

LLOYD No.

FREDERICK I thought it might be somehow more logical.

LLOYD No.

FREDERICK Lloyd, I know it's a bit late in the day to go into all this...

LLOYD Freddie, we've got several more minutes left before we open.

*Enter BELINDA from the mezzanine bathroom, to wait patiently.*

FREDERICK Thank you, Lloyd. As long as we're not too pushed. But I've never understood why he carries an overnight bag and a box of groceries into the study to look at his mail.

GARRY Because they have to be out of the way for my next scene!

FREDERICK I see that.

BELINDA And Freddie, my sweet, Selsdon needs them in the study for *his* scene.

FREDERICK I see that...

LLOYD *(comes up on stage)* Selsdon...where is he? Is he there?

BELINDA *(calling, urgently)* Selsdon!

DOTTY *(likewise)* Selsdon!

GARRY *(likewise)* Selsdon!

*A pane of glass shatters in the mullion window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch. Enter 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 becomes aware of the others)* No?

LLOYD No. Not yet. Thank you, Selsdon.

LLOYD No, no, no. Back to sleep, Selsdon. Another ten pages before the big moment.

SELSDON I'm so sorry.

LLOYD Not at all. Nice to see you. Poppy, put the glass back in the window. *(Enter POPPY. She puts the glass back)* And, Selsdon...

SELSDON Yes?

LLOYD Beautiful performance.

SELSDON Oh, how kind of you. I don't think I'm quite there yet, though.

*Exit SELSDON through the window.*

LLOYD He even remembered the line.

FREDERICK All right, I see all that.

LLOYD *(faintly)* Oh, no!

FREDERICK I just don't know why I take them.

*LLOYD comes up on stage.*

LLOYD Freddie, love, why does anyone do anything? Why does that other idiot walk out through the front door holding two plates of sardines? *(To GARRY)* I'm not getting at you, love.

GARRY Of course not, love. *(To FREDERICK)* I mean, why do I? *(To LLOYD)* I mean, right, when you come to think about it, why *do* I?

LLOYD Who knows? The wellsprings of human action are deep and cloudy. *(To FREDERICK)* Maybe something happened to you as a very small child which made you frightened to let go of groceries.

BELINDA Or it could be genetic.

GARRY Yes, or it could be, you know.

LLOYD It could well be.

FREDERICK Of course. Thank you. I understand all that. But...

LLOYD Freddie, love, I'm telling you—I don't know. I don't think the author knows. I don't know why the author came into this industry in the first place. I don't know why any of us came into it.

FREDERICK All the same, if you could just give me a reason I could keep in my mind...

LLOYD All right, I'll give you a reason. You carry those groceries into the study, Freddie, honey, because it's just slightly after midnight, and we're not going to be finished before we open tomorrow night. Correction—before we open *tonight*.

FREDERICK *nods, rebuked, and exits into the study*. DOTTY *silently follows him*. GARRY and BROOKE *go silently back into the bedroom*. LLOYD *returns to the stalls*.

And on we go. From after Freddie's exit, *with the groceries*.

BELINDA (*keeping her voice down*) Lloyd, sweetheart, his wife left him this morning.

LLOYD Oh. (*Pause*) Freddie!

*Enter FREDERICK, still wounded, from the study.*

I think the point is that you've had a great fright when she mentions income tax, and you feel very insecure and exposed, and you want something familiar to hold on to.

FREDERICK (*with humble gratitude*) Thank you, Lloyd. (*He clutches the groceries to his chest*) That's most helpful.

*Exit FREDERICK into the study.*

BELINDA (*to LLOYD*) Bless you, my sweet.

LLOYD (*leaves the stage*) And on we merrily go. *Lend*

*Exit BELINDA into the mezzanine bathroom.*

'Yes, but I could hear voices...'

*Enter ROGER from the bedroom, still dressed, tying his tie.*

ROGER Yes, but I could hear voices!

*Enter VICKI from the bedroom in her underwear.*

VICKI Voices? What sort of voices?

ROGER People's voices.

VICKI But there's no one here.

ROGER Darling, I saw the door handle move! It could be someone from the office, checking up.

VICKI I still don't see why you've got to put your tie on to look.

ROGER Mrs Crackett.

VICKI Mrs Crackett?

ROGER One has to set an example to the staff.

VICKI (*looks over the banisters*) Oh, look, she's opened our sardines.

*She moves to go downstairs. ROGER grabs her.*

ROGER Come back!

VICKI What?

ROGER I'll fetch them! You can't go downstairs like that.

VICKI Why not?

ROGER Mrs Crackett.

VICKI Mrs Crackett?

ROGER One has certain obligations.

*Enter MRS CLACKETT from the study. She is carrying the first plate of sardines.*

MRS CLACKETT (*to herself*) Sardines here. Sardines there. It's