

**WASPS**

© by

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## WASPS

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# WASPS

## CHARACTERS

Vera	The station cleaner
Sue	The new girl
Freda	Hard-faced German woman who keeps to herself
Maggie	Motherly organizer
Mooney	Part-time comedienne
Belle	Mutton dressed as lamb
Octavia	Well spoken ex-opera singer
Pearl	Shy pigeon lover on the edge of a nervous breakdown

The characters are entirely fictitious and are not based on any person living or dead. The uniforms of UK traffic wardens are black with yellow cap bands and flashes.

# WASPS

## ACT I

(The traffic wardens office in a busy police station. The walls are filled with lockers, a notice board and a full-length mirror. In one corner there is a window with pigeons fluttering about outside and a small table near the door with a telephone on it. At one side to the front there is a large table for report writing and in the centre an old sofa and armchairs

As the lights rise Vera is hoovering and singing to herself when Sue, the new girl, arrives at the open door carrying a suitcase and wearing a long coat with her warden's uniform underneath. She knocks but Vera is too involved to hear....)

Sue           Excuse me...

(the hoovering continues)

Excuse me...

(still no response so she goes up behind her and taps her on the shoulder which causes her to jump)

Vera           Good God!

Sue           I'm sorry

Vera           (Switching off) Don't ever do that again

Sue           Is this wardens' office?

Vera           (Indicating sign on door) Well if it isn't they've put the wrong sign on the door

Sue           I didn't see that - sorry

Vera           No skin off my nose - do y'mind if I carry on?

Sue           Don't let me stop you

Vera           (Clearing the table) Will you look at the state of this place - cups - papers - fag ends - I sometimes wonder what their homes must be like, I really do ... (To Sue) Well don't just stand there, come in - make yourself at home

Sue           Hasn't anyone else arrived yet?

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Vera Only you love. This lot wont be here till the stroke of eight - from eight they get paid and from eight they work - if you can call it work, walking round sticking bits of paper on motor cars - waste of time and money if you ask me... You can take your coat off you know, it is allowed

Sue Oh yes (she does so)

Vera (Seeing the uniform) You're one as well are you? All the gear underneath

Sue I didn't know if I was supposed to wear it to work or not

Vera I shouldn't worry, they come looking like all kinds - you're new then?

Sue Yes

Vera I thought so - first day?

Sue Yes

Vera Well we all have to start somewhere ... but what's a pretty young thing like you doing in that gear?

Sue Doesn't it suit me? Is there something wrong?

Vera Have you seen yourself?

Sue I didn't have time; I was in such a rush

Vera (Indicating mirror) Over there, take a look in the mirror

Sue (Seeing herself for the first time) Oh!

Vera It's you all right - changes you doesn't it? I'll bet you're quite a looker in your own stuff but that black - it wouldn't do for me - still, I suppose they've got to make you look like that or they'd have all the fellahs after you

Sue I suppose so

(Freda comes in purposefully)

Freda (Coldly) Morning

Vera Morning Freda (Confidentially to Sue) German doesn't mix much (To Freda) First again then Freda? Apart from this young lady ... funny how you're always the first

Freda (Getting uniform on for work) I am the first because I wish to be first. What's so strange in that?

Vera Nothing, I just notice these things. You all have your times - first you then Maggie - then the rest of them - every morning like clockwork

Freda I don't find it strange

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Sue Perhaps not "strange" - predictable

Freda You think so? (Pushing past Sue) Excuse me

Sue Sorry

Freda I don't see what's so predictable, I just like being prepared

Vera National trait you know

Freda What?

Vera Being prepared - noted for it, you lot

Freda You generalize, Vera, always you generalise

Vera Do I? You wait and see - any minute through that door it'll be "Greetings Vera!"  
(Right on cue Maggie enters)

Maggie Greetings Vera!

Vera There you are, what did I tell you

Maggie What did you tell them?

Vera She don't believe me - I was telling her about you lot and your routines

Maggie What've you been saying?

Vera Every morning she's first then you - except for today that is

Maggie Hello there! A new face?

Vera A new girl

Maggie (Extending hand) Pleased to meet you - Maggie Benson

Sue Susan, Susan Whittaker, everybody calls me Sue

Maggie Then we shall do the same. (Indicating Freda) Have you met everyone else?

Sue We've not ...

Freda (Not being drawn) Morning

Maggie And of course our own beloved Vera who cleans up after us, washes our cups, empties our ashtrays and generally runs after us like a mother hen

Vera You can say that again - and that reminds me - I want you to tell them others when they come in, I found fourteen fag ends on the floor this morning - fourteen!

Maggie I'll tell them

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- Freda Don't look at me, I'm not a smoker
- Vera I'm not accusing no-one in particular but you just tell them, drop them a 'int - when the floor's full, tell them, they can always use the ash trays!
- Maggie I'll tell them, Vera, but can I also tell you something - when I came in I could have sworn I heard the Chief Inspector asking for you
- Vera Willetts?
- Maggie I might have been wrong - you haven't forgotten his office again?
- Vera Its not a question of forgetting, its a question of time, I've only got the one pair of hands  
-(To Sue) excuse me - you're on me wire
- Sue Sorry
- (Vera chunters to herself as she drags her Hoover out of the door bumping into two other wardens on their way in - the inseparable Belle and Mooney. Mooney is dressed in a grey gabardine (relevant to the later plot))
- Mooney (Swinging Vera round) Shall we dance?
- Vera Gerroff!
- Mooney You all right our kid?
- Vera Out of me way, Willetts wants me
- Belle All right Vera?
- Vera No, I'm not all right (exits chuntering)
- Belle Sorry I spoke
- Mooney What's up with her?
- Maggie She thinks she's in bother again with Willetts
- Mooney And is she?
- Maggie No, but it gets her out of here with that Hoover
- Belle And a good thing too - I can't stand the row
- Freda If she worked at the proper time it wouldn't interfere with anyone
- Mooney Oh yes? And what's the proper time then Adolph?
- Freda Early, very early, before anyone else arrived - it would make more sense
- Mooney Don't you think she's got enough to do?

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Freda She is not overworked

Mooney You don't reckon?

Freda In this country they don't know what hard work is

Mooney Here we go again - (Singing) "Deutschland, Deutschland Uber Alles" - I say, I say - Knock, Knock!

Belle Who's there?

Mooney Adolph

Belle Adolph who?

Mooney (German accent) A dolf ball hit me in ze nose and dats why I talk like zis!  
(Groans from others)

Freda Always you make a joke of everything - and I would be obliged if you would call me by my proper name

Mooney Sorry chuck. (seeing Sue) Now then, who's this?

Maggie This is Susan, the new one they promised us - but she prefers to be called Sue

Mooney Sue eh? (Taking her hand) Well how-de-doo-de-Suzie - pleased to be making your acquaintance, honey child!

Maggie Sue meet Mooney

Sue Mooney?

Mooney That's what they call me chuck. Mad Mooney to my friends and to my enemies (casting a glance at Freda) well the least said about them the better

Maggie And Belle

Sue (Shaking hands) Morning

Belle (Bluntly) You're young aren't you?

Sue Am I?

Mooney Don't be so rude, Belle. Isn't she rude? You'll have to excuse her, her mum ran off with a gypsy and she was brought up in an orphanage

Sue Oh, I'm sorry

Belle She's having you on, love, but you are aren't you?

Sue I don't know...

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Mooney        You were young once, Belle, I know its hard to believe but you were - like I said to this bloke last night, " We all have to start somewhere," I said - you know what he said?

Freda         We do not wish to know what he said

Mooney        I'm not talking to you - he said, "Are you a virgin?" - "Virgin?" I said - 'Vergin' on the ridiculous!" - Well I ask you, at my age? Do I look like a virgin?

Freda         You look what you are - a second rate, part-time comedian in a seedy nightclub

Mooney        You what?

Freda         You asked

Mooney        I'll give you "second rate"

Maggie        (Stepping between them) Now then Mooney, don't start

Mooney        I'll have you Fritz!

Maggie        Sit down and take your coat off

Mooney        (Reluctantly complying) Bloody kraut.

Maggie        You haven't got in the door and you're at each other's throats

Mooney        D'you hear what she said? "Second rate". I'll give you second rate - I'll have you know, frauline, I had a very good offer last night

Freda         The same as your usual offers no doubt

Mooney        No, not the same, a genuine offer from a genuine agent as a matter of fact

Belle         You're joking?

Mooney        I'm not - I'd done my bit at the workmens club - you know, the one I was telling you about - and I was just going to get myself a drink at the bar when this fellah comes up to me and he says - you know what he says? He says, "You're wasted pet"

Belle         You what?

Mooney        "Wasted" he says, "If you keep flogging yourself to death with audiences like these you'll be dead by the time you're fifty"

Belle         And what did you say?

Mooney        What do you think? I said, "Tell me more,"

Sue            (Who has been standing awkwardly holding a heavy suitcase) Excuse me

Mooney        Why? What've you done?

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Sue Can you tell me where to put this?

Money I could, love, but it'd be very painful

Maggie Hey! Just behave - over here love, come on, we'll sort you out

Sue Only I didn't know what to bring, they gave me so much stuff

Maggie Lets find you a locker

Sue I didn't know what I would need so I brought it all - now I feel silly

Maggie (Going to lockers) There's this one - no, the locks broken - or this? - No, there's no hangers - wouldn't you think they'd at least provide us with proper lockers

Sue I can use this one, it doesn't matter about the lock

Maggie It does, love

Sue But it's a police station

Maggie All the more reason for the lock - I know - Beryl's - she's not going to need it any more

Sue Won't she mind?

Mooney She won't mind

Sue Only I don't want to upset anybody

Mooney You wont upset her, chuck; she's packed the poxy job in anyway - run off with the steward of a darts club - now they're looking for her and the club takings!

Maggie (Taking keys from a drawer) Here's the spares (opening the locker) There you go

Sue What do I do with all this that's left?

Mooney I'll show you what you do with it (she grabs a waste bin and throws everything in from the locker) That's what you do!

Maggie Now then, how many for coffee? Belle?

Belle Yes please

Maggie Mooney?

Mooney Yeah

Maggie Freda?

Freda Not for me - I have work to do (and with that she makes her way out)

Mooney Miserable cow

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Maggie            So that's four

Belle             Six - the other two are on their way

Mooney          Maria Callas? (To Sue) You're about to meet royalty, love. Are you sure you're ready for this? (Singing) "Maria, I've just met a girl named Maria"

Octavia          (As she comes in) Your singing is worse than your jokes, Mooney

Mooney          Well I haven't had your training, chuck

Octavia          Morning ladies

Belle             Morning 'Tavia

Mooney          Sue, I want you to meet our very special guest who comes to us direct from La Scala in Milan - the one and only Octavia

Octavia          Oh, so you're the new one are you?

Sue               I'm afraid so

Octavia          (Shaking hands) Pleased to meet you

Mooney          Give us a note Tavia

Octavia          You know what you can do

Mooney          She used to be a singer you know - a proper opera singer – i'n't that right 'Tavia? - she's only guesting with us till she gets her next big role

Octavia          At least its better to be a "has-been" than a "never-was"

Mooney          That was very cutting - did you hear that Belle Did you hear what she said? I could sue you for that - libel

Octavia          Libel is written, dear, slander is spoken

Mooney          Whatever. You can't say things like that in front of witnesses

Maggie          I never heard anything

Mooney          You did though, didn't you Belle?

Belle             (Doing her make up in mirror) You what?

Mooney          Oh forget it

Maggie          You having coffee Tavia?

Octavia          Yes please - and make it a strong one - I need it

Mooney          Why? What've you done?

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Octavia I've just had a contretemps with that fat slob on the enquiry desk, the leery one. As I was coming through he was doing his usual mickey-take about the wardens - you know what they call us don't you?

Mooney Yeah, wasps

Sue Wasps?

Maggie Because of the yellow and black, love

Sue Oh I see

Octavia And this morning I'd just about had enough - he caught me just at the wrong moment and I let him have it with both barrels

Mooney What did you say?

Octavia I said, "If you bloody coppers had done the job right in the first place there wouldn't be any need for us"

Belle What did he say to that?

Octavia He didn't know what to say, he just went red and went off mumbling to himself.

Mooney Good for you kid

Maggie I thought somebody said six for coffee - have you got Pearl with you?

Octavia I did have but she got delayed at the front door.

Maggie Doing what?

Octavia I'll give you one guess

Mooney Feeding the bloody pigeons

Octavia Right in one

Mooney I don't know why she bothers coming to work, I really don't. She might as well bugger off with a bag of bird seed all day and nobody'd be any the wiser

Sue What's wrong with feeding the pigeons?

Mooney There's nothing wrong, love, only she spends more time doing that than writing out tickets - she could be surrounded by double-liners and she'd still be there slinging out the corn to her feathered friends

Maggie She's just a little odd is our Pearl - a law unto herself

Mooney I'll say she's odd, she spends so much time feeding the ruddy birds she's beginning to look like one - you watch her when she comes in - she even walks like one

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Maggie Go and get her Belle

Belle (Engrossed in make-up) Eh?

Maggie Go and tell her we've made her a coffee

Belle Who?

Maggie Pearl - at the front door - go and tell her its getting cold

Belle Right

Mooney She's as bad - "Mirror, mirror on the wall."

Octavia We all have problems, Mooney, some of us more than others

Mooney I haven't got any problems - my only problem's being stuck in this hole till the right opportunity comes along

Octavia (Singing) "Some day my prince will come"

Mooney He will an' all, you mark my words, one day I'll be discovered

Octavia Yes, but doing what

(Pearl comes in head down and pigeon-toed)

Maggie There you are, love, we wondered where you'd got to.

Pearl (Mumbles) Morning

Octavia Morning love

Pearl (Hardly audible) I was just giving them their breakfast

Mooney So we heard

Pearl Only if I don't feed them you see....

Maggie Of course - is Belle with you?

Pearl (Indicating where she's come from) She was talking to...er...

(Pearl goes off to her locker and spends the rest of the time getting ready then later while the others are talking she puts seed through the slightly open window to the pigeons outside)

Mooney I don't know, it's like an Agatha Christie mystery, first you lose one then the other - I bet I know who she's talking to

(At which point Belle reappears)

Mooney Where've you been? - As if I didn't know

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Maggie Now then ... now that we've got all the staff together

Belle We haven't got Freda

Maggie Or most of them, I think we should officially welcome young Sue on her first day... On behalf of the group I'd like to wish you all the best in your new career

Mooney Career? (laughs)

Maggie And hope your stay will be a long and happy one

Mooney Delirious!

Maggie Its only coffee but I'm sure you'll all join with me in raising your mugs in the official toast - to Sue!

All To Sue!

Mooney And while we're on the subject I want a quid off everybody for the coffee fund

Octavia A pound? But it's only a few days since you had the last

Mooney It might seem like a few days, chuck, but its a fortnight (Producing book) It's all down here in black and white - see - and if you think I'm paying for your drinks you've got another thing coming

Octavia (Delving into purse) Well I don't know where it goes to, I really don't

Mooney If there's anybody else wants to do the job they've only got to ask

Belle No thanks

Mooney Then shut your gobs and lets be seeing the colour of your money - come on  
(She collects from each)  
That's it - d'you want to see your name marked off Tavia?

Octavia There's no need for sarcasm

Mooney (To Pearl who is still engrossed with her pigeons) You an' all

Pearl Eh?

Mooney A pound

Pearl What for?

Mooney What for? Are you with us or what? If you listened to what was being said instead of coo-cooing at them bloody birds you'd know what for - for the coffee fund

Pearl (Checking her purse) Can I give it you next week?

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Mooney        You what? You've got loads in there

Pearl         I've got to get them some food

Mooney        Now I've heard of everything - you'd sooner feed them than look after yourself, wouldn't you?

Pearl         You don't understand, they're hungry

Mooney        (Storming off) Yes and you'll be bloody thirsty before you get another cup of our coffee

Maggie        Mooney!

Mooney        Well she already owes two weeks and you know what she's like

Maggie        Another week won't matter

Mooney        Why should we have to make an exception for her?

Octavia        If it keeps you happy I'll give you hers and she can owe me

Mooney        I'm not having that - everybody runs round after her as if she was a baby - she's not a child - she should be made to face up to her responsibilities - it's the same with the tickets, whenever she's down we have to cover for her - if she can't do the job she shouldn't come to work

Maggie        All right, that's quite enough. Are we all agreed that Pearl can have another week?

All            Yes, why not, etc

Maggie        There you are then, a unanimous committee decision

Mooney        Well the committee can find itself another treasurer - I've had enough (slams down collecting jar)

Maggie        There's no need for tantrums; we're not criticizing you

Mooney        But it's the principle of the thing

Octavia        "Let she who is without sin cast the first stone"

Mooney        And what's that supposed to mean?

Octavia        I may be wrong but I could have sworn I saw a familiar figure in a grey gabardine scuttling off very early yesterday afternoon

Mooney        Yes, well that's different

Octavia        Principles, dear, principles

Mooney        I had to get my hair done for the show, didn't I?

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Octavia        And do you not recall a small paragraph in your contract of employment about not being allowed any other occupation while working as a warden?

Mooney        Its not what you'd call an occupation though, what I do, more like a talent contest

Octavia        Every week?

Mooney        You really know how to hurt people, you know that?

Maggie        And you are the best weedler-of-money-out-of-people that we've got so why don't we call it quits '?

Mooney        Its bloody blackmail, that's what it is

Sue            (Finding pocket book on floor) Does this pocket book belong to anybody?

Maggie        Where did you find it?

Sue            On the floor, over there

Mooney        (Grabbing it) Give it here - what a find

Belle         That's Freda's isn't it?

Mooney        It certainly is. What a bit of luck (she goes to the phone and begins dialing)

Maggie        What are you up to?

Mooney        Nothing - I'm only ringing George so he can tell her to come back for it

Sue            Who's George?

Maggie        The Senior Warden upstairs

Sue            Will she get into trouble?

Maggie        You're supposed to have it with you all the time otherwise you have to start writing on bits of paper and they don't like that

Sue            Couldn't she just give it back to her?

Octavia        She could but she'll get more enjoyment out of it this way

Mooney        Is that radio on? I want to hear this

George        (On the radio) "Control to Traffic Warden forty seven..."

Freda         (Also on radio) "Go ahead"

George        "Would you return to your office please and collect your pocket book ... and before you go out again pop up to my office would you..."

(No reply from Freda)

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George "Did you receive?"

Freda (Crossly) "Yes – received"

Belle I -

Mooney Don't speak, just let me enjoy the moment -wonderful

Octavia "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord"

Mooney Don't look at me like that, I was only doing her a favour. She might need it mightn't she?

Maggie (Turning to Sue who's trying to sort out her locker) How're you doing?

Sue I'm never going to get it all in

Maggie Never mind, what you can't manage you can put in my locker

Sue That's very kind of you

Mooney (Knowingly to others) She's like that is Maggie, very kind hearted aren't you? I sometimes wonder why she bothers, don't you Belle

Belle You what?

Mooney Wonder why she bothers

Belle Who?

Mooney Oh go back to your face - you'll not improve it, you know, you need Polyfilla for them cracks, not face powder

Maggie Come and sit down love while we get you sorted out

(She comes to the centre with the others Belle continues doing her face while Pearl is still at the window. Maggie offers her a cigarette)

Do you smoke?

Sue No thanks

Mooney (Taking one) I do

Maggie We know you do

Mooney (Taking another) So does my Mam (trying for a third) And me dog! (Maggie smacks her wrist)

Maggie Gerroff! That reminds me, I had a message this morning about cigarettes from Vera - she says -

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Mooney I know - "When the floor's full tell them to use the ash trays " Have you ever tried finding an ashtray in this place? Adolph dumps them all in the bin - she does - she's a ruddy nutter

Maggie And don't leave your nub ends standing on the table, its the height of laziness

Mooney Where do you want me to put them? – Don't answer that

Maggie (To Sue) Are you sure you wont have one?

Sue No thanks

Mooney You will after a few weeks on this job, believe me, you'll be eating valium like smarties ... look what it's done to Pearl (they look towards her) I'n't that right Pearl?

Pearl Eh? Oh yes

Mooney In a world of her own

Maggie Now then Sue, we want to know all about you

Sue There' s nothing to tell

Mooney What did you want to join a job like this for?

Sue Its hard to say

Mooney Are you a masochist then or a sadist? Do you enjoy people hating you?

Sue No, but I was working in this office -

Octavia - Doing what?

Sue Checking forms - tax forms

Mooney You what?

Sue Tax returns - nothing very interesting

Mooney Bloody Norah, you're definitely a masochist - a tax inspector!

Sue Not quite an Inspector

Mooney You're definitely unclean, pet, first a tax gatherer- and now this

Sue I didn't see it like that - I mean somebody's got to check the forms haven't they? If nobody paid their taxes where would we be?

Octavia A darn sight better off

Sue That's what my friends used to say but the money pays for things we need doesn't it?

Mooney I believe you thousands wouldn't

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- Maggie Just ignore her, love, and what made you want to come into this job?
- Sue I don't know, I just used to see a warden every day from my window and I used to think it looked nice being outside doing something useful
- Mooney Don't tell me - clearing the streets of obstructions so the traffic can flow freely thus ensuring greater prosperity for all
- Sue Something like that
- (Mooney puts her hands above Sue's head)
- What're you doing?
- Mooney Adjusting your halo!
- Sue I'm sorry but you asked
- Maggie I know we did, love, you'll get used to her
- Mooney Yeah but why did you really join? It can't have been for the money
- Sue I've told you
- Mooney Go on - I don't believe all that "doing good for society" crap - everybody's got a reason - look at Maggie, she's a natural organiser - Belle likes being chatted up - I do it for the laughs - Adolph for the power and Pearl.... why does Pearl do it?
- Belle For her pigeons
- Mooney Yeah, for her pigeons
- (At which point Freda comes back for her pocket book)
- Hello Adolph, we were just talking about you
- Freda Really? I believe I have left something
- Mooney You did that, chuck, (producing book) Is this what you're looking for?
- Freda Yes thank you
- Mooney (Holding it back) What's it worth?
- Freda Don't play games, I am not in the mood
- Mooney (Moving round the table) Ah, poor Adolph's not very happy
- Freda Give it here
- Mooney Is there something in it that we're not supposed to see?

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Freda            That is my personal property - give it here please

Mooney         That's not very polite - can't you ask better than that?

Freda            I've said please

Mooney         Pretty please with sugar on  
(Freda tries to get it)

Octavia         Oh come on Mooney (grabbing book) Here Freda, here's your book

Mooney         Spoilsport!

Freda            And who do I have to thank for informing on me?

Mooney         Don't look at me chuck, it weren't me it were ... Pearl

Freda            What?

Mooney         That's right, isn't it Pearl?

Pearl            Er yes ... that's right

Freda            (Looking daggers at her) Remind me to do the same for you sometime (She storms out and Pearl looks quizzically after her)

Maggie         I suppose you're satisfied with yourself

Mooney         (Shrugging off antagonism) Now then Suzie, I think its time for us to introduce you to the real world of being a warden - not that crap they teach you at Training School - we have our own way of introducing newcomers – isn't that right girls?

Belle            You mean the sting?

Sue              The what?

Mooney         The sting - they call us wasps and wasps have stings so you're about to learn the gentle art of stinging - no doubt you've spent the last two weeks in the classroom learning the various offences - "The vehicle was waiting in a length of the road where waiting was prohibited"

Belle            "In a length of the road for a period longer than the permitted thirty minutes!"

Octavia         "Longer than the permitted hour"

Mooney         "Than the permitted two hours!" But here and now is where your education really starts - girls! (she signals and they move a chair into a space Mooney shoves Sue onto the hot seat) You can forget everything they've told you about attitudes to the public - "fair but firm" and all that crap

Belle            "As you' d like to be treated"

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Octavia "Public servants"

Mooney "At the ratepayers expense" - because what they don't tell you at Training School is the public's attitude to you - you are now a wasp

Belle A whimp!

Octavia A whalley!

Mooney You'll be spat upon

Belle Sat upon

Octavia Sometimes even shat upon

Mooney (Mock horror) Octavia!

Octavia Well that's what they threw at me from that car park

Mooney You'll be outed

Belle Clouted

Octavia Your parenthood doubted

Mooney Used

Belle Abused

Octavia Eventually bemused

Mooney Leave Pearl out of this ... and in the end you'll wonder why you bothered (Moving her out of the seat) Now then, this here's a car, right?

Sue Right

Mooney And its parked on double yellow lines - right?

Sue Right

Mooney So what do you do?

Sue You walk up and -

Mooney Wrong! You don't walk up - you hover

Sue Hover?

Mooney That's right – hover - they call us wasps and that's just what wasps do, they hover - if he sees you waiting for him at the car he'll never come back so you hover, you lurk in a doorway or round a corner - you can even be extra cunning and nip round the block if you like - then when he thinks he's got away with it you nip in for the kill - the sting...

## WASPS

now then, lets assume you've caught him at the car - Octavia (Octavia dons cap and scarf and stands pretending to be the man) So what do you do now?

- Sue            Make out the ticket and -
- Mooney        Wrong! That would be the easy way out - you enquire into the case, ask him why he's parked there and you make him think he might just get away with it - string him along - then when he thinks he's cracked it you come in at the end with the sting
- Sue            It sounds complicated
- Mooney        It isn't as long as you remember the types
- Sue            Types?
- Mooney        Octavia's going to start you off - so what's your first line?
- Sue            Er ... "Excuse me Sir but did you realise you'd parked your car on double yellow lines?"
- Octavia        "Did I officer? I'm most frightfully sorry"
- Mooney        He's Mr Frightfully Sorry - what now '?
- Sue            Ask him for his name and address and give him the ticket?
- Mooney        No, you string him along - he thinks by being Mr Nice Guy he's going to get away with it, so you let him think just that
- Sue            I see ... "You must realise, Sir, that by parking your vehicle in this position you have committed a traffic offence"
- Octavia        "What can I say officer? It most certainly wont happen again"
- Sue            He seems so nice – can't I just let him off?
- Mooney        That's what he wants you to do - out of the way (she takes Sue's place) "You say it wont happen again?"
- Octavia        "It certainly won't officer"
- Mooney        "That's all right then ... (the 'man' turns relieved) "Then this will be your first and last ticket!" (as she slaps a pretend ticket into Octavia's hand)  
So just when he thinks he's escaped, you slip in the sting
- Sue            I'm not like that - vindictive
- Mooney        You don't have to be vindictive, you can be as nice as pie but in the long run it works better than a hundred warnings ... now then, that was Mr Frightfully Nice but how about this one.... Belle
- Belle            (Comes in with collar turned up and hat turned down chewing gum) "Hi babe!"

WASPS

Mooney Same again, come on

Sue Er ... "Did you realise you'd left your car on double yellow lines Sir?"

Belle (American accent) " Is that a fact? Has anyone ever told you you've got beautiful eyes?"

Sue (Turning aside) It wasn't like this at Training School

Mooney Of course it wasn't, come on, the string along...

Sue Er ... "That's very kind of you"

Belle "How's about you and me having a little supper tonight?"

Sue "Well I don't know"

Mooney Make it last

Sue "I would but you see I'm washing my hair"

Mooney Good

Belle "Maybe another time then?"

Sue "Yes, maybe"

Belle "Here's my card, beautiful"

Sue "Thanks very much"

(Tearing off imaginary ticket)

"And here's mine!"

Mooney (Applauding) Yeah! That's it - now you're getting the idea - the hover, the string along and then the sting ... now we come to the final test - if you can crack this one you can crack anything – these are the facts ... the motor's a brand new Porsche, its parked on double yellows in the busiest area of town, got a disabled badge in the window, a dog in the back and its been there for an hour on a Saturday afternoon

(Mooney herself now dons clothing, picks up bags and changes accent to high class punter)

"Ah good afternoon"

Sue (Getting the hang of it) "Do you mind if I have a word with you Sir?"

Mooney "Certainly, I'd be delighted - would you mind holding these for me while I find my keys?"

Sue "Do you realise you've been here for an hour?"

Mooney ""Well I haven't but the car has

## WASPS

Sue "I've been watching your vehicle"

Mooney "That's very kind of you officer"

Sue "Can you offer any explanation'?"

Mooney " Yes, you see the wife is pregnant"

Sue "And what does that have to do with it?"

Mooney "Well we were watching the afternoon film and she turned to me and said - you know what she said?"

Sue " I can't guess"

Mooney " She said 'I need some stockings for my varicose veins'"

Sue "Have you tried Boots?"

Mooney "Yes but they don't give the same support do they?"

Sue " What about the disabled badge? You're not disabled "

Mooney " No but the dog's got a limp"

Sue " Who does it belong to ?"

Mooney " The dog?"

Sue " No, the car?"

Mooney " Its my Granny's"

Sue " And where does she live?"

Mooney "Inverness"

Sue "You haven't explained yet why you parked on the double yellow lines"

Mooney "I tried parking on the pavement but it's so crowded isn't it?"

Sue "You could have used the car park"

Mooney "I could, but they're so expensive "

Sue (Pretending to write out a ticket) "And so is parking on yellow lines"

Mooney " You're not going to give me a ticket, surely - a nice girl like you?"

Sue "Well I suppose I could let you off"

Mooney " There you are then"

WASPS

Sue (Slapping ticket in hand) " But I wont!"  
(Cheers from the others)  
How did I do?

Octavia You did very well, love, didn't she Mooney

Mooney Bloody marvelous - I thought I had her going for a minute - put it there (She shakes hands)  
(Just then the phone rings)

Maggie (Answering it) It's for you Belle  
Belle answers it in the background)

Maggie Come on then Sue, I think its time we let you loose for real on the unsuspecting public

Sue On my own?

Maggie No, love, I'll show you round first

Mooney And when she's finished showing you the boring way, I'll show you the short cuts

Octavia And the tea spots

Mooney You what?

Octavia She knows every tea spot from the bus depot to the corporation canteen

Mooney I might pop in occasionally for the odd one

Octavia Pop in? You're never out

Mooney And how would you know?

Octavia Yes ... well...  
(Belle puts the phone down crossly)

Mooney Who was it?

Belle (Obviously angry) George

Mooney What does he want?

Belle He's given me a change of shifts

Octavia When for?

WASPS

Belle Tomorrow - I was going out as well - it seems one of our number's booked the day off at the last minute

Mooney Who?

(Belle turns to look at Pearl who is still involved with her beloved birds at the window)

(To Pearl) Do you realise you've messed up Belle's shifts Pearl?

Pearl Eh?

Mooney You need a damned good shaking

Octavia Don't be too hard on her, Mooney, it's her birthday

Maggie Is it love? Many happy returns

Mooney I know what we should buy her as well - a ruddy great handkerchief she can tie a knot in - then she might remember what day it is

Maggie We'll have to have a little celebration drink tonight when we go off - what do you say, Pearl?

Pearl (Unaware) Eh? Yes, all right

Maggie (To Sue) Are you ready Sue?

Sue I think so

Mooney Winter draws on

Sue Eh?

Mooney Its a joke, love

Sue Oh I see

Maggie Come on then, its time for you to earn your wings

(They exit as the lights fade)

# WASPS

## ACT I - Scene 2

(The following scenes may be played at the front of the stage against closed curtains with minimal props to illustrate outdoor or indoor scenes. During the blackout a small table and chairs need to be set up at one side of the stage to illustrate the bus canteen for one of the later scenes)

(Maggie and Sue are walking in the town centre)

Sue           Is she always like that?

Maggie       Mooney? Yes, she's a bit of a character isn't she?

Sue           You can say that again

Maggie       How does it feel then being out in the uniform?

Sue           Ever so strange - as if everybody's looking at me

Maggie       They're not - everybody feels like that at first. You'll get used to it

Sue           How long have you been doing the job?

Maggie       Longer than I care to remember - over twenty years

Sue           You must have been one of the first

## WASPS

Maggie Yes - happy days - not only did we have the public against us but the police as well

Sue I thought they brought in the wardens to help the police?

Maggie They did, but you try telling them that

Sue Was it right what Mooney was saying about the abuse?

Maggie Oh yes, you've got to put up with all that - you get used to it though - after a bit it's like water off a duck's back ... some people are a bit more sensitive, they let it get to them - like Pearl. I'm a bit worried about her

Sue Is it right she spends all her time feeding the birds?

Maggie I'm afraid so - she didn't used to be like that but just lately...

Sue Has she got any family?

Maggie I think she's married

Sue No children?

Maggie No, perhaps that's the problem

Sue And what about you?

Maggie Me'? Married '? No, that's something I never quite got round to - what about yourself?

Sue No chance - I want to see a bit of life first

Maggie Very sensible

Sue All my friends are married and you should hear them. All they can go on about are curtains or babies' nappies ... O.K. then where do we start?

Maggie I'll show you round this patch and then I'll pass you on to one of the others

Sue So what do we do?

Maggie We have to make a note of the numbers on the cars and come back later on to see which one's overstayed

Sue I don't know if I'll be able to do it you know

Maggie What?

Sue Write out tickets for the offenders - what if they come back when you're writing one?

Maggie You have to give it to them personally - you don't have to let it bother you though - they know the rules - if they take a chance, they have to pay for it.

Sue But what if they give me an excuse?

WASPS

Maggie        You'll hear all the excuses under the sun in this job - if you let them off they'll only do it again

Sue            I don't know if I'm hard enough

Maggie        You'll learn - you wouldn't do it yourself, now would you?

Sue            I haven't got a car

Maggie        But if you had?

Sue            I suppose not

Maggie        Think it out - what would happen if you didn't give them a ticket?

Sue            They wouldn't move in time?

Maggie        Correct - and that means less places for everybody else - you know the old saying, "You have to be cruel to be kind," ... come on then, lets get writing

(Lights cross fade to find Sue talking this time to Octavia while they write in their books)

Sue            Were you really an opera singer?

Octavia        For a short while

Sue            It sounds very exciting - what on earth made you give that up for this?

Octavia        In the arts love, you either make it or you don't. If you don't you end up forever in the chorus line, living out of a suitcase, moving from one crumbling boardinghouse to the next - I've seen enough suitcases and enough boarding houses to last me a lifetime

Sue            But it can' compare to this

Octavia        No, I'll admit it is "slightly" different but the money's about the same and at least this is regular - now I enjoy my music in my own time with a local group

Sue            A big fish in a little pond?

Octavia        Something like that ... what about you? You're surely not going to waste the best years of your life doing this?

Sue            I thought I'd just try it for the experience

Octavia        You'll get plenty of that in this job – don't you want to do anything else with your life?

Sue            I do have one dream - you promise you wont laugh?

Octavia        Scouts honour

WASPS

Sue I'm trying to write a book

(Octavia smiles)

You said you wouldn't laugh

Octavia I'm not laughing, I'm smiling – what's wrong with wanting to be a writer?

Sue Most people just laugh when I tell them

Octavia I think its a great idea - whatever you want to do you give it a try while you're young - there are lots of old people wandering around saying "if only I'd done so-and-so when I was younger"

Sue Not like you - at least you tried

Octavia I tried all right, nobody knows how much I tried

(Lights cross fade to Freda being pursued by an out-of-breath Sue)

Sue Could you slow down a bit please?

Freda Why?

Sue I can't keep up

Freda That is your problem - why they put you with me in the first place I don't know - I haven't the time to show people round

Sue They said I had to see each area

Freda So now you've seen it you can move on

Sue It isn't time yet

(The sound of rain)

(Pulling up collar) And now it's starting to rain

Freda (Unperturbed) A little rain never hurt anybody

Sue My writing's going all smudgy (she heads for a doorway)

Freda What are you doing?

Sue Just waiting till it eases off

Freda And if it rains all day? What will you do then?

Sue (Reluctantly coming back) Oh all right

WASPS

Freda That's the trouble with people; the slightest difficulty and they want to give up

Sue Vera said you were German

Freda That's correct - what of it?

Sue (Trying to make conversation) What made you come to Britain in the first place

Freda (Blocking) That is my business

(Pause)

Sue I had a pen friend once, from the Black Forest - Bad Liebenziel

Freda I don't know it

(Awkward pause)

Sue I'm sorry you know, about earlier

Freda When?

Sue It was me who found your notebook

Freda You?

Sue But it wasn't me who told what's-his-name

Freda They are like children - all the time playing games

Sue They seem a cheerful lot don't they?

Freda You think so?

Sue A lot more cheerful than the last crowd I worked with - can I ask you how long you've been a warden?

Freda Too long

Sue Don't you like the job then?

Freda What do you think?

Sue Why not?

Freda "Why not?" I should have thought that would have been obvious - we are dealing each day with people who break the rules, who come to town and think they can leave their vehicles for as long as they wish

Sue Sometimes it's unavoidable though isn't it?

Freda Why?

## WASPS

Sue Well ... if there's a queue for something or you forget the time

Freda They shouldn't forget

Sue Don't you ever forget anything?

Freda No

Sue I do - I can be in the library, reading and before I know it the whole afternoon's gone - one day you know I'm going to be an author

Freda Oh yes?

Sue Yes, I'm going to write about everything in the world that's unjust and then when people read my books they'll see the error of their ways and change

Freda You think so?

Sue Well that's the general idea ... don't you ever feel like writing

Freda What's the point?

Sue The point is that somebody's got to record what the world's like - if nobody does that, no one in the future will know how we live today

Freda Some people are too busy with the present to worry about the future

(Lights cross fade to a small table in the bus canteen - Belle, Mooney and Sue come in with cups of tea)

Sue So there we were writing down these numbers and it was pouring with rain - I asked her if I could shelter in a doorway but she wouldn't have it

Mooney That's Adolph, dedicated to the last

Belle She's all right underneath though

Mooney Yeah? How deep do you want to go?

Sue She's so keen it's unreal - one chap came back two minutes late and she was writing out the ticket - he said he's been to have his dog put down and I believed him, I really did, he had tears in his eyes and everything but it didn't bother her, she just wrote out the ticket and gave it to him

Mooney That's our Freda

Sue Why does she have to be so strict?

Belle I don't know

Mooney You won't change her

## WASPS

Sue I said to her " What if you're in the library reading a book and you forget the time? She won't wear any excuses. She says she's never late

Belle I enjoy a good book.

Mooney Come off it, you cant even read

Belle Cheek! I get those romantic novels, you know the sort I mean

Sue Oh

Belle What do you mean "Oh"?

Sue I thought you meant real books

Belle They are real

Sue They're not, they're escapism

Mooney Listen to her - and how would you know?

Sue Because I'm writing one

Belle You?

Sue Yes, why not

Mooney You? Write a book?

Sue Why shouldn't I?

Belle What's it about?

Sue About you, me, us

Belle Us?

Sue Yes, a sort of autobiography with the names changed to protect the innocent

Belle I don't think I like the idea of being in a book

Sue It wont be you exactly, just some of the things that happen

Belle But you're just a child

Sue So how old do you have to be?

Belle You have to have seen some of life

Mooney She'll do that all right in this job

Belle Why don't you just find yourself a boyfriend and settle down

## WASPS

Sue Have kids - do the ironing?

Belle Yeah

Sue Because I've got more to give than that - if you're happy to go home and watch the tele that's up to you - I go home and write

Belle I'll never be able to open my mouth again

Mooney Perhaps we ought to get her autograph before she's famous - I can see it now - "Yellow peril" - to I was a nymphomaniac traffic warden"

Belle "The Sweet Sins of Sexy Suzy!"

Sue There's more to it than sex – there's people – don't you find people fascinating?

Mooney Oh yeah - anybody for another tea?

Sue Shouldn't we be getting back on the streets?

Mooney Time enough for that

Belle (Seeing somebody she fancies) Now I could write a book about him

Sue Who?

Belle Him over there, look at those eyes

Sue That's the trouble, everybody goes on appearances

Belle What else is there?

Sue You fancy him do you?

Belle (Dreamily) Do I

Sue Why?

Belle Why? Just take a look

Sue But you don't know what he's like underneath, his personality

Belle I don't give a toss about personality with eyes like that, they're come to bed eyes

Sue So he takes you to bed - then what?

Belle What else is there?

Sue And that's all you want out of a relationship?

Belle It'll do for starters

## WASPS

Sue How long have you been in the job Belle?

Belle Five years

Sue And what were you doing before that?

Belle I was a sales executive

Sue Sales?

Belle Well actually I was a demonstrator but "sales executive" sounds better - I was selling kitchen utensils - frying pans to be exact

Sue Frying pans?

Belle Yeah, woks - Chinese woks - I had to demonstrate their non-stick capacities

Sue It sounds "different"

Belle Does it? It was bloody boring - I remember I had to learn this speech – "While other woks promise you the earth ours will provide it, a perfect finish every time, no scraping, no scouring, Rising Sun perfection at the minimum of cost"

Mooney (Returning with tea tray) You what?

Sue She was just telling me about her woks

Mooney Oh the demonstrating. Yes she's a right little mover when she gets going is our Belle - did they give you an Equity card?

Belle You know what you can do

Sue Don't you think we should be going? I think the rain's stopped

Mooney What's your hurry? We're entitled to a break aren't we Belle? (But Belle has made a move off towards the bus driver) Belle?

Sue Where's she going?

Mooney Chatting up that driver - its the uniform - she's got this thing about uniforms - she throws herself at them

Sue Sounds like a recipe for disaster

Mooney It is. Never mind, we can drink hers. What do you think of being a wasp then?

Sue I never knew there was so much to it - you just see the wardens walking in the sunshine and think "That looks a nice job"

Mooney Same as any job, you don't know it till you're on the inside ... D'you think you'll stick it then?

Sue Too early to say yet

## WASPS

Mooney      You can always put us in your book, not that anything interesting ever happens ...what would you write about us then?

Sue            I don't know

Mooney      Come on, tell the truth, if you were writing about us how would you describe us?

Sue            I don't think I should talk behind people's backs

Mooney      Come on - Maggie for instance

Sue            Well she's very friendly isn't she?

Mooney      She is that ... and Freda?

Sue            She's a different kettle of fish - I haven't quite worked out what makes her tick

Mooney      Nor have we

Sue            I'm sure deep down there's a caring person underneath but she puts up that veneer of hardness like a wall round her

Mooney      And Octavia?

Sue            I like her - she's nice

Mooney      Belle

Sue            I really -

Mooney      Come on, what do make of our Belle?

Sue            Well I don't know why she has to spend so much time doing her make up - I wonder what she's trying to prove

Mooney      And of course there's always me

Sue            Oh no -

Mooney      Go on, don't be shy. How would you describe me in this book?

Sue            You all of you seem as if you're looking for something

Mooney      And what am I looking for?

Sue            Status? Appreciation

Mooney      You're not as daft as you look

Sue            I really think I ought to be going

Mooney      Who's next on your Cooks tour?

WASPS

Sue Pearl

Mooney Well that should be an education

Sue How will I find her?

Mooney No problem - just go down to the Square and look for a crowd of pigeons - when you find them she'll be there somewhere in the middle

Sue (Getting up) Right then I'll be seeing you later

Mooney And don't forget - lunch is at twelve o'clock in the police canteen

Sue O.K.

(Cross fade of lights to Pearl in spot feeding her pigeons oblivious to the world around her – sounds of cooing and flapping as Sue approaches)

Sue Hello there ...

(No response from Pearl)

They said I'd find you here ...

(She is feeling awkward)

I've got to see each area they said...

(No response)

They certainly seem to like you don't they?

(No response)

Do you do this every day?

(No response)

I suppose they get used to you feeding them... it's a good job somebody does ... I often think it must be great to be a bird, don't you? To be able to just flap your wings and fly away from everything...

(No response)

When I was small I used to pretend I could fly I had these adventures where I could go to where-ever I wanted ... I didn't want to grow up ... I wanted to stay young all the time like Peter Pan ... but unfortunately you cant stay young can you? ... you have to grow up and face the real world ...

(No response – awkward pause)

## WASPS

Right then ... I suppose I'd better be getting back ... its nearly lunchtime ... are you going in for lunch?

(No response)

Perhaps I'll see you later then

(Sue edges off awkwardly)

(The spot fades for end of Act I)