

The Deafening Case of The Mountainside Inn

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with contributions from Jack Pachuta



How to Organize Your Kids Mystery

Ahead of time

1. Print one copy of the Chief Investigator's Briefing (pg. 2), Investigation Rules (pg. 3), Evidence Room (pg. 8), Suspect Roles (pgs. 9 - 17), and Solution to the Case (pgs. 18 and 19). Be sure to keep the solution hidden!
2. Print as many copies of the Notes and Answer Sheets (pgs. 4 - 7) as you need to match the number of participants.
3. Secure these Notes and Answer Sheets to a clipboard - OR you can make your own clipboards out of cardboard, and staple the sheets to them.
4. Post the Evidence Room in a place where the information can be easily read.

On the day of the investigation

5. Give each kid a clipboard.
6. Assign nine kids to take roles of the suspects. All other players will be private investigators.
7. If you like, you can assign kids to work in teams to solve the case.
8. Read--or choose someone to read--the Chief Investigator's Briefing and the Investigation Rules to the assembled group. Then, post both in a central location.
9. The kids investigate the case by asking key questions of the suspects. You can either organize this or simply "let it happen."
10. End after an hour or so--you'll be able to tell when it's time because the kids will be winding down their activity.
11. Assemble the group and, one at a time, ask each kid (or team) the questions on the Answer Sheet. Have each kid or team read their answers one by one.
12. Read the Solution to the Case. Whoever comes the closest to the correct solution is given the designation "Super Sleuth!" If you want to, you can award prizes.

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Chief Investigator's Briefing

It is 5:27pm. Approximately 24 hours ago, guests at the Creeky Inn--a large old mansion on the side of Shadow Mountain--heard a noise they could not identify.

It is described as a "low rumble" followed by a "bone-chilling blast of sound" that echoed through the entire inn, vibrating the walls and floors. More than one guest said it seemed as if "the inn was screaming." Since it was first heard, this noise has sounded between six and eight times - depending on which guest you ask.

Any time of the year, it can snow on the mountain and yesterday was no exception. The inn and its access road are now buried under a freak snowstorm that passed through the area. The guests cannot leave for fear of being trapped in the snow. This morning, the owner, **Homer Dumpling**, called the Shadowville police. Two officers were sent by snowmobile to the Creeky Inn and heard the noise themselves. The guests are desperate for us to identify what the noise is before nightfall.

Your job is to find the source of the noise and to figure out what is happening.

- One family is staying at the inn. The husband, **Richmond Smart**, is a successful businessman. His wife, **Angora Smart**, spends her time with environmental causes. Their son, **Jimmy Smart**, is a teenager. The **Smarts** come every year. **Jimmy** likes to play pranks in town, and is well know to the police.
- **Helen Dearing** is a world-famous test pilot who also comes every year. She's broken the airspeed record twice in her career.
- **Zelma Deal** buys and sells property. She's eager to purchase the Creeky Inn and isn't sure if she'll remodel it or demolish it. This is her first stay at Creeky Inn.
- **Rick Stranger** is a poet who makes his living chopping trees into firewood. He first came to the inn last year.
- **Burr D.. Wachter** is a longtime resident of Creeky Inn--and the only one who stays year round.
- **Zargimoff Fontuzi** is a foreign researcher doing a study on what scares people in this area. This is his first time at the Creeky Inn.

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Be sure to ask:

1. Who are you?
2. What does the noise sound like to you?
3. What were you doing last night?
4. Did you see anything suspicious?

Notes about Homer Dumping



Notes about Helen Dearing



Notes about Zargimoff Fontuzi



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Homer Dumpling, Owner of the Creeky Inn

You are a suspect. Always tell the truth when people ask you questions.

Who are you?

What? I can't hear you, but my name is Homer J. Dumpling. I own the Creeky Inn--have now for almost four decades. Who are you?

What does the noise sound like to you?

Can you just write your questions? This new hearing aid's supposed to be the best there is. But I haven't heard anything for days. Not since...well, let's see--since the **Smarts** arrived. But I can't blame it on them, even though I saw that **Jimmy Smart** monkeying around my rooms! Even took my little hearing machine to the repairman. Got home and it was fine--next day, nothing. It's driving me crazy!

What were you doing last night?

Mostly sitting and reading. That's what I do in the evenings since my wife passed away. She would have loved this crazy snow we're having. Guests were banging on my door all night, said they kept hearing a loud noise--kind of a deep shaking or rumbling--then a huge roaring sound. Some of them think it's a ghost!

Did you see anything suspicious?

Not really. After the third time, people came to complain about the noise, I went into the basement to investigate. Caught **Rick Stranger** coming up from the deep freeze with a couple of my steaks, but he said he was just hungry. I believe it. Hard for a poet to make a living in this day and age. I've always had a soft spot for **Rick**, so I just looked the other way. I enjoyed his visit last year a great deal. Sometimes at night he recites his poetry for the guests in front of the fire.

He's always looking for **Helen Dearing**. Quite a crush he has on her. Don't know if she knows. I suppose she must. And the thermostat in the main room keeps getting messed up. I must have checked it a dozen times in the last day. Seems like the inn is either way too cold or boiling. When I go to check it, sure enough, it's either turned all the way up or down.

What kind of publicity stunts have you pulled over the last year?

Oh, well, I'm glad you asked. Some quite good ones, actually. I had the whole building covered in red ribbon for Valentine's Day. That got some national attention, although it was a little expensive. We've sponsored "ghost hunts" here, where kids come overnight and try to find ghosts of the past--I play scary tapes and plant things all over the inn. Sure, it's silly, but we just need people to know about our beautiful little place on the mountain, so they'll keep coming. May I give you our Web address?

What do you know about your longtime resident, Burr D. Wacher?

Never heard of him. Some names are just easier to remember than other names.

What's this about a lost key?

Oh, well, I was checking through the inn this morning. Wanted to look in the locked part of the inn where my wife's sewing room is, but couldn't find my key. That part of the house is always sealed, though. How could the sound be coming from there?

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