US LETTER · 8.5 × 11 in

A FREE MINI MURDER MYSTERY

Death at Wren Cottage

Four suspects, one brandy glass and three unguarded minutes. Who poisoned Cecil Pryce?

1. **Pick your suspect** — each player takes one character page and keeps it secret.
2. **Play two rounds** — read the clues aloud, round by round, and question each other.
3. **Accuse** — everyone names the poisoner at once, then turn to the solution.

4 PLAYERS · 20-30 MIN · AGES 14+ · NO HOST NEEDED

Yours free from Gather Round Games

How to play — *no host needed*

1. **Take a character.** Each player takes one of the four character pages and reads it alone. Never show it to anyone.
2. **Read the story.** One player reads the story aloud. Then go round the table and introduce yourselves in character.
3. **Round one.** Read clues 1 to 3 aloud. Talk for about five minutes. Ask anyone anything; answer in character.
4. **Round two.** Read clues 4 to 6 aloud and talk again.
5. **Accuse.** On the count of three, everyone points at the poisoner. Then read the solution.

If you are innocent, tell the truth about your evening. You may keep your secret to yourself, but if someone asks you about it directly, do not lie. The poisoner may lie about anything.

The story — *read aloud*

Wren Cottage, Little Ashby. A wet October night in 1952.

For thirty years Cecil Pryce, retired dealer in antiques, has kept the same habit. At nine o'clock he pours himself a brandy. At half past nine, with the crossword, he drinks it.

Tonight the storm has kept four people under his roof: his niece Hazel; his housekeeper of twenty years, Margaret Lowe; Dr Laurence Penrose, who called to listen to Cecil's heart; and Lionel Hartley, a rival dealer who came about a clock.

At twenty to ten Margaret carried in a pot of tea and found Cecil slumped over his crossword. The doctor was fetched back through the rain, but there was nothing to be done. The brandy glass on the desk smelled faintly bitter.

One of you put something in it.

CHARACTER 1 OF 4 · KEEP THIS PAGE SECRET

Hazel Pryce

Cecil's niece

READ THIS ALOUD WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Cecil's niece and only family. You came to live at Wren Cottage in the spring. You are wearing a pale blue wool cardigan.

YOUR EVENING

- You came in out of the rain at 8:30.
- At 8:50 you went upstairs to freshen up. Margaret saw you go up from the hall.
- Then you went to the kitchen to make cocoa for everyone.

THE TRUTH — ONLY YOU KNOW THIS

You poisoned your uncle. You owe the bank £400 by Friday, he refused to help, and the cottage comes to you. At 8:50 you took two sachets of his Somnol sleeping powder from the bathroom cabinet. At 9:18 you heard his voice out on the front porch, left the milk, slipped through the dining room into the study and stirred the powder into his brandy. You waited in the dark dining room until the hall was quiet. When you got back to the kitchen the milk had boiled over and burnt, and coal dust on the floor told you Margaret had come in while you were gone.

Say you were in the kitchen watching the milk the whole time. You may lie about anything. Point the others at the doctor's bag, at Margaret's dismissal, at Lionel's quarrel.

YOUR NOTES — WHO DO YOU SUSPECT, AND WHY?

CHARACTER 2 OF 4 · KEEP THIS PAGE SECRET

Dr Laurence Penrose

the village doctor

READ THIS ALOUD WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF

The village doctor. You called at five past nine to listen to Cecil's heart. You are carrying your black medical bag.

YOUR EVENING

- Margaret let you in at 9:05 and you went straight to the study. You never went upstairs.
- You examined Cecil from 9:05 to 9:15. His heart was sound.
- At 9:18 Cecil walked you to the front door. You stood on the porch talking about the river and the bridge for about three minutes.
- Through the open door you could see Lionel Hartley on the hall bench the whole time. Nobody went in or out of the study by the hall door.
- You drove off at 9:21. Your patient at Mill Farm will say you arrived at 9:35. You were fetched back at 9:45.

ALSO

Your bag holds Veronal sleeping tablets, not powder. Show it to anyone who asks.

YOUR SECRET

You owe Cecil £200, due on Friday, and you do not have it. He reminded you of it tonight.

YOUR NOTES — WHO DO YOU SUSPECT, AND WHY?

Margaret Lowe

the housekeeper

READ THIS ALOUD WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Housekeeper at Wren Cottage for twenty years. You are wearing a black dress and a white apron.

YOUR EVENING

- This morning you dusted the bathroom cabinet. Cecil's box of Somnol powders was full.
- At 8:50 you saw Hazel go upstairs from the hall. Nobody else went upstairs all evening.
- You let Lionel in at 8:55 and the doctor at 9:05.
- At 9:15 you went out across the yard to the coal cellar. The back door banged behind you in the wind.
- You came back at 9:25 with your hands black with coal. The milk had boiled over and burnt on the stove, and nobody was in the kitchen.
- At 9:40 you took Cecil a pot of tea and found him.

YOUR SECRET

You read Cecil's letters. You know he had written you a letter of dismissal, to take effect at the end of the month.

YOUR NOTES — WHO DO YOU SUSPECT, AND WHY?

Lionel Hartley

a rival antiques dealer

READ THIS ALOUD WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF

An antiques dealer from Lewes. You came to buy Cecil's longcase clock. You are wearing a damp tweed coat.

YOUR EVENING

- You arrived at 8:55. At 9:00 you and Cecil quarrelled in the study. He refused to sell, and said he would tell the dealers' guild you had sold a client a fake.
- At 9:03 you stormed out and sat on the hall bench to wait for the rain to ease. You stayed there until Cecil was found.
- At 9:15 you heard the back door bang in the wind, and again at 9:25.
- At 9:18 you watched Cecil see the doctor out onto the porch. They talked for about three minutes.
- At 9:45 you had a brandy from the decanter to steady your nerves. You feel fine.

YOUR SECRET

The clock you sold that client was a fake.

YOUR NOTES — WHO DO YOU SUSPECT, AND WHY?

The clues — *read one round at a time*

Round one

1. **The doctor’s finding**
   Cecil died of an overdose of Somnol sleeping powder, dissolved in his brandy glass. The decanter is clean: Lionel drank from it at 9:45 and is well. Cecil drank the brandy at about 9:30.

2. **The wastepaper basket**
   A torn paper sachet printed SOMNOL — FOR C. PRYCE ONLY. It came from Cecil’s own box in the bathroom upstairs.

3. **The porch**
   From 9:18 to 9:21 Cecil stood on the front porch seeing the doctor off. These were the only minutes the glass was left alone, and the study’s hall door was in plain view of the porch the whole time.

Round two

4. **The other door**
   The study has a second door, into the dining room. The dining room’s own door to the hall has been locked since the key was lost last winter. The only way into the dining room is through the kitchen.

5. **The bathroom cabinet**
   Cecil’s box of Somnol was full this morning. Two sachets are missing. Only one person went upstairs this evening.

6. **The door handle**
   The white china handle on the dining-room side of the study door is perfectly clean, without a trace of coal dust. Caught on its edge is a single strand of pale blue wool.

DO NOT READ UNTIL EVERYONE HAS ACCUSED

The solution

Hazel Pryce poisoned her uncle.

HOW SHE DID IT

At 8:50 she went upstairs and took two sachets of Somnol from Cecil's cabinet. At 9:18, when Cecil stepped out onto the porch, she left the milk on the stove, went through the dining room into the study and stirred the powder into the brandy. The milk boiled over while she was gone, and her blue cardigan caught on the clean white handle.

WHY IT WAS NOT THE OTHERS

- **Dr Penrose** never went upstairs, and the powder came from Cecil's own box. During the only unguarded minutes he was on the porch with Cecil.
- **Lionel Hartley** sat on the hall bench the whole time, in plain view of the porch, and the hall door was never used.
- **Margaret Lowe** was carrying coal from 9:15. Any handle she touched would be black, and the study handle is clean.

IF TONIGHT WENT WELL

There is a lot more of this

Everything you just played is a taste of a full game. Here is what the complete versions hold.

A full murder mystery	**4-20 players, 90-120 minutes**
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