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SF PERUSALS

# A Month of Sundays

A Play

Bob Larbey

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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## A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

First presented by arrangement with H.M. Tennent Ltd. under the title *The First Sunday in Every Month* at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton on 14 November 1985 with the following cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Aylott** | Geoffrey Bayldon |
| **Cooper** | George Cole |
| **Julia** | Maggie Henderson |
| **Peter** | Edward Lyon |
| **Mrs Baker** | Lorraine Peters |
| **Nurse Wilson** | Siobhán Redmond |

Directed by Justin Greene
Designer Sarah-Jane McClelland
Lighting Designer Dave Horn

*A Month of Sundays* transferred to the Duchess Theatre, London on 7th February 1986.

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## CHARACTERS

**Aylott**, late sixties
**Cooper**, late sixties
**Julia**, Cooper's daughter, early forties
**Peter**, Julia's husband, early forties
**Mrs Baker**, cleaning lady, forties
**Nurse Wilson**, about 24

The action of the play takes place in Cooper's room in a Rest Home for the Elderly on the first Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May

Time — 1986

Other plays by Bob Larbey
published by Samuel French Ltd

Building Blocks
Half an Idea
A Small Affair

# ACT I

## SCENE 1

*Cooper's room in an old people's home. April. Morning*

*The room is large, and on the first floor of what looks to be a Victorian country house, but the furniture is modern and the decor bright and attractive*

US *almost the entire wall is taken up with large leaded windows with curtains. A door leads off* R *to the corridor; another door,* L, *leads to a bathroom. There is a bed* C, *its head against the windows. By the bed are a bedside locker, with a carafe of water, a glass and a bell push on it, and an upright chair. Against the* R *wall are a wardrobe and some shelves containing books, a vase and a few personal effects. Against the* L *wall is a dressing table with another upright chair in front of it. There is also a cupboard.* DS *are a coffee table and two armchairs*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises it is early morning; the lighting gradually gets brighter as the scene progresses*

*The bed has been slept in and the window curtains are closed*

*Cooper sits in one of the armchairs. He is in his late sixties and is rather frail but lively of mind. He wears pyjamas and a dressing-gown*

**Cooper** The Panzers will be coming soon. They're in the kitchen now, loading up for the first offensive of the day. Fuel on board — tea, coffee, orange juice. Ammunition on board — porridge, cereals, eggs, bacon, armour-piercing sausages. The crews stand ready, smart and starched. Then a signal from the Divisional Commander, Mrs Simmons, and they rumble out into the corridors, cutting a swathe of clatter through the silence of an early morning. There's little resistance — the odd cry of "I don't want any breakfast". Quite useless — the breakfast is left in any case. "I don't want any breakfast" is translated as meaning: "But nevertheless I do want to lie here looking at the breakfast I don't want to eat". Some, of course, the zombies, aren't really sure which meal it is they're supposed to be eating. That's a victory of sorts, I suppose. At least it robs the Panzers of the satisfaction of knowing that their dawn *Blitzkrieg* has been a total success. They can hardly triumph at someone eating his breakfast when that someone is quite convinced he's eating his lunch. My friend Aylott

once devised an ingenious plan. He dropped his upper dentures into his scrambled eggs. The dentures were retrieved and of course the scrambled eggs were taken away and, just for that morning, the Panzers forgot to bring him back a fresh plateful. We formed an Escape Committee last summer, Aylott and I. It entailed causing a huge explosion of porridge in the kitchen and Aylott and I making our way to Switzerland disguised as nuns. He was much better in the summer, Aylott.

*There is a noise in the corridor*

Ah, the Panzers!

*There is a tap at the door*

I should think twice, Fritz! I've got a twenty-five pounder trained on the door!

*Wilson — a nurse — enters with a breakfast tray. She is about twenty-four*

**Wilson** Good-morning, Mr Cooper.
**Cooper** (*putting his hands up*) *Kamerad!*

*Wilson puts the tray down and goes to open the curtains behind the bed*

**Wilson** If you must get up so early, why don't you sit by the window?
**Cooper** I've seen the window.
**Wilson** You've got a lovely view.
**Cooper** I've seen the view.
**Wilson** Eat your breakfast whilst it's hot.
**Cooper** To do that, Wilson, I'd have to perch on your trolley as you leave the kitchens. (*He takes the cover off his main dish*) I do believe that's scrambled egg.
**Wilson** You asked for scrambled egg.
**Cooper** In that case, *mea culpa*.

*Wilson makes Cooper's bed during the following; Cooper eats his breakfast*

**Cooper** I hope you're tucking those covers in nice and tight.
**Wilson** Why?
**Cooper** It would spoil the nightly challenge if I could get into bed easily. Of course, if you made the bed with me in it, I'd never get out of bed in the first place.
**Wilson** Don't tempt me.

**Cooper** I dreamt about you again last night, Wilson. You were quite naked.
**Wilson** Now there's a surprise.
**Cooper** Except ...
**Wilson** Except?
**Cooper** Except for a long rope of pearls swinging between your full breasts.
**Wilson** I haven't got full breasts.
**Cooper** It *was* a dream.
**Wilson** I'm not exactly flat-chested.
**Cooper** Ah!
**Wilson** I don't know why I listen to you.
**Cooper** Because we talk of today. We talk of beautiful things like your fairly full breasts. It's better than senile mumblings or tales of an age before you were born. Those are tights, aren't they?
**Wilson** Yes.
**Cooper** Shame on you.
**Wilson** You really are a dirty old man.
**Cooper** Now that's a point. When does one become a dirty old man? You never hear anyone talk of a dirty young man — or a dirty middle-aged man. It's as though "dirty" and "old" are synonymous. I shall write to *The Times*.
**Wilson** My fella works for *The Times*.
**Cooper** Is he on strike?
**Wilson** No, he isn't!
**Cooper** Makes a change. How's Aylott?
**Wilson** He's doing very well.
**Cooper** Doing what very well? Walking — thinking — breathing?
**Wilson** I expect he'll be along to see you later.
**Cooper** Did I tell you of the Escape Committee we formed in the summer, Aylott and I?
**Wilson** Yes, you did.
**Cooper** Oh, shit!
**Wilson** It doesn't matter.
**Cooper** It does. I'd forgotten.
**Wilson** It's not a crime.
**Cooper** No, it's not a crime.
**Wilson** In the summer, when it's warmer, I shall probably wear stockings.
**Cooper** You she-devil!
**Wilson** That's if you buy me that long rope of pearls.
**Cooper** Done.

*Wilson turns to leave*

Wilson?
**Wilson** Yes?

**Cooper** The Escape Committee. How many times did I tell you before?
**Wilson** Just once.

*Cooper looks at her, seeking confirmation that she is telling the truth*

Would I lie? Would I lie?

*Cooper smiles*

(*Pleased that she has made Cooper smile*) I'll see you later.

*Wilson exits*

**Cooper** I'm quite vain where Wilson is concerned. In fact, I've persuaded myself that I'm her little ray of sunshine. Not perhaps the brightest of rays, but that's only comparative to the Stygian darkness of most of the minds here. George Hartley joined the zombies yesterday. Big chap: "Remarkably fit for his age", that's what everybody said. Visitors often mistook him for a member of the staff. He used to fuel that particular fire by wearing his blue suit quite a lot — there's something about a blue suit. Then, yesterday afternoon, big "remarkably fit for his age" George Hartley, complete with blue suit, was discovered paddling in the pond in the garden. Thought he was at the seaside. Then he cried. (*He pushes his breakfast tray away and stands up, none too easily*) Now if I could have George Hartley's "remarkably fit for his age" body — perhaps a brain transplant. "Medical Breakthrough in Surrey Rest Home!" (*He walks to the window, speaking to his own body*) Will you *move*? Well, Hartley's not in the pond today — at least, not yet.

*From outside the door comes the sound of a vacuum cleaner*

That will be the second Panzer wave, mopping up any pockets of resistance. Mopping up — that's quite good. I must forget that — *remember* that. Aylott and I did formulate a theory that the steady whine of vacuum cleaners could actually affect the alpha rhythms of the brain. Then I posed the question as to whether most of the brains here *had* any alpha rhythms and the whole thing petered out.

*Mrs Baker, the cleaner, bustles in with the vacuum cleaner, dusters etc. She is in her forties. During the following, she cleans the room with a fierce intensity*

**Mrs Baker** Morning. I shan't be a minute.
**Cooper** You will, Mrs Baker, but no matter. I shall bask in the radiance of your physical beauty.

**Mrs Baker** Yes well, you want to try it.
**Cooper** Try what?
**Mrs Baker** You wouldn't know where to start.
**Cooper** Elliptical.
**Mrs Baker** What is?
**Cooper** Your conversation.
**Mrs Baker** Meaning?
**Cooper** We don't communicate, Mrs Baker.
**Mrs Baker** Well, we all know who that is.
**Cooper** Who who is? That doesn't sound right.
**Mrs Baker** There's a lot of old blokes in here who hardly know what day it is, but they don't go on like you.
**Cooper** They can't go on like me.
**Mrs Baker** Well, they don't.
**Cooper** We really should discuss the meaning of Life sometime, Mrs Baker.
**Mrs Baker** Yes, yes.
**Cooper** Is that you agreeing with me?
**Mrs Baker** No, it isn't.
**Cooper** Then why did you say, "Yes, yes"?
**Mrs Baker** Why you can't go for a walk while I clean your room I don't know.
**Cooper** I'd miss the conversation.
**Mrs Baker** What conversation? Is this your idea of conversation? It's not mine. Now Mr Aylott, he knows what a proper conversation is. We talk about all sorts of things, me and Mr Aylott — outside things.
**Cooper** If you mean the world beyond the gate, I can only express total disinterest.
**Mrs Baker** Well, you ought to be ashamed.
**Cooper** If I can't physically get further than the gate, why should I want to know what goes on beyond it?
**Mrs Baker** Because it's the world, that's why.
**Cooper** Oh, the world?
**Mrs Baker** Yes. And you can get further than the gate any time you like.
**Cooper** What do you have in mind, a piggy-back?
**Mrs Baker** Hire a taxi. You've got the money.
**Cooper** The equivalent of being taken for a ride in my pram.
**Mrs Baker** Oh, it's pride is it?
**Cooper** You're beginning to get on my nerves.
**Mrs Baker** Well, that makes a change from you getting on mine. This isn't even supposed to be one of my rooms, you know. I'm up the other end.
**Cooper** But you can't stay away from me?
**Mrs Baker** Oh, I could. I could. I'm just not letting Mrs Malik near you. You'd have her in tears.
**Cooper** Or raptures.

**Mrs Baker** And that's another thing. You're sex-crazed. It's not natural in a man of your age.

**Cooper** Actually, I haven't felt the physical urge for some years, but I can still remember what they were like. And until I join the zombies, I shall enjoy doing so.

**Mrs Baker** You shouldn't call them zombies.

**Cooper** You heard about "remarkably fit for his age" George Hartley going for a paddle yesterday?

**Mrs Baker** Poor man.

**Cooper** Why poor? He can spend his days in Wonderland now — going to the seaside.

**Mrs Baker** You're quite evil sometimes.

**Cooper** Not dull?

**Mrs Baker** No, not dull.

**Cooper** Praise indeed.

**Mrs Baker** Self-centred.

**Cooper** Guilty.

**Mrs Baker** You could get at least two more beds in a room this size.

**Cooper** I don't want two more beds in a room this size.

**Mrs Baker** Yes, well, you want to try it.

**Cooper** You said that before. What is it that you want me to try?

**Mrs Baker** You try looking after your father.

**Cooper** Rather difficult. He's in a little urn somewhere in Wimbledon.

**Mrs Baker** You know what I mean.

**Cooper** You look after your father?

**Mrs Baker** And run a family and do a job. He'd give his eye teeth for a room like this.

**Cooper** Has he got any eye teeth?

**Mrs Baker** He's seventy.

**Cooper** So's George Hartley and every tooth in his head is his own. I do hope he doesn't start trying to take them out and put them in a glass at night.

**Mrs Baker** You're wishing that poor man's mind away, aren't you?

**Cooper** Yes I am. He cried after he paddled.

**Mrs Baker** Poor man.

**Cooper** Not the tears of a child who's lost its parents on a beach. The tears of a "remarkably fit for his age" man who found himself paddling in the pond, wearing the blue suit that made people think he was on the staff. No-one walking past that pond would have taken him for a member of the staff, would they? Better he didn't cry. Better he waves an imaginary bucket and spade and toddles off to make some imaginary sand-castles. I'm going to have a pee.

*Cooper exits into the bathroom*

*Mrs Baker gets on with her cleaning*

**Cooper** (*off*) I'm inhibited. Would you mind singing, Mrs Baker?
**Mrs Baker** Don't be daft.

*But Mrs Baker does start to sing, rather self-consciously. She sings "Alice Blue Gown". She has rather a sweet voice and, as she goes on with the song, gains confidence in it*

*Cooper enters from the bathroom*

*Cooper takes Mrs Baker in his arms and engages her in a slow waltz. Mrs Baker does not resist and goes on with the song*

*Wilson enters to see the last of the dance*

*Mrs Baker sees Wilson and breaks off*

**Mrs Baker** We were dancing.
**Cooper** Tell the world, Wilson! We're in love!
**Mrs Baker** Fool.

*Cooper is out of breath. Seeing this, Wilson pushes a chair close to him. Quite deliberately, Cooper makes his way to a chair further away and sits down*

**Wilson** I didn't know you could sing, Mrs Baker.
**Mrs Baker** (*gathering her equipment*) Oh, I can sing. There's no reason why I shouldn't be able to sing.
**Wilson** Why don't you come round with us at Christmas?
**Mrs Baker** That's carols.
**Wilson** I know.
**Mrs Baker** No. I don't like carols.
**Wilson** Why?
**Mrs Baker** Because I don't.
**Wilson** Oh. There's a brew-up at the nurses' station.
**Mrs Baker** Mm. I might have a cup of tea. I might do that. (*To Cooper*) I'll see you tomorrow.
**Cooper** "Ye gods! Annihilate but space and time. And make two lovers happy!"
**Mrs Baker** Yes. I thought you'd have something funny to say.

*Mrs Baker exits*

*Wilson takes Cooper's pulse*

**Cooper** Now what are you doing that for?

*Wilson does a little shake of the head*

Of course, you're counting. I must remember that. Antidote for chattering nurses — make them take your pulse a lot. Well?

**Wilson** You just had to walk to this chair, didn't you?

**Cooper** You can't simply plonk yourself down on the ballroom floor. It spoils the moment.

**Wilson** You shouldn't get out of breath.

**Cooper** Indeed I shouldn't, Wilson. Dangerous habit. I have it on very good authority that if you get completely out of breath, you keel over and shuffle off the old mortal coil. I'm peeing more, you know.

**Wilson** Don't worry about that. You've done very well with your breakfast.

**Cooper** Does that describe the amount eaten, or the aesthetic arrangement of what I have left?

**Wilson** What would you like for lunch? The beef or the chicken?

**Cooper** Which do you recommend?

**Wilson** The chicken.

**Cooper** I'll have the beef.

**Wilson** Would you like me to bring you up a newspaper?

**Cooper** No thank you.

**Wilson** Or you could pop down and get one yourself.

**Cooper** You never give up, do you?

**Wilson** It was only a fall.

**Cooper** I couldn't have had it in the privacy of my own room, could I?

**Wilson** You're not the only person it's ever happened to.

**Cooper** And that's another thing. Why do we "have a fall?" Why can't people say "He fell down?" They don't, do they? "He had a fall." The next time I do it — and not in the residents' lounge — I shall issue instructions that it is reported as "Mr Cooper went arse over tip today."

**Wilson** You're not planning one, are you?

**Cooper** Only if you promise to lie beneath me.

**Wilson** Your daughter comes to see you today.

**Cooper** All the way from Milton Keynes. The first Sunday in every month.

**Wilson** It's a long way from Milton Keynes.

**Cooper** I wish I could convince her that it's too long a way altogether.

**Wilson** That's not very kind.

**Cooper** I'm not feeling very kind, Wilson. Since I last saw her, I've "had a fall," I now have to get up twice in the night instead of once, "remarkably fit for his age" George Hartley has joined the zombies and, last but not least, Mrs Baker suggests that I try looking after my father, who is in a little urn somewhere in Wimbledon.

**Wilson** You do provoke her.
**Cooper** I'm provoking me, Wilson. A cattle-prod to the brain. If I don't sting it, it won't work. And don't you dare say, "For a man of your age, your brain is remarkably active."
**Wilson** I wasn't going to.
**Cooper** Oh.
**Wilson** I was going to say that you're feeling sorry for yourself.
**Cooper** My God, if I was a few years younger, your "fella" who works for ...
**Wilson** *The Times* ...
**Cooper** Yes, *The Times* — I know, I know. He wouldn't stand a chance.
**Wilson** You'd like him.
**Cooper** Ah, but I *love* you.
**Wilson** Oh, you're crafty.
**Cooper** Will Aylott be along?
**Wilson** David and Jonathan. I must go. (*She picks up the breakfast tray and heads for the door*)
**Cooper** Wilson?
**Wilson** What?
**Cooper** Would I really make Mrs Malik cry?
**Wilson** Mrs Malik? Why should you?
**Cooper** Mrs Baker said I would. She said Mrs Malik is supposed to clean this room.
**Wilson** She is. Mrs Baker won't let her. You've gone quiet.
**Cooper** I shall think of something.
**Wilson** Tell me at lunch-time when I bring your chicken.
**Cooper** Beef!

*Wilson smiles and goes*

(*Getting up and moving to the window*) Daffs — daffies ... "I thought I saw a ..." or is it, "I saw a ...?" What a silly name for a flower, anyway.

*Aylott comes in. He is about the same age as Cooper. He is physically fitter and a gentler soul. He is dressed in shirt and sports jacket and carries two cups of tea*

**Cooper** Aylott!
**Aylott** I cadged these from the nurses' station. (*He sets the cups down on the coffee table*)

*Aylott and Cooper take an armchair each and toast each other with the tea*

**Cooper** The Escape Committee!

**Aylott** The Escape Committee!
**Cooper** And how are we feeling today?
**Aylott** Oh, much the same — mustn't grumble. How are *we* feeling today?
**Cooper** Oh, much the same — mustn't grumble.
**Aylott** Mr Spears came to see us yesterday.
**Cooper** Did he? Was he pleased with us?
**Aylott** Excellent recovery — quite a serious operation for a man of our age, he said.
**Cooper** I always call him "Doctor" instead of "Mister". He hates that.
**Aylott** How are the water-works?
**Cooper** Rather like your diet — little and often.
**Aylott** What does Mr Spears say?
**Cooper** He does quite a lot of "Ah wells". Actually, I think he's taking mental measurements for when I have to be fitted with the dreaded bags. I read it up. You get no warning, apparently. I mean, you don't feel that you want to pee. You just do. Not very much. You're sitting there and the first you know of it is a warm trickle — and incontinence is your new companion.
**Aylott** It could be years away.
**Cooper** Not from the sound of Spears' "Ah wells". I'm not sure that I wouldn't sooner go paddling. Any sign of Hartley this morning, incidentally?
**Aylott** Yes, he was ... Where did I see him? Yes, in the lounge earlier, reading a paper.
**Cooper** Upside down?
**Aylott** They're having his blue suit cleaned, apparently.
**Cooper** These bags of mine.
**Aylott** It's only one bag.
**Cooper** No, that's just it. I think I shall design my own. Designer urine bags: two-legged jobs, ankle-length — save all the changing.
**Aylott** You'd look as though you had rather fat legs.
**Cooper** I wonder if I could get them sponsored — like a racing driver's suit.
**Aylott** I think they'd want them on view.
**Cooper** Yes. You don't think Dunlop or Pirelli would settle for the odd flash?
**Aylott** Tell you what. You could have the advertising on your trousers saying, "*Under* these trousers, John Cooper's urine bags are sponsored by ..."
**Cooper** No, it's not really commercially viable, is it? I think the answer may be to dispense with trousers altogether and design the bags to look like trousers.
**Aylott** If you could make them inflatable, you could float over London like the Goodyear airship.
**Cooper** We could be on to something there.
**Aylott** We could.

*They lean back in their chairs, pleased with their sally into the surreal*

Is your daughter coming to see you today?

**Cooper** First Sunday in every month.

**Aylott** I know it's the first Sunday in the month! It was a rhetorical question.

**Cooper** All right, Aylott, all right.

**Aylott** Sorry.

**Cooper** I know.

**Aylott** They say you don't notice. They say. They say that little errors start to creep in — little lapses of memory. But you *do* know — belatedly sometimes, but you do know. You're telling a story to somebody and all of a sudden you know that you've told it to them before. Not a long time ago, that would be excusable — but a short time — like yesterday …

**Cooper** You didn't tell me this yesterday.

**Aylott** That's not what I mean and you know it. I suppose they are right, ultimately. There must come a time when you don't know — or a moment in time. But do you know that moment? Are there milli-moments within the moment?

**Cooper** You're being very alliterative today.

**Aylott** You described the onset of incontinence.

**Cooper** Guessing. Guessing.

**Aylott** "The first warm trickle," you said. Perhaps it's similar. Perhaps one millisecond you know and the next millisecond you don't.

**Cooper** Look here, I'll strike a bargain with you. You start repeating yourself without knowing it at exactly the same time that I start peeing myself without knowing it.

**Aylott** Tidy.

**Cooper** It's classic. You can say, "You're peeing yourself, you're peeing yourself, you're peeing yourself," and I can say, "Stop repeating yourself."

**Aylott** Without knowing you're peeing yourself at the time!

**Cooper** Exactly. Jack Robertson and Sid Brown.

**Aylott** Bill Edrich and Denis Compton.

**Cooper** Dewes. Was it George or John?

**Aylott** John — we think.

**Cooper** We'll settle for John. John Dewes. Leslie Compton.

**Aylott** Jim Sims, Jack Young.

**Cooper** And Laurie Gray.

**Aylott** It's still only ten men.

**Cooper** Yes.

**Aylott** Who *was* the eleventh?

**Cooper** We can never remember. Perhaps by some strange quirk, when your memory goes, the name of that eleventh man will come back to you.

**Aylott** As I forgot the other ten?

**Cooper** Of course.
**Aylott** It wasn't the young Fred Titmus, was it?
**Cooper** No. Not in 1947.
**Aylott** We could look this up, you know.
**Cooper** No, no. It would spoil the challenge.
**Aylott** I feel rather sorry for the chap whose name we can't remember. There he is, a member of the finest side that Middlesex have ever produced, and we can't remember his name.
**Cooper** I don't expect he knows.
**Aylott** No, there is that.
**Cooper** Bit like the reindeer.
**Aylott** What reindeer?
**Cooper** Santa's reindeer. You know — Donner, Blitzen ... that crowd.
**Aylott** Are there eleven of them?
**Cooper** I don't know.
**Aylott** Well, why bring them up?
**Cooper** Because nobody can ever remember all their names! I think we should bring George Hartley in on this conversation.
**Aylott** I saw him this morning.
**Cooper** Did you?
**Aylott** Yes. In the lounge, reading a paper. (*He realizes that he has said this before*) I think I'll go for a walk.
**Cooper** Captain Oates said that — or something like it.
**Aylott** (*getting up*) You're a fool, Cooper.
**Cooper** So are you.
**Aylott** You could lean on me.
**Cooper** I'd have to get dressed.
**Aylott** It's hardly climbing the Matterhorn.
**Cooper** When I design the inflatable bags, you can pull me along behind you, like a balloon.
**Aylott** Chat this evening?
**Cooper** I rely on it.
**Aylott** So do I.

*Aylott exits*

**Cooper** (*moving over to the window again*) Four months underground, a month's flowering and then weeks and weeks of bloody brown leaves, that's all that daffs are worth. Well, I suppose I could climb the Matterhorn. They do come all the way from Milton Keynes. (*He goes to his wardrobe and opens the door*) What shall it be? The blazer, I suppose. Gives one an air, a blazer. "The man who wears a blazer knows where he's going." Something to do with the shoulders. Can't get the same effect with a

cardigan. Plus the badge, of course. Royal Army Service Corps. It's not called that any more. What is it now? The Royal Corps of Transport. They didn't even ask me if they could change it. (*He takes out the blazer and inspects it*) We've got a full Colonel knocking about here somewhere. Ex-cavalry — calls the Service Corps "bloody lorry drivers." He still calls himself Colonel — pompous old twit. Mind you, it has a ring to it. "Good-morning, Colonel. How are you today, Colonel?" I suppose I could insist on being addressed as "Second Lieutenant", but it doesn't have the same ring. Yes, the blazer. Then if Julia brings my grandson, I can square my shoulders and tell him stories of my heroism in the Second World War. It keeps Julia quiet if I do that. I was almost a hero. (*He looks out of the window*) There goes Aylott. Chin in, chest out Aylott! Don't shuffle. Good old Aylott. Oh damn, I do think I need to pee again.

*Cooper heads towards his bathroom. As he does, he sings "Alice Blue Gown" softly to himself*

*Cooper exits*

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

*The same. Early afternoon, the same day*

*A lunch tray is on the table, with most of the lunch eaten*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises Cooper, now dressed in his blazer and flannels, but still wearing his slippers, is asleep in his chair*

*Wilson comes in and picks up the tray. Seeing Cooper is asleep, she moves to leave quietly but changes her mind. She puts the tray down again and shakes Cooper gently*

**Cooper** What? Mmm? Oh, hallo, Wilson.
**Wilson** How was the beef?
**Cooper** It went on a bit.
**Wilson** The chicken was delicious.
**Cooper** If news of your cruelty ever leaks out, Wilson, the place will be swarming with television cameramen.
**Wilson** I thought I'd wake you. They'll probably be here soon.
**Cooper** Good, yes. I don't like being caught asleep. I don't like the thought of being looked at when I can't look back.
**Wilson** Is there anything you want?

**Cooper** Yes, I wouldn't mind it being tomorrow.
**Wilson** It's a long drive from Milton Keynes.
**Cooper** So you keep saying. Still, there is one thing. Each month they're contriving to arrive just a little later. I suppose the natural progression would be for them not to get out of the car at all; quick circuit of the building, shout "Hallo, Dad!" and straight back to Milton Keynes.
**Wilson** Mr Aylott never gets any visitors at all.
**Cooper** Lucky old Aylott.
**Wilson** Shall I bring some tea later?
**Cooper** No, thanks. They stop at a tea-shop on the way back. What about George Hartley?
**Wilson** What about George Hartley?
**Cooper** He has people come all the time.
**Wilson** Yes, I know.
**Cooper** Well, today's contingent are going to get a bit of a shock, aren't they? What if they turn up and Hartley's standing in the pond again?
**Wilson** Not that it's any of your nosy business, but Matron's going to have a word with whoever comes.
**Cooper** I hope it's not his sister. Hartley once told me that he thought his sister was mad as a hatter.
**Wilson** (*unable to resist it*) I suppose they could go paddling together.
**Cooper** Nice one, Wilson — nice one.
**Wilson** It wasn't nice at all. It was unethical and I didn't mean it.
**Cooper** This word that Matron's going to have.
**Wilson** It's none of your business.
**Cooper** I hope she's good at it.
**Wilson** She's a very caring person.
**Cooper** With big knockers.
**Wilson** Yes.
**Cooper** It's funny, isn't it? George Hartley is on his way to joining the zombies, so Matron's going to tell his visitors. Who tells him?
**Wilson** It would upset him. He's quite rational today.
**Cooper** Well, nobody can tell him when he's irrational, can they?
**Wilson** Of course not.
**Cooper** So nobody tells him at all.
**Wilson** No.
**Cooper** But from now on, it's an irreversible procedure, isn't it? Like whiskers. So while Hartley's mind grows its senile beard, it will continue to be carried about by that strapping body. Pity decay can't be synchronized.
**Wilson** There's not a lot wrong with your mind.
**Cooper** I know. But then I don't have a strapping body.
**Wilson** I shall stop talking to you if you're going to be morbid.

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