

## The Looking Glass Murder

This is a mystery play about the murder of an elderly woman. Read it to yourselves.

Discuss the play together—the characters, the clues, the climax, the end. Find a good place to stop in the middle of the play.

Decide on your parts.

Study your part carefully.

How would you read if you were Lefty?

What would be an outstanding characteristic of Sally? Of Mildred? Of Frank? Of Tess?

Can you make Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. Stevens sound like gossips?

Read the first half of the play aloud. Check on anything that should be improved. Help each other.

Do the second half of the play the same way.

If the group agrees, read the entire play aloud.

Are you ready to read to the class?

## THE LOOKING GLASS MURDER

by John Murray

### Characters

(6 girls, 4 boys, and a narrator)

NARRATOR

SALLY, 20

MOM, her mother

MILDRED, 10, her sister

TESS, her friend

FRANK

LEFTY

MRS. MURPHY } Mom's boarders

MRS. STEVENS }

MR. BLY

LIM, a policeman

NARRATOR: Mom owns a house in the heart of the city. She earns her living by renting small apartments and keeping boarders. It is a warm evening and several of Mom's boarders are on the roof talking. Something has happened, for Sally and Tess are quietly talking together and Sally is very upset. Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Murphy are at the other end of the roof talking. Let's listen and find what the excitement is about.

MRS. STEVENS (*Cautiously*): Oh, Mrs. Murphy, don't gape at Sally. She'll know we're talking about her.

MRS. MURPHY: Well, what's a body to do? We have to talk about these things. A decent body isn't safe in this neighborhood any more. Mom's building used to be safe, at least.

MRS. STEVENS (*Shaking her head*): Poor old Mrs. Frazier. I wonder how much money was hidden in her room.

MRS. MURPHY: We'll never know, Mrs. Stevens. She was a real recluse. Imagine having so much money and living in this dump! But you never can tell about some people.

MRS. STEVENS: The worst part is, her killer got away. The police haven't a clue.

NARRATOR: Let's leave the two women and try to find out what is troubling Sally.

TESS: You can eat at my place if you like, Sally.

SALLY: Thanks, Tess. I'm not hungry. Oh, I'm so worried about Frank.

TESS (*Helpfully*): The police will find him.

SALLY: The police! Oh, I don't want them to find him.  
(*Slowly*) You—you don't think that he had anything to do with Mrs. Frazier's death?

TESS (*Awkwardly*): Honestly, I don't know.

SALLY (*Defiantly*): Well, I know. Frank didn't kill Mrs. Frazier. He liked her. She was his friend. He—he always helped her.

NARRATOR: Mrs. Murphy has been listening to Sally and Tess and interrupts as she hears Sally's remark.

MRS. MURPHY (*Interrupting*): Help? That terrible young man only went to Mrs. Frazier's apartment to find where she kept her money.

SALLY (*Angrily*): That's not true, Mrs. Murphy. Frank was always kind to Mrs. Frazier.

MRS. MURPHY (*Quickly*): Well, why did he run away, then? Why haven't the police been able to find him?

SALLY (*Tearfully*): I don't know, but he is innocent. And it's awful the way you—the way everyone is talking about him!

MRS. MURPHY (*Indignant*): Well, if you're not the limit, Sally! Why, I saw him with my own eyes. I saw Frank come out of Mrs. Frazier's flat. They found the poor old lady dead only a short time later.

SALLY: That doesn't prove anything. And you might have been mistaken.

MRS. MURPHY: The police didn't think so. They'll find him, all right! Come along, Mrs. Stevens, we'd better get down to our apartments. The murderer might come back!

NARRATOR: The two women rise and prepare to leave the roof. At the door Mrs. Murphy turns and glares at Sally.

TESS: Don't listen to her, Sally. She's just a troublemaking old gossip.

SALLY (*Dejectedly*): I wish Frank hadn't run away.

TESS: He'll turn up.

But it looks so bad for him. You heard Mrs. Murphy. She told the police that she saw him leaving Mrs. Frazier's apartment last night.

TESS: Well, Frank often went there to help the old lady.

SALLY: That's right. Someone could have gone there later and found the body. Oh, it's so hopeless. Oh, poor Frank!

TESS: I never knew you felt that way about Frank.

SALLY: He's been wonderful. Frank's boarded with Mom for five years. He and Lefty have been our dearest friends since Dad's death. I don't know what I would have done without Frank. We used to come up here to the roof and Frank would read to me. Does that sound silly?

TESS: No, I think it's wonderful.

SALLY (*Smiling*): And do you know, Tess, my favorite books were *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. It was like living in a different world. The Mad Hatter, the March Hare—Frank introduced me to all those things. Why, he'd even pretend to be the King. He liked to look at the city lights and the buildings and tell me that this was his kingdom.

TESS: *Alice in Wonderland*.

SALLY: The roof of Mom's old tenement was a wonderland! (She sobs.) And now he's gone.

TESS (*Awkwardly*): Gee, Sally, what can I say to you? I know that someone—something will clear his name. (Pause) Oh, it's almost six! I'd better get home. Maybe I'll see you later.

SALLY: Perhaps. I'd like to stay here for a while.

TESS: Goodbye for now.

SALLY: Goodbye. And thanks for everything.

NARRATOR: Sally stands and looks out over the roof. Mom and Tim, a policeman, come through the rooftop door and join Sally.

MOM: I thought we'd find you here, Sally.

SALLY: Hello, Mom. Good evening, Tim.

TIM: Hello, Sally. I wanted to ask you a few questions about Frank.

SALLY (*Anxiously*): Have you—have they found him?

TIM: Not yet. An alert is out for him all over the city.

MOM: Poor Frank!

TIM: Well, he ran away.

SALLY: What else could he do? Mrs. Murphy went screaming to the police that he had killed Mrs. Frazier.

TIM: Well, the old lady's body was found a short time after Frank left her apartment.

SALLY: But that's why he had to run away. No one would give him a chance to explain.

TIM: I don't think that running away ever helped anyone. I'd like to ask you a few questions.

SALLY: Anything.

TIM: Frank's been with your family about five years?

SALLY: Yes.

MOM: That's right. I ran an ad for boarders after my poor husband's death. I had my two daughters to raise and I had to do something to make ends meet.

TIM: And Frank and Lefty answered your ad? (*Pause*) Did Frank ever speak about his background?

SALLY: No, he didn't talk about himself very much. I don't think he had any family when he came here to find work.

TIM: How about friends? Did he have any in the city?

SALLY: I never met them. Of course, he knew the people at the plant, but Frank liked to keep to himself.

TIM: How did he meet Mrs. Frazier?

SALLY: Well, she was a recluse. She never left her apartment, but somehow Frank happened to meet her. Then he started going to the store for her and doing little chores around her place. She was terribly fond of him.

TIM (*Quickly*): Do you think that Mrs. Frazier had a lot of money?

SALLY: I wouldn't know. She lived simply enough, but there are always stories about rich old recluses.

TIM: She had some valuable jewelry. I questioned the tenants and they are willing to swear to that.

SALLY: I heard she had some lovely things.

TIM: Did you ever see her wearing a string of pearls?

SALLY: No, I didn't.

MOM (*Interrupting*): I saw them! She invited me in for a cup of tea one day, and she wore a string of pearls. Oh, I remember they were lovely.

TIM: Did Frank ever see the pearls?

MOM (*Thoughtfully*): Well, I can't be sure. (*She brightens*) Why, yes! He came that very day to see about Mrs. Frazier's stove. Yes, I'm sure he saw the pearls.

SALLY (*Exasperated*): Well, that doesn't prove that he killed her. Why are you asking us these questions, Tim? Are you trying to make us say something against Frank?

TIM: Now, Sally, of course not. I just want to get all the facts. We have Mrs. Murphy's testimony that he left Mrs. Frazier's place early last evening. She recognized his checkered sport coat. A little while later we got an anonymous call that Mrs. Frazier had been murdered.

SALLY: An anonymous call?

TIM: Someone told us to come to this address—to Mrs. Frazier's apartment. You know the rest.

SALLY: But I don't understand. How could anyone possibly know what had happened—except the murderer?

TIM (*Musing*): Then you don't think it was Frank who called us?

SALLY: No, no! Someone is trying to frame him.

TIM: We searched Mrs. Frazier's rooms and found that most of the jewelry was there, but other tenants told us about her string of pearls.

MOM: Are the pearls gone?

TIM: Yes. They must have been taken by the murderer. Most

folks believed that Mrs. Frazier had a large sum of money hidden in the place, but we didn't find it, either.

SALLY (*Imploringly*): I know you have your job to do, Tim, and you've always been wonderful to Mom, my sister Mildred and me. But you must help me now. We have to clear Frank's name.

TIM: That's a tough assignment, considering that he's been missing since the crime.

SALLY: Aren't there any other suspects?

TIM: Other suspects?

SALLY (*Quickly*): Did you question Mr. Bly?

TIM: Bly? Oh, he's the strange one in the rear apartment. I spoke to him, but I couldn't tie him in with Mrs. Frazier. I think he's as mad as a hatter.

SALLY (*Musing*): The Mad Hatter! Why, that's like *Alice in Wonderland*. (*Suddenly*) What about the weapon? Did you find the gun?

TIM: No, the murderer must have taken it away with him.

SALLY: Frank never owned a gun. (*She begins to cry.*)

MOM: Sally, don't get upset. Tim is doing everything he can to help.

TIM: I'd like to see Frank's room again. Maybe we'll find something that will tell us where he's hiding.

MOM: Sally, you come with us, too. Maybe you can help me find Mildred. It's getting late and we have to eat.

SALLY (*Sighing*): All right, Mom. There's nothing I can do here.

NARRATOR: As Tim, Mom, and Sally go through the open roof door, Mildred slips out from behind the door where she has been hiding. She looks at the apartment across the court and raises her hand as if she were holding a gun. Lefty comes out on the roof very quietly and watches Mildred. He grabs her by the shoulders and spins her around. Mildred screams.

MILDRED: Lefty! Gee, you scared me!

Lefty: Mom's been looking for you, Mildred. Where have you been?

MILDRED: Up here.

Lefty: Mom just left the roof. She didn't see you. Were you hiding?

MILDRED: Y-yes.

Lefty: I suppose you heard that policeman talking to Sally. You'd better listen to me.

MILDRED: You're hurting me—and I'm going to tell Mom. You—you're not in the family. You're only a boarder—just like Frank.

Lefty: I think you know something about Mrs. Frazier!

MILDRED: No!

Lefty: You were up on the roof about the time she was killed last night.

MILDRED (*Softly*): Yes, I was here.

Lefty: What did you see?

MILDRED: I—I didn't see anything.

Lefty: I think you're hiding something. You wouldn't want me to tell Tim, would you?

MILDRED: Oh, no!

Lefty: I've been watching you all day. You're frightened. You hardly touched your breakfast this morning. Mom thought you were coming down with a cold, but we know better, don't we, Mildred? You saw something last night.

(*Angrily*) Now, what did you see?

NARRATOR: At this moment Sally enters. They are too busy to notice her so she hides behind the rooftop door and listens.

MILDRED (*Hysterically*): I—I saw him kill her! I saw him shoot Mrs. Frazier! Oh, Lefty, don't tell Mom. Don't tell Tim.

I—I didn't want to tell, but you hurt my arm.

Lefty (*Coldly*): What did you see?

MILDRED: I—I was up here alone. I finished my homework and was standing by the wall. Then I noticed a light in Mrs.

Frazier's bedroom. I saw Mrs. Frazier standing by the window. Then I saw a hand holding a gun. Mrs. Frazier tried to back away, but then she fell to the floor. I didn't hear the gun. It must have been one of the silent kind.

LEFTY: What else did you see?

MILDRED: Then the man stepped to the dresser, got something out of the top drawer. He—he put it in his pocket and went out.

LEFTY (*Quickly*): Who was the man?

MILDRED: I couldn't see his face. I only saw his coat. A checkered sportcoat. Just like Frank's! (*She sobs.*)

LEFTY: Then you saw Frank kill Mrs. Frazier?

MILDRED: Oh, promise that you won't tell the police.

NARRATOR: Sally steps from her hiding place and runs over to Mildred.

SALLY: Oh, Mildred! Why didn't you tell me about—about Frank?

MILDRED: I didn't want to worry you. I didn't want you to know.

SALLY: Oh, you poor dear.

LEFTY (*Awkwardly*): I'm sorry if I frightened you, Mildred. I only wanted the truth.

SALLY (*Determined*): Well, we're going to tell Tim everything. It's the only way. Maybe someone else wore Frank's jacket. It's missing now. Mildred, tell me everything about last night. Where were you standing when you saw (*She falters.*)—when you saw Frank?

MILDRED: Right over there. The shade was up and I looked through the window.

SALLY: But that's impossible.

LEFTY: What?

SALLY: Mildred couldn't have seen anything in Mrs. Frazier's apartment. Her place is directly under this roof! (*To MILDRED*) And you pointed across the court!

LEFTY: That doesn't make sense. Mrs. Frazier wasn't killed in another apartment.

SALLY: I know—but Mildred couldn't have seen anything in Mrs. Frazier's place.

MILDRED: I saw it, I tell you! There's the window. You can see Mrs. Frazier's bedroom. There! That's how I saw it last night.

NARRATOR: Lefty and Sally look through the window across the court.

SALLY (*Puzzled*): But that's not Mrs. Frazier's apartment. Besides, there wouldn't be a light in her place now.

LEFTY (*Slowly*): Wait a minute! It looks like Mrs. Frazier's bedroom. There's her dresser and the chair, and, see, some old hat boxes on the bed. I guess the police haven't cleared the place out yet.

SALLY: That's not Mrs. Frazier's room at all. It's a mirror! It's a reflection in a looking glass!

LEFTY: I think you're right. Why, that's a mirror in Mrs. Stevens' flat! We can see the reflection of Mrs. Frazier's bedroom in the mirror.

SALLY (*Thoughtfully*): A looking glass—

LEFTY (*Whistling softly*): And Mildred saw the murder through a reflection in the mirror. Mrs. Frazier's place is directly across from the Stevenses'.

SALLY: Oh, we'd better get Tim.

NARRATOR: Mr. Bly comes out onto the roof. He walks to the group.

BLY: May I join you?

LEFTY: We're going downstairs, Mr. Bly.

BLY: Perhaps I can talk to the young lady.

SALLY: Well, I was leaving, too.

BLY (*Smiling*): No one wishes to remain alone after a murder.

LEFTY: What do you know about it?

BLY: Nothing, really. Murder isn't to my taste at all. (*He sighs.*) Oh, well. Life must move on its petty pace.

SALLY (*Suddenly*): Do you own a checkered jacket?

BLY: A checkered jacket? (*He laughs.*) Now, do I look the type?

LEFTY: No, I guess not. We'd better get downstairs.

SALLY (*Suddenly*): No, I want to stay here.

LEFTY: What?

SALLY: I have to think things out. I'm not afraid.

BLY: A very brave young lady. I understand that your boarder—Mr. Frank—is wanted for the murder.

SALLY: The police want to question him, that's all.

BLY: Is there really any difference? These flowers, now. They are unaware of the violence around them. (*Pause*) Yes, the violence. I'll see you later, young lady. Even though a murder has been committed, we must not change the course of our daily lives. Now, I must go to the corner for the evening paper.

NARRATOR: Mr. Bly leaves as the others stare after him.

MILDRED: Boy, he's strange!

LEFTY: He's a candidate for a straitjacket.

SALLY: I—I don't know. He acted as though he wanted to tell me something.

LEFTY: He's a little nuts, if you ask me. I don't like him.

SALLY: He had such a funny smile on his face, as though he knew something. The Mad Hatter—

LEFTY: He's mad, all right, and I don't know what you're talking about.

SALLY: I suppose my imagination has run away with me, but all this—it's like Alice in Wonderland.

LEFTY (*Scornfully*): Now, I've heard everything!

SALLY: No, Lefty, it's all there. Mrs. Frazier might have been the Queen of Hearts. And the Mad Hatter—and the murder in the looking glass. Through the Looking Glass!

LEFTY: And the Knave of Hearts ran away with the Queen's pastry. Only we're not looking for pastry. We're looking for a string of pearls.

SALLY: The Knave of Hearts—Frank! Oh, no! I—I never thought of that!

MILDRED: Don't talk like that, Sally. Everything's going to be all right!

SALLY: I wonder what Alice actually saw in the looking glass. Please take Mildred downstairs, Lefty. See that she gets there safely.

LEFTY: What about you?

SALLY: I told you I wasn't afraid.

LEFTY: Well, don't stay up here too long.

NARRATOR: Lefty and Mildred go out. After a moment, Frank, wearing a checkered sportcoat, climbs up the fire escape and drops on the roof. He looks strained. Sally looks up, startled. She jumps and runs into Frank's arms.

SALLY: Frank! How did you get here? Everybody's looking for you.

FRANK: I had to come back. I was a sap to run away, but I didn't know what to do.

SALLY: What happened last night?

FRANK: I don't want to think about it.

SALLY: Frank, did you—oh, you must tell me the truth.

FRANK: You don't think that I killed Mrs. Frazier?

SALLY: I—I don't know what to believe. Everybody's saying the most terrible things.

FRANK: I thought you'd trust me.

SALLY: I trust you, Frank, and I'll help you. I'll do anything—but I must know the truth.

FRANK: It—it's like a nightmare.

SALLY: Tim's down in our place now. He's searching your room.

FRANK: Good! I want to see Tim.

NARRATOR: Frank reaches into his pocket and draws out a string of pearls. Sally stares at it. . . .

SALLY: Where did you get those pearls?

FRANK: I found them in my pocket last night.

SALLY: But how did they get there? Who could have done such a thing?

FRANK: If I knew that, we'd have the murderer.

SALLY: Where have you been hiding all day?

FRANK: In the deserted warehouse down the block. They haven't searched that place—yet.

SALLY: Please tell me what happened last night.

FRANK: I don't know. I went to Mrs. Frazier's after supper and she wanted me to go to the store. I had to meet some fellow at the plant, but I knew that could wait, so I got the groceries and went back to Mom's place. I wanted to wear this jacket. It's funny, now that I think of it.

SALLY: Funny?

FRANK: Yes, I always hang the jacket in my closet, but I found it thrown across the foot of the bed. I couldn't figure it out.

SALLY (Slowly): The jacket. You were wearing that jacket when you went back to Mrs. Frazier's the second time?

FRANK: Yes. I put it on and went to Mrs. Frazier's apartment with the groceries. When I went in (Pauses)—you know what I found.

SALLY: She was dead?

FRANK: It looks bad for me, I know, but that's the truth.

SALLY: It's a silly question, Frank, but it could be terribly important. What did you do with the groceries?

FRANK: The groceries? I—I don't know. Maybe I put them on the kitchen table. Maybe I dropped them on the floor. I saw Mrs. Frazier lying on her bedroom floor and—and that's all I remember.

SALLY: Tim didn't mention anything about finding a bag of groceries.

FRANK: Well, I left it there. That's all I know. There was a bottle of milk, butter, bread, and—oh, yes, I stopped at the bakery for some of those apple tarts that Mrs. Frazier liked.

SALLY: Apple tarts?

FRANK: Mrs. Frazier mentioned that she was expecting Mr. Tim to stop by for tea a little later on.

SALLY (Reciting): The Queen of Hearts,

She made some tarts,

All on a summer's day—

FRANK (Confused): I don't know what you're getting at, but it doesn't make any sense.

SALLY: I think it makes a lot of sense. Would it seem logical if someone thought that you went to the store for Mrs. Frazier, and then calmly returned and murdered her and left the groceries as evidence?

FRANK: Well, everyone knew that Mrs. Frazier never left her place. And everyone knew that I've been going to the store for her for years.

SALLY (Nodding quickly): And if you had killed her, you would never have left the bag of groceries behind.

FRANK: I suppose you're right but—oh, I think I know what you're driving at. The murderer didn't want to make it too obvious that I had been in the apartment.

SALLY: That's right. Tim didn't mention anything about finding the apple tarts or the other things. And that would mean—

FRANK (Interrupting): That the murderer came back a second time and took the groceries away!

SALLY: And that proves that you didn't kill her. You didn't wear the jacket until the second time you went to her place. While you were at the store, somebody took your jacket, killed Mrs. Frazier, put the pearls in your pocket, and returned the jacket to your room.

FRANK (Bitterly): I'd like to make the police believe that.

SALLY: They'll have to believe it. Mildred saw someone wearing your jacket. Someone who killed Mrs. Frazier!

FRANK: Mildred saw the murderer?

NARRATOR: Sally points across the court to the window in the opposite apartment. She tells Frank about the mirror.

SALLY: It was really a reflection in a looking glass. Mrs. Stevens' flat is directly across from Mrs. Frazier's. Mildred saw what happened in Mrs. Stevens' mirror. She couldn't see his face, but she saw the murderer holding the gun.

FRANK: And a mirror is only a reflection of the things we think we see. Now I know what you meant about the Queen of Hearts before.

SALLY: *Alice in Wonderland*. You used to read it to me.

FRANK: But we haven't got time for that now. If Mildred saw the murderer wearing my jacket, it was a deliberate plan. (*He pauses.*) But the time element bothers me. It would have to be someone who knew I was going to Mrs. Frazier's flat. Then, when he saw me leave for the store, he killed her and planted the pearls in my pocket.

NARRATOR: Frank suddenly realizes he is holding the pearls in his hand. He pushes them back into his jacket pocket.

SALLY: And then you found the coat in your room. The murderer is someone in our house!

FRANK: That's hard to take. Mom? Lefty? Mildred? That's nonsense!

SALLY: You mustn't forget me. After all, Mildred couldn't be sure whether the murderer was a man or woman.

FRANK (*Snapping fingers*): Wait a minute! When I went back to Mom's place to get my coat, Mom was in the living room with—Mr. Bly!

SALLY: Mr. Bly? Yes, he often visits Mom. Why, yes! He could have taken your coat, committed the murder and put the pearls in your pocket. Then he could have put the coat back in your room. Mom wouldn't have noticed. She's always out in the kitchen.

FRANK: If someone saw him in my coat, he'd pick me as the killer. The hallways are poorly lit. But it could have been someone else, too. Mom's the most popular person in the house. Why, the Murphys and Stevenses are always visiting her. The murderer could be anyone in the whole place.

Yes, but there's something about Mr. Bly that frightens

SALLY: I want to talk to that guy.

FRANK: He went for the evening paper.

SALLY: Good! That'll give me a chance to search his apartment.

FRANK: That's dangerous.

SALLY: I'll take the chance. His window is three floors down directly under this fire escape. Sally, I'm going down.

FRANK: Be careful.

SALLY: It's pretty dark in the court. Maybe no one'll recognize me. (*Softly*) I'm glad you believe in me.

FRANK: Don't worry. We'll still have our kingdom on the rooftop.

NARRATOR: Frank goes quickly down the fire escape while Sally stands and watches him. Mildred strolls in eating an apple tart. Sally turns quickly, with a start.

MILDRED: Mom's waiting for you downstairs, Sally.

SALLY: Oh, yes, I'll be right there.

MILDRED: Why are you standing by the fire escape?

SALLY: For no reason. What does it matter?

MILDRED: I hear something down there.

SALLY (*Quickly*): There's no one there, Mildred.

MILDRED: Yes, I can see someone on the fire escape and I think he's wearing a checkered sport jacket.

SALLY: No.

MILDRED: That was Frank. You helped him escape!

SALLY: Please, Mildred, you must help us. He didn't kill Mrs. Frazier. Somebody's trying to frame him.

MILDRED: Then, why doesn't he tell Tim? Maybe Tim can do something.

SALLY: Yes, but Frank wants to work things out for himself first. What—what are you eating?

MILDRED: This? Why, it's an apple tart. Mom had them for dessert.



SALLY: Where did she get them?  
MILDRED: At the store, I suppose. You're acting pretty good.  
SALLY: Quick! Get Mom! Find out where she got those apples and tarts. It's terribly important.  
MILDRED: I still don't get it, but I'll ask her. Why don't you come with me?  
SALLY: No, no! I'm going to stay here until Frank gets back. And Mildred?  
MILDRED: Yes?  
SALLY: You mustn't tell anyone that Frank was here.  
MILDRED: All right, Sally, if that's what you want.  
NARRATOR: Sally gives Mildred a hug and returns to peer down the fire escape. She paces up and down. Suddenly Mr. Bly enters.  
BLY: I was hoping to find you alone.  
SALLY (*Nervously*): Mr. Bly! I thought you went for the newspaper.  
BLY: No, that was just an excuse to leave. I knew you spent a great deal of time up here and I wanted to speak to you alone.  
SALLY (*Nervously*): What do you want?  
BLY: I had quite a talk with your mother last night.  
SALLY: Yes?  
BLY: She told me that you were interested in Frank.  
SALLY: I'd rather not discuss that.  
BLY: But it's impossible not to. We must talk about it. Your young man is in a great deal of trouble.  
SALLY (*Defiantly*): Frank isn't a murderer.  
BLY: Will the police believe that?  
SALLY: They must believe it.  
BLY (*Smiling*): And I want them to believe it, too. You see, I know Frank didn't kill Mrs. Frazier.  
SALLY: You—you know?  
BLY: When I visited your mother last night, I noticed something.

Mr. Bly, do you know who the murderer is?  
SALLY: I think so.  
BLY: You should have gone to the police.  
SALLY: Would they believe the suspicions of an eccentric old man? I have no proof, and yet—  
SALLY (*Interrupting anxiously*): What is it, Mr. Bly? Oh, tell me!  
SALLY: Well, Frank's bedroom door was open.  
NARRATOR: Suddenly Sally and Mr. Bly are interrupted by loud screams from Mrs. Murphy.  
MURPHY: Stop, murderer! There he is—on the fire escape!  
SALLY: Frank! Mrs. Murphy's seen him.  
MURPHY: He's going into Mr. Bly's apartment. Call the police!  
SALLY: Mr. Bly's apartment. Oh, no! What did you see last night, Mr. Bly?  
BLY: There isn't time. If he knows that I saw him, there's no telling what he'll do.  
SALLY: Frank's in your flat. He thought you killed Mrs. Frazier.  
BLY: That I killed her? (*Suddenly*) Is that policeman still visiting your mother?  
SALLY: Yes, but—  
BLY (*Interrupting*): I must see him.  
SALLY: No, please! He'll arrest Frank.  
NARRATOR: Mr. Bly runs out the door in great excitement as Frank leaps back onto the roof. He is breathless from climbing and calls to Sally.  
FRANK: The Murphys saw me.  
SALLY: What are we going to do?  
FRANK: I can't go back to the warehouse. I'm going to find Tim.  
SALLY: Please wait. Bly was here. He said he might be able to help you.

FRANK: Bly? But he must have been the guy who left the pearl in my pocket.

SALLY (*Shaking head*): He thinks you're innocent.

FRANK (*Angrily*): I'm tired of what people think about me. I'm going to take my chances with the law. You'd better stay here. I don't want you around when I speak to Tim.

SALLY (*Resigned*): All right, Frank. I'll be waiting for you.

NARRATOR: Frank leaves through the roof door. Loud voices are heard from the court. Suddenly a dejected Frank appears again at the roof door. He walks slowly to Sally.

FRANK: It's no use.

SALLY: But, Mr. Bly knows you're innocent. Oh, Frank, you should have found Tim.

FRANK (*Bitterly*): Bly won't be able to help me. He's lying at the foot of the stairs leading to the roof.

SALLY: Oh, Frank.

FRANK: It looks as though he was thrown down the stairs. He's dead!

SALLY: No!

FRANK: That clinches the case against me.

SALLY (*Quickly*): Whoever killed Mrs. Frazier had to silence Mr. Bly. The murderer realized that Bly had seen something last night. Maybe the killer heard Bly talking to me.

FRANK: Tim won't buy that story.

SALLY (*Frightened*): What are we going to do?

FRANK (*Shrugging*): This is it. I can't run away—and I can't give myself up. Tim will come for me. He'll be here in a few minutes. Murphy is screaming his head off in the court.

SALLY: Oh, Frank—

NARRATOR: Suddenly Frank puts his hand across Sally's mouth. He points to the roof door as if to say someone is coming. Sally nods her head to show she understands. Frank quickly hides behind the door. Sally watches the doorway nervously. Lefty appears and starts toward her.

Lefty: Oh, Lefty, you frightened me to death. For a moment, I thought you were . . .

SALLY (*Quickly*): What did you think?

Lefty (*Taking his arm*): You've always been a good friend of Frank's. You must help him now.

SALLY: How can I help a murderer? Where's he hiding?

Lefty: I haven't seen him.

SALLY: You were never very good at lying.

Lefty: If you're going to talk like that about Frank, you can go away now. (*Thoughtfully*) Why did you come here, anyway?

SALLY: You're a smart girl. You've probably figured that one out.

Lefty: I don't know what you're talking about.

SALLY: Maybe you don't know anything about the apple tart, either.

Lefty (*Frightened*): The—the apple tart?

SALLY: Yes, the apple tart that you saw Mildred eating a little while ago. You asked her about that apple tart. You told her to find out where Mom got it.

Lefty: You're crazy.

SALLY: Oh, no, I'm pretty smart. I figured that you must have seen your boyfriend and that he told you he bought those tarts for Mrs. Frazier last night. You probably wondered how they got into Mom's apartment. You probably knew who took them from Mrs. Frazier's place and put them in Mom's apartment.

Lefty: The murderer!

SALLY: Yes, the murderer. Now, we couldn't have you wondering about things like that.

Lefty: It was you. You killed Mrs. Frazier! And—and you killed Mr. Bly, too!

SALLY: Bly was a nosy old fool. What did he tell you a little while ago?

Lefty: He didn't have time to tell me anything, but I think he

knew the truth. Did he see you go into Frank's bedroom and leave the checkered jacket there after you killed Mrs. Frazier? Did he see you put the pearls in Frank's pocket? You were probably listening outside the door. You heard Bly say that he was going to the police. When he left me, you—you killed him.

LEFTY: That's a nice story.

SALLY: And you tried to frighten Mildred, too. You wanted to find out what she had seen last night. You watched her all day because you were nervous.

LEFTY: But Mildred is my key witness. She saw Frank commit the murder, remember? And it's only a matter of time before she tells that to the police.

SALLY: Yes, Mildred will remember. She'll also remember what she saw Mrs. Frazier's room in the mirror. You recognized the dresser and the hat boxes on the bed. How did you know about the hat boxes? How could you have known about them? You were there last night.

LEFTY: There are ways of taking care of troublesome people. But, before anything happens to Mildred, she will have told the police that she saw Frank commit the murder. I'll see to that.

SALLY (*Excitedly*): She saw someone wearing Frank's coat. She saw the gun in his hand and—

NARRATOR: Suddenly Sally stops and looks at Lefty. He is clutching her arm with his left hand! She points to his hand and cries out.

SALLY: *That proves you're the killer!*

LEFTY (*Scornfully*): Where's your proof?

SALLY: Mildred saw someone shoot Mrs. Frazier, and he held the gun in his right hand. She saw his reflection in the big mirror in Mrs. Stevens' bedroom. If it appeared that the murderer used his right hand, that means that he was actually left-handed!

LEFTY: I—I don't get it.

I was a fool not to think of it before. Try standing before a mirror holding something in your right hand. It will appear to be in your left hand. Frank is righthanded. If he killed Mrs. Frazier, Mildred would have seen his reflection holding the gun in his left hand!

A pretty little theory. But I don't think you'll tell anyone about it.

I don't care what you do to me. Someone will be able to put these facts together, too. Someone will remember that a reflection in a looking glass is always opposite of the real thing. You're the only lefthanded person involved in this case. You had access to Frank's bedroom. You could have taken his jacket, killed Mrs. Frazier, and returned the jacket to Frank's room with the pearls in his pocket. I'll bet that's what Mr. Bly saw while he was visiting Mom.

LEFTY (*Angrily*): You're pretty smart! O.K. I killed her. I killed them both. That old dame had plenty of money and I was sick of living in a grubby room. Why should she have all that money buried away? I knew Mrs. Frazier liked your boyfriend and I had a chance to fix him, too. He's always been the fair-haired boy around this house.

SALLY: You won't get away with it. Why, Mildred's probably telling Tim about what she saw right now! Tim will figure it out.

LEFTY: It's only a short jump across the court onto the next roof. I have most of the dough, although there's some stashed away in my room. Maybe your friends will think that Frank put it there.

NARRATOR: Suddenly Lefty lunges toward Sally and pushes her to the edge of the roof. She screams as they struggle. Frank leaves his hiding place and jumps on Lefty. As they struggle Frank loses his footing and Lefty breaks away and starts down the fire escape. Tim dashes across the roof and peers over. . . .

TIM: Stop!

FRANK: He's getting away!

SALLY: Oh, Tim, it was Lefty! He killed Mrs. Frazier and Mr. Bly. We can't let him escape.

TIM: He won't get far. My men are surrounding the place.

FRANK: Look! Mrs. Murphy clobbered Lefty with a flowerpot!

TIM: And there's one of my boys climbing the fire escape to get Lefty. I'd better get down there—fast! It looks like the end of the case. (*Grimly*) I just found Bly at the foot of the stairs. You'd better come to headquarters, Frank. You'll have to answer some questions.

SALLY (*Protesting*): But he's innocent!

TIM: I know. I looked through Lefty's room a little while ago and found some money in his suitcase. It was pretty suspicious. On my way up here, I heard enough to tag him as the killer.

SALLY: But what about Mrs. Murphy? She saw Frank outside Mrs. Frazier's place last night.

FRANK (*Nodding*): I knew she saw me. That was after I discovered Mrs. Frazier's body. I knew that I had to get away. She'd identify me.

SALLY (*Interrupting*): And Lefty called the police about the murder to throw suspicion on you. He hoped that they'd find you in Mrs. Frazier's flat. (*Sighs*) Oh, let's forget it, Frank. You're safe now.

TIM: And innocent. I'll meet you down at Mom's place.

FRANK: You've been wonderful, Sally, about everything. You had faith in me, and, well, what else can a fellow say?

SALLY (*Smiling*): I couldn't let anyone take our wonderland away. The Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, the Looking Glass—yes, it was all there. And I won't let anyone take it away—not ever.

FRANK: We'll forget everything that happened. And our wonderland never looked better!

THE END

## The Boat Club Dance

Here is an amusing comedy which contains the usual confusion and mix-up. Read it to yourself.

Discuss the characters:

What are Penny and Jackie most interested in?

Is Polly Peters different? How?

What about Aunt Abby? The Commodore?

How would you read the part of Bill? Mr. Jones?

Choose parts with the help of your chairman.

Read your part to yourself. Be sure you are familiar with it. Know every word. Understand the character you will play.

Practice reading aloud together. Do one scene at a time. Discuss the scene. Decide where you need to improve. Help each other. Read again.

Evaluate your reading:

1. Did you vary your voice to show feeling?
2. Did you stress certain words to bring out meaning?
3. Did you come in right on time?

Arrange to read to the class.

## THE BOAT CLUB DANCE

by Christina Robinson

Characters

(6 girls, 3 boys, and a narrator)

NARRATOR