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FUNNY MONEY

A Comedy

by Ray Cooney

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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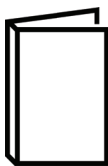
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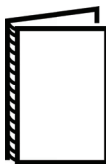


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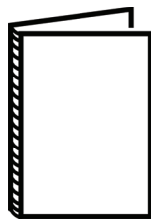
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ray Cooney is today recognised theatrically and publicly as “The Master of Farce” and a most worthy successor as an author to the great Ben Travers, and as a director/actor to Brian Rix. A most prolific writer of stage farces/comedies of high standards, which have not only graced the stages of English-speaking countries for more than forty years, but have been staged worldwide and translated into more than forty foreign languages, including Chinese, Japanese and Russian. Television broadcasts in English and foreign languages have also been widespread. Thus has Ray Cooney earned an international reputation as the finest living writer of this form of theatre, and professional and amateur artists have benefited from his writing genius and influence as well as an actor/director. Charles Spencer – the doyen of theatre critics – wrote of *Funny Money*, “Ray Cooney is a national treasure”.

The following resumé of Ray Cooney’s activities for over seventy years bears testament to his enormous theatrical input and influence on our theatrical world.

Ray began his theatrical career as a boy actor at the age of fourteen in *Song of Norway* at the Palace Theatre in 1946. He had a busy career between 1946 and 1950, appearing in *Calcutta in the Morning* at the Players Theatre and *The Hidden Years* at the Fortune Theatre plus *Treasure Island*, *Peace comes to Peckham*, *The Winslow Boy* and *The Guinea Pig* in tours and repertory companies around the UK. Between 1950 and 1952 Ray did his compulsory National Service in the Army. Following this he had many acting roles in weekly rep and tours until joining the Brian Rix Company at the Whitehall Theatre in 1956.

During this period he began his writing career by writing *One for the Pot* with Tony Hilton. This was premiered at the Whitehall Theatre on 2nd August 1961. Whilst this had a successful run for over four years, Ray wrote *Chase Me Comrade*, which had its West End premier at the Whitehall Theatre on 30th March 1964 and ran for three years. Following this he co-wrote *Charlie Girl* (1964); *My Giddy Aunt* (1968); *Not Now Darling* (1968) and *Move Over Mrs Markham* (1971), *Why not Stay for Breakfast* (1973) and *There Goes The Bride* (1974), with John Chapman. He then devised the musical *Elvis* in 1977, which won the *Evening Standard* best musical award, followed by the play *Her Royal Highness* (1981). Then came Ray's biggest hit, *Run For Your Wife* in 1982, which ran for nine years in the West End and which Ray directed and played in the New York production. This was then followed by *Two into One* (1984); *Wife Begins at Forty* (1985); *Out of Order* (1990) which won the Laurence Olivier award for best comedy, *It Runs In The Family* (1992); *Funny Money* (1995); *Caught In The Net* (2001), sequel to *Run For Your Wife*, which was nominated for both the Laurence Olivier award and the *Evening Standard* Theatre award, *Tom, Dick and Harry* (2005) with son Michael Cooney, and the musical *Twice In A Lifetime* (2011), with Keith Strachan and Chris Walker writing the music. It's estimated that over 100 million tickets have been sold throughout the world for Ray Cooney comedies!

Apart from starring in his own plays in London, America and Australia, Ray has appeared in many other productions including a year in the famous *The Mousetrap*.

Between the years of 1970 and 1983, Ray produced many plays for the West End, including *Lloyd George Knew My Father*; *Say Goodnight to Grandma*, *Passion Play*; *Whose Life it is Anyway?*; *Chicago*; *Over The Moon*; *Happy As A Sandbag*; *Duet For One*; *Bodies*; *Andy Cap*; *Elvis*; *Dame of Sark*; *Ghost on Tiptoe*, *Jack The Ripper*; *The Mating Game*; *Birds of Paradise*; *In At The Death* and *Ipi Tombi*.

In 1983, Ray formed the Theatre of Comedy Company (bringing together the founder members consisting of thirty West End stars) and became its first Artistic Director. During Ray's eight-year tenure the company produced over twenty plays, including *Out of Order*; *Run For Your Wife*; *Two Into One*; *Rookery Nook*; *When We Are Married*; *Pygmalion*; *See How They Run* and *An Italian Straw Hat* at the Shaftesbury Theatre;

and *Loot*; *Intimate Exchanges*; and *Sister Mary Ignatius* at the Ambassadors Theatre.

In 1992, Ray bought the Playhouse Theatre in London. That year he staged the West End premiere of his latest farce *It Runs In The Family* at the Playhouse. This was followed by *Jane Eyre* (1993), adapted by Fay Weldon and starring Tim Pigott-Smith, Frederick Lonsdale's *On Approval* (1994), starring Simon Ward, Martin Jarvis and Anna Carteret, and Ray's *Funny Money* in 1995.

Ray says he keeps fit, partly by swimming, playing tennis and gardening but mainly, by appearing in his own hectic plays!

He was awarded the OBE (Order of the British Empire) in the 2005 Queen's New Years Honours List for his services to drama.

FUNNY MONEY

First performed at the Theatre Royal, Windsor, on 4th May 1994, with the following cast:

JEAN PERKINS	Carol Hawkins
HENRY PERKINS	Ray Cooney
BILL	Hugh Lloyd
DAVENPORT	Alfred Marks
SLATER	Trevor Bannister
BETTY JOHNSON	Anita Graham
VIC JOHNSON	Henry McGee
PASSER-BY	Ron Aldridge

Directed by Ray Cooney
Décor by Douglas Heap

Subsequently produced at the Playhouse Theatre, London, on 2nd October 1995, with the following cast:

JEAN PERKINS	Sylvia Syms
HENRY PERKINS	Ray Cooney
BILL	Charlie Drake
DAVENPORT	Peter Ellis
SLATER	Trevor Bannister
BETTY JOHNSON	Lynda Baron
VIC JOHNSON	Henry McGee
PASSER-BY	Ron Aldridge

Directed by Ray Cooney
Décor by Douglas Heap

CHARACTERS

JEAN PERKINS, a pretty but ordinary woman in her late forties

HENRY PERKINS, an insignificant man in his early fifties

BILL, a middle-aged London taxi driver of spirit

DAVENPORT, a sparse middle-aged man with a knowing glint
in his eye

SLATER, a solicitous and kindly soul – until provoked

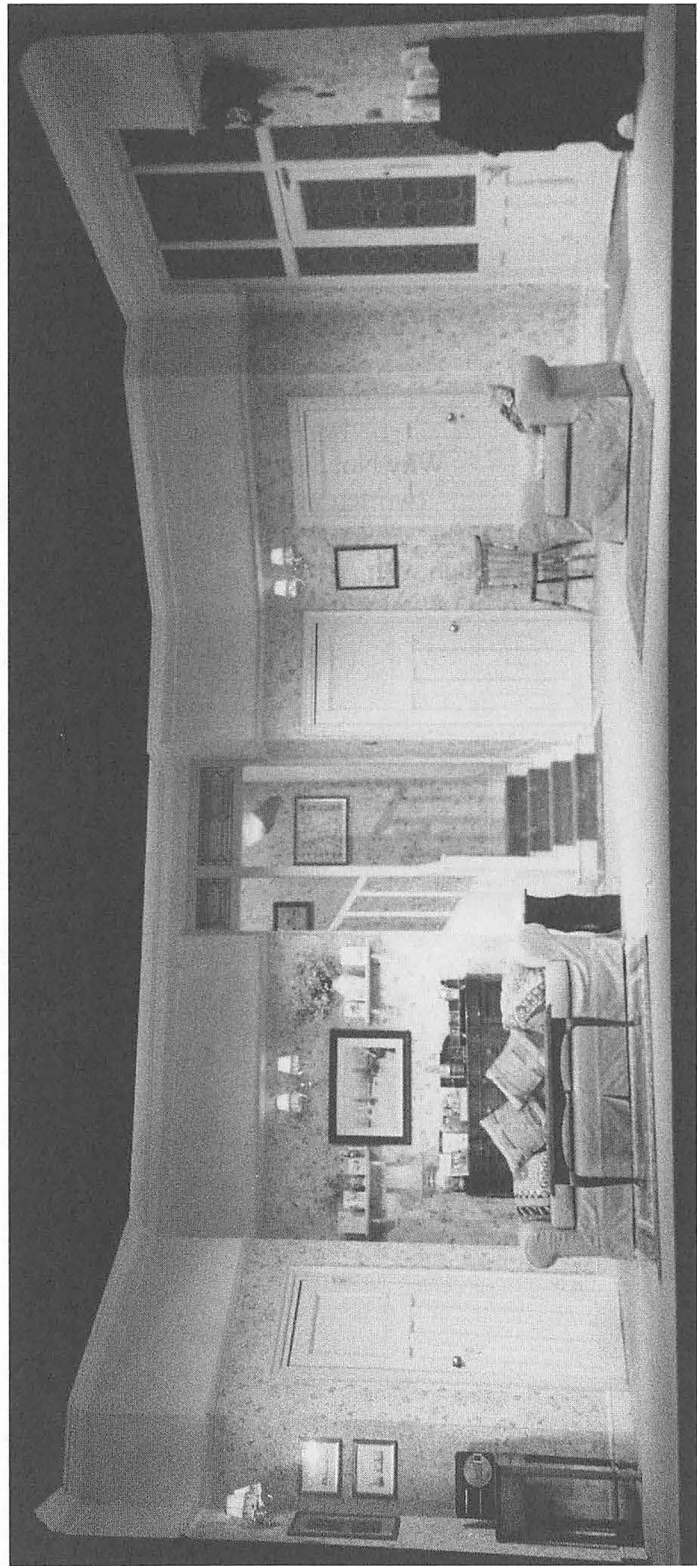
BETTY JOHNSON, a buxom and cheerful woman in her late forties

VIC JOHNSON, a brash man with feet of clay

PASSER-BY, a large man

The action of the play – which is continuous – takes place in
the Fulham house of Henry and Jean Perkins

Time – a winter evening



Designer: Douglas Heap

ACT I

*The living-room of **HENRY** and **JEAN PERKINS** in Fulham, which reflects a middle-class background. Through the windows and front door (when it's open) can be seen a front garden, and the house is clearly set on a corner.*

The front door, downstage left, leads directly into a porch area. There is a door to the kitchen in the centre of the right wall and a door to the dining room above the front door. In the dining room can be seen a laid-up dining table for four people. Stairs upstage centre lead up and off right to the bedrooms. There is a cupboard in the rear wall to the left of the stairs. In the upstage right corner of the room is a sideboard on which is a selection of liquor bottles and glasses, the Yellow Pages and a vase of flowers.

The room is quite tidy but "lived in" and the furniture is "comfortable" rather than new. There is a long settee downstage right centre and an armchair downstage left centre. Below the kitchen door is a table on which is a radio. There is a small desk downstage left and above this is a cuckoo clock. In front of the settee is a coffee table and to the left of the settee is a small table on which is the telephone.

It is a winter evening and the lights are on. The stage is empty. The radio is playing the William Tell overture.

*After a moment, **JEAN** comes out of the kitchen. She is wearing a pretty dress covered by an apron and is carrying a candle in a silver holder. She hurries through into the dining room. After a brief moment, she returns*

from the dining room without the candle. She looks at her watch and then hurries to the front door. She looks left and right and then closes the front door. She then hurries into the kitchen. After a moment, she returns from the kitchen carrying a bowl and a wooden spoon. She hurries to the front door, opens it, looks left and right and closes it again. She looks at her watch.

JEAN *(to herself)* You wretched man, Henry.

JEAN *then exits into the kitchen. After a moment, she returns from the kitchen with a bowl of peanuts and a bottle of sparkling rosé. She puts the peanuts on the table downstage right and switches the radio off. She marches into the dining room with the bottle of wine. She places the bottle of wine on the dining room table, enters and exits into the kitchen.*

The front door opens and HENRY PERKINS appears. He is wearing a suit and raincoat and carrying a briefcase. He is breathing heavily and looks dazed. He stands in the doorway.

JEAN *enters from the kitchen, carrying a tray on which are four plates and four sets of cutlery. Without seeing HENRY, who is masked by the open front door, she marches into the dining room.*

HENRY, *still in a daze, closes the door behind him, walks to the settee and sits, putting his briefcase on the floor.*

JEAN *enters from the dining room and opens the front door. She looks left and right, then looks at her watch.*

(to herself) You wretched man, Henry!

HENRY *is still in a daze and doesn't react. JEAN bangs the door shut and starts to move towards the kitchen. She sees HENRY.*

(startled) Ah!

HENRY *looks at her blankly.*

Oh, Henry! You gave me a...! Where have you been, for heaven's sake?

HENRY *looks away blankly.*

You're nearly an hour late! Vic and Betty will be here in a minute.

HENRY *looks at her blankly!*

For your birthday dinner!

HENRY *looks away.*

Why on earth didn't you phone if you were working late in the office? Was the train delayed?

HENRY *looks at her.*

Say something, Henry!

HENRY *looks away.*

HENRY *(suddenly) Yellow Pages!*

JEAN What?

HENRY *Yellow Pages! (He hurries to the sideboard and gets out the Yellow Pages directory)*

JEAN What do you want Yellow Pages for?

HENRY *(searching) Travel agents! No! They'll be closed. British Airways! (He hurriedly flips through the pages)*

JEAN Have you been in some sort of accident?

HENRY *(reading) Airlines – American Airlines. British Airways! 0181 897 4000. (He throws the directory over his shoulder and sits on the settee. He then places the telephone on the coffee table in front of him)*

JEAN What do you want British Airways for?

HENRY (*dialling*) 0181 897 4000.

JEAN Henry! Vic and Betty are coming—

HENRY *finishes dialing.*

—for dinner!

HENRY (*into the phone*) British Airways?

JEAN It's your birthday!

HENRY (*into the phone*) I'd like to book two air flights please.

JEAN Air flights?

HENRY (*into the phone*) For tonight.

JEAN What?!

HENRY (*into the phone*) Anywhere.

JEAN Henry!

HENRY (*into the phone*) Yes, you heard me, anywhere. Well, anywhere you don't need a special visa for. Holland, Sweden, France, Germany, Denmark, Spain.

JEAN What's the matter with you, we've got Vic and Betty at six thirty—

HENRY (*into the phone*) What? ...Time of flight? Hang on a second. (*To JEAN*) How long will it take to get to London Airport?

JEAN You've been drinking!

HENRY By taxi.

JEAN I can smell it on your breath. Whisky! You've been drinking.

HENRY It's six thirty now.

JEAN Put that phone down!

HENRY Taxi, at seven, Heathrow, eight. Check in. (*Into the phone*) Nine o'clock!

JEAN I shall stay calm, Henry.

HENRY (*into the phone*) Yes, any flight around nine o'clock.

JEAN I'm going to start getting angry very soon.

HENRY Go and pack. And get the passports. (*He indicates the desk left*)

JEAN Henry...

HENRY Only one suitcase! A small one. (*Into the phone*) And we want to go First Class.

JEAN You'll make me cry, Henry.

HENRY (*to JEAN*) Just a change of underclothes. We'll buy everything else when we get there.

JEAN Get where?

HENRY (*into the phone*) Barcelona? Great! ...Twenty-one fifteen hours. What's that in real time? ...Nine fifteen p.m., excellent!

JEAN (*starting to cry*) Henry, please...!

HENRY (*into the phone*) I don't care, smoking, non-smoking. Can I pay in cash at the airport?

JEAN (*crying*) It's your birthday. (*She sits in the armchair and buries her head in her hands*)

HENRY (*into the phone*) Terrific. Two first class, Barcelona. What? Oh no, singles. Yes, singles, we're not coming back.

JEAN *starts to cry loudly.*

(*into the phone*) Mr and Mrs Henry Perkins...Yes pick up the tickets half an hour before check-in, will do. Thanks for your assistance. Bye. (*He replaces the receiver*)

JEAN Henry—

HENRY Ssh, ssh, ssh. (*He lifts the receiver again and dials*)

JEAN Who are you phoning now?

HENRY Toothbrush, toothpaste and razor, that's all I need.
(Into the phone)

Hello, Fulham Taxis? I need a car to take two of us to London Airport immediately... Fifteen minutes, brilliant! Make it ten if you can... Mr Perkins, 42 Elgar Avenue... That's right, it's on the corner. *(He replaces the receiver)*

JEAN Henry—

HENRY Jean, listen!

HENRY rises, but JEAN sits him on the settee and sits beside him.

JEAN No, you listen! You've been drinking and it's affected your brain. You're not used to alcohol and you've gone funny.

HENRY No, I haven't gone funny.

JEAN Yes, you have! I don't know what's happened to you exactly, but we are not travelling to Barcelona tonight. We have Vic and Betty coming round for your birthday dinner.

During the ensuing speech, HENRY picks up his briefcase. He puts it on the coffee table and opens it to show JEAN the contents.

They've been working you far too hard at the office. It's probably not serious, just one of those temporary breakdowns. I don't think it's a blood clot. *(She stops on realizing what's in the briefcase. It is packed with bundles of fifty pound notes)* What's that?

HENRY Seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds.

JEAN *(blankly)* What is it?

HENRY Cash.

JEAN *(blankly)* But what is it?

HENRY Money. Cash. Seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds. All in fifties. Fourteen thousand, seven hundred

of them. Fourteen thousand, seven hundred fifty pound notes. Seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds in used notes.

JEAN (*sternly*) What is it, Henry?

HENRY It's a bloody fortune, Jean. Passports! (*He goes to get the passports from the desk left*)

She starts to lift up the bundles which are wrapped in elastic bands. The notes are clearly used.

JEAN Henry, how did all this money get into your briefcase?

HENRY That's just it. It's not my briefcase.

JEAN What are you talking about?

HENRY I got off the Underground train at Fulham Broadway – like I always do – with my briefcase and I started to walk home, you know, the way I always do, down Aylmer Road. Have you moved our passports?

JEAN Bottom drawer. Get on with it.

HENRY Well, it was a bit nippy, so I thought I'd put my gloves and scarf on. Now, they were in my briefcase – so I stopped and flipped open my briefcase. Only, it wasn't my briefcase.

JEAN Not your briefcase?

HENRY Ah, passports! (*He shoves them in his pocket*)

JEAN What do you mean, "not your briefcase"?

HENRY I must have left my briefcase on the train and taken this one by mistake. Or else somebody took mine and left theirs. (*He crosses delightedly to the briefcase*)

JEAN Why didn't you take it back right away?

HENRY I was in shock. How would you feel if you opened your handbag to powder your nose and found seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds in there?

JEAN How do you know the exact amount?

HENRY I counted it.

JEAN Counted it? In the middle of Aylmer Road?

HENRY No, in The Prince of Wales pub.

JEAN I thought you'd been drinking.

He sits JEAN on the settee, sits beside her and surveys the cash.

HENRY I had to pull myself together. I had to think what to do.

JEAN Taken it to the London Transport Lost Property Office, that's what you should have done.

HENRY So I ordered a large whisky and then went into the gents loo.

JEAN The loo?

HENRY To check if I hadn't been seeing things. I hadn't. I sat on the lavatory seat and counted it all out.

JEAN Henry!

HENRY Then I went back to the bar and had that double whisky.

JEAN Then what?

HENRY I had another one. Then I went back to the gents, sat on the loo and counted it all over again.

JEAN No wonder you're an hour late.

HENRY Actually, I had one more whisky and another sit on the loo before I'd finished. I just couldn't believe it.

JEAN Henry!

HENRY Jean! We'll never get another chance like this as long as we live. We've got to grab it with both hands.

JEAN We can't just up and leave at a moment's notice.

HENRY Oh, yes we can. Oh! We're travelling First Class, I'll keep some of these for tips on the flight. *(He puts a few notes in his pocket)*

JEAN It's not our money, Henry.

HENRY It is now. Go and pack.

JEAN Henry, it's stealing!

HENRY Oh, no! I gave that a lot of thought when I was sitting on The Prince of Wales loo. It seems to me this money is ill-gotten gains. I mean, it must be, right? Used notes all bundled up in elastic bands. It'll be payment to a Mr Nasty for some illicit transaction. This is cash that doesn't show in anyone's books – it won't be reflected in anyone's accounts – no income tax or VAT will have been paid on it. This money doesn't exist – so if it doesn't exist, I can't have stolen it!

JEAN Henry—

HENRY Jean, my conscience is clear. I've worked very hard for nothing for thirty years and at long last I've received my bonus.

JEAN But the police will—

HENRY (*interrupting*) The police will never get involved because the loss of this cash will never be reported to the police. Now go and pack that suitcase.

JEAN Henry—

HENRY Go and pack. And just a sponge bag and a couple of pairs of underpants for me.

JEAN Henry, I want to have dinner with Vic and Betty. I want to have our roast chicken! I want to stay here at number 42 Elgar Avenue!

HENRY Jean, you don't understand. We can't stay here. I can't go back to the office. I've burned my bridges.

JEAN But it's not too late.

HENRY Yes, it is! If I've got Mr Nasty's briefcase, he's got mine. It's got my office stuff in it. Tomorrow morning, Mr Nasty will call at the office looking for his briefcase and me. By

that time we've got to be a thousand miles away booked into some Spanish hotel as Mr and Mrs Shufflebottom.

JEAN Henry, he'll come looking for us. It won't matter if we're Shufflebottom, Ramsbottom or Sidebottom, he'll come looking for us.

HENRY He won't know where to find us.

JEAN He'll report us to the police. *They'll* find us. Interpol. It'll be awful.

HENRY It'll be lovely! Because there won't be any Interpol. Because Mr Nasty can't go to the police. I told you. Mr Nasty has fiddled seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds. And now the fiddler has been well and truly fiddled! Ha, ha! By yours truly. Henry A. Perkins!

JEAN *is amazed.*

JEAN I've never seen you like this, Henry.

HENRY I've never bloody felt like this, that's why.

JEAN I liked you as you were – a bit of a wimp.

HENRY Well those days are over! (*He starts to sing "WE'RE BOTH GOING TO SUNNY SPAIN" while closing the briefcase*)

JEAN Henry, I don't want to go to Barcelona.

HENRY Don't be daft. You love it in Spain. We've had three holidays there.

JEAN Holidays, yes! We weren't emigrating.

HENRY All right, if you don't like Barcelona, we'll just stay overnight, then fly on somewhere else – Australia, Bermuda, Bali... (*He holds up the briefcase*) We'll buy Bali!

JEAN I like it here, Henry. I don't want to move. What about the family?

HENRY What family? We haven't got any family.

JEAN Alf and Doris.

HENRY Doris is your second cousin and you haven't seen her for twenty years.

JEAN I send her a Christmas card.

HENRY Send her one from Barcelona. Now go and pack that suitcase.

The doorbell rings.

JEAN Oh, God!

HENRY That'll be Vic and Betty. I'll pack the suitcase – you get rid of them. *(He moves to the stairs)*

JEAN What'll I say to them? They've come to dinner.

HENRY Tell them to go to the Savoy and have dinner on me!

He takes some fifty pound notes from his pocket, throws them to JEAN and exits upstairs still carrying the briefcase.

JEAN *(calling upstairs, almost crying)* But it's your birthday! *(She picks up the fifty pound notes. To herself)* It's his birthday.

The doorbell rings. JEAN goes to the front door.

(opening the door) I'm sorry I took so long—

She stops on seeing a man standing there in a raincoat. He is DETECTIVE SERGEANT DAVENPORT.

Oh. I thought you were – er – I was expecting someone else. *(She hastily stuffs the money in her dress)*

DAVENPORT Detective Sergeant Davenport, madam. Fulham CID.

JEAN *(trying to be nonchalant)* Fulham CID.

DAVENPORT That's right, madam. *(He flashes his pass and walks in)* I was wondering if I could have a word with the gentleman of the house.

JEAN The gentleman?

DAVENPORT That would be your husband, would it, madam?

She closes the door and hurries to him.

JEAN What exactly – er – could you tell me what the problem is?

DAVENPORT I'd rather see your husband, Mrs – er—?

JEAN Perkins.

DAVENPORT Ah, Perkins.

JEAN He's upstairs at the moment.

There is a slight pause.

Would you like a peanut?

DAVENPORT No, thank you.

The doorbell rings.

JEAN (*jumping*) Ohh! (*To DAVENPORT*) Sorry. I'm a bit – er...
(*Calling*) Henry! (*Then to DAVENPORT*) That's my husband
– "Henry".

DAVENPORT *smiles and nods.*

Excuse me, Sergeant, I'll just see who – er—

DAVENPORT Of course.

JEAN I expect it will be Vic and Betty. They're having dinner
with us tonight. (*She smiles awkwardly at DAVENPORT*)

He nods and smiles politely back.

The Johnsons. Vic and Betty. Do sit down.

He goes to sit.

(*yelling upstairs*) Henry!!!

DAVENPORT, *in the middle of sitting, reacts.* JEAN *smiles at him. He sits.*

Yes. Dinner at home. Just the four of us. Henry and me.
Betty and Vic. It's his birthday.

DAVENPORT That's nice.

JEAN Henry's, not Vic's.

DAVENPORT Ah.

JEAN I don't know when Vic's is.

DAVENPORT You'd better let them in.

JEAN Yes. Henry won't be a... He's – er – getting dressed. In his
birthday suit. Oh! I don't mean he has no – er—

DAVENPORT No.

JEAN I'll – er... *(She opens the door)*

BILL *steps in.*

BILL Here we are!

JEAN Oh, I thought—

BILL You thought fifteen minutes, and I made it in ten.

JEAN I beg your pardon?

BILL Fulham Taxis.

JEAN *(nervously)* Oh! Yes.

BILL I'm Bill. Well now, London Airport. How many cases?

JEAN *(trying to make light of it)* Cases?

BILL To go.

JEAN Oh! Cases! For the – er – airport. Somebody flying off!
(She smiles at DAVENPORT)

DAVENPORT *just looks blank.*

(to DAVENPORT) Yes, it's not – er – my – er... *(She vaguely waves her hand upstairs. She looks at DAVENPORT and smiles.)*
To DAVENPORT It's my – er – sister. She's staying with us.
She has been. She's leaving this evening. London Airport.

BILL No, it's Mr Perkins.

JEAN What?

BILL The docket says "Mr Perkins". (*He shows a slip of paper*)

JEAN No. Mr Perkins isn't going anywhere. It's his birthday.
No, Mr Perkins just made the booking.

BILL Oh.

JEAN No, it's my sister who's leaving – flying off. (*She smiles at DAVENPORT*)

He smiles back.

BILL So, how many cases?

JEAN I'm not sure – er – "Bill" did you say it was?

BILL Yes, "Bill".

JEAN Yes. Why don't you wait in the taxi, Bill? Mr Perkins will help with the cases. My – er – sister's not quite ready yet.

BILL Fine. I'm parked just round the corner. Where's she flying off to?

JEAN I beg your pardon?

BILL Your sister. What's her destination?

JEAN *hesitates, smiles at DAVENPORT.*

JEAN (*turning to BILL*) Australia.

BILL Australia! Down under, eh?

JEAN Yes, she emigrated. She's been here for a visit. (*She smiles at DAVENPORT*) Now she's going back. To Sydney.

BILL Very nice. OK, I'm in that side street. Just give me a shout when the pair of them are ready.

JEAN The pair of them?

BILL The docket says two people. That's a pair, madam. (*He shows her*)

JEAN Yes, that's right. My sister and her husband. That's why she emigrated. He's Australian. (*She smiles at DAVENPORT*)

DAVENPORT *smiles and nods.*

(*to BILL*) I'll tell them you're parked around the corner.

BILL That's right. (*To DAVENPORT*) Nice to have met you.

BILL *exits.*

JEAN *smiles at DAVENPORT.*

JEAN Hectic here tonight.

DAVENPORT Certainly seems that way. Do you have something in the oven?

JEAN (*confused*) I beg your pardon?

DAVENPORT Dinner with your friends. The Johnsons.

JEAN Oh, yes.

DAVENPORT And you seem a bit distracted.

JEAN No, that's all in hand. Roast chicken.

DAVENPORT Pity your sister and her husband are going to miss it.

JEAN What? Oh, yes! Er – Adelaide. Adelaide and – er – Percy. No, they've got to catch their aeroplane.

DAVENPORT (*chuckling*) Still, Sydney! By the time they've finished that journey, they'll have had half a dozen dinners.

JEAN (*trying to laugh*) Yes!

HENRY *hurries downstairs, carrying his raincoat with the briefcase and a small suitcase. Without seeing DAVENPORT, he places the briefcase and the raincoat on the chair*

HENRY Right, all packed!

JEAN Henry!

HENRY Did you deal with Vic and Betty?

JEAN Henry! We have a visitor. (*She indicates DAVENPORT*)

DAVENPORT *stands up.* HENRY *turns.*

HENRY A vis – Oh. Ah! Fulham Taxis, brilliant!

DAVENPORT Fulham police, actually.

HENRY Great! (*He goes to hand the suitcase to DAVENPORT, but stops*) Fulham police?

DAVENPORT Detective Sergeant Davenport. CID. (*He flashes his card*)

HENRY (*cheerfully*) Yes, that's fine. (*He nonchalantly covers the briefcase with his raincoat*) What's the problem, Sergeant? Neighbours been complaining about something?

DAVENPORT You're Mr Perkins, are you, sir? Mr Henry Perkins?

HENRY The very same.

DAVENPORT I wonder if I could have a word with you, sir.

HENRY (*expansively*) Certainly. What about?

DAVENPORT If Mrs Perkins wouldn't mind, I'd prefer to see you alone.

HENRY Alone? Of course!

DAVENPORT Although I don't mind waiting until your wife's sister has gone.

HENRY (*blankly*) My wife's er...?

JEAN (*weakly*) He's referring to Adelaide.

HENRY (*blankly*) Adelaide?

DAVENPORT They're just about to leave, I gather.

HENRY (*to JEAN*) When he says "they"...

JEAN Adelaide and – Percy.

HENRY *can only manage a smile at DAVENPORT.*

DAVENPORT Back down under.

HENRY *looks down at the floor.*

HENRY Back?

JEAN Down under. Sydney.

HENRY Adelaide, Percy and Sidney?

JEAN Thanks for bringing their luggage down.

HENRY Oh, pleasure!

JEAN I really don't think the sergeant need wait for Percy and Adelaide to leave, do you, Henry?

HENRY Definitely not. Nor Sidney. Police business first. Shall we go into the kitchen, sergeant?

The doorbell rings.

JEAN Oh, my God!

HENRY That'll be the taxi. Tell it to wait.

JEAN Bill's already here.

HENRY Who's Bill?

JEAN Fulham Taxis.

HENRY Ah, great!

JEAN For Adelaide and Percy.

HENRY Ah, yes!

JEAN It'll be Vic and Betty Johnson!

HENRY Just get rid of them.

JEAN But we've invited them to your birthday dinner.

HENRY Well, tell them to leave their presents and go! (*To DAVENPORT*) I've decided to have the wife all to myself tonight. It's my birthday, isn't it, not Vic's. (*To JEAN*) They'll understand. Tell them we're going to bed. (*To DAVENPORT*) After I've satisfied the sergeant, of course. (*Realizing*)

Oh! When I say satisfied... I mean, after I've answered the sergeant's questions. *(He opens the kitchen door)* After you, sergeant.

JEAN Henry, I can't cope!

HENRY Of course you can!

JEAN No, I can't.

HENRY You can. *(To DAVENPORT)* She can. She just thinks she can't.

The doorbell rings – JEAN jumps.

JEAN Aaah!

DAVENPORT Perhaps it would be better, sir, if *you* answered the door and I'll wait for you in the kitchen.

JEAN That's a good idea.

HENRY *(at a loss)* Yes, all right. Shouldn't take a moment.

DAVENPORT No. And by the time you've seen your friends off, your in-laws might have gone, too.

HENRY What in-laws? Oh! The in-laws – Adelaide and – er – Percy. Yes, they're upstairs, packed and ready to go. *(He chuckles at DAVENPORT and indicates for him to go into the kitchen)*

DAVENPORT Make it as snappy as you can, Mr Perkins. I do have a line of enquiry to follow.

HENRY Of course! Put the kettle on for a cuppa, will you?

DAVENPORT *looks at HENRY levelly and exits into the kitchen.*

JEAN Henry! You said the man wouldn't go!

HENRY What man wouldn't go where?

JEAN The man who's got your briefcase. You said he wouldn't contact the police.

HENRY (*indicating the kitchen*) He might not have called about the briefcase! (*He picks up the briefcase*)

JEAN Of course it's about the briefcase. Why do you think he wants to see you alone?

HENRY Look, possession is nine-tenths of the law. Nobody can prove this isn't my savings.

JEAN Seventy hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds!

HENRY I've been frugal!

The doorbell rings.

JEAN God, I need a brandy. (*She goes to the sideboard and pours a large brandy*)

HENRY Jean! You don't drink.

JEAN I'm starting now. Henry, you'll have to tell him the truth.

HENRY You're a fine one to talk with Sidney and Percy on their way to Adelaide.

JEAN (*correcting him*) Adelaide and Percy on their way to Sydney. (*She drinks*)

HENRY Whatever!

JEAN (*referring to the drink*) God, this is awful stuff. (*She pours another brandy*)

The doorbell rings.

Henry!

HENRY It's only Vic and Betty. Get a grip on yourself, Jean. This is the happiest day of our lives. (*He opens the front door*)

BILL *steps in.*

I'm afraid the dinner's off! Oh, I thought you were Vic.

BILL The clock's ticking on, you know.

HENRY Clock?

BILL Taxi. On the meter.

HENRY Are you Ben?

BILL I'm Bill.

HENRY Ah, yes.

BILL And you're Mr Perkins, are you?

HENRY I am indeed. Take that suitcase.

JEAN Henry! What about that policeman?

HENRY I'll deal with it.

BILL Policeman?

HENRY Will you just wait outside! (*To JEAN*) And you wait with him.

JEAN I'm not going!

HENRY Yes, you are!

BILL No, she isn't, her sister's going.

HENRY *glares at BILL.*

HENRY (*to BILL*) I want her to see her sister off. Now, just take that case and go.

JEAN (*to BILL*) You leave that case where it is. (*To HENRY*) Henry, you're not thinking straight.

HENRY Jean, stop drinking, and do as you're told!

She goes to pour herself another drink.

BILL (*to HENRY*) Why don't you let her sister sort out her own suitcase?

HENRY (*to BILL, firmly*) Wait outside! Oh! What terminal is it?

BILL What?

HENRY British Airways to Barcelona!

BILL What's that got to do with her sister flying to Sydney?

HENRY Never mind! How long will it take to get there?

BILL About twenty-four hours, I imagine.

HENRY To get to London Airport.

BILL At this rate about twenty-four hours.

HENRY Wait outside!

HENRY *pushes BILL out. Still minus the suitcase.*

(to JEAN) And you wait with him!

JEAN I can't do it, Henry. You'll have to leave without me. *(She sits on the settee)*

HENRY I'm doing no such thing! Now, come on.

JEAN I can't just suddenly go off like this. I'll be a nervous wreck. It's driven me to drink already.

HENRY *bangs the suitcase down by the front door.*

HENRY How many more times?! Tomorrow morning, Mr Nasty will call at the office and get my address. Mr Nasty will then come visiting 42 Elgar Avenue, and if you're still here, Mr Nasty will cut you up into very little pieces and bury you in cement.

JEAN And that'll be all thanks to you.

DAVENPORT *enters from the kitchen.*

HENRY *(pressing on, not seeing DAVENPORT)* You silly woman!

DAVENPORT Excuse me—

There is a brief pause while HENRY decides what to do.

HENRY *(to JEAN, lightly)* You silly woman! You silly, silly woman! *(To DAVENPORT)* Isn't she a silly woman, mixing her drinks like this?

DAVENPORT *ignores this.*

DAVENPORT I was wondering if you were ready to join me.

HENRY I am indeed. After you.

DAVENPORT They've gone then, have they?

HENRY Who's that?

DAVENPORT Your wife's sister and her husband.

HENRY Ah! Mr and Mrs – er – er... (*He looks at JEAN*)

JEAN (*faintly*) Adelaide and Percy.

HENRY I know it's *Adelaide* and *Percy*. It's Percy's second name that keeps slipping my mind. Brown! Of course. Percy Brown. What were you asking me, Sergeant?

DAVENPORT I was asking if Mr and Mrs Brown had left for the airport.

HENRY Er – not quite, no.

The doorbell rings.

JEAN Oh, my God!

HENRY (*lightly*) You're a bundle of nerves, Jean. It's only Vic and Betty. You know what to tell them. You're giving me a surprise birthday present in *bed*!

JEAN *Henry!*

The doorbell rings.

God!

HENRY (*to DAVENPORT*) Look at her. I've never known her so jumpy. I hope that's not going to affect my birthday present in bed! (*He winks at DAVENPORT and indicates for him to go into the kitchen*)

DAVENPORT *gives HENRY a deadpan look and exits.*

HENRY *indicates for JEAN to get rid of VIC and BETTY and then hurries after DAVENPORT into the kitchen.*

The doorbell rings. JEAN hurries to the door and opens it.

BETTY *comes in, carrying a wrapped present. She walks past JEAN, taking her coat off.*

During the ensuing dialogue, she puts the present on the sideboard and JEAN hurriedly puts her coat in the cupboard.

BETTY Sorry, we're late, darling.

JEAN Oh, Betty!

BETTY I say "we". That damn fool husband of mine is round the corner arguing.

JEAN Arguing?

BETTY We hit a taxi!

JEAN A taxi?

BETTY *(to JEAN)* That was parked in that side street. Vic said he shouldn't have been parked right on the corner. The little taxi driver's very upset.

JEAN Yes, that's Bill.

BETTY Well, Bill called Vic a pillock and Vic offered to alter the shape of Bill's nose.

JEAN *grabs BETTY.*

JEAN Oh, Betty, it's terrible! Henry's gone mad and he's in the kitchen with a policeman.

BETTY Have we missed a couple of sentences?

JEAN He's stolen seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds.

BETTY Who has?

JEAN Henry! *(She grabs the briefcase and sits BETTY on the settee)*

BETTY (*flatly*) Henry has stolen seven hundred—

JEAN Seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds, yes!

There is a another pause and then BETTY lets out a huge guffaw.

It's true. He picked up the wrong briefcase, went to the pub, saw all this money and sat on the loo overcome.

BETTY Whole paragraphs seem to be disappearing now.

JEAN He's booked us on the nine fifteen to Barcelona and if I don't like it there he'll buy Bali for me.

BETTY You haven't taken up drinking, have you?

JEAN Only since Henry came home. Gin and brandy. Betty, I don't know what to do and now the police have caught up with him.

BETTY Jean! You're imagining all this. Henry couldn't possibly steal seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds.

JEAN opens the briefcase. BETTY looks down at the notes and then towards the kitchen.

You sly old bugger, Henry.

JEAN What the hell am I going to do?

BETTY I'd take Bali.

VIC comes storming in through the front door.

VIC That silly little berk is sending for the police. (*He takes off his raincoat*)

BETTY What silly little berk?

JEAN (*worriedly*) The police?

VIC hands the raincoat to JEAN.

VIC Hi, Jean. He says he's waiting to take your sister to London Airport. Do you mind if I pour myself a drink? (*He goes to the sideboard and helps himself to a drink*)

JEAN *puts his raincoat in the cupboard.*

BETTY I think I need one of those, Vic. So does Jean.

VIC Jean? She doesn't drink.

BETTY She does now. Brandy.

VIC Actually, I didn't know you'd got a sister.

JEAN I haven't! What was that about the police?

VIC That stupid cab driver is trying to call them on that radio thing of his, says I threatened him.

BETTY You did!

JEAN Oh, my God!

VIC I could have sworn he said sister.

BETTY It doesn't matter, Vic.

JEAN (*to VIC*) He's waiting to take us to the airport.

VIC (*confused*) You to the airport? What about our dinner?!

BETTY It doesn't matter, Vic. Go and apologize.

VIC Not bloody likely. He called me a pillock, the berk. Where's the birthday boy then? (*He gives BETTY and JEAN their drinks*)

BETTY You go and apologize. They don't want any more police here tonight.

VIC I'm perfectly capable of explaining – *more* police?

BETTY Henry's in the kitchen being questioned by a policeman about a robbery.

VIC Did I miss something earlier on?

BETTY It's absolutely incredible, isn't it?

VIC What's poor old Henry supposed to have nicked?

BETTY Seven hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds.

VIC (*to BETTY*) Pounds of what?

JEAN Money! It's made him go temporarily insane, Vic.

BETTY I'm not surprised.

VIC Go on, pull the other one. I suppose he found it on a park bench, did he?

JEAN No, on a tube train. (*She lifts the lid of the briefcase*)

VIC *splutters on his drink. He picks up a bundle of the money.*

HENRY *enters from the kitchen.*

HENRY (*calling back into the kitchen*) I won't be a moment, sergeant. (*He closes the door*)

They rush to him, pulling him on to the settee.

JEAN } (*together*) { What's happened, have you been arrested?
BETTY } { You haven't been arrested, have you?

VIC These aren't real, are they, Henry?

HENRY *snatches the bundle from VIC.*

HENRY Jean! You shouldn't have told them.

JEAN I was hoping Vic could talk some sense into you.

HENRY You were supposed to take their present and show them the door.

VIC Charming!

HENRY (*to JEAN*) And stop drinking, will you? You're not used to it.

JEAN Never mind that, what did the sergeant say?

BETTY Yes, what happened?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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