

STAATSTHEATER
NÜRNBERG

THE PLAY
THAT GOES
WRONG

by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer und Henry Shields

This synopsis is a summary of the content of the production. It serves to create a bridge of understanding for non-German-speaking audiences. It is not a complete translation of the play text, but is to be understood as a supplement to and in overall view of the production.

ACTORS

Annie, Stage manager of the theatre group: Stephanie Leue

Trevor, Light and sound technician of the theatre group:

Ksch. Pius Maria Cüppers

Chris (Head of the theatre group, plays Inspector Carter):

Luca Rosendahl

Jonathan (plays Charles Haversham): Joshua Kliefert

Robert (plays Thomas Colley Moore): Nicolas Frederick Djuren

Dennis (plays Perkins): Thorsten Danner

Max (plays Cecil Haversham und Arthur): Amadeus Köhli

Sandra (plays Florence Colley Moore): Katharina Kurschat

Extras of Staatstheater Nürnberg:

Petra Bogner, Martin Bordo, Aleksey Deliov, Emma Kappl,

Thomas Niesser, Elke Meyer, Jörg Scheiring

TEAM

Director: Christian Brey

Stage & Costume Design: Anette Hachmann

Music: Thomas Esser

Stuntcoordinator: René Lay

Light-Design: Thomas Märker

Dramaturgy: Brigitte Ostermann, Sabrina Bohl

Premiere: October 28, 2023, Schauspielhaus Nuremberg

Duration: 2 h, 10 minutes

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ACT 1

It's shortly before the show. The preparations have not yet been finished. They are looking for "Winston", a dog, who is required on stage later. Annie tries to fix a mantelpiece. Trevor tells the audience to switch off their mobile phones and asks if anyone has seen a Duran Duran CD box.

Chris enters and shoos Annie off the stage. He welcomes the audience on behalf of Cornley Polytechnic University's theatre company to the performance of the murder mystery "Murder at Haversham Castle".

Chris: For the first time, we have managed to find a play that perfectly suits the size of our ensemble. Previous productions have always suffered from a lack of performers. For example, last year's Chekhov performance: "Two Sisters".

The play begins.

Thomas (Charles Haversham's friend and brother of his fiancé) and Perkins (the butler) realise that Charles is dead. They discuss whether it was murder or suicide. They decide to call Inspector Carter. Perkins calls everyone together in the parlor.

Florence (Charles' fiancé) enters and is shocked.

Florence: My God, how fragile he looks. His skin is cold to the touch.

Thomas: No, don't touch him, Florence!

Florence: Don't touch me, you ruffian!

Cecil (Charles' brother) enters and is shocked. Thomas tells Perkins to go get him a drink from Charles' study.

Perkins: Charles has drunk the whole bottle

Thomas: There's another one in the drinks drawer.

Perkins: Yes, this one is still full!

Florence is having one of her hysterical fits. Cecil needs a few drinks. He thinks Charles has killed himself and wants to prove it.

Cecil: Hand me his diary from the mantelpiece. (reads)
 “I fear Florence does not love me. On the evening of our engagement party, despair overwhelms my soul.” He was paranoid and jealous to the point of madness.

Inspector Carter enters and realizes that everyone is shaken. They all toast Charles.

Thomas: A bloody good drop! What year?
 Perkins: (reads) highly flammable and corrosive.

The inspector asks Thomas and Perkins to take the body to the study. He will speak to each of them individually.

Inspector: I'll be back shortly, as soon as I've finished ...
 examining the body.

In the study:

Thomas: My goodness, Perkins, his body weighs a ton!

Inspector: So this is Charles' study. Put the body there, gentlemen.

Thomas: Unbearable. Look at him lying there.

In the parlor:

Cecil and Florence are having an affair. Now that Charles is dead, they can finally be together. But they didn't murder him. Cecil wants to ask her a question.

In the study:

Thomas and Perkins are shaken. Thomas searches the body and “finds” a letter.

Inspector: And now you dust the body for prints.

Thomas: I think he was breathing!

Inspector: Nonsense! The man is dead!

In the parlor:

Cecil: Marry me, Florence! Charles is dead. He'll never come between us again!

In the study:

The Inspector asks Thomas to bring him his notebook and pen and Perkins to lock everyone up.

In the parlor:

Cecil and Florence want to go at each other but keep getting interrupted.

Thomas: I'll get the inspector's pen.
 Perkins: I'll get the keys to lock us all in.
 Thomas: I've forgotten the inspector's notebook.
 Perkins: I have to prepare the room.
 Cecil: Put the candlesticks on the mantelpiece.

Cecil believes that Thomas murdered Charles because he didn't want him to marry Florence. He fears that if their affair comes to light, they won't be safe from Thomas either.

The inspector comes in and wants to get on with the investigation.

Inspector: Bring Charles' personal belongings.
 Perkins: Where should I put them?
 Inspector: Put everything on the mantelpiece. Stay, Perkins.

The inspector questions Perkins. It turns out that the inspector also knew Charles.

Inspector: How long have you been working at Haversham Castle?
 Perkins: Eighty years.
 Inspector: Eighty years?
 Perkins: Eight. Eight years.

The inspector asks for Florence when she appears. Thomas is with her. The inspector asks him for his pen and notebook. He questions Florence. She tells him about her first meeting with Charles. It was love at first sight. But something is mixed up.

Florence: When you love someone, there's no such thing as rushing.

Inspector: Have you ever had the feeling that you rushed into this wedding?

Florence: Why shouldn't I love him?

Inspector: So you loved him?

Florence: Who would profit from that?

Inspector: Do you know anyone who might have profited from the death of your fiancé?

Florence: Cecil?!

Inspector: Not even Cecil?

Florence: I wasn't having an affair! Don't shout at me, Inspector!

Inspector: YOU HAD AN AFFAIR!

Florence: Don't tell me to calm down!

Inspector: Calm down, Miss Colleymoore.

Florence: What letter?

Inspector: Then how do you explain this letter?

Florence: You read my letter? Where did you find it?

Inspector: I'll tell you what letter! The one addressed to Cecil, in your handwriting, declaring your love for him.

Florence: Charles read it?! Then it was suicide!

Inspector: Indeed it was!

Thomas and Cecil enter. And that blows Florence away...

Cecil: Calm down! Stop that shouting.

Thomas: She's having another one of her fits!

Cecil: Florence! Where are you going?

Thomas: Stay here! She's run away. I'll get her back.

The inspector questions Cecil about his father, who always favored Charles over him.

Inspector: This is a portrait of your father?

Cecil: Yes.

Inspector: He's the spitting image of Charles.

The brothers must have hated each other. The inspector reveals that he knows about the affair between Cecil and Florence and accuses Cecil of murdering Charles. Cecil defends himself and again puts forward his theory that Thomas is the murderer.

Alone again, the inspector finds a folder with Charles' will in which he leaves everything to a specific person. Before he can announce the person, he is interrupted by Thomas and Cecil. He goes into the study to look at the will in peace.

Thomas gets a call from his accountant. nine thousand pounds have gone missing.

Cecil: I'll get it.

Thomas: Hand me the phone. Perkins, give me my account book. Who am I'm talking to? Mr Fitzroy? I'll make a note of that.

Cecil confesses his affair with Florence to Thomas, whereupon they fight a duel.

Thomas : I don't need to kill someone like you. It's clear: you murdered Charles in a rage of jealousy.

Shots are fired in the library. The inspector hurries into the parlor. A somehow changed Florence enters.

Thomas: You're not yourself today, Florence!

Perkins: What a mess, sir! The worst night I've had in eighty... [corrects himself] eight years of service.

Florence: Save me, brother, save me! I'm panicking.

Inspector: Don't panic! Cecil's coming down the stairs. We have to lock him out. Give me the keys!

Cecil has been shot. Florence is horrified.

Inspector: Take the body away.

Florence: I'm having a fit, Inspector! I can't help it!

Thomas: That's enough, take your pills!

Florence: No. No more pills. Oh, peppermint!

They wonder who could have murdered Cecil. And they drink scotch.

Thomas: That was necessary.

They wonder and drink again. And again. And again. And again. Finally, it turns out that no one - apart from those present - could have murdered him.

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

Chris welcomes the audience to the second half and is surprised that so many have stayed. Trevor can be heard over the radio and announces that things are going badly overall. Chris asks everyone who ate a salmon canapé during the intermission to seek medical help immediately.

The play continues.

Thomas: What a dreadful evening.

Perkins: And look, the snowstorm is picking up!

They recapitulate what has happened so far.

Florence: Oh, the tension in this house is... tense.

Thomas: Florence. How are you feeling right now?

Florence: Great, yes, really good.

Thomas: How awful!

Florence: Yes, it's terrible. I want to die right now.

Thomas: That's the right attitude.

Perkins: Where were you at the time of the murder?

Perkins is making strange gestures.

Florence: I was lying on the floor, with a moustache.

Thomas: That seems logical to me. Me too.

Florence: Give me a thousand kisses! I'm all yours!

Thomas: Of course, Florence. That's what brothers are for.

Perkins: A disaster! And it's already midnight.

The clock strikes midnight. Sort of. The inspector calls Thomas into the study and Thomas gets there. Sort of.

Inspector: Ah, there you are.

Thomas: Yes.

Inspector: Are you sitting comfortably?

Thomas: Very comfortable, Inspector!

He shows him the gun with which Cecil was murdered and accuses him of being the murderer. Thomas forgets what he wants to say and asks for help.

Trevor: No idea what page we're on!

Thomas: No idea what page we're on!

A knock at the door downstairs.

Perkins: Who could that be?

Florence: Uhhh, no idea!

Perkins: You're right!

Perkins hides Florence behind a secret door that Charles has set up. Arthur the gardener and his dog Winston enter. Arthur has seen a strange figure in the garden and found a cyanide-soaked handkerchief under the window with the initials F. C. on it – as in “Florence Colley Moore”.

Upstairs in the study, the inspector tells Thomas about Charles' will and that he wants to leave everything to Perkins.

Arthur and Perkins confront Florence with their accusations, while the Inspector and Thomas want to confront Perkins.

Inspector: Into the lift! (Thomas shakes his head) Then we'll have to take the stairs.

Thomas: After you.

Downstairs, the dog attacks the inspector but is thrown out.

The inspector questions Arthur.

Arthur: I'm the most senior person here at Haversham Castle.

Perkins: He's worked for Mr Haversham for ninety years.

Inspector: Nine.

Perkins: Ninety-nine years.

Inspector: Ninety-nine years, what a dedicated man.

Arthur: I beg your pardon, young man?

Arthur shows the inspector the handkerchief.

Inspector: Good God! How dreadful! Colleymoore, get my magnifying glass from Charles's desk. I must inspect this handkerchief more closely.

He fetches the magnifying glass, in a way that's... a bit cumbersome.

The phone rings.

Thomas: Who is it, Arthur?

Arthur: Mr Fitzroy, sir.

Thomas: Give me the phone, Arthur.

Fitzroy has discovered another transaction: a one-way ticket to Dover.

Perkins: Mr Colleymoore, you look like you could do with a Scotch.

Thomas: No!!! No more scotch, thank you Perkins. What a dreadful evening! If you'll excuse me.

While Thomas tries to leave the study, Arthur tells the inspector about the initials on the handkerchief and the inspector decides that Florence is the murderer. Thomas reappears. And that blows Florence away. Again.

Thomas: She's about to have another one of her hysterical fits.

Inspector: What's your defence?

Florence goes through a change again.

Florence: I'm not a murderer!

Arthur: You are exposed!

The inspector goes to examine Charles' body for traces of cyanide poisoning. Florence tries to get Arthur on her side with her feminine charms.

Florence: I've seen the looks you've given me.

Arthurs clumsiness causes Florence to... well... lose her feminine charms.

Florence: But Arthur, how can you resist me, I'm a beautiful woman?

Arthur: Maybe it's true and I've admired you.

Florence: Then kiss... no, I don't do that. Nobody wants to see that.

They kiss.

Thomas: What on earth is going on here?

Arthur: I can explain everything.

Thomas: I can't imagine that

Inspector: Another affair?

Thomas: You're not the Florence I knew.

The others reproach Florence and accuse her of murder. She feels dizzy. Thomas goes to get her medicine. But she has another one of her fits. Thomas comes into the study and leaves very elegantly.

Thomas: No, nobody noticed.

Inspector: You're a murderer!

Florence: I can't bear it, I'm going to faint!

Perkins: She's fainted.

Inspector: Quick, put her on the chaise longue.

Thomas comes back and wants to wake up Florence.

Inspector: Is that the figure you saw?

Arthur: Can you take your hands off her face, I can't recognize anything! (Thomas does so.) No, it wasn't her. The figure was a male.

Suspicion now falls on Perkins. Florence wakes up and asks what happened. Perkins knows the real murderer, it was the inspector himself. Charles knew that the inspector was embezzling money and the inspector wanted to silence him once and for all. The inspector wants to shoot Perkins, but then Charles appears, who is still alive. He didn't drink the poisoned drink the inspector gave him because he suspected the inspector might want to kill him. The initials also fit: Frederick Carter.

Charles: Perkins here is just as innocent as I am. Free him from these handcuffs immediately!

Thomas: Of course, Charles, I've got the keys!

Inspector: Never! I've come to kill you, Charles, and I won't leave until that's done.

Charles: It's over, Inspector. I could prove your guilt in a matter of seconds. I've got the proof upstairs in the study! Perkins, get me the papers!

Things go haywire. Thomas was an accomplice of the inspector in the embezzlement of the money. And the two of them try to escape while Perkins has to fetch various things from the study. Florence wants Charles back, but he spurns her. Charles explains to Thomas that the inspector never intended to share the money with him.

Charles: What you don't know, though, Thomas, is that the Inspector withdrew nine thousand pounds from your private accounts this morning and planned his escape with a one-way ticket to Dover as soon as he could pin the murder on anyone. I think it's time to have a look in your briefcase, Inspector. And inside is: the bottle of cyanide! Thomas Colley Moore's nine thousand pounds!

Thomas: And, of course, your one-way ticket to... Durand Durand?! You scoundrel! I trusted you! You've made a mistake, Carter, and I'm afraid it's your last!

He shoots him. Perkins announces that the police has arrived.

Charles: Excellent, escort Miss Colleymoore down the stairs, Perkins. I wish to speak to Thomas in private.

Charles offers Thomas a drink. The poisoned drink the inspector put out for him. Thomas dies. For quite an amount of time.

Charles: Oh, I wish it could have ended differently. Thomas, your lies and deceit have brought you inexorably to this end. Let's hope there will never be another murder at Haversham Castle.

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