

Bumped Off

SYNOPSIS

Author: John McDermott
Word Count: 8,051 words
Characters: 4 male characters; 4 female characters

Colonel Sir Rodney Gung-Ho, a retired army officer dedicated to huntin', shootin' and fishin' and his good lady wife, the inimitable Lady Phyllis Gung-Ho decide to invite some friends round to their country home. The Colonel, who is not fond of visitors at the best of times, faces the prospect with a stalwart acceptance born of years of years under his wife's cultured but insistent thumb. His one ally in this life is Stanley Binge, the family butler and his former batman from army days.

On the guest list we have an unlikely threesome: Winnie Miller, a very American friend of Lady Phyllis's, her daughter, the tearful and sincere Sadie Miller, and Sadie's fiancé, the untrustworthy and oily Oliver Smooche, local bookmaker and latter-day Lothario. Caroline Gung-Ho, daughter to the Colonel and Lady Gung-Ho, and her fiancé, the well-meaning but rather dim minister of the church, Reverend Claude Smithers, make up the cast list. Oliver proves to be everyone's favourite person to hate for a variety of reasons – Rodney, because he owes the wretch a good deal of money; Caroline and her mother, because Oliver threatens to reveal the truth of an old romance from university days; and Binge, because Smooche ill-treated his daughter a number of years ago.

Sadie and her mother, in their turn, discover that 'Our Ollie' is about to end his relationship with fiancée Sadie, so they too have their motive.

Perhaps the only character without a death wish for poor Oliver (aren't you beginning to feel sorry for him now?) is the ineffectual and ineffective Reverend Claude Smithers. Or is he? Make up your own minds.