



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
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Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Séance for Murder

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Organiser's Overview – Read this First!

About this pack

The full murder mystery pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event.

Séance for Murder 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 a scripted performance to learn, with their actions containing all the information the audience will need to work out whodunit!

Structure

The murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview [*Extracts here*]
- The Script, including
 - Act One building up to the Murder [*Extract here*] and
 - Act Two in which the truth is revealed.
- Accusation sheets for the audience to enter their deductions of what happened.

The Organiser's Overview includes:-

- General Staging Notes summarising the plot and advising how best to plan and stage your murder mystery event
- Timing guide
- Character overviews
- Props list, Lighting plot and Sound Effects list/plot.

General Staging Notes

Widowed Evelyn Johnson goes to visit clairvoyant Alice Parkin, taking her schoolteacher daughter Lizzie with her. Lizzie doesn't really approve. Also at the séance are Joyce Rayburn and her bullying husband Keith, who is a sceptic. Charles Fieldhouse, a small-time local journalist with an interest in Lizzie, is also present. Across the road from Alice lives Roger Young. During the war, a plane crashed in what is now his garden; will they raise the spirit of an airman? Joyce is disorganised and picked on by Keith, who manages to upset everyone. Alice provides tea and coffee and the séance begins but is interrupted by Roger playing the fool outside. Charles intervenes on Alice's behalf and goes outside to have it out with him. All the cast are off stage at the end of the first act, when someone is found dead.

During the Interval, the audience are given the opportunity to deduce the victim, murderer, method and motive; Accusation sheets should be handed out at the end of Act One. A light supper can be served at this point, following which the sheets will be collected in. During the second act, the murder is gradually unravelled by the six remaining cast members. At the conclusion, if it is suitable and desired, the 'victim' gives a small prize to the audience member who succeeded or came closest to the correct answer. Allow approximately two hours for the event in total.

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.

Suggested Timing Guide

7:00 pm Act One

7:45 pm Interval and meal (during which the accusation sheets are completed and collected)

8:15 pm Act Two

8:50 pm Announcement of the best guess, prize awarded, dessert and/or coffee provided.

Character Overviews

Evelyn Johnson – Late 50s. Smart but not grand. Wants to move house but feels she should consult her dead husband.

Lizzie Johnson – Her daughter, late 20s. Teacher. Thinks her mother is silly but comes with her to see that she doesn't get involved with anything that might reflect badly on her job.

Alice Parkin – Late 50s. Practical. Comfortable in her own skin and not easily put out.

Charles Fieldhouse – Early 30s. Small time local reporter, hopes to get an article out of his experiences at the séance. Fancies Lizzie.

Keith Rayburn – Late 40s/early 50s. Works for the council and revels in telling people what they should do. Bullies his wife whom he regards as stupid.

Joyce Rayburn – Late 40s. Keith's wife. Nervous but determined. Easily flustered.

Roger Young – Late 60s. A nosey parker and keen on his garden. A bit on the rough side but able to put two and two together.

Script *[Extract]*

Act One

(It is 7.30 on an autumn evening. The scene is a dining room in a bungalow on the edge of a small town. There is a folding table against the wall and three dining chairs. Upstage, a window is screened by a pair of curtains which are closed. There is a side board with a bowl of fruit, two candlesticks, a pile of paper napkins and a small table lamp. Two other chairs are set back against the wall. Stage left, a door leads into the rest of the house and stage right a French window, also covered by a curtain.)

(When the lights come up, the room is empty. Lizzie enters, followed by Evelyn.)

Lizzie: I don't know that we should be doing this, you know.

Evelyn: What do you mean?

Lizzie: Suppose the headmaster finds out.

Evelyn: How will he? Unless you open your big mouth?

Lizzie: Somebody else might tell him.

Evelyn: It's none of his business.

Lizzie: And, Mum, you know how the Vicar feels about Alice.

Evelyn: Lizzie, I didn't ask you to come and if you'd rather not stay, just go home now and stop making a fuss.

Lizzie: I don't want to see you getting into anything you can't handle.

Evelyn: Alice and I have been friends for over fourteen years. If there was anything I couldn't cope with, I wouldn't be here now.

Lizzie: Yes, but a séance. You've never been to a séance before, have you? Well, have you?

Evelyn: No, I haven't. I've never needed to. Besides that, I don't think Dad would have liked it.

Lizzie: That's what I mean.

Evelyn: Well, he's not here, is he?

Lizzie: What happens if Alice succeeds in getting through, as she puts it? He'll be here then, won't he?

Evelyn: That's different. You know what he was like – always sounding off about...

Lizzie: Of course I know what he was like and anyhow, I can't think why after all this time, you want to get in touch with him. I don't forget you telling Alice, not six months since, you were glad to have the rest of your life to yourself.

Evelyn: I was and I am, but all the same, when he wasn't that way he could be quite sensible, and I'm sure on the other side...

Lizzie: On the other side... oh, for crying out loud...

Evelyn: I've told you, if you don't like it you can go home.

Lizzie: Who else is coming?

Evelyn: I think she said Joyce.

Lizzie: Joyce! But she doesn't approve of this sort of thing, she's involved with the church.

Evelyn: If you're going to stay, you might as well sit down. You're prowling around like one of those animals you see on TV.

(Alice enters from the hall with a folded-up velvet cloth.)

Alice: You've still got your coat on, Lizzie. Haven't you made yourself comfortable? There's no need to be nervous, there's nothing to be afraid of.

Lizzie: I'm only here to look after Mum.

Alice: But you're going to take part, aren't you?

Evelyn: She's worried about the headmaster. What he'll say if he finds out.

Alice: Oh, don't worry about him. Now, we'll have to pull the table out and arrange the chairs. I told you Joyce was coming, didn't I?

Evelyn: That's a turn up for the book.

Alice: I can tell you, no one was more surprised than I was when she said she wanted to come. And bring Keith. Truth is, I only think he's coming in the hopes of catching me out.

Lizzie: Catching you out at what. It's not illegal, is it?

Alice: These days you're not supposed to say you're in touch with spirits. Something to do with trades descriptions. It's only supposed to be an amusement... not as if it was real. I don't understand it...

Evelyn: But it is real, isn't it? I mean, you will get in touch with Stan, won't you? It's not a joke.

Lizzie: Now don't get upset, Mum.

Alice: Don't worry, Evelyn, of course I'll get in touch with Stan, I'll try to, anyway. You did bring something of his along, didn't you? I don't really need it but it helps.

Evelyn: **(She brings a cigarette lighter wrapped in a plastic bag out of her handbag. Leaves the bag on the table.)** Is this all right? I got rid of most his stuff. Four years is a long time, if you see what I mean.

Lizzie: What did you keep that for? I should have thought you wouldn't want to be reminded...

Evelyn: I know he was worse than a factory chimney and he drank like there was no tomorrow. Well, for him there was no tomorrow. And that's all there is to it. It was part of him. Just because I still have feelings, you know.

Alice: You don't have to say anymore I understand. Now, Lizzie, if you open up the leaf of that table a bit, we can spread the cloth out.

(SFX - the door bell rings.)

Alice: Oh Lizzie, be an angel, will you, and see who it is. It's probably Joyce and Keith.

(Lizzie exits.)

Evelyn: Fancy Joyce coming to a séance. Sorry, Alice, but you know what I mean, and Lizzie says she's very churchy.

Alice: Oh, she is. And it's all right, Evelyn, you don't have to worry about my feelings, I've learnt to take the rough with the smooth in my business. I suppose the truth is she wants something. Though why she had to bring Keith along, I can't think. He's a wet blanket at the best of times.

Evelyn: Same with all of them. Once they get a job with the council, they start behaving like little Hitlers.

Alice: Tell me about it. I suppose you've heard the latest. About the bins? Up before six he was one morning, taking snapshots of the wheelie bins in the Close. You should have heard Roger Young, went ballistic, he did.

Evelyn: Always had a short fuse that one. Remember those hikers two years back, nearly killed one of them.

Alice: They weren't hikers, they had those metal detector things. Told him his garden was the scene of a plane crash during the war. Now, how many are coming?

Evelyn: Don't you know?

Alice: I just need to add up. Make sure we've enough chairs. Now there's you and Lizzie and Keith and Joyce, that's four.

Evelyn: Don't forget yourself.

Alice: That's five and oh, I was forgetting Charles. Charles, you know, the one who fancies Lizzie.

Evelyn: And half a dozen others if you believe all you hear.

Alice: Don't you like him then?

Evelyn: I suppose he's all right, but at thirty odd he ought to be settled down, not playing the field. She's knocking on thirty herself and I don't want to think she's wasting her time.

(Keith enters.)

Keith: Who's wasting their time? Apart from me, that is.

Alice: Where's Joyce, isn't she coming?

Keith: Half way here and she says she's forgotten something. She won't be long. I told her the walk'd do her good.

Alice: **(Looking through the curtains.)** You never brought the car, not for this little way!

Evelyn: In your job I'd have thought you'd be more energy conscious. Where's your carbon footprint?

Keith: On the sole of my shoe. Bin day tomorrow. Hope you haven't forgotten. I thought I'd just have a little drive round on my way home. Make sure people haven't put their bins out tonight. Illegal, that is. Don't want someone causing an accident. And I hope you know what you're doing, Alice. Keeping the right side of the law, are you? We don't want you run in for making false promises.

Evelyn: It's only a bit of fun. You tell him, Alice.

Keith: Raising spirits! Dangerous fun. Setting people's hopes up. I don't hold with it, you know, and I don't call it fun either. Telling fortunes, reading cards, all a lot of codswallop in my opinion.

Alice: So why have you come? Didn't you think Joyce could manage on her own?

Keith: I like to know what she's getting into. Don't want her getting led astray. And what are you doing with that table?

Alice: Getting it ready. There'll be six of us and we need six chairs so we can all sit round.

Keith: **(Looking under the table.)** One rap for yes, two raps for no. How do you manage to get it to wobble about?

Alice: I don't. If there's any wobbling done, it's not me. Now, since you are here, and if you want to make yourself useful, there's another chair next door in the sitting room. You can bring that through for me.

Keith: You're not expecting me to take part, are you?

Alice: I thought you were here to look after Joyce.

Evelyn: And I should have thought Joyce'd be able to look after herself at her age. She's not a baby.

Keith: She gets swept away. Same as with the church. In and out, lighting candles. Got her on a string, the vicar has. I'm a practical man, down to earth, and I don't go along with all this mumbo jumbo.

Evelyn: Can't Joyce make up her own mind?

Keith: If she's a mind to make up.

Alice: I don't think you should be like that, Keith. Everyone's got their own path in life.

Keith: That's what I'm saying, she goes her way and I go mine. She's into religion and I'm into football.

Evelyn: You're not saying the church is the same as football?

Keith: I'm not saying anything, I'm just telling you. And now I suppose you'll be saying I'm not welcome.

Alice: Oh, don't be so silly, Keith, you know you're welcome. And I hope you're going to take part.

Evelyn: But only if you believe in it. I mean, things have to be harmonious for the spirits. That's right, isn't it, Alice?

Alice: It's all right, Evelyn. Don't worry. Everything'll be fine and if Keith doesn't want to be a part of the séance, he can sit in the other room and look at the paper or something.

Keith: You've got a telly, haven't you? There's a match on Sky – I might have a look at that.

Alice: You'll have to tweak the aerial.

Evelyn: Is that the only reason you came? Never mind seeing Joyce was all right.

(SFX - the door bell rings.)

Evelyn: That'll be her now, shall I go and let her in? And I'll find out where Lizzie's got to at the same time.

(Evelyn exits.)

Alice: And you can get me that other chair, Keith, if you will.

Keith: You've got five.

Alice: One, two... So I have. You don't really want to watch the telly, do you, Keith?

Keith: What's wrong with watching the telly?

Alice: Well. Oh, never mind. I expect it'll be all right.

(SFX - rapping on French window. Alice looks out, then opens it. Charles enters through the French window.)

Charles: Couldn't make anyone hear so I came round the back. Oh, hello, Keith, fancy seeing you here.

Alice: I expect the bell's stuck. It does that sometimes.

(Alice exits.)

Charles: I didn't think you were interested in this sort of thing.

Keith: A séance. Ghoulies and ghosties and long leggity beasties. I should think long leggity girls'd be more in your line.

[Continued in the full Murder Mystery Pack...]