



A Murder Mystery Party Pack

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Customer Taster

Mates Meet Again

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A school reunion is gate-crashed by the domineering headmistress Deirdre Blackburn. Tempers fly and someone gets more than just detention! Which member of staff or former pupil did the deed?

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Mates Meet Again

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.

This 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 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 this 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 sheets of Reunion name badges for all the characters.
- Printable Video Cover for 'Deep Goat'.
- Printable Table Cards to list the key characters to assist the audience.
- Printable Welcome Sign for your event.
- Printable 'who dunnit' Solution Sheets for your guests to complete.

You can feel free to customise the details of the scenario (in particular selecting the name of a school local to you). 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 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

The time and place is the local school reunion for the pupils from the early 1990's. Several of the students have been in contact through the "Mates Meet Again" website and have got in touch with favourite teacher **Fennella Brodie**. She has arranged a get-together.

In addition to Fennella, special guests to this event include:

Major Dickie Bennett: One of the School Governors.

Cyndy Sparkle, Sasha Denton-Wilde and Emilia Campbell-Black: past students of the school.

The evening goes downhill rapidly when the event is interrupted by two late arrivals:

Deirdre Blackburn: The evil, vindictive and hated school headmistress. Nicknamed 'the Dragon', she has found out about the event and has decided to make an appearance too.

Carrie Sidekick: School secretary and Deirdre's lackey.

Many people have not seen each other for many years, but old tensions come to the surface in a reunion which ends in violent argument and murder as two people die in mysterious circumstances. Eventually, the murderer 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 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.

It would be sensible to check the facilities before the event. (For example, having a murder victim found dead at the foot of a staircase has less credibility in a single storey building!)

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 5 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.
- There should be enough space at this top table for 2 additional places to be set for the late arrivals to join them. 2 spare chairs should be within easy reach.
- Tables for the other guest. 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 great	Pre-dinner drinks
8.00	Sit down and Fennella's speech	
8.10	Deirdre and Carrie arrive	
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 guest 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 commonest 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). Sometime 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, when 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; 'Did we really only go out for 5 months 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 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

Fennella Brodie

Female: Playing age early 40's.

Costume: Smart and trendy.

The drama teacher and very popular with students. Very much out for a laugh and likes to befriend the students she teaches. She has a colourful personality and is very extrovert. She is very bright too and there's a sense of frustration about her in that she has ambition and has stayed at the same school and never got any further. She also never married which also seems to be a source of tension for her.

Major Dickie Bennett

Male: Playing age 50's.

Costume: Smart suit / blazer with cravat or bow tie. A bit shabby around the edges.

A retired army major with a distinguished career who has been a school governor for 15 years. A bit of a vague and slightly muddled man, but quite charming. He is aware of the financial irregularities which are closing the school but has no idea what is going on (he's not good with figures). He is genial and always nice to the students (sometimes a little too nice!), but has recently racked up some rather hefty gambling debts and has some large very high interest loans to repay. His other big secret is that he is not actually a retired major at all. His army service was limited to Sergeant in the army Catering Corp.

Cyndy Sparkle

Female: Playing age early 30's.

Costume: Flamboyant, glamorous and a bit tarty!

A past student who left the school after a drugs scandal and who has gone on to make a modest income from fashion modelling and advertising. She is bitter that she never got to follow the high powered acting career to which she aspired. She has not met any of the other students since.

Sasha Denton-Wilde

Male: Playing age 30's.

Costume: Trendy modern suit, very smart and exuding wealth and confidence.

A dashing past student who charms everyone. Not particularly academic at school but he has done very well for himself (quite what his businesses are remains unclear). He drives a flash car and has a string of glamorous girlfriends. He is also totally amoral and is out for what he can get and doesn't care who he hurts. No-one can believe this of him though as he is so "nice" on the surface. But in short he's a thoroughly nasty piece of work.

Emilia Campbell-Black

Female: Playing age 30's

Costume: Hippy outfit with badges, charms and bangles. She brings along a teddy bear – the old school mascot.

Emilia was a very bright student who was the apple of everyone's eye and people had great expectations of her (a top university and a great career). She did get a place at Kings College (Cambridge) to read Law, but didn't finish and others have lost contact with her until now. People had assumed she would have done well, but she's dropped out and followed her artistic tendencies and seems happier. She's also embraced Buddhism and has travelled to places like Tibet. A champion of many odd environmental causes and a strong pro-lifer, but she has a secret that may come back to haunt and wreck this image...

Deirdre Blackburn

Female: Playing age 40's - 50's.

Costume: Power dresser – smart and austere.

A powerful and quite frightening character, who can sometimes appear to be very charming. She is lively and extrovert, but a complete control freak. For years she has exerted a hold on many of her students. Most people are terrified of her. She seems to know exactly what is going on in everyone's lives even though they left school a long time ago. She has never married and lives alone and underneath her frightening demeanour, She is actually quite a pathetic lonely bully. She'll stop at nothing to get what she wants and takes great pleasure in humiliating people. She has been up to all sorts in her 20 yrs + at the school and as wrecked the futures of many staff and pupils.

Carrie Sidekick

Female: Playing age 40's.

Costume: Shabby dresser, frumpy and tasteless.

The school secretary but very much the lackey of Deirdre. She does all Deirdre's dirty work. She like her mentor is also quite nasty, but needs to follow instructions and she is not so capable of thinking up such evil things as Deirdre. She would probably be quite reasonable under a better influence. She is quite a sad character in many ways. She seems to feel she has missed out on life and has regrets but doesn't seem able to articulate them very well. She is obviously scared of Deirdre and wants to stand up to her but somehow never quite makes it. She is in close cahoots with Deirdre in many of her schemes but is only now just realising that perhaps she has been left to do most of the dirty work that leaves a trail of evidence pointing at her and not Deirdre.

Plot Narrative

Meet and Greet

All the guests are ex-staff or ex-students of the school invited to this reunion party by popular drama teacher, Fennella Brodie. The 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: Fennella, Cyndy, Major Bennett, Sasha, and finally, Emilia).

They should introduce themselves to the guests, and interact with one another. They can talk about their excitement to be meeting up once more. They can remark about fictional teachers, lessons, old sports days, and also comment on how wonderful it is to be here without 'the Dragon', Deirdre Blackburn. They can make throwaway remarks about the other characters sowing the seeds for any mistrust 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.

The speech

Once the guests are seated for the meal, Fennella opens with a speech to the assembled guests.

Her speech must include:

- Welcome the audience to the reunion.
- How great it is to see so many old school chums here and then an introduction to the other main characters. Point out the school mascot etc.
- A mention that of course Deirdre Blackburn has not been invited so that everyone can let their hair down and really enjoy themselves.
- Explains how sadly the school is badly in debt and is threatened with closure. (all very vague and hush-hush but clearly money has been going missing and the school is bankrupt).
- But don't worry! She is not here to beg money off ex-staff and ex-pupils!
- Explains how she invited everyone here to meet up one final time as she planned to give up teaching. What people don't know though is she is not going to move very far...
- She announces that she has recently come into a significant inheritance and plans to buy the school and re-open it as a drama and arts college under her headship.

The guests will react to the revelation. Major Bennett is obviously concerned about the bankruptcy (this is the first he knows of it), but the others are all delighted for Fennella and congratulate her with applause.

However the merriment is short-lived as the party is crashed by Deirdre and Carrie. Everyone hates Deirdre. She is cruel and vindictive and people are still scared of her (including the students who have left). She seems to have an incredible hold and power over people. Deirdre announces that she and Carrie will stay and join in the fun!

[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 / detective 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 faxed through 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 motive.

The dead are invited to return (they should bring with 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 (magnifier glass etc)). 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 (wife's background etc).

Fennella Brodie

Whenever she hears the phrase "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps" she feels proud. Because that's her; that's what she did. She may not be proud of everything she has done to get where she is today, but she didn't hurt anyone other than herself.

Born in Liverpool she was brought up by her mother as her father died of meningitis when she was two years old. She was happy until her mother remarried when Fennella was ten. Her new husband was unkind to Fennella and abused her physically and mentally. She couldn't tell anyone as he said that she would ruin her mother's happiness if she ever let anyone know what he was doing.

Fennella was only ever happy at school, since her home had become a place of misery and abuse. She loved her lessons and joined every possible after school club that she could. She particularly enjoyed the drama side of things, and found that she was quite good at acting. It gave her a chance to escape from being who she really was, and to put on the character and persona of somebody else. In fact, it was to her drama teacher, Miss Betty Floyd, that she finally confessed what was going on at home. It was she who persuaded Fennella to tell her mother what was going on, and so after seven years of silence she told her mother what her husband was doing to her. She accused Fennella of lying and she threw her out of the house.

Fennella ran away to London and found her way into drama through porn films, as the luscious Lucy Moist. The best known of these 'Deep Goat' was scandalous at the time because of the blurred, but recognisable, figure of the Tory MP Dickie Denton Wilde. When Fennella had the pleasure of meeting his son, Sasha, a while later she could see the resemblance straight away, both thinking they were God's gift to women, and both being wrong.

She made other films, and finally scraped enough capital together to support her through teacher training (she realised that, much as she loved acting, she wasn't so good as to get much further than she'd already got) and she then got the job at the school. She was an excellent teacher, that rare mixture of a disciplinarian who can make lessons enjoyable, and gain the respect of the pupils.

Sadly, when trying for promotion she never got far, and suspected Deirdre Blackburn of giving duff references. Unbeknownst to her, Deirdre of course knows about Deep Goat, but has not yet used that knowledge.

Fennella has recently had a windfall in the form of a legacy from her old drama teacher Betty Floyd, who she has kept in touch with all these years. She plans on buying the school and announces this in her speech at the beginning of the event.

Fennella has liked most of her students, but was particularly proud of Cyndy Sparkle and Emilia Campbell-Black. Fennella had high hopes of both of these students for different reasons. Unfortunately, thanks to the attentions of Sasha Denton-Wilde, Fennella has seen both of her favourite students have their hopes and dreams smashed.

Fennella obviously hates Deirdre for holding her back all these years and also loathes Carrie Sidekick for her conniving, slimy nosy ways and for dropping poison in people's ears.

While Fennella knows (or at least suspects) the Major is phoney she does have a sneaking liking for him. He too has pulled himself up by his boot straps after all, Fennella isn't all she seems to be, and maybe she admires the Major for finding his own solutions to problems. She's not that impressed however by the fact that he appears to have embezzled the school funds, and so he won't be chair of governors at 'The Betty Floyd' School for Performing Arts