



A Shotgun Wedding

A Murder Mystery
by
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Customer Taster, Extracted from the main pack

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This afternoon, millionaire businessman John Davenport, married his fiancée, Juliet Lightfoot, following a whirlwind romance.

The reception is shortly to take place at the Great Bantworthy Golf Club. Family, friends and colleagues have gathered to celebrate the happy occasion, but not everyone wishes John well...

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About the pack

The full pack should provide everything you need to stage your own Murder Mystery.

A Shotgun Wedding is a scripted murder evening that will also require some background character knowledge to enable the cast to answer questions put to them by their audience.

A full script and character notes are provided as well as a pack of 'table clues' for each team within your audience.

There is a cast of nine as well as one narrator who will also act as compare for the evening.

The murder evening is intended to be run in a hall with a stage or suitable acting area, with tables around the hall for your audience. The set up is much the same as you would have for a quiz evening, e. g. teams of 6-8 people per table. Each table has a set of table clues to read through and will also have the opportunity to ask questions as the evening progresses.

The whole pack includes:

Organiser's Overview, containing

Plot overview [*Extract presented here*]

General staging notes [*presented here*]

Props list

An evening plan with approximate timings, [*presented here*]

Example questions (things the audience might ask the cast!)

A "cheat sheet" showing the clues and red herrings within the table clues

Main Script

First Act [*Extract presented here*]

Denouement

Character backgrounds, [*Extract presented here*]

Table Packs

Clues [*Extract presented here*]

(Optional) venue plan

Accusation Sheets

Plot Overview:

Today is 27th May 2006. John Davenport has a successful electronics and computer company called Computronics. He has built this company up over a number of years, usually by buying up shares of rival companies and then taking them over in the most aggressive of ways. A few months ago he met the niece of one of his junior partners and fell in love. Although she is over thirty years his junior, the feeling seems to have been mutual and a whirlwind romance ensued. Their wedding took place earlier today at St Geraldine's church in John's home village of Siddlington. We are now attending the wedding reception, which is being held in the banqueting hall of the Great Bantworthy Golf club, just a few miles away from the church. The caterers are running late and John and Juliet haven't arrived yet, so tensions are already running high.

Simon and Geraldine try to keep things on track until John and Juliet eventually arrive. Something has obviously happened between them, but neither is saying what. As the caterers are running late, they decide to read the cards and do the speeches before dinner. John insults Simon and ridicules him during his speech. He then goes on to insult Eleanor and generally upset everyone. After the speeches, Sophia and Simon slip off alone, Eleanor rushes off in tears, closely followed by Juliet, and Dennis realises he's battery is flat, so heads off to the car park. Then a shot rings out and John falls to the ground...

Characters:

John Davenport, the groom
Simon Davenport, John's younger brother and best man
Juliet Lightfoot, the bride
Mark Lightfoot, Juliet's brother
Eleanor Brock, junior partner as well and Mark and Juliet's aunt
Stephen Frost, junior partner and top salesman
Sophia Frost, Stephen's wife
Geraldine Fisher, John's PA and wedding organiser
Dennis Dickson, photographer and video man
Narrator, one extra person to ensure the smooth running of the evening

General Staging Notes

Casting & Rehearsal

Choose your performers and issue them with a copy of their pack - the character backgrounds, character descriptions and the script. You should hold as many rehearsals as you feel comfortable with.

The first rehearsal should concentrate on reading through the pack and familiarising yourselves with the characters, backgrounds and format of the evening, before moving on to a read through.

Subsequent rehearsals should be used for moving or blocking the action. This may need to be revised to suit your venue.

It is impossible to rehearse the question sections of the evening as you can never tell exactly what people will ask, however have a read through the example questions sheet as this details some of the questions that have been encountered in the past.

Facilities required for the performers

You will need a separate and private room in which to change and base yourselves when not required on stage. The victim will also use this room after being murdered.

The performers should also be given the same food as the audience.

It is always a good idea to visit the venue a few weeks before the performance and to tailor the hall plan to suit your venue.

Hall layout and event format

A top table to seat eight is required and this should be set mid stage of centrally in your acting area to allow movement in front of and behind the table. The rest of the tables can be scattered around the hall, as you would for a real wedding reception. Make sure you allow room between the tables for mingling and allowing guests and cast to move freely. You can dress the set as elaborately as you wish, but all you really need is the top table with a cloth that covers it down to the floor. You could have table decorations, a present table, a seating plan; it's entirely up to you. It is also fun to encourage your audience to enter into the spirit of the evening and dress appropriately. You could style your tickets as wedding invitations.

Suggested timetable

7:30 pm	Guests arrive and are seated.
7:45 pm	Once all have arrived; the Narrator will explain the format of the evening
7:55 pm	Photographer arrives to set up and has free reign to snap anything and anyone. The rest of the cast follow and mingle with the guests.
8:00 pm	Act One
8:25 pm	End of Act One, Narrator wraps up and supper is be served
9:15 pm	Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning
9:25 pm	Act Two
9:35 pm	End of Act Two and short break
9:45 pm	Cast returns and Narrator organises questioning
9:55 pm	Short break while guests complete Accusation forms
10:05 pm	Cast call for a spokesman from each table to read their accusation
10:15 pm	The big reveal
10:30 pm	End

Items for the table packs - in pdf form to be printed

- Intro Sheet - A basic intro to the evening
- The Table Clues - a copy of each should be put on each table. *An example is included in this document.*
- Hall Plan - Layout of 'the hall'.
- Accusation form - To be filled in by each team.

Character Backgrounds [*Extract*]:

John Davenport, aged 60 years.

Self-made millionaire and owner of Computronics. He delights in taking over other, smaller companies that he can add to his empire. His favourite way to do this is to buy up shares anonymously until he has a majority and then taking over the new company and dumping the existing owners. His last major acquisition was Data Dealings a little over two years ago. John's parents died while he was at university and he was left to like after his younger brother. He is quick to put people down and always has a cutting remark at the ready. He has known of Juliet for a number of years, but last year things came to a head and she accepted an invitation to dinner. A whirlwind romance ensued and the wedding was arranged very quickly. This could be because of John's heart condition. Eighteen months ago he was told he had an enlarged heart and only between one and two years left to live. He has told no-one of his condition. His current will leaves everything to Simon, but he is planning on changing this once he returns from his honeymoon. In the run up to the wedding, Juliet has told him that she is pregnant and John is delighted.

A Shotgun Wedding

Act One [Extract]

(When all of the guests have taken their seats and have started to read through the table clues, the narrator steps forward.)

Narrator: Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Great Bantworthy Golf Club. We are here to celebrate the wedding of John Davenport and Juliet Lightfoot that took place earlier this afternoon. However, we have reason to believe that this is to be no ordinary wedding reception, indeed before the evening is out you may be called upon to help solve a serious crime.

On your tables you will find plenty of information, history and clues which you should read with care. The players will be arriving shortly, so watch and listen carefully and try to spot the vital clues that may give the culprit away.

You will also have the opportunity to question the players as the evening progresses. I will return later to help guide you through the evening. It looks like the first of the players are arriving, so I'll leave you to it. Good luck.

(Dennis enters the main hall. He is the video man and is loaded down with cases, tripod and cameras. He makes his way to the front of the hall and begins to unload and get organized. While he is busy doing this, Simon, Stephen, Geraldine, Mark, Sophia and Eleanor all enter the hall and begin talking to the "guests" and each other. They are all suitably attired for a Wedding reception. The conversations with the guests should be kept light and chatty, e.g. introduce yourself, point out other members of the Wedding party and who they are, comments on the Wedding service, weather, etc. While all of this is going on Dennis has sorted himself out and has started a tour of the hall, photographing and videoing anything that takes his fancy, casts and guests alike.)

(After a few minutes of this Stephen and Sophia make their way up onto the stage and stand to one side, near the front. They have the following "whispered" conversation, but are continually glancing around to make sure that they are not overheard or caught talking by any of the cast.)

Stephen: So, how's it going?

Sophia: Very well so far. I don't think he knows what's hit him. I've got him eating out of the palm of my hand. I really do think that he'd do anything for me.

Stephen: That's great. I saw him mooning around the office a couple of days ago and when he saw me looking at him he went as white as a sheet and nearly broke the land speed record getting the hell out of there.

Sophia: Well don't overdo it. I don't want him backing off because he thinks you suspect something. How about your little project?

Stephen: I haven't seen much of her today, but I saw plenty of her last night.

Sophia: Yes, well there's no need to go into graphic detail about it.

(At that moment Eleanor and Mark arrive on stage and Stephen and Sophia's conversation changes dramatically.)

Stephen: So where were you last night then? Who is it this time?

(Sophia throws her hands to her face as she rushes off stage, supposedly in floods of tears.

Eleanor and Mark stare at Stephen for a moment before going back to their conversation. The rest of the cast come on to the stage, chatting to each other. Geraldine's mobile 'phone rings.)

Gerry: Hello. Yes... No, the caterers haven't been here long... Well, okay. I'll try. How long will you be?... Is everything all right?... Fine, see you then.

(She crosses to Simon and whispers to him. He nods, moves to the front of the stage and addresses the guests.)

Simon: Ladies and gentlemen. I have just been informed that the bride and groom have been... err... caught up in traffic and are running slightly late, however they should be here shortly. In the meantime can I ask you all to re-charge your glasses and bear with us for a little while longer.

(Sophia returns to the stage looking a bit tearful and heads straight for Simon. He is very concerned and she plays up to him. They take their places at the top table and he shows great concern while she explains what has happened. Geraldine crosses to Stephen.)

Gerry: The caterers only arrived twenty minutes ago and are nowhere near ready.

Stephen: What! But we're supposed to be eating in ten minutes. It's a good job John's running late as well. Do you know how long it's going to be before the food is ready?

Gerry: They had a cold starter already prepared, so that's been served, but they say they need another half hour or so at least. I'm going to go out there and try to speed things up a bit, can you let me know when John arrives?

Stephen: Of course.

(Geraldine exits and Stephen crosses to the table, picks up his speech notes and reads through it. All this time Dennis has continued to video, take snaps and get in the way. He takes a photo of Simon and Sophia who are deep in conversation. Simon glances nervously at Stephen and tells Dennis to clear off. Eleanor begins to get a bit agitated and her conversation with Mark gets louder. She is pacing while she talks.)

Eleanor: Traffic jam my foot. He's upset her again, that's why they're late.

Mark: We don't know that, they might be genuinely stuck. I'll talk to Jules when they get here. Don't worry everything will be fine.

Eleanor: They haven't even been married one day yet. I knew something like this would happen, I told her not to go through with it.

(Just then Dennis appears in front of them, pointing his camera at them.)

Dennis: One for the album, love?

Eleanor: Oh go away you silly little man.

(Dennis takes a snap anyway and wanders off up the hall and exits. Simon gets up and asks if anyone wants a drink. He leaves the stage and Eleanor approaches Stephen.)

Eleanor: How did you get on at the exhibition last week?

Stephen: Very well. We did about three hundred thousand and there was a lot of interest in your new Phoenix programs.

(Simon reappears with a tray of drinks and starts to hand them round.)

Stephen: So, Simon. Do you think we should update our website with details of Phoenix?

Eleanor: Mark should take most of the credit for those. They're his brainchild.

(Mark waves away her praise, but beams happily. Simon is left standing, a bit non-plussed. Stephen is looking at him, mockingly.)

Stephen: Well?

Simon: Well, I don't know, do I? I don't even know what they do.

(Mark comes forward and starts to explain that they are new programs that retrieve data from corrupt or damaged hard discs, but before he gets into too much detail, Dennis comes back into the hall.)

Dennis: They're here.

(He comes back to the front of the hall to check his cameras. Simon gets off the stage and heads for the back of the hall and exits. Stephen goes offstage to get Geraldine and they return together a few moments later. Everyone left on stage forms a line ready to meet the bride and groom.

Simon re-enters at the back of the hall.)

Simon: Ladies and gentlemen. Would you please be upstanding for the bride and groom.

(John and Juliet enter the hall and walk to the stage while Simon leads the applause. They say a few "hellos", etc. to some of the guests on their way up the hall and then walk down the line of cast shaking hands and kissing. John makes his way to his seat while Eleanor leads Juliet to one side. Mark joins them.)

Eleanor: Is everything all right? You haven't had a row, have you?

Juliet: No, of course not. We... err... decided to take the scenic route, that's all.

Mark: Well, if you're sure you're okay. We were worried about you.

Juliet: Well there's no need, I'm fine and we haven't been rowing.

(She leaves them and takes her seat.)

John: Sorry we're late, everyone. We had a puncture and it took a while to get the spare on. Have we missed much?

Simon: No, we've been waiting for you to arrive.

John: Waiting for us? What sort of a Best Man are you? Couldn't you have organized some group photos or something?

Simon: But I didn't think you'd be too long.

John: That just about sums you up, doesn't it? "I didn't think"!

Gerry: We have a slight problem with the caterers as well. They only arrived a short while ago and aren't ready to serve us properly yet.

John: Christ, what sort of a farce is this? What are we supposed to do, send Simon for fish and chips? Mind you, he'd probably cock that up as well.

Stephen: Why don't we all calm down a bit. Starters have been sorted out so have a drink, John. Gerry, could you find out how much longer they need?

(Geraldine nods and goes off stage again. Stephen hands John a drink and then sits down next to Sophia.)

Simon: He's right, John. You should try to calm down. You know what the doctor said.

John: Oh shut up about the bloody doctor. What would you know about it?

Stephen: I need to talk to you about the exhibition, John. We took a lot of orders and need to organize shipment.

(He sits next to John and they continue to talk business. Simon sits next to Sophia looking dejected, it is now her turn to comfort him.)

Sophia: Don't take any notice of him.

(She whispers something to him. He looks shocked and glances at Stephen.)

Simon: We can't, they'll be serving dinner soon.

(Geraldine comes back on and crosses to talk to Stephen and John.)

Gerry: They say another twenty minutes at least.

John: And what the hell are we supposed to do for twenty minutes?

Gerry: Why don't you do the speeches now, before dinner? I'm sure no one would mind.

Stephen: Brilliant idea, it's better than sitting round doing nothing.

John: Well, alright. **(He stands.)** Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been informed that dinner will be delayed for a short while longer. In the meantime, and as a break from tradition, I thought we should do the speeches now and eat later. So, if you could bear with us for a couple of minutes, I'll get my notes ready and let Stephen kick off.

(John, Stephen and Simon return to their seats and begin looking through their notes. Sophia and Eleanor have a brief chat about the way things have gone so far today. Geraldine tries to get Dennis' attention and beckons him up onto the stage. Mark draws Juliet to one side.)

Mark: Are you sure you're all right, Jules?

Juliet: Of course I am. It's my wedding day, why shouldn't I be?

Mark: Come on, you can't fool me as easily as the others. Something is going on.

(Juliet glances round to make sure that no one else is listening to them, then she moves Mark even further to one side.)

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Excerpt from Table Clues

Rufton Times
14 April 1994

Road Tragedy Strikes

Continued from page one

seen driving away at high speed towards North Potten.

Mr and Mrs Lightfoot were returning home after spending the evening with friends in Rufton. It is thought that they first encountered the BMW shortly before turning into Camp Road. An eyewitness reports having seen the Lightfoot's car travelling along that road with a dark BMW following extremely closely.

The Lightfoot's two children were at home with a baby-sitter at the time and were both reported as being in a state of shock. Mrs Lightfoot's sister, Eleanor Brock, has taken the children in for the time being. Miss Brock told us that it was a "tragic accident", but that if another car was involved she hoped the driver would soon be found so as not to prolong the agony for the children.

Police have asked that anyone with any further information contact them at Rufton police station on 01637 882200

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Camera Magic

People from all walks of life joined the professionals at the Carpenter Centre last Monday for some practical demonstrations on how to get the most out of their cameras this summer.

Mr P Stafford of Photogenics gave a talk on how to make the most of natural lighting and displayed some of his own work to illustrate how darkness can be used to great effect.

Mrs G Stevenson, who runs the photography evening classes at Rufton College, brought along some landscape shots taken by her classes and gave pointers on how to use trees and buildings to frame your snaps.

Mr N Edwards brought along a complete darkroom to show us all how easy it is to develop our own films. He also gave some demonstrations on how to create different effects at the development stage and introduced us to his latest invention, known affectionately as the darkroom enhanced negative imaging system.

Mr D Frazer showed us a range of lenses and filters and talked about "close to" photography. Some of his prints of the insect world were on show, as was a remarkable set of pictures that started with the earth from space and "zoomed in" to the final picture of a fly sitting proudly on a half-eaten sandwich.