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Are You Being Served?

A play

Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft

Samuel French — London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



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Are You Being Served?

Presented on stage at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, with the following cast of characters:

Mr Grainger	Larry Noble
Mr Mash	Stewart Sherwin
Mr Rumbold	Nicholas Smith
Mr Lucas	Michael Mundell
Miss Brahms	Wendy Richard
Captain Peacock	Frank Thornton
Mrs Slocombe	Mollie Sugden
Mr Humphries	John Inman
Mr Grace	A.S.M.
Lady Customer	Barbara Rosenblat
Male Customer	Raymond Bowers
Nurse	A.S.M.
Don Bernardo	Stewart Sherwin
Cesar	Raymond Bowers
Conchita	Petra Siniawski
Taeresa	Barbara Rosenblat

The play was directed by **Roger Redfarn**

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(See also page ii)

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CHARACTERS

Mr Grainger

Mr Mash / doubling **Don Bernardo** or **Cesar**

Mr Rumbold

Mr Lucas

Miss Brahms

Captain Peacock

Mrs Slocombe

Mr Humphries

Lady Customer / doubling **Taeresa**

Male Customer / doubling **Don Bernardo** or **Cesar**

Nurse / doubling **Conchita**

Mr Grace / **ASM**

The action of the play takes place on the shop floor of the Grace Brothers department store and at the Don Bernardo Hotel in Spain

PRODUCTION NOTES

prepared by David Croft

Bavarian Dance

Any three/four oom pah pah Germanic music will do. In the TV show, according to my records, we used a piece called "In Munchen Steht ein Hofbrauhaus Ms 10142F - German Dance Music".

Chattering Teeth effect

This requires some ingenuity! We took advantage of a talented enthusiast at the BBC special effects department who devised an electro-magnetic device powered by a 12-volt car battery. Recently, in Australia, the professional company went to an adult "marital aid" store where they purchased an electric thrusting device which gave satisfaction - not for the first time, I gather. A more crude and reliable way of doing it might be to have a hole through the back of the dummy which should be flush with the scenery and to put a walking stick sized instrument through to the front of the said dummy and to make the appropriate movements as if the teeth are down the shorts. In Australia the noise was produced by hand-held castanets sometimes found in a variety drummers kit and which should be available at any large musical store.

Other plays by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft
published by Samuel French Ltd:

'Allo 'Allo

ACT I

The set is an adaptation of the television set: two lifts US; about half a dozen steps lead down from the lifts to the main store. The Gentlemens' counter, L, has a pad and pencil, chalk and a phone on it. The Ladies' counter, R, has a signing-in book, pen and tape measure on it. Underneath the counter top is a drawer with a display model of underwear in it. At least three display dummies are in evidence. One female in short fur-trimmed nightdress, one female in top, skirt and loose-fitting knickers and one male with woollen bathing shorts. There are entrances to fitting rooms DL and DR. There are entrances UL and UR at the level of the bottom of the stairs

Mash enters with a bucket and cloth and a vacuum cleaner, singing the first verse of "If You Were the Only Girl". He goes to the girl model which is covered with the flimsy nightdress with a fur hem. He starts to wash the model from the knees. He lifts the hem of the nightdress up and washes the model's bottom

Mr Rumbold enters

Rumbold Good morning, Mash.

Mash Good morning, Rumbold.

Rumbold Mister Rumbold.

Mash Sorry, sir. I forgot I was just one of the lowly humble workers. (*He starts to wash the upper half of the model*)

Rumbold What are you doing, Mr Mash?

Mash Just cleaning up the models for the Common Market sales week. This is the French bridal nightie. Note the fur muff round the knees to keep the bride's ears warm during the honeymoon.

Rumbold Do you have to do that now?

Mash Oh, yes. Mrs Slocombe said they wanted titivating. (*He washes the model's bust*)

Rumbold You don't have to use a dirty old wet rag. Surely a feather duster would have the same effect?

Mash Last time I put a feather duster up a nightie it had a remarkable effect—I've still got the scars.

Miss Brahms enters from the lift, L. She has a suitcase and a large pregnant-looking bulge under her coat

Miss Brahms Morning, Mr Rumbold.

Rumbold Good morning, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms Blimey—it nearly killed me carrying this load.

Mash Congratulations, darling, how long have you been in the club?

Miss Brahms Since this morning—it's the only way I could get a seat on the train. (*She opens her coat and pulls out a duffle bag*)

Mash goes to sponge down the next model

Rumbold Mr Mash, do not do that in front of Miss Brahms.

Mash Sorry, sir. Can I give her a going over with the Goblin? (*He indicates the vacuum cleaner*) I'm talking about the model.

Rumbold Oh—all right—get on with it.

Turning on the vacuum cleaner, Mash goes to a model in skirt and blouse

Mash (*to Miss Brahms*) Close your eyes, darling. (*To the model*) Hold your breath. (*He vacuums under the skirt. He pulls the vacuum pipe away and a pair of knickers are attached*) Blimey, look at that.

Miss Brahms Oh Mr Mash, you are disgusting.

Mash What are you going on about? I bet it's not the first time you've lost your knickers in a tube.

Mash exits

Mr Lucas enters from the lift L, on crutches, with a false plaster cast on his leg

Lucas Morning all.

Miss Brahms Good heavens, what you been doing?

Lucas (*taking off the plaster cast which is wrapped round a wellington boot*) Nothing—this is the only way I can get a seat on the train with all them pregnant women about.

Miss Brahms Where's your suitcase?

Lucas I left it at home.

Miss Brahms You silly berk. You know we're going straight from here to the airport when we close.

Lucas (*moving to the book on the Ladies' counter to sign in*) It was too heavy for me to carry. My mum's taking it for me in her invalid car.

Miss Brahms Hope it's a bit warmer on the Costa Blanca than it is here.

Lucas Just think of it, Shirley. You and me under the Spanish stars dancing cheek to cheek.

Miss Brahms With all the rest of the Department watching, you'll have to behave yourself.

Lucas That won't be easy—the sight of you in your bikini will drive me wild with desire.

Miss Brahms I'll shove you in the pool to cool you off.

Lucas Do you think they'll have a pool?

Miss Brahms Well, it said so in the brochure.

Lucas I'll be able to tickle you in the deep end... (*He tickles her*)

Miss Brahms Get off.

Lucas With your figure you won't need water wings.

Miss Brahms Pity you haven't got bigger earholes.

Lucas Why?

Miss Brahms You could get a toothbrush in and clean your mind out.

The lift L opens. Mr Grainger steps out

Lucas | (*together*) Morning, Mr Grainger.

Miss Brahms |

Grainger Good morning. I wonder if you could help me. I have my old bag in the lift.

Lucas Ah, did you persuade Mrs Grainger to come as well?

Grainger Just because we are going on holiday together you're not entitled to be facetious, Mr Lucas. (*He burps*) These travel pills are not agreeing with me at all.

Miss Brahms They're supposed to be for the plane, not the bus.

Grainger I know that, Miss Brahms. I thought I'd better try them out in case I needed pills to get over the travel pills.

Lucas What happened to Captain Peacock this morning?

Grainger I saw him in the Sports Department purchasing some new balls.

Lucas He's determined to enjoy his holiday, isn't he?

The lift door L opens to reveal Captain Peacock

All Good morning, Captain Peacock.

Peacock steps out of the lift with two suitcases. Mash is behind him, carrying a set of golf clubs

Peacock Ah, I see you're all ahead of me.

Mash sticks the golf clubs between Peacock's legs

Good mo-o-o-r-n-i-ng.

Mash Sorry, Captain Peacock. I nearly got a hole-in-one there. Where would you like them?

Peacock Behind the counter, Mr Mash.

Mash I'm sorry I'm not coming with you in a way.

Peacock Yes, I understand the Grace Brothers' holiday deal was not available to manual and unskilled labour.

Mash Oh no, it wasn't that. I'm booked for the Seashells. Royalty goes there. I've been to all them Spanish places; a bit common if you ask me.

Mash exits

Peacock takes off his coat

Peacock And Mr Lucas, I hope I'm not going to see you standing around with your hands in your pockets again today.

Lucas Certainly not, sir. I've sewn them up like you said. (*He demonstrates that all his pockets are sewn up*)

Peacock And straighten your tie, Mr Lucas.

Lucas Oh, sorry, sir. (*He straightens his tie*)

Peacock points to three pencils in Lucas's breast pocket

Peacock One pencil is sufficient.

Lucas Yes, Captain Peacock. Shall I keep the HB or the extra soft?

Peacock If you had troubled to read the memo from the Accounts Department, you would see that they prefer ballpoints. Right, Mr Lucas.

Lucas Ballpoints, Captain Peacock. (*He sees something on Peacock's collar*)

Peacock Any questions.

Lucas Yes, sir. What's small, green and furry, with six legs?

Peacock Why do you ask, Mr Lucas?

Lucas Because whatever it is, has just crept out of your carnation and crouched on your collar.

Peacock Deal with it, Mr Lucas.

Lucas Certainly, sir. (*He puts his thumb on Peacock's collar and squashes the bug*) There, it's dead. Will there be anything else, sir?

Peacock Yes, get me a fifteen and a half collar from stock.

There is much banging upon the door of the lift R. This lift is never seen in the normal condition

What on earth?

Mrs Slocombe (*in the lift*) Drat this thing. The damned door's stuck again.

Miss Brahms It's Mrs Slocombe, she's stuck in the lift.

Lucas and Miss Brahms go up the stairs and press buttons, etc. The door on

the lift R opens to show that the lift has stuck about three feet above the level of the floor. Mrs Slocombe has to bend or kneel to be seen

Mrs Slocombe It's time somebody saw to this dratted thing.

Lucas Come on—we'll help you.

Miss Brahms Pass your things out.

Peacock Take Mrs Slocombe's cases.

Mrs Slocombe How am I going to get down?

Miss Brahms Well, you'll have to back out.

Mrs Slocombe Would you mind holding my pussy? (*She hands out a cat basket*)

Peacock Mrs Slocombe, you're not taking that to Spain with you.

Mrs Slocombe Of course not. I'm dropping it into the pet department to look after till I'm back. Oh, dear, I hope I haven't forgotten my passport. (*She backs out, showing Union Jack knickers*)

Lucas Don't worry—if you show the Spanish customs what you're showing us, I'm sure they'll know you're British.

Mrs Slocombe Captain Peacock, will you make Mr Lucas avert his gaze?

Peacock I'll come and help you myself.

Mrs Slocombe What makes you think that'll be any better? I bought these for the Common Market week.

Lucas Let's hope there's no national disaster, otherwise you'll have to wear them at half mast.

Mrs Slocombe Couldn't I have a ladder?

Lucas You've already got one. It goes very nearly out of sight.

Mrs Slocombe I'll bat you in the earhole when I get down.

Miss Brahms brings a chair

Miss Brahms Here you are, Mrs Slocombe.

Mrs Slocombe Thank you, Miss Brahms. At least somebody's a lady. Now I want you all to look the other way before I start again. (*She starts to climb down*)

Mr Mash enters with a feather duster, singing "Underneath the Arches". He dusts Mrs Slocombe's backside

Oooh...

Mash (*reciting*) I like to spread some happiness
Everywhere I pass,
That's why I took a bit of fluff,
Off Mrs Slocombe's...

Peacock Mr Mash...

Mash exits

Mrs Slocombe That man. Ooh, what a humiliating experience.

Lucas I think it's upset your pussy—it's miaowing.

Peacock Get behind your counter, Mr Lucas. The store will be open in a few minutes.

Mrs Slocombe takes off her coat. Mr Grainger is about to leave

Where are you going, Mr Grainger?

Grainger I'm afraid the thought of flying has brought on a touch of my old gastric trouble, Captain Peacock, so with your permission, I'm off to the little boys' room.

Peacock You have my permission.

Lucas It's just as well.

Grainger By the way, they will have one in the aeroplane, won't they?

Lucas If they don't, Mr Grainger, we'll tell the driver to stop just for you.

Grainger Can they do that—you know—I've often—oh, damn.

Grainger hurries off

Peacock It has all the makings of an interesting flight. (*He looks at the book*)

Mrs Slocombe, I see you haven't signed the book.

Mrs Slocombe All this red tape. I should have thought a sales assistant with my seniority would be past that sort of thing.

Lucas Quite right, Mrs Slocombe. I mean, let's face it, you're past most sorts of thing.

Mrs Slocombe Can you hear me clearly, Mr Lucas?

Lucas Yes, Mrs Slocombe.

Mrs Slocombe Well, would you mind shutting your cakehole. (*To Peacock*)

The juniors these days are very poor quality, are they not?

Peacock They are, Mrs Slocombe.

Mrs Slocombe Is it true that Mrs Peacock won't be accompanying us on our vacation?

Peacock Sadly no.

Mrs Slocombe We shall have to watch it, won't we?

Peacock Watch what, Mrs Slocombe?

Mrs Slocombe Well—you know—two unattached persons thrown together on a foreign shore—hot tropical nights, pulsating music—a couple of rum and cokes and who knows what can happen.

Peacock Don't worry, Mrs Slocombe, you may rely on me to behave like a gentleman.

Mrs Slocombe Yes, I thought so. (*She looks at the book*) Oh, I can hardly see to write my name.

Miss Brahms Get plastered again last night, did you?

Mrs Slocombe Certainly not, we just had a few gin and tonics. Well, one of the tonics must have been bad. They are sometimes, you know, because I came over all dizzy and Mrs Axelby had to put me to bed.

Miss Brahms Not with Mr Axelby.

Mrs Slocombe Certainly not, Miss Brahms.

Peacock (*after glancing round conspiratorily*) Talking of pubs reminds me of a bit of doggerel I picked up the mess.

Miss Brahms Really? What's that?

Peacock On the chest of a barmaid from Sale
Was tattoo'd all the prices of ale
Whilst upon her behind
For the sake of the blind
Was precisely the same, but in braille.

Mrs Slocombe (*po-faced*) Will that be all, Captain Peacock?

Miss Brahms giggles

Peacock For the moment, Mrs Slocombe.

Peacock moves away

Mrs Slocombe Oh, he's so coarse sometimes.

Miss Brahms If you think he's coarse, just wait till you get to Spain. Last time I was there I couldn't walk on the beach without having my bottom pinched.

Mrs Slocombe Really? Which particular beach was that?

Miss Brahms Any beach. As soon as they see a female bottom they go mad.

Mrs Slocombe It's just as well I've been slimming. At least they won't have such a big target. Let's see what I've got it down to. (*She picks up a tape measure and puts it round herself*) What does it read?

Miss Brahms Oh, doesn't it seem a lot in metric.

Mrs Slocombe Why, what does it say?

Miss Brahms Fifty-four whatever-they-ares.

Mrs Slocombe Centipedes, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms Well, whatever they are, you've put on two more.

Mrs Slocombe I don't know how you stay so slim. You must be starving yourself.

Miss Brahms Well, I have a big meal every night.

Mrs Slocombe I don't know how you can afford it.

Miss Brahms Well, I can't—I have to keep going out with men I don't like, just to keep body and soul together.

Mrs Slocombe Oh—I couldn't do that.

Miss Brahms It's easy. I wear my low-cut dress—they have a good look, and I have a good nosh.

Mrs Slocombe But these days they expect something afterwards, don't they?

Miss Brahms Oh, yes, but they don't get it.

Mrs Slocombe But why do they keep asking you out?

Miss Brahms It's the same principle as a fruit machine. Once they've invested, they go on and on hoping to hit the jackpot...

Mrs Slocombe They'd have to pull the handle a lot of times to get my cherries up.

Miss Brahms Here—you didn't forget your passport, did you?

Mrs Slocombe No, I had a new photo took. Look.

Miss Brahms Oh, isn't it awful.

Another picture falls out of Mrs Slocombe's passport

'Ere, what's this?

Mrs Slocombe That's one I had took on the front at Yarmouth.

Miss Brahms Don't your figure look smashing?

Mrs Slocombe It's not mine. It's Raquel Welch's. It was one of those where you stick your head through the hole. I sent it to the lonely hearts magazine and I couldn't open the door for letters.

The store bell rings

Peacock begins to change his collar

Peacock Places everyone.

Mash enters with a very large crate

Mash Tote that barge, lift that bale. C. O. D. from British Rail.

Peacock Mr Mash, how many times have I told you that goods must not be delivered on the floor after the store is open.

Mash It's a special, Captain. Marked most urgent.

Rumbold enters

Peacock If Mr Rumbold sees it, his eyes will pop out of his head.

Rumbold I've just heard that a package has been delivered on the floor.

Lucas Look, his ears have popped out of his head.

Peacock I have just castigated Mr Mash.

Lucas Does that mean he can sing in the choir now?

Rumbold Open the case and get it out of the way at once.

Mash starts to open the crate

This whole department is getting very slack, Captain Peacock. We expect you to get dressed before you arrive at Grace Brothers—I do not expect to find you untired at five past nine.

Peacock (*fixing his collar*) I can explain, sir.

Rumbold I don't want to hear any excuses. I want a word with the members of your department. Where's Mr Humphries?

Mr Humphries, carrying a handbag, pops out of the crate Mash delivered

Humphries I'm free. Oh, give me a hand somebody—they dropped me at Euston.

Peacock Mr Humphries. I trust you can explain arriving like a Jack-in-the-Box at five past nine.

Humphries Well, it was like this. I've got this friend, you see, who's very possessive, who waited all night outside my flat to say goodbye. Well, I didn't want a big emotional scene, you see——

Lucas Couldn't you have got the police to remove him?

Humphries What makes you think it was a him? Anyway, I phoned British Rail and they sent these two big men who stuffed me in the box.

Mrs Slocombe Oh, wasn't it claustrophobic?

Humphries Well, yes, it was until the big one got out.

Lucas Lucky you didn't crush your handbag.

Humphries It is not my handbag. I mean, am I the sort of person who'd carry a crocodile handbag with suede shoes? I'm having it repaired for a friend.

Mrs Slocombe She must be rich to afford a crocodile handbag.

Humphries What makes you think it's a she?

Grainger enters

Rumbold Never mind, settle down. Where's Grainger?

Grainger (*coming in*) Sorry, Mr Rumbold, I took a couple of travel pills this morning and—oh damn...

Grainger goes out again

Humphries They're certainly making him travel.

Rumbold Captain Peacock, I want to have a word with the staff while the store is quiet.

Peacock Certainly, sir. Mrs Slocombe, are you free?

Mrs Slocombe As soon as I've put up my underwear, Captain Peacock. *(She opens a drawer at waist height and takes out underwear display and puts it on the counter. She tries to shut the drawer. It sticks)* Oh, drat it. *(She turns and bangs it shut with her backside)*

Peacock Miss Brahms, are you free?

Miss Brahms Coming, Captain Peacock.

Peacock Mr Lucas, are you free?

Lucas *(looking round)* Yes, I think I'm just about free.

Peacock Are you free, Mr Humphries?

Humphries I've never been free, Captain Peacock, but I am available.

Grainger enters

Peacock Are you free, Mr Grainger?

Grainger Yes, it was a false alarm.

Mash I'm free an' all.

Peacock But you are not required, Mr Mash.

Mash Oh, it's like that, is it? Come the revolution we'll all be equal and then I'll be driving round in a big car.

Rumbold Mr Mash, I wonder if you'd be kind enough to start bringing up those German goods.

Mash Yah, herr jugen. Earen.

Rumbold Do not refer to me in that way.

Lucas No, leave out the hair.

Peacock Pay attention, please. Mr Rumbold has something to say.

Rumbold Now, as you know, the wind of change is blowing through Grace Brothers.

Grainger Oh, damn.

Grainger exits

Peacock *(calling after him)* We'll keep you informed, Mr Grainger.

Rumbold Now, while we're all away on our holiday at the Don Bernardo Hotel, the store is being redecorated. On our return we shall be having a series of campaigns to push goods from the Common Market, commencing with Germany.

Mrs Slocombe I don't see why we should push jerry goods, we have enough trouble selling our own.

Rumbold Do I detect an anti-German feeling?

Mrs Slocombe You do, Mr Rumbold. Some of us haven't forgotten the war. I remember being flung flat on my back on Clapham Common by a landmine. And the German air force was responsible.

Lucas All the other times she was flat on her back the American air force was responsible.

Mrs Slocombe Would you please knock it off.

Lucas She even remembers what she said.

Rumbold Look, don't let us go into all this. I know how excited we're all getting at the prospect of starting our holiday this very day, but——

Peacock (*interrupting*) Mr Rumbold, speaking for myself, I don't think we should over-emphasise the excitement of going away "en masse" as it were.

Mrs Slocombe I'm not a bit excited about going away with him.

Peacock I had personally planned a nostalgic visit to Mersa Matrah with Mrs Peacock to visit once again the scene of our great assault.

Miss Brahms Was that your honeymoon?

Peacock I was referring to the Eighth Army.

Rumbold Were you in it?

Peacock No—I was just referring to it.

Mrs Slocombe My friend's very disappointed. We were both going to Olympia to show our pussies.

Humphries My friend's very disappointed as well.

Lucas Why? Were you going to Olympia too?

Humphries No, we were going camping.

Rumbold Well, you all had the opportunity to make your own arrangements and let's face it, if it wasn't for the generosity of young Mr Grace, where else could you get a week in Spain for twenty pounds at a one-star hotel?

Mrs Slocombe I've been wondering about that—how good is a one-star hotel?

Peacock Let's put it this way, Mrs Slocombe, there is no such thing as a no-star hotel.

Rumbold This is all beside the point.

Grainger enters

Grainger Have I missed anything?

Humphries Not unless you were going to Olympia.

Rumbold What I am trying to say is this. Before we go, young Mr Grace is most anxious for us to check the German goods and our methods of displaying them, so we can get a good start as soon as we come back.

Mrs Slocombe I hope he's not still keen on us wearing them German costumes and doing that daft dance.

Rumbold It was all agreed at the meeting, Mrs Slocombe, and after all, we have rehearsed it.

Humphries You're telling me. Last night my back was so bad, my friend had to give me a going over with brown paper and a hot iron.

Lucas We didn't rehearse last night.

Humphries I know, but I wasn't going to tell, was I?

Mrs Slocombe Well, I'm against the whole idea. I don't like the Germans.

They've got no sense of humour.

Lucas Well, won't there be a lot of jerries in Spain?

Humphries (*looking at Grainger*) I sincerely hope so.

Rumbold Right, that's settled then.

Nurse enters with an enormous syringe behind her back

Ah, Matron, I see you're ready to give the injections.

Mrs Slocombe Injections? What injections?

Rumbold Grace Brothers does not want you to take any risk, so we're giving you free immunization against cholera. You go first, Mrs Slocombe.

Mrs Slocombe But the mere sight of a needle makes me pass out. I can't even knit.

Miss Brahms The last time I had it in the arm it left a nasty mark.

Rumbold You won't have to have it in the arm.

Humphries I'll go first.

The Nurse produces the enormous syringe

You go first.

Miss Brahms Come on, let's get it over with. (*She takes Mrs Slocombe by the hand*)

Mrs Slocombe These holiday pamphlets are all alike. All they show you is sun, sea and sex—but they never talk about a jacksy full of vaccine.

Mrs Slocombe exits with Miss Brahms and the Nurse

Peacock In Mrs Slocombe's absence, shall I put Mr Humphries in Ladies underwear?

Humphries You wait till you're asked.

Rumbold Yes, Captain Peacock, do that.

Peacock Take over, Mr Humphries.

A Lady Customer enters. She has an ample bosom

Humphries Are you being served, madam?

Lady Well, I was looking for somebody of the same sex.

Humphries Aren't we all.

Lady Oh, well, er, you see this suit I'm wearing, I'm not very happy with it.

Humphries No, I quite understand, madam. It is a bit old-fashioned. You want something new.

Lady It is new, I bought it here yesterday.

Humphries Did you? Let me have a look at it again. Oh yes, of course, one of our revival lines. An echo of the forties.

Lady I'm not happy with the fit—it's a bit large.

Humphries Yes, some of the revived lines are a bit loose. Let's have a look at the size. Oh, yes, it's a revived forty-five.

Lady I'd like a size smaller.

Humphries I regret, madam, as you've worn it, we can't do that—but we can soon alter it. Now, how is it under the arms? Put them out, will you.

The Lady puts her arms out. Humphries puts his hands under her arms

Now down, please.

The Lady does so, trapping his hands

Oh, that is cosy. I mean that's a cosy fit. If I could just have them back.

She releases his hands

Now, how's the chest?

Lady I'm not complaining about the chest.

Humphries No, I don't wonder.

Lady It's the skirt.

Humphries I'll get my chalk. *(He goes to his counter to get his chalk)*

Lucas You'll need a bigger piece than that.

Humphries *(returning)* Now which part of the skirt, madam?

Lady *(embarrassed)* Well, er, it's what one might call the derrière.

Humphries I specialise in derrières. Now what precisely is the trouble?

Lady Well, it seems to droop a bit.

Humphries What? The derrière or the skirt?

Lady The skirt seems to droop at the back.

Humphries Ah, yes, it wants taking in a bit here. Would madam brace herself for a quick tickle. *(He chalks on the backside)*

Lady Ooooh.

He chalks again

Ooooh.

Humphries That didn't hurt, did it?

Lady No, I rather liked it.

Humphries Yes, it is nice, isn't it.

Lady But if you take it in there, it'll ride up when I sit down.

Humphries Quite right, madam. *(He grabs the end of his sleeve with his hand and busily rubs out the chalk mark)* No tucks in the derrière.

The Lady giggles

Lady It's the waist, you see. Look, you can get your hand in.

Humphries Does madam regard that as a disadvantage?

Lady Yes, look.

Humphries does so

Humphries Oh, the things you see when you haven't got your gun. (*He pulls the back of the waist to test the waist band*) Oh dear, I've dropped me chalk down there. Don't move. (*He pulls the waistband back and peers down*)

Lady Can you see?

Humphries You haven't got a torch, have you? Tell you what, jump up and down and see if anything pops out.

She jumps up and down with obvious effect on her ample bosom

Stop! I think something's going to pop out. Hang on, I've spotted it. (*He takes the metal end of his tape measure and bends it into a hook*) It's just like *Jaws*, isn't it? (*He dangles the hook down the skirt*)

Lady How are you getting on?

Humphries Don't breathe—I think it's taken the bait. (*He pulls. The end is stuck*) Oh, heck, it's stuck in the gusset. Ah, I can see it. I tell you what's going to happen. You shut your eyes, think of England and I'll make a quick grab. (*He does so*) High up. (*He grabs and retrieves the chalk*)

Lady I didn't feel a thing.

Humphries Neither did I.

Lady Oh, you are clever.

Humphries Not all that clever, I've lost me watch.

The Lady starts to retrieve it

Peacock enters

Peacock What on earth is happening, Mr Humphries?

Humphries The lady's trying to get hold of my Rolex.

Peacock Your what?

Humphries My Rolex watch. It's a good job it's shock-proof.

The Lady produces the watch

Peacock Our lady assistants will attend to you if you'd care to wait a few moments. They're just having smallpox and cholera at the moment.

Lady I'll come back when they're better.

The Lady exits

Mrs Slocombe and Miss Brahms enter, in step, holding their backsides

Mr Humphries starts to sing the "Sand Dance" (Snake Charmer in Old Baghdad)

Humphries Here's Wilson and Keppel—where's Betty?

Mrs Slocombe By gum, my bum's numb.

Miss Brahms I'd rather have had cholera.

The Nurse enters

Nurse I'm ready for the gentlemen now.

Peacock We'd better leave somebody in the Department. Would you mind staying behind, Mr Grainger, and taking charge of the floor?

Grainger With great pleasure, Captain Peacock.

Lucas Ah, well ... here we go.

Lucas exits

Humphries It's a far, far better thing I do.

Humphries exits

Peacock Do I take it, Nurse, that we have to remove our trousers in front of you?

Nurse Yes—but don't worry, I don't look.

Peacock That gives me a lot of confidence.

Peacock exits

During the following, while they are off stage, Peacock, Humphries and Lucas underdress in the German costume

The lift bell dings and a Male Customer enters

Grainger Can I help you, sir?

Male Customer I'd like a pair of gloves, please.

Grainger Certainly, sir. Oh, damn, are you free, Mrs Slocombe?

Mrs Slocombe Yes, I'm free, Mr Grainger.

Grainger Would you take a pair of gloves. I have an urgent call.

Grainger exits

Mrs Slocombe What sort of gloves does sir require, sir?

Male Customer Fur.

Mrs Slocombe takes a pair of gloves off display

Mrs Slocombe These gloves are very popular. They're rabbit.

Male Customer Are they real rabbit?

Mrs Slocombe Oh—guaranteed.

Miss Brahms Yes—we daren't leave two pairs in the same drawer together.

Mrs Slocombe Thank you, Miss Brahms.

Male Customer I have rather big hands.

Mrs Slocombe These are the largest size.

Male Customer In that case, they'll do beautifully.

Mrs Slocombe Cash or account?

Male Customer Account.

Mrs Slocombe I'll just make the bill out.

Male Customer I haven't finished yet.

Mrs Slocombe Oh, was there something else?

Male Customer What have you got in Y-fronts?

Mrs Slocombe Y-fronts? I'm not too familiar with the stock. Miss Brahms— (*she indicates the drawers*) Come and have a look into the gentlemen's drawers.

The Customer starts to take off his trousers

Not yours, sir. I was referring to these here departmental drawers.

Miss Brahms Here we are, underwear. Would these be the ones? Jockey shorts.

Mrs Slocombe Jockey shorts, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms Do jockeys have to have special underwear, then?

Mrs Slocombe As you see, we're rather out of our area here. (*She whispers*) What size do you think he wants?

Miss Brahms Well, he's got big hands.

Mrs Slocombe What's that got to do with it?

Miss Brahms Well, you know the saying "Big hands, big..."

Mrs Slocombe I'm quite sure that's got nothing to do with it. But judging by the size of his nose, we'll give him large. There we are, sir, will there be anything else?

Male Customer Yes, I want a pair of trousers.

Mrs Slocombe I see. Well, could you come back later?

Male Customer No, I'm in a hurry.

Mrs Slocombe Do you know your size?

Male Customer No. You'll have to measure me.

Mrs Slocombe Tape measure, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms hands one off the counter

Get a pad and pencil to take this down.

Miss Brahms goes to the other end of the counter

Excuse me, sir. (*She puts the tape round his hips*) Will you be having that bulge there, sir?

Male Customer Yes—that's my spectacle case. (*He shows the spectacle case from his hip pocket*)

Mrs Slocombe I see. Are you ready, Miss Brahms?

Miss Brahms Yes—I'm ready.

Mrs Slocombe Thirty-eight, including the spectacles.

Miss Brahms Including the what?

Mrs Slocombe Spectacles, Miss Brahms. Does sir happen to know his inside leg?

Male Customer No, you'll have to take it.

Mrs Slocombe We'll have to take it, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms Couldn't we give him an estimate?

Mrs Slocombe No, take it, Miss Brahms.

Miss Brahms I'm not going to take it.

Mrs Slocombe Why not?

Miss Brahms I'm frightened.

Mrs Slocombe What of?

Miss Brahms The unknown.

Mrs Slocombe Never mind—I've got an idea. Hold the tape like this.

She gets Miss Brahms to dangle the tape with the end at floor level. She gets an umbrella

Was sir by any chance in the army?

Male Customer Yes, I was.

Mrs Slocombe Good... About turn.

He faces away from her. Miss Brahms stands in front of him with the tape

Stand at ease.

He does so. She whips the umbrella between his legs. As the end stops up against the tape, Miss Brahms calls out

Miss Brahms Thirty-one.

Mrs Slocombe What colour, sir?

Male Customer (*falsetto*) Fawn.

Grainger enters

Mrs Slocombe Sale, Mr Grainger. Thirty-four—thirty-one trousers in fawn.

Grainger Thank you, Mrs Slocombe.

Mrs Slocombe (*seeing Peacock and Humphries approaching*) Ay up—here comes the walking wounded.

Humphries enters, holding his backside

Humphries My leg won't bend at the knee. I hope it's not permanent, I used to have such a pretty walk.

Mrs Slocombe What happened to the gallant Captain Peacock?

Humphries He didn't take it so well.

Peacock enters, limping badly

Peacock I wouldn't have gone if I'd know she was going to throw the needle like a dart.

Humphries Think yourself lucky she didn't get a bullseye.

Mrs Slocombe Would you like to sit down, Captain Peacock?

Peacock I don't think so.

Humphries Speaking for myself, I shall be strap-hanging all the way to Barcelona.

Mrs Slocombe Never mind. The pain wears off after about five minutes.

Peacock I'm unspeakably glad to hear it.

Mrs Slocombe Then you get dizzy. (*She crosses confidentially to Captain Peacock*) I've got a flask of brandy in my first-aid cabinet, in the fitting room—just for emergencies, you know. Would you care to join me?

Peacock Thank you, Mrs Slocombe. I shall be honoured.

They go towards the door, arm in arm

Mrs Slocombe Miss Brahms, take over while Captain Peacock and I have a quick one in the fitting room.

Mrs Slocombe and Peacock exit

Miss Brahms Blimey, what was in their injections?

Lucas enters

Humphries Where have you been?

Lucas I stopped off to chat up that blonde in the joke department.

Humphries You've been told off for that sort of thing before.

Lucas I know. The supervisor saw me, so I had to pretend I was a customer and buy these. *(He places a pair of clockwork false teeth on the counter and they chatter up and down)*

Humphries Look out, here comes Big Ears.

Lucas picks the teeth up and tries to put them in his pocket, but realizes they are sewn up, puts his hands behind his back

Rumbold enters and approaches him

Rumbold Ah, Mr Lucas.

Lucas backs towards a dummy. It is a full-length male dummy wearing wool bathing shorts

Lucas Yes, Mr Rumbold?

Rumbold Where is Captain Peacock?

Lucas He's just gone in there, sir. *(He starts to indicate with his hand, but realizing that it holds the teeth, he indicates with the other hand)*

Rumbold What have you got behind your back?

Lucas Nothing, sir.

Rumbold Have you been smoking on the floor?

Lucas No, sir, I never smoke on the floor.

Rumbold You've got something in your hand.

Lucas No, sir, look. *(He shows him one hand)*

Rumbold What about the other one?

Lucas changes the teeth and shows the other hand

Both, Mr Lucas.

Lucas Both, sir?

Rumbold Both.

Unseen by Rumbold, Lucas appears to put the teeth down the front of the bathing trunks of the dummy. He then shows both hands

Thank you, Mr Lucas. You may go back to your counter.

Lucas does so

Peacock and Mrs Slocombe enter. She carries a flask of brandy. She hides it when she sees Rumbold

Ah, Peacock, would you mind checking this list of German goods with me?

Peacock crosses

Peacock Certainly, sir.

Rumbold And you, Mr Humphries.

They all go into a huddle. The teeth start to move inside the trunks. Lucas notices. He wonders if he dare retrieve them. He starts to walk towards them. The teeth stop. Lucas stops

Peacock (glancing up temporarily) Your counter, Mr Lucas.

Lucas Yes, Captain Peacock. (He goes back to his counter)

Miss Brahms crosses L, carrying a package. The teeth start again. Miss Brahms stops dead. The teeth stop. She turns, crosses to Mrs Slocombe and whispers to her about it, miming the chatter with one hand. Mrs Slocombe looks. The teeth are still. Miss Brahms mimes again. Mrs Slocombe crosses. She stops. She puts her glasses on. The teeth start again, she jumps. She staggers back to the counter. She looks again. The teeth stop. She takes a swig of brandy

She decides to tell Captain Peacock. She crosses to him and beckons him from the group. With her back to the audience, she whispers in his ear, miming the same way as Miss Brahms mimed. Peacock looks. The teeth are still. Mrs Slocombe mimes again. Peacock crosses, taking out his glasses. He puts them on and looks. The teeth are still. He takes his glasses off and is about to turn away. The teeth start again. He jumps. He returns to Mrs Slocombe. She offers the flask. He declines. She takes a swig

Peacock crosses to Humphries. Rumbold goes to show Mrs Slocombe the list of figures. Peacock whispers to Humphries. Humphries faints at the thought. Peacock holds him and slaps his face to make him come round. Peacock puts his hand out to Mrs Slocombe without looking at her. Still talking to Mr Rumbold, she puts the flask in Peacock's hand. Peacock gives a swig to Humphries and hands it back

Humphries revives and takes a couple of tentative steps towards the model. The teeth start again. Humphries goes back and grabs hold of Peacock's hand. The teeth stop. They both approach hand in hand. Humphries stretches out a tentative hand. The teeth start again. Humphries jumps into Peacock's arms. Peacock puts him down and goes for a heavy-handed walking stick. He is about to wallop the teeth. Humphries stops him with alarm. He mimes

that he will get it out. Humphries goes to the dummy. He turns it away from Peacock and the audience. He puts his hand down the front

Humphries (yelling) It bit me! (He brings out his hand with the teeth gripping his fingers)

Rumbold Please come over here and stop messing about, Captain Peacock. We must get our teeth into this German problem.

They rejoin him

Well, you've seen the list of goods. These must be checked before we go on holiday.

Moans from the staff

And there's one other thing. Young Mr Grace is most anxious to see the German dance that you'll be performing during the German sales week.

All Oh no.

Mrs Slocombe Well, speaking for myself, and I'm sure I'm unanimous in this, I feel right daft doing that German dance dressed like this.

Miss Brahms I think we should wait till we put on the proper costumes.

All Hear, hear.

Rumbold I do agree, Miss Brahms. Fortunately, the proper costumes have just arrived, so there's nothing to stand in our way.

Mrs Slocombe But people will see us.

Rumbold Notice has already gone up in the lift that this department is temporarily closed.

Peacock I trust if I join this charade I shall be given some garment which will be in keeping with my position.

Lucas Why don't you dress up as Hitler?

Rumbold Don't worry, Captain Peacock, I shall see that whatever you wear gives you the appropriate air of authority.

Mash enters, wearing a Hindenberg helmet. He is pushing a trolley

Mash Achtung, achtung. Get your kraut gear here.

Rumbold That will do, Mr Mash. (To the others) Sign for those goods and then go and get changed.

Rumbold exits

Miss Brahms Would you believe it? They're making us work right up to the last second.

Peacock Well, I suppose it's the least we can do for Grace Brothers. After all, they are subsidising our holiday.

Mash Here you are, a couple of German signs. (*He holds up signs reading "einfahrt" and "ausfahrt"*)

Mrs Slocombe (*reading*) Einfahrt. Ausfahrt.

Grainger enters

Grainger Oh, damn...

Grainger exits again

Peacock Einfahrt means "Way In". Ausfahrt means "Way Out".

Mrs Slocombe Descriptive language, isn't it?

Mash Four boxes of whatever they are.

Mrs Slocombe takes a box and reads

Mrs Slocombe Sex underhosen. I wonder what's inside.

Peacock Don't get carried away, Mrs Slocombe. Underhosen literally translated means undertrousers.

Miss Brahms Undertrousers. Do you mean knickers?

Mrs Slocombe I'm not selling German sex knickers.

Peacock Sex, Mrs Slocombe, is the word they use for six in Germany.

Miss Brahms What do they use for sex?

Mash Same as they use in England.

Peacock Will you hurry up, Mr Mash.

Mash There you are, twelve bras.

Mrs Slocombe And what's German for that? (*She looks at the box*)

Bustenhalter. Bustenhalter—doesn't it sound crude.

Miss Brahms Let's have a look.

They extract a large canvas bra

Bustenhalter. It'd halt anything, that would—including a bus.

Mrs Slocombe Heavens above—what size is that?

Miss Brahms It says Klein.

Peacock Klein, Miss Brahms, means small.

Mrs Slocombe My—they're well built, those German girls, aren't they?

Mash (*handing a box to the men*) Here's yours.

Lucas (*reading*) One dozen strumpfs. (*He takes them out*) Oh, look—they're socks.

Humphries If we're going to sell that lot, we'll have to pull our strumpfs up.

(*He takes out a pair of long johns*) Oh look—long Johanns.

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