

Dotty, Garry, Brooke Lloyd
(Ms Clackett) (Roger) (Vicki)

NOISES OFF

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DOTTY. Coming up like oranges and lemons.

GARRY. Listen, Dotty, your words are fine, your words are better than the, do you know what I mean? (To BROOKE.) Isn't that right?

BROOKE. (Her thoughts elsewhere.) Sorry?

GARRY. (To DOTTY.) I mean, OK, so he's the, you know. Fine. But, Dotty, love, you've been playing this kind of part for, well, you know what I mean.

LLOYD. All right? So Garry and Brooke are off, Dotty's holding the receiver...

GARRY. No, but here we are, we're all thinking, my God, we open tomorrow, we've only had a fortnight to rehearse, we don't know where we are, but my God, here we are!

DOTTY. That's right, my sweet. Isn't that right, Lloyd?

LLOYD. Beautifully put, Garry.

GARRY. No, but we've got to play Weston-super-Mare all the rest of this week, then Yeovil, then God knows where, then God knows where else, and so on for God knows how long, and we're all of us feeling pretty much, you know... (To BROOKE.) I mean, aren't you?

BROOKE. Sorry?

LLOYD. Anyway, you're off, Dotty's holding the receiver...

GARRY. Sorry, Lloyd. But sometimes you just have to come right out with it. You know?

LLOYD. I know.

GARRY. Thanks, Lloyd.

LLOYD. OK, Garry. So you're off...

GARRY. Lloyd, let me just say one thing. Since we've stopped. I've worked with a lot of directors, Lloyd. Some of them were geniuses. Some of them were bastards. But I've never met one who was so totally and absolutely... I don't know...

LLOYD. Thank you, Garry. I'm very touched. Now will you get off the fucking stage? (Exit GARRY through the front door.) And, Brooke... BAM

BROOKE. Yes?

LLOYD. Are you in?

BROOKE. In?

LLOYD. Are you there?

BROOKE. What?

LLOYD. You're out. OK. I'll call again. And on we go. (*Exit BROOKE through the front door.*) So there you are, holding the receiver.

DOTTY. So there I am, holding the receiver. I put the receiver back and I leave the sardines.

MRS. CLACKETT. Always the same story, isn't it...

LLOYD. And you take the newspaper.

(*She comes back, and picks up the newspaper and the receiver.*)

DOTTY. I leave the sardines, I take the newspaper.

MRS. CLACKETT. Always the same story, isn't it. It's a weight off your mind, it's a load off your stomach.

DOTTY. And off at last I go.

LLOYD. Leaving the receiver.

(*She replaces the receiver and goes off into the study. Enter ROGER as before, with the cardboard box.*)

ROGER ... I have a housekeeper, yes, but this is her afternoon off. (*Enter VICKI as before.*) So we've got the place entirely to ourselves. (*ROGER goes back and brings in a flight bag, and closes the front door.*) I'll just check. (*He opens the door to the service quarters. VICKI gazes round.*) Hello? Anyone at home? (*Closes the door.*) No, there's no one here. So what do you think?

VICKI. Great. And this is all yours?

ROGER. Just a little shack in the woods, really. Converted posset mill. Sixteenth-century.

VICKI. It must have cost a bomb.

ROGER. Well, one has to have somewhere to entertain one's business associates. Someone coming at four o'clock, in fact. Arab sheikh. Oil. You know.

VICKI. Right. And I've got to get those files to our Basingstoke office by four.

ROGER. Yes, we'll only just manage to fit it in. I mean, we'll

Poppy, Dotty, Frederick, Lloyd, Garry, Belinda, Selstdon, Brooke, Tim
(Mrs. Jackett) (Phillip) (Roger) (Flavia) (Vicki)

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(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

POPPY. He's not in the dressing room.

DOTTY. You've looked in the lavatories?

POPPY. Yes.

DOTTY. And the scenery dock and the prop room and the paint store?

POPPY. Yes.

FREDERICK. (To DOTTY.) You've worked with him before, of course.

LLOYD. (To POPPY.) Ring the police. (Exit POPPY into the wings. To TIM.) Finished the doors? Right, get the Burglar gear on. (Exit TIM into the wings. Enter SELSDON MOWBRAY from the back of the stalls. He is in his seventies, and is wearing his BURGLAR gear. He comes down the aisle during the following dialogue, and stands in front of the stage, watching everyone on it.) I'm sorry, Dotty, my love.

DOTTY. No, it's my fault, Lloyd, my love.

LLOYD. I cast him.

DOTTY. 'Let's give him one last chance,' I said. 'One last chance!' I mean, what can you do? We were in weekly rep together in Peebles.

GARRY. (To DOTTY.) It's my fault, my precious. I shouldn't have let you. This tour for her isn't just, do you know what I mean? This is her life savings!

LLOYD. We know that, Garry, love.

(BELINDA puts a hand on DOTTY's arm.)

DOTTY. I'm not trying to make my fortune.

FREDERICK. Of course you're not, Dotty.

DOTTY. I just wanted to put a little something by.

BELINDA. We know, love.

GARRY. Just something to buy a little house that she could I mean, come on, that's not so much to ask.

(BROOKE puts a hand to her eye.)

BELINDA. (*To BROOKE.*) Don't *you* cry, my sweet! It's not *your* fault!

BROOKE. No, I've got something behind my lens.

FREDERICK. Yes, you couldn't expect Brooke to keep anyone in sight.

DOTTY. (*Pointing at SELSDON without seeing him.*) But he was standing right there in the stalls before we started! I saw him!

BROOKE. Who are we talking about now?

BELINDA. It's all right, my sweet. We know you can't see anything.

BROOKE. You mean *Selsdon*? I'm not *blind*. I can see *Selsdon*.

(*They all turn and see him.*)

BELINDA. *Selsdon*!

GARRY. Oh my God, he's here all the time!

LLOYD. Standing there like Hamlet's father.

FREDERICK. My word, *Selsdon*, you gave us a surprise. We thought you were... We thought you were... not there.

DOTTY. Where have you been, *Selsdon*?

BELINDA. Are you all right, *Selsdon*?

LLOYD. Speak to us!

SELSDON. Is it a party?

BELINDA. 'Is it a party?'!

SELSDON. Is it? How killing! I got it into my head there was going to be a rehearsal. (*He goes up on to the stage.*) I was having a little postprandial snooze at the back of the stalls so as to be ready for the rehearsal.

BELINDA. Isn't he lovely?

LLOYD. Much lovelier now we can see him.

SELSDON. So what are we celebrating?

BELINDA. 'What are we celebrating?'!

(*Enter TIM from the wings.*)

TIM. I've looked all through his dressing room. I've looked all through the wardrobe. I can't find the gear. (*LLOYD indicates*

/ Roger, Vicki, Phillip, Lloyd, Poppy, Belinda, Dotty
(Garry) (Brooke) (Frederick) (Flavia)

NOISES OFF

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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.)

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

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

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

PHILIP. I should never have touched it.

FLAVIA. No, it's lovely.

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

(Exit PHILIP into study.)

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.)

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.

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

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

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

ROGER. I didn't lock the door!

VICKI. Someone locked the door!

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

VICKI. Like what?

[ROGER] In your underwear.

VICKI. OK, I'll take it off.

Stop [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.)

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

LLOYD. Hold it.

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

LLOYD. Hold it. We have a problem.

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

BROOKE. Left.

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

OMNES. *(Off.)* Left one!

(Enter DOTTY, BELINDA, and POPPY.)

[FREDERICK] It could be anywhere.

[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.)

[POPPY] Where did you last see it?

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

[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

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

FREDERICK. Yes, everyone look under their feet.

GARRY. No one move their feet.

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

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.)

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

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

FREDERICK. But can she see anything without them?

LLOYD. Can she hear anything without them?

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

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

POPPY. Ugh!

BROOKE. Oh. Sorry.

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

GARRY. Ugh!

BROOKE. Sorry.

(DOTTY hurries to his aid.)

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

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

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

Tim, Belinda, Selston, Poppy, Frederick
(Flavia) (Phillip)

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NOISES OFF

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

FREDERICK. Oh dear, Dotty's got her eye on someone, has she?

SELSDON. 'I've seen you creeping off into corners with that poor halfwit.'

FREDERICK. Which poor halfwit?

BELINDA. Never mind, my love.

FREDERICK. Not Tim?

BELINDA. No, no, no.

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

(Enter POPPY from the dressing rooms.)

POPPY. I think they're coming.

BELINDA. They're coming!

FREDERICK. They're coming!

SELSDON. I knew they wouldn't.

POPPY. And you're here!

SELSDON. Oh, yes, every word!

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.)

TIM. They're coming.

BELINDA. And we've found Selston.

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

SELSDON. How? Through the wall!

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

POPPY. I've done it!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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?

(TIM) *(Realizes.)* Oh...

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

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.)

BELINDA. Garry, my sweet!

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

(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.)

SELSDON. What does he say?

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

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.)

BELINDA. Dotty, my love!

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

(FREDERICK) Are you all right?

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-