

The Empty Chair

In 1931, every Friday at seven o'clock, the gates of Ashcombe Manor were locked and Lord Ashcombe's guests played a game. His secretary, Miss Pell, dealt each guest a card in silence: one said victim, one said murderer. The lamps went out for one minute. When they came back on, nobody was allowed to move, and Miss Pell went from room to room with her notebook.

HOW TO PLAY

1. **Every statement is true.** Read each one against the plan.
2. **Exactly one suspect stands in every row and every column.** The body is not a suspect. Areas have no such rule: an area may hold several suspects, or none.
3. **The murderer is the one suspect in the area with the body.** That area always holds exactly one suspect, and the rule works while you solve: once one suspect must be there, nobody else can be.

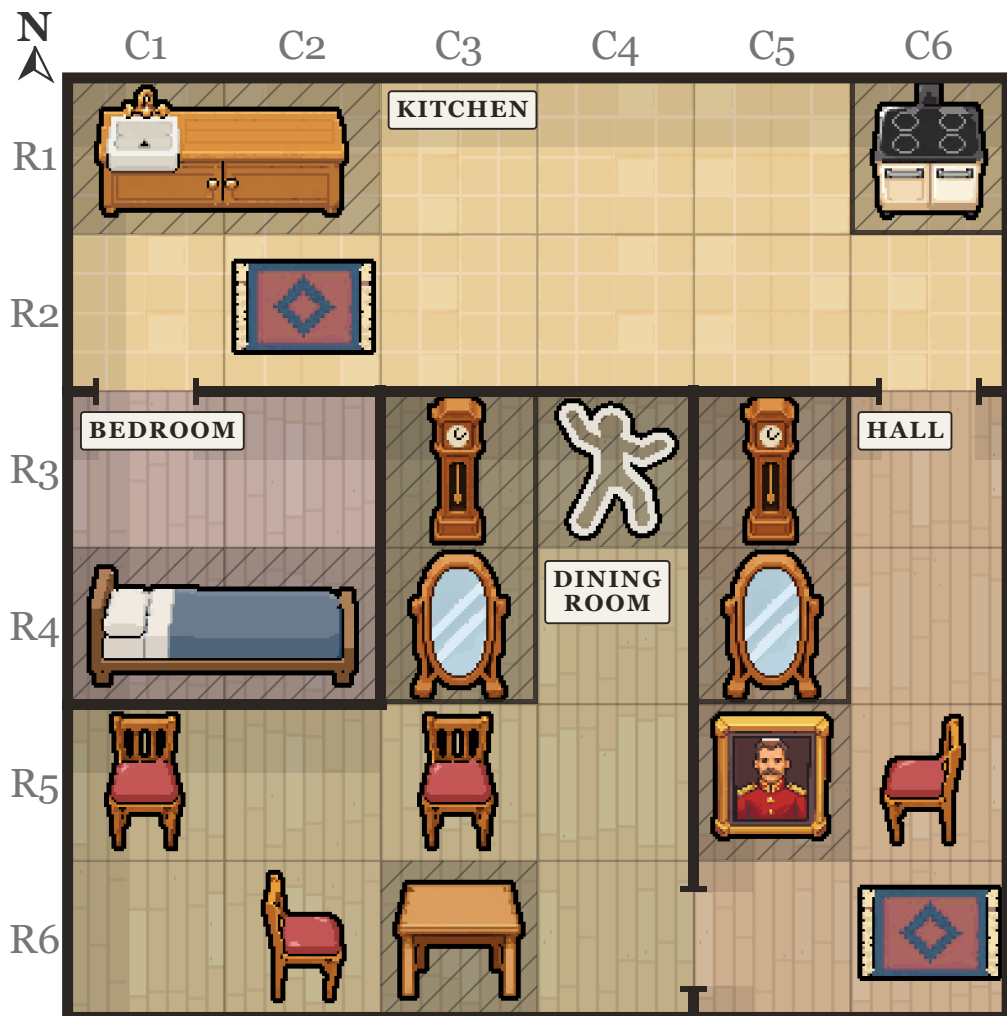
Rows are numbered from the top and columns from the left, so R2C5 is the second row, fifth column; north is the top of the plan. Hatched squares are where nobody can stand. A dark outline around a whole square means nobody can see past it, like a wall. Write initials on the plan as you go: small where a suspect *might* be, large where they *must* be. There is exactly one answer, and you never need to guess.

Beside: in a square next to it, up, down, left or right, and in the same area. Never diagonally, and never through a wall or a doorway. Sitting or standing on something, a chair or a rug, is not being beside it, but another one next to your square is.

In an area containing, in an area with no: the area holds at least one, anywhere in it, or none at all.

Of the people beside a sink, exactly two wore a bowler: counts the bowlers among whoever stood there; it does not say how many stood there.

Wore, had: what the lineup shows under each suspect's picture. *Everyone beside a clock, if anyone, had a beard* does not say that anyone stood beside one.



THE SUSPECTS



1. Lucy
a bowler
spectacles



2. Edith
a fedora
a monocle



3. Olive
a bowler
a monocle



4. Nora
a fedora
a monocle



5. Agatha
a fedora
spectacles



6. Sam
a monocle
a beard

A wet October evening, with rain on every window. When the lamps came back on, Harold lay in the Dining Room, and nobody had moved an inch.

THE CLUES

- 1. Olive was not beside a rug.
- 2. Agatha was in an area with no mirrors.
- 3. Edith was in the fifth column.
- 4. Sam was not beside a chair.
- 5. Nora was in an area with no portraits.
- 6. Lucy was in the top row.

GENERAL CLUES

- 7. Of the people beside a sink, exactly two wore a bowler.

THE MURDERER _____

The Furniture

Every piece in this case, drawn as on the plan, and the two things that matter about each: whether a suspect can stand on its square, and whether a suspect can see past it.



bed

✗ nobody can stand here
✓ can see past it



chair

✓ can sit or stand here
✓ can see past it



grandfather clock

✗ nobody can stand here
✗ blocks the view



mirror

✗ nobody can stand here
✗ blocks the view



portrait

✗ nobody can stand here
✓ can see past it



rug

✓ can sit or stand here
✓ can see past it



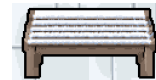
sink

✗ nobody can stand here
✓ can see past it



stove

✗ nobody can stand here
✗ blocks the view



table

✗ nobody can stand here
✓ can see past it

Stuck?

Three hints, each giving away a little more than the last. Read one, then go back to the plan.

Hint I • Where to begin. Start with Lucy. Clues 6 and 7 together leave her exactly one square. Clue 7 names nobody, but it applies to her too: find her in the lineup.

Hint II • When you are stuck. Read clues 1 and 7 together: they are enough to place the next suspect. Don't set clue 7 aside: it is true of everyone, and can do its work more than once. Clue 7 is about what people wore, and it applies to Olive: find her in the lineup, then read the clue against the squares still open to her. By this point one suspect should be placed.

Hint III • A checkpoint. Lucy at R1C3, Olive at R2C2, Edith at R6C5.

Who did it?

The answer, step by step, is at whereaboutspuzzles.com on Saturday.

Fifty more cases

Miss Pell wrote every game into a ledger: a whole year of Fridays at Ashcombe Manor, from the first daffodils to the last of the snow. **Whereabouts: Murder Sudoku — 50 Murder Mysteries from Ashcombe Manor** is that ledger, with a practice case solved for you, three levels of hints for every case, and the answers step by step.

And every Friday, a new case is free at **whereaboutspuzzles.com**.

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