



*A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery*  
by  
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**Customer Taster**

# The Allotment Plot

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# The Allotment Plot

## About the pack

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event. The Allotment Plot is intended to be performed from a stage, to an audience seated around tables. In the interval, over a light supper, the audience has the opportunity to compete as a table to figure out motives, weapons and who the murderer was.

This murder mystery is a scripted performance (without interrogation of the cast by the audience); the cast have set lines to learn, which contain the information the audience will need to work out whodunnit. The story takes place in a large garden shed and would be best served by a set which resembles one. However, trestle tables stacked with gardening paraphernalia and deck chairs could create a suitable setting.

## ***The Full Pack Contains:***

- **The Organiser's Overview** *[Extract here]*
- **The Script** *[Extract here]*
- **The Quiz and Accusation Sheet** - for the audience to fill in
- **The Quiz Answers**

## ***Organiser's Overview Contents***

- Putting On Your Murder Mystery Evening
  - Plot Overview
  - Character List
  - General Staging Notes
  - Suggested Timing Guide
- Production Notes
  - Costume Notes
  - Set Descriptions
  - Props List
  - Music Note
  - Sound Effects List
  - Lighting Notes

# Putting On Your Murder Mystery Evening

## *Plot Overview*

We join the Baldock Allotment Growers inside their clubhouse/potting shed as they prepare for the annual flower and produce show. Bob is relying upon Alex, a local councillor, to agree planning permission for a make-or-break building project. Alex is desperate to steal gold from Bob in the root vegetable category, having already stolen Bob's wife. Alice, on work experience from horticultural college, observes quietly, waiting for the right moment to reveal her true identity. Rachel, Alex's wife, is in charge of judging, along with Inspector Penny Hart, who also shares a dark secret with Alex.

## *Characters:*

- Alex Hodges - Late forties, pompous and a little sleazy.
- Rachel Hodges - Alex's efficient and mumsy wife. Late forties.
- Inspector Penny Hart - Late forties. Could be male or female.
- Bob Mansfield - Friendly, hardworking, humble man. Late forties.
- Deborah "Debs" Mansfield - Bob's bubbly young wife. Around thirty.
- Alice - Seventeen. A quiet, invisible sort of girl.
- Radio Announcer - Male or female. Could be pre-recorded. This person could also be the compère for the evening.

## *General Staging Notes*

During the first act, the audience are alerted to various possibilities that could lead to a murder: sharp tools, pesticides and poisons, double-crossing treachery and a secret love-child. In the interval, they are invited to speculate about who did it, how and why. Act two takes us through the events leading up to the death and the final denouement, after the court trial, one year later.

Front of house staff should meet, greet and lead your audience to their tables and to sell drinks. It is recommended that the audience does not wander around getting refreshment during the performance as this could be distracting. Top them up before the show starts!

The tables should be set with enough room for people to turn to face the stage and to gather around the table during the interval. The quiz sheets can be on the table at the beginning and work well as an ice-breaker. A little flower pot on each table to add decoration and set the scene would be nice. A short welcome from the host of the event to explain the structure of the evening should precede the first performance.

During the interval, more drinks and a light supper can be served, allowing enough time for each table to complete the quiz and make their accusations.

The final scenes are performed while the quizzes and predictions are marked. After the final scene, the quiz answers should be revealed and the winning team announced. (In the event of multiple correct accusations, the quiz may be used as a tie breaker.)

## *Suggested Timings*

7:30 pm	Doors open.
7:45 pm	Welcoming speech.
7:50 pm	Act 1.
8:20 pm	Interval with meal. Audience complete accusation form.
9:20 pm	Act 2.
9:40 pm	Winners announced, prizes awarded and thanks given.
9:50 pm	Evening ends.

# The Allotment Plot

## Act One

### Scene One

(Early Wednesday evening – three days before the show.)

(The lights come up on a garden shed, complete with seed trays, stacks of pots, hand tools, etc. as well as a tray of tea making things, a jug of water, a small saucepan and a camping stove along the back bench. Bags of compost, folded deck chairs, etc. on the floor. Downstage Left at bench height is a flat stone, for sharpening tools. Working at the bench at the back is Alice, listening to music through headphones on her mobile phone. Throughout Act One, Alice busies herself here, putting things out and then tidying them away again, to leave the bench area tidy by the end of Act One.)

(Rachel and Penny are standing in the shed looking at Rachel's clipboard. Rachel is smartly dressed in pale, pretty colours, Penny in sombre business clothes.)

**Penny:** (Glancing at Rachel's clipboard.) So, we'll have the same as last year then?

**Rachel:** That's right. Sixteen classes of vegetables. Gold, silver and bronze in each. I'll leave the flowers to Ted. He has his own system. What are you judging this year?

**Penny:** Same as always. I'm on the root veg team. I expect I'll get parsnips again.

**Rachel:** You know, that's what Alex's entering.

**Penny:** I thought he might.

**Rachel:** Honestly, those boys! The rivalry between him and Bob. You'd think it was a life and death issue, not a blinking parsnip! The build up is incredible. For weeks leading up to the show, he's up at the crack of dawn and down here for an hour before breakfast most mornings. I don't know what he finds to do with the time, I'm sure, but he certainly builds up an appetite!

**Penny:** It's all that fresh air and exercise.

**Rachel:** Well, he certainly needs it, especially with his blood pressure.

**Penny:** I'm rather hoping that once I've retired, I'll have enough time and energy to get into this gardening lark.

**Rachel:** Rather you than me. My arthritis gives me a good excuse not to get mucky any more! Anyway, you've a long way to go before you get to retirement age. As I understand it, promotion is more the order of the day.

**Penny:** Well... It's not public knowledge yet, but yes, I have my hopes.

**Rachel:** Chief Inspector as I heard it.

**Penny:** Hopefully. I should know in a couple of weeks.

**Rachel:** Good luck, you've certainly earned it. You've done so much for this community.

**Penny:** Well, one likes to do one's bit.

**Rachel:** You've done more than your bit at this show, not to mention all the other things you do in the town. I know the allotment group members are very grateful. You add such an air of honest authority to the proceedings.

**Penny:** Thank you.

(Bob and Debs enter, each carrying a tray of plants or tools to be used. Both are dressed in outdoor gardening gear. Bob wears a tool belt complete with gardener's knife.)

**Bob:** (Smugly) If you're talking about Sunday, it's a foregone conclusion.

**Rachel:** Hello Bob, Debbie.

**Penny:** Evening.

**Debs:** Hello. (Moves to bench to sort out trays of seeds, etc.)

**Bob:** (Very jovial, bending at the knees, in the style of Dixon of Dock Green.) Evening all!

**Penny:** Yes, ha ha, very good.

**Bob:** You judging the root veg again this year?

**Penny:** Some of them, yes. What are you entering?

**Bob:** Leeks, onions and parsnips. But it's the parsnips that'll win me the gold. Excellent crop, even if I do say so myself!

**Penny:** Wouldn't expect anything less from you, Bob. I look forward to seeing your entries on Sunday.

**Rachel:** Come along you two, you know judges aren't allowed to enter into...

**Bob:** Sorry boss!

**Rachel:** Right then Penny, shall we continue? We thought we'd try something a bit different with the refreshment marquee, why don't you come and have a look? Alice, can you give me a hand for a minute?

**Alice:** Yes, Mrs Hodges.

**Rachel:** **(To Penny.)** I'd love to know what you think...

**(Exit Rachel, followed by Penny and Alice. Bob moves to the flat-stone and begins to sharpen his knife and then cleans and sharpens a pitchfork or similar.)**

**Debs:** **(Coming to Bob – conspiratorially.)** She loves her little power trip, doesn't she?

**Bob:** PC Penny? Oh yeah!

**Debs:** No, not her. Rachel.

**Bob:** Does she?

**Debs:** Yeah, every year she's the same, rolls up here in her four by four with her clipboard and her pastel suits.

**Bob:** Does she?

**Debs:** She wore mint green last year, lemon the year before, on an allotment! I ask you. It's just showing off.

**Bob:** How is that showing off?

**Debs:** It's the wellies to match that really wind me up!

**Bob:** She's got an important position to uphold. Being in charge of the flower and produce show every year must take quite a bit of organising.

**Debs:** Well it's not as if she hasn't got the time is it? She doesn't have to work nights at the *[local hospital]* to make ends meet.

**Bob:** According to Alex, she's very busy. Out most days with her various do-gooding and self-improving. **(Holds up knife or pitchfork to inspect.)** That's better. That'll look good in the display for Sunday.

**Debs:** She's still a lady of leisure. Chairing the W.I. and Bums'n'tums Pilates is hardly hard work. I mean, it's not scrubbing bedpans six nights a week.

**Bob:** Look, it won't be for ever.

**Debs:** Too right it won't. It was supposed to be a stop gap, until things picked up. A couple of months you said.

**Bob:** **(Putting an arm around Debs.)** But you're so good at it. They love you on the ward; they wouldn't manage without you.

**Debs:** **(Shrugging him off.)** Five years, Bob. It's been five years and we're still chasing our tails. Robbing Peter to pay Paul. I don't mind the work. Not really. It's having to make do and mend all the time that hacks me off. We rely too heavily on my wages. If I had to stop work for any reason, I don't know how we'd manage.

**Bob:** It's not as bad as all that, surely? Stop work? Why would you have to stop? **(Bob barely gives Debs the chance to speak, before cutting in with his next line.)**

**Debs:** Well, I don't know for certain yet, but there is a chance...

**Bob:** Well it won't be for long now. This time next year...

**Bob:** } **(Together)**

**Debs:** } We'll be millionaires.

**Debs:** Yes, I know.

**Bob:** Oh come on Debs. I've got a good feeling about this one. Alex'll see us good. He's promised. Twelve months from now, we'll be sitting pretty.

**Debs:** I've heard this all before.

**Bob:** No really. So long as Alex can swing the planning, and he says it's as good as done, we're home and dry. Honestly, love.

**Debs:** I don't like the way you always have to rely on someone like Alex to pull you through.

**Bob:** He's a mate. That's what mates do.

**Debs:** Yeah. But if he's doing us favours, how come he always comes up smelling of roses? Countless times over the years you two have been in cahoots. He always walks away several grand better off, while we just about break even.

**Bob:** It's all to do with scale of investment, love. The more you put in...

**Debs:** And we never have much to invest.

**Bob:** Come along, love, cheer up. It's the show on Sunday. Highlight of the year and the one opportunity I get to outshine Alex. He can't stand that I keep beating him. And I'm going to do it again! My parsnips are the best yet. He's going to have to do something pretty amazing in the next three days to be in with a chance.

**Debs:** Oh, for heaven's sake, Bob. It's all a big game to you, isn't it? We're on the verge of going under and you're more concerned about the length of your bloody parsnips. I'm fed up, Bob. If this deal you're working with Alex doesn't come off...

**(Enter Alex, wearing a smart business suit.)**

**Alex:** Did I hear my name mentioned?

**Bob:** Evening, Alex.

**Debs:** Evening.

**Alex:** Evening you two. Looking forward to the big day? You've got some competition this year, Bob.

**Bob:** You reckon?

**Alex:** Yes, this could be the year that changes everything!

**(Alex winks at Debs.)**

**Bob:** Dream on! What, your weedy specimens?

**Alex:** They're just the same as yours.

**Bob:** On the surface maybe.

**Alex:** Meaning?

**Bob:** They're root veg...

**Alex:** You don't have the monopoly on prize winning you know.

**Bob:** I do so far!

**Alex:** I've got a funny feeling there'll be little less dusting to do in the Mansfield household come this Sunday afternoon!

**Debs:** Stop it, you two. It's only a parsnip. It doesn't matter. It's not life or death.

**Alex:** } **(Together)**

**Bob:** } No, it's more important than that!

**(Alex laughs with confidence. Bob laughs uneasily. Debs is irritated.)**

**Debs:** Yes, very funny. **(Opening one of the large bags of fertilizer.)** Come on, we've only got a couple of days to get the place tidied and everything ready. Bob, go and get us the cans, would you?

**(Bob exits. Glancing after him, Alex steals a kiss from Debs.)**

**Debs:** Alex! I didn't know you were coming up tonight?

**Alex:** Neither did I! Saw *you* were here! How's things?

**Debs:** Oh, you know.

**Alex:** What's up, Pixie?

**Debs:** The usual. I'm fed up with being poor.

**Alex:** You don't have to be. I could whisk you away from all of this.

**Debs:** Don't joke, Alex. It's very tempting.

**Alex:** You're very tempting!

**Debs:** Oh, Alex. Look at me!

**Alex:** I do. All the time!

**Debs:** Stop making fun of me.

**Alex:** I'm not. You know I'm not. You know I've always fancied you.

**Debs:** Do you really think about me, Alex?

**Alex:** Of course I do. **(Gives her a wink, pulling her closer.)** I was thinking about you this morning, wasn't I?

**Debs:** Don't, someone might see!

**Alex:** Go on... you know you want to.

**(He kisses her.)**

**Debs:** Oh Alex. **(Gently pushing him away.)** I wish Bob was more like you, more successful, more of an achiever. I'm so worried about him, about us.

**Alex:** I'm sure I could take your mind off things, make things better, if only you'd let me.

**Debs:** Do you really think so?

**Alex:** Yes, Pixie. Meet me here, Monday, early. **(Watching for Bob's return.)**

**Debs:** I need to see you before the show.

**Alex:** I know, Pixie. But I've got breakfast meetings. Important decisions to make.

**Debs:** I have important decisions to make too.

**(Bob coughs, then enters with two watering cans.)**

**Bob:** There you go, Debs love. Rachel's here, showing PC Penny the ropes for Sunday.

**Alex:** Is she?

**(Debs puts a spoonful of fertiliser into both watering cans, picks them up and goes to leave.)**

**Bob:** Go on, love, I'll meet you by the tap.

**(Exit Debs, with both cans. Alex throws her a wink and then picks up his wellies, bringing them down stage to sit in the deckchair while he puts them on.)**

**Bob:** Alright there, Alex. How's tricks?

**Alex:** Alright thanks. You?

**Bob:** Well, I was hoping to have a talk with you.

**Alex:** Oh yeah?

**Bob:** Not money, no, nothing like that. **(Sits next to Alex.)** I was just wondering about the planning application for Horsecastle Street. Any news?

**Alex:** It's complicated. It's not straightforward. You know I'm doing my best for you.

**Bob:** You said it was as good as in the bag.

**Alex:** As good as, yes.

**Bob:** Well, so long as Dougherty doesn't get his grubby hands on it.

**Alex:** I don't think he's interested in Horsecastle.

**Bob:** Good. I'm not losing another site to him. I need this one. If things don't pick up for me soon, we're in trouble, Debs and me.

**Alex:** Oh come on. You'll be fine. **(Going for his wallet.)** I can always lend you...

**Bob:** No, Alex. Just make sure the planning goes through, that's all.

**Alex:** I'll do what I can.

**Bob:** You do think it'll go through?

**Alex:** I'll do what I can, Bob.

**(Enter Alice with mobile phone speakers in her ears, carrying a banner or bunting. She removes one earpiece in order to speak to Bob.)**

**Alice:** Oh, excuse me, but Deborah said are you coming?

**Bob:** Oh, okay thanks.

**(Alice moves to back workbench, replaces the earpiece and starts to work there.)**

**Bob:** **(To Alex.)** Well, thanks. I'm sure you'll do your best.

**Alex:** Yes.

**Bob:** And you'll let me know as soon as... **(Starts to move towards the door.)**

**Alex:** Yes.

**Bob:** I can't tell you how important this is, how much I've got riding on it.

*[... The action continues in the full Murder Mystery pack.]*