

'TIL    
DO US PART

A Murder Mystery

by

Andrew Hull

Customer Taster

'Til Death Do Us Part

A Murder Mystery

Copyright 2020 by Andrew Hull

It is the afternoon of Thursday 16th May 2019. Tony and Claire are getting married at the weekend and this is their rehearsal at St Geraldine's church in the village of Siddlington. The bride and groom's family and friends have gathered for the vicar to talk through what will happen on the day and to have a dummy run. Some people are running late, some don't really want to be there, and at least one person doesn't want the wedding to go ahead. Failed relationships, affairs, threats and long-held secrets all add to the tension as Saturday's ceremony looks more and more unlikely.

COPYRIGHT REGULATIONS

This murder mystery is protected under the Copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations and all countries of the Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights, including Stage, Motion Picture, Video, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translations into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, manuscript, typescript, recording, including video, or otherwise, without prior consent of Lazy Bee Scripts.

A licence, obtainable only from Lazy Bee Scripts, must be acquired for every public or private performance of a script published by Lazy Bee Scripts and the appropriate royalty paid. If extra performances are arranged after a licence has already been issued, it is essential that Lazy Bee Scripts are informed immediately and the appropriate royalty paid, whereupon an amended licence will be issued.

The availability of this script does not imply that it is automatically available for private or public performance, and Lazy Bee Scripts reserve the right to refuse to issue a licence to perform, for whatever reason. Therefore a licence should always be obtained before any rehearsals start.

Localisation and updating of this script is permitted, particularly where indicated in the script. Major revisions to the text may not be made without the permission of Lazy Bee Scripts.

The name of the author must be displayed on all forms of advertising and promotional material, including posters, programmes and hand bills.

Photocopying of this murder mystery constitutes an infringement of copyright unless consent has been obtained from Lazy Bee Scripts and an appropriate fee has been paid.

FAILURE TO ABIDE BY ALL THE ABOVE REGULATIONS, CONSTITUTES AN INFRINGEMENT OF THE COPYRIGHT LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

'Til Death Do Us Part

About the Pack

This is a scripted murder evening that will also require some background character knowledge to enable the cast to answer questions put to them by their audience. A full script and character notes are provided as well as a pack of 'table clues' for each team within your audience.

There is a cast of nine as well as one narrator who will guide your audience and help organise the questioning sections of the evening.

The murder evening is intended to be performed in a hall with a stage or suitable acting area, with tables around the hall for your audience. The setup is much the same as you would have for a quiz evening, i.e. teams of around 6-8 people per table. Each table has a set of clues to read through and will also have the opportunity to ask questions as the evening progresses.

Although intended for a performance on stage, this murder evening could also be performed over a video conference program such as Zoom or MS Teams. The table clue pack would need to be made available to your audience via email prior to the performance. It would be helpful to have your audience split into household teams rather than tables in a hall. The narrator's role would also need to be expanded to provide the written stage directions, particularly with reference to the two exits; one into the kitchen and one into the main church. Your audience can still ask questions via the video conference at the appropriate times.

What's included?

The Organiser's Overview [Extract in this document]:

- Plot overview and character list
- General staging notes
- Suggested timetable
- Props list
- Example questions and answers
- A cheat sheet showing the clues and red herrings within the table clues

The Main Script [Extract in this document]:

- Scripts for Act 1 and Act 2
- Final character statements
- Character background notes, including motivation and opportunity
- Where all the characters were at the time of the murder

A Table Pack, to be given to audience members

- Introduction to the evening
- A set of clues to study
- Accusation sheet, to be filled in

Plot Overview and Characters

Today is Thursday 16th May 2019 and we are in the St Michael's room of St Geraldine's church, Siddlington. A rehearsal for a wedding is taking place and the friends and family of the bride and groom have gathered to find out what is expected of them on the day.

Your cast consists of:

Tony Harper, the groom,
Claire Jeffreys, the bride,
Mike Colley, the best man and Tony's oldest friend,
Philip Jeffreys, father of the bride,
Karen Jeffreys, mother of the bride,
Ian Harper, the groom's brother,
Caroline Jeffreys, the bride's sister,
Paula Jones, chief bridesmaid and bride's closest friend,
Rev Neil Childs, vicar of St Geraldine's,

Narrator, one extra person to ensure the smooth running of the evening.

Twenty-nine years ago, Tony and Mike were responsible for a tragic accident that left another boy with severe brain damage. They swore to keep their involvement a secret and it is something they have never mentioned. The other boy died seven years later. Fast forward three decades and they are both successful businessmen who share a dark secret.

A few months ago, Tony was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and decided to make some changes to his life. He told no one about his condition and has refused treatment. He had one date with Caroline, but it was a disaster. He met her sister, Claire, and fell for her. He asked her out and, a month later, asked her to marry him. There is an age gap, but neither seem worried. He is still haunted by what happened in 1990 and wants to confess to someone.

Claire doesn't love Tony, but sees the marriage as cover for her lesbian relationship with Paula, as she is too afraid to come out. Paula is worried Claire might fall for Tony. Ian has gambling debts and has taken loans from some nasty people. Caroline hates Tony for their failed date and Philip thinks Tony is having an affair with his wife. Karen is really seeing Mike. The vicar had a son who was the boy that Tony and Mike bullied. He has no idea, until Tony confesses to him. The event is somewhat marred by a murder.

General Staging Notes

Casting and Rehearsal

Choose your performers and issue them with a copy of the entire pack. You should hold as many rehearsals as you feel comfortable with.

The first rehearsal should concentrate on reading through the pack and familiarising yourselves with the characters, backgrounds and format of the evening, before moving on to a read-through.

Subsequent rehearsals should be used for moving or blocking the action. This may need to be revised to suit your venue.

It is impossible to fully rehearse the question sections of the evening as you can never tell exactly what people will ask, but have a read through the example questions sheet, as this shows some of the questions encountered in the past.

Facilities required for the performers

You will need a separate and private room in which to change and base yourselves when not required on stage. The victim will also use this room after being murdered.

The performers should also be given the same food as the audience.

It is always a good idea to visit the venue a few weeks before the performance and to tailor the performance to suit your venue.

Hall layout and event format

This is a community room attached to a church. There is a picture of the inside of the room in the pack of table clues, which gives an idea of the layout, but feel free to dress your stage to suit your venue.

There should be some chairs and tables dotted around the stage, but with enough room to allow free movement between them. The exact layout can be flexible to both your cast and your venue's needs.

Suggested Timetable

7:30 pm	Guests arrive and are seated.
7:55 pm	Narrator explains the format of the evening and Act One begins.
8:30 pm	End of Act One, Narrator wraps up and supper is served.
9:15 pm	Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning.
9:25 pm	Act Two
9:40 pm	End of Act Two and short break.
9:50 pm	Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning.
10:00 pm	Short break while guests complete Accusation forms.
10:10 pm	Cast call for a spokesman from each table to read their accusation.
10:20 pm	The big reveal.
10:30 pm	End

Table Clues

This pack includes a series of written clues which need to be printed and distributed to each ‘team’ or ‘table’ in the audience. The following summarises the contents of each clue.

<i>Document</i>	<i>Information to be gleaned</i>
Claire’s letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to Paula trying to put her mind at rest over the wedding and the future.
Doctor’s letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to Tony about his cancer.
Loan letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to Ian from loan sharks demanding payment.
Coded text message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text from Mike to Karen arranging a meeting. (The code is explained in the Organiser’s Overview.)
Church layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floor plan of church and photo of St Michael’s Room. Direction of car park and village.
Tony’s diary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two week extract from Tony’s diary.
Hertfordshire Times newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report about Graham’s accident 29 years ago.
Evidence sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police evidence report.

Additional Materials in the Table Pack

Intro Sheet	A basic introduction to the evening and how it will run.
Accusation Sheet	To be filled in by each team.

'Til Death Do Us Part

[Script Extract]

Act One

(The lights in the main hall dim, leaving only the curtains lit. Narrator steps through the curtains and addresses the audience.)

Narrator: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. You join us in the St Michael's room of Siddlington's sixteenth century church, St Geraldine's. Tony Harper and Claire Jeffreys are getting married in two days and Tony has arranged for a rehearsal to make sure the ceremony runs as smoothly as possible. Close family and the major players have been invited to the rehearsal and for a meal afterwards. Shortly, you will get to meet Tony, Claire and the rest of the party. However, all is not as it seems. At some point, a crime will be committed and it will be down to you to solve it, so make sure you watch and listen very carefully. On your tables you will find various items, which may or may not help you. You will get the opportunity to ask questions as the evening progresses, but I will give further instructions later. So, I'll leave it to you for now. Good luck.

(Narrator steps back through the curtains and, a moment later, they open to reveal the St Michael's room. Neil enters, followed by Tony and Claire.)

Neil: And this is the parish room, or St Michael's room to give it its correct name. This is where some of the church's clubs and meetings take place and I thought it would serve as a good base for us all this afternoon. There is a kitchen just through there. Feel free to help yourself to tea or coffee, there's milk in the fridge and some of Mrs Peplow's delicious chocolate chip cookies in the tin on the counter. Just the one sugar for me, haha.

(Claire laughs politely while Tony looks out into the hall.)

Claire: It is a beautiful church. Have you been here long?

Neil: Just a little over two years and yes, it is a very peaceful place to worship. A trifle cold in the winter, but that is a blessing in the height of summer. Have you not visited us before?

Claire: No, I haven't. I've driven past hundreds of times, but never been inside before. This is Tony's parish; I live in Great Bantworthy. Not that I've been into St Thomas' either, I'm afraid.

Neil: Please don't worry, Claire, God doesn't judge.

Tony: That's not what I've heard.

Claire: Tony!

Tony: Doesn't the Bible say, "for the time has come that judgement must begin at the house of God"? Peter, I believe.

Neil: Very good. You know your Bible then?

Tony: Yes, I used to come here every Sunday when I was younger. I was very involved and used to help with the readings sometimes.

Claire: I never knew that.

Tony: It has been a while, but you never forget.

Neil: In that case, you'll also remember that John tells us "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Tony: **(To himself.)** Confess, yes.

Neil: Anyway, as much as I enjoy discussing the Bible, this is supposed to be a joyous occasion. Why don't you pop the kettle on while I go and find the others? And don't forget the biscuits. Mrs P does bake a good biscuit.

(Neil exits.)

Claire: I had no idea you were religious.

(Claire exits into the kitchen, but continues the conversation.)

Tony: As I said, I used to be. This was my church and that's why I wanted us to get married here.

Claire: **(Offstage)** That's really nice. Do you want a tea or coffee?

Tony: Not really.

Claire: **(Offstage)** Me neither. I'll boil the kettle though, just in case someone else wants one.

Tony: (Wandering round the stage, looking at things.) It hasn't changed much. A new coat of paint and I think these tables are new, but everything else...

(Claire enters.)

Claire: That's a good thing for a church, isn't it?

Tony: I suppose.

Claire: Look, Tony, while we've got a couple of minutes on our own, I wanted to talk to you about Paula.

Tony: What about her?

Claire: I want you two to get on. She's my best friend and I like spending time with her.

Tony: I have no problem at all with Paula or with you seeing her. In fact, I like that you have friends to see when I'm busy.

Claire: You just never seem very happy whenever she's around. Is it because of the way she is?

Tony: Of course not!

Claire: There's nothing wrong with being gay.

Tony: (Shocked) I never said there was! Look, Claire, I honestly have nothing against her and I truly didn't know I treated her any differently to anyone else.

Claire: Well, you do. I just don't want there to be a problem between us all. I'd like her to feel welcome in our home.

(Paula enters, but stops when she realises she is the topic of conversation. Neither Tony nor Claire notice her.)

Tony: She is welcome, anytime you want her there. I've always said that. I'll make more of an effort to be nice. I've had a lot on my mind recently, what with the wedding and work and... I'll give her a nice big hug next time I see her, okay?

(Paula steps fully into the room.)

Paula: No need to go that far, Tony.

(Tony and Claire turn towards her. Tony looks suitably embarrassed. Claire crosses to embrace her.)

Claire: Paula! I'll give you a hug. Sorry about that, we were just...

Paula: A bit soon for a domestic, isn't it? You don't get married for another two days.

Tony: Paula, how lovely to see you. I must say, you are looking lovely. Have you done something different with your hair?

Paula: Well, I can see why Claire fell for your charms.

Claire: Let's not overdo it, Tony. Come and sit down, I need to update you on the wedding dress.

(Claire takes Paula by the hand and leads her across to some chairs, where they sit and begin chatting.)

Tony: Right, well, I'll just pop out and see where everyone else has got to. Why don't you offer Paula one of Mrs P's biscuits?

(Tony smiles and exits.)

Paula: Who's Mrs P?

Claire: Never mind. It's really good to see you.

Paula: It's good to see you too.

(She gives Claire a kiss on the cheek. Claire takes her shoulders and moves in as though to kiss her properly, but Paula pushes her away and stands up.)

Paula: Easy, tiger. Plenty of time for that later. What did you want to tell me about the dress?

Claire: Oh yes. I had a call from Julia and the alterations are all done. I need to call in at eleven tomorrow for a final fitting. Please say you can come with me.

Paula: I wouldn't miss it for the world. So, what were you talking to Tony about just now?

Claire: Nothing really, I just wanted to make sure that everything was okay between the two of you. He sometimes acts a bit funny towards you and I don't want it to be an issue, you know, in the future.

Paula: Actually, I wanted to talk to you about something similar.

Claire: Oh yes?

Paula: I know we've talked about this before, but I am really worried that this marriage is going to make a big difference; to us, I mean.

(Claire stands and moves towards Paula. She is about to reassure her, but Paula moves away and continues talking.)

Paula: I know you say it won't, but what happens when you're actually living under the same roof, as husband and wife, in the same bed?

Claire: Please believe me, Paula.

(Claire takes Paula's hands and they face each other.)

Claire: This marriage is only for show and to stop my mother going on and on at me about settling down. I don't love Tony, I never have, he's just a great cover for us. No one is going to suspect once I've married him.

Paula: But would it be so bad if they did? Why can't we tell everyone how we feel?

Claire: You know why. It would destroy mum and dad. Look, I just can't do that to them yet. There will come a time when I can, but not yet.

Paula: I do understand, but don't you think this is a bit extreme?

Claire: It's perfect, that's what it is. Tony is quite well off, has a nice house and, more importantly, he's not particularly interested in me sexually. After a few weeks, I'll suggest separate rooms and I know he'll agree. I'm pretty sure there's something wrong and that he's looking for a companion more than anything else. And if it is something serious, I'll be comfortably off and we can spend as much time together as we like.

Paula: I know, you've said all this before. But when it comes down to actually living together... I couldn't stand to lose you, Claire. I'd do anything to stop that happening.

Claire: Oh, Paula.

(They are about to embrace when Karen and Caroline enter. There is an awkward moment where Karen freezes and looks embarrassed while Claire and Paula drop each other's hands and move apart. Karen regains her composure and ignores what she's just seen, although she does eye Paula warily.)

Karen: Ah, there you are. The vicar said you'd be hiding away in here.

Claire: Hardly hiding, Mother. Did you want a cup of tea? Where's Dad?

Karen: Not for me, thank you. Let's just get this over with, shall we?

Caroline: Dad had to go back for his wallet. I told him that Tony should be paying for the meal later, but you know what he's like.

Claire: I'm sure Tony will offer. He went looking for everyone, so he's around here somewhere.

Karen: He's in the car park, talking to that useless brother of his.

Claire: Mother!

Karen: Well, you know what I mean. It must run in the family.

Claire: Tony's hardly useless.

Caroline: He's not the most reliable of people. I really don't know why you're going through with this. He probably won't even turn up on the day.

Claire: You would say that.

(Tony and Ian enter, closely followed by Neil.)

Tony: And this is where we used to do the Sunday school, do you remember?

Ian: God yes. What was that woman's name that used to run it?

Tony: Mrs Holloway.

Ian: That's it. She used to put the fear of God into me. I couldn't wait to get out of this place.

Neil: Well, we're pleased to have you back.

Ian: **(Embarrassed)** Oh, I didn't see you there Reverend. I didn't mean...

[... Continued in the full pack ...]