



**“They Never  
See It Coming...”**

**A Murder Mystery Party Pack**

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*in association with*



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***Customer Taster***

# “They Never See It Coming...”

*The team behind the smash-hit ghost hunting show “Beyond Belief” gather to celebrate the winning of several awards. But one of the team is not entering into the spirit of things...*

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## About 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 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 should have a lot more fun!

### *The full 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') *Customer Taster here*.
- 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. *One in the Customer Taster document here*.

The full pack gives the 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 season two of "Beyond Belief"
- A book sleeve for Darren Black's new exposé book
- Printable 'whodunnit' **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 surviving characters have been given motives and reasons to commit murder – including the investigator, Darren Black. 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!

## Plot Overview

Tonight the cast and crew of reality TV haunting investigation show “Beyond Belief” are gathering to celebrate their awards from the Fortean Times for “Best Paranormal Entertainment Show” and “Best Use of Night Vision Goggles”. These awards (or “Ghoulies”) are the pinnacle of televisual paranormal achievement.

Prominent guests include:

- **Ivor Feeling** – Nervous presenter of “Beyond Belief”.
- **Fenella de Kay** – Tyrannical producer of the award-winning show.
- **Erika Flora** – Show psychic that talks with those beyond the veil.
- **Gary Burke** – Show researcher and assistant to Fenella de Kay.
- **Cherry Chabona** – The bubbly wannabe whose haunted house helped to put the show on the map.
- **Darren Black** – investigative journalist whose column “Shades of Grey” exposes charlatans.

“Beyond Belief” is an entertainment show very much in the mould of programmes like “Most Haunted”. Presenter Ivor Feeling takes psychic Erika Flora around various reputedly haunted residences, where Erika tries to communicate with troubled souls from beyond the veil. This show began as one of those “here today, gone tomorrow” shows – with the shows only true value being the entertainment value of watching Ivor melt down into panic every time anything vaguely spooky happens. And then the team visited the home of Cherry Chabona...

It was there that the team experienced and captured phenomena that could not easily be explained. The hype and televising of this episode catapulted the show up the rankings list and created a global brand. The show’s subsequent popularity has led to its recognition and winning of two awards from the Fortean Times’ annual ceremony.

Fenella de Kay will stand up at the guest’s table, and thank everyone concerned with their help in making the show what it is. There is a very self-congratulatory tone around the room – but then Fenella drops her bombshell...

It has come to light that the very episode that shot them all to fame was nothing but a tissue of lies and trickery, cooked up by Cherry and the show’s researcher Gary Burke. Fenella has no moral option other than to reveal all immediately, which will undoubtedly mean the show’s immediate cancellation. There is at least some good news, however, in that Fenella has been offered a very lucrative Producer’s job in the United States – which she would have been unable to take whilst still under the tight contract with two more years to go on “Beyond Belief”!

The assembled cast are left in stunned shock – there are bitter arguments, and recriminations, not least of which as Cherry’s date for the evening reveals himself to be none other than Darren Black, investigative journalist and exposé of psychic frauds and charlatans.

After the main course, *someone* is found dead – apparently through heart failure with a look of terror on their face. *Someone* has been literally scared to death! Darren, as investigative journalist, cannot help but start to pull at the strings to unravel the mystery...

Can the diners help Darren to work out whodunnit?

# 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 (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. We provide example stories in the Appendix and 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 Fenella's speech (Starters)
8.10	Arguments and revelations begin
8.30	<i>Someone</i> leaves (Main course)
8.45	<i>Someone</i> found dead
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 supernatural theme, you should encourage the audience to come dressed for the occasion in suitable costume to add to the atmosphere! The principal characters should also be dressed for their roles.

## **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 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 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 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**

### ***Ivor Feeling***

*Male: Playing age 40/50s.*

A camp presenter at the end of his career, Ivor has a terrible habit of screaming hysterically at the slightest thing - much to the annoyance of all around him (especially Fenella). He has never really reached the lofty heights he felt he deserved to when leaving drama school. He was destined for stardom, but fell short. This leaves him with a huge chip on his shoulder as he feels the show is beneath him, but is holding on because it's all he has left.

### ***Fenella de Kay***

*Female: Playing age 30/40s.*

Machiavellian ambitious go-getting executive, prepared to do anything to further her career. Manipulative and two faced, and will happily lie to get her own way. This show is nothing more than a stepping stone for her, and she finds it hard to conceal her contempt for both the show and the team around her. She is prepared to use any means available to her to get her own way, including flirting outrageously with all and sundry.

### ***Erika Flora***

*Female: Playing age 40/50s.*

She is the show's Psychic co-host, working with Ivor on the televised investigations. She isn't really a psychic - at one time she had what she thought was a premonition, but subsequently thinks she was only daydreaming. She now, however, has made a career out of cold reading - always quite vague about the detail but convincing enough to dupe the vulnerable and hard-of-thinking. Much to her surprise, following a covert visit from the governing body, she received a glowing *OFFDEAD* report.

### ***Gary Burke***

*Male: Playing age 25-30.*

Much put-upon and under valued member of the team. He is the show's researcher, finding and interviewing potential guests and locations for the show. Due to the nature of his job he is privy to all that goes on with the crew and cast. More so due to his dalliances with .... All the others think he is harmless enough - little do they know he is plotting his own career... Gary is also probably the biggest advocate of Erika as a gifted spiritualist. She has time and time again revealed details from Gary's life that he cannot explain how she knows. He is in awe of her abilities.

## ***Cherry Chabona***

*Female: Playing age 35-45s.*

A mother and Bed and Breakfast owner desperate to escape the everyday drudge. She's loud, blond and brash - looking for her next fifteen minutes of fame. Having enjoyed the limelight following her appearance on the show, she is now convinced she is of star quality and is at the event tonight to get a commitment from the team to produce a follow-up episode of what phenomena are going on at the original haunt site.

## ***Darren Black***

*Male: Playing age 30/40s.*

He has a column in the Sunday papers called "Shades of Grey", specialising in exposés of all things moonbeams and crystals. He has a book deal pending and has spent the last year researching the world of psychic charlatans. He is currently in a relationship with ... – but she doesn't know who he really is. He has come as ...'s date tonight.

In the full pack please refer to Appendix A for more info on the characters, their likes and dislikes and back stories.



# Plot Narrative

## *Meet and Greet*

All the guests are regular people, but the TV show's demographic suggests that the fans and groupies of the show would tend towards the New Age style of dress – maybe you could encourage your attendees to dress as such! 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: Gary Burke first, paving the way for Fenella de Kay. Then Cherry Chabona and Darren Black should arrive arm-in-arm (although Darren will just be introduced as Daz initially as Cherry doesn't know who he really is). Finally Ivor Feeling and Erika Flora will enter, to lavish applause from the rest of the team.

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!

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

## *The speech*

Once seated and settled, Fenella stands and welcomes everyone there tonight for their help and support in getting "Beyond Belief" to the position that it holds today. The following points should be covered in the speech:

- A welcome to the guests.
- An introduction of the other principal characters for anyone who's missed them.
- How pleased she is to have won two prestigious awards from the Fortean Times as part of their annual awards for the investigation of all things paranormal (informally known as "The Ghoulies"), and the thrill it was to walk away from the event with a pair of Ghoulies.
- It was a gamble on her part, but the production company have decided to push forward with the three-year contract she signed up to in order for the show to be made in the first place. This secures two further years of "Beyond Belief!" on our screens.

There is general celebration amongst the special guests at this announcement, but Darren stands up and makes a brief announcement of his own, *and others give some particular points...*

## The Murder

### *Arguments before the murder*

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, there should be some predefined arguments / heated discussions should take place (*suggested in the full pack*). 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).

**Darren Black** is furious with ... With the press releases going public from Monday, it makes his entire book effectively redundant. The book's revelations will all be second hand by the time it is launched. Why must ... .. now?

**Gary Burke** is stunned. Yes, there was indeed fraud perpetuated in that episode of Beyond Belief but it was orchestrated between ... .. He feels hurt and betrayed, particularly as ... .. have been having a sexual relationship for quite some time. Why is he not coming across to the USA too?

**Ivor Feeling** was finally getting to be somebody and now it looks like his series is being ripped from him. Even though he is not being accused of foul play, the mud sticks. He's never gotten on with ... anyway and this is the icing on the cake.

**Erika Flora** is well aware she has no real psychic abilities. Without her "Beyond Belief" anchor she is going to be reduced to ... etc...

**Cherry Chabona** was relying on ... and ... etc.  
*...further details in the full pack*

If your venue permits and you can manage it without causing consternation with the guests (!) , if possible someone should trip the fuses to the lights – just for a few seconds. The wider the trip the better, to cover the bar and other locations the audience might have strayed to, but even just the room lights where the guests are eating will do! This will need to be done by a member of staff / someone else in the know.

The other characters should all return commenting on the brief blackout, ...

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

### *The further revelations*

Even after ... .. there are further revelations to be made. Whether in argument form or gossip for going around the tables, the following information should also be imparted...

- There is bound to be much speculation about the cause of death – can someone actually be scared to death? ... was found with ... .. a table lamp... with some subtle hints, someone in the audience may suggest that ... was .... If no one does, then one of the actors should. All have the necessary knowledge of ... .. but who had the motive and actually did it?

**Darren** has had ...

**Ivor** has always hated ...

**Gary** has always been in awe of ...

**Fenella** ...

**Gary** had been ...

## **Motives for murder**

**Everyone had a motive: All also have method – a knowledge or past connection with electricians (which will have been dropped into conversation).**

**These are disclosed in the full pack.**

### ***Who Dunit?***

The audience are asked to assist with identifying the murderer... to save time and effort for the Police when they finally arrive!

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).

... is the murderer. ... will explain the motives to the audience. ... Good riddance!

The dead are invited to return and ... joins the other characters (... brings the prizes when ... comes).

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 silly theme related gift). 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

### Full details in the Full Pack

Your performers can use these as the basis for their stories. Feel free to embellish, modify and personalise! 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.

Please note: each have a more than basic understanding of ... and so each could have rigged the table lamp to ... .... This is explained as a note in their back stories and it is up to the actors to drop that into conversation with the audience to drop hints / red herrings.

### *Customer Taster sample*

#### *Ivor Feeling*

Ivor's home is a small cottage at the foot of Snowdon in north Wales. He says he lives there because he finds it peaceful and spiritually fulfilling. The main reason however is more mundane, property prices were cheaper there in the seventies, and it was all he could afford.

His career has never really taken off, but despite that he has always tried to maintain a showbiz lifestyle, albeit on a very low income. He drives what he calls his beautiful eccentric vintage Citroen, that he refers to as Hercule. (After Hercule Poirot). However it is in fact falling apart and well past its sell by date.

He often finds himself in two minds as to what to do in even the simplest situations, but that Geminis for you! His only true love is a Labradoodle called Oscar, named after another misunderstood thespian, his hero Oscar Wilde.

He has an uncomfortable relationship with the media business and in particular the press, he sees them as a necessary evil, but in his eyes he has been treated unfairly in the past. Due to this he doesn't really get on with any of the crew or production team, but he has particular dislike of ... who he calls ...!

... *Knowledge:* In the mid Eighties, Ivor hosted a very short running kids show called '...'. Each show kids would be set ... challenges. Not only was it dreadful, but after an accidental ... that nearly killed a teenager, the show was canned mid first series.