

JUST ANOTHER MURDER IN SMALL TOWN MAINE

By Kelly Meadows

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JUST ANOTHER MURDER IN SMALL TOWN MAINE

A Comedic Monologue

By Kelly Meadows

SYNOPSIS: A student reading a steady diet of murder mysteries starts to fear that there's a killer around every corner. But... just maybe it's true! Just maybe our speaker finds a way to solve a real murder. Does it even matter? In this small town, murder is a way of life.

TIME: Present day

SETTING: The school; East Witchbrew, Maine

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 either)

SPEAKER (m/f)..... A student; possibly paranoid...
possibly not!

SET: Bare stage. However, a set reminiscent of a library, or with lots of bookshelves would be effective; another idea would be to have books lying around, and the speaker can pick them up here and there to emphasize certain parts of the play.

PROPS: An old notebook (optional).

COSTUMING: Normal attire, perhaps "bookworm" looking.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: There are a lot of what's called "cozy mysteries" on the market, meaning they're light and fun, but someone's still getting killed. The speaker in this monologue is picking up that there is a lot of wrongdoing in this small town and is justifiably afraid. As the piece starts out on an entirely different track, having the speaker slowly realize "what's going on" can be an effective way to deliver the monologue, so the audience is surprised throughout. Also, this speaker is "pro learning." The stage directions are suggestions, but feel free to use your own interpretation!

AT RISE: *Our SPEAKER is on a bare stage.*

SPEAKER: We were trained to be quiet when we were in the library, but it was impossible. Years ago, when libraries had books and were places for learning, being quiet made sense. But at our school every sound, every breath, every footstep echoed like an eagle's call across a mountain range. It bounced off walls, careened off empty shelves, then bounced back and smacked us squarely in the face. (*SPEAKER reacts to being hit in the face.*) It was the sound of stupidity looking for a final resting place until it died a slow painful sonic death in what was once the science fiction section.

The school kept us occupied while they did it; while we were busy gluing and taping Secret Santa arts and crafts in the cafeteria, a group of "concerned" and largely illiterate parents and school board members invaded the library and removed any book they thought unsuitable. History? It just repeats itself. Sports? We had a losing team. Social studies? We don't want those people in our house. Romance? Not for my kids! Books that had sat on our shelves for 100 years were donated to the city landfill, and someone under the impression we were actually checking them out took away one of the most important incentives from any student—potential. Possibility. Trust. (*A little sarcastic.*) Perhaps we were taunted by our bullying schoolmates, maybe we were abused by our alcoholic parents, likely we were belittled by our spiritual advisor, but at least we were protected from (*With a look of panic!*) the evil that lurked in the stacks of the school library.

The only books left were several series of murder mysteries. Of all the topics that were off limits to students, it seemed, killing was still fair game. A lot of the kids, who initially weren't even interested in reading, rebelled by downloading the books that were taken away. I just checked out what was still there. I started to read more and more murder mysteries, almost all of which were set in small towns in Maine, where people were killed right and left and an eccentric group of townies would search for clues to solve who did it. There were (*Short pause, in a bit of disbelief.*) hundreds of these books about small town murder. Time and time again, the peace of a

bucolic city of maybe 3,517 people in a quaint coastal northern enclave was shattered by an untimely killing.

(Explaining the reasons for the murders.) Someone wanted an early inheritance, someone wanted to silence a blackmailer, someone wanted something that, it was narrated, could only be achieved through murder. It became readily apparent, to me, at least, that there was no place more unsafe than a quiet village in eastern Maine, where people traded a peaceful existence on the waterfront for a life expectancy of maybe just a month or two longer. Conflict resolution? Not quite, we just put our problems into an early grave. Strange too, because these killers never seemed to realize that the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker would team up to find them every time. No one got away with it, yet everyone thought they could.

Even the school play was a murder mystery. The school fundraiser was a murder mystery, the sports team were called the Slayers. It made sense that the school board thought that murder was something the kids could live with.

About now, my mother decided we were going to move. Still clinging to the antiquated idea that reading and education went hand in hand, she wasn't going to have me go to a school that didn't have any books in its library. But when she said we were moving to East Witchbrew, Maine, I was scared silly. Sure, it was quaint. Old fashioned diners, a curmudgeon on every corner, snow on Christmas, and a downtown full of Hallmark-inspired men and women who gave up big city jobs for love with no possibility of making a living.

And of course, there was that house on the corner where that "thing" happened long ago. Long ago, like even Nathaniel Hawthorne thought it happened long ago, and no one had been in the house since, yet there it was, its seven gables sparkling good as new, as if it was kept up by the ghost of... well, either the victim or the killer. No one knew. All we knew was this was small town Maine, and sooner, rather than later, your time would come.

It was a problem from the get go. We'd go to the bakery, and while everyone was chowing the sweets, I was checking the condiment closet for body parts. The convenience store? Convenient... for murder! The hardware store? Tools... for murder.

Put three or four crows together and I was a basket case. Everyone, everything, everywhere, I knew the end was near. These days, if the safest place for me is in the classroom, you know things are turned upside down.

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