

Characters

Narrator (M/F)

Father (M/F)

Glenys (M/F)

Voice 1 (M/F)

Voice 2 (M/F)

Voice 3 (M/F)

Knife Thrower (M/F)

Roxanne (M/F)

Scene 1

- Narrator:** Roxanne was one of those girls to whom things happened. Take her name for instance; it was supposed to have been Annie, but something happened as her father was driving to register the birth. Explaining later to his bemused wife, he said,
- Father:** They played that song Roxanne on the radio. It seemed like a message.
- Narrator:** Seeing her expression he added,
- Father:** It's similar to Annie, only more, original.
- Narrator:** Her parents both as stubborn as mules, each had their own way over time. Her father called her Roxy; her mother called her Annie. And that was just the beginning.
- Narrator:** Up to the age of 24, little had happened to Roxanne that was entirely straight forward. And so, she was hardly surprised when, taking a job in the office of an insurance firm, she suddenly found herself working as a detective. Actually, her title was insurance investigator, but that was just the title. When she asked her predecessor about his sudden resignation, he replied somewhat enigmatically,
- Voice:** I like living.

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- Narrator:** Roxanne investigated many of the things a detective would, quickly becoming an expert on the underside of humankind. Leading such a fateful life herself, she empathised with people who had pigs fall on them, or whose homes were invaded by frogs. Soon though, very soon, she learned to ask questions such as,
- Roxanne:** Did the pig fall, or was it pushed?
- Narrator:** And,
- Roxanne:** Was the house built directly over an ancient pond?
- Narrator:** And,
- Roxanne:** Did the house have planning permission?
- Narrator:** She loved her work, but it didn't always make her friends.
- Narrator:** Roxanne was a sociable sort of girl. After work she usually called in at her local for a half. The landlady Glenys and her daughters were good friends. But that evening, she'd been to the dentist. One side of

her mouth, numb from the treatment for the revenge of the Mars bar, she had driven regretfully past The Newt and Gherkin.

- Narrator:** Sitting on the settee with her cats, wondering what to slurp for supper, the telephone rang. The cats scrambled at the sound. From experience they knew that Roxanne moved quickly, and they risked all manner of mishaps if they didn't. Dabbing absent-mindedly at the black coffee she'd slopped over her top, she picked up the receiver,
- Roxanne:** Hi, this is Roxanne.
- Narrator:** There was silence at the end of the phone. This was becoming a not uncommon event, and Roxanne waited for whoever it was to breathe heavily then ring off, or speak. A muffled voice spoke,
- Voice:** (**over telephone**) Glenys is asking for you. There's a body in the snug of the Newt and Gherkin. She says she needs you to come right away.
- Narrator:** Then the phone went dead.
- Narrator:** Brushing a straggle of fair hair behind one ear so she could see, Roxanne jabbed at numbers to access the caller's number. She frowned. The call had indeed come from the Newt and Gherkin. She thought it must be a hoax. If there really was a body in the snug, Glenys would have phoned personally surely? And why phone her? Roxanne was an insurance investigator, not a proper detective, although there were grey areas. But maybe Glenys was phoning the police right now? Still wearing her pink slippers with white rabbit ears dangling from each side, Roxanne rushed into the street, jumped into her car. Almost at the Newt and Gherkin, she indicated suddenly and pulled up at the road side. Something was wrong; she could feel it! She chewed her lips and noticed sensation returning to the side of her mouth; it seemed to convey a message. But what was it? Something that she was unaware of, yet very much present. Was someone watching her, waiting for her to arrive? Why?
- Narrator:** For no particular reason, she calculated how long it took to drive from home to the pub; two or three minutes maybe. Enough time to lightly boil an egg. She frowned; dismissing anything egg related from her mind. She struggled to recall if there was an event in the snug tonight; remembered Glenys mentioning a private birthday party.
- Glenys:** It's quite exciting. There's going to be a sort of cabaret with a singer, comedian, and a knife thrower. Don't worry - they're fake knives!
- Narrator:** Roxanne shivered. What if someone had accidentally substituted a real knife? Is that why there was a body; who was the victim? Then, her training as an insurance investigator made her think; what if someone had deliberately substituted a real knife? Uneasily she turned the key in the ignition, and was soon parking in the frontage of The Newt and Gherkin. She looked at her watch; three minutes;

enough time to boil an egg; then frowned. The pub appeared eerily quiet; no ambulance; no police car.

Narrator: Halfway to the entrance, Roxanne wondered when the police would arrive? Surely Glenys had phoned them? They couldn't just be waiting for her; could they? Again, she chewed the side of her lip that had been numb. This time she allowed her thoughts to stray to the egg case she was currently investigating; could almost smelt the smoke from the fire.

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Narrator: The investigation into the blaze at an industrial unit containing battery hens was a nasty one. Nothing remained but sky, a few bricks, roast chickens and some very hard eggs. Roxanne was vegetarian, but even if she hadn't been, the visit to the torched factory farm would have turned her into one. The owner, Vince Green, blamed animal activists, but she was suspicious. Suspicious, because one evening she'd read an article in the pub newspaper about a car totally fuelled by chicken dung. It seemed to convey a message and she was big on messages. So, she had set about enquiring how often the units had been cleaned recently. If the droppings were allowed to build up, and methane produced, the whole place could go up in smoke, especially if someone dropped a match; on purpose.

Narrator: Mr Price she'd discovered, had been on the brink of being shut down by the authorities for poor health and hygiene practices. Roxanne was on the verge of nailing him. Just a few more enquiries, and he could say goodbye to the pay-out he was attempting to swindle from of the insurance company; and she detested cruelty to animals. She frowned; why was she dwelling on this case when there was a body in the snug? She recalled her predecessor's reason for quitting; 'I like living'. For a second time that evening she shivered; and she really wasn't a shivery sort of person.

Narrator: Inside the pub, the long dark corridor leading to the bar was deserted. She darted into the open tap room off the corridor, but that too was empty. Looking at the yellow rag roll door leading to the snug, the old bakerite handle, she wondered what she would find when she turned it? The prostrate body of the illusionist's assistant; blood gelling from the fatal wound made by the real knife? Why then was it so quiet? Why no screaming or sobbing? Soon she would rotate the handle, swing open the door, end her suspense. She grasped the handle but then let go, as if it was red hot; burning in fact.

Narrator: Why, oh why, couldn't she get the fire and those wretched hens out of her mind? Then she thought, what if, just what if, the murder hadn't been committed yet? She stared at the door handle frowning.

Narrator: Sticking both sides of her hair behind her ears, Roxanne copied a technique she'd seen in police TV dramas. Turning the handle until it

stopped, she kicked the door wide open. Unfortunately, in the process she shot one pink slipper into the room, and when she tried to spring back against the corridor wall as they do in police dramas, tripped over the other. In answer to all her queries, a knife came slicing through the doorway. She screamed as it went home with a sickening thud.

- Narrator:** Inside the snug there was stunned silence. Removing his blindfold, the knife thrower, who'd been aiming knives at a board on the door reverse asked,
- Knife Thrower:** What's happened?
- Voice 1:** I think you've just hit someone!
- Voice 2:** I thought you bolted the door?
- Knife Thrower:** Some-one must have unbolted it again!
- Voice 3:** I thought you used fake knives?
- Narrator:** Striding to the open doorway, the knife thrower looked down onto the floor. His face registered disappointment as he asked,
- Knife Thrower:** Where is she?
- Narrator:** From the tap room, Roxanne appeared limping.
- Roxanne:** She - Mr. Green? I'm surprised you're trying to pull off another illusion, but you see I'm not as feather brained as your poor hens!
- Narrator:** Vince Green stared from the knife embedded in the wooden panelling of the corridor, to Roxanne. He said,
- Knife Thrower:** I never said she!
- Narrator:** But of course, everybody had heard him. It turned out Vince Green had made two telephone calls from the pub. One to Roxanne, and the other to Glenys the landlady, reporting a blaze in the medieval pigeon loft behind the pub. Of course, everyone except the people in the snug, ran out to pass buckets of water along to extinguish it. Later, Glenys said,
- Glenys:** How horrible! You were meant to be the body in the snug Roxanne! What a day you've had, what with the dentist and everything. And I bet you haven't even had your supper? How about I make you bread soldiers and a lightly boiled egg?
- Narrator:** Roxanne bit her lip, this time to prevent her saying something rude. She smiled,
- Roxanne:** Just make it a half, please Glenys!