

## THE SETTING:

*(The action of the play takes place in the LIVING ROOM of 344 Chilton Road, just off the Mile End Road in East London.)*

*(A tastefully, but not extravagantly, refurbished Victorian house belonging to ERIC SWAN and his wife LINDA.)*

*(There is a solid front door UC [large brass numbers 344, with a letter box but not glass] and a small porch outside of the Front Door.)*

*(Left of the Front door, is a bay window, that looks out onto the houses opposite. This window has a window seat in front, with a hinged lid just large enough to hide a body. There is an umbrella stand by the door.)*

*(A doorway, UR leads to the stairs [bottom few steps visible, the door opens out to a small landing, which in turn would lead to the upstairs flat, belonging to their lodger, NORMAN McDONALD.]*

*(UR a door leads through to the dining room and DL a door leads to kitchen [cabinets are visible off stage.]*

*(There is a small cupboard above the UL Dining Room door, which blends, unobtrusively into the framing of the door.)*

*(DR a door leads to the ground floor bedroom of ERIC and LINDA.)*

## FURNISHINGS:

A new sofa DR/C has an end table at its stage-left with a push-button phone.

A chair against the L wall, between the Kitchen and Dining Room doors.

The few paintings, although pleasing, are there for wall covering rather than artistic appreciation.

There is a clock on the wall between the bedroom door and the UR arch.

At intermittent moments throughout the play, rain is visible both streaming down the window and falling outside the front door when it is opened.

Note: When the curtain first rises it should be raining.

It is just after nine o'clock on a windy, rainy October morning.

All doors are closed.

## CHARACTERS:

*(In order of appearance)*

### Note:

This is how the character' names should appear in the program.

ERIC SWAN

LINDA SWAN

MORMAN McDONALD

MR. JENKINS

UNCLE GEORGE

SALLY CHESSINGTON

DOCTOR CHAPMAN

MR. FORBRIGHT

MS. COWPER

MISS DIXON

## ACT I

*(The curtain rises on an empty stage. LINDA enters from the bedroom drinking coffee from a mug. SHE is wearing a smart suit.)*

LINDA. Eric! Eric, darling!

*(ERIC enters from the kitchen, hiding the cordless phone from his wife. HE is wearing the trousers of a suit and a plain shirt.)*

ERIC. Yes, love?

LINDA. Have you got the house keys?

ERIC. You locked up last night, didn't you, love?

LINDA. Maybe they're in the kitchen.

ERIC. Yes. *(SHE moves past HIM into the kitchen, but turns back to give him a 'good morning' kiss. Then SHE exits. ERIC reveals the phone he's been hiding, puts it to his ear and shuts the kitchen door. On phone)* You still there? ... Sorry about that - Now, have I reached the Department of Social Security? ... Excellent. I have to be quick. I want to cancel all my social security payments ...

*(LINDA re-enters from the kitchen minus the coffee mug.)*

LINDA. Not there! *(ERIC hastily puts the phone in his trouser pocket and sits nonchalantly on the settee.)* Maybe they're in my handbag.

ERIC. *(Chuckling)* Yes, that's the last place you'd think of looking.

LINDA. *(Chuckling)* All right!

*(LINDA exits DR into the bedroom and ERIC is immediately back on the phone.)*

ERIC. *(On phone)* Sorry about that ... Yes, cancel all my social security benefits ... I need to speak to each division?! ... Well, if you put me through to the Income Support Division, will they be able to forward me to the Family Benefit Division? ...

*(LINDA re-enters.)*

LINDA. I've found them. *(ERIC quickly shoves the phone down the front of his trousers)* Right let's go.

ERIC. Listen, darling. You go ahead. I'll catch up with you on the way to the station.

LINDA. But you'll miss our train.

ERIC. I'm not dressed yet and I wouldn't want to make you late for work.

LINDA. But what about you?

ERIC. Oh, I'll be all right. I'll borrow Norman's bike and leave it at the station.

LINDA. Norman will have already left for his shoe shop. Anyway, you can't just borrow the tenant's bike without asking.

ERIC. Then I'll jog to the station, the exercise will do me good.

*(ERIC jogs on the spot for a moment - Then suddenly thrusts his hands into his pockets to stop the phone slipping.)*

LINDA. *(Compassionately concerned)* Eric, everything is all right, isn't it?

ERIC. *(Overly happy)* Yes. Everything's absolutely wonderful.

LINDA. I mean, you don't have any problems at the Electricity Company, do you?

ERIC. No. No works fine. *(Then, appearing off-hand)* Are you worried about me for any reason?

LINDA. Oh no, nothing really.

ERIC. Good, good.

LINDA. But if there was anything wrong, you would talk to me, wouldn't you, Eric?

*(LINDA tries to cuddle ERIC - and HE pushes HIS bottom out so that SHE doesn't notice the phone.)*

ERIC. Of course I would, darling. And if you were worried, you'd talk to me, wouldn't you?

LINDA. Of course. So I've got nothing to worry about.

ERIC. Not a thing. Both of us. Nothing to worry about.

LINDA. Good. I'll meet you at the station then.

ERIC. I'll be five minutes behind you.

LINDA. *(Exiting)* I'll be waiting.

*(The moment SHE leaves, ERIC shakes his leg – the phone falls out of his trouser leg and HE is quickly back on the phone.)*

ERIC. Are you still there? ... Damn music. 'Flight of the Bumble Bee' at nine in the morning. *(Then)* Ah, hello, which Division am I talking to? ... 'Income Support'. Excellent. Well, my name is Eric Swan, I'm phoning because of my upstairs tenant, Norman McDonald ... No, that's 'Norman', as in 'Rockwell' ... And 'McDonald', as in 'hamburgers' ... Yes. Well, I believe Norman has been claiming Unemployment Benefit from you, is that correct? ... Yes, I thought so. Well, I just phoned to say that there's no need to send Norman's cheque for this week, or any further cheques for that matter ... Er – No. No, Norman hasn't found a job. He died this morning ... Yes, it came as a terrible shock to everybody here – That's why I phoned ... No, Norman died of natural causes ... He's what? In line for a Funeral Payment. No, you don't understand, I'm trying to cancel all of his security payments ... I don't care if he is eligible, he doesn't want it ... No, his wife doesn't want a Widow's Payment ... Nor extra Child Care. *(ERIC doesn't notice NORMAN McDONALD enter through the stairs archway into the LIVING ROOM, behind him. Although dressed, NORMAN's wrapped in a woolen blanket – But he's full of BRIGHT ENERGY, determined to shake off his cold. On phone, giving in)* Alright, alright – and will I have to pick up one of those forms at the local D.S.S. office?

NORMAN. Morning, Eric!

ERIC. *(Surprised)* Ha!

NORMAN. Sorry, Eric. Didn't mean to startle you –

ERIC. Norman! What are you doing here?

NORMAN. I came down to borrow some pills.

ERIC. Why aren't you at your shoe shop? It's after nine.

*(ERIC tries to interrupt during:)*

NORMAN. Yes, I know. I woke up this morning feeling really lousy. Well, with my wedding just three days away, I want to shake this thing off. You know me any nose, Eric. Just say the word 'cold' and I can't keep my hands off the Night Nurse. I mean I couldn't let my Brenda down, could I?

ERIC. Norman, can't you see that I'm on the phone? What do you want?

NORMAN. I was wondering if Mrs. Swan might have some aspirin in the kitchen.

ERIC. Linda has just left for the station. But there may be something in there. Help yourself. And Norman – Don't sneak up on me again. *(ERIC hurries NORMAN out and closes the kitchen door – HE's straight back on the phone without wasting a moment)* I'm sorry about that, it was – er – the late Norman McDonald's wife, I mean 'widow'. She's crumbled, I'm afraid ... Yes, usually she's the backbone of the McDonald family. But she's in a terrible state ... Norman's three children? Oh, well, they're absolutely distraught. I can hear them all crying from here. *(HE holds the phone away and makes a quick sobbing sound)* Cause of death? *(Takes out scrap of paper from HIS pocket and reads)* Norman died of "Lasser Fever" ... That's right. The doctor said it was very rare these days. *(NORMAN enters from kitchen, trying to get the top off of a bottle of aspirin with his teeth. HE crosses unnoticed to behind ERIC again. On phone)* Well, thank you.

And I'll be certain to pass on your commiserations to Mrs. McDonald. Most kind.

NORMAN. Commiserations to Mrs. McDonald?

ERIC. *(On phone, quickly)* And I'll be sure to get all the necessaries in the post to you by the end of the week. Thank you and Good day. *(ERIC hangs up and starts toward the bedroom)* Did you find what you were looking for?

NORMAN. Who was that on the phone?

ERIC. Oh, just a lady from the local Girl Scouts.

*(Again ERIC moves to the bedroom, but is stopped by:)*

NORMAN. Why was a lady from the local Girl Scouts sending her commiserations to my mother?

ERIC. I'd put your Mum and Dad into a raffle.

NORMAN. Who'd want to win my Mum and Dad?

ERIC. As contestants.

NORMAN. Oh.

ERIC. But they didn't win - That's why the Girl Scouts were sending their commiserations - I mean, the top prize was a three week World cruise. First class cabin, Captain's table every night. It was for their Golden Wedding anniversary.

NORMAN. Golden Wedding anniversary. What a lovely thought, Eric. But they didn't win.

ERIC. No. They're getting the runners-up prize instead.

NORMAN. Oh. And what's that, then?

ERIC. A toaster-oven.

NORMAN. A toaster-oven. Not bad. Did you know your washing machine's making that funny noise again.

ERIC. *(Not interested)* Is it? If you'll excuse me,

Norman, I've got to get to the station. Oh, can I borrow your bike?

NORMAN. Eric, I can't seem to get the lid off this bottle of aspirin.

ERIC. Let me have a look. *(ERIC takes the bottle and glances at the label)* Here's your problem.

NORMAN. What's that then?

ERIC. *(Giving the bottle back)* Says right here on the label - Idiot proof.

*(NORMAN gives ERIC a stern look. And ERIC exits into the bedroom, leaving the door open.)*

NORMAN. You shouldn't talk to me like that Eric. Not only have I been your tenant for the past two years, but you are to be Best Man at my Wedding on Saturday. And I have been a loyal and trustworthy friend, through thick and thin, whenever you or Linda needed a shoulder to cry on ...

*(ERIC appears from the bedroom.)*

ERIC. You can't pay your rent again, can you?

NORMAN. In a word. No. But I promise you, Eric, I'll have your money the moment Brenda and I return from our honeymoon.

ERIC. Fine.

NORMAN. God, me on a honeymoon! It's amazing.

ERIC. Yes, it's quite a thought.

NORMAN. Who'd have guessed three months ago that I'd attend a shoe salesman conference in Liverpool and come back with my future bride.

## CASH ON DELIVERY!

ERIC. It's certainly some feat.

*(NORMAN doesn't get the pun. ERIC exits into the bedroom, closing the door.)*

NORMAN. When you and Linda meet Brenda on Saturday you'll just fall in love with her. Everybody does. *(Then, to himself)* I did. *(The DOOR BELL CHIMES)* I'll get it. *(The DOOR BELL CHIMES AGAIN. Calling)* Coming!

*(NORMAN opens the front door to reveal GEORGE JENKINS, a middle aged council employee who is probably less intelligent than he thinks, standing in the doorway, clipboard and briefcase in hand.)*

NORMAN. Good morning.

JENKINS. Yes, it is. A little showery, though. I apologize for disturbing you this early. I'm from the Department of Social Security. Sickness and Disability Division.

NORMAN. Yes?

JENKINS. Are you Mr. Thompson?

NORMA. Er - No.

JENKINS. Then will you tell Mr. Thompson that I'm here to see him.

NORMAN. I don't understand.

JENKINS. Oh. Well, it's quite simple really. I'm a D.S.S. Inspector and I'm here to see Mr. Rupert Thompson.

NORMAN. I think there must be some sort of mistake.

JENKINS. This is 344 Chilton Road, is it not?

NORMAN. Yes.

JENKINS. Then there shouldn't be any mistake.

## CASH ON DELIVERY!

*(NORMAN hesitates. Then:)*

NORMAN. Hold on. I'll get someone for you to speak to.

JENKINS. Yes, why don't you do that.

NORMAN. I think you'd better wait in the porch.

JENKINS. Oh, all right.

*(JENKINS steps back out of the door and NORMAN closes it as ERIC enters from the bedroom, slipping on his jacket.)*

NORMAN. Eric, there's a gentleman waiting outside.

ERIC. Norman, I'm trying to get to the station.

*(ERIC opens the front door ...)*

NORMAN. He's from the Department of Social Services.

*(ERIC slams the front door on JENKINS.)*

ERIC. I beg your pardon?

NORMAN. And he wants to see a Mr. Thompson.

ERIC. What?

NORMAN. A D.S.S. Inspector is here to see a Mr. Rupert Thompson. I said that there must be some sort of a mistake -

ERIC. *(Urgent)* What exactly did you tell him?

NORMAN. Just that I'd get him someone to talk to.

*(ERIC starts to move NORMAN UR to the stairs.)*

ERIC. Good thinking, Norman. I'll see to him.

NORMAN. *(Stops and realizes)* Wait a minute!

ERIC. What?

NORMAN. He means Mr. Thompson – You're old tenant.

ERIC. *(Trying to appear off hand, stopping him)* No. No, he doesn't.

NORMAN. Yes. Rupert Thompson. You know, the gentleman who had the upstairs before me.

ERIC. No. No, he doesn't mean him.

NORMAN. Yes, he emigrated to Canada. They keep on delivering his mail here.

ERIC. I know that, Norman.

NORMAN. Yes. You have to send it on to him. All his social security forms.

ERIC. No, it's not that Mr. Thompson he wants to see.

NORMAN. Yes, it must be. I'll go and tell him ...

ERIC. No!

NORMAN. ... that Mr. Thompson emigrated years ago.

ERIC. No! You mustn't!

NORMAN. Why not?

ERIC. Because I'm Rupert Thompson.

NORMAN. Well, I can still tell him that he – *(Then realizing)* You're Rupert Thompson?

ERIC. I'm pretending to be Rupert Thompson.

NORMAN. *(Tries to work this out, but)* No, no you've lost me.

*(ERIC opens the front door and smiles at JENKINS.)*

ERIC. *(To JENKINS)* Won't keep you a moment. *(As JENKINS goes to answer, ERIC closes the door on HIM.)*

ERIC pulls NORMAN aside. *(To NORMAN)* Can you keep a secret, Norman?

NORMAN. *(Worried)* A secret? I think so.

ERIC. Ever since Mr. Thompson left here two years ago ... I've been cashing in his social security benefits.

NORMAN. To send on to him, you mean.

ERIC. Not quite. No.

NORMAN. Well, to send back to the D.S.S. then?

ERIC. Not quite. No.

NORMAN. Well then what do you do with all ... *(Realizing)* Oh, my God!

ERIC. *(Urgently)* Shush!

NORMAN. That is disgraceful!

ERIC. I know.

NORMAN. How could you, Eric?

ERIC. It's a long story and now's not the time. Just keep out of the way and I'll deal with it. It won't be anything serious.

*(JENKINS pokes his face in through the letter box.)*

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* Hello!

ERIC. *(Calling)* Won't be a moment! *(JENKINS lets the letter box close. ERIC pushes NORMAN away from the front door, towards the kitchen. To NORMAN)* Now get in there and keep quiet – And don't listen at the door.

NORMAN. Why? You have told me everything, haven't you, Eric?

ERIC. *(Lying with a broad smile)* Norman! *(ERIC pushes NORMAN into the kitchen, slams the door, then rushes to the front door and calls:)* Coming! *(Then he stops, suddenly)*

*remembering something. To himself*) Mr. Thompson? Ah! Gout! Mr. Thompson, gout. *(ERIC throws his jacket into the window seat, then dives to the umbrella stand, grabs a short umbrella, realizes his mistake and grabs a walking stick and hobbles quickly to open the front door. To JENKINS)* Sorry for keeping you. *(Indicates his leg)* I don't get about that well, I'm afraid. Do come in.

JENKINS. Thank you. *(JENKINS enters the living room. Throughout, ERIC hobbles about, as if his leg is very painful)* Mr. Rupert Thompson?

ERIC. *(Glances at kitchen, then back)* Er - Yes. Rupert Thompson at your service. What can I do for you, Mr. - er - JENKINS. Jenkins.

ERIC. Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. George Jenkins. Department of Social Security, Sickness and Disability Division.

ERIC. *(Worried)* Sickness and Disability Division, I see. This has got nothing to do with the phone call earlier?

JENKINS. No.

ERIC. Ah. *(Then, trying to be pleasant)* Would you like to sit down?

JENKINS. That would be very nice, thank you. *(ERIC leads JENKINS DC where he sits on the sofa and takes out a thin file)* I won't waste your time, Mr. Thompson. I just have a couple of points, then I'll leave you in peace.

ERIC. Good. Well, fire away.

JENKINS. *(Referring to papers in the thin file)* Mr. Thompson, according to our records, you have been laid up in bed for the past six months with gout.

ERIC. *(Pained)* Yes, that's right, severe gout. Caused by complications resulting from a crate falling upon my foot

during unpaid voluntary employment packing food for famine relief - I have all the doctor's reports upstairs.

JENKINS. *(Indicating the thin file)* I have copies of them here.

ERIC. Oh yes?

JENKINS. *(Indicating the thin file)* As well as all your benefit claims.

ERIC. *(Worried now)* Oh yes?

JENKINS. Yes. In fact, I happen to have copies of the entire household's medical reports and social security claims with me.

*(JENKINS reaches into his brief case and takes out a HUGE, thick folder, overflowing with bulging multi-coloured papers and reports. It's MASSIVE.)*

ERIC. Will you look at that.

JENKINS. I must say, 344 Chilton Road is a very unlucky household.

ERIC. Isn't it just?

JENKINS. Almost jinxed.

ERIC. That's a very big folder, you have there, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Largest in the District.

ERIC. *(Laughing)* You're boasting again.

*(JENKINS doesn't get the joke.)*

JENKINS. There's everything in here, Mr. Thompson. Retirement Pensions, Family Benefits, Child Care, Single Parent Benefits, Sick Pay, Housing Benefit and Invalid Care.

ERIC. *(Thinking that's the end of the list)* And all under this one roof.

JENKINS. Guardian's Allowance, Widow's Allowance, Maternity Pay, National Health Refunds, Redundancy Payments and Several Industrial Injuries Benefits.

ERIC. *(Again thinking that's the end)* Who'd have believed it?

JENKINS. Christmas Bonuses, Vacation Bonuses, Cold Weather Compensation and miscellaneous Disease Benefits.

ERIC. Goodness.

JENKINS. And free milk. Yes, if it wasn't for all the confirmatory medical and legal backup documentation, we might think there was something funny going on.

ERIC. Would you?

JENKINS. Oh, Mr. Thompson, you'd be amazed at what some people do get up to - False claims, fake bank accounts, phoney names.

ERIC. Nooo!

JENKINS. Forged prescriptions, fake i.d.'s.

ERIC. Nooooo!

JENKINS. Multiple claims for a single disability.

ERIC. That's a good one - I mean it's good that one can spot these things.

JENKINS. Isn't it just. *(He fishes in his briefcase and takes out several forms)* Now, as I was saying, I have this form for you to sign.

ERIC. *(Unsure)* You do?

JENKINS. Just to confirm that you've been receiving our Sickness Benefit for the last six months.

ERIC. Er - That's right.

JENKINS. And as there are no signs of improvement.

ERIC. Er - That's right.

JENKINS. You are therefore now due to receive our Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

ERIC. *(He wasn't expecting this)* I'm what?

JENKINS. *(Checking his notes)* That's an extra weekly income of - Er - twenty-four pounds and ninety-three pence.

ERIC. Oh, no, really, the Unemployment Benefit is plenty for me.

JENKINS. But you're eligible. Aren't you, Sir? *(JENKINS offers ERIC a pen with the form. ERIC's not sure what to do. Reluctantly HE signs. JENKINS takes it back and signs as well - ERIC looks concerned)* Now, I am just signing as a witness to your signature, Mr. Thompson. It all seems to be in order.

ERIC. Oh, good. Well, if that's everything then.

*(ERIC stands JENKINS, but HE sits again.)*

JENKINS. Almost. I'll just need your Mr. Swan's signature, then I'll be on my way.

ERIC. I beg your pardon.

JENKINS. Mr. Swan. Your landlord.

ERIC. What about him?

JENKINS. I will need his signature to confirm that you have indeed been convalescing here for the past six months.

ERIC. *(Real friendly)* Oh, you don't need that.

JENKINS. *(Friendly, right back at him)* Oh, yes I do.

ERIC. Ah. Well, I'm afraid he's not in.

JENKINS. At work is he?

ERIC. That's right. He's at work. Hard at work at the Electricity Board. *(He stands JENKINS)* So why don't you

leave this all with me and I'll get Mr. Swan to sign everything then send it all back to you in the post.

JENKINS. *(Sitting)* You're forgetting departmental regulations.

ERIC. Am I?

JENKINS. I have to be present when Mr. Swan signs.

ERIC. Do you?

JENKINS. To witness his signature as I witnessed yours just now.

*(ERIC stands HIM again.)*

ERIC. Well, if you come back later, I'm sure he will have come home.

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, I think I should tell you that I'm under strict orders from my supervisor, our Ms. Cowper.

ERIC. Ms. Cowper?

JENKINS. Yes. Our Ms. Cowper gave me explicit instructions to sort out this matter before I leave this residence.

ERIC. Is that so?

JENKINS. And you wouldn't want to get the wrong side of our Ms. Cowper, let me tell you.

ERIC. No, I'm sure. *(Standing HIM)* I'll tell you what, if you'd like to set yourself up in the dining room, I'll see if I can find someone - Him - Mr. Swan, that is - to come home and sign your forms for you.

JENKINS. You'll be happier in there. You can spread yourself out on the dining room table. *(ERIC ushers JENKINS into the dining room, gently closes the door and rushes to the kitchen. JENKINS re-enters and ERIC quickly returns to his painted hobble)* Oh, Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Yes?

JENKINS. If you have a moment, I wouldn't say no to a cup of tea.

ERIC. Of course, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Earl Grey, if you have it.

ERIC. Of course. *(JENKINS exits into the dining room. ERIC pulls open the kitchen door)* Norman! *(NORMAN, who has been listening at the key hole on his knees, falls in. ERIC quickly pulls him to his feet)* Get up.

NORMAN. Oh, my God! I feel worse than I did before.

ERIC. Pull yourself together.

NORMAN. I think I'm going to be sick.

ERIC. We haven't got time for that.

NORMAN. You said there wasn't any more I should know about.

ERIC. Shh!

NORMAN. I heard everything, Eric.

ERIC. Shhh!

NORMAN. All those claims!

ERIC. Shhhh!

NORMAN. What happened to just cashing in Mr. Thompson's cheques?

ERIC. It all got a bit carried away.

NORMAN. I'll say!

ERIC. Well they kept on offering me all this money. I never asked for it.

NORMAN. What?

ERIC. All right, here's the story. Two years ago the Electricity Company got privatized and hands out their special Christmas bonuses - That's thirty percent redundancies. I'm out of a job. I can't bring myself to tell

Linda, and then, out of the blue, Mr. Thompson's cheque arrived and saves the day. I think, "Great, I'll find work in January." Well the New Year arrives and there's no work, no money. However, the DSS sent all these forms from their various divisions.

NORMAN. Divisions?

ERIC. One division asked me if I had any other tenants living here so I made up a couple of names and said ... "yes" ... and they sent me some money. Then somebody else asked me if they were all employed and I said ... "no" ... and they sent me some more money. Then somebody else asked me if everybody was healthy and I said ... "no" ... and they sent me even more money. And somebody else asked me if there were any pensioners living here and I said -

NORMAN. I get the picture!

ERIC. Well, before I knew what I was doing, everything had snowballed.

NORMAN. Snowballed, it bloody avalanched!

ERIC. Shush!

NORMAN. What you've done is a very serious offense.

ERIC. I know.

NORMAN. You could go to jail.

ERIC. I know.

NORMAN. What did you do it for?

ERIC. Twenty-five thousand pounds a year and no tax.

NORMAN. Bloody hell!

ERIC. Shush!

NORMAN. But you're going to go to prison, Eric.

ERIC. No, I'm not.

NORMAN. Yes you are. How can you sign as Mr. Swan, when he thinks you're 'hop-a-long' Thompson.

*(NORMAN imitates ERIC walking with a limp.)*

ERIC. Stop that! The solution is simple. Someone has got to pretend to be me.

NORMAN. What?!

ERIC. *(Straight at NORMAN)* Pretend to be me -

NORMAN. Pretend to be you?!

ERIC. - and sign the forms for Mr. Jenkins.

NORMAN. Come off it. What idiot are you going to get to do that? *(ERIC puts his arm around NORMAN. NORMAN realizes)* Ooh. No. I couldn't. *(Pulls away)* I won't.

ERIC. You must.

NORMAN. No. I refuse to participate in such a dishonest scheme. Get Linda to sign.

ERIC. Linda?

NORMAN. She's the landlord here as well as you.

ERIC. No, Norman, Linda can't sign.

NORMAN. Why not?

ERIC. Because she doesn't know what I've been doing. She thinks I still work for the Electricity Company.

NORMAN. Bloody hell! Does anybody know what you're up to?

ERIC. Only my Uncle George.

NORMAN. *(Amazed)* Your Uncle George - You mean that sweet old man who cleans up at the the local hospital?

ERIC. That's right.

NORMAN. Well, how on earth did he find out?

ERIC. He didn't find out. He's my partner.

NORMAN. Partner?!

ERIC. Shush! Well, after I'd told the Sickness and Disability Division that a few of my made up tenants were ill,

they suddenly wanted to see all their medical documentation – Prescriptions and so on – I knew I'd be in trouble if I couldn't show them anything, so I asked Uncle George and he helped me out by getting all the medical forms I needed from the hospital.

NORMAN. I can't believe I'm hearing this. I've got to go in there (*Indicates dining room*) and tell that Mr. Jenkins the whole story.

ERIC. (*Stopping him*) No! You can't do that!

NORMAN. It's my duty.

ERIC. You can't!

NORMAN. Give me one good reason why I can't!

ERIC. You're not here.

NORMAN. (*Stops, then confused*) Not here?

ERIC. That's right. You're at a funeral.

NORMAN. (*Confused*) A funeral?

ERIC. Yes.

NORMAN. Who's funeral?

ERIC. Yours.

NORMAN. (*Beat*) Mine.

ERIC. That's right ... You died this morning.

(*NORMAN tries to work this out.*)

NORMAN. (*Shakes his head*) No, no. You've lost me again.

ERIC. I have to tell you something.

NORMAN. (*Wary*) Should I sit down for this one?

ERIC. You might want to lie down. (*They sit on the sofa. ERIC tries to smile broadly*) I've been using your name as part of my fiddle.

NORMAN. (*Standing, furious*) My name?!

ERIC. (*Pulling him back down*) Shush!

NORMAN. What do you mean 'my name'?!

ERIC. The D.S.S. thinks that Norman McDonald has been living upstairs for the past two years.

NORMAN. Well, I have been.

ERIC. As an unemployed lumberjack.

NORMAN. What?!

ERIC. With a wife and family to support.

NORMAN. Wife and family?

ERIC. It's cramped, but you're happy.

NORMAN. Why on earth a lumberjack?!

ERIC. Well you had to be out of work.

NORMAN. So?

ERIC. Well, there's not much call for lumberjacks round Trafalgar Square, is there?!

NORMAN. God! And I died this morning?!

ERIC. Look, I could see the whole thing was out of control. I had to find a way out, Norman. I thought, "I know, I'll kill off all my made up characters, one by one."

NORMAN. Well, that sounds like a good idea.

ERIC. So I rand the DSS this morning and told them that Norman McDonald the lumberjack had died.

NORMAN. Great.

ERIC. Not great. Now they're going to send a funeral re-imbusement, a widow's payment, widowed mother's allowance and extra child care!

NORMAN. Oh, my god!

ERIC. I'd already tried emigrating your brother to Australia – they sent me a Relocation Fee. I put your father in jail – 'boom', 'Criminal Severance Pay'. I sent your sister off

to Africa to become a missionary and it's like I've won the damn lottery. I can't get rid of anybody! I'm stuck in a nightmare, Norman – I want to get out, but they keep giving me more and more money!

NORMAN. Bloody hell!

ERIC. *(Suddenly realizing)* Norman, you have to help me. If that Mr. Jenkins starts an investigation with the police, your name is bound to come up and no one will believe that we weren't in partnership.

NORMAN. Partnership?

ERIC. *(Again realizing)* Oh God, worse than the police – There's your fiancée.

NORMAN. *(Worried)* Brenda?

ERIC. She'll be devastated. Your wedding might have to be postponed.

NORMAN. Postponed?

ERIC. If not cancelled.

NORMAN. Cancelled?!

ERIC. *(Begging)* You have to help me.

NORMAN. *(Angry)* Do you know what you are?

ERIC. Up until now – bloody lucky.

NORMAN. You're insane.

ERIC. If you don't help me, Norman, I could be dead by dinner time.

NORMAN. *(Angry)* You might not make it to dinner time!

*(ERIC turns for the dining room, when the kitchen door opens and UNCLE GEORGE, a chirpy older man, enters, wearing a hospital porter's uniform.)*

GEORGE. Morning all!

ERIC. Uncle George!

GEORGE. Morning, Eric my boy. Came in the back way, hope you don't mind. *(HE steps towards NORMAN)* Morning, Norman.

NORMAN. *(Sternly)* Et tu, Brute?

GEORGE. Beg pardon?

ERIC. Nothing. Norman's a bit upset.

GEORGE. Yeah, I'd be upset as well if I was getting married on Saturday.

*(ERIC hurries to GEORGE to usher him back into the kitchen.)*

ERIC. Not now, Uncle.

GEORGE. Norman, did I ever tell you about the time I almost married Ivy Parsons the coalman's daughter ...

ERIC. We know, you got cold feet.

GEORGE. No, cold feet was the other one – Rosie Clark. God – Rosie Clark! No, Ivy caught me in the back seat of my car with her sister – God, you should have heard her language –

ERIC. Come back later, Uncle George.

GEORGE. *(Turning back into the room)* Oh, all right – Here, you know your washing machine's still making that funny noise?

ERIC. It doesn't matter. *(To GEORGE)* Norman's got a little problem.

NORMAN. *(Angry)* Ha!

GEORGE. Worried about your wedding night, are you lad? Wehah!!

ERIC. There's been a death in the family, hasn't there, Norman?

NORMAN. Yes. And another one coming up fast.  
 GEORGE. Oh dear. Well, you have my commiserations,  
 Norman. Was it someone close?  
 NORMAN. Yes, very!  
 ERIC. Yes. It's very sad. (*Quickly taking GEORGE aside*) And I'm dealing with a visit from the Department.  
 GEORGE. What?  
 ERIC. Sickness and Disability Division.  
 GEORGE. Oooh!  
 ERIC. They're in the dining room.  
 GEORGE. (*Checking his watch*) Oh dear, well, I can't stay long. I just popped over to tell you that I might have a bloke interested in the assorted National Health wigs.  
 NORMAN. Wigs?  
 ERIC. Fine.  
 GEORGE. But still not so much as a nibble at the support corsets.  
 NORMAN. Corsets?  
 ERIC. Well, I've stashed them up in the back of the top cupboard when you need them.  
 GEORGE. Top cupboard, right.  
 NORMAN. Corsets and wigs?  
 ERIC. Alright, alright – It's just the other part of what I've been up to.  
 NORMAN. Other part?  
 GEORGE. Hey, don't give the game away.  
 ERIC. It's okay. Norman's part of the set up now.  
 NORMAN. Norman's no such thing.  
 ERIC. Look, all the free stuff the Health Service sends me, Uncle George sells at the local market. There's maternity dresses.

GEORGE. Maternity bras.  
 ERIC. Alipitia wigs.  
 GEORGE. Surgical stockings.  
 ERIC. Support corsets.  
 NORMAN. No wonder the Health Service is going broke!  
 ERIC. Now, off you go Uncle George.

(*ERIC pushes GEORGE to the front door and turns back for the kitchen, NORMAN follows.*)

GEORGE. I'll see you at the church on Saturday, Norman.

NORMAN. Oh God, the church – Eric, if Brenda finds out –

ERIC. Just go and introduce yourself to Mr. Jenkins as me and I'll fix his tea.

(*ERIC exits into the kitchen.*)

NORMAN. (*Glances at the dining room then hurries after ERIC*) I'll fix his sugar.

(*As NORMAN exits into the kitchen, GEORGE opens the front door to reveal SALLY CHESSINGTON, a young welfare worker, in the doorway just about to knock.*)

SALLY. Good morning.

GEORGE. Good morning.

SALLY. I've called about poor Mr. McDonald.

GEORGE. Poor Mr. McDonald?

SALLY. (*Sympathetically*) Yes, I'm from the local family crisis department.

GEORGE. Oh, yes?

SALLY. Yes, Mr. Swan telephoned the DSS earlier this morning and informed them of Mr. McDonald's passing.

GEORGE. Passing what?

SALLY. Passing away - Apparently Mr. Swan indicated that the McDonald family was very distressed.

GEORGE. Did he?

SALLY. Yes - So the DSS immediately sent word to my supervisors, who thought someone should be sent round to help out.

GEORGE. But Mr. McDonald's in the kitchen, making a cup of tea.

SALLY. (*Confused*) Mr. McDonald's making a cup of tea?

GEORGE. That's right.

SALLY. (*Realizing*) Oh, you must mean his son.

GEORGE. Whose son?

SALLY. Poor Mr. McDonald's son, of course. Is he very upset?

GEORGE. He is a bit, there's been a death in the family.

SALLY. Yes, I know. That's why I'm here. Mr. McDonald's father has died.

GEORGE. His dad? Oh, he said it was someone close.

(*ERIC pushes NORMAN out through the kitchen door, NEITHER notice SALLY. ERIC carries the tray of tea and cakes.*)

ERIC. Just wait here and I'll fetch him from the dining room.

NORMAN. Couldn't we just say that Mr. Swan has left the country or something?

ERIC. No!

GEORGE. (*To SALLY*) This is Mr. McDonald now. (*Then, to NORMAN*) I'll see you on Saturday then.

NORMAN. (*Over his shoulder*) Yes, at the church, Uncle George.

GEORGE. And I'm sorry about the news you've had.

NORMAN. Not half as sorry as I am.

(*GEORGE exits. And NORMAN performs a couple of practice 'Hello's ...*)

SALLY. My sincerest commiserations, Mr. McDonald.

(*NORMAN turns at the unexpected voice.*)

NORMAN. Commiserations?

SALLY. I'm here from the phone call earlier.

NORMAN. What phone call?

SALLY. We spoke to a Mr. Swan.

NORMAN. Oh, yes. The phone call. Commiserations to Mrs. McDonald.

SALLY. Yes, that's right. It's a terrible loss.

NORMAN. Oh, yes, it's a shame. It would have been lovely.

SALLY. (*Confused*) What would have been lovely?

NORMAN. An ocean cruise for their golden wedding anniversary.

SALLY. Golden wedding anniversary?

NORMAN. In a couple of months from now.

SALLY. Oh, dear.

NORMAN. *(Leading her back to the front door)* Well, it's very nice of you to pop over, but I'm afraid I'm a bit busy right now.

SALLY. I won't get in the way.

NORMAN. But you might, Miss ... ?

SALLY. Chessington – Sally Chessington ... You must be so very sad.

NORMAN. Well, as Mum always says, you have to look on the bright side.

SALLY. The bright side?

NORMAN. At least we ended up with the toaster-oven.

SALLY. A toaster-oven?

NORMAN. It's not bad.

SALLY. A toaster-oven? *(Getting angry)* I think it's terrible that a man can work so hard and yet all his family ends up with is a toaster-oven.

NORMAN. It's only a raffle.

SALLY. A raffle?

NORMAN. Either you win or you don't. It's the luck of the draw. Fate wasn't shining on my Mum and Dad this morning.

SALLY. Goodness. I must say, you're taking it all very well.

NORMAN. Thank you.

SALLY. And I'm sure he's resting peacefully now.

NORMAN. Who?

SALLY. Your father.

*(NORMAN considers this and checks his watch.)*

NORMAN. No. I doubt that.

SALLY. You do?

NORMAN. Yes. He'll be at that allotment by now.

SALLY. Allotment? *(Then, understanding)* Oh, I see. The allotment. The great allotment in the sky.

NORMAN. I beg your pardon?

SALLY. Now that he's passed away.

NORMAN. Now that who's passed away?

SALLY. Why your father, of course.

NORMAN. My father?

SALLY. *(Confused)* Yes.

NORMAN. Passed away?

SALLY. *(Confused)* This morning.

*(NORMAN suddenly breaks down in tears and sits. SALLY sits by him.)*

NORMAN. Oh, God!

SALLY. That's all right, Mr. McDonald.

NORMAN. We were gonna go fishing in the morning!

SALLY. I bet Norman loved his fishing.

NORMAN. I'm sorry, but this is such a shock, I mean I only spoke to him on the phone last night, he said, "Don't forget your worms, Son!" *(HE sobs again, then HE realizes)* 'Norman'?

SALLY. Dear departed Norman.

NORMAN. Dear departed Norman?

SALLY. I'm sure you'll miss your father.

NORMAN. My dear departed father Norman.

SALLY. Yes.

NORMAN. Norman the lumberjack.

SALLY. Yes.

*(NORMAN considers this.)*

NORMAN. So, you're not from the local Girl Scouts?

SALLY. No, Mr. McDonald I'm from the council's Family Crisis Department.

NORMAN. Oh, you've come to the right place.

*(NORMAN jumps up to explain, but the dining room door opens and ERIC enters, ushering JENKINS in. JENKINS has a cup of tea in one hand and a slice of cake on a plate in the other.)*

ERIC. If you'd just like to come through now.

JENKINS. Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

ERIC. And Mr. Swan will be happy to answer all your questions.

*(NORMAN rushes to meet them.)*

NORMAN. No!

*(SALLY is soon at NORMAN's side.)*

ERIC. And here he is now.

NORMAN. Mr. Thompson, if I could just—

ERIC. Later—Leave the introductions to me.

NORMAN. *(To ERIC, indicating SALLY)* You don't understand.

ERIC. Later!

JENKINS. *(A little confused)* But, we met at the door.

ERIC. *(To JENKINS, indicating NORMAN)* You did indeed. Mr. Jenkins, I'd like you to say hello to, Mr. Swan.

NORMAN. *(Smiling both at SALLY and JENKINS)* Yes, I'd also like you to say hello to Mr. Swan ... but you can't.

JENKINS. Can't?

ERIC. Can't?

NORMAN. No, Eric's not at home.

JENKINS. *(Confused to ERIC)* But you just told me in there that Mr. Swan had come back for an early lunch.

ERIC. *(Pleasantly to JENKINS)* Yes ... *(Then angrily to NORMAN)* ... He had.

NORMAN. Yes. Mr. Swan was here, but not he's gone.

ERIC. Gone?

JENKINS. Gone?

NORMAN. Yes. He had his lunch, then he left.

ERIC. Had his lunch?

JENKINS. That quick?

NORMAN. Yes. He just blew in here, ate some baked beans and blew out again.

JENKINS. *(To ERIC)* Mr. Thompson, you should have impressed upon Mr. Swan the urgency of the situation.

ERIC. *(Pleasantly to JENKINS)* Yes ... *(Then angrily to NORMAN)* I realize that.

SALLY. *(Standing at NORMAN's back)* Is there anything else I can do for you, Mr. McDonald?

ERIC. *(Irritated)* McDonald? You—

NORMAN. McDonald, McDonald—Wait a minute. That name rings a bell.

NORMAN. *(Worried)* Does it?

JENKINS. Yes. 'McDonald'. You're another of Mr. Swan's resident tenants, aren't you?

NORMAN. Er—That's right.

JENKINS. Yes. McDonald—Family of six.

NORMAN. (*Angrily*) Six?!

JENKINS. Three children, the grand mother and Mr. and Mrs. McDonald themselves.

ERIC. Yes!

(*SALLY barges next to JENKINS.*)

SALLY. Sir, I don't know who you are but you are being most indelicate to Mr. McDonald.

JENKINS. (*Unsure*) Indelicate?

(*NORMAN steps in between THEM.*)

NORMAN. That's all right. Sally.

ERIC. Excuse me -

SALLY. You shouldn't let him talk to you like that, Mr. McDonald. Not today.

JENKINS. Oh?

NORMAN. I can handle it.

ERIC. Excuse me -

SALLY. (*Putting her arm around NORMAN*) This man needs care, support and sympathy.

JENKINS. Why, what's happened?

SALLY. His father passed away this morning.

JENKINS. Oh, tragic.

NORMAN. Oh, bloody hell.

ERIC. What's going on, Norman?

NORMAN. (*Quickly*) Norman ... ly! Normally. Normally, I would have said something earlier, but I forgot.

ERIC. Forgot what?

NORMAN. I forgot that my father dropped down dead this morning.

ERIC. (*Concerned*) Did he?

NORMAN. Yes. And we'll all miss my father 'Norman', won't we, Mr. Thompson?

ERIC. (*Understanding*) Oh. Your father 'Norman' ...

ERIC & NORMAN. (*Together*) ... Yes, we'll all miss him.

NORMAN. Say 'goodbye', Sally.

JENKINS. You say your father passed away this morning?

NORMAN. That's right.

JENKINS. So you're Norman McDonald's son?

NORMAN. Yes.

JENKINS. (*Fishing*) Which makes you?

NORMAN. (*Hopefully*) Very sad?

JENKINS. Your name.

NORMAN. Oh, I see. Mr. McDonald. (*Not good enough for JENKINS, so behind JENKINS' back, ERIC indicates a little boy*) Er - junior. (*Still not good enough, so ERIC sticks up two fingers behind JENKINS*) The second.

JENKINS. Your first name.

(*NORMAN looks to ERIC for help.*)

ERIC. Oh, he wants to know my first name, Mr. Thompson.

ERIC. Does he, Richard?

NORMAN. Yes, he does. (*To JENKINS*) It's Richard.

JENKINS. Richard McDonald?

NORMAN. Yes, but you can call me, Dickie.

JENKINS. But I still don't understand - According to our records, Norman McDonald's eldest son, Richard -

NORMAN. Call me 'Dickie'.

JENKINS. — is stone deaf.

ERIC. *(Remembering)* Ah.

SALLY. Deaf?

*(Everyone turns to face NORMAN ... Who cups a hand to his ear.)*

NORMAN. *(Feigning acute deafness)* I'm sorry, I missed that one.

JENKINS. He's been receiving our Criminal Injuries Compensation for the last eighteen months.

NORMAN. I've what ... ?! ... *(Then feigning deafness)* ... did you say again?

ERIC. *(Trying to lighten it)* Yes, poor Dickie has been stone deaf since the place where he worked was held up.

SALLY. *(Not understanding)* The place was held up and Dickie went deaf?

ERIC. They blew up the safe and burst both his ear drums.

SALLY. *(To NORMAN, still standing at his back)* But you've understood every word that I've said.

*(NORMAN says nothing, looking the other way, busily examining his fingernails.)*

ERIC. *(Clearly to NORMAN, indicating SALLY)* Your friend's talking to you, Dickie. *(ERIC turns NORMAN's head to face SALLY. To SALLY)* You have to look right at him when you talk to him. *(ERIC turns NORMAN's head back to him. To NORMAN)* Dickie reads lips. Don't you, Dickie?

*(NORMAN looks back at SALLY.)*

NORMAN. Yes ... By braille.

*(Note: From now on, SALLY and JENKINS speak loudly and clearly when addressing NORMAN. SALLY pulls NORMAN's face to her whenever SHE speaks to HIM.)*

SALLY. *(To NORMAN)* I had no idea.

ERIC. It's a burden he's learnt to live with, Sally. *(To NORMAN, pulling HIS face)* Haven't you, Dickie?

NORMAN. *(Looks back at SALLY)* I suppose I have, yes.

JENKINS. Yes, but I hope the unemployment benefits have helped to ease the grief.

NORMAN. *(Tersely, to ERIC)* Unemployment benefits?

ERIC. *(Trying to lighten it, nodding NORMAN's head)* Yes.

SALLY. Unemployed as well?

ERIC. Yes. Poor Dickie has been trying to find work for the past year. *(To NORMAN)* Haven't you, Dickie?

NORMAN. I suppose I have, yes.

ERIC. But it's all been to no avail. *(Shakes NORMAN's head)* Not even a whisper of a job.

JENKINS. No. Particularly as he was such a specialist before the accident.

NORMAN. Specialist?

JENKINS. Well, I wouldn't suppose there's much of a call for deaf piano tuners is there?

ERIC. No.

NORMAN. *(Angry)* Piano tuner?

SALLY. *(Turning NORMAN's head to her)* You poor

man. Your entire livelihood destroyed by a meaningless act of violence.

NORMAN. (*Vaguely*) Yes ...

ERIC. (*Escorting SALLY away*) Listen, Sally, it was very nice of you to pop round and make sure Dickie was all right.

SALLY. Well, when you've got something to give -

ERIC. But as you can see, he's coping just fine.

SALLY. But, I'm sure there must be something I can do.

ERIC. Thank you, there's nothing, is there, Dickie?

NORMAN. No, you've done enough already, Sally.

SALLY. But there's all of the funeral arrangements to be seen to.

NORMAN. The what?

SALLY. (*Very loud and clear*) The funeral arrangements. (*Brightly*) Why don't I handle all that for you?

NORMAN. Ooh, no.

SALLY. You just tell me if it's to be a cremation or burial.

NORMAN. It doesn't matter!

SALLY. What?

NORMAN. I don't care!

ERIC. Steady, Dickie!

JENKINS. Goodness me. Have some respect for your poor dead father.

ERIC. (*Stepping in to SALLY*) You must forgive Dickie. He's upset. (*Then to NORMAN*) Aren't you?

NORMAN. Yes. Very.

SALLY. Dickie, your father must have left some last wishes?

NORMAN. I think he wanted to be pushed off the side of Tower Bridge!

JENKINS. Good Heavens!

ERIC. (*Quickly*) No, no, no. (*HE hobbles to JENKINS*) What Dickie meant was that Norman wanted a burial at sea. (*HE hobbles to SALLY*) Now, why don't we let Sally go off and see what she can work out for us and we'll talk to her later. All right?

SALLY. Yes. You leave everything to me, Mr. Thompson. (*She smiles at NORMAN*) Keep it up, Dickie.

NORMAN. Thank you, Sally.

(*SALLY exits through the front door.*)

ERIC. Well, that's got that settled. (*To JENKINS*) Now, where were we?

JENKINS. Mr. Swan.

ERIC. (*Nonchalantly crossing back*) Yes? (*NORMAN stamps on ERIC foot and ERIC immediately returns to his limping*) I mean, "Yes, Mr. Swan" - You missed him. I know what - If you give me your address, I'll tell Mr. Swan to stop off at your office on his way to work tomorrow.

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, I should remain here until this matter is settled. Remember our Ms. Cowper.

ERIC. How could I forget. You have another cup of tea and I'll see if he's got back to work yet.

JENKINS. Good. I want this matter settled with Mr. Swan as soon as possible.

ERIC. Of course. Help yourself to another cookie.

(*JENKINS exits into the dining room. ERIC shuts the door behind him.*)

NORMAN. What have you done?!

ERIC. Don't panic – All we need is another Swan to sign – We're just back at stage one.

NORMAN. Stage one?! (*Indicating JENKINS*) He thinks you're a lame-legged lodger called Thompson, (*Indicating SALLY*) and she thinks I'm an out-of-work, recently bereaved dickie-deaf piano tuner!

*(The kitchen door opens and GEORGE enters with a cardboard box.)*

GEORGE. Eric, my Boy!

ERIC. Later, Uncle George. Our situation hasn't improved.

GEORGE. Sorry to hear that, but I'm afraid I've got some returns for you, Eric.

NORMAN. Returns?

ERIC. Now's not the time, Uncle.

GEORGE. It's these surgical stockings. (*Takes a pair of baggy, blue, woolen stockings out of the box and waggles them in the air*) They're just not moving.

ERIC. Oh, no. I've got a suitcase full of them up in the cupboard.

NORMAN. A suitcase full of stockings?

ERIC. Surgical stockings, Norman. Standard varicose vein issue.

GEORGE. They were our hottest selling line last Christmas. I think it's the colour, Eric. Autumnal pastels are in this season.

*(ERIC takes the box from GEORGE and nudges him back towards the kitchen door.)*

ERIC. This really isn't the time, Uncle George.

GEORGE. I just need to take those wigs from the cupboard.

NORMAN. (*Trying to usher GEORGE out*) Now now Mr. Swan.

GEORGE. But I need the wigs –

NORMAN. Come back later, Mr. Swan.

ERIC. (*Realizing*) Mr. Swan!

GEORGE. Yes?

ERIC. (*Indicates UNCLE GEORGE*) Mr. Swan!

NORMAN. Oh, no!

ERIC. It's perfect.

NORMAN. It's preposterous! It would never work.

GEORGE. What would never work?

ERIC. (*Pulling GEORGE aside and indicating all named in the speech*) Uncle George ... That inspector needs a Mr. Swan's signature. Now, I can't sign Swan because he thinks I'm Thompson and Norman can't sign Swan because he thinks he's his own son who's father's passed on and Linda can't sign Swan because she don't know what's going on. So, now we need you to sign Swan – But not as 'you' Swan, as 'me' Swan, so we've got a Swan to sign 'Swan' ...

*(GEORGE considers this and turns to NORMAN.)*

GEORGE. Sounds logical to me.

ERIC. Excellent! (*Indicating GEORGE's porter's uniform*) We'll have to get him a change of clothes.

GEORGE. You could just tell him it was odd job day and I've been working about the house.

ERIC. No, you're meant to have been at work – At the Electricity Company, remember.

GEORGE. Electricity Company, right.

ERIC. Everything I've got will be too big for him – What about you, Norman?

NORMAN. I'm not going to help you any further, Eric.

ERIC. You must. Remember your Brenda – Left alone when her fiance was carted off to prison where he spent ten years for conspiring to defraud her majesty's government.

NORMAN. I think I've got something upstairs that might fit him.

ERIC. That's the spirit! We'll dress you in the bedroom, Uncle George. Just go and get your clothes, Norman!

GEORGE. Hey, Norman – This is living!!!

NORMAN. Living! *(As ERIC exits into the bedroom DR with GEORGE, LINDA SWAN enters through the front door.*

*NORMAN passes LINDA. Without a concern)* Morning, Mrs. Swan.

*(LINDA throughout seems terribly upset by something.)*

LINDA. Norman?

*(NORMAN exits up the stairs. There's a brief pause, then HE comes crashing back in and stops dead.)*

NORMAN. Mrs. Swan. You're in the living room.

LINDA. I realize that, Norman. So are you.

NORMAN. You're not meant to be in the living room. Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. Neither are you, Norman. You're supposed to be at work.

NORMAN. So are you, Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. Never mind me. I'd be grateful if you left me alone.

NORMAN. That's not a good idea.

LINDA. I'm expecting a visitor.

NORMAN. A visitor?

LINDA. Yes. And it's private.

NORMAN. But it might not be.

LINDA. It is!

NORMAN. Eric didn't say anything about a private visitor.

LINDA. Eric doesn't know. Now please go back upstairs.

NORMAN. Mrs. Swan, I really don't think you should be having private visitors that Eric doesn't know about – *(LINDA bursts into tears)* Mrs. Swan – ?

LINDA. Just leave me alone!

*(She moves to the Bedroom door.)*

NORMAN. *(Quickly stepping in between LINDA and the Bedroom door)* No!

LINDA. What now?!

NORMAN. You're not allowed in there, Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. What are you talking about. Let me into my bedroom!

NORMAN. No, you can't. It's not allowed.

LINDA. Not allowed? Who said so?

NORMAN. The – er – Health Department. Yes, I had to call them in because of the smell.

LINDA. From my bedroom?

NORMAN. Yes! It was this terrible, yucky smell – What

a pong! The Health Department has put your bedroom into quarantine.

LINDA. Quarantine?

NORMAN. Apparently it's an outbreak of some horrible virulent, contagious disease – Blurr.

LINDA. In my bedroom?

NORMAN. Yes.

LINDA. That's awful.

NORMAN. It's bloody awful. The Health Department has been here spraying all morning. That's why you can't go into the bedroom – *(Suddenly realizing)* or the dining room.

LINDA. The dining room, as well?

*(NORMAN locks the dining room door and pockets the key.)*

NORMAN. That's right, it spread. You're going to have to sleep with me.

LINDA. I beg your pardon?

NORMAN. You'll feel better.

LINDA. Sleeping with you?

NORMAN. I mean upstairs – In my flat – Tonight – With Eric – When he comes home from work – From the electricity board – Where he works.

*(JENKINS bangs on the dining room door.)*

LINDA. What's that?

NORMAN. *(Feeling for rain)* Thunder.

LINDA. There's someone in the dining room.

NORMAN. No. No, I don't think so.

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* Hello, I think I've been shut in!

LINDA. Who's that?!

NORMAN. *(To LINDA)* Oh, that. That's nobody. *(Then, calling through the door)* Don't worry. Everything's under control! *(Then to LINDA)* It's a gentleman from the Health Department.

LINDA. A gentleman from the Health Department?

NORMAN. Yes. They left him behind.

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* I think the door's stuck!

NORMAN. *(Calling through the door)* I'll be with you in a minute!

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* Is that Mr. McDonald?

NORMAN. *(Calling through the door)* Yes.

JENKINS. The Mr. McDonald I was talking to earlier?

NORMAN. That's right.

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* Then how can you hear me?

*(NORMAN considers this and looks blankly at LINDA.)*

NORMAN. *(Loudly through the key hole)* I beg your pardon?

*(The PHONE RINGS and LINDA answers it immediately.)*

LINDA. *(On phone)* Hello, Swan's residence? ... Brenda?

NORMAN. Ooh, Brenda! Please let me talk to her.

LINDA. *(On phone)* Brenda he can't talk right now ... What? No, I don't know why he didn't go to work ... No! Don't come over here!

NORMAN. *(Grabbing the phone)* No, please don't –

LINDA. Shut up, Norman! *(Grabbing the phone back)* He'll see you tomorrow. *(SHE goes to hang up, then goes*

*back to the phone. On phone*) Brenda, I know we've never met, but I promise you, I'm not always this rude. Look, I'll see you on Saturday at the church, all right? Goodbye.

*(SHE hangs up.)*

NORMAN. Is she all right?

LINDA. She was worried about you.

NORMAN. I know how she feels.

LINDA. Norman, I'm going to make myself a cup of tea – and you'd better be out of my living room by the time it's brewed.

*(LINDA exits into the kitchen and NORMAN calls after her.)*

NORMAN. Then make sure it's good and strong.  
*(NORMAN slams the kitchen door shut on LINDA. He locks the door and the PHONE RINGS. On phone)* Hello, Brenda!

*(JENKINS bangs on the dining room door.)*

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* Open this door!

NORMAN. *(On phone)* Goodbye, Brenda! *(HE hangs up the phone and starts towards the dining room. Calling)* Coming!

*(ERIC enters from the bedroom DL.)*

ERIC. Where are those clothes for Uncle George?

NORMAN. Oh, thank heavens!

ERIC. Haven't you got them yet?

NORMAN. Disaster!

ERIC. What? No clothes?

*(JENKINS BANGS on the dining room door again.)*

JENKINS. Please let me out!

ERIC. What's the matter with Mr. Jenkins?

NORMAN. *(Holding up the key)* I locked him in the dining room.

ERIC. Why?

NORMAN. It seemed like a good idea at the time! *(ERIC snatches the key from NORMAN and starts to unlock the dining room door)* No!

ERIC. Be quiet, Norman.

NORMAN. *(Indicating kitchen door)* But you don't understand. In the kitchen –

ERIC. Shut up, Norman! *(ERIC opens the dining room door to reveal JENKINS)* I'm sorry, these old door frames are sticking all the time.

*(JENKINS steps into the living room, carrying a plate of jaffa cakes.)*

JENKINS. *(To ERIC)* Mr. Tompson, it is nearly ten o'clock.

ERIC. I know.

JENKINS. If Mr. Swan isn't here, I must contact our Ms. Cowper. May I use your telephone?

ERIC. No!

JENKINS. What now?

*(ERIC hobbles to JENKINS.)*

ERIC. Mr. Swan is here.

JENKINS. Is he?

ERIC. Yes. He came back.

JENKINS. Well, can I see him?

ERIC. Er - No. He's not ready yet.

JENKINS. Not ready? Well, where is he?

ERIC. He's - er - on the roof.

NORMAN. Oh my God.

JENKINS. On the roof?

ERIC. Yes.

JENKINS. What's your landlord doing up on the roof in this weather?

ERIC. Plugging up a leak.

JENKINS. But he was at work ten minutes ago.

ERIC. Yes, he suddenly remembered.

JENKINS. This is all very odd.

ERIC. And that's what he remembered, it's odd job day. He came back from work and went straight up onto the roof. He'll be down in three minutes.

*(LINDA BANGS on the kitchen door.)*

JENKINS. Who's that?

*(NORMAN looks about pretending he heard nothing.)*

NORMAN. Who's what?

JENKINS. Someone's in the kitchen.

NORMAN. Oh, yes?

JENKINS. *(To ERIC)* Well, who is it, Mr. Thompson?

ERIC. *(Lost)* Well, who is it, Dickie?

NORMAN. It's - er - my mother.

ERIC. Your mother?

NORMAN. Yes.

JENKINS. You mean, Mrs. McDonald.

NORMAN. *(Reluctantly)* Yes.

JENKINS. Your widowed mother?

NORMAN. *(Even more reluctantly)* Yes. My widowed mother.

LINDA. *(Off, calling)* This door's been locked!

ERIC. *(Realizing it's LINDA, rushes to kitchen door)* Hagh! *(HE turns back to JENKINS and makes exactly the same sound)* Hagh! *(Then, slowly changes the shocked sound to a sad one)* 'Ah', ah, aaah - the poor bereaved woman. *(HE takes NORMAN aside)* What's she doing here ... ?

JENKINS. Mr. McDonald, why has your widowed mother been locked in the kitchen?

NORMAN. Well, we had to. She heard the news about Daddy passing away and she went berserk,

JENKINS. Good Heavens, perhaps someone should let her -

NORMAN. No! No, you have to remember that it's that time of year, as well.

JENKINS. That time of year?

NORMAN. Her moon is in Uranus.

JENKINS. It's where?!

ERIC. Astrologically speaking. Dickie's mother goes quite funny at this time of year and that combined with the bereavement.

NORMAN. Yes, she's been tearing up the carpet, eating the wallpaper in the kitchen ...

JENKINS. Eating the wallpaper?

ERIC. Yes. This is for her own good. I know, why don't we go up to the attic.

JENKINS. The attic?

ERIC. Yes, we can climb out onto the roof from there and sort this business right away with Mr. Swan.

NORMAN. That's a good idea. I'll go first.

ERIC. (*Urgent*) No, Dickie, you should stay down here and deal with your Mother.

LINDA. (*Off, very loud banging and shouting*) Let me in!

JENKINS. Don't you think you should let that poor woman out?

ERIC. Oh, no. No, that's not a good idea, is it, Dickie?

NORMAN. Ooh, no, we've just had a new wallpaper in here.

ERIC. Now, Mr. Jenkins, to the attic - We can sort this business right away.

JENKINS. Oh, very well. Let me grab my files.

ERIC. You grab whatever you need. (*JENKINS exits into the dining room UL. ERIC quickly takes NORMAN aside*) Right, you've got five minutes maximum. When we get back from the roof I want Uncle George dressed up as me in one of your suits.

NORMAN. What about Linda?

ERIC. Just keep her locked up.

(*The PHONE RINGS and NORMAN picks it up.*)

NORMAN. (*On phone*) Hello? ... Oh, thank goodness, Brenda.

(*JENKINS enters from the dining room with his heavy, bulging files.*)

JENKINS. Right then, Mr. Thompson. (*JENKINS walks into NORMAN on the telephone and they both stop ... Finally ... to ERIC*) What on earth is Dickie doing on the telephone?

NORMAN. (*As if he can't hear anything*) Hello? Hello, is there anybody there? Hello? (*HE hangs up. To ERIC*) Would you believe it? There's nobody there again.

ERIC. (*Explaining to JENKINS*) Poor Dickie's never quite got the hang of telephones since the accident. Have you, Dickie?

NORMAN. Just gone half-past.

ERIC. Is it really? We'd best be off then, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Well, I have one question concerning Mr. McDonald's hearing.

ERIC. It's very sad, isn't it?

JENKINS. I dare say, but I was just talking to him and he understood every word I said.

ERIC. I told you, Dickie reads lips.

JENKINS. Through solid oak doors.

ERIC. Yes, he has very keen eyesight.

(*Before JENKINS is able to consider this, ERIC pulls him out through the UR stairs arch.*)

(*The PHONE RINGS and NORMAN picks it up.*)

NORMAN. (*On phone*) Hello, Brenda!

LINDA. (*Off, calling*) Norman!

NORMAN. (*On phone*) Goodbye, Brenda! (*NORMAN hangs up and backs to the UR arch.*) No! The gentleman from

the health department said that you have to stay in the kitchen until further notice!

*(NORMAN exits through the UR arch.)*

LINDA. *(Off, calling and banging)* Open up!

*(The Front Door opens and DR. CHAPMAN, a "first-day-on-the-job" marriage guidance councilor enters.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Quietly)* Hello?

LINDA. *(Off, calling)* Is there anybody there?!

*(DR. CHAPMAN looks all about.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Quietly)* Only me. *(DR. CHAPMAN gently rests his head against it, listening. Softly)* Hello?

LINDA. *(Off, suddenly calling as she BANGS loudly)* Unlock this door!

DR. CHAPMAN. Oh!

*(DR. CHAPMAN quickly unlocks the door and LINDA storms in, tea in hand.)*

LINDA. *(Furious)* NORMAN, if you don't stop being stupid! *(Then, great relief)* Oh, Doctor Chapman.

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan, are you all right, Mrs. Swan?

LINDA. No, I'm not!

DR. CHAPMAN. Would you like to sit down?

LINDA. *(Yelling up the stairs)* Stupid idiot, Norman!

DR. CHAPMAN. Let's take a few deep breaths.

*(HE does.)*

LINDA. What with him mucking about and having to meet you this morning.

DR. CHAPMAN. That's all right.

LINDA. I've been very anxious about it, you know.

DR. CHAPMAN. I can see that -

LINDA. Doctor Chapman, I never thought I'd have to talk to anyone about my husband.

DR. CHAPMAN. I can understand -

LINDA. Let alone a marriage guidance counsellor.

DR. CHAPMAN. Relationship arbitrator -

LINDA. And Norman McDonald, our upstairs lodger, hasn't helped.

DR. CHAPMAN. Hasn't he?

LINDA. *(Shouting up the stairs)* He's been a bloody nuisance!

*(DR. CHAPMAN takes a note of this.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Has he? Well, you approached your local council for help. And that's why I'm here.

LINDA. Thank you, Doctor Chapman. *(Calming herself)* Would you like a cup of tea, I've just made one.

DR. CHAPMAN. In a moment, perhaps.

LINDA. You know, I think I'd rather just get on with it as well - show it to you. Get it all out in the open.

DR. CHAPMAN. However you would like this to go, is just perfect. Questioning a partner's sexuality is never an easy task.

LINDA. No. It's over here. *(During the following, DR. CHAPMAN follows LINDA L as SHE arranges the chair to step up to the cupboard)* I found it all by complete accident tucked away at the back of the cupboard, when I was looking for our old 8mm cine films. I was going to have them transferred to video for our anniversary. *(DR. CHAPMAN holds the chair for her as SHE clammers up, opens the high cupboard, delves deep and takes out a large cardboard box)* This is it. Prepare yourself for a shock, Doctor Chapman.

DR. CHAPMAN. This is precisely what your local council has trained me for, Mrs. Swan.

*(LINDA takes out a LONG BLONDE WIG from the box, holds it up, then passes it down to DR. CHAPMAN.)*

LINDA. This is the first thing I found.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Trying to remain unstirred)* I see.

*(SHE then hands HIM a LADY'S CORSET, then a FLORAL MATERNITY DRESS. DR. CHAPMAN holds it up against himself. She takes out a PAIR OF STOCKINGS and hands them to DR. CHAPMAN.)*

LINDA. Then this ... And this ... And these ... And this. *(She takes out a large MATERNITY BRA from the box and hands it down to DR. CHAPMAN - He is astonished)* It's amazing, isn't it?

DR. CHAPMAN. Well, your husband's certainly got himself well organized, Mrs. Swan. Tell me, Eric's mother ...

LINDA. Yes?

DR. CHAPMAN. Is she a blonde, by any chance?

LINDA. Well, yes.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Examining the large bra)* And is she a big woman?

LINDA. Well, largish - Does that mean anything Doctor?

DR. CHAPMAN. Well, I think I'm beginning to see a pattern emerging here. Could be the result of a Suppressed Mother Fixation.

LINDA. Oh, God.

DR. CHAPMAN. Luckily it's early days and this fetish is still very personal to your husband.

LINDA. *(Upset)* His fetish?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes. I don't imagine Eric will have yet gained the confidence to venture out and about.

LINDA. *(More upset)* Out and about?

DR. CHAPMAN. I doubt if he's going that wild. I imagine Eric just likes to slip into his favorite dress and parade up and down in front of the bedroom mirror.

LINDA. *(Even more upset)* In front of the bedroom mirror!

DR. CHAPMAN. You mustn't distress yourself, Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. But you're telling me my husband's "gay"!

DR. CHAPMAN. No, no, no. Not all cross-dressers are ... that way inclined.

LINDA. Cross-dresser?!

DR. CHAPMAN. Now, I'm not saying that your husband doesn't have a problem - *(Glances at the size of the maternity bra)* A large problem - But -

LINDA. A large problem!

*(LINDA turns and runs for the kitchen.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan! Don't alarm yourself!

*(As LINDA exits into the kitchen, slamming the door behind her, GEORGE enters from the bedroom, wearing long underwear and his porter's hat.)*

GEORGE. Am I going to get dressed up or what?!

*(DR. CHAPMAN turns to see GEORGE in his state of undress.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Goodness!

GEORGE. Oh.

DR. CHAPMAN. And who exactly are you?

GEORGE. Wait a minute – Are you the gentleman from the local authorities?

DR. CHAPMAN. That's right.

GEORGE. Oh, sorry. *(Crosses to shake DR. CHAPMAN's hand)* Yes, well, Swan's the name.

DR. CHAPMAN. Gracious me. You mean you're Mr. Swan?

GEORGE. Yes.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Glances at the kitchen)* Mr. Eric Swan?

GEORGE. Oh, yes, yes, I am Eric Swan. Eric Swan, that's me. So, shall we get on with it?

DR. CHAPMAN. I beg your pardon?

GEORGE. You want me to sign a statement or something, don't you?

DR. CHAPMAN. Well, I thought we might start with a bit of a chat.

GEORGE. A chat?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes.

GEORGE. Oh, all right then. What shall we chat about?

DR. CHAPMAN. I suppose I had just better be straight forward and honest about it, hadn't I?

GEORGE. *(A little lost)* Honesty is always the best policy, as my lovely dear mother used to say.

DR. CHAPMAN. Ah, your lovely dear mother. *(HE makes a note of this)* Well, I know all about it.

GEORGE. All about what?

DR. CHAPMAN. What you've been indulging in – on the quiet.

GEORGE. *(Worried)* What do you mean?

DR. CHAPMAN. I've seen your getup in the cupboard.

*(DR. CHAPMAN shows GEORGE the open box of clothes.)*

GEORGE. Not what was in the box?

DR. CHAPMAN. I'm afraid so. Yes.

GEORGE. God, I didn't think you were here to chat about that.

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes. I'm afraid it's all come out into the open.

GEORGE. About what's been going on here.

DR. CHAPMAN. That's right.

GEORGE. You mean you've come here to make an arrest.

DR. CHAPMAN. Mr. Swan, there's no question of an arrest.

GEORGE. Well I have to make something perfectly clear to you, I am not who ... *(Realizing)* No question of an arrest?

DR. CHAPMAN. That's right.

GEORGE. Why not?

DR. CHAPMAN. Well, it's not illegal, is it?

GEORGE. *(Brightly)* Isn't it?

DR. CHAPMAN. No.

GEORGE. You mean that what I've been doing with the wigs and the stockings and the dresses isn't against the law.

DR. CHAPMAN. That's right.

GEORGE. *(Happily)* Well, then I'd have thought that everybody would've been at it!

DR. CHAPMAN. I'm not sure about that, Eric – You don't mind if I call you 'Eric'?

GEORGE. Oh no, you call me "Eric".

DR. CHAPMAN. Well, I don't think it's highly approved of, Eric. But certainly a lot of people do do it.

GEORGE. Do they?

DR. CHAPMAN. It's a free country.

GEORGE. It certainly is! I only wish I'd found out earlier that it was legal.

DR. CHAPMAN. Oh yes?

GEORGE. I'd have got the whole family at it!

DR. CHAPMAN. I must admit, Mr. Swan, this isn't the reaction that I had expected.

GEORGE. And I can tell you, my partner will be very relieved as well.

DR. CHAPMAN. Your partner?

GEORGE. Yes.

DR. CHAPMAN. Are you saying that there's somebody else who – er – indulges in this with you?

GEORGE. That's right.

DR. CHAPMAN. Would it be too impolite of me to ask who?

GEORGE. You're sure it's legal?

DR. CHAPMAN. Quite sure, Eric.

GEORGE. Well then, it's my Uncle George.

DR. CHAPMAN. Your Uncle?

*(During the following, GEORGE crosses, puts the clothes back in the box and the box back in the cupboard.)*

GEORGE. *(Proudly)* Actually, the clothes were all Uncle George's idea.

DR. CHAPMAN. Were they?!

GEORGE. I thought we should just stick to the wigs, but clever old Uncle George insisted that we got into dresses and corsets.

DR. CHAPMAN. Did he?!

GEORGE. *(Full of himself)* Oh, yes, Uncle George. He's the one who really knows the tricks of the trade.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Writes in notebook)* Does he?

GEORGE. Oh, yeah ...

*(Suddenly, LINDA bursts out of the kitchen in a rage – There is a loud BANG as the door CRASHES into GEORGE, who remains hidden upstage of the open door through. LINDA stands in the doorway.)*

LINDA. Dr. Chapman! I'm going round to Eric's office and have it out with him!

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan!

LINDA. Make him confess to everything!

DR. CHAPMAN. Your husband's here, Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. We've been married ten years! *(Then realizing*

*what DR. CHAPMAN just said, all her bravo fades away)*  
Eric's here?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes. *(LINDA goes to speak, bursts into tears and runs back into the kitchen, slamming the door)* Mrs. Swan!

*(DR. CHAPMAN is about to rush into the kitchen, when GEORGE emerges from behind the door on very unsteady legs. DR. CHAPMAN has to steady him.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Are you all right, Mr. Swan?  
*(GEORGE can only just stand)* Goodness. Do you often have comeovers like this?

GEORGE. *(Dazed)* The door, the door.

*(GEORGE weaves from side to side, holding his head and DR. CHAPMAN hurries to him with a chair, seating him quickly, still in a direct line with the door.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. There you go. I'll get you something to drink.

*(GEORGE flops forward, his head sinking down in front of his knees.)*

*(LINDA bursts back out of the kitchen, HITTING him again.)*

LINDA. Dr. Chapman!

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan, I...

LINDA. Where is my husband?

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan, prepare yourself for a shock.

LINDA. What?

DR. CHAPMAN. There's somebody else involved with your husband's cross dressing.

LINDA. What?

DR. CHAPMAN. I'm afraid it's true.

LINDA. God, who?

DR. CHAPMAN. Eric's Uncle George.

LINDA. Uncle George?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes, and from what Eric's told me, it's Uncle George who's been leading your husband astray.

LINDA. I can't believe it. Eric and Uncle George.

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes, and Eric indicated that they've been indulging in it for several years.

LINDA. *(Bursting into tears again)* Of course! His Uncle George used to take him camping!

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan!

*(SHE runs back into the kitchen, this time DR. CHAPMAN follows her through the kitchen door closing it to reveal GEORGE slumped in his chair.)*

*(Mustering all of his weary and wobblerly strength, GEORGE manages to stand, placing the chair to one side.)*

*(Without warning, LINDA crashes back out of kitchen, CRASHING the door into GEORGE once more - She runs across the stage, exiting into the bedroom. DR. CHAPMAN hurries out of the kitchen after LINDA - CRASHING the door into GEORGE once more.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan!

*(As DR. CHAPMAN exits into the Bedroom, NORMAN enters through the stair's Archway with a bundle of clothes and HE moves towards the Bedroom Door.)*

NORMAN. Uncle George, come on out.

*(GEORGE stumbles out from behind the kitchen door.)*

GEORGE. *(Foolishly)* Hello.

*(NORMAN dashes across to GEORGE, just as he faints into his arms.)*

NORMAN. Oh, my God!

*(As NORMAN starts to drag GEORGE back to the sofa, SALLY and MR. FORBRIGHT enter through the front door. FORBRIGHT is dressed in a dark suit.)*

*(THEY are both horrified at what NORMAN is doing. This can look quite rude as NORMAN tries to pull HIM up from behind.)*

NORMAN. *(To the unconscious GEORGE)* Up we come.

SALLY. Mr. McDonald!

NORMAN. Agh! *(NORMAN falls on the sofa in fright with GEORGE)* Sally, I thought I'd got rid of you.

SALLY. Dickie, I've brought Mr. Forbright.

NORMAN. Sally, please –

SALLY. Mr. Forbright is an undertaker.

NORMAN. Well, that's all very well, but – *(Then realizing and worried)* Undertaker?

SALLY. Yes. He's here to take care of everything.

NORMAN. Oh, bloody hell.

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald, whatever are you doing?

NORMAN. Doing?

FORBRIGHT. You shouldn't be trying to move the body on your own!

NORMAN. Body?

FORBRIGHT. Yes. *(Indicating GEORGE)* Your dear departed father, 'Norman'.

*(NORMAN looks quickly to GEORGE.)*

NORMAN. *(Thinking madly)* Ah – er – that body – this body. *(Then, crying)* I'm so confused. Dear Daddy. Norman McDonald.

*(SALLY notices it's GEORGE.)*

SALLY. Wait a minute, when I arrived earlier this morning you said that this man was Uncle George.

NORMAN. *(Thinking madly)* Ah, no, no, that was somebody completely different. Uncle George has gone now.

SALLY. But he looks the same.

*(NORMAN peers very closely at GEORGE.)*

NORMAN. He does, doesn't he?

SALLY. Practically identical.

NORMAN. That's right, they're twins.

SALLY. Twins?

NORMAN. Uncle George is dear Daddy's twin brother.

SALLY. Goodness, well, Uncle George must be shattered.

NORMAN. He's knocked out.

SALLY. Dickie, I think you should leave everything to Mr. Forbright.

NORMAN. I'd much prefer to do everything myself, honestly. It's no trouble at all. I can borrow a spade, dig a bit of a hole ...

FORBRIGHT. Dickie, is there a bedroom we could use on this floor?

NORMAN. Bedroom?

FORBRIGHT. I just need somewhere for your father to rest peacefully.

*(NORMAN leads THEM to the dining room.)*

NORMAN. No - All the bedrooms are being used. Sally will show you the way through here. You can lay him out on the dining room table.

SALLY. The dining room table?

NORMAN. Yes, we'll eat out tonight.

*(NORMAN pushes SALLY off and FORBRIGHT stops in the dining room doorway, turning to NORMAN.)*

FORBRIGHT. Your father's in a better place now.

NORMAN. Yes. *(NORMAN nods sympathetically and shuts the door on him)* And I wish I was with him. *(NORMAN hurries back to GEORGE)* I'll get you some smelling salts, Uncle George!

*(As NORMAN hurries into the kitchen, ERIC enters from the UR archway.)*

ERIC. *(Calling up the stairs)* I don't know how I could have got it wrong, Mr. Jenkins. I could have sworn that's where Mr. Swan went to.

JENKINS. *(Off, calling)* It's all right.

ERIC. *(Calling up the stairs)* And I had no idea how dusty it was up there.

*(JENKINS enters down the stairs, covered in dust. HE has removed his jacket and his shirt is blackened with filth - He doesn't have his briefcase or files with him.)*

JENKINS. I'm sure it'll come out after a couple of washes.

ERIC. I do apologize, Mr. Jenkins. *(Then with mock surprise, seeing GEORGE resting up on the sofa)* Wait a moment - Here he is now.

*(ERIC leads JENKINS to the back of the sofa.)*

JENKINS. So this is your illusive Mr. Swan.

ERIC. Yes, this is my landlord. Mr. Swan, say hello to Mr. Jenkins.

*(GEORGE doesn't move.)*

*(FORBRIGHT enters unnoticed from the dining room and walks up quietly behind them both.)*

JENKINS. Is he deaf as well?

ERIC. No. Nothing like that.

JENKINS. Well, what's the matter with him, then?

FORBRIGHT. He's dead.

*(ERIC looks in amazement at JENKINS.)*  
*(And the CURTAIN FALLS.)*

## ACT II

*(The action is continuous.)*

*(JENKINS, ERIC and FORBRIGHT stand behind the sofa on which lies the unconscious GEORGE. ERIC looks back at FORBRIGHT.)*

ERIC/JENKINS. Dead?

FORBRIGHT. *(Nodding solemnly)* Yes, dead I'm afraid. This poor gentleman slipped away from us earlier this morning.

ERIC. Slipped away?

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, did your landlord fall off the roof?

ERIC. I'm not sure what's happened, actually.

FORBRIGHT. I'm told it was very peaceful.

ERIC. Well, that is a relief.

*(As FORBRIGHT covers GEORGE with the blanket NORMAN used in act one, NORMAN hurries back in from the kitchen, carrying a large, half-filled rubbish bag. HE doesn't see FORBRIGHT.)*

NORMAN. I couldn't find any smelling salts, *(Indicating the trash bag)* But this trash is enough to bring anyone round.

FORBRIGHT. What was that, Mr. McDonald?

NORMAN. (*Realizing the undertaker has returned*) I was just saying that the trash men are coming round.

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald, I was looking for a cloth for the dining room table.

ERIC. A cloth for the ... (*HE limps across to NORMAN*) What on earth has happened down here, Dickie?

NORMAN. Nothing. Nothing at all.

FORBRIGHT. I'm preparing to lay out the body on the dining room table.

ERIC. Lay him out?

FORBRIGHT. (*Indicating NORMAN and GEORGE*) Yes, this young man's father has died.

NORMAN. Oh, God.

JENKINS. (*To ERIC*) Dickie McDonald's father? I don't understand, Mr. Thompson.

ERIC. Join the club.

(*NORMAN takes FORBRIGHT's arm and leads him towards the dining room.*)

NORMAN. Yes, thank you, Mr. Forbright. You'll find a table cloth in the far chest. And there's knives and forks in the dresser if you need them. (*HE pushes FORBRIGHT into the dining room and closes the door*) Well, there we are then.

JENKINS. Dickie McDonald's father? (*To ERIC, indicating GEORGE*) But you just told me that this was your landlord, Eric Swan.

ERIC. That's right, I did. And it is.

JENKINS. How could Mr. Swan have been Dickie McDonald's father?

(*ERIC draws a blank, turns to NORMAN and smiles broadly.*)

ERIC. You explained that to me once, didn't you Dickie?

(*NORMAN just looks straight at ERIC.*)

NORMAN. (*Feigning deafness again*) I'm sorry, Mr. Thompson, did you say something.

JENKINS. Mr. McDonald!

ERIC. That's you, Dickie.

JENKINS. (*Loudly, 'mouthing' for deaf DICKIE McDONALD*) How could Mr. Swan have been your father?

NORMAN. (*Caught*) Well ... when I was a little boy, my father, (*Angrily to ERIC*) the lumberjack, (*then pleasantly to JENKINS again*) lost his job. The family fell upon hard times and so they decided ... to have me fostered here with Mr. and Mrs. Swan.

JENKINS. So Mr. Swan was your foster father.

ERIC. Yes, on his mother's side.

JENKINS. (*To NORMAN*) Are you saying that both your natural father and your foster father passed away this morning?

(*NORMAN glares at ERIC.*)

NORMAN. Yes.

ERIC. Yes. Mr. Eric Swan here (*Indicated GEORGE*) and Mr. Norman McDonald - er - upstairs.

(*Indicates upstairs.*)

JENKINS. You've lost two fathers in one day.

NORMAN. Yes.

ERIC. Yes, he's very careless.

JENKINS. Goodness me. And how did your real father, Norman McDonald the lumberjack, how did he die?

NORMAN. He fell out of a tree.

JENKINS. Good God, and his body's upstairs?

NORMAN. Yes, that's where he landed.

JENKINS. And is the undertaker dealing with that body as well?

ERIC. No, that's a surprise for later. And obviously, Mr. Swan won't be able to sign your forms, Mr. Jenkins. So I think it best if we just forget about my claim for increased benefit.

NORMAN. *(Happily)* That's very generous of you, Mr. Thompson.

ERIC. A small sacrifice, considering your losses, Dickie. *(HE opens the front door for JENKINS and smiles confidently)* Yes, I'm sorry, Mr. Jenkins, but you'll have to return to your office empty handed.

JENKINS. *(Happily helpful)* Oh, but I won't.

ERIC. Won't you?

JENKINS. Not at all. Mrs. Swan can sign your forms.

NORMAN. Oh, God.

*(NORMAN sits on the chair L, his head down in his hands.)*

ERIC. I beg your pardon?

JENKINS. I think we'll find, Mr. Thompson, that according to your lease, Mrs. Swan is your landlord as well as the late Mr. Swan.

ERIC. Is she?

JENKINS. Yes. And if that's the case, then it would be

perfectly in order for Mrs. Swan to confirm that you have been convalescing here, from your gout, for the past six months.

ERIC. *(Very worried)* Oh, that's great news.

JENKINS. So is she home?

ERIC. No. No, she's definitely not home. She's at work.

*(DR. CHAPMAN enters from the bedroom.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Oh, sorry to interrupt.

*(ERIC is motionless. Drawing a black. HE looks at JENKINS, draws another blank. ERIC looks back at DR. CHAPMAN.)*

ERIC. You're new around here, aren't you?

DR. CHAPMAN. I am actually, yes. Has anyone seen Mr. Swan?

*(ERIC and JENKINS glance down at the covered unconscious GEORGE.)*

ERIC. No. No, Eric's - er - no longer with us. *(Warily)* And - er - Who want's to know?

DR. CHAPMAN. I'm Dr. Chapman.

ERIC. *(Worried)* Doctor?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes. I suppose Mr. Swan's resting.

ERIC. Resting?

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes. He was hit by a door.

JENKINS. *(To NORMAN)* Good heavens, is that how it happened then?

*(NORMAN just stuffs a piece of cake in his mouth.)  
(LINDA enters from the Bedroom.)*

LINDA. Have you found him yet, Dr. Chapman? *(She sees ERIC and holds back her emotions)* Oh.

ERIC. *(Caught, to LINDA)* Ah – Now, I know who you are.

LINDA. And I'm beginning to know who you are – Dr. Chapman and I need to talk to you in private.

*(ERIC, still limping, takes LINDA to one side.)*

ERIC. *(Happily)* We have company.

LINDA. I don't care if the Queen Mum popped over for – *(Realizing)* Why are you limping?

ERIC. I wasn't limping.

LINDA. You've got a walking stick.

ERIC. Oh, that, yes. It's nothing. It's just playing me up again.

LINDA. What is?

ERIC. My old, you know, in the leg.

LINDA. What are you talking about?

JENKINS. It's his gout.

ERIC. Yes, thank you Mr. Jenkins.

LINDA. Gout?

ERIC. Oh yes, and it's very sore.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* You haven't got gout.

JENKINS. What?

ERIC. *(Full of energy)* Yes, that's what I like! Positive thinking! Mind over matter. You are so right! I must keep telling myself. I haven't got gout! I haven't got gout! I –

*(Suddenly, HE experiences a "miracle healing" and performs a little jig in celebration)* My God! It's a miracle!! I can walk again! Praise the Lord! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

*(HE kisses LINDA's hand in gratitude.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Maybe I should come back at a more convenient moment.

*(NORMAN looks up from his despair.)*

NORMAN. I think we should all come back at a more convenient moment.

*(LINDA crosses to NORMAN and DR. CHAPMAN sits on the edge of the sofa.)*

LINDA. I told you to push off upstairs.

JENKINS. I believe he's involved down here, actually.

*(LINDA steps into JENKINS.)*

LINDA. And who are you?

*(NORMAN jumps up between LINDA and JENKINS.)*

NORMAN. Oh – he's fine.

LINDA. What?

NORMAN. You asked, "How are you?" And he's perfectly well. Wasn't feeling too good earlier on, but now he's just fine now. *(Then to JENKINS)* Aren't you?

JENKINS. Yes.

LINDA. Norman!

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* Normal! Normal, yes, he's absolutely normal now.

LINDA. I asked, "who" he was!

NORMAN. *(To ERIC)* Ah, she said, "Who".

ERIC. *(To LINDA)* It sounded awfully like "How" to me as well.

LINDA. Shut up! *(Then to JENKINS)* Who are you?!

JENKINS. I'm -

*(NORMAN jumps between LINDA and JENKINS again.)*

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* The gentleman from the dining room.

LINDA. What?

NORMAN. This is the gentleman that was stuck in the dining room. *(To JENKINS)* Aren't you?

JENKINS. Yes.

ERIC. There we are, then.

JENKINS. And who are you, madam?

NORMAN. Oh, she's fine as well.

JENKINS. *(For deaf DICKIE McDONALD)* I asked "who" she was!

ERIC & NORMAN. *(To each other)* Oh, he said, "who".

JENKINS. *(To LINDA)* Who are you?

LINDA. I'm -

*(NORMAN jumps back between LINDA and JENKINS.)*

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* The lady from the kitchen!

JENKINS. *(Very worried, backing away)* Not the wallpaper lady?

NORMAN. That's right! This is the lady that was stuck in the kitchen. *(To LINDA)* Aren't you?

LINDA. *(Terse)* Yes.

ERIC. *(Happily)* Yes, the gentleman from the dining room and the lady from the kitchen. Well, I think that's enough introductions for one day, how about a nice pot of tea?

*(ERIC tries to pull LINDA to the kitchen.)*

LINDA. I just made a pot of tea!

ERIC. Well, make a fresh one.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Standing)* I wouldn't mind putting the kettle on.

LINDA. *(Firmly)* Sit down please.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Sitting)* Certainly.

JENKINS. *(To LINDA)* You say you're the lady from the kitchen?

LINDA. That's right.

JENKINS. *(To LINDA indicating NORMAN)* You mean you're his ....

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* Yes. That's right.

ERIC. Yes, she is.

JENKINS. But she looks so young.

LINDA. What?

NORMAN. Doesn't she? What a nice thing to say. *(To LINDA)* Did you hear that? That is so sweet of Mr. Jenkins, saying you young you look - that Oil of Olay's obviously doing the trick, isn't it?

ERIC. It certainly is.

NORMAN. Why don't you go and put a mud pack on right away.

*(NORMAN tries to push LINDA away.)*

LINDA. Get off me.

JENKINS. Mr. McDonald –

NORMAN. Yes, that's me.

JENKINS. *(Indicating LINDA)* Are you saying that this is the widow?

LINDA. The widow?

*(NORMAN shakes his head and points at the window.)*

NORMAN. *(Baby talk)* No, that's the widow over there.

JENKINS. What?

NORMAN. Yes, that's the lickle widow. *(Indicates the door)* And that's the lickle dwoor. *(Points up)* And that's the lickle ceiwing up dere.

JENKINS. *(Shouting)* I said – Oh, never mind. *(HE turns to LINDA)* Is he saying that you are his –

ERIC. *(Interrupting)* Yes. That's exactly what he's saying.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* His what?

NORMAN. *(To LINDA, foolish baby talk)* Woo are my lickle cuddly-mummy-bunny, aren't woo?

LINDA. What?!

NORMAN. I know lickle woo is all upset and teary-dropping about lickle daddy going to heaven, but pwease don;t take it out on lickle me.

LINDA. Why are you talking like that?

NORMAN. *(Pushing LINDA closet to the kitchen)* Just put the kettle on.

LINDA. I'm not making any tea!

NORMAN. Please make some tea. *(Then for JENKINS's benefit)* Like woo did in the old days.

LINDA. Old days?

NORMAN. When you used to pick me up from school.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* What is he talking about?

*(ERIC indicates that he has no idea.)*

NORMAN. Woo always used to have a cup of tea and a slice of cake ready for me to do my home work.

LINDA. Get out! I just want to talk to my husband!

JENKINS. *(Astonished, glancing upstairs)* Talk to your husband?

ERIC. Yes! *(Then sympathetically for JENKINS benefit)* Yes, I'm sure you do.

LINDA. What?

ERIC. *(Solemnly)* Yes. I'm sure you would like to be able to talk to your husband. We all would. *(To NORMAN)* Wouldn't we?

NORMAN. *(Even more solemnly)* Yes. But we can't.

LINDA. Can't?

NORMAN. *(Tearful)* No. A few last words would be wonderful, but alas.

LINDA. What are you talking about, Norman?

NORMAN. Yes! *(Crying for JENKINS benefit)* "Poor Norman", that's exactly who I'm talking about. Now what about the tea?

LINDA. I said I don't want any tea!

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Standing)* I really wouldn't mind putting the kettle on.

LINDA. *(Tersely)* Sit down please.

DR. CHAPMAN. Certainly.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* Will you please get rid of Norman!

JENKINS. *(Staggered, glancing upstairs)* Get rid of Norman?

ERIC. Don't you think we should just 'let him be' for a while?

LINDA. No.

JENKINS. *(Astonished)* 'Get rid of Norman'? How can you talk like that, madam?

LINDA. Very easily.

ERIC. Oh, he's okay here.

NORMAN. Yes, he's okay.

LINDA. *(To JENKINS)* I'm sick of him hanging around the house like a bad smell.

JENKINS. Good God!

ERIC. Please. He's peaceful where he is.

NORMAN. Very peaceful.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* Look, if you don't do it, I'll throw him out into the street!

JENKINS. Madam, have you no respect?

LINDA. What for?

JENKINS. *(Clasping his hands in reverence)* Well, for poor Norman?

LINDA. Not today, no.

JENKINS. Especially today, Madam.

LINDA. He's being more of a bloody nuisance today than usual.

JENKINS. I beg your pardon?

LINDA. I'm having a terrible day and all he can do is lie about the house looking stupid.

JENKINS. I've never heard anything like it in my life.

LINDA. *(Indicating upstairs)* I wish he'd just bugger off up there where he belongs.

JENKINS. Good God!

ERIC. Mr. McDonald, why don't you take Mr. Jenkins into the kitchen and make him another cup of tea.

JENKINS. I've had enough tea to sink a battleship!

NORMAN. How about a wee mid-morning sherry then?

DR. CHAPMAN. I think I could use a small sherry.

NORMAN & JENKINS. *(Together, to DR. CHAPMAN)* Sit down.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Sitting)* Certainly.

JENKINS. I think it's a little early for sherry, Mr. McDonald.

NORMAN. No, it's all right, the clocks have just gone back.

JENKINS. Oh.

NORMAN. Follow me.

JENKINS. Oh, and in the meantime, perhaps you could locate Mrs. Swan for me.

*(NORMAN pulls JENKINS off into the kitchen and ERIC slams the door on them.)*

LINDA. Locate 'Mrs. Swan'.

ERIC. Never mind that.

LINDA. *(To ERIC, indicating the Kitchen)* Why is that man looking for me?

ERIC. (To LINDA) He's not looking for you. (Indicating DR. CHAPMAN) And why is this man looking for me?

LINDA. (To ERIC) He is looking for me.

DR. CHAPMAN. (To ERIC) I'm not looking for you.

ERIC. (To DR. CHAPMAN) You just asked for "Mr. Swan".

LINDA. (To ERIC, indicating kitchen) And he just asked for "Mrs. Swan".

DR. CHAPMAN. (To ERIC) But you're not the Mr. Swan that I want.

ERIC. (To LINDA, indicating the kitchen) And you're not the Mrs. Swan that he wants. He's looking for my mother.

LINDA. (To ERIC) Your mother?

ERIC. (To LINDA) That's right.

DR. CHAPMAN. (To ERIC) Ah, so you name's Swan as well, then?

LINDA & ERIC. (Together, to DR. CHAPMAN) Yes!

DR. CHAPMAN. (Sitting and writing) Aha!

LINDA. (Indicating the kitchen) That is the gentleman from the Health Department?

ERIC. Er - Yes.

LINDA. The one who's been spraying the bedroom for that contagious disease?

ERIC. Er - Yes.

LINDA. So what does he want with your mother?

ERIC. She needs to be fumigated.

LINDA. Fumigated?! (LINDA breaks right and stands L of the sofa which still has the, unconscious GEORGE covered with the blanket) Who's that?

ERIC. (Trying to steer her away) That? That's nobody. (In one deft movement, LINDA whips off the blanket like a

magician to reveal the semi-dressed GEORGE. Hopefully) Abracadabra?

DR. CHAPMAN. Heavens, it's Mr. Swan.

LINDA. What the hell's happened to him?

ERIC. He's okay. He was hit by a door.

LINDA. He's in his underwear.

DR. CHAPMAN. (Standing) He was in his underwear when I arrived.

ERIC. Yes, he was, wasn't he?

LINDA. (Now worried) Why for God's sake?

ERIC. Well - er - He was in the middle of getting changed.

DR. CHAPMAN. Changed?

ERIC. Yes.

LINDA. Into what?

ERIC. He wanted to borrow something of mine.

LINDA. Something of yours!

ERIC. Yes. He likes to get all dressed up from time to time.

LINDA. All dressed up?! How could you do this to me?

ERIC. Do what?

LINDA. Think what it must feel like to find out?

ERIC. (Still utterly lost) Find out?

LINDA. You're a transvestite!

(ERIC tries several times to answer, but draws a blank each time, HE is totally confused and lost.)

DR. CHAPMAN. (Thinking he's worked out who ERIC is) So this must be Uncle George.

(LINDA turns back to DR. CHAPMAN, who is sitting by  
UNCLE GEORGE.)

LINDA. Of course it's Uncle George!

DR. CHAPMAN. Good.

LINDA. (To ERIC) How can you be so blatant about  
this?

ERIC. Blatant?

LINDA. I might have guessed something like this was  
going to happen when you gave up smoking.

ERIC. Smoking?

DR. CHAPMAN. Mrs. Swan, I don't think you can  
blame your husband's condition on the fact Uncle George  
gave up smoking.

LINDA. Uncle George never smoked.

DR. CHAPMAN. Then how could he give it up?

LINDA. (To ERIC) My God, you even used to play  
rugby!

DR. CHAPMAN. Or on Uncle George giving up rugby!

LINDA. Uncle George never played rugby!

DR. CHAPMAN. (To ERIC) Are you sure your name's  
Swan?

ERIC & LINDA. (Together) Yes!

(DR. CHAPMAN sits, even more confused.)

(SALLY enters from the dining room and ERIC rushes to  
HER.)

SALLY. I think we're ready for - Oh, where's young  
Mr. McDonald?

ERIC. He left and you can leave too.

SALLY. But I'm still busy.

DR. CHAPMAN. Does Uncle George have any  
brothers?

LINDA. No.

SALLY. Well, he used to have a twin brother, Norman.

(ERIC gives her an angry look.)

DR. CHAPMAN. Ah.

LINDA. Twin brother?

ERIC. (To SALLY) Yes, thank you, you can leave now.

DR. CHAPMAN. Was it Uncle Norman who used to  
smoke and play rugby? (Everyone stares at DR. CHAPMAN)  
Excuse me.

(DR. CHAPMAN hurries off into the Bedroom.)

ERIC. (To SALLY) Now will you please go.

SALLY. But I'm still engaged.

ERIC. It doesn't matter.

LINDA. Engaged?

SALLY. Yes, Mr. McDonald.

(Behind SALLY's back, ERIC indicates his wedding ring  
enthusiastically.)

ERIC. Yes, engaged, Mr. McDonald.

(For an instant, LINDA is delighted to meet who she believes  
is NORMAN's fiancée.)

LINDA. Oh, you must be – *(Remembers her earlier phone call)* Oh God, the phone call earlier ...

SALLY. Yes.

LINDA. ... I'm sorry if you thought I was rude.

SALLY. Rude?

ERIC. Rude? No, she didn't think you were rude.

LINDA. *(Still upset, but delighted, taking SALLY's hands)* Well, it's wonderful to meet you at last.

SALLY. I beg your pardon?

LINDA. This is a lovely surprise.

SALLY. Surprise?

LINDA. I don't think I'd get to see you until Saturday.

SALLY. Saturday?

LINDA. At the church.

SALLY. Church?

ERIC. *(Miming)* Yes, the church. Here's the church, here's the steeple, look inside there's all the people.

SALLY. Oh, the church. On Saturday. *(Then trying to be as delicate as possible)* The date's been fixed then?

*(A moment as LINDA absorbs this.)*

LINDA. *(Unsure towards SALLY)* Yes.

SALLY. Oh, I don't think I'll be able to be there for that.

LINDA. I beg your pardon?

SALLY. I've already made other plans.

LINDA. Other plans? *(LINDA shares an anxious glance with ERIC. ERIC shrugs)* What about Norman?

SALLY. What about the poor man?

LINDA. If you don't turn up on Saturday, he'll be devastated.

SALLY. Who will?

LINDA. Norman, of course.

*(SALLY tries to fathom this, but:)*

SALLY. Norman's dead.

LINDA. What?!

ERIC. What a thing to say!

SALLY. Well he is.

ERIC. Oh, so that's how it is, is it?

SALLY. That's how what is?

ERIC. 'He's dead'. Just like that. Love 'em and leave 'em flat, ay?

SALLY. What?

LINDA. I couldn't agree more. That's very cold.

SALLY. What is?

ERIC. One moment you love him to the end of the earth, then the next moment, it's "Oh, he's dead" and you just dump him like an old sack of potatoes!

SALLY. What are you talking about?

ERIC. You've probably got a new boyfriend already.

SALLY. Mr. Thompson?!

ERIC. And that's his name, is it?

*(ERIC takes SALLY by the arm and leads to back to the dining room door, as DR. CHAPMAN appears from the Bedroom.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. I've completed my notes and I'd like to arrange another meeting for some other time.

LINDA. I want this sorted out today!

ERIC. (To SALLY) You get back in there and consider your position.

SALLY. Consider my what?

ERIC. Just get in there and shut up.

(ERIC slams the dining room door on HER.)

LINDA. What an awful woman!

ERIC. Isn't she?

LINDA. Get rid of her! Get rid of everybody! Dr. Chapman and I want to talk to you alone!

ERIC. Do you?

DR. CHAPMAN. Do we?

LINDA. Yes - About your mother!

ERIC. You want to talk about my mother?

DR. CHAPMAN. Uncle George's mother?

LINDA. (Furious, indicating ERIC) His mother!

ERIC. You want to talk about my mother?

LINDA. (Bursting into tears) Yes - And what big boobs she's got!

(LINDA runs into the bedroom, DR. CHAPMAN starts to say something important, then changes his mind -)

DR. CHAPMAN. Excuse me.

(As DR. CHAPMAN exits into the BEDROOM, ERIC runs to the kitchen, opening the door and calling in.)

ERIC. Norman!

(NORMAN's face appears in the doorway.)

NORMAN. Norman's dead!

(NORMAN disappears back into the kitchen. ERIC considers this.)

ERIC. I mean 'Dickie', Norman's son. Could I have a word?

(NORMAN appears again.)

NORMAN. I was just about to decant the sherry.

(ERIC pulls NORMAN out.)

ERIC. (Calling off) Won't keep him a minute, Mr. Jenkins - Help yourself to another drinkie-poo. (HE slams the door) Norman, our situation has deteriorated.

NORMAN. Deteriorated? It's bloody disintegrated.

ERIC. Shut up. We have got to get rid of Mr. Jenkins.

NORMAN. How? He's going to stay here until we produce Mrs. Swan.

ERIC. Hell.

NORMAN. And he's almost polished off your cooking sherry.

(GEORGE sits up, holding his head. He's very confused.)

GEORGE. Are my clothes ready yet?

ERIC. Uncle George!

(ERIC and NORMAN rush to GEORGE's aid.)

GEORGE. *(Dazed)* I've got to get all dressed up as you.

ERIC. Forget that now.

NORMAN. Yes, that's off, you can go home.

GEORGE. I want to go to bed.

*(GEORGE falls unconscious again into ERIC's arms.)*

NORMAN. Come on, Uncle George, don't leave us again.

*(NORMAN slaps GEORGE in quick succession in an attempt to revive him. And JENKINS enters from the kitchen, sherry glass in hand. JENKINS is about to speak, when he sees NORMAN slapping GEORGE. NORMAN realizes something is wrong and slowly turns to see JENKINS.)*

JENKINS. What on earth are you doing to poor Mr. Swan?

NORMAN. Putting some colour back into his cheeks.

JENKINS. Mr. McDonald you really should leave all that to Mr. Forbright, your foster father's undertaker.

NORMAN. Yes, you're absolutely right.

JENKINS. Now while I was in the kitchen, something struck me.

NORMAN. It probably fell off the fridge.

JENKINS. No, no. *(Loudly to NORMAN)* That lady just now. That's Mrs. McDonald, your widowed mother?

NORMAN. That's right.

JENKINS. I still feel she's far too young to be your mother.

ERIC. You're right. She's his stepmother.

NORMAN. Oh, my God!

JENKINS. *(Loudly to NORMAN)* Stepmother?

NORMAN. Well – Before my father lost his job and the family fell on hard times and I was fostered here by the Swans –

JENKINS. Yes.

NORMAN. My real mother died and so my father – the lumberjack – remarried. She's my stepmother.

JENKINS. Ah, I see! Well, that would explain her lack of respect for your father Norman.

NORMAN. Thank God it explains something.

JENKINS. And how did your real mother die?

NORMAN. She was struck while Mum and Dad were felling trees down Petticoat Lane.

JENKINS. How awful.

ERIC. Yes, shocking. *(JENKINS polishes off his sherry in one gulp)* Now, why don't you help yourself to another couple of sherries.

JENKINS. No, three's quite enough for me at this time in the morning. I really think I should contact our Ms. Cowper.

*(JENKINS reaches for the phone, but ERIC's there before him.)*

ERIC. No! You don't want to do that.

JENKINS. You're right, I don't want to do that. But as there is no sign of your landlady, I should report this to head office.

ERIC. No! Mrs. Swan will be here ... within quarter of an hour.

JENKINS. Really?

NORMAN. What?

ERIC. *(Thinking)* Yes. I contacted her at work and she's on her way home right now.

JENKINS. I'm pleased to hear it.

ERIC. So you can have a nice pot of tea ready for her by the time she arrives.

JENKINS. By the way, Mrs. Swan's washing machine is making a very funny noise.

ERIC. If you can fix it for her, she'll be very grateful.

JENKINS. *(Enthusiastic)* Ooh, right. I'll have a go at that.

*(JENKINS hurries into the kitchen.)*

NORMAN. How the hell can we introduce Mr. Jenkins to Mrs. Swan – You're never going to persuade Linda to help you out! And anyway, he thinks she's my loopy widowed step-mother who eats the wallpaper.

ERIC. I know, that's why we're going to revive Uncle George, dress him up in stockings, bra, corset, maternity dress and a long blonde wig, then pass him off as Mrs. Swan.

*(NORMAN thinks he's joking.)*

NORMAN. That's very funny – maternity dress and a long blonde wig. That's very good. *(HE laughs, but then HE realizes)* Oh, my GOD!

ERIC. *(Still struggling with Uncle George)* Help me with Uncle George.

NORMAN. You can't be serious? Pass off Uncle George as your wife?

ERIC. Not my wife, I'm Mr. Thompson, remember. Uncle George will be Mr. Swan's wife – Widow.

NORMAN. Well, who's going to be Mr. Swan, then?

ERIC. Nobody, Mr. Swan's dead.

NORMAN. I can't keep up with this!

ERIC. Now – Smelling salts?

NORMAN. *(Indicates the rubbish bag)* I told you we haven't got any. I thought we could use this to bring him round. It's got yesterday's cat food in it.

*(THEY smell the rubbish bag.)*

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* Ough!

NORMAN. Come on, let's get him in.

*(ERIC and NORMAN attempt to feed GEORGE's head into the plastic bag. In their struggles, they hold GEORGE upside-down in the bag.)*

*(FORBRIGHT enters from the dining room, astonished and aghast at what NORMAN and ERIC are attempting to do. THEY do not notice FORBRIGHT, until:)*

FORBRIGHT. Gentlemen! *(ERIC and NORMAN stop dead)* What in God's name are you doing with Mr. McDonald?!

*(ERIC and NORMAN still hold GEORGE upside-down in the bag.)*

NORMAN. I – er – thought that if we did it ourselves, we could save on the funeral expenses.

FORBRIGHT. What?!

ERIC. And quicker too, dustbins go out tonight.

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald, being thrown out with the rubbish is hardly a dignified manner for your dear father to depart this world.

ERIC. *(To NORMAN)* I told you he wouldn't go for it, Dickie.

*(THEY lower GEORGE as FORBRIGHT steps closer and indicates the dining room.)*

FORBRIGHT. Now, Mr. McDonald, we are ready for your father.

NORMAN. No!

FORBRIGHT. We'll lay him peacefully on the dining room table.

NORMAN. You mustn't take him in there.

FORBRIGHT. And why not?

NORMAN. Because - er -

ERIC. Because Dickie suddenly remembered that his mother's having a dinner party tonight.

NORMAN. That'll do.

FORBRIGHT. I beg your pardon?

NORMAN. I said, it's going to be quite a do.

FORBRIGHT. A dinner party?

ERIC. Yes, Mrs. McDonald is having a few close friends for dinner and it wouldn't look right if ML McDonald was the centre piece, would it?

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald, I think it would be easier for everyone if I simply took your father with me now back to my funeral parlour.

*(ERIC and NORMAN block off FORBRIGHT's advance.)*

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* No!

FORBRIGHT. Gentlemen, please -

*(NORMAN takes GEORGE in his arms.)*

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* No, no you mustn't take daddy away. Not until the rest of the family have paid their last respects.

FORBRIGHT. Rest of your family?

*(Each time NORMAN falters, ERIC whispers help.)*

NORMAN. Yes. They'll all have to say 'goodbye'. There's - er -

ERIC. Grandmother, Norma.

NORMAN. Dear old Granny Norma, up in the back room. And - er -

ERIC. Sister, Rosemary.

NORMAN. Sister Rosie, down in the basement. And - er -

ERIC. Brother, Ronald.

NORMAN. And my dear brother, Ronald.

FORBRIGHT. Ronald McDonald?

*(NORMAN gives ERIC a look.)*

NORMAN. Yes, And it was my father's dying wish that they should all pay their last respects in this house.

FORBRIGHT. But where shall we lay him out then?

ERIC. Let's put him in one of the bedrooms upstairs.  
FORBRIGHT. Very well, I shall move everything up there.

ERIC. Thank you, most kind.

*(ERIC turns FORBRIGHT, as behind them, GEORGE is suddenly awake in NORMAN's arms.)*

GEORGE. *(Foolishly)* Hello.

*(GEORGE falls unconscious again as FORBRIGHT turns to NORMAN, who waves coyly.)*

NORMAN. *(Foolishly)* Hello.

FORBRIGHT. *(Politely)* Good morning, Mr. McDonald.

*(FORBRIGHT turns away again and GEORGE is awake.)*

GEORGE. *(Holding his head)* That bloody door!

*(FORBRIGHT turns back quickly as GEORGE faints again. NORMAN sees the kitchen door.)*

NORMAN. That bloody door! That awful, horrible, bloody door, I hate it! I want it out of here, it's a terrible thing – You can bury it along with dad.

FORBRIGHT. You can't bury a door!

ERIC. You're right, we'll cremate it instead.

*(ERIC pushes FORBRIGHT off into the dining room.)*  
*(NORMAN immediately tries and revive GEORGE, but he's*

*fully unconscious again. ERIC grabs the clothes from the box in the cupboard.)*

NORMAN. Come on, Uncle George. Oh, it's no good. Look at him – He'll never be able to pretend to be your wife.

ERIC. You're right, Norman. At least one of us is still thinking straight.

NORMAN. Thank you.

ERIC. We'll have to abandon the idea of Uncle George impersonating Linda.

NORMAN. Thank heavens for that.

ERIC. Yes, you'll have to do it instead.

NORMAN. I knew you'd see it clearly in the –  
*(Realizing)* I'll have to do it?!

*(ERIC pushes the various articles of clothing into NORMAN's hands. NORMAN tries to interject, but ERIC is in full swing, during:)*

ERIC. Come on, there's no time to lose. Mr. Jenkins will never recognize you under this lot, and he's had a few sherries too. It's windy out there so you can tie a scarf around your head. Not even Brenda would know who it was.

NORMAN. Oh God, Brenda.

*(LINDA enters from bedroom. NORMAN stuffs the clothes up his front.)*

LINDA. Eric!

ERIC. Yes, dear?

LINDA. Dr. Chapman wants to see us in the bedroom now!

*(DR. CHAPMAN appears in the doorway.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. What I actually suggested was that I come back next –

LINDA. Now!

ERIC. We still have guests.

NORMAN. You still have guests.

DR. CHAPMAN. You still have guests.

LINDA. NOW!

DR. CHAPMAN. Excuse me.

*(DR. CHAPMAN scuttles back into the Bedroom.)*

LINDA. You've got five minutes, then I'm evicting the lot of them myself.

ERIC. Well, Norman was just leaving, weren't you Norman?

NORMAN. *(Indicating his stomach)* Yes. I was just going to take an Alka Seltzer.

*(ERIC pushes NORMAN off, as SALLY enters from the dining room with a bundle of table cloths.)*

SALLY. Excuse me.

LINDA. *(To SALLY)* You out!

SALLY. Look, I don't know who you are, but you're not making what I have to do any easier.

LINDA. I'm Norman's landlady.

SALLY. Well, I'm dealing with him as fast as I can.

LINDA. Oh, that's nice, isn't it?

ERIC. Very.

*(SALLY starts towards the UR arch.)*

SALLY. If you don't mind.

LINDA. Where are you going with those?

SALLY. I'm going upstairs to lay Norman.

*(ERIC nearly dies as LINDA looks amazed.)*

LINDA. You're going to do what?

SALLY. Lay Norman in the bed.

LINDA. What?

SALLY. We were going to do it on the dining room table. *(ERIC dies again)* And I've got to be quick because he'll be starting to stiffen.

LINDA. And then just leave him.

SALLY. I suppose so.

LINDA. You heartless tart.

SALLY. Heartless tart?!

ERIC. *(To SALLY)* Yes, heartless tart – I think it's a pudding she's making.

SALLY. Oh!

*(SALLY storms out the UR arch as, FORBRIGHT enters from the dining room.)*

FORBRIGHT. Almost ready.

ERIC. Good.

FORBRIGHT. I hope young Mr. McDonald will be all right – I think the shock has effected him more than he'd care to admit.

ERIC. Yes, I think it has.

LINDA. What shock?

*(ERIC tries to push LINDA back to the bedroom.)*

ERIC. It doesn't matter.

*(LINDA pulls free of ERIC and steps to FORBRIGHT.)*

LINDA. What's happened?

ERIC. Nothing that concerns you, darling.

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald's father died.

ERIC. Oh, bloody hell.

LINDA. Mr. McDonald's father?

ERIC. Died, apparently.

FORBRIGHT. This morning.

ERIC. Yes, 'Old Mr. McDonald bought the farm, Ee-Ei-O-  
Ee-Ei-O-'

LINDA. *(Silencing ERIC)* Goodness! Norman didn't say anything

FORBRIGHT. Norman didn't say anything ...

*(ERIC shoots a look at FORBRIGHT.)*

ERIC. Er - No. No, I don't think he did. No, no, Norman didn't say a word, he just came up the garden path -

*(ERIC mimes knocking on a door, opening a door, waving hello and dying on the spot.)*

LINDA. Oh, dear. *(To FORBRIGHT)* What did Mr. McDonald die of?

ERIC. Lasser Fever.

FORBRIGHT. *(Suddenly very worried)* Lasser Fever?

LINDA. My God, that explains why the Health Department have been here all morning.

ERIC. Yes, that's right. It was all very sudden.

FORBRIGHT. Sudden?

ERIC. It took all of us completely by surprise.

LINDA. It certainly has.

FORBRIGHT. But with Lasser Fever, surely poor Mr. McDonald would have been bed ridden for weeks.

ERIC. Well, he was.

FORBRIGHT. But you just said it was sudden.

ERIC. That's right.

FORBRIGHT. But he must have been dying for some time now.

ERIC. Yes, he was. He was dying for ages. But the bit right at the end. The very end. That was bloody sudden. That last moment, lights on, lights off, just like that. Very sudden.

*(HE drops down dead on the spot again.)*

FORBRIGHT. *(Anxious)* I see, but Sir, Lasser Fever is highly contagious!

ERIC. *(Worried)* Is it?

FORBRIGHT. You don't understand, this changes everything.

ERIC. *(More worried)* Does it?

FORBRIGHT. Definitely - There's an entirely different code of practice when dealing with a contagious disease.

ERIC. *(Extremely worried)* Is there?!

FORBRIGHT. Mr. McDonald's body has to be sealed and sent for autopsy as soon as possible!

ERIC. (*Horrified*) Autopsy?!  
FORBRIGHT. Immediately!

(*ERIC takes this in. Finally, HE turns to LINDA.*)

ERIC. (*Calmly*) How about we go out for lunch?

LINDA. Out for lunch?

ERIC. Great idea! You pop down to that cafe on the corner and I'll meet you there for that little chat.

LINDA. I'm not going anywhere!

(*FORBRIGHT crosses to the dining room, but ERIC is quickly next to him.*)

FORBRIGHT. I think I'd better collect the rest of my things.

ERIC. No! Don't you do anything.

FORBRIGHT. I have to remove the body this instant.

ERIC. You mustn't.

LINDA. (*To ERIC*) Did anyone find out what Norman wants.

ERIC. No, they didn't.

FORBRIGHT. (*Looking down at the unconscious GEORGE*) Find out what Norman wants?

LINDA. Of course.

ERIC. Absolutely.

FORBRIGHT. I don't wish to be indelicate but I don't think what Norman wanted is of any consequence.

LINDA. Don't you?

FORBRIGHT. I mean it's hardly relevant, is it?

LINDA. (*Indicating GEORGE*) You're about to take this

man off for an autopsy and you don't care what Norman thinks?

FORBRIGHT. Not really.

LINDA. You callous swine!

FORBRIGHT. Callous swine?!

ERIC. Yes, 'Callus Wine', a full bodied Chablis to go with the heartless tart she's making.

(*ERIC pushes FORBRIGHT into the dining room, then crosses right of LINDA, who just looks in amazement at the dining room door.*)

LINDA. What a horrible man!

ERIC. Isn't he just. (*Calling upstairs*) Norman!

LINDA. Now, perhaps we can spend five minutes with Dr. Chapman.

ERIC. Oh, no, I've got far more important things to do.

(*GEORGE sits up behind LINDA's back.*)

GEORGE. It's time I got all dressed up!

(*As GEORGE falls unconscious again, LINDA turns in amazement to ERIC.*)

LINDA. What did you just say?

ERIC. I said ... "It's time I got all dressed up".

(*LINDA bursts into tears and runs into the bedroom.*)

ERIC. (*To GEORGE*) Come on, Uncle George, we've

got to keep you out of trouble. Upstairs, no. Kitchen, no! Dining room, no! Bedroom – Oh, hell!! (Then HE sees the window seat) Ah ha! Come on, Uncle George it's into the window seat.

*(ERIC staggers backwards to the window seat with GEORGE and FORBRIGHT appears from the dining room.)*

*(FORBRIGHT then looks on in amazement as ERIC attempts to shove GEORGE into the window seat – It's a very tight squeeze – HE pushes GEORGE's head down but it keeps popping back up – So he gives GEORGE's head an almighty slap.)*

FORBRIGHT. Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Agh!

*(ERIC slams the window seat lid and jumps on top of the window seat, pretending to clean the windows with the curtains.)*

FORBRIGHT. What on earth are you doing with poor Mr. McDonald?

ERIC. Just seeing if he fits.

*(ERIC measures the window seat by walking along its lid.)*

FORBRIGHT. Fits?

ERIC. Yes, we're going to have a made to measure coffin made – to measure – and I wanted to see what size we needed.

FORBRIGHT. Mr. Thompson!

*(ERIC hands FORBRIGHT a cricket bat and several pieces of cricket equipment from the window seat.)*

ERIC. And I think we'll need the larger size after all.

FORBRIGHT. Larger size?

ERIC. Yes, the biggest coffin you offer, because Mr. McDonald requested to be cremated with his sports equipment.

*(JENKINS enters from the kitchen, sherry bottle in one hand, wooden mallet in the other, his arms covered in foam.)*

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, your washing machine is making a very funny noise indeed.

ERIC. It doesn't matter.

JENKINS. But it's starting to foam.

*(ERIC crosses to the kitchen.)*

ERIC. Oh, bloody hell.

FORBRIGHT. *(Indicating window seat)* Mr. Thompson, you should take poor Mr. McDonald out.

ERIC. No, leave him there, he might as well start getting used to it.

*(ERIC and JENKINS exit to the kitchen, as SALLY enters from the UR arch.)*

SALLY. Nearly ready for him.

FORBRIGHT. Change of plan, Miss Chessington.

SALLY. Oh, not again.

FORBRIGHT. Most urgent, I have to make plans to have the body sealed prior to autopsy.

SALLY. Autopsy?

FORBRIGHT. And they need a larger coffin for his equipment.

*(FORBRIGHT hands HER a baseball bat, which SALLY looks at, with a wry smile. FORBRIGHT then opens the door, to reveal MS. COWPER standing there – A severe looking DSS inspector. MS. COWPER is wearing a raincoat, a scarf around her head and carrying a brief case.)*

FORBRIGHT. Good morning.

MS. COWPER. I doubt that. *(SHE steps in uninvited and FORBRIGHT closes the door)* Are you Mr. Thompson?

FORBRIGHT. Er – No.

MS. COWPER. Swan?

FORBRIGHT. No.

MS. COWPER. McDonald?

FORBRIGHT. No. Forbright.

MS. COWPER. Well, Mr. Forbright, My name is Ms. Cowper.

FORBRIGHT. Miss Cowper.

MS. COWPER. Ms. Ms. Cowper. Department of Social Security, Chief Borough Inspector. I believe our man Jenkins has been here all morning.

FORBRIGHT. Jenkins?

MS. COWPER. Checking up on your Mr. Thompson.

FORBRIGHT. Ah, well Mr. Thompson is in the kitchen at the moment with a gentleman from the Health Department.

*(ERIC backs out of the kitchen, bubbles floating everywhere.)*

ERIC. *(Calling off)* Stop complaining and just keep your thumb in that hole!

FORBRIGHT. Ah, Mr. Thompson, this lady has arrived to see you.

ERIC. *(Not interested)* All right.

FORBRIGHT. And in the meantime, I'll take Miss Chessington and see if I can get my hands on a larger one.

*(FORBRIGHT and SALLY leave.)*

*(ERIC shuts the kitchen door and turns to MS. COWPER. HE looks her up and down. Bursts into laughter ... Finally, he slaps her on the back.)*

ERIC. *(To MS. COWPER)* You look marvellous!

MS. COWPER. I beg your pardon?

ERIC. That's brilliant! *(Imitating her)* "I beg your pardon". *(Then normally again)* Fabulous. I'd never have known.

MS. COWPER. What?

ERIC. *(Imitating her again)* "What?" Ha! We've got nothing to worry about.

MS. COWPER. Nothing to worry about?

ERIC. *(Imitating her again)* "Nothing to worry about"! *(ERIC points to HER chest)* You don't think those are a bit – er – You know –

*(ERIC indicates that they may be a bit large.)*

MS. COWPER. Oh!

## CASH ON DELIVERY!

ERIC. Oh, one thing – Don't get too close, your moustache is beginning to show.

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. *(Imitating her)* "Mr. Thompson"! But these are great. *(HE prods her chest)* Hey – Look at that – they wobble and everything.

*(ERIC wobbles her chest again and moves MS. COWPER so that HIS back is to the Stairs.)*

*(ERIC puts his face right in MS. COWPER's chest and shakes his cheeks about – And NORMAN hurries in from the UR arch, holding the dress. ERIC turns to NORMAN with a beaming smile – Gives him a nod of "Well done" and puts his face back in MS. COWPER's chest.)*

*(Then ERIC stops dead. Horrified. NORMAN goes to speak, thinks better of it, then dashes back off the way he came.)*

*(ERIC is motionless. HE looks at MS. COWPER, who glares back at him.)*

*(JENKINS enters from the kitchen, thick foam all over his shirt and trousers, carrying the sherry bottle.)*

JENKINS. Ms. Cowper?!

*(ERIC stops dead. HE looks blank for a moment as his mind whirls, then he emits a nervous giggle as he turns to the stone-faced MS. COWPER, trying desperately to lighten the moment.)*

ERIC. *(Finally)* I believe you two have met.

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson, what was the meaning of what occurred just now?

## CASH ON DELIVERY!

ERIC. I was just trying to keep abreast of events.

MS. COWPER. I saw!

ERIC. Ms. Cowper, you'll have to forgive me. I've been under a lot of strain this morning.

MS. COWPER. That is no excuse. You were a witness to this, Jenkins.

ERIC. No, you don't understand, I suffer from Tourette's Syndrome.

MS. COWPER. Tourette's Syndrome?

JENKINS. The uncontrollable urge to shout out insults at people.

ERIC. That's right, thank you, Mr. Jenkins. *(Then to MS. COWPER)* Well, in the final stages of Tourette's Syndrome, the sufferer never knows if he's going to simply insult people or actually physically abuse complete strangers.

MS. COWPER. Heavens.

ERIC. It can be very embarrassing.

JENKINS. No, I've read several medical papers on the subject and I don't recall anything about physical abuse.

ERIC. It's absolutely true, Big Boy!

*(ERIC suddenly gooses JENKINS.)*

JENKINS. Aaaagh!

ERIC. Whoa! There I go again!

MS. COWPER. Really, Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. *(To MS. COWPER)* Oh, shut up and give us a feel!

*(ERIC goes for MS. COWPER's chest again, and SHE slaps his hands away.)*

MS. COWPER. Get off me!

ERIC. I'm sorry! I can't apologize enough. It's got much worse of late. (MS. COWPER and JENKINS move closer to HIM) I mean it just used to be ... (HE waves his hand limply in the air) But now it's - Hagh! (HE gooses both of THEM - THEY SCREAM) I'm sorry, I'm sorry - I'll try and keep my mouth shut and my hands to myself.

MS. COWPER. If you could. (Then SHE crosses to JENKINS, giving ERIC a wide berth) Now Jenkins, were you able to get Mr. Swan's confirmation on Mr. Thompson's illness?

JENKINS. No. Mr. Swan wasn't here.

MS. COWPER. Well, where was he?

JENKINS. He's dead.

MS. COWPER. Dead?

ERIC. That's right.

MS. COWPER. Mr. Swan is dead?

ERIC. Yes, poor old Mr. Swan passed away this morning, which is why he couldn't sign my forms.

MS. COWPER. Really.

ERIC. But there is no need to worry as Mrs. Swan is on her way back here to sign them instead. So you can return to Head Office, knowing that Jenkins here is very much in charge of the situation.

(MS. COWPER steps out of ERIC's grip.)

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson. I do not like being played with.

ERIC. (Off hand) So I noticed.

MS. COWPER. You're not dealing with Jenkins now, you know.

ERIC. No indeed.

MS. COWPER. I'm not easy to satisfy.

ERIC. (Off hand) I can imagine that.

MS. COWPER. When Mrs. Swan gets here, she will find herself answerable to some very direct questions concerning her numerous lodgers.

ERIC. She'll be more than happy to help you.

MS. COWPER. And where are all the lodgers - this appears a dreadfully quiet home for such a houseful.

ERIC. Everyone tends to keep themselves to themselves.

JENKINS. And there have been two deaths here this morning.

MS. COWPER. Two deaths?

ERIC. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Yes, Mr. McDonald passed away this morning as well as Mr. Swan.

ERIC. Quite right, Mr. Jenkins. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Norman McDonald fell out of a tree.

MS. COWPER. Mr. McDonald, the lumberjack, fell out of a tree?

ERIC. Yes. Norman was up in the tree, having a bit of practice before the winter set in, when a branch snapped and he fell to his death.

(MS. COWPER is having a very hard time believing any of this.)

MS. COWPER. And has anybody else died?

ERIC. No. Absolutely not.

JENKINS. Not unless you count Dickie's first mother.

ERIC. Oh, God.

MS. COWPER. Dickie's first mother?

JENKINS. Yes, she was killed while felling trees down Petticoat Lane. *(MS. COWPER gives HIM a stern look) ... Apparently.*

MS. COWPER. So where is Mrs. McDonald, Norman's widow?

JENKINS. Ah, yes, I believe she's been locked securely away. *(MS. COWPER turns slowly to give JENKINS another stern look) It's that time again.*

MS. COWPER. That time?

JENKINS. Yes ... Her moon's in Uranus.

*(MS. COWPER just looks at JENKINS.)*

ERIC. Mrs. McDonald's become very upset since she heard that her husband fell out of a tree.

JENKINS. Mrs. McDonald eats the wallpaper if they don't lock her up.

*(LINDA enters from the bedroom. Completely furious!)*

LINDA. Get in here now!!!

JENKINS. *(Urgently to MS. COWPER)* My God, she's out again.

*(DR. CHAPMAN hurries in from the Bedroom.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. I really don't think this is the best atmosphere for an intimate family discussion.

LINDA. Sit down!

DR. CHAPMAN. *(Sitting)* Certainly.

LINDA. *(Indicating MS. COWPER)* Who's this?!

ERIC. She's with Mr. Jenkins, the gentleman from the dining room.

*(LINDA crosses to JENKINS and MS. COWPER.)*

LINDA. Haven't you done enough spraying for one day?!

MS. COWPER. I beg your pardon?

JENKINS. Watch her, Ms. Cowper - remember Uranus.

MS. COWPER. Jenkins!

ERIC. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. You must remember she's having a terrible day, Ms. Cowper.

JENKINS. *(Sympathetically)* Yes, her poor husband.

MS. COWPER. *(Also sympathetic)* Yes, of course.

LINDA. *(To JENKINS)* What about my husband?

ERIC. *(To LINDA)* Nothing. It's just very sad, that's all.

JENKINS. You have our condolences.

LINDA. But how on earth did you find out about it?

JENKINS. Mr. Swan telephones our department this morning.

LINDA. He did what?!

ERIC. Telephoned the department. Just wanted to let them know.

LINDA. Let them know?!

JENKINS. That your poor husband had gone like that.

LINDA. *(To ERIC)* Talk about getting it out in the open!

DR. CHAPMAN. Yes, in some cases a public declaration can be very beneficial. *(THEY ALL look at HIM)* I'll sit down, shall I?

*(HE does.)*

JENKINS. It's an odd way to go, but perfectly natural.

LINDA. A natural way to go?!

JENKINS. I believe my Grandfather went the same way in the First World War.

LINDA. Well, I don't want my husband to go 'that' way!!!

ERIC. Don't upset yourself.

LINDA. How can you say that?! You're a cross-dresser!

ERIC. Cross? I'm bloody furious!

*(As LINDA bursts into tears and runs to the bedroom, DR. CHAPMAN wags an accusing finger at ERIC.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. You have a lot of explaining to do, Uncle George.

JENKINS. Uncle George?

ERIC. *(Picking up from JENKINS)* Uncle George?

*(The Doorbell RINGS.)*

DR. CHAPMAN. Excuse me.

*(DR. CHAPMAN hurries into the Bedroom and the Doorbell RINGS again and MS. COWPER indicates JENKINS to open it.)*

MS. COWPER. Jenkins.

JENKINS. Of course.

*(There's a rapid KNOCKING as JENKINS goes for the front door.)*

ERIC. No! Allow me!

*(But it's too late, JENKINS opens the door to REVEAL BRENDA, NORMAN's girl-next-door fiancée. SHE's quite distraught.)*

JENKINS. Good morning.

BRENDA. I'm looking for Norman.

JENKINS. Norman?

MS. COWPER. Norman McDonald?

BRENDA. Yes, I'm Brenda Dixon.

ERIC. Brenda?!

BRENDA. Yes. I'm Brenda, Norman's fiancée.

ERIC. Oh, bloody hell.

MS. COWPER. Norman's what?

BRENDA. *(To MS. COWPER)* Are you Mrs. Swan?

MS. COWPER. No, I am not, young lady.

BRENDA. *(To JENKINS)* Mr. Swan?

JENKINS. No, Madam.

*(BRENDA crosses quickly to ERIC.)*

BRENDA. Mr. Swan?

ERIC. No, I'm Mr. Rupert Thompson. And this is Mr. Jenkins. I believe you've met Ms. Cowper. Mr. Jenkins, Ms. Cowper -

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Correct, Mr. Thompson. Thank you, Ms. Cowper,

Mr. Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins, Ms. Cowper. Ms. Cowper, Miss Dixon. Miss Dixon –

BRENDA. I've been phoning all morning. Norman didn't show up for work apparently.

JENKINS. (*Sympathetically*) I think you'd better sit down, Miss.

(*ERIC tries to lead BRENDA away.*)

ERIC. No. Why don't you go home, Brenda, and we'll fill you in later.

BRENDA. (*Pulling away from ERIC*) No, I'm very worried about Norman. He was talking gibberish on the phone. I must see him.

JENKINS. That must have been just before it occurred.

ERIC. Yes.

BRENDA. I must see him.

JENKINS. I really think she should sit down.

ERIC. No, she shouldn't, you ugly old trout!!!

(*ERIC gooses JENKINS. MS. COWPER steps in to BRENDA.*)

MS. COWPER. You say you're Norman McDonald's Fiancée?

BRENDA. That's right. We're getting married on Saturday. Where is he?

MS. COWPER. Married on Saturday.

BRENDA. St. Mary's at twelve o'clock and I've got the most beautiful dress.

MS. COWPER. Mr. Norman McDonald at this address.

BRENDA. Yes.

MS. COWPER. But Mr. McDonald is already married.

ERIC. Oh God.

(*BRENDA takes this in.*)

BRENDA. Already married?

MS. COWPER. Correct.

JENKINS. *Was* already married.

BRENDA. (*Showing off her engagement ring*) No. There must be some sort of a mistake.

ERIC. (*Trying to lead BRENDA away again*) Yes. Some sort of a mistake – That would explain it.

JENKINS. No, it's all in the file, Mr. McDonald's been married for several years now.

(*BRENDA starts to take this in.*)

ERIC. Anybody like a nice cup of tea?

BRENDA. Oh-my-God!

JENKINS. You didn't know?

BRENDA. Of course I didn't know. I'd never have got engaged to him if I'd known he had a wife!

MS. COWPER. This is his second wife, actually.

BRENDA. Second wife?

JENKINS. His first wife was killed in a tree-felling accident.

BRENDA. What??!

JENKINS. In Petticoat Lane.

BRENDA. I can't believe I'm hearing any of this.

ERIC. I know how you feel – I mean who would have expected this from Norman.

BRENDA. *(Wailing)* Norman!!!

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, someone should inform Norman's son that this lady's arrived.

ERIC. I'm not sure that's a good idea.

BRENDA. *(Utterly gob-smacked now)* Son?!

ERIC. No, definitely not a good idea, Mr. Jenkins.

BRENDA. *(To JENKINS)* Norman's son?!?!

JENKINS. Miss Dixon.

BRENDA. Yes.

JENKINS. Norman's got a little Dickie.

*(BRENDA screams! JENKINS sits HER on the sofa.)*

MS. COWPER. Jenkins, sit her down.

BRENDA. Thank you!

ERIC. No, she can't sit down.

JENKINS. The poor girl's in shock, for heaven's sakes.

ERIC. We all are. *(Trying to lead her away)* But she should go home now and discuss it in the morning with Mrs. McDonald.

BRENDA. *(Wailing)* Mrs. McDonald!

ERIC. Oh, shut up – It's not all that bad.

JENKINS. Not all that bad? She just discovered her fiancée was attempting bigamy!

BRENDA. *(Wailing and collapsing in JENKINS' arms)* Bigamy!

MS. COWPER. It seemed to be finding out about her fiancé's little Dickie that set her off.

BRENDA. I want to see Norman now.

ERIC. No, that's impossible.

BRENDA. Why? Where is he?

ERIC. He's – er – he's gone.

BRENDA. Gone?

JENKINS. *(To ERIC)* Will you tell her, or should I?

ERIC. No one should tell her, you big fart!

*(HE gooses JENKINS.)*

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Lovely, lovely, lovely!!! *(HE grabs MS. COWPER's chest)* Sorry, sorry, sorry!

BRENDA. *(Worried)* Tell me what?!

ERIC. *(Trying to be nonchalant)* Nothing, nothing at all. Norman's just gone, that's all.

*(JENKINS puts his arm fatherly around BRENDA's shoulders.)*

JENKINS. Brenda.

BRENDA. Yes.

JENKINS. Norman is dead.

ERIC. Oh, my God.

*(ERIC grabs the sherry bottle and drinks.)*

BRENDA. I beg your pardon?

JENKINS. It happened earlier this morning.

BRENDA. What happened?

JENKINS. Norman fell out of a tree.

BRENDA. *(Looks up)* Norman fell out of a tree?

JENKINS. Yes.

BRENDA. *(Looks down, VERY sad)* And died?

MS. COWPER. Yes.

BRENDA. Oh, my God!!!

*(SHE collapses in JENKINS' arms.)*

ERIC. *(To MS. COWPER)* Now look what you've done, you old bag! And you big prat! Sorry, sorry, sorry!

BRENDA. *(Wailing)* My lovely Norman!

MS. COWPER. Take her into a bedroom!

ERIC. *(Protecting the way to the bedroom)* No! I'll take her in the dining room! Give her a stiff drink.

JENKINS. Is that a good idea?

ERIC. Yes, we'll all have one!

BRENDA. My beautiful Norman!

ERIC. *(Leading BRENDA away)* C'mon, there's a drinks cabinet through here.

BRENDA. Wait a minute. What was Norman doing up in a tree?

JENKINS. Well, he was practising before the winter set in.

BRENDA. Practising what?

JENKINS. His job.

BRENDA. You're telling me that my Norman was up in a tree practising selling shoes?

JENKINS. Selling shoes?

ERIC. Yes, it was a shoe tree.

*(ERIC pulls BRENDA off into the dining room - Just as SALLY and FORBRIGHT enter through the front door, wheeling in a stretcher on a trolley. All four meet in the center.)*

MS. COWPER. *(Indicating the stretcher)* What's the meaning of this, Mr. Forbright?

MR. FORBRIGHT. We're removing the body for immediate examination.

MS. COWPER. Which one?

SALLY. Dear departed Norman McDonald.

FORBRIGHT. Yes. I believe they've been keeping him in the window seat.

MS. COWPER. The window seat?

FORBRIGHT. *(Opens the window seat)* Ah, yes, it's still here. *(Then, indicating JENKINS)* I'm sure the gentleman from the Health Department wouldn't approve.

MS. COWPER. Gentleman from the Health Department? *(MS. COWPER looks at JENKINS, who looks around for the "gentleman from the Health Department" and is utterly lost. As MS. COWPER pulls JENKINS down stage, SALLY and FORBRIGHT, take the still unconscious GEORGE, place him on the stretcher. Then THEY cover GEORGE with a long sheet and strap him down at his head, feet and securely around the middle, arms in, DURING:)* Jenkins, come here! What in God's name has been happening here this morning?

JENKINS. What, all of it?

MS. COWPER. Certainly all of it.

JENKINS. Well. *(Takes a swig from the sherry bottle)* Agh! *(Then, unstopping and with gusto!)* After I arrived and the gout-riddled Mr. Thompson signed for his Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Mr. Swan wasn't available for confirmation so I was introduced to his foster son, Dickie McDonald, a deaf, unemployed piano-tuner. Then, having perused Mr. Swan to the roof and back, we discovered that he had in fact died earlier this morning having been struck by a

solid oak door, so Mrs. Swan was sent for. That just about brings you up to date apart from Dickie's recently bereaved step-mother who eats the wallpaper when her moon's in Uranus and her late, bigamist husband who fell out of a shoe tree while attempting to do a little pruning before the winter set in.

MS. COWPER. That's easy for you to say.

*(SALLY and FORBRIGHT stand up, supporting the stretched GEORGE between them.)*

FORBRIGHT. Right, we'll be off then.

*(As ERIC enters from the dining room with a tray of sherries, SALLY and FORBRIGHT start towards the door with GEORGE on the trolley.)*

ERIC. All right, who's for a little snifter? *(He sees SALLY, FORBRIGHT and GEORGE)* No! *(ERIC throws the sherries back into the dining room. CRASH! Then HE races to stop the stretcher)* What do you think you're doing?!

FORBRIGHT. I told you, Mr. Thompson, with a contagious disease, Mr. McDonald's body has to be removed for immediate autopsy.

ERIC. You can't autopsy poor old Norman!

*(FORBRIGHT and SALLY start to exit again, ERIC struggles with them.)*

MS. COWPER. Contagious disease? You just said that Mr. McDonald fell out of a tree.

SALLY. No, it was Lasser's Fever. *(Then, to ERIC)* Let go of him, Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. He doesn't want to leave yet!

FORBRIGHT. We have to get him to the hospital!

ERIC. Tell you what, to save time, you two go ahead, and I'll just chuck Norman on the bonfire.

FORBRIGHT & SALLY. *(Together)* Bonfire?!

JENKINS. Mr. Thompson, you should leave everything to Mr. Forbright, here.

*(ERIC leaps over GEORGE to deal with JENKINS and MS. COWPER, ushering them towards the kitchen. FORBRIGHT and SALLY head to the front door with GEORGE.)*

ERIC. Mr. Jenkins, why don't you just show Ms. Cowper your washing machine and I'll be with you in three minutes.

MS. COWPER. I have no wish to see the washing machine!

ERIC. Then give us a quick feel, wobble, wobble, wobble!

*(ERIC grabs MS. COWPER's chest.)*

MS. COWPER. Aagh!

*(MS. COWPER hurries off into the kitchen.)*

JENKINS. Really, Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. God, you've got a lovely bottom!

*(ERIC gooses JENKINS and HE yells and runs off into the kitchen.)*

*(NOTE: For a moment, SALLY pulls the stretcher through the front door – out of view of the audience. FORBRIGHT remains in the doorway – in this instant, the "George Stretcher" is substituted with a "Dummy Stretcher", which looks identical to the original.)*

*(ERIC runs to SALLY and FORBRIGHT.)*

ERIC. *(Con't.)* Stop! No, you mustn't!

*(There's a CRASH as if the trolley has fallen over.)*

FORBRIGHT. Now look what you've done!

*(ERIC pulls the Dummy Stretcher back through the front door, struggling with FORBRIGHT and SALLY.)*

SALLY. He's off his trolley!

ERIC. Bloody do-gooder!

FORBRIGHT. You're being very silly, Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Leave him in peace.

SALLY. Much more of this and he'll leave in pieces!

*(ERIC manages to drag them back into the room.)*

ERIC. I told you, he doesn't want to do!

FORBRIGHT. And I told you, we have to dispose of the body!

*(In their struggle, THEY drop the Dummy Stretcher on its back with a crash.)*

ERIC. Now look what you've done!

FORBRIGHT. Gracious!

*(ERIC picks up the Dummy Stretcher at its head and stands it upright.)*

ERIC. Well, excuse me, but if this is the sort of treatment poor Mr. McDonald can expect, I would sooner choose another undertaker –

FORBRIGHT. *(Furious)* Mr. Thompson!!!

ERIC. What?!

*(ERIC steps aside and the Dummy Stretcher falls forward onto its front, so it's now face down.)*

FORBRIGHT. No!

ERIC. Right, that's it. You're fired!

FORBRIGHT. You can't fire the undertaker!

*(SALLY and FORBRIGHT start to pick the stretcher up once more – BRENDA stumbles out of the dining room with a decanter of brandy. SCREAMING! Causing THEM to drop the stretcher once again.)*

SALLY. No!

BRENDA. My lovely Norman! He was so young!

ERIC. There's plenty more fish in the sea.

FORBRIGHT. *(Referring to the Dummy Stretcher)* Up we go again.

*(BRENDA sees SALLY and FORBRIGHT with the Dummy Stretcher and races to THEM.)*

BRENDA. Who's that?!

ERIC. That's nobody.

FORBRIGHT. This is the late Norman McDonald.

ERIC. Oh, bloody hell.

BRENDA. Oh, Norman! No! Don't leave me!

FORBRIGHT. Behave yourself!

ERIC. Yes, pull yourself together, Brenda!

*(In her anguish and pain, BRENDA thumps her fists into the Dummy.)*

BRENDA. My lovely, lovely Norman.

ERIC. Quick, get him out of here!

SALLY. But I thought you said -

ERIC. Just do as you're told!

BRENDA. Norman, one last kiss!

*(BRENDA starts to pull the sheet off, but ERIC pulls HER away.)*

ERIC. No! She mustn't see what's under the sheet.

BRENDA. Why not?!

ERIC. Because Norman's all -

*(ERIC pulls an ugly mutated face, BRENDA screams and runs back into the dining room. SALLY and FORBRIGHT start towards the front door with the Dummy Stretcher.)*

SALLY. Right then.

ERIC. No!

FORBRIGHT. What now?

*(MS. COWPER enters from the kitchen.)*

MS. COWPER. *(Sternly)* Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. *(To FORBRIGHT)* Drive safely.

FORBRIGHT. The autopsy will be at St. Pancras' Hospital.

ERIC. In a couple of hours though.

FORBRIGHT. *(Exiting)* Yes, followed immediately by the cremation.

ERIC. Good. *(Then realizing)* Cremation!!!

*(MS. COWPER joins ERIC at the front door.)*

MS. COWPER. Mr. Thompson!

ERIC. Ms. Cowper.

MS. COWPER. It was not my morning's intention to watch out Mr. Jenkins fiddling with your washing machine.

ERIC. Of course not, Ms. Cowper.

MS. COWPER. So when will Mrs. Swan, your landlady, be here?

NORMAN. *(Off, in a fair female voice)* Helloe!

*(NORMAN enters from the UR stairs arch as "Mrs. Swan". NORMAN's wearing a large, floral maternity dress, dark stockings and the blonde wig.)*

ERIC. Ah, come on in, Mrs. Swan!

*(NORMAN, ERIC and MS. COWPER meet in the canter.)*

NORMAN. (*Normal voice*) I was told – (*ERIC gooses HIM, then high voice*) I was told there was a Mr. Jenkins looking for me.

ERIC. First things first. (*Then, introducing NORMAN to MS. COWPER*) This lady is my landlady, Mrs. Swan.

MS. COWPER. At last.

ERIC. (*To NORMAN*) And this lady is Ms. Cowper.

NORMAN. (*Immediately turning away*) I think I've left something upstairs.

ERIC. (*Stopping HIM*) No, you haven't.

(*JENKINS enters from the kitchen, being chased by a rampant WASHING MACHINE churning and crashing after him – JENKINS defends himself with a plumber's rubber plunger.*)

JENKINS. Get back in there, you beastly thing! Get back! (*JENKINS kicks the washing machine back into the kitchen*) I hope that washing machine's still under guarantee.

(*JENKINS turns back to close the kitchen door and a foam-covered shirt flies out and hits him in the face.*)

ERIC. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins, I'm sure you did your best. However, the good news is Mrs. Swan has arrived to sign your papers.

JENKINS. Oh, thank the Lord for that. Well, I just have a form for you to sign – er – I had it a minute ago, then I took it ... (*JENKINS turns to the dining room, then stops, remembers and looks to the ceiling*) Ah.

MS. COWPER. Come on, where is it, Jenkins?

JENKINS. On the roof.

MS. COWPER. The roof?

JENKINS. Yes, I left my briefcase up there, when we went to look for the late Mr. Swan.

(*NORMAN turns to leave.*)

NORMAN. Oh well, that's it then, isn't it?

MS. COWPER. No, Mrs. Swan, I want this matter settled. Jenkins get back up there and retrieve your briefcase.

JENKINS. But it's raining, Ms. Cowper.

MS. COWPER. Just get up those stairs, Jenkins!

(*MS. COWPER snatches the rubber plunger from JENKINS and pushes him up through the UR arch with the plunger.*)

(*NORMAN pulls off his scarf and wig in fury.*)

NORMAN. I am never helping you out again! That woman could have us both thrown in jail just like that!

ERIC. Put your wig back on!

NORMAN. No!

ERIC. She might come back in!

NORMAN. I'm getting out!

ERIC. In!

NORMAN. Out!

(*NORMAN and ERIC start to struggle with the wig – And LINDA and DR. CHAPMAN enter from the bedroom. ERIC and NORMAN both see LINDA together and quickly turn their struggle into a flamboyant dance – The HOKEY COKEY: In-Out, In-Out and shake it all about!*)

*(Finally, ERIC steps away from NORMAN and smiles, trying to lighten everything.)*

ERIC. Good morning again, doctor. Hello, darling.

LINDA. Norman.

NORMAN. Yes, Linda?

LINDA. Why are you wearing a woman's dress and dancing with my husband?

ERIC. No trick questions please.

*(LINDA shoots ERIC a look.)*

NORMAN. Ah, no, it's not a dress, these are my work out clothes.

LINDA. What?

NORMAN. We were just getting a little exercise. Twenty minutes of aerobics every morning.

*(NORMAN performs a couple of jumping jacks. NORMAN looks sternly at ERIC and HE joins in.)*

LINDA. *(Not believing a word)* Norman! *(THEY stop the exercises)* Norman, that is a very pretty, floral dress.

NORMAN. What, this old thing?

DR. CHAPMAN. Now, if Eric's Uncle Norman is a transvestite as well -

ERIC, LINDA & NORMAN. *(Together)* Sit down!

*(HE does and LINDA advances on ERIC and NORMAN.)*

LINDA. I know what you've been doing with the wigs and the dresses and the stockings.

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* What?

LINDA. Yes!

ERIC. God!

NORMAN. No!

LINDA. I've found out what you've been doing behind my back.

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* Oh, Linda!

LINDA. Waiting until I've left for work ... and then getting all dressed up in women's clothes and parading up and down in front of the mirror.

*(ERIC and NORMAN look freeze in utter dumbstruck confusion. ERIC's mind races.)*

ERIC. *(Finally)* Yes. That's exactly what's been going on behind your back.

NORMAN. What?

LINDA. I knew it!

ERIC. Yes. I've been trying on women's clothes.

LINDA. And Uncle George.

ERIC. Yes. And Uncle George.

LINDA. And now Norman as well.

*(ERIC quickly puts the wig back on NORMAN.)*

ERIC. Yes. And now Norman as ...

NORMAN. *(Interrupting)* Ooh, no. Not me, I've got nothing to do with it.

LINDA. You're going to stand there dressed like that and deny it?!

NORMAN. *(Determined to set the record straight)* Linda, prepare yourself for a shock.

ERIC. Norman, don't!

NORMAN. Mrs. Swan, for the past two years your Eric has been defrauding the DSS and this morning he forced me to dress up like this to impersonate you in order to sign for one of his numerous falsified claims.

*(LINDA considers this and turns accusingly to ERIC – Then back to NORMAN.)*

LINDA. I think I preferred the one about the aerobics class.

NORMAN. What?

LINDA. Just own up to it, Norman.

ERIC. Yes, confess to your little oddity.

NORMAN. I haven't got a little oddity!

DR. CHAPMAN. Excuse me, this is Norman the uncle?

ERIC, LINDA & NORMAN. *(Together)* No!

FORBRIGHT. *(Off)* Oh, my God!

SALLY. *(Off)* Watch out!

*(ERIC, NORMAN and LINDA turn as there is a CRASH OF DUSTBINS from off UR.)*

LINDA. What the hell's going on out there?

*(ANOTHER CRASH.)*

ERIC. Nothing. Nothing at all.

*(The front door bursts open and GEORGE, still tied to the stretcher and covered with a sheet, races in, his legs*

*waddling. Moments later SALLY and FORBRIGHT dash in through the front door.)*

FORBRIGHT. Stop that corpse!

SALLY. You're not well, Mr. McDonald!

*(THEY chase tied up GEORGE around the sofa and back out through the front door. GEORGE races off, quickly followed by FORBRIGHT and SALLY.)*

FORBRIGHT. Slow down!

SALLY. Mind the road, Mr. McDonald! It's slippery out there!

*(We hear CAR HOOTERS and SCREECHING BRAKES from UR, and we hear a car CRASH into a set of dustbins – We hear a DOG BARKING and a final CRASH. ERIC turns back to LINDA.)*

ERIC. Now, what was that you were saying?

*(MS. COWPER bursts in through the UR arch. NORMAN shoves his wig back on, back to front.)*

MS. COWPER. *(Shouting off behind her)* Just hold on, you stupid little man!

ERIC. What's happened?

*(MS. COWPER moves down to beside DR. CHAPMAN.)*

MS. COWPER. The wind blew the attic door shut and Jenkins is stuck out on the roof.

DR. CHAPMAN. *(To MS. COWPER, standing right in front of HIM)* Ah, now you must be Eric's transsexual Uncle Norman.

MS. COWPER. *(Glaring)* Sit down. *(DR. CHAPMAN sits and MS. COWPER crosses to the UR stairs. Shouting out the front door)* Just keep a firm grip of that lightning conductor! *(MS. COWPER moves to the others. NORMAN faces the UL corner. To NORMAN)* I think he's broken some tiles, Mrs. Swan.

LINDA. It doesn't matter.

ERIC. Yeah, never mind the tiles.

MS. COWPER. *(To NORMAN, insistent)* Mrs. Swan?

LINDA. Yes!

MS. COWPER. I'm not talking to you, madam.

LINDA. Yes, you were.

MS. COWPER. *(Indicating NORMAN)* I'm talking to Mrs. Swan, here.

*(LINDA turns to NORMAN, becoming more and more upset.)*

LINDA. Mrs. Swan?

NORMAN. I beg your pardon.

LINDA. Mrs. Swan!

ERIC. Now calm down.

LINDA. Mrs. bloody Swan!!! You couple of perverts!!!

MS. COWPER. Gracious!

LINDA. *(To NORMAN)* You need professional help, Norman!

NORMAN. The sooner the better.

MS. COWPER. Norman?

LINDA. That's right. *(LINDA pulls off NORMAN's wig,*

*almost in tears again)* This is Norman McDonald our upstairs lodger.

ERIC. Oh, my God.

MS. COWPER. *(Indicating NORMAN)* This man has been dressing up and impersonating Mrs. Swan for the past two years.

LINDA. Two years!!! How could you Eric?!

ERIC. Things are not what they seem, love.

MS. COWPER. Eric?

LINDA. Yes, this is Eric Swan, my husband.

NORMAN. Oh, my God.

MS. COWPER. I thought Eric Swan was dead.

ERIC. Stick around.

LINDA. What's going on, Eric?

MS. COWPER. It's very clear, Mrs. Swan, the police will have to be notified.

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* The police?!

LINDA. The police?

*(ERIC and NORMAN cuddle in fear.)*

MS. COWPER. Yes, your husband's been caught in the act of fiddling with your lodger.

*(LINDA takes this in and turns to see ERIC and NORMAN together.)*

LINDA. Oh-my-God!!!

*(LINDA runs to the front door and opens it, just as GEORGE runs in - Still strapped to the stretcher.)*

*(LINDA and GEORGE run into each other and SCREAM! LINDA runs to the sofa. GEORGE runs across to the dining room, just as BRENDA enters through the dining room door. BRENDA comes face to face with the walking stretcher, SCREAMS. GEORGE turns and comes face to face with DR. CHAPMAN, who SCREAMS and exits through the front door. GEORGE runs blind into the kitchen – SCREAMS [off] and CRASHES [off] into a dresser of plates!)*

ERIC. *(Explaining UNCLE GEORGE to MS. COWPER)*  
I think he's come to fix the washing machine.

*(NORMAN tries to sneak away, but BRENDA sees him.)*

BRENDA. Norman!

*(Caught in a dress, NORMAN turns back to HER.)*

NORMAN. Hello, Brenda.

*(BRENDA runs to NORMAN.)*

BRENDA. *(Delighted)* Norman, you're not dead.

NORMAN. The day's not over yet ... Now, you're probably wondering why I'm dressed like this ...

BRENDA. No, I'm game if you are.

*(SHE gives NORMAN a huge happy kiss.)*

LINDA. I thought that awful woman was Brenda.

ERIC. I'm not sure where she fits in, actually.

*(MS. COWPER crosses ominously to ERIC and NORMAN.)*

MS. COWPER. Mr. Swan and Mr. McDonald. There's enough evidence in Mr. Jenkins briefcase to put you two in prison for at least ten years!

NORMAN. Oh, no!

ERIC. It's all right, Norman.

BRENDA. Prison?

LINDA. What's Mr. Jenkins' briefcase got to do with it, Eric?

BRENDA. Eric? He said his name was Rupert Thompson.

NORMAN. He's said rather a lot of things today.

LINDA. Rupert Thompson?

ERIC. I never meant it to happen like this, Linda.

LINDA. Never meant what to happen, Eric?

*(ERIC opens his mouth to speak, when the lights dim as there is an ALMIGHTY CLAP of thunder and FLASH OF LIGHTNING.)*

JENKINS. *(Off)* Haa-agh!

MS. COWPER. My God! Jenkins is out on the roof – And so is the briefcase! *(THUNDER BOOMS – NORMAN opens the window and ERIC, NORMAN and MS. COWPER look out and up at the roof. As JENKINS' scream stops, ERIC and NORMAN look back in pain)* Stay where you are, Jenkins!

LINDA. What's going on, Eric?

MS. COWPER. You hold tight to that briefcase!

ERIC. You hold tight to that lightning conductor!

NORMAN. And don't worry! Lightning never strikes the same place twice!

*(There is another BOOM of thunder and flash of LIGHTNING, JENKINS howls and THEY watch aghast as the entire fileful of papers shower down outside the window – Hundreds and hundreds of multi-coloured papers scattered by the wind. The papers are blown all over the stage through the window. NORMAN and BRENDA start ripping up paper.)*

MS. COWPER. My evidence!

NORMAN. *(Turning back inside)* Oh dear, oh dear.

MS. COWPER. Get out of that tree, Jenkins!

NORMAN. It looks like your assets are blowing in the wind, Ms. Cowper.

MS. COWPER. Get my papers, Jenkins!

NORMAN. What a pity, Ms. Cowper, all your evidence has gone.

LINDA. What evidence?

NORMAN. *(About to tell another whopper)* Well, Linda, it's like this. When the Health Department discovered that the Lasser Fever was spreading into ...

ERIC. *(Turning back inside, indicating the strewn papers)* No, Norman, don't – Look at this mess. I can't keep this up any longer. Miss Cowper –

NORMAN. Eric, don't! She's got nothing against you now.

ERIC. I have to.

NORMAN. You'll go to jail.

ERIC. I can't live with all these lies. It'll be for the best, Norman ... Ms. Cowper ... I confess.

MS. COWPER. You confess?

LINDA. Confess to what?

ERIC. I just want you to know, Linda, I never wanted any of this to hurt you.

LINDA. What's happened?

ERIC. And Ms. Cowper, I have to make one thing perfectly clear – I'm in this on my own, nobody helped me. I blackmailed my Uncle George and my lodger Norman, here, into helping me this morning when Mr. Jenkins turned up. They're both completely innocent. And as you can see, Norman's not dead. And he's not a lumberjack either ... *(BRENDA and NORMAN look at his dress)* ... Nor is he married, nor has he ever been married. He hasn't got a father in jail, or any deaf unemployed children here or anywhere else in the World and he definitely hasn't got a little Dickie ... *(Another moment between BRENDA and NORMAN)* ... There's no Mr. Thompson living here, with or without gout, nobody with Lasser's Fever or any other Fever for that matter. There's no pensioners, or children or widows or widowers of single-parents or foster-parents or divorced parents or any other sort of parents. *(To LINDA, finding the courage)* Linda, I lost my job two years ago ... ever since then, I've been defrauding the Department of Social Security. *(To MS. COWPER)* Every one of those claims you received was made by me. I've done every trick in the book and even written some new ones. And I did it all because I couldn't find work ... and I've been able to fool your system for the better part of two years. *(To LINDA)* And for everything I've

been through, Linda, the worst part of it was having to lie to you.

LINDA. Oh, Eric.

ERIC. I just hope that you can find something inside you that can forgive me.

LINDA. Eric, as long as you love me, I don't care what you are. Employed or unemployed, I'll always be here for you. For better or for worse, remember?

*(ERIC and LINDA kiss and hug, as do NORMAN and BRENDA. Then THEY ALL turn to face MS. COWPER.)*

ERIC. There we are then.

*(MS. COWPER takes this all in.)*

MS. COWPER. You say you've been using every way to cheat our system?

ERIC. Yes, I'll plead guilty and hopefully get a shorter sentence.

MS. COWPER. Shorter sentence? I think prison would be a terrible waste of your talents, Mr. Swan ... You can start work for the department on Monday.

NORMAN. He can?

ERIC. I can?

MS. COWPER. You're just the sort of man we've been looking for – Assistant Fraud Inspector.

*(MS. COWPER offers her hand and ERIC shakes it.)*

NORMAN. *(To ERIC)* Lucky Devil!

MS. COWPER. I'll see you at nine o'clock sharp.

ERIC. *(Stunned and delighted)* Yes, of course, Ms. Cowper. I'll be there.

MS. COWPER. Good man.

*(MS. COWPER squeezes ERIC's 'boobs' the same way HE squeezed HERS.)*

*(Then NORMAN's, then she gooses the two of THEM.)*

ERIC & NORMAN. *(Together)* Wheey!

ERIC. Fabulous ay, Norman? You get married on Saturday, I start work on Monday! What a weekend! *(HE runs ahead of MS. COWPER to open the door for her)* After you, Ms. Cowper.

*(ERIC opens the door – REVEALING JENKINS – Frazzled and smouldering, his clothes, face and hair blackened and his briefcase turned to charcoal, smoke gently wafting off of him.)*

*(The Kitchen Door opens with GEORGE hurrying out, chased by the washing machine.)*

*(And FORBRIGHT and SALLY enter through the Front Door with DR. CHAPMAN on the trolley.)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE END