

# ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

A Humorous Reading

by  
Joseph Kesselring



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The scene is the living room of the old Brewster home in Brooklyn. It is just as Victorian as the two sisters, Abby and Martha Brewster, who occupy the house with their nephew, Teddy.

Abby, a plump little darling in her late sixties is discovered with Teddy. Teddy is in his forties and his manner and makeup suggest Theodore Roosevelt. The door opens and Martha enters. Martha is also a sweet elderly woman with Victorian charm.

MARTHA: Did you just have tea? Isn't it rather late?

ABBY: (Has a secret) Yes—and dinner's going to be late too.—Teddy! You're going to Panama and dig another lock for the canal.

TEDDY: Dee-lighted! That's bully! Just bully! I shall prepare for the journey. (Turns to go upstairs, cries CHARGE! and rushes off.)

MARTHA: (Elated) Abby! All by yourself?

ABBY: Oh, I got along fine!

MARTHA: I'll run right downstairs and see. (Starts happily)

ABBY: Oh, no, there wasn't time; Dr. Harper was coming you know. (Coyly) Martha—look in the window-seat.

But just then Mortimer Brewster walks in. Mortimer is a drama critic. He greets the aunts and turns to Teddy, who appears again dressed in tropical clothes.

MORTIMER: (Gravely) How are you, Mr. President?

TEDDY: Bully, thank you. Well, good-bye, I'm off to Panama.

ABBY: I do hope Mortimer, the play tonight will be something you can enjoy for once. What's the name of it?

MORT: "Murder Will Out."—When the curtain goes up the first thing you'll see will be a dead body.

He lifts window-seat and sees one. Not believing it, he drops the window-seat and starts away.

Then goes back, throws window-seat open and stares in. Drops the seat again and backs away.

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---