



**CHRIS VISSER**

**HOW TO PLAN A MURDER**

# How to Plan a Murder

Plan and Host a Murder Mystery Dinner to Die For

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Introduction	4
A Dinner to Die For	6
The Format	6
Your Character	7
The Rules	9
How to Plan a Murder	13
Design Philosophy	13
Assemble the Suspects	15
Example Character – Mr Marco Ambrogio	23
Murder Most Foul	25
Final Note	37
Appendix 1 – Example Archetypes	38
Appendix 2 – Example Spreadsheet	39





## Introduction

If you acquired this guide in order to plan an actual homicide, we're sorry to disappoint you. If, however, you're interested in hosting a murder mystery dinner where each of your guests portrays a different character, each with their own agenda, then you have the right guide.

There are two groups of people involved in a murder mystery: the characters and the **Director**. Most guests take on the role of a character, each with their own backstory and goals.

The Director's job is to guide the guests in interacting as their characters and to keep the story flowing by resolving any disputes that arise. At some point during the evening the Director reveals that one of the characters has been murdered

and the guests try to solve the mystery before the time runs out.

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**Character.** The fictional entity portrayed by a guest with their own personality, secrets and objectives.

**Character Pack.** All the information a guest requires to portray their character.

**Director.** The person that hosts the murder mystery dinner for the guests and maintains the story. They are often the author of the mystery.

**Guest.** A person who participates in a murder mystery dinner and portrays a character in the story.

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The characters are created by the Director or Directors before the event. They create the subplots and tension between the characters for the guests to explore, all tied to a simple setting of their choosing. They also decide who will die at which moment during the event. We break down the process into smaller tasks, with detailed advice in the *How to Plan a Murder* section.



## A Dinner to Die For

This section should be given to each guest, and the Director should have a copy on hand when preparing and running the event. A Pay What You Want copy of this chapter is available on Drive Thru RPG at <https://goo.gl/NdgNtC>.

### The Format

The game is a live-action murder mystery dinner. You will receive your character in advance, detailing their background, secrets, and any goals for the evening. You will also receive a list of **Three Public Facts** about everyone else.

On the day, you will receive a name badge with your character's name and the Three Public Facts on it, to help you remember who everyone else portrays. During the evening,

you portray your character. You dress like them, act like them, and work to achieve their goals.

At some point during the evening, a character will be murdered. You and the other guests will then receive more information on what you know about the crime. Then it's up to you to uncover the murderer in your midst. The murderer will try to deflect suspicion away from themselves and attempt to make a perfect getaway at the end of the evening.



## Your Character

Every guest receives a **character pack**. Your character pack contains everything you need to know to portray your character. This character pack is usually given to you a week or two before the event.



Please do not share any information about your character with other guests, beyond your character's name, before the event starts. You might reveal plot lines and spoil everyone's fun. Any information on your relationship to other characters is indicated in **bold**, for example: You are friends with **John Smith**.



All characters are described using the headings below:

### *About You*

This section describes your history and views on other characters.

### *Three Public Facts*

What everyone knows about you.

### *Three Dark Secrets*

Three secrets you know about other characters. You use these to achieve your objectives.

### *Three Objectives*

Three objectives you want to achieve during the evening.

### *Role-Playing Notes*

Suggestions on how to play your character.

### *Costume Notes*

A list of ideas on how to plan your costume and make your character stand out.



## The Rules

All games must have rules. They're the things that make the game run smoothly for everyone. Luckily, the rules for this game are easy to learn and even easier to follow.

### *Have Fun*

First and foremost, have fun. This is a game and you are here to enjoy the evening with other people. With that in mind, please consider others and help make the game fun for everyone.

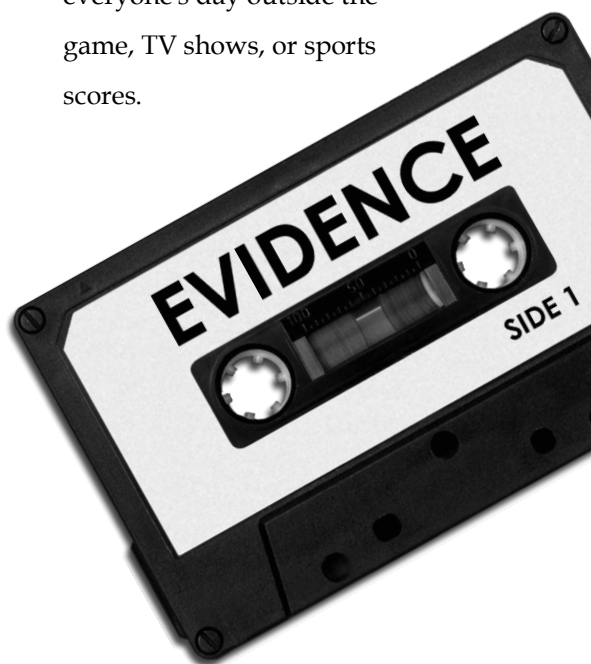
### *The Director is Always Right*

The Director is the person who works behind the scenes to make sure that the game runs smoothly and that the story they have worked very hard on happens in the order it is supposed to. They are the only person who knows the web of

intrigue they've spun, so they don't have to explain their decisions. The Director is there to make the game fun for everyone and their word is final in any dispute.

### *Stay in Character*

Keep in character, as if you were portraying a character in a movie, with the cameras rolling. It helps you and the other guests immerse yourselves in the story. Do not discuss everyone's day outside the game, TV shows, or sports scores.



### *It's a Game*

Many characters are at odds with each. Your partner might cheat on you and someone might murder someone your character cares about.

*Do not let the actions of a guest portraying a character influence your relationship outside the game.*

What happens in the game, stays in the game. Your real-life partner did not cheat on you with another person just because their character did.

Don't worry if you're not the victim or the killer, you are *still* a vital part of the story. If you happen to be the victim, you will stay involved in the story even if it is in another manner.

### *No Touching*

Never touch anyone without their express permission. While shaking hands is a part of polite

society, any other contact might make people uncomfortable, so always ask before you touch them.

### *Secrets Are Fun*

Secrets are more fun when you use them. Use the secrets you know to uncover more of the intrigue in the game and achieve your objectives. If you just hold them close to your chest, you'll miss out on a lot.

*"No" is Boring. Say "Yes, But..."*

Instead of saying "no" to another guest's question, try to bring their character into your character's unfolding story. Even if you're not directly linked to them, try to figure out how you can get involved and stay true to your character.

Saying “no” puts up a roadblock that’s no fun for you or other guests. When you say “yes, but...” you’re giving the other guest something to work with.

### *Make Things Up*

If you and another guest want to expand your connections, you’re welcome to. The only exception is that you cannot change anything written in their character packet. In case of conflicts, the character information takes precedence and what you made up is just a rumour. This includes coming up with new goals and objectives as you discover more of the story.

### *Know Your Limits*

Alcohol might be served during the event. If you decide to drink, please do so responsibly.

While a drink or two might help you relax, know your limits. You might think you’re hilarious when you’re drunk, but others will disagree. If your character is supposed to be a drunk, pretend. Real drunk is no fun and you won’t remember your awesome night if you partake of too much of the hooch.

Furthermore, if you feel that you need a break for whatever reason, take a break outside the area of play. Communicate the reason to the Director and they will take appropriate action.

### *Respect the Venue*

Just like you would expect visitors to your home to keep your space neat, tidy, and undamaged, so too should you respect the venue. Do not take things from the walls, and try not to break any furniture, crockery, or glassware, or to damage any plants. Please observe the venue's rules and stick to the designated smoking

areas. Treat anyone not directly involved, such as waitrons and other staff, with respect, even if your character is a terrible person.



## How to Plan a Murder

This section covers how to build a cast of characters for the murder mystery, before delving into hosting the actual event. Before we proceed we'll discuss some of the design philosophy behind the game.

If you plan to play in *Murder at North Manor*, please stop reading now as we use examples from that mystery to illustrate certain concepts — *A Dinner to Die For* is all a guest needs to read, for now.

### Design Philosophy

Firstly, there are no non-player characters in the game. All characters in the story are portrayed by the guests. The only exception is the Director and, if needed, your assistants. They portray background characters that fit the setting, such as servants, which

characters can interact with but are not part of the story.

Secondly, there are no combat rules. Any representation of physical combat is left up to the Director. Experience has shown that combat rules can completely change the style of the event.

Each guest has a name tag that displays the Three Public Facts about that character. This helps remind the guests who each character is and aids them in interacting with one another.

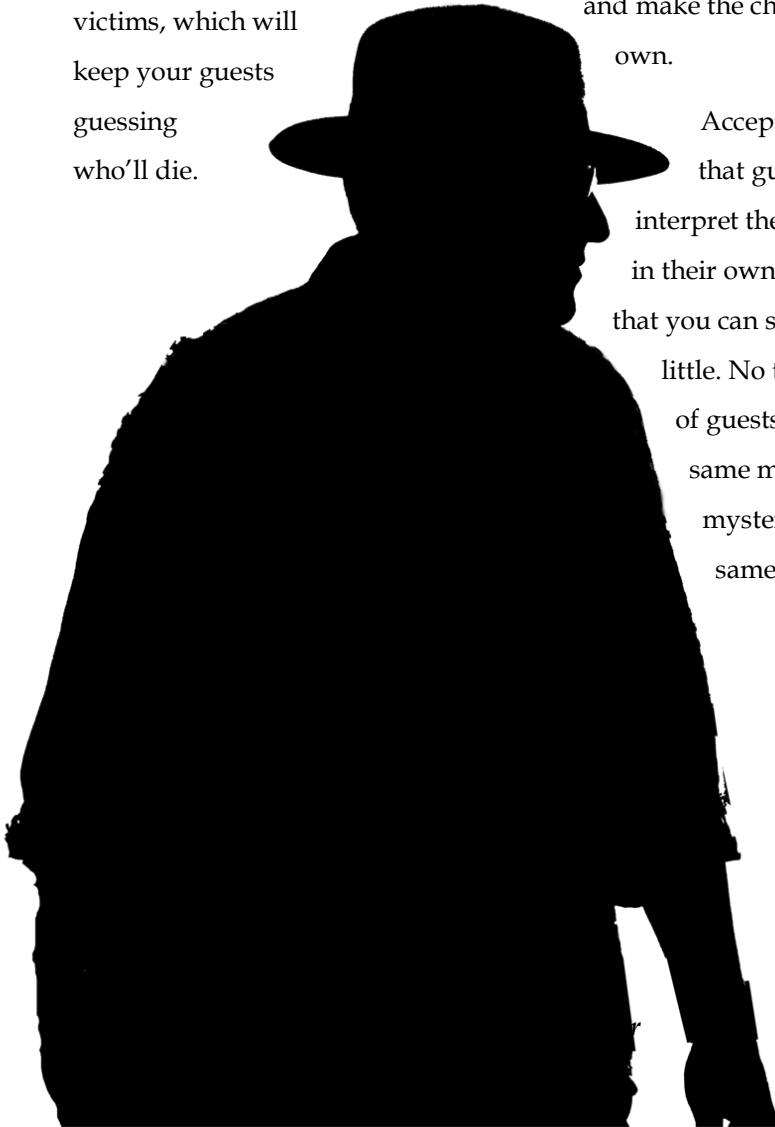
Furthermore, each character knows a secret about three other characters and has three objectives they wish to complete — beyond solving the murder, when it happens. A character's knowledge and objectives frequently don't match up. All these factors combine to help the characters interact with each other and keep the story

moving, even if a guest doesn't act on a secret their character knows.

To facilitate the objectives we add subplots, which also keep the guests engaged in the game. Each subplot introduces multiple suspects and potential victims, which will keep your guests guessing who'll die.

When you sit down to write the characters, write short and concise histories and objectives. As beautiful as your prose may be, guests rarely remember the details. If you keep everything short and to the point, they're likely to retain the key concepts and make the characters their own.

Accept in advance that guests will interpret their character in their own way and that you can script very little. No two groups of guests will play the same murder mystery in the same way.



## **Assemble the Suspects**

For this step we suggest you grab a couple of index cards or open a spreadsheet.

### *The Audience*

Before you dive into writing your murder mystery, take some time to consider your audience.

Are you creating a small event for six to ten friends, or hosting a larger party for twenty guests? If this is your first event, we recommend a smaller group. The story will require less time to create and there are fewer variables to keep track of when hosting the event. You'll also learn how many guests you can keep track of without additional help.

### *The Setting*

Start with a setting for your murder mystery. The intrigue of

fantasy noble houses, the Roaring Twenties, or even a board meeting set on a spaceship in the far future are just some of the options.

Keep the description of your setting as short and evocative as possible. Unless your audience is invested in the setting themselves, such as with a group of historical re-enactors, don't include too much detail. You may be tempted to include in-depth details regarding the Victorian language of flowers for a mystery set in a steampunk London, but in our experience most guests gloss over or ignore those details. Instead, focus on the details and flavour that has a direct impact on your story.



## *The Archetypes*

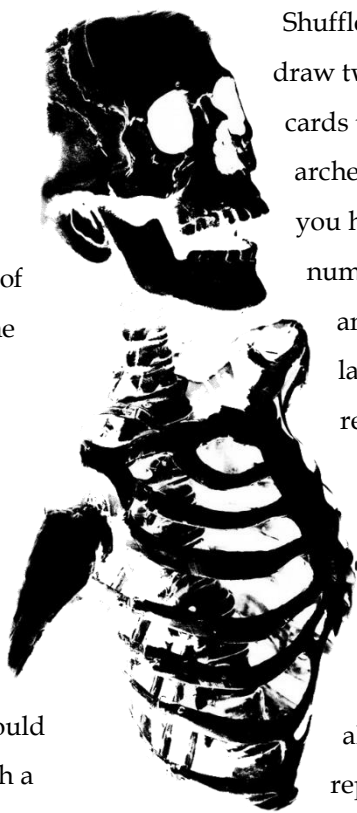
Initially, all characters are treated as gender-neutral archetypes to establish the connections between them. It allows the Director to easily change the gender of a character should the demographics of the guests change before the event.

Reach for your index cards. At the top of each one write down the name of one of your archetypes. Looking at your setting summary, you might see, for example, that you'll need a Noble and their Spouse. A Soldier and the Law would not go amiss, along with a Gangster and a Criminal, and so you continue until you have an

archetype for each potential guest.

## *Allies and Enemies*

Every character needs a friend they can rely on and someone they consider an enemy.



Shuffle the index cards, draw two, and note on the cards that the two archetypes are allies. If you have an odd number of characters and you get to the last card, just reshuffle and one lucky character will have two allies.

Once you have gone through all your archetypes, repeat the process, but this time note which characters are enemies.

*The Roaring Twenties, a Setting Example:*

The year is 1923. In America, Prohibition is at its height and cocktails are a popular way to hide alcohol in polite company. Hemlines have risen, corsets have gone the way of the dodo, and jazz and swing are getting the flappers to flap and the swingers to swing.

The Great War has been over for five years, but its mark is still felt everywhere. The old noble families in England are feeling the loss of their heirs and the old ways of their world, while everyone mourns those wasted lives buried in the trenches in France. It is a time of great optimism and great sadness, a time for new beginnings and looking to the future, while struggling to let go of the past.

You have been invited to dine with Lord Edward North, Baron of Ledshire, and his American wife, Lady Helen North, at their fabulous house in the Hamptons. Joining you is a cast of diverse guests, each with their own agenda. What secrets will be revealed while the cocktails flow and the jazz band plays?



### *Secrets and Objectives*

Everyone overhears or knows someone else's secrets. Again, draw a random archetype, but this time draw three archetypes which this character has the dirt on. Continue until each index card notes three other archetypes and their secrets.

Repeat the process again, and this time note three archetypes, each connected to an objective the character wants to achieve.


### *Genders, Relationships, and Affairs*

The gender and relationship splits will depend on your setting and your audience. In most historical settings, relationships and gender follow heteronormative rules with most homosexual

encounters and non-binary sexualities expressed behind closed doors. You can ignore this, provided you communicate this to your guests.

Even if you decide to stick to heteronormative genders and relationships, keep one out of every five characters separate and marked for either a male or female guest. This will allow you to quickly tweak the character at the last moment if the demographics of the group suddenly change.

Shuffle your index cards and split them however you decide to divide your genders. Do not worry if an archetype for a historical setting does not match the gender of the historical stereotype. History is full of



folks who defied their stereotypes.

Decide how many of the characters at your event will have long-term relationships. New guests at their first event frequently have an easier time getting in character if their real partner is their partner in-game. If you don't have such information available in advance, a good rule of thumb is to place half to two-thirds of the cast into relationships.

Keep your index cards divided by gender and shuffle before drawing to decide relationships. Note

down on both index cards who that character is associated with. Flip a coin for each member to decide if they are faithful to their partner. If not, draw another character from the appropriate pile to determine who they are unfaithful with. Infidelity increases the drama.

## *Review*

Now each index card should resemble this:

Gangster

Ally: Dandy

Enemy: Dowager

Secrets:

Daredevil

Noble

Bookworm

Objectives:

Dowager

Explorer

Criminal

Gender: Male

Partner: Daredevil (Faithful)

Look through the archetypes and their connections. Find patterns between them and start building relationships. Begin to flesh out their connections to each other and how those connections came to be.

Remember, if one character is connected to another, note it on both their cards. If they served together during the Great War, write it down for BOTH characters. The guests do not have access to the whole picture.

## *The Subplots*

Subplots keep the guests and their characters engaged in the story. It keeps them guessing who will die and how. Add a subplot for every two to

three characters in the story and involve each character in multiple subplots.

Here are some example subplots for the Roaring Twenties setting mentioned earlier:

- The orphan in search of their parents.
- The unfinished play that drives people mad.
- The scoundrel who stole another's identity during the war and turned their life around.
- The gambler with a gambling debt.
- The sibling rivalry in a noble family.
- The occultist and the scientist who tries to disprove their theology.
- The industrialist and scientist who have dreams of striking out on their own.

- A book about to be adapted into a play, and the leading role it offers.
- A small statue of a falcon rumoured to be of immense value.

Use the random nature of the process to define the information for each archetype and to spark novel ideas for subplots.

Write no more than one or two paragraphs for each subplot per character. Remember, if another character is involved, write something regarding the subplot in their character description, even if it initially seems unrelated.

### *Names, Costumes, and Role-Playing Notes*

Until now, we treated the characters as archetypes connected to each other by

luck and subplots. Only name the characters when they are fully fleshed out and every connection between them has been established. This allows you to easily make changes without needing to keep track of where characters are referenced.

While some guests will go all out with their costumes, other may need some guidance. Provide costuming tips for each guest on how to dress as their character. Costuming helps a great deal to get everyone into the spirit of things. If the character has a potential murder weapon, include it in their costume suggestions. Remember to clearly mark such items as props to avoid potential altercations with real life authorities.

The same applies to the role-playing notes. After spending all this time building the characters you'll have a few ideas on how to play the character. Include some guidance but allow the guest to make the character their own.



## **Example Character — Mr Marco Ambrogio**

### *About You*

Your father used to say, "If there's crime, it might as well be organised." Born into a crime family, you were a *made man* by the time you turned sixteen and a boss by twenty five.

Prohibition has been great for business, everyone wants a drink and without a legal way to get one, people turn to men like you.

One such man is Lord **Edward North**. You supply the nightclubs and speakeasies he owns with bootleg liquor. You both maintain a veneer of legitimate business over your otherwise illegal dealings. Another associate is **Anthony Ainsley**, for

whom you've smuggled in the occasional trophy.

Two men who are part of your operation are **James Marion** and **Lowell Sanford**. **James** puts holes into people when you don't want to get the family involved. You refer to him as your business associate and have asked **Edward North** if he could join tonight's festivities. **Lowell**, on the other hand, closes the holes other people put in your boys. He and his wife are friends of the North family.

You love the theatre and **Evelyn "Evie" Trace** is one of your favourite performers.

### *Three Public Facts*

You're a business associate of Lord **Edward North**.



You're rumoured to be a gangster and a bootlegger.

**Elia Raniero** is your girlfriend.

### *Three Dark Secrets*

You discovered **Edward North** is allergic to peanuts after offering him some as a snack.

Lord **Henry Beaumont** owes you a substantial gambling debt.

**Elia Raniero's** brother was a snitch and you forced Lowell Sanford to let him die.

### *Three Objectives*

Lady **Elizabeth North** wants to drive a wedge between you and Lord **Edward North**. Don't let her.

**Anthony Ainsley** commented that he ran across Lady **Margaret**

**North** in North Africa recently. Maybe you could use that to gain the upper hand with either of them. **James Marion** seems to have it in for Sheriff **Kevin Benson**. Keep James back until you have a patsy to take the fall for anything he might do to the Sheriff.

### *Role-Playing Notes*

You're always in charge. You keep your hands clean while other people do your dirty work. You worked hard to become the head of the family. Let no one threaten you. **Elia** is the most precious person in your life. Keep her safe.

### *Costume Notes*

The quintessential Hollywood movie mob boss: a black suit and fedora.

## Murder Most Foul

This section deals with the key event of the evening – the murder.

### *Means, Motive and Opportunity*

Experience has taught us that, with good characters and solid subplots to engage your guests, the murder itself acts more as a tension building device. That said, the guests expect that at least one character will not make it through the event alive, and who are we to disappoint them?

The common summation of a crime is that it requires motive, means, and opportunity.

Take a new set of index cards or create a new spreadsheet, where you'll plan the murder itself.

## Motive

Motive is easy to establish. Look at the various subplots you have. Does a partner discover their spouse's infidelity? Does the character kill to protect their secret? Will the character get revenge for a stolen treasure?

Most subplots can be twisted into a motive for murder. Note down which character has the motive you'll be using. Our example character, **Marco Ambrogio**, could easily decide to signal to his enforcer, **James Marion**, to get rid of the meddling mother, Lady **Elizabeth North**, for interfering with his plans involving her son, **Edward North**.

We make an index card for each of the characters

involved, with a short note on how they're involved. In the enforcer's case, it would be because his employer signalled him to act. In the mother's case, it might be because her character is about to die.

## Means

The means is frequently the easiest to arrange — a pharmacist's envelope of arsenic or a service revolver can be added to the character's costume ideas. A carving knife placed on a table, a lead pipe lying around, or even a heavy candlestick on a table provide the tools for murder.

Once you have decided on the means, include a few red herrings, either as props at the event or in the

character's information. Arrange for backup props and, especially in the case of weapons, clearly indicate that they are props, for example, by wrapping bright red tape around the muzzle of a replica firearm.

## Opportunity

Opportunity requires more planning than the other two components of a crime. It is also the only part of the evening we recommend that you script, to a degree. Now that you know which character dies, who kills them, and anyone else involved, you need to set it up.

At a dinner it's usually quite easy:

1. Assign everyone's seats beforehand.

2. Place instructions for what to do or say when the lights go out.
3. When you judge the time to be appropriate, let everyone read their instructions.
4. Switch off the lights and let the guests act out your instructions.
5. Switch on the lights and reveal the murder victim.

Include instructions for every character:

- *The victim.* Needs to know if they must say or do something while they're busy dying, as well as what clues specific guests discover as they examine the body. This keeps the victim engaged in the evening and frees the Director up to assist elsewhere.
- *The murderer.* Needs to know their motive, how they did it, and how they might attempt to cover their tracks.
- *Accomplices.* Anyone else related to the murder, such as a superior who ordered the killing, must know how they're involved.
- *Red Herrings.* Other characters might serve to muddy the clues, such as an elderly character who dies from a stroke to throw the others off. Let them know their part.
- *Additional Clues.* Any clues characters around the victim hear, smell, or feel must be supplied.
- *Everyone Else.* Give anyone not involved something to do, to

keep them busy, such as  
some thematically  
appropriate light  
reading.

Below are some example  
instructions. You'll notice  
that the victim doesn't  
know who killed them. This  
to stop guests from  
interfering with the  
investigations.



Example victim  
instructions:

*Kevin Benson*

Congratulations, you're a  
victim.

When the lights go out,  
count to 15, shake a bit, and  
then slump forward.

Anyone inspecting your  
body smells the scent of  
almonds and can feel that  
your muscles have  
stiffened.

You can whisper the  
following clues to the  
following people:

**Lowell Sandford** can tell  
that your skin has a pinkish  
tinge to it and can confirm  
you've been poisoned.

**Virginia Benson** can  
identify the poison as  
cyanide.

**Barbara Ainsley** knows  
you were killed by cyanide,  
she witnessed someone die  
from the same substance at  
one of her factories.

Example murderer  
instructions:

*Virginia Benson*

Congratulations, you're the  
killer.

When the lights go out,  
count to 5, quietly to  
yourself. You are assumed  
to slip the cyanide into  
**Kevin Benson's** food or  
drink.

Your cover is that you are  
looking for candles. You are  
a practical woman, and  
someone needs to do  
something about the lights.

After counting, stand up  
and walk past everyone,

down to the seating area, while commenting about the need for light.

When there is light, act distraught over the death of your husband.

The only objective that matters to you right now is making sure someone else takes the fall. You are free from your marriage to **Kevin** and can now pursue your passions – science and **Lowell Sandford**

Example red herring instruction:

*Elizabeth North*

Congratulations, you're a Red Herring.

You die of a stroke 5 minutes after the lights come on.

Excuse yourself from the table when the excitement breaks out and find a comfortable couch and just go limp after sitting there for a bit.

You can whisper the following clues to the following people:

**Lowell Sandford** can tell you did not die from the same poison as **Kevin Benson**. He will need to perform an autopsy to discover the cause of your death.

**Devin Kirk** has lost his true love and the killer will pay!

**Helen North** found a late aunt just like this. She had died of a stroke.

Example clue:

*Edward North*

You are still alive.

You could make out who you assume was **James Marion** reaching over to **Kevin Benson**, shortly after **Virginia Benson** got up.

Ask everyone to remain calm when the lights go out, your staff will tend to and restore power shortly.

*Hosting the Mystery*

Once you've plotted your murder, you're ready to prepare for hosting the event.

## Getting Help

The first thing you need to consider is whether you're doing everything yourself or if you're going to need some help. As your

experience hosting murder mysteries increases, you'll find the number of guests you can handle comfortably grows. A new Director might struggle with ten guests, while an experienced Director might be comfortable with twenty guests. For even larger events, recruit someone who is not attending as a guest to help answer guest queries. Suggested folks would be the friend who helped you brainstorm ideas or a guest from a previous incarnation of the mystery.

Another person to consider would be a person who handles the administrative tasks, such as payments or venue decor, especially if your free time is limited and you are still writing the mystery.



This person can even be a guest, just make sure they are not privy to any details that might spoil the event for them.

## Location

Decide where you're going to host your event. If it's a small event, use your backyard or home. For larger events, look for a restaurant with private rooms or even a local Scout Hall.

Keep in mind that your guests may shout excitedly and wave props about. At public venues this may cause issues with other folks not participating in the event. If your venue allows separate bills for your guests, work with the venue to identify which guests are which by listing each

guest's bill number on their name tag and make them accountable for it.

No matter where you decide to host your event, keep in mind your setting and decorate as needed. The little touches make your event feel special and help immerse the guests in the mystery.

## Casting the Characters

Finalise the casting of your characters at least two weeks before the event. This allows you and your guests to prepare and organise the final details, such as their costumes.

Look over the list of guests and assign them to whichever characters you think would be appropriate. This would also be the time to assign genders to the

flexible characters, if needed, and to update clues and your list of the Three Public Facts of each character.

Send the following to each guest:

- A list of Three Public Facts of each character. This allows the guests to familiarise themselves with the other characters in the story.
- The character outline for that guest.
- A copy of the *A Dinner to Die For* chapter. You can modify it to fit your setting, venue, and guests.
- A proper invite detailing the venue, date, time, and anything else expected of them.

## Before the Mystery

Print name tags for each character and include the Three Public Facts for that character on the name tag. We also recommend a small double-sided card, one side with the secrets and the other with the objectives for that character, to help the guest quickly reference their information without needing to carry their detailed character information with them.

Print out and place your clues into marked envelopes. Create seating cards or charts if you need special seating arrangements. Assemble a collection of back-up props and other costume details for guests who might need them.

## At the Event

Have your name tags, handouts, and props close at hand and distribute them to guests as they arrive.

There may be one or two guests running late, so plan to start fifteen minutes later than stated on your invitation.

Once everyone has arrived, take them through the Rules section of *A Dinner to Die For*. It contains important information to get everyone in the right frame of mind and to help things run smoothly.

Send your host characters into your venue and announce the other guests as they arrive. Even in a setting without explicit servants, you can portray another innocuous entity, such as a spaceship's

computer. Announcing each character introduces them to the other guests and refreshes the guest's minds as to who is portraying which character in the story.

Once everyone has been announced, leave the guests to mingle and talk to each other. Your main goal at this stage is to encourage everyone to remain in character and allow them to discover how their subplots relate to everyone else.

Make notes about what works and what doesn't. You'll get back to the notes later, polishing the mystery for the next time you present it.

When the time is right, perhaps after everyone has completed the main course, announce that they should read their sealed envelopes.

These are the envelopes created during your preparation, which indicate who is the killer, victim, and what everyone else is doing after you switch off the lights. We recommend you get everyone to grin like a fool while reading their information. This will help hide their emotional responses to what they're reading.

Switch off the lights and let the explicitly scripted parts of the event play out. Once everyone is done acting through their script, switch the lights back on to reveal the murder. Allow the characters to react to the victim's murder and then announce some external story factor that would end the evening, for example the police arriving in an hour's time.

Some characters, especially in a large mystery with many subplots, will ignore the murder itself and focus on their personal subplots. Let them. Those interested in the murder will investigate.

After the set time, announce that the police arrive, or whichever event occurs, and ask the guests who they think the murderer is. Narrate how the evening ends and ask everyone to take their seats for the final part of the evening.

## Cleaning up the Bodies

Ask each guest to take a turn to describe their character's goals and if they achieved them. Make it appear as if you're doing this part at random, but

leave the murderer, victim, and any red herrings for last.

Continue taking notes about how each guest experienced their character and what they did.

After everyone is done and the mystery and the subplots have been revealed, thank your guests. Begin cleaning up anything that was brought to the venue, such as decorations. Even if you used a room in a friend's house, leave the venue neat. It will help if you plan to use the venue in the future.

A day or two after the mystery, with everything still fresh in your mind, go through your notes and update your characters. Make yourself a list of things you could improve

on or need to remember for your next mystery. If this was your first murder mystery, or if you've hosted a hundred, you'll always learn new things, including how to write more compelling characters and how to make the most of each venue.



## Final Note

The task of creating and hosting murder mystery events may seem daunting at first but can be very rewarding. It can best be described as writing a novel and seeing it come to life before your eyes — filled with twists you never saw coming.

You will learn more and more from each event you create and host. The characters you create will improve and the subplots will become more engaging. You'll discover new rules that make your events run smoother and help guests enjoy their characters even more.



## Appendix 1 — Example Archetypes

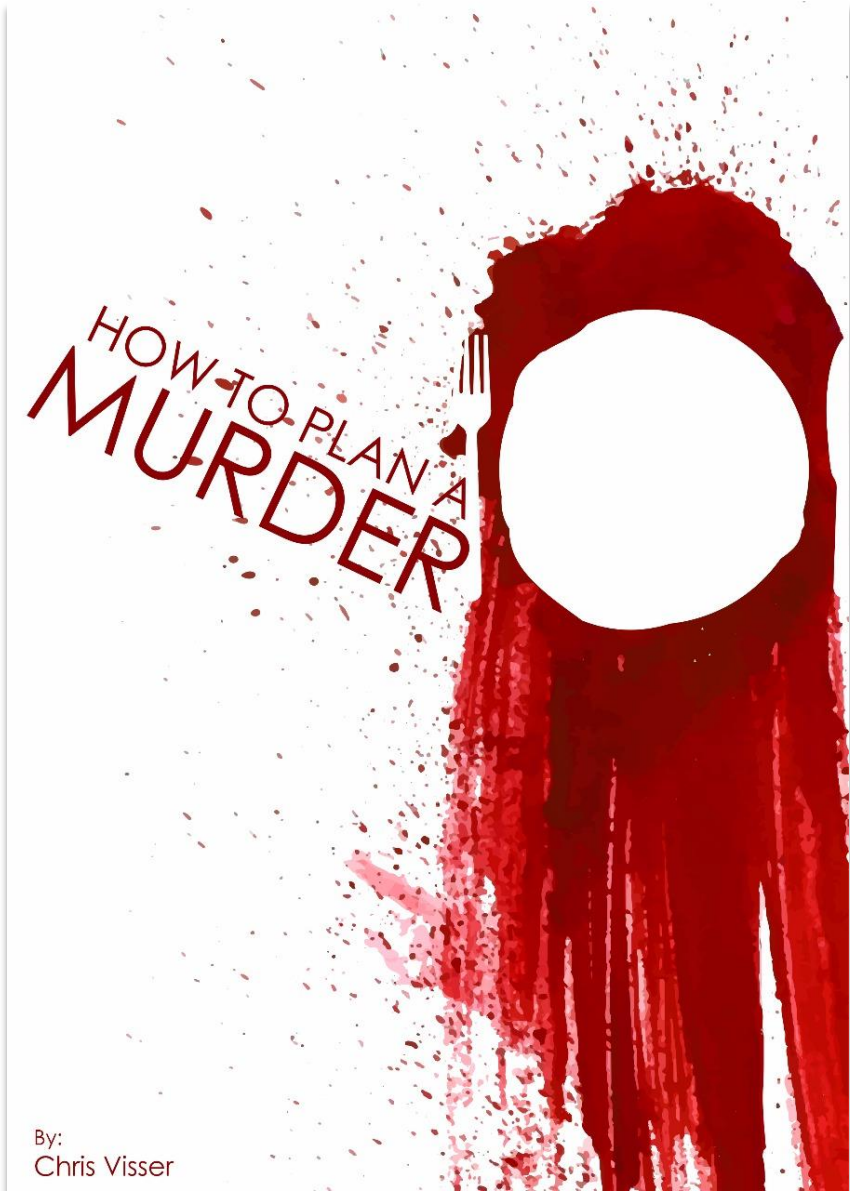
Archetype	Description	Examples
Artist	Creates works of art	Writer, poet, painter, sculptor, jeweller
Bookworm	Likes to read	Librarian, scholar, wizard
Celebrity	Always in the spotlight	Actor, debutant, unwilling hero
Criminal	Involved in illicit activities	Thief, pirate, smuggler, mobster, con-artist
Dandy	Fashionable and flamboyant	Fashion designer, fop, socialite
Daredevil	Looking for the next thrill	Ace pilot, moll, racing driver
Dowager	Elderly woman of elevated society	Widow, retiree, matron, conniving parent
Dreamer	Believes that things can be better	Activist, visionary leader, daydreamer
Everyman	Regular person living their life	Blue collar worker, straight talker, army private
Explorer	Adventuring into the unknown	Space captain, archaeologist, anthropologist
Gangster	Head of a criminal organization	Mob boss, pirate captain, 80s corporate raider
Harpy	Social commentator	Critic, satirist, gossip
Hunter	Always finds their target	Assassin, bounty hunter, big game hunter
Industrialist	Entrepreneur in their field	Businessperson, venture capitalist, sales person
Monster	Literal or implied monster	Cruel villain, supernatural creature, torturer
Nobility	Born into a noble title	Despot, honourable caretaker, disinterested ruler
Occultist	Seeker of occult lore	Cultist, mesmerist, fortune teller
Physician	Tends to other's physical health	Doctor, nurse, mad scientist
Rake	Collector of lovers	Playboy, pimp, femme fatale
Religious Leader	Influential religious leader	Monk, fire and brimstone preacher, crusader
Scientist	Natural or physical sciences expert	Researcher, myth debunker, distracted professor
Sheriff	Law enforcement	Corrupt cop, town guard, Wild West sheriff
Spouse	Defined by their relationship	Unfaithful partner, doting lover, trapped spouse
Spy	Informer for the opposition	Dashing super spy, double agent, informer
Warrior	Lives to fight	War veteran, boxer, prosecutor, muscle

## Appendix 2 — Example Spreadsheet

Archetype	Ally	Enemy	Secret 1	Secret 2	Secret 3	Obj. 1	Obj. 2	Obj. 3	M/F	Partner	Faithful	Paramour
Artist	Physician	Sheriff	Daredevil	Spouse	Warrior	Physician	Artist	Dowager	F			
Bookworm	Scientist	Spouse	Religious Leader	Criminal	Nobility	Daredevil	Warrior	Bookworm	F	Warrior	✓	
Warrior	Artist	Explorer	Physician	Artist	Explorer	Sheriff	Rake	Daredevil	M	Bookworm	✓	
Celebrity	Daredevil	Nobility	Sheriff	Rake	Dowager	Gangster	Bookworm	Occultist	M			
Criminal	Rake	Celebrity	Occultist	Warrior	Industrialist	Religious Leader	Daredevil	Rake	M			
Dandy	Explorer	Gangster	Industrialist	Physician	Gangster	Scientist	Occultist	Religious Leader	M			
Daredevil	Hunter	Physician	Hunter	Dandy	Physician	Industrialist	Nobility	Physician	F	Gangster	✓	
Gangster	Dandy	Dowager	Nobility	Bookworm	Daredevil	Dowager	Explorer	Criminal	M	Daredevil	✓	
Dowager	Bookworm	Warrior	Warrior	Celebrity	Occultist	Artist	Religious Leader	Hunter	F			
Explorer	Sheriff	Criminal	Noble	Hunter	Rake	Bookworm	Scientist	Nobility	F			



Archetype	Ally	Enemy	Secret 1	Secret 2	Secret 3	Obj. 1	Obj. 2	Obj. 3	M/F	Partner	Faithful	Paramour
Hunter	Occultist	Rake	Artist	Industrialist	Explorer	Criminal	Gangster	Explorer	M	Industrialist	X	Scientist
Industrialist	Warrior	Spouse	Dowager	Sheriff	Spouse	Occultist	Hunter	Celebrity	F	Hunter	X	Criminal
Nobility	Spouse	Scientist	Rake	Nobility	Scientist	Dandy	Celebrity	Gangster	M	Spouse	✓	
Spouse	Artist	Dowager	Dandy	Hunter	Bookworm	Spouse	Dowager	Warrior	F	Nobility	X	Hunter
Occultist	Criminal	Daredevil	Bookworm	Occultist	Artist	Nobility	Spouse	Dandy	F	Physician	X	Nobility
Physician	Gangster	Artist	Spouse	Dowager	Dandy	Warrior	Physician	Sheriff	M	Occultist	X	Explorer
Rake	Celebrity	Religious Leader	Criminal	Gangster	Celebrity	Explorer	Sheriff	Spouse	M			
Religious Leader	Dowager	Occultist	Celebrity	Daredevil	Criminal	Rake	Criminal	Scientist	M			
Scientist	Religious Leader	Hunter	Scientist	Religious Leader	Bookworm	Hunter	Industrialist	Artist	F	Sheriff	X	Rake
Sheriff	Nobility	Dandy	Gangster	Scientist	Sheriff	Celebrity	Dandy	Industrialist	M	Scientist	✓	



**Alternate Cover by Charl Ngrini**

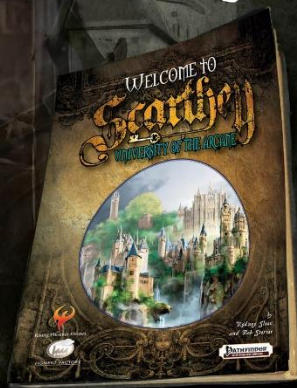
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