

Dead In The Morning

A mysterious, spooky and final-seconds-of-the-play thriller

A play by Cenarth Fox

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Synopsis

Dead In The Morning is about dying or rather about *when* we die. Some of us top the ton. Some of us are topped well before then. Few, if any of us know exactly *when* we're going to die. Well, except perhaps in the moment beforehand. But would knowing the date of one's demise be worth knowing? How would you spend your last year, day, hour of life on this planet? Would *you* like to know when your bucket is destined to be kicked?

"The play went very well ... everyone who saw it thought it was wonderful" **Judi Munro,**
Texas USA

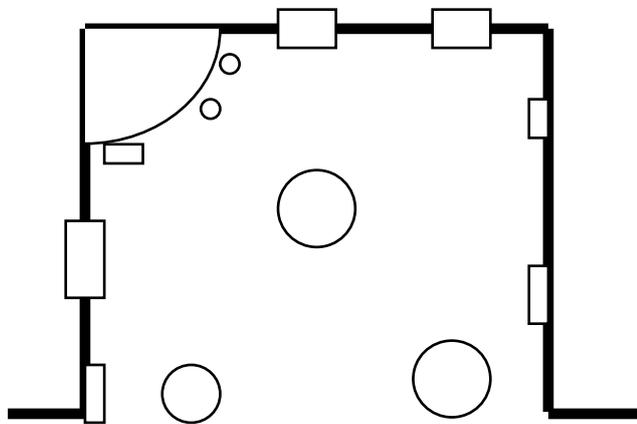
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Setting and Time

The interior of a pub in a country or provincial town. The pub is busy by day but quiet most nights, especially tonight. Usually it's just a few regulars who gather for a drink and some social chit-chat. The time is the present.

Stage Setting

It's not a fancy, modern or trendy pub. It's been managed by the same family for many years. It makes a profit but nothing flash. The decor is not quite shabby but that's its appeal. Run-down without being rundown. Frayed around the edges perhaps. Your set could look like this.



Dead in the Morning involved a major change of set and presented us with an atmospheric pub, fire blazing in the grate on a winter's night. The regulars assemble then a stranger comes in... and things get pretty spooky because he has the ability to predict the date of someone's death if they wish to know it.

A few drinks later and curiosity gets the better of some. I enjoyed the strong characterizations and comedy, especially Keith Harper as belligerent landlord Keith, Ashley Nicholls as the funny, thick and thuggish Buck, and Peggy Robinson as gossipy Lil. Richard Jeffreys made an impact as Ed and really seemed to make some of the audience jump when his anger rose to a roar. And there was strong support from Louise Canfield as Keith's sweet, downtrodden wife Carla; Marian Harper as churchy and disapproving Frances; Melissa Latchem as chatterbox academic Dot and Rick Godbolt as her sneering hubby Clarrie.

Addington Theatre Group

From the Croydon Advertiser - 15th of April, 2005

*Review by Diana Ecclestone **** - 4 stars*

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Characters

BUCK - young tearaway, full of life, an immature rough diamond

KEITH - middle-aged publican, fond of his own wares, no drive or ambition

CARLA - Keith's wife, youngish, foreign, has trouble with the language

DOT - brilliant university lecturer, PhD, very intelligent

CLARRIE - Dot's husband, university lecturer, appointed above his station

LILLIAN [LIL] - middle-aged/elderly, divorced, lively, fun to be with, works as domestic in homes of wealthy people

FRANCES [FANNY] - Lil's younger sister, middle-aged, quiet, spinster, reserved

EDWARD - a stranger

THE PLAY

(It's a cold, wet, winter's night. KEITH'S pub is quiet and empty. A fire burns DL. Lighting is dim. KEITH enters from the kitchen [off-stage] UR and flicks two light-switches. Lighting improves but it's not bright. KEITH moves to bottles UR and pours himself a large drink, skols it and pours another. He calls loudly as he attends to his drink)

Keith Carla! *(Swigs again. Calls even louder)* Carla!
(CARLA enters from UC door marked LADIES. She carries bucket and cleaning equipment, wears an apron. She's been working hard, her hair is messy but she still retains her natural beauty)

Keith The fire, woman. Don't let it go out.
(CARLA looks at KEITH, says nothing and crosses to fireplace DL placing bucket on table C. KEITH wipes the bar, drinks and flicks through a current newspaper. He reads sports pages. CARLA pokes the fire and adds a log or two. KEITH looks up and sees bucket on table. He lifts the counter flap)

Keith *(Lifts counter and crosses C)* Carla! *(CARLA keeps working at fireplace. KEITH grabs bucket and tosses it onto floor. Cleaning rags and plastic bottles of detergent spill free)* Not on the tables. God you're thick! *(CARLA rises and silently tidies mess)*

Carla *(Tidying)* I sorry. I will fix.

Keith Sorry's not good enough, sweetheart. No customers, no job, no roof over your head. *(Grabs her arm)* Speaka da English?

Carla *(CARLA is in pain)* Please. You hurting me.

Keith *(Pushing her away)* Not half as much if I go bust. Now where's me tea?

Carla I get it.

(She exits through bar to kitchen. KEITH wanders to fireplace and warms his hands. Suddenly the door opens DR and BUCK enters in a hurry. It's wet and cold outside. BUCK wears a short jacket and enters in a flap heading straight for the door marked GENTS UL. BUCK fails to close the DR door properly and KEITH calls in anger)

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Keith Hey! Shut the door!

Buck *(Heading UL)* Can't mate. Emergency!
(BUCK bursts through door UL and disappears. KEITH reluctantly to DR door and closes it on LIL and FANNY. All three are surprised. The women are a mite upset)

Women Oh!

Keith Hey! *(He opens door immediately)* Sorry ladies. Come in, come in. *(LIL enters closing an umbrella. FANNY follows. Both wear thick coats, scarves, gloves and hats. KEITH closes the door. The women head to the coat-stand RC and remove their coats, store the umbrella etc)*

Lil *(Removing her coat)* What sort of a welcome do you call that?

Keith *(Moves to help them with their coats)* Now Lil, you know me better than that. How are you, Fanny?

Fanny Well thank you.

Keith Good night to stop home if you ask me.

Lil It's Thursday, Keith. We're always here on Thursdays. *(LIL pronounces Thursday as Thurs-dee with emphasis on the Thurs)* And you know Frances. Wouldn't miss a booze-up for quids.

Fanny *(Embarrassed and cross)* Lillian! *(KEITH grins)*

Lil *(Heading to her table C)* And unless I'm mistaken, I'd say you've started without us. *(LIL sits at table C)*

Keith *(Holding chair for FANNY)* Now Lil, you know what they say. Takes a lush to spot a lush. *(LIL laughs)*

Fanny *(Politely to KEITH)* Thank you.

Keith So what'll it be ladies? The usual?

Lil Yes please. Only make it a large one.

Fanny *(Mild rebuke to her sister)* Lillian.

Keith *(To FANNY)* And what about the lovely Frances? What can I get for you?

Fanny Thank you. I'd like a ... *(The other two join in)*

Trio ... small, sweet sherry.
(FANNY is not amused. KEITH heads for the bar to prepare drinks. LIL fossicks in bag for hanky then blows her nose in loud fashion)

Keith *(Crossing to bar)* One large gin, one small sweet sherry it is.

Fanny *(To LIL)* I wish you wouldn't do that.

Lil I have to blow me nose, love. Or would you rather I use me sleeve?

Fanny You know perfectly well what I mean. There's no need to announce my drink order so the whole world can hear.

Lil Frances, the whole world's not in tonight.

Fanny I might just order something else. Then you'd look pretty silly

Lil You! Change a routine! Listen sister, you've got small sweet sherry written all over you.

Fanny Now you're insulting me.

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Lil *(Powdering nose)* That wouldn't be hard, love. You thought Harvey Wallbanger was an interior decorator.

Keith *(Calling from bar with drinks)* Here we are, ladies.

Fanny *(Spits at LIL)* And don't encourage that horrible man.

Keith *(Arrives placing drinks on the table)* One large gin and tonic. One small sweet sherry. Your very good health, ladies.

Lil *(Taking her glass)* Marvellous. Cheers. *(She drinks)* Ahh. I needed that.

Keith So how's the back, Lil? Still playing up?
(FANNY disgusted with KEITH for being so familiar)

Lil It's terrible. Don't ask. I reckon done something serious.

Keith Me too. Mine's playing up something terrible.

Lil Yeah, but we know what causes yours.
(Laughter twixt KEITH and LIL. FANNY suitably offended. Door to GENTS opens and BUCK enters wiping his hands on his jacket)

Buck Hey Keif! *(BUCK comes down to C table)*

Keith Here's trouble.

Buck You're outa paper in the bog, mate. *(To women)* Evenin' girls. *(Slaps KEITH on shoulder)* Usual mate. *(Heads to bar-stool RC, sits and combs his hair)* Bit soldier's out there.

Keith *(Heading back to bar where he pours BUCK a beer)* Yeah well it is winter. The temperature does drop in winter

Buck Not out dere. *(Points to Gents)* Out dere! You need a fire in the gents, mate. Them seats is freezin'. *(The WOMEN try not to listen, sip their drinks)*

Keith *(Handing BUCK his drink)* Well don't sit on 'em then.

Buck Very funny. Listen what's to eat? I could murder a steak.
(CARLA enters carrying small logs and crosses to fireplace where the logs are stacked. BUCK is glad to see CARLA. He thinks she's a bit of all right)

Buck *(Pleased)* Carla! *(Hops up and holds the counter for CARLA)* How's it goin'?

Keith About time.

Carla *(Smiles but hardly pauses)* Good night, Buck.

Buck *(Calls after her)* It's "Good evenin'" not "Good night".

Carla *(As she passes women)* Good night, ladies.

Lil Hello Carla.

Fanny Good evening.

Buck *(To KEITH looking at CARLA)* Lovely lady your missus. How 'bout I give 'er some lessons in speakin' proper?

Keith *(Quiet, nasty rebuke)* You keep your lessons to y'self. If I catch you hangin' round my wife, you'll wish you was never born.

Buck *(Miffed)* All right, keep ya shirt on. I'm only tryin' to 'elp.

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(BUCK takes his drink, crosses to dartboard UL, removes some darts and plays a few games. He's in a bad mood now that KEITH has cramped his style. KEITH exits to the kitchen. CARLA leaves the logs by the fireplace and heads back to the bar. She stops C and chats to the women)

- Carla** You have drink, ladies? Can I get more?
Fanny No thank you. We're quite all right.
Lil *(More friendly)* In a mo, love. We can't drink as fast as the landlord.
Carla *(Doesn't understand)* Sorry?
Lil Little joke. *(Changes tack)* So how you keeping? Busy?
Carla Oh very busy. Every day cooking, washing, cleaning. Busy, busy, busy.
Lil We hear you're a smashing cook.
Carla *(Again doesn't understand)* Smashing? You mean I break things?
Lil *(Laughing at misunderstanding)* No, I mean you're very good. You're a wonderful cook.
Carla *(Modest)* Oh, not too much. I try. My husband not like the fancy food.
Lil Typical. My old man was the same. Plain 'n plentiful was his motto. Try anything fancy and he'd hit the roof. What's your speciality?
Carla Sorry? I no understand speciality.
Lil What do you cook best?
Carla Oh I like vegetables, ah roasts and chicken and fish. Lots of sauces to give it the flavour, you know.
Lil Sounds terrific. We must come down one Sunday. Fanny loves fish.
Fanny We can't come on a Sunday.
Carla *(Happy to serve them)* Yes, you come here on Sunday. I can cook you something very special.
Fanny *(Polite but formal)* I'm sure you can but we go to church on Sunday. Thank you anyway.
Carla That okay. After church. You come and I make you beautiful lunch with herbs and spices.
Keith *(Appears in bar and yells)* Carla!
Carla *(Quiet and subservient)* Sorry. I must go. *(She moves quickly to bar)*
Keith *(Placing cardboard box on bar)* There's no paper in the Gents.
(CARLA is embarrassed that KEITH speaks to her in this manner and doubly so that the matter of the male lavatory is mentioned in public)
Carla *(Softer)* Please. Not so loud.
Keith *(Rude - again)* Don't tell me how to speak. *(Pushes box at her)* Do it.
(CARLA takes box and crosses to door UL. She pauses at door. KEITH is wiping glasses. He stops and exits to kitchen. CARLA moves quickly to BUCK. We can't hear her but she asks him to take the box into the Gents. He smiles at her and cheerfully obliges. CARLA watches him disappear then is startled when KEITH enters behind the bar)
Keith You done that?

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Carla (Returning to bar) Yes. I done that.

Keith (Pause. Suddenly suspicious) Where's Buck?

Carla (Inside bar heading for kitchen) I fix sandwich. (Exits to kitchen)

Keith (Faces kitchen - loud) Carla! Come here!
(DR door opens, DOT and CLARRIE enter. They are rugged up against the cold. Their arrival stops KEITH from his latest episode of wife-bashing/humiliating)

Buck (Enters from Gents, moves to DOT) Hey, Dot! Good to see ya.

Dot (Removing coat etc) Hello Buck. How are things?

Keith Evening Clarrie. Dot. (To the passing BUCK) Hey! (BUCK stops) I want a word with you.
(BUCK stops, annoyed, and goes to bar. KEITH leans across and mimes his displeasure about BUCK and CARLA. BUCK mimes the news that nothing happened and to get off my back. DOT and CLARRIE place their coats on pegs RC and move DL to their table)

Lil 'Evening Dot. 'Evening Clarrie

Dot (Goes to C table) Hello m'dears. Cold enough for you? (Rubs arms) Brrr. (To CLARRIE who unfolds a journal and heads to table DL) I'll get the drinks, Clarence. (She always does. CLARRIE ignores her remark, settles in the corner and reads) And how are you Fanny?

Fanny Well, thank you.

Dot How about another sherry?

Fanny No thank you, I'm still going on this one.

Dot Right. Oh Lil, a new tutor moved in this week. I asked her about housekeeping and she said yes. (Heading to bar) Can't remember her name but I'll get her to phone you. Okay?

Lil Terrific. Thanks a lot, Dottie.

Dot (At bar, breaking up KEITH'S dispute) Gentlemen. How are we?

Buck I'm okay but watch 'im.

Keith Shut it.

Dot Hello, hello. Do I detect an undercurrent of discontent?

Buck Look, I offered to 'elp Carla speak better like and the Mafia 'ere says I'm out of order. What d'you reckon?

Dot Hang on. Let me get this straight. You're volunteering to teach English?

Buck Yeah. Wot's wrong wiv dat?

Dot Nothing. Nothing. It's highly commendable. (To KEITH) Brandy and dry please Keith and the usual for Clarence. (KEITH prepares drinks)

Buck (Amused) Oi! Clarence. (Calls to CLARRIE in silly voice) Oh, Clarence!

Keith Belt up, Buck.

Buck (Putting his case to DOT) See what I mean? I can't say nuffin' wivout 'im jumpin' down me froat. I come in 'ere, spend me money and what 'appens? 'E insults me.

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- Dot** I wouldn't worry, Buck. It's probably reverse psychology.
- Buck** Reverse wot? *(Pause)* Hey, 'ow come you're so smart? I mean, bein' a woman an' all dat?
- Dot** Exactly. Well deduced.
- Buck** *(Completely confused)* 'ey?
- Dot** *(Puts money on bar)* A prerequisite for intelligence, sweetheart, is *being* a woman.
(She kisses him lightly on the cheek, takes her drinks and heads DL)
- Buck** Ah, I fink I missed somethin'.
- Keith** Yeah. The boat. *(Places another drink for BUCK on the bar)* Go and play darts. *(KEITH continues reading his newspaper and drinking)*
- Buck** Charmin' *(Takes his drink and resumes his solo darts UL)*
- Dot** *(Arriving with drinks DL)* Here you are my lovely. Your usual ... as usual. *(She sits and sips her drink. CLARRIE silent, keeps on reading)* And what great discoveries lie hidden in this month's journal?
- Clarrie** *(Replies without looking at her. Scoffs)* Clifford. Ha!
- Dot** *(Mock surprise)* Don't tell me. Another of your former colleagues, and a mediocre one at that, has just been appointed Professor at some respectable university.
- Clarrie** *(Still scoffs)* Senior Lecturer.
- Dot** *(Sarcastic)* Oh is that all? Darling, that's very small potatoes. You could leap frog him in a trice.
(BUCK approaches LIL and FANNY and asks them to play darts. LIL is delighted but FANNY remains polite but coldly in favour of silence and her a sweet sherry. BUCK and LIL move UL and play darts. They laugh a lot and really enjoy themselves. "Good shot" "You beautie" etc)
- Clarrie** I see Old Mitchell's retired. Bet I know who'll get his job.
- Dot** Yes but don't forget the bereavements. We academics do die you know. Some prof snuffs it and you're in like Flynnn, mate.
- Clarrie** Don't look now but your cynicism's showing.
- Dot** *(Even more sarcastic)* What? Again? Oh dear. Listen dear-heart, you've got enough self-pity to start a new branch of human behaviour.
- Clarrie** Discovered no doubt by Doctor Dorothy.
- Dot** *(Switches to being serious)* Don't start, Clarrie.
- Clarrie** *(Looks at her for first time)* I've told you before. If you want to apply for a senior post, do it. Canada, Australia, Britain, Timbuck-bloody-tu. I don't care.
- Dot** I don't apply, Clarrie, because ...
- Clarrie** Because you think I couldn't handle traipsing after you hoping to find some junior position demeaning to my super-sensitive ego.

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Dot *(Spits at him)*a Keep your voice down. If you want to make a fool of yourself, do it at home. *(CLARRIE glares at her, drinks and goes back to reading. DOT drinks, looks around and sees FANNY on her own)* Frances. Come and join us.

Clarrie *(Angry soft voice)* Not her.

Fanny *(Cold and polite - again)* No, I'll be all right. Thank you.

Dot Don't be silly. *(Pushing empty chair)* Here.

Clarrie *(More angry)* She doesn't want to.

Dot Come on. Clarrie insists. *(CLARRIE fumes)*

Fanny *(Reluctantly agrees)* Oh, if you insist. *(Brings sherry, sits next to DOT)*

Dot There you go. *(Raises her glass)* Cheers.

Fanny *(Politely raises her thimble)* Yes, cheers.

Clarrie *(Raises glass. Mumbles)* Cheers. *(More delight from the darts' team UL)*

Dot We were very sad to hear about your mother, Frances. How are you getting on?

Fanny Oh, not too bad. She went quite quickly in the end.

Dot That's always a blessing. Yes, Clarrie's mum lingered for years. It was pretty tough, wasn't it Clarrie?

Clarrie *(Through clenched teeth - he's not enjoying this)* Yes dear. Very tough.

Dot I'm sorry we didn't get to know your mother better. We all seem to be so busy these days. No time to talk, rushing everywhere.

Fanny *(Pause)* Yes, well, it can be difficult.

Dot Clarrie was just saying how we should get to know you and Lil, er Lillian, better. *(To CLARRIE)* Weren't you, Clarence?

Clarrie *(Looks up with expressionless look at DOT)* Yes dear. Absolutely.

Dot Here we are, regular drinkers in the same pub, neighbours almost and we hardly know one another. How about we get together for lunch one Sunday?

Fanny I don't think so.

Dot Nonsense. Carla's a great cook, *(Slightly softer)* when Keith lets her. *(Normal voice)* Clarence and I are always here for Sunday lunch. How about joining us?

Fanny Thank you but Lillian and I attend church on Sunday.

Dot *(Momentarily thrown)* Oh yes. I forgot.

Clarrie *(Seizes the opening)* Perhaps we could go to church, dear?

Fanny Well you'd be most welcome.

Lil *(Thrilled)* Fifty! *(BUCK delighted)* I've won! *(BUCK respectfully hugs a delighted LIL. TRIO DL turn to witness the excitement)*

Fanny *(Upset)* Lillian! Please! We're not at home now. *(Delighted, BUCK and LIL head to the bar)*

Dot Well those two have certainly broken the social barriers.

Buck *(To KEITH)* Drink for my friend, barman. The champion of champions!

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Carla *(Enters from kitchen)* Keith, za gas she no work.
Keith *(Angry)* What!?
Buck *(Ever helpful)* I'll fix it. *(Starts in behind bar)*
Keith *(Sudden move to stop him)* Hey! Where do you think you're going?
Lil *(Calling to FANNY)* Fanny. You right for another sherry?
Fanny *(Embarrassed. Replies to herself)* Lillian! Please behave.
Carla *(Worried that KEITH is violent)* Keith!
Buck Come on Carla, show me the problem. *(KEITH grabs him)* Hey!
Keith *(Manhandling BUCK)* You! Out!
Buck *(Resisting)* Hey! Watch it! Get off!
(They struggle without great violence. CARLA and LIL are concerned. CARLA grabs KEITH'S arm and tries to stop him. LIL tries to humour them apart. FANNY is shocked, rises and moves C to warn LIL. DOT senses real danger and shakes CLARRIE. Everyone becomes involved. The fight itself is a minor skirmish but it has the potential to become nasty)
Carla *(Grabbing KEITH)* No, Keith, no! Stop!
Lil *(As referee)* Time gentlemen, please.
Fanny *(Heads to C table)* Lillian! Come here!
Dot *(Stands and prods CLARRIE)* Clarrie! Get up!
Clarrie *(Annoyed)* Get lost! *(Now begins choreographed routine. BUCK and KEITH continue to tango DC. It's a "you-let-go-of-me-no-you-let-go-of-me" routine. CARLA moves RC pleading for it to stop. LILLIAN stays at bar but gets into an argument with her sister who remains C. DOT and CLARRIE have their own dispute DL. Three conflicts build in volume and tension)*
Keith *(Moving DR/DC)* Let go! *(Continues)*
Buck *(Moving with his partner)* You let go! *(Continues)*
Carla *(Upstage of door DR)* Keith! Buck! *(Continues)*
Lil *(Calling)* Nothing below the belt, boys! *(Continues)*
Fanny *(Outraged C)* Lillian! Stop that at once! *(Continues)*
Dot *(Jabbing Clarrie)* Do something! Clarrie! *(Continues)*
Clarrie *(Angry with DOT)* Mind your own business! *(Continues)* *(Continues" means ad lib. Continue in way developed. KEITH and BUCK verbally spar - neither has the guts to throw a punch. CARLA is frightened blood will flow. FANNY is outraged at LIL'S cavalier attitude. LIL, fortified by gin, is showing her true devilish colours. DOT and CLARRIE have another spat. Once CLARRIE says "Mind your own business!" start to build the tension and volume. Rehearse so that everyone is speaking [yelling/gesticulating] at once. At the climax of this furore, the DR door opens and EDWARD enters. It's an "interesting" moment. EDWARD is not sure what he's walked into. The OTHERS are embarrassed to be "sprung" and surprised that a stranger should appear. Instant silence. KEITH and BUCK are still in their cha-cha hold. Pause)*
Ed Good evening. *(OTHERS too stunned/embarrassed to reply. Pause)* Is this a public bar?

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(OTHERS break as one. DOT and CLARRIE sit at their table but stare at EDWARD. FANNY and LIL sit at their table C and stare at EDWARD. KEITH and BUCK break their embrace. KEITH heads to the bar pushing CARLA aside. BUCK moves UL to idly play darts. CARLA moves to ED)

- Carla** (Closing door) Yes, you come in. Here. (Indicates) Put your coat.
Ed (Removing coat) I thought for a minute it was a private party.
Carla No. It's no private.
Ed (Half jokes) Or maybe a gay bar.
Carla (Indicates table DR) Sorry? I no understand.
Ed (Feels obliged to explain) Well those two blokes were dancing and I thought maybe ...
Carla (Indicates DR table) No they are friends. Come. You sit here. What drink I get you?
Ed (Sitting DR) Ah, scotch please. (CARLA to bar) Double. (Sees OTHERS politely staring) Good evening. Pretty cold out there.
Dot (Raises glass to ED) Good evening.
Ed (Nods) Hello.
Lil (Raises glass to ED) Good evening.
Ed (Nods) Good evening.
Carla (Inside bar to KEITH) A scotch double please, Keith.
Keith (Goes on reading newspaper) You get it.
Buck (Soft but audible) Rat! (Hurls dart into dartboard. CARLA pours drink)
Dot (To ED) Care to join us?
Clarrie (Under his breath) No!
Ed (Rising and crossing DL) Sure. Why not? (CLARRIE looks at the fireplace in disgust. DOT pushes the empty chair out a little)
Clarrie (At the wall, soft but audible) What for?
Dot Pull up a chair.
Ed (Doing just that) Thanks.
Dot (Shakes hands) I'm Dot. (Indicates CLARRIE) This is Clarrie.
Ed (Reaching across to shake CLARRIE'S HAND) Hi. I'm Ed.
Clarrie (Keeps head in paper) They water the beer.
Ed (Sitting back) Oh. Right. Thanks. (CARLA sets off with drink)
Dot Don't mind Clarrie. He's normally much quieter. Tonight's one of his rowdy turns. (ED grins and nods. CARLA arrives with drink)
Carla One scotch for the gentleman. (Pron. gentle - man)
Ed Oh lovely, ta. (Reaching for money) How much?
Dot (Placing hand on ED'S arm) Please. It's strictly slate.
Carla You tell me your name.
Ed Ed.
Carla Ed?
Ed Yes, it's short for Edward.

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Carla Thank you Edward. You pay when you come to go. Okay?
Ed Sure. Whatever. (*CARLA departs for bar where she writes ED'S name and the cost of his drink on a slate. She then exits to kitchen*)
Dot (*Raising her glass*) Well, here's cheers.
Ed (*Toasting DOT*) Yes. Good health.
(*They drink. CLARRIE sips but keeps reading. FANNY and LIL sit quietly C, occasionally sipping drinks. BUCK moves to bar-stool RC. KEITH keeps reading behind the bar*)
Dot So what brings a stranger to a boring little place like this?
Ed Well it certainly didn't look boring when I opened the door.
Dot (*Laughing*) Oh, that! A minor altercation. Probably over some monumental issue like darts. (*Pause*) So? What brings you to our den of iniquity and boredom?
Ed (*Smiles*) Ah nothing special I'm afraid.
Dot (*Mock disappointment*) Oh no. You mean you're not an undercover narcotics agent?
Ed (*Laughing*) Hardly.
Dot How about a defrocked priest in disguise?
Ed (*Enjoying the game*) Nope. Not even warm.
Dot Okay, okay. Ah ... (*Changes tack*) You do realise you are the absolute centre of attention here right now. Everyone, *everyone* is busting to know who you are, where you're from and most importantly, what you're up to.
Clarrie (*Still reading, turning a page*) Yes, we're all incurable romantics.
Dot Oh, except Clarrie. Forget Clarrie. Everyone else has.
Clarrie (*Still reading*) Bitch.
Dot (*Back to the game*) Okay, you're a dentist passing through en route to a convention in (*Insert name of large local city*)
Ed (*Enjoying his drink and the game*) Sorry. Not even close.
Dot (*Chastising herself*) Of course, what a twit. You're a fanatical anti-sport terrorist who's just parked a car-bomb on the local football ground [pitch].
Ed (*Amused*) Very good. No. I'm nobody important. In fact I'm decidedly average. A boring, middle-of-the road nobody.
Dot (*Mock horror looking from ED to CLARRIE and back*) You mean, Clarrie's not the only one?!
(*CLARRIE drains his glass, sets off for bar. He sits on stool near KEITH, is given a fresh drink and he and KEITH mime conversation. DOT laughs*)
Ed (*Looks after CLARRIE*) I gather you two are married.
Dot Yes, but unfortunately to each other. How about you?
Ed What? Married?

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Dot Yes. *(Jumps in as ED is about to answer)* No, don't tell me. I like mystery. And don't tell me your job. I like to let my imagination run wild.

Ed *(Laughing)* Fair enough.

Dot Right now I've got you down as an undertaker.

Ed *(Amused surprise)* What!?

Dot *(Her imagination is firing)* You've just split with your company, your marriage broke up last year and you're here to make a fresh start in ... ah, advertising. That's it. Divorced undertaker turned copywriter. How am I going?

Ed Not bad.

Dot *(Genuinely excited)* Really?

Ed Well I'm certainly not an undertaker but I am in town because of a death. *(ED immediately regrets having said that. DOT is likewise annoyed at her faux pas)*

Dot Good one, Dorothy. *(To ED)* I'm sorry, Ed. Me and my big mouth.

Ed No problem. *(Changes the subject)* So what do you do?

Dot Me? I'm one of those ivory-towered academics.

Ed Really? Which area?

Dot *(Pointing finger)* Only if you promise not to laugh.

Ed *(Hand on his heart)* I promise.

Dot Would you believe human behaviour?

Ed I'm impressed.

Dot It has its moments. Especially when you meet an interesting subject. *(Looks at ED)*

Ed Me? You've got to be joking.

Dot I'm wondering why you changed the subject just now.

Ed What subject?

Dot About being here because of a death.

Ed *(Quiet)* Oh that. *(Pause)* Yes, well who wants to talk about death?

Dot Obviously not you.

Ed Hang on. Are you examining me?

Dot *(Brushing it off)* No, of course not. *(Pause)* Well, maybe just a little.

Ed Is that the same as being a little bit pregnant?

Dot *(Apologetic)* Okay. I'm sorry. It's just that you made this sudden transformation as if you'd given away some horrendous state secret or something.

Ed Can we change the subject?

Dot You shocked me.

Ed Shocked you!?

Dot Your expression, tone of voice, body language, everything suggested something ... serious.

Dead In The Morning 14

Ed Well most people would consider the death of their only brother reasonably serious.

Dot *(Ashamed)* Oh God, I'm sorry. I should have realised. Please, forgive me.

Ed *(Shrugs)* No offence.

Dot *(Pause)* Are you close? You and your brother?

Ed Not really. In fact I haven't seen him for years. But, blood being thicker and all that as they say.

Dot Has he been ill long?

Ed Two weeks. *(Changes subject again)* Now, how about a drink? What are you having?

Dot You've done it again - changed the subject.

Ed *(Abrupt)* Look if it's all the same with you, I'd rather not discuss it.

Dot I know and I'm sorry. But maybe if you did, you wouldn't be so uptight.

Ed I'm not uptight.

Dot You are, Ed. And you're mad with yourself and I can't even guess as to why.

Ed I've told you. My brother's in hospital, dying, end of story.

Dot Well if it's a terrible disease, maybe talking about it will help.

Ed I don't need any help. We weren't close. There's no grief. He'll be dead next Wednesday and I'll be gone.

Dot Next Wednesday?

Ed *(Confused)* What?

Dot You said your brother'll be dead next Wednesday.

Ed *(Confused and angry)* No. I said he *could* be dead. Look, what does it matter? Give me a break, or, more to the point, *(Louder)* mind your own bloody business.
(OTHERS turn and look DL. Awkward pause)

Keith *(Calls)* Everything okay, Dot?

Dot *(Calls back)* Yes, we're fine. Just a political debate. *(OTHERS murmur and resume their disinterest. DOT speaks more quietly to ED)* I'm sorry. My fault. *(Pause)* I will have that drink now.

Ed *(Taking her glass)* Okay. What'll it be?

Dot Brandy and dry, please.

Ed *(Rising)* Brandy and dry it is.

Dot *(Putting hand on his arm)* Can you tell me one thing? *(Pause. ED is not pleased)* What's wrong with your brother?

Ed *(Annoyed, blurts it out)* He's got a broken leg. All right?
(DOT is stunned and removes her hand. ED moves to the bar. DOT thinks for a second then sees red)

Dot *(Loud)* A broken leg!?! *(DOT rises, throws back her chair which sprawls upstage. She's wild. EVERYONE is in shock)* Listen Turkey, that is not funny!

Dead In The Morning 15

Clarrie Dorothy! What's going on?
Dot *(Threatening, moving to ED)* I can handle being taken for a ride but not some pathetic, juvenile joke about the dead.
Ed Hey! *(She's almost at him)* Take it easy.
Dot *(In rage appears to lunge at him)* You're sick! You know that? Sick!
(ED'S in trouble. He has a glass in each hand. He lurches upstage to avoid the angry DOT. ED falls awkwardly against LIL'S table knocking LIL to the floor. FANNY helps her sister. Everyone gets involved. CLARRIE restrains DOT. BUCK goes for CLARRIE thinking he's too harsh. CARLA and KEITH both try to exit from the bar at the same time but can't get through. They fight each other. Much of the following dialogue overlaps)
Dot You're sick! *(Continues attacking ED)* You know that! You're sick!
Ed Get off! Hey! Stop it! *(Continues defending himself)*
Fanny Lillian! Lillian are you all right? *(Helps her sister)*
Clarrie Dorothy! Are you mad? Stop it! *(Still restraining DOT)* Stop it!
Buck *(Grabbing CLARRIE)* Hey, easy! Not like that! *(Continues in melee)*
Keith *(Stuck at bar entrance with CARLA)* Look out! Get out of the way! *(He shoves CARLA who lurches forward DR and falls, screaming in fright and pain. BUCK, seeing this, leaves CLARRIE and goes to help CARLA)*
Buck Carla. *(Tenderly helps her to chair DR)* You okay?
Keith *(Grabbing ED)* Right you, that's enough.
Ed *(Has escaped DOT but not KEITH)* Ow, that hurts.
Keith Behave yourself. *(ED still in pain)* Now cool it!
(ED nods. CLARRIE draws DOT LC and FANNY helps LIL to chair DL)
Ed Okay, okay. I'm sorry.
Keith *(Frogmarching ED DC, KEITH is facing DL)* You come in 'ere, wreck my pub, attack my customers.
Ed It wasn't me. She started it. And I said I'm sorry.
Buck *(Suddenly angry at KEITH)* Hey! *(EVERYONE turns DR. BUCK points at KEITH)* You pushed Carla deliberately.
Keith *(Snaps at BUCK)* Keep out of it you little punk!
Buck *(Advances DC threateningly)* You wanna push someone, push me.
Carla *(Frightened)* No! Stop!
(KEITH releases ED and faces BUCK. The two confront each other DC. They pause waiting for the other to strike the first blow. ED moves upstage to C then suddenly races for the door DR. He exits into the night)
Clarrie *(Shouting)* He's getting away!
(This momentarily stops challenge DC. CARLA rises and goes to KEITH)
Carla Keith, please. You must stop doing these things.
(The woman's touch has a calming influence. The men's anger diminishes. But to save face, both make macho threatening gestures)
Keith *(To BUCK)* You. Watch it.
Buck *(My ego's just as big as your ego)* You watch it.

Dead In The Morning 16

Carla *(Indicating C)* Keith, look. Lillian has been hurt.
(KEITH leads the trio DL. FANNY is comforting LIL)

Keith Lil? You okay?

Fanny *(Emotional)* She fell when that man attacked us. She hit her head.
(CLARRIE and DOT move to see what has happened)

Buck Get a doctor.

Keith *(To BUCK)* You keep out of it.

Carla *(Fussing over DOT)* Is okay, Lillian. Everything will be good.

Clarrie Is she all right?

Dot *(Upset)* It's all my fault. I'm really very sorry.

Keith *(To CARLA)* Get her a brandy. *(CARLA departs for bar)* Take it easy, Lil.
We're getting you a brandy.

Lil *(Sways, is supported)* Oh. *(She coughs. It looks bad)*

Fanny Be still, Lillian. They're fetching you a cup of tea.

Lil *(Doesn't hear)* What?

Keith *(Louder)* We're getting you a brandy, Lil.

Lil Oh. *(The old LIL speaks)* Make it a double.
(The OTHERS smile, breathe deeply. They had been worried. FANNY still is and comforts her sister)

Clarrie That's more like it, Lil. You had us worried for a minute.

Dot I'm really very sorry, Lil.

Lil What for? No harm done. *(To KEITH)* Is the brandy on the house?
(She winks at OTHERS. EVERYONE laughs. Even KEITH. The group tease LIL and mime their relief and happiness at her recovery. The door DR opens slowly and a wetter ED peers inside. He sees the group C and takes the opportunity to sneak inside to get his coat from the stand RC. CARLA is behind the bar UR pouring a double brandy. She turns and sees ED)

Carla It's the man! *(ED panics. He grabs his coat but it won't come free. The OTHERS turn when CARLA calls. BUCK and KEITH move to ED who leaves his coat and heads upstage as the DR exit is blocked. CARLA is distressed that more violence will ensue)*

Keith *(Angry)* Hey you! Come 'ere!

Carla *(Distressed)* Keith! No!
(ED is upstage in fright. BUCK approaches him followed by KEITH)

Buck Righto mate. You've had it. *(BUCK starts advancing slowly towards ED who freezes C. DOT pushes CLARRIE)*

Dot Clarrie, do something.

Clarrie You do something. *(Suddenly BUCK races towards ED who tips a chair in BUCK'S path causing him to sprawl. CARLA screams more in fright as BUCK trips and lands on top of KEITH. The chaps make a lovely couple)*

Keith *(In pain as BUCK lands on him)* Ow! Get off! *(etc)*

Dead In The Morning 17

(Continues muttering, is helped by CARLA. BUCK rises, heads towards ED who looks for way to escape. Suddenly ED races over and grabs a dart. He threatens BUCK who stops)

Buck You'll need more 'an dat, mate. *(BUCK moves slowly to ED who raises a dart to throw it at BUCK. OTHERS spellbound. Suddenly BUCK roars and lunges at ED who sidesteps. BUCK crashes to the floor. ED hurls dart into dartboard, turns and in panic races into ladies' loo. BUCK leaps up and crashes against the door. It's locked. BUCK hammers on the door)*

Buck *(Hammering)* Open the door! Hey you! Open the door!

Keith Stop that! Buck! *(BUCK stops hammering)*

Buck 'e's locked the door.

Keith And you're wreckin' it. *(Going to bar)* Leave it. I'll call the cops.

Dot *(Anxious, crossing to bar)* No, Keith. Not the police.

Keith *(Inside bar, picks up phone)* He's a nutter. And he could be armed. *(Others distressed. DOT pleads)*

Dot Keith, he's not armed and he's not dangerous. I started it. It's *my* fault. *(Louder)* Keith!

(KEITH has phone to his ear, pauses, looks at DOT across the bar and slowly replaces the receiver)

Clarrie *(Sarcastic from DL)* Brilliant Dorothy, absolutely brilliant. Now what do we do?

Dot *(To KEITH)* Let me talk to him.

Keith He's mad. The bloke's a loony.

Dot Five minutes. If I can't talk him out, you call the police.

Keith *(Pause. Nods)* Okay. Five minutes. *(DOT heads upstage. BUCK is shooed away LC by DOT. CARLA replaces chair and goes UC to support DOT. Others watch intently. Pause)*

Dot *(Knocks softly)* Ed. *(Pause)* Ed it's me. Dorothy. The woman you were sitting with in the corner. The one who ... *(Make sure ED can be heard when he is out of sight upstage)*

Ed *(From inside toilet)* I know who you are. *(Relief from OTHERS)*

Dot Ed, it's okay. No-one's going to hurt you.

Ed Yeah? Well you could've fooled me.

Dot It's all a misunderstanding. I got upset when I thought you were ridiculing the dead and I was wrong.

Ed You got upset! I could've been *killed!*

Dot Yes I know and I'm terribly sorry. It's just that the others thought you'd done something ... ungentlemanly and ...

Ed What? To you?

Dot Yes.

Ed *(He means he is totally innocent)* You've gotta be joking.

(DOT miffed at remark and failure of her pleas. CLARRIE mildly amused)

Dot Please Edward.

Dead In The Morning 18

Ed This has got to be a night to remember. I drop in for a quick drink and finish in the ladies' loo hiding from a bunch of pathological fruit-cakes.

Keith *(Lifts receiver)* That's it. I'm calling the cops.

Dot *(Angry at KEITH)* No Keith! You agreed on five minutes.

Keith *(Gruff)* Right, you've got three. And I'm counting.
(Slams down phone)

Dot *(Back to door)* Ed, no-one's wants to hurt you. I told you, it's all a misunderstanding.

Ed Is this an episode of *Candid Camera*?
(Or other well-known TV surprise show)

Dot I wish it were. Look Ed, you've got to trust me. Please come out and I promise, no-one will hurt you.

Ed How about you call the police? I'd feel safer with them around.

Keith *(Grabs phone)* Right, he asked for it.

Carla No, Keith!

Dot Keith, if he wants the cops, he can't have done much wrong. *(KEITH again pauses)*

Carla Maybe you have trouble with licence. The police catch you before serving after hours drinks and ...

Keith *(Snaps at her, replaces phone)* Yes all right. I know what I'm doing.

Dot *(Beckons to CARLA who moves to her)* Carla. Here.
(The women converse briefly in whispers. CARLA speaks to door)

Carla Excuse me, man.

Dot *(To CARLA)* Ed. Call him Ed.

Carla *(To ED)* Man Ed. *(DOT despairs)*

Carla *(Mildly)* I am Carla. I tell you everything is okay. Dorothy tells the troot.
(sic) You come out and everything will be fine.

Dot *(Pause)* Ed? That's two of us. Two women. You can trust us.

Ed It's not the women I'm afraid of.

Dot *(Despairing)* Look, I'll come in and ...

Clarrie No!

Dot *(To hubby)* Clarrie, stay out of it.

Clarrie You're not going in there. *(He moves towards C)*

Dot This is very touching, Clarence. I never realised *gallant* was part of your vocabulary.

Clarrie It's not. I just don't want my wife mixed up in some sordid little squabble.

Dot Oh, of course. "Scandal ruins career of mediocre academic."

Clarrie *(Gives as good as he gets)* On second thoughts, you *can* go inside.

Keith Hey righto you two! That's enough.
(DOT and CLARRIE glare at one another. CLARRIE retreats LC. SUDDENLY LIL points upstage)

Dead In The Morning 19

Lil Look! (EVERYONE looks as the door to the Ladies opens slowly. BUCK starts to move but is stopped by a sharp cry from DOT)

Dot Buck! Stay there! (Pause. Softer) It's okay Ed. Please.
(Pause. Slowly the door opens and ED looks out. No-one is near the door. He feels slightly more comfortable but is still wary. DOT moves slowly towards him extending her hand)

Dot It's okay. No-one will hurt you. (She pauses just near him) See? Even Buck has turned pacifist.

Buck (Doesn't understand) Wot? Wot's a fasist? (sick sic)

Dot (Takes ED'S hand gently) No-one will hurt you. Least of all me. Come and sit down. (ED is still wary. He withdraws his hand)

Ed If it's all the same, I think I'd rather leave.

Dot (Upset) No, please. Don't go.

Keith Let 'im go.

Dot Ed, it's my fault you were attacked. My fault. I caused this cock-up. And I'm going to make sure you get a decent apology and as much free grog as you want. (Takes his hand and drags him C to chair) Now come on. You're my guest.

Ed It's not necessary.

Dot (Shoving him onto chair and sitting next to him) Too right it is. (To KEITH) Keith. Champagne. Real champagne.

Clarrie Dorothy!

Dot Go home, Clarence. Go anywhere.

Clarrie (Glares at her. Soft with venom) You can't help yourself, can you?
(CLARRIE moves to fireplace. BUCK comes down and joins him. They mime discussion of the situation agreeing that ED is dangerous)

Dot (Calling at KEITH but looking at ED) Come on Keith, where's that champagne?

Keith Who's payin'?

Dot I'm paying. (Takes purse from handbag) Here. Cash. Folding stuff.
(KEITH exits to kitchen [cellar] for champagne. CARLA goes behind bar and places glasses on tray)

Ed Really. There's no need for this.

Dot Oh yes there is. An injustice has been committed. A wrong must be righted. (To women DL) You too ladies.

Fanny Thank you but we have to leave.

Lil Like hell we do. (FANNY shocked) Very kind of you Dot.

Dot (To women) Bring yourselves over here. Come on.

Ed (Stands) Look I really must be going.

Dot (Pushing him back onto chair) For the last time, sit down. You're my guest. (FANNY and LIL have arrived. FANNY being shoved by LIL) Our guest. And we three ladies are going to show you a good time. Right girls?

Dead In The Morning 20

Lil *(Delighted)* Too right. 'Specially with some free bubbly.

Fanny I don't think we can stay.

Ed *(To LIL)* I'm terribly sorry if I frightened you before. I certainly didn't mean to.

Lil Course you didn't, love. No 'arm done.

Dot *(Calling)* Come on, Keith. Where's that champagne?

Keith *(Enters from kitchen)* It's not cold. I haven't got any that's chilled.

Ed *(Joking, soft)* Take it outside.

Carla I make it in some ice.

Dot Not good enough, Keith. You know I always order French champagne.

Keith *(Sucked in)* Garbage! You've had twice at Christmas.

Dot It's a joke, landlord. Look, give us another round of the usual. *(To OTHERS)* Okay? *(OTHERS nod)*

Lil Ooo lovely, yes please.

Ed That'll be fine.

Fanny I've had enough thank you.

Dot *(Calling)* Same again, Keith and your very best sweet sherry for Frances. *(FANNY is flustered. She doesn't know how to object)*

Keith *(Grumbling getting drinks)* Wish you'd make up your mind. *(CARLA exits to kitchen)*

Dot *(Back to ED)* Now, kind sir. Let us to the bottom get.

Ed Actually I'd rather we changed the subject. Let's talk about something safe like politics or religion.

Lil *(Scoffs)* Politics!

Fanny *(Serious - as usual)* We never discuss religion.

Ed *(Groans)* I can't open m'mouth without offending someone.

Dot *(Laughing)* Right. Fresh start. *(Extends hand. ED responds catching the joke)* I'm Dot.

Ed Ed.

Dot And this is Lil and Fanny, er, Frances.

Lil *(Nods and enjoys the joke)* Hello. *(FANNY frowns and remains passive)*

Dot So you're a stranger in town?

Ed *(Much happier now and enjoying the game)* Sure am. *(Cowboy accent)* Jist passin' through. *(KEITH brings drinks on tray to table)*

Keith 'ere's y'drinks.

Dot *(Passing them round)* Ah, lovely. Sweet sherry, Frances.

Fanny *(Polite)* Thank you. *(OTHERS take their drinks)*

Dot My slate, Keith.

Keith What? All of 'em?

Dot That's right. Oh, and next time have the champers on ice, please. *(KEITH scowls and crosses to BUCK and CLARRIE. He takes their orders, joins in their smug asides at ED and the others, then crosses to bar to prepare more drinks)*

Dead In The Morning 21

Lil *(Raising her glass)* Well, here's cheers. *(OTHERS raise their glasses)*
Dot Yes, good health. *(They drink)* And especially your brother. *(ED chokes on his drink. DOT could kick herself)* Sorry.

Lil *(Concerned)* Oh, is your brother not well?
Dot He's got a broken leg. Nothing serious.
Fanny I think a broken leg is very serious.
Dot Exactly. *(Changing the subject)* So where are you from, Ed?
Lil My Tom 'ad a broken leg, once. In two places it was.
Fanny Three.
Lil Was it? Oh yes, so it was.
Fanny Mother had a broken hip before she died. *(DOT and ED have lost control of the situation. The sisters unwittingly broach the old subject)*

Lil But she didn't die of that. You can't die from a broken hip or a broken leg.
Ed *(Pause)* No. That's right.
Lil So don't worry. Your brother's not going to die. *(Pause. Sisters have run out of conversation. ED and DOT are reluctant to speak)*

Dot *(Softly)* I seem to remember this conversation somewhere else.
Ed *(Likewise serious)* Likewise.
Lil Sorry. Did you say something? *(Next two speeches spoken simultaneously. DOT wants to change the subject)*

(Dot) No.
(Ed) Yes.
Lil *(Amused)* Oo, isn't that funny. I always think people have somethin' to hide when that 'appens.

Ed So much for the mouths of babes and sucklings.
Lil *(Enjoying ED'S conversation even if not understanding)* Pardon?
Dot It's nothing, Lil. The kafuffle before happened because I stuck my nose in where it didn't belong and ...

Ed Both of us are now trying desperately to avoid the previous subject.
Lil Oh. I see. *(Pause)* What previous subject?
Fanny Lillian, it's none of our business.
Ed Look, let's get this out in the open.
Dot No! *(Softer)* I don't want any trouble.
Ed *(To the SISTERS)* Tell me ladies, do either of you believe in the stars?
Fanny Certainly not. I'm a Christian.
Lil Wotcha mean, 'oroscopes?
Ed Yes. Telling the future, that sort of thing.
Lil Well I used to till they started sayin' I was goin' to meet some handsome stranger. I mean, even if I did, what would I do wiv 'im?

Fanny *(Annoyed)* Lillian.
Dot *(Amused)* Well you could give him to me.

Dead In The Morning 22

- (DOT and LIL shriek with laughter. ED amused. FANNY mortified. BUCK and CLARRIE cross to bar-stools UC and drink. They deride the cackling at the table C)
- Ed** (After teasing settles) The reason I ask is because I've had some ... experiences.
- Lil** (Interested) Oo, really? (Holds out hand) 'ere, read my palm.
- Fanny** Lillian!
- Ed** Not that sort of thing.
- Dot** Are you sure about this?
- Ed** No, but I've gone this far I may as well continue
- Dot** Is this about the business of your brother dying? (Sisters shocked)
- Lil** Dying! I thought 'e only 'ad a broken leg.
- Fanny** I'm so sorry. Please accept my sympathy.
- Ed** No, really. He only has a broken leg. (Sisters puzzled)
- Dot** Careful. This is where we got into trouble.
- Ed** I know. But I've got to explain. And please, no interruptions.
- Dot** (Pause) You're the boss. (The SISTERS are hooked)
- Ed** When I was a kid, a friend told me he'd like to know when he would die.
- Lil** We'd all like to know that. (ED is quietly annoyed)
- Dot** (Finger to lips) Lil. Shhh.
- Lil** (Realises) Sorry.
- Ed** (Pause) He didn't say, "I'll live to a hundred" or "I'll die when I'm really old". He said, (Slowly, deliberately) "I'd like to know the date of my death"
- Fanny** Come on. Lillian. We have to go.
(FANNY starts to rise but is quickly put back on her chair by LIL'S strong hand. LIL is hooked on ED'S discourse and doesn't even look at FANNY when she grabs her arm)
- Ed** (As if uninterrupted, he's re-living it all) Straightaway I had this vision like a dream-scene in a movie. It was a date. A clear, definite date. I felt cold, weird. My friend was still babbling away. Suddenly I blurted out, "How does May the third next year sound?" (ED is re-living the experience and it's pretty powerful) My god, I'll never forget it. His question and that date.
- Dot** And so May three came round and what happened?
- Lil** (Complete believer. Gasps) He died.
(BUCK and CLARRIE drink upstage. They continue their disinterest in the OTHERS. KEITH goes back to his newspaper)
- Fanny** Lillian, don't be ridiculous.
- Ed** He got some bug in March that year, went into a coma and died peacefully and without pain.
- Dot** On May the third?
- Ed** On May the third.

Lil (In awe) That's fantastic!
Dot And so broken-legged brother is about to cop your magic forecast next Wednesday?
Ed (Becoming irritated, distressed) I don't know.
Dot Oh so it doesn't always work?
Ed We had a family reunion last year. I hadn't seen my brother for twelve years. We got chatting. He said the same thing. "I'd like to know the date of my death." Straightaway, another vision. Another date. (Slowly but strongly. Here you must insert the date which will occur next Wednesday.) (Day of the week) the (number) of (month) a (the year).
Lil (Astounded) Next Wednesday! (If it's tomorrow, change to "That's tomorrow")
Fanny (Angry) This is ridiculous! I've never heard such nonsense.
Dot (Still undecided) So this vision thing has occurred twice?
Ed (Nodding) Twice.
Lil (Hooked) My goodness! That's incredible!
Fanny Lillian! Can't you see they're playing a game?
Dot I wish we were. (FANNY silenced and worried)
Ed Each time someone asked me that question, I had a vision. The first was correct. Exactly correct.
Dot And brother in hospital is number two? (ED nods) With a use-by date of next Wednesday?
Ed (Suddenly puts head in hands) I don't want it to happen. I don't know why it happens. But it does! (ED despairs. LIL comforts him. FANNY draws back. DOT believes ED is sincere)
Lil There now, don't upset yourself.
Dot Ed, listen to me. You need professional advice.
Ed What? To say I'm a witch-doctor?
Dot To help you. There's got to be a logical explanation.
Ed (Distressed) Yes. I'm possessed.
(ED, almost sobbing, buries his face in his hands. He is genuinely upset)
Lil Come on, Ed. It's okay.
Fanny Lillian. It's time we went home. (FANNY is ignored)
Dot (Also comforts ED) Ed, sit up. Sit up.
(DOT and LIL have their hands on ED trying to make him sit up and stop being upset. CLARRIE looks across, sees what's going on and calls)
Clarrie Hey! (BUCK turns, KEITH looks up from his newspaper at the bar)
Dot (Still comforting ED) We all have dreams.
Clarrie (Rising, heads C) Dorothy!
Dot (At CLARRIE) Get lost, Clarrie.
Buck (Also heads C) I'll help ya, mate.
Keith (Worried, calls) Hey! What's goin' on?

Dead In The Morning 24

(KEITH comes out from behind the bar. CARLA enters from kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. She looks grimy, she's scrubbing something)

Clarrie (At C) What do you think you're doing?
Dot (Confronts CLARRIE) Mind your own business.
Buck 'e been pesterin' you ladies? (BUCK threatens ED)
Keith (Comes between warring factions) Right, that's enough!
Fanny We're going, Lillian.
Lil (Again grabs FANNY) Sit. (LIL has FANNY under control)
Clarrie What's with the hands all over the stranger?
Dot Why? Are you jealous?
Clarrie (Points finger at DOT) Just behave yourself.
Keith Right, I've 'ad enough. (To ED) You. Out!
Carla (Calls from bar, distressed) No, Keith! Please!
Dot Why? Clarrie's the aggressor and you want Ed to leave.
Buck 'e was accostin' the women.
Dot Aw go and play darts, Buck. And take Mister Mediocre with you.
Clarrie (Venom) That's right, flaunt it.
Keith I said that's enough. Clarrie, back off.
(CLARRIE glares at KEITH, glares at DOT then retires to play darts UL)
Clarrie Come on, Buck. Leave them.
Buck (Points threatening finger at ED) You'll keep, pal. (BUCK joins CLARRIE. They mime their disgust with OTHERS as they play darts UL)
Keith You've been a damn nuisance ever since you got 'ere. What is it wiv you?
Dot It's not his fault.
Keith I don't want no trouble. (CARLA leaves bar crossing to C)
Carla Is everything fine, Keith?
Keith (Turns, angry at CARLA) It's nuthin'. Get back to work.
Dot Keith, she's only interested in your welfare.
Keith (Has never liked DOT) You mind your own business.
Dot It is my business when a friend is treated like dirt. And by her own husband.
Carla Dot, please.
Keith (Furious with everyone. At DOT) You can leave too. Now.
Clarrie (Is distracted and comes down) What's going on?
Fanny (Again tries to get up) Lillian!
Lil (Again stops her sister) Sit!
Dot (Deriding CLARRIE) Ah, Sir Lancelot.
Keith (To CLARRIE) Take your wife and get out.
Clarrie What!?
Carla Keith!
Dot Back to your beer, Clarence.

Clarrie Don't tell me what to do!
Keith Get her out of here!
Dot He doesn't own me! *(And so the tussle develops. KEITH is threatening DOT and ordering CLARRIE. DOT is denigrating CLARRIE and chastising KEITH. CLARRIE is reprimanding KEITH and abusing/defending DOT. ED despairs. FANNY is shocked and LIL loves it. CARLA is near to hysteria)*

Clarrie *(To DOT)* You keep out of it.
Buck *(Coming down)* 'ook 'im, Clarrie, 'ook 'im!!
Carla Buck! No! *(She goes to BUCK and restrains him)*
Keith *(Now furious with BUCK)* Hey! Right that's it. Everyone out!
Others *(Surprise, anger)* What!?
Keith *(Striding to door DR)* Get your coats and clear out. The lot of you!
(BLACKOUT. The storm has brought down the power-lines nearby and the pub is plunged into darkness. OTHERS scream, yell, comment. It's a shock heightened by the tension of the time. The pub takes on an eerie glow as the fire DL is the only source of light)

Buck 'ey! Wot 'appened?
Keith Keep still. Nobody move.
Clarrie The power's gone.
Dot Brilliant.
Carla *(Crossing to bar)* I will bring lanterns. *(She exits to kitchen)*
Keith Just one. They're all leavin'. *(OTHERS protest)*
Clarrie We can't go out in that.
Keith I'm closin'. When the pub closes, the customers leave.
Buck You gunna make Lil and Fanny walk 'ome in this weffa?
Lil We'll be all right.
Dot Keith. If I apologise will you reconsider?
Keith *(Pause. He doesn't know how to back-down)* a It's gettin' late.
Carla *(Enters with gas lantern, the type used by campers)* Here. I have one.
Buck Give it 'ere. *(BUCK lights and places it on table DR. The room is lit accordingly. Relief all round)*

Clarrie How about we ring the SEC? *[Name local electricity authority]*
Keith *(Heads to bar and telephone)* I'll do it.
Clarrie *(Wanders to fireplace)* Lil, Fanny. Come and warm yourselves.
Lil Good idea. Come on Fanny.
(LIL leads reluctant FANNY to table DL)

Clarrie You know what they say. It never rains but it pours.
Carla I see if there is more lanterns. *(She exits to bar and kitchen)*
Buck You be careful. *(BUCK wanders RC and props on corner bar-stool)*
Fanny I'm worried about Cleopatra.
Lil She'll be fine.
Fanny But I told her we'd be home by ten.

Dot *(Quietly to ED)* Cleopatra's the cat. *(ED nods)*
Lil She'll be fine. Stop worrying.
Keith *(Imitating electricity official)* We are working on the fault, sir and hope to resume services within the hour. *(Others react)*
Others The hour! ... What!?! ... We'll be here all night! *(etc)*
Dot *(Calling)* Does that mean we poor travellers can stay awhile, landlord?
Keith *(Grumbles)* Do what you like. I'm goin' to bed.
(Hubbub. KEITH exits to kitchen colliding with CARLA who enters bar)
Carla Oh Keith. We run out of lanterns.
Keith *(Brushing past her)* Stiff. Sit in the dark! *(Exits)*
Carla *(Calling)* Please Keith. Mind the bucket and mop!
(Sound effects of KEITH kicking the bucket [!] using appropriate language off-stage. CARLA exits distressed. OTHERS amused or concerned)
Buck *(Applauding)* 'ey! Go Keif.
Clarrie *(From fireplace)* Couldn't have happened to a nicer bloke [guy].
Fanny Do you think she'll be all right?
Dot Don't you worry about Carla. She can look after herself.
Fanny Not Carla. Cleopatra. *(OTHERS amused)*
Lil Will you stop worrying about that bloody cat!
(FANNY mortified at the reprimand and the language. CARLA enters bar)
Buck Carla. You okay?
Carla Yes, Buck. I am good. *(She moves C)*
Dot Over here. Have a seat
Clarrie How's the landlord? Bruised I hope?
Carla *(Sitting C)* He is good too. Just maybe a little bit angry.
Buck 'e 'asn't really gone to bed?
Carla I think so.
Buck *(Goes to bar)* Right, ladies and gentlemen. Name your poison.
Dot *(Polite reprimand)* Buck! Don't be an idiot.
Buck *(Checking what's available)* Let's see. You can 'ave cherry brandy, cognac, vodka, whisky ...
Clarrie Keith'll kill you, son. Come out of it.
Buck *(Enjoying his role)* Hey, tequila! I've always wanted to try dis. *(Pours a drink)*
Dot *(To CARLA)* You get him. He'll listen to you. *(CARLA nods, goes to bar. She gently leads BUCK from the bar back C. He retrieves his drink)*
Ed So is this a typical night at the local?
Dot Oh absolutely. Quite routine. Fanny'll have her sherry, Lil her gin. *(DOT rises and leads ED DL)* Clarrie and I'll argue over some petty issue. *(DOT, still talking, brings ED DL where they sit with FANNY and LIL)* Buck will play darts and our hero, Keith, will again nominate for title of *Landlord Most Likely To Offend*.

Lil *(Making room for them)* Come round 'ere, near the fire.

Clarrie *(Calls to CARLA and BUCK)* Hey, you two. Come and join the party.
(BUCK and CARLA cross and join the OTHERS. BUCK drags up a chair for CARLA. BUCK stands behind her sipping his tequila)

Dot So how's the tequila?

Buck Triffic. Want one?

Dot *(Laughing)* No. And stay away from that bar. You know what Keith's like.

Buck Stupid git. Any'ow, 'e's tucked up in bed.

Lil Which is where we should be. We'll drown goin' 'ome in this.

Clarrie Never fear, ladies. I'm sure our visitor here has a reliable vehicle. And I'm sure he can be trusted to do the right thing.

Dot Give it a rest, Clarrie.

Clarrie I mean all he's done so far is cause a minor riot, offend half the patrons and hide in the ladies' loo. Faultless credentials wouldn't you say?

Buck Wot's 'e on about?

Clarrie Mind you having to endure my dear wife's company would drive any man to a public convenience.

Dot *(Angry)* Clarrie!

Clarrie But why the ladies I wonder? I mean does the man have a fear of urinals? Is he a victim of the pan personality?

Dot Careful, Clarrie. You're dealing with a psychic.

Ed *(Angry)* Aw don't start that.

Clarrie *(Heavy sarcasm)* A psychic! This is fantastic.

Ed Thanks a lot, Dorothy. That's all I need.

Clarrie And what is your area of expertise? Communication beyond the veil? Clairvoyance? Astrology? Or how about water divining?

Ed And to think I wanted a quiet ale in a quiet pub.

Dot Ignore him.

Carla I am interested in astrology.

Ed Yes well I'm not. Never have been, never will be. Look, I'm a merchant banker. I'm married. One and a half kids. I'm normal. Or I was ... till I stumbled in here.

Buck *(Offended)* Just watch it, mate.

Dot *(Wearied at BUCK'S childish behaviour)* Buck.

Carla I am sorry for saying the wrong thing. I thought that Dorothy said you were perhaps someone who could tell the future.

Ed *(Slightly ashamed at his outburst)* I can't tell the future. Not like you mean, anyway. I ... *(Exasperated)* Look, just forget it.

Fanny I'm not afraid of dying. *(OTHERS stunned)* That's what you're talking about, isn't it?

Lil *(Her turn to be shocked)* Frances!

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- Fanny** *(Won't be stopped)* My faith is important. The mystery of death and life beyond the grave is not to be feared. Faith is the answer.
- Ed** Of course it is.
- Clarrie** Oh so you're also a priest?
- Ed** *(Decides to set CLARRIE straight)* No, definitely not. But I have experienced times when I saw dates, times when people would die. It's only happened twice. The first time I was spot on. The second vision concerns my brother, here in your local hospital.
- Lil** The one wiv the broken leg?
- Ed** *(Nods)* According to my vision, he'll die next Wednesday.
(Gasps from OTHERS)
- Carla** I know this is true. I believe.
- Clarrie** *(Moving upstage)* Okay, Mister Telepathy. How many fingers? *(CLARRIE stands behind E, gives a V for Victory signal with two fingers)*
- Dot** It's hard to believe that man's an academic. *(CLARRIE is ignored by ED and his sarcasm turns to scorn. He drifts back to the fire)*
- Lil** *(Excited to ED)* Do y'know what'll win at the races next week? *(ED puts his head in his hands. It's getting out of hand)*

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