

# THE MOSS TRAP

A Farce in 3 Acts

By David Meyer

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Time has taken its toll on the once stately inn known as Moss Manor. Its humble proprietor, Mrs. Moss, and her ever-faithful butler, Rhett, have been struggling to keep the inn open but have finally decided to sell and move on.

An unusual assortment of prospective buyers arrive, as well as some old friends. As the brokering becomes more competitive, word reaches the inn of an escaped murderer possibly heading their way. Mrs. Moss is unconcerned until she learns the identity of the convict, a former guest she helped unmask as a killer.

The vigilant local police inspectors are on the job protecting the inn, when a body suddenly turns up!

Everyone is a suspect until a strange turn of events has the killer unmask himself to the next victim. Through fate, quick thinking, and blind luck, Mrs. Moss is able to weather the crisis and put things right. It's great fun with a quick and crazy pace set by a cast of "unusual" characters.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(8 M, 7 W, 5 Flexible)*

**“MOTHER” MINNIE MOSS:** Proprietor of Moss Manor. Short, plump, gray-haired, grandmother-type, with a good-natured charm.

**RHETT (THE BUTLER):** The faithful but simple-minded butler. He is deaf and dumb but a lynch pin in the operation of Moss Manor.

**HOLSKI:** Local lawman. Simple country folk.

**HOLMES:** Partner to Holski. Casual country lawman who enjoys his pipe.

**WATSON:** Young, modern woman. Not at all what you would expect to be as a police inspector.

**HAFAWITZ:** Partner to Watson. Aggressive female police inspector. Much like Watson.

**PAT PENDING:** Burned-out, leftover hippie. At one time a cult leader, now he tries to use quotes of lyrics, and song titles to appear philosophical.

**MARTIN (MARTY)/MARTHA HARDY:** Always talks in rhyme. Chauffeur to the Charmins. He is an “ultra cool dude.”

**T.T. CHARMIN III:** High-strung, rich man. A bit dizzy but fun. He has a serious side. As a paper magnet, he has become rich and powerful.

**“HAPPY” CHARMIN:** Wife to T.T. Charmin. She shows her tough, bossy side and likes to use her wealth. She can be demanding.

**SHAMUS BARRISTER:** Shifty attorney trying to unload Moss Manor and make a tidy profit for himself.

**“COUSIN” NELLEN VOYD:** Very distant cousin trying to claim part of Moss Manor. Relative to the late Mickey (or so she claims). Hillbilly type who thinks the falling down inn is a palace. Older, stern, tough, grandma.

**JUD VOYD:** Son to Nellen Voyd. Recently escaped from “The Home” to be with “Ma.” Big, dumb, simple, hillbilly type.

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**MYRTLE MAE VOYD:** Daughter to hillbilly cousin, sister to Jud. Scrappy, tough, not as dumb as her brother. She is always on the prowl for a husband.

**THE AMAZIN' MANNY SHOWENBAUM:** A washed-up, and very rusty magician. Still tries to fumble through magic act.

**BOOM-BOOM O'REILLY:** Girlfriend and stage assistant to magician, former showgirl, long past her prime.

**DON/DONNA QUAKENBUSH:** Member of the Preservation and Monument Society here to try to rescue the inn from sale or destruction, claiming historical value.

**PHIL/PHYLLIS UPTON:** Member of society trying to preserve the inn. Partner of Donna.

**COLONEL G.I. BARFLEY:** Big game hunter. A bit arrogant and demanding but this appears to be a false front to hide his indecisive nature.

**DR. CHARLES HOARSE:** Late middle-aged, handsome and refined, but hardened by his jail time experience and his blind desire for vengeance.

**SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY**

ACT I: Evening, in the lobby of Moss Manor (current day).

ACT II: Just before midnight, the same day.

ACT III: Two hours later.

**SET NOTES**

All the action takes place in the lobby of the aging Moss Manor. There is a door to the outside USC and a window to one side of it. A closet is USR. The front desk is located DS of the front door. A door SR leads to the kitchen and other areas and a door SL leads to the rooms. There is a light switch located SL by hallway. A sofa and arm chair sit near CS.

**See end of playbook for prop and sound effects information.**

**ACT I**

*(AT RISE: The present, evening. MRS. MOSS, affectionately known as "Mother" is seated, center sofa, looking over some legal documents. Pacing behind her looking every bit annoyed, impatient, and professional, is SHAMUS BARRISTER. Behind the desk doing busy work is RHETT. Standing off to the side of the sofa are DONNA and PHYLLIS.)*

SHAMUS: As your attorney, Mrs. Moss, I advise you to reject this proposal.

MRS. MOSS: My attorney? You may be an attorney, Mr. Shamus Barrister, but you are not my attorney!

SHAMUS: Still, my advice is yours ... do not sign those papers!

MRS. MOSS: Mr. Barrister ... just who invited you into these negotiations?

SHAMUS: Let's just say I was informed of your plan to sell the inn and I felt I should notify some of my clients who may be interested in purchasing this property.

MRS. MOSS: Well, thank you for your concern, but at the moment I haven't decided what I want to do -

SHAMUS: I'm sure I can arrange a very generous offer. Even in this *(Looks around.)* run down condition it should be more than enough for a comfortable retirement.

DONNA: The Preservations and Monuments Society has very limited funds. We can only offer -

SHAMUS: That's why you're here? The Preservations and Monuments Society? I should have known.

DONNA: I'm the chairperson of our chapter, Donna Quakenbush, at your service, and this is the vice chair, Phyllis Upton.

SHAMUS: Mrs. Moss ... you can't seriously be considering an offer from them! They work on donations ... they have no assets to speak of.

MRS. MOSS: They do have manners, Mr. Barrister.

SHAMUS: I beg your pardon, Ladies of the Preservations and Monuments Society.

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PHYLLIS: We like to call it P.M.S. for short.

SHAMUS: I'm not surprised.

MRS. MOSS: *(To the LADIES.)* I'm undecided ... I was only toying with the idea of selling the inn. It really holds a lot of dear old memories for me *(Becoming emotional.)* ... My late husband, Mickey, had such dreams for this old place. *(RHETT comes over with a box of tissues for HER.)* I find it very hard to think of selling. *(SHE takes a tissue and honks her nose loudly.)* Thank you, Rhett. *(HE bows politely. SHE gives him the used tissue to dispose of. He folds it neatly and puts it back in the box.)* That's one of the reasons I'm not sure what to do ... *(Dramatically, a-la-Scarlet O'Hara.)* ... what ... what's to become of Rhett?

SHAMUS: *(Aside.)* Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

DONNA: Now, now ... your butler will be just fine.

MRS. MOSS: You don't understand, he's all I have left ... with Mickey gone and my son Pete married and moved away, it's just me and Rhett!

PHYLLIS: Maybe we should come back another time ...

SHAMUS: Yes, another time.

MRS. MOSS: I'm just not sure -

DONNA: Just relax now ... try to compose yourself. Perhaps something to drink ...

PHYLLIS: Yeah, good idea. A shot of whiskey would straighten her out.

DONNA: A glass of water would do it. *(To RHETT who is back at the desk doing busy work.)* Excuse me ... Oh, Mr. Butler ... yoo-hoo ... *(RHETT ignores HER and continues his work.)*

MRS. MOSS: He can't hear you.

DONNA: *(Shouting.)* Hey ... you!

MRS. MOSS: He's deaf.

PHYLLIS: Poor dear ... how is he as a butler?

MRS. MOSS: Best butler we ever had ... an absolute wiz on the switchboard.

DONNA: Incredible!

SHAMUS: Why, you could take care of him handsomely with the money I'm prepared to offer -

MRS. MOSS: Why?

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