

A. N. ANDREWS

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 the serious up-and-coming writer, A. N. Andrews, author of the still-to-be published psychological thriller *The Unreliable Narrator's Child*. You are young, idealistic and quite dazzled at finding yourself in the company of all these experienced mystery-mongers – and you are riding high on the rapturous pre-publication buzz for your first novel, which just received a starred Kirkus review and glowing quotes from a host of big names. Unfortunately, it seems that not everyone here is happy for your success, and you are worried that the news of a big film deal is going to sour the atmosphere further.

INTRODUCTION

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

Oh goodness, hello, everyone. I'm A. N. Andrews, and I'm about to publish my debut novel *The Unreliable Narrator's Child*, out in all good bookshops very soon. Gosh, this is, well, I never expected to find myself in such illustrious company. When I was scribbling away in my university dorm room, eating Pot Noodles and counting my pennies to pay the phone bill, if you had told me that I would find myself not just with a publishing deal and a starred *Kirkus* review, but in the very home of Aubrey St Clair – well, I wouldn't have believed you. I'm so thrilled and humbled to be here in such august company.

CHAPTER 1 REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

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

This is just – oh, it's beyond terrible. I don't know what to say. I didn't know Sir Aubrey well of course, in fact tonight was to be the first time we met. But we'd corresponded by letter and I've been quite public about my admiration for him as a writer, and the influence his work has had on my own. In fact I wrote to him to say as much, and to ask if I might send him a copy of *The Unreliable Narrator's Child*. He was kind enough to say yes, but I never dreamed that he would respond with an invitation to join the Detective Club. To say that I was bowled over by the honour is an understatement – and tonight was to be the crowning moment of that honour, a chance to meet with Aubrey in person and tell him what he meant to me.

To think that if only I'd arrived ten minutes earlier, I could perhaps have seen him in person – maybe even prevented this dreadful crime from happening. But my train from London was late – and I'll never forgive myself for that.

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 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 Kick Carmichael

- 1) You mentioned that you drove down from London. Did anyone actually see your car arrive?
- 2) You don't seem very sure of the plot of your own books. Why is that?
- 3) How long have you been a member of the Detective Club?

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) 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.

If you are innocent, say: I know, I'm still pinching myself! I was just honest about how much I admired his work, and the influence he's had on me. I first read his books when I was a teenager and they really imprinted on me what a perfect crime novel should look like. I was bowled over when he agreed to read *The Unreliable Narrator's Child*.

If you are the murderer, say: I know, I'm still pinching myself! I told him about my mother, who was his biggest fan, and introduced me to his work as a child, and the influence that he'd had on me growing up. And I enclosed a copy of *The Unreliable Narrator's Child* and explained that I thought he might find the contents interesting. I was bowled over when he responded with an invitation to Mistletoe Manor to discuss my letter in person.

- 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?

If you are innocent, say: I don't know what to tell you. The train arrived late and anyone who says otherwise is either lying or mistaken. If you don't believe me, you can telephone the station – they'll be able to confirm the delay and tell you what time the train really got in.

If you are the murderer, say: What you trying to suggest – that I raced up here, entered by a back door and spent the spare ten minutes killing a man I had never met, a man whose death could only disadvantage me? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

3) What is your novel about?

Answer: It's about a hugely respected writer who is killed at a convention – after which it comes out that his whole life was a lie. The detective turns out to be the writer's illegitimate child, abandoned years before. Sorry, that's a bit of a spoiler!

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:
If you are innocent:

Well! I am lost for words – and coming from an up-and-coming novelist like me, that's quite something.

No, I didn't kill Aubrey. In fact, I admired him hugely and was hoping he would be my mentor! As for your insinuations that it's suspicious he gave membership of the Detective Club after just one letter, all I can say is you have a twisted mind. Read *The Unreliable Narrator's Child* for yourself and decide if the quality of my work justifies Aubrey's confidence in me!

If you are the murderer:

Yes, I killed Aubrey. Or should I say – my *father*. No one bothered to ask what the A stands for in my name but no doubt it'll come out now, so I'll tell you: it's Aubrey. Yes, I was named after the man who seduced my mother at a writers' conference and then left her to bring up his child alone.

I idolised Aubrey as a child – read all his books, pored over every piece about him in the newspaper, and cherished an ambition to be a famous writer like him when I grew up. But as I got older I began to see what had really happened between him and my mother – and the way he had left her to struggle financially for years, while he lived in the lap of luxury at Mistletan Manor.

I couldn't accuse him publicly – it would have destroyed my mother. So I did it in my first novel instead, and publication of *The Unreliable Narrator's Child* gave me exactly the chance I'd been waiting for. I sent it to Aubrey with a thinly veiled note suggesting he might wish to see me as soon as possible, or face the consequences. Unsurprisingly, he invited me down to Mistletan straight away. I suppose he thought the Detective Club meeting would give him some sort of alibi, prevent people from talking about why he was inviting this up-and-coming young writer to his home. And maybe he thought I wouldn't confront him in front of strangers. But I wanted to talk to him face-to-face, and so I slipped up the back stairs on arrival, determined to have it out one-to-one.

I wanted him to apologise for what he'd done, to me and to my mother. But he didn't. Instead he laughed – called my mother a 'naive groupie'. I lost my temper and I snatched up the first thing that came to hand – a letter opener lying on the desk. I didn't intend to kill him, but I'm glad I did. Glad, I tell you!