

East of the Storm

A MURDER MYSTERY PLAY

By

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**Introduction & Procedures
(Director's Copy)**

Suggested number of actors & guests (12 - 30)

Allow 60-90 minutes for Play

KIT Edition

What's included with this Kit:

1. Synopsis of the play.
2. Suggestions on how to proceed.
3. Profiles of the Characters.
4. Sample invitations.
5. Suggested appetizers to be served.
6. Guessing & Scoring Methods.
7. Possible rewards for selecting the killer.
8. Notes for Director and cast members.
9. The Murderer, Motives, and Method.
10. Copies of Play.
11. Name Tags. (Make sure they are worn)

1. Synopsis of the play

The package arrived, a little later than usual; at the Royal Residence number 2, Amman Jordan. Saleem Hussein opened it with the same eagerness a little girl would open her Christmas presents. Nana Chapman always included letters from friends, the latest Cosmopolitan magazine, Victoria Secrets catalogs and Alicia's (Saleem's American name) own copy of Single Professional Magazine. Included this time was a free invitation from Single Professional magazine for a mystery cruise to unknown destinations. Alicia remembered reading about the cruise in the July issue and it sounded exciting.

Living in an Arab country, especially as the king's brother's, first born daughter, extremely curtailed the free spirit side of this half American beauty. Because of the Palestinian homeland crisis, and the recent non aggression pact Jordan is about to sign with Israel, the Ministry of External Security would not allow the trip unless Saleem had a personal body guard and traveled under her American passport.

Alicia Chapman left the following Saturday on a commercial flight to Miami, Florida USA with Moe E. Hammit, her personal body guard (oh boy! real original name, from the ministry of external security). From Miami, the magazine provided a charter flight to Key West. From there, all guests were escorted to the cruise ship anchored in Key West harbor. On the boat, there are 36 passengers, the captain, and a crew

of ten. After a welcoming address by the representatives of the magazine and the ship's captain, Captain Fillmore, the passengers were divided in groups of six. Each group was headed by a magazine's staff person. Alicia and Moe's group was headed by Mark Angelton, political editor for the magazine.

Mark informs his group that they will sail all evening to an unknown destination. He tells them that even Captain Fillmore does not yet know the first island they will anchor at, but he does have a compass heading to set sail. The ship's name is *Witches Haunt* and her registry is Port Charlotte. The captain announces that they have cleared the harbor and are about to set sails. He also informs them that there is a storm west of their heading but it should present no more than some choppy seas for them

2. Suggestions on how to proceed

This is a murder mystery play to be performed by guests at a party or function. It is not meant to be a professionally produced product. The play is designed for your guests to read from a script. There is no need for memorization. Much comedy is generated through the spontaneous interpretation of the characters by the readers. Ad-libbing does help to add flavor to the performance but the Director must insist the players read all of their lines. The Director for the play can be the host or someone designated by the host. The Director picks the persons he or she thinks could play a part. This could be done ahead of time (see enclosed invitation sample) or at the function itself. The most important character in the play is the NARRATOR. This person must be someone who speaks with clarity and volume. The Narrator carries the play from scene to scene and also helps lead the audience through the guessing process. This play could be performed spontaneously at a function by a very small number of people.

There is a minor ADULT content to the play. It is the responsibility of the person(s) putting on this play to consider the ADULT content in selecting the environment the play is to be performed. Above all this should be fun and absolutely no pressure should be put on anyone to play a part. There are a number of venues in which this play can be performed. The following are suggestions: Dinner party, cocktail party, picnic, office party,

organization party, family gathering. The play could be by formal invitation (see sample inside). It could be a costume event. One could even host a barefoot cruise party in a marine setting.

3. Profiles of the Characters

Characters are rated as major or minor. This is not to mean a minor character cannot be the murderer. It just indicates the amount of speaking lines the character has. One could use minor speaking parts to attract reluctant new actors.

The following 11 characters have speaking parts:

**NARRATOR;
MARK ANGELTON
JACK GALLAGHER
SARAH WHALEN
TONY MARDUCCI
HARMONY FISHMAN
ALICIA CHAPMAN
MOE E. HAMMIT
CAPTAIN JONATHON FILLMORE
GUN BOAT CAPTAIN
DIRECTOR**

NARRATOR: (Major Distinct Role)

The Narrator has the most lines in the play and should be the one that can articulate and speak with volume. There are parts in the play where the Narrator will carry some comedy. There are also parts in the play where comedy will come out on its own. It is in these moments the Narrator has to be at his/her best. The play must still go on and the Narrator above everyone else is responsible to get some laughs and still stay on schedule.

The Narrator must aid the Director in guiding the audience through the guessing segment of the play. Additionally, working with the Director, the Narrator sets the timing and the pace of the play. One cannot emphasize the care that must be taken in selecting a person for this role.

MARK ANGELTON (Major Distinct Role)

Mark is the political editor for professional magazine. He lives in Summerville, New Jersey, but was born in Syria. He is single, loves women, sailing, and sports, in that order. He likes to travel especially in Europe. He hates jackets, ties and office politics.

JACK GALLAGHER (Minor Role)

Jack lives in Boston and works for Smith Barney investments. He loves skiing, cross country mostly. He also loves football, jogging and working out. A calm guy most of the time. He loves and respects his girlfriend Sarah.

SARAH WHALEN (Minor Role)

Sarah lives in Salem, Mass, She is a buyer for rugs "r" us, a carpet store in Salem specializing in Oriental and Persian rugs. She loves all kinds of sports especially kick boxing. That is probably why Jack listens to her.

TONY MARDUCCI (Minor Role)

Tony lives in New York or as Tony pronounces it Nu Yawk. He is one of New York's finest, a cop. He loves sports especially the Knicks and sports and more sports. He is really a clown and likes to imitate people that do not speak English as their first language.

HARMONY FISHMAN (Major Distinct Role)

Harmony lives in New York, not like Tony who lives somewhere called Nu Yawk. She states she works at the United Nations as a secretary but is, in reality, a security Agent for the Israeli delegation. She loves art, especially modern art, and the theater. She tolerates Tony's love of sports.

ALICIA CHAPMAN (Minor Role)

Alicia states that she lives in Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and works in my grandmother's boutique. But we all know she is really a half American Princess living in Jordan who is generally well guarded and protected .

MOE E. HAMMIT (Major Distinct Role with some comedy)

Moe is actually a Jordanian Security Agent. He does not do well faking fractured English and could use some help. Posing as Alicia's date he is really her body guard. He was educated in the UK and speaks English perfectly. The character that plays this part should possess some comic skills.

CAPTAIN JONATHON FILLMORE (Major Distinct Role)

The captain is a retired U.S. Coast Guard cutter captain working out of the Florida Keys. He is an able helmsman having navigated storming seas more times than most men. He is a respected type of character and should be played by an older person who can speak with authority.

GUN BOAT CAPTAIN (Minor Role)

The gun boat captain is a Cuban gun boat captain nothing more to him than that. Someone should speak the character's few lines with a Spanish accent.

Cuban Gun Boat Armed Guards (Very Minor Role)

No speaking parts for these culprits.

4. Sample Invitations

Invitations are purely optional. There is a sample invitation enclosed. Copy the master on paper of one's choice, include the dates, the time, the place and directions, the expected participation of the invitee (player or guesser), and the name and telephone number for RSVP. These folded invitations should fit in standard off the shelf envelopes. In a larger package, one could optionally include a copy of the play to the designated players. Costumes are mentioned in the narrative of the invitation. Appropriate dress for the play would be the casual cruise ship. Costumes should be optional.

5. Suggested appetizers to be served

Your murder mystery play can be performed in many settings. It can be an indoor casual party, a relaxed outdoor barbecue, or an elaborate dinner party. Your party cuisine can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish it to be. A nice touch is to co-ordinate appetizers & wines to compliment the theme of the play. The following recipes for appetizers would be a good starting point. These provide for a simple appetizer accompaniment to wines and other beverages you may be serving your guest. One could also include a snacking tray consisting of various vegetable crudités, grapes and cheeses of your choice.

Tony's Hot Artichoke Dip

This may be served with garlic bagel chips, crostini, crackers, or crusty French or Italian bread.

4 cups artichoke hearts, drained and chopped

2 cups mayonnaise

Juice of one lemon

1 Jalapeno, seeded and diced

1 Tbls. Ground black pepper

1 ½ cups grated Parmesan cheese

1 cup onion. Diced

½ cup green pepper, diced

½ cup scallions, sliced

1 Tbls. Louisiana hot sauce

Sauté onions ,peppers, green onions and jalapenos until the onions are translucent. Cool. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. While oven is heating, combine all ingredients except for ½ cup of parmesan cheese. Pour into casserole dish and top with remaining parmesan. Heat for 35 minutes until heated through. Serve warm . While dip is awesome as is, the addition of a pound of lump crabmeat takes it to a new level.

Moe's Cheese Filled Endive Spears

This recipe serves 20. May be doubled .

20 large Belgian endive leaves

½ of an 8 oz. package cream cheese, cut up

1 cup crumbled blue cheese (4 oz.)

1/3 cup broken walnuts or pecans

1 lb. seedless red grapes, separated into clusters

2 large oranges, peeled and sectioned into segments

Separate endive leaves. Rinse in cool water. Drain and pat dry.

With hand mixer, blend cream cheese and blue cheese; reserving 3 Tbls. of blue cheese for garnish. Cover and chill. When ready to serve, spoon spread into widest part of leaves. Garnish with nuts and sprinkled reserved blue cheese. Mound grape clusters in center of plate. Arrange stuffed leaves, alternating with orange segments, around the platter. Cheese can be prepared one day ahead or to simplify, you may purchase an herbed cheese spread of your choice. You may substitute cheddar for blue cheese.

Mark's' Fig and Gorgonzola Toasts

1 cup Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Calimyrna or Mission Figs

1/3 cup Chianti wine

1/4 cup orange juice

1 (2x4 inch) strip orange peel

2 small sprigs rosemary

20 (2") squares rustic Italian bread

2 Tbls. extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup Gorgonzola cheese

1/4 cup butter, softened

20 tiny rosemary sprigs (optional)

Remove stems from figs, cut each into 4 slices. Bring wine, orange juice, orange peel and rosemary to a boil in a small sauce pan. Add fig slices. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until most of the liquid has been absorbed; set aside. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Drizzle bread squares with olive oil and place on baking sheet. Bake 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool. Combine cheese with butter in a small bowl. Spread mixture onto toasts and top with fig slices. Garnish with rosemary sprigs. Makes 20.

6. Guessing & Scoring Methods

There is always a cumbersome point in the play when the Narrator stops and asks the guests to render their judgment on who the murderer is and what was the motive. Suggestions on what format these opinions should take are strictly up to the Director. A great deal depends on how the play has been perceived, good or bad? The play ran too short or too long? There may be other considerations on extending or limiting the time for guessing that cannot be covered here. Again the Director has to be fluid about this. This is true, especially if an award is given to the person(s) getting the correct answer(s). Since in this particular play the Players will simply act out the murder scene, the correct guesser(s) will have to wait to hear the rest of the play. Remember there are two parts of the plot, the murderer and the motive and both should be guessed before the play resumes. The murderer will be easier to guess than the motive. Consequently there should be a higher score for guessing the motive than for guessing the murderer. If picking the highest individual score is not that important, you may want to have groups guess. This could be done by having the Narrator asking for a show of hands on who the audience thinks the murderer is. This of course takes place after the play pauses and after the audience gets a chance to ask the players questions. **Reminder: MAKE SURE PLAYERS WEAR THEIR NAME TAGS.** When it becomes obvious that several guests are picking a particular player or another, the Director or the Narrator should put them in groups. The groups then can discuss possible motives and render their opinions as a group. In this way a group can win rather than an individual. Remember that unless you have instructed the cast to unseal their copy of the play, they too will have a chance to guess.

7. Possible rewards for selecting the killer & the motive: a signed certificate, a copy of mutiny on the bounty, a bottle of wine.

8. Notes for Director and cast members:

1. There are clues in the play that lead to the solving of the murder and the motive. Make sure that they get read.
2. If you are going to ad-lib, these clues must still get read
3. Remember to bring your reading glasses if you need them.
4. There may be a number of people at the performance, so speak your lines clearly
5. Some lines need extra direction. They have comic dialogue.
6. Stop before the sealed pages. Don't read the sealed pages of the play until the audience has a chance to guess
7. Give time for the audience to guess. Remember they should guess the murderer and the motive.
8. Answer truthfully any questions the audience may ask. That is except the murderer, he/she is exempt from telling the truth.
9. After the audience has rendered their judgment, do not reveal the murderer! Unseal the last pages and just act out the rest of the play.
10. The director picks the parts starts and stops the play (He/She could yell "ACTION!" to start and "CUT IT'S A WRAP!" to stop)
11. The Director welcomes everyone and makes certain that the actors are ready.

12. Make sure everyone wears their character's Name Tag.

13. Characters should high light their names on the play to make it easier to follow their lines.

9. The Murderer, Motives, and Method

Director: Before reading this section, read the play first.

Murderer: Mark Angelton

Motive: To prevent the country of Jordan from signing a peace initiative with Israel by holding their Princess hostage.

Biggest Clue: Mark thought that Moe was on deck during the life boat drill but it was really Tony. Also Mark is an Arab by birth and this could explain his allegiance to the Palestinians.

10. copies of plays, (see enclosed)

11. Name tags, (see enclosed)

**Now you are ready to Direct. Get in your Director's Chair, silence your audience, gather your cast, and declare,
ACTION!**