



A Murder Mystery

by

Andrew Hull

Customer Taster

Just Desserts

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It is March 2019 and celebrity chef Raymond Myers is holding an exclusive opening night dinner party at his new restaurant, Just Desserts. A select audience has been invited to sample the menu and meet the great man himself. However, old grievances, as well as new, rear their heads as the evening progresses and Raymond finds himself surrounded by a group of people with more than dessert on their minds.

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Just Desserts About The Pack

This is a scripted murder evening that will also require some background character knowledge to enable the cast to answer questions put to them by their audience. A full script and character notes are provided as well as a pack of 'table clues' for each team within your audience.

There is a cast of nine as well as one narrator who will guide your audience and help organise the questioning sections of the evening.

The murder evening is intended to be run in a hall with a stage or suitable acting area, with tables around the hall for your audience. The set-up is much the same as you would have for a quiz evening, i.e. teams of 6-8 people per table. Each table has a set of table clues to read through and will also have the opportunity to ask questions as the evening progresses.

What's included?

- An Organiser's Overview *[Extract Here]*
- The Main Script *[Extract Here]*
 - Scripts for Act 1 and Act 2
 - Final Character Statements
 - Character background notes, including motivation and opportunity
- A set of table clues *which can be customised by adding photographs of cast members in the appropriate places*
- Accusation sheet

In the Organiser's Overview:

- Plot Overview and Character List
- General Staging Notes
- Suggested timetable
- A cheat sheet showing the clues and red herrings within the table clues
- Example questions
- Props list

Plot Overview and Characters

Today is Saturday 2nd March 2019 and we are at Just Desserts, the latest restaurant of celebrity chef Raymond Myers. This is the third restaurant in an exclusive chain opened by Ray, and joins Starters Orders and The Main Event in a true dining experience. Diners will pay a premium price to be served the highest quality cuisine and to be driven by limo between the three restaurants.

Your cast consists of (in order of appearance):

Raymond Myers, celebrity chef and restaurant owner

Charlotte Myers, Ray's wife

Sarah Riley, waitress

Ian Worthington, well known food critic

Etienne Blanc (Stephen White), head chef

Joanne Seymour, local vicar

Graham Rossiter, Mayor of Siddlington

Juliet Davenport, local wealthy resident

Gary Stone, local resident and raffle winner

Narrator, one extra person to ensure the smooth running of the evening.

It is the opening night of TV chef Raymond Myers' new restaurant, Just Desserts. This is the third restaurant in Ray's new dining concept where the diners visit three restaurants in one evening and are chauffeur driven between venues. Some local dignitaries have been invited to the opening night before the restaurant fully opens to the public tomorrow evening. Ray is not the easiest of men to get along with and has a reputation that would make Gordon Ramsey seem like a choirboy by comparison.

Ray's long-suffering wife Charlotte is here to provide support for her husband; Ian has been invited to give a professional write-up on the restaurant and the food; Joanne, Graham and Juliet have all been invited along due to their position in the local community; Gary has won a raffle for an invitation to the evening; Etienne is the French head chef; and Sarah has been drafted in from one of Ray's other restaurants to provide waitress service for this evening.

Ray was born and raised in Siddlington, the town that Just Desserts is opening in, and has planned for this restaurant to be in his old hometown to get as much free publicity as possible. However, not all of the guests are here just to sample the menu. Graham was bullied at school by Ray and has always vowed revenge; Joanne's sister committed suicide at university after a failed relationship with Ray; Juliet is on Ray's trail as she thinks he was responsible for her parents' death in a car accident; there is longstanding bad blood between Ian and Ray; Ray and Charlotte have a blazing row and he threatens to divorce her and leave her penniless; Etienne is desperate to hide his shady past; Sarah is having an affair with Ray; and Gary is just pleased to be mixing with the bigwigs for a change.

As you might expect, the event does not run smoothly: someone gets more than just desserts.

General Staging Notes

Casting & Rehearsal

Choose your performers and issue them with a copy of the entire pack.

You should hold as many rehearsals as you feel comfortable with.

The first rehearsal should concentrate on reading through the pack and familiarising yourselves with the characters, backgrounds and format of the evening, before moving on to a read-through.

Subsequent rehearsals should be used for moving or blocking the action. This may need to be revised to suit your venue.

It is impossible to rehearse the question sections of the evening, as you can never tell exactly what people will ask, but have a read through the example questions sheet as this shows some of the questions encountered in the past.

Facilities required for the performers

You will need a separate and private room in which to change and base yourselves when not required on stage. The victim will also use this room after being murdered.

The performers should also be given the same food as the audience.

It is always a good idea to visit the venue a few weeks before the performance and to tailor the performance to suit your venue.

Hall layout and event format

This is a swanky restaurant and so your table should look neat and presentable. The table needs to be set for seven with cutlery, wine and water glasses, a water jug, and other table decorations as you see fit. The exact layout can be flexible to both your cast and your venue's needs. You can dress the set as elaborately as you wish, but all you really need is the table and chairs. It is also fun to encourage your audience to enter into the spirit of the evening and dress appropriately. You could even design your tickets in an appropriate style for a restaurant opening invite.

Suggested Timetable

| | |
|----------|--|
| 7:30 pm | Guests arrive and are seated. |
| 7:50 pm | Narrator explains the format of the evening and Act One begins |
| 8:30 pm | End of Act One, Narrator wraps up and supper is served |
| 9:15 pm | Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning |
| 9:25 pm | Act Two |
| 9:40 pm | End of Act Two and short break |
| 9:50 pm | Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning |
| 10:00 pm | Short break while guests complete Accusation forms |
| 10:10 pm | Cast call for a spokesman from each table to read their accusation |
| 10:20 pm | The big reveal |
| 10:30 pm | End |

Table Clues

This pack includes a series of written clues which need to be printed and distributed to each ‘team’ or ‘table’ in the audience. The following summarises the contents of each clue.

| <i>Document</i> | <i>Information to be gleaned</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Celeb Chef Newspaper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some background on Ray’s early life and career • Details of new restaurant and the new dining concept |
| Computronics Sale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details Juliet’s sale of her share of her late husband’s company for millions |
| Detective Letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that the detective found a dark-coloured BMW that needed repairing around the time of Juliet’s parents’ death • Repairs were requested by a Mr G Myers on behalf of his son |
| Final Demand Letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over £14,000 is three months overdue • Threatens legal action and negative publicity |
| Loan Shark Letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that Charlotte borrowed £15,000 and hasn’t paid it back • Debt is now £20,000 • Vague threat around the opening of the new restaurant |
| Message From Headteacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of bullying of Graham • Names the three culprits of the bullying, including Ray |
| Lottery Winner Newspaper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names Gary as the winner of the raffle to win a place at Ray’s table on the opening night of Just Desserts • A bit more information on Ray and the restaurant |
| Rehabilitation In Prison Kitchens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the Clink Restaurant programme • Stephen White named as being on the programme |
| Rufton Times | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper report about Juliet’s parents’ death • Mentions a dark BMW being involved in the accident |
| Uni Mag | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of suicide of Karen Seymour • Names Ray as her ex-boyfriend |
| We Are Not Amused-Bouche | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A scathing review by Ian on a restaurant • Shows that Ian doesn’t hold back when reviewing |

Additional Materials in the Table Pack

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Intro Sheet | A basic introduction to the evening and how it will run. |
| Accusation Sheet | To be filled in by each team. |

Example Questions

Although you can never tell exactly what an audience is likely to ask, here are a few of the questions that we have had thrown at us in the past.

It is important to remember that non-guilty parties *must* tell the truth, although they are not required to volunteer any information if they are not directly asked for it. The guilty parties can lie, although they should stick to the truth where to do so will not incriminate them.

| <i>Suspect</i> | <i>Question Asked</i> | <i>Answer Given</i> |
|----------------|---|--|
| Charlotte | Why didn't you ask Ray to pay your clothing bill? | I did, numerous times, but he refused. |
| Graham | Where did you go after confronting Ray? | Outside for a walk around the car park. I needed to clear my head. |
| Juliet | Did you think that Ray was the driver of the BMW that caused the accident that killed your parents? | I thought it was a possibility. |
| Etienne | Is Etienne your real name? | No. |

[More in the full pack.]

Just Desserts

Script Excerpt

Act One

(The lights in the main hall dim, leaving only the curtains lit. Narrator steps through the curtains and addresses the audience.)

Narrator: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. You join us this evening for the opening night of the exciting new restaurant, Just Desserts, from celebrity chef Raymond Myers. You have all received a special invitation to the event and the restaurant will be fully open to the public from tomorrow evening. Shortly you will get to meet Raymond and some local dignitaries. However, all is not as it seems. At some point this evening, a crime will be committed, and it will be up to you to solve it, so make sure you watch and listen very carefully. On your tables, you will find numerous items, which may or may not help you. You will get the chance to ask questions as the evening progresses, but I will give further instructions later on. So I'll leave you to it for now. Good luck.

(The curtains open to reveal a table set for seven guests at a high-class restaurant. The table can be any shape to suit your acting space, but must have space for seven and all seats must be positioned so that no one has their back to the audience. This is the 'top table' at the new Raymond Myers restaurant Just Desserts. There should be enough space all around the table to allow your actors free movement around the stage when not seated.)

(Charlotte enters, carrying her handbag, closely followed by Ray.)

Charlotte: **(Looking around the restaurant.)** Oh Ray, this looks wonderful.

Ray: I should bloody well hope so, for the amount of money this has cost me.

Charlotte: I just meant that...

Ray: I know what you meant, Charlie. Just try not to be so wet all the time.

Charlotte: What do you mean?

Ray: This simpering little girl act. Big wide eyes, wringing the hands, telling me what you think I want to hear rather than what you really think.

Charlotte: But I *do* think it looks good, Ray. Why do you have to be so cruel all of the time?

Ray: Look, this is an important evening with lots of important people. Well, with a room full of people who like to think they're important. I need to be on top form, not worrying about whether you're going to say something stupid again.

Charlotte: Thanks for the vote of confidence!

Ray: Where did you put the quiche?

Charlotte: I gave it to Etienne. He was going to put it in one of the fridges until later.

Ray: We can't open a restaurant without the Myers Quiche.

Charlotte: I know. It's in the kitchen with Etienne.

Ray: Well, go and check that he's taking care of it. I spent all afternoon on that.

(She turns and storms off into the wings. Sarah enters, carrying some napkins, which she starts to lay out on the table.)

Sarah: Hi Ray.

(Ray turns to see who it is, smiles and moves to stand next to her.)

Ray: Ah, the lovely Sarah. No simpering from you.

Sarah: No what?

Ray: Never mind, come here.

(His hand moves to her waist and he pulls her in close. Sarah pushes him away, laughing and looking round to see if anyone is watching.)

Sarah: Ray! Not here, anyone could see us. Your wife, for example.

Ray: Let her see. Might liven her up a bit and get a real reaction out of her for a change.

Sarah: So things still aren't good between you?

Ray: Good? Things haven't been good for a very long time.

Sarah: Maybe you need a change of scenery.

(She brushes a piece of fluff from his collar and smiles again, but Ray seems to have lost interest.)

Ray: Yeah, look, can you go find Etienne for me? I need to see how the prep is going.

(Sarah looks a little disappointed, but smiles and does as she is asked.)

Sarah: Sure thing.

(Sarah exits, leaving Ray alone for a few moments. He absentmindedly straightens a spoon here and there. Ian enters. He is full of self-confidence and doesn't much care for Ray. The feeling is mutual, and this is portrayed in the way they are overly polite to one another.)

Ian: Ray, good to see you. Am I a tad early?

Ray: Ian, likewise. Not at all. Punctual as always.

Ian: Yes, yes. Good crowd in tonight?

Ray: An exclusive guest list tonight, Ian. Don't want our local dignitaries mixing with the great unwashed on a night out, do we?

Ian: Not having trouble with bookings, ha ha?

Ray: On the contrary, we are fully booked every night for the rest of the month.

Ian: Glad to hear it. Sit here, shall I?

(Ian pulls out a chair and sits without waiting to be invited. He takes a notepad and pen from his pocket and begins taking notes, looking round the restaurant as he does. He even goes so far as to pick up some of the cutlery and examine it as though checking for dirt.)

Ray: Wherever you like, Ian, make yourself at home.

(Ray walks to the front of the stage, looking annoyed. Etienne enters and crosses to Ray, wiping his hands on a towel.)

Etienne: You wanted to see me, Mr Myers?

Ray: Etienne, yes. How are things going in the kitchen?

Etienne: Very well, Mr Myers. Everything is under control.

Ray: It had better be! What about the quiche?

Etienne: Safely stored away in the dessert fridge.

Ray: Right. Make sure no one touches it. It's an important part of the evening. I never open a restaurant without a Myers Quiche.

Etienne: I understand, Mr Myers.

Ray: The lamb is prepped?

Etienne: Yes, sir. Prepped and marinating. The vegetables are ready, the consommé is clarifying, and David is working on the shortbread fingers as we speak.

Ray: The crème Anglaise?

Etienne: The cream is warming, but I won't start making the Anglaise until the main course is served.

Ray: You know how important this is, Etienne? Not just for me. If this goes well tonight...

Etienne: I understand, Mr Myers.

Ray: You'd better. Now get back out there and make sure David hasn't burnt anything!

(Etienne nods, then turns and exits. Raymond moves back towards the table as Joanne enters, looking nervously around.)

Joanne: Hello? Erm, am I too early?

Ray: That depends. Are you Joanne or are you here to convert me?

Joanne: Well, I am Joanne. I can try to convert you if you like, but I usually leave the bible at home when I'm out for dinner.

Ian: **(Without looking up.)** Good luck converting Ray. You'd have to wrestle the flaming pitchfork from his hands first.

Ray: **(Crossing to Joanne and shaking her hand.)** Take no notice of him. I'm really not that bad, despite what you may have read.

Joanne: That's a shame, I like a challenge.

Ray: Let me get you a drink. Take a seat.

(Ray disappears into the wings and Joanne sits next to Ian.)

Ian: He really is that bad, you know. I'm Ian, I'm here to write this place up.

Joanne: Ooh, a food critic, how interesting. I'm Joanne, local vicar, although I suppose the collar is a bit of a giveaway.

Ian: Hello Joanne, very nice to meet you. So, how did you wangle an invite to this soirée?

Joanne: Oh please, call me Jo Jo, everyone does. I don't know really, just had an invite through the post last month and I thought, well, why not? I'd get to meet the great man himself and some first-class grub into the bargain.

Ian: The great man?
Joanne: Isn't that how he thinks of himself? That's always the impression I got from seeing him on TV.
Ian: Oh yes, that's how *he* sees himself. Not how the rest of us see him, of course.
(Ray enters, followed by Sarah, who is carrying a bottle of champagne. She pours champagne into both Joanne and Ian's glasses and then stands behind the table with the bottle.)
Ian: Not joining us, Raymond?
Ray: Not just yet, but don't let me stop you.
(Ian shrugs and takes a sip of his drink.)
Ian: Saving the good stuff for later, are we?
(Ray gives a very false laugh. Graham enters, wearing his ceremonial chain of office. He looks around, spots Ray and crosses towards him.)
Graham: Raymond Myers? Graham Rossiter, good to meet you... again.
Ray: Graham. You must be the Mayor, or you had one hell of a Christmas cracker to produce that.
(Graham seems a little taken aback, but recovers and holds out his hand. Ray shakes it and leads Graham over to the table.)
Ray: Here, have a glass of champagne and grab yourself a seat. This is Ian Worthington and... erm...
Joanne: Joanne, but you already knew that. How are you, Graham?
(Sarah pours a glass of champagne for Graham, who takes it with thanks.)
Graham: I'm very well, Jo Jo. Good to see a friendly face.
(Juliet now enters. She is very well dressed, but not in a showy way.)
Ray: Ah, another of our party. We must be nearly all here.
Juliet: Juliet Davenport. Thank you for inviting me, Mr Myers.
Ray: Call me Raymond, please. Or Ray if you'd like. Champagne?

[... Continues in the full script.]