

# MURDER (COMEDY) IN SPACE!

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A one-act comedy by  
Ed Shockley

Inspired by students of Upper Merion Middle School

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[info@youthplays.com](mailto:info@youthplays.com)  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CALVIN HARVEY "HARDCASTLE" QUEEN

BRENDA BOXER

REUBEN SCHULTZ

CHIEF PORTHOS DRESDEN

SATURN GUARD ROBOT

PHOTOGRAPHER

NARRATOR

REPORTERS

INTERCOM VOICE

JANUS

OPERATOR

QUEEN

STAHL FLOWERS

VOICE

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**SCENE 1**

*(The apartment of Calvin Queen, early morning year 2071. A large carnival style cardboard of a body in a suit with the cutaway for insertion of one's head stands in front of a camera and neat apartment picture. The actual place is a shambles.)*

**NARRATOR:** The day began like any day in the post-stellar unification partitioning of twenty seventy-two.

*(SONG: MORNING SYMPHONY made up of beeps and mechanized sounds.)*

Then I got the call.

*(A futuristic phone ends the song.)*

They had done away with telephone, picture phone, tactile phone and the like, once matter transference and reconstitution had been perfected, and so now each conversation is face-to-face, 3-D, with one party teleported into the presence of another. Don't ask me to explain it, something about holograms and neurological sensors. I just know that Porthos Dresden, Chief of Intercultural Planetary Police, was standing in my living room at seven hundred hours and he didn't look nurturing.

**CHIEF:** You're late.

**QUEEN:** How can I be late when you're here?

**CHIEF:** That's my point. You were supposed to be there, in my office, old college 3-D, forty-six seconds ago.

**QUEEN:** Of course I knew this and was playing dumb. The Chief of investigators was one of those old fashioned types who still believed in kissy face meetings. It didn't make sense in the new technology but then there's always someone fighting the future, isn't there? *(To Chief:)* If you're willing to wait, then I can be wheeling toward you in under two hours.

**CHIEF:** Don't do cute, Queen, it doesn't sit well on you and I don't need you here, I need you there last nanosecond.

**QUEEN:** And which particular there do you expect me to explore this time?

**CHIEF:** Too late.

**QUEEN:** What'd'ya mean, "Too late."

**CHIEF:** There used to be a saying way back when in the oil age, "You sneeze, you freeze."

**QUEEN:** Who could you find in the forty-six seconds that it took to interrupt my morning workout, and don't say, "Brenda Boxer."

**CHIEF:** Brenda Boxer.

**QUEEN:** Then at least tell me it's a domestic dispute.

**CHIEF:** Nope.

**QUEEN:** A contested will.

**CHIEF:** No.

**QUEEN:** A skipped ship or shipment.

*(Chief shakes his head, "No.")*

So what've you got?

**CHIEF:** Murder.

**QUEEN:** Murder! Brenda Boxer couldn't solve a murder if she committed the thing herself.

**CHIEF:** But she was here and now she's there while you're still in your flowered jammies behind a cardboard cutout.

**QUEEN:** Who got stiffed?

**NARRATOR:** And that's when everything changed. You see, the development of habitable space stations coupled with

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heightened racial and cultural tensions finally provoked the Trans-Global Earth Government to isolate various peoples in separate but equal orbiting satellites. Every imaginable ethnic, political, religious, cultural, and special interest group has been placed in a dedicated location to live the existence that suits their temperament amongst like-tempered characters. It was an imperfect solution to an immoral state of affairs, but it happened and was only being opposed by one single interplanetary activist, Stahl Flowers. *(To Chief:)* I want there, Chief.

**CHIEF:** You know what they say.

**QUEEN:** No, but I'm sure you'll tell me.

**CHIEF:** Rhyming's everything.

**QUEEN:** And just what does that mean in twenty-second century English?

**CHIEF:** You want the case, you've got to battle.

*(BRENDA BOXER appears. HIP-HOP SONG.)*

**BRENDA:** You couldn't find a beagle in a haystack.  
If crime was wine then you'd be a teetotaler.  
You're out your mind to think you'll ever get this case back.  
And when we're done you just remember that I told ya!

**QUEEN:** You can't be serious.

**BRENDA:** It don't matter if you think it's real or not, Queen.  
The ship has sailed and you're back on the dock, Doc.  
I'm taking names and notes here at the kill scene.  
You're off the clock and remember that I told ya!

**QUEEN:** I'm not going to sing for a job, Chief.

**CHIEF:** Then you leave me no choice...

**QUEEN:** But if I was of half a mind to join into this word war,  
That rebel there would have to kowtow to this soldier.

I'd show her when and where and why and how and what for  
And just for fun I'd say, "Remember that I told ya."

**CHIEF:** This is big enough for both of you.

**QUEEN:** I'm strictly solo ops, Chief.

**CHIEF:** Do you want in on this case or not, Queen?

**QUEEN:** See you in ten seconds, Dee.

**BRENDA:** I've told you one hundred times, "Don't call me Dee."

*(Queen appears beside her.)*

**QUEEN:** So what have we got?

*(End Scene 1.)*

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**SCENE 2**

*(Orbiting space station.)*

**BRENDA:** I thought you didn't do matter transference?

**QUEEN:** The idea of having your atoms scrambled, shot a few million miles through space then reassembled is a thought that shouldn't appeal to any sane individual.

*(REUBEN appears.)*

**REUBEN:** Man, I just love being zapped and shipped.

**QUEEN:** I rest my case.

**BRENDA:** Reuben, what are you doing here?

**REUBEN:** The Chief thought you two might need a mediator to get you through the awkward spots.

**QUEEN:** So what are you doing here?

**REUBEN:** I know you, I know Dee...

**BRENDA:** Don't call me Dee.

**REUBEN:** So I'm the guy.

**QUEEN:** What guy?

**REUBEN:** The mediator.

**QUEEN:** But I hate your guts.

**BRENDA:** Me too.

**REUBEN:** See, I've got you agreeing already.

**QUEEN:** Where were we?

**BRENDA:** Nowhere. Stahl Flowers is dead. Phaser blast point blank from a frayed conductor wire.

**REUBEN:** So are we thinking accident?

**QUEEN:** We aren't thinking anything. You are sitting over in that gravity simulator out of the way while I examine the evidence.

**BRENDA:** What evidence?

**QUEEN:** Where there's a crime, there's a clue. Where's the body?

*(Brenda holds up a baggie with a few teaspoons of ash.)*

**BRENDA:** Phaser doesn't leave much.

**NARRATOR:** This was going to be hard, but hard is my middle name. Well, actually my middle name is Harvey, but there was this classic movie called Harvey about a thing called a Pukka so I told everybody my name was Hardcastle because kids can be really cruel and then it sort of got shortened...

*(Brenda clears her throat.)*

Anyway, there is always a clue and a snitch. Luck was with me because they both fell into my lap like a blob of ketchup on a white summer suit.

*(Queen opens the door suddenly and a camera light flashes. Reuben draws his weapon.)*

**QUEEN:** No!

*(Queen tries to intercede and gets zapped. The force sends him tumbling until he ends entangled with the photographer.)*

You shot me.

**REUBEN:** I thought you were in danger.

**QUEEN:** You shot me.

**REUBEN:** These new stun guns don't have very precise targeting.

**QUEEN:** Ow!

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**REUBEN:** Does it hurt?

*(Queen takes the gun and shoots Reuben.)*

Ow!

**BRENDA:** If you two are done.

*(Queen shoots her also.)*

**NARRATOR:** We got so involved in the phaser tag that we nearly blew the first big lead in the case, but our professionalism prompted us to focus and...

**BRENDA:** Actually the batteries went dead.

**NARRATOR:** Anyhoot, I spied a shifty eye in the camera guy and we made him sing like a...like a...

**BRENDA:** Like a cantina cantada.

**NARRATOR:** Like what she said.

**QUEEN:** What are you doing here?

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** I...

**QUEEN:** A likely story.

**BRENDA:** Where did you come from?

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Just now?

**BRENDA:** Don't get cutesy with me.

**REUBEN:** Why are tomatoes red?

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** If I knew that then I could go on Jeopardy and win a few trillion Euros.

**QUEEN:** So you think you're tough, punk.

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Sometimes a joke can...

**BRENDA:** We're just getting started.

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** There's no need for...

**REUBEN:** Are you now or have you never been to a common member list party?

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Does he make sense to you?

**BRENDA:** No, but he's necessary for the three-part harmony.

*(Song:)*

What did you do?  
Why did you hide?  
Who did your hair?

*(They stare at Reuben.)*

Why are you here?  
What do you know?  
Is that a wig?

*(They stare.)*

Who...did...you...see?  
Was....it...a...pro?

**REUBEN:** Did...he...dye slow...

*(Everyone smiles.)*

or did he use the new internal systems where you take a pill that puts little stylist nanobots inside your body and...

**QUEEN:** You've left me no choice.

*(Queen produces a roll of quarters.)*

**BRENDA:** I don't know if I can condone this.

**QUEEN:** Step outside if you're squeamish.

**BRENDA:** This is going against regulations.

**REUBEN:** Technically we are outside the jurisdiction of earth law on this satellite.

**BRENDA:** You're splitting hairs.

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**QUEEN:** I've never known that to cause much discomfort unless perhaps you're interrogating a model.

**BRENDA:** Five minutes.

**QUEEN:** With time to spare.

*(Exit Brenda.)*

Okay, you gonna talk?

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** If you guys would ask me something sane then...

**QUEEN:** He's a tough nut to crack but here goes. I'll give you twenty bucks.

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Twenty smackers? Shoot!

*(Reuben draws his phaser and fires.)*

**REUBEN:** Oops.

**QUEEN:** Oops? You drop a breakfast plate, it's oops. You incinerate an informant, it's something but definitely not, "oops."

**REUBEN:** My bad.

*(Enter Brenda.)*

**BRENDA:** I heard shooting.

**REUBEN:** We had a slight miscommunication during the interrogation.

**QUEEN:** This bozo is the king of understatement.

**REUBEN:** We can keep this between us, can't we?

**BRENDA:** Sure we can; as soon as you drop your weapon and place yourself in these restraints.

**QUEEN:** That isn't going to be necessary.

**BRENDA:** If you aid this perp then I will be perfectly happy to take you down too.

**QUEEN:** What's the current policy on zapping bots?

*(Brenda looks.)*

**REUBEN:** It's a robot...?

**QUEEN:** You knew that, right?

**REUBEN:** Oh, of course. I knew that.

**NARRATOR:** So Reuben dodged the hoosegow and we got our first break because every bot has a holographic recorder since Sir George Lucas made a silly string of 2-D movies nearly a century ago.

**BRENDA:** That's peculiar.

**QUEEN:** Don't judge me.

**BRENDA:** There's no holo-record.

**REUBEN:** I destroyed it with my shot.

**BRENDA:** No, it was removed and crudely.

**NARRATOR:** You can bet there's something juicy on that recorder, and I was going to see it, so I gave my pards the slip and went out on my own.

*(Queen performs an elaborate series of maneuvers to duck out on his partners.)*

It was nothing personal, but working solo suits my style and it's difficult enough cracking a hard case without worrying about a partner who might vaporize the stoolie or worse, you. I figured I'd lather on a thick layer of liberal praise once I busted this thing; meanwhile, I needed space both figuratively and literally.

*(Queen enters the transport device. Reuben and Brenda are there waiting.)*

**BRENDA:** What took you so long?

*(End Scene 2.)*

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