



by Eileen Clark



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Customer Taster

Murder at Morpeth Manor

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About the Murder Mystery Pack

The pack provides the full script and guidance to enable you produce a successful murder mystery event. The event will work well if delivered to an audience enjoying a meal, with the ideal break for the meal to be served being at the end of Act 2.

Structure

The Murder Mystery Pack Contents

- This Overview [*Excerpt in this Taster Pack*]
- The Full Script [*Excerpt in this Taster Pack*]
- The 'Accusation Sheet', to be provided for audience members to fill in

General Staging Note

In order to perform the mystery to an audience, a Performance Licence must be purchased from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.

The play is set in the lounge of a small hotel in Northumberland. As the hotel is due for refurbishment most of the guests and staff have left. Only three staff remain and the five remaining guests are due to leave that day.

Evidence

All the evidence is within the script and there is no audience participation with the actors, although the Inspector does talk directly to the audience at certain times during the play and also before the beginning of interval, when he invites the audience to consider the motives, actions and evidence against each character. Some time should be given for the audience to discuss this between themselves.

Whodunit slips can be inside show programmes or handed out during the interval. The Inspector invites the audience to fill them in by naming the person they believe to be the murderer and to add any clues they have spotted. These slips are then collected in and taken backstage. If it is a large audience, it is advisable to have one Whodunit slip per table rather than one per person to allow time for them to be checked and the results recorded; this would require either table numbers or team names to be taken.

Solution

At the end of the Denouement, the Inspector can say how many votes each character was given then announce the winner and award prizes. If more than one table or one person wins, a draw can be held or the naming of the correct clues taken into consideration.

Timing

Acts 1 & 2 should run to about 40 minutes.

This should be followed by a break for a meal or other refreshment during which the audience make their accusations. (Time also needs to be allowed for someone to collate the audience solutions and to pick the best.)

The denouement should take about 7 minutes plus the time taken for rewarding the audience for their efforts. (In some cases, it can be fun to read out the best or worst of the wrong solutions.)

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Characters

Inspector Grayson - Policeman

Sheila Redfern - Hotel Owner

Jane Pinker - Housekeeper

Fred Greenway - Porter

Jack Brownlow - Guest

Sylvia Golding - Guest

Peter Bluett - Guest

Irene Bluett - Guest

Act 1

(The Inspector is seated at his desk glancing through some files. The spotlight is on the desk. He looks up.)

Inspector: Ah, good, I see you've arrived. I've been glancing through some files to find a suitable crime to discuss with you and I think I've found one that may hold your interest. By the way, my name is Inspector Grayson. Right then, settle down and listen carefully because there will be some questions requiring answers eventually. This case was called Murder in Morpeth Manor, a small but up-market hotel in the North East. It was late one Sunday morning when I got a phone call from the Manor. I happened to be in my office at the time clearing up some paper work. It was Jane Pinker, the hotel housekeeper. "Mrs Redfern requests you call at the Manor as soon as possible as there has been an accident". An accident, I thought, why call the police? It's a doctor you're more likely to need. However, I agreed to call in as it was on my way home and it was as well I did because it was no accident that... but there, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's go back a little in time to earlier that morning so you can get a complete picture of the people involved in this so-called accident. It was near the end of the season and the hotel was due to close for refurbishment, so most of the guests and staff had gone. Only eight people remained. Mrs Sheila Redfern, the hotel owner, Jane Pinker, housekeeper and Fred Greenway the porter, plus five weekend guests who were all due to leave that day.

(The Inspector's light fades as the stage lights come up.)

(Jack sits on the couch reading a newspaper.)

Sylvia: **(Enters left.)** Oh... hullo.

Jack: Good morning. **(Returns to reading.)**

Sylvia: You're not sitting on it?

Jack: Sorry?

Sylvia: It must be somewhere. **(Searching round room.)**

Jack: Yes... yes, I'm sure it must.

Sylvia: I thought I might have left it by the pool after my swim last night but the door's locked.

Jack: The door?

Sylvia: The door down to the pool-room.

Jack: Ah. Well, I don't suppose they'll want anyone going down there if they're emptying the pool during the refurbishment.

Sylvia: I'm not going without it.

Jack: Why don't you ask one of the staff? They've bound to have found the... er, whatever it is you have lost.

Sylvia: My swimsuit, silly. **(Giggles)** I wouldn't be swimming in the nude, would I?

Jack: Oh no... no I'm sure not. Look, Mrs Redfern or someone may have found it. **(Returns to newspaper.)**

(Sylvia bounces down beside him.)

- Jack:** **(Lowering his newspaper.)** Er... had a nice weekend... Miss Golding?
- Sylvia:** Lovely, thank you, but I told you before, it's Sylvia and you're Jack, aren't you?
- Jack:** That... that's right.
- Sylvia:** Yes, it's been a nice little unexpected break.
- Jack:** Good.
- Sylvia:** Wasn't expecting the hotel to be so posh.
- Jack:** No?
- Sylvia:** Well, prizes so seldom are when you win something.
- Jack:** Sorry?
- Sylvia:** I won this weekend in a competition. Funny thing was, though, I don't remember entering it, the competition, I mean. But I wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth, now was I?
- Jack:** No. I suppose not.
- Sylvia:** **(Sits closer.)** I'll let you into a little secret, shall I?
- Jack:** Oh, I'm sure there's no need to...
- Sylvia:** And it doesn't matter if I tell anyone because it's too late to do anything about it. I've had my free weekend so they can't take it away from me now.
- Jack:** But why would they want to?
- Sylvia:** Because... I never enter competitions.
- Jack:** Ah.
- Sylvia:** So I couldn't have won, could I?
- Jack:** No, it seems not.
- Sylvia:** When the voucher first arrived, I thought, goodness, there's been some sort of mistake. I'll have to return it but there was no return address, so how could I return it?
- Jack:** How indeed.
- Sylvia:** There you are then.
- Jack:** Yes. **(Attempts to return to newspaper.)**
- Sylvia:** I needed a break. I work very hard. I'm an actress, you know?
- Jack:** Er... no, no, I didn't know.
- Sylvia:** I've been in lots of adverts and I was in that play Murder Will Out. You must have seen it. **(Waits expectantly.)**
- Jack:** **(Shakes head.)** I don't really watch much television.
- Sylvia:** It wasn't the biggest part in the world but I did have some lines.
- Jack:** Jolly good.
- Sylvia:** And I had a really good part in that medical series Doctor Tom's Diary. At least, I would have had a good part if he hadn't stuck his nose in.
- Jack:** Sorry?
- Sylvia:** That real doctor... what's his name... Whitley, that was it. I mean, I didn't even know he was there at first, on the set, somewhere in the background, watching, spying on us all. A medical advisor they called him. Okay, so he was there to advise but there was no need to say my lines were sup... superflu... not needed, was there?
- Jack:** Oh dear.
- Sylvia:** They cut my part right out. I was resting for months after that.
- Jack:** Resting?
- Sylvia:** Out of work.
- Jack:** Oh... er, bad luck.
- Sylvia:** It was a while ago and I had just about got over it when, would you believe it, there he was, in the dining room, eating breakfast!
- Jack:** This was...?
- Sylvia:** Him! That creature who had practically ruined my career, that Whitley! All the anger flooded back. I wanted to go and pour my orange juice over his head.
- Jack:** Goodness me.
- Sylvia:** But I didn't. I just glared at him. He did look up but just stared straight through me as though I didn't exist.
- Jack:** I expect he didn't realise who you were.

Sylvia: I want to find my costume and get out of here because if I see that horrible man again I might do something I'll regret.

Jack: Oh, Miss Gold... er Sylvia, really I wouldn't.

Sylvia: Like, if I pass him on the stairs I might be tempted to give him a push from behind and send him tumbling down. Serve him right if he broke his neck.

Jack: Yes... well, I really think it best if you do get on your way.

Sylvia: I knew you'd understand, Jack. You have such an understanding face. **(Leans towards him.)**

Jack: Er... have I? **(Rises. Puts newspaper on table.)** I must be off then. Still got a few bits and bobs to pack away.

Sylvia: **(Rises)** It's been ever so nice chatting to you. Now, don't forget to look out for repeats of Murder Will Out.

Jack: What? **(Edges towards door left.)** Oh yes... yes indeed. I'll do that.

Sylvia: **(Follows Jack.)** It's ever so good. I know you'll love it.

Jack: Yes, I'm sure.

Sylvia: And if you do see my costume somewhere you can always pop it across to my room. I'm just across the corridor.

Jack: Really? Well, must dash now.

Sylvia: I'll come and say goodbye before I go but I must find that darned costume first.

Jack: Perhaps it's under one of the cushions.

Sylvia: **(Turns to look at cushions.)** Oh no, I looked under all the cushions. **(Jack makes a quick exit left.)**

Sylvia: **(Turns back.)** Oh, he's gone. Well really, some people. Now, where can the blessed thing be? **(To door right and glances into room.)**

(Peter and Irene Bluett enter left. Peter carries a camera.)

Peter: Irene, our train's not due till this afternoon so we might as well... Sylvia, my dear, looking for someone?

Sylvia: **(Closes door and turns.)** Peter, sweetie, you haven't seen my swimming costume?

Peter: Oh no. Have you lost it? Not that lovely gold one you were wearing in the pool last night?

(A glare from Irene.)

Sylvia: Yes. Have you seen it?

Irene: No he hasn't! Neither Mr Bluett nor I have seen it. Peter, you said you wanted to go and take some more photographs.

Peter: Yes, in a minute, Irene.

Sylvia: That nice Jack Brownlow is going to look for it and I'm going to ask Freddie to keep an eye open too.

Peter: Freddie?

Sylvia: Freddie Greenway, the porter, silly.

Peter: Oh yes. And I certainly will too, my dear.

Sylvia: Ta ever so and don't forget you promised to take some snaps of me before you leave.

Peter: I haven't forgotten, Sylvia.

Sylvia: You are a poppit. See you later then. **(Exits)**

Irene: Ooh Peter sweetie, you are a poppit.

Peter: Irene! She'll hear you.

Irene: Who cares?

Peter: Now, dear, don't go getting yourself upset. We've had a lovely weekend and the best thing about it is it hasn't cost us a penny.

Irene: Yes... I still can't understand that.

Peter: You know you're always buying raffle tickets and for once it paid off.

Irene: It's just that I don't remember buying that particular one and there was no mention who the promoters were on the voucher. I did ask Mrs Redfern but she wasn't able to help.

Peter: What does it matter? We've had a wonderful time and we couldn't have afforded it otherwise.

Irene: No... not since... **(Sniffs)** well, you know.

Peter: Irene, I thought we'd decided to forget that horrible business. Why do you have to bring it up now?

Irene: Why! You ask me why? That man... that creature who ruined our lives was sitting there in the dining room. I couldn't believe my eyes at first.

Peter: Hardly ruined our lives. I did manage to keep my job at the college.

Irene: It cost you the Headship, Peter. **(Sits couch and sighs.)** I had so many plans.

Peter: I know. **(Sits by her.)** I know, my dear, but it's over now and we're managing, aren't we? It's just a bit of rotten luck that he booked into the same hotel. We'll be off home soon and we'll probably never see Whitely again. Meantime we'll try to keep out of his way.

Irene: Why should we? We've as much right to be here as he has.

Peter: I know we have but I don't think he recognised me and I prefer to leave it that way.

Irene: Doesn't seeing him again bring everything back? The humiliation, the shame. Doesn't it make you furious just passing him in the corridor... don't you want to lash out at him?

Peter: What would be the point? I don't want to make a fuss.

Irene: Well I would like to make a fuss. I'd like to smash his stupid head in!

Peter: Darling, it's not like you to be so vicious.

Irene: You must have felt some emotion, some anger when you first saw him.

Peter: Oh yes, of course I did. I wouldn't have objected if he'd choked on his porridge but what's the point of wistful thinking.

Irene: No point at all I suppose.

Peter: That's right, dear.

Irene: Peter, I wish you wouldn't be so... so friendly with that Sylvia creature. It was that kind of thing that started the whole horrible business in the first place and finally lost you that promotion.

Peter: I know, I know. It was a rotten thing Whitley did, telling the other college governors I could be involved when that money went missing just because Gloria and I were on friendly terms.

Irene: And by the time the secretary confessed and said she'd done it all on her own it was too late. They had offered the job to Philip Jenkins when it should have been you.

Peter: I admit I was disappointed but it's all water under the bridge now.

Irene: Being over friendly with women give people the wrong impression, Peter.

Peter: It's only my way, my dear. You know you're the only woman for me, Irene.

Irene: I do so want to believe that.

Peter: Then do, my sweet. Now then... **(Rises)** why don't you just sit back and relax while I nip out and take some snaps.

Irene: **(Rises)** Oh no you don't. We'll both go.

Peter: Just as you wish, my dear.

(Sheila enters left.)

Peter: Ah, Mrs Redfern, just off to take a few more snaps.

Sheila: Lovely. You haven't seen Dr Whitely, by any chance?

Peter: No, sorry.

Sheila: I wonder where he could have got to.

Irene: **(Sharply)** We have no idea. Come along, Peter.

(Peter and Irene exit left.)

Sheila: Dear me, she seems in a mood. **(To door right and glances in.)** Nope, not in there either.

(Jane enters door left.)

Jane: Found him yet?

Sheila: No. I've just checked the TV room. Are you sure he didn't come down to breakfast?

Jane: Positive. He's not in his room but his clothes are still in the wardrobe and drawers. His shaving kit and so forth are in the bathroom. As far as I can see the only thing missing, bar Doctor Whitely himself, is a towel and bathrobe.

Sheila: That's it! He's gone for a swim. Why didn't we think of that before.

Jane: As a matter fact I did. So I thought I'd better check the pool-room out.

Sheila: And?

Jane: I couldn't get in, could I?

Sheila: Why not?

Jane: You've locked the pool-room door and you must still have the key because it's not on its usual hook in the kitchen.

Sheila: I haven't locked it. You know we stopped locking that door because some guests like an early morning or late night swim.

Jane: Well, somebody has.

Sheila: Probably Fred. Although I don't know why.

Jane: Oh cripes! I've just thought. I bet Whitley did go for an early swim or sauna and Fred's locked him in.

Sheila: No, surely not. He'd have shouted and banged on the door, someone would have heard him.

Jane: I suppose so. Could he have taken ill down there?

Sheila: Oh Lordy, that's all we need, an accident in the pool. We'd better find Fred and get down there pronto because I don't want any of the guests...

(Sheila turns to door left as Sylvia enters.)

[Continued in the full script.]