

**FROM GAVEL TO GRAVE:
AN 1885 MURDER MYSTERY
Audition Material**

Here is your audition material. Please read and decide which character(s) you'd like to audition for and study that character description(s). Be prepared to present your character in audition, hopefully without notes. The script lines will be made available at the audition. If you'd like to audition for either Eliza or Black Bart, please feel free to do so-we may or may not cast them.

Auditions are September 6 from 10 – noon and September 9 from 6-8PM both at Magic Circle Theater. Please also complete the Info Sheet attached prior to auditions. Anyone can audition – no need to have attended a murder mystery workshop or have any theater experience.

Request: Montrose Center for the Arts (MCA) has requested a wild west murder mystery for their annual fundraiser on Saturday, October 25, 2025. It will be held at the Elks Club in Montrose and will host 125-140 guests.

Setting Summary: It's 1885 in a small town in western Colorado now called Montrose. The mayor has just been murdered late this afternoon on the front steps of Town Hall. Although there was a fair share of gun play, quarrelling and saloon disturbances, most citizens lived a peaceful life serving the needs of the mining camps, as well as the cattle & sheep ranches in the valley. The dead guy was murdered late this afternoon before the mystery even launches. From there the setting is an Emergency Town Hall Meeting where everyone has gathered to get the scoop on the murdered mayor. All the characters are witnesses to some part of today and relay their observations, conversations and eaves dropping on other suspects. It's a courtroom setting where the attorney is interviewing the suspects before the crowd who are, in fact, the jury who must determine the murderer.

Background: Montrose was established in 1882 and had previously been known as Pomona, Dad's Town or Uncompahgre. The first settlers came to the Uncompahgre Valley in the 1870s but legally could not purchase land until after September 1881, when the Ute Indians were removed from their land and put on a reservation in Utah. In 1882 Montrose officially became a town. This was also the year that the DRGRR built a narrow-gauge railroad through Montrose.

CHARACTERS: 6 to 8 characters.

***Charles Moynihan, Attorney** (pronounced Monihan): Male, any age. Not a suspect. This character does all the questioning of the witnesses. Likely to be the MC. Ability to mingle with the audience in character and lots of lines but will have script in front of him during the actual show.

Myrtle Blabbermouth Woman 35-50 years old. She is the town gossip. She appears very conservative and an unlikely suspect but her true colors are revealed by the other suspects and the fact that she is a busy-body. She is a faithful member of the Methodist Church (first church built in town). She serves as the post mistress and knows everyone's business – real and imagined by her. She loves to exaggerate any piece of information she may come upon. She talks very fast and gives every last detail to everything. She grew up with the mayor and went to the school with him. He was a bully and regularly tormented Myrtle. **Costume:** Wears a bonnet and conservative skirt and blouse – some ruffles would be appropriate. Think modest/frumpy. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for at least one hour and nine lines.

Mayor's Wife – Betsy Cummings – around 30 years old with two small children, 5 & 7. Her parents moved to the Montrose from Cripple Creek when she was 10 years old and she was very unhappy. The people in Montrose bore her. They were so uncultured. She went to school with Frank Mason who was the only one who seemed to read. They would discuss Shakespeare together when they talked after Church on Sundays. When she turned 17, the men came courting. She liked Frank the best, but her parents said he was poor and that he would not be able to provide very well for her. CW also came a courting. He seemed rougher than a rodeo rider's chaps, but her parents insisted that she marry him. She hated him, but there was no way to escape him, or so she thought. She has been married for 10 years and he has played around the entire time. She has two small children by him (or so she says) but they look much like the sheriff, Frank Mason. Her family owned a local ranch and she knows how to handle a gun since she was a little girl. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for about an hour. Two very dramatic lines.

***Sheriff - Frank Mason** This man is an upstanding citizen of Montrose: or so we think. He's a real ladies' man, flirts with all women. He had an on-going relationship with Miss Fanny but cut it off when he became sheriff. The new mayor told him he felt the sheriff needed to keep a clean image and she was a bit of a hussy. The mayor also told him he'd better keep his nose clean and Miss Fanny wasn't helping his image. In reality, the sheriff hates the mayor and has a bunch of secrets regarding each of the other suspects. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for about an hour. Ten lines.

Saloon Owner Miss Fanny. She might be a bit older as she is the owner of the saloon. She must be willing to wear a saloon girl get up. Was the sheriff's girlfriend but was thrown over by him when he became sheriff last year (same time the mayor was elected). She was truly in love with him but knew he played around a lot. She is still distressed over him, still loves him. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for about an hour. Nine lines.

***John Adams**—Coroner. Early in the show, he merely verifies the dead body of Mayor C.W. Cummings and the cause of death. He is not a suspect. NOTE: This part would be recruited from the audience. One line.

~~**Black Bart – Bandit/Gun Slinger** Been in town for the past few weeks for no apparent reason. Likely suspect to be the murderer. Like any common criminal, he doesn't talk much. Did the sheriff pay him to murder the mayor? Why is Black Bart in town? Just taking a break from gun slinging or hiding out from another "incident" in another town? He's not very forthcoming. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for about an hour. 14 lines.~~

~~***Eliza Butler:** 25-35 year old, poor, young woman of color who did laundry and cooking for the upper-class families in town. She is privy to lots of conversations as no one really regards her as a viable person. After all, she is nothing but a house maid. She is an unlikely suspect until she reveals all that she has seen and heard about the mayor from all the suspects. Ability to mingle with the audience in character for about an hour. 10 lines.~~

*Names are historically accurate but the personalities and deeds are purely fiction.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS? PLEASE CONTACT
CHRIS MCDONALD, MURDER MYSTERY QUEEN
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**ACTOR INFORMATION &
MURDER MYSTERY AUDITION FORM**

Name: Phone: Text? Y N

Age if under 18 years old Phone:

Address:

Email: print clearly! Gender?

Age range for acting: (ex: 20-35)

What show are you auditioning for and which character(s)?

Show _____

Character(s) _____

Dates you are NOT available between today and the date of the show. (October 25)

Days and times you are generally available. Please circle the days that work for you.

Evenings: (generally starting at 6 or 6:30) Mon Tues Wed Thu Fri

Weekends: Sat Mornings Sat Afternoons Sunday Afternoons

Are you new to Magic Circle? Yes No Other?

A short list of theatre experience:

Would you be interested in helping with any other aspects of any of our performances? (ex: script writing, sound, lights, stage crew, costumes, ushering, prompting, etc.)

Have you participated in or attended a murder mystery? Y N Where? When?

Have you attended the MCP Intro Murder Mystery Workshop? Y N

For more information about Murder Mystery@Magic Circle, please contact:

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