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Sam Cree Plays

Don't Tell the Wife by Sam Cree

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DON'T TELL THE WIFE

CAST

ISOBEL TATE

EDNA WILLIS

BOBBIE WILLIS

CYRIL LINDSAY

GEORGETTE

ERIC TWEEDY

BASIL CHARRINGTON

HILDA SMILEY

The action of the play takes place in the living room of the Willis home

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT ONE, Scene One

A Monday afternoon in April

ACT ONE, Scene Two

Later that evening

ACT TWO, Scene One

The following evening

ACT TWO, Scene Two

One hour later

ACT THREE

The following evening

ACT ONE

Scene One

The living-room of the Willis's home

It is a pleasant room, tastefully furnished in modern style. To L of rear wall open rail staircase leading off, between this and door which leads to the kitchen is a drop-leaf table with vase of flowers, above is a wedding photograph. There is a modern tiled fireplace DL, a sofa stands C with armchairs to match above and below fireplace. There is a telephone on a small coffee table to R of sofa. Another table stands below fireplace with a TV set. Above the fireplace is a sideboard, on it a collection of silver cups. A door DL leads to the hall and other parts of the house. Upright chairs stand above and below this door and also to R of kitchen door. Above the hall door is a radiogram. There is a Standard Lamp UL and small table lamp on radiogram. At night the room is lit by chandelier operated by switch at hall door.

TIME

A Monday afternoon in April.

*When the curtain rises ... ISOBEL TATE, a woman in her early forties is sitting on the settee, her hair a mass of home-perm curlers. She sits perfectly still under the hair drier reading a book entitled *SEX AND THE SINGLE GIRL* reacting with relish to the 'photographs' in the book. After a few minutes she touches her hair, then, hides the book at the side of the sofa and calls*

ISOBEL: Edna ... I'm ready when you are ... Edna

EDNA: (off kitchen) Coming.

(EDNA appears in the kitchen doorway with smoking frying pan in her hand.)

EDNA: I've only to turn this ... it's for Bobbie's tea ... won't be a minute ...
(business with pan. One small piece of liver drops from the pan. EDNA picks it up -wipes it on her apron and puts it back in the pan) "What the eye doesn't see the heart won't grieve over".

ISOBEL: It smells lovely ...

EDNA: (Spreading the contents of the pan) It's liver and onions. My Bobbie loves a nice bit of liver smothered in onions. He's onion mad. He eats onions with everything ... he even ate them on our honeymoon in Bray. And just to prove he wasn't bigoted, on the Friday he had fish and onions.

ISOBEL: He ate onions on your honeymoon?

EDNA: He did. Then I didn't notice. Now after twenty five years it doesn't make any difference. If Bobbie pecks me on the cheek more than once in the same week I think he's being passionate. (Turning back to the kitchen) Still just for once it would be nice to go to bed with a man smelling of 'Brut' instead of onions. (Exits to kitchen)

ISOBEL: (Calling after her) You know ... I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't helped me with my hair. I never remembered till this afternoon that this was the night of Harry's office dance ... and Harry likes to show me off to his boss. His boss loved the dress I wore last year. He was so impressed he said he'd love to see more of me.

EDNA: (Enters) I thought it was cut low enough. (Crosses to Isobel and removes the hair drier)

ISOBEL: But you know we're lucky having two good men (conspiratorially) not like that poor Mrs Wilson...a terrible thing that.

EDNA: (Behind the settee taking out Isobel's curlers) What's terrible?

ISOBEL: (Eagerly) Haven't you heard?

EDNA: No.

ISOBEL: (Delighted) Well ... you realise I'm telling you this in confidence. It was told to me in confidence by Mrs Fletcher, who got it in confidence from Mrs Simpson. (Warming to the subject) Well, it seems, after being married for over twenty years her husband's left her for a younger woman ... and him with a weak heart.

EDNA: (Shocked) It hasn't been all that weak ... the dirty old brute ... and I always thought he was a quiet wee man.

ISOBEL: Oh, there the worst 'course you know what was wrong don't you? He was fifty.

EDNA: And what has being fifty got to do with it?

ISOBEL: Didn't you know? Fifty is the dangerous age for men. They feel they've got to prove themselves ... that they can still get women interested in them. Still

I'm lucky, Harry's only forty-six, I've four years to go. What age is your Bobbie?

EDNA: (REACTING) Bobbie'll be fifty on Thursday. I've only four days to go!

ISOBEL: Still I wouldn't worry about Bobbie. I can't see him bothering with girls ... I mean he's a quiet man.

EDNA: You said they were the worst.

ISOBEL: Yes, well that's true. But look I wouldn't worry, you can always tell if anything's up by the signs.

EDNA: What signs?

ISOBEL: If they start taking an interest in themselves. You know the sort of thing ... using after shave ... shining their shoes ... brushing their teeth ...

EDNA: You mean the sort of thing a happily married man doesn't do?

ISOBEL: So you see, you've no worries about Bobbie. I mean, he's always scruffy looking isn't he? (Edna smiles in agreement then reacts .. and pulls hard on one of the curlers causing pain to Isobel... Isobel yells)

EDNA: (Smiling down at her) Sorry.

ISOBEL: (Recovering) Still it's Spring and men are inclined to get a wee bit frisky.

EDNA: Spring or no Spring ... my Bobbie hasn't been frisky for years.

ISOBEL: Just watch he doesn't start going on tonics and vitamin pills. 'The stuff that fortifies the over forties.'

EDNA: Bobbie doesn't bother with anything like that. An Alka-Seltzer or a glass of Andrews, but nothing that would start him running ... after girls I mean.

ISOBEL: How long has it been since he took you out for the evening?

EDNA: Oh, it hasn't been all that long.

ISOBEL: (Pointed) When?

EDNA: Christmas.

ISOBEL: Christmas. And it's now the middle of April.

EDNA: Well, he's been very busy since he started doing all the Council plumbing and he does a lot of his business at night.

ISOBEL: Oh yes, I'm sure. What sort of books does he read?

EDNA: Why. What has reading books got to do with it?

ISOBEL: Because you can always tell how a man's mind is working by what he reads. You know them SPICY books. So what does Bobbie read?

EDNA: The Plumber's Gazette! And I can assure you there's nothing spicy in that. I've yet to see a sexy drainpipe. The very idea of my Bobbie reading those kinds of books. (Crosses to sideboard to get hand mirror)

ISOBEL: (Retrieving the book from the side of the settee) Oh, how about this then? He didn't tell you he was reading this ... did he? (Reads cover) "SEX AND THE SINGLE GIRL".

EDNA: (Turning) That's mine.

(Edna quickly grabs the book and tucks it under a cushion)

ISOBEL: Well, of course, it's different for a woman reading a book like that ... men get so emotionally involved. It's got something to do with their glands.

EDNA: (Handing Isobel the hand mirror) My Bobbie's glands are quite normal, thank you.

ISOBEL: That's what Mrs Wilson thought until she saw the lipstick stains on her husband's collars and handkerchief.

EDNA: Mrs Wilson! They're all at it. What did she do?

ISOBEL: Oh, she was very clever about it. She didn't come straight out and accuse him. Oh no. She counted slowly to ten, and just quietly got herself a handsome male lodger, and, do you know, there hasn't been a trace of lipstick since ... and.. he takes her out every night. He's scared to leave her alone with the lodger. Now you're lucky. You've got a spare room and Harry knows somebody in work who's looking for a place ... a foreign student called .. er .. George Morrow. And you know what these foreigners are like tall, dark and handsome.

EDNA: Yes, and all smelling of Garlic. I've enough trouble with onions. So you can talk till the cows come home. I'm not having a lodger.

ISOBEL: (Rising & examining her hair in the mirror) I know, I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I mean you trust Bobbie, don't you?

EDNA: I did. I mean ... I do ... I do.

ISOBEL: (Crossing with mirror to sideboard) Thanks for doing my hair.

EDNA: (Mournfully) Pleasure.

ISOBEL: (Putting on head scarf) What time does Bobby come home?

EDNA: He's never home before six.

ISOBEL: (Looking at watch) Well look, it's only half past five. Why don't you come up to my house for fifteen minutes and have a look at my new dress.

EDNA: (Crossing to kitchen) Alright. I'll just turn the pan down. Onions burn very easily. (Exits into kitchen)

ISOBEL: Right, follow me up (crosses to front door) and, Edna, keep giving him plenty of onions. (Out front) Men that eat onions never go astray! (Exits to hall)

(Edna enters from kitchen, taking off her apron and pulling on a coat)

EDNA: (To herself) The very idea of my Bobbie going astray. He wouldn't like to ... he wouldn't want to ... he wouldn't dare! Mrs Know-all saying I can trust him. Of course I can trust him. I don't need her to tell me. I can trust him (raised voice to wedding photograph) or by heavens Bobby Willis ... I'll know the reason why! (Exits to hall)

(A few moments after the door has closed, Bobbie appears at the kitchen doorway. He is dressed in working clothes and carrying a Plumber's Bag)

BOBBIE: Edna love...I'm home ... Edna (He leaves his plumber's bag at the entrance and cautiously approaches the stairs calling) I'm home. (Speaks to someone out in the kitchen) It's alright, she's not here you can come in.

(From the kitchen a tall gawky youth of about twenty-one enters. This is Cyril Lindsay, Bobbie's apprentice. As he enters the room timorously, he trips over the toolbag and falls flat on his face)

BOBBIE: Look sit down, before you break something.

(Cyril sits on settee)

Now Cyril, what was it you wanted to see me about so private?

CYRIL: (Looking round) Are you sure we're alone?

BOBBIE: Yes, apart from the fact that that sofa's wired up to a tape recorder in the other room.

CYRIL: Yes ... (Reacts) Eh? (Leaps out of the settee)

BOBBIE: (Pushing him down again) Will you sit down and tell me what it is you wanted to ask me.

CYRIL: (Clearing his throat) Well Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... as you know I've been your apprentice for the past five years and you've taught me everything I know.

BOBBIE: Yes, and you still know nothing.

CYRIL: And, well ... Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... during that time I've come to look on you as a father figure. Never once have you shouted at me .. except for the time when I accidentally dropped the hot lead down your back.

BOBBIE: (Rubbing the back of his neck) Yes ... I think I did say something to you at the time.

CYRIL: I still don't know what half the words meant.

BOBBIE: Well, don't do it again to find out.

CYRIL: No Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... Indeed I won't, my mother told me off, she said I should be more careful.

BOBBIE: Your mother's quite right.

CYRIL: Yes, she said some of the hot lead could have off you onto me.

BOBBIE: (Big reaction) Give my regards to your mother.

CYRIL: Oh, I will .. Bobbie ... Mr Willis . As I said I have come to look on you as a father to me.

BOBBIE: Don't go on about me being your father.

CYRIL: Yes, Bobbie ... Mr Willis. I would like your advice on a very personal matter. (Looks round his right shoulder, Bobbie does likewise) I would like your advice on ... (Looks round his left shoulder, without thinking Bobbie follows his gaze)

BOBBIE: Will you stop doing that. What is it?

CYRIL: (Quickly) I'd like your advice on girls!

BOBBIE: Girls! You mean you want to know ... (Looks over his right shoulder and then realises) See that! You've got me at it now. Do you want to know the facts of life?

CYRIL: (Giggling) Oh no. I know all about that...I'm not as stupid as I look.

BOBBY: You couldn't be as stupid as YOU look.

CYRIL: I know that girls are made different from

BOBBIE: That's a start anyhow.

CYRIL: No, you see Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... I go to this youth club and there are these two girls. They keep chasing me and wanting to mother me.

BOBBIE: Are you sure it's not smother you?

CYRIL: You see Bobbie, Mr Willis, my problem is this. One of them, Hilda, is very plain and wholesome looking and the other one, Ester, she's glamorous and intriguing. I like them both, but which one should I start going out with ... steady like?

BOBBIE: If you're looking for a wife ... go for the plain one every time. Because if you marry the glamorous one and she runs away you'll be upset, whereas if the plain one leaves you ... you couldn't care less.

CYRIL: (Taking photograph from pocket) This is a photograph ... (Hands this to BOBBIE)

BOBBIE: (seeing photo ... reacts) Oh yes ... ah well ... never mind. You'll be out at work most of the time. And besides there's no danger of anybody running away with that one. (Takes another quick look at photo ... shudders ... hands it back)

CYRIL: (Taking another photo from wallet) Now ... would you like to see the PLAIN one?

BOBBIE: (Reacting) Eh! ... No ... No thanks ... not until I get my tea.

CYRIL: (Looking at both photos) One's very passionate and the other's a good cook. Which would you say?

BOBBIE: (On exit to kitchen) Depends what you're wanting for your supper.

CYRIL: Eh ... oh aye ... (sniggers) I see what you mean.

(CYRIL crosses to radio, switches it on. From it comes music. He twirls the nobs ending with someone speaking in Irish. BOBBIE enters.)

CYRIL: I've got Radio Eireann.

BOBBIE: Well, switch it off. Edna's an out and out Unionist. If she came in and that was on she'd go mad.

(CYRIL switches off radio.)

Did you fix up about me seeing the dog tonight?

CYRIL: Yes. It's all fixed ... Mr Sutton's going to ring tonight about when you can see it. He says it's the fastest greyhound he's ever had.

BOBBIE: Shush. Not so loud. The wife doesn't know I'm getting it. When you're married you'll find out a transaction like this has to be broken very gently, especially after what happened today.

CYRIL: You mean about you being suspended from work for a week?

BOBBIE: Yes. And keep your voice down. If Edna finds out I went into a bathroom to fix a plug and couldn't because there was a woman in the bath, there'll be hell to pay.

CYRIL: She'll believe you if you tell her the truth that you went into the wrong flat.

BOBBIE: Look, the Council didn't believe me when the woman complained. According to her I stood there leering at her with lust filled eyes. I haven't had lust filled eyes in years.

CYRIL: How are you going to explain to Edna ... Mrs Willis ... that you've been suspended?

BOBBIE: I'm not ... every day this week I'm going out in the morning and coming home at the usual time and with the overtime I've been doing I can give her the same house-keeping and she'll be none the wiser.

CYRIL: She'll want to know why you're in early tonight.

BOBBIE: You're right. I'm never in before six ... come on.

(BOBBIE pushes CYRIL in front of him towards hall door. CYRIL opens it then closes it again.)

BOBBIE: What's the matter?

CYRIL: It's your wife ... she's coming in the front door.

BOBBIE: Quick ... out the back door.

(They make mad dash across the room towards kitchen door, with CYRIL tripping and falling and BOBBIE bundling him into the kitchen only to return for his tool bag. He just clears his exit as EDNA enters hall door.)

EDNA: (Muttering to herself) The cheek of that Isobel one. Saying my Bobbie might be running around with other women. So he's fifty and it's Spring, that doesn't mean anything.

(During the remainder of speech EDNA prepares table for meal.)

Not to my Bobbie ... a good home ... good food ... a clean bed. What more does any man want? (Reacts on thought of this) No ... not ... my Bobbie. Still his sister was a bit free with the Americans. It might run in the family. No ... No ... Forget it Edna. What if he is a bit tired at night. That's because he works a lot of overtime. Of course it is. (Thinks on this) He never used to work four nights a week. He never used to work one night a week. But then plumbers are bound to be busy in the winter time. But it's not Winter. It's spring. And he's fifty.

(Sound of door at kitchen closing.)

BOBBIE: (Singing ... off) They tried to tell us we're too young ... too young to really be in love. (EDNA reacts)

(BOBBIE enters kitchen. Sets down bag of tools.)

Oh love ... I'm home.

EDNA: (Arms folded) Who is she?

BOBBIE: Eh?

EDNA: I mean, how are you?

BOBBIE: Now that you mention it ... I feel a wee bit under the weather. I think maybe I need a tonic. (Takes off jacket and places behind chair)

EDNA: (Sarcastic) Maybe some Vitamin Pills.

BOBBIE: Good idea, for overtime takes a lot out of you.

EDNA: Oh, I'm sure it does.

BOBBIE: (Crossing to Edna) You know, I'm lucky having such an understanding wife.

(BOBBIE holds EDNA in embrace. During next few speeches with her head over BOBBIE's shoulder, EDNA closely examines his collar for lipstick stains.)

EDNA: Why were you singing when you came in?

BOBBIE: I've no idea. It must have come into my head.

EDNA: I've never heard you singing before. Why all of a sudden do you feel like singing? And why that particular song?

BOBBIE: I don't know ... Oh, now I remember (breaks embrace) Cyril my apprentice was singing it today and I suppose I got it into my head. Do you know what he asked my advice on? (Laughs) It was very funny. You'll never guess ... WOMEN. (Laughs) Now, what do I know about women? (Rolls up shirt sleeves and into kitchen to wash.)

EDNA: That's what I'd like to know.

BOBBIE: (Off ... kitchen) Imagine asking my advice on his love life.

EDNA: And what did 'BUBBLING BOBBIE' say?

BOBBIE: (Out of kitchen drying hands on towel) Well it seems he's got these two girls running after him, one's very plain and wholesome, the other one's glamorous and intriguing and he wanted to know which one he should go with.

EDNA: And I suppose you said the glamorous one.

BOBBIE: No, you see that's where you're wrong. I said ... take my advice Cyril. If you're looking for a wife ... go for the plain one every time.

EDNA: Oh, you did ... did you? That was a nice thing to say, wasn't it?

BOBBIE: (Hesitant) Well, you know what I mean.

EDNA: Oh yes ... I know what you mean. So you picked a wife that was plain and wholesome. (Sobs)

BOBBIE: I didn't say that.

EDNA: Yes you did. (Sobbing) To tell a woman she's plain is bad enough. But it's adding insult to injury when you say she's wholesome ... like some kind of Wheaten bread.

BOBBIE: I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that ... here ... dry your eyes. (Hands EDNA handkerchief.)

(EDNA still sobbing takes handkerchief. In opening it out to dry her eyes ... she spies something and cries out.)

EDNA: Lipstick!

BOBBIE: What! Where?

EDNA: (Pointing to centre of handkerchief) There! You ... you male Jezebel.
(Sobbing) You couldn't wait 'til you're fifty.

BOBBIE: (Examining handkerchief) That's not lipstick. It's red lead paint.

EDNA: (Snatching back handkerchief) No ... it's not.

BOBBIE: Yes ... it is ... smell it. (Pushes handkerchief under EDNA's nose.)

EDNA: (Sniffing handkerchief) I suppose it does smell of paint.

BOBBIE: (Taking back hanky) Of course it does. Honestly love ... I don't know what's come over you tonight.

EDNA: I know ... I'm sorry Bobbie. (Kisses him on cheek) I'll get your tea. It's your favourite ... liver and onions. (Moves towards kitchen)

BOBBIE: Good, for I'm starving.

(Phone rings.)

EDNA: It's alright love ... I'll get it. You sit down and rest yourself. You've had a hard day. (Lifts receiver) Hello ... Hello. (Taps call button) Hello ... that's funny, they've rung off. (Sets phone down) Now why would they ring off?

BOBBIE: Maybe they got the wrong number.

EDNA: I didn't give the number.

BOBBIE: Maybe they knew by your voice it was the wrong number.

EDNA: Or maybe 'SHE' got the right number and the wrong person.

(EDNA stares straight at BOBBIE who winces under the close scrutiny.)

BOBBIE: How about the tea love ... I'm famished.

EDNA: (Crossing to kitchen) That's the first wrong number we've ever had.

(As EDNA reaches kitchen door, the phone rings again. EDNA and BOBBIE race for it ... BOBBIE wins.)

BOBBIE: Hello ... Yes ... Yes ... Just a moment. (To EDNA who stands close beside him) It's alright love, it's for me. (EDNA remains beside him) It's for ME!

EDNA: Well talk then

BOBBIE: (Looks towards kitchen) There's something burning in the kitchen.

(EDNA moves quickly towards kitchen ... hesitates half way ... then makes quick exit into kitchen.)

BOBBIE: (After making sure EDNA's gone ... subdued voice) Hello ... Hello Mr Sutton, sorry about the delay. (Sits on settee) Yes, Cyril was telling me something about it. What's the dog's name again? Bridget. That's it ... Bridget.

(Unknown to BOBBIE ... EDNA appears in kitchen doorway, she is about to cross with dinner plate in hand ... then stops and listens to BOBBIE's conversation with mixed feelings and reactions.)

From what I've heard she sounds a winner all the way. What's her age again? Oh lovely. It's best to get them young. It means you can get them into your own way of going. What? Oh yes ... that's a nice weight. I don't like them fat. It definitely slows them down. Yes. She certainly sounds fast. It's her what? Her long legs. Oh yes ... that's a great help. It also means they can stick the pace better. What? No I've never had any desire for one before, then I thought, well I'm near fifty, if I don't have one now ... I'll never have one. So I'm hoping her price will not be too high. Oh of course, that's true. You have to pay for a good thing.

(At this stage EDNA starts counting slowly to ten mouthing the numbers.) Now the only trouble is the wife. You know what they're like. They don't seem to understand a man needs an outside interest. So I'll have to set her up some place until I can get the wife talked round into having her here. Yes ... Right ... See you in the 'White Horse' in half an hour. Yes ... I can't wait to get my hands on her.

(Through gritted teeth EDNA mouths the number ten and clears her throat. BOBBIE turns in alarm and talks quickly into the phone.)

Oh yes ... yes ... that'll be alright. Yes ... a dripping tap can be very annoying. (Smiles sweetly at EDNA who smiles sweetly back.) Oh yes ... you can rely on me. (Sets down receiver.)

EDNA: (Casually and sweetly) Who was that ... love?

BOBBIE: Just a business call ... love.

EDNA: (Setting dinner plate on table) What sort of business call ... love?

BOBBIE: The usual sort ... love.

EDNA: What sort of usual sort ... love?

BOBBIE: Just the usual.

EDNA: I see. Sit down and take your tea and eat up all those lovely onions.

BOBBIE: I haven't time ... love.

EDNA: Why haven't you time?

BOBBIE: (Putting on jacket) I have to go out.

EDNA: Where?

BOBBIE: A dripping tap. The telephone. (Moving to hall door) Don't wait up for me. It could turn out to be a long session. (Exits)

EDNA: (Looking down at dinner plate)
He never took his onions. That proves it's a woman.

(Phone rings. EDNA crosses and lifts receiver.)

(Into phone) Hello ... what? A dripping tap. Now look you ... I know all about this code double talk of yours. I hope you're ashamed of yourself leading my husband astray like this. He never looked at another woman until you got your evil claws into him. Just who are you anyhow? Oh ... sorry your Reverence. I'll get Bobbie to call at the Manse. Yes your Reverence. Goodbye your Reverence. (Sets down phone)

(To self) For goodness sake Edna get a grip on yourself. See how easy it is to get the wrong impression over a telephone call. There's probably some logical explanation for Bobbie's call. So what I'll do is put his onions and liver in the oven (crossing to plate) and have them hot for him coming in tonight. (Lifts plate.)

(Phone rings. EDNA answers it.)

(Continued - into phone) Hello ... yes. No, I'm sorry Mr Willis is out at the moment. Who's speaking? Mr Sutton. Yes ... I can give him a message. Tell him there's been a snag ... a snag ... yes ... Bridget's not available until nine. (Reacts) Oh yes ... don't worry ... I'll see he gets the message alright. (Sets down phone)

EDNA (To self) Count ten Edna. 'One ... two ... three ... four.' I'll paste him against that door ... 'five ... six ... seven ... eight ...' who will I exterminate ... (Lifts phone) Right Bobbie Willis ... two can play at that game. (Into phone) Hello Isobel ... this afternoon I said you could talk about a lodger until the cows come home ... well ... the cows have just come home. Get me a lodger ... Yes ... Right away. (Sets down phone) I'll show what's her name ... Bridget. (Reacts) BRIDGET! Could he not have got one of his own sort.

She'll have him up at Clonard before you can say Father O'Flynn. I know her game. She'll make him turn. Oh no, Bobbie Willis. My loss is not going to be their gain. No man of mine is going to play Hurley on a Sunday.

(EDNA turns on Radio. Voice speaking Irish ... followed by music 'Kelly the boy from Killaine'. EDNA reacts.)

He's turned already!

(BOBBIE enters.)

BOBBIE: Hello love ... I forgot my tools. Imagine me going out on a job and forgetting my tools.

EDNA: (Holding plate in hand) Yes imagine ... Oh and Bobbie ... there's something else you forgot.

BOBBIE: (Crossing to Edna) What was that?

EDNA: YOUR ONIONS! (Empties contents of plate over BOBBIE'S head)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

Scene Two

Later that evening.

Scene as before but now the curtains are drawn and the room is lit by chandelier. Music is coming from the gram. EDNA in angry mood is pacing up and down. She is wearing old faded dressing gown and dust-cap with curlers jutting out underneath. As she moves about room she picks up objects, tests them for weight finally selecting a vase ... takes out the flowers ... is about to throw out the water but changes her mind.

The music finishes on the radio and the ANNOUNCER is heard.

ANNOUNCER: (Bright and breezy) You're so right ... you're tuned to the 'Light' ... it's twelve midnight ...

EDNA: Twelve o'clock. Just wait 'til my Cinderella returns from the ball.

ANNOUNCER: And we continue our music through midnight with that old old favourite ... 'I wonder who's kissing her now.'

EDNA: (Reacting) I know WHO'S kissing her now ... my Bobbie. (Switches off radiogram) They're all the same. You give them the best years of your life. You nurse them when they're sick ... and boy is he going to be sick. You keep house for them ... you cook for them ... you wash for them ... you ... 'ACCOMMODATE' them. Not any more. No more Friday night specials. He's probably lying in her arms at this moment with her running her fingers through his hair, at least what there is of it ... and his glasses steamed up ... and her saying (mocking) "Oh Bobbie ... what a strong handsome man you are." And he's lying back lapping it up ... strong and handsome ... she doesn't know him. First sign of a cold and he's off to bed with four hot water bottles and his nose running like a water tap. Well may he sow his wild oats now ... For when he comes home the Thrasher's waiting for him. (Holds vase menacingly)

(Sound off.)

EDNA: (Continued) This is him now. (Switches off light) Right Bobbie Willis ... I hope you enjoyed yourself for you're in for a rude awakening ... I'll cool you down.

(The hall door opens and figure enters. EDNA throws water from vase ... the figure screams ... EDNA switches on light.)

EDNA Now ... Bobb ...

(ISOBEL is standing in hall doorway wearing full evening dress and with water dripping from her face.)

Isobel ... I'm very sorry ... I thought you were ... a ... ah ... a burglar. Here let me get you a towel. (Rushes into kitchen and returns with towel.)

ISOBEL: I'm soaked.

EDNA: I know. I'm sorry. (Handing her a towel) Would you like a cup of tea. They say it's very good for shock.

ISOBEL: I'd prefer a brandy, if you had one.

EDNA: Brandy ... Yes. (Crossing to sideboard) There should be some here since Christmas.

ISOBEL: I'm dying for a drink. Harry won't let me drink in front of his boss. He's due for promotion you see.

EDNA: I see. Here's the brandy.

ISOBEL: (Taking glass and bottle from EDNA) I'll pour it Edna. I know you. You'd give me far too much ... and I don't really like it.

(ISOBEL pours herself large glass of brandy.)

EDNA: Yes. (Holds up bottle) Well I'm glad you're not fond of it.

(ISOBEL takes long drink, then tops up her glass from brandy bottle and sets it in front of her on small table.)

ISOBEL: Where's Bobbie ... in bed?

EDNA: (Aside) I wouldn't be at all surprised. He's out on a job.

ISOBEL: I hope you don't mind me calling round so late.

EDNA: (Without conviction) No ... no.

ISOBEL: But I was coming back from the dance when I saw your light still on and your front door open and seeing how upset you sounded on the phone earlier I thought to myself I'd better call in case Bobbie and you had a row and maybe you were doing something foolish like lying in wait for him coming in.

EDNA: No ... no ... I'd never do anything as foolish as that.

ISOBEL: I hope not. For that's the worst thing you could do. It would turn him quicker to the other woman than anything else. (Takes long drink) This is lovely brandy.

EDNA: I think I'll have one myself. (Pours self a drink)

ISOBEL: That's the idea ... enjoy yourself. Why should men have all the pleasure. I'll have another one just to keep you company.

EDNA: (Sadly) Please do.

(ISOBEL takes bottle from EDNA and pours large amount into glass.)

ISOBEL: Come on drink up and cheer up. You look terrible. What's the matter?

EDNA: I'll have to tell somebody. (To ISOBEL) If I tell you something personal, will you treat it in confidence?

ISOBEL: (Interested) Of course. You know me.

EDNA: Yes. But I'll have to tell somebody. (Hesitant) Bobbie is ... Bobbie is ... (quickly) Bobbie's got himself a fancy woman.

ISOBEL: (Beaming) NO! I can't wait to tell ... ah ... I mean that's terrible Edna. You know I guessed as much when you rang about the lodger. Is this the first time?

EDNA: I think so. He said he's never had any desire for one before.

ISOBEL: What's she like? Have you seen her?

EDNA: No. I've only heard him talk about her on the phone. (In outburst) She's young ... slim ... can stick the pace and he couldn't wait to get his hands on her.

ISOBEL: It sounds serious.

EDNA: Worse than you think. She's one of 'THOSE'.

ISOBEL: You mean a prostitu...

EDNA: No ... a Catholic. The town's full of nice Protestant girls and he's to pick one of them

ISOBEL: It's the 'ITCH'. That's what it is ... the seven year itch.

EDNA: When he comes home he'll be scratched alright. I'll put the itch out of his head for the other six.

ISOBEL: No ... no ... that's the worst thing you could do. You must do what the Americans say ... 'Play it cool!' and look before you leap.

EDNA: He has looked ... and I'M leaping.

ISOBEL: You know Edna, you've only yourself to blame. I mean look at you ... old dressing gown ... dust-cap ... curlers ... Harry never sees me like that. You should look like me.

EDNA: I'd look stupid sitting watching the TV in full evening dress.

ISOBEL: I don't mean that. Look at it like this. When Bobbie comes home he'll have left a beautiful young woman smelling of exotic perfume ... her hair shimmering with a thousand sparkling highlights ... her tight fitting gown moulding the contours of her young body. Then he'll walk through the door and see you like this.

EDNA: I could take out the curlers.

ISOBEL: No. You must fight fire with fire. When he comes home you must be as glamorous as the other woman.

EDNA: How can I? Her hair has a thousand highlights. Mine's mousy brown. She has a tight fitting gown. My best dress needs let out four inches. She smells of exotic perfume. I smell of Lifebuoy.

ISOBEL: (Opening evening bag) You can borrow my perfume.

EDNA: Can I borrow your hair?

ISOBEL: You've that blonde wig you bought and never wore.

EDNA: I couldn't wear that.

ISOBEL: Nonsense. It'll make you look like a film star.

EDNA: Aye ... Lassie.

ISOBEL: Now, what are you going to wear? Have you a negligee?

EDNA: I've the one I had on my honeymoon. I haven't worn it since. It's all onion marks.

ISOBEL: Onion marks?

EDNA: Yes. He even ate them in bed.

ISOBEL: It's better than nothing.

EDNA: I'm certainly not going to wear nothing.

ISOBEL: Now the only thing left is your entrance

.

EDNA: My entrance?

ISOBEL: Yes. It's most important how you enter a room. The first impression counts. So go out and let me see how you intend to enter.

EDNA: (Crossing to hall door) This is daft.

ISOBEL: Go out and come in again ... and pretend I'm Bobbie.

EDNA: (On exit) I'll be put away. (ISOBEL takes drink from EDNA's glass)
(EDNA re-enters ... crosses to ISOBEL.)

EDNA: (Continued) (Deadpan voice) Hello Bobbie. Take me I'm yours.

ISOBEL: No ... no ... no. You can't come in and say ... Take me ... I'm yours.

EDNA: Why not? It's simple enough.

ISOBEL: No. All you have to say is hello ... just hello. He'll get the message.

EDNA: I hope so ... otherwise I'm going to look stupid standing there ... saying hello ... hello ... hello.

ISOBEL: Try it again.

EDNA: Just hello?

ISOBEL: Just hello.

(As EDNA exits ISOBEL takes another quick drink from her glass. EDNA re-enters.)

EDNA: (Quickly) Hello.

ISOBEL: That's far too quick. You must drag it out ... like this ... He ...
... oooo ... Make it sexy.

EDNA: He'll swear I'm sick.

ISOBEL: Try it again ... and this time full of emotion. (Gives example) With your hips swaying and your eyes rolling.

EDNA: (Crossing to door) He'll swear I'm drunk. (Exits)

(ISOBEL finishes off EDNA's drink ... EDNA enters doing the full vamp treatment.)

Hell ... oo ... oo ... oo ... OO ... (Reacts in pain) OHooo ... (Hand to hip)

ISOBEL: What's wrong?

EDNA: I think I've pulled a muscle.

ISOBEL: That may do ... quick get up the stairs and get changed. Can I use your phone?

EDNA: Yes. (Crosses to hall door ... stops and turns) No ... no ... this is stupid. If she wants him ... let her have him ... I don't care what you say, I'm not going to do it.

ISOBEL: She's a Catholic. She'll make him turn.

EDNA: I'll do it! (Quick exit)

(As EDNA exits ISOBEL follows behind her ... satisfied EDNA's out of ear shot she crosses to phone and quickly dials number ... pours herself the remains of the brandy bottle while she waits for the number to answer.)

ISOBEL: (Into phone) Hello ... Mrs Wilson ... Hello Joan ... This is Isobel Tate ... yes ... I know it's late, but believe me it's worth getting up out of bed for ... What I have to tell you ... You know Edna Willis, the plumber's wife? Well what do you think ... (Glances around)

ISOBEL Her man's started chasing around after other women ... Yes ... what ... only one that she knows of ... but I'm sure there's more ... there always is ... isn't there ... It's like smoking isn't it? Once they start they find it hard to stop ... Yes don't worry ... I'll keep you posted ... Oh and I don't need to tell you this has all been in the strictest confidence ... By the way do you know Mrs Fleming's number? No ... It's alright ... I'll get it in the book ... Yes ... right ... See you at the Women's Fellowship on Sunday.

(ISOBEL rings off ... crosses to hall door and calls.)

Near ready Edna?

EDNA: (Off) I've only to get my hair done ... in case this doesn't work out ... did you do anything about the lodger?

ISOBEL: I told Harry about it and he said he would fix it tonight at the dance. In

fact they'll probably come here direct after the dance. I forgot to ask him about it coming home, but I'm sure he did. He's very reliable my Harry. There's some men you couldn't trust to ... Sorry Edna ... I shouldn't have said that.

(Sound of back door closing.)

Here he is now ... Good luck Edna ... And don't forget a big entrance.

(ISOBEL crosses back into room to collect handbag on exit hall door.)

I wonder would Mrs Fleming be in bed? No, still better not tell her ... she can't keep a secret. (Exits)

(BOBBIE enters kitchen door. He has had a few drinks and looks very worn out. He moves very quietly into room looking around as he does so.)

BOBBIE: (Softly) Edna ... Edna ... Oh thank goodness she's gone to bed.

(BOBBIE crosses and flops down on settee.)

Oh I'll not be long until I'm in it myself. (Yawns) Oh I'm sleepy. I wish I was in bed without the trouble of going. (Slips off shoes) A few quick drags and then off to bed. (Takes out cigarettes and lights one.) Oh I hope Edna's sleeping, I'm in (yawns) no form for one of her face to face discussions. Still she was right about one thing ... I really must get some vitamin tablets ... I've never felt as tired. (Sets cigarette in ash tray and leans back on settee) Thank goodness for the man who invented bed ... he (yawns) deserves a medal ... he does ... (yawns) a medal ... a great big ... (yawns) medal.

BOBBIE

(As his head hits the back of the settee he is fast asleep. It is at this moment that EDNA makes her big entrance. She is wearing a vivid red negligee, long black earrings, bright blonde wig, full facial make-up, gold glitter dancing shoes. She takes three paces into room, stops and strikes pose.)

EDNA: (Deep sexy voice) Hell ... oo ... oo ... oo.

(EDNA holds pose until snore from BOBBIE makes her glance down at him asleep. With a look of disgust she exits and makes another entrance.)

(Much louder) Hell ... oo ... oo ... oo.

(All the reaction she gets from BOBBIE is another snore. With a determined look on her face she exits and makes another entrance, but

this time crosses to BOBBIE and, shouting in his ear: (almost a yell)
HELL ... OO ... OO ... OO.

(BOBBIE reacts, jumps to his feet in alarm.)

BOBBIE: Eh ... wha ... what ... where am I? (Peers at EDNA through sleepy eyes) Oh, excuse me Miss ... I thought this was my house.

(Turns to move away.)

EDNA: (Pulling him back) Bobbie Willis ... do you not know me?

BOBBIE: No, but I recognise the voice. (Peers again at EDNA) Is that you Edna?

EDNA: Yes, it's me.

BOBBIE: Come on love. Let's go to bed.

EDNA: I didn't get dressed up like this to go to bed. Do you not recognise this negligee?

BOBBIE: No. Who owns it?

EDNA: I own it. I got it for our honeymoon. You at least remember our honeymoon.

BOBBIE: Of course I remember our honeymoon. All those lovely platefuls of liver and onions. How could I ever forget?

EDNA: Is that all our honeymoon meant to you? Liver and onions?

BOBBIE: Of course not. Some days we had tripe and onions.

EDNA: Never mind the menus. Try and remember the nights we spent.

BOBBIE: (Flopping into armchair) Edna ... (yawns) I'm sleepy. Could we not just go to bed and remember in the morning?

EDNA: We're remembering now. (Walks as she talks dreamily) Do you remember that first night? We walked hand in hand along the promenade up to the cliff road. There wasn't another soul in sight. Just a big yellow moon shining down on two people in love. Suddenly you squeezed my hand and you said we'll stop here for a little while. You took off your coat and we sat down on the grass. (EDNA lies full length on the settee) You put your arms around me and held me so tight I could hardly breathe. Your lips touched my ear and I could feel

your warm passionate breath on my neck. With love in your eyes you turned to me and you said ...

(Loud snore from BOBBIE. Reaction from EDNA.)

BOBBIE! ... (BOBBIE stirs) (Loudly) WHEN I'M BEING SOFT AND SENTIMENTAL YOU LISTEN! (Softly) You said Edna ... I love you, and I said, Bobbie, I love you and we vowed never to part. Then you said ... let's go to bed.

BOBBIE: (Who has been half listening - yawns) Alright love. (Goes to rise, is pushed back by EDNA..)

EDNA: Not now. I'm talking about our honeymoon night.

BOBBIE: I want to go to bed.

EDNA: Well, you're not going. You're going to sit there and be romantic even if it kills you ... (Crosses to gram) See if you remember this. (Selects and places record on gram)

(From the gram comes the music of the old Al Jolson favourite ... 'Oh how we danced'.)

EDNA: Now, what does that remind you of?

BOBBIE: Al Jolson.

EDNA: Apart from Al Jolson. (Menacingly) Try again.

BOBBIE: (Almost in panic) Ah ... ah ... ah ...

EDNA: You don't know do you?

BOBBIE: Ah ... no.

EDNA: It's the tune the band was playing the first time we met.

BOBBIE: That was over twenty-five years ago.

EDNA: You could remember Al Jolson ... but you couldn't remember us.

BOBBIE: (Looking heavenward - away from EDNA) Of course I could remember ... I was only joking.

EDNA: Right then ... (arms outstretched) come on ...

BOBBIE: (Puzzled) Come on where?

EDNA: Come and dance with me

BOBBIE: Dance ... Edna ... I just want to go to bed.

EDNA: DANCE!

BOBBIE: Dance.

(BOBBIE reluctantly crosses to her.)

EDNA: And try and remember it's a waltz. The last time you did a quick step.

BOBBIE: (Weary) There's no chance of that now.

(They dance to music ... EDNA in full romantic remembrance ... BOBBIE just sleepy.)

EDNA: Do you remember that night ... I had gone to the dance with a girl friend. Half way through I saw you sitting in your Air Force uniform and I thought you looked very shy and it wasn't until the last waltz you came over and asked me to dance. Do you remember what you said?

BOBBIE: (Almost asleep) Let's go to bed.

EDNA: No, you said my name's Bobbie - can I have this dance and I said my name's Edna - yes you can - do you remember?

BOBBIE: (Eyes closed) Yes love.

EDNA: Then you saw me home. After we'd been standing for about ten minutes ... not knowing what to say ... you said ... "Can I kiss you Edna?" ... and I said ... "You're stronger than I am Bobbie" ... and you did and it was lovely. Do you remember?

BOBBIE: (Trance-like) Yes ... love.

(EDNA gets a bit suspicious of BOBBIE'S answers and holds him out at arm's length. His eyes are closed ... he is almost asleep.)

EDNA: And then the house collapsed and we both were killed. Do you remember?

BOBBIE: Yes ... love.

(EDNA moves back a few paces. Without her support BOBBIE just stands swaying fast asleep.)

EDNA: (Loudly) BOBBIE!

BOBBIE: (Reacts) Eh ... wh ... what ... Yes ... love ... (eyes close again)

EDNA: That does it ... Bobbie Willis ... I'm getting a lodger.

BOBBIE: Yes ... love.

EDNA: Do you hear me? I said ... (shakes BOBBIE on each word) I ... am ... getting ... a ... lodger! ... A male man lodger. He's coming tonight ... and he'll have the spare room and when you're out at work he'll come down here and make mad passionate passes at me. What do you say to that?

BOBBIE: (Now awake) I'll tell you what I say ... you're having no lodger here ... and I'm off to bed.

EDNA: (Delighted) Oh Bobbie. Then you can't bear the thought of another man making love to me.

BOBBIE: (Crossing to hall door) No. I need that spare room for my plumbing gear.

EDNA: (Reacting) YOU ... You ...

(Doorbell)

That's him now. Your plumbing gear goes out and he goes in.

BOBBIE: I don't want a lodger.

EDNA: Well ... you're getting one ... go on let him in.

(BOBBIE exits muttering. EDNA crosses to mirror to fix her hair.)
If this doesn't make Bobbie jealous, I don't know what will.
(BOBBIE enters.)

BOBBIE: Your lodger ...

(BOBBIE stands to one side and a beautiful young girl enters dressed in tight fitting evening gown.)

GIRL: (French accent) Hello ... I am Georgette Moreau. Everybody calls me George and I am so happy to be your ... how you say ... lodger.

(BOBBIE stands back leering. EDNA gives him dirty look.)

EDNA: Listen Georgie Girl ... there's been a mistake.

GIRL: Your name ... it is Willis?

BOBBIE: Oh yes.

GIRL: Then there is no mistake. I am at the place Harry told me to come.

BOBBIE: My name's Bobbie. You're very welcome ... (to EDNA) isn't she?

EDNA: (Dryly) Oh very.

BOBBIE: This is my wife Edna ... Edna ... Georgette ... George ...

GIRL: (To EDNA) Hello. You're not as fat as Harry said you were.

EDNA: You've made my day. Now look Georgette ...

GIRL: George.

EDNA: George ... We did think we had a room but my husband just told me he needs it for his plumbing gear. (Direct to BOBBIE) Isn't that right, Bobbie?

BOBBIE: That's right ... (to Girl) but don't worry, I'll soon find another place for it.

GIRL: (Making eyes at BOBBIE) Ah ... how sweet. (To EDNA) I think your Irishmen are wonderful.

EDNA: Irishmen! ULSTERMEN ... if you don't mind.

GIRL: Irishmen ... Ulstermen ... What is the difference?

EDNA: (Reacting) About eight of a family.

GIRL: I will learn all about these things. As I say ... when in Rome ...

EDNA: (Eyes flashing) Never mention that 'NAME' in this house again.

GIRL: I think maybe I should go to my room. I am very tired. The men at the dance would not leave me alone for one minute. Not that I mind ... I adore men. So if you can show me to my room

EDNA: Bobbie's too sleepy. I'll show you.

BOBBIE: No. It's alright Edna. I'm wide awake now. Where is your case George?

GIRL: I will collect it tomorrow.

BOBBIE: What about your night things? I know ... Edna'll lend you something of hers.

GIRL: It is alright. I never wear anything in bed. I prefer freedom of movement.

BOBBIE: (Deep swallow) Yes ... quite ...

GIRL: (Moving to stairs) Goodnight ... Edna.

EDNA: Goodnight.

GIRL: (On exit) I shall say goodnight to 'you' upstairs ... Bobbie.

BOBBIE: (Clears throat) Yes.

(As BOBBIE is about to follow GIRL ... EDNA holds him back.)

EDNA: Listen ... (mocking accent) BOBBIE ... Just show her the room. You don't need to tuck her in. And put your eyes back ... you'll trip over them.

(BOBBIE exits.)

EDNA (cont) (Pacing up and down) Oh no. We can't have this. Bad enough when he goes out and looks for it. I'm not going to bring it home for him. And as for Isobel's Harry ... just wait 'til I see him. Fat indeed. His Isobel's no 'Twiggy'. (Crosses to door) (Calls) Bobbie! (Back into room) Oh no. She'll have to go. "GEORGE MUST GO". "EDNA SAYS NO" (Calls loudly) BOBBIE!

(BOBBIE enters.)

EDNA: (Continued) Take that smile off your face

BOBBIE: I'm not smiling Edna.

EDNA: You're not smiling outwardly ... you're smiling inwardly. How's Fifi?

BOBBIE: She would like you to call her at six in the morning.

EDNA: SIX ... why six?

BOBBIE: I'd rather not tell you Edna.

EDNA: Tell me.

BOBBIE: She'd like you to call her for Mass.

EDNA: (Big reaction) MASS! (Starts counting to ten) One ... two ... three ...
four ... five ...

AS THE CURTAIN FALLS ...

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene One

The following evening.

As the curtain rises EDNA is finishing off hammering a nail into the back wall.

EDNA: (Testing nail) That should hold it.

(EDNA crosses and exits hall door and re-enters with large picture, the back of which is held to the audience.)

(Crossing with picture) Right Mademoiselle. We'll see if you can take the hint.

(She then hangs up picture of King William on his white horse.)
(Standing back to admire it)

That'll show her there's no doubt where we stand. (Dusts picture with handkerchief) You're lovely so you are ... lovely ... (yawns) We'll teach her to get me up at six to get her out to Mass. (Speaks to picture) I promise you that's the first and last time ... (Turns away then turns back to the picture)

And I'll tell you something else, there'll be no fish here on Friday - 'No Plaice Here' ... Heavens, that reminds me. I've nothing in for the tea. (Looks at clock) Half-five. I'll ring Bobbie at work and he can bring something home with him.

(EDNA crosses to 'phone and dials number. As she waits for 'phone to answer she looks across to picture.)

You're lovely. My bedroom wall's going to be bare without you. You went so well with my 'Love Thy Neighbour' picture. (Into phone) Hello ... Hello, can I speak to Mr Willis ... the plumber ... Yes the plumber ... yes ... I'll hold on ... (pause - into phone) Hello ... Bobbie ... What? He's not there? Have I missed him? He hasn't what? He hasn't been in all day ... He must have ... He left here for work this morning at his usual time with our lodger ... He never clocked in? Well he'll clock out I can tell you that ... What? A message for him when you see him tomorrow? You won't see him tomorrow ... He'll be in the hospital ...

(EDNA slams down phone and starts pacing up and down.)

If he's not at work where is he? Maybe he's had an accident ... or off somewhere with that French bit. I hope for his sake he's had an accident.

(Sound of door closing.)

(To picture) You think you had a battle? Wait till you see this one.

(BOBBIE enters.)

BOBBIE: Hello love.

EDNA: (In full temper) Never mind the "Hello love". Where were you? Where have you been? You weren't at work. What have you been doing?

(GEORGETTE enters. EDNA does quick look from her to BOBBIE.)

GEORGETTE:(To EDNA) Hello. How are you?

EDNA: Flaming!

GEORGETTE:Yes ... It is very warm. Could you take my coat, Bobbie?

(BOBBIE helps her off with coat. She is wearing a mini-skirted outfit underneath. BOBBIE does double-take at this.)

BOBBIE: We ... Ah ... bumped into each other at the corner.

EDNA: (With look at GEORGETTE'S ample figure) Well, it's a cert you didn't hurt yourself.

GEORGETTE:It was funny us running into each other, was it not?

EDNA: (With a look to BOBBIE) Oh highly comical. (Coughs as she straightens picture)

GEORGETTE:(Seeing picture) Is that a new picture?

(BOBBIE reacts at seeing picture in new position.)

EDNA: (Proudly) No ... it's old. But it is beautiful.

GEORGETTE:It is a lovely picture. He is so handsome.

EDNA: (Taken aback) You mean you like him?

GEORGETTE:Of course, he is my favourite man. (EDNA pleased) I love him on television when he says "HEY HO SILVER" ... (BOBBIE turns away in fear)

EDNA: (Reacting) Hey Ho Silver ... (Turns away) I will not be responsible for my actions. (Turns back) That is William, Prince of Orange ... King William ... of Glorious, Pious and Immortal memory ... and that, for your neglected education, is a picture of him on his horse crossing the Boyne.

GEORGETTE:Why did he cross the Boyne?

EDNA: Why ... why ... (to BOBBIE) You tell her. Words fail me.

GEORGETTE:Wait ... Don't tell me. I know why he crosses the Boyne. To get to the other side! What do you know ... I make a joke. (Laughs)

(BOBBIE starts to laugh but this is killed by look from EDNA.)

EDNA: And it might well be your last.

BOBBIE: It was just a joke, Edna.

EDNA: King William is no joke.

BOBBIE: (To GEORGETTE) I think you should go up to your room and unpack.

EDNA: Yes, I think you'd better.

GEORGETTE:Whatever you say Bobbie. Your husband is so kind. He helped me carry round my little bits and pieces and I am so grateful. (Loving look at BOBBIE who smiles nervously at EDNA) (On exit upstairs with case and sun-lamp - to EDNA) I bet you would miss your Bobbie ...

EDNA: Don't worry ... (lifts vase) I won't miss him. (Turns to BOBBIE) Now ... (mocking) BOBB-ie ... And where was my Bobbie today?

BOBBIE: At ... ah ... work ... of course ... (sits on settee)

EDNA: (Sweetly) And what sort of a day did my Bobbie have?

BOBBIE: The ... ah ... usual sort of day.

EDNA: (Moving behind settee) I see ... the usual ... get plenty of work done, did you?

BOBBIE: Yes ... yes ... plenty of work. Why do you ask?

EDNA: (Still sweetly) Oh, no reason Bobbie. I just like to take an interest in your work and (loudly - BOBBIE jumps in alarm) YOU WEREN'T AT WORK ... so ... (sweetly) tell me Bobbie ... Where were you? Tell Edna ... Bobbie ...

BOBBIE: Well you see Edna ... I ... ah ... ah ...

EDNA: Edna's waiting Bobbie.

BOBBIE: Well you see Edna.

EDNA: You've said that Bobbie.

BOBBIE: It's a long story Edna. I'll tell you after tea.

EDNA: We've plenty of time Bobbie for you're not getting any tea.

BOBBIE: Ah Edna ... I'm hungry ... my stomach thinks my throat's cut.

EDNA: (Lifting bread knife) And it could be right Bobbie. You were saying?

BOBBIE: Well Edna ... the first thing is ... you must understand that these things happen.

EDNA: Oh don't worry Bobbie ... (Rolls up cardigan sleeve) I'm in a very understanding mood ... carry on.

BOBBIE: Because as you know, I'm a very quiet kind of man ...

EDNA: That's the worst kind.

BOBBIE: And in work yesterday ... out on a job ... something happened. Through no fault of mine I got myself involved with a certain party ...

EDNA: This certain party wouldn't have been a woman by any chance?

BOBBIE: Yes ... but how did you know?

EDNA: It's the 'Itch'. That's what it is ... (prods him in chest to emphasise point)
The ... seven ... year ... itch ... (points to bulge in top jacket pocket) What's
that in your pocket?

BOBBIE: (Taking out large bottle of tablets) Nothing ... just vitamin tablets.

EDNA: Vitamin tablets!

BOBBIE: Well you told me to get them.

EDNA: Not a year's supply. Now listen you to me Bobbie Willis ... Before you tell
me more and you are going to tell me more ... there is one little thing I would
like to make clear to you. (Points to wedding photo) On our wedding day ...
you plighted to me your troth ... and you are going to stay 'Plighted' ... So
just you ...

(GEORGETTE enters wearing dressing gown and carrying sun-lamp.)

GEORGETTE: Excuse me, but the plug in my bedroom seems to be faulty ... would you mind if I plugged in my sun-lamp down here?

EDNA: Oh no ... no ... plug away.

GEORGETTE:(Handing flex to BOBBIE) Could you switch me on?

BOBBIE: Ah ... yes ... yes. (Plugging in flex)

GEORGETTE: Mind you do not get a shock.

EDNA: He has quite a few coming.

BOBBIE: (At switch) Try the lamp ..

(GEORGETTE switches on lamp. It lights.)

GEORGETTE: (Delighted) Ah, it works ... (to BOBBIE) You are wonderful.

EDNA: He's unbelievable ... (to BOBBIE) Imagine able to switch in a plug all by yourself. And there's a tap in there without a washer for months.

GEORGETTE: (Putting on sun glasses) Maybe when you get a moment you could fix the plug in my bedroom. I would be so very grateful.

BOBBIE: (Moving to hall) I'll go straight away and fix it.

(GEORGETTE takes off dressing gown to reveal brief swimsuit.)

(On seeing this, turns) After I've read the paper.

(GEORGETTE positions herself on settee under sun lamp. BOBBIE crosses to chair opposite.)

EDNA: The paper's not in yet.

BOBBIE: (Lifting newspaper on chair) This'll do. I'm not fussy. (Pretends to read paper)

EDNA: You mustn't be.

(EDNA lifts paper from BOBBIE'S hand and turns it right way round. BOBBIE forces a laugh. From time to time he peers over the top of paper. EDNA watches him closely.)

GEORGETTE: I am trying to get a tan for my holiday. This lamp is nice. But oh I prefer to feel the sun's rays caress my body. On a beach on the South of France you can lie soaking up the sun without any clothes. (BOBBIE leans forward) Last year I got tanned all over. (Touches bra strap) You can see where ...

EDNA: (Pulling BOBBIE back) He'll take your word for it.

GEORGETTE: I was just going to move my strap.

EDNA: His imagination would have done the rest.

GEORGETTE: I am not ashamed of my body ... Are you Bobbie?

BOBBIE: (Loosening collar) No ... no.

(BOBBIE takes out vitamin bottle from pocket and is about to take some when EDNA crosses, takes them from him and sets them on sideboard.)

EDNA: It's not vitamins you need. It's a cold shower.

BOBBIE: Make a cup of tea Edna.

EDNA: Oh no. If I left this room you'd be over there before I could say "Yoo-hoo Typhoo".

(Phone rings. BOBBIE rushes for it.)

BOBBIE: Hello ... yes ... she's here ... Who shall I say wants to 'Listen' to her? Yes ... right ... just a moment ... (to EDNA) It's Isobel Tate ... she sounds hysterical.

EDNA: Aren't we all ... (into phone) Hello Isobel ... Take your time ... take see you ... What? No I can't come round right away ... You come round here ... You're what? Standing on a chair ... There's a mouse in the living room and it can't get out ... You've got a mouse ... I've ... (look to BOBBIE) got a rat ... Where's Harry? I see ... alright alright ... I'll come round ... But I hope you appreciate what I'm doing for you ... (Sets down phone - to BOBBIE) I'm going round to Isobel's for a minute ... It'll only be a minute ... When I come back if there's one part of you sun tanned you'll hear from me ... (On exit - to picture) You're the only man I would trust ... (To BOBBIE) You sit there 'til I come back ... don't move ... 'NOT AN INCH' ... (exits)

(There is a moment's pause.)

BOBBIE: Would you like a cup of tea?

GEORGETTE: If you make it Bobb-ie ... it will be lovely.

BOBBIE: Ah ... yes.

(BOBBIE moves into kitchen.)

GEORGETTE: In France ... All men flirt with the girls ... Why do Irishmen ... sorry, Ulstermen, not do this? What is the reason?

BOBBIE: (Off - kitchen) The reason's just gone out.

GEORGETTE: Surely you are not going to tell me you are afraid of your little wife.

BOBBIE: She's not so little ... No ... I'm not afraid. (More definite) Of course I'm not afraid of my wife ...

(Noise off.)

(Alarmed) What was that?

GEORGETTE: It was nothing ... you are tired and nervy ... come with me.

BOBBIE: I've the kettle on for tea.

GEORGETTE: The tea can wait. I cannot. Come. (Indicates settee)

(BOBBIE walks slowly towards settee.)

BOBBIE: Put out the sun-lamp.

GEORGETTE: (Rising) Oh yes ... of course. We mustn't get you tanned. (Switches off lamp) And anyhow you will be warm enough without it.

BOBBIE: If I am going to sit beside you, could you put on your dressing gown? It would look better if somebody walked in.

GEORGETTE: You could lock the doors ... yes?

BOBBIE: Yes ... NO ... no ... no locked doors ... just put on the dressing gown.

GEORGETTE: (Putting on gown) Anything to make you happy. I like to make my men happy. (Sits on settee)

BOBBIE: (Deep swallow) Yes ...

(BOBBIE sits at opposite end of settee from GEORGETTE.)

GEORGETTE: Now how can I soothe all your troubles away if you sit there ... come beside me ... Bobbie ... relax ... enjoy yourself ... life is so short ...

BOBBIE: (Moving down settee) If Edna comes in ... it'll be a heck of a lot shorter.

GEORGETTE: There you go again ... forget about your wife.

BOBBIE: Edna's very hard to forget about.

(GEORGETTE grabs BOBBIE and turns him so that his head is on her lap.)

GEORGETTE: That's better ... get comfortable ... take off your tie. (Quickly takes off BOBBIE'S tie) That's right. (Opens shirt button) Ah ... you have hairs on your chest ... you're all man Bobbie.

BOBBIE: Yes.

GEORGETTE: (Touches BOBBIE'S ears) You have lovely little ears ... I will kiss your ears.

(GEORGETTE kisses BOBBIE'S ears. BOBBIE giggles.)

BOBBIE: That tickles.

GEORGETTE: Did you know when you laugh your nose crinkles? It is a lovely nose ... I will kiss your nose.

BOBBIE: It needs wiped.

GEORGETTE: It is lovely ... (kisses his nose) You like it?

BOBBIE: It's lovely.

GEORGETTE: Have you never had your nose kissed before?

BOBBIE: No ... Edna's not a great one for kissing noses.

GEORGETTE: Would you like it kissed again?

BOBBIE: Yes, please.

(GEORGETTE kisses his nose again.)

GEORGETTE: Your nose is cold ... that is very good ... it means you are very healthy.

BOBBIE: I thought that was only dogs ...

GEORGETTE: No ... no. You know what they say ... cold nose ... warm heart. (Stroking his forehead) You are comfortable?

BOBBIE: Very.

GEORGETTE: Did you know you have a lovely mouth?

BOBBIE: (Licking his lips) Have I?

GEORGETTE: Oh yes ... a lovely mouth ... I will kiss your mouth ...

BOBBIE: No ... you can't.

GEORGETTE: Why not?

BOBBIE: Well ... I ... ah ... I ... ah ... I'm a married man.

GEORGETTE: To me you are just a man ... Of course if you do not want me to kiss you ...

BOBBIE: I didn't say that ... it's just the wife ...

GEORGETTE: There you go again ... on about your wife ... Forget about your wife.

BOBBIE: I can't.

GEORGETTE: I will make you forget her. When I kiss a man he forgets everything but me.

(GEORGETTE gives BOBBIE a long passionate kiss which leaves BOBBIE limp.)

That was nice ... again.

(GEORGETTE makes move to kiss BOBBIE again ... whistle of kettle off in kitchen.)

BOBBIE: It's the kettle.

GEORGETTE: Let it go.

BOBBIE: I can't ... Edna'd hear it

(BOBBIE staggers to his feet and crosses to kitchen.)

GEORGETTE: (Rising) While you make the tea ... (takes off dressing gown) I will get more tan ... (switches on lamp)

BOBBIE: Watch you don't get too much of that lamp ... it's dangerous.

GEORGETTE:(Putting on dark glasses) I know when I've had enough. When we have had our tea ... you will come back to your George ...

BOBBIE: (Breathlessly) If I'm able. Do you like strong tea or weak tea?

GEORGETTE: Strong ... I like everything strong.

BOBBIE: Yes. (Looks heavenward) Oh, Edna ... if you only knew.

(BOBBIE exits kitchen. GEORGETTE settles down under the lamp. Few moments later CYRIL enters from hall. He walks past GEORGETTE then does double take. Crosses and looks down appreciatively at her. GEORGETTE stretches out her hand.)

GEORGETTE: Ah Bobbie ... you have come back to me.

(CYRIL reacts but takes her hand.)

GEORGETTE: (Continued) (Pulling CYRIL down beside her) Sit with me ... Kiss me Bobbie.

(CYRIL is enjoying himself. He kisses GEORGETTE.)

And again.

(They kiss again.)

Ah that is wonderful. I knew you would get to like it. There is some skin lotion on the table, could you put it on for me?

(CYRIL quickly gets lotion and with great enjoyment starts applying it to GEORGETTE'S body. He is putting it on her legs as BOBBIE enters from kitchen.)

BOBBIE: Tea's ready ... (sees CYRIL and reacts) CYRIL!

(GEORGETTE reacts, sits up and takes off her sun glasses.)

GEORGETTE: (Wipes eyes and staring at CYRIL) Who is this Bobbie?

BOBBIE: This is my apprentice.

CYRIL: Are you not going to introduce us Bobbie ... Mr Willis?

BOBBIE: Do you not think you've been introduced enough ... This is Cyril ... (indicates GEORGETTE) George ...

CYRIL: GEORGE?

GEORGETTE: Georgette. I am Bobbie's lodger.

CYRIL: Oh ... (to BOBBIE) Does your wife know?

BOBBIE: Of course she knows.

GEORGETTE: She got me.

CYRIL: Oh ... (to BOBBIE) Could she get one for me?

BOBBIE: What is it you want?

CYRIL: I've news about the dog.

BOBBIE: Excuse us ... (takes CYRIL to one side of stage) (to CYRIL) Well ...

CYRIL: Mr Sutton said you can see the dog definitely tonight.

BOBBIE: That's at least something. How was it in work today?

CYRIL: Alright. There's a Corporation Official coming round to see you.

BOBBIE: That's all I need.

(Phone rings. GEORGETTE who is beside it answers it.)

GEORGETTE: (Seductive voice) Hello ... yes ... Mr Willis is here ... He is busy at the moment ... (Reacts at telephone - holds ear piece at arm's length) Oh you should hear this ...

BOBBIE: Who is it?

GEORGETTE: I think it is your wife.

BOBBIE: (Reacting) EDNA! OH ... Noooooo ...

(In his urgency to get to the phone he trips, quickly picks himself up and grabs phone.)

(Breathless) Hello Edna ... Yes Edna ... No Edna ... No I'm not busy Edna No Edna ... Yes Edna ... I'm not breathless Edna ... Yes Edna ... I'll bring the mousetrap round Edna ... yes ... right away Edna ...

(GEORGETTE holds head and groans in pain. BOBBIE looks across.)

BOBBIE: What was what Edna ... (signals to CYRIL to see to GEORGETTE) No ... I never heard groaning Edna ...

GEORGETTE: Oh Bobbie ... (falls back on settee in faint)

CYRIL: She's fainted.

BOBBIE: Hello Edna ... Yes Edna ... I'll have to go Edna ... Goodbye Edna. (Crossing to GEORGETTE) What happened?

CYRIL: She's fainted.

BOBBIE: I can see she's fainted. She's stayed under the lamp too long. Get the smelling salts. In the cabinet drawer.

(CYRIL rushes over to cabinet drawer ... back with smelling salts.)

CYRIL: Maybe if you loosened her clothing ...

BOBBIE: There's nothing to loosen ... (waves smelling salts under GEORGETTE'S nose) Oh waken up ... please ... please ... Edna'll be round here like a mad elephant ... (to GEORGETTE) Come on ... Viva la France!

(GEORGETTE stirs a little.)

GEORGETTE: Oh, I feel terrible.

BOBBIE: We've got to get her out of the way before Edna comes round.

CYRIL: I'll take her up to her room and she can lie down on the bed.

BOBBIE: No ... I'll take her up. You watch out for Edna.

(CYRIL crosses to kitchen.)

Come on young lady. It's off to bed for you.

GEORGETTE: You are so kind Bobbie.

BOBBIE: Come on. Put your arm round me.

(With their arms round each other, they move towards stairs as EDNA enters. She reacts at sight of BOBBIE and GEORGETTE.)

EDNA: (Loudly) What's going on here?

BOBBIE: I can explain Edna.

GEORGETTE: No ... let me. Your Bobbie is so kind. HE IS TAKING ME TO BED!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Scene Two

One hour later.

As the curtain rises ISOBEL is sitting on settee and EDNA is pacing up and down.

EDNA: I'm telling you ... When I came round from your house, there they were, my Bobbie and her with their arms locked round each other and her looking up

she into his face like a sick cow and when I gently asked what was going on ... piped up and said "Bobbie's taking me to bed" ... Oh I was that degraded that Bobbie would do a thing like that ... him knowing fine well the beds weren't made.

ISOBEL: What did Bobbie have to say for himself?

EDNA: Oh of course according to him it was all innocent. He said she had fainted and he was just helping her up the stairs ... If I'd caught them kissing he'd have said he was giving her the kiss of life.

ISOBEL: It's the old story ... far off fields are green ...

EDNA: The fields might be, but I'm not. Look what was on the settee. (Lifts tie) His tie ... his tie. A thing he never takes off until he's going to bed. Heaven only knows what else he had off. And look at that. (Points to tea tray) He made tea ... and they never drunk it. A good waste of milk.

ISOBEL: I didn't think your Bobbie would have been fit enough to tackle anyone as young as her.

EDNA: (Crossing to sideboard) There's the answer ... (lifts vitamin bottle) Vitamin tablets ... two hundred of them ... Three months' supply. (Holds up bottle) He only got them this morning and he's gone through a week of them.

ISOBEL: (Examining bottle) I know these. They're advertised on television. It shows you after you take them ... a wee man pushing a wheelbarrow up the hill ...

EDNA: Yes, only mine doesn't push a wheelbarrow up the hill ... he's too busy pushing a girl up the stairs ...

ISOBEL: Where's the girl now?

EDNA: She's up in her room ... packing her bags.

ISOBEL: Packing? Where could she go?

EDNA: She asked me that ... and I nearly told her.

ISOBEL: Seeing she works with Harry ... I suppose I could ut her up for the night.

EDNA: On your own head be it.

ISOBEL: Oh my Harry's not interested in girls. I can trust my Harry.

EDNA: I wouldn't trust that one with an Eskimo on crutches.

ISOBEL: She'll try none of her nonsense with Harry. He's not as easily led as your Bobbie. Where is Bobbie?

EDNA: Out ... according to his apprentice ... they're off to see a man about a dog. He must think I'd believe anything.

ISOBEL: Did he say when he'd be back?

EDNA: No ... If you must know, we're not speaking. And the cheek of him. When I said I wasn't speaking to him all he said was ... "It's an ill wind" ... Ill wind indeed. When he comes back I'm going to settle this in a good old sensible Ulster way ... I'm going to hammer him.

ISOBEL: I've told you that'll only send him off to what's her name again.

EDNA: BRIDGET ... (to picture) Sorry for mentioning 'THAT' name in your immortal presence.

ISOBEL: Now listen to me Edna ..

EDNA: No, Isobel, enough's enough. I've tried it your way and it doesn't work. I wore a negligee, and all he wanted to do was go to bed. I got a lodger and all he wanted to do was go to bed. I've counted to ten 'til I'm blue in the face. No more. When I'm finished with him he won't be able to see Bridget ... (to picture) sorry.

ISOBEL: Will you listen just for a minute.

EDNA: I'll listen ... but that's all.

ISOBEL: The negligee didn't work because he was tired that night ... and the lodger didn't work because it was a girl. Now if it had been a man ...

EDNA: I'm not having another lodger. With my luck it would turn out to be 'Old Corky'.

ISOBEL: Not a lodger ... A lover.

EDNA: A lover! What would I do with a lover?

ISOBEL: Make Bobbie jealous ... that's the answer. Get yourself a lover.

EDNA: I'm not joining a lonely hearts club.

ISOBEL: You don't have to join anything. Just ring up the escort service and they provide a man to take you out dancing ... to a show ... to dinner ... anything you like and you pay them a fee.

EDNA: Pay a man to take you out? No, it's not decent.

ISOBEL: It'll just be for the one night and that's all it'll take to make Bobbie jealous.

EDNA: Me out with another man? No ... I couldn't hurt Bobbie's feelings. No, I'll just hammer him.

ISOBEL: Oh well ... Whatever you like ... Do it your own way. I must say Bobbie'll suit a green sash.

EDNA: (Over to phone) What's their number?

ISOBEL: It's in the book. Apex Escort Service. You ring them and I'll go up and tell Georgette about coming round to my house.

EDNA: (Looking through phone book) This is ridiculous, a woman of my age. What's wrong with a woman of my age? If a man of his age can do it ... (reads from book) 83491 ... (lifts phone then sets it down again) No ... it's not decent ... Still I used to pay Bobbie's way into the pictures. But this is a stranger and anyway suppose I do ring them, what do I say? Hello ... I want a man? No ... hello ... I need a man ... No that's worse. Hello, could I have the loan of one of your men? No. What do I say? Oh, here goes. (Dials number, listens to phone ringing) Oh, I don't think I'll bother ... Oh. (Into phone) Hello, is that 84391 ... it is? Sorry, wrong number. (Sets down phone) No, that was stupid. (Dials again) Hello, is that the escort service? Yes ... I was ... I was ... I was ... I'm ringing for a friend ... a Mrs Willis ... She was wondewanting ... wondering ... an escort for the night ... what? A male? Yes of course a male ... What age group is she in? Oh, her early forties ... About thirty seven ... Yes, for say tomorrow night ... For where? The theatre ... dinner ... I haven't ... I mean she hasn't made up her mind yet ... You'll have someone call tonight to go over the details? The address is 104 McBride Street ... Has she what? Any particular type of man in mind ... no ... tall ... short ... fat ... thin ... It doesn't matter as long as he's in trousers ... No, wait there is one thing ... one very important thing. Protestant preferred.

(EDNA sets down phone and crosses to picture of King William.)

EDNA: (Continued) (to picture) I say, if you've any business, give it to one of your own.

(ISOBEL enters from hall.)

ISOBEL: Well, that's Georgette sorted out. Did you ring?

EDNA: Yes ... and I think I'll ring back and cancel it.

(EDNA moves to phone, is stopped by ISOBEL.)

ISOBEL: No ... don't do that. What did they say?

EDNA: They're sending a man round tonight to sort out the details. Oh, I could do with a drink.

ISOBEL: (Moving to sideboard) I'll get us both one.

EDNA: No ... There's only a bottle of whiskey there ... That would make me feel sicker than I am.

ISOBEL: Tell you what ... come up to my house ... I think Harry has a bottle of sherry. Not that Harry drinks mind you. He keeps it just in case someone calls.

EDNA: Alright.

ISOBEL: (Moving to hall door) And cheer up. I think this is all very exciting ... don't you? (Exits)

EDNA: (On exit) Very ... Oh Edna ... what have you done? (Exits)

(Few moments later GEORGETTE enters dressed in slacks and sweater. She is carrying case. She crosses to sun-lamp, disconnects plug and starts rolling up flex.)

(Knock at front door.)

GEORGETTE: Ah good ... it is Bobbie to say goodbye.
(She exits and returns a moment later with a small man. This is ERIC TWEEDY. He is dressed in dark suit, rolled umbrella and bowler hat.)
(Close beside him) And what can I do for you ... Mister ... ah ...

ERIC: (Reacting to closeness of GEORGETTE) Ah ... Tweedy ... I'm from the Corporation ... They sent me round to have a few words with Mr Willis.

GEORGETTE: He is not in. There is no one in the house but us. What is your first name?

ERIC: Ah ... ah ... Eric. Are you his daughter?

GEORGETTE: His daughter! No, I am his lodger. At least I was until his wife caught us ... Oh ... she is so jealous. Just because I kiss her Bobbie on the ear ... I will show you ... Eric. It was just like this.

(GEORGETTE kisses ERIC on the ears. He just stands in absolute bewilderment.)

GEORGETTE: Then I kiss him on the nose ... just like this.

(GEORGETTE kisses ERIC on nose. He stares straight in front.)

Then I kiss him ever so gently on the lips ...

(GEORGETTE gives ERIC a long lingering kiss.)

Now tell me, what was wrong with that?

ERIC: (In a daze - moving to door) Will you tell Mr Willis I'll call back later.

(ERIC takes quick look at GEORGETTE then runs to the door and exits.)

GEORGETTE: Men are so funny. But, oh, I like them.

(GEORGETTE finishes winding flex around sun-lamp. Phone rings.
GEORGETTE answers it.)

(Into phone) Hello ... Yes ... No ... I am sorry Mr Willis is not in at the moment ... Pardon? Who am I? I am Georgette ... I am the lodger ... At least I was the lodger until his wife caught me kissing him ... I ask you, what harm is there in a kiss? They were only little kisses on the ears, on the nose and on the lips ... Now tell Georgette ... What is your problem? Your tap is dripping ... I will write a note for Bobbie ... and what is your name? The Reverend Wilson ... Thank you.

(As GEORGETTE writes note, BOBBIE enters from back door with CYRIL.
They are arguing.)

BOBBIE: (As he enters) How many more times am I going to see that dog and not see it?

CYRIL: I was sure he said seven o'clock ... (sees GEORGETTE) Oh hello ... George.

GEORGETTE: Hello Cyril ... and hello, Bobbie.

BOBBIE: Hello.

GEORGETTE: (Moving to Bobbie) I am sorry I cause all the trouble between you and your wife. As I explained to the man who rang ... I was only kissing you ...

BOBBIE: Yes, of course. (Reacts) Who rang? (Panic) Who was on the phone?

GEORGETTE: (Crossing for notepaper) I have his name here ... The Reverend Wilson.

BOBBIE: The Reverend ... Will ... Wi ... Wilson.

GEORGETTE: I told him about your wife being jealous ... and ...

BOBBIE: (Sitting on settee) No ... no ... don't tell me any more.

GEORGETTE: Oh, Bobbie is angry with me. I do not want you to be angry with me and me leaving.

BOBBIE: You're leaving?

GEORGETTE: Of course you did not know. Your wife has turned me out. I know you would not have turned me out.

BOBBIE: Ah no ...

GEORGETTE: All you have to do ... is say stay ... and I will stay. After all it is your house ... you are the boss.

CYRIL: That's true.

BOBBIE: (To Cyril) You keep out of this. (To GEORGETTE) Well you see Georgette ... I would like you to stay ... but ...

CYRIL: Then let her stay.

BOBBIE: Will you shut up?

GEORGETTE: Do not worry Bobbie. I understand. Your wife is the boss of this house.

BOBBIE: Yes ... NO.

CYRIL: He's the boss. Aren't you Bobbie ... Mr Willis?

BOBBIE: (To CYRIL) Why don't you go for a walk under a bus ... (To GEORGETTE) You see ...

GEORGETTE: It is alright. Do not explain. I will collect the rest of my things and then I will go. It is a pity because I heard your wife on the phone and she is going out tomorrow night ... We would have been alone.

CYRIL: I wish I'd a spare room. Where are you going?

GEORGETTE: (On exit) I am staying with Harry. (Exits)

BOBBIE: Heaven help Harry.

CYRIL: Bobbie ... Mr Willis. Can I say something?

BOBBIE: No, you've said enough.

CYRIL: I was wanting to ask you a favour.

BOBBIE: I'm out of favours at the moment ... What did you want?

CYRIL: Well, you remember I told you about the two girls that were after me ...

BOBBIE: What about it?

CYRIL: Well, one of them is going off to England tomorrow night and I've made arrangements to see her off at the boat ... but I've made a date with the other one tomorrow night ... And I was wondering if you could help me out ...

BOBBIE: I hope you don't mean what I think you mean. Because the answer's no. I've had my fill of women this week.

CYRIL: It's nothing like that. I've worked out a plan. It's simple.

BOBBIE: That figures.

CYRIL: I've told the one I have a date with that you're my uncle.

BOBBIE: Your uncle?

CYRIL: Yes ... my uncle. And I've said I'd like her to meet you. I bring her here ... make some excuse out ... rush down to the boat, see the other one off and come back here to collect her.

BOBBIE: There's only one snag ... Edna!

CYRIL: Didn't George say she'd be out?

BOBBIE: Something would happen. I'm in enough trouble without this. I'm sorry Cyril.

CYRIL: So am I. I'm going to hate myself for telling our wife about the woman in the bath.

BOBBIE: You wouldn't do that!

CYRIL: Yes, I would.

BOBBIE: You say I've only to sit and talk to this girl for about half an hour and you'll be back to collect her?

CYRIL: That's all.

BOBBIE: I should have my head examined ... but all right ... I'll do it.

CYRIL: Thanks Bobbie ... Mr Willis. You won't regret it.

BOBBIE: That I doubt very much. Which of the two girls is coming here?

CYRIL: It's the ...

BOBBIE: Don't tell me. It's the plain one isn't it?

CYRIL: How did you guess?

BOBBIE: I'm just lucky, that's all.

(GEORGETTE enters.)

GEORGETTE: Well, I am ready to go. I will say goodbye. Goodbye Cyril.

(She kisses CYRIL.)

Goodbye Bobbie.

(GEORGETTE makes to kiss BOBBIE, but he puts out his hand.)

(Shaking hands) Goodbye, Bobbie. Do I not get one little kiss?

CYRIL: Go on, kiss her ... Bobbie ... Mr Willis.

(BOBBIE glares at CYRIL and kisses GEORGETTE on the cheek. She puts her free hand round him in a hug. It is on this scene that EDNA enters.)

EDNA: (Reacting) YOU'RE AT IT AGAIN ... (to GEORGETTE) YOU! ... OUT!
... (points to door) Out ... out ... out!

GEORGETTE: (Picking up her belongings) Goodbye Cyril ... Goodbye Bobbie ... (to EDNA) Goodbye.

EDNA: OUT!

(GEORGETTE, quick exit)

(To CYRIL) Would you kindly ask my husband what does he mean with that carry on ...

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) Your wife wants to know what do you mean ...

BOBBIE: (To CYRIL) Would you ask my wife ... What does she mean ... What do I mean?

CYRIL: (To EDNA) Your husband wants to know ... What do you mean ... What does he mean?

EDNA: (To CYRIL) Would you tell him, when I say what does he mean ... He knows what I mean.

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) Your wife says ... When she says ... What do you mean ... You know what she means.

BOBBIE: If she means what I think she means ... Then she's the meanest person I know I know what I mean ... Tell her that.

CYRIL: (Confused) I don't know what you mean.

EDNA: Tell my husband ... I said ... 'Hmgh' ...

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) Your wife said ... 'Hmgh'.

BOBBIE: Tell my wife ... I said ... 'Hmgh'.

CYRIL: (To EDNA) Your husband said ...

EDNA: I heard him ... I heard him.

BOBBIE: Tell her ... I am going out.

CYRIL: (To EDNA) He's going out.

EDNA: Good riddance.

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) Good riddance.

BOBBIE: I'm going where I'll be appreciated.

CYRIL: He's going where he'll be appreciated.

EDNA: That'll be hard to find. His mother doesn't want him. She was too glad to get rid of him.

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) That'll be hard to ... (to EDNA) Could you repeat that?

BOBBIE: (Moving to the back door) I'm going.

CYRIL: (To EDNA) He's going ...

EDNA: He can go to the devil.

CYRIL: (To BOBBIE) You can go to the devil.

BOBBIE: (On exit) No ... Your mother mightn't be in.

CYRIL: He said your mother mightn't ...

EDNA: I heard him ... I heard him ... Out ... Out!

(CYRIL is chased out after BOBBIE.)

(In temper) The cheek of him ... my mother ... my mother that made a man of him. He never had a clean shirt on his back 'til he came to live with my mother. He never knew what a hot meal was. Him that was reared on fish suppers saying that about my mother. Her that took him in and treated him like one of the family. Not like his family. Oh the things I could have said about his mother. But no. I'm too much of a lady for that. Things like she got enough back on the empties on Monday to buy the eight of them all fish suppers. And the home I've gave him. A bed that the Queen Mother could sleep in. And before he married he thought all sheets were a khaki colour ... And the time when ...

(Doorbell)

Who can that be? If it's him back, I'm ready for him. It can't be him, he has a key. Heavens it's the man from the escort service and look at the state of me. (Moves to hall door) Right, Bobbie Willis. I'll show you two can play at this game. (Exits)

(EDNA exits and re-enters a few moments later with ERIC TWEEDY. ERIC is hesitant about entering, fearing GEORGETTE will pounce again.)

EDNA: (Continued) I'm Edna Willis. Your name is ...?

ERIC: Tweedy ... Eric Tweedy. (Looking nervously around - softly) Is your husband in?

EDNA: (Softly) No ... he's out. Come in.

ERIC: (Reacts) Ah ... yes.

EDNA: My husband could be back any time ... so the sooner we get down to it the better. Don't you agree? (ERIC nods in a daze) If I seem a bit nervous it's because I've never done anything like this before. Even during the war when he was away in the Air Force. I'm just not the type. But I suppose you can tell. Are you married?

ERIC: Yes ... with six of a family.

EDNA: Six? It's nice when your work's your hobby as well. Well now ... I really want you for tomorrow night but I thought maybe we should have a practice run through ...

ERIC: I only came to ...

EDNA: (Interrupting) I know ... but this is part of the details ... And I'd feel happier if we worked it out before hand ... Now what I thought was ... Now you stop me if you can think of anything better ... Because you're the expert ... But I thought if we sat together on the settee ... Just a little bit apart ... Come on and I'll show you what I mean. (Leads ERIC over to settee) Right, now you sit there and I'll sit here.

(ERIC is pushed down on settee with EDNA sitting about a foot away.)

Then you look at me and I'll look at you. Then I'll smile at you and you smile back. Go on, smile. (ERIC forces a smile) Then you move towards me ... Well, go on, move towards me. (ERIC does this) Then you kiss me on the cheek ... go on kiss me on the cheek ... (in a daze ERIC does this) No ... louder than that ... try again ... (ERIC does this) That's right ... I'll show him ... now remember every time my husband looks over, you kiss me on the cheek.

ERIC: Your husband?

EDNA: Yes. This is all for his benefit.

(ERIC shys away from EDNA. Doorbell. ERIC jumps.)

You'd better go now. (Moves ERIC towards back door) I don't want anybody to see you.

ERIC: Is it your husband?

EDNA: Oh, I'm not worried about him. Can you come tomorrow night at eight and appreciate it if you could be a bit more flashy dressed and less like an undertaker ... see you at eight.

(EDNA exits hall door. ERIC stands for a moment full of bewilderment.)

ERIC: (On exit to back door) I'm sure I'm dreaming ...

(As ERIC exits back door EDNA enters hall door with smartly dressed man with large handlebar moustache, and enormous shoes.)

EDNA: Did you want to see my husband mister?

BASIL: Charrington ... You call me Basil ... what!

EDNA: Well, Basil What ... My husband's not in.

BASIL: I didn't call to see your husband. You're more my cup of tea ... eh ... (nudges EDNA) I'm from the old Escort Service ... Chocks away what ...

EDNA: You're from the escort service?

BASIL: Bang on.

EDNA: (Hands to head) THEN WHO'S THE WEE MAN COMING AT EIGHT?

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Scene One

Scene as before.

The following evening.

As the curtain rises EDNA dressed in smart outfit is putting the finishing touches to her make-up in front of fireplace mirror. ISOBEL is sitting on settee.

ISOBEL: Well, turn round and let me see you.

(EDNA turns round to face ISOBEL.)

You look great. No one would believe you were in your forties.

EDNA: Thanks very much.

ISOBEL: How do you feel?

EDNA: (Taking few pained steps) Apart from the fact that these shoes are killing me and I can't breathe in this new corset, I feel marvellous.

ISOBEL: No. I meant, how do you feel about going out on a date again?

EDNA: Terrified.

ISOBEL: I don't see why.

EDNA: Yes, but you didn't see him. You talk about speaking a language the stranger doesn't know. He's all wizard prang ... piece of cake ... bombs away ... what ho ... with a moustache you could swing on and the biggest pair of feet I've ever seen on man or beast.

ISOBEL: He'll make Bobbie jealous and that's the main thing. I say Edna ... what'll you do if he tries to get fresh?

EDNA: He can try but listen, by the time he gets through this armour ... (taps her side) the notion'll be off him.

ISOBEL: I'll have to go ... Harry's working late and I'll have to get his tea. If he came home and I wasn't there, my Harry would worry himself sick. He's like that, is Harry ... so I'll see you later. (Moves to door) And don't do anything rash ... remember count to ten ... and relax and enjoy yourself ... (on exit) because (Continued) remember (bitchy) ... you're paying for it!

EDNA: (To self) That's right ... rub it in. Oh I don't feel too happy about this ... even my goose-pimples have got goose-pimples. Once he's here how do I get rid of him - is he paid by the hour? Maybe I should have got an estimate. I wonder does he get double time after twelve o'clock. He'll maybe not turn up ... And here I'll be all dressed up and nowhere to go. (To reflection in mirror) Now be honest you wouldn't be all that fussed if he didn't turn up. Or on the other hand I wouldn't like to be let down. But then what about the neighbours? It's not as if you could slip him in ... I mean thon moustache of his can be seen for miles. Oh I wish I hadn't started this. I suppose I could ring up and cancel it. Why not? I mean it's not as if he was a coat and I'd worn it. (Crosses to book) Apex Escort Service ... (lifts phone book)

(As EDNA is leafing through phone book the doorbell rings.)

Heavens, it's too late ... (sets down book) I know, I'll tell him I've changed my mind and give him something for this trouble. That's the answer. (To mirror) Thank you for coming, but I've changed my mind and here's something for your trouble. (Repeats parrot fashion as she crosses to hall door) Thank you for coming, but I've changed my mind and here's something for your trouble ... (repeats) Thank you for your trouble, I've changed my thanks and mind ... (on exit) Oh ... just go home. (Exits)

(EDNA returns moment later with BASIC CHARRINGTON. He has had a few drinks and is carrying large bouquet of flowers.)

- BASIL: (Salutes with hand holding flowers) Well ... Hello there ... Basil Charrington reporting as ordered nineteen hundred hours bang on the button ... (sways slightly) standing by for further instructions.
- EDNA: (Into prepared speech) Thank ... ah ... thank you for coming ... but ah ...
- BASIL: Nonsense ... nonsense. My pleasure. (Stands back a pace and studies EDNA) By jove my pleasure ... what-what. The night is young and you're so beautiful. You've the beautiful lines of a Stirling Bomber. Now there was a beautiful plane.
- EDNA: Yes ... Well ... Ah ... Thank you for ...
- BASIL: (Bows) Flowers for you ... my Juliet.
- EDNA: The name's Edna.
- BASIL: Tonight you are Juliet. (Strikes pose) Ah what light from yonder window shines.
- EDNA: It'll be the neighbours ... there'll be a head at every window. Well thank you for the flowers mister ... ah ...
- BASIL: Don't thank me dear Juliet. It's all on the bill. Everything's on the bill. What a night we're going to have tonight.
- EDNA: Yes well ... thank you for coming, but ...
- BASIL: (Looking towards sideboard) Hush ... hush ... I see bandits at two o'clock ... going into attack now. (With arms outstretched and making engine noise he moves in to sideboard) Over target ... going into attack. (Swoops up whiskey bottle ... makes machine gun noise) Got you. (Holds up bottle) Do you mind?
- EDNA: Well I think ...
- BASIL: (Taking cork from bottle) Good show. How about you?
- EDNA: I think I need one ... a small one.
- BASIL: Right-e-oh ... a small one for you and a big one for me. (Business of pouring drink from distance above glasses) Bang on target. Haven't lost the old touch, what-ho! (Hands drink to EDNA) A tiddler for you and a whopper for me. This your first today?

EDNA: Of course.

BASIL: Pity. This is my eighth. Never mind you'll soon catch up.

EDNA: There's something I think you should know.

BASIL: I know ... I know ... I know what you're going to say. You're scared of me getting stinko ... absolutely stinko. Well fear not my fair Juliet. I've never been grounded in my life. In the RAF I was known as Spongy Charrington. Used to just soak it up. So come on. Drink up. Eat drink and be merry ... for tomorrow we die.

EDNA: (Reacting on taking drink) You could be right.

BASIL: (Finishing off drink) That's better. Do you know what I feel like ... (sets down drink and rubs hands gleefully)

EDNA: (Backing away) I shudder to think - what?

BASIL: Dancing.

EDNA: Dancing?

BASIL: Yes, a touch of the old light fantastic. (Dance movement) These shoes were made for dancing.

EDNA: (Looking down at his large feet) You could have fooled me.

BASIL: So let's have some music. (Moves to radio)

EDNA: Mr Charrington ...

BASIL: (At radio) Call me Spongy. (Switches on radio)

EDNA: Well look Spongy ... there's something I want to say to you. Thank you for
(Music from radio, mambo rhythm.)

BASIL: (Finger to lips) Hush ... hush ... music. If music be the food of love play on.
(Turns up volume)

EDNA: Turn that down. You'll have the neighbours in.

BASIL: (Arms outstretched) Dance ... dance little lady, dance.

EDNA: I will not. Now look ...

BASIL: If you don't dance ... I'll sing. (Loudly sings part of number)

EDNA: I'll dance ... I'll dance. (Points to his feet) Only keep those bulldozers away from me.

(Into dance with EDNA keeping as far away as possible from BASIL'S feet. BASIL does most of the dancing. During one of the fast movements they part company and BASIL ends up flat out on the settee.)

BASIL: A beautiful landing ... What-ho ... here we go again. Ready for take-off ...

(BASIL tries to rise but flops back on the settee out of the world.)

EDNA: (Crossing to him) Oh this is great. I start off with a Romeo and end up with the sleeping beauty ... wake up ... (shakes BASIL) Wake up!

BASIL: (Stirring) I can do the mambo ... do the mambo ... bambo ...

EDNA: You'll do it outside. We'll get some air and get you sobered up.

BASIL: I don't want sobered up ...

EDNA: The man that pays the piper calls the tune ... and I'm paying. Get up on your feet ... and you've plenty to get up on.

(Sound of door closing.)

It's Bobbie. I don't want him to see you like this ... up ... UP ... UP ... UP!

(With an effort BASIL gets to his feet and is helped to the back door.)

BASIL: (Arms outstretched) I'm flying tonight.

EDNA: You'll have a crash landing if you don't watch yourself.

BASIL: (On exit) Ah ... we pass this way but once ... Omar Khyyam.

EDNA: Shut your gob ... Edna Willis.

(As they exit BOBBIE enters from hall.)

BOBBIE: (Calling) Edna ... Edna ... Thank goodness ... she's out. If she knew there was a girl coming here tonight she'd go mad. What's she like again? (Takes photograph from pocket, looks at it and reacts) Oh well, maybe she's not very photogenic. Still they say the camera never lies. Oh camera if you ever lied, lie tonight. (Puts photo away) What I need is a drink. (Crosses and lifts

whiskey bottle and studies it) That was full this morning ... Edna hitting the bottle?

(Door opens and CYRIL enters.)

CYRIL: Hello Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... She's here.

BOBBIE: (Looks around) Where?

CYRIL: Out in the hall ... she's very shy.

BOBBIE: Well tell you what. Why doesn't she wait in the hall until you come back.

CYRIL: No ... she has a fear of being on her own. And another thing ... try not to get her too excited as she breaks out in hives.

BOBBIE: Hives?

CYRIL: Yes, and another thing ... she's got these spots on her chin and she's very self-conscious about them.

BOBBIE: Anything else? I mean, if she's got a wooden leg, don't keep it back from me.

CYRIL: Oh no, she hasn't got a wooden leg ... (pause) at least not that I know of, but she has got funny eyes.

BOBBIE: I know I shouldn't ask but how do you mean funny?

CYRIL: Well, the left one looks over to the right and the right one looks over to the left she can see both ways at the same time.

BOBBIE: She has the makings of a good traffic warden. You'd better show her in. On second thoughts, wheel her in.

CYRIL: (Moving to door) I won't forget this Bobbie ... Mr Willis.

BOBBIE: By the sound of her I don't think I will either.

CYRIL: (At hall door) Oh, there's something else ...

BOBBIE: She's got two heads.

CYRIL: No. She's very fond of singing so don't be surprised if she suddenly bursts into song.

BOBBIE: Nothing would surprise me. (Has quick drink)

CYRIL: (On exit) Hilda ... Hilda ... (back into room) I don't see her.

BOBBIE: Look up on the chandelier.

CYRIL: (Looks out) Oh there she is ... hiding behind the hallstand.

(BOBBIE looks heavenwards and has another quick drink.)

(Calling) Come on Hilda.

(CYRIL stands back to let HILDA enter. She is dressed in grey fitted coat, pink high neck cardigan, flat shoes and black stockings ... also small black hat. She is also wearing thick rimmed glasses. She stands cowering at the door.)

Hilda ... this is my Uncle Bobbie ... Mr Willis ... Bobbie ... Mr Willis
this is Hilda.

(HILDA with hand extended in opposite direction to BOBBIE is turned towards BOBBIE by CYRIL.)

BOBBIE: How do you do Hilda.

(HILDA turns away shyly.)

CYRIL: She's a real chatterbox once she gets started.

BOBBIE: How do you start her?

CYRIL: (Moving to hall door) Well, I'm off. I'll not be long. (To HILDA) You stay here Hilda. (His arm is grabbed by HILDA, she whispers in his ear and points to door) Yes ... alright. (To BOBBIE) I'll have to leave the doors open. She suffers from claustro...claustro....she doesn't like being shut in.

BOBBIE: Tell me more.

CYRIL: I can trust you with Bobbie Mr Willis. (Exits)

BOBBIE: (Aside) You could trust her with Nanook of the North. Won't you sit down Hilda. Let me take your coat.

(As BOBBIE touches her shoulder to help her off with her coat she shys away.)

Oh, well if you'd feel safer with it on ... this chair's very comfortable.

(Indicates armchair)

(HILDA moves towards armchair but ends up on settee.)

Well you're unpredictable, I'll say that ... Cigarette? (Offers packet but HILDA shakes her head) A drink? (HILDA shakes head) (Aside) Blood transfusion!

(BOBBIE pours himself another drink and sits sipping it on armchair. Each time he looks across at HILDA she reacts, pulling down her already low skirt line. During one of these movements her coat falls open at the bottom. She panics until it is wrapped over again. During one of the silent pauses, completely out of the blue HILDA starts to sing. BOBBIE does double take.)

HILDA: (Singing) (Staring straight in front of her)
'Tis the last rose of summer left blooming alone ...
All her lovely companions all faded and gone ...
No flower of her kindred ... ' etc etc

(About half way through the song HILDA holds her head and moans.)

BOBBIE: (Looking across) She's blown a fuse ... (over to her) What's the matter?

HILDA: I take headaches.

BOBBIE: It's the singing does it. There's some tablets on the sideboard ... take them.
I'll get you a glass of water.

(BOBBIE points towards sideboard - he enters kitchen. HILDA lifts bottle of vitamin tablets.)

(Off in kitchen) Take three.

(HILDA takes three tablets and swallows them. BOBBIE enters with water ... hands her the glass ... she crosses with it back to settee.)

BOBBIE: You took the tablets? (HILDA nods) Good. They'll help you. (Lifts bottle, glances at it casually ... sets it back on sideboard ... reacts and lifts it up again) My Vitamin Tablets! (Reads label on bottle) One, three times a day after meals and SHE took three on an empty stomach ... she'll explode.
(Crossing to HILDA) Do you feel alright? (Smiling HILDA nods)

(BOBBIE walks along back of settee, continuously glances over at HILDA. The tablets are beginning to take effect. The smile on her face widens and she begins to giggle to herself. She crosses her legs not bothering to adjust her skirt. BOBBIE crosses to her behind settee.)

(Leaning towards her) How do you feel? Maybe you should go home and lie down.

HILDA: (Scratching) I feel ... (giggles) great.

(HILDA reaches up and pulls BOBBIE over the back of the settee. He lands on the floor. He scrambles to his feet, backs away as HILDA moves towards him.)

BOBBIE: (Backing around settee) Now steady Hilda ... remember your hives ... steady now ... steady. Tell you what ... why don't we sing? That's it we'll sing ... (sings) 'Tis the last rose of summer left blooming alone ... All her lovely companions all faded and gone ...'

(BOBBIE runs round the settee and hides in the kitchen. HILDA takes off her glasses and peers trying to find where he has disappeared to. It is at this moment that ERIC TWEEDY enters.)

ERIC: Excuse me but the door was open and I ...

(HILDA makes towards the sound of the voice. She crosses with arms outstretched. ERIC stands mesmerised.)

HILDA: Kiss me ... kiss me ... kiss me ...

ERIC: Oh no ... not again ...

(ERIC moves round settee with HILDA following him.)

(As she moves) If you see Mr Willis ... tell him he can start on Monday. As for me ... (on exit) I'm going into a rest Home. (Quick exit)

(HILDA in looking for him moves towards the stairs and goes up them. When she has disappeared off at the top ... BOBBIE puts his head round the kitchen doorway and looks around.)

BOBBIE: Thank heavens, she's away. Oh, I need a drink.

(He crosses to sideboard and is pouring drink as EDNA enters. She looks across at BOBBIE and clears her throat. BOBBIE reacts, startled, thinking it is HILDA.)

Oh, Edna it's you. For a minute, I thought it was ... (stops short) ... ah ...

(smiles)

EDNA: For a minute you thought it was who?

BOBBIE: Ah, nobody ... nobody. You look very smart.

EDNA: Nice of you to notice. Does it not worry you why I'm all dressed up?

BOBBIE: No ... no. Why should it?

EDNA: I don't suppose it would cross your mind that I might have a date ... with a man.

BOBBIE: What would you do with a man? So don't talk nonsense.

EDNA: Oh, nonsense is it? Just wait a moment. (Calls) Come in please. This is my date.

(BASIL enters, still looking a bit tipsy.)

This is ...

(Immediate recognition between BOBBIE and BASIL.)

BOBBIE: SPONGY!

BASIL: BUBBLES!

EDNA: (Looks at BOBBIE) Bubbles?

(BOBBIE and BASIL greet each other like long lost brothers. EDNA stands back, stunned.)

You mean, you know each other?

BOBBIE: (To BASIL) Do we know each other! (Nudges him playfully)

BASIL: (To BOBBIE) Do we know each other! (Nudges him playfully)

EDNA: Well ... do you?

BOBBIE: We were in the RAF together. (Slaps BASIL on shoulder) Old Spongy ...

BASIL: (Slapping BOBBIE on shoulder) Old Bubbles ...

EDNA: (Looks heavenward) Old ... Don't say it, Edna.

BOBBIE: (To BASIL) Imagine meeting like this after all these years. It's a chance in a million ... isn't it Edna?

EDNA: You've no idea.

BOBBIE: I didn't know you knew my wife, Spongy.

BASIL: Not until tonight. You see, Bubbles, what happened was she ...

EDNA: (Pushing BASIL towards door) Pity you've to go.

BASIL: Have I?

BOBBIE: (Pulling BASIL back) No, he hasn't.

EDNA: (Pushing BASIL) And I say he has and I'm paying ... (stops short)

BOBBIE: How do you mean, paying ...?

EDNA: Nothing ... nothing.

BOBBIE: (Pulling BASIL back) Of course he's staying and you'll have a drink, won't you Spongy?

BASIL: Roger.

EDNA: Who the devil's Roger?

BOBBIE: It's RAF slang ... like Roger ... over and out.

EDNA: (To BOBBIE) All I'm interested in is Basil ... Over and OUT! ... (indicates door)

BOBBIE: (Crossing to sideboard) You take whiskey ... don't you Spongy?

BASIL: Roger.

BOBBIE: (Pouring drinks) Roger ... (hands BASIL his drink - holds out drink) 'Bombs Away' ...

BASIL: (Raised glass) 'Bombs Away' ...

(They both finish drink in one swallow, BASIL swaying.)

EDNA: (with look to BASIL) He'll be carried away.

BOBBIE: Where was the last place we had a drink together?

BASIL: Cairo, old sport ... what a prang that was.

BOBBIE: Oh yes. How could I ever forget Cairo?

EDNA: You never told me about Cairo.

BOBBIE: It was nothing Edna.

BASIL: It was nothing, he says. Oh ... oh, Cairo. Will you ever forget Spitfire Annie?

BOBBIE: Ah, yes ... (look towards EDNA) Edna, why don't you make Spongy a cup of tea?

EDNA: No ... I'd rather hear about Spitfire Annie.

BASIL: So would I. (Jumps up and down, excited) Oh ... oohhhho ... Spitfire Annie.

EDNA: (To BOBBIE) I'm waiting.

BOBBIE: (With signals to BASIL) Spitfire Annie was just the name of a plane ...

EDNA: (Nods towards BASIL) He's getting very excited over a plane.

BOBBIE: He's like that. He's very fond of planes.

EDNA: (Looks at BASIL) Fond yes ... but that's ridiculous ... (to BOBBIE) Now look you, I'll make a cup of tea on condition that Hurricane Harry here flies off after it ... right?

BOBBIE: Right, Edna, right.

EDNA: (On exit to kitchen) And don't think you've heard the last about Spitfire Annie.

BASIL: Let's have another drink ... It's my round. (Crosses to sideboard and pours drink, spilling more than he fills - raised glass) ... to Cairo.

BOTH: Cairo.

BOBBIE: Listen Spongy ... no more talk about Spitfire Annie in front of the wife ... you understand?

BASIL: Message received and understood ... Roger, over and out. Not another word about Spitfire Annie. But will you ever forget the belly dance she used to do?

BOBBIE: Never.

BASIL: Will you do me a favour, Bubbles?

BOBBIE: Anything Spongy.

BASIL: You do it now.

BOBBIE: No, I couldn't.

BASIL: Of course you could. Piece of cake. Piece of cake.
 BOBBIE: No ...
 BASIL: I dare you ... In fact, I double-dare you. The old Bubbles I knew never refused a dare.
 BOBBIE: Seeing you double-dared me ... here we go ...
 (BOBBIE goes into his version of the belly dance. In the middle of it EDNA enters from kitchen carrying cups and saucers etc. BOBBIE stops and smiles at EDNA.)
 EDNA: I think I'll have you certified.
 BASIL: Bubbles is as sane as I am.
 EDNA: In that case, the sooner the better. (Back into kitchen)
 3:1:50

BASIL: How about one of the old songs ... 'Eskimo Nell'?
 BOBBIE: No ... no. (Kettle whistle from kitchen) Hear that - that's Edna reaching boiling point.
 BASIL: I double-double-double-dare you.
 BOBBIE: I wish you would stop daring me.
 BASIL: I know. We'll sing your old theme song. Are you ready? Here we go ...
 (sings) 'I'm forever blowing bubbles ...'
 (BOBBIE joins in.)
 BOTH: 'Pretty bubbles in the air ... They fly so high ...'
 (Female voice joins in with next line ... 'Nearly touch the sky')
 (BOBBIE and BASIL look at each other then towards the stairs where HILDA is descending, singing. BOBBIE stares in amazement. BASIL crosses to bottom of stairs where he joins in duet with HILDA. EDNA enters from kitchen, then stops in her tracks. BOBBIE cowers back in fear of the expected outburst from EDNA, but EDNA crosses to him with a smile on her face.)
 EDNA: (Softly) Bobbie ... As you know I am not by nature a curious person. Nor am I inquisitive. Nor do I ever pry into things that don't concern me ... but ...
 (loudly) WHO THE BLAZES IS THAT?
 BOBBIE: Tha ... tha ... that's Hilda.
 EDNA: Hilda? What are you running? A Harem?
 BOBBIE: She's Cyril's girlfriend.
 EDNA: (Sarcastic) Oh, of course that explains it, except for one small detail.
 (Loudly) What the devil's she doing up our stairs and coming down like something out of the 'Pirates of Penzance'?
 (BASIL and HILDA continue to sing softly in the background. EDNA crosses to them.)
 Shut up!
 (The song tails off. EDNA crosses back to BOBBIE.)
 Now you. If she's Cyril's girlfriend, what are you doing with her? I'm waiting and it had better be good.
 BOBBIE: Well, you see, Edna ... she ... Hilda thinks I'm Cyril's uncle.
 EDNA: You're a monkey's uncle. But go on. I'm not believing a word of it, but go on.
 BOBBIE: And he has another girlfriend ... and he went down to see her off at the boat. She's going to England and he didn't want this one to know and he asked me if I

would keep her here for half an hour and I said alright and she came and she was just sitting there, when suddenly she started to sing and in the middle of the song she took a headache and I told her there were some tablets on the sideboard but instead of taking headache pills, she took my vitamin pills and she went all funny ... and she started to scratch because she gets hives and she gets excited ...

3:1:51

EDNA: This is like the Forsythe Saga ... carry on ...

BOBBIE: When I saw this, I got suspicious ...

EDNA: That makes two of us ... excuse me for interrupting your story ... but how did you let yourself be talked into this in the first instance?

BOBBIE: I'd better tell you ...

EDNA: Yes, I think you'd better ...

BOBBIE: Well you see, if I hadn't done it, Cyril was going to ... to ... tell you what happened in work ...

EDNA: Oh yes ... the woman in work ... This'll be good.

(BASIL and HILDA who have been sitting on bottom step of stairs again burst into song.)

Just a moment ... until we get rid of (popular singing duo) here ...

BOBBIE: But she's to wait here for Cyril ...

EDNA: They're both going ... because when you finish telling me your story, I don't want any witnesses ...

(EDNA crosses to BASIL and HILDA.)

(To BASIL and HILDA) Right, the party's over ...

BASIL: (Struggling to his feet) But I was just getting warmed up.

EDNA: Well, you're now going outside to cool off ... And take Jenny Wren with you.

BASIL: (To BOBBIE) What do you say ... Bubbles ...?

EDNA: The least Bubbles says the better.

BOBBIE: I think you'd better go, Spongy. We'll meet again.

BASIL: That's it ... You've said it. (Sings as he moves to hall door) 'We'll meet again ... Don't know where don't know when ... But I know we'll meet again some sunny day ...'

HILDA: Where's Cyril?

BASIL: Come with me, Madam ... and I will find your Cyril. Are you with me?

HILDA: (Pushing hat on to back of head) I'm with you ... (over to BOBBIE) Well goodbye ... ah ...

EDNA: Just call him Uncle.

HILDA: (On exit, to BOBBIE) That was the best headache I've ever had. (Exits)

BASIL: (To BOBBIE) Cheerio Bubbles. Chin up and keep your powder dry. (To EDNA) Goodbye madam. Look after old Bubbles. (Moves towards door then turns) Oh, and by the way ... No charge ... Tonight was on the house.

Cheerio and don't forget ... (sings) 'We'll meet again ... Don't know where don't know when ... But I know ...' (exits singing)

BOBBIE: (To EDNA) You never told me how you met old Spongy.

EDNA: Never mind old Spongy, let's get back to old Bubbles.

BOBBIE: Can I have another drink first?

EDNA: After ... if you're still standing. Right, I'm listening.

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BOBBIE: Well, to cut a long story short ... I walked into a bathroom by mistake and there was a woman in the bath and she reported me to the Council for having lust filled eyes ...

EDNA: Is that all?

BOBBIE: Yes, that's all. You mean you're not mad, Edna?

EDNA: She'd little to do reporting you ...

BOBBIE: Give me a kiss, Edna.

EDNA: Just hold on. There's another little thing to get sorted out. A thing called Bridget.

BOBBIE: Oh, do you know about her?

EDNA: Yes ... but I want to know more.

BOBBIE: Well ... Bridget's a bitch ...

EDNA: You took the words out of my mouth.

BOBBIE: She's a greyhound bitch.

EDNA: (Reacting) A GREYHOUND?

BOBBIE: Yes, what did you think she was?

EDNA: Nothing ... nothing ... I'll finish making the tea ... a greyhound. (Enters kitchen)

(CYRIL enters from hall.)

CYRIL: Oh, hello Mrs Willis ... Bobbie, Mr Willis ... (looks around) Where's Hilda?

BOBBIE: She's gone home with hives.

CYRIL: Hives? That means she's excited. I've never seen Hilda excited. What am I going to do?

BOBBIE: (Crossing to sideboard and lifts vitamin bottle) Here you are, son ... hold out your hand.

(CYRIL does this. Into his hand BOBBIE pours some vitamin tablets.)

If you can't fight them ... join them. Off you go.

CYRIL: Thanks ... thanks ... Mr Willis. (Pause - on exit) 'Bobbie' ... (winks on exit)

(EDNA enters.)

BOBBIE: Oh Edna ... now that we've disposed of my problems ... Let's hear how you met up with Spongy.

EDNA: No. You wouldn't want to, Bobbie.

BOBBIE: Oh but I would, Edna. I would ... I'm listening Edna.

EDNA: Well, promise you won't laugh.

BOBBIE: Carry on, Edna.

EDNA: I ... ah ... I ... ah ... I hired him from an escort service.

BOBBIE: FROM A WHAT?

EDNA: (Timid) An escort service.

BOBBIE: Oh nooooo ... (bursts out laughing)

EDNA: Stop laughing.

3:1:53

BOBBIE: (Doubled up with laughter) I can't help it ... You hiring a man for the night.

EDNA: You don't hire them ... you book them.

BOBBIE: (Holding stomach) Oh don't Edna ... don't ... my side's sore. Did you have to leave a deposit? (Laughs) In case you don't return him. (Laughs) Oh, I'm sore.

EDNA: You'll be a lot more sore, if you don't stop laughing.

BOBBIE: I can't help it. Tell me, Edna ... did you pay the full price, or did you get him wholesale? (Doubles up laughing)

EDNA: You're going to get this teapot round your head.

BOBBIE: Alright ... I'm stopped Edna ... I'm stopped. (Tries to hold in laugh but cannot - laughs) No I'm not ...

EDNA: (Raised teapot) I warned you ...

BOBBIE: No Edna ... no ... I'm stopped ... Tell me, why did you go to an escort service?

EDNA: Because of you. I thought you'd started going around with other women ... like Bridget and that French girl. And you were coming up to the dangerous age.

BOBBIE: The dangerous age?

EDNA: Yes, Isobel said it's when a man reaches fifty and tomorrow's your birthday and you'll be fifty.

BOBBIE: No I won't ... tomorrow I'll be forty-nine. It'll be another year before I'm fifty.

EDNA: Heavens, does that mean I've got to go through this next year again?

BOBBIE: No, I'm sure it doesn't.

EDNA: You're only sure ... are you not certain? Bobbie Willis, if I thought that ...

BOBBIE: Now Edna ... Edna ... You can't shout at a man on the eve of this birthday.

EDNA: You're right, Bobbie. No more shouting. With all the fuss I never got you anything for your birthday.

BOBBIE: I'd love that dog, Edna. Let me buy the dog.

EDNA: NO! (Softer) I'll buy it ... on one condition. You change its name from Bridget ... agreed?

BOBBIE: Agreed ... I'll call it Bertha.

EDNA: (Reacting) BERTHA? Bertha was my mother's name and you're going to call no dog after my mother ... 'cause my mother was good to you Bobbie Willis. You could never say one word about my mother ... she was always ...

BOBBIE: Edna ... we agreed - no shouting.

EDNA: My mother looked after you. If it hadn't been for my mother, we'd have had no place to live ... she always ...

BOBBIE: Edna ... it's my birthday.

3:1:54

EDNA: My mother always had a good word for you ... And this is how you repay her ... Nothing was too much trouble for my mother ... she was ...

BOBBIE: Shut up Edna!
(EDNA is stunned into silence.)
Now just a moment. (Crosses to gram) Just a moment. (Places record on turn-table) Let's start all over again.

(From the gram comes the music of 'Oh How We Danced on the Night We Were Wed'. BOBBIE crosses to EDNA. She has her back to him.)

My name's Bobbie ... can I have this dance?

EDNA: (Turning - smiling) My name's Edna ... yes you can.

(They dance for a moment.)

BOBBIE: Can I kiss you, Edna?

EDNA: You're stronger than I am Bobbie.

(They kiss. In the middle of the kiss, in rushes ISOBEL in a terrible temper.)

ISOBEL: After all these years ... this should happen!

EDNA: What's wrong, Isobel?

(BOBBIE switches off radiogram.)

ISOBEL: I'll tell you what's wrong. I've just had a phone call from the airport. My Harry's run off with the French girl. What do I do?

EDNA: There's only one thing you can do, Isobel.

ISOBEL: What?

EDNA: Count slowly to ten. (Arm around BOBBIE) We're going to bed.

(With a grunt, ISOBEL stamps out of the room.)

EDNA: (Continued) (To BOBBIE) Come on ... BUBBLES ...

BOBBIE: Lead the way, Edna.

(They move towards the stairs when EDNA stops.)

EDNA: Bobbie Willis. You're a typical plumber. You've forgotten something.

BOBBIE: What?

EDNA: (Pointing to sideboard) YOUR VITAMIN PILLS!

(CURTAIN FALLS ON BOBBIE HUGGING EDNA.)

CURTAIN