

A blue wrench is positioned on the left side of the title, and a brown bottle with a black label featuring a white skull and crossbones is on the right. The title text is centered between them.

GETTING AWAY WITH IT

A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery

by

Richard Adams



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Getting Away With It

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About the Murder Mystery Pack

The full Murder Mystery pack provides the full script and guidance to enable you to produce a successful murder mystery event. The usual format, including a light supper, is given below. The author has no objection to this format being changed to suit, for instance, a three-course meal with courses served before the play begins, between Acts One and Two, or any other variation.

The Pack Contains:

- An Organiser's Overview [*Extract here*]
- The Full Script [*Extract here*]
- Accusation sheets for the audience to formulate their suspicions

Suggested Event Format

- Act One
- Act Two
- Interval and light supper – during this time, the audience complete their Accusation Sheets, which are then collected and assessed by the scrutineers.
- Act Three
- Presentation of certificates and prizes to the winning team.

Approximate Timings

- Act One: 30 minutes
- Act Two: 20 minutes
- Interval and light supper: 30 minutes (this being dependent upon the complexity of the catering)
- Act Three: 10 minutes
- Prize-giving and closing announcements: 10 minutes

Plot Overview

Detective Chief Inspector Ben Cleveleys is nearing retirement and keen to go out on a high note, but the arrest of unpredictable plumber Dudley Huggins for hugging his wife to death is fraught with difficulty – not least from Dudley's estranged sister Phyllis, who also happens to be the Cleveleys' cleaner and vows revenge for what she sees as the wrongful arrest of her brother.

Meanwhile, life is complicated by Ben's playful dalliance with Simone, a flirtatious café proprietor whose father Ben had sent to prison where he died. Ben's wife Linda, tired of her lonely life due to the demands of Ben's job and his constant absence, seeks amusement with PC Graham Fisher, who is none too pleased with the way his senior officer treats him.

A complex plot is afoot, but one in which DCI Ben Cleveleys who has the final word.

Characters

DCI Ben Cleveleys – approaching retirement

Linda Cleveleys – Ben's wife

DS Sandra Thornton – Ben's Detective Sergeant

PC Graham Fisher – a bumbling police officer

Dudley Huggins – an unpredictable plumber

Freddie Newbold – a forensic pathologist

Phyllis Hancock – a cleaner, Dudley's estranged sister

Simone – a flirtatious café proprietor

Learned Lines or Rehearsed Reading?

The play will work best if lines are learned. This gives the actors more freedom of movement and interaction with one another. It will be difficult, for instance, for PC Fisher to manage a tray of tea things while handling a script.

However, DCI Ben Cleveleys has a number of long speeches to the audience. Provided he is sufficiently familiar with his lines, so as not to be glued to the script, it might be helpful to have the speeches in his notebook, to which he would then appear to be referring quite naturally as a detective would in the course of the investigation. There are also opportunities for lines to be secreted in Cleveleys' scrapbook and Dudley Huggins' folder.

If it is decided to perform the play as a rehearsed reading, this should be made clear in the publicity and reflected in the ticket prices. Note that even if it is a rehearsed reading, you need to purchase a Performance Licence from the Lazy Bee Scripts website.

Allocating Responsibilities

The producer will need to appoint those who are to be responsible for various aspects of the event:

- A Director – whose job will be to audition, select and direct the actors, and to advise on the set.
- Set Construction Team.
- A Stage Manager to co-ordinate all aspects of the set, and generally keep the show on the road during the performance.
- A Property Manager to acquire all properties and ensure they are in the right place at the right time.
- Costume Supervisor – the play is set in the present and there are no special costume requirements, but the producer may wish to appoint someone to ensure that each character is dressed appropriately.
- Sound Manager to acquire all sound effects and music, and play them as required.
- Lighting Manager to set the lighting rig and operate cues as per script.
- Continuity Assistant (Prompt).
- Raffle Manager (if desired) – to acquire raffle prizes, arrange for the sale of tickets before the performance, and organise the draw for prizes at an appropriate time during the evening.
- Catering Team.
- Publicity Manager to arrange posters, fliers, tickets and ticket sales.
- Scrutineers – who will distribute the Accusation Sheets before the play, collect them in after supper, read them during the performance of Act Three to determine the winning team (see Adjudication below) and give the result to Chief Inspector Cleveleys for him to announce. In the event of a tie, they will provide Cleveleys with a set of tie-break questions to be put to the tied teams, the winning team being the first one to shout out the correct answer. Suggested questions are given below, but the scrutineers may devise their own.

Suggested Tie-break Questions

- What was Dudley Huggins' employment? (Plumber)
- What was Ben Cleveleys' favourite wine? (Rioja)
- What did Phyllis bring to Dudley in the interview room? (Grapes)

The Set

The set requires three locations:

- The living space of the Cleveleys' home with table, chairs, an armchair and a small desk for Cleveleys to work at.
- A police station interview room, with a table and three chairs, and which by a quick transformation (see script) can become...
- Café Simone.

For reasons of pace, if the stage is large enough to permit it, the locations are best contained in one set with changes from one location to the other indicated by lighting cross-fades as noted in the script.

Getting Away With It

Script Extract

Act One

Scene One

(The stage is split into two. One area is the Cleveleys' living space with table, chairs, an armchair and a small desk for Cleveleys to work at. From this space there are two doors, one leading to the hall, front door and stairs, the other to the kitchen. The second area has a door upstage and a table and chairs which double as furniture for a police station interview/visiting room and Café Simone.)

(SFX: Opening music.)

(In the Cleveleys' living space, Cleveleys is sitting at the desk, cutting items from a newspaper and sticking them in a scrapbook. Linda enters from the kitchen and looks over his shoulder.)

Linda: Bringing it up to date?

Cleveleys: Yes, won't be many more. I shall miss it.

Linda: That must be a history of local crime.

Cleveleys: Yes. I sometimes wonder how I've survived it all without going mad.

Linda: I wouldn't be too sure about that.

Cleveleys: Linda, my love, I think it's you that's kept me sane.

(Cleveleys sifts through the cuttings as they talk.)

Linda: That's nice to know. (Takes a cutting from Cleveleys.) Ooh, *he's* ugly.

Cleveleys: Yes. Ugly by name, ugly by nature.

Linda: He's never called "Ugly"?

Cleveleys: No. Police station mug shots are all the same. You look like a criminal even if you're not. Real name Dudley, Dudley Huggins. Dudley, Ugly – you can see how one became the other. Started out as Hug me Dudley.

Linda: Hug me?

Cleveleys: Yes; on account of what he's in for. "Hug me" turned into "Ugly" and the rest is history.

Linda: What *is* he in for?

Cleveleys: Hugging his wife.

Linda: What?

Cleveleys: She never came to.

Linda: I see. Do I need to remember that next time you give me a hug?

Cleveleys: Don't tempt me. Did you come in for something?

Linda: I think we need a plumber. Kitchen tap won't stop running.

Cleveleys: I'll come and look. Probably needs a new washer. (Laughs.) Ugly Dudley was a plumber.

Linda: That's handy.

Cleveleys: Why? You thinking of calling him round to fix the tap?

Linda: No, no. Just thinking about forgiveness and rehabilitation.

Cleveleys: Well, don't. That might be dangerous with Dudley. Anyway, he's only in custody, waiting for his day in court. *We* reckon he's guilty, but it's a bit circumstantial and a judge and jury might think differently.

Linda: Really? Why'd he do it? Did he say?

Cleveleys: Mmm. Sort of.

Linda: Sort of?

Cleveleys: (Tidying up his papers and scrapbook.) It's quite a story... Let's have a look at this tap. Oh, (turning to the audience) and while I'm seeing to that, you can have a look at what happened when we brought Dudley Huggins in for questioning – about a month ago. See if you can make sense of it.

(Cleveleys and Linda exit.)

(FX: Crossfade to interview room.)

Scene Two

(A month earlier. The police station interview room has a table and three chairs. Dudley Huggins, enters escorted by Detective Sergeant Thornton and Police Constable Graham Fisher. Fisher stands guard by the door. Thornton pulls the chairs away from the table, stands behind one and points to another on the other side of the table.)

Thornton: Sit yourself down. Dudley.

Dudley: I wasn't planning on standing up. Do I get a cuppa tea?

(Thornton indicates to the constable to fetch a cup of tea.)

Fisher: You sure?

Thornton: Yes, I'll be safe enough. Bring three while you're at it. Cleveleys will be here in a minute.

Fisher: If you say so.

Thornton: (With exasperation.) Three teas, constable.

(Fisher still hesitates.)

Thornton: If you PLEASE!

(Fisher exits.)

Dudley: I take sugar.

Thornton: Do you?

Dudley: Go on, say it...

Thornton: Say what?

Dudley: I need sweetening.

Thornton: What?

Dudley: Sugar! Sweetening! You stupid or what?

(Thornton approaches Dudley and leans menacingly over the table. Cleveleys enters and sees the confrontation. He is carrying a folder.)

Thornton: Don't push your luck, Dudley. Don't push your luck.

(Dudley crumples.)

Cleveleys: Suspect being stroppy, sergeant?

Thornton: (Surprised.) Not any more... (Staring at Dudley.) Thinks he's funny, that's all... There's tea on the way.

Cleveleys: Good. Let's get started.

(Cleveleys and Thornton sit opposite Dudley. Cleveleys opens the folder.)

Cleveleys: Dudley Frances Huggins?

Dudley: Yes.

Cleveleys: Fourteen Garden Street?

Dudley: Yeah, if you say so. Humming and Pleating.

Cleveleys: Yes, Dudley. Now, do you know why you're here?

(No answer. Dudley looks confused.)

Cleveleys: You shouldn't need to think about it...

(Dudley is beginning to recover himself.)

Cleveleys: Well?

Dudley: (Pointing to Thornton.) She gave me a lift.

Cleveleys: Strewth! Where's that tea?

Dudley: Yeah. I'm gasping. Poor room service in this nick.

Cleveleys: Never mind that. Tell me about your wife.

Dudley: Well, let me see... She's blonde, about five foot six, likes Pringles Sour Cream and Onion, and is... erm... dead.

Thornton: Did you kill her?

(Fisher enters with the tea things on a tray and sets them on the table.)

Dudley: Oh, saved by the tea – about time an' all. No biscuits?

Fisher: Where'd you think this is, the bloody Ritz?

Cleveleys: That'll do, constable. Just stand by the door.

(The teas are poured, milked, sugared, stirred as necessary, and then the interview resumes.)

Cleveleys: Let's try again, Dudley. Did you kill your wife?

Dudley: No, course not.

Cleveleys: Well, how do *you* account for her being found dead on the kitchen floor apparently hugged to death?

Thornton: **(Fiercely in Dudley's face.)** You squeezed the very life out of her, didn't you?

Dudley: No, I didn't. **(Beginning to crumple again.)** Honest, I didn't.

Fisher: **(A touch of pantomime.)** Oh yes, you did!

Dudley: Oh no, I didn't.

Fisher: Oh yes, you did.

Cleveleys: Constable!

Fisher: I'm sorry sir, but he's clearly a loony. When we broke in, he was lying on top of her with his arms trapped underneath her. He couldn't extricate himself. We had to roll the two of them over to release him and then drag his missus off the top of him.

Cleveleys: **(Angry.)** Yes, and contaminated a crime scene while you were at it. You're supposed to touch *nothing* until the SOCOs have thoroughly examined the situation. Do you have diplomas for stupidity?

Fisher: Yes, sir. Er, no, sir.

Thornton: Is this true, Dudley? How Fisher just described it?

Dudley: I don't remember.

Fisher: Oh yes, you do!

Dudley: Oh no, I don't!

Cleveleys: Enough! This is no pantomime. This is a serious matter.

Dudley: I'd love a biscuit. Send him out for some biscuits.

Thornton: **(Fierce and angry.)** You *take* the bloody biscuit, you do.

Cleveleys: Steady, Thornton, steady. Let's take a break. Constable, take Dudley back to his cell while Thornton and I have a think.

(Fisher escorts Dudley out.)

Cleveleys: **(To Thornton.)** Pour us another cup of tea, would you, and let's try and shed some light on the matter. What did the p-m say?

Thornton: **(Pouring tea as she speaks.)** Hasn't come through yet. There's a backlog apparently.

Cleveleys: So we're still in the queue.

Thornton: 'fraid so. You want me to go and chivvy them up? Though I can't see it doing any good. What made you arrest him? It *might* have been an accident.

Cleveleys: It might, but there's something about his manner. His wife's dead, he was found lying on top of her, but he makes no attempt to explain, and worse, he doesn't seem to care. He's just too...

Thornton: Flippant?

Cleveleys: Flippant, that's the word.

(There is a knock at the door. Forensic Pathologist Freddie Newbold pops his head in.)

Freddie: Am I interrupting?

Cleveleys: Not if you've got some news. We're floundering, Freddie.

Thornton: I thought there was a backlog.

Freddie: Yes, there is, bodies piling up, but this one caught my eye, so I fast-tracked it.

Cleveleys: So was it an accident or did Dudley Huggins do his wife in?

Freddie: Well, not for me to say it was Dudley, but she had three broken ribs, one of which had punctured her right lung. That's how she breathed her last.

Thornton: That is *some* hug.

Freddie: Yes, especially since she had brittle bones. I can't believe Dudley didn't know about it. Dudley's Tracey was a very vulnerable victim.

Cleveleys: Mmm. We may have to talk to him again.

(All exit.)

[Continued in the full Murder Mystery pack.]