

## ***Oh This Myst'ry O' Christmas Tree Cast List***

### ***7 Male, 7 Female, and Extras***

**DUKE OF GRINCHESTER (M)** Cranky resident duke, a widower and father of two, who shares the castle with his younger brother, niece and nephew.

**DUKE OF GLOWERMORE (M)** Brooding resident duke, also a widower and father of two, who shares the castle with his *older* brother, niece and nephew.

**LADY HOLLYBOUGH (F)** Sanguine daughter of the Duke of Grinchester

**LORD HALLDECKER (M)** Somewhat pessimistic son of the Duke of Grinchester

**LADY DANCINGFORTH (F)** Lively daughter of the Duke of Glowermore.

**LORD LEAPINGWORTH (M)** Lighthearted son of the Duke of Glowermore.

**PRINCESS PLUMERIA (F)** Blithe visiting princess who lives in Yonder Castle with her two sisters.

**PRINCESS FIGGELIA (F)** Sister to Plumeria (like plums in a pudding) and Puddinia.

**PRINCESS PUDDINIA (F)** You guessed it: the pudding who holds the plums together.

**GERARD THE BUTLER (M)** The brazenly handsome but somewhat harried castle butler.

**EGGINOGGEN (M)** The Swedish (and sweetish) castle steward, married to Nuttenmegan.

**NUTTENMEGAN (F)** The Swedish (but not sweetish) castle cook, married to Egginoggen.

**JUST EARL (M)** The old gardener, a bit roughhewn.

**AUNT AGATHA (F)** Estranged sister of the Dukes.

**EXTRAS (M/F)** Ambient entertainers, singers, or courtiers.

### **Sample Pages**

#### **FANFARE AND WELCOME**

*(When the guests have been seated, a second BRASS FANFARE will signal all entertainers to clear the hall. Spotlight on BUTLER entering at floor level.)*

BUTLER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Gerard the Butler. *(Girlish screams heard offstage)* Ne-nooo, not the Gerard Butler, Gerard the But—*(More screams. He feigns bashfulness, smiles rakishly.)* Ahem—welcome to Harmony Hall! Though, all is not harmonious

heaven here, however. The times are medieval and a mite ... eeeeevil. As you feast, you will also partake in a “whodunit” – Now, now ... settle your innards if you’re squeamish; this isn’t a murder mystery – you won’t hear any blood-curdling screams—

*(A bloodcurdling scream is heard offstage; enter EGGINOGEN, holding a bite-size morsel of pie. He weaves among tables to opposite side of BUTLER from “kitchen.” After a slight pause, out runs NUTTENMEGAN, raving Nordic-sounding gibberish. EGGINOGEN scrambles behind BUTLER. NUTTENMEGAN halts in brief curtsy to BUTLER, then watches EGGINOGEN and menacingly mutters more gibberish. EGGINOGEN eyes NUTTENMEGAN for a moment then pops pie into his mouth. NUTTENMEGAN lunges and BUTLER holds her at bay as she swings straight arms windmill-fashion at EGGINOGEN, who cowers behind BUTLER.)*

BUTLER: *(To audience)* You will witness no mayhem—

*(NUTTENMEGAN ceases swinging, steps back, shrugs, smiles, and stretches arms toward EGGINOGEN in cajoling gesture. EGGINOGEN shrugs and smiles in turn and steps out from behind BUTLER toward NUTTENMEGAN to embrace her. NUTTENMEGAN suddenly lunges again as if to strangle EGGINOGEN, and EGGINOGEN screams, dodges NUTTENMEGAN, and exits as NUTTENMEGAN gives chase.)*

BUTLER: *(Calling after them)* No strangling!— *(To audience)* Ahem... I assure you, dear diners, there’ll be no violence *(Clanging pots and muffled yelling heard offstage – BUTLER shouts toward kitchen)* of any kind whatsoever! *(To audience.)* This is a civilized gathering – yes, a most *(More clanging and muffled yelling heard offstage—BUTLER shouts over kitchen to audience)* refined, cultural affair! *(To audience.)* But do keep your wits about you, lords and ladies, because with the prose and wit presented before your eyes tonight, purloinery will be performed beneath your very noses! The game’s afoot!

*(Spotlight down, lights up on side-stage, which is set like an entry hall. There is a bench and stool. Boisterous, incessant knocking is heard. BUTLER deliberately and slowly ambles across stage to “open” unseen door just offstage. Unseen stage-hand tosses a smidgeon of “snow” confetti into his face as howling-wind sound-effect is played, after which PUDDINIA twirls in with arms raised as if blown inside, bumping into BUTLER. BUTLER recovers from the impact and, exerting much effort against the wind, closes the door.)*

BUTLER: *(Spitting confetti with each “P”)* Princess... Puddinia! Welcome to Harmony Hall, Your Highness *(bowing)*.

PUDDINIA: Thank you, Gerard *(carelessly flinging her confetti-filled cape into BUTLER’s face. BUTLER pauses, holding cape, eyes closed, then spits out confetti.)* Well, don’t just stand there, let my sisters in!

BUTLER: Your sis—? *(More boisterous, incessant knocking is heard.)* Blimey! *(Leaps to door and opens it to more howling wind and more hand-tossed confetti. FIGGELIA bounds in, tackling BUTLER and knocking him into PUDDINIA, who catches him.)*

PUDDINIA: *(Shouting over wind.)* Where is she?

FIGGELIA: *(Shouting over wind.)* Lagging behind! As usual! *(PUDDINIA and FIGGELIA brace each other against the wind as BUTLER struggles past them toward the door, fighting against the wind. PLUMERIA, with arms stuck straight out as if frozen, bumbles in and bounces off BUTLER, PUDDINIA, and FIGGELIA in turn like a pinball against pins. BUTLER exerts effort to close the door, having to put his shoulder and then his back into it. PUDDINIA and FIGGELIA stand on either side of PLUMERIA, each grasping one of PLUMERIA's arms.)*

PUDDINIA: *(Nodding to FIGGELIA)* One, two, three! *(On "three," PUDDINIA and FIGGELIA lower PLUMERIA's stiff arms while a cracking sound effect is heard. PUDDINIA and FIGGELIA let go and finish dusting PLUMERIA off, rather roughly, as she comes to life. Medieval-ish Christmas music begins playing faintly in the background and continues for remainder of this scene.)*

BUTLER: Your Royal Highnesses, Princess Figgelia and Princess Plumeria. *(Eying the door.)* Will there be any more in your party?

FIGGELIA: *(Carelessly flinging her cape, which hits BUTLER in the back of his head.)* Of course not, who would be fool enough to join us on a night like this? Thank Heaven we just live over in Yonder Castle!

BUTLER: *(Stooping to pick up cape.)* Yes, Your High— *(Plumeria flings her cape as he straightens back up, hitting him in the face.)* —ness.... *(Adjusting all capes in his arms.)* Your usual chambers are prepared. Shall I have hot cocoa brought up?

PLUMERIA: Wassail for me!

FIGGELIA: Wassail's a dinner drink, you fruitcake.

PLUMERIA: Says who?

PUDDINIA: Simmer down, sisters. Warm yourselves some other way.

BUTLER: *(Peeking above capes he holds.)* I've stoked your fires already, mi'ladies.

PUDDINIA: *(Gives him a look.)* Indeed. Are your masters in residence or did they dodge our arrival?

BUTLER: At their hunting lodge, Your Highness. They return on the morrow.

PUDDINIA: Not here to welcome us? Tsk, tsk. Still sawing old bones, those Dukes are.

FIGGELIA: Ah, but surely their kith and kin are about, for I detect the faintest strains of music from the hall.

BUTLER: Lord Haldecker and Lady Hollybough are in the drawing room, Your Highness, going over the guest list. And Lord Leapingworth and Lady Dancingforth are overseeing the table trimmings. I shall announce you. (*Bows and exits with capes.*)

PLUMERIA: (*Smoothing her hair in a mirror drawn from a pocket or reticule.*) I never have understood our hosts. Always off hunting. Especially during the holidays. (*Sits down on bench.*) What did you mean, Pudy, when you said that they're "sawing old bones"? Have you unearthed some delightful dirt about the Dukes? Do tell!

FIGGELIA: (*Dusting and smoothing her skirt.*) You little hermit, how is it you don't know what is of common knowledge?

PUDDINIA: (*Dusting off her sleeves.*) Leave her be, Figgy. She can't help it that her brain's the size of a plum pit. (*PLUMERIA frowns.*) —Plumeria darling. (*Sits beside PLUMERIA.*) When Lady Hollybough and Lord Haldecker were toddlers, and their cousins Lady Dancingforth and Lord Leapingworth mere babes, times were happier here at Harmony Hall—jolly in fact—during the holidays.

FIGGELIA: So we've been told —we were barely out of our nappies ourselves, remember.

PUDDINIA: Quite. Their dads the Dukes —before they became the "Brothers Grim" —were famous for their wild sleigh rides.

FIGGELIA: (*Sitting down on stool.*) The "Dukes of Hazard" we called 'em —well —folks called 'em, that is. . . . We, of course, didn't call them anything. We were just saying "Goo-goo" and "Gah-gah."

PUDDINIA: (*To FIGGELIA.*) You still are. (*FIGGELIA slunks back. PUDDINIA stands.*) The "Dukes of Hazard" and their "Daredevil Duchesses" were always trying to outdo each other. Battle of the sexes and all that. Was the talk of the fief. The dukes' sister the Countess used to hold wagers on the most daring sleigh-rides. Why, even our own grandmama the Queen Mum — may she rest in peace—would bet on the duchesses.

FIGGELIA: (*Standing up.*) Then one foggy Christmas Eve—

PUDDINIA: Who's telling this tale? (*FIGGELIA ducks back.*) Despite the fog and warnings from the Dukes, the duchesses set out on a particularly risky ride—

FIGGELIA: *(Unable to contain herself.)* In a one-horse open sleigh—

PUDDINIA: *(With some irritation.)* And they were exceeding a safe traveling speed—

FIGGELIA: Dashing through the snow—

PUDDINIA: *(Clapping hand over FIGGELIA's mouth.)* And they were making too much merriment to pay careful attention to the ruts in the road—

FIGGELIA: *(Pulling PUDDINIA's hand down and sidestepping her.)* Laughing all the way, Ha! Ha!  
*(PUDDINIA glares at her.)* ha-hem . . .

PUDDINIA: When all of a sudden they hit a bump, the bells on the horse's bobtail got tangled up in the reins, the sleigh went flying—

FIGGELIA: Over the river and through the woods— *(Glances nervously at a stern-looking PUDDINIA and claps hands over her own mouth.)*

PUDDINIA: *(Turns from glaring at FIGGELIA, softens and sighs.)* Anyway, the poor duchesses met their ends.

PLUMERIA: *(Pausing reverently.)* Their ... decease?

FIGGELIA: Don't you mean the ground met their ends, Pudy dear?

PUDDINIA: *(Slightly frazzled)* What I mean is they met the demise of their daredevilry. Doomed to detainment within the castle walls during snow season. Dukes' orders. Well, this would not do for Dancer and Prancer. Cabin fever, you might say. Itching for just one jaunty sleigh ride one night, they made a dash for it—

FIGGELIA: Like comets!

PLUMERIA: The vixens!

PUDDINIA: And disappeared. Carried off, sleigh and all. Never seen or heard from again.

PLUMERIA: *(Gasping)* Carried off?! By whom?

PUDDINIA: To this day no one knows. Marauding bandits, perhaps.

FIGGELIA: Or Rudolph's reindeer patrol. Keeping the snow-ways safe for Santa.

PUDDINIA: Don't be absurd.

PLUMERIA: *(To FIGGELIA)* Pshh—Silly! Everyone knows Santa flies. *(FIGGELIA and PUDDINIA subtly exchange eye-rolls.)* Oh, but how simply ghastly! ... So after all these years, the Duke of Grinchester and the Duke of Glowermore are still mourning ....

FIGGELIA: Pfuh!—Mourning is putting it mildly. Add to that brooding, wallowing, grouching, grudging—

PLUMERIA: Grudging—whom do they grudge? Not ... us — surely! Is that why they give us cold hospitality? Because of GrandMum's part in it?

PUDDINIA: Well it's worse for the Countess —She's never invited here at all. So there you have it, and here we are. I suppose that sly Gerard snuck off for an eggnog instead of announcing us. Come, they must be preoccupied with preparations; let's get out of this drafty entry hall and up to our toasty chambers.

PLUMERIA: *(As they exit)* Speaking of Grandmum, how did she ... meet her end?

PUDDINIA: Ah, that's another sad story. Seems one Christmas Eve she was walking, and there was this rampaging reindeer .... *(Her voice fades as they all exit, and "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" is faintly heard. Lights down on side stage.)*

***BUTLER moves the audience through the toasts.***

## **FIRST COURSE**

*(Servants bring soups/salads, and/or fruit and distribute to guests. Some servants also set fruit/bread bowls/baskets on ROYAL TABLE. Bench is removed and replaced with a decorated Christmas tree in its stand. A pile of mail is strewn on the floor. SINGERS sing 1-2 selections. Lights down on main stage; BRASS FANFARE; lights up on side stage. HOLLYBOUGH enters with a small clipboard and quill, sits daintily on the stool and begins opening envelopes and checking off on her clipboard. HALLDECKER enters with a large open envelope.)*

HOLLYBOUGH: Regrets.... Regrets... Regrets... *(Sharply)* Decline with no regrets?!

HALLDECKER: Who's that?

HOLLYBOUGH: Baron Rudolph the Red. The old fox.

HALLDECKER: Old weasel-face, you mean.

HOLLYBOUGH: Now, Decks, be civil. Ah, Earl is coming.

HALLDECKER: Earl of...?

HOLLYBOUGH: Just Earl. You know, our old gardener.

HALLDECKER: That ragamuffin vagabond scallywag—

HOLLYBOUGH: Aren't you in a mood—hello, what's that you have there?

HALLDECKER: Oh this ... is marked in ornate calligraphy ... "Regrets without invitation."

HOLLYBOUGH: Without?—oh dear, I don't like the sound of that. *(Rising)* Have you opened it?

HALLDECKER: Naturally.

HOLLYBOUGH: Well ... *(Reaching for envelope, which HALLDECKER withdraws from her.)* Don't be coy, who sent it?

HALLDECKER: *(Extracting a large scroll from envelope, which he partially unfurls and begins reading)* Faithfully and slightly yours ... the Countess of Monte Christie.

HOLLYBOUGH: *(Gasping)* Good gracious, Aunt Agatha! *(Studying the signature)* "Slightly" — as in ... a slight. Of course. We've slighted her. Again.

HALLDECKER: And will suffer for it. Again.

HOLLYBOUGH: Hence your mood. Come, come, we should be grateful. After all, it's just her way of sending us a Christmas present— maniacal though it may be *(HALLDECKER eyeballs her)* —Have you read the whole thing?

HALLDECKER: Not on an empty stomach. *(BUTLER enters.)* AH! Impeccable timing, Gerard.

BUTLER: Actually I was eavesdropping, as any respectable butler would do.

HOLLYBOUGH: *(Teasingly)* Cheeky blighter.

BUTLER: *(With a coy smile and a demi-bow)* Their Highnesses from Yonder Castle are here, Your Ladyship. I shall see to a light repast at once.

HALLDECKER: Good man! *(BUTLER exits.) (To HOLLYBOUGH.)* We'll need all the intestinal fortitude we can muster before delving into this diabolical diatribe.

HOLLYBOUGH: And besides that, we are very late for dinner!

*(BOTH exit. Background music as other servants enter with brooms and sweep mail pile offstage. BRASS FANFARE. BUTLER re-enters.)*

BUTLER: Hear ye, hear ye! Mark ye now the Royal Procession! Lord Haldecker and Lady Hollybough! *(Short fanfare.)* Lord Leapingworth and Lady Dancingforth! *(Short fanfare.)*

*(Enter in pairs HALLDECKER and HOLLYBOUGH, DANCINGFORTH and LEAPINGWORTH, and seat themselves at ROYAL TABLE in that order. HALLDECKER still holds scroll.)*

BUTLER: Announcing their Royal Highnesses Princess Plumeria, Princess Figgelia, and Princess Puddinia!

*(As PUDDINIA, FIGGELIA, and PLUMERIA enter, SINGERS sing “Oh, bring us some figgy pudding, oh bring us some figgy pudding, oh bring us”— they break off as PUDDINIA gives them the eye. PLUMERIA, FIGGELIA, and PUDDINIA seat themselves after LORD LEAPINGWORTH in that order.)*

PUDDINIA: *(Glancing at HALLDECKER holding scroll on his plate)* That’s a strange dish—eating your words, Decks?

HALLDECKER: Now there’s a thought. *(Starts to hand scroll up to BUTLER, who stands by.)* Pop this in the oven straightaway. *(BUTLER reaches for scroll.)*

HOLLYBOUGH: Don’t take it, Gerard. *(BUTLER withdraws hand.)* Isn’t it time for the main course?

BUTLER: Indeed it is. *(BUTLER bows and exits.)*