



*A Murder Mystery*

*By*

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**Customer Taster**

# An Extortionate Death

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*Jack Hammer is an accomplished, professional blackmailer. He is careful not to be seen in public, almost nothing is known about him and he has never come to the notice of the police. He has amassed a considerable fortune extorting large sums from his rich, vulnerable victims, none of whom to their knowledge have ever met him face to face. So why has he decided to invite his latest selection of victims to his country house? Does he have a death wish?*

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## **Overview**

An Extortionate Death 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**

**George Cross:** Hammer's recently appointed personal assistant.

**Bruce Elosis:** A Police Superintendant who may have been taking bribes.

**Den Tallbridge:** A Harley Street dentist with a dodgy practice or two.

**Tamara Sandwich:** A rich society girl with a cocaine habit.

**Victoria Sandwich:** A prominent MP who has used her influence unwisely.

**Claire Voyant:** An author who is accused of 'borrowing' her best plot.

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

## ***The full murder mystery pack contains:-***

- The Organiser's Overview which includes a rough guide on how to structure your event (*extract in this taster*), notes on setting, and a props list.
- Act One and Two, to be performed by the actors (*extract in this taster*)
- Pieces of evidence for the audience to examine (*one extract in this taster*)
- The solution.

## **Setting**

The lounge of Hammer's country house.

So it can be performed either as a stage play or as entertainment during a meal for the audience.

## Production Notes

If performing this to an audience, it is worth considering the provision of a meal for the audience.

A suggested format for the evening could be as follows:

- Introduction by the Narrator, who gives an overview of the evening's entertainment.
- Act 1 is then performed - this takes around 12 minutes.
- If a two course meal is being provided, the first course is served following Act 1, and the audience are given the first three written clues.
- Act 2 is then performed - this takes around 10 minutes, and is followed by the second course, and the audience are given the remaining written clues.
- If a one course meal is proposed, or a buffet is provided, the two Acts can be performed without an interval, as there is no break in the action.
- After the conclusion of the play, the Narrator calls the suspects back on stage and invites the audience to put questions to them. This session can last as long as the Narrator chooses, assuming the questions keep coming. An optimum period of twenty minutes is recommended.
- The Narrator then invites the audience to complete a 'whodunnit' sheet, naming the guilty party and providing supporting evidence drawn from the action on stage and/or the written clues. Allow twenty minutes for all the answers to be submitted.
- As soon as all the answer sheets have been submitted, the cast/director/ Narrator must quickly review them all, and select the best answer. There may also be a number of wildly inaccurate or humorous answers, and the Narrator may wish to keep a few of those aside to share later with the audience.
- Once the winning answer has been selected, the Narrator will ask all the suspects to return to the stage, and require the guilty party to reveal themselves. The Narrator then reads the formal solution to the audience – this will take around six minutes. After this, the Narrator reads out a selection of the wrong or humorous answers, at his or her discretion, followed by a formal announcement of the winner.
- If a two course meal is offered, allow a total of two and a half hours for the whole event, but this can be shortened by perhaps twenty to thirty minutes if the meal is only one course, or consists of a buffet.

# An Extortionate Death

## Act 1

(As the curtain rises, George is alone on stage, and is polishing the glasses with a suitable cloth. After a few seconds, the front door bell rings. George exits.)

**George:** (Offstage) Good evening. I'm George, Mr Hammer's PA.

**Bruce:** (Offstage, and angry.) Big deal!

(Enter George and Bruce.)

**George:** May I offer you a drink?

**Bruce:** Scotch! Large!

**George:** Ice?

**Bruce:** No!

**George:** (As he pours the drink and hands it over.) Did you have a good journey?

**Bruce:** Do you actually *care*?

**George:** Possibly not. Please take a seat.

**Bruce:** (Remains standing.) Where's Hammer?

(Before George can answer, the door bell rings again.)

**George:** Excuse me.

(Exit George. Bruce paces impatiently, looking at his watch.)

(Enter George, followed by Den.)

**George:** (To Bruce.) Do you gentlemen know each other?

**Bruce:** No!

**Den:** (Holding out his hand, smiling.) Den Tallbridge – oral surgeon to the stars.

**Bruce:** (Shaking hands.) Bruce Elosis – Met Police, guardian of the public. Sorry if I was a bit offhand. I've got a lot on my plate.

**Den:** Oh dear, shall I take a look at it? (He moves towards Bruce, who backs away sharply.)

**Bruce:** Not my dental plate, you fool! I mean I'm very busy! Stressed!

**Den:** Aren't we all, dear.

**Bruce:** What?

**Den:** I said we all are this year.

**Bruce:** (To George.) So where's Hammer?

**George:** In his study, I believe.

**Bruce:** Tell him I'm here, and I want to see him now.

**Den:** So he's got to you too, has he?

**Bruce:** I don't know what you're on about. I have a business meeting with Mr Hammer – which is none of your concern.

**Den:** How quaint! A business meeting! That's one way of putting it.

(The door bell rings.)

**George:** I'll just get that. (To Den.) Please help yourself to a drink.

(Exit George.)

**Bruce:** What did you mean just now?

**Den:** (Pouring himself a drink.) There's no need to be coy about it. He's doing the same thing to all of us. That's why we're here.

**Bruce:** I have no idea what you're on about.

**Den:** Suit yourself.

(Enter George, Victoria and Tamara.)

**George:** I understand some of you already know each other.

**Tamara:** Surely *everyone* knows me?

**Den:** Not necessarily, dear. Not *all* of us read Hello magazine. Do excuse me, will you? I've just remembered I left something in the car.

(Exit Den.)

**Victoria:** Well, I know Den. He's my dentist.

**Tamara:** Mine too. He says I've got a lovely pair of molars.

**Victoria:** (To Bruce.) We're old friends, aren't we?

**George:** *Are you?*

**Bruce:** Not friends! Professional acquaintances!

**Victoria:** **(To George.)** I'm an MP, and a junior minister at the Home Office. Bruce and I often attend the same meetings, as I've got the police portfolio.

**Tamara:** And they want it back! **(She giggles to herself, but nobody else laughs.)**

**George:** May I get you ladies a drink?

**Victoria:** That's very kind. I'll have a Scotch, please. No ice.

**Tamara:** And I'll have a strawberry daiquiri.

**George:** I'm sorry Miss, but we're right out of strawberries.

**Tamara:** Okay – I'll have a large Scotch.

**George:** Anything in it?

**Tamara:** Just another scotch. **(She giggles again, but nobody else does.)**  
**(George gets the drinks, and gives them to the ladies during the next few lines.)**

**Victoria:** **(To Bruce.)** Actually, it's a bit embarrassing, meeting you here.

**Bruce:** Is it? Why?

**Victoria:** Well... I presume we're all here for the same reason, aren't we?

**Bruce:** Are we? I have a business appointment with Hammer.

**Victoria:** Is *that* what you call it? How very amusing. I call it...  
**(Enter Den.)**

**Den:** **(To the girls.)** Well, well! I had no idea! Both joined the club, have you?

**Bruce:** What club? What's going on here?

**Victoria:** Oh Bruce! Don't play the innocent. He's got to all of us. **(To Tamara.)** You tell him, I need the loo. **(To George.)** Would you point me in the right direction?

**George:** Yes, of course. **(He opens the door.)** It's down the hall, second on the left, the green door.

**Victoria:** Thanks.  
**(Exit Victoria.)**

**Bruce:** **(To Tamara.)** So – what were you going to tell me?

**Tamara:** Tell you?

**Bruce:** Yes, tell me.

**Tamara:** Tell you what?

**Bruce:** Now look...!

**Den:** Tam, dear. Just tell the nice policeman why we're all here – including him.

**Tamara:** Doesn't he *know* why he's here? He must be a bit thick.

**Bruce:** What!??

**Den:** Yes dear, *he* knows why he's here. The thing is, he didn't realise there were others in the same situation as him, and he's a bit shy about admitting he's being 'Hammered'.

**George:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I don't like the direction in which this conversation seems to be going.

**Den:** And your problem is... ..?

**George:** Mr Hammer is my employer, and...

**Bruce:** Well? Come on, man! Spit it out!

**George:** You seem to be implying that Mr Hammer has somehow forced you to be here.

**Den:** George... Exactly how long have you worked for Hammer?

**George:** Exactly?

**Den:** Yes, exactly.

**George:** This is my third day.

**Den:** And what precisely do you think Mr Hammer does for a living?  
**(The door bell rings.)**

**George:** Er... Excuse me.  
**(Exit George.)**

**Bruce:** **(To Tamara.)** Alright! I'll admit it. Hammer's blackmailing me. **(To Tamara.)** And you too, I presume?  
**[Continued!]**

An Extortionate Death - Clue 1  
**Letter received in the House of Commons, 3 weeks previously**

Dear Ms Sandwich,

Although I have yet to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, I am confident that by the time you have finished reading this letter you will be more than willing to remedy that unfortunate state of affairs.

I already know a great deal about you. A successful MP, popular with everyone in your party. An influential member of the Home Office team, apparently much admired by the PM, and a shoe-in as the next Home Secretary. What could possibly go wrong? Surely not a family embarrassment?

Poor little, rich little Tammy. Never done a day's work in her life. But why should she, with all that lovely money you both inherited from your Grandmama? You were sensible with your share, tucking most of it away for a rainy day, but no such prudence for Tamara. Darling of the late night West End and showbiz set. Picture never out of the papers. A drink always in her hand, and a line of coke up her nose.

Lucy Robinson - only 7 years old. Slipped away from her mum, was crossing the road to the sweetshop, and... Bang! Boozed up, coked up Tamara comes along in her brand new Porsche and that was the end for Lucy.

I've been in touch with Tammy, and she's coming to see me. That smart lawyer of hers convinced the jury that someone had stolen her car, and it wasn't her who was driving that day. But we know different, don't we? And I've seen the photos. And I know who gave that lawyer a copy of the confidential prosecution file – and where you got it from.

I suggest you have a quiet word with Tammy next time she's sober, and make sure you come with her when she visits me. Unless you don't mind me telling the PM and the Old Bill what you've done. I think it's called perverting the course of justice.

See you soon...