



*A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery*  
by  
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**Customer Taster**

# **I Spy a Murder**

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# I Spy a Murder

## About The Pack

I Spy a Murder is a scripted murder mystery set at a spy school in England during World War II, over two acts, with approximately 65 minutes of scripted dialogue. The audience, divided into teams or tables, are invited to ask the suspects questions, and are given time to solve the mystery before the guilty party is revealed. The murder evening is designed to be played by ten actors in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area.

## Structure

This murder mystery pack contains:

- **The Organiser's Overview** [*Excerpt here*]
- **The Script** [*Excerpt here*]
- **The Accusation Sheet** - for the audience to enter their solutions

## Organiser's Overview Contents

- Synopsis
- Character Descriptions
- General Staging Notes
  - Suggested Show Timings
  - Notes on Audience Participation
- Production Notes
  - Stage Settings
  - Props List
  - Costume
  - Effects

## Synopsis

It is 1942, and across England, as part of the war effort, secret operations specialists are training people with different areas of expertise to become spies.

In the heart of the English countryside lies Rothersfield Hall, which now plays host to its first batch of would-be spies, but when there is a murder, it's clear that someone has already been keeping a secret.

It's down to Inspector Leake and the audience to find out 'whodunnit'.

## Character Descriptions

**Squadron Leader Simeon Simpkins** – RAF officer in charge of the spy training (male). A typical English officer, very upper class. Short temper.

**Betty Brown** – the tea lady at Rothersfield Hall (female). She doesn't suffer fools gladly, and is devoted to Lord and Lady Hall.

**Lady Victoria Rothersfield-Hall** – owner of the Hall (female). Loveable but scatty. She married Lord Hall but wanted to keep the Rothersfield family name going, hence Rothersfield-Hall.

**Inspector Leake** – investigating officer (written as male, but could be played as female). Wise, patient and has a very dry sense of humour.

**Arthur Cannon** – explosives expert (male). Very upright and well-spoken.

**Will Hyde** – master of disguise (male). Ambitious but has a chip on his shoulder. Noticeably younger than other characters.

**Isabelle Sevenger** – French Resistance (female). Suspicious of everyone.

**Corporal Carol Singer** – NCO, Simeon's secretary (female). Very efficient, slightly giggly.

**Dotty Key** – coding expert (female). Assertive but scatty.

**Jean Wheeler** – logistics expert (female). Easily flustered.

## General Staging Notes

This play is set in 1942 and is performed by 10 actors (3M, 6F, 1 either). It is set out over two Acts with approximately 65 minutes of scripted dialogue.

There is an interval to allow for audience to enjoy a meal and/or drinks and time given for audience questions and deliberation before the final scene. The final scene contains the reveal.

### *Timing*

**Act One** – approximately 40 minutes.

Scene One: 15 minutes

Scene Two: 25 minutes

**Interval** – as required.

**Act Two** – approximately 50 minutes if including full audience participation.

Scene One: 20 minutes

Audience questioning: 10 minutes

Break for deliberation: 10 minutes

Scene Two: 5 minutes

Winners announced: 5 minutes

## ***Audience Participation***

In Act Two, there is a break between Scene One and Two for audience questioning and deliberation, followed by filling in of Accusation Sheets.

Consider how you want audience participation to work. It is usually better if you have teams or tables rather than normal theatre-type seating if your venue is suited to this. If you want to allow your audience to ask your characters questions, then make sure you give them some paper and pens at the start of the evening so they can take notes. You may also want to explain before the show starts that there will be a chance for one question per team later in the play, so they can start thinking during the performance. Or you can leave the pens, paper and an explanatory note on the tables.

During audience questions, only the murderer is allowed to lie! All other characters should speak the truth as they perceive it. Remember to rehearse the sort of questions you might be asked so you have prepared answers. It's a fun evening, so there may be some questions based on explosives, logistics, maybe even the French Resistance.

Don't forget that, unless you are using a roving microphone, sometimes it is difficult for everyone in a hall to hear audience questions, so it is always a good idea for Leake to repeat the question to the character.

Once the questioning is complete, the Inspector should announce that there will be approximately ten minutes for deliberation and the filling in of accusation sheets, after which the sheets will be collected. After his announcement, the stage curtains should close and the characters can leave the stage.

Your backstage staff (or members of the cast, if necessary) should give out accusation sheets after the questioning session. If you are not including audience questioning, then make sure that, when you give out the sheets, the audience know how long they have to deliberate. At the end of the allowed time, gather in the answer sheets. Make sure you know who the winning team is before you start the final scene, because the Inspector will need to announce it!

## **Production Notes**

### ***Stage Settings***

The setting throughout the play is in a single room (e.g. a drawing room or large study) at Rothersfield Hall. It will have had the usual furniture removed (i.e. no comfy chairs, sideboard, etc.) to allow it to function as a spy school classroom. To set the scene, you could have a blackboard onstage with some chalk scribbles (which don't have to mean anything), a map pinned up, etc.

There should be at least 7 chairs, set out in a classroom-type layout at an angle to the stage, or in a semi-circle. All chairs should be easily accessible and individually visible from the audience's perspective. There should be a table or desk for Simeon, plus a chair at the desk.

# I Spy a Murder

[Script Extract]

## Characters

Squadron Leader Simeon Simpkins – RAF officer in charge of the spy training (M)  
Betty Brown – tea lady at Rothersfield Hall (F)  
Lady Victoria Rothersfield-Hall – owner of the Hall (F)  
Inspector Leake – investigating officer (M, but could be F)  
Arthur Cannon – explosives expert (M)  
Will Hyde – master of disguise (M)  
Isabelle Sevenger – French Resistance (F)  
Corporal Carol Singer – NCO, Simeon’s secretary (F)  
Dotty Key – coding expert (F)  
Jean Wheeler – logistics expert (F)

## Act 1

### Scene 1

(Will is standing at the back of the stage throughout the scene; until directed otherwise, he should not move. He is dressed as a banana.)

(Enter Simeon, dictating a letter. Followed by Carol, taking notes in a notepad.)

**Simeon:** And finally, I must express my extreme dissatisfaction in the facilities and staff provided for such a key operation. Yours, et cetera, et cetera.

**Carol:** Oh Simeon, surely you’re not disappointed with *all* your staff?

**Simeon:** Present company excepted of course, my dear. You are the one shining light in all this gloom. I mean, have you seen the list of the so-called experts who are arriving to impart their knowledge? With just one exception, the ammunitions guy, they are hardly top of their game. It’s a joke, a joke I tell you, and I’m not going to be the butt of it!

**Carol:** Oh come now, sweetie, it can’t be that bad?

**Simeon:** Now then, Corporal Singer, you know you can’t call me that when others are around.

**Carol:** But there’s nobody else here?

**Simeon:** But you know what they say about walls having ears.

**Carol:** And bananas.

**Simeon:** Bananas?

**Carol:** Yes, there’s a six-foot tall banana in the corner of the room.

**Simeon:** That’s the aristocracy for you. They have bizarre taste at the best of times. I will never understand their obsession with the obscure, but this statue takes the biscuit.

**Carol:** Really? I’ve not even seen it move.

**Simeon:** Nevertheless, we must be careful. We don’t want people to spread rumours about us, do we?

**Carol:** But they’re not rumours, they are the truth. Why do we have to keep us a secret? We are both single now. It’s not like you have a wife anymore, not since the incident with the poisoning.

**Simeon:** It’s not been that long. I have my reputation to think of.

**Carol:** And what about my reputation? I’m not getting any younger. At this rate, I’ll be your age before we make it down the aisle!

**Simeon:** Aisle? Who said anything about an aisle? That is, I mean to say, you don’t have a reputation, my dear.

**Carol:** Not yet, but all this cloak and daggers stuff going on, I’ll soon get one.

**Simeon:** But it has to be cloak and daggers, dear, it’s about spying.

**Carol:** I meant us, not spying!

**Simeon:** Oh, right, yes. Look, why don't you just run along and type that letter up. Don't worry your pretty head about anything. Off you go, there's a good girl.

**Carol:** Well, okay, sweetie, I mean, yes, sir, right away, Squadron Leader sir! (**Salutes and exits.**)

**Simeon:** Women! Why can't they just be happy with looking pretty?

**(Enter Isabelle.)**

**Simeon:** (**To himself.**) Ah, the first to arrive, and by the looks of things, I'm guessing this is not the master of disguise. (**To Isabelle, in a charming manner.**) Good morning, or should I say bonjour? I presume you are Mademoiselle Sevenger.

**Isabelle:** I am indeed, how did you know?

**Simeon:** I am trained to spot even the smallest of clues.

**Isabelle:** And you must be Squadron Leader Simpkins.

**Simeon:** Ah, I see you too are trained in the same skill.

**Isabelle:** No, you are wearing a badge with your name on it.

**Simeon:** Ah yes, a bit of a giveaway is that. So you are our French Resistance expert. Tell me, (**trying to be more charming**) can you resist everything you see?

**Isabelle:** (**Dryly.**) Oh, Squadron Leader, you will be amazed at what I can resist, and also amazed at what I can smell at close proximity.

**Simeon:** Oh, er, right. Yes, well. Is this your first visit to England?

**Isabelle:** It is. My cousin was married to an Englishman, but the family did not approve, and I never met, or wanted to, meet him.

**Simeon:** What a coincidence! I was married to a French girl whose family did not approve and I never got to meet any of them. Tell me, is this quite usual in French families?

**Isabelle:** Apparently so.

**Simeon:** How strange. So, how have you found England?

**Isabelle:** I got on a boat to Dover and there it was.

**Simeon:** No, I mean, what do you think of England now you are here?

**Isabelle:** It is an odd place, and the people are even more peculiar.

**Simeon:** In what way?

**Isabelle:** Well take this place for example. There's a woman walking around pushing a trolley with teacups on it, and she appears to go nowhere and do nothing.

**Simeon:** That will be Mrs Brown, the tea lady. She is very important.

**Isabelle:** And then there is a woman who is dressed like some kind of mechanic, walking around like she owns the place.

**Simeon:** That will be Lady Victoria. She dresses like a land girl because she thinks that counts as doing her bit for the war effort. And she *does* own the place.

**(Enter Carol.)**

**Simeon:** Ah, Corporal Singer, this is Mademoiselle Sevenger. She is from...

**Carol:** (**Interrupting.**) France?

**Isabelle:** Mais oui! How did you know?

**Carol:** Call it instinct, (**aside**) or garlic.

**Simeon:** (**To Isabelle.**) Isabelle, may I call you Isabelle?

**Isabelle:** No.

**Simeon:** Isabelle is from the French Resistance in France.

**Carol:** (**Sarcastically.**) Really? I thought the French Resistance were only based in Congleton.

**Isabelle:** Oh, you English sense of humour. It is so... unique.

**Simeon:** Er, right, well, Corporal Singer, could you ask Mrs Brown to bring some tea?

**Carol:** Yes, sir.

**Isabelle:** Oh, I don't want tea. I prefer coffee. Strong and black and ground this morning.

**Carol:** You do know there's a war on, don't you? I tell you what, I'll see what I can dig up, I'm sure I can find something in the garden that was ground this morning. (**Goes to exit.**) Like dirt. (**Exits.**)

**(Enter Arthur, who stops abruptly when he sees Simeon.)**

**Arthur:** You!

**Simeon:** You!

**Isabelle:** I appear to be at a disadvantage here, gentlemen.

**Simeon:** What are you doing here? I have the name Bill Buckshot listed as the ammunitions expert.

**Arthur:** Poor Bill, such a tragic accident.

**Isabelle:** Accident?

**Arthur:** Yes. I knew his colour-blindness would cause a problem one day. He cut red instead of green.

**Isabelle:** Oh no! The poor man. Was it quick?

**Arthur:** Well, I think he deliberated for a while, but in the end it was just a quick snip.

**Isabelle:** No, I meant... oh, never mind. I am Isabelle Sevenger from the French Resistance.

**Arthur:** I can tell. Either that or you are the master of disguise.

**Isabelle:** And you are?

**Simeon:** In the wrong place.

**Isabelle:** Strange name.

**Arthur:** Arthur Cannon.

**Isabelle:** Where's the other half?

**Arthur:** No, Arthur. **(Spelling it out.)** A-R-T-H-U-R.

**Isabelle:** And you two clearly know each other.

**Simeon:** We have crossed paths in the past.

**Arthur:** **(Under his breath.)** And now I just cross his palm.

**(Will sneezes.)**

**Isabelle:** **(To Arthur.)** Bless you.

**Arthur:** Sorry?

**Isabelle:** No need to be sorry, it's perfectly natural.

**(Isabelle takes Arthur to one side.)**

**Isabelle:** Now, tell me all about ammunitions. I do like a good explosion, what has been your biggest one so far?

**(Isabelle and Arthur carry on their conversation at the back of the stage, inaudibly.)**

**(Enter Carol.)**

**Carol:** Mrs Brown is on her way. She said Lady Victoria has made biscuits and she just has to clear the smoke out of the kitchen.

**Simeon:** I'm beginning to think we should just put Lady Victoria in charge of the German rations – they'd soon surrender after burnt offerings.

**(Enter Dotty.)**

**Dotty:** **(To Simeon.)** Hello! You must be Squadron Leader Simples.

**Simeon:** Simp-kiss.

**Dotty:** **(Shaking Simeon's hand vigorously.)** I'm Dorothy Key, Dotty to my friends and those who are not angry with me.

**(Simeon grabs his hand away from Dotty.)**

**Dotty:** Am I late? I'm not usually late, I'm always dashing here there and everywhere, you know.

**Carol:** And dotting?

**Dotty:** Sorry, dear?

**Carol:** Dashing and dotting. It does say you are the coding expert?

**Dotty:** Oh yes, dear! Oh, that's so funny!

**(Dotty slaps Carol on the back a bit too hard.)**

**Dotty:** I say, Simples, you've got a good one there!

**Simeon:** Simp-kiss! It's not Simples.

**Dotty:** Well, it is simple, dear, it's your name. Nothing really complex about that, is there? I'm sure you've had it for a good few years. Anyway, you've got a smart girl there. Hold on to her.

**(Carol smiles smugly.)**

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*[Continued in the full Murder Mystery Pack.]*