

**black  
party**



# **RIP SHERLOCK**

**Instructions**

# black party

In this game, players assume the roles of characters embroiled in a spectacular murder mystery. One of you is the murderer. But you all have your own dark secrets—along with an additional special task that only you are aware of.

Decide as a group who you think the murderer is, then learn whether your suspicions were correct. It's all about cleverly extricating yourselves from the whole affair. Because what's the point in being innocent if all the others think you're guilty?

In addition to solving the case, Oscars are awarded for the most convincing performance, tallest tale, and wickedest deed at the end of the game.

You only need this box and your imagination for this game. *Now, let's get started!*



## Contents:

- 1 set of instructions (*for the host*)
- 7 character booklets (*with character descriptions and hidden clues*)
- 7 place cards (*bearing the characters' names*)
- 1 small envelope (*for playing with six people*)
- 3 large envelopes (*with hidden police clues and the solution*)

# IT'S TEA TIME



**Congratulations on your decision to throw a murderous black party!**

As the game's host, you will assume the role of Queen Victoria—regardless of your gender.

**Number of players:** The game is designed to be played with seven people (including yourself), but can also be played with one fewer. If there are only six of you, look in the small envelope marked with »6 players« to see which role should be omitted.



**IMPORTANT:** Do not open the envelope until it is clear how many players there will be, else you will already know who definitely isn't the murderer. The character not involved in the game cannot be the murderer and can therefore be ignored.



## ATTENTION!

These instructions are only for the eyes of the black party host.

# THE STORY

It's a sad day at 221B Baker Street. But can it really be true? Last night, the world-famous detective Sherlock Holmes was strangled in a cab on the way home from his favorite opium den. Why? Because he finally worked out the true identity of the mysterious criminal mastermind Moriarty. He must be the murderer, of course. But who is Moriarty?

Sherlock Holmes appears to have foreseen his demise: shortly before, he asked Her Royal Highness Queen Victoria to invite selected individuals to tea at Buckingham Palace. One of those present is Moriarty. Your task is to unmask the murderer, who has assumed a false identity.

Moriarty can of course also be a woman. And wouldn't it be a twist entirely in the spirit of Sherlock Holmes if the Queen of the British Empire and his opponent Moriarty were one and the same person?! So the hostess herself is also under suspicion.



**A quick side note for all Holmesians:**

We ask that all connoisseurs of and experts on the work of Arthur Conan Doyle ignore all that they know (at least in part) for the duration of this game. This black party can only work if there are certain artistic deviations from the Sherlock Holmes canon. While the characters present remain true to his work, their actions and biographies do not necessarily. But let's not waste another word on this, for like Sherlock once said »I am afraid that I rather give myself away when I explain.«



# THE GAME

As the host, you are responsible for preparing the black party—and thus also for directing and allocating the roles.

Ideally, begin preparing a few days in advance. An impromptu black party is of course also possible if you are all together and suddenly feel like a murder mystery evening.

**Either way**, you should first read the character descriptions on the following pages and decide who will assume which role. As the host, you are Queen Victoria.



**IMPORTANT:** Only open the character book for your role:

**QUEEN VICTORIA.** Do not open any of the others! The information in each of the character booklets is intended exclusively for the person playing the character.

**Impromptu play:** Allocate the roles and ask each player to take themselves off with their character booklet and read through the first section in peace (up until the first sealed section entitled »**What happened previously**«). There's sure to be something in your wardrobe suitable for a British afternoon tea.

# THE HOSTESS

## Queen Victoria

Her Royal Highness

The Queen herself? What on earth did she have to do with Sherlock? Quite a lot, obviously—after all, she invites everyone to tea at Sherlock's request the very day after the murder. But what if the Queen were also the criminal mastermind Moriarty? That would of course explain the meteoric rise of the British Empire in the Victorian era and show the historiography in a whole new light ...



# THE WATSONS

## Dr John Watson

### The Assistant

Whatever would Sherlock Holmes have been without Dr. Watson? And what will Watson be now without Sherlock? The doctor, lodger, and magnanimous tolerator of all of the genius detective's moods is thunderstruck when he learns of Sherlock's death. Watson would like to just drown all his sorrows in whisky. But he has a job to do: he must unmask his revered friend's murderer. Or is he perhaps the one behind the murder?



## Mary Watson

### The Wife

Mary Watson, née Morstan, hails from a distinguished family. Her father led a regiment in India and disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Before she wed Watson, Mary worked as a governess. But is Mary Watson even Mary Morstan? Or is she perhaps actually Mary Moriarty? Now wouldn't that be the perfect way to get close to Sherlock? By marrying his rather sentimental assistant?

# FURTHER ROLES

## Mrs Hudson

### The Housekeeper

Despite his many years at 221B Baker Street, Sherlock never fully understood his landlady, Mrs Hudson. For a Scotswoman, she's a good cook—but is she really Scottish? In any case, this resolute woman put up with her eccentric lodger for many years. No one knew Sherlock better than Mrs Hudson, except perhaps Watson. What a brilliant move it would be on Moriarty's part to pose as Sherlock's landlady ...



## Porky Johnson

### The Hired Muscle

A reformed criminal, Shinwell »Porky« Johnson worked for Sherlock as an informant and 'assisted' during unofficial interrogations requiring a little extra muscle—always very hush-hush, mind you, so that the police would not catch wind of it. Porky is rather a simpleton and somewhat naive. Or is it all just a façade for the greatest criminal mastermind of the century: Moriarty?



## Irene Adler

### The Agent

A singer, actress, and lover of the King of Bohemia. But above all, an agent with a razor-sharp mind. She's the only one to have ever managed to outwit Sherlock on numerous occasions. No wonder Sherlock immediately fell for her—though he would deny this again today if he could. He described her face as one a man »might die for«. So maybe he did? Is Moriarty just one of Irene Adler's elaborate identities? Or is it perhaps the other way around?



## Mycroft Holmes

### The Brother

Who could possibly hold a candle to a Holmes? Why, another Holmes of course! Seven years Sherlock's senior, Mycroft's intellect is perhaps even sharper than the detective's. However, Mycroft abhors exercise. The daily stroll from the office to the Diogenes Club is enough for him. Mycroft works as a consultant to the British government. Word has it that Mycroft is the British government though. What if Sherlock's own brother has been the mysterious Moriarty all along?



# ROLE ALLOCATION

Allocate the roles as you wish—either according to your guests' characters or entirely unconventionally.

Women can play male characters—and vice versa. It's entirely up to you. While beginners will probably find it easier to play a character that is closer to their own, advanced players may enjoy the challenge of assuming a completely different role.

Once you have allocated the roles, give each player their character booklet and ask them to read through all of the pages up until the first sealed section entitled »**What happened previously**«. The information in each of the character booklets is only intended for the person playing the character.

**Please ask your fellow players to arrive in good time for the start of the game** as you can only begin when everyone has assembled.

**Optional:** Players can think up a disguise for their character. The most minor of accessories—a fake mustache, tweed jacket, or similar—can already have an astounding effect. As the host, you can also supply some accessories should you wish.



# THE SETTING



We're gathering for a very British afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace. As the host, you are in charge of setting the scene.

**The decor:** Anything regal and quintessentially British! Porcelain figurines, crocheted doilies, teacups with a gold rim, antique grandfather clocks—the possibilities are endless.

**The music:** Anything from music by the acclaimed British composer Sir Edward Elgar to soundtracks from thrillers and murder mystery films would be appropriate. It's important for the music not to disturb or influence the entertainment though.

**Food and drink:** This could be very British, too: a pot of tea (preferably served with a dash of milk), cheese and cucumber sandwiches (apparently the Queen's favorite!), shortbread, and salt and vinegar or prawn cocktail crisps, not to forget the mint chocolates. If you're preparing a full meal, how about roast lamb with mint sauce or a selection of pies? Alcoholic beverages could include sherry, port, a German white wine (the English love that!), and beer (preferably a stout or bitter).

# HOW TO PLAY

As the host, you will guide the players through the evening. This fits with your role: Sherlock himself asked you to invite selected individuals to Buckingham Palace for afternoon tea.

The game comprises three rounds. During the first round, each of the players explains what they were doing before the murder took place. In the second, rumors and gossip are exchanged. In the third, each of the players has a final opportunity to defend themselves before an accusation is made.



## The conversations:

The game is most fun when the conversation at the table flows freely. **There are no rules about who has to say something when.** Encourage quieter players to join in the conversation—by asking uncomfortable questions, for example.

This game is about not establishing the technical background to a crime like in CSI. Rather, the focus is far more on the psychological elements—these are infinitely more entertaining! Which of the people sitting round the table has the strongest motive? Who is lying? And who is concealing a truth that could get them into hot water? Only those who manage to convince the others of their innocence will survive the evening.



# LET'S GET STARTED!

Once the game starts, all players should remain in character: they should also address each other with their character's name, and act and speak like their character. If the game is paused, you must announce this as the host. Try to remain in character whenever possible.

**IMPORTANT:** The other players must be aware that, as the host, you are also still one of the players. You know as much—or as little—about the crime as the others, could be the murderer yourself, will share your suspicions, and must also defend your actions.

## **When all of the players are seated:**

**Read the story out loud** – just to refresh your memories. It is also printed in the character booklets for all of the players.

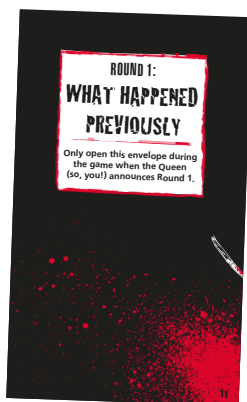
**Everyone should then introduce themselves.** This is the first opportunity for the players to show themselves in the best possible light.

**Remind your fellow players that they may conceal facts, but mustn't lie—except if they are the murderer.** In which case they may lie through their teeth. You announce that the game has now begun and ask that everyone remains in character from now on.

# ROUND 1

## What happened previously:

Ask all of the players to explain what they were doing before the murder occurred. Everyone should open the sealed section in their character booklet entitled »What happened previously« and quietly read through it for themselves.



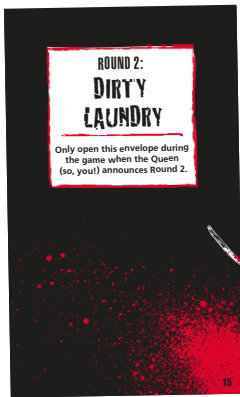
Decide who should report first. Contest their story and encourage the others to do the same. This should not simply be a question and answer session, but rather a lively and entertaining exchange. Have the courage to make grand gestures. We are at Buckingham Palace after all!

## Scotland Yard Report 1:

If you feel that the conversation is starting to wane or going in circles, open the sealed envelope marked with »Scotland Yard Report 1«. Read the information from the police headquarters leaked by Inspector Lestrade. This should inject new life into the conversation.

When everything has been said about "What happened previously" or the conversation has dried up, open the envelope for **Round 2**. If desired, you could take a short break beforehand.





# ROUND 2

## Dirty laundry:

Ask all of the players to share what they know about the other characters. Everyone should open the sealed section entitled »**Dirty laundry**« in their booklet and quietly reads through it for themselves first. In this round, each player can pull out all the stops to publicly air their fellow players' dirty laundry. And things can get pretty heated, too. This is where the suspicions of those present will be corroborated.

## Scotland Yard Report 2:

If you feel that the conversation is starting to die out or going in circles, open the sealed envelope marked with »**Scotland Yard Report 2**« and read what new information has been leaked by Inspector Lestrade to give the conversation a boost.

When you think that everything has been said or that the conversation has waned, start the **Accusation round**.

There is time for another break beforehand.



# ACCUSATION

It's time to get down to the nitty-gritty. The players take it in turns to make one last plea and attempt to cleverly extricate themselves from the whole affair. Questions are more than welcome at any time. The suspects should really be put through the wringer! Once the final plea has been heard, count to three:

**One ... two ... three!**

On »three!« all of the players should simultaneously point to the person they think is Moriarty.



## The solution:

Open the sealed envelope containing the **solution** and read it out loud. Now you will learn whether your suspicions were correct.

It remains to be seen if Scotland Yard will ever find out who the murderer is.

Players can contribute further details, such as secrets they successfully concealed or false leads they gave to throw their fellow players off their scent.

**See you at the next black party!**

# THE OSCARS

Once the murderer has been revealed, the »Oscars« can be awarded for the following categories:

## **Additional task:**

Who solved their additional special task most effectively?

## **Best performance:**

Who gave the most convincing performance in their role?

## **Best costume:**

Who had the most creative costume?

## **Best sleuth:**

Who had the best sleuthing skills?

## **Best baddie:**

Who was the meanest and most scheming?

You can think up other categories as desired—as well as how best to actually award the Oscars. Now, isn't it about time for a gin and tonic?



# black party

