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SF PERUSALS

Communicating Doors

by Alan Ayckbourn

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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ISBN 978-0-573-62684-5 Printed in U.S.A. #5301

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Under the direction of BEN SPRECHER and WILLIAM P. MILLER

HARRIET NEWMAN LEVE AND JAMES D. STERN
PRESENT

MARY-LOUISE PARKER PATRICIA HODGES
IN

COMMUNICATING DOORS

BY
ALAN AYCKBOURN

WITH
DAVID MCCALLUM

TOM BECKETT CANDY BUCKLEY GERRIT GRAHAM

SCENIC DESIGN
DAVID GALLO

COSTUME DESIGN
JESS GOLDSTEIN

LIGHTING DESIGN
DONALD HOLDER

ORIGINAL MUSIC/
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THE PRODUCERS WISH TO EXPRESS THEIR APPRECIATION TO THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR ITS SUPPORT OF THIS PRODUCTION.

PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH DUNCAN C. WELDON

Communicating Doors was first performed in Scarborough at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in the Round, on 2 February 1994. The cast was as follows:

Reece ..... John Hudson
Jessica .....Sara Markland
Ruella ..... Liz Crowther
Julian .....Richard Durden
Poopay .....Adie Allen
Harold .....Nick Stringer

Director: Alan Ayckbourn
Designer: Roger Glossop
Lighting: Mick Hughes
Music: John Pattison

Communicating Doors was first performed in London on 2 August 1995. The cast was as follows:

Reece .....Laurence Kennedy
Jessica .....Sara Markland
Ruella .....Julia McKenzie
Julian .....Ken Bones
Poopay ..... Adie Allen
Harold ..... John Arthur

Director: Alan Ayckbourn
Designer: Roger Glossop
Lighting: Mick Hughes
Music: John Pattison

CHARACTERS

REECE — a businessman aged 30 and 70

JESSICA — his first wife aged 25 and 45

RUELLA — his second wife aged 45

JULIAN — his business associate aged 45 and 65

PHOEBE (POOPAY) — a prostitute aged 33

HAROLD — a house detective aged 35 and 55

A suite in the Regal Hotel, London WC2

Time
May 1974
October 1994
July 2014

ACT I

(It is the year 2014. A view of part of a sixth-floor suite in the five-star Regal Hotel. Our view is of the sitting room and the bathroom. At least four doors lead off the sitting room; the main door leading straight on to the hallway; one linking direct to the bathroom; one leading to the bedroom; the fourth is an intercommunicating door to the room next door. This last door will play a significant part in the action. It opens inwards permitting one person—just—to squeeze into a small cupboard-like space or lobby (also visible). Once the occupant has closed this door behind them only then is there space to open the further door, i.e. both doors cannot be opened simultaneously. Moreover, this entire two-door/lobby unit should be built to revolve so that either door can open on to the area in view.

The bathroom has two doors; the one previously mentioned, leading to the sitting room; a second leading to the bedroom.

This suite itself will need to alter very swiftly as the action proceeds in order to reflect various locations (and time periods). This can be done primarily with light and a certain scenic ingenuity.

The rooms, basically, have a fairly classic architectural feel with high, imposing Victorian ceilings and solid classic furniture. The sitting room has a long sofa, an armchair, a

writing desk and chair, a sideboard that incorporates the mini-bar, plus other furnishings including a small phone table. It also has some rather splendid high windows that open on to a shallow, high-level balcony. Six floors below this is the street; across the street is the river. The window curtains are, in the main, left open. The bathroom contains all the usual fittings: a bath/shower, WC, bidet, bathroom cabinet, towel rails, etc.

At the start it is a summer evening in July, around 9 p.m.

JULIAN, a tall, powerful man, stands staring out of the windows. The sound of distant small arms fire and the occasional mortar explosion can be heard, momentarily, from across the river. Now aged sixty-five, he is still in good physical shape. He is very well spoken in a way that suggests that his original background could have been vastly different. Despite the time of year, he is smartly dressed in an expensive dark suit. After a second or so, the doorbell chimes. JULIAN turns and goes to answer the door. As he does so, he calls to someone, unseen, in the bedroom.

JULIAN. *(As he goes, calling.)* She's here.

(There is no reply from the bedroom. JULIAN opens the door to admit POOPAY. She is blonde, heavily made-up, aged thirty plus but having a fair stab at twenty-five minus. She is swathed in a long, almost ankle length, high-collared, artificial fur coat and carries an incongruously large leather bag filled with the tools of her trade. She is unmistakably a class, but not that high class, hooker.)

POOPAY. *(Sweetly.)* Hallo. I'm Poopay.

JULIAN. *(Startled.)* What?

POOPAY. Poopay. Lennox sent me. I understand you—Have I the right room? *(JULIAN nods her into the room and closes the door behind her. As he does this, he looks her up and down with ill-concealed contempt. POOPAY is unaware*

of this. She looks around.) Oh, this is nice. Very nice. Got the suite, have you? Yes. Beautiful. *(She now goes straight into her stern nanny/schoolmistress act.)* Now, what's this I've been hearing? You've been a very naughty boy, haven't you? So I've been told. Don't try and deny it. You've been very, very bad, haven't you? Well. We'll soon see about that, won't we? We'll soon put a stop to that. Just wait and see what Poopay's got for you in here, my lad. *(She puts her bag down with a clank. During the next she starts to unfasten her coat. She talks as from a well-worn script, staring out of the windows as she talks, her mind on a dozen other things. JULIAN, meantime, has moved to the bedroom door.)* She's going to teach you a lesson you won't forget in a hurry, I can promise you. A little punishment, a little strict discipline, that's what you're in need of, aren't you? Well, just you wait. By the time I've finished with you, my boy, you'll learn to control yourself. *(She has taken off her coat to reveal her full 'dominatrix' outfit.)* Now, I want you to go straight in that bedroom and take off all your...

(POOPAY breaks off as she sees that JULIAN isn't paying attention.)

JULIAN. *(Calling through the bedroom doorway again.)* She's arrived ...

REECE. *(Off, from the bedroom.)* What?

JULIAN. *(Calling.)* She's here. That tart's here.

REECE. *(Off.)* All right. Just a minute. Tell her to wait a minute, Julian.

POOPAY. *(Dropping her previous tone.)* Excuse me. Am I to understand there are two of you?

JULIAN. What?

POOPAY. Because Lennox led me to believe there was just one gentleman here requiring my services ... That this was a single engagement ...

JULIAN. There's only one.

POOPAY. Only if this turns out to be a group booking, then

the rates are very different—

JULIAN. Just the one.

POOPAY. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm happy to accommodate two but I think you should be warned that I—

JULIAN. *(More sharply.)* Just the one, all right?

POOPAY. *(Slightly warily.)* Right. *(Suspiciously.)* Where are you going to be, then? Only if you intend watching, it still counts as—

JULIAN. *(Cutting her off.)* I shall be elsewhere.

REECE. *(Off.)* Tell her I'm just coming, Julian.

JULIAN. *(To POOPAY.)* I asked for Delphine. Where's Delphine?

POOPAY. Delphine? She's off—sick.

JULIAN. Sick?

POOPAY. She—went down with something.

JULIAN. I wanted Delphine.

POOPAY. Well, you've got me instead, haven't you? Anyway, it's not for you, is it? You've said.

REECE. *(Off.)* Tell her I won't be long. *(He sounds as if he's struggling with something.)* Is she beautiful, then?

(JULIAN doesn't reply.)

POOPAY. *(Calling.)* She's gorgeous.

REECE. *(Off, struggling.)* Ah! She sounds a beauty. She sounds a lovely.

POOPAY. *(To JULIAN.)* What's he doing in there?

JULIAN. He's getting dressed.

POOPAY. *(Mystified.)* What's he getting dressed for?

JULIAN. You know who you remind me of?

POOPAY. Who?

JULIAN. My mother.

POOPAY. I'm sure we're both flattered.

REECE. *(Off, struggling.)* I may—need—help—arrgh!—with these shoe laces again, Julian ...

JULIAN. *(Calling but not moving.)* Say the word, Reece.

REECE. *(Off.)* Bloody things ...

POOPAY. How old is he, then?

JULIAN. Never mind.

POOPAY. I mean, if he can't even do his shoes up. I mean.

JULIAN. *(With sudden urgency.)* Listen, he's not in good health, so go carefully with him, all right. *(Indicating her bag.)* None of your fancy games or you'll finish him off. Just one quick straight screw and piss off.

POOPAY. *(Starting to protest.)* Listen, there is no need to talk to me like—

(POOPAY starts to put on her coat again.)

JULIAN. *(Talking through her.)* You keep all that stuff strictly in your bag.

POOPAY. —I'm not staying here to be—

JULIAN. *(Still ignoring her.)* Look. *(He moves to the phone table.)* I will be in my room just along the corridor. I am writing the number here. If there is any problem, you contact me and only me—

POOPAY. I'm sorry, I am not—

JULIAN. Understood?

POOPAY. —not being responsible for someone who's not fully—

JULIAN. *(Quietly.)* Hey! Hey! Are you listening to me?

(A slight pause. POOPAY weighs JULIAN up as someone not to argue with.)

POOPAY. Yes. *(More warily.)* All I'm saying is, if the man ... if the man is ... then ... maybe I shouldn't ... he shouldn't ... that's all I'm saying ... that's all. *(Pause.)* I mean, come on. Be fair. Eh?

(REECE enters. After the build-up, he really isn't as old as all that—a mere seventy. Not a robust septuagenarian, though,

but frail and apparently one with not too long to live. He moves with some difficulty and whenever he does, needs to pause frequently for breath. Once a handsome young man, a life of aggression, double dealing and ultimate disillusionment and disappointment have resulted in a testy individual, self-willed, old before his time, living a life of constant pain.)

REECE. Aha! Aha! *(POOPAY looks at him in horror.)* So this is the—this is the—this is Lennox's young friend. He's got hidden depths, hasn't he? Our hall porter? Never get you a bloody taxi, but he can fix you up with a woman at the drop of his cocked hat. Come on then, get your coat off, girl. Julian, take her coat for her. You haven't even taken the woman's coat.

POOPAY. That's all right.

JULIAN. Give me your coat.

REECE. Take her coat, man—

POOPAY. No, I'll keep it on, thank you.

JULIAN. *(Sharply.)* You heard him, give me your coat.

(POOPAY looks from one to the other and decides, reluctantly, to surrender her coat.)

REECE. That's better. *(To POOPAY.)* Very nice.

POOPAY. Thank you.

REECE. Can't do—what we're going to be doing—with your coat on, can you? *(To JULIAN.)* Hang it up for her, Julian, in my wardrobe. Then you can go. *(JULIAN goes into the bedroom for a second.)* Me and this young lady have—er—things to do in private. *(Smiling at her.)* Don't we?

POOPAY. *(Doubtful.)* Possibly.

REECE. *(Sitting on the sofa.)* Sit down, sit down, then.

POOPAY. Right. *(She sits in the chair.)* I'm sorry I'm late. I think there was a gun battle in the Strand.

REECE. Come on, a bit closer than that. I'm paying for this.

POOPAY. *(Sitting next to him.)* There were armored cars everywhere ...

REECE. That's better.

POOPAY. Ever since that Houses of Parliament business...

REECE. There.

(REECE puts an arm round her shoulder. POOPAY doesn't respond.)

POOPAY. Funny without Big Ben. Listen, I don't think this is going to—

(JULIAN returns. He looks at them.)

JULIAN. All right?

REECE. Very cozy. *(To POOPAY.)* Isn't it?

POOPAY. Wonderful. He's extremely sexy.

REECE. Now be a good fellow and go away.

JULIAN. Call me when you've done.

REECE. I will. *(JULIAN opens the front door.)* I wouldn't wait up, though.

(REECE laughs. JULIAN goes out, closing the door.)

POOPAY. Listen, I'm sorry to disappoint you but I don't think this is going to work out at all ... *(REECE removes his arm from around her shoulder and starts to struggle to his feet.)* You see, I'm a specialist—and my particular line is probably...

REECE. Wait here!

(REECE starts to head towards the bathroom.)

POOPAY. My particular speciality, well, it's—it's not designed—Where are you going?

REECE. Wait! Wait!

(REECE goes into the bathroom, switching on the light.)

POOPAY. *(Following REECE.)* You see, it's not really suitable for maturer people. It's quite, you know, arduous—I mean not violent, you understand—I'm not into violence—just a bit of fun and pain, really ... What the hell are you doing?

(REECE is at the bidet, attempting to kneel down.)

REECE. *(Struggling vainly.)* Oh, this damned—ah! Can you do it? Can you reach it?

POOPAY. What?

REECE. Down the waste pipe. Take out the plug and feel down the waste pipe.

POOPAY. I'm not putting my hand in there ...

REECE. Come on! It's perfectly clean. Come on. Just feel down with your fingers.

(POOPAY does as she's told, with some distaste.)

POOPAY. I don't know what we're into here. You're *really* weird, you are.

REECE. Can you feel it ... ?

POOPAY. No, nothing. Just—Oh. Piece of paper. Is that it?

REECE. That's it! Get it out.

(POOPAY retrieves three or four sheets of folded foolscap paper.)

POOPAY. I dread to think what this is. Is this what you want?

REECE. Give it here.

POOPAY. What do you keep it there for?

REECE. Because it's the safest place I could think of.

(REECE returns to the sitting room, switching off the bathroom light as he goes. POOPAY follows.)

POOPAY. Get wet there, won't it?

REECE. Wet? Who the hell ever uses those things?

POOPAY. Why do you need to hide it in the first place?

REECE. Because they're watching me all the time, that's why.

POOPAY. Are they? Who are?

(REECE reaches the desk and starts to unfold the paper.)

REECE. Goodman. Any of them. Right, now. Let's get down to it. Pay attention.

POOPAY. Listen ...

REECE. No, you listen. Just shut your trap for a minute ...

POOPAY. Listen, I cannot do this. I cannot go through with this, I'm sorry. That's all I'm saying. It's too risky. It's too dangerous. I had no idea of your—physical condition when I came up here. That bloody Lennox, he just books us in—

REECE. What are you talking about?

POOPAY. I'm saying we can't do it. Right? Not possible to do. OK.

REECE. Do what?

POOPAY. Sex.

REECE. *(Mystified.)* Sex?

POOPAY. Yes. Sex. Remember it? Sex.

REECE. Who the hell's talking about sex. I don't want sex.

POOPAY. You don't?

REECE. Don't be stupid. Look at me, woman. Finish me off altogether, in my condition. Now sit down, pay attention and shut up. We haven't got much time.

POOPAY. *(Sitting.)* I don't know what's happening. I do not know what's occurring here.

REECE. All I require from you, young woman, is one signature.

POOPAY. A what?

REECE. A signature. Can you write your name? I presume you can write your name? Then that's all I want you to do. That and—to run a small errand.

POOPAY. Look, what is all this?

REECE. Just sign your name here, come on. I'll pay you anything you want. Straight cash and away you go. Easiest money you'll ever earn in your life. Come on. Over here. Sign your name.

POOPAY. I'm not signing. Sorry.

REECE. Why the hell not?

POOPAY. I don't even know what it is I'm signing.

REECE. What does it matter? All you're doing is witnessing my signature, that's all. My signature to a document.

POOPAY. What sort of document? A will?

REECE. Of course not a will. If it was a will, I'd get my lawyer in, have it done properly.

POOPAY. Why can't you get that one done properly?

REECE. Because—*(Impatiently.)* What does it matter to you? Come on, are you going to sign or aren't you?

POOPAY. No. And don't shout at me. I don't like it.

REECE. *(Calmer.)* You don't want your money, then?

POOPAY. I'll do without it, thank you very much.

REECE. All right. I'll pay you double.

POOPAY. Sorry. No.

REECE. Oh, my God. An honest whore. That's all I need ...

POOPAY. No, not honest. Just not an idiot, that's all. And not a whore either, if you don't mind. I resent that term deeply.

REECE. What else are you then?

POOPAY. I'm a Specialist Sexual Consultant.

REECE. Oh, hooray! *(Suddenly deflated.)* So you refuse to sign? You won't do it? Then goodnight. *(She hesitates. Makes a slight move to leave. Then stops.)* Off you go. I've no further need of you.

POOPAY. *(Cautiously.)* I might sign. If I was allowed to read it first, I might.

REECE. You want to read it?

POOPAY. No. I don't want to read it. I only want to read it if you want me to sign it.

REECE. All right, read it. I don't mind. Read it. Read it. Everyone's going to be reading it sooner or later, anyway.

(REECE throws the papers across the desk to her.)

POOPAY. What is it?

REECE. What's it look like? It's a confession.

POOPAY. *(Incredulously.)* A confession? Your confession?

REECE. You know you remind me of Rachel.

POOPAY. Rachel?

REECE. My daughter Rachel. Haven't seen her for twenty years. You look very like her.

POOPAY. *(Unimpressed.)* Yes, well, I always remind people of someone.

REECE. Same—hair. Same ...

POOPAY. Getting back to this confession. Why were you hiding it, then? I mean, if you want to confess, why are you hiding it?

REECE. It implicates—other people. That's why. Who aren't as anxious to confess as I am.

POOPAY. Oh. So why are you and not them?

REECE. Because they're not dying and I am.

POOPAY. You don't know that for certain.

REECE. I hope so. I've wasted a lot of money on some very expensive doctors, otherwise.

POOPAY. How long you got then?

REECE. Few weeks, few days. They think.

POOPAY. Oh. I'm sorry.

REECE. No, you're not. Read that and you won't be.

POOPAY. What have you done?

REECE. I've made a great deal of money at other people's expense.

POOPAY. Well, that's not—

REECE. At the cost of other people's lives. And I didn't give a damn.

POOPAY. People doing that all the time. Join the club.

REECE. Not on my scale. Not juggling with currencies and creating bankruptcies, gambling with commodities and causing famines, profiting from arms deals and bringing death. My second wife was absolutely right, you know. It'll all catch up with you one day, she said. You can sit there now, she said, like the cat who's swallowed the vat—but one day, there'll be a reckoning. Ruella was right. As always.

POOPAY. Your second wife said this?

REECE. Ruella. Beautiful woman. Beautiful mind ... A really good person, you know. Honest through and through.

POOPAY. What happened to her?

REECE. I murdered her.

POOPAY. *(Taking this in.)* You—murdered your wife?

REECE. No. Not personally. I—wanted her—dead—somebody else killed her. In this very hotel. He pushed her out of those windows. Poor bloody woman half asleep and he throws her out of the window—

POOPAY. Who? Who threw her?

REECE. What does it matter who? I was the one responsible. He only did it because in my heart I wanted it to happen. Needed it to happen. And he knew it.

POOPAY. But why? Why kill your wife?

REECE. Why do you kill anyone? She was in the way. She got in the way. She had to go. She was blocking up the system, threatening to foul up the machine. She found out—she wanted to tell everyone. She was an honest woman. I tell you, there's no place in business these days for a good, honest wife.

POOPAY. She was your second wife?

REECE. Yes.

POOPAY. I don't like to ask really but what—

REECE. He murdered her as well.

POOPAY. Oh, God.

REECE. He drowned her. She was swimming, he held her under by her hair ...

POOPAY. I hope you're mad. Because I'd hate this to be true. I really just hope you're mad. Or senile. Why didn't you

stop any of this if you knew he was ... ? You could have stopped him surely?

REECE. I didn't know at the time. Of course I didn't. *(Reflecting.)* No. Correction. Of course I knew. I just preferred the facts as they appeared. As they suited me. Two convenient accidents that just happened to occur at absolutely the right time for me, for my career. In the end, you can always convince yourself that a version of the truth is the truth itself.

POOPAY. What made you change your mind?

REECE. Hard facts. Like the drunken bastard standing in front of me in this very room. Swilling my whisky and telling me to my face ...

POOPAY. What bastard?

REECE. *(Getting agitated now.)* Less than a week ago. Laughing ...

POOPAY. Who?

REECE. Come on, old boy. Over 30 years ago—Jessica. Forget about it. All over. But Jessica hasn't forgotten, has she? August the 15th, 1981. She remembers it well enough. Swimming in Corsica ... Aged 32. That's all she was—32. RIP. Do you know where I was when that happened? Very conveniently?

POOPAY. I've no idea.

REECE. Have a guess, Rachel. Go on. Taiwan. Swindling a load of poor bloody Chinamen.

POOPAY. *(Getting alarmed for his state of health.)* Steady now ...

REECE. Ruella ... my second wife ... Ruella. 5 October 1994. You see, I still remember exact dates ...

POOPAY. You would.

REECE. Accidentally fell out of that sixth-floor window. Finishes up on that pavement with her nightdress round her ears for all the world to see. What way's that for a decent woman to finish her life? And where was I?

POOPAY. Australia?

REECE. Athens.

POOPAY. Swindling Italians.

REECE. Buying up the world's rubber supply.

POOPAY. Useful.

REECE. Oh, he was clever, Rachel. Clever bastard.

POOPAY. We're back on him again, are we?

REECE. If I hadn't been so busy making deals, making money, I might have seen what he was up to. My own partner, I trusted him like my brother. I never had a brother, you know. If I'd had a brother I wouldn't have had to trust *him.* Do you know what he told me? He confessed to me that he'd even killed his own mother. Smothered her. What do you think of that?

POOPAY. *(Very shocked.)* Oh, that's awful. To smother your mother ...

REECE. His own mother! He stands in front of me, in this very room, drinking my Glenfiddich. Oh yes, he says, I killed them, he says. Make no mistake, old boy, I killed them. And I'd do it all over again if needs be, old boy. And then he just laughs. He laughs and laughs and laughs. I've never seen him laugh like that—He's mad, you know—barking mad. But I couldn't have done it without him, you see, Rachel. I'm like Faust. You ever heard of Faust, Rachel? You must have done. That's me. Sold my soul to the devil. That devil.

POOPAY. *(Quietly.)* Excuse me. Excuse me for interrupting. This is driving me mad. Would you please tell me who we are talking about here?

REECE. J.S. Goodman, woman—who else?

POOPAY. Who the hell's J.S. Goodman?

REECE. It's all in there. Read it for yourself. You still want to read it?

POOPAY. I think I've heard it.

REECE. Then sign it. Please sign it, Rachel. Please, Rachel...

POOPAY. No, I'm not Rachel ... My name's Poopay.

REECE. Rachel?

POOPAY. It's French for doll. La Poupée. La poupée est

dans la joujou. Merci. I'll sign it, don't worry. Give us the pen.

REECE. You're a fine girl, Rachel. I love you, you know.

POOPAY. *(Taking the pen and examining the document.)* Yes ...

REECE. *(Stroking her hair.)* I've always loved you ...

POOPAY. *(Not noticing, studying the document.)* Yes, that's nice ...

REECE. I didn't mean to kill your mother. I didn't mean to.

POOPAY. Then why did you, then?

REECE. I needed her money, Rachel. We needed her money to save the firm.

POOPAY. You and J.S. Goodman. I'm signing here, all right?

REECE. Thank you, Rachel. Bless you, darling. You've got your mother's hair, you know.

POOPAY. Depends who they sold it to. Who's this other signature? Quentin Jerkin?

REECE. Quentin. That's the bellboy.

POOPAY. Only this place would have a bellboy called Quentin.

REECE. He's a good boy, Quentin, but I couldn't trust him with this. Not with the errand.

POOPAY. *(Alarmed.)* Errand? What errand?

REECE. You deliver this, in person, to my lawyer's office. Whitworth, Constable, Grady & Such.

POOPAY. Lawyers? Oh, now wait. Hold on ...

REECE. It's written on the front there. Constable, Grady, Such ... Whitworth ... See? But it's only to be delivered to a certain person. Not Bill Whitworth. For God's sake, not Whitworth.

POOPAY. Not Whitworth?

REECE. He's in with Goodman, I'm certain he is. And forget John Constable, he's too thick with Bill Whitworth ...

POOPAY. Forget Constable, right. What about Grady?

REECE. No, no, Grady's been dead for years. No use at all.

POOPAY. Right, no use whatsoever.

REECE. The man you want is A.P. Such. Straight as a die. Can you remember that name, Rachel? Tony Such. Tall with dark hair and a ...

POOPAY. Look, I can't do this. I really can't ...

REECE. Rachel, please ...

POOPAY. I am not Rachel! And I'm not getting involved. I'm sorry. I mean, if these people are happy to push women out of windows, what chance have I got? Most of your lawyers are bent as well, from the sound of it. I'm not having anything more to do with it, I'm sorry. You'll have to ask Quentin. Ask Rachel. You can leave me out.

REECE. *(Half rising.)* Rachel! You must ...

POOPAY. Ask Lennox. Anyone but me. I'm sorry. I'm getting my coat. No charge, all right ...

REECE. Rachel ... Please, Rachel ...

(REECE grabs on to POOPAY.)

POOPAY. For the last time will you stop keep calling me that? My name's not Rachel. It is Poopay Dayseer. Now, let go of me, will you ... ?

REECE. *(Imploringly.)* Please, Rachel, I beg you. Please.

POOPAY. Get off! Off! Off! All right? Or I'll break your stupid fingers. *(She prises him off her.)* That's better!

(POOPAY starts to move away. The exertion has proved too much for REECE. He collapses, making strangulated noises.)

REECE. *(Choking.)* Rach ... Ra ... Ra ... el ... el ... el ...

POOPAY. What are you doing now? What is it? What's the matter?

REECE. Ra ... eeelll ...!

POOPAY. What's the matter with you ... ? *(REECE lies on the floor making strangled breathing sounds.)* Oh, my God!

Oh, God! I'm getting out of here. I'm sorry, I'm getting out. *(She runs into the bedroom. REECE continues to lie there choking. Banging of cupboards from the bedroom. From off, in a panic.)* Where's my coat? What's he done with my bloody coat? *(Further banging. POOPAY returns with her coat. She starts putting it on.)* Look, I'm sorry about this. I'm making no charge. All right?

REECE. *(Weakly.)* Rachel ...

POOPAY. *(Grabbing her bag.)* That was on the house. I hope you're better soon ...

REECE. *(Gasping.)* Rachel ... please ... help me ...

POOPAY. *(Hesitating, then relenting.)* Oh, God. All right. Wait. *(She puts down her bag and picks up the phone. She consults the notepad and works the phone.)* I'll phone him. I'll phone your—your butler—whatever he is—Then I'm away, all right? *(Into phone.)* Hallo ... is that ... whoeveritis? ... This is POOPAY ... the—specialist consultant ...in room—hang on a minute ... *(She studies the phone.)* ... What? ... No, he's not—he's lying on the floor ... he's had some sort of ... hallo ... *(The phone has gone dead. POOPAY replaces the receiver and grabs up her bag. REECE continues to lie on the floor, breathing with apparent difficulty. She continues to REECE, loudly.)* There's somebody coming. Can you hear me? There's somebody on their way. You'll be OK now. *(REECE groans.)* Oh, soddit. Here. *(She grabs a cushion from the sofa and puts it under REECE's head. As she does this, she continues.)* I'm S&M, not doctors and bloody nurses ... Right. Better? 'Night 'night.

(POOPAY takes up her bag once more and heads for the front door. Just as she reaches it, the door opens and JULIAN steps into the room.)

JULIAN. Where are you off to?

POOPAY. He's there. I've done what I can ...

JULIAN. Just a minute. What have you done to him?

POOPAY. He's all yours. Good night.

(JULIAN kneels beside REECE, concerned.)

JULIAN. Reece? What's she done? What have you done to him, you slag?

POOPAY. I haven't done nothing. Good night.

(POOPAY makes to go out of the door.)

JULIAN. Hey!

POOPAY. What?

JULIAN. You're not going anywhere.

POOPAY. Who says so?

JULIAN. I do.

POOPAY. Oh yes? You and who else?

JULIAN. Me and those two gentlemen down the hall there for starters. *(POOPAY takes a look down the hall and looks uncertain.)* Now kindly step back inside, please.

POOPAY. *(Doing so.)* I can call for assistance, you know. If necessary.

JULIAN. Give me a hand with him. If you've damaged him I will personally pull your head off. *(POOPAY and JULIAN lift REECE off the floor with difficulty.)* Gently! Gently!

POOPAY. *(As they do this.)* You keep threatening me, I can easily summon the management, you know.

JULIAN. I wouldn't bother, we own the hotel.

POOPAY. *(Realizing she is in deep.)* Oh. Do you?

(REECE groans.)

JULIAN. *(To REECE.)* All right, old lad ... Easy. Easy. *(They disappear momentarily into the bedroom. From off.)* Down here.

POOPAY. *(Off.)* Right. *(She returns.)* I'll be off then, all right?

JULIAN. *(Returning swiftly.)* Hey! I said wait a minute ...

POOPAY. Yes, well, I've done ...

JULIAN. Sit down.

POOPAY. I've done what I can—

JULIAN. Sit! *(POOPAY sits.)* You go when I tell you you can go. All right? Take your coat off. Relax. *(He picks up the phone and punches a number. POOPAY removes her coat, reluctantly.)* It's Julian. Get Doctor Joachim ... Yes. Yes, he's had another one ... Yes. It's in my book. Right. Quickly.

(JULIAN hangs up. He turns to POOPAY.)

POOPAY. *(Rather nervous.)* I don't think you really need me here any more, do you? I think I'll—

JULIAN. So. What happened?

POOPAY. How do you mean?

JULIAN. I mean with him. What happened to my friend, Mr. Welles?

POOPAY. Nothing. We were—

JULIAN. Playing little games with him, were you? Showing off your bag of tricks?

(JULIAN kicks POOPAY's bag.)

POOPAY. No. We were just—

JULIAN. Just what?

POOPAY. Talking.

JULIAN. Talking?

POOPAY. And then he—sort of fell over.

JULIAN. While you were talking?

POOPAY. Yes.

JULIAN. You must have a very forceful line in conversation.

POOPAY. Not really.

JULIAN. What were you talking about?

(POOPAY is trying to keep her eyes off the confession on the desk.)

POOPAY. Nothing.

(JULIAN picks up the cushion from the floor. He starts to toss it from hand to hand. POOPAY becomes riveted by this.)

JULIAN. I'll repeat that question just once more. What were you both talking about?

POOPAY. *(A bit croakily.)* I can't remember.

JULIAN. You can't remember?

POOPAY. No.

JULIAN. You can't remember a conversation you were holding less than five minutes ago? Suffer from memory loss, do you? *(POOPAY doesn't answer.)* Well, do you? You know what is sometimes a good cure for memory loss? Shock. You give the person a shock. It sometimes serves to jolt the memory. As you might do any piece of faulty equipment. Like that. *(He bangs the cushion suddenly and throws it quite sharply on to the sofa beside POOPAY. She jumps.)* One more time, then? What were you both talking about? *(POOPAY's eyes stray momentarily back to the desk. JULIAN intercepts her look this time. POOPAY seizes her opportunity to try and make a bolt for it. JULIAN continues, going to the desk.)* What's this then? Is this what all the excitement was—SIT DOWN! *(POOPAY sits again, swiftly. JULIAN picks up the document and skims through it. Through the window, the distant sound of automatic gun fire. POOPAY and JULIAN both react. JULIAN moves to the window.)* 'S'alright. Other side of the river. Deptford, I think. *(He resumes reading.)* Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I had some small inkling this was on the cards. I'm going to have to keep a closer eye on him for the remainder of his days. He's becoming a liability, the wicked old thing. Nothing like imminent death, is there, for bringing out a guilty conscience. Wouldn't you agree?

POOPAY. *(Huskily.)* I wouldn't know.

JULIAN. Did you read this? *(POOPAY shakes her head.)* No?

POOPAY. No. Not a single word.

(JULIAN studies POOPAY.)

JULIAN. You signed it though, didn't you? This is your name, I take it? Poopay Dog-ear, is it? Oh, yes. And here's our old pal Quentin. Must have a word with him, too. And you say you haven't read it? *(No reply.)* Then you might as well read it now, hadn't you?

(JULIAN throws the document into POOPAY's lap.)

POOPAY. No, thank you.

JULIAN. That's entirely up to you. Since I don't believe you, there's no way you're going to leave here alive in either event, is there? *(POOPAY suddenly makes a bolt for it. She throws her coat at JULIAN which he catches without difficulty. But it allows her the split second required to bolt across the room and into the bathroom where she slams the door behind her and locks it. JULIAN is only seconds behind her, still holding her coat.)* Oh, now that's silly. That is silly. That is very, very silly, isn't it? Now you're going to make me cross.

(JULIAN stands for a moment, then moves swiftly across the room towards the bedroom door. He stops briefly, picks up her bag and takes it with him into the bedroom. Meanwhile POOPAY looks around her and finds she still has the confession in her hands. Deciding the best course is to get rid of it, she kneels and hides it back in the bidet as before. She gets back on her feet and for the first time sees there is another door to the bathroom. She moves to it hastily to lock it, but JULIAN is there before her. He moves into the room. He still holds her bag. She backs away until she

reaches the bidet. She loses her balance and sits. JULIAN stands over her.)

POOPAY. We can talk about this. There's no need ... I mean, I'm not going to ...

(JULIAN opens POOPAY's bag.)

JULIAN. Got quite a collection in here, haven't you? Handcuffs. Whips. Cat-o'-nine-tails. The things a girl carries in her handbag these days. What is all this junk?

POOPAY. I'm a ... I'm a ... I'm ...

JULIAN. You're a what? What precisely are you?

POOPAY. *(In a tiny voice.)* I'm a dominatrix ...

JULIAN. Are you now? Well, you certainly scare the hell out of me.

POOPAY. Is that what you'd like? I mean, if that's ... I'd be very happy to ... I mean, free ... no charge ...

JULIAN. I wouldn't touch you with a lavatory brush, you grimy little woman ...

POOPAY. Yes, well, just as you like.

JULIAN. What we're in need of here, correct me if I'm wrong, dominatrix, is something in the nature of a tragedy. Elderly gentleman, distinguished businessman, pillar of society, rents the services of a whip woman, together with all her deviant commodities—*(He tosses the bag back through the bedroom door.)* Leaving her client helpless as a turkey, she comes into the bathroom—to see if there's anything worth taking. Drugs maybe? Yes. She opens the bathroom cabinet ... *(He does so.)* ... in search of something to give her a bit of a buzz, get her dull little brain working and, yes, she finds this ... looks interesting, doesn't it? ... which she swallows in one gulp. *(He holds up a small bottle.)* Not bothering to read, in her excitement, on the back: *(Reading.)* 'Caution. Dangerous to exceed the stated dose.' Oh, dear, what an oversight. Which, of course, taken on top of these pills—*(Taking up a bottle of*

pills)—that the greedy girl had already gobbled up, resulted in her sad demise. That should do it, shouldn't it? *(He unscrews the bottle top, then the pill bottle. He pours a few pills into the palm of his hand. He takes up the open medicine bottle with the other. POOPAY watches him with horrified fascination.)* We have a choice now. This can be voluntary—or this can be compulsory. It's entirely up to you.

POOPAY. You—you—you could go to prison for this, you know ... *(JULIAN stares at her, startled. Suddenly he starts to laugh. Long and hard. It isn't a cheering sound. The laughter stops, eventually. POOPAY continues, in a near whisper.)* Oh, dear God you're him, aren't you? Him. You're J.S. Goodman?

JULIAN. Julian to my closest friends. *(Extending his hands.)* Come on then. Come on. Good girl. *(POOPAY draws back.)* No? All right. It has to be the hard way, then.

POOPAY. *(A last bid.)* You do this you'll never get it back. Will you? His confession. The pieces of paper he signed. You kill me, you'll never find them.

JULIAN. *(Slowly.)* Where is it? *(Louder.)* Where is it? *(Savagely.)* WHERE IS IT? *(JULIAN switches the bottle to the hand which holds the pills and swiftly lunges out and grabs POOPAY by her hair. He drags her towards him. POOPAY's wig comes away in his hand. JULIAN is again momentarily startled. POOPAY makes a dart through the bedroom door. JULIAN continues, angrily.)* Come here! *(With a cry.)* Mother! Come here, Mother!

POOPAY. *(As she runs.)* Mother?

(JULIAN initially chases after her into the bedroom. POOPAY re-emerges immediately through the other bedroom door into the sitting room, literally running for her life. She makes first for the front door, opens it, remembers and then closes it again. She looks around and makes a dart for the only other remaining door in the room, the communicating door. During this, JULIAN re-emerges from the bedroom back into the bathroom, doubling back to cut her off. He has dis-

carded her wig and the drugs he was holding. He goes to open the bathroom door leading to the sitting room. It is still locked from when POOPAY locked it earlier and this momentarily delays him. JULIAN fumbles with the lock, cursing. All this allows time for POOPAY to step inside the linking lobby and shut the door behind her. She stands blinking and breathless in the confined, dark space. JULIAN, who has been hot on her heels, tries the door handle but POOPAY's body wedges it shut. He finds he is suddenly short of breath.)

JULIAN. *(To himself.)* I'm getting too old for this, Mother. *(To POOPAY, through the door.)* You can stay locked in there as long as you like. You can't go anywhere, you know. That just links with the room next door, that's all. Just a storeroom in there. No way out. Just a great big cupboard. *(Rattling the handle.)* Come on. Come on out. You might as well. *(The doorbell chimes. JULIAN curses under his breath.)* I can wait. I'll be waiting for you. Don't worry. *(JULIAN looks round and makes one or two rapid decisions. Change of plan. He takes up POOPAY's coat from the floor and goes out through the bathroom, closing the bathroom cabinet as he goes. The doorbell chimes again. He yells:)* All right. I'm coming, I'm coming. Keep it down, will you, there's a dying man in here ...

(JULIAN disappears into the bedroom.
POOPAY, alone in her cupboard, tries the other door. It opens. As it does so, the unit revolves so that she, effectively, steps back into the same area she has left.
We are in the same place but we have moved in time. Back twenty years. It is 1994.
POOPAY peers around, accustoming her eyes to the gloom. She starts to creep across the room. She falls over something.)

POOPAY. Ow! Ooh! Ow!

RUELLA. *(From the bedroom.)* Who is that? Who's out there? *(POOPAY freezes.)* Who's there? *(POOPAY hurries back to the cupboard but has trouble locating it. Before she can, the sitting room lights come on and RUELLA is standing in the bedroom doorway in her nightdress. At forty-five, she is a handsome, elegant woman—the sort other women often aspire to be like—capable and determined and, as described by REECE, with a fierce sense of fairness, honesty and justice. At present she is fairly angry at the intrusion.)* Who the hell are you?

POOPAY. *(Confused.)* I'm sorry, I ... I'm ...

(POOPAY is rapidly going to pieces.)

RUELLA. What are you doing here? This is my room ...

POOPAY. I'm so sorry. I thought it was a cupboard.

RUELLA. A what?

POOPAY. A cupboard. I was informed it was a cupboard. I'm so sorry.

RUELLA. It's my room.

POOPAY. Yes.

RUELLA. Mine. Why did you think it was a cupboard? Were you looking for a cupboard? Why do you want a cupboard?

POOPAY. I don't want a cupboard, I was trying to ...

RUELLA. Why are you dressed like that? Are you in fancy dress?

POOPAY. *(Her teeth chattering.)* No, no I'm a dom ... I'm a dom ...

RUELLA. You're a what?

POOPAY. I'm a dominatrix ...

RUELLA. A dominatrix?

POOPAY. Yes.

RUELLA. I don't even know what that is, I'm sorry. Something sexual, isn't it? *(POOPAY whimpers.)* Well, you can't do it here, whatever it is. Are you on drugs or something? *(Another*

whimper from POOPAY.) Would you kindly leave my room at once or I shall phone security.

POOPAY. *(Weakly.)* No ... no ...

RUELLA. What do you mean, no? Get out at once. It's nearly midnight. I want to get some sleep. I have—mountains to do in the morning.

POOPAY. They're waiting out there.

RUELLA. Out where?

POOPAY. There.

RUELLA. What, outside my room? How many more of you are there?

(RUELLA crosses and opens the door. She takes a swift look up and down the hall. As she does so, POOPAY draws back into the corner of the room, terrified.)

POOPAY. *(Terrified.)* No ...

RUELLA. *(Closing the door.)* Well, there's nothing out there except dirty shoes. *(POOPAY cowers, shivering, making whimpering noises.)* You're obviously on something appalling. You're quite evidently hallucinating. Well, there's nothing I can do. I'm phoning security.

POOPAY. *(A great cry.)* NO!!!

RUELLA. *(Fiercely.)* Will you keep your voice down? There are people in this hotel who are trying to sleep. For goodness sake have some consideration for others. What's the matter with you? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Now, sit down there and be quiet this minute. Pull yourself together, you're a grown woman. *(POOPAY, not for the first time this evening, sits meekly as she is told. RUELLA lifts the phone and punches 0. She speaks into the phone:)* Hallo. This is suite 647. I've just been woken up by a woman who's broken in here. She appears to be high on drugs and dressed in rubber ...

POOPAY. Leather.

RUELLA. What? Leather, then. Dressed in leather. Will you please come and remove her at once ... Thank you ... yes,

647. Mrs. Welles. And this is not what I expect from a five-star hotel.

(RUELLA hangs up.)

POOPAY. Mrs. Welles? You're Mrs. Welles?

RUELLA. Yes.

POOPAY. Are you married to Mr. Welles?

RUELLA. Yes. Amazingly. Currently. Though I don't suspect for very much longer—anyway, what's it got to do with you? Mind your own business.

POOPAY. The Mr. Welles who owns this hotel? The Mr. Welles in the room next door?

RUELLA. Next door?

POOPAY. Through there. Through that door.

RUELLA. Certainly not. My husband's abroad, at present. And he certainly doesn't own this hotel and if he did, I'd advise him to sell it immediately. Anyway there's no room next door. Not that way. It's a box room or something. I checked on the map there. I always check my fire exits. Most of these places are death traps.

POOPAY. It's not, there's a suite through there. It's a great big suite like this one. *(Starting to cry.)* I promise. Please, believe me.

RUELLA. *(More gently.)* Listen. Just try and calm down. Sit there quietly and take deep breaths, all right. *(POOPAY does as she's told.)* That's it. Not too fast. Slowly. Slowly. Now, what's your name?

POOPAY. Poopay.

RUELLA. Poopay? Is that your real name? It can't possibly be.

POOPAY. No.

RUELLA. What's your proper name, then?

POOPAY. Phoebe.

RUELLA. Phoebe? Oh, that's much nicer.

POOPAY. I hate it.

RUELLA. Well, you shouldn't. It's a very fine name. Phoebe was a goddess. Did you know that?

POOPAY. Was she?

RUELLA. Oh, yes. A very important one. The sister of Apollo, the sun god. Can't get much more important than that, can you? You should be proud of it, Phoebe. Mind you, I don't know what she'd think if she saw you looking like this.

POOPAY. You're positive there's no suite next door? You're sure?

RUELLA. It's just a storeroom, I promise you. Do you want to look? I don't even know if it's open.

(RUELLA moves to try the door.)

POOPAY. *(Alarmed.)* No, don't open that door. Please ...

RUELLA. All right, all right ... Something's really terrified you, hasn't it? What is it? Tell me. I'll listen.

POOPAY. He tried to kill me.

RUELLA. Who did? Who tried to kill you?

POOPAY. J. S. Goodman.

RUELLA. J.S.—? You mean, *Julian* Goodman?

POOPAY. Julian, yes. Julian Goodman. Do you know him?

RUELLA. Yes, of course I do. He's my husband's business partner.

POOPAY. Your husband?

RUELLA. My husband, Reece. Reece Welles.

POOPAY. Then it is him, that is him.

RUELLA. What?

POOPAY. The old man next door. Your husband, the man who's just collapsed.

RUELLA. *(Patiently.)* We'll try again, shall we? My husband is indeed Reece Welles but he is not staying in this hotel. *(As she speaks she goes into the bedroom briefly and returns, pulling on her dressing gown.)* He is not due back till tomorrow in time for lunch. A final attempt, on his side anyway, at a last-minute reconciliation; but as far as I'm concerned, far too

late. I've stuck it for twelve years but enough is quite sufficient. I don't know what your involvement is with Reece, dear, and I really don't want to know, but as from tomorrow you're welcome to him. Though you may have to visit him in jail, I warn you.

POOPAY. No, you don't understand, he's—

RUELLA. Incidentally, in your book he may be an old man. But as far as I'm concerned he's still a comparatively young man of fifty. That spoken by a comparatively young woman of forty-five.

POOPAY. Fifty? He can't be fifty? He's—

RUELLA. As for Julian, I'm on less sure ground, I must say. He's a perfectly despicable man and I wouldn't put anything past him.

POOPAY. He killed his own mother ...

RUELLA. From my knowledge of Julian that is just possible. My husband's infatuated with him. In his eyes, Julian can do no wrong. Which is one of the reasons I'm leaving, if you must know. It was either Julian or me. I don't know how long they thought they'd get away with it. If they imagined I was just going to stand by and let them embezzle millions.

POOPAY. My God. I've just—I've just ... What's you name? No, wait. I'll tell you your name. Not Jessica—that was the first one. It's Rue—Rue ...

RUELLA. Ruella.

POOPAY. Ruella, yes. You're right ...

RUELLA. I thought I was.

POOPAY. He must have got it all confused, you see. Your husband. He thought I was his daughter Rachel, you see. He was all muddled up. He said he'd killed Jessica and then he'd killed you ...

RUELLA. Reece said that?

POOPAY. Yes. Only he got it muddled. He means to kill you, only he hasn't yet.

RUELLA. He's in Greece.

POOPAY. Greece, yes. Greece. Buying up all the rubber.

Only he can't be in Greece, can he? He's next door. Only he can't be next door because he has to be in Greece for Julian to kill you, you see ...

RUELLA. Julian? Julian's killing me as well?

POOPAY. No, not as well. Julian's the one who's going to do it, you see. He's planning to throw you out of a hotel window. The one next door. While Reece is in Greece.

RUELLA. *(Staring at her.)* I think you're the one that's muddled, not my husband. Deep breaths now, deep breaths. Head between your knees ... *(RUELLA gently but firmly pushes POOPAY's head down between her knees.)* That's it. Deep breath as you come up. And down—and let it all out—that's it. *(Conversationally, like a hairdresser.)* So, what's it like being a prostitute? Is it fun?

POOPAY. *(As she comes up.)* Not very, no.

RUELLA. And what do you do when you're dominatrixing? Is that hard work? Keep breathing ...

POOPAY. It's all right, you know, it's a bit more interesting than straight work—

RUELLA. And what do you have to do exactly?

POOPAY. Oh you know, beat people, tie them up, you know ...

RUELLA. That doesn't sound very life enhancing, does it—?

POOPAY. They seem to like it ...

RUELLA. Yes, well, some people like listening to Schoenberg; but I don't think it's to be encouraged ... *(The doorbell chimes.)* Ah, here we are. *(RUELLA moves to the door. POOPAY cowers and moans. RUELLA speaks soothingly.)* Now it's all right, it's all right. It's just the house detective. *(Calling through the door.)* Hallo?

HAROLD. *(From outside.)* Security. Harold Palmer.

RUELLA. *(To POOPAY.)* Security. There we are. *(Opening the door.)* Come in.

(HAROLD, the house detective, enters. A lugubrious man who's

seen it all several times over. He is currently fifty-five years old.)

HAROLD. Evening, Mrs. Welles. Sorry about this. They sometimes slip past you. *(Seeing POOPAY.)* Dear, oh dear, where did you spring from then? Walk in here like that, did you? I don't know, it gets worse, you know. Come on, up you get. I'll take you down the service lift. Not going through the foyer like that. Frighten the night porter.

RUELLA. Be gentle with her. She's had some sort of shock.

HAROLD. Caught sight of herself in the mirror probably.

POOPAY. Shut your face ...

HAROLD. Hey, hey, hey ...

RUELLA. Listen, I'll lend you my mac. But you must give it back. I'm going to trust you. Will you promise?

POOPAY. Thank you. I promise.

(RUELLA goes into the bedroom momentarily.)

HAROLD. No need for that, Mrs. Welles, I'll find something. Throw a bit of polythene over her or something. Don't want to dirty your coat.

POOPAY. Look, stuff up, all right?

HAROLD. Now you watch that language. This is a respectable hotel.

POOPAY. Respectable?

(RUELLA returns with a raincoat.)

RUELLA. Here we are.

POOPAY. *(Starting to put on the coat.)* That's a good one. Try telling that to Lennox ...

HAROLD Lennox? Who's Lennox?

POOPAY. Your pimping, poncing, poxy head porter. That Lennox. *(To RUELLA.)* Thank you very much.

HAROLD. Lennox? Head porter's name's George.

POOPAY. George? Where have you been? Wake up. George's dead, isn't he?

HAROLD. Dead? No, he just looks it.

POOPAY. George died ages ago. 'bout eight years. Got run over by a taxi. Where have you been? Asleep?

HAROLD. Come on. This way. And I'm having a polaroid of you before you go. No way you're getting back in here.

POOPAY. *(Ignoring HAROLD, to RUELLA.)* Goodbye. Thank you very much, you've been very kind. Just—I know you think I'm mad—but be careful, will you? Be very, very careful.

HAROLD. Come on ...

POOPAY. *(Indicating the communicating door.)* And keep away from that door. Whatever you do. He's only the other side. All right?

HAROLD. *(Tugging her out.)* This is your last warning.

POOPAY. Yes. OK. Don't pull me.

RUELLA. *(Something is troubling her.)* Just a minute—Harold—it is, Harold, isn't it?

HAROLD. That's right, madam. Harold Palmer.

RUELLA. Phoebe ...

POOPAY. Yes?

HAROLD *(Scornfully.)* Phoebe?

RUELLA. What happened to Jessica, can you remember? How did she die?

POOPAY. She was drowned. In—wait—yes, 1981. Year I was born. Swimming in Corsica. Aged thirty-two. Something like that. It was supposed to be an accident. But it wasn't. He held her down. By the hair.

RUELLA. *(Rather shaken.)* I see.

HAROLD. That's it. Come on then, Phoebe. *(Laughing.)* Phoebe ...

POOPAY. *(As she's dragged away.)* See what I mean ...

RUELLA. You stick with it, girl. Stick with Phoebe. *(The door closes on HAROLD and POOPAY. RUELLA stands thoughtfully. She shakes her head. Speaks to herself:)* Year

she was born? She may want to lie about her age but she'll never get away with thirteen. *(RUELLA makes a move to the communicating door, changes her mind and then moves to the bedroom. She is about to go in and switch off the light, when she hesitates. She returns to the communicating door, her hand on the handle, deliberating.)* Ridiculous. Quite absurd. Still, I won't sleep otherwise, will I? *(Cautiously she opens the first door, steps inside the lobby and finds that she needs to close it before she can open the other door. Standing in the confined space, she speaks, quietly.)* Help. *(The unit revolves as before. RUELLA opens the second door to arrive back in the suite. It is now in darkness. Time has changed yet again. It is now 1974. She speaks, staring into the darkness:)* Odd sort of box room. *(RUELLA moves further into the room groping round furniture. From the bedroom the sound of girlish giggles and manly growls. Honeymooners having fun in the dark.)* Oh, no. Not in the box room, surely ... They're everywhere.

(RUELLA starts to try and retrace her steps. It's difficult. Before she's gone far, a young woman comes out of the bedroom. It is JESSICA, a young bride of twenty-five, rich, pretty and vivacious.)

JESSICA. *(Calling to someone in the bedroom, giggling.)* ... I need to go. I have to go. I'm sorry, I'm bursting ... Sorry...

REECE. *(Off, from the bedroom.)* You're going the wrong way ...

JESSICA. *(Calling.)* What's that?

REECE. *(Off.)* The bathroom's the other way.

JESSICA. Oh, where am I? I'm lost, I'm lost. Where's the loo? I need the loooo ...

REECE. *(Coming out of the bedroom.)* Just a minute, here you are, you ...

(The room is flooded with light as REECE switches them on. He and JESSICA are both near naked. Fortunately, REECE

is carrying a sheet which they both clasp to themselves in one lightning movement as they see RUELLA.)

JESSICA. *(Squawking with surprise.)* Oh!

REECE. *(Likewise.)* Ah! *(REECE is now thirty. He and JESSICA stare at RUELLA. RUELLA stares at them. A shocked silence.)* How did you get in here? This is a private room.

JESSICA. *(Echoing him.)* ... private room.

REECE. Get out at once.

JESSICA. Get out.

RUELLA. *(Still stunned.)* I'm sorry, I ...

JESSICA. How dare you!

REECE. How dare you!

RUELLA. *(Wonderingly.)* Reece?

REECE. *(Startled.)* What?

RUELLA. Jessica?

JESSICA. *(Equally startled.)* Yes?

REECE. Look, I don't know who you are but—

RUELLA. *(Confused.)* Yes, I'm sorry. I'm going, I'm going. I'm going now. I'm sorry.

(RUELLA, in panic, opens the communicating door and steps back into the lobby closing the door behind her.)

REECE, No, not that way ... *(He darts forward to reveal he is just in his shorts. He tries to follow RUELLA but finds the door won't open. RUELLA stands for a second in the lobby area, recovering from the shock.)* Honestly. What a damn cheek.

JESSICA. Do you know her?

REECE. Of course I don't. Never seen her before in my life.

JESSICA. She seemed to know you. She knew your name.

REECE. She knew your name, come to that.

JESSICA. Yes. How odd. Weird.

REECE. Come on. You'll get cold ...

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