

The Night before Christmas

It is December 24, 1948. The socialite Evington-Browne family (“E-B” to their friends) and guests are preparing for their annual Christmas Eve 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 party has an element of added excitement, as the “Dazzling 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 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 Dazzling 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!

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

- A step-by-step guide on how to run the game.
- Character sheets for each guest, including background, goals and objectives, plus special abilities, rules and item cards.
- Handouts and other essential items.
- The solution!

How does *The Night before Christmas* work?

The Night before Christmas has been written for 12 to 15 guests – plus the host or coordinator. The step-by-step guide explains which characters to omit should you have fewer than 15 guests (you do need at least 12, however). Here's how that works:

Number of guests	Male characters	Female characters	Characters that can be played by either sex
12	5	6	1
13	6	6	1
14	6	6	2
15	6	6	3

The Night before Christmas runs over the course of 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

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

Where can I get *The Night before Christmas*?

The Night before Christmas is available from www.freeformgames.com. It costs \$29.99 (US dollars). We accept all major credit cards – and PayPal.

When you purchase the game, you'll be taken to a page where you can download it right away. We will also email you a download link and password, so you can come back to the site and collect your game later if that's more convenient.

What if I don't like *The Night before Christmas*?

No product is perfect for everyone. We know that and you know that and that's why we offer a cast-iron, no quibble guarantee. If you're not completely satisfied with *The Night before Christmas*, let us know within 30 days and we will refund you. You can read our full terms and conditions here:

<http://www.freeformgames.com/terms.php>

“The Night before Christmas was a terrific party. The story line was sophisticated enough to engage everyone but not so complicated that we didn't all get into it. My family had a blast and wanted to do it again the very next day (not practical). I'm sure we will be doing other events of this type in the future when we can get everyone together. Good fun was had by all.”
Nancy Wakeman, United States



“The Night before Christmas was the first 'whodunnit' night that I had attended, and it was initially a daunting task thinking about how to organise everyone/everything. The information sent in the pack was, however comprehensive, and the evening went off brilliantly. Everyone really enjoyed themselves (although they didn't all guess the murderer correctly), and they all want to know when the next one is going to be! Of the people who attended, a couple had been to other similar evenings, but yours was rated as the best, due to the level of interaction and improvisation involved. Many thanks for a great night!”
Chris Higginbotham, United Kingdom

“Just before Christmas this year, my sister and I decided to host a Murder Mystery Party for close friends and family. As we had quite a large group to invite, **The Night before Christmas** was the best solution. We had previously enjoyed many of the boxed Murder Mystery games, but found that the unscripted element made for a more exciting evening (including one rather dramatic death scene). Everyone threw themselves into their characters and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. There were even requests to make it an annual event!”
Liz Gore, United Kingdom



“I started having a Christmas party last year with a murder mystery, one you had to read a script and we all had a good time, but this year I tried a freeform game, **The Night before Christmas**, and everyone loved it. Everyone really got into costume. I sent out everyone's part to them well in advance I knew everyone was coming. I had so much fun myself just watching them acting out their parts. There were times I was laughing out loud and had to cover my mouth. Some of my guests were already talking about next year's party. This type of game is much better than the type you read. We loved it and will play again.”
Robin Goracke, United States

“Many thanks for all your help, and for providing such an entertaining murder mystery in **The Night before Christmas!** The party was a huge success! Definitely takes a lot of planning, but in the end it was well worth it. Other friends found out about the one I held on Dec 15, and they wanted me to do another one for them... so I'm having another one this Saturday! I'll definitely be back for more murder and mayhem! Thanks!”
Larry Weixel, United States



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 'Dazzling Diamonds' from her aunt, Miss Priscilla Evington-Browne at the climax of the evening. 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 next month!

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

For some investors, this will be a far from happy 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 next quarter.

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.

The Night before Christmas cast list

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 wilful 21-year-old daughter.

Tracy Evington-Browne: John and Rose's mischievous 16-year-old 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.

Reggie Haven: Young socialite friend of Evie's.

Christy Crompton: Young fellow-student friend of Patrick.

Soames: Butler/Housekeeper.

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

