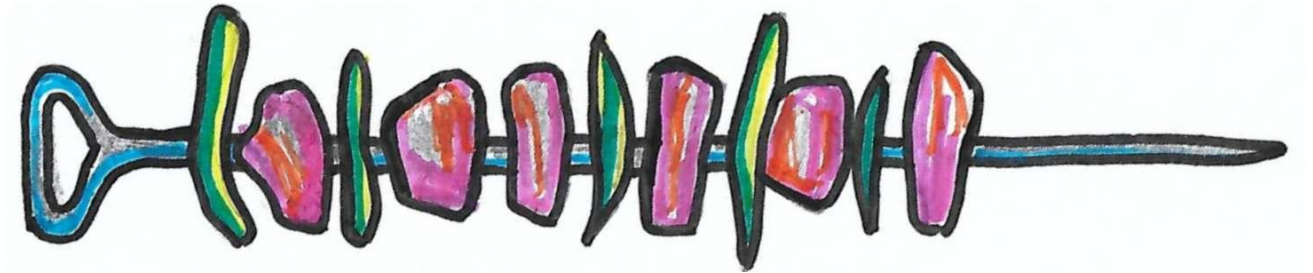


Who's The Maddest Of Them All?



A Murder Mystery

by

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Customer Taster



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Who's The Maddest Of Them All?

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About the Murder Mystery Pack

The Murder Mystery pack provides the full script and guidance to enable you to produce a successful murder mystery event. *Who's The Maddest Of Them All?* was written for a drama group which has staged a number of such events and the usual format, including a light supper, is given below. The author has no objection to this format being changed to suit, for instance, a three course meal with courses served before the play begins, between Acts One and Two, or any other variation.

The Pack Contains:

- The Organiser's Overview [*Extracts here*]
- The Full Script [*Extracts here*]
- Accusation Sheets for the audience to formulate their suspicions.

Organiser's Overview Contents:

- Character and Plot Overview
- Programme Notes - on the format of the night
- Production Notes - including set description, props list, sound effects list

Characters

Lois King - a student
Kenny King - Lois' brother – a layabout
Kate King - mother to Lois and Kenny
George King - Kate's brother in law
Judith - Kate's sister
Jenny - a neighbour
Bernie King - Kate's ex-husband
Ben Cleveleys - Detective Inspector

Plot Overview

Madness seems to run in the King family. First there's Uncle George who can't be trusted near water, but manages to fall into the local canal with his sister-in-law and his niece Lois. Next is his brother Bernie who's a bit trigger happy with a handgun and may, or may not, have committed a bank robbery, and may or may not have shot Aunt Judith's pet dog Bonzo. Meanwhile Bernie's ex-wife Kate, and her teenage children, Lois and Kenny, try but fail to maintain a sense of order in the house when it's invaded by George, Bernie and Judith; not to mention Detective Inspector Ben Cleveleys who calls to investigate the gun shots reported by a neighbour, and finds himself appearing in a murder mystery that rapidly turns into farce when water drips through the ceiling, and a dead body is found in the living room. Who killed him? Detective Inspector Cleveleys calls on the audience to make known their suspicions.

Programme Notes

In addition to the usual lists of cast and crew, the audience may find it helpful to have the sequence of events listed as follows:

- **Act One** – The living room of the King family - a summer's afternoon
- **Act Two - Scene One:** The same - two days later, with occasional visits to the office of Detective Inspector Cleveleys
- **Act Two – Scene Two** – The same
- **Act Two – Scene Three**
- Interval and Supper: team discussion , handing in of Accusation Sheets
- **Act Three** – the same - an action replay of Act Two – Scene Three plus: in which the murderer is revealed.
- Presentation of prizes.

Suggested Event Format

- Act One
- Act Two
- Interval and light supper (the audience complete their Accusation Sheets which are then collected and assessed by the acting company).
- Act Three
- Presentation of certificates and/or prizes to the winning team.

Approximate Timings

- Act One: 30 minutes
- Act Two: 15 minutes
- Interval and light supper: 30 minutes (this being dependent upon the complexity of the catering)
- Act Three: 10 minutes
- Prize-giving and closing announcements: 10 minutes

Learned lines or rehearsed reading?

The play will work best if lines are learned. This gives the actors more freedom of movement and interaction with one another. It will be difficult, for instance, for Bernie to carry a gun and a holdall if he also needs to handle a script. Lois will similarly struggle with lifting George's trainer onto her ruler if she has a script in her other hand. However, Detective Inspector Cleveleys has a couple of long speeches. Provided he is sufficiently familiar with his lines, so as not to be glued to the script, it might be helpful to have the speeches in his notebook, to which he would then appear to be referring quite naturally as a detective would in the course of his investigation.

If it is decided to perform the play as a rehearsed reading, this should be made clear in the publicity and reflected in the ticket prices. Note that even if it is a rehearsed reading, you need to purchase a Performance Licence from the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.

Adjudication

A full answer should include the following elements; allow one point for each:

- The murderer
- The method
- The motive

The full pack includes suggested tie break questions, based on the audience's recollection of the script.

Allocating responsibilities

The producer will need to appoint those who are to be responsible for various aspects of the event:

- A Director - whose job will be to audition, select and direct the actors, and to advise on the set.
- Set Construction team.
- A Stage Manager to co-ordinate all aspects of the set, and generally keep the show on the road during the performance.
- A Property Manager - to acquire all properties and ensure they are in the right place at the right time.
- Costume Supervisor: the play is set in the present and there are no special costume requirements, but the producer may wish to appoint someone to ensure that each character is dressed appropriately.
- Sound Manager to acquire all sound effects and music, arrange for the recording of the “commotion on the landing” – parts 1 and 2, and play them as required.
- Lighting Manager to set the lighting rig and operate cues as per script.
- Continuity assistant (Prompt).
- Raffle Manager (if desired) – to acquire raffle prizes, arrange for the sale of tickets before the performance, and organise the draw for prizes at an appropriate time during the evening.
- Catering Team.
- Publicity Manager to arrange for posters, fliers, tickets and ticket sales.
- Scrutineers - who will distribute the Accusation Sheets before the play, collect them in after supper, read them during the performance of Act Three to determine the winning team (see Adjudication below) and give the result to Detective Inspector Cleveleys for him to announce. In the event of a tie, they will provide Cleveleys with a set of tie-break questions to be put to the tied teams, the winning team being the first one to shout out the correct answer. Suggested questions are provided, but the scrutineers may devise their own.

Production Notes

The setting is a family living room. A dining table with four chairs, two easy chairs, sideboard, bookshelves, sofa, TV table with TV and phone on it. Dull pictures on the walls. Two doors, one leading to the kitchen, the other to the entrance porch and the stairs. In Act Two, a desk needs to be wheeled in to temporarily provide Detective Ben Cleveleys with an office space.

Towards the end of Act Two, Scene Three, the stage direction envisages water dripping from the ceiling. If stage management can contrive to engineer this, excellent, it will certainly add to the comedy. If not, then suitable sound effects and the reaction of the actors may suffice to persuade the audience of water “plunking” onto the floor, or into a bucket. If using water, remember to protect the stage floor.

In this scene, there is a lot of commotion and dialogue from offstage. The director may prefer to have this pre-recorded and played over the sound system to ensure audibility. Act Three repeats this commotion but with additional dialogue.

Who's the Maddest of them All?

Act One

(A family living room. A dining table with four chairs, two easy chairs, sideboard, bookshelves, sofa, TV table with TV on it. Dull pictures on the walls. Two doors, one leading to the kitchen, the other to the entrance porch and the stairs. There should be space remaining for a desk to be wheeled in for Act Two.)

(FX: Opening music and fade.)

(FX: Full stage lighting.)

(Lois is sitting at the table, doing her college work, with the aid of laptop, books and writing implements including a wooden twelve inch ruler. She is consulting the laptop and making notes in a notebook. Her brother Kenny enters through the door to the porch. He creeps in quietly, planning to make Lois jump. He has a paper bag which he fills with air by blowing into it and screwing up the neck. When he is close behind Lois, he explodes the bag with a sharp smack. Lois doesn't even twitch.)

Kenny: You dead or what?

Lois: I saw you coming.

Kenny: What?

Lois: Reflected in the laptop.

Kenny: (Groans) Yarr. You're no fun, you.

Lois: Go away, Kenny. I'm busy.

Kenny: You're always busy. What's it all for?

Lois: Qualifications. A decent job. You should try it sometime.

Kenny: All right, Lois. No need to get snotty. Think you're clever, I suppose.

(Kate, their mother, enters.)

Lois: No, not clever; determined. I want to make something of my life. What do you plan to do with yours?

Kate: From the state of his bedroom, he'll spend the next six weeks tidying up.

Kenny: It's not that bad.

Kate: I thought I'd do you a favour and Hoover it.

Kenny: Great!

Kate: I couldn't find the floor.

Kenny: Ooh, Mum!

Kate: It's impenetrable.

Lois: Hey, that's a good word. (Writes in her notebook.) Impenetrable.

Kate: (To Lois.) What's impenetrable? What are you doing?

Lois: Writing an essay. It's all about how forests are no longer impenetrable because they've been chopped down.

Kate: What is it you're studying?

Lois: Ecology. One day I hope to be a Forest Ranger.

Kenny: Is that like the Lone Ranger?

Lois: The what?

Kenny: The Lone Ranger. He's a sort of western hero.

Kate: You're too young to know about the Lone Ranger. How do you know about him?

Lois: I don't know about him. What are you talking about?

Kenny: I've been talking to George. He says the Lone Ranger was his favourite TV show when he was a boy.

Lois: How long ago was that? And who's George?

Kenny: (Looking at Kate.) Haven't you told her?

Lois: Told me what? What's going on?

Kate: (Embarrassed) I've been meaning to tell you. Only...

Lois: You've told Kenny and not me.

Kate: Well, you always seem to be so busy, Lois. I didn't like to...

Lois: (**Irritated. Closes her book and laptop.**) Right. Now I'm not busy. I'm all ears. Tell me about George.

Kate: He works at Dexters.

Lois: Which is where you work. What is it – hanky panky in the broom cupboard?

Kate: (**Affronted**) Lois!

Kenny: I don't think I need to hear this.

(Kenny exits.)

Kate: (**Calling after Kenny.**) Where are you going?

Kenny: (**Offstage**) Tidy me bedroom.

Kate: I'll believe it when I see it.

(Pause. Kate is reluctant to speak. Lois waits for a response. They eye each other awkwardly.)

Lois: George?

Kate: Ye – e – es.

(Pause)

Lois: Ye – e – es?

Kate: He's... your uncle.

Lois: What? (**Gets up, throwing her book into the air, and stalks across the room. Pauses, incredulous.**) Not Mad George!

Kate: Lois. He's not mad. He's kind and gentle and thoughtful when you get to know him.

Lois: He's not like Dad then?

Kate: No. Chalk and cheese, your dad and his brother. You know why I got rid of your dad.

Lois: 'Cos he knocked you about. Yes. I know. He slapped me and Kenny about as well. But you don't want to be out of the frying pan into the loony bin.

Kate: I wish you wouldn't talk about him like that. I've really got to know him since he came to work at Dexters.

Lois: Enough to marry him? Is that what you're thinking?

Kate: (**Sad and helpless.**) Lois... I know your dad was a bully and a layabout, but he was mine, and now I've got nobody.

Lois: You've got me and Kenny.

Kate: I know... well, I've got you - and you've always been a good girl - but Kenny... well, I could put up with Kenny if he'd find himself a job...

(Kenny enters.)

Kate: And his bedroom didn't stink like a wrestler's armpit.

Kenny: I heard that. It's not true. And it's tidy now. Go and look.

Kate: Right, I will. There's a floor now, is there? (**Turning to Lois.**) And you just think on, young lady. If you don't want your old Mum to be (**feigning tearfulness**) unloved and all alone in her old age, you just think on. (**Exits**)

Kenny: Told you, has she?

Lois: Yes. How come you knew about him and I didn't?

Kenny: I saw them together in town. They were all lovey- dovey in the Farmer's Arms.

Lois: What were you doing in the Farmer's Arms?

Kenny: I was only passing. They were on the patio outdoors. He smokes like a chimney.

Lois: Oh no, not that as well.

Kenny: What?

Lois: If they do get married, God forbid, Mad George'll move in here I expect, with his loony ways and stinking fags. Do you know where he lives?

Kenny: No idea.

(Pause: they are both at a loss and look at the ceiling for inspiration. Lois' gaze finally lands on the phone.)

Lois: We could ring Aunt Judith.

Kenny: What for?

Lois: Advice. She might talk to Mum and make her see sense.

(FX: Sound of a vacuum cleaner from upstairs.)

Kenny: Do it now while she's busy.

(Lois goes to the phone and punches in a number. She waits while it rings, but there is no reply.)

Lois: No answer. **(Puts the phone down.)**

Kenny: We could go round there.

Lois: She might not be in. Then it'd be a wasted journey.

(FX: doorbell.)

(Kenny goes to answer the door.)

Kenny: **(Offstage)** Uncle George!

Lois: **(Horrorified)** Uncle George!

(George enters followed by a dismayed Kenny. George might appear quite normal, but there's room for doubt - he has an almost permanent grin on his face. He is wearing a grubby, ill-fitting track suit and trainers.)

Lois: **(Trying to be pleasant in spite of herself.)** Well, Uncle George. What a lovely surprise.

George: Yes. I like surprises.

(A long pause. Nobody knows what to say. Lois and Kenny look bewildered. George grins, looking from one to the other.)

George: Don't you?

Kenny: What?

George: Like surprises? **(Waits for an answer, doesn't get one so he carries on.)** Me and your Dad, we loved surprises. **(Takes out a pack of cigarettes, offers it to Lois and Kenny.)** Have a fag.

Lois: No thanks. I don't smoke.

Kenny: Nor me, and you'd better not light up in here. Mum'll have your guts for garters.

George: No, no, no, no, I've given up. Just had a couple left. Seemed a shame to waste 'em. Let somebody else have the bronchitis, I thought. **(Laughs, splutters and coughs.)** See what I mean? **(Re-pockets the cigarettes.)**

Lois: **(Tentatively)** Uncle George... Did you come for a reason?

George: Yes. **(Looking round.)** Have you got any chairs?

Lois: **(Puzzled)** Er... Yes. Why?

George: Well, seeing as you haven't asked me to sit down yet, I just wondered.

Kenny: **(Bringing a chair to George.)** Oh, yes, of course. Here you are, sit yourself down. Make yourself at home,

Lois: **(Aghast)** No, Kenny, no!

Kenny: Just a turn of phrase, Lois, sorry. **(To George.)** Did you want something, Uncle George?

George: Just the chair. Thank you, Kenny.

(FX: the Hoover stops.)

[But in the full pack, the script continues.]