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Customer Taster

Dying for a Leek

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Dying for a Leek

A Horticultural Homicide by Ian McCutcheon

Overview

Dying for a Leek is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 8 actors. The actors perform two formal scenes, then the audience receive additional written clues and may interrogate the suspects. From this, they try to solve the mystery before a speech by the master of ceremonies (or detective) reveals the guilty party.

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:

- The Organiser's Overview [*extract here*] including notes on setting and characters, a props list, and a rough guide on how to structure your event.
- Acts One and Two, to be performed by the actors [*extract here*].
- Four pieces of evidence for the audience to examine.
- 'Accusation sheets' for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution.

Synopsis

Del Fyniam is chair of his local gardening club, and a multiple winner of the annual prize for the biggest leeks. But not everything in the garden is rosy. Del has called an emergency committee meeting to discuss a few urgent matters, and possibly conduct a leek enquiry.

Setting

Snogley is an affluent village in the County of Widdleshire. There are numerous local clubs and social groups in the village, including Snogley and District Gardeners in the Shire – aka SADGITS. Club members pay a sizeable annual fee and monthly subscriptions, much of which is paid out by way of prize money awarded to the growers of the biggest vegetables, especially carrots, onions and leeks.

The action takes place in a committee room at the rear of Snogley Village Hall. There is a door which gives direct access to the hall car park. A large table is in the middle of the room, with six chairs set around it. Several photographs or pictures of various locations around the village are on the walls. As Act One begins, a pencil is lying on the table. It is 7 p.m. on a Tuesday evening in October.

Guide to staging the murder mystery evening

If performing this to an audience, it is worth considering providing a meal – and adjusting the ticket price accordingly.

A suggested format for the evening could be as follows:

- Introduction by the Master of Ceremonies, who gives an overview of the evening's entertainment.
- Act 1 is then performed – this takes around 12 minutes.
- If a two-course meal is being provided, the first course is served following Act 1, and the audience are given the first two written clues.
- Act 2 is then performed – this takes around 14 minutes, and is followed by the second course, and the audience are given the remaining written clues.

- If a one-course meal or a buffet is provided, the two Acts can be performed with a very short interval, with enough time to reset the stage and allow the Master of Ceremonies to tell the audience the action moves forward by 4 hours.
- After the conclusion of the play, the Master of Ceremonies calls the suspects back onstage and invites the audience to put questions to them. This session can last as long as the Master of Ceremonies chooses, assuming the questions keep coming. An optimum period of twenty minutes is recommended.
- The Master of Ceremonies then invites the audience to complete an accusation sheet, naming the guilty party and providing supporting evidence drawn from the action on stage and/or the written clues. Allow twenty minutes for all the answers to be submitted.
- As soon as all the answer sheets have been submitted, the cast/director/Master of Ceremonies must quickly review them all and select the best answer. There may also be a number of wildly inaccurate or humorous answers, and the Master of Ceremonies may wish to keep a few of those aside to share later with the audience.
- Once the winning answer has been selected, the Master of Ceremonies will ask all the suspects to return to the stage, and require the guilty party to reveal themselves. The Master of Ceremonies then reads the formal solution to the audience – this will take around five minutes. After this, the Master of Ceremonies can read out a selection of the wrong or humorous answers, followed by a formal announcement of the winner.
- If a two-course meal is offered, allow a total of two and a half hours for the whole event, but this can be shortened by perhaps twenty to thirty minutes if the meal is only one course or consists of a buffet.

Characters in order of appearance:

Del Fyniam: Chair of the SADGITS, and multiple winner of the biggest leek prize. He has called an emergency committee meeting to discuss a few urgent matters, and one of the members is demanding a leek enquiry...

Rhoda Dendron: Del's long-suffering partner. Rhoda suspects Del is having an affair with another club member, and is planning to confront them both...

Flora Bundy: Until a few days ago, Flora was the club treasurer, but felt obliged to stand down when rumours that she had stolen money from the club began to circulate...

Daisy Cheyne: The club secretary, and a close friend of Flora's. She wants to know why this year's biggest vegetables prize money has been drastically reduced from previous years...

Terry Cotter-Potts: Del's most competitive rival leek grower. Terry was convinced his magnificent specimens would be this year's winners – until they were dug up by a mystery saboteur a few nights ago...

Bella Donner: The club's social secretary, and a glamorous widow. Rhoda believes Bella has been a good deal *too* social with Del...

Chris Anthemum: A Detective Inspector with Widdleshire Police. Can be either male or female.

Master of Ceremonies: Reveals further evidence before the accusations, and reveals the solution at the end. Alternatively, this role can be occupied by Anthemum.

Dying for a Leek

Act 1

(A committee room at the rear of Snogley Village Hall. A door gives direct access to the hall car park. A large table is in the middle of the room, with six chairs set around it. Several photographs or pictures of various locations around the village are on the walls. A pencil is lying on the table. It is seven pm on a Tuesday evening in October.)

(Enter Del, followed by Rhoda. Del is carrying a folder, containing six copies of the agenda for the meeting and a bank statement printout. He also carries a bunch of car/house keys. He puts both down on the table and switches on the lights. Rhoda is struggling with a box containing four bottles of wine, two red and two white, six wine glasses, and a tea towel. She puts it down, and they sit at opposite ends of the table. Rhoda takes the bottles and glasses out of the box, and starts polishing the glasses. There is a frosty atmosphere between them.)

Del: Well, say something!

Rhoda: Wine?

Del: You never stop!

Rhoda: Pardon?

Del: I said I'll have a drop.

Rhoda: Red or white?

Del: White.

Rhoda: You usually have red.

Del: Then why ask?

Rhoda: Just to annoy you!

(Rhoda pours them both a glass of wine, picks hers up and sips it, but leaves Del's in front of her.)

Del: (Pointing to the other glass.) Is that mine?

Rhoda: Well, it's not Monty Don's, is it?

Del: So can I have it?

Rhoda: Something wrong with your legs?

(Del gets up, collects his glass, and sits down.)

Del: Where's my SADGITS pen?

Rhoda: Where you threw it – in my handbag.

Del: And where's that?

Rhoda: In the car, which you locked, remember? I couldn't carry everything.

Del: Can you get it now?

Rhoda: (Still polishing glasses.) In a minute! Can't you see I'm busy?

Del: (Fiddling with his agendas.) So am I! I want my SADGITS pen!

Rhoda: Too bad! You'll just have to use this, won't you? (Picks up the pencil from the table and throws it to him.)

Del: (Catching the pencil.) I suppose so.

(Enter Flora and Daisy, who is carrying a ring binder labelled 'SADGITS Minutes'. Both ladies have handbags.)

Flora: Good evening.

Del: Is it?

Rhoda: (To Del.) Don't start!

Daisy: Hello, you two. Are we late?

Del: Only a couple of minutes.

(Flora and Daisy sit down.)

Del: Flora, would you care for a glass of wine?

Flora: No thank you, I'm driving.

Del: One glass won't hurt, surely?

Flora: No thank you! I need to keep my wits about me this evening.

Rhoda: Don't force her, Del. Some of us can control our... urges.

Del: And what's that supposed to mean?

Rhoda: Daisy? What about you?
Daisy: Oh, rather! I'll have white, please.
Rhoda: **(Pouring a glass of wine.)** Here you are. **(Passes it to Daisy.)**
Daisy: Thank you.
(Enter Terry. He is not in the best of moods.)
Rhoda: Hello, Terry.
Del: Hello, mate. Have you managed to save any of your leeks?
Terry: No! **(Sits down.)**
Rhoda: **(To Terry.)** Would you like a drink?
Terry: Yeah! A large cyanide and soda.
Rhoda: We've only got red or white, sorry.
Terry: Red, then.
(During the next few lines, Rhoda pours a glass of red wine and gives it to Terry.)
(Enter Bella, who is sexily dressed, with very high heels, and carrying a handbag.)
Bella: Oh dear, am I the last?
Rhoda: As if you didn't know. How long were you waiting out there?
Bella: Sorry?
Rhoda: You know, waiting to make your big entrance.
Bella: I've no idea what you mean.
Rhoda: A bit overdressed, aren't you? For a committee meeting?
Bella: I try to look my best.
Rhoda: For whom?
Bella: You never know, do you? **(Sits down next to Del.)** Any chance of a drink?
Rhoda: Of course. Red or white?
Bella: Red, please.
Rhoda: Red for the scarlet woman?
Bella: What are you talking about?
(During the next few lines, Rhoda pours Bella a drink and hands it to her.)
Del: Now then, girls. Let's not have any unpleasantness.
Bella: No, of course not!
Rhoda: Unless it's absolutely necessary!
Del: Let's just get on with the business in hand, shall we? Here's the agenda.
(Del hands a copy to everyone.)
Daisy: Shall I start taking the minutes now?
Del: Obviously! Item One: my shed.
(Daisy takes minutes ad lib throughout meeting.)
Rhoda: You mean *our* shed?
Del: Yes, alright, *our* shed!
Terry: What are you on about?
Del: If you give me a chance, I'll tell you, okay?
Terry: Get on with it, then.
Del: Someone broke into my shed on the allotment.
Rhoda: *Our* shed!
Terry: When?
Del: Last Saturday night.
Daisy: Was anything taken?
Del: One of my best tools.
Terry: Hoe dear!
Del: It was my favourite spade actually, Terry, and it's not funny.
Flora: Why's this on the agenda? You should report it to the police.
Del: I wanted to give one of you the chance to own up first.
Flora: Do you actually think one of *us* stole your spade?
Del: I have my suspicions.
Flora: Oh, really?
Del: Yes, really!

Rhoda: Okay, did anyone break into *our* shed and pinch Del's precious spade?
(Nobody says anything.)
Terry: Good, that's that. Can we move on to Item Two?
Bella: Yes, let's get on. I've got a hot date.
Rhoda: Who with?
Del: Never mind that! Item Two: Terry, the floor's yours.
Terry: Right. You all know what's happened to my leeks, don't you?
Bella: I heard a rumour they've been uprooted.
Terry: Bloody right they've been uprooted! It must have happened on Saturday night, when I was staying with my brother in Yettington. I got home just after breakfast on Sunday, went straight up to my allotment and found someone had pulled up every one of my leeks and thrown them all over the place.
Daisy: So you haven't got anything for this year's leek competition?
Terry: No.
Del: Oh mate, I'm really sorry about that.
Terry: And you can wind your neck in! Year after year, I've had to put up with you poncing about all over the village, flaunting the trophy in my face, shouting 'Loser!' every time I walk into the pub. Nine sodding years in a row you've won that leek cup! But I had you this year, my leeks were superb, you saw them for yourself, and you knew I was going to win.
Del: I don't think so!
Terry: You couldn't stand the thought of being beaten, could you? So you sneaked up there when you knew I was away and ripped them out.
Del: If you repeat a word of that outside this room, I'll have you in court for defamation.
Terry: **(Stands up, knocking his chair over.)** You won't get the chance, *mate!* You can *stuff* your committee... **(screws up his agenda)** and *stuff* your gardening club! **(Throws the agenda at Del and points at him.)** I haven't finished with you yet!

[... Continued in the full Murder Mystery Pack.]