

Scene 3: Lloyd, Selsdon (Burglar), Belinda,  
44 NOISES OFF Poppy, Freddie

Pause.

LLOYD Selsdon...? You're on, Selsdon. We're there. The moment's arrived...

BELINDA (offstage) It's all right, love. He's coming, he's coming...

LLOYD But his arm should be coming through that window even before Freddie's off!

*A pane of glass shatters in the mullion window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch.*

LLOYD Ah. And here it is.

*The window opens, and through it appears an elderly BURGLAR. He has great character, but is in need of extensive repair and modernisation.*

BURGLAR No bars, no burglar alarm. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

*He climbs in.*

LLOYD All right, Selsdon, hold it. Let's take it again.

BURGLAR No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults!

LLOYD Hold it, Selsdon. Hold it!

BURGLAR What am I doing now?

LLOYD Hold it!

*Enter POPPY from the wings.*

BURGLAR I'm breaking into paper bags!

POPPY Lloyd wants you to hold it.

*Enter BELINDA.*

BURGLAR Right what are they offering?

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BELINDA Stop, Selsdon, my love! Wait, my precious!

SELDON *stops, restrained at last by BELINDA's hand on his arm.*

LLOYD It's like Myra Hess playing on through the air raids.

SELDON Stop?

POPPY Stop.

BELINDA Stop.

LLOYD Thank you, Belinda. Thank you, Poppy.

*Exeunt BELINDA and POPPY.*

Selsdon...

SELDON I met Myra Hess once.

LLOYD I think he can hear better than I can.

SELDON I beg your pardon?

LLOYD From your entrance, please, Selsdon.

SELDON Well, it was during the war, at a charity show in Sunderland...

LLOYD Thank you! Poppy!

SELDON Oh, not for me. It stops me sleeping.

*Enter POPPY from the wings.*

LLOYD Put the glass back once more.

SELDON Come on again?

LLOYD Right. Only, Selsdon...

SELDON Yes?

LLOYD A little sooner, Selsdon. A shade earlier. A touch closer to yesterday. All right? Freddie!

*Enter FREDERICK.*

(To SELSDON) Start moving as soon as Freddie opens the door. (To FREDERICK) What's the line?

FREDERICK 'I've heard of people getting *stuck* with a problem, but this is ridiculous.'

LLOYD Start moving as soon as you hear the line, 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a *problem*...'

FREDERICK 'Stuck with a *problem*?'

LLOYD 'Stuck with a *problem*, but this is ridiculous.' And I want your arm through that window. Right?

SELDON Say no more. May I make a suggestion, though? Should I perhaps come on a little earlier?

LLOYD Selsdon...

SELDON Only there does seem to be something of a hiatus between Freddie's exit and my entrance.

LLOYD No, Selsdon. Listen. Don't worry. I've got it.

SELDON Yes?

LLOYD How about coming on a little earlier?

SELDON We're obviously thinking along the same lines.

*Exit SELDON through the window.*

LLOYD Am I putting him on or is he putting me on? Right, Freddie, from your exit.

PHILIP (*flapping the tax demand*) I've heard of people getting stuck with a *problem*, but this is ridiculous.

*Exit PHILIP into downstairs bathroom.*

*Enter BURGLAR as before, but on time.*

BURGLAR No bars, no burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags!

*He opens the front door.*

So what are they offering? (*He peers at the television*) One microwave oven.

*He unplugs it and puts it on the sofa.*

What? Fifty quid? Hardly worth lifting it.

*He inspects the paintings and ornaments.*

Junk... Junk... If you insist...

*He pockets some small item.*

Where's his desk? No, they all say the same thing... They all say the same thing...

SELDON Yes? Line?

POPPY (*offstage*) 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELDON What?

LLOYD (*wearily*) 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELDON Hard to what?

OTHERS (*variously, offstage*) 'Adjust to retirement.'

SELDON It's also very hard to hear if everyone talks at once.

*Exit BURGLAR into the study.*

*Enter ROGER from the service quarters, followed by MRS CLACKETT, who is holding another plate of sardines.*

ROGER ...And the prospective tenant naturally wishes to know if there is any previous history of paranormal phenomena.

MRS CLACKETT Oh, yes, dear, it's all nice and paranormal.