

BATT, BAYLES AND BALLS  
SOLICITORS AND COMMISSIONERS FOR OATHS  
IN  
A  
LEGAL MURDER  
BY  
IAN MCCUTCHEON



*Published by Lazy Bee Scripts*

*Customer Taster*

# **A Legal Murder**

*Copyright 2011 by Ian McCutcheon*

*Hugh Balls is the senior partner in a firm of solicitors. But he has made many enemies among the staff. Several are angry enough to want to kill him. Is Balls about to come to a shocking end?*

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# A Legal Murder

*By Ian McCutcheon*

## *Customer Taster*

### *Organiser's Overview*

**Read this THOROUGHLY before touching, printing or distributing the rest of the material!**

### *Overview*

A Legal Murder is a Murder/Mystery designed to be played by 7 actors. The actors perform two formal scenes, then the audience receive additional written clues from which they try to solve the mystery before a speech by a narrator reveals the guilty party.

### *Characters*

**Hugh Balls:** Senior partner, serial adulterer and a thoroughly unpleasant man.

**Annette Curtain:** Balls' faithful secretary and ex-lover, now sacked.

**Olive Stone:** A long-serving solicitor, about to lose her job for 'reasons of efficiency'.

**Mike Rowchip:** The Firm's IT expert, shortly to be fired due to no fault of his own.

**Jenny Tayliah:** Balls' latest 'conquest', but now 'let go' by Balls in an effort to save his marriage.

**Dick Withers:** The practice manager, now dismissed for defrauding the Firm.

**Narrator:** Reveals further evidence before the accusations, and reveals the solution at the end.

### *Structure*

The full murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview (this document!) including plot overview, a rough guide on how to structure your event, notes on setting, and a props list. **[Included in this Taster]**
- Act One and Two, to be performed by the actors **[Part of Act 1 included in this Taster]**
- Six pieces of evidence for the audience to examine **[One example included in this Taster]**
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution.

## ***Plot Overview***

Since it was established in 1873 **Batt, Bayles and Balls** has been the smallest and most traditional firm of solicitors in the quaint market town of Twytching, a few miles from the sun-drenched coast of Southern England. But all is not well in those grandiose yet somewhat faded corridors of equity and jurisprudence.

**Hugh Balls** (known behind his back as Huge) is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of Balls in the firm, and is the current senior partner. But the firm has been going through a lean spell recently, thanks in part to the credit crunch, but also in no small measure to a few dubious decisions taken by Balls, who has the final say in partnership affairs – principally because he is currently the only partner! And those decisions have angered more than one member of the firm...

Take for instance his faithful secretary **Annette Curtain**. She's been with the firm for years, working her way up from tea-girl to her present lofty position. There are those in the firm who believe she only achieved this through giving everything to Balls – including her body... and they'd be right. The two of them have been having an affair for some years, but his wife found out, and the Present Mrs Balls is threatening to become the Ex Mrs Balls, and take him to the financial cleaners, unless he sacks Annette and promises never to stray again. So she's been given a month's notice. Annette's whole life is Balls. How will she react?

**Dick Withers** is the firm's practice manager. Balls recruited him a few years ago, promising him a free hand to take care of the business side of the firm. Sadly, Withers took him literally, and has been systematically stealing substantial amounts of cash from the practice, to fund his high-flyer image – and his unfortunate weakness for cocaine. Following an investigation by his accountant, Balls knows that Withers has had his hand in the till, and has told him to resign with effect from the end of the month, or the whole affair will be turned over to the police. Dick is between a rock and a hard place, and he knows it...

**Jenny Tayliah** is the firm's most recent recruit, an attractive trainee solicitor who Balls was very keen to have as a partner – but not in the boardroom. His plan was for her to replace the faithful Annette as his extra-marital interest, and Balls has already had his wicked way with Jenny (several times, actually) in a smart hotel during a three day legal conference in Brighton a month ago, when he promised her a permanent position. But his wife's ultimatum regarding Annette and other possible replacements has forced Balls to tell Jenny she's not being retained after the end of the month. Jenny feels used and abused, and she isn't going to take it lying down any longer...

**Mike Rowchip** is the firm's IT expert, and a wizard with all things electrical. Balls hired him to bring the firm's computer system into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and paid him well, yet insisted on querying almost every decision Mike made. His most costly blunder to date was to overrule Mike's choice of the latest high-tech software, designed specifically for use in a solicitors' practice, and insist on buying an inferior (but much cheaper) system. This quickly proved to be next to useless, and has cost the firm dear, losing it both money and clients. Balls has acted swiftly, and in character, blaming Mike for everything and has given him a month's notice – by e-mail, which Mike hasn't read yet! Mike's short temper is legendary: he once threw a laptop into the car park – via a closed window. How will he react to being fired because of a decision Balls made?

**Olive Stone** has worked for the firm ever since she qualified as a solicitor, spending most of her time drafting wills for the wealthy and the elderly, and making very little profit for the firm. But she was loyal and reliable, and the previous senior partner (known affectionately as Old Balls) had promised her a job for life. New Balls, however does not feel bound to honour his father's promise, and has told Olive she's being made redundant in three months' time. Olive's whole world has been shattered. Her life will never be the same again – unless Balls changes his mind, or Olive does something drastic...

All five suspects have a good motive for murder. But who has the balls to do it?

## *Running the script in front of an audience*

**Note that you need to purchase a performance licence from the Murder Mysteries page of the Lazy Bee Scripts web site.**

### *Preparation*

Initial preparation can be done by distributing the opening scene, then running a first rehearsal in which the actors have to guess the identity of the murderer (evaluating the written evidence) before they see the script for the Final Scene. (It's fun! Why not? It also ensures that the actors become familiar with the logic of the mystery - they will learn more about themselves and their roles from the evidence.) Decide on the format for declaring the winner and if you will be using a tie-breaker question in the event that two or more audience members guess the murderer correctly.

**Open the event by acting out the scripted dialogue.**

### *Distribute the written evidence*

Announce that you wish them to evaluate a selection of the evidence gathered by the police. Give the audience a specified time to evaluate the evidence.

### *Accusations*

At the end of the evaluation period, ask the audience to fill in the accusation sheets. (Make sure you have some spare pens or pencils!)

### *Solution*

Act out the final scene.

### *Prize giving*

There may be an option to read out some of the (more bizarre) audience solutions! Declare the winner. In the event of a draw, you may wish to include your own tie-breaker question. Award a prize to the best solution! (And possibly a prize for the worst.)

### *As a broad guide your event might run as follows:*

7.30 to 8.00	Meet and greet; pre-dinner drinks
8.00 to 8.30	Act One
8:30	Serve starters
8.45	Act Two
9.00	Distribute evidence and "accusation sheets" to each member of the audience
9.10	Collect Accusation sheets. Main course (during which the cast/crew evaluate the audience answers and choose the winning answer - by reference to the tie breaker and drawing from a hat if necessary)
9.40	The Solution and Prize-giving.
9.50	Dessert.

Other timings could be accommodated, especially if you want your audience to eat earlier!

## ***Setting***

The setting for Act 1 is Balls' office. This is on the first floor of the office building. Also on this floor, but not seen by the audience, are Annette's office (next door to Balls) , the conference room and the ladies' rest room.

The setting for Act 2 is the conference room, which can for practical purposes be the same set, but with slightly different furniture.

For the benefit of the audience, the gents' toilet and kitchen are on the ground floor. Jenny, Dick and Olive all have offices on the second floor.

## ***Props***

### **Act 1**

Desk and chair for Balls (**Set Onstage**)

Client's chair (**Set Onstage**)

Phone, laptop and desk lamp (**On the desk**)

Letters (**Annette**)

E-mail (**Mike**)

Handbag (**Jenny**)

### **Act 2**

Table and chairs (**Set Onstage**)

Bag containing IT items (**Mike**)

Handbag (**Jenny**)

Reflective jacket and clipboard (**Annette**)

## Customer Taster - part script

# A Legal Murder

## Act 1

### Scene One

(The action takes place in Balls' office. There are others who work for the firm, but by now it is way past 5pm, and they have all gone home, leaving only these six in the building.)

(A simple set, comprising a desk and chair for Balls, with phone, laptop, desk lamp and some documents on the desk. A few chairs in the room for clients etc and some pictures on the walls. Only one door!)

(Balls is on stage, sitting behind his desk, studying a document. He is not in a good mood.)

(The phone rings. He answers it.)

**Balls:** Balls!... Who?... Oh, it's you. Well, what's the bad news?... Twenty-two grand! Are you sure?... Oh, you're not sure, but that's probably about right?... Listen, Ivor, you're the firm's accountant, and for the money I pay you I expect an exact figure, not some probably maybe estimate... I know it's a substantial sum, you moron, you told me that last week, and I've already fired him. What I asked you for was an exact figure... Well, get on with it! I want an answer by this time tomorrow!... Yes, tomorrow! **(He hangs up, and returns to his document.)**

(Enter Annette, with some letters for him to sign. There is clearly a frosty atmosphere between them. She throws the letters down.)

**Annette:** Anything else?

**Balls:** Yes! A bit of respect for your employer!

**Annette:** **(Clearly very angry)** You... **(She struggles to find the right word)** ... Git! I've given you everything! Literally! And now, just because *she* has a tantrum, you calmly tell me it's – how did you put it? – 'time for me to move on'. Of all the bloody cheek!

**Balls:** Now just you listen to me...

**Annette:** **(Interrupting)** No! You listen to me, you randy little rat! You won't get away with this. It's unfair dismissal, it's... It's...

**Balls:** **(Interrupting her)** It's the end, Annette, that's what it is. The end of your employment here. There's nothing you can do about it. And if you want a half decent reference, I suggest you try to behave like a lady for the remainder of your time here.

**Annette:** I haven't finished with you yet!

**Balls:** Yes you have. Now get out. And find Withers for me.

**Annette:** Find him yourself!

**Balls:** One more outburst like that and you won't get *any* reference.

**Annette:** **(Sarcastically, pretending to think)** Ooh! I wonder if he's in his office? Or are you too tired to pick up the phone?

**Balls:** Very amusing! I tried that, and got no answer.

**Annette:** **(On her way out)** Maybe he's gone to the Job Centre!

**(As she exits, enter Olive. She stands and glares at him.)**

**Balls:** Do we have an appointment?

**Olive:** Don't give me that! You're getting rid of me, after all the years I've given to this firm, and despite your late father's promise. I don't need an appointment – I need an explanation.

**Balls:** My father was a sentimental old fool, with no business sense. It's obvious to me that you don't earn enough to justify your far too generous salary, so you're leaving: redundant: surplus to requirements. Call it what you like, but you're out of here in just under three months.

**Olive:** And what happens if I kick up a fuss? Take you to a tribunal? Complain to the Law Society?

**Balls:** They'll all tell you the same thing. That I run this firm now, and it's none of their business. There's no place here for a useless, inefficient lawyer like you. So why don't you just resign today? Go now, and do us all a favour?

**Olive:** **(Getting angry)** I'm leaving! Before I do something I'll regret.

**Balls:** Good decision. I'll organise a whip-round for the usual pathetic leaving present.

**Olive:** I don't mean I'm resigning, you stupid man! I'm going to the doctor!

**Balls:** Huh! Getting signed off sick won't help. Anyway, what's the matter with you? Not that I care, you understand.

**Olive:** I've got an acute case of occupational nausea.

**Balls:** And what's that? Some trendy new designer illness, I suppose? Another excuse to take time off at my expense?

**Olive:** Not exactly. It simply means I'm sick of my employer!

**(Exit Olive, with a slam of the door)**

**(Balls picks up the phone and presses a key)**

**Balls:** Annette! Where the hell is Withers?... Well go and look for him!

**(He slams the phone down, just as the door flies open, and in comes Mike, holding a piece of paper. And he's really angry.)**

**Mike:** **(Brandishing the paper)** What the hell is this?

**Balls:** I didn't hear you knock.

**Mike:** I'll knock alright! I'll knock your bloody head off if I don't get an answer within the next five seconds! What's this? **(He flings the paper onto the desk.)**

**Balls:** **(Pretending the penny has dropped)** Oh! Is that a copy of my e-mail?

**Mike:** What do you think it is? My last will and testament?

**Balls:** Temper, temper!

**Mike:** I'll give you bloody temper! This says I'm fired. Why?

**Balls:** Don't you know?

**Mike:** I wouldn't be asking if I did, would I?

**Balls:** Then I'll spell it out for you. Your performance as a so-called IT expert has fallen below the required standard, and is no longer acceptable to the firm.

**Mike:** Meaning you, I suppose?

**Balls:** Of course.

**Mike:** What do you mean, 'my performance'?

**Balls:** I mean... You've wasted an enormous amount of this firm's capital on an IT system that simply isn't fit for purpose. It's cost me a packet, and it's cost you your job. It's as simple as that.

**Mike:** But it was your idea to buy the sodding system in the first place.

**Balls:** No it wasn't.

**Mike:** Oh yes it was! I warned you it wasn't right for this firm, but you said we'll have it because it's cheap. Those were your very words.

**Balls:** And you can prove that, can you?

**Mike:** I've just said so.

**Balls:** Got it in writing, have you?

**Mike:** No, of course not. You made damn sure of that.

**Balls:** And whose name and signature's on the order form?

**Mike:** Mine. I know that. But I was acting on your instructions.

**Balls:** And can you prove that? I think not.

**Mike:** Think what you like. I'm not finished with you, Balls.

**Balls:** Well I'm finished with you. Now get out.

**(Mike goes to the door, opens it, looks angrily at Balls, and points at him.)**

**Mike:** You're a dead man, Balls!

**(As Mike exits in a hurry, in comes Jenny.)**

**Jenny:** Now there's an idea. Except killing's too good for you!

**Balls:** Pardon?

**Jenny:** You heard! I've had a couple of days to think about what you've done to me. And the more I think about it the more I wish I'd never met you.

**Balls:** That's not what you said in Brighton.

**Jenny:** **(Angrily)** I'm not talking about Brighton! That was the most disgusting thing I've ever done.

**Balls:** You didn't say that either.



**Jenny:** You promised me a permanent position. 'A potential partner' you said. And now I'm sacked, for no good reason, and with no explanation.

**Balls:** I told you why you had to go. The practice can't afford you.

**Jenny:** That's rubbish! I know how hard I've worked, and I've checked the figures with Dick. He said I was making a good profit for the firm. So what's going on?

**Balls:** I'm sorry, Jenny, but I can't keep you on.

**Jenny:** It's her, isn't it?

**Balls:** Who?

**Jenny:** Cilla. The first and worst Mrs. Balls, as you so charmingly referred to her in Brighton. She's jealous of me. That's what it is, isn't it?

**Balls:** Jealous? She's only met you once.

**Jenny:** And that's not all, is it?

**Balls:** What are you on about?

**Jenny:** Do you think I'm stupid? I know you've been bonking poor Annette for years. The entire firm knows about it. And so does Cilla. She's told you to get rid of the pair of us, hasn't she?

**Balls:** I have to admit, you've got a great imagination.

**Jenny:** It was all going so well, wasn't it? You'd had the best out of Annette, and you had me earmarked as her replacement... didn't you?

**Balls:** I have no idea what you're talking about.

**Jenny:** But then Cilla found out. Get careless, did you? Leave some incriminating evidence lying around? Or does she go through your pockets?

**Balls:** I think this conversation is over.

**Jenny:** She said that unless you get rid of your bits on the side she'd rip you to shreds in the divorce court, didn't she?

**Balls:** Goodbye, Jenny. Don't bother to work the rest of your notice. Just leave now.

**Jenny:** I haven't finished with you yet. You're going to pay for this.

**Balls:** Get out, Jenny. I'm busy.

**(There is a knock at the door, and Dick enters. He sees Jenny, and senses all is not well.)**

**Dick:** Shall I come back later?

**Balls:** No. Come in. Jenny was just leaving. **(Looking straight at her)** Weren't you?

**Jenny:** This isn't over, Balls.

**(Exit Jenny in a bad temper.)**

**Dick:** **(Sits down)** Bad time to call?

**Balls:** Not for me. But for you? Oh yes!

**Dick:** There's no need to labour the point. I'm leaving, aren't I? As you commanded. Not that you can prove a thing, of course.

**Balls:** I wouldn't bet on that if I were you.

**Dick:** Now listen, Balls... ..

**Balls:** **(Interrupting)** No, Withers, you listen! I've just had a very interesting chat with our accountant. He's told me how much you've stolen from me. But I don't need to tell you, do I?

**Dick:** I told you before, I haven't stolen a penny from this firm.

**Balls:** I agree. It's not a penny, it's twenty-two thousand quid. Ivor has all the evidence I need.

**Dick:** As I said before, you can't... ..

**Balls:** **(Interrupting)** Prove a thing? Well I'm going to have a good try. Unless... **(He pauses)**

**Dick:** Unless what?

**Balls:** Unless you repay the lot within the next six months.

**Dick:** **(Angrily)** Six months? Impossible!

**Balls:** So you admit you've stolen it?

**(A pause. Dick sighs.)**

**Dick:** I was going to put it back, before the books were inspected. But things got out of hand.

**Balls:** And up your nose, apparently.

**Dick:** I use coke occasionally – for recreational purposes. It’s not a habit. I can take it or leave it.

**Balls:** Unlike my money – which you just take.

**Dick:** Alright! Enough! I’ll do what I can. But six months? I’ll need longer.

**Balls:** You’ve got six months. Or I’m going to the Old Bill. And if I do that – you’re going to jail.

**Dick:** **(Standing)** I always knew you were unreasonable, Balls, but I didn’t know you were a ...

**(He is interrupted as the door opens, and Jenny comes back in, followed by Annette. Jenny is carrying a small handbag.)**

**Annette:** I’m sorry to intrude, Oh Mighty One, but Jenny has a problem.

**Balls:** I’m busy.

**Jenny:** It’s not you I want. It’s Dick.

**Dick:** What can I do for you?

**Jenny:** My battery’s flat, and I remember you said you always kept a set of jump leads in your car. Would you mind giving me a jump?

**Annette:** **(To Dick)** If your meeting with His Majesty’s finished.

**Balls:** It’s finished!

**Jenny:** In that case... ...

**(At which point the fire alarm goes off – not too loud, otherwise the audience won’t be able to hear!)**

**Annette:** Everybody out!

**Dick:** You sound like Arthur Scargill.

**Annette:** That’s the fire alarm, and I’m still the fire marshal. And the alarm means we all vacate the building – now!

**Balls:** It’ll be a false alarm. It always is.

**Annette:** But we can’t take that chance. All out now, please.

**Dick:** She’s right. Let’s go.

**(Dick, Jenny and Annette all start to leave. Balls stays put.)**

**Annette:** **(To Balls)** And you!

**Balls:** **(Getting up)** This is pathetic.

**(They all leave the room)**

**(Blackout.)**

## ***Scene Two***

**Narrator:** We return to events some fifteen minutes later...

**(Lights up – but just a little less bright than before)**

*And the action continues...*

## **A Legal Murder**

### *Evidence 2*

#### **An E-mail to Balls from the firm's accountant:-**

From: Ivor Penn <iPenn@battbaylesandballs.co.uk>

To: Hugh Balls <hBalls@battbaylesandballs.co.uk >

Hugh,

I'm now able to confirm that your suspicions are correct. Withers has made a number of unauthorised withdrawals from Office Account over the past 18 months or so. I'm not sure exactly how much yet, but it's not less than 20K in all.

He's been using Office Account cheques to pay a company called 'Pooters R Us' for various items of computer hardware the firm has apparently ordered from that company. Problem is, none of the stuff that was ordered seems to have been delivered! I called in a favour from an old chum of mine in the banking business, and it transpired Pooters R Us is a fictitious company set up by none other than Dick Withers! Of course this is all strictly off the record, otherwise my banking buddy will be in hot water.

I might be able to get enough evidence for you to prosecute the bugger, but do you really want the publicity? Probably best just to get rid of him, and cut your losses.

I'll let you know as soon as I've got a final total of the loss to the firm.

Regards,

Ivor