

Murder at the Manor

SYNOPSIS

Author: Chris McDermott
Word Count: 8,122 words (estimated)
Characters: 3 male characters; 3 female characters

The play is set in 1995 in the grounds of a manor house in the south of England. Sir Marcus is a middle aged, conceited and bad-tempered aristocrat who is frustrated with himself and the rest of the world. His wife, the long-suffering Cynthia, spends a good deal of her time trying to pacify him. Unbeknownst to Marcus, she has sought, and continues to seek, solace in the arms of Nigel Hetherington-Smyth, Marcus' younger brother, a Conservative MP who shows as much respect for the North of England as does Marcus!

This is emphasised by the contempt Marcus shows for his butler, "The Hero from Heckmondwyke" who appears, at first, to be no more than a downtrodden lackey whose chief purpose in life is to avoid yet further humiliation by his master. But is Arnold really as simple and unassuming as he portrays himself?

Perhaps Briony Hetherington-Smyth could help us to answer that question. She is a bright young lady, studying English at Cambridge, who returns on the fateful weekend to attend her father's forty-fifth birthday party. But will she be inviting her boyfriend to the party? Not if her father has anything to do with it. Poor man, if only he knew that the daughter of whom he is so very proud isn't, in fact... But that would be telling the whole story.

Perhaps we should leave that to Caroline Shepherd, family friend, Chief Inspector and former mistress to Sir Marcus. Surely she would not have murdered her former lover. After all don't all good murder mysteries need a reliable detective to sort out the mess? Don't be too sure.