

Dead Tuesday

Characters

ROY

LILLIAN

LORELLE

YVONNE

BOB

ERIC

Time: Ten years ago

ROY is in the process of standing at the door Upstage, seeing off a customer. LILLIAN is removing used pint glasses from the table Downstage through to the bar Off Left.

ROY calls to Offstage.

ROY: Bye Chris. See you. Take care now. *(He closes the door and sighs with relief.)*

LILLIAN: Thank God for that!

ROY: Don't celebrate just yet. He could be back. *(He imitates a drunk.)* Jusht one more for the road.

LILLIAN: Don't! My face aches from trying to look as if I give one. How can anybody talk such bull for four hours?

ROY: Easy - six or seven pints every afternoon, seven days a week.

LILLIAN: Well, four or five afternoons at least.

ROY: *Every* afternoon. When he's not here, he's at The Blue Garter.

LILLIAN: He's a poor soul for a young man. No family, no job, no prospects of one. No wonder he's peeing his benefits money up the wall.

ROY: As long as he's peeing it up *this* wall. If it hadn't been for him, we'd have taken nothing this afternoon.

LILLIAN: But take into account heating and lighting and we've *made* nothing, and been bored rigid into the bargain. Tuesday afternoons are dead, Roy. We may as well close up.

ROY: Thin end of the wedge. We'd be discouraging trade, and Chris would spend Tuesday afternoons at The Garter, perhaps every afternoon.

LILLIAN: Hallelujah! Would that be such a *bad* thing?

ROY: Not if you want forced early retirement... Just what the hell do we have to do to make some money in here? (*He looks at his watch.*) What time have you put on the board for tonight?

LILLIAN: Seven-thirty.

ROY: And now it's seven forty two.

LILLIAN: Give 'em a chance.

ROY: And the weather doesn't help. Thundery showers forecast for the rest of the evening. People don't like to get wet, and anyway, if they're as keen to swap ghost stories as you seem to think they are, then... eh... where are they? A tenner says it'll be another non-starter, just another dead Tuesday.

LILLIAN: Roy, I don't think you quite understand what tonight is all about. It's not like a quiz night or a darts tournament or a meat draw. 'Come and share your supernatural talents and experiences.' What does that say to you?

ROY: Not a lot. It all sounds a bit cranky to me.

LILLIAN: Exactly, because for every one person who has experienced the supernatural, there are five people who haven't, and three of those five are scoffers, of which you are one. Now if, like me, someone happens to be one of those one in six who *have* experienced the supernatural, whilst we would love the chance to share and compare experiences with similar one in sixers, we may well hang back, because we don't exactly look forward to being labelled as nutters by the scoffers who will inevitably turn up to do just that.

ROY: I've never called you a nutter, have I?

LILLIAN: Not in so many words, but you didn't believe me, did you, so you must have thought I was either a liar or a nutter.

ROY: I know, but come on Lil... you saw your father three days after he died!

LILLIAN: That's right, Roy, I did. Three days after my dad died I walked into his garage and saw him sitting in the driving seat of his Ford Fiesta and you know how he loved that car.

ROY: I'm not trying to be daft, love, but it all sounds very familiar, a bit too much like 'and on the third day he drove again'... and God knows your dad was no divine being.

LILLIAN: It was as it was, Roy. Take it or leave it. You can't sit on the fence about these things, and as we are so obviously on opposite sides of the fence, I think it might be better if you took the night off and went upstairs.

ROY: I'd like nothing better, but in case you'd forgotten, tonight's event is yet another attempt to boost takings, to attract paying customers, to stop us going to the wall, and if by some freak, it *does* get busy, how will you cope on your own? What if a barrel needs changing?

LILLIAN: Wouldn't *that* be nice, but I'm not expecting miracles straight off. I feel that this will be a slow burner and once the scoffers lose interest, that's when we'll really start to build up business with the genuine cases.

LORELLE hurries in Upstage.

LORELLE: Phew, just made it! It's started to tip it down. (*She takes down her hood and removes her raincoat, revealing the dress style of a modern pop diva, leaving little to the imagination. She is surprised to see the pub is empty.*)

LILLIAN: Hello. Are you here for tonight's event?

LORELLE: Yea. It is still on, isn't it?

LILLIAN: Oh yes. We're just waiting for it to get underway. Welcome. I'm Lillian and this is Roy.

LORELLE: I'm Lorelle.

LILLIAN: Sit here if you like, Lorelle.

LORELLE dumps her bag on LILLIAN'S table, moves to sit down, then hesitates.

LORELLE: Well actually, do you mind if I go now?

ROY: Go? You've only just got here.

LORELLE: I mean, perform.

LILLIAN: Don't you want to wait until there's a few more to hear you?

LORELLE: I can go again later, if you think I'm alright. I've never done anything like this before and I really need some feedback so please be totally honest because I don't want to go shaming myself in front of a full house.

ROY: Chance would be a fine thing!

LORELLE: Just give me a second to get in the moment. *(She hoists at her bodice, pushes up her breasts, smooths her very tight, very short skirt, tosses her hair about and adopts a provocative pose.)* Right, I think I'm ready... would you mind not looking *right* at me because I'm a bit shy? *(She waits until they avert their gaze.)* Are you ready?

LILLIAN: Wouldn't you be comfier sitting down, Lorelle?

LORELLE: Oh no, this is how I practise in my bedroom. Right, ready now. Perfectly honest, ok?

LORELLE opens her mouth to begin but ROY interrupts before she does.

ROY: Before you start, can I get you a drink, love?

LORELLE: Ta, I'll have a voddie and coke.

ROY: With ice and a slice?

LORELLE: Lovely.

ROY: Would that be a double?

LORELLE: Ooh, why not?

ROY rubs his hands at the prospect of some profit as he moves behind the bar and exits Down Left.

Without warning, LORELLE, miming holding a hand mike, suddenly bursts into some modern tuneless song, singing in a breathy nasal whine with heavy American pronunciation and much provocative writhing, in the style of some modern popular female singers. LILLIAN is stunned. LORELLE ends her singing. ROY enters with her drink.

LORELLE: That's just the first verse. Obviously, ideally it should have a backing track. Well? What did you think?

ROY hands LORELLE her drink.

ROY: It was painful. I thought I was listening to an asthmatic depressive yodeller from Nashville.

LORELLE: Eh?

ROY: Sorry, but you did ask for perfect honesty. I take it you have ambitions as a singer?

LORELLE: Well... yea. I suppose I do.

ROY: And what sort of lasting impression do you want to give to your audience?

LORELLE: I dunno... I just want to be famous... stand out... be different.

ROY: Then sing as if you're English and pronounce the lyrics so we know what you're singing about. Now *that would* be different. And stop with the irritating verbal gymnastics. It's not impressive. It's a trick employed by all the wannabes to disguise the fact they can't hold a clean note, and if you picked a song with a tune it might help. Who's going to remember that one five seconds after you've sung it? Now if you want a good example on how to, you should listen to Lily Allen. Now she's got -

LILLIAN: - Roy, shut up... Sorry, he does go on a bit. He thinks he's Simon Cowell because he used to manage a couple of local entertainers. Ah! Is that why you're here, Lorelle, because I'm sorry but he doesn't do it anymore?

LORELLE: What are you on about? I'm here for the talent show.

LILLIAN: What talent show?

LORELLE: Duh! The one you have advertised outside. 'Come and share your supernatural talents'. I wouldn't hardly claim my singing's supernatural but it's not as bad as he says, is it?

ROY: I didn't say it was *bad*, I said -

LILLIAN: - you've misunderstood love. It's not a talent competition... although that's not a bad idea. We'll keep that one in mind, Roy.

ROY: It's badly phrased, Lillian. I can understand why she might have thought it was a talent competition.

LORELLE: So if it's not, what is it?

ROY: You might well ask.

LILLIAN: It's about supernatural happenings.

ROY: Ghosts of the dear departed.

LILLIAN: Have you ever seen any, or better still, can you make contact with them?

LORELLE: No... why... can you?

LILLIAN: That's what we're hoping for, when we get a few more here.

ROY: *If we get a few more here.*

LILLIAN: Are you going to join us?

LORELLE: You must be joking me. I've seen movies about all that, and they all end up dead or haunted for life.

LILLIAN: That's just them daft horror films love. Real life's not like that. When I saw my dead dad sitting in his car, I wasn't a bit frightened. What do you say?

LORELLE: I'm saying that if I run I'll just catch the number eight. *(She gulps down the rest of her drink and pulls on her raincoat.)*

ROY: That'll be four-seventy five please.

LORELLE: For what?

ROY: The drink.

LORELLE: But you asked me if I wanted one.

ROY: Of course I did. That's my job. I'm the landlord.

LORELLE: Well I didn't know that. I've never been in here before, have I? I only came because I saw the notice from the bus this morning. Tell you something – I shan't be back.

ROY: Whatever! It's still four-seventy five.

LORELLE: Why would I pay four-seventy five for a double when I can get a whole bottle of voddy for a tenner in 'Booze and Stuff'? I can't afford to pay pub prices. I wouldn't have had a drink at all if you hadn't asked me.

ROY: Ok. Compromise. We'll call it four for cash.

LORELLE: We'll call it nothing. I've only got enough for my bus fare into town. *(She pulls up her hood, grabs her bag and makes for a hasty exit Upstage.)*

YVONNE, shaking off the raindrops and carrying a large tote bag, enters in time to see the last of the exchange.

ROY: Oi, I'll have the law onto you.

LORELLE: Get stuffed! Weirdos!

ROY pursues her to the door and calls after her.

ROY: You're barred.

YVONNE: Bad customer?

LILLIAN: Just a misunderstanding.

ROY: Don't be so sure. She's probably got it down to a fine art. I've a good mind to -

LILLIAN: - just leave it, Roy. *(She speaks to YVONNE.)* I'm sorry about that. Are you here for our supernatural experiences evening?

YVONNE: I am. I'm here to demonstrate my mystic talents. Are you expecting a good crowd?

ROY: No.

LILLIAN: It's only the first time we've held it, but I'm sure if you bear with us, we'll turn it into a regular weekly event... given time.

YVONNE: I'm sure we will.

YVONNE begins to unpack a bag, loading some bottles, packets etc. onto the table.

LILLIAN: Er... what are those?

YVONNE: *(She points them out.)* Charms, spells, crystals, love potions –

LILLIAN: - what for?

YVONNE: You name it, I have something for it. All reasonable prices, dearie.

LILLIAN: I'm sorry. I can't allow you to sell stuff. This is supposed to be a discussion, not a market.

YVONNE: I think you'll find that people who are seriously into the unknown expect all the merchandise that goes with it, and they're willing to pay good money for it.

ROY: How much?

YVONNE holds up a small packet.

YVONNE: Heightened Awareness Dust, my best seller at five-twenty- five. Want some? I sold loads of these at my last demonstration.

ROY: I want fifty percent on total sales.

LILLIAN: *Roy!* Are we licensed for it?

ROY: Sure we are, anyway we're renting out floor space. It's business.

YVONNE: If you guarantee me a table every week, I'll guarantee returning customers. Good for all of us.

ROY: Agreed, although I don't know how you're going to pull it off because we've been here for over six months and tried every trick in the book to bring them in.

YVONNE: Except I shan't be using tricks. Gather round. (*She motions for them to assemble round her table.*)

LILLIAN: Shouldn't we wait for a few more to arrive?

YVONNE: Two or forty-two, it makes no difference to me.

LILLIAN: But we don't want to peak too soon.

YVONNE: No danger. I can demonstrate for hours.

ROY: And won't all your one- in- sixers be a lot more impressed if they walk in on the weird and wonderful instead of stony silence? So what are you gonna give us, love, table-tapping, yards of ectoplasm or deep trance?

LILLIAN: *Roy!* Show some respect, please.

YVONNE: I'm going to tell your fortunes.

LILLIAN: Oh... well I don't really think -

YVONNE: - six pounds per person or two for a tenner.

ROY: Just a minute! You'll be getting no money out of us. We're trying to make some, not give it away.

LILLIAN: And fortune telling wasn't quite what I had in mind. I thought you were going to make contact with the departed.

YVONNE: To be honest I've been putting out feelers since I came in and I'm getting nothing back. You can't make contact if there's no spirits in the vicinity.

ROY: *No spirits!* If there's none in this vicinity, there'll be none anywhere. This pub is nearly four hundred years old *and* it was once a workhouse. It's connected to the church down the lane by an underground tunnel in the cellars. It's bricked up now but at one time they used to take all the stiffs along it to their funerals.

YVONNE: What were bodies doing in the cellars?

ROY: Chilling out. Before central heating, pub cellars like ours used to be pretty cold, ideal conditions for a mortuary. They laid 'em out on the slabs around the walls. They're still there.

YVONNE: The bodies?

ROY: The slabs. Do you know, I'm very tempted to take a pickaxe to that bricked- up tunnel.

LILLIAN: Don't you dare.

ROY: Just for curiosity. Who knows what you might find on the other side? Does it still run all the way through to the church, and if it does and you have the nerve to follow it, what unmentionable horrors might be lurking along its length, what sort of ghastly ghoul might come shuffling towards you, suddenly looming up out of the gloom?

LILLIAN: Stop it, Roy. You're giving me the shivers.

ROY: Good, because isn't that what tonight's supposed to be all about? How can you guarantee returning customers if you can't give 'em some sort of tingle up the spine, so go on love, stick your feelers out a bit further and pull in the spirits. Go on, go for it. Let's frighten ourselves silly.

YVONNE makes a reluctant, half-hearted attempt to make contact, by closing her eyes and holding up her arms.

YVONNE: Sorry. All I'm picking up is static.

ROY: Call yourself a psychic!?! Announce yourself. Give it some welly. (*He stands and calls out theatrically.*) This is Roy, present landlord of The Yew Tree, throwing out an invitation to all you spirits. Welcome. Don't be shy. Come and say hello. We're *dying* to meet you.

The lights begin to flicker then come up again.

LILLIAN: Stop it, Roy.

ROY prowls around the room, calling out to all corners.

ROY: To all those who've lined these cellars over the centuries, all those who passed on within or without these walls, old, young and in-between, crumbling bones or putrefying flesh, I call on you to appear to us tonight. You're all welcome at The Yew Tree, so don't hang about, come on down, or up, or whatever. Let's be having you. We're waiting... and waiting... and waiting...

The lights dip.

LILLIAN: Roy, don't be so stupid.

ROY: It's not me that's stupid. It's this whole idea of yours. You might be up for being labelled as a crank, Lillian, but I'm not. I've a reputation to think about, so this circus ends here, now. *(He speaks to YVONNE.)* Are you intending buying a drink?

YVONNE: I don't drink.

ROY: Then pack up your knickknacks and get out. You're barred.

LILLIAN: *Roy!*

ROY: No, Lillian. It's obvious she's a charlatan. She's not taking us for a pair of fools.

The lights flicker and dip as BOB enters Upstage. YVONNE screams, startling LILLIAN and ROY.

YVONNE: Keep him away from me.

BOB: Don't start that again. I've spent the best part of an hour driving all over looking for her. As soon as I spotted your sign outside I knew she'd be in here.

YVONNE: Woman beater! Call yourself a man? Well now you're up against a real man, so see how you come out of this one, you bully. *(She pushes ROY at him.)* Go on. Sort him out.

ROY: What's going on?

BOB: I'm sorry if she's been bothering you, mate. She's not herself. I'll take her home.

YVONNE: He's been stalking me all day.

BOB: Pack it in, Yvonne. Come on now. Stop making a nuisance of yourself. *(He moves to bring YVONNE to her feet.)*

LILLIAN: Just a sec. Who are you?

BOB: I'm her husband.

LILLIAN: How do we know that?

ROY: Don't interfere, Lillian.

LILLIAN: How do we know *he's* telling the truth and *she* isn't? For all we know he could attack her once he gets her outside.

YVONNE: That's right. He'll knock me senseless.

BOB: Believe me, there are times when I'm tempted. Listen, she's ok as long as she's taking the tablets, but if she stops them she gets the idea I'm a brute and she's a gypsy.

YVONNE: A Romany!