

KICK CARMICHAEL

Character Booklet

Hello and welcome to Mistletoe Manor – and to the murder mystery set to unfold under its ancient roof. I am author Ruth Ware, and I will be guiding you through the events of the night.

Your host is the bestselling writer Aubrey St Clair, author of more than forty books starring his celebrated sleuth Eric Argent, and founder of the Detective Club, whose members comprise the crème de la crème of crime writers. Tonight is the fiftieth annual meeting of the club, and you are one of the honoured guests.

First of all, an explanation about this character booklet. Anything written in italics is for your eyes only, so please don't read it aloud. It may contain secret information or clues to your motive, if you are guilty. However, you may choose to share this information as part of the discussions at the end of the evening.

The night begins with a draw determining who is the murderer and who is an innocent bystander. Whatever your status, keep this information to yourself! But when you come to the paragraph in the character booklet marked 'if you are innocent' or 'if you are the murderer', then you must read the appropriate section.

If you are innocent, you win by collaborating with your fellow bystanders to correctly figure out the murderer. If you are guilty, you win by tricking the other participants into accusing the wrong person.

You are handsome, athletic Kick Carmichael. Originally a professional tennis player, you are now better known as the author of eight detective novels for children starring your twelve-year-old super sleuth Mindy Day. Although you hung up your racket almost a decade ago you are still regularly stopped on the streets by admiring fans. However, your fame as Mindy's creator has now almost surpassed your reputation as a tennis player, as Mindy has become one of the UK's most beloved children's characters, branching out into clothes, a TV series and even a board game. Professionally, life couldn't be better ... if only you could stop those persistent rumours that you don't actually write the books yourself.

INTRODUCTION

Read the paragraph below to your fellow guests when you are invited to introduce yourself.

Hello, everyone, and what a lovely time we are having here tonight. Aren't we? Aren't we? I know I am. I'm Kick Carmichael – and yes, if you think you know the name, you're right! You probably know me from my days as a professional tennis player – anyone over the age of thirty probably remembers my epic four-hour doubles match on Number One Court at Wimbledon! But the younger members here tonight might know me better as the author of the Mindy Day books for boys and girls – no mystery is too baffling for twelve-year-old Mindy and her best friend, Buster the pup! In fact, do I see a My favourite day is Mindy T-shirt at the back there? No. Oh well. Never mind. I'll be signing autographs in the library after dinner, but please, no photographs.

CHAPTER 1

REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

Read the paragraphs below when the narrator instructs you to do so.

Well, this is just absolutely frightful news. Poor old Aubrey – and stabbed you say? Just like in my fourth novel *Mindy Day and the Clue of the Poisoned Racket*. Or was it my seventh, *Mindy Day and the Match Point Murder*? Regardless, it's a tragedy and I very much hope the murderer is brought swiftly to justice. It's just a shame that I arrived too late to pick up any clues. I drove down from London and was one of the last to get here – in fact the party was in full swing when I turned up, as Stebbings can attest, since he let me in.

As you can see from this, any suggestion of my involvement is absurd and my lawyer would no doubt like to speak with anyone who says otherwise.

CHAPTER 2

A QUESTION OF MOTIVE

After the narrator has finished, it's time for you to ask some questions – and answer them!

Below are the questions you might wish to ask your fellow guests. Each guest can ask TWO questions, so choose wisely. They don't have to be directed at the same person. At the end are the questions you may be asked yourself. The answers may be different according to whether you are the murderer or an innocent bystander, so take a moment to read through all the questions and answers, and familiarise yourself with what you should say in the event that you are questioned.

If you are innocent, then your job is simple: to figure out the murderer. You need to get other people on your side, so don't be afraid to point out holes in the stories of your fellow guests! If you are the murderer, then remember you cannot lie – you must read out the 'if you are the murderer' answer if you are asked that question. However, your job is to deflect suspicion onto your fellow guests, by rousing suspicions against them. Be ready with some red herring theories!

Questions for Valerie Chime

- 1) You said you're something of a 'scribbler' – can you tell us a bit more about your literary ambitions?
- 2) Sir Aubrey always gave his speeches off the cuff. Why would he be writing out notes this time? Was that really what he was writing?
- 3) Can you tell us anything about the murder weapon? The maid said it was a letter opener. Do you know the one she meant?

Questions for Alex Masters

- 1) You said that you had last seen Aubrey at a writing retreat. Did anything happen there that we should know about?
- 2) What is your next book about?
- 3) You told us that you arrived on the 5.20 train from London, but other guests said the London train was late. Did you really take that train? How is it that you arrived ten minutes before them?

Questions for Dolores de l'Amour

- 1) You told us that you gave Aubrey's forthcoming novel *Eric Argent and the Secretary's Revenge* a glowing quote. Other guests have told us that this book wasn't finished yet. How did you manage to give a quote for it?
- 2) What was Aubrey's forthcoming novel about?
- 3) How did your late husband die?

Questions for A. N. Andrews

- 1) What did you say in your letter to Sir Aubrey? It seems a big leap from writing one fan letter to being invited to join the Detective Club.
- 2) You told us that your train from London was late. Other guests who were on the same train arrived ten minutes before you. What were you doing in the interim?
- 3) What is your novel about?

Questions for Tuffy Farqueson

- 1) You seem awfully eager to make hay out of Aubrey's death with special editions and so on. Isn't that a little macabre?
- 2) You told us that you went up to see Aubrey before dinner but that he was dressing. Other people have told us he was in his study. Can you explain the discrepancy?
- 3) You mentioned Aubrey wrote to you about his forthcoming novel, *Eric Argent and the Secretary's Revenge*. What was the novel about?

Questions for Rowan McTaggart

- 1) You seemed very reluctant to look at Sir Aubrey's body. As a doctor, didn't you want to see if there was anything you could do?
- 2) You told us that your train from London was late, and you were one of the last to

arrive at the party, but other guests who were on the same train arrived considerably before you. How do you explain the difference?

- 3) In your opinion, as a medical examiner, would it have taken much strength to stab Aubrey?

Questions for Clive Barking

- 1) You said in your statement that you usually stay with Aubrey but you didn't this time – why was that?
- 2) You said that you co-founded the Detective Club alongside Sir Aubrey – I never knew that. It's very generous of you to let Aubrey take all the credit.
- 3) You mentioned that Sir Aubrey was stabbed with a letter opener you gave him – can you tell us a bit more about that?

Questions for YOU!

- 1) You mentioned that you drove down from London. Did anyone actually see your car arrive?

If you are innocent, say: Well, I don't know what you're getting at, but yes, fortunately for me, that old stick Stebbings was at the door, greeting one of the other guests, so he saw me draw up. Lucky I have an alibi, what?

If you are the murderer, say: Well, I don't know what you're getting at. No, as a matter of fact everyone was inside when I turned up. I rang the bell and Stebbings let me in, but no doubt you'll try to imply that I scaled the ivy and stabbed old Aubrey with a letter opener before sauntering back down to ring the bell. Well, I may have been one of the coolest players on Number One Court, but I'm not that cool. Regardless, I'd like to see you tell that story to my lawyer.

- 2) You don't seem very sure of the plot of your own books. Why is that?

If you are innocent, say: Well, truth to tell, old bean, I don't actually write them myself. It's something of an open secret, but my publishers like me to keep up the pretence, so don't spread it around. Nice young woman called Daphne Pebbles does

all the elbow work, I just fill in the tennis details, don't you know.

If you are the murderer, say: I have no idea what you're getting at. If it's that persistent poppycock rumour that I don't write my own books, I've sued the *Daily Yell* over it, and I'll sue you too if you repeat it. The truth is that when you've written eight books it gets dashed hard to remember which of them is which. If that's a crime, then guilty as bally charged.

3) How long have you been a member of the Detective Club?

Answer: Actually this is my first year. My publishers had been lobbying Aubrey for quite a while – after all, I *am* the bestselling detective novelist in the age 8–10 category. But he was a terrible stick about that kind of thing – there's lots of snobbery about children's books and celebrity authors, don't you know. Aubrey had some absurd prejudices about that kind of thing.

CHAPTER 3

J'ACCUSE!

After the narrator has finished, it's time for you to share your theories with the other guests – and vote. The accused is decided by majority vote.

If suspicion has fallen on you, then read out the appropriate passage below.

If you are innocent:

Me! Are you seriously accusing me, Kick Carmichael, three times winner of Sports Player of the Year, and twice voted Most Beloved Children's Author in the age 8–10 category? I've never heard of anything so preposterous!

Say that again and you'll be hearing from my lawyer! Yes it's true that Aubrey kept me out of the Detective Club in a most absurdly snobbish fashion – but that would be a pretty poor motive for murder. However, since you force me to deny it – no, I did not kill Aubrey. You'll have to find your scapegoat elsewhere.

If you are the murderer:

Ha. And I thought I'd got away with it! Yes, I killed the old scoundrel, and I'm not sorry for it. Eight years my publishers lobbied to get me into his precious Detective Club, and for eight years the doddering old fool knocked them back.

And then, finally, when he had the sense to admit defeat and cave to their pressure, he found out that I don't write my own books.

Well, of course it's quite absurd to be snobbish about this kind of thing. Celebrities are ghosted all the time. So when I arrived I slipped in the back way to have a talk to Aubrey about it, man to man, and make him see what a mare's nest he was making of the whole business.

Aubrey kicked up a most ridiculous fuss about it. Threatened to expel me from the Detective Club if you please, and even worse, he made some preposterous threats about going to the *Daily Yell* with the story. 'I think children and their parents deserve to know the truth about who is really responsible for creating Mindy Day,' he said. Utterly ridiculous of course, but unfortunately my publishers have always been rather antsy about keeping that side of things quiet – and with a big TV deal in the pipeline, I can't afford to rock the boat just now.

Regardless, I wasn't going to stand for being treated like that by some jumped-up little scribbler, and I told him so. At which point he had the nerve to call me a tennis-playing has-been who couldn't write his own name. Well. That was the last straw. I admit I lost my temper, snatched up the letter opener, and stabbed him with a very neat little backhand. I've always been proud of my backhand.