

# **YOUR NUMBER'S UP**

**by Brian Freeland**

**A Murder Mystery set in a Bingo Club, and specifically  
written to be performed in non-theatre venues.  
It works equally well in restaurants, pubs, clubs and  
function suites.**

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**All enquiries to:  
Brian Freeland  
32 Westdown House,  
Hartington Place,  
Eastbourne BN21 3BW  
01323 727525  
(m) 07752 616634**

## **YOUR NUMBER'S UP**

### **CHARACTERS:**

Bingo Hall Manager, Mr Hamilton

Bingo Caller, Jerry Canning

Box Office Lady, Mrs Nancy Ritchie

Snack Bar Manageress, Mrs Betty Baxter

Cleaner, Miss Joan Mathie

Maintenance Man, Bill Maitland.

Usherette/Checker, Ms Helen Brown

Detective Inspector Campbell

Customer (Margaret) (planted in the audience)

### **SETTING:**

The platform of a Bingo Club, with low-key manual equipment (ie, not a big electronic numbers board which can be seen by the audience).

The audience are the Bingo players, still seated at their dinner tables. They have each been given (or sold?) three differently-coloured bingo cards.

The actors should feel at home in the Club, making entrances and exits through the audience, and even playing small scenes among the audience. In an ideal production they will actually be manning the box office, snack bar, etc as the audience arrives.

*The Bingo Caller, Jerry Canning, makes a grand entrance....*

JERRY Good evening, possums. Nice to see you; to see you ....  
That Bruce Forsyth gets all his material from me. Anyway,  
welcome to the Guardbridge Bingo Club. Sorry we're a bit  
late starting, but as you will have seen, we have a problem at  
the box office. How's she doing out there, Betty?

BETTY (*entering*) Aye, the queue's nearly cleared. Just two or three  
more to come.

JERRY Any idea what the problem was?

BETTY She hasn't got any change. Mr Gordon hasn't appeared with  
the floats.

JERRY Cashier done a bunk with the cash bags, has he?

BETTY Wherever he is, I just wish he'd given us our floats before he  
went. It's been chaos out there, and it's going to be the same  
in my snack bar unless he shows up soon.

*(she exits)*

JERRY Never mind, everyone's in now. Time to get started on the  
first card. Eyes down. Pens poised. Stop the chat at the back  
there, pay attention. All set? Right, we'll start with a top  
line. First correct top line wins a tenner. That should cheer  
you up after the long wait. Here we go then, First number,  
on its own, number seven. Five and two, fifty two. Eight and  
one, eighty one. Two little ducks (quack quack) twenty two.  
One and four, fourteen. Seven and three, seventy three.  
Three and six, thirty six, four and one, forty one.

MARGARET Bingo!

JERRY Cor, that's a quick one. Five out of the first eight, that can't  
be bad. Just check it through, make sure. Helen, please?

*Helen, the Usherette/Checker takes the card to the Caller and reads out  
five of the numbers that have already been called (but are not necessarily  
the five numbers on the top line of the card. She has written the early  
numbers on her hand as an aide memoire)*

HELEN 7. 14. 41. 73. 81.

JERRY Yes, all correct. Well done. Just got to find you a tenner.  
Helen, see if you can find Mr Gordon. Tell him we've  
started – and we need a tenner for our first lucky lady of the  
evening. Margaret, isn't it?

MARGARET Yes, that's right.

JERRY Thought I remembered you. You had a top line last week,  
didn't you?

MARGARET Four corners. Top line was three weeks ago.

- JERRY Four corners. That's right. You're on a lucky streak, eh, Margaret?
- MARGARET Only the little ones. Never won anything big, not yet anyway.
- JERRY You never know your luck. That's the great thing about Bingo. The next number out could be the one you're waiting for.
- HELEN (*returning*) Sorry Jerry, he's not in his office. I'll check around, see where he is.
- JERRY You'll have to be patient, Margaret. Trust us. You'll get your tenner – but, for the moment let's push on with the first card. All the way now for a Full House.

*The game continues until someone shouts 'Bingo'.*

- JERRY Lady at the back there, Helen. Could you check it for us please?  
*Helen calls out the numbers.*
- JERRY Yes. All correct. Well done – and here's the manager, Mr Hamilton with a lovely bottle of plonk for you.
- HAMILTON There you go, a bottle of wine, compliments of the management. My apologies for the hold-ups, but we can't find Mr Gordon, the cashier, and he has the keys to the safe. We'll sort out all the cash prizes as soon as we find him. Yes, Joan?
- JOAN Sorry to interrupt, Mr Hamilton, but I've been cleaning through the back corridor and I've heard a mobile phone ringing several times in the gents. It's not being answered. Probably been left there by someone, but I don't like to go in to look.
- HAMILTON Anyone lost a mobile phone? Left it in the toilet? No-one? Get Bill to have a look, Joan. Let me know if there's anything wrong.

*As the Cleaner departs, Mrs Ritchie, the Box Office lady arrives with the takings.*

- NANCY I've got my box office takings, Mr Hamilton. I can't seem to find Mr Gordon.
- HAMILTON He's not in his office, Mrs Ritchie?
- NANCY No, I looked. I haven't seen him all evening.
- HAMILTON Neither have I. And I don't have my safe key with me.

JERRY        Tuck the bag here under the bingo desk for now. It'll be  
                  'safe' enough till he turns up.

HAMILTON Might have to dash home and get my key if he doesn't  
                  show up soon.

NANCY        He didn't bring the floats, not to me nor to the snack bar.  
                  I've had a terrible problem with change, I expect Betty has  
                  too, in the snack bar.  
                  I hope it all balances; it's been a nightmare out there.

*A scream is heard. Joan and Bill rush in.*

HAMILTON        Joan, Bill? What's the matter?

JOAN            Bill went into the gents to look for the phone....

BILL             ..couldn't see anything, and then it started ringing  
                  again – inside one of the cubicles. I banged on the door, but  
                  no response, so I climbed up to have a look over the top. A  
                  body, sir, slumped on the floor. He wasn't moving so I got  
                  my tools and unlocked the door. It's Mr Gordon, sir. I'm  
                  afraid he's dead.

HAMILTON You didn't touch anything?

BILL            No, sir.

HAMILTON Good. Go back and guard the door. Don't let anyone in.  
                  Mrs Ritchie, would you please call the police. Tell them  
                  what's happened.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid that you'll all have to  
remain here until the police have carried out their checks. I  
suggest that the best way to pass the time is with another  
card of Bingo. Jerry, over to you.

JERRY Yees. Thank you! All right, we'll go for four corners this time.  
                  On the blue card. Four corners. Eyes down. First number  
                  four and two, forty two.

*The game is played for real. After a few minutes the Inspector  
arrives, looks around, and is taken through to the back by Helen. The  
Manager arrives at the end of the bingo game with another bottle for the  
winner. The Inspector returns.*

INSPECTOR        Inspector Campbell.

HAMILTON        Charles Hamilton.

INSPECTOR        Manager?

HAMILTON        Yes.

INSPECTOR Not much I can do through there until the scene of crime people arrive. *Looks around* You seem to be busy. House nearly full.

HAMILTON Yes, business is OK. Unfortunately, the profits are down. Not quite clear why. We've spent hours going through the books. Expecting a visit from the Head Office auditors any day.

INSPECTOR You sound concerned.

HAMILTON Yes, I am. And with reason, it seems.

INSPECTOR How do you mean?

HAMILTON Well, if my cashier has committed suicide.... It looks ominous, don't you think?

INSPECTOR I think it's a little early to jump to conclusions. Let's wait and see what the police doctor says.

HAMILTON But inside a locked cubicle?

INSPECTOR Might have been a heart attack.

How was his health?

HAMILTON Pretty good for his age, I'd have said, although I don't think he exercised much. Quiet type, lived alone.

INSPECTOR Did he have a mortgage?

HAMILTON No, a rented flat.

INSPECTOR Was there anything that might have been worrying him?

HAMILTON Getting near retirement: don't think he was looking forward to that.

INSPECTOR Had he been here long?

HAMILTON Longer than me.

INSPECTOR Which is how long, exactly?

HAMILTON I've been here twelve years. Mr Gordon's been here nearer fifteen.

INSPECTOR Then he must have built up a pension?

HAMILTON No, odd thing – he cashed it in about three years ago. Just paid into the state system since then.

INSPECTOR Needed some capital suddenly, eh. Any idea why?

HAMILTON I don't know. You didn't have that sort of conversation with Mr Gordon, he kept himself to himself.

INSPECTOR Tell me about the system here. Do you have a regular routine?

HAMILTON Mr Gordon or I usually open up in the evenings, whoever's here first. We aim for around six-thirty, otherwise the staff are hanging about outside.

INSPECTOR And who opened up tonight?

HAMILTON Mr Gordon – at least I assume he did: when I arrived the doors were unlocked and the lights were on.

INSPECTOR Bingo equipment all issued as usual?

HAMILTON Yes, but not the floats: the empty bags are still lying on his desk.

INSPECTOR And you didn't see him around?

HAMILTON No, but that's not unusual: we each have things to do, mainly routine, just get on with it. One night is very like another.

INSPECTOR Until tonight.

HAMILTON Yes!

INSPECTOR What happens during the day?

HAMILTON Mr Gordon normally looked in during the morning, while the cleaners are tidying up, to do the books and bank last night's takings.

INSPECTOR Have they been banked?

HAMILTON Don't know; I'd have to check – contact the bank when it opens in the morning, I suppose.

INSPECTOR Paying-in book?

HAMILTON Of course. I'm not thinking straight. I'll go and check.

INSPECTOR Would you ask the Box Office Lady, Mrs ....?

HAMILTON Mrs Ritchie.

INSPECTOR Ask Mrs Ritchie to come in.

*The Manager leaves. A few seconds later Mrs Ritchie enters.*

INSPECTOR Come through, Mrs Ri.... Oh my goodness, what have you been up to?

NANCY Torn ligaments. Just tripped on the kerb, weeks ago. Taking ages to clear up.

INSPECTOR Here, come and sit down. Sad evening, Mrs Ritchie.

NANCY Yes, I should have realised something was wrong when he didn't bring the floats. Never missed before, all the time I've been here.

INSPECTOR I suppose you couldn't go and look for him with all this...?

NANCY Oh, I did. Of course. Hobbled round to his office, but he wasn't there.

INSPECTOR Was the office locked?

NANCY Unlocked, and the door open, which was most unusual.

INSPECTOR In what way unusual?

- NANCY Well, the safe is in there, and the books. And he checks the takings, gives the prizes, so he usually locks the door when he comes out – came out.
- INSPECTOR Did you go into the office?
- NANCY Just knocked and looked in. Saw he wasn't there, so hurried back to the box office – I'd left it unattended.
- INSPECTOR You didn't notice anything out of the ordinary?
- NANCY No, I was only there a second – except....
- INSPECTOR Except what?
- NANCY It didn't register at the time, but the middle drawer of the filing cabinet was half-open.
- INSPECTOR And that was unusual?
- NANCY Oh yes, he's ... he was ...so precise, everything in its place. Like the floats – always ready when we came in.
- INSPECTOR How ever did you manage without the float?
- NANCY Had to ask everyone for the right money, or see if anyone could change a note. Seemed to take ages, built up a long queue, that's why we started late. Oh, what an awful night (*sobs*).
- INSPECTOR Yes, indeed. Sorry, Mrs Ritchie, nearly done. Tell me, what normally happens to the money when you close the box office?
- NANCY Mr Hamilton collects the cash from me as soon as I've finished and takes it through to the Cashier's office. Mr Gordon preferred to check the money and till roll back in his office. Said it was safer than me counting it out in public in a glass booth.
- INSPECTOR Very thoughtful. So what happened tonight?
- NANCY Mr Hamilton was busy in here, so I took it to Mr Gordon's office, expecting him to be there, but he wasn't. I had to bring it into the Club. It's hidden under the Bingo table.
- INSPECTOR It's still there?
- NANCY Yes. We can't lock it in the safe until we get Mr Gordon's keys.
- INSPECTOR They're probably still in his pocket. I'll get SOCO to check. When you took the money to Mr Gordon's office, was everything still as you'd seen it the first time?
- NANCY Er...no. No, the door was shut. That's right, I knocked, and then went in – but he wasn't there. I'm sure I didn't shut it the first time - I was in such a hurry to get back to the Box Office.

INSPECTOR     And the filing cabinet....?  
 NANCY (*realising*) ....was closed! Someone had closed it. But who?  
 INSPECTOR     Who indeed. Thanks, Mrs Ritchie, that'll do for now.  
                   Could you ask the Cleaner to come in – Mrs....?  
 NANCY         Miss, Miss Mathie.

*The Box Office Lady leaves, and shortly afterwards the Cleaner enters.*

INSPECTOR     Come in, Miss Mathie; sad evening.  
 JOAN          I still can't believe it, can't believe he's gone.  
 INSPECTOR     Had you seen him at all this evening?  
 JOAN          No. I was one of the first here, but the doors were already  
                   open and the lights on, so I knew that at least one of them  
                   was in.  
 INSPECTOR     One of them?  
 JOAN          Either Mr Hamilton or Mr Gordon.  
 INSPECTOR     Right. I understand it was you who found the body?  
 JOAN          Not exactly; I'm not allowed in the gents while the Club is  
                   open. If there's a problem then Bill has to see to it.  
 INSPECTOR     Bill?  
 JOAN          Bill Maitland, the maintenance man. But I did hear the  
                   phone?  
 INSPECTOR     Phone?  
 JOAN          A mobile phone, ringing in the gents toilet.  
 INSPECTOR     And you thought that was – what - suspicious?  
 JOAN          Not at first, no, it seems to be the place nowadays for  
                   making personal phone calls – no-one listening in, know  
                   what I mean? I think they get it from the telly; actors in the  
                   soaps are always sneaking into the toilets to make secret  
                   phone calls.  
 INSPECTOR     You said “not at first” – was the phone ringing a long  
                   time?  
 JOAN          Not continuously, no. I was taking black bags out the back to  
                   – to the dustbin, so I was up and down that corridor several  
                   times. Sometimes I heard it, sometimes I didn't. But  
                   eventually I started to wonder.  
 INSPECTOR     And that was when you reported it to Mr Hamilton?  
 JOAN          And Jerry, the Caller, yes. And they told me to get Bill to  
                   check and he found Mr Gordon, like the three old ladies.  
 INSPECTOR     The three old ladies?  
 JOAN          The song, you know, oh dear what can the matter be, three  
                   old ladies locked in the lavatory...

INSPECTOR        They were there from Monday to Saturday...  
                         goodness, I haven't heard that since school... Were the  
                         doors open to the public when you heard the first phone  
                         ring?

JOAN                I thought they must be. I don't have much to do with front-  
                         of-house when the customers are in, but I assumed it was a  
                         customer on the phone. The bosses all have phones in their  
                         offices, and why should any of the staff want to make a  
                         secret phone call?

INSPECTOR        Why indeed! How well did you know Mr Gordon?

JOAN                Not at all, really. Hardly said a word to him since we started  
                         here.

INSPECTOR        We?

JOAN                Mmm?

INSPECTOR        You said since we started here?

JOAN                Did I? Just confused; it's been a confusing evening; since I  
                         started here.

INSPECTOR        And how long ago was that?

JOAN                About seven months now. Started just before last Christmas.

INSPECTOR        You like it here?

JOAN                It's a job. I used to play Bingo here, and I was in the night  
                         they sacked the last cleaner. I just went and asked the  
                         manager and he took me on right away. Suited us both.

INSPECTOR        And this death won't put you off.

JOAN                I might get Bill to clean out the gents for a few days. Could  
                         be a bit creepy in there at first, knowing that was where he  
                         done himself in.

INSPECTOR        You think it was suicide, then?

JOAN                Inside a locked cubicle? What else could it be?

INSPECTOR        What indeed! Thank you Miss Mathie. Would you ask  
                         Mr – er -Maitland to come in, please.

*The Cleaner exits, to be replaced by the Maintenance Man.*

INSPECTOR        Mr Maitland, come in. Sad evening.

BILL                Sad? Yes, I suppose so.

INSPECTOR        You suppose so?

BILL                Sorry. It's all been a bit of a shock.

INSPECTOR        Of course. What made you look over the top of the  
                         cubicle?

BILL                Didn't know what else to do. The phone was ringing, the  
                         door was locked: I shouted and knocked but no response.

INSPECTOR Tell me what you saw.

BILL Just a shape, a body, curled up on the floor. I shouted again, but it didn't move, so I went to get my tool box.

INSPECTOR Tool box?

BILL Yes. A screw-driver'll open those cubicle locks from the outside in an emergency.

INSPECTOR I see. Was the phone still ringing?

BILL No, it had stopped by then. Wonder who it was?

INSPECTOR We should be able to trace that through the last caller number.

BILL Aye, unless it was one of these cold callers from Bombay or wherever. You dial 1471 and the voice just says (*in an electronic voice*) "the caller did not give his number".

INSPECTOR It would have to have been a pretty persistent cold caller.

BILL But they are all bloody persistent, aren't they. I've had some woman trying to tell me I was due some PPI; must have phoned ten times....

INSPECTOR Mine's usually double glazing. At least once a week, sometimes twice. Er - can we get back to Mr Gordon...?

BILL Sorry. I tried to open the door, but his body was blocking it. I could see it was Mr Gordon by his suit.

INSPECTOR No sign of any injuries or wounds?

BILL I couldn't see that much of him. I could just reach his hand, so I checked his wrist for a pulse. Nothing. That's when we told Mr Hamilton and he made me stand guard there until you arrived.

INSPECTOR Did Mr Gordon let you in this evening?

BILL No. It was slightly odd; I got here a bit early, expecting to have to wait about outside until one of them arrived with a key, but the door was already open. I knew I had to clear a sink in the snack bar, so I just got on with that. I don't - I didn't - have much to do with Mr Gordon, except the odd bit of petty cash - but I heard Betty in the snack bar complaining that he hadn't brought the float.

INSPECTOR It seems that most of you only saw Mr Gordon when you needed money.

BILL Or when he wanted to complain about the invoices.

INSPECTOR Invoices for what?

BILL Cleaning materials, mostly. All these EEC regulations - you have to use different fluids for different jobs now, and we do seem to be ordering more than before.

INSPECTOR      And using more than before?  
 BILL            Er - I suppose we must be. Difficult to say. There's so many different drums spread around the place – for the kitchen, for the toilets, for the drains, know what I mean? – you don't keep a regular check like you used to. Suddenly find things have run out and then you have to get an urgent delivery – and that's more expensive.  
 INSPECTOR      Which upset Mr Gordon.  
 BILL            Right. But anything to do with spending money upset Mr Gordon.  
 INSPECTOR      Did he make up the wages as well?  
 BILL            Yes. Cheques, of course, these days, and he even paid those grudgingly – you'd have thought it was his own money he was handing over, not the firm's. Kept very tight control over every penny.  
 INSPECTOR      Take care of the pennies, they say... Thank you Mr Maitland. Now, I suppose I ought to see the – er – compere, do you call him? Reads out the numbers on the balls?  
 BILL            The Caller. Jerry Canning. I'll send him in.

*Bill Maitland exits. The Inspector picks up one of the balls and tries his hand....*

INSPECTOR      Seventy-three; seven and three...

*The Caller, Gerald Canning enters*

JERRY           Other way round... *the Inspector doesn't understand.*  
 Seven and three; seventy-three.  
 INSPECTOR      I don't think I could cope with your job, Mr Canning.  
 JERRY           Jerry – everyone calls me Jerry.  
 INSPECTOR      I don't think I could do your job, Jerry. All those tricky little bits – two fat ladies: twenty two.  
 JERRY           Eighty-eight. Two fat ladies, eighty-eight. Wobble wobble.  
 INSPECTOR      So what's twenty-two?  
 JERRY           Two little ducks. Figure two – looks a bit like a duck.  
 Quack, quack.  
 INSPECTOR      Aah – it's a whole different.....  
 JERRY           ...ball-game?  
 INSPECTOR      Yes.  
 Sad evening, Mr – er - Jerry.

JERRY Yes, difficult to pitch the spiel on that last game, trying to keep everyone happy when they all know there's a corpse in the toilets.

INSPECTOR Especially when it is one of your close colleagues.

JERRY Hardly close, I'm afraid. In fact, I'm not certain he had any close friends – or relatives, come to that. Never one to sit and gossip in the snack bar, or join you in the pub after work. I've no idea, really, about his private life.

INSPECTOR Or his private death.

JERRY No. The staff are out there talking about suicide, but I don't think that's likely.

INSPECTOR What makes you say that?

JERRY He lives alone in his flat, he has an office to himself which is usually locked – plenty of comfortable private spaces. Why would he shut himself in a toilet cubicle to commit suicide?

INSPECTOR Why indeed! I'd be interested to hear your theory.

JERRY I don't think my theory would excite anyone's interest. He probably just went in there for the obvious reason, and had a stroke or a heart attack or something. End of story.

INSPECTOR You may well be right. At least no-one is suggesting that he might have been murdered?

JERRY Murdered? Mr Gordon? You are joking?

INSPECTOR What makes you say that?

JERRY Well, he was such a - a nobody.

INSPECTOR A cashier, handling all the money.

JERRY In a little out-of-town Bingo Club. We're not talking about a bank or a supermarket. Our turnover wouldn't justify a robbery, and certainly not a murder.

INSPECTOR Suppose the motive wasn't financial.

JERRY What other motives are there? Jealousy? Not Mr Gordon! No-one could be jealous of Mr Gordon.

INSPECTOR He doesn't seem to have been very popular.

JERRY But you wouldn't call him hated – or even unpopular. Bad-tempered, certainly, but mostly just .. well .. insignificant!

INSPECTOR I see. Just for the record, I had better check when you last saw Mr Gordon.

JERRY Last night, when we finished. Just said 'Goodnight' on the way out: he was waiting to lock up.

INSPECTOR You didn't see him this morning?

JERRY I don't do mornings. Just come in the evenings to call the numbers. Got a little cleaning business during the day.

Set it up with a lady friend – she used to work here, actually – cleaner – got the push late last year, Christmas coming up and no money, so we went into partnership. Just business, you understand, nothing else.

INSPECTOR Or tonight? See Mr Gordon tonight?

JERRY No. I was in a bit of a rush. Arrived late, but fortunately there was a long queue at the box office, so we didn't start on time. Just shot into my dressing room – more of a broom cupboard, really – put on my fancy jacket, checked my hair and went straight on. Didn't see anybody.

INSPECTOR Have you been working here long?

JERRY March last year. I was made redundant at the Paper Mill, voluntary really, I was happy to get out, get away from the smell. Saw this job advertised in The Citizen. Bingo Caller. Fancied the glamour of show business and went for it. Glamour, huh! Look at it. Guardbridge Bingo Club. About as glamorous as Dairsie on a wet Tuesday.

INSPECTOR Never mind, I'm sure the old ladies all love you.

JERRY Yes. Just a pity I don't love the ladies. Oh, I may as well tell you now, you're sure to find out if you going digging, I coned my way into the job. Didn't think they'd have the imagination to see a redundant engineer doing the stage business in a fancy suit and natty hair style. Got a friend to help with a cv and phoney references. And it worked – as I said, over a year now, and there've been no complaints – from management or customers.

INSPECTOR Thanks for your honesty.

JERRY I'd be grateful if you didn't tell Hamilton. Don't want to spoil a good relationship.

INSPECTOR How good?

JERRY Nothing like that, not my type. Anyway, he's married. And he's having a rough time at home. His wife's in line for a hip operation, in agony most of the time, but you know what it's like – waiting lists and all that. He wishes they could get it done privately. Fat chance, not on these 'glamour palace' salaries.

INSPECTOR So you're lucky to have a second income?

JERRY Couldn't manage otherwise.

INSPECTOR You've been very frank. One last question – your, er, business partner? You said she was given the push? Do you know why?

JERRY        Just suspicion, really. Nothing proved, probably nothing to prove. She was friendly with one or two of the customers, and they seemed to be winning rather more often than you might expect. Not big sums, and no pattern to it, but Gordon and Hamilton were uneasy. The management doesn't like to bar customers, so they gave Myra the push.

INSPECTOR     And did that stop the – erm - suspicious wins?

JERRY        It's a game of chance, Inspector. Punters can go for months without a win, and then get two full houses on the same night. I never thought Myra was up to anything – wouldn't have gone into business with her otherwise.

INSPECTOR     I understand. Thanks for your help. Could you send in the young lady – Helen, is it? – the usherette.

JERRY        Helen Brown. We call her the Checker, but she'll answer to usherette.

*Jerry Canning leaves, to be replaced by Helen Brown.*

INSPECTOR     Come in, Miss Brown. Sad evening.

HELEN        What?

INSPECTOR     I said, it's been a sad evening.

HELEN        Sad? It's been a bloody nightmare! All that chaos at the beginning, Mrs Ritchie throwing a wobbly over her blessed float, the Boss wandering around with a face as long as Kirkcaldy High Street, and now old Mr Gordon popping his clogs. Won't be sorry to get home.

INSPECTOR     Then I'll try not to keep you too long. We're really trying to discover Mr Gordon's movements earlier this evening. Everyone seems to think that he opened up tonight.

HELEN        Maybe. Maybe he never went home.

INSPECTOR     How do you mean?

HELEN        I walked past the Club this afternoon collecting my little girl from Playschool, and the lights were all on.

INSPECTOR     Was that unusual?

HELEN        Never happened at all when I first started here, but I've noticed it quite a lot recently. Lights on in the management offices sometimes – both offices are on the front of the building. And occasionally in the foyer. One afternoon I saw old Mr Gordon in the box office. Workaholic, he was, always fussing over his blooming accounts. He needed to get a life.

INSPECTOR     Instead of which he got a death.

- HELEN Oh gawd, me and my mouth. I didn't mean it to come out like that. It's just that he was so ... dull. That miserable little flat, and this boring place. I don't think he ever had any fun.
- INSPECTOR And he certainly won't be getting any now. Did you discuss any of this with the others?
- HELEN The lights on, you mean? Yeah, a bit. Just thought it was old Gordon doing his books. It's common knowledge that the profits are dropping – could be closed down soon, we reckon. Bingo's not the big attraction it used to be – my mum was in here every day, almost. Used to be afternoons as well then. Don't know how the staff'll manage if it does close – they all depend on this place.
- INSPECTOR The patrons will miss it too, surely.
- HELEN Aye. Part of the furniture, some of them. They come in out of the cold, bit of a natter, coffee and cake, maybe win a few quid.
- INSPECTOR Maybe lose a few quid?
- HELEN They don't think about that. It's always the next number, the next card, the next night, the next chance to win the big one, change their dreary little lives.
- INSPECTOR You don't play yourself, then?
- HELEN No, waste of money. Staff aren't allowed, anyway. Would look like a fix if we won.
- INSPECTOR What does your husband do?
- HELEN Husband?
- INSPECTOR You said you had a little daughter.
- HELEN But I didn't say I was married. Not obligatory, you know.
- INSPECTOR Who looks after the little one then, in the evenings?
- HELEN My aunt Myra, mum's sister. Lost her job last year, so now she has her evenings free. Couldn't work here otherwise – the wages wouldn't cover a baby-sitter. Hey, we're talking a lot about me; I'm not the one who went down the tubes.
- INSPECTOR You mean poor Mr Gordon.
- HELEN Poor Mr Gordon my arse. Accountant and assistant manager here, must have got a reasonable salary. What did he spend it on? No family, no hobbies, no pets – just that grotty little flat with a load of second-hand furniture. Didn't even have a car – came to work on the bus. If you ask me, he's been stashing it all away for a rainy day.
- INSPECTOR Sadly, he died before the rains came.

HELEN        Looks like it. Someone's going to get a nice little windfall, take it from me. You ought to go through his filing cabinets, see if he left a will.

INSPECTOR        I might just do that. Thankyou.

*The Manager enters.*

HAMILTON        Sorry to interrupt.

INSPECTOR        Not at all, Mr Hamilton. We were just finishing.  
Thank you, Miss Brown.

HAMILTON        Your sergeant asked me to give you this note. (*hands him a sealed envelope*)

INSPECTOR        Thankyou. How are they getting on out there?

HAMILTON        Difficult to say. The whole section is roped off.

INSPECTOR        Yes. I expect they'll be at it for some time yet. Still, it'll give us a chance to gather the staff together, have a word with them. You've got some interesting characters there, Mr Hamilton. Not unpleasant people, any of them, but not one showed any regret for the passing of Mr Gordon.

*He reads the note*    Did you find the paying-in book?

HAMILTON        Yes. He banked the takings this morning, as usual.  
And he'd entered the figures in the account books.  
Everything balanced.

INSPECTOR        Including the till roll?

HAMILTON        The till roll?

INSPECTOR        You do keep the old till rolls?

HAMILTON        Yes. For seven years, like the account books. Have to save them for the auditors and the tax inspectors.

INSPECTOR        Can you show me his office?

HAMILTON        Of course. Looking for anything special?

INSPECTOR        I'd like to know what he kept in the middle drawer of the filing cabinet.....

HAMILTON        The middle drawer ...That's where I found the paying-in books.

INSPECTOR        Really. Oh, by the way, there's no need to tell the others this for the moment, but Mr Gordon's death was no suicide. According to my sergeant's note, this is now a murder enquiry.....

**END OF SCENE ONE**

**SCENE TWO:**

- INSPECTOR Is everyone here, Mr Hamilton?
- HAMILTON Apart from Betty - Mrs Baxter.
- JOAN She's still washing up in the Snack Bar. Do you want me to fetch her?
- INSPECTOR No, let her finish her work. We've got a woman PC out there, keeping an eye on things. Does Mrs Baxter check her own takings, or did Mr Gordon do that as well?
- HAMILTON Betty can lock the door of the snack bar when the customers have gone, so she checks her own till. But Mr Gordon would go and collect the money from her, just to be safe. Didn't want her walking around the corridors late in the evening with a bag of cash.
- INSPECTOR Very thoughtful. *To staff.* Mr Gordon seems to have been a considerate, efficient colleague – and yet not one of you has expressed any sadness or regrets over his death.
- JERRY None of us were very close to him, I suppose.
- NANCY Kept himself to himself.
- JOAN Didn't have that much to do with him.
- BILL Don't know much about him, really
- INSPECTOR Well, we're going to have to find out something about him because - it rather looks as though he was murdered.
- Reactions from staff.*
- HELEN Murdered? In a locked cubicle?
- JOAN Aye, and locked from the inside. If he was killed then he must have done it himself. That's suicide, not murder, isn't it?
- INSPECTOR Suicide, indeed, Miss Mathie, if the death had been occasioned alone inside a locked space.
- JERRY If? So there's a but.....?
- INSPECTOR Two buts, I'm afraid. One, there's no evidence of any weapon in the cubicle.....
- JOAN He could have flushed it down the loo.
- INSPECTOR That would be a good trick for a dead man, Miss Mathie, even one as efficient as Mr Gordon, especially since we believe that he was probably already dead when he was put in the cubicle.
- HAMILTON How can you possibly know that?
- INSPECTOR Scuffs on the backs of his shoes, and two long marks in the corridor where he had been dragged along.
- NANCY But the door was locked from the inside. How did the killer get out?

JERRY Climbed over the top?

NANCY He'd need to be a bloomin' acrobat. Let's me out, anyway. I can hardly climb on a bar stool with this ankle.

INSPECTOR Mr Maitland was able to unlock the door from the outside with a screwdriver. Presumably it could be locked from the outside in the same manner, Mr Maitland?

BILL Yes, of course. We do it sometimes if a toilet is out of order – stop the punters using it.

INSPECTOR We? Who else would know?

HAMILTON Most of our backstage staff, Inspector – Bill and the cleaners, for instance, were all told when they started here about locking an Out Of Order toilet with a screwdriver until it can be fixed – and about unlocking from the outside, safety precautions, you know, in case an old lady gets taken ill, or a small child locks itself in and can't get out.

INSPECTOR So our murderer could be almost anyone with access to a screwdriver.

BILL Or even a nail-file, anything like that. I've never tried, but you could probably do it with a five-pee piece.

HELEN I may be missing the point here, but don't you think one of us would have noticed a couple of heavies dragging a dead body around the Club?

INSPECTOR I'm still waiting for time of death, Miss Brown, but it seems fairly certain that it happened before most of you arrived. You have all confirmed that Mr Gordon stuck firmly to his routines: the bingo cards and equipment were all in place, and there were two empty cash bags on his desk –

NANCY Our float bags....

INSPECTOR - presumably his next task, had he not been interrupted.

JERRY By whom?

INSPECTOR Indeed. None of you seemed to know him particularly well, but I do need your help to get some kind of picture of the late Mr Gordon. Mr Hamilton, you said he lived alone; was there any family?

HAMILTON He was a widower. I went to his wife's funeral, ooh, about five, six years ago, Nancy?

NANCY Yes, must be six years.

HAMILTON Not many people there, I remember, although I did talk to a son. Can't remember his name; he'd have been late twenties?

NANCY Robert, I think. I saw him occasionally with his father; he was here once – not to play bingo; came to the box office and asked to see his dad. I just passed him through. But that was all of three years ago? Haven't seen him since.

HELEN He went to Australia.

*Reactions.*

JERRY Helen! How do you know that?

HELEN I asked the old man once why he lived in that poky little flat, and he said he didn't need three bedrooms any more with his wife dead and his son emigrated to Australia.

INSPECTOR Did he say when he emigrated?

HELEN I didn't ask; didn't particularly care. Just trying to make conversation.

INSPECTOR But it's three years since you last saw the son, Mrs Ritchie?

NANCY Yes, at least three.

INSPECTOR And three years since Mr Gordon cashed in his pension, Mr Hamilton?

HAMILTON About that, yes. We could soon check.

INSPECTOR I wonder if there's a connection. That's one more thing to look out for when we search his flat – an address in Australia for the son.

JERRY If he's still in Australia.

HAMILTON How do you mean?

JERRY Well, if Gordon was bank-rolling him – paid him to go away, perhaps?

Say the money dried up for some reason? Mrs Ritchie said he knew his way around the Club. He could have been here this afternoon.

HAMILTON If he was looking for more money from his father then killing him was hardly the best way to get it.

HELEN You're right there. I did tell the Inspector to look out for a will.

INSPECTOR It's just moved up several places on my list, Miss Brown. Although I think it very unlikely for a sole heir, which he presumably was, to kill for what was coming to him anyway.

HELEN Well, you're the detective....

INSPECTOR Yes, I am, Miss Brown, and I've been meaning to check on something all evening. Can I ask why you have those numbers written on the palm of your hand?

HELEN Numbers?

INSPECTOR Yes. *She hides her hand.* Mr Hamilton, would you mind?

HAMILTON 7, 14, 41 – 73,81

HELEN It's a phone number.

JERRY No it isn't. It's a bingo line – five numbers between one and ninety in ascending order.

HELEN You've got bingo on the bloody brain – get a life.

JERRY And not any old bingo line either – that was the first one up this evening. Won the tenner.

HAMILTON Is that true, Helen?

HELEN No, he's wrong. It's a telephone number, I told you.

JERRY A tenner. That bloody Margaret. Only the little ones, she said. Only three times, she said.

HAMILTON Well, it will only be two, now. Tonight's tenner is still locked in the safe, and I can't believe she'll be suing us for it. How long's this been going on Helen?

HELEN (*in tears*) Just those three times. I'm sorry, Mr Hamilton, but I had to pay a baby sitter.

JOAN Myra always looks after Kylie when you're here.

HELEN Usually, yes. But sometimes she can't do it, and I have to find someone at short notice – and they always expect paying on the night.

HAMILTON Just a minute – Myra.... (*to Helen*) Your auntie Myra? (*to Jerry*) Your business partner – Myra? Same lady?

JERRY Yes.

HAMILTON Not the Myra we sacked last Christmas?

JERRY Yes.

HAMILTON And did she tell you about this fiddle?

HELEN Yes.

JERRY You write five of the early numbers on your hand, and then hold the card so that you can read off the numbers and it looks as though you're reading the card. I should have picked it up.

HELEN I'm sorry Jerry, but I was frantic. I can't afford to lose this job, and when auntie Myra cried off one night I was desperate – didn't know what to do. So she told me about this little fiddle – even put me on to one of the ladies who used to work it.

JERRY Margaret!

HELEN Yes. Nothing big – you couldn't win a Full House with it – but it helps with the baby-sitter. And when Myra cancelled at short notice this evening I didn't know what else to do.

HAMILTON Well, Margaret's banned from now on. You know who we're talking about, Nancy?

NANCY Yes, I know her. Looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

BILL It's always the quiet ones, isn't it!

HAMILTON She doesn't come in anymore, right? And you, young lady, I'll see you in the office tomorrow morning. Decide whether we're going to prosecute or not.

HELEN I'll never do it again, Mr Hamilton, I promise. I need this job; I've got a kiddie to look after. Don't get me arrested.

HAMILTON Tomorrow! Ten o'clock! We've other things on our mind tonight.

INSPECTOR Did Mr Gordon guess what was going on, I wonder?

HELEN Hey, I fiddled a few quid to pay the baby-sitter – I never murdered anyone.

INSPECTOR No, probably not – although I was half-hoping that the numbers on your hand would turn out to be Mr Gordon's mobile number.

BILL You mean you don't know who called him yet? I thought you were going to check the last caller.

INSPECTOR Yes, we've done that, but it wasn't much help.

BILL Bombay, you mean?

INSPECTOR No, much closer to home. Right here, in fact. The last call was made from the Bingo Club number.

HAMILTON Which extension?

INSPECTOR I'm afraid the system isn't that sophisticated; just tells us the line number. How many extensions are there?

HAMILTON My office, Cashier's office, Box Office, Snack Bar. Works as an internal system: we dial 9 for an outside line.

INSPECTOR It rather looks as though someone here was trying to contact him – and urgently. When we find out who that was we might have a clue to our murderer.

BILL You still haven't told us how he was murdered, Mr Inspector.

INSPECTOR Hit on the side of the head. Twice, it seems - once with a blunt instrument.

JOAN What kind of blunt instrument?

- INSPECTOR Not sure yet. Metal, they think. But there is one interesting clue – on the soles of his shoes and his clothes. Traces of cleaning fluid!
- JOAN No!
- INSPECTOR Yes. Or to be more exact, cleaning fluid containing tridextrinol-hypochlorite, a component of some of the stronger cleaning fluids – used in drains, blocked sinks, things like that. Do you use it here, Miss Mathie?
- JOAN I don't know. I'm a cleaner, not a blooming chemist.
- HAMILTON Yes, I think we do. The name rings a bell. I have to fill in a form listing all the dangerous chemicals that we store on the premises – another piece of European Union bureaucracy – and I'm sure that's on it.
- INSPECTOR But firmly locked up, I assume, Mr Maitland?
- BILL I hope so, although there are several sets of keys. I've got one of course, and Joan, and there's one in the key cupboard in Mr Gordon's office.
- INSPECTOR And the previous cleaner? The one you sacked?
- HAMILTON Sacked with good reason, as it now turns out, despite all her protestations. I took back her set when she left.
- JOAN She could have made copies, I suppose.
- HAMILTON And she would know where everything was kept – probably even knew about the keys in Mr Gordon's office?
- BILL Probably! The system's not been changed since she left.
- JERRY Hey, I hope you're not trying to put my partner in the frame for murder.
- JOAN She knows her way around this place, and she was never happy about being sacked.
- HAMILTON And it turns out that she is not as truthful as you always claimed.
- HELEN She was up to something tonight that stopped her looking after Kylie.
- BILL And she's an experienced cleaner.
- JERRY So are you. So's Joan. So am I, come to that. Run my own cleaning business.
- INSPECTOR Indeed, so you do, Mr Canning. A professional cleaner who would have access to the chemicals. An ex-engineer, handy with a screw-driver...
- HAMILTON Ex-engineer? *(Jerry reacts)*
- INSPECTOR *(quickly)* Not important – and someone who was unusually late for work tonight. Or would have been late if there hadn't been problems at the Box Office.

NANCY Oh, don't remind me. I don't ever want another evening like that one – this one.

JERRY And someone who has absolutely no motive. Why would I want to kill Gordon; what's in it for me?

INSPECTOR What indeed. That's something we might be checking on over the next few hours. I must ask all of you to report back here at nine o'clock sharp tomorrow morning –

BETTY Sorry I'm late.

INSPECTOR - including you Mrs Baxter. We've got some checking around to do: Mr Gordon's flat, for instance, and his office, and the mobile phone company. Those calls to his mobile point strongly to the murderer being someone connected with the Bingo Club. When we find that caller, we've probably found our murderer.

BETTY There's no secret about those calls, Inspector. I can tell you now who made those.

INSPECTOR Really, Mrs Baxter. And who was that?

BETTY It was me, Inspector.

*Reactions!*

INSPECTOR You!

BETTY Yes.

INSPECTOR Go home, everybody. I need to have a word with Mrs Baxter. Give your addresses to the constable, and don't any of you attempt to leave the country. I want you all back here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

JERRY I don't do mornings.

INSPECTOR Nine o'clock. Sharp.

The constable has the cashier's keys, Mr Hamilton. Take the two cash bags through and he'll lock them in the safe for you, you can check them in the morning. Don't touch anything else: my men will be doing a thorough search – there'll be people on duty all night. See you tomorrow.

*They all exit*

INSPECTOR Now, Mrs Baxter, you had better sit down. This might take some time.

BETTY Goodness, no, Inspector – just a minute. You wanted to know who made the phone calls; as I said, it was me.

INSPECTOR Mrs Baxter – you weren't here earlier, so won't have heard the news. It does rather look as though Mr Gordon has been murdered.

BETTY Oh, I don't think so, Inspector.

INSPECTOR Well we do think so, Mrs Baxter. And we rather suspect that one of the Bingo Club staff was involved – probably the same someone who was trying, unsuccessfully, to contact him on his mobile phone.

BETTY But that was me, Inspector.

INSPECTOR So you said, Mrs Baxter. Now are you going to tell me why you were continuously phoning someone whom you supposed to be working in the same building, or do you want to continue this conversation down at the station?

BETTY I needed my change for the snack bar. I rang Mr Gordon on the internal phone and when he didn't answer I assumed he was somewhere in the Club so I kept trying his mobile.

INSPECTOR Did you often call him on his mobile?

BETTY I ring him most nights.

INSPECTOR Really? Do you mind my asking why?

BETTY When the last customer's gone I lock the snack bar and check the takings, then I phone Mr Gordon and he takes the money to the safe for me. Sometimes I catch him on the office number, but I usually have to ring the mobile.

INSPECTOR (*deflated*) He was fond of his little routines, wasn't he, the late Mr Gordon?

BETTY Yes, he was a bit fussy, I suppose, over that sort of thing. Perhaps he was right; times have changed. At my last job I thought nothing of carrying the takings across the factory site and up to the office all on my own. And that was real money, not the few pounds we take here.

INSPECTOR Where was that?

BETTY Up at the paper mill.

INSPECTOR Where Mr Canning used to work?

BETTY Yes. Scrubbed up well, hasn't he?

INSPECTOR Did he remember you?

BETTY Don't think so. I have a suspicion he doesn't remember ladies' faces, if you know what I mean. Young Helen remembers me, but she's rarely in the snack bar.

INSPECTOR Helen Brown, the Checker?

BETTY Yes, she was at the paper mill full time until she got pregnant. So was her boyfriend.

INSPECTOR No wonder they call that place The Great Provider. Was her boyfriend the father of the child?

BETTY Oh, I would imagine so. They were very close at the time, although he disappeared before the baby was born. Coincidence, really, given the reason you're here; it was Mr Gordon's son, Robert.

INSPECTOR The one who emigrated to Australia?

BETTY Oh is that where he went. I didn't know that; just knew he suddenly upped and left.

INSPECTOR You never discussed him with Mr Gordon?

BETTY Certainly not; you didn't have that sort of conversation with him. Very difficult man, ... private ... secretive almost.

INSPECTOR Secretive. I wonder if he knew he had a grand-daughter?

BETTY I can't answer that one.

INSPECTOR Not just a grand-daughter, but another heir. Another good reason for finding that will. This seems to be a veritable house of secrets, Mrs Baxter. There's Mr Hamilton, with a sick wife he's supposed to be very fond of, and yet he's locked up in here six or seven days a week. And we uncovered a little bit of fraud here tonight. Our single mother Helen fiddling the winnings to pay for her baby-sitter.

BETTY If you stick around a bit you might uncover a few more.

INSPECTOR You have my full attention, Mrs Baxter.

BETTY Oh, I've no proof, I'm not pointing a finger at anyone, but things happen here, nothing obvious, just odd little things...

INSPECTOR Such as...?

BETTY Well tonight, for instance, when I was looking for Mr Gordon, Joan was taking rubbish bags out through the back door.

INSPECTOR Yes, I know, she told me. That was when she heard the mobile ringing.

BETTY But they do the cleaning in the mornings. I had a cake delivery this morning, and she helped me clear up the rubbish. I'm sure she put all the bags out then. Where did this second lot come from?

INSPECTOR Where, indeed!

BETTY And from the way she was carrying them I would say they were heavier than the regular rubbish.

INSPECTOR Intriguing. Anything else?

BETTY You been in the box office?

INSPECTOR Not yet.

BETTY Full of brochures. For Mediterranean cruises.

INSPECTOR Mrs Ritchie?

- BETTY Yes. Mediterranean cruises! On her wages. There's something odd going on there.
- INSPECTOR I'm going to have quite a busy day tomorrow.
- BETTY And it's not just the present staff, either. I've seen the old cleaner, Myra, hanging around outside the Club a couple of times. No reason why she shouldn't, of course. She works with Jerry, and could have been dropping him off, although she couldn't do that and baby-sit for Helen at the same time. I just thought it was – well – as I said – odd!
- INSPECTOR You didn't see her tonight, I suppose?
- BETTY No, there was too much going on inside tonight. No floats, no cashier, and when I arrived Bill was swilling down my kitchen floor. He'd come in early to clear a blocked sink, and apparently knocked the can of cleaning fluid off the draining board and all over the floor. Filthy stuff. Ruined two pairs of Marigolds helping him clear it up. We barely got finished for opening up time. It's been quite a night, one way and another.
- INSPECTOR Yes, and it's barely started for me. I need to get over and search Mr Gordon's flat while my men check through his office. See you in the morning, Mrs Baxter. Sorry I shouted at you. And thanks for your help.
- BETTY You mean I've helped you solve the case?
- INSPECTOR Let's say, you've helped to narrow down the field a little. See you tomorrow.

**END OF SCENE TWO.**

**SCENE THREE.**

*Jerry pushes Helen in through the door*

- JERRY       Helen. Get in here, quick, before the others arrive.
- HELEN       Hey, steady.
- JERRY       What did you think you were up to last night, you silly cow? Your aunt Myra and I had a nice little thing going here, and it looks as though you've blown it all away for a measly ten quid.
- HELEN       No good shouting at me. Myra looks after the baby; that's the arrangement. If she lets me down, I have to pay a baby sitter – she knows that. You know that. If you must go around stealing things do it on my night off; I don't see why I should be out of pocket just so as you can make a bit on the side.
- JERRY       That bloody child's more trouble than it's worth.
- HELEN       You lay off my Kylie. Best thing that ever happened to me. Put a roof over my head – more than her useless father would ever have done.
- JERRY       I don't know why you ever got involved with Robert. You must have known he wasn't the marrying kind.
- HELEN       I wasn't particularly looking for marriage; he was fun – good looking, good company, good in bed.....
- JERRY       Yes. He was.
- HELEN       But not what you'd call a long-term proposition.
- JERRY       No.
- HELEN       Australia's probably the best place for him.
- JERRY       If he ever went to Australia.
- HELEN       What do you mean?
- JERRY       I suggested a long weekend in Paris once, but he said he didn't have a passport. A few weeks later he's supposed to be in Australia.
- HELEN       But if he's not in Australia, where the hell is he?
- INSPECTOR *(who has entered during this)* Where, indeed, Miss Brown. I assume we are talking about Robert Gordon?  
*(as the others join them)*
- HELEN       Maybe.
- INSPECTOR       Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being so punctual.
- HAMILTON       It was a relief to get up. I didn't get a wink of sleep.

- BILL No. Terrible night.
- INSPECTOR Well, at least you all got to bed. We've spent most of the night going through Mr Gordon's flat and office.
- JOAN Find anything interesting?
- INSPECTOR Quite a lot of interest, Miss Mathie – but whether it's relevant or not, well, I think we're about to find out.
- JERRY Are you saying that you think one of us killed Mr Gordon?
- INSPECTOR It this was an Agatha Christie novel, Mr Canning, I might be thinking that all of you conspired together to murder Mr Gordon. One of her grander conspiracy theories, like Murder On The Orient Express.
- HELEN Oh, I've seen that film.
- NANCY Who hasn't? It's forever being repeated on the telly, every blooming Bank Holiday.
- HELEN Can't say I understood it all.
- BETTY I'm intrigued, Inspector. What makes you consider a conspiracy?
- INSPECTOR Everybody's been so unexpectedly honest with me. So keen to admit to a little white lie, a little fiddle, a little something on the side. But always something little. Not quite big enough to demand an arrest warrant, certainly not big enough to justify a murder. There are things that you haven't yet told me.
- JOAN Things like what, Inspector?
- INSPECTOR Things like bin bags, Miss Mathie. You were taking black bags out to – to the dustbin, I think you said – yesterday evening when you heard the phone ringing.
- JOAN Yes, that's right. That's not a lie. I did take the bags out.
- INSPECTOR You put the rubbish out yesterday morning, and the bin was emptied just before two o'clock. We checked with the Council. It is still empty this morning.
- JOAN I swear I took the bags out and put them in the big bin. They were all tied up – I didn't look inside. Tins, I think, and rubbish from Bill's workshop – he'd been having another of his clear-outs.
- INSPECTOR Another?
- JOAN This is the third in recent weeks.
- BILL I like to keep things tidy, Inspector.
- INSPECTOR Very creditable. And do you then tidy up the dustbin on the way home?
- Pause*
- Or does Myra see to that?
- Reactions*

Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr Canning, but I'm assuming that the Club has been providing specialist materials for your little cleaning business.

HAMILTON Is this true? Bill? Jerry? Have you been shovelling our equipment out of the back door? No wonder the bills are going through the roof.

BILL I shouldn't climb on your high horse just yet, Mr Hamilton. From the way he's talking I think there's more to come.

JERRY All right, so we've been half-inching a few cans of cleaning fluid.

BILL And the rest....

JERRY Whatever... but I never murdered anyone.

INSPECTOR Strange. That's what Myra's niece said last night. I fiddled a few quid to pay the baby sitter, but I never murdered anyone.

HELEN That's right, I didn't.

INSPECTOR And you didn't tell me the whole truth either, did you Miss Brown?

HELEN I answered all your questions.

INSPECTOR Fair enough. My fault for not asking the right ones.

HELEN Such as?

INSPECTOR Such as, how did you know that Mr Gordon's grotty little flat was full of second-hand furniture?

HELEN Because he left all his decent furniture in the old house when he moved out.

INSPECTOR And you moved in.

HELEN How did you find that out?

INSPECTOR We asked you all to leave your addresses with the constable last night. The deeds to your address were in Mr Gordon's flat.

So presumably Mr Gordon knew that Kylie was his granddaughter?

HELEN Yes. He felt more responsible for her than Robert ever did. Oh, Robert hung around for a few weeks after I found I was pregnant, then just disappeared. Didn't even say goodbye, just went.

INSPECTOR Did he give notice at the Paper Mill?

HELEN No. Just pissed off. Not built for responsibility, was Robert. His father wanted him to marry me. Thank God he didn't!

INSPECTOR So Mr Gordon provided a home for you and his granddaughter?

- HELEN        Carried on paying the mortgage, as well as his own rent. I gave him the rent allowance I got from Social Security, seemed only fair. Now it looks as though I'll get thrown out. Even if he's left us the house I couldn't afford to keep up the mortgage, so I really need this job – I'm sorry about the cheating, Mr Hamilton.
- HAMILTON     We'll sort that out later, Miss Brown. Perhaps find you some extra hours.
- JOAN         That won't help if your baby-sitter ends up in prison.
- INSPECTOR    She might not be the only one, eh Mrs Ritchie?
- NANCY        How do you mean?
- INSPECTOR    My men had a lot of fun with the till rolls last night. Only had time to check a small sample, of course – the rest will be taken down to the station this morning.
- NANCY        What about the till rolls? Didn't they check out?
- INSPECTOR    Oh yes, the total at the end of the till roll always checked with the bank pay-in...
- JERRY         Here comes another 'But'...
- INSPECTOR    But – the sum of all the individual items on the till roll usually added up to about £30 or £40 more than the total shown at the end of the roll. It seems that someone was putting refunds through the system before the box office opened up, so the first few customers merely cleared off the deficit – allowing that someone to help themselves to the money at the end of the night.
- BETTY         But who, Inspector?
- INSPECTOR    Who, indeed, Mrs Baxter.
- JOAN         It surely wasn't Mr Gordon, Inspector.
- INSPECTOR    What makes you say that, Miss Mathie?
- JOAN         Well, he may not have been dazzling company, but everything we've heard suggests that Mr Gordon was honest – scrupulously so, in fact, even running himself into poverty to provide a home for his grand-daughter.
- BETTY         Perhaps it was that poverty which drove him to embezzlement.
- JOAN         Perhaps – but he was the one who was killed. It's more likely that he discovered the thief, and was attacked when he threatened to expose him.
- INSPECTOR    Or her.
- BETTY         Or her, indeed, Inspector. There is one way to check.
- INSPECTOR    And what is that?

BETTY Well, if Mr Gordon was fiddling the till he would not be able to remove the cash until he got it to his office...

INSPECTOR ....which didn't happen last night!

BETTY Exactly. So if the takings are thirty or forty pounds too much then we know the culprit. Mr Gordon.

NANCY And if they balance?

INSPECTOR Then, Mrs Ritchie, you might find yourself answering questions down at the station. Mr Hamilton, would you please go through to the office and count last night's takings for us; check it against the till roll total. The constable has the safe keys.

*Hamilton exits.*

NANCY I don't want to speak ill of the dead, but I can assure everyone that it certainly wasn't me.

INSPECTOR I rather hope it wasn't, Mrs Ritchie, but the holiday brochures in the box office make me suspicious. You seem to be planning a Mediterranean cruise.

NANCY It's in the back of our minds, Inspector. Albert retires next year, and we thought we might treat ourselves. But only if we can afford it, legitimately. We wouldn't steal the money.

INSPECTOR I'm inclined to believe you.

BETTY So, Inspector, you seem to be accepting that Mr Gordon is the embezzler?

INSPECTOR Mr Hamilton's cash check should confirm the identity of the embezzler, Mrs Baxter, but it won't explain why Mr Gordon was killed yesterday evening. So bear with me, please; just a few more questions while we are waiting. Mr Canning....

JERRY Oh, no; not me again. You've already got me for lying and thieving. No way are you adding murder.

INSPECTOR Not Mr Gordon's murder, no. But something you said last night has set me wondering. "I'm not certain he had any close friends – or relatives". And yet you'd worked with Mr Gordon's son at the Paper Mill and, through Myra if no other way, you knew that Kylie was his grand-daughter. What made you say "no relatives"?

JERRY Didn't want to involve Helen and Myra – things are complicated enough there already – and I couldn't see how a three-year-old girl might be involved in her grandfather's death.

- INSPECTOR She could be the sole heir if Robert doesn't show up, and I have to tell you all, that there is no sign of any address for him at the flat – not in Australia nor anywhere else. No letters from him: not even a phone number. And nothing in Mr Gordon's bank statements that suggest payments to him. It's almost as though Robert never existed.
- BETTY Or no longer exists, Inspector?
- INSPECTOR Is he dead, Mr Canning? Did you know that? Is that why you said "no relatives"?
- JERRY I've always thought that he might be dead. He disappeared so quickly, and so completely. I knew him, you're right, but we weren't exactly close – intimate, occasionally, but not close. No reason for him to keep in touch. But I never thought he went to Australia. London perhaps. Brighton. But not Australia. As far as I know he didn't even have a passport – you should be able to check on that.
- INSPECTOR Yes, we should.  
Mrs Ritchie, you'd seen Robert at his mother's funeral?
- NANCY Yes, and here – once.
- INSPECTOR That's right. Did anyone else know him?
- BILL Didn't know him, but I might have seen him the night he was here. About three years ago, you said. Tall, slim, dark hair?
- NANCY Yes.
- BILL Good looking!
- JERRY/HELEN Yes.
- BILL He went into Mr Gordon's office and shut the door. There was one hell of a row, and then Mr Gordon let him out through the fire exit. Wouldn't let him go through the Club.
- INSPECTOR And you've never seen him since.
- BILL No.
- INSPECTOR Nor anyone else?
- ALL No.
- INSPECTOR Mr Gordon never talked about him, Miss Brown?
- HELEN Just that once, when we were fixing the tenancy. Said he'd emigrated to Australia. I asked once or twice if he'd heard from him: just got a "No". Nothing else. So I stopped asking.
- INSPECTOR We'll have to start making some enquiries. Organise a proper search. I'll get a warrant for your house, Miss Brown. We may need to turn it over, I'm afraid. Even rip up your floorboards, or dig your garden over.
- HELEN If it proves he's dead then go ahead, feel free.

JOAN       Helen!

HELEN       Sorry Joan, but I'm thinking about Kylie. If Robert is dead, however he died, then everything should go to Kylie. Shouldn't it. Inspector?

INSPECTOR     You might need a DNA test, but if that's OK then she should have a clear claim on the estate, such as it is. As long as you didn't kill Robert, of course.

HELEN       Fortunately for him he wasn't around, or I might have thought about it.

INSPECTOR     But if he is dead, and you didn't do it.....?

BETTY       Then who did, Inspector?

INSPECTOR     Who, indeed, Mrs Baxter. If our scrupulously honest cashier has buried his son's body under the cabbages....

HELEN       I don't grow cabbages. Tried growing lettuces, but they all came up at once. Only ate about four, the rest just rotted away.

BILL         Like the corpse underneath them, perhaps?

HELEN       Ugh, don't. That's sick.

*Mr Hamilton returns. Everyone watches him. There will be different reactions.*

INSPECTOR     Well, Mr Hamilton, how was it?

HAMILTON     Forty pounds over.

*Again there are different reactions.*

NANCY       So it was Mr Gordon!

INSPECTOR     Was the constable with you while you counted it?

HAMILTON     Most of the time, yes, although he did have to slip out for a minute.

INSPECTOR     Yes, I asked him to. I thought you'd probably need a moment to put the money back in.

HAMILTON     What are you saying?

INSPECTOR     Don't take us for complete fools, Mr Hamilton. I gave you the cash bag last night to put in the safe. After you'd gone home we checked the takings and it all balanced against the false figure on the till roll, which meant that someone had removed the cash before the bag went into the safe. Only two people had handled the bag - Mrs Ritchie and you.

NANCY       Mr Hamilton!

- INSPECTOR        So we set you a little test. I explained that we had discovered the fraud, and then gave you an opportunity to replace the money and throw the blame onto the late Mr Gordon. Which you did. Or so you thought. But you didn't know that we had already counted the takings. Now let me hazard another guess. Mr Gordon, who kept the till rolls in the middle drawer of his filing cabinet, finally worked out what was happening and came through to confront you, in such a rush that he left his door open.
- BETTY            But Mr Hamilton didn't murder him, Inspector.
- INSPECTOR        Mrs Baxter! Yes. Someone else who let slip a few 'little things' last night but forgot to mention the big one. Perhaps you'd like to tell us what really happened.
- BETTY            Mr Hamilton came into the kitchen for a quick coffee before the punter's arrived. Bill and I were just finishing the mopping up, and were ready for a break ourselves, and then Mr Gordon came rushing in. Really angry, shouting.
- BILL              Had a righteous streak. He didn't often lose his temper, but when he did...
- BETTY            Got his hands around Mr Hamilton's neck and was shouting at him about honesty, and trying to keep the Club open while the manager was stealing the takings...
- HAMILTON        Shouting right in my face, pushing me backwards over the cooker – I couldn't breathe.
- BILL              I tried to pull him away, but the floor was still slippery and I almost lost my balance. Had to grab hold of the sink to stop myself falling.
- BETTY            I thought he was going to kill Mr Hamilton. So I hit him with a saucepan.
- INSPECTOR        You killed him?
- BETTY/BILL/HAMILTON    No!
- BETTY            .... of course not. But I did stop him. He let go of Mr Hamilton and staggered backwards – then seemed to be coming for me, but as he swung round he went over on the slippery floor and banged his head. Hard! And that was that.
- HAMILTON        The fall killed him.
- BILL              An accident.
- INSPECTOR        Why didn't you just phone us? Why lock him in the toilet?
- BILL              Panic, I suppose. The punters were about to arrive.

BETTY        Some of them come in for a quick coffee before the first card. Couldn't have a dead body in the kitchen.

BILL         It was the fall that killed him, so we tried to arrange things to look as if he had collapsed in the loo and hit his head there.

INSPECTOR    Might have worked, too, if we hadn't found the mark of the saucepan.

HAMILTON.    Yes.

INSPECTOR    Why all the palaver with the phone calls?

BETTY        He had to be 'found', Inspector. We couldn't leave the poor soul locked in there....

INSPECTOR    ...from Monday to Saturday....

BETTY        Right.

HAMILTON     And I needed the safe keys.

INSPECTOR    I don't understand why you didn't just report it. Does nobody here ever tell the truth?

HAMILTON     But then all the other business would have come out. The till roll money, the sales of surplus cleaning materials.....

INSPECTOR    You knew about all that?

HAMILTON     Yes. Bill organised that. Jerry was happy to get his materials on the cheap...

JERRY        ...and help to fund Mrs Hamilton's operation at the same time.

JOAN         Mrs Hamilton's operation?

BETTY        For her hip replacement. All in a good cause, you see, Inspector.

INSPECTOR    All in a good cause? You have all been systematically thieving from your employers....

NANCY        Not all, Inspector. I promise you, I knew nothing about any of this.

JOAN         No, nor me

INSPECTOR    Theft, fraud, wasting police time, conspiring to pervert the course of justice – all in a good cause?

BETTY        Yes. A good cause. If you could only see her, inspector. Poor Mrs Hamilton is in so much pain. The cash from the box office and the cleaning materials, plus the odd few pounds from my snack bar takings - another few weeks and we'd have had enough for her new hip.

NANCY        Betty, Jerry, how could you?

JERRY        It was a risk. We knew that. We just hoped things would be back to normal before the auditors realised what was happening.

INSPECTOR      And now Mr Gordon's death has brought it all out into the open.

BETTY         Just a death, inspector!

BILL          An accident.

BETTY         Not a murder.

INSPECTOR      That depends on the inquest, and the Magistrate, Mrs Baxter. If you hadn't been fiddling the books Mr Gordon wouldn't have gone rushing into the kitchen, and he'd still be alive. You could still be facing manslaughter on top of everything else.

BILL          He could have phoned you; reported the thefts. He didn't have to come rushing in here like a mad thing, attacking Mr Hamilton...

HAMILTON      He was in such a rage...

BILL          ...I thought he was going to kill you, I've never seen anyone so angry.

It does make you wonder about his missing son.

BETTY         If Robert is under the cabbage patch, then Mr Gordon has to be the chief suspect.

HAMILTON      The only suspect.

BETTY         You could still have your murder, Inspector – and your murderer.

INSPECTOR      Unless Robert also fell and banged his head, Mrs Baxter.....

What do you think, Mrs Ritchie?

NANCY         I can't condone theft, I really can't. I've always tried to do things honestly, but... I can sympathise with Mrs Hamilton. I do understand now what's it's like to live with pain. This ankle. Some days I just sit with the bottle of painkillers and think – take the lot, put an end to it.

*(pause while Inspector considers alternatives)*

INSPECTOR      Where is the money now?

BETTY         Under my mattress, Inspector.

INSPECTOR      All of it?

BETTY         Yes.

INSPECTOR      If – and there are no buts this time - if we find Robert's body, and if I can square things with the Magistrate, can you be as adept at replacing the money as you were at stealing it? Mr Hamilton?

HAMILTON      What are you suggesting?

INSPECTOR        Feed the money back into the tills, a bit at a time. The takings improve again and that should satisfy the auditors. No more fraudulent top lines, Helen. No more liberated cleaning materials, Jerry. That way there's a chance that the Club will stay open, and you'll still have jobs.

HAMILTON        Do we have any alternative?

INSPECTOR        Oh yes. Prison! And that's not going to help your wife's condition, is it?

BETTY        But poor Mrs Hamilton....

INSPECTOR        ..... will have to take her chance with the NHS. What do you say?

HAMILTON        *(looks at the others)* There's only one thing we can say, Inspector.

INSPECTOR        And what's that?

ALL        BINGO!

INSPECTOR *(as he exits through the audience)* Huh!

*And the evening probably ends with another game of Bingo.*