

Murder Around the Clock



by
Karen Banfield



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Customer Taster

Murder Around the Clock

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About The Pack

Murder Around the Clock is a scripted murder mystery set at a milkshake bar in the 1950s, with approximately 40 minutes of scripted dialogue. The audience, divided into teams or tables, are invited to ask the suspects questions and are then given time to solve the mystery before the guilty party is revealed. The murder evening is designed to be performed by six actors, plus a narrator, in a venue with a stage or suitable acting area.

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:

- The Organiser's Overview [*extract here*] containing
 - Suggested Timings
 - Casting
 - Character Descriptions
 - The role of the Narrator
 - Audience Questioning
 - Marking Accusation Sheets
 - Set Description
 - Props List
- The Script [*extract here*];
- The Narrator's Statement, to be read out after the scripted scenes;
- The Denouement;
- Table Packs, to be handed out to the audience, containing:
 - A set of clues to study,
 - Notes Sheet, to write down questions to ask the suspects,
 - Accusation Sheet, with three questions to answer.

Suggested Timings

The following timings will allow for an event lasting two hours total, though you may extend or shorten the intervals (or omit the meal) to suit your event.

- Scripted scenes – approximately 40 minutes total
 - Scene One – 16 minutes
 - Scene Two – 8 minutes
 - Scene Three – 15 minutes
 - Scene 4 – 1 minute
- Narrator reads statement, and table packs are handed round – 5 minutes
- First interval – meal served, and audience prepare questions to ask suspects – 25 minutes
- Audience questioning of suspects – 15 minutes
- Second interval – dessert is served, audience fill in accusation sheets, accusation sheets collected in – 20 minutes
- Denouement – 10 minutes
- Narrator reveals winning team and hands out prizes – 5 minutes

Casting

The script requires a cast of 6. There are 3 female and 2 male roles, plus 1 of either sex – Sam, who is currently written as male (you may make the necessary changes to pronouns in the script if you wish to play Sam as female).

Additionally, Ned could be female, with a name change to Nell, and references to working in bomb disposal during the war changed to working in a munitions factory.

The performance also requires a narrator, whose responsibilities are listed below. You may also require helpers for handing out paperwork and collecting/marketing submissions.

Character Descriptions

Female Roles

Molly Dawson – mum, aged 40-60

Bunty and Suzie's mum, who runs Molly's Milkshake Bar, with their help. Molly is very proud of her daughters and has brought them up to be strong and independent. She wants the best for them and is happy for them to pursue their dreams. She is glad for the friendship of neighbour Ned.

Bunty Dawson – eldest daughter, 20-25

A really confident person, excited about the possibility of a singing career. Bunty is very close to her sister Suzie and proud of how her mum has made a success of the milkshake bar. The three women are very close and supportive of each other.

Suzie Dawson – youngest daughter, 18-24

Suzie also has a lovely voice, but is frightened of singing in public. She is a very contented person and not in any way jealous of her sister; she is really pleased for her. She's happy to stay and help Mum, who she's also very proud of, run the business.

Male Roles

Next Door Ned – neighbour, 40-60

Ned has lived next to the Dawsons for many years, and as a bachelor, he's been happy to step in and help. He's very friendly with Molly and is a kind person who enjoys helping his neighbours.

Reg – a face from the past, 40-60

Molly's husband, and Bunty and Suzie's father, previously believed to be dead. There's great excitement when Reg turns up unexpectedly. He's initially quite affable and interested in everyone, but later his strong personality starts to show that he wants to be in charge.

Either Male or Female

Sam – music manager and talent scout, 25-60

He's spotted Bunty's singing potential and has great plans to make her a star. As is necessary for a person in his role, he's very easy to get along with and to talk to. He likes working with the family.

Narrator

The narrator can be any age and gender. Their responsibilities include:

- Reading out a written statement after the scripted scenes (When the narrator reads this, helpers will hand out the paperwork.)
- Co-ordinating audience questioning of suspects
- Announcing when accusation sheets should be handed in
- Asking each suspect to read their final statement
- Announcing the winning table and handing out prizes

Guidance for Audience Questioning

Narrator:

Take a question from each table. If a question is asked too quietly, repeat it so that everyone in the room can hear.

Depending on the number of tables you have, use discretion as to whether you go around the room a second time for further questions. You don't want the cast to have to answer too many each, so you might open it up to any table that has questions for those who haven't answered as many.

Cast Members:

The murderer is the only one who is allowed to lie, and even then, only about not being the murderer. If asked if they did it, they should simply say they didn't, they were fast asleep all night.

Here are some examples of questions to expect and answers you could give:

Sam:

Q: Are you really a talent scout or are you just interested in Bunty as a girlfriend?

A: Yes, I'm a successful music manager and am only interested in Bunty professionally.

Ned:

Q: Does your hand really shake like that or are you trying it on to get sympathy from Molly?

A: My hand shakes all the time and I can't control it. It's very annoying.

Bunty:

Q: Are you really a good singer or is Sam not a good judge?

A: I think I'm really good, and Sam's in the business, so he must know.

Suzie:

Q: Does your back really hurt that much or are you putting it on?

A: It's agony, like knives. It's never been this bad before.

For questions you don't know the answer to, you can make up something that fits with your character's history and is consistent with how they're being portrayed. For example, if Sam is asked how long he's been in the music business, he could say it could be five years or twenty-five years; he's experienced and knows what he's doing, so either answer could work, depending on the age of the actor.

You might consider questioning each other at a rehearsal, to practice answering unexpected questions.

Set Description

September 1958, Molly's Milkshake Bar. There are two high, round silver tables with high silver stools; on each table is a red and white checked tablecloth, a menu, and a vase of red roses. There is also a small table with napkins and cutlery, and a couple of chairs.

There is a jukebox against the middle of the back wall – alternatively, it could be a simple screen at the edge of the stage, with coloured lights flashing behind it.

Murder Around the Clock

[Script Extract]

Characters

Molly Dawson – mum, aged 40-60
Bunty Dawson – eldest daughter, 20-25
Suzie Dawson – youngest daughter, 18-24
Next Door Ned – neighbour, 40-60
Reg – a face from the past, 40-60
Sam – music manager and talent scout, 25-60, male or female
Narrator – co-ordinates audience interaction

Scene One

(September 1958, Molly's Milkshake Bar. There are two high, round silver tables with high silver stools; on each table is a red and white checked tablecloth, a menu, and a vase of red roses. There is a jukebox upstage. There is also a small table with napkins and cutlery. Suzie and Bunty are sitting down at it, folding napkins.)

Suzie: What a busy morning it's been.

Bunty: I know, I've hardly sat down. Still, it's good for Mum.

Suzie: Absolutely. Do you remember when she first set the milkshake bar up? There were times when we had only one customer all day.

Bunty: Yes, she was so worried. It's not easy for a woman to run a business.

Suzie: And now it's doing well, she'll be able to spare you to go off with your new career.

Bunty: I'll miss everyone so much. But I won't be away all the time anyway. Sam's coming round soon. **(Puts all folded napkins on small table.)**

Suzie: To think of all those months he came and he was an ordinary customer. We didn't realise he mixed with all those famous people.

Bunty: I can't believe how much he thinks of my singing and how much potential he says I have.

Suzie: Well, he knows the music business, so he can judge whether you might be a success. And you are a great singer, Bunty. You must know that.

Bunty: I do. But I'm nervous too. It would be lovely if we could have sung together, since you're just as good as I am.

Suzie: You know I can't sing in public anymore. Besides, Mum needs at least one of us to help here.

(Molly enters with two ashtrays and puts one on each high table.)

Molly: What help do I need, Suzie?

Suzie: You'll need me to stay here whilst Bunty seeks her fortune.

Molly: I think you girls are getting a bit ahead of yourselves. Nothing's been agreed yet.

Suzie: Oh, by the way, Mum, I managed to fix it.

Molly: What's that?

Suzie: Your teasmade. It was just one of the wires that had come out of the plug.

Bunty: I said that's what it was likely to be.

Molly: You clever girl. I have missed that little luxury first thing in the morning. **(Looks at Bunty.)** I mean, you're both clever. I know Bunty, you could have fixed it as well. I'm very proud of how you girls can turn your hand to anything.

Suzie: Well, you've taught us to be independent women.

Molly: Which is just as well as I don't want to go near any electrics anymore, not since I had that nasty scare with the hairdryer catching fire. That's put me off picking up a screwdriver ever again, worrying I could burn the place down if I did the wrong thing.

Bunty: We can look after you, Mum.

Suzie: I can, even if Bunty goes off to the bright lights.

Molly: I don't want to stop either of you doing what you want with your lives.

Suzie: You couldn't manage this place on your own, though.

Molly: No, I couldn't. Although you both do chat to the customers instead of working. I've lost count of how many times I've had to tell you to get a wobble on.

Suzie: It's get a wiggle on.

Molly: All right, how many times you should be getting a wiggle wobble on.

(Suzie and Bunty laugh.)

Molly: You two are so mean to me. You can both go and find your fortunes. I'll be fine on my own.

Bunty: I still say you should marry again. It's been years since you lost Dad.

Suzie: It's such a shame, Bunty and I can't even remember him.

Molly: No, I couldn't possibly marry.

Bunty: It's quite romantic really that you don't want anyone else. But when we do finally go, you'll be all lonely.

Suzie: You know Next Door Ned would snap you up in a flash.

Molly: Snap me up! You make me sound like I'm something on special offer at one of those new supermarkets. And aren't you too old to still call him that?

Suzie: No, he likes it. It's like Uncle Ned.

Bunty: Just think, in the future you could wake up to him, instead of your teasmade.

Ned: **(Offstage.)** Hello, anyone at home?

Suzie: Hello, Next Door Ned. That's spooky, we were only just talking about you.

(Ned enters, carrying a white shirt and a button. He has a noticeable tremble in one hand.)

Ned: Were you indeed? **(Nervously.)** All good, I hope?

Bunty: I think Mum should go and see a film. Do you go to the cinema ever?

Molly: Stop it, girls, you're embarrassing me.

Ned: No, but only because I don't know what's on, as I don't walk past any cinemas to see the posters.

Bunty: They're showing A Night To Remember at the Odeon.

Molly: Bunty! That sounds an inappropriate film to suggest to Ned.

Bunty: **(Laughs.)** It's not a smutty film, Mum.

Suzie: No, it's about the Titanic.

Molly: It's a pity it doesn't say that in the title.

Ned: I quite fancy the sound of that actually. How about tomorrow?

Molly: Thank you. That would be nice. What have you got there? **(Points to shirt.)**

Ned: I wondered if you'd mind sewing the button back on the cuff for me. My hand's too shaky now to thread the needle.

Molly: Of course I will, give it here. **(Takes shirt and button.)**

Ned: Thanks. I did try, but I just kept stabbing myself.

Bunty: Have you ever been married, Next Door Ned?

Suzie: I don't remember you ever having a lady friend.

Molly: Girls! Don't be so rude.

Ned: I don't mind. But no, never married. All because of Doreen Chapleton.

Molly: What happened?

Ned: She broke my heart. She dropped me right after I bought her an engagement ring. I'd taken ages to save up for it as well.

Suzie: She didn't give it you back?

Ned: No. Not that I'd have known what to do with it even if she had.

Molly: Does the doctor know why your hand's so shaky? It's been a few months now, hasn't it?

Ned: Something about being anxious. Last bonfire night set me off. Some little toerag put a firecracker through my letterbox and it scared the living daylight out of me.

Molly: Well, don't worry about asking for help. Have you got any darning you need doing?

Ned: I can't ask you to mend my socks, Molly!

Molly: Why not? You've done enough for us over the years.

Ned: Just being neighbourly.

Molly: You know it's more than that.

Bunty: Yes, you taught us to ride our bikes.

Suzie: **(Laughing.)** Because Mum wouldn't let go. When she tried, she was running alongside us, holding on the handlebars.

Bunty: So we nearly ran into the grocery shop's display.

Molly: I daren't show my face there for days after.

Ned: It's natural, you were trying to protect them from getting hurt.

Molly: Yes. Well, I've always tried to do my best.

Ned: I think you've done a great job of keeping everything together. I never heard you shouting at them or anything like that.

Molly: No. **(Looks sad.)** No-one should be shouted at.

Suzie: You gave us those handyman lessons, didn't you, Next Door Ned? So that we could fix things.

Bunty: And you made us a little wooden toolbox to keep all the screwdrivers and pliers in.

Suzie: **(Laughs.)** Do you remember me picking up the big metal file and asking if I could use it on my fingernails? You took it off me straight away, thinking I was serious.

Ned: You did like to tease me, I remember that.

Bunty: You got your own back. You sent us in to Mum to ask for a tin of elbow grease.

Ned: That's right, I did. Sorry, I can't stop. Thanks for sorting my shirt out. **(Exits.)**

Molly: I don't know what to wear to the cinema. I haven't been in ages. Do people dress up still?

Suzie: I'll help you sort something. Shall we go and have a look now?

Molly: That's a good idea, otherwise I'll be fretting over it. Give us a shout if it gets too busy, Bunty.

(Molly and Suzie exit. Bunty continues sorting the tables out. Sam enters.)

Bunty: Hello, Sam.

Sam: Hi, Bunty, how are you today?

Bunty: Really well, thanks. And excited – it's just so hard to believe what you're going to do for me.

Sam: Well, it works both ways, you know. I will be taking a fee from what you earn.

Bunty: Of course, but you'll deserve every penny. I couldn't do it without you. And although Mum has built this place up, she wouldn't have been able to help me like you are. She doesn't know anything about music really.

Sam: That jukebox has worked out well, she says. It brings people in just to listen to it, then they usually stay for a drink as well.

Bunty: It's a good job Mum's not in charge of choosing the records. She'd fill it with Bing Crosby and Vera Lynn if she had her way.

Sam: I won't have a word said against Vera. She did wonders for keeping up the morale to the troops.

Bunty: No-one wants to be reminded of those times, though; it was ages ago.

Sam: Maybe to you, but not for those that were adults at the time it was going on.

Bunty: Next Door Ned always said he lived in fear every day he was in the army. Mind you, he defused bombs, so I suppose that was pretty scary. He said if you cut the wrong wires, that would be it. Boom!

Sam: Terrible times. And of course, you lost your Dad.

Bunty: I know. Mum used to say she had to be Mum and Dad to us. That's why we've been so lucky having Next Door Ned.

Sam: I had my Dad around, but he was a horrible man. A right thug. Poor Mum had a terrible time.

Bunty: You poor thing. I always thought it was the worst thing not having a Dad; I never thought about having one alive but nasty.

Sam: He had such a temper and he used to throw things across the room. I lost count of how many times I took the radio apart trying to mend it. Oh, and the clock. The crockery usually had it. For ages, we only had two plates and a bowl.

Bunty: How terrible.

(Molly enters.)

Molly: Hello, Sam. How are you? Oh I've read through the contract and I told Bunty she should sign it.

Bunty: Yes, I have, I'll go and get it. **(Exits.)**

Molly: You'll only have her working in nice places, won't you, Sam?

Sam: I will look after her, don't you worry. You know I spend my evenings checking out musicians and visiting all the nightclubs, so I know the circuit well.

Molly: It's a scary old world out there. Especially for young women.

Sam: I know. But I've been doing this for years. There won't be a lot of money to be made to start with. But it will get better as she gets known.

Molly: Singing with a live band, eh? I still can't believe it.

(Bunty enters with the music contract, which she hands to Sam.)

Sam: Thanks. Well, I'm afraid I can't stay. I've got to go and listen to a new band.

Bunty: **(Excitedly.)** A rock and roll band?

Sam: No, skiffle, but apparently still pretty good. So, we'll see. I just popped in to tell you I've had really good feedback from the recording studio we went to last week.

Bunty: I wish you'd been there, Mum. It was so exciting, although they did keep stopping and asking me to redo it. But it didn't matter really. I could have sung all day long.

Sam: It's going to be really useful trying to get you signed up with a record label.

Molly: It could really happen then? You are a lucky girl.

Sam: We've got a long way to go yet, so it's good you're so supportive, Molly. There won't be any money to be made for a long time. We are in the very early stages.

Bunty: But one day, I could be famous and earn a fortune. You could open up loads of other milkshake bars then, Mum.

Molly: We'll see. This is more than enough for me. But you being famous... **(pauses)** that would be chilly.

Bunty: **(Laughing.)** It would be cool, not chilly. Mum's trying to talk like the customers.

Molly: Well, at least I'm making an effort.

Bunty: I've been practicing my singing whenever it's empty in here; you know, close to closing time or first thing in the morning. It's lucky we've got the jukebox to have so many records to listen to. Otherwise it would only be Radio Luxembourg.

Molly: I like listening to that too. **(Slowly, expecting to impress.)** I dig those far out sounds.

Bunty: Mum!

Molly: I'm trying to be more round.

Bunty: What do you mean, more round?

Molly: Well, less square.

Bunty: **(Laughs.)** It's really better if you don't, Mum.

Molly: **(Disappointed.)** All right.

Sam: But Suzie still doesn't want to sing as well, I presume. I know she's got a great voice too. I've heard her when she thought no-one else was around.

Bunty: I have asked her, but she said she'd be too frightened in front of people.

Sam: Fair enough. You do need to have confidence. I'll be off then. Cheerio.

Bunty: Bye, Sam.

Molly: Bye.

(Sam exits.)

Bunty: Hey, Mum, I can buy you one of those fancy Italian coffee machines when I've started earning.

Molly: No, you won't. You'll keep it just for you, after all that effort you're going to. Anyway, it's a lot easier to get things on the never-never these days. So if I want a fancy Italian coffee maker, I'll get one on HP.

(Offstage, Suzie screams. She then backs slowly into the room looking shocked. Molly stands up.)

Suzie: Mum, Mum. There's a ghost!

Molly: **(Walks over to Suzie.)** Whatever do you mean?

(Reg enters.)

Reg: My beautiful girls. All grown up.
Molly: **(Shocked.)** Oh my word. Reg, is that you?
Reg: The one and only.
(Molly sits down.)
Bunty: But it can't be. **(Stands, takes a step closer.)** Dad's dead.
Suzie: **(Excited.)** Bunty, can't you see? He's just like in the photos. Oh, Dad. **(Rushes over, hugs him.)** It's really you.
Bunty: It is, isn't it? **(Hugs him.)**
Reg: Let me look at you, then. Beryl and Suzannah. Haven't you turned out well?
Bunty: We're just Bunty and Suzie now.
Reg: Are you now? My girls, eh?
Molly: **(Stands up, moves towards him.)** Where have you been all this time, Reg?
Reg: Well, I lost my memory. After I was ill in that damned POW camp in Burma. Woke up in hospital. Didn't know a thing.
Suzie: **(Jumping up and down.)** I can't believe we've got you back. It's a miracle.
Bunty: Yes, it's a miracle.
Molly: Why were you in hospital?
Reg: Malaria, they said.
Molly: Well when did you start remembering? You haven't written or even called.
Reg: I wanted to surprise you.
Molly: You've done that all right. It must be, what, sixteen years!
Reg: What kind of greeting is that for your old man, eh? Come here. **(Draws her to him, hugs her.)**

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[Continued in the full Murder Mystery pack.]