

CRIMINAL Mischief

A comedy in two acts
By William Cameron

© 2023

Contact:
William Cameron
724-413-0650
bcameron28@comcast.net
www.williamcameron.net

CRIMINAL Mischief

A comedy in two acts

Characters *(3 women, 2 men)*

Alice Ford	Mid-30s. A competent, professional policewoman with a soft side that she keeps well hidden.
Spencer Bishop	Early 40s. Pedantic and a bit of a Mama's boy, Spencer is married to Angie, half-brother to Fred.
Fred Mason	Early 30s. The flipside of his half-brother, Freddy is as rash and spontaneous as Spencer is circumspect.
Angie Bishop	Early 30s. Spencer's wife. Angie's youthful and adventurous spirit is out of sync with her older and stodgier husband.
Rusty	Mid-late 60s. Mother to both Spencer and Fred and fiercely protective of both "boys".

Time & Place

Present day in a small American town. A Thursday in spring.

Act One

Time:

Mid-morning to mid-afternoon

Place:

Act One takes place in a variety of locations—2 police interrogation rooms, a hospital room, a bar—all easily indicated by minimal furniture and area lighting.

Act Two

Time:

That evening, around dinner time

Place:

A modestly furnished living room in the home of Spencer and Angie Bishop. A functional front door is visible. A door on one side of the room leads to the kitchen; a hallway on the opposite side leads to other areas of the house.

ALICE, late-30's, dressed in pants, shirt & leather sports jacket, holstered gun visible, speaks into a small voice recorder.

ALICE

Detective Lieutenant Alice Ford responding to report of shots fired at one-one-seven Pellerman Road, private residence. Tuesday, May nineteen eight-fourteen a.m. Arrived on scene eight-twenty-three, accompanied by uniformed officers Smith and Barker. Shooting victim Frederick Mason, thirty-one, taken by ambulance to Pinecrest Hospital with single gunshot wound to left shoulder. Suspected assailant Spencer Bishop, forty-two, taken into custody. Suspect and victim are half-brothers.

(ALICE clicks a button, turning off her recorder as the lights rise on SPENCER, early 40's, in a police interrogation room, nervously waiting. ALICE enters behind him, places a can of soda in front of SPENCER.)

Couldn't find any Dr. Pepper. I got you a ginger ale.

SPENCER

Oh.

SPENCER cracks open the can, takes a sip. Sets it back down immediately.

ALICE

Need anything else?

(A forlorn look at the ginger ale, then SPENCER shakes his head. ALICE sits opposite him.)

OK. Tell me what happened.

SPENCER

Well ...um, see it was...I can't quite...

ALICE

Just start from the beginning.

SPENCER

The very beginning? Because the very beginning is different from the beginning. See, I think of today as the beginning, but not the very beginning. The very beginning goes back to... well, before today. But when *you* say the beginning, I'm not sure what you—

ALICE

How about you start from when you shot your brother?

SPENCER

My half-brother. And it was an accident.

ALICE

An accident?

(SPENCER nods, ALICE sighs.)

What a surprise. OK, Lee Harvey, where'd you get the gun?

SPENCER

From Fred.

ALICE

Your brother?

SPENCER

Half-brother.

ALICE

And he gave you the gun?

SPENCER

No, I wouldn't say he *gave* it to me.

ALICE

You stole it from him?

SPENCER

No, I wouldn't say I *stole* it from him.

ALICE

What *would* you say?

SPENCER

See, this is why I think we should go back to the very beginning, because—

ALICE

Mr. Bishop, this is not a joke. I take gun violence very seriously.

SPENCER

Me too. I never would've—

ALICE

You know how many people die from guns in a single day in this country?

SPENCER

I don't know the exact figures but I know it's—

ALICE

A hundred. More'n that! Your brother's not one of 'em, fortunately, because you missed but—

SPENCER

And I'm so glad I did, believe me, I never wanted to hurt Freddy and, besides, I didn't really shoot my—

ALICE

We got the gun, Mr. Bishop. We got your prints. We got your brother with a bullet in his shoulder. From where I sit, I got you on attempted murder.

SPENCER

Murder!?! No! I would never—

ALICE

Yeah, a lot of people would never until all of a sudden they would and then they do.

SPENCER

Why would I shoot my brother?

ALICE

Half-brother.

SPENCER

Why would I shoot my half-brother?

ALICE

You tell me. What motivation might you have to shoot your half-brother?

SPENCER

None. I love Freddy!

ALICE

Love! Gimme a break! You know how many women take a shot at their husbands just for leaving the toilet seat up? So, tell me what really happened or you and me are gonna have a problem.

SPENCER

OK.

(He takes a sip of his ginger ale.)

You sure there's no Dr. Pepper?

(ALICE gives him a look.)

Sorry. So... Fred...um, he came to the house and... see, I haven't really seen him or talked to him since—

(He stops himself.)

Never mind. So Fred—

ALICE

Wait. Since what?

SPENCER

See, this is what I meant by...the *very* beginning.

ALICE

(leaning forward, a bit menacing)

Since what, Mr. Bishop?

SPENCER

Since I found out. See, Fred he...

(Clears his throat)

He's in love with Angie.

ALICE

Who's Angie?

SPENCER

Angie's my wife.

ALICE

Ahhh. Fred, your half-brother that you shot this morning, he's in love with Angie, your wife.

SPENCER

Yes.

ALICE

That changes things, doesn't it?

(SPENCER sighs.)

Okay, this Angie, did she return his affections?

SPENCER

Oh yeah, she returned 'em. She returned 'em a bunch of times. Mostly on Wednesdays.

(ALICE makes a note in her notebook.)

I travel on Wednesdays. Work.

ALICE

I see. How long have you known about the affair?

SPENCER

Two weeks. Well, more like seventeen days. Let's see, today's the nineteenth, so—

ALICE

And yet you still contend you had no motive for shooting your—

SPENCER

No, I...I mean, I guess you could say I had a motive and...I guess you could say I shot him, but it was an accident! See, Fred came over this morning and said he needed to talk to me and I said

SPENCER (cont'd)

OK and then he walked into the front room. I followed him in and said, "What do you need?" And that's when Fred pulled a gun out of his back pocket and pointed—

ALICE

Wait, wait, wait! He pulled a gun out of his...so Fred brought the gun to the house?

SPENCER

Yes.

ALICE

Why didn't you just tell me that to begin with?

SPENCER

Because! I've never been...arrested or whatever this is and I've...I've never shot anybody and...and I'm worried about Freddy, and...

(He picks up the can of ginger ale, guzzles, slams it back down.)

This is warm! And it's not Dr. Pepper, which I specifically requested!

ALICE

This is not a restaurant, Mr. Bishop!

SPENCER

Then why did you ask me what I wanted, and why when I said I wanted a Dr. Pepper did you say, "Comin' right up!" when you intended all along to bring me a less desirable beverage choice!!!

ALICE

(As she rises and crosses to the door.)

Calm down, calm down!

(She opens the door, calls out.)

Get me a cold Dr. Pepper, stat!

(She slams the door.)

Mr. Bishop, are you OK?

SPENCER

I don't understand why I'm even here. I didn't do anything wrong!

ALICE

Mr. Bishop, calm down. Can you do that for me? Calm down.

(SPENCER takes a deep breath.)

Atta boy. Now, real slow...Fred pulled the gun out of his back pocket...right?

SPENCER

Yes. He, um...he pulled the gun out of his back pocket. He pointed it at me. I said, "Is that a gun?" He said, "Oh yeah, it's a gun." I said, "Why do you have a gun?" He said, "Why do you think I have a gun?" I had no idea why he had a gun, so I said, "I have no idea why you have a gun." And then he started crying.

ALICE

Crying? Why was he crying?

SPENCER

He cries a lot.

ALICE

So, what did you do?

SPENCER

I...stood there.

(She looks at him, incredulous.)

He had a gun, he was pointing it at me, his hands were shaking, he was crying. I didn't want him to shoot me!

ALICE

What happened then?

SPENCER

He shot me.

ALICE

He shot you?!

SPENCER

He shot *at* me. He missed.

ALICE

Two shots were fired?

SPENCER

Yes. One by him, one by me. But him first.

ALICE

The only bullet we know about was in your brother's shoulder.

SPENCER

His bullet hit the piano.

ALICE

(making a note)

The piano.

SPENCER

Angie plays. She's very good. She's been working on some of Scott Joplin's—

ALICE

So he fired the shot after he started crying?

SPENCER

Right after.

(ALICE goes to make a note)

Well, not *right* after but very close to being right after. I would say, one, he started crying then twooooo...and threeeee—BANG!

ALICE

So, he fired the gun, dropped the gun, you grabbed the gun and shot him?

SPENCER

Yes. No...well, see, he dropped the gun right after he shot it and—well, not *right* after. I would say, one, bang...then twoooo ...and—

ALICE

He dropped it or you knocked it out of his hand?

SPENCER

He dropped it. He was crying and when the gun went off, I think it scared him, and he dropped the gun.

ALICE

And you picked it up?

SPENCER

Yes. I was afraid if he got the gun he would shoot again and maybe hit me this time or put another hole in the piano. It's a really nice piano.

ALICE

So, that's when you shot him?

SPENCER

Yes. No! That's when he jumped at me and tried to get the gun from me, but I had a tight grip on it, so he pushed me, and I fell backwards over the...um...

ALICE

Chair?

SPENCER

No.

ALICE

Stool?

SPENCER

No.

ALICE

Coffee table?

SPENCER

Cat!

ALICE

And that's when you shot him?

SPENCER

That's when the gun went off.

ALICE

A gun doesn't go off unless you pull the trigger.

SPENCER

Then I must have accidentally pulled the trigger because Freddy had just pushed me and I was on my back and he was hovering over me.

ALICE

And that's when you shot him.

SPENCER

It was an accident!

(ALICE regards him for a moment, then makes a few notes.)

I really don't think Freddy meant to pull the trigger. His hands were shaking so hard and he was so...oh, Freddy.

(A discouraged sigh.)

I didn't even know he owned a gun.

He shakes his head and sighs. Lights up in a hospital room. FREDDY, early 30's, lies in bed, bandages over his arm and shoulder. He is hooked up to an IV.

SPENCER (cont'd)

How is Fred? Is he gonna be OK?

FREDDY

It hurts to get shot.

ALICE

You got lucky. It's not a life-threatening injury.

SPENCER

Oh, thank God.

FREDDY

Still hurts.

ALICE

We're waiting for word that he's safely out of surgery, at which point I will speak to Mr. Mason and get his side of the story.

FREDDY

My brother shot me. That's my side of the story.

Lights out on SPENCER as ALICE crosses into the hospital area.

ALICE

It was your firearm, am I correct?

FREDDY

I have a permit.

FREDDY punches the TV remote. Loud game show music, "*Come on down!!!*"

ALICE

I didn't ask if you—

(FREDDY hits a button, TV gets louder. ALICE grabs the remote and clicks the TV off.)

Who owns the firearm that was used in this morning's shooting?

FREDDY

Uhhhhh...me.

ALICE

Why did you take the gun to your brother's house?

FREDDY

Is it against the law to take a gun to my brother's house?

ALICE

If it's for the express purpose of shooting your brother, yes.

FREDDY

That was not my express purpose.

ALICE

What was your express purpose?

FREDDY

Did you ask Spencer his express purpose? He's the one who shot me.

FREDDY pushes a button connected to his
IV.

ALICE

Mr. Mason, did you fire—

(FREDDY pushes the button more furiously.)

Mr. Mason?

FREDDY

Damn thing doesn't work.

ALICE

What doesn't work, sir?

FREDDY

This button thing. Supposed to give me a painkiller dose.

(Pushes the button quickly and angrily)

Stupid thing!

ALICE

Are you in a great deal of pain right now, sir?

FREDDY

Yes! It hurts to get shot. Guy gets shot in the movies—like Indiana Jones! He gets a bullet in the shoulder, then he drives a truck and punches a guy. No way could he drive a truck and punch a guy after—

ALICE

Do you think this is funny, Mr. Mason?

FREDDY

No! I'm just saying that in the movies—

ALICE

Bad enough we got the crazies using nightclubs and classrooms for target practice, we gotta worry about people being stupid with guns.

FREDDY

I agree. Who do those people think—

ALICE

Like you!

FREDDY

Me?

ALICE

How long you owned that gun, Mr. Mason?

FREDDY

Uhhh...couple of days.

ALICE

So you take a loaded pistol you barely know how to use, you point it at your brother—

FREDDY

Half-brother.

ALICE

And you pull the trigger! That's what I call being stupid with guns.

FREDDY

Yeah but...Spencer shot me!

ALICE

Who fired the bullet that we dug out of the piano twenty minutes ago?

FREDDY

Uhhhhh...me.

ALICE

Right.

ALICE makes a note as FREDDY pushes the button on his IV device.

ALICE (cont'd)

Get it going?

FREDDY

Uh, yeah. Think so.

ALICE

So, to be clear...you shot the piano.

FREDDY

Well, I—

ALICE

You dropped the gun.

FREDDY

Uhhhh—

ALICE

And you started crying.

FREDDY

No, I didn't start— Did Spencer say I started crying? That son of a—

ALICE

But you did drop the gun, as opposed to Spencer taking it away from you.

FREDDY

Yeah, I dropped the gun, but...

(ALICE writes a note.)

Or... you could kinda say he took it away from me.

ALICE

Kinda?

FREDDY

Yeah. See, I dropped the gun and *then* he took it away from me.

ALICE

You mean he...picked it up.

FREDDY

Yes. He picked it up...and *awaaay* from me.

(FREDDY suddenly sits back in bed. A distant smile.)

I think the painkillers are kicking in.

ALICE

Mr. Mason, is it true that you've you been sleeping with Angela Bishop?

FREDDY

Your head looks really big right now.

ALICE

Your half-brother's wife. You're having an affair with her?

FREDDY

(with a jaunty, slightly loopy smile)

I know! She's so beautiful.

ALICE

Angela Bishop?

FREDDY

Yes. And she loves me. And I love her. And she loves me. And someday—

ALICE

Did Angela Bishop ask you to kill your half-brother Spencer Bish—?

FREDDY

Huh?

ALICE

Did Angela Bishop ask you to kill your brother?

FREDDY

No...I don't know...I can't concentrate. My brother SHOT ME TODAY!!!

ALICE

Mr. Mason—

FREDDY

YOUR HEAD IS BIG!!! YOU'RE SCARING ME!!!

FREDDY's head falls to the pillow, his eyes close.

ALICE

Mr. Mason?

(FREDDY snores loudly. A beat as ALICE pulls out her recorder, speaks into it.)

Interview with Mr. Mason inconclusive.

