

Introductory Materials

This instruction manual contains all of the introductory materials necessary for planning and preparing your party.

- You will find a basic overview of the plot;
- A description of each of the characters;
- Tips on preparing your playing area, choosing a menu, and organizing your printouts;
- Detailed instructions on how to go about inviting players and assigning characters.

Please note: The majority of the contents are intended for the eyes of the Host/Hostess only! The success of your party hinges on a strong element of intrigue and mystery, so be certain not to share this with other players. The material that should be provided to your guests is clearly described in this Instruction Manual. Under no circumstances should you allow any of your players access to this Manual!

Welcome!

This package contains everything you need to host a spectacular Murder Mystery party that your guests will remember for many years to come. Included are materials for hosting a party for anywhere from 10 to 25 participants (including yourself). Note that the game is played the same way no matter how many guests you have. This is because only the **ten required characters** are critical to solving the mystery; the additional guests just add more personalities to the fun!

Murder Mystery Parties are essentially a combination of improvisational acting, storytelling, and creative problem solving. Your guests will each assume the role of a particular character and will play the part of that character throughout the course of the game. Each character has personality traits, goals, secrets, and information, all of which are included in the character sheets Template. A big part of the entertainment value of Mystery Parties is getting into character and trying to achieve your character's individual goals.

At some point during the party, an Event will occur that will force the players to come together in order to solve a problem or unravel a mystery. Traditionally, the Event in question will be the murder of one of the characters (as played by a guest), but the basic framework of a Mystery Party can accommodate numerous different types of Events.

The guests will need to use the information that their characters know (as well as additional clues that are provided during the game) to solve the mystery or overcome the problem posed by the Event. Typically this culminates in the guests voting on the identity of the murderer, but again, different parties will have different goals. The party may also have certain additional subgames built into the framework; for example, many Mystery Parties will have some form of scavenger hunt built into the story.

Once the mystery has been solved or the problem has been overcome, the party draws to a close. Guests are provided with an opportunity to vote on the **best actor/actress, the best dressed player, and so forth** and then are given certificates and awards for their participation in the game.

Throughout the course of the party, the Host/Hostess is responsible for ensuring that the event continues to run smoothly. He or she sets the scene, provides dinner and drinks, and moves the plot along at key points by reading scripted descriptions of what is happening. Frequently the Host/Hostess will also play one of the characters.

This particular Mystery Party, Murder in Beverly Hills , is a murder mystery wherein each party guest will be playing the role of a guest or employee of Eliza Woodsby at an anniversary bash for Patrick Finch, and the Host/Hostess will be playing the part of Avery Winters, a caterer.

The party takes place in two acts. During Act One, guests will mingle over food and drinks until Patrick Finch is shockingly murdered during a blackout that left the room pitch black and created an opening for the killer. The guests will then search for clues during Act Two and, upon reviewing the evidence, will vote for who they think committed the crime. They should discover the killer was an architect that Patrick was going to expose to the police for his previous crimes.

Please be advised: The parties developed are substantially more complex and detailed. Even if you are experienced at hosting Murder-Mystery Parties, it is imperative that you read the instruction manual carefully and completely before beginning to plan out your party!

What Is My Role?

As the Host or Hostess, your role in the party is that of a facilitator or a storyteller. It is your job to plan the event, prepare the playing area, and, once the game begins, move the story along and make certain that everyone is on task and enjoying themselves.

In many Mystery Parties the Host or Hostess is given the option to not learn the identity of the murderer before the end of the game, thereby allowing him or her to participate in the party the same way as the other guests. However, because *Murder in Beverly Hills* is a more complex party, it is necessary for the Host or Hostess to have a clear understanding of all key plot points in order to ensure that the game runs smoothly. This means that you will be **aware** of the killer and the victim's identity in advance.

You will be playing the role of **Avery Winters**, a caterer hired for the event. As a caterer you will be able to watch over your event in character to make sure everything runs smoothly while still enjoying the opportunity to play someone with their own secrets, motivations, and goals.

How Do I Get Started?

Start by reading this manual thoroughly. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized! This manual contains detailed information on every aspect of planning and executing your party, and you will find that a comprehensive understanding of the source material will make your responsibilities as Host or Hostess much simpler and more enjoyable. Once you have read the entire manual, you should do the following:

Several Weeks Before the Party

- **Decide on the date of your event.** The more time you give yourself to prepare, the more successful your event will be. It is recommended that you give yourself a minimum of two weeks to prepare for your party.
- **Decide on your location, menu, and decorations.** You have numerous options for determining how to decorate your venue and what food to serve. You should decide on these options well in advance of the actual party and create a list of supplies that you will need.
- **Decide on your guest list and send out invitations.** You will need between ten and twenty-five participants for your party to run properly.

One Week Before the Party

- **Purchase any necessary supplies.** If you require special decorations or ingredients for your menu, purchase them well in advance of your party date. Waiting until the day of or the day before an event will be more stressful and difficult than taking the time beforehand.
- **Verify attendance.** Contact each of your guests beforehand and verify that they will be able to attend. If there are any last minute cancellations, you may need to bring in alternate players.
- **Prepare the paperwork.** Print out copies of the character sheets, clues, voting sheets, and other relevant materials.

One Day Before the Party

- **Decorate your venue.** Depending on the complexity of your decorations, you may wish to begin decorating your venue a full day in advance.
- **Begin preparing the food.** Any food items that can be prepared in advance should be readied before the day of the party. While this will, of course, depend somewhat on your particular menu, ideally you should have everything ready to go in the oven or be set out on the table.

The Day of the Party

- **Finish decorating.** If there is additional decorating that needs to be done, try to do it several hours in advance of guest arrival; remember that some people may end up arriving earlier than you expect!
- **Finish preparing the food.** If there are items that need to be cooked or prepared on the day of the party, have them ready to go before your guests arrive. Remember that once the party starts, you will have numerous responsibilities and will not be able to spend too much time in the kitchen.
- **Set out folders with character sheets and other prepared materials.** Have all of your paperwork prepared and ready for distribution.

An Overview of the Party

Basic outline: This mystery is divided into two primary segments.

Act One is the first portion of the evening, during which the guests will arrive at Patrick Finch's penthouse apartment for a party in his honor. They will have a chance to eat, drink, and mingle with one another while acting in character. It is most important that the guests get to know each other's characters during this part of the game, as knowing the details of the other players will be important to form a theory about the murder in Act Two. In this act, you will encourage everyone to introduce themselves to one another, ask about each other's backgrounds, and share gossip. Additionally, several of the guests have certain personal goals (unrelated to the overall mystery) that they are attempting to achieve, and Act One gives them the opportunity to meet those goals.

During the course of the evening, there are rolling blackouts that will be slowly approaching the West Hollywood. These are likely a result of power shortages in Los Angeles and the Head Caterer (played by the Host/Hostess) tells people not to worry. When the blackouts hit the penthouse, Patrick Finch is stabbed in the ensuing confusion.

Act Two will commence with the discovery of Patrick Finch's corpse. He has been stabbed through the heart with something sharp. The Head Caterer will respond to the murder by calling the police. However, the elevator that leads to the apartment is not working due to the blackout, and the police cannot reach the penthouse until the power is restored. Until then, everyone is trapped, and they need to find the murderer or get caught in the inevitable scandal.

The rest of the evening is then devoted to locating clues, piecing together evidence, and trying to figure out who killed Finch. The guests should hopefully determine that the killer is Nicholas Wells, the Architect, who killed Finch over a personal vendetta (see Nicholas's character sheet for details). However, the night will include red herrings and misdirection that may lead them to point the finger at other guests. Those who correctly identify the killer will win an award at the end of the night.

Solving the mystery: There are several puzzles that the guests will need to piece together in order to solve the murder. They will find evidence such as Finch's corpse, Alexis Hunt's camera footage, and the murder weapon, but solving the mystery will hinge on opening the safe and cracking Finch's cell phone.

Here are notes about each piece of evidence:

-**Patrick Finch's corpse:** Patrick has been stabbed in the heart by a sharp implement.

-**Bloody knife:** Found in a wastebasket, it was obviously quickly discarded. The knife matches the set in the kitchen.

-**Alexis Hunt's camera footage:** The camera footage shows a male figure stabbing Finch in the dark, but it is so grainy it's difficult to tell who it is.

-**Finch's cell phone:** The cell phone is cutting-edge technology and is down to its last bar of power. The players will only have time to examine three of the four recent e-mails and texts on the phone before it dies.

- Phone call to the LAPD recorded earlier this morning; it lasted over thirty minutes.
- E-mail to James Finch about certain payouts on recent Ponzi schemes.
- E-mail draft to Nicholas Wells titled "I know what you did to Gayle."
- A financial review of Violet Woodsby's accounts that shows she has been rebuilding assets after taking a substantial loss in an investment. The investment is traced back to James Finch.

Safe: The safe holds multiple files containing background information and secrets of several guests: the Woodsby's, Finch's brothers, and Nicholas Wells. Finch had a private eye investigate these people for various reasons:

Files on Violet Woodsby: This reveals through love letters that she was once a groupie for the band Eagle's in college and was going to run away with band member Carter Ridge. However, her parents died shortly after. Receipts for a wedding ring are in this file. Also, there are some pictures of Violet and Carter Ridge in a coffee shop that look recent. And a note from a private eye for a meeting earlier today.

File on Eliza Woodsby: Mostly police records of public intoxication—one for public indecency and one for driving under the influence.

File on Benjamin Woodsby: Accounting files on notable contributions to children's charities around the country. Also, admission papers to St. Albert's Institution for attempted suicide. The file indicates that he was under watch for three months and

then released.

File on Charlotte Bloom: There are many pictures of her about town and a copy of a birth certificate. There is a note to contact the IRS about the birth certificate. File indicates she was living with Violet Woodsby's cousin Julian Swift in Florida. There are pictures of Charlotte Bloom in Florida, but she doesn't look anything like the Charlotte Bloom at the party.

File on Theodore Finch: These are mostly police reports on Theodore's past. He has multiple arrests for being drunk in public, possession, etc. In the past few years he appears to have cleaned up his act. There are financial notes on a hotel called the Castle. All the accounting notes are pristine.

File on James Finch: The files on James are over ten years old, and all predate his assignment to Australia. There are several files with police records holding accusations of rape from numerous women. All the charges were dropped after substantial payouts. There are also financial records on Ponzi schemes that Finch's accountants apparently paid out before they were brought to police attention. There is an invoice from a private investigator to reopen the file on James that covers airfare to Australia and expenses. A meeting was scheduled tomorrow to discuss his findings.

File on Nicholas Wells: Mostly accounting records on his architecture business that Finch recently took over and assimilated into his own company. Notes on employees, as well as an assessment of the company and suggestion for improving productivity. Also, an invoice from a private investigator for researching the death of Gayle Hartford several years ago, dated before the takeover.

Culmination: At the end of the evening, the clues will be assembled and reviewed. Once the files from the safe are reviewed and the cell phone has been opened, the murderer will be revealed. Now partygoers will have the opportunity to cast their vote for who they think the killer is.

Awards: At the end of the evening, several awards will be presented to the guests.

Character List

Please note: This character list is for the Host/Hostess's eyes only and should not be shared with the other players. An abbreviated guest list should be included with the invitations.

Optional characters are marked with an asterisk (*).

Male Roles

- **Patrick Finch—Real Estate Tycoon**—This party is being thrown by Patrick in celebration of his company's twenty-five years of success in real estate. Finch is very wealthy and is using this party to announce his engagement to Violet Woodsby—in addition to celebrating the success of Finch Enterprises. He is generally well liked by everyone. Patrick always has to be in control. He has secret files on all the Woodsby's and Finch's so that he can never be surprised by them. He is aware that Carter Ridge and Violet Woodsby had a fling, but Violet has told him it's over. To control his womanizing brother James, he sent him away to Australia, and he paid for brother Theodore's private education until Theodore decided to invest in hotels. Whoever plays Patrick Finch during the first portion of the game **will play Paige McLeod**, one of the caterers, during the second portion.
- **Benjamin Woodsby—Philanthropist**—A young but prominent philanthropist, he is known for giving generously to children's charities around the country. He was recently committed to St. Albert's Institution and put on suicide watch by his sister, Violet. He was released and told everyone he was visiting family in Florida. By happy coincidence, his cousin Charlotte came up from Florida, and he is using her as his cover story.
- **Theodore Finch—Playboy**—The debauchery and indulgence of the life of the upper class run hand in hand with this well-known playboy and brother of Patrick Finch. He owns the Castle, a hotel known for ruining the reputations of many celebrities and socialites. However, recently he has begun a secret affair with Chloe Timberlake and has stopped his debaucherous ways (at least in private).
- **James Finch—Outcast**—James runs Finch Enterprises in Australia and has been invited back to Los Angeles for his brother's big celebration. He was banished to Australia after he was accused of raping several women and his brother caught him running several Ponzi schemes with his money. While in Australia James continued his illegal activities and even fathered an illegitimate child. He desperately wishes to overthrow his brother by any means possible and return to Los Angeles .

- **Nicholas Wells—Architect**—A board member of Finch Enterprises from Chicago, he is attending the event with his daughter Penelope. He married Patrick's ex-wife and then murdered her when she was about to leave him to return to Patrick. Patrick found this out many years later and took Nicholas's company from him in retribution. He informed Nicholas before the party that he had alerted the LAPD and they would be standing by. Nicholas is looking for a way to take revenge and pin it on another guest.

- ***Finn Brook—Lawyer**—Entertainment lawyer known for his famous clients and sharp sense of humor. He knows a lot more about the partygoers' legal histories than any of them know. He is having a secret fling with Grace Timberlake, and the two are planning a quiet wedding.

- ***Nathan Ridge**—Author—He published a biting satire on West Hollywood personalities—recently at the top of the Los Angeles Times bestseller list—which everyone suspects is based on actual socialites. Nathan attended the same prep school as most of the people here, but he came from a middle class family in Malibu and it practically bankrupted his parents to provide that future for him. But, he has turned all of his experiences there into literary gold.

- ***Carter Ridge**—Rock Star—A one-hit wonder, Carter was once part of the band Eagle's, which has long since broken up. He was madly in love with Violet Woodsby, but she left him when her parents died to take care of her siblings. Recently, he met her again, and they have started a fling. He has come to the party to stop her from marrying Patrick Finch.

- ***Tyler Connelly**—journalist—Editor of a biting online gossip site, The Socialite, Tyler is known for only publishing verifiable rumors. He comes from one of the most powerful families on the West Hollywood but has always hated that his life has been planned out for him. He has made his break from them through founding his own website, which might be a bit of a rag, but it is enough to grant him his own independence.

- ***Lucas Connelly**—Retired Senator—Although retired from government life, Lucas is the head of the politically active Connelly family. Easily the king of the West Hollywood socialites, Lucas had played the social and political scene for years. But now that he's retired he's looking out for the legacy of his family and wants to see his grandson Tyler take his place instead of running that yellow rag of a gossip website.

- ***Dmitri Ivanov**—Security—Doorman and security for the party, Dmitri is in charge of making sure none of the lower classes get into the party. He has a shady past with the Russian mafia but has been trying to clean up his act since he came to Los Angeles .

Female Roles

- **Eliza Woodsby—Party Planner**—Party planner of the event with a party girl past she leverages to host only A-List parties. She lives a charmed life. Aside from some minor infractions in her youth everything she has ever wanted has been handed to her on a silver platter. She is the life of every party.
- **Violet Woodsby—Queen**—Queen bee of the older socialites and older sister of Eliza, Violet rules the West Hollywood with an iron fist inside a silken glove. She had a wild past and was madly in love with Carter Ridge, but she left him when her parents died to take care of her siblings. She invested well and continued to support them. However, she recently got caught in a Ponzi scheme run by James Finch and lost a great deal of money. She had her brother Benjamin committed to an institution after he continued to donate their money to charities. She does what she thinks is best for her family, no matter how hard-handed. She is engaged to Finch because she thinks he will provide a good support for her family, even though she has fallen back in love with Carter.
- **Alexis Hunt—Filmmaker**—New to the scene, Alexis makes documentaries and is filming as we speak. She wants to do an exposé on the secret lives of the West Hollywood and where better than at this party?
- **Penelope Wells—New Girl**—Penelope is both Nicholas's daughter and his assistant. This is her first time in Los Angeles. She is very nervous to be around the socialites but is determined to make a good impression for her father.
- ***Chloe Timberlake—Editor**—Up-and-coming queen of the younger generation, Chloe is the editor of Runway, a popular fashion magazine. She is a schemer and uses The Socialite to keep the younger generation in line. She is fiercely protective of her friends. She is the younger sister of Grace Timberlake.
- ***Grace Timberlake—Designer**—Grace owns and designs her own line of haute couture fashion, catering only to the rich and fabulous. She is reserved and conservative, but has recently fallen deeply in love with Finn Brook, a lawyer from out West. It is very out of character for her, but she's happy. She doesn't want to create a scene and is planning to have a small ceremony soon.
- ***Evelyn Ridge—Rising Star**—New to the social scene, Evelyn is a fashion designer with cutting-edge style and swift social climbing ambitions. She clambered to the top of the fashion scene after a scandal at Fashion Week caused by Chloe Timberlake. While no one believed she wasn't responsible, she was still smart enough to use the publicity to start her own line. Now she just needs some powerful backers. Evelyn is the younger sister of Nathan and Carter.

- ***Charlotte (Callie) Bloom—Debutante**—A cousin of the Woodsbys from Florida, Callie recently arrived in Los Angeles and is making her debut among the upper class. She is actually a fake, an actress from Florida who found out about the trust fund in the real Charlotte's name and is trying to get Violet to grant her access to it.
- ***Hope Neville—Scheming Socialite**—A well-known socialite, Hope mysteriously left Los Angeles a few years ago and has only just returned. She is a troublemaker and a schemer who used to give Chloe a run for her money. She has returned after the police dropped some charges and is eager to return to the scene.
- ***Natalia Dragomir—Housekeeper**—Chloe's maid and housekeeper, Natalia has been looking out for Chloe since she was a little girl. She knows a great deal about the secret goings-on of the West Hollywood but is fiercely loyal to the Timberlake family.

Male or Female Roles

- **Avery Winters—Head Caterer**—Hired by Eliza to be attentive and discreet, as well as to run the staff and make sure the party goes as planned.
- **Paige McLeod—Caterer**—Hired by Eliza to be attentive and discreet, as well as to bring her any juicy gossip. (**NOTE: The guest that played the victim Patrick Finch in Act One will play this character in Act Two**).
- ***Casey Laurent—Caterer**—Hired by Eliza to be attentive and discreet, but paid off by Tyler to bring proof of any rumors.
- ***Sydney O'Donnell—Caterer**—Hired by Eliza to be attentive and discreet, as well as to bring her any juicy gossip.
- ***Mason Leland—Bartender**—Hired by Eliza to be attentive and discreet, as well as to bring her any juicy gossip.

Preparations

As Host or Hostess, it is your responsibility to ensure that the mystery unfolds smoothly, that everyone is involved in the event, and that the location is set up in a fashion that lends itself to the story. While the party is designed to accommodate straight-from-the-box play with a minimum of set up and expense, you will find that a little bit of preparation will go a long way towards improving the overall experience. This section of the instruction manual should give you some ideas regarding how to set up your party.

Props

While all the items that you need to play (invitations, nametags, character sheets, clues, voting sheets, and player awards) are included as a editable template for easy printing, more flavor can be added to the evening by taking a little extra time in preparing these necessities. Some possible suggestions include the following:

Invitations: Printing out the invitations on high quality stationary, vellum, or cardstock adds a touch of class and authenticity to your event.

Nametags: Most office supply stores carry a wide variety of plastic ID badge holders that are ideal for party nametags.

Character Sheets: These can be printed on plain paper. It is a good idea to have duplicates prepared in advance, as players have been known to misplace their starting materials.

Clues: Locating the clue cards during Act Two will be an integral part of solving the mystery. It is recommended that these be printed on heavy cardstock, since the players will undoubtedly want to examine them in detail.

Player Awards: High-quality certificate paper is available at most office supply stores. Printing your player awards on this type of paper will give your guests a memento suitable for framing and display!

Menu

While five star restaurant food is a perfect choice for an West Hollywood soiree, it is difficult to come by. Be sure instead to have lots of upper class hor d'oeuvres on trays for casual sampling. Also have an ample supply of fake champagne and other virgin drinks available so your guests can always have a glass in their hands. Now is the perfect time to try some new virgin cocktail mixes.

Setting the Scene

Murder in Beverly Hills is designed to be played in two acts, with Act One being the evening spent at Patrick Finch's anniversary party while the guests attempt to uncover rumors and secrets about each other and Act Two being the time spent looking for the murderer. This party requires only minimal space and can be completed with very little in the way of decorations; a single large room for the main party can serve as the primary playing area with a small side room to serve as Finch's study. Of course, if you have more space available, you can designate several other rooms as part of the party, so that the guests can steal away to have private conversations. Ideas for other rooms include a game room, library, private balcony, or pool and garden area (if you have outdoor space to use).

Decorations for the evening can be as simple or complex as you desire. If you want to go the distance, a web search for "Los Angeles benefits" or "West Hollywood party theme" will turn up numerous links to websites providing ideas. Subdued lighting, drapes to cover walls, and pictures of Los Angeles monuments may help immensely.

Audio

Adding, a sound track on loop for the party would add a feeling of class. Classical or understated modern music would work well, depending on the average age of your guests.

Here is a playlist I would recommendations:-

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6kxjWUw1BQRMWyc0763ThO>

Candles

During the blackout scene, you have the option of providing guests with candles to add to the ambiance of the room. If you choose to use candles, LED candles are safest and provide excellent ambiance without risk of fire.

Preparing the Paperwork

Have all of your paperwork printed out and ready to go beforehand. Begin by printing out all of Props & Clues. You will be using that to run the party. You should also prepare three large envelopes or folders as follows:

First Folder (labeled “Act One”): This should include nametags and character sheets for each player, along with multiple copies of the “Welcome to the Party” text. As players arrive, you can pass out starting materials.

Second Folder (labeled “Act Two”): This should include sealed envelopes, labeled with each character’s name, containing the character’s information and rumors for Act Two. It should also contain the paper tokens that represent clues that are to be hidden for the scavenger hunt (assuming that they have not been placed out ahead of time).

Third Folder (labeled “Finale”): The final folder should contain the voting sheets and preprinted award certificates that can be filled out when winners are decided.

Before the Party

This portion of the instruction manual will walk you through all of the steps you need to accomplish before your guests begin arriving.

Invitations and Assigning Characters

Print out and send your invitations (along with RSVP cards, “What Is a Murder Mystery Party?” and the “Guest List” inserts) several weeks in advance of your event. The success of the party hinges on a minimum of ten participants (including the Host or Hostess) so it is very important that you verify attendance well before the actual event takes place; this will give you an opportunity to reschedule in the event that not enough players are able to attend. Note that there are two types of RSVP cards available in the Props & Clues Template: the first type allows the Host or Hostess to choose the character the guests will be playing, and the second type provides an option for guests to indicate their character preference. Which type of RSVP card you use will be determined by how you want to assign characters.

You have several options when it comes to assigning characters. You can assign characters yourself based on what you know about your guests and what roles you think they would enjoy, or you can allow your participants to choose their own characters on a first-come, first-served basis.

We recommend you choose to assign characters yourself (perhaps after discussing the available options with your players so that you can get a feel for what they would enjoy playing). This allows you to assign roles in a fashion that will keep the party running smoothly and will be enjoyable for all involved; for example, you may not want to assign an extremely outgoing character to someone who is particularly shy and introverted, since that person would likely to feel uncomfortable playing a character whose personality contrasts so drastically with their own.

If you opt to assign characters yourself, your invitation process should be as follows:

- **Step One:** Contact prospective guests by phone, e-mail, or in person, explain that you will be hosting a Mystery Party, and verify their interest and availability. If you wish, you may choose to discuss available character options so that you have a good idea of what type of character each guest would like to play.

- **Step Two:** Once you have established your guest list, print out and send out the formal invitations, along with the “What Is a Murder Mystery Party?” insert, the “Guest List” insert, and the first RSVP card (there is a field on this RSVP card that you can use to specify what character the guest will be playing).
- **Step Three:** When you receive final confirmation via RSVP, send the guest his or her character sheet and rumor list. If you wish, you may instead choose to include the character sheet along with the original invitation; this works best if you know for certain each person you are inviting will definitely be attending.

If you opt to allow your guests to choose their own characters, your invitation process should be as follows:

- **Step One:** Print out and send invitations to all your prospective guests, along with the “What Is a Murder Mystery Party?” insert, the “Guest List” insert, and the second RSVP card (this version includes an option for guests to indicate their first and second character preferences).
- **Step Two:** As you receive the RSVP cards, assign the characters based on the preferences your guests have expressed. In some cases it may be necessary to assign a character other than the guest’s first or second choice (if both those characters have already been assigned); in this case you may wish to contact the guest and tell him which characters are still available.
- **Step Three:** Send each guest his or her character sheet.

Remember: *Once you have assigned characters, you must provide each guest with a copy of their character sheet. This should be done well in advance of the party so that each guest has time to put together a costume and give some thought to how they will role-play their character. Be sure to let the guests know that they should not share details of their character with anyone prior to the party! Guests should be told to bring their character sheets with them to the party, but as Host or Hostess, you should make certain to have some additional copies of these character sheets on hand, since it is likely that some guests will forget or lose theirs.*

Preparing the Scavenger Hunt

A substantial portion of the night's festivities will involve a scavenger hunt to locate the various clues that lead to the killer. There are four clues to be hidden, represented by paper tokens with a description and picture of the items, and locating them should take up most of the second half of the evening.

It's best to hide the clues before the party starts if there isn't a great risk of people finding them during Act One. Otherwise they can be hidden during the intermission between Act One and Act Two (if you can hide them without being seen). Either way make sure they're hidden before you're prompted to start the scavenger hunt, which begins shortly after the discovery of Patrick Finch's dead body.

It is important you set up the clues in a way that will ensure the players are challenged but do not find it impossible to locate the objects necessary to make the event progress. Since you are just hiding paper tokens, there are many options for hiding places. Some hosts will tape the phone token to an actual phone, however it is just as appropriate to hide the token under a book or tape it to a wall. The locations of the clues do not have to be places that would be "realistic" for the story; the scavenger hunt simply represents the guests scouring for evidence. Accordingly, you can hide the clues anywhere that is part of the designated party area; they do not have to be in "the study" or any other specific room.

The four clue tokens that will be hidden for the scavenger hunt are:

- A Bloody Knife
- Finch's Dead Body
- Finch's Phone
- Finch's Safe

Two of these clues will trigger further action once found:

1. Finch's Phone – When guests find the Finch's Cell Phone clue, read the phone token to the group and see if anyone says that they know how to get into the locked phone (a few can do it and should know to speak up; it's a skill listed on their character sheets).

- **A-** If at least one person speaks up, inform the group that the battery is almost dead and they only have time to look at three of the four clues. Shuffle the clues and ask the person who found the phone to select three of them and read them aloud to the group.
- **B-** If no one speaks up, you will have to prompt James Finch to announce that he knows how to unlock the phone. He is a required character with that ability, and it is critical that the phone be unlocked for the group to solve the mystery.

2. Finch's Safe - When guests locate the Finch's Safe clue token, you will read the clue token to the group and see if anyone speaks up about knowing how to open the safe (a few characters do).

- **A-** If at least one person says they can open it, you will share the contents of the safe with the group. This means you can either read each of the file clue tokens out loud or pass the file tokens around to be read by the guests individually.
- **B-** If no one speaks up, you will have to prompt Theodore Finch to announce that he can do it. He is a required character with that skill, and it is also critical that the safe be opened to solve the mystery.

Remember to be clear with your guests regarding the rules of finding the clues. If there are any places specifically off limits, point that out to the players and consider posting signs reminding them. Some good general rules for everyone to follow include:

- Nothing is hidden inside something that needs to be disassembled in order to gain access; if you really feel that a hammer and screwdriver would be helpful in trying to find a potential token, you're looking in the wrong place!
- No tokens are hidden in a way that would require anyone to lift anything heavy or move anything especially delicate to find them.
- No tokens are hidden in places that would be dangerous to reach or that would require guests to climb onto something.
- No tokens are hidden in places that would require guests to get wet or dirty in order to reach them.

After the scavenger hunt has concluded and the clues have been shared with everyone, the group will have everything they need to solve the mystery. There should then be a period for everyone to discuss the new information and their ideas about who may have killed Patrick Finch.

Party Guidebook

This section of the instruction manual, the Party Guidebook, contains a detailed script for running the party. You should **PRINT OUT** this section in its entirety and have it on hand during the party; at various points you will need to read directly from this guidebook.

The following is an outline of each step found in the Party Guidebook:

1. **Guest Arrival:** Explains what you will need to do as the guests arrive for the party, before the actual game begins.
2. **Introduction of the Guests:** Provides a script for introducing the guests to the scene and explaining how the party will be run.
3. **Act One:** Covers the events leading up to the murder, including mingling, dinner, and the blackouts.
4. **The Murder:** Describes how to handle the actual murder of Patrick Finch.
5. **Act Two:** Covers the hunt for clues as the guests try to solve the murder.
6. **Presentation of Evidence:** Once all the clues have been found, the guests will have an opportunity to consider the different pieces of evidence they have gathered and present theories on the identity of the killer.
7. **Votes:** After all the evidence is considered, the guests will have an opportunity to vote on who they believe is the killer, as well as on which guests are the best dressed and the best at acting.
8. **Revelation:** Finally, once all the votes have been tallied, the actual killer will explain his actions, and the awards will be handed out.

Running the Party

This portion of the instruction manual will walk you through all the steps you need to follow once your guests arrive. **Read over this section carefully** as it contains vital information to the success of the event.

Before starting the party, make sure that the following have been completed:

- Hide the scavenger hunt clue tokens (Finch's body, the bloody knife, the safe and the cell phone), unless you plan on doing this later in the party.
- Make sure all printed materials are prepared in their folders.
- Compile a list of names of the characters that will not be played by anyone tonight. You will be reading this list to the guests so they know which names on their character sheets to ignore.

Once you have taken care of those things, you are ready for the party to begin!

1) Guest Arrival

As guests arrive, you've got a good chance to speak with them one-on-one and help orient them to the party; this may be their first murder mystery game! It's up to you if you'd like to ask them to get into character before the game officially starts. Either way, it's time to give them their starting materials.

Starts: When first guest arrives.

During this stage of the event:

- Make certain that everyone has a character sheet and visible nametag.
- Invite the first guests to mingle until the rest of the guests have arrived.

2) Introduction

Once everyone has arrived, it will be time to explain to them how the party will proceed.

Starts: When all the guests have arrived.

During this stage of the event:

- Gather guests in the main room.
- Read the "Welcome to the Party" text (below).

Welcome to the Party

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for attending Murder in Beverly Hills . As all of you know, this is a murder mystery party. During the party, each of you will be playing the role of a guest or employee of Patrick Finch at his party celebrating his company's anniversary. You should each have a character sheet that details what your character knows and how you should act in response to specific situations. Aside from these instructions, there is no particular script you need to follow; simply do your best to act as you believe your character would act.

During the course of the event I will be playing the part of Avery Winters, one of the caterers. However, I will also be available to answer any questions about how the game works. Just let me know if you need to ask me something "out of character."

Your goal tonight is to get to know the other guests. Introduce yourselves, exchange backgrounds, and trade gossip. You should find there are some interesting secrets in the room - maybe even a secret or two for which one would kill. This means that you should pay special attention whenever you feel that a guest has something to hide. Even more importantly, make sure to protect your own secrets; you don't want people drawing any unfavorable conclusions about you. Not in this prestigious crowd.

Each character sheet includes Gossip & Objectives pages that detail what you know about the other guests. Check your sheet before you start a conversation so you know with whom you're dealing.

[Read following if you have less than 25 people or unassigned characters.] Please note that there will be no one playing the following characters tonight and cross them off of your sheet anywhere the names appear.

[List the names of characters that are not being played by anyone] You may hear these names in your conversations but you will not be interacting directly with those characters today.

Before we begin, we'll give everyone a couple of minutes to read over your character sheets and make sure you understand everything. Remember not to show your character sheets to anyone else and to be careful with what information you end up sharing with other players. Most of you have secret information listed on your sheet your character wouldn't want to disclose to just anyone. Please take a minute to read over your character sheets now.

[Once everyone has had a chance to read over their sheets, give them a opportunity to ask questions about how the game will work. Once all of their questions have been answered, continue this script.]

Alright, if there are no further questions, let me describe the scene for you. You are in Patrick Finch's fabulous penthouse suite apartment on the Beverly Hills. You are here for an evening of dinner, dancing, and conversation in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Finch Enterprises. Patrick Finch has a big announcement to make at midnight, but everyone is free to mingle and talk until then.

[Point out each of the different rooms that are considered part of the game, and explain what part of the apartment they represent. You should have at least one large room for the dining hall and another that is Finch's study. You can specify other areas as you wish, depending on the size of the playing area.]

You are now free to mingle with each other and enjoy the party. Drinks and food will be available shortly. And now, if I could see the catering staff in the kitchen.

After reading:

- Take the catering staff (or whatever guests you'd like to help you with food) into the kitchen and explain that part of their role tonight will be to assist with serving food, bringing around the appetizer trays, and keeping drinks refilled.
- Make sure the guests have started mingling and are enjoying themselves.

3) Act One

Act One is relatively simple and is intended primarily as an opportunity for your guests to get into character, mingle, and enjoy the food. This act should last for approximately an hour or two, though that time may be adjusted up or down depending on how long it takes to eat and how animated and in character your guests are.

Starts: When guests have started to mingle.

During this stage of the event:

- Enlist the aid of any guests you've asked to help with food to lay out and circulate the hors d'oeuvres.
- Help confused guests understand that this time is to be used to learn about the characters of the other guests. Knowing details about the other attendees will benefit them as the game goes
- Monitor the guests to make sure they seem to be enjoying themselves and aren't running out of things to talk about. If the conversation begins to slow substantially, you may wish to move to the murder early.
- After dinner has concluded and a few minutes before you are ready for the murder to occur, read aloud the "Blackout Approaching" script, included below.

Blackout Approaching

As the evening progresses, you begin to notice patches of darkness in the city below. Los Angeles has been experiencing rolling blackouts due to recent power shortages, and it appears that one is approaching the apartment. But not to worry, there are candles on hand in case the emergency lights do not come on. Please continue enjoying yourselves; all is well.

4) The Murder

A blackout creates the perfect opportunity for the killer to act. You will now set the stage for the murder.

Starts: When you are ready for murder to occur.

During this stage of the event:

- If you are handing out candles when the lights go out, gather them now.
- Discreetly inform Patrick Finch that he is about to be a murder victim and that you will be cueing him momentarily to fall to the floor and play dead.
- If you are using audio, get the "[Scream-Thud.mp3](#)" track ready. Tell Patrick that it will be his cue to fall.
- Prepare to turn the lights off.
- Read aloud the "The Lights Go Out!" script below.

The Lights Go Out

The rolling blackouts continue to approach, and then suddenly, all the lights go out.

[Here you should extinguish the lights.]

The caterers go to get the candles as you wait in confusion for the emergency lights to come on. As people move around in the darkness there is a sudden scream and a thud in the confusion.

[Cue Patrick Finch to fall to the floor as the victim. If you are using the audio files, play the [Scream-Thud.mp3](#) track first.]

The Blackout

The blackout has caused mass confusion for the guests. You will now get the lights working again and reveal the murder victim to the guests.

Starts: A few moments after Patrick Finch is murdered.

During this stage in the event:

- Turn on a few independent light sources, like lamps or flashlights. There should be less light than before the blackout since these lights represent emergency lights.
 1. If you are using candles, keep the independent light sources low enough so the candles have an effect.
 2. If you are not using candles, make sure there is enough light for people to see during the scavenger hunt.
- If you are using candles, pass them out to the guests.
- Read the "Blackout!" script below.

Blackout!

The emergency lights come on in a minute and the caterers pass out candles. You are all shocked to see the still form of Patrick Finch sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood, obviously stabbed through the heart by a knife of some sort. A feeling of horror sweeps through the room. Not only has Patrick Finch just been murdered, but the killer is surely still here.

We will now take a brief intermission as we prepare for Act Two.

After reading:

- Hand out the Act Two character sheets.
- Give the guest who was previously playing Patrick Finch a **new nametag**; during Act Two he will be playing the part of Paige McLeod, one of the caterers.
- If you haven't already done so, hide the clue tokens (Finch's body, the bloody knife, the cell phone and the safe) for the scavenger

6) Act Two

After the intermission, it will be time for the group to figure out who killed Patrick Finch. This starts with the scavenger hunt to find the primary clues: Finch's dead body, his cell phone, his safe, and the bloody knife.

Starts: After everyone has read their Act Two character sheets and you are ready to continue the game.

During this stage of the event:

- Reassemble guests in the playing area.
- Read the "Trapped in the Penthouse" script below.

Trapped in the Penthouse

The murder is reported to the police and some guests head to the elevator. However, due to the power outage the elevator will not open. All the guests are trapped in the penthouse until the power comes back on and the police can get in. The building manager says that the power outage should last an hour or so. Everyone should be very cautious: after all, Patrick Finch was just murdered, and it is likely the murderer is still in the penthouse. You should look for clues to solve the murder before the police arrive and splash this party all over the tabloids.

We will now begin a scavenger hunt for clues. The clues are small paper tokens that are hidden throughout the area. Everyone can join in. If you find one, announce it to the group and then bring it to me. I will let you know when all the clue tokens have been found and we will attempt to solve this mystery!

After reading:

- Lay out any ground rules about areas that are on or off limits.
- Prompt the guests begin hunting.
- Oversee the scavenger hunt and make certain that everyone is following the rules and staying in the correct area.
- If Alexis Hunt approaches you about her camera footage (as she is instructed to do in her character sheet), tell her you will share the footage with the group after the scavenger hunt.
- If the group is unable to locate one or more of the clues, provide hints or point them in the right direction.
- After the guests have found all four clues, read the following

After combing through the area, it seems that we've found everything there is to find. We have located four clues: a bloody knife, Finch's cell phone, his safe, and, of course, his dead body. Now let's take a closer look at the evidence!

7) Presentation of Evidence

It is now time for the final presentation of evidence. At this point, all evidence will be reviewed and everyone will be given a chance to provide any additional information they might have regarding the identity of the killer.

Starts: After the clue tokens have been found and guests have regrouped.

During this stage of the event:

Read the Finch's Dead Body clue and Bloody Knife clue tokens to the group.

Read the Finch's Cell Phone clue token to the group and wait for someone to say that they know how to unlock the phone. Several characters have this ability noted on their character sheets so someone should speak up.

- If no one speaks up, discretely prompt James Finch to do so; he knows how to unlock it.
- When someone that can unlock the phone steps forward, let the group know that the cell phone battery is so low and they will only be able to access three of the four clues before the phone dies.
- Shuffle the clues and allow the guest who located the cell phone to pick three cards at random. Instruct that guest to read the clue tokens out loud to the group

Read the Finch's Safe clue token to the group and wait for someone to say that they know how to open the safe.

- If no one speaks up, discretely prompt Theodore Finch; he can open it.
- When someone that can open the safe steps forward, either read the file tokens aloud to the group or simply pass them around to be read by guests individually.
- If the guest playing Alexis Hunt approached you about her camera footage, read the camera footage clue to the group.

Read the "Presentation of Evidence" script below.

Presentation of Evidence

Now that we've seen the hard evidence, does anyone have anything to

Did anyone see anything suspicious leading up to the event? Does anyone have any questions or theories?

After reading:

- Give the guests a chance to talk amongst themselves. It is likely at this point that the guests will want to ask questions and level accusations at one another and provide alibis or explanations as to why they are not guilty. Allow this to continue as long as is necessary.
- When all guests have had their say, announce that it is now time for everyone to cast their votes for who they believe committed the murder.

8) Votes

Starts: After the presentation of evidence discussion.

During this stage of the event:

- Pass out the "Who Did It?" voting sheets and have players fill them out.
- Collect completed voting sheets and tally up the votes.
- Prepare the award sheets.

The awards that will be presented at the end of the night include the following.

- **Keen Detective Award:** This award goes to any guest who correctly identified the Architect as the killer. Note that it is possible several guests will receive this award; be sure to have multiple copies printed.
- **Outstanding Acting Award:** This award goes to the guest who received the most votes for best role-playing.
- **Outstanding Costume Award:** This award goes to the guest who received the award for best costume.
- **Falsely Accused and Convicted Award:** If the majority of the guests vote for someone other than the Architect as the killer, that unfortunate person receives this award as a consolation prize.
- **Cold-Blooded Killer Award or Got Away With Murder Award:** The guest who played the Architect will receive one of these awards. If any of the other guests successfully identified him during the vote, he gets the "Cold-Blooded Killer" Award. If none of the other guests identify him as the killer, he gets "Got Away With Murder."
- **Hapless Victim Award:** The guest who played Patrick Finch will receive this award.

9) Revelation!

After tallying up the “Who Did It?” votes, you will announce the results to the group and then ask that, as the game is now over, the real killer step forward and explain his motive.

Starts: After awards are prepared.

During this stage of the event:

- Ask that the real killer step forward and explain his or her motive. The guest who played Nicholas Wells should then announce his guilt and explain his actions using the information from his character sheet.
- Announce the results of the voting to the group and hand out appropriate awards.

Conclusion

And that’s it! The mystery is solved. You may tell your guests that the game has concluded and thank them for coming. Hopefully the party continues as everyone recounts the best moments from the night! If you haven’t taken any pictures yet, this would be a great time to take a group shot with everyone in costume.