

Christmas on Cromas Isle

A Murder Mystery Party Pack

By Jane Morris



Morris Murder Mysteries



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

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It is Christmas Eve on Croma Isle, Scotland. Helena, Nick and Jock are guests at the Forest Park Guesthouse which is run by Anastasia. It is an ideal location to escape their hectic London lives as it overlooks the stunning hills of Corby, Loch Stanion and Glen Weldon. They were due to leave the island today and return to London but the taxi hasn't arrived to take them to the harbour to catch the ferry.

What brought these people to Croma in the first place and how are their lives intertwined?

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Christmas on Croma Isle

Customer Taster

This Taster Contains extracts from the Organiser's Overview and from one of the Role Packs.

Overview

Christmas on Croma Isle is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 4 participants as a “dinner party” mystery.

It could also be played and improvised by four actors in front of a small audience at a larger party (for which different preparation is needed - see “Running the Script in Front of an Audience”).

It is assumed that “the organiser” will also be a participant, playing one of the characters - hence there are various indications that the organiser should avoid looking at some of the documents in advance of the event!

Characters

Anastasia Jonsonovski

Russian, retired prima ballerina with the Bolshy Company, now owner of the Forest Park Guesthouse on Croma Isle, a remote Scottish Island, ex wife of Blyth Thursford.

Helena Thursford

Anastasia's daughter, also a professional dancer

Dr Nick Porton-Down

Brilliant but secretive young scientist.

Lord Jock Stockbrig OBE

Millionaire and successful businessman.

Unseen Characters

These are people relevant to the story, even though they do not appear in person!

Blyth Thursford Ex husband of Anastasia, still living in London

Moira McTavish The island's taxi driver.

Hamish McDonald The island's ferry man

Structure

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview
- One “Role Pack” for each character (to be distributed to the individual characters before the event)
- The Police report (to be revealed during the event)
- The Solution (to be revealed at the end of the event)

The Role Packs

Each pack contains:-

- A brief overview (introducing the characters and the background)
- The script for the “opening scene”
- A character briefing for the individual character (which hints about questions to ask of the others)

Running the script for a “dinner party mystery”

Distribute the relevant Role Pack to each player

(This can be done prior to the event, in order to give the characters time to digest their brief and, if desired, to find an appropriate costume). Ideally, the distribution would be done without the organiser being tempted to read the packs! (For example, the individual files could be distributed, or a trusted third party could print them and distribute an envelope to each participant.)

Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.

(This can be done as one single scene or split to accommodate eating and drinking!)

Print and circulate one or more copies of the Police Report

“The police have just faxed through their preliminary findings”. (Ideally this should not have been seen by the organiser beforehand, therefore if it cannot be printed during the event, it should be printed and put in an envelope by a trusted third party before the event!)

Interrogation

The players interrogate each other on the basis of the hints in their “character briefing”.

Accusations

At the end of the interrogation (when everyone believes that all the relevant information has been disclosed), then each participant should write down who they think is the murderer, and why; then explain their solutions to the other players. (Writing down the accusations first prevents one accuser from influencing the rest!)

Solution

Print and read (aloud!) the solution sheet. (Ideally this should not have been seen by the organiser beforehand, therefore if it cannot be printed during the event, it should be printed and put in an envelope by a trusted third party before the event!)

Award a prize to the best solution!



Running the script in front of an audience

Note for performance in front of an audience, you need to purchase a performance licence from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.

Preparation

Initial preparation can be done using the dinner party format. (It's fun! Why not?)

After that, the cast need to learn the dialogue, develop character and get comfortable with the (improvised) interrogation.

Decide whether the audience should be invited to join in the interrogation. If so, then consider:-

- Developing more detailed "background briefs" for each character, elaborating background, but not changing any of the plot points. This allows the actors to accommodate more irrelevant questions from the audience!
- Developing "get-out strategies" so that an irrelevant line of audience questioning can be curtailed. (This can, for example, be direct "that has no bearing on the case", jokey "I couldn't possibly answer that without my lawyer present" or via an interruption which introduces a new line of questioning from the character brief.)
- Giving "seed questions" to the audience by way of selected information from the background briefs. (This could be done as "hearsay" briefs, or "police lines of enquiry")

Create "accusation sheets" for the audience to write their guesses.

Decide on the format for declaring the solution.

Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.

This can be done as one single scene, or split to accommodate eating and drinking!

Circulate one or more copies of the Police Report

"The police have just faxed through their preliminary findings". Circulate this amongst the audience.

Interrogation

Either the players interrogate each other, or the interrogation is opened up to the audience. If the latter, then it is the responsibility of the players to ensure that all relevant information is disclosed.

Accusations

At the end of the interrogation (when all the relevant information has been disclosed), each member of the audience should be asked to write down who they think is the murderer, and why. The solutions should be collected, read and graded by the cast.

Solution

Read out some of the (more bizarre) audience solutions.

Declare the solution. (For example, a detective - an additional actor - could use the material from the solution sheet, the cast could use the material from the solution sheet or the murderer could be asked to step forward and explain themselves.)

Award a prize to the best solution! (And possibly a prize for the worst.)



Role Pack: *Helena* [Excerpt]

Part 1: Scripted Scene-Setting

- Helena:** (looking at her watch and getting impatient) Mum, where is that taxi? I'll miss my flight from Glasgow if I don't catch the ferry. I must get back to London before Christmas.
- Anastasia:** I'm really cross that Moira has let me down. She promised to be here by now to pick all three of you up and take you to the harbour. I never did take to that woman.
- Helena:** I don't believe there's only one car on this godforsaken island. Mum, why ever did you chose to move here?
- Anastasia:** You know full well why I had to get away. I couldn't bear to be in London any longer and this island is so beautiful and peaceful. London is so polluted whereas the air here is fresh and clear – and I had to get away from your father. Let me ring Moira again and see what's happened.
(Anastasia picks up the phone and rings Moira's taxi service)
- Helena:** (to Jock and Nick) I've got to get back to London somehow. The show opens on Boxing Day.
- Jock:** Couldn't we walk down to the harbour and catch a later ferry?
- Anastasia:** (still with the phone to her ear) Well Moira's not picking up her phone. I'm afraid you've already missed the last ferry today but let me try and contact Hamish and see if he'll take the boat across again today. (She dials another number) I do apologise to you two gentlemen. You must have your own families who you would rather spend Christmas Day with.
- Nick:** Please don't concern yourself about me Mrs Jonsonovski.
- Anastasia:** Oh please call me Anastasia.
- Nick:** If you don't mind, I'd rather call you Mrs Jonsonovski. I was brought up to show respect to my elders and I find it hard to be on first names terms with anyone until I know them really well. But please don't worry about me, Mrs Jonsonovski, I have no family in London. They are all abroad on government business and I rather like the isolation of this place.
- Anastasia:** (putting down the phone) Hamish isn't answering either. Whatever can have happened to him? Lord Jock, you must have arrangements for Christmas Day. Please use the phone to let your family know you won't be able to get back to London in time for Christmas.
- Jock:** Don't worry about me lass, I've already emailed my PA and asked her to reschedule my diary. And I have no family so no ties. I was planning to have my Christmas lunch at the club with some old army pals but they'll have to get on without me won't they, won't they.
- Helena:** (getting cross) Try again Mum, maybe the old boy has fallen asleep or the old girl can't hear her phone.
- Anastasia:** Don't be so cheeky. Moira might be young but Hamish is about my age.
- Helena:** I can't believe there's no one else on the island who has a boat and can get us back to the mainland?
- Anastasia:** No, Hamish and Moira are the only people on this island, apart from us four of course, all the other crofters left yesterday in their own boats to spend Christmas on the mainland with their families.
- Helena:** I don't believe it. So you're telling me we're all stuck here on Croma until Hamish wakes himself up or the rest of the natives decide to bring their boats back after Christmas.
- Anastasia:** I'm afraid it's beginning to look like that. I doubt anyone will be back till after Hogmanay.
- Helena:** Haven't you got a helicopter or private plane or something, Lord Jock, you could get us off out of this dump couldn't you?
- Jock:** I'm sorry lass, I gave my pilot the fortnight off and he's flown the jet out to Antigua. He won't be able to get you back to London in time for Christmas. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news.

Nick: Oh that's not bad news. I'll be able to spend more time doing my research on the island and there won't be anyone here to disturb me.

Helena: That's not my idea of fun.

Anastasia: We'll just have to make the best of it. I've got a freezer full of food so how about we have our Christmas dinner together tomorrow?

Jock: Aye, that's jolly decent of you lassie.

(Possible break point)

[The scene continues, but not in this taster!]

Part 2: Character Profile - Helena [Excerpt]

Until recently you believed you were the daughter of Anastasia and Blyth Thursford. Anastasia and Blyth divorced 2 years ago and your mother is now using her Russian maiden name of Jonsonovski.

You love London and are due to appear in a show at the Palladium which opens on Boxing Day. You agreed to visit your mother on the Isle of Croma for a few days before Christmas. You understood from your father (Blyth) that your real father (Hamish) was living there and you wanted to speak to him as you understood he was loaded although he chose to live as a recluse. You hate the island and came only to confront Hamish and ask him to acknowledge you as his daughter in his will as Blyth has threatened to cut you out of his. You and Blyth had a big argument in London before you left. The day before yesterday you and Hamish had a big argument as he refused to acknowledge you as his daughter.

You must ask your mother how she could have been so foolish as to have an affair with him in the 80s.

You must ask your mother about her present relationship with Hamish. Ask if they are still lovers.

