

ALWAYS HAVE,
ALWAYS WILL.

A
Murder Mystery
by
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SYNOPSIS

GEORGIA has decided to spend New Years Eve at her fiancé's newly inherited French Villa. She has invited all their close friends over for the weekend for a Murder Mystery party, although things do not quite go as planned.

The night has been carefully thought out and all GEORGIA needs is for CHARLIE to behave himself, for MIRIAM not to take over, for FRANK to keep his hands off her bottom and for SARAH to let her dead mum rest in peace.

The evening starts with the opening of the Murder Mystery box game she has purchased - "Murder in Shanghai." Everyone having eventually arrived in full costume and having been presented with a fantastic Chinese meal it is time to start the game. Each person is given a character to play and a set of rules to follow. GEORGIA can't believe how fantastic this night is going to be, that is if CHARLIE would put down the prawn balls and take it a little more seriously! As expected MIRIAM takes control and starts the game off. Each person introduces themselves in character, and the task of finding the murderer is about to begin. That is until one of them actually dies, or should I say 'is murdered'! This certainly wasn't in the rules that the box promised!

Stuck in a French Villa miles from the nearest neighbour, in the middle of New Years Eve and with one of their best friends murdered, the group take the decision to carry on with the game. Only this time as themselves. The only rule being that every question asked has to be answered truthfully.

They now have until New Years day to discover which one of them is the killer; otherwise they could all be for the chop!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- CHARLIE Aged late 20's - late 40's, engaged to GEORGIA. Public School boy, laid back, not always in the 'real' world. One of life's jokers.
- GEORGIA Aged late 20's - late 40's, engaged to CHARLIE. Blond and beautiful she likes to wear leather trousers, short tops, high heels etc. She doesn't 'let her hair down' too often. She thinks she knows everything about everyone.
- FRANK Aged late 20's - late 40's, married to GINNY. Can be life and soul of the party. Friends with everyone. Usually ends up taking control when things get out of hand.
- GINNY Aged late 20's - late 40's, married to FRANK. Of medium build and very attractive in a classy way. An actress by profession.
- PETER Aged late 20's - late 40's, married to MIRIAM. Extremely British. Henpecked by his wife both at home and in public.
- MIRIAM Aged late 20's - late 40's, married to PETER. A loud, controlling bully. She loves her husband as long as he does what she wants. She puts him down without a thought for his feelings.
- OWEN Aged late 20's - late 40's, single. Very 'normal' looking, wears sensible clothes. A single man and is always likely to be. Highly intelligent, bordering on brilliant.
- SARAH Aged late 20's - late 40's, Single. Spiritual although not religious. Has got into the habit of speaking to her dead mother quite a lot.

ACT ONE

Around 50 minutes

*In Act One the cast wear 'Murder Mystery' costumes
and play the following roles:-*

- CHARLIE is: PEKING TOM, dressed like Paul Hogan;
Australian adventurer.
- GEORGIA is: MRS S CARGO, wife of the Ambassador of
France, dressed as a sexy French lady.
- FRANK is: LITO LORLEONE, dressed as a Chinese gangster.
- GINNY is: SUE SUSHI, dressed as a Japanese actress.
- PETER is: BRUE LIE, dressed as a martial arts expert.
- MIRIAM is: LIZA LOTT, dressed as a housekeeper.
- OWEN is: REVEREND MITCHELL LUTHER SINGH, dressed as
Bertie Bassett.
- SARAH is: SUSIE SINGH, the wife of Reverend Mitchell.

ACT TWO

Around 45 minutes

Cast wear normal modern clothes

*The action takes place in the lounge, kitchen and dining
room of CHARLIE'S recently inherited French Chalet.
The lounge and dinning room are opened planned into each
other and the kitchen is set back from the dinning on a
higher level. There is a serving hatch from the kitchen
into the dining room. There are stairs from the lounge going
upstairs.*

Time: the present

ACT ONE

The stage is set as the lounge/dining room of a French chalet. The room is typically French. Spread around the lounge are some chairs & sofas with a coffee table in the middle whilst in the dinning room there is a dining table set with eight chairs and a bar area with glasses. Behind the dinning room, set slightly higher, is the kitchen. This has the serving hatch into the dinning room with a breakfast bar running its length and you can clearly see into the kitchen. At the back of the room there are stairs going upstairs and of to stage right there is a short hallway that would lead to the door to the outside.

As the scene opens we see GEORGIA enter. She is dressed as her murder mystery character, the French lady. She is wearing a very sexy short leather skirt, French style top and fishnet tights with high heeled shoes. She takes a table cloth out of the dinning room dresser and starts to set the table.

GEORGIA *(Calling out)* What time did you tell them to get here? Charlie!

CHARLIE *(From upstairs)* Love you too sweetheart.

GEORGIA I said, what time did you tell them to get here? Charlie!

CHARLIE *(From upstairs)* What is it my sweetness?

GEORGIA For God's sake Charlie, can you please come down, you've been up there for hours.

CHARLIE enters the room from the striars dressed as Australian adventurer Paul Hogan.

CHARLIE Just trying to make myself look handsome for
you my little peach.

GEORGIA Well you'd better go up for a bit longer then.

CHARLIE Ha Ha!

*Charlie checks himself out in the
mirror before sitting in his
favourite swivel chair. He pours
himself a large whisky and grabs
some nuts from a bowl. He throws
some up to his mouth, missing some
and catching some.*

GEORGIA You've sorted the food out like I asked haven't
you?

CHARLIE Of course.

GEORGIA Just like I asked? Canapés to start, cold meat
platter with salads, then cheese and biscuits
to end; all nice and easy.

CHARLIE Yep, kinda.

GEORGIA What do you mean kinda? All you had to do was
phone the deli in the village like I'd arranged
with them.

CHARLIE I know.

GEORGIA Well did you or didn't you?

CHARLIE I called them but they were engaged, so I tried
someone else.

GEORGIA But there's no-one else in the village, who the
hell did you call?

CHARLIE The China Kitchen in the next village. Don't
worry yourself, it's all in hand. I had to pay
a little more to cover the cost of their
driver, but you wait, it'll be a pure feast.

GEORGIA Chinese! You ordered Chinese!

CHARLIE You love Chinese.

GEORGIA We're in France. We asked our friends over to France to eat with us; they'll expect French food. So what do you do, give them Chinese food. Unbelievable!

CHARLIE Don't worry, it goes better with the parts we're playing doesn't it. Everyone loves Chinese, they'll love it, you wait.

GEORGIA Do you remember the last time we had Chinese with them, do you? Miriam almost died.

CHARLIE I didn't know she was allergic to nuts did I. *(eating another handful of nuts)*

GEORGIA I think the clue may have been the fact that she told you the night before and you promised her that the dishes you ordered were nut free.

CHARLIE Oh yeh, God that was funny.

GEORGIA Not for her, or the rest of us it wasn't. She ended up in intensive care all because of your silly prank. God I felt sorry for poor Peter, he thought she was going to die. I really thought he was going to faint.

CHARLIE Out of pleasure maybe.

GEORGIA Well it's too late to get anything else in for her now, the fridge is almost empty and everywhere else is shut.

CHARLIE She'll just have to have some plain rice that's all. Tough luck if you ask me

GEORGIA Well she'll not be happy and it's poor Peter who'll be the one who gets it in the neck.

CHARLIE Well he deserves it doesn't he, he should stand up for himself.

GEORGIA Charlie don't start that tonight, you know how sensitive he gets when you tease him about her.

CHARLIE I wouldn't let a woman give me orders and talk to me like that. A man has to be a man in this world.

GEORGIA Of course they do darling. Now go get me a drink and put the wine in the fridge

CHARLIE starts to exit.

Oh yes and get the plates out will you.

CHARLIE Of course my little peach.

CHARLIE goes into the kitchen.

GEORGIA *(Calling out to him)* Did you manage to speak with Frank about Miriam?

CHARLIE What about?

GEORGIA You didn't forget did you?

CHARLIE comes back into the dinning room and sits back in his chair.

CHARLIE Forget what?

GEORGIA I asked you to tell Frank not to get into a deep business chat tonight. Otherwise he and Miriam will end up in the corner talking work all night and it'll ruin the whole game.

CHARLIE You worry too much. *(Patting his knee)* Come sit here and relax.

GEORGIA *(sitting on his knee)* I just want tonight to be perfect, that's all. It's been ages since all of us got together.

Where's my drink?

CHARLIE Oops

GEORGIA Unbelievable!

GEORGIA goes into the kitchen to get herself a drink.

GEORGIA *(Calling from the kitchen)* What time did you tell them to get here?

CHARLIE What was that darling?

CHARLIE drinks the last of his whisky and pours himself another. GEORGIA comes back into the lounge.

GEORGIA What time did you tell them to get here?

Loud knock at the door.

CHARLIE About now. *(Falling into his seat)* Come in, door's unlocked.

GEORGIA *(Going to the door herself)* You can at least show them in.

CHARLIE just shrugs with a grin on his face and takes a gulp of his drink.

FRANK comes in followed by GEORGIA and GINNY. FRANK is dressed as a Chinese gangster, complete with sword on his back. GINNY is dressed as a very classy Japanese actress. FRANK is carrying a large box of Chinese food.

FRANK *(in a Chinese accent)* Greetings Charlieson!

CHARLIE Nice outfit man.

FRANK I thought so too, but the Chinese delivery boy got the shock of his life when I met him on the doorstep. He thought I was some kind of triad, he turned yellow with fright! It was all I could do to make him take the money.

GINNY You think that's bad, you should have seen the looks we got on the Euro star! *(Giggling)*. When Frank was in the toilet I was being chatted up by the ticket man who thought I was some famous actress, then he saw Frank come out of the toilet waving his sword. I thought we were going to be thrown off the train...

FRANK Until he realised it was plastic. Charlie, how the hell did you get Chinese food delivered in a French village on New Years Eve? Total Respect *(in Chinese accent)*

CHARLIE smiles at GEORGIA.

CHARLIE *(In Chinese accent)* Confucius he say 'man who order Chinese food either wants to eat some Chinese food, or knows someone who wants to eat some Chinese food'.

CHARLIE sits back and takes a large gulp of his whisky & looks very pleased with himself.

FRANK I see, well that's cleared that up then! Has he been on his funny fags again George?

GEORGIA There's nothing funny about them if you ask me! Help yourself to a drink, they're in the kitchen. Actually take the food in there as well will you.

Charlie give him a hand!

FRANK and CHARLIE go into the kitchen.

GINNY *(giving GEORGIA a kiss on the cheek)* Hi stranger!

GEORGIA Wow you look great! Fantastic costume, it really shows off your figure!

GINNY Is there anything I can do to help?

GEORGIA *(going over to the dinning table)* I guess you can help me set up the table, before you know who gets here and takes over!

GINNY Miriam?

GEORGIA Who else.

GINNY Are her and Sarah all right now, the last time we all got together there was a little tension in the air.

GEORGIA They'll be fine. They were just seeing too much of each other, you know what sisters can get like. Anyhow what about you? I haven't seen you for weeks.

GINNY I know, I've missed you.

GEORGIA How's the play?

FRANK and CHARLIE come in and interrupt them.

FRANK *(To CHARLIE)* Which room shall I put our bags in?

CHARLIE Any one you want, except ours of course.

FRANK Which is yours?

CHARLIE The one with my stuff in it.

FRANK George?

GEORGIA Put it in the blue room. Peter & Miriam are in the yellow room, Sarah's in the Pink room and Owen's in the study.

GINNY Unless he wants to share with Sarah!

CHARLIE Or Peter!!

GINNY *(Jokingly)* You bitch!

FRANK leaves the room to take the bags up

CHARLIE *(Giving GINNY a kiss)* So how's my gorgeous ex wife then?

GINNY Fine thank you, and happy to still be your ex. *(jokingly addressed to CHARLIE)* Rather you than me George.

GEORGIA I sometimes wonder why you didn't warn me of him.

CHARLIE Because she still finds me irresistible and if she can't have me then she at least wants her best friend to have the pleasure!

GINNY Don't kid yourself tiger. We may have just been kids then, but there was little pleasure, *(wagging her little finger)* very little. Anyway I have tried to talk Georgia into leaving you loads of times, but she seems dead set on ruining her life.

SARAH (*TO Charlie*) How long have you had it?

CHARLIE Since the last round of family funerals. It was my Uncles'.

GEORGIA Your Aunties'.

CHARLIE Oh yes, my Aunty Phyllis.

GEORGIA Your Aunty Maureen.

CHARLIE Right.

PETER Can't be many left now. What's this, the fourth inheritance you've been left.

CHARLIE I think so.

MIRIAM Not bad being the only child in the family. All I've got is a crazy step sister.

SARAH Thanks a lot!

MIRIAM I meant it in an affectionate way. Anyway sometimes it's best to be left on your own.

PETER You said it!

MIRIAM gives him a sharp look, CHARLIE & FRANK laugh and she gives them a look as well.

CHARLIE Drink anyone? Follow me boys.

CHARLIE leads them into the Kitchen

MIRIAM (*Calling after PETER*) I'll do the bags then shall I!

MIRIAM storms upstairs with all the bags, including SARAH's.

GEORGIA (*Calling out to MIRIAM*) You're in the Yellow room and Sarah's in the Pink room.

SARAH (*To GINNY & GEORGIA*) They've been like this all the way over here. I told them, it's New Years Eve, chill out.

GINNY (*Giving SARAH a hug*) It's been ages since we've got together, I missed you. How's your mum?

SARAH Still dead.

GINNY Sure, but is she still talking to you?

SARAH Every day, every night and in between. We talk more since she died than we ever did when she was alive. I can't wait to die, I'm gonna spend the time catching up with all the people I forget to call!

GEORGIA Still mad as ever then darling.

SARAH Not mad, just enlightened.

GINNY Are you and Miriam alright now? I was bit worried about us all being here together for the weekend.

SARAH We're fine.

GEORGIA and GINNY give her a knowing look.

SARAH Really, we're fine. The truth is, since Mum died we haven't really been seeing much of each other, which isn't a bad thing. At least it means that when we get together we've got stuff to catch up on and it means we don't get too tetchy with each other...

MIRIAM comes back in interrupting SARAH.

MIRIAM Nice rooms aren't they, bigger than I thought they'd be.

GEORGIA I know, the place is massive. You know it's set in 60 acres.

GINNY Blimey that's bigger than my whole street back home.

GEORGIA I know. We haven't even had a chance to look around it yet, we only got here yesterday morning ourselves.

MIRIAM takes in the surroundings and eyes up the place.

MIRIAM It must be worth a fortune?

GEORGIA I guess so.

MIRIAM So he owns this on his own then, it's not part of his family's estate?

GEORGIA It's just his, his Aunty left it to him in the will. Why?

MIRIAM No reason, just wondering. So what's the plan for tonight then?

GEORGIA Well we need to wait until Owen gets here, and then I guess we get on with it.

SARAH I'm really excited, I've never played a murder mystery game before. What exactly happens?

GINNY It's just like being in a play actually. We're all given characters

GEORGIA gestures to her outfit.

GINNY Then we're given information about ourselves, which we share with each other and then we have to question each other about the murder.

SARAH What murder?

GINNY The host.

SARAH Georgia?

GINNY No, the host in the story. Let me explain...

Scene darkens and we go into the kitchen.

FRANK, CHARLIE and PETER are in the kitchen. The food is in the oven being kept warm and CHARLIE is pouring them a drink each.

PETER This is a great place Charlie. I'd love somewhere I could escape to.

FRANK Escape 'to' or escape 'from'?

PETER Probably both.

FRANK Work or home?

PETER Probably both.

CHARLIE I know what you mean.

FRANK What have 'you' got to escape from?

PETER You've never done a days work since you were born.

CHARLIE I have problems too you know; just different ones.

FRANK I'd swap mine for yours.

CHARLIE The business?

FRANK No the business is alright, it's Ginny.

PETER I thought you too were happy.

FRANK We are, really. We just don't seem to see each other much. She's just started this new play in London, which is great; she's worked really hard to get it. But it means that she gets in around 1.00am when I'm asleep, and then I'm up at 4.30am to get to work for the first print run, then I get back at about 6.00ish and she's already gone back to London.

PETER Sounds fantastic to me. I get woken up at 6.30am, sent to work, told to be home by 4.00pm sharp, prepare the dinner for when she gets back at 5.30pm, on the dot I should add, then clear up the plates and follow whatever soap she's decided to watch.

FRANK She's a tough one your wife.

PETER At least I get to go to my book club twice a week; otherwise I think I'd lose my mind.

CHARLIE You think that's bad. I wake up at 10.00am, have sex, then wake Georgia up, get breakfast in bed, have to read my magazine for an hour, then lunch, then the gym, then home. Then after that I have to start all over again the next day. Oh yes, there is the odd holiday in between and the odd day at the races!

FRANK God it sounds like hell!

PETER I'll think I'll keep my own life if you don't mind.

*The boys go back into the room.
CHARLIE falls back into his chair,
FRANK stands next to GEORGIA and
PETER stays close to FRANK.*

MIRIAM Peter get me a drink will you, I'll have my usual. Sarah what can he get you?

SARAH *(Giving MIRIAM a look)* It's alright I can get my own thank you PETER.

GEORGIA *(Putting her hand out to stop PETER)* Charlie'll get them.

CHARLIE Frank get the drinks in mate.

GEORGIA *(Shaking her head)* Unbelievable.

FRANK *(Grabbing George's hand)* Come on George you can give me a hand. Another drink Peter?

PETER Shall I give you a hand?

MIRIAM I'm sure they can manage Peter.

PETER Oh right. Well um, I'll have an orange juice and lemonade then please.

FRANK Of course what else would you be allowed? G&T for my lovely wife.

GINNY Thank you.

FRANK Rosé for Miriam, another whisky for you?

CHARLIE Yup.

FRANK *(Flirting with GEORGIA)* And whatever takes your fancy my little French maid, whatever!

FRANK follows GEORGIA into the kitchen.

MIRIAM What's it been, five, six months since we all got together last?

SARAH Must be.

GINNY And we all look the same, although slightly more Chinese, Japanese, Australian...

PETER *(saluting jokingly)* And British thank you!

GINNY Still saying grace for the Queen then?

CHARLIE And dressing like one...

PETER I'm dressed as Bruce Lee for your information.

CHARLIE Brenda Lee more like!

MIRIAM *(Defending her husband)* And who are you supposed to be then, Rolf Harris?

FRANK and GEORGIA come back in with the drinks and hands them around.

FRANK One for you, one for you and a large one for me. So what's next then, what happens now?

GEORGIA We wait for Owen that's what.

FRANK But the food'll get cold.

MIRIAM Has anyone heard from him?

CHARLIE He called about an hour ago.

PETER What did he say?

CHARLIE He said he was about an hour away.

MIRIAM Always the smart arse aren't you.

Loud knock on the door

CHARLIE *(Smug look at MIRIAM)* It's open!

GEORGIA Unbelievable.

GINNY I'll get it.

OWEN walks in just as GINNY is about to go out to get him.

OWEN Hi all, not late am I?

CHARLIE Perfect timing.

MIRIAM You're not even dressed!

OWEN It'll only take a minute. *(Gives GEORGIA, GINNY and MIRIAM a kiss on the cheek)* Hey Sarah, how's your mum?

SARAH Fine thanks, how's yours?

OWEN Still dead and still quiet.

SARAH Too bad.

OWEN Where shall I put my bag?

GEORGIA You're...

MIRIAM ...in the study, I'll show you...

MIRIAM grabs his bag and heads out the door.

CHARLIE Grab Owen a drink Frank.

MIRIAM *(walking up the stairs)* Owen, I'm not unpacking for you as well.

CHARLIE *(looking at OWEN)* I wouldn't chance it!

Looking at FRANK who is laughing, OWEN leaves the room to go and change.

GEORGIA Right lets get this thing started, we don't want to be half way through it when New Year strikes the clock. Ginny can you come and give me a hand with the food. Peter maybe you can set the table.

SARAH *(Walking into the kitchen behind them)* I'll help with the food.

FRANK What about me?

PETER You can help us.

*MIRIAM comes back in discreetly
wiping her nose*

MIRIAM Stop fussing around him Peter, we can do it
 ourselves.

GEORGIA (to FRANK) You keep laughing boy amused. The
 more he's kept out of it at this stage, the
 better for all of us.

CHARLIE Thank you my darling, as kind as ever. Frank,
 I think I'm about to finish this drink, perhaps
 you should be preparing the next.

FRANK Yeh right, you're on your own buddy.

*FRANK takes a seat and sits back to
watch the party take shape, CHARLIE
does the same. MIRIAM gets PETER
into motion setting the table and
OWEN is upstairs getting changed.
We move into the kitchen where
GINNY, SARAH and GEORGIA are putting
the food into dishes.*

SARAH (Looking out the kitchen window) Wow, look at
 the garden, it's huge, how far does it go?

GEORGIA As far as you can see.

GINNY This place is amazing; you certainly fell on
 your feet this time.

GEORGIA I know, it's great. I don't think Charlie
 appreciates it at all though. Every time he's
 left something, and it's always huge things
 like this, he's like 'oh right, cool, that's
 nice then.' I mean for God's sake, you've just
 been left a five bedroom French chalet, how
 about showing some bloody excitement.

GINNY You know Charlie, always laid back, never in
 the real world.

SARAH There's nothing wrong with taking life easy.

GINNY Is that your plan now?

SARAH No way, I've done far too much lying around since mum died last year. I'm ready to get working again

GEORGIA What are you going to do?

SARAH Something spiritual, something, I dunno, something relaxing.

GINNY Why not start the yoga classes again, or you could do that crystal ball thing you were studying! (*Nudging GEORGIA in and smiling*)

SARAH Yeh, something like that, something I could do from home. (*to GINNY*) What about you, how's the new play going? I really want to come and see it.

GINNY It's alright actually. The cast are great; we're having loads of fun. The directors a shit though, so bloody bossy. I named him Miriam! Oops sorry Sarah, anyway all the cast call him that now and he's getting more and more annoyed because he doesn't know why. He even stropped off the other day and didn't come back until the next morning. He can't afford to leave though, it's his last big break in the West End, if he screws up now that's it for his career.

GEORGIA What about yours?

GINNY What do you mean?

GEORGIA We'll you've been at this acting business now for what, 6 years, and this is your first pro play in London. Is this one going to launch you?

GINNY Who knows? I mean it should, it's got a great cast and the story's really funny. But it always seems to be about 'who you know' rather than anything else. I really need this though. Frank's been great, but he can't keep supporting us both all the time. I really need to start bringing in some decent money.

GEORGIA (*Standing very close to GINNY*) Are things tight?

GINNY No, course not.

GEORGIA *(affectionately putting a hand on her shoulder)*
I know you too well.

GINNY I shouldn't say, I mean I don't know for sure,
but I think the company's in quite a bit of
trouble. I heard Frank talking to Charlie the
other night on the phone. I get the feeling
that the bank don't want to extend the business
overdraft, which could be really bad and he's
lost that big council contract which he was
really relying on.

SARAH But I thought Miriam had sorted everything out?

GINNY She had, I mean she was great to begin with,
but she's just the manager, it's not her bank
is it. Anyway to be honest I think she's
driving Frank a bit crazy at the moment. She's
always round our house and seems to be forever
telling him how to increase sales, how to cut
costs, how to get the paper in this shop and
that shop, how to cook, clean, walk, breath;
God she's infuriating at times. If I don't get
another play after this one, I'm gonna have to
get a night job just to avoid going home after
work.

GEORGIA I'm sure she's getting worse each year. *(to*
SARAH) You and her are more like strangers now
rather than sisters and she nags Peter all the
time. No wonder he's got eyes for the men!

GINNY You don't think he's actually gay do you?

GEORGIA Do me a favour. You wait, one of these days
him and Owen are gonna wake up and run off into
the sunset.

SARAH I'm sorry but Owen's not gay, he's just, well,
single like me.

GEORGIA Well, what about it then?

SARAH What, Owen and me?

GEORGIA Sure, why not? You can't tell me you've never
considered it.

SARAH Actually I did think him and I were going to hook up recently. He's been great since mum died, really attentive. I thought he was using mum's death as an excuse to see me; he was always just popping around, having a coffee. But it seems he's around at Miriam's just as much as mine lately.

GINNY Miriam's?

SARAH Yes, maybe he thinks he can do some sort of counselling thing with us, you know, tell me how upset she is and tell her how upset I am; that sort of thing.

GEORGIA He's a good guy, maybe you should make the first move.

SARAH I couldn't.

GINNY Why not?

SARAH I wouldn't know how.

GINNY It's easy, it's like this...

We go back to the dining room and lounge. The dinning table is nearly set, apart from a couple of things which PETER is placing. MIRIAM picks them back up and moves them, whilst PETER just watches her do it. FRANK and CHARLIE down their drinks and almost choke when they see OWEN. He comes into the room dressed as a huge Bertie Bassett.

FRANK *(Trying not to laugh out loud)* Who the hell have you come as?

OWEN *(sounding bemused)* Charlie told me it was a 'come as your favourite sweet party.'

CHARLIE Did I?

OWEN *(Looking around the room)* He did!

The girls come back into the lounge. GEORGIA, SARAH and GINNY put the food onto the table. GEORGIA and GINNY walk back to the kitchen to get more food, passing CHARLIE on the way.

GEORGIA *(hitting CHARLIE around the head)* Sorry Owen, you know what Charlie's like.

FRANK *(Still laughing)* Nice one Charlie. It's alright Owen, don't worry. Anyway you look good enough to eat, doesn't he Sarah?

OWEN I'm getting changed.

SARAH *(Grabbing him by the arm)* You can't, we've got to start. Anyway Mum thinks you look great, don't you Mum. *(Looking up, then giving him a kiss on the cheek)* that's from Mum.

MIRIAM shakes her head at SARAH's comments.

CHARLIE There you go Owen even the ghosties think you're a sweetie!

OWEN If it's going to be like this all night...

PETER Leave it out Charlie, don't spoil the night.

CHARLIE *(Looking bemused)* What?

MIRIAM It's always the same with you, you always go too far.

CHARLIE *(Fairly aggressively)* How far is too far Miriam?

FRANK Come on guys we're only having a laugh; you don't mind do you Owen? Cause you don't.

OWEN No, I'm used to his little jokes now. I think I'll give the girls a hand.

OWEN takes off his Bertie Bassett head and goes into the kitchen.

SARAH *(To CHARLIE)* You know how shy he can be, that was really mean of you.

CHARLIE It was only a joke.

SARAH Not a good one.

Back in the kitchen

OWEN Anything I can do to help?

GEORGIA Sorry about Charlie, you know what he's like.

OWEN It's alright, actually it's quite funny isn't it.

GINNY Sarah was saying she's been seeing a lot of you recently.

OWEN *(Defensively)* No more than usual.

GINNY Come on, you can tell us.

OWEN There's nothing to tell. I see her when I'm around, I think it's good for her to talk sometimes; it's not healthy to bottle things up.

GEORGIA And Miriam?

OWEN *(annoyed)* What's that supposed to mean?

GEORGIA Alright calm down, I didn't mean anything by it.

GINNY Sarah said you've been seeing a lot of Miriam lately, that's all.

OWEN Oh. Well not really much. I just drop books I've read over to Peter for his book club, that's all.

GINNY I suppose you drop books off to Sarah as well do you?

OWEN Yes actually!

GINNY *(sarcastically)* Oh right.

OWEN *(changing the subject)* How's the play going?

GEORGIA Don't get her started on that one.

GINNY It's fine thank you very much, lots of fun.
Are you gonna come and see it, maybe you and
Sarah can come?

OWEN Yes maybe, I'll see if she fancies it. Shall I
take these in?

*OWEN takes some of the food and goes
back into the dinning room.*

GEORGIA (to GINNY) Right little match maker aren't we.

*GINNY shrugs, takes some food and
heads into the dining room. GEORGIA
follows.*

FRANK We're all here then. Right where do we sit?

GEORGIA Charlie, you're over there.

MIRIAM I'll sit here, Sarah you come next to me.

GEORGIA Actually Miriam you're over there and Sarah is
next to me.

*MIRIAM gets up with a huff and moves
seat.*

GEORGIA Frank, you're next to Miriam.

FRANK Fantastic, come right here my beauty (*patting
her seat*).

MIRIAM (*With a sigh*) Oh great!

GEORGIA Peter, you're the other side of Frank.

PETER (*With a smile*) Oh great!

GEORGIA Ginny you're next to Peter, Owen you're here
next to me. Right that's everyone seated.

CHARLIE Excellent, let's eat

*CHARLIE grabs a prawn ball, MIRIAM
grabs it off him and puts it back.*

MIRIAM We haven't started yet.

GEORGIA Charlie!

CHARLIE What?

GEORGIA Read the instructions.

CHARLIE Oh right. Let's see then, it says:- "The person playing Peking Tom..."

GEORGIA That's you.

CHARLIE Right. The Person playing Peking Tom should eat a prawn ball

CHARLIE grabs the prawn ball back and shoves it into his mouth.

GEORGIA *(Shaking her head)* Unbelievable.

MIRIAM *(Grabs the instructions)* I'll read them.

EVERYONE except GEORGIA and MIRIAM are grinning at CHARLIE.

MIRIAM Welcome to New Years Eve 1937. We are in Shanghai which is a cosmopolitan city with a strongly international flavour. In 1937 the rich of the world gather in Shanghai for both business and pleasure, and for those who can afford it, there's nowhere on earth more glamorous, more decadent or more insecure!

CHARLIE My sort of place.

FRANK Bring it on.

MIRIAM glowers at both of them and continues:

MIRIAM The Japanese are casting acquisitive eyes at the city, society is polarised between extremes of wealth and poverty, and corruption is rife. We are all here on the invitation of Fu Changchoo a leading businessman in the city. Unfortunately though, our host will not be attending the dinner tonight, or any night for that matter. He was found a few minutes ago in his own dressing room, tied to a chair and stabbed through the heart with a chopstick.

GINNY *(Using all her acting skills)* Oh my, how dreadful, to be chopped with a chop stick! *(grabbing PETER's hand and looking into his eyes)* Whatever shall we do?

FRANK *(In his best Chinese accent)* No need to hurry my dear, the famous detective is here. *(Looking at OWEN)*

SARAH bursts into a fit of giggles.

CHARLIE It's none other than Sherlock Bassett.

OWEN Here we go again!

MIRIAM Georgia!

GEORGIA Just carry on, come on we've got to get into this or the food'll go cold.

MIRIAM One of us is a murderer. But which one? The murderer's task is to evade detection, whilst the rest of us have to solve the crime. At this stage even the murderer does not know who he is.

SARAH Or she?

MIRIAM Or she. Once we have introduced ourselves we get to ask each other questions about our relationship with the deceased. We all have to tell the truth at all times, but only when directly questioned. In front of us all is a brief description of who you are, so one at a time let's go around the table and introduce ourselves.

GINNY *(standing up to read)* Me first. I'm Sue Sushi, a Japanese actress. I'm one of the greatest stars of the Oriental stage and newest star of the movies. Apparently people think I'm a self-absorbed prima donna, but what do they know about being great. I'm currently appearing at the Shanghai Opera House, where I'm going to once again prove to them why they should look up to me.

Everyone claps as she sits down.

FRANK No acting for you then, more like a biography.

GINNY Thank you darling, how kind.

GEORGIA Peter?

PETER *(getting up and walking around the table)* I'm Bruce Lie, an expert in the martial arts. I'm currently working as a nightclub bouncer, but am trying to get into the movie business. My boss was Fu Changchoo. I have been working at his nightclub for the past three months, but as the pay and conditions are so bad I have been talking with my co workers about doing something about it. I was told that Fu Changchoo knew what I was doing and that I needed to keep watching my back in case he sought revenge. It looks like I no longer need to worry about him now!

Everyone claps as he sits down.

GEORGIA Charlie...

CHARLIE Yes, my darling?

GEORGIA It's your turn.

CHARLIE Oh right, drink anyone?

GEORGIA Don't be an idiot, just read it.

CHARLIE I'm Peeking Tom,

FRANK Another autobiography!

CHARLIE *(reading at his chair)* I'm an Australian Adventurer and speculator. Excellent! *(Now with an Australian accent)* I go anywhere that there's money to be made and have been in Shanghai for the last couple of years. When I first came to Shanghai I worked for Fu Changchoo but left him to set up on my own as soon as I could. I'm loud, sorry I meant *(really loud)* I'm loud and aggressive and don't suffer fools easily. There are rumours that I left Australia before the law caught up with me over an alleged fraud in the gold business.

Everyone except MIRIAM claps as he sits down.

MIRIAM Do you have to shout?

CHARLIE (*loudly*) Sorry.

GEORGIA Right then, now Miria...

MIRIAM (*interrupting her and standing up to read*) It's me now. Right I'm Liza Lott. I was the housekeeper and secret lover of Fu Changchoo.

CHARLIE So that's why he killed himself!

MIRIAM (*Glowering at CHARLIE*) He was murdered.

CHARLIE Alright, so he murdered himself.

EVERYONE sniggers, except PETER who simply nods as if in agreement.

MIRIAM (*Ignoring him*) There was never any proof to the outside world of our relationship, although people suspected that we were close in both personal and business terms. I am always courteous and respectful but have the reputation of being the power behind the man. I control all the purse strings and as everyone knows, the person who controls the money has all the control.

Everyone claps as she sits down.

FRANK (*Uncomfortably*) Blimey, another flipping autobiography, who wrote these!

PETER Since when was my wife courteous and respectful?

MIRIAM Peter!

PETER (*Jumping slightly*) Sorry.

CHARLIE This is ridiculous can't we eat yet?

SARAH Actually I'm kind of hungry as well.

FRANK Well why not ask your mum who the killer is and we can end the game and start the food.

SARAH Don't be rude to mum, anyway she doesn't know who did it. (*looking up*) Do you mum?

GEORGIA Well that's great isn't it. I tell you what, why don't we just forget the game and just eat then.

GEORGIA gets up in a strop and stomps into the kitchen.

SARAH What did I say?

CHARLIE Well it was a bit rude wasn't it. She spent ages looking for the right game for us and all you want to do is eat.

Having been knocking back the wine MIRIAM is now starting to sound a little drunk

MIRIAM Leave her alone Charlie, it wasn't you Sarah; if it was anyone it was her fiancé! You haven't stopped since we arrived.

CHARLIE What did I do?

GINNY I'll go and see if she's alright.

OWEN I'll come with you.

GINNY *(not wanting him too)* It's alright I'll go on my own thanks.

OWEN *(following her anyway)* Maybe my outfit will cheer her up.

GINNY gets up and goes into the kitchen, followed by OWEN.

FRANK *(Grabbing some food)* You don't mind do you Charlie?

CHARLIE Course not mate, I'll join you I think.

PETER is about to join in, but MIRIAM stops him.

In the Kitchen, GEORGIA is crying and GINNY and OWEN walk over to her.

GINNY *(Putting her arms around her)* What's wrong?

GEORGIA I've planned tonight for months and no-one's taking it seriously. I've organised everything on my own, while Charlie just sits and drinks himself asleep and all everyone cares about is

the bloody food, well fine, let them bloody eat it.

OWEN What's really wrong?

GEORGIA I just told you.

GINNY hands her a glass of water.

GEORGIA *(Taking the drink and sitting down)* I don't know, maybe it's the whole being engaged thing. Charlie's great, I mean I love him, I really think I do, but he never gives anything back. I never know what he's thinking, or feeling and, I don't know. You were married to him for nearly a year; did you ever manage to get inside his head?

GINNY We were kids, it was different then.

GEORGIA Did he do drugs back then?

GINNY Sure, but only the usual stuff, nothing heavy. We all did, Frank, Charlie and me.

OWEN You did too?

GINNY Sure why not. We were back backing for a year; we did loads of crazy things.

GEORGIA Like taking drugs and getting married!

GINNY Well some things were a little crazier than others. Anyway a little bit of weed can't hurt him; you know what he's like.

GEORGIA It's not the weed that bothers me.

OWEN You think Charlie's taking serious drugs then?

GEORGIA You can't tell him I said anything.

OWEN Of course we won't. When did you find out?

GEORGIA He's always done it, little bits here and there. It's just that recently he seems to be taking more and more, or at least he's spending more and more money on them.

OWEN Have you actually seen him take the drugs then?

GEORGIA Well, no.

OWEN So how do you know the moneys going on drugs?

GEORGIA What else could it be?

GINNY Gambling, horses maybe?

GEORGIA He hardly gambles at all. He part owns a race horse and goes to watch it run, but never puts serious money on it.

GINNY *(To OWEN)* You know about things like this, does he look like a drug user to you?

OWEN I don't think so, but then again I work with animals mostly these days, not people. I wouldn't worry too much, I'm sure he's alright. Would you like me to talk to him in the morning?

GEORGIA *(Giving him a kiss on the cheek)* Thanks, you're a love. Last of the good guys, a real sweetie.

OWEN Don't you start now!

OWEN leads the girls back into the dinning room.

FRANK Come on girls, and you Bertie, lets get back to it.

GEORGIA Sorry everyone. *(Gives CHARLIE a kiss on the cheek then sits down)* A mix of hormones and New Years Eve jitters, that's all. Right where were we?

OWEN We were getting round to it being my turn.

FRANK Excellent, come on then

OWEN *(reading his piece at his chair with no feeling)* Right I'm the Reverend Mitchell Luther Singh. I was originally born in India but moved to America as a small child. My calling was always to the Lord. I met my future wife whilst doing missionary work in Shanghai. During my time in this wonderful city I became good friends with our host, Mr Fu Changchoo, he was always so very generous with his financial donations. Some people seem to think that not all the money I raise goes to the missionary, but of course I completely refute such things.

No-one claps at his half hearted effort.

CHARLIE *(Addressing no one in particular)* Can we ask some questions yet?

GEORGIA I d...

MIRIAM *(interrupting and sounding drunker still)* I don't think so. Shall I read the rules?

GEORGIA Why not. I tell you what, while she's doing that let's start eating.

SARAH About time, I'm starving.

They All start to pass the food around whilst MIRIAM reads the rules and downs another glass of wine.

MIRIAM It says here that once everyone has introduced themselves then the person playing Lito Lorleone...

FRANK That's me,

MIRIAM Reads the first clue. I suppose we then just follow on and see what happens.

OWEN Can I have some wine please?

MIRIAM *(Taking the bottle of Rosé from in front of her)* Here you are...

GINNY *(Getting there first with her own bottle)* Already got it, you prefer red don't you?

OWEN Please.

GEORGIA *(Talking to MIRIAM)* Actually I think Charlie said that bottle was for you as you're the only one who drinks Rosé.

MIRIAM How thoughtful he is.

CHARLIE shrugs.

GEORGIA Right let's tuck in then, Frank why don't you read yours now.

FRANK In a minute let me get some food first.

SARAH Miriam since when do you eat Chinese?

MIRIAM I don't (*looking angrily at CHARLIE*), anymore.
Anyway I thought he might do something like
this.

GEORGIA Sorry Miriam, I did tell him.

CHARLIE shrugs

MIRIAM It's alright I brought my own food, just in
case, I asked Peter to give it to you when we
got here. (*To PETER*) You did didn't you?

PETER Sorry I forgot, I'll go get it.

GINNY It's alright I need the toilet anyway; is it in
your bag? I'll bring it down with me.

PETER Yes, it's in the pink room, thanks.

MIRIAM (*drunker still, To FRANK*) You didn't get that
New Years day print job then?

FRANK (*Talking with a full mouth*) Let's not talk
business tonight eh.

MIRIAM I was just wondering.

FRANK (*Clearly annoyed*) No I didn't get it. I
haven't got anything since I lost the council
contract.

MIRIAM You need to start door knocking in the New
Year, business is a real battle you know.

FRANK Like I said lets not talk business tonight.

SARAH He's right Miriam lets just get on with the
game, leave business talk for the morning.

MIRIAM I was just trying to show some interest.

*FRANK picks up his character sheet
and starts to read out loud.*

FRANK *(standing up to walk around, he places a prawn ball in each cheek to emulate the Godfather character)* I'm Lito Lorleone. I'm as mean as I look and deadly with a sword. I made my reputation growing up in the streets of Shanghai under the direction of my uncle, Fu Changchoo . Uncle Fu taught me everything, all the rackets, from pimping, to prostitution, to murder! Whatever he needed he just had to call. Some people in this city think of me as the new boss now, they are right. *(holding his sword to CHARLIE'S throat)* Others think I might have killed Fu...

CHARLIE Who me?

FRANK No Fu...

CHARLIE Me?

FRANK Shut up you idiot. Where was I, oh yeh, others think I might have killed Fu, but I didn't. Now I vow to personally find and deal with the person who did.

Everyone claps as he sits down.

CHARLIE Ooh, scary boy.

FRANK Nice part, I could get into this.

GINNY comes back in with the food.

PETER Thanks, I'll take it. *(To MIRIAM)* How do you want it done?

MIRIAM It's a bloody salad, just put it on a plate.

PETER takes it into the kitchen.

SARAH *(standing up by her chair)* My turn I think. I'm Susie Singh, wife of the Reverend Mitchell Singh.

PETER *(Calling from the kitchen)* Where are the plates?

GEORGIA I'll do it, you come back in...

PETER comes out and GEORGIA goes in.

SARAH I met the Reverend in Shanghai where we were both missionaries. We were married within the year and I follow him everywhere. He introduced me to Mr Changchoo about a year ago and I thought he was just fantastic. He's so manly and so very powerful. My husband suspects us of having an affair, but really we are just very good friends!

Everyone claps, Miriam particularly loudly. GEORGIA comes back in with the salad and puts it in front of MIRIAM.

GEORGIA There you go, don't want you to starve to death.

MIRIAM Thanks.

GEORGIA *(standing up by her chair)* Right then, just me left I think. I'm Mrs S Cargo, wife of the Ambassador of France. My husband and I have been living in Shanghai now for the last two years. We attend every function we can and that is where I met the wonderful Fu...

CHARLIE Who me?

MIRIAM elbows him.

GEORGIA ...he is trying to set up business in England and as such has become good friends with my husband and I. When we go back home we are looking into setting up a joint business with him. Or least we were hoping to, until tonight. I did have the feeling that things were not going too well between my husband and Mr Fu recently, but it may have just been my imagination.

She sits down and everyone claps.

CHARLIE Right then, anyone need a top up before we get the game properly started?

FRANK I'll have a beer.

OWEN Me too.

MIRIAM Could I have water, please?

CHARLIE No problem.

OWEN I'll give you a hand.

CHARLIE OK, I'll get the beers, you grab the water.

SARAH You can have mine. *(passing MIRIAM her water which MIRIAM knocks back in one go.*

OWEN goes into the kitchen and comes back with the water for MIRIAM. CHARLIE gives out the beers.

SARAH Before we start I would like to raise my glass and thank our hosts for inviting us here tonight.

FRANK Absolutely!

SARAH To Charlie and Georgia thanks for having us here this weekend. It's been ages since we all got together and I've really missed everyone. It's not the same speaking on the phone, we really need to do this more often.

OWEN I agree. We should make sure we meet up at least once a month. Maybe I'll do it next month at my house.

SARAH Yes lets. We'll do Owen's house in January; I'll help him with the food.

OWEN Alright.

SARAH Then I'll do it in February. Not this murder night thingy, just a meal.

PETER That'll be really nice won't it Miriam? Maybe we can do the month after.

MIRIAM *(slouching a bit as she's definitely drunk)*
Lets not plan too far ahead Peter. We all might be sick of each other by then.

FRANK *(looking at MIRIAM)* Who knows!

GINNY To Georgia and Charlie and all of us, friends for life...

She raises her glass

SARAH Always have been.

ALL Always will be.

ALL chink their glasses/bottles.

GEORGIA It's our pleasure. And here's to a great new year (*looking at her watch*), in 1 hours time.

GINNY And maybe here's to a wedding next year?

CHARLIE coughs his beer up and GEORGIA looks slightly uneasy.

GEORGIA Who knows.

FRANK I think Charlie knows by the sound of it.

CHARLIE (*Still coughing, then looking at GEORGIA*) Who knows what tomorrow may bring my little French maid.

ALL start to eat and drink whilst GEORGIA gives out some more game cards.

GEORGIA These are the clues that we all have to read out. I think Frank has the first one. Frank you read this and then I think we all then sort of just follow on from there.

FRANK Alright then. It says here that I have to ask Reverend Singh what he was doing at Fu Changchoo's house the other evening, when he should have been preaching at his Missionary.

MIRIAM starts to cough quite heavily.

OWEN Did something go down the wrong way?

MIRIAM (*Trying to speak*) I can't breathe...

MIRIAM continues to cough.

GINNY Are you alright, is she alright?

MIRIAM continues to cough.

PETER She'll be alright, she always eats too fast. Have some more water.

MIRIAM I can't... b...r...e...

She continues to cough.

SARAH (*Looking up*) What's that Mum? Oh my God, Mum says she's choking.

OWEN Not a great time for Mum jokes Sarah!

SARAH I'm not joking! Do something someone.

PETER Someone pass her the water.

CHARLIE She's drunk it.

MIRIAM continues to cough, but is now looking really bad. EVERYONE gets up and crowds around her staring to panic.

GEORGIA For God's sake Charlie get her some more then, (*pushing past him*) oh I'll get it myself

GEORGIA rushes into the kitchen and brings out some more water, whilst everyone else crowds around MIRIAM trying to help her. FRANK tries to grab her around the waste to clear the blockage, CHARLIE starts waving a magazine to give her air, GINNY and SARAH are simply fussing and PETER is just standing there shouting orders to everyone. All of a sudden MIRIAM suddenly stops coughing, the room goes quiet and everyone starts to look at each other for guidance.

CHARLIE (*Trying to break the atmosphere*) No need for the water now, it looks as if she's stopped. You alright now Miriam? Miriam? (*shaking her, but she falls forward onto her plate.*) Shit!

PETER What's wrong with her?

GINNY What's she doing?

GEORGIA (*Pushing OWEN to the front*) You're the Doctor what's wrong with her?

OWEN I'm not a Doctor, I'm a biologist.

GEORGIA Well you know more than us, has she just passed out?

OWEN *(Looking closely and taking her pulse etc)* I don't know. Miriam, can you hear me?

*Everyone is crowding around her.
OWEN pushes them back.*

OWEN Get back, give her room for Gods sake. Miriam, sweetheart, can you here me, it's Owen, are you alright? *(Looking up at everyone)*. I think she's passed out.

PETER *(panicking)* Why would she pass out? She was alright a minute ago, what's wrong with her? Charlie if she's eaten Chinese again...

CHARLIE She didn't touch it did she, you all watched her, she had the salad.

PETER Get a Doctor or something. An ambulance, Georgia where's your phone?

GGEOGIA It's over there.

*PETER goes over to the phone whilst
OWEN takes her pulse again and
checks her breathing.*

OWEN I don't think an ambulance is gonna be any good.

PETER What do you mean? What is it then?

OWEN I think she's dead!

ALL What???

OWEN There's no pulse.

*PETER rushes back and pushes OWEN
aside onto the floor and starts to
shake MIRIAM.*

PETER Come on wake up, wake up, what's wrong with you, it's not bloody funny, just wake up.

*OWEN continues to lie where he was.
SARAH begins to cry, CHARLIE & FRANK
just stand there watching, GEORGIA
falls against the wall as in shock
whilst GINNY goes over to try to
settle PETER.*

PETER Miriam, for Gods sake wake up.

GINNY Peter, leave her, there's nothing you can do now.

He pushes her away.

PETER You're not a Doctor, none of you are. Just shut up, she's going to be fine; she's just passed out, that all.

OWEN She's dead Peter. She's not breathing and she's got no pulse.

CHARLIE Are you sure?

OWEN Of course I'm bloody sure. There's no pulse. I can find a pulse you know, I'm not an idiot, and she's not breathing is she and she's certainly not shouting at Peter at the moment.

CHARLIE Blimey she must be dead then.

GEORGIA Charlie!

EVERYONE looks stunned and they all start to lose control, PETER falls into a chair holding his head in his hands, SARAH just stands there crying, GEORGIA just stares into space, CHARLIE looking embarrassed heads to get a drinkk, and GINNY, out of nervous tension starts clearing the plates.

FRANK *(Taking charge)* Alright lets all calm down, just calm down. Ginny put the bloody plates down will you, it's not helping.

GINNY *(Starting to cry and shake)* What do you mean calm down, our friend's just choked to death.

OWEN *(Quietly)* I never said she choked to death.

FRANK Look we've got to keep calm, we've go to think about this, about what to do. *(Looking at OWEN)* What do you mean she didn't choke to death, she's either dead, or she isn't?

OWEN *(Still quietly)* Oh she's dead alright, no doubt about that, I just didn't say she choked to death.

FRANK What then?

OWEN I think it was poison.

GEORGIA (*Grabbing CHARLIE's arm*) What!!

FRANK What are you talking about?

PETER (*Muttering to himself over and over*) Poison, oh my God my wife's dead, she's dead, what shall I do, she's dead...

OWEN (*talking over Peter*) I've seen enough dead lab rats to know when one's been poisoned.

SARAH Owen!

OWEN (*Shouting*) I didn't mean she was a rat for Christ sake. I'm just saying I've seen all kinds of death and that was definitely poison. It could easily be her nut allergy; you remember what happened last time

CHARLIE She didn't touch the Chinese did she; she had the salad, we all saw her.

OWEN I didn't say it was the Chinese did I. I just said it could have been her allergy.

CHARLIE How? You don't think someone did this to her do you?

GEORGIA Oh my God.

SARAH (*Talking to her MUM*) What shall we do, oh Christ, what shall we do?

PETER (*Muttering again to himself*) She's been poisoned, oh my God my wife's dead, she's dead, what shall I do, she's dead..

GINNY (*Starting to clear the plates again*) Oh shit!

FRANK GINNY! Leave the bloody table alone will you.

*GINNY stops what she's doing.
CHARLIE goes over to MIRIAM and starts poking her shoulder to see if she's really dead.*

FRANK Come on, lets all try to keep calm. Carry on Owen, tell us what you know?

OWEN If she was choking, then she wouldn't have just died that quickly and her skin wouldn't have gone that odd greeny colour. I've done tests on rodents before with various poisons and that is definitely what killed her. She's been poisoned.

FRANK How?

OWEN I don't know. The food maybe or a drink.

SARAH (*Panicking*) We're all gonna die.

FRANK Don't be stupid Sarah, does it look like we're dying.

GEORGIA Oh my god, I told you Charlie didn't I. I said it wasn't funny to give her Chinese, you've killed her, you bloody idiot.

CHARLIE Look, will you all just stop blaming me, she didn't have any Chinese did she, she brought her own food.

FRANK He's right, she only had the salad.

SARAH She got it on the train coming over.

FRANK What was in it?

SARAH I don't know, it was a salad.

FRANK Did it have nuts in it?

SARAH How would I know?

CHARLIE Did you or Peter add some nuts to it in secret?

GEORGIA Charlie, that's sick.

CHARLIE Well someone did it didn't they; maybe one of those two had had enough of her shouting and nutted her!

SARAH What about you then? It's your house maybe you did it!

OWEN I didn't say it was definitely the salad. It might have been the drink.

FRANK What did she drink?

OWEN Well she had some wine that Charlie left for her.

CHARLIE (*slumping into his chair again*) Oh thanks a lot.

OWEN And Sarah passed her some water.

SARAH It wasn't me. I didn't poison her. What about you, you seem to know everything all of a sudden, maybe you killed her.

OWEN Why would I do it?

SARAH I don't know. You're always at their house aren't you. I've driven passed late in the evening when Peter's at his book meetings and I've seen your car there and the lights on upstairs. Maybe you were having an affair with her and then she dumped you.

OWEN Oh grow up. What about you then. You've not exactly been best friends recently have you.

SARAH Like I'd kill my own sister.

OWEN Adopted sister actually.

FRANK Come on guys this won't help will it, accusing each other, we don't even know for sure that it is poison do we.

OWEN It is, believe me on that, it definitely is.

FRANK Alright so it is. But let's just calm down and get some self-control going for god's sake.

PETER (*jumping up to face FRANK*) My wife's been poisoned and you want us to calm down, you're not fucking normal are you, what if it was your precious wife, how calm would you be?

FRANK Well no one would poison my wife would they, everyone likes my wife.

PETER Alright then Mr 'lets all keep calm', what about you then. I heard you on the phone the other day shouting at her, I even heard you threaten her. What was it you said exactly...? "If I could..."

GEORGIA (*Shouting over everyone*) Just shut up will you, all of you. Our friend's dead for god's sake.

OWEN Been murdered.

GEORGIA Oh shut up Owen.

PETER He's right though isn't he, someone's murdered her. *(going back to sit down, quite deflated)*

GEORGIA But blaming each other's not going to help us.

GINNY Who else could have done it then, she was alright when she got here.

FRANK Georgia's right. Actually both of you are right. Let's just call the police and let them sort it out. If one of us has done it, then the Police will soon find out which one. Everyone agreed, yes?

Unison Yes.

FRANK picks up the phone to dial

FRANK *(Pressing the phone a few times)* Unbelievable, the phone line's dead. It's like a bloody Agatha Christie movie.

OWEN Who cut the phone line?

CHARLIE *(Sarcastically)* Eh, maybe the murderer.

FRANK Maybe you?

CHARLIE Maybe you?

SARAH Maybe both of you!

FRANK/CHARLIE Shut up!

GEORGIA Who's got a mobile?

Some of them take one out of their pockets.

GEORGIA No signal, anyone got a signal?

SOME shake their heads and others say, "No."

FRANK So no phones and no bloody signal. *(Looking at CHARLIE)* You had to inherit a chalet in the middle of no-where didn't you?

CHARLIE I suppose you think I murdered my 90 year old Uncle to get it do you?

GEORGIA Your Aunty you idiot!

GINNY Come on everyone, this is stupid. We've got to get a grip. Peter, she was your wife, what do you want to do?

PETER I don't know do I. What do you think we should do?

OWEN I'm going out to find someone to help us.

CHARLIE *(slowly speaking to him like a child and getting louder and louder)* We are in the middle of no-where. The closest neighbour is about seven miles one way and the closest village is about eight miles the other way. We can't call a cab as none of the phones are working and none of us speak French anyway. The mini bus I ordered isn't coming to get us until tomorrow evening and oh yes, let's not forget, it's New Years bloody Eve, so our neighbours, whoever they are, are probably out getting pissed.

OWEN You suggest something then smartarse.

CHARLIE Alright I suggest, erm, I suggest, a very large whisky. *(pouring himself another drink)*

FRANK I'm for that.

CHARLIE Anyone else?

PETER *(Almost hysterical now)* I'm glad you're all taking the murder of my wife so well.

FRANK Well you're not exactly breaking down in tears yourself.

PETER lunges at FRANK, but is stopped by CHARLIE.

CHARLIE Maybe you could do with a drink as well.

PETER Alright, alright, just let me go will you.

CHARLIE Have a drink, it'll calm your nerves.

PETER *(falling into a chair)* I'll have the same as Frank.

CHARLIE Of course you will!

SARAH Look Charlie's right, we won't find any help at this time of night. Let's wait for the morning and then one of us can run to your neighbours and call the police from there.

GINNY And meanwhile we do what, just sit here staring at Miriam?

GEORGIA I can't, I really can't.

SARAH Shall we all go to bed and try to get some sleep maybe. Sometimes things look better in the morning?

*Everyone stares at SARAH,
CHARLIE quietly laughs.*

GEORGIA *(almost shouting at her)* Better!

GINNY Do you think she's going to just get up and finish the game to try to find out who killed her? *(Pretending to be MIRIAM)* I'd like to ask a question, who in this room poisoned my salad and wine! For god's sake Sarah. Actually why don't you go to bed?

SARAH starts to cry.

OWEN *(Comforting SARAH)* Leave her alone Ginny, it's not her fault.

PETER How do you know?

GEORGIA *(Taking control)* She's right, that's brilliant, let's finish the game.

CHARLIE Now who's being the sick one.

GEORGIA I mean it lets finish the game. Look it's a murder mystery game isn't it. We were going to question each other about the murder of Fu ... whatever his name was. Let's clear the table, put Miriam upstairs on one of the beds and get on with it. But this time we question each other as ourselves. One of us did this and six of us didn't. It seems that there's already some tension and accusations going around, so let's focus it a little.

GINNY I wasn't suggesting that at all.

OWEN That's horrible.

FRANK Actually I like it, she's got something there.

CHARLIE Me too, I think my darling fiancé has come up with a good idea (*about to kiss her*).

GEORGIA (*Moving away from him*) Not right now lover boy, for all I know you're the killer!

FRANK Come on guys think about it. It's brilliant really, simple but brilliant.

GINNY But we'd have to clean up the table and move MIRIAM. Surely we should just leave everything as it is.

PETER You're not suggesting I leave my wife face down in a plate of lettuce are you? We might not be able to get hold of the police for hours yet.

SARAH Peter's right, we can't leave her like that can we, not really.

*The clock strikes twelve and
EVERYONE jumps.*

FRANK Welcome to a new year everyone. Not the exact the start I had in mind for the year.

PETER Me either.

CHARLIE Georgia's right, let's clear the room. It's the only way.

GEORGIA *(Stopping everyone doing anything further)* Look the deal is this. We clear up the mess, put Miriam in the bedroom and then come back down and start again, but this time as us. No fighting, no tantrums and no storming off. Charlie lock the doors and shut the windows and put the keys on the table.

CHARLIE That's bad luck isn't it!

GEORGIA It will be for the killer. There are going to be two rules to this and we all have to agree to them. Firstly no lies at all, just like the game, whenever we are asked a question by someone we all tell the truth.

FRANK Sure, like the killer will just admit to being the killer.

GEORGIA All right, fair point. But we all have to tell the truth about everything else, including the killer, but no-one can ask the question 'are you the killer', not until we all think we know who it is. By then I hope it will be quite clear which of us did it and hopefully the killer will have the conscience to come forward.

GINNY And the other rule?

GEORGIA When we find out who the killer is, then he, or she, gives themselves up to the police.

ALL *(except OWEN)* Ok, or Yes, or Fine.

FRANK Owen you've got to join in, you've no choice.

OWEN Says who?

PETER Says me. Unless you want to own up right now and save us all the bother of this charade.

OWEN I'm not owning up to anything.

GEORGIA Right then, it's settled. Let's clear up this mess. Who wants to do the salad bowl...?

ALL LOOK AT GEORGIA THEN BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

The room has been tidied and MIRIAM's body is gone. The dinning room table is pushed back under the breakfast bar and the lounge has been moved more into centre stage. There are some glasses of water on the coffee table. Everyone, with the exception of PETER and GEORGIA are in the room. PETER is upstairs with MIRIAM and GEORGIA is in the Kitchen. The mood in the room is one of nervous tension.

GINNY I'm going to see if Georgia needs a hand. Frank can you check on Peter, he's been up there for nearly an hour

FRANK Do I have to?

GINNY Please Frank.

GINNY goes into the kitchen and FRANK goes upstairs.

CHARLIE *(looking at his water)* If she thinks a glass of water is going to get me through this then she's madder than she's acting. *(CHARLIE walks over to get a drink from the dinning room bar area)*

SARAH Look Charlie if this is going to really work then we've all got to keep our heads clear.

CHARLIE pours himself a large whisky

CHARLIE If you want me to have a clear head then it's best to give my body what's it's used to. *(taking a swig of the whisky)*

SARAH *(about to drink some)* It's only water.

CHARLIE Exactly, and how do I know it wasn't what killed Miriam.

SARAH *(looking at it suddenly and slowly putting it down)* I'll have what you've got.

CHARLIE *(pouring a whisky out for SARAH)* What's your Mum's take on this then?

SARAH She won't tell me, I think she's too upset to talk at the moment

CHARLIE Maybe I should ask her. (*Looking up*) Mrs Sarah's mum, tell us what the spirits say.

SARAH Don't be an idiot all your life Charlie.

CHARLIE Funny that's what your mum just said to me as well.

OWEN Cut it out you two.

CHARLIE I'm just trying to lighten the mood.

SARAH I'm not sure even you're capable of that tonight.

OWEN So what do you two think then? Who did it?

CHARLIE You?

OWEN Be serious for a second. Who do you think did it?

SARAH I don't know. I mean would any of us really have the nerve to kill someone?

CHARLIE Apparently one of us would.

SARAH Would you?

CHARLIE Well I can't answer that can I, it's against my fiancés 'murder mystery' rules.

OWEN So you really think we're gonna go through with this then, it's sick.

CHARLIE What else are we gonna do. We can't get hold of the police tonight can we, so why not.

OWEN (*incredulous, to SARAH*) And what about you!

SARAH Someone here killed my sister. I want to know who. Too right we're doing it. What are you scared of Owen, scared of being caught

OWEN I didn't kill anyone. I can't believe you're actually prepared to think of me like that, I thought we were friends.

SARAH I don't know who my friends are any more.

OWEN Quite Frankly I'm not going to be part of this sick game. You can count me out.

CHARLIE Too late mate, you're in, we all are.

OWEN Is this just a game to you two? Let's just get the police, or a Doctor or anyone.

SARAH How? You heard Charlie; this place is in the middle of no-where

OWEN No it's not. It's eight miles from the village, that's all; I can run it in an hour. This is stupid; I'm getting out of here.

OWEN goes for the keys on the table, but is pushed away by CHARLIE. He goes back to get them again so CHARLIE pushes him to the floor.

CHARLIE No you don't

CHARLIE grabs the keys himself and puts them in his trouser pocket. OWEN goes for them again and they struggle. FRANK enters the room just as CHARLIE pushes OWEN to the floor for a third time.

FRANK I can't leave you two alone for a minute can I. We really don't need another murder tonight if you don't mind.

CHARLIE He was trying to leave so I put the keys in my pocket

OWEN *(shouting at CHARLIE)* You can't keep me here, its, it's... false imprisonment.

CHARLIE So what! I'm almost up for murder, a bit of false imprisonment isn't gonna hurt me much is it.

OWEN *(starting to look dejected)* Look just let me out will you; I'm really not finding this funny Charlie.

PETER enters the room.

PETER *(sounding deadly serious)* Actually none of us are finding this particularly funny so why don't you just stop your bloody winging for a second.

OWEN Peter you can't be serious about this, your wife's been murdered for Christ sake, get the police, let them deal with it.

PETER You, me and everyone else are going to do just what we agreed. My wife is lying upstairs dead and until I find out exactly who killed her and why, no-one is leaving this house until then.

OWEN You're all bloody mad, the lot of you. I didn't kill anyone and I don't have to explain myself to any of you

OWEN heads to the door, but PETER grabs him and shoves him into a chair.

PETER Just shut up and sit down. I've got questions for everyone here, including you,

OWEN Me! I've done nothing wrong. I wish I'd never agreed to come tonight; I should've stayed back at home. *(To SARAH)* I told you I wanted to stay at home didn't I, but you wouldn't leave it would you.

SARAH Well maybe if you had then my sister would still be alive.

OWEN *(throwing his hands in the air in despair)* Whatever. Go on then Peter, ask me whatever you want, I really don't care anymore.

PETER OK then, let's start with your unique knowledge of my wife's drug problems.

OWEN stares at him in shock.

You didn't think I knew. She's my wife for gods' sake, of course I knew. If you think you're not my number one suspect at the moment then you're sadly mistaken

CHARLIE Round one and Peter lays the first punch.

FRANK Bring it on.

SARAH Drug problem!

GEORGIA and GINNY enter the room from the kitchen. GEORGIA has a tray of cups & milk and GINNY is carrying a coffee pot. They put them down on the coffee table and sit down.

GINNEY It looks like some of us do have some secrets to share after all.

GEORGIA Shall we get on with it then.

They ALL take their place around the coffee table, except OWEN who stays near the door on his chair.

CHARLIE *(shaking the keys)* Come on mate, no ones going anywhere. Let's get started.

OWEN, resigning to the inevitable, brings his chair over and sits down with the others.

GINNY Now what?

FRANK Like Georgia said we play the game. We all know the rules now and we already know each others characters already.

SARAH Do we?

FRANK I suggest we start by asking some very direct questions. Peter why don't you start. Personally I wouldn't mind hearing more about the drugs

SARAH Me too.

OWEN Oh great.

PETER Suits me. So Owen would you like to tell the group all about your little visits to see my wife when I'm at my book club.

CHARLIE I'd rather know why you go to a book club.

FRANK Shut up Charlie.

OWEN Not much to tell really. She had a little drug problem and I was helping her with it.

PETER Little! She was hooked on the stuff, couldn't get enough of it.

SARAH Since when?

PETER Since your mum died.

SARAH I didn't know.

PETER No one did. She even tried to hide it from me, but I knew, there are always signs.

CHARLIE Cup of tea my darling or join me for some coke.

PETER *(Clearly annoyed with CHARLIE)* This is serious, drugs kill.

SARAH So do friends!

GEORGIA Stick to the rules Peter. If you have another question then ask it, if you don't then move on to someone else

PETER I've got a question, I've got plenty of questions. How were you helping her, why were you helping her and...

OWEN What is this, pick on Owen night. I'll answer your questions but give me a chance.

PETER A chance! You didn't give Miriam a chance.

OWEN Well that's where you're so wrong, I was giving her more than one chance, I was the one giving her a chance to get her life back. *(getting up and pacing)* I'm a scientist aren't I; I solve problems, find solutions, it's what we scientists do. After her adopted mum died she fell into some kind of depression. It wasn't that she loved her so much; it seemed to be the opposite actually. She seemed to resent the life she didn't get, rather than the one she had been given

SARAH Ungrateful cow, my Mum gave her everything.

OWEN Except the truth.

SARAH What do you mean by that.

OWEN She recently found out that her birth parents had only just died, but your mum told her that they had been dead since she was a baby. She couldn't handle it. She felt betrayed by you and your mum. She couldn't believe that her real mum had been alive all that time and that you and your mum had kept it a secret. She lost the plot completely, she couldn't sleep, her work was suffering, and she started to hate everyone and everything. She ended up taking sleeping pills, anti depressants and god knows what else. After a while none of it worked much, so she went onto the harder stuff.

PETER Why did she come to you, why didn't she speak to me?

OWEN *(pouring himself some coffee)* Because she never spoke 'to' you, she only ever spoke 'at' you. You're weak Peter, weak and pathetic. She needed someone unrelated to her, someone who wouldn't judge her.

PETER You!

OWEN Yes me. Why not, I'm a good listener.

SARAH Where did she get the drugs? I wouldn't know where to start looking.

OWEN If I recall correctly she got her drugs from Charlie.

CHARLIE Crap.

OWEN Come on Charlie, don't act so innocently, we all know you do drugs.

FRANK He only smokes weed, socially, who doesn't.

OWEN I don't and neither does he. Charlie plays with the big boys now don't you.

CHARLIE Alright so I take a bit of coke now and again, so what.

OWEN From what Miriam told me it's more again and again.

FRANK Miriam! How come she knew about this and I didn't

PETER *(back to OWEN)* All this is fascinating, but that doesn't explain why you always waited until I was out of the house before going coming over.

OWEN She didn't want you to know how bad it was getting. There wasn't anything she could do to come off them and she considered it a real weakness, and you know how she hated weakness. So she came to me to help her find a cure for the addiction. It was right up my street, similar to the work I was doing for the government on allergy testing, but so much more meaty. I used to test the drugs she had and then test her blood before and after she took them. I'd check her temperature, blood pressure, look at the cell development, I did unbelievable numbers of tests. I was actually getting somewhere. *(Getting excited)* Can you imagine the possibilities? A cure for drug addiction, I'd solve half the worlds problems in one go. I'd be up for a Nobel Prize.

CHARLIE And have half the worlds gangsters gunning for you...

OWEN Yeh, well I thought of that, but this is science, you can't put yourself first with things like this. I mean I was actually getting close to solving the whole 'addiction problem' when I started to notice that each time I took a step forward she somehow found a new drug that moved me back again. I couldn't understand why it wouldn't just break through. My formulas were unique, but the drugs she kept bringing back were different each time. It was as if her suppliers knew what I was doing and kept counteracting it. I asked her for all my old notes, but she said she couldn't find them, I mean when did she lose things, she was the tidiest person I'd ever met in my life

FRANK Why did she have the notes? Surely you would have kept them, or at least copies of them.

OWEN I couldn't. That was part of the deal. She insisted that she kept everything and if she found out I had kept copies she'd stop the visits; I couldn't have that, it was too important to me. Then she goes and tells' me she's lost them.

PETER So you decided she'd actually given the notes to the drug dealers.

OWEN What else could I think.

SARAH So you killed her,

OWEN No I didn't kill her. The stupid woman. I was giving her back her life, and at the same time offering a cure to millions of people. And what did she do, sold me out to her dealers for free drugs.

PETER Why didn't you just stop seeing her then, why didn't you find someone else to work on?

OWEN I couldn't could I. She told me what she was doing just the other evening when I called her.

PETER So you threatened to kill her.

OWEN What would you have done! She told me that if I didn't help her keep getting the free drugs then she would give my name and address to her dealers. If she had done that they would have killed me.

PETER So her death was a nice surprise to you then wasn't it. As it now stands you can carry on with your work, and the bad guys won't know who you are. That's a pretty good motive for murder.

OWEN Maybe it is, but wouldn't I have murdered Charlie as well then. The contacts are his and for all I know Miriam had told him everything and he could have gone and done the same thing to me.

CHARLIE She didn't tell me anything.

OWEN Then what were you blackmailing her about then?

CHARLIE shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

FRANK Now it's getting interesting, drugs and blackmail, do tell...

PETER I haven't finished questioning him yet!

FRANK You have for the moment. I've got a question. I want to know more about the blackmail. Go on Owen, the floors all yours

OWEN Well Charlie, am I wrong then? Weren't you blackmailing her?

CHARLIE Blackmail's a strong word; let's just say I was 'encouraging her'.

PETER To do what?

CHARLIE Nothing much really, I was just, well I was...

GEORGIA Cut the crap lover boy. You've got money problems and drug problems, and she worked at a bank and also had a drug problem. It doesn't take a genius to put it together

FRANK Money problems! He's the inheritance kid; everyone's always leaving him money.

GEORGIA Yes well they shouldn't, he only blows it, or should I say snorts it

FRANK You bloody idiot. When are you going to grow up?

CHARLIE Growing up is for the grown ups.

FRANK Well we've certainly all grown up tonight haven't we. I think it's about time you started telling us the truth mate.

CHARLIE *(losing his cool now. He gets up and pours himself a large whisky from the bar)* Alright fine then, let's get the confessional open. I never needed to work did I?

CHARLIE (*cont*) I always had loads of money in the bank invested in stocks and shares and mummy and daddy were one day going to leave the family estate to me as well, so why work. I always had enough income to do nothing, so I did nothing. How was I meant to know that the price of drugs was going to exceed the interest I was getting and at the same time my bloody shares kept going down and down? I always thought the banks shares was a good way of funding my little bit of fun. I didn't know the thieving bastards kept giving me less each year and then they didn't even tell me when I started to use my own capital, I mean how irresponsible is that!

GEORGIA (*shaking her head at his naivety*) Unbelievable!

CHARLIE Anyway I started to spend more than I had coming in and ended up having to mortgage my family's estate.

FRANK How could you do that? It's your parents house not yours

CHARLIE I don't know, Miriam sorted out the mortgage for me, no problem. She even waived the fees', on condition of course that I gave her a little something to help her sleep at night. You think I've got a drug problem, you should've seen her go. (*To PETER and then sitting back down in his chair*) That was some appetite your wife had. Anyway I was getting deeper and deeper into debt so I went to her for some more money. She was alright at first, I mean I gave her some stuff and she arranged another loan. But after a while she needed more and more stuff, but I couldn't get that much for myself, let alone the amount she wanted. So in the end I gave her my contacts and told her to do it herself.

FRANK So why the blackmail?

CHARLIE I was in a corner wasn't I. I needed some more money to pay the dealers and I couldn't pay the loans on the house. It was my parent's home, it's been in the family for about two hundred years and the bloody bitch was going to repose it, no way! So I told her that I wanted the house back, oh and some spending money as well. Not a lot, just a little each month. (*getting up and going to get another drink*).

PETER Or you would do what?

CHARLIE Tell the bank everything. She'd lent me money on my parent's house without them knowing, which isn't exactly legal is it, and she had a major drug habit. I don't think the listening bank would have been overjoyed to listen to that do you.

FRANK Let me guess, she said no to your little request and so you killed her. Not that smart, you still owe the bank the money you half wit.

CHARLIE I didn't kill her, although I must admit I thought about it. And actually I don't owe the bank the money any more. She had to destroy the papers herself; it was the only way she could think of to stop me blackmailing her, she had to delete the mortgages from the banks computers to protect herself. So the house is in the clear.

FRANK So you got what you wanted then?

CHARLIE Almost. She kept hard copies of all the papers and was threatening to show my parents. You know what they're like, all goody goody, old school types. They would have disowned me on the spot and I would have lost everything, again. (*Looking pleased with himself*) As it stands now it seems her dying has saved me a lot of money and a lot of problems.

FRANK Nice motive for murder.

CHARLIE (*sitting back down with his drink*) Yeh well, I didn't do it, although I should have.

GEORGIA So that gives us two motives and no admissions. Anyone else got any little secrets to share with us

FRANK I have.

GEORGIA You've got a secret you're willing to share without being pushed into it; how intriguing.

GINNY Don't say anything Frank, they'll just twist your words.

GEORGIA *(turning aggressively to GINNY)* We'll come to you in a minute so keep your mouth shut and let him speak

GINNY *(getting up to lunge at her, but being held back by FRANK)* How dare you...

FRANK Leave it Ginny.

GEORGIA Be smart for once Ginny or you might just put yourself in the hotspot

GINNY settles back down, but give GEORGIA a dirty look.

GEORGIA Go on Frank, tell us your little secret.

FRANK Not so much a secret, rather a little confession.

CHARLIE Bloody hell man, don't tell me you did it!

FRANK Not a confession to murder you idiot, just a confession to wanting to. But only if the grieving husband agrees to join in now?

OWEN Don't tell me that my accuser has some skeletons hiding away

FRANK Not for much longer. Shall I tell them Peter or do you want to?

PETER I think I need a drink.

CHARLIE Excellent idea. Whisky anyone?

PETER I'll get my own.

FRANK Me too.

GEORGIA We're all a little paranoid aren't we? I'll get them, you lot carry on, it's getting late and we've still got a killer to find.

GINNY I'll get my own.

GEORGIA Whatever!

GEORGIA gets drinks for everyone, GINNY gets her own and they carry on meanwhile.

FRANK You all know that my publishing business was ticking along fine, nothing fancy, but making a living nevertheless. Then I landed this big Council contract to print their daily newspaper. It was a great turning point for me; I'd have killed for a contract like that. Excuse the pun. Anyway I needed a bigger place and some new printing equipment...

CHARLIE Step in the lady banker.

GINNY It seems she's been called worse than that tonight.

A nervous laugh from some of them except PETER.

FRANK Anyway, so in she stepped. I needed a mortgage on a commercial plot I found and also some money for the equipment. I didn't have enough collateral on my house for the bank so she said that she would go in as partners with me and we'd buy it together. The bank would secure my share on my house and off we jolly well go. So we brought it, built a small workshop and ordered the equipment. I was ready to rock and roll. Then out of the blue the council withdrew the contract. I couldn't believe it, after everything I'd gone and done. I was about to lose the lot, even my house.

CHARLIE Peter, don't you work for the council?

PETER *(quietly)* Yes.

SARAH Peter you didn't!

PETER *(getting up and walking to the front of the stage away from Frank)* She was driving me mad. Nagging and nagging. Telling me it wouldn't matter, Frank would get another contract anyway, it's only one job. On and on, she was like a bloody woodpecker pecking at my head. I didn't know she owned the property with Frank or that he would lose everything over one contract, I didn't, really

GINNY You bastard.

PETER I'm sorry, I really am.

GINNY *(walking back to her chair)* Sorry! Oh that's fine then. I want to ask a question now. *(Looking at GEORGIA).*

GEORGIA Sure, let's liven up a quiet night.

GINNY I want to ask Peter how he can take everything away from the one person he truly loves. How did you sleep at night?

PETER *(turning back to face them)* I didn't sleep at night, that's the point.

CHARLIE I'd kinda like to go back to that love thing.

FRANK I don't think I want to!

PETER Alright so I love him. Where's the crime in that!

FRANK Oh great!
(Together)

CHARLIE Great!

SARAH Did Miriam know you were in love with Frank?

PETER She knew all along. I only married her to hide it. She never wanted a real marriage anyway, it suited us both. Then all of a sudden out of the blue she went and threatened to tell him and spoil everything if I didn't do what she said. I didn't want to break up our friendship. I knew Frank loved Ginny and not me, but I couldn't bear not being around him. So I had a choice, either I did as she asked or risk the chance of losing him.

PETER (*cont*) At least this way I could be there to console him, it was better than losing him.

FRANK (*sarcastically*) I am touched.

CHARLIE Ooooooh...

FRANK Not literally you perv.

GINNY So you thought bankrupting him was the best option.

PETER I didn't know it would be that bad, really.

FRANK Yeh but you knew Miriam had told me that she was going to repossess the land from me didn't you.

PETER Well I...

FRANK But I bet you didn't know she'd planned it from the start though did you!

PETER Well I...

FRANK And I don't suppose you knew that she had just got planning permission to build a block of flats on the plot once I was gone did you.

PETER Well I...

FRANK (*dawning on him*) Shit, of course you knew. It was the council who gave her the permission to build the flats in the first place, the council you work for, the same council who took away my fucking contract!

PETER (*breaking down and falling into his chair*) She made me do it, don't you understand. She wouldn't stop, always putting me down, always pushing me, I hated her so much, I wished she was...

SARAH Dead! Well she is now isn't she?

PETER holds his head in his hand and starts to cry.

CHARLIE Two more motives now then. Frank was about to lose everything because of her and Peter was about to lose the love of his life. Looks like it might not be me after all then doesn't it? I think that calls for a celebration drink

CHARLIE gets up and gets himself another drink.

SARAH I'm tired, I can't take all this in. First it's Owen, then Charlie, now it's Frank and Peter. I need to take a break.

GINNY Me too.

GEORGIA *(looking at her watch)* It's three thirty already, times moving on too quickly. I really think we ought to keep going.

CHARLIE *(still standing by the bar)* Definitely, this is getting juicy now. I want to ask a question, I haven't asked anything yet.

GEORGIA Go on then.

CHARLIE What now?

GEORGIA Of course.

CHARLIE Well I haven't thought of one yet.

GEORGIA *(shaking her head)* Unbelievable.

SARAH Why not asks Ginny if she knew about Frank and Miriam. She seemed to know about Frank & Peter didn't she.

CHARLIE Excellent idea. *(In a question time mode)* A question from the audience I think, yes you young lady, no not you, you, the one at the back with the gorgeous blouse, yes you *(points to GINNY)* Tell us what you knew about Frank and Miriam.

GINNY Grow up Charlie.

GEORGIA He asked you a question, you know the rules, honest answers only please!

GINNY Why don't you just shut up.

GEORGIA He asked you a question, so answer it!

GINNY Alright I knew Peter loved Frank, but that's all. You'd have to be blind to miss that one. But I didn't know anything else at all. I promise, I didn't.

CHARLIE Oh, all right then. Anyone else got a question.

SARAH Do me a favour. She a professional actress, you're not buying that crap are you. She had as much to lose as Frank did. If he lost his business then he'd also lose his house, so she'd lose everything as well.

CHARLIE Good point. Another question to the girl at the back, the actressy type. Honest answers only if you please. Did you know about Miriam trying to bankrupt Frank and steal his new property for her own use? Is that specific enough?

GINNY Alright, I knew, of course I knew, I'm not an idiot.

SARAH Now we're getting somewhere.

GEORGIA *(getting angry)* We all agreed to the rules; no lies, so what the bloody hell was that!

GINNY Oh get over it.

GEORGIA *(standing up)* I'll get over nothing. Either we do this properly or we call it off.

PETER We all agreed Ginny, even you.

CHARLIE Even I did! *(sitting back down with his drink)*

GINNY Alright alright, calm down. I'll tell you the truth; it's about time you all knew what an idiot my husband is. *(getting up to get herself a drink from the bar, walking past Frank and hitting him across the head)*

FRANK That's charming!

GINNY (to FRANK) I really couldn't believe you were going to put all your eggs in one basket, who the hell does that! I mean to chance everything we had on one contract, especially a council contract...

FRANK (getting up and going over to her) What are you talking about, you agreed with me all along, I discussed it with you before I signed the contract.

GINNY No you didn't.

FRANK Yes I did, I remember the conversation. It was that Saturday night before I first put in my bid for the contract. We went to that new Italian Restua... (Goes quiet)

GINNY At last he realises, about time. I was working in London that night. That Saturday night was the opening night of my play.

FRANK Oh yes, it must have been another time.

GINNY (walking back to her chair leaving Frank by the bar) That was the time alright. Only it wasn't me you were telling, it was your bimbo secretary.

CHARLIE (laughing) Excellent.
(Together)

PETER (Mortified) You cheated.

FRANK I...

GINNY Don't even go there. I knew all along, I just couldn't be bothered anymore with your lies to do anything about it. I mean she wasn't the first was she.

FRANK (Getting angry) Well what did you expect? We hadn't had sex for nearly a year. Every time I went near you, you were tired from work, or it's too late or whatever. Anyway don't tell me you weren't doing it with your leading man all along, why else were you avoiding me.

GINNY Actually I wasn't doing anything with my leading man apart from acting, it's what I do.

GEORGIA Well this is all fascinating news, but what the hells it got to do with Miriam?

SARAH I can answer that quite easily. If Frank loses it all then so does Ginny. She was just getting herself established in London and if he lost it all she'd have to come back home and get a proper job, maybe even back at that café.

GINNY Alright I'll admit I worked out what Miriam was doing. And you're right, it pissed me off. Why wouldn't I want Frank's business to work, it was my money too. But the fact is that he was having affairs all over the place.

FRANK That's rubbish, it was only one.

GINNY Oh that's fine then isn't it.

FRANK I didn't mean it like that.

GINNY Whilst I might have fallen out of love with him, it still meant I would lose out on the money, so sure I wanted her gone.

FRANK You don't love me anymore?

GINNY No.

SARAH So you had a motive for killing her then as well.

GINNY Not really a good one though. My solicitor was already planning the divorce and I was entitled to half the building anyway. So even if Miriam had foreclosed she would still have had to face me and my solicitor first.

FRANK Divorce!

GINNY Yes, divorce.

CHARLIE Free's him up for you, Peter.

FRANK
PETER
(together) Shut up Charlie.
GINNY
GEORGIA

CHARLIE Just saying...

FRANK (going back to his chair) Are you really going to divorce me?

GINNY I'm sorry you heard it like this, but it's not working is it. Look, we've got the property now haven't we and it's worth a fortune with that planning permission. (looking at PETER) Assuming Peter doesn't get the planning permission removed that is.

PETER Of course I won't, it's all yours now.

GINNY Let's sell it, split the money and go our own way. With that and the house we'll get over half a million each. Let's just start again, me in London and you with your bimbo.

FRANK You with your leading man.

GINNY Believe what you want, but he's really not my type.

FRANK You really don't love me anymore?

GINNY Let's just end it without the usual fights and screams that most people have.

FRANK I guess, but... Ok, maybe you're right.

SARAH I want to accuse someone. What's the rule on that?

GEORGIA Bit soon for that isn't it?

SARAH Come of it, it's obvious. It was Frank and Ginny. They were in it together. You heard it yourself, they both have their own agendas and now they've got the money to do exactly what they want.

FRANK You think I want this? I was happily married a minute ago, now I'm about to get a divorce.

GINNY Spare me!

SARAH Well it all sounds very convenient to me.

CHARLIE Sounds promising to me as well.

FRANK Oh thanks a lot mate; I thought you were meant to be my best friend.

CHARLIE Only moving the blame away from me. All's fair in love and murder!

SARAH So, did you do it?

FRANK
(*Together*) No!

GINNY

SARAH I don't believe you.

FRANK (*raising his voice*) Then ask your mum!

GINNY Look, I admit that without Miriam around it means I can afford to leave him, I'll gladly admit that. But I'm not going to kill a friend just to get some money am I.

SARAH A lot of money.

GINNY Alright a lot of money, but still I wouldn't.

SARAH Nice acting.

FRANK What about you then Sarah. Very cock sure of yourself now the fingers pointed at us aren't you. But you weren't exactly flavour of the month at Peter & Miriam's from what I hear.

SARAH We were sisters, of course we fell out, all sisters do.

PETER Not like that they don't.

GEORGIA Time for another question I think. Peter, you're in the hot seat again, ask away.

PETER Fine by me. You knew for years that your mum had lied to Miriam. Yet you kept it to yourself, why?

SARAH Mum made me promise to keep quiet; I couldn't go back on that.

PETER But you did though didn't you.

SARAH (*unconvincingly*) No.

GINNY God you're no actress that was crap.

SARAH gives GINNY a chilling look.

SARAH Well she had it coming didn't she. Mum took her in and gave her everything - a family, a home, money, everything she needed. She was a baby when mum fostered her, then my dad died a year later and despite struggling to deal with that and bring me up, she still kept Miriam and eventually even adopted her. But all Miriam ever cared about was who her real parents were and why they left her - me, me, me. Well it wasn't fair, Mum was my best friend and that bitch killed her

PETER Killed her, have you gone mad!

GEORGIA Now we're getting somewhere.

SARAH (*To PETER*) You never knew what she was capable of. You were just a scared prick, scared of your own shadow, you never knew her, not really knew her. I did, I grew up with her. She was manipulative, spiteful and scheming. She always used the 'poor adopted me' line to make mum love her more than she loved me.

GINNY Tell us about her real parents then.

SARAH Mum had a friend who worked for social services. She used to visit parents who were in trouble with the law and who were about to have a baby or had just had one. I was only one or two when she met Miriam's parents. Her dad was a really nasty bit of work, in an out of prison for Theft, GBH, and all that sort of thing. Anyway soon after she got pregnant, Miriam's mum took an overdose of pills trying to kill herself..

SARAH (*cont*) Her Dad ended up in prison and Miriam's mum ended up in hospital. Anyway Miriam was born soon after and was put into care. My mum's friend was still in charge of the case and suggested to my Mum & Dad that they should foster her. So they did.

GEORGIA What happened to her Dad, is he still in prison?

SARAH No, he died almost as soon as he got out.

PETER How

SARAH Apparently when he got out of prison he ended up working for some really 'bad' people. He was found a few months later at the bottom of some lake with a few holes in his head.

PETER Blimey.

SARAH Anyway Miriam's mum lost the plot after that and overdosed again. She never really got any better and ended up suggesting that my mum and Dad adopt Miriam. So that was that, they adopted her and Miriam's mum stayed away until about a year ago. Then all of a sudden nearly thirty years later she contacted mum out of the blue, she wanted to meet Miriam, but my mum wouldn't let her.

GEORGIA Why?

SARAH She didn't want Miriam having to deal with it, she knew she wouldn't take it well, that she'd end up blaming mum for keeping it all secret, so it was best left hidden away.

PETER Why did you tell her then?

SARAH She wouldn't stop going on about how mum loved her more than she loved me. On and on, mum and me this, mum and me that. Well it wasn't true, mum loved me more than her and she knew it. I was her real daughter, not some drugged up bimbo's daughter like Miriam.

SARAH (cont) So one night when she was at my house bragging again about how mum was going to leave the house to her and how she was going to move in with her and Peter, how she always thought of her as her real daughter and not me - I just lost it.

GEORGIA What did you do?

SARAH I told her the truth, all of it. Including the fact that her mum only died a couple of days before.

PETER *(getting up and going over to face Sarah)* My God. You bitch; you knew what that would do to her.

SARAH *(standing up to face him back)* So, she deserved it.

PETER You bitch.

SARAH Listen to yourself, you hated her as much as I did. *(Peter goes back to his chair, head down)*

GEORGIA When did you find out about her real mum.

SARAH *(sitting back down)* I always knew. Mum told me when we were kids.

PETER And you told her that as well?

SARAH Sure. You should have seen her face, it was great. I took the wind right out of her sails.

PETER I can't believe you did that. I always knew you were jealous of her, but to do that.

SARAH *(angry)* Jealous, I was never jealous of her. She could never get between mum and me, never.

GEORGIA What did she do after that?

SARAH Well the story goes that she went home to confront mum and found her lying at the bottom of the stairs, apparently an innocent fall. What crap. She pushed her.

PETER You had no proof of that.

SARAH I had proof enough. I knew what she was like, what she was capable of. She pushed her and watched her die.

CHARLIE It sounds to me like you might as well have pushed her yourself.

SARAH (*Turning on CHARLIE*) You know nothing about it.

OWEN So that's why you can't let go of your mum then, why you pretend to talk to her. You blame yourself.

SARAH I do talk to her! The only one to blame is Miriam; I hated her for taking mum away from me.

GEORGIA Enough to kill her?

SARAH Yes.

FRANK Another one bites the dust! Sounds like we all have motives then.

GINNY Not quite.

FRANK What do you mean?

GINNY Our hostess, the organiser of this little game. Seems to me that she's been leading us all to confess why we might have killed Miriam, but she's been a little too quiet about her own feelings.

CHARLIE (*turning to GEORGIA*) She's right my little peach. You have been playing us all quite nicely haven't you.

GEORGIA (*getting up and putting the cups etc on the tray and heading for the kitchen*) So ask me a question then and I will tell no lies. But you'd better be quick it's nearly morning and time for the police to be found.

CHARLIE Actually I would like to ask you something.

GEORGIA Sure, why not.

CHARLIE Are you with me for my money?

GEORGIA *(stoppng and turning around to face him)* What's that got to do with the murder?

CHARLIE Nothing. I just thought that as we're telling home truths anyway that it would be good to know. So are you then, is it the money?

GEORGIA *(putting the tray down on the dinning room table)* What money! You've been skint for the last couple of years, I've been keeping you!

CHARLIE *(swinging his chair round to face her)* Only because of the mortgage and stuff, but I always had more family money coming. This place, the family estate, the shares; all that.

GEORGIA I've got my own money, I don't need yours and you know that.

GINNY Black widow money!

GEORGIA Ooh spiteful.

GINNY Well it is.

GEORGIA My husbands died of natural causes. *(going to get a drink from the bar)*

GINNY Maybe, maybe not. Never any proof as far as I can remember.

CHARLIE *(Half jokingly, half serious)* So was I in line to be the next one sacrificed to the black widow.

GEORGIA *(getting emotional now)* I loved them both, they were both twice the man you are. Neil died of a heart attack and Spencer was killed in a car accident. I had nothing to do with them.

CHARLIE Losing one husband then marrying again and losing another within a year, bit of a coincidence wouldn't you say?

GEORGIA How? That's the worst bloody excuse for a coincidence I've ever heard. It's not a crime to fall in love twice you know.

CHARLIE Only twice? Well thanks a lot

GEORGIA Alright, nearly three times.

CHARLIE Nearly, great.

GEORGIA Well you wanted an honest answer didn't you.

GINNY You did alright out of their deaths though didn't you. And you started seeing Charlie, what was it, three months later.

GEORGIA The money meant nothing to me compared to losing the two men I loved.

GINNY *(almost laughing)* Sure it didn't.

GEORGIA *(walking over to GINNY)* How long have we known each other, what is it 20 years. And that's what you really think of me, you fucking bitch.

GEORGIA throws her drink over Ginny and then turns to walk away. GINNY gets up and lunges at GEORGIA and a fight breaks out. Frank and PETER jump up and pull them apart.

FRANK Easy girls, settle down. We've all had shocks tonight, not just you.

GEORGIA *(to GINNY, with venom)* I hate you.

GINNY So deal with it. I never bought that sad widow crap anyway.

GEORGIA I really don't know you at all.

GINNY Touché.

CHARLIE Lets get back to the questions shall we.

Everyone sits back down.

CHARLIE So we now know you don't love me and you still say you don't want my money, I'm not buying that. Why are you with me then?

PETER What the hells this got to do with Miriam's murder!

CHARLIE Keep your hair on, it's my turn now. Go on, why are you with me then.

GEORGIA We had fun, lots of fun. I thought maybe we would fall in love.

CHARLIE I did.

GEORGIA Bollocks.

CHARLIE Alright, fair enough. But come on admit it, the money was tempting wasn't it. You had a fair bit from the life assurances and houses you got from the dead blokes, but not enough for the life you wanted.

GEORGIA OK, the money helped. But what's that got to do with anything, who wouldn't like it?

CHARLIE It's more than that though isn't it? I've never met anyone so driven about money than you. It's everything you've ever wanted. Even at school you were the spoilt rich kid.

GEORGIA I never had any money at school, my parents weren't rich like yours.

GINNY That was the problem though wasn't it. You had nothing and hated everyone because of it. You were always jealous of everything I had. That's why you're with Charlie now, it's because I was married to him first. You had to have him because I had had him and you couldn't stand anyone but you ending up getting the family fortune. Then Miriam almost takes it all away, I wish she'd succeeded.

GEORGIA Well she didn't.

CHARLIE You had a right attitude on you at school; it's never really gone has it.

GEORGIA So why are you with me now then.

CHARLIE Look in the mirror darling.

GEORGIA Sex! You're easily pleased.

CHARLIE (*Smiling*) Yep.

FRANK So let's get this straight then. You knew about Charlie and Miriam's drugs and all the blackmail?

GEORGIA Of course I did. I might not have loved him, yet, but I had plans. But without the inheritance I'd end up supporting him instead of the other way around. The stupid cow was ruining it all. It was bad enough she was ripping off you and Ginny, but to try to take us on as well, unbelievable cheek. But I didn't kill her. It wasn't me.

GINNY Well I think you did, you've already killed two husbands, why not someone's wife.

GEORGIA *(getting up and lunging for her again)* I'll bloody kill you.

CHARLIE gets up and stops her.

CHARLIE Leave it out you two.

CHARLIE and GEORGIA now stand and face each other.

CHARLIE *(To GEORGIA)* so where does that leave us then.

GEORGIA Us as in you and me, or us as in all of us here and her upstairs.

CHARLIE Both I guess.

GEORGIA Well lover boy there isn't any you and me now is there.

CHARLIE *(angry at her)* Fine, then I guess you can move out tonight can't you.

GEORGIA Think again lover boy. I've put up with your crap for far too long and let's not forget who's been paying all the bills recently. Maybe I should pay a little visit to mummy and daddy and tell them about the mortgages and the drugs. I wonder what they would say to that. I wonder what that's worth to you?

CHARLIE That's blackmail!

GEORGIA Well as you said earlier to OWEN, so what! I'm almost up for murder, a little bit of blackmail isn't gonna hurt me much is it.

CHARLIE Damb you!(*thinking for a moment then going to the bar again*) Alright you can have 'this' place then, but that's it, nothing else. You don't get the family estate, or the shares or anything else, just this place, that's all.

GEORGIA looks around the room, thinking about it for a few seconds.

CHARLIE Well! What do you say?

GEORGIA Fine, that'll do. (*taking her engagement ring off and putting it in his hand.*)

CHARLIE But you'd better keep your big mouth shut, or.
. . .

GEORGIA Or what, you'll kill me?

CHARLIE Well maybe I will. Maybe I'm capable of it after all.

CHARLIE walks back to his chair with his drink.

GINNY So she ends up with this place, come of it Charlie you can't do that.

CHARLIE It's got nothing to do with you so keep out of it.

GEORGIA (*going back to her chair*) You heard him, keep out of it.

FRANK So now what. Do we take a vote on who we think the killer is?

EVERYONE starts looking at each other, not knowing what to say or do.

FRANK It seems like no-ones actually sure who did it. We all had reason to kill her and let's be honest with each other, we all win don't we?

PETER How do you figure that out!

FRANK Come on Peter, you hated her as much as the rest of us. Now you can come out and start being yourself at last.

PETER looks at him lovingly.

FRANK You can forget that!

CHARLIE So what are you suggesting?

FRANK I'm not suggesting anything, I'm just saying; anyone of us could have done it.

GEORGIA But only one of us did

GINNY *(to GEORGIA)* How true.

GEORGIA gives her a look back.

CHARLIE I don't think Georgia did it anymore than I think you did it, but as she said, one of us did.

OWEN So do I go get the police then and let them work it out?

SARAH And tell them my sisters been murdered and that we all could have done it?

OWEN I'd be ruined. My career would be over there and then.

FRANK You'd be in prison there and then!

OWEN We all would.

CHARLIE Any suggestions then?

ALL think for a minute, looking at each other for clues. It seems that no-one want to make the first move. Eventually FRANK steps forward.

FRANK *(walking around behind the sofa)* Look, here we are in the middle of France. No-one knows us here do they. It's New Years day and everyone's either indoors suffering from a hangover or dragging each other around the streets trying to get home. Who would notice us helping a drunken friend down the road?

GINNY Are you suggesting what I think you are?

FRANK All I'm saying is that no one is going to own up to this are they, and with Miriam dead anyway what's the point of calling the police and going over it all again.

GEORGIA Sounds like a convenient get out for the murderer.

FRANK *(going back to his chair)* Fine, alright then. Let's get the police, I didn't kill her anyway, bring it on.

CHARLIE Just calm down everyone. He's right, think about it. The police could end up pinning this on any or all of us, so we're all up to our necks in it anyhow. Frank's right, let's make it look like she topped herself or something like that.

SARAH How do we do it then?

FRANK Lets just pretend her and Peter had a bust up and off she went. I don't know, maybe she topped herself or had an accident...

CHARLIE Ate a bag of nuts!

FRANK Absolutely. It's up to you Peter, she was your wife?

PETER I guess so. I mean it can't help her now if the police lock us away can it.

SARAH I'm for it.

FRANK Girls?

GINNY Sure

GEORGIA says nothing.

FRANK Georgia, in or out

GEORGIA In. But I want to have nothing to do with her after this. *(pointing to GINNY.)*

GINNY You won't have. I personally never want to see any of you again after today.

FRANK *(getting up again)* Then it's settled then. Sarah, you come along with Charlie and me, it'll look more like two couples out for the night if anyone sees us.

CHARLIE *(getting up)* We'll find some river or some wood somewhere and dump the body. Then we'll come back, pack and go home. Once we're home for a couple of days Peter can phone the police to say that he hasn't seen Miriam for a couple of days. Something about an argument on New Years Eve, about him being gay and coming out and she ran off. We all then went home New Years day and thought she would turn up later. We can work out the details later and get our stories straight. What do you all think?

PETER As long as you all back me up. I'm crap at lying.

GEORGIA You could get Ginny to teach you.

SARAH Then what, is that it, we all walk away?

GINNY Well I'm getting divorced and want half of what's mine.

FRANK Me too.

CHARLIE Well I'm getting unengaged and losing a holiday home.

GEORGIA Sounds good to me.

PETER Looks like I'm the merry widow.

GINNY Georgia will give you tips on that.

OWEN It's settled then. And Charlie, you better not mention my name to your dealers.

CHARLIE Actually mate I thought you might be able to help me clean up my act a bit, you know, like you were doing with Miriam?

FRANK It's settled then. Come on, let's get going. Sarah, you wait outside, me and Charlie'll bring the body down. Peter and Owen, get all our stuff together and meet us outside in about an hour, we'll come back with a taxi, somehow, and can get going. Ginny go around the house and make sure nothing looks out of place. Georgia...

GEORGIA I know, clean up the kitchen.

FRANK Right then let's get going...

BLACKOUT

LIGHTS FADE UP UNEXPECTEDLY - IT'S A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

The house is quiet after everyone has gone. GEORGIA is in the kitchen. She spends a few minutes tidying up the room. Then she goes to the fridge and takes out two champagne glasses and a bottle of champagne. She brings them into the dining room and puts them down on edge of the dinning table. We hear footsteps coming down the stairs behind her.

GINNY walks in the room. She walks over behind GEORGIA and puts her arms around her kneck. GEORGIA turns around slowly and they have a passionate kiss.

GINNY I really thought we were going to get caught.

GEORGIA That was a brilliant move suggesting we carry on with the game, inspirational.

GINNY It seemed the only way to get everyone to start fighting.

GEORGIA *(touching her face)* Well I think the slap you gave me convinced them!

GINNY *(touching her face)* I'm sorry but it had to look real didn't it!

GEORGIA It's alright, nothing matters now, not now we're together.

They walk to the front of the stage with their glasses of champagne.

GINNY Not just together. Together with plenty of money and no husbands in tow.

GEORGIA *(Looking around her)* And a lovely home in the sun.

GINNY Just how it was always meant to be.

GINNY hugs GEORGIA around the shoulders.

GEORGIA Took a few years longer than I thought it would
 though, a few more casualties along the way as
 well.

GINNY Yes, but worth it in the long run.

GEORGIA Of course it was.

*They face each other. GEORGIA raises
her glass.*

GEORGIA To you and me darling,

They clink glasses

GINNY I do love you.

GEORGIA Always have.

GINNY Always will.

They drink the champagne.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

THE END