

THE IMPOSTER

A Comedy Play by John Waterhouse



Introductory first ten pages.....

Setting: The entrance hall of Knox Manor, a 19th century mansion in the South of England.

Time: The present

Cast: Flint Colburn (*male*) - an American film director (& property developer)

Sassy Malone (*female*) - an American actress (and ad. Model)

Johnny Spaghettoni (male) - an Italian actor (and restaurateur)

Franny Frigitoli (*female*) - an Italian composer and model

Margret Bouvier (*female*) - a French socialite (and escort agency owner)

Sandy Collins (*female*) - an English artistic designer (and film producer)

Matt Parker (*male*) - an English writer (and lawyer)

Hudson (*male*) - an English housekeeper (and actor)

Note: Sandy Collins plays two other parts.

Set requirements:

1. A piano
2. A spoof grandfather clock (with a door big enough for people to be able to climb into)

Prop requirements:

1. Bagpipes.
2. A guitar.
3. A drink cabinet.
4. A gun.
5. A bull whip.
6. A vase full of dead flowers

Act One – Evening Arrival

Sandy enters through a side door, gingerly looking around her.

SANDY: Wow!

She examines the wall pictures, ornaments and furniture, impressed by all the décor.

SANDY: Amazing! *(picks up a plate)*

HUDSON enters from another doorway, slowly creeping up behind her.

HUDSON: It's late 18th century. Quite a rare Wedgewood. *(SANDY screams, dropping the plate)*. I did not mean to startle you, madame. *(picks up the plate)*.

SANDY: I'm so sorry. I've never been on a proper film set before. It's all so..so...realistic. It could be where the Adams family live! Are you one of the cast?

HUDSON: I am the housekeeper.

SANDY: *(laughs)*. Oh, yes, of course. You look as creepy as the house in that outfit. *(looks around)*. It feels so scary; just like a creepy, haunted mansion.

HUDSON: It is a creepy, haunted mansion.

SANDY: What? So you really are a housekeeper? Look, I'm so sorry but I think there's been some mistake. I came here to see Mr. Knox and I think I came in through the wrong entrance. This isn't where Mr. Knox actually lives? Is it?

HUDSON: When Mr. Knox is at home, this is his residence. He's often away, you know. And whom would you be please, madame?

SANDY: Sandy.

HUDSON: I take it then that you are Miss Sandy Collins?

SANDY: Yes, I'm er... a designer. An artistic designer.

HUDSON: Ah, yes. (*eyeing list*). You are expected. It's always a delight to receive a charming and attractive visitor to the house.

SANDY: You're very kind (*the doorbell rings*).

HUDSON: Would you please take a seat? (*Hudson opens the front door*).

Enter MATT.

MATT: Good evening. I'm here to see Mr. Knox. You wouldn't be.....

HUDSON: I am Mr. Knox's housekeeper. Mr. Knox has been detained and I am here to ensure you are comfortable until his arrival. And you would be?

MATT: I'm Matt Hudson, Mr. Knox's screenwriter.

HUDSON: You already work for Mr. Knox?

MATT: Well, that is to say, I am expecting Mr. Knox to shortly engage me because he has invited me to his house,

HUDSON: (*eyes list*) You are certainly one of Mr. Knox's expected guests. Allow me to introduce Sandy Collins. If you will excuse me for a moment.

Exit HUDSON.

SANDY: Pleased to meet you. So glad to see one of the other guests.

MATT: I did not realise there were any other guests. Writing is the most solitary of professions. I assumed Mr. Knox would have wanted to initially discuss the script with me in private.

SANDY: What script?

MATT: The script he's engaging me to write. I assume you're Mr. Knox's P.A. This is my first meeting with Mr. Knox.

SANDY: Mine too. I guess he likes to meet all his team together.

MATT: I'm sorry? You're actually one of the team on this production?

SANDY: I certainly hope so. He'll need someone to design the sets, won't he?

The doorbell rings. HUDSON opens the door. Enter MARGRET.

MARGRET: Oh, my, what a fabulous house. So nice of you to invite me over. I thought it was time we finally said hello because I've heard so much about you. I guess you know who I am?

HUDSON: I certainly do, madame. And may I say what a delight it is receive such a cultured and glamorous lady to the house.

MARGRET: Hey, what's with the formality? Call me Margret. And these are two of your friends? Pleased to meet you both.

SANDY: I'm Sandy and this is Matt who is a writer.

MARGRET: You're not a tabloid journalist, I hope. I don't mind Hello Magazine or Vanity Faire but I draw the line at the paparazzi. I simply loathe intrusive publicity seekers, at least until I'm wearing the appropriate outfit!

The doorbell rings. HUDSON opens the door to FLINT.

HUDSON: Good evening, Sir. And you are.....

FLINT: Flint Colburn. Delighted to finally see inside the house. I'd heard it was unusual but it's positively....

SANDY: Creepy?

FLINT: Yeah, creepy. No, I didn't mean to say that exactly.

HUDSON: Have no fear, Mr. Flint. Everyone forms their own view of the house; it's part of its charm and peculiarities.

MARGRET: I must say, Mr. Knox, I expected you to be a little less formal.

MATT: This isn't Mr. Knox! It's his housekeeper!

MARGRET: Oh, I see. Then where is our host?

HUDSON: Mr. Knox has unfortunately been detained. I do not have a precise ETA for him, I'm afraid.

The doorbell rings. HUDSON opens the door to FRANNY.

HUDSON: Good evening madame. May I have your name please?

FRANNY: Franny Frigitoli.

HUDSON: Ah, yes (*eyes list*). Madame, you have the very essence of finesse and aesthetic grandeur. Would you be so good as to join the other guests?

FRANNY: Thank you.

MARGRET: Hello, I'm Marget. What do you do, Franny?

FRANNY: Hello. I am a composer of film scores.

FLINT: In that case, I'm very pleased to meet you. The names Flint and I direct. I'd like to score with you.

FRANNY: I'm sorry, you would like to.....ah, you mean discuss the music score for this movie.

SANDY: I think you heard him right, first time

The doorbell rings. HUDSON opens the door to SASSY.

HUDSON: Good evening madame. May I have your name please?

SASSY: Good evening, I'm Sassy Malone

HUDSON: Ah, yes (*eyes list*). *May I say what an air of sophistication and elegance you bring to the house, madame. We're almost complete.*

MATT: May I ask what your part is in this venture, Sassy?

SASSY: Of course, darling. I'm an actress. *(to MARGRET)* Are you an actress too?

MARGRET: I have been known to dabble a bit in acting but I think Mr. Knox wants me for the publicity. I excel at playing myself.

The doorbell rings. HUDSON opens the door to JOHNNY, who bursts in.

JOHNNY: Hello guys, you are all here for Mr. Knox's film, no? I am Johnny Spaghettoni. Delighted to meet you all.

MARGRET: We're just awaiting the arrival of Mr. Knox himself now.

JOHNNY: I see. *(sees MATT)*. In that case, could I have a coffee please? My bags are in the red Ferrari outside.

MATT: I am the writer.

JOHNNY: Yes, I know. Just a coffee please. It's a little early have a Cinzano, no? *(laughs)*.

MATT: I am a writer; not a waiter!

HUDSON: Allow me. I am Mr. Knox's housekeeper and I am to look after you all until he arrives. Please help yourself to drinks from the cabinet whilst I get Mr. Spaghettoni his coffee. Unless anyone else would like a coffee or perhaps a tea?

MATT: Yes, I would also like a coffee, I think. A black one! *(eyeing JOHNNY)*.

HUDSON: I shall return in a minute.

Exit HUDSON.

FRANNY: In that case, I am going to have a gin & tonic.

SANDY: Ooh, that sounds like a good idea.

FLINT: Make that a bourbon for me.

MARGRET: I suppose Mr. Knox has Cointreau amongst that collection.

SASSY: I could certainly do with a drink.

The guests all pour themselves drinks.

MATT: This a strange set-up. I thought I was coming here for a one-to-one with Mr. Knox and find myself in the company of a group of strangers.

MARGRET: I think my dear, you will find that goes for all of us. Has anyone here ever met Mr. Knox?

They all shake their heads.

SANDY: I just know that he's a very powerful man who everyone in the industry seems to have had dealings with.

FLINT: That's my understanding but I must confess I can't name a single damn film that he's directly produced. He seems to operate through proxies.

FRANNY: But for some reason, he wants to be personally involved in the details of this film?

JOHNNY: I think he wants to ensure he's up to date with the latest talent, no?

SASSY: That's what agents are for, darling or don't you have one?

JOHNNY: Of course I do, but my agent does not need to find me work: he is there to save me the time of trawling through all the offers. That is how it is when you are a major star like me.

SASSY: In that case, why have you bothered to come here?

JOHNNY: I wanna a meet the great Mr. Knox.

Enter HUDSON with the coffees.

HUDSON: Everyone wants to meet the great Mr. Knox. You all are privileged to have been invited. Mr. Knox does not usually have guests.

MARGRET: Are we all considered by Mr. Knox to be the best in our respective fields?

HUDSON: It is my understanding that that is what Mr. Knox is hoping you will each demonstrate that over the course of your stay here. Mr. Knox only uses the very best and he is adept at exposing imposters.

MATT: Are you suggesting one of us might be an imposter?

HUDSON: I sincerely hope for your sake that is not the case, Sir.

FRANNY: (*observes grandfather clock*) That is a remarkable example of a grandfather clock. Late 1700's, isn't it? German, I would say.

HUDSON: If you say so, madame. That particular clock stopped the day the original owner of the house died and it is said it cannot be repaired for want of a broken part.

FRANNY: That's a great shame because it's a remarkable example. When do we finally get to meet our host?

HUDSON: I cannot say precisely, madame. I will show you all to your rooms and arrange for the luggage to be brought up from your cars. The swimming pool in the basement is at your disposal and you are all to make yourselves at home.

SANDY: That sounds great. I didn't mean any offence when I described the house as scary and creepy. It's simply oozing with character and distinction.

HUDSON: But you were quite correct in your observations, madame. The house does indeed have a dark history and misadventure has tended to happen to guests who turned out to be frauds, poltroons or otherwise sought to deceive others.

SANDY: The house isn't actually haunted though...is it?

HUDSON: The ghost of at least one of them is said to still haunt the house! Still, I'm sure you are, each one of you, all that you know yourselves to be. I wish you all a pleasant night.

Exit HUDSON

MARGRET: What a strange man? Do you think he was trying to scare us?

SANDY: Not trying to; succeeding! I thought the place looked creepy.

FLINT: Well, he didn't scare me with his limey eccentricities.

FRANNY: Nor me. I am going to check out the pool he mentioned.

SASSY: That sounds like a good idea. I think, I'll join you.

MARGRET: Me too. I just hope it's the kind of proper sized pool that I'm used to and not a glorified bath tub. You never know who's taking photos that might end up in the glossies!

Exit FRANNY, MARGRET and SASSY.

JOHNNY: I think I'm a going to have a look around this place.

MATT: I'll join you. Hopefully the house has a library where I can be left alone without disturbances.

Exit JOHNNY and MATT.

FLINT: Well, I guess that just leaves you and me.

SANDY: I feel kind of safe with you, Flint.

FLINT: Oh, you don't want to take any notice of superstitions. I make bold, action movies about reality and.....

A strange creaking sound is heard.

SANDY: (*grips FLINT'S arm*) What was that?

FLINT: Building movement. You expect that in an old pile like this.

SANDY: If you say so. I suppose you're used to the sound of bangs and explosions in the kind of movies you make.

FLINT: Damn right I am.