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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“The Search For The Truth”

Play version
for 13 to 16 guests

(Christian “mystery not murder” version)

by Stephanie Chambers

First edition

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“Merri Mysteries” was formerly known as “Tailor Made Mysteries”.

Although some of the characters in this mystery are loosely based on real people, the events depicted in this mystery are totally fictional.

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The Suspects

A large group is attending a Christian camp. The theme for the weekend is to find the truth. As the weekend progresses the participants find that they are not only on a search for their own personal truth, but also the truth in relation to a crime they didn't think could ever happen – the poisoning of camp leader, Peter Stein. But it is obvious that there was no intention to kill Peter, only to make him sick.

Peter is a hard-working 56-year-old man who is said to look like “a stern garden gnome”. He is a Vietnam vet and retired Lt. Col. in the US Army. His favorite food is Haggen Daaz ice cream and he never turns down dessert. He has a wife who is helping run the camp, two grown children and four grandchildren. He is a counselor for the police department. He has a Masters in counseling, although some people found his counseling style a bit dictatorial.

Kevin Spicer – I'm mad about heavy metal music. I played piano for 11 years but now I prefer to play bass guitar. I received a scholarship recently to do computer science at university. I like chick flicks but never get to see them because I don't have a girlfriend and I'm too embarrassed to go on my own. I hate Tim Allen movies. I was in a car wreck last year that totaled my friend's car. I drive a big red Buick, work at sorting parcels, and still live with my mom. **Dress suggestions:** Black clothes and glasses. Carry a heavy metal CD.

Pamela Marras – I am so sweet – everybody says so. I have a beautiful laugh that is contagious, but too loud sometimes, people tell me. Guys are mad about me and I'm mad about Latin and Psychology (both of which I am studying). I have played in the sea a little bit but I don't know how to swim so I don't go swimming. I wear contact lenses. I've vacationed out of the country to places like Trinidad and Bermuda. I'm vegetarian. I like karate movies and I hate people telling me what I should or shouldn't do. **Dress suggestions:** Pretty feminine clothes. Carry a book on Latin. Flirt and laugh a lot.

Kennie Rosie – I love any movies by Monty Python especially “The Search For The Holy Grail”). I'm a drummer and play the guitar pretty well too. I've written a few songs including “My Two String Guitar” which everybody knows and likes. I love basketball and work at a grocery store. I have a girl for a best friend (Kitty Raymond) and a girlfriend (Renata Beavis). I'm a great skateboarder and a pretty good snowboarder too. I can always make people laugh so I'm good fun to have around. My ambition is to be a radio broadcaster or an actor, because I can do great English and Australian accents. **Dress suggestions:** Carry a guitar. Quote bits from “The Search for the Holy Grail”. Speak with an accent.

Eleanor Hoskins – I am fluent in sign language as both my parents are deaf. I spent last Christmas on a cruise in the Bahamas. I wear braces and I can eat more than anyone else but I never put on weight. Everyone teases me about my appetite. They tell me I'm eating all their supplies but I don't think they're serious. My hair is red right now but I change the color every month or so. I'm mad about a guy named Tyler, but that might change next week. I'm a student and I work at a copy shop part time. I've taken 3 years of German but still struggle with it. I will be attending an elite art school in San Francisco next year. I like to wear clothes that show my flat tummy. At night I go to sleep cuddling my teddy bear. **Dress suggestions:** Wear arty clothes that show your tummy. Color your hair (with a temporary overnight color). Carry a teddy bear. Carry a German translation book and speak a few words of German.

Damien Hoskins – I'm Eleanor's brother. I still live at home with my parents. Like my sister, I am also fluent in sign language. I love country music. I also went on the cruise with my parents. I have a dog and a cat (the cat is also deaf). I always wear a baseball cap, even to bed. The only time I don't wear it is in the shower. I'm really fit because I walk about two miles every day and play football, basketball and do wrestling. **Dress suggestions:** Sports clothes and a baseball cap. Carry a football or basketball.

Renata Beavis – Some people think I'm a bit fanatical because I carry a toothbrush and mouth wash with me wherever I go. I make lists for everything, keeping track of every food group I eat during the day on a chart, which I keep in my purse. I always match the color of my top with my socks. I'm an avid scrapbooker so I'm always taking photos. I'm Kennie's girlfriend and I have a little white Maltese dog named Angelo, but they call him “Angel”, because he is one. **Dress suggestions:** Carry toothbrush and mouthwash and a notebook and pen. Wear green socks that match your green top and wear green nail polish.

Kitty Raymond – I'm a gymnast. I no longer compete but I am still as limber as ever. If you notice my lisp, I would prefer you not to mention it. I like to have something in my mouth to chew on. The guys don't seem to like me very much. My socks never match. I think it's a waste of time to worry about that. My parents are always off traveling somewhere. I've been to every state in the Union but Alaska and also traveled to Germany, Italy, England, and France. I don't eat breakfast, and some people think I'm a bit ditz. I wear contacts and when I spend the night somewhere without having my contact solution, I sleep with my contacts in my mouth. I swallowed them once. **Dress suggestions:** Wear mismatched gymnastic type clothes with odd socks. Chew gum, speak with a lisp and behave a bit ditz.

Theresa MacGregor – I am a teenager and I'm in love with a 21 year old named John Mark Harrison and have been for at least a year (he used to go to our church but moved to Wisconsin). I've never been kissed by a boy and I like to mother everyone, even my own mother. I play the violin, am very ticklish and I'm very good at saving money. I have a purple and green bedroom; I'm great at foos ball, love the Green Bay Packers and talk very loudly when I'm excited. I love any movie from Saturday Night Live (eg "Wayne's World" etc.) and simply adore the actor Heath Ledger from "The Patriot". I love the ocean. In fact I love almost everything except my big feet! **Dress suggestions:** Wear purple clothes, big shoes and a long blond wig. Carry a violin.

Langley Weaver – I am a student. I play electric guitar (in a band with Kennie and Kevin), and am gaga over Donna Glover! I drive a black Cougar and I'm VERY protective of Donna. I'll do anything she wants. I sing back up in the band and I have a little brother. Though I like heavy bands, I'm usually very mellow. I've just started working at a grocery store on weekends. It's not much fun but it helps to pay my student fees. **Dress suggestions:** Modern clothes with glasses and bleached hair.

Donna Glover – I'm a student and I'm gaga over my boyfriend Langley. I'm teaching myself how to play the piano and I work at a department store. I adore short shirts and hipsters but my parents won't let me wear them. With my blonde hair everybody says I look like Britney Spears. I know a lot about horses. I plan to be a vet and I don't intend to have any kids. I prefer animals. I love anything that's pink. My whole room is pink. I also sing in a choir. They tell me I have a lovely singing voice. I pretend to be ditzy (but I'm really not). Eleanor Hoskins is my best friend in the world. **Dress suggestions:** Pink clothes and a blond wig. Sing a little.

Rose Willis – I'm a youth leader and I also work as a draftsman for an architecture firm. I'm getting married this fall to Keld who I adore. I just started learning the guitar so we can sing songs at camp, but I'm not particularly good at it. I don't like girls who giggle all the time and just chase boys. Some people say I'm spunky but that's not important to me. What is important is honesty and staying close to people you love. I drive an old silver/gray Honda. I'm sort of a tomboy, with one niece and one nephew. **Dress suggestions:** Plain non-feminine trousers and shirt. Carry a guitar.

Keld Henderson – I work as a draftsman for an electrical firm. I'm getting married this fall to Rose, which is very exciting. I'm usually quiet except when in a competition of some sort. They say I'm very competitive. I love to ride jet skis. I really want one! I drive a little white truck and love anything that has to do with the "Indiana Jones" series, whether it is the movies or the TV show. **Dress suggestions:** Modern clothes. Carry an Indiana Jones video.

Investigator: Detective Sam Cummings – a police officer. I knew Peter from the police station. But we weren't friends. **Dress suggestions:** Mock police uniform.

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The Witnesses

Optional extra characters:

Narda Spencer – I am a student. I have two little sisters who I baby-sit, and I baby-sit for other people as well. I love children and plan to have lots one day and live in a house near to my parents. I am one of Theresa's best friends. I play basketball and have a boyfriend that I have known almost my entire life. He lives next door to me. **Dress suggestions:** Basketball clothes or plain clothes. Carry a basketball and a picture of a boy (Michael) in your wallet.

Roland O'Connor – I am a student. I've had the same girlfriend since 5th grade. I love watching TV with friends in my room. Sometimes I baby-sit my little brother. I think church is boring but I like listening to the band play (the youth worship band which is Kennie, Langley and others). I eat whatever I can get my hands on – I'm not fussy. I like computer games, and playing in the snow. **Dress suggestions:** Carry a small computer game, add extra freckles and wear a green coat.

Paul Mitters – I'm a freelance journalist and I love computers. I want to be a pastor who works as a computer programmer. Money is not the most important thing in my life. I drive a little old silver Honda Accord and have a girlfriend named Jerilyn. I'm mad about Karate movies and I started learning Karate a year ago. I'm extremely fluent in Spanish. I like to bleach my hair and usually take things just a bit too seriously. I love talking to people. **Dress suggestions:** Neat and tidy shirt, trousers and tie. Carry a Karate video.

Name Tags

The Suspects

Kevin
Spicer
(suspect)

Pamela
Marras
(suspect)

Kennie
Rosie
(suspect)

Eleanor
Hoskins
(suspect)

Damien
Hoskins
(suspect)

Renata
Beavis
(suspect)

Kitty
Raymond
(suspect)

Theresa
MacGregor
(suspect)

Langley
Weaver
(suspect)

Donna
Glover
(suspect)

Rose
Willis
(suspect)

Keld
Henderson
(suspect)

Investigator

Detective Sam
Cummings

Witnesses

Paul Mitters

Narda Spencer

Roland O'Connor

Merri Mysteries
presents...

**“The Search For
The Truth”**

by Stephanie Chambers

The Play

The Search For The Truth - Act One

Note: *Although this is in play format, you do not have to take to a stage and act it out. You can just sit around a dining table and read out your lines or sit in a circle on sofas etc.*

Note: *If it says the line may be said by “Anyone”, we recommend that one of the optional detectives and witnesses take a turn to say the line. If there are no optional witnesses or detectives, then everyone should take a turn saying one of these lines, however, the person the clue is about should not say it. You may like to work out beforehand who will say each of these 20 “Anyone” clues and write their character’s name next to each one.*

Detective Sam Cummings:

As you all know, Peter Stein has been poisoned. Fortunately, he’s only got severe diarrhea and a bit of nausea. From the nature of the poison used, we can tell that there was no intention to kill Peter, only to make him ill.

Apparently he left your meeting this morning saying that he wasn’t feeling well and he was going to lie down in the men’s cabin. Keld found him collapsed and lying outside the door to the other cabin when you all had your morning break. He took him home to recover.

We have taken all the food to be analyzed as we suspect that Peter was poisoned during breakfast. We are also conducting a search of your belongings.

Have any of you seen Peter lately in the past few weeks or months? What happened last time you saw him?

Kevin Spicer: I saw Peter at church. And last week I saw him with his family at the ice cream parlor. He told me pralines 'n' cream was his favorite. I noticed he had a much bigger ice cream than anyone else in his family.

Pamela Marras: Peter lives near me so I see him quite a bit. Recently I saw him at church and at the local store. He was buying binoculars so he could spy on his neighbors.

Kennie Rosie: I saw Peter at church and I also saw him last weekend at the movies. He was there with his wife and they’d just seen “Meet the Parents”. I was going to see “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”.

Eleanor Hoskins: I saw Peter at church. He was always telling me not to wear shirts that show my tummy. He was so old-fashioned.

Damien Hoskins: I saw Peter at church quite often and once while I was walking to school. Peter pulled up in his car to tell me that I shouldn’t wear my baseball cap backwards.

Renata Beavis: I saw Peter at church and at a party for one of his granddaughters. I think I’ve got him in one of the photos I took at the party. He was the only person who didn’t smile in any of the photos.

Kitty Raymond: I last saw Peter at church and then at the airport. My parents and I were just returning from a quick trip to Europe and he was leaving to go to some ex-army get-together in Iowa.

Theresa MacGregor: I saw Peter at church – that’s all. I don’t really hang out anywhere he hangs out.

Langley Weaver: I last saw Peter at the grocery store where I work. He came in to buy some Haggen Daaz ice cream. He said it was for the guys at the police station, but I knew it was probably mostly for him.

Donna Glover: I last saw Peter at church. He said I look pretty in pink. Bit cliché I thought.

Rose Willis: I last saw Peter at mid-week bible study. He asked me about my wedding plans.

Keld Henderson: I've only really seen Peter at church. He never seemed to bother speaking to me.

Detective Sam Cummings:
Did Peter speak to you since you came on this camp? What did he say? Did you hear Peter say anything to anyone else at the camp? What did he say?

Pamela Marras: Peter said to me on the camp: "I will have to teach you how to swim when we get back. Just because you wear contact lenses doesn't mean you should shirk from things like swimming. And what's this about counseling victims rather than the criminals when you become a psychologist? The criminals are the real ones who need psychological help. Believe me, I know. I work with them."

Kevin Spicer: I can't remember Peter speaking to me personally at the camp. But he was always barking orders to everyone. I think the only "camps" he'd ever been on were "boot-camps" in the army so he had no idea how to run the camp as a "fun event". He ran it like "boot-camp" and it wrecked the whole camp for everyone.

Anyone: I heard lots of the people at the camp lost respect for Peter because they felt he was being too bossy.

Damien Hoskins: I can only remember Peter continuing to nag at me about my baseball cap every time he saw me. There was no way I was going to wear it the other way around just because he didn't like me wearing it backwards.

Eleanor Hoskins: Peter said to me on the camp: "I hear you sleep with a teddy bear. I think you need to grow up now and realize that God is a better comfort than any teddy will be."

Kennie Rosie: Peter told me that he'd chosen a really good video for the camp. When he told me what he'd chosen, I almost died in horror. It was the kind of movie six year olds watch. It was about birds or something. Fortunately, he and his wife left us and went to bed after the first fifteen minutes, so I was able to swap it for a zombie video that I had in my bag because I was going to return it on the way home.

Kitty Raymond: Peter told me I had to make all the beds before I could come to dinner. I thought that was a bit unfair and that he was picking on me. Why couldn't everyone make their own bed?

Renata Beavis: Peter made me give him my camera on the camp. He said people thought I was spying on them because I was taking lots of random photographs. He said he'd give it back before I went home.

Donna Glover: Peter told me on camp that I was selfish not to want to have children. He said, "Listen to me, a grandfather, I've had kids and it's the best thing I ever did. God wants you to have children Donna."

Theresa MacGregor: Peter said to me on the camp: “I hear you are mooning over an older man. It’s time you quit that and found a boy your own age, big foot.” That really annoyed me - especially him making fun of my slightly large feet. They’re just good strong feet.

Langley Weaver: Peter kept telling me to move my guitar. He said people would trip over it. But there wasn’t anywhere else in the tiny cabin to put it.

Rose Willis: Peter told me I wasn’t to spend time talking to Keld at the camp – that I should mix with everyone. I just ignored him.

Renata Beavis: Peter told me I should stop matching my top with my socks. He said that sort of thing could lead me to develop an obsessive compulsive disorder. I told him that I love matching things, so I’m not going to stop.

Detective Sam Cummings:
Apparently Peter made a short speech on Friday night that put a few people offside. We found his notes for this speech. This is what he said:

Anyone: *“I have been really saddened, as I am sure you all have been, by the spate of youth killings over the past few years. I have been giving it a lot of thought. I have decided, for reasons I will discuss over the weekend, that we all need to lead even purer lives, free from the influence of violence and closer to God. Even though I have led a pretty violent life myself having been in the army as I was, I think we all need to give up things such as:*

Wrestling, football and competitive sports and games in general. Even things like foos ball.”

Anyone: *“Participating in karate and other martial arts or watching martial art films.*

Playing rock music and heavy metal. Only classical music is truly uplifting.

Watching violent films and other films such as Monty Python films and Austin Powers’s films.

Eating mind-altering substances such as chocolate.

Instead we should all focus our efforts on being more loving.

I don’t want to discuss all this now however as it is time for us all to watch a video. I will discuss it with you all over the weekend.”

Detective Sam Cummings:

What was your reaction to that speech and how did your friends react to it?

Kevin Spicer: Peter’s speech on Friday night didn’t worry me. I just thought he’d gone bananas and ignored it.

Pamela Marras: Peter’s speech didn’t worry me. I’ve never liked what he’s said about anything, so I just ignored it.

Kennie Rosie: I thought Peter had gone a bit off his rocker with his speech. Fancy telling people not to watch Monty Python movies or to play in rock bands. I was a bit irritated. I don’t see why we have to give up things like listening to rock music. It isn’t fair. I thought Peter needed to chill out – badly.

Eleanor Hoskins: I thought Peter had really lost it when I heard his speech but it didn't really worry me. I was just hoping he'd finish soon as I was looking forward to the popcorn we'd have with the video.

Damien Hoskins: I thought Peter was over-reacting a bit when I heard his speech. He was normally a pretty chilled out dude, but last night he sounded like he'd flipped out. Maybe the power of the position of being "camp leader" had gone to his head.

Theresa MacGregor: The only part of Peter's speech that annoyed me was when he said we couldn't even play foos ball.

Kitty Raymond: What did he say? I've forgotten already whatever it was he said. I suppose I must not have been listening.

Renata Beavis: I wasn't really paying all that much attention to Peter's speech either. I was trying to work out how many calories were in our dinner and which food groups were in it. I thought he must be joking. Nobody says you have to give up chocolate and means it.

Langley Weaver: I thought Peter was a pretty good guy until I heard him speak on Friday. There's no way I was ever going to give up playing my type of music on my electric guitar. Classical music just isn't the same.

Donna Glover: I thought Peter had gone loco with that speech. Austin Powers is fantastic! Who'd ever give that up?

Rose Willis: As a youth leader, in my opinion, Peter meant well but he was a bit off track in his beliefs. We don't have to give up everything we like. The only thing he said that was true was that we should all focus our efforts on being more loving. And the only way to do that is to abide by the teachings of Jesus and to realize that God's word is the only source of truth in the world.

Keld Henderson: Peter's speech was a bit of a shock. I never thought "being competitive" was a sin.

Anyone: Some people at the camp thought Peter wasn't the angel or the quiet gnome he pretended to be.

Anyone: Peter kept complaining that the music was too loud. He kept telling people to turn it down. He made everyone feel uncomfortable. People were getting grumpy about it.

Anyone: Peter told Kennie that if he found any of his "Monty Python" videos at camp he would burn them. He said they were morally bad for anyone to watch.

Anyone: Peter's wife thought he was right in trying to ban modern music and brutal competitive sports.

Anyone: Lots of the people at the camp were annoyed with Renata because she was taking photos of everyone while they were asleep.

Anyone: Donna said Peter was too old to be running a camp and that she was going to make sure he was replaced by someone younger.

Anyone: I saw Kennie looking through Peter's diary that he left on the kitchen table on Friday night. I wonder if he saw the diary reminder to have his parents destroy his Monty Python video collection.

Anyone: I don't know who poisoned Peter. But what I do know is that Peter has been poisoned just as Abel was killed by Cain in the Bible because Cain didn't value God's love. The person who poisoned Peter obviously doesn't really believe in Jesus and his teachings.

Anyone: I thought most of the group were happy that Peter was running this camp. He's the best camp leader around and everyone knows him from church.

Anyone: I think it was a bit suspicious how Langley spent so long looking at the cereals this morning. I wonder if he was deciding which one to add the poison to.

Anyone: Maybe it was a delayed poison that one of Peter's police clients gave him for some crazy reason.

Anyone: I can't imagine one of us Christians doing something like this. It's a bit like Agatha Christie's "*Murder at the Vicarage*" isn't it? Except this time the camp leader has been poisoned, not the Colonel.

Anyone: Peter hasn't looked very happy lately. He was obviously worried about something but he wouldn't talk about it.

Anyone: Damien said Peter was jealous of his physique. He ridiculed him for wearing a baseball cap all the time and told him to stop exercising and flexing his muscles.

Kevin Spicer: I was a bit depressed last night so I went for a drive. Driving out in my beautiful Buick and having my stereo playing full blast always makes me feel better.

Pamela Marras: Some people have been giving Peter the cold shoulder on this camp. Actually it's been more like a freezer, than just refrigerator-type "coldness".

Eleanor Hoskins: Donna told me she thought Peter was jealous of the way she dressed because no one ever found what he wore attractive.

Kitty Raymond: I heard Kevin drive off late last night. When he came back he was looking pretty pleased with himself. I wonder if Kevin cooked up some scheme to poison Peter.

Rose Willis: I saw Donna and Langley whispering together and looking at Peter. They looked like they were planning something.

Keld Henderson: When Peter collapsed in pain, he said "*I've been poisoned*" and he pointed to his notepad where he had scribbled:

“Solventur risu tabulae”

It is a bit like the handwriting on the wall from The Book of Daniel in the Bible. Most people didn't know what it meant.

Anyone: Kevin, I saw you looking through Peter's folder. Did you see the letter Peter had written and was about to send to the university regarding your scholarship? Did that freak you out, Dude? Is that why you poisoned him – to stop him sending it? Of course this is all speculation. You don't have to answer these questions Kevin.

Anyone: Here is the text of the unsent letter to the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Administrators from Peter Stein:

Regarding Kevin Spicer's university scholarship:

"I would like to inform you as Kevin Spicer's camp leader and counselor that I feel he isn't emotionally mature enough for the challenges of university life.

For example, Kevin has not had a girlfriend, which demonstrates his lack of emotional development."

Anyone: *"Although he is good at computer science, he has always lived at home and I think he is not capable of taking care of himself (eg doing his own washing etc).*

Kevin may be ready in a few years time, but he definitely is not psychologically prepared for the demands of university life at present. I would, therefore, urge you to retract your offer of scholarship to your university.

As a grandparent and a youth counselor (I have a master's degree in counseling) I feel I am qualified to offer my opinion on Kevin.

Yours sincerely

Peter Stein"