CLUDOKU

THE NIGHT BEFORE ADVENT

5 FREE COZY MURDER MYSTERY LOGIC PUZZLES



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READ THE STATEMENTS. WORK THE SCENE. NAME THE GUILTY.

THE NIGHT BEFORE ADVENT

5 free cozy murder mystery logic puzzles



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The Night Before Advent
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English edition. First edition 2026. Independently published.

Set in Anton, Figtree and Roboto Condensed (SIL Open Font License). Every case was generated and checked by computer: each has exactly one solution.

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CASE FILE · 00

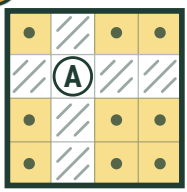
THE BRIEFING

Each case in this book is a single moment, frozen: the instant the deed was done. Everyone present is sitting, standing or lying somewhere on the floor plan, and each has given a statement about where. Settle in, put every person back on their exact square, and the guilty party will quietly give themselves away.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT **Rebuild the scene, then name the guilty:** the only suspect who ended up in the same room as the victim.

THREE LAWS OF THE SCENE

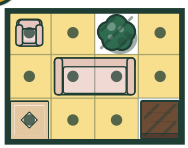
I



One per line

Nobody – the victim included – shares a **row** or a **column** with anyone else. When a map has as many people as rows, **every row holds exactly one person**; the same goes for columns. Place one person and their whole row and column close for everybody else.

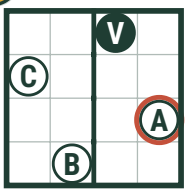
II



Mind the furniture

People stand on bare floor or use **armchairs**, **sofas** or **rugs**. **Tables**, **Christmas trees**, **registers**, **bookcases**, **book boxes** and **reading lamps** are **in the way** – nobody can be on those squares.
An object covering several squares is still **one** object: a person on any of its squares is **on** it, not beside it.

III



Alone with the body

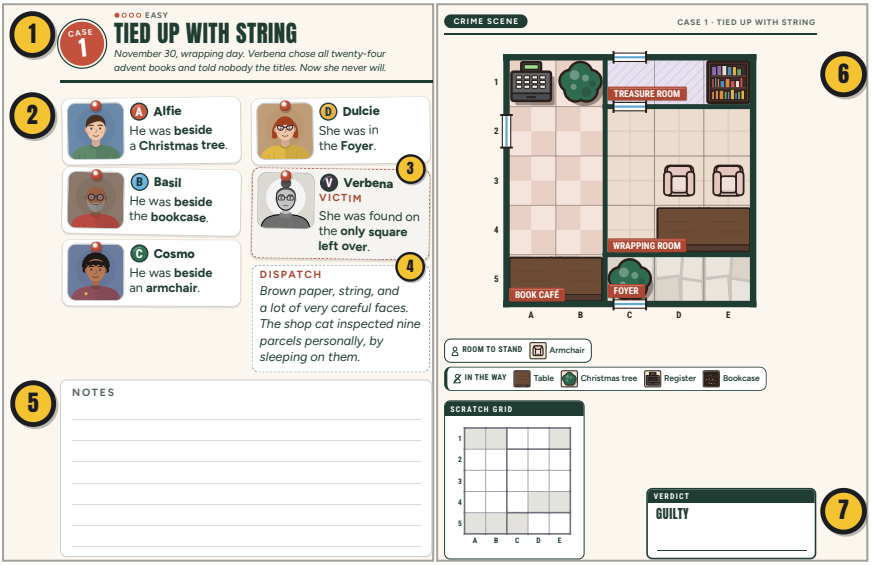
Exactly **one suspect** ends up in the same room as the victim. That suspect is **guilty**. The victim's own card tells you how to find their square – and the victim **counts as a person** in every clue.

Every person is on exactly one square. Every statement on the person cards and every Evidence clue is **true** – including the culprit's. Titles, introductions and dispatch notes are atmosphere only; they never contain clues.

Work in pencil. Cross out squares that are ruled out, write a letter on a square once you are sure, and keep everything else in the Notes box – smaller maps also come with a scratch grid.

ANATOMY OF A CASE

Every case fills one spread. This is how the first one in this book is laid out:



1. **Case number and level.** The dots show how tough it is.
2. **The people.** One card each: photo, letter, name and what they said about where they were.
3. **The victim's card** says where to find them.
4. **Dispatch.** A note from the station – atmosphere only, never a clue. An **Evidence** box, where a case has one, is a real clue.
5. **Notes.** Room for your own working – every case has some.
6. **The scene.** The floor plan: columns lettered A, B, C … along the bottom, rows numbered 1, 2, 3 … down the side.
7. **Scratch grid and verdict.** Smaller maps come with a scratch grid for your working. Then write down who is guilty.

CASE FILE · 00

CASE ZERO

A small case to learn on: three suspects, one victim and a 4×4 floor plan with two rooms. Squares are named by column letter, then row number: C4 is column C, row 4. Read the statements, then follow the log.



A Albert

He sat on the **armchair**.



B Barnaby

He was **in front of** a **window**.



C Clara

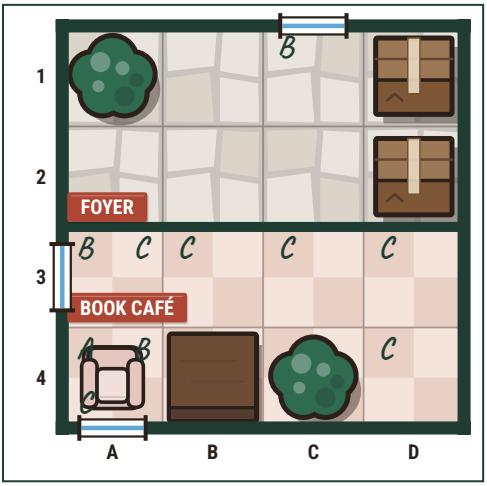
She was in the **Book Café**.



V Violet

VICTIM

She was found on the **only square left over**.



0 Pencil in the possibilities. Nobody can be on tables, Christmas trees, registers, bookcases, book boxes or reading lamps. Going by their statements, **Albert**, **Barnaby** and **Clara** can only be on these squares:

THE DEDUCTION LOG

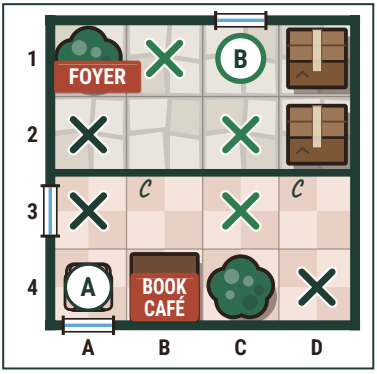
1. **Albert** has only one square on the armchair. That puts **Albert** on the armchair in A4.

2. **Barnaby**: Own statements leave only C1, A3 and A4. A3 and A4: rows or columns already taken by **Albert**. Therefore **Barnaby** is in C1.

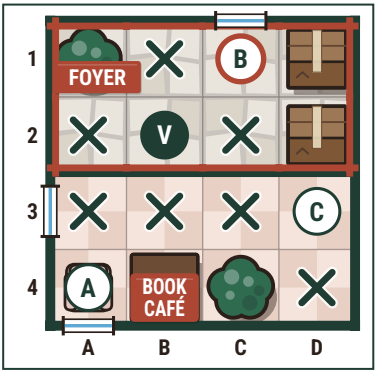
3. **Violet**: Only B2, B3 or D3 still possible. B3 and D3: **Clara** must be in row 3. So **Violet** is in B2.

4. **Clara**: Own statements leave only A3, B3, C3, D3, A4 and D4. A3, B3, C3, A4 and D4: rows or columns already taken by **Albert**, **Violet** and **Barnaby**. That puts **Clara** in D3.

5. **Who shared a room with Violet? Only Barnaby. Case closed.**



THE SCENE AFTER STEP 2



THE REVEAL



VERDICT

B Barnaby

Only one suspect was in the same room as the victim.

FIELD GUIDE

Everything on a floor plan either gives someone a place to be or gets in the way. This is what you will meet in this book.

ROOM TO STAND, SIT OR LIE


Armchair


Sofa


Rug

IN THE WAY


Table


Christmas tree


Register


Bookcase


Book box

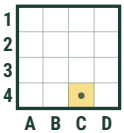

Reading lamp

WINDOWS



Windows are set into the walls. A square is **in front of a window** when one of its sides touches it – a window in an inner wall touches the squares on both sides.

WORDS THAT MATTER



C4

Squares are named by column letter, then row number: C4 is column C, row 4. Rows are numbered 1, 2, 3 … from the top, columns lettered A, B, C … from the left; there is no column I, so a letter never looks like a 1.



beside

Sharing a side with it – directly above, below, left or right – **and** in the same room. Diagonals don't count, and neither does the thing a person is on – not even its other squares.



in a corner

On a square with walls of their own room on two sides that meet, for example above and to the left. Walls are the thick lines, including the edge of the map.



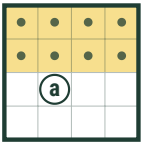
alone / alone with (a)

Alone: nobody else was in the room – not even the victim. **Alone with (a):** exactly these two people were in the room, nobody else. (If both are suspects, the victim was elsewhere.) **The victim was alone with the culprit:** exactly the victim and the culprit were in that room.

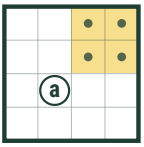


empty

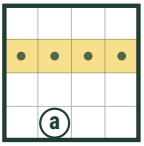
Nobody at all was in the room – not even the victim. Said of an object: nobody was on it. Clues that count people always include the victim.



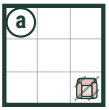
north / south / east / west of (a)
Anywhere above / below / right / left of person (a) – any distance, any room.



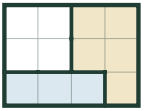
northeast of (a) and so on
Both at once: further up **and** further right than (a).



two rows north of (a)
Exactly that many rows further up than (a), in any column.



sat on an armchair, and nobody else did
Nobody else sat on any armchair – not even the victim. The same goes for "was beside a table, and nobody else was".



room
Any area fenced in by thick lines – the Shop Floor, the Reading Nook or the Book Café, for example.

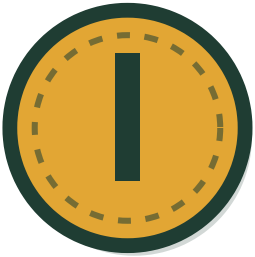
TRICKS OF THE TRADE

A Start with the loners
Look for a statement that leaves only one square – beside the only one of something, in front of the only window, in a one-square nook. Place that person first: every placement closes a whole row and column. And when there are as many people as rows, if only one person can still reach a row, that person is in it.

B Count heads per room
Statements like "alone", "no room was empty" or "three people in the room" are about numbers. Count who can still reach each room and the numbers often decide for you.

C Two squares, one shadow
When someone is down to two squares, any square that shares a row or column with **both** of them is out for everybody else – whichever square turns out right, it blocks that one.

NOTES



CHAPTER I

ON THE BEAT

Warm-up cases. Every statement pulls its weight, and one clean line of reasoning leads home.

●○○○ EASY · CASES 1–2

· ON THE BEAT · CHAPTER I · ON THE BEAT · CHAPTER I · ON THE BEAT · CHAPTER I ·

CASE 1

●○○○ EASY

TIED UP WITH STRING

November 30, wrapping day. Verbena chose all twenty-four advent books and told nobody the titles. Now she never will.



A Alfie

He was **beside** a **Christmas tree**.



B Basil

He was **beside** the **bookcase**.



C Cosmo

He was **beside** an **armchair**.



D Dulcie

She was in the **Foyer**.



V Verbena

VICTIM

She was found on the **only square left over**.

DISPATCH

Brown paper, string, and a lot of very careful faces. The shop cat inspected nine parcels personally, by sleeping on them.

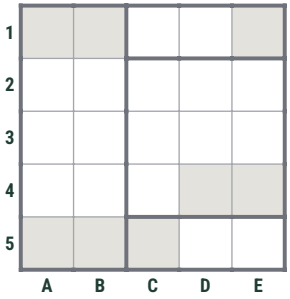
NOTES



ROOM TO STAND Armchair

IN THE WAY Table Christmas tree Register Bookcase

SCRATCH GRID



VERDICT

GUILTY

CASE 2

●○○○ EASY

FA-LA-LA-LETHAL

Vashti decorated the shop to a laminated plan, bauble by bauble. This afternoon somebody went off-plan with the tinsel.



A Agnes

She was in the **Event Hall**.



B Bea

She was in the **Owner's Study**.



C Caspar

He was **beside** the **reading lamp**.



D Dev

He sat on an **armchair**.

He was in the **Event Hall**.



E Ezra

He was **beside** a **book box**.



V Vashti

VICTIM

She was found on the **only square left over**.

DISPATCH

Forty meters of fairy lights, finally untangled. The alibis are proving harder.

NOTES



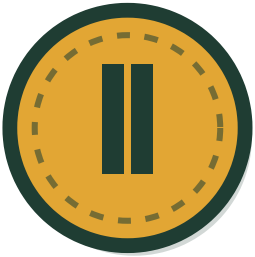
ROOM TO STAND · Armchair · Rug

IN THE WAY · Table · Book box · Reading lamp

VERDICT

GUILTY

NOTES



CHAPTER II

PLAIN CLOTHES

More suspects, bigger floor plans. Expect to combine two statements before a square gives way.

●●○○ MEDIUM · CASES 3–4

I · PLAIN CLOTHES · CHAPTER II · PLAIN CLOTHES · CHAPTER II · PLAIN CLOTHES · CHAP

●●○○ MEDIUM

CASE 3

OUT FOR DELIVERY

The van with the new stock is stuck in a snowdrift a mile out of town. Vespasian walked the last mile in. He did not walk out.



A Abe

He was in the **Archive Room**.

He was in **column** [A].



B Bastian

He was at the **Cocoa Bar**.

He was in a **corner** of his room.



C Cressida

She was **beside** a **table**.

She was in a **corner** of her room.



D Daphne

She was **beside** a **table**.

She was in the **Poetry Attic** or at the **Cocoa Bar**.



E Effie

She was in **row** [6].

She was **in front of** a **window**.



V Vespasian

VICTIM

He was found on the **only square left over**.

DISPATCH

A van full of brand-new books, somewhere under a snowdrift. Everyone here is remarkably calm about it. Suspiciously calm.

NOTES



ROOM TO STAND

- Armchair
- Sofa
- Rug

IN THE WAY

- Table
- Christmas tree
- Bookcase
- Reading lamp

VERDICT

GUILTY

●●○○ MEDIUM

CASE 4

PLACES, PLEASE

The staff rehearsed tomorrow's opening reading in secret. Vadim directed. He said 'once more from the top' one time too many.



A Annika

She was in **row** 1.



B Benji

He was **in front of** a **window**.

He was **north** of **Vadim**.



C Cal

He was **beside** a **bookcase**.

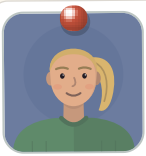
He was **east** of **Benji**.



D Delia

She was in a **corner** of her room.

She was **east** of **Esme**.



E Esme

She was **beside** a **book box**.



F Freya

She was on the **Shop Floor**.

She was in a **corner** of her room.



V Vadim

VICTIM

He was found on the **only square left over**.

DISPATCH

Nobody knows their lines. Everybody knows their motive. The shop cat has been cast as itself and is word-perfect.

NOTES



ROOM TO STAND · Armchair · Rug

IN THE WAY · Table · Bookcase · Book box · Reading lamp

VERDICT

GUILTY

NOTES



CHAPTER III

MAJOR CRIMES

Busy scenes and tight-lipped witnesses. Keep track of who could still reach each room.

●●●○ HARD · CASES 5–5

II · MAJOR CRIMES · CHAPTER III · MAJOR CRIMES · CH

CASE 5

●●●○ HARD

DRESSED TO KILL

Eleven at night, and Vesna was still dressing the shop-front display for tomorrow. By midnight the display was finished. So was Vesna.



A Ansel

He was in **row** 6.

He did **not** sit on an **armchair**.



B Bertie

He sat on an **armchair**.

He was in a **corner** of his room.



C Clement

He was in **column** D.

He was **north** of **Ansel**.



D Dmitri

He was **not** in the **Book Café**.



E Edwina

She was in the **Fireside Nook**.



F Fenella

She was **beside** an **armchair**.

She was **not** in the **Book Café**.



G Gwen

She was **beside** an **armchair**.

She was **south and east** of **Bertie**.



V Vesna

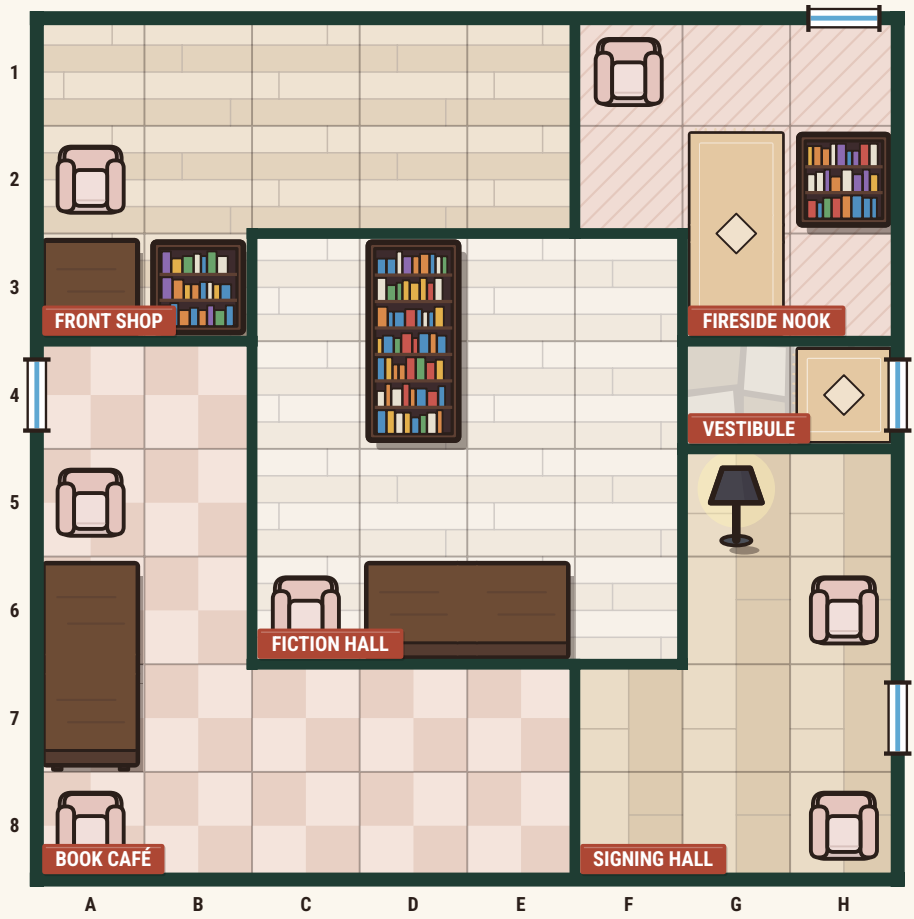
VICTIM

She was found on the **only square left over**.

DISPATCH

Snow falling, cocoa going cold, and everyone very keen to go home. Not yet. The advent calendar opens in a few hours.

NOTES



ROOM TO STAND — Armchair — Rug

IN THE WAY — Table — Bookcase — Reading lamp

VERDICT

GUILTY

TIP-OFFS

Stuck? Each tip-off points to a good first move – nothing more. Cover the page and uncover only your own case.

1 TIED UP WITH STRING

B has only one square beside the bookcase.

2 FA-LA-LA-LETHAL

C is confined to one column. What does that rule out for D?

3 OUT FOR DELIVERY

E is confined to one row. What does that rule out for A?

4 PLACES, PLEASE

A is confined to one row. What does that rule out for F?

5 DRESSED TO KILL

A is confined to one row. What does that rule out for B?

VERDICTS

Open this file only once you have named a suspect.

VERDICT

GUILTY
Alfie

SOLUTION

1. Tied Up with String



A Alfie B Basil C Cosmo D Dulcie V Verbena

1. B has only one square beside the bookcase.
   That puts B in D1.
2. A: Own statements leave only B2 and D5.
   - D5: B is already in column D.

   Therefore A is in B2.
3. D: Own statements leave only D5 and E5.
   - D5: B is already in column D.

   So D is in E5.
4. C: Own statements leave only D2, E2, C3, D3 and E3.
   - D2, E2, D3 and E3: rows or columns already taken by B, A and D.

   That puts C in C3.
5. Only one square is left for V.
   Therefore V is in A4. **A was the only suspect in the room with V. A did it!**

SOLUTION

2. Fa-La-La-Lethal

VERDICT

GUILTY

Ezra



A Agnes B Bea C Caspar D Dev E Ezra V Vashti

1. **D**: Own statements leave only F1 and C4.
   - C4: **C** must be in column C.

   That puts **D** on the armchair in F1.
2. **B**: Own statements leave only F5, E6 and F6.
   - F5 and F6: **D** is already in column F.

   Therefore **B** is in E6.
3. **A**: Only C2, C4 or D4 still possible.
   - C2 and C4: **C** must be in column C.

   So **A** is in D4.
4. **C**: Own statements leave only C2 and C4.
   - C4: **A** is already in row 4.

   That puts **C** in C2.
5. **V**: Only A3, A5 or B5 still possible.
   - A3 and A5: **E** must be in column A.

   Therefore **V** is in B5.
6. **E**: Own statements leave only A3, B4, A5 and B6.
   - B4, A5 and B6: rows or columns already taken by **A**, **V** and **B**.

   So **E** is in A3. **E was the only suspect in the room with V. E did it!**

SOLUTION

3. Out for Delivery

VERDICT

GUILTY

Effie



A Abe B Bastian C Cressida D Daphne E Effie
V Vespasian

1. **A**: Own statements leave only A5 and A6.
   - A6: **E** must be in row 6.

   That puts A on the armchair in A5.
2. **Row 3: B**, **D** and **E** ruled out – own statements.
   - **V** – needed in row 4 (nobody else can go there).

   Only C can still go in row 3. Therefore C is in F3.
3. **B**: Own statements leave only D1, D2 and F2.
   - F2: **C** is already in column F.
   - D2: every square left for **D** (D1 and E2) shares a row or column with D2.

   So B is in D1.
4. **D**: Own statements leave only D1, E2 and F2.
   - D1 and F2: rows or columns already taken by **B** and **C**.

   That puts D in E2.
5. **E**: Own statements leave only C6 and F6.
   - F6: **C** is already in column F.

   Therefore E is in C6.
6. Only one square is left for **V**.

   So V is on the rug in B4. E was the only suspect in the room with V. E did it!



SOLUTION

4. Places, Please

VERDICT

GUILTY
Benji

A Annika B Benji C Cal
D Delia E Esme F Freya
V Vadim

1. **F**: Own statements leave only E1 and E3.
   - E1: **A** must be in row 1.

   That puts **F** in E3.

2. **C**: Only B1, B2, C2 or D7 still possible.
   - B1: **A** must be in row 1.
   - B2 and C2: **E** must be in row 2.

   Therefore **C** is in D7.

3. **B**: Own statements leave only B1, F4, G4, A5 and B6.
   - B1: **A** must be in row 1.
   - B6: **B** was north of **V**, and **V** can only be in rows 1, 2 or 4–6.
   - F4 and G4: **C** was east of **B**, and **C** can only be in D7.

   So **B** is in A5.

4. **Column C**: **D** and **E** ruled out – own statements.
   - Because **A** must be in row 1, nobody else can use row 1.
   - **V** ruled out – **E** must be in row 2.

   Only **A** can still go in column C. That puts **A** in C1.

5. **D**: Only B4, G4 or B6 still possible.
   - Because **E** must be in row 2, **V** must be in rows 4 or 6.
   - Because anyone else in B4 would leave **D** without a square (G4 and B6 share its row or column), **V** can only be in F4, G4, B6, F6 or G6.
   - Because **B** was north of **V**, and **B** can only be in A5, **V** can only be in B6, F6 or G6.
   - B6: **V** must be in row 6.
   - B4: **D** was east of **E**, and **E** can only be in F2 or G2.

   Therefore **D** is in G4.

6. **E**: Own statements leave only F2 and G2.
   - G2: **D** is already in column G.

   So **E** is in F2.

7. Only one square is left for **V**.
   That puts **V** on the rug in B6 (the rug covers A6–B6). **B** was the only suspect in the room with **V**.
   B did it!



SOLUTION

5. Dressed to Kill

VERDICT

GUILTY
Ansel ✓

(A) Ansel (B) Bertie (C) Clement
(D) Dmitri (E) Edwina (F) Fenella
(G) Gwen (V) Vesna

1. (B): Own statements leave only F1, C6, A8 and H8. C6: (A) must be in row 6. Row 6 is (A)'s. (G) south and east of (B) ((B) in F1, A8 or H8), so (G) only in H5, H7 or G8. H8: all squares of (G) (H5, H7 and G8) share a row or column with H8. A8: (G) south and east of (B) ((G) in H5, H7 or G8).
That puts (B) on the armchair in F1.

2. (A): Own statements leave only B6 and G6. G6: (E) and (G) need columns G and H ((E): G or H; (G): G or H).
Therefore (A) is in B6.

3. (F): Own statements leave only C5, H5, H7 and G8. H5, H7 and G8: (E) and (G) need columns G and H (see step 2).
So (F) is in C5.

4. (C): Own statements leave only D2, D7 and D8. D7 and D8: (C) north of (A) ((A) in B6).
That puts (C) in D2.

5. (D): All squares of (G) (H7 and G8) share a row or column with H8, so nobody else in H8. Anyone else in G3 would block (E) (H3), so nobody else in G3. (E), (F) and (G) need columns C, G and H ((E): G or H; (F): C; (G): G or H), so (D) and (V) not in columns C, G and H. Only E3 or E4 left. E3: (E) must be in row 3.
Therefore (D) is in E4.

6. Only one square is left for each of (V), (G) and (E).
So (V) is on the armchair in A8, (G) in H7 and (E) on the rug in G3 (the rug covers G2–G3). (A) was the only suspect in the room with (V).
(A) did it!

Case closed with minutes to spare. Tomorrow the advent calendar opens, and forty more cases wait in 'Murder at the Christmas Bookshop'. See you on December 1.

DETECTIVE'S LOGBOOK

Log every case you close. Tick "tip-off" if you needed one – the logbook only works if you are honest with it.

NO.	CASE	LEVEL	CLOSED ON	TIME	TIP-OFF	RIGHT?
1	Tied Up with String	EASY			☐	☐
2	Fa-La-La-Lethal	EASY			☐	☐
3	Out for Delivery	MEDIUM			☐	☐
4	Places, Please	MEDIUM			☐	☐
5	Dressed to Kill	HARD			☐	☐

YOUR RANK

Chief Inspector
5 or more right without a tip-off

Inspector
4 or more

Detective
2 or more

Constable
fewer – there is always the next book