

A Visit From Miss Prothero

(from *Office Suite*)

A Play

Alan Bennett

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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A VISIT FROM MISS PROTHERO

First transmitted by the BBC on 11th January, 1978,
with the following cast of characters:

Mr Dodsworth

Hugh Lloyd

Miss Prothero

Patricia Routledge

Directed by Stephen Frears

The action takes place in the living-room of Mr Dodsworth's semi-detached house

Time—the present

A VISIT FROM MISS PROTHERO

The living-room of a semi-detached house. A worn, comfortable, cosy place

There are two doors: one to the hall, the other to the kitchen

Dozing in an armchair and similarly worn, cosy and comfortable is Mr Dodsworth, a man in his sixties. In a cardigan and carpet slippers with the top button of his trousers undone Mr Dodsworth is retired. He is just having five minutes and, unless one counts the budgie, he is alone

A few moments pass, sufficient for the tranquillity of the household to be established, then the door-chimes go

Mr Dodsworth does not respond

The chimes go again

Mr Dodsworth stirs and, fastening the top button of his trousers, gets up

Mr Dodsworth (*addressing the budgie*) Who's this then, Millie? Who's this?

He goes out, leaving the living-room door open. The front door opens

(*Off*) Is it you, Miss Prothero?

Miss Prothero (*off*) It is.

Mr Dodsworth (*off*) I didn't expect to see you.

While Mr Dodsworth hovers in the living-room doorway the visitor comes in boldly. It is a middle-aged woman, who runs a critical eye over the warm, comfortable, cosy room. She is none of these things

Miss Prothero I was beginning to think I'd got the wrong house.

Mr Dodsworth Why? Had you been stood there long?

Miss Prothero A minute or two.

Mr Dodsworth No, it's the right house. Number 59. The Dodsworth residence.

Miss Prothero I rang twice.

Mr Dodsworth To tell you the truth I was just having five minutes.

Miss Prothero I'm surprised. You were the one who couldn't abide a nap.

Mr Dodsworth Was I? You'll take your coat off?

Miss Prothero I was waiting to be asked.

He starts to help her off with her coat

I shan't stop.

Mr Dodsworth No, but . . .

Miss Prothero I still have my back, so I'll keep my undercoat on.

Mr Dodsworth is tugging at her cardigan sleeve, trying to take it off

That's my undercoat.

Mr Dodsworth Sorry. Sorry.

Miss Prothero This time of year can be very treacherous. (*Spring, summer, autumn, winter . . . to Miss Prothero the seasons were all potential assassins*) And I'd best keep my hat on as well. I don't want another sinus do.

Mr Dodsworth is about to bear away the fainted form of Miss Prothero's swagger coat when she stops him

I'm forgetting my hanky. (*She takes it out of the pocket and blows her nose*)

Mr Dodsworth carries her coat out to the hallstand

There's half a dozen people I ought to go see, only I thought you might be feeling a bit out of it. I said to Doreen, "I know Mr Dodsworth, he'll be wanting to be brought up to date."

Mr Dodsworth (*off*) What on?

Miss Prothero What on? Work! Warburtons!

Mr Dodsworth (*off*) Oh, work. No. No.

Miss Prothero (*to herself*) I'm sorry I came then. (*She remains standing in one spot, surveying the room*)

Mr Dodsworth bustles back

Mr Dodsworth What I mean, of course, is I do want to be brought up to date but to tell you the truth, Peggy, since I've left I've hardly had time to turn round. What with bowling on Tuesdays and my Rotary thing on Fridays and Gillian and the kiddies