

DR ROWAN MCTAGGART

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 eminent, grizzled Dr Rowan McTaggart, medical examiner, and author of a series of wildly popular true crime non-fiction bestsellers, entitled *The Truth About ...* Each one covers a famous cold case and uses your medical expertise to sift through the reported facts and challenge received wisdom to find out the truth. You have made many enemies with your fearless pursuit of the truth ... is it possible Aubrey St Clair was one of them? He was certainly asking some very odd questions last time you met ...

INTRODUCTION

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

Good evening, everyone, Dr Rowan McTaggart here, part-time author, part-time medical examiner, full-time seeker after truth. I feel like a bit of a fish out of water among all you novelists – as a non-fiction writer, my trade is in facts rather than fiction, sifting through famous cold cases to find the nuggets of truth among the myths and misconceptions. Perhaps you've read my bestselling debut, *The Truth About Jack the Ripper* – *The Times* said it 'ripped apart received wisdom with panache', and the *Cold Case Weekly* called it 'essential reading for any armchair sleuth', though I'd hesitate to describe it that way myself, I'm not one to blow my own trumpet.

CHAPTER 1 REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

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

Good God – Aubrey, murdered in cold blood? What a terrible thing to happen. And what a crying shame that he wasn't discovered in time for me to give him first aid – as a qualified medical examiner I could no doubt have helped, but it sounds like it's too late for that now.

It's for the police surgeon to determine time of death and all that, my professional ethics won't let me interfere in that respect, but since you're all being so transparent, I don't mind telling you that I came down by the London train and arrived at the house at about twenty past six. The train was late, or I would have been here earlier. As it was, I was one of the last to arrive.

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 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 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 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?

If you are innocent, say: Be reasonable, now, I'm a suspect in a murder inquiry – it would be absolute foolishness for me to do anything to disturb the murder scene or tamper with the corpse. If Clara had been less definite about Aubrey's death then, believe me, I would have been up there like a shot trying CPR. But she was very clear that he was dead, and in that scenario, I don't think there was anything I could do, apart from muddy the evidence.

If you are guilty, say: Good God, what are you trying to imply – that I'm not a real doctor? I'll have you know I graduated summa cum laude from my class at Edinburgh University. Or are you saying something else – that I *wanted* Aubrey to die? Either way, I find your words damned offensive. You'd do well to remember that slander is still a crime in this country, and that my reputation is my livelihood.

- 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?

If you are innocent, say: Look, the train was late – you can call down to the station if you don't believe me. It's true I was one of the last to arrive, and in fact I particularly dislike being late so I wasted time trying to get a taxi at the station. But I hadn't

taken into account the fact that this is the country we're talking about. No taxis for love nor money, so I had a sweaty walk up the hill, and damn glad I was of Stebbings' whiskey when I got here.

If you are the murderer, say: Maybe they're the ones who're lying now, did you ever think of that? If you imagine I hung back so I could slip in the back way and kill Aubrey, you've another think coming.

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

Answer: I know the letter opener Clara was describing, and in my opinion no, it would not. It was extremely sharp and very long. Thrust up below the ribs into the carotid artery, or from behind into a kidney – well, it wouldn't take much force, and if you hit an artery, poor Aubrey would have been dead within minutes. If you're asking whether a woman or someone frail could accomplish it, I should say that anyone here could be the killer.

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:

Murderer, you say? What absolute nonsense. I never touched a hair of Aubrey's head.

Yes, it's true I'm not a qualified medical doctor. I suppose that silly slip with the carotid artery alerted you, I knew as soon as I'd said it that wasn't right. As a matter of fact I'm a doctor of criminology, with a PhD from Exeter University. Not quite what the press are looking for when they get you in to comment on cold cases.

But glossing over your qualifications is a pretty thin motive for murder, and I certainly didn't stab poor Aubrey. No, you'll need to look elsewhere for your murderer, I'm afraid!

If you are the murderer:

Damn you, yes, I killed Aubrey and I'm not sorry. What gave me away? Was it that stupid slip about the carotid artery? I knew as soon as I'd said it that wasn't right.

Either way, I suppose you've guessed that I'm not a trained medical examiner. The truth is I have a PhD in pet care from an online university. But if people make assumptions based on that fact, that's hardly my fault. Failing to correct people is not yet a criminal offence.

I don't know how Aubrey found out – I suppose I must have made some medical gaffe in front of him and he got suspicious. Whichever it was, he started to grill me about my qualifications when we met in London, and I only just managed to get away. So when my train got into Mistletoe, I hung back, and made my way up to the manor by a different route, climbed up the ivy to Aubrey's bedroom, and confronted him in his study.

I told him, I'd be happy to give him a puff, dedicate my next book to him – anything he wanted. But no, he got on his high horse and started lecturing me about my professional responsibilities. He said if I didn't come clean, he'd be writing to my publisher in the morning!

Well, I couldn't have that. I have a professional reputation to maintain – and a TV deal in the works. Any hint of impropriety would send all that up in smoke.

No, I had to shut him up, and fast – so I did, and I don't regret it for a second. He brought it on himself.