

Future Tense

Book Week Scotland 2020
Murder Mystery



Future Tense

Welcome to Future Tense, a rather literary Murder Mystery party for Book Week Scotland 2020. Thank you for playing!

Lock the gates

A twisted tale is unfolding in the Scottish Highlands tonight. The world's bestselling author Catriona du Meurtre has been murdered hours after launching the final instalment of her acclaimed Crook Week series.

The scribe, beloved by an army of fans, didn't make it home to her Highland retreat alive following her book launch at Stirling Castle. Instead, she took ill in her Land Rover and died, clutching her stomach. The cause of death: arsenic.

We know this comes as a shock, but the killer can only be one of Catriona's close friends or associates. They were the only people who could have got close enough to poison her. So take a breath and grab a drink, because you are a suspect.

Rules of engagement

At this point, everyone is a suspect. Be cool, play by the rules and you will be fine – maybe.

- 1 Read your character description and secret information but don't read ahead! Let your host guide you through the evening.
- 2 After each scene, please don't hold back. Each suspect has secret information they have to reveal when probed. Don't be shy.
- 3 When put under pressure by your fellow guests you can be coy, but never lie.
- 4 Overacting and gesticulation are hugely encouraged.

Morven du Meurtre



Catriona's wife and muse

Thirty-something, Morven is a glamorous, well-spoken and attractive socialite.



Play her like:

Daisy Buchanan. She has a voice full of money, all the tact in the world and laughter like tinkling bells. Deliver your lines as artfully as you can, with plenty of charm. Oh, and make sure your outfit is to die for.

Others see her as:

The closed off and reserved muse of Catriona du Meurtre, and a stepmother to Catriona's grown-up son Sam only in name. She's unknowable and no one ever knows what her real intentions are. Close acquaintances may even expect them to be no good, but no one would ever question her. She seems very agitated tonight – for Morven anyway.

Costume inspiration:

Anything glamorous, elegant and expensive looking (even if it's not).

Secret information (to divulge only if asked):

Morven signed a prenuptial contract prohibiting her from receiving any money from Catriona while she was alive. That said, there is a life assurance policy which will pay out £10 million to either her or Catriona in the event of the death of the other, and Morven knew about it. It will not pay out in the event of suicide, however.

Even though Morven and Catriona have been exploring the possibility of IVF, Morven has been having an affair with Catriona's agent, Finella. She knows that Sam has never liked her.

Her ideal future:

Would be to live with her lover, Finella, looking forever young and living like a character in an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel.

The suspects

You are within the inner sanctum of bestselling author Catriona du Meurtre tonight. You can probably tell a lot about the woman from the entourage she has built up for herself over her hugely successful career.



Morven du Meurtre

Catriona's wife



Finella Bludgeon

Catriona's agent



Bruce McCroaster

Catriona's chef



Lindy Scriver

Catriona's prodigy



Sam du Meurtre

Catriona's son



Dr Justin Fayed-Sinner

Catriona's
personal doctor



Holly Netweaver

Manages several
Catriona du Meurtre fan sites



Your introduction to the group

‘What can I say, my heart is broken and it shall never heal.

My profoundly wonderful wife of six years is dead and I believe someone here murdered her. I have been in love many times but never like this. My heart will be buried with Catriona.

Will someone please bring me a vodka martini, extra dry?’

Scene 1

- Dr Fayed-Sinner:** I am so very sorry, Mrs du Meurtre. I really can't believe it but the truth is that Catriona has died. I don't know what to say.
- Morven:** How could this happen? She was absolutely fine before tonight's book launch. We were going to take a holiday . . . to . . . to . . . have a break. Whatever shall I do now?
- Lindy:** Dead?! She can't be! That doesn't make sense!
- Sam:** Mother, dead? I can't believe it! That's impossible! How on Earth could *that* have happened?
- Dr Fayed-Sinner:** It seems she has been poisoned. By arsenic of all things – like DI McNoiry in her latest book. In all my years in . . . my profession, I have never known anything like it. It appears that the poison has been ingested.
- Morven:** Where is the chef? Where is Bruce McCroaster?
- Chef:** Eh'm here, Mrs du Meurtre.
- Morven:** What did Catriona eat and drink before tonight?
- Chef:** As far as eh ken, just the usual, like. Yi ken how she is . . . eh mean, how she wiz. Fruit and cereal fir ir breakfast, nae lunch and jist a light salad wi' nae dressin' in the early evenin'. Nae alcohol, nae added salt or sugar and only wah'er ti drink. You ken tha' yirsel', Sam. You an' Lindy were in the kitchen wi iz when eh wiz feenishin' aff the ganache on they lactose-free truffles Morven likes.
- Lindy:** Yes, I remember. They looked delicious.
- Morven:** Could she have consumed anything else by mistake, Bruce?
- Chef:** Maybe she et sumhin' at the event. Na, she widna hiv did tha'. Food wiz jist a means o' stokin' the biler fir her, so ti speak, so's she'd hae the energy and concentration fir ti work. She didna care fir fine dining.
- Morven:** Okay. Thank you, Chef McCroaster. Could you please now refresh everyone's drinks and get ready to serve dinner?
- Chef:** Aye, nae problem, Mrs du Meurtre. (*Chef leaves to prepare food and drinks for everyone*)
- Finella:** Is that wise? Asking him to prepare food and drinks when Catriona has evidently been poisoned by something she has eaten?
- Morven:** Oh, don't be ridiculous. Chef Bruce adored Catriona. He'd never do anything to harm her. But did she have anything to eat or drink at the book launch?
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Sam: No.

Holly: YES! She did! (*To Morven*) You kept trying to get her to eat throughout the evening. You said she looked . . . faint.

Morven: Well she did! I thought that a quick truffle would give her the sugar hit she needed. What's wrong with that? I'd have eaten some myself if I hadn't been so busy.

Lindy: Well we only have your word for that.

Sam: Yes, we DO only have YOUR word for that. Why would you give my mother *your* special truffles, Morven? She never wanted to eat or drink anything during events! You knew that!

Morven: Settle down, Samuel! What are you saying? It was only one truffle. She had to eat something or she wouldn't have made it through the night . . . she was really quite light-headed. (*Pauses and looks around*) And when I think of it, every one of you offered her food at some point. How do I know she didn't eat anything else? It's not like I can . . . I can . . . ask her. (*To doctor*) May I see her, dear Justin?

Dr Fayed-Sinner: Yes, of course.

Morven: Did *you* give her anything?

Dr Fayed-Sinner: No, I did not, dear. As you are aware, she never took anything other than paracetamol and that only when she *absolutely* needed it. She preferred my heat and cold therapies to ease the stiffness in her fingers when she had been writing all day and to relax her shoulders and muscles after hours of working. She just needed support and comfort.

**Morven
(defensively):** I gave her that.

**Finella
(soothingly):** Indeed you did.

Sam: (*Coughs meaningfully*)

Lindy: Oh for goodness' sakes. Think of poor Sam, Morven. He is the one who has lost his mother. (*Lindy smiles at Sam and Sam gazes at her adoringly*)

Morven: You don't think she . . . I mean she wouldn't have . . . she was so happy, doing so well. You don't think she could have (*gulps*) *done something stupid?*

Dr Fayed-Sinner: Don't upset yourself. There's no way she would have taken arsenic on purpose. She was so happy – and she loved you.

Finella: Of course she did. Everyone knew that. She often spoke about how lucky she was that you had agreed to marry her.

Finella: Look, I'm just going to pop up to the office to make all the necessary phone calls. I need to handle the information spread and just check everything is okay. Oh! I've forgotten my key. Morven, may I borrow yours?

(Finella draws Morven to one side)

Finella: Please don't worry. It will all be all right. I promise you that.

Morven: But what can have happened? If she did this to herself I'll get nothing! I can't go back to that. Our plan was to have a child together. It was what Catriona wanted to seal our six years together.

Finella: Don't fret, Morven. All will be well. You must trust my judgement. I was the one who first suggested the character of DI McNoiry and it made her fortune, and I was the one who recognised that the character should be killed off at the height of his popularity. She had completed the final book and when it's published it will be worth millions. I'll get my cut and we shall be set up for life.

Morven: I *do*. I do trust you. But I also wonder if she had her suspicions about *us*.

Finella: Not at all. Sweet Morven, we've always been careful. Now just go back in and talk to the others and I'll make sure everything is okay. *(They hug one another for a long time)*

**Dr Fayed-Sinner
(coughs):**

Erm. You can go up now, Mrs du Meurtre. Would you like me to come with you?

(Morven and Finella break away hurriedly.)

Morven: No. Thank you, Doctor. It's fine. I'll go myself.

(Morven leaves)

Finella: She couldn't have done this to herself, could she?

Dr Fayed-Sinner: It's a little too early to say. We shall find out but she has definitely been poisoned by arsenic. This is such a tragedy. She was an exceptional writer – a true star. Everyone loved her.

Finella: When will we know? I mean . . . how it happened?

Dr Fayed-Sinner: We shall know later this evening. Once everyone has said their goodbyes to her I shall conduct further tests and we shall know for certain then.

Finella: You'll let me know as soon as *you* know?

Dr Fayed-Sinner: Yes, yes, of course.

Finella: And Justin, about Morven . . . Mrs du Meurtre . . . and me. You *mustn't* say anything to anyone.

Dr Fayed-Sinner: I'm very discreet.

Finella: So am I. I *know* that you are not a real doctor but Catriona believed in you and so that was all that mattered.

Dr Fayed-Sinner

(alarmed): I . . . well . . . you won't say anything?

Finella: Of course not. I think we understand one another.

(Holly bursts in on the conversation)

Holly: You are a murderer!

Finella: What? What are you talking about, Ms Netweaver?

Holly: You did it before – you could do it again!

Finella: She's ranting now. Doctor, perhaps you could give this poor creature something to calm her down.

Holly: You killed DI McNoiry! Who's to say you didn't kill Catriona too?

Finella

(speaks slowly): DI McNoiry was a character in a book.

Holly: Loved by MILLIONS of fans!

Finella: That's right, but a character in a book. Having a tattoo of him on your arm doesn't make him real, Ms Netweaver. McNoiry had served his purpose and it was time for him to go. I simply advised Catriona that his time had come.

Holly: Well your advice stinks.

Finella (sighs): Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that Catriona was a real person who has died and at this point in time we have no idea how or why.

Holly: It was *you*, wasn't it?

Finella: I've already told you . . .

Holly: You are the one. The one who has been writing these horrible comments on and about my fan forums. All anonymously of course. You'd *never* have the courage to put your name to them.

Finella: I wouldn't demean myself by getting involved in your fantasy world Ms Netweaver, but just for the record, if I wrote anything I would most certainly put my name to it – and had I done so then your unctuous little websites would have been abandoned by all. Now please calm yourself and leave me alone.

Holly: *(Bursts into tears and laughs inappropriately)*

Questions: Round 1

You can now ask any questions of your fellow party guests.

Important: If anyone asks you whether you murdered Catriona du Meurtre say, 'No'. However, should they push you on your secret information, you must divulge it.

Questions you could ask the characters

- How did you first meet Catriona?
- What was your relationship with Catriona?
- How do you see your future now without Catriona?
- Do you know what is in Catriona's will?
- Has anyone been unfaithful in their relationship?
- What is Finella keeping secret?
- How does Sam feel about Morven?

Intermission

Take a break for ruminations and cocktails and/or cups of tea.



Scene 2

Sam: What can we do now?

Lindy: I have no idea.

Sam: I just can't believe that *Mother* has been poisoned. It's such a shock to hear that the great Catriona du Meurtre has been poisoned. How could *that* have happened?

Lindy: It changes everything – and the doctor has just confirmed that it wasn't suicide – that in fact she was *definitely murdered*.

Sam: Which means that that duplicitous Morven will receive the life assurance that was set up in the event of the death of her or Mother. The good thing is that because she signed a prenuptial agreement I shall inherit all of Mother's estate. What we have now, Lindy, is an opportunity – an opportunity to be together – and the main thing is that I will inherit everything.

Lindy: Hmmmm.

Sam: I was going to propose to you this evening. I wanted to make a big announcement and plan a huge engagement party so we could declare our love to the world.

Lindy (sharply): Well, given the circumstances I think that would be in rather poor taste now.

Sam: Do you think so?

Lindy: Yes, but there's no reason why we shouldn't just arrange a very quiet wedding – just you and me and a couple of witnesses. Much more intimate and romantic.

Sam (sadly): I wanted to let everyone know what we feel for each other.

Lindy (impatiently): Yes, yes, but there'll be plenty of time for that later.

Do you think Holly could have had anything to do with this? I've often wondered if she was secretly rather jealous of your mother's writing fame? I mean, she has only made her own name on the back of your mother's talent. She's so unremarkable. She could easily have found a way to poison Catriona – no one would notice *her*.

Sam: Holly! Of course not! Holly worshipped my mother and adored her work. You know that.

Lindy: Well, so she made it appear, Sam. But actually, I've often wondered . . .

Sam: It couldn't have been Holly. She has always been such a loyal and supportive presence to Mother and to me.

Lindy: Yes, quite the little lapdog. (*Sarcastically*) What WOULD you do without her?

Sam: It's Morven I'm wondering about. If Mother consumed arsenic but only partook of what Bruce had cooked, including *the truffle Morven handed her*, doesn't that rather point to one of them?

Lindy: What possible reason could Bruce or Morven have for wanting to see your mother dead? They both have fantastic lives *thanks* to your mother.

Sam: *She* doesn't have everything she wants! She wants to help Finella build that ridiculous collection she has of rare antique books. It's worth an absolute fortune and Finella means to have THE most prized collection in the world. (*He pauses then blurts out*) . . . And she wants to be with Finella!

Lindy: Finella! Whatever gave you that idea?

Sam: Holly told me. She came across it in one of her chat rooms. They've been seen together, plotting and planning.

Lindy: They *have* to do that. As your mother's wife and agent they need to co-ordinate your mother's work and personal commitments to make sure there are no clashes with engagements.

Sam: No, no it's more than that. One of the fans heard them whispering one evening and then she saw them kiss one another. They didn't know they'd been seen but it's true, Lindy! I *know* it is!

Lindy: Perhaps, but I still think . . .

Sam: And I've always suspected that Finella has been creaming money off the top of Mother's fortune. How else could she have built that incredible book collection. I mean, for goodness' sakes, one of those books alone is worth £93,000!

Lindy: How *very* interesting. Sometimes you quite surprise me, Sam.

Sam (glowing): Do I Lindy?

Lindy: Yes . . . but I must say that you also have the knack of getting things *spectacularly* wrong.

Sam: But not with you beside me. We make a great team. You know how much I need you.

Lindy: Yes, yes. I know. Listen, your mother has been good to me. She was the one who first recognised my incredible talent and I mean to do everything I can to protect her name. We can do this together but we need to find out who has poisoned your mother, and it seems to me that there's more to your sweet little Holly than meets the eye.

Questions: Round 2

The plot has thickened but are you any closer to cracking the case?

Important: If anyone asks you whether you murdered Catriona du Meurtre say, 'No'. However, should they push you on your secret information, you must divulge it.

Questions you could ask the characters

- Could someone else have been the intended victim?
- What will you lose/gain from Catriona's death?
- Are all of the characters what they seem?
- Who is the barrier to Lindy's real ambition?
- Why did Catriona employ Bruce after he was dismissed from a top hotel?
- Where did Dr Justin Fayed-Sinner study?
- Has the doctor come across any interesting reading material recently?
- With whom is Holly head over heels in love?
- Why has Lindy been so busy on her laptop without producing a manuscript?
- What has Holly told Sam in confidence?

Intermission

Take a break for ruminations and cocktails and/or cups of tea.



Scene 3

Finella: Here it is! Catriona's last will and testament. *(She reads)* I, Catriona du Meurtre, a resident of Edinburgh, being of sound mind and memory and at least eighteen (18) years of age, do hereby make, publish and declare this to be . . .

Morven: Oh, please, let's not prolong this, Finella. We get all that. What does it SAY?

Finella: Oh! Um . . . *(reads down a bit)* . . . currently married to Morven du Meurtre . . . ah . . . blah blah blah . . . appoint as my representative my faithful and trusted agent Finella Bludgeon, to carry out my last wishes.

(She beams with delight)

Morven: Well . . . and what are the last wishes?

Finella: To my dear wife, Morven, who signed a prenuptial agreement prohibiting her from receiving any of my wealth while I was alive, I know that you will make good use of the £10 million you will receive in the life assurance payment in the event of my death. I wish you well.

(Morven sighs with relief)

Finella: To my loyal and trusted agent, Finella, I leave the sum of £15 million and I thank you for your service over the years. We have been a great partnership.

To Holly, the first and most faithful of fans, I leave the sum of £5 million to create the life you deserve.

(Morven scowls at Holly. Holly looks stunned and giggles)

To Lindy, who has shown such promise, I leave the sum of £10,000 to make sure you stay hungry enough to build on your evident writing talent. Please use this wisely, Lindy, and make the most of the skill you have.

(Lindy is furious but tries to disguise this)

To my excellent chef, Bruce. I know that you were wrongfully dismissed from a position in your early years when you were accused of poisoning a hotel guest. I was that hotel guest and I know that that incident had nothing whatsoever to do with you but that you were blamed simply because you delivered my room service tray that night. To right a wrong I made sure you were given employment in some of the best hotels in the world before finally you came to work for me. You have dedicated your life to cooking for others and I leave you my hotel chain because I know that you will make a real success of this business. Thank you for your commitment.

(Bruce looks astonished but pleased)

To my respected doctor, Dr Justin Fayed-Sinner, I thank you for your professionalism and skill and leave you my yacht and private jet so that your travel and professional development may always be easy in the future.

(Dr Fayad-Sinner looks content)

To my beloved son, Sam, I am sorry I wasn't always there for you in life. I want to make sure I am there for you in death. I leave you everything else I own to ensure you will have a life of luxury and have the opportunity to indulge your every whim. Make your choices for the future wisely and without any financial worries influencing them. I love you and want only your happiness.

(Sam beams at Lindy)

Questions: Round 3

You now have your **final opportunity** to ask the characters/suspects questions.

Important: If anyone asks you whether you murdered Catriona du Meurtre say, 'No'. However, should they push you on your secret information, you must divulge it.

Questions you could ask the characters

- Did you know what was in the will before it was read?
- Who had most to gain from Catriona's death?
- How do you feel about the content of Catriona's will?



Denouement

The time has come for you to close the book on this Crook Week case for Book Week Scotland. There's been a murder and you need to solve it. Who from tonight's tragic party killed the world-famous author Catriona du Meurtre? It's time to ask yourself these questions:

- **Who do you think was the intended victim, and why?**
- **Who do you think killed Catriona du Meurtre, and why?**

Before you make your mind up, listen to each character's closing statements and read your own, when prompted by the host.

Read your closing statement when prompted then **STOP HERE** until your host tells you to move on.

Your closing statement:

'This has been a ghastly evening. My dear wife is lost to me, to us all, and to the world of books. I shan't recover. To be a suspect in her murder is too much to bear. I understand polyamory isn't to everyone's tastes but murder isn't to mine. A £10-million payout would not change that. Catriona and I were planning a family, for goodness' sakes. I need to lie down.'



Stop here!

**Scottish Book Trust
encourages all reading
but not reading ahead at
murder mystery parties!**

It wasn't you!





Thanks for playing and happy Book Week Scotland. This Murder Mystery party was prepared by Scottish Book Trust.

By supporting our work, you can bring the benefits of reading and writing to everyone in Scotland.

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Many thanks!