

SFX: OPENING TANGO MUSIC, THEN --

The Quaranteam presents Mansfield Mysteries: 'Game, Set, Murder!'
- Chapter Three.

SCENE ONE:

SFX: DINING ROOM SOUNDS AS THE WAITSTAFF CLEARS THE TABLES OF DISHES. IN THE BACKGROUND, HALLOWEEN MUSIC PLAYS.

CARL: Hey, Stacey. I'm here to take you up on that drink you promised.

STACEY: Hey, Carl.

CARL: Are you Glinda the Good Witch? You look great!

STACEY: Thanks, Batman.

CARL: I was dressed as Bruce Wayne all day, but nobody noticed. Say, you hear anything about Alice?

STACEY: Nothing new. She's stable.

CARL: Hardly!

STACEY: What's that supposed to mean?

CARL: She was trying to have me fired, you know. For incompetence, like you have to be sooo competent to run the desk at a tennis club. So I get a court time written down wrong every once in a while. You're gonna to ruin somebody's livelihood for a little mistake like that?

SFX: THE MUSIC AND BRANDON SHIFT FROM LEFT TO CENTER AS WE MOVE LEFT.

BRANDON: (on the mic, slightly drunk) Excuse me, everyone. Hello? Please grab that last cocktail and find your seats. We're about to begin the festivities!

SFX: BRANDON AND THE MUSIC SHIFT FROM CENTER TO RIGHT, FADING OUT. BAR NOISES (SHAKERS SHAKING, CLINKING OF GLASSES, ETC.) AND PEOPLE CHATTING SLIDE FROM LEFT TO CENTER, MOVING FURTHER LEFT IN THE ROOM.

POLICE OFFICER: Barkeep? One Diet Coke, please. And one of whatever the Wicked Witch of the West is having.

DORINDA: I don't accept drinks from strange men.

POLICE OFFICER: Mrs. Mansfield, I'm Officer Stan--

DORINDA: Oh, of course. Didn't recognize you in plain clothes. In that case, I'll have a--

BARTENDER: Bombay Sapphire Martini, very dry--

DORINDA: Just open the vermouth somewhere nearby.

BARTENDER: --and bleu cheese olives or regular, Mrs. Mansfield?

DORINDA: Surprise me. (a pause) And speaking of surprises, Officer, what are you doing at the club? Have you made a break in the case? And how's my tennis partner doing?

POLICE OFFICER: Alice is out of the woods and should be out of the hospital this evening. As for a break in the case, surprise is the right word: the deceased, Niles Higgenbottom, did not die by head trauma, as we first suspected.

DORINDA: But all the blood on that horrific rug and curtains!

POLICE OFFICER: It wasn't all blood. It was a Chateau Lafite Rothschild, 2018.

DORINDA: But Alice doesn't drink red wine. It gives her a headache.

POLICE OFFICER: As it did Niles Higgenbottom.

SFX: TANGO MUSIC TRANSITION, THEN --

SCENE TWO:

SFX: AS THE HALLOWEEN MUSIC PLAYS, THE DINING AREA IS FILLED WITH CROWD NOISES, CHAIRS MOVING, CLINKING GLASSES.

BRANDON: (on mic) Last call! Let's giddy on up to our seats, folks!

STACEY: Mom, did the officer find you?

DORINDA: We had quite the chat. Very informative.

STACEY: So, do you think you're ready to name the murderer? Are they here? You're going to bring Alice's attempted killer to justice tonight!

DORINDA: Let's just say: yes, and no.

PAM: What's that now? About Alice?

DORINDA: Pam, you're sitting in her chair. I see you still have your chimney sweep costume. How adorable.

PAM: This is the winner's table. Nadia was the singles champ. I'm her plus-one.

DORINDA: I didn't realize you'd gotten so close so quickly.

NADIA: (pulling out chair) Good evening.

DORINDA: Good evening, Nadia.

PAM: Nadia, where's your costume? It's Halloween!

NADIA: Costumes are for children. See? Look at that man-child, dressed as a cowboy. Ridiculous.

BRANDON: (on mic) Yippee ki-yay, everyone, and happy Halloween! Let's get this party started! As is tradition: ladies first! But to begin, let us all raise a glass to Alice Breckenridge. She's been a member at this club for close to thirty years, and sadly, she was attacked last night, not long after losing the singles final. Let's have a moment of silence, please, as we wish her a speedy recovery. Oh, and some guy, a Noel Hogwarts, was killed, too. Rest in peace, Noel. (a very brief pause) So, this year's singles winner was completely unexpected! A last-minute international entry, who's single-handedly reignited the cold war, at least here at the club. A lock from the Eastern Block, a star six degrees from a Tsar: Nadia Gorcheva! Giddy on up here and claim your trophy!

SFX: APPLAUSE. QUICK RUSSIAN MUSIC PLAYS

NADIA: (on mic) Thank you very much. (a pause) My father always said: there is no happiness in life, only mirage on horizon, so we'll cherish that. And I will cherish this trophy. Thank you.

SFX: APPLAUSE. ANOTHER QUICK RUSSIAN SONG PLAYS

BRANDON: (on mic) All right, OK! Quite a speech! Wouldn't want to have to follow that. Anyway, moving right on to women's doubles, this year's winners are bittersweet, and all the way from Oz. As we all know, Dorinda Mansfield was the twenty-year partner of our hospitalized Alice, but today Dorinda brought home the "W" with her beloved and talented daughter--my protege and the NCAA National D1 Tennis Champ for Stanford University four years in a row – say that five times real fast – Stacey Mansfield! Come on up, you two!

SFX: APPLAUSE.

STACEY: Oh, thank you everyone. Um, here, Mom. You take the mic.

DORINDA: (on mic) How lucky was I to have my daughter swoop in and rescue me at the last second? Even though some of her line calls were overly-generous. Anyway, I want to dedicate this trophy to my longtime partner, friend, and harshest critic: Alice Breckenridge. Alice has her flaws--her backhand, certainly, and her taste in fabrics. But Alice did not deserve to be attacked in her home, where a man was also murdered, and tonight the culprit will be brought to justice, for the prime suspect is in this room!

SFX: GASPS FROM AUDIENCE.

ANNABELLE: Who, Dorinda?

SARABELLE: What monster lurks amongst us?

DORINDA: (on mic) Just look around, and you're sure to spot a half-dozen people with an axe to grind--so to speak--against poor Alice. You two, for instance. What would you give to be holding this trophy tonight?

ANNABELLE: Well, I swear, Dorinda, you're about to make me as mad as a wet hen!

SARABELLE: Bless her heart. She's done lost her mind!

DORINDA: (on mic) Would you kill to have it? Perhaps. Excuse me, what are you two dressed as?

ANNABELLE: Why we're the twins from The Shining.

DORINDA: (on mic) How fitting. And then there's cowboy Brandon. Everyone here knows he and Alice had been carrying on in the saddle for the last few months, and the affair ended just last week. I'd call that suspicious.

BRANDON: Chaaa... Don't be ridiculous.

DORINDA: (on mic) There's Carl Berkshire, of course, who Alice tried to have fired for incompetence, saved only by nepotism.

CARL: No, it's because my dad owns the club.

DORINDA: (on mic) Exactly. And let's not forget Pam. She was not only desperate to win this prize but as my partner, only Alice stood in the way.

PAM: You're accusing me?

DORINDA: (on mic) The Southern Belles have an alibi, of course. They were here partying late into the night, nursing a hangover this morning, as they surely will tomorrow. As for Brandon, though he might be capable of a crime of passion, I saw the terrible stains splashed across Alice's terrible curtains. It was clear that the splattering was the work of a rightie, and we all know Brandon is a left-handed tennis player.

BRANDON: Can't do squat with my right hand. Ask anyone.

DORINDA: (on mic) Not to mention the fact that Brandon dumped Alice, not the other way around. Isn't that right, Pam?

PAM: Why are you asking me?

DORINDA: (on mic) Isn't it true that you and Brandon are also involved, and that you're allegedly expecting a child next spring?

PAM: How do you know that?

SFX: QUIET WHISPERS.

DORINDA: (on mic) Well, you're not his type. He prefers women with money. However, your recent weight gain combined with an ultrasound picture Stacey found in Brandon's office, plus the fact you had a key to open it for your illicit rendezvous...

PAM: We're getting married.

BRANDON: We are?!

DORINDA: (on mic) Which brings us to Nadia Gorcheva. This last-minute Russian opponent, this gifted Olympian, who's a curator for

the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Moscow, and who had a meeting with Alice yesterday afternoon to discuss the sale of her Faberge egg. This Nadia Gorcheva did not stay for the party after her singles victory. Moreover, her registration paperwork disappeared.

NADIA: I have killed no one. And I would be fool to stay here if I had.

DORINDA: (on mic) But you said your negotiations with Alice, over the egg, ended badly.

NADIA: That is true. She would not sell to me. She said it reminded her of late husband.

DORINDA: (on mic) And you parted on bad terms?

NADIA: Temporarily. Once I beat her 6-1, 6-0 I felt quite sorry for your tennis partner. She was crestfallen. In fact, I re-gifted her bottle of fine wine to ease blow.

DORINDA: (on mic) The Chateau Lafite Rothschild you spoke of earlier?

NADIA: Yes.

DORINDA: (on mic) I had a feeling. And what of the late Niles Higgenbottom?

NADIA: I know no one by that name.

DORINDA: (on mic) No? I should've thought your paths would cross in the very small world of 19th Century Russian artifacts. He, too, was trying to procure Alice's Faberge egg. On behalf of Rosemary Berkshire. Who was certainly disappointed earlier today when he missed their meeting at the Berkshire Bay Museum. Contrary to her belief, Rosemary doesn't know everything that happens in this town.

SFX: SOMEONE "OOOHH!"S

NADIA: I do not know that man, nor have I heard of this museum.

DORINDA: (on mic) Rosemary's meeting would have been for naught, however, as I was told by a reliable source that you have another seller.

NADIA: Who told you this? What is this reliable source you speak of?

DORINDA: (on mic) The puppet master himself--your boyfriend--Vladimir Putin. (GASPS FROM THE AUDIENCE) You left your cell phone in the sauna this morning, and he and I had a good long talk about this egg business, not to mention your tortured love affair. For what it's worth, I really do think he wants to marry you. But he also provided an important alibi. He told me you were on the phone all night after your single's victory.

ANNABELLE: You're going to take Putin's word?

DORINDA: (on mic) I don't see any reason why he would interfere with this investigation.

SARABELLE: To save his girlfriend.

NADIA: I am not his girlfriend, and I would like my phone back immediately.

DORINDA: (on mic) Sure thing. It's right there in my purse, Nadia. Feel free to grab it. You are not Alice's assailant, nor Niles Higgenbottom's murderer.

SFX: A GASP FROM THE ROOM.

STACEY: (on mic) Then who is? You said the killer is here tonight.

DORINDA: (on mic) I said yes and no. After speaking with the police, I have managed to piece the events together and will reveal them now. First, I must note that Alice, even with her backhand, always wins the singles final. Always. And she loves to stick around the party afterwards to gloat and recap her finer strokes. The attacker knew this and used the opportunity to break into her home when she was bound to be at the club. But Alice did not win, thanks to Nadia Gorcheva, and as anyone who's ever beaten Alice knows: she's a terrible loser! (THE AUDIENCE AUDIBLY AGREES) My first instinct was that she must've gone straight home to pout and drown her sorrows in Chardonnay to get her mind right for today's doubles match. But she was so distraught, Alice first picked up Niles Higgenbottom. She was so desperate to feel better, Alice decided to seduce a man her own age-- (GASPS FROM AUDIENCE) --not knowing that he also wanted something from her: the egg. And that is how Alice incited the killer! She came home early.

STACEY: (on mic) How can you be sure?

DORINDA: (on mic) From the state of her house. Remember, Stacey, how I'd noted that everything around the living room was askew?

STACEY: (on mic) Yes: pillows everywhere, closet doors open.

DORINDA: (on mic) And the spray of blood across that vulgar rug and tawdry curtains, yes. But it was not all blood. It was mostly the Chateau Lafite Rothschild.

NADIA: 2018. Excellent vintage.

DORINDA: (on mic) I'm sure. Only Alice doesn't drink red wine. It gives her a headache. She did, however, offer a glass to her esteemed guest. Officer, would you mind revealing Mr. Niles Higgentobbom's cause of death?

POLICE OFFICER: Poison. Novichok. A fatal nerve agent developed by the KGB in the 70s.

NADIA: (laughing) Classic Vlad.

STACEY: (on mic) What was the motive?

DORINDA: (on mic) That's just it! The murder was an accident. The wine was meant for Nadia Gorcheva, not Niles Higgenbottom. Alice's assailant merely meant to be a thief--to steal the Faberge egg--but when Alice arrived and surprised the robber... Well, my best guess is panic. They hid in the closet, and once the seduction turned deadly, 911 was called. Afraid of being caught up in this crime scene, the fireplace poker was grabbed and poor Alice met her match.

STACEY: (on mic) But you said Nadia Gorcheva was innocent!

DORINDA: (on mic) No, I said she'd found another seller. And that could've been anyone. It was common knowledge among club members and staff Alice kept that egg on her gaudy mantel. And that brings me to my conversation with the Southern Belles, who provided a valuable clue.

ANNABELLE: We did?

SARABELLE: But we don't know anything!

ANNABELLE: Only that she was concussed.

SARABELLE: Everyone knew by then. It was on Facebook!

DORINDA: (on mic) Not that she was concussed, but how.

ANNABELLE: By fire poker.

SARABELLE: Bludgeoned.

DORINDA: (on mic) Exactly! How did you know that?

ANNABELLE: You told us!

DORINDA: (on mic) I did not. I told you I needed a new tennis partner.

ANNABELLE: Then it was---

SARABELLE: Pam!

DORINDA: (at the same time) (on mic) Pam!

PAM: I didn't! I would never! Why would I want to kill Alice Breckenridge?! That's ridiculous!

DORINDA: (on mic) Pam, there's a police officer stationed right by that door, so don't make any sudden moves.

PAM: Police?! But I--

DORINDA: (on mic) Quiet, Pam. If I were you, I'd ask for a lawyer before opening my mouth, but for these patient club members, allow me to explain. Let's begin by clearing up the falsehood of your pregnancy.

PAM: Falsehood?

BRANDON: Pam's not pregnant?

DORINDA: (on mic) Pam's not pregnant.

PAM: I am so!

BRANDON: (in unison) But she told me--

DORINDA: (on mic) She showed you an ultrasound, but did you note the date? It's two years old and printed off the internet besides.

BRANDON: Whaaat?

DORINDA: (on mic) That is not your baby, Brandon, and if she was using her false pregnancy to get you to marry her--

BRANDON: I mean, we'd talked about it--

DORINDA: (on mic) Was there something else she was dangling before you? A new beginning, perhaps?

BRANDON: We'd discussed me opening my own club. Getting out of Berkshire Bay and starting over someplace new. Somewhere I didn't have such a--

DORINDA: (on mic) Such a reputation?

BRANDON: I guess.

DORINDA: (on mic) And how did she propose you two finance such a venture? Opening a tennis club is an expensive undertaking.

BRANDON: She said she was coming into some money. Ya know, come to think of it, she was a little vague.

DORINDA: (on mic) Coming into some money. Yes. Care to clear up that part of the mystery, Pam?

PAM: I don't have to tell you anything.

DORINDA: (on mic) If you don't, I will, and I'll begin with your deeply held grudge against Rosemary Berkshire.

PAM: I have nothing against Rosemary Berkshire.

DORINDA: (on mic) Everyone knows you tried again and again to crack her inner circle--of employees, anyway. But your Cockney accent would never fly. Rosemary only surrounds herself with those who speak using the received pronunciation, no?

PAM: (slipping into full Cockney accent) What!? Don't make Barney Rubble for me, Dorinda Mansfield, or it'll be Barney Rubble for you!

BRANDON: That's Cockney for trouble. They do this rhyming thing, so you can't understand what they're saying--

DORINDA: (on mic) Which is precisely why Rosemary Berkshire wouldn't hire her. Listen to how rough she sounds!

PAM: (under her breath) Ya Berkshire Hunt.

SFX: THE AUDIENCE GASPS.

BRANDON: (giggling) That means --

DORINDA: (on mic) I'm sure we don't want that one explained. Anyway, your resentment about being passed over by Rosemary Berkshire made the arrival of one Nadia Gorcheva an unexpected opportunity.

STACEY: (on mic) How so, Mom? I thought Nadia was innocent.

DORINDA: (on mic) An unwitting accomplice is more like it. Nadia attempted to purchase Alice's egg, was unsuccessful, and Pam used that to her own advantage. She could steal Alice's egg during her singles victory party, sell it to Nadia, whose registration papers Pam stole to secure her contact information, and then claim the financial windfall as a way to lure Brandon away from Berkshire Bay before he ever figured out she wasn't pregnant.

PAM: That's quite a tale you're weaving.

DORINDA: (on mic) And when Alice came home, accidentally poisoning Niles Higgenbottom--who was trying to purchase the egg on behalf of Rosemary Berkshire--with the lethal bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild, Alice called 911 and Pam panicked. After hiding in the closet, you grabbed the fireplace poker and bludgeoned my poor tennis partner--

PAM: Your Richard the Third of a theory--

BRANDON: (laughing) That means turd.

PAM: --is just that: a theory. I didn't do any of it!

PAM: You're just blowing smoke out of your arse, Dorinda Mansfield. You've got no witnesses, and you've got no egg.

SFX: DOORS OPENING IN BACKGROUND. CROWD GASPS.

ALICE: That's where you're mistaken, Pam.

CLUB MEMBER: Oh, my god! It's Alice!

ALICE: (from back of the room) I am the witness, and you were in my home. And you took four swings at me with the fireplace poker, but you only grazed me once. You have a terrible forehead.

DORINDA: (on mic) Alice! You're all right!

ALICE: I am. One slash on my side from Pam, but otherwise just a bump on the head, from when I slipped on the spilled wine. I would've been here sooner, but I had a quick consult with Dr. Margosian while I was at the hospital.

DORINDA: (on mic) A perfect time for a little nip/tuck, since you're already bruised.

ALICE: My thought exactly.

DORINDA: (on mic) Will you only do the face? Or maybe shave a little off the midsection, since you're torn up there, too?

ALICE: Definitely the face, though a little lipo never hurt anyone. But back to Pam, I can confirm she is not an attempted murderess, but I am just as sure she has my egg.

PAM: I don't! I swear!

DORINDA: (on mic) Save it for the judge, Pam. When Stacey and I started poking around this morning, you got nervous. So nervous, in fact, that you locked Stacey in Brandon's office. Was she getting too close to the treasure, Pam?

PAM: I don't know what you're talking about. Where is this supposed egg, anyway?

DORINDA: (on mic) This doubles trophy--usually covered in dust until the winner receives it--is shining like new, all fingerprints wiped clean. Because the egg is hidden in it, right? When I lift the lid of this beautiful winner's cup, I'll find Alice's beloved egg inside? Let's look.

SFX: A GASP OF AWE AS THE AUDIENCE REGARDS THE EGG.

STACEY: Wow! That's beautiful!

DORINDA: (on mic) Some would say so, others might call it a tad garish.

NADIA: The "Cherub With Chariot" Faberge. We must reunite this treasure with it surprise, owned by Rosemary Berkshire, if she can be convinced to do the right thing. And then only seven eggs will remain missing in the world.

PAM: I didn't put it there.

DORINDA: (on mic) You did, Pam. Because you thought you clobbered Alice last night then stole the egg to sell to Nadia Gorcheva.

(A beat.)

PAM: (growls) And I would've gotten away with it, too, if it weren't for Alice's rotten backhand! 6-1, 6-0? I should've had at least ninety minutes to pull it off, but she was home in a half hour!

POLICE OFFICER: You're going to need to come with me, chimney sweep. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to an attorney--

SFX: FADE OUT TO CLINKING OF GLASSES, MURMURS.

SFX: TANGO MUSIC TRANSITION, THEN --

SCENE THREE:

SFX: CAR ENGINE NOISES.

ALICE: Thanks for the ride home, ladies.

STACEY: You're in no condition to drive, Alice.

DORINDA: Not the first time that statement has been made.

SFX: THEY ALL LAUGH.

STACEY: Well, Mom, you did it!

DORINDA: Bringing this trophy home ten years running is no easy feat! You see how desperate everyone is to bring me down!

STACEY: No, I meant solving the mystery! You found Alice's egg and outed Vladimir Putin as a murderer.

DORINDA: Oh, right. Yes, I'm glad we solved it before that egg left the country! Though, Alice, you should consider showing it in

the Berkshire Bay Museum, along with Rosemary's surprise. It will look much better there than on your mantel.

ALICE: Hmmm. I'll have to think about that. I hate to give Rosemary something she wants when it's so much more fun to torture her a bit. Maybe if it's displayed in the Breckenridge Gallery...

DORINDA: Anyway, I'm pleased to still have the doubles trophy.

STACEY: I'm happy we won together. This has been a memorable trip home.

DORINDA: I never thought I'd find someone as good Alice, even with that backhand of hers.

SFX: ALICE LAUGHS.

STACEY: And the good news is, you have a whole year to strengthen your serve, Mom.

ALICE: As I've been mentioning for quite some time now.

DORINDA: My serve?

STACEY: You double-faulted four times.

ALICE: Sounds about right.

DORINDA: I was distressed.

STACEY: And your second serve could use a little speed.

DORINDA: Well, I wasn't going to mention your over-dependence on your drop shot, but since we're giving notes--

ALICE: How about we give notes over martinis? Can we go to your place? Mine's a mess.

DORINDA: That's an excellent idea.

STACEY: So long as we get Alice an Uber home.

DORINDA: Of course! And in that case, maybe we'll have two.

ALICE: Best way to cure a headache.

DORINDA: To the depths, Alice!

ALICE: To the depths!

SFX: THE CAR DRIVES AWAY AS THE SOUNDS OF THE OUTDOORS (WIND, BIRDS, ETC.) FILL THE AIR.

SFX: MARTINI GLASSES CLINK.

Mansfield Mysteries

Featuring:

Melissa Hughes Ernest as Dorinda Mansfield
and
Melissa Zeien as Stacey Mansfield

With:

Doug Despin as Police Officer
Cody Ernest as Brandon
Amy Hanson - Rosemary Berkshire
Anne Mollerskov as Pam
Tina Paukstelis as Annabelle and Nadia Gorcheva
Paul Reese as Bartender
Joan Roehre as Sarabelle
And
Christopher Wild as Carl

Written by Amy Hanson and Michael L. Johnson

Sound Design by Paul Reese

Directed by Nicholas Hoyt

Special thanks to Dennis Hoyt as well as an extra special thank you to Amber Miller for inspiring this whole project. We couldn't have done it without any of them.

You've just enjoyed a Quaranteam production.