

# The Last Gasp

A Victorian murder mystery  
for 14 to 40 people  
which you can run yourself.



George Sweet, the 5th Earl of Coddingham, has led a wicked life. Eager to keep out of reach of the law, he is planning to flee abroad. Before he goes, he holds one final party: “The Last Gasp”. Invited to it are all the people to whom his appalling behaviour has brought the most grief and heartache: his ex-wives, Florence and Dawn, his present wife, Jojo, his ballet dancer son, William, and his long-suffering friend, Bernard. George is determined to use his party to make up for past mistakes.

People from the Earl’s local village and members of his staff are also at “The Last Gasp”. The local vicar is recruiting new members for the church choir. Cavalry officer Captain Ratliffe is breaking a few more women’s hearts. Jarvis, the Earl’s loyal butler, is making sure no one steals the sherry. The Earl’s plans go slightly awry, however, when the police unexpectedly turn up, hoping to arrest someone for murder. Who do they want to arrest? The Earl of Coddingham....

“The Last Gasp” is a Victorian murder mystery which usually takes place over a meal but can also be run without food. Ideal for anyone who likes intrigue, infamy, stiff drinks and stiff collars.

## **Age Rating/Content Rating**

Although some of the characters in this plot misbehave badly in various ways, we don’t believe they get up to anything most people would take serious exception to. Infidelity, blackmail, deceit: where would any murder mystery be without them? We believe this plot is suitable for anyone aged 12 or older.

## **When is this whodunit set?**

In 1899. Please go to our [Murder Mystery Costume Guide](#) for help and fashion suggestions.

## **Hire an actor**

If you are in the UK and would like a professional actor to run your game for you, please look at Option 2 on [www.mayhem.org.uk/plots/best-value/](http://www.mayhem.org.uk/plots/best-value/). If you’d like a professional events company to put together the whole party for you, please look at Option 3 on the same page.

# Welcome to The Last Gasp

Thank you for taking the time to download this document. Most of the information you need to put it together is contained in the main game, for which you will have to pay. Before you do that, please check that your software and hardware are compatible with ours by printing out this whole document.

## *What is in this section?*

- A summary of what our murder mystery is about.
- A list of all the character parts.
- An invitation. Please don't send this out until you have bought the rest of the plot, where you will find out which characters to include in your version of it.
- A copy of the Coddingham Gazette
- Notes on how to buy your game.

## *What is included when you actually buy it?*

- Character information for each guest.
- A step-by-step guide on how to run it.
- A chart which shows how to allocate the characters: which to keep and drop.
- Paper money and all the other essential paper props: Wills, Forensic Reports, etc.
- The solution!

## *How does the Last Gasp work?*

Designed for groups of 14 to 40 people, the Last Gasp runs for up to 4 hours and works particularly well over dinner. One person acts as co-ordinator, responsible for making sure everything goes smoothly and that guests receive the information they need. They, like

all the other guests, also have a character to play in the mystery.

The co-ordinator plays the role of the Earl of Coddingham's lawyer, Sam Jenkins (short for Samuel or Samantha). One of the guests will be the murderer, although they won't know this till the end.

As well as trying to identify who the killer is, every character will also have their own, personal objectives to pursue. These will sidetrack them into making deals, bribing people and getting involved in plenty of other activities along the way.

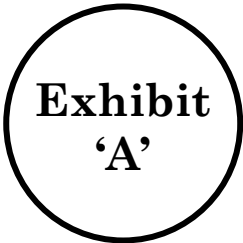
As proceedings draw to a close, people get the opportunity to make their accusations, then the correct solution is revealed and the murderer is unmasked.

## *Who has booked our murder mysteries before?*

We have been running murder mysteries professionally in the UK since 1989. Hundreds of blue-chip businesses have booked us, and a list of satisfied corporate customers is on this link to the web site of our Murder Mystery and Mayhem sister company:

[www.mayhem.org.uk/about-us/](http://www.mayhem.org.uk/about-us/)

Please do not think, however, that you can just download the game and let it run itself. By getting it at a much lower price than it usually sells for, you will obviously have to put in some work yourselves to make it a real success. But rest assured that thousands of people all over the world have done so before - and been very happy with the result.



# Invitation

The 5th Earl of Coddingham, George Sweet, is pleased to invite you to his forthcoming "last gasp" party, to be held at:

(address)

.....

on:

(date)\*

.....

starting promptly at:

(time)

.....

Please confirm whether or not you will be attending by phoning or emailing:

(organiser):

.....

on:

(phone/email)

.....

The Earl wishes it to be known that, immediately following the party, he intends to leave this wretched, stinking pit of a country for good and to move somewhere his talents will be properly appreciated. All those attending are, he promises, sure to receive something of great advantage to them.

Signed:

*George Sweet*

**\* Important note:**

As far as your character is concerned, the year George's "last gasp" takes place in 1899. If you wish to dress in a way appropriate for your character and the period, please do so!

The character George would like you to come as is:

.....

See you there!



## Exhibit 'B'

# Guest List



If your character's name is not on this list, please do not panic: there will no doubt be a good reason for this, which will become apparent later.

**George Sweet, 5th Earl of Coddingham:** Dashing, fabulously wealthy host of the party. His family motto is: "nothing succeeds like excess".

**Florence Sweet:** The Earl's darling first wife, daughter of the late Marquis of Sleasby. Florence is the mother of George's only child, William.

**William Sweet:** George's sole heir. William's desire to succeed as a ballet dancer has made him a disappointment to his father.

**Dawn Sweet:** The Earl's dear second wife, daughter of the late Harold Knight. She now devotes her life to charitable good works.

**Lady Coddingham:** The Earl's delightful third wife, once married to Bernard Fry. When she and the Earl first met, she was an exotic dancer known as "Babylon Jojo, Dynamite on Legs".

**Bernard Fry:** Lady Coddingham's ex-husband and the Earl's ex-best friend. Always willing to forgive and forget, Bernard was recently let out of prison.

**Jarvis:** The Earl's wonderfully deadpan butler. Very loyal to his master.

**Daniel Worsley:** The Earl's gardener. It's said that many of the plants Daniel cultivates are more intelligent than he is.

**Sam Jenkins:** The Earl's legal advisor, Sam has succeeded in keeping George out of trouble on many occasions.

**Captain Philip Ratliffe:** Cavalry officer Philip has a devilish way with women. Invited to all the finest parties, he also writes a gossip column for "The Gentleman" magazine, which his father owns.

**Dr. Hammer:** The Earl's private physician. It's entirely thanks to the doctor that George is now clean of all drugs.

**Martha Dooley:** Dim but eager to please, Martha is the Earl's young maid. Can be relied on to do a bit extra, when required.

**Remington Hope:** A distinguished writer, now working on the Earl's biography. Remington has spent the last two years as the Earl's house guest.

**Lord Blenkinsop:** Many people regard Blenkinsop as pompous and self-important, but that is perhaps too generous. He was present at an unsavoury incident three months ago, when some chap got shot.

**Dame Marjorie Blenkinsop:** Blenkinsop's charming mother, the Dame is getting on in years and can be forgetful, but still likes to attend important social functions.

**Harper Dinsdale:** A stranger to most people here, Harper seems particularly interested in gambling and gamblers.

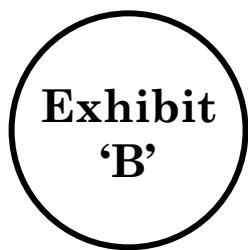
**Ruby Lipgood:** Young housewife Ruby lives in London with husband Lenny. Despite Lenny's lowly job, Ruby always manages to dress very fashionably. No doubt she is good with money.

**Lenny Lipgood:** Lenny loves Ruby so much, it hurts - especially those who have to listen to him going on about it. He works nightshifts in a bottling factory.

**Bellamy Bunting:** Bellamy is the chief reporter on the Coddingham Gazette and wrote all the stories that appear on the front page of the latest issue.

**Her Gracious, Glorious, Sublime Majesty, Queen Victoria:** Our noble Queen. What an honour it would be if she accepted George's invitation to attend this gathering.

**Humphrey Trippington:** A member of the Royal Household staff who rarely leaves the Queen's side. He always makes sure people behave properly in her presence.



# Guest List

(continued)



**Lady Masheter:** Fifi Masheter is a society hostess and organised the recent gala dinner in London which Queen Victoria attended. Fifi is well known for her immense wealth and snobbery.

**Lord Masheter:** His Lordship is the long-suffering husband of society hostess Fifi. She treats him worse than a dog. He seems to enjoy it.

**Johnny Pigge:** A surly, aggressive man who was clearly never taught good manners. No one knows why George invited him.

**Reverend Oliver Twite:** The local vicar. He often comes to call on George but has never yet been asked inside.

**Pat Hartley:** Patient and kind, local school teacher Pat does not need a cane to get the best out of pupils.

**H. Mersey:** *Times* journalist Mersey reports for the paper on crime and is always first with the top stories.

**Sir Huxtable Ratliffe:** Huxtable doesn't take nonsense from anyone, least of all his son, Captain Ratliffe. He once thrashed his servant Gibbet within an inch of his life, just for being slow with the sherry.

**Gibbet:** Sir Huxtable's manservant, Gibbet has worked for him for many years and has yet to receive a pay rise.

**Dodger:** Chirpy, cheeky young Dodger is the local grocer's boy. He is often seen on his delivery bicycle, whistling at all the girls.

**Shylock Nomes:** Shylock claims to be the inspiration for Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes character. Like Sherlock, Shylock has a brilliant mind which can unlock even the most challenging mystery.

**Pfeiffer Pfifer:** Friendly, courteous and hard-working, Pfeiffer is an academic based at the local University.

**Maggie Struthers:** Maggie's darling husband died three months ago, at the gambling club where he worked. The police decided his death was suicide, but Maggie is far from convinced.

**Alfred Smart:** Owner of Le Monsignor, the club where Maggie Struthers' husband died. George Sweet is a club member.

**Gertrude Pendle:** Gertrude is new in the area. Although fallen on hard times, she has the airs and graces of a very well-born lady.

**Edward Pendle:** Gertrude's son Edward is a professional musician and composer. Firmly convinced of his own genius, he gets very impatient with those who don't recognise it.

**Marchmain Pierrot:** One of life's losers, Marchmain worked in a lowly position at Le Monsignor club for several years. In a lucky change of fortune, Marchmain has just been taken on by George as his "dresser".

**Sterling Verity:** Local landowner Sterling is bossy, haughty, tactless and thoroughly unpleasant. It's amazing what you can get away with when you are rich.

**Rumbold McManaman:** Rumbold is Sterling Verity's neighbour. They have been feuding for many years, following a disagreement about a hedge. Anything Sterling can do, Rumbold can do better - including being obnoxious to everyone.



## Dashing Earl set to leave this land

*"Look to the future," urges George Sweet*  
Party to celebrate

Pity all the young ladies in these parts: George Sweet, fifth Earl of Coddingtonham, is soon to transport himself overseas! Dashing George is to hold one last party before his departure, to which he has invited everyone who has brought pleasure in his life so far. Among those attending will be his two charming ex-wives, Florence and Dawn, his legal advisor, Sam Jenkins, and his good friend, Bernard Fry.

The Earl has asked us to pass on his regrets to those whom he has offended in the past, and asks that they should regard such matters as ancient history. "Look to the future instead," he says. He certainly means to!

To show his deep gratitude for the many kindnesses he has received from his friends, he intends to use his "last gasp" party as an opportunity to "set the record straight". His plans to go abroad are, he says, in no way connected with any police enquiries into his activities: "I simply wish to spend more time pleasing myself." His wife, Lady Coddingtonham, has no plans to join him overseas as yet.

George asks us to inform all well-wishers that he is not expecting anyone to bring any leaving gifts to his party but, for those who can't be dissuaded, a year's supply of Chateau Lafite 1883 certainly will not go amiss!



**Long may she reign over us:  
Her Majesty, Queen Victoria.**

*Her Glorious Majesty, Queen Victoria, has been so kind as to send a letter to this newspaper, inviting us to thank all those from this locality who attended her recent Gala Dinner in London, and so helped her raise a large sum of money for good causes. Among those present were Captain Ratliffe, Dr. Hammer, Florence Sweet and Dawn Sweet.*

*Is it not the case, however, that we, her humble servants, should be thanking Her Majesty for her sublime beauty, graciousness and magnificence ?*

### A Plea for Tolerance

Concerned about a number of foul rumours spread by those less tolerant than he is, the Earl wishes to assure everyone that:

- 1) His more unusual behaviour in times gone by can be blamed on a hallucinogenic substance called "Sugarloaf". He has refrained from taking it for many years, ever since his doctor informed him that one more dose could prove his last.
- 2) The death by axe blow of Florence's father was quite obviously suicide.
- 3) The Blenkinsop "cheat" business was all a silly misunderstanding.

# HOW TO BUY YOUR GAME

THANK YOU for getting this far. Now please buy the game!

Available from anywhere in the world, the game is only available by download from the Internet. When buying a game from us, you must respect the copyright terms as set out on our [www.murdermysterygames.net](http://www.murdermysterygames.net) website and to abide by our [Terms and Conditions](#). In particular, you agree not to run your game commercially or for profit unless you have received our **specific, written consent** to do so.

## To buy online

The payment system is very secure. We don't receive or store any of your bank details ourselves. Instead, your payment will be processed via PayPal which encrypts and protects your personal details using SSL.

Please go to [www.murdermysterygames.net](http://www.murdermysterygames.net) and follow the instructions you find there. When we receive your payment, we will e-mail you a password which will enable you to download the main game. Yours for around US\$45. (We are based in the UK and prices may vary slightly according to the latest exchange rate changes.)

## Disclaimer

The game comes "as is". Any disputes arising from the sale of the game are subject to the laws of England and Wales, regardless of the geographical location of the customer.