

Board to Death

by
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Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster Version

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Ricky T. Bridge is the owner and managing director of Health and Proficiency, a successful spa and fitness club. But his less than honest business dealings are about to be exposed at a potentially fatal board meeting...

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Overview

Board to Death is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 7 actors, with a narrator providing the solution for the audience. 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 the narrator reveals the guilty party.

Characters

Ricky T. Bridge: An ex-professional footballer, now the bad-tempered boss of Health and Proficiency.

Erica Nurney: Ricky's faithful secretary; secretly in love with him, but her love goes unrequited and has recently been given her notice.

Gloria Stitts: A member of the executive board. She believes Ricky has been breaking the law, and is determined to take the company from him.

Al Bertall: The club's general manager. Previously promised a seat on the executive board, he has since been snubbed by Ricky.

Phil Droll: Another board member. Ricky knows Phil has been stealing money from the club and plans to expose him.

Sue Flay: The club's doctor, who has been helping Ricky supply members of the club with illegal steroids, and could face being struck off if the truth emerged.

Laura Norder: The Detective Inspector assigned to investigate the inevitable murder.

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

Setting

The set is a corporate boardroom. Only one door is required, either at the side or at the back – whichever is easier. On stage is a table large enough to seat five people. Five chairs are arranged around it. On the table are a plate of biscuits (ginger nuts), a notepad and pen, and a phone.

Props

Act 1

Table and chairs, a notepad and pen, a plate of biscuits and a phone (**set onstage**)

Handbag with a container of sweeteners in it (**Gloria**)

Tray (**Erica**)

A pot of coffee, 5 cups and saucers, milk jug and sugar bowl, and a second plate of biscuits (**on Tray**)

Doctor's bag (**Sue**)

Act 2

Another container of sweeteners (**Laura**)

A printed e-mail (**Al**)

Structure

The complete murder mystery pack contains:-

- The Organiser's Overview including plot overview, a rough guide on how to structure your event, notes on setting, and a props list.
- Act One and Two, to be performed by the actors [*Act 1 is provided as a Customer Taster*]
- Five pieces of evidence for the audience to examine [*One piece as a Customer Taster*]
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution.

Plot Overview

Ricky T. Bridge is the chief executive and majority shareholder in Health and Proficiency, a new up-market health and fitness club in Snogley, a prosperous town in the West Country. The club has been a huge success, especially with the local sportsmen and women. There is a long waiting list for membership, resulting in massive profits for Ricky and his two fellow directors. But all is not what it seems. Ricky has been involved in shady practices within the club, and has made enemies both in and out of the boardroom. To add to his troubles, he has recently been diagnosed as suffering from diabetes. This has restricted his diet, and done nothing to improve his legendary bad temper.

Erica Nurney has worked for Ricky for some years, and has always been hopelessly in love with him. Sadly, Ricky has never shown the slightest interest in her, and has recently dropped a bombshell by giving Erica a month's notice because he wants a 'more efficient' secretary. Erica has devoted her life and all her energy to Ricky, and was devastated by what she considered to be his total betrayal. A woman spurned is always dangerous, especially if she is as mentally unstable as Erica.

Gloria Stitts – also a member of the board – has become one of Ricky's fiercest critics. She is convinced he is cutting corners with health and safety issues in the club, and is desperate to remove him from the board and take over as chief executive. Unknown to Ricky she is having a passionate affair with a member of staff at the club, and will do anything to get rid of Ricky, take his place at the head of the company, and install her lover on the board.

Al Bertall is the general manager, and Gloria's secret lover. He is furious with Ricky, who promised him a seat on the board when Al was appointed to his present post. But Ricky has since gone back on his word. Al is infatuated with Gloria, and rumour has it he will do whatever is necessary to achieve what he believes to be his rightful place on the board – and keep Gloria's affections. Oddly, Al has been summoned to attend the next board meeting. Will Ricky be offering him that promised seat on the board? Or something completely different?

Phil Droll is the third and final member of the board and, as Health and Proficiency's treasurer, has enjoyed complete control of the club's finances. But every man has his weakness, and Phil's is an insatiable desire for the company of Snogley's 'ladies of the night'. His unusual requests can be met, but they're expensive, and Phil has been stealing huge sums of money from the club to pay for his pleasures. Ricky recently commissioned a secret auditor's report on the club's financial affairs, and is about to confront Phil with the evidence. But could Phil already know about the report – through his connections in the accountancy world – and would he do anything to avoid exposure and prison?

Sue Flay is the club's resident doctor. Although not a member of the board, she has recently been making a lot of money by supplying Ricky with illegal steroids which he has been selling to some of the club members. But one of the more reputable members is threatening to complain to the police, and Sue knows it will only be a matter of time before Ricky's dodgy dealings are exposed. She is also aware that Ricky will readily shift the blame onto her, resulting in her losing her job, and no doubt being struck off as a doctor – and possibly facing a prison sentence.

The weekly board meeting is about to start. It promises to be a good deal livelier than normal! When things develop during a round of coffee, Sue Flay recognises the signs of cyanide poisoning and calls the police.

It is now up to Detective Inspector **Laura Norder** - and the audience - to uncover the identity of the killer!

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!

Board to Death

Customer Taster - Act 1 Excerpt

Act 1 (excerpt)

(A corporate boardroom. Enter Ricky, obviously in a bad mood. He looks at the table, and realises something is missing.)

Ricky: (To himself) Can't that bloody woman do anything right? (He goes to the door, opens it and shouts) Erica! Get in here now!

(He sits at the table, drumming his fingers impatiently.)

(Enter Erica, in a rush.)

Erica: Yes Ricky?

Ricky: Where are my biscuits?

Erica: I'm sorry – aren't they here?

Ricky: Would I be asking if they were?

Erica: No, I don't suppose you would.

Ricky: It's bad enough being diabetic, and having to eat invalid food, without you forgetting to put them out. The sooner you're out of here the better.

Erica: (Nearly in tears) I'll get them now.

Ricky: And bring the coffee at the same time.

Erica: Yes Ricky.

(Exit Erica in a hurry. As she leaves she bumps into Gloria who is coming in. Gloria is carrying a handbag. She looks surprised by Erica's rapid exit.)

Gloria: (To Ricky) What's up with her?

Ricky: I don't know and I don't care. She'll be gone in a couple of weeks.

Gloria: I suppose you've got some leggy bimbo to take her place. Don't tell me... She can't type but she's a 38 D.

Ricky: Jealous, Gloria? Fancy the job yourself?

Gloria: Hardly! I wouldn't be your secretary at any price. It's bad enough having to share a boardroom with you. It's you that should be on the way out, not poor Erica. You're not fit to run a burger van, never mind a decent business like this.

Ricky: I'm here to stay, Gloria dear, and there's nothing you can do about it. Health and Proficiency is mine. I put the money in, and I'm going to take the profits.

Gloria: I don't know how you can sleep at night.

Ricky: What are you going on about now?

(As Gloria speaks the next line the door opens.)

Gloria: You're a drug dealer Ricky. I know it, you know it and Al knows it.

(Enter Al.)

Al: What does Al know?

Ricky: This is the boardroom, Bertall. Unless you're a board member you knock before you come in.

Al: Sorry, I thought I *was* on the board. Oh no... That's not until next week, isn't it?

Ricky: Oh really?

Al: I repeat: what does Al know?

Gloria: I was just telling our beloved leader that you and I know all about his little scam with the steroids.

Al: Oh that! Of course I know.

Ricky: If either of you repeat a word of this outside this room I'll sue the pair of you for all you've got.

Gloria: Don't be stupid Ricky. Nobody's going to sue anybody. All you have to do is resign as chief executive and hand over to someone else.

Ricky: I presume you mean you?

Gloria: Why not?

Ricky: You're the stupid one, Gloria, not me. I'm the head of this company and it'll stay that way until I decide otherwise.

Al: Unless we go to the police of course.

Ricky: And what a waste of time that would be! There isn't a shred of evidence to back up your ridiculous accusations. And once my good name has been cleared I'll have the pair of you in court for libel and slander so fast your feet won't touch the ground.

Gloria: We want you to resign now Ricky. Before it's too late.

Ricky: Too late? For what?

(Before Gloria can answer Erica and Phil enter. Erica is carrying a tray on which is a pot of coffee, five cups and saucers, milk jug, sugar bowl and another plate of biscuits – notably different biscuits to those already on the table. During the next few lines she puts the various items on the table, then sits down next to Ricky.)

Ricky: **(Looking at biscuits Erica has just brought in)** Erica!

Erica: Yes Ricky?

Ricky: There are only *four* of my biscuits here.

Erica: There were only four left. I'll get some more tomorrow.

Ricky: Well make sure you do.

Phil: Good morning one and all.

Ricky: And what's so good about it?

Phil: Well it's good for me anyway.

Ricky: Don't bet on it.

Phil: **(to Al)** What's up with him?

Al: Let's just say it's executive stress.

Ricky: Shut up, Bertall – nobody asked for your opinion.

Al: You will when I'm on the board.

Ricky: And what makes you think you'll ever be a member of this board?

Gloria: Of course he will. You gave me your word.

Ricky: Oh really? Got that in writing, have you?

Al: You as good as promised me a seat on the board. "I've got a little something in mind for you", you said.

Ricky: And so I have. Sit down, all of you. Erica, try and take accurate minutes of this meeting – for a change. Not only will they be the last ones you take, but they'll probably be the most exciting.

(Gloria, Al and Phil sit down.)

Erica: Shall I pour the coffee, Ricky?

Ricky: Not yet.

Erica: But it might get cold.

Ricky: Just shut up and do as you're told.

Phil: There's no need to be unpleasant, Ricky.

Gloria: On the other hand... Why break the habit of a lifetime?

Ricky: Are you all sitting comfortably? Right. Let's get on with it. **(To Erica)** Start taking the minutes as from now.

Erica: Yes Ricky.

(Erica picks up a pen and notepad and 'takes shorthand notes.')

Phil: Where's the agenda for the meeting?

Ricky: There isn't one.

Gloria: Why not?

Ricky: Because there's only one matter to be decided at this meeting.

Gloria: And what's that?

Ricky: Changes to the membership of this board.

Al: Excellent.

Ricky: I'm so glad you're pleased.

Al: I think I'll have a biscuit to celebrate. **(He reaches towards the plate of biscuits Erica brought in)**

Erica: **(Jumping in quickly)** No! Not those!

Al: Why not? They look nice.

Ricky: They're my personal biscuits.

Al: Eh?

Erica: Ricky's a diabetic.

Al: I know that. Everyone knows that.

Gloria: They're diabetic biscuits.

Phil: Almond crunch cookies, no less.

Erica: Only for Ricky.

Phil: **(Indicating the other plate)** We get the ginger nuts.

Al: Big deal. **(He takes a ginger nut.)**

Ricky: Before you all stuff yourselves stupid with biscuits, you may wish to hear what I have to say.

Gloria: We're all ears, Oh Mighty One!

Phil: So tell us about these additions to the board. Is Al joining us?

Ricky: Who mentioned additions?

Gloria: But you said...

Ricky: **(Interrupting her)** I said changes... Not additions.

Phil: So what's changing?

Ricky: Just about everything, as it happens.

Gloria: What??

Ricky: As you all know, the constitution of this company gives the chief executive the final say as to who is or is not a member of the board.

Phil: So?

Ricky: So... As of today, I have decided to remove you and her **(indicating Gloria)** from the board.

(Gasps of horror etc. from the others.)

Gloria: What!!

Ricky: You heard me. I'm sick of the pair of you. You're a complete waste of space. As of this moment you're both fired.

Gloria: You're mad!

Phil: But that will leave you as the only board member.

Ricky: Unless I appoint someone else.

Gloria: You mean Al?

Ricky: Oh yes, I forgot. **(He turns to Al)** Bertall... You're fired!

Al: Eh?

Phil: What the hell is going on here?

Gloria: Would you mind explaining this... This... Lunacy?

Ricky: Not at all. **(To Erica)** You are getting this all down, aren't you?

Erica: **(Writing furiously)** Yes Ricky.

Ricky: Let's start with you, Gloria dear. I am well aware that your sole ambition in life is to be the chief executive of Health and Proficiency. Over my dead body! I've built up this company to what it is today, and I'm not having you and that twerp Bertall ruining it.

Gloria: If by ruining it you mean stopping the illegal sale of steroids you're quite right.

Ricky: I run a highly profitable – and legal – business here, and I don't need your unique brand of sanctimonious ethics any longer. You're out, as from tomorrow, when the minutes are signed by the company lawyer.

Phil: I should think the company lawyer will have plenty to say about this, and he might not agree to sign the minutes.

Ricky: If I were you Phil, I would be seeking my own legal advice tomorrow, and not worrying too much about the company's lawyers.

Phil: What *are* you going on about?

Ricky: I'll put it in words of one syllable – so that Bertall here can understand. You've had your hand in the till.

Phil: That's an outrageous lie!

Ricky: Why bother to deny it? You know it, I know it and Lock, Stock and Company know it.

Al: Who are Lock, Stock and Company?

Ricky: An independent firm of chartered accountants. They've been going over our accounts for the last nine months. Remind me Phil – exactly how much is it you've stolen?

Gloria: (To Phil) Is this true?

Phil: Of course not! He can't prove a thing.

Ricky: Oh but I can. And when I present my evidence to the police tomorrow, you'll be... how can I put it?... Stuffed. And you won't be able to pay Whiplash Wendy's 'fees' with your job seeker's allowance, will you?

Al: Who's Whiplash Wendy?

Gloria: Use your imagination.

Phil: What I choose to do in my spare time is none of your business.

Ricky: You're right. I couldn't care less about your... personal habits. But you're not paying for them with my money. So you're fired.

Gloria: So who's going to replace us? You can't run your vast empire on your own. Even supremos need help.

Ricky: I can run this club perfectly well on my own.

Al: Not without a general manager you can't.

Ricky: Well I can certainly do it without you, Bertall.

(There is an uncomfortable silence, as they all look at each other.)

Erica: Shall we all have a nice cup of coffee?

Ricky: What?!

Erica: I've made it, so we may as well drink it.

Gloria: Why not?

Al: Yes... why not? The day can't get any worse, can it?

Phil: Might as well I suppose.

Erica: Shall I be mother?

(Nobody answers her, so Erica picks up the coffee pot, pours coffee into each cup and places a cup in front of Ricky. She then hands a cup to the others, who say 'thank you' etc. ad lib. But nobody drinks any.)

Ricky: (To Erica) Where are my sweeteners?

Erica: (Looking round the table) I don't know. I could have sworn I put them on the tray before I brought it in.

Ricky: You stupid girl. Can't you do anything right?

Gloria: Have one of mine. **(She rummages in her handbag and produces a container of sweeteners, and offers it to Ricky.)**

Ricky: If you think giving me a couple of your sweeteners will somehow make me change my mind you can think again.

Gloria: **(Still holding them out to him)** Do you want them or not?

Ricky: **(Takes them and says, sarcastically)** Thank you so much!
(He makes a show of dropping two into his cup, and gives the container back to Gloria.)

Gloria: **(Equally sarcastic, and in an American accent)** You're welcome. Have a nice day!
(But she doesn't put any in her own coffee, and puts the container away.)
(Phil picks up the milk jug.)

Phil: **(To Ricky)** Milk?

Al: If it's the milk of human kindness... Don't bother!

Ricky: Oh ha ha, Bertall! You should be a professional comedian - now that your career as a manager here's over.

Phil: **(To Ricky, and still holding the jug)** Milk?

Ricky: **(Sarcastically)** If it wouldn't be too much trouble!

Phil: My pleasure!

(He pours some milk into Ricky's cup, and puts the jug down. Nobody else takes any milk. They all help themselves to a ginger nut, but nobody drinks any coffee.)
(Ricky picks up one of his biscuits...)

Board to Death - Evidence Part Three

Customer Taster

Post Mortem Report on the victim.

Prepared by Jacqueline Hyde MD

The body was that of a well nourished male aged between 40 and 60. I found no external wounds, marks or other visible signs of injury on the body.

Upon examination of the internal organs I detected an exceptionally high level of potassium cyanide in the bloodstream and major internal organs, namely the liver and both kidneys. This is a particularly toxic compound of the chemical commonly known as cyanide, and is invariably fatal to humans if ingested even in relatively small quantities. The amount I detected in this particular case easily exceeded what could be described by a layman as a fatal dose.

Potassium cyanide takes the form of white sugar-like crystals, easily soluble in water or other liquids with a high water content. It has a characteristic odour similar to almonds or marzipan – but is considerably more detrimental to ones health.

From blood tests conducted by a colleague I am aware that the subject was suffering from a form of diabetes. In order to control this condition the subject would have been required to strictly control and limit his intake of sugar and sugar products, for example by taking a saccharin-based substitute for sugar in hot drinks. Minute quantities of such a product were detected by the blood test.

In my opinion death was caused by cyanide poisoning.