



LADIES & GENTLEMEN, GIRLS & BOYS
STEP RIGHT THIS WAY TO BE A PART OF...

MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP

ENTER A WORLD OF FABULOUS FREAKS, EXOTIC ACTS & MYSTERIOUS MANAGEMENT

Desperate to bolster his circus from a dog-and-pony show to a spectacle that will rival Ringling, Clydes Brown's dire attempts to lure audiences and show-stopping attractions have created rivalries that extend beyond the center ring.

As pressure builds a murder is committed that steals the show... and you are left to uncover the culprit before the final act.

Was it the raging ringmaster in an attempt to clean up the spectacle? The talented tight rope walker whose fall took them out of the limelight? A revolting roustabout with revenge in their veins? Or possibly a possessive performer whose death-defying deamior went too far...

**IN AN INTENSE WORLD OF ILLUSION AND INTRIGUE, YOU MUST RELY ON YOUR
WIT AND INTUITION TO FIND THE KILLER BEFORE THE GRAND FINALE!**

HFC

HOST GUIDE

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP

We are confident that you will find this comprehensive packet to provide everything that you will want and need to run your very own murder mystery party—one that will have your guests talking about it for weeks, if not longer.

This murder mystery experience is designed to be easy to run and fun to play for all the guests involved. The game is played with all of your guests having active roles in the game and each guest having objectives to complete. These objectives keep the party from being pre-scripted and allow your guests to draw their own conclusions as to the motives and the identity of the murderer. This format also allows for great mingling amongst your guests and insures that all of your guests feel included. Before the night is through, each guest will have discovered that they have a motive for killing the victim and be inclined to protect their innocence as well as seek out the murderer. To add to the experience and suspense of the night, the murder happens during the party, not before, as in some other murder mystery games. The victim is also allowed to play along after they 'die', since they have no clue who murdered them. Murder Under The Big Top is certain to be a hit with all of your guests.

The following pages contain a simple list of things you need to do as host in order to have the party run smoothly. Once the party is going, it is up to the guests to make the most of it—something you will be surprised at how well they do.

GUEST TOTALS:

With 20+ guests: At least 7 Male characters, 6 Female Characters, 7 Gender neutral characters (roles that can be assumed by either a male or female guest).

With 15-20 guests: 7 Male characters, 4-6 Female Characters, 4-7 Gender neutral.

With 10-15 guests: 4 Male, 1-4 Female, 5-7 Gender-neutral.

With 8-12 guests: 3-4 Male, 0-2 Female, 5-6 Gender-neutral.

GET A COUPON AND A FREE PARTY!

Once your party is thrown, please let us know how your party went by posting it on our MURDER MYSTERY MESSAGE BOARD! We will email you a \$5 coupon for posting comments and/or pictures about your party. (If you would like us to post your pictures, please email them to info@nightofmystery.com once you have posted your comments.)

In addition to the coupon, each month we will select one posting to be featured in our "Party of the Month" forum and that customer will receive a \$45 gift certificate towards the purchase of a future party.

MORE IDEAS ON PREPARING FOR YOUR PARTY

You can find more ideas on decorations, music, food, etc. in the "Party Tips" section at www.nightofmystery.com

HOST GUIDE

ASSIGNING THE CHARACTERS

- **You, as host, will need to decide upon a character for each of your guests.** The easiest way to assign the characters is to read the character descriptions and match each character with the guest that you feel suits that particular character the best.
- **If you choose NOT to know the murderer,** you can simply choose NOT to read the character descriptions or examine the evidence before the party. While you will be able to play along with everyone else, you will not be able to read the descriptions when assigning the characters. (You will find a short list of the characters with descriptions in this introduction file.)
- **Because this party is dependent on a minimum number of people attending,** you may want to determine ahead of time which guests are attending before assigning characters.
 - It is recommended that you send out the general invite, guest list and magazine page with an RSVP date of two weeks before the party. After your guests RSVP positive, you can send them their character sheet.
- **The killer will not know they are the murderer until they open their second envelope at the party.**
- **The victim will not know they are the victim until they get to the party.** The victim will not have a list of objectives for after the murder. If the victim wishes to play along after the murder, they can do so without an identity. If you have an extra identity (that is, a role that is not being played), they can also assume that identity if they so choose.
- **Is this mystery suitable for youths and/or church groups?** There is a clean version which is suitable.

MAKING THE INVITATIONS

Before the party, each guest must receive three things: (1) the invitation, (2) the Circus Bulletin and (3) their character description.

THE INVITATION

- To make the invitations, print out the number of invites that you need onto 8.5 x 11 paper. (You may print on nicer paper, such as parchment, to add authenticity to the invitation.)
- Fold each invite in quarters.
- Fill out the information for the place, date and time of your party.
- Invite should fit nicely into an invitation sized envelope (4 3/8" x 5 3/4").

THE CIRCUS BULLETIN

- This will provide more background information for your guests.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- You need to assign each guest a character to be at the party. (See the previous sections.)

-- **You may also utilize the downloadable invitations provided for you on the website after purchase.** Each invitation is a pdf that has the above information for each character. This allows you to email your guests their information directly without having to print and mail the information. Please keep in mind that there is not a place to enter in the date, time or address of the party within the emailable invite, so you will have to inform your guests of that information in another fashion.

HOST GUIDE

INITIAL TIMING FOR THE PARTY

- Most likely, the length of the party will take 2-4 hours. The party length will depend on a number of factors, including the number of guests, if you are serving dinner, how well your guests mingle, etc.
- The party may be longer if you choose to serve dinner, although much of the mingling done during Stage 2 may be done at the dinner table as well.
- Because the party is not pre-scripted, but set up in stages, as host it is important to observe the guests' behavior and move onto the next stage when you feel it is most appropriate. This will give everyone enough time to enjoy all aspects of the party and enable it to move along at an enjoyable pace.

PREPARING THE MATERIALS FOR THE PARTY

- Make name tags for the guests. (You can print out the name tags onto on adhesive label paper or print out on regular paper and include a pin with the name tags so that the guests can secure them to their outfits.) **Name tag template is compatible with Avery labels 15163, 18163, 5163, 5263, 5523, 5663, 5963, 8163, 8253, 8463, 8663 and 8763.**
- Photocopy the print out of the money onto green paper. You will need as many copies as there are guests attending. Trim the money and bundle them in packages of \$500.
 - To skip this step, you can purchase fake/play money or coins rather inexpensively at a novelty or party store and use the fake/play money or coins instead of the paper money.
- Cut the objective sheets in half on the dashed lines.
- Label two envelopes with each character's name. Label one envelope with an (A) and one with a (B) for each character. On the (B) envelope, also put "DO NOT OPEN until AFTER the murder".

In the (A) envelopes, place: a name tag, safety pin(s) to adhere the name tag, a bundle of money and the left side of the character's objective sheet that has objectives for the beginning of the party.

In the (B) envelopes, place: the right side of the objective sheet for each character which has objectives for after the murder happens.

Have the (A) & (B) envelopes on hand to give to the guests as they arrive.

- In a separate envelope place the Investigation sheet and label it as "Investigation".
- In a separate envelope place the Evidence Presentation and label it as "Evidence".
- Place the solution in a sealed envelope and label it "Solution".
- Keep the "introduction", the "investigation envelope", the "evidence envelope" and the "solution envelope" in a safe and convenient location so you can hand them out throughout the night as guests need them.
- Make enough copies of the Who Dunit voting sheets for the number of guests you have coming. Cut the pages into quarters along the dashed lines.
- Make copies of the smoking gun award, as there may be multiple people who guess the murderer.

SCHEDULE

STAGE ONE: THE GUESTS ARRIVE

- Have the guest's name tags, bundle of money and their (A) and (B) envelopes available for them.

STAGE TWO: INTRODUCTION

- After all of the guests have arrived, hand Harold Hargrove the Introduction and have him read it aloud to everyone.
- Have time for guests to mingle and complete their objectives.
 - This may require 30-60 minutes depending on how well your guests know each other.
 - If serving dinner, this may be a good time for dinner to be served.

STAGE THREE: MURDER & INVESTIGATION

- When guests start to settle down and you are sure the victim has completed all of their objectives, you will arrange for the lights to go out and a loud "bang" to sound.
- When the lights come back on, the victim will have fallen down "dead".
- After victim has "died", hand Payton Protection masking tape or chalk, so that they can outline the position of the body on the floor or ground.
- Have Payton Protection read the sheet explaining the Investigation.
- The guests will open their (B) envelopes which will have new information and objectives for the guests to complete now that the murder has occurred.

STAGE FOUR: EVIDENCE PRESENTATION

- When guests have settled down again, Payton Protection has collected all of their evidence and you feel as though most people have completed their objectives, hand Payton Protection the evidence packet so that they can present the findings of the evidence at the crime scene to the guests.
- It is best if the evidence is then laid on a table so that everyone may see it.
- Give your guests additional time to review the evidence. You may want to make multiple copies of the evidence so that it can be seen by everyone.
- Hand out the 'Who Dunit' answer sheets and ask everyone to complete them and hand them back to you during this time.

STAGE FIVE: THE SOLUTION

- When all the 'Who Dunit' sheets are handed in, ask Payton Protection to read the solution aloud to the guests.
- Using the tally sheet included, calculate who the winners are and award the certificates.

CHARACTER GUEST LIST

Harold Hargrove—Bossman. As owner of the circus, Harold has been cleaning up his image and the circus to make it succeed. Whether his tactics are legal or lethal is the question.

Matilda Hargrove—Harold's wife. Even though she is not in command, others may differ with that opinion. Even with her exquisite tastes, there is little this woman cannot get. Or Harold get for her.

Boomer Jackson—Ringmaster. The voice of the circus, Boomer is in charge of the performers and commanding the perfect show...his job depends on it.

Finley Fiscal—Ticket Taker. Being your first impression as you enter the show, Finley is one who has mastered their appearance... but what is hiding under the exterior?

Ariel Swinger—Trapeze Artist. Currently performing in the center ring, some think Ariel got her position by luck, some by talent and others by her connections.

Robert Flyer—Catcher. As Ariel's sidekick, Robert gets little credit for the fame Ariel claims, but she would be nowhere without him.

Twisty Kristy—Acrobat. With her sites set on center ring, Kristy wants nothing more than to be in the spotlight and she will do anything to get there.

Nick Dagger—Knife thrower. Heartbroken by Twisty Kristy, it is questionable whether Nick is out to win Kristy's heart back or to break it.

Skylar Toppolet—Tightrope walker. Injured, Skylar is convinced that it is only a matter of time before they reclaim their proper position in the spotlight!

Ruby—Clown. Making everyone laugh is Ruby's position, but at what cost?

Patty Pachyderm—Animal performer. Patty has a way with large, obtrusive temperaments but taming them is another story.

Cat Levens—Lion tamer. With a few circus animals missing, Cat is on the prowl for what may be the cause.

Ricky Mammal—Menagerie Man. Working with the exotic animals, Ricky thrives on the thrill of danger and reward.

Rowan McGregor—Midway director. Rowan will use their knowledge, wit and expertise to run a successful midway, all to the boss' approval.

Casey Saber—Sword Swallower. The most loyal circus employee around, Casey will do anything to keep the circus operating at a profit.

DJ Ink—Tattooed Spectacle. With skin of ink, it is hard to know if DJ's frightening appearance is for show or a tell-tale sign of their true demeanor.

Harley Bell—Strong Person. Harley's physique has gotten them far in life. However, to get what Harley wants, they may have to use more than intimidation.

Mandy Small—Skinny Woman. The tiniest freak in the show, Mandy is out to prove she is a force to be reckoned with.

Payton Protector—Head of security. Hired to end the corruption, Payton has more on their plate than they bargained for.

Agent Swift—FBI agent. On assignment, this agent is secretive about what their real mission is.

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HFC CIRCUS BULLETIN

COME ONE, COME ALL!

To the closing party following the final performance in town. Celebrate a successful week before we pack up and head to the next city. Among others, you'll be sure to see:

Harold Hargrove—Bossman. As owner of the circus, Harold has been cleaning up his image and the circus to make it succeed. Whether his tactics are legal or lethal is the question.

Matilda Hargrove—Harold's wife. Even though she is not in command, others may differ with that opinion. Even with her exquisite tastes, there is little this woman cannot get. Or Harold get for her.

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THE "NEW" FAMILY CIRCUS

As the Hargrove Family Circus grows in popularity, Harold Hargrove has been focusing on making the midway and show more kid and family friendly. Among his efforts, Harold Hargrove has implemented a strict no tolerance policy for immoral and unethical behavior. "This type of conduct deters many people from attending our circus and those are customers we just can't afford to lose!" says Harold.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



After suffering a fall and a broken ankle, Skylar Toppolet was replaced in the center ring by Ariel Swinger. Ariel has been doing a fantastic job performing and bringing in record amounts of attendees!

AGENT ON BOARD

This is just a fair warning to be on your best behavior since Agent Swift (an FBI agent) is traveling with us and conducting an investigation into any illegal behaviors that may present themselves on the train. Your own participation in the agent's investigation is not only anticipated, but expected. The sooner the agent is done conducting their business, the sooner Agent Swift will be returning to Washington where their services are TRULY needed.

ALL ABOARD

The train will be leaving at midnight after the party for its next stop:

**HENDERSON, KY
BE ON OR BE GONE**

MISSING

Unfortunately some of our Hargrove Family Circus performers have been reported missing. While at first these performers were believed to be on their way to a new position at another circus, they never said their farewells, nor did they arrive at the new circus. If you have any information, please let Agent Swift or Payton Protection know.



Sample Character Description
(taken from another mystery)

Banker Bob

As the banker in the town of Deadwood, you do business with many of the people in the town and also some of the participants of the Deadwood Poker Tournament. One of your foremost clients is Harry High-Stakes, the owner of The Deadwood Saloon. In order to get the saloon established and operating in it's first year, you have loaned Harry a substantial amount of money. Although the saloon appears to be doing very well, you are uncertain why Harry is continually delinquent and sometimes misses his payments on his loan. Just last month, Harry was late again on his payment and you warned him that you will have to put his saloon into foreclosure if he cannot repay the money he owes on the loan by next month. You suspect that Harry is throwing the Deadwood Poker Tournament in order to get enough money so that his saloon will not go into foreclosure. This will be an important week to see if you will gain your money back from Harry's loan or if you will gain control over the saloon.

Because Harry is such a difficult and delinquent client, you hope that you will gain control over the saloon. If the saloon becomes the bank's property, you speculate that you may have a very wealthy buyer in Montgomery Money, an investor from the East. Because of Montgomery's wealth, you are certain that you will make a healthy profit off of selling the saloon to Montgomery. In addition, Montgomery will be consistent and reliable when making his loan payments.

Along with all the excitement of the tournament this week there has also been excitement in your bank. Earlier in the week, your bank was held up at gun point while your wife was watching the bank over the noon hour. Ordinarily, Bonnie does not watch the bank, but you were meeting with Harry about his payments. Because of the high ante for the poker tournament, you are convinced that the robber must have been a gambler who was trying to accumulate enough money to enter to the poker tournament. Since you view Sheriff Sam, the sheriff of Deadwood, as a very lazy individual, you plan on taking matters into your own hands when it comes to finding the culprit of the bank robbery and bringing them to justice!

As the Deadwood Poker Tournament Party quickly approaches, you are looking forward to attending for a few reasons. The party will be a perfect place for you to talk business with Montgomery Money about his intentions on investing in the saloon if your bank gains control of it. In addition to your dealings with Montgomery, you plan to figure out which one of the poker players may have robbed your bank and you plan to bring them to justice!

Acting and Dressing Your Part: As the banker of Deadwood, you are a businessman first. Your bank and your money come before everything, including your wife, Bonnie. Since you will be using the party to for business matters, you will want to dress dignified for the night. *For more ideas on how to dress and a glossary of wild western words and phrases to use at the party, please see www.nightofmystery.com*

**Sample Objectives Sheet For Beginning of Party
(taken from another mystery)**

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

Banker Bob

Objectives At The Start Of The Party:

These are things that are in your best interest to do before the evening goes much further. Be aware of what others around you are doing as well!

- Ask Harry High-Stakes why he can't seem to make the loan payment on his saloon when business seems to be doing so well.
- Ask Sheriff Sam if he has any leads on who robbed your bank earlier this week.
- Question some of the gamblers to see what they were doing over their lunch hours earlier this week when the bank was robbed.

**Sample Objectives Sheet
For After The Murder
(taken from another mystery)**

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

Banker Bob

Things You Know:

This is information not known to many (and possibly only YOU). Use it wisely in your scheming and bribery or hide it to help maintain your innocence.

- You are about to foreclose on The Deadwood Saloon.
- When you went to see Sheriff Sam about your robbery earlier this week, you saw Harry High-Stakes handing him over money, for what reason, you are not sure.

Objectives After The Murder:

**These are things that are in your best interest to do to help solve the murder.
Be aware of what others around you are doing as well!**

- Ask Sheriff Sam how much money the killer is paying him to keep his mouth shut.
- Tell Harry that you need the money by tomorrow at 5 or the bank will have to retake the saloon.
- Tell Montgomery Money that you may have a business proposition for him depending on how the evening turns out.
- If anyone approaches you with information about your bank robbery, question their sources and motives.

Sample Evidence
(taken from another mystery)

EXHIBIT A

Description: The murder weapon-- a dagger in the heart

Notes: Found to be the cause of death.

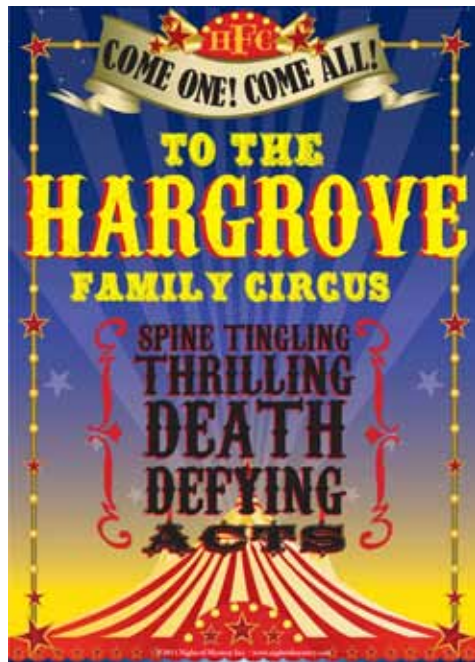


HFC
MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP

ALL THE EXTRAS

INCLUDED WITH YOUR MYSTERY ARE IDEAS AND DESIGNS TO HELP YOU MAKE YOUR
MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP PARTY ONE YOUR GUESTS WILL NEVER FORGET!

TICKETS * POSTERS * FOOD LABELS * SIGNS * CONDIMENT LABELS * OLD-TIME PRICE TAGS * MORE!





MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP

THIS HAS BEEN JUST A SAMPLING OF WHAT YOU WILL RECEIVE WHEN YOU PURCHASE MURDER UNDER THE BIG TOP

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- **A Host Guide**— A complete how-to of throwing your party which includes directions on preparing the invitations, assigning characters and preparing for the party.
- **A Schedule of the Night**— A step-by-step breakdown of how the night will go.
- **An Introduction**— to be read to the guests upon arrival.
- **Designed Invitations**— that you can customize with the details of your party.
- **Circus Bulletin**— to be sent with the invitations, it includes background information on the other circus goers that will be at the party.
- **Character Sheets**— full descriptions of the characters, including costuming and acting tips.
- **Character Objective Sheets**— this includes objectives for each character to try to achieve at each stage of the game in order to uncover evidence and find the murderer.
- **Name Tags**
- **Fake Money**— to be distributed to guests and used in the party for scheming and bribery.
- **Evidence**— more clues that will be presented towards the end of the night. This evidence will help your guests solve the mystery and find the murderer.
- **Solution**— a detailed description of who the murderer is, why the murder happened and the clues that led to the outcome.
- **“Who Dunit” Cards**— to allow your guests to guess the murderer, along with vote for the most animated character and best outfit.
- **Award Certificates**— to be awarded to the best costume, the most theatrical guest, the player with the most money at the end of the night and to each of the guests that solve the murder.
- **Party Printables and Extras**— directions, templates and designs to help you plan for your party. (Pictured on previous page. **Included are:** how to dumbbell/barbell, designs for circus tickets, circus posters, templates for menus, designed signs for you to print and more!)

All of our parties come in the form of a professionally designed 50-125 page pdf. Immediately after completing your order, you will be able to create a “member account” in our member’s center using the email address that you established in the purchasing process. Once in your account, you will have the ability to download your party (including optional emailable invitations for your guests and party extras). You can also access this information for 60 days after your purchase by logging into your account. If you forget your password, you can request a new password be sent to your email. By having our games online as instant downloads, we are able to satisfy even the most urgent need for a party.

PLEASE LOG ONTO: www.nightofmystery.com
to purchase your mystery today.