



Dial M for Monster

A Murder Mystery Party Pack

By Steve Clark and David Lovesy
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The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event.

The full 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 the full pack 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 should have a lot more fun!

The full documents include:

- 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').
- A **Plot Narrative** to show how plot should flow and how the events should be woven in.
- An Appendix containing summary **Character Back Stories** on each character.

An accompanying **Downloadable Resources pack** of Adobe Acrobat .PDF image files 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.
- A **promotional leaflet** for SCREAM!
- A **promotional poster** for 'Granny's New Fairy Tales'
- 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 five evil characters have been given motives and reasons to commit murder. Add into the mix the investigator, Van Helsing, who given his 'job' also has the perfect motive, it could have been any of them that did the deed! As such there are no complicated or involved clues for the audience to have to try and deduce or follow!

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Plot Overview

Tonight is the annual meeting of SCREAM!, the “**S**ecret **C**oven **R**euniting **E**vil and **M**onsters”.

A horrid collection of monsters and things that go bump in the night have gathered for a night of debauchery, evil and annual reports as they welcome their all powerful and supreme leader to recap on the year’s exploits and look to the future.

Tonight is extra special as their esteemed leader has already announced her intention to step down and appoint a successor and all of the VIP guests are hopeful that they may be the one selected. After all each has a fine pedigree of ghoulishness and evil (especially the werewolf who has an excellent pedigree!).

Prominent guests include:

- **Count Vlad Dracula** – The famous Vampire from Transylvania.
- **Dr Jekyll** – The Victorian scientist / inventor never far from his alter ego, Mr Hyde.
- **The Werewolf** – A vicious lycanthrope who likes having his tummy tickled!
- **The Bride of Frankenstein** – A collection of diverse female body parts given life!
- **Baba Yaga** – The feared Russian Witch.

They are joined by their illustrious and feared leader – **Granny**. She opens proceedings recapping some of the highlights of the past year and recounts a series of ‘evil’ events that SCREAM! have been behind (note: these should be fun and trivial incidents – England failings in the World Cup 2010, a celebrity’s misfortunes etc, not real disasters!).

She then moves on to the moment they have all been waiting for - the announcement of a successor. Instead she reveals that rather than a simple handover she has signed a deal with a TV company to run a public vote – ‘Dial M for Monster’, where all the VIP guests and others will feature in a Big Brother-style reality show, locked in a castle, forced to carry out pointless tasks and subjected to a public phone vote each week until a new leader is selected. The monsters and villains are furious!

Someone leaves... A death is discovered...

While the evil VIP’s are reeling from the shock, who should arrive on the scene but Van Helsing, monster hunter extraordinaire.

The audience must help Van Helsing determine who didn’t do it and therefore know just what spells to use! The audience then get dessert to work out whodidntdunnit!

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General Staging Notes

Casting / rehearsal

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

You should hold as many rehearsals as required depending on experience of performers (2 or 3 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. In the full pack we provide example stories in the Appendix. You can use these or write new ones.

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 victim will also use this room once deceased!

The performers will eat at the same time as the audience. Food for the deceased victim 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 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 6 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!).

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 Granny's speech	Starters
8.10	Arguments and revelations begin	
8.30	... leaves	Main course
8.45	... found dead. Van Helsing arrives	
9.00 to 9.30	Ongoing revelations	Dessert
9.40 to 9.55	Wrapping up!	
10.00	Solution sheets distributed	Coffee
10.15	Prize giving and denouement	

Since the event has a horror theme, you should encourage the audience to come dressed for the occasion in suitable horror / Halloween costume to add to the atmosphere! The principal characters should also be dressed for their roles.

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 is not as 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 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 back ground 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).

Customer Taster - Overview of a Character

Count Vlad Dracula

Male: Playing age 40s.

Costume: Immaculate in tuxedo and flowing black and crimson cape. Oh and fangs!

Vlad Dracula is one of the longest standing members of the circle having 'lived' for several millennia! He is also a traditionalist and despises his associates who cheapen their image and reputation pandering to commercialism and modern trends. He resents the domination of Granny but also fears her and has long been muttering in the background. A charmer with the ladies...

Customer Taster - Plot Narrative

Meet and Greet

All the guests are characters from the world of horror film and fiction and should be encouraged to come dressed for the occasion! The key 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: Werewolf and Bride of Frankenstein, Dr Jekyll and Baba Yaga and finally, making a bit of an entrance, Count Dracula). Granny and Van Helsing arrive later in the proceedings...

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!

Guests should then be invited to take their seats for the meal.

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The speech

Once the guests are seated for the meal, Dracula announces that their illustrious leader is here. If possible at this point a burst of atmospheric entrance music can be played e.g. the Carmina Burana and the VIP guests prepare themselves accordingly all bowing as Granny arrives.

She recognises their subservience and presence rather dismissively and takes her seat. She opens with a speech to the assembled guests welcoming them to the event. The speech must include:

- A welcome to the guests.
 - An introduction of the other principal characters for anyone who's missed them.
 - A recap of the year: Some of the notable successes for SCREAM! operatives around the globe. These are to be silly misfortunes, topical scandals and gags – *not* actual world disasters or unpleasant events
 - Praise to the Werewolf for his role in the 'Twilight' movies! (Dracula is loudly dismissive of this – but is accused of being jealous that he didn't get a role as advisor for the Vampires side – but he didn't want it anyway!!)
 - That she now plans to retire from her onerous and demanding role as head of the organisation and dedicate her time to writing her memoirs and bingo
 - She has thought long and hard about her successor. Many are the skills and strengths of those present and those sadly not here...
 - And more...!
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- She concludes by wishing them the very best of luck and thanking them for their many years of support and evilness! She looks forwards to a happy retirement writing books and playing bingo in her deluxe mansion on a Caribbean island.

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Arguments before... is murdered

After these revelations, the performers should feel free to move about and work the tables and not stay sat at the top table. The characters should mingle and engage in dialogue with the other guests, expressing their amazement and reaction.

While this is going on, some predefined arguments / heated discussions should take place. This can be done at the top table, in the area in front of the table or anywhere around the room (if the venue is very large then the arguments can be held twice or more at different points around the room if necessary).

e.g. Count Dracula is furious with... He is a true traditionalist even if the content is taking place in a castle, it is not a true gothic castle like he is used to and anyway since when should the humans votes a now leader for SCREAM!

All characters have some input during this discourse

Granny finishes with a finale tirade against them all – accusing them of being spineless, weak and gullible creatures not worthy of her further attention and leaves to speak to the TV company on her phone. She sweeps out dramatically in her cardigan!

The other characters are then seen to leave the room.

They must all have the opportunity to be involved in the death of... They can meet and confer in the private room and then return to the main room, individually... except...

All the characters should react with horror and shock at the murder (of course!). Who could have done this?

While chaos reigns, **Van Helsing** makes a dramatic entrance! The others react accordingly! The most feared monster hunter alive has just entered the building and... has just been killed!

Van Helsing explains that his first reaction is to destroy them all (and any costumed guests!) but not only have the venue stated that they don't want a mess, but also he has a more pressing concern.

He produces a bag / pot holding a heart and some blood (a fake heart and fake blood we hasten to add!). This is what remains of...

The further revelations

Van Helsing needs the help of the audience to determine the truth:

Further revelations must come out in ensuing counter accusations and argument. All players can accuse one another of being too weak and not evil enough to have murdered...

Everyone had a motive!

Who Dunit?

Van Helsing announces that the audience must determine who didn't do it so that he can get the right counter curses and charms performed to stop ... returning.

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 guests 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).

Van Helsing can then thank the audience for helping him to solve the crime, *etc.*

Appendix A (in the full pack) gives Detailed Character back stories

Your performers can use these as the basis for their stories. Feel free to embellish, modify and personalise! As most of these characters are taken from horror fiction, there is plenty of real material about them available on the internet and you can do further research there! We have included some extra key information that is needed for this particular plot!

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.

e.g. Count Vlad Dracula

Vlad has lived for many centuries and is a purist and traditionalist. He lives in his vast, decomposing castle in the mountains of Transylvania and to be honest, he doesn't get out much. His doors remain un-oiled to give that perfect creaking effect and, despite the draughts, he refuses to fit double glazing (you'd have to admire the courage of a door-to-door salesman anyway)!

He abhors the modern world and the way that monsters in the 21st Century have turned away from their roots and the good old ways. He always dresses in the classic Tuxedo and cape and resents the trendy modern breed of vampires in their jeans and tee shirts.

For him a classic encounter is the assault on a virginal nightdress-clad woman in her four poster bed and an exit of evil cackling into the night; the thrill and challenge is in the chase and the personal touch, not like his modern peers who use Facebook and texting. He still travels by horse drawn carriage and sleeps in a coffin.

He is particularly touchy if the whole Harker story is brought up. Not his finest hour when his plans to take over London were thwarted and he himself had a stake through the heart. Fortunately he was able to regenerate – as portrayed (rather badly he thinks) in the Hammer Horror films. However being one for honour and style he relishes the eternal battle between good and evil and actually rather enjoys it all. He tends to be a bit over the top in everything he does especially in his dealings with his arch enemy Van Helsing. He is deeply resentful of...