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SF PERUSALS

Out of Order

Ray Cooney

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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Out of Order was first produced (under the title *Whose Wife is it Anyway*?) at the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead on 8th May 1990, with the following cast:

THE MANAGER.....John Pennington
RICHARD WILLEY M.P..... Bruce Montague
THE WAITER.....Robert Fyfe
THE MAID.....Sally Kinghorn
JANE WORTHINGTON.....Judy Buxton
A BODY..... David Warwick
GEORGE PIGDEN..... Ray Cooney
RONNIE WORTHINGTON.....Michael Fenner
PAMELA WILLEY..... Wanda Ventham

Directed by Ray Cooney
Set designed by Douglas Heap

The play was subsequently produced by The Theatre of Comedy Company at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London on September 28th 1990 with the following cast:

RICHARD WILLEY..... Donald Sinden
THE MANAGER.....Dennis Ramsden
THE WAITER..... Brian Murphy
JANE WORTHINGTON.....Sandra Dickinson
A BODY..... David Warwick
GEORGE PIGDEN..... Michael Williams
THE MAID..... Pamela Cundell
RONNIE.....Michael Fenner
PAMELA..... Wanda Ventham
GLADYS..... Jacqueline Clarke

Directed by Ray Cooney
Set Design by Doulas Heap
Lighting by James Baird

Author's Notes

a) It is important that the characters of "A Body," "Ronnie," "Pamela" and "Gladys" are listed as such in all the programmes or cast lists.

b) When the play was written Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister, the Conservative Party was in Government and Neil Kinnock was the Leader of the Opposition, the Labour Party. I leave it to the director of any subsequent production to re-write the pertinent script references should the political situation in Great Britain ever change!

Out of Order was first presented in the U.S. by The Hampton Players, Hampton, New Hampshire in August, 1991. It was produced by John Vari and Alfred Christie with the following cast:

RICHARD WILLEY ..... Wayne Rodda
THE MANAGER ..... Frank Vohs
THE WAITER ..... Dan Entriken
JANE WORTHINGTON ..... Karri Nussle
A BODY ..... Don LaBranche
GEORGE PIGDEN ..... Bruce Wall
THE MAID ..... (1st week) Mary Stys
..... (2nd week) Mimi Stauber
RONNIE ..... D.J. Salisbury
PAMELA ..... Linda Milani
GLADYS ..... Deb G. Girdler

Set Designer: Robert Soule
Costume Designer: Kathryn Wagner
Lighting Designer: Michael Giannitti
Production Stage Manager: Karen Terry

CHARACTERS

RICHARD WILLEY	A suave and successful man and a Junior Minister in the Government
THE MANAGER	A severe man
THE WAITER	A nimble and wily old servant
THE MAID	A plump Italian woman in her fifties
JANE WORTHINGTON	An attractive but dizzy young lady
A BODY	A nondescript middle-aged man
GEORGE PIGDEN	An upright pleasant man of nervous disposition
RONNIE	An angry young man
PAMELA	An attractive sophisticated woman in her forties
GLADYS	A bossy but attractive woman in her forties

TIME & PLACE

The action of the play takes place in Suite 648 of the Westminster Hotel, London. It is about 8:30 p.m. on a September evening. The action is continuous with one intermission.

ACT I

SETTING: The setting for the play is the lounge of suite 648 on the sixth floor of the Westminster Hotel, London. The style is slightly faded Regency. The lounge is dominated by a single large casement window which runs at an angle from URC to DRC, taking up half the wall.

DR, below the window, is a door to the bedroom. UR centre is a door leading to a cupboard. In the centre of the wall DL is the main door of the suite leading into a corridor. On the opposite side of the corridor is seen the door of Suite 650.

Outside the window is a balcony (about three feet deep) beyond which can be seen the skyline over the Thames from Westminster. The balcony runs off UL and UR.

The furniture is in keeping with the style of the room. There is a low divan at DLC and a small low armchair DRC. Below the main door is a built-in cupboard in which is the radio and T.V. In addition, depending on space, there are tables, ornaments and pictures. At the left end of the divan is a table on which is the telephone. The table has a lower shelf on which can be seen the London telephone directories.

AT RISE: When the curtain rises the LIGHTS are on and the curtains are closed. RICHARD WILLEY is standing behind the telephone dialling a number. HE finishes dialling and looks impatiently at his watch. Richard's briefcase is on the divan.

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) Hello, darling ..Yes, I've just this second checked in. Same old suite, 648. Everything all right at home?... Good ... I wish you were too, darling, but it's an all night sitting so you wouldn't see much of me ... well, you know how Mrs. Thatcher relies on me. Look, I'd better ring off my sweet, it's half past eight and the debate was just about to get under way ... I will. And you have a nice early night with Dick Francis I must rush, darling. See you tomorrow afternoon.

(There is a KNOCK on the hall door.)

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) Hang on, there's somebody at the door. (*Calls.*) Who is it?

MANAGER. (*Off.*) It's the Manager.

(RICHARD opens the door while continuing to talk.)

RICHARD. Coming! (*On phone.*) I'd better go, my sweet, or the debate will have started.

MANAGER. (*Enters.*) Good evening, Mr. Willey.

(RICHARD holds up his hand.)

MANAGER. Sorry, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) What's that? ... It was the Manager.... (*To MANAGER.*) Mrs. Willey sends her best wishes.

MANAGER. How kind. Will you reciprocate?

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) The Manager reciprocates.... (*To MANAGER.*) Mrs. Willey says "how kind."

MANAGER. How kind.

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) I must go, darling. You curl up in bed with Mr. Francis.

(The MANAGER raises an eyebrow.)

RICHARD. ...'Bye darling. Sweet dreams. (*HE puts the phone down and grabs his briefcase. During the ensuing dialogue HE takes out papers and hastily checks them.*)

MANAGER. I trust everything is to your satisfaction, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Fine, fine.

MANAGER. We've just had this suite re-decorated.

RICHARD. The twenty years was up, was it?

MANAGER. (*Wagging a reproving finger.*) Mr. Willey!

RICHARD. As long as you don't improve the plumbing.

MANAGER. The plumbing?

RICHARD. The central heating starting up in the morning is far more reliable than your alarm calls.

(The WAITER enters with Richard's case.)

RICHARD. Ah, thank you.

(HE tips the WAITER a coin. The WAITER looks at it, drops the case and exits.)

RICHARD. He's just about due for re-decorating, isn't he?

MANAGER. Would you like an early morning call, Mr. Willey?

RICHARD. Not too early after an all-nighter. Nine o'clock will be fine.

MANAGER. I'll arrange for the central heating to be turned on at nine precisely.

RICHARD. (*Is stuffing the papers into his briefcase.*) I think I've got everything for the debate.

MANAGER. Will you be making one of your blistering ministerial speeches?

RICHARD. Only if the Opposition cuts up rough. (*Indicating the door.*) You carry on.

MANAGER. Shall I hold the lift for you, Mr. Willey ?

RICHARD. No, I always use the stairs. Good for the figure.

MANAGER. Quite.

(The MANAGER pats his tummy and exits, leaving the hall door open. RICHARD moves to door and watches the MANAGER disappear down the corridor. HE then closes the door, throws his briefcase behind the divan and opens bedroom door.)

RICHARD. (*Gleefully.*) All clear, Miss Worthington.

(JANE appears at the bedroom door wearing a dress and carrying her shoes—one in each hand.)

JANE. You don't think the Manager will be popping in and out all evening, do you?

RICHARD. (*Goes to hold her hands but grasps the shoes.*) Of course not. Why haven't you changed into your nightie?

JANE. I've been too busy listening at the door.

RICHARD. Well, hurry up, you beautiful creature! (*RICHARD is left with her shoes as HE pushes HER into the bedroom. HE puts the shoes on the chair and then can't resist a look through into bedroom. Calls:*) Would you like me to help you out of your dress?

JANE. (*Off.*) No, thank you!

RICHARD. (*Watches for a brief moment.*) Are you sure? (*HE starts to move into the bedroom.*)

JANE. (*Off.*) Get out!

(Jane's dress comes flying through the open doorway and RICHARD catches it. RICHARD has one more peek into the bedroom.)

RICHARD. Oo!

(HE then hurries to the telephone, throwing the dress on the divan. HE lifts the receiver and dials a London number.)

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) House of Commons? It's Richard Willey here. Put me through to my Parliamentary Private Secretary, please ... George, it's Mr. Willey ... It's no concern of yours where I am, how's the debate going?... (*Displeased.*) Oh! Well, listen, I don't want to be disturbed unless it starts turning into a disaster ... George! Put it this way, if Mrs. Thatcher says "Where's that idiot Richard Willey?" you can contact me ... no I'm not at home—and don't ring there whatever you do! The number here is 839-5097 and I'm in room 648.... No it's not a hotel, it's the Reading Room of the British Museum ... Stop asking questions, George, you're my PPS, just do as you're told! (*RICHARD puts down the phone and hurries to the radio. HE starts to search for some suitable music.*)

VOICE. (*On radio.*) ... the Chancellor of the Exchequer said today that inflation will drop to below six percent by next March.

RICHARD. Bloody liar.

(HE fiddles some more and finds some military band MUSIC. JANE comes out of the bedroom wearing a flimsy nightie.)

JANE. (*Referring to music.*) I think that might give us hiccups, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. (*Turns, then sexily.*) Oh, you look gorgeous.

JANE. Thank you, Minister.

RICHARD. (*Switches off the radio and moves to her.*) Absolutely gorgeous! (*HE goes to embrace her but she speaks.*)

JANE. You know—this feels really naughty, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. So it should, it is naughty. Do you mind if I slip into something more comfortable? (*RICHARD picks up his case and goes into bedroom.*)

JANE. (*Calls.*) I mean you're a Junior Minister and I'm one of the secretaries over there.

RICHARD. (*Appears taking off his jacket.*) Very democratic, though. Especially as Mrs. Thatcher's my boss and Neil Kinnock's your's. (*RICHARD exits into bedroom.*)

JANE. (*Chuckling. Calls out.*) Mr. Kinnock would hit the roof if he knew.

RICHARD. (*Enters putting on his dressing gown.*) Mrs. Thatcher would go *through* it. (*RICHARD goes to kiss her.*)

JANE. I don't make a practice of doing this, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Quite right! Neither do I. (*HE goes to kiss her.*)

JANE. Come off it, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. (*Hurt.*) Jane!

JANE. You should hear the jokes about you that go round the typists' pool.

RICHARD. (*Surprised.*) About me?

JANE. About *you*, Mr. Willey. And with a name like that some of the jokes are pretty strong, I can tell you.

RICHARD. Disgraceful.

JANE. (*Laughs and sits on settee.*) I'm only teasing you, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Are you?

JANE. (*Teasing him.*) Don't you like to be teased, Mr. Willey?

RICHARD. Depends what you mean by—"teased." And I wish you'd stop calling me "Mr. Willey." (*RICHARD sits beside her.*)

JANE. I've never called you anything else.

RICHARD. Well, under the circumstances I think you can call me—Dickie.

JANE. (*Giggling.*) No, I couldn't.

RICHARD. All my friends call me Dickie.

JANE. No I couldn't. Not after all those jokes I've heard. I'll call you "Richard."

RICHARD. Coming from you, it sounds beautiful. Now, I've laid on some champagne—

JANE. Lovely!

RICHARD. Some caviare—

JANE. Lovely!

RICHARD. And three dozen oysters.

JANE. Oysters! Aren't they supposed to do something to a chap? (*JANE rises and moves to the radio.*)

RICHARD. God, I hope so, they're damned expensive. What time do you have to be home in—er—where is it? Lewisham?

JANE. I don't. I can stay all night.

RICHARD. (*Delighted.*) All night! What have you told your husband then?

JANE. I'm visiting Auntie Rosie in Felixstowe.

(JANE presses a button on the radio, and the intro music of "Love And Marriage" is heard.)

RICHARD. (*Delighted.*) Auntie Rosie in Felixstowe.

JANE. She's developed severe bronchitis.

RICHARD. Poor Auntie Rosie.

JANE. And Auntie Rosie's not on the phone so—

RICHARD. So your husband can't ring up to disturb you. Lovely! (*HE goes to kiss her as Frank Sinatra starts singing "Love and Marriage."*) There must be a more suitable song than that. (*RICHARD starts to fiddle with the radio.*)

JANE. It's a beautiful warm night. Shall I open the curtains? (*JANE moves to the window.*)

RICHARD. Why not? If I remember correctly there's a beautiful view. These balconies overlook the river.

(JANE pulls the cord to open the curtains. The curtains open to reveal the BODY of a man in a raincoat. The window has come down on his neck. His head, shoulders and dangling arms are protruding into the room with the rest of his body in a prostrate position outside the balcony. JANE steps back to look out of the window and sees the BODY. SHE emits no sound but her hands come up to her mouth and SHE staggers back a pace. SHE then turns from the window.)

JANE. Ohhh!

RICHARD. (*Is still concentrating on the radio.*) Breathtaking view, isn't it? Nelson's column one way. Big Ben the other.

JANE. (*Finally, trying to be calm.*) Mr. Willey—

RICHARD. I've told you, "Dickie."

JANE. I think I feel sick.

RICHARD. (*Going to her.*) Can't stand heights, eh?

JANE. (*SHE grabs him.*) Oh, my God!

RICHARD. Well, six floors is pretty high.

JANE. Mr. Willey—!

RICHARD. (*Holds up a remonstrative finger.*) Dickie!
JANE. Dickie! (*SHE moves past him.*)

RICHARD. (*Going to window.*) Well, don't look down, just look up at (*Seeing the BODY.*) Good God! (*HE kneels down to look at the man's face. Turning to JANE.*) I think we can dispense with Rod Stewart.

(JANE turns off the radio. SHE then moves to RICHARD who is feeling the man's pulse.)

RICHARD. The window must have come down on his neck.
JANE. Oh, Mr. Willey.
RICHARD. I can't feel any pulse.
JANE. He's dead, is he?
RICHARD. (*Tersely.*) That's what "no pulse" usually means.
JANE. (*Kneels beside RICHARD.*) How long's he been there?
RICHARD. (*Tetchily.*) How do *I* know? The curtains were already closed when I arrived. I've been here about ten minutes.
JANE. Is he still warm, Mr. Willey?
RICHARD. (*Rises and back away a pace.*) Yes, he's still warm, Miss Worthington!
JANE. (*SHE rises.*) He looks awful.
RICHARD. 'Course he does, he's dead!
JANE. Poor man.
RICHARD. Poor man? He's obviously a burglar.
JANE. Is he?
RICHARD. Well, he's not the waiter delivering oysters, is he? Besides, we're six floors up. Of course he's a burglar.
JANE. He might be one of the guests.

RICHARD. Jane, it doesn't matter who he is, he was clearly breaking and entering. He must have somehow got onto our balcony—(*HE looks out of window.*)—it goes all round the hotel—forced the window open and (*HE mimes the window coming down.*) bang!

JANE. Must be a dodgy sash or something.

RICHARD. Well, he won't be suing the hotel, that's for sure. (*RICHARD pulls the cord and closes curtains.*)

JANE. (*Has picked up the telephone.*) We'd better ring the police.

RICHARD. Police?

JANE. About him.

RICHARD. We *can't ring the police!* (*RICHARD replaces the receiver.*)

JANE. We must, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. How do we explain what you and I are doing in a suite at the Westminster Hotel?! I'm supposed to be attending an all-night sitting in the House of Commons.

JANE. But he's *dead*, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Well, the police won't be able to bring him round, will they? (*Suddenly realising.*) God! If Mrs. Thatcher finds out—! One more scandal for the Conservatives and we'll fall below the Liberal Democrats in the opinion polls.

JANE. You can't discover a dead body and just ignore it. If you're worried about the police, phone down for the Manager.

RICHARD. What's the difference? Look, Jane, I'm thinking about you.

JANE. You're thinking about your wife, Mrs.Thatcher and your career.

RICHARD. Well, those too. (*Suddenly.*) God, I can see the headlines in the *Sun* now—Junior Minister and Kinnock's secretary in sex-orgy with dead body.

JANE. You've got to inform somebody!

RICHARD. You're right. I'll inform George. (*HE goes to phone.*)

JANE. Mr.Pigden?

RICHARD. (*Dialling.*) Yes.

JANE. What will your PPS do?

RICHARD. Whatever I tell him. (*On phone.*) Richard Willey here. Put me through to my PPS ... George, get over here right away ... never mind the debate, just get over here ... no, not the British Museum, the Westminster Hotel ... never you mind. You can be here in two minutes. Suite 648 and don't tell anyone where you're going ... Bring anything with you? Yes, your brains, George, your brains.

(HE slams the phone down. There's a KNOCK at the door. THEY both hesitate.)

RICHARD. (*Calls sweetly.*) Who is it?

WAITER. (*Off.*) Room Service.

RICHARD. (*Calls.*) I'm busy.

JANE. You ordered champagne, caviare and oysters.

RICHARD. I know!

WAITER. Room Service 648!

RICHARD. Go away!

(The WAITER KNOCKS persistently.)

WAITER. (*Off.*) Room Service! 648.

RICHARD. God, he'll have the whole hotel in here. Wait in the bedroom.

(HE pushes JANE into the bedroom. There is more KNOCKING from outside. RICHARD sees Jane's

shoes on the chair and quickly throws them into the bedroom, closing the door.)

WAITER. (*Off.*) Room Service. 648.
RICHARD. Coming!

(RICHARD quickly checks that the curtains are covering the body then opens the door. The WAITER comes in, pushing trolley, and glares at RICHARD.)

WAITER. If this was hot it would be cold.
RICHARD. Just leave it there.

(The WAITER pushes the trolley D.L. RICHARD sees Jane's dress, picks it up and starts to move to bedroom.)

WAITER. Hey! You've got to sign.
RICHARD. (*Stopping.*) All right!
WAITER. (*Goes to his side pocket but his pad isn't there.*) I've got it here somewhere.
RICHARD. Good!

(The PHONE rings. RICHARD hesitates. The WAITER indicates that the phone is ringing. RICHARD angrily picks it up.)

RICHARD. (*On phone. Sweetly.*) Yes? (*Sweetly.*) Mr. Willey speaking ... (*Sweetly.*) Oh, and what can I do for the Manager of this delightful hotel?

(During the above the WAITER has found his pad in his back pocket and offers it to RICHARD to sign. RICHARD has the phone in one hand and the dress in the other, so he gives the dress to the WAITER to hold

while he signs. RICHARD is just about to sign when HE stops.)

RICHARD. (*On phone. Alert.*) Seen a what? (*Flatly.*) An intruder?... on our—er—

(RICHARD looks at the closed curtains. So does the WAITER.)

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) No, no. Nothing untoward at all ... must have been somebody else's balcony ... No, there's no need to come up ... our curtains are wide open, I can see there's nobody there.

(The WAITER turns to look at the closed curtains.)

RICHARD. (*On phone.*) I'm just about to leave for the Commons ... No, there's no need to put yourself out ... There's obviously been a mistake. It must be some other balcony ... No, please. (*To WAITER.*) Go away! (*On phone.*) No, not you ... Hello ... Hello!

(The MANAGER has rung off. RICHARD slams down the phone. He turns to see the WAITER who is now walking up to look at the window.)

RICHARD. (*Yells.*) Hey!
WAITER. (*Jumping.*) Ahhh!
RICHARD. I'll sign that now.

(RICHARD signs and at the same time leads the WAITER to the door.)

RICHARD. Thank you.

(The WAITER hesitates, coughs and surreptitiously holds out his hand. RICHARD goes to his pocket and takes out his money clip. HE gives the WAITER a £5 note and bundles him out, neither HE nor RICHARD noticing that the WAITER is still carrying Jane's dress.)

WAITER. (*Impressed with the tip.*) Thank you.

(RICHARD slams the door and hurries to the window. HE pulls the cord and the curtains open to reveal the BODY still in place. RICHARD looks around quickly and then opens the cupboard door. The cupboard is shallow with a hook on the inside of the door, and a clothes rail (with hangers) in the cupboard. HE pushes the window up and heaves the BODY in. We now see that the BODY is that of a short man in his mid-fifties. RICHARD is holding the BODY "face to face" when JANE comes in from the bedroom. SHE is carrying her bag and wearing bra and pants.)

JANE. Hey, you've got my—(*SHE sees RICHARD with the BODY and screams.*)

RICHARD. (*Jumping.*) Ahh!

JANE. (*Horrified.*) What are you doing, Mr. Willey?

RICHARD. (*Through gritted teeth.*) The Fox Trot, what does it look like I'm doing, Miss Worthington!

(The window behind them suddenly falls with a loud BANG.

[AUTHOR's NOTE: All the window "bangs" in the production must be very loud. The best method is a separate "slap-stick" coinciding with the window falling. This applies even when one of the characters gets struck!])

RICHARD. (*Reacting to the window falling.*) Ahh! Well, we can see how it happened now. (*RICHARD starts to drag the BODY to the cupboard.*)

JANE. You can't move him, Mr. Willey!

RICHARD. It won't make any difference to our friend here where he's discovered or who discovers him or when! I'll sort it out with George as soon as he arrives.

JANE. This isn't right, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. It's not supposed to be right. It's supposed to be expedient.

(During the above dialogue RICHARD hangs the BODY on the hook on the inside of the cupboard door. JANE looks horrified as RICHARD closes the cupboard door.)

RICHARD. Now you get home to Lewisham as fast as—(*HE stops.*) Why haven't you put your dress on?

JANE. You've got it in here.

RICHARD. No, I haven't. I threw it into the bedroom.

JANE. You threw my shoes in.

RICHARD. I gave your dress—(*Realising.*)—to the waiter!

JANE. The waiter!

(There is a KNOCK at the door. THEY look at each other)

RICHARD. (*Calls sweetly.*) Who is it?

MANAGER. (*Off.*) The Manager.

RICHARD. Quick!

(RICHARD starts to push JANE towards the bedroom.)

JANE. (*Whispering urgently.*) Mr. Willey, what are you doing?

RICHARD. (*Whispering urgently.*) Ssh! In the bedroom.

JANE. What about my dress?

(HE pushes her into bedroom.)

MANAGER. (*Off.*) Mr. Willey!

RICHARD. (*Calls.*) Coming! (*RICHARD realises he's wearing his dressing gown. HE opens bedroom door. Calls into bedroom.)* Throw me my jacket!

(JANE enters hands him his jacket and exits into the bedroom, closing the door. RICHARD, not realising, puts the jacket on over his dressing gown.)

MANAGER. (*Off.*) Mr. Willey!

RICHARD. (*Calls.*) Coming!

(As RICHARD starts to move from the bedroom door, the cupboard door falls open and the BODY appears still hanging on the hook.)

RICHARD. Oh, my God! (*RICHARD hurries to the cupboard and closes the door.*)

MANAGER. (*Off.*) Mr.Willey!

RICHARD. (*Calls, calmly.*) Coming!

(RICHARD does up the button on his jacket and opens the door. The MANAGER storms in, slamming the door behind him.)

RICHARD. Sorry about that.

MANAGER. This is a very serious—(*The MANAGER stops and reacts to Richard's attire.*)

RICHARD. Shall we go? I really must get back to the debate. (*Realising.*) Oh, silly me. (*RICHARD chuckles at the way HE is dressed.*)

MANAGER. This is a very serious business, Mr. Willey.

(The MANAGER goes to the window, opens it and looks out. RICHARD gently moves the MANAGER down into the room. During the ensuing dialogue RICHARD removes his dressing gown and puts his jacket on properly.)

RICHARD. Yes, I'm sorry I can't be of more assistance. It's been very quiet here actually.

MANAGER. A guest nearby said she'd seen a man kneeling on this balcony looking through the window.

RICHARD. Must be mistaken.

MANAGER. No, this is the balcony all right. Suite 648. She said she'd watched this man for a good ten minutes. He didn't move a muscle. He just knelt outside—staring in.

RICHARD. Good Lord! Well, as you can see, there's nobody there now. Let's forget all about it.

MANAGER. Sounds like a Peeping Tom to me or, even worse, a burglar. I'll just go into your bedroom.

RICHARD. Bedroom?

MANAGER. The balcony goes past there too. Can't do any harm to check.

(Suddenly the window falls with a loud bang. RICHARD jumps and clutches the MANAGER.)

MANAGER. I must tell maintenance about that. Excuse me.

(As the MANAGER starts to move to the bedroom door RICHARD quickly opens it.)

RICHARD. Allow me.

MANAGER. I'll do it, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. All right. Yes. (*Loudly for JANE's benefit.*) It's a good idea for the *Manager* to check the bedroom window! (*HE smiles at the MANAGER.*)

MANAGER. (*Surprised by the shouting.*) Thank you.

(The MANAGER moves to go past RICHARD but RICHARD stops him.)

RICHARD. And for the *Manager* to check the bedroom balcony!

MANAGER. (*Surprised.*) Thank you.

(The MANAGER moves to go past RICHARD. RICHARD stops him.)

RICHARD. After the *Manager*! (*Handing the bewildered MANAGER his dressing gown.*) Thank you.

(RICHARD allows the bemused MANAGER to walk past him into the bedroom. There is a KNOCK at the corridor door.)

RICHARD. (*Loudly, into the bedroom.*) I'll just see who's at the door! (*Calls.*) Who is it?

GEORGE. (*Off.*) It's me, Mr. Willey. George.

(RICHARD opens the corridor door. GEORGE steps in, holding his briefcase.)

GEORGE. I got here as fast as I—

RICHARD. Shut up!

(RICHARD pulls the surprised GEORGE into the room and shuts the door.)

RICHARD. Now, listen, Pigden. I'm going to say this once and very, very quickly. I discovered something extremely unpleasant in my suite tonight.

GEORGE. When you say "sweet" do you mean pudding or—?

RICHARD. (*Interrupting.*) Shut up! This body now resides in the coat cupboard.

GEORGE. When you say body do you mean—?

RICHARD. (*Interrupting.*) Shut up! We will arrange for this body to be discovered at some other place later tonight by your good self.

GEORGE. I don't quite understand.

RICHARD. (*Pressing on.*) By which time I will be in the House of Commons lending my support to the Transport Minister and—

(There is a pause as GEORGE attempts to take it all in.)

GEORGE. Do you think I could go out and come in again?

(RICHARD sits GEORGE in the chair R.)

RICHARD. George! When the Hotel Manager comes out of that bedroom, remember—everything I've just told you *never happened.*

(GEORGE goes to speak but then looks at RICHARD dumbly.)

RICHARD. There's been no intruder on the balcony. I've had a very quiet evening. There's no dead body in the coat cupboard.

GEORGE. Well, thank goodness for small mer—

RICHARD. Shut up! (*Continues.*) *Nothing's happened.* Have you got that?

(There is a moment's pause and then GEORGE shakes his head.)

RICHARD. For God's sake just agree with everything I say. Don't try to be helpful. Just look intelligent and nod your head.

(GEORGE blankly nods his head. The MANAGER comes in from the bedroom.)

MANAGER. Nothing unusual on that balcony either.

(GEORGE rises but RICHARD sits him immediately.)

RICHARD. I thought not. Oh, this is my Parliamentary Private Secretary, Mr. Pigden.

(GEORGE gives a wan smile and nods intelligently.)

RICHARD. Yes. I'm afraid I've lumbered George with rather a lot of detailed work so I've asked him to stay in London overnight, haven't I, George?

(GEORGE hesitates and then nods intelligently.)

RICHARD. Yes. So I was wondering if you could accommodate him.

MANAGER. I'll see what I can do, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Actually—what would be perfect would be the suite next to this. Either side will do. Adjoining balconies. We need to be close, don't we, George?

(GEORGE hesitates a little longer than usual but then nods intelligently.)

MANAGER. I'll see if we have anything nearby, Mr. Pigden.

RICHARD. (*Lightly.*) Don't bother to get up, George.

MANAGER. And I'll put our Security on to that intruder, Mr. Willey.

(The MANAGER moves to go. RICHARD leans nonchalantly against the cupboard door.)

RICHARD. Oh, I wouldn't bother. There's been no damage. (*Intimately.*) And not good publicity for the hotel, that kind of thing.

MANAGER. Nevertheless, I have my—you're right, it's not good publicity, is it?

RICHARD. Definitely not.

MANAGER. Maybe it's a case of "least said soonest mended."

RICHARD. I'd like to borrow that phrase if I may.

MANAGER. Thank you. (*The MANAGER. looks pleased and exits.*)

GEORGE. Mr. Willey—?

RICHARD. Well done, George. Every nod was a gem.

GEORGE. What on earth's going on?!

RICHARD. You're going to have a free overnight stay at a four-star hotel.

(RICHARD moves to bedroom but GEORGE stops him.)

GEORGE. I never stay out without telling mother.

RICHARD (*Grimaces.*) Well give your mother a ring. She'll be thrilled for you.

GEORGE. She's already in bed. Besides there's Nurse Foster.

RICHARD. Nurse Foster?

GEORGE. She looks after mother while I'm at work. She goes off at 9:30.

RICHARD. You can phone Nurse Foster and tell her she'll be doing some overtime.

GEORGE. I never take advantage of her like that, Mr. Willey. Anyway, mother worries herself to death if I change my plans at the last minute.

RICHARD. Your mother has been worrying herself to death for the last eighty years. The future of the Government is at stake here.

GEORGE. But *why*?

(By way of an explanation RICHARD quickly opens the bedroom door.)

RICHARD. Quickly! Out you come, Miss Worthington.

GEORGE. (*Surprised and concerned.*) Miss Worthington?

JANE. (*Appears still carrying her bag and still dressed in bra and pants.*) Have you got my dress—(*Sees GEORGE.*) Oh, Mr. Pigden. (*JANE moves to GEORGE.*)

GEORGE. (*Mortified.*) Miss Worthington!

RICHARD. Now can you see the problem?

(GEORGE goes to speak but decides to simply nod.)

JANE. Good evening, Mr. Pigden.

GEORGE. (*Eying her "bra."*) Good evening, Miss Worthingtons—Worthington. (*To RICHARD.*) Mr. Willey, how could you?!

RICHARD. I haven't yet, George, but that's the least of my problems. First of all we've got to get Miss Worthington's dress back.

GEORGE. Where is it for heaven's sake?

RICHARD. I gave it to the waiter.

GEORGE. Ask a silly question.

JANE. (*To RICHARD.*) What did you tell the Manager just now?

RICHARD. Never mind. George is stepping into the breach.

GEORGE. Not until he knows all the facts.

JANE. (*To RICHARD.*) Have you told Mr. Pigden about the dead body?

RICHARD. Yes, yes, yes.

GEORGE. (*Aghast.*) you mean there *is* a dead body?! You said there wasn't.

RICHARD. No, I didn't. I said to tell the *Manager* there wasn't.

GEORGE. I can't follow this.

RICHARD. All the Manager knows is that there's an intruder.

GEORGE. Intruder?

RICHARD. What the Manager doesn't know is that the intruder was a dead body.

GEORGE. (*Perplexed.*) The intruder was a dead body?

JANE. He was stuck in our window.

GEORGE. The Manager or the intruder?

RICHARD. The intruder!

JANE. With his neck broken.

GEORGE. Oh, I see. (*Realising.*) Neck broken?!

RICHARD. (*Opens bedroom door.*) Thank you, Miss Worthington! Will you kindly wait in the bedroom while I retrieve your dress.

JANE. How will I know when it is safe to come out?

RICHARD. I'll shout!

JANE. I'm sorry you've got involved in this, Mr. Pigden.

GEORGE. That's all right.

(JANE exits.)

GEORGE. (*Rising.*) I'm not involved in it!

RICHARD. (*Sits him and hurries to the phone.*) I need your help like I've never needed it before, George. (*RICHARD is dialling Room Service.*)

GEORGE. (*Rising. Concerned.*). Wait a minute. When I arrived you told me the body was in that cupboard.

RICHARD. It is. (*On phone.*) Hello! Are you the gentleman who's been providing 648 with Room Service...? Good. You went off with a dress just now ... I gave you a *dress!* (*To GEORGE.*) Stupid man. (*On phone.*) I want it back ... I want my dress back! 648 and *hurry*, you silly old bat! (*HE slams the phone down.*) (*To GEORGE.*) Next time there's a debate on euthanasia I'm voting in favour.

GEORGE. (*Fearing the worst.*) Mr. Willey, could I return to the body in the cupboard?

RICHARD. I knew you'd come to my aid, George.

GEORGE. Oh no! First of all I just want to know how it got from outside the window *there* to inside the cupboard *there.*

RICHARD. I think you'd better sit down, George.

GEORGE. (*Understanding the situation.*) Oh, no. Mr. Willey! You didn't!

(RICHARD sits GEORGE.)

RICHARD. (*Pleading.*) George! I had no alternative.

GEORGE. (*Mortified.*) You didn't move a dead body?

RICHARD. I had to think quickly. He's only a burglar for God's sake.

GEORGE. (*In disbelief.*) You haven't informed the police or anybody?

RICHARD. No, that's why I need your help, George.

GEORGE. (*Determinedly.*) I'm sorry, Mr. Willey. (*GEORGE rises and moves away.*)

RICHARD. George! My wife thinks I'm in the House of Commons! It would all come out. Miss Worthington! The lot!

GEORGE. Mr. Willey—you have tampered with material evidence.

RICHARD. My wife will tamper with something else if she finds out about Miss Worthington. George, you're not married. You don't know how terrifying an angry wife can be.

GEORGE. If I was married, Mr. Willey, I would be faithful to my wife!

(RICHARD takes his briefcase and sits him in the chair R.)

RICHARD. That's because you're a far better person than I am, George. Now, all we have to do—

GEORGE. (*Rising.*) There's no "we" about it.

RICHARD. O.K. all "you" have to do—

GEORGE. I don't have to do anything!

RICHARD. As soon as the Manager finds you a room we transfer the body—

GEORGE. We do what?!

RICHARD. Transfer the body. To your suite. We'll arrange him on your window ledge and then—when I'm safely back in the House of Commons and Miss Worthington is in Lewisham—you will open your curtains, discover the poor unfortunate chap and report it immediately to the Manager.

GEORGE. Just like that! Move the body to *my suite*. Lay him out on *my* window ledge. You and Miss Worthington—(*HE mimes "leaving."*) Poor George Pigden—(*HE mimes cutting his throat.*)

RICHARD. George, if you won't do it for *me* think of Miss Worthington! The poor girl's career will be ruined. She's Neil Kinnock's secretary for God's sake.

GEORGE. I've told you a hundred times where your libido would lead you.

RICHARD. (*Suddenly very moved.*) You'd also be doing it for our Prime Minister. Maggie. She'd be devastated. She'd have to ask me to resign. That'll be three in the last twelve months. George, the Government would never win the next election.

GEORGE. (*Hesitates.*) It's in the cupboard, is it?

RICHARD. Hanging on a hook.

(GEORGE grimaces. HE hesitates a moment and then moves to the cupboard door. HE stops and looks at RICHARD.)

RICHARD. You'll get a shock, George!

(GEORGE, averting his eyes, opens the cupboard door. The BODY is still hanging on the inside of the door. Slowly GEORGE turns to look inside the cupboard. The cupboard is empty. GEORGE starts to chuckle, believing that RICHARD has been playing a joke on him. Still laughing, GEORGE sees the dead body

hanging on the inside of the door. For a moment GEORGE continues laughing but then suddenly stops and screams. The MANAGER enters from hall [Without seeing GEORGE]. The MANAGER is removing his pass key from the lock.)

MANAGER. (*As HE enters.)* Good news, Mr. Willey!
GEORGE. Ahhh!

(At the sound of the MANAGER's voice GEORGE steps into the cupboard and closes the door in one deft movement. RICHARD drops to his knees. The MANAGER surveys RICHARD on the floor.)

RICHARD. (*As HE rises.*) That's a very good quality carpet you have there.

MANAGER. (*Decides to ignore this.*) I've found Mr. Pigden a suite which is—oh, where's Mr. Pigden?

RICHARD. He's in the loo. (*RICHARD leads the MANAGER away from the cupboard. Shouts across to bedroom, for JANE's benefit.*) I've told the *Manager* you're in the "loo"! (*RICHARD smiles at the surprised MANAGER.*)

MANAGER. I've managed to get him suite 650.

RICHARD. (*Shouting.*) The *Manager* says it's suite 650.

MANAGER. (*Getting perplexed.*) Right opposite.

RICHARD. (*Shouting.*) The Manager says it's right opposite!

JANE. (*Comes out of the bedroom still in her bra and pants.*) O.K., you don't have to shout as loud—oh!

(SHE stops on seeing the MANAGER. The MANAGER steps back a pace. There is a pause as RICHARD and the surprised MANAGER take in the situation.)

RICHARD. This is Mrs. Pigden.

MANAGER. Mrs. Pigden?!

RICHARD. Didn't I tell you?

MANAGER. No!

RICHARD. Yes, his wife's staying up with him tonight. (*To JANE.*) Aren't you, Mrs. Pigden?

JANE. Am I?

RICHARD. Oh, yes, the Manager's fixed it. Suite 650. Just across the corridor. (*To MANAGER.*) That was so kind.

MANAGER. I thought Mr. Pigden was staying up to assist you with your work.

RICHARD. That's right but who am I to deny him a little pleasure with his business? (*Referring to JANE.*) Can you blame him? (*Chuckling.*) A delectable wife. A suite at the Westminster. All paid for by the government. George telephoned her and she was round here like a shot. Dropped everything.

MANAGER. (*Pointedly looking at JANE.*) Yes.

RICHARD. Now you're probably wondering why Mrs. Pigden is wearing—er. (*HE indicates her state of undress.*)

(The MANAGER says nothing.)

RICHARD. Yes. She was in the shower. Mr. Pigden's in the loo. All nice and intimate. There you have it. (*To JANE.*) I think that sums it up, doesn't it?

JANE. I think so.

RICHARD. (*To MANAGER.*) Yes, that's about the size of it.

(The MAID KNOCKS on the open door and enters.)

MAID. 'Scusa, signor.

RICHARD. What is it?

MAID. (*Carefully.*) Make-bed-up.

RICHARD. (*Indicating JANE.*) No, we'll do it. (*Quickly.*) *I* will do it.

MAID. Oh, si. (*Sees JANE.*) Oh, Si! (*SHE giggles.*)

RICHARD. We're busy!

MAID. (*Not understanding.*) Non capisco.

RICHARD. Go. 'Bye, 'bye.

MAID. Oh, go bye-bye. Si! (*SHE indicates JANE and giggles.*)

MANAGER. Thank you, Maria.

MAID. Si. (*The MAID curtsies and exits.*)

RICHARD. (*To MANAGER.*) And thank you so much.

MANAGER. Yes. (*To JANE.*) Well, I'll have the key to 650 sent up. You can move in immediately, Mrs. Pigden.

RICHARD. Splendid.

MANAGER. (*To JANE.*) Or when you've completed your ablutions, that is. And then will either you or Mr. Pigden be good enough to come down to Reception and check-in right away.

RICHARD. No problem. (*RICHARD leads the MANAGER towards the door.*)

MANAGER. And I thought you were in a hurry to get back to the House of Commons, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Yes, I'm on my way right now. I'm just waiting for the "loo."

(The MANAGER gives RICHARD a blank look and moves to go. Behind them the cupboard door opens and, with one deft movement, RICHARD BANGS it closed.)

GEORGE. (*Off. Yells.*) Oh!

(The MANAGER looks at RICHARD.)

RICHARD. Oh!

(RICHARD crosses his legs and holds his stomach as though anxious to spend a penny. The MANAGER looks at RICHARD and exits.)

JANE. Mr. Willey, what have you done?

RICHARD. I thought I did very well, actually. (*RICHARD opens the cupboard door.*) George!

(GEORGE steps out of the cupboard. HE realises HE is inadvertently holding the BODY's hand.)

GEORGE. Ahh! Oh, that was terrible.

(There is a KNOCK at the corridor door.)

GEORGE. Ahh!

(GEORGE goes to step back into the cupboard but RICHARD stops him and closes the cupboard door.)

RICHARD. Who is it?

WAITER. (*Off.*) Room Service.

RICHARD. Great. (*To JANE.*) Your dress. (*RICHARD opens door.*) Quick!

(The WAITER steps in and gives RICHARD a sheet of notepaper. RICHARD looks at it blankly.)

RICHARD. (*To WAITER.*) What the hell's this?

WAITER. You asked for my address.

(RICHARD throws his hands in the air and walks away in disbelief.)

GEORGE. Mr. Willey wanted a *dress.*

WAITER. (*Looks at RICHARD surprised.*) Did he?

JANE. It's dark blue with little flowers.

WAITER. (*Smiles at RICHARD.*) Sounds nice.

RICHARD. You took it!

WAITER. (*Remembering.*) Oh, a *dress.*

RICHARD. Yes!

WAITER. I wondered how I came by that. You're right, I am a silly old bat.

JANE. Will you go and get it, please.

RICHARD. And hurry!

WAITER. No sooner said—Oh—the Manager said somebody here was checking-in to suite 650.

RICHARD. That's correct. Mr. and Mrs. Pigden.

(GEORGE looks around for "Mrs. Pigden.")

WAITER. Mr. and Mrs. Pigden.

RICHARD. Yes. Mr. Pigden here. And Mrs. Pigden there.

(GEORGE looks again for "Mrs. Pigden.")

JANE. Darling.

(JANE puts her arm through George's and squeezes him lovingly. GEORGE looks at her and then can only nod.)

WAITER. (*Producing key.*) One key.

(RICHARD takes the key.)

RICHARD. (*Handing key to GEORGE.*) There we are, George.

WAITER Do you have any bags, Mr. Pigden?

GEORGE. (*Rubbing his eyes.*) Not yet, no.

RICHARD. No. No bags, no cases. Nothing like that. They're on their honeymoon.

GEORGE. (*Faintly.*) Oh, my God! (*GEORGE sits in the chair R.*)

RICHARD. Yes. Married this morning. In Lewisham. Yes. Well, the hotel's my wedding present, George. (*Laughing gaily.*) When I say "the hotel's my wedding present"—I mean, the suite, of course. Nice way to spend a honeymoon.

WAITER. (*To GEORGE.*) You're sure you want me to bother fetching your wife's dress?

GEORGE. Yes, please!

RICHARD. (*To WAITER.*) And we'd like it quickly.

(WAITER hesitates, holds out his hand and emits his cough. RICHARD gives him £5.)

WAITER. Most kind. (*Referring to trolley.*) Oh, you haven't touched your supper.

RICHARD. We don't want it, thank you.

WAITER. But you've paid for it.

RICHARD. Just take it away.

WAITER (*Takes the trolley.*) Right. I'll sell it to one of the other guests. (*The WAITER exits.*)

GEORGE. Mr. Willey, I wish to register my strong objection to all of this.

RICHARD. Right, George, it's registered. Jane—wait in the bedroom. As soon as your dress arrives, go. (*RICHARD opens bedroom door.*)

JANE. I'm so sorry about tonight, Mr. Pigden.
RICHARD. He's having a ball.

(*HE pushes JANE into bedroom.*)

RICHARD. O.K., George. Get yourself into suite 650.
GEORGE. Wait a minute! I've got to call Nurse Foster. (*GEORGE lifts receiver and dials.*)
RICHARD. Nurse Foster?
GEORGE. To tell her I'm going to be late.
RICHARD. Well hurry up for heaven's sake.
GEORGE. The world doesn't totally revolve around you, Mr. Willey.
RICHARD. Never mind the sermon, George, just be quick about it.

(RICHARD opens the cupboard door and the BODY is revealed once more.)

GEORGE. (*On phone.*) Hello, is that Miss Foster?... Good evening, it's Mr. Pigden here ... I'm fine, thank you ... Yes, I'm keeping very fit, thank you.

(RICHARD, who has turned from the cupboard, advances on GEORGE.)

RICHARD. She doesn't need a medical report, George!
GEORGE. (*On phone.*) How's mother been today?
RICHARD. God!
GEORGE. (*On phone.*) Oh, dear ... oh dear, oh dear. (*To RICHARD.*) Mother's been a wee bit restless.
RICHARD. We're *all* restless, George! Tell the Nurse you're going to be late.

GEORGE. (*On phone.*) I was wondering if I could ask a small favour ... thank you. (*To RICHARD.*) She says nothing's too much trouble for me.

RICHARD. Good. (*RICHARD moves up and opens the window.*)

GEORGE. (*On phone.*) I may be a little late tonight. Something's cropped up ... that's very good of you, Miss Foster ... Ah, no! If mother wants to call me she'll have to ring me on 071-839-5097.

RICHARD. George!

GEORGE. I always like mother to know where I am in case of emergencies. (*On phone.*) And I'll either be in Room 648 or 650 ... They're Reading Rooms in the British Museum ... Thank you so much. (*GEORGE puts the phone down.*)

RICHARD. Right, George. Get into suite 650 there, open the window and then come back in here via the balcony.

GEORGE. I suffer from vertigo, you know.

RICHARD. Good, that'll take your mind off the corpse you'll be carrying.

(RICHARD pushes GEORGE into corridor and closes door. HE then goes to the BODY as JANE comes in from bedroom.)

JANE. Mr. Willey!

RICHARD. Ahhh! Don't *do* that, Miss Worthington.

JANE. I've just realised I've nowhere to go.

RICHARD. What do you mean? As soon as you're dressed, go home.

JANE. I can't. My husband thinks I'm with Auntie Rosie in Felixstowe.

RICHARD. Well go to Auntie Rosie in Felixstowe! (*RICHARD looks out of the window U.L. for GEORGE.*)

JANE. She'd have a fit if I turn up in the early hours of the morning.

RICHARD. (*Turns to her.*) Then bed down with Pigden in suite 650.

GEORGE. (*Appearing at window from U.L.*) I heard that, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. Quick, George, I'll give you a hand. (*RICHARD goes to lift BODY off hook.*)

GEORGE. I've been having second thoughts about the whole thing.

(The MANAGER enters from the corridor. RICHARD steps into the cupboard and JANE closes the door on RICHARD and the BODY. The MANAGER is removing his pass key from the lock.)

MANAGER. (*As HE enters.*) I can't find Mr. or Mrs. Pigden in their—

(HE stops on seeing GEORGE kneeling outside the window. GEORGE smiles at the MANAGER and gives a friendly wave. The MANAGER advances on GEORGE who continues to smile happily and tries to look nonchalant.)

MANAGER. (*Finally.*) What are you doing out there, Mr. Pigden?

GEORGE. Coming in.

(Before GEORGE can move, the window descends with a loud BANG in front of his face. The MANAGER opens it.)

MANAGER. I've just been into suite 650 looking for you and Mrs. Pigden.

GEORGE. I came over to look at the view. It's great in here. (*To JANE.*) Come on, darling, I'll take you back. (*GEORGE offers his hand.*)

JANE. (*To MANAGER.*) Excuse me.

(JANE climbs out through the window and follows GEORGE off U.L.)

GEORGE. 'Bye 'bye.

MANAGER. (*Calls.*) And then will you kindly check-in at Reception immediately.

(RICHARD comes out of cupboard.)

GEORGE. (*Off.*) Of course!

RICHARD. (*To MANAGER.*) Crazy honeymooners.

MANAGER. (*Turns to see RICHARD standing beside him. Calmly.*) You're missing your debate, Mr. Willey.

RICHARD. I just need to go to the "loo" first.

(RICHARD crosses his legs and moves towards the bedroom door. RICHARD stops when HE realises that the MANAGER, instead of leaving, is watching RICHARD.)

RICHARD. After you.

(RICHARD indicates for the MANAGER to leave. The MANAGER moves. The window falls with a BANG.)

RICHARD. (*Jumps.*) Ahhh!

(The MANAGER returns and looks enquiringly at RICHARD, waiting for him to speak. RICHARD smiles and waves "Good-bye" to the MANAGER. As

the MANAGER moves to go the cupboard door swings open and the BODY is revealed.)

RICHARD. (*Inadvertently yelling.*) Ahhh!

(The MANAGER stops and turns to look at RICHARD, who smiles.)

MANAGER. Did you wish to say something else, Mr. Willey?

RICHARD. No, just "Ah." I've said it now. Twice, actually. "Ah." "Ah." No, that's all. Thank you. "Ah." "Ah." (*Sings.*) "Ah!!!" (*Sings.*) "La Donna e Mobile!" Yes. Still there!

(The MANAGER never taking his eyes off RICHARD, and so still not seeing the BODY, exits, closing the door.
RICHARD hurries to the window and opens it.)

RICHARD. (*Calls off U.L.*) George! (*RICHARD shuts the cupboard door and returns to the window. Calls.*) George! (*RICHARD climbs out onto the balcony.*) George! (*RICHARD exits along the balcony U.L.*)

(There is a KNOCK at the corridor door. After a moment, the WAITER enters holding out the dress.)

WAITER. Here we are—! Hello! Room Service!

(The WAITER hesitates and starts to go. The PHONE rings. The WAITER hesitates and then lifts the receiver.)

WAITER. (*On phone.*) Hello?... yes, this is 648 ... No it's not one of the Reading Rooms at the British Museum ... Yes, the telephone number here is 071-839-5097 but it's the Westminster Hotel ... Madam, I'd *know* if I worked in the British Museum ... Mr. George Pigden? Yes, I know Mr. Pigden ... Message from who ... Nurse Foster? And what's the message Nurse Foster?... His mother's a bit worried about tonight and wants to talk to him.... Well, you tell Mrs. Pigden there's no cause to worry. Her son's honeymoon is going like a bomb.

(HE puts down the phone and exits happily into the corridor, closing the door. RICHARD, GEORGE and JANE appear outside the window from U.L.)

RICHARD. Come on.

(The THREE OF THEM enter through the window.)

RICHARD. Jane, you guard the hall door. George and I will transport the cause of all our problems to 650.

(JANE goes to the corridor door while RICHARD opens cupboard door. During the next three lines HE and GEORGE get the BODY off the hook. JANE closes cupboard door.)

GEORGE. Oh dear! I hope my mother doesn't start worrying about me.

RICHARD. Forget your mother for five minutes! Come on, George. Don't hang about.

(As THEY turn to the window the WAITER appears on the balcony from U.L. still carrying the dress.)

WAITER I say!

(In one deft movement GEORGE and RICHARD straighten up with the BODY between them. They have the Body's arms around their shoulders supporting him, and the three of them are standing in a row. The WAITER steps over the window ledge, into the room as GEORGE and RICHARD move quickly away to in front of the settee with the BODY between them. The WAITER moves down and surveys the "tableau." By way of explanation GEORGE and RICHARD start "dancing" and singing with the BODY between them. The WAITER is mesmerised. THEY finish their brief but bright routine and JANE, who has come D.L. to watch, applauds.)

RICHARD. Thank you, Mrs.Pigden. (*To GEORGE.*) A little more practice, George, and it will be ready for the Conservative Conference Cabaret.

(The window suddenly falls with a BANG. GEORGE and RICHARD yell. GEORGE and BODY collapse onto the settee.)

RICHARD. Quite right, George. You and your *"brother"* take a rest.

GEORGE. Oh, my God!

RICHARD. (*Lightly.*) Is Fred worn out, George?

GEORGE. Dead beat.

RICHARD. Your brother's not got your stamina, George. (*To WAITER.*) Fred was George's best man at the wedding this morning. I think he's had a few too many. Pull yourself together, Fred!

(RICHARD slaps Fred on the shoulder. The BODY flops forward. GEORGE pulls it back.)

RICHARD. You'll be all right, Fred. (*To WAITER.*) So, what's your problem?

WAITER. (*Bemused.*) What? Oh. Yes. I've got your dress.

(During the ensuing dialogue RICHARD takes the dress from the WAITER, tips him a £5 note and leads him to the door. JANE moves up and opens the door.)

RICHARD. Thank you. Most kind. If you can be of any further service tonight we won't hesitate to ring through and ask for you, personally. What's your name by the way?

WAITER. (*Looking at GEORGE and the BODY.*) Cromwell.

RICHARD. Cromwell, eh? What's your first name, Oliver?

(RICHARD chuckles but the WAITER is still mesmerised by GEORGE and the BODY.)

WAITER. No. Harold.

RICHARD. (*Giving him £5.*) Well, you buy yourself a little something, Harold.

WAITER. (*Still looking at GEORGE.*) Thank you.

RICHARD. (*Gives the Waiter another £5.)* Open a small guest house somewhere.

(RICHARD turns the WAITER round and gently pushes him out of the room closing the door. GEORGE rises and steps away from the BODY, which slumps onto the settee.)

GEORGE. (*In anguish.*) Oh, my God!

RICHARD. (*Handing JANE the dress.*) Quick, put this on, then go down to Reception and check-in as Mr.and Mrs. Pigden before the Manager blows his top.

(During the next few lines JANE very quickly slips into her dress. RICHARD takes sunglasses from his jacket pocket.)

RICHARD. George, stick my sunglasses on him, he'll look better.

GEORGE. (*Takes sunglasses.*) Oh, my goodness! (*GEORGE starts to put the sunglasses on the BODY.*)

RICHARD. (*To JANE.*) After you've checked-in go home to Lewisham. George and I will get him into 650.

(The TELEPHONE rings. THEY all "freeze." RICHARD lifts the receiver.)

RICHARD. (*On phone. Brightly.*) Hello?... (*Tersely.*) Nurse Foster?!

GEORGE. Nurse Foster?

RICHARD. Ssh! (*On phone.*) No, you can't speak to Mr. Pigden.

GEORGE. Is mother all right?

RICHARD. Ssh! (*On phone.*) Mr. Pigden has his hands full at the moment.... I'm the Curator at the British Museum ... I'm the Curator at the British Museum and I'm staying overnight at the Westminster Hotel ... Oh!... Ah!... I see!

GEORGE. What's she saying?

RICHARD. Ssh! (*On phone.*) I'll get Mr. Pigden to ring you back. (*RICHARD replaces the receiver.*)

GEORGE. What's happened?

RICHARD. That was Nurse Foster. Your mother's upset about you being late home.

GEORGE. Is that all?

RICHARD. Not quite. She's even more upset that you got married today without telling her.

GEORGE. Married?!

(GEORGE rises and the BODY slumps onto the divan.)

JANE. How on earth did she hear about that?

GEORGE. My poor mother.

RICHARD. Never mind your mother. Let's deal with the body and Miss Worthington.

(As RICHARD takes hold of JANE the MANAGER appears outside the open window.)

MANAGER. There you are!

(RICHARD grabs JANE and calmly waltzes her around the room. GEORGE quickly sits beside the body back on the divan and holds it with his arm around its shoulders. The MANAGER comes through the open window and glares at the cavorting RICHARD. HE taps RICHARD on the shoulder.)

RICHARD. I'm afraid it's not an "Excuse me."

(RICHARD continues to dance with JANE.)

RICHARD. (*Sings.*) "La Donna e Mobile." It's been one helluva day.

(RICHARD opens the door and "ushers" JANE out into the corridor. JANE still dancing exits.)

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