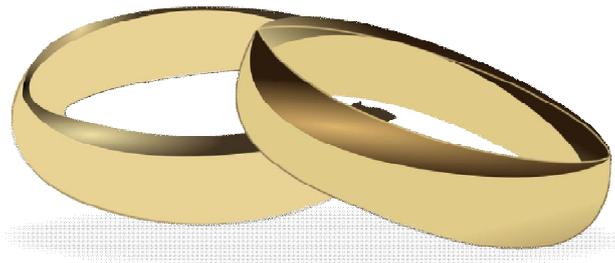


# *Act of Union*



*An Interactive Murder Mystery*

*by*

**Adam Croft**



*Published by Lazy Bee Scripts*

*Customer Taster*

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*An Interactive Murder Mystery*

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*As the guests assemble for the reception following the wedding of Gary and Victoria Sponge, family feuds and class divides rise to the surface with a fiery passion. After all, blood is thicker than water...*

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## **Introduction**

This is a taster pack, containing extracts from the full pack.

The full pack has been designed to ensure you have all the information and materials required to produce your own interactive murder mystery event.

The event is designed to be played out during a sit-down meal at which the audience are the guests at the wedding and the actors constitute the top table.

This particular pack is designed to be performed as an **improvised performance**. No scripts are provided and there are no lines to be learnt. Character biographies are provided to allow the actors to view important information about their characters. Any additional information and back stories can (and should) be developed by the actors and production company to suit their own needs and requirements. Without restrictions created by scripts and detailed information, you are free to tailor the production to your own event.

### ***The Full Pack includes:***

- **Production Guidelines** to guide you through staging the event. [Extract included in this taster.]
- **Character biographies.** These include all details and information necessary to the advancement of the plot. Any additional information can be created by the actors or production team to suit their event. [Included in this taster.]
- **An overview of events.** This will detail the order of events which need to occur and some suggestions as to how these can be played out. [Extract included in this taster.]
- **Whodunnit sheets.** To allow audience teams to name the guilty.

You can customise any of the information to suit your own particular requirements so long as the characters and plot remain credible and believable.

Although the subject matter is serious, character names and traits have been designed to inject fun and humour into the event and to provide your guests and audience with a night to remember. (This is intended to be on the light side of murder mysteries, more about the fun than the serious sleuthing.) Motives and clues have been kept strong and simple, giving all the characters a strong chance of being the killer whilst allowing the audience to follow the plot easily.

# The Production

## *Plot Overview*

It is the wedding reception of Gary and Victoria Sponge, who have just got married at a local registry office, much to the dismay of Victoria's ultra-religious mother, Virginia. Assembled at the top table are:

- **Gary Sponge** — The groom
- **Victoria Sponge** — The bride
- **Dick Sponge** — Gary's father
- **Mildred Sponge** — Gary's mother
- **Alexander Falls** — Victoria's father
- **Virginia Falls** — Victoria's mother

Later in the evening, a surprise guest arrives:

- **Jenny Tulworts** — Ex-lover of Gary and mother to his secret child

The mood seems happy but family feuds soon come to the fore, as does the class divide between the Sponge and Falls families. Each of the wedding party's speeches is laced with barbed comments and references to the difficulties they've had.

When the mysterious Jenny Tulworts arrives part-way through the evening (she tried to time it so she'd arrive at the 'If any persons here present...' moment, but the train was late) declaring that she's Gary's ex-girlfriend and mother to his secret child, the nuptials are thrown into chaos.

When Gary is found dead with a kitchen knife through his chest, the fellow reception guests must discover whodunnit...

## *Back Stories and Rehearsals*

Information provided in the back stories for characters is only what is necessary to advance the plot and character arcs. This has been done deliberately to ensure that you can customise and tailor other aspects to suit your production.

Although there are no scripts, rehearsals are strongly recommended in order for characters to discuss their back stories, motives and relationships prior to the event.

## *Facilities and Technical Requirements*

Performers will need a separate private room. This is where the murder victim will go once he has died and will also provide a place for other characters to decamp to when necessary. Performers should eat at their table at the same time as the audience, although Jenny Tulworts should eat her meal in the private room.

## *Format and Staging*

The event should be structured around a sit-down meal, ostensibly the wedding reception of Gary and Victoria Sponge. Both the performers and the audience should be situated in the same room.

Staging the event around a buffet arrangement would also work and could, in fact, provide the necessary platform for characters to keep circulating around the room.

## *Timeframes*

There is no set or predefined timing, although events should happen in the predefined order and at realistic intervals commensurate with a real wedding reception.

### ***Tips on Improvisation***

There is no set script for this murder mystery event, which gives you free reign to improvise as much or as little as you wish. This can give your actors the freedom to create their own in-depth back stories and add a little of their own personal colour to their characters.

Performers should remain in character throughout and at all times when audience members and guests are in the vicinity.

If you are asked tricky questions by a guest, you can either steer the conversation elsewhere or be deliberately vague or obtuse. This can actually be a very handy way of throwing suspicion directly onto your character! If you accidentally give contrasting information to another character, this can also provide extra suspicion. Perhaps both characters could even accuse the other of lying about the facts!

## Character biographies

### *Gary Sponge*

Male: Playing age late 20s or early 30s

The bridegroom. Works for his father's window cleaning business and has recently been put in charge of it. He's not the brightest tool in the box and is generally oblivious to what people think of him. He has been trying for a long time to persuade Alexander to allow him to marry Victoria and now his big day has arrived.

### *Victoria Sponge, née Falls*

Female: Playing age mid to late 20s

The bride. A glamorous young woman from a well-to-do family. Although she loves her parents very much and wouldn't say it to their faces, she doesn't like their snobbishness and is actually looking forward to a life of lower-middle-class normality with Gary.

### *Dick Sponge*

Male: Playing age 50s

The father of the groom. He's been running a window cleaning business for many years and although he's not set the world of chamois leathers alight, he's managed to run a household on it. Has been ill and handed over the running of the business to his son, but on the proviso that if anything should happen to Gary then ownership of the business would revert back to him. Like his wife, he's fond of a drink or two.

### *Mildred Sponge*

Female: Playing age 50s

The mother of the groom. A loveable, jolly woman who very much likes a drink or twelve. She was abandoned by her father at a very young age and as a result has harboured resentment ever since. As she gets progressively drunker, she tells all and sundry about this and remarks that men who abandon women and children deserve everything that's coming to them.

### *Alexander Falls*

Male: Playing age 50s

The father of the bride. He's extremely protective over his daughter and has reluctantly allowed her to marry Gary after beginning to realise that perhaps, just perhaps, he's not such a bad person. After all, he's now running his own business — even if it is a window cleaning company — and it's not as if he's got a sordid secret history, is it?

### *Virginia Falls*

Female: Playing age 50s

The mother of the bride. A devoutly religious woman who really can't see why Gary and Victoria didn't get married in the beautiful Church of St Winifred the Colossal. She doesn't drink and is mortified at how much the Sponges seem to put away through the course of the evening.

### *Jenny Tulworts*

Female: Playing age late 20s or early 30s

The secret ex-girlfriend of Gary Sponge and mother of his child. They met at university in Scotland and he abandoned her to drop out of university and move home.

## **The Speeches**

Following the start of the evening's proceedings, some of the principal characters will make speeches. These should be done in the predefined order. Speeches should be written and rehearsed prior to the event and include each of the bullet points listed for each character.

### ***Alexander Falls***

- Says that as a successful and ambitious man he has always wanted nothing but the best for his daughter, but even he must be realistic at times and is pleased to welcome Gary into the family.
- Gary has finally proven himself recently after taking the reins of his father's business — even though it is only a one-man-band window cleaning business — and has shown some nous and initiative.
- [Etc.]

### ***Gary Sponge***

- Thanks his new father-in-law for his speech.
- Declares how delighted he is to be marrying the girl of his dreams and says that all he has ever wanted to do is make her happy.
- [Etc.]

### ***Dick Sponge***

- Remarks that even though he dropped out after a year or two, he's very proud of Gary for going away to university in the first place (if the actor playing Gary is at the upper end of the recommended age bracket, a remark should be added along the lines of 'Even if he did eventually go later than most other people.' You could even add something like 'But that's what happens when you have to re-sit your A Levels. Eight times.')
- [Etc.]

## **Arguments and Conversations**

A number of arguments and conversations need to take place within earshot of the guests.  
[These are specified in the full pack.]

## The Plot Narrative

The plot of the evening should be carried out in the following order. The timing of courses can be moved and/or altered to suit the venue and logistics of your particular event.

- **Pre-dinner drinks** and meet-and-greet if this has been decided on.
- **Introduction** by Gary, thanking everyone for coming and letting them know the first course is about to be served, followed by speeches.
- **First course served**, to audience and characters at the same time.
- **Circulation** of characters, speaking to the audience members to see if they're enjoying their meal. Opportunity for conversation with the guests and for some of the **arguments and conversations** listed to be carried out.
- **Speeches** to be made in the order listed.
- **Main course served.**
- There are revelations and arguments and opportunities for murder. [More details in the full pack]
- **The murder is announced.** A character (or, for added cachet, even a member of staff from the venue) comes in and announces that Gary Sponge has been found dead with a kitchen knife sticking out of his chest. The manager of the venue is keen not to get the police involved, due to the media attention from grisly and violent murders being generally quite bad for business, and as a result the fellow guests must determine who killed Gary Sponge.
- **The 'whodunnit forms' and pens** are distributed. The performers retire to the private room while the guests deliberate and decide in their groups whodunnit. The forms are then collected and taken to the performers, who decide on a winner.
- **The denouement.** The characters return to the dining room and the events of the evening are summarised.
- The murderer is revealed.
- **Gary returns** and awards the prize to the winning team along with their solution and reason why they thought the murder was committed. A booby prize can also be given for the daftest solution.