



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
Lynn Rushby and Gordon Lewis



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Class War

Copyright 2022 by Lynn Rushby and Gordon Lewis

COPYRIGHT REGULATIONS

This murder mystery is protected under the Copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations and all countries of the Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights, including Stage, Motion Picture, Video, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translations into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, manuscript, typescript, recording, including video, or otherwise, without prior consent of Lazy Bee Scripts.

A licence, obtainable only from Lazy Bee Scripts, must be acquired for every public or private performance of a script published by Lazy Bee Scripts and the appropriate royalty paid. If extra performances are arranged after a licence has already been issued, it is essential that Lazy Bee Scripts are informed immediately and the appropriate royalty paid, whereupon an amended licence will be issued.

The availability of this script does not imply that it is automatically available for private or public performance, and Lazy Bee Scripts reserve the right to refuse to issue a licence to perform, for whatever reason. Therefore a licence should always be obtained before any rehearsals start.

Localisation and updating of this script is permitted, particularly where indicated in the script. Major revisions to the text may not be made without the permission of Lazy Bee Scripts.

The name of the author must be displayed on all forms of advertising and promotional material, including posters, programmes and hand bills.

Photocopying of this murder mystery constitutes an infringement of copyright unless consent has been obtained from Lazy Bee Scripts and an appropriate fee has been paid.

***FAILURE TO ABIDE BY ALL THE ABOVE REGULATIONS CONSTITUTES
AN INFRINGEMENT OF THE COPYRIGHT LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.***

Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

About the Murder Mystery Pack

Class War is an interactive murder mystery set in a community college, over two acts, with approximately 40 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 in Act 3.

Structure

This 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

- Introduction
 - Plot outline
 - Setting
 - Character list
- Character background details
- Explanation of how the murder was done
- Suggested programme with approximate timings
- Guidance for the Meet and Greet
- Guidance for audience interrogation
- Production Notes
 - Props
 - Costumes
 - Music
 - Sound effects
 - Lighting

Introduction

Plot Outline

It is the day before the start of the autumn term at Corkscrew Community College. The staff have arrived for a training and preparation day. In the light of recent poor exam results, staffing concerns and falling applications, a new Bursar has been appointed by the governors. He has spent the Summer looking at the administration, systems and financial arrangements ready for a likely Ofsted inspection. However, all the change will have an adverse effect on the lives and plans of many members of staff..

Setting

The staff room of Corkscrew Community College. This can be suggested with a school shield on the back wall with the motto “Carpe Vinum Maximum” and a notice board. There is a presentation screen and a table or trolley at the back with mugs, tea, coffee, etc. A lectern is ready for the headteacher to address the staff.

Characters (in order of appearance)

Carole Curtain, head of drama

Bryony Bunsen, head of science

Andy Cox, head of PE

Chris Coke, laboratory technician

Bill Boilerhouse, caretaker

Nick Pinscher, bursar

Samantha Richer-Quick, headteacher

DI Hagley, local police (female)

PC Racy, local police (female)

Character Backgrounds

Nick Pinscher: The bursar. A recent appointment by the governors, with the aim to introduce economies and ensure all paperwork and records are correct for Ofsted. He has been going through staff files and has asked them all to provide evidence of their qualifications, and is also looking at redundancies, checking outside contractors, etc. Pompous, smarmy. Always has a clipboard with a list of things to check. Fancies Carole.

Samantha Richer-Quick: Headteacher. Lavish lifestyle funded by nepotism, having given catering and cleaning contracts, among others, to her family members. Boasts about holidays and possessions. Will lose her status and lifestyle and possibly more if Nick makes too many changes.

Carole Curtain: Head of drama, on a temporary maternity cover post, but she has applied for a mortgage on the basis of it being a full time role and is asking Nick to provide reference for this. Is having a secret affair with Andy.

Bryony Bunsen: Head of science. Has no formal teaching qualification, but has been at the school for thirty years and has managed to cover this up. Is fanatical about her donkey sanctuary and always has her donkey file with her. Not on the ball with running her department so is unaware that Chris has been stealing chemicals.

Andy Cox: Head of PE. Married and has children. He is having an affair with Carole and would lose his home and family if his wife found out. He constantly plays with a tatty cricket ball.

Chris Coke: Lab technician. Has a gambling addiction. He has been stealing chemicals to make drugs and is under pressure from a local drug gang to keep up supplies, but Nick is checking everything closely.

Bill Boilerhouse: Has worked at the College for over 40 years. A jobsworth and union man, he avoids hard work as much as possible. If he loses his job, he will lose his home, a tied cottage. Nick wants to use outside agencies to replace him. Bill has a different tool with him every time he makes an appearance so he can always appear to be working.

Suggested programme with approximate timings

This event has been designed to incorporate a two-course meal, giving the audience time to discuss the clues and suspects and to make their accusations.

The overall time for the event is approximately two hours, but this will vary depending on audience size and type of meal, as well as other elements that groups might include, such as a raffle or best team name competition.

Accusation Sheets either on tables, with pens or pencils, prepared, or ready to be distributed during the 1st interval.

The Meet and Greet (15 mins) – The audience arrives. Unscripted.

Act 1 (35 mins) – The murder. Scripted.

Interval/1st meal break (30 mins) – A chance for the audience to discuss the event.

Act 2 – scripted scene (5 mins) – Hagley and Racy begin the investigation.

Act 2 – audience interrogation (10 mins) – The detectives invite the audience to question the suspects. Some questions can be prepared, but the actors will improvise responses to the audience's questions.

Interval/2nd meal break (15 mins) – The audience consider the suspects and make an accusation. Answer sheets collected.

Act 3 (5 mins) – All is revealed! Scripted statements and a confession.

And finally... (5 mins) – The winner is announced and prizes awarded.

The Meet and Greet

The purpose of the Meet and Greet is to set the scene and provide some background information, without giving too much away.

As the audience arrives, they will be treated as if they are members of staff at the college. Tables could be allocated by named departments to help them feel part of the scenario.

Members of the cast will then join in briefly, to help establish their characters by interacting with audience members or each other. The actors must stay in character throughout, even if they know people in the audience.

Possible subjects of conversation for the cast to bring up include:

- Carole:** Her holiday in Margate, her plans to buy a flat, encouraging support for the next drama production.
- Bryony:** Trying to get support for her donkey sanctuary (could hand out leaflets).
- Andy:** Discretely flirting with Carole, eliciting help with sports teams.
- Chris:** Looking at Racing Post, discussing bets.
- Bill:** The unions, his bad back and his workload.
- Nick:** Plans for the new term, financial pressures.
- Samantha:** Her holiday in Martinique, exam results.

At the end of the Meet and Greet, a school bell sound can be played to indicate the start of the staff meeting.

Audience Interrogation

Here are some suggested general questions and some for specific characters. [*The full pack contains a few more.*] These can be used to help get the audience started if they need encouragement. They can also be used to help the suspects practise this section of the performance in rehearsals. However, you can never anticipate what the audience will actually ask! Other suspects and the police can help out with any tricky questions.

General questions:

- What was your relationship with the deceased?
- How would you describe the deceased?
- Give an account of your movements yesterday.

Carole:

- Tell us about your mortgage application.
- Are the rumours about your affair with Andy true?

Chris:

- If you have a master's degree, why are you working as a lab technician?
- What was your last job and why did you leave it?
- What do you think happened to the missing chemicals?
- What's your financial situation?

Bryony:

- If science and maths are merged and you lose your post, how will that affect you?
- How have you managed a thirty-year career without a teaching qualification?
- How much does it cost to run the donkey sanctuary and how do you raise funds?

Samantha:

- How do you manage to enjoy such a lavish lifestyle on a head's salary?
- Can you explain your procedures for awarding contracts, such as cleaning and catering?
- Tell us about your relationship with Charles.

Andy:

- How long have you been having an affair with Carole?
- How have the financial cutbacks affected your job?
- Do you plan to leave your wife for Carole?
- Have you had affairs with other members of staff?

Bill:

- How have you managed to keep your job when you should have retired before now?
- Have you made plans for where you will live when you retire?

Class War

[Script Extract]

Act 1

Scene 1 – The staff room, morning.

(There are a couple of chairs and a lectern. There is a presentation screen at the back and a table with mugs, spoons, etc.)

(The staff drift on, talking about their holidays, new timetables, etc. Carole and Bryony enter first and look for somewhere to sit. Andy, close behind them, spots a couple of chairs, blows his whistle to attract their attention and then rushes to sit across both chairs before they can get there. He pats his lap to suggest they should sit there but then lets both of them sit down. He flirts with Carole behind Bryony's back. Bryony puts her ring binder file under the chair. Andy plays with a tatty cricket ball, which he plays with throughout the scene.)

(Bill and Chris enter next, also looking for seats. Chris reads the Racing Post when he can and Bill moans about his bad back. Nick is next on and checks the lectern is in place. Finally, Samantha enters and takes her place at the lectern to address the staff – including the audience.)

Samantha: Welcome back, everyone. Well, I say everyone, but I have received an email from Tom Jones, whose QueasyJet flight has been delayed yet again. But as we know with our dear Mr Jones, *it's not unusual*. (Laughs at own joke.) However, on a serious note, I would like to remind you that this kind of absence at the beginning of term will need full documentary evidence or a doctor's certificate, along with the completion of form one-oh-one, sections c, d and q, otherwise salaries may well be affected. (To Nick.) Nick, perhaps you would kindly follow up on that, please?

Nick: Yes of course, Headmistress.

Carole: But Samantha, we can't help flight delays and cancellations, especially when we have to use the cheaper airlines.

Samantha: In which case, I suggest you leave a couple of days earlier, Carole. Luckily, BA were not on strike and my flight from Martinique got in bang on time on Friday. Of course, we always fly Club Class, but as frequent flyers, we were upgraded to First on the way home. By the way, for those of you who have never been, what a sensational place Martinique is. As some of you may know, Charles and I bought a modest little pad there about ten years ago and have never looked back. The food, the culture, the beaches – I thoroughly recommend it. Anyway, I trust you are all suitably rested and thoroughly prepared to face what promises to be a rather challenging year.

Andy: I don't wish to be rude, Samantha, but how many more of these so called "challenging years" do we have to put up with? My bid for new cricket gear was turned down yet again this summer. I have three broken bats and you should see the state of my balls.

Chris: I'd rather not, if you don't mind.

Samantha: As I was saying, in this era of austerity, schools have had to make economies too. Last year, the Parents Association organised several fundraisers to help towards the cost of various equipment, although some events proved to be rather less successful than others. We were perhaps fortunate that the 'Take Your Pet to School' day only resulted in one minor legal action. Once we had paid the local pet shop compensation for the stolen gerbils, we were considerably out of pocket. Clearly, we cannot continue to rely on the parents' generosity to bolster our financial shortfalls, so the bursar and I have been drawing up plans to address this matter. He will give you more details in a moment.

Bryony: Oh, those poor little gerbils.

Bill: Poor little gerbils, my arse. Messy little buggers shat everywhere.

Samantha: If I may continue. As you are already aware, the exam results for some departments have been rather disappointing, to say the least. At least one geography student thought the Taj Mahal was a takeaway in the High Street, and when asked where the Magna Carta was signed, another genius wrote “at the bottom”. I despair, I really do. As a result, our position in the league tables has dropped significantly. This will not only have an impact on our ability to recruit quality students, it makes us far more likely to receive an Ofsted visit this term. We will need to be absolutely on top of our game if we want to improve on our previous ‘Satisfactory’ status. At this point, I’ll hand you over to Nick, who has been hard at work on budgets and the like throughout the summer. Nick.

Nick: Thank you, Headmistress. Yes, I seem to have taken over at a particularly difficult time for the school, both educationally and financially. As you say, the weaker our results, the fewer new pupils we attract and the less money we receive. It is therefore my difficult job to address these financial matters, and after lengthy discussions with the Head and the Board of Governors, we have decided that we will not be replacing retiring members of staff for the foreseeable future. Consequently, some of you may have found some additional subjects on your timetables for this term, but I’m sure you will rise to the challenge.

Bryony: I thought it was a mistake when I saw you had given me economics. I mean, I know nothing about it. I am a science teacher.

Bill: You think that’s bad – Doris fainted when she heard she was doing double woodwork with 3B on Friday afternoons. She’s locked herself in the music room and won’t come out.

Nick: We will also have to merge several departments over the course of the coming year. Later today, I will be speaking to those staff who will be affected by these changes. The Head and I also have to ensure that we are all ready for this possible Ofsted inspection, and that is why I sent you all a message last week asking for a copy of your teaching qualifications. I thank those of you who have already responded. I will be chasing up the rest of you today. That is all I wanted to say at the moment, so back to you, Headmistress.

Samantha: Thank you, Nick. That’s all for now. I am sure you all have plenty to be getting on with in your own departments, but I would remind you all to be back here at eleven-thirty for the first part of the new health and safety training.

(Staff exit, chatting quietly as they go. Carole stops Nick and takes him aside.)

... [Continued in the full script.]