

Felix Stripe

Adapted from the play by Lord Dunsany "A Night at an Inn"

Norman Maine Publishing

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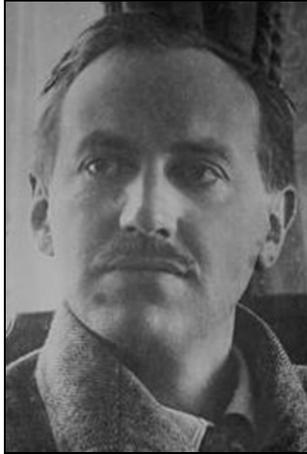
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Four Thieves, Three Assassins, One Idol, and a Ruby

CLASSIC HORROR. Adapted from the play “A Night at an Inn” by Lord Dunsany. In this horror classic, four thieves are hiding out at a remote inn after having stolen a priceless ruby from the eye socket of a mysterious stone idol. The thieves are anxiously awaiting the arrival of three assassins, who have been sent to retrieve the ruby. But just as the thieves relax and think they have given the assassins the slip, a hideous visitor arrives looking for the ruby.

Performance time: Approximately 20-30 minutes.



Lord Dunsany (1878-1957)

About the Story

During his 50-year writing career, Irish author Lord Dunsany (1878-1957) wrote numerous short stories, poetry, novels, essays, and plays. From a wealthy aristocratic family, Dunsany became the 18th Baron of Dunsany when his father died in 1899, and he lived most of his life at Dunsany Castle. Dunsany is known for his odd writing habits, which included writing with his own handmade quill pen and sitting on an old crumpled hat. Dunsany was an avid hunter, a world traveler, a champion pistol shooter, a cricket player, a chess player, and an animal rights advocate. Dunsany's works often contain inexplicable supernatural events as well as characters who tell fantastic tales from exotic lands. Today, Dunsany is best known for his fantasy fiction.

Characters

(8 flexible)

TOFF: Lawyer who heads up a band of thieves; flexible.

"SNIGGERS" SMITH: Lawyer and thief; flexible.

BILL/BILLIE JONES: Sailor and thief; flexible.

ALBERT/ALBERTINA THOMAS: Sailor and thief; flexible.

IDOL: Stone idol who has come to life and is searching for his missing eye; large, menacing, hideous idol carved out of green jade or stone with one ruby eye and one empty eye socket; speaks with an eerie foreign accent; flexible.

ASSASSIN 1, 2, 3: Sent to retrieve the Idol's missing eye from the thieves who stole it; wear menacing black robes; non-speaking; flexible.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

Setting

A remote, rural inn, 1900.

Set

A room in a rural inn. There are four armchairs and a small table. There is a window(s). A door SR opens inward.

Props

Newspaper
4 Toy knives (plastic)
4 Toy guns
Decanter
4 Glasses
"Ruby" for Idol's eye

Sound Effects

Music may be used throughout to heighten suspense

Stony footsteps

Moaning

“I did not foresee it...”

—Toff

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(AT RISE: A room at a remote, rural inn. Sniggers and Bill are talking. Toff is reading a newspaper. Albert is sitting apart from them.)

SNIGGERS: *(To Bill, indicating Toff.)* What's his idea, I wonder?

BILL: I don't know.

SNIGGERS: And how much longer will he keep us here?

BILL: We've been here three days.

SNIGGERS: And haven't seen a soul.

BILL: And a pretty penny it cost us when he rented the inn.

SNIGGERS: How long did he rent the inn for?

BILL: You never know with him.

SNIGGERS: It's lonely enough.

BILL: How long did you rent the inn for, Toffy?

(Toff ignores them and continues to read his newspaper.)

SNIGGERS: He's such a snob.

BILL: Yet he's clever, no mistake.

SNIGGERS: Those clever ones...their plans are clever enough,
but they don't work, and then they make a mess of things
much worse than you or me.

BILL: Ah...

SNIGGERS: *(Looking around anxiously.)* I don't like this place.

BILL: Why not?

SNIGGERS: I don't like the looks of it.

BILL: He's keeping us here so those assassins can't find us.
They are looking for us, so we should go and sell our ruby
soon.

ALBERT: There's no sense in keeping us here.

BILL: Why not?

ALBERT: Because I gave them the slip.

BILL: You gave them the slip?

ALBERT: The slip, all three of them. I had the ruby then, and I gave them the slip.

BILL: How did you do it?

ALBERT: I had the ruby and they were following me—

BILL: Who told them you had the ruby? You didn't show them?

ALBERT: No...but they kind of know.

SNIGGERS: (*Confused.*) They kind of know?

ALBERT: Yes, they know if you've got it. Well, they sort of followed me— (*Shivers.*) Ugh! When I think of what they did to poor old Jim...

BILL: Yes, and to George...

SNIGGERS: (*Shivers.*) Ugh!

ALBERT: (*Continuing.*) I walked up and down through the streets. I walked real slow...and then I turned a corner and I ran. I twisted through the streets like a rabbit. Then I sat down and waited. No assassins.

SNIGGERS: What?

ALBERT: I gave them the slip.

BILL: Well done.

SNIGGERS: (*To Albert, sighs.*) Why didn't you tell us?

ALBERT: (*Indicating Toff.*) 'Cause he's got his plans, and he thinks we're silly folk. Things must be done *his* way. And all this time I've gave 'em the slip. He might have had one of their knives in him before now if I hadn't given 'em the slip.

BILL: Well done, Albert.

SNIGGERS: Did you hear that, Toffy? Albert has given 'em the slip.

TOFF: Yes, I hear.

SNIGGERS: Well, what do you say to that?

TOFF: Well done, Albert.

ALBERT: And what are you going to do?

TOFF: Going to wait.

ALBERT: (*Aside to Sniggers.*) Don't seem to know what he's waiting for.

SNIGGERS: (*Looking around anxiously.*) It's a nasty place.

ALBERT: (*Aside to Bill.*) It's getting silly, Bill. Our money's gone, and we need to sell the ruby. Let's go to town—

BILL: (*Indicating Toff.*) But he won't go.

ALBERT: Then we'll leave him.

SNIGGERS: We'll be all right if we stay off of the main roads.

ALBERT: We'll go to town.

BILL: (*Indicating Toff.*) But he must have his share...

SNIGGERS: All right. Let's go. (*To Toff.*) We're going. (*Toff keeps reading his newspaper and doesn't respond.*) Do you hear?

Give us the ruby.

TOFF: (*Nonchalantly.*) Certainly.

(*Toff retrieves the ruby from his pocket and hands it to Sniggers. The ruby is the size of a small chicken egg. Toff goes back to reading his newspaper.*)

ALBERT: (*To Sniggers and Bill.*) Come on.

(*Albert and Sniggers exit.*)

BILL: (*To Toff.*) Goodbye. We'll give you your fair share, but we must sell the ruby.

TOFF: I'm not a fool.

[END OF FREEVIEW]