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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“Mardi Gras Mayhem”

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 criminal 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 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 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.
- 4 Or you could paste the jpg version into an email and add your party details and send this to each guest.
- 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 Print out the play.

- 8 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!
- 9 Staple the pages together into a booklet for each act.
- 10 If it says the line may be said by "Anyone", it can be said by one of the optional authorities and witnesses. If there are few people playing optional roles, then the suspects should take a turn saying one of these lines, however, they shouldn't say it if it is a question for their character or about their character. 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 everyone has a similar number of lines to say.
- 11 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.
- 12 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.
- 13 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 14 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 15 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.

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 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 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 line, give it to someone playing one of the optional roles or if you don't have any people playing these roles, give it to someone who hasn't had much to say as long as it isn't about them. 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. 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 Have the Police Chief read out the Investigator's Report (or if not present, the host or anyone can read this).
- 12 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.
- 13 After everyone has had a guess, take the *Who Did It* pages out of their sealed envelope and read as specified.
- 14 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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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.

There are three acts in this play and then there is an investigator's report. 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". These lines are to be said by people playing the authorities and witnesses. We will be taking turns to say these lines and making sure we all get to participate. If there is another character's name written next to a line, then that person should say it.

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. 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.