

THE AMBUSH

A Full-Length Play

A Medical Murder Mystery

By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

1. **Detective Ben Sinclair** – man, early 40s; casual clothes with casual jacket. He has a concealed small handgun, holstered on his belt, inside his jacket. He has a police badge in his pocket.
2. **Dr. Amy Sinclair** – woman, early 40s; comfortable clothes.
3. **Dr. Jack Stevenson** – man, in a wheelchair, late 30s to mid 40s, muscular, dark brown hair, no beard. Tall (ideally, about 6 feet). He wears glasses and white lab coat.
4. **Lieutenant Lela Rose** – woman, African-American, mid to late 40s; business suit. She has a police badge in her pocket; (optional: holstered gun under jacket)
5. **Dr. Miranda Phillips** – woman, late thirties to early 40s, comfortable clothes; white lab coat.
6. **Dr. Terri Phillips** – woman, Miranda's mother, late 60s, comfortable clothes; feeble, sickly.
7. **Detective Rubin** – man, 30s to 50s, business suit; (optional: holstered gun under jacket).
8. **Dr. Jenner** – woman, 40s, white lab coat (optional scrubs)

SETTING

Present time. Memorial Hospital, Danville, Illinois.

1. ICU Waiting Room – couch, small side table, chairs
2. Command Center – large table with chairs around it
3. Dark stage – empty stage with lights shining on actors who are spread out through stage; light comes on speaking actor. This is also used for scene when Jack has Lela at gunpoint and last scene when Ben and Terri die.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

1. Guns x2-4 – Ben, Jack (optional: Lela and Rubin)
2. Police badges x2-3 – Ben and Lela (optional: Rubin)
3. Gun hip holsters x1-3 – Ben (optional: Lela and Rubin)
4. Business card for Lela
5. Manila folders
6. Picture array, 8.5 x 11, with 8 faces
7. Two 8.5 x 11 pictures (of the man who dished out Gatorade at the soccer field)
8. Wheelchair – with hidden compartment
9. Cellphones x5 – Ben, Amy, Lela, Jack, Rubin
10. Bloody towel
11. Stationary object for Ben to handcuff Lela to such as pole, radiator, doorknob, etc.
12. Handcuffs x1
13. Test tube – unbreakable as it is thrown to the floor (or the throwing is faked)
14. Syringe with needle
15. Tourniquet
16. White lab coat x3 – Dr. Jenner, Miranda and Jack
17. Plastic (opaque) or paper bag for the dead angelfish x2
18. Glasses –Jack

SOUND BITES

1. Intro and outro music for medical murder mystery
2. Cell phone ring
3. Texting chime
4. Gun shot – when Ben shoots Jack and when Ben shoots at the floor next to Lela
5. Test tube or glass breaking for when Jack throws test tube on the floor
6. Explosion for when the car explodes outside in the parking lot
7. Soft background evangelical music for last scene when Ben and Terri die
8. Emergency sounds from ICU – monitors, alarms

ACT 1

SCENE 1

ICU waiting room

AMY paces around and looks at her watch. She looks at her smartphone.

BEN enters with two coffees. AMY takes one and paces. BEN sits.

AMY

Nothing's gone right since we stepped foot in this God-forsaken city.

BEN

Everything will work out fine. It always does.

AMY

The doctor's been in there with him forever. What's taking her so long?

BEN

These things take time. She'll be out soon.

AMY

I'm worried, Ben. Healthy young men don't just become so weak they collapse.

BEN

You think Billy caught some weird bug? A bad case of the flu?

AMY

No, it's way worse than the flu! I can't take much more of this waiting.

BEN

(Standing) You're starting to worry me, Amy. Could what's going on with Billy be serious? More than plain exhaustion?

AMY

Potentially, yes. He was perfectly fine before he—

DR. JENNER enters and gestures for all to sit.

DR. JENNER

Billy tells me he was on the soccer field warming-up and about to start a scrimmage before the big game scheduled for this afternoon. He says his tongue felt numb at first, then he became short of breath. His legs began feeling weaker and weaker until he became so weak he collapsed.

BEN

Yeah, he stumbled a few feet then fell over. He seemed too weak to get back up on his feet.

AMY

Dr. Jenner, Billy's a soccer player. He's been playing for six years now. He runs every day to stay in shape. He's extremely fit. This is ... highly unusual! What did you find on your examination?

DR. JENNER

Well, the weakness is worsening and is affecting all his muscles. He's having difficulty swallowing, he's wheezing, he's—

BEN

Wheezing? What does that mean?

DR. JENNER

His airways are constricted. The muscles that cause the airways to dilate are weak.

BEN

Why is all this happening to Billy?

DR. JENNER

I don't know yet.

BEN

What are you doing to find out?

DR. JENNER

We're running extensive tests... I have to ask: Any reason to suspect Billy may have been experimenting with drugs?

BEN

I realize these things happen and the parents are always the last to find out. But, I seriously doubt street drugs.

AMY

(Shakes her head) Billy is very serious about soccer. He values his health above all.

DR. JENNER

I need to consult with several specialists. You'll be able to see him soon. I'll keep you informed of our progress.

DR. JENNER exits. AMY paces around, obviously nervous and concerned. BEN goes to her and stops her from pacing.

BEN

What are you thinking? You're a doctor. What's your professional opinion?

AMY

I have a really bad feeling about this... Billy collapses for no good reason and—

BEN

No good reason? What do you mean?

AMY

Well, there's a reason, I'm sure. But not one that's easily diagnosed or by now Dr. Jenner would have some idea as to why Billy is in the condition he's in.

BEN

Amy, I'm just a dumb police detective. Spell it out for me. What aren't you telling me?

AMY

In my mind, I've gone through all the potential causes for this. All the medical diagnoses that could cause a young athlete like Billy to get so weak he collapses and can't get up.

BEN

Okay, what are the possibilities?

AMY

Ben, I think our son was poisoned.

BEN

Poisoned?

AMY

If Dr. Jenner doesn't find some obscure medical basis, and I doubt she will, acute poisoning with a nerve blocker is by far the most likely cause for Billy's profound weakness.

BEN

Billy's been playing soccer with this team for years now. This is the first time we've been invited to play here in Danville, Illinois. Pre-season games are never out of state.

AMY

What does an out of town pre-season soccer game have to do with Billy's condition?

BEN

If Billy was in fact poisoned, I think the out of town game was designed to trick us out of our comfort zone.

AMY

A trap?

BEN

And if that's the case, I doubt Billy is the primary target. Either this was a random attack or somebody's trying to get back at *me*! Some scumbag I arrested! I'm sure of it! I need to call headquarters back home.

AMY

Or maybe I'm the target! Some monster trying to hurt my family...

BEN

Amy, don't be silly. You're a research doctor. Who would want to harm you or your family? I'm a police detective. I deal with low-lives all day long!

AMY

The low-lives you deal with probably don't know much about nerve-blocking toxins that can lead to muscle weakness, paralysis and death.

BEN

If Billy was poisoned, where would this have been done?

AMY

It had to be on the soccer field. He was with us at every other moment before then.

BEN

What about how?

AMY

In an open field, the possibilities are either by injection, but that's unlikely. More likely, orally. Do you think somebody spiked his Gatorade?

BEN

Now that you mention it, there was a man dishing out Gatorade bottles I didn't recognize. Did you know—

DR. JENNER enters.

DR. JENNER

You can come in and see Billy for a little while. He's stable and comfortable right now. We're in between tests.

AMY

Oh great!

DR. JENNER

(Looking at AMY) Billy told me you're a doctor.

AMY

I'm the director of a medical research institute in Indiana.

DR. JENNER

We have a great research institute. Have you ever visited here before?

AMY

No, but I know the doctor who started the lab, Dr. Terri Phillips. Her daughter runs it now. Do you know Dr. Miranda Phillips?

DR. JENNER

No, I don't know any of the research people. They're in a hospital wing of their own.
(Turning to BEN) Billy says you're a police detective back home.

BEN

(Still pondering) Yeah!

DR. JENNER

We can use your help, then. The whole city's in an uproar. Several dead bodies have been found recently. Murdered!

BEN and AMY speak at the same time, their attention piqued.

BEN

What?

AMY

How awful!

DR. JENNER

Apparently the killer injects his targets with a paralyzing drug. Then cuts a big gash on their abdomen.

AMY

I hope the police catch this monster soon!

BEN

We'll be right in to see Billy.

DR. JENNER nods and exists.

AMY

Oh my God! A killer on the loose in a town where our son was just potentially poisoned with something that causes muscle weakness. After weakness comes paralysis and death. And the killer injects a drug that causes muscle paralysis!

BEN

You go on in, Amy. I'll be right there. I'm going to call the local police.

SCENE 2

ICU waiting room

*AMY enters first and paces nervously a moment then sits.
BEN enters next with an 8.5x11 manila folder in hand.*

AMY

They'll let us in again to see him in about thirty minutes. Did you get it?

BEN

Got it! Now, if only I could get the police to let me talk to the lead detective. I've called the station several times, but—

AMY

Well, that's the funny part. I just got a call from the Danville Chief of Detectives – Lieutenant Lela Rose. She's in the Pathology Department of this hospital. Downstairs. She's on her way up to see *me*.

BEN

She called *you*? Where did she get your name and number?

AMY

She didn't say.

DETECTIVE LELA ROSE enters and shows her police badge.

LELA

Dr. Sinclair, I'm Lieutenant Lela Rose. I'm intrigued to know what you're doing in Danville—

AMY

Aren't you looking for my husband, Ben Sinclair? He's been trying to get a hold of you all morning.

BEN shows his police badge. LELA inspects it carefully.

BEN

I'm Ben Sinclair. I'm a police detective in Zionsville, Indiana.

LELA

I didn't know you called for me. We've all been very busy, so returning messages is low on the priority list. Why did you call me?

BEN

We heard about the murders in town. Our son, Billy, seems to have been poisoned today. There may be a connection.

AMY

Billy's in ICU with severe, progressive muscle weakness. Muscle weakness is a precursor to muscle paralysis. And death!

BEN

It looks like Billy was given Gatorade laced with poison. I managed to get pictures of the man who dished out Gatorade to all the soccer players.

BEN hands LELA the manila folder. She examines the photos.

BEN (continued)

This man seems to have poisoned my son and is probably the killer you're looking for.

LELA

How did you get these pictures?

BEN

I noticed family members taking pictures from the bleachers during warm-ups before Billy collapsed. I had them email the photos to me. There are two good pictures with the man in the background.

AMY

Billy tells us he never met him before today.

BEN

I'm sure you'll want to have your people collect the Gatorade bottle at the soccer field and process it for evidence.

AMY

The contents of the bottle may also be important to figure out what Billy was poisoned with.

BEN

I called Coach Lewis of the Zionsville Eagles and told him to guard the Gatorade bottle and not to let anyone touch it. He's expecting the police to pick it up. They're at the Danville North High School soccer field.

AMY

Coach Lewis said the man in the picture told him he was with the high school and had a valid ID.

BEN

Even though all the players received Gatorade, only Billy's bottle was labeled with his last name and only he was affected. This was a targeted attack, I'm sure of it.

LELA nods and moves away to make a call on her cellphone; then rejoins the conversation. During this, BEN and AMY hug for a long moment then speak.

AMY

I'm scared, Ben.

BEN

Everything will be OK. Billy will make it through this mess!

LELA

(LELA returns) I'll have the Gatorade bottle processed for evidence quickly and then it's all yours.

AMY

Thank you.

LELA

I checked up on you, Dr. Sinclair. I know you've corroborated with Dr. Terri Phillips from this lab as well as her daughter, Dr. Miranda Phillips.

AMY

Yes. I've known both for years. Why?

LELA

Your name and your phone number were left *in...on* the dead body of a man we found this morning. He's the latest victim of the mass murderer we're looking for.

BEN

Why would the killer do that? What advantage does leaving behind my wife's contact information give him?

LELA

That I don't know yet. For now, I'm more curious as to how or why a mass murderer would have your name and more importantly your cell phone number, Doctor?

AMY

I have no idea.

LELA

When was the last time you were in Danville, Illinois before today?

AMY

I've never been here. Ever.

LELA

Are you sure about that?

BEN gets in between LELA and AMY.

BEN

Wait just a damn minute, Lieutenant! Do you consider Amy a suspect? Or me?

LELA

I can continue this conversation with the two of you in separate interrogation rooms down at Police Headquarters, if you'd prefer. As a police detective, I'm sure you appreciate the fact that *everybody* is guilty until I clear them as such. And right now the two of you are very much people of interest in the multiple murders in this city.

BEN

Lieutenant, we're on the same side, here. We're both cops.

LELA

Let me remind you, Detective, here in Danville, Illinois, you're not a police officer. Here, you're just a citizen. A visitor.

BEN

No, Lieutenant, at the very least, I'm a victim! My family's been tricked into the middle of all this mess and attacked. I'm not just going to sit back and watch you interrogate—

AMY comes to and hugs BEN; he calms down.

AMY

Ben, please!

AMY looks at LELA.

AMY (continued)

Before nine this morning, I had *never* been to Danville, Illinois. Ever. As far as my cell phone number, I give it out freely to family, friends, employees, business associates ... everybody. It's on my business card. I honestly have no idea how a man capable of murder would have my cell phone number. But somehow he got it. He also managed to trick us into coming here to poison my son with God knows what and ...

AMY begins to break down. BEN comes to her. LELA's cell phone rings and she steps away to take the call. BEN listens to LELA as he hugs AMY.

LELA

Let's follow that lead. Set up a Command Center at the hospital. Put all available officers on alert and call the neighboring districts, and County and State Police, too. I want all the SWAT personnel ready to deploy at a moment's notice!

LELA hangs up the phone and hands BEN a business card.

LELA (continued)

Here's my card. Call me if you think of anything useful. Don't leave town! I'll be in touch with you later. I'm sure you left your number at the station.

BEN nods and accepts the card. LELA heads to the door.

BEN

Lieutenant, I need armed police guards here in ICU guarding my son and wife. Somehow, my family is at the center of all this mess.

LELA thinks a moment.

LELA

OK, I agree. I'll make that happen.

LELA exits. DR. JENNER enters.

DR. JENNER

We've ruled out all the medical reasons for Billy's progressive muscle weakness. We now need to consider bizarre and unusual causes. Meanwhile, his condition has worsened and is now affecting his breathing muscles. He's beginning to struggle. Soon, he'll need to be placed on a respirator.

AMY

What about his heart?

DR. JENNER

No cardiac effects yet. Thank God.

AMY

We believe Billy may have been poisoned. Any idea as to what that poison could be?

DR. JENNER

I've consulted all the specialists here at the hospital as well as specialists in Chicago, Boston, New York and LA but so far none of us have seen or heard of anything like this. We all agree, though, this looks to be an acute poisoning with an unknown nerve blocker.

BEN

What can you do about it?

DR. JENNER

All we can offer is supportive care.

AMY

At this rate of progression, how long can you keep Billy alive?

DR. JENNER

I'd say ten hours. Twelve, at most. Once the stuff gets into the heart cells, there will be very little we can do to keep him alive.

BEN

That can't be right... ten to twelve hours? Billy is so young and was in excellent health.

DR. JENNER and AMY look down.

BEN (continued)

But with all the medical advances and technology. Don't you think you can...

DR. JENNER

Unfortunately, this is a very powerful poison that is devastating Billy, rapidly taking over all his muscles. We have nothing that can stop it.

BEN

That bastard ... He doesn't know who he's dealing with ...

AMY comes to BEN and hugs him for a moment. He calms down.

AMY

When can we see our son?

DR. JENNER

I'm sorry I've kept you away for so long but we've had a lot of tests we've had to do. I'll give you a few minutes with him soon.

DR. JENNER exits.

AMY

Ben, unfortunately, this isn't something traditional medicine and doctors are trained to deal with. It's going to take a research doctor like me to identify the poison and

manufacture an antidote. Fortunately, attached to this hospital is a top-notch research institute. I'll go assemble a team—

BEN

Whoa! You're not leaving this area. Did you not hear the Lieutenant? She's creating a command post at *this* hospital and deploying her people into action. Here! The animal who poisoned our son is probably here! The bastard may already have killed Billy and I'll be damned if I'll let him kill you, too.

AMY

Ben, no! Think about it. I'm the director of a research institute. I've worked with unknown drugs for years. It's my job to invent new medical cures. I can take Billy's blood and the Gatorade bottle and figure out what he was poisoned with. I can find an antidote. I will—

BEN

No, Amy! That's final. You will stay here. Look, I doubt Billy's the actual target of a madman capable of mass-murder. More than likely, he did this to get back at our family. Either way, you're *not* safe. There will be armed police guards right outside these doors. I want you to stay here in ICU with Billy!

AMY

This is my son, Ben. I'm not just going to stand by and wait for him to die while his muscles become paralyzed one by one. No! I'm going to—

BEN

Amy, you said it yourself. This hospital has an attached top-notch research institute. There have to be several research doctors just like you, each of them capable of doing what you can do. Now, how many moms does Billy have? Stay here with him! I'll go assemble a research team.

AMY

Okay, Ben. Go! Hurry up. We don't have much time.

BEN

Who's that doctor you always talk about from here?

AMY

Dr. Terri Phillips, but she retired. Her daughter, Miranda, is in charge now. Find her and ask her to assemble the best team to—

DR. JENNER rushes in.

DR. JENNER

We need to place Billy on the respirator very soon. If you'd like to see him before we do, please come now.

All rush out.