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# Happy Birthday Me

A comedy

Simon Williams

(Based on the author's *Laying the Ghost*)

Samuel French — London  
[www.samuelyfrench-london.co.uk](http://www.samuelyfrench-london.co.uk)



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## CHARACTERS

**Margot Buchanan**, an actress

**Miss Freda Deacon**, an elderly actress

**Mrs Kidd**, the home administrator

**Sir Leo Buchanan**, an actor

**Lady Buchanan**, Leo's wife

**Sadie Croft**, a young actress

**Superman**, an unwelcome visitor

**Graham Latimer** (voice off)

The action takes place in the lounge of an actors' retirement home on the South coast

Time—the present

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(See also page ii)

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# HAPPY BIRTHDAY ME

## SCENE 1

*The lounge of an actors' retirement home on the South coast*

*A mobile phone is ringing as the CURTAIN rises*

*Freda, an eccentric elderly resident, takes off her iPod and answers it*

*During the following speech, Mrs Kidd, the home's administrator, enters. She is holding a newspaper*

**Freda** Hallo. This is Margot Buchanan's phone ... No, I'm someone else — never mind who ... A fellow resident, I'm in the room next door to hers ... Is that who I think it is? ... Aha, well, she doesn't want to speak to you ... We both don't. Because you're unspeakable and so are your films.

**Mrs Kidd** Good morning, Miss Deacon.

**Freda** *(hanging up hurriedly)* Morning, Matron.

**Mrs Kidd** So who was that?

**Freda** It was a wrong number, for Margot.

**Mrs Kidd** Is that right, Miss Deacon?

**Freda** Margot does not need to be harassed on her birthday, and not by that ocean-going twat.

**Mrs Kidd** You don't mean Sir Leo?

**Freda** I do. There's no point in trying to be pally with your exes, I say. I hated all mine.

**Mrs Kidd** *(opening her newspaper)* All over the front of the *Daily Mail*. Drunk as a lord apparently.

**Freda** (*studying the paper*) It used to be two fingers for a V-sign. Is this new one fingered thing European, do you suppose?

**Mrs Kidd** Well, I don't want Mrs Buchanan seeing it.

**Freda** If she does, we'd better take to the hills. When she heard he'd sold the Augustus John painting, she didn't speak for three days, not even to her bookmaker.

**Mrs Kidd** It touched a nerve. He can't need the money, surely.

**Freda** It's of her after all. It was a wedding present from her to him.

**Mrs Kidd** (*picking up and rattling a small money box*) Her swear box is nearly full as it is. I can't be charging enough.

**Freda** One pound for the F-word is a bit steep, but ten pence a pop for the odd "bugger" is a bargain. Happy birthday, darling.

*Margot enters*

**Margot** I could kill you, Freda. You've told everyone. There'll be cakes and speeches and God knows what. Ronnie Machin says he's arranged a kissogram from Hove.

**Mrs Kidd** It's all right, Mrs Buchanan, I'll make him cancel it.

**Margot** Good. He's an unspeakable little nerd. Am I allowed nerd, Mrs Kidd?

**Mrs Kidd** As it's your birthday.

**Margot** Just as a matter of interest, how stupid does everyone around here think I am?

**Freda** Compared to whom, my darling?

**Margot** All over the building, every single copy of the *Daily Mail* seems to have gone into auto-destruct. Apparently copies have been lost, damaged, defaced, burnt and even vomited on. (*Beat*) Did Arsenal lose again last night? Or — could it be dear old Leo?

**Freda** Of course it's Leo.

**Mrs Kidd** Is he dead?

**Freda** No.

**Margot** Don't tell me he's won an Oscar.

**Freda** (*showing her the paper*) There.

**Margot** (*peering*) Oh my God ... Is that his finger in the foreground?

**Freda** Yes. It's a kind of one-legged V-sign.

**Margot** Read me what it says.

**Freda** (*reading*) "*The Sheriff of the Universe* star, Sir Leo Buchanan, responded angrily to rumours about his personal life last night. He swung a punch at a journalist from a Sunday newspaper."

**Margot** *Cherchez la femme* again, is it?

**Freda** "Hunt the bimbo," it says here.

**Mrs Kidd** (*taking back the paper*) On page five, there's a picture of his wife. "Lady Buchanan stands by her man."

**Margot** I bet she does the — . How much for bitch?

*The telephone rings. Margot answers it*

(*Into the telephone*) Hallo ... Yes?

**Freda** Put it on speaker ...

*Margot puts it on speaker*

**Graham Latimer** (*off*) Hallo. Is that Margot Buchanan?

**Margot** Maybe.

**Graham Latimer** (*off*) It's Graham Latimer here. I'm with the *News of the World*. As Sir Leo's first wife, I wondered if you felt —

**Margot** Are you the one he bopped last night?

**Graham Latimer** (*off*) Yes.

**Margot** No comment.

**Graham Latimer** (*off*) Is that all?

**Margot** How about — no comment, scumbag. (*She hangs up*)

**Mrs Kidd** By the way, your visitor has arrived, Mrs Buchanan, she's waiting in my office.

**Margot** Visitor. What visitor?

**Mrs Kidd** Miss Sadie Croft. Actress — going to play Juliet. I'll fetch her.

**Margot** (*recalling*) Bugger. Bugger. Bugger.

**Mrs Kidd** That's rather extravagant, Mrs B.

*Margot puts coins in the money box*

**Margot** Bugger. Bugger. Bugger. (*She puts in three more coins*) I thought I'd put her off. Bound to be grungy.

**Mrs Kidd** I'd better bring you another pile of ten pence coins while I'm about it ...

*Mrs Kidd exits*

*The telephone rings. It's still on speaker*

**Margot** (*answering*) This is a recorded message. Please speak after the bleep. Bleeeeeep.

**Sir Leo** (*off*) Happy birthday. It's me. Leo. I just spoke to some old crone who said you wouldn't speak to me.

**Margot** (*into the telephone*) BOG OFF, LEO. (*Hanging up*) You weren't going to tell me?

**Freda** I thought you had enough on your plate with the kissogram.

**Margot** Thanks. (*A beat*) Funny, isn't it? I only have to hear his voice or see his picture and all the old symptoms come right back, the irritation, the nausea, the sense of foreboding.

*Sadie Croft enters. She overhears this last line*

**Sadie** Not about me I hope ...

**Margot** Ah, you must be ...

**Sadie** Sadie Croft.

**Margot** Of course. This is Freda Deacon.

**Sadie** Not *the* Freda Deacon?

**Freda** No — probably another one. It's Margot's birthday. Seventy.

**Sadie** Many happy returns. Actually I'm amazed you didn't cancel. You must get swamped with grungy young drama students.

**Margot** Good Lord, no. I've been looking forward to it, haven't I, Freda?

**Freda** Oh yes.

**Margot** I'm not sure I'll be any use to you. It's over forty years since I played Juliet.

**Sadie** Forty-three. With Leo Buchanan as your Romeo.

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