

Murder on the Moor – Act 1

Introduction of Characters

Tracey: My name is Tracey Wentworth. I am an Accountant with Howell-Dewyn Surgical Supports. As a loyal company person I am annoyed with the antics of my fellow executives here on this course, who are all jockeying for position and want the promotion to the board which is currently being decided. If the promotion were offered to me I would of course accept, as I am the best person for the job.

Eddie: Eddie Spencer is the name. I am the Marketing Manager with Howell-Dewyn. It is my job to write the leaflets and advertising material. And I also write the in-house magazine. Having been with the company a long time and seen these younger people rising through the ranks, I know quite a lot about all of them. And I think that it is my turn for promotion, this time.

Jane: I am Jane Tolworth, an Account Executive with the company. It is my job to handle client expectation and the delivery of the right goods at the right time. Why we are on this team-building course totally eludes me, especially as I am so busy at the moment. Just like everyone else here, I want that promotion, if only to prevent Ronnie Younger from getting the job. I once had a fling with Ronnie and he is utterly vile.

Phil: Let me introduce myself, I am Phil Greenman and I am the Sales Manager with the company. I am a very good salesman and bring a lot of money into the company. Because of this, I think that I ought to get the promotion. This team-building exercise out on the moors hasn't been too bad, except for Ronnie, of course. Everyone really dislikes Ronnie. He's my main rival to this promotion.

Wendy: I am Wendy Sumner, the Purchasing Manager with the company. It is my job to buy in parts, and sometimes some of our suppliers offer an inducement, but I am always straight and honest, despite the temptation. And because I am so good and honest, and I work so hard, I think that I deserve the promotion.

Tony: My name is Tony MacLeod and I am the Development Engineer. That sounds quite grand, but I mostly work on the factory floor. The managers seem pleased with me and have sent me on this course with the executives. Everyone is talking about the promotion, but I'm not really the right sort, as I'm not used to meetings in offices. Recently I have been working on an important new product.

Ronnie: I am Ronnie Younger, the Product Development Executive. All the others here are just time wasters or time servers. This promotion is going to be mine, and I don't care what I have to do to get it. The others think I am ruthless, and I am, but I am quite capable of turning on the charm when I need to.

[Phil Greenman, and Wendy Sumner are on stage. Wendy is starting to prepare a meal and has various tins and packets on the table. Phil is supposed to be helping but he is in fact hindering.]

Wendy: Could you help me out here? I'm absolutely shattered. I couldn't find my sleeping pills and hardly got a wink of sleep last night. Do you think there is enough pasta here? How much do you need for seven people? I suppose it should be enough, I mean, they left the food for us in this hostel, and it ought to be enough.

Phil: Did I tell you about last year, when I was in Sorrento? We have some great pasta there, it was black they said it had squid ink in it.

Wendy: But this is just penne, nothing fancy. Do you think half a kilo is enough for seven people?

Phil: My wife does all cooking. I've no idea how much you need, I mean, you don't keep a dog and bark yourself, do you?

Wendy: I can't believe you, don't you take any interest in anything except yourself?

Phil: Only in making a sale. I'm always interested in that.

Wendy: Are you interested in the promotion that's on offer?

Phil: Of course I am. It might mean a bit less money, seeing as I am on commission at the moment, but it does give a place on the board. I would be mad not to be interested.

Wendy: So what do you think your chances are?

Phil: I think my chances are pretty good. I mean, I AM a very good salesman.

Wendy: But are you a good manager? Just because you're a good salesman doesn't make you a good manager. And perhaps you are more valuable to the company as a salesman. Perhaps they can't afford to promote you.

Phil: Perhaps they can't afford not to promote me.

Wendy: Don't you believe it, no-one is irreplaceable.

Phil: But I bring in more money to the company than anyone else.

Wendy: But you bring that money in as a salesman. That's what makes you so valuable in your current role.

[Eddie enters stage right]

Eddie: How's it going?

Wendy: I could do with some help. Phil seems to think that this below him to do the cooking.

Phil: No I don't, it's just that I'm not very good at it.

Eddie: Pleased to help. What are you thinking of cooking?

Wendy: Pasta and something, probably some kind of sauce. I'll have a look and the cupboards to see what else is available.

Eddie: Pasta again?

Wendy: I never pretended that I was a good cook. But we all have to take a turn, well everyone except Phil that is.

Phil: Look, I've never cooked in my life. Do you really want me to poison you?

Eddie: I'll have a look in the cupboards and see what I can come up with.

Wendy: We were just talking about the promotion. Phil seems to think that he is up for it.

Eddie: I don't know about that, I'm sure that no decision has been made yet. No doubt we'll discover in time who is not the honour of the new job. It will descend from on high to us as it usually does. And I am sure that Ronnie is putting himself up for the job. I wouldn't bet against Ronnie getting it or at least stopping any of us getting it.

Phil: Not if can help it!

Wendy: If it is any comfort Phil, I would much rather you got the job than Ronnie. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him, and that isn't very far. At least I know when you are lying to me.

Phil: How's that?

Wendy: Your lips move.

Eddie: Don't you want the job, Wendy?

Wendy: Well of course I do, but I'm not willing to crawl up pile of the corpses of my colleagues to get it.

Phil: How very moral of you, Wendy, but I don't suppose that Ronnie has such qualms.

Eddie: What was that saying about greater love hath no man than to lay down the life of his friends to further his ambition.

Phil: And are you interested in the job, Eddie?

Eddie: Well, in principal yes, but I'm not sure about all the aggro involved in getting a job on the board. Me and politics don't match very well. But, on the other hand, I am overdue a promotion.

Wendy: Very wise, Eddie, best not show your hand at this point. It's always a good idea to keep your powder dry, or is that mixing metaphors?

Phil: How are those photos you've been taking for the staff magazine?

Eddie: Pretty good. I've got the great one of Tracey face down in the mud. And that paint balling gives lots of nice colours for the cover. But I'm not sure that she would forgive me if I actually printed it.

Phil: But all this team building exercises a pile are rubbish isn't it? I mean, are we getting on any better than we do in the office? It seems to me that no relationships have really changed, and everyone hates Ronnie even more than before.

Wendy: Yes, you do have a point there. Do you know what that git did to me today? He shot me from point blank range. It wouldn't have been so bad, but I was on his team! Oh, I could kill him, sometimes!

Eddie: Bloody typical of the man!

Phil: Do you remember that trust exercise two days ago, when I refused to fall back into his arms. I knew I couldn't trust him and could've got badly hurt. And he was talking about stealing one of those paint-ball guns today.

Eddie: Remember when he screwed up that big sale for you last year?

Phil: Do I! All it needed was a minor change to the schedule, and he invented all these reasons why it couldn't be done, like changes to the tooling. But it was all really minor stuff, nothing of note.

Wendy: The man is definitely a menace. So, Phil, ruling out Ronnie, who do you think is going to get this promotion?

Phil: I think Tracey would be the best option, apart from me and you of course, and Eddie, if you are interested.

Eddie: But Tracey just speaks in gobbledegook. Have you ever tried listening to anything she says? It's like listening to a self help Manual.

Wendy: Well, yes, I suppose so, but she's a really good company person.

Phil: If I am not needed to help with the cooking I think I'll go for a shower. [he exits stage left]

Wendy: Just typical of Phil, as soon as there is some work to do he disappears.

Eddie: You know you can always trust Phil. He will always let you down. You should try sharing a room with him. I'm no perfectionist, but it looks like a bomb has hit the place.

Wendy: Tracey is just the opposite. Not a sock out of place. I'm sure she irons her knickers. Well, at least this is the last night. Any ideas about what you are going to cook yet?

Eddie: Well, let's see what we have left in the cupboard. I'm sure I can rustle up something. It's just one of my many talents you know. Did you know that I'm having an exhibition of my

photographs, including some really good candid shots. But going back to the cooking issue, I don't want to mention it, but I did the cooking last night as well.

Wendy: I don't suppose that it has to be anything special. And last night's stew was really good. And I'm not just saying that. I'm sure everyone thought so.

Eddie: [looking in cupboards] Well that's a real bonus, someone has left us half a case of wine. And its good stuff by the look of it.

Wendy: That should improve the general mood. Except for Ronnie, of course.

Eddie: [taking out a bottle of wine] Of course, he's still off the booze, isn't he, and being a real prig about it. Fancy a glass of wine?

Wendy: Do I ever! Do we have any glasses?

Eddie: If I can't find any glasses I'll use the mugs.

Wendy: Anything, so long as the wine doesn't leak out.

Eddie: There are some glasses in this cupboard here. And, surprise, surprise, they are pretty well clean. [he pours out to glasses of wine and gives one to Wendy]

Wendy: I wonder where the wine came from?

Eddie: No doubt we shall find out a bit later.

[Tracey enters from SL]

Tracey: Hello, you two. Any more of that wine going?

Eddie: Sure, I'll get you a glass. Do you want red or white?

Tracey: White for me, please, just a small one, mind. Did you get the wine in?

Wendy: We were just talking about that. We haven't a clue who got it. Lets hope they don't mind us opening it.

Tracey: What is the betting that Ronnie claims to have brought it, or bought it, or to have had the idea to buy it?

Wendy: I don't think that you will have any takers for that bet. I suppose that he's been winding you up.

Tracey: He's got a ruddy cheek. When I said that I was going for the promotion, he tried to persuade me to support him, said that I'd be his second in command. As if I would ever want to work for him. If it should ever come to that I think I'd resign first, and you know how much the company means to me.

Eddie: The only person who seems pleased at the idea of Ronnie getting that promotion is Ronnie himself.

[Ronnie enters from SL]

Ronnie: Do I hear my name taken in vain?

Eddie: Not getting paranoid, are you, Ronnie?

Ronnie: Not really, I know that a lot of people don't like me, but then, I don't much care for them. When I get this promotion, you will soon find out which of you gets on with me OK. I see that you've found the wine. I suggested to Jane that he got some in for our last night.

Wendy: Of course you did, Ronnie. Did you want a glass?

Ronnie: Come on, you know I don't drink. Just the grapefruit juice for me. But don't let that stop you. We all know you like a drink, Eddie.

Tracey: And I am sure that it is very wise of you not to drink. We remember what you were like when you were drinking.

Wendy: But think of all those long directors' lunches. All that wine and port and brandy you would have to turn down, and how unpleasant it is to be the only sober person in a room full of half-cut old men.

Tracey: That is hardly the company ethos, Wendy. And there are very many fewer lunches of that type these days. The shareholders don't like it much, it reduces the dividends.

Wendy: Of course, Tracey. I was only saying it to annoy Ronnie.

Ronnie: Well, you didn't succeed. Now I know that I am getting that directorship my mood could not be better.

Eddie: How could you possibly know that? The decision isn't due until the end of next week, and I was assured by the MD that no final decision would be taken until then.

Ronnie: But our beloved MD is not the power he was. You have to be in with the right people, and I am. Its accountants that run companies these days. And I am the favourite of the accounts department.

Wendy: And what would make you so valuable to an accountant?

Ronnie: I've been working on a new product. One that will double our sales within a year. But I can't say more, I wouldn't want to spoil your surprise when it is announced.

Tracey: But when did you ever have an idea like that? No offence meant, Ronnie, but you are not really known for being an ideas man.

Ronnie: Maybe not before, but I will be from now on.

Wendy: Look, Eddie, if you don't need me anymore I can go and change.

Eddie: That's alright, I can cope.

Ronnie: Just a minute, Wendy, I just want to have brief word about one of our suppliers.

Wendy: What do you mean?

Ronnie: Well, as Purchasing Manager, you have to choose suppliers for the firm. And when you do the job properly, you get the best parts for the best price.

Wendy: I don't need you to tell me my job!

Ronnie: Well, perhaps some salesman from a supplier offers an inducement to buy parts from him at an inflated price. It's a form of bribery, really. Just the sort of action that could get a manager sacked, or sued.

Wendy: An interesting hypothesis, Ronnie. As far as I can see you are just trying to stir things up. You can't have any proof of anything, otherwise you wouldn't talk to me like this.

Ronnie: Well, I do have some print-outs from a spreadsheet, as it happens.

Wendy: It's not true. None of this has any truth in it.

[Wendy storms out SL]

Ronnie: Oh, you're not cooking the dinner again, are you, Eddie? I've only just got rid of the indigestion from last night.

Eddie: Well, I am perfectly willing to let you do the cooking. Don't let me stop you if you feel like mucking in.

Ronnie: Not really my thing, Eddie. All a bit menial for me. Its not that I can't cook, its just that I only do it with the finest ingredients, not the muck they have in the cupboards here. And I want a word with you as well, about some of the photos that you have been taking. You see, I think you might have some really interesting shots. Some of them might prove very useful to me.

Eddie: I've got some really clear shots of you to, Ronnie, which might be very interesting to the MD, or possibly even the Police. But we'll talk more about that later. Meanwhile, I'm going to get on with preparing the dinner. Got to keep up appearances.

[Jane enters SL]

Jane: Don't worry, boys, there's no need for anyone to cook tonight. I've ordered a load of pizzas and stuff from the town. It should be here in half an hour. And I see you've opened the wine, so I'll have a glass of red.

Tracey: So you got the wine as well.

Jane: Well, I thought it might be appreciated. And I can always claim it out of my budget. And it's a way of ending these four days on a bit of a high.

Tracey: I suppose you used your mobile to order the wine and pizzas. We were all supposed to leave those at home. That really is a bit of a breach of the rules, you know.

Jane: I know its bending the rules a bit, but as it is our last night here I thought that everyone would appreciate it, and I think we have done quite enough bonding.

Tracey: Ronnie, I thought you said that you suggested getting the wine?

Ronnie: I was around when Jane ordered it. She asked me if I thought it was a good idea.

Jane: You said that you suggested the wine?

Ronnie: What is your problem, I explained what happened.

Jane: All I can remember is you going on about that paint-ball gun you stole today.

Ronnie: But I did think that it was a good idea to get some wine in.

Jane: You had absolutely nothing to do with the wine order, you were just listening in to my conversation. What is the point of having a bonding session with someone who is only interested in himself.

Eddie: Too right. The only bonding I want to do with you, Ronnie, involves a tube of superglue and a rabid rat.

Ronnie: Well I think you can look forward to collecting your P45 pretty soon after the end of next week, when I have that promotion.

Eddie: Well, bless you for your honesty, Ronnie. I'll bear that in mind. In the meantime, I hope that I don't lose too much sleep worrying about it. And as I'm not doing the food anymore, I think I'll go out for a bit of fresh air. Try not to miss me too much, Ronnie.

Jane: Can I have a little word with you later, Eddie?

Eddie: Sure. I won't be long.

Ronnie: And don't leave the door open. There's a dreadful draft in here.

[Eddie leaves SR]

Jane: I wouldn't count on that promotion yet, Ronnie. I know about your proposal to the board, and I know where you got the idea from. I was just talking to Tony, and he says that you made him swear not to tell anyone about the new product he has developed until after the promotion has gone through. Since I made Tony aware of what you are doing he decided to tell all. It really is very naughty of you, Ronnie, to steal other people's ideas and pass them off as your own.

Ronnie: It was my concept, Tony just did some of the development work.

Jane: That's strange, Tony seems to have the basic concept on the back of an envelope, and all the data and maths needed to prove it works, and the designs drawn out in detail.

Ronnie: But it WAS my idea.

Tracey: I find it hard to believe you, Ronnie. And this week was supposed to be all about trust and team building and promoting the company ethos.

Jane: And I put in a call to the MD and told him all about what you were doing. I think you can kiss that promotion goodbye.

Ronnie: Like I kissed you goodbye! This is just revenge, isn't it Jane. Oh, get stuffed, the pair of you.

[Ronnie storms off SR]

Tracey: Did you really make that call, Jane?

Jane: Not really. I tried to but the battery is low on the phone, and I happen to know that the MD is playing golf today, and he never has the phone switched on when he is on the course. I've sent a text message to his secretary, so he'll know soon enough.

Tracey: And what did he mean by "kissing you goodbye"?

Jane: Well, we had a bit of a fling a couple of years ago, at that Sales Conference in Widnes. Men like Ronnie regard events like that as an opportunity to chase any available woman. But then he dumped me after he'd had his fun. That was the best thing that he ever did for me. Besides, he snored like a bull and blew-off all night. And he kept the window open wide all night. With a combination like that I scarcely got a wink of sleep.

Tracey: I've noticed the way that you look at Eddie. You seem to have a thing about married men, don't you?

Jane: Not any more I don't, not after Ronnie! And I don't think of Eddie that way, because even if he is really rather sweet he is almost old enough to be my father. Truth be told, Tracey is that you are holding a candle for him. I do believe that you are hoping to get him in your room sometime tonight. That's the benefit of having a room to yourself. But don't worry, I won't tell anyone.

Tracey: I'll pretend that I didn't hear that. The MD doesn't like that sort of behaviour. You must know how much bad feeling can come from office romances.

[Tony enters SR]

Tony: What's got into Ronnie? I just said hello to him and he swore at me, called me a traitor and pushed me into a wall.

Tracey: I think that he's a bit upset about the promotion. He thought he'd use your idea to get that promotion, and now he's been rumbled. The company won't like the way he did that.

Tony: Does it always go like this? These company events I mean.

Jane: No, only when Ronnie is involved. He could start a fight in an empty room. You should know that, you're sharing a room with him.

Tony: But I didn't mean to upset him like that. I mean, I don't much like the man, but I try to get on with everyone.

Tracey: Don't blame yourself. It's all Ronnie's fault. He really has no idea about how to behave. This was supposed to be a team-building exercise, but Ronnie is not a team player in any way, shape or form. I do wish that we could just get rid of him.

Jane: What is this new idea you've come up with? It sounds really good.

Tony: Well, it's not perfected yet, but, roughly, it's a way of providing support without applying constant pressure. It only comes into play when needed. It should be a lot more comfortable.

Tracey: I can't really imagine it. You'll have to let us look at the design. And I will make sure that you get full credit if it goes into production.

Jane: You may even get that promotion yourself.

Tony: No I won't, I'm not ready for it yet. I think I was invited to this to take on the Product Development area when Ronnie got promoted. To be perfectly frank, I've found it a bit difficult here. I'm more used to the shop floor than the offices.

Jane: Well, I don't think that Ronnie will get that promotion now. That's what he's so angry about. Lets hope that he leaves anyway, then you can move up and get Product Development working properly again.

Tony: Yes, that would be good, but it's not that easy to get a job at the moment. So I think I'll have to be patient.

Tracey: You might not have to wait. If we can prove that he was going to steal your idea, he might be forced to leave.

Tony: I wouldn't want that, what would happen to his family?

Jane: He's been divorced for years, and I think his wife has almost given up trying to get money out of him. They didn't have any children, and she's re-married. And anyway, after what he was about to do to you, I wouldn't be too worried by what will happen to him.

Tony: Look, I really want to be product development manager, but I don't want to have to change my way of looking at things in order to do it.

Tracey: You mean you don't want to have to crawl over the bodies of your rivals.

Jane: You'll never make it to the top with that attitude!

Tony: Well, maybe not, but at least I'll be able to live with myself.

Tracey: If I were you, I'd really want to get rid of Ronnie. And if you did manage to get rid of him, you'd earn the eternal gratitude of the rest of us.

Tony: What do you mean by getting rid of him?

Jane: Just tell the MD that the idea Ronnie was going to put forward was your idea as his own, and show him the proof. That will do the job nicely.

Tracey: I'm off for a shower, I'll see you later. Those pizzas sound like a really good idea. [She exits SL]

Tony: I think I'll have a bit of a wash myself. Trouble is that I'm not sure that I want to go back in the room with Ronnie at the moment.

Jane: Probably best that you let him calm down a bit. Have a glass of wine.

Tony: You haven't got a beer, have you?

Jane: Sorry, only wine or fruit juice.

Tony: Oh, well, I'll have some white wine then, please. [Jane pours him a glass of white wine. Tony sips it and grimaces] I've never really got used to drinking wine. I suppose that I'll have to, now. Look, I'm sure Ronnie wouldn't mind if I had some of his fruit juice. [He helps himself to a small glass].

Jane: You don't need to like wine. Just be yourself. Look, if you get to be the new Production Development manager, we'll all support you. And you don't have to change anything about yourself, you just need a bit more confidence.

Tony: Thanks for that, but I've got a lot to learn. It's a different world in the boardroom from the factory floor. Urghhh!, this grapefruit juice tastes filthy. [He puts the nearly full glass down]

Jane: It's not that different in the boardroom. Rather easier, if the truth be known, but I shouldn't really let you know that!

Tony: Look, I'd appreciate any help, of course, but I'm still not convinced that I'll move on to Ronnie's job, whether he gets the promotion or not.

Jane: Believe me, you can count on that promotion, and you deserve it. Just remember what we were talking about, last week.

Tony: I'm not so sure. But don't think that I'm not anxious to get on. Its just that I think everyone should receive recognition for what they have done, and this new product hasn't been proved yet. There could be all sorts of problems getting it into production or in patenting it or even in marketing.

Jane: Now you go and have your wash, and I'll hang around here and wait for the pizzas to arrive.

Tony: Alright, but I'll try to stay out of Ronnie's way.

[Tony exits SL. Jane's Mobile phone rings. She answers it]

Jane: Hello. (Gap while she listens to the phone) How to find us? OK, go to the end of the village, past the school and turn right up the lane until the end, then bear left up the track to the hostel. Oh, damn! I'm losing the signal, I'll go outside.

[Jane exits SR. After a few seconds, Phil enters from SL]

Phil: Anyone here? Where's everyone got to?

[Wendy enters from SL]

Wendy: Are we still waiting for the pizzas?

Phil: I suppose so. Hope mine doesn't have any mushrooms.

[Tony enters from SL in an agitated state]

Tony: Someone come quick. It's Ronnie. I don't think that he's breathing. Has anyone got any medical training or something? [He picks up the glass of grapefruit juice and drains it] I think he might be dead!