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SF PERUSALS

CURTAIN UP!

A Comedy
by Peter Quilter

Based on the author's
Respecting Your Piers

SAMUEL FRENCH

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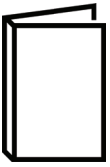
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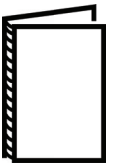
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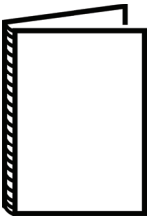
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Quilter's plays have been produced in forty countries around the world and translated into thirty languages. He has had three successful shows in London's West End, a hit run on Broadway, and has twice been nominated for the Olivier Award – for Best New Play and Best New Comedy. His work has been produced at some of the world's most prestigious venues, including Sydney Opera House, the Ahmanson in Los Angeles, the Belasco Theatre in New York, and also at many of the national theatres of Europe.

His most widely produced play is the Florence Foster Jenkins comedy, *Glorious!* which premiered at the Duchess Theatre in London's West End in 2005 starring Maureen Lipman. It has since been seen by over a million people in theatres across five continents. Stage productions have been broadcast "live" on television in Poland and Japan and the show has also had success in countries as diverse as Canada, Brazil, Germany, Russia, Romania, Israel and Spain.

Peter is also the author of the popular comedy *Duets* which has dozens of productions every year and has toured in many countries. His other comedies include the all-female *Curtain Up* and the theatrical play *The Actress*.

In recent years, Peter has received critical acclaim for his Judy Garland play with music, *End of the Rainbow*. The show enjoyed hit runs in both London and New York and was nominated for three Tony Awards and four Olivier Awards including Best New Play. A movie adaptation of the play will be released in cinemas in 2019.

Peter's new work includes the drama *4000 Days* and the comedy *Saving Jason* both of which had their world premiere productions at the Park Theatre in London.

Information, video clips, reviews and photographs from Peter's plays can be seen on his website – www.peterquilter.net

AUTHOR'S NOTE

One of the main plot-lines of *Curtain Up!* concerns the characters of the play putting together a fund-raising concert at which the singing star Liza Minnelli is scheduled to appear. Companies may choose to change Liza for an alternative singing star – someone who is either famous internationally or a celebrity in the country of production. In either case, it should be a figure who is famous, instantly recognisable, has a very individual style, and of whom the public has a clear visual image.

The company should take pains to ensure that all references are adjusted accordingly, including dialogue, music, lyrics, physical routines and choice of songs.

P.Q.

(Please read the PRS notice on page viii in regard to any music used.)

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CURTAIN UP!

First produced as *Respecting Your Piers* by Gut Reaction Theatre Company in the autumn of 1994 on a national tour. The commissioning of the play was part-funded by a grant from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The premiere took place at the Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury on 17th September, 1994, with the following cast:

SHARON	Jo Smith
THERESA	Catherine Ellerman
PAM	Teresa Selfe
BETTY	Norma Howard
JACKIE	Wendy Young

Produced by Jack Milner and Debby Holden
Directed by Mike Burnside
Designed by Gerri Livesey

The sixty-venue tour ended at The Players Theatre in London.

CHARACTERS

THERESA, mid/late 20s
SHARON, a full-figured gothic punk, 20s
PAM, Theresa's mother
BETTY, Theresa's grandmother
JACKIE, slim, sporty, late 30s

The action of the play takes place in a derelict theatre. ACT I is set in the theatre's foyer and ACT II on the theatre's stage.

Time: the present

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene One	The theatre foyer
Scene Two	Two days later
Scene Three	Late that day
Scene Four	The next morning
Scene Five	Another month later

ACT II

Scene One	On the theatre stage – three months later
Scene Two	One hour to show time
Scene Three	The concert
Scene Four	After the show

Peter Quilter would like to dedicate this play to

Eliźbieta Woźniak (Ela)

and

Nelly, Isa, Nico and *Linda*

and

To his Mum, Margaret

ACT I

Scene One

Lights rise on the dilapidated foyer of a derelict theatre, which is strewn with litter and dust. Several cardboard boxes are stacked up by the door.

The door is pushed open by **THERESA** *and the boxes tumble to the floor.*

She enters and clears the boxes to one side. She collects some bags of shopping from just outside the door and places them on the table. She then looks around for a few moments. She finds an old book lying in a corner and opens it up. She blows the dust from the pages and is engulfed by a cloud of debris. She coughs violently.

PAM *enters.*

PAM Oh, charming!

THERESA It's very dusty.

PAM I gathered. I'll leave the door open. *(She wedges the door open)* I had no idea it would be in this state.

THERESA It has been closed up for years.

PAM Even so.

THERESA I'll make a drink, shall I?

PAM Are you sure it's hygienic? I could do without termites in my Earl Grey this morning.

THERESA I can promise you that won't happen – I didn't bring tea bags. However – *(She starts unpacking her*

bags. She brings out biscuits and two stacks of instant soup drinks in plastic cups)

PAM What on earth have you got there?

THERESA "Super Soup". I found them at the back of the cupboard.

PAM What cupboard?

THERESA The blue door cupboard, in your kitchen.

PAM Oh, for heaven's sake, you shouldn't be rooting around back there – God knows what you'll come across.

THERESA Well, I found these. And they're still within their use-by date.

PAM Which is?

THERESA Two thousand and forty nine.

PAM Oh, good. So long as I get my week's supply of chemicals. How many have you got?

THERESA Twelve vegetable soup with croutons and twelve chicken. *(She produces a kettle from another bag and a couple of plates. She fills the kettle from a plastic bottle of filtered water as the conversation continues)*

PAM That should be plenty. There's only Sharon and your nan isn't there.

THERESA Yes.

PAM Nobody else?

THERESA No, Mum. Not today. You've already asked me that.

PAM Just making sure.

THERESA *prepares to plug the kettle into a socket.*

Careful with that.

THERESA It'll be fine. The generator was checked this week.

PAM I've heard that one before. Just keep your rubber soles on the floor.

THERESA *plugs in the kettle.*

THERESA Do you want to fetch Nan?

PAM Give her a few more minutes, she wanted to have a snooze.

THERESA How does she feel about all this? Have you talked to her about it?

PAM I gave her the basics, that's all. I called in to see her after the reading of the will. "Hello, Mum", I said, "You know how we thought it would be nice if Michael left us something in his will? – Well, he did – a big, crappy, derelict rat-ridden old bloody theatre".

THERESA You didn't describe it like that!

PAM Well how else would you describe it? Look at this place. Better to come right out with the truth.

THERESA What was her reaction?

PAM "Silly bugger" I think were the exact words. And she was confused. I don't think she understood that the theatre was Michael's to give away to anybody. She knew he'd inherited it from his uncle, but of course Michael got ill so soon after that. Your brother dies, then your son dies as well. No wonder she lost track. It's been hard for all of us, but you can imagine what she had to get through.

THERESA She doesn't show it, though, does she?

PAM She's slowed down a bit. But that'll pass. Give her a month or two and she'll be charging about like a twelve-year-old.

THERESA Let's hope so – do you want to sit down?

PAM I'm a bit frightened to.

THERESA *wipes the dust from a chair and* **PAM** *sits.* **PAM** *looks around.*

What a bloody mess.

THERESA No – we can tidy it up a bit. At least make this part of the building presentable.

PAM I suppose we should. We are going to need somewhere to sit around and talk everything through. Did you bring all the papers?

THERESA Yes.

PAM Have you read them all again?

THERESA I had a go. The basic premise of it is clear enough, but all the legal jargon is a bit mind-numbing.

PAM For you? Why? You went to university.

THERESA Well, yes—

PAM "Well, yes" – the fees cost a fortune. Yet whenever anything complicated turns up, you can't help. I don't know why we bothered.

THERESA I didn't read law, Mum.

PAM No, but you read English, Theresa – and the documents are in English, aren't they?

THERESA It's just very convoluted. A bit beyond me.

PAM I don't know. Three years at university and all you came back with was a certificate and a tattoo on your bottom.

THERESA Mother, will you stop being horrible. It's not a tattoo, really – more of a small illustration – of a strawberry. And it's on my hip.

PAM Well, whatever – just so long as you can explain things properly to Mum and to Sharon. If they're as stunned as I am, they'll need it to be gone over again and again.

THERESA I think they'll be fine. They've got the general idea. It's the sharing of ownership that needs to be talked about, there are all sorts of officious entanglements.

PAM Officious entangle...? Could we avoid all these big words for this morning.

THERESA Just showing you my three years at university weren't a complete waste.

PAM Anyway, there aren't any entanglements, are there? It's a straight split, we divide the proceeds between us. There's no more to it than that.

THERESA Put simply, yes, but – well, that's why we're here, isn't it? To iron out all the little details.

PAM And to decide what to do. It's all such a silly way to go about things. But that was your father. Never the easy way through anything. Are those drinks ready?

THERESA It's still boiling.

PAM I can't see how it can work. Five women owning equal shares in a theatre. And look at the place!

THERESA It's all he had to give us. It meant so much to him.

PAM You think so?

THERESA Oh, yes. He loved this theatre. He came here all the time with his uncle. You know how often he talked about it. And when I came backstage as a little girl, he used to tell me all these stories. And when he inherited the theatre from Great Uncle Bill, I thought it was just the most wonderful thing. Perfect. But Dad never got to enjoy it. That's the saddest thing. Things happened so quickly, he never even got to come down here.

PAM You can blame the lawyers for that. It took them so bloody long to verify Bill's will.

THERESA It's tragic, isn't it? But now it's ours. He had this precious thing that he couldn't enjoy, and so he gave it to his five favourite people.

PAM "Favourite"? No, dear, I don't think I was among his favourites.

THERESA He never hated you. I never heard Dad say anything like that.

PAM He didn't need to say anything, did he? Walking out the front door with a suitcase says it all, doesn't it!

THERESA Whatever his reason was, he wanted to give something to each of the five of us. And I think it's lovely. *(She switches the kettle off)*

PAM I'm not saying it wasn't thoughtful. It's just strange, that's all – forcing me and that woman into any kind of deal.

THERESA Well, she's not here today, so you don't have to worry about it just yet, do you? You want the one with croutons, I presume.

PAM Yes, but check in the bottom of the cup for mouse droppings before you put the water in.

SHARON *peers through the open door.*

SHARON Anybody home?

THERESA Sharon! Hi! Come in.

SHARON *comes in. She wears outrageous punk/gothic clothes and has spectacular brightly coloured hair which shoots off in all directions.* **THERESA** *and* **SHARON** *hug. A handshake from* **PAM**.

PAM Very punctual.

SHARON Yes, very good going for me. Couldn't wait to see the place, actually. Now that I own a fifth of it.

THERESA Have you been here before?

SHARON Not since I was three foot high. Looks much as I remember it, though...shabby and full of crap.

THERESA It's all a bit of a shock, isn't it?

SHARON Michael never let on about this to me – not a word. I didn't really expect anything at all, let alone twenty per cent of this old place! When I told my boyfriend Stevey about it, he went hysterical. Brought on his asthma.

THERESA He never was a very predictable man, my father. But even so...

SHARON My very own theatre, eh? That'll show those squatters at number twenty-six. Though I'm not so keen on the idea of having to run the place. Fifty words a minute I can cope with, but Tom Stoppard is beyond me. *(She looks round. Sarcastically)* Is all of it as glamorous and tidy as this?

THERESA Mostly, yes. This foyer area is the cleanest bit.

PAM *(to* **SHARON***)* Your hair's changed colour, hasn't it?

SHARON Since the last time I saw you, yes. On the day of the funeral, I had it done green. Sort of a tribute.

PAM I'm sure he appreciated that.

SHARON It's a bit of a mess at the moment. I've been putting camomile in it to try and make it go blonde, but it doesn't seem to be working.

THERESA Can I get you a drink?

SHARON Please. *(She sees the plastic cups)* Broke into a vending machine then?

THERESA No, I brought these this morning. Thought it would make things more efficient. What would you like?

SHARON Black tea, please.

THERESA *(examining the cups)* I've got chicken soup, will that do?

SHARON Oh. Are they all soup?

THERESA Yes – "Super Soup".

SHARON Oh...super! – What's the other one?

THERESA "Vegetable with croutons".

SHARON I'll have the chicken.

THERESA *(making the soups)* How is Stevey?

SHARON Fine. Been with him two years now. Two and a half if you count the period when he was in the detention centre. He was caught stealing wheelchairs. He loves his charity work.

PAM No, Theresa – don't pour mine just yet. I think I'd better go and collect your nan. *(To* **SHARON***)* I thought it best she stayed in the car while we got the foyer tidied up and put the kettle on.

SHARON Oh, right. There's a load of them sat in cars outside the supermarket. It's like a rally. All sat staring into space and sucking on sweets. There was one in a red Metro with a face like sin.

PAM Yes, that's her. *(She makes for the exit)* Won't be a mo'.

PAM *exits.*

SHARON Whoops...

THERESA Don't worry. Help yourself to biscuits. *(She offers over a couple of packets)*

SHARON Can I have a look at the calories? *(She reads the panels)* These are a bit less. *(She picks one of the more calorific ones)* What about Jackie? She here?

THERESA She's busy today with a marketing job. She'll join us later on in the week.

SHARON What are things like between her and your mum?

THERESA Not great. Mum has never forgiven Dad for leaving, and she's always blamed Jackie for what happened. They're not the best of friends.

SHARON Not surprising, really. If I was shagging your bloke, we wouldn't exactly be best chums either.

THERESA No... Not that I have a "bloke" – or any prospects of getting one at the moment.

SHARON Still single?

THERESA Afraid so – and hurtling towards thirty.

SHARON *(taking another biscuit)* You'll get someone soon, don't you worry. Cupid will hurl a grenade in your direction. You

shouldn't have any problem now that you're eligible – you know, joint owner of an old theatre – very sexy.

THERESA You think so?

SHARON Oh yes, all that power and influence – and free tickets for Wednesday matinees. Anyone bored and lonely will be on to you like a shot.

THERESA I'm not sure "bored and lonely" is quite what I'm after.

SHARON Well, beggars can't be choosers. Think I'll try one of these ones. *(She takes one of the other packets of biscuits)* Shouldn't be eating biscuits at all, really. Very bad for you.

THERESA *brings* **SHARON** *a cup of instant soup and sits down with another soup for herself.*

Cheers. *(She drinks her soup)* Ergh – tastes like warmed-up sick.

THERESA Oh. Shall I make you something else?

SHARON No, I quite like it. *(She starts wandering around the foyer, investigating everything and playing with things)* What state is the actual theatre in?

THERESA Not very good. The stage has collapsed and the curtain hangs there in shreds. But it's not a total disaster – and at least we have this foyer to work from.

SHARON All we need now is an underground bunker for when your mum and Jackie declare war on each other.

THERESA I don't think it will be that bad. I hope not. Just keep your fingers crossed.

SHARON Well, at the end of the day we have to make it work, don't we – we have to work together somehow. I mean, that's the deal, isn't it? *(She takes and consumes another biscuit)* That's the way the cookie crumbles.

THERESA Have you not had lunch?

SHARON No, I'm skipping lunches this week – part of the diet.

THERESA You don't look like you need to lose weight to me.

SHARON Ah, but it depends who you compare yourself with, doesn't it? Put me in a group of chubby people and you won't notice me at all. But stand me next to someone skinny and I look like a punk elephant. And a scary one at that. When we do our market stall, nobody ever buys anything from me – they're too frightened. But we enjoy going anyway. Stevey loves markets and that – he'll barter over something for hours and hours – before he finally nicks it. He'll come over here in a few days – help with all the manual stuff that needs doing.

THERESA There'll be plenty of that. It's all in a pretty bad state. Come on, let's start cleaning this place up a bit. *(She proceeds to clean and tidy the foyer)*

SHARON *just keeps investigating things.*

I'd love to properly preserve this place.

SHARON Did you come here a lot when you were young?

THERESA Oh, yes – whenever there were empty seats – which was most of the time. I'd sit at the back and laugh and laugh. Didn't matter what the show was. Even if it was a dark tragedy, I'd just laugh and laugh. It didn't make any difference whether it was funny or miserable – I'd just keep chuckling and giggling. I was so excited, I couldn't help myself. Then I'd have an ice cream at the interval – and that was good too. Then after the show sometimes, I'd get to go backstage and meet the actors. And they'd be full of life and have funny stories. And I'd start laughing before they'd even finished the story. They didn't like that much. I think I always ruined the punchline. And then after all that, I'd head off back home.

SHARON *(drily)* Laughing as you go.

THERESA Yes. Grinning from ear to ear.

SHARON And where was your dad during all this?

THERESA Oh, he'd usually come with me. And I'd grip his hand really tightly because I was so captivated by all the lights and everything. It was great. We'd sit there together. It was at times like that I really felt close to him. I really miss him.

Silence for a moment.

SHARON Have some chocolate. *(She takes a large bar of chocolate out of her pocket and hands it to* **THERESA***)*

They both eat.

I wish I had brought Stevey with me today. He might help cheer things up. We could find him a proper job here, couldn't we? He's hopelessly unemployed. It's crazy. We've got so many debts. Some money from this place would really sort us out. Stevey would be handy, wouldn't he?

THERESA Oh, yes. If we all agree to get the theatre up and running, we'll need all sorts of people working here, building scenery, operating the lights, selling tickets.

SHARON He could do that – work in the box office. He's very good with the public.

THERESA Yes. Though he'd have to have a uniform and cover his tattoos. When families come for a day out, they don't really want to read "vomit" on someone's forehead.

SHARON That's nothing. You should see what he's got written on his—

PAM *and* **BETTY** *enter from outside.*

PAM Hello again!

BETTY Well, here we are.

PAM *(to* **SHARON***)* Do you know Michael's mother?

SHARON Not really.

PAM This is Betty. *(To* **BETTY***)* This is Sharon, Nan, she was Michael's secretary.

SHARON Um, executive assistant.

SHARON *and* **BETTY** *shake hands.*

Nice to meet you, Betty.

THERESA You all right, Nan?

BETTY Yes, dear, thank you.

THERESA What do you want to drink?

BETTY Hot chocolate.

THERESA Can't do it, sorry. Just soup.

BETTY Eh?

THERESA Soup! Some with croutons, some without.

BETTY Oh...without.

THERESA That'll be chicken then.

BETTY *looks bemused.* **THERESA** *makes the soup.*

Biscuits are over there. There's plain with currants and chocolate digestives. The plain ones are lower in calories, apparently.

SHARON I suppose I could have one more. *(She takes a biscuit)*

PAM *(to* **BETTY***)* Do you want a biscuit?

BETTY What are they, ginger ones?

PAM Digestives.

BETTY No, thank you. Not for me. *(She takes a biscuit)*

PAM Sit down, Nan, take it easy.

BETTY *sits.*

She's still a bit taken aback by it all. Wake up one morning and find yourself the owner of a theatre. Not the sort of surprise any of us are used to.

SHARON You're telling me. I'm dead excited, though. I think it'll be a real adventure. Great fun.

PAM Fun?! Well…possibly. Though I wouldn't hope for an easy ride with that girlfriend of his involved – her with the face-lift and the lycra body stockings.

THERESA She doesn't wear body stockings.

PAM Have you not seen her in them? Looks like four pound of pork chops in a three pound bag.

SHARON How long ago did you and Michael split up?

PAM Several years. While Theresa was at university. Her dad was trying to catch his lost youth with Jackie. One of several things I imagine you could catch off of her.

BETTY Michael was an idiot. Don't know where he gets it from. Mind you, he's always been the same, you never knew where you were with him. He was never very bright, you know, not if I'm honest about it. I told him so and all. His brother was out there doing all these exams, all these examinations. But not Michael.

PAM What do you mean? Michael went to college.

BETTY Not like his brother did. His brother went to lots of them.

PAM That's because they kept throwing him out!

BETTY His brother Robert was smart. That's why they didn't get on too well. Robert was a clever boy, much brighter than Michael, God rest his soul. And look at his brother now; comfortable, plenty of money – and with the same wife he started out with.

PAM Here we go.

BETTY You don't run off with some… Marks and Spencer's type, just like that. People changing wives these days like they're trying out a new supermarket. Don't know what he saw in Marks and Spencer's. *(With a thumb towards* **PAM***)* Should have stuck to Asda. *(The joke here draws reference to an upmarket classy shopping store and a cheap downmarket supermarket chain – These should be altered to the local equivalents)*

PAM Oh, thank you!

BETTY Well… Where's me hot chocolate?

THERESA It's soup. I made you soup. Without the crunchy bits that stick in your teeth.

BETTY He was an idiot. I always told him so.

PAM All right now, that's enough – you'll get upset.

BETTY I won't! I won't get upset! Can't afford to – not on a pension.

THERESA All right, let's all calm down – can we? Please? The least you can do is give Jackie a fair chance. I'm sure once she's here we'll be able to settle down and forget all this. You'll feel fine once Jackie's actually here. Won't you, Mum?

Complete silence.

Well – you'll have to, because there's a lot of work to do.

PAM It's impossible, if you ask me. It needs a thorough clean, major re-decoration, half the mechanics don't work anymore; and the fridge in the actors' green room is a death trap. And all this before we could even set about running the place. Doomed to failure. It's like being a passenger on the *Titanic*.

THERESA I'm sure we can do it, if we all pull together.

PAM Have you ever tried to raise half a million pounds?

THERESA No. But that's part of the challenge, isn't it?

PAM *shakes her head in despair.*

We have to try, Mum! We can't give up hope on our first day!

SHARON I agree. We have to give it a good shot. I for one am not missing out on a chance for some cash. We can get on with raising money and, meanwhile, try to get everything cleared up and mended. It's amazing what you can do when you just try.

PAM Do you know about corporate fundraising?

SHARON That and hairdressing are my two strong points. And Stevey can put his hand to anything practical – mending and fixing. He's got a technical college diploma.

PAM He probably stole that too.

THERESA Mum!

SHARON Yes he did, yeah.

THERESA Even so – I'm sure we'll find Stevey very useful to have around.

PAM Yes, if we run low on cash, he can rob some banks for us.

THERESA Mother!

PAM Sorry, Sharon, I didn't mean to be quite so offensive.

SHARON No, I'll mention it to him.

THERESA Perhaps we could put on a big fundraising concert? See if we can persuade some celebrities to come along.

SHARON Good idea. Got anyone in mind?

THERESA Not really.

BETTY What about Liza Minnelli?

SHARON Oh yes, Betty, that's a great idea. She did a big concert here once. We could maybe give her a ring – I mean it is a good cause, isn't it?

THERESA Yes, it's a wonderful cause. Though I don't think we should get our hopes up – she must always be terribly busy. But everything's worth a try.

SHARON Does the theatre actually work? I mean, do the lights come on and the curtain go up?

THERESA What's left of it, yes. The Operatic Society were still putting shows on until a few years ago. It's quite big as well. Mind you, I don't think it's up to Minnelli standard.

PAM Just a moment. We haven't agreed we're going to do anything yet. Doesn't anyone think it would just be better all round if we sell the place for scrap?

THERESA What scrap? Nobody wants an old theatre that's falling apart, what can you do with it? It's built for a specific purpose. It only has value while it's still a theatre. Besides, I'd never agree to it. I want to save this place, not destroy it. I thought we'd agreed on this?!

PAM Just thought it was worth mentioning again. I mean, we're not even all here, are we?

THERESA I've spoken to Jackie and she wants the same as me. Dad put his faith in us to do this for him and Jackie has no intention of letting him down.

PAM Fine. Just don't say I didn't warn you. Come on then, we might as well get on with it.

THERESA Right.

PAM Important things first.

THERESA *(picking the papers up)* The documents?

PAM No, Theresa; to use one of your big words – internal lubrication.

SHARON Eh?

PAM I found a few tea bags! *(She waves a small plastic bag filled with tea bags in the air)* Put the kettle back on.

SHARON Oh, tea! When you said "internal lubrication" I thought you meant—

PAM Yes, I can imagine what you thought. Have another biscuit.

SHARON *eats a biscuit, as* **THERESA** *puts the kettle back on, as* **PAM** *stares at* **SHARON** *with a look of mild horror.*

Blackout. Music.

Scene Two

A sign above the stage is caught by a spotlight. It reads "Two Days Later". It is morning.

When the lights come up, we see the foyer has been tidied up, boxes removed and litter cleared. A rusty automated bingo machine that randomly selects numbered balls stands centre.

THERESA *is trying to turn it on, as* **PAM** *watches.*

THERESA Oh, bother. It's not working.

PAM Something else that needs mending – all this is getting to be very expensive.

THERESA Well, you're the one that's agreed to deal with all the money. I'll leave it with you to decide what's best.

BETTY *enters.*

BETTY What's all this then?

PAM It's not working.

BETTY Oh, dear. That's a shame... What isn't working?

PAM The bingo lottery thing.

BETTY Eh?

THERESA An automatic ball selector. Picks the numbers for you. They would use it for bingo nights here – or for a raffle in the middle of a show.

BETTY What do you want a machine to do that for? People don't want a machine. They want a human up there giving out numbers, a friendly face.

THERESA You still have someone saying the numbers, Nan. This just picks the balls out for them.

BETTY Picks the balls out? Stupid. Here, let me have a go. *(She opens up the lid and puts her hand into the machine. She pulls a ball out)* Here we are, easy. No electrics or anything. *(She looks at the ball)* Eleven. *(She picks out another)* Thirty-three. *(She looks closer)* No – twenty-three – forty-th – Oh, bugger. *(She puts it back, gets another)* Number one!

PAM Betty seems to have finally found her vocation in life.

BETTY *(picking up another ball)* All the sixes...no, sevens. Is that a seven or a four? *(She gives the ball to* **THERESA***)*

THERESA *(examining the ball)* It's a golf ball, Nan.

BETTY That shouldn't be in there. *(To* **PAM***)* Should it?

PAM I don't know. The cut-throat world of bingo isn't really my thing.

SHARON *enters.*

SHARON Hey, bingo time! Brilliant! Excellent!

PAM The machine doesn't work.

SHARON Oh. Well, so much for that short burst of excitement. Any news on Liza Minnelli?

THERESA I sent a fax to her agent.

SHARON Did you? Well that sounds promising.

THERESA Not at all. It would be a miracle if they even read it. Is Stevey with you?

SHARON No, he's still at home working on his moped. I got a lift from Jackie.

PAM *nearly dies of shock.*

PAM Jackie?! You mean she's here? Is she here?

SHARON Oh, yeah. She's just finding a parking space.

PAM Oh, my God...

BETTY Here we go, here we go...

THERESA I do hope you're going to be friendly, Mum.

PAM I wouldn't hope for too much, darling.

THERESA At least make an effort. We are all in this together, we do have to try and get on.

There is a knock on the door.

JACKIE *(offstage)* Hello! Anybody home?

THERESA Yes, Jackie, we're in here. Come in.

JACKIE *enters, dressed in the latest fashionable sportswear.*

JACKIE Oh, this is nice. Hello. *(She sees the bingo machine)* What's that?

BETTY It's full of balls.

JACKIE Really? Hello, Betty, how are you?

BETTY Not so bad.

JACKIE *(with a nod)* Pam.

A cursory nod from **PAM**. **JACKIE** *gives* **THERESA** *a kiss.*

How's it all going?

THERESA Fine. Fine.

JACKIE Good. I got the message about the paint. It's all in the boot of the Renault – I picked the colours out myself.

THERESA That's great, thank you.

JACKIE I picked up some brushes and rollers while I was there – so we can all get painting this afternoon. I've got the receipts here. *(She produces a couple of receipts)*

THERESA You need to give those to Mum, she's dealing with all that. Sort of a treasurer, aren't you, Mum?

PAM *snatches the receipts from* **JACKIE***'s hands.*

PAM Sort of. *(Desperate to get away)* Well – I'll go and fetch those things then.

THERESA What things?

PAM The things. Things for the – for the thing. Are you coming, Nan? To help with the – with the things?

BETTY What things?

PAM *(aggressive)* Are you coming or staying?

BETTY I'll come, dear.

PAM Right. See you all later.

PAM *exits quickly* **BETTY** *slowly follows behind.*

BETTY *(as though to explain)* Menopause.

BETTY *exits.*

THERESA I'm sorry about that, Jackie.

JACKIE It's all right. No, really, it is. I'm used to it by now. Our paths cross quite often and it's always the same. Just a few weeks ago, in fact, at Tesco. I was at the salads and Pam was queuing up for a cheese sandwich and a Mars Bar. Her eyes glared at me like a furnace. Then she marched off. What can you do? You just have to carry on.

SHARON But how will you manage? We're going to have to work so closely together.

JACKIE The first few days are always the worst. It will get better. Anyway, how are you?

THERESA I'm fine. I've been a bit down. But this place has really perked me up.

JACKIE You like it?

THERESA I love it. I think it's just wonderful. So old and majestic. I really hope we can make this work.

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