



by
Patricia Gay



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Customer Taster

Let Sleeping Frogs Die

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Monsieur le Comte d'Avignon, a wealthy French aristocrat exiled in London, has not arisen in time for his usual evening drink at the Yacht Club. The Comte's two squabbling ex-wives and his drinking pal, the Colonel, discover the Comte dead...

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Organiser's Overview – Read this First!

About this pack

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event. The pack is intended to be used at a sit down meal, where the principal characters will act out a set of events for the assembled guests.

The pack is, in part, a **scripted performance**; the cast have set lines to learn, which contain the information the audience will need to work out whodunit – if they are thinking clearly enough!

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview (mostly in this taster).
- The Script (to be distributed to the individual characters before the event), including the denouement, in which the murderer is revealed. (An incomplete extract can be found in this taster.)
- Solution sheets for the audience to enter their solutions.
- Quiz sheets, (which could be an independent competition or a tie breaker).

This taster document includes:

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

Plot Overview

Monsieur le Comte d'Avignon is a wealthy French aristocrat, who has lived in London for many years. The Comte is extremely Right Wing and a Monarchist, which is why he cannot bear to live in Republican France. The Comte does however own estates in Avignon, where the famous Chateau Pis (pronounced Pee) is produced.

Consternation arises in the household when the Comte has not arisen in time for his usual evening drink at the Yacht Club. The Comte's two squabbling ex-wives and his drinking pal, the Colonel, discover the Comte dead. He was poisoned with a dose of Aconitine, which could have been administered, in food or drink, at any time throughout the day of his death.

Inspector **Alan Cartwright** takes charge of the investigation and uncovers the motives that each person has for the murder, and the opportunities that they may have had for giving the lethal dose.

The Comte's only child, **Louis**, despises his father's political views, and is himself a Left-Wing dogma-spouting anarchist. The Comte, disgusted by his son's plan to turn the family Chateau into a Commune, decides to disinherit Louis and leave his money to the French *Front National*. His father's murder comes just in time to save Louis' fortune, but he is the one character who has not supplied the Comte with any food or drink during the day.

Fifi, the Comte's little French maid is secretly engaged to Louis. Whilst Louis plans to share his wealth and dispense with his new title, Fifi is determined to change things once they are married and to become the new Comtesse and mistress of the Chateau. Fifi has taken the Comte his mid-afternoon brioche.

Mrs Huggins, the Comte's Housekeeper has a guilty little secret. During her employment, she has been steadily drinking the contents of the vast wine cellar. In order to top up during the day, she has been secreting bottles of Chateau Pis all over the house. Should the Comte have found this out, Mrs Huggins would have been out of a job. Mrs Huggins has taken up the Comte's morning café au lait.

Stackhouse, the Butler, does not appear to have a motive for the Comte's murder. He took up the Comte's after-dinner glass of wine, which he claims was not drunk. However, Inspector Cartwright reveals that Stackhouse has a wealthy French aunt, who is descended from one of the most radical of the 1789 Revolutionaries, the sort who did-away with the French aristocracy.

The two ex-wives, **Sara and Tracey**, are desperate for more alimony, and should therefore be interested in keeping the Comte alive. But the Comte was in the process of completing his memoirs, which he has kept well-hidden. Sara is afraid that her spendthrift ways would be heralded in the national press, whilst Tracey is afraid that her numerous affairs would be revealed. The ex-wives are all too aware that any chance of ensnaring future wealthy husbands would be jeopardised should their peccadillos come to light. Throughout the day, Sara and Tracey have taken up the Comte's lunch and dinner.

The Colonel is completely bogus – he is in fact an ex-Army Sergeant who was dishonourably discharged for embezzling funds from the Sergeants' Mess. He is also afraid that the Comte suspected his fraudulent activities as Treasurer of the Yacht Club. During the morning, the Colonel had taken the Comte his morning croissant.

Character overview

Inspector Alan Cartwright of the Plodshire Police – He takes charge of the whole performance. He welcomes the audience, explains the scenario and in the first sequence, introduces the other characters. He then conducts a series of three interviews, each concluding with a different course of the meal. Finally, he presents the denouement and arrests the murderer.

Fifi - French Maid to the deceased and the only French character in the production. A frivolous little flirt, whose English leaves a lot to be desired.

Sara - Deceased's ex-wife number one. A catty, pretentious snob and rabid spendthrift, with a penchant for designer clothes.

Tracey - Deceased's ex-wife number two. Bitchy, brassy, common and tarty, she is reputed to belong to the oldest profession.

The Colonel - Friend of the deceased. Bombastic. Always on the lookout for a free drink.

Stackhouse - Butler to the deceased. Condescending and with a spiteful tongue.

Louis - Son of the deceased. An idealistic left-wing rebel. Full of platitudes about how his New Order will change the world.

Mrs Huggins – Housekeeper to the deceased. Cheery salt-of-the-earth type. Becomes more inebriated throughout the production.

General Staging Notes

Note that you need to purchase a Performance Licence from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.

Preparation

Please rehearse, even if you are going to read the script as opposed to memorising it. If performers are familiar with their characters, it will help to make the production to run so much more smoothly.

There is no inbuilt question and answer 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.

Decide on the format for declaring the winner.

Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.

The script takes the form of a conventional play, with entrances, exits and other basic stage directions included.

Evidence

All the evidence is covered by the script. (There are no additional clues for the audience to consider and it is not intended that the audience should interrogate the cast.)

The audience are invited to consider the motives and evidence against the characters involved. The case can be discussed during and after the various courses of the meal. The Inspector can announce this before the food is served and time should be allowed for this.

Solution

At the end of the final set of interviews and during the Coffee Break, the audience can submit the form with their table number, the name of the killer and the evidence that led them to this decision. In the case of two or more tables correctly identifying the murderer, it is the one with the clearest analysis that is the winner.

Following the submission of all entries, the denouement can be enacted, the winners declared and prizes given.

There is also the opportunity for an additional quiz to take place during the performance. For example listing the French words/terms commonly used in English - (e.g. derriere or chaise longue.

(Alternatively items of French cuisine can be listed - e.g. Assiette de Fruits.)

This could be used as a tie-breaker in the case of multiple correct solutions to the mystery, or used as an independent quiz. (In the latter case, if there is a die for the murder mystery solution, then a draw from the hat may suffice to pick the winner!)

Let Sleeping Frogs Die

Scene 1 - Introduction Of Characters

(The Action takes place in the elegant drawing room of Monsieur le Comte's London home.)

(Enter Inspector Cartwright.)

Inspector: Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen, to the palatial London home of Monsieur le Comte d'Avignon. Monsieur is an emigré French aristocrat, who is, unfortunately, the victim of a poisoner. I am Inspector Alan Cartwright of the Plodshire Police, and it is my job to unmask the murderer. But first, let us meet the characters in this little drama, just before the murder is discovered. I would point out, that although Monsieur le Comte is French, the only other person from his home country is little Fifi, his French maid. Here she comes now with Monsieur's two ex-wives, Sara and Tracey.

(The Inspector takes a position to one side of the stage and speaks in asides during the Introduction of Characters.)

(Sara and Tracey enter, followed by Fifi.)

Fifi: Excuse moi, Madame la Comtesse.

Sara: } (Together)

Tracey: } Yes?

Sara: If you don't mind I am Madame la Comtesse; I was married to him before you were.

Tracey: And if you don't mind darlin', 'ee kicked you out and made me his wife, so I am Madame la Comtesse.

Sara: Well, the term Madam certainly suits you.

Tracey: He got shot of you, and then he did better for himself; with me.

Sara: And then he saw the error of his ways and got rid of you as well, you trollop.

Tracey: You harpy.

Sara: You pleb.

Tracey: You, you... UKIP voter!

Fifi: Zut alors! That was ze insult terrible.

Sara: What do you want, servant girl?

Fifi: Ze Colonel is 'ere. You know, ze one 'oo speak with ze funny accent.

Inspector: The Colonel is the Comte's drinking pal.

(The Colonel enters.)

Colonel: I say, is the old boy any better? It's nearly eight o'clock.

Fifi: 'Ee is still up with the fly.

Tracey: Down with the flu, you twit.

Fifi: Zat is what I say. And if any of you go up to 'im, you will also catch the fly.

(Fifi exits.)

Tracey: (Indicating Sara.) Well she will; she never shuts her big trap.

Colonel: Must say, he looked a bit rough this morning when I went up with news from the Yacht Club. Took him The Times and his morning croissant; just to save old Stackhouse the stairs. By the way, where is your man? Stackhouse! STACKHOUSE! Where the devil is he?

Inspector: Stackhouse is Monsieur's Butler.

Colonel: STACKHOUSE!

(Stackhouse enters.)

Stackhouse: You bellowed, Sir?

Colonel: Ah, there you are. Wish you'd stop hiding. You should be ready and willing, what, what?

Stackhouse: Yes Sir.

Colonel: Good. Any chance of a G and T?

Stackhouse: No Sir.

Colonel: What do you mean, No Sir?

Stackhouse: You finished all the gin last night, Sir.

Colonel: Damned bad show, man. I'd have had you court-martialled, back in my day.

Stackhouse: Yes Sir.

Colonel: So the old Comte is still not the ticket eh? He'll be late on parade at the Yacht Club bar then. Hanging offence, that.

Sara: He was very wan at lunchtime, when I went up.

Tracey: Yeah, I saw you. You was taking him up a pancake.

Sara: A crepe, you moron. Crepe!

Tracey: Smelled like it, an' all.

Sara: And I see you were ahead of me. What were you after?

Tracey: Wouldn't you like to know? As a matter of fact, I took him up some hors d'oeuvres.

Sara: You don't pronounce the aitch, simpleton. Although perhaps in your case, you do.

Inspector: And now for Louis, the Comte's son and heir.

(Louis enters.)

Louis: Hi guys, how's things?

Sara: Oh here's our very own little Karl Marx. How's the revolution coming along?

Louis: The glorious day will dawn. The new world order is just around the corner.

Tracey: Get the bleedin' red flag out!

Louis: You may scoff, but when my Father's estate passes to me, it will no longer be the possession of one man, but a glorious commune, fit for the proletariat.

Colonel: I say, steady on, old chap. You can't do that.

Louis: Yes, Colonel. No more scrounging free drinks for you.

Tracey: But what will happen to us?

Louis: You will have to find honest work, my dear ex-step-mothers. No more living a life of idle luxury on my Father's alimony.

Sara: } **(Together)**

Tracey: } Work!

Colonel: Think I'll just go up and see how the old chap is. Make sure he's not going to pop his clogs just yet.

Sara: What a good idea. I'll come with you.

Tracey: Thank goodness he's only got the fly, flu. Oi, wait for me!

(Sara, Tracey and the Colonel exit.)

Inspector: It's now time we met Mrs Huggins, the Comte's Housekeeper.

(Mrs Huggins and Fifi enter.)

Mrs Huggins: Oh, those two ex-wives never leave him alone, do they?

Fifi: Zey are ze clones.

Stackhouse: They're nothing like each other. One's nothing but a parvenu, the other one's as common as muck.

Fifi: No, no, like in ze circus. Clones.

Mrs Huggins: Clowns, you mean, dearie.

Fifi: Zat is what I say.

Stackhouse: They're both plastered with enough make-up to be in the circus.

Fifi: As for zat Colonel, 'ee is just as bad; always after the G and the T.

Louis: Never fear, when the glorious revolution takes place, they will all be sent to the coal mines.

Mrs Huggins: We 'aven't got any coal mines, dear. They all got closed.

Louis: Call centres, then. Have we got any call centres?

Stackhouse: Have you just been in to see Monsieur, Mrs Huggins? How is he?

Mrs Huggins: Very quiet; he's just laid there, all quiet. I've never known him so quiet - in all my days as housekeeper.

Fifi: Perhaps 'ee is asleep.

Mrs Huggins: With his eyes open?

Stackhouse: He didn't even want his glass of wine after dinner.

Mrs Huggins: That's not like him. He loves his wine.

Stackhouse: He's not the only one, is he Mrs Huggins?

Mrs Huggins: 'Ere, what are you implying, Mr Stackhouse? So he didn't want his wine, eh?

Fifi: Perhaps 'ee is sicker.

Mrs Huggins: Well, you can't let it go to waste; it's good for my indigestion. Playing me up something chronic, that is. I'll be as right as rain after I've had a glass.

Stackhouse: } **(Together)**

Fifi: } Or two.

(Colonel, Sara and Tracey enter.)

Colonel: I say, it's all very odd, he is not moving.

Fifi: Perhaps 'ee is dead.

Sara: He has no pulse.

Fifi: 'Ee could be dead.

Tracey: He ain't breathing.

Fifi: Ee is dead.

Stackhouse: The old Comte is dead; long live the new Comte.

Louis: Oh, call me Louis. I don't want to be called a Comte.

Tracey: But we've always called you a ...

Inspector: **(Moves centre stage.)** So, our murder has been committed. Death by Aconitine, a poison that could have been administered at any time during the day. A poison whose effect could take minutes or hours. Who would have the motive for such a murder? Who had the opportunity? Who has something to hide? Now let us commence the first round of interviews and to begin, we will have the loyal staff.

(All exit with the exception of the Inspector and Fifi.)

[Continued in three more scenes plus denouement.]