

MURDER MYSTERY LOGIC PUZZLES

FOR ADULTS

CASE ZERO

THE MORTLOCK FILES



ARTHUR MORTLOCK

5 CASES • 1 HIDDEN WORD • FREE

MURDER MYSTERY LOGIC PUZZLES FOR ADULTS

CASE ZERO

The Mortlock Files

Five free cases from the autumn before Ravenwood Manor

Arthur Mortlock

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First Edition: 2026

A NOTE BEFORE THE FIRST FILE

Every detective has a first box of files. This is mine.

These five cases came across my desk in the weeks before the dinner party at Ravenwood Manor, the night that opens Murder Mystery Logic Puzzles for Adults. Each one stands on its own. Every clue is true, and every case has exactly one solution.

But the files also share a secret. When you close a case, write the first letter of the culprit's first name on the Hidden Word page. Five files, five letters, one word. The word tells you where the story goes next.

No guessing. Just logic.

Arthur Mortlock

HOW TO SOLVE A FILE

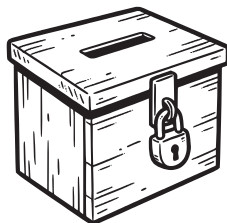
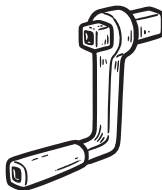
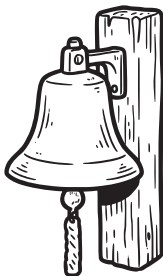
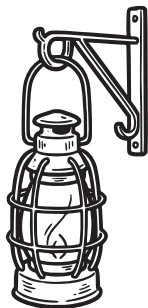
Read the scene. It ends with one fact stated outright, such as “the culprit was in the Tollhouse.” That fact is how you name the culprit once the grid is solved.

Work the grid. Each suspect matches exactly one value in each category. Mark an X when a clue rules a box out and a check when a box is confirmed. A check rules out the rest of its row and its column.

Read every kind of clue. Most clues say where someone was not. Some say where someone was. An either/or clue narrows a place to two people. A “whoever” clue pairs a room with an item without naming anyone.

Name the culprit. When the grid is complete, find the suspect who matches the fact from the scene. That is your answer, and the first letter of their first name goes on the Hidden Word page.

Files 1 and 2 use one category. Files 3 and 4 add a second, and File 5 is a full Medium case, the level of Part II in Volume 1. The Hidden Word page and the Answer Key follow the last file.



THE LANTERN AT THISTLEWICK LOCK

 VICTIM Mr. Jasper Thwaite	 SCENE Thistlewick Lock, beside the lower gates	 ESTABLISHED The culprit was in the Tollhouse
---	--	--

The lantern over Thistlewick Lock is still lit, swinging a little in the wind off the water. Mr. Jasper Thwaite, who has kept this lock for thirty years, is lying beside the lower gates, and the lock bell is still trembling on its post.

Four people were near the lock when the bell rang. The evidence at the scene settles one thing outright: the culprit was in the Tollhouse. Which of them that was is for you to establish.

Canal folk keep close accounts: of tolls, of weather, of who passed through and when. The clues below keep better ones.

 DETECTIVE'S NOTES

Not every clue is a “not.” One clue here says where someone was. Mark it with a check, then cross out the rest of that row and column.



THE SUSPECTS

01	IMOGEN TARRANT	<i>The keeper's niece, visiting from town</i>
02	CLEMENT SOWERBY	<i>A canal surveyor with plans for the lock</i>
03	RODERICK PELL	<i>A barge owner months behind on his tolls</i>
04	LAVINIA MALLORY	<i>A painter who sketched the lock every evening</i>



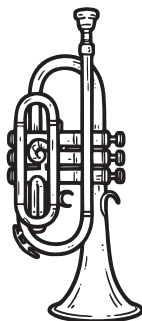
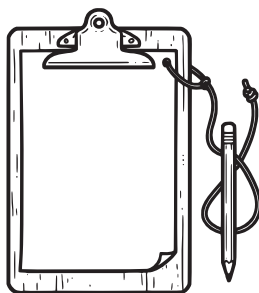
THE CLUES

- 1 Clement Sowerby was not in the Boathouse when the lock bell rang.
- 2 Clement Sowerby was not in the Tollhouse when the lock bell rang.
- 3 Imogen Tarrant was on the Towpath when the lock bell rang.
- 4 Lavinia Mallory was not in the Tollhouse when the lock bell rang.

The Grid		LOCATION			
		Lock Cottage	Tollhouse	Towpath	Boathouse
SUSPECTS	I. Tarrant				
	C. Sowerby				
	R. Pell				
	L. Mallory				

CASE VERDICT	FILE 01
THE CULPRIT IS _____	

Work it out, then check your answer in the Answer Key (File 1).



THE LAST RIBBON AT HADDON GREEN

🔪 VICTIM

Mr. Horace Pembury

📍 SCENE

Haddon Green flower show,
behind the marrow table

✓ ESTABLISHED

The culprit was in the
Judging Tent

The brass band had just struck up the prize march when someone noticed the judge's chair was empty. Mr. Horace Pembury, who has judged the Haddon Green show for twenty summers, is behind the marrow table, his rosette book open at the last page.

Four people had reason to be near him that afternoon. The evidence at the scene settles one thing outright: the culprit was in the Judging Tent. Which of them that was is for you to establish.

A village show runs on rivalries older than the marrows. Fortunately, the clues below have no favorites.

🔪 DETECTIVE'S NOTES

An either/or clue narrows a place to two people. Cross out everyone else in that column and let the other clues decide between them.



THE SUSPECTS

01	ANNABEL GREAVES	<i>Last year's champion, beaten this morning</i>
02	CEDRIC MOSS	<i>The show's treasurer</i>
03	HESTER LOWELL	<i>The vicar's sister, who organized the show</i>
04	WILFRED GILCHRIST	<i>A rival grower from the next village</i>



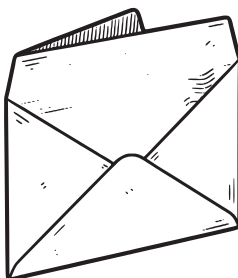
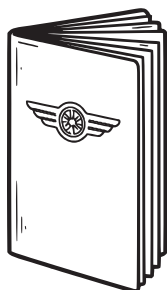
THE CLUES

- 1 Wilfred Gilchrist was not in the Tea Tent when the ribbons were given.
- 2 Cedric Moss was not in the Vicarage Garden when the ribbons were given.
- 3 Either Annabel Greaves or Wilfred Gilchrist was in the Judging Tent when the ribbons were given.
- 4 Cedric Moss was not in the Tea Tent when the ribbons were given.
- 5 Wilfred Gilchrist was not in the Judging Tent when the ribbons were given.

The Grid		LOCATION			
		Tea Tent	Bandstand	Vicarage Garden	Judging Tent
SUSPECTS	A. Greaves				
	C. Moss				
	H. Lowell				
	W. Gilchrist				

CASE VERDICT	FILE 02
THE CULPRIT IS _____	

Work it out, then check your answer in the Answer Key (File 2).



THE NIGHT EXPRESS AT THE BRACKWATER HOTEL

👤 VICTIM

Mr. Leopold Strake

📍 SCENE

Brackwater Station Hotel,
the main staircase

✓ ESTABLISHED

The culprit was in the Palm
Court

The night express is eleven minutes late into Brackwater, and by the time its whistle has faded, Mr. Leopold Strake is at the foot of his own hotel's main staircase. He has managed the Station Hotel for nine years. The clock above the desk has stopped.

Four guests and staff were awake and on the ground floor when the train came in. The evidence at the scene settles one thing outright: the culprit was in the Palm Court. Which of them that was is for you to establish.

Railway hotels keep timetables for everything. Tonight, the clues below are the only timetable you need.

THE SUSPECTS

01	MARGOT LINLEY	<i>A novelist who keeps odd hours</i>
02	VERNON HARROW	<i>The night porter</i>
03	DOROTHEA PIKE	<i>A traveling saleswoman in silks</i>
04	VIOLET ASHDOWN	<i>The manager's former fiancée</i>

THE CLUES

- ① Whoever was in the Writing Room was holding a Pocket Lamp when the night express came in.
- ② Whoever was in the Luggage Room was not holding a Timetable when the night express came in.
- ③ Violet Ashdown was not holding a Room Key when the night express came in.
- ④ Margot Linley was in the Writing Room when the night express came in.
- ⑤ Dorothea Pike was not holding a Room Key when the night express came in.
- ⑥ Whoever was in the Telegraph Office was not holding a Timetable when the night express came in.
- ⑦ Vernon Harrow was not in the Luggage Room when the night express came in.
- ⑧ Dorothea Pike was not in the Palm Court when the night express came in.

The Grid		ROOM				ITEM HELD			
		Writing Room	Luggage Room	Palm Court	Telegraph Office	Timetable	Room Key	Telegram	Pocket Lamp
SUSPECTS	M. Linley								
	V. Harrow								
	D. Pike								
	V. Ashdown								
ITEM HELD	Timetable								
	Room Key								
	Telegram								
	Pocket Lamp								

CASE VERDICT	FILE 03
THE CULPRIT IS _____	

Work it out, then check your answer in the Answer Key (File 3).

 **DETECTIVE'S NOTES**

When one person is confirmed for both a room and an item, those two belong together. Mark that pairing in the lower grid too.



THE FINAL CURTAIN AT BRIGHTWATER PIER

 VICTIM Mr. Rollo Pennyfeather	 SCENE Brightwater Pier Theatre, in the wings	 ESTABLISHED The culprit was at the Stage Door
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The audience is still applauding when the curtain comes down at the Brightwater Pier Theatre, which is why nobody hears anything in the wings. Mr. Rollo Pennyfeather, who produced tonight's revival and three before it, is found among the painted flats with the final page of the script beside him.

Four members of the company were off the stage when the curtain fell. The evidence at the scene settles one thing outright: the culprit was at the Stage Door. Which of them that was is for you to establish.

Actors are trained to be convincing. The clues below are trained to be true.

 THE SUSPECTS

01	MABEL OSTRANDER	<i>The theatre's wardrobe mistress</i>
02	ELEANOR PRIDEAUX	<i>The leading lady, about to be replaced</i>
03	LIONEL PENRITH	<i>The pier's owner</i>
04	EDGAR LARKBY	<i>The understudy, waiting for his chance</i>

 THE CLUES

- ① Eleanor Prideaux was not holding a Bouquet when the curtain fell.
- ② Lionel Penrith was holding a Hand Mirror when the curtain fell.
- ③ Mabel Ostrander was not holding a Bouquet when the curtain fell.
- ④ Edgar Larkby was not at the Stage Door when the curtain fell.
- ⑤ Whoever was in the Prop Store was not holding a Bouquet when the curtain fell.
- ⑥ Whoever was at the Stage Door was not holding a Hand Mirror when the curtain fell.
- ⑦ Whoever was in the Box Office was not holding the Script when the curtain fell.
- ⑧ Whoever was in the Box Office was not holding a Hand Mirror when the curtain fell.
- ⑨ Whoever was in the Box Office was not holding a Bouquet when the curtain fell.
- ⑩ Eleanor Prideaux was not holding a Top Hat when the curtain fell.

The Grid

		ROOM				ITEM HELD			
		Stage Door	Dressing Room	Prop Store	Box Office	Script	Top Hat	Bouquet	Hand Mirror
SUSPECTS	M. Ostrander								
	E. Prideaux								
	L. Penrith								
	E. Larkby								
ITEM HELD	Script								
	Top Hat								
	Bouquet								
	Hand Mirror								

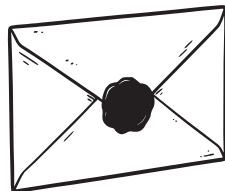
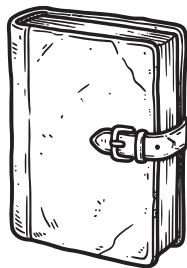
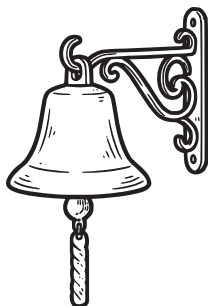
CASE VERDICTFILE 04

THE CULPRIT IS

Work it out, then check your answer in the Answer Key (File 4).

 DETECTIVE'S NOTES

Three clues say what the Box Office occupant was not holding. That leaves one item for the room before you know who was there.



THE GATEHOUSE AT RAVENWOOD

 VICTIM Mr. Josiah Tolley	 SCENE Ravenwood estate, the gatehouse	 ESTABLISHED The culprit was on the Gatehouse Stair
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A week before the dinner party at Ravenwood Manor, the gate bell rings at the estate's gatehouse a little after ten. Nobody comes through the gate. Mr. Josiah Tolley, Ravenwood's gamekeeper for twenty years, is found at the bottom of the gatehouse stair.

A letter addressed to Mr. Edmund Voss was due at the gatehouse that night, and four people were close enough to the gate to hear the bell. The evidence at the scene settles one thing outright: the culprit was on the Gatehouse Stair. Which of them that was is for you to establish.

Ravenwood keeps its secrets well. Not well enough for the clues below.

THE SUSPECTS

01	NADIA WHITLOW	<i>Ravenwood's housekeeper</i>
02	HUGO PENDEREL	<i>A land agent down from London</i>
03	NEVILLE STRICKLAND	<i>The gamekeeper's assistant</i>
04	MARGERY DUNSTAN	<i>A tenant farmer with a boundary dispute</i>

THE CLUES

- ① Nadia Whitlow was not holding the Estate Ledger when the gate bell rang.
- ② Whoever was on the Gatehouse Stair was not holding a Walking Stick when the gate bell rang.
- ③ Hugo Penderel was not on the Gatehouse Stair when the gate bell rang.
- ④ Nadia Whitlow was not holding a Sealed Letter when the gate bell rang.
- ⑤ Whoever was in the Lodge Kitchen was not holding a Walking Stick when the gate bell rang.
- ⑥ Hugo Penderel was not in the Boot Room when the gate bell rang.
- ⑦ Margery Dunstan was not holding a Walking Stick when the gate bell rang.
- ⑧ Whoever was on the Gatehouse Stair was not holding a Lantern when the gate bell rang.
- ⑨ Neville Strickland was not holding a Sealed Letter when the gate bell rang.
- ⑩ Hugo Penderel was not in the Lodge Kitchen when the gate bell rang.
- ⑪ Margery Dunstan was not holding the Estate Ledger when the gate bell rang.
- ⑫ Margery Dunstan was not holding a Sealed Letter when the gate bell rang.

The Grid		ROOM				ITEM HELD			
		Boot Room	Lodge Kitchen	Stable Yard	Gatehouse Stair	Lantern	Estate Ledger	Walking Stick	Sealed Letter
SUSPECTS	N. Whitlow								
	H. Penderel								
	N. Strickland								
	M. Dunstan								
ITEM HELD	Lantern								
	Estate Ledger								
	Walking Stick								
	Sealed Letter								

CASE VERDICT	FILE 05
THE CULPRIT IS _____	

Work it out, then check your answer in the Answer Key (File 5).

 **DETECTIVE'S NOTES**

Some clues point at a person; others point at a pairing of room and item. You will need both kinds before the grid closes.

THE HIDDEN WORD

Write the first letter of each culprit's first name, in file order.

File 1

File 2

File 3

File 4

File 5

The word is a place. If you have it, you already know where the trail leads: to a dinner party, a scream at nine o'clock, and a man found in the conservatory.

Your next case is the Warm-Up of Murder Mystery Logic Puzzles for Adults: Death at Ravenwood Manor. Seventy more cases follow it.

Mysteries You Can Solve.

ANSWER KEY & REASONING CHAINS

Each entry walks the file from its first confirmed fact to its last, one numbered step at a time, referring only to the clues printed with that file.

ANSWER & REASONING CHAIN – FILE 1

Here's how the case breaks down:

Step 1. Clue 3 places Imogen Tarrant on the Towpath directly, so Imogen Tarrant is confirmed for the Towpath, and nobody else could have been there.

Step 2. Only one possibility remained for Clement Sowerby in Location, so Clement Sowerby is confirmed for the Lock Cottage.

Step 3. Only one possibility remained for Lavinia Mallory in Location, so Lavinia Mallory is confirmed for the Boathouse.

Step 4. Only one possibility remained for Roderick Pell in Location, so Roderick Pell is confirmed for the Tollhouse.

Step 5. The scene evidence establishes that the culprit was in the Tollhouse, and the grid now shows that was Roderick Pell, which closes the case.

Solution: Roderick Pell — confirmed through direct deduction alone, using only the 4 clues and the scene evidence. Letter: R.

ANSWER & REASONING CHAIN – FILE 2

Here's how the case breaks down:

Step 1. Clue 3 leaves only two people who could have been in the Judging Tent: Annabel Greaves and Wilfred Gilchrist. Everyone else is ruled out of the Judging Tent.

Step 2. Only one possibility remained for Cedric Moss in Location, so Cedric Moss is confirmed for the Bandstand.

Step 3. Only one possibility remained for Wilfred Gilchrist in Location, so Wilfred Gilchrist is confirmed for the Vicarage Garden.

Step 4. Only one possibility remained for Hester Lowell in Location, so Hester Lowell is confirmed for the Tea Tent.

Step 5. Only one possibility remained for Annabel Greaves in Location, so Annabel Greaves is confirmed for the Judging Tent.

Step 6. The scene evidence establishes that the culprit was in the Judging Tent, and the grid now shows that was Annabel Greaves, which closes the case.

Solution: Annabel Greaves — confirmed through direct deduction alone, using only the 5 clues and the scene evidence. Letter: A.

ANSWER & REASONING CHAIN – FILE 3

Here's how the case breaks down:

Step 1. Clue 1 states outright that the Writing Room goes with a Pocket Lamp, so that pairing is confirmed.

Step 2. Clue 4 places Margot Linley in the Writing Room directly, so Margot Linley is confirmed for the Writing Room, and nobody else could have been there.

Step 3. Margot Linley is already confirmed for the Writing Room, and only one item held pairs with the Writing Room, so Margot Linley must be confirmed for a Pocket Lamp as well.

Step 4. Only Vernon Harrow could still be matched to a Room Key, so that pairing is confirmed.

Step 5. Only one item held possibility remained for the Luggage Room, so the Luggage Room is now known to go with a Telegram.

Step 6. Only one item held possibility remained for the Telegraph Office, so the Telegraph Office is now known to go with a Room Key.

Step 7. Vernon Harrow is already confirmed for a Room Key, and only one room pairs with a Room Key, so Vernon Harrow must be confirmed for the Telegraph Office as well.

Step 8. Only one possibility remained for Dorothea Pike in Room, so Dorothea Pike is confirmed for the Luggage Room.

Step 9. Dorothea Pike is already confirmed for the Luggage Room, and only one item held pairs with the Luggage Room, so Dorothea Pike must be confirmed for a Telegram as well.

Step 10. Only one possibility remained for Violet Ashdown in Room, so Violet Ashdown is confirmed for the Palm Court.

Step 11. Only one possibility remained for Violet Ashdown in Item Held, so Violet Ashdown is confirmed for a Timetable.

Step 12. Violet Ashdown is confirmed for both the Palm Court and a Timetable, so those two facts must go together.

Step 13. The scene evidence establishes that the culprit was in the Palm Court, and the grid now shows that was Violet Ashdown, which closes the case.

Solution: Violet Ashdown — confirmed through direct deduction and cross-category reasoning, using only the 8 clues and the scene evidence. Letter: V.

ANSWER & REASONING CHAIN – FILE 4

Here's how the case breaks down:

Step 1. Clue 2 states outright that Lionel Penrith was holding a Hand Mirror, so that pairing is confirmed.

Step 2. Only one possibility remained for Eleanor Prideaux in Item Held, so Eleanor Prideaux is confirmed for the Script.

Step 3. Only one possibility remained for Mabel Ostrander in Item Held, so Mabel Ostrander is confirmed for a Top Hat.

Step 4. Only one possibility remained for Edgar Larkby in Item Held, so Edgar Larkby is confirmed for a Bouquet.

Step 5. Only one possibility remained for Edgar Larkby in Room, so Edgar Larkby is confirmed for the Dressing Room.

Step 6. Edgar Larkby is confirmed for both the Dressing Room and a Bouquet, so those two facts must go together.

Step 7. Only one possibility remained for Lionel Penrith in Room, so Lionel Penrith is confirmed for the Prop Store.

Step 8. Lionel Penrith is confirmed for both the Prop Store and a Hand Mirror, so those two facts must go together.

Step 9. Only one possibility remained for Eleanor Prideaux in Room, so Eleanor Prideaux is confirmed for the Stage Door.

Step 10. Eleanor Prideaux is confirmed for both the Stage Door and the Script, so those two facts must go together.

Step 11. Only one possibility remained for Mabel Ostrander in Room, so Mabel Ostrander is confirmed for the Box Office.

Step 12. Mabel Ostrander is confirmed for both the Box Office and a Top Hat, so those two facts must go together.

Step 13. The scene evidence establishes that the culprit was at the Stage Door, and the grid now shows that was Eleanor Prideaux, which closes the case.

Solution: Eleanor Prideaux — confirmed through direct deduction and cross-category reasoning, using only the 10 clues and the scene evidence. Letter: E.

ANSWER & REASONING CHAIN — FILE 5

Here's how the case breaks down:

Step 1. Only one possibility remained for Hugo Penderel in Room, so Hugo Penderel is confirmed for the Stable Yard.

Step 2. Only one possibility remained for Margery Dunstan in Item Held, so Margery Dunstan is confirmed for a Lantern.

Step 3. Only one possibility remained for Nadia Whitlow in Item Held, so Nadia Whitlow is confirmed for a Walking Stick.

Step 4. Only one possibility remained for Nadia Whitlow in Room, so Nadia Whitlow is confirmed for the Boot Room.

Step 5. Nadia Whitlow is confirmed for both the Boot Room and a Walking Stick, so those two facts must go together.

Step 6. Only one possibility remained for Margery Dunstan in Room, so Margery Dunstan is confirmed for the Lodge Kitchen.

Step 7. Margery Dunstan is confirmed for both the Lodge Kitchen and a Lantern, so those two facts must go together.

Step 8. Only one possibility remained for Neville Strickland in Room, so Neville Strickland is confirmed for the Gatehouse Stair.

Step 9. Only one possibility remained for Neville Strickland in Item Held, so Neville Strickland is confirmed for the Estate Ledger.

Step 10. Neville Strickland is confirmed for both the Gatehouse Stair and the Estate Ledger, so those two facts must go together.

Step 11. Only one possibility remained for Hugo Penderel in Item Held, so Hugo Penderel is confirmed for a Sealed Letter.

Step 12. Hugo Penderel is confirmed for both the Stable Yard and a Sealed Letter, so those two facts must go together.

Step 13. The scene evidence establishes that the culprit was on the Gatehouse Stair, and the grid now shows that was Neville Strickland, which closes the case.

Solution: Neville Strickland — confirmed through direct deduction and cross-category reasoning, using only the 12 clues and the scene evidence. Letter: N.

THE HIDDEN WORD

Roderick · Annabel · Violet · Eleanor · Neville = **RAVEN**, as in Ravenwood Manor. The letter that was due at the gatehouse never reached Mr. Edmund Voss. A week later, he hosts a small dinner party. Turn to the Warm-Up in Volume 1 to see how that night ends.

YOUR NEXT CASE IS WAITING

Seventy fair-play whodunits, from a billiard room locked from the inside to a midnight auction and a rare book sale. Every clue is true, every case has exactly one solution, and the answer key shows how to get there, step by step.

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Mysteries You Can Solve.

