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Customer Taster

Death and Waxes

A Moustache Murder Mystery

by Barry Wood

A serial killer who steals the moustaches from his victims is at large. Convinced she knows where the killer will strike next, Freya Yorke, a young criminology student, takes a job at an Edinburgh hotel that is hosting the International Moustache Championships. During the evening, Freya is proved right, and there follows a farcical murder investigation into the group of misfits who comprise the competitors and their partners.

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Death and Waxes

The Murder Mystery Pack contains:

- The **Organiser's Overview** [*Extract Here*]
- The **Full Script** (in two versions with and without optional character) [*Extract Here*]
- **Accusation Sheet** (for the audience to complete)
- **Quiz Sheet** (for the audience to complete)
- **Quiz with Answers**

The Full Organiser's Overview contains:

- **Event Guide**, to help you put on a successful Murder Mystery evening
- **Timing Guide**
- **Character Overviews**
- **Plot Overview**
- **Production Notes** (Set, Lighting, Sound Effects, Costume, Props)

Event Guide

'Death and Waxes' is a Murder Mystery farce designed to be played by 13 actors, with the option of adding an extra actor (in a minor cameo role).

It is suggested that this murder mystery is performed with the audience having a catered-for meal. This doesn't have to be anything fancy, a light supper or fish and chips from a local shop would work. Alternatively, the audience could bring their own picnic.

As 'Death and Waxes' is set in Edinburgh, another option would be to serve a traditional Scottish dish such as haggis, neeps and tatties, or deep-fried Mars bars for the more discerning palate.

The Narrator has some scripted lines in which they instruct the audience as to what is happening and when, and can also act as Master of Ceremonies when it comes to revealing quiz answers, announcing winners, and presenting prizes.

All the evidence is within the script, so audience interrogation of the actors is not required. (This follows an unfortunate waterboarding incident when 'Death and Waxes' was first performed).

If serving food, the audience will obviously be sitting around tables, otherwise things could get very messy, particularly if serving ribs, chicken wings or crab legs. Each table can comprise a team that can discuss the evidence they've picked up from the play.

On second thoughts, crab legs would probably be too messy to serve even while sitting around a table. Any food which requires a hammer to eat is best avoided. Not to mention the garlic and melted butter sauce - that stuff gets everywhere.

Accusation and quiz sheets can be placed on each table before the start of the performance. Alternatively, they could be incorporated into a show programme. It is suggested that pens and paper also be provided for each table; within the script, the Narrator will remind the audience to make notes and instruct them when to complete the sheets. For a smaller audience, rather than giving the table an accusation sheet, they could work individually and have one each.

A prize can be given for the table or individual who gives the explanation closest to that delivered in the final scene. A separate prize can be given to the quiz winners. It is highly unlikely that anyone will answer the final quiz question correctly, so a tie-breaker can be whose answer is closest to the year

asked for. If more than one table manages to deduce/guess who the murderer/murderers are, the quiz score could be taken into account. If there is still a tie, a fight to the death would probably be the most appropriate solution.

The organiser will need to decide who will read and mark the answer sheets. This could be carried out by the actors playing Sutherland, Hopper and Douglas, who are not in the final scene.

When the winners are announced, there may also be an opportunity to read out any of the audience's particularly amusing or ridiculous theories regarding the murder.

When thinking about a prize, consider that it is likely to be shared by a number of people. Perhaps a pack of crab legs to take home - let them make a mess in their own house.

Timing

Scenes 1 & 2 - allow 30 to 35 minutes, in total.

Interval - suggested 45 minutes.

Scenes 3 & 4 - allow 30 to 35 minutes, in total.

Break - 10 minutes to fill in accusation sheets and complete quiz.

Scene 5 - allow 10 to 15 minutes.

Quiz answers followed by prize-giving for solution and quiz - allow 10 to 15 minutes.

If doors open 30 minutes before the start of proceedings for the audience to get drinks etc., the whole evening should last about 3 hours.

Character Overview

There are six male and seven female roles. The number of male roles could be increased by one by making Detective Sutherland (re-named Angus) male. There is an additional version of the script included in this pack. Version 2 includes an incidental character, Red Herring, who comes on intermittently throughout the play to throw the audience off the scent.

Narrator - Male or female.

This character can read from a script. Ideal for any actor who does not like learning lines (probably most). They appear in front of curtain to introduce the show and also between the scenes to break up the play and act as Master of Ceremonies.

Freya Yorke - Barmaid, English, age 18-30.

Criminology student and part-time barmaid. Freya appears in every scene and aims to solve the case of the Moustache Murderer. She is bright, enthusiastic and tries to get involved with all the other characters in her quest to solve the mystery.

Anthony Pratt - English with large bushy moustache. Age 49 (it's relevant to the story, but the casting age bracket is 45-60).

One of the International Moustache Championships competitors. Keen to win Best in Show before his imminent fiftieth birthday. Likeable but naive and bordering on being a buffoon.

Sarah Pratt - Married to Anthony, age 45-60.

It's not that Sarah doesn't love Anthony, she just loves to put him down as well. She's capable and caring, but Sarah is also hiding something from Anthony. And it's not just that she grows unwanted facial hair.

Herr Lip - Male, with large, black, bushy moustache, any age.

Representing Germany in the competition, he is one of the favourites to win. Stern and serious, he is a stickler for rules and regulations and lacks a sense of humour. Of course, this in no way reinforces the idea that all Germans conform to a certain stereotype.

Hannah Lip - Married to Herr Lip, similar age to husband.

Hannah and her husband manage a swingers website called 'Gratify' to which Douglas Palmer and his wife subscribe. As Douglas is getting divorced, the German couple want to exclude Douglas from the club, though for questionable reasons they do not want to expel Douglas's wife.

Trixie Steinbeck - Female, Texan, with moustache, any age.

Trixie, along with her sister Emmylou, represent the first female competitors of the International Moustache Competition. Friendly and likeable, but both sisters share a bizarre secret.

Emmylou Steinbeck - Female, sister to Trixie, wearing a dress and also sporting a moustache, similar age to Trixie.

Confident and seemingly carefree, Emmylou falls for Hugo Dubois, one of the other competitors.

Hugo Dubois - Male, French competitor with handlebar moustache, age 20-45.

The face of 'Ackermann's Exquisite Moustache Wax', Hugo is attracted to Emmylou. Oozes masculinity, but at the same time is in touch with his feminine side.

Douglas Palmer - Scottish competitor, bald (possibly wearing a wig) with a ginger moustache, age 30-60.

Douglas won the International Moustache Championships the previous year, which is why they are being held in Scotland this time. Self-centred and arrogant, Douglas is disliked by many of the other competitors.

Lottie Sutherland - Scottish Detective, age 30-55.

Self-important detective in charge of the initial murder investigation. Arrogant and inept, with little regard for proper police procedures. Likes a good pun.

William Hopper - American detective, age 30-55.

On secondment from the Los Angeles Police Department. Hopper dresses and speaks like Humphrey Bogart, using all the Film Noir clichés. He drinks whisky throughout his appearance, getting progressively more tipsy.

Hayley Brennan - Scottish Detective, age 30-55.

Appears only in the final scene, the dénouement. Intelligent and proficient.

Red - a red herring. (Optional.) Male or Female, any age. Dressed all in red.

Not crucial to the plot, in fact quite the opposite. Appears in most scenes at some point to deliver bizarre 'clues' to hinder the audience.

Plot Overview

'Death and Waxes' is set in the present and takes place in the lounge of an Edinburgh hotel that is hosting the International Moustache Championships. Freya Yorke, a criminology student, works part-time as a barmaid at the hotel. She took the job in the hope of catching a serial killer, known as the Moustache Murderer. Because the killer always removes his victim's moustache, Freya is convinced that he'll make an appearance at the hotel this weekend.

Anthony Pratt is an English competitor and is staying at the Hotel with his wife Sarah. He suspects Sarah is up to something, due to the fact that she receives several suspicious texts on her mobile phone during the evening. But Anthony also has a secret concerning his dealings with Douglas.

Emmylou and Trixie the Texan Steinbeck sisters are the championship's first ever female competitors. Douglas does not think they should be allowed to take part and plans on meeting with the competition's

organiser the following day to try to get them disqualified, claiming that the sisters are taking testosterone in order to grow their facial hair.

During the evening, Emmylou becomes besotted with Hugo Dubois, a handsome Frenchman with a handlebar moustache. Hugo has a lucrative advertising contract with Ackermann's Exquisite Moustache Wax. However, Douglas is blackmailing Hugo as he claims to have evidence that Hugo does not use Ackermann's wax himself, but rather a cheaper own brand from Lidl.

The other competitor in the hotel lounge is the German, Herr Lip, attending the event with his wife Hannah. Although seemingly uptight, the German couple run a swingers' club, of which Douglas Palmer and his wife are members. One of the club's stipulations is that all members must be part of a couple. However, when Herr and Hannah Lip discover that Douglas is getting divorced, they fall out with him as he refuses to relinquish his membership.

The second half of this murder mystery takes place about three hours later when it is revealed that Douglas Palmer has been killed. The investigation into his death is conducted by the detectives Sutherland and Hopper, who question each of the suspects in turn.

After a short break for the audience to deliberate on the proceedings and complete their accusation sheets, the play continues with the final scene in which the hair-raising conclusion is revealed.

Production Notes

Set

The set is the lounge of an Edinburgh hotel. All the action occurs on this one set - first in the early evening and then about three hours later. The only exception to this is when the Narrator comes on, which is front of curtain.

Three sets of tables and chairs are required: one, centre-stage with four chairs, will be where most of the action takes place; another is stage-right with two chairs; and one is stage-left with three chairs. Along the back should be the bar where Freya prepares her cocktails. A flat or flats with bottles and glasses on shelves could be positioned behind the bar. Ideally, there should also be several high stools at the bar, where some of the guests can sit when the detectives in Scene 3 interrogate the suspects at the centre-stage table. Finally, there could be some simple decoration of additional flats either side of the bar - pictures, etc..

Death and Waxes

[Script Extract]

Introduction

(Narrator enters in front of curtain, stage right.)

Narrator: (Reading from a script.) Good evening everyone and welcome to *[drama group name]*'s latest production, our murder mystery - 'Death and Waxes'.

The play is set in the lounge of a hotel in Edinburgh that is hosting the annual International Moustache Championships. And as the name murder mystery suggests, during the evening one of the characters will be killed off, leaving all the others as suspects. Your job as the audience is to decide who's the murderer. You've all been given a brief description of each of the characters. You also have an accusation form and quiz sheet, which we'll ask you to complete after the fourth scene and before the denouement, which is the fancy French way of saying before we tell you whodunnit. Then at the very end of our performance, we'll give out prizes after announcing which table is the closest to working out who the murderer or murderers are. There will be an additional prize for the quiz winners. Please don't use your phones to help answer the quiz questions. Anyone found doing so will be publicly humiliated.

From this moment on, it's important that you pay close attention to what you see and hear because if you miss even the tiniest of details, it will make your job as amateur sleuths much more difficult. Which, I'll be honest with you, is a bit of a worry. You see, not all of my fellow actors take their roles as seriously as I do. This isn't pantomime, I keep telling them... **(Pause)** Sorry, I was just waiting for someone to shout, 'Oh yes it is.' No, it's not pantomime, you can't just wing it. 'Please be professional' I've told them, 'pay close attention to the script, being faithful to the words and stage directions at all times.'

They've been working hard these past few weeks though, so with a bit of luck, things will run smoothly. Ladies and gentlemen, sit back and enjoy Death and Waxes.

(Narrator exits stage left, then comes straight back on and marches stage right.)

Narrator: Sorry, I was supposed to exit this side; can't get off that way. Sorry.

Scene 1

(A hotel lounge in Edinburgh. Freya is behind the bar, upstage. There are several tables with chairs occupying the rest of the stage. Herr Lip and Hannah Lip are sitting at a table, upstage left, drinking. Herr Lip is wearing a waistcoat.)

(Anthony enters, thinking he's talking to Sarah.)

Anthony: They've got Netflix and a freezer full of pizzas, what else does...? **(Turning around confused.)** What are you doing?

(Sarah enters behind, looking at her phone.)

Sarah: Checking my messages.

Anthony: Stop worrying, they're fine. We'll be back on Monday.

Sarah: Just wondered if they'd texted, that's all.

(Anthony and Sarah sit down at one of the tables.)

Anthony: Jacob's not likely to text, is he?

Sarah: No, but Freya's usually pretty good.

Anthony: Did you tell them I'm through to the finals?

Sarah: Of course.

Anthony: What a brilliant birthday present that would be, if I won.

Sarah: **(Still looking at her phone.)** Yes.

Anthony: **(Stroking his moustache.)** 'Bold, lustrous and sculptured to within an inch of perfection.' I think the judge fancied me.

Sarah: **(Looking up from her phone.)** Eh?

Anthony: That's what the head judge said, bold, lustrous...

Sarah: **(Putting her phone down on the table.)** I bet you don't even know what lustrous means.

Anthony: I'm not an idiot, Sarah.

(Pause)

Sarah: Go on then.

Anthony: Lustrous?

Sarah: Yeah.

Anthony: Well... Full of, you know, lust. Sexy.

(Sarah bursts out laughing.)

Sarah: It means glossy, shiny - you fool.

Anthony: In a sexy way though.

Sarah: Yes, of course, Darling.

(Freya approaches Anthony and Sarah's table carrying a couple of cocktail menus.)

Freya: Good evening. **(Handing a menu to Anthony and Sarah.)** Can I interest you in a cocktail? Happy hour finishes at six, they're half price until then.

Anthony: Thank you, erm... **(peering at Freya's name badge)** Freya. Oh, we have a daughter called Freya.

Freya: Really? Her surname's not Yorke as well, is it?

Anthony: No, Pratt.

Freya: **(Mildly annoyed.)** I was only joking.

Anthony: No, no, Pratt is our surname.

Freya: **(Embarrassed)** Oh, I see. Sorry.

Anthony: Don't worry about it. It happens all the time.

Sarah: **(To Freya.)** It's worse than you think, his first name is Anthony - the number of times people have told me, that I'm married to A Pratt.

(Sarah and Freya chuckle.)

Anthony: You don't sound Scottish, Freya?

Freya: No, I'm from south of the border, **(conspiratorially)** but don't tell anyone.

Sarah: Your secret's safe with us.

Freya: I'm a student at the university. I just work here at weekends.

Sarah: Oh, what are you studying?

Freya: Criminology.

Anthony: Interesting.

Freya: I'm specialising in psychological profiling.

Anthony: Sounds fascinating. Perhaps one day you'll help catch a serial killer.

Freya: Ha! That is the very reason I'm here tonight.

Anthony: How do you mean?

Freya: When I heard that the Moustache Championships were going to be held at this hotel, here in Edinburgh, I came in every day asking for a job. John the bar manager got so fed up of me hounding him, he eventually gave in, even though at the time there wasn't really a vacancy.

Sarah: What have the Moustache Championships got to do with serial killers?

Freya: Over the past year in the UK, six men with bushy moustaches have been murdered.

Sarah: Is that more than usual?

Freya: Probably not, but the difference is, they were all strangled, with some sort of metal chain, and after they were killed, their moustaches were removed.

Anthony: Why?

Sarah: Bizarre.

Freya: It's not that unusual, many serial killers take souvenirs and trophies from the people they murder: jewellery, items of clothing; or even body parts.

Sarah: Gross.

Anthony: Why haven't we heard about this in the news?

Freya: The police have banned the press from reporting about this particular aspect. I'm not sure why, maybe to avoid people coming forward with false confessions, or to prevent a panic, I don't know.

Anthony: So how do you know about it?

Freya: I used to go to school with the daughter of one of the victims.

Anthony: Oh, dear.

Freya: I didn't really know him, but it's the reason I heard about the moustache connection.

Anthony: And you think the killer could strike here, this weekend?

Freya: If he has some sort of facial hair fetish, then what better place to look for his next victim than at the International Moustache Championships?

Sarah: You mean to say a serial killer could be staying in our hotel?

Freya: He could be in this very room.

(They all look over at Herr Lip.)

Freya: Do you know him?

Anthony: I know *of* him. His name's Herr Lip.

Freya: *Herr Lip*? Surely that's not his real name.

Anthony: **(Shrugging)** That's what he goes by. He's representing Germany in tomorrow's finals. He's one of the favourites.

Freya: Are you competing against him? Presumably, you're taking part in the competition, having such an impressive moustache yourself.

Anthony: Oh, thank you. Did you hear that, Sarah? Impressive.

Sarah: I never said it wasn't impressive.

Anthony: **(To Freya.)** Would you describe it as lustrous?

Freya: Yes, definitely.

Anthony: **(To Sarah.)** See.

(Sarah gives a 'what the hell's that supposed to mean' shrug.)

Anthony: Thank you, Freya. Yes, I am taking part in the championships, but Herr Lip is competing in a different category.

Freya: Oh, there are different categories, are there?

Anthony: Yes, eight. I'm competing in the Imperial class; Herr Lip is a Freestyle competitor. Although, in theory, if we both win our class, we could face each other for the title of 'Best in Show'.

Freya: I didn't realise how involved it all was.

Sarah: They take it very seriously.

(Pause)

Anthony: What makes you think *I'm* not the Moustache Murderer?

Freya: You don't fit the profile.

Sarah: I don't think Tony's the murdering type.

Anthony: I'll tell you what I could murder though - a drink.

Freya: Oh, I'm sorry, what can I get for you?

Sarah: I quite fancy a cocktail. **(Opening the menu and reading. Then - puzzled.)** What's a Stalin?

Freya: It's a mix of vodka and cream.

Sarah: Isn't that a White Russian?

Freya: Yes. Stalin was a white Russian.

Sarah: **(Puzzled)** Right... **(Pointing to the menu.)** And what's this - a Piñochet colada?

Freya: A Piña colada with a chilli in it; to give it a kick.

Sarah: **(Pointing to the menu.)** Assad-car?

Freya: It's just a normal Sidecar really - We've changed the names of our cocktails this weekend, you see, in tribute to the moustache championships. They're all named after famous people with facial hair.

Anthony: Don't you mean infamous - they're all brutal dictators.

Freya: **(Resigned)** Yeah, I know... I told John, but he didn't seem to think it mattered.

Anthony: **(Studying the menu again.)** And I'm pretty sure Tito didn't even have a moustache.

Freya: You're right, he didn't, but Tito Mojito - you've got to admit, that is a good one?

(Pause)

Sarah: **(Reluctantly)** I'll have a Tequila Saddam-rise, please.

Freya: **(To Anthony.)** And for you?

Anthony: I'll just have a Guinness.

Freya: **(Smirking)** Half, or a Pol Pot?

Anthony: A pint please.

Freya: Coming right up.
(Freya walks back to the bar.)

Sarah: I'm not sure about these dictator cocktails.

Anthony: No. Weird. **(Looking over at Herr Lip.)** I hope she didn't show our German friends the list; I don't think they would have been too impressed with the Adolf Spritzer.

Sarah: No. **(Pause)** Do you think there *could* be a serial killer staying at the hotel?

Anthony: Nooooo. I think our barmaid just has a very vivid imagination.

Sarah: **(Looking around.)** I need the loo.

Anthony: I told you to go before we came down.

Sarah: I didn't need it then.

Anthony: I think it's near where we came in.

Sarah: **(Getting up.)** Okay.
(Sarah exits stage right.)
(Anthony looks around the room and he catches Herr Lip's eye. Anthony smiles and raises his arm to say hello. Unfortunately, this looks like Anthony is giving a brief Nazi salute. Herr Lip frowns, and Anthony, puzzled, looks away.)
(SFX: Notification of an incoming text message.)
(Anthony picks up Sarah's mobile phone and reads the message on the screen. He then puts the phone down, thinking.)
(Enter Trixie and Emmylou, both wearing dresses but sporting moustaches. They look around and then approach Anthony's table.)

Trixie: Howdy - do you mind if we join you?

Anthony: No, not at all.
(Trixie and Emmylou start to sit down.)

Anthony: My wife's just popped to the loo.

Trixie: **(Confused.)** Excuse me?

Anthony: Erm, how would you say it? My wife has just gone to the bathroom.

Emmylou: Oh, I'm sorry, we don't want to impose. We thought you were on your lonesome.

Anthony: No, you're not imposing. In fact, Sarah, my wife, wanted to meet you. She won't be long... She's not having a bath, in the bathroom.

Trixie: No. Of course not.

Anthony: I'm Anthony. And you two must be Trixie and Emmylou Steinbeck? **(Shaking their hands.)** Pleased to meet you.

Trixie: I'm impressed you know our names.

Anthony: You're too modest, everyone is talking about the Steinbeck sisters. Although to be honest, I'm not sure which of you is which.

Emmylou: I'm Emmylou and this is Trixie. It was easier when only Trixie had the moustache, but now we look more similar.

Anthony: So, haven't you both always had facial hair? **(Quickly adding.)** Sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

Emmylou: Not at all. Yes, we've both had moustaches from an early age, but I took a little longer to accept mine. I used to bleach or shave. But now I embrace it. It's part of who we are.
(Freya heads over with the two drinks.)

Anthony: **(To Trixie and Emmylou.)** Good for you.

Freya: **(Placing the drinks in front of Anthony.)** There you go. **(To Trixie and Emmylou.)** Can I get you two gentlem... ladies, can I get you two ladies a drink? **(Embarrassed)** Sorry.

Trixie: Don't worry yourself, Honey. People mistake us for men all the time.

Emmylou: **(Playful)** I can't think why, Trixie.

Freya: Sorry.

Emmylou: I'm just teasing you, **(looking at her name badge)** Freya.

Trixie: I think I'm in the mood for a few cocktails. **(To Freya.)** Do you have a menu?

Anthony: **(Pushing the cocktail lists towards them.)** There's a list here.

Freya: They're all half price for another twenty minutes or so.

Trixie: Even better. **(Pointing to Sarah's drink.)** What's that one?

Freya: A Tequila Saddam-rise.
Trixie: *Saddam-rise?*
Emmylou: **(Looking at the list.)** Hey Trixie, they're all named after moustache-wearing dictators.
Trixie: **(Smiling)** How quaint.
Anthony: Quaint?
Emmylou: I'll get a Ho Chi Mint Julep.
Trixie: And a Baby Doc Daiquiri for me, please.
(Sarah enters.)
Freya: Excellent choices.
(Freya collects the menus and returns to the bar.)
Sarah: **(To Trixie and Emmylou, sitting down.)** Hello.
Trixie: Oh howdy.
Emmylou: I hope we're not intruding?
Sarah: Not at all. Actually, I was hoping to meet you two. The first female competitors in the International Moustache Championships, it's an honour.
Trixie: You're too kind.
Sarah: It's true.
(Anthony places Sarah's drink in front of her, while she has a sneaky look at her phone.)
Sarah: Thank you.
(Sarah takes a sip, still looking at her phone.)
Anthony: **(Disapprovingly.)** Sarah.
Sarah: Sorry, I was just checking to see if I'd had any messages from Freya.
Emmylou: The waitress?
Anthony: Freya's also our daughter's name.
Emmylou: Gotcha.
Anthony: No, she hasn't texted, but you did get a message from someone with the initials DP, asking for details of the rendezvous.
Sarah: Have you been reading my messages?
(Anthony shrugs.)
Anthony: I thought it might have been Freya. So, who's DP?
Sarah: Deborah; Deborah... Perkins, from work.
Anthony: I haven't heard you mention her before.
Sarah: She's new. We've got an important meeting next week.
Anthony: Oh, right.
(Sarah takes a sip of her cocktail.)
Trixie: How's the Tequila Saddam-rise?
Sarah: Not bad, actually.
(Herr Lip is glowering at Anthony and Emmylou notices.)
Trixie: What's the red at the bottom? Blood of the infidels?
Sarah: Either that or grenadine.
Emmylou: Don't look, but Herr Lip over there keeps staring at us, and he seems angry for some reason.

[... Continued in the full script.]