

WHODUNNIT? A Murder Mystery Musical

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List of Characters:

The Police

Inspector Bumbleton: Pompous, vain, and incompetent. Comes to his own conclusions regardless of evidence.

Barney: Bumbleton's much-maligned assistant. World weary and logical in the face of his superior's buffoonery.

Chief Manners: Bumbleton's boss. Famous for his booming voice.

Constable Goons: Nerdy and overworked. This does not mean he is competent.

Sergeant Silly: It's in the name.

The Guests

Angel Goody and Saint Goody: Far too nice and squeaky-clean to ever commit murder. Or so it seems...

Lucifer Shady and Jezebel Shady: Extremely suspicious duo. The two lack brain cells, but Lucifer definitely has a more limited number.

Dr Angus Bones and Dr Andrew Bones: The normal ones. Not quite sure how they got here.

Cuthbert Snooty: An extremely posh and disdainful friend of Lord Harvington.

Joe Dullard: The world's most boring party guest

The Harvingtons

Lord Harvey Harvington of Smythe: Bombastic aristocrat. Bad liar. Fond of a drink.

Lady Harvington: Slightly dim, well-meaning hostess.

Charlie Harvington: Slightly dim, well-meaning child.

Binky Harvington: Oxford Union hack.

Minty Harvington: Amateur detective

Percy Harvington: A fan of the withering put down.

Alex Heartswept: Lord Harvington's financial advisor, with whom he also happens to be having an affair. Businesslike.

The Staff

Tompkins: The butler. Deadpan at all times.

Dorothy: The maid. Obsequious in the extreme, bowing violently every time she speaks.

Mabel: An ineffective cook, but a kindly person who is easily flustered.

Groundskeeper Bob: Curmudgeonly and elderly. Fond of a nap. Prone to violent outbursts. Secret computer genius.

The Reporters

Snoop and Scoop: Ratlike hacks from the Doolally Mail.

Act I

1.1. An Inspector Calls

Inspector Bumbleton, Lord Harvington's body, Barney, Lady Harvington

SONG: WHODUNNIT?

[the title song, in which the various characters introduce themselves and their potential motives. This might involve some movement and choreography.]

When the song ends, the stage clears to reveal the hallway in Lord Harvington's house. The man himself lies dead on the floor. The Inspector stands alone centre stage.

Inspector Bumbleton: The time? 11.41pm. The day? Last night, Saturday. The victim? Lord Harvey Harvington of Smythe. The crime? MURDER. The scene of the crime? The bottom of the staircase. The weapon? A knife. Blood? None. Suspects? Many. The case? Inspector Bumbleton is on it!

[Enter Barney]

Barney: Do I get to have a dramatic speech?

Inspector: Shut up, Barney. Don't ask questions.

Barney: But you just asked several...

[Enter Lady Harvington, sobbing]

Lady Harvington: Oh, Inspector, I'm so glad you've come!

Inspector: Never fear, dear Lady Harvington - I will find out who did this to your husband in absolutely no time at all.

Lady H: Oh, what a darling!

Inspector: I've been awarded Inspector of the Year for the North of the North of Derbyshire at least once, madam, there is no reason not to have complete faith in me.

Lady H: That is just spiffing. We are all so deeply upset, you see. Is that your assistant?

Inspector: What? Oh - you mean *Barney*. Yes, he will be assisting me in this case.

Barney: Hi -

Inspector: That's quite enough Barney. Now, my Lady - tell me the dreadful circumstances that led to the death of your frightfully foppish husband over there.

Lady H: Of course, Inspector. You see, it all began yesterday, when we invited some close friends round for a dinner party....

[Exeunt]

1.2. Come Dine With Me

The Goodys, Tompkins, the Shadys, the Doctors, Cuthbert Snooty, Joe Dullard, Lord Harvington, Alex Heartswept, Lady Harvington
Lord Harvington's driveway. The Goodys enter, with Tompkins standing to welcome behind the front door.

Saint Goody: Are you sure this is the right address?

Angel Goody: Quite sure. See, there's that very large sign saying 'Harvington House' on it.

S. Goody: How lovely! What an excellent landmark for the local community.

A.Goody: A worthy monument to their self-esteem.

S. Goody: Shall we ring the doorbell?

[The doorbell rings. Tompkins answers.]

Tompkins: Hello.

A. Goody: Good afternoon! We're here for the dinner party?

[Pause whilst Tompkins regards them with blank disgust]

S. Goody: We're old friends of Lord Harvington. From the university Tiddlywinks society, in fact.

A. Goody: Although he only ever seemed to turn up for the free Capri-Suns...

S. Goody: Such a socialite!

[Pause. Tompkins continues to stare.]

A. Goody: We're Angel Goody and Saint Goody.

S. Goody: The Goodys!

A. Goody: Are we not on the guest list?

S. Goody: Oh, gosh, we have definitely got the right address, didn't we Angel?

A. Goody: Yes, I even printed out the email it was written in. Better to be safe than sorry!

Tompkins: Yes, you're on the guest list. I just think it's too early in the day to be so disgustingly cheerful.

A. Goody: It's 4pm! We've been awake since 5!

S. Goody: Nothing better for the digestive system!

The Goodys: Ha, ha, ha!

Tompkins: Go away - I mean, inside. Please.

S. Goody: Gosh... He's having a bad day...

A. Goody: Poor fellow.

[the Goodys exit; the Shadys enter]

L. Shady: Oi!

Tompkins: And you are?

J. Shady: Lucifer and Jezebel Shady.

L. Shady: We're here for the dinner party. Absolutely nothing else.

J. Shady: No suspicious behaviour here!

The Shadys: Ha, ha, ha....

Tompkins: That's quite a suspicious thing to say, actually.

L. Shady: Can we come in though?

Tompkins: [pause] Yes.

[The Shadys exit. Snooty and Joe enter. Tompkins turns to them.]

Snooty: Cuthbert Snooty here. Can I come on through?

Tompkins: Of course, the Earl's expecting you. But who's he?

Joe Dullard: Joe Dullard

Snooty: I would like to most heartily assure you our coordinated arrival is a mere coincidence and that I am in no way associated with this specimen.

Joe Dullard: Is this a gravel drive? I remember it being tarmac... I guess crude oil prices have gone up so much these days. And gravel is better suited to the Lord's four-by-fours There's a really nice selection of stones on display here, in fact -

Tompkins: I don't care. Go in.

[Snooty and Dullard do as they are told. Dr and Dr Bones enter]

Andrew Bones: Dr and Dr Bones.

Angus Bones: Andrew and Angus?

Tompkins: You're all very keen and on time. It's barely past four.

Angus Bones: Well, it's convenient for the script if we all arrive at once so -

Tompkins: Fine by me. I suppose I should tell Lord Harvington you're here.

[Tompkins leaves the hallway and walks to Harvington's office. He knocks]

Tompkins: Sir? Your guests have arrived -

Lord Harvington: Wait - hang on - don't come in, don't come in!

[Tompkins enters the office]

Tompkins: Oh. Too late. Afternoon, sir.

Lord H: Afternoon, Tompkins. Ahem. This is my - er - business -

Alex: Friend.

Lord H: Business friend?

Alex: Alex Heartswept.

Tompkins: Your trousers are undone, sir.

Lord H: Oh - yes. That's all part of our new... business partnership.

Alex: We're - hoping to remodel the traditional fly zip with something more practical.

Tompkins: More practical than a zip?

Lord H: We're experimenting with - er.. velcro.

Tompkins: Oh. That's quite different from your current line of income, sir.

Alex: What, tax avoidance?

Lord H: No - oh, never mind. Alex, we'll - um - we'll meet later.

Alex: Ok.

Lord H: Bye.

Alex: Bye.

[There is an awkward handshake/hug scenario. Alex exits]

Lord H: You know, Tompkins, I actually do think I should be diversifying my investment portfolio.

Tompkins: I thought you already were with this zip thing.

Lord H: Well, yes, exactly! But I always seem to have put my money in the wrong places... First that Club Penguin website, then MySpace... It's a damn shame. I need to set my finances in order, pronto. They're looking far too shabby.

Tompkins: Very well, sir.

[Enter Lady Harvington]

Lady H: Darling! Your guests are here!

Lord H: Tompkins! Why didn't you say?

Tompkins: Oh. Your guests are here.

Lady H I think I just ran into one on the stairs? The one in the red scarf, did they get here early?

Lord H: Oh - er - eeh - ahh

Tompkins: They're business friends.

Lady H: I don't understand what you mean, so I'm going to ignore it. Now, come quickly darling!

[Exit Lady Harvington]

Lord H: She grinds me down, that woman. All these guests every weekend!

Tompkins: You invited them.

Lord H: Enough of that, Tompkins. Fetch my jazziest blazer and be hasty about it.

[Exeunt]

1.3. A Little More Conversation, A Little Less Action (Please)

The Goodys, the Shadys, the Doctors, Snooty, Dullard, Harvington, Dorothy, Charlie, Percy, Charlie, Minty, Binky

The Harvingtons' reception room. The guests all stand around, definitely not in a line.

S. Goody: That's a beautiful gold clock.

A. Goody: Exquisite, it really brings the place together.

S. Goody: No, it's not gaudy at all - in fact, it enhances the room's natural light!

A. Goody: Exactly!

L. Shady: How much do you think it's worth?

Snooty: Not enough. Indeed, it has nothing on the platinum-engraved grandfather clock in my estate, but then Harvington has always been a bit blasé with his wealth. Something much more subtle, like a diamond-encrusted teapot, would far better suit the prospect of this room - small though it is.

Angus Bones: This is bigger than our entire flat.

J. Shady: The clock's too large to fit in a handbag.

L. Shady: I wonder where it's from?

J. Shady: [picking up the clock] Made in China.

L. Shady: Ooh, china is really valuable.

Snooty: [sniffily] These people.

Joe Dullard: My Master's thesis was on clocks, actually... I analysed the changing shape of the hands from big to small to big again. For example, did you know that in 1894, local people in Cirencester designed what was at the time the world's largest clock. It was about eight feet in diameter - or was it nine? Actually, I think it was in Chippenham, not Cirencester. Both West Country market towns, you see. I always get those muddled in my brain. In fact -

S. Goody: So have you known Harvington a while?

Angus Bones: Oh, we're neighbours.

Andrew Bones: We live just at the bottom of the drive. But how did you meet him? You don't seem like his - usual type.

A. Goody: We met at university Tiddlywinks!

S. Goody: He always came for the Capri Suns!

Both: Ha, ha ha!

Angus Bones: I thought the Lord preferred something a little stronger.

S. Goody: Not with us!

Andrew Bones: And what do you do for work?

A. Goody: Oh, we don't work.

S. Goody: We volunteer.

A. Goody: We're extremely dedicated to our local community. Helping toads cross the road, art therapy for the under-5s, that sort of thing.

Angus Bones: Why would toddlers need therapy?

S. Goody: Being born is a traumatic experience, Dr Bones. Why do you think they're crying all the time?

J. Shady: Do you think we could fit that mirror in the suitcase?

L. Shady: Maybe if we folded it in half...

Andrew Bones: And what about you, the Shadys - what do you do?

J. Shady: What?

L. Shady: We're doing nothing.

J. Shady: We're just looking.

Andrew Bones: I meant - what do you do for work?

J. Shady: Oh. Jobs.

L. Shady: Jobs in a normal, non-illegal environment.

Andrew Bones: Sure....

Angus Bones: And how do you know Lord Harvington?

J. Shady: We ran into him in the pub and he invited us here.

L. Shady: Nothing shady about that!

[Enter Lord Harvington, Lady Harvington, and kids]

Lord H: Friends! Friends! Welcome to my humble grade 1 listed home. It 'ain't 'much, but it is listed! This is my darling wife - and may I present my children, Percy, Charlie, Minty, and Binky. But what is this, I can't have you all standing around my second reception room without something to drink! Dorothy!

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: **[with a comically large bow]** Sir!

Lord H: All right, get up.

Dorothy: **[bowing again]** So kind, sir!

Lord H: **[a little embarrassed]** Yes - all right, Dorothy. Could you be a dear and fetch us all something to drink? What does everyone fancy? Champagne?

Charlie: I'm gasping for a negroni.

Binky: Urgh, such a good idea, Charlie.

A. Goody: Actually - we don't - we don't drink?

Lord H: You will today! Bring out the Bollinger, Dorothy!

Dorothy: Absolutely, sir!

Lady H: Um - um - darling - um. I think we - **[whispers]**

Lord H: Ah, ahem, Bring out the Lambrini, Dorothy!

[Exit Dorothy]

Snooty: Lambrini? Isn't - isn't that a *cheap* drink?

Lord H: Sorry chaps, times are tough.

J. Shady: Are they indeed?

L. Shady: Is there anything you want to - get rid of, maybe?

Lord H: Well, maybe the ponies -

Percy: Good riddance.

Binky: Daddy, you wouldn't!

Lord H: They're rather a waste of hay, chaps. I'm thinking of reinvesting that in the basket-weaving industry.

L. Shady: **[whispering]** Horses are portable - take note.

J. Shady: I don't know how to ride one.

L. Shady: It's basically the same as a bike, isn't it!

Minty: Oh, you ride too?

J. Shady: **[laughing nervously]** Naturally! We love equations! I mean, equestrianismism **[to Lucifer]** Keep your voice down!

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: Your drinks, sir!

Lord H: Cheers, Dorothy. Now, everyone take a glass. A toast?

[Exit Dorothy]

Joe Dullard: Is no one going to ask about my thesis on clocks?

Angus Bones: To you, our host.

Snooty: To updating your wine cellar.

A. Goody: To your amazingly generous and splendiferous hospitality!

S. Goody: We love you!

L. Shady: **[Exchanging a loaded glance with Jezebel]** To a weekend of drop-dead fun...

[They all drink]

Lord H: Mmm! Tastes terrible. Now - to the dining room!

[Exeunt]

1.4. Motives at the Motive

Lady Harvington, Inspector Bumbletton, Barney, Lord Harvington, Snooty, the Goodys, the Shadys, the Doctors, Joe Dullard, and Dorothy

The Inspector, Barney and Lady Harvington to the side of the stage. Behind them sit the guests and Lord Harvington, frozen.

Lady H: So you see, Inspector - there were a fair few people in our house last night.

Inspector: Quite a hefty cast!

Barney: **[to the audience]** As you might have guessed, it's been a nightmare for the directors.

Inspector: Was there anyone else in the house I need to know of?

Lady H: Well, the servants - Dorothy, Tompkins... The cook. The groundskeeper. But he rarely ventures out of his armchair.

Inspector: Very well. Are you taking notes, Barney?

Barney: Yes, but -

Inspector: That's quite enough, Barney. Now, do go on, my Lady...

Lady H: After dinner my husband withdrew with his guests into the drawing room. Well, one of the drawing rooms...

[Exit Inspector, Barney and Lady Harvington. The scene behind unfreezes]

Lord H: Cracking dinner, that.

Snooty: I was a little perplexed by some of the ingredients, Harvington. What, for example, is the nature of those small crisped potatoes shaped like faces? They were quite delectable.

Andrew Bones: The potato smileys?

Lord H: Straight out of the freezer I'm afraid, Snooty. But didn't they pair well with the litres of Crofters?

A. Goody: I do wish you would serve more unprocessed foods.

S. Goody: It is not at all good for our digestion.

A. Goody: We ourselves are high-raw, no-fat vegans.

S. Goody: If you want our recipe for cashew butter butternut squash bolognese, do not hesitate to ask!

J. Shady: Sounds vile.

L. Shady: We only feed on bad energy and bad deeds.

Joe Dullard: Bad deeds are a puzzle, aren't they. Back when I was in primary school I picked all the staples out of the classroom board, and that got me into a whole host of trouble, let me tell you.

Lord H: Picking out staples is nothing compared to what those Shadys have done, old bore.

Joe Dullard: My name's Dullard, actually.

Lord H: I know. But when I met those two down the pub they were telling me how they faked their own deaths to commit credit card fraud!

L. Shady: I pretended to drown at sea whilst stand-up paddleboarding.

J. Shady: We had to change our names afterwards.

L. Shady: Before our surname was actually Evilyn - you know, *Evil-yn* -

J. Shady: Lucifer! Shh!

L. Shady: What? So we changed it to Shady to be less - shady.

Andrew Bones: But - correct me if I'm wrong here - your real names are still Jezebel and Lucifer?

Angus Bones: You didn't think to change those?

J. Shady: No...

L. Shady: I don't see what your problem is.

SONG: FIFTEEN CRIMES AND HOW TO COMMIT THEM

[The Shadys sing about their past evil doings and advise (poorly) on how others might do the same. Eg bank robbery, pickpocketing, identity fraud.]

Lord H: They're such a hoot, those two!

J. Shady: Cheers, Lord H!

L. Shady: We'd really like all your money, too -

J. Shady: We mean, we really like you too...

Snooty: Speaking of money... Harvington, old bean - that loan I gave to you -

Lord H: Ooh - err - ahh - umhmmm - What about it?

Snooty: Well, I rather think it's time you paid it back. I've looked over my books with the accountant and my multi-million fortune is now looking like a mere million.

Lord H: God! Poor old Snoots!

Snooty: Well, precisely. So I'm hoping to - ahem - call in some debts.

Lord H: Well... I would very much like to pay you back, old chap, but I'm having some *teeny* financial difficulties myself at the moment. And, you know, we've been friends for so long... Would a teeny extension on repayments be too much to ask? From one toff to another?

Snooty: Hmm... Very well. But I must add - if you don't pay up soon, I will be forced to threaten you with legal action.

Lord H: That doesn't sound good.

S. Goody: We don't believe in money.

A. Goody: We believe in the barter system. When we go to the local market we exchange our selection of organic vegan produce for a homemade spelt sourdough loaf.

S. Goody: And obviously the 5 year olds we treat pay us in their smiles.

Snooty: What a revolting notion!

A. Goody: Mr Snooty, are you really such a cynic?

Snooty: There's nothing to smile about in my life.

L. Shady: Hear hear!

Joe Dullard: The first time I smiled was I believe in 1976, at the first football game between Blackburn Rovers and Sheffield Wednesday. I remember it clearly because I was wearing a rather itchy pair of socks and that morning I'd been to Barclays bank to get some cash out -

Andrew Bones: We're rather thinking of heading to bed, weren't we Angus?

Angus Bones: Yes, we're quite tired. It was a long day of travelling.

J. Shady: I thought you said you lived at the bottom of the drive.

Andrew Bones: Well, it is seven miles long -

Lord H: Not to worry if you're feeling fatigued, my dear Doctors. Dorothy will show you up to your room. Dorothy!

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: Yes, sir!

Lord H: Accompany these two up to their room.

Dorothy: Of course, sir!

Lord H: Stop doing that, I've said a thousand times.

Dorothy: If you insist, sir!

Lord H: No - Dorothy - I said - oh well, just take them upstairs.

[Exit Dorothy, with the Doctors]

Lord H: Come to think of it, I'm feeling rather sleepy myself. Good old Crofters!

S. Goody: Is that - did I just see someone outside the window?

L. Shady: They were wearing a red scarf!

Snooty: Intruder!

Lord H: **[excited]** Alex? Oh I mean - no - don't worry, that's - er - just one of the children.

A. Goody: Are you sure? They didn't look like one of yours.

J. Shady: They looked about thirty five.

Lord H: No but - they, er, like playing dress up.

L. Shady: Really?

Lord H: Yes, they wear - wigs and the like. Huge costume box upstairs.

S. Goody: Ooh, maybe they could treat us to a performance!

Snooty: Absolutely not.

Lord H: Anyway, rest assured, dear Goodys, there's no way anyone could intrude. The Groundskeeper triple-locks the gates after 7pm when he knows we're not heading out for the evening.

Joe Dullard: A triple lock? Now, that is rather fascinating. On my own front door I have a Yale, you can trust the quality of those -

A. Goody: Good night!

L. Shady: We'll see you later, Lord Harvington.

J. Shady: We mean - tomorrow.

Snooty: Have a blessed rest, companions.

S. Goody: Thank you for a delightful evening!

Joe Dullard: ...So you can really see how lock design has evolved over the past century. Wait - where's everyone going?

[Exeunt]

1.5. DUN DUN DUUUN

Tompkins, Mabel, Groundskeeper Bob, Lord Harvington's dead body, Alex Heartswept, the Doctors, Lady Harvington
The kitchens. Bob is asleep in a chair.

Tompkins: Can you hear that? They're all off to bed.

Mabel: Finally! A sit down after all that cooking.

Tompkins: It's a great effort, is it, putting the potato smileys in the oven.

Mabel: **[ignoring]** I'd better give old Bob his dinner.

Tompkins: He won't wake up. He's been sleeping there since eight.

Mabel: Bob! Bob!

Tompkins: No - stop doing that. You need to shout properly. BOB!

Bob: Aaargh! Is that the Teletubbies?

Tompkins: No Bob... Just me. **[to Mabel]** He has this recurring dream where Tinky Winky is plotting to murder him.

Bob: Don't say his name!

Mabel: What, Tinky Winky?

Bob: I said, don't say it! That little purple terror comes for me every night but I'll get him, I'll get him one day...

Tompkins: If you say so.

Mabel: Bob, here's your dinner. Everyone's gone to bed.

Bob: Dinner? Where's all the time gone? Did I - I don't think I locked the gate!

Mabel: You didn't? The boss'll be furious!

Tompkins: He says this every night, Mabel, and he's never forgotten to lock it.

Mabel: Are you sure?

Bob: Come to think of it... I went and locked it. No, I definitely did - HANG ON!

Mabel: What is it?

Bob: I heard the swinging of a door.

Tompkins: I didn't.

Mabel: I think you're imagining things, Bob.

Bob: If it's that little Tubby Custard devil -

Mabel: It definitely won't be an imaginary children's TV character, Bob. Now, can we please just head to bed? I'll walk you out to your cottage, come on - oh.

[Bob has already fallen back asleep and is snoring in his chair]

Tompkins: I'm going to bed.

Mabel: I'll come too - wait - shh! Did you hear creaking on the stairs just then?

Tompkins: No.

Mabel: I'm sure I did... Some sort of scuffle.

Tompkins: Don't be silly.

Mabel: Maybe he's right about the Teletubby - I'm taking this.

[Mabel picks up a stray knife]

Tompkins: Ludicrous.

Mabel: I'll feel better if I have it... Come on.

[They walk out of the kitchen and into the corridor beneath the staircase]

Mabel: What are the guests up to tomorrow?

Tompkins: I think the boss was hoping for a polo match.

Mabel: Can his friends ride?

Tompkins: No. I thought he'd sold half the horses anyway.

Mabel: Who'd buy half a horse? **[notices Lord Harvington's body]** ARGH!

[Shocked pause as they both stare at the body]

Mabel: Oh my God... Oh my God...

Tompkins: ...Sir?

Mabel: Is he asleep?

Tompkins: People don't usually just fall asleep at the bottom of the stairs.

Mabel: Wake up, WAKE UP!

Tompkins: Wait - I know a far more effective method. Sir - I forgot to record the snooker highlights on ITV6. **[Pause]** Strange, that usually works.

Mabel: Is he... breathing?

Tompkins: **[inspects]** It appears not.

Mabel: So he's dead?

Tompkins: It does seem that way.

Mabel: **[claps her hands to her mouth; the knife tumbles to the ground]** I need to sit down... Good Grief...

[Enter Alex Heartswapt]

Alex: Harvey? Are you coming back to bed?

Mabel: Who's that? Tinky Winky? A GHOST!

Tompkins: A ghost with nothing but a dressing gown on.

Mabel: Pardon?

Tompkins: He's the boss's business friend.

Alex: What's happened? Is he all right?

Tompkins: I doubt it, he's dead.

Alex: No... No... It can't be! What are you doing just standing there! Someone call an ambulance!

[Enter the Doctors]

Andrew Bones: What's all this noise?

Alex: Oh, good... A doctor! You're Dr Bones, aren't you?

[The Doctors exchange a look]

Angus Bones: Yes -

Alex: Well, get down here at once - we think Harvey has fallen down the stairs.

Tompkins: Did he fall... or was he pushed?

Mabel: Not now, Tompkins!

Alex: Look, he could be dead! Dr Bones, come quick.

Andrew Bones: What are we supposed to do about it?

Alex: Treat him?

[The Doctors look blank]

Alex: Because you're DOCTORS?

Angus Bones: I'm an accountant.

Andrew Bones: We just did PhDs...

[Lady Harvington enters with a dramatic shriek]

Lady H: Is that my husband... NO! NO!!! Harvey - Harvey, my darling - can you hear me?

Tompkins: **[poking the body]** He's dead.

Lady H: Get your hands off him! Oh, my poor darling... How can this be?

Angus Bones: He must have fallen down the stairs.

Lady H: No - my darling never trips. Look, he's wearing his grippy socks. *Such* a great Christmas present from me a few years back. No - this is MURDER.

Tompkins: Terrific.

Alex: Look - a knife on the floor!

Lady H: But no blood?

Alex: How can this be?

Mabel: About the knife -

Lady H: **[to Alex]** Hang on - why are you wearing my dressing gown?

Alex: Uh - no time to explain now. If this is murder, the police must be called at once. We are now standing at the scene of the crime...

Lady H: Tompkins - to the phone. Hurry!

[Exeunt]

1.6. A Constable, a Sergeant, and the Chief of Police Walk Into a Room...

Constable Goons, Chief Manners, Sergeant Silly, Tompkins, Inspector Bumbleton, Barney
An office in the police department. Goons is seated at a desk.

[The telephone rings]

Goons: North of the North of Derbyshire Constabulary, Harvington police station. PC Goons speaking. No, the police. You need to dial 9191 for the fire department. For the police it's 9119. Yes, confusing, isn't it! No, I don't know how to put out a raging oil fire I'm afraid... Have you tried a saucepan of water? Oh - it's your sink that's on fire... Yes, that would be a problem...

Chief: *[offstage]* Goons!

Goons: Sorry, got to go. Don't forget, the number for the firefighters is 9911. I mean - 9191 - I mean - Love you! Bye!

[Enter the Chief and Silly]

Chief: What are you doing blithering all over the receiver?

Goons: I was responding to a caller, Chief.

Chief: Well, stop doing that right this moment. We have urgent business to attend to.

Goons: But - I haven't heard of any incidents so far. Indeed, I haven't all year.

[Pause. The both look at a sign on the desk - 'Days without incident - 875']

Chief: Yes, it's a ruddy good job we're understaffed, eh, Sergeant?

Silly: What?

Chief: Oh, keep up.

Goons: Who's this?

Chief: Your new assistant, Sergeant Silly. I recruited him from outside the bowling alley myself.

Silly: Bowling? I thought I was playing football...

Chief: That's how he got the broken toe. I did tell him not to kick the ball. But I'm sure we can shape him up to be an upstanding member of our police force.

Goons: How do you do, I'm Constable Goons.

Silly: Spoons?

Goons: No -

[The telephone rings]

Chief: Goons! Answer that telephone at once!

Goons: But - it's usually just people trying to reach the fire department. I'm fed up with it!

Chief: You never know when crimes can occur, Constable! We must be prepared and ready at all times.

Silly: Exactly. That's why I've brought my magnifying glass. **[holds out a random object that is definitely not a magnifying glass]**

Chief: **[proud]** Good job.

Goons: **[answering the phone]** You have reached the police department.

[Enter Tompkins, also holding a telephone]

Tompkins: Good evening.

Goons: How may I help you?

Tompkins: I'm not sure if I need the police, in fact.

Goons: No? Is anything in your house on fire, perhaps?

Tompkins: No. But we may need a firefighter.

Goons: Not again... What is it this time? Ovens overheating? Faulty electricity?

Tompkins: We need someone to do some heavy lifting.

Goons: Oh?

Tompkins: You see, there's a body at the bottom of our staircase.

[Pause]

Goons: Pardon?

Tompkins: Yes. Apparently it might be a murder case.

Goons: Why didn't you say that first? Where are you calling from?

Tompkins: Harvington House. The Earl would have called himself, but he's the one who's died.

Goons: We'll send someone over immediately. Thanks for calling.

Tompkins: My pleasure.

[They hang up. Exit Tompkins]

Chief: Why - I - I can't believe it.

Goons: I know! Our first crime in 875 days!

[Goons changes the 'Days without incident' sign from 875 to 0]

Chief: Who am I going to play darts with at the weekend now?

Silly: Who's dead?

Goons: Lord Harvington. Were you not listening?

Silly: Oh. Who's Lord Harvington?

Goons: The Earl. He lives that way. With the massive estate.

Chief: Well, I heard he was rather well-endowed but a chap doesn't like to ask.

Silly: It's not ringing any bells.

Goons: He drives that enormous red car with the number plate that reads 'legend'.

Silly: I always thought that car belonged to Paul Hollywood...

Chief: Crime! In my own police administrative district! How I have failed...

Goons: Don't worry, sir, we'll get it sorted -

Chief: No - we can't do this alone. We need -

[Enter Inspector Bumbleton, and Barney]

Inspector: Did somebody say - MURDER?!

Goons: Oh - not him -

Silly: Who's him?

Chief: Inspector Bumbleton! Perfect timing!

SONG: BUMBLETON IS BEST

[A bragging song for Bumbleton. The Chief and Silly join in singing his praises (literally); Goons and Barney are less keen.]

Inspector: At your service, chief! Send me wherever you need me and I'll be there pronto.

Barney: As will I.

Inspector: And Barney will come too, if anyone cares about that.

Chief: Inspector, we will be requiring your services. This is a serious issue, so you'll need to use all your wit and cunning to solve the crime.

Inspector: What has occurred?

Chief: Lord Harvington has died. They suspect that he has been murdered!

Barney: Crikey!

Inspector: Enough bad language, Barney. We must act with efficiency and immediacy. I will head to Harvington House at once. Thank you, Chief, for trusting me with this case.

Chief: There was really no one else for the job.

Goons: I'm here.

Inspector: Yes, Goons, but who solved the case of which pigeon did the poo outside the post office? Was it you?

Goons: No...

Chief: Who did you accuse of doing the poo?

Goons: A seagull...

Chief: Who solved the case?

Barney: Me -

Chief: Bumbleton, of course! Once again our hopes of success lie with you. This dastardly deed has ruined our crime-free district. Chase the murderer down and rid us of their mischief!

Inspector: On my way!

[Exit Inspector]

Chief: Now - sergeant. We'll get started on your training.

Silly: Trains? I thought I was becoming a police officer.

Barney: Do - do you have any instructions for me, Chief?

Chief: Eh?

Inspector: **[offstage]** Barney!

[Exit Chief, Silly, and Goons]

REPRISE: BUMBLETON IS BEST

[A very brief musical end to the scene. Barney sings the chorus of 'Bumbleton is Best' but with the lyrics changed to reflect his feelings of frustration and bitterness towards his boss.]

[Exit Barney]

1.7. An Expository Scene in which Barney is Ignored Yet Again

Inspector Bumbleton, Lady Harvington, Barney, Lord Harvington's body, Dorothy, Mabel, Tompkins

The Harvingtons' hallway.

Inspector: So you see, my dear Lady, how it is that I came to be here today.

Lady H: Thank you, Inspector, that was most interesting.

Barney: I'm not sure the story of how you got your 50 metre swim badge is relevant.

Inspector: It's setting the scene, Barney. You could learn a thing or two about that. Now - to the scene of the crime!

Lady H: My poor husband is just there - at the foot of the stairs.

Inspector: Have a look at this, Barney. Tell me, what do you see?

Barney: Hmm... Well, there's a knife over here. It can't have fallen from the Earl's hand because his palms lie flat. But there's no blood... It's possible that he was threatened with it by the murderer, who then chose to shove him down the stairs when he resisted. Actually, it's entirely possible that he could have just tripped and fallen.

Inspector: Don't be silly, Barney. He's wearing grippy socks.

Lady H: Is there a coroner at hand? I would really like my husband to be inspected properly, for poison and all that...

Barney: Poison?

Inspector: Don't scoff. In this case any conclusion is possible.

Barney: Looking at the distance between the stairs and the body - I really think he might have just fallen, Inspector. We can't let our imaginations get the better of us.

Lady H: There's no question that this was murder, I'm afraid, Bobby.

Barney: It's Barney.

Lady H: Oh, sorry Bernard. The point is, I can think of many reasons why people might want my husband dead...

Inspector: Is that so?

Lady H: Darling Harvey had his fair share of enemies - opponents he'd left in the dust at Tiddlywinks, locals he'd seriously injured whilst driving recklessly in his big red car, the poor, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera...

Inspector: I see. But do you think any of these groups could have broken into the property last night to attack your husband?

Lady H: Our security is managed by the groundskeeper, you'd have to ask him. Although there were so many guests in the house last night it's not impossible that one of them is also a bad Tiddlywinks player, or suffering from a car accident, or (eugh) poor. I myself was not aware of any strange goings-on last night. I heard some footsteps on the landing not long before the body was discovered, but I assumed that was just Harvey going to get his bedtime milk. He can never sleep without it.

Inspector: Noted. Well -

Barney: **[returning to look at the body]** Hang on, sir. I've found a mug on his person. Are we sure he didn't trip whilst heading to the kitchens?

Inspector: Barney, you have got to stop with these ridiculous suggestions! Now, how can we interview this groundskeeper?

Lady H: I never know where the staff are, one has staff to tell one that. Dorothy?

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: Yes Ma'am?

Lady H: Please fetch Groundskeeper Bob.

Dorothy: I don't know where he is, Ma'am!

Lady H: Then bring someone who does.

Dorothy: Yes, Ma'am!

[Exit Dorothy]

[Enter Dorothy, with Mabel and Tompkins]

Dorothy: Here are Mabel and Tompkins, Ma'am!

[Exit Dorothy]

Tompkins: Hello.

Mabel: Isn't it dreadful, Inspector?

Inspector: For you loyal servants, I suppose! For me this is quite the plum case. Now, this groundskeeper - do you know if he remembered to lock the gates last night? Is there any possibility anyone could have broken in?

Mabel: Poor Bob - he does get confused. But he said he remembered to do it...

Tompkins: Although there is a chance that he didn't.

Inspector: Are you insinuating that your fellow staff don't do their jobs properly?

Tompkins: Well, yes - I mean, look at us.

Inspector: Did either of you hear anything suspicious last night in the hour before midnight?

Mabel: We were in the kitchens with Bob, clearing up after dinner. Bob claimed to hear some creaking upstairs, and I did too - I now realise that was probably the sound of the poor Earl plummeting to his death.

Inspector: I see, I see... And did you two hold any grudges against the Earl? Any motive for MURDER?

Barney: Sir - you can't just -

Mabel: Oh, no! Never!

Inspector: But you found the body... Quite suspicious, don't you think?

Tompkins: Someone had to find it.

Mabel: Oh, we didn't do it! I promise! I swear on my second-best apron -

Barney: Sir, I don't think -

Inspector: **[aside]** Don't worry, Barney. This is all just for show. Everyone knows the people who find a body can't be its killer, that's far too obvious.

Barney: It is?

Inspector: **[to Tompkins and Mabel]** Thank you, both, there will be enough time for questioning later. But first - take me to the man that they call... *Bob*.

[Exeunt]

1.8. The Tabloids Act Immorally (Shocker!)

Constable Goons, Chief Manners, Sergeant Silly, the Reporters

The police department. A harrassed Goons sits before a desk answering telephone calls.

[The telephone rings. Goons answers.]

Goons: The North of the North of Derbyshire Constabulary, Harvington Police Station, PC

Goons speaking, how can I help? Yes, Lord Harvington is dead... Yes, we suspect it is murder...

Yes, we're on the case, please don't worry... **[Goons hangs up; the phone rings again; he**

picks up] Harvington Police Station, PC Goons speaking. How can I help? No, there's no serial

killer. At least - we don't know yet. I mean - no, don't take your kids out of school and move to

Iceland, it's really not - oh, they hung up. **[Goons hangs up; the phone rings again; he picks**

up] Police, PC Goons speaking. Do you actually have a crime to report? Just stressed about a

potential murderer? Yes, us too, that's why - no need to swear! And the pigeon/seagull mistake

was years ago, I already made a public apology - You don't like me taking that tone, Karen?

Well, why don't you report me to the police - oh wait!, I am the police! **[Goons hangs up**

triumphantly, then picks up again immediately] Wait - sorry - hang on - Oh, she's hung up

too. **[breathes in. The phone rings again. Goons picks up.]** Police. Your toaster's on fire? I

can't help you. **[hangs up]**

[Enter Chief and Silly]

Chief: GOONS!

Goons: Chief, can you get the phone to stop ringing? I've been inundated with calls all day. The residents are terrified that a murderer is on the loose!

Chief: As they should be!

Goons: But - all these callers are becoming a real obstacle to me doing actual police work!

Chief: Hah! Nice joke, Goons! As if you've ever done a day's work in your life!

Goons: You see me sat at this desk literally every day -

Chief: Forget the telephone for a minute, I want to run through some basic training with you and old Silly here.

Goons: Basic training?!

Silly: I really don't understand why we keep talking about trains.

Goons: Chief, I've worked here for almost a decade! He's been here five minutes!

Chief: You can never go wrong with the basics, Goons, as my track record will show. If you can learn to pick up the telephone and strap your police belt you'll be well on the way to becoming chief of the North of the North of Derbyshire police force.

Goons: But... I already do both of these things.

Chief: Not well enough! Now, sergeant - what's this?

Silly: ... A nose trimmer?

Chief: Good guess - it's a walkie talkie. Now, if you press -

[There is a knocking without.]

Chief: I wasn't expecting any callers. Enter!

[The Reporters scurry onstage]

Snoop: Morning, chief...

Scoop: We were in the area, digging around...

Snoop: When we caught a delicious scent...

Scoop: Smells like - mmm, a lovely scoop.

Silly: Is there ice cream?

Goons: No, these are reporters from the Doolally Mail.

Chief: Don't say a word, you two! I'll deal with this. Watch and learn.

Snoop: Oooh, the headline writes itself - 'Chief of minor Derbyshire constabulary stuns in mannish display of manliness'

Scoop: Or, if we want to be nasty - 'Chief of loser Midlands police force threatens innocent reporters in horrifying attack on free speech - and Brexit'!

Chief: I never mentioned Brexit!

Scoop: You have now!

Chief: Get out of my office!

Snoop: 'Loser chief of minor police force uses aggressive language against inferiors and comes out in support of Meghan Markle - click here to see him tear up a picture of our beloved Lady Di'.

Chief: ENOUGH! Have out with it, what do you want?

Snoop: We just want some answers to our very simple questions.

Scoop: We heard some whispers on the street this morning...

Snoop: Very juicy they were too...

Scoop: Mmm... Delicious...

Snoop: And we were wondering if you might be able to enlighten us a little further.

Chief: On what subject?

Snoop: Is it true that Lord Harvey Harvington of Smythe is dead?

Scoop: That he was found at the bottom of the staircase in the middle of the night?

Snoop: That his wife and children are distraught?

Scoop: That he won't pay any inheritance tax?

Snoop: That the killer was none other than his OWN WIFE?

[Pause]

Chief: No comment.

Scoop: **[gasps]** Are you sure that's all you have to say?

Snoop: If you don't answer, we have no qualms about telling our readers that you're a member of the tofu-eating wokerati.

Chief: You could at least come up with a believable story. I'm a policeman, after all.

Scoop: Look, we just want to know - Lord Harvington, is he dead or alive?

Snoop: Was it an accident or murder?

Scoop: Did he trip or was he pushed?

Chief: No comment. The incident is under investigation and there will be a full press report when we have conclusive answers.

Snoop: Oh, come on Chief.

Scoop: You must have some little nugget you can cast our way.

Snoop: Tell us - what happened to Lord Harvey Harvington?

[pause]

Silly: Lord Harvington's still alive? I thought he was dead.

Chief: SERGEANT!

Scoop: Ooooh... the dim one speaks...

Snoop: Tell us more, tell us more...

Silly: I struggle to follow these things, but didn't you guys just send an inspector to see whether he'd been murdered?

Scoop: Murder?

Snoop: Murder?

Goons: Did you really have to speak?

Silly: What?

Snoop: Well, thank you gentlemen...

Scoop: A very fruitful discussion indeed...

Snoop: We'll be off, we'll be off...

[They scurry offstage]

Goons: You fool.

Chief: Ah, never mind, Goons. We all make mistakes.

Goons: I don't think I've ever made that sort of mistake!

Chief: Get back to the telephone.

Goons: But sir -

Chief: Come on, Goons. Disaster will be averted. Before those reporters have even had one sniff at this story, Inspector Bumbleton will have solved the case. I'm sure of it.

Goons: Yeah... right. But do you think we should let the Harvingtons know that their moment of personal grief is about to be blown up into a national spectacle by the media?

Chief: Pff! As I've said, Bumbleton will solve it first. The man's a genius. Now - back to work.

[Exeunt]

1.9. A Tasty Cliffhanger to Encourage People to Return After the Interval

Inspector Bumbleton, Barney, Mabel, Tompkins, Groundskeeper Bob, Guests, Harvington family, Dorothy

The entrance to the kitchens. The Inspector, Barney, Mabel, and Tompkins before the door.

Inspector: Police regulations insist I must knock first. We must exercise great care and delicacy when approaching potential suspects. Ahem. Groundskeeper Bob? Groundskeeper Bob? Are you in there?

Mabel: He might be asleep still.

Inspector: Hmm. **[pause]** Never mind.

[The Inspector barges in with a bang. The Groundskeeper is still asleep in the chair.]

Mabel: Bob? Bob? Where is he?

Barney: There! Oh, he's asleep.

Inspector: Groundskeeper - please arise so I can ask some questions. Mr Bob? Hello?

[Shaking him] Hello?

Mabel: Is he - is he -

Inspector: He's not breathing!

Mabel: **[gasps]** Another murder?

Tompkins: He's probably still asleep.

Barney: I agree, if -

Inspector: Shut up, Barney. Hang on - let me use my tried and tested resuscitation methods on him, just to be sure.

Barney: But sir - your fingerprints -

[Inspector shakes and pokes Bob in very bad CPR.]

Tompkins: Has he passed?

Inspector: No, he's just failed the post mortem exam. But he may still be dead... Look - by the chair! A small bottle of elixir. **[Raises a bottle of blue VK beside the chair]** Smells like -
POISON!

Mabel: Oh, Bob!

Inspector: We must act quickly. The killer could be after any one of us next.

Mabel: But why would they want to murder Bob?

Inspector: I don't know, Mabel. Our criminal is clearly a loose cannon who cannot be trusted.

Barney: Because all other criminals are famously trustworthy...

Mabel: I hope he went peacefully - he always had such frightful nightmares.

Inspector: What about? They may be the clue to the next stage in this super twisty case.

Tompkins: I doubt they're relevant - he used to dream about being hunted down by Tinky Winky -

Bob: [suddenly and violently awake] WHERE IS HE? WHERE IS HE? LET ME TAKE A SWING AT THAT BIG PURPLE FIEND!

Barney: Oh - he's not dead. Just insane.

Mabel: Bob! You're alive!

Bob: I am? How disappointing.

Mabel: We were worried about you!

Inspector: I suppose my resuscitation methods were a success. **[Raising the VK]** You weren't poisoned by this by any chance, Groundskeeper?

Bob: No, I just like the colour.

Inspector: So no one, as far as you are aware, has attempted to murder you in the past twelve hours?

Bob: Don't think so.

Inspector: Oh. That's a shame. Let's cut to the chase. Groundskeeper, my name is Inspector Bumbleton **[flashes badge]** and I need you to answer a few very important questions relating to the death of Lord Harvington on Saturday evening.

Bob: Lord Harvey's dead?

Inspector: Yes.

Bob: No one bothered to tell me. I've been asleep in this chair since then.

Inspector: Oh.

Bob: Too bad. I always liked him. He gave me a 50-pack of these **[gesturing to the VK]** for my birthday. He always had refined taste.

Barney: It doesn't matter, Bob - we just want to know if you remembered -

Inspector: If you remembered to lock the estate gates yesterday before Lord Harvington died. It is extremely important that you know.

Bob: I - I -

Inspector: Yes?

[Pause. Bob is concentrating very hard on remembering]

Bob: I don't remember.

Mabel: Bob!

Bob: But I can check - hang on.

[Bob pulls out a laptop]

Bob: In my spare time, I've been kitting out the estate with a state-of-the art security system. I've got all the footage archived - look, here.

Tompkins: I didn't know you knew how to read, let alone use a computer.

Bob: Oh, I still can't read. I never did make it past the difficult Biff, Chip, and Kipper books.

Inspector: A man of culture, I see.

Bob: But computers are easy, you've just got to press the buttons. Look, I've even got a light-up keyboard.

Inspector: Impressive.

Bob: There you go, inspector. There's the footage - me on Saturday evening at 7pm, triple locking the gates. The last people to go up the drive were Dr and Dr Bones. My camera network found no trace of break ins or intruders.

Barney: Thanks, Bob -

Inspector: Thank you, Bob. Extremely useful. Well - this revelation has added a new twist in our ever-dastardly tale. This calls for a house meeting. Everyone - gather round!

[The guests, Harvingtons, and Dorothy trundle in.]

Snooty: Can we make this quick? I'm playing Bridge with Jacob Rees-Mogg at seven.

A. Goody: Have you found the murderer?

J. Shady: It was absolutely nothing to do with us, absolutely not... Right, Lucifer?

[L. Shady considers for a moment, then shakes his head]

Inspector: Gather round! Bob here - *[The Inspector claps a hand on Bob's shoulder, but Bob has already gone back to sleep and snores]* Bob here has just helped me make a great advance in my investigation of the murder of poor Harvey Harvington, seventh earl of Smythe.

Barney: I'd like to add that his death may still have been an accident, we don't know -

Inspector: Barney?

Barney: Yes?

Inspector: What am I going to tell you?

Barney: That no one asked for my opinion?

Inspector: You said it, not me. Now, security footage from Saturday night revealed that no one left nor entered this house between four pm and the hour the body was discovered. This can only mean one thing - the murderer, whoever they may be, is standing in this very room...

[END OF ACT ONE]

Act II

2.1. Whodunnit? (Roll Credits)

The Goodys, the Shadys, the Doctors, Snooty, Joe Dullard, Tompkins

The Harvingtons' sitting room. The guests stand around in silence, casting each other suspicious looks.

Snooty: I'm going to say what we're all thinking. Obviously it was you two who did it.

J. Shady: What?

L. Shady: No!

J. Shady: We would never.

Snooty: I saw you eyeing up that clock on the mantelpiece!

J. Shady: We were all eyeing up the clock on the mantelpiece -

Snooty: But you were doing it in an especially suspicious way. Shady by name, shady by nature!

Andrew Bones: Also, didn't you say you'd faked your own death on a canoe?

L. Shady: It was a stand-up paddleboard, actually.

Snooty: I think that proves my point -

Angus Bones: On second thoughts - what would the Shadys have to gain from murdering Lord Harvington? It would be a pretty stupid plan, you've got to admit, Snooty.

J. Shady: [sweating] Yeah... I guess it would be a pretty stupid plan...

A. Goody: Guys, guys - can we not argue about this!

S. Goody: Why can't we all just be nice to each other?

Snooty: Oh, shut up. I'm suspicious of you two too.

A. Goody: How could you say that?

S. Goody: We would never push anyone down the stairs - not a fly, certainly not Lord Harvington -

A. Goody: Not even the actual murderer.

Snooty: Well, I for one don't believe your goody-goody act.

Andrew Bones: Come on - let's not argue.

Snooty: And you doctors - pretending to be all normal and non-weird, but you must be peculiar deep down. You easily have the medical skills to inflict death.

Angus Bones: We've already said, we have doctorates, we're not doctors.

Andrew Bones: And let's not ignore the fact that you too have a great motive for murder.

Snooty: How dare you! Lord Harvington was a dear friend!

Andrew Bones: A dear friend who owed you a large amount of money you wanted to get back.

Snooty: But - killing him would have solved nothing!

L. Shady: It's worked all right for us in the past.

J. Shady: What about Joe?

Snooty: It can't be Joe, Joe's far too boring to be a killer. I mean, look at him.

[Pause as they all stare at the vacant Joe Dullard]

Joe: I actually witnessed a murder in January of 1982. I was standing outside the Co-op in Slough, thinking about which type of onions to buy -

Snooty: Shut up, Joe - Hang on - did you just say you'd witnessed a murder?

Joe: Yes, I had to testify in court. But was it 1982, or 1984? The weapon was a broken spork, blue in colour, but then I'd always thought they were rather sinister objects. Though had they been invented by 1984? You know, I might be entirely wrong, I think it was 1978 -

Snooty: Oh, spare us.

Joe: **[affronted]** Does no one want to hear the rest?

J. Shady: How can you make murder sound so dull?

S. Goody: Why don't we do some sort of indoor activity?

A. Goody: Since we're all locked up here whilst the Inspector gets to work, we may as well have some fun whilst we're at it!

Angus Bones: Sure, what do you suggest?

S. Goody: Pass the parcel!

Snooty: There's no wrapping paper.

A. Goody: Musical chairs!

Andrew Bones: We've only got one chair.

S. Goody: Potato prints!

J. Shady: There aren't any potatoes.

L. Shady: How old do you think we are? Five?

A. Goody: Mentally, perhaps, yes!

S. Goody: We could sing a happy song!

Snooty: Absolutely not.

SONG: HAPPINESS IS CLAPPINESS

[A song detailing the Goodys' life philosophy. A very upbeat and cheery number with lots of clapping, maybe the recorder, maybe the triangle. Features all the other guests' reactions to their efforts.]

[Enter Tompkins]

Tompkins: We can have lunch now, the inspector says.

J. Shady: Ooh, free food!

Angus Bones: What's he doing now?

Tompkins: They're rifling around Lord Harvington's office. Looking for clues, or some such idea.

S. Goody: Does he want to speak to us?

Tompkins: Oh, probably.

Snooty: You sound very - apathetic today, Tompkins.

Tompkins: I always sound like this.

Snooty: Even so... Could *you* have given Lord Harvington that fateful shove?

Andrew Bones: Come off it, Snooty. Let's eat.

Angus Bones: And let's leave the inspecting to the professionals.

Tompkins: **[deadpan, to the audience]** I'm sure they're doing a marvellous job.

[Exeunt]

2.2. WILL they solve the case?

Inspector Bumbleton, Barney, Dorothy, Chief Manners
Lord Harvington's office. The Inspector and Barney enter.

Inspector: Right, Barney. Into the Earl's office. It's time we split up and look for clues.

Barney: I feel I've heard that somewhere before.

Inspector: No you haven't, it's entirely my own original catchphrase. Now - don't just stand there like an idiot! Have a look around.

Barney: But what am I looking for, exactly?

Inspector: I don't know - cheques, bills, paperwork. Anything that could tell us why someone would want to murder him.

Barney: All right.

[Barney walks over to the desk and begins to rifle through the drawers]

Barney: These files are a mess!

Inspector: **[crawling along the floor]** Well, he was never an organised man -

Barney: **[noticing]** What are you doing?

Inspector: Tapping the floor for secret panels. Carry on.

Barney: There's loads of IOUs in here. Snooty definitely gave Harvington a great deal of money. And his bank statements! The man was hugely in debt.

Inspector: **[still on the floor]** What was he spending the money on?

Barney: Tickets to see Ed Sheeran, ew... A trip to - Milton Keynes? How can that have cost four thousand pounds? Two hundred packets of Jammy Dodgers... 50 VKs? The man truly spared no expense.

Inspector: I get the picture, Barney. Find me something actually useful.

Barney: Like what?

Inspector: His will, that would be good. Although people of his kind have a habit of squirrelling them away -

[Barney looks around the desk and pulls out a sheet of paper]

Inspector: **[taps floorboard]** This sounds promising.

Barney: Sir -

Inspector: Don't interrupt, Barney. I think I've come upon a secret panel.

Barney: But sir - look -

Inspector: I don't need any more pieces of paper, Barney. Beneath this floorboard, is almost definitely Lord Harvington's final will and testament...

Barney: I've found it.

[The Inspector ignores him and continues to search under the floorboard]

Barney: This is it, this piece of paper. I've found the will.

Inspector: Nothing under there, just some sleeping pills and several kilograms of icing sugar in plastic bags.

Barney: What?

Inspector: I know, he must really be into his baking. Hang on - what's this? [**He walks over, snatches the piece of paper out of Barney's hand, and gasps**] I've found it! Lord Harvington's final will and testament!

Barney: Oh for fu -

Inspector: Keep searching, Barney. There's still time for you to contribute something, fool though you may be. Well, well, well... This is very revealing.

Barney: What does it say?

Inspector: The entire estate is to be made over to his 'lifelong companion' Alex Heartswept! No mention of his wife or kids!

Barney: Who's Alex Heartswept?

Inspector: We'll have to find out. A secretary of some sort, perhaps. Well done, me! This is a great discovery! [**Snatches the cheque Barney is holding**] And what's this?

Barney: A cheque for five thousand pounds from the local police office, sir.

Inspector: One of ours?

Barney: I suppose it must be.

Inspector: I've never seen that signature before in my life. And the handwriting is unfamiliar.

Barney: It's dated to last week.

Inspector: Hmm, maybe it's one of the new recruits. But why would the police department want to pay Lord Harvington?

Barney: I remember the chief telling me they make use of the estate's security system.

Inspector: Ah, naturally. Isn't it fun being understaffed? **[Tosses the cheque aside]** Well, that's useless. But at least we have this. **[Brandishes the will]**

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: The telephone is ringing for you, sir!

Inspector: Who's calling?

Dorothy: The chief of police, sir!

Inspector: Oh, bother. I'd better go and answer.

[Exit Dorothy]

Inspector: In the meantime, Barney, I'm actually going to delegate some responsibility to you for once.

Barney: Wow, thanks! What do you want me to do?

Inspector: Interview the family. Find out whether any of them know about this will or this Alan fellow.

Barney: Alex.

Inspector: Can I trust you to do this, Barney?

Barney: Of course, sir. And what will you be doing in the meantime?

Inspector: Putting my feet up! The discovery of Harvington's will merits a tea break. But first - the telephone.

[Exit Barney. The Inspector walks over and picks up the phone]

Inspector: Hello?

[Enter the Chief, on the other side of the stage, also holding a telephone]

Chief: Bumbleton! Have you cracked the case yet?

Inspector: Not yet -

Chief: What have you been doing all this time? Get on it.

Inspector: I am, I am -

Chief: The reporters are circling.

Inspector: What? Which ones?

Chief: Some hacks from the Doolally Mail. So you need to be quick about solving it.

Inspector: How dare they!

Chief: I'm relying on you to clear this up pronto, Inspector.

Inspector: Don't worry, we've already made great advances. If I'm lucky we'll have cracked it before tea time.

Chief: Perfect. I really don't want to see our department rinsed in the national media for incompetence.

Inspector: Too right! It would be a complete misrepresentation of our skill and intelligence.

Chief: Exactly. Anyway, I've got to go. Sergeant Silly needs to be taught how to use the spacebar on the computer. Dismissed!

[Exeunt]

2.3. Skeletons in ~~the Closet~~ the Basement

Mabel, Tompkins, Inspector Bumbleton, Alex Heartswept
A hallway in the house. Mabel and Tompkins to one side, the Inspector drinking tea.

Mabel: Well, that was a delicious lunch.

Tompkins: I'm not sure you're supposed to cook chicken from frozen.

Mabel: I poured boiling water over it first, what's the worst that could happen?

Tompkins: Food poisoning?

[They come across the Inspector drinking tea]

Mabel: Oh - good afternoon, Inspector.

Inspector: Hello.

Mabel: Are you any closer to solving the case?

Inspector: We're getting there!

Mabel: Great! Do you - um - need any assistance?

Inspector: No, not really.

Mabel: We really want to help you out.

Tompkins: We do?

Inspector: No thanks. No interviews for the moment.

Mabel: But - our boss has been murdered!

Tompkins: And his body is still hanging around in the hallway. Aren't you going to do something about it?

Inspector: Guys! Chillax! I'm on my tea break. Now is not the time for detecting.

Mabel: It isn't?

Inspector: Nope.

Mabel: Oh. OK then.

Inspector: Have fun, kick back... I've got this all sorted. Barney might come bumbling around to speak to you, but don't worry about him. He's completely useless. You two have my complete trust.

Mabel: Well - thank you, Inspector! We're flattered.

Tompkins: Speak for yourself.

Inspector: Cheerio.

[Exit Inspector]

Tompkins: I'm not sure the Inspector's up to the task.

Mabel: Tompkins! You can't say that!

Tompkins: Why not? He's done nothing so far except drink tea and give dramatic monologues.

Mabel: I think he's lovely. Look, don't dwell on it. We've got to keep a positive attitude. Smile!

But before you go - can you help me get some stuff out of the freezer in the basement?

Tompkins: Not more chicken, I hope.

Mabel: Oh no, just some Marmite. And some cereal bars. Come on.

[They walk down the stairs into the basement. Alex Heartswept is lying asleep on the floor.]

Mabel: If I could just find the light switch -

Tompkins: Got it.

Alex: AARGH!

Mabel: AARGH! It's a zombie, it's a zombie!

Tompkins: No - Mabel - calm down. It's just Alex Heartswept.

Mabel: Who?

Tompkins: Lord Harvington's business friend.

Mabel: Oh - I remember. .

Alex: I don't really look like a zombie, do I? Surely a few hours without my 22-step skincare routine hasn't done that much damage?

Tompkins: What are you doing here?

Alex: Er - resting.

Tompkins: The police are here, you know. They have no idea about you.

Mabel: Hiding from the Inspector, are we? You're the killer!

Alex: What? How could you say such a thing! No one told me they were here, and then I needed a nap so I just sort of lay down.

Tompkins: In the basement?

Alex: Yes.

Tompkins: Each to their own.

Mabel: You've got to come upstairs with us. The Inspector will want to question you!

Alex: Yes, I see that... But...

Mabel: What?

Alex: Well - I don't feel safe in the house, you see.

Mabel: Why not?

Alex: I don't know if I can face the truth in front of Lady Harvington.

Mabel: Because you're her husband's killer?

Alex: No - because - because - Lord Harvington and I were having an affair!

[Pause]

Tompkins: Wow, what a surprise. Couldn't have seen that one coming.

Alex: Excuse me?

Tompkins: He had his trousers unzipped when I walked in on you two.

Mabel: He did?

Alex: We were talking about investing in velcro!

Tompkins: As if Lord Harvington had a spare penny to invest.

Mabel: Look - I'm sorry for frightening you. Will you come with us? The truth's got to come out at some point or another.

Alex: I - I guess you're right.

[The Inspector appears]

Inspector: The truth about WHAT?

Mabel: Argh!

Alex: Argh!

Mabel: Where did you come from? You almost gave me a heart attack.

Inspector: I heard screaming and sneakily followed you down the stairs. Just one of my little detective tricks. But now, Heartswept - what's this about THE TRUTH?

Alex: The truth is - that Lord Harvington and I were having an affair!

Inspector: Nothing I didn't know already.

Alex: How is this not surprising anyone?

Tompkins: Harvington was hardly the most discreet man. The guests all saw you running outside with your scarf on last night.

Alex: What?

Inspector: Enough! Heartswept - cast your eyes upon - this!

[The Inspector produces Lord Harvington's will]

Mabel: His will? Oh my goodness - he's left you all his money! And everything he owns!

Tompkins: Everything? He promised me one of his tie clips at least.

Alex: But - but -

Inspector: Pretty damning evidence, right?

Alex: But -

Inspector: It's clear - you killed Harvington to get the money for yourself! Poor little Alex, impoverished, sad... Just waiting for the fatal moment where you could give your so-called lover a well-timed shove!

Alex: How dare you! Impoverished? Me?

Inspector: Stop acting, we all know what you did - and you tried to hide from your crimes in the basement! You must have known that would never have worked. My genius would outsmart you in the end!

Alex: Huh, nice try! If you'd done even a smidge of research before accusing me, you would have found out that I'm Lord Harvington's financial advisor. I've got millions to spare - why else would he trust me with his own?

[Pause]

Tompkins: So the velcro story wasn't a lie?

Alex: No. I was encouraging him to consider alternative financial streams.

Tompkins: Without any trousers on?

Alex: It was pillow talk... What can I say? But I had no idea about this will, and I really don't know why he wrote it since he has nothing to give away. The man's bankrupt. I would gain nothing from his murder except losing the love of my life. What do you say to that, Inspector?

Inspector: Ah. Well... This is a touch embarrassing.

Mabel: We all make mistakes. It's part of any job.

Tompkins: Like defrosting chicken with boiling water?

Mabel: Shut up.

Inspector: Er - I'm sorry, Heartswept. I seem to have made some leaps in judgement. But that doesn't mean you're in the clear! Just because your motives weren't financial doesn't mean I can't find some other, more secret motive!

Alex: Go ahead and try!

Inspector: But enough of this - time to check on that idiot Barney. Come along, everyone - you suspects need to be kept together.

[Exeunt]

2.4. Barney's Time to Shine

Barney, Lady Harvington, Binky, Minty, Percy, Charlie, Alex Heartswept
A room in the house. The Harvingtons seated, Barney standing.

Barney: So - er - I guess I'd like to start by thanking you all for your time. And I'm really sorry about the passing of your father and husband.

Charlie: Dear old Pater.

Binky: And he died just moments after my greatest triumph!

Barney: Which is?

Percy: Binky was just elected President of the Oxford Union.

Binky: It's a very important position, you see. My slate was called 'Excrete'.

Barney: Why?

Charlie: She got it confused with 'excite'.

Percy: Neither are very good exhortations.

Binky: Actually, I was promising to 'excrete' all the bad qualities of the Union!

Percy: Well, I hope you'll be excreting yourself first then!

Lady H: Percy! Don't be so rude to your sister.

Percy: I'm just telling the truth. She embezzled funds for her campaign, you should be investigating her.

Barney: Sort of outside my jurisdiction, I'm afraid.

Lady H: Children - your father is recently deceased. Please, show some manners.

Barney: Speaking of which - I have a few difficult questions.

Minty: Oh yeah? *Everything* seems to be difficult for you, though. You're useless! Always following the Inspector around, not saying a word. We've been following you.

Percy: We know what's up, we're not so dumb - except for Binky.

Binky: That's President Binky to you -

Charlie: If you were such a good detective, you would have solved the case already.

Barney: Look, I have to follow the Inspector around. And I'd like to see you try and get a word in, let alone solve the case, with him breathing over your shoulder.

Minty: I could do it easily. I've got a GCSE in Criminology.

Barney: Go on, then.

Minty: All right. I've drawn up a list of suspects. Number one on the list - Mummy.

Binky: What ?

Lady H: Darling!

Minty: Because Papa was having an affair. You wanted him gone.

[Alex Heartswept pops up]

Alex: Sorry, are we talking about me?

Minty: Yes, you, Alex. Hi there.

Alex: But - I thought -

Charlie: We've seen you running around the house loads of times. We're not stupid.

Percy: Except for Binky.

Charlie: And Pater wasn't exactly the most subtle fellow, was he?

Minty: He was an awful liar.

Charlie: When caught eating frozen peas out of the packet he said Tim made him do it.

Barney: Who's Tim?

Percy: Groundskeeper Bob's dead guinea pig.

Barney: Hold on - you're Alex Heartswept?

Alex: Yes. Your boss found me hanging around in the basement.

Barney: That's rather suspicious.

Alex: There's a reason for my secrecy. I was afraid of your reaction, but I have to confess -

Lady H: We know, you were having an affair with my husband. I've known about that for ages, my dear, don't worry. And I really don't care at all, definitely not enough to plot to murder poor Harvey! Besides, I've been conducting my own affair with Dorothy for a decade now.

Charlie: Dorothy? The maid?

Binky: But she's so - submissive!

Percy: I rather imagine that's part of the appeal.

Minty: I DON'T WANT TO KNOW!

Barney: Look - Alex, I'm glad you're here. There is a delicate matter I need to discuss with all of you. It concerns Harvington's will. In it, he left all his money to Alex. I was wondering if any of you knew about this before the fateful events on Saturday night.

Minty: Are you trying to suggest - that we murdered Papa to seize his money before Alex could?

Barney: Yes, I suppose I am.

Percy: Hahahahaah!

Lady H: You joker!

Binky: Top badinage!

Charlie: As if Pater has a penny to spare any of us - least of all Alex!

Minty: Some inspector you are!

Barney: I'm just his assistant! And it was his idea to speak to you all anyway, I didn't have a choice.

Lady H: Oh, Benedict, you have made me laugh. Poor Harvey dearest - he hadn't a straw of hay to his name. We've only managed to keep this place running thanks to Alex and my own personal investments.

Barney: In what?

Lady H: Dustbin production. Everyone needs one, it's a safe bet regardless of the state of the economy.

Alex: Nice idea.

Binky: Can we go, please? I've got 3000 missed messages to reply to on WhatsHack. My Presidency isn't going to run itself!

Charlie: I need to clean my lacrosse stick.

Minty: I have actual detective work to do?

Lady H: We're all busy, Boris - thanks for your queries but if you want to pin the murder on us you're going to need to find a better motive.

Barney: Fair enough, you've proved your point. I'd best be off anyway. There's a few details I need to iron out with the Chief...

[Exeunt]

2.5. Happy Clappy People

The Guests, Inspector Bumbleton, the Reporters, Chief Manners, Constable Goons, Barney

The Harvingtons' sitting room. Joe Dullard is in the corner pinned to the wall with a blindfold and gag (not in that way please read the scene for context).

L. Shady: You know... I really think I feel healed.

S. Goody: I said that you would!

J. Shady: Why do I suddenly want to smile at people in the street?

Andrew Bones: Should I quit my job?

Snooty: What is this strange feeling in my heart? It feels all - soft. And this pain in my eyes, these tears - am I going mad?

A. Goody: No, Snooty. You're simply experiencing a little thing called happiness.

Snooty: Oh God! Worse than madness!

Angus Bones: I'm sorry for not taking you seriously before. I just didn't think such radical methods would work.

S. Goody: Well, since we're all locked up here we thought it would be a good time.

[Enter Inspector]

Inspector: What's going on here?

A. Goody: We've been doing some group therapy, Inspector.

L. Shady: It's changed our lives!

Inspector: Oh? What kind of therapy?

S. Goody: We've been watching videos of baby animals being reunited with their parents.

J. Shady: The best was when the little elephant ran across the savannah, and it reached out with its trunk, but the trunk seemed to reach beyond the pixelated barrier of the screen and into my soul, telling me to be better, do better -

Snooty: [sobbing] Speak no more! It's too much.

L. Shady: We're completely different people now. Our criminal days are over.

Snooty: Papa, why did you have to leave me?

S. Goody: I'm afraid it has rather wrecked poor Snooty.

Inspector: Hmm, very displeasing. You Goody's - what are you up to here? Addling the minds of my suspects?

S. Goody: Pardon?

Inspector: Playing devious little tricks, are we? Trying to confound them into believing they committed a crime they never did?

A. Goody: I don't know what you mean!

Inspector: Well, I do! I mean - you know what I mean and I mean that I mean it! I don't trust your saintly little performance for one instant.

L. Shady: Believe what you want - we stand with the Goodys. They're solid people.

J. Shady: Yeah, they've made us feel so much better about ourselves. Angel encouraged me to forgive myself for all the nasty crimes we've committed over the years.

Andrew Bones: Whether the actual victims of the crimes have forgiven them is still up for debate.

L. Shady: The local pensioners can't be that upset that we stole their life savings.

J. Shady: All we did was sell them novelty tea strainers at an extortionate mark-up.

Inspector: Enough of this - guests, I've done some digging. I've interviewed suspects. I've come up with a comprehensive list of reasons you might have to murder Lord Harvington. The murderer, whoever they may be, must lie in this very room! You, the Shadys - you have a shifty sort of character, and an eye to robbing the Earl of his finer possessions. Would you have given him a shove to secure those riches? Snooty - the Earl owed you money. Could you have killed him to get it back? The Doctors - you arrived rapidly after the deed was done and refused to provide medical assistance.

Angus Bones: Because we weren't qualified to give him any!

Inspector: A lousy excuse to forsake your Hippocratic Oath. The Goodys - well, I've already established my suspicions, but as for the motive... Hmm. And Joe Dullard, he - hang on. Where's Joe?

Joe Dullard: [talking through the gag] I'm here!

Inspector: Oh God! He's gone missing! Another murder! Can it be?

Joe: [breaking free from the gag] I'M HERE!

Inspector: How could I have been so stupid, how -

J. Shady: It's all right, Inspector. We just taped him to the wall so he'd stay out of the way and not bore us all to tears.

Inspector: Oh, good shout.

A. Goody: His energy was very disruptive to the room's harmony.

Angus Bones: He kept trying to interrupt our therapy session with boring facts about elephants.

Joe Dullard: I saw an elephant in the summer of 1994, I did. It was at the Cotswold Water Park. Did you know that elephants can spend up to 15 hours eating fruits and grasses every day -

Snooty: [sobbing] They eat fruit...!

Inspector: That's quite enough, Joe. Hang on. Did you all hear that?

Andrew Bones: Hear what?

Inspector: There was a sort of rustling sound - a little sniffing.

Snooty: Are there mice?

A. Goody: Ooh! Some little animal friends.

Inspector: **[peering behind the furniture]** No, not mice just - aha! A pair of reporting rats.

[He fishes out the Reporters by the scruffs of their necks]

Snoop: Ooh, sorry for disturbing you Inspector!

Scoop: Nothing to see here!

Inspector: Explain yourselves.

Scoop: We were innocently fishing for scoops.

Snoop: We mean no harm.

Scoop: We really really don't want to drag anyone's name through the mud.

Inspector: Huh! A likely story.

Snoop: Was that a sarcastic comment, Inspector?

Scoop: I see the headline already - 'Caught on camera: Local Inspector and D-List celebrity shocks in stunning attack on free speech'.

Inspector: Camera? Where is it? Give it to me!

Scoop: Hehe, oopsies! My finger seems to have slipped and recorded this ENTIRE CONVERSATION.

Inspector: Give it over! This case is a private matter!

Snoop: But you're not a private detective, are you Bumbleton? You're a weasley little Inspector!

Inspector: How dare you!

Scoop: Have you still not caught Lord Harvington's murderer? Oh dear, that won't look good on the front page!

Snoop: 'Serial killer stalks the woods of the North of the North of Derbyshire. His killing method of choice? A shove down the stairs!'

Inspector: No - guys - please -

Scoop: What are your thoughts about vegans, Inspector? Do you like them?

A. Goody: We're vegans!

Scoop: So you do! No wonder you can't crack the case!

Snoop: Everyone knows the best brain proteins are found in meat- or that's what we tell everyone anyway.

Scoop: An all vegetable diet is deadly.

Snoop: It turns you into a rabbit.

Scoop: But meat can also be full of the most disgusting and deadly bacteria.

Snoop: Did you know that most meatballs are actually horse testicles?

Scoop: And don't eat potatoes or toast, that will give you cancer.

L. Shady: What can I eat then?

Snoop: Nothing, except our fantastic headlines!

Scoop: The stress, hate and anger they incite is actually extremely satiating.

Snoop: Where do you think we get our energy from?

SONG: JOIN OUR HACKATHON

[A musical list of increasingly lurid and absurd newspaper headlines concerning Harvington's murder and other things.]

Scoop: But enough of all that razzmatazz. We know who really killed Lord Harvington - it was LADY HARVINGTON.

Snooty: What?

Snoop: YOU did it!

S. Goody: No!

Scoop: It was a group conspiracy!

Snoop: It was the Labour voters!

Scoop: It was anyone who doesn't speak with a certain kind of English accent!

Both: It was Meghan Markle!

[Enter the Chief and Goons]

Chief: REPORTERS!

Inspector: Oh, Chief - you've arrived just in time.

Snoop: Ooh, we're really scared.

Scoop: What are you going to threaten us with this time?

Chief: No threats today - to ward you off I'm simply going to tell you I've left Sergeant Silly in charge back at the office.

Scoop: Is that - the smell of incompetence?

Snoop: Ooh, a very delectable scoop.

Scoop: Thank you, Chief.

Snoop: We'll be back, Inspector...

[They scurry offstage]

Inspector: I never thought I'd say this, but I'm glad to see you!

Chief: Good to hear, Inspector - but we really thought you would have solved the case by now.

Inspectors: It's proving rather more complicated than I expected. These guests are not revealing much about themselves.

J. Shady: Hey, we just told you all about our therapy session.

Goons: Hang on - Chief -

Chief: What is it, Goons?

Goons: I recognise those people.

Chief: Who?

Goons: Those shady people, hiding behind those newspapers - aren't they on our wanted list?

Chief: You mean the two dressed in black, looking shifty? No, it can't be! Besides, they're under investigation by Bumbleton! They must stay here. And besides, they look perfectly innocent - my goodness, they're trying to escape out of the window!

Goons: Stop them!

[The Doctors wrestle the Shadys away from the window]

Chief: Wait - I know those faces... Goons, thank you for alerting me.

L. Shady: We look like a lot of people.

Chief: I'm sure you do, masters of disguise. But I could never forget that face.. That face appeared at my doorstep and robbed me blind.

Goons: Really? Straight out of your pocket?

Chief: No! They conned me into buying a novelty tea strainer with Jeremy Clarkson's face on it. It cost me £200, and his beautiful face is nowhere to be seen because the damn thing was so FULL OF HOLES!

Goons: Isn't that the point of a tea strainer?

Chief: Goons! Arrest them immediately.

Inspector: But - Chief - it's my turn! They're my suspects!

Chief: I can't tolerate fraud, Bumbleton. They've got to be locked up before any more fans of Top Gear - I mean, the Grand Tour - I mean, generic programmes about cars, fall victim to their wicked crimes.

Goons: Is there anything you'd like to confess before you leave?

Inspector: It can and will be held against you.

J. Shady: We did not murder Lord Harvington.

L.. Shady: We swear it's true.

J. Shady: I mean, we did plan to murder him. Don't get us wrong. We wanted to get all his stuff. But someone else got there and gave him a shove before we could.

L. Shady: And a damn shame it was too! I really wanted that clock.

Snooty: It's worth nothing. You might as well have it.

[Snooty gives Lucifer the clock]

L. Shady: Aw, what a win!

J. Shady: We're being arrested, Lucifer.

Inspector: That eliminates two more of my suspects, I suppose.

Chief: Yes, get on with it, Bumbleton. Sergeant Silly won't distract those reporters for much longer. I want the culprit captured. Where's that useless assistant of yours?

Inspector: Oh, Barney? Dunno.

[Enter Barney]

Barney: I'm here.

Inspector: Did you get the Harvingtons to tell you anything useful?

Barney: No, but-

Inspector: Just as I expected!

Barney: Can I have a word with the Chief?

Inspector: Anything you say to me you can say to him!

Barney: I know - but this is sort of a personal issue.

Inspector: OK, I don't want to know.

Chief: We can talk, but make it hasty. We've got two criminals to lock up.

Inspector: You'll come back soon, won't you Barney?

Chief: Until later, Inspector.

[Exit Chief, Barney, and Goons with the Shadys]

Inspector: And then there were none.

Angus Bones: We're all still here.

Inspector: None.

[Exeunt]

2.6. Conclusive Evidence

Binky, Charlie, Percy, Minty, Groundskeeper Bob, Inspector, Dorothy
The Harvington children stand before the door outside the kitchens. Bob is asleep on the chair inside.

Percy: I still think this is a silly idea.

Minty: No, it's not. You want to find out who bumped off Papa don't you?

Percy: Yes, but -

Binky: Can we be quick about this please? Someone is already trying to impeach me.

Charlie: What did you do?

Binky: It wasn't my fault! I was betrayed. I did swear at them very loudly but how can that have given them grounds to turn traitor?

Percy: I don't know - because you verbally abused them?

Minty: Shut up, Percy. I'm knocking. Groundskeeper Bob?

Percy: Can we come in?

Binky: He might be drunk.

Charlie: Ooh, maybe he has a spare VK. I'm totally in the mood for a Strawberry and Lime.

[Bob starts to life and opens the door]

Bob: Whassat?

Percy: It's just us, Bob.

Bob: Come in, come in little tyrants. What can I do for you?

Minty: We have a few questions to ask you. We're doing some detective work.

Bob: Not you too?

Percy: Well, the Inspector doesn't seem to be up to scratch.

Charlie: **[finding a VK]** Aw, nice! Orange and passion fruit!

Bob: Yes, I rather agree with you there, kids. But I still don't see how I can help.

Percy: Well, you have all that security footage from those state-of-the-art cameras you've put everywhere.

Bob: I do?

Minty: Yes, you bought them all and spent a month putting them up. Don't you remember?

Bob: Not really.

Minty: It's all on your laptop, over there.

[Charlie walks over and picks the laptop up]

Bob: I have a laptop?

Minty: Could you enter the password, maybe?

Bob: I don't remember it.

Binky: Are you sure?

Percy: Oh, hand it here - done, I've logged on.

Charlie: What was the password?

Percy: 12345.

Bob: Great password, so easy to remember. Oh yes, the cameras. And?

Minty: The Inspector got you to check the cameras around the grounds, but he didn't ask to see the footage from inside the house.

Percy: Because he's a moron.

Minty: Can you use the cameras to see what happened before he was murdered?

[Percy passes the laptop to Bob]

Bob: Hmm, let me see... Let's dial back a few hours. Unfortunately, I don't have a camera on the stairs. That's the one zone I haven't got covered. But we can see who was out of bed at the time he fell.

Minty: That would really narrow down the suspects list!

Bob: Let me see... The boss left his room at 11.36 to go downstairs... What other movement was detected at that time... Oh. None...

Percy: You know what that means.

Minty: If no one was awake, no one could have threatened Papa.

Charlie: He didn't meet anyone on the stairs...

Binky: He just... fell.

Minty: That stupid Inspector! He's got it all wrong!

Percy: And the murder story will be all over the papers tomorrow!

Charlie: What shall we do?

Minty: Let's get the Inspector - Inspector! Inspector!

[Enter Inspector Bumbleton]

Inspector: Well, hello there, youthful acolytes.

Minty: We have very important information for you.

Inspector: That's nice. Why don't you run along and play conkers, or whatever it is the kids do these days.

Percy: Seriously, Inspector - Bob has helped us make an important discovery about Papa's death. Didn't you, Bob?

[Bob is already snoring]

Minty: Security footage from inside the house reveals that no one else was awake at the moment Papa went to get his nighttime milk. No one pushed him! He just fell!

Inspector: Ridiculous. What about the grippy socks?

Charlie: It's true, look!

Inspector: But - there's no real footage of the stairs! What if someone was hiding by the bannisters and we just can't see them?

Minty: Look closer - all the guests are in bed. Tompkins and Mabel are in the kitchens. There's no way -

Inspector: There must be a way! This is murder, I've said it a thousand times! They could have - the murderer could have... poisoned his food at dinner, intending for its effect to kick in once he walked down the stairs, thus sending him to his death! Aha! How do you disprove that one?

Percy: I mean, we can't disprove it -

Inspector: I'll prove it! I'll prove it if it's the last thing I do! Now, where's that idiot Barney?
Barney? Barney?

[Enter Dorothy]

Dorothy: Sir!

Inspector: No - not you, Dorothy -

Dorothy: I have a note for you, sir! From Barney, sir!

[Dorothy passes the note to the Inspector]

Binky: What does it say?

Inspector: ‘Sorry Sir, I’ve been called away on a family emergency. The Chief gave me leave to depart. Best of luck with the investigation, I’ll be back as soon as I can. Love, Barney’. But- but - Barney did all the work - I mean, didn’t do any work. This is going to be much more difficult - or rather, easy, without him. The useless twerp!

Dorothy: There’s also this newspaper, sir!

Percy: Oh no.

Charlie: [reading off the front page] ‘MURDER! Local Earl killed and flung to the bottom of the staircase by his vengeful wife in assassination plot instigated by the Russians, China, the wokerati, and J. K. Rowling’.

Bob: [waking up briefly] Quite the headline.

Binky: On page 5 - ‘North North Derbyshire sergeant caught on camera playing darts with staples and using a banana as a telephone’.

Inspector: I’ve got to put an end to this - but how? Oh, Barney! I’ll never say a bad word about you again.

Minty: Papa fell down the stairs, I’m telling you!

Inspector: Gather everyone in the hallway. There's no time for more interviews or evidence. We're finding out whodunnit NOW.

[Exeunt]

2.7. The Inspector Makes His Case

Everyone except the Reporters and the Shadys

The Harvington's hallway. Tompkins and Mabel stand looking at Lord Harvington's body.

Mabel: It is strange they never moved his body.

Tompkins: I think it livens up the room. Although I could do without the smell.

[Enter the Goodys, the Doctors, Joe Dullard, Snooty]

Mabel: Oh - hello. Is it dinner time?

Angus Bones: No. We've been ushered in here by the Inspector.

Snooty: He's making some sort of declaration, it seems.

Mabel: He's caught the killer?

Andrew Bones: I guess so.

[Enter the Harvington children, Lady Harvington, Alex Heartswept, and Dorothy]

Minty: The panic is over, guys! No one killed Papa! We saw the security footage. He must have just tripped.

Tompkins: Then what's the point of all this?

Lady H: [to Minty] I wish you hadn't gone off on your own, darling. I don't know who to believe anymore!

[Enter Inspector]

Inspector: Believe me, my dear Lady Harvington, when I say your husband was killed.

Percy: Where's your evidence?

Inspector: My detecting instincts are screaming inside that the murderer is among us. Shouldn't that be enough? The Shadys planned to murdered the Earl, but who beat them to it? Was it you, the Goodys, who harboured criminal designs behind your innocent facades? You, the Doctors - feigning normalcy but secretly deranged? Snooty, hankering after his friend's money? Harvington's wife, or his lover, killing the object of their desires to quench their jealousy? Or even his own children, unloved and unwanted by their father?

Charlie: We actually all had quite a good relationship with Pater -

Inspector: Silence! I am stating the facts of the case. Everyone here had a motive, few had a good alibi. But if there is one thing I have learnt in my years of reading crime novels, the killer is

always the person you least expect. Which can only mean one thing... Dorothy, why did you kill your master?

Dorothy: I didn't, sir!

Inspector: Why did you do it?

Dorothy: I didn't, sir!

Inspector: WHY!

Dorothy: Sir -

Inspector: Yes?

Dorothy: Yes, sir?

Inspector: See, she confessed!

Andrew Bones: No, she did not!

Inspector: She was Lady Harvington's lover! Maybe she wanted to kill the husband to keep his wife for her own!

Minty: But everyone was IN BED when he fell!

Inspector: [casting around for an explanation] Er - Dorothy poisoned his food! She had ample means to.

Dorothy: What's food, sir?

Lady H: Inspector, I really don't think dear Dorothy would ever commit this crime. She knows I'm hers regardless of the piece of paper that says the Earl and I are 'married' or whatever.

S. Goody: I think you need more proof, sweet pea.

Inspector: Fine! Fine! If it wasn't unsuspecting little Dorothy then the murderer must have been - Joe Dullard!

Joe: Pardon?

Inspector: He witnessed a murder outside the Co-op, who's to say he wouldn't imitate it himself?

Binky: But why would he want to kill Daddy?

Inspector: Er... aha! Harvington's comments about finding him boring. Joe finally snapped and took his revenge!

Joe: Wait - did I hear that right? The Earl thought I was... boring?

Tompkins: Yes.

Joe: Oh. I had no idea. I thought we were friends.

[Long uncomfortable pause]

Joe: Someone else who found me boring was Jean Dubbins, the lady who worked as the cashier at my local shop when I was just getting into accounting -

Percy: It can't be *Joe*, Inspector!

A. Goody: He's a good soul really. A few more animal videos and he might become a more entertaining person.

S. Goody: Everyone always loves it when someone says 'do you want to watch a funny video I've found'.

Inspector: But - it has to be Joe! There's no one else - you've all acquitted yourselves.

Minty: That's because NO ONE is guilty - Papa tripped!

Lady H: You know, you might be right, darling -

Inspector: No, no! It's *murder*, it's got to be! But who could be the killer? Who would I suspect the absolute least? Who did I write off as innocent from the very beginning? Who could possibly commit a crime right under my very nose?

[Enter Barney. Pause.]

Barney: [with sinister calm] Hello, Inspector.

Inspector: Barney! For once, I'm glad to see you. Come tell me who the murderer is, will you? You've probably done all the homework and figured it out hours ago.

Barney: Yes, I did.

Inspector: Then - hang on. I thought you had been called away on a family emergency?

Barney: I did tell you that. But I'm back now.

Inspector: Who's the killer then?

Barney: You really don't know?

Inspector: I haven't a clue, Barney! I'm useless without you! You find all the clues, and do all the work. It's a real pain having to come to your own conclusions, let me tell you.

Barney: It's nice to hear that at last, Inspector. I'll give you a hint - the killer is standing in this very room.

Inspector: I'd gotten that far already.

Barney: In fact - they're standing right in front of you.

Inspector: What, the Goodys?

Barney: No, no! He's standing *right in front of you*.

Inspector: [realisation slowly dawning] You... You! You're the murderer!

Barney: Took you long enough to figure it out!

Inspector: But - but - why! Why would you betray me?

Barney: Why would I betray you? Think back on what you've just admitted, Bumbleton! You're hopeless without me, and you know it. Yet despite your incompetence, who gets the credit for my success? Who talks over me in every discussion? Who insults me at every turn? It was me who solved the case of the pigeon poo outside the post office. Inspector of the Year for the North of the North of Derbyshire was mine for the taking, but whose name was it on that stupid award? Yours! And do I ever get any recognition from the chief? No, because your ego is so huge and distorted it could fill the entire continent of Africa!

Charlie: You killed poor old Pater!

Lady H: Very rude of you, Bertram, I must say.

Percy: And how does your confession solve any of our problems?

Barney: I'd like to apologise for scaring you, Harvingtons. But can I first point out that Lord Harvington is not even dead.

Inspector: What?

Barney: If you'd taken five minutes to inspect the body properly, you would have noticed this. But no, you got me to do it and you didn't bother to check my work! The whole time he's been lying on that floor he's been breathing, and you didn't even call the coroner. All the clues were right under your nose. You found the extra-strong sleeping pills I told him to take, hidden in the floorboards in his office! That cheque on his desk bore *my* signature, but you didn't recognise my handwriting even though you look at it literally every day! Minty got the closest when she said he tripped - no one pushed Lord Harvington down the staircase because he did not fall, he simply walked down the steps, lay down at the bottom, took his pills, and had a lovely long sleep.

Lord Harvington: **[stretching and yawning]** What a peaceful nap. Ah, Tompkins! Did you record the snooker on ITV6?

Tompkins: Yes, sir.

Lord H: What are you all doing here? Hullo, hullo - hi, Barney. Oh, fiddlesticks! I've ruined it all - I forgot, I'm supposed to be dead!

[Harvington lies back down and pretends to be dead again]

Barney: You can sit up, Harvinton. Don't worry, you woke up just at the right time. I was just telling everyone about our little plan.

Lord H: Yes, pretty funny, isn't it, gang? Barney paid me to fake my own death so he could prove to everyone that the Inspector there is a rubbish inspector.

Barney: And proven it I have! He found the cheque I paid you in your office and didn't suspect a thing!

Binky: Daddy - bit rude not to tell us, no? We thought you were dead!

Lord H: Oh - soz, chaps. I sort of forgot. But a cheque's a cheque, after all. Only a few more tens of thousands to go and we'll be free of debt! Isn't that great?

Snooty: I'll be taking that cheque, thank you very much.

Lord H: Oh. Well, we haven't made a loss at least!

Alex: Hello, Harvey. I'm glad you're back.

Lord H: Ooh, Alex - and -

Lady H: Hello, husband.

Lord H: Oh - er - this is - ooh - a sticky situation. I was - um - not anticipating. You're all dreaming, I'm actually still dead.

Alex: It's fine, Harvey. Everyone knows about our affair.

Lady H: And no one minds! See, I've been having an affair with Dorothy!

Dorothy: Yes, Ma'am!

Lord H: Well, that's great then!

Percy: It is?

Binky: I'm not sure I want to come from a broken home. But maybe it will boost my cred with the voters...

[Enter Chief Manners, Sergeant Silly, Constable Goons]

Chief: Barney! Has the truth been told?

Barney: It has, Chief.

Chief: Well, I shall be calling you Inspector Barney from now on. Bumbleton - we're locking you up.

Inspector: What?

Chief: You have flagrantly lied to your superiors and broken all kinds of police regulations. And you're rubbish at your job! If Barney hadn't come and told me Harvington's death was all a ruse, I would never have known!

Goons: I definitely knew you were rubbish.

Silly: **[brandishing a telephone receiver]** I've got a gun.

Inspector: You're locking me up? But what about my awards, my debonair flair - without me, the police force will have no style! Barney's such a nerd!

Chief: Hand over the trenchcoat, Bumbleton. That's police property, Barney can have it now.

Goons, get the handcuffs!

A. Goody: Oh, I do love a happy ending!

[The telephone in Silly's hands begins to ring]

Chief: Ah, the telephone! Come on, answer it!

Bumbleton: He's not allowed!

Barney: I am now! If you're sure...

Chief: Go on! Pick it up.

Barney: My first case going solo! I wonder what it will be. A bank robbery? Identity theft? Another murder? Oh, Chief, I really can't thank you enough.

Chief: My pleasure.

Barney: Here we go... Gosh, I'm so excited. **[Picks up the receiver.]** You have reached the North of the North of Derbyshire Constabulary. Inspector Barney speaking. No, I don't know how to put out a grease fire. **[Hangs up, turns to Chief]** Wrong number.

SONG: THE FINAL SONG

[Will it be as catchy as Patrick's final song?]

FIN