

Murder Most Mysterious

A role-playing scenario for 6 players

Murder Most Mysterious is a scenario for 6 players. The setting is the luxurious Manor of Harrington Hall, home of Lord Herbert Harrington and his family. Unfortunately Lord Harrington will be murdered early in the scenario. The players play the roles of Lord Harrington's household and guests as they seek to unravel the mystery. Pre-generated characters are included at the end of the scenario. The following *Dramatis Personae* section describes each of the characters. Many of them have motive to murder Lord Harrington.

Dramatis Personae

Lord Herbert Harrington (NPC) – Lord of Harrington Hall and soon to be murder victim.

Lady Cynthia Harrington (his second wife) – Lady Cynthia is a “Black Widow”. Her two previous wealthy husbands died in unfortunate accidents. This does not bode well for Lord Harrington.

Haldor Petersen (World famous detective) – world-famous Danish detective. Has amazing powers of deduction and has never failed to solve a case yet. Note that Haldor also has knowledge of the art of hypnosis. This means that he can probe and alter the memories of others. However, this power is only effective against willing targets.

Sir Robert Collingwood (Rival detective) – Sir Robert is an English gentleman detective of some renown, but not yet as famous as the great Haldor Petersen.

Lady Amelia Harrington (his daughter) – Lord Harrington's wastrel daughter. She had aspirations of becoming an actress (much to her father's horror) and has been confined to the family on threat of having her allowance cut off.

Miss Rosemary Timmins (Mystery novelist) – Miss Rosemary Tibbins is a popular writer of detective novels.

Thomas Smythe (the Butler) – a long-term employee of the Harrington family, Smythe has had the misfortune to fall in love with Lady Harrington.

Plot Synopsis

Lord Harrington has invited the two greatest detectives and the greatest writer of detective novels to stay at Harrington Hall. The reason he gives is that he wishes an audience for the manuscript of his own mystery novel. However, the plot thickens. Lord Harrington's novel (working title “The Black Widow”) is heavily based on the exploits of his wife Cynthia, who murdered her two previous husbands. Unfortunately Lord Harrington is murdered before he gets to read his manuscript – killed by a poisoned cigar.

Whodunnit?

In actual fact, any of the player characters could be the murderer. The identity of the murderer is determined randomly. On page 3 is a set of cards that should be printed and cut out. Ideally the cards should be cut and folded so that there is a guilty side and an innocent side. The cards can then

be placed in a black-backed plastic sleeve with either the guilty or innocent side showing.

There is one card for each player character which describes their motive for murdering Lord Harrington; there are also a couple of other options (suicide, or a The Person Who Wasn't Even Mentioned Until The Final Chapter) to keep players guessing. At the beginning of the game randomly select a murderer card and put it in the sleeve with the guilty side showing and place all the other cards in the sleeve with the innocent side showing. Allow each player to look at their card so that they know whether or not their character is the murderer (the exception being if Haldor is the murderer. Haldor will have erased the memory of the murder from his mind using mesmerism so the player should be shown the innocent version of the card). Then take all the cards back, place the murderer card in a secret envelope and place the other cards on the table face down as the Clue Deck.

When important clues are discovered the discovering character's player gets to draw a random card from the Clue Deck (the text will note when a draw from the Clue Deck is warranted). Other clever deductions may also warrant a draw from the Clue Deck at the GM discretion. Only the player who draws the card may look at it, and they may not show it to anyone else. The cards in the Clue Deck represent the innocent characters; this allows the drawing player to eliminate them from suspicion. After the player has read the card it is shuffled back into the Clue Deck. Players are unlikely to get enough draws from the Clue Deck to tell for certain who the murderer is, so there will be an element of risk when making murder accusations.

<p style="text-align: center;">LORD HARRINGTON</p> <p>Did not commit suicide. He loved life too much.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LORD HARRINGTON</p> <p>Committed suicide.</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Lord Harrington knew his mysterious death would cause problems for his scheming wife and his troublesome daughter. He was also amused by the thought that he would be baffling the minds of the world's greatest detectives.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LADY CYNTHIA HARRINGTON</p> <p>Is innocent – at least of this murder.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LADY CYNTHIA HARRINGTON</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Lord Harrington's book would have exposed Cynthia's past crimes. Her only hope was to get rid of Harrington and the manuscript before anyone could read it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HALDOR PETERSEN</p> <p>Is innocent – he's the world's greatest detective after all.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HALDOR PETERSEN</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Petersen realised that no mere criminal intellect could challenge him anymore. In fact there was only one mind that could give him the challenge he craved – his own. Petersen arranged the murder of Lord Harrington then mesmerised himself to forget. Can the master detective outwit himself?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SIR ROBERT COLLINGWOOD</p> <p>Is innocent – English gentlemen don't go around murdering one another.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SIR ROBERT COLLINGWOOD</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Collingwood was fed up with that tiresome foreigner Petersen claiming to be the world's greatest detective. The only way to stop him would be to commit a murder that the great detective was unable to solve...</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">AMELIA HARRINGTON</p> <p>Is innocent – she's been too busy partying to arrange a murder.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AMELIA HARRINGTON</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Amelia managed to lose rather a lot of money on the horses. Her father threatened to cut off her allowance if she didn't start behaving herself. However, Amelia thought it would be simpler to kill her father and have her entire inheritance immediately.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ROSEMARY TIMMINS</p> <p>Is innocent – but will probably use this incident as inspiration for another book.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ROSEMARY TIMMINS</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Rosemary is suffering from writer's block. She was considering having the victim in her current book killed by a poisoned cigar. However, she had no idea whether it was plausible. So she decided to test her method on Lord Harrington.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">THOMAS SMYTHE</p> <p>Is innocent – having the butler do it is <i>such</i> a cliché</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THOMAS SMYTHE</p> <p>Is guilty</p> <p><i>Motive:</i> Despite years of faithful service to the Harrington family, Robert Smythe became smitten with the new Lady Harrington. He knew that Lord Harrington's book would expose his wife's former crimes and therefore he had to be stopped.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">The Person Who Wasn't Even Mentioned Until The Final Chapter</p> <p>Didn't do it. That would just be unfair...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Person Who Wasn't Even Mentioned Until The Final Chapter</p> <p>Is guilty. How was anyone supposed to figure that one out?</p>

Red Herrings

No proper murder mystery is complete without a healthy dose of false leads and red herrings. At the beginning of the game give each player one or two random red herring card (possible red herrings listed below). Players may play these on other characters at any time during the game. These represent (false) clues that throw suspicion on another character. When a red herring card is played the allegation should be assumed to be true (although ultimately irrelevant to the murder). The person on whom a red herring is played may not deny the facts outright, but may apply “spin”.

You have found a book entitled “Exotic Poisons” amongst another characters possessions.

You overheard a row between another two characters earlier today.

Another character's shoes seem to have an unusual amount of mud on them.

You found an empty bottle hidden in the bushes by the window of another characters bedroom.

You find a fragment of cloth from another characters clothes snagged somewhere

The sword from above the mantelpiece is missing.

You noticed two characters exchanging longing glances during dinner.

A telegram arrived for another character this morning, but it was in code.

There is an uncanny family resemblance between another character and Lord Harrington.

You noticed a strange idol in another character's room.

You overheard another character muttering “I'll kill them all” in their sleep.

Another character is wearing the secret symbol of the Bavarian Illuminati

Player Handout 1 – Note to Lord Harrington

Dear Lord H,

Am much looking forward to your reading tonight. Please accept this token of my gratitude. It contains special herbs that should improve your reading voice.

System

It is intended that *Murder Most Mysterious* should be a fairly system-lite game. However each of the characters is given 4 basic traits (Brawn, Perception, Guile and Stealth) with a score from 0 to +3. In cases where characters are struggling against each other have the players roll a d6 and add the most appropriate trait with the high total winning. If a character is struggling against an inanimate object (e.g. trying to pick a lock) pick a target difficulty (4 = easy, 5 = average, 6 = difficult) that the player must exceed on a trait + d6 roll.

The Opening Scene

Lord Harrington has invited the two detectives and Miss Tibbins to spend the weekend at Harrington Hall. The reason given for this invitation is that Lord Harrington has written a detective novel and would like to read the manuscript to the finest minds in the country. The visitors will arrive on Saturday afternoon and you may allow the player characters some time to get acquainted with each other.

The game proper opens with Saturday night dinner. Lord Harrington has given most of the servants the night off (except for the Smythe the butler). Fortunately Smythe is exceptionally competent and manages to ensure the dinner goes smoothly.

After desert the gentlemen retire to the smoking room for cigars while the ladies have sherry in the drawing room. Lord Harrington orders Smythe to fetch the cigars and reminds him to bring his special cigar. Harrington explains that the cigar arrived in the mail this morning with a note saying that he should savour it on this special occasion.

However, when Lord Harrington begins to smoke his cigar it produces a vile green smoke and Lord Harrington falls over dead. The first person to examine his body may make an easy perception roll (4+) to determine that he has been poisoned. This counts as a Clue and the player may draw a card from the Clue Deck. Anyone who examines the cigar may also make an easy Perception check to notice that the cigar appears to have been opened and resealed (and gains a draw from the Clue Deck).

Certain characters (Heldor, Collingwood and Miss Timmins) might be able to identify the poison as coming from a rare African plant (Perception 6+, but only if the player asks). The first to correctly identify the poison may draw a card from the Clue Deck. In Lord Harrington's pocket is the key to the desk in the study.

Smythe is able to retrieve the note should anyone think to ask (see Player Handout 1). The note has been typewritten.

If anyone contacts the local police they won't be too keen on investigating after hours. The local sergeant knows that the great detective Heldor Petersen is present, so he'll be happy to turn up in the morning and pick up the miscreant once the detective has identified him. This gives the player characters the rest of the night to try to solve the murder.

Harrington Hall

Ballroom – is not currently in use. It is somewhat eerie. There is a balcony surrounding the ballroom that could be used to drop heavy objects on someone, if one was that way inclined.

Bedrooms – The bedrooms are all on the second floor. These contain the usual furnishings and personal belongings (plus anything else that players may decide to plant there).

Conservatory – the deadly herb used to poison Lord Harrington grows in the conservatory. If someone thinks to examine the garden for poisonous plants then a Perception roll of 6+ will identify the deadly plant (draw from Clue deck).

Dining Room – this is where the party had their first meal together.

Drawing Room – this is where the ladies were gathered when Lord Harrington was killed. There is a small writing desk in the corner.

Hall – an elaborate entrance hall. Two complete suits of armour stand guard (with swords that are still sharp, should anyone feel murderous).

Kitchen – Butler's pantry. Keys to the wine cellar.

Library – a copy of MacBeth lies open on a table. Lady MacBeth's soliloquy has been underlined. Anyone who randomly takes books from shelves has a 1-in-6 chance of randomly triggering the secret door (causing one of the bookcases to slide aside revealing the secret room). If deliberately looking of secret doors a Perception roll of 6+ will reveal the entrance. (Draw from Clue deck for the person who discovers the secret entrance).

Secret Room (accessible from library) – This room is where Lord Harrington worked on his book. The room is just large enough to hold a comfy chair and desk. On the desk is Lord Harrington's diary. There is a safe in the wall that contains the manuscript of Lord Harrington's novel. The diary can be decoded with a Guile roll of 6+. For the most part Lord Harrington complains about his gout. On the final page Lord Harrington talks about his planned reading of the novel and mentions that he looks forwards to the look on the faces of certain persons when the dark secret is revealed. (The person who first decodes this gets a draw from the Clue deck).

The safe can be cracked with a Guile roll of 8+ (or more easily using the combination that can be found in the study). The manuscript is entitled "The Black Widow" about a woman who marries wealthy men and then murders them. She is obviously based on Lady Harrington. (Draw from the Clue deck if a character spends some time reading the manuscript). There is also a revised copy of Lord Harrington's will (dated only a couple of days ago) that completely cuts out Lady Cynthia, instead leaving all the money in trust for Amelia when she turns 25 or marries.

Smoking Room – this is where the murder took place.

Study – The desk in this room contains a typewriter. If anyone thinks to compare the type with that on the note sent with the poisoned cigar they will find that it is a match (draw a card from the Clue Deck). The desk drawers are locked (Lord Harrington carried the key in his pocket). It can be opened by picking the lock (Guile) or brute force (Brawn) requiring a roll of 5+. Inside it contains Lord Harrington's will (in which the Harrington fortune is split between Lady Cynthia and Amelia). This will predates the version hidden in the safe in the secret room. The first person to examine the Will may make a draw from the Clue deck. There is also a business card from Harrington's publisher. Harrington has written three numbers on the back. This is the combination to the safe in the secret room.

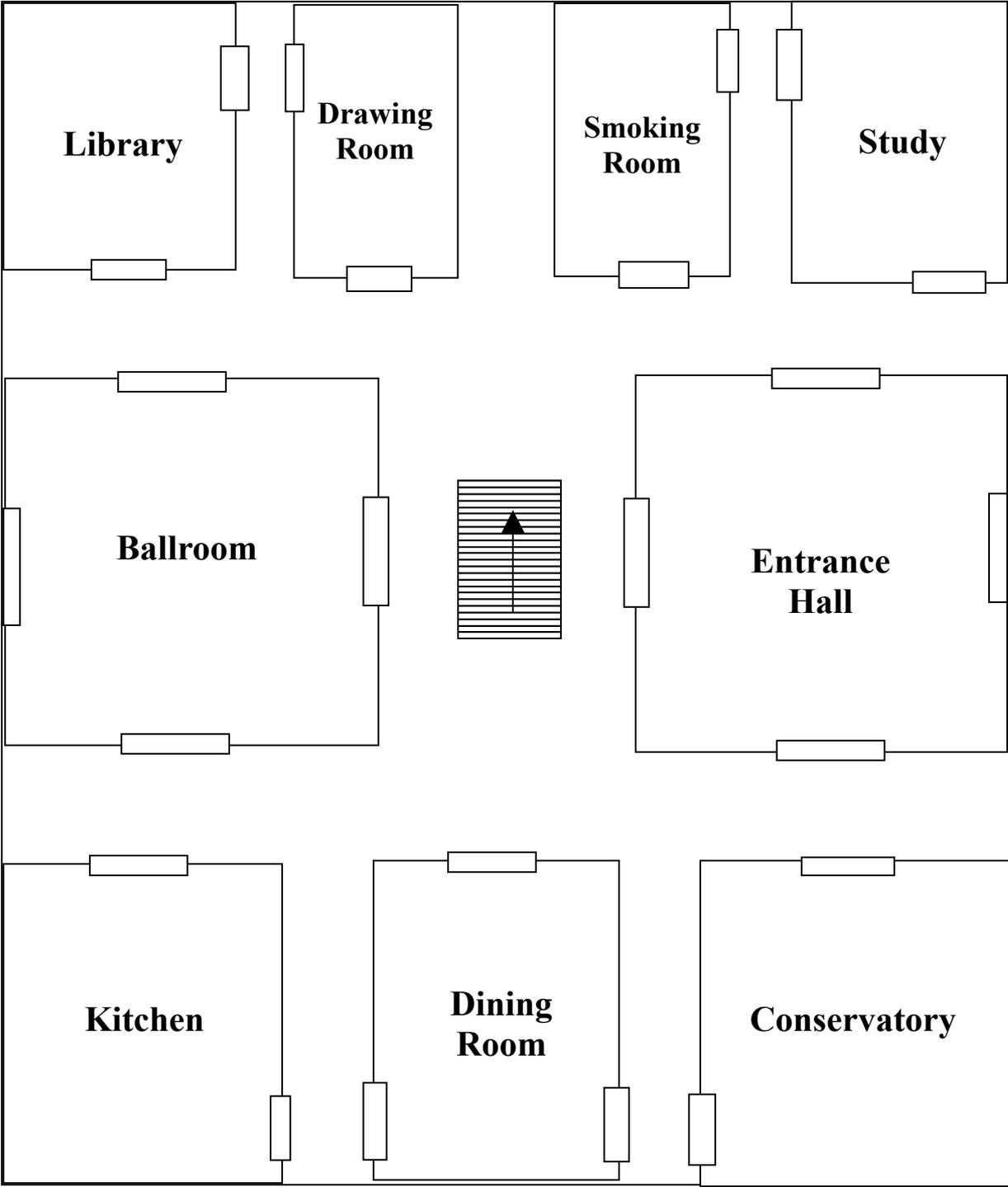
Unmasking the Murderer

At 10am the following morning Sergeant McAlister will arrive to arrest the murderer. He is a great fan of Haldor Petersen and will expect a grand unmasking in the library. If the players have not arranged this themselves Sergeant McAlister will insist that they “do things proper”.

At this point the PCs may start expounding upon their theories about the murderer’s identity. Explain to the players that after they make an accusation they may choose to look in the envelope to see the identity of the true murderer. If they have guessed correctly then the murderer will confess all (and the accuser gains much reputation as a great detective). The murderer then has the choice of going quietly or resisting arrest in some dramatic fashion.

If someone incorrectly guesses the murderers identity then their theory has some embarrassingly obvious flaws in it and the would-be detective is humiliated. (The player can still play, but cannot make any further accusations and mustn’t give any hints about the identity of the actual murderer).

Harrington Hall



Lady Cynthia Harrington

Brawn: -1

Guile: +2

Perception: +1

Stealth: 0

You are the wife of Lord Herbert Harrington. He is, in fact, your second husband. Your two previous husbands met with a “tragic accidents” that happily left you with a small fortune. However, you would have preferred a large fortune, hence your third marriage. You are prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure that you will always be able to live in the style to which you have become accustomed.

Haldor Petersen – A funny little foreign man. Rumoured to be a great detective. Still, you know there's nothing that can be proved against you.

Sir Robert Collingwood – an English gentleman and amateur detective. He is also wealthy, which makes him of some interest to you.

Amelia Harrington – your step-daughter. Amelia is a wayward brat and an embarrassment to the family.

Rosemary Timmins – a writer of murder mysteries.

Thomas Smythe – the butler. Thomas has been part of the Harrington family for years. However, he does seem rather eager to please you.

Haldor Petersen

Brawn: 0

Guile: +1

Perception: +3

Stealth: -1

You are the world's greatest detective and you don't care who knows it. Since you moved from your native Denmark to work for Scotland Yard you have solved more murders than most people have had hot dinners. You are looking forward to the reading of Lord Harrington's mystery novel as you are certain that you will be able to unravel the secret before chapter 2

Note: Amongst your impressive array of skills, you have mastered the art of mesmerism. If you mesmerise someone you can improve (or alter) their memory of a past event. This has aided you in solving several murders. Unfortunately you can only mesmerise the willing.

Cynthia Harrington – Lord Harrington's wife. There is something about her you do not trust.

Sir Robert Collingwood – an English gentleman and amateur detective. You might give him a few pointers if you're feeling generous.

Amelia Harrington – Lord Harrington's daughter. Amelia exhibits the decadence and lack of moral fibre unfortunately common amongst the youth of today.

Rosemary Timmins – a writer of murder mysteries. A charming lady, who will no doubt wish to hear all about your exploits.

Thomas Smythe – the butler. Contrary to popular belief not all butlers are potential murderers, but they often know what's going on within a household.

Sir Robert Collingwood

Brawn: +1

Guile: +2

Perception: +2

Stealth: -1

You are an English gentleman, accomplished in many fields – including the solving of mysteries. In fact, it is rather peculiar how often chaps end up getting murdered in their country estates.

Cynthia Harrington – Lord Harrington's wife. Lady Harrington is rather younger than her husband, and not quite the right class.

Haldor Petersen – a Danish detective. Claims to be the greatest detective in the world. But, dash it all, such a title belongs to an Englishman.

Amelia Harrington – Lord Harrington's daughter. The kind of girl who likes to court scandal. Pretty though.

Rosemary Timmins – a writer of murder mysteries. You are rather fond of a good mystery novel. Not as good as the real thing though.

Thomas Smythe – the butler. Seems to know his stuff.

Amelia Harrington

Brawn: 0

Guile: +2

Perception: 0

Stealth: +2

You are the daughter of Lord Harrington. You are not yet ready to settle down and get married like father wants though. Life's too much fun at the moment. You enjoy going to wild parties, driving fast cars and having the odd flutter at the race-track. Recently you have discovered a passion for the theatre and hope to become an actress. Father was furious when he found out and ordered you back to Harrington Hall on threat of cutting your allowance. You'd love to get back to London. However, if you're going to be stuck in the country with a bunch of boring houseguests you might as well take the opportunity to practice your theatrical skills.

Cynthia Harrington – your step-mother. You think it's disgusting, she's barely older than you. You're also worried that she'll manage to spend the family fortune before you do.

Haldor Petersen – a Danish detective. Talks about himself a lot.

Robert Collingwood – a gentleman and amateur detective. The kind of stuffy, boring man your father expects you to marry.

Rosemary Timmins – a writer of murder mysteries. Maybe you could convince her to write a play that you could star in.

Thomas Smythe – the butler. You suspect he fancies you and take great delight in teasing him.

Rosemary Timmins

Brawn: -1

Guile: +3

Perception: +1

Stealth: 0

You are a highly popular writer of murder mysteries. You take your work very seriously and do extensive research. You are rather annoyed at having to spend your weekend out in the country when you could be at home working on a new novel. However, your publisher insisted that you humour Lord Harrington.

Your more famous works include:

- Murder on the Trans-Siberian Express
- Sparkling Strychnine.
- Death on the Amazon.

Cynthia Harrington – Lord Harrington's wife. Quite a bit younger than him.

Haldor Petersen – a Danish detective. Talks about himself a lot.

Robert Collingwood – a gentleman and amateur detective.

Amelia Harrington – Lord Harrington's daughter. Seems to be a bit of a “handful”.

Thomas Smythe – the butler.

Thomas Smythe

Brawn: +1

Guile: +1

Perception: +1

Stealth: +2

Your family has faithfully served the Harringtons for years. Therefore you were somewhat disconcerted to find yourself falling in love with Lord Harrington's second wife. This was even after you heard the rumours about her previous husbands and foul play.

Cynthia Harrington – Lord Harrington's wife. Your professional pride does not allow you to tell her how you feel, but you try to help her discretely.

Haldor Petersen – a Danish detective. He is always making strange food requests

Robert Collingwood – an English gentleman and amateur detective.

Amelia Harrington – Lord Harrington's daughter. This wild young lady is likely to cause a family scandal if her father does not keep her under control.

Rosemary Timmins – a mystery writer. You are an avid reader of her novels.