



DOING WHODUNNIT

By David Spicer

A SMITH SCRIPT

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CHARACTERS (3m 3f – Can be any age):

- TERRI She's is the co-owner of the theatre company and plays The Detective who introduces the suspects and leads the audience through the clues.
- JUDITH An earnest actress who is committed to the success of the evening. She plays The Private Secretary.
- REBECCA An actress with a broad regional accent who struggles to make the audience believe she's Venezuelan. She is also practical and doubles as the company Stage manager when required.
- JASON Playing a mysterious German Professor, he is unconvinced by the old-fashioned clichéd plays the company does. He writes his own hard-boiled mysteries and is always trying to get Terri to read and produce them.
- TOM & EBON They are the audience. A pair of irritating, pedantic nerds who are obsessive fans of Midsomer murders.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the original production of the play, the actors were all based around Liverpool area and this is referenced in the script. If the play is done by a company from a different area of the country, with different regional accents, then I would be very happy for those references to be to changed to suit the company playing it.

The play takes place during an online corporate Murder Mystery evening.

Before the show starts there is a sign on-screen reading:

The Golden Age Murder Mystery Theatre Experience Presents

MURDER BY FROG!

TERRI appears in her window. She is the co-owner of the company and is also playing the detective who will guide the audience through the play.

TERRI Good evening. You're probably wondering why I've called you all here today, to the drawing room of Cloderham Court, a stately home, here in the misty midsts of the desolate depths of darkest Dartmoor. It is because today, Sir Reginald Clichy, the celebrated billionaire financier and owner of Cloderham Court has been discovered murdered...

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI ...to death! I am Inspector Courtney Dike of the Yard, and it is my belief that Sir Reginald's murderer...

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI ...is still at large, somewhere in the house. And for all we know, he...or she?...may be preparing to strike again. And so, it is up to you... *(She glances at a piece of paper she is holding)* ...the Sales and Marketing department of Sunbritecrest Conservatories plc, to follow the clues, unmask that fiend and thwart his...or her?...evil plans. Welcome!

A different but equally unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TOM and EBON (who are the audience for the show) appear in their windows. (They will appear with irritating regularity throughout)

TOM Evening.

EBON Hello.

TERRI acknowledges them and then waits, expecting more. TOM and EBON, smiling in expectation at her.

There is a pause.

TERRI *(Finally)* It's just the two of you?

TOM Yes, that's right.

TERRI The booking was for thirty.

TOM I know.

EBON I don't think the others are coming.

TOM There was a bit of dissent in the ranks.

EBON Yes. Instead of an end of year bonus, the company decided they'd lay this on for us instead.

TERRI That's very nice of them.

TOM Well, Ebon and I, we think so.

EBON However, the *general* feeling amongst the sales team is they'd rather have the cash.

TOM Yes. And that Sunbritecrest Conservatories can stick their Murder Mystery evening up their...
'youknowwhat'.

EBON (*Unnecessarily explaining*) Their arse.

TERRI Oh. I see. Well, you can't get a refund. If you look at the terms and conditions of the booking...

EBON We're not looking for a refund.

TOM No, indeed. Because whilst Ebon and I have sympathy with said suggestion of the company sticking said Murder Mystery evening up their...

EBON Arse.

TOM ...we're in a bit of cleft stick as, frankly there's nothing m'colleague Ebon and I like better than a good Murder Mystery.

EBON Absolutely right. I always say, if I could live anywhere in the world, I'd live in Midsomer.

TOM And why not? There's probably loads of property available round there. Places coming on the market all the time. 'Quick sale needed due to death in family. Again.'

EBON 'Come and meet the neighbours.'

He cheerfully mimes stabbing someone.

TERRI (*Getting back into character*) Good. Right, well, we're glad you're here. Because, as I said, there's been a murder...

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI ...and it is one of the most baffling cases I've ever seen in all my years around these parts, and I'll need your help to solve it.

TOM Okay-dokey.

EBON So, what's happened?

TOM and EBON produce notepads on which they make frequent intense scribbles.

TERRI Sir Reginald Clichy has been murdered. He was discovered in his private study, poisoned by one of the most rare and deadly toxins known to mankind.

TOM Is he dead?

TERRI Yes, of course he's dead.

EBON Are you sure?

TERRI It's one of the most rare and deadly toxins known to mankind Yes, I'm sure he's dead. I'm also sure... that he was murdered.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TOM Could it have been suicide?

TERRI No. It was...murder.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI And the person who did this terrible thing is still here.

TOM and EBON look around the screen.

EBON Well, there's no one here apart from us three.

TOM And we didn't do it. We didn't even know the bloke.

EBON So that means it must have been you.

TOM Well, that was easy.

EBON Yes, a bit disappointing really. I think we'd have been better off with an end of year bonus.

TERRI Wait, wait, wait. There's more. You haven't met the other suspects yet.

EBON (*Brightening*) There's other suspects?

TERRI Yes, of course there are. And anyway, why would I have killed him? I'm a detective. What's my motive?

EBON I don't know.

TOM Have you got a motive?

TERRI I...I might have. You've just got to be patient. And, who knows, you might find out something interesting about me.

EBON Like what?

TERRI Like...you'll just have to wait and see.

TOM Why can't you just tell us?

TERRI Because...okay, look, just assume for the moment that I *don't* have a secret connection in my past to the dead man and so I *don't* have a motive to kill him.

EBON But you said you might have.

TERRI But *assume* I don't. Okay? *Assume* that I am simply an honest detective. Dike of the Yard.

TOM What of the yard?

TERRI Dike. Inspector Dike of Scotland Yard who has been called here to the misty midsts of the desolate depths of darkest Dartmoor to investigate this terrible and baffling...murder.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

EBON If it is a murder.

TERRI It is a murder.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TOM I don't think we've established that.

TERRI (*Firmly*) We have. And it is. Murder.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI So there.

EBON So you say.

TERRI I do. And I'm the detective.

TOM Who needs our help.

TERRI does her best to keep her temper with these difficult twats.

TERRI *(Finally)* Would you like to know who found the body?

EBON Yeah, alright, go on, then.

TERRI *(Forcing a smile)* Good! Because you're about to meet them. The person who discovered the hapless victim and called me to the scene of this terrible and wickedly ingenious *murder*.

An unnecessarily dramatic chord plays.

TERRI Fellow detectives allow me to introduce your first suspect.

Gratefully, TERRI's window disappears. TOM and JASON also disappear. There is a short musical intro and JUDITH appears, looking very prim and business-like.

JUDITH Good day to you. Phyllida Mann at your service. And what a terrible day it is here at Cloderham Court. I have known dear Sir Reginald since I was a small girl and he has been like a father to me, ever since my own poor papa's flourishing lingerie and surgical pet appliance business was bought from under him by an unscrupulous and ruthless financier and he was ruined. My poor father couldn't stand the disgrace...and the poverty...and he took his own life. I was left alone, friendless and distressingly lower middle-class when Sir Reginald took pity on me. He took me in and paid for me to finish my education at an exclusive Swiss Ladies College. In Birkenhead. And then he offered me a job, working for him. He was like a father to me. And I was like an underpaid Private Secretary to him. My duties included taking care of all his commercial and legal correspondence and I was privy to everything concerning his finances, his business and his will.

TERRI reappears, followed by TOM and EBON.

TERRI Hmm. Thank you, Miss Mann. So, fellow detectives, what questions do we have for Miss Phyllida Mann, the Private Secretary?

EBON You discovered the body?

JUDITH *(Stifling a sob)* Yes, I did. Poor Sir Reginald was in his study, slumped across his antique desk, his face...

TOM *(Interrupting)* I suppose...the door was locked from the inside.

JUDITH Yes, it was.

EBON They always are.

TERRI (*Meaningfully*) So! The dead man was in a locked room with no way in or out.

JUDITH That's right.

TOM So how did you get in?

JUDITH Sorry?

TOM If there was no way in or out of the room, how did you manage to get into the room in order to discover the body?

JUDITH and TERRI have no idea.

JUDITH Er...

TERRI That's a very good question.

TOM And the very good answer is?

JUDITH I...think...I probably...climbed in through the window?

TERRI Yes. I think that's exactly what you probably did.

EBON So the murderer 'probably' climbed out through the window.

TERRI Yes. Probably.

TOM Not much of a 'locked room' really, is it?

TERRI (*A bit annoyed*) No. Not much, really. Anyway, do you want to hear the rest of this suspect's testimony?

JUDITH (*Flustered*) Yes. Right. So...where was I?

TERRI 'Poor Sir Reginald was in his study, slumped across his antique desk...'

JUDITH Yes, that's right. He was slumped across his antique desk, his face a rictus of agony, And clutched in his hand was...

TOM (*Interrupting*) Sorry to interrupt.

JUDITH Yes?

TOM A 'what' of agony?

JUDITH A rictus.

TOM A 'rictus'?

JUDITH Yes. And as he lay there, I saw, clutched in his hand...

EBON How are you spelling that?

JUDITH Spelling what?

EBON This 'rictus'?

JUDITH Er...R I C T U S, I suppose.

EBON carefully writes this down in his notepad.

TOM You suppose?

JUDITH Yes.

TOM But you're not sure?

TERRI No, I think that's right. *(Trying to get it back on track)* But I don't think it's really important. What I think we want to know is what was dead man clutching in his hand.

EBON *(Looking up from his notebook)* What did it look like?

JUDITH What he was clutching in his hand?

EBON No, this rictus. Can you describe it?

JUDITH *(At a loss)* Er...

TERRI *(Trying to help her)* I think a rictus is just a, sort of, like, horrible expression.

TOM Or grimace?

TERRI Yes. It's a grimace. But really, I don't think that's...

EBON Can you show us this rictus?

TOM Or grimace.

JUDITH Er...okay. It was sort of...like...