



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
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Customer Taster

A Hair-Raising Halloween

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About The Murder Mystery Pack

A Hair-Raising Halloween is a scripted murder mystery set at a Halloween party, over two acts, with approximately 70 minutes of scripted dialogue. The audience, divided into teams or tables, are invited to ask the suspects questions, and are given time to solve the mystery before the guilty party is revealed. The murder evening is designed to be played by nine actors in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area.

Structure

The murder mystery pack contains:

- **The Organiser's Overview** [*Extract in this document*]
- **The Script** [*Extract in this document*]
- **The Accusation Sheet** - for the audience to enter their solutions

Organiser's Overview Contents

- Synopsis
- Character Descriptions
- General Staging Notes
 - Suggested Show Timings
 - Notes on Audience Participation
- Production Notes
 - Props List
 - Stage Settings
 - Costume and Make-up
 - Music Notes
 - Additional Note for Non-UK Productions

Synopsis

A strange group of dead and undead characters have joined together to keep each other company through eternity. They live in a vast house owned by Victor the Vampire, who they all met just over five years ago, and he soon invited them to live with him. Being a group of strange but mostly fine and upstanding spooks under the implied leadership of Victor, they only ever venture out as a group around Halloween, when they can merge quietly into the parties and mortals in costume without causing panic.

But when they decide to attend a nearby Halloween party, the last thing on their minds was a murder in their midst – after all, how do you murder the already dead or the undead? With a dead body and hair-raising revelations which send shockwaves through the spooky group, it is down to one detective (and the audience) to solve the crime... but who will do the time?

Character Descriptions

Patti – Young female poltergeist. She is a recent and reluctant member of the undead, but she does have a soft spot for Victor and has spent quite a bit of time with him. She died at her own Halloween party last year and this is her first group outing since then. She is allergic to animal fur and so keeps away from William as he makes her sneeze. She is dressed in a ghostly costume (her ‘death clothes’).

Victor – Vampire/psychologist. He is allegedly from the small country of Lamivia, and appears to be around forty to fifty years old, but tells everyone he is five hundred and ninety-two. He talks with a non-specific European accent, in a stereotypical ‘vampire’ way, and pronounces his W’s as V’s. Unknown to the others, he is actually Professor Ernest Jones from Croydon and has been studying the group for the past five years as part of his academic research. He is dressed in a very dapper way and is very charming, particularly with Patti, who, as a new member of the group, he is fascinated by.

Winnie – Witch from the 17th century. She has a very large chip on her shoulder but is also very quick and very sharp. She has little or no patience with the younger members of the group, but she gets on very well with William. She has suffered with supply issues since Brexit and has had to adapt some of her spells to try to find alternative ingredients – some of the spells work, some are disastrous. She is dressed as a typical witch and has completely mad and unmanageable hair.

Zoe – A zombie from the 21st century. Stereotypical zombie in her appearance and speech, she goes into “full zombie” mode when anyone mentions anything to do with brains. She really likes Patti as a friend, but cannot understand why Patti doesn’t really want to be her friend. In fact, she’s rather slow on the uptake and doesn’t understand much. While not speaking, she spends a lot of time on her mobile phone playing games or trying to arrange the apocalypse. Zoe is dressed in ragged clothes with many blood splatters, typical of a zombie look.

Malcolm – Mummy from ancient Egypt, who died when he was forty-two. He likes to think he was more important in his days than he really was, and sees himself as a bit of a joker. He was the previous leader of the group and doesn’t like the fact that Victor came into the group five years ago and quickly assumed the role of leader. He doesn’t really like newcomers and is suspicious of Patti. Like a typical mummy, he is dressed in bandages.

Gillian – A ghost (from no specific era). She died in the bath and so has no death clothes. As a result, whenever the group go out, she has to wear a sheet so that she has some ‘form’. She wears skin-coloured gloves so that her hands appear to be real, and she has some make-up on so her face is visible. Whenever she removes her sheet, she is completely invisible to most mortals and her own group. She is very nervous and pretty useless at haunting, which is why she lives with the group. She has been taking sessions with Victor to try to build up her confidence and haunting skills. Gillian is dressed in a sheet which should show her face and hands/arms.

Bella – Bride of Frankenstein. Bella is very posh! She has been searching for Mr Right since Frankie (Frankenstein), and has proposed to many a spook, but they all seem to disappear after rejecting her. The group presume they have been scared off by her. Her subject of affection for the last five years has been Victor, and she has decided that tonight she is going to get him to marry her, but is also aware that Patti may be an issue. She refused the attentions of Malcolm, which has added to his dislike of Victor. Bella is dressed in a ragged bride's dress with veil.

William – A werewolf. Unfortunately, William is stuck in werewolf form after a spell from Winnie went wrong, but as he was quite a hairy person before then, he isn't that bothered. He has been learning over the years, with Victor's help, to control his temper. He liked Patti, but when he found out that she was allergic to fur, he stayed away from her, until Winnie convinced him to try a potion which would make his fur less irritating to her. William can be dressed in any manner, but should be quite obviously hairy.

Inspector De'Ath – The investigating officer. Quite dry humour, but no-nonsense detective.

General Staging Notes

This play is set in the present day at a Halloween party. The venue can be any suitable venue, dressed up with Halloween decorations. To make the evening more fun, you may want to decorate the whole venue to match, rather than just the stage, suggest that your audience follow a spooky dress code, and advertise the event as if it were being held at a Halloween party.

It is set out over two acts, with approximately 70 minutes of scripted dialogue. The actors perform Act One, followed by an interval in which the audience can be served a meal or drinks, and then Act Two. Between Act Two, Scene One and Act Two, Scene Two, the audience, divided into teams or tables, are invited to ask the suspects questions, and then to make an accusation using their Accusation Sheet.

The final scene contains two possible endings to allow for productions over two nights, or for the performing group to select whichever ending they prefer.

Timing

Act One – approximately 40 minutes.

Scene One: 20 minutes

Scene Two: 20 minutes

Interval – as required.

Act Two – approximately 40 minutes if including full audience participation.

Scene One: 15 minutes

Audience Questions and deliberation: 10-15 minutes

Scene Two: 15 minutes

Audience Participation

In Act Two, there is a break between Scene One and Two for audience questioning and deliberation, followed by filling in of Accusation Sheets.

Consider how you want audience participation to work. It is usually better if you have teams or tables rather than normal theatre-type seating if your venue is suited to this. If you want to allow your audience to ask your characters questions, then make sure you give them some paper and pens at the start of the evening so they can take notes. You may also want to explain before the show starts that there will be a chance for one question per team later in the play, so they can start thinking during the performance. Or you can leave the pens, paper and explanatory note on the tables.

During audience questions, only the murderer is allowed to lie! All other characters should speak the truth as they know it, or as it is perceived. Remember to rehearse the sort of questions you might be asked. It's a fun evening, so there may even be some odd questions on historical events for some of the older spooks! Try to think about what may be asked and come up with some answers so you have them to hand. Don't forget that sometimes it is difficult for everyone in a hall to hear audience questions, so it is always a good idea for De'Ath to repeat the question to the character, e.g. "A good question there from table seven – what was in the spell you used, Winnie?"

There is an example Accusation Sheet in this pack; these should be given out for the audience to complete between the questioning session and Act Two, Scene Two. After audience questions, the curtain should close, and characters can leave the stage. You should allow approximately ten minutes for deliberation, after which the sheets should be collected.

If you do not have any front of house or backstage staff to help with giving out and collecting the sheets, then Inspector De'Ath should do this in character, and not comment on any questions. Make sure you know who the winning team is before you start Scene Two, so that it can be announced at the end of the play.

A Hair-Raising Halloween

[Script Extract]

Act 1

Scene 1

(Setting throughout is in any suitable location – e.g. house, bar, hall – as long as it is dressed for a Halloween party. A couple of chairs should be available on set.)

(Victor is already at the party and is finishing eating buffet food from a napkin.)

Victor: **(As he walks around the stage, looking at the decorations.)** Ah, what a splendid location and wonderful party! Just the kind of place my friends and I can enjoy our annual outing among the living. It is so funny, the humans all think we are dressed in their fancy-dress costumes, but this is normal attire for the undead. Of course, we make a bit more of an effort on this day – well, you would, wouldn't you? It's the one day of the year when we can leave the house without anyone being suspicious, and being the fine upstanding spooks that we are, we wouldn't want to scare anyone – well, not without just cause. So for the rest of the year, we just stay in the house and secluded gardens. Well, except for Zoe, that is – everyone thinks she's just a normal teenager whenever she goes out. Yes, yes, I think tonight is going to be wonderful. The best Halloween for years. I mean, just look at the catering here! Delightful! I just need to finish this little snack before anyone else arrives.

(Enter Patti, looking very nervous.)

Victor: **(Quickly hides the napkin and brushes crumbs from his jacket.)** Oh, Patti, I didn't realise anyone else was here yet. Come here, my dear, come here. Now, why are you looking so worried, my dear?

Patti: Oh Victor, I'm so glad you're here. It's rather spooky, isn't it?

Victor: Now Patti, we've discussed this before. You're a member of the undead now, there's no need to be worried, and this is our annual outing to a Halloween party, it's supposed to be spooky. Just relax and enjoy yourself. Have you seen the food here? It looks amazing.

Patti: Except I don't eat anything now I'm undead. I suppose I could chuck some of it around, if only I'd listened to that lesson in poltergeist training.

Victor: Ah yes, eating, a minor issue I'd overlooked. It still looks very nice, so maybe don't throw it around?

Patti: Also, it's just that this is my first since... well... you know.

Victor: After what?

Patti: Well, it's just that this time last year, I was at my own Halloween party, and now look at me.

Victor: Ah, it brings back sad memories for you, my dear?

Patti: Yes it does. But at least it wasn't a toga party, or I'd have to wear a toga for the rest of eternity. Couldn't I have at least worn a costume tonight? I've been in my death clothes for a year now, and I'm a pretty rubbish poltergeist.

Victor: Well, don't mention the death clothes to Malcolm; he gets a bit tetchy about how long he's been in death clothes. But I'm afraid we've had to cut back on our expenses. It costs a lot of money to keep the mansion running, and Gillian is wearing our only costume, for obvious reasons.

Patti: And what about my hair?

Victor: It looks lovely, my dear.

Patti: Yes, it's not the style so much, Winnie helped me get ready. But it's what you said about what would happen if I lost it tonight and I'm really scared now.

(Enter Winnie, unseen by Victor and Patti.)

Victor: **(Puts his arm around Patti to comfort her.)** You have no reason to be scared, my dear. The mortals won't know it is your Achilles heel, and in any case it takes the strength of the undead to remove your hair, and we're the only real ones here. You're with friends, my dearest. You have no reason to worry, everyone loves you.

Patti: Except Malcolm.

Victor: OK, except Malcolm.

Patti: And Bella, and William.

Victor: Well, yes, Bella, and maybe William.

Winnie: And I'm not overly fussed about you either, to be honest.

(Patti is startled and then appears disappointed.)

Victor: **(Quickly removes his arm from around Patti.)** Winnie! You crept in there. How long have you been here?

Winnie: Long enough. Anyway, Patti, I heard Zoe calling for you. She's outside by the front gate. I'd go out the back way if I were you, I got so much harassment from the mortals on the way in, asking how I got my hair to look so realistic. I told them it was centuries of work and they just laughed!

Patti: OK, thanks, Winnie. See you later, Victor. **(Exits.)**

Victor: You should be nicer to Patti, Winnie, she is still finding her feet as a spook.

Winnie: Well it looked like you were being nice enough to her to make up for everyone else. No wonder Bella was so grumpy earlier. And anyway, nobody was nice to me. They burned me, after trying to drown me! Do you know how long it takes to get rid of the smell of smoke from death clothes?

(Victor mimics Winnie's next words as though he's heard them thousands of times before.)

Winnie: Centuries! Centuries I tell you!

Victor: Yes, Winnie, you do tell me. Time and time, and time and time again...

(Enter Malcolm and Gillian.)

Victor: Hello Malcolm, hello Gillian. What a lovely party this is, isn't it?

Malcolm: I still don't know why you can't call me by my real name; you've been with this group for five years now and you're a man of intellect.

Gillian: It's because nobody can pronounce Masitus... Mashitus... Mastiut...

Winnie: No, no, it's Marstitu...

Victor: I think it's pronounced Marstuti...

Malcolm: Okay, okay, I get it! Nobody can pronounce my name. Just call me Malcolm.

Winnie: We do.

Gillian: I thought Patti was coming tonight for her first Halloween outing as a spook?

(Enter Zoe, unseen.)

Victor: Oh, she's here, she just went to meet Zoe at the gate.

Zoe: No, she didn't.

Victor: Didn't what?

Zoe: She didn't meet me.

Winnie: Well, at least the girl has some brains.

Zoe: Brains! Brains!

Victor: Oh look what you've done, Winnie, you've set her off again.

Zoe: Brains! Brains!

Victor: Calm down, Zoe. What Winnie meant was that Patti is intelligent.

Zoe: Oh right. Hang on, you mean she's intelligent because she didn't meet me?

Winnie: Got it in one, mastermind.

(Gillian moves to one side with her back to the entrance.)

(Enter Bella, holding Patti's hair.)

Bella: Hello everyone. Super party, Victor. Sorry I'm late, some mortals stopped me to ask where my costume came from. It happens so often when you wear designer clothes such as mine. I just told them I got them from a vintage shop... ha ha, such a hoot! **(Taps Gillian on the shoulder.)** Hello Gillian.

(Gillian jumps.)

Bella: Oh, you've not started that again, have you?

Gillian: I can't help it, I scare easily!

Malcolm: Bella, good evening. Proposed to anyone on the way in here, have you?

Bella: I don't propose to just anyone, Malcolm. I am selective.

Malcolm: Picky, more like.

Bella: Just because I won't marry you, Malcolm, does not make me picky. I need a man of style and a certain standing, don't I, Victor?

Victor: What? Pardon? Sorry Bella, were you saying something?

Malcolm: She was saying... **(Notices Patti's hair.)** Hang on, is that Patti's hair in your hand?

Bella!

Bella: What?

Victor: Bella, where did you get that hair from?

Bella: It was on the floor by the gate. I thought a mortal had dropped it. I was going to show Patti because it thought it was funny it looked like hers. I don't know who styled this, but it's nothing like how Patti normally wears her hair. It smells a bit too... **(Sniffs hair and holds it away in disgust.)**

Winnie: I've already said how long it takes to get rid of the smell of smoke.

All: Centuries, centuries, I tell you.

Winnie: Yes, centuries. I'm glad you've finally got the message.

Bella: No, it doesn't smell of smoke, it smells of fur... wet fur.

(Enter William.)

William: Evening everyone. Sorry I'm a bit late.

(Everyone turns to stare at him.)

William: It's just started to rain and I didn't want to get my fur wet... what? Why are you all staring at me? And why is Bella holding what looks like Patti's hair?

Gillian: Maybe you can tell us, William?

William: Me? Why would I know? I've got enough hair already without going round picking up dodgy costumes just scattered on the ground by those mortals. I mean, who would style their hair like that? Oh, hang on. Winnie, isn't that how you did Patti's hair earlier? Wow! What are the chances of a mortal copying the style? Hang on, where is Patti?

Zoe: She's gone to meet me at the gate.

Gillian: No Zoe, you're here, you're not at the gate.

Zoe: Oh yes, that's right. She's gone to not meet me at the gate.

Malcolm: Hang on, if that is Patti's hair, then doesn't that mean she must be... dead?

Gillian: Well, dur! We're all dead. Apart from Victor, of course.

Victor: No!

Gillian: Yes! I mean, I hate to correct you...

William: **(Interrupting.)** But you're going to anyway.

Gillian: **(Ignoring William and carrying on.)** But technically vampires are undead, as opposed to the rest of us, who are all actually dead.

... Continued in the full Murder Mystery Pack