

GARRY / Roger
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The sound of a key in the lock.)

LLOYD. Hold it.

(The front door opens. On the doorstep stands ROGER, holding a cardboard box. He is about thirty, and has the well-appointed air of a man who handles high-class real estate.)

ROGER. ... I have a housekeeper, yes, but this is her afternoon off.

LLOYD. Hold it, Garry. Dotty!

(Enter VICKI through the front door. She is a desirable property in her early twenties, well-built and beautifully maintained throughout.)

ROGER. So we've got the place entirely to ourselves.

LLOYD. Hold it, Brooke. Dotty!

(Enter DOTTY from the study.)

DOTTY. Come back?

LLOYD. Yes, and go out again with the newspaper.

DOTTY. The newspaper? Oh, the newspaper.

LLOYD. You put the receiver back, you leave the sardines, and you go out with the newspaper.

GARRY. Here you are, love.

DOTTY. Sorry, love.

GARRY. *(Embraces her.)* Don't worry, love. It's only the technical.

LLOYD. It's the dress, Garry, honey. It's the dress rehearsal.

GARRY. So when was the technical?

LLOYD. So when's the dress? We open tomorrow!

GARRY. Well, we're all thinking of it as the technical. *(To DOTTY.)* Aren't we, love?

DOTTY. It's all those words, my sweetheart.

GARRY. Don't worry about the words, Dotty, my pet.

DOTTY. Coming up like oranges and lemons.

GARRY. Listen, Dotty, your words are fine, your words are better than the, do you know what I mean? *(To BROOKE.)* Isn't that right?

BROOKE. *(Her thoughts elsewhere.)* Sorry?

GARRY. *(To DOTTY.)* I mean, OK, so he's the, you know. Fine. But, Dotty, love, you've been playing this kind of part for, well, you know what I mean.

LLOYD. All right? So Garry and Brooke are off, Dotty's holding the receiver...

GARRY. No, but here we are, we're all thinking, my God, we open tomorrow, we've only had a fortnight to rehearse, we don't know where we are, but my God, here we are!

DOTTY. That's right, my sweet. Isn't that right, Lloyd?

LLOYD. Beautifully put, Garry.

GARRY. No, but we've got to play Weston-super-Mare all the rest of this week, then Yeovil, then God knows where, then God knows where else, and so on for God knows how long, and we're all of us feeling pretty much, you know... *(To BROOKE.)* I mean, aren't you?

BROOKE. Sorry?

LLOYD. Anyway, you're off, Dotty's holding the receiver...

GARRY. Sorry, Lloyd. But sometimes you just have to come right out with it. You know?

LLOYD. I know.

GARRY. Thanks, Lloyd.

LLOYD. OK, Garry. So you're off...

GARRY. Lloyd, let me just say one thing. Since we've stopped. I've worked with a lot of directors, Lloyd. Some of them were geniuses. Some of them were bastards. But I've never met one who was so totally and absolutely... I don't know...

LLOYD. Thank you, Garry. I'm very touched. Now will you get off the fucking stage? *(Exit GARRY through the front door.)* And, Brooke...

BROOKE. Yes?

LLOYD. Are you in?

BROOKE. In?

(Exit ROGER into the mezzanine bathroom.)

VICKI. *(Anxious.)* You don't think there's something creepy going on?

*(Exit VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom.
Enter FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor.)*

FLAVIA. Darling, are you coming to bed or aren't you?

*(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.
Enter ROGER and VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)*

ROGER. What did you say?

VICKI. I didn't say anything.

ROGER. I mean, first the door handle. Now the hot water bottle...

VICKI. I can feel goose-pimples all over.

ROGER. Yes, quick, get something round you.

VICKI. Get the covers over our heads.

(ROGER is about to open the bedroom door.)

ROGER. Just a moment. What did I do with those sardines? *(He goes downstairs. VICKI makes to follow.)* You — wait here.

VICKI. *(Uneasily.)* You hear all sorts of funny things about these old houses.

ROGER. Yes, but this one has been extensively modernized throughout. I can't see how anything creepy would survive oil-fired central heating and...

VICKI. What? What is it?

*(ROGER stares at the telephone table in silence
The bedroom door opens, and FLAVIA puts ROGER's flight bag on
the table outside without looking round. The door closes
again.)*

VICKI. What's happening?

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ROGER. The sardines. They've gone.

VICKI. Perhaps there is something funny going on. I'm going to get into bed and put my head under the...

(She freezes at the sight of the flight bag.)

ROGER. I put them there. Or was it *there*?

VICKI. Bag

(VICKI runs down the stairs to ROGER, who is directly underneath the gallery.)

ROGER. I suppose Mrs. Sprockett must have taken them away again... What? What is it?

VICKI. Bag!

ROGER. Bag?

VICKI. Bag! Bag!

(VICKI drags ROGER silently back towards the stairs. Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom with the box of files. She picks up the flight bag as well, and takes them both off along the upstairs corridor.)

ROGER. What do you mean, bag, bag?

VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

ROGER. What bag?

(VICKI sees the empty table outside the bedroom door.)

VICKI. No bag!

ROGER. No bag?

VICKI. Your bag! Suddenly! Here! Now — gone!

ROGER. It's in the bedroom. I put it in the bedroom.

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

VICKI. Don't go in there!

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(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

ROGER. The box!

VICKI. The box!

ROGER. They've both gone!

VICKI. Oh! My files!

ROGER. What on earth's happening? Where's Mrs. Spratchett?
(He starts downstairs. VICKI follows him.) You wait in the bedroom.

VICKI. No! No! No!

(She runs downstairs.)

ROGER. At least put your dress on!

VICKI. I'm not going in there!

ROGER. I'll fetch it for you, I'll fetch it for you!

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

VICKI. Yes, quick — let's get out of here!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

ROGER. Your dress has gone.

VICKI. I'm never going to see Basingstoke again!

(ROGER goes downstairs.)

ROGER. Don't panic! Don't panic! There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this. I'll fetch Mrs. Splotchett and she'll tell us what's happening. You wait here... You can't stand here looking like that... Wait in the study... Study, study, study!

(Exit ROGER into the service quarters.)

VICKI opens the study door. There's a roar of exasperation from PHILIP, off. She turns and flees.)

VICKI. Roger! There's a strange figure in there! Where are you?