

The Little Willey Murder

by

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Customer Taster Version

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Customer Taster for The Little Willey Murder

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview (Provided in this *Taster* document)
- Character descriptions (Two provided in this *Taster* document)
- Act One and Two, to be performed by the actors (Script part in the *Taster*)
- Four pieces of evidence for the audience to examine (One available in *Taster*)
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution.

Setting

The setting for this piece is the living room of an ordinary house, so it can be performed either as a stage play or as entertainment during a meal for the audience. Guidelines are provided for timing each act around the preparation of the food.

Props

Act One

Table and chairs (**Set Onstage**)

Scripts (**On Table**)

Coffee and Tray (**Lou**)

Handbags (**Diane and Reggie**)

Act Two

Stage set as before

Script (**Alec**)

Overview

The Little Willey Murder is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 9 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 narrator reveals the guilty party.

The action takes place in the lounge of Jack and Lou's large, comfortable house in the village of Little Willey, home of the Little Willey Players. The lounge is off the entrance hall, as is the kitchen, a downstairs cloakroom, the study, the dining room and the stairs. Upstairs are 5 bedrooms, 2 of which are en suite, and a large bathroom. The Players meet regularly at each others' houses, and are all familiar with the layout of the Dawe residence.

Lou held auditions for the next play the previous week, and has invited a select few to her home to announce her casting decisions. They have just finished dinner – during which Lou banned all talk of the play – saying she would reveal all with coffee in the lounge.

To accommodate the plot Jack and Diane must wear jackets and Jack must have a slight limp.

Running the script in front of an audience

Note that you need to purchase a performance licence from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.

Preparation

Initial preparation can be done by distributing the opening scene, then running a first rehearsal in which the actors have to guess the identity of the murderer (evaluating the written evidence) before they seen the script for the Final Scene. (It's fun! Why not? It also ensures that the actors become familiar with the logic of the mystery - they will learn more about themselves and their roles from the evidence.)

Decide on the format for declaring the winner and if you will be using a tie-breaker question in the event that two or more audience members guess the murderer correctly.

Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.

Distribute the written evidence

Announce that you wish them to evaluate a selection of the evidence gathered by the police.

Give the audience a specified time to evaluate the evidence.

Accusations

At the end of the evaluation period, ask the audience to fill in the accusation sheets, including the tie-breaker question. (Make sure you have some spare pens or pencils!)

Solution

Act out the final scene.

Prize giving

There may be an option to read out some of the (more bizarre) audience solutions!

Declare the winner.

Award a prize to the best solution! (And possibly a prize for the worst.)

As a broad guide your event might run as follows:

- 7.30 to 8.00 Meet and greet; pre-dinner drinks
- 8.00 to 8.30 Act One
- 8:30 Serve starters
- 8.45 Act Two
- 8.55 Distribute evidence and "accusation sheets" to each member of the audience
- 9.00 Collect Accusation sheets
- 9.10 Main course (during which the cast/crew evaluate the audience answers and choose the winning answer - by reference to the tie breaker and drawing from a hat if necessary)
- 9.40 The Solution and Prize-giving.
- 9.50 Dessert

The Little Willey Murder

by Ian McCutcheon

Characters

Lorraine Dawe: Known to everybody as Lou. Chair of the committee and director of their latest show.

Jack Dawe: Lorraine's long-suffering husband.

Alec Tricity: The aging 'star' of the group, he is now past his best.

Russell Hobbs: Alec's partner (although they both insist he is just a 'lodger').

Regina Grey: Known as 'Reggie Mental'. Prone to outbursts of artistic temperament.

Justin Thyme: The new male recruit.

Diane Knight: Justin's girlfriend.

Narrator: Reveals further evidence before the accusations, and reveals the solution at the end.

Director: Can be a part played by an actor, or the actual director him/herself. Appears in the solution to give the prize(s) away.

Example of Character descriptions

Lorraine Dawe:

Known to everybody as Lou. She has been a member of the village amateur dramatic society for years, and was chosen by the Committee (of which she is the chair) to direct the next production – a whodunnit. Having her as director was not a popular choice with some members of the group. She is bossy and overbearing, and thinks she's dead sexy.

Jack Dawe:

Lorraine's long-suffering husband. His only involvement with the group is running the bar on show nights. Their marriage is under strain as he suspects Lou has been having an affair with the newest male recruit to the group. Jack is the quiet type, but still waters run deep.

The Little Willey Murder

Act One

(As the curtain rises the stage is empty. Lou enters, carrying a tray of coffee.)

Lou: (calling out through the door as she enters) OK darlings, coffee is served in the lounge.

(To herself) And it s going to be a damn sight more bitter for some than others!

(She puts the tray down on a table, picks up a script from the same table and sits down.)

(Enter the rest of the cast, in the order in which they speak. They all sit down wherever they can as they come in.)

Jack: I hope you haven't used that awful Columbian rubbish we had last night.

Lou: No my darling. Only the finest from Waitrose.

Alec: As long as mine's hot and wet I don t care where it comes from.

Russell: So I've heard.

Alec: Shut up Russell!

Russell: Oh pardon me! Just trying to inject a little humour into the proceedings.

Reggie: You're so coarse Russell. What must Diane and Justin think of you?

Russell: The same as the rest of you I expect. (Turns to Justin) My dear boy, I never did thank you for those tablets you gave me for my Todger. He s up and about again already. He must be the fittest cat in the village. It s such a treat to have a decent vet now. Old Chivers was pretty hopeless.

Jack: His obvious hatred of animals probably had something to do with it.

Justin: All part of the service.

Diane: Justin's a real animal lover. Aren t you darling?

Alec: (To Justin) By the way, I've been meaning to ask you all evening. Why on earth have you got a thermometer in your top pocket?

Justin: (Looks and sees Alec is right) Oh damn! Some arse must have my biro.

Lou: Boys and girls – please help yourselves to coffee and I'll announce my chosen cast for 'The Detective Always Rings Twice'. I'm really looking forward to directing a murder/mystery. I just know our loyal audience will love it.

Reggie: I still think it's a mistake. Our audiences just aren't bright enough to follow the plot, never mind work out who dunnit.

Jack: Oh I don't know. Some of them are quite intelligent.

Lou: Of course they are. Now settle down. Firstly the detective, Lysander Parrott. I've decided the play would be much more exciting if the detective was a woman. So I've re-written the script, changing Lysander to Lucy... and I'll be playing her.

Russell: So you're actually going through with it! When you told me in the pub last Friday I thought you were having me on.

Reggie: Lou, you can't do this! It's always been in the Players' constitution that the director never takes a part in his or her own production. It s just not on.

Jack: I agree. You should at least have consulted the committee.

Lou: It s got nothing to do with the committee. I'm running this production.

Alec: You promised me the detective. I've even started learning the lines.

Reggie: That'll make a change.

Russell: Oh yes he has. I can vouch for that.

Lou: I'm sorry Alec darling: but I'm playing the detective.

Alec: So what part have you given me?

Lou: I'm afraid there isn't a part for you in this production, darling.

Alec: I can't accept that.

Lou: Alec, darling, even the best of us need a rest from time to time.

Alec: I don't want a rest.

Lou: Darling, that's my decision and you'll just have to accept it.

Alec: And what if I won't accept it?

Lou: You can always resign from the Players.

Alec: Huh!!

Lou: Can we please get on! Thank you. Next we have the heroin, Emelda. Reggie darling, I think...

Reggie: **(Interrupting)** Thank you. I accept.

Lou: Let me finish please. Reggie darling, I think your particular talents would be much better utilised if you played Daphne.

Reggie: **(Outraged)** The corpse!?

Lou: Yes darling.

Reggie: But she's only got about six lines at the beginning before she gets strangled.

Russell: If the cap fits...

Reggie: Shut up Russell! Lou, this is madness. I was born to play Emelda.

Lou: Perhaps you were, darling... .. But sadly about 20 years too early.

Jack: Steady on Lou. These are our friends.

Alec: Don't bet on it.

Reggie: Lou – darling – you can stuff your murder/mystery where the sun doesn't shine as far as I'm concerned. I am not playing a corpse.

Lou: I'll take that as a no, shall I?

Russell: Well... This is getting really catty! So who does get Emelda?

Lou: **(Ignoring Russell)** Diane – how would you like to play Emelda for me?

Diane: **(Excited and embarrassed)** Oh gosh... I don't know what to say.

Russell: Try "get stuffed."

Alec: Shut up, Russell! Dignity at all times, remember.

Lou: Diane... What about it?

Reggie: Don't you dare take that part.

Justin: Why not? She deserves it. After all she did really well in 'How Clean Was My Valet' didn't she?

Reggie: With all due respect Justin, she was the maid. It was her first time, and she played a timid little creature with about a dozen lines that the audience couldn't hear anyway. I hardly think that qualifies her for a major role such as Emelda.

Justin: I think we should let our director be the judge of that, don't you?

Reggie: Even if she's not fit to judge a dog show?

Lou: Diane? I'm waiting.

Diane: I don't know. It's such a surprise. This could change everything for me. **(She looks at Russell)** You didn't mention this when we played croquet last Tuesday.

Russell: I didn't know, did I?

Diane: **(To Justin)** What do you think?

Justin: Go for it sweetheart. It's a great opportunity. And who knows, you might have me as your leading man.

Lou: **(To Justin)** Not in this play, darling.

Justin: Oh. I'm disappointed. I thought after what you said... **(He stops there, realising he's said too much already)**

Diane: What she said when? What's been going on?

Justin: Nothing. It was nothing.

Diane: What was nothing? When did you see her **(indicating Lou)** without me?

Justin: Can we talk about this later? Please?

Diane: No we can't.

Jack: No we can't. **(To Lou)** What's this all about?

Russell: Sounds like another example of the casting couch to me.

Jack: Shut up Russell! Well Lou, I'm waiting.

Lou: Justin happened to... Pop round the other morning, and we had a chat about the play. That's all there was to it. ...*contd*...

Customer Taster

Evidence Part 4

Midshire Police

Scenes of Crime Report

Officer's report: By Nora Bone Dated 25 February

I attended Footlights, Winding Lane, Little Willey to assist in the investigation into the sudden death of Lorraine Dawe. My task was to locate, seize and examine any items I considered relevant to the investigation.

I searched all the rooms in the house. In the dining room I found a handbag, which contained a number of personal papers (including a driving licence) indicating that the owner of the bag was Diane Knight. In the same handbag I recovered a Smith and Wesson handgun. I subsequently examined this weapon in detail, and noted there were three bullets missing from it. I was later handed three bullets recovered from the body of Lorraine Dawe, and conducted a test firing of the weapon. I can state with certainty that the bullets recovered from the body were fired from the weapon I was handed.

Ownership of the weapon has not been established.

Also in the dining room I found a second handbag, which contained personal papers indicating the owner to be Regina Grey. Also in the bag was a Nokia mobile phone. I later discovered this item had been recently purchased in the Ascot branch of 'Fones R Us'. The shop manager was unable to provide any details of the buyer, who paid in cash. Later examination of the phone revealed that the last number called from it was 01999 432539 - the home phone number of Jack and Lorraine Dawe.

I was also instructed to search the clothing of the persons detained at the house, and I recovered two items of particular interest.

From the right inside pocket of the jacket belonging to and worn by Jack Dawe I recovered a Mortice type key. I later established by testing that this key locked and unlocked the door of the bathroom on the first floor of the premises.

In the right outer pocket of the jacket belonging to and worn by Diane Knight I recovered an empty clear plastic food bag.