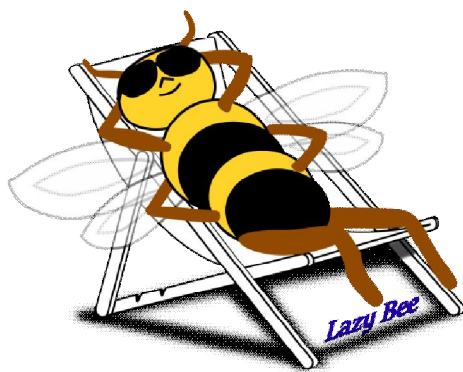




An Interactive Murder Mystery with a Continental Flavour
by

Gordon Lewis and Lynn Rushby



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Customer Taster

Sinning at the Twinning

by Gordon Lewis and Lynn Rushby

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Sinning at the Twinning

An interactive murder mystery with a continental flavour

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About the Murder Mystery Pack

The full pack provides all you need to stage a successful murder mystery event. There are scripted sections as well as sections in which the characters interact with the audience, so some background character knowledge will be required of the cast in order for them to be able to improvise; the pack contains guidance which will help prepare for this.

Structure

The full Murder Mystery Pack contains:

- An Organiser's Overview [*extract here*]
 - Staging notes
 - Character biographies
 - Production notes (including props list and costume suggestions)
- The Script [*extract here*]
- The 'Accusation Sheet', to be provided for audience members to fill in.
- A Table of detailed characters' movements on the day of the murder.

Staging Notes

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

A murder mystery play works well when a meal is served throughout the acts, and there are ideal breaks for courses to be served at the ends of Act 1 and 2. The break after Act 2 also allows for the audience to complete their Accusation Sheets.

Outline

It has been ten years since the Kentish town of Crumbdale twinned with Bouzville in France and the residents of Crumbdale have commissioned a commemorative plaque to mark the anniversary. A delegation from France has just arrived and many people are looking forward to renewing friendships with their 'twins'. Adam McAdam, the chair of the twinning committee, will present the plaque at a ceremony in a marquee in the grounds of Crumbdale Manor, owned by his wife, Lady Caroline. Ruthless and highly ambitious, McAdam has made many enemies, both in his personal life and business dealings. He has big plans to develop the Manor and local area, but others have very different ideas about the future, both for his projects and for McAdam himself. So who will use the comings and goings of the day to try to get away with murder?

Characters

Adam McAdam - Ruthless local developer.

Lady Caroline Crumbdale-Smythe - Adam's aristocratic wife.

Imogen Trollope - Adam's personal assistant.

The Honourable Duncan Crumbdale-Smythe - Son of Lady Caroline.

Harry Hawkins - Adam's former business partner.

Geraldine Greenfinger - Librarian, environmentalist.

Barry Blenkinsop - Chief Planning Officer of Crumbdale Council.

Monsieur Franck LeBanque - Mayor of Bouzville, France.

Madame Elise LeBanque - Wife of Monsieur Franck.

Inspector Hagley - Police Investigator.

Constable Racy - Police Investigator.

Optional incidental roles - Members of Crumbdale Twinning Committee at Meet and Greet

Suggested Timings

This event has been designed to incorporate a two-course meal, giving the audience time to discuss the clues and suspects and to make their accusations. The overall time for the event is approximately 2 hours, but this can vary depending on audience size, type of meal, etc.

Meet and Greet (15 mins) - The audience arrives. Unscripted.

Act 1 (25 mins) - The Murder. Scripted.

Interval/1st meal break (35 mins) - A chance for the audience to discuss the event. They can be served the main course of the meal.

Act 2 (15 mins) - The Investigation. Led by the detectives. Some questions will be prepared, but the actors will improvise responses to the audience's questions/comments.

Interval/2nd meal break (15 mins) - The audience consider the suspects and complete the accusation forms. The forms are collected. They can also be served dessert and/or drinks.

Act 3 (10 mins) - All is revealed! Scripted statements and a confession.

And finally... (5 mins) - The winner is announced and prizes awarded.

Improvised Sections

The play begins with a 'Meet and Greet', where the characters interact with the audience as they arrive. Each character has some suggested actions (in the script document) for this section. During Act 2, there is an improvised questioning session. Each actor should be fully conversant with the background to their character for these sections. They should also know their movements on the day of the murder (see Suspect Movement Table).

During the questioning, the suspects must tell the truth to the best of their knowledge, although they do not have to volunteer any information that they are not asked about. Only the murderer may lie deliberately. Suspects should respond "I don't know" rather than mislead the audience. It is important that the actors stay in character in this section and react to information provided by the other suspects accordingly.

The two investigators can provide humour and ensure all the main points are covered. The questioning is not scripted, but suggestions are provided below. The investigators should start with one or more questions to each suspect before inviting the audience to ask their own questions. If the audience is reluctant, you can have some plants to help get things going.

Suggested Police Questions

- Describe your movements today prior to the start of the ceremony.
- How would you describe the deceased?
- What was your relationship with the deceased?
- How familiar are you with the Manor House and grounds?
- Have you any knowledge of poisons?
- Did you see any of the other suspects today before the start of the ceremony?
- Did you see anything suspicious when you arrived at the Manor?
- Have you had any financial dealings with the deceased?

Character Biographies

There are 5M, 4F, and 2 gender non-specific police roles.

Adam McAdam: Late 40s. Universally disliked and feared. Highly ambitious, ruthless, self-made millionaire in the construction business. Many allegations of bribery and corruption have been made against him, but nothing proved. A ladies' man. Likes good food, wine and cars. Married Lady Caroline for status, land and aristocratic contacts. Takes advantage of weaknesses in others. Short-tempered. Asthmatic.

Barry "The Bung" Blenkinsop: In his 40s. Chief Planning Officer for Crumbdale Council. From a working-class background, he married a local girl from a well-to-do family. He struggles to meet her expectations on his modest salary, especially with two daughters at private school Hoedean. This led to him accepting increasingly large bribes from McAdam for granting planning consent and suppressing adverse environmental reports. He's now in thrall to McAdam and can see no way out.

Lady Caroline Crumbdale-Smythe: Mid 50s. At 18, she married Lord Reginald Crumbdale-Smythe, a much older local landowner, who died two years later after they'd had one son, Duncan. Death duties, taxes, massive house running costs, etc. left her land rich but cash poor. She initially saw McAdam as a charming "bit of rough", a financial saviour and a way to maintain the estate, despite her family's opposition. Now she loathes him. A case of marrying in haste...

The Honorable Duncan Crumbdale-Smythe: Mid 30s. Son of the late Lord Reginald. Decent, gullible and unworldly, he lacks confidence and ambition. He fell for Imogen's looks, flirtation and flattery. Loathes his step-father, who belittles him and controls the family purse. Is Estate Manager in name only.

"Hapless" Harry Hawkins: Early 60s. Former successful property developer. He went into partnership with McAdam for a very large local development project, expecting to retire on the profits. McAdam bought him out with worthless bearer shares in a clever scam, leaving him penniless. Turned to drink and blames McAdam for his downfall.

Imogen Trollope: Late 30s. Seen by some to be a gold-digger. Has been McAdam's PA and secret lover for the last two years. She found his brash charm attractive, along with his confidence, wealth and power. Initially confident that her youth and looks would make him leave Caroline and marry her, she has secretly started dating Duncan to hedge her bets. Her biological clock is ticking!

Geraldine Greenfinger: Late 50s-60s. Bio-chemist graduate, works as a librarian. An avid campaigner for environmental issues, she was once arrested for a new road protest in which she was chained to a tree with Swampy. Detests developers like McAdam, who ruin the countryside and destroy habitats of endangered species. Suspects corruption in local planning office.

Monsieur Franck LeBanque: Mid 60s. Distinguished older man, Mayor of Bouzivilite, the twin town of Crumbdale. Knows his wife, Elise, is having a fling with McAdam, but is unconcerned about her occasional infidelity, as he has a mistress of his own back in France.

Madame Elise LeBanque: Late 50s. Confident and elegant. Has had ongoing discreet liaisons with McAdam since the first town twinning 10 years ago. She knows about her husband's mistress but shares Franck's Gallic approach to extra-marital relationships. What's good for the goose...!

(Suggested ages are only a guide, although Duncan should be around 20 years younger than his mother, Lady Caroline.)

Production Notes

Setting

The interior of a marquee in the grounds of Crumbdale Manor on the day of the twinning anniversary. Simple bunting and French and English themed decorations can suggest this. A table is set with bottles of champagne and glasses at one end and an inhaler at the other. At the rear there is a plaque, behind a curtain, commemorating the anniversary.

Sinning at the Twinning

[Script Extract]

Meet and Greet

[The purpose of the Meet and Greet is to set the scene and provide some background information, without giving too much away.]

(As the audience arrives, Lady Caroline welcomes them. The audience are treated as if they are local Crumbdale residents or French visitors from Bouziville. Members of the cast then join in briefly, to help establish their characters by interacting with audience members or each other. The actors must stay in character throughout, even if they know people in the audience. The first 4 characters are those involved with organising the event at Crumbdale Manor. This is improvised but these suggestions should help.)

Adam – on his mobile, bragging about the golf club development, encouraging a potential new investor etc., or giving orders to Duncan regarding the estate.

Caroline – as the Lady of the Manor, greeting the guests.

Duncan – looking harassed, doing final checks of the marquee and grounds using a checklist on a clipboard.

Imogen – checking hair and make-up, taking a selfie on her phone, checking people's names against the official list of invited guests.

(As they leave to get ready for the ceremony, Geraldine, Harry and Barry come in separately. They have not been invited to the event and so will be rather furtive. They do not acknowledge or interact with each other.)

Geraldine – handing out leaflets, trying to garner support for green issues.

Harry – obviously drunk, sipping from a hip flask or bottle, complaining about the waste of money involved in the event.

Barry – looking very worried, on mobile, trying to get hold of Adam.

(As they leave, Lady Caroline will invite people to take their seats for the ceremony.)

Caroline: Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, welcome to Crumbdale Manor. The ceremony to mark the tenth anniversary of the twinning of Crumbdale in Kent and Bouziville in France will be starting very shortly, so please, *asseyez vous s'il vous plait!*

(The audience are then seated to watch the scripted section of the play.)

Act 1

(The action takes place in a large marquee erected in the grounds of Crumbdale Manor. It is the tenth anniversary of the twinning between the town of Crumbdale in Kent and Bouziville in France. A table is set with bottles of champagne and glasses at one end and an inhaler at the other. At the rear there is a plaque, behind a curtain, commemorating the anniversary. The play starts shortly before the ceremony takes place.)

(Adam enters, taking a call on his mobile. He is carrying plans for a new golf course.)

Adam: I'm looking at them right now. The golf course is only going to work if we get another twenty units in the walled garden... Don't give me that crap, Barry. You're the Chief Planning Officer. You can push anything through if you put your mind to it!... So how the hell do you think you're going to keep your darling brats at Hoedean on your pathetic salary? We had a deal, mate, and you'd better stick to it! (He ends the conversation.)

(Enter Caroline with a floral arrangement. Adam tries to hide the plans behind his back.)

Caroline: Adam! What are you skulking in here for? (Puts flowers on table.) Our guests will be arriving for the twinning ceremony any minute.

Adam: Er... I was just going over my speech.

Caroline: Oh really? So what's that you're hiding behind your back? **(She snatches the plans and looks at them.)** What's this? This isn't what we agreed for the golf course - the eighteenth hole is on the front lawn! And our carriage drive is now a driving range! So what's next? Our beautiful home becomes the bloody club house? You seem hell-bent on destroying five hundred years of Crumbdale heritage. You *promised*, you absolutely promised that converting the stables would be the last. My father was right about you – I wish I'd listened to him!

Adam: No-one would ever be good enough for your family. All those stuck up airs and graces and not a penny in the bank. You only married me to keep this place together. You thought I'd be a pushover and you'd get your manicured mitts on my working class cash. While your precious house is crumbling around you, I'm making plans. So what's it to be, eighteen small holes in the lawn or a hundred and eighteen big holes in the roof? Your call! **(He uses his inhaler and puts it down on table again.)**

Caroline: I realise now that I only married you because I was lonely and vulnerable. I had been on my own for so long after Reggie died. He was more of a man than you'll ever be. He did everything to keep this place together. He may not have had much money but he had class, honesty and integrity, things you'll never understand.

Adam: It was your precious Lord Reggie that got you into this mess in the first place, living the grand lifestyle with nothing to back it up. All those fancy servants – butlers, gardeners, upstairs maids, downstairs maids, under the sodding stairs maids! Swanning around as if he was still living in the last century. I'm looking to the future. A posh golf course for the stinking rich – that's the way to make money!

Caroline: Look, I agreed to converting the stables into holiday homes because that wouldn't affect our privacy. And I reluctantly went along with a half a dozen time-share units in the walled garden to raise the money to restore the windows. But this is totally unacceptable!

(Enter Imogen.)

Imogen: Oh, there you are, Caroline. The caterers need to know where to set up.

Caroline: I suppose it was too much to expect Adam's "personal assistant" to lift a finger to help. As usual, I'll have to do everything myself. **(To Adam.)** And as for you, you haven't heard the last of this! **(Exits)**

Imogen: I don't know why you still put up with that stuck-up cow and her pathetic son. I'm sick of her looking down her nose at me and treating me as if I was something nasty she's trodden in. And as for her precious Duncan, he's as much use as a chocolate teapot. Why on earth did you make him the estate manager?

Adam: Just keeping them sweet, my dear, until I get full control of everything.

Imogen: And then you'll divorce the bitch and we can finally get married?

Adam: All in good time, Imogen darling, but we have to see this deal through.

Imogen: Oh yes, the golf club. I know how much it means to you, or to us, darling. It's one in the eye for all those who said you'd never get planning permission. But they don't know how persuasive you can be. **(She flutters her eyelashes and moves closer to him.)**

Adam: I have my ways, Sweetie, as you well know. But right now I have to concentrate on greeting our French visitors. As Chair of the Twinning Committee, I want to make sure we put on a good show. And it's your job to make sure everything goes smoothly. And keep an eye out for that environmentalist nutter who seems to be haunting me.

Imogen: Oh that daft old cow, Geraldine. How can anyone get their knickers in a twist over a bloody newt?

Adam: Ugh, I really don't want the image of her baggy old knickers in my head, twisted or not! I'd much rather think about your cute little panties.

Imogen: Adam darling... I've got something really important to tell you... I'm two weeks late. Isn't that wonderful, you'll have your own child at last!

Adam: Really? **(Uses inhaler and replaces it on the table.)** That'll be another immaculate conception then, will it?

Imogen: What do you mean?

Adam: I had the snip two years ago, so whoever's bastard child you're carrying, it ain't mine! **(Adam pushes Imogen away and exits.)**

Imogen: **(Calling after him.)** Adam! **(She starts to sob.)**

(Enter Duncan in a rush, carrying his clipboard.)

Duncan: Have you seen...? Imogen, darling, whatever's the matter? I hope that lout of a step-father of mine hasn't been upsetting you. He really doesn't appreciate you properly. He's been in a vile mood all day, shouting at everyone and ordering us about, just so that he can lord it over us all in front of the French. If it wasn't for Mama, I'd take him down a peg or two.

Imogen: I'm alright. It's just that my emotions are all over the place. It's the hormones raging, I suppose.

Duncan: Hormones raging? Why's that, darling?

Imogen: Oh, Duncan, I don't know how to tell you – I'm going to have your baby! Please tell me you're happy!

Duncan: That's, er, amazing, darling. After all, we've, er, only made love twice, and we were a little the worse for wear both times.

Imogen: Well, we let our hair down while Adam was away in France.

Duncan: That's wonderful, darling. We can tie the knot as soon as possible and I don't care how much mother and bloody Adam object. We can leave this place and our rotten jobs and set up our very own home together.

Imogen: Oh that would be lovely, darling, but what are we going to live off?

Duncan: We don't need money and this fancy lifestyle. **(He puts his arms around her waist from behind.)** I'll get a simple job and we'll rent a little bed-sit to start with and you can stay at home and look after our little baby.

(Duncan sings happily, oblivious to Imogen's horror at the prospect.)

Duncan: All you need is love, la la la la! All you need is love, love, love is all you need.

(Imogen collapses into tears again. Duncan is unaware of this.)

(Enter Harry, drunk.)

Harry: Where's that thieving, cheating father of yours?

Duncan: He's no father of mine, but if you mean my *step*-father, I've no idea where he is and I care even less.

Harry: I want my money back. He's conned me out of two million.

Duncan: Two million! How?

Harry: Those bearer shares he fobbed me off with for my half of the business weren't worth the paper they were printed on – while he's made a fortune at my expense. I'll swing for him, you just watch me!

Duncan: Calm down, Harry. Let's discuss this tomorrow. The French will be arriving any minute for this flipping twinning that no-body except Adam wanted.

[Continues in full script.]