

Never Mind The Bollards

by

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Episode 1 - Death And Taxis

30 minute radio sitcom pilot

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SCENE 1

ATMOS: INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM.

FX: An impatient sigh from **ALVIN KING**, 40s, as he drums his fingers upon the flat wooden surface of the desk. If we could see him, he'd look dodgier than the genetic splicing of a politician and a second-hand car dealer.

FX: A **POLICE DETECTIVE** enters the room and closes the door behind him. Unhurried footsteps signal his approach.

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

Ah, so ALVIN'S a cocky fellow.

FX: The DETECTIVE emits 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?

FX: The DETECTIVE lobbs something made of cardboard on the desk.

DETECTIVE: You order a pizza.

ALVIN: A man's got to eat, Detective.

FX: The DETECTIVE sits down at the desk, thumbing through a folder of paperwork.

FX: ALVIN opens the pizza box, then groans.

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.

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.

FX: ALVIN munches on a pizza slice as he talks.

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...

FX: Let’s somehow make an audible transition into Scene 2, so we know we’re heading into a flashback.

SCENE 2

ATMOS: INT. TAXI OFFICE.

FX: While the phone rings, **QUEENIE KING**, late 30s, takes a somewhat desperate swig of vodka straight from the bottle. She burps, then answers the landline phone.

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

ALVIN: No, of course not.

QUEENIE: Good.

ALVIN: Alcoholics take breaths between swigs.

QUEENIE: Alvin, you b—

FX: Interrupted by the taxi office door opening.

FX: In toddles **BERTIE**, 60s, naive, dodderly, lost-sounding,
followed in by **LEO**, 20s, cool and confident. We can't see **LEO**,
but we just know he's wearing sharp threads.

FX: **LEO** closes the door behind him.

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.

FX: Murmurs of disbelief from everybody.

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.

FX: Anti-climax groans all round.

FX: 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. Byeeeeee.

FX: She hangs up the phone.

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.

FX: 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: Certainly, Le—

ALVIN: Queenie, cancel that order. 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: Heading for the taxi rank now, Sir Alvin. ... 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.

FX: 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.

FX: 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: All right, don't milk it.

FX: Interrupted by a panic-stricken BERTIE on the CB radio.

BERTIE: Bertie to base! Bertie to base!

FX: ALVIN grabs the radio mic.

ALVIN: What's with the panicking, Bertie? Have you picked up your fare yet?

BERTIE: 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: But Alvin. The poor chap has died!

ALVIN: What? I hope he paid in advance.

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

FX: QUEENIE wrestles ALVIN for the radio mic and wins.

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

BERTIE: Righto.

FX: QUEENIE returns the radio mic home.

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

ALVIN: 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: I'm sure I provided more than that.

QUEENIE: Oh, you did. But your ex-wife's bottomless pit of despair which fuelled a hopeless dependency on alcohol doesn't exactly shine you in a positive light.

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

SCENE 3

ATMOS: EXT. TAXI OFFICE CAR PARK.

FX: BERTIE reverses his taxi towards a parking space, 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.

FX: At last, BERTIE kills the engine and clambers out of the vehicle, shutting the front door behind him.

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: He's sitting in the back. See?

FX: ALVIN opens the rear door, looks inside, then 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.

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.

FX: We hear QUEENIE'S footsteps leading away.

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?

It takes a moment for BERTIE'S proverbial penny to drop. And when it does –

BERTIE: Ohhhh, I see. How about the estate car?

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

FX: Again, ALVIN opens the rear door. We hear patting and brushing of material. What's going on?

BERTIE: Alvin? Why are you rooting through that poor chap's pockets?

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

SCENE 4

ATMOS: INT. TAXI OFFICE.

It's ALVIN and QUEENIE in the taxi office.

QUEENIE: What's taking that ambulance so long? I called them well over an hour ago.

ALVIN: Isn't it a bit late in the day for an NHS chariot? The man's stone dead. If a dustcart picked him up, he wouldn't know about it.

QUEENIE: I hate you, Alvin, you've got no soul.

ALVIN: Nor has he now.

FX: The door opens. Introducing a **FEMALE PARAMEDIC**.

PARAMEDIC: Excuse me. I'm after a body.

ALVIN is suddenly (and overly) flirtatious.

ALVIN: Hey, hey, hey, well, Alvin King is available.

The PARAMEDIC, unimpressed.

PARAMEDIC: I meant a dead body.

QUEENIE mimics ALVIN'S failed attempt at seduction.

QUEENIE: Hey, hey, hey, well, Alvin King is available.

ALVIN: Queenie. I'm the funny one around here.

QUEENIE: I pity you, dear ex-husband. Blind delusion must be such a wicked curse.

QUEENIE then addresses the PARAMEDIC.

QUEENIE: Ignore Alvin. He's a professional tosspot. You'll find the deceased outside in the back of the estate car.