

DEAD TO THE LAST DROP

AN INTERACTIVE MURDER MYSTERY

By Ken Jones

Copyright © MMVIII by Ken Jones

All Rights Reserved

Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-200-7

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this work is subject to a royalty. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All rights to this work of any kind including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing rights are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. Inquiries concerning rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

This work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

All organizations receiving permission to produce this work agree to give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production. The author(s) billing must appear below the title and be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with production of the work must include the following notice: **“Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.”**

There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the work, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language unless directly authorized by the publisher or otherwise allowed in the work’s “Production Notes.” The title of the play shall not be altered.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second-hand from a third party. All rights, including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing, recitation, lecturing, public reading, television, radio, motion picture, video or sound taping, internet streaming or other forms of broadcast as technology progresses, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW. One copy for each speaking role must be purchased for production purposes. Single copies of scripts are sold for personal reading or production consideration only.

PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

DEAD TO THE LAST DROP

By Ken Jones

SYNOPSIS: *Dead to the Last Drop* is a hilarious interactive murder mystery that takes place in a coffeehouse and bookstore called “Café Caffeine.” The crazy cast of characters leads the audience through a maze of funny twists and turns. Opportunities for audience and cast interaction reach a peak when the audience is allowed to vote on the ending that they want to hear! There are four possible killers and four possible endings!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MALES, 3 FEMALES)

TULLY (m).....He is a flamboyant, sarcastic, but sensitive man. He was trained as a dancer and often plays chess professionally. Tully won the international limbo contest, but while attempting an under-the-bar, half-twist, with a full body roll, he hurt his back and had to withdraw from future competitions. He is the main cook and waiter at Café Caffeine, although he is terrible at both skills. (168 lines)

DR. BILL KILDARE (m).....Has a Ph.D. in English Literature. A middle-aged book collector and scholar, Kildare is often found in the back aisles of very old libraries. Once he was found removing antique books from a library. A lawsuit is still pending. (140 lines)

CLARICE (f)A beautiful woman in her thirties. She is a waitress and an assistant to Ariel Ford. Her job at Café Caffeine is secure, because she is the only one capable of working the cappuchino machine. Her dream would be to own a coffee house. She is having a secret affair with an anonymous lover who calls her “Boots,” the only explanation for which is her long rooted love of war movies and military attire. (99 lines)

MIRANDA DE VERE (f).....A young woman, 25-30 years old. Miranda is a graduate of Our Lady of Perpetual Entertainment. She still dons the clothes of a good Catholic girl, because her father Charles De Vere insists that she remain pure. If she does not keep her virginity, she will not inherit his fortune. The rumor is that many have tested the validity of her chastity. (49 lines)

ROBERT LUDZESKI (m).....An undercover policeman, Robert is a good-looking, young cop. He is pretending to be an out-of-work student, and if he bungles the case, he will indeed be an out-of-work policeman. He is staking out Café Caffeine in hopes of catching a money laundering facility. (238 lines)

DEAD TO THE LAST DROP

APRIEL FORD (f).....Is a woman on the go. She is the ex-wife of Charles De Vere and one of the stepmothers of Miranda (a fact she wishes was not true). She is the boss of Café Caffeine, but only when Charles allows her to be. Her hobby is the collecting and restoring of old and rare books. She lacks talent at running a restaurant, therefore the Café is struggling. (148 lines)

PROPERTIES

- Large Book- (Title- DEAD TO THE LAST DROP)
- Plain Apron
- Hula Skirt
- Frilly Apron
- Pen
- Order pad
- Placard and easel
- Several antique books
- Numerous large coffee mugs
- Several soup bowls
- Soupspoons
- Large cooking spoon
- Acoustic Guitar
- Empty Large Campbell Soup cans
- Can of Whip Cream
- Cappuccino Machine- (Prop machine with tubes, noises and flashing lights)
- Goggles
- Large work gloves
- Wrapped package- brown paper
- Several kitchen cloths
- Red ink- (simulated)
- Cast iron frying pan

- Handgun
- Handcuffs

SCENE CHANGES

ACT ONE

“THE CRIME”

In this fast-paced act, the characters and the Café are introduced. The play is seemingly heading in one direction, but suddenly, there is a murder! An act break is not necessary between Acts One and Two.

ACT TWO

“THE INVESTIGATION”

The first half of Act Two finds the characters in shock after the murder. Our detective reveals himself, and some interesting facts begin to trickle out of the suspects.

The second half of Act Two includes the audience. The actors realize that they are being watched and then they invite the audience into their world. The actors re-enact the events leading up to the crime with the audience making sure they do it correctly.

ACT THREE

“THE SOLUTION”

This act should open with all the surviving actors available for questioning by the audience. This session is completely improvisational, but based on the previous text. The question and answer session should last about 20 minutes.

At this point, the detective will continue with a small scene to engage the actors back into the play and present some clues to help set up the endings. Finally, the detective will ask the audience to vote on which actor they wish to see found guilty, and that ending will be played out.

SETTING

The interior of Café Caffeine. A large, outrageous cappuccino machine sits to one side. A bar and serving area is opposite. A few tables and chairs are center. Bookcases line the perimeter of the room carrying an assortment of old, dusty books. Two wooden booths are crushed against these walls. Upstage of the tables and chairs sits a small stage. A guitar leans against a stool, which rests next to a placard reading: MIRANDA DeVERE APPEARING LIVE. A tacky headshot of this young girl is glued onto the sign. To each side of this stage and to the rear are doors. One door leads to a kitchen area. The other door leads to the book-binding and repair office. Both doors have access to the upstairs apartment.

NOTE: Access from outside the coffee shop is through the back of the audience. There is no door. This will bring actor through the audience at times.

PRODUCTION

In 1995, *Dead to the Last Drop* premiered at THE LANDMARK THEATRE located in the Omni Netherland Hotel in Cincinnati, Ohio and ran for 250 performances.

ACT ONE
“THE CRIME”

In this fast-paced act, the characters and the Café are introduced. The play is seemingly heading in one direction, but suddenly, there is a murder! An act break is not necessary between Acts One and Two.

Enter DR. BILL KILDARE, a middle-aged, college professor and book-collector. HE walks to a bookshelf, removes a book, and sits at one of the center tables. HE opens the book. Immediately, a crash of lightening flashes and thunder is heard. There is a slight change in the interior lighting. KILDARE begins to read. TULLY, a flamboyant, sometimes outrageously wicked man, enters from the kitchen. HE is a waiter. TULLY crosses to the bar and turns the stereo on. A rhythmic, calypso beat plays and sweeps TULLY away. HE cannot control his inner beat and begins to do everything to the music. TULLY sets eyes on KILLDARE.

TULLY: A customer!

TULLY whips out an apron from behind the bar. HE ties the apron around his waist, but changes his mind after seeing it on. Immediately, TULLY pulls out another apron. This apron is less waiter and more HULA SKIRT. HE ties it on, and HE is transformed into a POLYNESIAN DANGER for a moment. However, this apron is not right either. Back to the bar. HE pulls out a frilly, Betty Crocker style apron, and finally, HE is pleased with his choice. HE puts it on, and approaches the MAN. KILDARE is now engrossed in his book. TULLY stands behind him with pen and paper in hand ready to take the MAN's order. As he waits, TULLY begins to read the book over the MAN's shoulder. Both TULLY and KILDARE move their head in unison as they read down the page. When KILDARE flips the page, both heads follow the pattern. TULLY absorbed in the book moves his head closer to the unaware KILDARE. Both MEN are mouthing the words of the book. THEY are whispering, but the words soon become audible.

TULLY AND KILDARE: (*Growing louder.*) ...the thunder echoes outside capturing the two men within a cavern of sound. Their hearts beat as one. Their souls joined in thought. Their voices unified in a horrific... (*THEIR faces inches apart, THEY see each other.*) ...SCREAM! (*THEY both scream!*)

KILDARE: Holy cow, you scared me.

TULLY: Me scare you? I haven't screamed like that since Angelina married Brad!

KILDARE: May I see a menu?

TULLY: Sorry.

KILDARE: Isn't this a restaurant?

TULLY: Yes.

KILDARE: But I can't see a menu?

TULLY: Nope.

KILDARE: Why not?

TULLY: Don't have menus, it's all up her in the ol' noggin.

KILDARE: Well, can I hear what you have?

TULLY: Nope.

KILDARE: Why not?!

TULLY: Because I forgot.

KILDARE: Special.

TULLY: No, just slow. I always had trouble in school –

KILDARE: Specials. What are your specials?

TULLY: Are you slow? I just said I forgot.

KILDARE: Could you find out?

TULLY: Sure.

KILDARE: Thanks.

TULLY: Will that be all? (*Pause.*)

KILDARE: What?

TULLY: Will that be all?

KILDARE: I haven't ordered anything.

TULLY: I know that. But I am supposed to say, 'Will that be all?' before I leave a table.

KILDARE: Yes, that will be all.

TULLY: Somebody woke up on the wrong side of the bed—

KILDARE: —fine—

TULLY: —someone's got a bee in their bonnet—

KILDARE: —yes, anyways—

TULLY: —cat pee in your cornflakes this morning?!—

KILDARE: ALL RIGHT! (*TULLY charges into the kitchen. MIRANDA DE VERE, a young college girl, enters. Although she's in college, SHE still wears the plaid skirt, white blouse, and saddle shoes of her Catholic high school. SHE crosses to her guitar and begins to tune it. TULLY enters.*)

MIRANDA: Hi, Tully!

TULLY: Miranda, my dear, is tonight the night you're performing?

MIRANDA: Yes, I'm scared to death.

TULLY: (*To audience.*) After hearing you practice, so am I. (*HE crosses down to KILDARE.*) I'm back.

MIRANDA: Professor Kildare? What are you doing here?

KILDARE: Miranda, dear? I...well...I...just wanted...

TULLY: ...some soup? So the 'Good Doctor' knows our little song bird?

MIRANDA: He was my professor...my friend...my...

KILDARE: One semester. That's all. Just one semester.

TULLY: One semester is all it takes...

KILDARE: Yes, well... Any luck finding out what's on the menu?

TULLY: Oh! Sorry. Yes, well, tonight's special is soup.

KILDARE: That's it?

TULLY: We have ten kinds: barley, pea, chicken, chicken noodle, beef, beef noodle, vegetable, corn chowder, seafood chowder, and clam.

KILDARE: I see. You know, I've never been to a restaurant that only serves soup.

TULLY: Well, now you can buy a magnet, put it on your refrigerator, and say you've been here!

KILDARE: Why so many soups?

TULLY: Probably because we just got the can opener fixed.

KILDARE: I'll have the chicken soup.

TULLY: (*Calling to the kitchen.*) Chicken soup!

KILDARE: Wait. I've changed my mind. Give me the pea soup.

TULLY: (*Calling.*) Hold the chicken and make it pea! (*pause.*) Is that all?

KILDARE: I'll have a coffee.

TULLY: What kind?

KILDARE: Black coffee.

TULLY: What kind?

KILDARE: The kind from the...coffee bean.

TULLY: Oh, nurse, take my stitches out, I want to laugh more!

Mister, this is a coffeehouse and bookstore. A thousand books, a thousand coffees.

KILDARE: What kind do you have?

TULLY: Anything special we might have had between us...is definitely over! *(Taking a deep breath.)* We have...cappuchino, cappa cappuchino, espresso, mocha, mocha mocha, mocha swiss, java, java swiss, java mocha cappuchino— *(CLARICE enters from the kitchen picking up where TULLY left off.)*

CLARICE: *(A young, beautiful, tough waitress.)* —Irish coffee, Swedish coffee, and Norwegian iced coffee. Mexican Mud, Columbian Caffeine Clog, and Tiajuana Tar— *(SHE breathes. TULLY takes over.)*

TULLY: Red Cherry, Vanilla Dream, and Chocolate Paradise.

KILDARE: Wow. They sound interesting.

TULLY: They're exotic dancers in the next town. I just wanted to see if you were paying attention.

KILDARE: What was the first one?

TULLY: Cappuchino.

KILDARE: I'll have that.

TULLY: Is that a joke? Did someone pay you to come here and torture me?

KILDARE: Just get me the cappuchino with whipped cream.

TULLY: When Tully's your man, you always get whipped cream. *(TULLY goes into the kitchen. KILDARE goes back to reading the book. CLARICE enters and crosses to the cappuchino machine. SHE takes the pair of goggles hanging from the side of the machine and places them over her eyes. SHE also puts on heavy duty work gloves.)*

CLARICE: All clear! (*MIRANDA, hearing the warning, drops to the floor. Pulling the handle, the cappuchino machine comes to life. Unnatural noises fill the room. KILDARE become frightened for his life. The lights dim on and off from the power drain as the machine coughs to life. Finally, the moment climaxes with a plop of coffee falling into the tiny cup. CLARICE removes her protective gear, MIRANDA resumes her work on the guitar, and KILDARE climbs back into his chair. CLARICE takes the drink to the bar. TULLY enters with a can of Ready Whip. HE begins to shake the can. This shaking builds until HE sprays the whip cream over the cup and saucer. TULLY looks drained. HE returns to the kitchen. CLARICE takes the cappuchino to KILDARE.*)

CLARICE: Here you go.

KILDARE: Thank you.

CLARICE: Your soup will be right out.

KILDARE: Great. By the way, I was hoping to meet the owner.

CLARICE: He's not here, but Ms. Ford manages the place.

KILDARE: Yes, well, could I speak with her?

CLARICE: No.

KILDARE: Is this not a good time?

CLARICE: No, it's fine. The mornings are when the bombs are dropped. In the evening, we just experience the fallout.

KILDARE: I see. Are there problems?

CLARICE: Marriage, money and men. That's Ariel Fords' life in a nutshell.

KILDARE: Troubled?

CLARICE: More nut than shell. I can give her your name?

KILDARE: Kildare.

CLARICE: All right, Mr. Kildare. Enjoy the cappuchino.

KILDARE: Doctor.

CLARICE: What?

KILDARE: Doctor.

CLARICE: You're choking?! Oh, my God! (*SHE runs behind him and begins the HEIMLICH maneuver.*) It's probably a fishbone. Tully made the chowder in it last week. He thought the cappuchino machine would make it thicker. (*Breaking away from her.*)

KILDARE: No. Doctor. I am a doctor.

CLARICE: Such a big chest for a doctor.

KILDARE: Yes, well, whatever.

CLARICE: I'll tell Ms. Ford that you're here. (*Passing by MIRANDA.*)

Miranda, dear, is tonight your performance?

MIRANDA: Yes, and I'm dying to get started.

CLARICE: (*To audience.*) The way you play...I wish you'd die before you get started. (*CLARICE exits into the book office.*)

Entering from the back of the audience is ROBERT, an eager young man. A bit nerdy. HE awkwardly looks around. KILDARE looks up, but disregards ROBERT. Trying to fit in, HE takes down a large book from the shelf to read. Unfortunately, the book he has chosen is too heavy for him. HE drags the book to one of the side booths, and with all his strength, heaves the book onto the table. HE sits in the booth, pretending to read the book. TULLY enters with the MAN's soup. HE carries it to KILDARE.

TULLY: Here's your soup, Mister. (*He starts away.*)

KILDARE: Doctor.

TULLY: What?

KILDARE: Doctor.

TULLY: Oh, my God! He's choking! (*He begins the HEIMLICH maneuver on KILDARE.*) It's a furball! I swear I told them to keep that cat out of the kitchen! (*KILDARE breaks away.*)

KILDARE: I'm fine. I'm a doctor! Not a mister. A doctor! Do you get it?

TULLY: Not half as much as I like to! (*TULLY turns and spots ROBERT. HE fixes his hair and moves in.*) May I help you?

ROBERT: I'm a little hungry.

TULLY: So am I.

ROBERT: What do you have?

TULLY: Anything you want?

ROBERT: Soup?

TULLY: Now you're the kinda customer that I like.

ROBERT: What kinda soups do you have?

TULLY: Barley, pea, chicken, chicken noodle, beef, beef noodle, vegetable, corn chowder, seafood chowder, and clam!

ROBERT: They all sound good.

TULLY: So innocent...so naïve.

ROBERT: I'll have the chicken noodle.

TULLY: *(Yelling.)* Chicken noodle!

ROBERT: No, instead I'll have the beef noodle.

TULLY: *(Yelling.)* Hold his noodle and stick the beef in it! *(HE winks at ROBERT and exits to the kitchen.)* Miranda, are you using amplification tonight?

MIRANDA: Four speakers!

TULLY: I need an aspirin.

MIRANDA: I'm sorry. Do you have a headache?

TULLY: No. I just want the cotton at the top of the bottle to stuff in my ears. *(HE goes to exit. CLARICE enters from the office and stops TULLY.)*

CLARICE: Tully, she's on the warpath.

TULLY: What is it this time?

CLARICE: The builders didn't show up this morning.

TULLY: That's because all construction workers are busy tearing up the highways.

CLARICE: I haven't seen a worker here yet...oh well, you'd better stay clear.

TULLY: My only hope is that before she makes me start crating up those awful, dusty books...a tornado will drop a house on her. *(HE exits to the kitchen. CLARICE crosses down to DR. KILDARE.)*

CLARICE: Excuse me, Doctor. Ms. Ford—Ariel—would like me to ask you what it is that you want?

KILDARE: It's about books.

CLARICE: Yes. I see. Is there a book in that package?

KILDARE: This package. It's nothing. Really. Just something I picked up.

CLARICE: I see.

KILDARE: I could make an appointment for another time?

CLARICE: Okay. I'll go ask her. You're fine with your coffee?

KILDARE: Yes. Thank you.

CLARICE: If you want to look at another book, then feel free to browse.

KILDARE: Thank you. I will. *(CLARICE exits to office. KILDARE moves to the book shelves and begins to glance at the titles. MIRANDA wanders downstage. SHE sees ROBERT.)*

MIRANDA: Excuse me, have you been helped?

ROBERT: Yes. The waiter. You know...the strange waiter.

MIRANDA: Tully.

ROBERT: Yes.

MIRANDA: First time to Café Caffeine?

ROBERT: Yes, I'm not from around here.

MIRANDA: Really? I pegged you for a classy guy.

ROBERT: Why?

MIRANDA: Your jeans don't have holes in them, and your hair is combed. That usually means you're from the richer areas.

ROBERT: I'm from California, originally. *(Excited by this, SHE pulls a chair over to his booth.)*

MIRANDA: Wow! California. LA? San Francisco?

ROBERT: LA.

MIRANDA: Wow! Do you miss it?

ROBERT: Besides the riots, fires, earthquakes and murder...yeah, I thought it was cool.

MIRANDA: I'm going there one day... To launch my singing career.

ROBERT: You're a singer?

MIRANDA: I'm Miranda De Vere. You know...I'm the act here.

ROBERT: Oh, you are! Wow! Been playing here a long time?

MIRANDA: Tonight's my first time.

ROBERT: Your first time.

MIRANDA: I want my first time to be special

ROBERT: Oh, I think it's important that everyone's first time is special.

MIRANDA: Wow! We could be soul mates. We think the same things.

ROBERT: Except that you're a little young.

MIRANDA: I'm twenty-five.

ROBERT: I thought you were in high school.

MIRANDA: Oh, no, I graduated from Our Lady of Perpetual Entertainment seven years ago. It's the clothes. Right?

ROBERT: Well...

MIRANDA: My dad makes me wear these outfits. He won't let me grow up. I have a leather miniskirt, chains, and nose ring that I put on when I go out.

ROBERT: A nose ring?

MIRANDA: I used to have a belly-button ring, but one day, I accidently though it was my jacket zipper... Oooh, that was messy.

ROBERT: Do you know the manager of this building?

MIRANDA: Ariel Ford. She's okay. This store used to belong to her number one ex-husband. She got it in the settlement. Made it her pride and joy. She decided to put the books in here. She loves old books. She repairs them in the back. Ex-husband number two came along and bought the whole block for a song.

ROBERT: How?

MIRANDA: He had an inspector come in here and declare the apartments upstairs condemned. She's been trying to get the builders in here to fix it up to specs. So anyways, he bought up the whole block. Owns everything. He's money crazy.

ROBERT: Is this Charles De Vere we're talking about?

MIRANDA: Hear of him in California?

ROBERT: We get out. We know all the celebrities.

MIRANDA: Yeah, well he's famous all right.

ROBERT: Wow. Does he live here?

MIRANDA: His office is upstairs. I've seen it. He's got pictures of himself with all these famous people. Rock stars, foreign dignitaries, movie stars. He has a picture of the President, but it's in a plastic frame. He figures they're never there too long.

ROBERT: But when I started college, I wanted to be just like him. Know everything. Do everything. Make millions of dollars. Write books about it. Have affairs with beautiful women. Write books about it. Do nothing but have a good time. Have other people write books about it. So you've actually met Mr. De Vere?

MIRANDA: The minute I was born. He's my father. (*ARIEL FORD enters. Busy, vibrant, fast. SHE charges into the room with CLARICE close behind.*)

ARIEL: Has anyone seen a squatty little man who calls himself a carpenter?

CLARICE: No.

ARIEL: I bet he was the runt of the litter. Charles had to hire someone that would make me angry! That's what we get. (*SHE checks the bar for dust.*) Clarice, I need you.

CLARICE: (*Sarcastically.*) Well, you know it's my life's dream to serve you.

ARIEL: Get me a caff capp hazelnut. Heavy on the sugar. I need the energy! (*SHE storms back into the office. TULLY enters with ROBERT's soup.*)

TULLY: Was that her?

CLARICE: Either her or Medusa...I really couldn't tell.

TULLY: At least she didn't fire anyone today. (*Pause.*) ...Yet. (*HE crosses down to the table.*) Here's your soup, a nice beef with a little noodle.

ROBERT: Thank you. It looks terrific.

TULLY: Just thank me and the Campbell's Kids.

MIRANDA: What a cook. Tully can open a can faster than anyone.

ROBERT: I saw you playing chess earlier.

TULLY: Yes.

ROBERT: Win much?

MIRANDA: Tully always wins. He plays with himself.

ROBERT: I find it very hard to play with myself. (*Silence, TULLY thinks that one over.*)

TULLY: Is it hot in here? I'd better go and take a little icy cold shower. (*TULLY exits to the kitchen. CLARICE has by now equipped herself with her goggles and gloves.*)

CLARICE: Clear! (*MIRANDA hits the deck. Pots and pans falling in the kitchen can be heard. CLARICE pulls the handle. Again, the cappuchino machine screams and sputters. The lights flicker from the power. Finally, it squirts coffee into the cup.*) All clear!

ROBERT: Why does everyone get so frightened?

MIRANDA: A year ago the machine got clogged up. The pressure built up and boom!

ROBERT: Did anyone get hurt?

MIRANDA: Two waiters were severely frothed. It took the bomb squad to turn the darn thing off. I thought Ariel would get a new machine, but she just had this one fixed instead. She mumbled something about finances. (*ARIEL bursts into the room.*)

ARIEL: Clarice, my cappuchino! (*TULLY enters.*)

CLARICE: Yes, my dragon. Just like you like it. Hot, foamy and smooth!

TULLY: This kinda talk makes me feel like I'm in a Tennessee Williams' play. (*TULLY fanning himself exits back into the kitchen.*)

ARIEL: My God, Clarice, what are you wearing? You look like a melting sno-cone.

CLARICE: I know I can always expect a compliment from you.

ARIEL: I need to set up a dress code! Oh, my Lord! Miranda, is tonight you debut?

MIRANDA: Yes, Ariel.

ARIEL: Then I'll have to schedule a meeting with my therapist for tomorrow. Oh, Clarice...

CLARICE: Yes, my liege.

ARIEL: Where's the man who wanted to meet with me?

ROBERT: (*Standing up.*) Excuse me, Ms. Ford.

ARIEL: Yes...?

ROBERT: I wanted to meet with you...

ARIEL: Concerning...?

ROBERT: I am hoping to get a job, maybe here?

CLARICE: You want to work here? With us? Call the wagon...he's insane.

MIRANDA: I should have known. Jobs... Money... Just another member of the establishment. (*SHE crosses back to her guitar.*)

ARIEL: A job.

CLARICE: Don't do it! Get away while you can!

ARIEL: Does a big, good-looking young man like yourself have a name?

ROBERT: Robert Ludzedski.

ARIEL: Bobby.

ROBERT: Robert.

ARIEL: Bob, can you do construction work?

ROBERT: Some.

ARIEL: Drywall, electrical and plumbing?

ROBERT: I'm not great, but I'm good.

ARIEL: Oh, I bet you are.

MIRANDA: I can't believe this. She has stretch marks older than him.

ARIEL: Miranda, dear, don't you need to get a tune-up for your guitar?

MIRANDA: I'm ready to go.

ARIEL: Then go.

MIRANDA: Tonight's my shot.

ARIEL: Tonight I wish you'd get shot!

MIRANDA: Listen, Mommy Dearest—

TULLY: (*Entering as JOAN CRAWFORD.*) Not the wire hangars!

ROBERT: Mommy?

ARIEL: Step-mommy...once removed.

MIRANDA: I'm playing here tonight or else...

ARIEL: Or else you'll get Daddy to close the doors.

MIRANDA: That's right.

ARIEL: Yes, well, you sing your little songs. Fine. Bobby, I'm so sorry. Where were we? A job. Of course... (*SHE drinks from her cappuchino and gets whipped cream on her upper lip.*) ...Rob, you're hired.

ROBERT: Really?

ARIEL: That's right. Now you need to get working. The sooner you're all hot and sweaty, the better.

ROBERT: Thank you, Ms. Ford. And you can tell your ex-husband, Mr. De Vere, that I'll do an excellent job on his building.

ARIEL: Please, must you remind me of him?

MIRANDA: Robert actually admires Daddy. Don't you, Robert?

ROBERT: The man is a legend. Not only has he been mayor, written best-selling books and two Broadway plays, but he also had that bit part—

ARIEL: —Baywatch! Yes, I know. We've all heard how he gave mouth to mouth resuscitation to that Pamela Anderson.

TULLY: He tried to give her a massage, but he got stuck up to his elbows in her cleavage.

CLARICE: And then they started dating.

MIRANDA: That could have been Mommy number three! I would have killed myself.

ARIEL: I can always dream. Now, Robert dear, why don't you trot on upstairs and take a look around? See what you can do.

ROBERT: Yes, ma'am. Uh, how much do I owe you for the soup?

ARIEL: Don't worry about that.

CLARICE: Ms. Ford, the rent is due.

ARIEL: We'll deduct it from your first week's wages.

ROBERT: *(Disappointed.)* Oh. *(HE exits through the office door.)*

CLARICE: Dr. Kildare *(KILDARE still over at the bookcases.)*

KILDARE: Yes.

CLARICE: Ms. Ford will see you now. *(KILDARE and FORD cross to each other. It is obvious that they know each other.)*

ARIEL: Bill...? *(Shaking hands.)*

KILDARE: Doctor...Kildare.

ARIEL: Kildare, of course, I'm sorry. Doctor.

CLARICE: Do you know each other?

KILDARE AND ARIEL: No, oh, no. Us know each other? No.

MIRANDA: Mommy...Dr. Kildare was my English teacher.

ARIEL: I didn't know that.

KILDARE: One semester.

MIRANDA: He was a superb teacher. Always had time for me. Always there when I needed him.

ARIEL: How nice.

KILDARE: One semester. I sometimes...once...tutored her privately...

ARIEL: Is there a reason you're here? Now? In front of these people?

KILDARE: I came to inquire about a book. *(SHE knows everyone is listening so she pretends to show him books.)*

ARIEL: One of my books?

KILDARE: Rare books.

ARIEL: I have many. Charles Dickens' first failure, "*A Tale of Three Cities*".

KILDARE: Not Dickens.

ARIEL: Twain's little known sequel, "*Injun Joe's Got a Crush On Me*"?

KILDARE: More of a classic.

ARIEL: You mean Jackie Collins?

KILDARE: It's actually a private matter.

ARIEL: Would you like to step into my bedroom—uh, office?

KILDARE: Please.

ARIEL: We can discuss how dear Miranda did while under your care?

KILDARE: It was only one semester. *(ARIEL and KILDARE exit to the office.)*

TULLY: Miranda, dear, I was thinking of what you were talking to me about before.

MIRANDA: So?

TULLY: I think I have a solution.

MIRANDA: You do?

TULLY: It's a little devious.

MIRANDA: Is it a sin?

TULLY: Sin is in the eye of the beholder.

MIRANDA: Good point. *(MIRANDA rushes into the kitchen with TULLY. CLARICE crosses to the phone. Dials.)*

CLARICE: Hello? Good, it's you. Listen, we almost got caught. I was scared. She will hate me when she finds out. Maybe I could come over and talk to you about our little problem? *(Pause.)* Well, it is. How could you even think such a thing? *(Pause.)* I can't believe the way you...listen, who does all the covering for you? I thought I meant more. *(SHE slams down the phone. Rushing to a stack of books on a shelf, she grabs the biggest one and run through the house. BILL, KILDARE and ARIEL enter arguing.)*

KILDARE: This is no joke. We are running out of time! If I don't get that book—

ARIEL: Why should I care? You can't come back into my life and think I'm going to jump at whatever you say.

KILDARE: You could even the score. Do you think he's going to give you a dime? It's hers. Everything is hers. Let me take something that can be our way out of here.

ARIEL: Listen, there is nothing. Now please, leave. I've got a business that I need to run. *(SHE storms into the office. BILL crosses to the phone and dials.)*

KILDARE: It's Bill. No, I don't have it yet. No! No. She's having second thoughts...I don't care. This is the find of the century, and I'm not going to let some sniveling socialite ruin it. I've got a plan. Fine. *(Pause.)* In a couple of hours. See ya. *(TULLY enters. Wiping something off his hands with a rag. KILDARE, unaware of TULLY, heads toward the office.)*

TULLY: Looking for the exit? It's that way.

KILDARE: You're right. How silly of me. Could you please thank Ms. Ford for her time?

TULLY: All right.

KILDARE: Thank you. *(KILDARE exits through the house. CLARICE rushes in, pushing KILDARE out of her way.)*

TULLY: Clarice, what's the matter?

CLARICE: I don't want to talk about it! *(SHE rushes into the kitchen. TULLY tries to stop her.)*

TULLY: No, don't go in there! *(CLARICE pushes past him.)* It's a mess in there! *(HE runs after her. ARIEL bursts from the office with a red liquid all over her hands. The liquid is actually an ink she was using to restore a book, but the audience should believe that it is blood.)*

ARIEL: I've got to get this off my hands! *(SHE turn to go into the office and runs into KILDARE, who is stealing a book. KILDARE loses his balance, tripping over a chair and flipping over a table. ARIEL runs into the kitchen where we hear the clang of a frying pan. TULLY rushes out holding a frying pan.)*

TULLY: I think I've killed her! *(CLARICE rushes in screaming.)*

CLARICE: Blood! Everywhere! She's dead!

KILDARE: Dead!

ARIEL: *(Staggering in holding her head.)* Could someone please catch me?

TULLY: I will.

KILDARE: I will! *(Too late. SHE faints falling like a board behind the bar.)*

CLARICE: Oh, my God, Miranda is dead! *(ROBERT rushes in from the office with a gun drawn.)*

ROBERT: Freeze! *(THEY all raise their hands. ARIEL pops up from behind the bar.)* I said freeze, lady, or I'll shoot. *(SHE faints again. Like a board behind the bar.)*

BLACKOUT.

DO NOT COPY

ACT TWO
“THE INVESTIGATION”

The first half of ACT TWO finds the characters in shock after the murder. Our detective reveals himself, and some interesting facts begin to trickle out of the suspects.

The second half of ACT TWO includes the audience. The actors realize that they are being watched, and then they invite the audience into their world. The actors reenact the events leading up to the crime with the audience making sure they do it correctly.

AT RISE:

MUSIC is heard throughout the BLACKOUT. Lights up to reveal the CAFÉ. ROBERT is in control. ARIEL is lying on the bar with her legs hanging over the edge. TULLY is beside ARIEL holding a huge ice bag on her head. CLARICE is seated in a booth to one side, and BILL is leaning against a bookcase on the opposite side of the stage. EVERYONE is talking wildly.

ROBERT: All right. Can everyone please calm down? Please.
(THEY still keep talking.) I have a gun, and I will use it. *(No improvement.)*

CLARICE: I love a man with a big gun.

ARIEL: *(To TULLY.)* Tully, tell me what it looks like.

TULLY: *(He looks at her head wound.)* I can't.

ARIEL: It's all right. Just tell me if it's bad.

TULLY: I'd better not.

ARIEL: I'm an adult woman. I can take it. Just give it to me straight.

TULLY: Well, let's just say that if anyone wants to take a family picture, you might want to stand in the back.

ARIEL: *(Crying.)* Oh, my God! I'm disfigured! I have an ugly bruise on my face.

TULLY: I'd say it's more like a contusion than a bruise.

ARIEL: Comfort is what I was going for.

TULLY: It's like a mini-Mount Everest on your face.

ARIEL: You can stop any time.

TULLY: Hey, look on the bright side, at least it didn't knock your face-lift loose.

ARIEL: All right! Let's not forget that it was your frying pan that dropped on my head.

TULLY: Oh now, you'll never let me forget that.

ROBERT: Please, people, give me a break. We have a situation here. *(Waving his gun.)*

ARIEL: *(Being interrupted.)* How rude!

CLARICE: The way he keeps pulling that thing out, you'd think he was in a militia.

TULLY: Most men can wave it around, but only a few know how to use it.

ROBERT: Hey! That's enough. Now, I called the police, but it seems like there won't be anybody on the scene for a little while. All police officers are tied up with an accident on the highway.

CLARICE: What are we going to do?

ROBERT: Well, folks, we got a dead body in the back, and I'm in charge.

TULLY: Why did we put her in the freezer? I mean, she's so close to the succotash.

ARIEL: Please, Tully, that's my late ex-step-daughter you're talking about.

CLARICE: I have a question.

ROBERT: Shoot.

CLARICE: Who the hell are you?

ROBERT: Good question. Robert Ludzeski. Treasury Department. Special Agent. *(Flashes his badge.)*

ARIEL: A policeman?

ROBERT: No, ma'am. A special agent.

ARIEL: I don't care what your problems are. Does this mean you're not going to finish the construction on the upstairs?

ROBERT: Ma'am, there has been a murder. Miranda DeVere is dead. *(THEY all ad lib appropriate words of shock.)*

TULLY: *(Nudging ARIEL.)* This is where you're supposed to cry.

ARIEL: Oh. *(Bursting into tears.)* Oh, my God. Little Miranda. Poor, sweet, stupid Miranda. Poor, untalented, spoiled-brat Miranda. Poor—

KILDARE: We get the picture! (*ARIEL stops.*)

CLARICE: Are you sure she was murdered?

ROBERT: I'm no forensics expert. However, I think the fact that she was struck over the head, pushed downstairs, and stabbed rules out suicide.

KILDARE: A comedian.

ROBERT: As a matter of fact, it seems Miss De Vere was not only struck over the head with a blunt object but also stabbed to death with a— (*THEY all gasp.*) spoon!

ARIEL: How horrible!

KILDARE: A spoon?

TULLY: What a way to go.

CLARICE: It must have been very painful.

ROBERT: And since I was on the scene immediately, securing the Café, that means that one of you did it! One of you murdered that beautiful young girl.

KILDARE: And I suppose you haven't tampered with any of the evidence.

ROBERT: No, I didn't drop a bloody glove at the scene, if that's what you mean.

CLARICE: Why were you here?

ROBERT: A money laundering scheme. There were reports that counterfeit money was being laundered throughout this establishment.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from DEAD TO THE LAST DROP by Ken Jones. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

HITPLAYS.COM