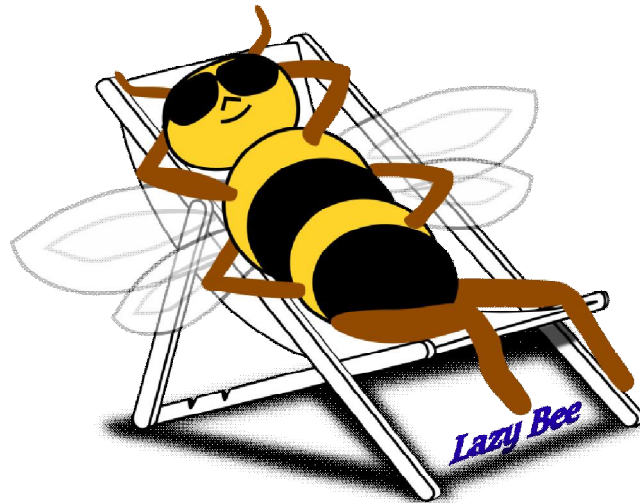


A Dinner-Theatre Murder Mystery
by

Geoff Fulford



Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Some Anniversary!

Copyright 2017 by Geoff Fulford

COPYRIGHT REGULATIONS

This murder mystery is protected under the Copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations and all countries of the Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights, including Stage, Motion Picture, Video, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translations into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, manuscript, typescript, recording, including video, or otherwise, without prior consent of Lazy Bee Scripts.

A licence, obtainable only from Lazy Bee Scripts, must be acquired for every public or private performance of a script published by Lazy Bee Scripts and the appropriate royalty paid. If extra performances are arranged after a licence has already been issued, it is essential that Lazy Bee Scripts are informed immediately and the appropriate royalty paid, whereupon an amended licence will be issued.

The availability of this script does not imply that it is automatically available for private or public performance, and Lazy Bee Scripts reserve the right to refuse to issue a licence to perform, for whatever reason. Therefore a licence should always be obtained before any rehearsals start.

Localisation and updating of this script is permitted, particularly where indicated in the script. Major revisions to the text may not be made without the permission of Lazy Bee Scripts.

The name of the author must be displayed on all forms of advertising and promotional material, including posters, programmes and hand bills.

Photocopying of this murder mystery constitutes an infringement of copyright unless consent has been obtained from Lazy Bee Scripts and an appropriate fee has been paid.

***FAILURE TO ABIDE BY ALL THE ABOVE REGULATIONS, CONSTITUTES AN
INFRINGEMENT OF THE COPYRIGHT LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.***

Some Anniversary!

by Geoff Fulford

Introduction

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 anniversary celebration, and most of the actors constitute the top table.

The production is for 9 people, 3 males, 5 female and one of either gender.

The mystery is designed to be performed as a part scripted and part improvised performance. Speech and intervention scripts are provided and these are the only lines to be learnt. Character biographies are provided to allow the actors to understand 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 contains

- **Organiser's Overview** (extract in this document)
- **Scripted Elements** (extract in this document)
- A **Character Brief** for each of the characters (except the MC and the victim), including the character biographies and that character's actions before and after the murder (these are suggestions and do not have to be followed).
- **Accusation sheets.** To allow audience teams to name the guilty party (or parties).
- **A map of the hotel.** Can be given to the audience for them to track movements of suspects during questioning.

In the Organiser's Overview, you will find:

- **Production guidelines** to guide you through staging the event.
- **A suggested timetable** to detail the order of events which need to occur and some suggestions as to how these can be played out.
- **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.

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. 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.

Production Guidelines

List of characters

Clark Seville

Barbara Seville — Clark's wife

Victoria Falls — Clark's sister

Sue Flay – Barbara's sister

Eddie Bull – Clark's nephew

Alison Wonderland – Eddie's girlfriend

Annette Curtain – a middle aged widow.

Ivor Grudge – a middle aged man

Master/Mistress of Ceremonies

Plot Overview

It is the 30th wedding anniversary dinner of Clark and Barbara Seville. Clark addresses the audience, who are the guests at the dinner. Assembled at the top table are:

Clark

Barbara

Victoria

Sue

Eddie

Alison

There is also a **Master of Ceremonies (m or f)** who introduces speeches, tells the guests what is happening and what they need to do at each point in the performance. They are seated at the side of the stage area, sufficiently far from the action that they are not thought to be a part of it.

Seated separately at different tables in the hall are:

Annette

Ivor

The mood seems happy but feuds and problems soon arise. Each of the speeches is laced with barbed comments and references to the difficulties they've had.

When a body is found in the conservatory, stabbed with a cake knife, 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 characters. This has been done deliberately to ensure that you can customise and tailor other aspects to suit your production.

Although there are only scripts for the initial speeches and introductions, rehearsals are strongly recommended in order for characters to discuss their back-stories, motives and relationships prior to the event and prepare for questions they may be asked by the guests.

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.

Format and Staging

The stage will have a table in the centre with six chairs for the cast and a chair at the side away from the cast for the MC.

The tables will be decorated with tablecloths, cutlery, wine glasses and wine bottles, serviettes and general wedding anniversary decorations: balloons, cards, banners, tinsel, etc.

The event should be structured around a sit-down meal, ostensibly the 30th (pearl) wedding anniversary dinner of Clark and Barbara. Both the performers and the audience should be situated in the same room, preferably with the performers on a stage or raised area.

The audience - 'guests' - sit round tables with either a buffet from where they collect their food or helpers delivering food to the tables. Tea and coffee at the end should be served by the people responsible for laying out the food.

Pre-dinner drinks: Although not necessary, this can be a nice touch which allows your guests to be met and greeted by the top table family before the evening gets underway.

Dining arrangements: Tables should be arranged so that characters can move freely between them when necessary and chairs can be turned to be able to see what is happening on stage. If used, buffet tables should be set up at the side of the hall from which guests will collect their meals. Alternatively, if there are sufficient helpers, meals can be delivered to the tables. Tea and coffee at the end will be delivered to the tables.

Costumes and Props

In terms of essential props, this pack has been designed to keep essentials to a minimum. Costumes, naturally, should be commensurate with the characters and the occasion. The mystery is set in the present day. Decorating the hall and stage with 'Happy Anniversary' banners, balloons, etc. is advised to help set the mood.

Tips on Improvisation

There is no set script for this murder mystery event, other than the opening speeches and interventions, 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 contradictory information to another character, this can also provide extra suspicion. Perhaps both characters could even accuse the other of lying about the facts!

There is no set murderer, each production can decide for themselves which of the characters committed the murder. The innocent characters must tell the truth as far as they are able to from their back-stories. The guilty character can lie as much as he, or she, likes. The Character Brief for each character gives their story if they are innocent and a different story if they are guilty.

Suggested Timetable

This can be variable to suit each production's needs.

- 7.15 – 7.30 p.m. - Guests arrive and are greeted by Clark, Barbara, Victoria, Sue, Eddie and Alison who explain who they are and are offered a drink before finding a table.
- 7.30 – 7.50 p.m. - Guests are served or invited to collect their first course and eat.
- 7.50 – 8.10 p.m. - Scripted speeches and interventions, including all the cast leaving the stage either when directed or at the end of this section.
- 8.10 - 8.45 p.m. - Guests are served or invited to collect their main course. At the end of this course, the MC announces that there has been a murder and that for the next 30 minutes, the cast will be available to be asked questions by the guests (“prior to the arrival of the police”).
- 8.45 - 9.10 p.m. - Cast circulate among the audience to be asked questions. The cast move round tables at specified time intervals depending on how many tables there are.
- 9.10 – 9.40 p.m. - Guests are served or invited to collect their dessert. During this period, each person or each table decides who they think the murderer is and complete their forms, which are collected by the cast.
- 9.40 – 10.00 p.m. - Tea and coffee is served while the producer/organiser reviews the completed forms to decide who the winner is.
- 10.00 – 10.15 p.m. - The murderer and their reasoning is revealed by the MC and prizes are awarded.

Character Biographies

Clark Seville

Male. Playing age late 50s or early 60s.

A charming rogue. His marriage has been littered with affairs, heavy, uncontrolled gambling and failed business enterprises and generally letting down everyone he comes into contact with. His opening speech is intended to contain the sort of 'corny' and old, unfunny jokes that people make at this sort of event.

Barbara Seville

Female. Playing age 50s.

A beautiful woman who has been loyal to Clark throughout their troubled marriage. She knows some but not all of Clark's infidelities and other activities. She decides that this anniversary is the chance to air her frustrations as she has seen a lawyer and is starting divorce proceedings. She has a £1m insurance policy on Clark's life.

Victoria Falls

Female. Playing age 50s.

Clark's sister. She is divorced. Her former husband was a business partner of Clark. Clark was the cause of the business failing, in which his brother-in-law lost all his family's fortune and left him bankrupt. This was the reason for him leaving Victoria, who loved him very much. Victoria has always blamed Clark.

Sue Flay

Female. Playing age late 40s to early 50s.

Barbara's sister. She was seduced by Clark many years ago and became pregnant with Eddie. She pretended that the child was her husband's but he knew the truth. Later, he committed suicide and Sue blames both herself and Clark for his death.

Eddie Bull

Male. Playing age early 30s.

Barbara's sister's son. He does not know it, but he is Clark's biological son. Clark groomed Eddie as a friend as well as a nephew and he was taken in by Clark's charm and for some years had great faith in him, as Clark took him to parties and events. However, Clark used Eddie's trust fund and credit to gamble with and ran up a huge debt to unregistered money lenders. The money lenders wanted their money back from Eddie and beat him up very badly. He now has a limp and although a heavy drinker, he is sober when he appears at the dinner. Eddie and Alison live together but in a very strained relationship.

Alison Wonderland

Female. Playing age about 30.

Eddie's girlfriend. Alison was an attractive and talented aspiring dancer ten years ago when she met Eddie who introduced her to Clark who was running a talent agency. She registered with the agency, but was not offered any work, other than in a lap-dancing club. Clark also offered her the 'casting couch'. She still loves Eddie with whom she shares her anger about the way Clark treated both of them. She is now working at a drive-through fast food outlet wondering what might have been if she had joined a reputable agency.

Annette Curtain

Female. Playing age late 40s or early 50s.

Annette is a widow, left a lot of money by her husband. Clark approached her to finance a film company and was very charming. She funded the activity but was unaware that none of the money ever went towards forming a company but was spent on Clark's gambling and womanising. He never paid back any money and Annette hopes that, by turning up at the dinner, she can shame Clark into repaying her what she is owed.

Ivor Grudge

Male. Playing age – middle aged.

Ivor's wife was hit by Clark in his car and she is now disabled and housebound. Although no charges were brought, Ivor blames Clark for the incident which has totally changed his life. He has arrived as an unexpected and uninvited guest to tell the world what he thinks about Clark.

Speeches and Scripted Elements

Following the start of the evening's proceedings, the principal characters will make speeches. These should be done in the predefined order. Speeches details can be amended but need to be rehearsed prior to the event and must include the main points for each character.

Conclusion

After the desserts, tea and coffee, the Master of Ceremonies announces the murderer(s), gives the reasons, announces the winning table and gives out prizes.

Some Anniversary!

Opening address:

MC: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. In about thirty minutes I will ask our host, Mr Clark Seville to welcome you to his and Barbara's thirtieth wedding anniversary. Before I do so, I would like to tell you what will be happening this evening - when I finish speaking, please help yourselves to the starters that are laid out on the tables at the side of the hall *[for "your first course will be brought to you"]*. I will call you all to order for the speeches shortly. After the speeches, there will be a break for your main course and after that I will keep you advised as to what is going on. There is a major celebration planned with cutting of the cake and champagne in the conservatory after the main course and you are all invited to join us there.

After the starters are finished and cleared:

MC: Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. I will now ask Mr Clark Seville to welcome you all.

Clark: **(Stands up.)** Thank you all very much for coming to help me and my darling wife Barbara celebrate our thirtieth wedding anniversary. I can only say that the last thirty years have flown by. I was a bit shy as a young man, hadn't had many girlfriends so I put an advert in the local paper, saying 'Wife wanted'. Within a day, I had received over a hundred replies. **(Pause)** All of them said the same thing, 'you can have mine'. Barbara, darling, **(turns his head towards her)** you have been my rock, the most devoted and loving, gentle and kind person I know. I never realised what happiness was until I got married, and then it was too late. I do, of course, remember our wedding day. Barbara was in Kent and had to get here late at night the day before the wedding. She just caught the midnight train, which was just as well, as there were no other services until the day of the wedding. It became known in the family as 'The last train to Clark Seville'. You are all very welcome to eat and drink whatever you like, Barbara and I will just float through the dinner as we have floated through the last thirty years. I am so lucky to have such a wonderful wife. She has made all my dreams come true as a wife, mother and provider of happiness for all who come into contact with her. My mum said at the wedding that as a couple we were drop dead gorgeous – I told Barbara she was gorgeous and she told me to drop dead. I was speaking to a friend of mine the other day and asked him what he thought I ought to do for our thirtieth anniversary. He suggested that I take Barbara to Rome. So I asked him what I could do for our fortieth. He said I could go and bring her back. Barbara was confused about the wedding process, but the vicar told her it was easy, walk up the aisle to the altar and sing a hymn. So repeat the key words after me **(slowly)** 'Aisle altar hymn' **(quicker)** 'Aisle altar hymn'. But seriously, friends, can I ask you to raise your glasses to drink the health of the most beautiful woman in the room, no, sorry, the most beautiful woman in the world. To Barbara.

(All stand, raise their glasses while looking at Barbara, drink and sit down.)

MC: Now, can I ask Mrs Barbara Seville to say a few words.

Barbara: **(Stands up, takes a gulp of her drink and looks to be summoning up the courage to say what she means to say.)** I suppose it is traditional at these events to say such lovely things as Clark has just said about me. To flatter your spouse is part of the game. **(Pause)** Part of the act might be more appropriate. Because it is an act. We have both been playing parts for many years. Clark the devoted husband, always cheerful and considerate and me, the loving wife always supportive and encouraging. Well, let me tell you the truth. Clark is a bully. He is a Casanova, a gambler, a chancer, a cheat and a liar. I have been living with his lies for so many years, I can't count them all. Tonight, I am telling the truth. A truth that I didn't want to believe. When I first heard rumours of his womanizing I stood by him, defended him. I didn't believe them, not because they weren't true, but because I didn't want them to be true. I want, **(pause)** no, I need to get stuff off my chest. I cannot count the number of women he has got himself involved with, the number of times I have had to lie to people phoning because he owes them money, more money than he could possibly have spent in legitimate business dealings. No, my dear friends and relatives tonight I am exposing this cheat, this liar and want to tell you all, in public, that I am divorcing him as soon as I possibly can. I have no idea what I will do, how I will live, but I cannot live a lie any longer. This is the end.

(Barbara throws her wine at Clark and storms off stage. Clark stands and follows Barbara off stage. There is the sound of an argument – “What are you doing?” “How dare you treat me like that?” “You deserve it, you monster,” etc., followed by the sound of a face being slapped.)

Barbara: **(Off stage)** Well, that’s the end of it, I’m not having any more, go back to your slappers and scrubbers. I want my life back. I’ve got someone in this evening to change the locks and you can’t come back in. You can send someone for your stuff, but you’ll never set foot in the house again!

(Door slams.)

Victoria: **(Stands up.)** Well, that’s a bit of a shocker, to put it mildly. But I can’t say I’m totally surprised, in fact, Barbara’s outburst has emboldened me to say what I think. I too have been bottling it up for years. I am Victoria Falls; I know I am Clark’s sister, but I can’t defend him any longer. I have been holding my tongue for Barbara’s sake, but now I can tell you all the truth. You remember Bob, my husband, ex-husband, I should say. He was a very rich man and Clark talked him into investing in some business venture. Bob wasn’t very savvy in business and Clark kept convincing him that just a bit more investment would show a fantastic return. He bled Bob dry until he had no more money. Then the business ran out of money completely and instead of Clark, it was Bob whose name was on the papers, so Bob was made bankrupt. He felt so embarrassed that he ran away from the trouble and the whole situation, he left me holding our baby and I loved him. I still love him, and I still believe that he loves me. **(She is wringing all the emotion she can muster out of this!)** It wasn’t Bob’s fault, other than being naïve. It was Clark’s fault, all Clark’s fault. He could charm the fish out of the sea and it was all fake, he was a fake the whole thing was nothing more than a bloody fake. He destroyed my happiness, all my hopes and dreams. **(Breaks down and sits down in tears.)**

Sue: **(Stands up.)** I suppose you could say ‘Follow that’. Well, unfortunately, I can. For those who don’t know me, I am Sue Flay, Clark is my brother-in-law. I am Barbara’s sister. Shortly after they got married, Clark, Barbara and I were going to a concert. Barbara had the ‘flu’ and stayed at home so Clark and I were left to go to the theatre. Well, the concert was fine – it was Cyndi Lauper, supported by a new girl group called The Vestals. We went for a drink afterwards and as I lived close by, I invited Clark, foolishly as it turned out, back for a drink. I only knew him through Barbara and wasn’t aware of the sort of man he was. I was engaged to Terry who was away on a business trip. We had a couple of drinks and I got a bit squiffy. Clark turned into a monster and showed what I now know to be his true colours. The outcome was that I got pregnant, but I didn’t know that until after Terry and I got married a couple of weeks later. I tried to convince myself that the baby was Terry’s but I think I always knew the truth. Terry found out when we had tried for three years to have a baby and the doctor told him that he was unable to father a child. We never told anyone and in public everything was fine, but it destroyed our marriage and Terry killed himself a year later. I blame myself, of course, but Clark needs to know, accept and acknowledge his responsibility. **(Sits down.)**

Eddie: **(Stands up.)** As you know, Clark is my uncle and I can...

Annette: **(Stands up at rear of hall.)** Wait, I must speak. I came here to see Clark and tell him what I thought of him. **(She moves to the stage.)**

Eddie: Who are you? What are you doing here?

[Scripted elements continue.]