



*A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery*  
by  
**Cheryl Barrett**



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**Customer Taster**

# Blue Murder at the Blue Parrot

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## About the Murder Mystery pack

**Blue Murder at the Blue Parrot** is a scripted murder mystery set at a Soho nightclub in 1925, 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 (4M, 6F) 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 Note
  - Lighting
  - Music Suggestions

## Synopsis

It's the roaring twenties and new nightclubs are opening every week in London. Despite the buzzing social scene and popularity of jazz music, Soho nightclub owner Harry Ferrari is trying to find a way to save his Blue Parrot nightclub from going under. Is there more to Harry's employees than meets the eye? Is Giuseppe Dolce intent on putting Harry out of business for good? And what brings bumbling police inspector Mayday to the club? Join us at the Blue Parrot for music, mayhem and murder.

## Character Profiles

### **Harry Ferrari** – 40+

Italian owner of the Blue Parrot. Married to Mollie. Harry sees himself as a wealthy Sicilian who has made good. He is a womaniser and a gambler. He has borrowed money from family, friends and customers over the years. He owes money to rival Italian club owner Giuseppe Dolce, with whom there is a family history. Harry is a singer and opened the Blue Parrot. Harry's manager, Suzie Aringa, is also his mistress.

### **Ruby Redd-Berring** – 40+

Club singer Ruby had a fling with Harry Ferrari when she was younger. She loaned Harry money on the premise that she and her older sister Rose would sing at the club and that the loan would be repaid. To be played as a comedy role – her dancing and singing skills are past their best and it shows.

### **Rose Redd-Berring** – 45+

Club singer Rose is Ruby's older sister. She also loaned Harry money on the promise that she would have a job as a singer at the Blue Parrot. To be played as a comedy role – her dancing and singing are past their best and it shows.

### **Mollie Ferrari** – 35-50

Harry's long-suffering wife. Married to Harry and aware of his womanising and gambling. Mollie hates the club, but gave her inheritance to Harry with the proviso that he doesn't employ young singers or dancers.

### **Penny Pincher** – 40-60

Harry's sister-in-law, Mollie's older sister. A single woman and bitter, she speaks her mind. She hates Harry with a passion.

### **Suzie Aringa** – 25-40

Suzie is manager at the Blue Parrot nightclub, and Harry's current mistress. She has been having an affair with Harry for five years. An assertive businesswoman, Suzie is determined to own her own club one day.

### **Johnny Walker** – 30-60

Harry's financial advisor is a quiet man. He constantly reminds Harry to cut back on his spending.

### **Giuseppe Dolce** – 25+

Giuseppe is the Italian owner of a rival nightclub, The Candy Club. Although Giuseppe is known as the Sweet Man, he is feared in Soho and runs a protection racket. His family are also from Sicily and have a vendetta with the Ferraris. Giuseppe is determined to put Harry out of business.

### **Alice Butler** – Mid 20s

A former customer, Alice has been working as a hostess at the Blue Parrot for a few months.

### **Detective Inspector Mayday** – 40s

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

## **Author's Notes**

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

Set in 1925, I have suggested music which suits the era and the play. I hope the inclusion of live or recorded music from that era will add to your audience's enjoyment. In some instances, a few bars may suffice; however, as this is a cabaret club, dances can be choreographed to add to the atmosphere. Keep in mind that the Blue Parrot Club is a dingy nightclub. Rose and Ruby, the singers, are past their best. They should be played by older ladies, and any dancing should be hammed up and over the top.

Pre-lockdowns, this murder mystery was performed by my drama group with a pianist, drummer and double bass and the cast singing solo and group numbers, some of which the audience joined in with. We also had music underscoring the various 'lipstick, Sicilian, dog, tricks, lies, poison' soliloquys.

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, however these are merely guidelines.

This murder mystery is set in 1925, so costumes or accessories should reflect the era and setting. Inviting your audience to dress in 1920s style is great fun and adds to the overall atmosphere.

I have added a list of properties and basic lighting cues, though you may also want to use follow spots for each cabaret 'turn' and the suspects' soliloquys. 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*

## **General Staging Notes**

This play has four male roles and six 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 two acts, with approximately 55 minutes of scripted dialogue. As the audience enter, front of house staff in 1920s costume can greet them and guide them to their seats, and a selection of 1920s music can be played. In the interval between Acts One and Two, you could serve a meal/drinks, give prizes for best dressed, and/or sell raffle tickets.

In Act Two, Scene One, the audience are given the opportunity to put their own questions to the suspects.

They should then be given Accusation Sheets, and a short break in which to fill them in. Mayday should collect the sheets once they have been filled in.

Somebody needs to assess the answers quickly. This duty usually falls to the victim.

This break is also an opportunity to draw your raffle.

After the final scene, 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 – 15 minutes

Scene Two – 10 minutes

Scene Three – 15 minutes

**Interval** – as required

### **Act Two:**

Scene One, including audience questioning – 10-15 minutes

Short break for the audience to fill in accusation forms and Mayday to collect them – 5-10 minutes

Scene Two, followed by announcement of winners – 15 minutes

## **Production Notes**

### ***Set***

The Blue Parrot, a dingy nightclub in Soho, London, 1925.

There are a couple of café-style round tables and chairs on stage, as well as a bar area. Optionally, a 'Blue Parrot Club' sign and a toy parrot in a cage can add to the club decor.

# Blue Murder at the Blue Parrot

*[Script Extract]*

## Act 1

### *Scene 1 – Another Day, Another Problem for Harry*

(LX 1 – lights up. The scene is set in the Blue Parrot nightclub. Early evening. Harry sits at a table drinking. Rose and Ruby are rehearsing their dance moves.)

(Music 1.)

(Rose and Ruby do a short tap dance routine.)

**Ruby:** Well, what do you fink, 'arry? (**Stops dancing.**) We've been practising our dance moves all week.

**Harry:** Is that it? No wonder the club is half empty every night.

**Rose:** We usually wow the punters, Harry.

**Harry:** I need something livelier than that to bring the punters in – a gimmick or speciality act. Can you girls dance with fans?

**Ruby:** I'm not dancing semi-naked, Harry. It's in my contract.

**Harry:** (**Puts hand on Ruby's arm.**) You didn't mind a few years back, Ruby.

**Ruby:** (**Pushes hand away.**) That was then, I prefer to keep my clothes on these days. We don't do nudity, do we Rose?

**Rose:** No. I like to keep my vest on because of my chest.

**Ruby:** She's a martyr to her chest, aren't you dear?

**Rose:** I'm a martyr to my chest.

**Harry:** If Mollie had her way, you girls would be clad head to foot in sacking cloth.

**Rose:** Me and Ruby were talking... about a pay increase.

**Harry:** I pay you the going rate, plus you get to keep ten percent of your tips.

**Ruby:** (**Sarcastic.**) Generous to a fault.

**Rose:** Just a bit more, Harry – you can afford that.

**Harry:** If I pay you girls more, I'll have to pay the band more as well.

**Ruby:** I could do with an extra few quid.

**Harry:** Forget it. I'm struggling to stay afloat as it is. Giuseppe Dolce has got a stranglehold on Soho, he's choking the life blood out of small businesses. Since that double-crossing no good lowlife opened the Candy Club, the Blue Parrot has taken a dive.

**Rose:** This place is a dive.

**Ruby:** We've worked in better establishments than this.

**Harry:** (**Stands.**) If you don't like it, girls, there's the door – I won't stand in your way. Club singers are two a penny these days.

**Rose:** Steady on, Harry. Your Mollie may have something to say about you auditioning new singers.

**Harry:** Do you know, that woman is the bane of my life.

**Ruby:** You hum it...

**Rose:** And we'll join in the chorus.

**Harry:** That's all I need – a bunch of low comedians.

**Ruby:** Here, who's he calling low?

**Harry:** Two hours until curtain up – you'd better get your act together, pronto. I need to find some investors. If that falls through, you girls will have to take a cut in wages.

**Rose:** We can't live on ten percent of our tips – I 'ardly get any tips.

**Ruby:** Rose is right – you can't do that to us, Harry.

**Rose:** We barely survive on what you pay us now.

**Harry:** (**Turns on Ruby.**) Don't push it, girls. I'm the boss and what I say goes – remember that.

**Ruby:** We know enough about your dodgy dealings, Harry...

**Harry:** Don't you threaten me.

**(Harry exits.)**

**Rose:** Well, that's a stab in the back after all our years of loyalty.

**Ruby:** **(Shouts.)** You said we'd get a return on our investment, Harry.

**Rose:** I don't know what you saw in Harry, Rube.

**Harry:** **(Offstage.)** Just give me a break. I told you that I will sort it out.

**(From off, a woman screams.)**

**Harry:** **(Offstage, shouting.)** *Lasciami solo.*

**Ruby:** Blimey, 'ere we go again. That's Harry's second row today that I know of.

**Rose:** Who's he upset this time? We can't let Harry run this club into the ground, Rube.  
Harry does what he wants.

**Ruby:** I've covered for Harry a few times. I'm not standing by him any longer.

**(Rose and Ruby exit. Mollie and Penny enter and sit at a table.)**

**Penny:** The girls were in a hurry. Has Harry been up to his old tricks again?

**Mollie:** I know he's up to something.

**Penny:** Women or money worries?

**Mollie:** Both, I think. Every time I try to talk to him about money, he fobs me off.

**Penny:** I know he's your husband, but truth be told, I never trusted Harry. Even mother thought he was shifty.

**Mollie:** All I ever wanted was to marry, settle down and have a family, but Harry likes the high life. He thinks more of this rotten club than he does of me.

**Penny:** He'll get his comeuppance one day, mark my words.

**Mollie:** I want you to come to the show tonight, Penny. Harry's been on edge for the past few days. I want some support, just in case.

**Penny:** I'm not lending you any more money to pay his gambling debts. It's high time you held the purse strings, Mollie.

**(Club manager Suzie enters.)**

**Suzie:** Hello ladies, how are you? Is Harry about?

**Penny:** He's not here.

**Suzie:** I was hoping to go through a few things with him before we open.

**Penny:** **(Sharply.)** I bet you were.

**Suzie:** And what is that supposed to mean?

**Mollie:** Penny, drop it. **(To Suzie.)** What do you need to go through, Suzie?

**Suzie:** Just a few business things, it can wait until I see him.

**Mollie:** Are you sure? Maybe I can help. I've noticed Harry seems quite preoccupied at times, maybe if we share the workload...

**(Harry enters. He walks across to Mollie and kisses her on the cheek.)**

**Harry:** Fix me a rum, Moll. It's going to be one of those days.

**(Mollie goes to the bar and pours a glass of rum.)**

**Penny:** Why can't you pour your own drink, Harry? Better still, why don't you give it up?

**Harry:** Ah, Miss Penny Pincher misery guts – and to what do we owe the pleasure?

**Penny:** Mollie invited me to keep her company.

**Harry:** With company like you, I'd rather have enemies.

**Suzie:** You've got plenty of those already, Harry.

**Penny:** I bet he has.

**Harry:** **(Glares at Penny.)** Make that rum a double, Moll. Better still, pass me the bottle.

**Suzie:** Come and sit down, Harry. Stress is not good for your blood pressure.

**Harry:** **(Sits at table.)** What time is Johnny coming, Suzie?

**(Mollie gives Harry a glass of rum.)**

**Harry:** Thanks, Moll.

**Mollie:** Johnny is coming today? But you only met with him last Tuesday, Harry. Is everything okay?

**Harry:** **(Drinks his rum.)** Last week was a social call, today we're talking business.

**Penny:** If you keep drinking the profits, there won't be a business.

**Harry:** If you keep making snide remarks, there won't be a welcome for you here.

**Mollie:** **(Stands.)** Come on, Penny. Let's give Harry a bit of space.



**Penny:** I'd rather give him a bit of my mind.  
**Harry:** **(Sarcastic.)** Can you spare it?  
**(Mollie and Penny exit.)**  
**Suzie:** Well, you certainly know how to clear a room, Harry.  
**Harry:** Penny gives me enough grief. We just don't hit it off. That woman is evil, she poisons Mollie against me. **(Looks at watch.)** Where is Johnny?  
**Suzie:** I'm sure he'll be here soon. You know Johnny, he's never on time.  
**(Johnny Walker enters, carrying a briefcase.)**  
**Harry:** The late Mister Walker.  
**Johnny:** I'm here now. What's so urgent, Harry?  
**Harry:** Did you bring all the paperwork?  
**Johnny:** **(Takes sheaths of papers from briefcase.)** Everything you asked for, Harry. We need to sit and go through the accounts at some point.  
**Suzie:** How bad is it looking?  
**Johnny:** **(Looks at papers.)** You're haemorrhaging money, Harry.  
**Harry:** I had a run of bad luck. Let's just say I had a few dead certs that turned out to be donkeys.  
**Johnny:** Forget the horses. You need new investors.  
**Suzie:** Or a business partner. Someone who loves the club as much as you do and who is willing to put money into it.  
**Harry:** **(Doubtful.)** A business partner? I'm not sure about that.  
**Johnny:** Suzie has got a point. A business partner is ideal, they can take some of the pressure off you.  
**Harry:** No, it wouldn't work. Someone telling me what to do all day? I get that from my wife. I'd want a sleeping partner.  
**Suzie:** **(Pats Harry's hand.)** What if sleep is the last thing on her mind?  
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*[Continued in the full Murder Mystery pack.]*