

# DEATH BY CHOCOLATE



*A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery*  
by  
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*Published by Lazy Bee Scripts*

**Customer Taster**

# Death by Chocolate

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## About The Murder Mystery Pack

Death by Chocolate is a scripted murder mystery set at the offices of a chocolate company, over two acts, with approximately 80 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 eight actors in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area.

### *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*

- Synopsis
- Character Descriptions
- General Staging Notes
  - Suggested Show Timings
  - Notes on Audience Participation
- Production Notes
  - Props List
  - Stage Settings
  - Costume
  - Music Notes

### *Synopsis*

It's not all sweetness and light at the world-famous, but very exclusive, chocolate company Fountain Chocolate, and when, not long after a major announcement, a body is found in the soft centre of the company, it's sure to be a sticky ending for one of the suspects.

Will there be hundreds and thousands of excuses? Will the alibis be solid? Will the murderer be in plain sight, or will they milk their excuses? It's down to the Inspector and the audience to make their selection!

### *Character Descriptions*

**S. Herbert Fountain** – You are the middle-aged playboy, very rich and somewhat spoiled, American owner of Fountain Chocolate. The company was handed down to you by your father, who moved to England for his second marriage to an English lady, and ran the company set up by his uncle, also called Herbert Fountain. You have spent most of your life, and most of your family's money, jetting around the world and generally enjoying life, so having to move to cold, rainy England was not your idea of fun; however, the terms of your father's will left you no provision for funding unless you took charge of Fountain Chocolate for at least ten years. Those ten years are now up, and you see your own future elsewhere, probably on a yacht in the Caribbean with your new wife. As a result, you have been in negotiations to sell Fountain Chocolate to a larger, more commercial competitor, The Sweet Stuff, for a ridiculously inflated price.

**Pierre Dropse** – Passionate about your craft, you know that Fountain Chocolate is one of the last true family-run businesses where your skills and expertise can be used. Swiss by birth and a bit pompous, you are a perfectionist and have no time for most of the people around you, least of all the American in charge. Seeing he is not suited for this craft, you assume that he will soon get bored of playing boss at some point and you will of course then take charge and run the company as it should be. You have an unprecedented dislike of what you call ‘common’ chocolate, believing that true chocolate should be reserved for the few who can afford luxury.

**Toby LeRone** – You are a charming ‘cheeky chappy’ and very popular with the ladies at Fountain Chocolate. You have worked your way up to work alongside Pierre as Assistant Master Chocolatier. But you are also fiercely ambitious. You don’t really like Pierre as he is almost impossible to work with, but his knowledge of chocolate is second to none and has been useful to you. You know the only way to get the Master Chocolatier role is by dead man’s shoes, and so you have been considering a move.

**Jelly Beans** – You are Herbert’s long-suffering assistant. You have worked for Fountain Chocolate for nearly forty years, and you were devoted to Herbert’s father. You alone can see how badly the company has been run since Herbert took over. Almost everything other than commercial agreements is now done by you because you can’t trust Herbert to do anything, and so you know you are invaluable. You are ready to retire now and looking forward to a substantial retirement fund pay-out.

**Dolly Mixtures** – You are Herbert’s wife, having married him just a few days prior to the business meeting. You appear to be a giggly, naïve and somewhat ditzy lady. You like the finer things in life and although Herbert is not your usual type, he is very rich and very convenient. You have only known him for a few months. You who know how to play a situation to your best advantage.

**Parma Violet** – You are Head of Tasting at Fountain Chocolate. You have been working with Pierre and Toby on the new range ‘Chocolat de Baies’ for months now and know the final tasting has to be done soon or you will miss the lucrative Christmas markets. You are at your wits end about Herbert’s lack of interest and can see the company failing at the most profitable time of the year if something isn’t done fast.

**Cherry Pips** – You are a down-to-earth shop steward at Fountain Chocolate and can see that, despite Ms Bean’s best attempts, the company’s standards and employee working conditions are going downhill fast. You have attempted time and time again to address this with Herbert, to no avail; you now see no other option than to speak to your fellow members and consider strike action.

**Inspector Abbott** – You hate plain chocolate, and anything fancy with chocolate. Your favourite chocolate is a bar of Sweet Stuff white chocolate with multi-coloured sprinkles on it, which you buy once a week from the Co-op, but don’t tell Mrs Abbott! Aside from that, you have seen almost every type of murder there is to be seen – nothing surprises you. You have a quick but rather dry sense of humour which comes out from time to time, but you always get the bad guy (or girl) in the end and that gives you an enormous sense of job satisfaction. A challenge is what motivates you.

## General Staging Notes

This play is set in the present day and is performed by four male and four female actors. It is set out over two acts with approximately 75 to 85 minutes of scripted dialogue.

There is an interval to allow for audience to enjoy a meal and/or drinks and time given for audience questions and deliberation before the final scene. The final scene contains the reveal.

### *Timing*

**Act One** – approximately 45 minutes.

Scene One: 17.5 minutes

Scene Two: 12.5 minutes

Scene Three: 15 minutes

**Interval** – as required.

**Act Two** – approximately 50 minutes if including full audience participation.

Scene One: 20 minutes

Audience Questions and deliberation: 10-15 minutes

Scene Two: 15 minutes

### *Audience Participation*

In Act Two, there is a break between Scene One and Two for audience questioning and deliberation, followed by filling in of Accusation Sheets.

Consider how you want audience participation to work. It is usually better if you have teams or tables rather than normal theatre-type seating if your venue is suited to this. If you want to allow your audience to ask your characters questions, then make sure you give them some paper and pens at the start of the evening so they can take notes. You may also want to explain before the show starts that there will be a chance for one question per team later in the play, so they can start thinking during the performance. Or you can leave the pens, paper and explanatory note on the tables.

During audience questions, only the murderer is allowed to lie! All other characters should speak the truth as they know it, or as it is perceived. Remember to rehearse the sort of questions you might be asked. It's a fun evening, so there may be some odd questions based on the ingredients used in luxury chocolates! Try to think about what may be asked and come up with some answers so you have them to hand. Don't forget that sometimes it is difficult for everyone in a hall to hear audience questions, so it is always a good idea for Abbott to repeat the question to the character, e.g. "A good question there from table seven – what flavours were the tasting chocolates?"

There is an example Accusation Sheet in this pack; these should be given out for the audience to complete after the questioning session. Once the questioning is complete, the Inspector should announce that there will be approximately ten minutes for deliberation, after which the sheets will be collected. After his announcement, the stage curtains should close and the characters can leave the stage.

You could ask your backstage staff to give out and collect sheets. If you are not including audience questioning, then make sure that, when you give out the sheets, the audience know how long they have to deliberate. At the end of the allowed time, gather in the answer sheets. Make sure you know who the winning team is before you start the final scene, because the Inspector will need to announce it!

## **Production Notes**

### ***Stage Settings***

The setting throughout is a meeting room. The style of the room is not important, but it should have a long table and chairs around it set out as though it was a normal business meeting room – obviously with chairs all facing the audience.

Depending on the size of the stage and the style of the room, you could dress the stage with additional items, such as plants or pictures on the wall. For example, you might want to consider something which could be a portrait of Mr Fountain Senior if it's a more traditional boardroom-type setting, and if a more modern setting, maybe some marketing displays, a computer/screen, etc.

# Death by Chocolate

[Script Extract]

## Act 1

### *Scene One – an announcement is made.*

(Set throughout is a boardroom, with a table and eight chairs around it. A water jug and glasses are on the table.)

(Enter Herbert and Jelly. Jelly is carrying a notepad and pen.)

**Herbert:** I did have a good long weekend, Miss Bean, thank you for asking, and I'm now ready to face whatever the day will bring. Oh, and by the way, Dolly will be attending this meeting as well, so please reserve a seat next to me for her, Miss Bean.

**Jelly:** Your fiancée is coming? But why, Mr Fountain? I thought this was a business meeting? With all due respect, what business is it of hers?

**Herbert:** Ah, Miss Bean, forever with this English business etiquette of yours. The announcement I am making in today's meeting will affect everyone – here at Fountain Chocolate and in my personal life too. I want to share the amazing news with all of you at the same time. Is there anything wrong with that, Miss Bean?

**Jelly:** Well, it's not really the way we do...

**Herbert:** Excellent, excellent, I knew you'd see things my way. You know, Miss Bean, you've worked with me for how long now?

**Jelly:** Ten years today, Mr Fountain.

**Herbert:** Wow, ten years. In all that time I've only ever called you Miss Bean. Please, may I call you Jelly? And please, do call me Herbert.

**Jelly:** No, Mr Fountain, you may not call me by my first name, it's not the done...

**Herbert:** Excellent, excellent, Jelly it is.

**Jelly:** But...

**Herbert:** Now then, there is no need to worry.

(Enter Cherry and Parma. Cherry is carrying a book with the letters "N.I.C.E. Rule Book" on the cover, plus a mobile phone. Parma has an iPad or other similar tablet.)

**Herbert:** It's all in hand, Jelly.

**Cherry:** That sounds like a sticky situation to me.

**Herbert:** Ah, Cherry, Parma, do come in, come in, take a seat, and... er, what exactly sounds like a sticky situation?

**Cherry:** Jelly in hand. Very sticky indeed.

**Herbert:** Oh that! No, no... I was telling Jelly here that everything is in hand.

**Parma:** (To Jelly.) You let him call you by your first name?

**Jelly:** No.

(Cherry and Parma sit down.)

**Jelly:** Mr Fountain...

**Herbert:** Herbert.

**Jelly:** Mr Fountain. I really must protest. This is most un-business-like.

**Parma:** What is?

**Jelly:** Miss Mixture's attending the meeting.

**Cherry:** Oh, I don't think that's allowed under our union rules, Mr Fountain. Not unless she is a member of staff or on the board of directors, and she's not...

**Herbert:** Cherry, what I have to say is happy news for everyone. Now, I know that your union is keen to ensure that the employees are happy, so there's no harm in extending that happiness beyond these four walls just one teeny weeny little time is there?

**Cherry:** Well, it's highly irregular. Under section fourteen, subsection three, paragraph two b...

**Parma:** (Interrupting her.) Employees have the right to demand liquid soap in automatic dispensers?

**(Enter Pierre and Toby. Both are carrying mobile phones.)**

**Cherry:** No, Parma! That's section fifteen. Section fourteen deals with business meetings called at short notice.

**Pierre:** Quoting the rule book again, Cherry? Is it ever going to be worth anything? You spend more time quoting the rule book than making sure it is followed.

**Toby:** Good afternoon, ladies, Mr Fountain.

**Herbert:** Pierre, Toby, glad you could make it.

**Pierre:** I'm amazed Toby did, turning up late on such an important day.

**Toby:** I told you, Pierre, I had to go and see someone this morning.

**Herbert:** Yes, yes. Sit down everyone, please, sit down. I'm just going to get Dolly, she should have been here by now. Maybe she has gone to my office instead.

**(Exit Herbert. Toby sits down next to Parma.)**

**Cherry:** Union rules are there for a reason, Pierre. They protect people like me and you.

**Pierre:** I beg to differ. I do not belong to your union, they do not protect me, they are merely designed as a means for the menial staff to delay important progress.

**Cherry:** Menial? Menial? How dare you! I'm going to see what the NICE book has to say about that! **(Starts looking through rule book. Aside to Parma.)** How do you spell menial?

**Pierre:** And on the subject of progress – Parma, have you got anywhere with those tastings yet? We need to finalise this year's seasonal selection. I need time to create, there is not long to go now. You know what those marketing people are like, they will be pestering for packaging information soon. If I'm going to change the ingredients, I'll need to know within the next day or so.

**Parma:** I've scheduled a tasting session immediately after this meeting. We'll do the tasting here, then reconvene to discuss in the morning. All the tasters are ready in my office.

**(Pierre sits down and checks his phone.)**

**Toby:** I need to put another box in there as well, Parma – just a small box with four tasters in. Last minute addition to slip in. I'll help you if you like?

**Parma:** Oh, that would be lovely, Toby.

**Pierre:** I don't seem to have the meeting invitation, Parma. Why not? My input is clearly the most important. After all, I'm the one who created all the chocolates.

**Toby:** Except mine. Remember? You gave me the okay to submit my own creations this year?

**Pierre:** Well, I don't really count them. I mean, clearly they won't get in this year. Maybe in five or ten years' time when you have accumulated a minute amount of the experience I have, then your options may be chosen, but not this year.

**Jelly:** Sorry, Pierre, Mr Fountain said he wanted to do the tasting session without you this time. Something about change in priorities.

**Pierre:** **(Furious.)** What? How dare he! Well, I'm coming to the meeting anyway.

**(Enter Herbert and Dolly.)**

**Pierre:** There will be a change in something else... **(notices Herbert and changes tone back to normal)** er, which I'm sure will be of great interest to everyone.

**Herbert:** Good to see you embracing change, Pierre! Thank you everyone for being so prompt. Dolly, my dear, your place is next to me. **(Pulls out chair for Dolly.)** And everyone please welcome Dolly to our meeting today. She was just powdering her nose, as you do.

**(All the employees mumble general greetings to Dolly.)**

**Dolly:** I still wish I could have brought my Snuffles out, Bertie.

...

*[Continued in the full script.]*