

NEVER MIND THE BOLLARDS

by

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Episode 1 - Death and Taxis

30 minute TV sitcom pilot

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INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Meet ALVIN KING. 40s. Looks dodgier than the genetic splicing of a politician and a second-hand car dealer. He sits at the desk. Alone. Tetchy. The long wait drives him to drum impatient fingers upon the flat wooden surface.

A POLICE DETECTIVE enters, a folder of paperwork tucked under one arm, his other arm bent behind his back, hiding something, we don't know what yet.

ALVIN

About time too. I've been sitting here so long, my piles have grown piles of their own.

The DETECTIVE stands before the desk. A weary sigh, then --

DETECTIVE

Mr King. I've been a police officer for twenty loooooong years.

ALVIN

You chose the wrong side, mate. You'd have got less for murder.

DETECTIVE

I thought I'd seen it all. And now you come along.

ALVIN

Compliments will get you everywhere.

DETECTIVE

People who are unfortunate enough to find themselves in police custody generally use their one phone call to contact a loved one. But oh, no. Not Alvin King. What do you do?

The DETECTIVE lobs a cardboard pizza box (oh, so that's what he was hiding behind his back) onto the desk.

DETECTIVE

You order a pizza.

ALVIN

A man's got to eat, Officer.

The DETECTIVE seats himself opposite ALVIN, placing the folder of paperwork on his desk. A hungry ALVIN opens the box. Upon inspection of the pizza, his face clouds with disappointment.

ALVIN

Oh, no. I specifically requested no olives.

DETECTIVE

Do you not grasp the seriousness of this situation?

ALVIN

Yes. I do. I hate olives.

Picking out olives, ALVIN starts munching on the pizza.

DETECTIVE

I am talking about Traffic pulling over your taxi and discovering two recently deceased elderly people sitting in the back seat, both seat-belted up like tourists.

ALVIN

Pair of bloody jobsworths those coppers were too. Can you believe they arrested me for that?

DETECTIVE

What did you expect them to do? Play a jolly game of "ignore the corpses?"

ALVIN

I think you'll find I have a perfectly reasonable explanation.

DETECTIVE

Well, go on then, let's hear it.

ALVIN

There I was, minding my own business in my taxi office with Queenie. She's the radio controller. Anyway, the phone rang and she answered it...

INT. TAXI OFFICE - MORNING

ALVIN stands behind the counter with a seated (and a little tipsy) QUEENIE KING, late 30s, super-loud blouse, way too much make-up, trying too hard to look glamorous.

The ringing landline phone sits on the counter next to a half-consumed bottle of vodka. QUEENIE'S hand hovers over the phone, then the vodka, the phone, the vodka. Is she actually choosing what to pick up first? Decision made, she answers the call.

QUEENIE

Good morning. King's Taxis. ... Oh. They hung up. Alvin, why does that keep happening?

ALVIN

I reckon they got a whiff of that vodka you've been chucking down your throat all morning.

QUEENIE

What, down the phone line?

ALVIN

Probably, with the amount you drink.

QUEENIE

It's medicinal. Doctor's orders.

ALVIN

Who, Doctor Smirnoff?

QUEENIE

Alvin. Are you insinuating that I'm an alcoholic?

ALVIN

No, of course not. ... Alcoholics take breaths between swigs.

QUEENIE, hugely offended.

At that moment, two taxi drivers walk in: BERTIE, 60s, naive, dodderly, lost-looking. And LEO, 20s, cool, confident, eye candy for the ladies, wearing sharp threads.

LEO

Take no notice of him, Queenie. Us drivers love you, babes.

QUEENIE

Awwwww, thanks, Leo.

ALVIN

Queenie. Have you not learnt by now that a compliment off Leo holds about as much weight as a catwalk model? The man is sex mad. He'll sweet-talk anything in a skirt. Most of his female customers pay him in kind. No wonder he's always skint.

BERTIE

I was once paid in kind.

Everybody gawks at BERTIE in disbelief.

ALVIN

What, a dodderly old codger like you,
Bertie? Never.

BERTIE

It's perfectly true. She came round
every Thursday for four weeks and did
the polishing and vacuuming. That was
really kind of her.

Anti-climax groans all round.

Again, the phone rings. Again, QUEENIE answers it.

QUEENIE

Good morning. King's Taxis. ... Yes, we
do have a mature driver available. In
fact, absolutely ancient. Mind you, he
is rather batty. Are you all right with
that? ... No, he hasn't got any
imaginary friends. ... Yes, he has
remembered to put on his trousers. ...
Right, where are you heading? ... Okay,
I'll send him straight round. Byeeeee.

She hangs up the phone and --

QUEENIE

Bertie. Job for you. Some old boy wants
picking up from the phone box just
round the corner. He needs to go to the
train station.

BERTIE

Righto, on my way.

BERTIE leaves the taxi office.

ALVIN

And what about you, Leo? Planning on
doing any actual work?

LEO

I was hoping Queenie would make me a
coffee to start off my day.

QUEENIE stands up, walking towards the back room, but --

ALVIN
Queenie, cancel that order.

QUEENIE returns. ALVIN points to a nearby vending machine.

ALVIN
Leo, there's a perfectly good drinks machine over there. For the life of me, I can't fathom out why you don't take advantage of it.

LEO
Why do you think? You've set it at a fiver a cup.

ALVIN
Well, if you drivers worked a lot harder, I wouldn't need to.

LEO dishes out a mock salute.

LEO
Heading for the taxi rank now, Sir Alvin.

He sets about leaving, but then --

LEO
Oh, by the way. Later this morning, I'll need the estate car. I'm taking my latest potential regular to the garden centre. Megan is well green-fingered. You should see her front garden.

ALVIN
Her lady garden is all you want to peek at, you dirty so and so.

QUEENIE grabs the relevant keys from a board on the wall and hands them to LEO.

QUEENIE
Ignore him, Leo, he's only jealous.

LEO
Cheers, Queenie. Later.

And then LEO makes his exit.

QUEENIE
Don't you think you're a bit hard on your drivers?

ALVIN

It's good for them. Never did me any harm. Made me the man I am today.

QUEENIE

Yes, I agree. Rude. Arrogant. Conceited.

ALVIN

Yeah, well, we all have faults.

QUEENIE

Thoughtless. Impolite. Offensive.

ALVIN is about to protest, but he's interrupted by a panic-stricken BERTIE on the radio.

BERTIE (V.O.)

Bertie to base! Bertie to base! Do you read me?

It's ALVIN who grabs the radio mic.

ALVIN

What is it, Bertie? Have you picked your fare up yet?

BERTIE (V.O.)

Yes, but he's just this minute suffered a heart attack in the back of my taxi!

ALVIN

Oh, no. You showed him our price list. I've told you a million times, break it to customers gently.

BERTIE (V.O.)

But Alvin. The poor chap has died!

ALVIN

What? I hope he paid in advance.

BERTIE (V.O.)

Afraid not, no.

ALVIN

Then raid his wallet for the readies. Just because he's dead, it doesn't give him the right to fare-dodge.

QUEENIE

You can't make him do that!

ALVIN

Oh, yes, I can, I want paying. Don't these people realise I've got mouths to feed?

QUEENIE

You live on your own.

ALVIN

That's not the point. I still want my cut.

QUEENIE

Oh, for God's sake, give me the mic.

QUEENIE wrestles ALVIN for the radio mic and wins.

QUEENIE

Bertie. Come back to the office. And bring your newfound friend with you.

BERTIE (V.O.)

Righto.

QUEENIE returns the radio mic home and sits down.

QUEENIE

Alvin, you are so insensitive. Raid his wallet for the readies indeed. It's lucky you've got somebody like me to keep you in check.

ALVIN

Well, that's why I married you.

QUEENIE

Yes. And that's why I divorced you.

ALVIN

If I was really that bad a husband, why did you keep my name?

QUEENIE

It's the only decent thing you ever gave me. Queenie King has a certain ring to it.

ALVIN

Cor, dear, what a day. Mind you, it was bound to happen sooner or later. After all, as they say, the only certain things in life are death and taxis.

QUEENIE

Um. Alvin. I'm pretty sure it's taxes.
As in, the money you're always trying
to avoid giving to HMRC.

ALVIN

That doesn't make sense. No, no, it's
got to be taxis. I mean, the clue's in
the phrase "the only certain things."
As in, sure-fire. Reliable. Dependable.
Like this taxi firm.

QUEENIE regards him with head-shaking incredulity.

QUEENIE

You truly are unbelievable.

ALVIN, thinking she means it, lobs her a weird look.

ALVIN

That sounded like a compliment. Not
like you at all. Are you sure you're
not coming down with something?

EXT. TAXI OFFICE CAR PARK - MORNING

ALVIN and QUEENIE look on in weary disbelief as BERTIE attempts
to park his taxi in a free bay next to the estate car. The car
park is actually almost empty, with ALVIN'S own personal taxi
parked in the far corner. Even so, BERTIE reverses, pulls
forward, reverses, pulls forward, crunching of gears aplenty.

ALVIN

Unbelievable. Bertie has been a taxi
driver since the Big Bang. Yet here he
is, taking an ice age to reverse into
that parking space. I mean, look. It
defies logic. The car park is almost
empty.

QUEENIE

Well, yes, but as you can see, he's
parking next to your precious estate
car. Don't forget, you weren't too kind
to him the other day when he almost hit
it.

ALVIN

All I did was threaten the man with
rusty-bladed castration.

At last, BERTIE clambers awkwardly out of the vehicle.

ALVIN

All right, Bertie, show us your body.

BERTIE

I beg your pardon.

ALVIN

I meant the lifeless one. Not that there's much difference.

BERTIE points through the window of the rear door.

BERTIE

He's sitting in the back. See?

ALVIN opens the rear door, pokes his head inside for a closer inspection, then stands up straight and closes the door.

ALVIN

You're right. He doesn't look too well at all. But are you sure he's dead? The man could be in a deep sleep.

BERTIE

Yes, of course I'm sure. I saw enough of the deceased whilst fighting in the Napoleonic Wars to know the difference. Old Bonaparte once gave me a medal for being able to spot dead bodies so well.

ALVIN and QUEENIE swap funny looks.

QUEENIE

Ummm, Bertie. Maybe you should consider upping your medication.

BERTIE

No, hold on, I tell a lie. It wasn't Napoleon who awarded me that medal. It was Mahatma Ghandi.

ALVIN

Look, as much as I'd love to stand around all day debating French military leaders versus Indian anti-colonial campaigners, what are we going to do with this stiff? I want him out of this taxi pronto, so Bertie can get back out in the field and earn me money.

QUEENIE

Where do you suggest we put him?

ALVIN

Well, he's not coming in the office.
The last thing I need is some old
corpse staring at me all day.

QUEENIE

Why not? I had to endure that when we
were married.

ALVIN

Yeah, har-de-har. Check out my
splitting sides. Now, concentrate.
Think deceased pensioner. Where can we
store him?

QUEENIE

Sort it out amongst yourselves. I'm
heading inside to phone for an
ambulance.

And then QUEENIE walks towards the taxi office.

ALVIN

What we need is somewhere flat to lay
him down before rigor mortis sets in.

BERTIE

Why?

ALVIN

Bertie. When was the last time you saw
a sitting-up shaped coffin?

BERTIE looks at him, confused. Then the penny drops.

BERTIE

Ohhhh, right. How about the estate car?

ALVIN

Good thinking. We'll recline the rear
seats and stick the body in the back.
But first...

Again, ALVIN opens the car door. He stoops inside and, much to
BERTIE'S dismay, rifles through the DEAD GUY'S pockets.

BERTIE

Alvin? What are you doing?

ALVIN

Like my old man used to say... death is
not an excuse to let debts linger.