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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents . . .

“Who Killed Santa?”

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. It is better if people play roles that are as different as possible from their normal lives.
- 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 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.
- 5 Print out the play.
- 6 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!
- 7 Staple the pages together into a booklet for each act.

- 8 If it says the line may be said by "Anyone" (eg if the named optional character is not present), it can be said by one of the other optional characters. If there is only one optional character or no optional characters, 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" lines and write their character's name next to each one.
- 9 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 12 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 13 Prepare props (see *Preparing props*). This is optional, but recommended.
- 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 "Xmassie":

- Kitsch, over-the-top Christmas decorations
- Some crime-scene tape around an area where Santa collapsed near the fireplace
- A sleigh heaped with presents
- A chair where Santa was to have sat in the corner of the restaurant surrounded by presents
- Play Christmas carols (preferably modern ones as this would fit with the plot better).

You will have to pretend that your house is a restaurant called “Chatties”. Perhaps put a sign saying “Chatties Restaurant” on your front door.

You may like to section off an area near the fireplace (if there is one) with crime scene tape. This is where Santa collapsed. Mark his very round body on the floor with chalk. Or stuff some red Santa clothes and pretend his body is still there lying face down.

Also put a chair in a corner and surround it with boxes. This is where Santa would have sat if he had stayed alive at the party.

You may choose to have your guests wear name tags. It would also fit well with the plot. This also makes it easier for people when everyone is mixing during the breaks.

Menu suggestions

Serve the kinds of foods that are traditional in your area for Christmas or serve an international selection of Xmas-type foods. Search for recipes on the Internet (eg search for “Christmas recipes” on www.google.com or search for specific recipes).

For example, for first course you could serve Mrs Claus Christmas soup (see <http://www.santas.net/recipes.htm> for details).

For second course, you could serve a roast chicken or turkey with vegetables.

For dessert you could serve a traditional English King George Christmas pudding, mince pies or a French Christmas chocolate log (see <http://www.santas.net/recipes.htm> for details).

With coffee and tea, you may like to serve Norwegian Christmas cookies called “Sand Kaggers”. See <http://www.santas.net/norwegianchristmas.htm> for details.

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 props

You should provide these props to the people at the beginning of the party. These are the important props that you or your guests need to provide:

- **Martina** – a Barbie doll and a plate of chocolate chip cookies.
Note: In the versions for 8 and 9 guests, Glenda has the Barbie doll and Nick has the plate of chocolate chip cookies.
- **Winnie** – a softball bat.
- **Josh** – a small briefcase full of Monopoly money.
- **Regina (or Reg if played by a male)** – a dark colored drink in a plastic bottle – one of those modern “health” drinks.
- **Glenda** – a laptop computer (or a cut-out of one in cardboard).

You may like to stuff some Santa clothes and arrange Santa’s body on the floor in the dining room (or another room if more convenient). You may like to cordon this area off with “crime scene” tape.

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 clue, give it to someone playing one of these 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 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.
- 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 “Who Killed Santa?”!

As you know we have been invited here today for the office Christmas Party. Unfortunately, I have some sad news. Santa has been murdered. Just before this party was set to commence, he collapsed and died. I will introduce the suspects to you in a moment.

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 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.