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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“The Love Letter”

Host Guide

For the play version

by Stephanie Chambers

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Host's guide

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 murderer knows who 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 **Note:** If you are not having Lord Mazing present, you can ignore his lines. However, we recommend that you make a dead version of his body and place it in a spare room (see the props for details).
- 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. It is better if people play roles that are as different as possible from their normal lives.
- 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 Or you could paste the jpg version into an email and add your party details and send this to each guest.

- 6 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.
- 7 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.
- 8 Print out the play.
- 9 Cut each page in two using a guillotine/paper trimmer or scissors. Don't read the play 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!
- 10 Staple the pages together into a booklet for each act.
- 11 If it says "Anyone" can say the clue, give it to someone who hasn't had much to say or if you have people playing optional roles, give it to one of them (they should be taking turns to say the "anyone" clues). Just make sure it isn't the same character as the next character in the play. You may like to work out beforehand who will say each of the "Anyone" clues and write their character's name next to each one.
- 12 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.
- 13 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.
- 14 Print additional copies of "The Love Letter" to hand out or enlarge it and put on the wall.
- 15 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 16 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 17 Prepare or arrange for the props (see *Preparing props*).

18 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).

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. Decide who will take him a glass of water at the beginning of Act Two.

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
- with the best costume.

You can reduce the number of people you have to give a prize to by asking for details as to who, how and why the person did it.

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 Give each guest their name tag and a small safety pin to attach it with.
- 2 When everyone has arrived, read *The Rules* to everyone.
- 3 Have everyone introduce themselves to the group by saying their character’s name and a few words about themselves from their description.
- 4 Check that everyone has read the “*The Guests*” pages. If they haven’t, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. There may be important clues in “*The Guests*” pages.
- 5 Serve the First Course of your meal or have dips available. Generally we don’t recommend you continue with the play while people are eating unless you are pressed for time.

- 6 Start Act One of the play. Pass the play booklet around to each person mentioned. If it says "Anyone" can say the clue, give it to someone who hasn't had much to say or if you have people playing optional roles, give it to one of them (they should be taking turns to say the "Anyone" clues). Just make sure it isn't the same character as the next character in the play. 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. Make sure everyone reads out all their lines and that everyone participates.
- 7 Serve the Second Course of your meal (if applicable).
- 8 Do Act Two. Serve Dessert (if applicable).
- 9 Do Act Three.
- 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 who the letter was intended for. Ask them to write down their final choice. When they are ready, go around the group and ask everyone who they think did it and why and how they did it.
- 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 as to how and why the person did it. You may like to also give a prize for the person who has the best (or most creative) costume.

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The Rules

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 guests shortly.

There is a separate play booklet for each of the three acts. Only read your lines as required and please don’t read the pages ahead of time. There are assigned lines and there are also some lines which can be said by "Anyone". We will be taking turns to say these “Anyone” clues and making sure we all get to participate. If there is another character’s name written next to an “Anyone” clue, then that person should say it.

During Act One:

If Lady Mazzing is present: The eight young ladies will speak to Lady Mazzing and, she will reply to each of them. ***If Lady Mazzing isn’t present:*** The eight young ladies say what they said to Lady Mazzing and what she said to them.

If Lord Mazzing is present: Then the eight young ladies will speak to Lord Mazzing and he will reply to them. ***If Lord Mazzing isn’t present:*** The eight young ladies will say what they said to Lord Mazzing and what he said to them.

(see next page)

There is no need to hurry through this and you can adlib a little if you want. You do not have to read each line exactly as it is written – embellish it if you want, but just don’t change its meaning. 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 and who the love letter was for. 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.