

Side 6

28

NOISES OFF

~~SELSDON.) Oh.~~

~~SELSDON. Beer? In the wardrobe?~~

~~LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Tim, you need a break. Why don't you sit down quietly upstairs and do all the company's VAT?~~

~~TIM. VAT, right.~~

~~LLOYD. (Discreetly.) And Tim — just in case he and the gear do walk off together one night, order yourself a spare Burglar costume.~~

~~TIM. Spare Burglar costume.~~

~~LLOYD. Two spare Burglar costumes. One to fit you, one to fit Poppy. I want a plentiful supply of spare Burglars on hand for any eventuality.~~

~~TIM. Two spare Burglars.~~

~~(Exit TIM into the wings.)~~

~~BELINDA. He has been on his feet for forty-eight hours, Lloyd.~~

~~LLOYD. (Calling.) Don't fall down, Tim. We may not be insured.~~

~~SELSDON. So what's next on the bill?~~

~~LLOYD. Well, Selsdon, I thought we might try a spot of rehearsal.~~

~~SELSDON. Oh, I won't, thank you.~~

~~LLOYD. You won't?~~

~~SELSDON. You all go ahead. I'll sit and watch you. This is the beer in the wardrobe, is it?~~

~~BELINDA. No, my sweet, he wants us to rehearse.~~

~~SELSDON. Yes, but I think we've got to rehearse, haven't we?~~

~~LLOYD. Rehearse, yes! Well done, Selsdon. I knew you'd think of something. Right, from Belinda and Freddie's entrance...~~

~~(Enter POPPY from the wings, alarmed.)~~

Start //

POPPY. Lloyd...

LLOYD. What? What's happened now?

POPPY. The police!

LLOYD. The police?

POPPY. They've found an old man. He was lying unconscious in

a doorway just across the street.

LLOYD. Oh. Yes. Thank you.

POPPY. They say he's very dirty and rather smelly, and I thought oh my God, because...

LLOYD. Thank you, Poppy.

POPPY. Because when you get close to Selsdon...

BELINDA. POPPY!

POPPY. No, I mean, if you stand anywhere near Selsdon you can't help noticing this very distinctive...

(She stops, sniffing.)

SELSDON. *(Putting his arm round her.)* I'll tell you something, Poppy. Once you've got it in your nostrils you never forget it. Sixty years now and the smell of the theatre still haunts me.

(Exit SELSDON into the study.)

BELINDA. Oh, bless him!

LLOYD. Tell me, Poppy, love — how did you get a job like this, that requires tact and understanding? You're not somebody's girlfriend, are you?

(POPPY gives him a startled look.)

BELINDA. Don't worry, Poppy, my sweet. He truly did not hear.

(Enter SELSDON from the study.)

SELSDON. Not here?

LLOYD. Yes, yes, there!

BELINDA. Sit down, my precious.

DOTTY. Go back to sleep.

LLOYD. You're not on for another twenty pages yet.

(Exit SELSDON into the study. Exit POPPY into the wings.)

LLOYD. And on we go. *(He goes back down into the auditorium.)* Dotty in the kitchen, wildly roasting sardines. Freddie and Belinda waiting impatiently outside the front door. Garry and Brooke disappearing tremulously into the bedroom. Time sliding irrevocably into the past.

(Exeunt DOTTY into the service quarters, GARRY and BROOKE upstairs into the bedroom, and FREDERICK through the front door.)

BELINDA. *(To LLOYD, with lowered voice.)* Aren't they sweet?

LLOYD. What?

BELINDA. *(Points to the bedroom and the service quarters.)*

Garry and Dotty.

LLOYD. Garry and Dotty?

BELINDA. Sh!

LLOYD. *(Lowers his voice.)* What? You mean they're an item? Those two? Tramplemain and Mrs. Clackett?

BELINDA. It's supposed to be a secret.

LLOYD. But she's old enough to be...

BELINDA. Sh! Didn't you know?

LLOYD. I'm just God, Belinda, love. I'm just the one with the English degree, I don't know anything.

(Enter GARRY from the bedroom.)

GARRY. What's happening?

LLOYD. I don't like to imagine, Garry, honey.

(Exit BELINDA through the front door.)

GARRY. I mean, what are we waiting for?

(Enter DOTTY from the service quarters, inquiringly.)

LLOYD. I don't know what you're waiting for, Garry. Her sixteenth birthday?

Stop