

AS FARCE AS YOU CAN

Lickety-split comedy
on roller skates



CENARTH FOX

As Farce As You Can

A comedy by Cenarth Fox

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Playwright of

It'll Be All Wrong on the Night, Agatha Crispie and The Real Sherlock Holmes

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Published by FOX PLAYS

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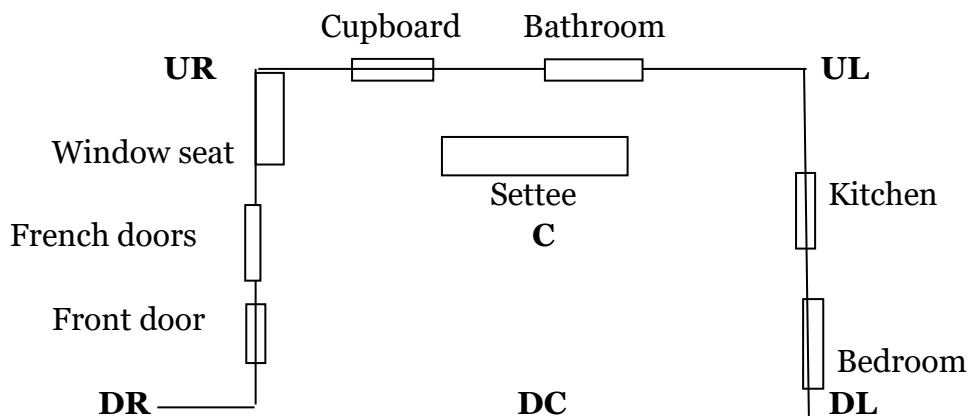
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Synopsis

Tom Goodie is an all-round nice guy, an accountant in the Tax Office. His live-in girlfriend, Lola, is an ambitious lawyer working for a high-flying legal firm. Tom wants to start a family but not so Lola. Tom's wealthy great aunt Wilhelmina, (GAW) wants the family name to continue. There's an incentive there to breed. Lola goes to work. Tom calls in sick. It's a lie. Then things happen. Their gorgeous neighbour arrives wearing a smile and little else. His best friend arrives as Santa. Lola returns unexpectedly. A criminal escaping from the Mob bursts in and confusion runs rampant. But when Great Aunt Wilhelmina turns up dressed as a nun, farcical doesn't even begin to cover it. In time it appears not everyone is who they claim to be and when a Constable Bobby and an Inspector Noddy arrive, the play is in danger of being cancelled. And all this happened because Tom told a porkie.

Setting

Only one set which is the living room of Tom and Lola's apartment. It's tastefully furnished and decorated without being ostentatious. The diagram below is a suggested set only and groups may wish to design their own. The area behind the settee could be raised giving the floor two levels. The settee C needs to be high or low enough for kneeling people to look over and hide behind. Upstage there are two doors leading to a cupboard and bathroom. On the P side there is a swing door to the kitchen and a standard door to the bedroom. On the OP side there is a window and window seat UR with French doors to the garden.



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Characters

Tom – about 30, average bloke, accountant for government department

Lola – about 30, ambitious, high-flying lawyer, domineering, Tom's intended

Ditzi – young, gorgeous woman, Tom's upstairs neighbour

Justin – about 30, Tom's long-time "friend", ruthless property developer

Kevin - middle-aged, failed criminal

***Constable Bobbie** – middle-aged uniformed police officer

***Inspector Noddy** - middle-aged, plainclothes police officer

***Monster** – ruthless criminal

Great Aunt Wilhelmina - Tom's ancient and only living relative

* Same actor

Act One, Scene 1

(Curtain rises on interior of TOM and LOLA's flat. It has classy furniture without being super expensive. The action begins offstage in the kitchen)

LOLA *(Shouting)* Not now! I'm late already. *(Louder)* And I haven't had my coffee!

TOM *(Arguing)* But we need to talk. *(She enters, he follows)* Your biological clock is ticking so loud I can hear it from here.

(LOLA has burst out of kitchen dressed smartly for work with half-eaten toast in her mouth and fancy satchel and handbag in hands. She has fashionable jacket half on and TOM follows wearing daggy pyjamas and is trying to help her get dressed. She stops about C to let him finish jacket helping)

LOLA *(Finishes eating toast)* I've told you a hundred times, if I'm pregnant they won't give me any big cases and far, far worse, they won't make me a partner.

TOM That's discrimination. Sue them.

LOLA *(She's constantly sarcastic)* Oh, what a great career move. Meet the bitch who sues her boss.

TOM But if you're pregnant our money worries are over. Great Aunt Wilhelmina will leave me megabucks if I continue the family line.

LOLA And if the firm offer me a partnership, I'll make ginormous bucks and be able to gloat at dinner partners as the new partner.

TOM I can take paternal leave. And plenty of women juggle career and family.

LOLA *(Sarcastic)* In your government job world maybe, but not where the real money's made. *(Disgusted)* And look at you; still in your K-Mart jim-jams.

TOM Only because you once said me and silk pyjamas were beyond a makeover.

LOLA *(Ordering him)* Get dressed.

TOM I'm having a sickie.

LOLA I rest my case. In the real world, there's no such thing as a sickie. *(She heads to front door)* I'm late already.

TOM *(Calling)* Let's talk tonight.

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LOLA *(Calling back)* I've got Pilates, Tai Kwando, Astrology and her Multivitamin worship.

TOM *(Calling)* After all those?

LOLA *(Stops at door)* And have you contacted the cops about the break-in?

TOM They said someone would call today which is another reason why I have to stay home.

LOLA *(Shaking head, exiting)* Grow up. *(Slams door)*

TOM *(Finds phone by settee, practises coughing, hits number, uses croaky voice)* I'm not well. I'm feeling terrible. *(Phone is answered)* Oh hello. Is that reception? *(Pause)* This is Tom Goodie. *(Pause. "Who" asks receptionist. More emphatic)* Tom Goodie. *(The person still doesn't know who he is)* From Accounts. *(Pause)* Yes. Look will you please tell my department I'm unwell and won't be in today? *(Pause)* That's right, thank you. *(Ends call. Sudden change to happiness)* Yes! A day off. *(Flops on settee)* There's nothing like a good bludge.

FX *Doorbell rings*

TOM Bugger! *(Groaning, moves to open door, sarcastically mimics LOLA)* Thomas, I forgot my damn keys and case notes. *(TOM opens door and is struck dumb by DITZI in her interesting pyjamas with satchel)*

DITZI Good morning.

TOM Good morning.

DITZI I'm so sorry to trouble you but I've locked myself out.

TOM Oh. *(He's tongue-tied)* Ah ...

DITZI I'm your upstairs neighbour.

TOM Of course. I recognized ... your face.

DITZI I'm in a bit of a spot and I don't want to travel far wearing this outfit and ...

TOM Oh course, of course, please, *(Gestures)* do come in. *(She moves into the room. He closes the door)*

DITZI Thank you, thank you so much. *(She's relieved)* You're my knight in shining armour. Have I disturbed you?

TOM No, no, well perhaps my blood pressure. *(Pathetic smile. Pause)* So, you've locked yourself out?

DITZI My flat mate often says I'm a bimbo and now I've proved it.

TOM Nonsense. I'm sure your IQ matches your extraordinary beauty.

DITZI Oh thank you. Not many men mention my QI *(sic)*.

TOM Well now, how can we make the breast of this? *(Grimaces)* Best of this.

DITZI I don't suppose you'd have a spare robe I could borrow?

TOM *(Moving to Bedroom)* Of course, I'll be right back. *(At door)* Just talk amongst yourselves. *(Pathetic grin as he exits. She looks around. He returns carrying classy female gown)* Please, slip this on.

DITZI *(Being helped)* Oh it's beautiful. Is it your wife's? She has great taste.

TOM *(Admiring)* It suits you. You look fabulous.

DITZI Are you sure?

TOM That you look fabulous?

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DITZI That your wife won't mind?
TOM She's my girlfriend and I think she'd mind more if you *weren't* wearing it. Now, how can I help?

DITZI My flat mate left for work and forgot her (*Indicates*) satchel. I ran out but missed her and then the door slammed leaving me with just the clothes I'm wearing.

TOM Well it could have been worse. I might not have been home.

DITZI You're right and boy, am I lucky?
TOM Me too.

DITZI I normally sleep naked so I would've rung your bell with just this satchel. (*She laughs*)

TOM (*He laughs*) That would definitely have rung my bell.

DITZI Anyway my flat mate won't be home till six.

TOM (*Looking at watch*) Darn, that's only about 10 hours away.

DITZI I'll be ever so grateful if you can help me.

TOM (*Producing his phone*) No problem. We can call and have her come back or maybe have her send the key by cab.

DITZI How clever you are. Why didn't I think of that?
TOM (*His hope is her flat mate's phone is NOT working*) Let's hope her phone is switched on. What's the number?

DITZI (*Suddenly concerned*) Oh no! We can't contact her.

TOM (*Suddenly concerned*) Why? What's happened?

DITZI My flat mate's on a field trip all day and out of range.

TOM (*Fake regret*) Really?
DITZI (*Nodding*) Yes, all day.

TOM Right, let's try and think of something else.

DITZI I don't suppose I could stay here 'till she comes home?
TOM (*So glad it's her suggestion*) Of course, why didn't I think of that?

DITZI I could do some cleaning or ironing or walk your dog.
TOM We haven't got a dog and even if we did, I think in that outfit you might upset the other dogs, not to mention their owners.

DITZI (*Looks around and points to window seat*) I could sit over there and read some magazines. You'll never notice me.

TOM You could but never noticing you is probably not an option.

DITZI (*Stressed*) And I'm stopping you from going to work. (*Hands to face, is distressed*) Oh, god, I'm such a waste of space.

TOM No, come on, please don't cry. Come and sit down. (*They sit on settee*)

DITZI Some people say I'm an airhead ... and it's true. (*More distress*)
(*TOM goes to put an arm around her. He hesitates then shapes to pat her knee but stops*)

TOM Come on, don't cry. You're definitely none of those things and of course you can stay here. (*She stops crying. He is mock serious, warning her*) But only forever. (*He smiles*)

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DITZI *(She suddenly hugs TOM who wants to join in but his arms are wide apart)* Oh thank you, thank you. *(Breaks the hug and holds out hand)* And my name's Ditzi.

TOM *(They shake hands)* Hello Ditzi, I'm Tom.

DITZI However can I thank you, Tom?

TOM There's no need. I'm happy to help. *(Pause)* Now, have you had breakfast?

DITZI No, I don't eat much. I'm watching my figure.

TOM *(Staring at her)* So am I. *(Pause)* I mean I'm

DITZI I don't want to be any trouble.

TOM It's no trouble, I'd be delighted to cook you. *(Correction)* Cook *for* you.

DITZI But what about your job? Don't you have to go to work?

TOM Oh I'm the boss of a huge government department. I work my own hours. *(He heads towards kitchen)* You just make yourself comfortable and I'll be right back. *(He enters kitchen)*

FX *Doorbell rings*
(TOM makes an immediate and panicky re-entrance)

TOM I'll get that.

DITZI Maybe someone else is locked out of their flat.

LOLA *(Offstage, calling)* Thomas, I forgot my phone and keys, and it's all your fault.

TOM *(Super worried)* That's not someone else. That's my fiancée.

DITZI *(Stands, happy to help)* Oh, I'll let her in.

TOM *(TOM panics and runs to her)* No! *(Settles a little)* Please, I can do that.

DITZI But you're making breakfast. Let me do something to help.

TOM *(Panic continues)* Ah, you might be a surprise. No, you *will* be a surprise.

LOLA *(Getting annoyed)* Thomas!

DITZI But I greet people for a living?

TOM You do?

DITZI I work at a gentlemen's club.

TOM My girlfriend's not a gentleman.

DITZI *(Smiles)* I wear a special costume; much less than I'm wearing now.

TOM You wear less? *(Pause)* W W W W Where is this club?

FX *Doorbell rings again*

DITZI I'll get the door. You go and make three cups of coffee.

TOM *(Abrupt)* No. *(Softer)* I mean my fiancée's extremely shy. She doesn't react well to strangers.

DITZI But I'm your neighbour—and a female.

TOM So you are. *(Thinking on his feet. Takes her satchel and puts it beside settee. Guiding her to kitchen)* Look, why don't you answer the coffee and I'll make the door? *(sic)*

DITZI If you think so.

TOM I do, I do.
(She enters kitchen, he to front door looking back)

DITZI *(At kitchen door)* But I'm not very good in the kitchen.

TOM I'm sure you'll manage. And take your time.

DITZI Okay.

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TOM *(At front door, almost begging)* And please stay in the kitchen till I call you.
(He begs, she finger waves and exits)

FX *Angry door knocking*

TOM *(Opens door but stands in the way)* Lola! *(Her bag and satchel are in her car boot)*

LOLA What kept you?

TOM Why are you here?

LOLA I just told you. Now get out of my way. *(She pushes past him)*

TOM *(He runs to stop her)* How can I help you to leave?

LOLA *(She stops to criticize him)* And why are you *still* in those pathetic pyjamas? *(He continues to block her)* Get out of my way.

TOM *(Puts on dying routine)* I can't.

LOLA Can't? Just step aside.

TOM I'm sick. I'm staying here to work on her assets.

LOLA What? *Her* assets?

TOM *My* assets. Mine, mine.

LOLA *(Pushing past him)* You haven't got any. And I'm dying for a coffee.
(She heads to kitchen. He races past her and stands in front of her)

TOM No.

LOLA No? What's the matter with you? *(Suspicious, slower)* What's happened?

TOM Nothing. *(Pause, softer)* Yet.

LOLA Anyone'd think you're hiding a half-naked woman in the kitchen.

TOM She's definitely not hiding.

LOLA *(Not listening)* Good. *(Departs for kitchen)* Because I need coffee.
(He makes strange cry which stops her just as she reaches the kitchen door)

TOM Ahhhh ... *(She turns and stares at him)*

LOLA *(Demanding)* What is the matter with you?

TOM It's... it's your lipstick.

LOLA *(Immediate change, she's upset, worried)* What about my lipstick?

TOM It's very nice but ... it's smudged.

LOLA Smudged? *(Upset. She is always perfectly presented. Exiting to bathroom)* It's never smudged. *(She exits to bathroom)*

TOM *(Calling)* Take your time, babe.

DITZI *(DITZI enters from kitchen)* How do you like your steak?

TOM *(Panics)* Steak? *(Ushering her back into kitchen)* Please, coffee and toast are fine.
(LOLA enters. TOM turns back to her framing himself in doorway)

LOLA There's nothing wrong with my lipstick.

TOM *(He approaches her)* Well, let me be the first to mess it up.

LOLA *(She recoils)* Are you on drugs? *(She fumes)* What a start to my day.

TOM Ditto.

LOLA *(Sits)* I need caffeine.

TOM But you can't stay. I'll give you my germs.

LOLA All right, *(Stands)* I'll get it myself.

TOM No, no, I'll get it. You sit down. *(Almost begs)* Please.
(She looks at him, shakes her head then sits. He starts to exit to kitchen)

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FX *Doorbell*
(TOM freezes when doorbell sounds)

LOLA What is going on?

TOM Far too much. *(Starts to move)* I'll see who it is.

LOLA *(Standing, hand up in STOP sign)* No, I'll go. *(He stops. She points accusingly at him)*
There's something fishy in here.

TOM *(Sotto voce)* Steak yes, fish no.

LOLA *(As she walks to door)* Just get my coffee.
(DITZI appears and TOM rushes to usher her back inside kitchen. He follows her into kitchen. LOLA opens door and KEVIN bursts in with full rucksack and pointing handgun)

KEVIN Don't scream, lady. Scream and you're dead.
(He closes door and she backs into room)

LOLA *(Terrified)* Don't shoot. Please, please, I'm too young to die and besides, this is a new outfit.

KEVIN *(Looking around)* I'm desperate, I need to low lie. *(sic)*

LOLA *(Confused)* Low lie? Surely you mean lie low.

KEVIN *(Anger rising)* Look, lady, mess me around and I shoot.

LOLA *(Back to being worried)* Okay, I'm sorry, but please don't shoot me. No-one at work has seen my new outfit. *(Twirls)* What do you think? Can you tell it's lookalike Chanel?

KEVIN *(Looking around)* I'm in serious trouble, lady. I've broken the most heinous law.

LOLA No problem, I'm a lawyer. *(Produces card)* Here's my card. *(He takes it)*

KEVIN You don't understand. There's one law you can never, ever break.

LOLA Oh, you are so right.

KEVIN *(Surprised)* You know the most heinous law?

LOLA Of course; it's a lawyer working pro bono.

KEVIN What?

LOLA If I ran the Law Society, any lawyer working pro bono would be disbarred.

KEVIN You don't understand. I ripped off the Mob.

LOLA *(Realises)* Whoa, now that is a no-no.

KEVIN Tell me about it.

LOLA *(Extends hand)* I'll have m'card back. *(He hands it over)*

KEVIN *(Indicates)* Inside this bag is 200 big ones in washed cash plus the key to a coke full of safe.

LOLA You mean a safe full of coke.

KEVIN *(Furious and confused)* You know about it? Who told you? *(Threatens her)* Tell me!

LOLA *(Panics, thinks he'll shoot)* Wait, wait, I know nothing. I mean, I have no comment.

KEVIN *(He settles a tad)* Good answer. *(Advises her)* Always go no comment.

LOLA But why are you here, and why this place?

KEVIN I was told I could low lie at 13 Langdon.

LOLA But this is 31 Langdon.

KEVIN *(Shocked)* 31? Are you sure?

LOLA Have you got back-to-front-itis?

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KEVIN (*Angry, waves gun*) Hey, don't push me, lady.
LOLA (*Trying to pacify him*) Okay, relax, take it easy. So, what's your back story?
KEVIN My what?
LOLA You can't just barge in without a reason. We need to know your back story. Tell me about your character.
KEVIN (*Fuming*) My character?
LOLA Yes, your childhood; was your father a train spotter? Did your mother feed you sprouts? Were you forced to watch *Sesame Street*?
KEVIN What are you on about? This is a farce. We're all two-dimensional.
LOLA (*Realises*) Of course, you're right. Oh, and I'm the stereotypical bitch from Hell.
KEVIN So who else is here?
LOLA Just my fiancée.
KEVIN A man?
LOLA (*Offended*) How dare you.
KEVIN Listen lady, today men have husbands and women have wives, some have both. You've gotta times with the move. (*sic*)
ROMONA You mean move with the times.
KEVIN That too. Now, where can I hide?
LOLA That depends.
KEVIN (*Impatient*) Come on, where?
LOLA How long are you staying?
KEVIN (*Really angry*) Just tell me where?
LOLA (*Pointing behind/beside settee*) For short-term rental, down there.
KEVIN (*Moving to settee*) That's better. Now lose the guy.
LOLA Actually I have been thinking about dumping him.
KEVIN (*Curious*) Oh? How? Shoot, stab or strangle?
LOLA (*That throws her*) What?
KEVIN I only charge a reasonable fee for someone knocking.
LOLA You mean for knocking someone.
KEVIN Just don't tell him I'm here. (*Threatens*) If you grass, I shoot. Understand?
LOLA Me or him?
KEVIN (*Tosses rucksack behind settee and crouches*) What?
LOLA Will you shoot me or him?
KEVIN What difference does it make?
LOLA Quite a lot actually. He's older and I've just bought these shoes and ...
TOM (*Offstage*) Coffee time.
(*KEVIN bobs down and hides just as TOM enters with coffee on tray*)
LOLA (*Short*) Wait. I've changed my mind.
TOM (*Pleased*) Oh, you're leaving. (*Puts tray on small table*)
LOLA No, *you* are.
TOM (*Disappointed and confused*) Me?
LOLA Yes, my mother's coming and I need to clean the apartment.

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TOM *(Despairing)* Oh not your mother. *(Begging)* Please, you promised.

LOLA *(Pointing)* Just get in the bedroom and change. I need you out of here—*now*.

TOM And what are you going to do?

LOLA Clean the flat. *(Starts for kitchen)* I'll start in the kitchen.

TOM *(Back to panic)* No! The kitchen's occupied.

LOLA *(She stops just short of kitchen)* Occupied? *(Half looking back at KEVIN, speaking louder and slower. KEVIN's head appears)* Oh, have you got a man in there?
(TOM throws away his reply which LOLA misses because she's worried)

TOM If she's a man, I'm batting for the other team.

LOLA *(Even slower and louder)* Oh, you've got *two* men? *(KEVIN's head disappears)*

TOM *(Misses her hints)* Sorry, it's been one of those mornings; not occupied, occup-
pies. I'm making Italian pastries called occu pies and you *(Terrible Italian*
accent) can't-a change the room-a temperature.

LOLA You *are* sick.

TOM *(Normal accent)* I'm sorry, but you can't go in the kitchen.

LOLA *(Pushing him)* But you can go in the bedroom and change.

TOM *(Being pushed)* Hey! Careful. Hey!
(They exit and bedroom door is closed. Quick change for TOM; suggest tracksuit pants and
sweatshirt. KEVIN'S head appears. He sees empty room. DITZI enters carrying jars.
KEVIN bobs down)

DITZI Do you want honey or sardines on your toast? *(Sees no-one is there)* Oh. *(Decides)*
I'll mix them up.
(She exits. KEVIN rises, moves to cupboard with rucksack, opens door, steps inside and
closes door just as TOM being pushed by LOLA enters from bedroom. TOM now knows
about the armed criminal but not where he is)

TOM *(Super nervous, calling)* Hello? Mister Man? Sir?

LOLA *(Using TOM as shield, whispers)* He's behind the couch.
(TOM edges closer upstage to get a view of the armed man)

TOM Ah, good morning, sir. Lovely day. *(Pause)* Sir? *(Looks but sees nothing. Whispers to*
LOLA) There's no-one here.

LOLA *(Moves around him)* Of course there is. I saw him. He threatened to shoot you.

TOM Me? How did he know I was here?

LOLA *(Looking around)* He must have escaped.

TOM *(Annoyed)* You've made this up.

LOLA *(Anger increasing)* I saw him. Now will you go and change for work?

TOM I told you I'm not going, I'm sick.

LOLA *(Takes coffee)* I'll get rid of the coffee.

TOM No! *(He runs to block her)*

LOLA What is the matter with you?

TOM What is the matter with *me*? You're the one seeing invisible gangsters.

LOLA *(Hands him coffee)* I've had enough. I think you really *are* sick—in the head.
(Starts for front door) And I'm late for work.

TOM *(Relieved, puts down coffee)* Thank God for that. *(Louder)* Bye.

LOLA *(Calling en route to door)* And I'll report the intruder to the cops.

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- TOM** *(Upstage cupboard door opens and KEVIN's head appears. He watches them)*
(Racing after her, passes her and she has her back to kitchen, he is facing it) No! No police! No publicity.
- LOLA** Oh, so you're happy to have a maniac in my apartment?
- TOM** Our apartment.
- LOLA** *(Threatens)* Read the pre-nup, Sunshine. Never marry a lawyer.
(DITZI enters with tray of breakfast things - toast, single flower, etc.)
Well, are you happy to welcome a total stranger?
- TOM** *(Sees DITZI)* It depends.
- LOLA** Depends? On what?
- TOM** *(Desperate)* What she's wearing.
- LOLA** She? It was a *man* with a gun who threatened to shoot your fiancée.
- TOM** You said he was going to shoot *me*.
- LOLA** *(Gives up, disgusted)* Just get dressed and remind the cops about the break-in.
(LOLA to front door. TOM to DITZI ushering her back into kitchen. KEVIN comes out and crouches behind settee. When LOLA opens door and steps out, he rushes to behind door. LOLA exits but doesn't quite close it. She re-enters and moves C leaving door open with KEVIN hidden behind it. She is about to shout to the kitchen then freezes sensing someone is behind her. She turns petrified. KEVIN closes door and is revealed, pointing handgun)
- KEVIN** So, you'll intrude the cops to the reporter. *(sic)*
- LOLA** *(Even she's confused)* You mean report the cops to the intruder. *(sic)*
- KEVIN** *(Furious)* I heard you.
- LOLA** *(Begging)* No, please, I wasn't serious.
- KEVIN** *(Threatens)* I told you what happens to a grass.
- LOLA** *(About to cry)* Oh, don't shoot me. I've pre-paid for my next manicure and haven't used my free Botox voucher.
- KEVIN** *(Looking around, sees window seat)* Over there. *(Indicating/Hustling her UR)*
- LOLA** Not there. I'm scared of heights.
- KEVIN** We're on the ground floor. *(Lifting lid)*
- LOLA** *Nights*, I meant nights. It's dark in there and I'm scared of *nights*.
- KEVIN** Get in.
- LOLA** I can't.
- KEVIN** In. *(She's about to step in under threats from KEVIN)* Wait.
- LOLA** *(Huge relief thinking she's being spared)* Oh thank you, thank you.
- KEVIN** Give me your shoes.
- LOLA** *(Now seriously upset)* No, please. Not the shoes. Anything but the shoes.
(He aims gun. Almost sobbing she hands over her pumps)
- KEVIN** In! *(Upset, she climbs into window seat and kneels)* And if you make a sound I'll scratch the labels.
- LOLA** *(Wails, begging)* Not the labels, please not the labels.
- KEVIN** *(Reads label)* You lousy thief. These belong to Choo Jimmy.
(Final wail as lid is lowered and LOLA is hidden in window seat)
- FX** Doorbell
(KEVIN darts to back of settee and ducks as TOM enters turning back to kitchen)
- TOM** *(Calling)* I'll be right back. You make the toast. *(Looking around)*

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- DITZI** *(Stands in doorway)* Okay but what about breakfast for your wife?
- TOM** My fiancée's gone to work.
(DITZI gives TOM a finger wave and watches. TOM to door. Once past settee, KEVIN rises and runs to cupboard with shoes, rucksack and gun)
- DITZI** *(Sees KEVIN disappear. To herself)* Oh, there's someone else for breakfast.
(She exits to kitchen)
- TOM** *(Opens door, annoyed, groans)* No, no, not you!
- JUSTIN** *(Strides in dressed as Santa)* Ho ho ho and a very Merry Christmas to everyone.
(TOM closes door as JUSTIN stops centre. He is striking as Santa)
- TOM** *(Closes door)* Don't tell me. I don't wanna know.
- JUSTIN** *(Pumped)* I'm playing Santa at a kiddies' party. It's the perfect scam. The parents think I'm wonderful so they invest in my latest mega-development.
(Opens hands) Wotcha reckon?
- TOM** What's worse than appalling? Don't tell me - despicable.
- JUSTIN** *(Deaf to criticism)* I knew you'd like it.
- TOM** *(Depressed)* Listen, mate, I'm crook, off work, fighting with Lola, again, and I've been invaded by a crazed gunman and an upstairs neighbour, which all adds up to you having to leave immediately. *(He indicates the door)*
- JUSTIN** *(Ham acting, ignoring TOM's woe)* I was born for this role. *(Performs)* Ho, ho, ho!
- TOM** What I don't need is *(Looks at JUSTIN posing)* a madman pretending to be Santa Claus.
- JUSTIN** *(Offended)* Pretending? Pretending? I am Santa Claus.
- TOM** *(Indicates door)* Mate, it really is a bad time. *(Goes to drag him)* C'mon, scram.
- JUSTIN** Wait! Have you told your filthy rich great aunt how I can turn her millions into billions.
- TOM** No. *(Points)* Now out.
- JUSTIN** Wait, wait, wait. *(Referring to his clobber)* Seriously, what do you think of the outfit?
- TOM** *(Losing it)* Justin, I'm having a hell of a day and it's only just started.
- JUSTIN** Okay, buddy, chill, let Santa fix it.
(DITZI enters with tray and stands outside kitchen)
- TOM** So how would you fix that? *(He nods towards DITZI)*
(JUSTIN turns, does a double-take and is gobsmacked)
- JUSTIN** That's a problem?
- DITZI** *(Puts down tray and walks excited towards them)* Oh Santa, is that really you?
- JUSTIN** My kingdom for some mistletoe?
- DITZI** Coffee, Santa?
- JUSTIN** *(Oozes charm)* Yes please and I'd like ... two lumps.
- TOM** *(Groaning at JUSTIN's chat-up routine)* No, please, don't do this.
- JUSTIN** *(Taking DITZI's hand)* Now young lady, Santa needs to know if you've been naughty and if not, let me help you play catch up.
- DITZI** *(Super impressed)* Oh Santa, the last time we met I sat on your knee.
- TOM** *(Exasperated)* Stop it.
- DITZI** I'm not sure I can remember how.

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JUSTIN It's like riding a bicycle, sweetheart; once on, never off.

DITZI *(Hands together under chin)* Oh Santa, after all these years, I'm still excited.

JUSTIN So is Santa.

TOM That's enough. Ditzi, this is my friend ...

JUSTIN Titz! *(Taking her hand and kisses it)* What an apposite appellation.

TOM It's *Ditzi!* *(TOM is ignored)*

DITZI *(Overcome)* Are you the *real* Santa?

JUSTIN Let me prove it. Show me your chimney.

TOM Stop it now.

JUSTIN And I'm currently auditioning for a Missus Santa. *(DITZI gasps)*

DITZI *(Swooning)* Be still my beating breast.

JUSTIN Ditto.

TOM *(Takes over)* Okay, game over. Ditzi, this man's a property developer.

DITZI *(In awe)* A *real* estate Santa?

TOM He's wearing that costume to con people.

JUSTIN Where can I audition you, Titz? Your place or my North Pole?

DITZI I'm locked out of my apartment upstairs.

JUSTIN *(Throwing hands apart)* Then fate has thrown us together. There's a love seat in the garden. *(Taking her hand leading her)* Let me test your knee-sitting expertise. *(He opens French doors and they exit with DITZI excited and JUSTIN winking at TOM)*

TOM *(Shaking head and heading to settee)* At last, peace and quiet. *(He relaxes. Cupboard door opens, KEVIN's head appears then he creeps towards settee holding gun. Just as he reaches back of settee he freezes as doorbell sounds)*

FX *Doorbell*

TOM *(Despairs, yells in frustration)* I do not believe it. *(TOM heads to door. Window seat lifts and LOLA looks out. KEVIN sees her, points gun and she disappears. KEVIN hurries back and enters cupboard)*

TOM *(Opens door to policeman in uniform)* Ah Officer, please, do join the party.

BOBBY *(Enters)* Good morning, sir. Constable Bobby responding to your reported break-in.

TOM Constable Bobby?

BOBBY At your service, sir.

TOM You're joking of course.

BOBBY Not at all, sir, a home invasion is no laughing matter.

TOM I meant your name.

BOBBY Ah you noticed. Not everyone picks up on a bobby called Bobby.

TOM And don't tell me, you work for a Sergeant Plod?

BOBBY No sir, but we do have an Inspector Noddy.

TOM Detective Inspector Noddy?

BOBBY That's the one, sir.

TOM Has he got big ears?

BOBBY *(Takes out notepad)* Now you reported a break-in, sir.

TOM Yes, I did, last millennium.

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- BOBBY** *(Writing)* Last mill ... *(Not impressed)* I'm obliged to warn you, sir, in this new age of policing, sarcasm is now a criminal offence.
- TOM** Really?
- BOBBY** Indeed sir.
- TOM** And what about irony and satire?
- BOBBY** It's all part of the counter culture overhaul of the Police and Evidence Act, 1984.
- TOM** 1984 seems appropriate.
- BOBBY** *(Looking around)* Now about your break-in, what appears to be missing?
- TOM** Ah, *(Looking around)* we can't find our sense of humour, Officer.
- BOBBY** *(Writing)* ... missing one sense of humour. *(Questions)* When did you last see it?
- TOM** *(Thinking)* Oooh, let's see. I think it was just before they added laugh tracks to TV sit-coms.
- BOBBY** *(Writing)* ... TV sit-coms. *(Questions)* And is that all, sir?
- TOM** I think so, Officer. *(Sudden stop)* No, wait, there is something else. Today we had an armed and dangerous criminal roaming around this our apartment, here in this very room.
- BOBBY** *(Excited)* Really? Armed and dangerous you say? *(Puts away writing materials)*
- TOM** Could well be involved in organized crime.
- BOBBY** Oh that is so brilliant. *(Grateful, shaking hands with TOM)* Thank you, sir, thank you so much.
- TOM** You think that's brilliant?
- BOBBY** Yes, indeed, and it makes such a wonderful change.
- TOM** Organized crime is wonderful?
- BOBBY** You don't understand. Every day I go home and my parents ask about my day.
- TOM** *(Can't believe it)* You still live with your parents?
- BOBBY** I do, sir, and every day when they ask for a report on my shift, they are always terribly disappointed.
- TOM** Oh?
- BOBBY** All I can talk about are tipped-over rubbish bins and the odd lost dog. Ah, that's the occasional lost dog not lost dogs which are odd.
- TOM** *(Salutes)* Roger that.
- BOBBY** With your armed and dangerous criminal news, Mummy and Daddy will be tickled pink. We'll still be talking about it after pudding.
- TOM** After pudding?
- BOBBY** Yes sir.
- TOM** What pudding?
- BOBBY** Ah, today is ...
- TOM** Tuesday, all day.
- BOBBY** Then it'll be bread and butter pudding. And you say the gunman was here in your apartment?
- TOM** So I believe.

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(Seat cover rises and LOLA's head appears. BOBBY has his back to LOLA)

BOBBY

When did you last see him?

LOLA

Psst. *(Pause)* Psst.

(She catches TOM's attention. He's shocked. She indicates cupboard. Cupboard door opens and KEVIN's hand with gun appears pointing at LOLA. She disappears as does KEVIN's gun. TOM is distracted)

BOBBY

Sir? When was the criminal here?

TOM

Ah, that would have been some time ago.

BOBBY

Okay, how about a description? What did said miscreant look like?

TOM

(Can't believe the police vocabulary) Said miscreant?

BOBBY

Yes sir, I could say malefactor or reprobate if that would help.

TOM

It wouldn't and I didn't get a good look at him.

(KEVIN steps out pointing gun at TOM. BOBBY can't see the crim)

BOBBY

Anything might help, sir.

TOM

(Being threatened) Ah, he was overweight with a big white beard, red trousers and black boots. *(KEVIN gives TOM a thumbs up and retreats to cupboard)*

BOBBY

(Writing) That's most helpful, sir. Well, I'll see myself out. *(Heading to French doors)* I'll slip out through the garden. Cheerio.

(BOBBY exits via French doors. TOM grabs furled umbrella from umbrella stand and creeps towards cupboard. He holds umbrella ready to strike in one hand and uses other hand ready to yank open cupboard door. Window seat rises and LOLA watches. Just as TOM's about to strike, DITZI bursts in from garden. LOLA disappears)

DITZI

(Distressed) Help me, help me!

TOM

(Forgets gunman) Ditzi, what's happened?

DITZI

Santa's been arrested. *(She points to garden)*

TOM

What! *(Racing out to garden, calling, followed by DITZI)* Wait! Constable Bobby!

(Pause. Silence. KEVIN pokes out his head, sees room is empty, hurries to garden seat and rips it open. LOLA appears)

KEVIN

(Threatens) Out!

LOLA

No!

KEVIN

(Louder) Out!

LOLA

I can't be seen in public unless my hair is perfect.

KEVIN

(Fuming) I said, "Get out!"

LOLA

Not without my shoes.

KEVIN

(Frustrated) Ohh f' crying loud out, *(sic)*, they're in the cupboard.

(LOLA hops out and heads to cupboard followed by KEVIN. She enters cupboard, he grabs his rucksack of cash, closes the door and places chair against it. He looks around, stashes rucksack under cushions on settee, hears offstage voices and dives into window seat and closes it just as JUSTIN enters with DITZI and TOM. DITZI carries Santa's beard and hat with wig attached)

JUSTIN

Bloody police. Fancy trying to arrest Father Christmas.

DITZI

How dare they make you remove your hat and beard. Thank goodness they didn't ask you to remove your trousers.

JUSTIN

I'm saving that job for you.

DITZI

Oh, Santa, the police accused you of being a criminal.

JUSTIN

(To TOM) They did.

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TOM You *are* a criminal.

JUSTIN (*JUSTIN glares at him*) Watch it.

TOM White collar of course.

JUSTIN Fair enough.

DITZI Have you lost your strength, Santa?

JUSTIN Never.

TOM Go and change, Justin. And Ditzzi, will you please make some fresh coffee?

DITZI Of course, anything for my heroes. (*Heads to kitchen*)

JUSTIN (*Heads to bedroom*) And Titzzi, I'll need a hand removing my boots. (*She smiles and waves, they disappear leaving Tom alone. He sits on settee*)

TOM (*Despairs*) What is happening? I only told a little lie; one lousy lie. I pulled a sickie. One day off work. My fiancée's impossible, my neighbour's gorgeous, my mate's a ratbag and there's an armed lunatic in the cupboard. What ... (*He is uncomfortable because of the rucksack. He stands, removes cushion, sees rucksack*) What's this?
(*He's about to examine it but stops when doorbell rings*)

FX Doorbell

TOM (*Frustration scream*) Ahhhh!
(*Replaces cushions hiding rucksack then moves to and opens door and GAW – Great Aunt Wilhelmina Rolls Canardly Getalaugh - enters dressed as a nun. She carries a stuffed rucksack identical to the one now hidden on the settee. She tosses it on settee close to hidden rucksack and strikes a dramatic pose. SPOILER ALERT: There is a possibility the rucksacks may be mixed up*)

GAW I'm on my way to another audition for the Absolutely Fabulous Completely-Crackers Off Broadway Players. Now, can you guess the show and the role I'm sure to get?

TOM It's nice to see you, Great Aunt Wilhelmina.

GAW Yeah, yeah, we take that as read. (*She poses*) Now, what show and which role?
(*She loves this game, he is bored to death*)

TOM (*Guessing*) Ah, *The Sound of Music* and the Mother Superior.

GAW (*Amused*) Wrong and wrong.

TOM Okay, how about *Nunsense* and the Reverend Mother?

GAW (*She's enjoying this*) Nope, not even close.

TOM Then someone, anyone in *Sister Act One* or *Two*?

GAW (*Loving this*) Wrong again.

TOM (*Exasperated*) I don't know, Great Aunt. I'm running out of nuns.

GAW Okay, I'll tell you the role and you have to guess the show. (*Pause*) I'm auditioning for Maria.

TOM (*Shocked*) Maria? But in *The Sound of Music* she's young, she's a novice.

GAW (*How stupid can he be?*) Not *that* Maria; Maria in *West Side Story*.

TOM She's not a nun.

GAW (*Shocked*) Really? Are you sure?

TOM And she's closer to 19 than 91.

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- GAW** *(Disappointed)* Oh bugger. *(Sits on settee, removes document from side of her rucksack)*
Forget the audition, I want your advice on my latest will.
- TOM** *(Joins her)* Do I have to?
- GAW** *(Offended)* Do I have to? What sort of an answer is that? As your only living relative, as an elderly woman living alone and *(Pointedly)* rarely visited, and, as we all know, someone who is about to die ...
- TOM** You said that last year.
- GAW** Said what?
- TOM** *(Mimics her)* "Someone who is about to die".
- GAW** *(Shocked)* Did I?
- TOM** And the year before that and before that, et cetera ad nauseum. Trust me, Great Aunt, you're not about to die.
- GAW** Well I can't go on forever, Godfrey.
- TOM** No, Godfrey's your cat. I'm your great nephew, Thomas.
- GAW** *(Waving document)* Of course and that's why I need your input, Tommy. My will now leaves my entire estate – that's the real estate, stocks and shares, jewellery, cash, cars, including your grandfather's Vintage Ferrari, and art works – split between Godfrey and friends, and my farm for retired donkeys. What do you think?
- TOM** Does it matter what I think? You've told me I'm not getting so much as a brass razoo *(A non-existent coin of trivial value)* so why ask me?
- GAW** Because you know the deal. Become a daddy and you get half my estate. Add a new branch to the Rolls Canardly Getalaugh family tree, Godfrey, and you and the twisted Lola Montez could be rolling in it.
- TOM** She's not interested in money.
- GAW** *(Scoffing, raucous laughter for some time)* Oh, pull the other one. She's a lawyer. Money's embedded in her DNA.
- TOM** *(Nodding)* Tell me about it.
- GAW** So how is the baby-making business coming along?
- TOM** Slowly.
- GAW** Slowly, slowly, catchee monkey but not the great aunt's *(Flashing bling on her wrist)* golden chunky.
- TOM** Lola's agreed to talk about it tonight, after Pilates, Tai Kwando, Astrology and her Multivitamin worship.
- GAW** Talk about it? You can't talk yourself pregnant. You wanna stick to the old-fashioned method of humpty dumpty.
- TOM** I think you mean rumpy pumpy.
- GAW** That too. Now just be honest with me, have you gone off sex? Come on, you can tell me.
- DITZI** *(Enters carrying tray with coffee)* Coffee.
- TOM** *(Standing, staring at DITZI)* Definitely not, and especially not since this morning.
- GAW** *(Turns and is impressed)* Wow! You have a new girlfriend? She's gorgeous.
- TOM** Sister Wilhelmina meet my neighbour, Ditzi.

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GAW *(Impressed)* Hello sailor.

DITZI *(Unsure)* Hello, Sister.

TOM *(TOM takes tray)* And like you, she's in show business.

GAW *(Stands arms out)* Daaaarling. *(Women embrace)*

TOM You girls chat. I'll take Santa his coffee.
(He exits to bedroom while GAW and DITZI sit)

GAW How lovely to meet a fellow performer. Do you sing, dance, act or all three?

DITZI None I'm afraid. I'm a hostess in a gentlemen's club.

GAW You're a stripper!

DITZI Not quite.

GAW How fabulous. You know I once auditioned for the lead in *Gypsy*.

DITZI *(Can't believe it)* You played Gypsy Rose Lee?

GAW *(Annoyed)* Nah, they gave it to some bimbo who was sleeping with the musical director. You know what musical directors are like with their *(Uses fingers for quotation marks)* wandering batons.

DITZI But I didn't think nuns were allowed to ... you know?

GAW *(Cackling)* Oh Gawd, do you think I'm a real nun?

DITZI Well your outfit ... *(Gestures to costume)*

GAW Darling, this is a cossie. I was on my way to an audition and like to go prepared. *(Stands, starts to remove habit)* Mind you I'm late now, and getting hot.

DITZI *(Hops up to help)* Let me help you.

GAW Thanks, Babe. *(Habit is removed with GAW having simple clothes underneath)* We great artists always suffer for our art.

DITZI Look, I don't suppose you'd let me try on your costume?

GAW *(Hooked)* Really? *(Thinks she understands)* Of course, a nun as a stripper gram. I love it.

DITZI No, this robe belongs to Tom's fiancée, and I'm not wearing much underneath.

GAW *(Helping DITZI put on habit)* Gotcha, although it's a damn shame to hide your fabulous body. *(Habit is on)* There you go.

DITZI Thanks so much. *(Doing a sort of twirl)* How do I look?

GAW Stunning. You'll have the fellahs lining up for confession. Hey, why don't we pretend you're a real nun?

DITZI They'll never fall for that. And how will we explain what happened to Ditzi?

GAW We're in a farce. Mistaken identity makes the world go round.

DITZI No, it'll never work.

GAW Pretend her boyfriend rescued her.

DITZI I haven't got a boyfriend.

GAW Pull the other one.
(TOM and JUSTIN enter)

DITZI Look out.

GAW They're males, they'll believe anything.
(TOM carries Santa costume and JUSTIN wears smart casual)

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TOM Here we are and ... where's Ditzzi?
GAW Her boyfriend rescued her.
JUSTIN (*Inspecting DITZI*) Well hello Mother Teresa.
(*The scheme fails*)
DITZI (*To GAW*) I told you.
GAW (*To DITZI*) Worth a try.
DITZI With Santa being arrested, I thought I'd be better off in a nunnery.
JUSTIN You'll be better off in my confessional.
TOM Anyway, Santa's off to his real job scamming people out of their life savings.
JUSTIN (*Mock outrage*) Hey! That's slander.
TOM (*TOM heads to cupboard, moves chair*) I'll put your gear away Santa. You can collect it tomorrow. (*Opens door and steps back in fright*) Lola!
LOLA (*Storms out, furious*) And about bloody time.
TOM What the hell are you doing in there? (*Puts Santa gear in cupboard and closes door*)
LOLA Hiding from the lunatic.
JUSTIN (*Insincere*) Hi, Lola, great to see you.
LOLA Liar.
GAW (*To LOLA*) So what have you got against Humpty Dumpty?
LOLA The fruitcake speaks. (*Looks at DITZI*) And who the hell is this?
TOM (*Has rejoined the party*) Ah, this is Sister Coincidence.
JUSTIN He means Sister Magnificence.
GAW I've decided to give money to the church and Sister Extravagance is here to advise me.
LOLA You're all mad and I'm late for work.
TOM Then don't let us delay you any further, Honey.
LOLA (*Heads to bathroom*) I need to powder my nose. (*Stops at door*) And what happened to the madman with the gun?
TOM Ah, long gone, Babe, he's disappeared.
(*She glares and exits to bathroom*)
JUSTIN A madman? What madman?
TOM Nobody, she's working too hard.
JUSTIN You had an armed intruder in here and didn't tell me.
TOM There is no madman.
GAW I should damn well hope not.
DITZI I think I saw him. (*That stops the traffic*) He hid in there. (*Points to cupboard*)
(*TOM panics*)
TOM He's not in there, I just looked.
JUSTIN So he does exist?
TOM No, I've never seen him. Lola's under pressure at work. She gets confused. (*To JUSTIN*) Now shouldn't you be going to work?
JUSTIN (*Taking GAW's arm*) Indeed but not before I escort your lovely great aunt to the garden and explain how she can make squillions for her favourite charities.
GAW (*Going with him*) Why is my bullshit meter ticking so loudly?

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JUSTIN *(Exiting with GAW to garden)* Think of all those cuddly kitty cats you can save.

TOM *(Admiring DITZI)* Ditzi, you've become a nun, and you look amazing.

DITZI I was feeling a little undressed and your aunt kindly let me borrow her costume.

TOM *(Referring to himself)* Speaking of costumes, I look terrible.

DITZI No you don't. Casual and laid back suits you.
(Pause. What is she saying?)

TOM I'll just nip in the bedroom and change. *(Exiting)* I'll be right back.

DITZI *(Exiting to kitchen)* Okay, I'll tidy up.
(She takes tray and any kitchen items and exits to kitchen. Pause. Stage empty. Lid of window seat opens and KEVIN looks out. Sees coast is clear, hops out and heads to cupboard. Stops as he's forgotten his rucksack with the cash. He goes to settee then sees GAW's identical rucksack. He grabs it and disappears into cupboard. Pause. LOLA comes out of bathroom with hair, make-up and clothes all pristine. She stops and looks around.)

LOLA Where is everyone? *(Looks around, yells)* Thomas?
(Nobody responds. She has a thought so creeps towards window seat. She pauses then suddenly lifts seat. There's no-one there. She replaces seat and moves C calling again even more angry) Thomas!
(OTHERS enter together and she's confronted with people from all angles. GAW and JUSTIN enter from garden, DITZI from kitchen, and TOM from bedroom. He's changed)

TOM *(He looks smart)* Are you still here?

LOLA What's going on? And why aren't you looking your usual boring self?

GAW *(Big announcement)* Listen everyone. I've changed my mind. *(Indicating a smiling JUSTIN)* This sneaky creep is not such a sleazebag after all.

JUSTIN *(Beaming)* You heard it here first, folks.

TOM *(Shocked)* Great Aunt Wilhelmina, what have you done?

LOLA *(Panics)* Tell me you signed nothing. Show me the contract.

DITZI Would anyone like coffee? *(Is ignored)*

GAW *(To TOM)* Your best friend, Godfrey, has shown me the perfect way to double if not triple my money.

JUSTIN *(Putting arm around his benefactor)* Meet my favourite client.

TOM *(Despairing)* No! Great Aunt Wilhelmina, his middle name is Scam.

JUSTIN And I can do the same for everyone, even you, Titzzi.

LOLA *(Shocked)* Titzzi! Sister Titzzi?

GAW My legacy to the stray cats and retired donkeys of this world is now secure.

JUSTIN *(False modesty)* I'm also Santa in real life. Give me your cash, folks, and fill y'boots.
(Tension rises)

LOLA I demand to see the fine print.

GAW I demand to see your pregnancy test.

JUSTIN *(Arm around GAW)* She's family, and I always charge mates' rates for our nearest and dearest.

TOM *(Angry at JUSTIN)* You charge double for family, and more for mates.

DITZI *(Indicating kitchen)* I think there are some biscuits. *(Is ignored)*

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LOLA (At GAW) You give your money to that creep and nothing to your family.
DITZI I think they're chocolate. (Still ignored)
GAW (Fighting back) Only because you won't get stuck into any Humpty Dumpty.
(They start to get physical with shaking fists and pointing fingers)
JUSTIN (At TOM) You never give me credit for helping people make money.
TOM (At JUSTIN) The only person you've ever helped is yourself!
(They grab one another's hands/arms to prevent blows being struck. There are now two couples preparing for some biff with a nun as a confused referee. The next five speeches are ad lib and spoken simultaneously. There is a crescendo of anger with volume rising)
LOLA You're evil, and well-named, Canardly Getalaugh. I hate you. (Continues)
GAW Listen Miss Frigid, all you want is money. (Continues)
TOM Ponzi's your middle name, Mr Rip-off. (Continues)
JUSTIN Get off your backside, Sunshine and do some real work. (Continues)
DITZI Please, this is crazy. Please stop! (Continues)
FX Gunshot
(This brings an immediate end to the squabbling, shouting, shoving and pushing. The characters freeze then move apart, turn and face upstage. Pause. Slowly the cupboard door opens and KEVIN, as Santa, makes an unsteady, slow entrance. He stands still looking distressed)
KEVIN (Gasps) Somebody shot Santa.
(Pause. No-one speaks. No-one knows what to say. Just as it seems time for someone to speak, they freeze again)
FX Doorbell
(BLACKOUT. Music begins. Actors exit. House lights up)

End of Act 1

Act 2

FX Gunshot
(Lights up with everyone facing upstage. KEVIN slowly emerges from cupboard in shock)
KEVIN (Gasps) Somebody shot Santa.
FX Doorbell
(All freeze. Pause. TOM heads for door. OTHERS turn to watch him. He opens door and INSPECTOR NODDY enters. He wears a suit, collar and tie and on his face has a Groucho mask of eyebrows, glasses, nose and moustache as per the cover of this play script)
NODDY Good day to you, sir. (Flashes ID) Detective Inspector Noddy responding to a reported break-in. Am I addressing Mr Thomas Rollicking Goodshow Goodie who prefers to identify as he/him?
TOM (Like OTHERS, in a bit of a daze) What is this? A government woke survey?
NODDY I'll take that as an affirmative.
TOM You lot are like buses; we wait ages then two come along together.
NODDY (Looking around) Having a party, are we, sir? Fancy dress is it?
TOM No it's actually a meeting of the Flat Earth Society, and we've just finished. In fact I'm about to (Louder – hint, hint) farewell my guests.

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- NODDY** Not so fast, Mr Goodie. (*Announces to all*) I'm afraid no-one is permitted to leave this property. (*OTHERS react*) Not without my say so.
- LOLA** Listen officer, I'm a lawyer, late for work, and I'm leaving. (*Starts for front door*)
- NODDY** Then, madam, I'll have to arrest you. (*At door, she freezes, turns and glares at NODDY*) And I think we both know what a criminal record can do to lawyer's career.
- LOLA** (*She smolders*) Arrested for what? Leaving my own home? Having a boring boyfriend who pulls a sickie? (*Points at NODDY, threatening*) False arrest will cost you big time, Big Ears.
(*Frosty atmosphere. Who will crack first? TOM saves the day*)
- TOM** Look, what has a break-in got to do with all these people?
- JUSTIN** What break-in?
- GAW** Yes, I'm family and I've never heard of it.
(*All five complain*)
- NODDY** (*Raising hands and/or voice to stop complaints*) All right, settle down. (*They settle*) This neighbourhood is under lockdown. An armed and dangerous criminal is in the area, and an emergency declaration is in place under the Public Safety Preservation Act. Everyone is required to stay indoors until the felon is caught.
(*Angry reaction from OTHERS*)
- LOLA** (*Peeved*) Another armed and dangerous criminal?
- NODDY** (*Shocked*) Another one? What other one?
- LOLA** We had our own armed criminal in here not ten minutes ago.
- TOM** No we didn't.
- LOLA** I saw him. (*They argue but are interrupted*)
- KEVIN** (*Nervous, disguising his voice*) Excuse me but ... (*Argument stops. Everyone looks at Santa*) ... is the armed and dangerous criminal from the Mob?
- NODDY** (*Interested in Santa*) Oh yes, and why would Father Christmas be interested in the Mob?
- KEVIN** (*Hesitant*) Ah, because ...
- GAW** Oh talk about a dumb question. You police are so damn thick.
- NODDY** Careful, madam. Hate speech is red hot today thanks to the Twittersphere.
- GAW** Listen Einstein, Santa needs to know if the crim is from the Mob. He can't deliver presents to someone who's been naughty.
- DITZI** That's right. (*OTHERS agree*)
- NODDY** (*Backing down*) Of course, I apologize, mea culpa. Santa's rules rule but I'm not at liberty to reveal the fugitive's identity other than his nom de plume.
- TOM** His nom de plume? Your hitman pens novels?
- GAW** I bet it's crime fiction.
- NODDY** We know the reprobate as Slasher the Smasher Smith.
(*OTHERS respond. KEVIN knows Slasher works for the Mob and reacts*)
- NODDY** Please make yourselves comfortable while I quiz Mr Goodie about his break-in statement. Once the baddie is busted, you'll be free to go.

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(Others complain and spread out. They mime their respective chats. JUSTIN chats up DITZI the nun, KEVIN as Santa chats with GAW while LOLA makes a call on her phone. TOM and NODDY move to one side and chat)

TOM So police grade witness statements now; did I pass, fail, or am I a “could do better”?

NODDY Has Constable Bobby explained the new sarcasm laws?

TOM He has.

NODDY Then I want straight answers, sir. Where did the black hat force entry?

TOM The black hat?

NODDY Yes, the bad egg, the rotten apple, the ne-er-do-well. It’s new police-speak.

TOM Wonderful. *(Indicates)* In the bedroom, officer. Walk this way.

(TOM walks off with a fake limp. NODDY follows mimicking the walk. They exit to bedroom. LOLA sees them go, ends her call and tip toes to the front door. OTHERS watch. Bedroom door opens and NODDY races across the stage, seen by all except LOLA, exits through the French doors to the garden. At the front door, LOLA pauses, looks back then opens door to flee)

BOBBY *(Enters sans mask but complete with helmet)* Hello, hello, hello.

LOLA Bugger!

BOBBY *(Ushering LOLA back into the room)* Back inside if you please, madam. No-one may leave and there are officers outside to make sure you don’t. *(Heads to bedroom)* I’ll check with my colleague, Inspector Noddy.

TOM *(At bedroom door having seen everything)* He’s in here, Constable, working as farce as he can.

(BOBBY enters bedroom with door closed by TOM. LOLA in a huff enters bathroom. JUSTIN and SANTA exit to kitchen)

JUSTIN *(Guiding KEVIN to kitchen)* Come on, Santa, coffee’s on me. *(They exit)* Where did you get your suit?

(GAW and TITZI sit on settee)

GAW So tell me about your job at the gentlemen’s club?

DITZI It’s boring. I hate it.

GAW *(Looking around)* Say, what’s happened to my rucksack?

(They both stand and search)

DITZI Where did you put it?

GAW *(Pointing)* There on the settee. Someone’s pinched it.

DITZI *(Spots the hidden rucksack)* No, it’s here, behind the cushion.

(The rucksack is recovered and they sit again)

GAW *(Opening rucksack)* I’ve got another costume, this one’s for the fancy dress party at my retirement home. Tell me what you think. *(She discovers the cash and reacts)* Oh my godfather.

DITZI *(Hooked)* What’s happened?

GAW *(Removes wad of banknotes)* It’s full of money. *(Keeps producing wads)* Lots and lots of money.

DITZI *(Handling the cash)* Is it yours?

GAW It is now. Finders keepers. Give us a hand, love.

(The rucksack is between them on settee)

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DITZI *(Helping retrieve money)* Where will you put it?
GAW *(Looking around)* In my rucksack, wherever it is.
DITZI I saw one in the cupboard. The gunman had it.
GAW *(Worried, stops taking cash)* What gunman?
DITZI The one who broke in.
GAW The cops said he's outside.
DITZI No, that's Slasher, I mean Santa. *(Heads to cupboard)*
GAW Santa? You mean he's delivering cash as presents? *(Upset)* I can't steal from little kiddies.
DITZI *(Returns with identical rucksack)* Is this your rucksack?
GAW *(Inspects it)* Yes. There's something inside for you.
DITZI *(DITZI produces package which is the new costume)* Is this your other costume?
GAW Yes. *(Refers to GAW'S now empty rucksack)* We need to make it like this one was. Let's stick a cushion in it.
(They shove cushion in GAW'S rucksack)
DITZI I'm not sure Santa is the real Santa.
GAW What?
DITZI We've had two Santas here today.
GAW Right, I'm pinchin' this cash for my charities.
DITZI You should put some of the money on top so they'll think it's all there.
GAW Good idea. *(They do)*
DITZI I'll put this rucksack back where I found it. *(She returns it to cupboard)*
GAW *(Goes to window seat)* I'll hide mine in here. *(Rucksack to window seat)*
DITZI *(They return to settee)* What do we do now?
GAW We need disguises. Give me back the nun's cossie.
DITZI *(Disrobing)* But what'll I wear?
GAW My fancy dress outfit on the settee. Come on, hurry.
(They race to change. GAW becomes the nun again and DITZI takes out new costume and becomes Dick Turpin with black mask, black hat, large black cape, and black boots)
DITZI *(Dressing)* Who am I supposed to be?
GAW Dick Turnip.
DITZI Dick Turnip?
GAW Yes, the fancy dress party has a vegetable theme. But hurry. *(She helps DITZI)*
DITZI Do you think these disguises will work?
GAW Of course. The original meaning of farce is absurd, and then there's the good old suspension of disbelief.
LOLA *(Enters from bathroom addressing GAW who she thinks is Sister Extravagance)* Are you still here Sister Despicable?
GAW *(Disguising her voice)* I think so.
LOLA *(Addressing DITZI)* And who's this, Zorro from Forensics?
DITZI *(Disguising her voice)* I'm Dick Turnpike.
LOLA *(Ignoring them and wandering to French doors)* So what's happening out there? Have they caught the madman?

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(OTHERS interrupted when TOM and NODDY as well as JUSTIN and KEVIN enter. KEVIN uses the moment to duck into the cupboard. He returns, still as Santa, but with his rucksack on his back)

NODDY Still no word on Slasher, ladies, gentlemen and others. *(Heading for front door)*
I'm off for a site reccy. *(At door wags finger, grins)* Now no escaping and remember big brother is watching. *(Exits – quick change to BOBBY)*
(The following three activities begin almost simultaneously)

JUSTIN *(Arm around GAW)* Now Titzi, darling, let's you and me get better acquainted.
(Leads her to settee where they sit)

LOLA *(Grabs TOM and leads him to bedroom door)* I want a word with you.

GAW *(Goes to KEVIN)* Santa, tell me about the presents in your sack.
(Just as three conversations are about to start, BOBBY enters, stands at door and blows a whistle. This stops everyone. They turn to face BOBBY)

BOBBY *(Big voice)* You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say will be used against you by any B Grade critic who has nothing better to do than rock up to this here so-called performance. *(Bellows order)* Now move!

FX *Hurry music for ten seconds – the lighting change and music happen simultaneously*

Major lighting change, suggest switch to all blue wash

(Everyone moves simultaneously. BOBBY runs DC then upstage to exit into cupboard. TOM and LOLA towards C, bump into one another and return to DL at bedroom door, GAW and DITZI sit on settee and JUSTIN and SANTA sit on window seat RC)

FX *Music stops*

Blackout with spot DL on TOM and LOLA

(The short conversations that follow – there are 15 – need to be punchy. Each new conversation starts just before the previous one ends. Start at the highlighted words)

Lighting – spots crossfade at the highlighted words

SEGMENT 1

LOLA I've had it with you, loser. We're done. This is my apartment so you can sling y'hook.

TOM Suits me, Attila. At least now I can spot a barracoota.

LOLA And please, do me a favour – sue me so I can take you to the cleaners.

TOM Just remember, darling, when I'm a dad, I'll have a family and a fortune.

LOLA You a dad? Only when pigs fly over a frozen hell.

TOM Watch this space.

Crossfade spots - spot now on GAW and DITZI on settee

LOLA *(Scoffs)* **Ha! Bor-ing.**

(DITZI starts her conversation at highlighted words above)

DITZI Did you really sign a contract with the first Santa?

GAW Why? Is there a problem?

DITZI He's a creep. Even Tom reckons he's bent.

GAW Well then how come my great nephew likes him?

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DITZI Because Tom's a softie. He lets people walk all over him. Look how his fiancée treats him.

GAW What he needs is a bit of old-fashioned tender loving care. *(Stares at DITZI)* Not that I'm looking at anyone in particular.

DITZI Me? We only met an hour ago.

GAW Tell me, does Dick Turnip have anything against Humpty Dumpty?
Crossfade spots - spot now on JUSTIN and KEVIN on garden seat

DITZI *(Thinking)* **Depends on what he's wearing.**
(JUSTIN starts his conversation at highlighted words above)

JUSTIN I used to be a Santa in that cossie.

KEVIN *(Reluctant to speak, wants to be gone)* Really?

JUSTIN It's a great disguise if you wanna rip off anyone.

KEVIN *(Same response as before)* Really?

JUSTIN So what's your caper? Who and how do you rip off suckers?

KEVIN *(Can't say "Really?" this time)* What?

JUSTIN Who are you scamming? *(Nudges KEVIN)* Honour amongst thieves and all that.

KEVIN No comment.

JUSTIN *(Raising eyebrows)* Go on, wotcha got in the rucksack?

KEVIN *(Suddenly worried, holds rucksack tighter)* Nothin'!

JUSTIN I've got a scheme to double y'money.

KEVIN *(Wants none of it)* No!
Kill spot. LIGHTING switch back to blue wash
(NODDY enters from cupboard wearing mask and hat and freezes inside room)
Spot NODDY

NODDY *(Blows whistle. Everyone freezes)* This is the police. Everyone, move along now!
Kill SPOT

FX *Hurry music for ten seconds*
(Everyone moves. NODDY exits to bedroom, JUSTIN crosses to TOM, LOLA moves to DITZI on settee, and GAW moves to KEVIN on garden seat)

FX *Music stops*
Blackout with spot C on DITZI and LOLA

SEGMENT 2

LOLA I don't think we've been introduced. Not that I care about anyone but m'self.

DITZI I'm your upstairs neighbour.

LOLA So have your legs stopped working?

DITZI I'm sorry?

LOLA Are you incapable of climbing stairs?

DITZI No, I was locked out and Tom, Mr Goodie kindly offered to help.
Crossfade spots - spot now on KEVIN/SANTA and GAW on garden seat

LOLA I'll bet he did. *(Sarcastic)* **Good old Mr Goodie.**
(GAW starts her conversation at highlighted words above)

GAW So tell me, Santa, what's in your sack of goodies?

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KEVIN Presents.
GAW Just presents?
KEVIN Just presents.
GAW So, no cash for the kiddies then?
Crossfade spots - spot now on TOM and JUSTIN DL)
KEVIN *(Turns so rucksack is not near GAW)* **No comment.**
(JUSTIN starts his conversation at highlighted words above)
JUSTIN I've really got me claws into your great aunt's fortune.
TOM Tell me, *Santa*, are all Ponzi-schemers proud of their work?
JUSTIN Proud and as pleased as punch.
TOM Sadly you're gunna need to find another sucker to sponge off, me old mucker.
JUSTIN *(Insults wash over him)* I need to get me Santa suit back so I can fleece those parents.
TOM You're not listening, Goose features, you never listen. *(Emphatic)* I'm leaving.
JUSTIN *(Shocked)* Leaving the lovely Lola? But you're the friend I sponge off.
TOM Exactly but it's not all bad news. I've got you a parting gift.
JUSTIN *(Pleased)* Ah, that's very kind of you. Let me guess its value in dollar terms.
TOM *(Prepares to punch JUSTIN)* It's a knuckle sandwich! *(JUSTIN recoils in fear)*
LIGHTING switch to blue wash
(TOM swings and JUSTIN screams. EVERYONE freezes. BOBBY enters from kitchen and freezes inside room)
SPOT hits BOBBY
BOBBY *(Blows whistle)* On the floor! Everyone get down! Get down!
Kill SPOT on BOBBY
FX *Hurry music for ten seconds*
(Everyone moves. BOBBY exits to garden, GAW crosses to TOM, JUSTIN to LOLA on settee, and DITZI moves to KEVIN garden seat)
FX *Music stops*
Blackout with spot on JUSTIN and LOLA on settee

SEGMENT 3

LOLA I've had it with Tom. There's now a vacancy in my apartment.
JUSTIN Really?
LOLA You can doss on this settee.
JUSTIN I'm happy to share your bed.
LOLA And six months' rent in advance with no refunds.
JUSTIN I agree.
LOLA *(Shocked)* What? You agree?
JUSTIN Yeah, I've always wanted to be screwed by a lawyer.
Crossfade spots - spot now on SANTA and DITZI on garden seat
LOLA *(Furious shaping to slap him)* **You lecherous leech!**
(DITZI starts her conversation at highlighted words above)
DITZI I saw you when you first arrived.

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KEVIN *(Worried)* What? Whad'ya mean?
DITZI You burst in here and hid behind the settee.
KEVIN No, I'm Santa.
DITZI You had a gun. I saw it.
KEVIN *(Realises she knows. Pats his side)* Well jus' remember, I've still got a gun.
DITZI What's happened to your rucksack full of cash?
KEVIN *(Threatening)* Say nothing ... *(Doesn't know her name)*
DITZI I'm Dick Turnip, and how do you know I'm not from the Mob?
KEVIN I I I ... I don't know my next line.
Crossfade spots - spot now on TOM and GAW DL
DITZI **You need to call "Prompt".**
(GAW starts her conversation at highlighted words above)
GAW What is the matter with you, Godfrey?
TOM I need the litter tray. *(He starts to leave, she stops him)*
GAW Have you never heard of the saying, "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do"?
TOM Of course.
GAW Then grow a pair, be a man and do what you've gotta do.
TOM Lola's chucked me out.
GAW Good.
TOM *(Confused)* Good?
GAW Godfrey, take control, get stuck in.
LIGHTING switch to blue wash
(EVERYONE freezes. NODDY enters from garden and freezes inside room)
Spot NODDY
NODDY *(Blows whistle)* Police! This is a raid. Stay where you are!
Kill SPOT
FX *Hurry music for ten seconds*
(Everyone moves. NODDY exits to kitchen, SANTA crosses to TOM, JUSTIN crosses to DITZI on garden seat, GAW crosses to LOLA on settee - please avoid collisions)
FX *Music stops*
Blackout with spot on GAW and LOLA on settee

SEGMENT 4

GAW So what's the latest with you and my only living relative?
LOLA I've given him the flick.
GAW It's because you reckon I'll never make him a beneficiary.
LOLA I couldn't give a stuff about your money.
GAW *(Laughter unconfined)* Oh yeah and next you'll be telling me Elvis is in the kitchen.
LOLA Your useless great nephew is about to be evicted – permanently which, ipso facto, puts you, Queen Victoria, front of the queue in the exit lounge.

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GAW (Sarcastic) Oh really? Was it something I said?
Crossfade spots - spot now on LOLA and JUSTIN

LOLA (Snarls) **Get lost, Fogie.**
(JUSTIN starts his conversation at highlighted words above)

JUSTIN (Oozing) I don't think we've met. I'm Justin but you can call me any time.

DITZI (Disguised voice) Hi. I'm Dick Turnip.

JUSTIN Hello Dick. (Pause for effect) I was speaking to you.

DITZI (Mimics him) Hello Turnip. (Pause for effect) I was speaking to you.

JUSTIN You remind me of someone I once knew.

DITZI Ditto

JUSTIN How about we get outa this dump and try making whoopee?
Crossfade spots - spot now on TOM and KEVIN

DITZI (Sarcastic) **Oh whoopee.**
(KEVIN starts his conversation at highlighted words above)

KEVIN You've gotta help me, please, I'm in real trouble.

TOM Who are you? How did you get in here? And that looks Justin's Santa suit.

KEVIN I'm the gunman who burst into your flat and scared your wife.

TOM (Shocked) Hell's bells! So you really do exist?

KEVIN But I won't exist if the Mob find me. I'll be brown bread.

TOM (Pointing) What have you done?

KEVIN Nothing much. Just ripped off the Mob.

TOM (Twigs) You mean that madman outside is looking for you?

KEVIN Excellent plot of the summary.

TOM (Confused) I think you mean excellent summary of the plot.

KEVIN Whatever.
LIGHTING switch to blue wash
(EVERYONE freezes. BOBBY enters from front door and freezes inside room)
Spot BOBBY

BOBBY (Blows whistle) Police! Open this door!

OTHERS (Yell at BOBBY) It is open!
Kill SPOT

FX *Hurry music for ten seconds*
(Everyone moves. BOBBY exits to kitchen, DITZI crosses to TOM, JUSTIN crosses to DAW on settee, and KEVIN crosses to LOLA on garden seat – please avoid collisions)

FX *Music stops*
Blackout with spot on GAW and JUSTIN on settee

SEGMENT 5

GAW How can I ever thank you for such wonderful financial advice?

JUSTIN (Spreads hands) Darling Great Aunt, what can I say? My mission in life is to make others happy.

GAW You've made me more than happy. So happy in fact I'm delirious.

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JUSTIN *(A tad unsettled)* Well that's really nice. *(Pause)* So tell me about your wonderful old donkeys.

GAW I'm looking at one.

JUSTIN *(Stunned)* Sorry?

GAW I'm looking at the financial genius who's just been stitched up like a kipper.

JUSTIN *(Turning nasty)* Now don't get smart with me you old bag.

GAW You should've read the small print, Mr Ponzi. *(JUSTIN feels in his pocket for their contract. He starts to read)* On the back, Loser.

JUSTIN *(Turns to back page and reads aloud)* 'I agree to donate 200 grand to the Save the Old Donkey Farm within 30 days.' What?

GAW I played the "little old lady will sign anything routine" and you, Muggins, fell for it.

JUSTIN *(Furious)* This is not legal.

GAW Lola Montez begs to differ. Now, you've got your copy and *(Patting chest)* I've got mine.

Crossfade spots - spot now on LOLA and KEVIN

GAW *(Raucous laughter. JUSTIN hops up and we see him in the blue wash fuming looking into garden)*

(LOLA starts her conversation at highlighted laughter above)

LOLA I know who you are. You're the lunatic gunman who threatened to kill me.

KEVIN I would never have shot you. I panicked.

LOLA You failed to stiff my moronic boyfriend but worse, you wrecked my shoes.

KEVIN It's the Mob, they're after me, they've made me desperate.

LOLA I'm going to hand you over to the cops.

KEVIN *(Sudden change, mightily grateful)* Oh will you, please? You thank, you thank. *(Grabs her hand and kisses it. She pulls it away in disgust)*

LOLA Get off. *(Annoyed)* And it's thank you not you thank.

KEVIN The cops'll protect me from the Mob.

LOLA You wish. *(Curious, looking him over)* So tell me, what's it like being a criminal?

KEVIN Oh it's bliss. Best lifestyle ever. Ah, except when the Mob catch me and cut off my tentacles.

LOLA I think you mean ... *(Looks at him strangely)* Tell me, how do you handle boredom?

KEVIN Boredom? What's boredom? I've never heard of it. My life is one adventure big. *(Pause, he's learning)* Sorry, big adventure.

LOLA *(She's thinking)* Yeah but does it pay?

KEVIN *(Warming to her)* Does it pay? Are you kidding? *(Indicates rucksack)* I've got two hundred K in here plus the key to a cocaine load of shed.

LOLA You mean a shed load of cocaine.

KEVIN It's worth a mint.

LOLA *(She's thinking still)* So what's it worth if I help you escape?

KEVIN *(Stunned)* Are you serious?

LOLA Just answer the damn question.

As Farce As You Can 31

KEVIN Ah, you can have half of everything or we split it fifty-fifty; you choose.
LOLA And you're sure there's no boredom in your life?
KEVIN None. Every day is different and filled with heart-pumping excitement.
LOLA *(Depressed)* My life is riddled with boredom. *(Is the evil one crying?)*
KEVIN *(Is the mobster caring?)* Hey, none of that.
LOLA *(Snaps out of it)* I need a new life, a riverting life filled with danger and delirious titillation.
KEVIN I could help with the tits.
LOLA *(Bemoaning her fate)* Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?
KEVIN *(Sees a win win situation)* You wanna hook up with me, babe. Re-battery your charges. Go on, grab the horns by the bull.
(They look at one another then speak together)
BOTH *(Fierce)* Bull by the horns.
(They laugh and in the blue wash we see them scamper to the bathroom and disappear)
Crossfade spots - spot now on TOM and DITZI
TOM You're still here I see.
DITZI I am and must apologize for overstaying my welcome.
TOM Don't apologize, it's been a delight to meet you, and anyway, now we're in the same boat.
DITZI I'm sorry?
TOM My now former fiancée has kicked me out of this, *her* apartment, meaning I'm homeless.
DITZI Well the least I can do is to return the favour. While you're looking for somewhere new, your ensuite room upstairs awaits, kind sir.
TOM Wow, that's ... fantastic. But what about your flat mate? Or is she also your ... close friend? *(Hasty correction)* Not that it's wrong or any of my business.
DITZI Ah, you mean the flat mate, the one who ran off and left behind my satchel, with me out in the cold wearing next to nothing.
TOM I thought you looked lovely. *(Twigs)* Your satchel?
DITZI Yes, there's a slight problem with my girlfriend. *(Pause)* She doesn't exist.
TOM *(Confused)* What?
DITZI I live alone. I haven't got a flat mate.
TOM But ...
DITZI I think this might be the cue for confession time music.
FX *Romantic music begins softly*
TOM Why am I suddenly nervous? *(Looking around)* And what's with the special mood music.
DITZI Does the word denouement come to mind?
TOM *(Surprised)* Already? Whatever happened to *three-act* plays?
DITZI I need to get home.
FX *Blue wash lighting crossfades and changes to red wash*
TOM *(Looking around again)* And now we have mood lighting?
DITZI When I knocked on your door I was carrying a satchel.

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TOM I remember. It was your security blanket.
DITZI It's my satchel.
TOM Oh?
DITZI It contains notes for my PhD thesis.
TOM I see. So no girlfriend and no gentlemen's club employment wearing just a smile?
DITZI And no loopy name of Ditzi.
TOM Pity, I like Ditzi. So what's the thesis?
DITZI its title is *The Exponential Growth of Chauvinism Since Feminism*.
TOM Wow, that's a mouthful.
DITZI My supervisor is a disciple of Woke.
TOM I see. So to research your opus you dropped in on your local guinea pig.
DITZI *(Nodding)* Guilty as charged, your Honour. Will you ever forgive me?
TOM Have done so already. *(Pause)* But just out of curiosity, how did I score?
DITZI Very well. Actually I gave up on any research once I met the occupier.
TOM I need time to think about that.
DITZI You really impressed me, Godfrey. *(They smile at the joke)*
TOM So will I get a mention in the Acknowledgements?
DITZI You're already top of the list.
TOM And Santa? How did they score?
DITZI Both were way out of your league.
(Pause. Both continue to struggle. Who will be first to commit?)
TOM Well, I guess I need to pack.
DITZI Can I help?
TOM Ah, I think handling unwashed smalls would not be a good start to ...
DITZI A new relationship?
TOM You took the words right out of my mouth. *(Pauses. Softer)* Out of your simply adorable mouth.
(Pause before they lean in and kiss lightly and briefly)
DITZI I'll grab my satchel and go upstairs.
TOM Have you got your key, Doctor?
DITZI It's under the doormat. *(Pause. Neither knows what to say)* The spare will be under your pillow.
FX *Music fades*
TOM I'll see you soon. Bye.
DITZI Bye.
(They turn to head off but stop when BOBBY enters from front door)
BOBBY *(Spot hits BOBBY who blows whistle)* This is the police. The emergency is over.
Normal lighting resumes
KEVIN *(Enters from bathroom in original outfit. LOLA follows. Both nervous)* Have you caught the mobster? Is he cactus?
BOBBY *(Embarrassed)* Not exactly, sir.
GAW Try either yes or no.

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- BOBBY** It would appear the malfeasant has managed to circumvent the impenetrable wall of steel, police dogs and state-of-the-art technology to somehow have mysteriously disappeared.
- LOLA** Is that police-speak for 'he got away'?
- BOBBY** I can neither confirm nor deny the situation but all of you are now free to leave. *(JUSTIN exits to bathroom. BOBBY moves to front door)* We believe the mobster is hunting a fellow criminal wearing a Santa suit. *(BOBBY exits)*
- KEVIN** *(Heading for front door. Speaking to LOLA)* Right, we're outa here.
- LOLA** *(Following)* Amen to that. *(LOLA stops at door, turns and yells back at TOM)* I'm off. Little Tommy Tucker, for some fun and excitement with a real man, and when I come back, *(Points threatening)* you'd better be gone.
- TOM** *(Calls back)* Okay. Bye, *(Pause)* neighbour.
(LOLA pauses, confused, but scoffs and exits after KEVIN. TOM exits to bedroom and DITZI goes to settee to collect her satchel where GAW has remained)
- GAW** So Dick Turnip, what's happening?
- DITZI** Quite a bit. Have a guess who's moving in with me upstairs?
- GAW** *(Thrilled)* Not Godfrey?
- DITZI** Otherwise known as Tom a.k.a. your illustrious great nephew.
- GAW** *(Excited)* Oh Humpty Dumpty be praised. And I've got my own news. I've just conned the conman into handing over his fortune for my donkey retirement home.
- DITZI** You've what? *(Hugging GAW)* Oh congratulations. It's been one hell of a morning. *(Starts to remove outfit)* Now I must return your costume.
- GAW** No, no, no. I'll go as I am.
- DITZI** A nun at a fancy dress party as a vegetable?
- GAW** Yes, I'll be Sister Aubergine. *(Pulls out sides of robe)* Wotcha reckon?
- DITZI** *(Laughing)* Come upstairs and check out Tom's new pad.
(They head towards the front door. GAW has her rucksack full of cash and DITZI her satchel with thesis notes)
- GAW** His new pad with his own bed?
- DITZI** Well for starters anyway.
- GAW** Is it suitable for Humpty Dumpty?
- DITZI** Possibly, even rumpy pumpy.
(They exit laughing. The room is empty. Silence for a few seconds. Then MOBSTER is heard calling outside. He is played by BOBBY or NODDY or by half of each. He's dressed in all black with black mask a la Zorro and carries a fake gun. It could be a fake blunderbuss or something equally ridiculous)
- MOBSTER** *(Off stage)* Come out your scumbag. The Mob will have blood. *(He bangs on door and gets no response. More banging)* Open this door or I'll down it smash.
- TOM** *(Enters from bedroom carrying holdall. Calls)* Oi, keep it down. The owner's shot through.
(TOM puts holdall on the settee then decamps to kitchen. We hear sounds of bottles, jars etc being placed in cardboard box or supermarket bag)
Mine ... hers ... hers ... mine ... mine ...

As Farce As You Can 34

(He keeps sorting as bathroom door opens and JUSTIN, as Santa, peers out. He hopes his disguise will allow him to escape not realizing his disguise is his death sentence. He tip toes towards the French doors when suddenly MOBSTER looms large)

MOBSTER *(In garden, roars)* Vengeance is mine!

(Three things happen simultaneously. MOBSTER bursts through the French doors so quickly he sprawls on the floor in front of the settee dropping gun in the process, TOM enters from kitchen and JUSTIN, as Santa, dives into the cupboard)

TOM Hey! Who the hell are you?

MOBSTER *(Struggles to get up, find the gun and aim at TOM)* You're dead, Bud. The Mob wants your spike on a head.

TOM I think you mean, your head on a spike.

MOBSTER Think you can stiff the Mob, huh? Say bye bye, Bud. *(Prepares to shoot)*

TOM *(Panics)* No! Wait! You've got the wrong man.

MOBSTER Oh yeah. *(Indicating holdall on settee)* You've even got the bag with the Mob's goodies. There, look.

TOM *(Sees holdall)* Trust me, you don't want those goodies.

MOBSTER Open the bag. *(Pause, louder)* Now!

TOM Okay. *(Opens bag)*

MOBSTER Hold up the cash.

TOM You asked for it. *(TOM holds up a bunch of unwashed smalls)*

MOBSTER *(Falls back in fear as if confronted by the plague)* Ahhh!

TOM *(Replaces clothing)* I did warn you.

MOBSTER *(Threatening TOM, indicates bedroom)* Right, get moving. It's hidden in there.

TOM *(Being forced into bedroom)* I tell you I'm not your man. *(They exit)*

(Pause. JUSTIN opens cupboard and peers out. Coast is clear so he tip-toes to front door. He gets there but it won't open. He panics and even more so when TOM is forced out with MOBSTER behind him. TOM freezes and JUSTIN turns and does the same. MOBSTER spots his man)

MOBSTER It's him! It's Santa!

(MOBSTER pushes past TOM, stops and aims at the frozen and trapped JUSTIN)

JUSTIN *(Desperate)* Don't shoot! *(Dropping to his knees)* I'm not the real Santa.

MOBSTER Okay. I promise not to shoot until *after* you money over the hand.

TOM I think you mean, 'hand over the money'.

MOBSTER *(Losing it)* Look, just gimme the cash.

JUSTIN *(Desperate, crying from shame as much as his loss of cash)* I gave all my money, *all* of it to Great Aunt Wilhelmina Rolls-Canardly Get-a-Laugh for her donkey farm.

MOBSTER *(Suddenly changes to softie, lowers gun)* Ahhh, did you really? That's so sweet. *(To TOM)* Isn't he just the nicest guy?

TOM *(Tells the truth, shaking head)* No, he's a Ponzi prick.

MOBSTER *(Back to nasty)* You're right. *(Raises gun)* Okay, I'll take the payment in blood. *(JUSTIN accepts his end. Just as MONSTER'S about to pull the trigger, a knock sounds)*

FX *Angry door knocking*

MOBSTER *(Unsure. To TOM)* What's happening? Who's outside?

LOLA *(Calling)* Thomas, open this door. If you've changed the locks, I'll kill you.

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TOM That is Atilla the Hun.
MOBSTER *(Shocked)* What!?! Not *the* Atilla the Hun?
TOM He smashed the Balkans and invaded Rome.
MOBSTER *(Gasps)* He topped the Mafia?
JUSTIN Look, could we get on please? Am I gunna be shot or what?
FX *More door banging*
LOLA I'm coming in, Thomas and when I do ...
(JUSTIN decides to flee. He takes off and dives behind settee. MOBSTER turns to shoot him just as the door is forced open and LOLA bursts in followed by KEVIN. MOBSTER is confused. He points gun at the disappeared JUSTIN and the newly-arrived ZOLA and her new boyfriend. KEVIN nearly dies)
KEVIN *(Terrified, hiding behind LOLA, babbling)* It's Slasher Smith.
LOLA *(Fuming at TOM)* So you're sub-letting *my* apartment already.
TOM *(Behind MOBSTER, intimate)* Meet Attila the Hun.
LOLA Both of you – out! Now!
MOBSTER *(Obsequious)* Sure, Atilla, I'm leave to happy.
TRIO *(LOLA, KEVIN and TOM)* You mean, happy to leave.
MOBSTER Gotcha.
(Suddenly JUSTIN sees his chance. He stands and races to French doors and exits. MOBSTER spots him and sets off in pursuit)
MOBSTER Oi!
(Remaining TRIO are nonplussed but not for long)
FX *Two gunshots*
LOLA *(Racing after the fugitive and his would-be murderer)* Not the geraniums! *(LOLA exits followed by TOM and KEVIN. From offstage)* Get off my lawn!
(Pause. GAW and DITZI enter carefully via open front door. Both wear tee-shirts and slacks. GAW's shirt is a face of a donkey and DITZI's has the slogan Back to Front)
DITZI *(Looking around)* There's no-one here. I'm sure they were gunshots.
GAW From a Glock 457.
DITZI *(Impressed)* Wow!
GAW *(It's no big deal)* I was in the Girl Guides.
DITZI Shall we call the police?
GAW What, Bobby and Noddy?
DITZI I'm worried someone may have been hurt.
GAW You mean Godfrey?
DITZI Yes, the two-legged one.
FX *Music begins – it's for the Curtain Calls. Start soft with a crescendo reaching its peak once the bows begin*
GAW *(Leading DITZI to French Doors)* C'mon, let's go and find your favourite donkey.
(They exit. No sooner have they gone then JUSTIN stumbles in being pursued by MOBSTER wearing the Groucho mask instead. They are both knackered. They stop, apart, DC puffing and wheezing)
JUSTIN *(Hands on knees)* I give up.
MOBSTER *(Waves gun)* I can't even pull the bloody trigger.
JUSTIN Can we put off the execution until Act Three?

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MOBSTER Good idea. *(Surprised, pause)* Is there an Act Three?

FX *Music volume increases*

JUSTIN Who cares? *(Pause)* You can go first.

MOBSTER *(Confused)* What?

(Still looking at MOBSTER, JUSTIN nods towards the audience. MOBSTER looks at audience and twigs. He forces a weak grin. JUSTIN steps back and applauds as MOBSTER steps forward and takes his bow. He then steps back and returns the favour as JUSTIN takes his bow. Both actors are then apart allowing the others to fill the space.

GAW enters through French doors, takes her bow and moves to beside JUSTIN. LOLA and KEVI enter together, take individual bows. LOLA moves to beside MONSTER and KEVIN to beside GAW.

DITZI and TOM enter; take individual bows with DITZI beside KEVIN and TOM beside LOLA. COMPANY bow)

Of course these are only suggestions. Break a leg!

Curtain

www.foxplays.com
www.cenfoxbooks.com

More Comedies from Cenarth Fox

Agatha Crispie



Agatha Christie and her mystery stories are well-known. But who has heard of her contemporary, the completely unknown writer of mystery stories, Agatha Crispie? In the south of England not long after WW1, Agatha Crispie scribbles away. Her second husband, Archibald Walloman, is big on digging. He owns half of Cornwall. Agatha's mother-in-law and step-daughter are outstanding snobs and regard Agatha's literary efforts as nothing short of scandalous. Even Archibald demands that his wife should attend to dinner parties and flower arranging. Only Pimms, Agatha's long-serving tippy maid stands by the unpublished author.

One day a well-known writer, Dorothy S. Layers, pays a visit and Archibald is bowled over. But horror of horrors. The lights go out and Archie is left with a body in the library. A body with a peg on its nose. Archie rushes out but when he returns the body is missing. Agatha is fascinated and wants the police to solve the crime. The others are furious. They compromise and the little old spinster from the village is invited to investigate. Miss Mary Mead has a reputation for solving crimes. And Miss Mead *does* solve the mystery with shocking results. So shocking that Agatha is hounded into submission by her rotten relatives. This could mean Agatha's classics will never see the light of day. The world will never read *Murder on the Oriental Express*, *Witness for the Defence* and *The Rat Trap*.

Suddenly, Agatha disappears. But where? Pimms is concerned about the ashes in the fireplace. Oh no! Could they be Agatha's ashes? Has she been murdered! Or worse. She's done herself in! The ashes are scattered in the rose garden. Everyone is sworn to secrecy. Absolutely no scandal! The plot thickens. The new Belgian butler arrives. Hercules Grey-Cells is more like a detective. Enter Chief Inspector Sap from Scotland Yard. And when Miss Mary Mead returns, the family are in a spin. A comedy made hilarious if you know anything of the great Dame Agatha and her tales.

Are you one of those readers of mystery novels who find Agatha Christie's tortured plots, blind alleys and obscure clues frustrating? Do you become exasperated by the bumbling policemen, shudder at Poirot's mannerisms or long to strangle Miss Marple? Then this is the play for you. Cenarth Fox's sendup of the Christie genre takes us on a worldwind tour of Agatha's quirky characters and throws them into situations which audiences would find familiar but which include an unexpected twist or two of their own. Thankfully the obnoxious characters get their comeuppance in the end while Grey-Cells and Miss Mead [aka Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple] ride off into the sunset. It's all done in a gently whimsical way so, despite some wild wintry weather on the night I attended, we all went home with smiling faces. **Theatrecraft**

Our production of Agatha Crispie went extremely well, sold out audiences 4 nights. They loved it. Thank you!

Powassan Players Canada

A wonderful evening of entertainment. Radio Eastern Theatre

I was delighted to see something so different. PADS

This cleverly constructed play takes us on a whimsical journey into the life of Agatha Christie, I mean Crispie, an author struggling for recognition and acceptance with murder, mayhem and delicious revenge. A brilliant cast of readily recognizable characters was given a new lease of life through the fertile imagination of its playwright. Marie

Ryan Inner FM On Stage

Our audiences thoroughly enjoyed our season of Agatha Crispie. Barossa Valley Drama Society

This production is a hilarious spoof on the writings of Agatha Christie and is impressively directed by Winston Williams. All the characters are extremely stupid and the plot is as improbable as those of the original Agatha, but it is a cleverly constructed little play and is performed by a talented bunch of actors who will have you laughing out loud and listening for those ridiculous references to some of Christie's book titles such as the absolutely essential "body in the library", the extremely thick and overconfident policemen, the enigmatic and sharp Miss Mary Mead (Miss Marples), Hercules, and, of course – The Mousetrap!! Yass Repertory Theatre

It'll Be All Wrong on the Night

2 or 3M, 4F, comedy, 90 minutes

The correct saying is, "It'll be all *right* on the night".



It'll Be All Wrong On The Night is about staging a play when things *don't* go as planned. A nightmare for every actor, director, audio/lighting operator, and stage manager. An actor falls sick during the play and is replaced by an unrehearsed technician from the bio box. I mean he's seen the play a few times in rehearsal but he can't act to save himself. A friend of the technician, who just happens to be in the audience, takes over the technical duties. On stage, the unrehearsed actor is struggling and the totally unrehearsed technician in the bio box is in even deeper doo-doo's. The sound effects don't work or do when they shouldn't, scenery gets stuck, lights miscue and the theatre catches fire, well it appears to catch fire. Apart from that, everything runs like clockwork.

This is a real test for a set designer and builder and of course the cast who have to act as if the well-rehearsed script is not rehearsed at all.

The play was very well received – we found that Act 1 produced a few laughs and was taken fairly seriously, so that when we started Act 2 with a completely new Brad (25 years older than the original!) they were taken by surprise. The scene where Amanda and Brad get to know each other rather well on the sofa produced fits of laughter too. All in all, it was a very successful production. HATS

All Wrong on the Night was a huge success. One of the funniest plays we've done. The last scene was absolute chaos. All the cast and crew had a ball and the audience response was amazing. **Yass Rep Theatre**



This Is Your Captain Speaking

Dinner-theatre comedy, 10-20 roles (M and F), 90 minutes
It's a play, musical, pantomime, movie and a dinner show.



You don't have to have an interval but you could have the main meal time as your interval. It's hard to explain but fabulous to perform and watch. It's a madcap, high-flying comedy. It's a three-set show where the audience moves to three locations. The show suits a hall rather than a theatre but everything is flexible. Your foyer is an airport terminal with shops, check-in venue and crazy characters. From the foyer, your audiences pass through Customs with all sorts of 'interesting' examinations. They finally settle in the plane and prepare for take-off. On the flight, they 'enjoy' a slide show, a sing-a-long and a medical emergency.

Your pilot is short-sighted and the plane is running low on fuel. I mean, there's even a priest called Father Forgive-me. True. A great show for people who don't normally go to live theatre.

If you're looking for something different, *This is Your Captain Speaking* is for you. The script allows for you to add your own entertainment items. When the in-flight movie fails, the crew entertain the passengers. You can serve a simple basket supper with the more expensive ticket holders getting better food in the pointy end of the plane. And by milking this 'social divide' you'll get audience members laughing and interacting well before the main show even starts. Great for cast/audience interaction.

An absolute smash **Lachlan Arts Council**

Very well received **Big River Repertory**

What a BIG success Captain proved to be. We included concert items with our passenger actors performing. Our catering classes in home economics provided authentic meals for both first class and economy passengers. It was highly successful. Please send a catalogue of your plays as we would be very interested in performing another of your great shows. **Glenmore HS**

The experience of a lifetime, a nutty night of laughter and mayhem enjoyed by all. What did you enjoy most about This Is Your Captain Speaking? All of it! **Mordialloc Light Opera Society**

An out of the ordinary, fun and laughter-filled evening. An interesting dinner theatre production that will have its audience raving for months to come. **Gordon F Kells HS Canada**

The pace was fast and furious from the start with the traditional divide between cast and audience fading quickly. The cast obviously had a great time and the audience was gathered up by this enthusiasm. The action was happening everywhere at once and those in the audience were more a member of the cast than an observer. **Narracan News**

Lots of short comedies here <https://www.foxplays.com/mini-plays/>

