

ROUND ONE - The murder is announced

Round instructions:

Before Round One begins, all the cast, except Robin (if you're using an extra to play the twin) and Joy should be circulating in character.

Astra should be flirting with Rex. Jack and Ali should be keeping their distance from each other, Ali more so than Jack. Jack and Rex (in between flirting with Astra) should both be chatting up attractive females.

Everyone apart from Ali should aim to get the talk drawn towards the police tape outside and the 'dead body' that's been found in the grounds. This should be done in a gossipy way, e.g. "Did you see the tape outside? Apparently they've found remains in the field. Human remains..."

If the guests meet in a separate room to the meal, then Ali Weals should call them through for dinner before the script begins.

ROUND ONE SCRIPT

MAKE SURE ALL THE GUESTS ARE SETTLED BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

JOY SHOULD RUN IN SCREAMING WITH BLOOD ON HER HANDS.

Ali: Joy! Whatever is it?

Joy: (POINTING SHAKILY) Out there... on the patio!

Jack: Where?

Joy: Just around the side. There's ... [SHE SUDDENLY NOTICES HER HANDS] oh my... [SHE FAINTS]

JACK KNEELS DOWN BESIDE HER.

Jack: She's out cold!

Rex: The woman's hysterical!

Astra: She's not. Well, not usually.

Rex: [SARCASTICALLY] Really?

Astra: I know you don't like her Rex but Joy's one of the calmest people I know. And she's a dog whisperer too, remember?

Rex: Dog whisperer?! Hardly!

Jack: Good grief! She's got blood all over her!

Ali: You don't think she's found Digger, do you?

Rex: Digger? Her shabby, runaway mutt?

Astra: He's not shabby! He's won all sorts of awards.

Jack: Would you two stop bickering for a moment and lend me a hand?

Astra: Yes, of course. [SHE BENDS OVER JOY] Joy? Joy?

Joy: Oooooh....

Astra: Everyone get back a bit, will you? You're crowding her.

[REX AND ALI STEP BACK BUT JACK DOESN'T]

Jack: Hardly. Joy my love. Are you OK?

JOY SITS UP WITH JACK'S ARMS AROUND HER.

Joy: Jack?

Jack: I'm here, Joy.

Rex: Oh... it makes you sick.

ASTRA THUMPS HIS ARM.

Astra: Stop it!

Rex: Ow!

Jack: Do you feel up to standing, my darling?

Joy: I... I... I think so.

JOY GETS UP. SHE SWAYS A BIT.

Joy: Ooooh. I... [SHE SEES HER HANDS AGAIN] Oh! Rex... I'm sorry... so sorry... [SHE SWOONS. JACK CATCHES HER AS SHE STARTS TO FALL]

Jack: Er... any chance of a hand?

Rex: What do you want me to do?

Jack: Find her a chair. She's clearly seen something terrible!

REX HEADS TOWARDS A CHAIR.

Joy: Oh Jack... I... I think I'm going to be sick...

JOY STAGGERS OUT. JACK GOES AFTER HER.

Ali: What did she mean, she's sorry?

Astra: I don't know. Rex?

Rex: Don't look at me! I haven't done anything!

Astra: Whatever it was, it was outside.

Ali: On the patio.

Astra: Do you think someone should...?

THEY BOTH LOOK AT REX

Rex: Don't look at me! I'm not going out there! It might be a...(IN A PANTOMIME SCARY VOICE) zombie Digger! (LAUGHS SCARILY)

Ali: You're not funny, Rex.

Rex: (GRUMBLING ACCEPTANCE) Oh... all right, although this is your hotel, Ali. I really think you should be the one to check.

REX GOES OUT. [DO A MEGA-QUICK CHANGE OUTSIDE THE DOOR TO BECOME ROBIN, READY FOR HIS ENTRANCE SHORTLY!]

Astra: Oh dear. Ali, I'm so sorry. This doesn't look like the most auspicious launch for your new function suite.

Ali: (RESIGNEDLY) Memorable though.

Astra: I suppose it is that. Have you heard any more from the police? Do they think the remains are.... you know?

Ali: Too early to say, they say. The archaeologist's think it's too modern for them though. So it could be...

Astra: [TAKES ALI'S ARM KINDLY] And you're... OK with all that?

Ali: No... but... there's some small part of me that'll be pleased to know for sure, you know? Especially after all this time.

Astra: Eight years... I don't think we'd even met when Dirk was... well... you know.

Ali: Hmmm.

ROBIN WALKS IN, BREATHLESS.

Robin: Astra! Sorry I'm late. Sorry I'm late, Ali. The traffic was a nightmare. [LOOKS AROUND] You weren't holding everything back for me, were you?

Astra: Did you... did you see anything on your way in?

Robin: No. Should I have?

Ali: Did you see Rex?

Robin: Rex?

Astra: He went outside.

Robin: Don't tell me he's smoking again! Father'll be furious! He paid that hypnotherapist nearly £600 to... [SEES THEM ALL LOOKING AT HIM ODDLY] What?

JACK WALKS IN.

Jack: I think someone had better call the police.

Astra: The police?

Jack: Joy says... Oh! Robin! Where did you come from?

Robin: Just arrived.

Jack: Did you see Rex?

Robin: Why does everyone keep asking me that?

Jack: I... er... I...

Astra: What is it? What did Joy find?

Ali: Come on Jack, spit it out!

Jack: Robin, er...just come with me a moment, will you?

Robin: Where?

Jack: Just outside is fine.

Robin: Outside?

Jack: Outside the room. I... (PULLS ROBIN TOWARDS HIM TO TALK TO HIM CONFIDENTIALLY) look, I've got something to tell you and I don't want to tell you in here, OK? Not in front of the whole village at any rate.

Robin: What is it?

Jack: Not in here. And I think we need to find Rex.

Robin: OK then. (TO THE LADIES) Er, we're just popping outside, ladies! Won't be a long, I'm sure!

JACK AND ROBIN LEAVE. [ROBIN NEEDS TO CHANGE BACK INTO REX WHILE HE'S OUTSIDE]

Astra: What on earth is going on?

Ali: I don't know but it doesn't sound good.

Astra: No. Do you think I should go and find Joy?

Ali: You know what she thinks of me. I'm probably not the best person to go and see how she is.

Astra: At least she came.

Ali: I really didn't think she would. Mind you, her and Jack...I think she just wanted to rub my nose in it.

Astra: I –

REX STAGGERS IN, COVERED IN BLOOD AND SOBBING. JACK IS JUST BEHIND HIM LOOKING GRIM.

Astra: Rex!

ASTRA RUSHES OVER.

Astra: Rex! What is it?

REX HUGS HER FIERCELY.

Rex: Oh Astra... Astra... it's... it's... horrible! I don't know what to do... I just don't know what to do...

Astra: What is it? Where's Robin?

Jack: Telephoning the police.

Astra: The police?

Rex: It's Dad, Astra... It's Dad!

Astra: Rusty? What's he done?

Jack: He's dead, Astra! Someone's murdered him!

Ali: (INCREDULOUSLY) Murdered him?

Jack: Yes!

Ali: Oh my! [SHE LOOKS AROUND HER] Oh... I... here. Let me take you somewhere a little more private.

ALI OPENS THE DOOR AND LEADS THE CAST OUT.

END OF ROUND ONE.

The guests should all now be served with their first course.

The cast should not re-enter the room until round two begins. All the cast should be served their starters outside the room.