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WHY NOT STAY FOR BREAKFAST?

A comedy

GENE STONE
and
RAY COONEY

SAMUEL



FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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WHY NOT STAY FOR BREAKFAST?

The play was first performed at the Palace Theatre,
Westcliff-on-Sea, July 1970, with the following cast:

George Clarke	Ray Cooney
Louise Hamilton	Liz Edmiston
Jimmy	Ralph Arliss

The play directed by Ray Cooney

WHY NOT STAY FOR BREAKFAST?

Presented by Ray Cooney Productions Ltd
at the Apollo Theatre, London, on the 12th December
1973, with the following cast of characters:

George Clarke	Derek Nimmo
Louise Hamilton	Katy Manning
Davey	Sam Sewell
Hippy Boy	Edward Duke
Hippy Girl	Susan Holderness

The play directed by Ray Cooney

Setting by Hutchinson Scott

The action takes place in George Clarke's flat, in a late
Victorian house in Hampstead

ACT I	A late September evening
ACT II	
Scene 1	Late afternoon, ten days later
Scene 2	The following morning

Time – the present

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(See also page ii)

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ACT I

George Clarke's flat. 9 p.m. on a September evening

The flat is on the first floor of a large Victorian house in Hampstead. The set is a converted large room, with a lounge area, taking up about two-thirds of the stage, R, and a kitchen area L. There are two low steps running up and downstage between the two areas. In the R wall is a large bay-window giving a view of roof-tops. The front door is in the back wall and opens on to a dingy landing and staircase. A door up L to the bedroom is separated from the lounge area by a short wall running on the line of the steps. In the bedroom is visible George's bed. Above the sink in the L wall is a single window, with a view of house backs and a brick wall. In the centre of the steps is a low oak chest, leaving plenty of room to pass above and below it. The flat is obviously a bachelor flat, very unfeminine, but with the walls covered in bric-a-brac and "old-fashioned" pictures. The furniture is from all periods except modern, and the room is very cluttered with odd bits and pieces which George has bought in second-hand shops. The lounge is furnished with an armchair, a large desk, bookshelves on the back wall, a gramophone, and a console table carrying drinks. There is a large put-u-up type settee with small tables at either end of it. The telephone is on the table R of the settee. There is a small console table to one side of the front door. The kitchen has a refrigerator, cupboards and shelves, an oven (practical) and a sink unit (also practical). The cupboards provide work-tops, with the oven and sink in between. There is a small round table downstage with two upright chairs. (See set plan at end of book.) Light switches are beside the front door, on the wall downstage of the drinks table, and beside the bedroom, for the kitchen lights

As the CURTAIN rises, George is in the kitchen cooking his supper. He is in his late thirties, very neat-looking and prim. He wears a white shirt and striped tie, with well-pressed dark trousers, and braces. At the moment he is also wearing an apron. The kitchen table is laid for one person and also contains bowls of ingredients, scales, and a cookery book. There are three pans on the stove, containing rice, "Suki Yaki" and something (indiscernible) burning. There is a kitchen timer on the work-top. The kitchen is lit, but the lounge is in darkness except for a little street light showing through the half-open curtains

After a moment the timer rings. George refers to the cookery book, takes something from the table and puts it in the Suki Yaki pan. As he does so, the telephone starts to ring. He hesitates, looks at his watch, nods, then carries on cooking. After a moment he regulates the heaters, then goes towards the settee. He stops and comes back, unhurriedly, to the light switch L. He then moves back and sits beside the telephone, changes his mind, rises

and turns on the standard lamp. He resumes his seat, picks up the telephone, and speaks immediately

George (on the phone) Hullo, Helen . . . Mm? Wish I wouldn't do what? . . . I always say, "Hullo Helen" . . . Who else would it be? . . . In that case I'd simply say, "I'm sorry I thought you were my sister. She always rings at nine o'clock." Actually, you're five minutes late . . . The doctor, of course . . . Was I? I was busy in the kitchen . . . Suki Yaki . . . Suki Yaki. It's Japanese . . . Of course it won't upset my tummy. You know I like to experiment . . . Just me . . . No, no just me. What were you seeing the doctor about this time? *(As soon as he asks the question he realizes he shouldn't and holds the receiver away from him for a few seconds. He then listens again)* In the kidneys, oh dear. *(He listens again for a moment. Commiserating)* Oh dear . . . Oh dear . . . oh dear . . . *(Helen is obviously nattering on so George takes this opportunity to lay the phone in the armchair and hurry through to the kitchen. He quickly lowers all the gases. He hurries back to the phone but stops. He quickly pours himself a small whisky and soda and then picks up the phone)* Oh dear.

From above comes the sound of a record player playing an up-to-date number very loudly. George reacts

(On the phone) What was that? . . . I can't quite hear. There's a most extraordinary noise going on. They really shouldn't allow these hippy types in the flats here. Sometimes goes on all night . . . I have but it's like conversing in a foreign language . . . It started off with two young men but there's enough up there now to start a small demonstration. Now what were you saying, my love? . . . The doctor's worried about your liver . . . Your kidneys, I mean . . .

From upstairs has come the sound of an argument between Davey and Louise. Although no actual words are heard, Louise's voice is predominant

(On the phone) Oh dear, that's nasty . . . A specialist? *(He reacts to the noise upstairs)* I'm sorry I didn't hear that. They're at it again upstairs—it sounds more like an argument . . . Mm? No, I don't think a specialist would do you any—why don't you go and stay with Mummy in Bournemouth.

There is a sudden very loud crash from upstairs

Oh, my God, they're coming through! Heaven only knows.

The door upstairs opens and closes loudly

Helen, I think you'd better ring me back later. I can't concentrate. There's a frightful row going on and I just can't concentrate.

There is a sudden urgent ringing at his door

(Startled) Oh! *(On the phone)* There's someone at the door. Hang on a

second. (*He inadvertently replaces the receiver, realises and immediately starts to re-dial. Still holding the phone, he goes to the door as the ringing is repeated*) All right, all right, I'm coming. (*He opens the door*)

Louise enters. She is a north-country girl about seventeen and dressed in the uniform of the young female nonconformist—a simple, shift that ends above her knees, long hair down over her shoulders, a large bag with shoulder strap and bare feet in sandals. She has an air of almost arrogant self-confidence. She is also very pregnant

George stares at her in blank amazement. She “waddles” from the door, goes to the settee and lays back on it. George, still agog, comes down to look at her

(*On the phone*) Er—Helen . . . Yes, I'm all right . . . Someone from upstairs . . . No, not one of the young men.

Louise opens her eyes on hearing this last remark

(*On the phone*) Helen, will you ring back in a few minutes . . . No, I won't get involved.

George puts the phone down and looks at Louise

(*After a moment*) Are you all right?

Louise That's a silly question.

George (*trying to be polite*) Would you like a glass of water?

Louise Have you got a coke?

George No, I'm afraid not. Is there anything else I could get you?

Louise (*referring to George's drink on the table*) What's this?

George Whisky and soda.

Louise I'll have one of those.

George Oh. (*Indicating her condition*) Do you think you should?

Louise (*patting her tummy*) It'll put hair on his chest.

George starts to pour her drink

(*Sitting up*) Oh that bloody bugger upstairs.

George winces slightly at the swearing

George I—er—there was rather a lot of noise.

Louise That was Davey and me.

George Davey?

Louise One of the fellows upstairs.

George Oh.

Louise We were having a row.

George I thought you might be.

Louise Oh that bloody bugger . . .

George (*quickly*) Yes, I heard you the first time.

Louise I hope his record player got broken.

George Record—is that what that crash was?

Louise Yes. His record player getting tossed around.

George He didn't throw it at you?

Louise No fear. I threw it at him.

George Good Lord. (*He hands her the drink*) There you are.

Louise takes a sip. It is quite strong

Louise This'll set him going.

George Set who going?

Louise Him in there (*patting her tummy*) with his feet. Boom-boom!

George gives an embarrassed nod. Louise gets up with her drink and walks around looking at the lounge

This is the same layout as the boys' place upstairs.

George Is that so?

Louise I suppose the downstairs flat is the same as well.

George Er—I should imagine so, yes.

Louise (*pointing to the bedroom*) That's your other room through there is it?

George Er—yes—bedroom.

Louise It's all one bloody bedroom upstairs. Hey you've done this up differently though. Are you in the second-hand furniture business?

George (*surprised*) No.

Louise (*laughing*) It looks like the "Old Curiosity Shop". Did you get landed with this lot by the last tenant?

George No I like to collect the odd thing, that's all.

Louise You didn't fix it up like this on purpose?

George Yes!

Louise (*looking around*) Well. Bugger me gently!

She goes into the kitchen, leaving George looking after her irritably

(*Calling out*) Kitchen's not bad.

George Thank you very much.

Louise Hey, there's a pan burning on the stove.

George Burning. Out of the way! Out of the way! (*Rushing through*) Oh, my goodness.

During the ensuing dialogue, George tries to sort out the various pans. One of the concoctions has got burnt and he runs the saucepan under the tap

Louise What is it?

George Various things. The main course is Suki Yaki.

Louise Sooky who?

George Suki Yaki. It's Japanese.

Louise You kinky devil.

George I see nothing kinky about liking Japanese food.

Louise Cooking it yourself though.

George (*concentrating on his pans*) That's right.

Louise (*looking at the cookery book*) Were you making it from this?

George Yes.

Louise Bloody hell, and scales too. Do you always use scales when you're cooking?

George Yes.

Louise Scales. Cookery books. Little apron. Proper do-it-yourself kit, aren't you?

George (*on his dignity*) I'm sure you didn't come here to discuss my culinary peculiarities.

Louise (*sending him up*) Bloody hell.

George And perhaps you could moderate your language.

Louise (*laughing*) And what about your bloody language?

George (*politely*) It's rather late and I'm——

Louise It's only ten past nine.

George (*pressing on*) —I'm in the middle of preparing my dinner.

Louise Sooky Pooky!

George Sooky Pooki—er—Yaki!

Louise (*laughing*) I'm only sending you up. (*Simply*) How would you like to give me some money?

George I beg your pardon?

Louise I said, "How would you like to give me some money?"

George What do you mean, "Give it to you?"

Louise I would say "lend" but you won't get it back.

George You're not serious.

Louise Of course I am.

George You can't just walk into somebody's flat and say, "How would you like to give me some money".

Louise I can.

George Well, if that doesn't take the biscuit.

Louise It's not bad this stuff. I've only had whisky a couple of times before. Up the revolution! (*She drinks*)

George Up the revo——! (*quietly*)—lution!

Louise A couple of quid will do actually.

George Pardon?

Louise A couple of quid will do.

George You realize this is begging, do you?

Louise It's not begging.

George What do *you* call it then?

Louise Can't you understand? I'm offering you a chance to share something with me.

George (*worried*) Share something?

Louise An experience. A little exchange of feeling between two people.

George Exchange of feeling?

Louise Relationship. Communication.

George (*sarcastically*) I see.

Louise You don't understand.

George Yes, I do. It's all part of this modern way of carrying on, isn't it.

The youth movement. Live now pay later. Let's make love not war.

Let's not bother to work, let's knock on some chap's door and ask for a couple of pounds.

Louise You don't half talk a load of balls.

George Will you stop using that sort of language.

Louise You're very uptight, do you know that?

George I haven't the faintest idea what "uptight" means but I'm sure you're right. Now as you've finished your drink, and as you seem to have calmed down a little, I suggest you return to your husband.

Louise What husband?

George How many husbands have you got?

Louise Bugger all.

George Oh. Well in that case I suggest you—er—return to—er—the father of your child.

Louise It's a hell of a walk to Bradford.

George The gentleman upstairs isn't . . .

Louise I'll tell you what he is——!

George Apart from that.

Louise I've only known him a week. I met him and this other guy in a café in Leicester Square.

George A week?

Louise Have you got a fag?

George A . . . ? Yes. (*He indicates the box*)

Louise Is that a fag box?

George Not really. It's funny you should say that. It's an early Victorian crumpet warmer. (*Louise giggles*) It really is most ingenious; the little flap goes up there, and the hot water goes in *there*, and the heat sort of permeates beneath your crumpet and warms it. It's Sheffield plate, actually—you can see the copper coming through. It's rather pretty, isn't it?

Louise Very pretty—can I have a fag? You see, I'd just come down from Bradford. I'd got nowhere to stay so Davey said I could crash in with them. Well, it's been one bloomin' row after another, so I've split.

George Why did you leave your—er—Bradford boy friend?

Louise One bloomin' row after another.

George You've obviously got a very quick temper.

Louise That's right.

George What did you throw at the Bradford one?

Louise His trousers, I think.

There is a slight pause

You going to let me have the money then? Just enough to crash out for a couple of nights.

George Well I suppose if you've got nowhere—I must be quite honest though—I don't really believe in—er. It's not that I'm mean. I donate to all sorts of charities.

Louise Well, come on, donate a couple of quid to the Bradford Pudding Club.

George It's ridiculous anyway. Two pounds won't go anywhere.

Louise Make it a fiver then.

George You'd be far wiser to patch up your quarrel with this Davey chap upstairs and stay there until you go into hospital.

Louise Hospital?

George For the baby.

Louise They won't get me into any flaming hospital. You've only got to read the papers. I'd end up with the wrong baby and my appendix out.

George Surely you've made some plans.

Louise (*grinning*) I'm not very good at planning.

George The doctor must have made some plans.

Louise What doctor?

George (*slowly*) Haven't you seen a doctor?

Louise What do I need a doctor for? A bloomin' idiot could tell it's not a carbuncle.

George What a mess.

Louise I don't know why you're so worked up. It isn't due for another eight days.

George Oh, my God!

Louise All the fuss that's made about something as natural as giving birth. It'll be just like shelling peas.

George It'll be *nothing* like shelling peas!

Louise In India the women drop their babies out in the field then go straight back to work, hoeing maize or whatever.

George The point is you're not an Indian woman and you won't be able to carry on like that on Hampstead Heath. You're the most irresponsible person I've ever met. It's criminal irresponsibility. (*Putting his hand to his head*) You're giving me a headache.

Louise Bloody hell you'll give yourself ulcers, you will.

George I've already got them.

Louise Are you married?

George (*after a slight pause*) No.

Louise You have been though, haven't you?

George Yes!

Louise I thought so. You've got that sort of haunted look about you.

The telephone rings and George answers it

George (*on the phone*) Two-three-nine—oh . . . Oh, hullo, Helen . . . Sort what out? . . . Oh—er—yes. . . . No, no trouble. (*He shoots Louise a glance*) She was collecting for a Charity . . . Save the Children Fund.

Louise Hey.

George (*on the phone*) One moment, Helen. (*To Louise, irritably*) What is it?

Louise Can I use your "loo"?

George Must you?

Louise Where else would you suggest?

George All right.

Louise (*pointing to the bedroom*) Is it through there?

George Yes!

Louise Ta.

Louise exits off the bedroom

George (*on the phone*) Sorry about that . . . It was—er—the same lady as

before . . . The charity lady, yes . . . No, not collecting this time—delivery . . . my flag. I'm not getting involved, Helen! . . .

Louise enters. During the remainder of the call she wanders through into the kitchen. She tastes the Suki Yaki and likes it

She's gone . . . All right. Is there anything else? . . . Wednesday night, as usual. Of course . . . I'd better ring off now, Helen . . . Of course I'm by myself.

Louise (*calling out*) Can I have some of your Sooky Pooky?

George clamps his hand over the receiver

George (*shouting quietly*) Be quiet!

Louise (*shouting quietly*) Can I have some of your Sooky Pooky?

George Yes. (*On the phone, nonchalantly*) I'll ring you in the morning, Helen. Bye.

Louise helps herself to a large plate of food from the various pans. George puts down the phone and joins her, switching off the lounge lights

Louise I liked your loo.

George Good. I'm glad.

Louise Apart from those bloomin' awful rubber plants! The rice goes with this lot, does it?

George It can do. Yes. (*Surveying her plate*) When did you last eat?

Louise Dunno. I think we had some breakfast. Are you going to have any of this stuff?

George If you don't mind.

Louise Help yourself.

George Thank you very much.

She sits at the table but there is not much room because of her stomach

Louise Good thing I'm nice and slim.

George It's probably a bit overcooked now.

Louise No, it's O.K. Do you eat Japanesey all the time?

George Good Lord, no. Once a week I try something a little different, that's all. Tell me—is that flat upstairs on the telephone?

Louise It's all the boys can do to stop them cutting off the gas and electric. What do you want to know for anyway?

George To ring up your friend and tell him he's got to look after you.

Louise I don't need looking after. And I'm not going back up there. Nobody's going to own me.

George Is that what the other fellow did? Tried to own you?

Louise Lad from Bradford.

George Yes.

Louise Suppose so. He didn't know what he wanted to do. There was one thing he did bloody well, I can tell you. (*She pats her tummy*)

George (*trying to ignore it*) Yes, I'm sure.

Louise Hell but he was fruity.

George He was what?

Louise Fruity.

George What does that mean?

Louise Fruity. Randy. He was a right prescription that one.

George (*blankly*) A right prescription?

Louise He liked it three times a day after meals.

George carries on eating, rather embarrassed

Are you fruity?

George Would you like some mango chutney?

Louise Don't think so.

George Home-made.

Louise By you?

George Yes.

Louise Do you knit as well?

George No! They're chopsticks. (*Louise chuckles at him*)

Louise Thought they were early Victorian knitting-needles.

George Oh no, they're chopsticks, all right. They're Chinese—— They really should be Japanese.

Louise (*suddenly*) Ouch! (*She holds her stomach*)

George What is it?

Louise Little basket kicked me.

George Probably disapproves of your conversation at the dinner table.

Louise Oh, you are uptight. Oo! (*She holds her stomach*) There he goes again. Do you want to feel?

George No, thank you. (*He quickly sits and helps himself to chutney*)

Haven't you got any relatives or friends you could stay with in London?

Louise No. (*Suddenly*) You're worried about me, aren't you?

George No! It just seems too awful, a young girl leaving here with no arrangements made about hospitals or doctors or anything.

Louise Hey, this is good! You're starting to share my experience.

George I'm not sharing anything! You should have stayed with that boy in Bradford.

Louise Why? He's done his share.

George You must have been fond of him at one time.

Louise Not really. It was just a bit of fun. With a bloke I happened to meet. I didn't want it to last.

George But you're going to have his baby!

Louise So what?!

George Obviously you're one of these young people to whom the conventions of our society mean absolutely . . .

Louise Bugger all—dead right. I think they all should have been buried years ago including Father Christmas, the weatherman and civil servants.

George I'm a civil servant.

Louise (*laughing*) You're not. Of course, you must be. (*Laughing*) What are you in? The Ministry of Pensions?

George Yes.

Louise (*stopping laughing*) I shouldn't laugh.

George Oh, you have got some appreciation of other people's feelings.

Louise No. I'd just hate to laugh so much that I dropped it in your kitchen. What do you do in the Ministry of Pensions? Stick those silly stamps on cards?

George No! I'm what they call a E.O.

Louise E.O.?

George Executive Officer—Grade Two.

Louise Is that good?

George Oh, yes! It's only one step from supervisor. (*Chattily*) Mr Saunders is our supervisor at present. He can be a bit of a tartar, as a matter of fact. Only last Tuesday . . .

Louise How long have you been doing this trip?

George Trip?

Louise The civil servant bit?

George Eighteen years.

Louise Blimey, don't they give you time off for good behaviour? No wonder you're uptight.

George I enjoy the work very much.

Louise Give over.

George No, it's really quite complicated and one has the feeling of job satisfaction. You know, of doing something really worthwhile . . . (*Embarrassed*) Well I enjoy it anyway.

Louise Pensions. National Health, State Hospitals. The Establishment. Crap.

George I wish you wouldn't use words like that.

Louise Establishment?

George No.

Louise What then?

A slight pause

George Crap. I mean why do hippies have to talk like that?

Louise That's about all that upsets you, isn't it? You'll swallow Father Christmas, the Horse Guards Parade and the Ministry of Pensions but somebody says "bum" and you practically die. And I'm not a hippy. Hippies went out with early Victorian crumpet warmers.

George Oh. Well, beatnik, drop-out. Whatever you call yourself. I don't know.

Louise (*angrily*) Why do you have to file everybody? I'm me. I'm doing my own thing—where I want to—and when I want to. I don't need anything from anybody.

George I thought you needed two pounds.

Louise Oh! (*She rises angrily*)

George (*clucking*) Sorry, that was unfair. Really rather hitting below the belt . . . (*He stops as he notices her stomach*)

Louise That stuff wasn't half bad. (*She goes to the fruit bowl, and turns on the lights*)

George (*drily*) I'm glad you liked it. I mean don't bother to say "Thank you!"

She helps herself to a banana

Louise Oh, the polite bit. I gave that up...

George I can see that. Do help yourself to a banana. I suppose good manners are another of the conventions you find so "square".

Louise Good manners mean bugger all.

George reacts momentarily to the swearing

George I'm afraid I don't agree.

Louise My mother and father were so polite to each other it made me sick.

George I'm sorry. I don't understand that.

Louise Because it was phoney. It was always: (*mimicking*) "Sorry dear" and, "Oh, no, it was my fault, *sweetheart*". "You shouldn't have done that, *darling*." "Of course I should, you're my *little pet*." All the time my mother was having it off with the next door neighbour.

George Oh. (*At a loss*) That must have been very disturbing.

Louise Not really. Didn't disturb my father much either. He was too busy having it off with the neighbour's wife.

George gives an embarrassed nod of his head

George Well—not everybody carries on like that.

Louise There are three sorts of people. Those who are having it off with their neighbour. Those who wish they were. And those who've got bloody ugly neighbours. Any road, I packed and split. Left them all to it.

George (*after a slight frown*) Haven't you got *any* money at all?

Louise Few bob I think. (*She holds her stomach*) Woops! Another kick! I think he's going to be a bloomin' footballer.

George And you're really setting off by yourself with not the faintest idea where you are going to sleep tonight.

Louise I'll get a place.

George Good God, girl, you may not.

Louise Yes, I will. You just don't know what's going on out there. (*She indicates the world*) There's always some group or other who's got a pad they'll share with you.

George But for heaven's sake, you're nine months pregnant.

Louise Well, it's not bloody catching, is it?

There is a pause

I've got to go now.

George Are you sure you've had enough to eat?

Louise Yes.

There is a fractional pause as George is at a loss

You going to let me have that money, then?

George hesitates, then nods and goes through the lounge and off into the bedroom

Louise, leaving her bag in the kitchen, looks for somewhere to put her half-eaten banana. Finally she puts it back in the fruit bowl

Was that your girlfriend you were talking to on the telephone just now?
(*She takes a cigarette from the box*)

George enters with his money

George Good Lord, no. My sister, Helen.

Louise (*surprised*) Your sister?

George Yes.

Louise She goes on a bit, doesn't she?

George She's not very well.

Louise I see.

George (*handing her two five-pound notes*) Here you are.

Louise (*impressed*) Ten quid!

George It's all in a good cause—Save the Children Fund.

She takes it

Louise I helped myself to another fag.

George That's all right. (*Suddenly*) Look, why don't you use that to get up to Bradford. Send your parents a telegram saying you're coming home.

Louise They're busy enough without me turning up.

George In what way?

Louise Keeping the neighbours happy for one thing. Any road, I think they were secretly relieved when I left.

George I'm sure you could go back.

Louise (*defiantly*) But I'm not going to.

The front door bell rings. Louise looks at George, who hesitates

George (*calling*) Who is it?

Davey (*off*) From upstairs.

Louise (*whispering urgently*) It's Davey. Don't let him in.

George (*whispering*) I'll have to.

Louise I won't see him.

George Don't you think . . .

Louise I won't see him.

George You'll have to see him.

Louise I'll wait in your bedroom.

George No!

Louise I'm not going back upstairs.

Louise exits into the bedroom

Davey comes in. He is a young man of about nineteen and much more "Hippy" in appearance than Louise. His long hair is in waves to his shoulders with a band around his head and beads around his neck. He wears

a wildly coloured shirt, fanciful trousers, no socks and sandals. He is tall, well set-up and attractive. He could be Scots. His manner is very pleasant which worries George

Davey Hi there, man.

George Oh, hello! That is, hi, man. I'm sorry I took so long answering the door. I was on the telephone—to my sister.

Davey Got the pad above.

George I beg your pardon.

Davey I've got the pad above.

George Oh, yes, *you've* got the—er—pad above. Yes. Quite. Actually, I've—er—passed the time of day with the young man you share with. We've had the—er—odd word together. Nice to meet you. Can I help at all?

Davey (*looking around*) Could be, man. Could be.

George (*making conversation*) It's quite a pleasant neighbourhood this, don't you think?

Davey Yeah.

George I've been meaning to pop up ever since you moved in.

Davey Yep?

George Yes. Just to say hello, mind you. Just to say—hi there, man.

Davey (*quite pleasantly*) Where's our chick?

George Your—er. . . ?

Davey Chick.

George When you say chick, do you mean. . . ?

Davey Come on, man. Give.

George She did call actually. Simply explained you'd had a bit of a tiff and she'd thrown some trousers at you . . .

Davey Record-player.

George Record-player. Trousers, Bradford. She—er—and then—er—left.

Davey No, she didn't. No-one's been through the front door. Been looking from the window.

George You probably missed her.

Davey No, Dad.

Davey sits on the settee

George (*jovially*) Well—if you knew she was here why didn't you pop down sooner.

Davey Waiting.

George What for?

Davey just shrugs

She—er— She'd prefer not to go back upstairs actually.

Davey She's our chick.

George I think she'd rather not be your chick any longer.

Davey Where is she?

George She's—er—she's in my bedroom.

Davey nods. There is a slight pause

(*Looking at his watch*) It's very late. Actually I was in the middle of washing-up—so if . . .

Davey (*grinning*) Do you know what we call you upstairs?

George (*smiling*) No.

Davey See you going in and out. Nine till five. Real wierdo, you are, man.

George Real wierdo; I see!

Davey We call you "Old tight-arse".

George "Old—er—tight—er—arse." Very good.

Davey (*chuckling*) Every morning. Bowler hat, umbrella. Off you go in your little chariot.

George Little. . . ?

Davey Motor vehicle.

George Oh yes.

Davey Now old "tight-arse" has snatched our chick.

George Old tight-arse hasn't snatched anything and if you're trying to threaten me, young man. . . .

Davey (*surprised*) Threaten? Message from above is peace, man. Peace.

George Oh. Well, I'm delighted you're taking that attitude.

Davey Yep, peace. But she's our chick and if she wants out—(*suddenly smiles*)—she tells us and not old tight-arse.

George I would have thought that a travelling record-player was sufficient evidence.

Davey Just a flare-up, chief.

George (*trying to be firm*) She really doesn't want to go back with you. I must say I think it would be wiser if she did—all things considered—but she's a determined young lady.

Davey So she's shacking up with you?

George She's not shacking up with me. She was just about to leave.

Davey Yep. And what about her bread situation?

George Well, I did manage to find her something to eat . . .

Davey Folding stuff, she's got no loot, man.

George Ah, well I've been able to help out a little in that direction. Not much but enough to see her through a few days.

Davey Very cool.

George Well, it's my opinion one ought to try and share these experiences.

There is a pause as they look at each other

Davey See you around, man. . . .

Davey gives a wave, and exits, closing the door himself

George See you around—man. (*He goes to the bedroom door and opens it*)
You can come out now, Minnehaha's gone.

Louise enters from the bedroom

Louise Was it O.K.?

George We didn't actually finish on "first-name" terms but there seemed a certain friendliness in the way he referred to me as "old tight-arse".

Louise *grins*

I suppose that's the same as being "uptight".

Louise More or less. What did he say?

George Nothing much. He was rather concerned about your "bread" situation.

Louise Fat lot he could do about it. Did he want me to go back?

George I think that's what he'd prefer.

Louise Yes. Wants to bloody own me.

George Ah, yes, of course! The cardinal sin.

Louise *(after a slight pause)* My bag's in the kitchen. *(She moves towards the kitchen)*

George Hang on a minute!

Louise *(stopping)* What now?

George *(floundering)* Well, it just seems so ridiculous a young girl—I mean, nowhere to—you could walk about half the—I know it's really nothing to do with—and you can please yourself—mind you, I'm not saying—er . . .

Louise What the hell are you talking about?

George Why—why not stay here?

Louise I told you. I'm not going back upstairs.

George No. I mean—here.

Louise *(amazed)* Here?

George Why not? You could get a good night's rest. Have a decent breakfast in the morning and start out nice and fresh.

Louise You're joking.

George No, I'm not.

Louise I don't get it. Half an hour ago all you'd ever done was donate to charity and now suddenly you want to be president of the "Pudding Club".

George It seems a sensible suggestion.

Louise Come on. What's the catch?

George There's no catch.

Louise There must be some catch. *(Suddenly)* You needn't think I'm coming across.

George Coming across what?

Louise Coming across with a bit of the other.

George *(realizing)* That's a ridiculous suggestion. I wouldn't dream of doing anything like that.

Louise Are you homosexual then?

George No! No! *(deeper voice)* No! It just wouldn't enter my head—in your condition.

Louise *(suddenly smiling)* Bloomin' safe, I can tell you that.

George I'm absolutely astonished you can even talk about it.

Louise It's natural, isn't it?

George Of course but, well—like you are.

Louise It's not easy, I admit.

George You mean you've—er . . .

Louise Once or twice.

George (*pompously*) I think that's very silly. It could be dangerous.

Louise You mean a fellow could slip off and break his neck.

George gives her a withering look

George (*coldly*) No, I was thinking of the baby.

Louise You don't read the newspapers at all, do you? Doctors say it's perfectly safe.

George Do they? And do they say anything about the moral issue involved in that sort of behaviour?

Louise (*angrily*) Now that's e-bloody-nough! You've been asking questions all night and you've had your pissy moneysworth!

George Charming!

Louise You know what you are, don't you. You're a hypocrite. A pompous, prissy hypocritical old pouffe!

George And you're a damn spoiled little brat. No wonder your parents were glad to get rid of you.

Louise (*stung*) They weren't glad to get rid of me. I didn't say that. My folks love me. They'd be glad to take me back.

George But you wouldn't want to go back. They're just a couple of phonies and you're much too honest for them. The whole world's phony, isn't it?

Louise And you're the pick of the bunch!

Louise marches into the kitchen to collect her bag. George follows her

George You know it all, don't you?

Louise I know a bloody sight more than you do. I've lived my life. I won't end up in the Ministry of Pensions.

George You've already ended up in the Ministry of Labour!

Louise You've got sex on the brain, you have. Probably because you're no good at it. I'll bet that's why your wife walked out on you. Like doing it with a bloomin' computer.

George Now, dammit, that's enough. You get out of here. I wouldn't let you stay in my flat now if you were having quintuplets.

Louise Don't worry, I'm going. I don't want to stay cooped up in this blinking junk shop. And you can have this back, too. (*She throws the ten pounds at him*) I don't want anything from you. You don't know how to share. You can stick your money and your flat right up your tight . . .

George Out!

Louise exits

George closes the door and picks up the ten pounds

(*To himself*) Charming. Absolutely charming.

George goes through into the kitchen and starts to run water on to dirty

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