

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.

ROGER. No, I just dropped in to ... go into a few things... *(The bathroom door opens. ROGER closes it.)* Well, to check some of the measurements... *(The bathroom door opens. ROGER closes it.)* Do one or two odd jobs... *(The bathroom door opens. ROGER closes it.)* Oh, and a client. I'm showing a prospective tenant over the house.

*(The bathroom door opens.)*

VICKI. What's wrong with this door?

*(ROGER closes it.)*

ROGER. She's thinking of renting it. Her interest is definitely aroused.

*(Enter VICKI from bathroom.)*

VICKI. That's not the bedroom.

ROGER. The bedroom? No, that's the downstairs bathroom and WC suite. And this is the housekeeper, Mrs. Crockett.

MRS. CLACKETT. Clackett, dear, Clackett.

VICKI. Oh. Hi.

ROGER. She's not really here.

MRS. CLACKETT. Only it's the royal, you know, with the hats.

ROGER. *(To MRS. CLACKETT.)* Don't worry about us.

MRS. CLACKETT. *(Picks up the sardines.)* I'll have the sound on low.

ROGER. We'll just inspect the house.

MRS. CLACKETT. Only now I've lost the newspaper.

*(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, carrying the sardines. Only she leaves them behind.)*

LLOYD. Sardines!

ROGER. I'm sorry about this.

VICKI. That's all right. We don't want the television, do we?

LLOYD. Sardines!

*(Enter DOTTY from the study.)*

*cont.*

DOTTY. I've forgotten the sardines.

GARRY. Lloyd! These sardines! They're driving us all mad! *Stop*

LLOYD. Something wrong with the sardines? Poppy!

GARRY. There's four plates of sardines coming on in Act One alone! They go here, they go there. *She* takes them — I take them. *(To BROOKE.)* I mean, don't you feel, you know?

BROOKE. *(Elsewhere again.)* Sorry?

GARRY. The sardines.

BROOKE. What sardines?

*(Enter POPPY, the assistant stage manager, from the wings.)*

POPPY. Change the sardines?

LLOYD. Make it four grilled turbot. Off the bone.

GARRY. *(To LLOYD.)* OK, it's all right for you. You're sitting out there. We're up here. We've got to *do* it. Plus we've got bags, we've got boxes. Plus doors. Plus words. You know what I mean?

DOTTY. We're not getting at you, Poppy, love. We think the sardines are lovely.

GARRY. I'm just trying to, you know.

LLOYD. So what *do* you want to change, Garry? The bags? The boxes? The doors?

DOTTY. We can't start *changing* things now, love!

GARRY. I'm just *saying*. Words. Doors. Bags. Boxes. Sardines.

Us. OK? I've made my point?

LLOYD. You certainly have, Garry. Got that, Poppy?

POPPY. Um. Well.

LLOYD. Right. On we go. From Dotty's exit. And Poppy...

POPPY. Yes?

LLOYD. Don't let this happen again.

POPPY. Oh. No.

*(Exit POPPY into the wings.)*

GARRY. Sorry, Lloyd. I just thought we ought to, do you know