Acting Edition

Drop Dead!

by Billy Van Zandt
and Jane Milmore

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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DROP DEAD! opened Friday, May 31, 1985 at the Dam Site Theatre, Tinton Falls, New Jersey under the title *I Don't Want Her, You Cadaver (She's Too Stiff For Me).* It was produced by Kathy Reed and directed by Billy VanZandt. Set design was by William Lee and Oaad Heulitt. Lighting design was by Joseph Rembisz. Costumes were by Russell Schiavone. Sound design was by Scott Wheeler. The Stage Managers were Neil Murphy and Jennifer Milmore. The cast (in order of appearance) was as follows:

PHILLIP . . . . . .Glenn Kelman
CHAZ LOONEY . . . . . Glenn Jones
BRENT REYNOLDS . . . . . .Jonathan D. Mack
CANDY APPLES . . . . . Jane Milmore
SOL WEISENHEIMER . . . . . Don Brennan
DICK SHALIT . . . . . .Art Neill
VICTOR LE PEWE . . . . . Billy Van Zandt
MONA MONET . . . . . Sherle Tallent
CONSTANCE CRAWFORD . . . . . Kay Stansbury
ALABAMA MILLER . . . . . .Jack Ryan

DROP DEAD! made its New York debut at the No Smoking Playhouse, Thursday November 6, 1985 produced by the Sherbet Organization in association with the Never-Never-Landers. Directed by Mr. Van ZandL Set design was by William Lee and Oaad Heulitt. lighting design was by Joseph Rembisz. Costumes were by Russell Schiavone. Sound design was by Scott Wheeler. The Stage Managers were Neil Murphy and Bob Hendrickson. The cast (in order of appearance) was as follows:

PHILLIP . . . . . .Glenn Kelman
CHAZ LOONEY . . . . . Glenn Jones
BRENT REYNOLDS . . . . . .Jonathan D. Mack
CANDY APPLES . . . . . Jane Milmore
SOL WEISENHEIMER . . . . . Don Brennan
DICK SHALIT . . . . . Don T. Gretzinger
VICTOR LE PEWE . . . . . Billy Van Zandt
MONA MONET . . . . . Sherle Tallent
CONSTANCE CRAWFORD . . . . . Kay Stansbury
ALABAMA MILLER . . . . . Denis Lynch

DROP DEAD! opened in Los Angeles at The Court Theatre on August 16, 1991. It was produced by Mitch Nedick and Edward P. Vogels. It was directed by Billy Van Zandt. Set design was by Robert W. Zentis. Lighting design was by Mike Pearce. Costumes were by Elizabeth Dirks. Sound design was by Scott Wheeler. The Stage Managers were Jennifer Milmore and Keith Cable. The cast (in order of appearance) was as follows:

PHILLIP . . . . . .Glenn Kelman
CHAZ LOONEY . . . . . Craig Bierko
BRENT REYNOLDS . . . . . .Jonathan D. Mack
CANDY APPLES . . . . . Jane Milmore
SOL WEISENHEIMER . . . . . .Barney Martin
DICK SHALIT . . . . . .Michael Kostroff
VICTOR LE PEWE . . . . . .Billy Van Zandt
MONA MONET . . . . . Adrienne Barbeau
CONSTANCE CRAWFORD . . . . . Rose Marie
ALABAMA MILLER . . . . . .Don Most

CHARACTERS

CHAZ LOONEY – The Apprentice Actor

CANDY APPLES – The Producer's Girlfriend

BRENT REYNOLDS – The Method Actor

DICK SCORSESE – Martin Scorsese's Cousin

MONA MONET – The TV Star

VICTOR LE PEWE – The Director

P.G. "PIGGY" BANKS – The Producer

PHILLIP – The Stage Manager

CONSTANCE CRAWFORD – The Legendary Stage Star

ALABAMA MILLER – The Playwright

ACT ONE

(Lights come up full on the drawing room of the Barrington Estate. We see a tuxedoed butler in a cutaway coat and white gloves dusting the painted-on fireplace. This is **CHAZ LOONEY** *playing the role of* **DROOLS** *the butler. He is much too young for the role and wears exaggerated bad age makeup. He speaks in an exaggerated English accent. He delivers all of his lines out front as if reciting in a children's pageant. He slyly uses crib sheets sewn inside his jacket and script pages, which are visibly taped underneath all his props.)*

DROOLS. Ah, what a sad day for the Barringtons. Especially Lord Barrington, who was found horribly murdered as he ate cheese in the library. Gouda cheese. Sliced thin.

(He peeks a look at his crib sheets and takes three steps to C.S.)

I have slaved for this family since I was a little boy, as my father did before me and his father before him, and my grandmother beside him, and my mother beneath her.

(The door chimes.)

Ah, the door is chiming. I must answer it, as I have done since I was a little boy, and as father did before me, and his father before him, and my grandmother beside him, and my mother beneath her.

*(***DROOLS** *walks to the front door, tripping on the rug – which is painted on the floor. He opens the door U.S.R. and we see* **BRENT REYNOLDS** *as* **ALEXANDER BARRINGTON**, *and* **CANDY APPLES** *as his new bride* **PENELOPE**.*)*

(Sound effects: Raging Windstorm)

(A small burst of snow is thrown in after them as they enter. They wear coats. **ALEXANDER** *wears a fedora.* **PENELOPE** *carries a small overnight bag.* **ALEXANDER** *and* **PENELOPE** *pose together D.S.C.)*

Young Alexander Barrington.

ALEXANDER. Drools. Kindly Drools. Ever faithful. Ever true.

DROOLS. And who is the young woman I see before me?

ALEXANDER. Drools, I'd like you to meet my new bride, Pen-el-ope…

DROOLS. *(ad libbing)* Don't you mean, Penelope?

ALEXANDER. You're so right, Drools. I just call her "darling."

PENELOPE. A delight.

DROOLS. The delight is mine.

ALEXANDER. Ah, Drools. It's a sad day for the Barringtons.

DROOLS. May I take your coats?

*(***DROOLS** *takes their coats and Alexander's hat.* **ALEXANDER** *wears a smoking jacket and ascot underneath.* **DROOLS** *hangs their things on the coat rack. Since it is painted on the wall, they fall to the floor.)*

ALEXANDER. Is mother about?

DROOLS. She's been under quite a strain. Finding the lord like that. Face down in the Gouda. Sliced thin.

ALEXANDER. *(posing dramatically)* Poor Mother.

PENELOPE. *(posed identically)* Poor thing.

ALEXANDER. How is she?

DROOLS. Hasn't touched a dairy product since.

ALEXANDER. And my sister…

(disgusted)

Bette…

(back to normal)

Has she arrived yet?

DROOLS. Yes, she's come, sir. Arrived this morning. Singing out loud like a little bird.

PENELOPE. How odd.

ALEXANDER. Not really. She has a beautiful voice.

DROOLS. I'll see if the Lady Barrington is up and around. May I take your suitcase?

*(***PENELOPE** *holds out her suitcase, but* **DROOLS** *never takes it.)*

Please help yourself to the sherry. It will warm you from the winter chill. He exits up left.

*(***DROOLS** *exits through the archway U.S.L.* **PENELOPE**, *unexpectedly stuck with a prop, hurls the suitcase offstage through the archway. We hear it smack* **CHAZ** *in the head. And a yell of pain.)*

CHAZ. *(off)* Ow.

PENELOPE. *(Spitting gum into her hand)*

There's a chill in the air. A chill about this house, Alexander. An evil chill. That I cannot explain. I am frightened. Hold me. Hold me.

*(***PENELOPE** *and* **ALEXANDER** *embrace.* **CANDY***'s gum sticks to* **ALEXANDER***'s back.)*

ALEXANDER. *(trying to reach the gum on his back)* You're all right. As long as I'm around, Pen-el-ope.

PENELOPE. I feel better knowing that you are near.

ALEXANDER. I'll never leave you. Never.

*(***ALEXANDER** *steps forward into a spotlight as the stage lights blackout.)*

The snow. Falling snow. White snow. Snow everywhere. Snow. Each flake different and unique in a…

(pronouncing the "ch")

…melancholy way. Yet together…a mass…of constant white…

(Spotlight off – stage lights up full as **ALEXANDER** *steps back into the scene. Snow falls outside the window*

– from a cheaply made "snow machine" hanging above the window.)

PENELOPE. What are you trying to tell me, Alexander?

*(***ALEXANDER** *crosses to the fireplace. We see a big wad of pink gum stuck to his back. He picks up a poker, which he uses to poke the plastic fireplace log.)*

ALEXANDER. I was born and raised in this house, Pen-el-opp. I lived here my entire life. With the exception of school and college and day camp. And the week I was kidnapped by the man in the Blue Mask. This home is my blood. This home and…

(Spotlight on – stage lights out as **ALEXANDER** *steps forward.)*

... The Snow…

(Spotlight off – stage lights up as **ALEXANDER** *steps back into the scene.)*

(posing at fireplace)

There's nothing I wouldn't do to keep it. Nothing.

*(***DICK SCORSESE** *as* **INSPECTOR MOUNDS** *enters from the archway. He wears a tweed Sherlock Holmes coat and cape, a Deerstalker hat, his Martin Scorsese glass frames, and smokes a large pipe.)*

INSPECTOR. "Anything?" What do you mean by "anything?")

*(***ALEXANDER** *and* **PENELOPE** *exchange looks – never having said the word.)*

ALEXANDER. Who the hell are you?

*(***CANDY** *begins mouthing all the other actors' lines.)*

INSPECTOR. Me?

ALEXANDER. Yes.

INSPECTOR. Inspector Mounds.

ALEXANDER. Beg your pardon?

*(***INSPECTOR MOUNDS** *dramatically poses at the fireplace – with his foot set on the log.)*

INSPECTOR. Inspector Mounds. Scotland Yard. I'm investigating your late father's death.

ALEXANDER. And what have you found? We have nothing to hide here.

INSPECTOR. Nothing?

ALEXANDER. Nothing that can't be explained.

INSPECTOR. Explained?

ALEXANDER. And what else do you know, Inspector?

INSPECTOR. We know that your late father didn't die accidentally.

ALEXANDER. You mean…

INSPECTOR. Murderrr!

(Sound effects: Ominous Music Sting)

PENELOPE. Oh, Alexander. Hold me. Touch me. Thrill me.

(Spotlight on – stage lights out, as **ALEXANDER** *steps forward.)*

ALEXANDER. Looks like snow.

(Spotlight off – stage lights up, as **ALEXANDER** *steps back into the scene.)*

INSPECTOR. Would you mind answering some questions, Mr. Barrington?

ALEXANDER. I have nothing to hide.

INSPECTOR. The reading of the will will tell the tale.

ALEXANDER. Meaning?

INSPECTOR. Exactly what was your sister Bette's relationship with your late father?

*(***MONA MONET** *sweeps in as* **BETTE**. *She glides in as she speaks, smoking from a long cigarette holder. She rehearses a grand bow for the audience's expected applause.)*

BETTE. Marvelous, Inspector. We got along divinely. I was like a daughter to him and he was like a father to me. I miss him so.

(flicking away a tear)

It's hard to believe he's really gone.

*(***DROOLS** *pops in to deliver a punchline, carrying a tray with script pages taped to the bottom.)*

DROOLS. I say! He's not really gone. He's still in the study. They haven't come for the body yet. Snow and all.

*(***DROOLS** *exits.)*

BETTE. Hello, brother.

ALEXANDER. Hello… Bette!

BETTE. You must be the new one.

ALEXANDER. Bette…this is Pe-nep-o-le. Pe-nep-o-le… Bette.

PENELOPE. Delighted. What did you mean, "New one?"

*(***BETTE** *and* **ALEXANDER** *exchange looks.* **CANDY**, *the actress playing* **PENELOPE**, *continues mouthing the other actors' lines.)*

INSPECTOR. Yes. What did you mean? I didn't quite follow that myself.

BETTE. Didn't dear brother tell you? You're number thirteen. Unlucky number thirteen! Ha ha!

PENELOPE. Thirteen? Thirteen what?

BETTE. Why, thirteen wives, you little unsuspecting fool!

PENELOPE. Wives?

BETTE. Ha ha!

PENELOPE. I thought I was the first.

BETTE. Naive foolish petulant child!

ALEXANDER. You are the first, Pen-el-opp. The first that meant anything.

PENELOPE. Alexander…what happened to them? Were they pretty?

ALEXANDER. They were all lovely.

(stepping forward)

Especially Gwendolyn.

(removing a paper from his pocket and reading it)

"With her fair skin, tight sweaters, and massively large jugs."

PENELOPE. Where are they now?

ALEXANDER. She was buried with them.

PENELOPE. You mean…

ALEXANDER. Dead.

PENELOPE. You mean?

BETTE. Murderrr!

(Sound effects: Ominous Music Sting)

ALEXANDER. I always meant to tell you that, dear.

PENELOPE. Murdered? All of them?

ALEXANDER. Not at the same time. Individually.

INSPECTOR. Interesting, Mr. Barrington. If you'll excuse me.

(The **INSPECTOR** *dramatically exits stage left face first into the painted-on archway. The slam sends chills up the other actors' spines.* **INSPECTOR** *slinks off through the archway, rubbing his face in pain. The other actors freeze until he is off.)*

ALEXANDER. I was never convicted.

*(***INSPECTOR MOUNDS** *screams from pain backstage.)*

BETTE. Ha ha. Juries can be bought. You never did explain that blood on your socks.

*(***DROOLS** *enters through the archway with his tray/script.)*

DROOLS. Mr. Barrington, your mother can't wait to see you. I told her that you had arrived and her face lit up like a shining sun in the noon day…

(can't remember the line)

…sun. Presenting Lady Barrington!

(All pose, and NO ONE enters. There is an awkward pause.)

Presenting Lady Barrington… She cannot wait to see you, Mr. Barrington. Her face… Lady Barrington.

BETTE. Ha ha!

ALEXANDER. I can hear Mother coming now!

DROOLS. Presenting Lady Barrington!

(from out in the audience we hear:)

VICTOR. Where the hell is she?

ALEXANDER. I shall go and find her!

VICTOR. Wait! Stop it! Stop it! Where the hell is Miss Crawford for God's sake? Phillip!

*(***VICTOR LE PEWE** *rushes up on stage from the audience, his hands filled with notes. Work lights come up, as stage lights go out.)*

ALEXANDER. Please Mr. Le Pewe. We're rehearsing.

VICTOR. Does anyone but me realize that we open tomorrow night? Phillip!

*(***PHILLIP** *rushes on. The actors break character –* **MONA** *and* **BRENT** *bitch to each other.* **CANDY** *puts more gum in her mouth, and blows bubbles.* **CHAZ LOONEY** *takes out a compact and adds yet another layer to his bad makeup. Between strokes of the brush,* **CHAZ** *flirts with* **CANDY**. **DICK SCORSESE** *enters from backstage reading a Police Gazette.)*

PHILLIP. Yes Mr. Le Pewe?

VICTOR. Where the hell is Miss Crawford? We could have gone out for a sandwich here.

PHILLIP. *(exiting)* Miss Crawford!

BRENT. Why are we breaking?

VICTOR. Miss Crawford did not enter, in case you didn't notice, Mr. Observant.

BRENT. Miss Crawford never enters. She's stone deaf and can't hear the other actors, in case you didn't notice, Mr. Director.

MONA. I am tired of carrying her through this production, Victor. I was hired to play one role. Not two.

VICTOR. A little respect for Miss Crawford, please?

CHAZ. How does my makeup look?

VICTOR. Fine, Hiawatha.

VICTOR/PHILLIP. Miss Crawford! Miss Crawford! Lady Barrington!

*(***CONSTANCE CRAWFORD** *enters – stage star of the 1950s. She is always in her own world.)*

CONSTANCE. Now? Is it me?

VICTOR. It's all right, Miss Crawford. If you can't hear the other actors, perhaps you could see them from back there. We can use a sight cue.

CONSTANCE. What?

VICTOR. I said perhaps we could use a sight cue.

CONSTANCE. I'm waiting for my cue, darling.

CHAZ. *(yelling)* Is this all right??

CONSTANCE. What?

VICTOR. *(to* **BRENT***)* Do you think you could project a little?

BRENT. Mr. Le Pewe, I learned to project on a mountaintop, with pebbles in my mouth, reciting Shakespeare to the winds.

VICTOR. Sorry, Brent, we haven't got any winds here.

DICK. Yes, we do.

(motioning to **CRAWFORD***)*

Stand behind her!

VICTOR. People, please! We haven't even gotten through the first half of the play! When you speak with Miss Crawford…just yell your brains out.

BRENT. I hardly think yelling my performance is the answer.

VICTOR. The answer is mercy-killing, but we're opening tomorrow.

CONSTANCE. Shall we take it from my entrance?

VICTOR. In just a minute!

*(***CRAWFORD** *shuffles off backstage anyway.)*

Phillip! Perhaps we can push her out from the back?

PHILLIP. Yes, Mr. Le Pewe.

VICTOR. While we are stopped, may I give a few notes?

*(***EVERYONE** *whips out their smart phone and checks messages, ignoring* **VICTOR** *as he reads his notes – all except for* **PHILLIP**, *who listens intently.* **PHILLIP** *catches the actors texting and quickly collects all the smart phones, before* **VICTOR** *notices.)*

(reading from notes)

"Muscatel the actors open!"

(to **PHILLIP**, *sotto voce)*

What the hell does this say?

PHILLIP. "Mouthing the actors again."

VICTOR. Yes. Candy…sweetheart…darling…you are mouthing the other actors' lines, again dear.

CANDY. I know.

VICTOR. I know, too. I saw it.

CANDY. That's how I learned my lines. I hear their lines in my head and then I know when to talk.

VICTOR. Do you think you might say their lines in your head with your mouth closed? Or shall I staple your lips shut?

CANDY. I'll say them in my head with my mouth closed.

VICTOR. I'm so glad.

(reading notes)

Miss Monet! If you insist on taking a bow every time you enter the stage, perhaps you shouldn't make your first entrance until curtain call.

MONA. Are you correcting me in front of the cast, dear?

VICTOR. I'm merely suggesting.

MONA. Face it, Le Pewe, when I enter, people will stand and applaud.

VICTOR. Darling, you haven't worked since your television series went off the air in 1997.

MONA. "Everyone Knows Mona" was top ten for two years. We beat the pants off "Dharma and Greg." Jenna Elfman still doesn't speak to me over it.

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