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# Merri Mysteries

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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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*presents...*

## “Caught In A Spanish Web”

Standard version  
for 6 females  
and 6 males

*by Stephanie Chambers*

Second edition

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## The Suspects

In the morning, they found the owner and director of The Grand Hacienda Hotel in Spain, Arthur Seaton, dead in his office. He had been stabbed to death. The four and three quarter star, luxury international establishment had only been in operation for less than a year, but, as you will soon learn, a lot has been going on behind the scenes. The staff at the hotel are:

**Fiona** (*co-owner of the hotel*) I met Arthur when I was at college. We became good friends. After we finished, Arthur asked me if I'd like to go into a business venture with him. He thought we could pool our resources to build a new hotel in Spain and then run it together. His family was very wealthy and so was mine. It was a bit of a gamble, but we both wanted to create something special and we both loved Spain. After a bit of persuading, our parents agreed to fund the project – 50% each. Arthur didn't fancy me romantically thankfully. We were just business partners. He certainly wasn't my kind of man. Unfortunately Arthur has always insisted on working our staff far too hard. *Dress suggestions:* Conservative business clothes such as a suit. Carry a notepad (paper or electronic) or a briefcase.

**Sebastian** (*conciierge*) When I was in my twenties, I was lucky enough to be able to spend some time working in the USA because my mother had moved to California after she married an American man. I learnt how to speak English fluently and I learnt a lot about the hospitality industry. I obtained work in one of the finest hotels in LA and I was able to move up the ranks quite quickly. Unfortunately I didn't get on too well with my new stepfather who seemed to treat my mother as some kind of slave. Finally my mother decided that enough was enough and that even a poor existence was better than one where you lost all respect for yourself. So we moved back to Spain, back to our old way of life. I must admit I was sorry to kiss all that money goodbye, but I was happy to be back in Spain. So you can imagine my excitement when I heard that a luxury hotel was being built in my city by an American couple. And it has been great, apart from the very long hours Arthur expected me to work. *Dress suggestions:* Dark suit with a white shirt. Perhaps add a drooping moustache and a sash tie.

**Pascal** (*French chef*) I loved cooking and my mother soon handed the apron over to me. She said I could sense what a taste would be even before I had put the ingredients together. I won a scholarship to the most prestigious culinary academy in Paris. I cooked a soufflé. They said it didn't just melt in their mouths; it melted their hearts as well. Then I worked in one of the leading hotels in Paris. I became the head chef of the hotel. French cuisine is without doubt the best in the world, but even caviar and truffles every day can lose their appeal. You need variety and new challenges. When I heard of this job in Spain, I knew it would allow me the opportunity to experiment not only with the colors and textures of Spain but also with a different cuisine. *Dress suggestions:* Chef's check trousers and chef's cap or a French beret.

**Jose** (*Spanish waiter*) When I was younger, I dreamed of being a singer. I love singing ballads – the ones that make women weep. But I realized that although I was a good singer, I was no Caruso. So I became a waiter to make a living. Almost three years ago, I married Louisa, the most beautiful woman on God's earth! She shines like the sun in my eyes. A year ago, she gave birth to our precious little Annietta. I worked at one of the restaurants in the city, but I found it hard to make enough money to support my wife and child. Louisa had to mind other women's children as well as her own, just so that we could afford to pay the rent. I was very happy when I obtained a job at the new hotel, because it paid more and I was allowed to sing Spanish love songs to the guests. *Dress suggestions:* Black trousers and white shirt. Perhaps add a drooping moustache and a sash tie. Carry a guitar or violin.

**Francis** (*Spanish gardener*) My father was one of the leading botanists in Spain and he taught me to love plants. Unfortunately, I inherited my mother's emotional side rather than my father's intellect, so I didn't make it to university. After I left school, I became a gardener. I always knew I would because plants are the only things that bring out the best in me. There are few wealthy people in our city who can afford to have a private gardener, so I was employed in doing minor gardening jobs by various people. When I heard about the new hotel, I was very excited by the idea of creating a big beautiful garden from nothing. I was afraid that they would give the job to someone who had been to horticulture school rather than me, but fortunately they didn't. *Dress suggestions:* Drape yourself in cuttings from various plants as if you have just emerged from the bushes. Khaki clothes with maybe a spade in hand.

**Antoinette** (*Brazilian masseuse*) My mother was a healer and she passed on a lot of what she knew to me. I went to massage school in Brazil and obtained my certificate in remedial massage. I worked in a health clinic. I developed a good reputation. But I found that there were problems I didn't know how to deal with, so I went on an advanced training course in remedial massage in LA. While I was in LA, I heard about a hotel that some Americans were planning to build in Spain. I thought that because I know Portuguese, Spanish and English, that I would fit in quite well in Spain. I applied for the position and I demonstrated my skills on Arthur and he said he would be happy to employ me, especially if I did that to him once a week. It was agreed and I got the job. *Dress suggestions:* Well-oiled body, leotards or gym clothes and perhaps with a towel around your neck. Perhaps wear tiger balm or other fragrant oils.

**Maria** (*Flamenco dancer*) I grew up in a respectable family. We thanked God for what we had. I dreamed of becoming a nun, but later I realized that my family needed my financial support. My family was so poor that it looked as if they would have to adopt out my youngest sister if I didn't find work. Fortunately I was lucky enough to find work in one of the restaurants as a Flamenco dancer. But I am a bit shy and I found that the clients would generally tip the more bubbly waitresses rather than me. So my wages were very low indeed. When I heard of the new hotel, I thought that it would be a better place for me to work – more tasteful and genteel. I was very pleased when I got the job at the hotel. Fiona seemed such a nice lady to work for. I didn't like it when Arthur used to squeeze me, but I thought that this was just the way American men were with women. *Dress suggestions:* Flamenco dress with castanets (if available) and dancing shoes. Wear a cross around your neck.

**Tom** (*Caribbean barman*) I wanted to be a famous cricketer, but don't all young Caribbean boys want to be cricketers! I loved to dance and I loved to party, so when someone suggested my being a barman, I thought it sounded perfect. My parents sent me to a top bar school in the US. I memorized all the cocktail recipes as quickly as I could. Then I came to Spain and worked in a few of the bars. I was popular with everybody and I mixed a mean drink. Then I saw the movie *Cocktail* and it changed my approach to my career. I knew then that I wanted to include more of my love of dancing in my job. I started moving, really moving man! And they started to pay me even more, so I knew I was doing the right thing. Then I heard about the new hotel and they heard of me. You see I had quite a reputation around town by then. *Dress suggestions:* Flowery Hawaiian-type shirt. Add some fake-tanning lotion to add to the Caribbean look.

**Louis** (*Spanish porter*) My family was poor so I didn't go to school for very long. That is why I can't speak much English. My first job was as a bouncer at a bar. It was a tough job. I hated dealing with drunks all the time. I was lucky to get my position with the hotel. I think they liked my smile. They didn't seem to mind that my English was a bit poor. I bring the bags and the meals to the hotel rooms. Sometimes the clients asked me to buy postcards for them, so now I have set up a little sideline business selling postcards. They are very pretty postcards. *Dress suggestions:* Black trousers and a white shirt and a porter's cap. Perhaps add a drooping moustache and a sash tie.

**Marilda** (*Spanish barmaid*) My mother was the kind of woman who lived for her children. She had nothing in her life besides us. I am determined to not end up like her. I want a life filled with excitement, not nappies. I went to a bar school and spent my nights in the kinds of bars I wanted to work in. I have never had trouble attracting men. I love to go out with men and have fun, but I don't let them put their noose around my neck. I found a job at a classy bar at one of the hotels. I learnt a lot on that job about how to handle drunken men. I found that there are ways to twist men around your finger without them thinking the less of you. When I heard about this elegant new hotel I just knew it was the place for me. So I put on my red dress and my best perfume and fluttered my eyelashes at Arthur. Men are so easy. *Dress suggestions:* Colorful feminine clothes (as you are part of the bar dancing act). Lots of lipstick and perfume. Maybe enhance your breasts by adding socks.

**Isabella** (*Spanish room service maid*) Over the years, when I haven't been having children, I have been working as a maid for various rich people. But it seems the richer they are, the less they pay. My husband hurt his back when he worked as a builder's laborer and he hasn't been able to work since. He has to spend most of his time lying down. We have 4 children to support, so I have to work. In my last job the woman was a slave driver. She had me cleaning the cracks between the tiles in her house with a toothbrush. When I heard about this new hotel, I thought I would be given a job as a bed maker. I was very surprised when they offered me the job of room service maid. My English is not the best, so I am often in trouble when the guest complains that I am bringing him or her not what they ordered. They start drawing pictures in the air, trying to get me to understand what it is that they want. I feel like child in class. *Dress suggestions:* A maid's outfit (eg frilly apron).

## Name Tags

**Juliolla** (*Spanish cleaner*) When I was younger, I dreamt of marrying a man and never having to work again. But when I grew up, I realized that nobody gets to just be at home these days. My husband works as a carpenter. His wage isn't enough for us both to live on. I was unable to have children, so there isn't much for me to do at home anyway. I have been working as a cleaner for most of my life. I used to clean large office buildings at night. I didn't really like this because it meant that I never got to spend time with my husband. When I heard about the hotel, I was determined to work there. Arthur, believe it or not, timed applicants on how long it took them to clean a double room. Of course I won hands down. At first there weren't many guests, so the work was easy. The other cleaner and I used to mess around and laugh a lot. She said I can make beds so quick, I ought to be in the Guinness Book of Records. *Dress suggestions:* Wear a uniform. Have cleaning rags still hanging out of the pockets. Carry a feather duster.

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Fiona

Sebastian

Jose

Pascal

Francis

Antoinette

Maria

Tom

Louis

Marilda

Isabella

Juliolla

*Merri Mysteries presents...*

## **“Caught In A Spanish Web”**

*by Stephanie Chambers*

*These are the clues for:*

# *Fiona*

During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 We built the hotel about eleven months ago. Then we got the decorators in and we interviewed for staff. We recruited mainly local Spanish staff plus a few specialists like Pascal, Tom and Antoinette.
- 2 At business school Arthur and I were praised for our emphasis on efficiency, but when it came to actually managing a hotel, I found out that Arthur was keen on having his staff work long hours so that he could cut costs.
- 3 For the first few months, that was OK. We were keen to make a good job of it and so were the staff. But no one can be expected to work thirteen or fourteen hour days indefinitely.
- 4 Two months ago, I told Arthur I just couldn't keep up with this sort of pace. I told him I was taking two weeks off to go back to the States to see my folks. Arthur reluctantly agreed, but not without giving me an “I'm more wonderful than you” type lecture about “letting the team down” and so on. I just ignored him and went.
- 5 When I came back, I could tell things had changed. I could just feel it in the air. The staff members were giving me funny looks. I asked Maria what happened while I was away. She said, “While the cats away the mice will play”. She said that Arthur had been flirting with all the female staff, but that they all found him as appealing as a cold Tortilla de Patatas – a Spanish potato omelet.

## Fiona - Act Two

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 Sebastian came to me to complain about the long hours he was being expected to work. He said he'd complained to Arthur, but he just ignored him.
- 2 I felt sorry, not just for Sebastian, but for all the staff. I told Arthur it was unreasonable, not to mention inefficient, to expect our staff, and Sebastian in particular, to work such ridiculous hours. Arthur told me to mind my own business and that he would decide how to manage the staff not me.
- 3 That really upset me because before that Arthur had always said what a great team we made and how he always really valued my opinions.
- 4 Now that I was back, I thought Arthur would stop flirting with the female staff. But he didn't.
- 5 Arthur still kept bothering the women staff.

## Fiona - Act Three

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 Last night, I went to Arthur's office and told him I was ashamed of the way he was treating the staff, especially the women. He just laughed at me and told me to get out.
- 2 I told him that I wanted out. Arthur didn't seem too worried. He said if I left him he would have more time to play around with the female staff, whether they liked it or not. He said his parents would help him buy my share of the business.
- 3 I told him that they would take him to court for harassment. He said, his family and his lawyers would never allow that to happen.
- 4 I left in tears. Maria saw me and took me into the conservatory and comforted me.
- 5 Arthur had changed from the man I knew from my college days and I no longer liked him. In fact I was surprised to discover that I really hated him.
- 6 I knew that Arthur would be in his office till late that evening because he had the end of month paperwork to finish.

*Merri Mysteries presents...*

## **“Caught In A Spanish Web”**

*by Stephanie Chambers*

*These are the clues for:*

# *Sebastian*

During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 I applied for the position of concierge, because I had reached that level in my last job in the US. I was very pleased when I was told I'd won the position.
- 2 My new bosses were great. They were both so keen to make The Grand Hacienda Hotel the finest hotel in Spain. I knew it would mean long hours but that didn't worry me.
- 3 Fiona even asked my advice on the decor. She said she wanted ideas on how to make it have an even more Spanish flavor. I bought my mother in, and together we came up with some really good ideas.
- 4 The staff they employed were excellent, each and every one of them, and for the first six months we worked as a very close team.
- 5 We used to have weekly meetings in which we were encouraged to give our suggestions. Arthur and Fiona often changed things as a result of our suggestions.

## Sebastian - Act Two

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 The monthly meetings started to become gripe sessions, because everyone was starting to feel run down after six months of incredibly long hours.
- 2 Arthur started to ignore our suggestions as to how things could be improved. We all felt that we need more staff so that we could start working normal hours. He just said there wasn't the money.
- 3 We knew he was lying about the money, because the hotel had become very popular and was often booked out with visitors and conferences.
- 4 Arthur expected me to work until the last guest had arrived which often meant staying up till one or two o'clock in the morning and then being back behind my counter at six the following morning. I was only given one day off a week and Fiona worked in my place on this day.
- 5 I survived by drinking lots of coffee, but even the effect of the strong coffee was wearing off. I had started taking handfuls of caffeine pills just to stay awake.
- 6 My health was starting to deteriorate. The doctor said I had developed an ulcer. I told Arthur that I needed another assistant, apart from Fiona, so that I could rest up my ulcer a little bit.

## Sebastian - Act Three

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 Arthur said that if I couldn't handle the job, he would have to replace me with someone who could. He said I should think about it some more.
- 2 I felt really angry, because I had devoted so much time and effort into making the hotel the success it now was. And I knew that I would never find a similar job in Spain. But ulcers can kill people you know, so I was in a real predicament.
- 3 I asked Fiona if she could help. She said she would try, but I knew she had no real power over him.
- 4 On the night of the murder I was very busy. We had a big conference starting on Monday and a lot of the delegates had come a few days early to see the sights of Spain before the conference began.
- 5 Recently my mother had been talking to Arthur and discovered that he was the cousin of the man she had married in LA. I told her that didn't surprise me in the slightest. I thought they both had bad blood. While my mother, to my surprise, said she sensed that Arthur was a man who didn't deserve to be alive.
- 6 I worked late, as usual on the night of the murder. My ulcer was giving me a lot of trouble – sharp twinges and so on. I was sick of the pain and I just had to do something to get rid of it.

*Merri Mysteries presents...*

## **“Caught In A Spanish Web”**

*by Stephanie Chambers*

*These are the clues for:*

# *Pascal*

During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 Fiona was delighted when I accepted the position. I think she knew she had scored one of the world’s most brilliant chefs.
- 2 It soon became apparent, however, that to Arthur I was just the “cook” out the back whipping up some food. He couldn’t understand why as a chef I commanded such a high salary. But Fiona pointed out to him that that was how things were, that he couldn’t employ some cheap chef and still expect to attract celebrities and dignitaries to the hotel.
- 3 At first I had plenty of time to experiment with new dishes, because it wasn’t until after the first month that we started having large numbers of rooms being filled.
- 4 I tried some of the new Californian cuisine and I read up on the new “healthy” approach to cooking. I must admit it was a bit of an eye opener for me. I had to think twice about all the creamy sauces I was used to using. And when I read all the statistics about the effect of meat on the body, I decided to concentrate on white rather than red meat.
- 5 Of course, I still cooked red meat and I still cooked French dishes, but I started to put other alternatives on the menu.
- 6 Being in Spain, I also did some research on local vegetables and spices and the way real Spanish food is prepared and cooked. I developed some very interesting nouveau Spanish dishes.

## Pascal - Act Two

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 I loved the way in Spain, there was so much color. The clothes people wore, the colors they painted their houses. Everything was so rich.
- 2 I started to focus more on the appearance of my dishes on the plate. For example, when I served a Spanish dish, I served it on colorful plates and served the dish in such a way that its colors were also vibrant.
- 3 Arthur and I clashed badly. He was always complaining that I never cooked any “normal” food. I told him that if he wanted a hamburger, he should get take out from Greasy Jose’s down the road.
- 4 And he said that my Spanish dishes weren’t Spanish enough. I think that to him a Spanish dish was paella like his mother used to make him. I told him that there was more to Spanish cooking than just the rice dishes.
- 5 Arthur said that he wanted me to remove all the vegetarian dishes from the menu. He said that cheapskates often chose these dishes just because they were cheaper. I tried to explain to him that there was a growing trend towards healthier foods, but it was like talking to a deaf man. In the end I reluctantly removed the vegetarian dishes from the menu and added “Vegetarian dishes available on request” at the bottom of the menu.
- 6 I don’t see this hotel as the end of my career. Someday I would like to open a top class restaurant of my own in the Big Apple. But if Arthur had continued to cramp my culinary genius it would have destroyed my reputation forever.

## Pascal - Act Three

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During this act, you must reveal the following points:

- 1 I have become close friends with Maria. She is the kind of lady I admire. She has strong values. Someday I would like to marry her.
- 2 Recently Maria told me how Arthur had been making very indiscreet advances towards her. It made me furious that he would dare to touch my pure little Spanish rose – Maria.
- 3 Lately we have been having full houses and it has been frantic in the kitchen. I told Arthur that he must employ a junior chef to help me or I will not be able to keep up the standard that people have come to expect. He said he would find someone for me.
- 4 Arthur bought a young Spanish man to the kitchen yesterday. He said he was my junior chef, but after the first hour or so, I realized that this man had never had any training as a chef. He had only worked in Greasy Jose’s Take Out.
- 5 There is a big difference between cooking burgers and creating culinary magic. I was so angry. I went to Arthur’s office to complain after most of the dinner rush was over.
- 6 When I knocked he didn’t answer so I walked in. I found him grabbing hold of a terrified Maria. I won’t repeat the words that came to my mouth, for the sake of the ladies present, but I can tell you that they were words of flaming fury indeed.