The play was first produced at the Library Theatre, Scarborough, on 16 June 1975 and subsequently, under the direction of Peter Hall and Alan Ayckbourn, at the National Theatre, London, on 16 March 1977 with the following cast.

CHARACTERS

ERNEST	*Michael Gough*
DELIA	*Joan Hickson*
NICK	*Michael Kitchen*
JAN	*Polly Adams*
MALCOLM	*Derek Newark*
KATE	*Susan Littler*
TREVOR	*Stephen Moore*
SUSANNAH	*Maria Aitken*

ACT ONE

Saturday evening 7 p.m.
Three bedrooms:
The first, ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*
Large Victorian bedroom in need of redecoration. The furniture including a double bed, bedside tables, dressing table etc. are all sturdy, unremarkable family pieces. A phone by the bed. Two doors, one to the landing and the rest of the house, the other to a bathroom.
The second bedroom is MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.*
This is smaller, probably a front bedroom in a terrace house which they are in the process of converting. It is sparsely furnished. A brand new bed, unmade, being the centrepiece. In addition an odd easy chair. One of the walls has been repapered, the rest are stripped. In one corner, a number of cardboard packages, unopened. A phone by the bed. One door leading to the landing, the bathroom and the rest of the house.
The third bedroom is NICK *and* JAN*'s.*
This is furnished in a more trendy style with a brass bedstead and some interesting antique stuff. Rugs on the floor. A phone by the bed. One door leading off to the bathroom and everywhere else. The action will alternate between these three areas.
At the start, NICK *is already in bed, lying looking sorry for himself.*
MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s bedroom is empty.*
DELIA *sits in her bedroom at her dressing table mirror. She is going out. She is in her slip and finishing her make-up. An elaborate operation.* ERNEST *wanders in. Birdlike, bumbling, nearly sixty. He is in evening dress. He stares at* DELIA. *They are obviously going to be late but* ERNEST *has learnt that impatience gets him nowhere.*

ERNEST: Have you got much further to go?
DELIA [*without turning*]: Not long now.

ERNEST: Good. Good show. [*He walks about humming restlessly.*] No, that is definitely a damp patch, you know.

DELIA: Mmm?

ERNEST: A damp patch. Definitely. It's getting in from somewhere. I've just been standing on the spare bed in there feeling the ceiling. The verdict is, very very damp.

DELIA: Oh dear.

ERNEST: Yes. Which only goes to confirm my suspicion that those chaps we had crawling about the roof for six months didn't know their job. [*He leans out of the window backwards.*]

DELIA: What are you doing?

ERNEST: I'm trying to catch a glimpse of the re-pointing. It's seeping in from somewhere.

DELIA: You'll fall out in a minute.

ERNEST: No. You can't see a thing. That gutterwork's obscuring the whole . . . Good lord. That needs a spot of attention. It's hanging off at one end. Good lord.

DELIA: Darling, you're in my light.

ERNEST: There's a whole chunk of guttering here hanging on by a screw. [*He comes in.*] Hadn't noticed that before.

DELIA: Oh, did I tell you? Susannah phoned this afternoon.

ERNEST [*thoughtful*]: Did he? Did he indeed.

DELIA: No, not he. Susannah.

ERNEST: Who?

DELIA: Susannah.

ERNEST: Oh, Susannah. Jolly good. Very worrying that guttering, you know. One light to medium monsoon, we'll have a water-fall in the dining room.

DELIA: She sounded very agitated.

ERNEST: Oh yes.

DELIA: Things are not good between her and Trevor.

ERNEST: Ah. It's twenty past, you know.

DELIA: All right, all right.

ERNEST: We're booked for eight o'clock.

DELIA: They'll hold the table.

ERNEST: They might not.

DELIA: Of course they will.

ERNEST: You never know. Not these days.

DELIA: They'll hold the table for us. We're regulars. We go there every year.

ERNEST: Oh, well. It's your anniversary.

DELIA: And yours.

ERNEST: True, true. I think I should have given these shoes another polish.

DELIA: Well, go and do it.

ERNEST: No, it doesn't matter. Nobody'll notice.

DELIA: It would appear that things between Susannah and Trevor are coming to a head.

ERNEST: Ah.

DELIA: He was always a difficult boy. I sometimes think if you hadn't ignored him quite as much –

ERNEST: I did?

DELIA: Of course you did. You hardly said a word to him all the time he was growing up.

ERNEST: I seem to remember chatting away to him for hours.

DELIA: Well. Chatting. I meant conversation. Conversation about important things. A father should converse with his son. About things that matter deeply.

ERNEST: Doesn't really leave them much to talk about then, does it?

DELIA: And that if I may say so is typical. No. Let's admit it. We weren't good parents. You did nothing and I tried to make up for it, and that's why he's like he is today. I mean if he'd had a stable childhood, he'd never have completely lost his sense of proportion and married Susannah. I mean, I sometimes feel on the rare occasions one does see them together that she's not really – awful thing to say but – not really resilient enough for Trevor. He wants somebody more phlegmatic. That Jan girl for instance would have been ideal. Do you remember her?

ERNEST: Jan? Jan? Jan?

DELIA: Nice little thing. Beautifully normal. She came to tea, do you remember? You got on very well with her.

ERNEST: Oh yes. She was jolly, wasn't she? She was very interested in my stamps. What happened to her?

DELIA: Oh, she married – someone else, I think. She still writes occasionally.

ERNEST: I must say I preferred her to Susannah. Never really hit it off with her, I'm afraid.

DELIA: Well, she's a very complex sort of girl, isn't she? Hasn't really made up her mind. About herself. I mean, I think a woman sooner or later has simply got to make up her mind about herself. I mean, even if she's someone like Carolyn – you know, Mrs Brightman's Carolyn – who looks at herself and says, right, I'm a lump, I'm going to be a lump but then at least everyone can accept her as a lump. So much simpler.

ERNEST: I think he should have married this other one.

DELIA: Jan? I don't think she was that keen.

ERNEST: She was altogether much jollier.

DELIA: Well, we're saddled with Susannah as a daughter-in-law – at least temporarily. We'd better make the best of it – I think I've put these eyes on crooked – we'd better make the best of it.

ERNEST: It's their bed. They can lie on it.

DELIA: Yes. I think that's one of the problems.

ERNEST: Eh?

DELIA: B – E – D.

ERNEST: B – E – D? Bed?

DELIA: Enough said.

ERNEST: Good lord. How do you know?

DELIA: One reads between the lines, darling. I've had a little look around their house. You can tell a great deal from people's bedrooms.

ERNEST: Can you? Good heavens. [*He looks about.*]

DELIA: If you know what to look for. Now then. Do I wear what I wore when I went to the Reynolds or shall I wear the stripy thing that you loathe.

ERNEST: I'd wear the Reynolds thing.

DELIA: Or there's the little grey.

ERNEST: Oh.

DELIA: Or the blue.

ERNEST: Ah.

DELIA: No, that isn't pressed. You decide, darling. Stripy or the other one.

ERNEST: Er . . .

DELIA: Or the grey.

ERNEST: Er . . .

DELIA: Right, I've decided, it's the other one. Good. Now, in the spare wardrobe in Trevor's old room on the top shelf, there's a little black handbag. Could you fetch me that? . . .

[DELIA *goes into the bathroom.*]

ERNEST: Little black handbag, right. [*Looking round.*] I don't think you can tell very much from this bedroom. Except the roof's leaking from somewhere.

[*As he goes out, cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN*'s room.* JAN *comes in in her coat. As soon as* NICK, *lying in bed, sees her he groans.*]

JAN: Are you all right?

[NICK *moans.*]

JAN: Is it painful?

NICK: Amazingly enough, yes.

JAN: Are you comfy?

NICK: Not really.

JAN: Shall I prop you up a bit?

NICK: No, no. I'll just – aaaah!

JAN: You might want to read.

NICK: How can I read? I can't do anything.

JAN: Well, your book's there.

NICK: Oh, it's maddening. A maddening thing to happen. Why this month? I mean, I'm simply bending down pulling on my

socks and bang. It's totally unfair. Why me? I mean, I'm the last person in the world who should be stuck in bed.

JAN: Yes . . .

NICK: I'm a naturally active person, aren't I? Aren't I? I have to be on the go. I need to be on the go. I'm going to go mad lying here, you know. I'm going to go off my head, I know it. I've only been here since this morning and I'm dying of boredom. How long did that man say?

JAN: Well, a few days.

NICK: We know what that means. I'll be here for Christmas.

JAN: Don't be stupid.

NICK: That doctor obviously didn't know what he was talking about. Bad luck, old chap – a bottle of pills and he's off.

JAN: They're supposed to relax you.

NICK: All they've done is to give me double vision. Why me? I've got so many things I should be – aaah – should be doing. Did you get hold of the office and tell them about the meeting?

JAN: Yes, it's cancelled.

NICK: And you sent the telegram to Glasgow?

JAN: Yes, and I spoke to someone at Shelgrove and told them not to expect you. And I cabled America and asked them to ring this number when convenient. O.K.?

NICK: Right.

JAN: I don't know why you pay a secretary. I won't be long.

NICK: Where are you going?

JAN: I told you. Malcolm and Kate's housewarming.

NICK: Tonight?

JAN: They did invite us both. I phoned and told them what had happened. I said I'd just look in for ten minutes.

NICK: What about me?

JAN: I won't be long.

NICK: You don't want to go to Malcolm and Kate's, do you?

JAN: I said I would.

NICK: What? And sit and look at love's young dream all evening.

JAN: There'll be lots of others.

NICK: Then they won't miss you, will they?

JAN: I said I would.

NICK: Well, phone them up.

JAN: No, I want to.

NICK: Why?

JAN: Well.

NICK: What on earth for?

JAN: Well. If you must know – it's simply that – well. Simply. Susannah is going to be there.

NICK: Susannah.

JAN: Yes. I wanted to see her. It's a good opportunity and I thought I might . . .

NICK: And Trevor.

JAN: Yes. Possibly.

NICK: I should think it's highly probable. Seeing as they're married. Unless he's crippled as well.

JAN: Anyway. That's why.

NICK: And if it's a choice between Trevor and me, it's going to be Trevor.

JAN: No.

NICK: Yes.

JAN: Not at all.

NICK: Yes.

JAN: It's just I heard that – well – there's some awful trouble between them. I mean that silly bitch Susannah, she's got no idea at all. She hasn't a clue about Trevor. I know Trevor's impossible sometimes but I think I do know him probably better than anyone . . .

NICK: Oh yes, yes.

JAN: I think if I talk to them before they do something they'll regret . . .

NICK: Like her shooting him.

JAN: Don't be silly.

NICK: Look, he's a very selfish, very spoilt, self-pitying, self-obsessed . . .

JAN: I know, I know.
NICK: All right.
JAN: Just for ten minutes. I promise. Your book's there. [*She moves to the door.*]
NICK: Oy!
JAN: Mm?
NICK: I take it you still prefer me?
JAN: I think so. Mostly.
[*She kisses him.*]
NICK [*wriggling*]: Oh.
JAN: What is it?
NICK: Ah.
JAN: What?
NICK: This damn bed is full of crumbs.
JAN: Crumbs?
NICK: From those biscuits. I told you not to give me biscuits.
JAN [*pulling back the side covers and attempting to brush the undersheet beneath him*]: O.K., just a minute, just a minute.
NICK: Careful! Careful! CAREFUL!
JAN: All right, all right, ALL RIGHT! God, how do they do it? How do these nurses do it? They are saints. I'd go stark raving mad and strangle all the patients, I know I would.
NICK: Aaaah!
JAN: Nick, will you kindly lie still.
NICK: Ah!
JAN: There we are. Is that better?
NICK: Aah!
JAN: And stop that din. It's not that serious.
NICK: Hah!
JAN: It is not a disc. Nothing is broken. It is just a little tiny muscle.
NICK: It is not a little tiny muscle. It is the main motor muscle that runs right up the spinal cord . . .
JAN: All right. Too bad. Sorry and all that. Won't be long. See you later.

NICK: Thanks for the sympathy.
JAN. Well, I'm afraid I have the misfortune to be born with only that much sympathy and that's your lot. You've had it all. Bye-bye.
NICK: Give my love to Trevor . . .
JAN: Oh God. [*She goes out.*]
NICK [*shouting after her, propping himself up on one elbow*]: Tell him with me ill in bed, the field's clear for him to – aaah! Oh blimey O'Riley. Why me? Why me?
[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]
[MALCOLM *comes in with one of* KATE's *shoes.*]
[*He looks for somewhere to hide it.*]
[*He tucks it down the bottom of the unmade bed.*]
[MALCOLM *sits in the chair innocently.*]
KATE [*off, then entering*]: Malcolm! Malcolm . . . I know you're up here, Malcolm. Come on, Malcolm, what have you done with it?
MALCOLM: What?
KATE: My other shoe. What have you done with it?
MALCOLM: I don't know.
KATE: Oh really . . . [*Seeing the cardboard packages.*] What's all this?
MALCOLM: Ah-ha.
KATE: Where did they come from?
MALCOLM: I got it today.
KATE: I didn't see you.
MALCOLM: You don't see everything.
KATE: What is it?
MALCOLM: A little surprise. Nothing much. A little housewarming present from me to you.
KATE: Whatever is it?
MALCOLM: Later, later. When they've all gone.
KATE: Whatever is it? It's an ironing board.
MALCOLM: An ironing board . . .
KATE: What have you done with my shoe?

MALCOLM: Shoe? Shoe?

KATE [*giving up*]: Oh . . .

MALCOLM: It's going to be a really good party tonight, I can feel it.

KATE: I hope so. Oooh. Something to confess.

MALCOLM: What?

KATE: You know that shelf you put up in the kitchen.

MALCOLM: Yes.

KATE: It's fallen down again.

MALCOLM: Again –

KATE: I was ever so careful.

MALCOLM: I told you it wasn't designed for great heavy weights.

KATE: I only stood the cruet on it. I deliberately didn't go near it in case it fell down. Oh, I'm terribly hot. Have I got time for a bath?

MALCOLM: Just about.

KATE: Now, the food's all going on the big table. Then I've cleared the sideboard for the drinks. And they can put their coats here on the bed – oh look, I haven't made the bed. Where is it then?

MALCOLM: What?

KATE: You know what. My blooming shoe.

[MALCOLM *whistles to himself and starts to take off his boots.*]

[*Starting on the bed.*] You going to wear your nice shirt?

MALCOLM: Which one?

KATE: Your nice one.

MALCOLM: All right.

KATE: You look nice in that.

MALCOLM: Yes, it's going to be a really good party. Who've we got coming then?

KATE: Oh – everyone – I asked everyone. Except Nick, he can't come.

MALCOLM: Nick?

KATE: Yes, he hurt his back, poor thing.

MALCOLM: Ah.

KATE: Jan phoned me. He hurt it this morning. She's coming though.

MALCOLM: Good. Good. [*He takes off his sweater.*]

KATE: And who else is there. Ken and Margaret, of course. And John and Dorothy and Wilfrid and Gareth and Gwen and Mike and Dave and Carole and Dick and Lottie, Gordon and Marge, of course and – er – Susannah and Trevor . . .

MALCOLM: Trevor?

KATE: Yes.

MALCOLM: And Susannah?

KATE: Yes.

MALCOLM: Oh dear, oh dear.

KATE: Well, I had to. They've had us round twice.

MALCOLM: I see. Well, that's that, isn't it?

KATE: Well.

MALCOLM: That's that. Where is it then?

KATE: What?

MALCOLM: The shirt.

KATE: Oh, it's in the airing cupboard. I washed it.

MALCOLM: Right.

KATE: Could you turn my bath on?

MALCOLM: Right.

[MALCOLM *goes out.*]

[KATE *finds her shoe in the bed.*]

KATE: Oh really.

[*She eyes the present.*]

[*She sees* MALCOLM's *boots.*]

[*She snatches them up and stuffs them into one of the pillow cases.*]

[MALCOLM *returns.*]

Very funny.

MALCOLM: Eh?

KATE: My shoe. Very funny.

MALCOLM: Ah.

KATE: And I don't want any more foreign bodies in my side of the bed tonight, thank you very much.

MALCOLM: Foreign bodies?

KATE: You know. Hair brushes and all my bottles and jars – you know.

MALCOLM: Wasn't me.

KATE: You and your jokes. Is my bath running?

MALCOLM: Yes. Now look, you say Jan's coming and Susannah's coming and Trevor's coming?

KATE: Yes.

MALCOLM: That's marvellous. If Trevor and Susannah don't have a fight, then it's ten to one Jan and Susannah will have a fight . . .

KATE: I hope not.

MALCOLM: Well, the first sign of any trouble they're all out, I'm telling you. This is going to be a good party. I'm not having any of that. [*He has put on his shirt.*]

KATE: Has that shrunk?

MALCOLM: I don't know, has it?

KATE: It looks as if it's shrunk. Or else you're getting fat.

[*She goes out.*]

MALCOLM: Fat? You cheeky thing. [*Calling.*] Hey, Blodge. Blodge.

KATE [*off*]: What?

MALCOLM: What have you done with my shoes?

KATE [*off*]: Ah-ha.

MALCOLM: What have you done with them? What's she done with them?

[*He sees her shoes.*]

[*He hides them in the bed.*]

KATE [*off*]: Ooooh!

MALCOLM: What?

KATE [*returning partially undressed*]: Did you put that brush in my bath?

MALCOLM: Brush? What brush?

KATE: Well, you shouldn't do that. It's very unhygienic. Honestly . . . [*She goes.*]

[MALCOLM *laughs.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA's.]

[DELIA *comes in dressed to go.*]

[*She looks about her.*]

DELIA [*calling*]: Ernest! Ernest!

ERNEST [*off*]: Coming.

DELIA: Where have you got to?

ERNEST [*enters dusting himself down*]: All ready to go, are you?

DELIA: Where on earth have you been?

ERNEST: I was just having a quick squint into the loft. Seeing if I could see any signs. Water's getting in from somewhere.

DELIA: You're filthy dirty.

ERNEST: Oh, that's all right. No one'll notice.

DELIA: I have. Now, don't go and overtip tonight, will you?

ERNEST: Overtip?

DELIA: You did last year. These waiters don't like it.

ERNEST: I've never heard them object.

DELIA: I read somewhere it was just as bad form to overtip as it was to undertip. If not worse.

ERNEST: The bloke last year was pleased enough to take it.

DELIA: The Spanish one.

ERNEST: Was he Spanish? Smiling all over his face.

DELIA: You obviously don't know the Spanish. That expression was little short of scornful. Desperately embarrassing. Right, we're off. [*She goes.*]

ERNEST [*following*]: I thought he was an Italian, anyway.

[*Cross fade to* NICK.]

[NICK, *lying in bed, has evidently been reading. He has laid down his book on the eiderdown to rest. He now pulls up the eiderdown round him a little and in doing so causes his book to fall off the end of the bed.*]

NICK: Oh no, oh no, oh no . . .

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

[*The room is empty. From off a scream from* KATE. *She rushes in with just a towel round her, pursued by* MALCOLM *now shirtless again and brandishing an aerosol can of shaving soap.*]

KATE: Now, Malcolm, stop it, do you hear, stop it.

MALCOLM: You started it.

KATE: I did not start it.

MALCOLM: You splashed me.

KATE: All right, I'm sorry.

MALCOLM: Are you sorry?

KATE: Yes, I said I'm sorry.

MALCOLM: Very sorry?

KATE: Yes, very sorry. Now, let me get dressed, Malcolm, please.

MALCOLM: All right. Splash me again, you're in trouble.

KATE: I'm getting dressed in the bathroom, I don't trust you.

[*She picks up some clothes and the aerosol can.*]

MALCOLM: Where have you hidden my shoes? [*He looks under the bed.*]

[KATE *sprays his back with the shaving soap. And darts away with a shriek.*]

MALCOLM: Right, Blodge, you're going to get it, Blodge.

KATE [*distant*]: I've locked the door. You can't come in.

MALCOLM: I can wait, Blodge, I can wait. I'll get you. I'll get you.

[*The doorbell rings.*]

Somebody's arrived.

KATE [*distant*]: What?

MALCOLM: Somebody's here. That was the doorbell. [*He has wiped off the soap and has slipped on his shirt.*]

KATE: Oh no, it wasn't.

MALCOLM [*slipping on some other shoes*]: Want a bet? It was the doorbell.

KATE [*distant*]: Really? Well, you answer it then.

MALCOLM: I will.

KATE: I don't believe you, Malcolm Newton.

[MALCOLM *goes off downstairs.*]

[*Off.*] I don't believe you. [*She comes in still with the towel round her, the soap spray in her hand.*] Where are you hiding? Malcolm? Malcolm? I can see you, Malcolm. Malcolm, I don't believe you . . .

[*Voices are heard coming upstairs.*]

Oh, my God.

[*She runs to the door.*]

[*It is too late.*]

[*She looks round for somewhere.*]

[*As a last resort, she pulls back the covers and slides into bed.*]

KATE: Ooh!

[*She pulls out her shoes from the bed, holds them up, then tucks them back under.*]

[TREVOR *enters.*]

MALCOLM [*off*]: Coats just on the bed, Trevor. I'll fix you a drink.

TREVOR: Right, thanks. [*Seeing* KATE.] Ah.

KATE: Hallo, Trevor.

TREVOR: Oh, hallo there.

KATE: Hallo.

TREVOR: Are you ill?

KATE: No.

TREVOR: Ah.

KATE: I'm just getting changed.

TREVOR: Ah. Er – Malcolm said it would be all right to put my coat on the bed. Is that O.K. with you?

KATE: Fine.

TREVOR: Won't make you too hot, will it?

KATE: Uh?

TREVOR: I mean with all the coats on top of you. Could get a bit hot by the middle of the evening.

KATE: Oh no. I'm not staying here. I'm just . . . resting.

TREVOR: Oh, great.

KATE: How are you?

TREVOR: Fine.
KATE: Good. Susannah?
TREVOR: She's all right. I think.
KATE: She downstairs, is she?
TREVOR: Not that I noticed.
KATE: Oh. You didn't come with her then?
TREVOR: No. We were travelling separately.
KATE: Oh. Well . . .
TREVOR: Yes. [*He laughs to himself somewhat bitterly.*]
[MALCOLM *enters.*]
MALCOLM: Are you coming down for this drink, Trevor, or are you . . . [*Seeing* KATE.] Oh.
KATE: Hallo.
MALCOLM: What are you doing?
KATE: Nothing.
MALCOLM: Oh. Right. [*Handing* TREVOR *his drink.*] Here you are then.
TREVOR: Thanks.
MALCOLM: Cheers then.
TREVOR: Cheers.
MALCOLM [*to* KATE]: You all right?
KATE: Fine.
MALCOLM: Well, what do you think of our place then, Trevor? Our new little love-nest. What's the verdict? Not bad, is it? Not bad. Quite nice.
TREVOR: Yes.
MALCOLM: Mind you, we've got a lot to do. Masses. This room for one. I mean, it's not properly furnished or anything. Still, we'll get it together. Give us time. Not bad though, is it?
TREVOR: No.
MALCOLM: And how are you and – er – well, dare I ask – how are you and Susannah these days?
[TREVOR *laughs.*]
Oh, all right. I've said enough. Said enough.
TREVOR: We're still trying to – work something – out. You know.

MALCOLM: Good.
KATE: Good.
MALCOLM: Good.
TREVOR: I don't know how successful we're being but we're trying. You know . . .
MALCOLM: Yes – well . . .
TREVOR: It's a totally draining experience though. Once you get yourself committed to a – commitment – like Susannah and I have committed ourselves to, you get a situation of a totally outgoing – non – egotistical – giving – ness . . . a total submerging, you know.
MALCOLM: Yes, yes.
KATE: Yes.
TREVOR: You feel yourself – being pushed under . . .
MALCOLM: Yes.
TREVOR: As if on top of you were a great . . . a great . . . [*He tails off.*]
KATE: Yes.
MALCOLM: Yes.
KATE: Yes.
[*A long pause.*]
[MALCOLM *and* KATE *wait for* TREVOR.]
TREVOR [*at length*]: Heavy weight. God.
[*A silence.*]
KATE [*very quietly*]: Malcolm, I wonder if you could possibly get my things out of the bathroom.
MALCOLM: Your what?
KATE: My things.
MALCOLM: Your –? Oh, I see. That's what you're up to. Have you got nothing on under there?
KATE [*embarrassed*]: No.
MALCOLM [*laughing*]: Do you hear that, Trevor?
TREVOR: Eh?
MALCOLM: She's got nothing on under there.
TREVOR: No, no.

MALCOLM: Hey hey! Wait there, I'll . . .

[*Doorbell rings.*]

Ah, somebody else. Hang on.

[MALCOLM *darts out.*]

KATE [*calling after him vainly*]: Could you fetch my clothes before you . . . Trevor, I'm going to have to ask you in a minute if you'd mind . . . Trevor.

TREVOR: Sorry, Kath. I was miles away. I'm sorry. Kath, listen.

KATE: Kate, yes.

TREVOR: I was just thinking, what is the point of it all really. You and I. Take you and me. We start out in this world with the innocence of children. We start our lives like little children.

KATE: Well, we are.

TREVOR: Have you ever studied children at close range?

KATE: Oh yes. I like children.

TREVOR: I have. You have a close look at them sometime.

KATE: I have.

TREVOR: Really closely. And then look at yourself. You'll be appalled at what's happened to you, Kath. And this – this is the test. You try and think of three – I'm only asking for three – three good reasons why you shouldn't throw yourself out of that window here and now.

KATE: I haven't got any clothes on.

TREVOR: Three good reasons, eh?

KATE: Yes.

TREVOR: See what I mean?

KATE: Yes, I follow your reasoning.

TREVOR: You do?

KATE: Yes. I don't agree with it but I think I can follow it.

TREVOR: You either don't think things out at all or you're lucky, Kath. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

[MALCOLM *enters with a pile of coats.*]

[*He also has* KATE*'s clothes.*]

MALCOLM: Whole load of people. Mike, Dave, Graham and Anna, Gareth and Gwen, Bob and Terry . . . oh, Trevor.

TREVOR: Mm?

MALCOLM: Now listen, Susannah's arrived.

TREVOR: Oh.

MALCOLM: Now, there's a house rule tonight. No arguments with your own wife. Anybody else's wife but not your own, all right?

TREVOR: I should tell her – not me.

MALCOLM: Now, Trevor, one word you're out.

TREVOR: I'll try, Malcolm, I'll try. [*He goes out.*]

MALCOLM: I must say Susannah seems in good form. I opened the door to her, she burst into tears and ran straight into the bathroom. Oh well, press on . . . Hurry up and come down. They're all arriving.

KATE: I will. Are those my clothes?

MALCOLM: Oh yes – here – [*He throws them to her.*]

KATE: At last. [*She snatches them gratefully.*]

[MALCOLM *opens the door to leave.*]

MALCOLM [*calling*]: John . . . Brian . . . Dave. Don't hang them there. It wasn't designed to take any sort of weight. Bring them up here. Put them on the bed.

KATE: Oh . . . [*she dives under the bedclothes and starts to dress.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK.]

NICK [*in extreme frustration*]: Aaah – aaah – aaaaah!

[*He gets up on his elbows to see if he can see his book.*]

[*In pain.*] Ah!

[NICK *rolls over on to his front. He slithers sideways out of bed and finally lands on the floor on all fours with a clump. He yells again. He begins laboriously to crawl round to the end of the bed to reach his book.*]

[*Getting there.*] Ah-ha. Gotcha.

[*He tries to get back on to the bed. He can't make it. He brings the eiderdown slithering down on top of him.*]

Oh no. Jan. Help. Help.

[*He lies on the floor helplessly.*]

Why me? Why me?

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.* MALCOLM *enters with more coats which he throws on the bed.*]

MALCOLM [*calling behind him*]: Just along the passage there, Joan. It's the blue door.

[*As he turns to go, he passes* SUSANNAH *coming in.*]

SUSANNAH: I didn't realize there were going to be so many people.

MALCOLM: It's a party, my darling, what do you expect?

SUSANNAH: Yes.

[MALCOLM *goes.*]

[*Taking a deep breath.*] I am confident in myself. I have confidence in myself. I am not unattractive. I am attractive. People still find me attractive. I am not afraid of people. People are not frightening. There is nothing to be frightened of.

[*During this,* KATE*'s head has popped up from under the sheets. She gapes at* SUSANNAH *in wonderment.* SUSANNAH *sees her. She jumps very nervously.*]

KATE: Hallo. Sorry. I didn't mean to startle you.

SUSANNAH: I was just doing my – exercises. I do them whenever I'm alone. Or when I feel alone. They help.

KATE: Oh yes.

SUSANNAH: Trevor's here, I suppose?

KATE: Yes, yes.

SUSANNAH: He hasn't said hallo to me, I notice. No doubt he's better things to occupy him.

KATE: Well . . .

SUSANNAH: I see that woman's here.

KATE: Who's that?

SUSANNAH: Whatever her name is. Jan.

KATE: Oh, Jan. Yes. Poor old Nick's in bed. He's ill.

SUSANNAH: Oh. Is he? How lucky for her.

KATE: Excuse me. I must pop down. See things are all right.

SUSANNAH: Kate.

KATE: Yes.

SUSANNAH: Just a moment.

KATE: Yes.

SUSANNAH: Tell me something. Do you and Malcolm still have . . . how are you and Malcolm?

KATE: Oh, very well.

SUSANNAH: Truly?

KATE: Yes.

SUSANNAH: You can be honest, you know.

KATE: Yes. Well. We have a bit of a laugh. You know.

[*Doorbell rings.*]

KATE: Oh, there's the . . .

SUSANNAH: I don't know if you know it but things for Trevor and me have gone totally wrong.

KATE: Yes, I heard a rumour.

SUSANNAH: I'm sure everyone's heard a rumour. We're neither of us very good at –conventional cover-ups. Is it still exciting for you?

KATE: What?

SUSANNAH: God, Trevor used to excite me. I was so excited by that man. Do you know what it feels like to be really excited?

KATE: Yes, yes, I think so.

SUSANNAH: When we weren't actually physically here in the bed . . . you know, making love – I felt empty – utterly incomplete.

KATE: Yes, it is nice sometimes, isn't it . . .

SUSANNAH: And now. Now, it's a desert. We hardly touch, you know.

KATE: Oh.

SUSANNAH: I think I actually revolt him.

KATE: Oh, surely not.

SUSANNAH: I sometimes feel that. Suddenly I've lost all my identity. Some mornings, who am I, I say. Who am I? And I don't know. I terrify myself. [*Leaning towards* KATE *confiden-*

tially.] I saw this girl in the street the other day – about my age – a little bit younger. Do you know, I felt aroused by her. Attracted.

KATE: Oh.

SUSANNAH: Isn't that terrifying?

KATE: Yes.

SUSANNAH: Not that the feeling in itself is terrifying. I don't believe the feeling in itself is wrong but what it means is that all the things I used to think I knew about myself I no longer know.

KATE [*who has been gently backing away*]: Yes, yes.

SUSANNAH: I suppose you're beautifully uncomplicated, Kate.

KATE: Yes, I think so. Look, I must pop down. Do you want to . . .?

SUSANNAH: Could I just lie down for a moment?

KATE: Oh yes, yes, do. Move the coats.

SUSANNAH: Thanks. I'll pluck up courage in a minute. I'm sorry, I'm being absolutely useless.

KATE: No, no, no. Not at all. See you in a minute.

SUSANNAH: Yes.

[KATE *goes.*]

[SUSANNAH *clears a few coats from one side of the bed. Dramatically, she throws herself back on to the pillow. She strikes her head. She discovers the boots in the pillow case. She looks puzzled. She lies back again.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK.]

NICK [*in the same position as before*]: Help . . .

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA's.]

[DELIA *and* ERNEST *return from their meal.*]

ERNEST: Well, that place has certainly gone off.

DELIA: You can say that again. Disastrous meal.

ERNEST: Three times as expensive too.

DELIA: Yes. I noticed you deliberately undertipped.

ERNEST: I didn't deliberately undertip. I just didn't bring enough money with me.

DELIA: That Spaniard looked even more miserable than last year.

ERNEST: Serve him right. Highway robbery.

DELIA: And that asparagus was out of a tin.

ERNEST: That wasn't bad.

DELIA: No, it was quite nice but it was out of a tin.

ERNEST: Oh yes, certainly out of a tin.

DELIA: I've never felt so over-dressed in my life. All those young men, none of them with a tie. And all those girls in slacks.

ERNEST: Well, they didn't bother me.

DELIA: It's all those labels sewn all over their bottoms and places I find so off-putting. I mean, nobody can seriously want to read people's bottoms. I mean, one girl had reams.

ERNEST: I think that's the thing, isn't it?

DELIA: When I was their age, I spent all my time making sure nobody could read my labels. I mean, we would rather have died than show a label.

ERNEST: We used to show the odd label, I think. On the inside of the jacket. Let the other chap see you had a tailor. Ah well, back to worrying about the roof, I suppose.

DELIA: I don't know about you but I'm still feeling distinctly peckish.

ERNEST: Are you? Yes, I am a bit.

DELIA: There's some sardines downstairs.

ERNEST: Sardines. That sounds attractive.

DELIA: On toast?

ERNEST: Rather. Let's go the whole hog if we're going to.

DELIA: Tell you what . . .

ERNEST: Um?

DELIA: Let's be really really wicked . . .

ERNEST: Eh?

DELIA: Let's eat them in bed.

ERNEST: In bed?

DELIA: Sardines on toast in bed, do you remember?

ERNEST: Good lord, yes. You've got a memory. Sardines on toast in bed, yes.

DELIA: I was expecting Trevor . . .

ERNEST: That's right. Are you sure it wasn't baked beans?

DELIA: No, not baked beans. Sardines.

ERNEST: Yes, quite right. Sardines. All right, we'll go one better. I'll go and hot them up while you get into your jim-jams.

DELIA: Oh, all right.

ERNEST: No sooner said . . .

DELIA: What fun.

ERNEST: Off you go.

[DELIA *goes into the bathroom.*]

[ERNEST *takes his pyjamas from under his pillow and goes off the other way.*]

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.*]

[SUSANNAH *still on the bed.*]

[KATE *ushers in* TREVOR.]

KATE: She's in here, Trevor, having a lie down. Here he is, Susannah. Found him for you.

[KATE *goes out.*]

[TREVOR *wanders to the window.*]

[SUSANNAH *doesn't move.*]

TREVOR: Tired?

SUSANNAH: No.

TREVOR: If you're tired, you shouldn't have come.

SUSANNAH: If I listened to you I wouldn't go anywhere at all. Mind you, you'd prefer that, I'm sure. [*Pause.*] You don't have to stay up here with me, you know. I'm very used to being on my own. And I'm sure there's lots of people down there you'd rather be talking to.

TREVOR: I came up to see if you were all right.

SUSANNAH: You came up because Kate told you to come up. You'd never have come near me all evening if you could possibly have avoided it.

TREVOR: Look, don't get worked up. What are you getting worked up about?

SUSANNAH: Because I've every reason to be worked up.

TREVOR: Quieten down.

[*Pause.*]

SUSANNAH: You're a fine one to talk.

TREVOR: What?

SUSANNAH: If people had seen you earlier this evening . . .

TREVOR: Well –

SUSANNAH: Driving here and leaving me to walk.

TREVOR: I didn't think you were coming.

SUSANNAH: You knew I was coming.

TREVOR: I thought you wanted to stay behind.

SUSANNAH: You knew perfectly well I was coming.

TREVOR: Then why did you lock yourself in the bedroom?

SUSANNAH: Because I didn't want you in there.

TREVOR: What? In case I saw you changing? Good gracious. Husband sees his wife changing. I don't know what it is you're hiding but I bet it's fantastic.

SUSANNAH: You really are coarse, aren't you? Coarse and violent.

TREVOR: You're the one who makes me violent. I was a pacifist before I met you.

SUSANNAH: I wish I'd listened to that man.

TREVOR: What man?

SUSANNAH: That man we consulted just before we were married. The one who did the palm readings.

TREVOR: What, him?

SUSANNAH: He told me you were potentially a violent person. He was absolutely right. You've broken all my things. All my things I brought from home. All my china animals.

TREVOR: I told you, I'm sorry. I'll buy you some more.

SUSANNAH: I don't want some more. I wanted those.

TREVOR: I didn't mean to break them.

SUSANNAH: Then why did you throw a chair at them if you didn't mean to break them?

TREVOR: I don't know. I just felt like throwing a chair, that's all. No law against throwing chairs, is there? It was my chair.

SUSANNAH: Potentially violent. That's what he said. That man.

TREVOR: He was an idiot.

SUSANNAH: No, he wasn't. My mother always went to him.

TREVOR: He told me I had a natural mechanical aptitude. I can't even put the plug on the Hoover. [*Lying on the bed.*] Well anyway, the one good thing about this party . . .

SUSANNAH: What?

TREVOR: At least we're both lying on the same bed.

SUSANNAH [*lunging at him with a fist*]: You rotten . . .

TREVOR: Ah, now who's violent?

SUSANNAH [*hailing blows upon him*]: You destroy everything, don't you? Everything. Everything.

TREVOR [*laughing as he covers up from her blows*]: What are you doing now?

SUSANNAH [*furious*]: Oh, I could so easily – oh – oh – oh.

TREVOR: Ow! Now, stop it. Stop it.

[*Eventually he pushes her off and she slips on to the floor.*]

SUSANNAH: Ow. You great bully.

TREVOR: Now, stop it. Before you're sorry.

SUSANNAH [*getting up*]: I'm not sorry. I am not sorry.

[*She snatches up the table lamp.*]

TREVOR: Now, put that down. Put it down. It's not yours.

SUSANNAH: Get away, get away, get away.

[TREVOR *approaches her.*]

[*She lunges at him with the lamp.*]

[*He grabs her wrist. He loses his balance. They both land on the bed, locked in mortal combat. Fighting for serious now, they roll on to the floor clawing and tugging at hair.*]

[MALCOLM *enters.*]

MALCOLM: Right. Who's for Cornish pasties . . . [*Seeing them.*] Oh no. Now, break it up. Break it up. That table lamp won't take that sort of treatment. [*Putting the Cornish pasties on the floor.*] Now, come on. Trevor! Susannah! Come on, break it up. [*He attempts to pull them apart.*]

[KATE *appears in the doorway.*]

KATE: The plaster's coming down. What's happening?

MALCOLM: Come on, give us a hand. Give us a hand here. You pull her. I'll pull him. Pull, woman, pull.

KATE: I am pulling.

[TREVOR *and* SUSANNAH *are separated.*]

[*They stand panting, staring at each other.*]

[KATE *holding* SUSANNAH. MALCOLM *holding* TREVOR.]

MALCOLM: Now, calm down. Do you hear? Calm down, both of you. Calm down. That's it.

[KATE *releases* SUSANNAH.]

Now, both of you, take a deep breath.

[*With renewed energy,* SUSANNAH *suddenly clouts* TREVOR *with the table lamp.*]

KATE: Stop it, stop it. Susannah . . .

MALCOLM: Stop that at once.

TREVOR: Ow.

[SUSANNAH *rushes out.*]

TREVOR: Right – all right. [*Wrenching free from* MALCOLM.] Right.

[TREVOR *chases out after* SUSANNAH.]

[*There are sounds of crashes downstairs.*]

KATE: Malcolm, do something, please.

MALCOLM: Right. I am now personally going to drop him straight off our roof on to his head.

[MALCOLM *goes out.*]

KATE [*anxiously following him to the doorway and watching*]: Oh now, Malcolm, don't you start. You must be the one to keep calm, Malcolm. Don't you start. [*Picking up the Cornish pasties.*] Malcolm . . . Malcolm . . . [*She hops up and down in agitation.*]

[MALCOLM *returns half carrying* TREVOR.]

MALCOLM [*hurling him into the room*]: Right, you get your coat. Do you hear? Get your coat. Then you're out. Straight out, mate. Come along, Kate.

[MALCOLM *goes out.*]

KATE: Right. [*Slipping a Cornish pasty on to the corner of the bed.*] I'll leave you one of these.

[KATE *goes out.*]

[TREVOR *sits on the bed recovering his breath. He feels his head.*]

TREVOR: Oooh.

[JAN *comes in.*]

[*She glances at him briefly.*]

[*She looks for her coat, picking the others off the floor.*]

JAN: I hope you're thoroughly ashamed of yourself. Both of you. [*Pause.*] God, to think I nearly married you. What an escape.

TREVOR [*muttering*]: She started that one. She started that one.

JAN: I hoped that after I left you, you might have learnt to grow up. It appears that you're more retarded than ever. I mean, I realized that as long as I was there to look after you, make all your decisions you could never make, you hadn't a chance.

TREVOR: God, my head.

JAN: When are you going to grow up, Trevor?

[MALCOLM *enters.*]

MALCOLM: Excuse me, please. [*Snatching up coats.*] Gordon's coat. Marge's coat. Mike and Dave's coats. Gwen's coat. [*To* TREVOR.] I told you, out.

[*He goes.*]

JAN: Well?

TREVOR: Just because I have an unfortunate marriage, I'm not necessarily an idiot. I try. I try all the time.

JAN: Like you did with me.

TREVOR: I particularly tried with you. I was always working flat out to make a go of it.

JAN: I don't think you noticed half the time if I was there or not.

TREVOR: I did.

JAN: Which is why I left. That didn't seem to bother you either.

TREVOR: What do you mean? I was annihilated. What are you talking about? I needed you.

JAN: Yes. I realized that from the way you came running after me.

TREVOR: I thought you'd be back.

JAN: No, thank you.

TREVOR: Never mind, eh. You're all right.

JAN: Perfectly.

TREVOR: Safe and secure with Nick.

JAN: That's right.

TREVOR: Some of us aren't so lucky.

[MALCOLM *enters.*]

MALCOLM: Excuse me. John's coat. Ken's coat. Margaret's coat. Dorothy's coat. [*To* TREVOR.] This is your last warning.

[*He goes out.*]

JAN: You see? You can't go anywhere.

TREVOR: I'm a destroyer.

JAN: True.

TREVOR: Susannah said that. I destroy everything. She's right. I even destroyed you.

JAN: No, you didn't.

TREVOR: Destroyed you. So you go out and in desperation you marry the first man you happen to meet.

JAN: That's not very fair to Nick.

TREVOR: No, well . . .

JAN: I happen to love Nick.

TREVOR: Like you loved me.

JAN: No, not like I loved you. Like I love Nick. Quite different. Thank goodness. I can just about cope with Nick. I don't think I could ever have coped with you.

[MALCOLM *enters.*]

MALCOLM: Bob's coat. Terry's coat . . . Anna's coat. Graham's coat. [*Turning to* TREVOR, *livid.*] You've ruined this party. You realize that, don't you?

TREVOR: Have I?

MALCOLM: You and that wife of yours. You've ruined fifty people's evening down there.

TREVOR: Well, I'm sorry.

MALCOLM: What's the point in being sorry now, mate?

JAN: Malcolm, don't.

MALCOLM: Him and his batty bloody wife. Sitting there in the middle of the front room crying her eyes out she is. If I had my way, I'd have you both locked up for good . . . They've all gone home, every one of them . . .

JAN: Malcolm.

MALCOLM: I'm sorry, Jan. Every one of them. I hope you're satisfied.

[MALCOLM *slams out.*]

TREVOR: I might have improved if you'd stayed with me. I mean, with you, Jan, I . . . You see, Susannah I can't get near. She's incapable of giving. She won't give.

JAN: Perhaps you don't deserve anything.

TREVOR: Oh, what does that mean?

JAN: It means that before anyone's prepared to give anything, they want to make sure that the person they're giving it to is not going to hurl it back at your head the first time he chooses to lose his temper. You'll have to learn to treat people properly. There you are. End of lecture. Now I'm going home.

TREVOR: I treated you properly.

JAN: No, you didn't.

TREVOR: Not ever?

JAN: No.

TREVOR: Never at all?

JAN: Not really.

TREVOR: No?

JAN: No.

[*He kisses her.*]

[*She responds.*]

[KATE *enters.*]

KATE: Oh. It's all right, Susannah, I'll bring it down. I'll bring it down to you.

[SUSANNAH *enters.*]

SUSANNAH: That's all right.

[*A swift glance at* TREVOR *and* JAN, *she picks up her coat and puts it on.*]

TREVOR: – er –

JAN: Susannah . . .

[SUSANNAH *goes out.*]

JAN: Oh God.

KATE: Oh dear.

JAN: Look, can you go after her, Trevor, quickly . . . No, silly question. Oh well, I've really done it now. Sorry, Kate. I'll have to leave you with it. I'd better get back to Nick.

KATE: Right.

JAN: Good night all.

KATE: 'night. Malcolm's down there seeing them off.

JAN: OK.

[*She goes.*]

KATE: Oh dear. [*She looks at* TREVOR.] Oh dear. [*She goes to the window.*] Oh dear, oh dear. Susannah's driving. I hope she gets home all right.

TREVOR: I don't know where I'm going to go.

KATE: How do you mean?

TREVOR: I can't go home.

KATE: Can't you?

TREVOR: How can I go home . . . ?

[*A pause.*]

KATE: We've got the little bedroom in the back. It isn't furnished or anything but we've got a camp bed.

TREVOR: You're a real friend, Kath.

KATE: Kate, yes.

TREVOR: Sorry about your party.

KATE: Oh well – get to bed early, won't we? I'll go and make the

bed up for you. Look at this. Malcolm's surprise for me. In there. Malcolm's surprise.

TREVOR: Oh.

KATE: I don't know what it is.

[MALCOLM *enters.*]

MALCOLM: Right, that's it. End of party. All gone. [*Seeing* TREVOR.] Oh. You're still here, are you? All right. Now, I warned you . . .

KATE: Malcolm . . .

MALCOLM: This your coat?

KATE: Malcolm . . .

MALCOLM: Eh?

KATE: I've said he could stay.

MALCOLM: Stay?

KATE: Just for the night.

MALCOLM: Who? Trevor? You're joking. Home.

KATE: He's got nowhere to go, Malcolm. He'll have to stay.

MALCOLM: He's got a home, hasn't he? Let him go to it.

KATE: He can't.

MALCOLM: All I know is he's not staying here . . .

KATE: I'm sorry, Malcolm, he'll have to stay.

MALCOLM: Not under my roof. Not after his behaviour tonight.

KATE: I'm sorry but he is.

MALCOLM: I'm sorry but he isn't.

KATE: Look, there's no point in arguing.

MALCOLM: No. Quite. Out . . .

KATE: No, I'm sorry.

MALCOLM: Yes, I'm sorry too. I'm very sorry. He is not staying in this house and that is final.

KATE: Oh, yes he is and that is also final.

[*Pause.*]

MALCOLM: All right. All right.

KATE: Where are you going?

MALCOLM: I'll tell you this much. If he is staying then I am definitely not staying.

KATE: Now, Malcolm.

MALCOLM: And that, my love, is that. I am not staying if he is staying so take your choice.

[MALCOLM *goes.*]

KATE: Oh.

[*A door slams.*]

Oh.

TREVOR: Sorry.

KATE: Oh.

TREVOR: Where's he gone?

KATE [*snapping*]: I don't know where he's gone, you damn fool.

TREVOR: Oh. Well.

KATE: He'll be back. I'll make up your bed.

TREVOR: Thanks. Er – Kath.

KATE [*shouting*]: Kate. My name is Kate.

TREVOR: Oh. Yes. Sorry.

KATE: Now. Sheets.

TREVOR: Look. I must get things cleared up before I go to bed.

KATE: How do you mean?

TREVOR: Well, with Jan and Nick, you see.

KATE: Jan and Nick?

TREVOR: Well, it was my fault and – word's bound to get back to Nick – and – he'll feel badly – and he might take it out on Jan – I wouldn't want that.

KATE: Who's going to tell Nick?

TREVOR: Well, Susannah for one.

KATE: Oh. Might she?

TREVOR: She might.

KATE: Oh. Are you going round tonight?

TREVOR: I'd better.

KATE: You could phone.

TREVOR: Oh no. Face to face stuff this. Has to be.

KATE: Don't forget your coat. [*She helps him into it.*]

TREVOR: Don't wait up. I'll let myself in.

KATE: Oh yes, you'd better have a key – oh no, we haven't had another one cut yet. There's only Malcolm's.

TREVOR: Oh. Well, I won't be long.

KATE: It's all right, I'll wait up.

TREVOR: You're really great, Kate. Thanks.

KATE: That's all right. That coat's very big on you, isn't it?

TREVOR: I don't think it's mine.

KATE: Oh. Well, it's the only one left. You'd better take that one.

TREVOR: Yes. Right. See you later.

[*He goes.*]

KATE: Bye. [*She sits on the bed looking worried.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[DELIA, *in her dressing gown, sits in front of her mirror and starts to remove her make-up.*]

[ERNEST *enters with two plates.*]

ERNEST: Grub up.

DELIA: Just a minute.

ERNEST: It'll get cold.

DELIA: I've just got to take this off.

ERNEST: You can do that afterwards.

DELIA: I'm not getting into bed with my make-up on, darling. It may look beautiful in the films but they don't have to worry about laundry bills.

ERNEST: Oh well. Spot of bad news, anyway.

DELIA: Bad news?

ERNEST: Sardines were not in evidence. I had to settle for pilchards.

DELIA: Pilchards? Oh . . .

ERNEST: Don't you like pilchards?

DELIA: Well, not as much.

ERNEST: Similar. Both fish, anyway.

DELIA: Yes.

ERNEST: You had them in stock. I assumed you liked them.

DELIA: I don't necessarily like everything I buy. Those were just stores. For an emergency.

ERNEST: Ah, the old siege stores, eh?

DELIA: I bought a little of everything. I think there's even some tinned red cabbage and I certainly don't intend to eat that.

ERNEST: Oh well, I'll wolf the lot then, shall I?

DELIA: No, no, leave me a little.

ERNEST: Right. [*He slides into bed.*] Aaah. Didn't put the blanket on, did we?

DELIA: Nor we did.

ERNEST: Ah. Woof. Down you go. [*He shoves his feet into the bed.*] Ah, this is nice. What better way to end a day? Listening to the rain gushing through our roof . . .

DELIA: It's not raining surely?

ERNEST: Metaphorical. These aren't bad at all. You know, I think I could become a pilchard man in time.

DELIA: I'll phone Susannah tomorrow to see how they're getting on.

ERNEST: Good idea. I think we're in imminent need of a hot water bottle here, you know.

DELIA: Oh yes.

ERNEST: Bearing in mind the normal running temperature of your feet.

DELIA: Not my fault. Most women have cold feet. It's circulation.

ERNEST: I wouldn't know about that. I haven't sampled that many.

DELIA: The girls at school did. Well, not the younger ones. Younger girls have very hot feet. Like little boys. But when we got to the sixth form, we all found we had cold feet. I think it's something to do with – maturing.

ERNEST: Very curious. Chaps I shared a hut with in the army all had overwhelmingly hot feet . . .

DELIA: I can imagine.

ERNEST: Yes, I pronounce these pilchards a success.

DELIA: Jolly good. Right, here I come.

ERNEST: Stand by for cold feet.

DELIA: Darling, you're getting fish on the sheet.
ERNEST: Oh, sorry.
DELIA: Now we're going to reek of fish all night. I don't think this was a terribly bright idea of someone's.
ERNEST: Oh well. You only live once. What the hell.
DELIA: Well, it's on your side. You have to put up with it. [*She eats.*]
Oh yes, they're quite pleasant, aren't they? Not up to sardines but not bad.
ERNEST: They got my vote.
DELIA: At least we're in for a reasonably early night.
ERNEST: Yes.
DELIA: Sunday tomorrow, we can lie in.
ERNEST: Go for a walk later on if you like.
DELIA: That'd be nice.
ERNEST: If unwet.
DELIA: Rather.
ERNEST: Otherwise we'll both be crouching in the rafters with buckets.
DELIA: God forbid.
[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN's. NICK *is still lying on the floor.* JAN *arrives back.*]
JAN: Nick. Nick . . .
NICK: Aaaah.
JAN [*seeing him*]: Darling, what are you doing?
NICK: What do you think I'm doing? I've been lying here for hours.
JAN: Oh, darling. How did you get there?
NICK: I dropped my book.
JAN [*trying to find a way to get him up*]: Well, let me – how do I get you . . . shall I . . .?
NICK: No, no. Don't do that. Let me climb up you.
JAN: Right.
NICK: Can you take the weight?
JAN: Hang on. Right.

NICK: Hup – right – hold steady. Steady . . .
JAN: I'm trying. I'm trying.
NICK: Keep still.
JAN: You are very heavy.
NICK: Right. Nearly there.
JAN: Oh –
NICK: What?
JAN: You're on my foot.
NICK: All right.
JAN: Please get off my foot.
NICK: I will. Wait a minute.
JAN: Oh dear God, my foot.
NICK: Right. Hold on, hold on.
[JAN *loses her balance.*]
[*They both crash on to the bed.*]
[NICK *falling across* JAN *who is trapped underneath him.*]
Aaaaah. Aaaaah. Aaaaah.
JAN: Aaaah.
NICK: Aaaah.
JAN: Oh, that was agony.
NICK: Aaaah.
JAN: Can you get off me, darling?
NICK: I cannot move at all. Ever again.
JAN: Well, try to move. I'm trapped.
NICK: I'm sorry. If I could move I would but I'm physically incapable of moving.
JAN: Can you get off my ribs? You're so heavy.
NICK: I am not heavy. I am the correct weight for a man of my height.
JAN: Well, that is still bloody heavy. [*Easing herself slowly underneath him.*] Hang on, I'll try and . . . oouf. [*She rests.*]
NICK: Did you have a nice evening?
JAN: No.
NICK: Didn't think you would. Serve you right for going.
JAN: Thank you. Here we go again. [*She renews her efforts to*

slide from under him.] Huh. Huh – hoo – hup . . . oh dear God. This is going to take all night. Can't you even roll over?

NICK: Ha ha –

JAN: Well, can you be a gentleman and take your weight on your elbows?

NICK: No. That puts a direct strain on all the muscles all the way . . .

JAN: All right. Sorry. Oh dear. [*She laughs.*] We're going to be like this for ever. People will find us in years to come. They'll all jump to the wrong conclusions, failing to realize what a rare occurrence this is. Us together on the bed.

NICK: There's no need to get unpleasant.

JAN: Sorry.

NICK: I've been working very hard lately.

JAN: Yes, all right, I'm sorry.

NICK: And now thanks to my back, we may have to get someone in for you. Try again.

JAN: Humphh – oh – I'm so weak.

NICK: You're telling me.

JAN: Nick.

NICK: Mmm?

JAN: While I've got your attention . . .

NICK: Mm?

JAN: I want to tell you something.

NICK: I can hardly avoid listening.

JAN: Good. I'm telling you because I want to tell you (a) and (b) I've a feeling if I don't, a certain person will be phoning you up very shortly to tell you herself.

NICK: Who?

JAN: Susannah.

NICK: Susannah?

JAN: Well, very simply – or not very simply – I had a long talk to Trevor.

NICK: Ah-ha . . .

JAN: Which culminated in Trevor kissing me.

NICK: I see.

JAN: And to be perfectly honest, with me kissing Trevor.

NICK: Just kissing him?

JAN: Yes. Nothing else.

NICK: Oh, well. Hope you enjoyed it.

JAN: Yes I did, thank you.

NICK: Good. I hope you don't want me to start jumping about with rage.

JAN: No. Not at all. Not at all. [*She slides out from under him.*] Right. Now let's get you into bed. [*Without a lot of ceremony.*] Come on.

NICK: Careful, careful.

JAN: Come on, it doesn't hurt.

NICK: Don't start taking it out on me just because . . .

JAN: I'm not taking it out on anyone.

NICK: As you say, you only kissed him. If you want me to knock you about, you'll have to wait until I'm better.

JAN: I don't want anything, thank you.

NICK: You only kissed him.

JAN: Yes, quite. I went to bed with all the other men at the party but I only kissed Trevor.

NICK: Oh well, that's all right. I had three or four women in while you were out actually. That explains the back.

JAN [*unamused*]: There you are.

NICK: Thank you. Can I have my book, please?

JAN [*slamming it down*]: There you are.

NICK: Thank you.

JAN: Happy?

NICK: Thank you.

JAN [*pounding the bed rail in fury and frustration*]: Aaarrrggh!

NICK: Did you say something?

JAN: I'm going to wash my hair.

NICK: Wash your hair?

JAN: Yes.

NICK: It's half past twelve.

JAN: So what.

NICK [*mildly amused as she goes out*]: Dear, dear, dear . . .

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

[KATE *wanders in. She sits unhappily.*]

[MALCOLM *returns.*]

MALCOLM: Hallo.

KATE: Oh, Malcolm.

MALCOLM: Got a bit churned up.

KATE: Yes, I know. I understand. [*Pause.*] They left mountains of food.

MALCOLM: Never mind. [*Pause.*] I was sitting in the car, that's all.

KATE: I'm glad you've come in.

MALCOLM: Oh yes. Well. As soon as I saw you'd turfed Trevor out, I came back.

KATE: Oh. Well . . .

MALCOLM: What?

KATE: He's coming back.

MALCOLM: Coming back? Here?

KATE: Yes, he's just gone round to see Jan and Nick.

MALCOLM: Jan and Nick?

KATE: Yes.

MALCOLM: Hasn't he done enough damage?

KATE: Well, he wanted to sort things out.

MALCOLM: And you told him he could come back here?

KATE: Yes.

MALCOLM: Well, how's he going to get in?

KATE: I said I'd wait up.

MALCOLM: You are soft in the head, you know that, don't you?

KATE: Probably.

MALCOLM: We're not going to get much sleep round here tonight then. Are we?

KATE: I don't know.

MALCOLM [*rolling up his sleeves*]: In that case . . .

KATE: What are you doing?

MALCOLM [*hauling out cardboard boxes*]: I'll make a start on this. If you don't come to bed I can't sleep, so I might as well do something useful.

KATE: What is that?

MALCOLM: Surprise. You'll see. I'll just fetch the tool kit. Only take me fifteen minutes. I'll put it together for you.

KATE: Oh lovely . . .

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA's.]

DELIA: I feel as if I'm sleeping on board a herring trawler. This whole room reeks of fish.

ERNEST: We'll get used to it.

DELIA: I doubt it.

ERNEST: Want the light out?

DELIA: In a minute.

ERNEST: Shall I read to you for a bit?

DELIA: If you like. I'll go to sleep as soon as you start. You have been warned.

ERNEST: Oh well.

DELIA: You have a very soporific reading manner.

ERNEST: Probably. I'll read you a bit of this, shall I?

DELIA: What is it?

ERNEST: *Tom Brown's Schooldays.*

DELIA: I thought you'd read that.

ERNEST: Oh yes, rather. Always worth a re-read. Marvellous stuff. Now then. 'Tom was detained in school a few minutes after the rest, and on coming out into the quadrangle, the first thing he saw was a small ring of boys, applauding Williams, who was holding Arthur by the collar. "There, you young sneak," said he, giving Arthur a cuff on the head with his other hand; "what made you say that –" "Hallo!" said Tom, shouldering into the crowd . . .'

DELIA: I can't follow a word of this.

ERNEST: Perfectly clear.

DELIA: Not to me. Who are all these people?

ERNEST: Well, we do have the disadvantage of starting on page

256. But I'm damned if I'm going all the way back to the beginning just so you can go to sleep. Shall I carry on?

DELIA: If you want to.

ERNEST: I'm asking you. I don't mind.

DELIA: Oh yes, carry on for goodness sake. Only not too loud.

ERNEST: '"Hallo!" said Tom, shouldering into the crowd; "you drop that, Williams; you shan't touch him." "Who'll stop me?" said the Slogger, raising his hand again . . .'

[*The doorbell rings.*]

Good heavens.

DELIA: Was that the doorbell?

ERNEST: Sounded like it.

DELIA: It's twenty to one. Have a look and see who it is.

ERNEST: Yes, all right.

DELIA: Look out of the window.

ERNEST: Right.

[*He starts to get out of bed.*]

[*Cross fade to include* NICK *and* JAN's.]

[*As* JAN *comes back into the room, her hair in a towel, the doorbell rings.*]

JAN: What was that?

NICK: Front door.

JAN: Funny.

NICK: Have a look.

JAN [*going to window*]: Right.

ERNEST: Looks suspiciously like Susannah.

DELIA: Oh lord . . .

JAN [*in a low voice*]: I think it's Trevor.

NICK: Oh no. Why me? Why me?

[*As* ERNEST *and* JAN *go out their respective exits to open their front doors, a sight of* MALCOLM *starting to unpack his assemble-it-yourself bedroom surprise. A great clattering and clanking of tools.*]

[KATE *sits on the bed watching.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Lights up on all three areas.

MALCOLM *and* KATE's *room is now strewn with tools from* MALCOLM's *tool box and littered with wrapping paper removed from the easy-to-assemble-it-yourself dressing table which is scattered about in various pieces.*

MALCOLM *has unfurled the plan and is crouching on the floor studying it.*

KATE *sits on the bed watching.*

NICK *is in bed as usual.*

DELIA *is in bed.*

KATE: It's going to be lovely when it's all put together.

MALCOLM: As soon as I've made head or tail of this plan. [*He studies it.*]

[ERNEST *returns to* DELIA.]

ERNEST: She's – er – just gone in the bathroom downstairs.

DELIA: I suppose I'll have to come down.

ERNEST: There's no need to go downstairs – it's a bit parky. I told her to come up here when she's ready. Then you can talk.

DELIA: Does she want to talk to me?

ERNEST: Presumably. I can't think of anyone else she'd want to talk to.

DELIA: No.

ERNEST: She seems in a rather – distraught state. Could be a long session. Shall I make us some cocoa?

DELIA: Yes. I'd better try and make myself reasonably presentable.

[DELIA *goes to the bathroom.*]

[ERNEST *goes back downstairs.*]

[*Lights down on them.*]

[TREVOR *enters with* JAN, *still with a towel round her head.*]

JAN: It's Trevor, darling.

NICK [*without much geniality*]: Good lord.

TREVOR: Hi, Nick.

JAN: Nice coat. Is it new?

TREVOR: Er – yes.

JAN: Smart.

NICK: Is there just the one of you in it, or are there more?

TREVOR: What?

JAN: Let me take it.

TREVOR: Thanks.

NICK: What can we do for you?

JAN: Sit down, Trevor.

TREVOR: Thanks.

NICK: At ten to one in the morning.

TREVOR: Well – [*He looks at* JAN.] Well –

JAN: Would you rather I wasn't here?

TREVOR: Well –

JAN: It's all right, I'll make some tea. Then I've got to dry my hair.

TREVOR: Right. Thanks.

[JAN *goes.*]

[TREVOR *sits brooding.*]

[NICK *waits.*]

MALCOLM: I'm going to need the Phillips.

KATE: The who?

MALCOLM: Phillips screwdriver. It's in the car. I'll get it. Won't be a minute.

[MALCOLM *goes out.*]

[*Lights down in their area.*]

TREVOR: Look, Nick . . .

NICK: Yes?

TREVOR: Something happened tonight you've got to know about.

NICK: Yes?

TREVOR: Jan and I – we met at that party and we . . . and Susannah came . . . and we were together and etcetera etcetera and . . . it was nothing at all . . . nothing to it at all . . . but I wanted you to be the first to know about it.

NICK: Thank you.

TREVOR: You see, I don't know if you've heard but I've been going through this whole thing . . . this whole . . . me and Susannah and well.

NICK: That's O.K., I quite understand.

TREVOR: You do?

NICK: Yes, yes. Of course. See you again soon then.

TREVOR: Yes.

NICK: I'd see you out only I've wrecked my back, you see. I can't get up. Absolute agony.

TREVOR: Yes, yes. Fine. [*He remains seated.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA's.]

[DELIA *is coming out of the bathroom in her dressing gown as* ERNEST *returns.*]

DELIA: Well, where is she?

ERNEST: Still in the downstairs bathroom.

DELIA: What on earth is she up to?

ERNEST: Well, I don't really know. I passed the door just now on my way to the kitchen and I thought I heard voices.

DELIA: Voices?

ERNEST: She appears to be talking to someone. Or to herself.

DELIA: To herself, I hope. Unless she's using our downstairs bathroom for secret assignations.

ERNEST: You never know. She's a very peculiar sort of girl altogether. I hope she isn't going to be much longer. I'd rather like to go to bed.

DELIA: Well, you mount guard down there, darling. And bring her up when she's finished whatever it is she's doing.

ERNEST: Right. It's very chilly down there, you know. The Aga's gone out.

DELIA: Oh lord.

[ERNEST *goes out.*]

[DELIA *gets into bed and reads a magazine.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN'*s.*]

[JAN *enters with two mugs of tea.*]

JAN: Have you finished talking?

NICK: I don't know if he has. I have.

JAN [*giving* NICK *his tea*]: Here. [*Approaching* TREVOR.] Trevor – Trevor . . . he's asleep.

NICK: He's what?

JAN: Ssh.

NICK: What do you mean, ssh? He can't sleep here. Wake him up. Wake up!

[TREVOR *grunts.*]

JAN: Leave him for a minute.

NICK: He really is the limit, isn't he? Why doesn't he go home and sleep? Like anyone else.

JAN: Because Susannah's probably locked him out. Look, I'll just go and dry my hair. When I've done that, I'll wake him and pack him off.

NICK: He really is the limit.

JAN: You don't want me to wake him up now, do you? He'll only start talking to you again.

NICK: All right, all right. Leave him, leave him . . .

JAN: He looks so peaceful.

NICK: Ha ha.

[JAN *goes to the bathroom, taking* TREVOR'*s mug of tea for herself.*]

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE'*s.*]

[MALCOLM *returns.*]

MALCOLM: Here we are. Right. I'm going to take it out on the landing.

KATE: Can't you do it here?

MALCOLM: It's a surprise. Anyway there's more room out there.

KATE: Oh, all right.

MALCOLM [*consulting the plan*]: Now, where do we start? 'Locate panel A which will form the inner side of the drawer unit – figure 1.' Panel A? Ah – yes, right – now . . .

KATE: She's very odd, isn't she, Susannah? A very odd person.

MALCOLM: You're right there . . . Support bar B. Where's that?

KATE: She said something very peculiar to me.

MALCOLM: B? B? B? Don't tell me they haven't given me a B.

KATE: She said she got attracted by other girls in the street.

MALCOLM: Who said that?

KATE: Susannah.

MALCOLM: I didn't know she was like that.

KATE: I don't think she is really.

MALCOLM: Well, fancy that. Ah-ha. Support bar B.

KATE: No, I don't think she's like that. You could tell if she was.

MALCOLM: Well, it's not normal, is it? For a woman? Fancying girls in the street.

KATE: No, but – well –

MALCOLM: You don't feel like that, do you?

KATE: No, but . . .

MALCOLM: I didn't think so.

KATE: No.

MALCOLM: Not you. Mrs Normal, that's you.

KATE: That doesn't sound very exciting, does it?

MALCOLM: Suits me. Locking bar C for the second drawer.

KATE: You don't think I'm too normal, do you?

MALCOLM: How can you be too normal?

KATE: Well . . . you see things, you know. And you think, well – I might be missing out on something.

MALCOLM: How do you mean?

KATE: Well . . .

MALCOLM: You're happy enough, aren't you?

KATE: Yes. I just thought that I might be – I could be a more exciting person. Perhaps.

MALCOLM: You're all right.

KATE: But are you excited at all by me, Malcolm?

MALCOLM: Oh yes. Mad about you . . . Where the hell is locking bar C?

KATE: No. Seriously.

MALCOLM: What are you on about?

KATE: Well, I looked at those magazines of yours.

MALCOLM: Magazines? What magazines?

KATE: The ones you hid under your socks in the drawer.

MALCOLM: Oh. You found those, did you?

KATE: Well, I couldn't help it. I mean, I'm in and out of your sock drawer all day. I mean, I didn't mind . . .

MALCOLM: Somebody gave them to me at work. I didn't even read them.

KATE: I did.

MALCOLM: Oh.

KATE: No, I just think perhaps I could be more exciting. For you. I'd hate you to get bored.

MALCOLM: I'm not bored. I'm just trying to find locking bar C.

KATE: You will tell me if you get bored with me, won't you?

MALCOLM: Yes, sure sure.

KATE: And I promise to tell you.

MALCOLM: What?

KATE: If I get bored with you.

MALCOLM: You don't get bored with me, do you?

KATE: No. No. Not often.

MALCOLM: What, you mean – when we're – in bed? Here?

KATE: Not often . . .

MALCOLM: Well, that's nice.

KATE: Only once or twice.

MALCOLM: Bored?

KATE: No, not bored. You know, it's just I have my mind on other things.

MALCOLM: You mean, other men.

KATE: No. Ordinary things like, shall we have a carpet in the hall or shall we stain the floorboards. That sort of thing. They're all to do with us. In a way.

MALCOLM: You mean to tell me while I'm – giving my all – you're lying there thinking about floorboards?

KATE: Only sometimes.

MALCOLM: Bloody hell. [*He snatches up some of the pieces.*] I'm going in the hall.

KATE: Have I hurt your feelings?

MALCOLM: No. Not at all. I'm just going in the hall.

[MALCOLM *goes out angrily.*]

KATE: I just don't want to get boring.

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[DELIA *in bed,* SUSANNAH *comes in cautiously.*]

SUSANNAH: Hallo.

DELIA: Susannah. Come in, dear, how are you? A late visit.

SUSANNAH: Yes.

DELIA: We were just – going to bed. I think Ernest is making us some cocoa.

SUSANNAH: Oh.

DELIA: We often have cocoa. Sometimes hot milk but usually cocoa.

SUSANNAH: Oh.

[*A pause.*]

DELIA: Now. What's the problem?

SUSANNAH: It's –

DELIA: Mmm?

SUSANNAH: It's just . . .

DELIA: Mmm?

SUSANNAH: What am I going to do, Delia?

DELIA: You're talking about you and Trevor.

SUSANNAH: I've lost his respect.

DELIA: Oh surely not. What makes you think that?

SUSANNAH: When he's there deliberately making love to another woman. Knowing . . .

DELIA: Trevor was?

SUSANNAH: Knowing that I was bound to come in and see them.

DELIA: Another woman?

SUSANNAH: Yes.

DELIA: Who was this?

SUSANNAH: Oh, that woman. Jan . . .

DELIA: Jan? Not *the* Jan?

SUSANNAH: Do you know her?

DELIA: Oh yes, yes.

SUSANNAH: He's brought her here, has he?

DELIA: Oh yes, several times. I mean, not since he's been married to you. This was years and years and years and years ago. I mean, he's never looked at another woman. I mean, not since he's been – busy married to you. If there's one thing his father and I always instilled in him from birth it was loyalty. Loyalty to us. Loyalty to the ones he loves. And especially loyalty to the woman he marries.

SUSANNAH: He despises me.

DELIA: Oh, nonsense.

SUSANNAH: Do you know what it's like to be ignored?

DELIA: Well, yes. As a matter of fact I do. We all do. We all get ignored sooner or later. Ernest ignores me dreadfully. I have to tell him everything three times before he'll lift a finger.

SUSANNAH: Not only mentally.

DELIA: Oh. Oh, I see. [*Patting the bed.*] It's this old trouble, is it?

SUSANNAH: Partly.

DELIA: Oh dear. Dear me. My mother used to say, Delia if S-E-X ever rears its ugly head, close your eyes before you see the rest of it.

[ERNEST *enters with a tray.*]

ERNEST: Cocoa is served.

DELIA: Oh, well done.

ERNEST [*handing* SUSANNAH *a cup*]: Susannah.

SUSANNAH: Thank you.

[ERNEST *gives* DELIA *a cup and sits.*]

ERNEST: Well, now, what are we all chatting about?

DELIA: Nothing. Nothing that need concern you, dear.

ERNEST: Oh. On to – those things, are we? Good health.

SUSANNAH: We were talking about physical relationships.

ERNEST: Oh, were you? Jolly good.

SUSANNAH: Delia was saying it's probably the cause of all our problems.

ERNEST: Really?

DELIA: I said – something like that, yes.

ERNEST: Did we have any problems? I didn't think we had. I don't think I had any problems. Probably have a problem now but I don't remember having any then. [*He laughs.*]

DELIA: Darling, I wonder if you'd like to slip in to the bathroom for a moment.

ERNEST: Bathroom?

DELIA: Just for a moment.

ERNEST: Oh, all right.

SUSANNAH: You don't have to go.

DELIA: Yes, I think he does have to. I'd prefer it.

ERNEST: Right. I'll – be in the bathroom then.

[ERNEST *goes into the bathroom.*]

DELIA: I'm sorry. I find it rather difficult to talk about this sort of thing in front of Ernest.

SUSANNAH: Isn't that – awkward for you?

DELIA: No, no. We just don't talk about it. We never have talked about it. I think there's far too much talking about it anyway. I mean, I think people would be far happier if they were just left to get on with it.

SUSANNAH: But if they have difficulties – hang-ups . . .

DELIA: Well, if you have difficulties surely you go to your doctor. Talk to him. They love talking about it. Mine does. In fact, he's got an almost macabre interest in it. For a man of his age.

SUSANNAH: I mean, mental problems. That affects how you approach everything. I mean, I am physically afraid of Trevor.

He's a very violent, passionate person really and I – I don't think I can be.

DELIA: Oh dear. That is difficult. Of course, Ernest never was. I spent most of my time trying to get him to notice me at all.

SUSANNAH: Can you tell me about it?

DELIA: About what?

SUSANNAH: About – that side of it. With you and your husband.

DELIA: Don't forget your cocoa.

SUSANNAH: No thank you, I –

DELIA: Don't you want it?

SUSANNAH: No, I –

DELIA: Something else then?

SUSANNAH: No, it's –

DELIA: Tea? Have a cup of tea. I'll make you a cup of tea.

SUSANNAH: No, it's –

DELIA: Nothing like tea. [*Rising.*] Yes, that is a problem for you, isn't it. I don't know quite what we do about that. Wait there, I won't be a moment.

[DELIA *goes out.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN*'s.*]

[NICK *in bed.* TREVOR *still asleep.*]

[JAN *comes in from the bathroom to fetch her comb.*]

NICK: He's starting to snore.

JAN: I'll wake him in a minute.

NICK: Please do . . .

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.*]

[KATE *still on the bed.*]

[MALCOLM *enters for another section.*]

MALCOLM: Why don't you get into bed?

KATE: I'm all right.

MALCOLM [*rummaging about in his tool box*]: Well, I'll try and be less boring for you in future.

KATE: I didn't mean that.

MALCOLM: Tomorrow night I'll come to bed in a funny hat.

KATE: Oh crikey. What have I started?

MALCOLM: I don't know. And this damn plan's no use, either. [*Very irritably.*] One-inch sevens, where are they?

KATE: One-inch what?

MALCOLM: Never mind. Nobody ever told me before I was boring. And I've been with a few, I can tell you.

KATE: Yes, I know, you've told me.

MALCOLM: They weren't bored. None of them were bored. No woman who's been in bed with me has ever complained of boredom. That was the last thing on their mind. If I were you, I'd start worrying that there wasn't something wrong with you.

KATE: That's what I am worrying about.

MALCOLM: You'd do well to. You'd do right to. [*Marching to the door and turning for a parting shot.*] You ask Doreen Foster if she was bored with me. She'll tell you . . .

[*He goes out.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[SUSANNAH *stands alone.*]

SUSANNAH: I am confident in myself. I have confidence in myself. I am not unattractive. I am attractive. People still find me attractive.

[*During this,* ERNEST *emerges from the bathroom. Seeing her, he attempts to tiptoe across to fetch his book from the bedside table without disturbing her.*]

SUSANNAH: I am not afraid of people. People are not frightening. There is noth – [*She sees* ERNEST.]

ERNEST [*embarrassed*]: Just – fetching a book. Carry on. [*He goes to the door.*] *Tom Brown's Schooldays.* Fearfully good. Read it, have you? No? Carry on.

[*He goes.*]

[SUSANNAH *wanders slowly out the other way.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN*'s.*]

[TREVOR *suddenly wakes up.*]

TREVOR: No, the point is, Nick . . .

NICK: Huh what?

TREVOR: What? Sorry, did I . . .
NICK: You just startled me.
TREVOR: Have I been asleep?
NICK: Yes.
TREVOR: Sorry.
NICK: Quite all right.
TREVOR: I don't think I was asleep, I was . . . Nick, Nick, you're a friend, aren't you? I mean, I know there's Jan and all that – she was mine, now she's yours and you're the luckiest man in the world but – I think I know you. And I trust you.
NICK: Thank you.
TREVOR: And I'd like to know more about you.
NICK: Ah.
TREVOR: And frankly, I'd like you to know more about me. [*Bounding up.*] I know, I've got a great idea. Why don't we take a walk? Now? Why not? Come for a walk?
NICK: I can't come for a walk, Trevor. I've told you. I have a splintered spine. I'm lying here in agony.
TREVOR: Oh. Tell me about Jan, then.
NICK: Jan?
TREVOR: Jan as she is now. I mean, when you met her, when she came to you from me was she badly destroyed?
NICK: No.
TREVOR: Had I in fact destroyed her?
NICK: No, I think she'd forgotten about you completely by the time she met me.
TREVOR: But you see what I'm driving at, though?
NICK: No.
TREVOR: If I destroyed Jan, maybe I'm destroying Susannah in the same way. Maybe I'm just a destroyer of people.
NICK: Now that is possible.
TREVOR: You think that is possible.
NICK: No. Look, Trevor, I don't want to belittle your powers of destruction in any way but it does appear to me that whereas Jan is a perfectly ordinary, normal – reasonably normal –

woman – fairly well-balanced – that, in my experience, nothing short of a nuclear charge is likely to destroy – Susannah from our brief acquaintance was born a wreck, is even now a wreck and will probably die one.
TREVOR [*taking this in*]: You think it's an inherent part of Susannah's character?
NICK: Yes.
TREVOR: Not me at all.
NICK: No. I don't think you've helped but . . .
TREVOR: That's an interesting theory.
NICK: Just a thought. I mean, you must have known what you were taking on when you married Susannah.
TREVOR: She seemed to understand.
NICK: Ah well, yes. Most women look as if they understand. Then you find half of them haven't a bloody clue what you're talking about.
TREVOR: Is that what you find with Jan?
NICK: I find the best of Jan is that she's amusing occasionally, very efficient when she wants to be – pretty bright, and the worst is that she can be totally self-obsessed, erratic, bad-tempered and unreliable. But taking it all in all, I could have done worse.
TREVOR: I found her a very gentle person.
NICK: Really? Well . . .
TREVOR: Odd, isn't it? How one person to someone can be something different to someone else? [*He lies on his back on the bed beside* NICK. *Reflectively.*] I remember one day . . .
NICK: What the hell are you doing?
TREVOR: I remember this one magic day when Jan and I, we went off together . . .
NICK: Look, Trevor, you've got your shoes all over the eiderdown.
TREVOR [*casually shifting his feet*]: Sorry. We went to the seaside. It was one of those perfect days . . .
NICK: Look, Trevor –

[JAN *enters brushing her hair.*]

JAN: Oh, that looks cosy. What are you up to?

NICK: Look, Jan, will you tell him to get his feet off my eider-down?

JAN: Trevor! Shoes off, please.

NICK: Not just his shoes off. Get off altogether. What's he doing lying on my bed anyway?

JAN: He's not doing any harm.

NICK: He's doing considerable harm. This is my bed. I don't happen to want people sprawling all over it.

TREVOR [*getting up*]: Sorry. Sorry, I didn't realize.

NICK: What nobody in this house seems to realize or appreciate is that I am in considerable physical discomfort. In fact, a great deal of pain. And it is not helped when people sprawl all over the damn bed.

JAN: Come on, Trevor. Come and help me wash up.

TREVOR: Right. Sorry, Nick mate. Sorry.

JAN: We'll leave him to it.

NICK: And will somebody remember to remind me that I have to phone Arthur Hewitson tomorrow morning at home.

JAN: All right, all right.

[JAN *and* TREVOR *go out.*]

NICK [*yelling after them*]: And don't you two start anything in there. Do you hear me? Do you – aaaah. [*He lies back.*]

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.*]

[KATE *lying on the bed, wincing at the sound of heavy hammering in the hall.*]

[*A clatter.*]

MALCOLM [*off*]: Oh damn and blast this thing.

KATE: Malcolm.

MALCOLM: Damn and blast it.

KATE: Malcolm, why don't you come to bed? Leave it till the morning, love.

[MALCOLM *marches in clutching two pieces of splintered wood.*]

MALCOLM: Look at that. Snapped in half. It was cut half an inch too big. I tried to get it in place and what happens, it snaps in half. Useless. Useless. I'm writing a letter to this lot, I can tell you.

KATE: You're very tired . . . it's nearly three o'clock.

MALCOLM: I am not tired.

KATE: Leave it for now.

MALCOLM: Oh no, I'm going to finish it.

KATE: Well, can I help at all?

MALCOLM: No, you cannot. This is a surprise for you. Now go on, get into bed. And go to sleep.

[*He stamps out.*]

[KATE *sadly gets into bed. As if by reflex and without really noticing what she's doing, she removes a hair brush, three make-up jars and a couple of hairsprays. She lies down. The banging starts again in the hall with renewed fury.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[SUSANNAH *and* DELIA *enter.*]

[SUSANNAH *with a cup of tea,* DELIA *with a slice of cake on a sideplate.*]

DELIA [*chatting cheerfully as they come in*]: . . . no, we had elastic on ours. We had terrible problems if they got too tight round here . . . oh, he's still in the bathroom. Good. Now, we're going to have to put you somewhere, aren't we? And we haven't really got an awful lot of choice. I think you're going to have to share with me if you can bear that. Ernest can go in the spare room. He won't mind at all.

SUSANNAH: Are you sure . . .

DELIA: No trouble. Now, you're positive you're not hungry?

SUSANNAH: No.

DELIA: This time of night, I get ravenous. [*She takes a bite of cake.*] Now remember, three simple rules. Feed him properly. Make sure he's clean clothes in the morning. And most important of all, don't tell him anything you don't have to. A little bit of mystery never did anyone any harm. You'll have

him eating out of your hand – this is delicious for a shop cake – now, we must find you a nightie. You'll have to excuse the smell of pilchards when you first get into bed. You'll find it wears off after a little. [*Holding up a nightdress.*] Now, how about this?

SUSANNAH: Thank you.

DELIA: It's a bit old . . . now, what else?

[ERNEST *comes out of the bathroom.*]

ERNEST: Right. That's it. I don't care what you're talking about, I'm not sitting in that bathroom a moment longer. I have now finished *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, there is nothing else in there to read and I'm going to bed.

DELIA: Yes, we've decided to give you the spare room.

ERNEST: The what?

DELIA: The spare room. Trevor's old one. You'll be sleeping in there.

ERNEST: What, the one with the damp patch, you mean? Not on your life.

DELIA: Now don't be silly, it hasn't rained for days. Susannah's staying the night and she's sleeping with me in here.

ERNEST: In here?

DELIA: Yes.

ERNEST: In my bed.

DELIA: Just for the night. I'll come and help you make up the bed in there. Oh, and you'll probably need a bottle. You deal with the bottle. The bathroom's just through there, Susannah. Use anything you find.

[SUSANNAH *goes out.*]

[DELIA *goes out.*]

ERNEST [*following*]: I don't think I've ever spent a night like this in my life.

[*As he goes, cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN's.]

[TREVOR *comes in with a teatowel to fetch* NICK's *airty cup.*]

[JAN *appears in the doorway.*]

[TREVOR *indicates* NICK.]

JAN [*sotto*]: Is he asleep?

TREVOR [*sotto*]: Yes.

JAN: Good. He's been absolutely foul all day.

TREVOR: Has he?

JAN: He can't bear it if he's in bed. Absolutely loathes it. He's so bad-tempered you would not believe it. I've got to put up with this for days.

TREVOR: Oh.

JAN: Imagine that all day long. Count yourself lucky you've only got Susannah. She can't be worse than him at the moment.

NICK: I am not asleep. I heard that.

JAN: Good.

NICK: Is he going home now?

JAN: No, he's sleeping here.

NICK: Who said so?

JAN: I did. Want to argue? He's sleeping on the sofa. Come on, Trevor.

TREVOR: Oh. Can I ring Kate first? She's waiting up for me, you see.

JAN: Oh, they'll have gone to bed by now.

TREVOR: No, she said she'd wait up. I'll just give her a quick ring.

JAN: If you like. I'll get the number, I've got it somewhere.

NICK: Make sure he pays for the call.

JAN: Ignore him. [*Heading to the door.*] I'm sure they'll have gone to bed, you know.

TREVOR [*following her out*]: I'd feel better if I phoned

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

[*Banging from the hall.*]

MALCOLM [*off*]: Get in, you bastard, get in, will you? [*More banging.*] Get in . . . [*More banging and a final crash.*]

[MALCOLM *staggers in, bleary and dishevelled.*]

KATE: Have you done it?

MALCOLM: Give me a hand in with it, will you?

—

KATE [*jumping out of bed and following him off*]: Oh, right, I'm dying to see it.

[MALCOLM *and* KATE *carry on the dressing table.*]

[*It is a lop-sided mess. They set it down.*]

[KATE *steps back.*]

Oh. Yes . . . yes . . .

MALCOLM: Well, it's – not quite right but . . .

KATE: It's very nice. I like the drawers. [*She pulls one out. It is stuck.*]

MALCOLM: Hang on, hang on, don't force it. [*He pulls at the drawer without effect. He tugs at it. He wrestles with it and finally delivers it a mighty blow with the flat of his hand. The drawer opens.*] I'll ease them a little in the morning.

KATE: It's very handsome.

MALCOLM: Not bad.

KATE: I'm just a bit worried things might roll off the end.

MALCOLM: Roll off the end?

KATE: With it being a bit on the slant.

MALCOLM: Well, it's got to be finished off. It's got to be sanded down yet.

KATE: Oh, I see. Well. Well done.

MALCOLM: Most of their stuff didn't make sense. I had to make half this up as I went along.

KATE: That's not right, is it? Are you coming to bed now?

MALCOLM [*squinting at his masterpiece*]: Yes, yes. Just a sec.

KATE: It's very late.

MALCOLM: You hop in. I'll join you.

KATE [*getting into bed*]: Don't be long.

MALCOLM: No. All I need to do, you see, is to sand down the feet at this end a bit. It's only a matter of a – of a little bit. [*He lifts the thing on to its side.*] Just a moment.

KATE: What are you doing now?

MALCOLM: Won't be a moment.

[*The phone rings.*]

Who the hell can that be?

[KATE *answers the phone.*]

[*Lights up on* NICK *and* JAN*'s to reveal* TREVOR *at the other end.*]

KATE: Hallo?

TREVOR: Hallo, Kate?

KATE: Yes.

TREVOR: It's Trevor.

KATE: Oh hallo, Trevor. [*To* MALCOLM, *sotto, covering the receiver.*] It's Trevor. [*Into phone.*] Where are you, Trevor?

TREVOR: Look, I hope it's all right, I'm staying over with Nick and Jan here.

KATE: Oh, I see. I have made the bed up.

TREVOR: Yes well, thanks all the same, Kate. So just to say don't wait up.

KATE: No, right, I won't. I won't. Thank you for phoning, Trevor.

TREVOR: Yes, well. Good night then, Kate.

KATE: Good night, Trevor.

[TREVOR *rings off and goes out.*]

[*Replacing the receiver*] He's not coming back after all.

MALCOLM: Good. Now then, let's have a look at this.

[*He takes out a selection of sandpapers from his tool box and sifts through them.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[DELIA *enters, followed by* ERNEST.]

[*She takes his pillow from the bed and hands it to him.*]

DELIA: Now, you'll be perfectly comfy in there. I don't know what you're complaining about.

ERNEST: I shall probably finish up with marsh fever.

DELIA: Nonsense.

ERNEST: On your head be it. That's all I can say . . .

[ERNEST *goes out.*]

[*Simultaneously* SUSANNAH *comes in from the bedroom in her nightdress.*]

DELIA: Oh, that suits you.

SUSANNAH: Thank you.

DELIA: Much nicer than on me. Do you mind sleeping that side?

SUSANNAH: No, no.

DELIA: We tend to lie in a little on Sundays so don't feel you have to get up. Actually, Ernest usually makes a cup of tea for me so maybe we'll be lucky. Right, everything you want?

SUSANNAH [*getting into bed*]: Fine.

DELIA [*doing likewise*]: Now, if I do happen to dig you with my elbows – Ernest often complains I do that – just push me out of the way. Don't worry, you won't wake me.

SUSANNAH: Right.

DELIA: Lights out, then.

[*They switch off.*]

Sleep tight.

SUSANNAH: Good night.

DELIA: Sweet dreams.

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN's.]

[JAN *enters ready for bed.*]

JAN: Well, that's Trevor settled. It makes quite a nice bed, that sofa.

NICK: Oh good. Now perhaps you can wrench your attention round to me.

JAN: Glass of water. [*She hands it to him.*]

NICK: What for?

JAN: Two of these. [*She hands him two tablets.*]

NICK: They are absolutely . . .

JAN: Come on. Come on, please. I want to get to bed.

NICK: Oh.

[*He takes the pills.*]

[JAN *gets into bed.*]

Are we sleeping with the light on?

JAN: Just for a second. I want to think.

NICK: Can't you think in the dark? I mean, I thought I was supposed to get rest. This place has been like a major trunk road.

JAN: In a minute.

NICK [*after a slight pause*]: It beats me what you ever saw in that man.

JAN: Trevor?

NICK: Yes. I mean, it doesn't say much for me. I mean, if he was your first choice that makes me your second choice.

JAN: I like a contrast. Shut up, I'm thinking.

NICK: Was he . . .

JAN: Mm?

NICK: Was he – you know. Good?

JAN: Good?

NICK: In bed.

JAN: Why do men always want to know that? I mean, how am I possibly expected to answer that?

NICK: Truthfully.

JAN: If I say yes, he was marvellous, you'll sulk, won't you? Whereas if I say no, awful, you'll just lie there looking smug all night.

NICK: Not at all.

JAN [*after a pause*]: Well, I'll say this. He thinks he's awfully good.

[NICK *laughs.*]

That satisfy you?

NICK: Thank you. Thank you.

JAN: Oh, look at him. Just look at him. Why didn't I keep my mouth shut.

[JAN *switches off the light.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA's.]

[DELIA *and* SUSANNAH *in bed asleep.*]

[SUSANNAH *is making weird moaning noises.*]

[*She starts to flail about.*]

[DELIA *wakes up. She looks alarmed.*]

[SUSANNAH's *wails increase in volume.*]

[*She begins to claw and clutch at* DELIA.]

[DELIA *fends her off.*]

DELIA: Oh lord. Oh lord. Susannah. Susannah.

[DELIA *switches on the light.*]

SUSANNAH [*sitting bolt upright awake*]: Wah – wah – . . .

DELIA: It's all right, dear. You're all right. Just a nasty dream.

[ERNEST *comes in.*]

ERNEST: Anything wrong? I heard shouting.

DELIA: Susannah had a little dream. That's all, dear. Nothing serious.

ERNEST: Oh. Did she? Did she? For your information, there is steam rising off my top blanket in there. Thought you might like to know. Goodnight.

[ERNEST *goes out.*]

DELIA: Better now, dear?

SUSANNAH [*who has lain down again half asleep already*]: Mmm.

DELIA: Goodnight.

[DELIA *switches off the light again.*]

[*A slight pause.* SUSANNAH *starts again.*]

SUSANNAH: No – no – no . . . no – no – no . . . . . no – no – please – no – no . . .

DELIA: Oh heavens . . .

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE*'s.*]

[KATE *is invisible under the sheets.*]

[MALCOLM *is on the floor and has fallen asleep in the midst of sandpapering.*]

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN*'s.*]

NICK [*restless, unable to get to sleep*]: Oooh – ow . . . [*Softly.*] Jan? Jan? Are you asleep? Jan? . . . ooh – ow. [*Loudly.*] Aaah.

JAN [*waking up*]: What?

NICK: Sorry. Did I wake you? It's just agony.

JAN: Well, try and sleep, darling.

NICK: Impossible, I'm afraid.

JAN: Well, do try . . .

[JAN *turns over.*]

[NICK *lies, moaning to himself softly.*]

[*Cross fade to* ERNEST *and* DELIA*'s.*]

[SUSANNAH *is now quiet.*]

[DELIA *sleeps sedately.*]

[SUSANNAH *suddenly sits bolt upright, her eyes wide open.*]

SUSANNAH: Oooooaaaah! Trevor . . .

DELIA [*awake in a flash*]: What? What?

SUSANNAH [*fumbling her way out of bed*]: I must phone Trevor.

DELIA: Not now, dear. It's only quarter to seven.

SUSANNAH: Please, please, I want to phone Trevor.

DELIA: Well, there's a phone here. Don't go out there, you'll wake Ernest. And if you wake Ernest before he's ready, he gets very tetchy. Here we are.

SUSANNAH: I'll just phone home. [*She dials.*]

DELIA: It's far too early to telephone anyone. Far too early . . .

SUSANNAH: It's ringing.

DELIA: And Trevor hates being woken up early. I could never get him to school on time. He's worse than Ernest.

SUSANNAH: There's no reply.

DELIA: He'll be dead to the world. Try again later on. Now go back to sleep . . .

SUSANNAH: No, no, he would have heard. I know he would have heard. I had this terrible dream . . . I'll see if he's still at Malcolm's.

DELIA: No. Now you really mustn't. It's very naughty of you. Phoning people up at this time of the morning. I absolutely forbid it.

SUSANNAH: But I'm worried to death about him. Don't you see? Don't you care?

DELIA [*quietening her*]: Yes, yes, all right, all right.

SUSANNAH [*scrabbling for her address book in her bag*]: Malcolm and Kate . . .

DELIA: You're going to be dreadfully unpopular . . .

SUSANNAH [*dialling*]: I'll ask Kate if she knows where he went. He may still be there.

DELIA: I hope you don't carry on like this at home. You can never hope to keep a husband if you keep bobbing up and down like this all night.

[*Lights up on* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

[*The phone rings.*]

[MALCOLM *remains asleep.*]

[KATE's *head emerges.*]

KATE: Ooooo – aaah – oh . . . [*Answering.*] Ho. Hoo hiss.

SUSANNAH: Kate?

KATE: Hes.

SUSANNAH: It's Susannah.

KATE: Oh. Ho.

SUSANNAH: I hope I haven't woken you.

KATE: Ho. Ho.

SUSANNAH: Is Trevor there?

KATE: No . . . no, he's not. He went to Jan's. Night night. [*She hangs up and slumps back.*]

[*Lights down on* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

SUSANNAH [*thunderstruck*]: He's at Jan's.

DELIA: What?

SUSANNAH [*beginning to crumple*]: I knew it. I knew he would be. He's at Jan's.

DELIA: Now, Susannah.

SUSANNAH: I dreamt he was at Jan's.

DELIA: Now come along, pull yourself together.

SUSANNAH: He's gone back to Jan. I knew he'd go back to Jan.

[*She flings herself on the bed weeping hysterically.*]

DELIA: Now, Susannah. Susannah. I shall smack your face. Susannah.

[ERNEST *enters angrily.*]

ERNEST: Look, what the blazes are you two playing at? Banging and thumping and wailing. It's like sleeping next door to a girls' dormitory.

DELIA: Ernest dear . . .

ERNEST: It's too bad, you know. Too bad. I just this minute got off to sleep against considerable odds.

DELIA: Ernest, we have a crisis.

ERNEST: I know we have a crisis. And if I don't get my sleep, there's going to be a bigger one.

DELIA: Ernest, please. Quietly, darling. Quietly. Please . . .

ERNEST: What?

DELIA: You're going to have to do something. Will you do something, please? Then we can all get some sleep.

ERNEST: Anything.

DELIA: Right. Will you pick up that phone, please. And ring Jan whatever-her-name-is and ask to speak to Trevor. And then you can put him on to me.

ERNEST: Why should I want to ring Jan?

DELIA: Because that apparently is where Trevor is.

ERNEST: At this time of the morning?

DELIA: Especially at this time of the morning.

ERNEST: Oh, no. You don't mean to say . . .

DELIA: Apparently.

ERNEST: Oh, no. Well, I warn you, I'm not in any mood for pleasantries. Give me the number then.

DELIA: Susannah.

SUSANNAH: Mm?

DELIA: What is Jan's number? [*Holding up address book.*] Will it be in here?

SUSANNAH [*nodding mutely*]: Mmm.

DELIA: Where do I find it? What's her husband's surname?

SUSANNAH: Davies.

DELIA: Davies. [*Handing book to* ERNEST.] Look up Davies, dear, under D.

ERNEST [*searching*]: Davies? Davies? Davies? Nick and Jan Davies. Those the ones?

DELIA: That's them.

ERNEST: 26 – um – um – 74 – [*dialling*] 2 – 6 –

DELIA: Ask to speak to Trevor.
ERNEST: I shall.
[*Lights up on* NICK *and* JAN's.]
[*The phone rings.*]
NICK [*waking up and trying to sit up*]: Aaah. [*He lies back.*]
JAN [*asleep*]: Phone's ringing.
NICK: Well, answer it, darling. Will you come round and answer it. I can't reach.
JAN [*stumbling out of bed*]: Oh no.
NICK: Oh my God, it's probably America. Lights on.
JAN: What?
NICK: Lights on.
JAN: Right. [*She does so.*]
NICK: Notebook, quick. Pen and notebook. Come along, darling. Quickly please, they'll hang up.
JAN: Pen and notebook.
NICK: Jan please, get a move on.
JAN: I am getting a move on.
[*She answers the phone.*]
Hallo? 26 . . .
ERNEST: Hallo. Is that Jan?
JAN: Yes, just a moment, please. I'll give you my husband.
ERNEST: I don't want your husband, young lady. I want to speak to my son.
JAN: Your son?
ERNEST: I know he's there. Come along.
JAN: Oh I'm sorry. I thought you were America. Just a second . . .
[*To* NICK.] It's not America. It's your father.
NICK: My father? Good lord. [*Taking the receiver.*] Hallo there, Dad.
ERNEST: Hallo, who's that?
NICK: It's Nick, Dad. How are you? When did you get back?
ERNEST: Back?
NICK: I thought you were in Rome.
ERNEST: Rome?

NICK: Who is this?
ERNEST: That's not Trevor.
DELIA: Who are you talking to?
ERNEST: Haven't the foggiest. Some fellow who thinks I'm in Rome.
NICK: Look, did you say Trevor?
ERNEST: Yes. Trevor. I'm talking to Trevor. We seem to have a crossed line . . .
DELIA: Oh, give that to me.
ERNEST: Bloody G.P.O. Absolutely the last straw.
DELIA [*ultra-charming*]: Hallo, who am I speaking to?
NICK: Madam, you are speaking to a man with a bad back in considerable pain. More to the point, who are you?
DEALIA: I'm so sorry to disturb you. This is Trevor's mother speaking.
NICK: You want to speak to Trevor, do you?
DELIA: If it's not too much trouble. Thank you so much.
NICK [*handing receiver to* JAN]: Trevor's mother. It runs in the family.
JAN: Delia?
DELIA [*to* ERNEST]: There, that's that sorted out.
JAN: Hallo, Delia. It's Jan. Do you want a word with Trevor?
DELIA: Yes, is he with you, Jan?
JAN: Yes, he's sleeping on the sofa. I'll get him. [JAN *goes out.*]
DELIA: Thank you, Jan. She is a nice girl. Her husband sounds a very grumpy thing.
ERNEST: I'm not surprised.
DELIA: Now then. She's obviously with her husband, Susannah, so there's nothing at all for you to worry about. She's just fetching Trevor. He's sleeping on their sofa apparently.
[TREVOR *blunders in.*]
[*He has been sleeping in his shirt, pants and socks.*]
NICK: Could you not use the phone in there?
TREVOR: Sorry to disturb you.

JAN [*entering as she speaks*]: No, Trevor, I said you can take it in here, Trevor.

TREVOR [*answering phone*]: Hallo.

JAN: Trev – [*apologetically to* NICK]. Sorry.

TREVOR: Hallo.

DELIA: Trevor?

TREVOR: Hallo, Mum.

DELIA: I have Susannah here, Trevor. She wants to talk to you.

TREVOR: Oh. Right.

DELIA [*holding out phone*]: Susannah.

SUSANNAH: Thank you. Hallo – Trevor?

DELIA: Ernest. [*She waves him away.*]

[ERNEST *stamps back into his room.*]

TREVOR: Hallo, Suse.

SUSANNAH: I thought I'd ring you.

TREVOR: Yes.

SUSANNAH: To say. I'm sorry. About yesterday evening . . .

TREVOR: No. It was me. I'm sorry.

SUSANNAH: Well.

TREVOR: Yes, well.

SUSANNAH: Yes. Trevor, I think we ought to try again.

DELIA [*softly*]: Aaaah.

TREVOR: Yes. Yes. O.K.

SUSANNAH: Are you alone?

TREVOR: Not really.

SUSANNAH: Is she with you?

TREVOR: Yes. Yes.

SUSANNAH: Are you still keen on her?

TREVOR: No. No.

NICK: Is this going on for long?

TREVOR: Nick's here too, Suse. He's in bed. [*To* NICK.] Could you say hallo to Susannah to prove you're here?

NICK: I'm not saying hallo to anyone at this time of the morning.

TREVOR: Thanks. Did you hear that, Susannah?

SUSANNAH: Yes.

TREVOR: Well. I'm sleeping on the sofa.

SUSANNAH: Oh.

TREVOR: Where are you sleeping?

SUSANNAH: With your mother.

TREVOR: Oh.

SUSANNAH: Look, I could be home in ten minutes. I've got the car.

TREVOR: Well. O.K. So could I.

SUSANNAH: Shall we do that?

TREVOR: Sure. Fine.

SUSANNAH: O.K. See you then.

TREVOR: Yes. Sure. Bye.

SUSANNAH: Bye-bye.

TREVOR: Bye.

[*They both hang up.*]

DELIA: Well, everything settled?

SUSANNAH [*hurrying to the bathroom*]: I'm going to get dressed. Excuse me.

DELIA: Dressed?

TREVOR [*to* NICK]: Thanks a lot. Thanks a lot.

NICK: Want to phone anyone else while you're here?

TREVOR: No, no. That's fine, thanks. I'll be off home then. I'll just get dressed. Thanks, Jan.

JAN: All right, Trevor.

[TREVOR *goes out.*]

NICK: I'm going to get my firm to sue that man. He's set me back about a month.

JAN: Try not to be quite so unpleasant. [*She kisses him.*]

NICK: Ow.

JAN: Sorry, sorry. Back to sleep now. [*She gets into bed.*]

[SUSANNAH *returns from the bathroom struggling into her clothes.*]

SUSANNAH: Trevor says he's going home. So I'm going home too. Thank you for everything.

DELIA: Quite all right. Would you like a hairbrush before you go?

SUSANNAH: Hairbrush? Oh, all right.

DELIA: You ought to do a little something with yourself. For Trevor's sake.

SUSANNAH: All right.

[*She sits and does her hair.*]

[*Back at* NICK *and* JAN's, TREVOR *comes in.*]

TREVOR: I say. I say . . .

NICK: Oh no . . .

TREVOR: I'm off.

JAN: All right, Trevor. Bye-bye.

TREVOR: I say . . .

JAN: Yes.

TREVOR: I wonder if I could make a quick phone call?

JAN: Phone call?

TREVOR: Would you mind? I can't get the one in there to work.

JAN: No, you have to switch it through.

TREVOR: Switch it through?

JAN: Never mind. Use this one.

TREVOR: Are you sure?

NICK [*screaming*]: Look, take the phone! Take it!

TREVOR: Thanks. Just a quick one.

JAN: I'll put the light on.

TREVOR: No, it's all right. I can see. I can see.

[TREVOR *goes to the phone table.*]

[*He fumbles about. A clatter.*]

NICK: Aaaah! Aaaah!

TREVOR: Sorry.

JAN: What –?

[*She switches on the light.*]

[TREVOR *has knocked* NICK's *glass of water on to the bed.*]

NICK: You bloody fool.

TREVOR: Sorry, sorry, sorry.

JAN [*getting out of bed and going out*]: All right, all right. Hold on, hold on.

TREVOR: Sorry. [*He dials.*] I should get up and pull the sheet over this way a bit if I were you.

NICK [*yelling*]: I can't get up! For the last time, I can't get up! You idiot.

TREVOR: Sorry.

[*The phone rings in* DELIA's *bedroom.*]

DELIA [*answering*]: Hallo.

TREVOR: Hullo, Mum. It's Trevor again.

DELIA: Trevor. Oh – you want Susannah. She's just gone. Hold on, I'll see if I can catch her . . . [*Running to the door and shouting.*] Susannah! Susannah!

SUSANNAH [*very distant*]: Yes.

DELIA: Telephone. [DELIA *hurries back to the phone.*] She is just coming, Trevor. You just caught her.

[JAN *enters and starts to mop up* NICK, *slipping off his pyjama jacket and pulling the sheet sideways from under him so that he no longer lies on the damp patch.*]

[*Meanwhile at* DELIA's, ERNEST *enters hurriedly.*]

ERNEST: All right, all right, I'm coming. Who is it?

DELIA: No, darling, not for you. For Susannah.

ERNEST: Oh my God.

[SUSANNAH *bursts past* ERNEST.]

SUSANNAH: Excuse me.

DELIA: Trevor again for you, dear.

SUSANNAH [*taking the phone*]: Hallo, Trevor. I was just leaving.

TREVOR: Look, Suse, I was just thinking. I think I'd better just clear things up first.

SUSANNAH: How do you mean?

TREVOR: Well, I was thinking – Malcolm and Kate. I mean, we ruined their party last night.

SUSANNAH: Yes, I know.

TREVOR: Well. They're good friends. I don't want them to

think – well – that I'm not sorry. I think I have to go round and see them.

SUSANNAH: It's a bit early, isn't it?

TREVOR: Oh no, Malcolm's always up at the crack of dawn. He won't mind, don't worry. Anyway. So could you meet me there? Then we could drive home.

SUSANNAH: All right. Malcolm and Kate's.

TREVOR: O.K. See you then.

SUSANNAH: Right. Bye.

[*They hang up.*]

Thank you. Good-bye. Good-bye, Ernest.

ERNEST: Good-bye.

[SUSANNAH *rushes out.*]

[ERNEST *sits on the bed.*]

TREVOR: Well. See you then.

JAN: Yes.

TREVOR: Bye, Nick. Bye.

[TREVOR *goes out.*]

JAN: Right. You comfortable now?

[NICK *utters a low moan.*]

[*Fade out on* NICK *and* JAN.]

ERNEST: I'm sorry. I am firmly of the opinion that that girl is completely potty. Not only potty but dangerously potty.

DELIA: No, she's not really. She's quite sweet. Very, very, very dim – but quite sweet-natured.

ERNEST: Am I to be allowed back into my own bed?

DELIA: Yes, it's all yours.

ERNEST: You haven't got any more people dropping in?

DELIA: Not as far as I know.

[*They get into bed.*]

ERNEST: Well, once I'm in, I'm not getting out again.

DELIA: Not if you don't want to.

ERNEST: And I'll tell you something else. If you want your morning tea . . .

DELIA: Yes?

ERNEST: You're going to have to whistle for it.

[*Cross fade to* NICK *and* JAN's.]

[NICK *moans.*]

JAN: What is it?

NICK [*feverishly*]: Jan – promise me. Don't let him back in here again. Please don't let him back in here again. Never let that man back in here again.

JAN [*concerned*]: All right, darling, all right. I won't . . . [*She strokes his brow.*]

NICK: Please, promise me.

JAN [*soothingly*]: Yes, yes.

[*Cross fade to* MALCOLM *and* KATE's.]

[KATE *under the bedclothes.*]

[MALCOLM *still asleep on the floor.*]

[*The front door bell rings.*]

[*It rings again.*]

KATE: Mmmmm . . .

MALCOLM [*wakening*]: Uh. Oooh . . .

KATE: Malcolm.

MALCOLM: Oooh.

KATE [*emerging*]: Malcolm? What are you doing?

MALCOLM: I must have fallen asleep.

KATE: Was that a bell?

MALCOLM: Was it?

[*Doorbell rings.*]

KATE: Front door.

MALCOLM: All right, I'll go . . . [*He tries to get up.*] Har . . . I've got cramp. Cramp – cramp – cramp.

KATE: Right. Don't worry . . . [*She slips out of bed still in her dressing gown.*] I'll go. Walk around a bit.

MALCOLM: Walk around a bit.

[KATE *goes downstairs.*]

[MALCOLM *manages to stand.*]

[*His head lists over to one side.*]

[*He seems unable to straighten it.*]

[The arm on which he has slept hangs uselessly. One of his legs seems reluctant to support him.]

[KATE *returns cautiously.*]

KATE: Malcolm.

MALCOLM: Uh?

KATE: Malcolm, it's Trevor.

MALCOLM: Who?

KATE: Trevor.

MALCOLM: Trevor.

[TREVOR *enters.*]

TREVOR: Hallo, Malcolm mate. Oh, you're dressed. I'm glad I didn't get you up.

MALCOLM [*bemused*]: What are you doing here?

TREVOR: Malcolm – Kate, look. Look –

MALCOLM: What is he doing here?

TREVOR: I've come to say sorry.

MALCOLM: What are you doing here?

TREVOR: I realize that last night . . . unforgivable. I . . . sorry. Sue and I, we're very, well, you know –

MALCOLM: Ah.

KATE: Thank you, Trevor.

TREVOR: So.

MALCOLM: Yes. Cheerio then.

TREVOR: Yes.

[*A pause.*]

KATE [*moving to the door*]: Well . . .

TREVOR: – er – do you think I could just hang on for a couple of seconds? I arranged to meet Susannah here, you see.

MALCOLM: Here?

TREVOR: Yes.

MALCOLM: Ah.

KATE: Malcolm, would you like a bath?

MALCOLM: Bath?

KATE: It'll loosen you up. You look very tense.

MALCOLM: All right. Yes. All right.

KATE: I'll run it for you.

MALCOLM: No. I'll do it. I'll do it. You keep an eye on him.

KATE: All right.

[MALCOLM *limps lopsidedly out.*]

Well . . .

TREVOR: We're really genuinely sorry, Kate. We're both going to try to . . .

KATE: Yes . . .

TREVOR: If we possibly can.

KATE: Yes.

[*An awkward pause.*]

Look what Malcolm made last night. [*She indicates the masterpiece.*]

TREVOR: Ah yes.

KATE: Out of a kit. He had a bit of trouble with it. It's got to be sanded yet.

TREVOR: Yes.

KATE: You can see it's a bit down at one end.

TREVOR: Ah yes.

KATE: And the drawers are a bit stiff. But he's going to ease those.

[*They survey it.*]

TREVOR: You could maybe just – get it more even if you did this with it . . . like this.

[*He takes the top and tries to bend it to one side. The top comes away in his hand. Unsupported, the entire thing drops to pieces.*]

Ah.

KATE [*appalled*]: Oh no. Oh no.

MALCOLM [*off*]: What's going on?

KATE: Nothing, dear, nothing. Have your bath. Oh Trevor, what have you done?

TREVOR: Sorry.

[*The doorbell rings.*]

I could maybe get it together again for you. It doesn't look as if . . .

KATE: No, don't touch it, Trevor. Don't touch it at all. I'll just tell him it – suddenly collapsed. Wait there.

[*She goes.*]

[TREVOR *examines the wreckage.*]

[KATE *returns with* SUSANNAH.]

Here she is.

SUSANNAH [*shyly*]: Hallo.

TREVOR: Hallo.

KATE [*aware of being in the way*]: I'll just see if Malcolm's managing.

[KATE *goes.*]

TREVOR: Look, Suse . . . this may not work but . . . I'm going to try, you know. I'm really going to try.

SUSANNAH: Well. I'm going to try. That's all we can do really.

TREVOR: You see, I think if we could just –

SUSANNAH: Communicate –

TREVOR: Yes –

SUSANNAH: Yes. [*She sits on the bed.*]

TREVOR [*sitting next to her*]: Well, we're on the bed again.

SUSANNAH [*embarrassed*]: Yes. It's a start.

TREVOR: Yes. I'll try not to rush you, Suse. I think I really rushed you.

SUSANNAH: Well. Maybe a bit.

TREVOR: My fault.

SUSANNAH: No, my fault.

[*He strokes her hair awkwardly.*]

[*She clings to him.*]

TREVOR: You cold? You're shivering.

SUSANNAH: A little bit. Tired, I think . . .

TREVOR [*drawing the blanket round her*]: Well, I think we both are. Been a busy night.

SUSANNAH: Yes. [*She kicks off her shoes and tucks up by him.*] We shouldn't do this.

TREVOR: Just for a second. He's having a bath.

SUSANNAH [*content*]: Mmm. This is nice. [*She slides her feet down under the covers.*] Ow.

TREVOR: What?

SUSANNAH: Something in the bed. [*She produces a saucepan.*] What's this doing in here?

TREVOR: I don't know.

SUSANNAH: They have all sorts of things in their bed. I found boots in the pillowcase.

TREVOR [*knowingly*]: Ah well. People get up to strange things, you know. Some people . . .

SUSANNAH: Yes.

[TREVOR *cuddles up to her.*]

[*She holds his head in her arms.*]

SUSANNAH: I've been thinking. We must do something about our house. I think that's important. I want to start trying to make it more of a home. I – haven't been very good at that. I mean, somewhere nice . . . then you'll want to come home all the more, won't you? And I'll try and cook. I mean, really cook . . . and make sure you have some clean clothes in the morning and . . . well. You know what I mean, don't you? Trevor? Trevor . . .?

[TREVOR *is asleep.*]

[*Alone*] Oh . . . I am confident in myself. I have confidence in myself. I am not unattractive. I am attractive. People still find me attractive . . .

[*Lights fade slowly during this.*]

CURTAIN