

HERE WE GO ROUND THE ROUNDABOUT

A comedy in two acts

by

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HERE WE GO ROUND THE ROUNDABOUT

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HERE WE GO ROUND THE ROUNDABOUT

Characters

Harry.....	<i>Late 30s</i>
Satnav.....	<i>40's/50's</i>
Ellie.....	<i>20/30s</i>
Heather.....	<i>50's</i>
Graham.....	<i>30's</i>
Uncle Alban.....	<i>60's</i>
Aunt Sheena.....	<i>50/ 60s</i>
Police Constable: male/female.....	<i>Any adult age</i>

The scenes of the play take place in Harry's bedsitter and Heather's sitting room in London suburbia.

ACT 1

Scene 1 – A weekday morning and a couple of hours later.

Scene 2 – The following Saturday, teatime.

ACT 11

The same day - afternoon, evening.

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Time – the present

Note: It is not necessary for GRAHAM and UNCLE ALBAN to look exactly alike. But certain similarities are necessary e.g. height, build and age and of course, the bald wigs.

Note: Satnav is a Tom Tom – a satellite navigator. For this play, a male voice over.

*Note: *Taken from Winston Churchill's Speech 1941 on visiting Harrow School.*

SYNOPSIS

Harry, an aspiring out of work young actor, is very behind with the rent for his bed-sitting room.

Desperate for money, he hatches a plot to persuade his stepfather Alban, a retired bank manager, to come to his rescue. Alban arrives only to discover that Harry's attractive landlady is an old flame of his, a woman who still arouses past passions. When they all meet in Heather's sitting room, together with Harry's pregnant girl-friend, hilarious complications ensue. A Sat Nav, which refuses to switch off and insists on giving advice, adds to the fun.

Comedy – adult group

5 males, 3 females (The police constable can be played by a man or woman)

2 sets: bedroom/sitting room

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SCENE: It is seven am on a fine spring day: An untidy, slightly shabby bedsitter on the first floor of a large Victorian house situated in the heart of London suburbia. There are two main entrances: Stage right, a door leading from bedsit to landing and centre back, a large French window leading onto a fire escape and the front of the house. Downstage right is door leading to bathroom off. There is a chest of drawers SR. USR is a wardrobe. SL is a double bed occupied by HARRRY. Beside the bed is a small table with a landline telephone on it, a pad and pencil some small change and a mobile phone. On the other side of bed, is an upright chair on which are scattered some of his clothes. Downstage right is a small table on which sits a kettle, two mugs and a jar of coffee, sugar etc.

When the play opens, HARRY is seen in bed, fast asleep. HARRY is a thwarted actor, highly charged, and prone to moments of desperation, which manifest themselves in wild schemes. While his temperament is mercurial, domineering and impulsive, he also has a loveable side, is vague, with an appalling sense of direction: HARRY is a cross between a Rottweiler and a spaniel! The room is silent and the curtains are open, throwing the early morning light across the room. Suddenly out of the silence, we hear a voice coming from the direction of the chest of drawers. It is HARRY'S satellite navigator.

SAT: Go right on roundabout, take the third exit.

Pause

SAT: Go right on roundabout, take the third exit.

HARRY stirs.

SAT: Bear left at the next set of traffic lights.

HARRY flings back the covers and heads for the chest. He opens the top drawer just as the message is repeated a third or fourth time and fetches out a Satellite Navigator. He fiddles with it trying to locate the switch. Eventually satisfied that he has turned it off, he puts it back in the same drawer before climbing back into bed and settling himself for sleep.

Silence

SAT: Then right round the roundabout and turn left.

HARRY, furious,, jumps out of bed, rushes over to the chest and grabs the navigator just as:

SAT: Then right round the roundabout and turn left.

HARRY: (switches it off) Got you, you bastard! (Throws SAT on top of chest and returns to bed.

Silence

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The alarm clock rings. HARRY groans turns over and pulls the covers over his head.

Silence

The telephone rings. He swears, flings back the covers, switches off alarm clock and answers phone on bedside table.

HARRY: What time d'ya call this!...My early morning call?... Did I? Sorry. Thanks.

He replaces the phone, climbs out of bed, draws the curtains, grabs a pair of jeans from the bedside chair, and puts them on over his pyjama bottoms whilst making for the bathroom. A few moments later HARRY returns to the bedroom dressed in a lollipop man's uniform: hat and a hi vis jacket. He opens the wardrobe and fetches out a lollipop stick. After collecting some change and his mobile phone from the bedside table, he looks miserably around the room before letting himself out through the window and onto the fire exit.

Moments pass. There is the sound of a key in the door and ELLIE enters. She is dressed in jeans and a tea shirt; is young and pretty, possesses a lively, but temperamental personality and has a penchant for using pet names. She and HARRY argue volubly, possess equal amounts of passion and fury, and are, as a consequence, irrevocably attracted to one another. She fetches out her mobile phone and dials.

ELLIE: Debbie, hi! Anything for me?Freckles the Frog?...No, I haven't played Freckles the Frog. Isn't there anything else? A speaking part? A human being even?... Harry? Yes, he's gone.....A lollipop man... Hackney. You know that! You booked him. ..No, I don't know what time he left, I've just arrived at his flat. He probably went by car. Hang on, I'll check.

She goes to chest, opens top drawer and peers inside before returning to phone.

His sat nav's here, so I guess he's gone by train, or bus. Why? Is he late or something?... Lost? Probably - Harry could get lost climbing out of bed. Anyway, nothing doing then, apart from Freckles the Frog?...Well, what does she have to do?...Hop about the supermarket giving out lollipops? I thought that was part of Harry's job ...The lollipop man, you know! *(Laughs)* Okay. I'll say yes then. What time do I report? *(She looks at watch)* Yes, I should be able to make it by then....Have I any waders? *(Cross)* No, I don't have any waders Debbie. I never tried snorkeling. What's the address? Hang on.

ELLIE puts down phone and goes in search of paper and pencil. She finds a pad and pencil on bedside table and takes down the address.

Right. Got that. Thanks. I'll ring in again tomorrow. 'Bye.

She switches off phone and puts it in her pocket. Tears off sheet from pad, places that in pocket. Now returns pad to side table. She goes to her overnight bag, takes out a nightdress and fondly places it on a pillow next to where HARRY sleeps. ELLIE looks around the room before exiting through via the door, leaving her overnight bag on the floor.

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Lights fade to black.

Lights up: A couple of hours later.

HARRY enters via the fire escape. He is breathless. He goes to the landline phone and dials.

At last! Debbie! It's Harry. Look, I'm sorry but I just couldn't find Rose Farm Lane. It doesn't seem to exist. I asked everyone in the area and they said they'd never heard of it. Apparently there's a Rose Farm Lane on the outskirts of Inverness, but not Hackney. Are you sure you got the address right?...Calm down Debbie! I did try ringing you, over and over, but the line was busy, I just couldn't get through...My texts come out garbled...I dropped me mobile down the lavatory pan... Are you sure you got the address right?...Well, I searched and searched but nothing doing, so in the end I had to come home....Yes, I daresay there *are* twenty children waiting to cross the road....Yes, and a film crew with a catering van....And a lighting man! Yes Debbie, and two hundred lollipops but I COULDN'T FIND IT! ...What? Go back? You've got to be joking! Not unless you send a cab for me, I'm not... No?... Then no!

He slams down phone, takes off his uniform which he flings on the bed, deposits the lollipop stick back in the wardrobe, picks up the kettle and storms into the bathroom. We hear running water as he fills kettle, returns and plugs it into a socket to make tea or coffee.

SAT: *(from drawer)* Mucked up again, Harry?

HARRY: Oh shut up!

SAT NAV: You should have taken me with you.

HARRY: I forgot. And your batteries need changing.

SAT: Yes, I do feel a bit low.

HARRY: Anyway, a fat lot of good you are.

SAT: Only because you don't listen to my instructions. If I say turn right at the next roundabout, I mean, turn right at the next roundabout; I do not mean carry on for three miles until you hit a one way street. Why, Harry, why?

HARRY: *(miserably)* I don't know. I guess I think I'm smarter than I am.

SAT: You can't afford to be smart, Harry. You know that.

HARRY: I'm an actor. I have to tell myself I'm smart, otherwise where would I be?

SAT: Down another one way street, I guess.

HARRY: I Went to RADA. For God's sake!

SAT: You did.

HARRY: I've played Shakespeare and Ben Johnson.

SAT: You have indeed.

HARRY: And where's it got me?

SAT: We all have to start somewhere.

HARRY: Yes but *where*, that's the point. I had hopes, I had dreams. I never thought I'd end up playing a lollipop man who couldn't find his crossing. Do you know Sat, in the last six weeks I've played a headless chicken, a jar of marmite, a giant pizza, a Coxes Pippin, a pumpkin and a purple banana. I don't even get to play characters – like Elvis for instance – I'd be good doing him or Old Mother Riley, there's another

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one - Lots of dialogue there. But do I get cast? Not a chance. For some unknown, unspecified reason, our Debbie gives those little gems to Graham with the oversized tonsils. And he's fucking awful. I bet it's because he's a stack of fancy dress costumes squirreled away in his cupboard.

SAT: How come?

HARRY: His mother had a fancy dress shop, and when she sold up she let him have half her stock. He gets more money than the rest of us for bringing his own gear to the shoots: The jammy bastard.

SAT: You're jealous!

HARRY: Of that little creep? You've got to be joking! He's no acting talent. He could no more impersonate Al Capone than I could do a Woodpecker on heat. The agency calls itself Character Castings, but what sort of character does a tomato have? Tell me that. Eh?

SAT: Then make it a character, Harry: A squashed tomato, for instance, run over by a seventy two bus. Did it know its Highway Code or was it a green tomato? What was its background? How many tomatoes were there in the family? And were they greenhouse reared, or more commonly brought to life via a grow bag?

HARRY: I'm pissed off, Sat. Buggered! (*He notices ELLIE'S bag on floor, smiles and moves it into a far corner of the room*)

SAT: Why couldn't you find your way today?

HARRY: I tried. Really, I did. I took the main line train to Hackney Central, turned right at the station exit, walked to the end of the road, turned left at the traffic lights, left again - or was it right? Anyway, there were some crossroads somewhere along the line, and I do remember passing a landfill next to three very pretty thatched cottages... And then there was this style. Odd, I thought. Well anyway, I climbed this style and landed in a field of cows.

SAT: Are you sure you were in Hackney, Harry?

HARRY: Not any more. No.

SAT: You should have taken me with you.

HARRY: Stop saying that! I forgot.

SAT: Programme me right, and I will serve you right.

HARRY: Yeh! Yeh!

SAT: What about your car?

HARRY: You keep falling off my windscreen. The suction thing doesn't suck.

SAT: Then learn to read a map.

HARRY: I'm useless at maps, and you'd be out of a job.

Knock on door.

HEATHER enters. She is single, attractive and kind but there is a slight steeliness to her nature, possibly developed over years of coping single handedly with life.

HEATHER: Hello Harry.

HARRY: Hello Heather.

HEATHER: Harry, I must ask you to stop using the fire escape as a means of exit. What is wrong with using your own door and exiting via the front? That is what doors are for.

HARRY: The fire escape's quicker.

HEATHER: But it looks so awful.

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HARRY: I don't see why.

HEATHER: It gives the wrong impression.

HARRY: And what sort of impression would that be?

HEATHER: Well, for a start, anyone could be entering my premises without my knowing.

HARRY: Ah! Ladies of the night, you mean.

HEATHER: Possibly.

HARRY: But I'm not a lady of the night, Heather, in case you hadn't noticed.

HEATHER: I don't like people running up and down my fire escape, unless absolutely necessary. Is that clear? Fire escapes are for use in the event of fire. People must wonder what on earth's going on here. You were spotted this morning rushing down two steps at a time brandishing a lollipop stick. It's got to stop Harry. I'm very annoyed.

HARRY: Sorry Heather.

HEATHER: The other reason I dropped by is to ask for my rent. It's overdue Harry. Six weeks overdue.

HARRY: I don't have the readies, Heather. Sorry, can you give me a bit more time?

HEATHER: You take advantage of my good nature, Harry. I won't put up with it any more.

HARRY: I always pay in the end.

HEATHER: I'll give you until next Monday at the latest. Otherwise I've someone who'd very much like your room. Understood?

HARRY: Next Monday! But it's Wednesday already. I won't have it by next Monday. It's too soon. Couldn't you stretch it a bit?

HEATHER: I have stretched it. I've over stretched. I fully understand your precarious position. But I need to make a living too. Next Monday, all right? Otherwise, your room goes to another gentleman and I'll be forced to take further action.

HARRY: Hey! That's a bit rich. Where's the notice? Surely I get some notice.

HEATHER: There was no contract, Harry. Your room was rented out on a weekly basis and on the proviso that you would pay up weekly. It is now six weeks since I received a cheque, or cash. I've been more than tolerant. I've been a saint. So, pay up or Graham gets this bedsitter.

HARRY: Graham? Did you say Graham?

HEATHER: Yes. I did.

HARRY: Is he an actor, like me with an unhealthy pair of tonsils?

HEATHER: I haven't inspected his throat, Harry. He's in work and that's all that interests me.

HARRY: My God! Graham! Talk about rubbing salt in the wound.

HEATHER makes for door. She turns.

HEATHER: Next Monday, all right?

HARRY: *(sighs)* All right! Got the message.

HEATHER exits. HARRY picks up ELLIE'S nightdress and absent mindedly strokes it before putting it back on the pillow.

SAT: Bad luck Harry!

HARRY: Shut up, Sat! I've got to think.

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SAT: You'd better.

HARRY: I suppose I'll have to go crawling back to Debbie.

SAT: I suppose you will, Harry.

HARRY goes to landline phone and dials.

Debbie?... Hi. It's Harry again.... I know, I know. I'm sorry I slammed the phone down earlier....*(Holds the phone away from him)* Please don't shout, Debbie, I've sensitive ear drums. I suppose you've given the lollipop man to someone else by now... Of course you have... Yes, I'm massively sorry... There's no need to SHOUT Debbie. The thing is, I'm behind with the rent, and need a job most desperately... Yes, I know I should have thought of that before.... Yes, I know. Bad temper – it runs in the family. My cousin once removed suffered from fearsome rages caused by a lack of vitamin C... I've run out Debbie. Can't afford vitamins Debbie – down to bread and marmite, Debbie.... Please Debbie! Haven't you got anything? What about 'Bug of the Month'?... A Death Watch Beetle? I can be a death watch beetle, no probs.... What? You've given it to Graham? Slumming it a bit, isn't he? Nothing else in the pipeline then? Surely there must be something. Something local would be nice. I won't get lost if it's local... No, no, all right, then don't. Yes, I'm unreliable. Yes, I'm a shit and yes I...*(stops)* You won't strike me off your books, will you Debbie?*(Pause)* Debbie? Are you there? Debbie!*(Puts down phone)* Shit!

SAT: Temper!

HARRY goes to SAT picks him up and starts to throttle him. We hear gurgles and pops as SAT 'fights for his life.' HARRY opens the chest and flings SAT into the top drawer which he leaves open.

SAT: *(muffled)* You must try to curb your temper, Harry.

HARRY: I've got to get hold of some money! And I've got till next Monday. Right?

SAT: Right.

HARRY: I can't get work from that agency. Right?

SAT: Right.

HARRY: So, there's only one thing for it.

SAT: What's that Harry?

HARRY: I'll have to rob a bank.

SAT: Better make it your local then.

HARRY: It can't be my local. I'll get nicked. No, I shall have to go far afield.

SAT: You'll never find it.

HARRY: What?

SAT: The field.

HARRY: I'll take you with me.

SAT: But you don't like me.

HARRY: I didn't say that.

SAT: You've just tried to murder me.

HARRY: You mustn't take it personally. *(Lifts SAT out and tenderly places him on top of chest.)*

SAT: And I don't stick onto your dashboard.

HARRY: That's a minor issue. You're coming with me and that's that.

SAT: It's not a good idea, Harry. Not good at all.

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HARRY: I'm a desperate man, Sat.

SAT: What about Ellie?

HARRY: What about her?

SAT: She won't approve.

HARRY: She needn't know.

SAT: But if she finds out, she won't love you anymore.

HARRY: She won't find out. Not if I'm careful.

SAT: But what will you do with all that money? Banks are full of the stuff. You'll never cope.

HARRY: Good point. I'll dump most of it and keep just enough to pay my rent and a bit extra for having pulled it off.

SAT: Where will you dump it? Not here. And then you will forget where you've put it.

HARRY: Now the question is which bank and where?

SAT: Banks are secure places, Harry. You don't have the expertise to rob anything bigger than a fruit machine, and you'd never find your way into that.

HARRY: Look Sat. I don't want to rob a bank. I don't like the idea any more than you do. Stealing from people's savings and accounts stinks, it really stinks. But it's a question of survival. I have a perfectly acceptable bed sit, complete with a fire escape, running water and a girlfriend who sleeps with me when her electric metre runs out. It's a crime to let that all go just because I can't pay the rent. Besides which, I have to eat. A man has to do what a man has to do. So Sat, are you with me or against me?

SAT: Don't you think you're being a bit extreme, a bit over ambitious? Why don't you go for something less spectacular, like robbing the local green grocers, or nicking a few bob from the church collection plate?

HARRY: I don't go to church, Sat, and the only vegetables I buy are frozen.

SAT: Then ask Ellie for a loan.

HARRY: I suppose I could. But I hate asking her for money. I did it once before, to pay for going on Debbie's books. Ellie's nearly as hard up as I am.

SAT: What about your parents?

HARRY: I haven't got any.

SAT: That's sad, Harry.

HARRY: Not really. I've got a very nice uncle and aunt who brought me up and made me what I am today.

SAT: Oh! So what happened to your folk?

HARRY: They were killed in a car accident. So I went to live with my mother's sister and her husband. I had a very comfortable and loving upbringing.

SAT: What does your Uncle do?

HARRY: He's a retired bank manager.

SAT: Then why don't you ask him for a loan?

HARRY: Mm. I suppose I could. It's just that they think I'm more successful than I really am.

SAT: Surely not!

HARRY: Well, yes they do. They've no idea that I play the parts of various vegetables and sauce bottle and that I hang about supermarkets with a stupid grin on my face, handing out free samples.

SAT: No?

HARRY: No. They think that I live in the lap of luxury, all financed by a thriving career acting my socks off in commercials that are recorded here and shown abroad. I had to make it overseas, you see, because then there was less risk of being found out.

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SAT: A fool proof lie.

HARRY: I'm a fraud, I know. They're decent folk. Boast about me to their friends. They even carry a photo of me around in their pockets. No, if I ask uncle for a loan, it'll look odd.

SAT: Even the rich hit hard times. It's worth a try Harry, and it would save you the anguish of robbing a bank. And seeing that your uncle was a bank manager, how would you explain yourself to him if you were caught?

HARRY: It would probably kill Auntie.

SAT: And ruin your uncle's reputation.

HARRY: Absolutely. Yes, I see your point.

SAT: Then what can you say to them?

HARRY: Let's see. *(Pause)* I've hit on hard times. My contract with the commercial company....now what can I call them?

SAT: Compton and Issacs?

Harry: Compton and Issacs, yes. My contract with Compton and Issacs has not been renewed owing to, owing to...

SAT: Owing to the fact that you are going bald.

HARRY: Bald? Nonsense. *(Looks in mirror)* Thinning slightly, perhaps, but nowhere near bald.

SAT: You are hardly up for the quintessential juvenile leads any more though, are you?

HARRY: Mm. I suppose not. *(Thinks to himself)* I wonder if that's why I was turned down as Hamlet in Stockton On Tees. Do you think Hamlet was going thin on top?

SAT: Keep to the point Harry.

HARRY: And then I'll tell Uncle that I'm behind with the rent.

SAT: You pay rent?

HARRY: What do you think this is all about? You know I do.

SAT: But as a successful artiste, wouldn't you own your property?

HARRY: Not necessarily. I might roam about – renting a villa here, a chateau there – on the hoof as it were, from location to location.

SAT: Or you might lease a property.

HARRY: True.

SAT: Very well. Let's recap. You are a balding male, who has been ditched by a top commercial company owing to a lack of thatch.

HARRY: Thatch?

SAT: Hair! You can no longer afford to live the life style to which you had grown accustomed. You are low on funds and throwing yourself at your uncle's feet.

HARRY: Put like that Sat, it makes me out to be a fucking loser.

SAT: Have your aunt and uncle ever visited this house?

HARRY: No. Next Saturday they're taking me to The Savoy Grill for a slap up dinner. I'll arrange to meet them outside the hotel. Can't have them coming here!

SAT: You will need to convince them that this is your property.

HARRY: Here? This room's hardly the sort of pad a bloke in my so called position would live. No, no. It's all too difficult.

SAT: Not half as difficult as robbing a bank.

HARRY: I suppose.

SAT: You could borrow Heather's sitting room. Now there's an idea. Could you get rid of her by Saturday?

HARRY: Murder her, do you mean?

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SAT: Get her out of the house. This bedsit is a no, but Heather has got a very nice front room and the outside of this house is really quite smart. Isn't there a preservation order on it?

HARRY: I hope not. The roof leaks in here in winter. I use a bucket to collect the drips. Anyway, how do you know what Heather's sitting room looks like?

SAT: She borrowed me once while you had a short stint in Bridlington on Sea.

HARRY: Did she indeed!

SAT: Yes, she took me to Plymouth for the day. It was a very smooth journey as I recall. We didn't take one wrong turn.

HARRY: What a cheek! And what a nerve, the old bat going through my drawers! Right! That's it! I'm up for it! I'll use Heather's sitting room to entertain Uncle Alban and Auntie Sheena and then I'll ask him for a loan.

SAT: The question is how to get Heather to go out and stay out. How long are your aunt and uncle likely to stay?

HARRY: Difficult to say. They don't come up to London often, they like to drag it out a bit – makes them feel it's been worth their while. So, if I give them tea that leads us nicely towards dinner, and The Savoy Grill. They usually stay overnight there. And tea shouldn't be a strain. Earl Grey and a few digestive biscuits will probably do the job. What do you think Sat? *(Pause. He shakes the machine)* Sat! Can you hear me Sat?

SAT: At the next junction turn left. Proceed for two miles until you reach a roundabout.

HARRY: Oh for God's sake! *(He turns him off.)*

There is the sound of a key in the door and ELLIE enters carrying a bottle of wine. She flings her bag on the bed, gives HARRY a kiss, goes into the bathroom and comes out with two tooth mugs which she fills. She gives one of them to HARRY before flopping down on the bed.

ELLIE: I'm shagged! *(Drinks)*

HARRY: Must you use that language darling?

ELLIE: Yes. It stank!

HARRY: *(absently)* I can imagine.

ELLIE: No you can't!

HARRY: You worked. Don't complain.

ELLIE: Freddie the Frog!

HARRY: No!

ELLIE: Freddy the Frog!

HARRY: Not Freddie *the* Frog.

ELLIE: Yep.

HARRY: At least you were indoors.

ELLIE: I'd have been better off playing the Abominable Snowman. The supermarket was freezing, and I was next the meat counter. My thighs are screaming too.

HARRY: Why's that?

ELLIE: I had to leap out at customers from behind the biscuits and surprise them with a Froggie Fritter. Debs said lollypops, but they were Froggie Fritters. She never gets anything right, stupid mare! One old boy had to be taken to hospital suffering from shock. I feel so responsible. Do you think I should visit him and take some grapes?

HARRY: *(vague)* What? No. No, I'm sure that won't be necessary.

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Pause

Ellie, did you get paid in cash today, by any chance?

ELLIE: When were we ever paid in cash, Sugar Lump? Nah. It's the usual eight weeks wait.

HARRY: (*crestfallen*) Oh. Yes.

ELLIE: How was *your* day?

HARRY: Don't ask.

ELLIE: You got lost.

HARRY: How d'you know?

ELLIE: I phoned in. Debbie was chomping at the bit. Oh Harry babe!

She drags him down onto the bed and wraps her arms around his neck.

HARRY: Don't call me babe, honey.

ELLIE: OK Pet! (*Pause*) Hey!

HARRY: What?

ELLIE: Ever thought of having therapy?

HARRY: What for?

ELLIE: You lack direction, Sugar Plum.

HARRY: Thanks a lot!

ELLIE: (*sitting up*) Getting lost all the time reflects an inner confusion that manifests itself in precarious mindsets.

HARRY: Ellie, I'm tired. Shut up!

ELLIE: OK.

Pause as they both lie on their backs staring at the ceiling.

HARRY: I don't know how you do it.

ELLIE: What's that?

HARRY: Being so disgustingly jolly – So on the up. Sick making really, but I love yer!

HARRY takes her in his arms and they kiss. He starts to undress her.

HARRY: I'm behind with my rent.

ELLIE slaps him and sits up.

ELLIE: So that's your game!

HARRY: No game. It's the truth, love.

ELLIE: You want me to give you some lol?

HARRY: Did I say that?

ELLIE: No, your hands did.

HARRY: You must have a pretty low opinion of me, if you think that twice in one year I'd ask you for a loan.

ELLIE: Three times.

HARRY: Eh?

ELLIE: There was that four quid I lent you to grease your underside.

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HARRY: Oh yeh, I forgot.

ELLIE: Waste of money that.

HARRY: Too right. Graham got the part. Mind you, he probably made a very good tin of polish – slippery, shiny and toxic.

ELLIE: So what is it this time, Purple Heart?

HARRY: I'm in Debbie's bad books. And Heather's threatened to throw me out if I don't pay a back log of rent by next Monday.

ELLIE: The cow!

HARRY: Anyway, I've come up with an idea.

ELLIE: Does it involve travel?

HARRY: Listen.

ELLIE: I'm listening.

HARRY: On Saturday, my Aunt and Uncle are coming over. I'm going to ask them to lend me the money.

ELLIE: Well, that's all right then.

HARRY: No, but the thing is, I've got to get Heather out of the way.

ELLIE: Why? Does she want a loan too?

HARRY: I want to use her sitting room to entertain them.

ELLIE: (*not comprehending*) Right.

HARRY: They've never been here, you see. They think that I've made a bit of a name for myself making television commercials.

ELLIE: But you haven't.

HARRY: Don't interrupt... That I've made a bit of a name for myself making television commercials which sell abroad.

ELLIE: But you still haven't.

HARRY: Look! Do you want to hear this, or not?

ELLIE: I get it. That way there's no risk of your aunt and uncle finding out that you're a bear faced liar.

HARRY: I'll ignore that remark. Now with the money come the trappings.

Entertaining them in this bed sit, wouldn't tally with my so called success. So I thought I'd entertain them in Heather's sitting room, which is smart and classy.

ELLIE: But why then do you need any money, if you appear to already have it?

HARRY: No, well that's it, you see. I'll tell them that my contract's run out, and I've no ready cash.

ELLIE: Do you think they'll buy into that?

HARRY: Possibly. And they're even more likely to, if you'll play alongside me.

ELLIE: Me?

HARRY: You would be my new and beautiful wife.

ELLIE: I thought you didn't believe in marriage.

HARRY: I don't. But my Aunt and Uncle don't approve of pregnancy outside the matrimonial state.

ELLIE: Pregnancy!

HARRY: You'd be my eight and a half months pregnant wife. You and I have to move out of our lovely home because the lease has run out, or the rent is due, I haven't decided which yet, and you're about to pod.

ELLIE: How far behind are you with the rent, really?

HARRY: Quite a bit, I'm afraid.

ELLIE: As in...?

HARRY: Six weeks.

ELLIE: My God! You must owe a fortune.

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HARRY: In our terms yes - A fortune.

ELLIE: If this pretend lease thing *has* run out, or if you're renting this piky pile, why, with all your so called money, can't you get yourself another pad?

HARRY: Because there's no more money. I spent it all.

ELLIE: On what?

HARRY: Good point. (*Pause*) I know. I'm a generous sort of a guy so I gave a large percentage of it to the, to the... .

ELLIE: To The Spatial Awareness Foundation.

HARRY: Is there one?

ELLIE: No. But they're unlikely to check it out.

HARRY: They might.

ELLIE: Yes, but your sense of direction is so appalling, it would seem feasible to donate to a charity that champions abnormalities of your nature.

HARRY: Thanks a lot.

Pause

ELLIE: It's ehm, funny that you should want me pregnant.

HARRY: Not funny at all, Ellie – Very serious. In fact it will aid the cause. Appeal to uncle's softer side.

ELLIE: Yes, but the thing is, you see. Well, I've been meaning to tell you, you see...

HARRY: Now the thing is how do I persuade Heather to go out and stay out?

ELLIE: This is quite important, Harry.

HARRY: I know it is.

ELLIE: Then will you listen!

HARRY: And for, how long should Heather stay out do you suppose? One hour? Two?

ELLIE: (*irritably*) How should I know?

HARRY: There's no need to take that tone.

ELLIE: Well, you ask such daft questions. And as for your stupid aunt and uncle, you're asking me to do this for a couple I've never even met. I didn't know people had aunts and uncles any more.

HARRY: Don't be so dim! You knew perfectly well that they brought me up. Or don't you ever listen?

ELLIE: Hah! That's rich coming from you.

HARRY: Just because I'm not talking about you for two seconds – just because I'm trying to sort out our financial future...

ELLIE: What financial future! I look after my own financial future, thank you very much. And just as well I do on your poxy income.

HARRY: Yes, well, we're struggling actors, love.

ELLIE: You can say that again. And don't you *love* me!

HARRY: But I do, you sex pot. (*He makes a grab for her*)

ELLIE: (*pulling away*) Sex! That's all you ever think of.

HARRY: Don't fancy your chances, love.

ELLIE: There you go again: Love! Love! Love! You don't know the meaning of the word.

HARRY: And you do, I suppose.

ELLIE: At least I've got a bit of depth.

HARRY: More out of it, you mean.

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ELLIE: Listen here, Einstein. If you'd half the brain you think you have, you'd be acting your socks off in the West End instead of slumming it with some god forsaken agent who thinks Milton is a baby sterilizing fluid and that Shakespeare was born in the West Indies.

HARRY: Milton is a baby sterilizing fluid. Anyway, what great parts have you ever played?

ELLIE: At least I know my playwrights.

HARRY: And I don't, I suppose.

ELLIE: When did you last read a play?

HARRY: (*hesitant*) I read them all the time.

ELLIE: So, who wrote *Krapps last Tape*?

HARRY: Samuel Becket.

ELLIE: Wrong!

HARRY: I'm not wrong!

ELLIE: It was Thomas Becket, you fool!

HARRY: Wrote *Krapps last Tape*?

ELLIE: Yes.

HARRY: Hah!

ELLIE: Don't you hah me!

HARRY: Thomas Becket was in *Becket* and a character in *A Man for all Seasons*, you pint sized plonker.

ELLIE: How dare you call me pint sized, you long streak of bacon!

Loud knock on door. They stop, stare at each other and then at door. After a moment, HARRY answers it. Enter HEATHER accompanied by GRAHAM. GRAHAM is a mild unprepossessing type of man, who is easily intimidated. Perhaps because of his lack of personality and looks, he revels in his collection of fancy dress. He takes his work at Character Castings very seriously, investing time and effort into every job he accepts. GRAHAM has unsuccessfully attempted to refine his accent, which results in the mispronunciation of the odd word.

HEATHER: I'm sorry to disturb your domestic, Harry, but Graham was in the area and wondered if he could take a peek at your room.

HARRY: I'm not dead in the water yet, you know, Heather.

HEATHER: (*smiling sweetly*) No. but you *are* treading it, aren't you, dear?

GRAHAM: I'm sorry to butt in. I just wanted to gauge the dimensions.

GRAHAM starts measuring the room with his feet. He goes into the bathroom, switches the taps on and off then reappears while the others gaze on in silence.

Yes, well I'm sure this would do me nicely, circumstances permitting, of course.

HARRY: (*gives a small mock bow*) Large enough, is it, to accommodate your vast wardrobe?

GRAHAM: Well I eh ...

HARRY throws open the wardrobe.

HARRY: Enough room is there, for your weasel outfit?

GRAHAM: (*uncomfortably*) Yes, I should think so.

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HARRY: And I'm delighted to be able to tell you that there is no Death Watch Beetle in this wood. Is there Heather?

They all stare at him.

A good solid piece of furniture! Right. That's settled then. (*Slams wardrobe door shut*) Now if you you'll excuse me, it's time for my cheese on toast. Incidentally, how was *your* Death Watch Beetle, Graham?

GRAHAM: Awesome.

HARRY: Awesome, was it?

GRAHAM: Fantastic!

HARRY: You must have had a beano – all that fungal decay.

GRAHAM laughs uncomfortably and HEATHER glowers at HARRY.

HEATHER: Right, Graham. Well, if you've seen enough, we'll leave these two to battle it out. Bye Ellie.

ELLIE pushes HARRY forward.

ELLIE: Harry wants to ask you something? Don't you Harry?

HARRY: (*under his breath*) No, I don't!

ELLIE: Yes, you do. That's what you told me. 'I must ask Heather something,' you said.

HARRY: I didn't!

HEATHER: All right then, what is it?

HARRY: I eh ...

HEATHER: Cat got your tongue, Harry?

HARRY: Not at all. I was just wanted you

ELLIE: To meet Harry's aunt and uncle next Saturday. Isn't that right, *love*?

HARRY: NO!

ELLIE: For tea. You said.

HARRY: Nothing of the sort! Heather would be bored witless.

ELLIE: Oh no, she wouldn't. Heather would love your Uncle Alban. He's a... he's a

...

HARRY: Retired bank manager - A very boring retired bank manager.

HEATHER: (*showing sudden interest*) No! No! I'm sure, not boring at all.

HARRY: Extremely boring. And he gets very tired. The two of them like nothing more than to sit and... and ...eh

HEATHER: Read?

GRAHAM: Rot?

ELLIE: Read and rot?

HARRY: Rot! That's it! Dry rot! Their house is full of dry rot. In fact just before Ellie came in, Uncle Alban rang me to say that they'd probably have to cancel Saturday because the pest control people are coming.

ELLIE: It's the weekend. They have weekends off, surely.

HARRY: (*between clenched teeth*) Twenty four hours a day call up, seven days a week, two hours response. All right?

HEATHER: What a shame! I could really do with a bit of advice from a retired bank manager. You never hear of them these days, do you? These days, everything is

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answer phones and computers. You can never see anyone anymore, can you? All faceless, graceless and incompetent. No, to meet a real chip off the old block would be a treat. I was in love with a bank manager once, you know. But he sadly ... *(stops)*

ELLIE: Then you *shall* meet him.

HARRY: *(under his breath)* Fucking fairy godmother now, are we?

HEATHER: I'd like that. How nice.

HARRY: *(under breath to Ellie)* I'll get you for this!

HEATHER: What was that Harry?

HARRY: Nothing.

HEATHER: I'll pop up here on Saturday afternoon, just on the off chance that he might turn up. Is his wife coming?

ELLIE: Oh yes. He never goes anywhere without...eh.

HEATHER: Look, I tell you what. Why not come down to me for tea. My sitting room's much larger, more appropriate for afternoon tea than up here. And I'll make some scones. How about that?

HARRY: There's no assurance that they'll come, Heather.

HEATHER: I know that. You told me that Harry. So, why don't you let me have a word with your uncle? May be I could persuade him?

HARRY: No, it's all right. I'll ring Uncle.

HEATHER: Good.

HARRY: That's settled then. I'll phone him now. *(Pause)* After you've all gone.

HARRY looks pointedly at ELLIE.

ELLIE: Right. I'm off! I know when I'm not wanted.

She snatches up her nightie from the bed, stuffs it into her bag, which she slings over her shoulder before making for the door. She exits followed by HEATHER and GRAHAM.

HARRY picks up his bedside phone and dials: