

Death is a Cabernet, Ol' Chum

Preview



Use your sleuthing skills to investigate the death of Cabernet vintner Malcolm Melee.

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How to Organize "Death is a Cabernet, Ol' Chum"

Thanks for purchasing this unique murder mystery. You and your guests will enjoy the challenge of solving a crime that will test everyone's powers of deduction. Here is what you should do to coordinate your murder mystery evening:

STEP 1: Review the materials in this mystery packet. But ... please do it in a very specific way. Remember - you have ALL of the information, *including the solution to the mystery*. If you decide to participate in the mystery as a role player or an investigator, you'll want to keep yourself in the dark about WHO DONE IT.

All page numbers in this packet are in the upper left-hand corner of the pages as you look at them vertically. That way you can run off the material without having the page numbers interfere with the format. The entire packet includes:

- **Instructions on how to organize the event.** They're on pages 2 through 5. (You're reading them right now.)
- **Instructions for the person who will facilitate the event.** Information for the person who will take charge of the murder investigation is on page 6. *If only eight people are invited to the event, you may want to assign this duty to Renee Melee, Malcolm's daughter.*
- **Role Player Information.** These pages serve as a "cover letter" for the information you'll send to the *eight individuals* who will be in character as the suspects. Run off eight copies of pages 7 and 8 back to back. You may want to use better quality stationery for this letter.
- **Role Player Information.** Pages 9 through 24 contain the information you'll send with the cover letters. Each role is designed as a two-sided two-fold document. Again, run off this information back to back. *Each role player gets only the information that applies to the role that he or she is playing. Your role players should know ONLY what's in their individual packets.*
- **The Invitation to the Mystery Event.** The invitation on page 25 will be sent to each guest. It is designed to be run off as a two-fold. Or, if you decide to use heavier stock, the left side of the page can be run off back-to-back with the right side of the page.
- **Police Chief's Letter.** The letter on page 26 will be given to each guest by the facilitator upon arrival. Run off enough copies so that each person receives one.
- **Clues about the Crime.** You'll find 24 clues about the mystery on pages 27 through 29. Cut them out. *Since each guest receives a clue, you can invite up to 24 investigators. Should you want to invite more guests, simply double and triple the clues.*
- **Today's Edition of The Nippy Valley Grapevine.** Everyone will receive a copy of *The Nippy Valley Grapevine* on pages 30 and 31. Run the pages off back to back.
- **Melee Cabernet Labels.** The labels of a recent vintage of Melee Cabernet Sauvignon are on page 32. Follow the instructions of the page about how to display the labels.
- **Investigative Report.** Run off one report on page 33 for each investigative team.
- **The Answer Sheet.** Run off one answer sheet on page 34 for each investigative team.
- **The Denouement. This is the solution to the crime.** Run off pages 35 through 39. The facilitator will read these pages at the end of the evening.

STEP 2: Plan your event. Pick a date on which to conduct the murder mystery event. *Death is a Cabernet, Ol' Chum* is designed to be an evening's entertainment. Remember: our mysteries are for serious sleuths. It will take two to two-and-a-half hours to solve the case using the

recommended format. Because of this, a buffet meal is suggested for the mystery evening. If you have a sit-down meal, add the amount of time the meal will take to your planning time.

STEP 3: Select your role players. Review the scenario and the brief descriptions of the suspects on page 7. Select guests who would fit into these roles. Send the role players their information **and** a copy of *The Nippy Valley Grapevine* (pages 30 and 31) approximately 10 to 12 days before the mystery event. The role players should bring the information with them and use it as a reference when they are questioned by the investigators.

If you have only eight guests, the role players will also be the investigators. This means you will send the invitations with the roles so that all of the information arrives at the same time.

STEP 4: Invite your guests. Approximately three to four weeks in advance of the event, send invitations to the guests who will not be role players .

STEP 5: Select a person to facilitate the investigation. The facilitator should read the *Instructions* on page 6, and review the information in the packet to keep the event moving so that the investigation is conducted effectively.

Here's what to do on the night of the mystery event.

STEP 6: The person portraying Renee Melee greets the guests. Since Renee is Malcolm's only child, she greets people as they arrive. Renee (or the person who is the facilitator) gives each guest who is investigating the crime a *Police Chief Letter with a Clue attached and The Nippy Valley Grapevine*. (You may want to put them in envelopes marked "Official Information from the Chief of Police.")

If you have only eight people at the event, and the role players are also investigating the crime, everyone receives a letter. If your event separates the role players from the investigators, then role players DO NOT receive letters. Tell the investigators they can share clues with each other at any time during the evening.

STEP 7: The role players speak. The facilitator (in a small group, this could be the role player portraying Renee Melee) asks everyone to sit down as the suspects give their recollections of what happened the previous night. Ensure that it is staged in this way:

- The facilitator (or Renee) reminds everyone that Malcolm Melee died last night after the reception that was being held in honor of the winery's 10th anniversary. The eight people who are gathered here were at the event. They've been asked to give their recollections about what happened last night along with their feelings about Malcolm Melee.
- The facilitator (or Renee) asks the eight role players to speak in this order: (1) Renee Melee, (2) Pierre LaPaine, (3) Sue Veneer, (4) Carter Cabot, (5) Nina Grigio, (6) Ben Breakfast, (7) Stan Milton, (8) Leelah Eagle. They stand and read the sections headlined, "Here's what you'll say when you're asked to speak."

STEP 8: The investigation starts. The facilitator (or Renee) briefly reviews what happened, including such facts as:

- Malcolm Melee has owned the winery for 10 years and has made enemies along the way.
- *Only one of the people who attended the reception committed the murder.*
- MOTIVE, MEANS and OPPORTUNITY must be considered to solve the case.

STEP 9: Form investigative teams. Have the guests who are investigating the murder form three-to-five-person investigative teams. Team members will work together to solve the case.

If only eight people are at the event, you may (at your discretion) form two-person teams who will work together to solve the case.

STEP 10: Break for dinner or refreshments. The teams may trade clues to obtain as much information as possible while they are eating, but they cannot question the suspects yet.

If only eight people are involved, distribute the remainder of the 24 clues at regular intervals during the meal until all clues have been used.

STEP 11: Continue the investigation. At the end of the meal, tell the teams that it is time to start the investigation again. Each team should find an area to use as an interrogation room.

If only eight people are present, everyone stays together and one role player at a time is questioned.

STEP 12: Coordinate the questioning. Have one role player rotate to each interrogation room at six-minute intervals. If you have fewer than eight teams, work out a rotation that gives role players breaks between some of the rounds of questioning. The investigators may ask the suspects ANYTHING.

The suspects should use the information provided in the *Role Player Information* to answer the questions. Suspects should *not* withhold any bits of information, but they should not offer information unless the investigators specifically ask for it. Good investigators must ask the right questions to get the correct facts.

STEP 13: Distribute copies of the Investigative Report. After the 4th round of questioning, The facilitator should loudly announce that police have prepared a report about the case. Distribute a copy of the report to each team.

STEP 14: Conduct open questioning. Place the suspects in different parts of the facility. For a six-minute period, investigators from any team may go to the suspects and ask final questions. *WARNING: Some investigators will try to pull the suspects back to their teams. Don't permit this.* Several different teams *may* question a suspect at the same time.

With only eight people, anyone can ask any other role player anything.

STEP 15: Distribute Answer Sheets. Give teams 10 to 12 minutes to write out their solutions by answering the questions on the *Answer Sheet*.

STEP 16: Teams give their solutions. The facilitator asks the questions on the answer sheet to each team, one at a time. The teams read the answers exactly as they were written on the answer sheet. *NOTE: Often, a team will want to change its mind after hearing the answers from another team. Don't let this happen.*

If you have only eight people, each role player (or two-person team of role players) gives an individual solution to the case.

STEP 17: Read “The Denouement.” The facilitator opens the envelope in which the solution was placed. The facilitator reads it aloud to the guests. This will take 6 to 8 minutes.

STEP 18: Award prizes. You may want to award prizes to the investigative team that did the best job of solving the crime. Let your creativity run wild in selecting the prizes.

Special role player information ...

(The facilitator may want to review these with the suspects prior to the start of the mystery.)

- Because this mystery is crafted with intertwining facts, the role players are provided with an abundance of information that may or may not be used during the investigation. Since the suspects will undergo interrogation by the investigative teams, the extensive number of personal facts will enable them to answer most questions that are asked.
- Role players **MUST** read recollections exactly as they are written. **THIS IS IMPORTANT.** It enables the investigation to begin with the correct preliminary data.
- If role players are asked questions not specifically addressed in this information, the role players should answer in character based upon the other facts available to them.
- The only relationships that the suspects know about are those written into the roles. If asked by investigators about relationships that are not mentioned in the roles, the suspects should say, “No, we’re not related.”
- All of the suspects are telling the truth with the exception of the murderer whose recollections and responses will contain lies – this is intentional and part of the murder investigation.
- Since a good investigator must ask good questions, suspects must only offer information that is asked for by the investigators. They should **NOT** offer information that has not been directly requested.

The murderer **DOES NOT** know he or she committed the crime. This means the suspects don’t have to be good liars. The solution is contained in “The Denouement.”

Instructions for the person who will facilitate the event

If you are a role player, then you already have a formal part in the investigation. Your role as facilitator means you will have to stay in character while ensuring that the investigation is conducted effectively.

If you are not one of the eight role players, you may want to create your own character and come in costume. You could be, for example, Lawrence Law, the police chief who signed the letter on page 26. To facilitate the mystery event, do the following:

- 1.** Review all of the information in this packet so that you are familiar with the mystery. **REMEMBER: If you are attempting to solve the crime, do NOT read “The Denouement” in advance. It contains the solution to the case.**
- 2.** As the guests arrive, hand them a copy of the Police Chief letter, along with a clue and a copy of *The Nippy Valley Grapevine*. Tell them to talk with as many people as they can to acquire information about Malcolm.
- 3.** The suspects have been told to arrive 15 minutes early. When they do, take them aside and review the *Special role player information* on page 5. Answer any questions they may have. Even though you are “facilitating” this event, the person playing Renee Melee will be hosting the event. It will be up to Renee to get people seated so that the investigation can start.
- 4.** Keep the event moving by following the instructions on pages 2 through 5. Make sure all information is given at the right time.
- 5.** **If you are not one of the role players**, after you read “The Denouement,” lead the guilty party away to jail. If you want to, you can use toy handcuffs to make the arrest. If you want to stage the arrest in this way, let the suspects know you will do this.
- 6.** Take a bow for a job well done!

told you that she'd been there for about a year. Sue is a tea drinker and always has a kettle boiling.

A few days later Ben showed up at the winery. The Nippy Victorian Inn had become the most popular inn in the Valley. Ben purchased Melee Cabernets as welcome gifts for his guests. Ben and Pierre see each other regularly because Pierre also has an interest in archery. Both are members of the Nippy Valley Bowmen who meet bi-monthly to target shoot. You and Ben are again close friends - who knows what the future might bring?

A bone of contention between Malcolm and Pierre is the hides that are always hanging in the wine cellar. Since the hides cannot be permitted to dry out before Pierre uses them, he'd found that the damp environment of the wine cellar is just right for storing them. He uses a small room in the back of the cellar as a workshop. The cellar is located in a natural cave under the main building and extends back into the adjacent hillside. It has two entrances, one from the wine tasting area and an outside entrance directly under Malcolm's office. Only you, Malcolm and Pierre have the key to that entrance.

Lately, the relationship between the two of them has become very strained. Your father wants to shortcut Pierre's vining process to save money. And, he even confronts Pierre about leaving the lights on. Your father always checks to make sure they're turned off at night.

Pierre is convinced that any change in the vining process would mean that Cabot Cabernets, owned by **Carter Cabot**, would gain market share. That sends Pierre into a fury. And, the local newspaper, *The Nippy Valley Grapevine*, has been saying that **Stan Milton**, the owner of the Milt-Martis wants to purchase the winery and build a new mega-store on the site. Maybe that's why that snooty attorney, **Leelah Eagle**, always seems to be around. Ben says she's a frequent guest at his inn.

Last night, though, your father organized a wine and cheese party to celebrate his tenth anniversary in business. It was open to the public and a lot of people showed up. Who could have predicted the outcome?

1

Here's what you'll say when you're asked to speak.

I still can't believe my father is dead. The police are saying it could be homicide, but I'm sure it was just a tragic accident. He must have slipped on the steps as he was going down into the wine cellar to turn out the lights.

It was only during the last year that I really got to know my father. He was tough, showed very little emotion, and did whatever he needed to do to get what he wanted. Yes, he was difficult to live with, but I think he was beginning to mellow.

Only four of us - my father, Pierre, Sue and I - run the entire operation with some part-time help when it's time to harvest the grapes. Because we were preparing for last night's wine and cheese reception, the tours that I usually lead were cancelled yesterday. Sue and I cleaned the main building while Pierre was away buying supplies.

I was surprised at how many people showed up. The event was scheduled from 7 to 10, but some people were around much later. I left about 11:45. I was so tired that my father told me to go to bed. He said he'd stay around to turn out the lights. I don't know why the lights in the wine cellar were on. No one was supposed to have been down there last night.

I fell asleep very quickly. This morning, Pierre woke me up and said he'd found my father on the floor of the wine cellar - dead. Who knows what will happen to the winery now? If I inherit it, I just might sell it.

Death is a Cabernet, Or' Chum

Your Role: **Renee Melee**

You, **Renee Melee**, are the only child of Cabernet king Malcolm Melee. Born 35 years ago on the East Coast, you had a comfortable life during your formative years. At that time, your father was an up-and-coming force in the publishing world who provided you with all of the creature comforts, but who worked long hours and had little time for his family. He put all of his energy into founding and running *Melee Magazine*, a definitive source for business information.

Your mother, Chantee, was French by birth. Your parents had met when Malcolm was backpacking through Europe one summer while still in college. Chantee's father was Roland LaPaine, the owner of a small winery in the Bordeaux region of France. He vinted quality Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc wines. Malcolm and Chantee kept in touch when Malcolm returned to the States. They were married one month after your father graduated from Ivy University 43 years ago.

You've been told that the two of them were deeply in love when they were first married, but your recollections of their relationship was of two people who were distant from each other. You were close to your mother and, as you entered your teen years, you grew to dislike your father because he immersed himself in his magazine.

When you were 16, your mother unexpectedly died in an auto accident. Your father was out of town on business at the time and he didn't return home immediately. Instead, he finalized the contract he had been negotiating, then caught a flight. You've never forgiven him for the callous way he handled your mother's death.

Two years later, you left for college. You earned a liberal arts degree at Western College and decided to stay in the West - and to have very little contact with your father. Sure, the two of you had an occasional telephone conversation and sometimes you even saw each other during the holiday season, but the relationship certainly would not have been described as "warm."

You were intrigued by the ambiance of the wine country. It was 13 years ago that you found a job at a local winery, Veneer Vintages, a small operation in the Nippy Valley specializing in cabernet wines. The Veneer family had owned the winery for over a century.

The current owner, Hugh Veneer, was the grandson of the founder. His wife, Lu, handled the business office, and his daughter, **Sue Veneer**, ran the gift shop. Sue and you became good friends.

Ten years ago, Hugh announced that the winery was almost bankrupt and he had decided to sell it. You were shocked to discover that the new owner would be none other than Malcolm Melee. Your father had decided to give up *Melee Magazine* and vint cabernet wines.

You couldn't imagine why he would decide to give up the magazine and start a new venture. At the time, newspapers speculated he was forced out. You've never learned the complete story. Every so often, though, you meet someone who knows some of the story and you believe that he was involved in some underhanded dealings that put the magazine in jeopardy of being sued.

As soon as the deal was sealed, the Veneers packed up and moved away. You decided to stay around - after all, he was still your father. Perhaps you could do something to mend fences. You emailed him and told him that you would like to work with him. And, amazingly, he agreed. Could it be that he had mellowed? You waited with anticipation as he arrived at the winery.

If joy was in his heart, it didn't show. He greeted you curtly and went about his business. True to form, he began making changes the very first day. The 35-acre winery grows its own grapes. Your father liked to be in charge of everything, so it didn't surprise you that he appointed himself "winemaster." For the first time in his life, he was failing. He became more temperamental and

difficult to be around. He took it out on everyone. You had flashbacks to your childhood.

About six months after your father purchased the winery, you decided to leave. When you said "good-bye" to him a little over nine years ago, you thought you saw a tear in his eye - but you could have been mistaken.

You had to support yourself, so you took seasonal jobs to make ends meet. Finally, about four years ago, you found a job at a small hotel in the mountains. That's how you met **Ben Breakfast**. Ben was a co-worker of yours at the Copper Hotel. He told you that he was saving up money and finding a way to buy his own place.

Ben had a hobby that intrigued you. He was an archer with a passion for designing and fabricating his own bows and arrows. He had studied Native American crafts and used local woods and rawhide to make authentic archery equipment.

You'd watch him as he soaked the hides he'd bought to soften them. Then, he'd stretch thin strands of rawhide to make bowstrings that would dry and shrink, becoming strong and taut. He'd even mastered the technique of "barebow," shooting without a bowsight, stabilizers, or release aides.

The two of you became close friends and you even talked of running an inn together. So, you were at first excited when, three years ago, Ben told you he'd found a property to purchase. Your mood changed, though, when he said he was buying a B&B in the Nippy Valley. You realized it was near the Melee Vineyard and Winery.

You'd had no contact with your father since the day you'd left the winery. You didn't want Ben to exit your life, but how could you see your father again? Yet, maybe things had changed because. You'd been reading articles about the Melee Winery in magazines such as *Wine Line*. Critics began to give his vintages rave reviews. One *Wine Line* writer, **Nina Grigio**, regularly mentioned Melee Cabernets in her articles. It was almost as if your father had something on her.

Ben left to take ownership of the B&B, calling it the

Nippy Victorian Inn. He asked you to follow him. You refused - at least for the time being. But, last year, that changed. After a lot of soul searching, you returned to the Valley and contacted your father.

He was still grouchy, but not as much as he once was. He asked you to work for him again, helping with the vinting and giving tours. You could live with him in the house on the winery's property. You agreed. It was time to try to make the relationship better - and to see Ben again.

And, you discovered what turned the winery around. You'd never met your mother's family because your father didn't get along with it. But, he'd contacted the LaPaine family eight years before and hired **Pierre LaPaine** to be his winemaster. Pierre's father, Jacques, was your mother's brother, making Pierre your first cousin. Pierre is temperamental. Everything must be done his way or he goes into a rage. He and your father constantly butted heads.

Pierre had his own process for vinting excellent wines. He proudly tells everyone that it dates back to the Middle Ages. Pierre is quite a historian and was the impetus behind an event that has become a huge promotional success for the winery.

Every year during the fall, Melee Vineyard and Winery sponsors and hosts a French Wine Fest. Many winemaking events are featured, including grape stomping. While many people think that grapes were crushed by bare-footed workers, Pierre reported that they actually wore rawhide boots.

He had been a student of the Middle Ages for many years and became proficient at making his own garb from cloth and animal hides. To add to the authenticity of the fest, every year Pierre makes rawhide boots for attendees to wear as they participate in grape-stomping competitions.

The grape-stained boots are then sold in the gift shop. And, speaking of the gift shop, you were reunited with another old friend. Sue Veneer had been hired as the winery's gift shop manager. She

Renee Melee

Renee Melee

Your Clue #1

A confidential source told you that mega-mart entrepreneur **Stan Milton** is intent on acquiring the 35 acres on which Melee Vineyard and Winery is situated. Milton is convinced that it's the perfect spot for his next huge discount store.

Your Clue #2

Ben Breakfast, owner of the Nippy Victorian Inn, is an avid archer. He even makes his own bows and arrows from wood, flint, feathers and rawhide.

Your Clue #3

It's no secret that **Renee Melee** had been estranged from her father for many years before returning to Nippy Valley last year. Many local residents are puzzled about her decision to reunite with her father and help him out at the winery.

Your Clue #4

Sue Veneer, the gift shop manager at Melee Vineyard and Winery, is the daughter of Hugh Veneer, the former owner of the winery. The property had been in the Veneer family for over 100 years before **Malcolm Melee** purchased it 10 years ago.

Your Clue #5

Rumor has it that **Stan Milton** is planning on beginning to sell wines in the delicatessens of his Milt-Marts. **Carter Cabot's** younger brother, Cramer, is attempting to negotiate a contract that would make Cabot Cabernets the exclusive provider of Milton's private-label wines.

Your Clue #6

The French Wine Fest, sponsored and hosted by Melee Vineyard and Winery each fall was the brainchild of winemaker **Pierre LaPaine**. It features a variety of wine-related events, including stomping grapes in the traditional Medieval way.

Your Clue #7

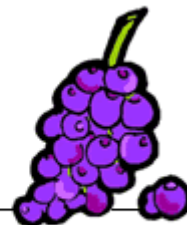
You've noticed that attorney **Leelah Eagle** spends a lot of time in the Nippy Valley. She always stays at the Nippy Victorian Inn, owned by **Ben Breakfast**.

Your Clue #8

In private, **Nina Grigio** has admitted to several people that she prefers Cabot Cabernets to those produced by the Melee Vineyard and Winery. If that's the case, you wonder why she spends so much time extolling the quality of Melee's wines.

The Nippy Valley Grapevine

Squeezing every bit of news from the Valley



Cabernet king corked

Body of volatile vintner found in wine cellar

Nippy Valley - Malcolm Melee, the owner of Melee Vineyard and Winery whose Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc wines have become famous around the world, was found dead this morning. His lifeless body was discovered at the foot of the staircase that connects the winery's wine cellar to its wine tasting area. When Pierre LaPaine, the winery's winemaker, arrived in the cellar at 6:00AM, he noticed that lights were on and doors were unlocked.

Melee, the founder and former publisher of Melee Magazine, purchased the 35-acre property 10 years ago after divesting himself of his interest in the publication. Melee Magazine continues to be recognized as one of the world's leading business magazines.

The death marked a tragic ending to an evening that started as a celebration of Melee's decade-long ownership of the small winery. At a wine and cheese evening open to the public, Melee talked with the people who packed the winery's main building. In recent years, his vintages have received critical acclaim, most notably from Nina Grigio, writer for Wine Line magazine. She was present at last night's event and had only a terse comment this morning.

"Of course his death is a shock to me. We've known each other longer than most people realize," explained



The wine cellar at Melee Vineyard & Winery. The body of owner Malcolm Melee was found at the bottom of the staircase early this morning.

Grigio, "Tell everyone to read what I have to say in next month's issue of the magazine. They'll be surprised at what they see."

Melee's only child, Renee

Melee, who returned to the Valley a year ago to assist her father in running things, would only say that the winery's future is uncertain. "My fa-

Continued on back page.

Plans for mega-mart move ahead

Nippy Valley - Mega-retail store entrepreneur Stan Milton said this morning that his plans to build a new Milt-Mart in the Valley are "full speed ahead." As previously speculated in this newspaper, Milton has been attempting to acquire property and begin construction of another one of his huge discount stores.

"My legal representative has been taking care of the details," ex-

plained Milton, "and she believes that the process now can be expedited." Although Milton wouldn't confirm it, sources say that Malcolm Melee, whose body was found this morning, was the final roadblock to Milton's move.

The land on which the Melee Vineyard and Winery sits has long been considered the perfect spot for a large retail store.