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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“Mardi Gras Mayhem”

Host Guide

For meet and mingle versions

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 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.
- 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 suspects 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 suspect 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 suspects also. All the clues should be given out. If there are far too many clues for the number of guests you are having, then you can ignore some of the sillier 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. You may like to save some clues to hand out in the middle of the party when people may be tired of their original clues.
- 12 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 13 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 14 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 like it's New Orleans at Mardi Gras time:

- have lots of streamers, and balloons in the Mardi Gras colors of purple, green and gold
- have beads in the Mardi Gra colors strewn about the table
- have chocolate coins / doubloons on the tables
- have coconuts on the tables
- have posters of New Orleans Jazz icons on the walls
- make a mock float with cardboard cut-outs or fake people (clothes full of bags etc)
- play jazz or big band music.

If you are hosting a Halloween party, you may also like to add traditional Halloween decorations such as skeletons and carved pumpkins and dim lighting.

Menu suggestions

Eat food you would find in New Orleans such as creole. Search for recipes on the Internet (eg search for "Cajun and Creole recipes" or "New Orleans recipes" or "Southern comfort food" or "fried chicken" or specific recipes such as "Gumbo recipes" on www.google.com.)

Serve some King Cakes. These are oval, sugared pastry that contains a plastic doll hidden inside; the person who finds the doll is crowned "king" and buys the next cake or throws the next party. If you don't want to put a doll in your cooking, use an almond.

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 suspects may also like to move around a little to other tables between courses.

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 Guessed 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 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.
- 2 When everyone has arrived, read *The Rules* to everyone.
- 3 Have each suspect 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 Suspects*" pages. If they haven't, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. There may be important clues in "*The Suspects*" 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 Have the police officer (or the host or someone else if they aren't present) read the Investigator's report and then let people mingle some more and serve some more food.
- 8 Serve hot drinks and after dinner mints (if applicable).
- 9 Ask each person to think about who did it and why and how they did it. 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.
- 10 After everyone has had a guess, take the *Who Did It* pages out of their sealed envelope and read as specified.

- 11 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 “Mardi Gras Mayhem”!

It's Mardi Gras in New Orleans and the city is full of party-goers. The parade has just finished and the invitation-only Ball is about to commence. The only problem is that this year's Rex King of the Mardi Gras – a local property developer called Darrin Hibiscus – hasn't been seen since he went up the steps of Gallier Hall to collect the keys to the city. The Mayor waited in vain in his office, but the king never appeared. His wife, the Queen waited for him to pass by, but he never did. Where has he gone? Has he been kidnapped? It's your job to find out.

You have all been asked to remain here for questioning by the police. 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. We must all work together to help determine who was responsible and to find the King. And you must do whatever you have been instructed to do. Don't panic if you don't get to talk to everyone. You will hear and see enough to help you work out who did it. 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.