

A Recipe for Murder!

A Murder Mystery Party Pack

By David Lovesy & Steve Clark

Really Horrid Production Company



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Customer Taster

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Clint Plumb has gathered his loyal customers and a number of special guests to announce the exciting plans for a new extension to his venue incorporating a new restaurant and guest wing. But what he reveals is not quite what everyone expected and tempers fly!

Sordid secrets, recriminations and blackmail finally end in a double murder!

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About this pack

This is a taster pack, containing extracts from the full pack.

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event.

The pack is intended to be used at a sit down meal where the principal characters will act out a set of events and arguments to the assembled guests.

Please remember from the outset that this is intended for an improvised performance. There is no script or set lines included for the cast to learn. Instead, your cast is expected to use the information included in the pack, develop their 'back stories' further and, staying completely in character throughout, improvise the action, dialogue and arguments themselves. This means that your performers are less constrained and restricted, can react and interact with the audience and guests at will and have a lot more fun!

This document includes:

- A **Plot Overview**.
- **General Staging Notes** on how best to plan and stage your Murder Mystery event.
- **Overview of the Characters** (including suggested costumes and 'props').
- An extract from the **Plot Narrative** to show how plot should flow and how the events should be woven in.
- An Appendix containing an example of one of the detailed **Character Back Stories**.

The Downloadable Resources pack that accompanies the full pack contains Adobe Acrobat .pdf image files and allows you to produce additional materials and resources that will help bring the event to life and enhance the plot.

These include:

Printable **Table Cards** to list the key characters to assist the audience.

Printable **Menu card** for Bertie Bear's Burger Barn.

Printable 'who dunnit' **Solution Sheets** for your guests to complete.

You can feel free to customise the details of the scenario. Names and titles of the characters are more fixed if you choose to use the resources provided but should not cause any problems for you.

This Murder Mystery is a light hearted affair and is intended to be as daft and silly as possible; a comic entertainment rather than a serious Agatha Christie style detective story.

The plot subject, the secret pasts of the characters and the characters themselves are designed for laughs! All the characters have been given motives and reasons to commit murder and in fact it could have been any of them that did the deed and as such there are no complicated or involved clues for the audience to have to try and deduce or follow!

Plot Overview

Please note: The setting is deliberately vague in this document and can be adapted to your specific venue. This could be a golf club, restaurant or hotel. The characters include a number of fictional members of staff at your chosen venue.

The year is the present. The manager of your venue, **Clint Plumb** has gathered many of the venue's loyal and valued customers together to announce plans for the opening of a new wing, which combines a classy new bistro and 50 deluxe guest rooms.

Other notable guests at the launch include:

Brad Temple: CEO Europe for the chain that owns the venue.

Antoinette Wirral-Timpson: the venue's Sous-Chef.

Dorothy Barking: the dotty previous owner of the venue and now a 'regular'.

Albert 'Grizzly' Bear: Food franchise magnate!

Tanya Tucker: Former waitress and now reality TV 'celebrity'.

Shelly Beach: Clint's partner and Feng Shui Master.

This should be an exciting event for the venue but as Clint announces his plans to open a fast food franchise instead of a bistro, and to change the planned accommodation into a rather warped Feng Shui concept, the other guests react in horror and anger. Blackmail, recriminations and secret pasts all combine to create a violent and deadly atmosphere, in which two of the company are brutally murdered! Finally, the killer is revealed...

General Staging Notes

Casting / rehearsal

Your chosen performers should be issued with a copy of the entire pack.

You should hold as many rehearsals as required depending on the experience of performers (3 to 5 recommended).

The first rehearsal should concentrate on reading through this pack and getting a feel for how the event is structured and the role that each character has to play in the plot.

Before the second rehearsal the performers should further prepare their back stories. We provide example stories in the Appendix and you can use these or write new ones. At the second rehearsal these should be read out by each performer in character.

As it is impossible to rehearse the whole event without that all important audience to react to, you should concentrate on cementing motives and the order and content of the arguments. These can be rehearsed by the performers, more to prove they can improvise and keep up a convincing performance than word for word content!

Facilities required for the performers

The performers need a separate private room for their use. They will use this prior to the event to get changed and prepared, and will use the room during the event where they can exchange notes and discuss any change of tactics. The murder victims will also use this room once deceased!

The performers will eat the same as the audience. Food for the deceased victims can be brought to the main table and then sent away (and taken to the private room!) for extra comic effect.

Recommended event format

The evening works best if structured round a sit down meal. If the event is being staged in a hotel this may be a formal served multi-course meal, but if this was being staged in a hall or private venue you could lay on a simpler meal or even a table buffet. However guests should have a table to sit at, to watch and enjoy the action.

Pre-dinner drinks

Before moving to the seated area, we recommend pre-dinner drinks. This gives an opportunity for the guests to mingle and more importantly to meet the characters informally before the action begins (see Meet and Greet below)

Dining area:

- Top table: set for 7 places, used by the principal characters. Positioned in a central location so that all the other guests can see the action. Ideally a clear area in front of this table should be provided, to give space for the actors to perform freely.
- Tables for the other guests: depending on facilities and space it is recommended that the tables are spaced to give room for the actors to move around and between them, and so be able to interact with the guests.

Although structured around a meal, there is no predefined timing for the action and the courses. If this is a restaurant based event then the serving staff should just be instructed to serve the courses as normal and not wait for any events/action (this saves upsetting the chef!).

Timing guideline

As a broad guide your event should run as follows:

7.30 to 8.00	Meet and greet	Pre-dinner drinks
8.00	Sit down and Clint's speech	
8.15 to 8.40	First set of Arguments	Starters
8.40	First victim leaves	
8.50	First body discovered	Main course
9.00 to 9.25	Second set of arguments	
9.25	Second victim leaves	Dessert
9.35	Second death announced	
9.40 to 9.55	Wrapping up!	
10.00	Solution sheets distributed	Coffee
10.15	Prize giving and denouement	

Improvisation and performance

Improvisation

As already explained, there is no set script for this Murder Mystery scenario. Your performers are expected to improvise their dialogue, interactions and behaviour based on their back stories and knowledge of the plot and their interpersonal relationships. This should not be as seem daunting as it sounds! Your performers need to get into character and remain in character throughout. All conversations with guests should be as the character they are playing.

You are bound to get some comments about ‘who dies first?’, ‘are you the murderer?’ at the start of the evening. The trick is to act confused and surprised? What are they talking about? This is a special occasion!

If guests start asking you questions that you don’t know the answer to then you can simply make excuses and walk away or steer the conversation in a different direction.

You don’t have to admit your feelings outright, but can hint at your relationships with the other characters, make passing comments about your reaction to something to trigger a response and a question.

The most common difficulty is when someone slips up and gives the wrong info from their back story (and guests will sometimes probe into your ‘past’ in depth). Sometimes this is not of consequence but other times it could be important, a date, a place or something that your character should know too. If when quizzed you give the wrong corroborating account of events, this can lead to red herrings as the guests think you are lying deliberately. Therefore, if possible, if you realise you have let slip something on the spur of the moment that is nonsense, try and draw the other character(s) aside in time and tell them the new story. And if you don’t have time to do so, and you get ‘caught’ out, make light of the situation and play for a laugh; ‘Have we really been married for 5 years and not 8, well it seemed like even longer to me...!’

You will find there is plenty of opportunity to whisper in corners with the other performers (and when out of the room) to check tactics, prompt actions and arguments (‘right, we need to reinforce our hatred of one another, let’s go and have a fight in the middle of the room’). This is often necessary to keep things on track!

The Arguments

The arguments that are used to move on the plot, reveal motives and skeletons in the closet and the complexities of the characters’ inter-relationships can be split into two types:

Public: The confrontational / explosive challenge as one character rounds on another to contest something that has been said or announced. These can be very public and devoid of subtlety and a slanging match over the tables and even across the room often develops. Once these start the guests will quickly fall silent and pay attention.

Private: These are the type that build from a quiet conversation into a row as things are said that should not be or revelations are made. These can be more subtle. The characters start talking together, beside a table of guests and get louder and more heated as things develop. Gradually the whole room is drawn into the conversation.

In general the arguments only need to be staged once but if the venue is very large or there is a lot of background noise from the guests you can stage the argument and then move to another area of the room to continue the quarrel (repeating the salient points once more).

Overview of the Characters

Clint Plumb

Male: Playing age late 30's.

Costume: Smart and trendy. Open shirt and suit jacket.

Clint is on the way up in management and has a big future (or so he thinks!) manly 'cos he dazzles everyone with nonsense management speak most of the time. His altered plans for the venue are past revenge on some of those he dislikes and part innocent 'great ideas', perhaps his grasp on reality and good business is not that strong. He thinks he has mastered the art and has adapted Shelly's Feng Shui ideas even further, wrecking her true form into something even odder. He has holds and influence over many of the other characters.

Brad Temple

Male: Playing age 40's.

Costume: Smart, sophisticated and elegant.

Brad as a big wig in the chain that owns the venue, married to one of the CEO's daughters, and is very surprised to hear about the daft plans. Of course he could stop it immediately but Clint has knowledge of some financial irregularities in the accounting that is all Brad's work and has been blackmailing him for some time. Brad also had an affair with Tanya on a visit to the venue a couple of years ago when she was a humble waitress maid. He has since left his wife and is desperate to see her again to profess undying love.

Shelley Beach

Female: Playing age 25.

Costume: A bit wacky and Eastern with chains, beads and assorted Feng Shui and crystal accoutrements.

Shelly is Clint's partner and has advised Clint on the Feng Shui angle to change the plans. She is actually pretty good on this but Clint has altered the concept to become ludicrous which will pull her name down. She is close to signing a TV deal to present 'Arranging rooms': a Feng Shui series.

Antoinette (Toni) Wirral-Timpson

Female: Playing age early 40's.

Costume: Chef's whites or suit.

Antoinette is the venue's Sous Chef, who sees the new bistro as her big break having been promised the management of the new restaurant. She has a murky past in catering having had her small café closed down for serving rat in the sandwiches. Clint knows this from their earlier affair and having this hold over her, she'll never work anywhere else. Some money changed hands to secure the new bistro job so she will be mightily unimpressed and cheated to discover she will now have to dress as a bear...

Albert 'Grizzly' Bear

Male: Playing age mid 50's.

Costume: Dressed as a bear to promote his franchise. If not possible/feasible, a dark suit, plenty of jewellery.

There is nothing respectable about Albert, full stop! He manages the Bertie Bear Franchise network and has bribed, threatened and cheated to get where he is today. He has links with a number of bear sanctuaries and takes the poor creatures for his franchise.

Tanya Tucker

Female: Playing age mid 20's.

Costume: Low cut blouse, tarty and tasteless

A past waitress at the venue, who got her big break a year ago on reality TV (first on a reality show featuring hotel staff in a controlled environment hotel; 'B&B Brother', and then on a fame academy style programme for those in the service trades called 'Upstage, Downstage' which she won dazzling many

with her operatic voice). She is now a media celebrity with a fairly clean image, sexy but not smutty! She is rather precocious and obnoxious with it too, flouting her new found wealth and 'fame' and rubbing other people noses in it! She has had affairs in the past with Clint and Brad. Clint has some rather intimate pictures of her which he has threatened to sell to the papers and she is here for the opening as a celebrity guest but also to get them back.

Dorothy Barking

Female: Playing age 60's.

Costume: Old fashioned, eccentric and faded

Dorothy and her late husband, Reg, used to own the venue and ran it for many years and indeed many of the staff began in the hotel business with them. The venue was bought out by the chain and Dorothy is a bit dotty and still thinks she owns the hotel and that she is the boss. She is a regular visitor at dinner and spends most of her days wandering about the building, sipping coffee in the bar and generally hanging about making a nuisance of herself. The rest of the staff barely tolerate her behaviour and she has been known to berate staff over things which are not her business. Her confused and dotty act is actually a cover. She still holds copies of the master keys and for the past few years has been stealing cash, jewellery and other items from guests, staff and the venue. Clint has his suspicions... Dorothy thinks the new wing will be named in honour of her long standing connection with the venue as the 'Barking Wing'. She's in for a disappointment!

Plot Narrative

Meet and Greet

All the guests are important and valued customers of the venue. They have been invited along tonight for Clint Plumb to unveil the exciting plans of a new extension to the venue. There has been much speculation about this and it is understood to include a high class bistro/dining venue and a large number of five-star bedrooms. It is also rumoured that the wing will be named in honour of the Barkings who have long been associated with the venue. Clint has invited a number of special guests too. These principal characters need to introduce themselves and each other to the assembled guests before the event really kicks off (see General Staging Notes above for how best to do this).

The characters should arrive over the space of 15 minutes during this informal section (Recommended order: Clint and Shelley, Toni, Brad, Dorothy, Tanya, Albert).

They should introduce themselves to the guests, and interact with one another. They can make throwaway remarks about the other characters, sowing the seeds for any mistrust, dislike and personal conflicts. It is important that during this opening session the characters get to mingle and introduce themselves with all of the guests to ensure that everyone feels involved and gets a feel for what is going on! There should be much anticipation about the new extension. Clint is playing cards close to his chest but all the others are very excited. Albert should be evasive as to just what he is doing there! Guests should then be invited to take their seats for the meal.

The speech

Once the guests are seated for the meal, Clint opens with a speech to the assembled guests welcoming them to the unveiling of the plans.

His speech must include:

- Welcome to the guests.
- Introduction to the other principal characters.
- Announcement of the new wing.
- Revelations that:
 - The only part of the new wing to be named after the Barkings in the broom cupboard. The rest of the wing will be named after your choice of z-list celebrity, to make the facility more attractive to a newer, younger target market.
 - Following advice from Feng Shui expert Shelly Beach, the design for the rooms upstairs are very much altered to be in keeping with chi and other Feng Shui thought. Rather than 50 rooms there will be 4 specially designed rooms (open, centred, focussed). All walls to be mint green with lavender insignia. The only windows to be east-south-east facing.
 - The high class bistro will actually be a new burger franchise: 'Bertie Bear's Burger Barn' (where the staff dress up as cuddly bears and the burgers are made from 70% real bear! The other 30% is wood pulp!)

These revelations will cause consternation. Brad thinks it is commercial suicide. Toni is gutted that she is going to be the manager of a burger bar. Shelley is furious that her Feng Shui plans have been turned upside down and made a laughing stock by Clint's changes. Tanya is angry to be associated with such a tacky (even for her) franchise, and Dorothy is upset that she, and her dear late Reg, have been treated so badly!

Albert interjects to give a sales pitch for his Burger Franchise and hands around menu cards to promote the wonderful concept to the assembled guests.

[From this point on, arguments develop, leading to two murders! A large chunk of the plot has been cut here for the purposes of this taster!]

Wrapping it up

Obviously the second murder is met with equal shock and this time the mood is more sombre and subdued. Now the murders are complete the final section is an opportunity to sum up the events of the evening and reiterate the motives and the issues. The characters can interact with one another and the guests to ensure everyone has followed what is going on. The guests are likely to quiz individuals on their feelings and attitudes and motives.

Who Dunit?

At this point you have a range of options as how to handle the final events. You can introduce a police officer/inspector, use a member of the staff of the venue/organisers or let the characters themselves handle the final section.

If a policeman/inspector is used, he will announce he is just a trainee and needs some help. He can optionally quiz a few of the guests and the characters and make notes.

If one of the organisers or staff members handles this, they simply have to announce that the police are on their way but will need help. One of the characters is guilty of a double murder.

If the characters do it themselves: A lot of fun can be made of the fact that the local police are a little over-worked tonight and rather than sending an arresting officer they have sent over a crime sheet and would like the assembled guests to finger the murderer for them (Cut-backs etc)!

Solution forms (and pens) are distributed to the guests and the performers retire to their room to give the guests time to complete their forms. After giving the guest 10 minutes or so to make their deductions, the forms are collected and the characters in the privacy of their room select the winner and the booby prize!

Denouement and Prize giving

The surviving characters return to the dining area.

A summary of the events of the night is repeated and the real murderer is invited to step forward from the line up (you can milk this for tension and laughs by all characters twitching and almost stepping forward).

The murderer will step forward and should deliver a short denouement speech to explain the motives.

The dead are invited to return (they should bring the prizes).

The chosen winner is announced (and the solution they gave read out) and a prize awarded (A bottle of wine / champagne).

The booby prize is announced (and the solution they gave read out) and a prize awarded (a suitably silly gift e.g. magnifying glass). If there were a number of amusing sleuthing answers you can read out a shortlist of howlers.

The audience is thanked for their sleuthing skills. The cast take a bow and a get a rousing round of applause.

Appendix A - Detailed Character back stories

Your performers can use these as the basis for their stories. Feel free to embellish, modify and personalise (use your own birthday to save having to learn a new one, etc.).

Your performers should learn these, both their own and each others. In particular they should be familiar with information that they would know about the other characters (girlfriend's background, etc.).

Brad Temple

Aged 40. Brad is a young but senior executive in the venue's European Operations.

Born in the South of England he has been well educated and moved into the hotel industry as a graduate working for the 'Trusthouse Thirty' group. He quickly learnt the business and gained a reputation for good business practice, innovation and achieving strong results. He also learnt the intricacies (and personal benefits) of fiddling the books and budget accounts and taking a nice slice off the top to feather his own nest.

8 years ago he met and married the daughter of one of chains' founders and moved to an executive position with the company. He started overseeing the UK operation as CEO UK and is now CEO Europe. This involves a lot of travel and jet setting around Europe visiting the various hotels and teams within his control.

Clint, when he became regional manager was investigating the accounts for the southern UK region and spotted the black hole into which the monies vanished which is part of Brad's little operation. Brad has received challenges and threats from Clint and has been forced to pass a percentage of his proceeds to Clint to avoid getting shopped. As such he has an uneasy relationship with this junior manager who could ruin everything for him and send him to prison if the truth was revealed.

He visited the venue 2 years ago when it was acquired by the chain and met Tanya who was then on the staff. They had a torrid night of wild passion which has clearly meant a lot more to him than it did for her. He is risking a lot with this infatuation with Tanya and has recently separated from his wife to pursue her. He has been pestering her by phone and email for the last 6 months. This function is an occasion to see her face to face. He will be gutted beyond reason if she spurned him!