

## **ROUND ONE - The murder is announced**

Round Instructions:

Before Round One begins, all the cast except Nicolas Bottomley should have been circulating (in character) with the guests.

If the guests do meet in a separate room then allow one of the hotel staff to call them through for dinner.

While the guests are seated Emma should find a guest, near the area they plan to use when Eleanor is brought in, to catch her should she faint. She should not explicitly say she will faint, but hint to the guest that she isn't fond of surprises as they make her dizzy and that she hopes her father hasn't planned anything as she might need someone strong to catch her, and then suggest that he might be just such a man.

Once everyone is seated Nicolas Bottomley should enter, dressed in his coat and hat, perhaps a scarf too, looking as though he has just come from outside the house.

## **ROUND ONE SCRIPT**

MAKE SURE ALL THE GUESTS ARE SEATED BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

JOHN SHOULD MAKE SURE HE HAS LEFT A SMALL GLASS OF WATER ON A GUEST'S TABLE READY FOR LATER IN THE SCENE.

THE CAST SHOULD REMAIN STANDING BESIDE THEIR SEATS. JOHN ADDRESSES THE GUESTS.

**John:** Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you all for coming to help me to celebrate my darling daughter Emma's twenty-first birthday. Before we proceed with the festivities and the food, I would first like to propose a toast. [RAISES A GLASS]

NICOLAS BOTTOMLEY DASHES IN SHUCKING HIS COAT AND HAT

**John:** Goodness man! I thought you were going to miss it!

**Nicolas:** Emma's twenty-first! Not a chance.

**John:** [SHOUT] Oddfellow! Where is that infernal man? [SHOUT] Oddfellow? Did you see him on your way in?

**Nicolas:** No. Perhaps I should just -

**John:** No! That's why we pay a butler Bottomley. [SHOUT] Oddfellow?

**Emma:** [CALMLY TAKES COAT AND HAT] Here.

**Eleanor:** No Emma, it's your birthday. I'll do it.

ELEANOR TAKES THE HAT AND COAT.

**Emma:** Oh, you are a dear.

**Eleanor:** Nonsense.

ELEANOR LEAVES THE ROOM.

**John:** [RAISES GLASS AGAIN] As I was saying...

JOHN IS INTERRUPTED BY A LOUD SCREAM FROM ELEANOR OUTSIDE.

**John:** Hells bells! Whatever is the matter?

**Larcey:**(CONCERNED) That sounded like Eleanor!

LARCEY RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM.

**Nicolas:** Well I'll say this for him, the man can *move*.

**John:** Now, now Bottomley, just because you aren't the outdoor type. Brawns and brain do go hand in hand sometimes.

**Nicolas:** If you say so.

LARCEY ENTERS ROOM CARRYING (OR DRAGGING DEPENDING ON WHAT HE CAN MANAGE) A FAINTED ELEANOR. HE LOWERS HER TO THE FLOOR AND ALL THE CAST RUSH OVER. EMMA BENDS DOWN TO TEND TO HER AND THEN STANDS UP AT SOME POINT DURING THE EXCHANGE READY FOR HER OWN FAINT.

**Emma:** Eleanor!

**John:** Mr Larcey! What is the meaning of this?

**Larcey:**She... er... I just found her Mr Bleakwood.

**Nicolas:** Found her?

**Larcey:**By the body.

**John:** The body?

**Larcey:**The dead body.

**Nicolas:** The *dead* body?

**Larcey:** The dead body.

**John:** [INCREDULOUSLY SHOUTING] Dead body?

**Larcey:** Dead body. It's the –

EMMA FAINTS ONTO THE PRE-ARRANGED PERSON. NICOLAS RUSHES OVER TO EMMA.

**Nicolas:** My goodness man, didn't you think about the ladies in the room?

**Larcey:** I, er, well...

**John:** Well then, while she's out... I believe you said something about a dead body?

**Larcey:** It's the butler.

**John:** Oddfellow?

**Larcey:** That's the man.

**John:** What about him?

**Larcey:** He's dead.

**John:** You mean... Oddfellow is dead?

**Larcey:** Yes sir.

**John:** And there was me thinking I'd have to berate him most severely when I – ...where *is* he exactly?

**Larcey:** In the library sir.

**John:** Well, he can't stay there!

**Larcey:** No sir. Would you...er... like me to move him?

**John:** Would I like...? Of course I would! This is *my house*! I can't have dead bodies lying around, especially not in the middle of a – [TURNS TO NICOLAS] I say, how is she?

**Nicolas:** As well as can be expected.

**John:** Well then, leave her there Bottomley and go and help Larcey move Oddfellow before any other female wanders in and creates a scene.

NICOLAS AND LARCEY GLANCE WORRIEDLY AT THEIR FEMALE CHARGES AND THEN LEAVE THE ROOM. JOHN BLEAKWOOD WALKS OVER TO THE PERSON HOLDING ONTO EMMA.

**John:** [TO GUEST] Many thanks old bean. You've obviously got good reflexes. [TO EMMA] Emma darling? Emma?

JOHN PATS EMMA ON THE CHEEK TO ROUSE HER. SHE COMES ROUND SLOWLY.

**Emma:** Ohhh. Father?

**John:** Yes dear?

**Emma:** Is that you?

**John:** [BRUSQUELY] Of course it's me you ninny! I've sent Larcey and Bottomley to deal with the body.

**Emma:** The body! Ohhh...

EMMA FAINTS AGAIN.

**John:** Women! [TO GUEST] Just keep a hold of her will you? She'll come round I'm sure.

JOHN WALKS OVER TO ELEANOR.

**John:** Eleanor? Eleanor?

JOHN TRIES TAPPING HER AND THEN TAKES THE GLASS OF WATER HE HAD PUT DOWN EARLIER AND TOSSES IT ON HER FACE.

ELEANOR SPLUTTERS AWAKE.

**Eleanor:** [DAZED] Mr Bleakwood?

**John:** You fainted. Here. [JOHN HELPS ELEANOR UP] See what you can do with Emma.

ELEANOR WALKS OVER TO EMMA AND ROUSES HER QUIETLY WHILE THE MEN COME BACK IN.

LARCEY AND BOTTOMLEY COME BACK IN.

**Larcey:** Finished.

**John:** Thank goodness for that. Emma dear, how are you doing?

**Emma:** Errr, I'll be all right father. I just feel a little giddy.

**Eleanor:** Some smelling salts would help. Do you have any Colonel?

**John:** We keep them on a shelf in the under-stairs cupboard.

**Larcey:** But - !

ELEANOR LEAVES.

**John:** But what? Let us just forget this nasty business and get on with the party, yes? After all, I'm sure it's what Oddfellow would have wanted.

**Nicolas:** But...

**John:** But nothing! Have you forgotten? This is Emma's twenty-first! Come on Emma, stand beside me and we'll start over. [JOHN TAPS HIS GLASS AGAIN FOR ATTENTION] Ladies and gentlemen, as I was saying, thank you all for coming to help us celebrate Emma's twenty-first. I'd like to start by proposing a -

THERE IS THE SOUND OF A LARGE CLATTER OUTSIDE THE ROOM AND ELEANOR SCREAMS AGAIN

LARCEY RUNS OUT SAYING:

**Larcey:** Eleanor!

**John:** Oh hell. [JOHN KNOCKS BACK HIS DRINK] What now?

**Nicolas:** We put Oddfellow under the stairs.

**John:** You did what?!

**Nicolas:** It seemed like the obvious place.

**John:** The obvious.... I'm sorry Emma, it looks like I'll have to sort this mess out myself. Bottomley – carry on.

JOHN LEAVES. NICOLAS BANGS HIS GLASS TO GET EVERYONE'S ATTENTION.

**Nicolas:** Ladies and gentlemen. Let me propose a toast: to our fondest friend Emma Bleakwood.

GET THE GUESTS TO JOIN IN WITH “EMMA BLEAKWOOD” YOU MIGHT WANT TO ENLIST THE HOTEL STAFF FOR THIS AHEAD OF TIME TO MAKE IT WORK.

**Nicolas:** I hope you enjoy your meal.

NICOLAS AND EMMA SIT DOWN.

END OF ROUND ONE.

The guests and cast should all now be served with their first course. John, Eleanor and Larcey will come back into the room at the start of round two in time to eat.