



A Murder Mystery
by
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Customer Taster, Extracts from the main pack

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Bowing Out

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Three years have passed since the untimely demise of Sly Sparkle, jewel of the West End. On the anniversary of his death, a chosen few still struggle to free themselves from his icy grip, crossing paths once again to perform his final masterpiece and stake their claim on his estate. Tensions rise long before the curtain, as each returns to the spotlight, bringing with them a dark secret and a taste for revenge. All must turn in a killer performance if they are to reap their reward but will one go that bit further and force another to take their final bow?

Characters

Destiny Daniels - A plastic actress who'd kill for some inner peace.

Billy Blagg - A reality show reject prepared to give his rivals a permanent eviction.

Mabel Brown - A back stage scrubber who's ready to take out the trash.

Pierre Geeziour - A ruthless French businessman. People pay the ultimate price for his dirty tricks.

Sir Willard Dashmont - A once famous luvvie who'd sacrifice anyone to get back on top.

Babooshka Manooshka - A predatory Russian temptress. Once she gets a grip, she never lets go.

Blaine Fox - He's going to be the next big thing, after he's eliminated the competition.

Jessica Blake - A troubled starlet teetering on the edge. Watch she doesn't take you with her.

Tarquin Tailor - Wardrobe mistress so handy with his scissors they just might end up in your back.

Vera Scruples - A daytime soap diva whose career is flat lining. Now it's someone else's turn to suffer.

Sapphire Sparkle - Intent on stealing the show. Upstaging her would be a fatal mistake.

Inspector Darkly - Out to catch a killer at any cost.

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Customer Taster

Organiser's Overview

About the pack

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event.

The pack is intended to be used at a sit down meal where the principal characters will act out a set of events for the assembled guests.

The full pack is, in part, a **scripted performance**; the cast have set lines to learn, which contain the information the audience need to work out whodunnit - if they are thinking clearly enough! There is also opportunity to **interact with the audience** between the main body of the script and the final scene in which the murderer is revealed. This will require **improvisation** by the actors, since the audience will be asking all the questions.

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview
- The Script (to be distributed to the individual characters before the event), including the denouement, in which the murderer is revealed
- "Solutions sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions
- Detailed character profiles for the actors to memorise as preparation for interrogation by the audience
- Seven pieces of evidence to help the audience deduce the identity of the killer (or throw them off the scent!)
- A template graphic for a suspect sheet (to help the audience remember who is who). As designed, the production would need to insert pictures of the individual actors into the template.

The full pack includes:

A **Plot Overview**.

A **Character Overview**.

General Staging Notes on how best to plan and stage your Murder Mystery event.

A **Props** list for the scripted sections.

General Staging Notes

Running the script in front of an audience

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

Preparation

Initial preparation can be done by distributing the opening scene, then running a first rehearsal in which the actors have to guess the identity of the murderer before they see the script for the Final Scene. (It's fun! Why not?)

After that, the cast need to learn the dialogue, develop character and get comfortable with the (improvised) interrogation.

Consider:-

- Developing more detailed “background briefs” for each character, elaborating background, but not changing any of the plot points. This allows the actors to accommodate more irrelevant questions from the audience!
- Developing “get-out strategies” so that an irrelevant line of audience questioning can be curtailed. (This can, for example, be direct “that has no bearing on the case”, jokey “I couldn't possibly answer that without my lawyer present” or via an interruption which introduces a new line of questioning from the character brief.)
- Giving “seed questions” to the audience. (This could be done as “hearsay” briefs, or “police lines of enquiry”.)

Decide on the format for declaring the winner.

Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.

Evidence

A break to look over the printed pieces of evidence is indicated in the script (between Acts 2 and 3, and between Act 3 and the Interrogation). This may coincide with the serving of courses in the guests' meal.

Interrogation

In this scene, the actors will be seated onstage and may be questioned by the audience. The order in which this is done is entirely at the discretion of the organiser and/or the person playing Inspector Darkly. You may choose to question each character individually, or let the audience fire their questions at the cast as they occur to them. It would help to give the audience a chance to do this at the end of the interrogation, since their idea of who the murderer is may change during the course of questioning.

“Whodunnit” sheets may be discreetly passed around the audience at this point, and discreetly collected again before the final scene takes place. Alternatively, these could be handed out and filled in during the dessert course of the guests' meal.

Solution

Act out the final scene.

There may be an option to read out some of the (more bizarre) audience solutions!

Declare the winner.

Award a prize to the best solution! (And possibly a prize for the worst.)

Additional notes

In the script, Sapphire performs a wild song and dance number before collapsing at the end of Act 2. The choice of song is unspecified and is left entirely to the discretion of the producer. If you do not wish to use a song at all Sapphire could merely strut centre stage as the lights change, as if to begin a song and dance number, then appear to collapse before she has a chance.

Facilities required for the performers

The performers need a separate private room for their use. They will use this prior to the event to get changed and prepared and will use the room during the event if necessary. The murder victims will also use this room once deceased!

Recommended event format

The evening works best if structured round a sit down meal. If the event is being staged in hotel this may be a formal served multi-course meal, but if this was being staged in a hall or private venue you could lay on a simpler meal or even a table buffet. However guests should have a table to sit at to watch and enjoy the action.

Pre-dinner drinks

Before moving to the seated area, we recommend pre-dinner drinks. This gives an opportunity for the guests to mingle and more importantly to meet the characters informally before the action begins.

Dining area:

Since there will be very little interaction between the guests and the characters during the course of the evening, it is recommended that the cast dine separately (if dining at all). Space should, of course, be left at the front of the venue for the action and the interrogation to take place.

Although structured around a meal, there is no predefined timing for the action and the courses. If this is a restaurant based event then the serving staff should just be instructed to serve the courses as normal and not wait for any events / action (this saves upsetting the chef!).

As a broad guide your event should run as follows:

7.45 to 8.00	Meet and greet, Pre-dinner drinks
8.00	Prologue and Act One.
8.50	Starters served.
9.00	Act Two.
9.30	Main course. Evidence A, B, C and D circulated.
9.50	Act Three.
10:25	Evidence E, F and G circulated. Interrogation.
10:45	Denouement.
11:10	Prize giving and coffee.

Bowing Out

Customer Taster excerpt

Prologue

Darkly: Good evening, I'm Inspector Darkly. I can see you're all here, Scotland Yard's finest. Nasty business, I'm afraid, and you're all in for a rocky night. This old theatre has been the scene of murder most foul and the perpetrator is one of the people sitting behind this curtain. In order to have any hope of solving this baffling mystery, we must sift through the startling events that occurred this evening. Someone must have seen or done something that will lead us to the identity of the killer or killers. You must all work quickly, stick to the facts, note down everything of importance, so this cold blooded murderer doesn't slip through the net. I'm out of clues, so I'm relying on you! You'll witness a three act tragedy. Keep your eyes peeled, someone may give something away. You'll also be given access to artefacts taken from the crime scene which may prompt you further as you hunt the killer. Aided by me, you'll then have a chance to cross-examine the suspects, but watch them - they can be an oily lot. All must be truthful to their word, except for the murderer, who'll lie their guilty socks off to escape the hand of justice. Finally, you'll be given a moment to figure out whodunit, how, and why, noting down your answer using the paper provided, before we take them away for analysis. Only then will the killer's identity be revealed. Oh, and there will be prizes for the swot who gets closest to the truth. So stay true to the law, watch out for red herrings, but most of all catch this cunning killer before they can strike again!

(Inspector exits. Curtain opens)

Act 1

(We see a bare stage West End stage. It looks like it has been uninhabited for some time. It is dusty and pieces of mismatched scenery are scattered around it. On stage there are a couple of stage blocks. A tray with a champagne bottle and glasses is set on one of the stage blocks; the characters may pour themselves a glass when they each arrive.)

(To the front a glamorous looking older woman, Destiny Daniels, stands. She wears large dark glasses and a head-scarf that disguise most of her face. She carries herself in a haughty manner. She poses as if she has just performed a show-stopping number, bathing in the praise of the non-existent crowd. She takes a bow and then stops. Pain washes across her face. Slowly she touches it. She looks haunted.)

(Billy Blagg enters from the wings. He is a casually dressed, fresh faced, young man and has a streetwise demeanour. He observes Destiny for a moment, captivated by her, and then nervously moves across to her. She jumps and reasserts her posture to that of a diva.)

Billy: Scuse me? I have got the right place, haven't I? You see, I'm awful at directions and the tube ain't the easiest. I mean, whose bright idea was it to make all the lines colour coded? All I get is 'take the red line, mate, as far as Oxford Circus'. Course, I ended up on the bleeding green line, which looks identical to the blooming brown line, cos all three are blooming brown, cos I'm blooming colour blind, ain't it.

Destiny: **(Snobbish)** But he did say Oxford Circus? It's clearly written on the map.

Billy: Sorry, lady, but I don't read. Not when I'm inna hurry, it all goes out the winda. Anyway, I ain't late, am I?

Destiny: **(Mimicking him)** 'No you ain't late'. I mean, you aren't late. Well, it doesn't appear so anyway, but god knows with this charade, whatever it is.

Billy: If you don't mind me asking, what is it?

Destiny: What?

Billy: Da thing?

Destiny: 'D-A- T-H-I-N-G?'

Billy: Da thing, darlin'?

Destiny: 'D-A- T-H-I-N-G D-A-R-L-I-N'. Urgh, it's like a whole new language.

Billy: Da thing! Why we're here? I mean, I just answered an ad, innit. Yeah, it said 'seeking professional actor stroke singer, to read stroke sing a two-line part and fill as per'.

Destiny: As per...

Billy: As per and when people need. Kinda like an understudy. I've been searching for a way into this biz for some time, an' I thought, I've gotta takes whats I can. Who knows if one of the bunch gets some bronchial thing and can't do the do? Know what I'm saying?

Destiny: Not so far!

Billy: Well, strangest fing. Turned up to da audition and it was this room with a mirror. I reckon it was one of them two way mirrors, like they have on spy films. Anyhoo, I does mi biz...

Destiny: Your biz.

Billy: Me ding dong! Yer know, used mi part.

Destiny: **(She looks at him horrified)** What kind of audition was this?

Billy: No mi script, yer plum. Well, I reads it and sings a tune, and blow me down, next day I don't only go and get a call to say I've got it. And here I am. So, if yer don't mind I'd like to get on, seeing as I've a date later. Meeting this little coochie down China Whites for a bit of lickety split - if ya know what I mean!

Destiny: For once, I think I do. Well, I'm afraid, Mr...?

Billy: Oh, Blagg. Name's Billy Blagg. You obviously don't watch much telly, Miss...?

Destiny: I am Destiny.

Billy: Really? Well, if you're my future, I've been a very bad boy.

Destiny: No, Destiny is my name.

Billy: What a line! I'll have to use that down Whiteseys.

Destiny: No, Destiny Daniels. Don't you know who I am?

Billy: Well, you didn't know who I was. I think we mix in very different circles, Mrs Daniels.

Destiny: **(Correcting)** Ms Daniels.

Billy: We're obviously not da same demographic. I would naturally appeal to the younger, more shall we say, virile viewer, and you... Well... You're more ya senior brigade.

Destiny: Senior?

Billy: Yer know, blue rinse.

Destiny: Blue rinse! I'll have you know I was the doyen of the stage musical. I was a West End triumph. I used to take every lead going. I did them all - Crud Brothers, Bats, Phantom of the Light Opera, Titanic the Musical.

Billy: Didn't that one sink?

Destiny: Without a trace, but I got a good review in the Metro. Mind you, in those days I took anything going.

Billy: **(Muttered under his voice)** Sounds like it...

Destiny: Every part was mine, until *he* came along. Well, I'm still standing and he isn't. So that's why I thought I'd come. Stick two fingers up at the old bastard, just to make sure whoever pushed him off that cliff had done the job properly.

Billy: Man, you've got issues, love.

Destiny: Issues. You don't know the meaning of the word. What it's like to be plucked from obscurity, have your life changed into a fairytale and then dropped like yesterday's cast-off. That's what he did with everyone. We were all his little puppets, as you'll see tonight. They'll all come running just for him and he isn't even alive anymore.

Billy: Who isn't?

Destiny: You mean, you take a job and you don't even know who you're working for?

Billy: Well, no. I takes what I can.

Destiny: **(Mocking his accent)** Oh you does, does you. Well, tonight Mr Blagg, you are here to pay tribute to a master manipulator and all round A1 bastard, Sylvester Sparkle.

Billy: Oh, I think I heard of him.

Destiny: Yes, I believe his work has penetrated to the lower echelons of society.

Billy: Yeah, had that reality show to find the voice of H'Oliver for his Dickensian musical 'Twisted'. I auditioned for that. Would have been a dead cert but I lost out on a technicality.

Destiny: Really, what was that?

Billy: They were looking for a ten year old. Anyhoo, life loves a trier, an' tha's me.

Destiny: Huh, reality TV. That's what killed the star in me. Time was you used to have to earn fame. Now you can be famous just by shacking up with some other losers and letting the nation debate your bad hygiene, loose morals and whether or not you'll get your baps out. I abhor the whole industry. It's filled with pleading, untalented wannabes, who will turn up at the opening of an envelope, shag a footballer and suddenly they've made it. In my day, you had to strive for your fame, taking what little you could get, putting the hours in as you climbed the ladder.

Billy: Then finally someone would give you your big break?

Destiny: No, finally you'd get to shag the director; then you'd get your big break. It was a fair game but now look at it; everyone's 'fair game'. That's the problem with this new existence we've created, there is simply no structure. People are bed hopping all over the place, messing up the hierarchy, forcing us all to resort to cheating. **(She wears a haunted look as she slowly touches her face)**

Billy: You all right?

Destiny: **(She works herself up into a bitter rant)** I hate all those soul sucking reality TV leeches. They bleed society of its intellect, with their twenty four seven, access all areas, no nonsense, all nonsense, mindless view of the world. They're secreting it into every second of our lives. Very soon we won't know where reality starts and TV ends! **(Pause)** I'm so sorry. What did you say you do?

Billy: **(Tentatively)** Um... I'm the winner of Big Bother series 11. They used to call me Billy the Willy cos I kept flashing me...

(From stage left through the shadows enters someone carrying a dagger.)

Mabel: Thought I heard voices!

Destiny: **(Jumps at seeing the knife)** My god... Is that... Mabel Brown?

(Emerging from the shadows she sees it is Mabel Brown. She is a kindly, practical looking woman.)

Mabel: Who else would be giving you daggers!

Destiny: Why, you haven't aged... er... the years have been... um... you're looking...

Mabel: Oh, Miss Daniels, don't beat around your bush. I look like the rear of a very old horse but then that's show business at the back end. Least I own every lump and bump. You look no different, as always. It's not like I can even say the years have been kind, they've not even touched you. Oh... Except... Is that a new nose I see? **(She uses the dagger to indicate the nose region)**

Destiny: Oh, how kind of you to notice.

Mabel: That Doctor Romano is a talent. I'd consider getting myself plucked, tucked and sucked, if it wasn't for the fact that my excess skin would clog up the ozone layer. **(She grabs her love handles and then notices Billy)** Ah, Billy boy! So glad you could make it.

Billy: Auntie Bull! How's it hanging, or should I say stabbing? **(Spying the knife)**

Mabel: Oh, sorry. It's just a prop.

Destiny: You know this... Er... **(She looks at Billy and tries to find words to describe him)**

Mabel: Billy, yeah. My best friend's little boy. Known her since I was a kid, and Billy 'ere since he was a glint in the eye of the milkman.

Billy: Ere, you told me it was the postman, innit?

Mabel: Why are you talking in that ridiculous 'cockernee' accent?

Billy: Oh, sorry Auntie. I put it on whilst doing Big Bother. Made me sound more like a people's person, know what I'm saying? Can't seem to shift it for love nor money.

Bowing Out

Customer Taster sample

Character Profile: Destiny Daniels

Likes: Herself,

Dislikes: Vera, Pierre, and Jessica's new look, Billy and anyone common like him.

Secrets: You used to be Debra Dunlop - a frumpy young girl with a spare tyre for a waist. Mr Sparkle rescued you after an audition and gave you extensive plastic surgery to transform you into Destiny Daniels. You were, for a time, the doyenne of the Theatre Royale. You performed in all his great shows: 'Show Boot', 'Bats', 'Phantom of the Light Opera' and 'Titanic the Musical'. To begin with he thought you to be magnificent. You were his leading lady in all senses of the word. He loved the fact he had created you from nothing and wanted to continue the experiment. He kept paying for you to have more and more surgery until the surgeons went too far and, after a bodged eye job, you were left disfigured. You now wear shades to cover your hideous deformity.

After this incident, instead of binning you, he kept you around. He cast you in parts such as the elephant man, much to his amusement and that of his showbiz friends.

Now he has gone you can't get any work. You are desperate for money as you have huge debts from all your surgery. You can't stop; you're addicted, desperate, and you think if you keep going you'll be able to recapture your former glory. You see the chance to inherit from the Sparkle estate as your ticket to freedom from the plastic prison in which you now live. Sly Sparkle took so much from you and you hated him for it. As far as you're concerned he owes you big time.

Knowledge: You know Vera Scruples was once pregnant but you don't know what happened to the baby. If she starts on you, you'll use it to shut her up.

You have heard of Billy's mother - Lucille Lamplock. Rumour was she would sleep with anyone going.

You believe Pierre Geeziour to be a highly dodgy character. You once caught him taking money from Mr Sparkle's safe. You think it very unlikely Mr Sparkle signed all his work over to Pierre and believe he must have found an unlawful way of getting his hands on the property. However, because you hate Sly, you feel there is a strange sort of justice in what Pierre has done. You'll still use your knowledge of his dodgy dealing to divert suspicion away from yourself.

Audience Tasks: If the audience ask you why you wear the shades, you'll take them off and show them your surgical scars.