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Style Plus

Trends

WHODUNIT?

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The scene: The Center for Alternative Defense, a little-known think tank somewhere outside the Beltway.

The players: KGB agents, CIA agents, Cuban colonels, Pentagon liaison officers, an about-to-be-disgraced senator, his wife and administrative aide, two brothers—one substituting himself for his brother and killing him.

The situation: By the time the feds came around, a number of people had blown the lid off the potboiler.

Another typical weekend in Washington? Actually, it was a typical made-to-order mystery weekend, this one at the Jefferson Hotel on April 19-21, and everyone—suspects, victims, the culprit and the paying sleuths—couldn't have been happier about the whole faked deal, put on by Larry Redmond in conjunction with the Source Theater Company.

What was—and is—for real is that mystery thrillers are big business across America: Television shows, books, movies, plays and, more and more frequently, murder-mystery evenings and weekends are cashing in on the phenomenon.

Parker Brothers has come out with a video version of its ever-popular Clue board game (15 million to 20 million sets sold since 1949), and a \$10 million movie, also titled "Clue" and featuring all the familiar character/suspects, is due for release around Christmas.

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EXCERPTED