

The beginning of

SORRY, YOU'VE GOT MY WRONG NUMBER (from **RADIO RIDICULOUS**)

a comedy in one act

by Rich Orloff

Note: SORRY YOU'VE GOT MY WRONG NUMBER is designed to be performed as a theater piece – but in the style of old-time radio plays which were broadcast in front of an audience, preferably with live sound effects and musical accompaniment.

The play has 4 male and 6 female roles and can be performed with a cast of five (3 m., 2 w.) or more. Women can play male roles (and vice versa), as long as the audience can always ascertain the proper gender of the characters.

SFX: A CREAKY DOOR OPENS SLOWLY

ANNOUNCER

Open the door to danger.

MUSIC: SPOOKY MUSIC

SFX: A CREAKY DOOR OPENS SLOWLY

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Open the door to terror.

MUSIC: MORE SPOOKY MUSIC

SFX: A CREAKY DOOR OPENS SLOWLY

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Open the door to a world where evil goes unpunished, and where door hinges never get oiled... Open the door to SUSPENSE-ORAMA.

MUSIC: CLIMACTIC CHORDS

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

SUSPENSE-ORAMA, brought to you each week by Gerisqual, the multivitamin–multimineral tonic that adds iron to your bloodstream as we curdle your blood. Tonight's tale: SORRY, YOU'VE GOT MY WRONG NUMBER.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

DETECTIVE

In all my years as a New York City police detective, in all my years as a human being, I never found a case as fascinating as the one I'm going to tell you now. That I was personally involved in it still fills me with amazement – and gratitude.

I suppose the story begins in a dingy one-room apartment in the kind of bad neighborhood that gives good bad neighborhoods a bad name. According to the police interrogation, the conversation went something like this...

MUSIC: BRIDGE

ROY

Do you have everything?

GUS

I got the key to the apartment, I got the gun, and I got the catnip.

ROY

Great. Now after I meet with our client –

GUS

Roy, I'm beginning to have second thoughts about this.

ROY

You're not turning yellow, are you?

GUS

No! You know me. I've wanted to be a killer ever since I was in the second grade – for the third time. But, but –

ROY

But what, Gus?

GUS

But she's a poor, defenseless cripple.

ROY

The dame ain't poor. She and her husband live on Easy Street. With a view of the Easy River.

GUS

Okay, so she's a *rich* defenseless –

ROY

She has a highly overprotective cat.

GUS

She's a helpless cripple.

ROY

So?

GUS

It's my first murder, Roy.

ROY

So?

GUS

I always thought I'd start with a no-good rat and work my way up to helpless cripple.

ROY

Hey, we're probably doing her a favor. Stuck in a wheelchair all day. She can't do the things you and I do.

GUS

Like robbing and killing people?

ROY

Exactly.

GUS

But what if she's a good person?

ROY

She's crippled. She's forced to be good whether she wants to be or not.

GUS

That sounds so sad.

ROY

The way I see it, this is like a mercy killing, only more lucrative. So you in or out?

GUS

I don't know. It just seems so, so despicable. Then again, it's 1939 and I'm broke... I'm in.

ROY

Great. You hold onto the bag with the supplies. I'm going pay a visit to our client to make sure we get the first half of our dough before he and his floozy leave to spend the night in Atlantic City.

GUS

The ol' Atlantic City alibi, huh?

ROY

Yep. He's coming down with the floozy. After our meeting, I'll call you at that pay phone.

GUS

Oh, Roy, one last question.

ROY

What?

GUS

After we shoot the old lady and watch her die... who's going to take care of the cat?

ROY

We gotta work on your attitude.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

DETECTIVE

Meanwhile, just a few blocks away...

MUSIC: BRIDGE BUILDS TO DISSONANT, JARRED CLIMAX

DETECTIVE

An organ player was having an epileptic fit.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

DETECTIVE

A half-hour later, in a nice apartment on Easy Street...

KITTY

Meow.

LUCILLE

Oh, Kitty, I'm so glad you're here. Why does Albert have to work so late? Leaving me all alone.

KITTY
(offended)

Meow.

LUCILLE
Well, almost all alone.

KITTY
(pleased)

Meow.

LUCILLE
And with the radio broken, I can't even listen to
AMOS AND ANDY, my favorite fake colored people.
I'm going to call him and insist he come home.

SFX: A PHONE NUMBER BEING DIALED, THEN A BUSY SIGNAL

LUCILLE
Oh, his line's been busy so long.

KITTY
(helpful)
Meow.

LUCILLE
Good idea. I'll get the operator to interrupt.

SFX: THE NUMBER "O" BEING DIALED

OPERATOR #1
Operator.

LUCILLE
Yes, Operator, I've been trying to reach
my husband all night, and his line's been
busy. I'm afraid it might be off the hook.
Could you dial the number for me?

OPERATOR #1
I'll try. What number, please?

LUCILLE
Bovine 6-2491.

SFX: A PHONE NUMBER BEING DIALED

LUCILLE

(OVER THE DIALING:)

It's so late and I'm a helpless cripple and
it's my maid's night off and I'm all alone –
except for my lovable little kitty.

KITTY

Meow.

SFX: THE PHONE NUMBER BEING REACHED

(*Note:* THE CALL SHOULD SOUND SLIGHTLY MUFFLED.)

ROY

So there's been a change of plans.

GUS

The murder's off?

ROY

No, it's still on. We'll meet at her apartment
in ten minutes. But our client has decided
we shouldn't use the gun.

GUS

Then how do –

ROY

We strangle her. So there will be
no blood. Our client wants no blood.

GUS

He sounds very considerate.

ROY

He doesn't want to ruin the carpet.

GUS

Oh.

ROY

And then we take all her jewelry, so it looks
like robbery, and then maybe we cop a feel.

GUS

Why do we do that?

ROY

Professional perk.

Sorry, You've Got My Wrong Number EXCERPT, 7

GUS

How about if we cop two feels?

ROY

That's unprofessional.

GUS

I have so much to learn.

ROY

So I'll meet you there in ten minutes.

GUS

And what about the cat?

ROY

We smother it to death.

SFX: CLICK – THEN THE LINE GOES DEAD. THE PHONE IS HUNG UP.

LUCILLE

Oh, how awful. How terribly awful.
Some poor woman –

KITTY

(concerned)

Meow.

LUCILLE

– and her cat are going to be murdered.
I better tell someone.

SFX: THE NUMBER "O" BEING DIALED

OPERATOR #2

Operator.

LUCILLE

Yes, Operator, I just asked you to dial
Bovine 6-2491, but you dialed the wrong
number by mistake, and I guess the
wires got crossed or something –

OPERATOR #2

Do you want me to try the number again?

LUCILLE

Wait. I listened to the call –

OPERATOR #2

That's not nice.

LUCILLE

I know, but they were planning a murder. Something has to be done.

OPERATOR #2

What do you suggest?

LUCILLE

Can't you dial the number again and make the same mistake?

OPERATOR #2

I'm sorry, but phone company policy prevents us from making the same mistake twice.

LUCILLE

But you have to trace that call; it's a matter of life and death!

OPERATOR #2

Life and death?

LUCILLE

Yes. Life and death.

OPERATOR #2

Okay. Let me get the "life and death" form.

LUCILLE

The "life and -

OPERATOR #2

Hmm, here's form 21H, for matters of life and limb. No, that's not right.

LUCILLE

What difference -

OPERATOR #2

Form 45G - help we're being invaded by Martians.
Form 16Y - my neighbor thinks he has the power to cloud men's minds. Form 33B - my child just swallowed a decoder ring.

LUCILLE

Will you hurry up?

OPERATOR #2

Here we are, Form 9W, for matters
of life and death.

LUCILLE

Thank God you found it.

OPERATOR #2

Now where'd I leave my pen...
I know it's around here somewhere...
Anybody got a pen?

OPERATOR #1

(in the distance:)

I've got a pencil!

OPERATOR #2

A Number One or a Number Two?

LUCILLE

Will you hurry? Two cold-blood killers
are planning to kill a defenseless woman
and her cat before the next commercial!

OPERATOR #2

They're going to kill someone *tonight*?

LUCILLE

Yes!

OPERATOR #2

Well, that's a different form.

LUCILLE

I don't care about the forms!

OPERATOR #2

You'd never make it as an operator.

LUCILLE

I want to talk to your supervisor.

OPERATOR #2

One moment.

SFX: PHONE RINGING

Sorry, You've Got My Wrong Number EXCERPT, 10

LUCILLE
(over the ringing:)
Of all the incompetence.

KITTY
(agreeing)
Meow.

SUPERVISOR
This is the supervisor. May I help you?

LUCILLE
Yes, I was talking to your one of your operators
who was completely uncooperative –

SUPERVISOR
Calm down, ma'am.

LUCILLE
You don't understand! A cold-blooded murder
is going to be committed in the next ten minutes!

SUPERVISOR
Welcome to New York.

LUCILLE
Don't you think you should do something?

SUPERVISOR
I've considered moving to Pittsburgh.*

(*Instead of "Pittsburgh", feel free to substitute the town
where the play is being performed.)

LUCILLE
Well, I can't move to Pittsburgh. I'm a cripple and –

SUPERVISOR
There are no cripples in Pittsburgh?

LUCILLE
Of course there are cripples in Pittsburgh.

SUPERVISOR
Are they all *from* Pittsburgh?

LUCILLE
No, but my husband's here, and my cat –

KITTY

Meow.

SUPERVISOR

Pittsburgh has a low crime rate
and is very friendly to cats.

LUCILLE

Look, any moment now there's going
to be a horrible murder in this city.

SUPERVISOR

Oh, let's not be so negative.

LUCILLE

Negative?

SUPERVISOR

Think of all the people who *won't* be murdered.

LUCILLE

Will you stop all this blather and do something?!

SUPERVISOR

Ma'am, will you please watch your tone?
It's not my fault the Lord decided you
should be crippled.

LUCILLE

I don't think the Lord decided to make me crippled!

SUPERVISOR

So you're you an atheist.

LUCILLE

No!

SUPERVISOR

You know, the phone company is a very liberal company.

LUCILLE

Is that so?

SUPERVISOR

We even had an operator in a wheelchair once.

LUCILLE

Once?

SUPERVISOR

But she had to be let go. She worked hard, but she kept wanting to use the bathroom. And her chair wouldn't fit in the stall, and it just got it impossible. My boss told her, "If you really want this job, just don't eat or drink anything before you come to work." Well, what can you do? We tried. I'm not resentful. I even voted for FDR. And I give to the March of Dimes every year. Last year I doubled my contribution and gave twenty cents.

LUCILLE

None of this is helping me.

SUPERVISOR

Oh, you're one of those *bitter* cripples.

LUCILLE

I'm not – will you just –

SUPERVISOR

Maybe you should forget about the impending murder and pray for forgiveness.

LUCILLE

I don't – I don't – Oh, go to Pittsburgh!

SFX: LUCILLE HANGS UP THE PHONE

LUCILLE

Oh, why'd I do that? Now she'll really think I'm nuts. Oh, if only I hadn't heard that call! Oh, if only I wasn't stuck in this apartment! Oh, if only I weren't crippled! Oh, if only I had a Rotweiller instead of a cat!

KITTY

(insulted)

Meow!

LUCILLE

Sorry, kitty.