

Garry Lejeune (Roger), Brooke Ashton (Vicki), Lloyd,
Dotty (Mrs. Clackett)

Side 3

14

NOISES OFF

(The sound of a key in the lock.)

LLOYD. Hold it.

(The front door opens. On the doorstep stands ROGER, holding a cardboard box. He is about thirty, and has the well-appointed air of a man who handles high-class real estate.)

ROGER. ... I have a housekeeper, yes, but this is her afternoon off.

LLOYD. Hold it, Garry. Dotty!

(Enter VICKI through the front door. She is a desirable property in her early twenties, well-built and beautifully maintained throughout.)

Start //

~~ROGER. So we've got the place entirely to ourselves.~~

LLOYD. Hold it, Brooke. Dotty!

(Enter DOTTY from the study.)

DOTTY. Come back?

LLOYD. Yes, and go out again with the *newspaper*.

DOTTY. The newspaper? Oh, the newspaper.

LLOYD. You put the receiver back, you leave the sardines, and you go out with the newspaper.

GARRY. Here you are, love.

DOTTY. Sorry, love.

GARRY. *(Embraces her.)* Don't worry, love. It's only the technical.

LLOYD. It's the dress, Garry, honey. It's the dress rehearsal.

GARRY. So when was the technical?

LLOYD. So when's the dress? We open tomorrow!

GARRY. Well, we're all thinking of it as the technical. *(To DOTTY.)* Aren't we, love?

DOTTY. It's all those words, my sweetheart.

GARRY. Don't worry about the words, Dotty, my pet.

DOTTY. Coming up like oranges and lemons.

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

BROOKE. *(Her thoughts elsewhere.)* Sorry?

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

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

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

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

LLOYD. Beautifully put, Garry.

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

BROOKE. Sorry?

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

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

LLOYD. I know.

GARRY. Thanks, Lloyd.

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

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

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

BROOKE. Yes?

LLOYD. Are you in?

BROOKE. In?

LLOYD. Are you there?

BROOKE. What?

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

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

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

LLOYD. And you take the newspaper.

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

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

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

DOTTY. And off at last I go.

LLOYD. Leaving the receiver.

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

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

VICKI. Great. And this is all yours?

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

VICKI. It must have cost a bomb.

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

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

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

only just do it. I mean...

VICKI. Right, then.

ROGER. *(Putting down the box and opening the flight bag.)* We won't bother to chill the champagne.

VICKI. All these doors!

ROGER. Oh, only a handful, really. *(He opens the various doors one after another to demonstrate.)* Study... Kitchen.. And a self-contained service flat for the housekeeper.

VICKI. Terrific. And which one's the ... ?

ROGER. What?

VICKI. You know ...

ROGER. The usual offices? Through here.

(He opens the downstairs bathroom door for her.)

VICKI. Fantastic.

(Exit VICKI into the bathroom. Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study, without the newspaper.)

~~MRS. CLACKETT. Now I've lost the sardines ...~~

~~*(Mutual surprise. ROGER closes the door to the bathroom, and slips the champagne back into the bag.)*~~

~~ROGER. I'm sorry. I thought there was no one here.~~

~~MRS. CLACKETT. I'm not here. I'm off, only it's the royal you know, where they wear those hats, and they're all covered in fruit, and who are you?~~

~~ROGER. I'm from the agents.~~

~~MRS. CLACKETT. From the agents?~~

~~ROGER. Squire, Squire, Hackham and Dudley.~~

~~MRS. CLACKETT. Oh. Which one are you, then? Squire, Squire, Hackham, or Dudley?~~

~~ROGER. I'm Tramplemain.~~

~~MRS. CLACKETT. Walking in here as if you owned the place! I thought you was a burglar.~~

Stop