

ROBBIE

By

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The Playwrights Publishing Company

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THE CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

LIZZIE JONES.....*thirty four years old*
MRS ROBINSON*sixty five years old*
JANE MURPHY.....*thirty two years old*
TIM MARTIN*twenty five years old*
SARAH POWELL*twenty two years old*
GRAHAM MURPHY.....*thirty six years old*
LYNN MORTIMER.....*thirty four years old*
ALEC JONES*forty years old*
PARAMEDIC*any age*

The action of the play takes place in the living room of a modern bungalow somewhere in the midlands.

The time is the present and covers a period of six days.

When their parents are killed in a motor accident, LIZZIE JONES, JANE MURPHY and SARAH POWELL are faced with the agonising decision of who is to have the responsibility of looking after their severely handicapped brother ROBBIE POWELL.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

The Time - The Present - Afternoon

(A comfortable living room in a modern bungalow, a table and three chairs set C. An armchair set to side D.L. with a small coffee table below. An armchair set D.R. a stool with magazines on, set below. A bay window R. looks out onto a garden. An archway slightly up R.C. leads into the kitchen. Welsh dressers with an assortment of crockery, clock, photo frame, vase of flowers and telephone stand R. and L. of a wide doorway B.C. this leads to the hall and other rooms. A wide doorway L.C. leads into Robbie's room, through which can be seen a hospital type child's cot. This room also leads to outside for bringing in wheelchair. There is the remains of a buffet meal on the table.)

(The CURTAIN rises on LIZZIE JONES, a pleasant but overweight thirty-four year old, dressed in black. She is standing D.C. below table. MRS ROBSON, a garrulous Yorkshire woman aged about sixty-five, wearing a flowered pinafore over a black skirt and blouse, is in the kitchen, she comes back and forth into the living room, collecting dirty pots.)

(She brings a large china dish out and stands C. She holds the dish in one hand, gets a man's hanky out of her pocket and dabs at her eyes.)

MRS ROBSON: Shall I put this in t'sideboard cupboard, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: Yes, we'd better put everything back, for the time being, anyway.

MRS ROBSON: *(starts to cry)* They were such lovely people.

(LIZZIE goes to MRS ROBSON and puts her arm around her)

LIZZIE: Come on now, Mrs R. You start crying and you'll have me off again. Look at me, I've got so much make-up on, you'd think I was going on the stage.

MRS ROBSON: *(sniffs)* I'm sorry,.....it's just that every time I think..... I can't help meself.

LIZZIE: I know....I know - but we've got to be brave. If I let myself go, I'd never stop.

(MRS ROBSON moves U.C.)

MRS ROBSON: And what about that poor boy?

LIZZIE: There's been so many other things to think of the funeral arrangements..... letting everyone know..... Besides, we can't make any definite decision without Sarah.

MRS ROBSON: It's going to be hard for you, whatever you decide on.....It's a shame she couldn't mek it t' funeral.

(She exits through doorway B.C.)

(LIZZIE goes across L. and stands looking at the food on the table. She absently picks at a cake, crumbling it in her fingers. Then she turns up the long corners of the table-cloth to cover the food)

(MRS ROBSON enters through door B.C. carrying her shopping bag and coat)

LIZZIE: I'll leave this food out until Jane comes back - she might feel like something. She hasn't eaten a thing all day.

(MRS ROBSON takes pinafore off)

MRS ROBSON: I haven't seen you eat much, for that matter.

LIZZIE: Every time I try to swallow I feel as though the food's going to choke me.

MRS ROBSON: *(sighing)* Yes.....I remember when my Frank went, I lost more 'an two stone.

(She puts on her coat)

LIZZIE: I could do with losing weight... but not like this.

MRS ROBSON: Now the funeral's over and done with, you're past the worst.

LIZZIE: I hope you're right.

MRS ROBSON: I'd best be going else I'll miss me bus.

(LIZZIE looks at watch)

LIZZIE: If you wait a few minutes Jane shouldn't be long, she'll run you home.

MRS ROBSON: I wouldn't dream of it. You've more than enough on yer 'ands without running me about.

LIZZIE: It's no trouble, honestly. You've done so much the last few days, it's the least we can do.

MRS ROBSON: Oh, go on with you. I wouldn't see you struggling would I? What time d'you want me tomorrow?

LIZZIE: Lynn should be bringing Robbie back fairly early....so, about nine?

MRS ROBSON: Fine...well, I'll be off then.

(off stage an outer door slams)

(JANE MURPHY, a very attractive blonde of thirty-two enters through doorway L.C. and comes D.C. She is wearing an expensive black suit and black hat, she carries a black handbag)

JANE: Are you going, Mrs R? Do you want a lift?

(She takes off hat)

MRS ROBSON: Bless y'soul, no....I've just bin saying t'Lizzie - you've more than enough to cope with.....*(to LIZZIE)* And you get a good night's sleep while you have the chance..... I'll see you in t'mornin'.

(MRS ROBSON exits through doorway L.C.)

(JANE comes D.L. puts handbag on chair then throws hat on to coffee table)

JANE: I'll never wear that again!

(She sits in chair and removes her shoes)

Put the kettle on, Liz.

(LIZZIE goes R. into kitchen)

LIZZIE: *(off stage)* There's all that food left. You ought to eat something.

JANE: I'm not really hungry - just gasping for a cup of tea! *(She stretches out legs, admiring them.)* That station's a draughty hole.

(LIZZIE comes back in)

LIZZIE: You saw them onto the train, did you? Were they all right?

JANE: Aunt Marian cried a bit - kept saying she couldn't believe it - can any of us? But I think they'll be all right. Uncle Ben was in his element - three females to look after.

LIZZIE: Bless him, he's such a dear.

JANE: *(yawning)* A real poppet. Oh...by the way...

(She reaches into handbag, takes out a cheque and waves it at LIZZIE)

.....he gave me this.

(LIZZIE goes D.L. and takes the cheque)

LIZZIE: Five hundred pounds!

JANE: I know! He said it might take time for the Wills to be proved.

LIZZIE: When, we find them. I can't understand why they didn't tell us who the solicitor was..... This'll certainly come in very useful, I've shelled out quite a bit the last few days.

JANE: It's made out to you. And don't forget, Graham and I did offer to help.

LIZZIE: I know you did. Anyway, this'll make things a lot easier. I've got to pay Mrs Robson, she's owed money from before.... *(She stops, choked up)*last week, as well as all the extra she's done this week.

JANE: *(nodding towards kitchen)* Kettle's boiled.

(LIZZIE goes R. into kitchen, comes back with tea tray, puts it on table, pours out two mugs of tea, passes one to JANE, picks up her own goes R. and stares through window)

LIZZIE: What time did you say Sarah's plane's due in?

(JANE sips tea appreciatively)

JANE: If it's on schedule, about seven o'clock. Graham's picking us up about quarter to six. That'll give us a good hour to get to the airport.

LIZZIE: *(drinking tea)* There's a lot of sorting out to do.

JANE: Oh...not now Liz! I'm too wound up to think straight.

(LIZZIE turns sharply)

LIZZIE: So am I! But we can't just ignore things - the problem won't go away!

JANE: You're right....but it's so...distasteful...to have to go through everything....all their private things. Can't we leave it a little while longer? Until I feel more able to cope?

LIZZIE: You're always thinking of yourself! We've got to cope. If there wasn't Robbie to consider. I'd agree with you, we could leave it.

(She comes D.R. and stands below table)

But we've got to decide what's to be done, soon! I can't stay here forever, you know.

JANE: Well, perhaps Sarah will take on some of the responsibility.

LIZZIE: We can't rely on that, can we? *(She pauses)* I wonder what she looks like now....what kind of a person she's grown up into. It's a long time, twelve years.

JANE: Twelve years.... I expect she'll have changed so much we won't recognise her.

LIZZIE: I think there's a photo somewhere, of her at her Confirmation.

JANE: Is there? I don't remember that.

LIZZIE: Don't you? It was on Mum's dressing table for ages, she was very proud of it.

JANE: A case of, absence makes the heart grow fonder.

LIZZIE: Probably.....I suppose we should have postponed the funeral until she got here.

JANE: It was just one of those things.... *She realises what Lizzie has just said* You can't do that, can you – postpone funerals? I've never heard of anyone doing that. Weddings, yes - but not funerals.

LIZZIE: I don't know.....she sounded quite upset when she rang from Singapore.....

JANE: Where is that photo, anyway?

LIZZIE: In the old album I should think.....If you're not going to eat any of this, I may as well put it in the fridge, we can finish it off tomorrow.

(LIZZIE starts clearing table, going back and forth to kitchen)

(JANE watches her then gets up and pads up C.)

JANE: I'm going to find it. Is it in the bureau?

(LIZZIE comes out of kitchen)

LIZZIE: In one of the drawers. I saw it when we were searching for the insurances.

(JANE exits through door B.C.)

(LIZZIE stands gazing thoughtfully at the doorway, then with a deep sigh she goes U.C. to B.L. opens a drawer, takes out a duster. She moves D.C. and flicks the duster over the table. She goes U.C. gets a vase of flowers from top of dresser, comes D.C. places it on the table, stands looking at it)

(JANE enters through door B.C. carrying a large old photo album. She comes D.C. places it on table, sits down L. of table)

JANE: Come on, Liz, sit down and take the weight off....You've hardly sat down all day.

(she opens album)

(LIZZIE sits R. of table)

LIZZIE: I wonder why!

JANE: There's no need to be sarky! Oh my God! Get an eyeful of this one.....
(She laughs) What do we look like!

LIZZIE: *(laughs)* Those were the dresses Mum made for the Easter Festival if I remember rightly - a century ago!

(JANE turns pages)

JANE: And look at this one! *(She peers closely)* What year was this taken? I can't read it.

(LIZZIE bends over the page)

LIZZIE: Let me see, my eyesight's better than yours....you should get some glasses..... Nineteen eighty! The year before they had Robbie - I remember because it was the last time we all went on holiday, together.

JANE: So it was....I was eighteen, it was just before I went to college....Sarah was only eight....

(She starts to cry)

We were a happy family in those days, Liz.

LIZZIE: Yes.... now, don't get upset. *(She turns the pages)* Oh....here's one of Mum - she was pregnant!

JANE: *(recovering)* Goodness! she looks as though she's about to give birth to an elephant *(She claps hand to her mouth)* I'm sorry - I didn't think what I was saying.

- LIZZIE: He might as well have been.
- JANE: Lizzie! It's not like you, to say a thing like that.
- LIZZIE: It's seeing those photos. It's years and years since that album was brought out, there were no more photos after Robbie was born.
- (She gets up quickly)*
- Oh, put it away, Jane....I can't stand it.
- (JANE closes album)*
- JANE: I thought it would be a good idea. But if you feel like that.....I'll take it back in a minute.
- LIZZIE: They bring back too many memories. I can't handle it at the moment.
- JANE: Let's have a drink.
- LIZZIE: I'm awash with tea.
- JANE: I didn't mean tea! I meant a "real" drink.
- LIZZIE: Jane! It's only half past three in the afternoon.
- JANE: So! I fancy a long G and T.
- LIZZIE: You'll be lucky! Dad only liked his Guinness, and you know what our Mum was like - one glass of wine and she was well away. Do you remember that time at Uncle Ben's ? I suppose having Robbie to look after put a stop to all that partying....We did used to have some fun though.....before he was born.
- JANE: *(not listening)* Yes.....There must be something - somewhere.
- (Jane goes B.L. and B.R. looks in cupboards)*
- LIZZIE: What about the sitting room - in the sideboard ? I'll go and see what I can find.
- (LIZZIE goes U.C. and exits through door B.C.)*
- JANE: *(calling after her)* Bring some glasses as well - if you find anything.
- (off stage clinking of bottles and glasses)*
- LIZZIE: *(off stage)* You'll never guess what I've found.....

(She enters B.C. carrying a bottle of vodka and two glasses, she waves bottle at JANE)

.....vodka! I wonder how long it's been in there?

JANE: Ooooh lovely! Is there anything to go with it?

LIZZIE: No...not in there....there's some orange juice in the fridge....I reckon this must be pretty old vodka.....

(She looks closely at bottle)

.....God knows where it came from - I've never known them drink it - have you?

(She comes D.C. and puts glasses and bottle on table)

JANE: Can't remember. Come on Liz - open it. I'll get the orange. I suppose it's too much to hope that there's any tonic.

(JANE goes R. into kitchen, brings back an open carton of orange juice crosses to L. and puts it on table)

(LIZZIE struggles to unscrew vodka bottle cap)

LIZZIE: God, this is tight!

(She finally manages it and pours a very generous measure into each glass)

(They sit down at table)

(JANE raises her glass)

JANE: Bottom's up!

(LIZZIE raises her glass, then takes a big gulp)

LIZZIE: Ooooh....heavens - that's strong! Ooooh, I can't drink much of this.....

(She studies her glass)

It must be a hundred and fifty percent proof - it's gone to my elbows.

(She moves her arms in and out exercising her elbows)

JANE: Your elbows?

LIZZIE: I've lost all feeling in them.

JANE: *(laughs)* You fool! It's because you're not used to it.
(She puts her glass on table)
Here - water it down a bit more.
(She pours more orange into LIZZIE's glass)
There....try that now.

LIZZIE: *(sips drink)* That's better...Ooooh, my lips have gone stiff.

JANE: Oh, stop moaning....get it down you - it'll blunt the edges.

LIZZIE: The edges of what?

JANE: Reality I suppose.

LIZZIE: I don't know whether that's such a good idea.

JANE: Anything's better than this awful miserable ache I've got in my chest.

LIZZIE: *(slurring slightly)* I know what you mean. It's like something's missing.

JANE: It is!
(silence)
(They sip their drinks, deep in thought)

LIZZIE: *(slowly)* Do you think they knew anything about it?

JANE: The police said it would have been very quick.

LIZZIE: How could they tell....for sure I mean?

JANE: Experience, they see enough of that sort of thing. Anyway, we must try and put it out of our minds. It doesn't serve any purpose to keep raking it up - imagining what they went through.

LIZZIE: I can't help.... thinking - picturing....I'm not relishing having to tell Sarah what happened either, it'll just bring it all back again.

JANE: You know what the vicar said, 'Time doesn't make you forget, it just makes it easier to bear'.

LIZZIE: Platitudes. I don't feel as if I'll ever come to terms with it....
(She pauses)

....I wonder what she's really like - as a person - how're we going to get on with her, coming back after all these years?

JANE: We'll find out, won't we?

(silence - as they sip their drinks)

LIZZIE: *(slowly)* Do you think he knows....that he senses something?

JANE: I don't know, how can we tell?

LIZZIE: He's been making his noise a lot these last few days....He's never been away from Mum in his life - well, not longer than a few hours. He must be missing her.

JANE: Don't Lizzie....I don't want to think about it - my own grief's bad enough! Besides, how can he feel anything? He's just a vegetable - no matter how much we delude ourselves - that's what he is.

LIZZIE: Jane!

JANE: It's true. He's never responded to anything has he?.

LIZZIE: I've never heard you talk like that before.

JANE: I've never been in this situation before.

LIZZIE: I don't think vodka suits you.

(JANE pours another generous measure into each glass)

JANE: As it's the only thing we have I can't be choosy, can I? Besides, it's not the vodka, it's time we faced the truth.

LIZZIE: There's no need to be so cruel....you'd never have dared say anything like that in front of Mum and Dad.

JANE: I'm sorry if it seems cruel, but we've got to be realistic - it's going to be damned hard. But we've got our own children to think of, and more importantly, our marriages...look how having him affected them – they had no life.

LIZZIE: *(upset)* Do you think I haven't thought out all the implications? That I haven't laid awake the last few nights - trying all permutations to find a solution which will suit us all, and still do what Mum wanted?

JANE: *(impatiently)* But Mum isn't here any longer, Lizzie - what she wanted doesn't really enter into it now....does it?

LIZZIE: (tiredly) How can you say that? It was always understood that if anything ever happened, we'd be responsible.....between us.

JANE: We've got to consider what's right for Robbie - yes, but we have to come first.

LIZZIE: (*stubbornly*) I want to do what Mum wanted.

(*doorbell rings*)

Who on earth can that be?

JANE: There's one way to find out....

(*LIZZIE makes no effort to move*)

(*doorbell rings again*)

JANE: Oh, I'll go! Where's my shoes?

(*She looks around finally finds them and puts them on, goes U.C. and exits through door B.C.*)

(*LIZZIE stands up and moves U.C. listens, then hurries D.R. and is sitting in armchair as JANE enters through door B.C. She looks warningly at LIZZIE, gesturing to her to move the bottle of vodka but LIZZIE doesn't cotton on*)

(*TIM MARTIN enters behind JANE, He carries a briefcase, he is an earnest looking social worker aged twenty five, wearing jeans and sweatshirt. His long hair is tied back in a pony tail*)

JANE: This is my sister, Mrs Jones....she's staying here at the moment, looking after our brother. Lizzie! This is...

(*She turns to Tim*)

I'm sorry I didn't quite catch your name.

TIM: Tim Martin, but please, call me Tim.

(*TIM moves D.R. to where LIZZIE is sitting in a daze. The vodka has just hit her. Tim holds out his hand. LIZZIE stares at it*)

JANE: He's come from the Social ServicesLizzie!

(*LIZZIE grasps Tim's hand, pumping it up and down*)

(*TIM finally manages to extricate it. He moves L. below table*)

JANE: Oh...do sit down....or we could go into the other room where it's more comfortable. *(She looks pointedly at Lizzie)* Do you want to go into the front room?

LIZZIE: *(enunciating carefully)* No thank you....I'm perfectly fine where I am.

(She gazes fixedly at Tim) Would you like a drink?

(TIM sits at table)

TIM: Coffee...thanks.....black, no sugar.

(LIZZIE stands up and walks very carefully U.R. and is almost into kitchen when she changes her mind comes back D.C. walks across to Tim, leans over him looking right into his face)

LIZZIE: Are you sure you wouldn't like a proper drink?

(She picks up the bottle of vodka and waves it under his nose)

(JANE sits down opposite TIM at table)

(She looks daggers at LIZZIE)

JANE: Put it in the kitchen, Liz. *(then to Tim)* You'll have to excuse my sister, she's not used to drinking in the afternoon - neither of us are. We just needed something to cheer us up after the harrowing day we've had.

LIZZIE: I can speak for myself, thank you....do you want some of this?

(She waves the bottle at him again)

TIM: Coffee will be fine, thanks...I'm driving.

(He puts his briefcase on table, opens it and takes out a folder. On the front of it are the words CASESTUDY in large letters. He opens it)

(JANE looks uneasy. She glances quickly at LIZZIE who has now wandered back R. and is gazing out of window still clutching the vodka bottle)

JANE: *(clears throat)* What is it exactly that you want to discuss?

TIM: I'm very sorry to intrude at a time like this, but I understand there might be a problem.

JANE: Problem?

TIM: About your brother..*(looks at his papers)* Robert?

- JANE: There's no problem. Who said there was?
- TIM: We received an anonymous phone call. Obviously we have to follow up any such report.
- JANE: Anonymous phone call? Did you hear that, Lizzie? No.... we have no problems, I can assure you - everything's fine.
- TIM: Your brother's handicapped isn't he?
- (LIZZIE turns round, comes C. and stands close behind JANE)*
- JANE: *(tersely)* Very.
- (TIM opens the folder)*
- TIM: If you could fill me in with a few details like, your brother's full name, date of birth - that sort of thing?
- LIZZIE: *(alert now)* Robert James Powell...born...the first of April, nineteen eighty one at four twenty in the morning.
- JANE: I don't think he needs quite so much detail, Liz.
- (TIM writes)*
- TIM: Actually, the more details the better. That's fine, thanks. Is your brother here, now?
- JANE: He's being looked after by a friend. She's bringing him back in the morning. Why?
- TIM: I would have liked to have seen him.... what exactly is the nature of Robert's handicap?
- JANE: Nature....? Oh, you mean what's wrong with him! Didn't your informant tell you? He's a congenital Hydrocephalic and Spina Bifida.
- (TIM writes)*
- TIM: Ce..pha..lic..Spi..na Bi..fida...So he needs constant supervision and care?
- LIZZIE: *(sharply)* Which he's always had, and his name's Robbie! He's also asthmatic and suffers from a heart condition as well!
- TIM: Mrs Jones, I'm not here to create problems for you. I'm simply doing my job, which is to ensure that Robert...er...Robbie is receiving proper care, and if you need any help, to put you in touch with the right authorities. I can see this is not the most convenient of times..... *(He looks pointedly at the vodka bottle)*but if you'll just bear with me.

LIZZIE: *(truculent)* If we'd wanted help, we'd have asked for it - I don't see any point in continuing with this.

TIM: I'm afraid it isn't a question of whether you want to continue. Until I'm satisfied that he is getting the right care....and I shall need to know what arrangements have been made I must keep the file open.

(LIZZIE goes up to him, bangs bottle on table emphasising each word)

LIZZIE: Now just a minute! We didn't invite you here.... Our parents were buried today, for God's sake!

(She stops, choked up)

....and you expect us to answer your prying questions? We'll make any arrangements we like - he's our brother. Why do you think he's lived all these years? I'll tell you why! Because my mother devoted herself to that child....They said he wouldn't live beyond the age of two - she took such care of him.... and we intend to do the same. So don't come here with your holier than thou attitude.....We don't need this!

(silence for a few seconds)

TIM: *(conciliatory)* Er...hum...I'm sorry, Mrs Jones. I hadn't realised that today was the day of the funeral. Please, don't get so upset, I do understand that it's a bad time for you. But, when we get phone calls informing us of risk situations, then I'm afraid we have to investigate straight away.

LIZZIE: *(even more upset)* Well you can take your investigations somewhere else... Risk situation? What's that supposed to mean? How dare they! We're his sisters! It's just sheer maliciousness.

TIM: *(rattled)* I wasn't implying there was maliciousness involved. All the information we were given was, that Robert was in need of proper specialist care now both his parents were dead.

JANE: Who'd say a thing like that?

TIM: All kinds of people make these type of phone calls, Mrs Murphy. Usually they do it out of a sense of duty. It could be a neighbour - or relatives, you'd be surprised.

LIZZIE: Well, no-one had any right to say such things and it wouldn't be any of our relatives. Robbie doesn't need specialist care....well what I mean is....yes, he does need special care, which we can and will, provide ourselves, *(to Jane)* won't we?

JANE: *(hesitatingly)* Maybe we shouldn't be quite so hasty, Liz. We could find out what's available....just in case....

LIZZIE: What are you babbling on about? He's a Social Worker isn't he?. We promised Mum, that if anything ever happened, we'd look after Robbie, that we'd never let the Social Services anywhere near - you know where they'd put him.

TIM: I think you're jumping the gun here....I didn't say anything about putting him anywhere.

LIZZIE: That's what you lot usually do, don't you? I read the papers, you know.

JANE: Liz, calm down. Let's listen to what Tim has to say....It won't do any harm - to listen - will it?

(LIZZIE storms R. into kitchen)

LIZZIE: *(shouting)* No! I'm not listening. If he wants to discuss this further, then he can come back when we're all together. I'm not even considering listening to him without all the family being here.

(TIM stands up and pushes his papers into his briefcase)

TIM: I understand that your sister is upset and over-reacting at the moment, Mrs Murphy. Believe me, I sympathise, but now the wheels have been set in motion I have to follow it through.

(He places a small card on the table) There's my card, please ring me in a couple of days. If it could be arranged for me to meet all the carers, to get an overview of the situation, I'm sure everything will be resolved satisfactorily.

JANE: I'll see you out.

(THEY go U.C. and exit through doorway B.C.)

(off stage an outer door slams)

(LIZZIE comes out of kitchen and moves D.R.)

(JANE enters through door B.C. She comes D.C.)

JANE: Well?

LIZZIE: Well what?

JANE: That was a fine exhibition you made of yourself. You do realise don't you, that everything you said, will more than likely be written in his report?

- LIZZIE: So what!
- JANE: So what? Use your head, Lizzie. He'll make out we were unco-operative. God knows what he thought of us. There we were...drinking in the afternoon..... he's probably got us down as raving alcoholics.
- LIZZIE: I couldn't care less.....*(She mimics Tim)* 'resolved satisfactorily' patronising little pipsqueak. Who does he think he is? He's still wet behind the ears, I bet he's never experienced any suffering in his whole life.
- JANE: Oh, come on Liz, that's the vodka talking!
- LIZZIE: Maybe....but what right had he to come barging in here, simply because of an anonymous telephone call?
- JANE: He didn't barge in, I invited him. He was only doing his job. *(She starts to laugh, slightly hysterical)* Oh, God! His face, when you offered him the vodka....*(then serious)* Don't forget Liz, we may have nothing to hide, but there are plenty who have.....
- (She comes D.R. and puts her arm around LIZZIE)*
- Don't worry, love. When Sarah's settled in we'll work something out, together.
- LIZZIE: You wouldn't agree to them taking Robbie into 'Care' would you?
- JANE: It won't come to that, I've already said. Mind you, if they decided that would be best for him, there wouldn't be a lot we could do about it. Now, come on - go and do your face - your mascara's run, and it's nearly time for us to go to the airport. I'll make some coffee - sober you up a bit.
- (She puts her arm around LIZZIE and as they walk U.C. She starts laughing)*
- He never did get his coffee!

BLACKOUT

ACT 1 SCENE 2

Later that night.

(The lights come up on a darkened empty stage. A faint light shows through the hall, off stage an outer door opens)

JANE: *(off Stage)* The light switch's to your right, Sarah, just inside the door.

(SARAH POWELL enters through door B.C. and fumbles for the light switch, she finds it and the stage is flooded with light. She is twenty-two, petite. Her blonde hair, cut in a classic bob, frames a pretty face, She has a very attractive Australian accent. She is wearing a smart travelling suit. She carries an expensive make-up case. She comes D.C. and stands looking around.)

(GRAHAM MURPHY comes in behind her carrying two large matching suitcases. He is a tall good looking man, aged 36, smart but casually dressed in sweater and jeans. He wears highly polished loafers. He looks what he is, an upwardly mobile man. He places the cases to L. of door B.C. and comes D.L. and sits in armchair)

(JANE and LIZZIE enter through door B.C.)

JANE: Now then, drink?

SARAH: I'd love a cup of tea!

LIZZIE: I'll put the kettle on.

(LIZZIE goes R. into kitchen then comes out carrying a tea tray she puts it on table and stands above table)

Make yourself at home, Sarah.

(SARAH goes U.C. places her bag on top of the suitcases, then comes slowly D.L. stopping as she passes Robbie's room, she looks through door, gives a shudder and moves D.L. below table)

JAN *(to Graham)* Darling, would you take Sarah's cases and put them in the spare room?

GRAHAM: Sure.

(He goes U.L. picks up the suitcases and bag exits through door B.C.)

(JANE goes R. into kitchen and comes out with teapot she places it on table, then sits down R. of table.)

SARAH: So, when are we supposed to be having this family meeting? Tomorrow? Is that when the social worker guy is coming back?

(LIZZIE pours out four cups of tea)

- LIZZIE: No, he'll wait until he hears from us. We want everything arranged before we contact him...*(She passes a cup to Sarah)* There you go, do you want some sugar?
- SARAH: Just milk thanks.*(She sits down in chair D.L.)* But surely, as Robbie's closest relatives - not that I know much about these things - you have the sole right to decide who's to look after him?
- LIZZIE: That's what we thought. I said to Jane, what's it got to do with them? But she seems to think we're obliged, now, to tell them our every move.
- JANE: You've got it wrong, as usual - I do wish you'd listen. What I said was, because they've become involved, we need to get everything cut and dried before he comes back. He can make his report and hopefully that will be the last we see of him unless.. *(She pauses)* ...unless we decide otherwise.
- SARAH: Well, I'll go along with whatever - after all, it's nothing to do with me is it? I'm hardly part of the family now.
- JANE: *(indignant)* Of course you are! Why do you think we waited for you to come home? You're still a part of this family despite your being abroad all these years. Mum and Dad only let you go because they thought they were doing what was best for you, at the time. But it was always understood that you'd come back.

(LIZZIE takes her cup goes D.R. and sits in armchair)
- LIZZIE: It was very hard for them, you know, to let you go with Aunt Kate.
- SARAH: Was it? I seem to remember Aunt Kate telling me they were pretty glad to be rid of me.
- JANE: *(briskly)* Hasty words spoken at a rather fraught time, all over and done with - you're home now.
- SARAH: Back!
- JANE: Back?
- SARAH: I'm back - for the moment. My home's in Australia.
- JANE: This is your real home, Sarah.
- SARAH: No....I'm sorry, you haven't any right to say that. And I don't want you to be under any misconception, my home's been in Australia for the last twelve years, I'm happy there....I've got a good job. I came back out of respect - I'm not looking to settle here.

LIZZIE: We'll see..... Drink your tea - I'm sure you must be absolutely worn out after all that travelling, and there's nothing like a good strong cup of tea to make you feel better.

(GRAHAM enters through door B.C.)

GRAHAM: *(looking at watch)* Don't pour any tea for me. Are you going to be long, Janie? I have to get back to finish those reports.

JANE: It's only half past eight, Graham. For goodness' sake! Go down to the pub and have a pint, I want to talk to Sarah.

(GRAHAM comes D.R.)

GRAHAM: Okay, Sweetness.... it'll have to be a quick one though, so don't talk all night, will you? *(He goes across to JANE, kisses her.)* See you later.... *(He goes L. touches SARAH's shoulder)* Nice to meet you, Sarah.

(He exits through door L.C.)

(Silence)

LIZZIE: Well...so....here we are then.

JANE: Yes.....

LIZZIE: It's a pity it had to be in these circumstances.

SARAH: What happened exactly?Oh, sorry, if you'd rather not talk about it....I'll understand.

LIZZIE: They were your parents too, Sarah.

SARAH: I know.....but being away such a long time... I don't - can't... feel the way you two must be feeling. Oh, there's a sense of loss...yes...but I'm confused. I can't really say how I feel at the moment. It was a terrible shock, your phone call.

LIZZIE: It was to be the first holiday they'd had together since Robbie was born. And it was only because I promised to stay here and look after him, that they went.

JANE: We went into town and bought her things that she'd never felt the need for - not for a long time - holiday clothes and things. And when the passports came - you should have seen their faces. They were like a couple of teenagers.

SARAH: Do you know..... I can barely remember them.

LIZZIE: You had photos didn't you?

- SARAH: There was only one. It was the one where we were all together, the Christmas before I went to Australia - it got very dog-eared.
- LIZZIE: I remember that one....but what about the wedding photos, mine and Jane's?
- SARAH: I never saw any. As far as I knew you had all disowned me. Certainly no one wrote to me.
- LIZZIE: I don't believe it! I know Mum definitely sent birthday cards....letters.....Aunt Kate sent us cheques for wedding presents, *(She looks at Jane)* didn't she?
- JANE: She did, yes....cheques and letters.
- SARAH: I'm telling you the truth. Maybe they were sent but I never saw any cards or letters. I never found anything when I was going through her things after she'd died, either. If Mandy hadn't managed to contact me - she's the girl who rents my house, I would never have known that my own parents were dead.
- JANE: We didn't know about Aunt Kate. Mum never even knew her only sister had died!
- SARAH: It never crossed my mind to let you know. There was nothing in her will or her papers. In any case I wouldn't have known where to contact you. I vaguely remembered Aunt Kate telling me that they'd moved from the old house, but she never said where to, and I never asked.
- JANE: How long is it, since she died?
- SARAH: Almost two years.
- JANE: She was always very possessive over you.
- SARAH: It's a good job she was....they couldn't wait to push me off to Australia, I do remember that, clearly.
- JANE: You've got to understand Sarah, it was a very difficult time for them, I don't suppose anyone was behaving normally. You were only a child, I don't expect you really knew what was going on.
- SARAH: I was ten! All I was told was, that I'd be going to live with Aunt Kate. No explanations - nothing!
- LIZZIE: Well, probably no-one thought to explain things to you. Besides, what's the point of bringing up the past. Mum and Dad are gone.... and we're left with Robbie.

- JANE: Yes..... and it's not going to be easy, so we've all got to co-operate.
- SARAH: Look, I said I'll go along with whatever you two decide. But, I'm virtually a stranger... *(She pauses)* I thought he would be dead.
- LIZZIE: *(short)* Well, he's not - and you're still family. It was always understood that if anything ever happened to Mum, we'd be the ones to look after him - you included.....*(She pauses)* She always believed that you'd come home, though she never dreamt, that anything like this could happen.....neither did we.
- SARAH: I don't know where she got that notion - Why would I want to come back to this country? What was she expecting, a return of the prodigal daughter? Someone to look after him in their old age?
- LIZZIE: It's wasn't like that at all. Anyway, it seems to me that Aunt Kate wasn't being very fair to you. She used to write about all your achievements, but Mum often wondered why you never wrote, in answer to her letters.
- (SARAH gets up moves C. below table)*
- SARAH: Because I didn't know, that's why.... I won't have you maligning Kate - you know nothing at all! She was like a mother to me - never once making me feel obligated to her, in any way. If she kept things from me, then I can only assume she had her reasons.
- LIZZIE: I don't think we're doing any good trying to work out other people's motives. What's done is done - you're here now - part of the family. We're glad that you're back, aren't we, Jane?
- JANE: The past is best forgotten as far as I'm concerned.
- SARAH: I hope you don't think I'm being presumptuous but seeing as I am one of the family, is there any money?
- JANE: *(shocked)* We don't know yet. We haven't been through all their private papers.
- SARAH: I should imagine it's going to cost a good deal to have him looked after.
- LIZZIE: Dad once mentioned they'd taken out good insurances. But we haven't been able to find them or any Wills.
- SARAH: Are you sure they had them? Didn't they have a legal adviser?
- JANE: You mean a solicitor? Of course they did! They must have done - when they bought this bungalow - but we can't recall who he was. The name will be on the Wills no doubt, but until they come to light....

- SARAH: It was so easy when Aunt Kate died, she'd left specific instructions. All I had to do was go to her attorney, he dealt with everything. I arranged the funeral because I wanted to.
- JANE: She was quite well off by all accounts, wasn't she ? Did you inherit everything?
- SARAH: There were one or two small legacies, but yes, I inherited the bulk of the estate.
- JANE: So, you don't have to worry about money then?
- SARAH: I wouldn't say that exactly. I manage. There are some investment trusts should I ever need them, and I have a good salary. The house, which as I said, is let out at the moment, is mine. I share a flat in the city.
- LIZZIE: So in the end, you did well going to Australia.
- SARAH: I think, as things turned out, I had a good deal. Although, it took me a long time to realise just how lucky I was. It wasn't always easy for Aunt Kate, she'd never had children of her own, and I'm sure I must have been a real trial to her.
- JANE: *(dryly)* I'm sure you soon changed.
- SARAH: She was a patient woman and very kind to me. Mind you, she was strict too. I learned to respect her - we became very close.
- LIZZIE: What happened to her husband? All she ever told Mum was that he'd died.
- SARAH: He was killed in a mining accident long before I went out there. She didn't talk much about it - they hadn't been married all that long. It was only after she died that I found out he'd left her quite a fortune which she'd invested, wisely as it turned out. She wasn't one for discussing money.....
- (She moves R.)*
- When she told me she'd got cancer and had only a few months to live I couldn't believe it....she'd always been so strong. She didn't last months.....only weeks.... and she'd left everything so straightforward....
- JANE: I wonder why she didn't leave Mum anything. After all, she was her only sister.
- SARAH: She had her reasons I suppose.
- LIZZIE: Didn't you think about coming home after she died?

SARAH: No, why should I? I've already said, my home is Australia. I may have lived the first ten years of my life here, but I feel Australian.... I *am* Australian. I love the people - the way of life. England holds no attraction for me.

LIZZIE: Well, that puts us firmly in our place doesn't it?

JANE: Looks like it. But don't forget, Sarah, we are your sisters, your flesh and blood. We can't be blamed for what our parents did.

SARAH: I don't think I blame anyone, now. At nine years old, when your world is turned upside down, you can't see the reason for things. I hated you all, but Aunt Kate made me understand that I was better off with her. It took a long time but I eventually settled down and was happy.

(GRAHAM comes through Robbie's room and enters L.C.)

JANE: Good Heavens! Are you back already?

GRAHAM: I certainly am....have you had a good chat about old times?

JANE: Not really.

GRAHAM: Are you ready then? It's getting late.

JANE: I suppose so.

(She stands up, picks up her handbag and goes U.C. then turns and looks at Lizzie.)

You okay? We'll be round about twelve, tomorrow. Are you going to ask Alec if he can get? He really ought to be here.

LIZZIE: I'll ring him later, perhaps his mother will have the children, though she moans every time we ask her.

JANE: Right....good night, Sarah.

SARAH: Goodnight.

GRAHAM: Ciao!

(They exit through door B.C.)

(LIZZIE stands up)

LIZZIE: I expect you're ready for bed, you look tired out.

SARAH: Yes, I'm beginning to feel the effects of travelling.

LIZZIE: I'll show you where everything is.

SARAH: Before you do....will you tell me what happened?

(LIZZIE sits down again)

LIZZIE: Oh, I'm sorry, Sarah...I keep forgetting no-one's actually told you the details. *(She takes a deep breath)* Well, their flight was due to leave at six a.m. so I came over the night before. They'd booked a taxi for half past three, to take them to the airport.... We went to bed and got up at three o'clock. They had a drink and then the taxi came - I saw them off and went back to bed.....*(She pauses)* About half past nine I was getting Robbie dressed when Alec came..... I knew as soon as I saw his face something was wrong..... There'd been an accident, the police had found the passports with my name and address in them, in case of emergency - you know the kind of thing....

(She breaks off, gets up out of chair and moves U.R. She stares out of window for a moment her back to SARAH, then turns and walks slowly D.R. and sinks into armchair)

Apparently they were on one of the flyovers leading into Birmingham when the taxi went out of control..... it smashed through the barrier, hit the road below and burst into flames....the police told us they would have been dead before it set on fire..... they never even got to the airport...

SARAH: *(whispering)* I had no idea....how awful.

(LIZZIE wipes her eyes)

LIZZIE: We're still waiting to hear what caused the accident, but the police seem to think the driver must have had a heart attack and his foot jammed the accelerator.

(SARAH shakes her head)

SARAH: And now you're left with all the responsibility.

LIZZIE: The responsibility belongs to all three of us.

SARAH: Yes.....

LIZZIE: *(putting on a brave face)* Come on, time for bed. We've a busy day tomorrow.

(They go U.C .and exit through door B.C.)

BLACKOUT

ACT 1 SCENE 3

Next Morning

(The lights come up on LIZZIE entering through door B.C. she is wearing a dressing gown and slippers and carries a newspaper. She goes R. into kitchen, comes out and bustles about laying two places at the table, she goes back and forth, brings in two cups of coffee, toast etc. She goes U.C. and leans through doorway B.C.)

LIZZIE: *(calls)* Sarah....are you awake? Breakfast!

(She comes D.C. and sits at table, helps herself to toast, butters it, starts to eat. She opens paper.)

(SARAH enters B.C. prettily dishevelled, wearing a glamorous housecoat.)

SARAH: *(yawns)* Coffee....lovely!

LIZZIE: I'm afraid we only run to instant.

SARAH: I don't mind, anything with caffeine in will do.

LIZZIE: If you want breakfast, there's toast or cereal. There's the toast, the cereal's in the kitchen.

(SARAH sits at table)

SARAH: No thanks....I usually only have a piece of fresh fruit.

LIZZIE: There's some in the fridge.

(SARAH sips coffee)

SARAH: This's fine, really.

(They sit in silence for a few seconds. LIZZIE reads, SARAH just sits LIZZIE folds up newspaper and lays it on table)

LIZZIE: I'll go and have my shower, then the bathroom'll be free for you. *(She looks at clock)* Eight o'clock....Lynn will be bringing Robbie back around nine - that gives me time to nip down to the shops.

(She moves U.C. and stops in doorway B.C.)

If you want anything.....

SARAH: I'm okay for now, thanks.

(LIZZIE exits through door B.C.)

(SARAH waits for a second then gets up. She prowls around the room, quietly opening drawers and cupboards peering quickly in then closing them. Picking up a photograph displayed on top of the dresser she looks at it for a long time then replaces it carefully. She moves L. and stands at Robbie's doorway. She leans into the room, stares for a few seconds, then with a shudder she comes C. and sits back at table continues to drink her coffee. She picks up the newspaper and flicks through it)

(The telephone rings)

(SARAH is startled, she looks around the room for it. She stands up, undecided whether to answer it. Finally she walks U.C. to dresser L. and picks it up)

SARAH: Hello?No - it's Sarah. No....she's in the shower, shall I get her for you? I see.....yes, I'll tell her.....Bye...

(She comes back D.C. and sits at table)

(LIZZIE enters through door B.C. She is wearing a skirt and blouse, a shoulder bag hangs from her arm. She comes D.C. and puts a bunch of keys on the table, goes back U.C. and through door B.C. to come back a second later carrying a jacket. She puts this on, smooths her hair with her fingers and comes D.L.)

LIZZIE: Did I hear the phone?

SARAH: Oh, yes....it was Alec....? He'll be over about midday. He'd got a call to make, if you want him he can be reached at the branch office.

LIZZIE: Oh that's fine. He must have got his mother to come over. I'll ring her when I get back - see if the kids are all right. Now....sure there's nothing you want?

(SARAH shakes her head)

Right, I'll be off then. I shouldn't be longer than half an hour.

(LIZZIE picks up keys and exits through door L.C.)

(SARAH sits reading the paper for a few seconds then she gets up, and crosses to R.)

(She stands looking out of the window, deep in thought)

(off stage a door slams)

(SARAH jumps and looks round, nervously)

MRS ROBSON: *(off stage)* It's only me.....I caught the early bus..... couldn't sleep last night...so I thought... might as well get meself up and get on.....

(She stops in doorway L.C. She wears an outdoor coat and carries a shopping bag) Oh.....where's Lizzie?

SARAH: She's just gone to the shops.

(MRS ROBSON comes into room)

MRS ROBSON: She's out early, I don't suppose she slept much, either - she'll have bin worryin' her head off about that poor boy.....You'll be Sarah.

SARAH: Yes.

MRS ROBSON: Yes.....I can see it now, you've a look of your mother about you, now you've grown up.

(MRS ROBSON comes C. below table)

SARAH: Have I?

MRS ROBSON: Oh yes.....she were a real beauty too, when she were younger - not that she lost her looks when she got older. No.... it were having that poor boy that aged her - made her old before her time.....you home for good, then?

(SARAH stares at her in bewilderment)

Well? what are you gawping at?

SARAH: Gawping?

MRS ROBSON: Aye....you're standing there looking proper gob smacked. You don't remember me - do you?

(She puts her bag down, takes off her coat goes U.C. through B.C. doorway and hangs it in hall. She comes back D.R. and stands in archway)

(SARAH shakes her head)

SARAH: No...no I don't, should I?

MRS ROBSON: Well, bless y'soul. Fancy not remembering me. My word....I remember you.....like it were yesterday.

ROBBIE: ACT 1 Scene 1

- SARAH: I'm sorry.....it's been a long time.
- MRS ROBSON: And not a day went by but what your mum didn't regret letting you go with your aunty.
- SARAH: Did she?
- MRS ROBSON: Oh aye.....
- SARAH: I didn't know.
- (MRS ROBSON goes into kitchen)*
- MRS ROBSON: I'll have to brew up before I start....
- (after a few seconds she comes out and stands in archway)*
- yes, you were t'apple of their eye. Broke their hearts when you went so far away, things were never t'same. Course they had that poor boy to care for....but it were a poor exchange....
- SARAH: I was always under the impression they were glad to see the back of me.
- MRS ROBSON: Never! Where did you go and get an idea like that from?
- (She goes into kitchen and comes out with a mug and teapot goes L. to table, places it in the centre, goes U.R. and gets a tin of biscuits out of cupboard. She comes D.C. to table, sits L. and pours tea)*
- (She opens tin, helps herself to a biscuit)*
- No....they were that torn apart....but when your Aunt Kate said she'd tek you back with her, it seemed best at t'time. You'd been a real varmint since that poor boy was born.... they couldn't cope with you.
- SARAH: *(smiles)* I remember always being in trouble.
- MRS ROBSON: Trouble? You were a right little devil and no mistake.....still by t'look of you, you seem to have come t'no harm.
- SARAH: So, where do you fit into all this?
- MRS ROBSON: Where do I fit in? Well, bless y'soul, I don't know where they'd 'ave been without me - nobody else wanted to know.....*(She sips her tea)*
- We moved in next door - to where you used to live - now let's see.....it'd be when my Frank retired - a few months before she had that poor boy. She needed looking after - she weren't a well woman. I spent more time round at your house

than I did at me own. *(She dunks her biscuit into her tea)* 'Course you'd be at school...and I always made meself scarce before your dad came home.... I'm not one to intrude. After that poor boy was born I used to go in and do a bit of cleaning like - help out. They needed somebody at hand.....

(She takes a quick gulp of tea)course if they'd have been mine I'd 'ave fetched one of your sisters back from that there college, to help out....but your mum wouldn't hear of it....and there y'see, I've bin helpin' out ever since.

SARAH: *(bemused)* I wish I could remember, but I can't seem to recall much about that time at all. Just very hazy memories.

MRS ROBSON: It's called wilful amnesia that is...when you forget summat you don't want to remember.

SARAH: *(smiles)* Really?

MRS ROBSON: 'Course it's understandable in your case. You had all the limelight taken off you when that poor boy was born. By 'eck....you were a little madam. I used to say, 'what she needs is a good smacking' but y'poor mum wouldn't raise a finger to you.....Now y'Dad, well.....he were a different matter - he'd 'ave peppered your backside.....

SARAH: I remember him shouting at me - he always seemed to be shouting.

MRS ROBSON: Yes....he had a temper on him when he chose, though he were a good man....*(She fumbles in her pocket, takes out a man's hanky and blows her nose)* I can't believe the pair of them won't come walking through that door any minute....

SARAH: Don't cry.....

MRS ROBSON: *(sharply)* I'm not....I've done all me crying. *(She stands up)* Well, I can't sit here for ever....are you going round like that all day? Lynn'll be bringing that poor boy back in a minute, you don't want to be seen in y'nightclothes.

SARAH: Er...no....I'll go and have a shower.

(SARAH exits quickly through door B.C.)

(MRS ROBSON goes into kitchen and comes back with a wooden box, she takes out a duster and polish. Vigorously, she starts to spray and dust)

MRS ROBSON: Looks as though a puff of wind'd blow her away... shouldn't think she'll be much use round here.

(off stage a door opens. There is the sound of a wheelchair being brought in)

LYNN: *(off Stage)* Lizzie? We're back....

(LYNN MORTIMER appears at Robbie's door, she is a very capable looking woman of thirty four, sensibly dressed. She looks around for Lizzie)

Oh....hello Mrs Robson, is Lizzie around?

MRS ROBSON: She's down at shops by all accounts. *(lowers her voice)* She's here.... having a shower at the minute.

LYNN: What's she like?

MRS ROBSON: Very pretty.....like her mum. But delicate like.

LYNN: Oh....before I forget, Robbie seems a little bit chesty.....but he's had all his usual treatments....

(She comes D.L. and stands below table)

Having that extension onto his room's made all the difference, hasn't it? It's a lot easier bringing the chair in that way. I used to dread getting it up those front steps.

MRS ROBSON: Aye, it saves me going right the way round an' all. Was he any trouble?

LYNN: Funny you should ask that....not trouble exactly, but he keeps making that noise.

MRS ROBSON: Oh dear! You've not had a lot of sleep then.

LYNN: Well, it was only for one night. I don't mind, it gave Lizzie a rest - she's had more than enough to cope with. Is there any tea in that pot? I could do with a drink. With getting the kids off to school and seeing to Robbie, I haven't had time.

MRS ROBSON: I'll get another cup.

(She goes R. to kitchen and comes out with another cup and saucer, brings it to table and pours out tea, she passes it to Lynn)

He seems to be quiet now.

(LYNN still standing, sips tea)

ROBBIE: ACT 1 Scene 1

- LYNN: Thanks....it's the car ride, it always sends him off.....do you know I think he's lost some weight. The straps on the car seat seemed a bit loose.
- MRS ROBSON: Aye....I thought that - yesterday, happen he's fretting a bit. Are you staying until she comes in?
- (She sits at table again)*
- LYNN: I may as well...I'd like to meet her. I'll just go and see if he's all right.
- (Lynn goes U.L. into Robbie's room)*
- (SARAH enters through door B.C.)*
- (She wears a very attractive pink silk suit. Her hair and makeup are perfect. She looks around)*
- SARAH: Has Lizzie come back?
- MRS ROBSON: No....that's Lynn, she looks after that poor boy sometimes. She's brought him back.....go and see him....they're in there. *(She points to L.C.)*
- SARAH: *(looks frightened)* No....I'll wait.
- MRS ROBSON: He won't hurt you, you know.
- SARAH: It isn't that....I just don't feel like seeing him yet, that's all!
- MRS ROBSON: You'll have to get used to him, if you're going to be any help.
- (SARAH comes down D.R. and sits in armchair. She picks up a magazine, ignoring Mrs Robson)*
- (LYNN comes back in)*
- LYNN: Hello, you must be Sarah....I'm Lynn.
- SARAH: Hello Lynn, pleased to meet you.
- LYNN: I'm sorry you've had to come home at such a dreadful time.
- SARAH: Yes....thank you.
- LYNN: Lizzie's been marvellous, coping with everything.
- SARAH: Yes...so I understand.
- (LYNN puts cup down on table)*

ROBBIE: ACT 1 Scene 1

LYNN: Well, I'd better go.... Tell Lizzie about his chest, won't you, Mrs Robson? I'll catch up with her later.

(She exits through door L.C.)

MRS ROBSON: *(calls after Lynn)* Aye, I will... take care now.... *(then to Sarah)* She's a real brick, that one. Five children of her own, she's got, and always ready to lend an'and with that boy. She was the only one your mum would trust with him outside the family - except me - that goes without saying. Yes...she's a real treasure, and she's not got an'usband y'know....he ran off with some dolly daydream two or three years back... but does she complain? No! You never hear her say a bad word against him, a real Christian she is, and she has a such a struggle to make ends meet.

SARAH: Really?

(off stage an outer door shuts)

LIZZIE: *(off stage)* Hello, poppet. Don't you look posh... be a good boy now and I'll be back in a minute.

(LIZZIE enters through door L.C. carrying box of groceries.)

Quick, let me put this down, it's heavy!

(She comes C. nearly dropping the box on table Massaging her shoulders she looks at Sarah)

You look rather smart.

SARAH: Not knowing what your plans are, I didn't know what to wear.

LIZZIE: Oh, that's fine....although you might have been more comfortable in jeans and a sweater. I did wonder whether you'd want to go up to the cemetery before the others come.

SARAH: Er...I hadn't thought.

LIZZIE: Well, do you or don't you? There were some beautiful wreathes and flowers. It might help, you know.

SARAH: Would you come with me?

LIZZIE: Of course! You'll watch Robbie, won't you, Mrs R?

MRS ROBSON: That's what I'm here for. *(to Sarah)* You go and put something more sensible on, my girl - it blows right through you, up there.

SARAH: *(smiles)* If you say so.

(SARAH goes U.C. and exits through door B.C.)

MRS ROBSON: I can't see that she's going to be much use to you.

(LIZZIE picks up box and goes into kitchen)

LIZZIE: Give her a chance, she must be feeling very strange.

MRS ROBSON: *(raises her voice)* She wouldn't go in and see that poor boy.

(LIZZIE comes out of kitchen and stand R.)

LIZZIE: There's plenty of time for that. We mustn't push her, Mrs R. Now, leave her alone....okay?

MRS ROBSON: You're too soft you are, always was. She ought to be made to see where her duty lies. You and Jane have got your own families to look after.

LIZZIE: We'll work something out. You haven't said anything to her, have you?

MRS ROBSON: Me? She's only been out the bathroom two minutes before you came in.

LIZZIE: Well, remember what I've said. I don't want her upsetting.

MRS ROBSON: Bah! I'll go and do that poor boy's room.

(She crams her polish and duster into her box and goes to L.C. then turns at doorway to face Lizzie)

Just think on, Lizzie....just think on!

(She goes into Robbie's room)

(SARAH enters door B.C. she is now dressed in designer jeans and sweatshirt, she carries a leather jacket over her arm and a silk head square in her hand)

LIZZIE: Ready? Right, we've got plenty of time before the others come - Oh...I'll just ask Mrs R something.

(She goes L. to doorway L.C. and leans into room.)

Mrs R? Will you do a few fresh sandwiches? There's plenty of bits from yesterday, you can put those out as well. You're an angel...

MRS ROBSON: *(off stage)* Go on with you....I'll see to everything for when you get back.

ROBBIE: ACT 1 Scene 1
(LIZZIE comes U.L. to doorway B.C.)

LIZZIE: She's got a heart of gold....I don't know what we'd do without her.

(THEY exit through door B.C.)

(MRS ROBSON comes out of Robbie's room and stands L.C. shaking her head)

(A wailing noise comes from behind her. It goes on and on.....as we)

BLACKOUT

ACT 1 SCENE 4

The same day - Afternoon

(As the lights come up: JANE sits right of table, LIZZIE left of table, SARAH D.R. in armchair, is idly thumbing through a magazine. GRAHAM stands R. by kitchen window looking angry. MRS ROBSON is sitting in a chair placed by doorway L.C. she is knitting. On the table are glasses and a couple of half empty wine bottles and the remnants of a snack lunch)

GRAHAM: *(impatiently)* How long is Alec going to be, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: I don't know, do I? He said he'd be here by one. He must have got held up on the motorway.

(GRAHAM paces up and down)

GRAHAM: I've cancelled an important meeting to be here, the least he could do is make the effort to arrive on time.

JANE: Oh darling, don't be so grumpy, it's not Lizzie's fault.

LIZZIE: *(defensive)* He's had a lot of time off work since the accident, you know, while I've stayed here. Someone had to look after my children, we can't afford to send them to boarding school.

JANE: There's no need to be so touchy! Graham didn't mean anything, did you darling? We appreciate you've put your own family on hold whilst you've looked after things here. But you're so capable, I couldn't possibly cope like you do.

LIZZIE: Only because you don't want to. It's not as if you haven't plenty of time, children away for most of the year - I don't know how you do occupy yourself.

JANE: I'm very busy with my committees - it isn't that I don't want to help. I'm just not cut out for that kind of caring. I've done what I can.

MRS ROBSON: Don't you two get falling out now.

JANE: She can be so unfair sometimes. Just because our children go to private schools. She doesn't realise the sacrifices we make so that we can send them there.

LIZZIE: Sacrifices!

JANE: Yes!

SARAH: Is this going to turn into some kind of family feud?

JANE: Oh you'll soon learn that our Lizzie isn't all sweetness and light, are you sister dear?

(LIZZIE gets up and goes U.L.)

LIZZIE: That's right. I'll just go and look at Robbie.

(MRS ROBSON puts knitting down)

MRS ROBSON: I'll see to him.

LIZZIE: No, it's all right, you carry on with your knitting.

(She goes through into Robbie's room and can be heard talking)

SARAH: Why does she talk to him all the time?

JANE: She always has done - swears he understands her.

SARAH: But he can't, can he?

JANE: I've no idea whether he can or can't. But who am I to disillusion her?

(off stage an outer door slams. ALEC JONES enters through door B.C. He is a big, handsome, athletic type aged 40. He wears a cravat, sports jacket and trousers - a real ladies' man. He has an attractive Welsh accent. He comes quickly D.C.)

ALEC: God! I'm sorry, some crazy fool decided to come the wrong way up a dual carriageway.... it was chaos I tell you, chaos!

ROBBIE: ACT 1 Scene 1

(He looks apologetically at the assembled company, his gaze resting on Sarah)

He...llo, you must be Sarah. They didn't tell me you were such a beauty.

GRAHAM: Cut the crap, Alec. We're here to discuss something serious, not form an admiration society.

(ALEC still looks at Sarah)

ALEC: As you will, Boyo, as you will. *(He tears his gaze away)*
Where's Lizzie?

(LIZZIE enters through door L.C.)

LIZZIE: Here, what held you up?

ALEC: A kamikaze driver. Anyway, I'm here now. How have the proceedings gone, has anything been decided?

LIZZIE: We've been waiting for you. So, now you're here we can get down to business.

ALEC: I hope it's not going to take all afternoon. I've got to meet the kids at half past three, I promised I'd take them for a pizza.

LIZZIE: Alec! That'll be the third time this week. Can't your mother cook a decent tea for them?

ALEC: She's busy. Anyhow it won't hurt them, they'll appreciate your cooking all the more when you eventually come home. Incidentally, when will that be?

(LIZZIE comes D.C.)

LIZZIE: Tomorrow, if you'd let me bring Robbie! Have you eaten?

ALEC: I grabbed a bite on the motorway.

(He goes D.L. sits in armchair.)

Mind you, I could use a cup of coffee.