# LAST WILL & TESTAMENT

*An Audience Participation Murder Mystery in Three Acts*

By Lisa Patrick-Wilkinson

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

Texas was never this fun - or this deadly! Jonas Carmody, President and Founder of Carmody Oil, is dead of natural causes at the age of 78, leaving an estate valued in excess of $30 million. The heirs apparent are in for a big surprise when they gather together with his friends and business associates for a memorial dinner in his honor. Unbeknownst to his eccentric family, a surprise reading of the will is on the menu, and murder is certain to be a la mode! As the story unfolds and the family unravels, it seems everybody wants more than their fair share. But who is willing to kill for it? The prim and proper step-daughter? The greedy, ne'er-do-well brother? The hot-shot lawyer? The underpaid security guard? Or the floozy girlfriend? In this hilarious mystery/comedy, author Lisa Patrick-Wilkinson brings to life a host of colorful characters and interactive fun. Audience members are encouraged to come in Texas attire, and will team up with the detective to crack clues, obtain evidence and ultimately help solve the crime committed before their very eyes!

*First produced by Murder, Incorporated, October 1994, in Naples, Florida.*

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(3 m, 2 w)*

SILAS CARMODY: The large and aging erstwhile brother of the late multi-millionaire and Texas oil magnate Jonas Carmody.

EMMA RICHFIELD-CARMODY: Stepdaughter by marriage to Jonas Carmody. A middle-aged and uptight religious fanatic.

DEE-DEE DELANE: Former "companion" of Jonas Carmody, Dee-Dee is a gaudy tramp from the Bronx.

JACKSON DAVIS: An extremely good-looking, dark-haired lawyer who looks like a used car salesman.

SAM DAVENPORT: A sandy-haired man of medium height who sports a Columbo demeanor and Bogart accent.

***See back of script for additional character and costume notes.***

## HAND PROPS

This play utilizes a minimum of inexpensive hand props, as follows:

SILAS: A cane, cigar (optional); plastic bottle of "pills" (may be filled with aspirin, Vitamin E capsules, sweet-tarts, or mints.)

EMMA: Religious tracts; small Bible.

DEE-DEE: Bottle of cough syrup; marriage license, photo, and compact in a large handbag; necklace with desk key attached.

JACKSON: Silver flask; thick, legal-looking will; bandaged thumbs, stage blood (optional).

SAM: Marriage license in an envelope, stage pistol.

SET: Champagne glasses, mineral water or sparkling cider.

## SET REQUIREMENTS

The setting for the play is a swank, upscale dinner club where relatives of the late Jonas Carmody, President and Founder of Carmody Oil, are hosting a memorial dinner in his honor. The set for the play is designed to be portable. Use of a platform is recommended. You will need the following:

**In the reception area:**

Memorial table
Guest book (optional)
Flowers or urn (optional)
Photograph

**For the primary set:**

Five chairs, lined in a row

One small table placed upstage center between the chairs or two smaller tables on either end, depending on the size of your area. On the table will be liquor bottles, glasses and a knife.

A logo of “Carmody Oil” (optional) blown up and displayed in the staged area.

A Texas flag (optional) provides an excellent backdrop

Sleuth sheets - single or folded sheets with adequate space for guests to write in their notes and observations about who did it, why and how. If placed beforehand on tables or in seats, they should be placed in an envelope to save the surprise of who gets killed. (See end of script for further details.)

Fake deeds for 100 shares of Carmody Oil might decorate each table or be placed in each seat, perhaps in an envelope, again for all to open on cue and discover.

## SETTING THE SCENE - OPENING IMPROV

A few, inexpensive props can be utilized to help set the scene for the mystery. The following will help both audience and characters get into the spirit of the play.

A memorial table for Jonas Carmody can be displayed in the entrance hall with a photo and caption, "In Memory of Jonas Carmody." Flowers are optional. The characters (except for Sam Davenport, who enters later) will greet the guests personally as they enter, forming a "receiving" line and thanking them for attending on behalf of the Carmody family. They will mention that guests will have an opportunity to "say a few words" on behalf of the deceased later.

Emma, a religious fanatic, will take this opportunity to distribute religious tracts to the guests. An assortment of appropriate tracts are available inexpensively through Christian bookstores.

Jackson, whose thumbs are bandaged, may use the time of greeting/hand-shaking to emphasize his disability and raise questions as to what type of accident he has been involved in. Evasive answers may hint at some type of gambling involvement.

Silas may use this opportunity to set the tone for his previous relationship with his brother, answering any questions the guests might have with regard to himself or Jonas. He may also make sly, subtle moves on Dee-Dee, who will be treating the affair as though it were a Hollywood bash.

Dee-Dee coughs repeatedly during the improv, which is commented upon with annoyance by family members. At the end of the improv, she will exit to find her "cough medicine."

**~Appetizers, Soups and Salads Served Prior to the Start of Act I~**
**Alternately, the full meal may be served here.**

**ACT I**

*(AT RISE: SILAS CARMODY dozes in a chair CS. Seated next to him is JACKSON DAVIS and EMMA RICHFIELD-CARMODY. They exchange a few muffled words, and Jackson rouses Silas who shuffles DSC.)*

SILAS: *(Clearing his throat loudly and reeking of dramatic importance.)* Ladies and gentlemen, if I may have your attention, please! On behalf of the family, I want to thank y'all for coming on out tonight to honor our dear departed brother, Jonas Carmody. He is lost, but not forgotten! His body lies within the cold bosom of the earth, but his spirit dwells warmly within the bosom of each and every one of us! In the words of Sam Houston …

*(HE trails off, head nodding. After a beat, a loud snore. JACKSON rises and takes Silas' arm. HE rouses with a snort.)*

JACKSON: Thank you, Silas! I'm sure your words have touched us all very deeply!

*(HE leads SILAS back to his seat. Silas clears his throat loudly, mumbling to himself.)*

SILAS: Uh-HUM. Yes.

JACKSON: *(Clearing his throat.)* As you all know, Mr. Carmody was a generous man. It was Mr. Carmody's greatest desire that he continue this spirit of generosity even after his death. I have here just another shining example of that generosity. *(With a flourish, HE extracts a flask by mistake from his jacket pocket. Embarrassed, he fumbles to replace this, extracts a thick, formal-looking document, and holds it proudly aloft.)* Yes. Well. As many of you know, the law firm of Davis, Davis & Locke has had the privilege of representing Mr. Carmody for better than thirty years. My late father, Andrew Davis –

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