
Murder and Modern Manners

A practical guide to murder manners.

By Jane Darling Worthington

INTRODUCTION

Murder can rear its head in the most inappropriate places—weddings, cocktail parties, the theatre—even in your own home. Killers, it seems, have utter disdain for social convention and proper manners.

Ironically, the most unfortunate aspect of a grisly murder is not the loss of a loved one, but the burden of social responsibility and proper behavior the survivors must bear. There are questions of etiquette, accusations to make and deny, puzzlement about proper dress and ironclad alibis to fuss over. The potential for social blunder is immense. Unless, of course, you are prepared to meet the challenges with finesse and sensitivity.

Read *MURDER AND MODERN MANNERS* and you'll soon be in complete command of even the most vile affairs. You will waltz through the proceedings while others crawl and weep. You will learn to integrate the dark underbelly of the criminal pathos into your subconscious. You will learn to deny even the most well-founded accusations. You will slander your own best friends without compunction. And, should circumstances deem it necessary, you will learn to graciously accept life imprisonment without remorse. And without parole.

J.D.W. October '84

CHAPTER ONE

Accepting an invitation to a murder.

The thoughtful guest.

An invitation should be answered promptly in writing using the third person. For instance, you, Mr. Charles Edwards, would reply: "Mr. Charles Edwards thanks Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong for their kind invitation to the ghastly murder to be held at Armstrong Manor on Saturday, the 30th of June, and has great pleasure in accepting."

This formal reply is often accompanied by a more personal handwritten note that can be included in the envelope with your acceptance. (See *Why a written reply?*)

The importance of punctuality.

Since you may be the unfortunate guest of honor, your presence might make the difference between a fabulously successful homicide and a merely great party. Under *no* circumstances, however, should you reply using the pre-printed card that accompanies the invitation. It only convinces the host of your pedestrian upbringing and propels him or other guests towards more heinous behavior on the night of the party.

Why a written reply?

In recent years, the telephone has nearly eliminated the courtesy of a written reply. This is wrong.

A written reply, especially a fond note, gives blood-hungry investigators a bit of meaningful physical evidence. For example, the victim might be found lying dead with your note in his pocket. And if you've made that note temptingly personal, as suggested in the first part of this chapter, you've assured yourself the distinction of "prime suspect." Something like this might be nice:

"Dearest, I long to see you again. There has been too much between us these past few years." With this note, you might be perceived as an old lover with a vengeance. Or the police might infer that your sweet message was enough to drive an already distraught victim over the edge, making suicide a viable possibility.

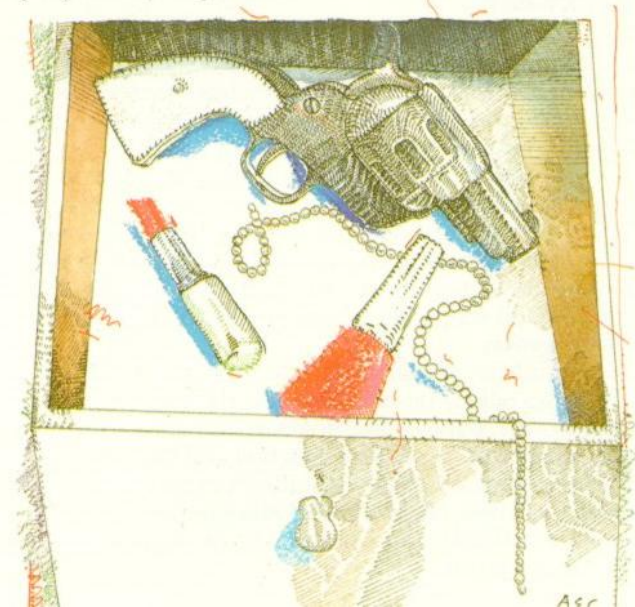
Now, had you replied with a simple telephone call, none of this would have been possible. There would be no scathing rumors, no heated court battles. No allure.

Special considerations.

Once you've opted to attend the party, some background work must be accomplished. Make your acceptance known among your friends and neighbors. Describe in detail your past tempestuous affairs with the host (or hostess), real or imagined. Visit a gun shop and purchase several boxes of ammunition and inquire lovingly about "that little snub-nosed .38 that would be great to have around for special occasions."

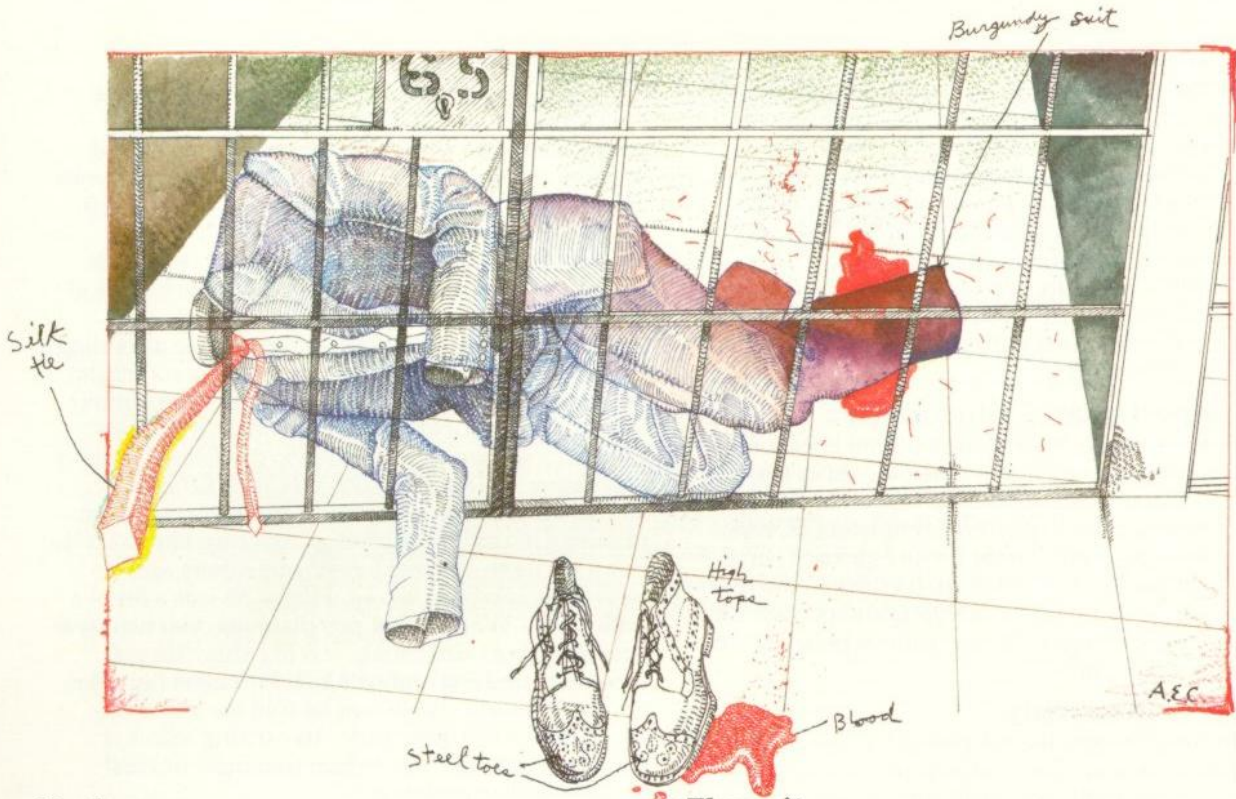
Make it clear that your intentions for attending are more complex and sordid than anyone's reason for attending a party could possibly be. Put tantalizing images in people's minds, and you've assured yourself a sensational headline in the following day's newspaper: *MODEL CITIZEN TURNS KILLER!*

Imagine if you were forced to bear the embarrassment of unflattering press coverage like this: "He was a perfectly normal fellow, quite quiet and reserved. He rarely went out; I think he was a bit of a wallflower." With a bit of pre-planning, you can have your neighbors describing you like this: "He was absolutely dashing and reckless. We called him 'Hollywood.' Some of the stories he told me about his love affairs were quite racy. An exciting fellow; I guess he just had a side to him that most normal people never experience."



CHAPTER TWO

What to wear (men)



Neckwear.

The most important part of a man's outfit is his tie. Besides its utility as a strangling tool, it says not only who you are, but how much abuse you're willing to take. Finely crafted silk, while appropriate at most parties, can be detrimental to a murder.

This becomes painfully obvious when a detective arrives and grasps you firmly by the tie in preparation for beating a confession out of you. Most law enforcement veterans prefer suspects to wear heavy wrinkle-proof rayon-dacron blends that won't look tattered and shopworn after a session of serious interrogation.

Should an officer clutch your expensive but frail Sulka Silkie—or even worse, a clip-on—and jerk it vigorously, it may come apart in his hands. The policeman then becomes disturbed and severe. You're inviting a kick in the shins from his canoe-sized, insulated, oil-resistant clodhoppers—a fate that can be avoided by a few minutes of foresight when choosing your tie.

The suit.

Like tie selection, the choice of a suit is a matter of practicality. You'll be spending quite a lot of time on the floor of a cold jail cell rolled up in the fetal position. So you'll want a suit that is both warm and durable. Convenience dictates a wash-and-wear three-piece business suit. You may be wearing it for 48, maybe 72 hours in the slammer, so get something that will still look fresh when they take you to court for the arraignment. Dark colors, usually burgundy or a chocolate brown, are good for hiding cell grime and blood. No well-bred suspect can afford to wear anything less.

Smart shoes.

High-top Naugahyde wing-tips are both functional and stylish. The steel-toed models, while sometimes hard to find, are ideal for self-defense in the lockup. They work as well as policemen's clodhoppers, yet they add an element of sophistication to even the most mundane outfit. Again, color is important. A burgundy or dark brown masks blood stains much better than a pair of suede saddle shoes.

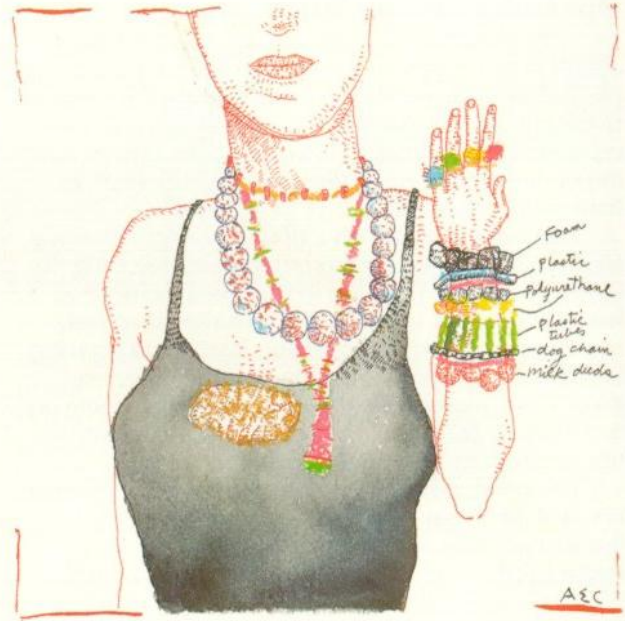
CHAPTER THREE

What to wear (women)

Jewelry.

Nothing catches eyes and turns heads like a vault of rare gems worn by an attractive woman. However, when there's a murderer about, the last thing a woman wants is attention. One need only consider the violent ends met by such diamond-studded beauties as Czarina Alexandra and Marie Antoinette.

Here again, let form follow function. Let the lessons learned by others serve as your precedents. When you seek to make a statement with your ornaments, say it with paste—the gaudier the better. Fake opals the size of walnuts, brooches that resemble peanut brittle during a nuclear meltdown, any Cub Scout arts-and-crafts project—gimcrack of this ilk, too long overlooked by the trendsetters of High Society, is *de rigeur* as regards the lady for whom being the hit of the party is secondary to getting home in one piece. Not only will your gewgaws discourage the killer intent on robbery, they'll prove more effective than mace in repulsing any jealous ex-lover, scorned admirer or sex slayer with even an inkling of fashion sense. Remember, when you prefer not to make the Society pages at the expense of making the obituaries, junk jewelry is a girl's best friend.



Shoes.

You can't run very swiftly in high heels. But then, you can't kick very effectively with sneakers. A sensible solution is to seek out a pair of Italian-designer jogging shoes. These combine a comfortable flat crepe sole with a toe that resembles the tip of a cross-country ski.

The evening dress.

When selecting a gown, never underestimate the suspicious nature of the authorities. You may be accused, arrested and taken downtown for a sun-tanning session under a very powerful heat lamp. So dress accordingly.

Most women prefer something that gives them an innocent, demure look. A loose-fitting wrap or chemise is comfortable and cool, yet it belies the presence of the high-powered weapons that many women like to carry in metropolitan environs. The perfect solution for the occasion.

CHAPTER FOUR

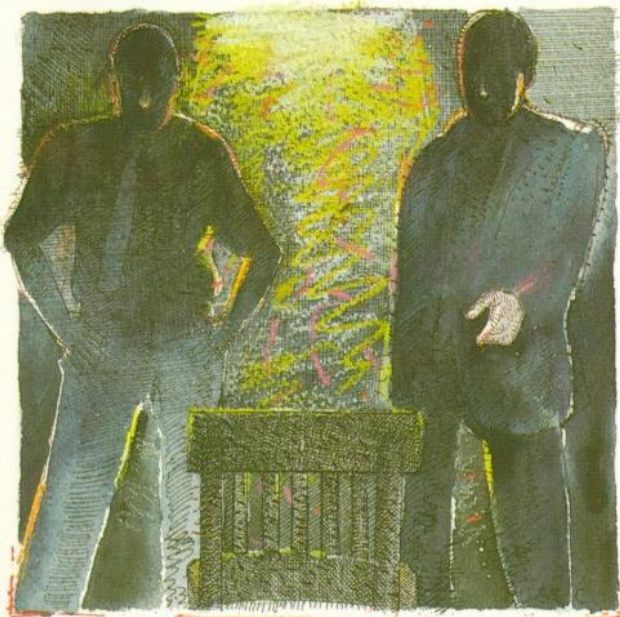
Conversation, Interrogation, Incarceration.

Opening conversational gambits.

The *first* art of a good conversationalist is the ability to put people at ease. Once you've accomplished this, you can begin to make good conversation. Your job as a pacifier and confidante is doubly complicated by the victim's knowledge of his or her impending doom. How does one allay the fears of a hapless murder victim?

You might start with a flourish of light-hearted foolery. Try hiding in the coat closet and scaring the daylights out of the victim as he opens the door to hang his coat. Or try a more conventional and earnest approach. Explain who you are: "Good evening, I'm Charles Edwards. I'm an emergency room surgeon. Have you ever been in an emergency room on Saturday night?" Now that you've got the conversation started, let it follow its natural course.

Practice is the best way to polish your conversational skills. Many beginners have difficulty at first. But rest assured, it's not really as important as you might think. After all, the victim will soon be dead. So if you fail to calm his fears, it is not going to matter anyway.



Interrogation:

Chatting with the police.

Yes Sir! Authorities, like royalty, should be treated with deference. Always refer to them as Sir, Ma'am, Officer, or Your Highness. All questions should be answered with a humble "Yes, sir," or "No, ma'am." And only under the most stressful situation should you direct questions back at your interrogator—when a gun is pointed at your head, for example.

The art of a good conversationalist is the ability to "lighten up" the atmosphere at times like these. There are a few simple and time-tested rules to follow. 1. The order of questioning should start with family-related matters. 2. Once the "ice has been broken," the subject should be either sports or sex. 3. Never ask authority figures about their jobs or salaries. This is considered *déclassé* and invites additional charges of bribery and slander.

A proven example.

Imagine for a moment that you have been arrested by the police. You are face down on a plush ballroom floor, the officer's knee rests firmly on your kidneys and his .357 Magnum is pointed at the base of your cerebellum. Light conversation might improve your situation. "So, sir, I trust that the wife and young ones are doing well?" He jabs the nose of his gun deeper into your skull.

Don't be alarmed. You've "broken the ice," so move on to the next subject.

"Say, officer, I'm certain you couldn't have missed that slug-fest of an Orioles game last night!"

The magic has begun to work. Watch as the officer takes his gun from your neck, grabs it by the barrel and cuffs you firmly across the knee cap with the finely oiled walnut grip of his beloved pistol.

There now, you've managed to get even the most ruthless authority to drop his gun from its threatening position! You've played him into your hand, and you're on your way towards a close friendship with a person who, only a few moments earlier, was a bitter enemy.

Patience, practice and perception; nothing can replace these three keys to successful conversation.



Comfortable incarceration.

The gang's all here! Let your memory drift back to the days of youth. Whether you're a man or woman, from the city or country, you must certainly have fond memories of the long summer days of your childhood. Prison is a throwback to those long lost days. You never have to work if you don't want to, you can play basketball and lift weights all day, and when you need the close companionship of a friend, there is always someone there. Someone who sympathizes with your plight. Someone who'll set you up. A good prison is just like a poorly run summer camp.

The secret of successful incarceration is connections. Upon arrival you should watch the other inmates closely. See who dominates and who submits. Then align yourself with the bullies. You'll always be assured of the best food and drink. And the best seats in the house for inter-prison boxing matches.

Prison projects.

After two or three years in a maximum security prison, you'll become more reflective. You've got "time to kill," as they say, and you'll want to develop some of those skills that you never had time for as an overworked free adult.

The key to selecting the right pursuits is to choose those that show the greatest signs of rehabilitation, or those that will supplement your meagre weekly income as a license-plate maker.

Poetry can be a wonderfully sensitive medium for expressing your remorse and anguish. The study of law will help you improve your oratory skills, a

clear benefit when you make vehement pleas to the prison parole board. Writing books can also be quite rewarding: the first eight editions of this book were all highly successful and sold particularly well among guilt-ridden liberals. But perhaps the wisest choice is painting. Prisoners are perceived as having great depth of repressed artistic genius. There are literally thousands of deep-pocketed dilettantes who are willing to pay a fortune for prison art. Especially if the work is being done by prisoners with a background of violent crime.



Open the door to the manor house on Ashcroft Farm . . . and step into a world of elegance, deception and murder!

From the crystal chandelier in the dining room and the magnificent fieldstone fireplace in the main ballroom to the sumptuous leather-volumed library, you're taken aback by the timelessness of this century-old southern mansion and its grounds.

Everywhere there are antiques and mementos of Ashcroft's illustrious equine history. Here, some of the nation's greatest thoroughbreds have been sired . . . Mr. Cyrus, Stampede, Veroniana and others.

But on this Halloween night, there's something different about Ashcroft's atmosphere. It's murderous.

You're a newspaper reporter and a friend of the hostess. You've come to party with the world's most celebrated personalities: politicians, entertainers, royalty, power brokers and the idle rich. But now the evening has been spoiled by a deadly interloper . . . and fingers are pointing at you.

You have but a few hours before you're arrested. Fail to prove your innocence, and you'll be convicted of murder and imprisoned. There's precious little time to unmask the homicidal guest—or guests. And if you fail, you've got a lifetime to ponder your mistakes in a maximum security jail cell at the Maryland State Penitentiary.

Go ahead—enjoy the party!

The Table of Contents for the manual is on page 11. Read it to find out what you need to know before you start the story.