



by
Giles Black



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Murder in Hollywood

Copyright 2014 by Giles Black

Megalomaniac film director Mickey Moviemaker has a questionable approach to film making, accounting and his private life. Not only have such tactics made him many enemies, but new tensions arise as he battles to create his latest epic, a radical reworking of the life of Joan of Arc...

COPYRIGHT REGULATIONS

This script is protected under the Copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations and all countries of the Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights, including Stage, Motion Picture, Video, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translations into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, manuscript, typescript, recording, including video, or otherwise, without prior consent of Lazy Bee Scripts.

A licence, obtainable only from Lazy Bee Scripts, must be acquired for every public or private performance of a script published by Lazy Bee Scripts and the appropriate royalty paid. If extra performances are arranged after a licence has already been issued, it is essential that Lazy Bee Scripts are informed immediately and the appropriate royalty paid, whereupon an amended licence will be issued.

The availability of this script does not imply that it is automatically available for private or public performance, and Lazy Bee Scripts reserve the right to refuse to issue a licence to perform, for whatever reason. Therefore a licence should always be obtained before any rehearsals start.

Localisation and updating of this script is permitted, particularly where indicated in the script. Major revisions to the text may not be made without the permission of Lazy Bee Scripts.

The names of the authors must be displayed on all forms of advertising and promotional material, including posters, programmes and hand bills.

Photocopying of this script constitutes an infringement of copyright unless consent has been obtained from Lazy Bee Scripts and an appropriate fee has been paid.

***FAILURE TO ABIDE BY ALL THE ABOVE REGULATIONS, CONSTITUTES AN
INFRINGEMENT OF THE COPYRIGHT LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.***

Published by Lazy Bee Scripts - www.lazybeescripts.co.uk

Murder in Hollywood

By Giles Black

Customer Taster

Overview

Murder in Hollywood is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by eight actors, (the victim, six suspects and the detective). Ideally there should be at least two other actors who do not have speaking parts. However their presence is not absolutely necessary.

The actors perform a formal scene which ends with a murder and the arrival of the detective.

The audience are then given additional written clues.

After a brief scene led by the detective, the audience are invited to question the suspects.

After the questions, members of the audience try to solve the mystery before the closing scene - in which the detective reveals the guilty party.

Please note that the murder takes place on a darkened film set. Therefore this play depends on it being possible to either darken the stage sufficiently to conceal the action or to rapidly draw a curtain across it to simulate darkness.

Also because part of the play involves one suspect intending to impersonate another, there should be at least a superficial physical resemblance between two of the actresses.

Characters

Female: 3, Male: 3, Either male or female: 2

Mickey Moviemaker. (Male) A famous Hollywood director, he is determined to film his latest epic, The Adventures of Joan of Arc, no matter how many people he upsets.

Caroline Stardust. (Female) The leading lady. Once a famous actress she is now attempting a comeback, but then Mickey makes a most outrageous demand.

Rocky Craggs. (Male) The leading man and still a famous actor, he has been blackmailed into taking part due to some foolish indiscretions and some interesting photographs.

Sammy / Samantha Shakespeare. (Male or Female) For simplicity, the character is written as male, but can easily be switched. Scriptwriter who so much wants to emulate his famous ancestor. If only Mickey had not taken some very wild liberties with his masterpiece.

Charlie / Charlene Cashcow. (Male or Female) For simplicity, the character is written as female, but can easily be switched. Mickey's financial backer who is deeply worried about losing her investment. Fortunately she has taken out insurance.

Masie Makeover. (Female) A wannabe starlet who after giving so much to secure the title role has suddenly found herself being dropped in favour of Miss Stardust.

Addie Minn. (Female) Mickey's very personal assistant who is prepared to go to any lengths to get him whatever he wants. But then Mickey proves to be less than grateful.

Lieutenant Oscar Winner. (Male) A hard-bitten detective of the Hollywood Homicide Squad who has been called in to investigate the murder.

Ideally there should be at least two film crew to move the screen in front of the film set and to act as camera and lighting operatives. They do not have speaking parts and are not suspects. However if they are not available, two of the actors can move the screen.

Structure

The full murder mystery pack includes

- A complete set of character descriptions in the organiser's overview, plus notes on staging the murder, and a props list. (Part of this is contained in this Taster.)
- The full script for Act 1 and Act 2, Scene 1. (Part of this is contained in this Taster.)
- Four pieces of written evidence for the audience to examine. (A sample is contained in this Taster.)
- Background briefs for interrogation of the suspects. (A sample is contained in this Taster.)
- Accusation sheets for the audience to complete.
- The solution. (Act 2, Scene 3.)

Plot overview

Megalomaniac film director Mickey Moviemaker has a questionable approach to film making, accounting and his private life. Not only have such tactics made him many enemies, but new tensions arise as he battles to create his latest epic, a radical and controversial reworking of the life of Joan of Arc.

Just as the first scene is filmed, there is a murder on the set, using a vital prop. Lieutenant Oscar Winner of the Hollywood Homicide Squad is called in to investigate.

Running the script in front of the audience

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

Preparation

Initial preparation can be done by distributing the opening scene, then running a first rehearsal in which the actors have to guess the identity of the murderer (evaluating the written evidence) before they have seen the script for the final scene. (It's fun! Why not? It also ensures that the actors become familiar with the logic of the mystery – they will learn more about themselves and their roles from the evidence.) Decide on the format for deciding the winner and if you will be using a tie-breaker question in the event that two or more audience members guess the murder correctly.

The First Act

Open the event by acting out the opening scene.

After the murder, distribute the written evidence.

Announce that since they - the studio audience - have now been sworn in as officers of the Hollywood Police Department, Lieutenant Oscar Winner wishes them to examine a selection of the evidence he has gathered.

Give the audience a specified time to evaluate the evidence.

Interrogation

Act out Act two, Scene 1, then invite the audience to question the suspects.

For a small event this can be done before the full audience, with Winner introducing each suspect in turn, and bringing each interrogation to a close; for a large it might be more effective for the questioning to be done in small groups – for example by the suspects rotating round the audience tables. The advantage of choosing the former option is that if the questioning is slow, Lieutenant Winner can step in to ask some questions himself.

Accusation

At the end of the interrogation, ask the audience to fill in the accusation sheets. (Make sure you have some spare pens or pencils.)

Solution

Act out Act 2, Scene 3.

Prize giving

This should be done by Lieutenant Winner.

He could also take the option of reading out some of the more bizarre audience solutions!

Declare the winner. (In the event of a draw, you can either draw the winner from a hat, or you may wish to include your own tie breaker question.)

Award a prize for the best solution! (And possibly a prize for the worst.)

Timings

As a broad guide your event might run as follows:-

7:00 Meet and greet; pre-dinner drinks.

7:30 Act 1.

7:55 Distribute evidence and accusation sheets to each member of the audience. Serve starters.

8:10 Act 1, Scene 1. (The investigation.)

8:15 Interrogation by the audience.

8:35 Collect accusation sheets.

8:40 Main course.

(During the main course the cast/crew evaluate the answers and choose the winning answer.)

9:10 Act 2, Scene 3. (The solution.)

9:15 Prize giving.

9:25 Desert.

Murder in Hollywood

Act 1 - The Murder (Sample)

(Addie Minn enters holding clipboard with notepad and pen. She walks round the stage looking at each of the following items and writing on the notepad as she speaks.)

Addie: Cameras? Tick. Lights? Tick. Microphones? Tick. Excellent. Now listen everybody. Mr Mickey Moviemaker the most wonderful film director in all of Hollywood will be here soon and I want everything perfect for the great man. Sammy Shakespeare, have you sent him the script yet?

(Sammy Shakespeare enters.)

Shakespeare: Oh yes, Addie. I sent a copy over this morning and believe me, it is the greatest script I have ever done. All my life I have been overshadowed by my great ancestor, but at last I have I managed to equal him.

(Mickey Moviemaker enters waving a film script.)

Moviemaker: Shakespeare! What on earth is this rubbish?

Shakespeare: Oh Mr Moviemaker, should I take it you don't like it?

Moviemaker: How should I know whether I like it or not? I only got through the first six pages before I felt the irresistible urge to vomit. Of course I don't like it.

Shakespeare: But Mr Moviemaker, what's wrong with it? It so wonderfully conveys the vulnerability of an innocent young maid even as she battles for her faith. Believe me, this script is at the pinnacle of the screenwriters' art. This script is a masterpiece. This is a script you could die for.

Moviemaker: What do you mean, she battles for her faith? Hell! We just don't do all that holy stuff here. And forget about her being an innocent young maid because I don't want any of your la de da historical accuracy, just some gratuitous sex and violence. It's what the public wants.

(Moviemaker throws the script at Shakespeare who catches it.)

Moviemaker: More to the point, Charlene Cashcow our main financial backer will be here any minute now and I want a decent script to show her. Now who is the hero in this epic?

Shakespeare: Well there isn't one really. It's the story of Joan of Arc so it's all about her.

Moviemaker: What? All about her? Look, I can do the feminist thing as much as the next guy. But I don't go overboard about it. Any dame in one of my movies can do as she likes as long as she ends up getting laid by somebody. Now who have you got?

Shakespeare: Well there is the Dauphin of France.

Moviemaker: Dauphin? What's that when it's at home?

Shakespeare: It means dolphin.

Moviemaker: Dolphin! You're saying she should have it away with a fish. Sexy I can do, but there is no way I am going to have any of that kinky stuff in one of my movies.

Shakespeare: I mean that Dauphin is the title of the heir to the French throne. It comes from his coat of arms.

Moviemaker: You mean he is a prince? Hey prince I like. Every dame would love to meet her prince. Have her shack up with him and then we're talking.

Shakespeare: But it did not happen. Once she succeeded in making him king, he...

Moviemaker: What she actually makes him king? This gets better and better. I see it now, girl gives her all to make her boyfriend king of France. And I mean her all. So rewrite it now.

Shakespeare: What rewrite my masterpiece? No I can't. My life's work ruined. I just won't do it.

Moviemaker: Then I will just get somebody who will. Start with the castle bedroom scene, or you'll be back writing the jokes in Christmas crackers.

Shakespeare: But I can't do it. I really can't **(He breaks into tears and exits, running.)**

Addie: I think he's upset.

(Cashcow enters.)

Moviemaker: Oh he'll get over it. Now Ms Cashcow. Can I take it you are here because you are entranced by the magic of the movies?

Cashcow: No you cannot. I am here because I have been going through the books and I don't like what I have been reading.

Moviemaker: Well that is just what I have been saying all these years. People should not go round reading books. They should go to the movies instead.

Cashcow: I meant the account books. You are so over budget that we risk going broke even before we shoot a minute of film.

Moviemaker: Ah well, maybe I have spent a little more than was planned, but that's the movie business for you. To make a good film you have to spend top dollar. Film sets and overseas locations don't come cheap.

Cashcow: Especially when they are in places like Zanzibar, the Greek islands and Bali. I mean they are abroad.

Moviemaker: Precisely. Just imagine the hero and heroine frolicking in the surf with soaking wet clothes clinging to their perfectly toned bodies. Now for that I just had to find the perfect beach.

Cashcow: But since when did Joan of Arc frolic in the surf with anyone?

Moviemaker: Since I decided to make a movie about her and you do that with a French dame, you have to show a bit of passion. So what better than to have her rolling about on a beach?

Cashcow: Then why don't you have her rolling around on one here in California?

Moviemaker: Because our beaches look nothing like French ones and first rule of the movies is you got to have realism.

Cashcow: Then why not just have her rolling around on a French one?

Moviemaker: Sometimes I think you just don't understand the movie business.

Cashcow: I understand it well enough to know to ask why you had to take this dame Masie Makeover with you to Zanzibar, the Greek islands and Bali. Who's she?

Addie: **(In a disdainful tone of voice.)** Mr Moviemaker's latest discovery. Apparently she has a unique talent that only a genius like him could recognise, so he's told her she is going have the starring role.

Cashcow: I don't believe it. He has cast a total unknown in a big budget film. My budget may I point out.

Addie: Oh don't worry. When Mr Moviemaker said he was going to make her a star, he just meant half of it.

Cashcow: And which half would that be?

Addie: The half in which he says he is going to make her.

Cashcow: And the star part?

Addie: Oh she can forget that. You don't think Mr Moviemaker would risk his reputation with some floozy he discovered dancing in a strip joint.

Cashcow: Glad to hear it. But this Masie whatshername might not be too happy when she finds out. I mean a lot of dames would kill for a lead role in a movie.

Moviemaker: Well, so what if she isn't? She can just keep on doing the one thing she's good at until she finds out she hasn't got the part.

(Masie Makeover enters.)

Masie: **(Shouting angrily.)** Well she has found out! What do you mean I have not got the part?

Moviemaker: Oh hello Masie, sweetheart. I did not realise you were there.

Masie: Obviously.

(Masie tries to hit Moviemaker, but Addie holds her back.)

Addie: It's all right, Mickey. I'll handle this. Now listen, Masie. It is just that Mr Moviemaker feels that a unique talent like yours should be nurtured gradually. Believe me, I have seen it all too often before. A bright young actress gets her big break far too soon, she takes on far too much and before she knows it she is burnt out before her time.

Masie: Oh, so you mean that Mickey was only thinking of me when he decided not to give me the leading role after all?

Addie: That's right. All heart is Mr Moviemaker. He just felt it would be best if you took on something rather less taxing. That's why he has told Sammy Shakespeare to write something more uniquely suited to your talents.

[After which, the plot continues!]

Act 2 - The Investigation [Sample]

Scene 2 - Interrogation [Sample]

(The actors respond to audience questions based on the following briefs. Since the audience may well ask totally irrelevant questions, be prepared to use some deflecting answer such as “I don’t think that’s relevant.” The guilty party is allowed to lie. The rest may tell the truth to the extent that their character knows it.)

Rocky Craggs

Rocky Craggs says he was looking for the lamp while still on the edge of the film set after saying his last line. He knew nothing more until the lights came on ten seconds afterwards as arranged.

Of course he had been angry about being blackmailed into taking part, but if you reveal an indiscretion, someone will exploit it. That is the way things are done in Hollywood and he would have done the same. Besides he was not doing anything else and who knows, the film might have turned a profit.

As for having to do a nude scene, he now considered it a good career move. It is the twenty first century after all and was it really right that he should deprive all of womankind of feasting their eyes on absolute perfection?

He knew that Masie would be temporarily doubling for Caroline, but he could not see who was there or where when he opened the door onto the darkened set. Equally he could not see who else was on or near the film set.

He had no idea that Addie felt so strongly about him so he could not have been upset at Moviemaker’s treatment of her.

Exhibit 1
Covering note found in the office of C Cashcow

To C. Cashcow,
Cashcow Productions,
Hollywood.

Film Insurance Incorporated,
Heaven's Gate,
Los Angeles.

Following our telephone conversation today, I am writing to confirm that Film Insurance Inc. agrees to pay you ten million dollars in the event of the motion picture, the Adventures of Joan of Arc being cancelled through

S.1) The death, serious injury or illness of one of the following

- a) The director.
- b) A leading actor or actress.

S.2) The destruction of the film set through

- a) Fire.
- b) Hurricane.
- c) Earthquake.

S.3) The theft or destruction of vital equipment including

- a) The cameras.
- b) The sound recording equipment.
- c) The director's drinks cabinet.

Yours sincerely



Will E. Payout.