

Illinois Jane and the Pyramid of Peril

by
T. James Belich

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CHARACTERS

DR. ILLINOIS JANE (F), *dashing young heroine*

SID KNICKERBOCK (M), *her reluctant sidekick*

PIERRE LEMALODEUR (M), *our odor-endowed villain*

CLAUDE, *Frenchman of many faces*

MARCEL(LE), *mime of evil*

DR. THADEUS JANE (M), *the heroine's father*

CAPTAIN NOBEARD, *mighty pirate*

TIN TOE TERRY, *reasonably mighty pirate*

(F) indicates a female role

(M) indicates a male role

All other roles may be cast as either gender

Total Roles: 8 (1 female, 3 male, 4 male or female)

Production History

Illinois Jane and the Pyramid of Peril was first performed by the Hodge-Podge Players in the Twin Cities, Minnesota on June 3rd through 6th, 2004. It was directed by Jaron Burdick with the following cast:

DR. ILLINOIS JANE

Kelly Belich

SID KNICKERBOCK

Chris Bowsby

PIERRE LEMALODEUR

Kevin Whitby

CLAUDE

Sarah Cadorette

MARCELLE

Amanda Zenk

DR. THADEUS JANE

Nathan Wagner

CAPTAIN NOBEARD

Bradley McCoy

TIN TOE TERRY

Lisa Barnes

Technical Requirements

Set Description

The set is comprised primarily of two upstage platforms which are separated by a distance of several feet, allowing for an upstage center entrance. During the final scene, which takes place within the pyramid, this entrance is framed by an archway or pair of pillars that are decorated in Egyptian hieroglyphics. The two platforms stand about two or three feet high and each one has a small stairway leading up to it. During scene 3 the platforms are pushed closer together, leaving only a small gap, to simulate the appearance of two adjacent train cars. The gap should be small enough for an actor to easily jump across. Several banners, decorated in ancient Egyptian style, hang from upstage to add to the Egyptian atmosphere. The stage may be further decorated as desired.

Sound Effects

Most of the "special effects" in this play are intended to be suggested through the use of sound and lights, rather than be portrayed literally. The necessary sound effects are as follows:

- A moving train
- A person hitting the ground
- A person falling in the river
- Large stone doors slamming shut *
- Stone ceiling slowly coming down *
- Stone ceiling moving back up *
- Stone doors opening again *
- Giant boulder crashing to the ground and rolling *
- Ominous female laughter

* Available at <http://www.playwrighting.org/illinois.html>

Prop List

Whip (Optional)

Pedestal

Small platform (rests on top of the pedestal)

"Stone" tablet

Lots of paper airplanes

Canteen

Guns (2)

Pyramid shaped artifact (fits under the small platform)

Spatula

Tea tray with:

- Tea pot

- Cups and saucers (4)

- Small pitcher of cream

- Small bowl of sugar cubes

- Plate of scones

Cloth (to cover the tea tray)

Map of Cairo

Pair of joke glasses with fake nose

Sign reading "Information"

Stack of translation cards

"Stone" ball

Glass vial filled with colored liquid

Several "gold" artifacts

Pirate swords (2)

Crumpets

SCENE 1

(The lights come up, very dimly, on what appears to be an ancient temple. Enter ILLINOIS JANE in dramatic, heroic fashion. If possible, she should swing in on a rope. She is dressed in a leather hat and coat, Indiana Jones style, and carries a whip. Enter SID KNICKERBOCK in a clumsy and utterly undramatic manner which leaves him sprawled out on the ground. He is dressed in knickers, knee-high socks, prominent glasses, and clothes more suitable for a quiet library than a cave or tomb.)

ILLINOIS: Shh! *(She helps SID to his feet.)*

SID: Sorry, Dr. Jane! *(They proceed cautiously forward.)*

ILLINOIS: Careful, Sid. This place is filled with booby traps. The slightest wrong step could set off a trap of diabolical proportions.

SID: Are you sure you need me to come?

ILLINOIS: Of course! Have you ever heard of an adventure hero who didn't have a sidekick?

SID: Well, no, and I have made a thorough study of the role of the sidekick in adventure literature.

ILLINOIS: Then you know how these things work.

SID: I do, and if you ask me, the part of the reluctant sidekick is rather overused. *(He walks forward.)*

ILLINOIS: Stop! *(SID freezes in a position that will be difficult to hold for very long.)* Don't move.

SID: That might be difficult, Dr. Jane.

ILLINOIS: Do you see those markings on the floor? *(SID twists his head into an even more unnatural position.)*

SID: Yes.

ILLINOIS: We have to walk across those squares in exactly the right order, or else...

SID: Or else what?

ILLINOIS: Splat! Or maybe stab. Or squash, it could be squash. At any rate, it'll be something altogether unpleasant, and...

SID: Getting uncomfortable here.

ILLINOIS: Right! The squares!

SID: Which ones do I step on?

ILLINOIS: Let's see, they're laid out in a geometric pattern and each square has a symbol inscribed upon it. If I can just decipher the meaning behind...

SID: Which squares!

ILLINOIS: Uh... forward! *(SID hops forward.)* Forward again. *(SID hops again and continues to obey ILLINOIS' instructions.)* Now right... right... forward... left... forward... right... forward... forward... forward. Good, you're through!

SID: No squash?

ILLINOIS: No squash.

SID: Good. *(Slight pause)*

ILLINOIS: Uh, Sid?

SID: Yes, Dr. Jane?

ILLINOIS: You can move now.

SID: Oh! *(He returns to a normal position.)*

ILLINOIS: My turn. *(She hops from square to square in the same order as SID.)* There!

SID: So how did you figure out the correct order?

ILLINOIS: I was able to determine that the symbols served as some kind of directional indicator. Knowing that, I used my extensive knowledge of cartography...

SID: Wait a minute, they're arrows. You just told me to follow the arrows.

ILLINOIS: Yes, in layman's terms.

SID: *(Sarcastically)* Brilliant, Dr. Jane.

ILLINOIS: Thank you. Now stay close. We don't know what sort of deathtrap will be waiting for us next.

(During the following lines ILLINOIS and SID transition to a different chamber within the "temple." This may be easily accomplished by having ILLINOIS and SID exit briefly, continue their dialogue offstage, and re-enter from a different direction.)

SID: We don't?

ILLINOIS: No, we forgot the map at home, remember?

SID: Right. That would have been good to have.

ILLINOIS: It certainly would have helped us avoid that crocodile pit earlier.

SID: Why do you never fall in those?

ILLINOIS: My unerring sense of direction.

(If ILLINOIS and SID have exited to aid in the transition, they should re-enter by this point.)

SID: So which way now?

ILLINOIS: What we want should be somewhere in this chamber. *(She points to a pedestal which stands on an upstage platform. A stone tablet, the object of their search, sits on a small platform on top of the pedestal. A map is inscribed upon the tablet, which is also covered in Egyptian hieroglyphics.)* There! On that pedestal.

SID: I see it, Dr. Jane. *(He starts to walk towards the pedestal and sets off the next booby trap by tripping an invisible tripwire. Several paper airplanes fly in from offstage.)*

ILLINOIS: Watch out! *(They dodge the airplanes. SID picks one up.)* Careful, they're poison-tipped darts. Sort of.

SID: What did I do? *(He steps back towards ILLINOIS and sets the trap off again. More paper airplanes.)*

ILLINOIS: Stay where you are, Sid! *(She examines the ground.)* Look, tripwires, all the way to the pedestal. Step very carefully. *(She tiptoes towards the pedestal, carefully stepping over each tripwire. SID follows.)*

SID: Do you really think this tablet will lead us to the pyramid?

ILLINOIS: I'm sure of it. The pyramid of Hatshepsut. My father has been looking for it all his life. It's been lost for over 3000 years, ever since Hatshepsut disappeared after ruling Egypt as the first female pharaoh.

SID: That's a lot of exposition for one line.

ILLINOIS: I know, but we have to keep the story moving.

SID: You didn't mention the Elixir of Life.

ILLINOIS: One thing at a time. *(They reach the pedestal.)* This is it! But I'll need something... *(She looks around and spots the canteen SID has slung over his shoulder.)* Like this. *(She takes the canteen and weighs it in her hand. Satisfied, she prepares to replace the tablet with the canteen. She does so quickly, so as not to set off any booby trap that might be connected to the pedestal. Nothing happens and ILLINOIS lifts the tablet triumphantly.)* Here we are, Sid. The key to finding the lost pyramid of Hatshepsut.

SID: Where Hatshepsut hid the Elixir of Life, the secret of immortality.

ILLINOIS: Exactly. *(Slight pause)*

SID: Remind me why we want that.

ILLINOIS: Sid, it's the Elixir of Life.

SID: Of course.

ILLINOIS: Now, let's see... *(She starts to study the tablet.)* Look! There's something written on the back of the tablet. *(She reads the inscription as SID picks up the canteen and takes a drink.)*

SID: What does it say? *(ILLINOIS sees that he has taken the canteen.)*

ILLINOIS: Sid!

SID: What? *(Slight pause)* Oh! Was it booby trapped?

ILLINOIS: *(Surprised at the lack of a trap)* No. How ironic.

SID: Not really.

ILLINOIS: Yes it is.

SID: No, it's not. Trust me, I'm a librarian. *(He takes another drink and then accidentally drops the canteen. Yet more paper airplanes.)* Sorry. *(ILLINOIS sniffs.)*

ILLINOIS: Do you smell that? *(SID sniffs and grimaces.)*

SID: Smells like rotten cheese.

(Enter the villain of our story, the diabolical Frenchman PIERRE LEMALODEUR. He enters with his henchmen, the Frenchman of Many Faces, otherwise known as CLAUDE, and MARCEL(LE), the Mime. CLAUDE reappears throughout the play as various minor villains who die off one by one. Each is technically a different character, distinguished by slight alterations in appearance, but all are obviously played by the same person. MARCEL is dressed as a typical mime, complete with appropriate facial make-up. MARCEL's "lines" are primarily intended to give the actor a sense of what to portray. It is not expected that the audience understand word for word what MARCEL is "saying." PIERRE and CLAUDE both have guns which they point at ILLINOIS and SID. MARCEL, what else, mimes pointing a gun. PIERRE and CLAUDE speak with French accents.)

PIERRE: Do not move, Americans, or else you shall have to face the wrath of France! *(He waits for a reaction and receives none.)* You are not afraid?

ILLINOIS: You did say France, right?

PIERRE: I did.

ILLINOIS: Then no. You, Sid?

SID: No.

PIERRE: Insolence! I shall teach you to fear the Society of Perpetual Arrogance as well as I, its greatest leader, Pierre LeMalodeur!

ILLINOIS: Malodeur? *(ILLINOIS begins to laugh. She then whispers something in SID's ear and he begins to laugh as well.)*

PIERRE: No, stop! Do not laugh! Never laugh at Pierre LeMalodeur!

ILLINOIS: But your name means "bad smell"!

SID: That explains the cheese.

PIERRE: I will have you know that LeMalodeur is a proud and noble name...

CLAUDE: We call him LeStink behind his back.

PIERRE: Yes, they call me Pierre LeStink! *(To CLAUDE)* What?

SID: Pierre LeStink, that's good.

PIERRE: *(Furious)* Quiet! I must now reveal my evil plan! *(To CLAUDE and MARCEL)* And you, do not speak!

MARCEL: *(Mimes, "Who, me?")*

PIERRE: (To MARCEL) Especially you!

ILLINOIS: But we already know your evil plan. You want the tablet.

PIERRE: You do not know that. I could be here to... eh...

ILLINOIS: You want the tablet.

PIERRE: No I don't.

ILLINOIS: Yes you do.

PIERRE: Very well, no more pretenses. I want the tablet!

ILLINOIS: You'll have to come and get it.

PIERRE: I am not such a fool as that.

CLAUDE: (*Moving towards the pedestal*) I shall get it!

PIERRE: No! You do what I say, not what she says! (*CLAUDE stops, but she has already set off one of the tripwires. Even more paper airplanes. No one is hit.*)

ILLINOIS: (*To SID*) That isn't the most effective booby trap, is it? (*PIERRE picks up one of the airplanes.*)

SID: Watch out, they're poisoned darts.

PIERRE: They are not darts. They are paper airplanes. (*He gives the airplane to CLAUDE who examines it and pokes her finger with the tip. CLAUDE then seizes up and dies, making as big a deal of this as possible. When she falls to the ground she sets off another tripwire, resulting in still more paper airplanes.*) I did not say they were not poisoned, you fool. (*To MARCEL*) Marcel, take her away. (*MARCEL drags CLAUDE's body offstage and then re-enters. In the meantime, ILLINOIS and SID begin to quietly cross the tripwires, attempting to sneak away with the tablet.*) Stop! You will now bring me the tablet!

ILLINOIS: Never!

SID: He does have a gun, Dr. Jane. Maybe we should give it to him.

ILLINOIS: But the tablet is a priceless artifact, perhaps the most ancient map ever discovered.

PIERRE: The tablet or your lives.

ILLINOIS: Very well. *(She hands PIERRE the tablet.)* But we'll find you, LeMalodeur. I'll never let you get away with this.

PIERRE: That is what all the heroes say. And yet we villains...

ILLINOIS: ...usually lose in the end.

PIERRE: That is not so.

SID: Actually, it is. I've made quite a study of this and...

ILLINOIS: Sid, not now.

SID: Right.

PIERRE: *(To ILLINOIS)* And who are you that you think you can stop me?

ILLINOIS: Dr. Illinois Jane, cartographer extraordinaire.

SID: That means she studies maps.

PIERRE: I know what it means! It comes from the French!

SID: Does it?

PIERRE: Yes!

SID: Oh. Sorry.

PIERRE: I have heard of you, Illinois Jane, but you shall not stop my evil schemes! No one shall. And then the world shall know the name of Pierre...

ILLINOIS: LeStink?

PIERRE: You shall pay for your mockery, Illinois Jane. You have not heard the last of Pierre LeStink. I mean, Stinky Pete. I mean... oh, never mind. *(He begins to exit.)*

MARCEL: *(Mimes to PIERRE, "Aren't you going to shoot them?")*

PIERRE: What? Shoot them? I cannot, you fool. The play would be over without the heroine. No one would come to see a play just about me. Am I truly so unlovable?

ILLINOIS and SID: Yes.

PIERRE: Well, when you wonder what drove this Frenchman to a life of crime, wonder no more! *(He makes a dramatic, villainy exit. Pause. MARCEL looks around, realizes that PIERRE is gone, and exits after him.)*

ILLINOIS: Great. My dad is going to kill us. He hates it when I let the villain get away!

SID: I told you we shouldn't have broken into his museum.

ILLINOIS: If we hadn't broken in, then we wouldn't know who stole the tablet, would we?

SID: I suppose not.

ILLINOIS: But don't worry, Pierre LeMalodeur has made one crucial mistake!

SID: What's that?

ILLINOIS: According to the inscription on the back of the tablet we'll need a second artifact in order to pass the traps in the pyramid and find the Elixir of Life. *(She starts to cross back towards the pedestal, again stepping over each tripwire.)*

SID: *(Following ILLINOIS)* You mean LeMalodeur will be able to find the pyramid, but not get through it?

ILLINOIS: Exactly! You see what happens when men don't follow directions?

SID: Hey!

ILLINOIS: And if I know my dad he'd hide it right... *(She lifts the small platform on top of the pedestal and uncovers a pyramid shaped artifact. The pyramid is also covered in hieroglyphics, only they are written upside-down.)* Here. Now, we've got to follow LeMalodeur. It's our only chance to find the pyramid. *(She returns the platform to its original position, and she and SID start to cross back over the tripwires.)* I just hope we get out of here before... *(A light switch goes on, flooding the stage with much more light than before, revealing that they are indeed in a museum. DR. THADEUS JANE, ILLINOIS' father, enters. He is dressed impeccably in a suit and bow tie and exudes an air of confidence that can only be found in someone who believes he is the James Bond of the cartographic world.)* Hi, Dad.

SID: Afternoon, Dr. Thadeus, sir.

THADEUS: Illinois, what are you doing here? *(He sees that the tablet is missing.)* And where is the tablet of Hatshepsut?

ILLINOIS: Relax, Dad, this time it wasn't me.

THADEUS: Oh?

ILLINOIS: No, we tried to stop the thieves, but they escaped.

THADEUS: You mean you let them get away with the tablet?

ILLINOIS: They had guns, Dad, which I would have had except...

THADEUS: A true heroine never needs a gun.

ILLINOIS: That's what you always say.

THADEUS: I must say, Illinois, I'm very disappointed.

ILLINOIS: What was I supposed to do? Let them shoot us?

THADEUS: I'm certain you could have found some way of stopping the thieves, had you put your mind to it. *(Before ILLINOIS can reply, he continues speaking and begins to cross towards the pedestal.)* But at least they didn't get the second artifact.

ILLINOIS: Actually, they did.

SID and THADEUS: They did?

ILLINOIS: Yep.

THADEUS: This is serious. I suppose I shall have to organize an expedition and follow them.

ILLINOIS: No need, Dad, Sid and I will take care of it. Let's go, Sid. *(She tries to leave with SID as quickly as possible.)*

THADEUS: Very well, you and Mr. Knickerbock may come along if you like. I'll make the arrangements and meet you in Cairo. *(ILLINOIS stops.)*

ILLINOIS: What?

THADEUS: That's where the thieves are headed: Cairo, Egypt. Didn't you know?

ILLINOIS: No, how did you?

THADEUS: I was studying the tablet last night. The map to Hatshepsut's pyramid begins in Cairo.

ILLINOIS: And where do we go from there? *(Slight pause)*

THADEUS: I don't actually remember...

ILLINOIS: Dad!

THADEUS: When it's written down on a map I shouldn't have to remember.

SID: He has a point.

THADEUS: If only you hadn't lost the tablet.

ILLINOIS: *(Sarcastically)* Right, Dad, because it's all my fault the tablet was stolen.

THADEUS: Well, I'm sure you did your best. I'll see you in Cairo. And don't worry, Illinois, I'll find the pyramid. *(He exits and leaves behind a fuming ILLINOIS.)*

SID: Dr. Jane, why didn't you tell your dad that we have the second artifact?

ILLINOIS: Because we're going to discover that pyramid, Sid. Now, let's go find ourselves a Frenchman. *(They start to exit.)*

SID: I thought we were looking for a pyramid.

ILLINOIS: That too. *(They exit.)*

To read the remainder of the script, please contact:

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