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**Customer Taster**

# *An Inspector Pops In*

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# An Inspector Pops In

## About the Pack

The full Murder Mystery pack provides the full script and guidance to enable you to produce a successful murder mystery event. *An Inspector Pops In* was written for a drama group which has staged a number of such events and the usual format, including a light supper, is given below. The author has no objection to this suggested event being altered to suit other variable timings and possible inclusions of meal courses, e.g. a break after Act One.

## Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- **The Organiser's Overview** (extract in this document)
- **The Script** (extract in this document)
- **The Accusation Sheet**

## Organiser's Overview Contents

- Plot Overview
- Character List / Descriptions
- General Staging Notes
  - Suggested Event Format
  - Approximate Show Timings
  - Preparation - a brief description of each step of the production
- Production Notes
  - Set Descriptions
  - Properties List
  - Costume Notes
  - Sound Effects
  - Lighting Plot

## Plot Overview

Gary Benedict is an aging actor and occasional film star. Gary's estranged wife Amanda is plotting with Gary's entourage to systematically drain his bank balance. When Lisa, a young nubile reporter from the local newspaper arrives for an interview with Gary, she becomes privy to conversations which threaten to uncover the whole plot if the details find their way on to the front page of *The Chronicle* but Lisa is not all she seems.

Amanda has inveigled Gary's Agent Simon Foyle, his secretary Jemima Lawrence, his disappeared accountant Maurice Parker, and even his own mother, Sarah, into the conspiracy. Their machinations provide more than one of them with a motive for murder.

Detective Inspector Cleveleys is both host for the evening and investigator. His curious ability to pop up unexpectedly, either in person, or as a figment of the imaginations of the other characters adds to the comedy, helps to keep the audience informed and ultimately to identify the murderer. (Interrogation of the suspects by the audience is optional.)

## Character List

**Gary Benedict** – a fading actor in his mid-sixties.

**Jemima Lawrence** – Gary’s secretary, fiftyish.

**Lisa Graham** – a newspaper reporter, twenty six.

**Sarah Benedict** – mid-eighties but still quite sprightly.

**Simon Foyle** – Gary’s agent – fiftyish.

**Amanda Benedict (née Fisher)** – Gary’s estranged wife forties/fifties.

**Maurice Parker** – Gary’s Accountant –forties/fifties.

**Detective Inspector Ben Cleveleys** – fiftyish. He also serves as host for the evening and frequently addresses the audience directly, either as scripted or *ad lib*.

Plus a very brief appearance by the **Stage Manager**

## General Staging Notes

### *Suggested Event Format*

- Introduction by the host (Chief Inspector Cleveleys).
- Act One
- Act Two - including an optional opportunity for the audience to question the cast.
- Interval and meal (including the optional drawing of a raffle, team discussion, filling in and collection of the Accusation Sheets).
- Act Three
- Presentation of certificates and prizes to the winning team.

### *Approximate Timings*

You should allow around two hours and fifteen minutes for the event.

Act One: 35 minutes

Act Two: 45 minutes

Audience interrogation (if desired): 10 minutes

Interval/Supper: 30 minutes (highly dependent on the complexity of the catering)

Act Three: 5 minutes

Epilogue: 10 minutes for prize-giving and closing announcements.

## Preparation

### *Learned lines or rehearsed reading?*

The play will work best if lines are learned. This gives the actors more freedom of movement and interaction with one another. It will be difficult, for instance, for Jemima to open a cupboard door and take out a trouser suit on a hanger if she has a script in her other hand, or for Sarah to manage a tea tray and distribute cups of tea. However, Chief Inspector Cleveleys has a number of long speeches which include references that need to be delivered clearly and smoothly to the audience. Provided he is sufficiently familiar with his lines, so as not to be glued to the script, it might be helpful to have the speeches in his notebook, to which he would then appear to be referring quite naturally as a detective would in the course of his investigation.

If it is decided to perform the play as a rehearsed reading, this should be made clear in the publicity and reflected in the ticket prices. Chief Inspector Cleveleys’ dialogue may be added to or amended to accommodate any changes.

## ***Programme Notes***

If a programme is created for the production, then in addition to the usual lists of cast and crew, the audience may find it helpful to have the sequence of events listed:-

Act One: The office-cum lounge of Gary Benedict's luxury home: time – the present.

Act Two: Scene One: A high class hotel lounge: time - five years ago.

Scene Two: Gary Benedict's luxury home – five years ago.

Scene Three: The same – the present – following on from the end of Act One.

Scene Four: The same – the present – three hours later.

Scene Five: The same – the present – fifteen minutes later.

Interval and Supper

Act Three: Gary's luxury home – the present – following on from the end of Act Two.

## ***Allocating responsibilities***

The producer will need to appoint those who are to be responsible for various aspects of the event:-

- [ ... ]
- Scrutineers - who will distribute the Accusation Sheets before the play, collect them in after supper, read them during the performance of Act Three to determine the winning team (see Adjudication below) and give the result to Chief Inspector Cleveleys for him to announce. In the event of a tie they will provide Cleveleys with a set of tie-break questions to be put to the tied teams, the winning team being the first one to shout out the correct answer. Suggested questions are given under 'Adjudication', but the scrutineers may devise their own.

## ***Audience Interrogation***

The script has an option for interrogation of the cast by the audience. If the director decides to exercise this it is, of necessity, improvised. The rules are:-

The murderer may lie, but everyone else should tell the truth (not necessarily the whole truth).

Responses should be based on the script. There is no information needed by the audience that is not in the script, although some information is made more specific in Act Three (after the interrogation).

The audience may ask questions that go beyond the script. The cast may make up answers, provided that these do not have material influence on the plot! There is an option to answer "I don't think that's relevant" or for Cleveleys to step in with "That's not a line of enquiry we are pursuing at this time."

The cast should prepare for and practice this interrogation, particularly dealing with difficult and irrelevant questions.

Creating (mutually agreed) back stories for the characters may help, however these need to avoid details that might confuse the plot.

## ***Adjudication***

A full answer should include the following four elements: allow one point for each.

- Correct identification of the murderer.
- Correct identification of the method
- Two parts to the motive.

Three tie-break questions are suggested in the Organiser's Overview.

## **Production Notes**

### ***Set Description***

A lounge-cum office in Gary Benedict's rented mansion. There is a sofa, behind which is a desk and desk chair, with papers, a PC and keyboard and a telephone. Other furniture as desired – filing cabinet, chairs and cupboards, etc., but including a small drinks table with appropriate bottles and glasses. Downstage right are two easy chairs and a coffee table which serve as the furniture for Act Two Scene One, when a portable screen can be wheeled across to separate this area from the main set, so that it serves as the lounge of a high class hotel.

There are three doors, one leads to the hall and thence the front door, another leads to the kitchen and thence the back door. A third door is the door to a cupboard in which Jemima keeps her spare clothes including a trouser suit. A window, stage right, looks out over the garden onto the road which is not viewable by the audience.

### ***Costume Notes***

All characters need to give the appearance of being quite well-heeled, the men in suits, blazers or sports jackets, the women in fashionable coats and dresses. Gary should be 'theatrical' in silk dressing gown over his day clothes, and a luxury bath robe when required.

Cleveleys' clothes are as world-weary as he is. The script makes it quite clear when he is appearing as himself or as a figment of other characters' imaginations, but the director may like to stipulate a change of raincoat to indicate this more explicitly. As many colourful neckerchiefs as the company can afford, in order that they should look identical, might be made by cutting up a length of suitable material.

# An Inspector Pops In

## Script Extract

### Act One

(A lounge-cum-office in Gary Benedict's rented Mansion. There is a sofa, behind which is a desk and desk chair, with papers, a PC and keyboard and a telephone, and other furniture. There is also a small drinks table with appropriate bottles and glasses. Downstage right are two easy chairs and a coffee table which serve as the furniture for Act Two Scene One, when a portable screen can be wheeled across to separate this area from the main set, so that it serves as the lounge of a high class Hotel.)

(Gary, in a dressing gown over his day-clothes, is lounging on the sofa.)

(Sound FX – Phone rings. Gary ignores it. It eventually stops.)

(Sound FX – Doorbell. Pause. It rings again. Gary ignores it. It rings again.)

(Sound FX- The phone rings for a long time. At last Gary gets up and answers it.)

Gary: Gary Benedict's residence. He's not in. (Slams down the phone.)

(Sound FX – The doorbell rings. A pause, before it rings again. Gary returns to the sofa.)

(Jemima Lawrence, Gary's secretary enters. She is wearing a skirt and blouse.)

(Sound FX- Telephone rings.)

(Jemima picks up the phone, listens for a moment and then holds her hand over the mouthpiece.)

Jemima: Gary...

Gary: Jemima?

(Jemima holds out the phone to him.)

Gary: I'm not in.

(Jemima puts the phone back in its cradle.)

Jemima: Why not?

Gary: Because I was a long time out last night. I'm too tired to answer phone calls.

Jemima: Out late with another woman, I suppose.

Gary: (Smugly) I had a secret rendezvous. Though I fancy I saw you. *You* were out late as well.

Jemima: You couldn't have. Unlike you I had an early night.

(Sound FX-The telephone rings. Jemima picks it up and drops it back into the cradle.)

Gary: (Irritated) Oh, unplug it from the wall. It'll only be the paparazzi.

Jemima: Isn't publicity supposed to be a good thing?

Gary: Not at the moment. They'll only want to know if I'm having an affair with Bryony Jones.

Jemima: And are you?

Gary: No.

Jemima: Who are you having an affair with?

Gary: Emily Mortimer.

Jemima: Emily? Isn't there a bit of an age gap?

Gary: A teeny bit; but oh (dreamily) how bright the eyes, how soft the skin.

Jemima: How taken in by false promises of romance... Does Amanda know?

Gary: Amanda turns a blind eye these days. We came to an understanding.

Jemima: (Hopefully) You're going to divorce?

Gary: Heavens, no.

(Jemima sighs, disappointed.)

Gary: I couldn't afford a divorce, you know that. She'd bankrupt me.

Jemima: She couldn't. You're bankrupt already. Which reminds me...

(Jemima moves behind the desk and takes a play-script from a file.)

Gary: No, Jemima, no. Don't remind me, I shan't be able to bear it.

Jemima: You could at least read it. You need some work. It's the only offer you've had in months.

It wouldn't surprise me if those persistent phone calls were Simon Foyle's secretary wanting to know what you think.

Gary: Simon Foyle is a toad. That's what I think.

**Jemima:** Simon Foyle is your agent. Without him you would have never risen to the dizzy heights of fame you once enjoyed.

**Gary:** Without Simon Foyle I would have kept a great deal more of the money I earned. I was the talent. He was the leech.

**Jemima:** I give up. Will *I* get paid this month?

**Gary:** Do I have any money to pay you with?

**(Jemima returns to the desk, puts down the play-script and picks up an envelope. She takes a bank statement from it and hands it to Gary.)**

**Jemima:** Bank statement.

**Gary: (Scanning the statement.)** Two thousand four hundred and seventy two pounds and forty three pence. We can survive a bit longer on that, can't we?

**Jemima:** No Gary. That balance is what *you owe them*. You are two thousand – whatever it was – pounds in debt to the bank.

**Gary:** Oh. That never used to happen when Maurice was in charge.

**Jemima:** Maurice was never in charge. *I'm* your secretary. Maurice was your accountant. It's why you've never looked at a bank statement in your life.

**Gary:** Whatever happened to Maurice?

**Jemima:** He left when you couldn't afford to pay him any longer.

**Gary: (Sighing sadly.)** And now I can't afford to pay you either.

**Jemima:** No. Just to add to your misery, I have to tell you that I've decided to leave at the end of the month. If, before then, you should happen to find some work, I *might* change my mind. **(Picks up the play-script from the desk and throws it at Gary.)** Read it! **(Storms out.)**

**Gary:** Jem! You can't leave...

**(Sound FX – The phone rings. Gary picks up the phone.)**

**Gary:** I'm not in.

**(Puts the phone down, picks up the play-script, reads the title and is horrified.)**

**Gary: (Horrified)** Macbeth! I can't do *Macbeth*. I'm not a *Macbeth* sort of actor. I'm a Noel Coward sort of actor – suave, debonair, a magnet for beautiful women. *Macbeth!*

**(He flings the play-script onto the sofa. A sheet of paper comes loose. He retrieves it. It is a letter.)**

**Gary:** Oh! A missive from Simon.

**(Sound FX – The doorbell rings.)**

**Gary: (Reading the letter.)** Dear Gary, As you appear to be incapable of answering your phone, I am resorting to a letter, and enclosing a script. Angus Foreman is desperate for someone to play the Porter in his forthcoming production of *Macbeth*, and I persuaded him you might make a half-decent fist of it. **(Affronted)** – A half-decent fist of it! It's hardly a star role, Simon – this is the man who played the lead in *Blithe Spirit*. Half decent fist of it indeed!

**(Sound FX – The doorbell rings.)**

**(Gary picks up the script and thumbs through it to find the Porter's speech.)**

**Gary: (Reading)** Knocking within. Enter a Porter. **(Putting on a drunken porter's voice and overacting abominably.)** Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. *Knocking within.* Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't.

**(Sound FX – The doorbell rings again.)**

**Jemima: (Offstage)** I'll get it.

**Gary: (Reading)** Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator.

**(Jemima comes in and watches Gary's performance with amusement.)**

**Gary: (Reading)** *Knocking within.* Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose.

**Jemima:** I think you're going to need a good director.

**Gary:** *If I* agree to do it. It's less than a page, and I don't even know what it's about.



**Jemima:** It's about a porter admitting an assortment of people through the gates of hell. Typecasting wouldn't you say?

**Gary:** That's unkind Jemima. Who was at the door?

**Jemima:** Nobody.

**Gary:** Nobody? *Somebody* must have rung the bell.

**Jemima:** Tired of waiting, I suppose.

**Gary:** Oh, well. I think I'll go and have a shower. What are you going to do?

**Jemima:** Well, in spite of everything there's a heap of fan mail, which I shall attempt to answer on your behalf. When you've cleansed your body, you can cleanse your soul by at least condescending to sign them.

**Gary:** Do they want photographs?

**Jemima:** Of course.

**Gary:** Where's the current one? Do I look old in it?

**(Jemima takes a bundle of photographs out of a desk drawer and hands one to Gary.)**

**Gary:** **(Looking at the photo.)** Oh. You can't send *this* to my adoring fans. I look ancient.

**Jemima:** That's because you *are* ancient. You're sixty eight.

**Gary:** That's young nowadays. Look at Maggie Smith, Timothy West – they're in their eighties. They're still getting lead parts.

**Jemima:** That's because they're still good at what they do. It's called talent.

**Gary:** Oh! That's below the belt Jemima. **(He approaches her amorously.)** I've a good mind to give you the sack.

**Jemima:** **(Accepting his embrace.)** Too late. I've sacked myself. Remember? End of the month.

**Gary:** Oh, Jem. Don't leave me. You know my life would be unbearable without you.

**Jemima:** Did you tell Amanda that when you married her?

**Gary:** That was *then*. Things change.

**Jemima:** And Bryony Jones?

**Gary:** Ah Bryony! She brought a little sunshine into a clouded life.

**Jemima:** Until Emily Mortimer came along.

**Gary:** Yes, but by then the sun had gone down on Bryony Jones.

**Jemima:** **(Pushing him away.)** You know, you are totally irresponsible. You lead these girls on, and then you drop them like yesterday's news.

**Gary:** They're young, Jem. They're resilient. They find other fish to fry. They drop me as easily as I drop them. I always gave them leaving presents, but they're just passing fancies, fun at the time but not forever.

**Jemima:** Like me?

**Gary:** Jem, you know you're special.

**Jemima:** Not special enough though, am I. Are you still in love with Amanda?

**Gary:** I fell out of love with Amanda the day we married.

**Jemima:** And you're still not divorced.

**Gary:** No. She'll take me for every penny I've got. Then where would we be?

**Jemima:** We? Did you say *we*? **(She returns to embrace him.)**

**Gary:** Did I? **(He pulls away.)**

**Jemima:** **(Exasperated)** Oh - you're hopeless. Go and get your shower. I've work to do.  
**(Gary exits. Jemima sits at the desk and begins typing. After a moment Lisa Graham enters. She wears a light raincoat and carries a shoulder bag. Jemima does not immediately notice her. Lisa hovers at the edge of the room, and slowly approaches the desk. Jemima sees her and is startled.)**

**Jemima:** Oh! Wherever did you come from?

**Lisa:** Through the back door. I couldn't get any answer at the front.

**Jemima:** That's a bit of a liberty. What do you want?

**Lisa:** I was hoping for an interview.

**Jemima:** There are no jobs going here.

**Lisa:** No. Sorry. I'm Lisa Graham from the Chronicle. I was hoping for an interview with Mr Benedict.

**Jemima:** I see. He's in the shower.

**Lisa:** Well, I don't mind, if he doesn't.

**Jemima:** I beg your pardon?

**Lisa:** Sorry. Is it all right if I wait?

**Jemima:** Did you make an appointment? There's nothing in the diary.

**Lisa:** No. I know I should have done, but nobody answers the phone.

**Jemima:** Yes, I'm afraid you're right. Take a seat, and I'll go and see what the state of play is.

**(Jemima gets up and exits. Lisa sits on the sofa, takes a notebook out of her bag and leafs through the pages. After a moment, she notices a lacy bra tucked down the side of the cushion, and pulls it out. She gets up and lifts the cushion and discovers matching panties. As she stands staring at them, Jemima returns.)**

**Jemima:** Gary says... **(Stops, stunned.)**

**Lisa:** I think I may have the beginnings of a story.

**Jemima:** That may not be the best starting point for an interview. Give them to me.

**(Lisa gets up and hands the garments over. Jemima puts them in a desk drawer.)**

**(Sound FX - The doorbell rings.)**

**Jemima:** Never a dull moment. Gary says he'll be down in five minutes.

**Lisa:** Thank you.

**(Jemima goes off to answer the door. Lisa sits down again. After a pause, Jemima returns with Sarah Benedict, Gary's mother. She walks with the aid of a stick, but is still quite lively, and very fashionably dressed with a vibrant neckerchief.)**

**Sarah:** Is he in? I suppose he's still in bed.

**Jemima:** The last time I looked he was in the shower.

**Sarah:** *You looked?* **(Sees Lisa.)** Who are you? One of his floozies?

**Lisa:** I'm nobody's floozy. I'm Lisa from the Chronicle. May I ask who you are?

**Sarah:** No, but I'll tell you anyway. I'm Sarah Benedict, Gary's mother.

**Lisa:** Wow! I could be onto a scoop here. Would you allow me to interview you?

**Jemima:** That might not be...

**Sarah:** About Gary? Why should I tell you things about Gary I wouldn't want you to print?

**Lisa:** **(Eager)** You mean they would actually be unprintable?

**Sarah:** What else? That's Gary Benedict for you. But you'd print it anyway, and then he could sue you for libel. He could probably do with the money.

**Lisa:** Not if I had taken down verbatim what you told me. It wouldn't be libellous then. It would be the truth. Honest reporting, from the horse's mouth.

**Sarah:** Are you calling me a horse?

**Lisa:** Sorry? No. Of course not.

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