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SF PERUSALS

HUMBLE BOY

by Charlotte Jones

SAMUEL FRENCH

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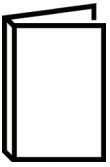
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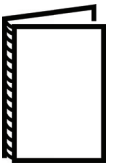
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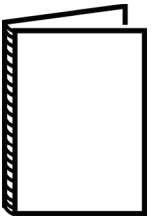
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte Jones is a highly successful British playwright whose six stage plays have been performed at the National Theatre, the Donmar, the Almeida, in the West End and all over the world. She has also written extensively for TV, radio and film.

Humble Boy is a comedy about broken vows, failed hopes and the joys of beekeeping.

CHARACTER LIST

FELIX: Male. Overweight but not unattractive, thirty-five.

MERCY: Female. Late fifties, petite, timid, mousy.

FLORA: Female. Late fifties, attractive, youthful-looking.

JIM: Male. Sixties, thoughtful, quiet.

GEORGE: Male. Sixties, beefy, well built, coarse.

ROSIE: Female. Early thirties, healthy-looking, plain, direct.

ACT ONE

Scene One

Set: A pretty country garden. Perhaps the suggestions of a house or a glass conservatory from which the characters enter into the garden. A patio area, perhaps with a path through the garden. Hanging baskets. At the back there is an area for gardening tools; a gardening chair or stool. There is a garden hosepipe wound up there. Something of a lawn with borders. A rose bush. There is a hammock in one corner. And perhaps a loveseat around the base of a tree. At the end of the garden there is a large beehive. The suggestion of an apple tree – perhaps just some overhanging branches with a few apples.

The stage is in darkness. There is music. Perhaps resonant of "The Flight of the Bumblebee". The beehive lights up to suggest the bees leaving the hive. The lights fade up on the rest of the garden. The music is still playing and the hive continues to throb with light.

FELIX HUMBLE *walks in a stumbling, uncertain way into the garden. He is transfixed by the hive. He is an overweight but not unattractive man of about thirty-five. He wears old and slightly greying cricket whites despite the fact that he is not a sportsman by any stretch of the imagination. He climbs up the steps and takes off the lid of the hive and looks in. The music ends.*

MERCY LOTT *enters the garden. She is wearing black clothes with brown shoes. She is in her late fifties, a petite and timid, mousy woman. She watches* **FELIX** *with concern. She approaches him but doesn't get too close.* **FELIX** *glances at her then returns his attention to the hive.*

FELIX *(he stumbles on the letter 'B')* The b-b-b-bees have gone.

MERCY Yes dear. Will you come in now?

FELIX They took the b-bees away. I saw them.

MERCY Your mother isn't cross. She just wants you to come in.

FELIX There were four of them. The beekeepers. All in white.

MERCY I'm sure if you just say a little sorry to her—

FELIX They looked like astronauts.

MERCY Did they?

FELIX Or cosmonauts. Depending.

MERCY On what, dear?

FELIX If we were in Russia.

MERCY Is it still called Russia? Russia?

FELIX What?

MERCY Russia? Is it still called Russia? I can't keep track. Anyway, your mother's waiting inside for you.

FELIX *puts the lid back on and climbs slowly and awkwardly down.*

FELIX What do you call a group of b-beekeepers, Mercy?

MERCY Is this a joke? I'm not very good with jokes, dear.

FELIX No, I mean what's the word? Like a flock of sheep, a herd of cows, a pack of dogs, a – an exaltation of larks.

MERCY Is it really? An exaltation. How lovely.

FELIX What is it for b-beekeepers?

MERCY Do you know? I've no idea.

FELIX What is it for astronauts? A group of astronauts?

MERCY Shall we discuss it inside, dear?

FELIX Something to do with them being white. And weightless. And silent.

MERCY We shouldn't leave your mother on her own with all the others.

FELIX I just have to find the right word.

MERCY We really should support your mother.

FELIX *(a flash)* I can't go in until I've found the right words. Come on. A swarm of b-bees. A what of b-beekeepers? A what of astronauts? A what? There must be a word for it. The word must exist. I just need to get this – just – think logically. There were four of them. They were dressed in white – they took the bees away.

MERCY A heavenly host?

FELIX What?

MERCY A heavenly host! A heavenly host of beekeepers, stroke astronauts. I like it.

MERCY *glances anxiously towards the house. She sees* **FLORA** *approaching.*

Please let's go in now.

FELIX Or an apocalypse. An apocalypse of beekeepers.

MERCY Lovely. Even better. That's settled. In we go then.

FLORA *enters. She is a very attractive woman in her late fifties. She looks young for her age. She wears a stylish navy blue dress and Jackie Onassis glasses.*

Flora! We were just coming in. Weren't we, Felix? We were just sorting out what you call a group of beekeepers and then we were right with you. Do you need me to do more sandwiches? She's not angry. You're not angry, are you Flora?

FLORA No.

MERCY There. I told you she wasn't angry. We can all go in now. Your mother isn't angry with you.

FELIX Yes she is.

FLORA *(calmly)* I am not angry, Felix. I am incandescent with rage.

MERCY Oh dear.

FELIX *(stammering badly)* An apocalypse of b-b-b-b–beekeepers. What do you think of that for a collective noun, Mother? It's not b-b-bad, is it?

FLORA Stop that, Felix. You haven't done that since you were at prep school.

MERCY He's just a little jittery.

FLORA He's doing it to annoy me.

MERCY I'm sure he's not – you're not, are you, Felix?

FLORA He can speak perfectly well, if he wants to. He's doing it on purpose.

FELIX *(extreme frustration)* I'm trying to b-b-b-b-b—

MERCY *(supplying the word for him)* Behave? He's trying to behave, Flora.

FLORA *(coolly)* I'm afraid Felix you will not get the sympathy vote… Today your father has a prior claim.

FELIX I saw them, Mother. The apocalypse of b-b-b- *(he gives up)* they were here. While my father was being consigned to dust. You got rid of them immediately. His be- his be-be-

FLORA I got rid of the bees on professional advice. They were swarming. Since your father's death they have developed very alarming tendencies.

FELIX P-perhaps they were angry.

MERCY Felix.

FELIX I came home and I went through the house and I find all my father's be-be-be- all his things gone. All his clothes.

MERCY Flora very kindly gave them to me. For the Romanian orphans.

FLORA His beekeeping suit is still there. In the garage. It is a constant reminder.

MERCY I could have taken it but Jean who runs the shop was worried there wouldn't be much call.

FELIX I come home – and there is just an ab-sence.

FLORA Don't question what I do, Felix. You weren't here.

FELIX I'm trying to find the right words.

FLORA Oh yes, Felix, you carry on. That is what this day has been lacking. Yes. There we all were, waiting in the church for you to find just the right words. Waiting for my clever son, my golden boy, the Cambridge don, to deliver his father's oration.

FELIX I'm not a don.

FLORA There we all were thinking, he will make this bloody bloody awful thing – better – oh we will cry but we will be uplifted. But instead you, let me find the exact word now, you absconded.

FELIX I'm not well.

FLORA Buggered off.

FELIX I have p-pills.

FLORA And so it falls to an amateur entomologist, an insect man, not even a close friend, a passing acquaintance of your father's, to find the right words. The bon mot.

MERCY He did very well, considering.

FLORA He did not do well, Mercy. He compared my husband's career to the lifecycle of an aphid.

MERCY I liked the bit about you spinning a web around him.

FLORA Oh yes, there was no end to his metaphorical prowess. Men who spend their waking hours studying the mating rituals of arachnids should not be allowed out.

FELIX They're his friends.

FLORA They *were* his friends. Friends of the *late* James Humble. A group of tedious entomologists. No, no, let me adhere to the linguistic rules that have been imposed on us today. A boredom of entomologists. A woeful irritation of insect men. Open up their collective thorax and you will not find a beating heart among them.

MERCY Shall I go and make some more sandwiches? I thought the beef paste was going down rather well.

FELIX I haven't b-b-been well.

FLORA Your father is dead, Felix. Your being unwell barely registers on the Richter scale.

FELIX I tried to sp-speak – to sum his life up—

FLORA We are every one of us unwell. Do not deceive yourself that you hold the monopoly. Mercy's not well. She hasn't been right in years.

MERCY Well, a little arthritis in my back—

FLORA And I am recovering from major surgery.

MERCY Oh she is.

FELIX *(quietly)* P-plastic.

FLORA What did you say?

FELIX A nosejob is not major surgery.

MERCY Oh, but her face was black and blue. You should have seen it. Even now if you look under those glasses – ah, the bruising, she looks terrible—

FLORA Shut up, Mercy.

MERCY I only meant—

FLORA Did you not have a more suitable pair of shoes?

MERCY What?

FLORA I've told you about wearing brown and black together.

FELIX You're not wearing b-black.

FLORA Black is too draining. Anyway this is Jean Muir. And I have to say I find it rich, yes, ripe that I am being criticised on my choice of – look at you! Did you seriously think that this was appropriate attire for your father's funeral? You don't even play – you were a horror when it came to ball games. In fact I don't recognise you. Look at yourself. You've grown fat and unkempt. How could you do this?

MERCY Should I pop home and change them?

FLORA Oh please go in, Mercy. See to the insect men. Wreak havoc with some potted shrimp, for Christ's sake.

MERCY Right. Yes. Good idea. You'll be all right?

FLORA Oh yes, yes. My husband is dead and my only son, who has grown fat and strange, has just run away from his own father's funeral. I'll be fine. Fine. At least those bastard bees are gone.

A moment then **MERCY** *leaves apologetically.*

MERCY Yes. Yes. Sorry, Flora.

FELIX *and* **FLORA** *stand there.*

FELIX B-b-blessed are the p-p-peacemakers.

FLORA For they shall irritate the hell out of you… I saved up a long time for that operation.

FELIX I know.

FLORA Your father wanted me to – *(carefully)* he didn't not want me to – he knew what it meant to me.

FELIX Yes.

FLORA I didn't even know he was in the garden. I was upstairs, resting, when he collapsed. I couldn't hear – the bandages covered my ears, muffled the sound. But I knew. I was reading *Vogue* and suddenly it dropped from my hands. Just fell to the floor. But there was nothing – he was dead in an instant, you know, his heart—

FELIX Yes.

FLORA I couldn't bear to have his things. I couldn't bear—

FELIX It doesn't matter.

FLORA Perhaps I should have kept – for you – but really, you haven't been here in such a long time—

FELIX Just because you can't see something doesn't mean that it isn't there.

FLORA *(sharply)* What?

FELIX B-black holes. They're not observable. Well, without very sophisticated microlensing techniques, they're not.

Pause. **FLORA** *is wrong-footed.*

FLORA Don't try and blind me with science, Felix.

FELIX I'm not.

FLORA You made me look like a fool in that church. This is not something that I will be able to forgive, Felix.

FELIX No.

FLORA This is not something that I will be able to forget.

FELIX No.

She turns to go, turns back.

FLORA What pills are you taking?

FELIX It's nothing. Nothing. For nerves. Just to help me sleep.

FLORA I always know when you are ill.

FELIX Yes.

FLORA Well, you're too old now for me to— Are you going back today?

FELIX I don't know yet.

She looks at **FELIX** *intently. The gardener* **JIM** *walks into the garden. He is in his sixties, thoughtful and quiet, even absent-minded, with a gentle sense of humour.* **FELIX** *stares at him,* **FLORA** *does not look at him. He carries a hoe and a bucket of ashes and tea leaves. He scatters the ashes under the rose bush, spreads them.* **FLORA** *looks away, around the garden.*

FLORA It's such a beautiful day. Shame.

She walks back into the house, steering a wide berth around the hive. **JIM** *glances at her as she leaves.* **FELIX** *continues to look at* **JIM.** **JIM** *notices him watching.*

JIM I know, I know. I thought twice about coming today. But what with this hot weather, it all needs doing and your mother can't bear it getting out of hand, can she?

FELIX No, she can't.

JIM *(looking at the roses)* This has definitely come out of itself today… *(He dead-heads the bush)* I like the floribundas but Mrs Humble is fond of the hybrids. They smell sweeter of course. That always swings it for her. I'd go for more variety but she only wants the scented flowers. And I do as I'm told.

FELIX Yes.

JIM This one's a hybrid tea, *Rosa "Josephine Bruce"*. Don't know who she was, Josephine, but she's got quite a jolly flower named after her. Beautiful dark crimson, lovely scent – and so easy. Positively rampant. Makes me think Miss Bruce must have been a bit of a goer in her day.

FELIX She might not be dead. Josephine B-b-b-

JIM No, you're right, she could still be at it. But often they are, aren't they? Dead, I mean. And this is a nice way of carrying them on. For their family.

FELIX Yes.

JIM You'd be surprised how many are named after the strangest people. There's a pink climber called Bobby Charlton. Not that he's dead. Or is he? Anyway it's a real blowsy thing, I always wondered if he had a hand in choosing it for himself. I rather hope he did… Sorry, listen to me, I'm not thinking. Are you all right, lad?

FELIX The b-b-bees are gone.

JIM I know, it's a sad day. Very sad. A hive without its bees. It says it all, doesn't it?

FELIX I saw it. There were four of them. An apocalypse. In all their regalia. White with their veils on, carrying their boxes and the – you know – *(he searches for the word)*

JIM Smokers?

FELIX Yes.

JIM To pacify the bees, I know.

FELIX It was strange. No it was beau-tiful.

JIM *(smiles)* Was it?

JIM *enjoys the story of the beekeepers.*

FELIX I was watching from upstairs and the sky was black with bees. But the beekeepers didn't panic.

JIM No. They wouldn't.

FELIX They placed a white sheet on the ground and reached up towards the bees. And what was odd; from where I was upstairs, from that angle, with the blackness of the sky and the whiteness of their suits, it seemed like they lifted right off the ground. It made me – I can't describe it exactly – but it, it made me want to cry.

Pause.

JIM Don't tell Mrs Humble but there's still some left.

FELIX What?

JIM Bees. The ones that got away. They've outwitted her. God love 'em.

FELIX But the hive is empty.

JIM No, not in the hive. *Bombus hortorum*. The garden bumblebee. There's a nest underneath the shed. I found it just the other day. At least they look like *hortorums*.

FELIX You didn't tell her?

JIM If she wants her flowers, she should be thankful for some friendly neighbourhood bees. Anyway they'll die off soon. They'll only last the summer, not like the honey bees. I think we should leave them in peace, don't you?

FELIX Yes. Till the end of summer. Yes.

JIM Good lad. It can be our little secret.

FELIX I'd better get in now.

JIM Yes. There's quite a gathering in there.

FELIX They'll want to see me.

FELIX *stumbles away, perhaps steadying himself on the hive as he goes. He looks back at* **JIM**.

JIM Nice talking to you, Felix.

FELIX *nods and exits.* **JIM** *starts to hoe around the rose plant.*

Scene Two

A beautiful sunny day in mid-summer. The summer solstice. About two weeks after the funeral.

JIM *picks up his gardening implements and exits. As he does so,* **GEORGE PYE** *enters.* **JIM** *looks at him but* **GEORGE** *does not return the glance.* **GEORGE** *is a beefy, well-built man of about sixty. He has a large portable CD walkman on and he carries a jug of Pimms or the equivalent. The headphones are very large.* ***MUSIC:*** *Glen Miller* ***"IN THE MOOD"*** *plays quietly. He puts the jug down.*

GEORGE *(he shouts towards the house, rather too loud)* Out here, bunny!

He turns his walkman up. We hear ***"IN THE MOOD"*** *more clearly. He stretches luxuriantly. He pours himself a Pimms, he is already jiggling along to the music. He dances absently around the garden, banging out percussion on the hive. He comes to the rose bush. He tries to pick a rose off the bush. A thorn pricks him.*

Bugger. Bloody bugger it.

He sucks his finger, then rips the flower from the bush.

Got you, you swine.

He places the rose on the hammock. He checks in his pocket, takes out a ringbox. He puts it back in his pocket. This gives him a burst of energy. His moves become more exuberant. He is definitely "in the mood", dancing as if no one were observing him. He starts conducting the plants of the garden, as if he were Glen Miller. He brings some garden furniture out and sets it up, dancing all the while. **FLORA** *enters. She looks radiant in cream. She watches* **GEORGE**, *amused in spite of herself. He spots her.*

FLORA George. What are you doing?

GEORGE Bunny!

He grabs her and swings her into a jive. For a moment they dance well together. But she is reluctant and tries to stop him after a few extravagant moves.

FLORA *(laughing)* Stop it, George.

GEORGE Can't hear you, bun.

FLORA You great fool! I can't even hear the music.

GEORGE Don't need to. Just follow me, bunny.

FLORA What if someone saw us – stop it – what if Felix? Turn, it off.

He turns it off. Takes it from his waistband. The music stops.

GEORGE He's still here is he?

FLORA Apparently he intends to stay till the end of summer.

GEORGE After what he did to you at the funeral. The little shit.

FLORA He is my – I can't – anyway, he doesn't seem – himself.

GEORGE *snorts in response. He pours her a glass of Pimms.* **FLORA** *sits, re-arranges herself, undoes a button to catch more sun. She looks at the CD player.*

Is that your new toy?

GEORGE It's bloody excellent, isn't it? I even wear it when I'm driving.

FLORA Isn't that illegal?

GEORGE Bollocks! I'm going high-tech, bun. Stereo, on-digital, widescreen, DVD, that's me.

FLORA No holding you back.

GEORGE Rosie bought it for me. I tell you, it comes to something when it's your child telling you to turn your music down.

FLORA I take it she's not a fan of the big band.

GEORGE Christ no! I love her to bits but she's like her mother. Born without an ounce of swing.

FLORA *laughs. Pause.*

This is good, Flora. Being out here with you.

FLORA Yes.

GEORGE I could get used to this. Flora—

FLORA *(interrupting)* You haven't said anything, George.

GEORGE Eh?

FLORA The bruising's completely gone down now.

GEORGE What?

FLORA My nose.

GEORGE *(mock surprise)* Bloody hell!

FLORA What?

GEORGE It's magnificent!

FLORA You hadn't even noticed.

GEORGE I had. I was just savouring it. It's bloody tremendous. It's positively Roman.

FLORA It's not Roman. I didn't ask for Roman.

GEORGE When I say Roman, I mean – Neapolitan.

FLORA Neapolitan?

GEORGE Yes! The Neapolitan nose is soft, with delicately flared nostrils and a certain very appealing button mushroom quality. As far as noses go, it's a bloody classic. It's the Lamborghini of noses.

FLORA Yes, but is it me?

GEORGE Let me see… And the other side. Yes. It's definitely you.

FLORA I mean, does it suit me?

GEORGE You're a vision of loveliness.

FLORA I don't think I like it.

GEORGE Oh bun! After all that.

FLORA Oh, I mean the nose is fine. The nose is quite pleasing, but I'm not sure if my face lives up to it. Somehow it makes the rest of me look – tired. I might need a little lift.

She pulls her skin back and up. **GEORGE** *takes her hand away.*

GEORGE You look fine to me.

FLORA Well, you're biased. Hand me my cream before my wrinkles reach the point of no return.

GEORGE Let me.

He puts suncream on her face.

FLORA Ah yes, anoint me. That's nice.

GEORGE Oh Flora.

FLORA Please don't get ardent, George. It's only half past twelve.

GEORGE You know what I want, damn it. I know it's too soon, but, I mean bloody hell. I've been waiting in the wings for a long time now.

FLORA I know.

GEORGE And it doesn't come naturally to me. I'm not a backseat driver, Flora. It's a terrible shame, a shock about James and everything but you've been worrying about telling him for so long, I think we should just do it. Grab it by the balls. We can wait a few months, but let's not piss about, the sooner the better, bun. Anyway I've already got you the ring.

FLORA Really?

GEORGE I'll make you bloody happy. The words pig and shit spring to mind. In a more classy sort of way.

FLORA You're such a romantic, George.

GEORGE How do you want me to do it? On bended knee?

FLORA Please don't, George, you might never get up again.

GEORGE I'll swing from the ruddy trees if you want. Shout it from the rooftops, thatched or otherwise.

FLORA This is a small place, George.

GEORGE I don't give a Bishop's bollock what anyone thinks.

FLORA George!

GEORGE I mean bloody hell, Flora. It's not as if you were happy with him.

FLORA Please don't talk about that.

GEORGE He was dull. You told me he was dull.

FLORA That was the wrong word to use.

GEORGE Look, lover, we've both paid our dues and neither of us are getting any younger.

FLORA I don't need reminding of that.

GEORGE *(pleadingly)* Bunny please…

FLORA Show me the ring.

He takes the box out. She looks at it.

GEORGE It's a black opal. Bloody unusual, apparently. I can change it if you don't like it.

FLORA Is it old?

GEORGE Antique.

FLORA Mm. What sort of ring did Mary have?

GEORGE I don't remember, it was years ago, some cheap thing, we were completely brassic at the time—

FLORA I'm not ready for another ring.

GEORGE It's not Mary's ring. Rosie has that.

FLORA I don't like the idea of someone having worn it before.

GEORGE I can change it, get a new one. I knew I should have let you choose. I've got bugger all taste.

FLORA A diamond might have been nicer.

She closes the ringbox and hands it back to him.

GEORGE Is this a no?

FLORA No. I'll have to think.

GEORGE Is this a provisional yes?

FLORA We'd have to wait a bit. Till after – till the end of summer.

GEORGE You're a star.

FLORA You'd have to make an effort. With Felix. I know he's – but I don't want any more upset. I can't take it.

GEORGE I like Felix. We just got off on the wrong foot.

FLORA What about Rosie?

GEORGE She wants what I want.

FLORA But after what happened between her and Felix?

GEORGE Water under the proverbial.

FLORA I haven't ever spoken to Rosie. Properly, I mean.

GEORGE Rosie's not a problem. She wants her old dad to be happy. They're both old enough and wise enough—

FLORA Yes, I suppose so.

GEORGE We'll have a little party, invite them all.

FLORA Nothing showy.

GEORGE No, no, discreet. My middle name.

FLORA Yes. It's about time we all got civilised.

GEORGE Absolutely.

FLORA This is not a yes.

GEORGE *gets the rose he picked earlier and gives it to her.*

GEORGE It's enough.

She takes the rose, smiles and smells it. **FELIX** *enters the garden. He watches his mother. He is wearing his cricket whites but with an old-fashioned coloured tank top over them.*

FLORA That's funny.

GEORGE What?

FLORA Doesn't smell of anything.

He takes the flower and smells it.

GEORGE Course it does.

FLORA No. It doesn't.

She goes to the bush, smells the rest of the flowers.

FELIX Mother?

FLORA Felix! Darling. You made me jump. Come and join us. Felix, you remember, George Pye, Rosie's father?

FELIX Yes. I do.

GEORGE Felix. I was just offering my condolences. I'm very sorry about your father's—

FELIX Yes.

FLORA Thank you, George. *(To* **FELIX***)* You're back very early.

FELIX Half-day closing.

FLORA On a Monday?

FELIX Jean is a very whimsical woman.

She looks at him oddly.

FLORA What is that top you're wearing?

FELIX Perk of the job.

FLORA It doesn't suit you darling. Felix has been helping Mercy out at the charity shop. I'm not sure why.

FELIX Apparently I'm a natural. Jean says I've got a job for life, if I want. I shifted more in two hours than Mercy does in a week.

GEORGE Oh yes?

FELIX But then it's for a good cause. The Romanian orphans. And I have a particular affinity with them, being halfway to orphan status myself. I like the second-hand nature of it all. Used goods do have a special appeal all of their own, don't they?

He spots the jug of drink.

Ah, nectar! It's a scorcher today, isn't it? Of course it's the summer solstice. The longest day. It's all downhill from now on.

He helps himself to a drink.

FLORA *(a slight edge)* You're very honey-tongued today, Felix... But I think you should calm yourself, don't you?

FELIX Oh I am calm. I am wonderful. And you are looking ravishing, Mother, if I may say so.

FLORA Thank you.

FELIX Not even a hint of widow's weeds.

FLORA *laughs.*

FLORA *(a little forced)* He's only joking.

FELIX Oh yes it's all in jest. Now how are you? How is your fleet, George Pye?

GEORGE What?

FELIX Pye's coaches.

GEORGE Well, I'm semi-retired now. Some other bugger does the dog work for me. I still do the odd Oxford run though, if we're short. I'm not proud. Can't quite hang up the old driving gloves, you see.

FELIX No, I bet you can't. What was the legend now? "Travel Pye – don't tell me – travel Pye...

GEORGE *(pleased)* – if you want to fly." "Travel Pye if you want to fly."

FELIX Ah yes. A fleet of flying Pyes. Did you come up with that?

GEORGE I did as a matter of fact.

FELIX Genius. Absolutely inspired.

GEORGE Thank you very much.

FELIX Only thing is, I remember being rather disappointed the first time I travelled on one of your coaches. It was all curiously earthbound, you see. Not at all P-pye in the sky-ish. But then

you weren't driving. Perhaps they needed George himself at the helm to really make them lift off.

FLORA It's just as well, Felix. You don't really have a head for heights.

GEORGE When are you going back to your – erm studies?

FLORA He hasn't completely decided, have you? A little break will do him good.

GEORGE Astrology, isn't it?

FELIX What?

GEORGE Your bag. Astrology.

FELIX No.

FLORA It's like astrology, darling. It's not a million miles away.

FELIX Theoretical astro-physics. I think the differences between the two could be measured in light years.

GEORGE It's all the same to me.

FLORA And me. But he's a clever boy.

GEORGE Don't believe in it myself anyway.

FELIX What?

GEORGE Horoscopes. A load of balls.

FELIX Really? I bet you're a Taurean then, aren't you?

GEORGE *(as if he is getting the joke)* Ah! Yes! Good one.

FELIX Yes, definitely Taurus, the b-bull. Born in the month of May. When's your birthday, George Pye? When's his b-birthday, Mother?

FLORA Well, you know, it is May. It is May, isn't it George? But you could be on the cusp.

FELIX Bullseye. Perhaps you're right, George Pye. Perhaps astrology is, after all, my b-bag. Here I was thinking that all the other sciences were woolly and descriptive, that there was something p-pure and exact and fundamental about theoretical physics, that it would unveil for me the secrets of the universe but now I see I was mistaken. I should have got myself a sparkly

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