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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“Phony”

Play version
for 10 to 16 guests

by Stephanie Chambers

2nd edition
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Although the characters in this mystery are based on real people, the events depicted in this mystery are totally fictional.

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The Suspects

A bunch of friends have gotten together and decided to hold a group graduation party. But as people arrived at the party, they found some anonymous typed notes saying that one of the new graduates is a fraud. Someone managed to get a master's degree without ever having obtained an undergraduate degree.

Which of their graduating friends had found out the truth? Why didn't they tell the university? What will happen once the truth is revealed? Will the imposter take revenge? All of these questions will be answered at the party. The suspects are:

Raven Mayo (medical graduate) I've been extremely one-pointed in my studies. This is the first party I've been to in years and I feel like I really deserve to celebrate. I play tennis to unwind and I can speak Spanish. **Dress suggestions:** Carry a piece of doctor's equipment such as bandages and a thermometer and carry a black bag to keep them in. **Theme song:** "Bad Case of Loving You" by Robert Palmer.

Darnell Lincoln (law graduate) Law seemed a natural progression from literature. It's like words put into action. I hope to become a famous barrister. I'm born for the legal stage. I do improv theater for fun. **Dress suggestions:** A slick suit jacket over the top of a comedy t-shirt. But wear very punk-like jeans. Maybe add some graffiti to some old jeans. If possible, don't wear glasses, but you will still need to be able to read. **Theme song:** "The Law" by Leonard Cohen.

Zora Bronte (creative writing graduate) A world devoid of emotional complexity is a world lacking in depth and in life itself. Great literature gives us perspective. I'm not writing for the masses. I'm writing for minds. **Dress suggestions:** Wear a black lace blouse and long black skirt or similar and put on lots of black eyeliner. Carry a notebook with some poems you've written in it. Put a temporary tattoo on your shoulder and be ready to reveal it if necessary. Also put a few other tattoos in visible places. **Theme song:** "Wuthering Heights" by Kate Bush.

Fenton Herodotus (history graduate) We historians are the ones who yell when you're about to go over the same cliff that others have been over before. They should make history compulsory. I like wrestling bodies when I'm not wrestling minds. **Dress suggestions:** Greek toga or a wrestling outfit. Speak with a posh accent. **Theme song:** "History Repeating" by Alex Gifford.

Jada Curie (biochemist graduate) I like explosions and I like creating them. Science can be exciting if you know how. I hope to find a way to use micro-explosions more often to replace surgery. I like doing my own mechanics and racing cars in my spare time. **Dress suggestions:** Wear a racing helmet or dress like a mechanic or carry science tools. **Theme song:** "T.N.T." by ACDC.

Xavier Gates (game programming graduate) My passion is making games more realistic. I'm going to use GPS to free gamers from our pokey little rooms and to make life itself become a game. I love sci-fi. **Dress suggestions:** Carry a computer game or a joystick or similar or wear a sci-fi outfit. **Theme song:** "The Game" by Motorhead.

Tara Logue (speech therapist graduate) I used to be an actor obsessed with accents and how we speak. Now I use these and other skills I have learned to help children find their voice and their role in life. I wear my sunflower hat and they love that. **Dress suggestions:** Wear a big hat with a real or fake sunflower on top. Wear an auburn-haired wig or die your hair red. **Theme song:** "Rain In Spain" from the My Fair Lady musical.

Beau Maslow (counseling graduate) My aim is to help people cope with all the challenges of life and to increase their happiness quotient. I remind people that they need to exercise, eat well and meditate. It's all about balance. I love biking. **Dress suggestions:** Wear biking clothes and carry a bike helmet. Bring a fake engagement ring and keep it hidden until you need it. **Theme song:** "Mind Games" by John Lennon.

Effie Carnegie (MBA entrepreneur graduate) I want to start my own business, become incredibly rich and then become a philanthropist. Having an MBA should help me convince the venture capitalists to back my idea. My party plan days will soon be over. **Dress suggestions:** Carry some products sold by party plan and a t-shirt that you've written a motivational "success" aphorism on. Make yourself look plump by putting some pillows under your clothes. Wear a dark wig or color your hair dark. Add some wrinkles and/or a few gray hairs. **Theme song:** "Money" by Pink Floyd.

Monroe Nightingale (male nurse graduate) My specialty is pediatric nursing. Sick boys especially need males around because they often won't express their emotions to females. I've years of experience as a nurse plus I'm a single dad and that's taught me a lot. I love playing basketball. **Dress suggestions:** Basketball uniform. Wear a big fake beard. **Theme song:** "Lady of the Lamp" by Donovan.

Optional characters

Faye Paige – I am an administrator at the university. I find the students interesting. They all have such different aspirations and dreams. I run a belly-dancing class in my spare time. *Dress suggestions:* Wear belly dancing clothes and lots of scarves and beads. *Theme song:* “Hips Don’t Lie” by Shakira.

Derry Culley – I’m a gaming buddy of Xaviers. Unlike a lot of gamers, I keep really fit. I study Chi Gung and I’m also in the Army Reserve. So I’m a warrior on all fronts. *Dress suggestions:* Wear a Chi Gung outfit or an Army Reserve uniform. *Theme song:* “Eye Of The Tiger” by Survivor.

Rosamond Orlando – I’m a professor in the creative writing department and Zora is one of my celestial students. I’m a published poet and also a performance poet and Shakespearean actor. *Dress suggestions:* Wear outlandish, eccentric, flamboyant clothes. *Theme song:* “Shakespeare” by Miranda Cosgrove.

Santo Nightingale – My Daddy is one of the people graduating. He says I’m his superhero because I help him cook dinner and do laundry. *Dress suggestions:* Wear a super-hero outfit. *Theme song:* “Hero” by Mariah Carey.

Veronique Golding – I’m one of the chief nurses at the hospital. Monroe works under me. We don’t always see eye to eye. Raven, however, is a delight to work with. I will miss her. *Dress suggestions:* Wear a nurse uniform. *Theme song:* “Night Nurse” by Simply Red.

Bill Saunders – I’m the janitor in the building Raven lives in. Raven and I like talking about politics and what laws and legislation we wish we could change. She’s like the daughter I never had. We both also love pop music. *Dress suggestions:* Wear overalls and/or carry a mop. *Theme song:* “I Love Pop Music” by Ben Lee.

Suspects

<p>Raven Mayo</p>
<p>Darnell Lincoln</p>
<p>Zora Bronte</p>



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Fenton
Herodotus

Jada
Curie

Xavier
Gates

Tara
Logue

Beau
Maslow

Effie
Carnegie

Monroe
Nightingale

Optional characters

Faye
Paige

Derry
Culley

Rosamond
Orlando

Santo
Nightingale

Veronique
Golding

Bill
Saunders

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The Play

Note: *Although this is in play format, you do not have to take to a stage and act it out. You can just sit around a dining table and read out your lines or sit in a circle on sofas etc.*

Note: *If it says the line may be said by “Anyone”, we recommend that one of the optional characters take a turn to say the line. If there are no optional witnesses or not many of them, then everyone should take a turn saying one of these lines. Try and make sure everyone gets a similar number of lines to say. You may like to work out beforehand who will say each of these “Anyone” clues and write their character’s name next to each one. Try and make sure they aren’t given a clue about themselves.*

Raven Mayo: As a doctor, I take ethics very seriously. I can’t believe that anyone would suspect me of doing anything.

Darnell Lincoln: Just because I like comedy and improv, some people don’t think I’m the lawyer type. But lots of great comedians like John Cleese started out as lawyers.

Zora Bronte: Just because I look dark and mysterious doesn’t mean I am. I’m an open book really. All my thoughts and emotions go on the page literally.

Fenton Herodotus: There have been some great fraudsters in the past like Frank Abagnale that the movie “Catch Me If You Can” is about. And maybe Effie made up her last name of “Carnegie” to remind us of Cassie Chadwick. She fooled some banks into thinking she was the illegitimate daughter of Andrew Carnegie and into giving her \$10 Million dollars. But nowadays because the internet has made our lives more transparent, it’s harder to get away with things like this.

Jada Curie: I hate the way everyone thinks that anyone from the former USSR is part of the mafia or something. I don’t deny there is a lot of crime, but we aren’t all tarred with the same brush.

Xavier Gates: Even though I’m obsessed with games, I know the difference between real life and imagination. The idea of me being an imposter is pure fantasy. I’m Pegasus minus the wings.

Tara Logue: I love reading crime fiction, so it’s quite exciting to think I might be part of a conspiracy – as a spectator of course, not as the villain.

Beau Maslow: It will be interesting who shows any signs of being worried about this party turning into an investigation. Sweaty palms and things like that are all used as part of lie detection. I learned about this in psych 101. Feel how dry my palms are.

Effie Carnegie: There must be a lot of money at stake. That’s why people risk everything. But I don’t know how people like Bernie Madoff and other criminals could look at themselves in the mirror. Wouldn’t they try and floss the evil out of themselves?

Monroe Nightingale: People change in vulnerable moments like these. I’ve seen it happen at the hospital. Someone’s going to snap under the pressure. What we don’t know is what they will do when their secret is revealed.

Anyone: Raven – you are very young for someone who has just finished medicine. Maybe it’s because you skipped pre-med?

Raven Mayo: I was a gifted child. I finished high school at 15, undergraduate at 18 and now medicine. But I am very mature for my age, both emotionally and mentally. My friends would confirm this, except I don’t really have any.

Anyone: Darnell – in other countries you don’t need an undergraduate degree before you can study law. Maybe you decided to skip it and to just sit the law entrance exam?

Darnell Lincoln: But everyone knows that to practice law you have to have had an unblemished criminal record. Surely I wouldn’t take a shortcut and risk not being able to practice what I have spent years learning.

Anyone: Zora – there aren’t many pre-requisites to get into an MA program. You just have to have a few writing samples. So it would have been pretty easy for you to skip your undergrad?

Zora Bronte: Ask any of my professors and they’ll confirm that my writing is deep, really deep and it makes a lot of references to other great literary and historical themes. You can’t fake that by reading a few books. You have to have studied them at depth.

Anyone: Fenton – your parents are rich but everyone knows how stingy the rich often are. Maybe they wouldn't pay for your studies and because of them you couldn't get scholarships. So you decided to cut costs and skip the first degree?

Fenton Herodutus: And wouldn't ones parents know whether one did an undergraduate degree? Or are you saying my parents are fraudsters too? As they say in Latin “*ex dolo malo non oritur actio*” – actions that originate in fraud cannot be supported.

Anyone: Jada – you must have studied some science because it's hard to fake knowledge of chemistry. But you are from overseas so it's not as easy to check your credentials. Maybe you studied but didn't actually finish your degree in Poland?

Jada Curie: But I went to the University of Warsaw which is one of the most well-known universities in Poland. And chemistry is sequential so you can't just study part of it. It's a house of cards that falls down without its foundations.

Anyone: Xavier – a lot of great programmers are self-taught. Maybe you thought it would be boring to have to sit through all the undergraduate basics, so you decided to skip them?

Xavier Gates: Gaming draws on a wide range of programming skills. Self-taught people often don't have a broad enough range of knowledge to be able to cope with it. They're the ones whose games crash just when you're starting to get a good score.

Anyone: Tara – as you have an acting background, it would have been easy for you to assume a new identity, wouldn't it?

Tara Louge: If I was an imposter, I wouldn't have told you that I have an acting background. Surely I'd have made up a really boring wallpaper-person past.

Anyone: Beau – males are in the minority in counseling. Did you think it would be less suspicious to be in a minority?

Beau Maslow: Well when couples are going through marital troubles, they often want a male therapist, so I'm hoping I'll be in demand. But I can act more feminine if that would allay your suspicions.

Anyone: Effie – most MBA types come from the corporate world and they don't hold parties to sell multi-level marketing stuff at weekends. And your journalism degree would have been easy to fake and you struggled in finance.

Effie Carnegie: MBA students come from a broad range of backgrounds. And I was one of many that struggled with finance. Journalism may not be quantum physics but it's as valid a degree as any other.

Anyone: Monroe – you're a single dad. Maybe you couldn't afford the time and the finances to do an undergraduate degree as well. Maybe you chose the option that would increase your wage faster?

Monroe Nightingale: No one ever gives nursing the respect it deserves. It has a lot of pre-requisite knowledge and it would be very hard to fake. And if I wanted to earn more, surely I'd fake medicine instead like Raven might have done.

Anyone: Darnell – because you were interested in law, you probably knew all the loopholes and about all the fraud cases?

Darnell Lincoln: Just because a thorn can be used to remove a thorn, doesn't mean lawyers commit crimes.

Anyone: Effie – you're pretty old to be doing a masters. Maybe you felt you needed to skip ahead for that reason?

Effie Carnegie: Sometimes it takes a while to work out what you want to do in life. Journalism was a good career until the Australian mega-media-man started cutting costs and cutting writers and just started printing press releases instead.

Anyone: Fenton – you use your parents in your defense. But none of us have ever met them and they weren't at your graduation so how do we know they really exist?

Fenton Herodutus: Well they work hard to earn and maintain their wealth. That's the price you pay for money. And a lot of us didn't have our parents at our graduation, so I'm not the only one.

Anyone: Raven – you don't have many friends. Maybe it's because you have a new identity?

Raven Mayo: It's hard to maintain friendships when you study medicine. You don't have any spare time. And the people with whom you're studying act like competitors rather than friends.

Anyone: Monroe – whenever anyone asks what your middle initial R stands for, you won't tell them. Maybe it's because it doesn't match up with the middle name you used for your undergraduate degree?

Monroe Nightingale: No. It's because it's Romeo. Can you imagine how embarrassing a name like that is? When I was at school, everyone used to call out "wherefore art thou, Nightingale?"

Anyone: Beau – a lot of people say that psychology is common sense. Was it easy to get through it even though you'd never studied it before?

Beau Maslow: Psychology does have a lot of science and statistics behind it. Even majoring in counseling as I did at the undergraduate level, to get a masters there were a lot more expert's names and theories to memorize and to put into practice. If psychology were just common sense, no one would need therapy, so that's obviously not true.

Anyone: Xavier – you also do your own computer graphics. Did you use these skills to forge your own degree documents?

Xavier Gates: Nowadays universities don't just trust copies of documents. They all communicate electronically and verify records that way. And you have to show your driver's license or other id when you start so they can check it against your birth date given on your undergraduate documents and ids are pretty hard to forge.

Anyone: Zora – a lot of your poems are about truth and justice and what is real. Is that because that's a psychological problem you face yourself?

Zora Bronte: As I said, the complexities of life are interesting. I think I am more rebelling against the strict religious education my parents forced me into and I'm sorting out my own feelings about guilt. But I'm not a con artist, just an intellectual.

Anyone: I saw a guy come up to Tara at the mall. He said, “Hi Mandy. It’s been years. You look different with red hair.” But she just said, “Sorry. You must be confusing me with someone else. My name is Tara.” He looked confused and rejected and walked off.

Tara Logue: Oh I remember that. That sort of thing happens to me all the time. I think he must have seen me in one of the ads I did for soap on TV years ago. They think they know me. But they don’t.

Anyone: Jada – maybe you’re a terrorist and that’s why you’re into explosives? Maybe faking your undergraduate degree was just part of a bigger plot?

Jada Curie: How ridiculous. Learning chemistry is far harder than learning to fly a plane I can tell you. I’m no more a terrorist than your mother is.