



HEMLOCK PARLOR · FREE PRINTABLE

Murder at Winterbourne's Toys

A murder mystery party for 6 players. About 90 minutes. For adults and teens.

What's in this file

1. How to host it, and what to read aloud (pages 2 to 3)
2. Six invitations to cut out and hand out or photograph and text (pages 4 to 5)
3. Six character sheets, one per guest (pages 6 to 11)
4. Three clue cards to cut out (page 12)
5. Accusation slips and the solution, for the host only (page 13)

Written with AI and checked by hand: the three clues point to exactly one guest, and no clue contradicts another. Made with AI. Hatchery Lake Studio.

Free to print for your own party. Please don't resell it.

FOR THE HOST

How to host it

A week before

1. Give each guest a character. Any guest can play any role; every name works for anyone.
2. Send each guest their invitation (pages 4 to 5). Keep the character sheets until the party.
3. Print the clue cards and cut them apart. Fold the last page and keep it closed.

CHARACTER	WHO THEY ARE	COSTUME IDEA
Holly Winterbourne	Rudy's niece, who keeps the shop's books	A cozy cardigan, reading glasses on a chain and a charm bracelet
Nick Carroll	the shop's toy demonstrator for twenty years	A bright vest or a bow tie, a yo-yo and a jolly laugh
Noel Ashby	the baker who made the anniversary cake	An apron with a dusting of flour, and a plate of cookies
Ivy Pembroke	the owner of the rival toy shop across the street	A sharp coat, a scarf and a phone always in hand
Robin Calloway	Rudy's oldest friend and the local paper's columnist	A tweed jacket, a notebook and a pencil behind one ear
Jules Marlowe	the shop's window dresser for twelve years	Paint-flecked overalls or an artist's smock, and a lanyard

On the night

1. **Welcome (10 minutes).** Hand each guest their sheet. Ask them to read only their own.
2. **The setting.** Read the opening below aloud.
3. **Round 1 (20 minutes).** Everyone mingles in character and shares their Round 1 facts.
4. **The body.** Read the discovery aloud, then put out Clue 1.
5. **Round 2 (20 minutes).** Secrets can now come out when asked. Put out Clue 2 halfway through.
6. **Clue 3, then accuse (10 minutes).** Put out Clue 3. Each guest writes a name on a slip.
7. **The reveal.** Read the solution aloud. The murderer may confess first, for drama.

You can play too: the host can take any role and still run the night, since the solution page stays folded until the end.

FOR THE HOST

Read these aloud

AT THE START: THE OPENING

It is a Saturday night on Main Street. Rudy Winterbourne, who has run Winterbourne's Toys for forty years, closes the shop at seven and throws its fortieth-anniversary party for staff, neighbors and old friends: punch, a cake shaped like a toy train, a photo booth by the front window and a model train running through the window display. Just after nine, Rudy slips into the stockroom to fetch "the big surprise." He never comes back.

READ ALOUD AFTER ROUND 1: THE DISCOVERY

At 9:30, Holly goes to the stockroom for more ribbon. The door is locked. Holly opens it with a key and finds Rudy on the floor, struck down with the heavy brass-based snow globe that always sits on the stockroom shelf. Rudy's wristwatch cracked in the fall and stopped at 9:10, the moment several of you remember hearing a crash over the music. Nobody has left the shop since. One of you did this.

BEFORE THE REVEAL

Every slip is in. Before I open the solution: does the murderer wish to confess?

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Holly Winterbourne

Rudy's niece and bookkeeper. Holly knows where every penny in the shop goes. Or almost every penny.

Wear: A cozy cardigan, reading glasses on a chain and a charm bracelet.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Nick Carroll

Winterbourne's toy demonstrator for twenty years. Nick knows every child on Main Street by name, and every toy in the stockroom by price.

Wear: A bright vest or a bow tie, a yo-yo and a jolly laugh.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Noel Ashby

The baker next door, who made tonight's toy-train cake. Noel's cookies are sweet. Noel's temper, less so.

Wear: An apron with a dusting of flour, and a plate of cookies.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Ivy Pembroke

Owner of the shiny new toy store across the street. Ivy has wanted Winterbourne's building for years, and Ivy usually gets what Ivy wants.

Wear: A sharp coat, a scarf and a phone always in hand.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Robin Calloway

Rudy's oldest friend and the Main Street Gazette's columnist. Robin writes about everyone in town, and not always kindly.

Wear: A tweed jacket, a notebook and a pencil behind one ear.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

YOU'RE INVITED · ANNIVERSARY NIGHT AT WINTERBOURNE'S TOYS

You are Jules Marlowe

Winterbourne's window dresser for twelve years. Jules's windows stop traffic on Main Street every season.

Wear: Paint-flecked overalls or an artist's smock, and a lanyard.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Holly Winterbourne

Rudy's niece and bookkeeper. Holly knows where every penny in the shop goes. Or almost every penny.

Round 1: what you know and say

- You saw Uncle Rudy head down the back hall toward the stockroom at about 9:00, saying he was fetching "the big surprise."
- Only three keys open the stockroom: Rudy's, yours (on the charm bracelet you never take off) and the one on Jules's lanyard, because Jules keeps the window props in there.
- From about 9:05 you were in the photo booth with Nick and Noel, wearing paper party crowns. Say so if anyone asks where you were.

Your secret

Last month you borrowed \$2,000 from the till to cover a car repair and meant to pay it back next month. Rudy found the gap in the books this afternoon and told you "we'll talk after the party." Keep this quiet in Round 1. In Round 2, if anyone asks about money or the books, admit it.

Your goal

Find out who killed your uncle, and keep the \$2,000 out of it as long as you can.

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Nick Carroll

Winterbourne's toy demonstrator for twenty years. Nick knows every child on Main Street by name, and every toy in the stockroom by price.

Round 1: what you know and say

- At about 9:05 you saw Ivy step out the front door onto the sidewalk with a phone to one ear.
- From about 9:05 you were squeezed into the photo booth with Holly and Noel. The booth prints the time on every frame.
- Rudy seemed tense all evening and kept patting his jacket pocket, as if a letter were in it.

Your secret

For two years you have been quietly selling rare old toys from the stockroom online and keeping the money. Rudy never noticed, as far as you know. Keep this quiet in Round 1. In Round 2, if anyone asks about the stockroom or missing stock, admit it.

Your goal

Find the killer before anyone starts counting the stockroom shelves.

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Noel Ashby

The baker next door, who made tonight's toy-train cake. Noel's cookies are sweet. Noel's temper, less so.

Round 1: what you know and say

- At 8:45 you argued with Rudy in the back hall: the shop has owed you \$800 for cakes and cookies since spring. Rudy waved it away and said, "After tonight, I'm making some changes around here."
- From about 9:05 you were in the photo booth with Holly and Nick, and you remember the model train running through the front window behind you with nobody tending it.

Your secret

You told the argument's story kindly. In truth you shouted that Rudy would "regret it," and Robin may have heard you. In Round 2, if anyone asks about the argument, admit you shouted.

Your goal

Clear your name. A shouting match is not a murder.

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Ivy Pembroke

Owner of the shiny new toy store across the street. Ivy has wanted Winterbourne's building for years, and Ivy usually gets what Ivy wants.

Round 1: what you know and say

- Tonight you offered, again, to buy Rudy's building. Rudy laughed and said no.
- At about 9:05 you stepped out onto the sidewalk to take a call and stayed out until 9:15. You can't prove it.
- Standing outside, you looked straight at the front window display: the model train was running, and nobody was in the window. Say so if anyone asks.

Your secret

The call was your banker: your own store is losing money, and buying Winterbourne's was your plan to save it. In Round 2, if anyone asks why you want the building so badly, admit it.

Your goal

Prove you were outside, and keep your money troubles to yourself as long as you can.

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Robin Calloway

Rudy's oldest friend and the Main Street Gazette's columnist. Robin writes about everyone in town, and not always kindly.

Round 1: what you know and say

- At 9:10 you were in the restroom at the end of the back hall, next to the stockroom. You heard a crash, then a key turning, then quick footsteps going toward the front of the shop.
- Earlier, at 8:45, you heard Noel and Rudy arguing in the back hall.
- You do not have a key to the stockroom and never have.

Your secret

Last week's column called Winterbourne's "a dusty relic," and Rudy hasn't spoken to you since. You came tonight to make peace. In Round 2, if anyone asks about the column, admit you wrote it and regret it.

Your goal

Find out who walked past the restroom door at 9:10.

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Jules Marlowe

Winterbourne's window dresser for twelve years. Jules's windows stop traffic on Main Street every season.

Round 1: what you know and say

- Say that you spent the whole evening in the front window display, fixing the model train and touching up the silver-glitter stars.
- Say that you were in the window at 9:10 and saw nothing.
- If anyone asks, admit you have a stockroom key on your lanyard: the window props live in there.

Your secret

You are the murderer. At about 9:00 you found a letter in Rudy's jacket: after twelve years, Rudy was giving the windows to a design agency next month. You followed Rudy into the stockroom, argued, and in a rage struck Rudy with the snow globe. You locked the door with your key and slipped back to the party. You may lie about anything except the facts on the clue cards. Never admit the crime unless someone accuses you with all three clues.

Your goal

Don't get caught. Point suspicion at Ivy, who has no alibi, or at Noel, who argued with Rudy.

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CLUE 1 OF 3

The stockroom door

The stockroom door locks from the outside only with a key. Three keys exist. Rudy's key was still in Rudy's pocket, inside the locked room, so it did not lock the door. The other two belong to Holly (on the charm bracelet Holly wore all night) and Jules (on Jules's lanyard). Whoever left the stockroom at 9:10 and locked it was Holly or Jules.

CLUE 2 OF 3

The photo booth strip

The photo booth prints the time on every frame. Two strips, one frame a minute from 9:08 to 9:12 (9:08, 9:09, 9:10, 9:11 and 9:12), all show Holly, Nick and Noel in party crowns, Holly's charm bracelet plainly on Holly's wrist. Behind them, through the booth's open curtain, the front window display is empty in every frame: the train is running, and no one is in the window.

CLUE 3 OF 3

Silver glitter

The snow globe's brass base carries fresh silver glitter. The only silver glitter in the shop is on the stars in the front window display, and the only person who worked in the window tonight was Jules. In Rudy's jacket pocket is a folded letter: "Dear Jules, after twelve years, I've decided the windows will go to a design agency from next month."

ACCUSATION SLIPS

I accuse: _____ Because: _____

I accuse: _____ Because: _____

I accuse: _____ Because: _____

Fold here. Host only: keep this half closed until every slip is in.

THE SOLUTION

Jules Marlowe killed Rudy Winterbourne.

Motive: at about 9:00 Jules found the letter in Rudy's jacket. After twelve years, the windows were going to an agency. Jules followed Rudy to the stockroom, they argued, and Jules struck Rudy with the snow globe at 9:10, cracking Rudy's watch.

Clue 1 (the door): only Holly's or Jules's key could have locked the stockroom from outside.

Clue 2 (the photo booth): Holly was in the photo booth from 9:08 to 9:12, key on Holly's wrist, so it was not Holly. The same frames show the window empty, so Jules's story of being in the window at 9:10 is false. Ivy, outside on the sidewalk, saw the empty window too.

Clue 3 (the glitter): the silver glitter on the snow globe comes from the window display, where only Jules worked tonight. Robin heard the key turn and the footsteps head for the front: Jules, returning to the window.

The red herrings: Holly's borrowed \$2,000, Nick's stockroom sales, Noel's unpaid bill, Ivy's money troubles and Robin's column. Each gave a motive; none had both a key and the time.