MURDUZZLE

BOOK ONE

The Rookery Files

Murder Mystery Word Search Puzzle Book

100 Word Searches, 50 Murders,
One Killer to Name in Every Case

Find the words.
Recover the evidence.
Name the killer.

H. J. LINNEL

PRYWELL

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Publication notes

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This is a work of fiction. Its people, businesses, records and crimes are invented. Any resemblance to actual people or events is coincidental.

The word grids reveal clues created for this book; they do not represent real investigative practice. These bounded cases are recreational puzzles, not legal standards of proof.

All the evidence each file asks you to use is in this book. No app, account or online answer service is needed. Hints and complete explanations are in this volume.

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Open a file. Follow the evidence.

1 Read the file

Inspector Mara Vale and her records clerk, Kit Rowan, work every case. Every file has its own suspects, two word searches and one question: who did it?

2 Find every listed word

Each search term appears exactly once. A term of more than one word runs together in the grid, without spaces. Which ways the words run depends on the file: see “How hard does it get?” on the next page. From File 31 on, some pairs of words cross and share one letter; a shared letter counts as used.

3 Recover the clue

Read the letters that belong to no word, left to right, row by row from the top. Add the spaces yourself. There are no filler letters.

4 Work the case file

The last page of every file holds its records: a table, a plan, a set of notes, a timeline or a rule card. The clues never say what to do with them. Working that out is the puzzle. The first time a new kind of record turns up, a short “How this works” line shows you the idea; after that you are on your own.

5 Close the file

Every file tells you where its hints and solution are. Any order is fine; Files 28, 38 and 48 borrow rules from earlier files and give their pages.

6 Collect the Room 19 letter

Once you have named the killer, the case file asks for one letter of that name, like “the killer’s name, second letter.” Name the wrong suspect and you will usually get the wrong letter. Fifty letters fill the Room 19 ledger on page 220.

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Your rules of evidence

One file, one killer. Somebody on the file's list did it, alone. No accomplices.

Records don't lie. People might. Logs, cards, plans, slips and lists are always right. What someone says is only a claim until a record backs it up.

A motive is not a verdict. Everyone had a reason to be angry. Evidence that ties a person to the attack decides the case.

No tricks. Tables show clothes, shoes, gloves and marks as they were at the attack, unless a table or file says otherwise. There are no secret twins, hidden passages or last-minute exceptions.

Everything you need is in the book. Each file explains its own gadgets, or gives the page where an earlier file did. The case file says what counts as a record.

Word lists are just word lists. The search words fit the theme, but they aren't clues. Only the two recovered clues are.

Take help in steps. A search starter gives a first word, the clue key a clue alone, a hint a nudge. Solutions come last.

HOW HARD DOES IT GET?

Files	Tier	Grid	Words run
1–10	Rookie	9 × 9	Across and down only
11–20	Rookie	9 × 9	Adds the downward diagonals
21–30	Detective	12 × 12	All eight directions
31–40	Detective	12 × 12	All eight; some words cross
41–50	Inspector	15 × 15	All eight; more diagonals

Each file's first page shows its logic level, from ●○○○ (gentle) to ●●●● (hard). It rises and falls on purpose: a lighter file often follows a hard one, and every tenth file is among the hardest in its tier. A big grid can still hide a quick case.

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Leave yourself a way back

Mark progress, not correctness. Tick each clue as you recover it, and tick Closed once you have read the ending.

File		Page	Clue 1	Clue 2	Closed
01	The Lamp in the Yard	10	☐	☐	☐
02	Five Pots on the Stairs	14	☐	☐	☐
03	Marmalade on the Cellar Steps	18	☐	☐	☐
04	The Last Ferry Over	22	☐	☐	☐
05	Bread Before Dawn	26	☐	☐	☐
06	Five Coats in the Cloakroom	30	☐	☐	☐
07	Hallam's Last Repair	34	☐	☐	☐
08	Black Dust on the Wharf	38	☐	☐	☐
09	The Stamp Without a Slip	42	☐	☐	☐
10	A Turn of the Millrace	46	☐	☐	☐
11	A Nightcap at Cobb's	52	☐	☐	☐
12	The Trap Under the Stage	56	☐	☐	☐
13	Five Stubs at the Gate	60	☐	☐	☐
14	Night at the Halt	64	☐	☐	☐
15	The Painted Crystals	68	☐	☐	☐
16	Steam and Starch	72	☐	☐	☐
17	The Lamp Over the Darkroom Door	76	☐	☐	☐
18	The Cooling Tank	80	☐	☐	☐
19	The Gun at the Start of the Final	84	☐	☐	☐
20	The Milliner's Back Office	88	☐	☐	☐
21	Silence in the Reading Room	94	☐	☐	☐
22	The Works After Dark	98	☐	☐	☐
23	Going, Going, Gone	102	☐	☐	☐
24	The Boarding-House Breakfast	106	☐	☐	☐
25	Under Glass at Crane's	110	☐	☐	☐

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File		Page	Clue 1	Clue 2	Closed
26	The Brewer's Tally	114	☐	☐	☐
27	Pledged and Never Redeemed	118	☐	☐	☐
28	Road Two	122	☐	☐	☐
29	The Bells on Practice Night	126	☐	☐	☐
30	Six Benches of Fruit	130	☐	☐	☐
31	The Last Collection	136	☐	☐	☐
32	Hemp on the Long Walk	140	☐	☐	☐
33	The Solicitors' Waiting Room	144	☐	☐	☐
34	Twice for a Straight Furrow	148	☐	☐	☐
35	The Reserve at Wardle's	152	☐	☐	☐
36	Second Act at the Lyric	156	☐	☐	☐
37	The Walkway Under the Water	160	☐	☐	☐
38	Sorting Till Dawn	164	☐	☐	☐
39	The Spring List	168	☐	☐	☐
40	The Brass Tokens	172	☐	☐	☐
41	Pym's Last Edition	178	☐	☐	☐
42	The Lamplighters' Contest	182	☐	☐	☐
43	The Toymaker's Little Book	186	☐	☐	☐
44	A Bill at the Livery	190	☐	☐	☐
45	What the Snow Kept	194	☐	☐	☐
46	The Glove Counter	198	☐	☐	☐
47	The Mulled Wine Round	202	☐	☐	☐
48	The Demon's Cue	206	☐	☐	☐
49	Practice at St. Wilfrid's	210	☐	☐	☐
50	The Last Night of the Year	214	☐	☐	☐

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The desk beneath the stairs

The Rookery Inn had a room for lost umbrellas, a cupboard for good china and, beneath the back stairs, a desk for things nobody knew how to file.

Kit Rowan inherited the desk in January, along with a new job: records clerk to Inspector Mara Vale, who had taken two rooms at the Rookery for a year's work across the district. The drawers held three keys without labels and an invoice from the Wrenfield Hotel.

The Wrenfield had been sealed for seven years. Yet the receivers were billing Room 19 for everything used there since last spring, for fresh stationery, a replacement lock and breakfast for one guest every summer morning, and the bills were still coming. No guest was named. Pinned to the invoice was a notice from the receivers who held the building: unless the bill was explained by New Year's Day, everything in Room 19 would be sold at auction that morning.

"Evidence goes with its explanation," Vale said. "Separate them and people make up a better story." Kit wrote that down. Vale pretended not to notice.

You take the other chair. Recover the clues, make your own call, then read how each file was closed. Every file also gives you one letter for the Room 19 ledger on page 220. The invoice can wait until the year's work is done. Fifty people deserve their stories put in order first.

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In the drawer

WRENFIELD HOTEL / ACCOUNT FOR ROOM 19

Fresh stationery	Delivered to the room
Replacement lock	Fitted to the door
Breakfast for one	Every morning, April to October
Guest	Not named

Billed by the receivers. The hotel itself has been sealed for seven years.

NOTICE. Unless this account is explained by New Year's Day, the contents of Room 19 will be sold at auction on that morning, at ten o'clock.

Kit put the invoice back in the drawer, the three keys on top of it, and opened the first file.

File 01: page 10.

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The Lamp in the Yard

THE ROOKERY INN / JANUARY 9

Innkeeper Hector Lyle had kept the Rookery Inn for forty years. At supper he told the house he had agreed to sell it to a brewery, and that the papers would be signed in the morning. Then he shut himself in the back parlor with his solicitor, who left him well at half past ten.

Just before eleven the yard lamp caught a figure in a coat, head covered, crossing from the scullery door to the parlor window. A minute later Hector was found struck dead at his desk, the sale papers still unsigned under a brass wren with a key in its beak. The scullery floor had been scrubbed at ten. "So whatever is on it is tonight's," Kit said. Vale held the lamp higher. "And whoever walked there was in a hurry."

THE FOUR SUSPECTS

Bram | cook — "A brewery has its own cooks." Hector had told him the kitchen would close.

Edith | housekeeper — "I have kept this house for twenty years." Hector had asked her to pack the linen for the sale.

Clive | porter — "I carry the coal. I don't carry grudges." Hector had promised him the stable lease, then sold it with the inn.

Tessa | lodger — "My rent is paid to the end of the year." Hector had told her the brewery wanted her room by Friday.

YOUR CASE STEPS

☐ Clue 1 ☐ Clue 2 ☐ Work the case file

☐ Name the killer ☐ Record your Room 19 letter

Your verdict: _____

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Clue 1

Find 9 terms. Words run across and down only. Read unused letters in row order.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	I	M	O	P	T	H	S	H	T
2	N	P	E	C	O	A	A	A	U
3	K	E	T	I	N	T	D	L	R
4	W	W	H	E	L	A	D	L	E
5	E	T	M	P	L	I	L	W	E
6	L	E	G	H	T	W	E	A	N
7	L	R	A	S	O	A	P	Y	S
8	G	R	S	K	I	L	L	E	T
9	A	Y	T	A	N	K	A	R	D

- ☐ **HALLWAY**
- ☐ **INKWELL**
- ☐ **MOP**
- ☐ **PEWTER**
- ☐ **SADDLE**
- ☐ **SKILLET**
- ☐ **SOAP**
- ☐ **TANKARD**
- ☐ **TUREEN**

Clue: _____

Search starter: 223 / Clue key: 227 / Hints: 231 / Solution: 242

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Clue 2

Before Clue 2, write your guess: _____

Find 9 terms. Words run across and down only. Read unused letters in row order.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	S	U	G	A	R	T	H	E	S
2	C	U	L	L	T	A	L	L	Y
3	E	R	S	U	P	P	E	R	Y
4	P	W	A	S	H	T	U	B	R
5	F	I	R	E	W	O	O	D	I
6	N	T	C	U	R	T	A	I	N
7	S	W	E	R	G	U	E	S	T
8	E	S	M	O	A	S	H	E	S
9	O	T	M	A	N	T	E	L	H

- ☐ **ASHES**
- ☐ **CURTAIN**
- ☐ **FIREWOOD**
- ☐ **GUEST**
- ☐ **MANTEL**
- ☐ **SUGAR**
- ☐ **SUPPER**
- ☐ **TALLY**
- ☐ **WASHTUB**

Clue: _____

Search starter: 223 / Clue key: 229 / Hints: 231 / Solution: 242

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Who’s the killer?

How this works: each clue settles one thing about the attacker. Check it against the table, then look for the one person who fits both.

THE RECORDS

Kit wrote down what each of the four wore outdoors that night and checked the boots lined up by the scullery door. Nobody borrowed anything. Only the figure in the lamplight crossed the scullery after ten, and nobody else reached the parlor window or came in by the parlor’s inside door after the solicitor left.

Suspect	Coat	Boot soles	Hat
Bram	cook	Gray	Hobnail	Cap
Edith	housekeeper	Gray	Smooth	Bonnet
Clive	porter	Brown	Hobnail	Felt hat
Tessa	lodger	Black	Smooth	Felt hat

USE BOTH CLUES WITH THE RECORDS. CIRCLE YOUR SUSPECT.

○ Bram | cook
the cook and the kitchen

○ Clive | porter
the porter and the stable

○ Edith | housekeeper
twenty years in the house

○ Tessa | lodger
the lodger and her room

ROOM 19 The killer’s name, third letter → ledger square B17

Hints: 231 / Solution and ending: 242 / Next: page 14.

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