

**You Can't
Mask Murder**



Preview

Greetings!

The following pages will give you an insight into how our murder mystery parties work. This example is for a 10-person game. The smaller versions (for 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 people) work in the same way but have fewer character roles. In this preview you'll see a complete set of instructions and game materials.

Don't worry! The preview doesn't contain any spoilers. That's why some of the passages and descriptions have been edited. In order to prevent any secrets slipping out, we've withheld certain original game documents.

We wish you a *murderously* good time!

Sincerely,

Mysterando Murder Mystery Team





Thank you very much...

...for choosing a Mysterando Murder Mystery! All ten players are actively involved and anyone could be the murderer—including the host!

The following pages contain the game materials you'll need, instructions for running the game, and valuable tips for creating an unforgettable evening with friends, family, or colleagues. We trust you'll have loads of fun with this exciting murder mystery party. Enjoy!

What happened?

It's the annual masked ball at the Belladonna Hotel, an evening that promises unprecedented glitz and glamor. Expensive perfumes trail behind exquisite evening dresses, and the guests clink champagne glasses under the chandelier's soft glow. Each mask is more dazzling than the last—and so are the secrets each smile conceals. The air crackles with tension as Viktor Kalkhoff, the city's most notorious (yet elegant) drug lord confronts his ex-wife Belinda. Rumors abound: the recent arrests, some say, are due to a mole in Viktor's own ranks. And the police—are they really as corrupt as the whispered anecdotes make them out to be?

The evening reaches its climax with an extravagant fireworks display, the thunderous bangs and glittering cascades demanding everyone's attention—until sudden screams pierce the explosions overhead. There, spotlighted by the flashing fireworks, a woman lies lifeless in her snow-white dress.


Immerse yourself in a decadent underworld as you try to unmask the murderer. The time period is up to you—the plot fits the world of today, but works equally well in the '50s or the '90s. The game is also great for a New Year's Eve party.

What to expect

Each player is assigned a character. Roleplaying as your character, you'll investigate the mysterious murder through a series of discussions and clues. But be warned—one of you is the killer! This player's aim is to "get away with it" and he or she will actively try to mislead the investigation. To complicate things further, each player has a dark secret and a compelling motive for wanting Alessandra dead. The killer really could be any of you...

During the game there's space for a meal. The menu is entirely up to you. Takeout, fondue, or a fancy three-course dinner—whatever tickles your fancy!

As the game progresses, you'll share hours of laughter and heated debate. At set intervals (the game rounds), new clues come to light and you'll build your case against the perpetrator. In the last round, everyone accuses the person they believe committed the murder. When everyone has made their accusation, the identity of the killer is revealed. Will you crack the case—or will the killer get away?





How long does a game last?

2 to 4 hours. The exact duration, of course, depends on the players. If you're really absorbed in the discussions, the game will last longer.

How old do players need to be?

For this murder mystery, we recommend ages 16 and up.

Should I dress up?

Yes! Definitely! While it's not a must, we strongly recommend it. Dressing up makes it easier to slip into character, and makes the evening so much more fun. Even the smallest accessories can make a big difference!

Preparations

Send out invitations and character descriptions

While it's certainly possible to play the game spontaneously and hand out character descriptions on game night, we strongly recommend you give your players a few days to prepare.

An easy way to do this? Email each player their unique "Invitation and Character Description" from the file package we've provided.

Prepare game materials for Game Host and players

Before the game begins, the host needs to print and prepare the following materials (some contained in this document, the rest in the provided file package):


- Clues for each player
- Game materials (Name Tags, Opening Scene, Hotel Belladonna Floor Plan)
- The Resolution

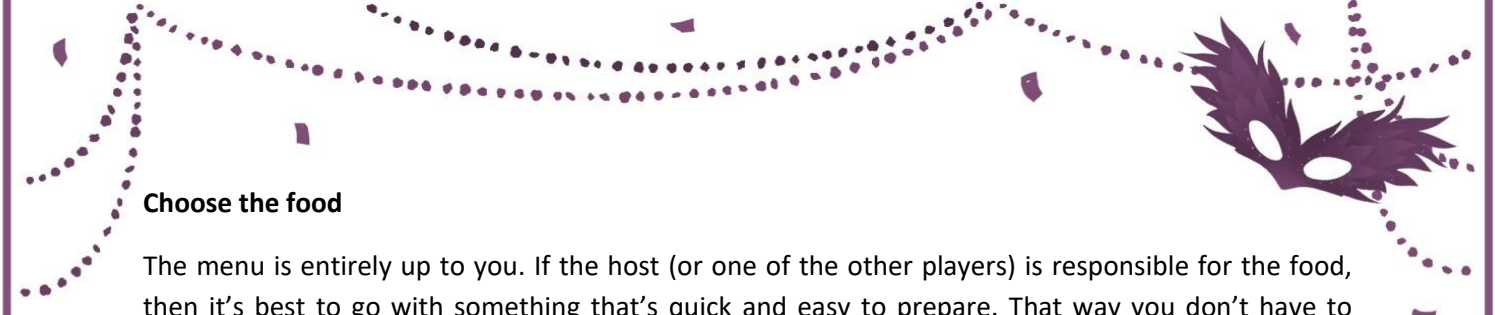
On game night, you'll use them as important references.

Tip: To save paper, you can print "The Clues" on both sides of one page. You can also print two pages per sheet if you're not afraid of small text.

Of course, you could also email each player their clues. However, we don't recommend this approach—reading clues on phones during game time is distracting. You'll find that keeping everyone's attention locked into the game greatly improves the atmosphere.

SPOILER ALERT: When preparing these materials, as tempting as it may be, **don't read The Resolution, The Clues, or the other players' Character Descriptions!** You won't ruin the game if you do, but trust us—it's way more fun to keep the outcome a surprise, even from yourself.





Choose the food

The menu is entirely up to you. If the host (or one of the other players) is responsible for the food, then it's best to go with something that's quick and easy to prepare. That way you don't have to pause the game for too long—or allow it to carry on while the absent player stresses over food.

We've found that tapas, fondue, or takeout work well. If you want to blow your guests away with a three-course meal, then by all means, go for it! But we strongly recommend you cook everything in advance so you only need to quickly heat it up before serving.

Tip: If you serve a meal with courses, don't pause the game. Instead, use the time between courses to reveal clues and read new information. Then allow the resulting discussion to unfold during the next course.



Print the character Name Tags

Towards the end of this document you'll find a set of name tags—there's one for each player. Print the page and keep it safe. On game night, cut out the name tags and let each player attach theirs to their clothing. Adhesive tape or a safety pin will do the trick.

Print out the Belladonna Hotel floor plan

You'll find a floor plan for the Belladonna Hotel at the end of this document. The floor plan is very useful when conducting the investigation. Print out a copy of the floor plan and place it in the middle of the dinner table so all the guests can clearly see it.

Decorate! Go wild!

A beautifully decorated murder mystery party is twice as fun. Like with the food, the decorations are up to you. In our experience, vibrant decorations add oodles of atmosphere. Trust us, your guests will love it, and sing your praises for weeks to come!

Characters

During the game, each player will play the role of a unique character. Before the game begins, assign a character to each player and make sure they receive their full Character Description (included in the file package). This page lists the shortened, teaser descriptions. Scan them to get a feel for each character, then determine which character best fits each player.

For new players, we recommend assigning characters that match age, gender, and personality traits. Experienced players (and people with a natural gift for acting) might find it fun to play as characters who bear no resemblance to their everyday selves. Consider mixing up the gender roles, too. This can be highly entertaining. It's your call!

Tip: When sending your players their full Character Descriptions, take care to avoid reading them—that way you keep the mystery alive for yourself.

The victim (Note: This character is **not** playable—she was murdered before the game starts)

Alessandra Montana (28): This young waitress started working at the Belladonna just a few months ago. She was an attractive, petite woman who (whether purposefully or innocently) drew everyone's eye—and who nearly everyone underestimated.

The "Inspector" (Note: This character is assigned to a player, but he is not a suspect)

Police Chief Stefan Falkner (51): This city has carved deep furrows into his forehead. Compared to the wolfish drug lords, the police are meek as a flock of sheep. Will his tireless fight against the drug underworld finally be rewarded with a long-awaited (and sorely needed) breakthrough tonight?

The suspects (Assign one of the following playable characters to each player)

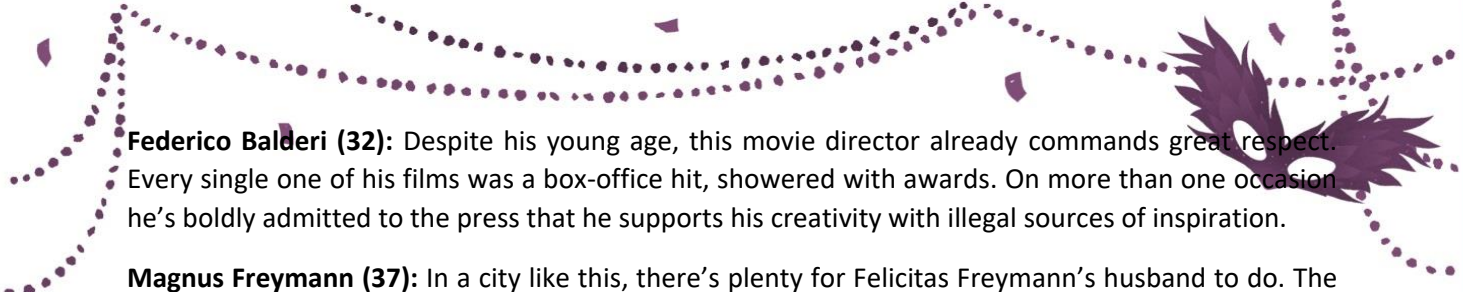
Viktor Kalkhoff (54): He's been running the Belladonna Hotel for many years. However, it's an open secret that his wealth doesn't come from renting out plush rooms, it comes from dealing drugs. Kalkhoff's calm, menacing voice makes one's blood run cold.

Mila Hoefer (35): She is Viktor Kalkhoff's right-hand woman: she's practically his bodyguard and takes care of all sorts of business to boot. Emotionally cold, powerful, and loyal—this woman has what it takes to assert herself in the tough milieu she operates in.

Belinda Carstens (51): After the divorce three years ago, she's reclaimed her maiden name. Previously, she co-managed the Belladonna with her ex-husband, Viktor Kalkhoff. Just a few months ago, she opened the Kings and Queens Casino, catering to a similar clientele as the Belladonna. The quiet life does *not* suit this elegant diva.

Nora Kirschner (31): She's only recently moved to the city. This young woman is trying to secure a position as a photographer and journalist with the major newspapers. She's yet to achieve her goal, but Nora tenaciously perseveres through every adversity.

Felicitas Freymann (29): Since childhood, she's only wanted one thing: to become an actress. With her training complete, she's now at the start of her career. Surely there's a major opportunity right around the corner...it's her destiny, she's made to step into the spotlight!

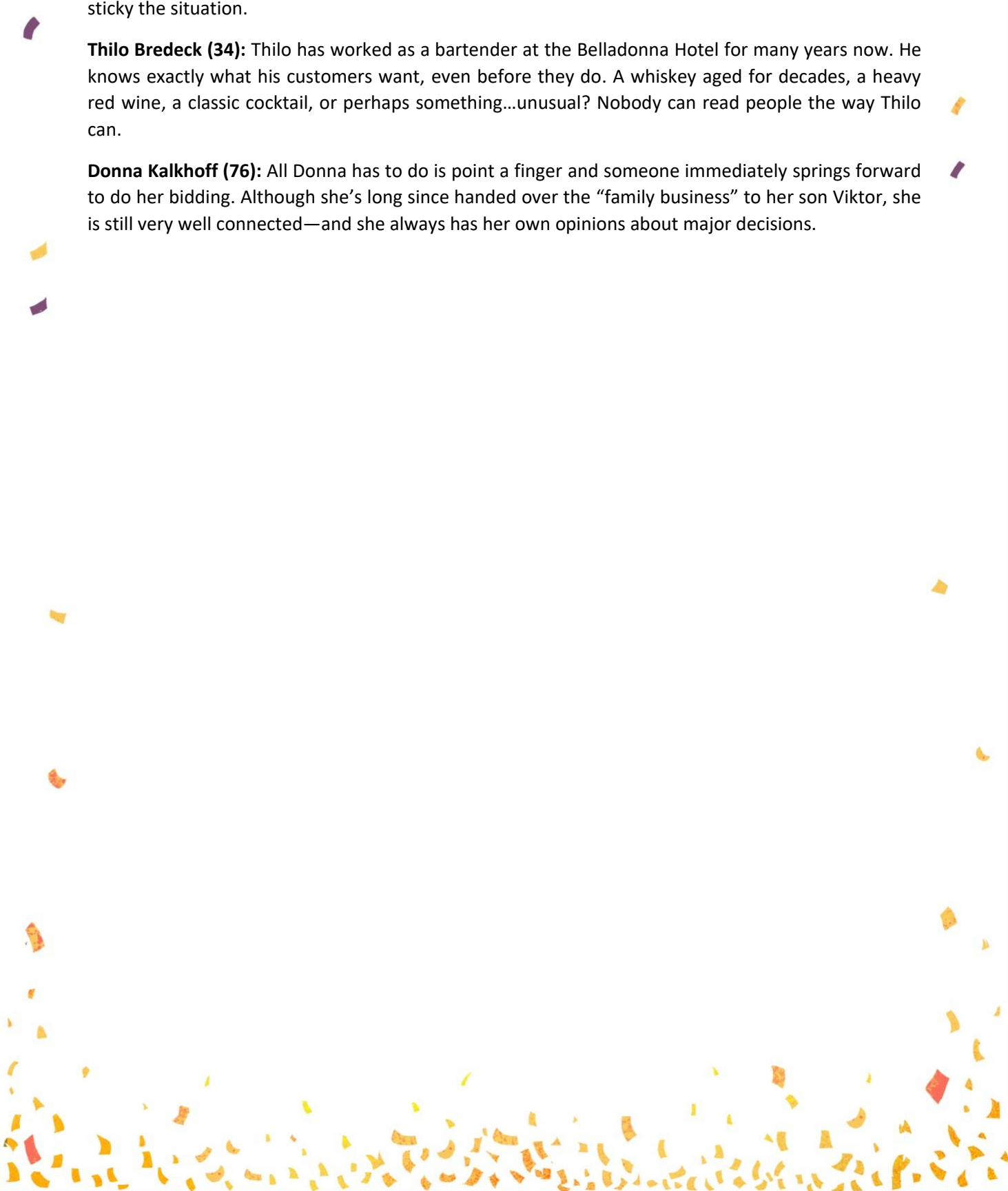


Federico Balderi (32): Despite his young age, this movie director already commands great respect. Every single one of his films was a box-office hit, showered with awards. On more than one occasion he's boldly admitted to the press that he supports his creativity with illegal sources of inspiration.

Magnus Freymann (37): In a city like this, there's plenty for Felicitas Freymann's husband to do. The hotshot lawyer works in one of the largest law firms in the city. He specializes in defending clients accused of drug-related offences and knows how to get his rich clients off the hook, no matter how sticky the situation.

Thilo Bredeck (34): Thilo has worked as a bartender at the Belladonna Hotel for many years now. He knows exactly what his customers want, even before they do. A whiskey aged for decades, a heavy red wine, a classic cocktail, or perhaps something...unusual? Nobody can read people the way Thilo can.

Donna Kalkhoff (76): All Donna has to do is point a finger and someone immediately springs forward to do her bidding. Although she's long since handed over the "family business" to her son Viktor, she is still very well connected—and she always has her own opinions about major decisions.





Game Instructions

Act I: Introduction Round

When everyone is ready to start, explain how the game works. Use the Game Rules Reminder on the last page of this document. Then Viktor Kalkhoff reads the Opening Scene out loud (also on the last page, after the Game Rules Reminder).

Next, have each character briefly introduce themselves. The introduction should cover their name, what they do for a living, and why they're at Belladonna Hotel tonight.

Note: No questions allowed just yet, this introduction round is a quick 5-10 minutes.

Act II: Clues Round 1

Hand out each player's Clues for this round (Clues 1). Then, each player silently reads their own Clues, ensuring nobody else sees.

Now it's time to share what you've learned! Everyone is free to discuss their clues and ask questions of each other. During the discussion, each player must truthfully volunteer the information in their Clues. However, if certain parts of your Clue incriminate you (or another player you want to protect), you may avoid sharing those details. This does not mean you can lie. It's essential that only true information is shared—this is the **Truth Rule**.

Truth Rule Exception (for the Murderer only): There is one and only one huge exception to the Truth Rule: *the Murderer may tell lies!* If you are the Murderer, you may purposefully try to mislead the others, diverting attention away from yourself. But don't get caught in your own webs of deceit!

Truth Rule Clarification: If, during the discussion, someone asks you a direct question, you **must** truthfully reveal what you know, even if it's incriminating. However, if someone asks you an imprecise question, you can give an *imprecise but truthful* answer. Here's an example:

Example 1: *Your Clue says: "Last night at 7 PM you were stuck in the office, working late. At 8 PM the victim phoned you, angrily demanding you repay your debt to him...or else! At 9 PM, exhausted, you drove home."*

Now, if Player One asks you: "What did you do last night?" (An imprecise question.)


You can answer: "I was forced to work late. Then I went home." (An imprecise, but truthful, answer).

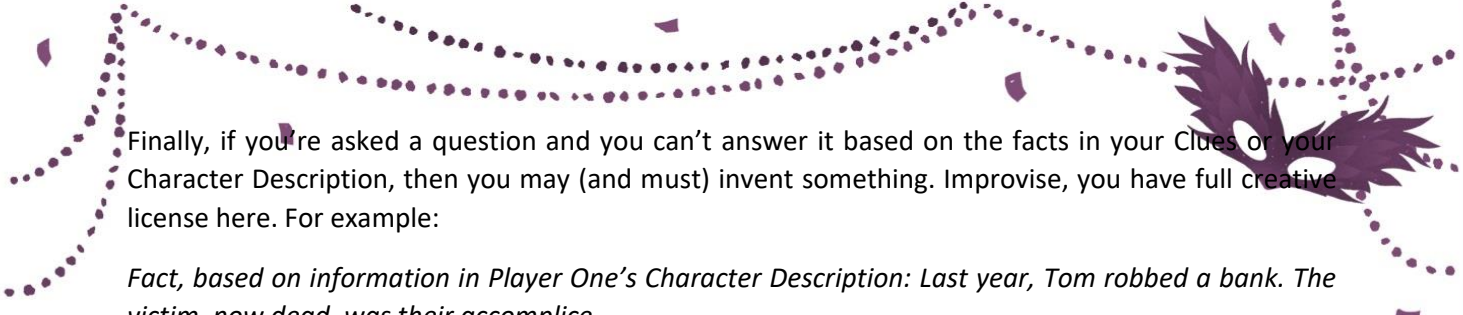
But then Player Two asks: "Did you speak to the victim last night?" (A direct question.)

You must answer: "Yes." (The truth. But you don't have to volunteer details like the time or what the victim said. Unless you're asked.)

Example 2: *Your Clue says: "Your wife (one of the other players) is plagued by financial difficulties." After reading this, you realize that if the other players know this, they'll suspect you committed the murder to help your marriage. It's best if you avoid letting the other players know this fact.*

The other players might also suspect your wife. Now, if your wife is your dearly beloved, you'll try your best to avoid this information coming to light. However, if you hate the old bat you're married to, you might want to tell everyone in the hopes they pin the murder on her...





Finally, if you're asked a question and you can't answer it based on the facts in your Clues or your Character Description, then you may (and must) invent something. Improvise, you have full creative license here. For example:

Fact, based on information in Player One's Character Description: Last year, Tom robbed a bank. The victim, now dead, was their accomplice.

During the game, someone asks Player One: "So, where did you meet the victim?"

Player One replies: "Oh, I know him from when I was training to be a butcher."

Player One's reply is totally fictitious, but it's allowed. Nothing in Player One's Clues or Character Description details how they met the victim, so an invented answer to this question is allowed. If someone else asks Player One, "Did you and the victim ever commit a crime together?" then Player One must, according to the rule about truthfully answering direct questions, reply: "Yes, I did."

Now, due to the nature of the game, new information is revealed in each new round. Something you said earlier might be contradicted by a new Clue. If this happens, you must correct your previous statement with the truth as soon as possible.

The Information Round ends when all the Clues have been discussed and nobody has any further questions.

Note: This Act should take 30-45 minutes.

Act III: Clues Round 2

Distribute the Clues for Round 2. (Alternatively, you can hand out all the Clues for all the rounds all at once, and then just have players look at the Clues for the relevant round).

Each player quietly reads their own Clues.

After that, follow the exact same procedure as the first clues round.


Act IV: Clues Round 3 a.k.a. the Rumor Round


The clues for this round are all rumors. Each rumor can be true—or totally false! Discuss with the other players and find out!

Act V: Clues Round 4

Distribute the Clues for Round 4 and then follow the exact same procedure as the first clues round.

Note: This is your final chance to probe the other players. After this round, you'll make a case against your prime suspect.





Act VI: Final Round a.k.a. the Big Reveal

Keep your wits about you—this is the showstopper!

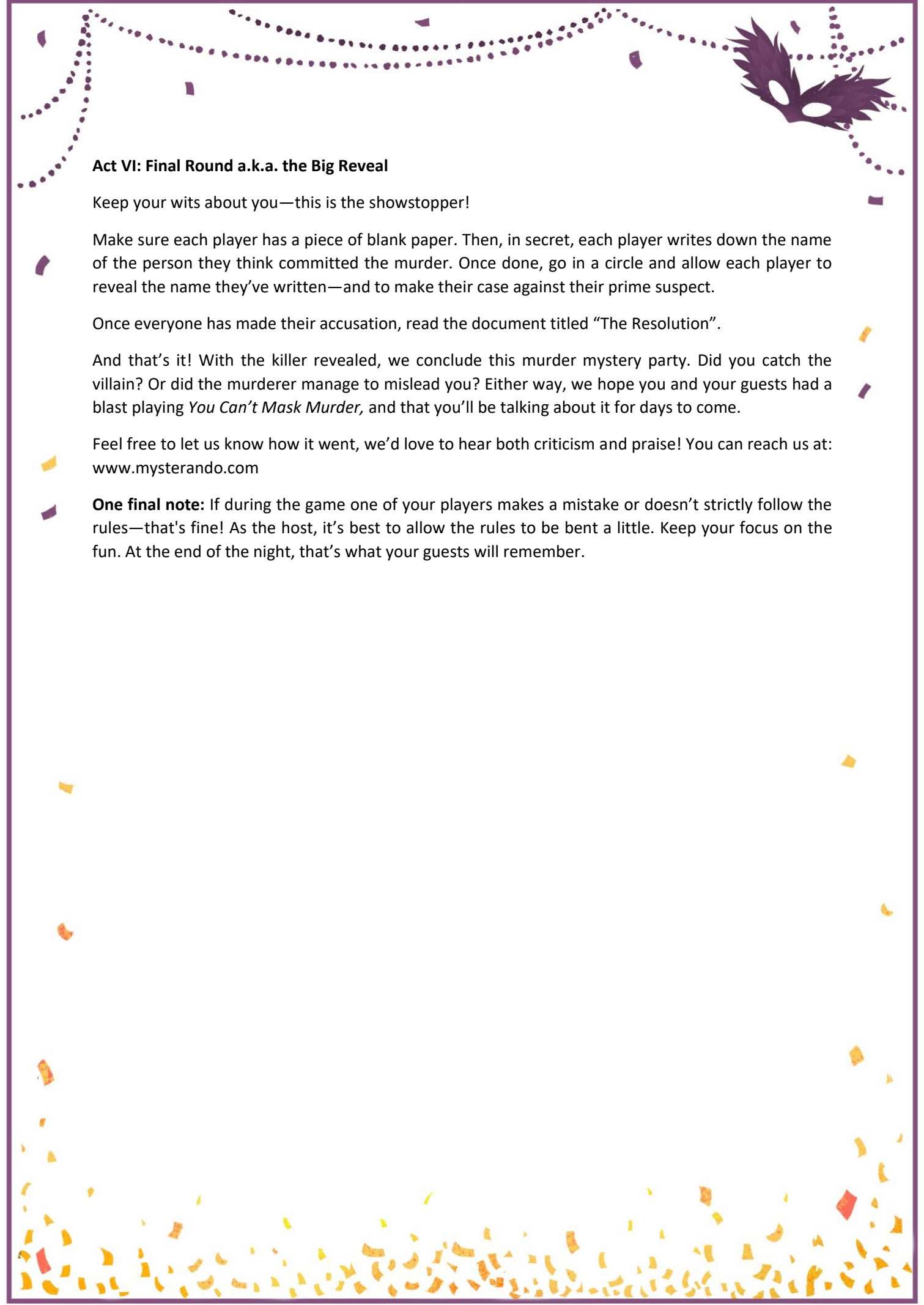
Make sure each player has a piece of blank paper. Then, in secret, each player writes down the name of the person they think committed the murder. Once done, go in a circle and allow each player to reveal the name they've written—and to make their case against their prime suspect.

Once everyone has made their accusation, read the document titled "The Resolution".

And that's it! With the killer revealed, we conclude this murder mystery party. Did you catch the villain? Or did the murderer manage to mislead you? Either way, we hope you and your guests had a blast playing *You Can't Mask Murder*, and that you'll be talking about it for days to come.

Feel free to let us know how it went, we'd love to hear both criticism and praise! You can reach us at: www.mysterando.com

One final note: If during the game one of your players makes a mistake or doesn't strictly follow the rules—that's fine! As the host, it's best to allow the rules to be bent a little. Keep your focus on the fun. At the end of the night, that's what your guests will remember.



Name Tags (to pin or stick on)





**Magnus
Freymann**



**Thilo
Bredeck**



**Donna
Kalkhoff**



**Stefan
Falkner**



Game Rules Reminder

Before you start playing, remind everyone of these game rules:

At the start of each round, hand out the Clues for that round. Read your clues silently and don't let the others see.

To keep the game going, honor the **Truth Rule**: Everyone must at all times tell the truth about the contents of their Clues.

There is **ONLY** one exception to this rule: the murderer! This dastardly villain may always lie.

If your Clue directly implicates you in the murder (or implicates someone you want to protect) then you may choose to keep quiet.

If another player confronts you with a direct, specific question, then you must share what you know, and share it truthfully. However, you may give an indirect answer to an indirect question.

If you're asked a question you can't answer based on the known facts inside your Clues or Character Description, then you can (and must) invent an answer. If, later on, a new Clue contradicts one of your inventions, correct it as soon as possible.

Opening Scene

(Viktor Kalkhoff reads this out loud to everyone)


Your attention please, ladies and gentlemen.

As you're no doubt already well aware, a woman has just died in an accident. Her name was Alessandra, she was one of our waitresses. Fortunately, the esteemed Chief of Police, Stefan Falkner, is here among my guests. He's already begun an investigation into the cause of death and will hopefully soon bring clarity to the circumstances of this tragic incident.

To expedite the process, I invite everyone present to introduce themselves—briefly. Please do not ask any questions of the speakers during their introductions. We don't want to drag this whole thing out unnecessarily! Now then—I'll start us off.

If you somehow don't already know me, I am, of course, Viktor Kalkhoff, your host, and the owner of the Belladonna Hotel...

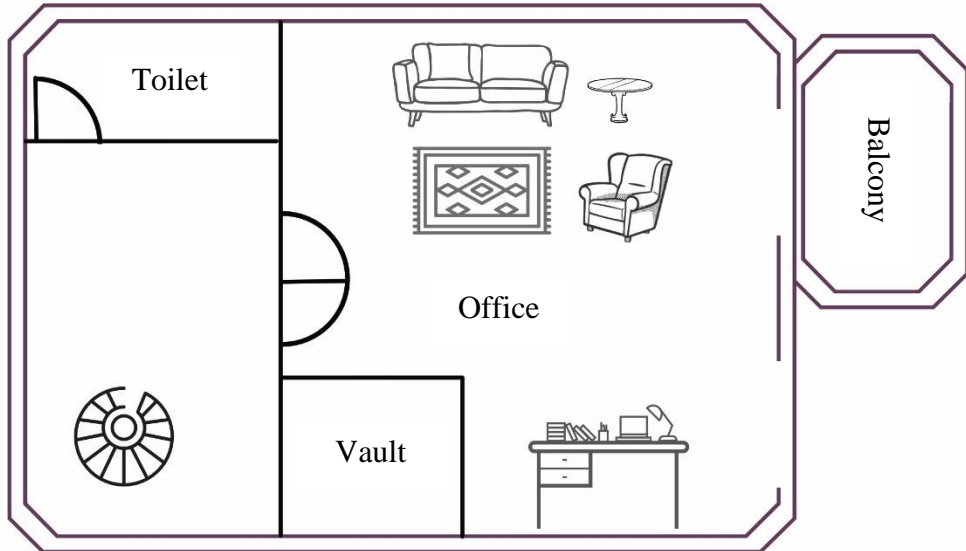
(Now begin Act I, in which each character briefly introduces themselves.)



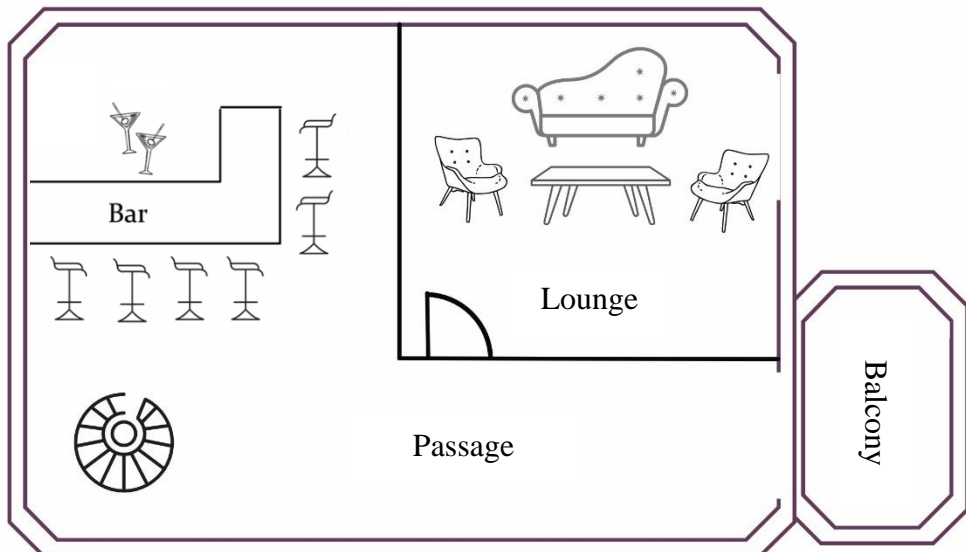
Hotel Belladonna

Floor Plan

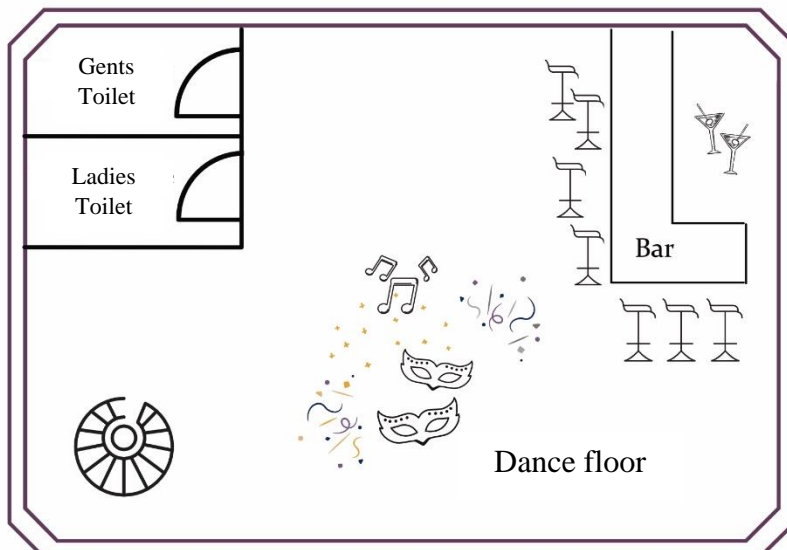
5th floor
Loft



4th floor
Sitting area
& lounge



3rd floor
Ballroom &
bar



On the following pages you can find a spoiler-free example **from a different (unpublished) game**. You can safely read it without learning any secrets. That said, this is what to expect from a character description and a set of Clues for one game round.



Character Description Eddie Example

What happened?

It's already been a week since the start of the Black 'n White Casino annual poker tournament—the biggest one in the world. Of the hundreds of bidders and bluffers, only the top eight remain. The winner-takes-all final round is about to start, and the tension is unbearable. TV cameras ring the room, capturing every flicker of emotion flitting across the faces of the finalists: most are notoriously well-known, but a few upstarts and underdogs have made it to the final, too. As the players take their seats around the table, eyeing the prize money in a huge glass jar overhead, one of the seats remains mysteriously empty...

Character Description

They call you the “Robin Hood of Poker”. You're highly unusual, a super wealthy superstar with an altruistic streak. Unlike many of your peers, you're not decked out in a thousand-dollar pinstripe suit, you're not wearing croc skin boots, and your belt buckle isn't the tiniest bit bling. Nope. Not you. You're wearing a colorful thrift store jacket and scuffed sneakers, casually picked from the single cupboard wardrobe in the modest two-bedroom apartment you call home. Since the start of your poker career, you've donated most of your prize money to charities and international aid projects—you've supported thousands of people. Your appearance always creates a stir. You're still not used to the media hype you attract, but you're proud of the way you conduct your career and hope to inspire others to model themselves after your example. But around the poker table, you're an affront to most. Poker pros usually mock you mercilessly, trying to undermine your reputation so their own overinflated egos don't have to acknowledge the alternative you represent. Recently, Thomas Danzer's been urging you to give up poker, saying that every particle of your being damages poker culture. Danzer proposes you instead become a kindergarten teacher. This made you furious. You're eager to wallop your rival in the final round of the tournament. That'll put him in his place! It didn't ever cross your mind that the brash Thomas Danzer wouldn't even make it to the table that night...





Costume

Poker is your thing; fashion trends are not. Your usual outfit (a colorful jacket, sneakers, and flowery pants) acts as a statement against expensive branded suits and designer clothes. You remain 43 years young.

Your role

You are not the murderer. You are not allowed to lie. Your goal is to find out who the murderer is and what their motive was.

What you know about the others

Michele Benyamine (35):

The Frenchman has all sorts of unexpected tricks up his sleeve. Besides a great hand, looks like he's able to read his opponents accurately.

Charlotte Stripe (39):

This woman has a keen, cool intelligence. She doesn't let her past success interfere with the game she's playing right now. Instead of trusting her gut, she carefully analyzes each of her opponents—starting before they've even sat down at the table.

Victoria Heinz (28):

She's got talent, that's for sure. But she plays her hand in wildly unusual ways. Others stick to the probabilities presented by their cards and chips, where she focuses on how her play will affect the media. She's a virtuoso of this strange approach.

Alexander "Nibbles" Nibbleman (21):

This young chap is more than a little green behind the ears. Seems to you he's learned poker from the computer, with little experience against real people. It won't be long before he realizes an in-person tournament is nothing like its digital counterpart.

Christina Venus (35):

As far as you know, she rarely competes in big tournaments. Her game as erratic as a beginner's. She must've had an incredible streak of luck to make to the final.

Inspector Ernst Clutch (41): **(Note: not a suspect)**

The police inspector started the investigation immediately after the victim's body was found. Thanks to his quick detective work, the circle of suspects is narrowed to just the tournament finalists.









Clues for Eddie Example

Hello Eddie Example, the following pages contain your Clues for each game round.

You're not allowed to look at the Clues for a future round. However, you're welcome to revisit any of the information already revealed in previous rounds. It's important for you to share and discuss the contents of each of your Clues with the other players. To advance the investigation, try using trick questions to catch out the perpetrator—but remember, only the Murderer is allowed to lie!

Hint: When sharing your Clues with other players, work them into the conversation—that is, be natural, and try not to just read them out. This is the chance to roleplay!





Clues for Round 1 – Eddie Example

When you got off the bus in front of Black 'n White Casino, the cameras swiveled to focus on you. It was drizzling—you had to smile at the press armada, all elbows and microphone booms, furiously jostling each other for a dry spot under the small bus shelter. Then you saw the reporter who interviewed Thomas Danzer last week. That wiped the smile from your face. Danzer! What was it he said? Cultureless? A kindergarten teacher!? Suddenly angry, you hurried into the casino.

Around 17:00 the final round's seating arrangement was announced. Victoria would be directly opposite the camera, with you as far away from her as possible. Naturally. At the time, you had no idea the seating arrangements would change...frankly, you're still in shock from the day's events. You've never experienced anything quite like this before.

Shortly after the announcement, pro poker player Richard Hamilton announced he was leaving immediately and would be forfeiting the final round. You asked Richard why he left the casino in such a hurry, but his answer was nothing more than a deep sigh.

Richard's odd departure sparked discussion during the poker game. Somewhere around 19:00, you were having dinner, and Thomas was ranting about Richard. At first, his inexhaustible flow of invective was amusing. But you soon grew tired of it. Perhaps it was the stress of the day finally catching up to you. You left and went to your room. You noticed the door of Room 505 was slightly ajar, but didn't think anything of it at the time.



We hope you have a blast with this Murder Mystery!

