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Customer Taster

A Grand Design For Murder

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A Grand Design For Murder

Organiser's Overview

Overview

A Grand Design For Murder is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 7 or 8 actors. The actors perform two formal scenes, then the audience receive additional written clues from which they try to solve the mystery, before a speech by a Master of Ceremonies reveals the guilty party.

Synopsis

Rich Pikkins is a former professional burglar who made a great deal of money from his crimes. He used much of it to have his dream home built, and he and his partner have invited two friends to join them for an informal housewarming. But danger arises when uninvited guests arrive.

Structure

This murder mystery pack contains:

- The Organiser's Overview [extract here] which includes notes on setting and characters, a props list, and a rough guide on how to structure your event.
- Acts One and Two, to be performed by the actors.
- Four pieces of evidence for the audience to examine.
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution, for the Master of Ceremonies to present.

Characters and Backstory

Rich Pikkins is a relative newcomer to Yettington, an affluent village in the County of Widdleshire. He and his partner **Pattie O'Dawes** bought a vacant plot of land overlooking St Ezekiel's Church and set about building their 'Grand Design' home.

Almost two years (and, it is rumoured, nearly two million pounds) later, the house, now named 'Dunnykin', is finished. Rich and Pattie have moved in and are about to entertain their first visitors, two funeral directors they met in the village pub. Rich and Pattie are known in the pub as gin lovers, and they have invited their guests to a gin and tonic evening.

Rich has let it be known in the village that he made his money as an antiques dealer; the truth is that he was a skilled professional burglar of country houses. With his partner in crime, Rich plied his trade at carefully selected targets throughout Greater London and Southern England for many years. He was never caught, and has now 'retired'. But is his past about to catch up with him? Or does he have enemies closer to home?

The visitors are due any minute, but there's trouble brewing in the form of uninvited guests...

The invited guests are:

Phillipa Graves: Known as Phil, a funeral director and joint owner of Yettington Funeral Services,

Edwina Stone: Known as Ed, Phil's business partner.

The characters Ed and Phil can be male if this is preferred, with only a few minor alterations to the script, written clues and solution.

The uninvited guests are:

Art Dekkoe: The principal builder of Dunnykin, who claims Rich owes him thousands of pounds,

Hugh Janus: Rich's former partner in crime, who believes Rich has cheated him,

Ella Mentric: A Detective Inspector, the officer in the case.

A **Master of Ceremonies** can introduce the evening and reveal the solution. Alternatively, this can be done by Ella.

Setting

The action takes place in the 'snug' lounge in Rich and Pattie's new home. There is a single door, which leads to the rest of the house. There is a table and seating for six. It is 7pm on a Friday evening in October.

Guide to staging the murder mystery evening

The characters Ed and Phil can be male if this is preferred, with only a few minor alterations to the script, written clues and solution.

If performing this to an audience, it is worth considering providing a meal – and adjusting the ticket price accordingly.

A suggested format for the evening could be as follows:

- Introduction by the Master of Ceremonies, who gives an overview of the evening's entertainment.
- Act 1 is then performed – this takes around thirteen minutes.
- If a two-course meal is being provided, the first course is served following Act 1, and the audience are given the first two written clues.
- Act 2 is then performed – this takes around ten minutes, and is followed by the second course, and the audience are given the remaining two clues.
- If a one-course meal or a buffet is provided, the two Acts can be performed with a short interval in between, to allow the stage to be reset.
- After the conclusion of the play, the Master of Ceremonies calls the suspects back onstage and invites the audience to put questions to them. This session can last as long as the Master of Ceremonies chooses, assuming the questions keep coming. An optimum period of twenty minutes is recommended.
- The Master of Ceremonies then invites the audience to complete an accusation sheet, naming the guilty party and providing supporting evidence drawn from the action onstage and/or the written clues. Allow twenty minutes for all the answers to be submitted.
- As soon as all the answer sheets have been submitted, the cast/director/Master of Ceremonies must quickly review them all and select the best answer. There may also be a number of wildly inaccurate or humorous answers, and the Master of Ceremonies may wish to keep a few of those aside to share later with the audience.
- Once the winning answer has been selected, the Master of Ceremonies will ask all the suspects to return to the stage, and require the guilty party to reveal themselves. The Master of Ceremonies then reads the formal solution to the audience – this will take around four minutes. After this, the Master of Ceremonies reads out a selection of the wrong or humorous answers, at their discretion, followed by a formal announcement of the winner.
- If a two-course meal is offered, allow a total of two and a half hours for the whole event, but this can be shortened by perhaps twenty to thirty minutes if the meal is only one course or a buffet.

A Grand Design for Murder

Script Excerpt

Act 1

(The Setting is the 'snug' lounge in Rich and Pattie's new home. It is 7pm on a Friday evening in October.)

(There is a single door, which leads to the rest of the house. Set on stage are a table, a tray on which are six spirit glasses, a glass polishing cloth, a bottle of 'designer' gin, nine bottles of tonic water, a plate of lemon slices and a full ice bucket, in which is a pair of ice tongs. Pattie's mobile phone is also on the table. There is sufficient seating for six.)

(As the curtains open, Rich and Pattie are onstage, having an argument. Rich is preparing a gin and tonic for each of them.)

Pattie: For God's sake, Rich, why don't you just pay him?

Rich: Do you want a large one? (**Indicates the gin bottle.**)

Pattie: Yes! And don't change the subject! I'm fed up with having to avoid him in the pub! Just pay up and look big!

Rich: I'm not paying him, because I'm still not happy with the kitchen floor.

(**Rich hands her a drink, and starts to drink his.**)

Pattie: The kitchen floor's fine, you're just putting off the evil day. Anyway, that's not two hundred grand's worth, is it? (**Takes a large sip.**) Because that's what he says you owe him.

Rich: But I think he's trying to fiddle me.

Pattie: Oh really? He's worked his socks off building this place for us.

Rich: Yes, but...

(**SFX: Pattie's phone rings.**)

Pattie: Hang on. (**Looks at phone.**) It's Pansy.

Rich: Who?

Pattie: My daughter, remember her? (**Answers call.**) Yes, darling? (**Pause.**) No, nothing special, just having an argument with Rich. (**Pause.**) Yes, I know, you're at Fleur's parents' house. (**Pause.**) A question? Go on. (**Pause.**) No, darling! I do *not* think Chlamydia is a good name for your new pony. (**Pause.**) Do you know what that *is*, darling? (**Pause.**) Well, I suggest you Google it! (**Pause.**) You saw who? (**Pause.**) Where? (**Pause.**) You *told* him? (**Pause.**) No darling, it's not your fault. (**Pause.**) No, don't worry. (**Pause.**) Yes, Rich'll pick you up in the morning. (**Pause.**) Okay, bye darling. (**Ends the call.**)

Rich: Chlamydia? Is she serious?

Pattie: Never mind that! We have a problem.

Rich: What?

Pattie: Hugh.

Rich: I said what, not who.

Pattie: I didn't say who, I said Hugh.

Rich: Who?

Pattie: Not who! Hugh! My step-brother Hugh! Your ex-partner Hugh! He's on his way here.

Rich: How do you know?

Pattie: Pansy just told me. She was in Dorchester with Fleur and her parents, and she bumped into him. He asked where you were, and she told him about the new house.

Rich: Oh no! Why did she do that?

Pattie: She doesn't know you're hiding from him.

Rich: I am *not* hiding!

Pattie: So what would you call it?

Rich: I just haven't told him where I am. I wonder what he wants.

Pattie: His fair share, I expect.

Rich: I don't owe him anything.

Pattie: I doubt if that's the way *he* sees it.

Rich: What do you mean?

Pattie: Oh come off it, Rich! You cheated him every time you flogged all that stolen gear to your Norwegian ‘associate’ – what was his name?

Rich: Larch Lapp.

Pattie: Yes, Larch Lapp, the fence.

Rich: How do you know I cheated him?

Pattie: Because you’re a criminal! You’d cheat your own granny to make a few extra quid.

Rich: If she was alive, definitely. But *not* your step-brother.

Pattie: What’s the difference?

Rich: My granny hasn’t got a conviction for GBH! Hugh’s a psycho!

(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Pattie: That’ll be Phil and Ed.

Rich: I’ll go, you polish the glasses.

Pattie: Oh thanks!

(Exit Rich.)

(Pattie polishes the glasses.)

(Enter Rich, followed by Phil and Ed. Ed is carrying a large holdall. Both ladies have handbags.)

Rich: This is what we call the snug.

Pattie: Hello both. Welcome to our new home. **(To Ed.)** What have you got there?

Ed: **(Looking at the bag.)** Just a few old clothes. You said you were after donations for the next village hall fundraiser-slash-jumble sale.

Pattie: Oh, thanks. Here, let’s have it. **(Takes the bag from Ed.)** I’ll put it in the hall for now. I was just off to get some canapés from the kitchen; fancy a look at it?

Ed: Yes please, the main reason we came was to have a snoop round the new house.

Phil: That’s true. But you go ahead, I’m dying to try this fancy new gin Rich was boasting about.

Pattie: **(To Ed.)** Follow me.

(Exit Pattie, carrying the bag, followed by Ed.)

Rich: So you want to try the Jordan’s Juniper Limited Edition, do you? **(Shows her the bottle.)**

Phil: Where did you get it?

Rich: That’s for me to know, and you to find out. Large?

Phil: Why not? Neither of us is driving.

Rich: Ice and lemon?

Phil: Please.

(During the next few lines, Rich makes Phil a large gin, tonic, ice and lemon, and the same again for himself, and he drinks his.)

Rich: So how’s the funeral business?

Phil: Oh, you know, up and down.

Rich: I gather you haven’t been there very long.

Phil: No, about a year or so. Ed was looking for a partner in the firm, I had a bit of spare cash, and I fancied a new challenge.

Rich: Do you actually *enjoy* the work?

Phil: I do, as it happens.

Rich: It’s dead interesting, is it?

Phil: That’s one way of putting it. **(Takes a drink.)** God, this is good!

Rich: It is, isn’t it?

Phil: But I could do with a bit more ice, if you don’t mind.

Rich: Sure. **(Picks up the tongs and takes a lump from the ice bucket.)** What did you do before the undertaking?

Phil: I was a police officer.

Rich: Oh right! Here in Widdleshire? **(Moves towards her with the tongs.)**

Phil: No, I was a detective sergeant in the Met.

(Enter Ed, followed by Pattie, who is carrying a plate of canapés.)

Rich: Not the Sweeney?

Phil: (Laughs.) That was a bit before my time. I was on the SBS.

Rich: What's that?

Phil: The Serious Burglary Squad.
(Rich drops the tongs and ice cube.)

Pattie: Rich! Be careful! (Puts the canapés on the table.)

Rich: Sorry. I'll just...

Pattie: (Interrupting.) Leave it to me! (Picks up the ice cube with the tongs.) I'll just wash these. Help yourselves to canapés.

Rich: (To Pattie.) What about mine?

Pattie: Oh yeah. (To Ed.) Rich is a vegan, so he's got his own canapés.
(Exit Pattie, with the tongs and ice.)

Ed: (To Phil.) You weren't boring him with your detective stories, were you?

Phil: No! Just saying I was in the SBS, that's all.

Rich: Ed, how about a large gin?
(During the next few lines, Ed and Phil eat some canapés.)

Ed: I thought you'd never ask. Not much tonic, lemon, no ice please.
(During the next few lines, Rich makes Ed a drink and gives it to her.)

Rich: So, you were in the Serious Burglary Squad?

Phil: As I said.

Rich: Did you catch many serious burglars?

Phil: Some. But a few got away. Or so they thought. (Stares him out.)
(Enter Pattie, with the tongs, which she puts in the ice bucket. She picks up her glass.)

Pattie: (To Rich.) Any chance of a top-up? (Hands him her glass.)

Rich: Sure. (Starts to make her drink.) Any chance of getting my canapés?
(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Pattie: Door first, then canapés. (Picks up a canapé and eats it.)
(Exit Pattie.)

Rich: (To Phil.) What did you mean just now, 'some got away'?

Phil: Nothing. Forget it.
(Enter Pattie, followed by Art.)

Pattie: Look who's here.

Rich: Art, my dear chap! To what do we owe this pleasure?

Art: It's no pleasure, I can assure you. (Sees Ed and Phil.) Good evening, ladies.

Ed: Hello, Art.

Phil: Hi.

Rich: Can I offer you a drink? (Puts his glass down.)

Art: No, thank you. I just want a quick look at the kitchen floor, then I'll be on my way.

Rich: Anywhere in particular?

Art: Yes, to see my solicitor and start the ball rolling to collect what you owe me.

Rich: It's not just the floor, Art, I don't think...

Art: (Interrupting.) There's nothing wrong with the floor, or anything else! You signed off on *all* the work weeks ago. You're just stalling now, and I've run out of patience.
(Exit Art, leaving the door open.)

Rich: (Calling after him, as he shuts the door.) And don't eat my canapés!

Phil: There goes one unhappy builder.

Pattie: Where's my drink?

Rich: It's here! (Hands it to her.) Now what about my canapés?
(SFX: Phil's mobile phone rings.)

Phil: Oh! That'll be me. (Takes phone from pocket, presses a button.)

Pattie: Aren't you going to answer it?

Phil: It wasn't a call. It was a reminder I set myself. Old Mrs Etheridge in Treetops Care Home was very poorly yesterday, and our services may be required. I'll give 'em a call. Oh, and where's the loo?

Pattie: In the hall, the blue door.

Phil: Thanks. (Makes the phone call.)

Ed: Who's going to collect her if she's passed over? *We* can't, we've had a drink.

Phil: That's alright, she'll be okay there overnight, or I'll get a couple of our bearers to...
(Picks up her drink, and with the phone in her other hand, heads towards the door.) Jo, it's Phil. **(Pause.)** Fit and well, thanks, but what about poor old Mrs Etheridge? **(Pause.)** Oh, I see. **(Pause.)** Well, she was a good age. **(Pause.)** Ninety-three? Was she really?

(Pattie opens the door for Phil.)
(Exit Phil, still on the phone.)
(As she exits, Art enters, carrying a small plate of canapés.)

Pattie: It's like Piccadilly Circus in here!

Art: **(To Rich.)** Your canapés, as requested! **(Bangs the plate down on the table.)**

Rich: Oh, you heard me, then?

Art: **(To Rich.)** Right! I've had another look at the kitchen floor, it's perfect, and I want my money.

Rich: This isn't the time or the place to discuss it, Art. You can see I've got guests.

Art: Now listen! I...

(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Rich: **(To Pattie.)** Would you mind getting that, my darling? I'm just having a row with our builder.

Pattie: Of course, my darling!

(Exit Pattie.)

Rich: Come on, Art, have a drink. **(Puts his own glass down on the table.)**

Art: No thank you.

Pattie: **(Offstage.)** Hugh!

Hugh: **(Offstage.)** Alright, where is the little shit?

Rich: **(To Art.)** These pizza delivery boys get ruder every day.

(Enter Pattie, who leaves the door open, followed by Hugh. He is very angry.)
(SFX: A flushing toilet from offstage.)

Rich: Hugh! What are you doing here?

Hugh: Don't play games with me, you bugger! You know exactly why I'm here!

Pattie: Mind your language, Hugh, we've got guests.

Hugh: Tell someone who cares!

Rich: Let's at least try and keep things civilised, shall we? Hugh, this is my builder, Art – Art Dekkoe. Art, meet Pattie's step-brother, Hugh Janus.

Art: How much does he owe *you*, Hugh?

Pattie: **(To Hugh.)** And this is Ed Stone. She's one of our local funeral directors.

Ed: Hello.

Hugh: This could be your lucky day, Ed. He may be needing your services any minute if I don't get what I came for.

[Continued in the full script.]