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The Christmas Conundrum



Ebenezer Stooze
Character Booklet

Congratulations! You are taking part in a murder mystery by Red Herring Games.

A few simple instructions to help you along:

Firstly: Don't Panic!

This booklet contains all the information you need as a guest to help you act your part throughout the murder mystery party.

The first page provides you with additional background information to help you get into character, however there are no special acting abilities required and you can make as much or as little of your character as you wish.

After that on each page you are given either something to read out (dialogue), questions to ask, or information to help you answer questions you will be asked. These questions and answers are not intended to be read out word for word. Instead read them, digest the information and then ask and answer any questions in your own words. You are encouraged to ad lib, but it is very important you do not lie, so please provide the information contained within your booklet when asked.

Your host for the evening will direct you where necessary and tell you when to move on to the next round when the time is right.

If you are the murderer you will not be told. When you finally come to guess who did it – it could easily be you and feel free to point the finger at yourself if you feel you must!

And lastly: Have fun!

1 2

Ebenezer Stoooge

Background Character Information:

Keep this information to yourself, and use it to help you to act in character throughout the mystery:

You are Jacob Barley's joint business partner and your accountancy background has held you in good stead as a financier/moneychanger.

Your apparel is well past its sell-by-date and your house is in a state of disrepair. You only see pleasure in the accumulation of wealth rather than the spending of it and have no interests in anything else, including love.

Your only relative is your niece, Clara Net. You have had no contact with her for some time and would prefer for it to remain that way. She is only interested in money – something you are not prepared to part with. She will probably suck up to you this evening. Don't part with any money!

Bob Scratchitt is your clerk. Order him around and never fetch and carry anything Bob can do for you.

Don't forget to say "bah humbug" at appropriate moments!

Ebenezer Stooge

Introductions:

Use the following dialogue to introduce yourself to the other guests, speaking when indicated below.

Ebenezer Stooge speaks first using the following dialogue:

Mind? Well of course I mind starting the introductions! Why should I, Ebenezer Stooge, have to introduce myself? That's what I pay other people for! Bob – you make the introductions.

After you have heard from everyone, please continue reading and begin round 1.

3 4

Scripted Dialogue Round 1

Ebenezer Stooge Bah! Humbug!

Bella Deball Really Ebenezer – the inspector tells you that your business partner has been murdered and all you can say is that!

Bob Scratchitt Did you really expect him to say anything else Miss Deball? It *is* Christmas.

Wanda Scratchitt The season of goodwill to all men.

Clara Net And women too I shouldn't wonder.

Ebenezer Stooge Women? Bah! Humbug!

Fred Nephew Oh – I dare say they aren't all that bad.

Bob Scratchitt Oh they aren't – I can assure you of that! I found a real gem.

Wanda Scratchitt Oh Bob – what am I going to do with you!

Ebenezer Stooge Well, just so long as no one decides to give them the vote. Imagine – a world with women in politics! It would be a disaster!

Fred Nephew It will never happen! No one would ever give them the vote.

Cont.

- Clara Net** And why not may I ask? We do all the work.
- Wanda Scratchitt** And we excel in multi-tasking.
- Bob Scratchitt** Women! You don't know the first thing about politics!
- Wanda Scratchitt** Mind your manners Bob. You know I don't tolerate insults.
- Ebenezer Stooze** And that's exactly why women would fail in politics – they're far too polite.
- Wanda Scratchitt** Hardly, you pug-nosed fathead!
- Fred Nephew** Yes – well, I can see this conversation is slipping away from us a little – aren't we meant to be investigating Jacob's death? Why don't we just get on with some questions. Who wants to go first?

Ebenezer Stooze

First Round

Questions you should ask:

Ask Fred Nephew if he is seeing anyone. He has the look of a man who has a love interest.

Ask Wanda Scratchitt if she has ever visited the offices of Barley and Stooze.

Information you should reveal about yourself only when asked.

Jacob Barley has been ill for several weeks. His symptoms were initially just regular headaches and light-headedness, but then he became pale and nauseous and latterly suffered from stomach cramps, delirium, vomiting and bouts of diarrhoea. When he died the doctor in attendance thought he had chronic gastroenteritis, and he was certainly being treated for such, at great expense you might add.

You think you are likely to inherit Jacob's half of the business as Jacob appeared to have no surviving relatives, just a godson, a Mr. Fred Nephew. Of course, his finances aren't entirely settled yet, as there is still the matter of the doctor's wages to come out of his side of the business (you certainly aren't paying for it!). But his money will certainly add to your finances.

Do not read further until instructed by your host.

Scripted Dialogue Round 2

- Bella Deball** Toxicology? I take it he doesn't think the stabbing with a pen was enough?
- Bob Scratchitt** Apparently not. Though, I must admit I always thought that the coroners ruling of "suicide with a pen" was a little far fetched.
- Wanda Scratchitt** Yes – but then we were hardly going to quibble over it. We were both just glad to see the back of him.
- Bob Scratchitt** There now Wanda, don't go implicating us in this.
- Clara Net** Oh – please do. It would make this so much easier.
- Fred Nephew** Yes – I mean, if Wanda and Bob are happy to admit to killing him then we can all carry on making merry this Christmas and forget all about this murder thing.
- Ebenezer Stooze** Making merry? Bah! Humbug! A waste of money if you ask me.
- Bella Deball** Yes – well, we all know your opinion on paying for anything pleasurable Ebenezer.
- Bob Scratchitt** I've always thought the best things in life were free.

Cont.

7 8

- Fred Nephew** I'd have to agree with you there. Love – for instance – you can't put a price tag on that, can you Clara?
- Clara Net** Quite true; but money does have its uses.
- Bob Scratchitt** Like paying for assassinations perhaps?
- Fred Nephew** Leave Clara out of this! Does she look like an assassin to you?
- Wanda Scratchitt** Well, that depends. What does an assassin look like?
- Bella Deball** Well, given what Inspector Gorse says, he or she looks like one of us. Shall we continue?

Ebenezer Stooge**Second Round****Questions you should ask:**

Ask Bob Scratchitt about the pen found in Jacob's body. Did he recognise it?

You are certain you saw Clara Net and Fred Nephew together in the park holding hands. Are they seeing each other? Ask Clara.

Information you should reveal about yourself only when asked.

You know that Jacob Barley had very little regard for Fred Nephew and are surprised he left his estate to him. The last time you spoke to Jacob about Fred, he called him a money-grabbing good for nothing.

You acted as signatory for Jacob Barley's will. The last will you knew about was the one he made five years ago leaving his half of the business and his estate to you. You haven't signed a will since then. So as far as you are concerned the money is yours.

Do not read further until instructed by your host.

Scripted Dialogue Round 3

- Clara Net** Strychnine? Where on earth did that come from? Isn't that a rat poison.
- Bob Scratchitt** Looks like it killed the biggest rat of all!
- Wanda Scratchitt** Bob! You can't go around saying things like that – Mr. Stooge is listening. Do you want to keep your job?
- Ebenezer Stooge** If you ask me it's too late for that given what we've heard already.
- Bella Deball** Perhaps, but perhaps not. If you find who killed Mr. Barley perhaps you could volunteer for the new detective force?
- Clara Net** Well I don't want to be a detective. I want to be a lady of leisure and this murder mystery is seriously affecting my ability to enjoy myself this Christmas, so I'd like it concluding swiftly if possible.
- Ebenezer Stooge** Wouldn't we all.
- Bella Deball** Oh, I don't know. It's kind of fun and it makes a change from blind man's buff and all those other parlour games.
- Bob Scratchitt** You have enough space in your parlour for games?

Cont.

Wanda Scratchitt Oh come now Bob, there is enough space in our parlour for some games, it just depends on what kind of games.

Bob Scratchitt Sardines being the usual.

Fred Nephew Sardines sounds like fun – what do you do?

Bob Scratchitt Everyone crams into the one space.

Clara Net I'm game if you are Fred.

Bella Deball If you don't mind I think we ought to give it a miss. I've seen the state of some of the clothes you go around in and I wouldn't want to catch anything.

Wanda Scratchitt Charmed, I'm sure. Look – why don't we all just get back to solving the murder. I'm sure I have a question for someone.

Ebenezer Stooge

Third Round

Questions you should ask:

Ask Bella Deball if her hatred for Jacob Barley was prompted by more than him causing Ebenezer to break off their engagement.

Ask Bob Scratchitt about Jacob Barley's debt. Can he tell you any more?

Information you should reveal about yourself only when asked.

Your office stationery is not usually lethal and you are very surprised that Jacob had the strength to stab himself with a pen. However – whoever did probably killed him as all your ink contains strychnine – you've been adding it to the bottles of ink to stop the rats nibbling at your manuscripts – it's been fairly effective too!

Jacob Barley was always seeing doctors about one ailment or another and you always felt he was a bit of a hypochondriac. You knew he was taking small doses of laudanum for various "aches and pains".

Do not read further until instructed by your host.

Ebenezer Stooze

Concluding Statement

Use the following dialogue to summarise your position, speaking when indicated below.

Ebenezer Stooze speaks first using the following dialogue:

Bah! Humbug! If you ask me this enquiry is a complete waste of time. I don't know why we pay taxes if the police force we pay for are going to make us do all the work! I could have told you at the start I didn't kill Jacob Barley and I am no further forward now than I was when the inspector arrived.

After you have heard from all the guests make a prediction as to who the murderer is and why.

Tell the others.

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