

MAD
DRAMA

NOISES OFF

A PLAY IN
THREE ACTS
BY

Michael Frayn

SAMUEL FRENCH

Also by
MICHAEL FRAYN

Alarms and Excursions
Alphabetical Order

Audience

Balmoral

Benefactors

Black and Silver

Chinamen

Clouds

Copenhagen

Donkey's Years
Here

Immobiles

Leavings

Listen to This

Look Away Now

Make and Break

Mr. Foot

The New Quixote

Now You Know

The Sneeze

Toasters

The Two of Us

Wild Honey

Translations

The Cherry Orchard

The Sea Gull

Three Sisters

Uncle Vanya

Noises Off

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

by

Michael Frayn

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM



printed on recycled paper

NOISES OFF

28

V L SELSDON. Oh.
A SELSDON. Beer? In the wardrobe?
B LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Tim, you need a break. Why don't you sit down quietly upstairs and do all the company's ~~taxes~~?
C TIM. ~~Taxes~~ fight.
D LLOYD. *(Discreetly.)* And I'm — just in case he and the gear *do* walk off together one night, order yourself a spare Burglar costume.
E TIM. Spare Burglar costume.
F LLOYD. Two spare Burglar costumes. One to fit you, one to fit Poppy. I want a plentiful supply of spare Burglars on hand for any eventuality.
G TIM. Two spare Burglars.

(Exit TIM into the wings.)

H BELINDA. He has been on his feet for forty-eight hours, Lloyd.
I LLOYD. *(Calling.)* Don't fall down, Tim. We may not be insured.
J SELSDON. So what's next on the bill?
K LLOYD. Well, Selsdon, I thought we might try a spot of rehearsal.
L SELSDON. Oh, I won't, thank you.
M LLOYD. You won't?
N SELSDON. You all go ahead. I'll sit and watch you. This is the beer in the wardrobe, is it?
O BELINDA. No, my sweet, he wants us to rehearse.
P SELSDON. Yes, but I think we've got to rehearse, haven't we?
Q LLOYD. Rehearse, yes! Well done, Selsdon. I knew you'd think of something. Right, from Belinda and Freddie's entrance...

(Enter POPPY from the wings, alarmed.)

R POPPY. Lloyd...
S LLOYD. What? What's happened now?
T POPPY. The police!
U LLOYD. The police?
V POPPY. They've found an old man. He was lying unconscious in

NOISES OFF

29

a doorway just across the street.
A LLOYD. Oh. Yes. Thank you.
B POPPY. They say he's very dirty and rather smelly, and I thought oh my God, because...
C LLOYD. Thank you, Poppy.
D POPPY. Because when you get close to Selsdon...
E BELINDA. POPPY!
F POPPY. No, I mean, if you stand anywhere near Selsdon you can't help noticing this very distinctive...

(She stops, sniffing.)

G SELSDON. *(Putting his arm round her.)* I'll tell you something, Poppy. Once you've got it in your nostrils you never forget it. Sixty years now and the smell of the theatre still haunts me.

(Exit SELSDON into the study.)

H BELINDA. Oh, bless him!
I LLOYD. Tell me, Poppy, love — how did you get a job like this, that requires tact and understanding? You're not somebody's girlfriend, are you?

(POPPY gives him a startled look.)

J BELINDA. Don't worry, Poppy, my sweet. He truly did not hear.

(Enter SELSDON from the study.)

K SELSDON. Not here?
L LLOYD. Yes, yes, there!
M BELINDA. Sit down, my precious.
N DOTTY. Go back to sleep.
O LLOYD. You're not on for another twenty pages yet.

(Exit SELSDON into the study. Exit POPPY into the wings.)

NOISES OFF

A LLOYD. And on we go. *(He goes back down into the auditorium.)* Dotty in the kitchen, wildly roasting sardines. Freddie and Belinda waiting impatiently outside the front door. Garry and Brooke disappearing tremulously into the bedroom. Time sliding irrevocably into the past.

(Exit DOTTY into the service quarters, GARRY and BROOKE up-stairs into the bedroom, and FREDERICK through the front door.)

B BELINDA. *(To LLOYD, with lowered voice.)* Aren't they sweet?

C LLOYD. What?

D BELINDA. *(Points to the bedroom and the service quarters.)*

Garry and Dotty.

E LLOYD. Garry and Dotty?

F BELINDA. Sh!

G LLOYD. *(Lowers his voice.)* What? You mean they're an item?

Those two? Trampelman and Mrs. Clackett?

H BELINDA. It's supposed to be a secret.

I LLOYD. But she's old enough to be...

J BELINDA. Sh! Didn't you know?

K LLOYD. I'm just God, Belinda, love. I'm just the one with the English degree, I don't know anything.

(Enter GARRY from the bedroom.)

L GARRY. What's happening?

M LLOYD. I don't like to imagine, Garry, honey.

(Exit BELINDA through the front door.)

N GARRY. I mean, what are we waiting for?

(Enter DOTTY from the service quarters, inquiringly.)

O LLOYD. I don't know what you're waiting for, Garry. Her eighteenth birthday?

NOISES OFF

A GARRY. What?

B LLOYD. Or maybe just the cue. Brooke! *(Exit DOTTY to the service quarters. Enter BROOKE from the bedroom.)* 'Oh, you're in a real state.'

C VICKI. Oh, you're in a real state! You can't even get the door open.

D LLOYD. Door closed, love.

(GARRY closes the door.)

E VICKI. You can't even get the door open.

(Exit ROGER and VICKI into the bedroom. Enter PHILIP through the front door.)

F PHILIP. No, it's Mrs. Clackett's afternoon off, remember. *(Enter FLAVIA carrying a flight bag like GARRY's.)* We've got the place entirely to ourselves.

(PHILIP closes the door.)

G FLAVIA. Home!

H PHILIP. Home, sweet home!

I FLAVIA. Dear old house!

J PHILIP. Just waiting for us to come back!

K FLAVIA. It's rather funny, though, creeping in like this for our wedding anniversary!

L PHILIP. It's damned serious! If Inland Revenue finds out we're in the country, even for one night, bang goes our claim to be resident abroad. Bang goes most of this year's income. I feel like an illegal immigrant.

M FLAVIA. I'll tell you what I feel like.

N PHILIP. Champagne? *(He takes a bottle out of the box.)*

O FLAVIA. I wonder if Mrs. Clackett's aired the beds.

P PHILIP. Darling!

Q FLAVIA. Well, why not? No children. No friends dropping in. We're absolutely on our own.

A PHILIP. True. *(He picks up the bag and box and ushers FLAVIA towards the stairs.)* There is something to be said for being a tax exile.

B FLAVIA. Leave those!

(He drops the bag and box and kisses her. She flees upstairs, laughing, and he after her.)

C PHILIP. Sh!

D FLAVIA. What?

E PHILIP. *(Humorously.)* Inland Revenue may hear us!

(They creep to the bedroom door.)

Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the service quarters carrying a fresh plate of sardines.)

F MRS. CLACKETT. *(To herself.)* What I did with that first lot of sardines I shall never know.

(She puts the sardines on the telephone table and sits on the sofa.)

G PHILIP and FLAVIA. *(Looking down from the gallery.)* Mrs. Clackett!

(MRS. CLACKETT jumps up.)

H MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, you give me a turn! My heart jumped right out of my boots!

I PHILIP. So did mine!

J FLAVIA. We thought you'd gone!

K MRS. CLACKETT. I thought you was in Spain!

L PHILIP. We are! We are!

M FLAVIA. You haven't seen us!

N PHILIP. We're not here!

O MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, like that, is it? The income tax are after you?

P FLAVIA. They would be, if they knew we were here.

Q MRS. CLACKETT. All right, then, love. You're not here. I have-

n't seen you. Anybody asks for you, I don't know nothing. Off to bed, are you?

A PHILIP. Oh...

B FLAVIA. Well...

C MRS. CLACKETT. That's right. Nowhere like bed when they all get on top of you. You'll want your things, look. *(She indicates the bag and box.)*

D PHILIP. Oh. Yes. Thanks.

(He comes downstairs, and picks up the bag and box.)

E MRS. CLACKETT. *(To FLAVIA.)* Oh, and that bed hasn't been aired, love.

F FLAVIA. I'll get a hot water bottle.

(Exit FLAVIA into the mezzanine bathroom.)

G MRS. CLACKETT. I've put all your letters in the study, dear.

H PHILIP. Letters? What letters? You forward all the mail, don't you?

I MRS. CLACKETT. Not the ones from the income tax, dear. I don't want to spoil your holidays.

J PHILIP. Oh good heavens! Where are they?

K MRS. CLACKETT. I've put them all in the pigeonhouse.

L PHILIP. In the pigeonhouse?

M MRS. CLACKETT. In the little pigeonhouse in your desk, love.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT and PHILIP into the study. PHILIP is still holding the bag and box. Only he remains on, and DOTTIE remains in the doorway waiting for him.)

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still dressed, tying his tie.)

N ROGER. Yes, but I could hear voices!

(Enter VICKI from the bedroom in her underwear.)

O VICKI. Voices? What sort of voices?

NOISES OFF

A LLOYD. Hold it. Freddie, what's the trouble?
B FREDERICK. Lloyd, you know how stupid I am about moves. Sorry, Garry. ... It's just my usual dimness. *(To Lloyd.)* But why do I take the things off into the study? Wouldn't it be more natural if I left them on?
C LLOYD. No.
D FREDERICK. I thought it might be somehow more logical.
E LLOYD. No.
F FREDERICK. Lloyd, I know it's a bit late in the day to go into all this...
G LLOYD. Freddie, we've got several more minutes left before we open.

(Enter BELINDA from the mezzanine bathroom, to wait patiently.)

H FREDERICK. Thank you, Lloyd. As long as we're not too pushed. But I've never understood why he carries an overnight bag and a box of groceries into the study to look at his mail.

I GARRY. Because they have to be out of the way for my next scene!

J FREDERICK. I see that.
K BELINDA. And Freddie, my sweet, Selsdon needs them in the study for his scene.

L FREDERICK. I see that... Selsdon ... where is he? Is he there?

M LLOYD. *(Comes up on stage.)* Selsdon!

N BELINDA. *(Calling, urgently.)* Selsdon!

O DOTTY. *(Likewise.)* Selsdon!

P GARRY. *(Likewise.)* Selsdon!

(A pane of glass shatters in the mullion window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch. Enter an elderly BURGLAR. He has great character, but is in need of extensive repair and modernization.)

Q BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarm. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement... *(He becomes aware of the others.)* No?

NOISES OFF

A LLOYD. No. Not yet. Thank you, Selsdon.
B SELSDON. I thought I heard my voice.
C LLOYD. No, no, no. Back to sleep, Selsdon. Another ten pages before the big moment.
D SELSDON. I'm so sorry.
E LLOYD. Not at all. Nice to see you. Poppy, ~~not the~~ *(Enter POPPY. She puts the glass back.)* And, Selsdon...
F SELSDON. Yes?
G LLOYD. Beautiful performance.
H SELSDON. Oh, how kind of you. I don't think I'm quite there yet, though.

(Exit SELSDON through the window.)

I LLOYD. He even remembered the line.
J FREDERICK. All right, I see all that.

K LLOYD. *(Faintly.)* Oh, no!
L FREDERICK. I just don't know why I take them.

M LLOYD. Freddie, love, why does anyone do anything? Why does that other idiot walk out through the front door holding two plates of sardines? *(To GARRY.)* I'm not getting at you, love.

N GARRY. Of course not, love. *(To FREDERICK.)* I mean, why do I? *(To LLOYD.)* I mean, right, when you come to think about it, why do I?

O LLOYD. Who knows? The wellsprings of human action are deep and cloudy. *(To FREDERICK.)* Maybe something happened to you as a very small child which made you frightened to let go of groceries.

P BELINDA. Or it could be genetic.

Q GARRY. Yes, or it could be, you know.

R LLOYD. It could well be.

S FREDERICK. Of course. Thank you, I understand all that. But...

T LLOYD. Freddie, love, I'm telling you — I don't know. I don't think the author knows. I don't know why the author came into this industry in the first place. I don't know why any of us came into it.

U FREDERICK. All the same, if you could just give me a reason I could keep in my mind...

V LLOYD. All right, I'll give you a reason. You carry those grocer-

ies into the study, Freddie, honey, because it's just slightly after midnight, and we're not going to be finished before we open tomorrow night. Correction — before we open tonight. (FREDERICK nods, rebuked, and exits into the study. DOTTY silently follows him. GARRY and BROOKE go silently back into the bedroom. LLOYD returns to the stalls.) And on we go. From after Freddie's exit, with the groceries.

A BELINDA. (Keeping her voice down.) Lloyd, sweetheart, his wife left him this morning.

B LLOYD. Oh. (Pause.) Freddie! (Enter FREDERICK, still wounded, from the study.) I think the point is that you've had a great fright when she mentions income tax, and you feel very insecure and exposed, and you want something familiar to hold on to.

C FREDERICK. (With humble gratitude.) Thank you, Lloyd. (He clutches the groceries to his chest.) That's most helpful.

(Exit FREDERICK into the study.)

D BELINDA. (To LLOYD.) Bless you, my sweet.

E LLOYD. (Leaves the stage.) And on we merrily go. (Exit BELINDA into the mezzanine bathroom.) 'Yes, but I could hear voices...'

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still dressed, tying his tie.)

F ROGER. Yes, but I could hear voices!

(Enter VICKI from the bedroom in her underwear.)

G VICKI. Voices? What sort of voices?

H ROGER. People's voices.

I VICKI. But there's no one here.

J ROGER. Darling, I saw the door-handle move! It could be someone from the office, checking up.

K VICKI. I still don't see why you've got to put your tie on to look.

L ROGER. Mrs. Crackett.

M VICKI. Mrs. Crackett?

A ROGER. One has to set an example to the staff.

B VICKI. (Looks over the banisters.) Oh, look, she's opened our sardines.

(She moves to go downstairs. ROGER grabs her.)

C ROGER. Come back!

D VICKI. What?

E ROGER. I'll fetch them! You can't go downstairs like that.

F VICKI. Why not?

G ROGER. Mrs. Crackett.

H VICKI. Mrs. Crackett?

J ROGER. One has certain obligations.

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study. She is carrying the first plate of sardines.)

J MRS. CLACKETT. (To herself.) Sardines here. Sardines there. It's like a Sunday school outing. (ROGER pushes VICKI through the first available door, which happens to be the linen cupboard.) Oh, you're still poking around, are you?

K ROGER. Yes, still poking ... well, still around.

L MRS. CLACKETT. In the airing cupboard, were you?

M ROGER. No, no. (The linen cupboard door begins to open. He slams it shut.) Well, just checking the sheets and pillowcases. Going through the inventory. (He starts downstairs.) Mrs. Blackett...

N MRS. CLACKETT. Clackett, dear, Clackett.

(She puts down the sardines beside the other sardines.)

O ROGER. Mrs. Clackett. Is there anyone else in the house, Mrs. Clackett?

P MRS. CLACKETT. I haven't seen no one, dear.

Q ROGER. I thought I heard voices.

R MRS. CLACKETT. Voices? There's no voices here, love.

S ROGER. I must have imagined it.

T PHILIP. (Off.) Oh good Lord above!

NOISES OFF

(ROGER, with his back to her, picks up both plates of sardines.)

A ROGER. I beg your pardon?
MRS. CLACKETt. Oh good Lord above, the study door's open.

(She crosses and closes it. ROGER looks out of the window.)

C ROGER. There's another car outside! That's not Mr. Hackham's, is it? Or Mr. Dudley's?

(Exit ROGER through the front door, holding both plates of sardines.
Enter FLAVIA from the mezzanine bathroom, carrying a hot water bottle. She sees the linen cupboard door swinging open as she passes, pushes it shut, and turns the key.)

D FLAVIA. Nothing but flapping doors in this house.

(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.
(Enter from the study PHILIP, holding a tax demand and its envelope.)

E PHILIP. ... final notice... steps will be taken... distraint... proceedings in court...

F MRS. CLACKETt. Oh yes, and that reminds me, a gentleman come about the house.

G PHILIP. Don't tell me. I'm not here.

H MRS. CLACKETt. He says he's got a lady quite aroused.

I PHILIP. Leave everything to Squire, Squire, Hackham and Dudley.

J MRS. CLACKETt. All right, love. I'll let them go all over, shall I?

K PHILIP. Let them do anything. Just so long as you don't tell anyone we're here.

L MRS. CLACKETt. So I'll just sit down and turn on the... sardines, I've forgotten the sardines! I don't know — if it wasn't fixed to my shoulders I'd forget what day it was.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETt to the service quarters.)

NOISES OFF

A PHILIP. I didn't get this! I'm not here. I'm in Spain. But if I didn't get it I didn't open it.

(Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom. She is holding the dress that VICKI arrived in.)

B FLAVIA. Darling, I never had a dress like this, did I?

C PHILIP. (Abstracted.) Didn't you?

D FLAVIA. I shouldn't buy anything as tarty as this... Oh, it's not something you gave me, is it?

E PHILIP. I should never have touched it.

F FLAVIA. No, it's lovely.

G PHILIP. Stick it down. Put it back. Never saw it.

(Exit PHILIP into study.)

H FLAVIA. Well, I'll put it in the attic, with all the other things you gave me that are too precious to wear.

(Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor.
Enter ROGER through the front door, still carrying both plates of sardines.)

I ROGER. All right, all right... Now the study door's open again! What's going on? (He puts the sardines down — one plate on the telephone table, where it was before, one near the front door — and goes towards the study, but stops at the sound of urgent knocking overhead.) Knocking! (Knocking.) Upstairs! (He runs upstairs. Knocking.) Oh my God, there's something in the airing cupboard! (He unlocks it and opens it. Enter VICKI.) Oh, it's you.

J VICKI. Of course it's me! You put me in here! In the dark! With all black sheets and things!

K ROGER. But, darling, why did you lock the door?

L VICKI. Why did I lock the door? Why did you lock the door!

M ROGER. I didn't lock the door!

N VICKI. Someone locked the door!

O ROGER. Anyway, we can't stand here like this.

NOISES OFF

40

A VICKI Like what?

B ROGER In your underwear.

C VICKI OK, I'll take it off.

D ROGER In here, in here!

(He ushers her into the bedroom.)

Only she remains on, blinking anxiously, and peering about the floor.

GARRY waits for her, holding the bedroom door open.

Enter **PHILIP** from the study, holding the tax demand, the envelope, and a tube of glue.)

E PHILIP. Darling, this glue. Is it the sort you can never get unstuck...?

F LLOYD. Hold it.

G PHILIP. Oh, Mrs. Clackett's made us some sardines.

H LLOYD. Hold it. We have a problem.

I FREDERICK. (To **BROOKE**.) Oh, bad luck! Which one is it this time?

J BROOKE. Left.

K GARRY. (Calling to people, off.) It's the left one, everybody!

L OMNES. (Off.) Left one!

(Enter **DOTTY**, **BELINDA**, and **POPPY**.)

M FREDERICK. It could be anywhere.

N GARRY. (Looks over the edge of the gallery.) It could have gone over the thing and fallen down, you know, and then bounced somewhere else again.

(**BROOKE** comes downstairs. They all search hopelessly.)

O POPPY. Where did you last see it?

P BELINDA. She didn't see it, poor sweet! It was in her eye!

Q GARRY. (Coming downstairs.) It was probably on 'Why did I lock the door?' She opens her eyes very sort of, you know. Don't you, my sweet? I always feel I ought to rush forward and — (He rushes forward, hands held out.)

NOISES OFF

41

A DOTTY. Mind where you put your feet, my love.

B FREDERICK. Yes, everyone look under their feet.

C GARRY. No one move their feet.

D BELINDA. Everyone put their feet back exactly where they were.

E FREDERICK. Pick your feet up one by one. (They all trample about, looking under their feet, except **BROOKE**, who crouches with her good eye at floor level. **LLOYD** comes up on stage.)

F LLOYD. Brooke, love, is this going to happen during a performance? We don't want the audience to miss their last buses and trains.

G BELINDA. She'll just carry on. Won't you, my love?

H FREDERICK. But can she see anything without them?

I LLOYD. Can she hear anything without them?

J BROOKE. (Suddenly realizing that she is being addressed.) Sorry?

(She straightens up sharply. Her head comes into abrupt contact with **POPPY**'s face.)

K POPPY. Ugh!

L BROOKE. Oh. Sorry.

(**BROOKE** jumps up to see what damage she has done to **POPPY**, and steps backward on to **GARRY**'s hand.)

M GARRY. Ugh!

N BROOKE. Sorry.

(**DOTTY** hurries to his aid.)

O DOTTY. Oh my poor darling! (To **BROOKE**.) You stood on his hand!

P FREDERICK. Oh dear. (He hurriedly clasps a handkerchief to his nose.)

Q BELINDA. Oh, look at Freddie, the poor love!

A LLOYD. What's the matter with him?
B BELINDA. He's just got a little nosebleed, my sweet.
C LLOYD. A nosebleed? No one touched him!
D BELINDA. No, he's got a thing about violence. It always makes his nose bleed.
E FREDERICK. (From behind his handkerchief.) I'm so sorry.
F LLOYD. Brooke, sweetheart...
G BROOKE. I thought you said something to me.
H LLOYD. Yes. (He picks up a vase and hands it to her.) Just go and hit the box office manager with this, and you'll have finished off live theatre in V.A.
I BROOKE. Anyway, I've found it.
J BELINDA. She's found it!
K DOTTIE. Where was it, love?
L BROOKE. In my eye.
M GARRY. In her eye!
N BELINDA. (Hugging her.) Well done, my sweet.
O LLOYD. Not in your left eye?
P BROOKE. It had gone round the side.
Q BELINDA. I knew it hadn't gone far. Are you all right, Poppy, my sweet?
R POPPY. I think so.
S BELINDA. Freddie?
T FREDERICK. Fine, fine. (He gets to his feet, looks in his handkerchief, and has to sit down again.) I'm so sorry.
U LLOYD. Now what?
V BELINDA. He's just feeling a little faint, my love. He's got this thing about... (She tries to demonstrate.)
W LLOYD. This thing about what?
X BELINDA. Well, I won't say the word.

(FREDERICK gets to his feet.)

Y LLOYD. You mean blood?
Z FREDERICK. Oh dear. (He has to sit down again.)
AA BELINDA. (To FREDERICK.) We all understand, my precious.
BB LLOYD. All right, clear the stage. Walking wounded carry the

stretcher cases. (LLOYD returns to the stalls, DOTTIE to the service quarters, POPPY to the wings, GARRY and BROOKE go upstairs. BELINDA helps FREDERICK to his feet.) Right, then. On we bloodily stagger. (FREDERICK has to reach for a chair again.) Oh, sorry, Freddie. Let me rephrase that. On we blindly stumble. Brooke, I withdraw that. (Exit BELINDA along the upstairs corridor, FREDERICK into study.) From your exit, anyway. OK, I'll take it off.... In here, in here. Where's Selsdon?
A GARRY. Selsdon!
B LLOYD. Selsdon!

(Enter SELSDON through the front door.)

C SELSDON. I think she might have dropped it out here somewhere.
D LLOYD. Good. Keep looking. Only another five pages, Selsdon. (Exit SELSDON through the front door.) 'Anyway, we can't stand here like this. — Like what?' — In your underwear. — OK, I'll take it off.'

E ROGER. In here, in here!

(He ushers her into the bedroom.)

Enter PHILIP from the study, holding the tax demand, the envelope, and a tube of glue.

F PHILIP. Darling, this glue. Is it the sort you can never get unstuck...? Oh, Mrs. Clackett's made us some sardines.

(Exit PHILIP into the study with the tax demand, envelope, glue and one of the plates of sardines from the telephone table.)
 Enter ROGER from the bedroom, holding the hot water bottle. He looks up and down the landing.
 Enter VICKI from the bedroom.)

G VICKI. Now what?

H ROGER. A hot water bottle! I didn't put it there!

I VICKI. I didn't put it there.

J ROGER. Someone in the bathroom, filling hot water bottles.

(Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.)

A VICKI. (Anxious.) You don't think there's something creepy going on?

(Exit VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom.
Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor.)

B FLAVIA. Darling, are you coming to bed or aren't you?

(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.
Enter ROGER and VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

C ROGER. What did you say?

D VICKI. I didn't say anything.

E ROGER. I mean, first the door handle. Now the hot water bottle... F VICKI. I can feel goose-pimples all over.

G ROGER. Yes, quick, get something round you.

H VICKI. Get the covers over our heads.

(ROGER is about to open the bedroom door.)

I ROGER. Just a moment. What did I do with those sardines? (He goes downstairs. VICKI makes to follow.) You — wait here.

J VICKI. (Uneasily.) You hear all sorts of funny things about these old houses.

K ROGER. Yes, but this one has been extensively modernized throughout. I can't see how anything creepy would survive oil-fired central heating and...

L VICKI. What? What is it?

(ROGER stares at the telephone table in silence
The bedroom door opens, and FLAVIA puts ROGER's flight bag on the table outside without looking round. The door closes again.)

M VICKI. What's happening?

A ROGER. The sardines. They've gone.

B VICKI. Perhaps there is something funny going on. I'm going to get into bed and put my head under the...

(She freezes at the sight of the flight bag.)

C ROGER. I put them there. Or was it there?

D VICKI. Bag ...

(VICKI runs down the stairs to ROGER, who is directly underneath the gallery.)

E ROGER. I suppose Mrs. Sprockett must have taken them away again... What? What is it?

F VICKI. Bag!

G ROGER. Bag?

H VICKI. Bag! Bag!

(VICKI drags ROGER silently back towards the stairs.
Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom with the box of files. She picks up the flight bag as well, and takes them both off along the upstairs corridor.)

I ROGER. What do you mean, bag, bag?

J VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

K ROGER. What bag?

(VICKI sees the empty table outside the bedroom door.)

L VICKI. No bag!

M ROGER. No bag?

N VICKI. Your bag! Suddenly! Here! Now — gone!

O ROGER. It's in the bedroom. I put it in the bedroom.

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

P VICKI. Don't go in there!

46

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

ROGER. The box!

VICKI. The box!

CR **ROGER.** They've both gone!

VICKI. Oh! My files!

ROGER What on earth's happening? Where's Mrs. Spratchett?

He starts downstairs. *VICKI follows him.* You wait in the bedroom.

VICKI No! No! No!

(She runs downstairs.)

ROGER At least put your dress on!

VICKI I'm not going in there!

TROGER: I'll fetch it for you, I'll fetch it for you!

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

VICKI! Yes, quick — let's get out of here!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

✓ **ROGER** Your dress has gone.

VICKI: I'm never going to see Basingstoke again!

(ROGER goes downstairs.)

PROGER. Don't panic! Don't panic! There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this. I'll fetch Mrs. Splochett and she'll tell us what's happening. You wait here... You can't stand here looking like that... Wait in the study... Study, study, study!

Exit ROGER into the service quarters.

(Lili ROBERTS and me) There's a roar of exasperation from VICKI opens the study door. There's a roar of exasperation from

PHILIP off. She turns and flees.)

! INCYI Does! There's a strange figure in there! Where are you?

47

(There is another cry from PHILIP, off.

Exit VICKI blindly through the front door.

Enter **PHILIP** from the study. He is holding the tax demand in his right hand, and one of the plates of sardines in his left.)

A PHILIP, Darling, I know this is going to sound silly, but...

(He struggles to get the tax demand unstuck from his fingers, encumbered by the plate of sardines.

Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, carrying various pieces of bric-a-brac.)

BFLAVIA. Darling, if we're not going to bed I'm going to clear out the attic.

PHILIP I can't come to bed! I'm glued to a tax demand!

FLAVIA. Darling, why don't you put the sardines down?

(PHILIP puts the plate of sardines down on the table. But when he takes his hand away the sardines come with it.)

PHILIP. Darling, I'm stuck to the sardines!

F FLAVIA. Darling, don't play the fool. Get that bottle marked poison in the downstairs loo. That eats through anything.

(Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor.)

PHILIP. (*Flapping the tax demand.*) I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.

(Exit PHILIP into the downstairs bathroom.)
Pause.)

HLLOYD, Selsdon...? You're on, Selsdon. We're there. The moment's arrived...

BELINDA. (Off.) It's all right love. He's coming home, com-

JLLOYD. But his arm should be coming through that window even before Freddie's off!

NOISES OFF

48

(A pane of glass shatters in the mullion window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch.)

A LLOYD. Ah. And here it is.

(The window opens, and through it appears an elderly BURGLAR. He has great character, but is in need of extensive repair and modernization.)

B BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarm. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

(He climbs in.)

C LLOYD. All right, Selsdon, hold it. Let's take it again.

D BURGLAR. No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults!

E LLOYD. Hold it, Selsdon. Hold it!

F BURGLAR. What am I doing now?

G LLOYD. Hold it!

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

H BURGLAR. I'm breaking into paper bags!

I POPPY. Lloyd wants you to hold it.

(Enter BELINDA.)

J BURGLAR. Right, what are they offering...?

K BELINDA. Stop, Selsdon, my love! Wait, my precious!

(SELSDON stops, restrained at last by BELINDA's hand on his arm.)

L LLOYD. It's like the band playing on the Titanic sinks!
M SELSDON. Stop?
N POPPY. Stop.

NOISES OFF

49

A BELINDA. Stop.

B LLOYD. Thank you, Belinda. Thank you, Poppy. (Exit BELINDA and POPPY.) Selsdon...

C SELSDON. My father was almost on the titanic

D LLOYD. I think he can hear better than I can.

E SELSDON. I beg your pardon?

F LLOYD. From your entrance, please, Selsdon.

G SELSDON. It was difficult travelling on those occasions during those times

H LLOYD. Thank you! Poppy!

I SELSDON. Oh, not for me. It stops me sleeping.

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

J LLOYD. Put the glass back once more.

K SELSDON. Come on again?

L LLOYD. Right. Only, Selsdon...

M SELSDON. Yes?

N LLOYD. A little sooner, Selsdon. A shade earlier. A touch closer to yesterday. All right? Freddie! (Enter FREDERICK. To SELSDON.) Start moving as soon as Freddie opens the door. (To FREDERICK.) What's the line?

O FREDERICK. 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.'

P LLOYD. Start moving as soon as you hear the line, 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem...'

Q FREDERICK. 'Stuck with a problem'?

R LLOYD. 'Stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.' And I want your arm through that window. Right?

S SELSDON. Say no more. May I make a suggestion, though? Should I perhaps come on a little earlier?

T LLOYD. Selsdon...

U SELSDON. Only there does seem to be something of a hiatus between Freddie's exit and my entrance.

V LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Listen. Don't worry. I've got it.

W SELSDON. Yes?

X LLOYD. How about coming on a little earlier?

A SELSDON. We're obviously thinking along the same lines.

(Exit **SELSDON** through the window.)

B LLOYD. Am I putting him on or is he putting me on? Right, Freddie, from your exit.

C PHILIP. (Flapping the tax demand.) I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.

(Exit **PHILIP** into downstairs bathroom.
Enter **BURGLAR** as before, but on time.)

O BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement. (He climbs in.) No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags! So what are they offering? (He peers at the television.) One microwave oven. (He unplugs it and puts it on the sofa.) What? Fifty quid? Hardly worth lifting it. (He inspects the paintings and ornaments.) Junk ... Junk... If you insist... (He pockets some small items.) Where's his desk? No, they all say the same thing... They all say the same thing...

F SELSDON. Yes? Line?

P POPPY. (Off.) 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

G SELSDON. What?

H LLOYD. (Wearily.) 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

I SELSDON. Hard to what?

J OTHERS. (Variously off.) 'Adjust to retirement.'

K SELSDON. It's also very hard to hear if everyone talks at once.

(Exit **BURGLAR** into the study.)

Enter **ROGER** from the service quarters, followed by **MRS. CLACKETt**, who is holding another plate of sardines.)

L ROGER. ... And the prospective tenant naturally wishes to know if there is any previous history of paranormal phenomena.

M MRS. CLACKETt. Oh, yes, dear, it's all nice and paranormal.

A ROGER. I mean, has anything ever dematerialized before? Has anything ever...? (He sees the television set on the sofa.) ... flown about?

(**MRS. CLACKETt** puts the sardines down on the telephone table, moves the television set back, and closes the front door.)

B MRS. CLACKETt. Flown about? No, the things move themselves on their own two feet, just like they do in any house.

C ROGER. I'd better warn the prospective tenant. She is inspecting the study. (He opens the study door and then closes it again.) There's a man in there!

O MRS. CLACKETt. No, no, there's no one in the house, love.

E ROGER. (Opening the study door.) Look! Look! He's... searching for something.

F MRS. CLACKETt. (Glancing briefly.) I can't see no one.

G ROGER. You can't see him? But this is extraordinary! And where is my prospective tenant? I left her in there! She's gone! My prospective tenant has disappeared! (He closes the study door, and looks round the living room. He sees the sardines on the telephone table.) Oh my God.

H MRS. CLACKETt. Now what?

I ROGER. There!

J MRS. CLACKETt. Where?

K ROGER. The sardines!

L MRS. CLACKETt. Oh, the sardines.

M ROGER. You can see the sardines?

N MRS. CLACKETt. I can see the sardines. (ROGER touches them cautiously, then picks up the plate.) I can see the way they're going, too.

O ROGER. I'm not letting these sardines out of my hand. But where is my prospective tenant?

(He goes upstairs, holding the sardines.)

P MRS. CLACKETt. I'm going to be opening sardines all night, in and out of here like a cuckoo on a clock.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the service quarters.)

A ROGER. Vicki! Vicki!

(Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.)

Enter BURGLAR from the study, carrying an armful of silver cups, etc.)

B BURGLAR. No, I miss the violence. I miss having other human beings around to terrify...

(He dumps the silverware on the sofa, and exits into the study.)

Enter ROGER from mezzanine bathroom.)

C ROGER. Where's she gone? Vicki?

(Exit ROGER into the linen cupboard.)

Enter BURGLAR from the study, carrying PHILIP's box and bag. He empties the contents of the box out behind the sofa, and loads the silverware into the box.)

D BURGLAR. It's nice to hear a bit of shouting and screaming around you. All this silence gets you down...

(Enter ROGER from the linen cupboard, still holding the sardines.)

E ROGER. (Calls.) Vicki! Vicki!

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

F BURGLAR. I'm going to end up talking to myself...

(Exit the BURGLAR into study, unaware of ROGER.)

Enter PHILIP from the downstairs bathroom. His right hand is still stuck to the tax demand, his left to the plate of sardines.)

G PHILIP. Darling, this stuff that eats through anything. It eats through trousers! (He examines holes burnt in the front of them.) Dar-

ling, if it eats through trousers, you don't think it goes on and eats through... Listen, darling, I think I'd better get these trousers off! (He begins to do so, as best he can.) Darling, quick, this is an emergency! I mean, if it eats through absolutely anything... Darling, I think I can feel it! I think it's eating through... absolutely everything!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still holding the sardines.)

A ROGER. There's something evil in this house.

(PHILIP pulls up his trousers.)

B PHILIP. (Aside.) The Inland Revenue!

C ROGER. (Sees PHILIP, frightened.) He's back!

D PHILIP. No!

E ROGER. No?

F PHILIP. I'm not here.

G ROGER. He's not there!

H PHILIP. I'm abroad.

I ROGER. He's walking abroad.

J PHILIP. I must go.

K ROGER. Stay!

L PHILIP. I won't, thank you.

M ROGER. Speak!

N PHILIP. Only in the presence of my lawyer.

O ROGER. Only in the presence of your...? Hold on. You're not from the other world!

P PHILIP. Yes, yes — ~~Bagelbore~~!

Q ROGER. You're some kind of intruder!

R PHILIP. Well, nice to meet you. (He waves goodbye with his right hand, then sees the tax demand on it, and hurriedly puts it away behind his back.) I mean, have a sardine.

(He offers the sardines on his left hand. His trousers, unsupported, fall down.)

S ROGER. No, you're not! You're some kind of sex maniac!

You've done something to Vicki! I'm going to come straight downstairs...!

(ROGER comes downstairs and dials 999.)

A PHILIP. Oh, you've got some sardines. Well, if there's nothing I can offer you...

B ROGER. This is plainly a matter for the police! (Into the phone.) Police!

C PHILIP. ... I think I'll be running along.

(He runs, his trousers still round his ankles, out through the front door.)

O ROGER. Come back...! (Into the phone.) Hello — police? Someone has broken into my house! Or rather someone has broken into someone's house... No, but he's a sex maniac! I left a young woman here, and what's happened to her no one knows!

(Enter VICKI through the window.)

B VICKI. There's a man lurking in the undergrowth!

F ROGER. (Into the phone.) Sorry ... the young woman has reappeared. (Hand over phone.) Are you all right?

G VICKI. No, he almost saw me!

H ROGER. (Into the phone.) He almost saw her... Yes, but he's a burglar as well! He's taken our things!

I VICKI. (Finds PHILIP's bag and box.) The things are here.

J ROGER. (Into the phone.) The things have come back. So we're just missing a plate of sardines.

K VICKI. (Finding the sardines left near the front door by ROGER.) Here are the sardines.

L ROGER. (Into the phone.) And we've found the sardines.

M VICKI. This is the police? You want the police here? In my underwear?

N ROGER. (Into the phone.) So what am I saying? I'm saying, let's say no more about it. (He puts the phone down.) I thought something

terrible had happened to you!

A VICKI. It has! I know him!

B ROGER. You know him?

C VICKI. He's dealt with by our office!

D ROGER. He's just an ordinary sex maniac.

E VICKI. Yes, but he mustn't see me like this! You have to keep up certain standards if you work for Inland Revenue!

F ROGER. Well, put something on!

G VICKI. I haven't got anything!

H ROGER. There must be something in the bathroom! (He picks up the box and bag and leads the way.) Bring the sardines!

(She picks up the sardines. Exeunt ROGER and VICKI into the downstairs bathroom.)

Enter the BURGLAR from the study, and dumps more booty.)

BURGLAR. Right, that's downstairs tidied up a bit. (He starts upstairs.) Just give the upstairs a quick going-over for them.

(Exit the BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)

Enter VICKI, holding the sardines and a white bathmat, and ROGER, carrying the box and bag, from the downstairs bathroom.)

J VICKI. A bathmat?

H ROGER. Better than nothing!

L VICKI. I can't go around in front of our taxpayers wearing a bathmat!

M ROGER. The bedroom, then! There must be something in the bedroom!

(He leads the way upstairs.)

N VICKI. No, no, no, no! I'm not going in that bedroom again!

O ROGER. I'll look in the bedroom. You look in the other bathroom.

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom and VICKI into the mezzanine bath-

E *room.* Enter PHILIP through the front door.)

A PHILIP. Darling! Help! Where are you?

(Enter VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

B VICKI. Roger! Roger! *(Exit PHILIP hurriedly, unseen by VICKI, into the downstairs bathroom.)* There's someone in the bathroom now!

(VICKI runs towards the bedrooms, then stops.)

C FLAVIA. *(Off.)* Oh, darling, I'm finding such lovely things...! *(VICKI turns and runs downstairs instead, as FLAVIA enters along the upstairs corridor, absorbed in the china tea service she is carrying. VICKI exits hurriedly into the downstairs bathroom.)* Do you remember this china tea service — *(VICKI screams, off.)* — that you gave me on the very first anniversary of our...? *(Enter VICKI from the downstairs bathroom. She stops at the sight of FLAVIA.)* Who are you?

D VICKI. Oh, no — it's his wife and dependents!

(She puts her hands over her face.)
Enter PHILIP from the downstairs bathroom, still with his hands encumbered, holding the bathmat now as well, and keeping his trousers up with his elbows.)

E PHILIP. Excuse me, I think you've dropped your dress! *(FLAVIA gasps. PHILIP looks up at the gallery and sees her. To FLAVIA.)* Where have you been? I've been going mad! Look at the state I'm in! *(He holds up his hands to show FLAVIA the state he is in, and his trousers fall down. The tea service slips from FLAVIA's horrified hands, and rains down on the floor of the living room below. PHILIP hurries towards the stairs, trousers round his ankles, his hands extended in supplication.)* Darling, honestly! *(VICKI flees before him, comes face to face with FLAVIA, and takes refuge in the linen cup-*

E *board.)* She just burst into the room and her dress fell off!

(Exit FLAVIA, with a cry of pain, along the upstairs corridor. Enter ROGER from the bedroom, directly in PHILIP's path. PHILIP holds up the bathmat in front of his face. He is invisible to ROGER, though, because the latter is holding up a white bed sheet.)

A ROGER. Here, put this sheet on for the moment while I see if there's something in the attic.

(ROGER leaves PHILIP with the sheet and exits along upstairs corridor.)

PHILIP turns to go back downstairs.

Enter BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom, holding two gold taps.)

B BURGLAR. One pair gold taps... *(He stops at the sight of PHILIP.)* Oh, my Gawd!

C PHILIP. Who are you?

D BURGLAR. Me? Fixing the taps.

E PHILIP. Tax? Income tax?

F BURGLAR. That's right, governor. In come new taps ... out go old taps.

(Exit BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)

G PHILIP. Tax-inspectors everywhere!

H ROGER. *(Off.)* Here you are!

I PHILIP. The other one!

(Exit PHILIP into the bedroom, holding the bathmat in front of his face.)

Enter ROGER along the upstairs corridor holding VICKI's dress.)

J ROGER. I've found your dress! It came flying out of the attic at me!

NOISES OFF

(Exit **ROGER** into mezzanine bathroom.
Enter **PHILIP** from the bedroom, trying to pull the bathmat off his head.)

A **PHILIP**. Darling! I've got her dress stuck to my head now!

(Enter **ROGER** from the mezzanine bathroom.
Exit **PHILIP** into the bedroom.)

B **ROGER**. Another intruder!

(Enter the **BURGLAR** from the mezzanine bathroom.)

C **BURGLAR**. Just doing the taps, governor.

O **ROGER**. Attacks? Not attacks on women?

E **BURGLAR**. Try anything, governor, but I'll do the taps on the bath first.

(Exit **BURGLAR** into the mezzanine bathroom.)

F **ROGER**. Sex maniacs everywhere! Where is Vicki? Vicki...?

(Exit **ROGER** into the downstairs bathroom.

Enter **BURGLAR** from the mezzanine bathroom, heading for the front door.)

G **BURGLAR**. People everywhere! I'm off. A tax on women? I don't know, they'll put a tax on anything these days.

(Enter **ROGER** from the downstairs bathroom. The **BURGLAR** stops.)

H **ROGER**. If I can't find her, you're going to be in trouble, you see.

I **BURGLAR**. WC? I'll fix it.

(Exit **BURGLAR** into the mezzanine bathroom again.)

NOISES OFF

A **ROGER**. Vicki ...?

(Exit **ROGER** through the front door.
Enter **PHILIP** from the bedroom. The bathmat is still on his head, but is now arranged like a burnous and he is wrapped in a white bed sheet.)

Enter **VICKI** from the linen cupboard, enrobed from head to foot in a black bed sheet. They both quietly close the doors behind them.)

B **VICKI**. Roger! (Together.) **B** **PHILIP**. Darling!

(They see each other and start back.
Enter **ROGER** through the front door.)

C **ROGER**. Sheikh! I thought you were coming at four? And this is your charming wife? So you want to see over the house now, do you, Sheikh? Right. Well. Since you're upstairs already...

(**ROGER** goes upstairs.
Enter **FLAVIA** along the upstairs corridor, carrying a vase.)

O **FLAVIA**. Him and his floozie! I'll break this over their heads!
E **ROGER**. ... let's start downstairs.

(**ROGER**, **PHILIP** and **VICKI** go downstairs.)

F **FLAVIA**. Who are you? Who are these creatures?

G **ROGER**. (To **PHILIP** and **VICKI**.) I'm sorry about this. I don't know who she is. No connection with the house, I assure you. (Enter **MRS. CLACKETT** from the service quarters, with another plate of sardines. **ROGER** advances to introduce her.) Whereas this good lady with the sardines, on the other hand...

H **MRS. CLACKETT**. No other hands, thank you, not in my sardines, 'cause this time I'm eating them.

I **ROGER**. ... is fully occupied with her sardines, so perhaps the toilet facilities would be of more interest.

NOISES OFF

(He ushers **PHILIP** and **VICKI** away from **MRS. CLACKETT** towards the mezzanine bathroom.)

A FLAVIA. Mrs. Clackett, who are these people?

B MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, we get them all the time, love. They're just Arab sheets.

C ROGER. I'm sorry about this. (He opens the door to the mezzanine bathroom.) But in here...

D FLAVIA. Arab sheets?

(Exit **FLAVIA** into the bedroom.)

E ROGER. In here we have...

(Enter the **BURGLAR** from the mezzanine bathroom.)

F BURGLAR. Ballcocks, governor. Your ballcocks have gone.

G ROGER. We have him.

(Enter **FLAVIA** from the bedroom.)

H FLAVIA. They're Irish sheets! Irish linen sheets off my own bed!

I MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, the thieving devils!

J ROGER. In the study, however ...

K MRS. CLACKETT. You give me that sheet, you devil! (She seizes the nearest sheet, and it comes away in her hand to reveal **VICKI**.) Oh, and there she stands in her smalls, for all the world to see!

L ROGER. It's you!

M FLAVIA. It's her!

(**FLAVIA** comes downstairs menacingly. Exit **PHILIP** discreetly into the study.)

N BURGLAR. It's my little girl!

O VICKI. Dad!

(**FLAVIA** stops.)

NOISES OFF

Enter **PHILIP** from the study in amazement. (He is now played by a double — **TIM**.)

A BURGLAR. Our little Vicki, that ran away from home, I thought I'd never see again!

B MRS. CLACKETT. Well, would you believe it?

C VICKI. (To **BURGLAR**.) What are you doing here like this?

D BURGLAR. What are you doing here like that?

E VICKI. Me? I'm taking our files on tax evasion to Inland Revenue in Basingstoke.

F PHILIP/TIM. Agh!

(He collapses behind the sofa, clutching at his heart, unnoticed by the others.)

G FLAVIA. (Threateningly.) So where's my other sheet?

(Enter through the front door the most sought-after of all properties on the market today — a **SHEIKH**. He is wearing Arab robes, and bears a strong resemblance to **PHILIP**, since he is also played by **FREDERICK**.)

H SHEIKH. Ah! A house of heavenly peace! I rent it!

I ROGER. Hold on, hold on... I know that face! (Pulls the **SHEIKH's** burnous aside to reveal his face.) He isn't a sheikh! He's that sex-maniac!

J FLAVIA. Yes — it's my husband!

K SHEIKH. What?

(They all fall upon him.)

FREDERICK's trousers are revealed to be around his ankles.)

L LLOYD. Trousers!

M MRS. CLACKETT. You take all the clean sheets! (She tries to pull the robes off him.)

N SHEIKH. What? What?

O LLOYD. Trousers! Trousers!

A VICKI. You snatch my bathmat! *(She tries to pull his burnous off him.)*

B SHEIKH. What? What? What?

C FLAVIA. You toss me aside like a broken china doll! *(She hits him.)*

D LLOYD. And to cap it all you've got your trousers on!

(Everyone except SELSDON finally comes to a halt.)

E BURLAR. And what you're up to with my little girl down there in Basingstoke...

(Even SELSDON becomes aware that the action has ceased.)

F SELSDON. Stop?

G BELINDA. Stop, stop.

(LLOYD comes up on stage.)

H LLOYD. It's a question of authenticity, you see, Freddie. Do Arab potentates wear trousers under their robes? I don't know. Maybe they do. But not round their ankles, Freddie! Not round their ankles!

I FREDERICK. Sorry. It's just frightfully difficult doing a quick-change without a dresser.

J LLOYD. Get Tim to help you. Tim! Where's Tim? Come on, Tim! Tim!

(TIM, wearing the sheet as PHILIP's double, gets to his feet and gazes blearily at LLOYD.)

K TIM. Sorry?

L LLOYD. Oh, yes. You're acting.

M TIM. I must have dropped off down there.

N LLOYD. Never mind, Tim.

O TIM. Do something?

P LLOYD. No, let it pass. We'll just struggle through on our own. Tim has a sleep behind the sofa, while all the rest of us run round with

our trousers round our ankles. OK, Freddie? You'll just have to do the best you can. On we go, then... *(FREDERICK hesitates.)* Some other problem, Freddie?

A FREDERICK. Well, since we're stopped anyway.

B LLOYD. Why did I ask?

C FREDERICK. I mean, you know how stupid I am about plot.

D LLOYD. I know, Freddie.

E FREDERICK. May I ask another silly question?

F LLOYD. All my studies in world drama lie at your disposal.

G FREDERICK. I still don't understand why the Sheikh just happens to be Philip's double.

H GARRY. Because he comes in and we all think he's, you know, and we all, I mean, that's the joke.

I FREDERICK. I see that.

J BELINDA. My sweet, the rest of the plot depends on it!

K FREDERICK. I see that. But it is rather a coincidence, isn't it?

L LLOYD. It is rather a coincidence, Freddie, yes. Until you reflect that there was an earlier draft of the play, now unfortunately lost to us. And in this the author makes it clear that Philip's father as a young man had traveled extensively in the Middle East.

M FREDERICK. I see... I see!

N LLOYD. You see?

O FREDERICK. That's very interesting.

P LLOYD. I thought you'd like that.

Q FREDERICK. But will the audience get it?

R LLOYD. You must tell them, Freddie. Looks. Gestures. That's what acting's all about. OK?

S FREDERICK. Yes. Thank you, Lloyd. Thank you.

T LLOYD. And it will be even more powerful when you do it with no trousers.

U FREDERICK. Of course. *(Takes his trousers off.)*

V LLOYD. Right, can we just finish the act? From Belinda's beautiful line, 'You toss me aside like a broken china doll!' *(LLOYD re-turns to the stalls.)* I'm being so clever out here! What's going to be left of this show when I've gone off to do ~~them~~ and you're up there on your own? Right — 'You toss me aside like a broken china doll!'

NOISES OFF

A FLAVIA. You toss me aside like a broken china doll! *(She hits him.)*
B SHEIKH. What? What? What?
C BURLAR. And what you're up to with my little girl down there in Basingstoke I won't ask. But I'll tell you one thing, Vicki.

(Pause.)

D LLOYD. Brooke!
E BROOKE. Sorry ...
F LLOYD. Your line. Come on, love, we're two lines away from the end of the act.
G BROOKE. I don't understand.
H LLOYD. Give her the line!
I POPPY. *(Off.)* 'What's that, Dad?'
J BROOKE. Yes, but I don't understand.
K BELINDA. It's 'What's that, Dad?'
L SELSDON. Yes, I say to you, 'I'll tell you one thing, Vicki', and you say to me, 'What's that, Dad?'
M BROOKE. I don't understand why the Sheikh looks like Philip.

(Silence. Everyone waits for the storm. LLOYD comes slowly up on stage.)

N LLOYD. Poppy! Bring the book! *(Enter POPPY from the wings, with the book. Patiently.)* Is that the line, Poppy? 'I don't understand why the Sheikh looks like Philip?' Can we consult the author's text, and make absolutely sure?

O POPPY. Well, I think it's ...

P LLOYD. *(With exquisite politeness.)* 'What's that, Dad?' Right. That's the line, Brooke, love. We all know you've worked in very classy places up in London where they let you make the play up as you go along, but we don't want that kind of thing here, do we. Not when the author has provided us with such a considered and polished line of his own. Not at one o'clock in the morning. Not two lines away from the end of Act One. Not when we're just about to get a tea break before we all drop dead of exhaustion. We merely want to hear

NOISES OFF

the line. *(Suddenly puts his mouth next to VICKI's ear and shouts.)* 'What's that, Dad?' *(All patience and politeness again.)* That's all. Nothing else. I'm not being unreasonable, am I? *(BROOKE abruptly turns, runs upstairs, and exits into the mezzanine bathroom.)* Exit? Does it say 'exit'? *(The sound of BROOKE weeping, off, and running downstairs.)* Oh dear, now she's going to wash her lenses away.

(Exit LLOYD through the front door.)

A FREDERICK. *(Chastened.)* Oh good Lord.
B SELSDON. *(Likewise.)* A little heavy with the sauce, I thought.
C GARRY. I thought it was going to be Poppy when he finally, you know.
D DOTTY. It's usually Poppy. Isn't it, love?

(POPPY smiles wanly.)

E FREDERICK. I suppose that was all my fault.
F GARRY. But why pick on, you know?
G DOTTY. Yes, why Brooke?
H BELINDA. I thought it was quite sweet, actually.
I GARRY. Sweet?
J BELINDA. Trying to pretend they're not having a little thing to-

gether.

K DOTTY. A little thing? Lloyd and Brooke...?

L BELINDA. Didn't you know?

M SELSDON. Brooke and Lloyd?

N BELINDA. Where do you think they've been all weekend?

O FREDERICK. Good Lord. You mean, that's why he wasn't here when poor old Tim...

(He stops, conscious that TIM is behind the sofa.)

P DOTTY. ... put the set up back-to-front.

A BELINDA. Sh! Here they come!

(Enter LLOYD with his arm round BROOKE.)

A LLOYD: OK. All forgotten. I was irresistible.
P POPPY: I think I'm going to be sick.

(Exit POPPY into the wings.)

C DOTTY: Oh, no!
O LLOYD: Oh, for heaven's sake!

(Exit LLOYD after POPPY.)

E GARRY: You mean ... ?
F SELSDON: Her, too?
G FREDERICK: Oh great Scott!
H BELINDA: Well, that's something I didn't know.
I BROOKE: I think I'm going to faint.
J DOTTY: Yes, sit down, love!

(They sit BROOKE down.)

K BELINDA: Quick — do your meditation.
L SELSDON: Well, that's something she didn't know!
M BELINDA: Hush, love.
N DOTTY: Two weeks' rehearsal, that's all we've had.
O FREDERICK: Whatever next?

P SELSDON: Most exciting!
Q BELINDA: (Indicating BROOKE.) Sh!

R SELSDON: Oh, yes. Sh!
S DOTTY: Here he comes. (Enter LLOYD from the wings, subdued.) Is she all right, love?

T LLOYD: She'll be all right in a minute. Something she ate, probably.

V GARRY: (Indicating BROOKE.) Yes, this one's feeling a bit, you know.

W LLOYD: I'm feeling a bit, you know, myself. I think I'm going to —

X BELINDA: Which?

Y GARRY: (Offering a chair.) Faint?

A BELINDA: (Offering a vase.) Or be sick?
B LLOYD: (Subsides on to the chair.) — need that tea break.
C DOTTY: You're certainly overdoing it at the moment, love.

D LLOYD: So could we just have the last line of the act?
E SELSDON: Me? Last line? Right.

F BURGLAR: But I'll tell you one thing, Vicki.

G VICKI: (With a murderous look at LLOYD.) What's that, Dad?

H BURGLAR: When all around is strife and uncertainty, there's nothing like a...

I SELSDON: ... what?

J POPPY: (Off, tearful.) Oh... 'A good old-fashioned plate of sardines.'

K SELSDON: What did she say?

L BELINDA: 'A good old-fashioned plate...'

(She hands him MRS. CLACKETT's plate.)

M BURGLAR: A good old-fashioned plate of...

N SELSDON: ... what?

(POPPY runs on with the book, LLOYD jumps to his feet, TIM jumps up from behind the sofa.)

O EVERYONE: (Except SELSDON.) Sardines!

(Tableau, with raised sardines. The tableau continues.)

P LLOYD: And curtain!

Q POPPY: (Realizes, sobs.) Oh!

(She runs hurriedly into the wings.)

Unknown playhouse in
Milwaukee

ACT II

The living room of the Brents' country home. Wednesday afternoon.
(Theatre Royal, Ashton-under-Lyne. Wednesday matinee, February 13.)

But this time we are watching the action from behind; the whole set has been turned through 180 degrees. All the doors can be seen — there is no masking behind them. Two stairways lead up to the platform that gives access to the doors on the upper level. Some of the scene inside the living room is visible through the full-length window. There are also two doors in the backstage fabric of the theatre: one giving access to the dressing rooms, and the pass door into the auditorium. The usual backstage furnishings, including the prompt corner and props table, chairs for the actors, a fire-point with fire buckets and fire-axe, etc.

(TIM is walking anxiously up and down in his dinner jacket.
POPPY is speaking into the microphone in the prompt corner.)

A POPPY. (Over the tannoy.) Act One beginners, please. Your calls, Miss Otley, Miss Ashton, Mr. Lejeune, Mr. Fellowes, Miss Blair. Act One beginners, please.

B TIM. And maybe Act One beginners is what we'll get. What do you think?

C POPPY. (To TIM.) Oh, Dotty'll pull herself together now we've called Beginners. Now she knows she's got to be on stage in five minutes. Won't she?

D TIM. Will she?

E POPPY. You know what Dotty's like.

F TIM. We've only been on the road for a month! We've only got

F to Ashton-under-Lyne! What's it going to be like by the time we've got to Stockton-on-Tees? (LLOYD)

A POPPY. If only she'd speak!

B TIM. If only she'd unlock her dressing room door! Look, if Dotty won't go on...

C POPPY. Won't go on?

D TIM. If she won't.

E POPPY. She will.

F TIM. Of course she will.

G POPPY. Won't she?

H TIM. I'm sure she will. But if she *doesn't*...

I POPPY. She must!

J TIM. She will, she will. But if she *didn't*...

K POPPY. I'd have five minutes to change. Four minutes.

L TIM. If only she'd say something.

(The pass door opens cautiously, and LLOYD puts his head around. He closes it again at the sight of POPPY.)

M POPPY. I'll have another go. Takes your mind off your own problems, anyway.

(Exit POPPY in the direction of the dressing rooms.

LLOYD puts his head back round the door.)

N LLOYD. Has she gone?

O TIM. Lloyd! I didn't know you were coming today!

(LLOYD comes in. He is carrying a bottle of whisky.)

P LLOYD. I wasn't. I haven't.

Q TIM. Anyway, thank God you're here!

R LLOYD. I'm not. I'm in *Abertillery*. I'm in the middle of rehearsing *Richard III*. *Have a nice job*

S TIM. Dotty and Garry ...

T LLOYD. I don't want anyone to know I'm in.

U TIM. No, but Dotty and Garry ...

A LLOYD. I just want two hours alone and undisturbed with Brooke in her dressing room between shows, then I'm on the 7:25 back to *Wales*. (Gives TIM the whisky.) This is for Brooke. Put it somewhere safe. Make sure Selsdon doesn't get his hands on it.

B TIM. Right. They've had some kind of row...

C LLOYD. Good, good. (Takes money out of his wallet and gives it to TIM.) There's a little flower shop across the road from the stage-door. I want you to buy me some very large and expensive-looking flowers.

D TIM. Right. Now Dotty's locked herself in her dressing room...

E LLOYD. Don't let Poppy see them. They're not for Poppy.

F TIM. No. And she won't speak to anyone...

G LLOYD. First house finishes just after five, yes? Second house starts at seven-thirty?

H TIM. Lloyd, that's what I'm trying to tell you — there may not be a show!

I LLOYD. She hasn't walked out already?

J TIM. No one knows *what* she's doing! She's locked in her dressing room! She won't speak to anyone!

K LLOYD. You've called Beginners?

L TIM. Yes!

M LLOYD. I can't play a complete love-scene from cold in five minutes. It's not dramatically possible.

N TIM. She's had bust-ups with Garry before, of course.

O LLOYD. Brooke's had a bust-up with Garry?

P TIM. Brooke? Not Brooke — Dotty!

Q LLOYD. Oh, Dotty.

R TIM. I mean, they had the famous bust-up the week before last, when we were playing *Workshop*. *Yah, yah*

S LLOYD. Right, right, you told me on the phone.

T TIM. She went out with this journalist bloke ...

U LLOYD. Journalist — yes, yes...

V TIM. But you know Garry threatened to kill him?

W LLOYD. Killed him, yes, I know. Listen, don't worry about Dotty — she's got money in the show.

X TIM. Yes, but now it's happened again! Two o'clock this morning I'm woken up by this great banging on my door. It's Garry. Do I

X L know where Dotty is? She hasn't come home.

A LLOYD. Tim, let me tell you something about my life. I have the Duke of Buckingham on the phone to me for an hour after rehearsal every evening complaining that the Duke of Gloucester is sucking boiled sweets through his speeches. The Duke of Clarence is off for the entire week doing a commercial for Madeira. Richard himself — would you believe? — Richard III? (He demonstrates.) — has now gone down with a back problem. I keep getting messages from Brooke about how unhappy she is here, and now she's got herself a doctor's certificate for nervous exhaustion — she's going to walk! I have no time to find or rehearse another Vicki. I have just one afternoon, while Richard is fitted for a surgical corset, to cure Brooke of nervous exhaustion, with no medical aids except a little whisky — you've got the whisky? — a few flowers — you've got the money for the flowers? — and a certain faded charm. So I haven't come to the theatre to hear about other people's problems. I've come to be taken out of myself, and preferably not put back again.

B TIM. Yes, but Lloyd...

C LLOYD. Have you done the front-of-house calls?

D TIM. Oh, the front-of-house calls!

(TIM hurries to the microphone in the prompt corner, still holding the money and whisky.)

E LLOYD. And don't let Poppy see those flowers!

(Exit LLOYD through the pass door.)

F TIM. (Into microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in three minutes.

(Enter POPPY from the dressing rooms.)

G POPPY. We're going to be so late up!

H TIM. No luck?

I POPPY. Belinda's having a go. I haven't even started the front of house calls yet... Money? What's this for?

A TIM. Nothing, nothing! (He puts the money behind his back and automatically produces the whisky with the other hand.)

B POPPY. Whisky!

C TIM. Oh... is it?

D POPPY. Where did you find that?

E TIM. Well...

F POPPY. Up here? You mean Selsdon's hiding them round the stage now? (She takes the whisky.)

G TIM. Oh...

H POPPY. I'll put it in the ladies' loo. At least he won't go in there. (Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms.) No?

I BELINDA. You know what Dotty's like when she's like this. Freddie's trying now... (She sees the whisky.) Oh, no!

J POPPY. He's hiding them round the stage now. (Enter FREDERICK from the dressing rooms.) No?

K FREDERICK. No.

L BELINDA. You didn't try for very long, my precious!

M FREDERICK. No, well... (He sees the whisky.) Oh dear.

N BELINDA. He's hiding them on stage now.

(Exit POPPY to the dressing rooms, holding the whisky.)

O FREDERICK. No, Garry came rushing out of his dressing room in a great state. I couldn't quite understand what he was saying. I often feel with Garry that I must have missed something somewhere. You know how stupid I am about that kind of thing. But I think he was saying he wanted to kill me.

P BELINDA. Oh, my poor sweet!

Q FREDERICK. I thought I'd better leave him to it. I don't want to make things worse. He's all right, is he?

R BELINDA. Who, Garry? Anything but, by the sound of it!

S FREDERICK. I mean, he's going on?

T TIM. Garry? Garry's going on. Of course he's going on. What's all this about Garry not going on?

U BELINDA. Yes, because if you have to go on for Garry, Poppy can't go on for Dotty, because if Poppy goes on for Dotty, you'll have to be on the book!

A TIM. This is getting farcical.

B BELINDA. Money.

C TIM. Money?

D BELINDA. You're waving money around.

E TIM. Oh, that's for... Oh...!

(TIM hurriedly grabs his raincoat from a peg and exits into the dressing rooms.)

F FREDERICK. She's a funny woman, you know — Dotty. So up and down. She was perfectly all right last night.

G BELINDA. Last night?

H FREDERICK. Yes, she took me for a drink after the show in some club she knows about.

I BELINDA. She was with *you*? You were with *her*?

J FREDERICK. She was being very sympathetic about all my troubles.

K BELINDA. She's not going to sink her teeth into you! I won't let her!

L FREDERICK. No, no, she couldn't have been nicer. In fact she came back to my digs afterwards for a cup of tea, and she told me all her troubles. Sat there until three o'clock this morning. I don't know what the landlady thought!

(Enter POPPY.)

M POPPY. And another thing.

N BELINDA. Nothing else, my sweet!

O POPPY. Where's Selsdon?

P BELINDA. It turns out that it's Freddie here who's the cause of all the... Selsdon?

Q POPPY. He's not in his dressing room.

R BELINDA. Oh — I might have guessed!

S POPPY. Oh — the front-of-house calls!

T BELINDA. You do the calls. I'll look for Selsdon.

U FREDERICK. What shall I do?

V BELINDA. *(Firmly.)* Absolutely nothing at all.

A FREDERICK. Right.

B BELINDA. You've done quite enough already, my pet.

(Exit BELINDA to the dressing rooms.)

C POPPY. *(Into the microphone.)* Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in three minutes.

(Enter TIM from the dressing rooms in his raincoat, carrying a large bunch of flowers.)

D TIM. He wants to kill someone. *(He takes off his raincoat.)*

E POPPY. Selsdon wants to kill someone?

F TIM. Garry, Garry... Selsdon?

G POPPY. We've lost him.

H TIM. Oh, not again!

I POPPY. Flowers!

J TIM. *(Embarrassed.)* Oh... Well... They're just... You know...

K POPPY. *(Taking them.)* Oh, Tim that's really sweet of you!

L TIM. Oh... Well...

M POPPY. *(To FREDERICK.)* Isn't that sweet of him?

N FREDERICK. Very charming.

(She kisses TIM.)

O POPPY. I'll just look in the pub. *(She gives the flowers to FREDERICK.)* Hold these.

(Exit POPPY to the dressing rooms.)

P TIM. I'll take those. *(He takes the flowers.)* Oh, the front of house calls! Hold these. *(He gives the flowers back to FREDERICK.)*

Q FREDERICK. Oh, I think Poppy's done them.

R TIM. She gave them two minutes, did she? I'll give them one minute. *(Into the microphone.)* Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in one minute.

NOISES OFF

(He takes the flowers from FREDERICK.)

A FREDERICK. Oh dear, I think she said three minutes.
B TIM. Three minutes? I said three minutes! She said three minutes?

C FREDERICK. I think so.

D TIM. Hold these. (He gives FREDERICK the flowers. Into the microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in two minutes.

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms, holding the bottle of whisky.)

E FREDERICK. Any luck?

F BELINDA. No, but I found yet another bottle.

G FREDERICK. Oh dear.

H TIM. Oh ...

I BELINDA. Hidden in the ladies' lavatory, would you believe.

J FREDERICK. Oh my Lord!

K TIM. (Takes it.) *Oxiam!* I'll give it to *Oxiam!*

(POPPY runs in from the dressing rooms.)

L POPPY. He's not in the pub...

M BELINDA. (Indicates the whisky to POPPY.) No, he's hanging round ladies' lavatories! *to Mrs. Brown*

N TIM. I'd better get the spare gear on.

(Exit TIM to the dressing rooms with the whisky.)

O POPPY. (Into the microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in two minutes.

P FREDERICK. Oh dear — Tim's already told them two minutes.

Q POPPY. He's done two minutes? (Into the microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in one minute.

(Enter LLOYD through the pass door.)

NOISES OFF

A LLOYD. What ^{bell} is going on?

B BELINDA. Lloyd!

C FREDERICK. Great Scott!

D POPPY. I didn't know you were here! ^{New York} ~~Aberystwyth~~ Festival! But I can't stand out there and listen to 'two minutes... three minutes... one minute... two minutes'!

E LLOYD. I'm not here! I'm at the ^{New York} ~~Aberystwyth~~ Festival! But I can't stand out there and listen to 'two minutes... three minutes... one minute... two minutes'!

F BELINDA. My sweet, we're having great dramas in the dressing rooms!

G LLOYD. We're having great dramas out there! (To POPPY.) This is the matinee, honey! There's old-age pensioners out there! 'The curtain will rise in three minutes' — we all start for the Gents. 'The curtain will rise in one minute' — we all come running out again. We don't know which way we're going!

H POPPY. Lloyd, I've got to have a talk with you.

I LLOYD. (Kissing her.) Of course, honey, of course. Looking forward to it.

J POPPY. You got my message?

K LLOYD. Many, many messages.

L POPPY. Why didn't you answer?

M LLOYD. I did! I have! I'm here!

N POPPY. Lloyd, there's something I've got to tell you.

O LLOYD. Go on, then.

P POPPY. Well... (She hesitates, embarrassed because other people can hear, then tries to keep her voice down.) I went to the doctor today...

(Enter BROOKE from the dressing rooms, with the whisky.)

Q BELINDA. Brooke!

(LLOYD hastily abandons POPPY.)

R LLOYD. (To POPPY.) Later, later. All right?

(BROOKE holds up the whisky.)

S BELINDA. Oh, no! Not another one!

NOISES OFF

A BROOKE. In my dressing room!
B BELINDA. (She takes the whisky.) In your dressing room? (To LLOYD.) It's getting completely out of control!

C FREDERICK. (Taking the whisky.) I'll give it to Oxfam, with the other one.

D LLOYD. (Holds out his hand for the whisky.) I'll do it. Thank you.

E BROOKE. (Sees him.) Lloyd! (Peers.) Lloyd?

F LLOYD. Got it in one. (Kisses her.)

G BROOKE. You got my message?

H LLOYD. And came running, honey, and came running.

I BROOKE. Lloyd, we've got to have a talk.

J LLOYD. We're going to have a talk, my love.

K BROOKE. When?

L LLOYD. Later, yes? Later. (He goes to take the whisky from FREDERICK, but is distracted by seeing the flowers that FREDERICK is holding.) Flowers?

M FREDERICK. Oh, yes, sorry. (He gives the flowers to POPPY.)

N POPPY. Tim bought them for me. (She puts them on her desk in the prompt corner.)

O LLOYD. Tim? Bought them for you?

P POPPY. To cheer me up. (Anxiously.) Lloyd...

Q LLOYD. Nothing more, just for the moment. Thank you. (To FREDERICK.) Strangle Tim for me when you see him, will you?

R FREDERICK. Right.

(LLOYD goes towards the pass door.)

S BELINDA. But what about Dotty?

T LLOYD. I don't want to hear about Dotty.

U FREDERICK. And Garry?

V LLOYD. Not about Garry, either.

W BELINDA. What about Selsdon?

X LLOYD. Listen, I think this show is beyond the help of a director. You just do it. I'll sit out there in the dark with a bag of toffees and enjoy it. OK? 'One minute' was the last call, if your memory goes back that far.

NOISES OFF

A BROOKE. Lloyd!
B POPPY. Wait!

(LLOYD exits through the pass door. POPPY and BROOKE jostle to follow him.)

C BROOKE. (To POPPY.) Excuse me!

D POPPY. I've got to talk to him!

E FREDERICK. (Separating them.) Girls, girls!

F BROOKE. (Indicates the dressing rooms.) I've a good mind to put my coat on and walk out of that door right here and now.

G FREDERICK. Listen, if you don't feel up to performing I'm sure Poppy would always be happy to have a bash on your behalf.

H BROOKE. I beg your pardon?

I POPPY. Honestly!

J BELINDA. (Firmly.) Brooke, you sit down and do your meditation. Poppy, you go and see what's happening with Dotty and Garry. (BROOKE reluctantly sits down on the floor. Exit POPPY to the dressing rooms.) Freddie, my sweet precious ...

K FREDERICK. Did I say something wrong?

(Enter SELSDON hurriedly through the pass door.)

L SELSDON. Where's Tim?

M BELINDA. Selsdon! My sweet! Where have you been?

N FREDERICK. Are you all right? (He puts out a sympathetic hand, then realizes that it contains the whisky bottle.) Oh dear.

(He hurriedly puts it out of sight behind his back.)

O BELINDA. We've been looking for you everywhere!

P SELSDON. Oh, yes, everywhere. In front — manager's office — bar. Not a sign of him.

Q BELINDA. He's looking for you in the dressing rooms.

R SELSDON. That's right! Great shindig been going on down there. I thought Tim ought to know about it.

S BELINDA. My love, I think he's heard.

NOISES OFF

A SELSDON. Oh, everything! Oh, he really went for her! 'I know when you've got your eye on someone!'

B FREDERICK. Oh dear, Dotty's got her eye on someone, has she?
C SELSDON. 'I've seen you creeping off into corners with that poor halfwit.'

D FREDERICK. Which poor halfwit?

E BELINDA. Never mind, my love.

F FREDERICK. Not Tim?

G BELINDA. No, no, no.

H FREDERICK. But who else is there? Apart from me?

(Enter POPPY from the dressing rooms.)

I POPPY. I think they're coming.

J BELINDA. They're coming!

K FREDERICK. They're coming!

L SELSDON. I knew they wouldn't.

M POPPY. And you're here!

N SELSDON. Oh, yes, every word!

O POPPY. Right. (Into the microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The performance is about to begin.

(Enter TIM from the dressing rooms, in BURGLAR's costume.)

P TIM. They're coming.

Q BELINDA. And we've found Selsdon.

R TIM. (To SELSDON.) How did you get here?

S SELSDON. How? Through the wall!

T TIM. (Into the microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats.

U POPPY. I've done it!

V TIM. (Into the microphone.) The performance is about to...

W POPPY. I've done it, I've done it!

X TIM. (To POPPY.) Done it? Done 'about to begin'?

Y POPPY. Yes! About to begin, about to begin!

Z TIM. (Into the microphone.) ... is about to... is about to begin at any moment.

NOISES OFF

A BELINDA. Poor Lloyd! He'll choke on his toffees.

B SELSDON. No, the walls are very thin, you see. 'I'm absolutely sick to death of it,' she cries... (Takes in what TIM is wearing.) Am I setting a bit of a trend?

C TIM. (Realizes.) Oh...

D BELINDA. (Quickly, snatching TIM's Burglar cap off.) Understudy rehearsal, my love.

E SELSDON. Oh, for Garry, yes — very timely. 'You try to give some poor devil a leg up,' she says.

(Enter GARRY from the dressing rooms.)

F BELINDA. Garry, my sweet!

G SELSDON. Or she may have said, 'a leg over...' Oh, and here he is.

H FREDERICK. (To GARRY.) Are you all right?

(FREDERICK collects the box and the flight bag from the props table, and smilingly offers them to GARRY, who snatches them angrily.)

I SELSDON. What does he say?

J BELINDA. He's not saying anything, Selsdon, my sweet.

K SELSDON. Very sensible. Only stir it up again. 'I've seen you giving him little nods and smiles!' — that's what he kept saying.

(Enter DOTTY from the dressing rooms.)

L BELINDA. Dotty, my love!

M SELSDON. Oh, she's emerged, has she? Come on, old girl! You're on!

N FREDERICK. Are you all right?

O SELSDON. Is she all right?

(DOTTY merely sighs and smiles and gives a little squeeze of the arm to BELINDA. She takes up her place by the service quarters entrance, a tragically misunderstood woman. GARRY moves point-

edly away.)

A BELINDA. (To SELSDON.) She's fine.
B TIM. All right, everyone?
C SELSDON. 'Little hugs and squeezes.'
D BELINDA. Hush, love.
E POPPY. Curtain up?

(Everyone looks anxiously from DOTTY to GARRY and back again. DOTTY and GARRY both ignore the looks. They stand aloof, then both at the same moment turn to check their appearance in the little mirrors fixed to the back of the set.)

F FREDERICK. Look, Dotty... Look, Garry... I'm not going to make a great speech, but we have all got to go out there and put on a performance, and well...

G BELINDA. We can't do it in silence, my loves! We're going to have to speak to each other!

(Pause. Neither GARRY nor DOTTY has appearedly heard.)

H DOTTY. (Suddenly, bravely, to TIM.) What's the house like?

I BELINDA. That's the spirit!

J FREDERICK. Well done, Dotty!

K TIM. It's quite good. Well, for a matinee.

L POPPY. There's quite a crowd at the front of the back ^{aisles} stalls.

M SELSDON. (To POPPY.) Come on, girl, get the tabs up! Some of those OAPs out there haven't got long to go.

N POPPY. Right. Quiet, then, please...

O FREDERICK. Let me just say one more word... Hold it a moment, Poppy...

P SELSDON. Let me just say one word. Sardines!

Q BELINDA. Sardines!

R FREDERICK. Sardines!

(BELINDA rushes to the prop table to fetch DOTTY the plate of sardines that she takes on for her first entrance.)

A POPPY. (Over tannoy.) Standing by, please. Music cue one...

(Enter LLOYD through the pass door.)

B LLOYD. Now what?

C TIM. We're just going up.

D LLOYD. We've been sitting there for an hour! They've gone quiet! They think someone's died!

E FREDERICK. I'm sorry, Lloyd. It's my fault. I was just saying a few words to everyone.

F LLOYD. Freddie, have you ever thought of having a brain transplant?

G FREDERICK. Sorry, sorry. Wrong moment. I see that.

H LLOYD. Anybody else have thoughts they feel they must communicate?

I POPPY. Well, not now, of course, but ...

J LLOYD. What?

K POPPY. I mean, you know, later...

L LLOYD. (To TIM, quietly, conscious that BROOKE has stopped meditating and started watching.) And you bought these flowers for Poppy?

M TIM. No... (Conscious that POPPY is watching) Well... yes...

N LLOYD. And you didn't buy any flowers for me?

O TIM. No... well... no...

P LLOYD. Tim, have you ever heard of such a thing as jealous rage?

Q TIM. Yes... well... yes...

R LLOYD. Then take ten pounds of your own money, Tim, and go out to the florists and buy some flowers for me!

S TIM. Lloyd, we're just going up! I've got to run the show!

T LLOYD. Never mind the show. Concentrate on the floral arrangements. Bought them for Poppy! You two could have Freddie's old brain. You could have half each.

(Exit LLOYD through the pass door. POPPY sobs.)

U FREDERICK. Oh dear.

NOISES OFF

A BELINDA. Don't cry, Poppy, love.
B SELSDON. Just get the old bus on the road.
C POPPY. (Over tannoy, tearfully.) Standing by, please. Elecs stand by.
D GARRY. (To himself.) ~~What~~ ^{And I!} (He hammers his fist against the back of the set in frustration.)
E POPPY. Quiet backstage!

(She waits for GARRY to subside, then gives an involuntary noisy sob herself.)

F BELINDA. Hush, love.
G POPPY. (Over tannoy, tearfully.) Music cue one go. (The introductory music for Nothing On.) Tabs going up...

Chunk 1

[Note: the act that follows is a somewhat condensed version of the one we saw rehearsed.]

(As the curtain rises the telephone is ringing.)

(DOTTY makes her entrance.) — (Enter from the service quarters MRS. CLACKETT, carrying a plate of sardines.)

H MRS. CLACKETT. It's no good you going on...

(There is a sound of scattered applause.) — (She pauses a beat to acknowledge the applause.)

I MRS. CLACKETT. I can't open sardines and answer the phone. I've only got one pair of feet.

NOISES OFF

(A small laugh.) — (Puts the sardines down on the telephone table by the sofa and picks up the phone.)

(SELSDON, BELINDA and FREDERICK express silent relief that the show has at last started, so all their problems are over. They subside onto the backstage chairs.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. Hello... Yes, but there's no one here, love... No, Mr. Brent's not here... He lives here, yes, but he don't live here now because he lives in Spain... Mr. Philip Brent, that's right... The one who writes the plays, that's him, only now he writes them in Spain... No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here... Am I in Spain? No, I'm not in Spain, dear. I look after the house for them, but I go home at one o'clock on Wednesday, only I've got a nice plate of sardines to put my feet up with, because it's the royal what's it called on the telly — the royal you know — where's the paper, then...

(She searches in the newspaper.)

B MRS. CLACKETT. ... And if it's to do with letting the house then you'll have to ring the house-agents, because they're the agents for the house... Squire, Squire, Hackham and who's the other one...? No, they're not in Spain, they're next to the phone in the study. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on, I'll go and look.

(TIM puts his raincoat on, takes out his wallet, checks his money, and exits to the dressing rooms.)

(BELINDA points out to the others that GARRY is banging his head softly against the set again.)

(FREDERICK puts the whisky down on his chair and goes across to GARRY. BELINDA watches apprehensively as FREDERICK gives GARRY's arm a silently sympathetic squeeze, and smilingly puts his fingers to his lips to remind him to be quiet. GARRY shakes him off indignantly.)

(BELINDA hurries across to draw FREDERICK off.)

(FREDERICK cannot understand what he has done to cause offence. He demonstrates what he did by giving GARRY's arm another friendly squeeze.)

(GARRY drops his props and

NOISES OFF

threatens to hit FREDERICK.)

(FREDERICK takes shelter behind BROOKE, who is now waiting for her entrance. GARRY chases him round and round her.)

(FREDERICK hurriedly puts his handkerchief to his nose.)

(BELINDA urges GARRY to the front door for his entrance.)

Chunk 2

(BROOKE makes her entrance.) — (Enter VICKI through the front door.)

(FREDERICK looks in his handkerchief, and comes over faint.)

(DOTTY has to put her arm round him to help him to a chair.)

(As GARRY turns back to collect the flight bag he gets a fleeting glimpse of this.)

(As GARRY comes through the service quarters he takes another look.)

(She replaces the receiver.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. Always the same, isn't it. Soon as you take the weight off your feet, down it all comes on your head.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, still holding the newspaper.)

(The sound of a key in the lock.)

(The front door opens. On the doorstep stands ROGER, holding a cardboard box.)

B ROGER. ... I have a house-keeper, yes, but this is her afternoon off.

(Enter VICKI through the front door.)

C ROGER. So we've got the place entirely to ourselves.

(ROGER goes back and brings in a flight bag, and closes the front door.)

D ROGER. I'll just check.

(He opens the door to the service quarters. VICKI gazes round.)

NOISES OFF

A ROGER. Hello? Anyone at home?

(ROGER closes the door.)

B ROGER. No, there's no one here. So what do you think?

C VICKI. All these doors!

D ROGER. Oh, only a handful, really.

(He opens the various doors one after another to demonstrate.)

E ROGER. Study... Kitchen... And a self-contained service flat for the housekeeper.

F VICKI. Terrific. And which one's the ... ?

G ROGER. What?

H VICKI. You know ...

I ROGER. The usual offices? Through here.

(He opens the downstairs bathroom door for her.)

J VICKI. Fantastic.

(Exit VICKI into the bathroom.)

(He stamps on FREDERICK's foot and reenters.)

(FREDERICK struggles with damaged foot and bleeding nose. DOTTY gets down on her knees to examine the foot.)

(GARRY keeps appearing at the various doors, trying to see what DOTTY and FREDERICK are up to.)

(BELINDA makes things worse by trying to move DOTTY's head to a less suggestive position.)

(GARRY comes off and rushes at FREDERICK and DOTTY. BELINDA pushes him back on stage.)

NOISES OFF

(BELINDA just manages to detach DOTTY from her ministrations and get her back on stage for her entrance.)

Chunk 3

(BELINDA tries to explain to FREDERICK that DOTTY has taken a fancy to him. FREDERICK can't understand a word of it.)

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study, without the newspaper.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. Now I've lost the sardines...

(Mutual surprise. ROGER closes the door to the bathroom, and slips the champagne back into the bag.)

B ROGER. I'm sorry. I thought there was no one here.

C MRS. CLACKETT. I'm not here. I'm off, only it's the royal you know, where they wear those hats, and the... all covered in fruit, and who are you?

D ROGER. I'm from the agents. I just dropped in to... go into a few things.

... push the bathroom door open.) — (The bathroom door opens.)

E ROGER. Well, to check some of the measurements...

(ROGER closes it.)

(And again.) — (The bathroom door opens.)

F ROGER. Do one or two odd

NOISES OFF

FL jobs...

(BELINDA suddenly points out that SELSDON has discovered the whisky that FREDERICK left on the chair. SELSDON opens the bottle, smells it, closes it again, and then goes off to the dressing rooms with it.)

(ROGER closes it.)

A ROGER. Oh, and a client. I'm showing a prospective tenant over the house.

(The bathroom door opens.)

B VICKI. What's wrong with this door?

(ROGER closes it.)

C ROGER. She's thinking of renting it. Her interest is definitely aroused.

(Enter VICKI from bathroom.)

D VICKI. That's not the bedroom.

E ROGER. The bedroom? No, that's the downstairs bathroom and WC suite. And this is the housekeeper, Mrs. Crockett.

F MRS. CLACKETT. Clackett, dear, Clackett. Only now I've lost the newspaper.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, carrying the sardines.)

G ROGER. I'm sorry about this.

Chunk 4

(DOTTY makes her exit ... puts down the sardines, shaking her head with misery, and begins to weep.)

NOISES OFF

(FREDERICK is very agitated by this. He takes the sardines away from DOTTY, pats her on the shoulder, gives her a handkerchief, realizes that it's not in a state to be seen, puts it hurriedly away, pushes the sardines back into her hand, and edges her towards the door.)

A VICKI. That's all right. We don't want the television, do we?

B ROGER. Only she's been in the family for generations.

C VICKI. Great. Come on, then. (She starts upstairs.) I've got to be in Basingstoke by four.

D ROGER. Perhaps we should just have a glass of champagne.

E VICKI. We'll take it up with us.

F ROGER. Yes. Well ...

G VICKI. And don't let my files out of sight.

H ROGER. No. Only ...

I VICKI. What?

J ROGER. Well ...

K VICKI. Her?

L ROGER. She has been in the family for generations.

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study, with the newspaper but without the sardines.)

M MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines ...

(At the last moment DOTTY realizes she hasn't got the newspaper.)

(FREDERICK runs and fetches it from the props table. DOTTY realizes that she is still holding the sardines, and hurls them to FREDERICK just in time...

... to make her entrance.)

NOISES OFF

Sardines ... It's not for me to say, of course, dear, only I will just say this: don't think twice about it — take the plunge. You'll really enjoy it here.

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms leading a bewildered SELSDON, but without the whisky.)

A VICKI. Oh. Great.

B MRS. CLACKETT. (To VICKI.) And we'll enjoy having you. (To ROGER.) Won't we, love?

C ROGER. Oh. Well.

D VICKI. Terrific.

E MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines, sardines. Can't put your feet up on an empty stomach, can you.

(They turn to watch her anxiously as she makes her exit.) — (Exit MRS. CLACKETT to service quarters.)

F VICKI. You see? She thinks it's great. She's even making us sardines!

G ROGER. Well...

H VICKI. I think she's terrific.

I ROGER. Terrific.

J VICKI. So which way?

K ROGER. (Picking up the

(They turn to watch her anxiously as she makes her exit.)

Chunks

(SELSDON seizes the opportunity to depart again to the dressing rooms.)

(BELINDA runs after SELSDON. FREDERICK goes to run after her, but turns anxiously back to reassure DOTTY.)

(But DOTTY is now smiling bravely, and telling FREDERICK that she has pulled herself together, thanks to him.)

A VICKI. Up here?

B ROGER. Yes, yes.

C VICKI. In here?

D ROGER. Yes, yes, yes.

(As GARRY comes through the door —
of the mezzanine bathroom he catches a fleeting glimpse of the kiss.)

F VICKI. (Off.) It's another bathroom.

(They reappear.)

G ROGER. No, no, no.

H VICKI. Always trying to get me into bathrooms.

I ROGER. I mean in here.

(He nods at the next door — the first along the gallery. VICKI leads the way in.)

(ROGER follows.)

J VICKI. Oh, black sheets!

(GARRY takes the sheet from VICKI.) — (She produces one.)

A ROGER. It's the airing cupboard ...

(GARRY hurls the sheet at FREDERICK and DOTTY. — This one, this one. He goes back on stage.)

(He drops the bag and box and struggles nervously to open the second door along the gallery, the bedroom.)

B VICKI. Oh, you're in a real state! You can't even get the door open.

(Exeunt ROGER and VICKI into the bedroom.)

(The sound of a key in the lock, and the front door opens. On the doorstep stands PHILIP, carrying a cardboard box.)

C PHILIP. ... No, it's Mrs. Clackett's afternoon off, remember.

(Enter FLAVIA carrying a flight bag like GARRY's.)

D FLAVIA. Home!

E PHILIP. Home, sweet home!

F FLAVIA. Dear old house!

G PHILIP. Just waiting for us to come back!

Chunk 6

(Enter SELSDON from the dressing rooms. He asks DOTTY for the whisky.)

But DOTTY is distracted by GARRY, who silently but forcefully...

NOISES OFF

fully explains to her that he will no longer tolerate these furtive meetings with FREDERICK.)

(SELSDON tries urgently to get the whisky off GARRY and DOTTIE as they quarrel.)

(GARRY and DOTTIE both turn on him in fury.)

(GARRY pleads with DOTTIE — kneels — weeps — hangs on to her plate of sardines.)

(DOTTIE breaks away from GARRY and goes to make her entrance. SELSDON points out that she is still holding the whisky.

GARRY takes it off her as she makes her entrance.)

Chunk 7

(SELSDON tries to get the whisky off GARRY, but GARRY turns to ascend the platform for his entrance.)

A FLAVIA. It's rather funny, though, creeping in like this for our wedding anniversary!

(PHILIP picks up the bag and box and ushers FLAVIA towards the stairs.)

B PHILIP. There is something to be said for being a tax exile.

C FLAVIA. Leave those!

(He drops the bag and box and kisses her. She flees upstairs, laughing, and he after her.)

D PHILIP. Sh!

E FLAVIA. What?

F PHILIP. Inland Revenue may hear us!

(They creep to the bedroom door.)

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the service quarters carrying a fresh plate of sardines.)

G MRS. CLACKETT. (To herself.) What I did with that first lot of sardines I shall never know.

(She puts the sardines on the telephone table and sits on the sofa.)

NOISES OFF

A PHILIP and FLAVIA. (Looking down from the gallery.) Mrs. Clackett!

(GARRY looks around for something to do with the whisky, and gives it to BROOKE.

(MRS. CLACKETT jumps up.)

BROOKE peers at it, no idea what she's supposed to do with it.

B MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, you give me a turn! My heart jumped right out of my boots!

C PHILIP. So did mine! (He puts it down on the steps, right in front of SELSDON, in order to undress for her entrance.

D FLAVIA. We thought you'd gone! While her back is turned SELSDON snatches it up and conceals it.)

E MRS. CLACKETT. I thought you was in Spain!

F PHILIP. We are! We are!

G FLAVIA. You haven't seen us!

(SELSDON demonstrates to BROOKE pulling a chain. BROOKE peers uncomprehendingly.)

H PHILIP. We're not here!

I MRS. CLACKETT. You'll want your things, look. (She indicates the bag and box.)

J PHILIP. Oh. Yes. Thanks.

(Exit SELSDON to the dressing rooms with the whisky.)

(He comes downstairs, and picks up the bag and box.)

K MRS. CLACKETT. (To FLAVIA.) Oh, and that bed hasn't been aired, love.

NOISES OFF

A FLAVIA. I'll get a hot water bottle.

chunk 8
(BELINDA makes her exit.) — (Exit FLAVIA into the mezzanine bathroom.)

(BELINDA looks urgently round for SELSDON, then makes drinking gestures interrogatively to BROOKE. BROOKE points towards the dressing rooms and repeats SELSDON's incomprehensible gesture of pulling a chain. Exit BELINDA towards the dressing room.)

(GARRY, still on the platform, tries to see what DOTTY and FREDERICK are doing, but is fetched back by BROOKE...)

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT and PHILIP into the study. PHILIP is still holding the bag and box... for his entrance.) —

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still dressed, tying his tie.)

G ROGER. Yes, but I could hear voices!

(Enter VICKI from the bedroom in her underwear.)

H VICKI. Voices? What sort of voices?

I ROGER. People's voices. (FREDERICK runs to the dressing rooms exit to deal with this,

NOISES OFF

but is brought back by BELINDA and forced to sit down.)

A VICKI. (Looks over the banisters.) Oh, look, she's opened our sardines.

(She moves to go downstairs. ROGER grabs her.)

B ROGER. Come back!

C VICKI. What?

D ROGER. I'll fetch them! You can't go downstairs like that.

E VICKI. Why not?

F ROGER. Mrs. Crackett.

G VICKI. Mrs. Crackett?

H ROGER. One has certain obligations.

chunk 9
... to make her entrance.) — (Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study. She is carrying the first plate of sardines.)

I MRS. CLACKETT. (To herself.) Sardines here. Sardines there. It's like a Sunday school outing.

(BROOKE makes her exit.) — (ROGER pushes VICKI through the first available door, which happens to be the linen cupboard.)

J MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, you're

look for SELSDON, then runs back to remind her...

A ROGER. Yes, still poking around, are you? well, still around.

B MRS. CLACKETT. In the airing cupboard, were you?

C ROGER. No no.

... to open the linen cupboard door.)

(The linen cupboard door begins to open. He slams it shut.)

D ROGER. Well, just checking the sheets and pillow cases. Going through the inventory.

(He starts downstairs.)

E ROGER. Mrs. Blackett...

F MRS. CLACKETT. Clackett, dear, Clackett.

(She puts down the sardines beside the other sardines.)

G ROGER. Mrs. Clackett. Is there anyone else in the house, Mrs. Clackett?

H MRS. CLACKETT. I haven't seen no one, dear.

I ROGER. I thought I heard voices.

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms. She demonstrates that SELSDON has locked himself in somewhere.)

(BELINDA gestures hastily to TIM in passing to explain the situation, and exits to the dressing rooms.)

(TIM asks FREDERICK where she is going.)

(FREDERICK demonstrates raising the elbow.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. Voices? There's no voices here, love.

B ROGER. I must have imagined it.

C PHILIP. (Off) Oh good Lord above!

(ROGER, with his back to her, picks up both plates of sardines.)

D ROGER. I beg your pardon?

E MRS. CLACKETT. Oh good Lord above, the study door's open.

(She crosses and closes it. ROGER looks out of the window.)

F ROGER. There's another car outside! That's not Mr. Hackham's, is it? Or Mr. Dudley's?

(Exit ROGER through the front door, holding both plates of sardines.)

(Enter FLAVIA from the mezzanine bathroom, carrying a hot water bottle. She sees the linen cupboard door swinging open as she passes, pushes it shut, and turns the key.)

G FLAVIA. Nothing but flapping

Chunk 10

(PHILIP breaks off from the conversation to say

(TIM hands BELINDA the flowers, and dashes out to the dressing rooms.)

(BELINDA gives the flowers to FREDERICK and fetches the fireman's axe from the fire point. She demonstrates using it to break a door down.)

(BELINDA is going to rush off to the dressing rooms with the axe when POPPY reminds her that she has an entrance coming up. BELINDA runs up on to the platform, finds that she is still holding the axe, and gives it to BROOKE.)

(But before BELINDA can explain what to do with the axe, she has to make her entrance.)

(GARRY advances threateningly upon FREDERICK and points suspiciously at the flowers he is holding.)

NOISES OFF

G doors in this house.

(FREDERICK has to hand GARRY the flowers in order to make his entrance.) — (Enter from the study PHILIP, holding a tax demand and its envelope.)

(BROOKE comes down from the platform and asks GARRY what she is supposed to do with the axe. GARRY takes it thoughtfully and puts the flowers into her hands. BELINDA, coming down from the platform to go off after SELSDON, stops at the sight of GARRY with the axe, as he looks at it and feels the edge. He looks at the door through which FREDERICK will exit. BELINDA looks at the door likewise.

GARRY looks back at the axe. BELINDA looks back at the axe. GARRY begins to smile an evil smile. Horrified, BELINDA quickly takes the flowers from BROOKE and sends her off in her place to find SELSDON, then tries to get the axe away from GARRY. GARRY holds it behind his back. BELINDA, still holding the flowers, puts her arms round GARRY, trying to reach the axe.)

(DOTTY appears — (Exit MRS. CLACKETT to the service quarters.)

just in time to see BELINDA with her arms round GARRY.)

(POPPY urges BELINDA upstairs

E PHILIP. I didn't get this! I'm not here. I'm in Spain. But if I

NOISES OFF

E L didn't get it I didn't open it. for her entrance. BELINDA flees up to the platform and opens the door to make her entrance. — (Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom.

She makes one desperate effort to grab the dress from the backstage hook where it is hanging, then gives up, and enters still carrying the flowers instead.

— She is holding flowers instead of the dress that VICKI arrived in.)

A FLAVIA. Darling, I never had a dress...

... or rather a bunch of flowers like this, did I?

BELINDA, on stage, has to vary the line.)

B PHILIP. (Abstracted.) Didn't you?

(DOTTY launches herself upon GARRY. He produces the axe in explanation of his behavior. DOTTY snatches it from him, and raises it to hit him.)

C FLAVIA. I shouldn't buy anything as tarty as this... Oh, it's not something you gave me, is it?

D PHILIP. I should never have touched it.

E FLAVIA. No, it's lovely.

F PHILIP. Stick it down. Put it back. Never saw it.

(Exit PHILIP into study.)

G FLAVIA. Well, I'll put it in the attic, with all the other things you gave me that are too precious to wear.

Chunk 12

Chunk 11

and raises it once again to hit him.

BELINDA appears — (Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs and snatches the axe from DOTTY...

... as GARRY makes his entrance.) — (Enter ROGER through the front door, still carrying both plates of sardines.)

A ROGER. All right, all right... Now the study door's open again! What's going on?

(He puts the sardines down — one plate on the telephone table, where it was before, one near the front door — and goes towards the study.)

... no knocking — ROGER. Knocking! because BROOKE is still off.)

(GARRY on stage repeats the line.)

ROGER. Knocking...! Knocking...? Upstairs! (He runs upstairs.)

(BELINDA realizes what's wrong, and knocks on the set with a prop.) — (Knocking.)

ROGER. Oh my God, there's something in the airing cupboard!

(He unlocks it and opens it.

(BROOKE doesn't make her entrance — Looks for VICKI.)

because she is still off in the dressing rooms.)

(GARRY comes through the linen cupboard door to look for BROOKE. He improvises.)

ROGER. Is it you...? I mean, you know, hidden under all the sheets and towels in here... I can't just stand here and, you know, indefinitely ...

(BELINDA hands the flowers to FREDERICK and runs off to the dressing rooms, still holding the axe.)

POPPY. (Reading.) Of course it's me! You put me in here! In the dark! With all black sheets and things!

VICKI. Why did I lock the door? Why did you lock the door!

ROGER. But, darling, why did you lock the door?

ROGER. I didn't lock the door!

(Enter LLOYD like a whirlwind through the pass door. He demands silently to know what's going on. FREDERICK tries to explain, while POPPY and GARRY continue to play the scene.)

VICKI. Someone locked the door!

ROGER. Anyway, we can't stand here like this.

(FREDERICK hands LLOYD the flowers to make ready for his entrance.)

— chunk 13

NOISES OFF

A VICKI. Like what?

C VICKI. OK, I'll take it off.

(LLOYD shoves the flowers into DOTTY's hands to get rid of them, and indicates to the terrified POPPY that she is to go on for BROOKE.)

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms with BROOKE, just in time for her to see LLOYD tearing POPPY's skirt off.)

(GARRY stands half on and half off, waiting for BROOKE. At the sight of BROOKE, LLOYD abandons POPPY, and instead urges BROOKE upstairs for the next scene, for which she is now late.)

(GARRY improvises.)

(BROOKE makes her entrance through the linen cupboard door... and starts to play the previous scene that she missed.)

(LLOYD despairs at BROOKE's inflexibility. DOTTY asks LLOYD if the flowers are really for her.

B ROGER. In your underwear.

D ROGER. In here, in here!

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

(Enter PHILIP from the study, holding the tax demand, the envelope, and a tube of glue.)

E PHILIP. Darling, this glue. Is it the sort that you can never get unstuck ... ? Oh, Mrs. Clackett's made us some sardines.

(Exit PHILIP into the study with the tax demand, envelope, glue and one of the plates of sardines from the telephone table.)

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, holding the hot water bottle. He looks up and down the landing.)

F ROGER. A hot water bottle! I didn't put it there!

I didn't put this hot water bottle. I mean, you know, I'm standing out here, with the hot water bottle in my hands...

G VICKI. Of course it's me! You put me in here! In the dark! With all black sheets and things!

H ROGER. Someone in the bath-

NOISES OFF

He pushes them back to her absently. DOTTY is very touched. She gives him a grateful kiss...

...just as GARRY appears to see it.)

(Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.)

A VICKI. Why did I lock the door? Why did you lock the door!

B ROGER. (Off.) Don't panic! Don't panic!

(GARRY moves closer to see, and cuts three pages of script. He panics, and stands for a moment unable to think where he is or what he is doing, then enters through the airing cupboard instead of the bedroom.)

(Enter ROGER, and goes downstairs.)

(Everyone backstage panics as well: 'Where are we?')

C ROGER. There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this. I'll fetch Mrs. Splottchett and she'll tell us what's happening. You wait here... You can't stand here looking like that ... Wait in the study... Study, study, study!

(POPPY desperately turns over the pages of the book to find the new place, while everyone else looks over her shoulder.)

(Enter TIM from the dressing rooms, leading SELSDON, who is holding his trousers up. TIM is holding the whisky, and the axe embedded in a shattered section of the door of the Gents. He hands the whisky to FREDERICK.)

(VICKI opens the study door. There's a roar of exasperation

- chunk
14

and goes to make his entrance, then realizes that he is holding the whisky instead of his props.

FREDERICK gives a cry—
of alarm, claps his hand over his mouth, then realizes he was supposed to give a cry anyway, drops the whisky under the chairs, grabs his props, and...
... makes his entrance.

(TIM gives the axe to LLOYD and snatches the flowers from DOTTY, who snatches them right back, leaving TIM with only one. He hands this to LLOYD, who hands it to BROOKE. She peers at it as it keels sadly over, then hurls it on to the floor and runs out to the dressing rooms.)

(LLOYD gives more money to TIM, who puts his raincoat on and exits wearily to the dressing rooms.)

from PHILIP off. She turns and flees.)

A VICKI. Roger! There's a strange figure in there! Where are you?

(There is another cry from PHILIP, off.)

(Exit VICKI blindly through the front door.)

(Enter PHILIP from the study. He is holding the tax demand in his right hand, and one of the plates of sardines in his left.)

B PHILIP. Darling, I know this is going to sound silly, but ...

(He struggles to get the tax demand unstuck from his fingers, encumbered by the plate of sardines.)

(Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, carrying various pieces of bric-a-brac.)

C FLAVIA. Darling, if we're not going to bed I'm going to clear out the attic.

D PHILIP. I can't come to bed! I'm glued to a tax demand!

A FLAVIA. Darling, why don't you put the sardines down?

(PHILIP puts the plate of sardines down on the table. But when he takes his hand away the sardines come with it.)

B PHILIP. Darling, I'm stuck to the sardines!

C FLAVIA. Darling, don't play the fool. Get that bottle marked poison in the downstairs loo. That eats through anything.

(Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor.)

b PHILIP. (Flapping the tax demand.) I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.

(Exit PHILIP into the downstairs bathroom.)

—Chunk
15

E PHILIP. But this is ridiculous.

(FREDERICK repeats the cue and slams the door again.)

(They all suddenly realize that this is SELSDON's cue. They rush him to the window. He raises his arms to open the window and his trousers fall down.

(Exit PHILIP into the downstairs bathroom.)

NOISES OFF

They bundle him on as best they can.) _____

(The window opens, and through it appears an elderly BURGLAR.)

(They watch him. Then GARRY snatches the flowers from DOTTIE, and hurls them on the floor. FREDERICK reproachfully picks them up, and hands them back to DOTTIE.)

(GARRY grabs the axe from LLOYD and advances upon FREDERICK. DOTTIE hands the flowers to BELINDA as to be able to throw her arms protectively round FREDERICK. BELINDA dumps the flowers on POPPY's desk so as to be able to snatch FREDERICK away from DOTTIE. DOTTIE snatches him back. They snatch him back and forth, like two dogs with a bone, then push him aside and face up to each other. DOTTIE grabs the axe from GARRY to use on BELINDA. But they are distracted because...

SELSDON appears at the front door.) _____

NOISES OFF

A SELSDON. Yes? Yes? 'They all say the same thing...?'

B POPPY. 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

C SELSDON. Hard to what?

D OMNES. (Shouting.) 'Adjust to retirement!'

(SELSDON goes back on.) — E BURGLAR. It's hard to assess a requirement.

(SELSDON makes his exit.) — (Exit BURGLAR into the study.) — chunk 16

(DOTTIE is about to resume her attack upon BELINDA when she realizes that GARRY is already making his entrance.) — (Enter ROGER from the service quarters.)

F ROGER. ... And the prospective tenant naturally wishes to know if there is any previous history of paranormal phenomena.

(DOTTIE hands the axe panic-stricken to BELINDA and makes her own entrance.) — (Enter MRS. CLACKETT, holding another plate of sardines.)

(BROOKE enters from the dressing rooms, wearing a leopard-skin overcoat and stuffing possessions into an overnight bag. She picks up her single flower from the floor, hurls it down again in front

E BURGLAR. Where's his desk? No, they all say the same thing...

(He pockets some small item.)

(He opens the front door to get a

G MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, yes, dear, it's all nice and paranormal.

H ROGER. I mean, has anything ever dematerialized before? Has

of LLOYD, and storms out to the dressing rooms.)

H (LLOYD subsides despairingly into a chair.)

FREDERICK indicates that he will go after BROOKE. BELINDA insists that she will do it. She runs towards the dressing rooms with the axe, sees LLOYD taking a despairing swig of whisky, and runs back to take the bottle away from him.)

(FREDERICK smooths his hair and buttons his jacket, and exits with determination towards the dressing rooms.)

(BELINDA looks to see how much LLOYD has drunk, puts it out of his reach, runs towards the dressing rooms, realizes SELSDON has picked up the whisky, and runs back.)

(Enter TIM from the dressing rooms with a third, very small bunch of flowers. He gives them to LLOYD, but BELINDA shows LLOYD SELSDON concealing the whisky about his person, and LLOYD goes to deal with him, then comes back to give BELINDA the flowers so as to leave his hands free. SELSDON quickly conceals

anything ever ... (He sees the television set on the sofa.) ... flown about?)

(MRS. CLACKETt puts the sardines down on the telephone table, moves the television set back, and closes the front door.)

A MRS. CLACKETt. Flown about? No, the things move themselves on their own two feet, just like they do in any house.

B ROGER. I'd better warn the prospective tenant. She is inspecting the study.

(He opens the study door and then closes it again.)

C ROGER. There's a man in there!

D MRS. CLACKETt. No, no, there's no one in the house, love.

E ROGER. (Opening the study door.) Look! Look!

the whisky in the fire bucket.)

(LLOYD searches SELSDON. **A** ROGER. He's... searching for SELSDON demonstrates that his hands are empty.)

(BELINDA hands the axe to TIM and gives LLOYD a grateful kiss for the flowers.)

(Enter FREDERICK triumphantly from the dressing rooms, bringing a reluctant BROOKE back, still in her overcoat and carrying the holdall.)

(He closes the study door, and looks round the living room. He sees the sardines on the telephone table.)

V ROGER. Oh my God.

C MRS. CLACKETt. Now what?

F ROGER. There!

G MRS. CLACKETt. Where?

H ROGER. The sardines!

I MRS. CLACKETt. Oh, the sardines.

J ROGER. You can see the sardines.

K MRS. CLACKETt. I can see

— chunk
17

(BROOKE is amazed and even more upset to see that the flowers are in fact for POPPY. She puts her overcoat back on and turns to walk out again.)

(LLOYD stops her, and looks desperately round for some other token of his affection to give her instead of the flowers.)

L the sardines.

(ROGER touches them cautiously, then picks up the plate.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. I can see the way they're going, too.

B ROGER. I'm not letting these sardines out of my hand. But where is my prospective tenant?

(He goes upstairs, holding the sardines.)

C MRS. CLACKETT. I'm going to be opening sardines all night, in and out of here like a cuckoo on a rock.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the service quarters.)

D ROGER. Vicki! Vicki!

(Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.)

(Enter BURGLAR from the study, carrying an armful of silver cups, etc.)

E BURGLAR No, I miss the violence. I miss having other human beings around to terrify.

(He dumps the silverware on the

out of BROOKE's hands.) **E** sofa, and exits into the study.)

(LLOYD takes it back and hands it to BROOKE. FREDERICK takes it away again to show it to DOTTY, turning her round to show her that it came from the fire bucket, just as...

A ROGER. Where's she gone? Vicki?

... GARRY makes his exit — (Exit ROGER into the linen cupboard, still holding the sardines.)

(GARRY leans down from the platform and tips the plate of sardines he is carrying over DOTTY's head. Everyone, even BROOKE, half in and half out of her coat, watches, hands helplessly upraised.)

B BURGLAR. It's nice to hear a bit of shouting and screaming around you. All this silence gets you down.

(GARRY makes his entrance.) — (Enter ROGER from the linen cupboard, still holding the sardines.)

(DOTTY puts the whisky down on the steps to deal with the sardines on her head.)

C ROGER. (Calls.) Vicki! Vicki! (Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

(GARRY makes his exit — then picks up the whisky and takes a swig, very pleased with himself.)

D BURGLAR I'm going to end up talking to myself...

(While GARRY stands on the platform with his head back, DOTTY climbs on a chair and ties his shoelaces together. (Exit the BURGLAR into study, unaware of ROGER.)

Chunk 18

... SELSDON to make his entrance.)

(LLOYD gives the whisky to BROOKE, kisses her, and tries to persuade her out of her overcoat while she peers at the bottle.)

(FREDERICK takes the whisky

Everyone, even BROOKE, watches, horrified.)

(Enter PHILIP from the downstairs bathroom. His right hand is still stuck to the tax demand, his left to the plate of sardines.)

A PHILIP. Darling, this stuff that eats through anything. It eats through trousers!

(He examines holes burnt in the front of them.)

B PHILIP. Darling, if it eats through trousers, you don't think it goes on and eats through... Listen, darling. I think I'd better get these trousers off! (He begins to do so, as best he can.) Darling, I think I can feel it! I think it's eating through... absolutely everything...!

(GARRY puts the whisky down and...

... makes his entrance — (Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still holding the sardines.)

C ROGER. There's something evil in this house.

(PHILIP pulls up his trousers.)

D PHILIP. (Aside.) The Inland Revenue!

E ROGER. (Sees PHILIP, frightened.) He's back!

(Everyone tries to see what's

A PHILIP. I must go. happening on stage, also half delighted and half shocked.)

B ROGER. Stay!

C PHILIP. I won't, thank you.

D ROGER. Speak!

E PHILIP. Only in the presence of my lawyer.

(LLOYD, DOTTY, and BELINDA all take swigs from it in turns, absently, as they follow events on stage.)

(DOTTY holds up her hand to get attention to the events on stage. She demonstrates that GARRY is going to have to run downstairs.)

F ROGER. Only in the presence of your...? Hold on. You're not from the other world!

G PHILIP. Yes, yes — Marbella!

H ROGER. You're some kind of intruder!

I PHILIP. Well, nice to meet you.

(He waves goodbye with his right hand, then sees the tax demand on it, and hurriedly puts it away behind his back.)

J PHILIP. I mean, have a sardine.

(He offers the sardines on his left hand. His trousers, unsupported, fall down.)

K ROGER. No, you're not! You're some kind of sex maniac! You've done something to Vicki! I'm going to come straight

downstairs...

(The sound of GARRY falling downstairs. — (ROGER falls downstairs.) Even SELSDON can hear it.)

(No sound from the stage. Everyone listens, and as they listen the laughter dies away.)

(FREDERICK, on stage, improvises a line.) — (No reply.)

A FREDERICK. Are you all right?

(BELINDA turns to DOTTY in horror — she's killed him! BELINDA opens the study door to go to GARRY. LLOYD restrains her.

At the sound of GARRY's voice ... they all relax.

Chunk 20
(LLOYD takes another swig of whisky.)

(FREDERICK makes his exit — trousers round his ankles, handkerchief pressed to his nose. He looks into his handkerchief, and comes over faint. BELINDA and DOTTY catch him.)

(LLOYD remembers that BROOKE has an entrance coming up. He attempts to peel the overcoat off

her. BROOKE, recoiling from this, reverses into BELINDA and DOTTY, staggering under the weight of FREDERICK, and loses her lenses.)

(BELINDA and DOTTY drop FREDERICK and turn to deal with this next problem.)

(GARRY repeats the cue.) — A ROGER. And what's

happened to her no one knows!

(GARRY appears, still hobbled, in the study doorway, and furiously repeats the cue yet again.) — B ROGER. No one knows!

(BELINDA, DOTTY, and LLOYD guide BROOKE, blinded and confused, and still wearing her overcoat, to the window for her entrance, cracking her head against the set on the way.)

(They watch as BROOKE falls headlong over the sofa onstage.) — (Enter VICKI through the window.)

Chunk 21

C VICKI. There's a man lurking in the undergrowth!

D ROGER. (Into the phone.) Sorry... the young woman has reappeared. (Hand over phone.) Are you all right?

E VICKI. No, he almost saw me!

(SELSDON suggests to DOTTY that the lenses may be in her clothes.)

A ROGER. *(Into the phone.)* He almost saw her... Yes, but he's a burglar as well! He's taken our things!

B VICKI. *(Finds PHILIP's bag and box.)* The things are here.

C ROGER. *(Into the phone.)* So what am I saying? I'm saying, let's say no more about it. *(He puts the phone down.)* Well, put something on!

(SELSDON searches DOTTY's clothes. She can't understand what he's after.)

D VICKI. I haven't got anything!

E ROGER. There must be something in the bathroom!

(He picks up the box and bag and leads the way.)

F ROGER. Bring the sardines!

(She picks the sardines.)

(Exeunt ROGER and VICKI into the downstairs bathroom.)

(GARRY comes hobbling and raging off, his shoes still tied together. He gazes in amazement at the sight of DOTTY and SELSDON.)

(GARRY repeats the cue.) — **G** ROGER. Bring the sardines!

(LLOYD realizes, and rushes SELSDON on, as FREDERICK loads him with props.) —

(Enter the BURGLAR from the study, and dumps more booty.)

(GARRY moves to commit violence upon everyone in sight, but the state of his shoes prevents him from getting more than a step or two before he has to return...

✱ Chuck 22
(Exit the BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)

... to make his entrance.) — *(Enter VICKI holding the sardines and a white bathmat, and ROGER, carrying the box and bag, from the downstairs bathroom.)*

B VICKI. A bathmat?

C ROGER. Better than nothing!

D VICKI. I can't go around in front of our taxpayers wearing a bathmat!

(He leads the way upstairs.)

E ROGER. I'll look in the bedroom. You look in the other bathroom.

(GARRY makes his exit — and is amazed to see DOTTY now apparently embracing FREDERICK.) — *(Exit ROGER into the bedroom and VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom.)*

(GARRY starts downstairs to attack FREDERICK. But he is still hobbled, and in any case...

NOISES OFF

FREDERICK has to make his entrance.) — (Enter PHILIP through the front door.)

A PHILIP. Darling! Help! Where are you?

(BROOKE blindly makes her entrance.) —

(Enter VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

(LLOYD takes over the search of DOTTY's clothing. GARRY gazes in astonishment.)

B VICKI. Roger! Roger!

(Exit PHILIP hurriedly, unseen by VICKI, into the downstairs bathroom.)

(TIM enters from the dressing rooms, and hands LLOYD a cactus.)

C VICKI. There's someone in the bathroom now!

(VICKI runs towards the bedrooms, then stops.)

(FLAVIA watches this anxiously.) — **D** FLAVIA. (Off) Oh, darling, I'm finding some lovely things!

(VICKI turns and runs downstairs instead, as FLAVIA enters along the upstairs corridor, absorbed in the china tea service she is carrying.)

(VICKI exits hurriedly into the downstairs bathroom.)

E FLAVIA. Do you remember this china tea service —

(LLOYD hands the cactus to DOTTY without looking at it while he searches.)

(GARRY hobbles downstairs, takes the cactus from the distracted DOTTY, and rams it into LLOYD's bottom. Then he hobbles back upstairs, still holding the cactus.)

(LLOYD tries to pursue him...

NOISES OFF

... but stops with a cry of pain. — (VICKI screams, off.)

A FLAVIA. — that you gave me on the very first anniversary of our...?

(Enter VICKI from the downstairs bathroom. She stops at the sight of FLAVIA.)

B FLAVIA. Who are you?

C VICKI. Oh no — it's his wife and dependents! (She puts her hands over her face.)

(Enter PHILIP from the downstairs bathroom, still with his hands encumbered, holding the bathmat now as well, and keeping his trousers up with his elbows.)

D PHILIP. Excuse me, I think you've dropped your dress.

(FLAVIA gasps. PHILIP looks up at the gallery and sees her.)

E PHILIP. (To FLAVIA.) Where have you been? I've been going mad! Look at the state I'm in!

(He holds up his hands to show FLAVIA the state he is in, and his trousers fall down. The tea service slips from FLAVIA's horrified hands, and rains down

chunk 23

(GARRY puts the cactus down on the platform. He takes the ends of the black and white bed sheets that are hanging up outside the bedroom door, waiting for FREDERICK and BROOKE, and ties them together.)

on the floor of the living room below. PHILIP hurries towards the stairs, trousers round his ankles, his hands extended in supplication.)

A PHILIP. Darling, honestly!

(BROOKE makes her exit.) — (VICKI flees before him, comes face to face with FLAVIA, and takes refuge in the linen cupboard.)

(BROOKE begins to take off her overcoat.)

(GARRY picks up the cactus, but then has to hand it BROOKE. She peers at it, baffled, while...

... GARRY makes his entrance. —

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom, directly in PHILIP's path.)

(BROOKE comes down from the platform holding the cactus, then stops in amazement, overcoat half on and half off, at the sight of LLOYD lowering his trousers and DOTTY pulling needles out of his bottom.)

C ROGER. Here, put this sheet on for the moment while I see if there's something in the attic.

(GARRY makes his exit — and also watches the scene below in amazement. So does BELINDA.)

(ROGER leaves PHILIP with the sheet and exits along upstairs corridor.)

(PHILIP turns to go back downstairs.)

chunk 24 →

(Enter BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom, holding two gold taps.)

A BURGLAR. One pair gold taps...

(GARRY hobbles downstairs and takes the cactus from BROOKE for use against LLOYD again.)

(He stops at the sight of PHILIP.)

B BURGLAR. Oh, my Gawd!

C PHILIP. Who are you?

D BURGLAR. Me? Fixing the taps.

E PHILIP. Tax? Income tax?

F BURGLAR. That's right, governor. In come new taps ... out go old taps.

(Exit BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)

G PHILIP. Tax-inspectors everywhere!

H ROGER. (Off.) Here you are!

I PHILIP. The other one!

(Exit PHILIP into the bedroom, holding the bathmat in front of his face.)

... make his entrance. — (Enter ROGER along the upstairs

chunk 25 →

NOISES OFF

(LLOYD lowers his trousers again for DOTTY to resume operations.)

corridor, holding a holding VICKI's dress.)

A ROGER. I've found your dress! It came flying out of the attic at me!

(GARRY makes his exit... — (Exit ROGER into mezzanine bathroom.)

... and LLOYD hurriedly decides that he needs no further attention.)

(Enter PHILIP from the bedroom, trying to pull the bathmat off his head.)

B PHILIP. Darling! I've got her dress stuck to my head now!

(Enter ROGER from the mezzanine bathroom.)

(FREDERICK makes his exit — (Exit PHILIP into the bedroom.)

C ROGER. Another intruder! (Enter the BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom.)

D BURGLAR. Just doing the taps, governor.

E ROGER. Attacks? Not attacks on women?

F BURGLAR. Try anything, governor, but I'll do the taps on the bath first.

(FREDERICK Try anything, governor, but I'll do the taps on the bath first.

NOISES OFF

had left — all the rest of their stock is now on POPPY's desk.)

(Exit BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)

A ROGER. Sex maniacs everywhere! Where is Vickie...?

(LLOYD takes the cactus back and kisses it, with painful results, to present to BROOKE again.

(Exit ROGER into the downstairs bathroom.)

(Enter BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom, heading for the front door.)

(BROOKE hesitates. Finally she takes off her overcoat runs up the steps with the cactus.)

B BURGLAR. People everywhere! I'm off. A tax on women? I don't know, they'll put a tax on anything these days.

(Enter ROGER from the downstairs bathroom. The BURGLAR stops.)

C ROGER. If I can't find her, you're going to be in trouble, you see.

D BURGLAR. WC? I'll fix it.

(SELSDON makes his exit.) — (Exit BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom again.)

(BROOKE pushes the cactus into SELSDON's hands as she passes.)

E ROGER. Vickie...?

(There is a swirl of sheets as FREDERICK attempts to dress BROOKE in time for her entrance.)

Chunk 26

NOISES OFF

(FREDERICK and BROOKE make their separate entrances — (PHILIP attempts to enter from and discover that they are unable to because their sheets are attached to each other.)

(BELINDA, upstairs for her entrance, goes to disentangle them. So does SELSDON, but he and the cactus together makes things worse.)

(FREDERICK and BROOKE are half on and half off.) — (VICKI attempts to enter from the linen cupboard.)

(GARRY watches with pleasure, until LLOYD furiously drives him...

... on stage to hold the fort. — (Enter ROGER through the front door.)

Chunk 27 →

(GARRY improvises.) — A ROGER. No sheikh yet! I thought he was coming at four? I mean, it's nearly, you know, four now... Well, it's after three... Because I've been standing here for a good, you know, it seems like forever... What's the time now. It must be getting on for five...

(They pass to the sheet to FREDERICK, but he is too entangled to do anything with it.)

(BELINDA gestures desperately to LLOYD for the real SHEIKH's

NOISES OFF

robes. LLOYD passes them up to BELINDA, who hands them to FREDERICK...

... who is dragged on through the linen cupboard door — A ROGER. Oh, you're here already, hiding in the, anyway... And this is your charming wife? So you want to see over the house now, do you, Sheikh? Right. Well. Since you're upstairs already —

(FLAVIA takes the cactus away from SELSDON, then hurriedly hands it down to LLOYD so that...

(ROGER goes upstairs.)

... she can make her entrance. — (Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, carrying a vase.)

B FLAVIA. Him and his floozie! I'll break this over their heads! (LLOYD puts the cactus in a safe place on the chairs downstairs.)

(ROGER, PHILIP and VICKI go downstairs.)

(TIM puts on the bathmat as burnous, to go on as PHILIP's double, but gestures to LLOYD that he now has no sheet to wear, because it has vanished on stage with FREDERICK.)

(They both register despair.)

(LLOYD takes a despairing pull of whisky.)

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the service quarters, with another plate of sardines. ROGER advances to introduce her.)

C MRS. CLACKETT. No other hands, thank you, not in my

NOISES OFF

o L sardines, 'cause this time I'm eating them.

(ROGER ushers PHILIP and VICKI away from MRS. CLACKETT towards the mezzanine bathroom.)

He opens the door to the mezzanine bathroom.)

A ROGER. But in here...

FLAVIA. Arab sheets?

(BELINDA exits.) — *Chork 28* (Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.)

(LLOYD and TIM indicate the problem of the missing sheet to her.)

(She instantly indicates TIM's own raincoat.)

LLOYD puts it on TIM back to front.

They both gloomily inspect the result.)

(Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom.)

F MRS. CLACKETT. You give me that sheet, you devil!

(She seizes the nearest sheet, and it comes away in her hand to reveal VICKI.)

(FLAVIA comes downstairs

NOISES OFF

menacingly.)

(FREDERICK makes his exit — (Exit PHILIP discreetly into the dragging BROOKE backwards with him, since they are still attached to each other.)

(SELSDON improvises a line.

A BURGLAR. It's my little girl! So far as I could see before she went.

(BROOKE struggles back on as best she can.) —

B VICKI. Dad!

(FLAVIA stops.)

(TIM makes his entrance in back-to-front raincoat.) —

(Enter PHILIP from the study in amazement. [He is now played by a double — TIM.]

(FREDERICK has picked up the real burnous, and flaps it in desperation as he realizes that the robes are still somewhere on-stage.

C BURGLAR. Our little Vicki, that ran away from home, I thought I'd never see again!

D FLAVIA. (Threateningly.) So where's my other sheet?

All LLOYD can find now as a substitute is BROOKE's leopard-skin overcoat. He spins FREDERICK round to put it on him back to front, as he did with TIM and the raincoat. He then crams the burnous on FREDERICK's head, but FREDERICK has continued to turn, so it hangs over his face instead of his neck. LLOYD crams the SHEIKH's dark glasses on top of the burnous...

... and FREDERICK stumbles
blindly back on stage.)

Chunk 29

(Enter through the front
door a SHEIKH, played by
FREDERICK.)

(LLOYD picks up the whisky,
takes a weary swig, and is just
about to sit down on the cactus
when he springs up again
guiltily, because POPPY is stand-
ing agitatedly in front of him.

She takes the whisky away from
him and puts it down, desperate to
secure his full attention. She whis-
pers urgently to him. He can't
understand. She whispers again,
becoming more and more agi-
tated. He puts a hand to his ear,
meaning he can't hear.)

A SHEIKH. Ah! A house of
heavenly peace! I rent it!

B ROGER. Hold on, hold on... I
know that face! (Pulls the
SHEIKH's burnous aside to
reveal his face.) He isn't a sheikh!
He's that sex-maniac!

(They all fall upon him, and
reveal that his trousers are
around his ankles.)

C BURGLAR. And what
you're up to with my little girl
down there in Basingstoke I
won't ask. But I'll tell you one
thing, Vicki.

D VICKI. What's that, Dad?

E BURGLAR. When all around
is strife and uncertainty, there's
nothing like a...

(He dries.)

F POPPY. (Screams to LLOYD
in despair) I'm going to have a...

(SELSDON flings the front door
open.)

A SELSDON. Good old-
fashioned plate of what...?

B POPPY... baby!

(Everyone on stage gasps. Their
heads flick round, then back
again.)

(SELSDON goes back on stage.) G SELSDON. A good old-
fashioned plate of gravy!

(POPPY claps her hand over her
mouth, horrified.)

D LLOYD. (Whispers.) And cur-
tain, perhaps?

E POPPY. Oh...!

(She runs back to the corner to
bring the curtain down.) CURTAIN

(LLOYD subsides, defeated, on
to the cactus, and springs up
again in agony.)

CURTAIN

1 - lines

1 - actions/sounds

1 - props

1 - scene changes

1 - costumes

Cincinnati Playhouse -
Cincinnati

ACT III

The curtain goes up to reveal the tabs of the Municipal Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees. A half-empty whisky bottle nestles at the foot of them. The introductory music for Nothing On.

(As the music finishes the tabs begin to rise. A foot or two above stage level they stop uncertainly, hover for a moment, and fall again. Pause.

The introductory music starts again, and is then faded out. Enter TIM from the wings, in his dinner jacket, but with elements of the BURGLAR's gear visible beneath it, and the BURGLAR's cap on his head.)

A TIM. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. (He removes the BURGLAR's cap.) Welcome to the

Cincinnati Park Playhouse, for this evening's performance of *Nothing On*. We apologize for the slight delay in starting tonight, which is due to circumstances...

B BELINDA. (Off, screaming but indistinguishable.) Hands off Freddie! All right?

C DOTTIE. (Off, screaming but indistinguishable.) You're the one who's trying to get their hands on Freddie!

D TIM. ... due to circumstances...

E DOTTIE. (Off, screaming but indistinguishable.) You don't own him, you know!

F TIM. ... beyond our control... (The sound of a slap, off, and DOTTIE screams in pain, off.) ... and we would ask you to bear with us for a moment while we deal with her. With them. With the circumstances. I should perhaps say with tonight's performance of the play

our long and highly successful tour...

A POPPY. (Over Tannoy.) Ladies and gentlemen. We apologize for the delay in starting tonight, which is due to circumstances which have...

B BELINDA. (Over Tannoy.) Don't you dare! Don't you dare!

C POPPY. (Over Tannoy) ... which have now been brought under control.

D TIM. ... our long and highly successful tour is on its very last legs. Its very last leg. Thank you for your...

E POPPY. Thank you for your...

F TIM and POPPY. (Together.) ... co-operation and understanding.

G TIM. I sincerely trust... (He pauses for an instant to see if he will be interrupted again.) I sincerely trust there will be no other... (He becomes aware of the whisky bottle.) ... no other hiccups. No other holdups. So, ladies and gentlemen, will you please sit back and enjoy the remains of the evening.

(Exit TIM. A slight pause, then his arm comes out from under the tabs and retrieves the bottle.)

The introductory music for Nothing On, and this time the tabs rise. The act is being seen from the front again, exactly as it was the first time, at the rehearsal in Weston-super-Mare.

Enter slowly and with dignity from the service quarters, limping painfully, MRS. CLACKETT. She is holding a plate in her left hand and a handful of loose sardines in her right.)

MRS. CLACKETT. (Bravely.) It's no good you going on... (She stops and looks at the phone. It hurriedly starts to ring.) I can't pick sardines off the floor and answer the phone. (She dumps the handful of sardines on the plate.) I've only got one leg. (She shifts the plate to her right hand and picks up the phone with the left. Into the phone, bravely.) Hello... Yes, but there's no one here... No, Mr. Brent's not here... (She puts the plate of sardines newspaper down next to the newspaper on the sofa as she speaks and picks up the newspaper. She shakes the outer sheet free and wipes her oily hand on it as best she can. The rest of the newspaper disintegrates and falls back on top of the sardines.) He lives here, yes, but he don't live here

now because he lives in Spain. Mr. Philip Brent, that's right... The one who writes the plays, only why he wants to get mixed up in plays God only knows, he'd be safer off in the lion's cage at the zoo... No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here... Am I in Spain...? (She realizes that she is holding the sheet of newspaper instead of the sardines. She turns round to look for them as she speaks, winding herself into the telephone cord.) No, I'm not in Spain, dear. I look after the house for them, but I go home at one o'clock on Wednesday, only I've got a nice plate of sardines to put my feet up with... (She sits down uncertainly on the heap of newspaper.) ... because it's the royal what's it called on the telly — the royal you know... (She realizes that she is sitting on the sardines, and extracts the plate as discreetly as possible as she speaks.) ... And if it's to do with letting the house then you'll have to ring the house agents, because they're the agents for the house... Squire, Squire, Hackham and who's the other one...? (She examines the flattened contents of the plate.) No, they're not in Spain, they're just a bit squashed. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on... (She stands up to go, uncertainly balancing plate, sheet of newspaper, and phone.) ... I'm going to do something wrong here. (She starts to go, then realizes there are loose sheets of newspaper all over the floor, and bends down to pick them up. The sardines slide off the plate on to the floor.) Always the same, isn't it. (She starts to go again.) One minute you've got too much on your plate... (She realizes that she has nothing on her plate, turns round and sees the sardines.) ... next thing you know they've gone again.

(She uncertainly drops a few sheets of the newspaper over the sardines and exits into the study, holding the empty plate and the telephone receiver. The body of the phone falls off its table and follows her to the door.)

The sound of a key in the lock. The front door opens. On the doorstep is ROGER, carrying a cardboard box.)

A ROGER. ... I have a housekeeper, yes, but this is her afternoon off. (Enter VICKI. The body of the phone begins to creep inconspicuously towards the door.) So we've got the place entirely to ourselves. (ROGER goes back and brings in a flight bag and closes the front

phone pulling begins

NOISES OFF

A door.) I'll just check. (He halts the telephone with a casually placed foot. **VICKI** gazes round.) Hello? Anyone at home? No, there's no one here. (He picks the phone up, and puts it back on its table.) So what do you think?

(He takes his hand off the phone, and it springs back on to the floor.)

A VICKI. Great. And this is all yours?

(The phone starts to creep away again. **ROGER** casually picks it up as he talks and puts it down on the sideboard.)

B ROGER. Just a little shack in the woods, really. Converted post set mill. Sixteenth-century.

C VICKI. It must have cost a bomb.

(Another jerk on the wire catapults the phone across the room. **VICKI** pays no attention to it.)

D ROGER. Well, one has to have somewhere to entertain one's business associates. Someone on the phone now, by the look of it. (He picks the phone up and puts it back on the sideboard.) It's probably this, you know, this Arab saying he wants to come at four, so I mean I'll just have a word with him and...

(He tries to pick up the receiver and finds that it's not there. As the conversation continues he follows the receiver cord along with his hand.)

E VICKI. Right, and I've got to get those files to our Basingstoke office by four.

F ROGER. Yes, we'll only just manage to pick it in. I mean, we'll only just fit it up. I mean...

G VICKI. Right, then.

H ROGER. We won't bother to pull the champagne.

(He pulls gently at the cord.)

NOISES OFF

A VICKI. All these doors!

B ROGER. Oh, only a handful, really. Study... Kitchen... and a self-contained service flat... (He tugs hard, and the cord comes away without the receiver.) ... for the receiver.

C VICKI. Terrific. And which one's the...?

D ROGER. What?

E VICKI. You know...

F ROGER. The usual offices? Through here, through here.

(He bundles up the phone and cable, and opens the downstairs bathroom door for her.)

G VICKI. Fantastic.

(Exit **VICKI** into the bathroom. **ROGER** tosses the phone casually off after her.)

Enter **MRS. CLACKETT** from the study, still walking with difficulty and holding the now cordless receiver.)

H MRS. CLACKETT. I've lost the sardines again...

(Mutual surprise. **ROGER** closes the door to the bathroom.)

I ROGER. I'm sorry. I thought there was no one here.

J MRS. CLACKETT. I'm not here. (She looks round for the phone, so that she can replace the receiver.) I don't know where I am.

K ROGER. I'm from the agents.

L MRS. CLACKETT. Lost the phone now.

M ROGER. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and Dudley.

N MRS. CLACKETT. Never lost a phone before.

O ROGER. I'm Tramplemain.

P MRS. CLACKETT. I'll just put it up here, look, if anyone wants it.

(She puts the receiver on top of the television.)

Q ROGER. Oh, right, thanks. No, I just dropped in to... go into a

few things... (The bathroom door opens. **ROGER** closes it. **MRS. CLACKETT** gets down on her hands and knees and looks under the newspaper.) Well, to check some of the measurements... (The bathroom door opens. **ROGER** closes it. **MRS. CLACKETT** goes to scoop up the sardines, but then looks round.) Do one or two odd jobs...

(The bathroom door opens. **ROGER** closes it.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. Now the plate's gone.

B ROGER. Oh, and a client. I'm showing a prospective client over the house.

(The bathroom door opens.)

C VICKI. What's wrong with this door?

(**ROGER** closes it.)

D ROGER. She's thinking of renting it. Her interest is definitely aroused.

(Enter **VICKI** from the bathroom.)

E VICKI. That's not the bedroom.

F ROGER. The bedroom? No, that's the downstairs bathroom and WC suite. And this is the...

(**ROGER** steps forward on to the newspapers to introduce **MRS. CLACKETT**. His foot slides away in front of him.)

G MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines, dear, sardines.

H VICKI. Oh. Hi.

I ROGER. She's not really here.

J MRS. CLACKETT. (Looking under the newspaper.) Oh, you shouldn't have stood on them.

K ROGER. (To **MRS. CLACKETT**.) Don't worry about us.

L MRS. CLACKETT. They'll all go standing on them now.

A ROGER. We'll just inspect the house.

B MRS. CLACKETT. I'd better give the floor a wash.

(Exit **MRS. CLACKETT** into the study, leaving the sardines beneath the newspaper on the floor.)

C ROGER. I'm sorry about this.

D VICKI. That's all right. We don't want the television, do we?

E ROGER. Television? That's right, television, she didn't explain about wanting to watch this royal, you know, because obviously there's been this thing with the... (He indicates the sardines.) I mean, I'm just, you know, in case anyone's looking at all this and thinking, 'My God!'

F VICKI. Great. Come on, then. (She starts upstairs.) I've got to be in Basingstoke by four.

G ROGER. Sorry, love. I thought we ought to get that straight.

H VICKI. We'll take it up with us.

I ROGER. Where are we?

J VICKI. And don't let my files out of sight.

K ROGER. Hold on. We've got out of...

L VICKI. What?

M ROGER. What?

N VICKI. Her?

O ROGER. Her? OK... 'her'. Right, because she has been in the family for generations.

(Enter **MRS. CLACKETT** from the study, carrying a fire bucket and a mop.)

P MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines... Sardines... It's not for me to say, of course, dear, only I will just say this: don't think twice about it — take the plunge... (She plunges the mop into the fire bucket.) You'll really enjoy it here...

(She discovers that the mop won't go into the fire bucket.)

Q VICKI. Oh. Great.

(MRS. CLACKETT removes the obstruction — a bottle of whisky.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. I'll put it here, look, then if he wants it he won't know where to find it...

(MRS. CLACKETT puts the bottle of whisky with the other bottles on the sideboard.)

B VICKI. Terrific.

C MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines, sardines. (She hands the mop to ROGER.) You'll have to do the sardines, then, 'cause I've got to go back to the kitchen now and do some more sardines.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT to service quarters.)

D VICKI. You see? She thinks it's great. She's even making us sardines!

E ROGER. (Contemplates the bucket and mop uncertainly.) Well...

F VICKI. I think she's terrific.

G ROGER. Terrific.

H VICKI. So which way?

I ROGER. I don't know — kind of parcel them up in the... (He holds out some sheets of newspaper to her.) And I'll... (He demonstrates the mop.)

J VICKI. (Starts up the stairs.) Up here?

K ROGER. Down here!

L VICKI. In here?

M ROGER. OK, I'll do the... you do the...

(Exit VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom. ROGER parcels up the sardines in the newspaper as best he can.)

N VICKI. It's another bathroom.

(She reappears.)

ROGER dumps the parcel of sardines on the telephone table while he

dabs hurriedly at the floor with the mop.)

A ROGER. Take the box upstairs, then! Take the bag!

B VICKI. Always trying to get me into bathrooms.

C ROGER. Bag! Box!

(VICKI moves to stand outside the airing cupboard.)

D VICKI. Oh, black sheets!

E ROGER. (Runs to the stairs with bucket and mop, and holds them out to VICKI.) All right, take the... take the... take the...!

F VICKI. Oh, you're in a real state!

G ROGER. (Despairingly.) Oh...!

(ROGER runs back and abandons the bucket and mop to pick up the bag and box.)

H VICKI. You can't even get the door open.

(Exit VICKI into the bedroom.)

ROGER runs back to collect the bucket and mop, just as the front door opens to reveal PHILIP, carrying a cardboard box.)

I PHILIP. No, it's Mrs. Clackett's afternoon off, remember. We've got the place... (PHILIP freezes, as ROGER flees upstairs with the bag and the box. PHILIP follows ROGER's progress out of the corner of his eye. Enter FLAVIA carrying a flight bag like GARRY's. The bedroom door shuts in ROGER's face. He opens the door again and exits into the bedroom with the bag and box.) ... en-tirely to ourselves.

J FLAVIA. Home.

K PHILIP. Home, sweet home.

L FLAVIA. Dear old house!

M PHILIP. Just waiting for us to come back!

N FLAVIA. (Producing the remains of the phone.) But how odd to find the telephone in the garden!

O PHILIP. I'll put it back.

(She hands him the phone — now in a very deteriorated condition — and he attempts to replace it on the telephone table. But it is still connected to its lead, which is too short, since it runs out through the downstairs bathroom door, and back in through the front door.)

A FLAVIA. I thought I'd better bring it in.
B PHILIP. Very sensible.

(He tugs discreetly at the lead.)

C FLAVIA. Someone's bound to want it.
D PHILIP. Oh dear. (He tugs.)
E FLAVIA. Why don't you put it back on the table?
F PHILIP. The wire seems to be caught.
G FLAVIA. Oh, look, it's caught round the downstairs bathroom.
H PHILIP. So it is.

(**PHILIP** takes the phone back out of the front room. **FLAVIA** with discreet violence pulls the lead out of the junction-box where it originates. **PHILIP** reemerges with the phone through the downstairs bathroom.)

I FLAVIA. I think I've disentangled it.
J PHILIP. I climbed through the bathroom window and... oh... oh...

(He takes the parcel of sardines off the telephone table and puts the telephone in its place.)

K FLAVIA. It's rather funny, though, creeping in like this for our wedding anniversary!
L PHILIP. It's damned serious! If Inland Revenue find out we're in the...

(Attempting to fold up the newspaper tidily, he becomes distracted by the contents that come oozing out over his hands. His voice dies away.)

A FLAVIA. ... country, even for one night...
B PHILIP. Sorry. (He puts down the parcel of sardines on the sofa.) Yes, because if Inland Revenue find out we're in the...

(He moves towards the champagne, and slides, exactly like **GARRY**, on the oily patch on the floor. He stops and looks back on it in surprise.)

C FLAVIA. ... country...
D PHILIP. (Distracted.) ... country...
E FLAVIA. ... even for one night.
F PHILIP. ... even for one night...

(**PHILIP** edges cautiously away from the oily patch.)

G FLAVIA. ... bang goes... (He bangs into the bucket and mop.) ... our claim to be resident abroad...

(**PHILIP** fumbles for his handkerchief, and claps it to his nose.)

H PHILIP. Resident abroad. Absolutely. (He looks into his handkerchief.)

I FLAVIA. Bang goes most of this year's income.

J PHILIP. Most of this year's income... (He puts the handkerchief away.) So, yes, I think I'd better... (He picks up bag and box, clutches them to himself for reassurance.) ... go and have a little lie-down.

(He starts up the stairs.)

K FLAVIA. (Surprised, but rallying) Lie-down, yes, well, why not? No children. No friends dropping in... (She moves the sofa to cover the oily patch as she speaks.) We're absolutely on our... Leave those!

L PHILIP. Oh, yes.

(**PHILIP** puts the bag and box down, but by this time he is already upstairs.)

A FLAVIA. Downstairs! Not upstairs!

B PHILIP. I'm so sorry. I... (He looks in his handkerchief again.) Oh dear...

(He exits hurriedly into bedroom.)

C FLAVIA. (Picks up the fire bucket and mop.) There is something to be said for being a tax exile... (She flees upstairs with the fire bucket and mop, laughing.) Sh...! What? Inland Revenue may hear us!

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the service quarters carrying a fresh plate of sardines.)

D MRS. CLACKETT. (To herself.) What I did with that first lot of sardines I shall never know.

(She puts down the plate of sardines, and goes to sit on the sofa, on the parcel of sardines left there by PHILIP.)

E FLAVIA. (Urgently, looking down from the gallery, still holding the bucket and mop.) Mrs. Newspaper!

(MRS. CLACKETT jumps up.)

F MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, you give me a turn! My heart jumped right out of the sofa!

G FLAVIA. So did mine! We thought you'd gone!

H MRS. CLACKETT. (Finding the parcel of sardines and examining it.) I thought you was in Sardinia!

I FLAVIA. We are! We are! You haven't seen us! We're not here!

J MRS. CLACKETT. I can guess which one of them put this here.

K FLAVIA. Yes, but the main thing is that the income tax are after us.

L MRS. CLACKETT. Lovely helping of sardines to sit on.

M FLAVIA. So if anybody asks for us, you don't know nothing.

Anything. So I'll just... I'll just... get a hot water bottle.

(She goes towards the mezzanine bathroom.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. And off she goes without waiting to find out about his letters.

B FLAVIA. (Stops, realizes despairingly.) His letters?

(Enter PHILIP groggily from the bedroom.)

C PHILIP. Letters? What letters? You forward all the mail, don't you?

D MRS. CLACKETT. Not presents from Sardinia, dear.

E PHILIP. I'm so sorry.

(Exit PHILIP into the bedroom.)

F MRS. CLACKETT. I'll show you where I put presents from Sardinia. (She goes upstairs towards FLAVIA who is still outside the mezzanine bathroom, carrying the bucket and mop, not sure which way to move.) I put presents from Sardinia in the pigeonhouse.

G FLAVIA. In the pigeonhouse?

H MRS. CLACKETT. In the little pigeonhouse down here, love.

(She stuffs the parcel of sardines down the front of FLAVIA's dress. FLAVIA looks down at the dress, then at the fire bucket and mop she is carrying. MRS. CLACKETT retires hurriedly back downstairs, and exits into the study, with FLAVIA after her.)

Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still dressed, but with no tie on.)

I ROGER. Yes, but I could hear voices!

(He falls over PHILIP's bag and box.)

Enter VICKI from the bedroom in her underwear.)

J VICKI. Voices? What sort of voices?

K ROGER. Box voices. I mean, people's boxes.

A VICKI But there's no one here.
B ROGER Darling, I saw the door handle move! And these bags... I'm not sure they were, you know, when we went into the, do you know what I mean?

C VICKI I still don't see why you've got to put your tie on to look.

D ROGER (*Picking up the bag and box.*) Because if someone left these things outside the, I mean, come on, they obviously want them downstairs inside the, you know.

E VICKI Mrs. Clackett?

F ROGER It could be. Coming up here on her way to, well, carrying various, I mean, who knows?

G VICKI (*Looking over the banisters.*) Oh look, she's opened our sardines.

(*She moves to go downstairs. ROGER puts down the bag and box out side the linen cupboard and grabs her.*)

H ROGER Come back!

I VICKI What?

J ROGER I'll fetch them! You can't go downstairs like that.

K VICKI Why not?

L ROGER Mrs. Crackett.

M VICKI Mrs. Crackett?

N ROGER One has certain obligations.

(*Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study, fishing sardines out of the front of her dress.*)

O MRS. CLACKETT (*To herself.*) Sardines here. Sardines there. It's like the Battle of Waterloo out there. (*ROGER tries to pull open the linen cupboard door to conceal VICKI, but it is obstructed by the bag and box.*) Oh, you're still poking around, are you?

P ROGER Yes, still poking, well, still pulling.

(*He tugs at the door again, unaware of the obstruction, and the handle comes off as it opens.*)

A MRS. CLACKETT Good job I can't see far with this leg. (*ROGER moves the bag and box, gets VICKI inside the linen cupboard, and rebalances the handle in place.*)

B ROGER Just, you know, trying all the doors and I mean checking all the door handles. (*He starts downstairs, carrying PHILIP's bag and box.*) Mrs. Blackett.

C MRS. CLACKETT Clackett, dear, Clackett.

D ROGER Mrs. Clackett. Is there anyone else in the house, Mrs. Clackett?

E MRS. CLACKETT I haven't seen no one, dear.

F ROGER I thought I heard a box. I mean, I found these voices.

G MRS. CLACKETT Voices? There's no voices here, love.

H ROGER I must have imagined it.

I PHILIP (*Off.*) Oh good Lord above!

(*The colossal sound of PHILIP falling downstairs, off, taking half the platform with him, followed by a wailing groan.*)

J ROGER I beg your pardon?

K MRS. CLACKETT (*Mimicking PHILIP.*) Oh good Lord above!

(*She crashes things about on the sideboard in imitation of the offstage crash, and ends the performance with a wailing groan.*)

L ROGER Why, what is it?

M MRS. CLACKETT The study door's open.

(*She crosses and closes the door.*)

N ROGER They're going to want these inside the... (*He indicates the study.*) So I'll put them outside the... (*He indicates the front door.*) Then they can, do you know what I mean?

(*Exit ROGER through the front door, carrying the bag and box. Enter FLAVIA from the mezzanine bathroom, carrying a first-aid box.*)

She sees the linen cupboard door swinging open as she passes, and pushes it shut, so that the latch closes. The handle comes off in her hand.)

A FLAVIA. Nothing but flapping doors in this handle.

(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom, holding the first-aid box and the handle. Enter from the study PHILIP, holding a tax demand and its envelope. The part is now being played not by FREDERICK but by TIM.)

B PHILIP/TIM. ... final notice... steps will be taken... distraint... proceedings in court...

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh my Lord, who are you?

D PHILIP/TIM. I'm PHILIP.

MRS. CLACKETT. You're Philip? What happened to you?

F PHILIP/TIM. Well, it's all got a bit slippery on the stairs out there.

G MRS. CLACKETT. You haven't done himself an injury?

H PHILIP/TIM. No. He's just a bit shaken. I'll be all right in a minute. (Exit MRS. CLACKETT to the study.) You weren't going to tell me a gentleman had come about the house, were you?

I MRS. CLACKETT. (Off.) What?

J PHILIP/TIM. You weren't going to tell me a gentleman had come about the house?

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study.)

K MRS. CLACKETT. That's right. A gentleman come about the house.

L PHILIP/TIM. Don't tell me. I'm not here.

M MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, and he's put your box out in the garden for you.

N PHILIP/TIM. Let them do anything. Just so long as you don't tell anyone we're here.

O MRS. CLACKETT. So I'll just sit down and turn on the... sardines, I've forgotten the sardines! (She finds the second plate of sar-

P dines on the table, exactly where she put it.) Oh, no, I haven't—I've remembered the sardines! What a surprise! I must go out to the kitchen and make another plate of sardines to celebrate.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT to the service quarters.)

A PHILIP/TIM. I didn't get this! I'm not here. I'm in Spain. But if I didn't get it I didn't open it.

(Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom. She is holding the dress that VICKI arrived in, and the handle of the linen cupboard.)

B FLAVIA. Darling... (She stares at PHILIP/TIM in surprise, then recovers herself and looks at the dress.) I never had a handle like this, did I?

C PHILIP/TIM. (Abstracted.) Didn't you?

D FLAVIA. I shouldn't buy anything as brassy as this. (FLAVIA drops the dress and attempts to replace the handle on the linen cupboard behind her back.) Oh, it's not something you gave me, is it?

E PHILIP/TIM. I should never have touched it.

F FLAVIA. No, it's lovely.

G PHILIP/TIM. Stick it down. Put it back. Never saw it.

(Exit PHILIP/TIM into study.)

H FLAVIA. Well, I'll put it in the attic, if anyone else wants to have a try.

(Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, taking the handle but leaving the dress on the floor.)

Enter ROGER through the front door, without the bag and box.)

I ROGER. All right, all right... Now the study door's open again! What's going on? (He goes towards the study, and opens and closes the door. He reacts to the sound of urgent knocking overhead.) Knocking. (Knocking.) Upstairs! (He runs upstairs. Knocking.) Oh my God, there's something in the... (He discovers the lack of a han-

I **dle.** Oh my God! (*Knocking.*) Listen! I can't, because the handle has, you know. You'll just have to... (*He demonstrates pushing. Knocking.*) Come on! Come on! (*Knocking.*) I mean, whatever it is in there. Can you hear me? Darling! (*Knocking.*) Look, don't just keep banging! There's nothing I can, I mean it won't, there's nowhere to... (*Knocking. He opens the bedroom door.*) Listen! Climb round into the... (*He indicates the bedroom.*) Squeeze through the, you know, and shin down the, I mean, there must be some way! (*Knocking.*) Oh, for pity's sake!

(*Exit ROGER into the bedroom.*)

Enter **PHILIP** from the study, holding a tax demand and an envelope. He is now being played by **FREDERICK**, with a plaster on his head.)

A **PHILIP.** ... final notice... steps will be taken... dis-
traint... proceedings in court...

(*Enter ROGER from the bedroom, pulling VICKI after him. PHILIP gazes at them, baffled.*)

B **ROGER.** Oh, it's you.

C **VICKI.** Of course it's me! You put me in here! In the dark with all black sheets and things.

D **ROGER.** I put you in there, but you managed to squeeze through the, you know.

E **VICKI.** Why did I lock the door? Why did you lock the door!

F **ROGER.** I couldn't, I mean, look, look, it's come off!

G **VICKI.** Someone locked the door!

H **PHILIP.** Sorry.

(*Exit PHILIP apologetically into study.*)

I **ROGER.** Anyway, we can't stand here like this.

J **VICKI.** Like what?

K **ROGER.** I mean, you know, with people going in and out.

L **VICKI.** OK, I'll take it off.

A **ROGER.** In here, in here!

(*He ushers her into the bedroom.*)

Enter **PHILIP** cautiously from the study, holding the tax demand and the envelope.)

B **PHILIP.** ... final notice... steps will be taken... proceedings in court...

(*Enter ROGER from the bedroom, holding the first-aid box. He looks up and down the landing.*)

Enter **VICKI** from the bedroom.

PHILIP stares at them.)

C **VICKI.** Now what?

D **ROGER.** A hot water box! I didn't put it there!

E **VICKI.** I didn't put it there.

F **PHILIP.** Sorry.

(*Exit PHILIP into the study.*)

G **ROGER.** Someone in the bathroom, filling first aid bottles.

(*Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.*)

H **VICKI.** (*Anxious.*) You don't think there's something creepy going on?

(*Exit VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom.*)

Enter **FLAVIA** along the upstairs corridor.)

I **FLAVIA.** Darling... Darling? (*Enter PHILIP cautiously from the study. He raises the income tax demand to speak.*) Darling, are you coming to bed or aren't you?

(*Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.*)

PHILIP raises his income tax demand to speak.

NOISES OFF

Enter ROGER and VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

A ROGER. What did you say?
B VICKI. I didn't say anything.

(Exit PHILIP into the study.)

C ROGER. I mean, first there's the door handle. Now there's the first water box.

D VICKI. I can feel goose-pimples all over.

E ROGER. Yes, quick, get something round you.

F VICKI. Get the covers over our heads.

(ROGER is about to open the bedroom door.)

G ROGER. Just a moment. What did I do with those sardines? (He goes downstairs. VICKI makes to follow.) You — wait here.

H VICKI. (Uneasily.) You hear all sorts of funny things about these old houses.

I ROGER. Yes, but this one has been extensively modernized throughout. I can't see how anything creepy would survive oil-fired central heating and ...

J VICKI. What? What is it? (ROGER looks round.) What's happening?

K ROGER. The sardines. They've gone. (He double-takes on them.) No, they haven't. They're here. Oh. Well. My God... I mean... my God! (He turns and starts back upstairs. FLAVIA crawls through the front door. She picks up the sardines and takes them back to the front door.) You put a plate of sardines down for two minutes, and the last thing you expect to find, I mean, these days, the one thing you don't expect to find when you come back is a plate of, I mean that's really weird!

L VICKI. Perhaps there is something funny going on. I'm going to get into bed and put my head under the ...

(She freezes at the sight of the empty table outside the bedroom door.)

NOISES OFF

A ROGER. Because, I mean, there they are! Exactly where I ... (He realizes that the sardines are not there.)

B VICKI. Bag ...

(ROGER goes back downstairs to investigate. VICKI runs after him. FLAVIA, unseen by GARRY, hesitates. She glances up towards the landing, reminded by the mention of the bag that she has failed to set it. She looks back at the table, realizing that ROGER now expects the sardines to be on the table.)

C ROGER. No, they're not. I suppose Mrs. Sprockett must have, I mean, what is going on?

(He looks at VICKI. FLAVIA hurriedly replaces the sardines.)

D VICKI. Bag!

(FLAVIA exits hurriedly through the front door.)

E ROGER. Bag?

F VICKI. Bag! Bag!

(She drags ROGER back upstairs.)

G ROGER. What do you mean, bag, bag?

(ROGER looks over the banisters and sees the sardines.)

H ROGER. Sardines!

I VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

J ROGER. Sardines! Sardines!

K VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

L ROGER. Sardines! Sardines!

M VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

(While ROGER is gazing at the sardines, and VICKI is looking at ROGER, the bedroom door opens, and FLAVIA puts the flight bag on the table outside.)

A ROGER. (Tearing himself away from the sight of the sardines.) Bag? What bag?

B VICKI. (Gazing at the bag.) No bag!

C ROGER. No bag?

D VICKI. Your bag! Suddenly! Here! Now — gone!

E ROGER. It's in the bedroom. (He sees the bag.) It was in the bedroom. I put it in the bedroom. I'll put it back in the bedroom.

(As ROGER goes to open the bedroom door it opens in front of him, and FLAVIA begins to come out carrying the box.)

F VICKI. Don't go in there!

(ROGER finds himself holding the box, with the door closing his face.)

G ROGER. The box!

H VICKI. The box?

I ROGER. They've both not gone!

J VICKI. Oh! My files!

K ROGER. What on earth is happening? Where's Mrs. Spratchett? (He starts downstairs with the bag and box. VICKI follows him.) You wait in the bedroom.

L VICKI. No! No! No!

(She runs downstairs.)

M ROGER. At least put your dress on!

N VICKI. I'm not going in there!

O ROGER. I'll fetch it for you, I'll fetch it for you!

(He puts the bag and box down at the head of the stairs, returns to the bedroom, and sees the dress on the floor.)

Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

A VICKI. Yes, quick — let's get out of here!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

B ROGER. Your dress has gone.

(As he speaks he slides the dress over the edge of the gallery with his foot to get rid of it. It falls on top of VICKI beneath, and makes her jerk her head. She feels blindly around her; her lenses have gone again.)

C VICKI. I'm never going to see Basingstoke again!

D ROGER. Don't panic! Don't panic! There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this.

(He starts downstairs, looking over the banisters, appalled at the sight of VICKI below, and falls headlong over the bag and box at the top of the stairs.)

VICKI searches blindly behind the sofa for her missing lenses. Enter PHILIP from the study. He is holding the tax demand and the envelope.)

E PHILIP. '... final notice... steps will be taken... distraint...'

(His voice dies away at the sight of ROGER lying at the bottom of the stairs.)

Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, carrying further pieces of bric-a-brac.)

F FLAVIA. Darling, if we're not going to bed I'm going to clear out the attic...

G PHILIP. (To ROGER.) Oh dear. (He claps a handkerchief to his nose.)

H FLAVIA. Oh great heavens!

(She rushes downstairs.)

Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the service quarters, holding another plate of sardines.)

A MRS. CLACKETT. No other hands, thank you, not in my sardines... (She sees ROGER.) ... 'cause this time she has, she's gone and killed him!

B FLAVIA. He's stunned, that's all. Keep going.

C ROGER. (Lifting his head.) Don't panic! Don't panic!

D FLAVIA. He's all right! Just keep going!

E ROGER. There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this.

F MRS. CLACKETT. Where are we?

G ROGER. I'll fetch Mrs. Spotchett and she'll tell us what's happening...

H MRS. CLACKETT. You've fetched her. I'm here.

I ROGER. I've fetched Mrs. Spotchett and she'll tell us what's happening.

J MRS. CLACKETT. She won't, you know.

K FLAVIA. I'll tell you what's happening.

L ROGER. There's a man in there! Yes?

M FLAVIA. He's not in there, my precious — he's in here, look, and so am I.

N MRS. CLACKETT. No, no, there's no one in the house, love. Yes?

O FLAVIA. No, look, I know this is a great surprise for everyone. I mean, it's quite a shock for us, finding a man lying at the bottom of the stairs! (To PHILIP.) Isn't it, darling?

P PHILIP. Oh dear. (He looks into his handkerchief.) Oh dear oh dear. (He sits down hurriedly.)

Q FLAVIA. But now we've all met we'll just have to... Well, we'll just have to introduce ourselves! Won't we, darling?

R PHILIP. Introduce ourselves. (He struggles to his feet, but has to sit down again.) I'm so sorry.

S FLAVIA. This is my husband. I'm afraid surprises go straight to his nose!

(VICKI rises blindly from behind sofa at her cue.)

A VICKI. There's a man lurking in the undergrowth!

B FLAVIA. Oh, how delightful — another unexpected guest. (To VICKI.) So why don't you... why don't you... see what you can see in the garden? (She pushes VICKI out of the front door, and helps PHILIP to his feet. To PHILIP.) And darling, you go off and get that bottle marked poison in the downstairs loo. That eats through anything.

C PHILIP. (From behind his handkerchief.) Eats through anything. Right. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.

(He opens the downstairs bathroom door to go off. A pane of glass drops out of the mullioned window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch. The window opens, and through it appears the BURGLAR, played by TIM.)

D BURGLAR/TIM. No bars. No burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

(He climbs in, and looks round in surprise to find the room full of people.)

E MRS. CLACKETT. Come in and join the party, love.

F FLAVIA. A burglar! This is most exciting!

G PHILIP. Oh dear, this is my fault. Because when I say, 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, this is ridiculous', and I open this door...

(He opens the downstairs bathroom again. Another pane of glass drops out of the mullioned window, and an arm comes through. Enter through the window the BURGLAR, played by SELSDON.)

H BURGLAR/SELSDON. No bars. No burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

(He climbs in, becoming uneasily aware of the others as he does so.)

I BURGLAR/TIM. No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit

NOISES OFF

down and weep.

A MRS. CLACKETT. I know, love, it's getting like a funeral in here.

B BURGLAR/SELSDON. When I think I used to do banks!
C FLAVIA. Just keep going.

D BURGLAR/SELSDON and **D** BURGLAR/TIM. (Together.) When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags ...

F FLAVIA. Keep going.

F BURGLAR/SELSDON. Stop?

G FLAVIA. No, no!

H BURGLAR/SELSDON. I thought the coast was clear, you see. I saw him going out to the bathroom.

I FLAVIA. (Closing the downstairs bathroom door.) Yes, never mind, it's all right. We'll think of something.

J BURGLAR/SELSDON. Oh, no, I was listening most carefully. What's it he says?

PHILIP. 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.'

L BURGLAR/SELSDON. And he opened the door ...

(BURGLAR/SELSDON opens the downstairs bathroom door to demonstrate.)

A third pane of glass drops out of the mullioned window, and an arm comes through. Enter through the window the BURGLAR, played by LLOYD.)

M BURGLAR/LLOYD. No bars. No burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

(He climbs in, very uncertain what's happening to him. He doesn't know whether to react to the presence of the others or not.)

N MRS. CLACKETT. They always come in threes, don't they.
C ALL 3 BURGLARS. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults...

P FLAVIA. Hold on! We know this man! He's not a burglar! (She

NOISES OFF

snatches LLOYD's burglar hat off.) He's our social worker!

A ROGER. He's what?

B FLAVIA. He's that nice man who comes in and tells us what to do!

C LLOYD. (Appalled, faintly.) What to do?

D OTHERS. (Firmly.) What to do!

(LLOYD is paralyzed with stage-fright. He looks round helplessly and makes vague and ineffectual gestures.)

E SELSDON. What's he saying?

F FLAVIA. He's saying, he's saying — just get through it for doors and sardines! Yes? That's what it's all about! Doors and sardines! (To LLOYD.) Yes?

G LLOYD. (Helplessly.) Doors and sardines!

H OTHERS. Doors and sardines!

(They all try to put this into practice. PHILIP picks up the sardines and runs around trying to find some application for them. The others open various doors, fetch further plates of sardines, and run helplessly around with them. LLOYD stands helplessly watching the chaos he has created swirl around him.)

I FLAVIA. He's saying, he's saying — 'Phones and police'!
J LLOYD. Phones and police...

K PHILIP. Phone!

(PHILIP and ROGER are each handed a half of the phone.)

L ROGER. Police!

(ROGER puts the receiver to his ear. PHILIP dials.)

M FLAVIA. He's saying 'Bags and boxes.'

N OTHERS. Bags and boxes!

(Everyone runs around with the two boxes and the two bags, all help-

NOISES OFF

lessly colliding with each other and running into the furniture.)

A FLAVIA. (Decisively.) Sheets, sheets! He's saying 'Sheets'!

B LLOYD. Sheets...

C OTHERS. (Desperately.) Sheets!

(ROGER runs out of the study door, TIM out of the front door.)

D FLAVIA. He's saying 'All we want now is a nice happy ending!'

(ROGER comes back at once propelling the helpless VICKI, wrapping her in the white sheet as they go. TIM comes back simultaneously with POPPY, cramming her into the real SHEIKH's robes.)

E DOTTY. (Looking at POPPY.) And here she is! In her wedding dress!

F FLAVIA. (Looking at VICKI.) Yes, yes — it's their wedding day!

G MRS. CLACKETT. (Still looking at POPPY.) It's their wedding day!

H OTHERS. Ah!

I FLAVIA. What a happy ending!

(MRS. CLACKETT pushes POPPY to LLOYD's side. FLAVIA pushes VICKI to his other side.)

J MRS. CLACKETT. Do you take this sheet to be your lawful wedded wife? If not, speak now, or forever hold your peace.

(LLOYD nods helplessly.)

K SELSDON. What's he saying, what's he saying?

L FLAVIA. He's saying... he's saying... 'Last line!'

M SELSDON. Last line? Me?

N ALL. Last line, last line!

NOISES OFF

A SELSDON. When all around is strife and uncertainty, there's nothing like a good old-fashioned plate of.....

(He dries.)

B ALL. (Holding up plates of sardines; beseechingly.) Curtain! (Tableau. Then TIM runs hurriedly off.)

CURTAIN

(Except that it jams just above the level of their heads. As one man they seize hold of it and drag it down. A ripping sound. The curtain detaches itself from its fixings and falls on top of them all, leaving a floundering mass of bodies on stage.)

COSTUMES

LLOYD DALLAS

- Act I: Casual slacks, shirt, cardigan or sweater, socks, casual shoes.
 Act II: Trousers, shirt, tie, jacket, coat, socks, shoes.
 Act III: Gray trousers, black roll-neck sweater, jacket similar to Burglar's, red and white neck scarf, black beanie, white gloves, shoes, socks.

DOTTY OTLEY (Mrs. Clackett)

- Act I: Skirt, blouse, wrapover pinafore, hat/turban headscarf, tights/stockings, slippers.
 Act II: Hat/turban headscarf adapted to retain sardines.

BELINDA BLAIR (Flavia)

Light-weight, elegant suit or dress, tights, shoes.

FREDERICK FELLOWS (Philip)

White flannel trousers, navy blue blazer, white shirt, cravat, white socks and shoes, 2 white handkerchiefs, second pair of white trousers that drop with holes and stains.

GARRY LEJEUNE (Roger)

Dark pinstripe three-piece suit, cherry and white striped shirt, red tie, red socks, black lace-up shoes with very long laces.

For Acts II & III: Padding for elbows, knees, hips and small of back.

BROOKE ASHTON (Vicki)

"Tarty" blue dress, black patent shoes, belt and clutch bag, tights, sexy underwear.

SELSDON MOWBRAY (Burglar)

Dressing gown, old black roll-neck sweater, old gray flannel trousers that drop, belt, old anorak-type jacket with large pockets, red and

white neck scarf, white gloves, black beanie, socks, old sandals.

TIM ALGOOD (Company Stage Manager)

- Act I: Dirty, paint-stained sweatshirt, ditto jeans/cords, old trainers, socks, old raincoat (suitable to double for Burglar), belt with tools including a hammer.
 Act II: Evening suit, evening shirt, bowtie, pink socks, black shoes.
 Act III: Black roll-neck sweater, red and white neck scarf, black beanie, white gloves.

POPPY NORTON-TAYLOR (Assistant Stage Manager)

- Act I: Shirt, old cardigan, jeans, soft-soled shoes, socks, man's handkerchief.
 Act II: Red blouse, black and white Tartan wrapover skirt, black boots, tights.

PROPERTY LIST

Prompt script
 Clipboard with notes
 Pen
 Front door key with label
 Cactus in pot
 Bouquet of flowers
 Bunch of flowers with 1 removable flower
 Small posy of flowers
 Small coal shovel
 Tea towel
 First aid box
 Lint dressing and Elastoplast
 Section of broken door
 3 plates of sardines (stuck on)
 1 trick plate, sardines stuck only by tails
 Plate with linked sardines with Velcro attached
 Plate with 5 loose sardines in gelatin
 Fork
 Silver bowl
 Silver cups (assorted)
 Tax letter
 Tax final demand slip
 Inland Revenue envelope
 Tube of glue
 Tabloid newspaper
 Sunglasses
 2 British Airways flight bags
 2 sealed champagne bottles (non-practical)
 Cardboard box with files
 Similar cardboard box with groceries
 Similar padded cardboard box (Freddie, Act III)
 Similar empty cardboard box
 Portable radio/cassette recorder
 Hot water bottle
 Pair of gold taps
 Folded black sheet
 China figurine
 Silver teapot
 Large ornamental vase (rubber)
 2 biscuit tins
 Axe (made of latex)
 Fire bucket on hook
 Box of tissues
 Ropes, assorted (dressing)
 Anglepoise lamp
 Bell push on board
 Notebook and pen
 Metal bin with crash tin (Poppy's sound effect, Act II)
 Dressing TV (non-practical)
 Whisky bottle
 Resin whisky bottle identical to above
 2 glasses (minimum)
 Phone directories
 Knocking block for Brooke
 Plastic cup
 Dirty cup and saucer
 Telephone
 Telephone with long receiver cable and long mains cable (Act III)
 Broken phone casing (Act III)

PERSONAL PROPS

FURNITURE, ETC.

LLOYD
 Pill bottle with 'Valium' tablets
 Notebook
 Watch
 Pen
 Wallet with notes and coins

FREDDIE
 Clean handkerchief
 Bloody handkerchief

TIM
 Tool belt with tools, including hammer
 Money
 Watch

GARRY
 Watch

POPPY
 Bloody handkerchief

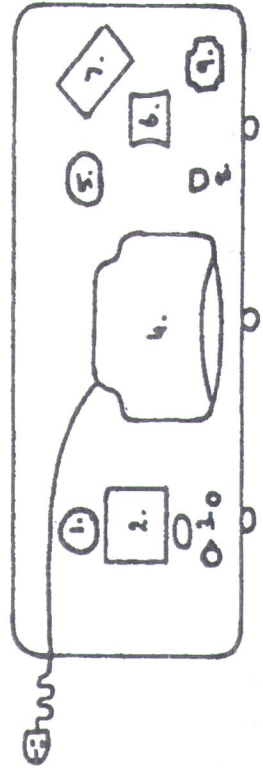
ACTS I & III
 Two-seater sofa
 Sideboard
 Drinks shelf
 Small console table (upstairs landing)
 Small telephone table

ACT II
 Row of assorted chairs
 1 loose chair
 Prompt desk
 Prop table
 Lighting control board
 Prompt stool
 Electrician's chair
 Minimum 5 panes of sugar glass per show (Tissue paper for above in Act II)
 2 metal framed chairs
 2 wooden chairs
 Saucepans, tins, etc.
 Metal box with cutlery for crash (Act I)
 1 white nightdress
 2 white "headaddresses"
 Burnous
 Headband
 2 white "Arab" robes
 1 white open robe
 1 black open robe
 Brooke's black "two-piece" robes

ACT I / ON STAGE

Plastic cup and dirty sauces on P.S. forestage
 Tab unhooked
 Border tucked behind header
 Floor clean
 Sofa in position with cushions neat
 Phone table in position with phone U.S. end, receiver cable to P.S., directories underneath
 Sideboard with
 1. Brass vase
 2. 'Silver' cigarette box
 3. 3 small ornaments
 4. TV, plug by socket
 5. Brass idol
 6. Cigarette box
 7. Wooden box
 8. Snuff box
 9. Ashtray
 (Drawers empty and free)

See drawing below.



Service door free and shut, masking behind
 Study door free and shut, masking behind
 Window 6" open, catch twisted correctly, masking behind
 Tissue paper in panes of window
 Sugar glass in P.S. pane
 Lanterns tight against window flat
 Front door free and shut, knocker loose
 Bathroom door free and shut, masking behind
 Book shelf with:
 Whiskey bottle one-quarter full with the top loose
 Dressing bottles
 4 clean bottles
 Dressing glasses
 Books straight
 P.S. and O.P. masking trucks in position, especially P.S. one

OFFSTAGE

Prompt Corner
 Crash box
 Taped pane of sugar glass
 Phone bell working, cover off
 Spare bell working
 Timber for curtain call
 Gaffer tape
 Double-sided tape
 Torch
 Vacuum
 U.L. Prop Table
 Jug with iced water
 2-3 glasses
 Tissues
 "J" cloth
 Brooke's handbag
 Prompt copy
 Clipboard with notes and pen
 Bloody handkerchief
 Box for sugar glass
 Door section
 Cactus
 Posy of flowers
 Bunch with 2 trick flowers in tissue paper
 Bouquet of flowers
 Dustpan and brush
 Plate with linked sardines
 3 tax letters
 First aid box
 Small shovel
 Tea towel
 Act III phone done with draw crash
 5 taped panes of sugar glass
 Scissors

Screwdriver
 Padded cardboard box
 2 lint dressings with "blood"
 Phone crash
 Plate with 5 loose sardines
 Spare tin with:
 Bottle of pills
 Handkerchiefs
 Red food color

Chairs for Artists
 2 battered chairs for Act III crash

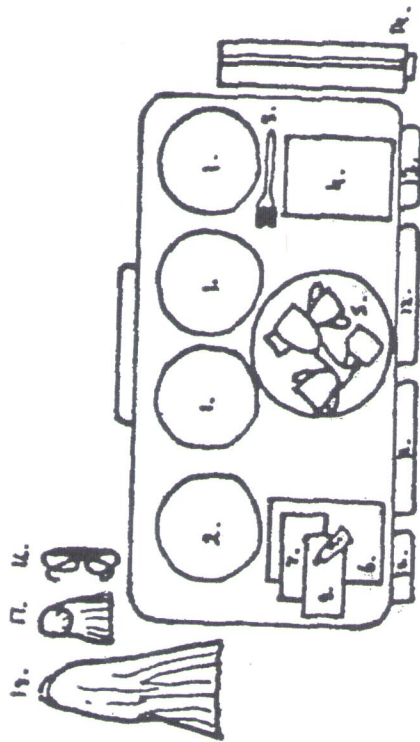
By P.S. Stair
 2 metal chairs with metal object for crash

Back of Set
 Row of 5 chairs, 4 fixed, R., end one loose
 2 mirrors on post
 Freddie's ragged trousers
 Burnous
 Headband

Prop Table by R. Stair
 1. 3 plates of fixed sardines
 2. 1 plate with attachment, sardines secured only by tails
 3. Fork
 4. Tabloid newspaper, turned to TV guide
 5. Silver bowl with 3 cups
 6. Tax letter
 7. Envelope
 8. Final tax demand
 9. Tube of glue

See drawing on top of page 168

NOISES OFF

Under Table

10. Cabin bag with champagne bottle and padding
11. Cardboard box with groceries including bag with 3 apples
12. Cardboard box with files
13. Cabin bag with champagne bottle and padding
14. Radio/cassette recorder
15. Empty cardboard box at back

Above Table

16. Sunglasses
 17. Nightdress headdress
 18. Sheikh's white sheet
- Back of Set Upstairs, O.P. - P.S.
 Bathroom door free and shut
 On hooks L. of door:
 Hotwater bottle one-third full
 Nightdress
 Gold taps on top step

Linen-cupboard door free and shut, key in, handle secured with pin

Fifth shelf up:

- Wooden knocking stick
- Folded black sheet
- Black sheet and headdress over rail
- Bedroom door free and shut
- On hooks R. of door:

Headress with loops

White sheet robe

On hooks L. of door:

China figure

Silver teapot

On floor below hooks:

2 biscuit boxes

Rubber vase

Archway curtain straight

All maskings up and secure

NOISES OFF

Off R. Table

- Box of tissues
- Resin whiskey bottle with cap secure
- Wallet with £10 note and loose change
- Speaker
- 2 chairs for artists

O.P. TruckUpstairs:

- Pint glass
- Can of beer/shandy
- Newspaper
- Cigarettes
- Matches
- Ashtray

Desk with:

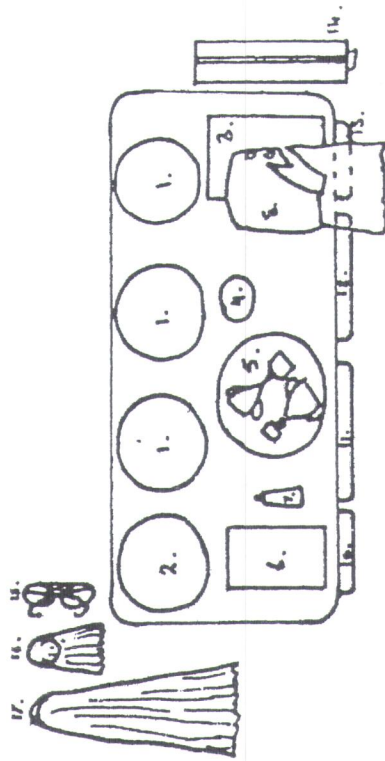
- Bell unit
- Notepad
- Pen

StoolAnglepoise lampBundle of ropesW.P.B. with biscuit tinAxe hung with blade facing U.S.Fire bucket with cloth and box of tissuesQ. lights off, master onMatchesAshtrayPint glass with beer/shandyFirebucket with cloth in bottomFire axe on bracket, blade U.S.Cue board with master on and switches offW.P.B. with tin under fire bucket• StoolPrompt desk with:

- Prompt copy with 2 loose pages
- Bell unit
- Anglepoise lamp, plugged up
- Notebook
- Pen
- Trail mic on clip

Under desk:Bundle of ropesBox of tissuesUnder small treads:• Freddie's ragged trousersRow of 5 chairsSugar glass replacedProp Table by Stair1. 3 plates of fixed sardines2. Plate with attachment, sardines secured by tails3. Tabloid newspaper, TV guide showing• 4. Silver cup• 5. Silver bowl with 2 cups• 6. Tax letter• 7. Tube of glue8. Tim's coatACT II / ON STAGEO.P. Truck with:ChairNewspaperCigarettes

See drawing on top of page 170

Under Table

- 10. Cabin bag with padding — no bottle
- 11. Empty cardboard box
- 12. Cardboard box with files
- 13. Cabin bag with padding—no bottle
- 14. Radio/cassette recorder

Above Table

- 15. Sunglasses
- 16. Nightdress headress
- 17. Sheik's white sheet

Up Stairs, P.S.—O.P.Nightdress

Hot water bottle—empty

Gold taps

Folded black sheet

Knocking stick

1 white sheet	} 1 corner tied,
1 black sheet	

Nightdress headress with hoops

China figure
Silver teapot
1 biscuit box
Rubber vase

All backing down, all doors working freely and shut, window 6" open with catch correct, LX bars in, border in, U.S. tabs in.

Upstage Set

Sofa and table with telephone in position

Glass and whiskey reset as Act I

Small ornaments from sideboard struck

By U.S. P.S. tormentor, plate with linked sardines

ACT III / ON STAGE

Border tucked behind header

Carpet clean — padding under

Sofa in position, cushions neat

Phone table in position with:

Phone with long flexes
(mains tacked down)

D.S. end

Phone directories underneath

Behind sofa:

Plate with 5 loose sardines on
gelatin

Sideboard with:

- 1. Wooden box
- 2. Brass idol
- 3. False silver cigarette box
- 4. TV on Act III mark, plug on floor
- 5. Brass vase
- 6. Silver box

See drawing below.

Crash objects in middle drawer
Window with 4 panes of sugar
glass, one-quarter open, catch
correct
Lanterns straight
Front door knocker bluetacked
down

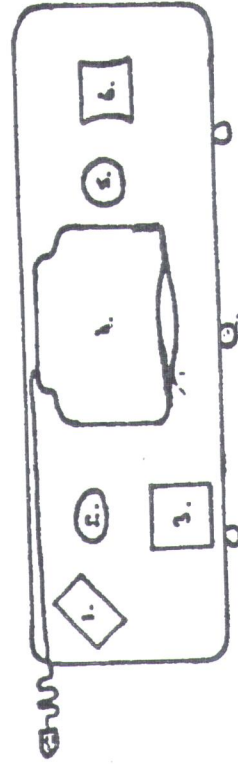
Bookshelf with:

No whiskey
4 clean glasses
Books straight
Dressing as Act I

All doors working freely and shut,
all maskings up, tormentors in
position, especially P.S. one

OFFSTAGEP.S. Wing:

Various objects for Freddie to
crash



NOISES OFF

On Top of Small Treads P.S.:

Broken phone shell
Screwdriver
Phone crash

Over Row of Chairs at Back:

Black sheets — for Tim
White sheet, headress,
burnous — for Poppy
Tim's coat

Prop Table with:

1. 2 plates of sardines
2. Plate with attachment
3. Tabloid newspaper, TV guide
showing

4. Bottle of whiskey—from
onstage

5. Folded tea towel
6. Small shovel
7. Spare tax letter
8. Tax letter
9. Tax demand
10. Envelope
11. Tube of glue

Under table:

12. Cabin bag with padding—no
bottle
13. Padded cardboard box
14. Cabin bag with padding—no
bottle
15. Cardboard box with files

Above Prop Table:

16. Bloody dressings
17. Sunglasses

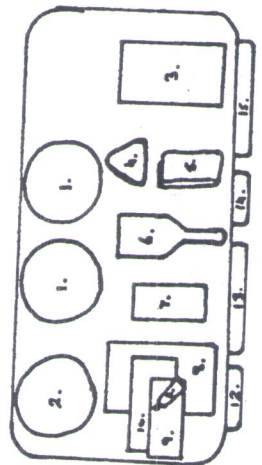
See drawing belowUpstairs:

Pin removed from linen cupboard
door

Knocking block
First aid box
China figure
Silver teapot

In O.P. Wing:

2 metal chairs for crash
2 chairs for artists

*Grand Theatre*

WESTON-SUPER-MARE

Proprietors: GRAND THEATRE (Weston-super-Mare) LIMITED
General Manager: E. A. GRADSHAW
The Grand Theatre Weston-super-Mare is a Member of the Grand Group
Evenings at 7.45

Matinee: Wednesday at 2.30
Saturday at 5.00 and 8.30

Otstar Productions Ltd present

• DOTTY OTLEY •
BELINDA BLAIR • GARRY LEJEUNE

in

NOTHING ON

by ROBIN HOUSEMONGER

with

SELDON MOWBRAY
BROOKE ASHTON
FREDERICK FELLOWES

Directed by LLOYD DALLAS

Designed by GINA BOXHALL
Lighting by ROD WRAY
Costumes by PATSY HEMMING

WORLD PREMIERE
PRIOR TO NATIONAL TOURS

Commencing Tuesday 15th January 1994 for One Week Only

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE AUDITORIUM

The use of cameras and tape recorders is forbidden.

The management reserve the right to refuse admission, also to make any alteration in the cast which may be rendered necessary by illness or other unavoidable causes.

From the Theatre rules "All exits shall be available for use during all performances".
"The fire curtain shall be lowered during each performance".

NOTHING ON

by
ROBIN HOUSEMONGER

Cast in order of appearance:

Mrs Clackett		DOTTY OTLEY
Roger Tramplemain		GARRY LEJEUNE
Vicki		BROOKE ASHTON
Philip Brent		FREDERICK FELLOWES
Flavia Brent		BELINDA BLAIR
Burglar		SELSDON MOWBRAY
Sheikh		FREDERICK FELLOWES

The action takes place in the living-room of the Brents' country home, on a Wednesday afternoon

for OTSTAR PRODUCTIONS LTD

Company & Stage Manager TIM ALLGOOD

Assistant Stage Manager POPPY NORTON-TAYLOR

Production Photographer MARTHA NORCHEESIE

Production credits

Sardines by Old Salt Sardines. Antique silverware and cardboard boxes by Mrs J. G. H. Norton-Taylor. Stethoscope and hospital trolley by Severn Surgical Supplies. Straitjacket by Kumfy Restraints Ltd. Coffins by G. Ashforth and Sons.

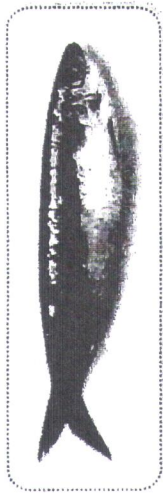
We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of
EUROPEAN BREWERIES in sponsoring this production.

'A Glimpse of the Noumenal'

(condensed from J G Stillwater: *Eros Untrousered* — *Studies in the Semantics of Bedroom Farce*.)

The cultural importance of the so-called 'bedroom farce,' or 'English sex farce,' has long been recognised, but attention has tended to centre on the metaphysical significance of mistaken identity and upon the social criticism implicit in the form's ground-breaking exploration of cross-dressing and trans-gender role-playing. The focus of scholarly interest, however, is now beginning to shift to the recurrence of certain mythic themes in the genre, and to their religious and spiritual implications.

The common sardine.
13.4 million are eaten
daily in Great Britain
alone. The word is
derived from the French,
sardine.



In a typical bedroom farce, a man and a woman come to some secret or mysterious place (cf Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard's Castle, etc) to perform certain acts which are supposed to remain concealed from the eyes of the world. This is plainly a variant of the traditional 'search' or 'quest', the goal of which, though presented as being 'sexual' in nature, is to be understood as a metaphor of enlightenment and transcendence. Some partial disrobing may occur, to suggest perhaps a preliminary stripping away of worldly illusions, but total nudity (perfect truth) and complete 'carnal knowledge' (i.e. spiritual understanding) are perpetually forestalled by the intervention of coincidental encounters (often with other seekers engaged in parallel 'quests'), which bear a striking resemblance to the trials undergone by postulants in various esoteric cults (cf *The Magic Flute*, *Star Wars*, etc).

According to evidence given to the Royal Commission on Procedures and Practice in the Sale of Real Estate, approximately 17% of estate agents admit to having on at least one occasion passed off a property they were selling as their own.

In 63% of these cases the intention was to impress a member of the opposite sex, and/or to provide accommodation for illicit sexual

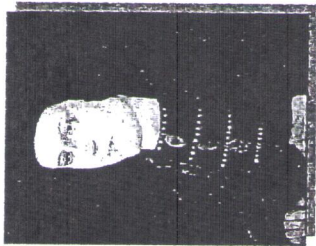
activity - though some witnesses had at one time or another used properties to secure a loan or other business advantage from gullible victims. One agent boasted that he had managed to have intercourse in the master bedroom, then sell his partner the property - and help himself to a case of champagne from the cellar and a pound and a half of strawberries from the garden.

A recurring and highly significant feature of the genre is a multiplicity of doors. If we regard the world on this side of the doors as the physical one in which mortal men are condemned to live, then the world or worlds concealed behind them may be thought of as representing both the higher and more spiritual plane into which the postulants hope to escape, and the underworld from which at any moment demons may leap out to tempt or punish. When the doors do open, it is often with great suddenness and unexpectedness, highly suggestive of those epiphanic moments of insight and enlightenment which give access to the 'other', and offer us a fleeting glimpse of the noumenal.

Another recurring feature is the fall or loss of trousers. This can be readily recognised as an allusion to the Fall of Man and the loss of primal innocence. The removal of the trousers traditionally reveals a pair of striped underpants, in which we recognise both the stripes of the tiger, the feral beast that lurks in all of us beneath the civilised exterior suggested by the lost trousers, and perhaps also a premonitory representation of the stripes caused by the whipping which was formerly the traditional punishment for fornication.

Posset (milk curdled with ale or vinegar) was one of the first foods to be processed by industrial methods. In the sixteenth century virtually every village had its posset-mill, though few have survived. Their functioning was based on the common observation that milk tends to curdle more readily on thundery summer days. In a posset-mill production was maintained throughout the year by allowing the milk to run into a heated curdling chamber where the flow of incoming ale or vinegar was ingeniously harnessed to operate a kind of simple theatrical thundersheet. The product was then packed in small 'yoggy pots', made from the scrota of wild yogs.

Janet Thrice: *The Tudor Food Industry*



An early pair of famous doubles - Edward IV and Leofric Leadbetter.

The confusion of identity caused by chance resemblance has always played a significant part in human affairs. Edward IV had a notorious lookalike, Leofric Leadbetter, a tallowboiler from Stony Stratford, who fooled many courtiers and visiting heads of state. Not even their wives could tell them apart. On one occasion Leadbetter gave the royal assent to three statutes and probably fathered the future King Edward V before the imposture was detected. Some historians believe that in the subsequent confusion it was in fact the king, not Leadbetter, who was hanged.

Farce, interestingly, is popularly categorised as 'funny'. It is true that the form often involves 'funny' elements in the sense of the strange or uncanny, such as supposedly supernatural phenomena, and behaviour suggestive of demonic possession. But the meaning of 'funny' here is probably also intended to include its secondary sense, 'provocative of laughter.'



Sardines are even more plagued than their human cousins by the problem of doubles and lookalikes.

This is an interesting perception. It scarcely needs to be said that laughter, involving as it does the loss of self-control and the spasmodic release of breath, a vital bodily fluid, is a metaphorical representation of the sexual act. But it can also occasion the shedding of tears, which suggests that it may in addition be a sublimated form of

Behind the Dressing Room Doors

DOTTY OTLEY (Mrs. Clackett) makes a welcome return to the stage to create the role of Mrs. Clackett after playing Mrs. Hackett, Britain's most famous lollipop lady ('Ooh, I can't 'ardly 'old me lolly up!') in over 320 episodes of TV's *On the Zebras*. Her many stage appearances include her critically acclaimed portrayal of Fru Säckett, the comic char in Strindberg's *Scenes from the Charnelhouse*. Her first appearance ever? In a school production of *Henry IV Part I* - as the old bag-lady, Mrs. Duckett.

BELINDA BLAIR (Flavia Brent) has been on the stage since the age of four, when she made her debut in *Sinbad the Sailor* at the old Croydon Hippodrome as one of Miss Toni Tanner's Ten Tapping Tots. She subsequently danced her way round this country, Southern Africa, and the Far East in shows like *Zippedy-Dooda!* and *Here Come les Girls!* More recently she has been seen in such comedy hits as *Don't Mr. Duddle!*, *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?*, and *Twice Two Is Sex*. She is married to scriptwriter Terry Wough, who has contributed lead-in material to most of TV's chat shows. They have two sons and three retrievers.

Dignity is the straitjacket of the soul. Its loss is our first stumbling step towards sanity. - Friedrich Nietzsche

GARRY LEJEUNE (Roger Tramplemain) while still at drama school won the coveted Laetitia Daintymen Medal for Violence. His television work includes *Police!*, *Crime Squad*, *Swat*, *Forensic*, and *The Nick*, but he is probably best-known as 'Cornetto', the ice-cream salesman who stirs the hearts of all the lollipop ladies in *On the Zebra*.

SELSDON MOWBRAY (Burglar) first 'trod the boards' at the age of 12 - playing Lucius in a touring production of *Julius Caesar*, with his father, the great Chelmsford Mowbray, in the lead. Since then he has served in various local reps, and claims to have appeared with every company to have toured Shakespeare in the past half-century, working his way up through the Mustardseeds and the various Boys and Sons of, to the Balthazars, Benvolios, and Le Beaus; then the Slenders, Lennoxes, Trinculos, Snouts, and Froths; and graduating to the Scroops, Poloniuses, and Aguecheeks. His most recent film appearance was as Outraged Pensioner in *Green Willies*.

British citizens claiming for tax purposes to live abroad cannot spend more than 6 months in the country during a single tax year, or more than 91 days in any one tax year calculated over 4 years. In 1996 a helpline, TaxBreak, was set up to counsel visiting tax exiles suffering anxiety or guilt about their situation. Many of its clients report recurrent nightmares involving sudden chance encounters with officials of Inland Revenue.

mourning. Indeed we recognise here a symbolic foretaste of death. If sneezing has been widely feared because it is thought that during a sneeze the soul flies out of the body, and may not be recaptured (whence 'Bless you!' or 'Gesundheit!'), then how much more dangerous is laughter. Not once but over and over again the repeated muscular contractions and expulsions of breath drive the 'soul' forth from the body. The danger of laughter is recognised in such expressions as 'killingly funny,' and 'I almost died.' There is a lurking fear that even more spectacular violence may ensue, and that a farce may end with a bloodletting as gruesome as in *Oedipus* or *Medea*, if people are induced to 'split their sides' or 'laugh their heads off.'

Fear of the darker undertones of bedroom farce has sometimes in the past led to its dismissal as 'mere entertainment'. As the foregoing hopefully makes clear, though, financial support by the Arts Council or a private sponsor for the tour of a bedroom farce would be by no means out of place.

The first item of background information in a theatre programme is believed to have appeared in 1599, for a revival of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It provided a brief history of the rise and fall of the North Italian city states, and an inset panel containing a list of useful Italian phrases for travellers.

THIS SPACE TO LET

Please apply to *The Manager, Grand Theatre*

BROOKE ASHTON (Vicki) is probably best known as the girl wearing nothing but 'good, honest, natural froth' in the Hauptbahnhofbrau lager commercial. Her television appearances range from Girl at Infants' School in *On the Zebra* to Girl in Massage Parlour in *On Pro-bation*. Cinemagoers saw her in *The Girl in Room 14*, where she played the Girl in Room 312.

The most important technological advance in history, so far as the maintenance of moral standards is concerned, was the invention of the keyhole. - George Santayana

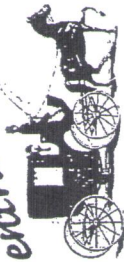
FREDERICK FELLOWES (Philip Brent) has appeared in many popular television series, including *Calling Casualty*, *Cardiac Arrest*, *Out-Patients*, and *In-Patients*. On stage he was most recently seen in the controversial all-male version of *The Trojan Women*. He is happily married, and lives near Crawley, where his wife breeds pedigree dogs. 'If she ever leaves me,' he says, 'it will probably be for an Irish wolf-hound!'

ROBIN HOUSEMONGER (Author) was born in Worcester Park, Surrey, into a family 'unremarkable in every way except for an aunt with red hair who used to sing all the high twiddly bits from *The Merry Widow* over the tea-table.' He claims to have been the world's most unsuccessful gents hosiery wholesaler, and began writing 'to fill the long hours between one hosiery order and the next.' He turned this experience into his very first play, *Socks Before Marriage*, which ran in the West End for nine years. Two of his subsequent plays, *Briefs En-courier* and *Hanky Panky*, broke box office records in Perth, Western Australia. *Nothing On* is his seventeenth play.

LLOYD DALLAS (Director) 'read English at Cambridge, and stage-craft at the local benefits office.' He has directed plays in most parts of Britain, winning the South of Scotland Critics' Circle Special Award, and going on to a highly successful season for the National Theatre of Sri Lanka. In recent years he has probably become best known for his brilliant series of 'Shakespeare in Summer' productions in the parks of the inner London boroughs.

Desperation tells a thousand tales - and each of those thousand beggets a thousand more. - Moldovian proverb

Make a
dramatic
entrance!



...with a pair of genuine reproduction coach-lamps from the reproduction lighting department at

**CURDEN &
STRAYGOLD**

the store in Weston-super-Mare.

Your Leading
Lady...



tonight or any other night, from West of England Escorts. Ring 4322, and let one of our charming hostesses show you the high spots of Weston-super-Mare, Burnham-on-Sea, and Yatton.



**WEST OF ENGLAND
ESCORTS**

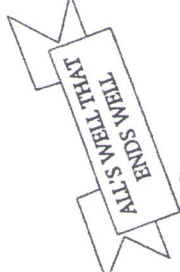
Spruitt's No. 4 'Seaspray' line, for The Perfect Cast.



Spruitt's Fishing Tackle, 97 The Promenade (opp. the South Pier).

*G. Ashford
& Sons*

**FUNERAL DIRECTORS,
48 STATION APPROACH.**



We understand