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SF PERUSALS

# On Location

A comedy

Stephen Smith

Samuel French—London
New York-Toronto-Hollywood



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## ON LOCATION

First performed by WCP at Waterbeach School, Cambridgeshire, on 15th November 2000, as the second half of a double bill with *Background Artiste*, with the following cast of characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Malcolm** | Bill Bullivant |
| **Mary** | Jane Stewart |
| **Roddy** | Garry Fowler |
| **Sam** | Christine Gilsenan |
| **Victoria** | Valmai Furness |
| **Background Artistes** | Martin Andrus, Roy Furness, Michael Williamson |

Produced and directed by Stephen Smith
Designed by Mark Easterfield
Stage managed by Julie Petrucci

## CHARACTERS

**Malcolm**, middle-aged
**Mary**, 30s
**Roddy**, middle-aged
**Sam**, third assistant director, young
**Victoria**, elderly
**Extras**

The action takes place in a church hall

Time—the present

Other plays by Stephen Smith
published by Samuel French Ltd

Background Artiste
Departure
One-sided Triangle
Parentcraft

# ON LOCATION

*A church hall in London. Winter, 6.30 a.m.*

*The hall is being used as the canteen of a film crew on location. Centrally, at the rear of the hall, is a pair of double doors through which all entrances and exits are made. On the* L *wall there is a display of children's paintings and on the* R *wall is a notice-board with various church notices and local events.* R *of the doors are several children's toys scattered about and* L *is a large table.* UR *is a smaller table with two chairs.* UL *is another table with two chairs. A bottle of tomato ketchup stands on the table*

*When the* CURTAIN *rises, several of the film crew (i.e. real "background artistes") are sitting at the larger table* R *of the doors drinking tea and reading newspapers. Malcolm, a fairly scruffily dressed middle-aged man, sits at the table* UR *eating a cooked breakfast. On the floor beside him is a supermarket carrier containing a paperback*

*After a few seconds Mary, a smartly dressed woman, timidly enters and, on seeing Malcolm on his own, walks up to him. She carries a piece of paper*

**Mary** Excuse me, (*looking at the piece of paper*) could you tell me where I could find Sam McNabb, please.
**Malcolm** (*without looking up*) In bed most likely.
**Mary** (*surprised*) Pardon?
**Malcolm** (*vaguely pointing in the direction from which she's come*) Grab yourself something to eat first.
**Mary** (*after a pause*) You see I was told to report to him at six thirty.

**Malcolm** Her.
**Mary** What?
**Malcolm** Sam's a her. Samantha.
**Mary** Oh.
**Malcolm** She'll come here looking for you, so go and grab something to eat.
**Mary** I've already eaten.
**Malcolm** That was stupid then, wasn't it. Got to get as much out of this lot as you can. They'll screw you otherwise. (*He looks at Mary*) Financially speaking that is. A hot meal every five and half hours is what we're entitled to. Stop taking them and it won't be long before we stop getting them. Not much left in our favour so we've got to make a stand in the food.
**Mary** Suppose I didn't really know what the food would be like.
**Malcolm** Snob are you?
**Mary** (*shocked*) No!
**Malcolm** All snouts in the same trough here. May have to wait for the cast and crew but we all get the same grub.
**Mary** (*looking at his plate*) Good is it?
**Malcolm** Not bad.
**Mary** Anyway I stayed in a Bed and Breakfast so I had already paid ...
**Malcolm** Bed and Breakfast! You're not going to be making very much out of today are you?
**Mary** Too early for a train, I get lost driving in London, so I thought best to come up the night before. Had its advantages, didn't have to get up until five thirty, if I'd driven from Bournemouth ——
**Malcolm** Bournemouth!
**Mary** Yes.
**Malcolm** Definitely not be making anything out of this game. Don't get expenses you know.
**Mary** Yes I know.
**Malcolm** Not a glory seeker are you?
**Mary** (*annoyed*) This Sam McNab, what do you mean she'd still be in bed?
**Malcolm** Probably up now.

**Mary** Does she live near here?
**Malcolm** See all the trucks parked along the road outside. She lives in one of them on location. The Winnebago next to the honeywagon.
**Mary** The what?
**Malcolm** The camper next to the bogs.
**Mary** Oh ... right ... well, perhaps I'd better find her.
**Malcolm** Up to you.
**Mary** Right. (*She starts to exit and then comes back*) Er — if she does come while I'm away my name's Cavendish. Mary Cavendish.

*Malcolm nods*

And you are?
**Malcolm** Still eating.
**Mary** Right.

*Mary exits*

*Malcolm continues eating*

*Roddy enters balancing his breakfast tray and carrying a large holdall at the same time. Roddy is about the same age as Malcolm but wears much brighter clothes. He looks around and then heads straight to Malcolm*

**Roddy** Malc, mind if I join you?

*Roddy puts down his tray before Malcolm has a chance to answer. He puts his holdall on the chair while he unpacks it and, during the following, proceeds to take out all sorts of vitamin pills, bottled water, his own glass and cleaning equipment*

**Malcolm** Do I have any choice?
**Roddy** Don't be like that, love.

**Malcolm** Howard with you?

**Roddy** Take more money than this to get that old cow out of bed these days.

**Malcolm** We're not good enough for him now, are we?

**Roddy** Not since he landed that bloody presenter's job on satellite.

**Malcolm** Pays well?

**Roddy** Four-fifty a day and all the frocks he wants. Makes me feel like Cinderella's frog.

**Malcolm** Life's one big fairy story for you, isn't it?

**Roddy** No it isn't. Not with Howard boasting he can have as many slots as he likes. Made me feel very insecure. But I plucked up courage and said, in my most sternest voice: "Howard, if you forget your roots you won't stay blonde for long" and gave him one of my severe looks.

**Malcolm** Without Howard, I expect we're going to be surrounded by wide-eyed amateurs again.

**Roddy** Alf's got no-one left. *Casualty*'s Christmas Day special has cleaned him out. Apparently a plane, carrying the EU endangered species committee, crashes into a load of trainspotters and then flips on to the World Morris Dancing Championships. Bells and notebooks are strewn everywhere.

**Malcolm** Why aren't you doing it then?

**Roddy** Don't do anything with blood in it. Gives me the willies, in the metaphorical sense that is. Won't do war films, hospital dramas and *Brookside*. Why aren't you doing it?

**Malcolm** I hate Bristol.

**Roddy** (*cleaning his glass*) Not *Casualty*'s fault it's shot in Bristol.

**Malcolm** Come to think of it, I hate the whole West Country. In fact I hate anything that is West. East Anglia, East Midlands even the North-East I can live with, but I hate the West with a passion. That's how I grew to love Eastern Europe and detest West Ham. Where were you born?

**Roddy** East Grinstead.

**Malcolm** Knew it. That's why I'm prepared to put up with you. Despite your deviant behaviour.

**Roddy** Speaking of deviants, his majesty wouldn't have been able to come today even if he wanted to. Gonna have to present from a prone position for the next few weeks.

**Malcolm** Do what?

**Roddy** On the show. Stupid bitch twisted her ankle spring cleaning. Our feather duster can be uncontrollable at the best of times. Got a mind of it's own. The amount of times I've said, "It's too big even for you, Howard, stick to the J Cloth", but he never listens. (*He puts the holdall on the floor*)

**Malcolm** I know the feeling.

**Roddy** (*cleaning his seat*) At least it's stopped him buying that motorbike. I quite like the leathers but I'm too old to be clinging to someone's back with a great big throbbing thing between my legs. (*Sitting down and looking at his plate*) Are your sausages small?

**Malcolm** No.

**Roddy** Look at mine. Bloody pig these came from must have been anorexic.

**Malcolm** (*reaching for them*) I'll have 'em if you don't want them.

**Roddy** Bet these baked beans came out of one of those five p cans, it's like a couple of islands in a vast orange sea.

**Malcolm** Get some more then.

**Roddy** Can't. Bloody caterer's got it in for me. Ever since I accused him of having an affair with Howard, I get small portions. Story of my life, I suppose.

**Malcolm** Story of your life is accusing everyone of having an affair with Howard.

**Roddy** Who's the third A.D.?

**Malcolm** Sam.

**Roddy** Oh wonderful, that's all I need, little Miss Bountiful.

**Malcolm** What's wrong with Sam, she's all right.

**Roddy** It's that so-called actor she hangs around with, Dirk the jerk.

**Malcolm** Dirk van Dyke.

**Roddy** What sort of name is that, Dirk van Dyke, sounds like a lesbian lorry driver.

**Malcolm** Sam obviously doesn't think so.

**Roddy** And who wears the trousers in that relationship I ask myself, she's got a man's name and he's always preening himself.

**Malcolm** You're a fine one to talk.

**Roddy** Sorry, but being splashed at a bus stop doesn't constitute being an actor in my book. I'm still not convinced it's his torso in that shower ad. A head like his on a body like that's unnatural.

**Malcolm** Have you got a crush on him or something?

**Roddy** (*getting tomato ketchup from the other table*) Not me, love, I have my standards.

**Malcolm** Then who?

**Roddy** Seems to spend more time stacking shelves at Tesco's than acting. Saw him the other day manhandling some grapefruits, I shouted out, "Is that what you call product placement, Dirk?" Didn't see the funny side.

**Malcolm** Howard's got a crush on him, hasn't he?

**Roddy** More crumble than crush. The sight of Dirk literally makes him go weak at the knees. If that shower advert is on while Howard's ironing he becomes a fire hazard. I told him how could he fall for some actor who spends most of his life sitting at a checkout. He had no answer to that. Flounced off in a huff with the feather duster.

**Malcolm** Dangerous to spring clean in a huff.

**Roddy** Few minutes later I hear a scream and discover him spread-eagled in the kitchen covered in mango chutney. He'd tried to reach a crevice that needs someone to support the stepladder and brought all the condiments down on himself. Is that Freudian or what.

*Sam enters. She is the third assistant director, in her early twenties. She is wearing very casual clothes and a headset and carries a clipboard. Victoria, an elderly and very elegantly dressed lady who carries a large handbag, follows her*

**Sam** All ready for action, chaps? (*She looks at her clipboard and then looks around*) Oh dear, one missing.

**Malcolm** Gone looking for you.

**Sam** Why didn't you tell her to wait here?

**Malcolm** I did.

**Sam** Anyway, let's tick you off. (*Doing so on her clipboard*) Malcolm, Roddy, and which one are you? Mary or Victoria?

**Victoria** Victoria.

**Sam** (*looking at her more closely and shaking her hand*) Right, oh good, glad to have you on board, Victoria.

**Victoria** Thank you.

**Roddy** What she means is welcome to the *Titanic*.

**Sam** (*handing her a form*) There's your artist's salary voucher. I'll explain what to do with it once I've found Mary. Get yourself something to eat if you want, Victoria.

**Victoria** (*putting the form in her handbag*) No fried breakfasts for me. Got to get the old cholesterol down.

**Roddy** (*holding up a sausage*) This isn't old cholesterol, it's new cholesterol.

**Sam** Cereals or fruit then?

**Victoria** No thank you; had a rather large supper last night and haven't had a good clearout yet.

**Sam** (*taken aback*) Yes — right, well there's tea and coffee as well. Anything you want don't hesitate to ask me.

**Victoria** Thank you so much.

**Sam** Better go and round up the straggler.

*Sam exits*

**Victoria** One of those famous filming phrases, is it? Round up the straggler. Like grip the dolly or SFX best boy.

**Malcolm** What?

**Victoria** What does it mean exactly, this "round up the straggler"?

**Malcolm** It means she's gone looking for the stupid cow who should have stayed here when I told her. From West Sussex, are you?

**Victoria** How did you know?

**Malcolm** Sixth sense.

**Roddy** Take no notice of Malcolm, too busy planning the revolution to develop any social skills. While the rest of the world has moved on he's still an unreconstructed Trot.

**Victoria** Don't worry, after a few lessons I could get him back on the right road. Got his own horse, has he?

**Roddy** Pardon?

**Victoria** For a spot of dressage. Too old I'm afraid for three-day eventing but any age can enjoy the odd trot with the hounds on a Sunday morning.

**Roddy** I'm sure you'd love that, Malc, wouldn't you, sweetheart?

**Malcolm** I'd love to put someone up against the ——

**Victoria** Clock. No don't try to jump until you can trot. Leave show jumping to the experts.

**Roddy** That's what I always say.

**Victoria** Jolly exciting all this filming lark. Wait until I tell Gwendoline Frognorton: she'll be green with envy. There again, she's rather purple at the best of times so perhaps not. People do so go on appearances, don't they?

**Roddy** Don't they just. Like this "I'm a nobody, but give me a posh frock and I'm signing autographs as Cilla Black".

**Victoria** Really?

**Malcolm** Fancies herself as Ilford's answer to Danny La Rue.

**Roddy** Don't knock it, darling, pays more than this for starters.

**Victoria** We get paid for this, do we?

**Malcolm** Why do you think you were given an artiste's salary voucher?

**Victoria** People are always thrusting pieces of paper into my hand, I never read them. Hermione Frognorton arranged all this for me.

**Malcolm** Who's she?

**Victoria** Gwendoline's daughter.

**Malcolm** Silly me, should have known.

**Victoria** (*sitting on the side of the table*) Lottery win catapulted her from table dancer to chair of the Parish Council.

**Roddy** This Gwendoline Frognorton was a table dancer?

**Victoria** Only when she's had one too many sherries. No, the family fell on hard times, and as their motto is "make a clean breast of it", Hermione did. Pretty girl but obsessed with personal hygiene.

**Roddy** And she's an agent?

**Victoria** Good gracious no, Gwendoline's chair of our bridge club.

**Malcolm** (*sarcastically*) What do they do, build bridges?

**Victoria** Don't be silly, they're all over fifty-five. No, we admire the architecture.

**Roddy** Of bridges?
**Victoria** Suspension mainly but a good cantilever can bring a tear to the eye.
**Roddy** You can say that again.
**Victoria** (*going to look at the children's drawings on the wall*) Every month we pick one out of the atlas to visit. Been all over the world, unfortunately we've still to do Hull.

*Sam enters with Mary*

**Sam** Found our lost sheep.
**Roddy** Lamb.
**Sam** Pardon?
**Roddy** Didn't Mary have a little lamb?
**Victoria** (*laughing*) Oh very good, Roderick.
**Roddy** Roddy please. I'm not the rat from *Tales of the Riverbank*.
**Malcolm** No, more a weasel from *Wind in the Willows*.
**Sam** (*ignoring him*) Good to see we have a happy bunch here today. Now, here's your form, Mary, (*handing her the form*) and don't go running off again, please. Fill this in and get Phil, the second A.D., to sign it before you go.
**Mary** How will I find him?
**Sam** You'll meet him on set. I'll just go and see what the situation is with make-up and wardrobe.

*Sam exits*

**Victoria** (*excited*) Are we going to be made-up? How spiffing. I usually do my own.
**Malcolm** As a mutant?
**Victoria** Is that what we are?
**Malcolm** Do you hire someone to do your thinking for you?
**Victoria** Life's an adventure to be lived. If you know what's around the next corner, might as well stay at home.
**Malcolm** Some of us can't afford the luxury of staying at home.
**Victoria** My father always used to say imagination and excitement cost nothing.

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