

Dying for a Drink

by
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Published by Lazy Bee Scripts

Customer Taster

Dying for a Drink

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Emma Royde is a wealthy widow with a drink problem. And to make matters worse, she's had an anonymous letter, telling her that one of the beneficiaries in her will is going to kill her. So is it wise of her to invite them all to her home...?

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Overview

Dying for a Drink is a Murder Mystery designed to be played by 6 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

Emma Royde: Widow of wealthy entrepreneur Andy, the victim of a hit-and-run driver.

Dan Druff: A retired police officer, who investigated Andy's death.

Penny Sillen: Emma's sister, recently divorced, and her only blood relative.

Lance Boyle: An old friend of Andy's, and chief accountant at Andy's company.

Father Back: The priest who officiated at Andy's funeral.

Tess Tykell: The surgeon who battled in vain to save Andy on the operating table.

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 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 [*excerpt from Act One provided with this Customer Taster*]
- Six pieces of evidence for the audience to examine [*One provided with this Customer Taster*]
- "Accusation sheets" for the audience to enter their solutions.
- The solution.

Plot Overview

Life was almost perfect for **Emma Royde** until two years ago, when her husband Andy was killed by a hit-and-run driver as he walked the three hundred yards home after a quiet night at his local pub. There was no question of Andy having been drunk – the post mortem proved that – and the driver of the car has never been traced.

Andy was the multi-millionaire owner of Royde's Continental Holidays (company slogan 'Book with us and you'll be taken for a Royde') and he left the lot to Emma. But she found life unbearable without her beloved Andy, and began drinking heavily within a few days of his death.

Confronted with her own mortality, and before the alcohol took over completely, Emma made a will - leaving her entire fortune equally divided between the five people who had, one way or another, helped her through the ordeal of losing Andy. They are **Dan Druff**, the police officer (now retired) who spent the last nine months of his service trying in vain to trace the driver who killed Andy; **Penny Sillen**, Emma's sister and only relative, recently divorced following a short but financially disastrous marriage to a car salesman; **Lance Boyle**, the accountant who ran the financial side of Royde's Continental Holidays, and an old friend of Andy's; **Father Back**, the priest who provided spiritual support and comfort to Emma in the weeks following Andy's death, and **Tess Tykell**, the surgeon who battled for hours in the operating theatre trying to save Andy.

But Emma is about to tell them that she recently received an anonymous letter, alleging ...

And so the stage is set for Emma ...

But does someone already know of the allegations, and are they planning a deadly deed?

(This is revealed in the full pack.)

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!

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Setting

The action takes place in the lounge of Emma's house. The set requires two doors, one leading to the hall, and the other to Emma's study. Plus chairs and a coffee table (on which is a newspaper) and a bookcase on which is a decanter of sherry and some glasses.

Props

Act 1

Chairs and/or sofa (**Set Onstage**)

Coffee table (**Set Onstage**)

Newspaper on it (**on Coffee table**)

Picture (**on the wall**)

A sideboard or small bookcase (**Set Onstage**)

Sherry glasses and decanter (**on sideboard**)

Act 2

Stage set as before

Pencil (**In Dan's jacket pocket**)

Key (**Offstage for Dan's newspaper trick**)

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Act 1

(Just before the curtain opens, a phone can be heard ringing. It then stops, as if someone has answered it. As the curtain opens Dan is alone on stage, admiring a painting on the wall. He is wearing a jacket. Enter Emma, who is slightly drunk.)

Emma: Sorry about that. Someone always phones at the wrong moment, don't they? And whoever it was hung up anyway. I suppose I should have a phone put in here, but Andy wouldn't have one in the lounge, so... (She becomes a bit tearful, then recovers) Sorry. Now – what was I saying?

(Before Dan can speak, the doorbell rings)

Emma: Oh well, it'll have to wait.

(Exit Emma. Dan picks up the newspaper and glances at the headlines. After a few seconds, Enter Emma with Penny.)

Emma: (To Dan) You two know each other, don't you? (She helps herself to a large sherry, and takes a drink.)

Dan: Yes, of course.

Penny: Yes, we met at the... Um... At the...

Emma: It's alright, you *can* say it. The funeral.

Dan: Yes, the funeral.

Emma: Andy's funeral.

Penny: Yes.

Emma: Drink, anybody?

Penny: No thanks.

Dan: It's a bit early for me.

Emma: It isn't for me. (She tops up her glass and has another drink.)

Penny: So why have I been summoned here?

Dan: And me.

Emma: All in good time. (The doorbell rings again) I'll tell you when everyone's here.

(Exit Emma – just a little unsteady on her feet by now!)

Penny: What did she mean – 'when everyone's here'?

Dan: No idea. But she's drinking a lot, isn't she?

Penny: And it's getting worse. But what can *I* do? I'm her sister, not her doctor.

(Enter Emma with Lance.)

Emma: (To Lance) You remember my sister Penny, of course?

Lance: Yes, we've met several times.

Penny: And it always seems to be at parties, doesn't it?

Lance: It does, doesn't it?

Emma: (To Dan) You know Lance, don't you? (She pours herself some more sherry.)

Dan: No... I don't think we've met.

Lance: Yes we have, old chap. I chatted to you after the funeral, if you remember.

Dan: Oh of course! Mr Boyle, isn't it? You work in the company's accounts department, don't you?

Lance: I *run* the accounts department actually: the company's doing very well, you know.

Emma: That's why I'm selling it.

(Gasps of amazement from the others.)

Penny: Selling it?

Lance: Selling it?

Emma: Selling it.

Lance: What for?

Emma: Money, of course.

Lance: But why? You're comfortably off as you are. You can't need the money.

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Emma: I don't. But I don't want the memories either. Anyway, I didn't ask you here to talk about that.

(The doorbell rings.)

Emma: I'll go.

(Exit Emma – even more unsteadily.)

Lance: **(Moving towards the decanter, he takes the top off)** After that little bombshell I think I need one.

Dan: **(Before Lance can pour a drink)** I think it would be much better if none of us drink in front of Emma. It'll only encourage her, and she's in a bad way as it is.

Lance: If you insist. **(He puts the top down – but not back on the decanter)** Mustn't argue with an officer of the law, must we?

Dan: I'm retired, actually.

(Enter Emma, with Father Back and Tess)

Emma: Right – introductions first, then a drink. You all remember Father Back, don't you? He buried Andy.

Back: Oh my dear please! I officiated at his internment.

Penny: Nice to see you again, Father.

Emma: And who remembers Tess?

Back: I recall we met at the hospital, after the operation.

Tess: And I've not seen you since, until we met just now on the doorstep.

Back: We arrived at the same time, you know. What a coincidence!

Dan: The doctor and I have worked on a few cases together, haven't we doc?

Tess: More than a few over the years. You're retired now, aren't you?

Dan: Yes. For about a year now.

Tess: So what are you doing with yourself?

Dan: Oh – this and that.

Emma: OK – enough small talk. Please sit down everyone, wherever you can. I've got something to say to all of you.

Penny: Aren't *you* going to sit down, Em?

Emma: No.

Back: I think you should, my dear, you do look a trifle unsteady on your feet.

Lance: That must be the...

Penny: **(Interrupting)** The sloping floor!

Tess: Pardon?

Penny: The sloping floor. That would make anyone look unsteady.

Emma: Especially if they were drunk – don't you think, Father?

(Everyone looks uncomfortable. Emma moves to the table, picks up the decanter and freshens her glass.)

Emma: Right: who wants a drink? Penny, dear?

Penny: No thank you.

Emma: Father? You could pretend it's communion wine if it helps.

Back: I'm afraid it's much too early for me.

Emma: Anybody? **(Nobody answers.)** Just me then. **(She takes another sip, tops up her glass again, leaving the stopper off the decanter, and moves away from the table.)**

Tess: Emma, why are we here? What's going on?

Emma: It's simple really. One of you wants to kill me, and I'd quite like to know who it is.

(The others all react in disbelief)

Back: I'm sure you're wrong, my dear.

Tess: Rubbish!

Lance: Emma, this is ridiculous!

Dan: What on earth makes you think that?

Penny: And why would any of us, your family and friends, want to do that?

Emma: If you just shut up for a minute Penny dear, I'll tell you! **(Penny looks offended, but shuts up.)** Right. A couple of weeks ago I received what the writers of thriller novels call an anonymous letter.

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Lance: Who from?

(The others stare at him, and he realizes what he's said)

Lance: Oh... Sorry. Carry on.

Emma: Thank you! Whoever wrote it warned me that one of you five intended to get me out of the way – to kill me in other words – so that he... or she... could cash in early as a beneficiary to my will.

Penny: And you believe this poisonous... Bilge?

Emma: Why not? Couldn't you do with a quick injection of cash, Penny dear? Surely none of you would turn down four million each?

(Gasps of amazement from all – except Lance.)

Penny: Four million?

Tess: It can't be that much.

Lance: Actually she's right. The company's worth at least twenty million, even after tax and all that.

Dan: Bloody hell!

Tess: I had no idea.

Back: None of us had. Oh Emma, my dear, you're much too generous.

Tess: **(To Penny)** But you *must* have known. She's your sister.

Penny: Why should Emma tell me all her secrets?

Tess: How about answering the question?

Penny: How about shutting your face!

Dan: Ladies! That's enough! This isn't a court of law. Nobody has to answer any questions.

Back: Please let us have no unpleasantness.

Dan: Quite right, Father. **(Pause)** But you're wrong about one thing.

Back: What thing?

Dan: You said none of us knew how much money was involved – but Lance did. He's in the perfect position to know.

Lance: I don't deny it. I just told you, didn't I?

Emma: Will you all pipe down for a minute? It's not as simple as who wants the money.

Tess: Isn't it?

Emma: Oh no! I haven't finished telling you what was in the letter yet.

Penny: Well go on then.

Emma: Whoever wrote that letter knows quite a bit about you lot. I'll start with you, Penny dear.

Penny: What rot!

Tess: How do you know it's rot before you've heard it?

Emma: Quite. My informant tells me you're so angry at only being left a fifth of my so-called fortune that you've decided to get your greedy little hands on it as soon as you can work out how to kill me and get away with it.

Penny: What...

Dan: **(Interrupting)** Rot? Is that what you were going to say?

Penny: It's ludicrous! Emma – surely you don't believe these lies some nutcase has invented?

Emma: I might. Now... who's next? Ah yes! How about our brave policeman, everyone's favourite copper?

Dan: Go on.

Emma: Apparently your investigation into Andy's death was pathetic.

(In the full pack it continues... until...)

Dan: Probably. But there's something not quite right about Mr. Boyle. I can't quite put my finger on it, but...

(He is interrupted by a loud scream from the study.)

(Curtain.)

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Evidence Part 1

Extract from The Willchester Chronicle

TRAGIC DEATH OF LOCAL TRAVEL TYCOON

By our crime reporter Ivor Nagenda

A massive police hunt began last night to track down the driver of a so far unidentified car that mowed down and killed Andy Royde, local entrepreneur and owner of the travel company Royde's Continental Holidays.

Details so far are sketchy, but it appears Mr Royde had spent the evening at his local pub, The Pickled Pilchard in Coffee Pot Lane, and set off to walk the 300 yards or so down the lane to his home. He was just moments from safety when he was struck from behind with considerable force by what police have described as 'a swiftly moving vehicle'. The speed limit in Coffee Pot Lane is 40mph, but an informed source in the Constabulary has told me the estimated speed of the vehicle on impact was at least 65mph.

Mr Royde was rushed to hospital, but despite the heroic efforts of casualty

staff and an expert surgeon he passed away some seven hours after the collision. He leaves Emma, his wife of 10 years, who is naturally devastated.

I spoke this morning to PC Dan Druff, one of the first officers on the scene. He assured me that every possible step was being taken to track down the vehicle involved, and apprehend the driver.

Tina Salmon, landlady of the Pickled Pilchard, said 'We're all gutted. Andy was a great bloke who never hurt a fly. He had his usual 2 pints of lager that night and was as sober as a judge when he left here. He'll be sorely missed.'

There have been countless complaints over the years that the 40 mph speed limit on Coffee Pot Lane, and several other narrow roads in and around the town, is much too high. And this is not the first time I have raised this issue in the pages of the Chronicle. Now, perhaps, our local bureaucrats will do something about it!