

“Murder in Plain Sight”

by Paul A. Rose, Jr.

Setting: Early 1948,
The B&O Railroad, going from Dayton, OH to Chicago, IL for the Chicago Rail Fair

Characters

Zephaniah “Gally” Gallagher – A former alcoholic, now being treated with LSD for what is believed to be schizophrenia since he claims he was abducted by aliens. He has been clean since the incident in question. He now claims he can see the aliens everywhere and thinks he has been following one since the train left Dayton, OH.

Col. Darnell Thomas – Air Force Colonel who was involved with the 1947 Roswell “crash” investigations and now heads up “Project Sign,” the Air Force’s task force for scrutinizing reported sightings of “foo fighters,” a.k.a. UFO’s.

Agent James Cheyenne – An FBI agent who sees conspiracies around every corner. He was orphaned at a young age, but is convinced that his parents are still ‘out there somewhere,’ since no bodies were located.

Mary Martha Boggs – a young woman who hopes to become an investigative reporter. She thinks she may finally have the scoop behind a large-scale government cover-up. She legally changed her name during college to distance herself from her previous life in Xenia, OH

Dr. Sheila Handhaber – Psychologist treating Gally. Has numerous secrets that she guards as carefully as her so-called patient’s medical histories.

Barbara Peterson – Younger sister of the victim. She went to school with Mary Martha. She appears to be a little ditzy and gets worse when she drinks.

Dwight Peterson – Victim. Sister of Barbara and fellow classmate of Mary Martha. Former drinking buddy of Gally. Began working at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base as a janitor. Col. Thomas recognized his hard work and promoted him to be his personal secretary.

ROTATIONS

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1A DR. SHEILA-GALLY (PG 2-4) | 2A AGT. CHEYENNE-DR. SHEILA (PG 11-13) | 3A COL. THOMAS-GALLY (PG 20-22) | |
| 1B MARY MARTHA-AGT. CHEYENNE (PG 5-7) | 2B GALLY-BARBARA (PG 14-16) | 3B AGT. CHEYENNE-BARBARA (PG 23-25) | |
| 1C BARBARA-COL. THOMAS (PG 8-10) | 2C COL. THOMAS-MARY MARTHA (PG 17-19) | 3C MARY MARTHA-DR. SHEILA (PG 26-28) | |
| RESOLUTION – ALL (PG 29-32) | | | |

Enter GALLY

GALLY

Run away, run away. I lost him, I lost him. Where did he go. Where's the alien? Come out, come out wherever you are... (mumbles incoherently as he moves deeper into the car)

Enter DR. SHEILA

DR. SHEILA

Well, hello, there, Zephaniah. Fancy meeting you here on this train.

GALLY

Can't talk now, Dr. Handhaber. Aliens on the train. Got to find the aliens. I was following him, but he lost me, lost me, lost me.

DR. SHEILA

Now, Zephaniah, we've had this discussion. There are no such things as aliens. And I told you to call me Dr. Sheila. Zephaniah? Hello?

GALLY

You don't understand, Dr. Sheila. I must find the alien before he switches bodies again. I've been following him since Wright-Patt, but now I've lost him.

DR. SHEILA

Wright-Patt? You mean the Air Force base? Now, Zephaniah, you know you're not supposed to be running around on the base anymore. Remember what happened the last time?

GALLY

Yes, yes, yes, General Twining had me put in jail. But, but, but... Captain Ruppelt asked me to come. Told me he needed me. I saw Dwight there. Dwight Peterson. He's not an alien either – but he knows one. Yeah, Dwight knows one.

DR. SHEILA

Zephaniah, Have you stopped taking your medications again?

GALLY

No, no, no time. No time at all. Got to find that alien. Captain Ruppelt needs me to find the alien.

DR. SHEILA

For the last time, Zephaniah, there is no such thing as aliens. Look at me. **Look at me.** Am I an alien?

GALLY

Course not, course not. You smell pretty – not like aliens. Aliens have a peculiar smell to 'em. Not always, you know, but just when they's about to change bodies, they have this nasty smell, like, like, like their insides is all dead. Yes, they do.

DR. SHEILA

Zephaniah, you stopped taking your medications again, didn't you? Zephaniah!

GALLY

(Shouts) I'M NOT CRAZY! Sides, sides, sides, that medicine you gave me gives me headaches, makes me see things. I need to stay sharp to follow the alien. (Shouts) I'M NOT CRAZY!

DR. SHEILA

Now, Zephaniah, calm down. Calm down. Go to your happy place. Why don't you tell me about your friend, Dwight that you saw at the base. The alien.

GALLY

No, no, no, Dwight's not an alien. He's not very nice, but he's all human. He and I used to drink a lot – before I met the aliens. He almost met them, too, but they spared him. Said they didn't want some folks, just the good ones. That way, when they take over, there ain't no good ones to stop 'em.

DR. SHEILA

I see. And why is this, um, Dwight, why is he not one of the good ones?

GALLY

Oh, Dwight, Dwight, Dwight. Not many people like Dwight. I like him, cause he would buy me drinks and listen to me tell my stories. 'Course I don't drink much any more. Nope, nope, nope.

DR. SHEILA

Right, Zephaniah, you don't drink. And fish ride bicycles. Tell me more about Dwight Peterson.

GALLY

Oh, no, no, no. Not had anything since them aliens captured me. I gotta keep my head clear, clear, clear, so I can save the world before they attack. They told me. Told me, told me, told me they was gonna take over the world, a few at a time, until they can take over everything. That's why they got some aliens in the govern'mint and some in the military. (Pauses, looks around) Trust no one.

DR. SHEILA

Now, Zephaniah, don't you think people would notice if there were aliens in the government and the military?

GALLY

Nope, nope, nope. Not at all, Dr. Sheila. That's how they fool us. They look just like us, except, except, except, they don't get it all right. They always miss something, something. They's not perfect, like us neither. Sometimes, sometimes, they's **TOO** normal.

DR. SHEILA

Just how can someone be too normal? So how do you tell who's an alien and who isn't?

GALLY

Oh, most people can't, can't, can't. I just got lucky, cause they let me go. I can sense 'em, smell 'em – even when they ain't changing bodies, cause they did something to me. I think they was

gonna take my body, except I heard one of 'em say they, they, they didn't think I would last long enough.

DR. SHEILA

Long enough for what?

GALLY

(Shouts) TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD! Ain't you been listening at all, at all? I got to stop them. I gotta go now, Dr. Sheila. I got to find me that alien. Been following, following, following him since Wright-Patt. I had him, but he lost me, lost me, lost me.

DR. SHEILA

Now, Zephaniah, why don't you come with me and we'll get you some more Lysergic acid.

GALLY

(Shouts) I'M NOT CRAZY! Dr. Sheila, I'm not, not, not. I gotta keep a clear head to find the alien.

DR. SHEILA

Zephaniah, come with me and we'll get you taken care of... AND then I'LL help you find all of the aliens, okay? It'll be a grand adventure.

GALLY

Only, only, only one alien. Only one. (Shouts) AIN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING? Only one alien. (Sniffs a few passengers) Yeah, only one alien.

DR. SHEILA

I'm sorry, Zephaniah. Only one alien. Let's go back to my compartment so you can feel better and then I'll help you find your alien.

GALLY

Okay, okay, okay, but we can't take too long. I gotta find that alien before he gets away from me too far, too far. Gotta find the alien.

DR. SHEILA & GALLY Exit

Enter AGT. CHEYENNE – He quickly moves through the car, checking randomly under tables and behind people’s chairs, intent on what he is doing.

Enter MARY MARTHA

MARY MARTHA

Greetings, everyone. How are you all doing today. My name is, Mary Martha Boggs and I am a reporter for the Dayton Journal, Fairfield Edition. I usually cover lifestyles – well, what little lifestyle there is in Fairfield, but now, I may be on to the story of a lifetime! Am I talking too much? I think I might be. I don’t get to cover too many interesting things and I just feel like I want to tell the world.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Tell someone else. The world doesn’t care.

MARY MARTHA

I’m sorry, sir, what was that?

AGT. CHEYENNE

I said tell someone else. I don’t care.

MARY MARTHA

No, you said, ‘the world doesn’t care,’ not ‘I don’t care.’ I notice these things – that’s why I’m such a good reporter. What do you do for a living?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Dark blue suit, white shirt, dark tie, clean-shaven, shoes you can see yourself in? I work for the FBI, ya dumb dora. Agent James Cheyenne.

MARY MARTHA

(Tearing up) Please don’t be mean to me, sir. I just found out I may be getting the world’s biggest scoop. I just wanted to share how happy I was. You aren’t my informant are you?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Fine, whatever. I’m sorry what was that?

MARY MARTHA

Are *you* my informant?

AGT. CHEYENNE

What? Speak up.

MARY MARTHA

Are *YOU* my in**FOR**mant?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Would you please speak up? I cannot hear you.

MARY MARTHA

(Shouting) ARE YOU MY INFORMANT?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Informant? Informant on what? Wait a minute. Are you informing on me? Tell your bosses they won't ever catch me!

MARY MARTHA

No, I'm supposed to...

AGT. CHEYENNE

What?

MARY MARTHA

I'm supposed to be meeting someone here who's going to help me break a huge story. He called me a couple of hours ago and told me to be on this train. He told me it could make my career. I just thought you might be him, being an FBI agent and all.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Okay, that makes a whole lot more sense. I thought for a second there, they were getting really sneaky.

MARY MARTHA

They?

AGT. CHEYENNE

The Communists. They're after me because I know too much.

MARY MARTHA

Really? Know too much about what?

AGT. CHEYENNE

About how the FBI works.

MARY MARTHA

Why would that matter to the Communists?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Because they're conspiring with my bosses – all the way up to the big guy.

MARY MARTHA

The 'Big Guy?' You mean God?

AGT. CHEYENNE

No, even bigger than him – (PAUSE, conspiratorially) J. Edgar Hoover

MARY MARTHA

What? Speak up, I can't hear you.

AGT. CHEYENNE

J. **Edgar** Hoover

MARY MARTHA

Would you please speak up? I can't hear you.

AGT. CHEYENNE

(Shouts) J. EDGAR HOOVER!

MARY MARTHA

Who's that?

AGT. CHEYENNE

I thought you said you were a reporter. You don't know the head of the FBI?

MARY MARTHA

Oh, the "head" of the FBI.

AGT. CHEYENNE

What?

MARY MARTHA

The *head* of the FBI.

AGT. CHEYENNE

What?!

MARY MARTHA

The... (exasperated) Oh, nevermind. So, if you work for the FBI, why would the head of the FBI be out to get you?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Because I know too much.

MARY MARTHA

Let me guess... About how the FBI works??

AGT. CHEYENNE

Exactly! I knew you were working for them. I won't talk. I swear I won't! You can't make me. No one will ever know what I know. That way they can't get rid of me!

AGT. CHEYENNE runs out

MARY MARTHA

Now that was one weird fella. Probably a good thing I didn't mention I had this newfangled magnetic tape recorder. He'd a gone really crazy

Enter COL. THOMAS, followed by BARBARA

BARBARA

Excuse me, sir. Um, Captain? Yoo hoo!

COL. THOMAS

Colonel.

BARBARA

What's that, handsome?

COL. THOMAS

I said, I'm a colonel. Colonel Darnell Thomas, to be more precise. And you are...

BARBARA

Starving. Well, maybe not starving, but definitely in need of a good meal. And a drink. I had a vodka tonic about an hour ago. Or was that 15 minutes? No matter, I know there's got to be a bar around here somewhere.

COL. THOMAS

No, I was asking what I should call you.

BARBARA

Well, I suppose that depends on how lucky you want to get. Have you been at sea "long?"

COL. THOMAS

Ma'am, I am an Air Force Colonel. I fly planes.

BARBARA

Are we on a plane? I thought for sure with all this rocking we were on a boat.

COL. THOMAS

No, ma'am, we are on a train.

BARBARA

A train? I thought you said you flew them aero-planes. Zoom.... Zoom...

COL. THOMAS

No, ma'am. I said I fly planes for the Air Force, but right now we are on a train.

BARBARA

How did we get from the boat to the train?

COL. THOMAS

We were never on a boat, ma'am. We're on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, on our way to Chicago

BARBARA

So when do we get on the boat? Oh! You want to give me a "ride" in your aero-plane?

COL. THOMAS

Ma'am, my airplane is back at the base. We are on a train. There is NO boat.

BARBARA

How disappointing. I've always wanted to travel by boat. Do you want to come back to my compartment and make some waves?

COL. THOMAS

Ma'am, this is highly irregular. I think you should just go back to whatever you were, um, doing, and I'll go back to finding my personal secretary.

BARBARA

So now the truth comes out. You don't want to have fun with me, because you already have a "personal secretary." Your loss, hot pants.

COL. THOMAS

No, ma'am, my personal secretary is a man, thank you very much.

BARBARA

Okay, now that's a little weird. I won't ask if you don't tell.

COL. THOMAS

Look, since I obviously will not be able to get rid of you, maybe you can help me find my secretary

BARBARA

Is he cute? I find it easier to locate the cute ones.

COL. THOMAS

Look. His name is Dwight Peterson and he's about

BARBARA

Five foot, 7 inches tall and BORING.

COL. THOMAS

I'm sorry, do you know Dwight?

BARBARA

He's only my ungrateful brother.

COL. THOMAS

Oh? He seems like a hard worker.

BARBARA

Dwight? A hard worker? Maybe between the sheets – especially with that psychiatrist dame. But, no, I've never known my brother to work hard at anything he could connive someone else into doing for him.

COL. THOMAS

I see. Well, that's disappointing. I had such high hopes for him.

BARBARA

How'd he end up your personal secretary anyhow? Last I heard, he was mopping floors at some military installation.

COL. THOMAS

Yes, that's where I met him. He was the custodian at my office at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. I found him so dependable, I hired him to handle all of my affairs.

BARBARA

Aha! So you do have affairs! What am I, chopped liver?

COL. THOMAS

Well, Miss, I suppose it's Peterson, isn't it? Or are you married?

BARBARA

Oh, heavens, no, toots. I'm completely available, if you get my meaning.

COL. THOMAS

Ma'am, I Think you mean, "toute de suite"

BARBARA

Oh, yeah, baby, right away. I love it when you Marines talk French.

COL. THOMAS

Ma'am, I'm in the... Oh, never mind. It's too much trouble.

BARBARA

Oh, it's really no trouble at all.

COL. THOMAS

You just don't give up do you, Miss Peterson?

BARBARA

Not when there's a cute man involved – and maybe some fancy whiskey.

COL. THOMAS

Well, I suppose we could go look for your brother together.

BARBARA

And maybe stop by the lounge car on the way?

COL. THOMAS

Sure. Maybe I'll introduce you to a Harvey Wallbanger.

BARBARA

Mmmm, now *that* sounds like a good time.

Enter AGT. CHEYENNE – he again moves quickly down the car, checking places, then realizes he’s been in the car before, hesitates, then continues to check everything.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Can’t be too careful, you know.

Enter DR. SHEILA

DR. SHEILA

Oh, hello, what do we have here? Unless my psychiatric training is escaping me, you’re one of J. Edgar Hoover’s boys.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Um, yes, ma’am. I am or I was or, well, I still am, but he, well, he thinks I’m a bit paranoid.

DR. SHEILA

Really? Hoover thinks *you*’re paranoid? You must really have some issues. But no matter, perhaps I can help you, um, Agent.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Cheyenne. Agent James Cheyenne. And I sincerely doubt that you can help me.

DR. SHEILA

Well, let’s see, shall we? What seems to be the problem?

AGT. CHEYENNE

I think everyone’s out to get me.

DR. SHEILA

Okay, we can explore that. Why do you think everyone is out to get you?

AGT. CHEYENNE

Because they are.

DR. SHEILA

Okay, that circular reasoning might work for your bosses, but let’s get to the heart of the matter.

AGT. CHEYENNE

Oh, they’re after me too. Me, the Nazis and the Communists.

DR. SHEILA

Now, Agent Cheyenne, now I know you’re playing with me. The Russians are our allies. You *do* remember World War II, right? Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin. They’re the good guys.

AGT. CHEYENNE

I have proof.

DR. SHEILA

I’m sorry. You say you have proof?