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MAN ALIVE

An Unlikely Story in Three Acts

by

JOHN DIGHTON



LONDON
NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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MAN ALIVE

Produced at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on the 14th June, 1956, with the following cast of characters:

(in the order of their appearance)

WALDORF	<i>Brian Reece</i>
BELGRAVIA	<i>Joan Benham</i>
GEORGE INGLE	<i>David Evans</i>
DAPHNE JAMESON	<i>Wendy Craig</i>
MISS YATES	<i>Elizabeth Addyman</i>
OAKSHOTT	<i>Joan Hickson</i>
JUBILEE	<i>Joan Sims</i>
MR WEMBLEY	<i>Geoffrey Dunn</i>
MR HATHAWAY	<i>Robertson Hare</i>
THE DOORMAN	<i>Wilfred Boyle</i>
FRED	<i>Peter Retey</i>
MISS BUTTERWORTH	<i>Anna Barry</i>
MISS ADSHEAD	<i>Marjorie Dunkels</i>
THE POLICE COMMISSIONER	<i>Deering Wells</i>

Directed by WILLIAM CHAPPELL

Setting by HUTCHINSON SCOTT

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*The action of the Play passes in a window of Hathaway's Stores
in Oxford Street, London*

ACT I

The morning of New Year's Day

ACT II

Half an hour later

ACT III

Half an hour later

Time—the present

ACT I

SCENE—A “Bedroom” in Oxford Street, London. The morning of New Year’s Day.

The room, which is panelled and painted in a light pastel shade, is laid out enough, yet there is something conventionally strange about it. This is partly due, perhaps, to the absence of such normal architectural features as doors and fireplace, partly to the newness and careful arrangement of the furnishings, which conspire to give it a curiously unnatural air. Two curtained alcoves are set diagonally in the L and R back corners. In the alcove up L is a satin-covered double bed. In the alcove up R the end of a bathroom is visible, with a towel rail, and a cork-seated stool. A curtained arch C of the back wall leads to the various sales departments and other parts of the building. The glass front of the window, facing the street, is presumed to be along the footlights. The alcoves give access to other windows R and L. A batten, with a tasselled fringe, representing the bottom edge of the window blind, is suspended across the front of the stage at floor level, and can be raised or lowered at will. The handle or pulley for this is fixed to the wall down L. There is a dressing-table with mirror and stool against the wall R. A chaise-longue stands C with a small circular table above it. There are two upright chairs which normally stand R of the exit up C and against the wall L. A small table stands L of the exit up C with a table-lamp and a telephone on it. There are electric wall-brackets on the walls R and L and in the alcove up L. The alcove up R is lit by an electric globe pendant. The switches are behind the right pillar of the exit up C.

When the CURTAIN rises, it is shortly before 9 a.m. The window “blind” is down, and the window is dimly lit. The occupants of the room, of which there are two, seem to have caught something of its artificiality. The figure of a woman, BELGRAVIA, elegant in a self-consciously draped housecoat, reclines on the chaise-longue, with a deadpan expression, reading a book. The figure of a man, WALDORF, stands stiffly down L, hands on hips, in a pair of new mauve pyjamas, a purple silk dressing-gown and blue bedroom slippers. He has his back to a streamlined sun-lamp which is focused obliquely on him, but which is not switched on. WALDORF and BELGRAVIA look about thirty years of age. Neither of them has a hair out of place. Both are motionless and, like the room, have what can best be described as an un-lived-in look about them. The chair from R of the exit up C is behind the chaise with a boy’s rather violent-coloured dressing-gown draped over it. After a few moments, GEORGE INGLE enters hurriedly up C. He is in his middle twenties, is rather matter-of-fact, and is neatly dressed in a dark suit. He carries a

notepad and pencil and a cardboard box, all of which he puts on the bed. The occupants of the room remain motionless and GEORGE takes no more notice of them than he does of the furniture, rather less, in fact, for having removed his jacket in a business-like way, he moves to the entrance up C, switches on the lights, then returns to the cardboard box, opens it, and bends over it, sorting the contents. DAPHNE JAMESON, a pretty girl of twenty enters up C. She wears a plain dark dress, but life to her is full of romantic possibilities. Her manner is less hurried than George's. She carries a feather duster. She sees George, smiles, moves quietly behind him and puts her arms around his waist. GEORGE is mildly startled.

GEORGE (*without looking round; with a grin*) Hullo, Daphne.
DAPHNE. 'Morning, George.

(GEORGE continues with his sorting)

(*In reproof*) George!

(GEORGE, still in Daphne's arms, turns and they kiss. DAPHNE attempts to kiss him again)

GEORGE (*mildly reproving*) Now, Daphne . . .

DAPHNE. No-one can see us. (*She kisses him*) We might be in our own home—in our own bedroom—(*with a little sigh*) if we ever have one. (*She sits on the end of the bed*)

GEORGE. If we both get the sack, we'll never afford even to get married. (*He attempts to break from her*) It's five to nine . . .

DAPHNE (*holding on to him; romantically*) Five to nine—on a Saturday evening—the moon is shining in at the window—we're very much in love. (*She pulls George on to the end of the bed and kisses him, rather over-passionately*)

GEORGE (*quite shocked*) Daphne! (*He looks guiltily around*)

DAPHNE (*still holding on to him; happily*) It's all right. (*She looks towards the audience*) The blind's down.

GEORGE (*a little anxiously*) That's just it—and if it's down much longer, there'll be hell's delight. (*He frees himself and rises*) Come on—I've got the list. You do that side and I'll do this. (*He glances at his notepad, gives Daphne a number of show cards and price tickets from the cardboard box, then takes some show cards and price tickets for himself and moves to Waldorf*)

DAPHNE. Every time I feel romantic, there's a reason not to.

GEORGE (*turning Waldorf to front*) Well, there's a time and a place for everything. (*He attaches one price ticket which reads "9 guineas" to the front of Waldorf's dressing-gown, and another ticket reading "59/3" to the pyjamas. He adjusts the clothing generally and rearranges Waldorf's arms*)

(WALDORF, whose air of artificiality is now accounted for, naturally remains as motionless as ever)

DAPHNE (*rising resignedly and moving below the downstage end of the chaise*) I know, and it isn't Saturday evening. It's Monday morning. (*With feeling*) I don't know who invented Sales, but I bet they never had to serve in one. (*She is about to put a show card on Belgravia, but pauses and reads it*) "What every Boy Wants"—that can't be right.

GEORGE (*indicating the boy's dressing-gown*) That's for *that*.

DAPHNE (*putting the card on the dressing-gown*) Did you see the paper this morning? Whole page advertisement. "Happy New Year. Hathaway's Can Supply It." That's all it said. (*Remembering*) Oh—"And At Half the Price". (*She selects another show card*) "Housewives' Choice." (*She moves above the chaise and moves Belgravia's hand*) I ask you. (*She puts the show card on Belgravia*) I suppose the old man's just discovered the Light Programme. And if it's really true he writes the ads, in addition to everything else, I think he's going crackers. (*She moves below the downstage end of the chaise*)

GEORGE (*putting a price ticket on the sun-lamp*) Probably New Year's Day coming slap on a Monday. Gone to his head a bit. (*He kneels and adjusts the angle of the lamp*)

DAPHNE (*after a pause; dreamily*) I had a funny feeling, when I woke up this morning. I suppose that's what it was.

(GEORGE, *still on his kness, stares enquiringly at Daphne*)

I always feel anything can happen on New Year's Day. (*She crosses to George and strokes his hair*)

GEORGE (*rising and crossing to the dressing-table*) It very likely will—if we don't get this blind up on the dot. (*He positions some price tickets and show cards on the dressing-table*) Old Wembley's in a filthy mood this morning. He always is, just before a Sale.

DAPHNE. So's Yates. But it isn't that—it's because she's had to share this window. She was planning to fill the whole thing with drastically reduced underwear.

GEORGE. I don't know why the old man's so keen on these mixed windows—bit of every department . . . (*He gestures around, then moves to the table above the chaise and adjusts the position of the vase of flowers*) You've got to go surrealist nowadays. (*He crosses to Waldorf*) That's the only way to make 'em stop and look. (*He adjusts Waldorf's position a little*)

DAPHNE (*looking towards Waldorf*) Well, he looks a bit surrealist, if you ask me.

GEORGE (*proudly*) Not bad, is it? Gives the window *something*, anyway. (*He indicates the sun-lamp*) I found this in Electrical. Just in. The very last word. Double Strength U.V.

DAPHNE. You what?

GEORGE. Ultra violet, like the sun radiates. Very invigorating.

DAPHNE (*abstractedly*) Shall we go skating tonight?

GEORGE. What? (*He stands down L of Waldorf and looks at him*)

DAPHNE. Skating. (*She moves below the chaise, imitating skating*)

GEORGE (*incredulously*) Tonight? (*He adjusts Waldorf's head*) If I know anything about my feet, they'll have no desire to be on ice. (*He moves to the cardboard box on the bed*) They'll want to be in a mustard-bath. (*He takes two show cards from the box*) Yours, too, I should have thought. (*He moves to R of Waldorf and places the show card in Waldorf's hand. It reads "Ultra-Violet"*)

DAPHNE (*sighing*) Oh, George—there are other things in life besides one's feet.

GEORGE. Not on the first day of a Sale. (*He puts another show card on the floor in front of Waldorf and the lamp. This, too, reads "Ultra-Violet"*)

DAPHNE (*looking a little sadly at George*) You know such a lot about so many things.

GEORGE (*modestly*) Well, I try to keep learning.

DAPHNE. If only you knew a little more about life.

GEORGE. What's that got to do with going skating?

DAPHNE. Oh—(*she turns away*) you're hopeless. (*She turns to Belgravia, swivels her legs to the floor, then sits on the end of the chaise*)

GEORGE. Well, it's quite a reasonable question.

DAPHNE (*with spirit*) That's it. You always want to do what's reasonable. You won't even get married because we can't afford it.

(*GEORGE attempts to speak*)

If you had any life in you at all—(*she rises and crosses to George*) you'd say: "Let's get married and starve, what does it matter?"

GEORGE. There wouldn't be much life in either of us, then, would there?

(*DAPHNE, exasperated, is about to retort.*)

MISS YATES enters up c. *She is in the early forties, efficient and well turned out, but with any femininity in her kept rigidly out of working hours. DAPHNE rises hurriedly and resumes work. GEORGE hastily does likewise*)

Good morning, Miss Yates.

DAPHNE (*replacing Belgravia's legs on the chaise; hastily*) We're nearly through, Miss Yates. (*She adjusts Belgravia's housecoat, then moves above the chaise*)

MISS YATES (*brusquely*) Good morning. (*She moves down RC, turns and surveys the window with a professional eye, then makes one or two small adjustments*) Yes—yes—the flowers . . . (*She indicates the flowers on the table above the chaise. To Daphne*) A little further to the left.

(*DAPHNE moves the flowers back to the place from which George moved them. GEORGE notices but says nothing*)

That's better. (*She catches sight of Waldorf*) That's ridiculous . . .

(GEORGE turns Waldorf to face down R)

(She checks herself with some exasperation) Oh well, I suppose it's not my business. (She moves below the chaise and looks at Belgravia. Dubiously) Mm—I suppose so. (She looks at the boy's dressing-gown) No. That I really can't have. It clashes horribly.

(GEORGE bends and moves Waldorf's right leg)

(She turns to George) I'm sorry, but you'll have to move it.

(GEORGE's seat only is presented to her)

(Sharply) Mr Ingle!

GEORGE (straightening up and turning; innocently) Yes, Miss Yates? Move what?

MISS YATES. "What Every Boy Wants". It won't do there at all. (She crosses to the dressing-table)

GEORGE. Oh. (He surveys the window) There's a bit of a gap here. I'll shift it. (He points C)

MISS YATES. No, no—right out of the window.

GEORGE (after a pause) But Mr Wembley said specially . . .

MISS YATES. I can't help what Mr Wembley said.

(DAPHNE idly dusts the flowers with a feather duster)

GEORGE. He's got fifty-three of these dressing-gowns, left over from Christmas before last. They won't seem to go.

MISS YATES. Well, this one's got to. Take it away at once.

GEORGE (giving up) O.K. (He moves to the dressing-gown, picks it up with the show card, places the chair R of the entrance up C, then turns to go)

MISS YATES. Mr Wembley has only himself to blame, if he buys unsaleable stock.

DAPHNE (mischievously) What every boy doesn't want, apparently.

MISS YATES (severely) Miss Jameson. (To George) And I'll fill the gap.

GEORGE. Whatever you say, Miss Yates. Until Mr Wembley says something different.

(GEORGE exits up C. MISS YATES looks exasperatedly after him for a moment, then turns to Daphne)

MISS YATES. Just finish that, and I'll find you something. (She moves to the head of the chaise) We've plenty of obstinate lines of our own, that will really repay pushing.

DAPHNE. Yes, Miss Yates.

(MISS YATES looks at Belgravia)

MISS YATES (pulling Belgravia's head backwards) This is a common

old model—(*she pushes Belgravia's head back into position*) couldn't you find a better one?

DAPHNE. Nothing that would go on that chaise-longue thing.

MISS YATES (*resignedly*) Oh, well. (*She moves to the exit up c*) That housecoat would look good on anything—that's one comfort.

(MISS YATES *exits up c*.)

DAPHNE *follows Miss Yates off. There is a moment's silence. Then, still otherwise motionless, BELGRAVIA speaks*

BELGRAVIA. In my opinion, that woman is a first-class bitch.

(WALDORF *answers in the same motionless manner, but whereas Belgravia's tone is sophisticated, his is completely the reverse*)

WALDORF (*simply*) I don't know what that is.

BELGRAVIA. Don't worry—when you've been here a few months you'll be an expert. You're new, aren't you?

WALDORF. I was delivered on Saturday.

BELGRAVIA. I thought I hadn't seen you before. Though, of course, in an emporium of this size, one hardly even knows the dummies in the next window. Thank God.

WALDORF. Have you been here a long time?

BELGRAVIA. Long enough. If you're thinking of that Yates woman's remark, it was entirely uncalled for. Common old model, indeed. I'm not even chipped—anywhere. Though I say it myself, I come of a very good factory. A lot of my contemporaries went to Harrods and Marshalls and Harvey Nichols and really first-class shops like that. (*Resignedly*) Still, we can't choose our store in life and there it is. A fine day you elected to start. January Sale.

WALDORF. Is that bad?

BELGRAVIA. You have no idea. Two thousand women fighting to pay too much for what they afterwards discover they never wanted in the first place.

WALDORF (*with a gleam in his eye*) Two thousand women!

BELGRAVIA. Of course, the White Sale is even worse. Last year I was dressed entirely in lace table mats.

WALDORF. Table mats?

BELGRAVIA. It was draughty in the extreme. Normal people put them on tables. It took one of Mr Hathaway's happy inspirations to put them on me.

WALDORF. Do women come to the White Sale, too?

BELGRAVIA. Nothing else but.

WALDORF. I think I'm going to like it here.

BELGRAVIA. Whether you do or don't, what can women possibly have to do with it?

WALDORF. I don't know. I've only seen one or two. I like the look of them.

BELGRAVIA (*a little anxiously*) There isn't anything peculiar about you, is there?

WALDORF. Not that I know of.

(DAPHNE enters up c. She carries a show card and a bed jacket. She moves the chair R of the exit up c and places it LC)

BELGRAVIA. Believe me, when you've seen as many women as I have . . .

WALDORF (with his eyes on Daphne) Sssh! She'll hear you.

BELGRAVIA. Don't be ridiculous—she can't. Humans can't hear us.

(DAPHNE evidently can't. She is busy with the bed jacket and show card on the chair)

And when they look us in the eye we can't speak. So there's no contact. We're in two different worlds. Silly little thing, this one is.

(DAPHNE, singing the first line of "Love is a many splendoured thing", moves to Belgravia and slightly adjusts her housecoat. During this, BELGRAVIA is mute. DAPHNE moves up R of Belgravia)

See what I mean?

WALDORF. I wish I could speak to her.

BELGRAVIA. If you could, you'd give her the fright of her life. She talks the most arrant nonsense, anyway. Romance with a capital R. And she hasn't the first idea how to pose one. She had my hands on back to front one day last week. So busy dreaming about Life and George. (She imitates Daphne's way of saying "George")

(MISS YATES enters up c)

MISS YATES (to Daphne) Haven't you done it yet? (She glances at her wrist-watch) It's time this blind was up.

DAPHNE. I'm waiting for George. He's bringing it in.

BELGRAVIA (to Waldorf) See what I mean?

MISS YATES. Mr Hathaway will have quite enough on his mind this morning, without a delayed window. He'd be extremely angry. I don't want that, even if it is Mr Wembley's fault. (She indicates the chair LC) We could have that chair down here. (She moves down R)

(OAKSHOTT enters up c. She is a severely dressed store detective, a militant ex-policewoman. She carries some items of women's clothing, a coat, cardigan, dress and hat. She is looking for Miss Yates)

OAKSHOTT (moving c) Ah—Miss Yates . . .

MISS YATES (exasperated) Oakshott—since when has a window been the store detective's province?

BELGRAVIA. She's off her beat.

OAKSHOTT (bristling at Miss Yates) The extent of my province, Miss Yates, is not your province. (She glares) Happy New Year.

MISS YATES (glaring) Same to you, I'm sure.

OAKSHOTT. I've taken these items out of stock. (*She puts the hat on the chair LC*) No objection, I hope?

MISS YATES (*moving to R of Oakshott; formidably*) Taken them?

OAKSHOTT. Borrowed them. For the Sale. You know what these shoplifters are. If I don't camouflage myself thoroughly, they spot me in a jiffy and then there's nothing doing. Can't have that.

BELGRAVIA (*dryly*) Oh, no—mustn't discourage them.

OAKSHOTT. There is this cardigan at thirty-five and six, this dress and coat at five and seven guineas, and a hat from the six-and-elevenpenny counter.

BELGRAVIA. Expensive at the price.

MISS YATES. Very well. (*Snootily*) Just see they're returned in due course. (*She moves down R*) They'll have to go into "Shop Soiled". (*To Daphne*) Now, as I said before, we could have that chair down here . . . (*Ignoring Oakshott, she shows Daphne where to place the chair*)

(DAPHNE picks up the chair LC)

OAKSHOTT (*fuming*) Really—(*she grabs the hat from the chair*)

(DAPHNE moves the chair down R)

—sometimes I wish I were back in the Force. At least the sergeant never snubbed me when I drew my uniform.

(OAKSHOTT exits up C)

MISS YATES (*moving the chair immediately down R of the chaise*) That's right—now drape the bed jacket over it.

(DAPHNE drapes the bed jacket over the chair.)

GEORGE enters up C. He is carrying JUBILEE, his arms grasped round her middle. She is a girl child dummy, about twelve years of age in appearance, with a bright, fixed smile. She wears a party frock and has her hair in pigtails. Her manner of speaking is that of a rather over-bright woman in the late fifties)

GEORGE. Here we are.

BELGRAVIA (*half to herself*) Oh, God—I might have guessed that.

JUBILEE. Happy New Year, everyone.

GEORGE (*moving LC with Jubilee*) About here, Miss Yates?

MISS YATES (*glancing up*) Yes—that'll do.

(GEORGE places JUBILEE LC so that she half faces Belgravia)

JUBILEE (*brightly*) Good morning, Belgravia.

BELGRAVIA (*sourly*) Morning.

JUBILEE. What are you reading, dear?

BELGRAVIA (*bitterly*) The Textile Trade Year Book for nineteen-twenty-six. Upside down.

(GEORGE, *dissatisfied with Jubilee's position, shifts her round, so that now she half faces Waldorf*)

JUBILEE (*to Waldorf*) I don't think *we've* met before.

WALDORF. No. I'm new.

JUBILEE. Straight here from the maker's, I hope?

WALDORF. I came out of the mould last week.

JUBILEE. Just at the start of life. How nice.

(GEORGE *turns Jubilee to face front but is dissatisfied and looks towards Miss Yates*)

GEORGE. I can't tell which way she looks best.

BELGRAVIA (*in an undertone*) Who could?

MISS YATES (*impatently*) Never mind—we'll see to it.

GEORGE. I'll get the remainder.

(GEORGE *exits up c*)

MISS YATES (*crossing to Jubilee*) Have you got the card that goes with it?

(DAPHNE *crosses to Miss Yates and hands her a show card*)

(*She looks at the show card*) "Glamorous Nights". No—I really think not. (*Exasperatedly*) We'll have to find another one. (*She moves to the exit up c*) And quickly.

DAPHNE (*crossing and putting the feather duster on the end of the bed*) It's just on nine, Miss Yates.

MISS YATES (*impatently*) Exactly. I've been pointing that out for the past ten minutes.

(MISS YATES *exits up c*.)

DAPHNE *follows her off*)

JUBILEE (*brightly*) Well, this *is* a pleasant surprise. One of my favourite windows, too—Number Thirteen. I was so afraid I was going to miss the best of the Sale. I had a most disappointing position, tucked away in that horrid narrow passage outside the Tea Room.

BELGRAVIA (*dryly*) And the "Ladies".

JUBILEE. Well, yes. And people squeeze past so—especially at Sale Time. I was there once before, a year or two ago—and I was knocked over. Such crowds.

WALDORF (*with a gleam in his eye*) Crowds of women?

BELGRAVE. Those are what usually patronize the "Ladies".

JUBILEE. Of course, he's new to it all, isn't he? We must say "Welcome to Hathaways".

BELGRAVIA. Anybody's welcome to it.

JUBILEE. Oh, come now—it's a very good house. It may not be Debenhams or Selfridges, but it has something that they haven't . . .

BELGRAVIA (*dryly*) Mr Hathaway.

JUBILEE. The family tradition. After all, I was here with his father, *and* his grandfather and I know. The changes I've seen in my time . . .

BELGRAVIA (*familiar with them*) Horse buses in Oxford Street—hansom cabs—sedan chairs, probably.

JUBILEE (*reprovingly*) Now, Belgravia—you're teasing.

WALDORF. What does that mean—"Belgravia"?

BELGRAVIA. It doesn't mean anything. It's my name.

WALDORF. Name?

BELGRAVIA. Like Thingummy-jig or What-d'-you-call-it.

JUBILEE. Of course. Every model has a name.

WALDORF. I haven't.

JUBILEE. Oh, yes, you have. You must have. The makers always put one on.

BELGRAVIA. They stamp it, rather impertinently, on one's behind. I suppose it's the only place, these days, that they can be reasonably certain will not be exposed to the public.

WALDORF. I wonder what my name is.

BELGRAVIA. "Waldorf". I saw it this morning, earlier on.

JUBILEE. When they were dressing the window, I expect.

BELGRAVIA. When they were dressing Waldorf.

JUBILEE. Oh, Belgravia!

WALDORF (*trying it out*) Waldorf. (*In a different tone*) Waldorf.

JUBILEE. My name is Jubilee. That's because I came out at the time of a royal anniversary.

(GEORGE enters up c. He carries a pale pink plastic squeaking duck)

BELGRAVIA. Not George the Fifth's. either. Queen Victoria's.

JUBILEE. Yes. I'm fifty-nine this year.

(GEORGE moves to Jubilee and puts the duck in her arm)

You wouldn't think it to look at me, would you?

(GEORGE moves down R of Jubilee and looks at her.)

MR WEMBLEY enters up c and moves down L of Jubilee. He is a fussy man in the early forties. His manner is pettish)

WEMBLEY (*to George*) The doors are just opening. Why isn't this blind up?

GEORGE. Won't be half a minute, Mr Wembley.

WEMBLEY. You know what Mr Hathaway is. What's the delay?

GEORGE. Just waiting for a show card. Miss Yates is bringing it. (*He moves to the upstage end of the dressing-table and adjusts the items on it*)

WEMBLEY (*exasperated*) Miss Yates. (*He moves to the bed*) I don't know why it is, but some women can never be on time with anything. (*He pushes the bed further into the alcove*)

BELGRAVIA. I've always thought his mother must have been several months ahead—with him.

WEMBLEY (*to George*) I said not a word when we had to share the window—(*he tidies the corner of the bed cover*) but I knew perfectly well how it would be.

(MISS YATES enters up c. She carries a fresh show card for Jubilee)

(*He moves down LC, turns and stares at the chair and bed jacket*) Where's that dressing-gown from Boy's Outfitting?

MISS YATES. I had it taken out. (*She crosses to the dressing-table and puts the card on the stool*)

WEMBLEY (*turning angrily to Miss Yates*) Well, really! There are some things I *won't* put up with.

MISS YATES. It was quite impossible. (*She moves to the chair RC and fiddles with the bed jacket*) Hideous colour, poor quality . . .

WEMBLEY (*outraged*) It was a pure Kidderminster Cashmere.

MISS YATES (*disregarding this*) And it ruined the look of the window.

WEMBLEY (*seething*) Miss Yates—I've been dressing windows for over twenty years.

BELGRAVIA. She won't try to compete with that one.

MISS YATES. That's probably just the trouble. Years ago, any old thing would do. (*She crosses to L of Jubilee and rearranges the duck*) I'm not going to lose sales, through having a lot of distracting clutter. (*She indicates Waldorf and the sun-lamp*) I'm putting up with *that* as it is.

WEMBLEY (*sarcastically*) You'll surely allow me one or two items . . . (*He looks at Waldorf, then stares at the sun-lamp*) What's that?

GEORGE. It's a sun-lamp, Mr Wembley.

MISS YATES. That's what I'm speaking about.

GEORGE (*to Wembley; eagerly*) It's the latest kind of U.V. And it's got I.R., too. Infra Red. You can switch from one to the other.

WEMBLEY (*pettishly*) I gave no instructions for that. None at all.

GEORGE. Well, I thought it would be a sort of unusual touch.

(MISS YATES moves above the right end of the chaise and adjusts the collar of Belgravia's housecoat)

WEMBLEY. Unusually stupid, I should say. What's the point of it? What on earth's the point?

MISS YATES. The point would be obvious to a child of ten. It's to focus attention on the dressing-gown and the lamp.

GEORGE (*crossing to R of Wembley; eagerly*) That's what I thought. Sort of surrealist. And both being ultra-violet—more or less . . .

WEMBLEY (*irritated*) Surrealist? What does that mean?

GEORGE (*stumped*) Well—I don't know exactly.

MISS YATES (*moving to the dressing-table; to Wembley*) As a matter of fact, it's the one original thing in your part of the window.

(GEORGE moves down L to Waldorf)

WEMBLEY (*crossing to Miss Yates; angrily*) Well, I like that! Half a minute ago you were complaining about it . . .

MISS YATES (*maddeningly*) I said I'd put up with it. You can hardly call that complaining.

WEMBLEY (*with rising heat*) Miss Yates—I don't know if you're trying deliberately to provoke me . . .

MISS YATES (*equally angry*) Really! You're quite impossible!

(MR HATHAWAY enters up c and moves down c. He is a well-groomed, well-fed man of about forty-five, self-assured to the point of pomposity. His appearance signalizes an immediate, shocked silence)

BELGRAVIA. Something tells me we are in the Presence.

HATHAWAY (*ominously*) Happy New Year to everyone.

MISS YATES

GEORGE

WEMBLEY

} (*together*) Happy New Year, Mr Hathaway.

HATHAWAY. It's two minutes past nine—on what is undoubtedly the most important shopping day of the year—and this window is not yet pulling its weight. May I ask why?

JUBILEE. Straight to the point. That's Mr Hathaway for you.

HATHAWAY (*moving above the chaise*) You may well be ashamed to answer. You know perfectly well the importance I attach to our window displays. Upwards of forty thousand people pass these windows every hour. At sale time, probably more. There are eighteen windows in the frontage—(*he stands immediately above Belgravia*) not counting the back and sides—

BELGRAVIA. Well, how can you, in the frontage?

HATHAWAY. —which means—(*he leans on Belgravia's shoulder and pushes her forward*) at a rough estimate, eighteen times forty thousand sales chances hourly. (*He pulls Belgravia back into place*) But not if we keep the blinds down. (*He moves down c*)

WEMBLEY (*all humility*) I'm sure we're extremely sorry, Mr Hathaway.

HATHAWAY (*moving to Wembley*) An apology is not an explanation.

MISS YATES

WEMBLEY

} (*simultaneously*) { Well, to start with . . .
{ Miss Yates appears to think . . .

HATHAWAY (*silencing them with a gesture; disapprovingly*) Please remember the team spirit.

BELGRAVIA. We must all pull together.

HATHAWAY. We must all pull together. (*He gives Wembley priority*) Wembley?

(MISS YATES moves down R. WEMBLEY looks at Miss Yates then turns to Hathaway)

WEMBLEY. Well, sir—it was only in the best interests of the house, of course—just a detail, really . . .

MISS YATES (*clear cut*) I objected to giving prominence in the window to an unsaleable line.

HATHAWAY (*with a step down stage; formidably*) An unsaleable line?

WEMBLEY (*hastily*) I'm afraid Miss Yates doesn't quite appreciate—she has rather less experience, after all . . . (*He glares at Miss Yates*) Naturally, as you know, sir, some lines take a little more moving than others . . .

HATHAWAY (*moving L*) Possibly. (*He turns*) They shouldn't.

WEMBLEY. Oh, quite, sir. (*He takes a step or two towards Hathaway*) But there it is. (*He eyes Jubilee's frock. Nastily*) If it comes to that, I seem to remember . . .

MISS YATES (*hurriedly*) It wasn't only the merchandise. As I pointed out to Mr Wembley, he already has more than his fair share of focus—(*she indicates Waldorf*) over there.

HATHAWAY. Over where?

BELGRAVIA. Now you're for it, Waldorf. Two minutes and you'll be outside the "Gentlemen's".

WEMBLEY (*agitatedly*) Miss Yates knows perfectly well I shall be changing that.

HATHAWAY. Changing what?

WEMBLEY. The sun-lamp, sir. (*With a nasty look at George*) For some reason I cannot fathom, my instructions were not totally adhered to this morning.

HATHAWAY (*nodding*) You mean it should be switched on, of course.

(WEMBLEY looks startled)

It's no use having an eye-catching device of that kind and then adopting half-measures.

WEMBLEY. Very true, Mr Hathaway. (*With a triumphant smile at Miss Yates*) Switched on, of course. (*He moves to L of Miss Yates*)

(GEORGE switches on the lamp. WALDORF is suffused with ultra-violet light from the lamp)

GEORGE. There we are, sir.

HATHAWAY. Excellent. What I should call a sort of surrealist effect. (*To Wembley*) What you were aiming at, of course.

(MISS YATES turns away)

WEMBLEY. Well, sir, I can't say I had exactly that term in mind. (*He eases his collar*)

(MISS YATES *laughs*)

But the general effect is what I imagined it might be.

HATHAWAY. I congratulate you. A very welcome piece of initiative and enterprise. (*He turns and looks at the lamp*)

(WEMBLEY *smiles uncomfortably.*

DAPHNE *enters precipitately up c*)

DAPHNE (*as she enters*) Oh, heavens, isn't this blasted blind up yet? (*She sees Hathaway. Aghast*) Oh—I'm so sorry . . .

HATHAWAY. Don't apologize, please. (*He looks at Wembley and Miss Yates and moves down c*) I'm glad to see one member of the staff with some thought for the shopping public. Wembley—please see this blind goes up without further delay.

(DAPHNE *moves LC*)

WEMBLEY (*chastened by Hathaway's tone*) Yes, Mr Hathaway.

HATHAWAY (*importantly*) And please remember—all of you—at Hathaway's, there is no such thing as an unsaleable line.

(HATHAWAY *exits with dignity up c. There is a momentary silence during which WEMBLEY and MISS YATES glare at each other*)

BELGRAVIA. You know, at times, I really find Mr Hathaway rather endearing.

(MISS YATES *picks up the show card from the stool and turns to Daphne*)

MISS YATES (*icily*) Miss Jameson—place this card, please. (*She moves c and holds out the card*)

(DAPHNE *moves to Miss Yates and takes the card*)

And then finish up.

(DAPHNE *moves to Jubilee*)

(*With a glance at Wembley*) If anyone should want me I shall be in Teen-age Underwear.

(MISS YATES *exits up c*)

BELGRAVIA. I can't see why anyone should—in Teen-age Underwear or anything else.

(DAPHNE *looks for a suitable place to put the card*)

JUBILEE. I wonder what that card says? (*In a pleased tone*) From here, it looks like "Rock-a-bye-Baby—two guineas".

(DAPHNE *puts the card at Jubilee's feet*)

BELGRAVIA (*dryly*) "Rock Bottom—two-and-six".

(DAPHNE moves the duck. It squeaks)

JUBILEE (taken aback) Oh! And they talk about inflation.

BELGRAVIA. Who cares? Personally, I never read my own publicity.

(WEMBLEY looks in a pained manner at Waldorf and the lamp)

GEORGE. Shall I get the blind up, Mr Wembley?

WEMBLEY (crossing to R of Daphne; nastily) I'm only waiting for Miss Yates' assistant to finish.

DAPHNE. I have.

(DAPHNE exits up C. WEMBLEY nods to GEORGE, who moves to the blind pulley on the wall down L)

WEMBLEY (moving LC; acidly) And when you've done that, perhaps you'll take a little of your initiative and enterprise to Cut-Price Cardigans. I anticipate a rush there.

(WEMBLEY exits up C)

BELGRAVIA (dryly) "Happy New Year. Hathaway's Can Supply It."

(GEORGE operates the pulley. The fringed batten down stage slowly rises. The blue-ish white-ish light of day rises over the scene, climbing with the raising of the invisible blind, from floor to ceiling)

JUBILEE. Ah, that's much better. I do like to look out.

(GEORGE finishes and turns to look with satisfaction at Waldorf and the lamp. He has an idea, undoes the dressing-gown and opens it a little, so that the pyjamas show, too. He whistles softly to himself. He looks at the effect, is satisfied with it and moves up C towards the exit. He catches sight of Daphne's feather duster on the end of the bed. He retrieves the duster, and still whistling, casually dusts Waldorf, Jubilee and Belgravia during the next speech)

BELGRAVIA. I can't think who likes to look in. What a nauseating domestic spectacle we present. Mother puts her feet up with a good book, dear little daughter clutches her disgusting duck, while father smugly limbers up with a sun-lamp, to gain the strength to raise an addition to the family.

(GEORGE dusts the low cut neck of Belgravia's housecoat)

And I'll thank you to keep that feather duster to yourself.

(GEORGE collects his coat, the cardboard box with any remaining show cards and price tickets, and exits up C)

WALDORF (breathlessly) Isn't it beautiful?

BELGRAVIA (amused) What! Oxford Street?

JUBILEE. Come, come—even I would hardly say that.

WALDORF. So many women. Beautiful!

BELGRAVIA. You know, you'll have to watch this. You seem to have some kind of an obsession.

WALDORF. So many—and all so different.

BELGRAVIA. All pretty much the same, believe me. You've only got to offer a woman the biggest monstrosity you have in stock and tell her it brings out the colour of her eyes and she'll fall for it every time.

WALDORF. She will?

BELGRAVIA. Certainly. They're all alike. Every time they stop and look in the window, I know exactly what they're going to say.

JUBILEE. They say some very rude things sometimes. And little boys write words on the window. Unfortunately, you can't shut your eyes to it.

BELGRAVIA. We all learn to lip-read, you know. You have to, out of sheer desperation. It seems even worse *not* to know what they're saying—until you do. Then you wish you hadn't.

JUBILEE. There were two able seamen, just before Christmas, when I was modelling a middy blouse. One of them asked the other what use I'd be in the Navy, and his reply was something I can't repeat in a mixed window. (*She pauses. Coyly*) But I could just hint at it, if you like. (*To Waldorf. Sharply and severely*) Young man! You should speak, when you're spoken to.

WALDORF (*vaguely*) I didn't hear you. It's the banging.

BELGRAVIA. What banging?

WALDORF. In my ears. It's been getting louder and louder. (*Rhythmically*) *Bang bang, bang bang . . .*

(*The sound of amplified heart-beats is heard*)

JUBILEE. I can't hear anything.

BELGRAVIA. Banging in the ears? Don't be ridiculous, only humans have that. It's their heart-beats or something.

WALDORF. And then there's the heat, too.

JUBILEE. Heat? It's freezing today.

WALDORF. It seems to be spreading all the time—right from the very middle.

BELGRAVIA. The middle of where?

WALDORF. The middle of me. Upwards and downwards and outwards.

BELGRAVIA. It's that sun-lamp. He said it was double-strength. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you were just a pool of plastic by the end of the day.

JUBILEE. If he is, it'll ruin the dressing-gown and pyjamas.

WALDORF. It's along my arms and my legs . . .

BELGRAVIA. Pins and needles, they call that.

JUBILEE. Talking of haberdashery, I hear they're enlarging the

department. Of course in my time there was a place for everything and everything was in its place . . .

(WALDORF moves slightly up and down on his toes)

WALDORF (with rising force) Bang bang, bang bang—louder, louder, louder. (He drops the show card from his hand)

JUBILEE (annoyed) Well, really!

(DAPHNE enters hurriedly up c. Her manner is a little fussed. She moves to the bed, looks for the dusting brush, cannot find it, so looks in other parts of the window)

BELGRAVIA. If it's your dusting-brush, you silly girl, George took it. (She imitates Daphne's tone when she says "George")

WALDORF. Louder—and louder—and louder—and LOUDER. (On the last of these, he is almost shouting. He ends abruptly)

(The heart-beat sound ceases and a continuous oscillating noise, the transition sound, is heard. DAPHNE, unable to find the brush, finally gives up, shrugs cheerfully and is about to go when she notices that Waldorf's dressing-gown is undone. She moves to Waldorf and ties the cord of the dressing-gown, humming cheerfully to herself as she does so)

DAPHNE (to Waldorf) There you are, Gorgeous. (She smiles at him and pats his face)

(WALDORF suddenly kisses DAPHNE, who lets out a squeak of utter astonishment. The transition sound ceases)

Oh! Who did that? (She runs behind one of the curtains of the alcove up L and peeps out)

JUBILEE (to Belgravia) My dear, you're right—he's melting.

BELGRAVIA. Melting my eye.

(DAPHNE recovers and moves to R of Waldorf)

DAPHNE (angrily) Who are you? How dare you?

(WALDORF looks in surprise at Daphne)

(Outraged) You kissed me! What are you doing in the window?

WALDORF (staring wonderingly at her) Something happened—you said "There you are, Gorgeous"—and then . . . (He takes a stiff pace forward to her)

DAPHNE (staring at Waldorf and realizing what he is) Oh—oh—oh! (She runs wildly to the exit up c and calls) George . . .

(DAPHNE, wailing, runs out up c. WALDORF endeavours to follow her. He takes a stiff step or two, then stops, bewildered)

WALDORF (dazedly) Something's happened to me. (He takes another pace)

BELGRAVIA. You're telling us!

WALDORF (*moving to Jubilee*) What is it? What's happened? (*He turns to Belgravia*) Belgravia—why don't you say something?

(BELGRAVIA is motionless)

JUBILEE. He can't even hear us any more.

WALDORF (*turning to Jubilee*) Jubilee—can't you hear me?

BELGRAVIA. If you ask me, he's turned human. That's what's happened to him.

(WALDORF turns away from Jubilee, more and more bewildered)

JUBILEE. Belgravia—don't be morbid!

(WALDORF moves above the chaise)

BELGRAVIA. Well, how else can you explain it? Look at him.

WALDORF. I spoke to the human and she heard me! I can move! (*He tries out various movements*) I can move everything. (*He moves down R, his bewilderment beginning to turn to delight*)

JUBILEE. He didn't look a defective model, either, but you never can tell, can you?

WALDORF. And I kissed her! I kissed her! She tasted delicious. (*He moves down stage until he "bumps" into the "glass" of the window*) I'm free! I'm as free as they are! The whole world's outside! (*He moves L, feeling the "window glass"*) What shall I do next? (*He moves c*) Where shall I go?

JUBILEE. You'll go straight back to the factory, that's what'll happen to you.

WALDORF. I can go anywhere! I can do anything!

BELGRAVIA. There'll be hell let loose in a minute, that's quite certain.

WALDORF. Two thousand women! Perhaps I can kiss them all! (*He starts delightedly for the exit up c, but freezes in his tracks, close by his original position near the sun-lamp as . . .*)

(GEORGE enters belligerently up c, followed by WEMBLEY, armed with a feather duster; a very large uniformed DOORMAN with "Hathaway's" on his cap; FRED, a young handyman in a fawn alpaca coat; MISS YATES and DAPHNE)

GEORGE (*as he enters*) Now then, what the blazes . . . ? (*He pulls up and looks blankly around*)

WEMBLEY. All right, Ingle—leave this to us.

(*They all pull up blankly. GEORGE stands c with WEMBLEY L of him. The DOORMAN stands up R of Waldorf and FRED above Waldorf. MISS YATES goes down R. DAPHNE stands L of Wembley*)

GEORGE. There's no-one here.

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