

**THE INSPECTOR WELLS MYSTERIES**

**THE GRUMBALDS ASH MURDERS**

---

A Play in Two Acts

by

Steven J Yeo

Cast of Characters

<u>Jack &amp; Understudy:</u>	(M) A man in his 50s.
<u>Inspector Wells:</u>	(M) A man in his 50s.
<u>P.C. Martin:</u>	(M) A man in his 30s.
<u>Lord Beckett:</u>	(M) A man in his 60s.
<u>Lady Beckett:</u>	(F) A Lady in her 60s.
<u>P.C. Turner:</u>	(M) A man in his 30s.
<u>Inspector Macey:</u>	(M) A man in his 50s.
<u>Inspector Lee:</u>	(M) A man in his 50s.
<u>Body of Nancy:</u>	(F) A lady in her 20s.
<u>Girl Victim 2:</u>	(F) A lady in her 20s.
<u>Sally Gibson:</u>	(F) A lady in her 20s.
<u>Miss Ambridge:</u>	(F) A lady in her 40s.
<u>Mr Hicks:</u>	(M) A man in his 40s.
<u>Four P.C.s Non-Speaking:</u>	(M) Any ages.

SCENE

In and Around a Village in Gloucestershire England

TIME

Late October 1910

ACT IScene 1

SETTING: This scene opens in a field by a churchyard, on the outskirts of Grumbalds Ash. It is a cool and star filled evening at about ten o'clock, three nights before Halloween. A very loud woman's scream breaks the silence.

AT RISE: The stage is dark, and spotlights go on to find a man all dressed in black standing over a dead woman's body. He is holding a bloody knife in his hand. He speaks eloquently.

JACK

(He asks the audience.)

Did you hear that scream too? I heard it and came running to find her already laying here. I think she is from the village.

(He bends over the body.)

I am sorry I was too late; she is dead. I am not sure how she died but I think she has been...stabbed...I found this knife by the side of her.

(He reveals a bloody knife. His demeanour changes and his voice changes into a London cockney accent.)

Such a pretty thing! I bet she was a big tease to the boys in the village.

(Moving her hair with the knife to reveal her blooded face. Accidentally cuts her face.)

BODY OF NANCY

(Opens her eyes and looks up at Jack.)

Bloody hell [*Insert first name of actor who plays Jack*] be careful, you could have killed me.

JACK

It was just a scratch, don't be such a drama queen.

(Whispers)

Besides you're supposed to be dead, so shut up.

(Clears his throat. Talks eloquently.)

She looks the type to lead them on, letting them think...

BODY OF NANCY

(Interrupts, whispers.)

...wrong accent.

JACK

Shit!

(Changes accent back into cockney)

She looks the type to lead them on, letting them think they're going to get somewhere, only to find out that she had a great time, but already has a boyfriend. She didn't care about them; she just had nothing better to do. Someone like that deserves to be taught a lesson in manners.

(Sniggers angrily)

We have feelings too, but she didn't care. She cares now though. Or she would if she could if someone didn't kill her.

(Angrily thrusts the knife, into the air, in stabbing motions. He kicks the body.)

BODY OF NANCY

Ow! Not so hard.

JACK

(To THE BODY OF NANCY)

Shhh! You thought you were so high and mighty and that nothing could happen to you. Well not every man loves to be teased. Some of us hate it.

(Angrily kicks the body again.)

But you know that now. Don't you, teaser.

BODY OF NANCY

(Whispers angrily)

Ooowww!! I've already told you; you dick. I'm not interested, you're too old for me. Now stick to the script.

JACK

(There is a short pause. His demeanour and accent change again.)

Such a tragedy, she must have been so afraid. I better go and get some help. I'll run down to the village and see if I can raise the alarm.

(JACK exits through the audience, running to the back of the room. Lights dim to blackout. Two voices can be heard offstage. The voices get louder as they move through the audience to the front of the stage, as a spotlight picks them out of the dark.)

LORD BECKETT

I do love our walks my dear, especially on such a beautiful night like tonight.

LADY BECKETT

So, do I, but tonight was almost ruined by that imbecile running in the dark, almost knocked me to the floor.

LORD BECKETT

Well don't let that ruin our evening. I think, maybe when we get home, a little night cap is called for. What?

LADY BECKETT

Oh yes darling,  
(She says holding his arm lovingly.)  
And maybe a little snuggle in front of the fire.

LORD BECKETT

We could treat ourselves to some of that new cocoa stuff warmed with a little milk.

LADY BECKETT

With a couple of those new cookies, I got from the village. Yes, let's spoil ourselves tonight, shall we?

LORD BECKETT

(Trips over something in the dark and falls to the ground.)

BODY OF NANCY

Ow! For God's sake.

LORD BECKETT

Good heavens! I'm so sorry my dear. I didn't see you there.

LADY BECKETT

(To LORD BECKETT)

Are you alright dear?

LORD BECKETT

Yes, I am.

(He climbs to his knees)

(Subtle lighting reveals a girl's body on the grass.)

(Speaking to the body)

But I think YOU may have had a little too much of the party sherry. Eh my dear?

(Patting her back and turning her over)

I say are you quite alright?

(Climbing to his feet)

Good heavens Dotty I think she's dead.

LADY BECKETT

Oh my! The poor thing, what do you think has happened to her?

LORD BECKETT

Not sure Dotty. She's all covered in blood. Think we better get the Rozzers.

(A short pause)

Now do you want to go for the Rozzers, or do you want to stay here? I don't think we should leave her alone like this.

LADY BECKETT

I'll go. I think your gout will get the better of you before you manage to get back. I am not sure I want to stay alone here with her to be honest. I will be as quick as I can.

LORD BECKETT

Well don't do yourself an injury rushing about in the dark. I don't think she will mind waiting a little bit longer. What!

BODY OF NANCY

(Sarcastically)

No, I don't mind. I've only been led here for ten minutes on the damp and cold grass. You take your time love.

LORD BECKETT

(Shushes the BODY OF NANCY and puts a hand on her mouth.)

Shh!

LADY BECKETT

I'll be careful. Just sit tight, back in a tick.

(LADY BECKETT exits through the audience to the back of the room.

LORD BECKETT sits next to the body.)

LORD BECKETT

What ever happened to you my dear?

(Talking to the body.)

You're too young to die like this. Not that there is any good age to die. But not like this all alone in the darkness.

(He pauses for thought.)

What your parents will go through. Oh my God; I can only imagine how they are going to feel when their baby is found dead.

(Another short pause.)

In this way too!

(Another short pause.)

So pretty and with your whole life ahead of you it's not fair, my dear, but the lord must have plans for you.

(He crosses himself.)

Well, you're not alone now my dear. I'm going to stay here until the Rozzers get here, don't you worry about that.

(BLACKOUT then lights up to signify time has passed. LADY BECKETT arrives with two police constables. One of them is carrying a

large bag. The police look around the body and the scene for clues and anything that may help. One of the Constables checks her pulse. LORD BECKETT is sitting next to the body.)

LORD BECKETT (CONT'D)

That didn't take you long. Brought the Rozzers I see.

(LADY BECKETT Helps LORD BECKETT to his feet, brushing the loose grass and dirt from the back of his overcoat.)

P.C. MARTIN

I understand it was you who stumbled across the body sir.

BODY OF NANCY

Stumbled! He bloody well fell on me.

P.C. MARTIN

Shh! Have you touched anything sir?

LORD BECKETT

I'm afraid I initially thought she was drunk, so I did turn her over.

P.C. MARTIN

So, she was led face down sir?

LORD BECKETT

She was laying on her front but looking out at me. Poor thing, I am sure she lives in the village. Dotty what is the name of the butcher's girl?

LADY BECKETT

Oh, Nancy, I think. Oh, I hope it's not her. She's a lovely girl. Do you think she has been murdered constable?

P.C. MARTIN

It certainly looks that way, but the coroner will confirm it in the morning.

LADY BECKETT

Oh, poor thing. Who could do such a thing?

(The two police constables remove a white sheet from the bag and cover the body with it.)

P.C. MARTIN

You and Lord Beckett may go home now ma'am. If we want to talk to you further, we know where we can get hold of you.

LADY BECKETT

Yes, at the manor house. Only we won't be there before two tomorrow. We are taking Lord Beckett's brother for a little Pheasant shooting. He loves it you know.

P.C. MARTIN

Thank you, Lady Beckett. Mind how you go in the dark. Do you need an escort ma'am? It is rather dark.

LADY BECKETT

Nonsense! We've been walking these fields for years. We'll be fine, thank you.

(LORD and LADY BECKETT exit.  
LADY BECKETT is helping LORD  
BECKETT who is limping.)

P.C. TURNER

I can't see any weapon. I've looked all around but it is too dark to see properly. Maybe we'll have to wait till morning and search again.

P.C. MARTIN

Yes, we'll just have to wait this one out I'm afraid. The sergeant will be here soon with some more help.

P.C. TURNER

What do you think happened to her?

P.C. MARTIN

It looks like she's been stabbed to me.

(The constables move around the body performing their duties and keeping watch for their colleagues. The lights dim to a blackout. A spotlight picks out THE BODY OF NANCY as it sits up. The sheet now falls from her head and onto her lap.)

THE BODY OF NANCY

I was murdered. For no reason other than being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Some short cut home this was. It was him from the papers. He did this to me. He hurt me you know. He wouldn't stop thrusting his knife into me. He's proper crazy.

(She makes the thrusting motions)

Over and over again; I was long dead before he stopped. You saw him, didn't you? He was right here talking to you. Yes, that's him. Did you see his knife all covered in blood, my blood? This lot won't catch him. They never caught him in London when he was right under their noses. He isn't going to stop you know!

P.C. MARTIN / P.C. TURNER

(Both constables shouted in unison to the body of Nancy.)

Lie down!

(The spotlight turns off as THE BODY OF NANCY clicked her tongue and lies back down, pulling the sheet over her head. Lights turn back on.)

P.C. TURNER

How long did the Sergeant say he'd be? This place is giving me the creeps.

P.C. MARTIN

They won't be long now. I'm sure her killer would never attack a constable of his majesties police force! Or certainly not both of us together, now, would he?

P.C. TURNER

Even so I wish they'd get here a bit faster.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Mr. Pantomime.com Sample Script

ACT IScene 2

SETTING: There is dark and subdued lighting to reflect late afternoon time.

AT RISE: LORD BECKETT and LADY BECKETT are talking with INSPECTOR WELLS.

LADY BECKETT

Oh, terrible affair. We have never had a murder in our village before. Who could have done such a thing to poor Nancy?

INSPECTOR WELLS

Indeed ma'am, very troubling times. We think it's the same man.

LORD BECKETT

The same man! Has there been another killing?

INSPECTOR WELLS

I'm afraid so. We also had one in the village of Wotton last night.

LADY BECKETT

It wasn't that singer in the *[local pub]* last week, was it? Even I wanted to kill him. Horrible! Just horrible! Any clues Inspector?

INSPECTOR WELLS

I'm not at liberty to say Ma'am, but rest assured we are doing everything we can. Have either of you seen any strangers in the village over the last couple of days, anything unusual, anything at all?

LORD BECKETT

Good lord no. The last stranger we had in the village was about twelve years ago. You remember Dotty, that fellow now runs the tavern.

LADY BECKETT

Oh yes, John or James, I think.

LORD BECKETT

That's the blighter.

INSPECTOR WELLS

So, no one has arrived more recent? Any new families moved into any of your properties?

LORD BECKETT

Last ones about two years ago now and they were from the village too. People love the village inspector. They say the only way you leave the Ash is in a box or an urn. What!

LADY BECKETT

Morris! A bit inappropriate don't you think?

LORD BECKETT

What? Oh yes, you're right my dear. I do apologise Inspector. Carried away with it all; what!

INSPECTOR WELLS

No need to apologize sir. If you do hear or see anything you think may help, just call at the station and let us know.

LORD BECKETT

Will do inspector and if there's anything we can do please let us know. We will try and be out.

LADY BECKETT

Morris! Please, don't be frightened to ask Inspector.

INSPECTOR WELLS

Thank you, sir, ma'am, your help in this matter is appreciated.

(LADY BECKETT follows the  
inspector as he exits.)

LADY BECKETT

And please pass on our condolences to the family.  
 (She says leading INSPECTOR  
 WELLS to the door. She spots Jack  
 hiding next to the door. Whispers.)  
 Aren't you supposed to be hiding, we can see you?

(Jack looks around and spots the  
 standard lamp shade and puts it on  
 his head.)

INSPECTOR WELLS

(At the door)

Thank you, Ma'am.

(LADY BECKETT opens the door,  
 and INSPECTOR WELLS exits. As  
 she closes the door, JACK in a false  
 beard and hat, removes the lamp  
 shade and makes LADY BECKETT  
 Jump. She shrieks.)

LADY BECKETT

Who, who are you? How did you get in here?  
 (Casual glance to the audience)

(JACK shows LADY BECKETT the  
 knife, turning it from side to side to  
 show it to her fully. JACK steps  
 forward and drops the knife.)  
 (LADY BECKETT picks up the  
 knife and casually hands it back to  
 Jack. She then steps backwards  
 maintaining the distance between  
 them until she backs into LORD  
 BECKETT)

LORD BECKETT

Steady on old girl.  
 (He sees JACK and his knife.)

LORD BECKETT (Cont.)

Who the blazes are you, and what do you think you are doing with my wife?

(He tries to hide LADY BECKETT  
behind him.)

I say old man be careful with that thing. You'll hurt someone.

JACK

(In the cockney accent.)

I killed that girl. You know the one you found last night. Nancy. I told her to stop teasing, but she wouldn't listen to me. So, I killed her, fair and square.

LADY BECKETT

Nothing fair about killing poor, sweet, Nancy you cad.

LORD BECKETT

Now Dotty, don't anger the man. He sounds upset enough as it is.

(To JACK)

What do you want with us?

JACK

(His demeanour and accent changes.)

Just somewhere to rest a while, yes, I think that is best for now. Hide here for a while.

(His demeanour changes again and  
again as he struggles with good and  
evil within.)

JACK (CONT.)

But I could kill you both now and have a whale of a time. Help myself to the silver and your jewellery; get paid for my performance, who'd know I'd have even been here?

(He looks at the knife and changes  
again.)

No, I think you are safe tonight! I am not going to kill again, but please do not provoke me. It is very hard. You must understand the struggle I have to maintain a little sanity.

(He looks at the knife and changes  
demeanour again. He looks at LORD  
BECKETT.)

Go on give me a reason an' I'll peel the skin from your face and make your missus watch me.

(He looks at the knife and changes  
again.)

Oh no! I do not know what to do! It is hard, very hard, I am very tired! I just need to rest a while.

(Looking at LORD BECKETT.)

What shall I do, please tell me?

LORD BECKETT

Why don't you turn yourself in to the Rozzers and have a nice rest in a cell with your feet up?

JACK

(His demeanour changes again.)

They'll want to hang me they will. But I am not going to let them. They aren't going to stop me!

LORD BECKETT

Then why don't we get ourselves sat by the fire and relax I'll get Dotty to put the kettle on.

LADY BECKETT

I will not.

LORD BECKETT

Oh Yes you will.

JACK

Oh no, she won't! God, how I love pantomimes! *YOU* go and put the kettle on and bring me a sandwich too. I and your missus here will have a nice chat while you're gone. That way there will be no heroics.

LADY BECKETT

It's me you got to watch out for.

(She tries to hit JACK from behind LORD BECKETT. LORD BECKETT stops her and keeps her behind him.)

LORD BECKETT

That's enough dear.

(To JACK)

If she stays, then I stay.

JACK

(Sighs)

Then let's all go and get a sandwich shall we.

(LORD BECKETT leads them away at knife point. As they take a couple of steps there is a knock at the door. The three of them stop suddenly and Jack accidentally stabs LADY BECKETT in the backside.)

LADY BECKETT

(Shrieks in pain.)

Bloody hell, [Insert first name of actor who plays JACK] that hurt. Watch what you're doing with that thing.

JACK

Sorry!

LORD BECKETT

Ha, It's the Rozzers. What are you going to do now?

JACK

This!

(JACK grabs LADY BECKETT from LORD BECKETT and moves to the closed door with LADY BECKETT held close to him and with the knife at her throat.)

JACK

(To LORD BECKETT)

Now no funny business or she'll gut like a fish she will.

(He says to the closed door sounding like LORD BECKETT)

I say who's there at this hour?

(LORD and LADY BECKETT look surprised at each other by JACK'S sudden voice change.)

INSPECTOR WELLS

(From behind the door.)

I'm sorry to disturb you again sir but I thought I heard a scream as I was leaving. Are you and Lady Beckett alright sir?

LADY BECKETT

That was you and that bloody knife. It didn't half hurt.

JACK

(To LADY BECKETT)

Shut up! I've already apologised for that.

(Back into character.)

What! Oh yes, very old house Inspector and very big spiders what.

INSPECTOR WELLS

But everything is OK ... Yes?

JACK

Oh yes splendid old chap. Thank you and good night inspector.

INSPECTOR WELLS

Good night, sir.

(JACK smiles at them both.)

LADY BECKETT

I say Morris he's very good.

(To JACK)

You should be on the stage.

JACK

Who says I'm not? Bit of make-up, little horsehair, maybe a false beard. Maybe I could be anybody I like and keep them Rozzers guessing.

LADY BECKETT

(Waving a smell away from her  
face.)

And maybe a breath mint too.

LORD BECKETT

So, what now, you Bounder?

JACK

That sandwich and maybe a bottle of something red, I'm partial to red you know.

LORD BECKETT

If we feed you, and let you rest the night will you leave us alone and be on your way in the morning?

JACK

I haven't decided yet. Depends on how good you look after me now, doesn't it?

LADY BECKETT

Then tonight you scoundrel, you shall have the best we can offer.

LORD BECKETT

I say, steady on Dotty. He's a fugitive from the law. We're not supposed to help him you know.

LADY BECKETT

If he promises not to hurt us, then to hell with the law for tonight!

JACK

Well said Dotty.

(To LADY BECKETT)

I and you are going to get on like a house on fire. Come on then I'm starving.

LORD BECKETT

What guarantee do we have that you won't kill us in our sleep?

JACK

I don't want to kill either of you, I am not going to do it while you sleep. But I will if you try anything. So, if you are good to me then I'll be good to you. Is that fair?

LADY BECKETT

Of course, it is fair. You will not get any trouble from us will he Morris?

LORD BECKETT

What? No. I'm too bloody tired if I'm honest.

(Rubbing his knee.)

And this bloody gout is giving me gyp too.

(JACK leads LADY BECKETT to the exit stage right closely followed by LORD BECKETT.)

LADY BECKETT

We have some wonderful Darjeeling you know.

(EXIT CAST)

(BLACKOUT)

(The next morning there is brighter lighting to reflect morning. LORD and LADY BECKETT are talking with INSPECTOR WELLS.)

INSPECTOR WELLS

So, you are saying that it was *HIM* who talked to me last night holding Lady Beckett at knife point? But it sounded like you sir.

LORD BECKETT

The bounder had me to a tee. But what could we do? We're too old for all those shenanigans.

INSPECTOR WELLS

(Reading from his notebook.)

Then you fed him some Scottish salmon and a bottle of vintage claret. Is that right Ma'am?

LADY BECKETT

Yes inspector. I know we shouldn't have, but we were quite frightened you know. That awful knife he had all covered in Nancy's blood. It was horrible, just horrible.

INSPECTOR WELLS

No one is going to blame you for anything Lady Beckett. We would all have done the same in your position. Is there anything else either of you can tell me that may help us catch him before he kills again?

LORD BECKETT

Well, as it happens, old chap, he did go on about make-up and pantomimes.

LADY BECKETT

Yes, we got the impression that he was an actor or something like that. His impression of Lord Beckett was good, you know.

LORD BECKETT

Yes, quite but nutty as a fruit cake though!

INSPECTOR WELLS

(Writing notes in his notebook.)

I see, so he may be good at voices, make up, and pantomimes that is interesting.

LADY BECKETT

I'm sorry inspector I almost forgot. He took my dinner wig and most of my make-up too.

INSPECTOR WELLS

(Writing notes in the notebook.)

Make-up, dinner wig; what colour was the wig ma'am?

LADY BECKETT

(Speaks with an animated flourish)

Blonde of course, in a kind of up do Inspector, full of poof around the crown and the front is embellished with curls that cover over the forehead.

INSPECTOR WELLS

(Making notes in a notebook.)

Blonde wig, yes ma'am I've got that. Did he take anything else ma'am?

LADY BECKETT

Yes, he also stole my frock from the chair. I put it out last night before I went to bed to wear at luncheon with the Millers today.

INSPECTOR WELLS

What colour was the dress ma'am?

LADY BECKETT

White Inspector, with a pink sash to tie around the waist.

INSPECTOR WELLS

(Writes more notes in his notebook.)

Well unless there is anything else you can both tell me, I must get this new information circulated.

LORD BECKETT

Yes, I'll show you out inspector.

(LORD BECKETT and  
INSPECTOR WELLS move towards  
the exit stage left.)

LORD BECKETT (Cont.)

When you do catch the blighter tell him to keep the wig. Never did like that bloody thing.

INSPECTOR WELLS

(He smiles.)

I'm leaving a constable at your door until we catch him just in case he should return. But I think it highly unlikely. Good day sir.

LORD BECKETT

Yes, quite thank you, Inspector.

(He closes the door and returns to  
LADY BECKETT.)

LADY BECKETT

You need to go and get yourself ready, were going to the Everyman today.

LORD BECKETT

Oh yes, quite I'm on my way now dear. What are we seeing this week?

LADY BECKETT

You know with all the kerfuffle going on, I have forgotten. It'll be on the tickets. Or we can keep it a surprise until we get there of course.

LORD BECKETT

Oh yes, looking forward to it, but not the part of getting home so late.

(Exit LORD and LADY  
BECKETT.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

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