

# Cold-Blooded Murder



by  
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*Customer Taster*

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*Pearl Barley is a devious, scheming woman, who has tricked her husband Charlie into marriage, and is about to take him to the financial cleaners. She also plans to blackmail two 'old friends.' So is she playing a dangerous game by inviting them to join her and Charlie for a weekend at their country home...?*

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# Cold-Blooded Murder

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## ***This Customer Taster of the murder mystery pack contains:-***

- Extracts from The Organiser's Overview (this document!) including a rough guide on how to structure your event
- Act One from the Script
- One of the Four pieces of written evidence for the audience to examine

## ***Organiser's Overview***

### ***Overview***

Cold-blooded Murder is a murder/mystery designed to be played by 6 actors plus Master of Ceremonies. 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.

### **Pearl Barley**

A former Las Vegas 'hostess', Pearl married Charlie and took his name, fully intended taking all his money as well. She tricked him into signing a pre-nuptial agreement giving her the bulk of the matrimonial estate, but that agreement is soon to be challenged in the courts, and a nasty divorce is in progress.

### **Charlie Barley**

A successful and wealthy entrepreneur – until he married Pearl, whose expensive tastes have cost him dear in time and money. He is determined ...

### **Chester Drawes**

Charlie's business partner, who owns 50% of the company, and Charlie's oldest friend. Chester is distraught at the prospect of ...

### **Sam Pulbottle**

Sam was at school with Pearl, and is now a successful doctor with a lucrative practice in Harley Street. However, she too faces ruin at Pearl's hands, but for a very different reason.

### **Rick O'Shea**

A man of dubious repute, and an acquaintance of Charlie's. Rick has never worked a day in his life, thanks to a substantial legacy from his father. He has begun a brief affair with ...

### **Isla White**

Isla was at school with Pearl and Sam. She is currently enjoying fame and fortune as a television weather presenter. But a brief fling a few years ago with ...

### **Master of Ceremonies**

Responsible for managing the event, distributing the evidence and revealing the solution at the end. (Does not interact with the other characters.)

## ***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 8.15	Act One
8:15	Serve starters
8.30	Act Two
8.45	Distribute evidence and "accusation sheets" to each member of the audience
9.00	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)
9.30	The Solution and Prize-giving.
9.40	Dessert.

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

## ***Setting***

The setting for this piece is the lounge of a country house. The set requires one working door. It can be performed either as a stage play or as entertainment during a meal for an audience.

## ***Props***

### **Act 1**

Sofa or easy chairs and coffee table (Set Onstage)

Overnight bag and handbag containing a letter (Sam)

### **Act 2**

#### **Stage set as before**

Coffee pot, milk jug and sugar, cups and saucers (Set Onstage)

Doctor's bag, containing a few items, including a thermos flask and a pill bottle (Sam)

Bottle of Champagne (Chester)

# Cold-Blooded Murder

## Act 1

(Charlie and Pearl on stage. Charlie is not happy.)

**Charlie:** Must we go through with this ghastly charade?

**Pearl:** And which ghastly charade is that, my sweetheart? My little house party, or our divorce?

**Charlie:** I'm not talking about the divorce, our lawyers are doing that. **(Pause.)** But as you've raised the subject, what the hell are you playing at? I got a letter this morning telling me you're now alleging that this farcical pre-nuptial agreement you conned me into signing is genuine! You promised me you were going to come clean about that.

**Pearl:** But darling, if I admitted that, I wouldn't get most of your money, would I? Remember what the agreement says? If we get divorced I get 85 percent of everything you've got. I'm not going to give up that easily.

**Charlie:** Are you mad? The company is in crisis, you know that! If I can't get instant access to the capital I'll be bankrupt within a month. And as far as your share goes, 85% of bugger all is bugger all! You've got to do the decent thing and admit you conned me into signing that agreement.

**Pearl:** Don't give me that 'I'm going bankrupt' routine! I don't believe a word of it, and neither does my solicitor. I'm going to get your money, and have enormous fun watching you suffer along the way.

**Charlie:** It may not be me that does the suffering – *darling!!*

**Pearl:** **(Pretending to be scared)** Oooh!!... is that a threat?

**Charlie:** Call it what you like. But don't forget it's not just me you're hurting. Chester's put practically all he's got into the business, and if you ruin me Chester goes down with me. Is that what you want?

**(Enter Chester, unseen by Pearl.)**

**Pearl:** I couldn't care less. He can go too.

**Chester:** Are you referring to me?

**Pearl:** Of course not, darling. Charlie's just going out for a walk – aren't you my sweetheart? I was just saying the dog can go too.

**Charlie:** So you were! **(To Chester)** I'll see you later. **(To Pearl, in a threatening manner)** And you!

**(Exit Charlie.)**

**Chester:** Would you care for a drink, Pearl? How about a large cyanide and soda?

**Pearl:** Oh dear, we are touchy today, aren't we?

**Chester:** **(Angry)** Now listen, you. Charlie's my best mate. He's also my business partner, and he's going down the pan unless you see sense. I know about the pre-nuptial agreement – and what it's going to do to him. And *you* know how much I've got tied up in the company, so why involve me in all this?

**Pearl:** I didn't tell you to throw good money in his direction, did I? If you were stupid enough and greedy enough to think you'd make a fortune, then that's your funeral.

**Chester:** There may be a funeral, Pearl, but don't take bets on who's.

**Pearl:** **(Sarcastically)** Oh Chester, this must be my lucky day! Two death threats already! And the party hasn't even started yet!

**Chester:** Be very careful, Pearl. I've known Charlie a long time, a lot longer than you, and I warn you there's a side to him that you don't want to see. If you push him too far you have no idea what he's capable of doing.

**Pearl:** Darling, do you really think you're frightening me? You forget that in my past life I worked in some of the most notorious establishments in Las Vegas. I've been threatened by experts!

**Chester:** Please yourself Pearl. But if Charlie and I go under because of you, a few smart lawyers won't do you any good.

**(Door bell rings.)**

**Pearl:** Oh dear – that must be the grim reaper already! You run along and I'll let him in.

**(Exit Chester.)**

**Pearl:** **exits to 'open the front door', and returns with Sam, who is carrying a small suitcase or overnight bag.)**

**Pearl:** Sweetie, I'm so pleased you accepted my invitation.

**Sam:** **(Angry)** Your *invitation!*? **(She takes a letter out of her handbag and waves it under Pearl's nose.)** This isn't an invitation. It's blackmail.

**Pearl:** **(Feigning shock)** Oh, that's such an unpleasant word!

**Sam:** What else would you call it? Either I pay you for ever, or you tell the world I'm unfit to be a doctor.

**Pearl:** I think the authorities would be very concerned about a certain little incident – don't you?

**Sam:** You've got no proof. The BMA will laugh in your face.

**Pearl:** Oh I don't think so. There's bound to be an enquiry. And even if they let you off, think of the publicity. How many of your lovely rich patients will stay with you after that? No sweetie, you can't afford to take the chance and you know it. Let's get the financial details out of the way, shall we? I'd prefer a direct debit – so convenient for both of us. And then we can relax for the rest of the weekend. I just know how much you'll enjoy it!

**Sam:** Stuff your weekend! I'm going to the police right now.

**Pearl:** I wouldn't advise it... At least, not until you've had a chat with Isla.

**Sam:** Isla??

**Pearl:** Did I forgot to mention? She'll be here soon. It'll be just like old times, the three of us together – remember? Me, as poor as a church mouse, you so *very* ambitious and poor Isla, so *very* pregnant. I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to our reunion.

**Sam:** You cow! I did you a favour when I took you on as a patient. All those tedious journeys down here for 'consultations', and you never paid me a penny. You filthy blackmailing...

**Pearl:** **(Interrupting)** Insults won't stop me doing my duty to the community – but cash? Now that's worth a try, don't you think?

**Sam:** You're a... ..

**(Door bell rings.)**

**Pearl:** What exquisite timing! That must be Isla now. Why don't you pop up to your room while I let her in?

**Sam:** **(Exiting)** Bitch!!

**Pearl:** **(Calling after her)** You're in the blue room, darling.

**(She exits to open the front door again, and returns with Rick.)**

**Pearl:** And what the hell are you doing here?

**Rick:** Not the greeting I was expecting, but I'll let that pass. And to answer your question, Charlie invited me for the weekend. Don't say he didn't tell you. Anyway, here I am.

**Pearl:** So you are!

**Rick:** Is that the best you can do? I've been trying to get hold of you for days, but your mobile must be switched off. Where were you last Monday? I waited in that hotel for hours, the suite was booked, and I had a table reserved at the trendiest restaurant in London – so what happened?

**Pearl:** Nothing happened, darling. I just decided not to be there.

**Rick:** Am I entitled to some sort of explanation?

**Pearl:** Rick, sweetie, you seem to have somehow formed the impression we're having an affair. We had three 'dalliances' when I was bored, that's all.

**Rick:** Dalliances? When we spent the afternoon here in your bed while poor old Charlie was at that creditors' meeting in London I don't remember you calling it a dalliance. And those two nights at the Ritz cost me a bundle.

**Pearl:** I was worth it, wasn't I? Oh – how silly of me! You thought that when the divorce was all done and dusted you'd be able to move in here and live off me, didn't you? Well, Rick, have I got news for you! Your investment hasn't paid off. You were a minor diversion, and the fact that you're a friend of Charlie's made it all the more amusing. But when I get what's coming to me from Charlie I won't be needing your somewhat second rate services again.

**Rick:** You spiteful malicious cow!

**Pearl:** I may be a cow, darling, but I can assure you that your qualifications to be my personal bull are woefully inadequate in one rather vital area.

**Rick:** You'll regret this, I guarantee it.

**Pearl:** Oh I doubt that very much. Now be a good boy and get your bags from the Bentley. You may as well stay now you're here. It's going to be quite a weekend!

**Rick:** Yes... I think I will stay. Enjoy your moment Pearl – it may not last very long.  
(Door bell rings.)

**Pearl:** As you're going that way, darling, would you mind seeing who that is? It's the butler's day off.

**Rick:** (Pretending to tug his forelock) Yes, my lady!  
(Exit Rick.)

**Pearl:** (To herself) Three down, one to go.  
(Isla enters with Rick.)

**Rick:** (Still in servant mode) Will that be all, my lady?

**Pearl:** (To Rick) Don't push your luck, darling.

**Rick:** I'll just go and polish the silver!  
(Exit Rick)

**Pearl:** Isla darling, I'm so pleased you could make it. How was the traffic?

**Isla:** Sod the traffic! Pearl, we haven't spoken to each other for I don't know how long, and we both know why. Then suddenly, right out of the blue, I get an invitation – no, a demand – to come all this way to see you for what you called 'a matter of life and death'. Right, I'm here. What's so desperate?

**Pearl:** Don't attack me sweetie, I'm only trying to help an old school friend, and I just know you'll want to help me.

**Isla:** What old school friend? What help?

**Pearl:** Sam of course. She's run into a slight financial problem, and it occurred to me that you'd be more than willing to help her out.

**Isla:** You're talking in riddles Pearl. Get to the point.

**Pearl:** With pleasure. To put it delicately, Sam and I are about to agree financial terms which will render it unnecessary for me to unburden my soul to the authorities about a little matter of (**she whispers**) abortion. Now bearing in mind your role in this unhappy affair I felt confident you'd want to make a contribution towards her expenses. After all, you're famous now, aren't you? National TV weather girl, face on the box every day. If the BBC got wind of this, so to speak, I would say your next and probably last forecast would be for stormy weather, don't you? Followed by a major depression.

**Isla:** I don't believe this! It's blackmail, pure and simple. You'll go to jail.

**Pearl:** And where will you go, darling? The Job Centre? I really don't think you're willing to risk that somehow. But don't make any hasty decisions. Sam's here – why not have a chat with her. She'll be down any minute.

**Isla:** What's she doing here?

**Pearl:** I invited her down to discuss her finances – and mine, of course.

**Isla:** You reckon you've got this all worked out, don't you?

**Pearl:** I like to think so.

**Isla:** Well you can think again, because as far as I'm concerned you can get stuffed!

**Pearl:** No darling, I'm going to get rich. You will stay won't you? I'm sure the others would love it if you joined us... especially Sam.

**Isla:** Oh I'll stay Pearl. But you'll regret it!

**Pearl:** I doubt that very much. I'm going to have a weekend I'll remember for the rest of my life.



**(Enter Charlie, who sees Isla.)**

**Charlie:** Hello. **(Pause)** Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

**Pearl:** Darling, that's not exactly an original chat-up line, is it?

**Isla:** Hello, you must be Charlie. I'm Isla. You've probably seen me on the box, telling you it's going to rain.

**Charlie:** Oh of course. So nice to meet you. **(They shake hands)**

**Pearl:** **(To Charlie)** Isla and I go back a long way. **(To Pearl)** This way, darling. I've got a lovely room for you.

**(As Pearl and Isla are about to exit, enter Chester.)**

**Pearl:** **(As she and Isla exit)** Introductions later, darling.

**Chester:** **(To Charlie)** I've seen her on the telly, haven't I? What's she doing here? Another pawn for Pearl's amusement?

**Charlie:** I've no idea. She didn't look exactly delighted to be here, did she?

**Chester:** I know how she feels.

**Charlie:** I'm in big trouble Chester. I'll give it to you straight. Pearl's flatly refused to back down. She won't tell her solicitor the pre-nuptial agreement's a fake, and she's going to delay the divorce as long as she can. She'll lose out financially of course, but she'll bankrupt me within weeks. And you know what that means for you.

**Chester:** Yes, I already knew. We had words when you were out. Vindictive tart, I could kill her.

**Charlie:** Oh sure!

**Chester:** Actually, I told her *you* were pretty dangerous when you were in a corner. So if I *did* do her in you'd be in the frame.

**Charlie:** And you'd do that to me, would you? Come on Chester, return to earth. If we're going bust we'll go together.

**Chester:** I don't think so. There is another way.

**Charlie:** Which is...?

**Chester:** It's obvious isn't it? If Pearl was dead the problem wouldn't exist. And the bank would be sympathetic in the circumstances and wait for the formalities to be completed. You'd be in the clear.

**Charlie:** No Chester. *You'd* be in the clear – *I'd* be in Wormwood Scrubbs.

**Chester:** No you wouldn't. Not if we played it right.

**Charlie:** What do you mean "*we* played it right"? I'm not playing anything.

**Chester:** Just hear me out. **(They move towards the door)** I've had this brilliant idea. Do you remember that Hitchcock film *Strangers on a train*?

**Charlie:** Vaguely.

**Chester:** Well... ...

**(Curtain)**

## **Cold Blooded Murder**

### **Evidence Part 1**

#### ***Customer Taster***

**An extract from the pre-nuptial agreement allegedly drawn up by Pearl's solicitors, Messrs Jock, Strapp and Co, Support House, Chancery Lane, London.**

“In the event of the said marriage between our client Pearl Ruby Amethyst Harbor and Charles Horatio Barley being ended for any reason whatsoever (and regardless of fault on either side) it is hereby agreed that the said Pearl Ruby Amethyst Harbor will receive 85% (eighty five percent) of the total assets of both parties.”

*The document bears what appear to be the signatures of Pearl and Charlie, although Charlie denies ever signing such an agreement.*