



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery

by

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Customer Taster

Blue Murder at Bluestone Hall

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About the pack

Blue Murder at Bluestone Hall is a scripted murder mystery set at a country estate in 1923, with approximately 55 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 ten actors (3M, 7F) in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area, or over an online platform such as Zoom.

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:

- **The Organiser's Overview** *[extract here]*
- **The Script** *[extract here]*
- **The Accusation Sheet** – for the audience to enter their solutions

Organiser's Overview Contents

- Synopsis
- Author's Notes
- Character Profiles
- Other Background Information
- General Staging Notes
 - Approximate Show Timings
- Production Notes
 - Set
 - Props List
 - Sound Effects Plot
 - Lighting Plot
 - Music Suggestions

Synopsis

It is 1923 and Lady Constance Dunne-Wittering is hosting a meeting at Bluestone Hall, her country estate. When someone screams blue murder and interrupts afternoon tea, Lady Constance is not amused. Hapless Detective Inspector Mayday arrives to investigate the killing. He soon realises that more than one person has a motive. The question on everyone's lips is whodunnit?

Author's Notes

This is a comedy murder mystery in my series of Inspector Mayday murder mysteries.

I have suggested some music which suits the piece, and, I hope, will add to your audience's enjoyment. In some instances, a few bars is all that's needed, however the Charleston dance and cast galloping around stage could be longer – just don't overegg the pudding, as Cook would say...

As one would expect with a list of comedy names, none of these characters are based on anyone in real life. I have also added character profiles – some ages are specific, others are merely guidelines.

This murder mystery is set in 1923, so costumes or accessories should reflect the era and setting. The downstairs staff costumes should reflect their position – aprons for the maid and cook. Fetchitt, the butler, could show the audience to their seats.

The set should represent the drawing room of a stately home. I have listed lighting cues, properties and sound effects needed. There is also a guide to staging the murder mystery.

I hope you have as much fun performing my murder mystery as I had writing it.

Cheryl Barrett

Character Profiles

[The full profiles in the Organiser's Overview include murder motives for each character.]

Lady Constance Dunne-Wittering – Lady of the manor, late 50s.

Married to Lord Henry. Has one daughter, Lady Dorothy. Doesn't suffer fools gladly. Elegant, imperious at times. Runs the household and estate. Very much involved with the local community.

Tia Maria – The Maid, 21.

Tia has only been working at the manor for a few weeks and is eager to please. She is learning the ropes and is rebuked by Lady Constance and Fetchitt the butler occasionally. Dutiful, gauche at times but always cheerful.

Fetchitt – The Butler, 40s.

Lord Henry's batman during the war. Fetchitt was down on his luck and approached Lord Henry for work. He was given the job of butler when the old butler, Soames, died. Fetchitt has only been working at the manor for a few months. He comes across as subservient, but has a deadpan, sometimes sardonic manner and is irreverent at times. He enjoys a drink and is a gambler.

Victoria Sponge – The Cook, 60s.

A homely, cheerful cockney, she is the longest serving member of staff. She has mollycoddled Lord Henry since he was a child. Beams with pride when complimented on her cooking. Wears a chef's apron.

Henrietta Soufflé – The Vicar's wife, 40s.

At the beginning, she is quite demure and unassuming. During the Charleston, she thoroughly enjoys the music, taps her feet and does some dance moves whilst seated. Henrietta wistfully says, "I used to dance", which indicates that she has adapted her life to that of dutiful Vicar's wife. As events develop, we see a more outgoing side to Henrietta. She becomes more animated and is keen to help the Inspector with his investigations.

Lady Dorothy Dunne-Wittering – Lady Constance's daughter, 23.

In her twenties. Gregarious, though a bit scatty at times. Dorothy, or 'Dotty', loves dancing and partying and is considered 'a bright young thing'. Although she enjoys a lively social scene, she does take an interest in local events. Engaged to Sebastian Fyfe-Fowsund, Duke of Rutherfordshire.

Anna Conda – Lady Constance's personal secretary, 38.

Anna is unmarried and lives in the village with her elderly mother. She has been secretary to Lady Constance for many years and is practical and efficient. Anna has a secret. She has been having a relationship with Lord Henry since she was eighteen. She loves him and believes him when he tells her he will leave his wife for her when the time is right. Her outburst to Inspector Mayday shows the frustration of her situation.

Major Freddie Dunne-Wittering – Lord Henry's brother, 55.

A typical Major of that era. Peppery and military. A military man who served with the Berkshire Yeomanry Regiment during the war. Plenty of bluster. Cheerful. A charmer who likes to gamble. Freddie was a confirmed bachelor until he met Ivanna. Enjoys the high life and has run up huge living expenses and gambling debts. Has a good relationship with his twin brother, Henry. Freddie wasn't bothered with the fact that he would have been Lord of the Manor if he had been born a few minutes earlier, until Ivanna kept mentioning it.

Ivanna Foxtrot – Freddie’s fiancée, 30s.

A gold-digging chancer. Pretends she is Russian, a distant cousin of the Russian royal family. She has left a trail of broken hearts and empty wallets in her wake. Loves the high life and fast living. Confident manner. Loves dancing and has a lively character. Ivanna met and befriended Dorothy at a London party and engineered an invite to Bluestone Hall. On realising that Major Freddie was unmarried and set to inherit a title and small fortune, she schemed to marry him. She has a regional accent at the end, after Mayday reveals she is a gold digger called Mavis Scroggins. Wears a sparkling diamond ring.

Detective Inspector Mayday – A bumbling detective inspector, 40s.

Although hapless, he manages to solve the crime through sheer luck, but puts it down to good policing. A comedy role.

General Staging Notes

This play has three male roles and seven female roles. The murder evening is designed to be played in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area, with tables around the hall for your audience.

Alternatively, it can be performed over an online platform such as Zoom.

It is set out over three acts, with approximately 55 minutes of scripted dialogue. As the audience enter, Fetchitt the butler can greet them and guide them to their seats. In the interval between Acts One and Two, you can serve a meal/drinks, give prizes for best dressed, and/or sell raffle tickets.

In Act Two, Scene Two, the audience are given the opportunity to put their own questions to the suspects. They should then be given Accusation Sheets, which they can fill in during the interval between Acts Two and Three. These should be collected at the end of the interval. This interval is also an opportunity to draw your raffle.

After Act Three, a prize can be given for the table/team with the most accurate accusations. This could be presented by Inspector Mayday, with some in-character improvisation.

Approximate Timing

Act One:

Scene One – 5 minutes

Scene Two – 20 minutes

Interval – as required.

Act Two:

Scene One – 20 minutes

Scene Two, including audience questioning – 10-15 minutes

Interval – as required.

Act Three:

Scene One – 10 minutes

Blue Murder at Bluestone Hall

Script Extract

Characters

Lady Constance Dunne-Wittering – Lady of the manor, late 50s
Tia Maria – the maid, 21
Fetchitt – the butler, 40s
Victoria Sponge – cook, 60s
Henrietta Soufflé – the Vicar’s wife, 40s
Lady Dorothy Dunne-Wittering – Lady Constance’s daughter, 23
Anna Conda – Lady Constance’s personal secretary, 38
Major Freddie Dunne-Wittering – Lord Henry’s brother, 55
Ivanna Foxtrot – the Major’s fiancée, 30s
Detective Inspector Mayday – a bumbling detective inspector, 40s

Act 1

Scene 1 – You Just Can’t Get the Staff...

(LX 1 – lights up. Mid-morning. The drawing room at Bluestone Hall. Lady Constance is addressing Fetchitt, Tia, and Victoria.)

Fetchitt: You summoned us, your Ladyship?

Constance: Indeed, I did. Nothing gets past you, does it, Fetchitt?

Fetchitt: Not if I can help it, Madam.

Constance: As you are all aware, his Lordship is recuperating after the recent fall from his horse and will remain in his rooms for a few days.

Tia: I know I’m only a housemaid, and it’s not my place to have an opinion, but I hope the poor horse is okay.

Fetchitt: You must only speak to her Ladyship when addressed, Tia.

Victoria: Is Lord ‘Enry alright, Milady? Only I was ever so worried about ‘im. It doesn’t do to be ‘avin’ falls at ‘is age. The older you get, the longer it takes for your bones to knit. My sister ‘ad a terrible time of it when she fell orf a ladder. Mind you, gettin’ ‘er foot stuck in the bucket underneath didn’t ‘elp. It took ages for ‘er ‘usband and neighbour to pull the bucket off ‘er foot. She’s never walked in a straight line since.

Constance: His Lordship is in good spirits, thank you for your concern.

Fetchitt: We all are concerned about ‘is Lordship, your Ladyship, he has had quite a run of bad luck, lately.

Constance: Thank you, Fetchitt. **(To Victoria.)** Cook, his Lordship particularly asked if you would prepare his favourite meal tomorrow evening.

Victoria: **(Smiles.)** Did, he, Milady? Oh, that’s luvvly that ‘e was thinkin’ of me, lyin’ up there on ‘is sickbed. **(Dabs eye with handkerchief.)** Now then, ‘is Lordship’s favourite meal – let me think. We’ve plenty of seasonal vegetables growing in the garden, but I shall ‘ave to send out for a few other special ingredients, mind.

Constance: Excellent, it’s been a while since we dined on pheasant under glass.

Fetchitt: Is there anything in particular you would like me to attend to, your Ladyship?

Constance: **(To Fetchitt.)** His Lordship will require his meals at the usual times, these are to be taken in his rooms until further notice.

Tia: In his room, righty-o, Ma’am.

Constance: Tia, you will approach and leave his Lordship’s room at a sedate pace, not at one hundred miles per hour.

Tia: I am learning how to close the door more quietly and trying not to run up and down the stairs so fast, Ma’am.

Constance: Quite!

Fetchitt: Will the Major and his intended be leaving as planned, your Ladyship?

Constance: Under the circumstances, the Major and Ivanna will stay a few more days, until his Lordship is fully recovered. **(To Fetchitt.)** As you know, I have a meeting this afternoon with the Reverend's wife and my secretary, to discuss arrangements for the village fête.

Fetchitt: **(Aside.)** More pesky people to fetch and carry for – as if I haven't got enough to do.

Constance: Did you say something, Fetchitt?

Fetchitt: I was just making a mental note to meself of what I need to do, your Ladyship.

Constance: My guests will be staying for afternoon tea.

Victoria: I took the liberty of baking a few cakes for afternoon tea, Milady, and I've made a few nice treats for Lord 'Enry. I know 'ow much 'e loves my egg custard.

Fetchitt: Cook's been experimenting in the kitchen, your Ladyship. Her Brussel sprout, cherry and hand-picked mushroom scones are to die for. Mind you, **(wafts hand in front of nose)** those sprouts certainly hit the spot. **(Slight pause.)** They make good doorstops as well.

Constance: On this occasion, cook, I think one of your delightful sponges and a few simple fancies should suffice.

Victoria: **(Puffs up with pride.)** Thanks ever so much – nice of you to say, Milady.

Constance: Thank you, Cook. **(To Tia.)** I realise that you are a new member of staff, Tia, and appreciate your continued efforts not to charge around like a bull in a china shop. Might I also remind you that one's maids do not whistle or sing on duty, certainly not modern ditties and certainly not in his Lordship's presence – is that understood?

Tia: Yes, Ma'am, ever so sorry, Ma'am. It was just that his Lordship had heard me singing as I worked. He asked if I could sing him a few lively songs to cheer him up, I didn't mind.

Fetchitt: **(To Tia.)** What on earth were you thinking, girl? **(To Constance.)** I'll keep a close eye on her, your Ladyship. If I've told her once, I've told her a thousand times.

Constance: Very well, you may leave.

Fetchitt: **(To Victoria.)** Come along, Cook. My stomach thinks my throat's been cut. It will be time for lunch soon. I could murder something hot and savoury.

(Fetchitt, Tia and Victoria exit. LX 2 – lights fade to blackout.)
(Music 1.)

Scene 2 – Everything Stops for Tea

(LX 3 – lights up. Mid-afternoon. Lady Constance and her daughter Lady Dorothy are sat with their guests for afternoon tea, Henrietta Soufflé and Anna Conda. Tia Maria, the maid, is attending Lady Constance.)

Constance: **(To Tia.)** What are you dithering for, girl?

Tia: Was you wanting anything else, Ma'am?

Constance: That's all for now. You may go.

Dorothy: We may need more tea, Mama. Ivanna and Uncle Freddie aren't here yet, they'll be in need of refreshment after their chat with Daddy.

Tia: Would you like me to bring more tea, Ma'am?

Constance: No need to bother just yet.

Tia: Oh, it's no bother, Ma'am.

Constance: I'll ring when I want something, Tia.

Tia: As you wish, Ma'am.

(Tia exits and slams the door. The door bursts open again and Tia bursts in.)

Tia: Sorry for the door, Ma'am. It won't happen again.

(Tia exits and closes the door slowly.)

Constance: You just can't get the staff these days...

Anna: Not as many people want to go into service these days – the war liberated people.

Constance: No good will come of being liberated. **(Briskly.)** Now then, ladies, where were we?

Anna: We were discussing arrangements for the village fête.

Constance: So we were. What will the church be doing this year, Henrietta?

Henrietta: The vicar and I will be organising the horticultural competition again.

Constance: We can but hope it has changed format.

Henrietta: Whatever do you mean, Lady Constance?

Dorothy: It's frightfully tedious, isn't it, Mama?

Constance: Dorothy, where are your manners?

Dorothy: Sorry, Mama, but the flower and produce show *is* overly long. There is a limit to how many chrysanthemums and prize marrows a person can look at.

Henrietta: The vicar thought it best to include as many categories as possible.

Constance: I realise the Reverend has only been in our church for a year and applaud the church's continued involvement in the village fête.

Henrietta: My husband and I will endeavour to support the fête in any way we can, your Ladyship.

Constance: Very commendable. However, I saw nothing amusing about the inclusion of a funny shaped root vegetable category last year. Some of the exhibits verged on the obscene.

Dorothy: Nonsense, that was the best part of the whole show, Mama.

Constance: **(To Anna.)** Anna, make a note to reduce the number of categories, following discussions with the Reverend, of course.

Anna: Very well, your Ladyship. Shall we make the usual arrangements for refreshments?

Constance: Of course, afternoon tea will be served in the grounds as usual.

Henrietta: You have such beautiful gardens here at Bluestone Hall.

Constance: The gardens are very well tended by myself and my gardeners. My roses always win best of show. One could hardly have a beautiful garden and not exhibit.

Dorothy: I think it would be rather splendid if we had a jazz band at the fête, Mama. Jazz is all the rage.

Constance: *A jazz band?* I think not! We must uphold tradition, Dorothy. A brass band has served the village fête well for years and will continue to do so.

Anna: **(Makes notes.)** Will Lord Henry be judging entries this year, your Ladyship?

Constance: Of course, Anna. His Lordship will have made a full recovery in time for the fête, it will be business as usual.

Dorothy: Wild horses wouldn't drag Daddy away.

Constance: That remark is in very poor taste, Dorothy, your father has had a rather nasty riding accident.

Dorothy: Sorry, Mama, I wasn't thinking.

Constance: You never do, child.

Henrietta: I was hoping to see his Lordship today.

Constance: I'm afraid that's out of the question, Henrietta. I expect his Lordship will be tired after his visitors.

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[Continued in the full pack.]