

## Consultation Transcript (Part 1)

This transcript is a full record of a 1-hour session with Doubtful-Tea, and the first of two sessions. Doubtful-Tea is in the process of developing an RPG and asked for my help to develop the connections between the main characters and decide how the murders happen.

### >The Character Consultancy, 19:54

I can start at 8pm. Are you happy for us to do that?

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### >Doubtful-Tea, 19:55

Sure

Just going to boot my computer up

All righty, I'm up and ready to get started!

I just had the craziest idea ever though

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### >The Character Consultancy, 20:02

Go ahead?

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### >Doubtful-Tea, 20:03

I had this idea in line with the cosmic horror I'm going for in this game where the house itself, *is* the true master-mind, and the one that kills people is like its servant.

It can't kill people itself so it causes people to murder, only then can it feed, which would also explain why the killer has a good relationship with the family

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### >The Character Consultancy, 20:05

That would be an amazing plot twist!

Would you ever reveal that to the player?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:06

The beauty of cosmic horror is the less you explain the better. However you are right about that part. I'm thinking the realize it's the truth when they uncover who the murderer is and then when they are confronted he tells them the entire truth.

They have to survive one more time at the house and escape.

Perhaps I'll leave some bread-crumbs clues that no one could ever put together until it's revealed so it's not completely out of nowhere.

I'm thinking like. the bodies were never found, just blood marks everywhere leading to mysteries like: how did the killer get them out?

Which the answer of course would be the house frickin' eats them - but only when there are no witnesses.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:08

Yes, that sounds like a good move: the player still gets to do a traditional whodunnit and then gets a final, bonus plot twist at the end. And a chilling one at that.

The fact that they have to survive a night in the house, knowing what it does, is a great tension-builder.

Good idea on the breadcrumb trail.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:10

Thanks. So ignoring that all for now let's go over who actually did it. I wanna pick someone that would be fun to poke holes into.

I also wanna make it so every character has a motive or reason behind how the family disappearing would help, even the ones that get along should have a possible motive.

*[Sends Spreadsheet of connections between characters with all character names on Y and X axes and colours denoting Love, Like, Not Met, Dislike, and Hate relationships.]*

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:11

Okay then! I'm wondering if it's worth us putting that onto a Google Docs spreadsheet so that we can both look at, and add to it, in real time.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:11

I, uh, I'm unfamiliar with Google Docs.

I know how it's suppose to work but I'm not the best at operating it ^^; Perhaps you could help me with that?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:12

I can open one up if you like and work on it myself while you watch. How does that sound?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:13

Yes please ^^

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:13

Okay, just setting that up now.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:13

Honestly I've always been a bit slow working software out.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:15

Here we go:

*[Shares link for Google Docs Spreadsheet with original Spreadsheet copy-pasted in]*

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:16

Cool I'm in.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:16

So I'm just looking at this to get my bearings.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:16

It's pretty large! I know ^^ I tried to keep it as simple as possible. Is there a way to zoom in and out to see the whole thing at once?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:17

View > Zoom > 50 or 75% depending on your screen size.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:17

Aha, just the normal zoom feature works.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:19

Now I'm thinking that what you've got here are the relatively obvious relationships between the characters. Or would people only find out the mutual resentment in these if they dug quite a lot?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:20

You nailed it there actually from the start: they are just how they outwardly treat each other, not what they truly think of each other (allowing anyone to secretly be hateful if it works).

I would say hateful is like, super obvious disliking of each other while bad relationships are less hateful and more, awkward?

Like they try to get along but just don't click.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:21

Good stuff! So what we have here is what people will work out pretty quickly?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:21

Yeah

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:21

Understood.

Then it seems to me as if it's worth looking at each one and discussing them to see whether they have any hidden depths to their relationship to work out what else might be going on.

History, secret dealings, that kind of thing. Sound good?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:22

Yeah, sounds good to me.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:22

So starting with Miss Rains and Miss Penny.

Miss Rains is a fox, I think, was that right?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:23

She is indeed.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:24

In fact... what am I thinking? Looking at *[Redacted]* relationships with everyone and working back from there would make more sense, wouldn't it?

We can work outwards from there.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:25

Sure. I think I follow.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:25

After all, it's *[Redacted]* who are murdered, so working out what the relationships between them and everyone else makes the most sense.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:26

Yeah indeed. The one who dislikes them the most is a pretty clear winner being Miss Strawberry. A bit of a crazy animal rights activist who can't imagine why anyone would willingly eat meat, so she is the most likely candidate, meaning it's probably best not to make her the killer.

Far too obvious.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:27

So. *[Redacted]* and Miss Penny then. The relationship seems to be good on the surface, but I'm aware that *[Redacted]* makes a point of being the jovial centre of the party. Could it be that he feels less pleasantly disposed towards her than it first appears? He has no particular reason to quarrel with her but she's, well, a pretty severe party pooper, to say the least.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:30

Indeed. She's a good pick too, however as a frequent visitor (Sometimes sending children on escorts to collect) they were one of the reasons she kept in good spirits.

*[Redacted]* had no problem publicly eating meat and saw no wrong in it.

It made her feel appreciated for her hard work. However it would be fun to suggest maybe she would have killed them from sheer jealousy of how they get away with liking meat just because they are *[Redacted]* and she is not.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:32

That seems a shallow reason for it. Personally I'd avoid that unless she's quite mentally unhinged.

Especially if she feels appreciated.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:33

She is a little unhinged but not enough to cause that, no.

So here's an idea that struck me.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:34

But maybe enough to make a player pause for thought?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:34

Yeah. I want to make it so everyone has a motivation even if it's small.

Keep them guessing if that makes sense.

Now here's an idea I had: what if the killer is *[Redacted]*, who as a servant to the house can change his shape and appearance, thus appearing to look different when they first brought the house?

I think I'd like to work with that. It also makes perfect sense. *[Redacted]*, gets *[Redacted]* killed, house eats up.

Then *[Redacted]* again and again.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:36

That is an interesting idea. But I have a question: is there any reason the player would expect the estate agent to be a shape-shifter?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:36

It could be revealed that *[Redacted]* is actually some kind of demon from the 'other world', perhaps some bread-crumbs could lead towards it - facts nearly lining up but things being slightly off.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:37

That would lead neatly onto the idea that the house is an eldritch location, and give you a good reason to put in a few breadcrumbs about that before the big reveal.

Yes! What you said.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:37

Like maybe they find some physical evidence but the physical evidence changes and confuses the players.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:39

You're welcome to do that if you like, but it sounds like unfairly covering your tracks as the GM.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:39

I guess perhaps. I gotta find a way to get it to work.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:40

Yes. It's okay, we've still got a lot of character relationships to work on.

By the way, as far as these deeper explorations of relationships go, are you wanting to keep notes or shall I?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:41

Hmm. I'm not the best at note taking. Perhaps it's best we share notes, anything we think is worth it.

But yeah it'll be a little unfair but eventually there will be enough clues to figure out what's up.

So let's go right into the party - the big social gathering where it all started

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:42

I can add notes to the spreadsheet, if you like?

Makes them quick and easy to find again.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:43

Yeah good plan... So *[Redacted]* at this point lets say is not a *[Redacted]* but instead a *[Redacted]*.

Going by the name *[Redacted]* and with an entirely different occupation.

Ooooo

Great idea: let's make it so the players quickly realize that the killer can shape-shift!

And that he could be *anyone*!

They can discover that in the dream sequences.

It would also make perfect sense on why seeing the killer wouldn't mean anything!

They need to piece other evidence together to uncover who doesn't belong to the many residences there.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:45

Okay, that's good! Can you see the little black triangle in the corner of that cell? If you click on the cell you should get a note up.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:46

Yeah I see it.

I like this!

So before we go leaving the fake bread-crumbs of possibility let's go over what happened that night and work backwards, like you said before.

Like a word search, first you write the words then you obscure them with lots of other letters around it.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:47

Mm hmm. Do you have thoughts you want to share on that?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:48

Yeah, sorta. Concepts as always, heh.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:48

Go for it. I'm all ears!

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:49

So as established, the killer's identity during the night of the murders is a *[Redacted]* named *[Redacted]* who joins the social gathering. Let's see... what do you think a high esteemed character like *[Redacted]* would throw a party over?

Maybe a great business success that will bring the village ample amounts of money?

Maybe he created a new *[Redacted]*. I'm thinking something really cheap and simple, but clever. How about it becomes apparent he created the *[Redacted]*? it seems silly but stuff like that went on to sell millions.

Sound good so far?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:51

Can you remind me who *[Redacted]* is? I don't remember him from the list of characters. Or not clearly, anyway.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:51

Oh that's the identity that *[Redacted]* goes by before he changes shape to escape getting caught.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:52

Aha, okay. So the *[Redacted]* is his true form?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:52

Nah, just another form he takes. I think I'll make him a formless being that changes on a whim.

A servant of the house.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:53

Sure thing.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:53

He's very clever, always having an alibi to not arouse any super-natural suspicion.

So I gotta think: what kind of low-key easy to maintain job would he have to be invited to the party?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:54

I guess he'd have to be fastidious about that. And perhaps he's feigning being a bad forward-planner (or something of that vein) by *[Redacted]* and coming across a bit green and eager.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:54

It cant be something too simple as only head merchants can join.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:55

Easy to maintain? I think if I was a shape-shifter I'd just pose as an established merchant. Or as one from a more distant area who happened to hear of the party so gate-crashed on the assumption that he would be allowed to stay.

That would mean that he could probably stay but also be unknown enough to *[Redacted]* that they wouldn't notice his OOC-ness.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:55

I getcha. So he's not actually invited, he just sneaks in. I like that. Could be his first trip up. Players notice he's not invited.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:56

(Just so you're aware, we have 5 more minutes of this hour)  
Could he double as serving or bar staff?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 20:56

(That's OK. Youve been a big help so far)  
Yes I like that idea. Maybe he's a bar owner across town.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 20:57

Sounds good - or bar staff cross town? It seems more likely that the bar owner across town would loan out his staff than go over himself.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 20:57**

OK so that's established now... Let's go over how the night unfolds. I'm thinking any good party has events, and during those events he exploits key moments.

Yeah, works too.

So next time we meet and greet here's my plan, right? I'll have an established party plan and how he goes about murdering each member.

Then we can go over the trails he leaves behind that could eventually all point out who he really is.

It'll be hard to do but with some elbow grease I think I can get it to work.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 20:59**

That's a good idea. I look forward to it!

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 20:59**

The trick I think will be inlined with his personalty being the same.

Or at least, enough to notice!

After all the biggest selling point to this game is that, they need to find evidence that they would never be able to find in normal circumstances by going to that night.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 21:01**

Aha, so they're constantly being funnelled towards that night. Got it.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 21:01**

Yeah.

It's all going to piece together.