



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
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Customer Taster

A Murder Has Been Arranged

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A Murder Has Been Arranged

About this pack

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event. ‘A Murder Has Been Arranged’ 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 pack is, in part, a **scripted performance**; the cast have set lines to learn or read, which contain the information the audience will need to work out whodunit!

Structure

This murder mystery pack contains:

- The **Organiser’s Overview** [*Excerpt here*]
- The **Script**, including the denouement, in which the murderer is revealed. [*Excerpt here*]
- **Accusation Sheets** for the audience to enter their solutions.

The Organiser’s Overview includes:-

- An overview of **Plot** and **Characters**.
- **General Staging Notes** on how best to plan and stage your murder mystery event, including
 - Suggestions for a welcoming atmosphere
 - Summary of the main clues
 - Suggested timings
- **Production Notes** - Set, Costume, Props.

Plot Overview

A marriage has been arranged between Emerald Bovis-Barratt and Persimmon Walls Wimpey, the offspring of wealthy rival developers. The ceremony is to be held at Castle Crantham, an historic stately home and now an up-market wedding venue.

Hosting the event are the Earl of Crantham and his long-suffering Countess, but the organisation for the event is in the hands of Quentin Wisp, an overly flamboyant wedding planner. Things are not running smoothly, however, as the wishes of Emerald and her equally demanding mother, Tracy, have not been agreed by the Earl. Emerald’s father, Robert, a self-made man, does not help matters with his brash manners, which are guaranteed to upset everyone. Then bridegroom Persimmon arrives and manages to blatantly ignore Emerald’s obvious reluctance to be his bride. Throwing their comments into the mix are the crabby Nanny McFlea, an old Crantham retainer; Mrs Fatmore, the very inventive cook; and Parsons, the highly snobbish Butler.

When the Earl is found dead on the eve of the wedding, all members of the household and the wedding guests are prime suspects, owing to their several motives for murder. Inspector Gorse of the Plodshire Police arrives to take control of the investigation. Will he and the audience manage to uncover the murderer and bring them to justice?

Character Overview

Inspector – A business-like Police Officer.

Countess – Harassed, distracted and put-upon.

Robert Bovis-Barratt – Brash self-made man, tactless.

Tracy Bovis-Barratt – Demanding, tries to be posh but fails.

Parsons – Stiff, correct and ultra-snobbish.

Nanny McFlea – Scottish accent, crabby, dark-humoured, anti-marriage.

Quentin Wisp – Flamboyant, waspish, cutting.

Emerald – Spoilt, brought up to be posh but wants to be a chav.

Persimmon (Perry) Walls Wimpey – Entitled, boastful.

Mrs Fatmore – Cheery Cockney.

General Staging Notes

Note that you need to purchase a performance licence from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts website.

The script takes the form of a conventional play, with entrances, exits and other basic stage directions included. Please rehearse, even if you are going to read the script as opposed to memorising it. If performers are familiar with their characters, it will help to make the production run so much more smoothly. There is no in-built question and answer session with this production, so it is not necessary for the performers to ad lib. Performers can, if they wish, provide backstories or fill in their characters, but these do not form part of the script.

The audience are invited to consider the motives and evidence against the characters involved. The case can be discussed during and after the various courses of the meal. The Inspector can announce this before the food is served and time should be allowed for this.

The Accusation Sheets should be supplied for each table, together with pens or pencils. Each table must fill in who they accuse to be the killer and the evidence that led them to this decision. The sheets are then collected during the Coffee Break and a designated person - perhaps the Inspector, the play's director, or the group's chair - will announce the winner, and prizes can be given. In the case of two or more tables correctly identifying the murderer, it is the one with the clearest analysis that is the winner.

Suggestions for a Welcoming Atmosphere

- A greeter at the main entrance.
- Pre-dinner drinks.
- Flowers, tablecloths and candles on tables, all perhaps with a wedding theme.
- Introductory music, played before the performance and during the meal break. Music can be played just before the curtains open; maybe the theme from Downton Abbey!
- A short welcome from the Chairperson including an explanation of the structure of the evening. The floor is then given to the Inspector and the performance follows.
- At the end of the evening's entertainment, the audience can be thanked for attending and invited to remain until the bar closes!

Suggested Timing

- 7:00 pm - Guests arrive and are seated. Drinks and/or starters can be provided.
- 7:15 pm - Scenes One and Two
- 7:40 pm - Main Course
- 8:00 pm - Scene Three
- 8:15 pm - Dessert
- 8:30 pm - Scene Four
- 8:40 pm - Coffee Break. Accusation Sheets to be filled in and collected.
- 8:50 pm - Scene Five, followed by announcement of the winning team.
- 9:00 pm - Finish.

Production Notes

Set Description

The set represents a reception room in a stately home. There could be comic ancestral portraits on the walls, a pantomime suit of armour, and tables with vases of flowers. A sideboard can be placed Upstage Centre to hold Parsons' tray of drinks. A door Stage Right leads to the front door, kitchen, dining room and North Tower. A door Stage Left leads to the East Wing.

Costumes

Inspector – Suit and tie. Jacket unbuttoned.

Countess – Jeans and blouse.

Robert Bovis-Barratt – Pale trousers, open-necked shirt with cravat, blazer with badge.

Tracy Bovis-Barratt – Bright ensemble with low neck and short skirt, too much makeup and jewellery.

Parsons – Striped trousers, smart shirt, jacket and tie.

Nanny McFlea – A rigid black dress, resembling the Matron's uniform of a bygone age. Tight belt with buckle, black tights, black lace-up shoes.

Quentin Wisp – Outrageously flamboyant with colourful suit, hat and full makeup.

Emerald – Ripped jeans, tight top.

Perry – Primly dressed in pressed trousers, linen jacket, bow tie.

Mrs Fatmore – Large wrap-around overall with cook's hat.

A Murder Has Been Arranged

[Script Excerpt]

(Guests arrive and are seated. Drinks and/or starters can be provided.)

Scene 1

(The set represents a reception room in Castle Crantham, a stately home. Enter Inspector, Stage Right.)

Inspector: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our Murder Mystery entitled 'A Murder Has Been Arranged'. I am Detective Inspector Gorse of the Plodshire Police and I will be guiding you through tonight's entertainment. We are at Castle Crantham, country seat of the Earls of Crantham. In order to raise badly needed revenue, the castle has in recent years become a wedding venue. A marriage has been arranged between Emerald Bovis-Barratt and Persimmon Walls Wimpey, the offspring of wealthy rival developers. On the eve of the wedding, the Earl of Crantham is found dead on the table of the grand dining room of the castle. He has been stabbed to death with a silver-plated carving knife. It is my task to investigate this apparent murder and this I shall do with a series of interviews of all those present. Before I do so, let us visit the castle just prior to the discovery of the Earl's untimely death. **(Exit Stage Right.)**

(Enter Countess, Stage Right, carrying a duster and pushing a vacuum cleaner. She begins polishing the furniture.)

(Enter Robert and Tracy, Stage Right with small luggage cases.)

Robert: Ooh, I say Missus.

Countess: Oh, hallo.

Robert: We just walked past your dining room and looked in.

Tracy: Well the doors *are* wide open.

Robert: And there's a great fat bloke lying in the middle of the table, among the knives and forks. Snoring 'is 'ead off.

Countess: Oh dear, that will be His Lordship, the Earl of Crantham. He's probably overdone the pre-prandials again.

Robert: Yer what?

Countess: Are you the caterers? I'm so glad you're here. We're madly behind. I'm just doing a last-minute tidy-up before the wedding party arrive and there is so much to do. The Earl is very particular about detail, you know.

(Parsons enters Stage Right.)

Countess: Oh, here's Parsons the Butler. He will show you where to go. These people are the caterers. So relieved to see them.

Robert: Parsons, is it? The parson's nose. Nosy. Ha ha. Get it?

Parsons: The kitchen is this way, if you would follow me.

Robert: Thanks very much, Nosy, but I'm the Father of the bride. Robert Bovis-Barratt. Executive Director of Bob the Builder Limited.

Countess: Oh dear, I'm so sorry. How awful of me. But please excuse me, as I must get finished before the Earl wakes up. **(She frantically carries on dusting around the room and does not listen to the following conversation.)**

Parsons: My apologies also, Sir. We are not used to persons of your social stratum at Castle Crantham.

Robert: Yer what? Oh, this is my wife, Tracy.

Tracy: May I say how lovely it is to hire such a classy joint for our Emerald's wedding. None of your grotty village halls for us, thank you very much. And where's all the circus stuff I ordered?

Parsons: I have absolutely no idea as to the circus stuff.

Tracy: It had all better be tip-top quality, or else.

Parsons: You will find our standards to be of the highest order as we do have a fine, historic heritage to maintain. The Earls of Crantham have held the Castle as their country seat since Norman times. Unfortunately in recent years we have had to turn to commercial measures to finance the upkeep of the buildings.

Robert: Ooh, I'm yer man. Pr'aps I could give you a quote for some work. You know, mates' rates and all that.

Parsons: I'm sorry, Sir, but we have to employ dedicated craftsmen from impeccable backgrounds to restore our valuable assets.

Robert: I know a good asset when I see it; I'm a self-made man, I am. I build 'ouses.

Parsons: 'Ouses?

Robert: All over the place. See a nasty green field and I'm in there wiv me bulldozer. Lovely jubbly.

Tracy: I wonder what's keeping our Emerald; she should be here by now. I do hope she's not outside vaping.

Robert: We'll soon know when she's arrived by her yelling.

Parsons: I take it that Emerald is the name of the young lady who is to be married?

Tracy: Yes, we went to the Emerald Isle when we... when she... on our honeymoon.

Robert: Good job we didn't go to the Isle of Dogs, eh? Woof, woof! **(Laughs coarsely and nudges Parsons.)**

Parsons: Yes, quite.

Tracy: She's a lovely girl, if I say so myself. Though she can be a bit of a madam at times. I really don't know where she gets that from.

Parsons: Then let us hope that she does not upset our wedding planner.

Tracy: Oh, don't the toffs do all the organising?

Parsons: Goodness me, no. Your fee includes dinner with the Earl and Countess tonight and that is the extent of their involvement.

Robert: La de bloody da.

Tracy: **(Nudges Robert.)** Shhhh. I expect you saw our notice in the Times concerning the nuptials? A marriage has been arranged between Emerald, daughter of Mr and Mrs Robert Bovis-Barratt and Persimmon, son of Sir Gerald and Lady Walls Wimpey. Tasteful, don't you think? You see, we're going up in the world with our daughter marrying the son of a Sir. We are acquiring class.

Robert: Any chance of a lager? I've got a mouth on me like a weasel's armpit.

Parsons: What on earth is a lager?

Tracy: His tipple.

Parsons: Oh, I'm not sure that we have any, er...

Robert: Lager.

Parsons: We have an extensive cellar...

Robert: I ain't interested in where you keep yer coal, Nosy.

Parsons: But I really don't think we have put down a reserve of that thing called lager. But perhaps Cook has something cheap and fizzy in her pantry.

Robert: Double quick then, if you please, old chap.

Parsons: Yes, Sir. And for Madam?

Tracy: 'Ooo?

Robert: You, yer daft bird.

Tracy: Oh. Gin and It then. Ta very much.

(Parsons rolls his eyes and exits Stage Right.)

Robert: When do we get to meet this old Earl and Countess, then?

Countess: You will meet the Earl at dinner, if he wakes in time. And I'm the Countess of Crantham.

Tracy: } **(Together)**

Robert: } Oh!

(Tracy bobs a small curtsy.)

(Robert makes as though to tug his forelock.)

Tracy: But why are you doing the dusting?

Countess: We just can't get any domestic staff on the wages that the Earl pays.

Robert: Sounds a right tight a...

Tracy: (Nudges Robert.) Shh.

(Enter Nanny McFlea Stage Right.)

Nanny: I see the large fat one is flat on the table, snoring his head off again. There's nae room for the food. But maybe that's a blessing.

Countess: Don't worry, he'll wake up soon. This is Nanny McFlea, an old retainer at Castle Crantham. And this is Mr and Mrs Bovis-Barratt, the parents of the young lady who is getting married tomorrow.

Nanny: Och, and canna the wee lassie throw hersel' under a bus instead? She'll be a sight happier in the end.

Tracy: But as my dear Robert and I always say, marriages are made in heaven.

Nanny: Aye, and bugged up on Earth. Noo, I must return to ma room in the North Tower to feed ma cockroaches. **(Exit Stage Right.)**

Tracy: I do hope she's got nothing to do with the organisation. She doesn't 'ave quite the enthusiasm that one would expect.

Countess: Oh, don't worry about dear old Nanny. The event is in very capable hands.

(Enter Quentin Stage Right.)

Quentin: I say, Lady Crantham, His Lordship is back on his perch, giving absolutely the wrong ambience to the dining room.

Countess: Yes I know.

Robert: What the bleedin' 'ell is this?

Countess: This is our wedding planner, Quentin Wisp. He's very experienced.

Robert: What at, I'd like to know?

Countess: And these are the bride's parents, Mr and Mrs Bovis-Barratt.

Quentin: Oh well, we can't win them all, can we? What colour is the Mother of the Bride going to be wearing?

Tracy: A beautiful purple, head to foot.

Quentin: Oh no dear, not with all those broken veins on your face.

Countess: Um, I think I'd better show our guests to their rooms. Come this way please; your rooms are in the East Wing.

(Countess takes the vacuum cleaner and leads Robert and Tracy off Stage Left with their luggage.)

Quentin: I can see that this is going to be one divine experience for Yours Truly.

(Enter Emerald Stage Right with luggage.)

Emerald: Mum, Dad! Oi you, why is there a great fat ugly man lying on the dining table, snoring his head off? I do hope he's not going to be there for long and spoil everything.

Quentin: Oh hallo. Are you the caterer? If so, you should have used the rear entrance.

Emerald: No, I'm Emerald, the bride.

Quentin: Oh dear!

Emerald: Who are you?

Quentin: Quentin Wisp, your wedding planner. So please try not to be too demanding, as I've got a splitting head.

Emerald: Have you done the flowers?

Quentin: I've arranged for all the roses to be placed around the function rooms.

Emerald: Roses? But I distinctly said that I wanted lilies. Black lilies.

Quentin: Oh no, Sweetie. Lilies are so utterly passé.

Emerald: And how would you know?

Quentin: My dear, I am a man at the top of my game. I oversee weddings of the highest social class. Or I did.

Emerald: Well, I have been brought up to get what I want, so bin the roses and get the lilies now! The sooner this poxy wedding is over, the better.

Quentin: Oooh, aren't we the bridezilla?

Emerald: Has my dress arrived?

Quentin: It's hanging upstairs. But I think they've made it a bit on the small side, if you ask me.

Emerald: What? I'm only size ten!

Quentin: Your feet might be, dear, but as for the rest of you...

Emerald: Where are my parents?

Quentin: In the East Wing. Just follow the aroma of special-offer aftershave. **(Points Stage Left.)**

Emerald: Mum! Dad! **(Exits hurriedly Stage Left, with luggage.)**

Quentin: What *did* I say?

(Enter Nanny McFlea, Stage Right.)

Nanny: Och it's you, you great wet drip.

Quentin: Och it's the Crone of Crantham. **(Exits Stage Left, laughing.)**

Nanny: Flattery will get ye nowhere.

(Enter Perry, Stage Right.)

Perry: I say, I do hope I've got the right place. Be an awful shame if I turned up at the wrong castle, wouldn't it?

Nanny: No it wouldn't. Are you the caterer? If y'are, you'd be best poisoning the lot of them.

Perry: I'm the Bridegroom, Persimmon Walls Wimpey. Son of Sir Gerald and Lady Walls Wimpey. Perry to my friends.

Nanny: I'm Nanny McFlea and I have nae friends.

Perry: Has my bride, the lovely Emerald, arrived yet?

Nanny: I dinna ken. And I dinna care. If she's the sense she was born with, she'll ha' run off tae a nice prison camp.

(Enter Emerald, Stage Left.)

Perry: Emerald, darling!

Emerald: What do *you* want?

Perry: To see my bride, of course.

Emerald: It's bad luck to see me before the ceremony.

Nanny: The doom has begun already.

Emerald: So now you've seen me, go back to the hotel and stay out of my way until tomorrow.

Nanny: Ye shouldna be so encouraging, lassie. **(Exits Stage Right.)**

Perry: Anyone would think you don't want to marry me.

Emerald: Anyone would be right.

Perry: Where are you going now?

Emerald: Upstairs to my room to throw myself off the balcony.

Perry: Straight into my arms?

Emerald: No! **(Exits Stage Left.)**

(Enter Quentin Stage Left.)

[Continues in the full script]