



A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
by
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Audition Information

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1. General Information

Part of the audition will include some *hot seating* in character to help us explore the improvisation side of the show. You'll be asked to stay in role and respond to questions as your character — for example, explaining your relationship with the victim, reacting to being accused, or justifying your actions. This isn't about getting the "right" answer, but about how naturally you can think, respond, and stay in character in the moment.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to be involved without taking on a scripted role. We'll need additional characters to help bring the college to life — such as dinner ladies, support staff, or other members of the school community — who can interact with the audience and contribute to the immersive experience. These roles are just as important in creating atmosphere and giving the audience a fully engaging event.

2. Character Backgrounds

Nick Pinscher: The bursar. A recent appointment by the governors, with the aim to introduce economies and ensure all paperwork and records are correct for Ofsted. He has been going through staff files and has asked them all to provide evidence of their qualifications, and is also looking at redundancies, checking outside contractors, etc. Pompous, smarmy. Always has a clipboard with a list of things to check. Fancies Carole.

Samantha Richer-Quick: Headteacher. Lavish lifestyle funded by nepotism, having given catering and cleaning contracts, among others, to her family members. Boasts about holidays and possessions. Will lose her status and lifestyle and possibly more if Nick makes too many changes.

Carole Curtain: Head of drama, on a temporary maternity cover post, but she has applied for a mortgage on the basis of it being a full time role and is asking Nick to provide reference for this. Is having a secret affair with Andy.

Bryony Bunsen: Head of science. Has no formal teaching qualification, but has been at the school for thirty years and has managed to cover this up. Is fanatical about her donkey sanctuary and always has her donkey file with her. Not on the ball with running her department so is unaware that Chris has been stealing chemicals.

Andy Cox: Head of PE. Married and has children. He is having an affair with Carole and would lose his home and family if his wife found out. He constantly plays with a tatty cricket ball.

Chris Coke: Lab technician. Has a gambling addiction. He has been stealing chemicals to make drugs and is under pressure from a local drug gang to keep up supplies, but Nick is checking everything closely.

Bill Boilerhouse: Has worked at the College for over 40 years. A jobsworth and union man, he avoids hard work as much as possible. If he loses his job, he will lose his home, a tied cottage. Nick wants to use outside agencies to replace him. Bill has a different tool with him every time he makes an appearance so he can always appear to be working.

DI Hagley: A confident, no-nonsense detective with a sharp eye for detail and a dry sense of humour. They lead the investigation with authority, quickly cutting through excuses and exposing secrets. Enjoys being in control and keeps everyone on their toes.

PC Racy: An eager and slightly over-enthusiastic junior officer who is keen to impress. Often jumps to conclusions but brings energy and humour to the investigation. Not as naïve as they first appear and enjoy getting stuck into questioning.

3. Script Pages

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EXTRACT 1 – CAROLE, BRYONY, ANDY, CHRIS, BILL, NICK AND SAMANTHA

Act 1, Scene 1 – The staff room, morning.

(There are a couple of chairs and a lectern. There is a presentation screen at the back and a table with mugs, spoons, etc.)

(The staff drift on, talking about their holidays, new timetables, etc. Carole and Bryony enter first and look for somewhere to sit. Andy, close behind them, spots a couple of chairs, blows his whistle to attract their attention and then rushes to sit across both chairs before they can get there. He pats his lap to suggest they should sit there but then lets both of them sit down. He flirts with Carole behind Bryony's back. Bryony puts her ring binder file under the chair. Andy plays with a tatty cricket ball, which he plays with throughout the scene.)

(Bill and Chris enter next, also looking for seats. Chris reads the Racing Post when he can and Bill moans about his bad back. Nick is next on and checks the lectern is in place. Finally, Samantha enters and takes her place at the lectern to address the staff – including the audience.)

Samantha: Welcome back, everyone. Well, I say everyone, but I have received an email from Tom Jones, whose QueasyJet flight has been delayed yet again. But as we know with our dear Mr Jones, *it's not unusual*. (**Laughs at own joke.**) However, on a serious note, I would like to remind you that this kind of absence at the beginning of term will need full documentary evidence or a doctor's certificate, along with the completion of form one-oh-one, sections c, d and q, otherwise salaries may well be affected. (**To Nick.**) Nick, perhaps you would kindly follow up on that, please?

Nick: Yes of course, Headmistress.

Carole: But Samantha, we can't help flight delays and cancellations, especially when we have to use the cheaper airlines.

Samantha: In which case, I suggest you leave a couple of days earlier, Carole. Luckily, BA were not on strike and my flight from Martinique got in bang on time on Friday. Of course, we always fly Club Class, but as frequent flyers, we were upgraded to First on the way home. By the way, for those of you who have never been, what a sensational place Martinique is. As some of you may know, Charles and I bought a modest little pad there about ten years ago and have never looked back. The food, the culture, the beaches – I thoroughly recommend it. Anyway, I trust you are all suitably rested and thoroughly prepared to face what promises to be a rather challenging year.

Andy: I don't wish to be rude, Samantha, but how many more of these so called "challenging years" do we have to put up with? My bid for new cricket gear was turned down yet again this summer. I have three broken bats and you should see the state of my balls.

Chris: I'd rather not, if you don't mind.

Samantha: As I was saying, in this era of austerity, schools have had to make economies too. Last year, the Parents Association organised several fundraisers to help towards the cost of various equipment, although some events proved to be rather less successful than others. We were perhaps fortunate that the 'Take Your Pet to School' day only resulted in one minor legal action. Once we had paid the local pet shop compensation for the stolen gerbils, we were considerably out of pocket. Clearly, we cannot continue to rely on the parents' generosity to bolster our financial shortfalls, so the bursar and I have been drawing up plans to address this matter. He will give you more details in a moment.

Bryony: Oh, those poor little gerbils.

Bill: Poor little gerbils, my arse. Messy little buggers shat everywhere.

Samantha: If I may continue. As you are already aware, the exam results for some departments have been rather disappointing, to say the least. At least one geography student thought the Taj Mahal was a takeaway in the High Street, and when asked where the Magna Carta was signed, another genius wrote "at the bottom". I despair, I really do. As a result, our position in the league tables has dropped significantly. This will not only have an impact on our ability to recruit quality students, it makes us far more likely to receive an Ofsted visit this term. We will need to be absolutely on top of our game if we want to improve on our previous 'Satisfactory' status. At this point, I'll hand you over to Nick, who has been hard at work on budgets and the like throughout the summer. Nick.

Nick: Thank you, Headmistress. Yes, I seem to have taken over at a particularly difficult time for the school, both educationally and financially. As you say, the weaker our results, the fewer new pupils we attract and the less money we receive. It is therefore my difficult job to address these financial matters, and after lengthy discussions with the Head and the Board of Governors, we have decided that we will not be replacing retiring members of staff for the foreseeable future. Consequently, some of you may have found some additional subjects on your timetables for this term, but I'm sure you will rise to the challenge.

Bryony: I thought it was a mistake when I saw you had given me economics. I mean, I know nothing about it. I am a science teacher.

Bill: You think that's bad – Doris fainted when she heard she was doing double woodwork with 3B on Friday afternoons. She's locked herself in the music room and won't come out.

Nick: We will also have to merge several departments over the course of the coming year. Later today, I will be speaking to those staff who will be affected by these changes. The Head and I also have to ensure that we are all ready for this possible Ofsted inspection, and that is why I sent you all a message last week asking for a copy of your teaching qualifications. I thank those of you who have already responded. I will be chasing up the rest of you today. That is all I wanted to say at the moment, so back to you, Headmistress.

Samantha: Thank you, Nick. That's all for now. I am sure you all have plenty to be getting on with in your own departments, but I would remind you all to be back here at eleven-thirty for the first part of the new health and safety training.

(Staff exit, chatting quietly as they go. Carole stops Nick and takes him aside.)

EXTRACT 2 – CAROLE AND NICK

Carole: Ah, Nick, could I have a quick word please?

Nick: Well hello, Carole! You're looking particularly lovely in that outfit. The break has obviously done you good. Did you get away at all?

Carole: Well, it wasn't quite in the same league as our esteemed head. Her own place in Martinique indeed! I can't think how she manages that, even on a head's salary. I couldn't even afford Spain. Anyway, one of my mates collected some tokens from The Sun and we got a good deal on a caravan at Margate. Not exactly what you'd call luxury, but I'm trying to save all the money I can to get on the property ladder.

Nick: Yes, but we all have to cut our cloth accordingly in these tough times, Carole. And I'm sure a pretty girl like you would still turn a few heads, whether it be in Martinique or Margate.

Carole: Huh, if only. Anyway, I just wanted to check you got my email.

Nick: I've had hundreds of emails. Remind me.

Carole: It was the letter I need for the mortgage company. I do need it quite urgently.

Nick: Oh that, yes. Well, I'm not sure I can sign it. I mean, it's not exactly true, is it? You're asking me to confirm that your temporary role is in fact permanent, which we both know isn't the case. Deirdre will be back from maternity leave at half term and you will return to your basic pay scale.

Carole: But we both know that Deirdre won't be coming back permanently. She'll only stay long enough to get her maternity pay. And I was as good as promised the permanent job when she leaves.

Nick: Well, that was before whispers about your affair with our married Head of PE started doing the rounds.

Carole: What! Me and Andy Cox? That's ridiculous. Who's been spreading stupid rumours like that?

EXTRACT 3 – NICK AND BRYONY (CAROLE)

(Enter Bryony.)

Bryony: Hello, Carole, have you seen my donkey sanctuary file?

Carole: What a bastard!

(Carole storms off.)

Bryony: What's wrong with her?

Nick: It's the acting Head of Drama being a drama queen as usual.

Bryony: Oh dear. I hope she's alright. I seem to have lost my donkey file somewhere.
(Sees it under a chair.) Oh there it is. **(Picks up file.)** I'll get straight back to the lab.
Lots to do!

Nick: Before you go, Miss Bunsen, I did want a word on a couple of matters.

Bryony: Can it wait? I...

Nick: I'm afraid it can't. As I said at the staff meeting this morning, I need to see everyone's teaching qualifications in preparation for the Ofsted visit. I still don't seem to have received yours.

Bryony: I didn't think it applied to me. I've been here nearly thirty years. Everything must have been checked when I was appointed.

Nick: It applies to everyone, Miss Bunsen. Myself included. Now, do you have your certificate or don't you?

Bryony: Well, it's probably up in my mother's loft. She kept all my old certificates. My twenty-five yards breast stroke, my cycling proficiency test, my Girl Guides sewing badge...

Nick: I don't care if she's got your Grade Three Nose Flute Player's certificate up there! I just need your original teaching qualifications and I need them in my office first thing in the morning!

Bryony: But my mother's on... er, um... an extended walking tour of Iceland and...

Nick: If you can't get hold of your mother to unearth these vintage documents, you can easily get replacements emailed to you from the relevant institution.

Bryony: But after all these years, I'm not sure I'll still be on their records.

Nick: I can assure you, they're all available online by request, even going back to whatever prehistoric age you studied in.

Bryony: Well, I'll do my best.

(Bryony attempts to leave, but Nick stops her.)

Nick: I'd also like to discuss the department's finances at that meeting. You seem to have exceeded your allocated budget by an incredible twenty percent, most of it on chemicals.

Bryony: Well, prices keep going up and up, and the new curriculum demands that we do so many more experiments to keep the students interested, and I know we set fire to the store cupboard last term, but I managed to repair most of the damage myself using a...

Nick: As I've told you repeatedly, it's your responsibility to manage the department's finances, and that includes ordering supplies.

Bryony: Well, that's Chris the lab technician's job. He does all the stock orders and knows when we're running low on stuff.

Nick: You can't just dump all this on a junior colleague. You may delegate the task, but not the responsibility.

Bryony: But, but...

EXTRACT 4 – CAROLE AND ANDY

Carole: (Offstage.) Andy, quick, in here.

(Carole drags Andy onstage.)

Carole: I must talk to you.

Andy: Hello, darling. Can't keep your hands off me, can you?

Carole: No, listen, this is important.

Andy: Not as important as what I'm thinking.

(Andy pulls her to him.)

Carole: No, stop it, stop it. Something's come up.

Andy: It certainly has, you cheeky little minx!

Carole: No, no. I'm being serious.

Andy: Don't tell me you're pregnant. Look, I told you from the outset I don't do serious. This is just a bit of fun. I'm married with three kids and not looking to lose everything over a quick fling.

Carole: A quick fling! Is that all I mean to you?

Andy: You know I didn't mean it like that. I thought we were both happy with our cosy little arrangement.

Carole: Well, I was, but now that bursar's got wind of it...

Andy: How?

Carole: Apparently, some interfering busybody saw us together in my car behind the pavilion.

Andy: So what? As far as anyone else was concerned, you were just giving me a lift to the garage to pick my car up.

Carole: That's what I told him, but it seems we were also seen leaving the Crowing Cock on Saturday.

Andy: Oh hell. I told my wife I was on a referees' course. Who saw us?

Carole: I don't know, but now that awful man wants to have a bit of 'fun' with me too. He wants me to go to a hotel with him next weekend.

Andy: I'll break his bloody nose.

Carole: That's not all. He as good as implied that he won't sign the letter for the mortgage company unless I sleep with him. I'll lose my deposit and my flat.

(She wails and throws herself into his arms.)

Carole: What are we going to do?

Andy: Leave this to me. You just watch him back down when I grab him warmly by the throat. He won't get away with this.

(Chris enters, looking at his mobile phone. Carole and Andy quickly pull apart and look embarrassed.)

Carole: Thanks for that, Andy. I'll catch you later.

(Carole exits.)

EXTRACT 5 – ANDY AND CHRIS

Chris: Thanks for what, eh, Andy? Doing the lovely Carole a favour are we, eh?

Andy: What are you on about? If you must know, I was just giving her a few tips for the Ofsted visit. She's never had to do it as acting head of department before.

Chris: I didn't know heads of department did it any differently to the rest of us. But then what would I know? I'm just a simple lab technician.

Andy: Very funny. There's nothing simple about you, Chris Coke. It strikes me as odd that someone with your qualifications should be working as a low-paid lab technician. Thought you had a master's degree.

Chris: This is just temporary. I've got plans, don't you worry. Anyway, back to you and the lovely Carole. I seem to have interrupted a rather intimate discussion between the two of you. So it looks like all the rumours are true, then.

Andy: What rumours?

Chris: About the two of you having a fling.

Andy: She's just a colleague and a good friend, nothing more than that.

Chris: Well, that's what I thought, until a friend said he saw you with a very attractive young lady in the car park of the Crowing Cock last weekend.

Andy: Well, I often go there with the missus.

Chris: But your wife's a redhead, isn't she? And this girl definitely wasn't. And she was driving a Mazda MX5, just like Carole does.

Andy: Last weekend? Must have been my cousin he saw me with.

Chris: So that's what they mean by kissing cousins, is it? What would your wife say?

Andy: Are you trying to threaten me? You leave my wife out of this. It's none of your goddamn business. Anyway, what was any friend of yours doing at the Crowing Cock? Your lot are more at home in that dodgy dive in the High Street. Or has it been raided again? Half the punters in there have got arms like pin cushions.

Chris: At least it's got a bit of life in it. Not like that overpriced poser's palace the Cock.

Andy: And right next door to the bookies, too. Maybe that's why you go there.

Chris: Oh, I just have the odd little flutter to give me an interest in a race.

Andy: How little is little, I wonder? Anyway, I've got something more important to deal with right now.

(Andy exits.)

(Chris takes his phone out and makes a call.)

Chris: Yeah, it's me... Yeah, I got some... No, I couldn't get all of it... I nearly got caught. Please be reasonable, you don't understand. There's this new manager and he's all over us like a rash. You can't even take a piss without filling in a form... No, please don't do that. I'll sort it... Just give me a couple more days and I'll get the rest and make another batch... No, Terry, please, please!

(He looks at his mobile in despair.)

EXTRACT 6 – SAMANTHA

Samantha: (Reverting to her working-class accent.) Oh come on, come on! Oh Mark, you are there, thank goodness. That nosey new bursar I told you about is poking his nose into all our outside contracts. Some like yours haven't been re-tendered for decades, and he is on to it. He could really stir up trouble. If he finds out you're my brother, then this could get very messy. Look, if he rings, just try to fob him off and let me know. And do me a big favour, will you? Warn cousin Dawn too, as the same thing is going to happen with her cleaning contract, no doubt... All the family have done very nicely out of our cosy little arrangements so far. At best you might lose the contracts, which will hit us all hard financially, but the worst-case scenario is that we all end up in the clink... Leave the rest to me. I'll try and deal with this.

(Samantha hangs up.)

Samantha: Oh shit! What am I going to do now? If Charles finds out I've been on the take all these years, he'll probably divorce me. And I'm not prepared to go back to that grubby council flat and two weeks in flipping Torremolinos either. No, something will have to be done about that man.

(Exit Samantha.)

(Blackout.)

EXTRACT 7 – BILL AND BRYONY

Scene 2 – *The staffroom, a couple of hours later.*

(The presentation screen has been moved forward ready for the training session and the kettle is on.)

(Enter Bill and Bryony. Bill is carrying a pint of milk. Bryony is going through her stock orders. Bill starts getting the mugs, etc., ready.)

Bill: Oh good, someone's already put the kettle on. Poor old Daphne got her marching orders at the end of last term after twenty years of tea making. More so-called cost saving. Shame she wasn't in a union. All she got was fifty quid and a box of chocs. Not much of a thank you, is it? Right, I've got the milk. Pass us the sugar, can you?

(Bryony picks up the sugar, but each time Bill reaches for it, she absent-mindedly moves away.)

Bryony: Oh Bill, Chris and I have searched high and low for the missing chemicals. Heaven knows what the bursar's going to say if they don't turn up.

Bill: Well you can't do much about it until this bloody training's over, so give us a hand. No doubt they'll all need a strong cuppa before we sit through more of this mind-numbing guff they call Health and Safety Awareness.

(Bill finally grabs the sugar from Bryony.)

Bryony: (Distractedly prepares mugs.) I won't be able to concentrate on it anyway. All I can think about is losing my job and my poor donkeys having to be put down.

EXTRACT 8 – HAGLEY AND RACY

Act 2

The following morning.

(Six chairs are set out in a line for the suspects to sit on. Hagley enters, followed by Racy who ushers the suspects on. The suspects take their seats.)

Hagley: Well here we are again, Racy, with yet another case of foul play to solve. **(Looks at audience.)** And some of this lot look very familiar. Check the current wanted list later, will you?

Racy: Already have, ma'am. Looks like we'll be asking quite a lot of them to help us with our enquiries tonight. Actually, ma'am, I was called to the school last week to deal with a serious incident. Two of them were going at it hammer and tongs, armed with needlework scissors and compasses – it was savage.

Hagley: Kids!

Racy: Oh no, ma'am, it was teachers. In fact, it was those two over there. **(Points to two members of the audience.)** Seems like anyone can be a teacher these days. It's all this 'woke' and 'inclusion' business.

Hagley: So I've heard. And as for what they teach, words fail me. You can do courses in whatever you like – origami, Harry Potter, Love Island.

Racy: I've got a GCSE in Television Studies.

Hagley: Well, that just proves my point. Anyway, back to the case. **(Addresses the suspects and audience.)** I have to inform you all that your bursar, Nick Pinscher, died in hospital this morning. According to the medics, he ingested a slow-acting poison that affects the respiratory system at around eleven-thirty a-m yesterday, which I understand was the time you were all together in the staff room for some training. That leaves us with a lot of suspects.

Racy: I've narrowed them down to these six, ma'am. **(Indicates the suspects.)** Everyone else can account for their movements yesterday morning and had nothing to do with getting the refreshments ready.

Hagley: Before we question them, Racy, I'd like the results of your fingertip search of the crime scene. What have you discovered?

(Racy produces her evidence box.)

Racy: We found several interesting items, ma'am. **(She takes out a couple of spoof items, such as embarrassing underwear, a bad school report, etc. and connects them to members of the audience before showing the real items – Nick's mug, the decaf coffee jar, and a poison bottle.)**

Racy: Exhibit One, ma'am. This is the mug that the victim drank from. Exhibit Two is this jar of decaf coffee. The victim was the only one who drank the stuff. We've had the contents of both analysed to see if the poison was in the jar or the mug and are awaiting the forensic results. Exhibit Three is this bottle of poison that we discovered dumped behind the bicycle sheds. This appears to be the source of the poison.

Hagley: Ms Curtain, I understand that you handed him his coffee.