

The Night before Christmas

Introduction

It is December 24, 1948. The socialite Evington-Browne family (“E-B” to their friends) and guests are preparing for the annual Christmas Eve cocktail party, held by tradition at the family’s hunting lodge in the White Mountains north of Boston. Snow has been falling for days – a blizzard has now set in – and the party finds itself cut off from the rest of the world. This is unfortunate, as the valet of one of the guests has been found dead in the kitchen! It looks like a heart attack – but is it murder?

This year, the Evington-Browne’s Christmas Eve cocktail party has an element of added excitement, as the “Brilliant Diamonds” (Aunt Priscilla’s fabulous necklace) will be handed down to the eldest daughter, as is the family tradition. But there is also a shadow cast over the event – and not just the death of the valet. There’s an infamous society cat-burglar ‘the Puma’ in the vicinity, and several family members are acting suspiciously... Join the Evington-Browne family in their hunting lodge as the cocktail party begins and find out how the evening unfolds. Welcome to... *The Night before Christmas!*

All those invited to *The Night before Christmas* are given a character – which could be a family member, the retired family doctor, unexpected friends, the famous English detective or hired help. As they arrive they are greeted by the Waiter, and welcomed to the hunting lodge. Each character has goals and objectives that they must complete before the end of the party. However, not everyone may be as they seem and some family members are behaving out of character. Some of those attending have alternative motives to celebrating the festive season and mysterious secrets that they will do anything to prevent from being revealed.

Everyone has their own goals – and not all goals are compatible. If one person achieves their goals, another may fail! Guests can form alliances, blackmail each other, steal items and maybe even try to kill one another. Along the way they may solve some of *The Night before Christmas’s* mysteries. Who has been wearing a Santa Suit to sneak around? Who will inherit the Brilliant Diamonds? Would the infamous cat-burglar ‘the Puma’ dare to strike here? Are the Evington-Browne family in danger of losing their money, their reputation in society and their sanity? Can anyone keep control of Tracy’s pet monkey? Join us in *The Night before Christmas* and find out if the festive season will end with Good Will to All Men!

Important note: *The Night before Christmas* is an alternative version of one of our other murder mystery games, *Dazzled to Death*. The characters and the plots are the same, so if your guests have previously played *Dazzled to Death*, they’ll know the secrets of *The Night before Christmas* too! The difference is that *The Night before Christmas* is written specifically for a Christmas setting, while *Dazzled to Death* is suitable for any time of year.

You are invited to a cocktail party!

Welcome to *The Night before Christmas*

Thank you for taking the time to download this document. Most of the information you need to host *The Night before Christmas* is contained within a second file, for which you will have to pay. Before you do that, please check that your software is compatible by printing this section out.

What is in this section?

- A summary of how *The Night before Christmas* works.
- An invitation to send once you know who will be attending. (This tells your guests which character they will be playing, and includes a list of all the characters in the plot.)
- A selection of articles from the *Boston Times*, which give some background to the plot.
- An introduction to *The Night before Christmas*.
- Costume tips.
- A booking form.

What is included when you buy *The Night before Christmas*?

- Character sheets for each guest, including background, goals and objectives, special abilities and items.
- A rule sheet for your guests.
- A step-by-step guide on how to run the game.
- Handouts and other essential items.

How does *The Night before Christmas* work?

Designed for 12 to 15 people plus a host, *The Night before Christmas* lasts for three or four hours and is particularly suited to a buffet meal. One person is the Waiter, and acts as organizer and co-ordinator, responsible for making sure everything runs smoothly and that all the guests have the information they need. They also act as referee should an impartial decision be required.

The guests are all present at a cocktail party on Christmas Eve at a snowed-in hunting lodge owned by the Evington-Browne family. They have their own goals and agendas, and how they choose to achieve those goals is entirely up to them. *The Night before Christmas* is an evening of double-dealing, intrigue, blackmail and even murder!

As the evening draws to a close, mysteries surrounding the Evington-Browne family and their guests are resolved, and the game ends. Then everyone has a chance to find out what was really going on!

Who has taken part in *The Night before Christmas* before?

The Night before Christmas has been run on numerous occasions, usually with people with no previous knowledge of murder-mystery parties or events. It contains everything you need to run the game, but please don't think that you can download the game and let it run itself. The co-ordinator will obviously have to put some work in to make it a real success.

The Night before Christmas

You are cordially invited to *The Night before Christmas*, an evening of double-dealing, intrigue, blackmail, riddle-solving and murder to be held at

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on starting at

Setting

It is December 24, 1948. The socialite Evington-Browne family (“E-B” to their friends), friends, hired help and some unexpected guests are preparing for their glamorous Christmas Eve cocktail party, traditionally held at the family’s hunting lodge in the White Mountains north of Boston.

Snow has been falling for days – a blizzard has now set in – and you find that you are cut off from the rest of the world. This is unfortunate, as the valet of one of the guests has been found dead in the kitchen!

You are cordially invited to join the Evington-Browne family for an evening of glamour, festive cheer and possibly murder in *The Night before Christmas*.

Your Character

Your character, the person you will be playing, is indicated below. You will receive more background, your character’s detailed goals, simple rules and a lot more abilities and items, on the day.

The Cast

John Evington-Browne III: Respected businessman and head of the family.

Rose Evington-Browne: John’s much-loved wife.

Patrick Evington-Browne: John and Rose’s 20-year-old son.

Evie Evington-Browne: John and Rose’s 21-year-old and wilful daughter.

Tracy Evington-Browne: John and Rose’s youngest (16 years old) and mischievous daughter.

Priscilla Evington-Browne: John’s elderly and often forgetful Aunt.

Agatha Marbles: Priscilla’s elderly English friend and allegedly famed detective.

James Pemberton: Rose’s brother. Art dealer and traveller.

Charles Pemberton: James’s son, currently a student at Harvard.

Dr. Bruisyard: Retired family doctor and friend.

Miles Earnshaw: Unexpected guest, friend from Rose’s youth.

Soames: Butler/Housekeeper.

Dinah Peters: Cook (temporary stand-in for usual cook).

Reggie Haven: Young socialite friend of Evie’s.

Christy Crompton: Young fellow student friend of Patrick.

MURDER, MYSTERY AND MAYHEM GUARANTEED!

THE BOSTON TIMES

**Excerpt from
The Boston Times
November 12 1948**

'Puma' preys on Boston Society

The Puma has struck again! This time the victim was Mrs Sowersby Smalls. In spite of the tightest security arrangements at the Springfield Ball, the notorious thief walked away with a beautiful ruby necklace and earrings given to Mr Sowersby Smalls by the Maharajah of Bajput.

The burglary had all the trademarks of a Puma attack, including a feather placed carefully where the necklace had been, and a note saying "you've been plucked!"

"This guy can walk through walls!" exclaimed D.I. Sparfield of the Boston PD. "This is the tenth robbery this year – but we'll catch him."

**Excerpt from
The Boston Times
'Society Page'
December 20 1948**

No doubt the Evington-Browne family are looking forward to their traditional Christmas festivities at the family's hunting lodge in the White Mountains area. We are sure no-one can be more excited than Miss Evie Evington-Browne who achieved her 21st birthday this year.

According to family tradition, it is assumed that the beautiful and charming Miss E-B will inherit the fabulous 'Brilliant Diamonds' from her aunt, Miss Priscilla Evington-Browne on Christmas Eve. Although we are sure that she can shine no more brightly than she already does, this writer looks forward to seeing Miss E-B display the diamonds at the Harpinger Ball in January!

**Excerpt from *The Boston Times* 'Business Page'
December 22 1948**

For some investors, this will be a far from merry Yuletide. The continuing instability in the market will see many of our men of business tightening their belts and looking anxiously at the predictions of an upturn in 1949.

Television – Explosion continues

The East Coast continues to lead the way in the media phenomena that is television – of the 350,000 TV sets in operation in the USA, 75% of these are in our eastern network cities. It seems that the \$1,000,000 needed to construct and place a TV station into operation may turn out to be a sound investment in spite of initial scepticism! Sports fans may be interested to know that television rights for baseball games in New York City have been sold for \$700,000.

An Introduction to *The Night before Christmas*

Forget who, when and where you are – and join the Evington-Browne family and their guests in their hunting lodge in the White Mountains north of Boston for an evening of double-dealing, intrigue, mysterious riddles and even murder!

In *The Night before Christmas* you and the other guests will take on the roles of fifteen characters at a cocktail party to celebrate Christmas Eve. You might be one of the family yourself, maybe the head of the family or the forgetful elderly aunt. Or maybe you are one of the guests such as the retired family doctor. You will be provided with background details for your character explaining who they are and why they are at the party. You will also be given information on other players and goals for you to achieve.

How do I play?

Playing *The Night before Christmas* is a little like starring in your own movie – although how your movie ends depends entirely on you and the other guests. There is no predetermined script – how you decide to tackle your goals is entirely up to you.

The most important skill in *The Night before Christmas* is the ability to hold a conversation. You will need to talk to the other players to find out who they are and whether they will help or oppose you. Some of the characters you may know a little about already, others will be unknown to you.

Information is the key to achieving your objectives in *The Night before Christmas*, so you should aim to talk to everyone. You may need to reveal information known only to you in order to get information from another player, of course.

You will also have a number of abilities that give you an advantage against other characters in certain situations. The other players also have abilities that they may use against you!

Rules and the Waiter

The Night before Christmas has a few simple rules, but the Waiter (the host) usually oversees these. The Waiter is neutral, and is there to ensure that *The Night before Christmas* runs smoothly and that everyone has a good time. If you have any questions about *The Night before Christmas*, you should first consult the Waiter.

And Finally...

Have fun!

Playing *The Night before Christmas*

If you've not played a Freeform Games murder mystery game before, you might not be familiar with how they are played. Our murder mystery games are different from other murder mystery games – so you might want to review these guidelines first.

The Night before Christmas is completely interactive. You decide who to talk to and when. You also decide what you will tell them, and whether you tell them the truth or not. Of course, that goes for everyone else in the game as well...

In *The Night before Christmas* you will pretend to be someone else (your character) in a fictional setting (the hunting lodge in the White Mountains). You will meet and interact with other characters and everyone will be trying to achieve their own goals. We don't provide a script – it's all up to you.

Here are several tips to help you enjoy *The Night before Christmas*:

- **Three basic attributes:** Playing this game requires just three basic skills – a sense of fun, an ability to strike up a conversation with another person, and the willingness to pretend to be someone else for an evening. If you can do that, you should have no trouble!
- **Dress the part:** You will receive information, including costume tips, about your character beforehand. A good costume can help you get into the spirit of the game, and also means that you will be in lots of photographs.
- **Read your character sheet:** Your character sheet explains who you are, who you know and what your objectives are. However, your character sheet describes what your character *believes*, but that might not necessarily be true! Keep your character sheet handy as you may need to refer to it during the evening.
- **Your Goals:** Your goals describe what your character is trying to achieve during *The Night before Christmas*. You should attempt every goal – although you may not achieve them all (as other characters may oppose you).
- **Read your character sheet again:** This time, think about your goals. You should also take note of other characters - you will probably need to speak to them sooner rather than later.
- **Introduce yourself:** Once the game starts, you will need to talk to people while pretending to be your character. The easiest way is to introduce yourself to someone as your character. If you don't know anything about them you can ask who they are and why they are here. If you do know something already (from your character sheet, for example) then you can ask about that.
- **Tips for beginners:** We provide tips for people who haven't played our games before. These give you a couple of ideas of things you should do at the start of the game. The tips are optional, but they may help you get started.
- **Find your friends and enemies:** In *The Night before Christmas* some people will help you, and some will oppose you. It's important to find both – although to get your friends to help you, you may have to help them in return.
- **Ability cards:** You will have special ability cards that you can use to help achieve your goals. The cards are self-explanatory and generally have a limited number of uses. You may need to think carefully about who you want to play them on.
- **The Host:** Ideally, you shouldn't need the host (the Waiter) to achieve your goals – most can be achieved by talking and negotiating with the other characters. You should consult the Waiter if you have a question about the rules, but you certainly shouldn't ask for help in solving your goals as they are up to you!
- **Act the part:** Don't start talking about football or movies or anything else that isn't part of *The Night before Christmas*. It's more fun if everyone tries to maintain the illusion that you're all in the 1940s.
- **Read your character sheet yet again:** If you find yourself at a loose end, find a quiet place and re-read your character sheet. You may find that there's someone you haven't spoken to yet, or something you need to do.
- **Finally:** Remember that the most important thing to remember is to have a good time!

Costuming for *The Night before Christmas*

These tips are suggestions only - you should wear whatever you find comfortable. However, photographs usually come out better if you're wearing a costume! The setting is a cocktail party so any sort of glam type evening dress for men and women would be appropriate.

John Evington-Browne III: Dinner jacket.

Rose Evington-Browne: Evening dress.

Patrick Evington-Browne: Dinner jacket.

Evie Evington-Browne: Evening dress.

Tracy Evington-Browne: young girl's dress, suitable for 16-year-old.

Priscilla Evington-Browne: stately evening dress, possibly something velvet, false fur.

Agatha Marbles: Evening suit, possibly smart tweed two-piece, or velvet.

Dr Bruisyard: Dinner jacket.

James Pemberton: Dinner jacket.

Charles Pemberton: Dinner jacket.

Reggie Haven: If male, dinner jacket. If female, evening dress.

Miles Earnshaw: Dinner jacket

Dinah Peters: Fairly smart dress, with an apron around it.

Soames: Smart suit.

Christy Crompton: If male, dinner jacket. If female, evening dress.

The Waiter: apron

THANK YOU for getting this far. Now please buy the game!

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