

## **Consultation Transcript (Part 2)**

This transcript is the record of a second 90-minute session with Doubtful-Tea. Doubtful-Tea is in the process of developing a whodunnit RPG and asked for my help in planning how the murderer, who is a shape-shifter, avoid being spotted.

### **>The Character Consultancy, 08:58**

Okay, so. Where would you like to start with your game?

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### **>Doubtful-Tea, 08:59**

Well I guess as I've written out the perspective of *[Redacted]*. I'd like to go into Zoey before her unfortunate end.

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### **>The Character Consultancy, 09:00**

Okay. Go ahead.

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### **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:00**

As the youngest, she would be the most curious and gullible so

Id like to make at least 4 key choice moments that can be established here. Where do you think she would be in the middle of a boring business party?

I'm thinking outside, as she does like nature.

4 key moments being parts the players controlling the memory would need to uncover about her to re-create or else be thrust outside the memory\*.

Or other-wise guess.

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### **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:02**

As an animal lover... perhaps she would watch all the horses as they arrive and leave. That sounds like her.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:03

Outside does make sense if she loves animals. Unless it's cold? You mentioned 6pm - 7pm which could either be quite clement weather or could be cold and miserable, depending on the time of year.

It might not matter but it's worth noting details like that just in case the weather or time of year becomes relevant later.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:04

True true...

I'm thinking it's a foggy night. She's meant to be indoors where it's warm but she sneaks out

to watch the horses.

That sounds like something she would do.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:05

Yeah? Okay then!

So what happens after that?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:08

I'm thinking she's being guarded by Miss Wellington.

It's 6:00. She's meant to be being put to bed a little earlier then normal but she does something to escape.

That's the first key memory.

It's on the second floor... Let's see.

Ah, I know: the classic hold your breath trick.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:10

I'm just trying to find the list of characters, having logged in to Roll20, but can't find them. To check Zoey's age.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:10**

She demands she gets a bed-time story to Miss Wellington who just really isn't in the mood, so she holds her breath and makes her panic and dash to the library to find one. Oh she's meant to only be 5. So basically a toddler.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:11**

Ah.  
I'm thinking she'd hide, in that case.  
Okay, I've found the list.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:12**

Yes. Instead of make a run for it from the distraction she hides in the chimney. When Miss Wellington comes back with the book she panics and looks for Lady Lucy for help. That should be the second part. The third is her running when she sees her go upstairs down the steps and out the front door to watch the horses.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:14**

Just checking there: who's the 'she' and 'her' there?  
Zoey sees Miss. Wellington going upstairs?

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:15**

That would be Miss Wellington running up the stairs to look for Lady Lucy.  
Yeah.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:15

Are you wanting me to take notes on the list of memories?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:15

Nope I got this covered.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:15

Okay - great.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:15

Hope I'm not causing frustration here.

This is mind boggling stuff it's good to be able to talk it out.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:16

Not at all. I just want to make sure I'm doing what you want me to do, since this is a service you're paying for.

Glad to hear it's helping.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:20

6:00 PM: Party starts, Zoey is being guarded by Miss Wellington in her room as she is meant to getting ready to sleep. She instead demands a bed-time story and holds her breath to scare Miss Wellington into going for a library book. 6:05PM: Instead of running off Zoey hides inside the chimney and waits for Miss Wellington to return, only leaving when Miss Wellington goes upstairs to look for Miss Lucy for help. Zoey then goes down the stairs and straight out the front door to watch the horses arriving till the very last one. 7:00PM: As the last one leaves, the Police Chief Mr. Brown comes from behind her and asks her what she is doing outside all alone, suggesting she go inside where it's warm. Zoey instead runs away in fear towards the back entrance of the house. The kitchen. How's this look?

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:23**

I'm thinking that she's doing a lot of going out and about considering how young she is.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:23**

She is a little rebel that's for sure.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:23**

Going outside to see the horses seems a bit of a stretch for a 5 year old, especially since the very reason the horses are there is that lots of people are coming.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:24**

The guests all enter from the side of the house.  
BTW.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:24**

Thing is, you described her as very shy in the character descriptions. Shy and rebel don't seem like two qualities that would occur in the same 5 year old.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:24**

She's a rebel as in she doesn't like talking to people and likes to do her own thing.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:25

So she gets to see the horses but nobody controlling the horses sees a 5 year old? Even if she hides, she has to get there first. Maybe she could be stealthy enough to get there but I'd bet someone would see her going there.

Ah, okay.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:25

Yeah, since there all going in by the side she can peek round to watch.

Hiding behind the fountain.

I think I'll mark that in.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:26

Okay. It's not impossible that she could be unseen, but it's certainly worth noting. In fact! That would be a good way for the player to figure out her route!

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:27

I know this sounds silly but I'm thinking.

Maybe she finds a set of toys. This one being simply knowing what her favourite toy is.

Just to advance time she plays with it for hours.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:28

Outside, where she started watching the horses?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:28

7:00PM: As the last one Leaves, the Police Chief Mr. Brown comes from behind her and asks her what she is doing outside all alone. Suggesting she go inside where it's warm.

Zoey instead runs away in fear towards the back entrance of the house. The kitchen.

Not quite. I'm talking this moment. I'm thinking the real police chief catches her while heading up the stairs and curiously approaches.

Not liking to talk to giant strangers she runs away all the way to the back of the house.

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### **>The Character Consultancy, 09:30**

Ah, so the one who approached her and asked what she was doing outside wasn't the real Mr. Brown?

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### **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:30**

No, in this case it's a switcher. It really is just Mr. Brown being a good cop.

Just a tense moment to make players go 'oh no, is this it?'

But it carries on.

You dig?

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### **>The Character Consultancy, 09:31**

Understood.

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### **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:31**

Being in no danger the cop decides to head back and inform the staff.

Actually yeah: scratch the toys he would totally do that.

I think she would need to hide again

Nah that would be hard to guess...

Hmmm...

I think I'll go back and say she plays with some toys, it would be a while before they actually locate her anyway.

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### **>The Character Consultancy, 09:36**

Okay.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:41

6:00 PM: Party starts, Zoey is being guarded by Miss Wellington in her room as she is meant to getting ready to sleep. She instead demands a bed-time story and holds her breath to scare Miss Wellington into going for a library book. 6:05PM: Instead of running off Zoey hides inside the chimney and waits for Miss Wellington to return, only leaving when Miss Wellington goes upstairs to look for Miss Lucy for help. 6:10PM: She goes down the stairs and straight out the front door to watch the horses arriving 'till the very last one, hidden by the fountain. 7:00PM: As the last one leaves, the Police Chief Mr. Brown comes from behind her and asks her what she is doing outside all alone, suggesting she go inside where it's warm. Zoey instead runs away in fear towards the back entrance of the house. The kitchen. 7:10PM: At the backside of the house she locates a skipping-rope, a hula-hoop and a football. She plays with the hula-hoop. 7:30PM: Miss Wellington opens the door and finds her, telling her off for running away and getting filthy. She generally apologises feeling guilty and agrees to go to bed for real if she is given a bed-time story. 8:00PM: Miss Wellington reads a bed-time story. She sits idle on the soft-red carpet of the library listening and slowly falling asleep. 8:06PM: While listening to the story still she notices Miss Wellington change suddenly into Miss Stone. She is confused for a moment by this and sees her make a sudden movement towards her that's too fast to keep track of before everything suddenly goes black. Memory ends here.

There we go.

I know we won't be able to cover it all but with your help I can get the ball rolling so to speak.

I like this idea that despite being so young she's very mature for her age.

Some 5 year olds are like that.

Smarter then you realize.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:44

They can be.

Do you think she'd be happy to sit on the carpet to have her bedtime story, or would she realise that she's meant to be in bed for that?

I mean, Miss Wellington (well, that's the murderer really, isn't it?) might invite her to have a kind of camp-out in the library, so perhaps that's how to do it?

Oh hey! So how about this?:

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:45

I just feel it's fitting, another weird 5 year old quirk. falling asleep in strange places.

Kids are like that. my brother Michael would only sleep if he was took on a car ride when he was a kid apparently.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:46**

Zoey clearly doesn't want to go to bed with so much going on. There's a party which is too boring (and late) for her to go to but as a kid, she doesn't want to miss out. So our murderer makes use of that by suggesting they have their own party: take her bedsheets to the library, pick any books he wants as a bedtime story from the whole of the library, and if she goes to sleep in the library that's fine. They had their little party/camp-out.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:46**

I wanna capture the silly nature of children if that makes sense, hence falling asleep in the middle of a library.

Hmm..

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:46**

Yeah? Fair enough.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:46**

Yeah I like that idea too!

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 09:47**

You're welcome to it!

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 09:47**

That's very cute.

It'll add to the horror perfectly.

Nothing like, cute murdering of children? Man horror really is uh...

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:47

Lil' bit of mood whiplash.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:47

Horrific.

Yee a great writer once said, 'horror just isn't horror unless you give people a reason to care about them first'!

If a space marine dies everyone's all like 'meh', but like, what if he's a got family, friends! a personalty!

Then it means something.

And thus, tension and horror.

Anyway, sorry - wasting time.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:48

It does seem to add nicely to it, doesn't it? Okay, awesome!

What would you like to look at next?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:50

Let's see...

I think Lucy.

As she has clear interactions at this stage better to tie all the ends loose and make a good reason for why she doesn't look for her own daughter after going missing.

I'm thinking perhaps she hears something and is deeply disturbed, and assumes like Brian, it's just her being a brat again and she will turn up.

There's plenty of people looking after all.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:52

That seems very harsh for Lucy, who I thought you described as a very loving mum.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:54

Well, she probably doesn't think brat?

That's more of a... you know, sarcasm?

Either way she really trusts the house servants and her disturbance is so profound that she not to worried.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:55

That was the bit that really sounded OOC to me. I can see her being worried, but leaving it to the servants as she has to support her husband in receiving so many guests at the time.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 09:55

After all it's regular that she pull stunts like this.

Hmm

Yeah that sounds more like it actually.

Yeah...

Heh, glad you're here. I like to keep my characters flexible and adaptable but I need to stick to the guns I think for her.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 09:57

Yes. Keeping things in-character does help to work out a complex story like this. Although it does restrict you in some ways, it also tells you what extra circumstances you'd need to include to make it plausible.

And it'll help your player to work out what he or she needs to do, as if the characters can just go OOC at any point, they can't trust that anybody will do what they think they'd do based on past experience.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:06

6:00 PM: Party starts, rows upon rows of horses with black and gold lined carts roll in and then roll out delivering guests one after the other. Each one is personally greeted by Lord Brian. Lady Caster stands by not saying a word and just nodding if greeted. After 8 minutes she excuses herself and goes upstairs to the 3rd floor 6:10PM: Lady Caster greets the guests that have made it inside the event hall. Meeting Mrs Kowal, Dr Smith, Mr Miller, Miss Willson, and Miss Strawberry. All goes well for a while until Miss Strawberry

makes a remark about how terrible it is predators still eat meat (A taboo she believes is OK). She reacts to this awkwardly with silence until... 6:12PM: Miss Wellington informs her that Zoey has gone missing again, she responds saying something along the lines of "Now is not a good time I have to look after all the guests coming in. I trust you enough you can find her." While she says this however it's clear she does not entirely and the stress of looking after the guests is already getting to her.

I like this idea, she's split between two desires. She can't leave the guests as she is worried with remarks like that flying around she's needed to keep the peace, and she knows that Zoey runs away a lot for fun and is clever.

So although worried, it's not enough to drop everything.

How much time do you have left now?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:09

Yes, that works nicely. If they were anywhere else then perhaps she would drop everything to find her daughter, but they're at home, so it seems that that would be enough to tip the balance.

Until 10.30, so another 20 mins.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:09

Gotcha.

Just thinking what would happen next... or, next big 'know the character moment'

I'm thinking a few more hours pass and she greets more guests.

This is the tricky part I really wanna make this a pinnacle moment... who could I use to say...

Oh I know. Let's say the fake Mr. Brown shows up!

As the real one is downstairs?...

Wait

Hmm

My mind is doing loops

But it's fun, I think it'll be fun to connect the dots.

It's just harder as I'm the one making them, ha.

Any ideas?

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:12

What are you aiming for - for Lucy to leave the party?

Or at least leave all of the guests?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:13

That, but also I wanna make this a moment that can be used to really tell the story of who the killer was that night, or who his public form was.

Which I'm going back to *[Redacted]* on this as obviously they need something to take on with.

I think I'm confusing myself here.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:14

Okay. So I'm thinking a few things: everyone's settled at the party and, although she may very well be needed to continue hostessing, the need isn't as great any more as people have long-since settled and are probably having a grand time socialising all by themselves. She's been working hard for a few hours so could probably do with a breather. Perhaps she wants to take the time to visit the bathroom, or go somewhere completely silent to just let her head stop spinning, or perhaps go and check that Zoey's all right, since she knows that something happened earlier.

Except, we both know that Zoey's not actually in her bedroom. If Lucy goes up there she'll be completely alone.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:16

Perhaps yeah. I got plenty of ideas for this but I'm trying to focus on the grander picture here rather than her unique story

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:16

Mm, but does it help with what you're trying to achieve?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:16

I've decided trying to do pin-pointing might be too over the top.

Do you think it would be better if simply by finishing each family's memories they see the last memory?

It wouldn't quite be a who-dunnit but it would still be interesting.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:17

What would it be, if not a whodunnit?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:17

It does help though.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:18

Awesome. I'm still not seeing how Lucy leaving to check Zoey's bedroom doesn't help.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:18

Well I mean, usually you're meant to use deduction from facts. In this you literally just get to see the killer leaving as *[Redacted]*.

His public form.

Which he stays as thinking no one saw that change.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:18

Right, so it's not a whodunnit because the killer shows himself at the end?

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:19

Sorta, but unintentionally, through a last memory brought about by getting past each memory.

Make sense?

Originally the idea was you had to deduce who the shape-shifter was at that party by piecing all the clues together of who was where by each family members memories and then by figuring that out, it would trigger the final one revealing what the shape-shifter changes into before leaving.

Thus knowing who did it.

But I think now... that would be far too complicated.

It's tricky enough as it is figuring out the family members' quirks and traits to thing things

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:21**

You do have a lot of characters there, and their relationships with one another is an important part of the story, so the story you're proposing here is certainly complex. And then you're trying to move the killer around all of those relationships, which is adding to the complexity.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:21**

I think if I add any more to it, it would be too much. so I'll keep the conclusion or 'reveal' simple, but hard to unlock.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:22**

I think you've got a great idea going on here and I understand that it's daunting, but if you need to just work on it in chunks then that's fine.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:22**

The best way is to use chunks.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:22**

That's the best way to deal with any big project like this: in manageable chunks.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:22**

First you gotta get the chunks then you refine.  
Yee.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:23**

So. You've got 10 minutes left. What would you like to do with that time?

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:23**

Let's just cover Lucy while I still got time.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:23**

Okay. Where are you feeling you're up to with her?

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:24**

Here's a concept character choice. I like your idea that she hostesses trying to keep the peace. Then is offered some very strong wine.

Does she drink it or not?

That's something I cant really think of the right answer to...

Hmmm.

On one hand. she's being over-run and could do with a break, on the other there's a lost child and she doesn't want to be drunk if she's needed.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:25**

I think if it was me, I'd take it just to be polite but either only drink it very slowly or not at all.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:25**

I like that, adds a little bit of flair to it and not just 'drink or not'.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:26

After all, many of the guests there know that she's working hard, especially if she looks a bit frazzle (which you said she is). Chances are someone's offered her that glass under the premise that she should relax too. They're trying to give something back to her by saying, "you can relax with the rest of us, you know!"

Accepting offers like that helps others to relax as they feel they're reciprocating, even if they're doing something unhelpful (she may not want to get drunk while hostessing). So just taking it and holding it for a while will make the giver feel they've helped her out while not getting drunk.

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:27

7:10PM Spends the time worrying about the safety of her child and hostessing at the same time, during this she is offered some strong wine by Mr Reid who suggests she unwind after seeing her stressed. She must take the wine but only pretend to drink it not wanting to seem rude.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:28

(also, just a quick worldbuilding note: wine can't be all that strong. When you brew anything alcoholic, the alcohol is toxic to the yeast, so wine can never get much stronger than about 14 or 15% ABV).

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## >Doubtful-Tea, 10:28

It's pretty strong wine but it's not that strong.

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## >The Character Consultancy, 10:28

It may be strong to her however, if she rarely drinks. Or if they offer her a spirit such as whiskey.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:28**

Hmmm...

I think whiskey is a better option.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:29**

Yeah? Okay!

Oh! And!

What if, in that case, one person offers her a whiskey which she accepts and drinks, but then more people offer her whiskey, not realising that other people have done the same? That means that she may drink the earlier ones but get less and less inclined to drink more as she's offered more, although she is under social pressure to drink (as in, she's at a party and to accept the 'gifts' from her guests).

Not sure if that's making it more complex but just thought I'd throw that in there.

And that's our time up.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:34**

Alrighty no worries.

I like this idea too actually.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:34**

So, just so that you're aware, as you've posted up that article you're entitled to the £12 per hour rate on consultations up until the 3rd of December.

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## **>Doubtful-Tea, 10:35**

You've been a bigger help than you might realize.

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## **>The Character Consultancy, 10:35**

I'm glad to have helped!