

Ding Dong Dell
Kitty's Down The Well!



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
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Customer Taster

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Customer Taster

About the pack

The pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event. *Ding Dong Dell - Kitty's Down The Well* is intended to be used at a sit down meal where the cast will act out a set of events for the assembled guests.

This murder mystery is a **scripted performance**; the cast have set lines to learn which contain the information the audience will need to work out whodunit!

Structure

The murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview [excerpts in this taster]
- The Script, including the denouement, in which the murderer is revealed [excerpt in this taster]
- Accusation sheets for the audience to enter their deductions of whodunnit.

The Organiser's Overview includes:-

- A Synopsis & Plot Overview
- **General Staging Notes** on how best to plan and stage your murder mystery event.
- A Character Overview
- Props, Costume and Set Suggestions.

Synopsis

Kitty's down the well! Kitty Blaine, the casting director of a pre-war repertory company, has been stabbed and her body dumped in a well – a prop made of canvas and plywood. Plodshire Police Inspector Laura Lovelace is soon on the scene to recruit the audience in assisting her in finding the murderer, amongst the argumentative actors and mysterious members of the company.

Plot Overview [excerpt]

The year is 1935 and in the town of Wellford-on-Sea there is a small, run-down Repertory Company providing culture to the provincial masses. Unfortunately, there has been a dramatic death on the stage of this theatre - a real-life murder. The Company's Casting Director, Miss Kitty Blaine, has been found stabbed to death in the well – a prop made of canvas and plywood.

Who among the Company would have done this and why? Inspector Laura Lovelace of the Plodshire Police has come to conduct interviews and uncovers the jealousy and backbiting which permeates this small tightly-knit group of desperate has-beens.

Sir Alan Blade-Beddington, the Theatre's artistic director is frantically trying to finalise rehearsals for the following weeks' performance of, a *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Unfortunately, his leading lady, **Marcia Mancroft** has an unfortunate habit of falling asleep on the job, and his props manager, **Croydon Cooper**, a mysterious character with a strange accent, is constantly mislaying the props. Supporting actors include **Leonora Longbridge**, who hankers after the leading roles, and effeminate **Tarquin Topaz** who longs to play Romeo but is more of a Juliet. The Company is maintained by **Jeff and Lily Mudge**, Stage Manager and Wardrobe Mistress respectively.

Jeff is allowed to have little to say for himself, whilst Lily has a passionate hatred of all actors. During her investigations, Inspector Lovelace reveals the backgrounds, alibis and motives of all the Company.

General Staging Notes

If performers are familiar with their characters, it will help to make the production run much more smoothly. There is no in-built interrogation session with this production, so it is not necessary for the performers to ad-lib. Performers, can if they wish, provide back-stories or fill-in their characters, but these do not form part of the script.

Allow approximately two hours for the event. Accusation sheets should be handed out following Scene 3. The audience are invited to consider the motives and evidence against the characters involved. Accusation Sheets are collected following the coffee break.

The announcement of the winning team and awarding of prizes should take place following the denouement. This could be performed by either the Inspector or Director. In the case of two or more tables correctly identifying the murderer, the team with the clearest analysis can be declared the winner.

Suggestions for a welcoming atmosphere:

- A greeter at the main entrance.
- Pre-dinner drinks.
- Flowers, tablecloths and candles on tables, all perhaps with a theatrical theme.
- Introductory music, played before the performance and during the meal break. Song suggestion: 'Fanlight Fanny' (George Formby, Harry Gifford and Frederick E. Cliffe)
- A short welcome from the chairperson including an explanation of the structure of the evening. The floor is then given to the Inspector and the performance follows.

Suggested Timing Guide

7:00 pm Guests arrive and are seated.

7:15 pm Scene One

7:35 pm Main course

7:55 pm Scene Two

8:05 pm Dessert

8:20 pm Scene Three

8:35 pm Coffee - Accusation sheets are distributed, with time given for deliberation.

8:55 pm Scene Four, and announcement of the winning team.

Production Notes [*Excerpt*]

Set Description

The stage is set for the evening's presentation of Macbeth. It is not an organised set, with props and costumes littering the area.

If presented on a stage, a backdrop of a castle interior would be sufficient.

If the event is staged in a non-theatre environment, such as a club or restaurant, there is less opportunity or need to create a set. Simply provide a delineated performance space. The performers retire to the outside of this area following their exits.

Character Overview

Inspector Laura Lovelace – Conducts the inquiry. Down to earth, cynical. Dislikes the theatrical profession.

Alan – Egotistical, exasperated. A Knight of the theatre and renowned ladies' man. Speaks in an affected upper-class manner.

Marcia – Speaks in a drawling manner. A trifle tipsy. Both she and Leonora are bitchy and cutting.

Tarquin – Effeminate and waspish.

Leonora – Vain and slightly common.

Croydon – Disorganised and German.

Lily – Domineering, working-class.

Jeff – Henpecked, pretends to be deaf for an easy life.

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Scene 1

(A theatre stage. Stage Right leads to the Properties, Costume and Make-up areas, Stage Left leads to the Green Room.)

(Inspector Lovelace enters Stage Right and takes Centre Stage. She makes notes throughout the play.)

Inspector: Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the Wellford-on-Sea Little Theatre, home to the Wellford Repertory Company. A dramatic murder has taken place in this theatre, and not a pretend, ham-acted murder as is usual on this stage. The body of the Company's Casting Director, Miss Kitty Hildegard Blaine, has been found in a plywood and canvas well in the properties department. She had been brutally stabbed to death by person or persons unknown and I, Inspector Laura Lovelace of the Plodshire Police, have come to carry out the necessary investigations. I have to admit that I am not quite comfortable in the fantasy world of the theatre, preferring instead the gritty harshness of reality. However, in this year of Nineteen Thirty Five, with the gathering storm of international unrest, I realise that many people need some form of escapism. And I suppose that a visit to their local provincial repertory theatre must be better than nothing. Just about. I will now begin my enquiries by meeting all the suspects, that is, the members of this Company and I will begin with none other than that renowned actor, Sir Alan Blade-Beddington.

(Enter Alan Stage Left.)

Inspector: Ah, Sir Alan, Inspector Laura Lovelace.

Alan: Ding dong! I didn't know they had such delightful creatures in the Police.

Inspector: Yes they do, and this one is seconded to the Criminal Investigation Department.

Alan: And what may I call you, my dear?

Inspector: Inspector.

Alan: Well, you may call me Alan, without the Sir; we don't want formality coming between us, do we?

Inspector: What can you tell me about...

Alan: My Knighthood, although bestowed upon me by His Gracious Majesty King George the Fifth, is not for me alone, you understand, but for the great and noble theatrical profession as a whole.

Inspector: You are far too modest.

Alan: Yes, being a world-famous actor is a great responsibility; one must not be too full of oneself.

Inspector: You have had a very long career, I believe. I remember you when I went to the children's matinees at the Odeon cinema.

Alan: Oh that! I was a mere tot myself.

Inspector: No, you were at least forty.

Alan: Make up, my dear. Make up.

Inspector: And now you are here at the Wellford-on-Sea Little Theatre?

Alan: But before this I played in all the top venues: Stratford, The Old Vic, Cromer Pier [*Or other local village hall / club*].

Inspector: Pardon my ignorance, but what exactly is repertory theatre?

Alan: Oh my dear, we bring salvation to the culturally deprived masses in the provinces.

Inspector: How very noble.

Alan: We operate on a shoestring, but we have the artistic freedom to determine our own repertoire, as well as designing our own wardrobe, sets and properties.

Inspector: It must be extremely hard work.

Alan: But we thrive on hard work. In addition to our performance roles, we each take on other theatrical responsibilities. I am the Artistic Director and, of course, leading man.

Inspector: I would expect nothing less.

Alan: Each week we perform one of the Bard's plays in the evenings, whilst rehearsing next week's offering during the day.

Inspector: What is your current production?

Alan: We go on at seven thirty with the Scottish Play.

Inspector: You mean Macbeth?

Alan: No my dear, you mustn't say that; it causes bad luck. Now, you had better go outside, turn around three times and come back in again.

Inspector: I shall do no such thing. What are you rehearsing during the day?

Alan: A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Inspector: And you were rehearsing this when Miss Blaine's body was discovered?

Alan: Yes, I believe she fell down the well during the break for luncheon.

Inspector: She didn't fall down the well. It's not a real well.

Alan: No? Well, we found her when we resumed rehearsals at three p-m. Such a comed... Er tragedy. We shall miss her so much.

Inspector: What was Miss Blaine's role within the Company?

Alan: She was my Casting Director and took on minor roles when required. But we tried not to overburden her with the performance side. Poor dear Kitty had an acting style that rhymed with her name.

Inspector: Er, thank you Sir Alan. Now your co-star is Miss Marcia Mancroft, I believe?

Alan: Oh yes, such a delight to work with, although, *entre nous*, a little teensy bit neurotic. And such an ego, my dear. Completely self-obsessed.

(Enter Marcia Stage Left.)

Marcia: Alan, dahling.

Alan: Marcia, dahling. May I present my Titania to you, Inspector.

Marcia: Fairies skip hence, I have foresworn his bed...

Alan: **(Interrupting, sotto voce.)** Thank heaven for that.

Marcia: And company. Such a delightful part to play – the female lead.

Alan: And I of course, take the role of Oberon.

Marcia: A vain and power-crazed fairy; Alan plays him so well.

Alan: And Marcia takes her role to the very limits of credibility.

Marcia: Your new toupée has arrived, dear. Go and try it on.

Alan: Marcia must have her little joke. My hair is all my own, of course. But costume fittings call, dear lady; must away... **(Exits Stage Right.)**

Inspector: Until later, Sir Alan. Now Miss Mancroft, you've been with the Wellford Repertory Company for how long?

Marcia: Ever since I returned from Hollywood.

Inspector: When was that?

Marcia: Nineteen-twenty two; my, how time flies.

Inspector: How do you find working with Sir Alan? I believe he has a great reputation as a ladies' man.

Marcia: Poor Alan; he's quite a poppet but he excessively overrates his personal charms.

Inspector: Has he ever made advances to you?

Marcia: Good heavens, Alan doesn't make advances; he makes attacks from the rear.

Inspector: What is your position here, Miss Mancroft?

Marcia: I am responsible for elocution, projection and deportment. And I have my work cut out, I can tell you.

Inspector: I'm sure you do.

Marcia: In addition of course, I am the leading lady.

Inspector: In every production?

Marcia: Who else has my experience and talent?

Inspector: So as well as Titania next week, you are playing. The Thane's wife now?

Marcia: And what a wonderful role it is. I nightly go from a scheming, obsessive fiend to a demented, withered wreck.

Inspector: What about Lady Macbeth?

Marcia: I plumb the depths of desperation.

Inspector: I'm beginning to feel the same way.

Marcia: **(Quoting)** Come to my woman's breasts...

(Enter Tarquin Stage Right, who passes across the stage with a flowered wreath on his head.)

Tarquin: Not bloody likely. **(Exits Stage Left.)**

Inspector: Who was that?

Marcia: Tarquin Topaz. Our Banquo and Puck.

Inspector: I think I'll speak to him next. Thank you Miss Mancroft, I shall see you again later.
Would you please be good enough to ask Mister Topaz to come back in.

Marcia: If you think it really necessary.

Inspector: I do think it really necessary.

Marcia: Well then, of course, dahling.

Inspector: Inspector.

Marcia: But do be careful with our Mister Topaz, won't you? He can be a trifle precious and will go into a swoon if you upset him. **(Exits Stage Left.)**

Inspector: This should be interesting.

(Enter Tarquin Stage Left.)

Tarquin: Hallo, my name is Mudd.

Inspector: Why, what have you done?

Tarquin: Archie Mudd. M. U. D. D. Tarquin Topaz is my stage name.

Inspector: I see.

Tarquin: On account of my dazzling performances.

Inspector: Which would you prefer to be called?

Tarquin: Well, Mudd sticks in the memory, but Topaz has a certain sparkle, don't you think?

Inspector: Quite. Mister Topaz, what do you do in this company?

Tarquin: I am the major supporting male actor and also in charge of choreography. The Fairies do a sweet little dance of my own devising. Would you like to see it?

Inspector: No thank you.

Tarquin: Your loss, ducky.

Inspector: Inspector. You appear to be a very colourful character, Mister Topaz.

Tarquin: Yes, and so are my costumes; they're divine.

Inspector: I'm quite sure they are. I understand that you also play Banquo?

Tarquin: Yes. I just love the bit where I appear as a ghost at the feast. To great applause, I may add.

Inspector: I'm sure it's an Oscar-winning performance. You must be kept very busy.

Tarquin: Ooh not half! We're trying to rehearse at the moment and have to keep dashing off for costume fittings. Of course, with you here as well, it's totally manic.

Inspector: Well, I'll try to wrap this up as quickly as I can. Now the next person on my list is Miss Leonora Longbridge.

Tarquin: Second floor ladies' hats.

Inspector: Why do you say that?

Tarquin: Her face has had more lifts than Harrods. She's in complete denial about the passage of time, you know. Still thinks she's a Flapper from the Jazz Age. Here she comes now. Mum's the word.

(Enter Leonora Stage Left.)

Leonora: Tarquin, dahling.

Tarquin: Leonora, dahling.

Leonora: There's a nice cup of coffee awaiting you in the Green Room. It's your favourite; Camp coffee.

Tarquin: Ooh, is that a grey hair?

Leonora: What! Where, where?

Tarquin: I'm sure it won't notice too much under the spotlights. Byesy bye.

(Tarquin Exits Stage Left.)

Inspector: Miss Longbridge, you are the major female supporting actress, I understand?

Leonora: And I am also the artistic make-up expert.

Inspector: **(Sotto voce.)** You could have fooled me.

Leonora: I work miracles with the greasepaint; most of them on Marcia Mancroft.

Inspector: Please stop fiddling with your hair, Miss Longbridge. That grey one really doesn't show. Not very much, anyway.

Leonora: How long is this going to be? Because I must get to a mirror.

Inspector: I'd like you to answer *my* questions, first.

Leonora: How strange, a woman Police Officer! Haven't you got any nice, gorgeous uniformed males in your force.

Inspector: Loads. I just happen to be the best.

Leonora: Oh well. I suppose the handcuffs and brutal interrogation will just have to wait, then.

Inspector: We tend to be quite gentle with the elderly. What are your roles in these two productions?

Leonora: I am Helena, the lovelorn maiden in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Inspector: And tonight?

Leonora: Tonight I am Lady MacDuff. She who is murdered with her two little sons. My performance is said to move the audience.

(Enter Croydon Stage Right carrying a table lamp.)

Croydon: Towards exits they move in great hurry. **(Exits Stage Left.)**