

## *Arsenic and Old Lace* Costume Concepts

I see Mortimer as being a pretty dressy-type guy. I'd say the correct read on his character is every bit the dapper gentleman of this day. He's relatively sophisticated and clean-cut. He's a professional and probably able to afford a decent lifestyle, especially taking into account the family fortune, of which we can speculate the aunts have been relatively gracious in sharing with their favored nephew. Below are a few images that I came across. Some work really well for me. Some not.



This is an ideal. Love the v-neck sweater along with the tweed coat. Great tie too.



This is a little too stuffy. It's formal, but too plain.



I don't like this. Too light.



Again, too light.

The aunts are interesting. I really don't want to allow for any "reveals" of their inner insanity. As such, they should be costumed as heirlooms from a time gone by who not inhabit 1940's Brooklyn. Most production pics of them display aprons, which are probably fairly appropriate. Martha's dress (probably the mourning dress as well) requires a high collar. We need to find something akin to a garnet ring for Abby. Anyway, I'm playing Abby as the slightly younger of the two aunts. That's a change from my earlier statements in the character descriptions. However, she remains the clearly dominant figure of the two, for what that's worth. I suppose the costuming implications would be to suggest a bit more vigor and assertiveness in her personality, whereas Martha is a bit more reserved, possibly a bit more conservative in dress as well. Having said that, there shouldn't be vast separations of appearance between the two of them.



Hats for their mourning clothes would be great But aren't vital.

These feel a little too bland. I'd love some pattern.



Difficult to see, but this is closer to the mark.



Not sure how I feel about the overall dress, but the lace is A great touch.



Too light, but this entire production's design concept odd.



Odd pairing. Not sure I like the b/w.





Great, but vastly excessive.



Somehow too elegant. They aunts are very frugal.



Film version, still, it works. Light and dark. Nice



Left is a bit plain.



Honestly, I love the two tones of red.  
Subtle, but a *NEAT* concept.

Elaine is tricky. She should be every bit the savvy, attractive, stylish, intelligent girl that captures Mort's attention. Having said that, she's also still a minister's daughter. There are some limits to how much she can get away with as she's still unmarried and living under her parents' roof. Her costume should reflect the sex appeal and smart polish that's captured Mort's attentions while remaining faithful to her parents' expectations.





Really kind of like this Elaine. Speaks to intelligence, dressy but she's not over the top.



She is dressing for a night at the theatre, but this seems somehow too formal. She's mismatched with our Mort in this pic.



This feels like a bit too much. It's a very bold statement. Not sure. Maybe it's right.



No, no, no. Just odd.



Basic, but I kind of like this look.



Too much business, not enough allure.



Teddy is another problematic figure. I really want to edge him more towards the formal side of the spectrum in most cases. I really see his open as being VERY formal. Most of the character's physical appearances escape their film incarnations very well for me. Teddy is not one of them. I love his opening costume in the film version. I'm also not positive I like the route of the pajama bottom. Slippers, yes. I think I may want to nix the outright PJ bottoms though. Teddy has several costume changes. He has his formal outfit, his safari outfit, and his "signing clothes". I think Teddy's costumes should speak to the level of a man whose utterly convinced of his ownership of this personality.



Love this outfit in the film.



There's our true mark.



A little color, which is interesting. Don't like it though. Great cop, by the way. Leather holsters possible?



All set for Panama. This works *very* well.



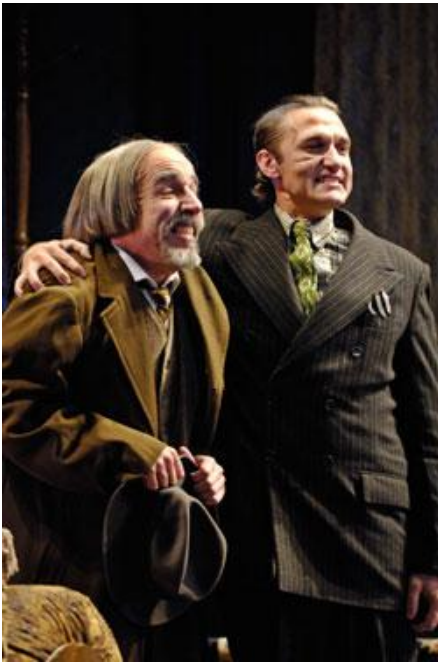
Roughrider look. Waaay too hokey.



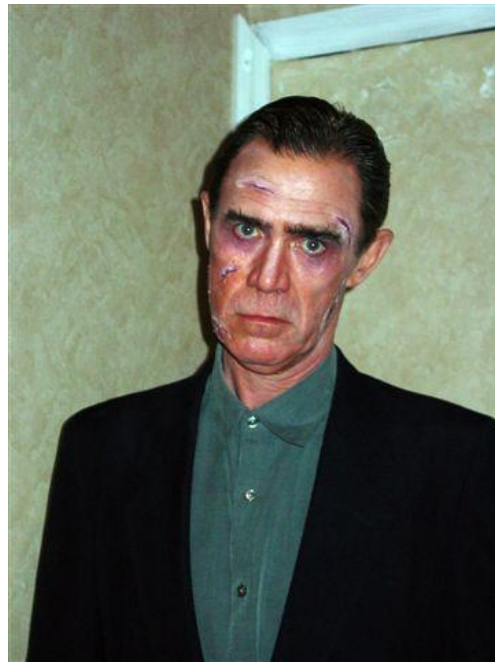
Way too informal. Nope.



Jonathan is an interesting case too. On the one hand, he should be a bit more formal, better dressed than his accomplice. On the other hand, they've both been on the road for days and up for over 72 hours straight. As such, they'll both have a certain air of being disheveled. Still, Jonathan's should speak to a need of a change of clothes and a night of sleep. Einstein should speak of a need of a bath and the need to discard his current attire outright.



Jonathan is waaay too ritzy. Too much.



No enough. This is bland. I do see a tie is vital.



Though to see, but not bad.



Utterly artificial, the lot of them.



LOVE the idea of a long, flowing black overcoat.



Einstein is too polished. Jonathan isn't bad.



Same prod as earlier. Scarf on Jonathan?

Einstein, as stated, is very clearly written. He's a sloppy, god-awful mess. Honestly, the image immediately below might be a tad bit too excessive, but it's the closest to what I'm looking for. I don't want to go this far, but she should definitely not look like a person you'd wanna stand too near for long.



Utter grunge. Too much, but interesting.



This really does look like Al Einstein  
Nope.



Hard to escape Capra's vision for the appearance.



And another view of Peter Lorre's Einstein.



Rooney should appear in plain clothes.



A long tan trench coat is my ideal for Rooney.





Okay, a few final notes. Rev. Harper and his wife should be costumed every bit the part of the minister and his wife. As stated, a collar is definitely preferred. I see a traditional black suit. His wife has a little more flexibility. Gibbs should appear a little destitute. He's not as unkept as Einstein, but he does live out of suitcases in hotels. He's been around the block a few times and had a fairly hard life. His clothing should speak to this fact. He's in his sixties. Witherspoon should be played with a sense of a formality. The same can be said of his assistant. The assistant can and should have a lab coat as well. Back to Witherspoon. He's a mild-mannered, aging man. His attire should speak to this nature. He comes across rather passive and light, again, allow the costume choices to speak to this as well. If finding enough police attire is causing massive issues, you might choose to dress Officer Thompson as a woman in plain clothes, something akin to the female version of Rooney. She's his right-hand in the station, so a common appearance is appropriate, almost preferable to a uniform.

Hats are utterly prevalent in the time period. They're a necessity in the show. Pretty much every single character should have one at some point. We need not go crazy with the selections. The only tricky situations are for the Aunts' mourning clothing (again, hats aren't utterly vital for them in these outfits) and Elaine's choice. Something 40's, trendy appropriate for her might be more of a challenge. They guys' hats should be pretty readily available with items we have on-hand.

I also have questions about hair. We can have the costume girls looking into this as well, but Pam recommended we keep hair with costumes and not makeup because the costumes have greater implications on choices. I don't know if wigs might be a better choice for the aunts or not. They definitely need to be heavily grayed. Your thoughts on the matter are highly important to me.

Spectacles are the final item to consider. I'd love to have some Peter Lorre specs for Einstein and we do need to find a prince-nez for Teddy. Spectacles might also work nicely for Witherspoon and possibly even Rev. Harper as well.