



A Murder Mystery Event Pack

By David Lovesy and Steve Clark

Really Horrid Production Company



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Customer Taster

M’Nango Valley

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Adventurer and explorer Oregon Smith is opening an African theme park based on some rather warped concepts. Will he get away with it? Not with the local aristocracy and some environmental activists to deal with!

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About this pack

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

This Taster gives you some extracts!

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 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 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').
- A **Plot Narrative** to show how plot should flow and how the events should be woven in.
- An Appendix containing a sample of the detailed **Character Back-Stories**.

The full pack includes an accompanying 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 sheets of **business cards** for two of the key characters.
- Printable **brochure / flyer** for the M'Nango Valley Park.
- Printable **newspaper story** on the Stockgrove private scandals.
- Printable **table cards** to list the key characters to assist the audience.
- Printable M'Nango Valley **park entrance tickets** for daft prizes.
- Printable 'who dunnit' **solution sheets** for your guests to complete.

You should feel free to customise the details of the scenario (in particular setting, Stockgrove Park, 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 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

Oregon Smith, intrepid explorer and Indiana Jones figure has purchased land on the local Stockgrove country estate (local to your venue), to build a theme park celebrating African culture and history. This event is to launch the plans of the park to local residents and business representatives (your audience).

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

Lady Daphne: The local aristocratic landowner who sold the land to Smith.

Tanya Smith: Oregon's new wife.

Rick Adams: The newly hired operations manager for the park.

Jane Wilde: The local councillor who hopes for political capital from the project.

The event will be interrupted 2 environmental protesters:

Scrapey: A spaced out activist who has had a few too many magic mushrooms.

Sunbeam Earth Mother : A hippy woman who believes in peace and free love!

They 'gatecrash' to complain about the fate of a rare butterfly that will be decimated by the new park.

Oregon then shocks everyone when he unveils the full details of the park. Cue arguments, recriminations, mayhem and murder as two of the characters die horribly!

General Staging Notes

Casting / rehearsal

Your chosen performers should be issued with a copy of this 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 the event is 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.
- A second table nearby the Top table with 2 spare places where the late arrival protesters will be invited to sit.
- 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 roughly as follows:

7.30 to 8.00	Meet and greet	Pre-dinner drinks
8.00	Sit down and Oregon’s speech	
8.10	Protesters arrive	
8.15 to 8.40	First set of Arguments	Starters
8.40	People storm out	
8.50	First body discovered	Main course
9.00 to 9.25	Second set of arguments	
9.25	More flouncing out	Dessert
9.35	Second body found	
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 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; 'Have we really been married 5 years and not 8, well it seems 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 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).

Overview of the Characters

Oregon Smith

Male: Playing age late thirties.

Costume: Oregon should be dressed in 'adventure / bush gear' with boots, shorts, safari style jacket, jungle / safari hat. He carries a rubber snake and a plastic crocodile (because he thinks it is funny!)

An "adventurer" (his words), who has modelled himself on Indiana Jones, except he's less interested in archaeology, and more in the fame and fortune side of things. He is well known for several discoveries (you can decide what, depending on your own interests & knowledge), and his daring exploits in areas of danger. Even in the war zones he has refused to leave archaeological sites (he says it is because he doesn't want fragile artefacts to be damaged however it is always because he is busy making black market sales). In fact he doesn't really care about the boring history side of things but uses his archaeology and exploring as a front for drug and gun smuggling and illegal exports of archaeological treasures. He is a womaniser; they love him for his robust tales of "daring do", his sense of mystery, and, of course, his money. Tonight he is leading the official launch of the new theme park that has been touted as bringing the mysteries and history of darkest Africa to the mass market in his home country, but his plans for the park are very different from what everyone is expecting...

Tanya Smith

Female: Playing age late twenties.

Costume: Short skirt, low cut top, gaudy and with very little taste.

Oregon's latest wife. Tanya has been married to Oregon for just over a year now. She is a model and minor TV celebrity and was attracted to Oregon's rugged charms and obvious wealth. She isn't terribly bright (or is she?) and Oregon treats her in an off-hand way. He is also rude and possibly violent to her when she annoys him.

Lady Daphne

Female: Playing age 50 - 60.

Costume: Eccentric, Upper class. Tweed skirt and jacket or similar. A bit tatty. Carries hand bag with bottle of spirits.

Lady Daphne is an upper class twit who has sold off some of the family land to Oregon, charmed by his tales of adventure and his promises of the prestige and acclaim the new park will bring to her part of the world. She has recently suffered several personal tragedies that she will drop into conversation with any one who will listen; the suicide of her son and the miscarriage of her daughter in law after a riding accident (the loss of the last 'heir' to the Stockgrove name).

Rick Adams

Male: Playing age late thirties.

Costume: Business suit. Never without his mobile phone

Rick has had a long career working in and running theme parks. He has worked in the UK, US and Europe. He has recently been 'head-hunted' (probably an apt word given the whole M'Nango image) to manage the new park and has great hopes for the future, but Oregon has not been very truthful about his visions for the park.

Councillor Wilde

Female: Playing age mid thirties

Costume: Power dressing (smart and business like)

Jane Wilde, local right wing Councillor who, for political gain and kudos, has supported the park since the outset as a source of local jobs and putting the local area firmly on the world map. She is also in the pocket of Oregon, who has paid her well to ask the right questions and push his plans through regulations.

Scrapey

Male: Playing age early thirties

Costume: Ripped and tattered mud-stained trousers, shirt and T-shirt. Unkempt and dirty. Carries a small hipflask.

Scrapey is the archetypical eco-warrior, a nutcase who has eaten a few too many magic mushroom omelettes. He has been living underground on the estate for the past 2 weeks in protest at the plans with his partner Sunbeam. He is regularly seen sipping from his own hip-flask. He also carries poorly made placards to “Save the buttafly” (*sic*) and “Down with money and stuff” and his behaviour gets more and more outlandish as the evening wears on...

Sunbeam

Female: Playing age mid thirties

Costume: Hippy style caftan and scarf (slightly messy given her underground living arrangements), but manages to look attractive in a wild way. She is also, very visibly, 5 months pregnant!

Sunbeam Earth Mother (originally Rachael), was married to Oregon for just under 2 years until their split. Everyone (including Scrapey) assumes that the child that Sunbeam now carries is Scrapey’s but it is in fact Oregon’s, conceived when she and Oregon had a brief liaison when the old flame rekindled a few months ago. This will come out during the evening. Having been married to Oregon for some time she is well aware of many of his little secrets, the gun running, drugs and treasure hunting. Interestingly, it will be revealed that in the past she has slept with all the male characters and one of the women!

Plot Narrative

Meet and Greet

All the guests are sponsors of the project or local businesses / residents invited by Oregon to his big launch. 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: Rick Adams, Councillor Wilde, Lady Daphne and Oregon with Tanya).

They should introduce themselves to the guests, and interact with one another. They can talk about their excitement and hopes for the new project. They can make throwaway remarks about the other characters sowing the seeds for any mistrust and personal conflicts. Those characters with Business cards can use these in introductions. 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, Oregon opens with a speech to the assembled notables and guests.

His speech must include:

Welcome to the audience.

Introduction of the other characters and how important they have been to the development.

A bit of background on the development. His study of African tribes, and culture. His belief in the importance of educating others.

He has long cherished the idea of educating the world to the culture of the now extinct M’Nango civilisation of deepest darkest Africa (a civilisation he has been studying for many years) and what better way than to combine education and learning with the fun and thrills of a theme park.

Distribution of the Park flyers.

Revelations as to just what the park will really be! The M’Nango tribe were a primitive and brutal people who lived life to the full! And that’s what the park should be like too. Forget all this modern nonsense like health and safety! That’s not authentic for the M’Nango experience! The rides will be exhilarating and thrilling! The M’Nango people faced deadly peril and danger everyday in their jungle environment with warfare, deadly fauna and flora, disease and sacrifice to their God. That’s why they are now extinct! It would be shallow and farcical not to include such elements in the park experience! The fact is Oregon’s park is going to be a bizarre mix of entertainment and savage torture. He thinks it is great but all the special guests are going to be horrified for obvious reasons!

The guests will react vocally to Oregon’s final revelations:

Lady Daphne is horrified but it’s a done deal and she has sold off the land. What will people say of her family?

Councillor Wilde is horrified as to the effect on the local area and her voting base as she so publicly endorsed the project at the early stages?

Rick Adams is horrified. This isn’t what he signed up for and now he has burned his bridges and is tied in...

Tanya doesn’t appear to really understand much of what is happening, but grasps that the park might not be the most lucrative endeavour she was hoping for.

Just as chaos begins to descend, the evening is gate crashed by Sunbeam and Scrapey, who arrive with banners to protest about the fate of a rare butterfly threatened by the park’s development. At first Oregon doesn’t recognise his ex-wife but she will soon put him straight. Oregon is so confident in his plans that he invites them to stay and see why they are so wrong.

The First Murder

Arguments beforehand

After Oregon's speech in which he announces the detailed plans for the park and hands out his brochures, 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. Oregon should be hyping the park, the others should be apologising and expressing their dismay and personal issues with the whole project.

While this is going on, each of the characters should also seek out Oregon have a heated argument with him. This can be done at the 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).

The following arguments should be held.

- Lady Daphne is outraged at plans. She has been lied to and deceived. What will the papers say? Oregon's reaction: "it's a done deal love!"
- Jane Wilde is furious at the whole thing: She was seen to support it and she could now lose her seat. Oregon reminds her that she never complained about those back-handers. What will the papers say about that?
- Rick Adams is outraged at this professional suicide etc. Oregon reminds him that he signed the contract and he can't get out of it now without massive penalties
- Scrapey has a go on the environmental front and the future of butterflies!.
- Sunbeam launches an environmental and personal attack on Oregon. She reveals the truth behind the baby. In stark contrast to Scrapey's horror, Oregon is delighted with the news and instantly proclaims that he will look after Sunbeam and the child, and raise the newborn to take over his mighty corporate empire, a thought which goes against everything Sunbeam believes in!
- Tanya is upset at the park, the child and the garage incident and now this adoption of an heir. What about her future?

Once all the arguments are out of the way and potential motives established, Oregon gives a final tirade against all their objections and proclaims whatever they say and feel he will have his way and M'Nango Valley will happen!

With the event in disarray, various people leave. Shortly afterwards, a body is discovered

Motives <Snip>

The Second Murder <Snip>

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 (cut-backs etc.) 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'.

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 guilty party will step forward and should deliver a short denouement speech to explain motives for the murders.

The dead are invited to return (and 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 and a set of park tickets!)

The booby prize is announced (and the solution they gave read out) and a prize awarded (a set of tickets to the park and a suitably silly gift – a magnifier glass, for example). 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 (*Sample*)

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).

Oregon Smith

Born Oswald Smith, Oregon took his more exciting moniker from his parent's pet dog. Oregon always enjoyed adventuring and exploring, forever lost in daydreams of lost kingdoms and forbidden temples. Although he has tried to study the sciences, Oregon barely scraped through Archaeology and Anthropology at Loughborough University when he was 21, and has spent his time ever since getting involved in digs, explorations and interfering with peaceful animals in their natural habitat. After realising the potential for attracting women by being a foreigner, Oregon took on the culture and linguistics of Australia (he now pronounces "Loughborough" as "LoogaBurrooga").

Oregon has made several important finds off the back of other's sweat. He was present in Cairo when the exciting discovery of Tutankhamen's Beach Home on the banks of the Nile was uncovered, and Oregon unearthed what is believed to be the Pharaoh's own surfboard. Several other smaller artefacts are attributed to him, but that is probably his most famous find.

He is exciting, energetic, and a bit of a duffer when it comes to academics. That said, he knows a business opportunity when he sees one and got an absolute bargain price on the local estate. With Councillor Jane Wilde in his pocket, and successful park manager Rick Adams under contract, Oregon can't see how he can be on to a loser with the creation of M'Nango Valley. It's an archaeological theme park which offers all the fun of traditional parks but coupled with the mindless blood letting of the M'Nango people. It's going to upset a lot of people, but as long as Oregon protests it's moral value then he should stand to make a tidy sum.

The idea first came to him when he and Sunbeam met in the Congo, Oregon looking for archaeological treasures, Sunbeam on an ecological trip studying the indigenous people of the area. It was a whirlwind romance followed quickly by marriage, but only lasted just under 2 years. Sunbeam just didn't take to the ethics behind most of Oregon's dealings.

Oregon is loud and rude, and is pretty happy with his lot in life. He regrets not having a son and heir to pass his Empire on to, but he has remarried (to Tanya Smith) and is hoping that the union may yet bear fruit. Tanya isn't too keen, however, and is currently putting her minor celebrity career first. Still, nothing that Oregon can't beat out of her in the near future. Oregon has a wealth of anecdotes about his adventures, 40% true and 100% exciting. And that's the way he likes it...