

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

## ***Suggested number of actors & guests (12 - 90)***

***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***

This play is about two families the Seldens of French ancestry and the Frattias of Portuguese ancestry. The Seldens are wine growers and the Frattias are Oyster harvesters. The play takes place, in modern times, in two towns in Connecticut. Both towns are on the Connecticut River close to the entrance to Long Island sound.

The families have a long history of distrust for each other and consider each other as enemies. This is because in 1880 the residue from the Selden's faulty wine presses leaked into the river and flowed out to the sea. This residue proved to be poisonous to the oyster crop and the Frattia family suffered a great financial loss. It was the uncaring attitude of the Selden's that led to an all out war between the families. This encounter had fatal consequences with 3 members of each family being killed, including the Frattia Grandmother. Although the families do not like one another, they do share a common bond of family loyalty and love for their land. They know each other by attending the same schools and by occasional forays into each others private lives. But they do not socialize or marry into each other's family.

The Selden's came to this country from France to escape the Peasant Revolution. Because of their status as upper class merchants, they were targets for the Guillotine. To save their aristocratic necks, they gave up their land and came to America to establish a vineyard on free soil.

The Frattia's came to America from Portugal in the mid 1850s, escaping their corrupt government. Portuguese leaders, at that time, extracted high taxes from successful enterprises. This tax condemned the businesses to failure. The Frattia's were fishers of oysters and they sought freedom from government shackles. So they too left their native land to find free fertile oyster beds in America.

Both families are not adverse to violence and it was demonstrated twice in their American experience. It happened once in 1880 and again, this past day. As Pierre Selden' was delivered a fatal blow to the head as a result of his defiance of the fragile truce.

## *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 cover all the clues. 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 murderer guessing process. This play could be performed spontaneously at a function by a very small number of people.

This particular play has an added bonus that allows the actors themselves to guess the murderer. The murderer is revealed in the last 3 pages of the play. These pages are sealed. The Director controls when the seal is broken.

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 (wine merchant and fisher person). The event could be a wine tasting party coupled with a murder Mystery. (To be fair, make sure you also serve oysters)

### *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, Rick Selden, Diana Frattia, Pierre Selden, William Selden, Grand Lady Gracia Selden, Linda Selden, Grandma Donna Frattia, Eduardo Frattia, Dano Frattia, The Marshal.*

**NARRATOR: (Main 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.

### **RICK SELDEN: (Main Character)**

Rick is the oldest next generation of the Selden family. He is well educated and has been bred to take over the family business. He is not everyone's first choice and he is fully aware of his short comings. But he is a man of conviction and he is no push over. The character is to be played with authority, without defiance. Rick's leadership skills should come out in the reading. Rick is forty three years of age. Rick is not married.

### **DIANE FRATTIA: (Main Character)**

Diane is the most beautiful of the Frattia's young women. She too has been bred for her role, but her role is protector of the truce. It is very difficult for her since her beauty attracts many men but she must put her family first. She can marry, but if she does she must be both a wife and mistress. Of all the characters, Diane's role has to come across as a highly intelligent and independent woman.

### **PIERRE SELDEN: (Main Character)**

A real troublemaker best describes this character. His father ran the Vineyard until Rick turned 43 (his age for accession to head the family business). Pierre believed he should have taken over the business because of Rick's short comings and Pierre's father's position. But Pierre's rebellious forays put him on the other side of leadership. Especially those forays into the Frattia camp to try to gain favor with Diana Frattia. Pierre's character must be played with defiance for everyone. Of course except for Diana. Pierre is 40 years old and is married without children.

### **WILLIAM SELDEN (Minor Character)**

William is just an all around nice guy and he should be played that way. He just wants to get along. He is Rick's brother but takes Rick's side only when Rick is right. He only advises but does not have the fortitude to make demands. William is 37 years old and is married with three children.

### **GRAND LADY GRACIA SELDEN: (Minor Character)**

As one would suspect from her name, Grand Lady Gracia is a stunning, well educated, older woman. She too once had to partake in the truce arrangement, as Diane is doing now.

She is the essence of what Diane has to become. She embodies a person of class and one would expect her to be served. Yet, instead, she has chosen to serve. This character adds class and dignity to the play and should be played by someone special. Gracia is 72 years of age, she is married with two children. She has five grandchildren, three girls and two boys.

### **LINDA SELDEN: (Minor Character)**

Linda is the Selden's answer to the Frattia's Diane. She is a very beautiful young lady that has to take on a task which she feels she may not be suited for. Not only is she the counter to Diana, she is Diana's friend. As Pierre's sister, she worries that her brother will create a problem for the families. Linda is 33 years old and is married with two children.

### **GRANDMA DONNA FRATTIA: (Major Character)**

Grandma Donna Frattia is not a Gracia Selden although; she is a beautiful woman in her own right. She is not petite like Gracia Selden but big like a man, yet still feminine. As a young lady she played boys games better than most boys. Oyster fishing is tough and she could handle both boat and crew. Even though her Grandson runs the Frattia oyster business, it is Grandma Donna who keeps it together. She is widowed and has four children and four grand children. Donna may be in the first stages of Alzheimer disease. Her age is 73.

### **EDUARDO FRATTIA: (Minor Character)**

Eduardo Frattia is the answer to Rick Selden as newly appointed head of the family business. He is a hard working man but rather be out sailing in the sunshine than fishing in the rain. However he does his job well and keeps the peace with the Seldens. Eduardo is 43 years of age and not married.

### **DANO FRATTIA: (Minor Character)**

Dano is Eduardo's brother, He is very energetic and wants to see the business succeed. He is the fighter of the family and has showed it in confrontations with companies that infringe on the family's fishing rights.

Dano is 34 years of age. He is married and has four daughters and one son. Dano has been a very productive guy.

### **THE MARSHAL: (Very Minor Character)**

The Marshal is the head of the Police Department in Hartford County. Very little else can be said. The role is one of little dialogue and can be given to the Host so he/she can follow along with the play.

## ***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. I chose the 1880's rather than 2010 as the year for costumes. This makes dress a little more interesting. Costumes are 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 French and Portuguese cheese and fresh grapes (black preferred).*

### **OYSTERS VICTORIA**

*Serves 4-5*

*3 cups ( about 1 ½ pounds) cooked baby shrimp*

*3 cups ( about 1 ½ pints) fresh shucked oysters , drained*

### **MORNAY SAUCE**

*5 Tablespoons butter*

*5 Tablespoons all-purpose flour*

*2 ½ cups light cream*

*1 cup ( 4 ounces) shredded medium Cheddar cheese*

*½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese*

*Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an ovenproof au gratin baking dish.*

*Line the bottom of the baking dish with the shrimp. Cover the shrimp with the oysters, making sure there are no small pieces of shell present.*

*Melt the butter in a heavy- bottomed saucepan. Whisk in the flour and cook for 3 minutes, stirring until bubbly and frothy, but do not let it brown.*

*Remove from heat and add the cream all at once, whisking to blend well.*

*Return to moderate heat and continue to cook and stir until the sauce becomes thick and smooth. Remove from heat and add the cheeses. Stir until well blended.*

*Pour sauce over seafood and bake about 15-20 minutes until heated through. Do not overcook or the oysters will toughen. Run under the broiler a minute or two to brown the top if desired.*

*Other cheeses may be substituted for the Cheddar and Parmesan.*

## **DONNA'S SMOKED OYSTER DIP**

*1 (8 – ounce) package cream cheese, softened*  
*1 ½ cups mayonnaise*  
*4 dashes hot pepper sauce*  
*1 Tablespoon lemon juice*  
*1 (4 ½ -ounce) can ripe olives, chopped*  
*1 (6-ounce) can smoked oysters, drained and chopped*

*Combine cream cheese, mayonnaise, hot sauce and lemon juice. Mix well. Stir in olives and oysters. Serve with raw vegetable crudité's and crackers. The recipe yields 2 cups. Recipe may be doubled or tripled to serve your party.*

## **OYSTERS FRATTIA**

*1 (5 ¾ - ounce) can smoked oysters*  
*1 (5 ¼- ounce) box Melba toast rounds*

*Mayonnaise*

*Parmesan Cheese*

*Place 1 smoked oyster on a Melba round and cover with a dollop of mayonnaise. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Broil until lightly browned and hot.*

*Easy but elegant, this may be doubled or tripled depending on size of party.*

## **OYSTERS EDUARDO**

*Oyster shells*

*Oysters*

*Salt*

*Pepper*

*Bacon*

*Barbecue sauce*

*Grated Parmesan cheese*

*Scrub oyster shells or run through dishwasher to clean. Pick oysters for shell pieces and rinse. Lay 1 oyster on each half shell. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cut strip of bacon to fit over oyster. Broil until bacon is cooked.*

*Add barbecue sauce and sprinkle heavily with Parmesan cheese. Broil again until cheese is melted.*

*Yield: allow 6 oysters per person, more or less as desired.*

## *6. Guessing & Scoring Methods*

There is always a cumbersome point in the play when the Narrator stops and asks the guest 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 be told. 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 (KEEPING THE TRUCE) 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 TAG.** 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*

**Bottle(s) of Wine of Course: Preferably Selden Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir. You can use the enclosed Selden Creek Vineyards labels to personalize the bottles.**

## ***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. Highlighted lines need extra direction. They have comic dialogue.**
- 6. Stop before the last three pages. Don't read the last two 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 judgement, do not reveal to them who the murderer is, just act out the last three pages of the play.**
- 10. The director picks the parts starts and stops the play (He/She could yell "ACTION!" to start and "CUT!" 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.*

After the 1885 war between the families where one woman was killed, the Frattia and the Selden women got together to prevent more wars from happening. They plotted in secrecy without ever revealing to the male members of the families what they were doing.

Here is what they did. They provided their most beautiful daughters to each other's family for the sole purpose of convincing the male heads of the families not to do battle with each other. They made the males make Sacred Promises. ("You will never do anything to hurt me or my family"). Of course these women used their most potent weapon to make their case, that is, **Sex**. This worked for generations until today. Today, Pierre was going ahead with pressing the grapes without the use of the Scrubbers which was against Rick's explicit orders. He could do this because Rick was going to be out of town and no one could stop Pierre except Rick. Or maybe one more person could do the job. Grandma Frattia knew that if the scrubbers were not working the grape residue that kills oysters would be dumped in the river. Without telling Diana, Grandma Frattia forged Diana's signature on a note telling Pierre to meet Diana at the Selden's Sacred Place. When he got there, she toyed with him and, in a very unlady like manner, she killed him.

***Murderer:*** Grandma Donna Frattia

***Motive:*** To prevent war between the families

***Biggest Clue:*** Eduardo said the body was below the cliffs. Grandma Donna Frattia told Diana the body was below the Selden's Sacred Place

*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!**