

## ARSENIC &amp; OLD LACE Audition Sides | Fine Linen Theatre

## Abby/Martha

**Mortimer:** All right—now—who was the first one?

**Abby:** Mr. Midgely. He was a Baptist.

**Martha:** Of course, I still think we can't claim full credit for him because he just died.

**Abby:** Martha means without any help from us. You see, Mr. Midgely came here looking for a room –

**Martha:** It was right after you moved to New York.

**Abby:** – And it didn't seem right for that lovely room to be going to waste when there were so many people who needed it –

**Martha:** – He was such a lonely old man . . .

**Abby:** All his kith and kin were dead and it left him so forlorn and unhappy –

**Martha:** – We felt so sorry for him.

**Abby:** And then when his heart attack came – and he sat dead in that chair (*pointing to armchair*) looking so peaceful –remember, Martha—we made up our minds then and there that if we could help other lonely old men to that same peace – we would!

**Mortimer:** And that's how all this started – that man walking in here and dropping dead.

**Abby:** Of course, we realized we couldn't depend on that happening again. So –

**Martha:** You remember those jars of poison that have been up on the shelves in grandfather's laboratory all these years – ?

**Abby:** You know your Aunt Martha's knack for mixing things. You've eaten enough of her piccalilli.

**Martha:** Well, dear, for a gallon of elderberry wine I take one teaspoon full of arsenic, then add a half teaspoonful of strychnine and then just a pinch of cyanide.

**Mortimer:** Should have quite a kick.

**Abby:** Yes! As a matter of fact one of our gentlemen found time to say, "How delicious!"

**Abby:** I wish you could stay for dinner.

**Martha:** I'm trying out a new recipe.

### Teddy/Abby

**Teddy:** General Goethals was very pleased. He says the Canal is just the right size.

**Abby:** Teddy! Teddy, there's been another Yellow Fever victim.

**Teddy:** Dear me – this will be a shock to the General.

**Abby:** Then we mustn't tell him about it.

**Teddy:** But it's his department.

**Abby:** No, we mustn't tell him, Teddy. It would just spoil his visit.

**Teddy:** I'm sorry, Aunt Abby. It's out of my hands – he'll have to be told. Army regulations, you know.

**Abby:** No, Teddy, we *must* keep it a secret.

**Teddy:** (*He loves secrets.*) A state secret?

**Abby:** Yes, a state secret. Promise?

**Teddy:** (*What a silly request*) You have the word of the President of the United States (*crosses his heart*) Cross my heart and hope to die. Now let's see – how are we going to keep it a secret?

**Abby:** Well, Teddy, you go back down in the cellar and when I turn out the lights – when it's all dark – you come up and take the poor man down to the Canal. Now go along, Teddy, and we'll come down later and hold services.

**Teddy:** You may announce the President will say a few words . . . . Where is the poor devil?

**Martha:** He's in the window-seat.

**Teddy:** It seems to be spreading. We've never had Yellow Fever there before.

**Einstein/Jonathan 1**

**Einstein:** Well, Chonny, where do we go from here? We got to think fast. The police. The police have got pictures of that face. I got to operate on you right away. We got to find some place for that – and we got to find a place for Mr. Spenalzo too.

**Jonathan:** Don't waste any worry on that rat.

**Einstein:** But, Chonny, we got a hot stiff on our hands.

**Jonathan:** Forget Mr. Spenalzo.

**Einstein:** But you can't leave a dead body in the rumble seat. You shouldn't have killed him, Chonny. He's a nice fellow – he gives us a lift – and what happens?

**Jonathan:** (*Remembering bitterly*) He said I looked like Boris Karloff! That's your work, Doctor. You did that to me!!

**Einstein:** Now, Chonny – we find a place somewhere – I fix you up quick!

**Jonathan:** Tonight!

**Einstein:** Chonny – I got to eat first. I'm hungry – I'm weak.

**Einstein/Jonathan 2**

**Einstein:** Chonny, when I go down in the cellar, what do you think I find?

**Jonathan:** What?

**Einstein:** The Panama Canal.

**Jonathan:** The Panama Canal

**Einstein:** It just fits Mr. Spenalzo. It's a hole Teddy dug. Six feet long and four feet wide.

**Jonathan:** Down there?!

**Einstein:** You'd think they knew we were bringing Mr. Spenalzo along. That's hospitality.

**Dr. Harper/Abby**

**Abby:** Oh, Dr. Harper, I hope you don't disapprove of Mortimer.

**Harper:** Well –

**Abby:** We'd feel so guilty if you did – sister Martha and I. I mean since it was here in our home that your daughter met Mortimer.

**Harper:** Of course, Miss Abby. And so I'll say immediately that I believe Mortimer himself to be quite a worthy gentleman. But I must also admit that I have watched the growing intimacy between him and my daughter with some trepidation. For one reason, Miss Abby.

**Abby:** You mean his stomach, Dr. Harper?

**Harper:** Stomach?

**Abby:** His dyspepsia – he's bothered with it so, poor boy.

**Harper:** No Miss Abby, I'll be frank with you. I'm speaking of your nephew's unfortunate connection with the theatre.

**Abby:** The theatre! Oh, no, Dr. Harper! Mortimer writes for a New York newspaper.

**Harper:** I know, Miss Abby, I know. But a dramatic critic is constantly exposed to the theatre, and I don't doubt but what some of them do develop an interest in it.

**Abby:** Well not Mortimer. You need have no fear of that. Why, Mortimer hates the theatre.

**Harper:** Really?

**Abby:** Oh, yes! He writes awful things about the theatre. But you can't blame him, poor boy. He was so happy writing about real estate, which he really knew something about, and then they just made him take this terrible night position.

**Harper:** My! My!

**Abby:** But, as he says, the theatre can't last much longer anyway and in the meantime it's a living. Yes, I think if we give the theatre another year or two, perhaps.

### Mortimer/Elaine

**Mortimer:** Where do you want to go for dinner?

**Elaine:** I don't care. I'm not very hungry.

**Mortimer:** Well, I just had breakfast. Suppose we wait until after the show?

**Elaine:** But that'll make it pretty late, won't it?

**Mortimer:** Not with the little stinker we're seeing tonight. From what I've heard about it we'll be at Blake's by ten o'clock.

**Elaine:** You ought to be fair to these plays.

**Mortimer:** Are these plays fair to me?

**Elaine:** I've never seen you walk out on a musical.

**Mortimer:** That musical isn't opening tonight.

**Elaine:** (*Disappointed*) No?

**Mortimer:** Darling, you'll have to learn the rules. With a musical there are always four changes of title and three postponements. They like it in New Haven but it needs a lot of work.

**Elaine:** Oh, I was hoping it was a musical.

**Mortimer:** You have such a light mind.

**Elaine:** Not a bit. Musicals somehow have a humanizing effect on you. After a serious play we join the proletariat in the subway and I listen to a lecture on the drama. After a musical you bring me home in a taxi, and you make a few passes.

**Mortimer:** Now wait a minute, darling, that's a very inaccurate piece of reporting.

**Elaine:** Oh, I will admit that after the Behrman play you told me I had authentic beauty – and that's a fool thing to say to a girl. It wasn't until after our first musical you told me I had nice legs. And I have too.

**Mortimer:** For a minister's daughter you know a lot about life. Where'd you learn it?

**Elaine:** In the choir loft. Religion never gets as high as the choir loft. Which reminds me, I'd better tell Father not to wait up for me tonight.

**Mortimer:** (*almost to himself*) I've never been able to rationalize it.

**Elaine:** What?

**Mortimer:** My falling in love with a girl who lives in Brooklyn.

**Elaine:** Falling in love? You're not stooping to the articulate, are you?

**Mortimer:** The only way I can regain my self-respect is to keep you in New York.

**Elaine:** Did you say keep?

**Mortimer:** No, no. I've come to the conclusion that you're holding out for the legalities.

**Elaine:** I can afford to be a good girl for quite a few years yet.

**Mortimer:** And I can't wait that long. Where could we be married in a hurry – say tonight?

**Elaine:** I'm afraid Father will insist on officiating.

**Mortimer:** Oh, no! I'll bet your father could make even the marriage service sound pedestrian.

**Elaine:** Are you by any chance writing a review of it?

**Mortimer:** Forgive me, darling. It's an occupational disease.

### **Martha/Witherspoon**

**Martha:** Mr. Witherspoon? Does your family live with you at Happy Dale?

**Witherspoon:** I have no family.

**Martha:** Oh – Well, I suppose you consider everyone at Happy Dale your family?

**Witherspoon:** I'm afraid you don't quite understand. As head of the institution, I have to keep quite aloof.

**Martha:** That must make it very lonely for you.

**Witherspoon:** It does. But my duty is my duty.

**Martha:** Well, Abby – If Mr. Witherspoon won't join us for breakfast, I think at least we should offer him a glass of elderberry wine.

**Witherspoon:** (severely) Elderberry wine?

**Martha:** We make it ourselves.

**Witherspoon:** (melting slightly) Why, yes . . . (severely again) Of course, at Happy Dale our relationship will be more formal – but here – You don't see much elderberry wine nowadays – I thought I'd had my last glass of it.

**Martha:** Oh, no – no, here it is.

**Gibbs/Abby (not NCIS)**

**Gibbs:** I understand you have a room to rent. Are you the lady of the house?

**Abby:** Yes. Won't you step in? I'm Miss Brewster.

**Gibbs:** My name is Gibbs.

**Abby:** Oh, won't you sit down? I'm sorry we were just setting the table for dinner.

**Gibbs:** May I see the room?

**Abby:** Why don't you sit down a minute and let's get acquainted.

**Gibbs:** That won't do much good if I don't like the room.

**Abby:** Is Brooklyn your home?

**Gibbs:** Haven't got a home. Live in a hotel. Don't like it.

**Abby:** Are your family Brooklyn people?

**Gibbs:** Haven't got any family.

**Abby:** (*Another victim*) All alone in the world?

**Gibbs:** Yep

**Abby:** Well, you've come to just the right house. Do sit down. What church to you go to? There's an Episcopal church practically next door.

**Gibbs:** I'm Presbyterian. Used to be. I'd really like to see the room.

**Abby:** It's upstairs. Won't you try a glass of our wine before we start up?

**Gibbs:** Never touch it.

**Abby:** We make this ourselves. It's elderberry wine.

**Gibbs:** Elderberry wine. Hmmph. Haven't tasted elderberry wine since I was a boy. Thank you. Do you have your own bushes?

**Abby:** No, but the cemetery is full of them.

## Brophy/Klein

**Brophy:** She shouldn't go to all that trouble.

**Klein:** Listen, try to stop her or her sister from doing something nice— and for nothing! They don't even care how you vote.

**Harper:** When I received my call to Brooklyn and moved next door my wife wasn't well. When she died and for months before — well, if I know what pure kindness and absolute generosity are, it's because I've known the Brewster sisters.

*(At this moment TEDDY steps out on balcony and blasts a bugle call. They all look.)*

**Brophy:** Colonel, you promised not to do that. He used to do that in the middle of the night. The neighbors raised Cain with us. They're a little afraid of him, anyway.

**Harper:** Oh, he's quite harmless.

**Klein:** Suppose he does think he's Teddy Roosevelt. There's a lot worse people he could think he was.

**Brophy:** Real shame — a nice family like this hatching a cuckoo.

**Klein:** Well, his father — the old girls' brother, was some sort of genius, wasn't he? And their father — Teddy's grandfather — seems to me I've heard he was a little crazy too.

**Brophy:** Yeah — he was crazy like a fox. He made a million dollars . . . left his daughters fixed for life. Not that they ever spend any of it on themselves.

**Klein:** You don't know a tenth of it. When I was with the Missing Persons Bureau I was trying to trace an old man that we never did find — do you know there's a renting agency that's got this house down on its list for furnished rooms? They don't rent rooms — but you can bet that anybody who comes here lookin' for a room goes away with a good meal and probably a few dollars in their kick.

**Brophy:** It's just their way of digging up people to do some good to.

**O'Hara/Mortimer**

**O'Hara:** Yeah. My mother was an actress – a stage actress. Perhaps you heard of her – Peaches Latour.

**Mortimer:** It sounds like a name I've seen on a program. What did she play?

**O'Hara:** Well, her big hit was "Mutt and Jeff." Played it for three years. I was born on tour – the third season.

**Mortimer:** You were?

**O'Hara:** Yep. Sioux City, Iowa. I was born in the dressing room at the end of the second act, and Mother made the finale.

**Mortimer:** What a trouper! There must be a good story in your mother – you know, I write about the theatre.

**O'Hara:** You do? Saay! – You're not Mortimer Brewster, the dramatic critic!

**Mortimer:** Yes.

**O'Hara:** Well, I certainly am glad to meet you. Say, Mr. Brewster – we're in the same line of business.

**Mortimer:** We are?

**O'Hara:** Yeah. I'm a playwright. Oh, this being on the police force is just temporary.

**Mortimer:** How long have you been on the force?

**O'Hara:** Twelve years. I'm collecting material for a play.

**Mortimer:** I'll bet it's a honey.

**O'Hara:** Well, ought to be. With all the drama I see being a cop. Mr. Brewster – you have no idea what goes on in Brooklyn.

**Mortimer:** I think I have.

**O'Hara:** Say, what time you got?

**Mortimer:** Ten after one.

**O'Hara:** Wow. I gotta ring in.

**Mortimer:** Wait a minute, O'Hara. On that play of yours – I may be able to help you.

**O'Hara:** You would! Say, it was fate my walking in her tonight. Look – I'll tell you the plot!

**Rooney/Mortimer**

**Rooney:** Yeah – yeah—those thirteen bodies in the cellar! It ain't enough that the neighbors are all afraid of him, and his disturbing the peace with that bugle – but can you imagine what would happen if that cock-eyed story about thirteen bodies in the cellar got around? And now he's starting a Yellow Fever scare. Cute, ain't it?

**Mortimer:** (*Greatly relieved, with an embarrassed laugh*) Thirteen bodies. Do you think anybody would believe that story?

**Rooney:** Well, you can't tell. Some people are just dumb enough. You don't know what to believe sometimes. About a year ago a crazy guy starts a murder rumor over in Greenpoint, and I had to dig up a half acre lot, just to prove them wrong. Now let's be sensible about this, ladies. For instance, here I am wasting my morning when I've got serious work to do. You know there are still *murders* to be solved in Brooklyn.

**Mortimer:** Yes! (*Covering*) Oh, are there?

**Rooney:** It ain't only his bugle blowing and the neighbors all afraid of him, but things would just get worse. Sooner or later we'd be put to the trouble of digging up your cellar.