

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 years.

ALVIN

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

DETECTIVE

I thought I'd witnessed it all. And now you come along. You see, 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, Detective.

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
poor souls 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.
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 Taxis. ... Oh. They hung up. Alvin, why does that keep happening?

ALVIN

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

QUEENIE

What, through the phone line?

ALVIN

Probably, with the amount you drink.

QUEENIE

Are you insinuating that I'm an alcoholic?

ALVIN

No, of course not.

QUEENIE

Good.

ALVIN

Alcoholics take breaths between swigs.

QUEENIE, hugely offended.

Enter two taxi drivers: BERTIE, 60s, naive, dodderly. And LEO, 20s, cool, confident, 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 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 kick-start 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 vending machine over there. For the life of me, I don't know why you never use it.

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

ALVIN
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 Alvin, 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 is interrupted by a panic-stricken BERTIE on the CB radio.

BERTIE (V.O.)

Bertie to base! Bertie to base!

It's ALVIN who grabs the radio mic.

ALVIN

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

BERTIE (V.O.)

Indeed I have. 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'm entitled to my fair share.

QUEENIE

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

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 worked as 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

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 and pokes his head inside. After a close inspection, he closes the door.

ALVIN

You're right. He doesn't look too well. 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. 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.