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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

## “The Love Letter”

### Host Guide

For meet and mingle versions

by Stephanie Chambers

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## Host's guide

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It is easy to prepare and run a mystery party. We recommend that as host you should also take a role and participate along with everyone else. With our mysteries, not even the person who did it knows that they did it. But with a little intelligence and a careful ear for important clues, it is possible to solve the mystery.

### **Preparing for the party**

- 1 Open the kit. The name of the kit shows the recommended minimum number of guests and the maximum number of guests that for which this kit caters.
- 2 Decide when you will be having the party, where and who will play each role. You should read the description of each character and try to select a role for each guest. Or you may like to give your guests a choice of the roles not yet taken and let them decide for themselves. Only give the special guest roles to reliable ladies that you are sure will be at the party. It is better if people play roles that are as different as possible from their normal lives.

**Very important host secret:** About halfway through the party when people have mingled and talked about their clues for Part 1 and they are starting to lose interest, discretely give Lord Mazing his clue page for Part 2 (if he is present) and tell him to read it alone immediately and take one of the ladies playing one of the optional witness roles aside (perhaps in a private room where no one will hear you talk). Give her the page that has the heading "Special items for a witness to receive before the beginning of Part 2". Tell her that when you return to join the others, she must pretend to take Lord Edward Mazing a glass of water. He will be in another room. If you can't keep a secret, then you will have to play this role, but this means you can't play a special guest role or one of the important optional roles. Later she must go out and come back. When she comes back, give her the Love Letter to read out to the group. Hand out copies if you have any.

- 3 We recommend that you tell your guests to: "Please dress up as your character. Over dressing and going to extremes is highly recommended." We generally find that the more people put into the event, the more fun it is.
- 4 Decide how you want to do the invitations. You can print out the Word or Adobe Acrobat versions and handwrite the details, or you can type in your party details before you print it out. There are versions with four invitations per page or one invitation per page. You can print them in color or black and white or you may like to print them on colored paper.
- 5 The invitations refer your guests to read a web page to find out more details about their character (ie their character's description and their dress suggestions). They should try and read the descriptions of all of the special guests before they come to the party. We sometimes hide clues in these. However, they don't need to read the descriptions of the optional characters.
- 6 You may like to have a copy of the special guests pages available at the party in case some guests didn't get time to read them before the party.
- 7 Cut each page in two using a guillotine/paper trimmer or scissors. Don't read the clues beforehand as it will spoil your enjoyment of the party, and you may spoil everyone else's enjoyment by letting on that you know everything!
- 8 The "Who Did It" pages are at the end with a warning beforehand not to read the next section. Fold these unread, put them in an envelope and open it at the end of your party to find out who did it.
- 9 Print a name tag for each guest. You can print them in color or black and white or you may like to print them on thicker or colored paper. Cut these up and have some small safety pins handy.

- 10 Create a clue page for each person playing an optional role. Divide up the extra clues and staple them to their clue page. You may like to print them an extra name tag each that you staple on to the front of their clue page. If you don't have many people playing optional roles, divide the extra clues up amongst the special guests also. But be careful not to give them a clue that is about them. All the clues should be given out. Repeat this process for both Part 1 and Part 2 clues.
- 11 If you think some of your guests may not turn up you could cut up the extra clues and have them in a bowl so people can help themselves. Create two bowls full of extra clues - one for Part 1 and another for Part 2. Keep the Part 2 bowl hidden till that part of the party begins.
- 12 Have a copy of "The Love Letter" ready to give the lady you gave the "Special items for a witness to receive before the beginning of Part 2" page. If you want you can also print out additional copies "The Love Letter" to hand out to your guests so they can also read it when she reads it out to the group.
- 13 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 14 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 15 Prepare or arrange for the props (see *Preparing props*).
- 16 Decide whether you are going to have prizes for the party (see *Preparing prizes*). This is optional, but recommended.

### ***Décor suggestions***

These are suggestions you might like to follow to make your place look 1800s:

- Scatter lace shawls and tapestries.
- Have some books that were written around this period on the table (eg Jane Austin).
- Remove anything very modern.
- Play classical music.

### ***Menu suggestions***

Though this is meant as a high tea you can make it into a dinner party and serve any dish. A high tea is served at about 5pm and consists of cups of tea or coffee, cucumber sandwiches (crusts cut off) and cake. Generally 1800s food was conservative and traditional. For example, you might serve soup, a baked roast with Yorkshire pudding and apple pie and cream.

Search for recipes on the Internet (eg search for "old-fashioned recipes" on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)).

Eat food you would find in America. Search for recipes on the Internet (eg search for "American recipes" or specific recipes on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)).

Or you may like to serve cocktail party food such as:

- caviar and crackers (not necessarily expensive caviar)
- vol au vents filled with corn or asparagus and cheese
- spring rolls
- filo pastry parcels with spinach and feta cheese and pine nuts
- spicy chicken wings
- mini pizzas
- hot skewered food
- mini sweet pumpkin pies.

If you would prefer, you can serve a sit down dinner or have the food in a buffet / smorgasbord arrangement.

If you are holding the party as a sit down dinner, don't assign fixed seating arrangements. Allow people to sit near the people that their clue(s) indicates they have to speak with. Also allow people to mingle a bit before and after dinner so they can chat with more people and find out more. Some of the special guests and people playing the important optional roles may also like to move around a little to other tables between courses.

## Preparing props

Scroll the love letter and tie it with a ribbon and a bow. Put this in the hand of Lord Mazing when he dies.

If Lord Mazing is not going to be present, you may like to prepare a replica of his dead body and place it in another room. Put a scrolled copy of the love letter in his hand. When people arrive, tell them that Lord Mazing is in his room and let them know which room that is. But tell them that he is not to be disturbed. The person who is to take him a glass of water will have that written on their clue sheet and they should take this to him at the appropriate time.

## Preparing prizes (optional)

This is optional, but you may like to have some prizes available to give to the people:

- who guess who did it
- who work out for whom the Love Letter was intended
- have the best costume.

You can reduce the number of people you have to give a prize to by asking for details (eg as to who, how and why the person did it or why the love letter was written for this person).

If you do have prizes, you should let people know they exist just after you read out “*The Rules*”.

**Tip:** Don’t assume that only one person will guess who did it. It is best to have a prize you can divide up (eg a box of chocolates or a bag or box of Turkish Delights). If no one guesses correctly, divide the prize up amongst everyone.

If you have a color printer and some T-shirt transfers, you may like to download and print out some of our special T-shirt logos (ie “I Gussed Who Did It” and “I Had The Best Costume”). See <http://www.merrimysteries.com/tmm/prizes.htm> for details. These are free to download.

## Running the party

We suggest that you run the party as follows:

- 1 Have everyone’s clue pages for Part 1 on a table near the entrance so people can collect their page and their name tag as they arrive. Or hand them to them as they arrive. Or you can have the ladies who are playing the optional witness roles take a clue each from the Part 1 clue bowl.
- 2 When everyone has arrived, read *The Rules* to everyone.
- 3 Have each special guest introduce themselves to the group by saying their character’s name and a few words about themselves from their description. If you have people playing the optional important roles, you should also introduce them.
- 4 Check that everyone has read the “*The Special Guests*” pages. If they haven’t, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. There may be important clues in “*The Special Guests*” pages.
- 5 Ask the guests to meet and mingle and find out information. Make sure everyone tells the people they meet about their clues and that everyone participates. You may like to encourage people who are shy by asking them a question or two. Once people find out things they think may be important, they can also pass that on to the people they meet.
- 6 Serve your First Course (if you are serving various courses, otherwise, just make the food available and let people know they can eat it during the party).
- 7 When everyone has mingled for a while, discretely give Lord Mazing his clue page for Part 2 (if he is present) and tell him to read it alone immediately. Also discretely give the witness you have chosen, the “Special items for a witness to receive before the beginning of Part 2” page. Then when she returns and says about finding the Lord lying dead, give everyone their clue pages for Part 2. If you have a bowl of Part 2 clues, hand this around and let everyone take 2 clues each.
- 8 After a while, when the witness leaves and returns again, give her the Love Letter to read out to the group. Hand out additional copies if you have them.

- 9 When everyone has mingled for a while, have Lady Mazzing (or one of the optional witnesses if she isn't present) read her report and then let people mingle some more and serve some more food. Her report is on her clue page for Part 2.
- 10 Serve hot drinks and after dinner mints (if applicable).
- 11 Ask each person to think about who did it and why and how they did it and for whom they think the love letter was intended. Ask them to write down their final choices. When they are ready, go around the group and ask everyone what they wrote down.
- 12 After everyone has had a guess, take the *Who Did It* pages out of their sealed envelope and read as specified.
- 13 Present the prizes (if you are providing these). If more than one person guesses correctly, give the prize to the person who has the most correct answers (eg as to how and why the person did it or why the love letter was written for this person). You may like to also give a prize for the person who has the best (or most creative) costume.

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### *These are to be read out by the host to the whole group at the beginning of the party:*

Welcome to "The Love Letter"!

It is 1807 and Lady Mazzing has invited eight young ladies to her mansion as she would like their advice about the next Ball she is planning to hold. Her one and only son Lord Edward Mazzing will briefly greet the guests, but he will not be joining them for long as he has other work commitments. Since his father's death two years ago, the young Lord has taken over the responsibility of managing their large estate. Secretly Lady Mazzing views this social event as an opportunity to acquaint herself with young ladies who may be suitable marriage partners for her son. I will introduce the special guests (and Lord and Lady Mazzing) shortly.

You must tell as many people as you can what you know. If you find out interesting new information, you can also pass that on to the people you meet. Don't panic if you don't get to talk to everyone. You will hear and see enough to help you solve the mysteries that will arise. You may want to jot down some notes on your clue page. When we do have some facts or evidence, we will read these to you.

There is no need to hurry through this and you can adlib a little if you want. You do not have to read each clue exactly as it is written – embellish it if you want. You might like to speak in slang or with an accent. For example, if you are playing a snob, you might speak as if you have a plum in your mouth. If your character is distressed, you could reveal your clues in between sobs. Act it out to the fullest. This is your chance to be dramatic!

At the end of the party you will be asked to guess who performed the crime and how and why they did it. If you work out who did it before the party ends please keep it to yourself. *Optional:* There is a prize for the people who guess who did it. There is also a prize for the person with the best costume.