

# Murder Back Stage

## SYNOPSIS

**Chris McDermott (1998)**

**7,546 words – including dramatis personae**

**3 male characters; 3 female characters**

The drama is set backstage at the West Griddlington Amateur Dramatic Society. Rehearsals are underway for the latest offering from the society's leading light, Alex Mitchel.

Alex is the author and director of "The Diary of An Urban Tree Dweller, a modern Robin Hood" a pretentious self-indulgent piece written to convince the townspeople of West Griddlington of the importance of conservation.

There are many references to the nurturing qualities of Gaia, or Mother Earth, and the importance of preserving the forest. Alex's girlfriend, Heather Ronson, and her daughter, Sarah Ronson, play the parts of two hippy tree dwellers who are determined to save the forest from the evil road company, represented by the Sir Douglas, played by Alex, and his sidekick, played by Jo Mablethorpe.

The ridiculous dialogue for "The Urban Tree Dweller" is complemented by the tree dwellers' costumes, which are green and/or brown, pinned with paper leaves a la primary school play trees. In reality, Heather is becoming tired of Alex's pretension, but is still somehow under his spell. Sarah has had an abiding hatred of Alex, someone she had previously admired, following her alleged rape at 16. She cannot understand why her mother still lives with

Alex, and would be delighted if Heather returned to her former husband, Sarah's father, Brian Ronson. Brian still carries a candle for Heather, despite being Jo Mablethorpe's partner. Jo realises this, and finds the situation very threatening. She has already been upset by the West Griddlington Amateur Dramatic Society's rejection of her script in favour of Alex's. She is perhaps the only woman in the western world who could find Brian remotely interesting and, in truth, she has nothing to fear from Brian's continuing interest in his estranged spouse.

The cast is completed by Rodrigo Castello, a stereotypically error-prone foreigner in the Manuel (Fawlty Towers) mode. His English, like that of Manuel, leaves a lot to be desired. He too plays the part of "an urban tree dweller" as does Brian. (N.B. Rodrigo is taller than Brian.)

The majority of the action takes place 'backstage', in rehearsal. In Act Two of the murder mystery the characters are backstage, going through their final preparations, waiting to perform. In turn, they leave the stage to 'go on stage'. Unfortunately, one of them leaves never to return. You can probably guess who the victim is, but can you guess who is his murderer? Let us all "worship at the temple of Gaia."