

Scene One - Read all about it!

Aladdin's bedroom

*Props : Basket of washing (pp) Bed with covers and pillow - centre stage..
Chair with Aladdin's tunic and hat. Large box - off stage right ready to be handed to Widow Twanky.*

(Aladdin in bed asleep centre stage.)

Lights: Full

Widow Twanky: *(Enters with basket of washing)*
Aladdin! Aladdin! Oy Lazy boy! Get up!

Aladdin: *(Yawning)* I'm getting up. *(Remains in bed)*

Widow Twanky: I've called you a thousand times and I'm sick of it.

Aladdin: All right! All right! *(Moves the cover back.)*

Widow Twanky: If you're not up by the count of 10, I'll throw a bowl of water over you. *(Starts counting 1..2..3.)*

Aladdin: *(Getting out of bed)* I had a late night.

Widow Twanky: You're always having a late night. Come on, I need a hand with all this washing. I've got another three baskets in the kitchen.

Aladdin: *(Dressing himself)* I've got to go out, mum - I've got a date.

Widow Twanky: Oh no you're not, boy. I need help.
By the way, someone dropped a parcel off for you this morning.

(She goes off stage right, fetches it and hands it to Aladdin.)

Aladdin: A present! Cor! *(He rips open the box.)*

*Sound Effect : Explosion.
Screams off stage*

*Lights: Blackout
Props: Body parts are thrown onto the stage
Lights: Come up.*

Widow Twanky: (Running over to the body parts crying)) Aladdin, my lovely boy! Oh no!

(She screams and runs off - stage right.)

*Lights: Blackout - Aladdin exits stage right.
Props: Clear all except chair.
Desk with pad of paper, pen and telephone. Move chair to desk*

Lights: Foreground

*Newspaper person: (Enter stage left,)
Read all about it! Read all about it! 3rd Panto Murder.
Aladdin bomb attack. (Walks across front and exits.)*

Lights: BLACKOUT

LINK-UP MUSIC

*Props: Clear stage.
Bring on desk, chair & telephone*

Scene Two: Hallo, Hallo, Hallo

Chief Superintendent's office

Sound Effect: Phone rings

Chief Superintendent: *(Enters and picks up the phone.)*
Hello, Chief Superintendent Snoop here.
(Clears throat and stands to attention)
Yes, Mam. *(Pause)* Good Lord! *(Sits down)* That makes three then. *(Removes hat and scratches head)* I have had my entire squad on it, Mam *(Looks perplexed)*
Yes, Mam, of course you can rely on me. I will ensure that the matter is dealt with speedily, Mam.
(Looks worried and puts the phone down.)
(Sarcastically) Yes, your highness, I will perform a miracle for you.
(Calls out) Sergeant Sniffer!

Sergeant Sniffer: *(Enters)* Yes sir?

Chief Super: We've had her highness on the phone, another Panto murder.

Sergeant: Oh my gawd, Sir! We haven't solved the last two yet and we've got as many people on the case as we can afford.

Chief Super: Yes, Sergeant, you don't have to remind me.

Sound Effect: Knock on the door

Secretary: *(Enters)* Sir, The Theatre Producer, Maxine Bucks, is outside and she insists on seeing you.

Chief Super: Oh, not her again! You'd better show her in.

(Secretary exits stage left)

Maxine Bucks *(Enters)* What's going on, Snoop? This is the third murder and so far you've done nothing about the other two. I'm sick of this. I need action, Snoop. I have a lot of money running on these productions. The audiences are cancelling their bookings, the production teams are terrified and three very talented actors are dead.

Chief Super: I have my whole squad on this operation....

Maxine Bucks *(interrupting)* Well, it clearly isn't enough, Snoop. I need top people on this and I will be employing my own team from now on. I've closed the pantomime for a week, Snoop, and the entire company of performers will be booked into a top hotel until it is solved. I'll get my secretary to give you the details.
(Storms off)

POLICE SONG: Crime free

Lights: Blackout

Props: Move desk stage right - add cloth and vase. Bring on couch - centre stage. Small coffee table for telephone and directories. Bottle of wine and three glasses back stage right.

LINK-UP MUSIC

Scene Three: We need help!

Producer's office

Lights: Full

(Enter Maxine Bucks, her secretary (Louise) and manager)

Maxine Bucks: *(Sits on couch)* The police have come up with nothing. I need you two to find me a top team of detectives. I've dug out some directories. Can you please go through them and get the best there is?

Paul (Manager): *(Camp)* Oh course, darling. Worry not! I'll get to the bottom of this. *(Cries)* Can't have any more of our wonderful, talented actors being killed. It's an absolute tragedy.

Maxine: Oh dear! *(She goes off to get some wine - back stage right)*

Louise: *(Comforts him and cries as well.)* It's awful, so awful.

Maxine: *(Pours them all a glass of wine.)*
Have a drop of this first and then we'll get down to business. When you've come up with an agency give me a ring. I'm going to sort out a hotel for the production teams. *(She drinks her wine and exits.)*

Paul: Come on, darling, let's get looking.

(The pair of them flick through the directories)

Louise: How about this one? **All clued up - First class detectives - 24 hour service.**

Paul: Sounds dreadful, darling. Here's one! **Gotch yer Detective Agency, No-one escapes our clutches.**

Louise: Don't like that, sounds a bit brutal.

Lights dim and come up

(Paul and Louise look exhausted and are flat out on the couch going through the directories)

Louise: *(Jumps up)*
Here! This is the one. **Panto Murder Expert Agency - we never fail. Top references - appointment by the Queen.**

Paul: Ooh! Is that the Queen of England or Freddie Mercury, I wonder?

Louise: It has to be the one. They're the only ones that mention Pantos.

Paul: And they're experts, darling. We certainly need experts. Give 'em a ring, luv, straight away.

Louise: *(Picks up the phone and starts to dial)*

Lights: Blackout

LINK-UP MUSIC

Props: Tray with tea things put on coffee table in front of couch. Two extra chairs stage left on back of stage

Scene Four: Super Sleuths

Producer's Office

Lights: Full

(Maxine sits on couch with Paul. Enter Louise and the two detectives. Everyone gets up and shakes hands.)

Maxine: Thanks! Good to see you both! I'm Maxine Bucks - producer of all the London pantomimes this season. This is Paul, my manager, and Louise, my secretary.

Amena: Hi, I'm Amena Ireland, Panto murder expert agency. Pleased to be of service to you.

Sam: And I'm Sam Cobb. Pleased to meet you?

Maxine: Please sit down!

(Louise brings over a couple of extra chairs and they all sit down. Paul offers them a cup of tea.)

Amena: *(Opens her notebook and starts to take notes)*
If you could fill us in with the details so far that would be helpful.

Maxine: Well, it started with Jack and the Beanstalk a couple of weeks ago.

Paul: Jack had the safety harness on and was flown up to the top of the beanstalk. *(Cries)* For some stupid reason, he took the harness off when he started to climb down.

Maxine: It looked like it was hurting him or something.

Amena: Uh huh.

Louise: When he started to climb down the ladder he lost his footing.
(Cries).

Paul: Someone had cut the rungs and he plunged to his death *(Sobs hysterically).*

Sam: Oh my goodness! How terrible.

Maxine: The place was in an uproar. We had to close the show.

Paul: Last week, Peter Pan was eaten on stage by a live crocodile.
(Everyone gets very upset)

Amena: How disgusting!

Louise: Everyone panicked and charged out of the theatre.

Sam: That is shocking!

Paul: We had to call in animal rescue and lock the crocodile in the theatre.

Louise: It's in Regent's Park Zoo now.

Amena: Thank goodness for that.

Maxine: And today, Aladdin has been blown up on stage.

(Everyone starts to cry again)

Widow Twanky handed him a box as she always does at that part of the pantomime, but it blew up when he opened it.

Paul: Body bits all over the place.

Amena & Sam: Urgh!

Maxine: The police have been investigating but are getting nowhere so I am taking things under my control.

Amena: This is just the kind of work we are used to. Discreet interviews, behind the scenes working - that kind of thing.

Sam: Works every time. It's clearly someone associated with the business. We need to have access to the crime scenes and to be able to speak to everyone involved in the production company.

Amena: We should be able to visit the scenes straightaway. We do have our own forensic team.

Maxine: I have organised for all the panto production companies to be accommodated at the Palace Hotel. You should be able to meet everyone involved tomorrow because they are all moving in tonight.

Sam: What about the police?

Maxine: They will continue with their own operation. I will make sure you get all the help you need.

Louise: I have drawn up a list of all the staff involved, right down to the cleaners. We have our own caterers as well. All the contact numbers you'll need are here. *(She gives it to Amena)*

Maxine: That reminds me. I promised the Palace Hotel Manager some help from our cleaning team. The poor man's a bit overwhelmed with so many people arriving in one day. *(To Paul)* Paul, can you get onto that please?

Paul: Yes sure, darling!

(Amena and Sam stand up)

Amena: I think we have what we need to get started.

Sam: It would be helpful to have someone to accompany us to the crime scenes.

Maxine: I'll do that as we need to stay away from the police.

Amena: Good - let's go!

(Exit Amena and Sam)

SONG: Our world has fallen apart

(Louise, Paul, and Maxine sing)

Lights: Blackout

LINK-UP MUSIC

Props: Left of stage couch - with different cover over it, coffee table. To right of stage hotel reception desk. Tray with cafetier and cups off stage right to be brought on by maid)

Scene Five - THE PALACE HOTEL

Foyer of the Palace Hotel

Lights: Full

(The panto characters enter the foyer stage right with their cases and line up at the hotel reception desk. They are chatting and crying to one another)

Widow Twanky: My poor son. Blown up before my eyes.

(Everyone groans and cries)

The Genie: It was terrifying.

(Everyone groans and cries)

Jack's Mum: It hardly seems like two weeks ago since Jack plunged to his death, poor lad. Never harmed a soul in his life.

(Lots of comforting and crying.)

Wendy: Imagine! Peter Pan being eaten by a ferocious crocodile. It was pitiful and terrifying at the same time.

(Everyone groans and cries)

Tinkerbell: We were all too scared to do anything in case it ate us as well. I feel so guilty.

(Everyone groans and cries)

Captain Hook: Yes, so do I. We all just ran out of the theatre in absolute panic

Cinderella: Who'll be next? That's what I want to know.

The Evil Vizier: Well it seems to be the lead character, so I should be ok.
Ha Ha Ha

(Everyone screams and cries again.)

Snow White: No-one is safe until the murders are solved.

Prince Charming: I resent being trapped in a hotel. It's like we have all committed a crime. I'm innocent, I haven't done anything.

Panto Characters: No, and neither have I.

Bad Witch: It's shocking. Those of us with evil parts will be the first suspects no doubt. I think it appalling. I've got nothing to hide. Nothing. It's shocking.

Evil Characters: It's shocking. I've got nothing to hide.

Panto Characters' Song: Who Dunit?

(Lights dim and then come up again)

(Enter hotel manager)

Hotel Manager: Sorry to keep you all waiting. Welcome to the Palace Hotel. I realise this is a difficult time for you all. My staff and I will do our best to ensure that you are all well looked after.

(Panto characters show appreciation.)

Sorry about the queue. We will all do our best to get you into your rooms as soon as possible. Then if you would like to join us in the dining room *(points to the left)* over there, we will get you all fed and watered as soon as possible.

(Panto characters show appreciation.)

Coffee and tea are available at all times in the small bar area. *(Points to the left)* Please feel free to help yourselves.

Panto characters: Thanks

Lights: Blackout

(Everyone exits stage right and returns to choir seats except Hotel Manager.)

Lights: Full

(Amena and Sam enter the foyer stage left. Cleaners come on stage and tidy up)

Hotel manager: You will have to forgive all the cleaning going on around us. I have had so much to do at such short notice. Make yourselves comfortable over there. *(Points to the couch)* I will make sure you two aren't disturbed. I'll get you some coffee.

Amena & Sam: Thanks (*They sit on the couch*)

Sam: No finger prints whatsoever at any of the crime scenes.

Amena: Whoever did it was a clean operator. They've covering their tracks well.

Sam: All the crimes are different. Plunging from a ladder, eaten by a crocodile and a blowing up.

Amena: Yes, but it feels like the same person is responsible for all of them, doesn't it? I know it's a gut reaction, but that's how I feel. Do you agree?

Sam: It certainly feels like a solo performer. Someone who's creative about murder. They've put a lot of thought into this. They must have some big grudge to want to kill off the leads in the shows.

Amena: Jack, Peter Pan, Aladdin, apart from being panto characters what's the connection? These are all male characters but sometimes they're played by a woman in some productions. So it could be a male or female.

Sam: Yes, I agree. It's always puzzled me why the lead character in pantomime is generally a woman, even when it's a male part.

Amena: I suppose it's just carrying on the tradition. The dame is always played by a man. It's just the way it is.

(The maid brings in the coffee from stage right and places it on the table.)

Sam and Amena: Thanks

Sam: Yes, the prince is usually played by a woman as well. Funny stuff. I have checked back over who might have had a grudge against Jack but nothing's come up from any discussions I have had so far. Forensic say that the rungs were cut with secateurs so it could be someone with a gardening background that we're looking for.

Amena: And this crocodile business is really odd. I have found out that Captain Hook's father runs a pet shop. So he might have some motive. He would certainly be familiar with animals. Some people collect the oddest things these days.

Sam: The only lead I have on Aladdin is that the evil Vizier, Jafar, did a spell in the army and was part of a bomb disposal team.

Amena: That sounds interesting and worth following up.

(Enter Maxine stage left)

Maxine: Hello you two. You've done a great job today. You must be exhausted.

Amena: Yes, we are.

Sam: By the way, Maxine, we'd like to look through your audition information.

Maxine: I will get Louise to give it to you first thing in the morning. I hope your rooms are comfortable.

Sam: Yes, they're fine, thanks.

Maxine: Good, I'm turning in for the night. I expect you two will want to get some sleep as well.

Sam: Yes, good idea.

Amena: See you in the morning.

Lights: Blackout

LINK-UP MUSIC

Props: Clear the stage.

Bring on bed with covers and pillows. Small bedside cabinet & lamp & telephone