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SF PERUSALS

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

A Play in Three Acts

by Harold Pinter

SAMUEL FRENCH

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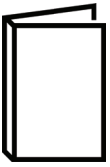

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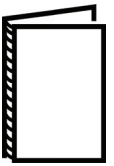

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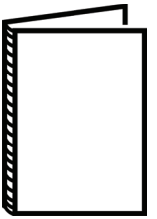

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harold Pinter was born in London in 1930. He lived with Antonia Fraser from 1975 until his death on Christmas Eve 2008. (They were married in 1980).

After studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the Central School of Speech and Drama, he worked as an actor under the stage name David Baron. Following his success as a playwright, he continued to act under his own name, on stage and screen. He last acted in 2006 when he appeared in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Royal Court Theatre, directed by Ian Rickson.

He wrote twenty-nine plays including *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *A Slight Ache*, *The Hothouse*, *The Caretaker*, *The Collection*, *The Lover*, *The Homecoming*, *Old Times*, *No Man's Land*, *Betrayal*, *A Kind of Alaska*, *One For The Road*, *The New World Order*, *Moonlight* and *Ashes to Ashes.* Sketches include *The Black and White*, *Request Stop*, *That's your Trouble*, *Night*, *Precisely*, *Apart From that* and the recently rediscovered, *Umbrellas*.

He directed twenty-seven theatre productions, including James Joyce's *Exiles*, David Mamet's *Oleanna*, seven plays by Simon Gray (one of which was *Butley* in 1971 which he directed the film of three years later) and many of his own plays including his last, *Celebration*, paired with his first, *The Room* at The Almeida Theatre, London in the spring of 2000.

He wrote twenty-one screenplays including *The Pumpkin Eater*, *The Servant*, *The Go-Between*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Sleuth*.

In 2005 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Other awards include the Companion of Honour for services to Literature, the Legion D'Honneur, the European Theatre Prize the Laurence Olivier Award and the Moliere D'Honneur for lifetime achievement. In 1999 he was made a Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature. Harold Pinter was awarded eighteen honorary degrees.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

Produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on the 18th June, 1964, with the following cast of characters

(in the order of their appearance)

PETEY BOLES	Newton Blick
MEG BOLES, his wife	Doris Hare
STANLEY WEBBER, a lodger	Bryan Pringle
LULU	Janet Suzman
GOLDBERG	Brewster Mason
MCCANN	Patrick Mage

Directed by Harold Pinter
Designed by Ralph Koltai

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the Play passes in the living-room of a house in a seaside town.

ACT I
A morning in Summer

ACT II
The evening of the same day

ACT III
The next morning
Time—the present

ACT I

SCENE—*The living-room of a house in a seaside town. A morning in Summer.*

The door to the hall is up centre and there are french windows right leading to the garden. A bay window left, with a built-in seat, overlooks the street. In the hall, the front door is left and a door right of the hall gives access to the kitchen. The staircase at the back of the hall runs up and off right. In the kitchen, a door right leads to the garden. A large serving-hatch is in the wall between the living-room and the kitchen. In the living-room there is a dining-table centre with upright chairs left, right, and above it; an armchair in the window bay down left; a sideboard under the serving-hatch and a serving-table above the bay window. A wooden cake-stand is in the corner up centre and a stool is in front of the armchair down left. A mirror hangs on the wall over the serving-table. At night the room is lit by an electric pendant centre, with the switch right of the hall door. In the kitchen, facing the hatch, there is the sink and the cooker. A dustbin can be seen outside the back door to the kitchen. Other suitable dressing can be added at the discretion of the Producer.

When the curtain rises, the living-room is empty and the serving-hatch is closed. The table is set for breakfast. **MEG BOLES** *is in the kitchen, washing up.* **PETEY BOLES** *enters by the french windows. He is a chair-attendant and carries his ticket-machine, his cash-bag and a newspaper. He puts the ticket-machine and bag on the sideboard then sits left of the table and opens his paper.* **MEG***'s voice comes through the hatch.*

MEG Is that you, Petey?

There is a pause.

Petey, is that you?

There is a pause.

Petey?

PETEY What?

MEG Is that you?

PETEY Yes, it's me.

MEG What? *(She opens the hatch and looks through)* Are you back?

PETEY Yes.

MEG I've got your cornflakes ready. *(She disappears and reappears with a plate of cornflakes)* Here's your cornflakes.

PETEY *rises, goes to the hatch, takes the plate from* **MEG**, *resumes his seat at the table, props up the paper and begins to eat.*

(she comes through the hall into the living-room and stands above the table) Are they nice?

PETEY Very nice.

MEG I thought they'd be nice. *(She sits right of the table)* You got your paper?

PETEY Yes.

MEG Is it good?

PETEY Not bad.

MEG What does it say?

PETEY Nothing much.

MEG You read me out some nice bits yesterday.

PETEY Yes, well, I haven't finished this one yet.

MEG Will you tell me when you come to something good?

PETEY Yes.

There is a pause.

MEG Have you been working hard this morning?

PETEY No. Just stacked a few of the old chairs. Cleaned up a bit.

MEG Is it nice out?

PETEY Very nice.

There is a pause.

MEG Is Stanley up yet?

PETEY I don't know. Is he?

MEG I don't know. I haven't seen him down yet.

PETEY Well then, he can't be up.

MEG Haven't you seen him down?

PETEY I've only just come in.

MEG He must be still asleep. *(She looks around the room, rises, goes to the sideboard, collects a pair of socks and darning materials from the drawer and returns to right of the table)* What time did you go out this morning, Petey? *(She sits right of the table)*

PETEY Same time as usual.

MEG Was it dark?

PETEY No, it was light.

MEG *(beginning to darn)* But sometimes you go out in the morning and it's dark.

PETEY That's in the Winter.

MEG Oh, in Winter.

PETEY Yes, it gets light later in Winter.

MEG Oh.

There is a pause.

What are you reading?

PETEY Someone's just had a baby.

MEG Oh, they haven't! Who?

PETEY Some girl.

MEG Who, Petey, who?

PETEY I don't think you'd know her.

MEG What's her name?

PETEY Lady Mary Splatt.

MEG I don't know her.

PETEY No.

MEG What is it?

PETEY *(studying the paper)* Er – a girl.

MEG Not a boy?

PETEY No.

MEG Oh, what a shame. I'd be sorry. I'd much rather have a little boy.

PETEY A little girl's all right.

MEG I'd much rather have a little boy.

There is a pause.

PETEY I've finished my cornflakes.

MEG Were they nice?

PETEY Very nice.

MEG *(putting aside her darning and rising)* I've got something else for you. *(She takes* **PETEY***'s plate and goes into the kitchen)*

PETEY Good.

MEG *appears at the hatch with two pieces of fried bread on a plate.*

MEG Here you are, Petey.

PETEY *rises, goes to the hatch, takes the plate, looks at it then resumes his seat left of the table.*

(she comes into the living-room, closes the door and stands above the table) Is it nice?

PETEY I haven't tasted it yet.

MEG I bet you don't know what it is.

PETEY Yes, I do.

MEG What is it, then?

PETEY Fried bread.

MEG That's right.

PETEY *eats.* **MEG** *watches him.*

PETEY Very nice.

MEG I knew it was. *(She sits right of the table and resumes darning)*

PETEY *(turning to her)* Oh, Meg, two men came up to me on the beach last night.

MEG Two men?

PETEY Yes. They wanted to know if we could put them up for a couple of nights.

MEG Put them up? Here?

PETEY Yes.

MEG How many men?

PETEY Two.

MEG What did you say?

PETEY Well, I said I didn't know. So they said they'd come round and find out.

MEG Are they coming?

PETEY Well, they said they would.

MEG Had they heard about us, Petey?

PETEY They must have done.

MEG Yes, they must have done. They must have heard this was a very good boarding house. It is. This house is on the list.

PETEY It is.

MEG I know it is.

PETEY They might turn up today. Can you do it?

MEG Oh, I've got that lovely room they can have.

PETEY You've got a room ready?

MEG I've got the room with the armchair all ready for visitors.

PETEY You're sure?

MEG Yes, that'll be all right then, if they come today.

PETEY Good.

MEG *rises, goes to the sideboard and replaces the darning materials and socks in the drawer.*

MEG I'm going to wake that boy.

PETEY There's a new show coming to the *Palace.*

MEG On the pier? *(She moves above the table)*

PETEY No. The *Palace,* in the town.

MEG Stanley could have been in it, if it was on the pier.

PETEY This is a straight show.

MEG What do you mean?

PETEY No dancing or singing.

MEG What do they do then?

PETEY They just talk.

There is a pause.

MEG Oh.

PETEY You like a song, eh, Meg?

MEG I like listening to the piano. I used to like watching Stanley play the piano. Of course, he didn't sing. *(She looks towards the hall door)* I'm going to call that boy. *(She moves to the halt door)*

PETEY Didn't you take him up his cup of tea?

MEG I always take him up his cup of tea. But that was a long time ago.

PETEY Did he drink it?

MEG I made him. I stood there till he did. *(She goes to the foot of the stairs)* I'm going to call him. *(She calls)* Stan! Stanny! *(She listens)* Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you if you don't come down. I'm coming up! I'm going to count three! One! Two! Three! I'm coming to get you!

MEG *exits up the stairs. In a moment, shouts are heard off upstairs from* **STANLEY** *and wild laughter from* **MEG.** **PETEY** *rises and takes his plate to the hatch. More shouts and laughter are heard.* **PETEY** *resumes his seat at the table. There is a silence.*

MEG *re-enters down the stairs and stands in the hall doorway, panting and arranging her hair.*

He's coming down. I told him if he didn't hurry up he'd get no breakfast.

PETEY That did it, eh?

MEG I'll get his cornflakes. *(She goes into the kitchen)*

PETEY *reads his paper.*

STANLEY WEBBER *enters down the stairs, comes into the living-room and sits above the table. He is unshaven, in his pyjama jacket and wears glasses.*

PETEY Morning, Stanley.

STANLEY Morning.

There is a silence. **MEG** *comes from the kitchen with a plate of cornflakes which she puts on the table in front of* **STANLEY.**

MEG *(right of* **STANLEY**) So he's come down at last, has he? He's come down at last for his breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he, Petey?

STANLEY *stares at the cornflakes.*

Did you sleep well?

STANLEY I didn't sleep at all.

MEG You didn't sleep at all? Did you hear that, Petey? Too tired to eat your breakfast, I suppose? Now you eat up those cornflakes like a good boy. Go on.

STANLEY *eats his cornflakes.*

STANLEY What's it like out today?

PETEY Very nice.

STANLEY Warm?

PETEY Well, there's a good breeze blowing.

STANLEY Cold?

PETEY No, no, I wouldn't say it was cold.

MEG What are the cornflakes like, Stan?

STANLEY Horrible.

MEG Those flakes? Those lovely flakes? You're a liar, a little liar. They're refreshing. It says so. For people when they get up late.

STANLEY The milk's off.

MEG It's not. Petey ate his, didn't you, Petey?

PETEY That's right.

MEG There you are then.

STANLEY All right, I'll go on to the second course.

MEG He hasn't finished the first course and he wants to go on to the second course!

STANLEY I feel like something cooked.

MEG Well, I'm not going to give it to you.

PETEY Give it to him.

MEG *(sitting right of the table)* I'm not going to.

There is a pause.

STANLEY No breakfast.

There is a pause.

All night I've been dreaming about this breakfast.

MEG I thought you said you didn't sleep.

STANLEY Day-dreaming. All night long. And now she won't give me any. Not even a crust of bread on the table.

There is a pause.

Well, I can see I'll have to go down to one of those smart hotels on the front.

MEG *(rising quickly)* You won't get a better breakfast there than here. *(She collects* **STANLEY***'s plate and goes into the kitchen)*

STANLEY *yawns broadly.*

(she appears at the hatch with a plate of fried bread) Here you are. You'll like this.

PETEY *rises, goes to the hatch, takes the plate from* **MEG**, *puts it on the table in front of* **STANLEY**, *then resumes his seat.*

STANLEY What's this?

PETEY Fried bread.

MEG *comes from the kitchen, closes the hall door and stands left of* **STANLEY**.

MEG Well, I bet you don't know what it is.

STANLEY Oh yes I do.

MEG What?

STANLEY Fried bread.

MEG He knew.

STANLEY What a wonderful surprise.

MEG You didn't expect that, did you?

STANLEY I bloody well didn't.

PETEY *(putting down his paper and rising)* Well, I'm off. *(He moves to the sideboard and collects his ticket-machine and bag)*

MEG You going back to work?

PETEY Yes.

MEG *(moving above the table)* Your tea! You haven't had your tea!

PETEY That's all right. No time now.

MEG I've got it made inside.

PETEY No, never mind. See you later. Ta-ta, Stan.

STANLEY Ta-ta.

PETEY *exits by the french windows.* **MEG** *moves to the french windows and looks after him.*

Tch, tch, tch, tch!

MEG *(turning; defensively)* What do you mean? *(She moves to right of the table)*

STANLEY You're a bad wife.

MEG I'm not. Who said I am?

STANLEY Not to make your husband a cup of tea. Terrible.

MEG He knows I'm not a bad wife.

STANLEY Giving him sour milk instead.

MEG It wasn't sour.

STANLEY Disgraceful.

MEG You mind your own business, anyway. *(She crosses to the window-seat left and fiddles with the cushions)*

STANLEY *eats.*

You won't find many better wives than me, I can tell you. I keep a very nice house and I keep it clean.

STANLEY Whoo!

MEG Yes! And this house is very well known, for a very good boarding house for visitors.

STANLEY Visitors? Do you know how many visitors you've had since I've been here?

MEG How many?

STANLEY One.

MEG Who?

STANLEY Me! I'm your visitor.

MEG You're a liar. This house is on the list.

STANLEY I bet it is.

MEG *(moving to left of the table)* I know it is.

STANLEY *pushes his plate away and picks up the newspaper.*

(she collects **STANLEY***'s plate)* Was it nice?

STANLEY What?

MEG The fried bread.

STANLEY Succulent.

MEG You shouldn't say that word.

STANLEY What word?

MEG That word you said.

STANLEY What, "succulent"?

MEG Don't say it.

STANLEY What's the matter with it?

MEG You shouldn't say that word to a married woman.

STANLEY Is that a fact?

MEG Yes.

STANLEY Well, I never knew that.

MEG Well, it's true.

STANLEY Who told you that?

MEG Never you mind.

STANLEY Well, if I can't say it to a married woman who can I say it to?

MEG You're bad.

STANLEY What about some tea?

MEG Do you want some tea?

STANLEY *reads the paper.*

Say please.

STANLEY Please.

MEG Say sorry first.

STANLEY Sorry first.

MEG No. Just sorry.

STANLEY Just sorry.

MEG You deserve the strap. *(She ruffles his hair)*

STANLEY Don't do that! *(He throws her arm away)*

> **MEG** *goes into the kitchen.* **STANLEY** *rubs his eyes under his glasses and reads the paper.* **MEG** *returns from the kitchen, carrying a pot of tea.*

MEG *(moving to left of the table)* I brought the pot in.

STANLEY *(absently)* I don't know what I'd do without you.

MEG You don't deserve it though.

STANLEY Why not?

MEG *(pouring a cup of tea*; *coyly)* Go on. Calling me that.

STANLEY How long has that tea been in the pot?

MEG It's good tea. Good strong tea.

STANLEY This isn't tea. It's gravy.

MEG It's not.

STANLEY Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag.

MEG I am not! And it isn't your place to tell me if I am.

STANLEY And it isn't your place to come into a man's bedroom and – wake him up.

MEG Stanny! Don't you like your cup of tea of a morning – the one I bring you?

STANLEY I can't drink this muck. Didn't anyone ever tell you to warm the pot, at least?

MEG That's good strong tea. That's all.

STANLEY *(putting his head in his hands)* Oh, God, I'm tired.

There is a silence. **MEG** *crosses to the sideboard, collects a duster from the drawer, and vaguely dusts the room, watching* **STANLEY**. *She moves to right of the table.*

Not the bloody table!

There is a pause. **MEG** *crosses above* **STANLEY** *to left of him.*

MEG Stan?

STANLEY What?

MEG *(shyly)* Am I really succulent?

STANLEY Oh, you are. I'd rather have you than a cold in the nose any day.

MEG You're just saying that.

STANLEY *(violently)* Look, why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room.

MEG *(sensual; stroking his arm)* Oh, Stan, that's a lovely room. I've had some lovely afternoons in that room. *(She fondles him)*

STANLEY *recoils in disgust, throws off her hand, rises, goes quickly into the hall and exits by the front door, leaving it open.* **MEG** *starts to clear the table and takes the teapot, cups, etc. to the hatch.*

STANLEY *re-enters by the front door, slams it shut and comes into the room.*

Is the sun shining?

STANLEY *moves to the window left, takes a cigarette and matches from his pyjama jacket pocket, lights the cigarette and gazes out of the window.*

What are you smoking?

STANLEY A cigarette.

MEG *(crossing to him)* Are you going to give me one?

STANLEY No.

MEG I like cigarettes.

STANLEY *gazes out of the window, smoking.*

(she tickles the back of his neck) Tickle, tickle.

STANLEY *(turning and pushing her away)* Get away from me. *(He turns to the window)*

MEG *continues clearing the table.*

MEG Are you going out?

STANLEY Not with you.

MEG But I'm going shopping in a minute.

STANLEY Go.

MEG You'll be lonely, all by yourself.

STANLEY Will I?

MEG Without your old Meg. I've got to get things in for the two gentlemen.

There is a pause. **STANLEY** *slowly raises his head.*

STANLEY *(without turning)* What two gentlemen?

MEG I'm expecting visitors.

STANLEY *(turning)* What?

MEG You didn't know that, did you?

STANLEY What are you talking about?

MEG Two gentlemen asked Petey if they could come and stay for a couple of nights. *(She dusts the crumbs from the tablecloth)* I'm expecting them.

STANLEY I don't believe it.

MEG It's true. *(She moves to the sideboard)*

STANLEY *(moving above the table)* You're saying it on purpose.

MEG Petey told me this morning. *(She takes some table mats from the drawer)*

STANLEY *(stubbing out his cigarette in the ashtray on the sewing-table up centre)* When was this? When did he see them?

MEG Last night.

STANLEY Who are they?

MEG I don't know.

STANLEY Didn't he tell you their names?

MEG No.

STANLEY *(pacing up and down left centre)* Here? They wanted to come here?

MEG Yes they did. *(She moves to the table)*

STANLEY Why?

MEG This house is on the list.

STANLEY But who are they?

MEG You'll see when they come.

STANLEY *(decisively)* They won't come.

MEG Why not?

STANLEY *(quickly)* I tell you they won't come. Why didn't they come last night if they were coming?

MEG Perhaps they couldn't find the place in the dark. It's not easy to find in the dark.

STANLEY They won't come. Someone's taking the Michael. *(He sits left of the table)*

MEG *sets out the mats on the table.*

Forget all about it. It's a false alarm. A false alarm. Where's my tea?

MEG *(moving to the sideboard)* I took it away. You didn't want it.

STANLEY What do you mean, you took it away?

MEG I took it away.

STANLEY What did you take it away for?

MEG *(moving to right of the table)* You didn't want it!

STANLEY Who said I didn't want it?

MEG You did!

STANLEY Who gave you the right to take away my tea?

MEG You wouldn't drink it.

STANLEY *removes his glasses and stares at* **MEG.**

STANLEY *(quietly)* Who do you think you're talking to?

MEG *(uncertainly)* What?

STANLEY Come here.

MEG What do you mean?

STANLEY Come over here.

MEG No.

STANLEY I want to ask you something.

MEG *fidgets nervously and does not go to him.*

Come on. *(He pauses)* All right. I can ask it from here just as well. *(Deliberately)* Tell me, Mrs Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? Eh?

There is a silence. **STANLEY** *groans, his trunk falls forward, his head falls into his hands.*

MEG *(in a small voice)* Didn't you enjoy your breakfast, Stan? *(She moves and sits above the table)* Stan? When are you going to play the piano again?

STANLEY *grunts.*

Like you used to?

STANLEY *grunts.*

I used to like watching you play the piano. When are you going to play it again?

STANLEY I can't, can I?

MEG Why not?

STANLEY I haven't got a piano, have I?

MEG No, I meant like when you were working. That piano.

STANLEY Go and do your shopping.

MEG But you wouldn't have to go away if you got a job, would you? You could play the piano on the pier.

STANLEY *looks at her for a moment.*

STANLEY *(airily)* I've – er – I've been offered a job, as a matter of fact.

MEG What?

STANLEY Yes. I'm considering a job at the moment.

MEG You're not.

STANLEY A good one, too. A night club in Berlin.

MEG Berlin?

STANLEY Berlin. A night club. Playing the piano. A fabulous salary. And all found.

MEG How long for?

STANLEY We don't stay in Berlin. Then we go to Athens.

MEG How long for?

STANLEY Yes. Then we pay a flying visit to – er – whatshisname…

MEG Where?

STANLEY Constantinople. Zagreb. Vladivostock. It's a round-the-world tour.

MEG Have you played the piano in those places before?

STANLEY Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world. All over the country. *(He pauses)* I once gave a concert.

MEG A concert?

STANLEY *(reflectively)* Yes. It was a good one, too. They were all there that night. Every single one of them. It was a great success. Yes. A concert. At Lower Edmonton.

MEG What did you wear?

STANLEY *(to himself)* I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. *(He pauses)* My father nearly came down to hear me. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it. No, I – I lost the address, that was it. *(He pauses)* Yes. Lower Edmonton. Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In Winter. I went down there to play. Then when I got there, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up. *(He removes his glasses and wipes them on his pyjama jacket)* A fast one. They pulled a fast one. I'd like to know who was responsible for that. *(Bitterly)* All right, Jack, I can take a tip. They want me to crawl down on my bended knees. Well I can take a tip – any day of the week. *(He replaces his glasses and looks at* **MEG***)* Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you? *(He rises and leans across the table to her)* That's what you are, aren't you?

MEG Don't you go away again, Stan. You stay here. You'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg.

STANLEY *groans and lies across the table.*

(she rises) Aren't you feeling well this morning, Stan? Did you pay a visit this morning?

STANLEY *stiffens, then slowly lifts himself and turns to face her.*

STANLEY *(lightly and casually)* Meg. Do you know what?

MEG What? *(She moves right centre)*

STANLEY Have you heard the latest?

MEG No.

STANLEY I'll bet you have.

MEG I haven't.

STANLEY Shall I tell you?

MEG What latest?

STANLEY You haven't heard it?

MEG No.

STANLEY They're coming today.

MEG Who?

STANLEY They're coming in a van.

MEG Who?

STANLEY And do you know what they've got in that van?

MEG What?

STANLEY They've got a wheelbarrow in that van.

MEG *(breathlessly)* They haven't.

STANLEY Oh yes they have.

MEG You're a liar.

STANLEY A big wheelbarrow. *(He sits on the downstage edge of the table)* And when the van stops they wheel it out, and they wheel it up the garden path, and then they knock at the front door.

MEG They don't.

STANLEY They're looking for someone.

MEG They're not.

STANLEY They're looking for someone. A certain person.

MEG *(hoarsely)* No, They're not!

STANLEY Shall I tell you who they're looking for?

MEG No!

STANLEY You don't want me to tell you?

MEG You're a liar.

There is a knock at the front door. **MEG** *and* **STANLEY** *are still for a few moments then* **MEG** *goes into the hall and collects a shopping bag.*

LULU *(offstage; calling through the letter-box)* Hullo, Mrs Boles.

MEG *opens the front door.* **STANLEY** *rises, sidles to the hall door and listens.*

(offstage) Hullo, Mrs Boles. It's come.

LULU *enters by the front door. She carries a large, solid, round parcel.*

MEG Oh, has it come?

LULU Yes, it's just come.

MEG What, is that it?

LULU Yes. I thought I'd bring it round.

MEG Is it nice?

LULU Very nice. What shall I do with it?

MEG Well, I don't... *(She whispers)*

LULU No, of course not. *(She whispers)*

MEG All right, but... *(She whispers)*

LULU I won't... *(She whispers)*

MEG *turns to go.*

Ta-ta, Mrs Boles.

MEG *exits by the front door.* **STANLEY** *moves quickly to left of the table.*

(she comes into the living-room) Oh, hullo.

STANLEY Ay-ay.

LULU I just want to leave this in here.

STANLEY Do.

LULU *moves to the sideboard and puts the parcel on it.*

That's a bulky object.

LULU You're not to touch it.

STANLEY *(moving to her)* Why would I want to touch it?

LULU Well, you're not to, anyway. Why don't you open the door? It's all stuffy in here. *(She moves to the french windows and opens them)*

STANLEY Stuffy? I disinfected the place this morning. *(He moves to left of* **LULU***)*

LULU Oh, that's better.

There is a pause.

STANLEY I think it's going to rain today. What do you think?

LULU I hope so. You could do with it. *(She moves, sits right of the table, takes a compact from her bag and powders her nose)*

STANLEY *(moving and standing behind* **LULU***'s chair)* Me? I was in the sea at half past six.

LULU Were you?

STANLEY I went right out to the headland and back before breakfast. Don't you believe me?

LULU *(offering him the compact)* Do you want to have a look at your face?

STANLEY *moves away and sits left of the table.*

You could do with a shave, do you know that? Don't you ever go out? *(She puts the compact in her bag)*

STANLEY *does not answer.*

I mean, what do you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? *(She pauses)* Hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?

STANLEY I always stand on the table when she sweeps the floor.

LULU Why don't you have a wash? You look terrible.

STANLEY *(rising and moving down left)* A wash wouldn't make any difference.

LULU *(rising)* Come out and get a bit of air. You depress me, looking like that.

STANLEY Air? Oh. I don't know about that.

LULU It's lovely out. And I've got a few sandwiches.

STANLEY *(moving to left of the table and leaning across it)* What sort of sandwiches?

LULU Cheese.

STANLEY I'm a big eater, you know.

LULU That's all right. I'm not hungry.

STANLEY *(abruptly)* How would you like to go away with me?

LULU Where?

STANLEY Nowhere. Still, we could go.

LULU But where could we go?

STANLEY Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.

LULU We might as well stay here.

STANLEY No. It's no good here.

LULU Well, where else is there?

STANLEY Nowhere.

LULU Well, that's a charming proposal. Do you have to wear those glasses?

STANLEY Yes.

LULU So you're not coming out for a walk?

STANLEY I can't at the moment.

LULU You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?

__LULU__ goes into the hall and exits by the front door. __STANLEY__ moves to the sideboard, looks at the parcel, crosses to the mirror left, looks in it then goes into the kitchen, removes his glasses and washes his face at the sink. There is a knock at the front door. __STANLEY__, drying his face, peers through the hatch. The knock is repeated.

__GOLDBERG__ and __MCCANN__ enter by the front door and come into the living-room. __MCCANN__ carries two suitcases. __GOLDBERG__ carries a briefcase. They halt inside the door, then move down centre. __STANLEY__, wiping his face, glimpses their backs through the hatch. __GOLDBERG__ and __MCCANN__ look around the room.

__STANLEY__ puts on his glasses and exits unobtrusively by the back door right.

MCCANN Is this it?

GOLDBERG This is it.

MCCANN Are you sure?

GOLDBERG Sure I'm sure.

MCCANN What now?

GOLDBERG Don't worry yourself, McCann. Take a seat.

MCCANN What about you?

GOLDBERG What about me?

MCCANN Are you going to take a seat?

GOLDBERG We'll both take a seat. *(He moves to the armchair left, sits and puts his briefcase on the floor above the chair)*

MCCANN *puts the suitcase on the floor down right, then sits right of the table.*

Sit back, McCann. Relax. What's the matter with you? I bring you down for a few days to the seaside. Take a holiday. Do yourself a favour. Learn to relax, McCann, or you'll never get anywhere.

MCCANN Ah sure, I do try, Nat.

GOLDBERG The secret is breathing. Take my tip. It's a well-known fact. Breathe in, breathe out, take a chance, let yourself go, what can you lose? Look at me. When I was an apprentice yet, McCann, every second Friday of the month my Uncle Barney used to take me to the seaside, regular as clockwork. Brighton, Canvey Island, Rottingdean – Uncle Barney wasn't particular. After lunch on Shabbuss we'd go and sit in a couple of deckchairs – you know, the ones with canopies – we'd have a little paddle, we'd watch the tide coming in, going out, the sun coming down—golden days, believe me, McCann. *(Reminiscently)* Uncle Barney. Of course, he was an impeccable dresser. One of the old school. He had a house just outside Basingstoke at the time. Respected by the whole community. Culture? Don't talk to

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