

# **AN UNHAPPY MEDIUM**

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**CHARACTERS:**

**MATTHEW:** *Man, twenty to forty age range.*

**ALBERT PINCKLE:** *Man, forty to sixty age range.*

**TAYLOR:** *Mr Pinckle's gardener.*

**CHRISTINE:** *Mr Pinckle's wife.*

**POTTS:** *Mr Pinckle's cook.*

**SETTING:** *A police interrogation room.*

*(Albert sits side on to the audience at a table centre stage with an empty chair opposite him. The table is lit by an overhead light, the peripheral stage areas are in shadow. On the table are some photographs placed face down. Matthew stands with his back to Albert and facing the audience. His hands are in his pockets and his eyes are closed. They remain so for a moment.)*

**ALBERT:** Sir? Excuse me, sir?

*(Matthew opens his eyes.)*

You wanted to ask me some questions?

*(He turns to Albert, hesitates for a moment, then moves to the table and stands opposite him.)*

**MATTHEW:** Call me Matthew.

**ALBERT:** Matthew. You wanted to speak to me.

**MATTHEW:** Yes...thank you for coming.

*(He turns over a photo.)*

Do you know this man?

**ALBERT:** Of course...it's Taylor...my gardener.

**MATTHEW:** When was the last time you saw Taylor?

ALBERT: I'm not sure... Was it yesterday? What day is it today?

MATTHEW: It's Tuesday, Mr Pinckle.

ALBERT: Call me Albert.

MATTHEW: Did you know that he's dead, Albert?

ALBERT: Who?

MATTHEW: Taylor, your gardener.

ALBERT: Dead?

MATTHEW: He was found on your property, in your house...

*(Pause)*

In your bedroom.

ALBERT: My bedroom?

MATTHEW: Do you know how he died, Albert?

ALBERT: I...I couldn't say.

*(Taylor enters, bleeding from the forehead. Albert sees him, Matthew does not.)*

TAYLOR: Tell him how I died, Albert.

ALBERT: What are you doing here?

MATTHEW: I'm trying to find out the truth.

TAYLOR: Go on...tell him the truth. Tell him how you came home early and found us in your bed...

ALBERT: Bugger off!

MATTHEW: I'm not the enemy, Albert. I'm here to help you.

ALBERT: Not you...him!

MATTHEW: Him? Who? Is someone else here?

TAYLOR: Tell him, Albert. Tell him your gardener has come back to haunt you because you shot him point blank in the head.

ALBERT: What did you expect me to do? Thank you for sleeping with my wife?

TAYLOR: Why not? *She* did...every time.

ALBERT: You shut your foul mouth right now, or I'll...

TAYLOR: You'll what? Kill me? You only get that pleasure once, buddy.

MATTHEW: Albert! Is it Taylor...is he here with you?

ALBERT: You can't see him.

MATTHEW: No...I can't see him.

TAYLOR: (*Laughing*) I'm your own private nightmare, Albert.

MATTHEW: They tell me you used to work here sometimes. As a medium. You helped them with some cases?

ALBERT: Yes...several.

MATTHEW: You're retired now?

ALBERT: They found someone else to use. Someone...

TAYLOR: Younger.

ALBERT: ...new.

MATTHEW: So you can see and hear people who've...passed on.

ALBERT: Only if they want me to.

TAYLOR: That's right, pal. I want you to hear me loud and clear...

*(Christine enters. She has heavy bruising around her neck. Once again, Matthew doesn't see her.)*

CHRISTINE: Oh for God's sake, Taylor, leave him alone.

ALBERT: Christine!

MATTHEW: Christine's here too?

ALBERT: I can't believe you're still with this gigolo...even in death!

TAYLOR: Gigolo? Let's get our facts straight here, buddy. I didn't take a cent from your missus. Not once.

CHRISTINE: That's true, Albert. He didn't want my money...we were madly in love.

TAYLOR: Well, maybe love is an exaggeration.

CHRISTINE: Are you saying you didn't love me?

TAYLOR: You had a hot bod, sweetheart. And you knew how to rock my world, but love...that's probably stretching it.

CHRISTINE: You bastard!

MATTHEW: What's happening, Albert?

ALBERT: *(To Christine)* Ha! So you fooled around with him behind my back and now you find he was just using you. How does it feel, my love? Do you feel exploited? Betrayed? Perhaps now you can appreciate how *I* felt?

MATTHEW: Did you find them together, Albert? Taylor and your wife? Did you kill them in a fit of jealousy?

ALBERT: No! He strangled her and then he felt so guilty he shot himself.

TAYLOR: You gotta be kidding me! *That's* the story you're spinning? Like anyone's going to believe that pile of manure!

MATTHEW: How do you know? Is that what they're telling you?

CHRISTINE: *(To Taylor)* You're right. No one would believe a bastard like you would have that kind of compassion...or courage.

ALBERT: *(To Matthew)* Yes...that's what they're telling me.

TAYLOR: You lying hound!

MATTHEW: Why would he strangle her?

CHRISTINE: *(To Albert)* I can understand why you would kill *him*, darling. But why me? I gave you ten good years!

ALBERT: *(To Christine)* Are you trying to tell me he was the first?

CHRISTINE: Of course!

ALBERT: So that time I caught you in the walk-in pantry with the cook...?

CHRISTINE: I was showing him where the flour was.

ALBERT: With the door closed?

CHRISTINE: The wind blew it shut!

ALBERT: You were on top of him!

CHRISTINE: I tripped.

ALBERT: Oh really. And your skirt blew up around your waist?

TAYLOR: Bloody hell!

ALBERT: Then there was the postman, the plumber...

MATTHEW: Your wife had been unfaithful before?

ALBERT: Many times...I tried to turn a blind eye.

TAYLOR: You did it with Potts? That half-wit of a cook!

CHRISTINE: He said he loved me...

TAYLOR: Oh, my God...! You are so gullible!

MATTHEW: But this was one too many? You couldn't take it anymore...

ALBERT: I told you I didn't do it.

MATTHEW: A delivery boy said he saw a man running from the house...

TAYLOR: *(To Christine)* What happened to being madly in love with *me*?

MATTHEW: He said he seemed distressed.

CHRISTINE: *(To Taylor)* You said you didn't love me!

TAYLOR: Yeah, but you didn't know that until five minutes ago.

ALBERT: I found them. I saw what he'd done...the gardener. He found out she'd been sleeping with the cook.

TAYLOR: Oh, for God's sake!

ALBERT: He was insanely jealous...even though he didn't love her.

TAYLOR: That's it, I'm going to let him see me...

ALBERT: *(To Taylor)* You can't...he doesn't have the power.

MATTHEW: Who can't? What power?

TAYLOR: Well let's see, shall we?

*(Matthew turns to Taylor as though seeing him for the first time.)*

MATTHEW: Taylor? Are you Taylor?

ALBERT: You can see him?

TAYLOR: He can see me!

CHRISTINE: How does that work?

ALBERT: How can you see him? He's dead!

MATTHEW: I haven't been completely honest with you, Albert. I'm a medium too. Your replacement, actually. The police have asked me to find out what happened at your house that day.

CHRISTINE: So can he see me?

TAYLOR: Just make it happen, baby.

CHRISTINE: *(Waving to Matthew)* Yoo-hoo!

*(Matthew turns to Christine.)*

MATTHEW: You must be Christine.

ALBERT: I don't believe this!

CHRISTINE: Hello, Matthew.

MATTHEW: It's good to talk to you.

CHRISTINE: Not at all...the pleasure's mine.

TAYLOR: You're unbelievable, you are. You're lifeless body's on a slab in a lab somewhere and you're *still* flirting with men!

MATTHEW: Is that why you killed her, Taylor. Were you jealous of the cook?

TAYLOR: I did not kill her! (*Pointing to Albert*) He did! The old fart found us at it in his bed and he went berserk. Blew my brains out without so much as a how's your father. Then he went to town on his missus and squeezed the life out of her.

CHRISTINE: Not a nice way to die, Albert...you could have at least made it quick like Taylor.

TAYLOR: As if I'd be jealous of that tosser Potts! He was about as sexy as a three minute egg...and probably only ever lasted that long.

*(Potts enters with a noose around his neck. Everybody sees him.)*

POTTS: I heard that!

ALBERT: Potts! What the devil are you doing here? You're supposed to be home cooking my supper.

POTTS: Yeah, sorry Mr Pinckle...a bit of a problem there.

MATTHEW: We found Mr Potts hanging in the garden shed.

CHRISTINE: Potty! What happened!

POTTS: Hello, Mrs Pinckle. How are we today?

TAYLOR: We're dead, you idiot! What were you doing strung up in my garden shed? Couldn't you have done it in your own kitchen?

POTTS: Only place I could find rope strong enough. The poultry twine wouldn't have been up to the job, I'm afraid.

MATTHEW: Why did you hang yourself, Mr Potts?

ALBERT: Well it's obvious, isn't it. He was guilty over the affair with my wife and distraught over her death.

POTTS: Well, there was that, sir, yes, there was that. A horrible business...

ALBERT: He probably killed Taylor! Did you think of that?

POTTS: I'm afraid not, Mr Pinckle, although I'll admit the thought had occurred to me on occasion.

MATTHEW: Tell us what happened, Mr Potts.

POTTS: Well, I heard the shot, y'see. I was coming in from the market with the vegies for tea and I heard the shot in the bedroom. I guess I should have

just called the police but I dropped me bundle and rushed upstairs and there they were...

MATTHEW: Who? Who was there?

POTTS: Mr and Mrs Pinckle. At first I thought they were having a bit of hanky-panky. I mean, it would have been highly unusual...

CHRISTINE: You can say that again.

POTTS: ...but anyway that's what it looked like. They were writhing around on the bed and Mrs Pinckle was making a strange moaning sound. Then I saw the gardener lying on the floor. He was starkers and had a bullet hole in his head and I thought, hang on, something's not right here.

TAYLOR: Strike me down, the man's a genius!

CHRISTINE: Shhh! He's getting to the interesting bit.

POTTS: So then it suddenly occurs to me that he's not actually bonking her, he's strangling her...and I see the gun on the floor and I pick it up.

MATTHEW: Mr Pinckle's gun?

POTTS: I would guess so, sir. The next thing she goes limp and he stands up and turns around and he sees me. He says, "Give me the gun, Potts." But I know that if I do chances are I'd end up like the gardener there on the floor...

ALBERT: This is ridiculous! Can't you see the man's an imbecile! I only took him on because I felt sorry for him. And he makes a pot roast that's to die for...excuse the expression.

MATTHEW: What happened next, Potts?

POTTS: I don't rightly know, sir. He was coming at me and I was thinking how he'd just killed Mrs Pinckle and how she'd been so kind to me in the walk-in pantry all those times and I just...I fired the gun.

MATTHEW: You shot him?

POTTS: Well I couldn't say for sure seeing as I had my eyes closed at the time. There's a good chance I might have missed, I mean never having shot a pistol before and all. And then I think I dropped it...the gun, that is...and I ran downstairs into the garden and I...

TAYLOR: Hung yourself in my shed! I knew I should have kept that shed locked.

POTTS: Sorry about that...guess I was a little upset. Spur of the moment thing, you understand.

*(Pause)*

ALBERT: Well, this is all very well, Matthew. But just how you're going to prove it in a court of law I really don't know. Seems to me, they're more likely to believe my story of a jealous gardener who strings the cook up in his shed, strangles his lover and then shoots himself in a moment of guilt.

MATTHEW: You're probably right, Albert. The only thing is...they're not going to hear your story.

ALBERT: Oh, and why is that?

MATTHEW: Because he didn't miss.

ALBERT: Who didn't miss what?

MATTHEW: Potts...didn't miss you.

*(Albert is confused for a moment, then slowly stands and looks down at the large bloodstain across the front of his shirt.)*

ALBERT: Oh...bugger!

*(Lights out.)*

**END**