



Pub Mystery

By
Sean Dooley



A Murder Mystery Party Pack
Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

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The landlord has called all his staff together for a meeting to discuss the future of the pub. On the agenda are things such as an increase in prices, the quality of the food, the cleanliness of the rooms and an idea to re-develop the bar area to make it more sociable. It seems set to be a night of business, but soon the business turns to murder...

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Customer Taster for Pub Mystery

Overview

Pub Mystery is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 8 participants as a 'Dinner Party' mystery. It could even be played and improvised by 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 the solution is disguised by a substitution cipher, so as to avoid the organiser knowing the murderer's identity in advance of the event!

This murder mystery is designed to give you the experience of a murder mystery without too much acting, costumes or preparation. It is designed to take place over about an hour and can be transported to any sociable place – for example, a pub.

It has eight characters and although some are of specified gender, this can be easily adapted for your requirements.

It runs in five stages each lasting approximately 10 – 15 minutes. The organiser must first print the role packs and cut out and fold (or put into envelopes) each of the characters' specific stage information (the final page of each roll pack). At each stage, the organiser must hand out the pieces of information to the appropriate people.

Each stage should have about 10 – 15 minutes of discussion time during which characters can talk amongst themselves to find out different pieces of information. There is no set order for how this is done so as to allow for improvisation and sociability. Try to keep to the relatively short time periods so as to maintain pace.

Neither the victim nor the murderer know their role in the evening's proceedings, so anything can happen. To this end, the person who does die should remain in the evening posthumously trying to discover who did the deed and, since the murderer could be anyone, guests are invited to suspect themselves as well as other people!

It is suggested that a time be identified in advance (say one hour from beginning) at which point each guest needs to identify their suspect (with reasons). The final 'solutions' page can then be de-coded to reveal the actual murderer!

Characters

Landlord – The Landlord of the pub. Deals with the financial side of the pub, advertising, and promotion. Married to Landlady.

Landlady – Landlord's wife. Deals with administration, public relations and staff.

Barmaid – A graduate in her early 20s who dislikes working at the pub but has to make money somehow.

Barman – In his mid 20s, miserably single, and has an eye for the barmaid.

Trainee – An A-level student who works at the pub but doesn't really have the knack for it yet.

Chef – A fiery Australian woman whose culinary skills have been somewhat limited by the pub's understocked kitchen.

Brewery Rep – Head of the local Brewery. In his late 40s. Knows the landlord from his school days.

Regular – A regular customer at the bar. Appalled by what he perceives to be dropping standards, he insisted on being at the meeting.

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 Post-mortem (to be read during the event)
- The Solution (to be revealed at the end of the event)

The Role Packs

Each role pack in the full pack contains:-

- A brief overview (including all the characters and the background)
- A character briefing for the individual character
- That individual character's reactions to the events of the evening.

The first two sections of the roll pack can be distributed before the event; for a 'dinner party' event, the third section needs to be cut into individual parts which are handed-out during the event.

Running the script for a 'dinner party murder mystery'

Distribute the relevant role pack to each player

This can be done prior to the event, in order to give 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).

Interaction

The participants should mingle, get into character, and make small talk for 10-15 minutes. Drinks could be served at this time.

Arguments

Once everyone has done enough socialising and (hopefully) settled into their characters, the organiser should ask them to read the next piece of information from their role packs - which will inform them that they have an argument with another character! They should spend the next 10-15 minutes making this animosity known, gossiping behind each other's backs for added drama.

If the timing is appropriate, the main meal could be served here – in case anyone loses their appetite after one of their number dies...

An Untimely Death

Suddenly, ... seems to have a heart attack, spasms and dies! This is announced by the organiser (and the participant playing ... may well choose to join in if he/she is a good sport.) The other participants all reveal their reasons for disliking ... (supplied in the role packs).

The participant playing ... can come out of character and join the rest of the characters in speculating who the murderer might be!

The Post-mortem Report

The post-mortem report may be read by the organiser or may have been printed and distributed amongst the guests' role packs for them to read. Participants are encouraged to gossip some more if this new information raises their suspicions about any of the others!

Interrogation

The organiser should announce that it is time to interrogate the suspects. Questioning should start with asking where they were at the time of the murder (answers to this question has been supplied in the role packs) and then each character should be given up to five minutes' worth of questions.

Accusations

At the end of the interrogation (when all relevant information has been disclosed), 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, decode and read (aloud!) the solution sheet. The participants could decode it themselves if they wish!

Award a prize to the best solution (whether anyone guessed right or not)!

Running the script in front of an audience

Note for performance in front of an audience, you need to purchase a performance license 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 work on their characters, rehearse reactions to each other's banter, and get comfortable with the improvised format.

Decide whether the audience should be invited to join 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 actors to accommodate the more irrelevant questions from the audience!
- Developing get-out strategies so that an irrelevant line of questioning can be curtailed. (This can, for example, be direct: "that has no bearing on this case", jokey: "I couldn't possible 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 out their guesses.

Decide on the format for declaring the solution.

Open the event by mingling with guests and acting out improvised scenes.

This could be done with a meet-and-greet beforehand and a single scene in which everything happens, or split up to accommodate a meal for the guests!

Circulate one or more copies of the post-mortem report

As before, this could be read aloud by a member of the cast or handed out for the audience to read themselves.

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 all the 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 use the material from the solution sheet or the murderer could be asked to stand forward and explain themselves.

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

Sample of a Character Brief

The **Landlord** met the Landlady 31 years ago at catering college. They have been married for 25 years and have been running this pub together for 21 years. He deals with all the financial transactions, advertising and promotional events.

Arguments

You, the **Landlord**, are angry that the brewery never delivers on time.

An Untimely Death

... has died, and you are not sorry. ... was driving away business by ..., abusing ..., and was also trying to ...

Post-Mortem

Once you have either read or been told the verdict of the post-mortem report, consider who you are beginning to suspect may have done the deed.

Interrogation

The rest of the group will now question you. Answer their questions however you like, but when they ask where you were at the time of the murder, you must answer that you were checking the books in the office.