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Customer Taster

Life After Murder

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Life After Murder

Overview

Life After Murder is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 8 actors. The actors perform two formal scenes, then the audience receive additional written clues from which they try to solve the mystery, before a speech by a Master of Ceremonies reveals the guilty party.

Structure

This murder mystery pack contains:

- The Organiser's Overview [*Extract here*]
- Acts One and Two, to be performed by the actors. [*Extract here*]
- Five pieces of evidence for the audience to examine.
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution, for the Master of Ceremonies to present.

Synopsis

Albert Hall was a rich man, and a firm believer in the afterlife. In his will, he left his considerable fortune to four beneficiaries. A clause in the will stipulated that, if Albert was murdered, he would reveal the identity of his killer at a séance, which was to be attended by the beneficiaries and a police officer. Two weeks ago, Albert died from cyanide poisoning, and the séance is due to take place...

Characters and Backstory

Albert Hall was a rich man, and a firm believer in life after death. He lived in the Widdleshire town of Devborough, and was unmarried and had no family, except a sister and a distant cousin. He recently made a new will, leaving his entire estate – some ten million pounds – to be divided equally between his two relatives and two old friends. He was acutely aware that some of them were desperate for money, and his will contained an instruction that, in the event of his death by murder, he would reveal the identity of his killer at a séance. He stipulated that all the beneficiaries were to attend, plus a police officer, who would then arrest the guilty party.

Albert hosted the reading of his will two weeks ago, at his home. It was attended by the four beneficiaries and their partners. Sherry was served after the will was read, and Albert died suddenly. According to the police, the cause of death was cyanide poisoning, but there has been no arrest to date.

In accordance with the terms of the will, a séance has been arranged, and the beneficiaries, together with a police officer, are due to attend. They are:

Jean Poole: Albert's sister, and a beneficiary. She was divorced five years ago and has recently been made redundant from her job as a forensic scientist, specialising in DNA research. She lives with her new partner in her former matrimonial home.

Mal de Mere: Jean's partner. Previously a self-employed sailing instructor, his business went bust, due in no small measure to his excessive drinking, even though Jean used all her redundancy money and mortgaged her house in a vain attempt to keep his company afloat.

Rosemary Spriggs: Albert's oldest friend, and a beneficiary. She is a clairvoyant and psychic medium.

Roland Butter: A Devborough restaurateur, Albert's other old friend, and a beneficiary. His business is in financial trouble, due to poor reviews on Tripadvisor, and the discovery last summer by a health inspector of maggots in the kitchen.

Allie Kantie: A distant cousin of Albert's, and a beneficiary. Allie runs a small travel agency in the town, and desperately needs a rapid injection of cash, partly due to the damage caused to the travel industry by Covid, and partly due to competition from High Street and on-line travel agents.

Benny Dorm: Allie's business and life partner. Apart from the business debts, he is way behind with maintenance payments to his ex-wife, and is being threatened with court action.

Dawn Rayde: A Detective Inspector with Widdleshire Police.

A **Master of Ceremonies** is also required, to introduce the evening and reveal the solution.

Setting

The conservatory in Jean's home. There is one working door, which leads to the rest of the house. Set onstage is a table, large enough to seat seven people round it, and seven chairs. There are two smaller side tables, and each has a working lamp on it. There is a picture on one wall. It is seven fifty-eight pm on a Tuesday evening in October, and the curtains are drawn.

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 fifteen minutes.
- If a two-course meal is being provided, the first course is served following Act 1, and the audience are given the first three written clues.
- Act 2 is then performed – this takes around ten minutes, and is followed by the second course, and the audience are given the remaining two clues.
- If a one-course meal or a buffet is provided, the two Acts can be performed with a short interval in between, to allow the stage to be reset.
- 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 onstage 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 four minutes. After this, the Master of Ceremonies reads out a selection of the wrong or humorous answers, at their discretion, 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 a buffet.

Life After Murder

[Script Extract]

Characters

Rosemary Spriggs – Albert’s old friend, a psychic medium.

Jean Poole – Albert’s sister, a former forensic scientist.

Mal De Mere – Jean’s partner, an ex-sailing instructor.

Dawn Rayde – a police inspector.

Allie Kantie – a travel agent.

Benny Dorme – Allie’s business and life partner.

Roland Butter – Albert’s other old friend, a restaurateur.

Master of Ceremonies – Reveals further evidence before the accusations, and reveals the solution at the end. (Does not appear in scripted acts.)

Act 1

(The conservatory in Jean’s home. There is one working door, which leads to the rest of the house. Set onstage is a table, large enough to seat seven people round it, and seven chairs. There are two smaller side tables, and each has a working lamp on it. One of the lamps is lit. On the table with the unlit lamp, there is a tray with a decanter of port and seven suitable glasses, and a tea towel. There is a picture on one wall. It is seven fifty-eight pm on a Tuesday evening in October, and the curtains are drawn.)

(Rosemary is alone in the room. She is flamboyantly dressed and made up. She has a large handbag. She is standing, admiring the picture. Enter Jean, carrying a glass of water.)

Rosemary: What a gorgeous painting! The artist has caught the light brilliantly.

Jean: Yes, it’s lovely, isn’t it? Here you are. **(Hands glass to Rosemary.)**

Rosemary: Thank you, dear. I’m parched! **(Has a long drink. Puts the glass down on nearest small table.)** I always get a dry throat before I speak to George.

Jean: Who’s George?

Rosemary: I’ll explain later.

Jean: Okay. **(Pause.)** So how long have you known Albert?

Rosemary: Oh, for years! Ever since he was a struggling pianist in some obscure classical group.

Jean: You must mean the Casserolli Trio.

Rosemary: That’s it.

Jean: They didn’t do very well, but Albert had real talent. It was only a matter of time before he found success as a concert soloist.

Rosemary: Yes, fame and glory. And a lot of money.

Jean: Money he’s generously shared out between us in his will. About ten million, apparently.

Rosemary: Indeed. What a tragedy he was taken so soon.

Jean: And by one of us!

Rosemary: Surely not?

Jean: But he was poisoned, wasn’t he? At the reading of the will.

Rosemary: It does seem like it.

Jean: And we were the only people there.

Rosemary: By we, you mean the beneficiaries?

Jean: Us and our partners. So we’re all suspects.

Rosemary: I suppose we must be.

Jean: I bet that’s what the police think!

(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Rosemary: Do you want to get that, dear?

Jean: No, Mal can go. You were going to tell me about George.

Rosemary: All in good time. When the others are here.
(Enter Mal, followed by Dawn. Dawn is smartly dressed and has a handbag. Mal is casually dressed. He is a little drunk, slurring slightly.)

Mal: She's here *this* time! **(Sits down.)**

Jean: Rosemary, this is...

Rosemary: **(Interrupting.)** No, don't say another word! **(Closes her eyes, holds her head.)**
 Something's coming through... You're a police officer... CID, I think, and... a Detective Inspector?

Dawn: That's right. How did you...?

Rosemary: **(Interrupting, opening her eyes.)** Oh that's easy! Jean told me about you last week.

Dawn: I see. Dawn Rayde. **(Offers her hand.)**
(Dawn and Rosemary shake hands.)

Rosemary: Rosemary Spriggs, clairvoyant and psychic medium. Are you a believer, Inspector?

Dawn: In the afterlife?

Rosemary: Yes.

Dawn: No. I'm here in my capacity as a police officer. As you know, there was a clause in Mr Hall's will that, in the event of his death by murder, the beneficiaries and a police officer were to attend a séance at which he would reveal the identity of his killer. That's why I'm here. I apologise for my absence last week, when this meeting was originally arranged. Something urgent cropped up, and there was a breakdown in communications.

Rosemary: Not to worry, Inspector, you're here now.

Jean: This is where we'll be having the séance, Inspector. I'm sorry it's a bit sparsely furnished, but we rarely use it. As you know, there'll be seven of us, so I've put seven chairs round the table.

Rosemary: You will be joining us at the table, won't you, Inspector?

Dawn: No. I'll be sitting on my own. **(Moves a chair away from table, repositions it near wall.)**
 Here.

Jean: **(To Rosemary.)** Will that be a problem?

Rosemary: Not in the least! **(Looks at side table.)** I see you've got the port. It *is* vintage, isn't it?

Mal: Of course.

Rosemary: And properly decanted?

Mal: Naturally. **(Pause.)** Fancy a drink, Inspector?

Dawn: No, thank you.

Jean: **(To Mal.)** And neither do you! It's for the séance.

Mal: I just thought I'd try it, make sure it's up to scratch for our guests.

Jean: It's fine! So leave it alone!

Mal: Jawohl, mein Kommandant!

Dawn: **(To Jean.)** I believe your brother was interested in spiritualism.

Jean: Yes, he was. He'd seen Rosemary a few times, but at *her* home, not here.

Rosemary: That's right, dear.

Dawn: In a professional capacity?

Rosemary: Of course!

Dawn: For which money changed hands?

Rosemary: Certainly not! I was insistent about that. "Albert," I said, "if you're good enough to remember me in your will, I wouldn't dream of taking anything."
(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Mal: I'll go!
(Exit Mal, unsteadily.)

Rosemary: **(To Jean.)** I hesitate to mention this dear, but is Mal...? Has he...? Might he be...?

Jean: **(Interrupting.)** You mean is he pissed?

Rosemary: Well, yes.

Jean: He had some wine with his dinner, that's all. He's fine.

Rosemary: Oh good! Because, as I said to you last time, it's vital that everyone round the table, including Mal, has a glass of port.

Dawn: Why?
(Enter Mal, followed by Allie and Benny. Both are casually dressed. Allie has a handbag.)

Rosemary: I'll explain later.

Allie: Hi, Jean.

Jean: Good of you both to come. I know things are difficult for you right now.

Benny: *Difficult?* We're about to go bust, unless...

Jean: **(Interrupting, to Allie.)** You both remember Rosemary, don't you?

Allie: Of course.

Jean: And this is Inspector Rayde. You know why she's here.

Allie: Pleased to meet you at last, Inspector.

(Allie and Dawn shake hands.)

Benny: Hello.

(Benny and Dawn shake hands.)

Dawn: **(To Jean.)** Who organised these... meetings?

Jean: It was me. Albert made me and Swing the joint executors of his will.

Dawn: Swing?

Jean: His real name's Martin – Martin Lowe. So we call him Swing.

Mal: Rumour has it he's well endowed... Swing Lowe. Get it?

Dawn: But who *is* he?

Jean: A solicitor. Partner in Lowe, Snow And Co. in the town. Anyway, as executor, I knew what was in Albert's will, and I thought we should have the séance as soon as possible – which led to the abortive meeting last week.

Dawn: Right.

(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

Mal: That must be Roland. Roly Poly, I call him.

(Exit Mal, laughing at his own joke.)

Jean: I think Mal had better have a *small* port when we start.

Rosemary: I agree.

(Enter Mal with Roland. Roland is very smartly dressed, in a business suit, shirt and tie.)

Roland: Hello everyone, I'm so sorry I'm late. Had an unscheduled visit from the health and safety police. That's the fourth since August!

Jean: Roland, this is Inspector Rayde.

Dawn: **(To Roland.)** *Detective* Inspector, nothing to do with health and safety.

Roland: Pleased to meet you, Inspector.

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[Continued in the full Murder Mystery pack.]