

# Maurice Rowdon

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Micheline Steinberg Associates

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10.03.08

Dear Micheline:

We've lost contact over the years and I can't quite remember our last communication. What actually happened was that I got very deep into health troubles. Thankfully that's all over now.

I have a shamelessly ribald one-set three-character piece called AND IN CAME OPHELIA, about an actor whose sell-by date as Hamlet has expired and who is visited by an unknown actress who brings him fame, or is it infamy? (57 pages).

The second is a multiple-set piece called I WANT WHAT I WANT (When I want it), which is about a therapist's practice, three males and three females, in which the therapist is himself trapped by---wanting too much. (69 pages).

My GENES which you sent to the Hampstead Theatre and which attracted their interest (140 pages, no less!) now has a smacking pace under the title GENES AND GENTS (67 pages).

With my best wishes

ESKIMO TRANCE

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Comedy  
**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:** Theatre in the Round Stoke on Trent  
**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**  
**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:** 1974  
**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**  
**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**  
**Male Parts:** Three  
**Female Parts:**  
**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** Three men in flight from no one, up in the Canadian bush.

Mahler

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:**  
**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**  
**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**  
**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**  
**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**  
**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**  
**Male Parts:** One  
**Female Parts:** One  
**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** 2<sup>nd</sup> performance at Mercury theatre London directed by author.

## information template

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<b>Name:</b>	MAURICE ROWDON	<b>Nationality:</b>	BRITISH
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	yyyy	<b>email:</b>	rowdoxy@aol.com
<b>Web:</b>	In Construction	<b>Agent:</b>	

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**Biography (one CONTINUOUS paragraph) :**

**Londoner, educated at Oxford**

**PLAY DETAILS ARE ON NEXT PAGE DOWN**

Boy Sees Red

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Comedy

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:  
Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** 2

**Female Parts:** 3

**Other Parts:**

**(one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** A boy and girl who spoof sex and clearly cannot practice it but bring family and welfare officer into turmoil.

Carmagnola

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** History

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:  
Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** 5

**Female Parts:** 2

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** An account of the perilous life of a mercenary captain in the Middle Ages, on hire to too many states.

One Summer Evening

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Dark comedy.

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:  
Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** 3

**Female Parts:** 3

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** Five people fleeing from floods find a landowner in his study and, strangely, there are seats for their exact number.

CARMAGNOLA

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:**

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:  
Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:**

**Female Parts:**

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):** The most famous mercenary captain of the middle ages sells his loyalty to too many states.

I Want What I Want

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Comedy

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** 3

**Female Parts:** 4

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):**

**A therapist endowed with unusual sympathy for his clients  
unearths the truth about them and, not least, himself.**

AND IN CAME OPHELIA

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Comedy

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** Two

**Female Parts:** One

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph): An actor whose sell-by date  
as Hamlet has expired is visited by an unknown actress who  
brings them fame.**

GENES AND GENTRY

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Comedy

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** 4

**Female Parts:** 3

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):**

**A geneticist who suddenly sees his experimental rodents as equal to, and better than, himself.**

Daddy Won't Buy Me a Bow-Wow

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:** Dark comedy

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:**

**Female Parts:**

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):**

**Ex-soldier of WW2 is reminded of his crimes in battle by his one-time major, causing upheaval in both their families.**

Mahler

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:**

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:** Portslade Productions

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:** Arts Theatre London

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:** 1976

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:** One

**Female Parts:** One

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph):**

); tragic-comedy about the tumultuous relationship between  
classical composer Gustav Mahler and his wife.

ONE SUMMER EVENING

**Synopsis (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)  
max !!!:**

**Genre:**

**Theatre Co or  
Producing Co:**

**Theatre and Place  
where 1<sup>st</sup> Produced  
only:**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Produced only:**

**Publishers (1<sup>st</sup>  
publication):**

**Date 1<sup>st</sup> Published:**

**Male Parts:**

**Female Parts:**

**Other Parts:**

**Notes (one CONTINUOUS paragraph)**

# GENES AND GENTS

8.00 - 10.35 ✓  
7.30 - 10.05

A Comedy

8.00 - [10.20 + 15] = 10.35  
7.30 - [9.50 + 15] = 10.05

$$\begin{array}{r} 70 \\ 2 \\ \hline 140 \end{array}$$
 1 hr  
2 hrs 20 mins

© Maurice Rowdon 2007

Minus  
 63 ✓ ~~455~~ ?  
 32  
 Interval 2 | 9'5 minutes 1 hour 35 mins  
 46  
 15  
 46  
 107 mins 1 hr 60  
 7.30 - 9.10 8 - 9.30

# CHARACTERS

4 males  
4 females

- X **Barry Pillinger, geneticist** Male
- X **Pamela Pillinger, his wife** F
- X **Peggy Cutlass, his mother in law** F
- X **Arthur Cutlass, his father in law** M
- X **Martin Fyffe, editor in chief of a Sunday paper** M
- X **Dr. Heather Seymour, a psychiatrist** F
- X **Dan Sutton, a Texan executive** M
- ~~Lance Kenning, geneticist~~
- ~~Hon. Sonya Tymes, his assistant~~
- X **Nancy, housekeeper**
- ~~Police Inspector~~

REVISE FROM P. 5 onwards

Maurice Rowdon GENES

28

~~party.~~ He sits on the bed, yawns, ~~scrubs his face,~~  
PAMELA comes in with ~~her blouse open,~~  
~~otherwise still dressed as in the previous scene.~~

PAMELA: ~~Sonya's are much smaller than mine.~~

~~BARRY (drawing her to him) There isn't as much in it as you might think (as he fondles her breasts).~~

~~PAMELA (excited) When you did this to her what was the difference?~~

~~BARRY: I felt should I and dare I and that sort of thing, it was like a giddy thrilling sortie into no man's land, she makes everything seem forbidden and pubescent.~~

~~PAMELA (kissing him) Why no man's land? Who's the enemy?~~

~~BARRY: The enemy's in the air, the darkness. It's dangerous, we're caught in a place we shouldn't be. So we make very little noise. We hardly move. It's very secret.~~

~~PAMELA: So how does this compare (kissing him again)?~~

~~BARRY: This is woods on a hot damp night, I belong among the wild perfumes, I breathe them in, and you're them, it's what the anteroom to heaven smells and touches like.~~

~~PAMELA: Oh!~~

~~They lie full out of the bed, kissing. She gently raises him from her by the shoulders to look in his eyes.~~

~~PAMELA: Barry. Could I look up something? *Adm*~~

~~BARRY: Yes?~~

~~PAMELA: *Why you at* How is it you aren't horrified by me having a baby *at* by the man?~~

He considers her, gazes at her face, shoulders, breasts.

*Barry: Should I be horrified by the fact that I will*

BARRY: You mean horrified by you having a baby that isn't mine?

*Yes!*  
PAMELA: No, by me having a baby with him.

BARRY: ~~He's because~~ *But* He doesn't horrify me. *Adm! Any way* It's him who has the horror. First because of me bringing up his child and then because the child's going to look like me! *ill see* So I've got you both by the curlies, *In fact all three of you including the baby.*

*Share and have I? the state you a certain*

*She enjoys this, takes pride in him.*

BARRY (cont.) I shall teach his baby how to walk and talk. *It's going to heeby-jeeby his life,* I shall work on your baby's genes with love and in return *they're these genes will* going to turn the baby into me. You see what a life-time of hell he's laying in store for himself? *make the child look like which look neg spitten image!*

PAMELA: Yes darling and you're going to orchestrate that hell for him aren't you?

They smile at each other as he lets his head fall on her shoulders.

PAMELA (cont.) Lance really worships you, you know.

BARRY (raising his head) No he doesn't, he's been hooked on you since he first clapped eyes on you.

PAMELA: Why shouldn't he worship both of us?

BARRY: Biology's funny, it works in a world of its own. That's why people like Dawkins say we're robots worked blindly by the genes.

PAMELA: Mm (closing her eyes with pleasure), that's how I feel at the moment.

BARRY: And Lance's genes are bachelor genes.

PAMELA (breathless) You're not a bachelor are you darling? Barry, you know how people say a baby takes on the face of the man its mother looks at during

~~pregnancy?~~

BARRY (~~his turn to be breathless~~) Yes?

PAMELA: Imagine when Martin sees your face and not his ~~own~~ at the birth!

BARRY: Sadist!

PAMELA: How can one hate the man one ~~wanted~~ <sup>Rally had</sup> a child by? But I do! <sup>And you don't!</sup>  
~~They~~ <sup>I laugh and</sup> hug and kiss and begin making love.

### ~~Five~~ Four

The Japanese room at the Cutlass residence, early morning. ARTHUR CUTLASS is with MARTIN FYFFE, editor in chief of a ~~daily paper~~. ~~MARTIN~~ <sup>He</sup> is a compact well-dressed man with a decided strength not wholly unpremeditated. They're in their office clothes, pacing up and down.

ARTHUR: Shepley consoles went down a few points, gave me a bit of a scare.

MARTIN: For god's sake stop prowling around and come to the point, what's bugging you?

ARTHUR: <sup>He's prowling mad! Go! (WTF/WTF)</sup> He's walked out of his job at Gower Street and I've fixed him up <sup>with</sup> a bloody great cage ~~for his rats~~ in my basement and they've started to take over the house.

MARTIN (with a gingerly glance round) ~~His rats?~~ <sup>Who have?</sup>

ARTHUR: <sup>(His rats)</sup> Yes Martin, ~~rats~~ (drilling it in). Peggy says he talks about gazing into their eyes and they gaze back and there's an understanding, naturally my daughter thinks he's ~~stark~~ raving mad.

MARTIN: <sup>So</sup> Why the hell doesn't she leave him?

ARTHUR gives him a flash of hatred which he doesn't notice.

MARTIN (cont.) Helen always said she had doubts about him.

ARTHUR: <sup>Your wife said he?</sup> Did she really Martin? ~~Your wife as well as you!~~ What frightens her about Barry is your accounts of him. I hope you ~~didn't~~ try and influence my daughter ~~as well~~. After all, you had three months in which to ~~chew~~ <sup>to black</sup> the fat about my son in law <sup>didn't you?</sup> <sup>have</sup>

old cock!

won't have it

with her

did you?

h

MARTIN: What are you talking about?

ARTHUR: <sup>The fact that</sup> There's a little thing I have to clear up about that highly fruitful visit <sup>she paid</sup> to you. Pamela's three months gone and three months ago Barry was on a <sup>hone</sup> trip to Italy with the Hon. Sunday Times or a name like that, she's apparently assistant head at Gower Street. It raises the question of paternity. Unless he sent his sperm home by post there was no way he could be the father.

the Staler.

MARTIN: What about it?

ARTHUR: You didn't introduce her to any nubile young man <sup>did you?</sup>

down there did you?

MARTIN (with a suavity which ARTHUR watches with detestation) We had the usual Sussex guests. Of course it's a busy household. As a matter of fact I work a damn sight harder in the summer than the rest of the year. I was probably a bit out of touch.

ARTHUR <sup>(giving him up as a bad job)</sup> I got a call from Dan Sutton and somehow I've got to get this party organized in a couple of days. I don't want any press by the way.

MARTIN You don't <sup>need</sup> have to say that.

ARTHUR: Yes I do because Dan <sup>Sutton</sup> would like some press.

MARTIN: Why?

ARTHUR: <sup>Because he's</sup> His company has got wind of Barry's latest project and Dan's going to buy him, ~~get~~ him and my daughter over to Ardmore Pennsylvania.

, rats and all!

MARTIN: <sup>But</sup> Barry's not even known! He's not a top name at all!

ARTHUR: I thought that'd rattle you, her going away!

he's moving into then with it

MARTIN: What do you mean?

ARTHUR: I told you, she's pregnant!

MARTIN: But why tell me?

ARTHUR: Then it ~~must have been~~ <sup>was</sup> one of your servants screwed her! <sup>the</sup> What about ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> butler you hire for cocktail parties? Or the gardener? <sup>the</sup> Now he's a stout looking chap, was he my Lady Chatterley's joy boy? (With remarkable savagery) Why don't you cross-examine your staff?

NANCY (VO) The coffee's ready Mr. Cutlass!

ARTHUR: We'll be right down Nancy! (With a gleam and a hiss) She heard the lot! (Taking hold of his arm) You're looking so green! And I think I know why! You're sorry to be losing Barry Pillinger!

MARTIN (his way of owning up to the truth) I do wish you'd shut up.

*As it were*

They go out.

*Six Five ✓*

The penthouse bedroom in an early morning dimness. The curtains are drawn and PAMELA is still asleep, alone.

BARRY tiptoes in. He is in his lab coat and his hands are over both of his pockets. He stands watching her.

BARRY (whispering) Pamela. It's ~~eight~~ <sup>seven</sup> o'clock.

She doesn't stir.

BARRY (cont.) Pamela, it's late.

She moves, raises her head, subsides again. He releases his hands from both pockets and ~~at once~~

*action!*

mattresses to the right of the arch, their heads to the back wall. PEGGY, high-heeled and in a two-piece with a flounced i.e. not skin-tight skirt has put Indian covers on one of them and is just now covering the other. There are several large bright cushions to one side.

NANCY's voice comes over the intercom.

NANCY (VO) Mum! *Mum!*

PEGGY (continuing her task, quietly absorbed) Yes, what is it Nancy and don't call me mum.

NANCY (VO) There's a doctor at the door, she's a woman.

PEGGY: What does she want?

NANCY (VO) Mr. Cutlass mum!

PEGGY: My husband's at work. Tell her to call back after nine o'clock this evening.

Some murmuring over the speakers.

NANCY (VO) She says could she have a word with you mum?

PEGGY: I'll come down to where you are, where are you?

NANCY (VO) In the room with all the furniture, *in the room.*

PEGGY: There's no room <sup>in</sup> there so you'd better send her up here. Japanese room.

NANCY (VO) You go up them stairs doctor, two floors up and you turn left and then you'll see it on your right.

PEGGY takes the cushions and places them at the head of the beds, three on each. She stands back to study them. Returns to adjust them.

WE MUST KNOW  
WHY AND HOW BARRY  
WAS SUDDENLY CHANGED,  
Yes, when Mr Ferdinand looked  
so gratefully in his eyes, so  
happy to be pregnant and lay  
~~about~~ it all.

MAKE MORE OF THIS

# River Thesis Genes

to make use of  
the other animals or not  
paradigms of the human  
they are different <sup>as in every</sup> and the  
human as abstract!

for  
repose?

Par: How can you see the Berg?  
Give me me just see Berg! →

we did accept the human we  
animals?

Barry: ~~The~~ ~~A~~ The y did accept  
and any physiology ~~lesson~~ <sup>lesson</sup> will show  
you!

~~Dan: It's a loss~~

---

→ Barry: Because there's only one way of  
judging the animal, including the human,  
~~animal~~ and that's how they ~~act~~  
whether they've been their behavior  
enhanced, and the human's worked  
not of their original behavior the way  
we on earth, he's knocked his nose  
globe off the ~~the~~ a killer - and he's  
always made a mess, a puller, never an  
enhancer! Dan: OK. But suppose

DR. HEATHER SEYMOUR appears at the arch, also in high heels. Most people would size her up as a young corporate manager except that she dresses in a manner that stretches the corporate to the candidly ~~if not flagrantly~~ erotic.

SEYMOUR: Heather Seymour (offering her hand without avail).

PEGGY: Come in.

SEYMOUR I'm from the Malmsey <sup>clinic</sup> hospital.



PEGGY: <sup>Clinic?</sup>  
~~Hospital?~~

SEYMOUR: Psychiatric. Sir Gerald Sommerson got in touch with me. He's a colleague of your husband's I believe.

PEGGY (busy with the mattresses) My husband's his boss. And there was me thinking you were pest control! How do you do?

She now shakes hands.

SEYMOUR (getting over the offence with schooled sangfroid) Sir Gerald told me you had a problem.

PEGGY: Just one? (Stepping back from the mattresses) How do you like it?  

SEYMOUR (with the coolness due to what is none of her business) Very nice.

PEGGY: Japanese style. Would you like to try this one?

SEYMOUR: What, lie down?

PEGGY: To christen it so to speak. I'll try the other one.

SEYMOUR: Shall I take my shoes off?

PEGGY: Well I suppose it would be appropriate (taking off her own).

As she does so she utters a horrified gasp.  
Something flashed across the archway (a squeak  
was certainly heard).

SEYMOUR (not quite down yet, and every inch the observer) Can I help?

PEGGY: We'd better not do it.

SEYMOUR: Not do what?

PEGGY: Sit on the floor. And on with your shoes again, quick!

SEYMOUR (encouraging) If you wish!

PEGGY (dashing off, left) Let me get a couple of chairs.

In her absence SEYMOUR gets up and begins eyeing the room clinically. She gingerly lifts the plinth-top. An inward taking of notes is obviously going on.

PEGGY returns with two upright kitchen chairs.

PEGGY (setting them down centre) There you are. Better safe than sorry.

SEYMOUR: Thank you (as she sits). Do you feel a little better?

PEGGY: I'll feel better when he's out of the house, not before.

SEYMOUR (staring at her as PEGGY lifts up her skirt preparatory to sitting down) You *are* Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY, having folded her pleated skirt under and around round her crotch with great care, sits.

PEGGY: Peggy Cutlass.

SEYMOUR (fascinated) How long has this been going on?

PEGGY: I saw one on my dressing table only an hour ago.

SEYMOUR: One what Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: A rat.

SEYMOUR: Of course. And how many rats have you seen altogether?

PEGGY: They're mounting up.

SEYMOUR: And are you taking anything?

PEGGY: What kind of anything?

SEYMOUR: Sedatives, antidepressants.

PEGGY: I haven't got to *that* yet.

SEYMOUR: And where do these rats come from Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: Well he's down there letting them out isn't he?

SEYMOUR: I'm sure he is. Who's 'he'?

PEGGY: My son-in-law. Geneticist. Brought home all his rats.

A pause for appraisal from SEYMOUR.

SEYMOUR: I see. Where from?

PEGGY: Gower Street. That's where his lab is.

SEYMOUR: And what's his name Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: Barry Pillinger. An unfortunate name but then I didn't give it to him did I?

SEYMOUR: No you certainly didn't. And where does this geneticist live?

PEGGY: Upstairs in the penthouse.

SEYMOUR: Ah. So he's always over your head so to speak?

PEGGY: When his rats aren't under my feet, yes.

SEYMOUR: But the rats must come from somewhere surely? Or do they seem to come from nowhere?

PEGGY: They come from his cages of course! My husband built them for him. Cost an entire torso. Not that he's in the least grateful. But my husband thinks he's the golden boy of the century. Nothing to be done about *that*.

SEYMOUR: And what colour are the rats Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: White. Sometimes they have spots. Black or brown spots. I've never seen a streaky one but I'm told they exist. You see, you've got to keep your eye on that arch. You've pointed yourself the wrong way.

SEYMOUR (without moving) So that's where they always come from is it?

PEGGY: If I were you I'd shift your chair a bit.

SEYMOUR Of course.

She shifts the chair a little so that she can  
now take the arch in.

PEGGY: Obviously he's trying to get rid of me.

SEYMOUR: Your husband or your son-in-law?

PEGGY: The latter more than the former but I sometimes wonder if there's much in it.

SEYMOUR (control factor entering) I'm under the impression that *you* wanted to get rid of *him*, I mean your son in law. Am I right?

PEGGY: Well it's a struggle of wits isn't it?

SEYMOUR (disciplinary) But your daughter Mrs. Cutlass! What does *she* have to say about

this? I met her downstairs I think.

PEGGY: My daughter? You *are* confused!

SEYMOUR: I'm sure I am. But I heard her call you mum!

PEGGY: That's—(listening intently)!

SEYMOUR: We were talking about your daughter Mrs Cutlass.

PEGGY: *Sssh!*

A decided squeak. SEYMOUR follows PEGGY's eyes on the archway. Another squeak and this time there is a brown-spots-on-white creature with a very long tail that flies or slides along the corridor beyond the arch with such speed that it is impossible for us to gain more than a perhaps mistaken impression. In a flash up go PEGGY's legs so that her high-heeled feet are on the edge of her chair. SEYMOUR, alarmed, quickly follows suit (she manages not to scream but only by the skin of her teeth).

PEGGY: You'd better hitch your skirt up too. (Showing her) One tried to run up Nancy this morning.

Frantically, with silly fumbling fingers, SEYMOUR heaves at her skirt to bring the back round to cover her crotch and the sides tight round to complete the bandaged up effect.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR's horror not raising her voice at all) Pamela! Pamela!

SEYMOUR glances round to see whom she is calling.

NANCY (VO) Did you call mum?

This voice from the blue almost shocks

SEYMOUR'S chair over.

PEGGY: Where's my daughter?

NANCY (VO) She's upstairs in her flat with Mr. Barry mum.

PEGGY: Pamela are you on? Pamela? You'd better phone her Nancy, tell her he's loosed another lot! (To SEYMOUR) He carries them round in his pockets. You ~~ve got to~~ put him away!

SEYMOUR: Away where?

PEGGY: <sup>1/2</sup> The Malmsey! Wherever you put 'em!

SEYMOUR (teeth chattering) The *Malm* —?

PEGGY (rejecting her pugnaciously) Phooey! And get your shoes off (flinging her own shoes to the floor), you can't run in those!

SEYMOUR flings her shoes off. She suddenly utters the scream that should have happened before. She is pointing desperately at one of the mattresses. Something humped is moving under it.

PEGGY (cont.) Nancy! Phone Mr. Barry and tell him a rat's frightening a doctor out of her wits!

NANCY (VO) All right mum!

SEYMOUR: Don't bring that man down here! Not with rats in his pockets!

PEGGY (quickly, as if getting ready to run, with continual glances at the mattress) Now <sup>hardly</sup> listen to me. We're having a big party in a few days and <sup>just sort</sup> officially I can't invite you. After all we can't have a Malmsey shrink wandering round the place, I mean it only takes you to walk in a room and people start feeling they're space cases, I certainly do. (Poised to run but deciding not quite yet) I don't mind how you do it, strait jacket, giggle suit, beefy skinhead male nurses, anything, I just want that bugga certified. On the other hand I don't want him taken out in chains right in front of the American ambassador but you won't be at the party so that's that, a pity

but—(jumping up as another rat dashes across)!

SEYMOUR: Don't leave me!

PEGGY races through the arch.

PEGGY (cont., off) Hang on to your skirt!

It is doubtful if SEYMOUR could move even if she wanted to. She has eyes for only one thing, the mattress. The long pauses in the rat's movements make it worse, as do its occasional little jumps that raise the mattress momentarily. They trigger similar jumps in SEYMOUR.

BARRY appears in his lab coat, down left. He stands watching her. He has his hands on his pockets.

BARRY: Are you the ~~doctor~~ *psychiatrist?*

This incursion nearly tips her off the chair again.

SEYMOUR: I'm t-t-terrified of rats, a ch-ch-childhood thing.

BARRY: I'm Barry Pillinger.

SEYMOUR: The ge-ge-ge-gene-

BARRY: Yes. Look, it's no use having your legs up like that. If a rat wants to climb up your legs it will. And it's more inclined to if you don't want it to. Anyway, how do you do?

He comes forward with his hand extended and of course the moment he takes his hand off his pockets the coat starts flapping wildly on both sides. SEYMOUR makes a leap backward that sends her off the chair, which rolls over. She begins screaming in a prolonged manner, the more as he now comes forward with both hands

# BARRY'S AWAKENING

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It happened at the lab one day.

[ ] One of the pregnant rats looked into his eyes with the very same sweet and lagg expression I see in ~~Mr~~ <sup>Mrs</sup> ~~eyes~~ Mrs ~~Fred~~ Ferdinand's

eyes how and just at that

moment I heard Lance, the

lab director asking for more 'experimental animals' & he said 'for god's sake it isn't as if I'm asking for anything precious — ~~these~~ animals are just

dumb automatic non-thinking THINGS,

and the hell difference is it that

I couldn't bear my ~~self~~, my being alive to be ~~base and~~  
viciously cruel so-called 'thinking' &  
clever human.

All I have a thousand of more to  
up my experimental ratio as opposed  
to 500? For Christ's sake, let's put  
it where the science is, not where  
the money - yes I know it's not  
that easy to find the animals but  
get 'em, just get 'em,

and only in the moment did I realise  
the principal ~~thing~~ thing - the - deeply  
cruel person I was, and how many  
unthinkable cruel days & nights I had  
given to these of animals, to be followed  
~~later~~ later or soon by a most  
terrifying unassuaged death - and  
to hear his very dog that in the service of  
medical science 3 1/2 billion experiments were  
carried out each year. ~~or~~ and the figure  
was due to go up by next. And suddenly

outstretched to help her.

BARRY (cont.) Oh I'm sorry.

He quickly puts his hands over his pockets. All is quiet, even the rat under the mattress.

BARRY (cont.) You see, it's nothing.

But she's staring at the archway. She points. A rat flashed by or was it just a squeak? BARRY at once lets his pockets go and rushes to the arch—

BARRY (cont., his coat flapping away) That was Mrs. Ferdinand! She's pregnant, enormously! (Returning and putting his hands back over his pockets) You'd better sit down again.

He picks up the fallen chair with one hand and of course this sets one of the pockets jumping. With the chair upright once more he almost pushes SEYMOUR onto it, then quickly puts his hand back to the flying pocket.

BARRY (cont.) Been sensitive like this for long?

She nods mutely.

BARRY (cont.) Before the childhood horror of rats I mean?

Again she nods.

BARRY (cont.) You were born with horror. Of everything. That right?

Yet again her child-like nod.

BARRY (cont.) I heard what Mrs. Cutlass had to say about me. So you're trying to get me put away are you?

SEYMOUR (with the shivers, watching his pockets) I wouldn't say that.

BARRY: What do you mean, you wouldn't say it? I heard everything she said!

SEYMOUR (her words jumping) It was Mr. C-C-Cutlass who got in touch with me. I was given only a v-v-v-vague idea of what I'm to do.

BARRY: Well let me tell you absolutely straight—(shouting) *and look me in the eyes!*

She obeys tremulously.

BARRY (cont., bending down to her eye level) You see, I'm deep in a new project and I don't have time to be put away. My project concerns a certain mutation in the human brain. Now this mutation is pure and simple dementia, humans are the first and hopefully last congenitally ~~crazy~~ animal. Excuse me doctor? Do you know what picture you are presenting to me at this moment?

*ital*

*mad*

SEYMOUR (words jumping like rats) N-n-no I don't.

BARRY: The eyes in shock, digital trembling, raised shoulders, mouth open! And on what grounds are *you* suddenly mad? On the grounds of a fantasy about creatures with legs and feet and brains and spinally hung systems of nerves exactly like ~~yourself~~ *you except that they obey the laws of the Relativ?*

~~She stares at him with fear~~ *she stares at him*

He looks at the four shoes on the floor with sudden interest. ~~He stops.~~

BARRY (cont.) Look! Shoes! Let me guess whose are Peggy's and whose are yours.

He runs to them and without disturbing his pockets kneels to smell them. He then picks one up by the teeth. He buries his nose deep in it. Meanwhile the rats are quiet, and so is the one under the mattress. She stares at him.

BARRY (cont.) Ah! (Gazing at her, then talking through the shoe in his teeth) So that's it! (Smelling again) My god! (Letting the shoe fall from

his teeth) Peggy's could never be *that* sensual! (Gazing up at her with awe).

*isw more hi ~~was~~ ~~than any~~*  
 She is terrified of imminent rat activity as he rises again.

BARRY (cont.) You see how quiet they are? They can feel my pleasure. Come my dear, let me take you upstairs, away from these terrors. My wife has just gone to work, the bed is still warm. Lower your legs, take your hands from your skirt, stand up. (Shouts) *Go on, stand up.* (Gasping as she does so) What an extraordinary creature! Stand exactly where you are. I shall lift you up the stairs, to peace! I'll never let you be afraid again! Will I?

SEYMOUR: N-n-n-no!

He goes towards her (still the pockets don't move though his hands are free). He puts his arms round her and lifts her by clasping the chaps of her behind. He turns round to carry her through the arch backwards. In this way we see, as she clings to him, that her eyes are squeezed tight shut. They disappear through the arch.

~~Eight~~ ?

*Eight* ?  
 This is the night of the party and we are still in the Japanese room. The two mattresses are there, only piled high with sumptuous cushions against the back wall. The only new item is a table with an antique lace cover in the corner upstage left.

Above it, on the wall, is an elegantly printed notice *printed* in burgundy red, PLEASE TAKE A GLASS. But the table is empty. ~~The~~ ~~bar~~ / chauvinism music continues.

NANCY comes in actor's right bearing a tray of champagne flutes already filled. She has been

dressed for this occasion in Victorian starch and black worsted but it takes nothing from her flaming fat red cheeks and immense voice. She crosses and puts the tray down on the corner table.

NANCY (gasping for breath) Why the hell she can't put a lift in I shall never know! (Depositing the tray) Cussedness I suppose!

She is about to leave by the archway when PAMELA appears, right, in outdoor clothes, with a briefcase.

PAMELA: Is that fizz?

NANCY: I don't know what it is my dear, all I know is it goes up your nose.

PAMELA takes a glass and samples it.

PAMELA: I'm used to <sup>that</sup> it. They dabbed a fingertip of it on your tongue when you were three. (Looking at the drink with distaste) Its deadly. Are we on relay?

NANCY: Not tonight. Mr. Barry took it off for your mother. She said they made an agreement he wouldn't let the rats out on a party night.

PAMELA: He says he never lets them out, they just get loose.

NANCY (miming the words with a huge conspiratorial grimace) I've seen him do it! <sup>, the cheeky</sup> <sup>finger!</sup>

PEGGY appears from the archway, dressed in a hail of sequins balanced on winkle pickers, yet with measure.

PEGGY: Nancy this room's for family only, don't forget. *And* special guests like Mr. Sutton. You'll see a Private notice over the corridor.

PAMELA: Won't that be a bit of a put-off, right over the stairs like that?

PEGGY: ~~Well~~ I can't have all and sundry in here can I darling? Well, this is the most unwilling party I've ever given, I do hope Barry's getting

ready. What you do Nancy is to steer everyone towards the Buffet room.

NANCY: Is that the sandwiches room?

PEGGY: Yes.

PAMELA: If this room is for family only why is that notice there (indicating the one above the drinks table)?

PEGGY: As a matter of fact it should have gone into the Buffet room.

NANCY: You can't take it down now mum. You told the workmen to screw it in good and hard. You'll have half the wall down if you try and ~~pull that off~~ <sup>pull that</sup> ~~down~~. have

She leaves.

PEGGY: Oh dear (kissing PAMELA) I'm so nervous, <sup>and</sup> ~~I hope it's going to be all right.~~ You're always so placid (calling out) Nancy you'd better go down to the front door, they'll be ~~coming~~ <sup>coming</sup> in droves as usual. And please don't call me mum tonight, we've got Americans coming and they don't believe in servants. have all of a sudden

NANCY (coming back) It's because my mum was in service, she always said mum, really she said 'mmm', like 'yes'm' m

~~PEGGY:~~ ~~Yes we know Nancy.~~

~~NANCY:~~ It's not really saying you're my mum, it's mmm. I think I can hear somebody mum! (Going, with a quite tremendous bellow) I'm coming!

PAMELA: This champagne doesn't taste <sup>anything like</sup> ~~at all~~ like Dom Perignon!

PEGGY: What you're drinking's a poison called Blanc de Champagne, ~~but~~ <sup>try you for the</sup> says it's the same as champagne only a fraction of the price.

ARTHUR (off, calling from above) Peggy! My dinner jacket's gone!

PEGGY (going to the archway) Nancy! Where's Mr. Cutlass's jacket?

NANCY (off, below) It's in the kitchen airing mum!

ARTHUR (off, as he comes down) Airing my foot, it's ~~getting~~ getting all the kitchen smells!

He puts his nose round the arch in his shirt sleeves.

ARTHUR (cont.) The American ambassador's definitely on.

PEGGY: What? Well that settles it! (Looking at her sequins) I can't wear this! (On her way out) Nancy! Bring Mr. Cutlass's jacket up please! Where are you?

NANCY (off) The first floor coming up! Mr. Fyffe's here mum! Bloody stairs.

PEGGY (to PAMELA) What are you wearing tonight?

PAMELA: I usually leave it to Barry.

PEGGY: I'm the same with Arthur, then I go for the opposite. (A whisper into ARTHUR's ear) Tell Martin I'm dressing.

She leaves.

ARTHUR (calling from the archway) We're up here Martin! (To PAMELA) How do you like the bubbly?

PAMELA: A bit funny.

ARTHUR: It'll grow. Well all this is for your husband, I hope it feels good.

PAMELA: We'll have to see.

ARTHUR: Exactly. (As MARTIN comes in) Ah Martin!

MARTIN is in elegant yet casual evening attire.

ARTHUR: Is this right about the ambassador coming?

MARTIN: It's what I heard. Dan Sutton's on his way, too.

PAMELA: Hullo Martin. I'm in a rush.

ARTHUR (also going) See you in a jiffy.

PAMELA and ARTHUR hurry off.  
MARTIN helps himself to a drink but  
after the first sip he holds the glass up  
and gazes at it with suspicion. He goes to  
the archway.

MARTIN: Nancy! Where are you? Nancy!

NANCY (off) Third floor up and coming down!

He waits for her at the archway, glass in hand. She  
comes puffing along.

MARTIN (holding up the glass) Where <sup>the hell</sup> did this come from? It's white wine with bubbles!

NANCY: I spat it out myself.

MARTIN: Listen, he's got some vintage Dom Perignon down there, let's brave the  
rats and find it. Meanwhile take this ~~crap~~ away.

She takes the tray and as she passes he puts his  
glass on it.

NANCY (as they go out, ~~she with the tray~~) As long as he don't come down on *me*  
afterwards.

~~LANCE KENNING strolls in, actor's right. He  
looks across at the notice PLEASE TAKE A  
GLASS. He strolls over and gazes at the table's  
empty surface.~~

DR. HEATHER SEYMOUR comes in, also from  
the right. She is dressed in muted evening shades.

SEYMOUR: Hullo.

He turns, hands in pockets, and studies her with his alert, interested gaze.

MARTIN:  
LANCE:

Hullo. I'd invite you to a drink if there was any. <sup>it</sup> Oh well, ~~this~~ is the Cutlass residence.

SEYMOUR: You mean they're eccentric.

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: All except Barry, yes.

SEYMOUR: That's news!

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: ~~You know him?~~ I was trying to be funny )

SEYMOUR: ~~I've met him once or twice. (Crisply) And his rats.~~

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: ~~Afraid of rats?~~

SEYMOUR: Yes, aren't you?

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: No, I work with them. <sup>Human ones.</sup> ~~Not actually with rats but e-mice so to speak.~~

SEYMOUR: <sup>so I guess</sup>  
Oh, are you in genetics too?

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE (as they shake hands) ~~Barry Kenning~~ <sup>a newspaper</sup> I run the Gower Street lab. You've gone pale under your makeup, just from talking about rats. But you're perfectly safe with me, all I do is whistle and they hurtle back to their cages.

SEYMOUR: Are ~~all~~ those speakers on?

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: No no. They switch off for parties.

SEYMOUR: What I can't understand is why they have to be all over the house.

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: The speakers <sup>the</sup> or rats?

SEYMOUR: Rats.

<sup>Martin</sup>  
LANCE: Oh that's perfectly normal with Barry.

ARTHUR CUTLASS  
hurries in with new champagne.

SEYMOUR: Isn't that leaning rather heavily on the word normal?

~~MARTIN~~ MARTIN FYFFE comes in with a new tray of champagne.

~~ARTHUR:~~  
~~NANCY:~~ ~~Am what's it gave me this - he said he was only~~  
MARTIN (as he takes the tray to the table) Hello Lance.

LANCE: Good evening. *try to be the least that the staff of early arrivals. Be the early arrival.*

MARTIN (going to SEYMOUR once his hands are free) I don't believe?

SEYMOUR: ~~Dr. Seymour.~~

MARTIN *with a smile for SEYMOUR: Like us!* (as they shake hands) I'm Martin Fyffe. You're from the Malmsey, aren't you? Peggy was telling me. What about some Dom Perignon?

SEYMOUR: Thank you. *real*

LANCE: ~~He usually serves that other stuff.~~

MARTIN (as they all take glasses) Not with me around. *another* (With a smile for SEYMOUR) My taste buds are snobs! (As they sip) What do you say? *My verdict,*

~~ARTHUR:~~  
LANCE: *is it?* Excellent. Could be colder.

~~ARTHUR~~  
MARTIN: Cellar temperature, *what more do you want?*

MARTIN:  
LANCE: London cellars are about five degrees higher than country ones.

~~ARTHUR~~  
MARTIN: There speaks the *very scientist!* ~~Still, it's better than that other poisoned chalice.~~

LANCE: ~~Oh certainly.~~ (To SEYMOUR) You must be the psychiatrist who's going to join Barry's project.

SEYMOUR: What project's that?

LANCE: He says you're going to observe his rat community.

(Emboldened by the wine)

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SEYMOUR (with a glance at MARTIN) Oh! It's good he didn't tell me, I might have told him where to get off.

ARTHUR:  
MARTIN: You have a grievance against Barry?

SEYMOUR: Not at all. I happen <sup>just do it</sup> ~~not~~ to be joining any projects of <sup>his</sup> ~~his~~, that's all.

MARTIN:  
LANCE: Are you sure you aren't a little attracted?

ARTHUR  
MARTIN: Women do fall for him like skittles.

SEYMOUR: Well this skittle <sup>is</sup> ~~hasn't~~. [ARTHUR: You're smitten, tell!]

MARTIN  
~~LANCE: You're smitten! Tell!~~

MARTIN (paternally taking her arm) Don't ~~take any notice of Lance~~. Haven't I read somewhere that you're an ardent follower of R.D.Laing?

SEYMOUR: I've studied him, yes.

LANCE: Didn't Laing say if you're beaten by madness join it?

SEYMOUR: No he didn't. But he easily could have.

LANCE: (If you find a madman you become one.) ✓ ✓

SEYMOUR (with a smile) Your words, not <sup>his</sup> mine. But madness does intrigue me. Despite its manifold disguises.

MARTIN: So we <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ all touched ~~are we?~~ by madness?

SEYMOUR: Not if the disguises are sound enough.

MARTIN: You mean all we have to do is hide it ~~effectively?~~

SEYMOUR (putting down her glass) I'd better circulate. <sup>Exit ~~unsteadily~~</sup> They watch her go out through the arch.

MARTIN (shaking his head)  
LANCE: I don't know how Barry does it.

MARTIN: *Has he done it?*

LANCE: *Can't you see? She's fallen for him like from her back the basement!*

PAMELA pops in, actor's left, in a dressing gown.

PAMELA: The street's already blocked with stretch cars.

MARTIN (kissing her) Let me get you a drink.

PEGGY comes in through the arch in a black and white robe hot in décolletée. We hear growing sounds outside as the guests arrive.

PEGGY: Pamela, you surely aren't still waiting for your shower?

PAMELA: I've just had it.

PEGGY: Suppose a guest comes in! <sup>walks</sup> ~~Where is~~ your father?

~~PAMELA: Hullo Lance!~~

~~LANCE (as they kiss) Pamela!~~

~~ARTHUR: Despite being my wife,~~ *Peggy!*  
~~MARTIN: Peggy, you look incredible~~ (as they embrace).

~~LANCE (to PEGGY) I hope you remember me—Lance Kenning.~~

~~PEGGY: Of course I do, you're Barry's partner (as they exchange a continental kiss).~~

~~LANCE: As was.~~

~~PEGGY: But still great friends?~~

~~LANCE: Oh we're very close!~~

~~MARTIN: Peggy, have a glass of Arthur's cheap fizz.~~

PEGGY: Thank you. *(She all the spits her mouthful in)*

~~LANCE~~ (raising his glass) To two lovely women

They all drink. PEGGY all but spits hers out.

PEGGY: ~~You're quite right, it's foul~~ (putting the glass back). *I wish you'd taste it* Anyway, I'm ~~not a~~ lovely woman at all. I don't come up to my daughter's level. *Wig up the real champagne darling!*

They all make deprecating noises. SEYMOUR ~~returns~~ comes in again and goes towards the drinks table with her empty glass. PEGGY stares at her with astonishment.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR) This is unexpected. You weren't invited.

SEYMOUR: Your son in law invited me.

PEGGY (icily) Oh well, since the party's in his honour...

MARTIN slips out discreetly. The sound of guests outside begins to grow.

NANCY (off) There's people don't know where to go mum!

PEGGY (going to the arch) I told you, the Buffet room! *Take the tray there!* NANCY = Is the sandwiches PEGGY: Yes!

She almost bumps into NANCY who is on her way in.

NANCY: ~~There's no drink in there!~~ SEYMOUR sways in again

PEGGY (leaving) Then take it from here!

NANCY seizes the champagne tray just as SEYMOUR reaches for a new drink.

NANCY (off, as she runs) Mr. Fyffe! Mr. Fyffe! More champagne for the Japanese room please!!

MARTIN comes running in through the arch.

MARTIN (seeing the empty table) Good god!

*He rushes out again.*

He dashes out again. SEYMOUR watches all this with a ~~slightly~~ tiddly fact-finding interest.

**PAMELA**

*looks in, radiant & dressed new.*

SEYMOUR:

LANCE:

Why are their parties always shambles like this?

PAMELA:

Peggy asks everybody, hairdressers, cab drivers. (~~For~~ SEYMOUR) I must say you seem very collected for a newcomer.

LANCE:

*Seen any*  
Not with rats she isn't. yet?

SEYMOUR

PAMELA:

Why, have you seen any?

~~PAMELA:~~  
~~SEYMOUR:~~

LANCE:

~~She knows Barry.~~

SEYMOUR:

PAMELA:

*Oh! I love rats, I like their tails, that she  
you're supposed to do.*

A commotion on the stairs outside.

NANCY (off, announcing) ~~The Honourable Sunday Times! Coming up now mum!~~

~~You said no journalists!~~

LANCE:

Sounds like Sonya!

PEGGY bursts in.

PEGGY:

Where is she? I said no newspapers!

The HONOURABLE SONYA TYMES strolls in and waves to LANCE and PAMELA.

PEGGY (cont., to SONYA) Are you the Sunday Times? If so get out!

SEYMOUR:

Excuse me (hurrying out through the arch).

PAMELA:

Mummy! It's Sonya. Barry was at Oxford with her.

PEGGY: It doesn't matter with journalists, they have no loyalties, the Sunday Times called my husband a stuffed suit.

LANCE: Let me present you Peggy. This is the Honourable Sonya Tymes, my assistant director at Gower Street!

PEGGY: Then you're not on the papers?

SONYA: No.

PEGGY: I don't mind people like Martin who *run* the papers but not reporters. Anyway what a relief! How are you my dear and what's the honourable, is that House of Commons or a title?

LANCE: Title. House of Commons is 'right' honourable.

PEGGY: In that case let me get you a drink, you won't like it but my husband favours the small champagnes as he says. (Putting a hand on SONYA's arm) Do forgive me won't you, parties always unnerve me!

~~SONYA pats her hand reassuringly. PEGGY stops at the empty table.~~

*(seeing the empty table)*

PEGGY (*cont.*) Oh dear!

*PEGGY dashes in.*

LANCE: That's what I thought.

*(moving in to the corner)*

PEGGY: ~~Let's all go to the Buffet room, quick march!~~ *please!*

~~She gathers them all and they go out by the arch, LANCE taking both PAMELA and SONYA by the arm.~~

NANCY (off) Mr. Dan Sutton coming up mum!

MARTIN FYFFE hurries in with a full tray.  
NANCY puts her head round the corner.

NANCY: Where shall I send him?

MARTIN: Who?

NANCY: The American gentleman!

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MARTIN: In here!

NANCY: Come in here Mister!

DAN, a large sandy comfortable well-travelled Texan, comes in. It would take a lot to faze him, much less erode his charm.

DAN (to NANCY) Thank you. What's your name?

NANCY: Nancy.

DAN: Could you mix me a whisky and soda Nancy?

NANCY: I certainly could!

DAN: Thank you.

NANCY (going) I don't blame you either, *she with the champagne!*

She is gone.

DAN: Where did they pick *her* up? *her's your* Not ~~their~~ usual Philippine! (As they clap arms round each other) ~~Well~~ How are you Martin?

MARTIN: It ~~certainly~~ does me good to see you, *Dan!*

DAN: *So* How's life down at Chumley Keep?

MARTIN: You're invited for next weekend one if you're about.

DAN: I guess not but you never know. I count a week-end at the old Keep paradise. Where's the boss?

MARTIN: He'll be down, he was late from the office. This was all so very sudden Dan.

DAN: I know. I thought if I don't move *right now* on this project ~~right now~~ it'll die. You know ~~how I am~~ *hunch* motivated, and somebody else is going to grab him if I don't.

*I am,*

*I mean*

MARTIN: Grab who?

DAN: ~~Why~~, Pillinger ~~of course!~~ Barry Pillinger. Geneticist!

~~MARTIN: Barry Pillinger?~~

~~DAN:~~ You look out of it.

~~MARTIN: I'm surprised.~~

~~DAN:~~ Reading your mind I'd say you think he isn't a big ~~enough~~ name.

MARTIN: That certainly.

DAN: Well I'm going to set you right ~~about that~~. There are more people talking about ~~him~~, I mean in my field, than there are people *not* talking about

him!

That's a big change from six months ago wouldn't you say?

MARTIN: I ~~suppose~~ <sup>it would</sup> it is. If you say so.

DAN: I mean six months <sup>back</sup> ago he was Arthur's son-in-law ~~that~~? That ~~was~~ it. Not any more! (Looking about him) Are there chairs around here?

MARTIN: She's not into chairs at the moment.

DAN (as the noise increases outside) How many people here for christsakes? I had to fight my way <sup>up</sup> in. My feet are ~~killing~~ me. (Looking at the mattresses) We're supposed to lie down?

MARTIN (with a shrug) Well it's the Japanese room.

DAN: Lying down's ancient Rome, not Tokyo! You <sup>need</sup> have to get your history straight Martin.

NANCY rushes in with the whisky.

NANCY: There you are Mister.

DAN: You're the sweetest thing!

NANCY: Now then!

She rushes out again and he winks at MARTIN.

DAN: Well, here goes (they touch glasses and drink).

DAN makes a satisfied gasp and approaches one of the mattresses.

DAN (cont., lowering himself to one of them and lying back) Hey, it's good! That Peggy Cutlass knows something. Come and join me, hack.

He drinks contentedly as MARTIN <sup>sits</sup> on the other mattress.

DAN (cont., nodding at the intercom plinth) *That* don't look Japanese.

MARTIN: It's for loudspeakers.

DAN: Loudspeakers?

MARTIN: They have speakers in every room. You just talk and your voice goes all over the house.

DAN: She likes other people's privacy huh?

They enjoy this.

MARTIN (pointing to the ceiling) Mikes everywhere.

DAN: We're on air right this minute?

MARTIN: No, they switch off for parties.

MARTIN too lowers himself and they lie there placid against the cushions.

DAN: You know what started the noise about Barry Pillinger? A paper

he wrote called How Can Genes Which <sup>Give</sup> Provide Us With Our Goals Give Us the Goal to Modify Our Genes? Some title huh? It set everybody alight.

MARTIN: In other words we're guided by our genes even when we try to fiddle with them.

DAN: Well listen to that! A hack understands a sentence of more than ten words!

MARTIN: I'll go further. He's saying we need to study our genes from a non-experimental angle.

DAN: This is fantastic! What you've just said is dumb but you're a hack so what else should come out of your mouth? Right?

MARTIN: Right! And this is making me feel so good!

They fall about laughing.

DAN (getting closer to him) Listen to me carefully, this is where *you* come in. Science isn't the hype word it was even ten years ago, too many things have gone wrong, there's too much of it anyway. Science needs to change, it needs new personalities. Would you say that Barry Pillinger is an extravagant kind of personage Martin?

MARTIN: I'd say he's more. I'd say he personifies the schizophrenic mutation in the de-oxy-ribo-nucleic acid to infinity!

DAN (who has cleverly drawn out his true feeling) Oh what a bitch we have here! And an informed one! One who does his bio-chemical homework! OK this is what I have in mind for you to ~~do~~. Put that personage on the world stage Martin.

MARTIN: Not my job or interest I'm afraid. I can start the ball rolling but I can't guarantee outcomes. Anyway it's <sup>best</sup> better done in the States.

DAN: Wrong again It's a small pool here, you get more concentration, your papers prefer people on the spot. That's all I need from you, sweet man. (Stretching and yawning) I could sure handle a lullaby.

He gazes before him dreamily. He begins blinking. He seems to be aware of something he can't define. He becomes slightly rigid, more thoughtful. MARTIN glances at him.

MARTIN: Anything wrong?

DAN: Nothing. Muscles in my back. Kind of twitching. Jet lag. They say you have to live like it was eight hours back, which means I've just finished my energy lunch and I'm bright eyed and bushy tailed but I ain't!  
(Suddenly staring before him) I—!

He is suddenly on his feet in one big jump, holding the back of his pants.

DAN (cont.) What the hell goes on? Somebody pinched my ass!

MARTIN (sitting up with a jerk) It's a rat!

DAN: A rat?

MARTIN: There it is!

And indeed there is humped movement under DAN's mattress, *Go.*

MARTIN (cont.) There's another one (jumping to his feet)!

DAN: And where do they come from for <sup>the lord's</sup> ~~god's~~ sake?  
*^*

MARTIN: They're Barry Pillinger's!

DAN: He has rats?

MARTIN: Cages full of 'em-in the basement!  
*---*  
*^*

DAN: What's he doing with rats for christsakes?

MARTIN: He's brought them all here, from Gower Street!

DAN: What's Gower Street?

MARTIN: His lab.

DAN: Son of a bitch, he's twenty years too late! This belongs to animal studies!

They stare at the three humped forms as they slide, go forward, retreat, two under DAN's mattress, one under MARTIN's.

DAN (cont.) Listen those <sup>e</sup> guys <sup>do not</sup> don't belong in a party. They can get viruses this way, humans are lethal for rats, you didn't know that? Maybe this man knows something! He's moved on to new knowledge Martin!

One of the rats makes a sudden dart to the edge of a mattress and MARTIN throws himself on it, trying to encircle it the more it darts about.

MARTIN (calling up to DAN) Get hold of your mattress! (Frantically trying to press down the mattress edges) Get your rats Dan!

DAN (clutching MARTIN's jacket from behind) What the hell are you doing? Leave 'em alone! These are research rats! Ten thousand dollars apiece ~~maybe~~! Lay off! Lay off Martin! Let 'em go! ~~!~~

<sup>BARRY</sup>  
~~LANCE~~ appears, left, glass in hand. He stands watching with some interest.

MARTIN (still struggling) They're rats like other rats! (Trying to clamber over both mattresses) They'll infest the house!

DAN (tugging at him) The future of mankind may lie there, now <sup>get</sup> get up!

In one determined yank he pulls MARTIN to his feet.

DAN (cont., wiping his face down) You hacks are crazy! You want to live for a thousand years or not?

MARTIN: Listen Dan I saw those rats downstairs, they go for your legs, they jump!

DAN: Phooey! You're talking sewer rats!

The rats continue to gyrate under the mattresses.

~~LANCE~~ appears.

~~LANCE~~:  
<sup>BARRY</sup> What's the trouble?

<sup>jump, with</sup>  
They swing round ~~and stare at him.~~

MARTIN: Loose rats are the trouble!

<sup>BARRY</sup>  
~~LANCE~~ (watching the mattresses) I think I know those three. One of them's Mrs. Ferdinand. That's the big one. She's pregnant. (Approaching the mattresses) Now come on you lot, it's feed time.

He suddenly puts two fingers to his teeth and makes a shrill whistle. The rats go immobile at once. ~~LANCE~~ picks up the mattresses and they are gone in three flashes and a squeak <sup>six</sup>

A split second later all hell is breaking loose outside—screams, chiefly women, male yells hoping for rational control and feet scrambling on the stairs.

NANCY (off) Mum! Mum! There's rats in the Buffet (rhyming it with 'rough-it'), they're on the table mum, oh blimey they're in the aspic mum!

Amid the screams PEGGY dashes in.

<sup>BARRY!</sup>  
PEGGY: ~~Lance!~~ Come on!

<sup>BARRY</sup>  
~~LANCE~~ disappears behind her. We hear his shrill whistle again and the screams gradually subside.

DAN: Who's the whistling guy?

MARTIN: ~~Lance Kenning. He runs Gower Street.~~  
*The unhinged Barry Pillinger*

DAN: ~~You mean the lab?~~

MARTIN: ~~That's right.~~

DAN: ~~Man!~~

PEGGY dashes back in.

PEGGY : Dan! I'm so sorry! A little crisis! How are you?

DAN (as they hug and kiss) Rats will be rats, how are *you* Peggy?

PEGGY: He promised me most solemnly he wouldn't let any go tonight!

DAN: Is this Barry Pillinger?

PEGGY: Yes!

DAN <sup>(mildly)</sup> He lets his rats go?

PEGGY: ~~Sometimes!~~

DAN: ~~That could be accidental.~~ <sup>But will</sup> Rats ~~do like~~ to gnaw their way out you know.

PEGGY: The cages are cast iron!

She dashes out again. MARTIN is thirstily downing a glass of champagne at the drinks table ~~after his exertions.~~

DR. SEYMOUR appears, her skirt held up round her legs, her shoes gone. She walks by MARTIN. They stare at her, (more particularly DAN).

DAN  
MARTIN: Are you ~~all right?~~ <sup>OK mate!</sup>

SEYMOUR: Ran over my foot. Tried to get up my-ny-ny -

MARTIN (cynical) Skirt?

[BARRY

Seymour: 7-7-7-yei!  
LANCE dashes back as SEYMOUR <sup>she</sup> seizes a water drink.

~~BARRY~~  
LANCE: They're all safe in their cages. Oh dear (seeing SEYMOUR) have you been frightened again?

SEYMOUR (letting her skirt go) It's a ch-ch-childhoo' thing.

DAN (to LANCE, putting his hand out, gingerly) Well you cleared 'em out good and straight. You're in bioscience too? *What do you do? Like →*

~~BARRY~~  
LANCE (as they shake hands) ~~That's right.~~ Why don't you come and visit us at Gower Street?

DAN (continuing to send preoccupied glances at SEYMOUR) I'd like to!

LANCE: Let me introduce Dr. Seymour, she's at the Malmsey, psychiatrist, she's joining ~~Barry's~~ <sup>my</sup> team I think. *Clinic*

DAN: Really? Well (looking down at her shoeless feet) ~~before shaking hands.~~ ~~You're terrified of rats man?~~ *She must be terrified of rats huh?*

~~BARRY:~~  
SEYMOUR: Mortally.

DAN: Then how are you going to cope ~~watching~~ <sup>studying</sup> the mental health of a rat community? *let loose on crazy humans?*

~~BARRY:~~  
SEYMOUR: I happen to work at a h-h-human hospital, we haven't m-moved into rat care yet. *c-c-c-c-care yet.*

~~SONYA Tymes~~ <sup>NANCY</sup> appears with SEYMOUR's shoes.

~~SONYA~~ <sup>NANCY</sup> (to SEYMOUR) You left these ~~with me.~~ <sup>with me.</sup> [BARRY: That's right] Trademark and Fickle Lilly were in them, one in each. *[DAN: You know every rat by name? →*

~~LANCE (to DAN)~~ Trademark and Fickle Lilly are joker rats. ~~By the way this is my assistant at Gower Street, the Honourable Sonya Tymes (To SONYA) Dan Sutton, from the Ardmore Pennsylvania project.~~

*By the way, I Seymour, this is Dan.*

→ making the genetic headlines!

†

→ BARKY: of course! ~~They were distinctive~~  
~~the humans~~ They've so much more  
personality than humans! It's been up  
for the minute by minute! Trademark...  
→ overleaf

~~They shake hands.~~

Seymour: S-s-s-so you s-s-said.. (To DAN)  
SONYA: Have you met the great man himself?

~~DAN (still somewhat preoccupied with SEYMOUR) If you mean Barry Pillingen  
no but I'm certainly happy you have the right idea about him.~~

SONYA: We were at Oxford together.

DAN: Well listen to that! I'd like you all to fill me in about those Oxford days.

BARRY: She's as drunk as a sourd leavening. I was  
SONYA: He had an annoying habit of always being right. We called him  
Batty. Rather paradoxically. *was at Oxford, how was she!*

DAN (ambiguously) Well listen to that!

SEYMOUR is trying to put on her shoes while also sipping her drink.

~~MARTIN: Why don't we go out on the terrace, Peggy's rigged up some  
wonderful lights.~~

DAN: *over here*  
Is Arthur lost or something?

MARTIN: Apparently he gets dragged into phone conferences.

DAN (with a last glance at SEYMOUR) Well, he could be saving us from a recession.

MARTIN: According to him we've never been out of one.

DAN: I think I'll *drift* go search him out. He  
has a kind of *sancti sane* touch - I mean *isn't he human*  
They all go out with the exception of SEYMOUR.  
BARRY *goes behind SEYMOUR,* is suddenly in the archway in his lab coat.  
*She doesn't see him.*  
*[He leaves]*

BARRY: Tssstt!

She jumps out of her skin and almost

*herself in his arms.*  
throws her glass back on the tray, preparatory to running.

~~BARRY: Have you seen my future employer? the Texan?~~

~~SEYMOUR: You're in your lab coat! He'll think you're mad!~~

~~BARRY: He does already. I've been listening to him over the speakers.~~

~~SEYMOUR: It's all been switched off madman!~~

~~BARRY: I kept the penthouse on receive. He thinks you're mad too.~~

~~SEYMOUR: Why?~~

~~BARRY: Well look at you! You're drunk and you have no shoes on!~~

~~SEYMOUR: <sup>I</sup> You don't need to be drunk!~~

~~BARRY: How's that?~~

~~SEYMOUR (with great syllabic care) You don't have to <sup>run away but</sup> escape yourself/ we do!~~

~~BARRY (coming forward with his hands outstretched so that the pocket rats start up) But darling!~~

~~MARTIN and DAN present themselves in the archway. She begins screeching at the jumping rats, pulling up her skirts frantically.~~

~~BARRY (putting his hands on his pockets) Ah gentlemen!~~

~~DAN (coming forward) This is Mr. Pillinger?~~

~~BARRY: Yes it is.~~

~~DAN pumps his hand but of course the moment BARRY takes his hands from off his pockets the rats start flying again.~~

~~DAN (jumping smartly away) Shit!~~

*He hurries her out, she having quickly taken another glass of champagne.* MARTIN

~~MARTIN (with a dawning look at BARRY) You'd better come and sit down Dr. Seymour, I know a room with chairs in it. Well!~~

~~He hurries her out, she having quickly taken another glass of champagne.~~

~~DAN (looking at his pockets genially) How do you do that? They're jumping hell one minute then they're like sedated.~~

BARRY: You're familiar with your wife's touch?

~~MARTIN:~~  
DAN: I'm sorry?

BARRY: The intimate touch? All creatures respond to it. Like when you don't know a woman from Adam but once you make love to her you know all about her. That's the intimate touch. It conveys knowledge.

DAN: ~~Right!~~ So?

BARRY: Let's see how much they trust you.

He very cautiously lifts his hands from his pockets. At first there's no movement, then it starts, but there is movement, it sluggishly. BARRY puts his hands back.

BARRY (cont.) They like you but there's something they mistrust.

DAN: I'm uneasy with rats, I have to face that.

BARRY: The thousand-year human has to face ~~it~~ <sup>that</sup> too, otherwise he'll be dead at a hundred and fifty.

DAN: ~~I like that! May I call you Barry?~~ *What are we talking about?*

BARRY: ~~Sure.~~ *The human is paid to receive calls. It last I believe at least 150 years. It could be a thousand.*

DAN (as they shake hands again) ~~And I'm Dan.~~

BARRY: ~~Here, let me get rid of these. They need some exercise.~~

NOTE

NB MARTIN is now following DAN's trip - put it on the map!

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BARRY puts a rat in MARTIN'S

DAN (as BARRY starts unzipping his pockets) Hey man!

hand.

MARTIN screams.

BARRY goes to the archway and does his low bending bowler's swing, sending one rat to the left and one to the right. There are instant screams, off.

BARRY (appalled) Now listen to that. Suppose rats screamed every time a human passed?

DAN (weakened) Right. Exact.

NANCY (off) Mum! Mum! There's one in the champagne mum! She tipped it over deliberate mum! She's swaying about mum, look she's as tight as a fiddler's bitch!

DAN is watching BARRY with alarmed interest in his next move.

BARRY: You hear <sup>low</sup> ~~that~~ Nancy observes <sup>human</sup> the behaviour correctly, and with sympathy, she calls the rat 'she', she even gets the sex right! Not so long ago she was hysterical on the subject of rodent sex, she said it was dirty. Did you hear the edge of concern in her voice? -she's concerned at Mrs. Ferdinand getting drunk! But she needs a fear, rat metabolism ~~isn't rectified~~ / adjust.

MARTIN DAN (breathy)

I thought you had an agreement with your mother in law not to let the rats loose tonight?

tonight sir? I'm preparing

LANCE's whistle is now heard.

BARRY: ~~Where is your <sup>any</sup> head ~~now~~?~~ You don't understand at all! I have to make a report on whether my rats find humans catching. ~~infectious.~~ (Tonight was my greatest chance!

DAN (above the din) ~~Catching?~~ Infectious? humans?

BARRY: You didn't know madness was catching?

DAN (allowing time in which to study him) I hear you! ~~See that's the way.~~ <sup>He's gone off Oh, (Nodding slowly)</sup> ~~Unless you're insane, get your~~ Under the influence of LANCE's persistent whistling the noise abates and they stand

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→ BARRY: Help your genes as they're trying to help you! —  
Feel very distress you feel as if you were twenty, the  
is don't think 'Here is the cold hand of death on my  
shoulder'. The doctors' talk, leave getting old to  
then! ~~I mean you'll think the doctor's words~~  
listening to the relative silence. ~~and that's the~~

Maurice Rowdon GENES

DAN: You certainly need your whistling friend!

BARRY: I'll say!

DAN (cont.): Now listen Barry, I've read a number of your papers and of course I especially liked How Can Genes Provide Us With Our Goal to Modify Our Genes?

BARRY: That wasn't the title. It was How Can Our Genes Which Provide Us With Our Goals Provide Us With The Goal To Modify Our Genes?

DAN: Right, right. Now could you give a five-word <sup>breakdown</sup> ~~rundown~~ of what you ~~wrote~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~there~~ <sup>means?</sup> Excuse me, this is a kind of little test I have with geniuses.

BARRY: Dan, it takes anything up to a couple of million years to modify a gene the safe way, the biological way. A human ~~can never do that~~ <sup>can't</sup>

DAN: Why not?

BARRY: Because you can't replicate the process experimentally. An experiment only demonstrates your own hypothesis. Genes don't work that way. They work close to the nervous system, watching and listening and adjusting. You can't replicate that. Genes are a function within a <sup>body</sup> ~~biology~~ <sup>physiology</sup> that's in motion all the time. Humans are trying to condition humans but humans are already conditioned and can only carry out that conditioning, which doesn't include the power to condition.

DAN: Could you give me a kind of <sup>an</sup> example? please? <sup>compare</sup>

BARRY: Let's take the opossum in an environment that hasn't changed for fifty thousand years, like on the island of Sapelo. Now ~~take~~ <sup>take</sup> an opossum in a heavy industrial area where he's regularly run down by articulated trucks. He has a high mortality. This is noticed by the genes. They start a mutation towards a shorter life. Now we ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> run into the same thing. We have short lives because we're out of synch. So we create more and more things that are out of synch. We can't feed ourselves efficiently so we need trucks and planes and refrigeration and radiation. And we're trying to adjust our genes to all that! It's crazy! <sup>(Humans have</sup>

DAN: But Barry we live much longer lives these days!

BARRY: That's another subject! The we're →

think 'old age, how it comes!' It's a good start.

deal with

BARRY: I'll give you a tip  
~~the way~~ way disease goes  
as you die in your 20s - do it

DAN: So how do I set about living to  
a hundred? - ~~a hundred in all~~ ~~take at~~  
~~the moment~~ Stop going to a doctor

INSER  
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~~BARRY: As long as possible, yes.~~

~~Barry: Stop going to the people who experience  
in animals! Dan: ~~for the doctor~~~~

→ know best class genetics; Barry:

~~DAN: Tell me.~~

~~BARRY: A form of the start~~

~~Barry: <sup>at 140</sup> ~~permitted~~ ~~consider~~~~

capcity = the human of 120 years  
of life, maybe 140. But the doctors  
put it not way day of your life - you're  
old at 34, then 54, then 74 - by  
the end you're almost pushed into the  
grave by their total lack of any

→ talking about the ability of human cells to  
renew themselves - once they stop life  
stops - and we're talking of a cell -

DAN: So where do your rats come in?

BARRY: I'm observing sane behaviour! I'm seeing how it reacts to mad behaviour, like my rats tonight, among drunk humans. Which reminds me.

DAN: Yes?

BARRY: You're in jet lag and need another whisky.

DAN: Damn me, Barry, I like you!

BARRY (taking his arm) Let's go.

The rats start up in his pockets.

DAN: Hey! How come you have rats? I saw you throw 'em out!

BARRY: I make new rats by thinking about it.

DAN: You didn't throw the others out, that's what happened!

BARRY: You heard people scream? And Nancy call out mum there's one in the champagne! *And two in the sponge tingle?*

DAN: *(puts his arm in his)* ~~You're playing with reality!~~ Take me back to my nursing home!

They go off laughing. After a pause MARTIN comes in from the other side of the arch. He is talking into his mobile.

MARTIN: Dan Sutton's walking round with his arm linked in Barry's... What do you mean, good news?... They're both drunk! You'd better get down here quick!... What do you mean, you're besieged in your dressing room? To hell with the rats, just shut your eyes and run!

He closes his mobile as PEGGY comes in with



SONYA TYMES. Between them they are supporting DR. SEYMOUR. MARTIN stares at them.

MARTIN: What's wrong with her now?

PEGGY: Passed out.

He quickly prepares a mattress for SEYMOUR. PEGGY and SONYA lower DR. SEYMOUR none too gently.

MARTIN: What happened?

PEGGY: A rat jumped at her playfully.

SONYA: Up her legs.

MARTIN (leaving) I'll get her a brandy. It'll be her third.

SEYMOUR has already fallen asleep.

SONYA: Thirsty work, I'll get us a refill.

She brings two glasses from the drinks table and hands one to PEGGY across SEYMOUR's sleeping form. They drink gratefully, seated on the floor on each side of the mattress.

PEGGY (smacking her lips) That's not so bad after all. Where's my daughter by the way?

SONYA: With Lance, I expect.

PEGGY: Why isn't she hosting this party? It *is* for her husband you know.

SEYMOUR (without opening her eyes) Don't worry, he's finished. Barry the Last!

PEGGY: You're being very cocky for one who's just fainted aren't you? Especially as you gatecrashed my party!

SEYMOUR (trying to open her eyes and sit up but she is pitifully unsuccessful so she opts for slurred speech) That American looks geriatric already. Met Barry, kiss of death!

PEGGY (pushing her back smartly and leaning over her with champagne-sparked menace) You don't look so far from geriatric yourself.

SONYA (to PEGGY) This is a classic reaction, I've been through it, blackening the beloved.

SEYMOUR: Who's that chipped in?

SONYA (to PEGGY) Barry infuriates women who fall in love with him.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR) Did you hear that? You'd better watch out we don't put *you* in a strait jacket!

SEYMOUR (sitting up blindly) There's method in *my* madness however.

She slumps back.

PEGGY (cont., to SONYA as she unsteadily downs the last of her drink) Get me another one dear, I can't believe any of this.

SONYA takes her glass and goes to the drinks table, from which she brings one drink for PEGGY and one for herself. They both down more than half of their respective glasses in one go.

PEGGY (cont.) I tell you what, this is god-awful champagne but it makes you feel good, Arthur's right there, not that I wouldn't prefer Dom Perignon.

SONYA: If this isn't Dom my name's not the Sunday Times.

PEGGY: You're not *really* a newspaper are you?

SONYA: Not apparently.

They drink back the rest of their glasses.

PEGGY hands her empty to SONYA, who goes for refills.

PEGGY: Not that I care, I shouldn't be here at all, I should be eating Elizabeth Taylor's caviar.

SONYA (as she sits again and hands a new glass to PEGGY) Why hers?

PEGGY: She left it behind. Had to get back to the States. So there's a party in her absence and it's going on at this moment. A whole slew of stars and directors. *And* their minders. Muscles trying to burst through their jackets. Lovely.

SONYA (swaying): Are you tiddly too?

PEGGY (also swaying) Only a bit. I couldn't bear to get like that one (indicating SEYMOUR).

SONYA: Some might say we intend what we live.

PEGGY: Meaning, if it does?

SONYA: Well you had a party on the same night as the Elizabeth Taylor caviar binge didn't you? You could have said tomorrow.

PEGGY: That's what I hate, seeing my intentions all over the walls *and* (with a glance at SEYMOUR) floors!

SEYMOUR (waking up) Talking about intentions, the fact is Barry invited me to lunch and I fell in love with him, I didn't intend to fall in love but I intended to go to lunch all right.

She flops back.

PEGGY: I'd like to see *her* standing in front of Shwarzenneger or whatever his name is. (To the dead SEYMOUR) Try putting *him* in irons! Do you know why she's here? Tried to clap me in irons for seeing rats! My husband's idea!

SONYA (waking SEYMOUR with a hard nudge) You said about method in your madness.

There seem to be three entirely disparate methods at work in you, not one, one you agreed to go to the States as his community psychiatrist, one you gatecrashed this party and one you're sleeping with him.

SEYMOUR (eyes closed) That's not three.

SONYA: What is it then?

SEYMOUR: Just the one.

PEGGY: She means intention. She's drunker than you are so she's quicker.

SONYA: Also she's lying down.

SEYMOUR has dropped straight off again.

PEGGY (tottering into an upright position) Oh well I'd better pop off and look after my rats.

She wavers out through the arch. SONYA is oblivious of her exit.

SONYA: Barry's father started saying Barry's brother Daniel's a better man than him and I agreed just to be polite and he starts bellowing 'You leave my son Barry alone! He's going to change the course of human nature!' Work that out.

SEYMOUR (eyes closed) I haven't.

SONYA: His dad always gets his sons mixed up, he's got five.

SEYMOUR: I'll tell you something, whoever you are. Barry's no good at stock-broking.

SONYA: My god, are you out of it.

ARTHUR, properly dressed now, puts his head in and promptly grabs a drink.

ARTHUR: What's wrong with her?

SONYA: Hullo. I'm Sonya Tymes.

ARTHUR: I'm looking for a gentleman called Dan Sutton and some say he was on his way to bed.

SONYA: He went through there (the archway) but he did have his eyes closed.

MARTIN hurries in with the brandy as the party noises increase.

PEGGY (off) We're being besieged! I told you to *announce*, Nancy!

MARTIN (handing the brandy to SONYA) Get that down her and get her out of this room, there's a conference starting.

SONYA promptly downs it.

MARTIN: Good god! (To ARTHUR) Anyway to hell with them, I've lost Dan by the way! What have you been up to in heaven's name?

ARTHUR: Bank stuff, I think they spring it on me when they know I'm giving a party.

MARTIN: Can't you tell them to piss off?

ARTHUR: Not with five hundred millions missing.

He downs his glass and takes another.

ARTHUR (cont.) I need this more than Dan at the moment.

MARTIN (having dialled a number on his mobile) Is that you Dan? We're in the Japanese room....(closing his mobile) He's drinking whisky in your daughter's flat.

ARTHUR: I've never known a party like this, everybody's being the opposite of themselves. Peggy drunk, Dan walking round with his eyes closed, so this young journalist tells me.

SEYMOUR: Now *he's* on about intention.

MARTIN (to SONYA) For god's sake get rid of her!

SONYA: How? I can't get up.

MARTIN (pulling her up) Of course you can.

SONYA seems to come to her senses at once.

MARTIN (starting to pull SEYMOUR) Give me a hand.

SONYA (yelling in her ear) Walk! (Managing to pull her up) That's not walking! You put one foot in front of the other! Like this!

She stumbles while demonstrating and SEYMOUR only moves her legs up and down.

SONYA (cont.) You repeat it, repeat! Watch!

She finally manages to walk her off and they reel across the archway, crashing into it and giggling as the roar of ever more guests grows.

ARTHUR: I've never seen *that*, have you?

MARTIN: I haven't, no.

ARTHUR: I mean at *any* party?

MARTIN: No.

DAN almost falls into the room.

DAN: How many people in this house for christsakes? (Brushing himself off) They're fighting to get out through people fighting to get in!

They stare at him.

DAN (cont.)       What's the matter?

MARTIN:           You're different!

ARTHUR (lit up by the champagne) You look lifted up, carefree, you're not the harassed  
Dan we're used to seeing (almost falling towards him ), how are you?

DAN (as they embrace) Maybe you're right, Arthur-maybe I have been inspired.

MARTIN:           What happened in this short space of time?

DAN:               What happened here was Arthur's son in law took me up to his  
apartment for a whisky and he has no whisky.

MARTIN:           Let me get you one!

DAN (disregarding him) He only has himself and all I can say is Arthur this is a man who  
removes any thirst you might have had for whisky or any other beverage.  
Don't talk to me about new age, this man is new age in himself.

ARTHUR (staring over DAN's shoulder) What the hell's that? Under that mattress! They  
got in my dressing room too, I was standing on my table!

MARTIN:           We chased them out long ago, didn't we Dan?

DAN (also staring) At this stage I don't remember.

ARTHUR (watching) It's gone quiet.

DAN:               Barry Pillinger *told* it go quiet. I'm telling you, that guy can materialise  
rats. I don't believe it and you don't believe it but that is the case. He can  
materialise them at a distance.

ARTHUR (still watching) You know what I believe (swaying slightly)? Even the rats have  
gone crazy. Do you wonder? Gatecrashers everywhere, two women  
teaching each other to walk, three men trying to arrange a meeting by  
mobile in the house they're all in, the rats are bound to be affected. It's  
like we're under possession!

DAN:               We are! Here's a man does things his own way. Like Einstein and Hitler.  
It's like we're in the battle phase of an operation, this is the front line,

where the bullets fly! What are we going to do, run the other way? (They stare at him) Did you ever hear of a big and momentous thing that didn't have to be fought for? OK he turns the house into a hell-hole but only a magician could do that! Don't you see—this magician could face anything, press conferences full of headless humans, chat shows upside down on the sea bed, executions that repeatedly don't come off, who do you think can get this man down like he gets *you* down? No one! That's who!

ARTHUR and MARTIN have been stunned into silence.

DAN (cont.) Who was the guy who spent his life in a barrel? And the other guy who stood on one leg for fifty years? Thinkers!

PAMELA rushes in.

PAMELA: Have you seen Barry?

DAN: I was with him in your penthouse!

PAMELA: Mummy wants the speakers on.

ARTHUR: *On*, what for?

PAMELA: They're pouring in from the street, hordes!

PEGGY runs in, out of breath.

PEGGY: We need three strong men to push them back down the stairs.

DAN: OK you guys, here we go-!

As they start to move off the loudspeakers switch on and we hear BARRY's voice: *Keep calm everybody, please leave the house, the house is on fire, don't remain on the upper floors, go quietly to the street, down to the street please!*

The house swells with an all but audible pause for

thought.

DAN: Can you beat that? He thinks of everything!

ARTHUR: He probably started the fire!

PEGGY : There isn't one!

DAN: You see what I mean about this guy?

LANCE comes in.

LANCE: Barry wants all the rats in the basement, it's past their evening feed.

PEGGY: There aren't any here!

LANCE: I can see three under that mattress.

He lifts the mattress and makes his shrill whistle. Three white rats hot-foot it through bthe arch. PEGGY hitches up her skirt and rushes out, flinging off her shoes. Panic sets in outside, women screeching, men shouting, people falling, scrambling with expletives.

NANCY puts her head round the corner.

NANCY (leaving again) They're jumping up people's legs mum!

LANCE (rushing out) Mum's gone! I'll look after this!

We hear his wild whistle, off.

DAN: Come on fellers, let's man the staircase!

They all rush out except ARTHUR. He takes another drink from the table. The noises outside subside.

ARTHUR (after downing it in one go) If only we had a place to sit. (Getting no response he

turns unsteadily and repeats) I said if only-(seeing that no one is in the room).

He goggles at the mattress, under which three rats are again lively. He blinks and blinks at their movements, swaying. Replacing his glass on the tray with solemn method, he puts two fingers to his teeth and tries several times, swaying, to whistle the rats out. But it's hopeless.

## Nine

The Japanese room the morning after. There is a deep silence in the house. The mattresses and cushions have been removed. Two bar stools and two light coffee tables (placed one on top of the other) constitute a bizarre improvised arrangement upstage right.

ARTHUR is sitting on one of the stools, his legs tucked up. He has last night's pants and shirt on and that's all, apart from carpet slippers over bare feet. He keeps nodding over the table.

MARTIN pads in bearing a tray full of coffee things. He is in a dressing gown, with carpet slippers.

MARTIN: Cost me five quid. (Placing the tray carefully on the table) Only way of getting Nancy out of bed.

He pours the coffees.

MARTIN (cont.) You look off colour. Drink this (pushing his cup across). I slept in the spare room.

ARTHUR (from the depths) There isn't one.

MARTIN: In Barry's flat.

ARTHUR: Trust the press lord to lay himself on.

MARTIN: Dan Sutton wants me to lay on an interview.

ARTHUR: With whom?

MARTIN: Your son-in-law. Five thousand words. Picture. It's a delicate mission. I told him I didn't think Barry's Sunday magazine material.

ARTHUR: I can tell you what material *I* think he is.

He drinks with decision.

ARTHUR (cont.) That Dr. Seymour made an exhibition of herself I must say.

MARTIN: Wouldn't you if you'd just slept with Barry Pillinger?

ARTHUR almost topples off his stool.

ARTHUR: In Pamela's bed? Who told you?

MARTIN: That Honourable girl.

ARTHUR: She's the Sunday Times, you can't rely on her!

MARTIN: She's Lance Kenning's assistant at Gower Street you chump. She and Barry were at Oxford together. They were going to marry.

ARTHUR: Then she noticed his face.

MARTIN: I told you not to invite him.

ARTHUR: Who?

MARTIN: Barry! It was obvious he'd drop us in the shit.

ARTHUR (screaming) What are you talking about? Peggy wanted him certified! As I pointed out to her, she'd be the first candidate for that! Anyway that was why the doctor woman was here. A fat lot of strait-jacket work *she* did.

MARTIN: You're talking rubbish. Barry invited her. The first time he slept with her.

ARTHUR: My god, sex moves faster than money in this place (holding out a limp cup and saucer). Of course that might be her way of dealing with a madman.

MARTIN: It is.

ARTHUR (rattled again) Anyway how could I NOT invite the rat-man if the ambassador was coming *solely to see him*? And don't play the innocent. You want him out of the UK.

MARTIN: Why's that?

ARTHUR: To have his wife to yourself! (Fixing him with a black Lethe stare) You think you can get her to stay. I'll see you bugged first! Pillinger wants her to go with him, she wants to go with Pillinger and I want them both to go just to spite your bloody face.

MARTIN: My goodness, coffee *does* work miracles doesn't it? The fact is I want my child. There's a little case of paternity.

ARTHUR: Paternity my arsehole! Willy-nilly screwing doth not a father make.

MARTIN: I happen to be serious about this Arthur.

ARTHUR (staring at him) Only for the length of the morning Martin. (Rising creakily) Anyway, I must dress for the office. (Going) After all, I have to finance all this.

Once alone MARTIN coolly dials a number on his mobile.

MARTIN: Hullo Dan, it's Martin Fyffe, 8.30 a.m. Friday the twelfth. I think I've

got just the girl for the interview. Outrageous but with authority. She'll say he's sexy. She also knows about commas and uses the word 'whom' sometimes. A good balance. See you later (closing the phone).

BARRY appears in the archway, tussled and in a dressing gown.

BARRY: You haven't seen Pamela have you?

MARTIN: She slept with her mum. I was in your spare room so she couldn't sleep there.

BARRY: Why couldn't she sleep in her own bed?

MARTIN: You were in it. So was Dr. Seymour.

BARRY: Seymour went.

MARTIN: How was Pamela to know that? Was she supposed to queue up for her own bed?

BARRY: Pamela and I are absolutely indivisible.

MARTIN (studying him with amusement) At this moment I think you are both highly divisible!

BARRY: I miss her warmth. The cold round me woke me up. You know how it is.

MARTIN (still amused) I do Barry.

BARRY starts to go but comes back.

BARRY: I've told my community no visits to the upper floors today, no getting under mattresses.

MARTIN: You would have done well to tell them that last night! (As BARRY turns to go again) Thank you for putting me up by the way.

BARRY: Thank you for giving me a second son.

MARTIN: I didn't.

BARRY: Oh yes you did. I spoke to your wife Helen this morning. I thought Pamela might be down there, what's it called Chumlet Hatch or something? Anyway I told your Helen you were claiming paternity and she said which child is this and I said the child your husband gave my wife when she was staying with you last summer.

MARTIN (jumping up, sending the breakfast things flying) You scatter-brained bastard!

BARRY has gone.

## Ten

LANCE KENNING's office. Diagrams and charts marked TTAGGG (a genetic clause repeated several thousand times in the telomere).

He has a comfortable swivel chair and a chaotic desk. He is opening letters. THE HON. SONYA TYMES comes in.

SONYA: That woman shrink wants a word with you.

LANCE: Not the one last night?

SONYA: Yes.

LANCE: She's here?

SONYA: Yes.

LANCE: Good god.

SONYA: She says she'd like to know more about this job Barry's offered her.

LANCE: Why can't she ask Barry? Tell her to piss off.

SONYA: She looks collected and pale and when a woman's like that you have to watch out for yourself.

LANCE: OK wheel her in but see she gets a cup of tea quick.

SONYA (going) By the way, I've formed the impression that she thinks *you* want her to go to Pennsylvania.

LANCE: *Me?*

SONYA leaves and after a few moments, during which he glares at the door, DR. SEYMOUR opens it and comes in.

LANCE: Sit down won't you.

She does so.

SEYMOUR: I'm afraid I was rather ill last night.

LANCE: I did notice you flat out on the floor. I could hardly not do.

SEYMOUR: I imagine you know why I'm here.

LANCE: Don't have the foggiest.

SEYMOUR: You called the Malmsey hospital.

LANCE: Did I?

SEYMOUR: You asked a few questions about me. This morning.

LANCE: Very polite ones.

SEYMOUR: The colleague you talked to said you seemed to be after some kind of career verification. Is that your business?

LANCE: None of my business at all. It just happens that I'm involved in all Barry's projects and I wanted to make sure that you were known at the

hospital and so on.

SEYMOUR: So it was a character enquiry! And not done very professionally either.

LANCE: If you're looking for professional behaviour from Barry you're barking up the wrong tree old girl. The fact is you're having an affair with him so your statements are perhaps a trifle unreliable? Love tints the view so to say? Tell me in plain words why you won't work with him.

SEYMOUR: You don't recall me saying last night that the Malmsey isn't into rat studies?

LANCE: Then it's about time it was! You've got a goldmine waiting for you, at a much better rate of pay than you'll ever get out of that hospital.

SEYMOUR: You really think I'd leave my career behind, however badly paid?

LANCE: Seize the bull by the horns! He's not expecting you to *treat* his rats, is he? They don't aberrate like the human does, so they don't need your antidepressants do they? By the way your eyelids are almost on the floor, I'd say you need a good night's sleep.

SEYMOUR: And shall I tell what *you* need? A bit of self-knowledge. You gene freaks talk too much stale air about immortality and the thousand-year man and no-disease-once-we've-computed-it-right. Did you ever hear the word grandiosity? It sizes you lot up!

LANCE: Our work *is* grandiose!

SEYMOUR: I was referring to a state of illusion as typified in the words 'I am Nero, I am Alexander the Great'! Come down to mother earth!

LANCE: You don't think Crick and Watson and Wilkins were on mother earth, one was a birdwatcher and the other a physicist! They got Nobel prizes! They were our founder geneticists! And what about Erwin Schrödinger? He thought genes came from proteins! Now you tell me anything earthier than that! He too got a Nobel prize! He just happened to be wrong, that's all. It's very mother earthish to be wrong! What about Niels Bohr, he thought genetics had something to do with life! He never stopped talking about the earth and light and all that!

SEYMOUR: But God didn't make you lot visionaries or sociologists or moral philosophers! Look at last night! That was a breach of the peace! Rats crawling up people's legs, eating the buffet food, biting hands that tried to get to a sandwich first!

LANCE: The one who bit the hand was Mrs. Ferdinand, she's learning some very unusual tricks and as for the sandwiches and lettuce getting nicked that was mostly Mr. Rabbit, he loves salads, that's all!

SEYMOUR: What about how you whistle and they all go back to their cages? You nearly whistled your back teeth off last night and they didn't budge!

LANCE: It was only the drunk ones who stayed! (At sea now) You're just like Ethel, you are! She fell in love with a rat twice her age and they fornicated round the clock for a week and then she bit him in the jugular vein and he bled to death!

SOYA appears with a cup of tea, puts it down  
by SEYMOUR.

SONYA: I can vouch for that.

SEYMOUR disregards both this remark and the  
tea.

LANCE: Anyway, I hope this answers your question.

SEYMOUR: I didn't put one (rising). What you *have* done is give me a very full picture of yourself! So you'd better watch your step!

LANCE: Oh the psychiatric police are out are they?

SEYMOUR: Not police, watchdogs. But just before I go let me tell you why you'd like me to go to Pennsylvania with Pillinger.

LANCE: Why?

SEYMOUR: Because you're in love with his wife!

She leaves, with SONYA behind her. LANCE stares before him. We hear a door close and SONYA comes back.

SONYA: Is that true? Since when?

LANCE: Since never. I was always interested in Pamela but...

SONYA: I had a call from Oxford by the way. They tell me the Cambridge ghouls are claiming a three-thousand year human! Adolescence is now up to five hundred years!

LANCE (without much attention) Send out a news release quoting Barry. Such as 'Humans would have a century of sex and two thousand nine hundred years of impotence'. That'll fix 'em. (As she goes) And would you call up Barry and tell him for god's sake to *keep in* with that doctor, she's dangerous.

SONYA: He'll think you mean keep going to bed with her.

LANCE: I do.

SONYA (going) Good god.

LANCE: It's better coming from a woman.

## Eleven

The Japanese room. The mattresses have gone. Instead there are four bar stools-without a bar or even table. The scene is empty.

We hear NANCY's voice on the speakers.

NANCY (VO) Mum! Mum! There's a copper down here! He wants to see Mr. Barry!

No reply.

NANCY (cont., VO) I think we'd better go upstairs Mister. I know he's at the top but the speakers don't stretch that far, I'll have to walk up and knock on his door. (Puffing as she walks up) Bloody stairs!

She appears in the archway with THE INSPECTOR behind her.

NANCY (cont.) If you'll wait here I'll see what I can do. (As she goes out) More climbing!

She leaves. He looks round, rather wondering about the bar stools. BARRY comes in through the archway. He is in his lab coat.

BARRY: Is it me you wish to see?

INSPECTOR: Mr. Barry Pillinger?

BARRY: Yes.

INSPECTOR: I'd just like to have a few words with you sir, won't take up too much of your time. My name's Justin Sarles (putting his police ID under his nose).

BARRY (after inspecting it in his own time) Police inspector. To do with what?

INSPECTOR: We've had a call from the health authorities. I believe you're engaged in research at London University—

BARRY: Wrong right from the start. I haven't worked at or even with London University for fifteen years.

INSPECTOR: But you do work at a Gower Street laboratory?

BARRY: Rubbish. Gower Street's completely independent. London University takes a paternal interest, that's all. You said this wouldn't take up much of my time but it already has, with nonsense.

INSPECTOR: I'm afraid we often have to follow up reports that originate in gossip Mr. Pillinger. We're well aware that you enjoy considerable respect in the academic world.

BARRY: Anyway, sit down, if you can manage on one of these stools.

They sit.

INSPECTOR: We were called in about a party held here the other evening. I believe Mr. and Mrs. Cutlass were the hosts.

BARRY: That's right.

INSPECTOR: And a large number of rats were released.

BARRY: They drifted out of their cages.

INSPECTOR: You have cages of rats here sir?

BARRY: Yes I work with rats nowadays.

INSPECTOR: A number of people called us after the party, quite a lot of people, and said they were bitten or terrified.

BARRY: My rats don't bite and they don't mean to terrify. If anybody's going to be terrified I should have thought it would be the rats of humans.

INSPECTOR: I'm not trying to score points sir. Our enquiries show that there is no license for experimentation on these premises.

BARRY: No experimentation goes on. I observe them.

INSPECTOR: You make it very difficult for us Mr. Pillinger. These rats get loose and I'm afraid they may not be as clean as you think, seeing that your waste disposal arrangements are still very primitive.

BARRY: How did you find that one out?

PILLINGER: The stink Mr. Pillinger. People were choking as they came up the stairs.

BARRY: On their own carbon dioxide! There were hundreds of them! Uninvited!

INSPECTOR: We have to take note of what people say, Mr. Pillinger, and there were at least thirty phonecalls. After all, a rat in the salad!

BARRY: Oh that was Mr. Rabbit, he just adores lettuce.

INSPECTOR: Yes but other people associate rats with sewers.

BARRY: Not white ones, not beige and spotted ones.

INSPECTOR (testy) We can't turn a blind eye to the running of a rodent laboratory on Hill Street Mayfair! So what are you going to do about it Mr. Pillinger?

BARRY: Listen, the rats are about to be shipped to Pennsylvania.

INSPECTOR (persuasively) Something has to be done *here* Mr. Pillinger! You will have to get a licence, I can't see anybody granting you one but you must take health regulations seriously.

BARRY: If I take my rats back to Gower Street I lose touch with the community just like that.

INSPECTOR: What community is this Mr. Pillinger?

BARRY: My rat community. I'm trying to create home conditions.

INSPECTOR: If the smell of urine on the stairs is anything to go by they're very sub-standard! Now listen to me, Mr. Pillinger, all we police can do is to say what the law is. Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to put difficulties in your way but you would help us a lot if you legalised your situation right now, today (rising abruptly). I gather you and Gower Street haven't quarreled so perhaps you should consult with them.

BARRY: They don't give a damn about the law, they're Genetics not Law.

INSPECTOR: But they obey it Mr. Pillinger. You don't!

PEGGY's voice is heard over the speakers. THE INSPECTOR looks round him with controlled alarm.

PEGGY (VO) Nancy? Are you in Nancy?

NANCY (VO) Yes mum?

PEGGY (VO) There's a police car outside!

NANCY (VO) I know mum there's a copper upstairs with Mr. Barry.

PEGGY (VO) Oh my god! It's about the party! (Puffing) I'm on my way up police officer!

BARRY: Here we go.

NANCY (VO) They're in the Japanese room, he ain't half giving Mr. Barry a wiggin!

PEGGY appears in outdoor clothes.

PEGGY (at once, to THE INSPECTOR) Do sit down, I'm surprised you haven't been offered a seat already.

INSPECTOR: I've just got up thank you. Are you Mrs. Cutlass madam?

PEGGY: Yes I am.

INSPECTOR: I'm Justin Sarles.

PEGGY: How do you do?

They shake hands, with PILLINGER a composed, interested audience, which PEGGY shows herself aware of by glaring at him from time to time.

INSPECTOR: I think I've said all I wish to say to Mr. Pillinger madam.

⑤ PLAYS ④.

'Genes and Gents'

Rough draft - pages  
missing

PEGGY (letting herself into a cut-off pillar—carefully) I'm so glad you didn't come in a uniform. The helmets are what terrify me.

INSPECTOR: I use a cap madam.

PEGGY: Is it a fine or sentence? I mean, anything to relieve me of sixty rats in the house!

BARRY: 172.

INSPECTOR: 172! I'm afraid you'll have to act very quickly Mr. Pillinger if you don't want to be arrested!

PEGGY: Why don't you take him now?

INSPECTOR: There has to be a warrant Mrs. Cutlass and so far we haven't considered this a possibility.

PEGGY: Then there's my daughter. If he takes his lab to the States she'll go with him, he's hypnotised her, he's hypnotising you right at this moment.

INSPECTOR (to BARRY) Do you agree with that?

BARRY: I suppose hypnosis does come into it a bit, yes.

PEGGY: I think he should be illegalised. Some of us might not want to live a thousand years, I mean a thousand years of worries like mine are going to kill me straight off.

INSPECTOR: Your husband is Mr. Arthur Cutlass of the Bank of England madam?

PEGGY: Yes.

INSPECTOR: Couldn't he in some way procure a license for the basement area for the few weeks before shipment to Pennsylvania?

PEGGY: As he always gives way to the Pillinger hypnosis I suppose he will.

INSPECTOR: 'Hypnosis' meaning exactly what madam? In the case of your husband?

PEGGY: Let's put it this way, my husband's careful not to run a really boiling hot bath like he's used to in case one of them falls in.

BARRY: I can corroborate that.

PEGGY: I don't think the police are going to accept *your* corroboration of *anything!* (suddenly in tears).

INSPECTOR (after a respectful silence) Mr. Pillinger's held in very high esteem scientifically madam, could it be that he's a little like the proverbial absent-minded professor?

PEGGY: *What?* That man's got eyes in his back passage! He can talk rat language and god knows what they're all hatching together! It's gone so far my daughter doesn't know whose child she's bearing!

INSPECTOR: You're surely not suggesting that Mr. Pillinger needs psychiatric help?

PEGGY: Suggest it? He's getting it! It's upstairs at this moment! (To BARRY) That's why she's sleeping with him-she says it gets her closer to the madness. In fact she says his certifiability sticks out like a red balloon!

BARRY: What about *you*? All these bloody loudspeakers and look at these bar stools! (To THE INSPECTOR) She's sold every stick of furniture in the house! When her husband comes home exhausted from a three-hour lunch he has nowhere to sit!

INSPECTOR (embarrassed) I really must be off. There's just another thing Mr. Pillinger, the animal people are complaining about your rats living without proper light or air.

BARRY: Now there you're really talking. It's why these little fellows dash all over the shop, it's the light and air they're after. You're quite right.

INSPECTOR: So could I assume that you'll look after that? to make the health authorities happy?

BARRY: Absolutely! You've given me a real incentive-light and air! But all the legal stuff means nothing to me, you have to talk my language and you've done so, though you *were* a long time a-coming.

PEGGY: Rat language.

INSPECTOR: Good bye madam, it was a pleasure to meet you. Mr. Pillinger (who has risen) I shall tell my office that we have your full cooperation. Good bye Mrs. Cutlass.

They shake hands and THE INSPECTOR goes.

BARRY (beaming) Pamela told me you were grooming Mrs. Ferdinand!

PEGGY (embarrassed) I happened to find a little brush I use on the kittens.

BARRY: Thank you so much!

PEGGY (drifting through the archway sheepishly) Oh that's all right.

He looks after her proudly.

## Twelve

ARTHUR CUTLASS's office at the bank. Heavy mournful pseudo-Gothic to suggest pseudo-probity. ARTHUR is behind his desk. DAN SUTTON is pacing around. A phone rings and ARTHUR springs on it.

ARTHUR: Hullo, come on up, we're waiting for you! (Putting the phone down and speaking to his intercom) Let Mr. Fyffe in please. He's in the lift now. Try and meet it.

They both watch the door.

After a time it pushes open and MARTIN FYFFE is standing before them.

MARTIN (stopping) It seems you're waiting for me.

- DAN: I'm sorry about the short notice Martin. We need to agree on strategy.
- MARTIN: The media makes short work of strategies. We're such an unorganised lot.
- DAN: You know what this is about don't you?
- MARTIN: Of course.
- ARTHUR: And you found out from Peggy didn't you? A minute after it happened?
- DAN (sitting) Let's put Peggy aside for the moment. My fears are about reactions at home.
- MARTIN (to ARTHUR) Am I to have a seat or not?
- ARTHUR: I'm so sorry Martin, do sit down.
- MARTIN (sitting) Look at you both! This is just the first shot and you're already quaking like a couple of spinsters. And what was it? Three column inches on page four at most!
- DAN: You could have stamped that story out. The fact it got to you first. So we won't put Peggy aside. She rang you right after that police visit. And it's in this morning's paper. Your own paper.
- MARTIN: But it doesn't nail him in any way! At worst he looks a maverick, which is perfectly OK in science.
- ARTHUR: The snag is you hate him.
- MARTIN: Well he *has* put my wife against me! She *is* talking divorce! And that *would* be the end of me! But I'm still professional enough to know I can't handle a story on the basis of my private grievances!
- ARTHUR: Helen doesn't understand your position as a father?
- MARTIN (in a fury at ARTHUR's sarcasm) Understand? How could she understand her husband getting a woman with child under her very nose?

ARTHUR (rubbing salt) It would have been better if Barry Pillinger hadn't spilled it to her?

MARTIN (almost jumping) Of course it would! Oh I know how bucked *you* must feel about it!

ARTHUR: I won't deny a feeling of just deserts.

MARTIN: And somebody else might get their just deserts too!

ARTHUR (coolly) That's just what we're awaiting the evening paper to know isn't it?

MARTIN: I'm not responsible for Pillinger's enmity towards me!

ARTHUR: Oh!

MARTIN: I *am* responsible for the child and I'll fight to keep my wife with all I've got.

ARTHUR (his eyes down) You could suggest to her that your desire to have a child overcame you. She being unable to have children.

There is a silence.

MARTIN (stroking his chin) Yes. Yes that *is* a point.

ARTHUR (cont., with a not dissatisfied glance at DAN) I'm sorry I've been rather indiscreet.

DAN (quietly) You see, Martin, I have to be very watchful what gets into the American press. A little matter of self-interest.

MARTIN: The report I printed this morning didn't tell the whole truth. The police went to see him for a reason far from health regulations. Do you think the police do the health department's work? They want to know one thing- if Barry Pillinger's crazy, in fact whether he's a dangerous lunatic. Releasing rats in a Hill Street residence, carrying the rats home from Gower Street over a six-month period one at a time! That's why they put Justin Sarles on the case, he can suss out fruitcakes quicker than anyone else in London.

DAN: So what did he decide?

MARTIN: He thought Pillinger touch and go. Now I could have reported that.

The intercom buzzes.

ARTHUR (answering it with the handset) ....Ah!....Thank you. (Putting the phone down)  
The paper's out. You were right. Page four.

MARTIN: There you are, the story's dead!

ARTHUR (cont.) The headline was Geneticist Visited by Police. My name's there. My address. And it also gave Pillinger quite a puff. And there's a photo of him.

MARTIN: You see how we papers unknowingly help each other?

DAN (with a long look) I'm beginning to, Martin.

ARTHUR: Anybody for tea?

DAN: Make mine a double espresso please.

ARTHUR: I wish they'd put *my* photo in. (At the intercom) One double espresso and a pot of Assam for two Jenny.

## Thirteen

The penthouse in the CUTLASS house.  
PAMELA has just come in from work and is changing. She has Classic FM on. Her briefcase is on the bed. She goes to the inhouse phone.

PAMELA: Nancy, is my husband down there?....Could you ask him to come up?

She goes to the shower and we hear the water running.

The house phone buzzes, and buzzes itself out.

BARRY comes in with his lab coat on.

BARRY: Pamela! (Switches the radio off) Pamela!

PAMELA (pushing the shower door open) You should never have touched that psychiatrist woman!

BARRY: What are you talking about?

PAMELA: Look in my briefcase, you'll see what I'm talking about! Page four.

BARRY opens her briefcase and takes out the evening paper. He settles into a chair with some satisfaction.

PAMELA pads in wrapped in a towel.

BARRY (looking up) What's wrong with this? It just says a police officer called on me about some rat cages.

PAMELA: Did *she* know about the police visit?

BARRY: Of course. She was up here at the time.

PAMELA: In this bed I suppose.

BARRY: Well you've been rather absent from it lately! As a matter of fact she went down to the kitchen to listen. Nancy gave her a cup of tea while they listened.

PAMELA (sitting on the bed and gazing at him) What's wrong darling is the police are really investigating your sanity.

BARRY (looking up from the paper) Where did you get *that* from?

PAMELA: Martin Fyffe.

BARRY: The police investigated Lance once. For obscene phone calls. He was phoning his rodent urine reports to a completely wrong number for six months. And you know how heavily he breathes.

PAMELA: Barry, why exactly did you release all those rats at the party?

BARRY: Well first of all I don't *organise* people to be spontaneously mad as they were that evening. I mean the rats *had* to see it!

PAMELA: And you think that's a perfectly sane remark?

BARRY: Of course.

PAMELA: And you expect me to stay here?

BARRY: Why not? You get on perfectly well with them.

PAMELA: Does Dr. Seymour?

BARRY: Good god no. I keep them all well out of sight when she's here. (Holding the paper up) Good photo of me, right? Remember it?

She shakes her head.

BARRY (cont.) Oh come on, it's from that honorary degree ceremony at Bennington New England. You had a little lace bag, and tea roses in your hat!

PAMELA: Barry, you remember!

BARRY: You were worried about your shoes, and in fact they made a killing.

PAMELA (kissing him suddenly, almost in tears) Yes!

They embrace for a moment, gaze at each other.

BARRY (jumping up) I'm going to slip round to the café, I want to see if people recognise me.

She watches him go, still tearful.

## Fourteen

The Japanese room. The bar stools are now accompanied by a tall table with a mosaic top featuring much turquoise. The scene is empty.

NANCY (on a speaker, VO, conspiratorially) Mum?

PEGGY (VO) Yes?

NANCY (VO) I think I just heard the car doors slam.

PEGGY (VO, on the stairs) Beautifully timed, eh?

NANCY (VO) Evening Mr. Cutlass.

ARTHUR (VO) Hullo Nancy!

PEGGY comes in through the arch with a tray already set out with coffee things, including the best gilded coffee cups and saucers and gold-plated spoons. She sets it down on the coffee table. She is dressed to kill. She begins pouring the coffee, black as night, no milk or sugar. .

NANCY (VO) Rough day sir?

ARTHUR (VO) Middling.

By the time PEGGY is finished he is standing in the archway with his briefcase.

ARTHUR: Well look at this! And look at *you*!

PEGGY: I thought we could do with a little celebration.

ARTHUR: You saw the paper?

PEGGY: Oh yes!

ARTHUR (settling himself carefully into a bar stool) I liked that bit about 'The Bank of England's Mr. Arthur Cutlass, father-in-law of one of our most notable geneticists'. It wasn't quite what I came on the earth for but small mercies, you know. I mean I like to think of myself as a Medici.

PEGGY: It wasn't *that* I wanted to celebrate.

ARTHUR (after sipping his coffee) What was it then?

PEGGY: His leaving.

ARTHUR: Whose leaving?

PEGGY: Barry. You told me yourself, it's retty well all arranged!

ARTHUR: It'll take a year to finalise the details.

PEGGY: A YEAR? We could all go mad in that time.

ARTHUR: But what do you think I'm fixing him up with bright new cages and drainage for?

PEGGY: Wherever Barry Pillinger is there are free-range rats! Bright new cages my foot! They'll all be outside! And I'm not having any more of it!

ARTHUR: All right, I'll have a sit-down chat with him. Anyway drink your coffee.

PEGGY (sitting back) I don't want any.

ARTHUR (putting down his cup with a little slam) What *do* you want?

PEGGY: I want to move. This house is quite spoiled for me.

ARTHUR: And where the devil do you want to move *to*?

PEGGY (croaking through quick tears) There's a house up the road. It's just come on the market. It's got a conservatory and a walled garden and a small pool. And it's—(suddenly without tears) dirt cheap.

ARTHUR: Let's talk about it over dinner. (Getting up) I need to change.

PEGGY: Yes Arthur. (As he leaves) That woman next door complained.

ARTHUR: Yes?

PEGGY: She's one of the junior royals. She said there's rat seepage through the walls.

ARTHUR: *Rat seepage?*

PEGGY: Urine.

ARTHUR: And what did you say?

PEGGY: I said the rats are going to Philadelphia or thereabouts and we're moving six doors up.

ARTHUR: *Moving? Us?*

PEGGY: She said I've had my eye on that house too. I said well look elsewhere my dear because I've just made an offer.

ARTHUR: *You made an offer?*

PEGGY: Yes Arthur.

ARTHUR: You made an offer for a house for god's sake?

PEGGY: Yes.

ARTHUR: On Hill Street. You must be mad!

PEGGY: They said immediate sale, cash, it's a third of what we paid for this place six years ago. I jumped at it!

ARTHUR: Is it falling down or something?

PEGGY: It's in better nick than this one, they're a couple on the run, a corrupt minister or something, anyway who cares so long as it's rat-free?

ARTHUR: And where's the catch?

PEGGY: There isn't one. I put a search on everything.

ARTHUR: Well! There's nothing like property I suppose! And it confirms my view that people who are totally bananas like you have uniform good fortune (taking up his briefcase).

PEGGY (as he leaves) Thank you Arthur.

She drinks her coffee with satisfaction.

## Fifteen

The LANCE KENNING apartment. Another party is in swing. As on the previous occasion we are in the alcove with its boudoir armchairs and round coffee table.

LANCE is reading, sprawled in one of the armchairs. Shadows pass across the doorway and there is a din of talk with dramatic rhythms from Brian Eno on the hi-fi.

BARRY, dressed elegant casual, puts his head round the door.

BARRY: I've just been interviewed.

LANCE (looking up with reluctance) Hullo Barry. By whom?

BARRY: Some woman.

- LANCE: Is this the girl called the Velvet Knife?
- BARRY: Yes. She was interested in my sex life principally.
- LANCE: You didn't tell her anything about it I hope.
- BARRY: I said I'm promiscuous and my rats are monogamous and they're much happier than I am.
- LANCE: She'll call that anecdotal. They've picked the word up from science journalists.
- BARRY: About ethics I told her science has nothing to do with ethics. I said are you going to tell me that nuclear research under Hitler was any different from nuclear research anywhere else?
- LANCE: Oh dear!
- BARRY: I said science is unpractical anyway.
- LANCE: Lovely!
- BARRY: All experiments prove is that something happened to work in an artificially protected environment. It doesn't mean it can work outside. There's a proven birth-control pill one year and the next it's deforming babies.
- LANCE: Any more?
- BARRY: I mean look at what we think of as a simple haploid cell fusion, millions of transactions are involved! The genetic codes work without thought but thought is all we have to study them with. And it's millions of light miles too slow.
- LANCE (after giving him a long appraising look) All this is to a journalist?
- BARRY: Yes.
- LANCE: And she understood every word?

BARRY: That's hardly my responsibility is it?

LANCE: *Gawd!*

BARRY: Why gawd?

LANCE: Because they think genetics is about a code and by the time you start explaining even what a biological code is you've lost them!

A pause.

BARRY: *Could* we explain what a biological code is?

LANCE: Exactly. Since there isn't one.

BARRY: I'm learning a lot from Heather Seymour.

LANCE: Ah.

BARRY: She says if there *is* a psychotic mutation in human DNA perhaps geneticists should see their obsession with longevity and genetic modification as biological psychosis.

LANCE: Why biological?

BARRY: She means the biological school of psychiatry. It says humans are *born* nuts. Which of course is what we're saying.

LANCE: In that case psychiatrists are a lot of nuts trying to cure nuts.

BARRY: The same applies to us. Crazy people trying to cure our genes instead of our madness. What I always said.

LANCE: And this kind of thing went to the journalist did it?

BARRY: Of course.

LANCE: I goggle at your diplomacy and careful use of non-extremist language.

BARRY: What would *you* have told her?

LANCE: More about my sex life.

BARRY: I did.

LANCE: I bet you didn't tell her you had Dr. Heather Seymour in your bed most nights of the week.

BARRY: She already knew.

LANCE (sitting up) I hope *that's* not going to be public! It'll devastate Pamela! For god's sake Barry, the poor woman's cooped up here in my spare room! How long is that to go on for?

BARRY: But you said it was urgent to keep on the right side of Dr. Seymour!

LANCE: Barry you have no discretion like most of us have no tonsils. I mean, Pamela saw you at it with that woman!

BARRY: I know, that's why I shouted out to her 'Don't worry, it's nothing!'.

LANCE: That must have been nice for Dr. Seymour! (Getting up) I've got to have a drink. I'll send Sonya in with yours.

BARRY: Thanks a lot.

LANCE (going) Don't mention it.

BARRY picks up LANCE'S book and scans it.

BARRY: 'Geneticists are the lion-tamers of nature'. Bloody fool! (throwing the book to the floor).

SONYA comes in with the drinks.

SONYA: Hullo.

BARRY (as if waking) Sonya! Oh thank you (as he takes his wine).

SONYA (sitting on the arm of his chair) They tell me you're looking after the children in Pamela's absence.

BARRY: Oh I enjoy it. Anyway I have to do it don't I?

SONYA: Yes you do Batty. Lance is fuming about that interview.

BARRY: He's rattled because I'm honest with them. The fact is if you try and manipulate a journalist they see through it in a flash.

SONYA: Why have interviews at all?

BARRY: Part of Dan Sutton's package. He says I have to be sort of floated into the States on a cloud of good publicity.

SONYA: That police visit should help.

BARRY: Just what I said.

SONYA: And what did he say?

BARRY: He said 'we're turning that into a cosy mad-professor story'.

SONYA: That's the trouble with your madness talk, Barry, the only person it sticks to is you!

They fall about over this.

## Sixteen

The house up the road which PEGGY has bought. This room is the exact equivalent of the Japanese room but bare, stripped, lightless. We hear echoing voices, steps on a carpetless staircase, energetic hammering from the ground floor.

PEGGY walks in with LANCE behind her.

PEGGY: We're going to do the alterations floor by floor.

LANCE: But Peggy it's exactly the same as the other place.

PEGGY: Not quite. The basement consists of four or five offices with stout walls between them so there's no way even a rat could get in. And since we're selling the old house it means he has to come back to *you* doesn't it? Plus his rats!

He is stunned by her tone.

LANCE: Is that why you got me here?

PEGGY: Yes it was.

LANCE: And all this moving is just because of him?

PEGGY: Wouldn't you move? My daughter already has! She's living with you!

LANCE: And I'm supposed to accommodate his rats as well am I?

PEGGY: Yes you are!

LANCE: But he's on a completely different project! The financing's different! And he's going to the States.

PEGGY: Not for a long time though.

LANCE: So what you're really doing is selling the old house over Barry's head?

PEGGY: Over his rats too. And the new cages. The people coming in say they need to lock up their wine anyway.

LANCE: What a treacherous idea.

PEGGY: He won't have a sitting target any more-me!

LANCE: You're pushing him out of your life just like that? What's Pamela going

to think?

PEGGY: There's another woman in her bed! It's a disgrace him living in my house with another woman, especially with children about! Anyway Pamela wants him out too!

LANCE: That's a downright lie!

PEGGY: So what's she doing in love with you? Don't look so alarmed! Or does her sleeping with you mean she's just trying to get Barry out of her body? We women do that you know!

LANCE: Isn't that that's rather personal

PEGGY: All sex is.

LANCE: She is pregnant with Barry's child after all!

PEGGY: That's Martin Fyffe's, didn't you know?

LANCE: Good god!

PEGGY: You all fornicate like rats, that's the trouble!

LANCE: You'll lose Pamela over this, you know that don't you?

PEGGY: Don't you see he'll bring discredit on your work? on London university?

LANCE: He has nothing to do with the university, nor do I! You don't even seem to know what Barry's work is! Some Americans call Barry the first geneticist! Do you think a man like Dan Sutton crosses the pool for a nobody?

PEGGY: Well in that case get him to the States as fast as you can! (Going) And you'll need to find room for 172 rats-that'll be 195 including the kids!

He stares after her.

## Seventeen

ARTHUR's office. He is sitting at his desk taking a call.

ARTHUR: But surely Pamela you can visit your own bedroom? He's only showing off!....Oh *her*. She couldn't certify a rabbit! Anyway who's going to accept *her* medical verdict?....Martin Fyffe wants him certified too? Listen Pamela if the whole world's going to certify itself all I can say is there's no need to worry, normal's mad, I'm not sure it isn't already. And Pamela don't rely on Martin Fyffe's description of events, making up stories is his job.

He puts the phone down and busies himself with his papers. The door opens slowly and since this is against all precedent ARTHUR attends closely to the result. It is DAN SUTTON.

ARTHUR: What's wrong?

DAN: Nothing, why?

ARTHUR: No new gaffes by you know who?

DAN: Not that I know of. (Sitting) Unless it happened in the time it takes a cab to get here from the Connaught.

ARTHUR: How did you break through my secretarial stockade?

DAN: Pure charm.

He sits down and yawns.

DAN (cont.) Excuse me. The interview seems to be going OK in the States. Luckily the Velvet Knife reserved her cruelty for the anti-Pillingers.

ARTHUR: Good.

DAN: This could be the calm after a storm and it could be the calm before it.

ARTHUR: You know why I think it's calm?

DAN: Tell me.

ARTHUR: We're all getting to know Barry. Including me. He does take some knowing.

DAN: Also a lot of our fears were unjustified Arthur.

ARTHUR: That's right.

DAN: And he has a certain, I don't know how to express this but wouldn't you say he was basically a peaceable kind of guy?

ARTHUR: I suppose a scientist has to be. Otherwise how is he going to do all those plodding day to day litmus tests and stuff?

DAN (nodding) Most science is dull like sewage water.

They sit in a comfortable silence.

DAN (cont.) Partly it's me getting used to things over here in England. I guess I'm a very simple man. You know, George Washington uttered some very beautiful words. He said Europe's a name for chaos.

ARTHUR: What's Europe got to do with it? We're in the UK.

DAN (scathingly) OK, OK, I just happened to forget we're in Asia, right? There's just this one thing that worries me about England. I'm going to be very frank, Arthur. I know a lot about your extended family—son-in-laws, daughters, psychiatrists, editors in chief, geneticists male and female, but business-wise *I am fucked*.

ARTHUR: How?

DAN: I'll tell you how. You and I are going into business together and as usual I hope to plough my way through good healthy soil but, funny me, I feel so far the only soil I've ploughed my way through is personal shit. You

forgive me?

ARTHUR: Of course. I see the same thing from the money end. Money's just an equation but people get very personal about it.

DAN (with a passing sour look) I'm not talking about people getting personal. I'm saying that the man we're putting our money on is sleeping with a psychiatrist who would like him in a nuthouse, his wife's sleeping with his closest professional associate and, guess what, she's carrying a baby from neither of these men but the editor in chief on whom we most rely for the creation of a good media image for the man we're putting our money on. Man, you haven't got chaos here, you have a tidal wave tall enough to carry us all away!

ARTHUR: Oh! But let me tell *you* something. Barry Pillinger is where I happened to have placed my bets. Do you hear me? And there they stay!

DAN: Arthur for christsakes stop fiddling with those dumb-ass papers will you? My career's on the line! I've staked it on a B film funny man and you sit there blabbermouthing this financial shit about how nothing's wrong, everything's normal, not to worry. You're as shit scared as I am.

ARTHUR: I am too.

DAN: I mean is this the menagerie I'm to export to Ardmore Pennsylvania? It'll take him a week flat to drive 'em all crazy! He'll be on every chat show from Sedona to Maine! For himself he'll be talking sense. Only for everybody else he'll be talking loco! I've been through his notes and his daily reports and there's nobody knows what he knows! Except he stands in front of himself making faces! So wrack your financial brains for something really dishonest will you?

ARTHUR: Why dishonest?

DAN: For christsakes just think something out will you?

ARTHUR: Well I've had certain thoughts already, as a matter of fact. Let's look at what Barry's already achieved. The papers are calling him up. Television appearances pending. He'll soon be the voice of genetics even on *this* side of the pool.

- DAN: I hear you.
- ARTHUR: Tell the Ardmore people you're keeping him here. Why do they need to own him bodily?
- DAN: Own him is just what we have to do! Nothing less! That's how we make our killing!
- ARTHUR: But you just said it yourself, Barry's circus travels with him. So let him and his circus stay here! That's where he does his best work, in a circus! He might lose heart in Ardmore! It might seem too flat for him! So he'll start a Yankee Doodle circus such as you've never seen! He'll do anything not to give you a safe feeling at breakfast! I've been in that one for years! But if I own the premises, the cages, the facility? Pay the salary?
- DAN: You mean he can do no more than he's done already.
- ARTHUR: Exactly right!
- DAN: And you kind of rent him to us? (Shaking his head) They won't buy it!
- ARTHUR: Better than renting is that you *own* me. Or rather you and I get owned.
- DAN: A subsidiary?
- ARTHUR: Better a franchise.
- DAN: And where are you going to put him?
- ARTHUR: In my house.
- DAN: There you go---back in the middle of the shit! It's your own residence man!
- ARTHUR: No. You're wrong.
- DAN: I'm sorry?

ARTHUR: We've purchased another house a few doors up.

DAN (with admiration) You cunning bastard.

ARTHUR: Here's something else. It's publicity that moves governments. And Barry's getting a lot of it. I can be of help there. I can start moving politicians. They're always saying isn't your son-in-law all over the news and I say didn't you know?

ARTHUR rises and leaves his desk.

ARTHUR: In fact I want to introduce you to a few government people right now.

DAN (rising too) I ought to say Arthur that in Ardmore Pennsylvania 'government' is the foulest word you can utter.

ARTHUR: That's all right. A rose by any other name is sweet.

DAN rises and they start to go out.

DAN: Lead on, wise man.

The phone rings.

ARTHUR (hurrying back to his desk) Let me just grab this....Hullo?....What?...Oh my god! (Shouting) Call Lance Kenning and get him over! And don't do anything! We'll be there in twenty minutes flat! (Crashing the phone down and grabbing his keys on the desk) Barry's locked himself in the cages and won't come out! He's rattling the bars and says he's on strike.

DAN stands with a face twice its length.  
ARTHUR has to all but drag him out. The door is left open.

ARTHUR (off) Refer my calls to Hill Street please!

## Eighteen

The Japanese room. Cage bars are being violently rattled below. A simply hair-raising noise.

NANCY (VO) Mum! Mum! Dad's arrived!

The front door slams.

ARTHUR (VO) Don't call me dad and where's my wife?

PEGGY (VO) I've locked myself in the bathroom!

ARTHUR (VO as he and DAN run up the stairs with much puffing) Which one, we have six?

PEGGY (VO) The master one!

ARTHUR comes in through the arch with DAN behind him, both out of breath.

ARTHUR (to PEGGY) I've got Dan with me, come down to the Japanese room.

DAN: Maybe we should call the medics!

ARTHUR: To hell with medics, it's probably one of his experiments.

PEGGY comes in.

PEGGY: I'm terrified he'll break out and start mauling us!

ARTHUR: Break out ? What are you talking about? He's inside with the key!

LANCE (VO) Hullo? Anybody upstairs?

ARTHUR: We're in the Japanese room.

DAN: Who the hell's that?

PEGGY: Lance Kenning.

DAN: That whistling guy? He's good for getting rats back in, not Pillinger out!

LANCE appears, composed.

ARTHUR: What do we do Lance?

LANCE: What about?

DAN (shouting above it) You don't hear the rattling?

LANCE: It's only Barry.

DAN: *Only!* He's a whole crowd of kooks (as the rattling augments)!

LANCE (also obliged to shout) It's because I told him you were throwing him out of the house! *And* his rats!

DAN: Who's 'you' for god's sake?

LANCE: Peggy. She said go and tell Barry I'm throwing him out of the house, she said I'm selling it under his feet, I've got a buyer. So naturally he got mad.

DAN (to PEGGY) You again!

LANCE: She said I want him and his 195 rats out right now! She said the people who've bought this house need the cages for their wine.

ARTHUR (also to PEGGY, with an appeal to the ceiling) Why in heaven's name?

PEGGY: Because it's true! We're not living in two houses just to provide *him* with a cage! So that's that!

ARTHUR: Oh really? Well just you listen to this! My plans for this house have already been made! It's now Barry's research centre! And in future keep

out of my business affairs!

LANCE (shouting at the arch) OK Barry you can stop rattling your cage!

The rattling stops abruptly.

PEGGY (to ARTHUR) You can't be serious, a prime Hill Street property turned into a rathouse!

ARTHUR: You don't have to worry, plenty of money is going to be made.

PEGGY: Well, I suppose you know best in that department.

ARTHUR (seething) Yes darling.

PEGGY (close to tears) What am I supposed to do? I don't mind touching them but I'm scared of them crawling up my legs. You're not too happy about them either, you're always tucking your pants in your socks and running up the stairs!

LANCE has already slipped away.

DAN: OK, let's cool it.

PEGGY: I found a buyer, I was only being sensible.

DAN (stone) That you were Peggy. Very sensible.

ARTHUR: In future if anybody says Barry Pillinger's crazy laugh in their faces! Any reflection on his sanity is a reflection on your bank balance, and don't forget money's very volatile at the moment, especially in your hands!

LANCE strolls in again.

ARTHUR (cont.) What's he up to now?

LANCE: Nancy's did him a couple of fried eggs.

PEGGY (blowing her nose) I wonder his rats didn't die of shock with all that noise.

LANCE: They loved it. He'd like to see you all, by the way. Share a pot of tea with him.

ARTHUR (looking at DAN meaningfully) And why not?

DAN: I could easily say why but why not?

ARTHUR: Come on Peggy.

PEGGY: It's hardly *my* fault if he puts himself behind bars! The police should have done that long ago!!

ARTHUR: You're perfectly right Peggy as always but where there's big money there's big compromise. Which means try and keep your mouth shut in future, will you?

They trail towards the arch but before they get there NANCY's frantic voice comes over the speakers.

NANCY (VO) Mr. Barry! Mr. Barry! You left them bloody cages open! They're everywhere! He's gorn mum. Mum! Oh blimey! They're in tonight's blancmange! Dozens on 'em! Dozens!

PEGGY (hitching up her skirt and flinging her shoes off) I told you so!

ARTHUR (yelling to DAN as he unties his shoes, hopping about) Get your shoes off!

DAN pulls off his laceless shoes, watching ARTHUR.

ARTHUR (cont.) Tuck your pants in (as he tucks his pant cuffs into his socks)!

DAN follows suit.

PEGGY (dashing out) Follow me!

ARTHUR runs out too.

DAN (as he too dashes out) Hold it you guys!

All we have left is three pairs of shoes. We hear LANCE's deafening whistle below. The slamming of doors above. Silence.

BARRY, in his lab coat, strolls in with LANCE behind him. They look round.

LANCE (as they inspect the shoes) Odd.

They sit on the bar stools.

LANCE (cont.) Are we switched on? (DAN shakes his head firmly) Well, that did for *her*. A little violent, your method. (No response) You know who's here don't you?

BARRY: No?

LANCE: Dan Sutton.

BARRY: The trouble is I never plan this kind of thing, I just find myself doing it.

LANCE: And now you're in the public eye it's not so convenient.

BARRY: Exactly. Hetty's trying to help me there.

LANCE: Hetty?

BARRY: Dr. Seymour. She says I do things to make a point when all I have to do is just make the point.

LANCE: Hardly a revelation.

BARRY: That's what she said. For me it's a revolution.

LANCE: You're not going to start interpreting everything you do as a psychological event are you? It's obvious you rattled your cage to make a point! What was your point? I want this house! Well you got it! If

you'd been psychoanalysed you wouldn't have dared. Irrational.

BARRY (glowing with admiration) That's exactly the point I'm making in my fieldwork!  
I'll quote you.

LANCE: Who to?

BARRY: The doctor.

LANCE: Would not do.

BARRY: OK.

LANCE: I was terribly impressed when you got them all back in the cages. After their blancmange binge.

BARRY (coming to) Is this about the rats?

LANCE: You need to be in a team again. Getting kind of absent.

BARRY: What's happening is I'm seeing the genetic language in behaviour, and then I'm seeing the behaviour send messages back to the genes! So the genes change and then you see the behaviour change.

LANCE: Genetic information elaborates on itself, every second.

BARRY (full of admiration for this remark) So all this crazy modification stunt can do is interfere with it!

LANCE gives him a long look.

LANCE: You won't get away with all this you know.

BARRY: I thought geneticists can get away with anything-the big money circus and all that.

LANCE: And suppose I told you you've pitched yourself against the big money? It's not your genetics they mind, it's your side-shows.

**BARRY:** But the best biologists agree with me! They say we're not describing life. And the best physicists say the same. That's how physics ended up in Hiroshima! I'm trying to stop genetics dropping the last bomb of all, without a bang, and without my side-shows they'd never listen!

NANCY puts her head round the arch.

NANCY (in a whisper) They're up there without their shoes, Mr. Barry. It's Mr. Sutton I'm most worried about.

LANCE (jumping up) So am I Nancy! Thank you!

He grabs the shoes and goes out, with NANCY behind him. BARRY stares before him. He gradually perceives, with perplexity, that he is alone.

## Nineteen

The alcove at LANCE's apartment. PAMELA is in one of the armchairs, alone, reading.

BARRY (off) Pamela?

PAMELA (without relinquishing her book) I'm here Barry.

BARRY (appearing at the doorway) Where's Lance?

PAMELA: At the lab.

BARRY: She's gone Pamela.

PAMELA: Who?

BARRY: The doctor. Heather Seymour.

PAMELA: Why don't you sit down Barry? (He does so) I didn't think you'd do what you did.

BARRY: What was that?

PAMELA: Stage a childish siege just because Lance told you mummy was selling the house.

BARRY: I went crazy. Selling the house over my head.

PAMELA: Why didn't you talk to daddy first? or Dan Sutton? They're the people who count for you, not Peggy.

BARRY shrugs.

PAMELA: Are you going to do this all your life? play schoolboy tricks?

BARRY: I locked myself up with the rats because I wanted to be with them. They were the only people I wanted to be with. I know I rattled the bars. I got frantic. I did get beyond myself.

PAMELA: You didn't see that there comes a time when that sort of thing no longer works?

BARRY: It did work. I got what I wanted. And partly it was because I was alone. You and I are better together than with anybody else under the sun.

PAMELA: That's where you're wrong Barry. You went too far. You broke something. I can't go back to the old life. I want my children to have a real father.

BARRY: You know I'm that!

PAMELA: Yes I know and the children love you so, sometimes I think they love you far more than me but I can't go on with that life, I can't.

BARRY: What are we going to do then?

PAMELA: I'm divorcing you Barry.

He can't grasp this. He stares at her, shakes his head.

PAMELA (cont.) Yes I am Barry.

BARRY: Let's stay away from each other for a bit if you like-you'll see, you don't love him!

PAMELA: I'm only marrying to end the marriage to you.

BARRY: Did you tell him that?

PAMELA: Martin Fyffe?

BARRY: Yes.

PAMELA: He accepts that.

BARRY (getting up) I'll leave you to think it over. You'll come back.

PAMELA: I won't Barry.

BARRY (at the door) Yes you will-your love's going to drive you back.

PAMELA: Barry-you drove it away! You referred all your games!

BARRY: They weren't games at all! They were just to get my ideas across!

PAMELA: Go back home.

BARRY: You say home.

PAMELA (hiding her face) Leave Barry! I don't want to look at you! Leave! *Leave!*

He walks out. She sits with her hands over her face.

## Twenty

The new CUTLASS residence up the road. We are in the exact equivalent of the former Japanese room but here there are a gorgeous carpet of heavenly peach and real armchairs in patterned covers subtly matched to the wall with its Rosko-ish abstracts.

PEGGY, in a quiet cashmere two-piece, enters through the arch with DAN SUTTON, who is dressed with great Southern panache subtly attuned to London.

PEGGY: So how do you like it?

DAN: Well it's kind of relaxed and more welcoming, I'd say. And you've been converted to chairs I see.

PEGGY: Of course Nancy misses the loudspeakers everywhere.

DAN (as he sits) The speakers were for convenience Peggy, not the nerves. I think you have a better arrangement.

PEGGY: I think we were all a little mad in that house.

DAN: Well Peggy, rats on the loose were never a recipe for good nerves.

PEGGY: Dan, I was hoping we could avoid work subjects this evening.

DAN: We'll just break bread and have a good time, what do you say to that?

MARTIN FYFFE appears in the archway.

MARTIN: It's wonderful Peggy! And Nancy so dainty in her pinafore.

He and PEGGY embrace.

MARTIN (coming forward) Dan, how are you?

DAN (rising and shaking hands with him) Well, kind of sad to be leaving.

MARTIN (following PEGGY's example and sitting down) I'm sorry you couldn't get over to us for the weekend. But you'll soon be back.

DAN: Oh sure.

MARTIN: I have some news. I'd better break it now otherwise you'll accuse me of being devious.

ARTHUR appears in the archway.

ARTHUR: Hullo all. Did I hear that correctly?

PEGGY (stricken) Yes you did! Martin has some news that can't wait.

ARTHUR (going to a chair) This *is* supposed to be a house christening.

MARTIN: I've just heard that Dr. Seymour has given an interview to an American television network, I don't know which yet.

ARTHUR: And she went for Pillinger's balls.

MARTIN: I'm afraid so, yes.

A long hush.

MARTIN (cont.) She told them how he let his rats loose and rattled the bars of his cage. And she said she had studied 'in the act' and her conclusion had been that he is certifiable.

ARTHUR (with quiet threat, to MARTIN) Is it true you've been in contact with her all these weeks?

MARTIN: No doubt my paper has. I know other papers have.

ARTHUR: Perhaps I should *tell* you you've been in contact with her.

MARTIN: Why do you say that?

ARTHUR: Because you're not the only person I know on your paper.

MARTIN: And this other contact monitors my calls does he?

ARTHUR: She appeared at your paper three times. Once she went into your office.

MARTIN: I gave her three minutes flat. I closed my ears.

ARTHUR: Ah!

MARTIN: I carry hundreds of stories a week Martin but this one I didn't run. She went to a television network because she got no joy out of me!

ARTHUR: The fact remains it cooked his chances in the States didn't it? Martin, you wouldn't have gently invited Dr. Seymour to do him in would you? I mean you're not exactly in love with Barry Pillinger are you?

MARTIN: This is getting offensive Arthur.

DAN: May I say something? Peggy's looking very concerned so why don't we put all this on hold-and I for one am hungry.

PEGGY (jumping up) I'll go downstairs and see to the cocktails. We'll have them at table.  
(Leaving) Thank you Dan!

DAN: OK, you guys, this is the end. Pillinger carries problems like clouds carry rain and there's been a heavy downpour every day. So now we can be ourselves. (Rising) What say we go downstairs and start enjoying ourselves? Let's try taking a drink not in desperate gulps but like we always used to.

MARTIN (as he rises) Hear hear.

ARTHUR (doing so reluctantly) I suppose you're right but that's a hell of a lot of work down the drain for a mad psychiatrist-I mean look at the accountants and lawyers alone, it's a big bill to foot.

DAN: It happens all the time Arthur.

ARTHUR: I suppose I'm being touchy because we lost five hundred million at the bank.

DAN: Know what I'm going to do tomorrow? I'm going to have a last look at Pillinger in that empty house. Just out of curiosity.

MARTIN (as they all drift out) Isn't that what killed the cat?

DAN (off) This cat growls. *Grrrrr!* (and a very good imitation it is).

## Twenty One

The Japanese room in the old CUTLASS residence. There is no furniture now, only the intercom-plinth with its carved lid.

BARRY strolls in. He has his lab coat on and goes to the intercom-plinth idly. He lifts the lid and reaches inside and comes up with severed cables and switch units. He lets them fall back into the box with a clatter.

SONYA TYMES appears in the archway, also in a lab coat. She carries a notebook on a band round her neck. A pencil is behind her ear. She leans against the wall, watching him.

SONYA: Come on Batty, it's not as bad as all that. We've worked in an empty house before.

BARRY: Those speakers would have been useful.

SONYA: Why don't you get them working again?

BARRY (with a shrug) Looks like Peggy cut it all to pieces in a rage.

SONYA: Do you notice the rats don't come out of their cages any more?

BARRY: They're bored. Nothing going on. No parties.

SONYA: Do you know something? All this reminds me of when the three of us started, after Oxford. Remember we used to talk shop all night?

BARRY: A happy trio. More stable than marriage.

They reflect.

BARRY (cont.) By the way would you make a note about that very clever one, the baby. We'll have to give her a name (as SONYA takes her pencil from behind her ear and opens her notebook). She's starting to sleep in shoes. Trying to get close to humans. That may be the first sign of a genetic change parallel with cats and dogs. I was going to call her Beelzebub.

SONYA: She's pink isn't she?

BARRY: Pink lard, sort of.

SONYA: Well there you go. (Writes) Pink lard. Sired by?

BARRY: Lucifer. That's why I thought of Beelzebub. They were both fallen angels you know.

DAN has appeared downstage right and stands gazing at them unseen.

BARRY (cont.) I've screwed it Sonya. I always knew I had nine lives but when I was rattling my cage I knew eight had gone and this was the ninth. No more chances.

SONYA: Lance'll take us on again.

BARRY: Not my rats he won't.

DAN: Sad day huh?

BARRY nods, showing no surprise at his

presence.

DAN (cont.)      What's the plan?

BARRY:            There *is* none.

DAN:              Why's that?

BARRY:            Well I'm not on my way to Ardmore Pennsylvania am I?

DAN:              You decided against that?

BARRY:            I think the American public did!

DAN:              How so?

BARRY:            Well after Dr. Seymour's television appearance.

DAN:              I wouldn't worry too much about that. I called her hospital this morning to find out what kind of remit they gave her and they told me she'd already been sacked.

BARRY:            Oh. I'm very sorry.

DAN:              Why? You always said you wanted her on your team. Here's your chance!

BARRY:            I don't have a team. I don't even have a job.

DAN:              You think your father in law won't go through with his plan? set you up like he said?

BARRY:            Not after all this, no. Am I right?

DAN:              You certainly are sir. He means to sell this house right quick. He had a big loss at the bank, some of that five hundred million pounds was his.

BARRY:            Well, there's my future down the drain isn't it?

DAN:              Not necessarily. The news about Dr. Seymour getting the sack should be

going out on the American networks any minute now.

BARRY: You know that?

DAN: Well of course I do Barry Pillinger! I broke the news! CNN will be calling you for a statement. There's your chance.

BARRY: OK. I'll tell them the truth.

DAN: Which is?

BARRY: She says *all* geneticists are crazy. She says geneticists found the schizophrenic fault in humans but won't look at their own discovery in the mirror.

DAN (with a smile) Well there you have it.

BARRY: I'd tell them her ideas are very close to mine. That's why I want her on my team.

DAN: Even better. (Confidentially) Listen Barry we can't finance your rat-sanity studies. You have to get that clear. But you'll have all the material support we can give you for it.

BARRY: You mean here? In this house?

DAN: Stop dreaming Barry! I mean in Pennsylvania! Your rat studies are great but they have to be a sideline. You can even take a team, like Miss Symes here and the crazy doctor. You'll certainly be able to afford it. You know Barry every bio-scientist in the world has a side-line he hopes is going to attract heavy-duty investment one day. I mean it's the norm!

BARRY: So I study rat-sanity in my spare time?

DAN: That's it.

A silence between them during which SONYA studies BARRY.

- DAN (cont.)      Would you agree to pursuing normal genetic researches on that basis?
- BARRY:           Well, I'm not going to stop them going on am I?
- DAN:             I think you may safely assume that Barry.
- BARRY:           And it's what I've been doing all my life.
- DAN:             I want to tell you something. You may not think so but you're putting genes on the map like no other geneticist ever did. Your remarks make prime-time television. For one whole year we've been trying to figure out how to get genetics into the public imagination, then you come along!
- BARRY:           And that's why you want me over there?
- DAN:             That's right Barry.
- BARRY:           And if I do agree when would we go?
- DAN:             There's no 'if' Barry. You decide right now. And if the answer is OK we step up to your apartment and use your phone because the president is anxious to know the outcome.
- BARRY:           So all this was planned!
- DAN:             That's right. He needs you there by the end of this month.
- BARRY:           But why?
- DAN (finally exploding) Because you hit the headlines in the States!
- SONYA:           Oh Batty, it wasn't your ninth life after all!
- BARRY:           Seems not.
- DAN:             We go ahead?
- BARRY:           Yes.

DAN: Well, lead the way to your office my friend! And perhaps this young lady could fix us a cup of coffee?

SONYA: I'd be delighted.

DAN (clapping and on BARRY's shoulder as they leave) Here we go!

The scene is empty. Dr. Seymour comes in stealthily downstage left. She peeps round the corner of the arch, then tiptoes to the plinth and opens it, stares inside, close the lid with care not to make noise.

PEGGY comes in slowly downstage right. She sees SEYMOUR's back with some surprise.

PEGGY: Good morning.

SEYMOUR (jumping) Oh!

PEGGY: You seem surprised.

SEYMOUR: I-I-thought you were a rat!

PEGGY: Really! You're the rat not me! So what are you doing here? It's still my house!

SEYMOUR (with a shrug) It's just that I miss everything, I suppose. The speakers. Nancy saying mum.

PEGGY (looking round) Yes. The old life's gone hasn't it?

They are interrupted by NANCY's voice below.

NANCY (off) Mum? Are you upstairs mum?

PEGGY (hurrying to the arch) Yes Nancy what is it?

NANCY comes puffing into view under the arch.

NANCY (cont.) There's something funny goin' on down there! (Stopping at the sight of SEYMOUR but only for a flash) There's a van come. And they ain't half hefty mum! Two on 'em! Blimey!

PEGGY (keeping her voice down) Two what Nancy?

NANCY: Two medicals!

PEGGY: Medicals?

NANCY: In white coats!

She stands where she can better see the staircase, while PEGGY and SEYMOUR remain in the room.

NANCY (cont.) That's how my uncle Wally was took away. He was doughy from birth mum and the van had bars in the winders just like this one! (Listening) They're coming up the stairs mum!

We hear heavy footsteps on the stairs. They reach the landing close by, then they continue up.

PEGGY (turning on SEYMOUR) *Beast!*

NANCY (looking at her, than SEYMOUR) Why? Have they come for Mr. Barry then?

The footsteps reach the landing upstairs. There are voices, all male. Then the footsteps are heard again, augmented this time.

NANCY (cont., hushed) They're coming down mum.

The footsteps arrive on the landing again and NANCY puts her hand up to her mouth in horror.

NANCY (cont.) Gawd almighty!

The footsteps continue down the stairs to the lower floors.

NANCY (cont.) Oh my Gawd (in tears)!

PEGGY: What is it?

NANCY: Mr. Barry mum. The Sunday Times woman was with him too. (Shaking her head with mute tears) I don't care what you say about journalists, mum, that one's loyal!

PEGGY (almost in tears, to SEYMOUR) You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

NANCY (cont.) Taking Mr. Barry away like that! (Directing her words to DR. SEYMOUR) It's a crying shame, that's what it is!

SEYMOUR: I didn't do anything! It must have been the hospital!

PEGGY (sharply) Run down and get a cab Nancy! Quick! We'll get him out!

NANCY rushes away in tears.

PEGGY (cont.) You see what you've done?

SEYMOUR: I don't know who the men are! I've got nothing to do with it!

PEGGY: I suppose it was me got on television and told the world he's a raving lunatic! What kind of doctor is that? You should be stripped of your Hippocratic oath! You knew they were coming! That's why you're here!

SEYMOUR: I CAN'T GET PEOPLE COMMITTED! Now calm yourself!

PEGGY: Me calm! Look at you, you're falling apart! Don't you see your hospital was watching you on television, you stupid interfering fornicator!

In silence, awed by what is going on, BARRY and SONYA have appeared in the archway with a gingerly NANCY behind them. They watch and listen with open mouths, as still as statues.

PEGGY (cont.) Well listen to this, you've landed the world's top geneticist for ever in a loony bin and, don't you turn away (pulling her back, for which she gets a hefty shove) he'll be in a padded cell, they'll inject him with antidepressants and he'll talk with fluff in his mouth for the rest of his days (as they push and shove at each other), he'll NEVER THINK AGAIN!

A serious scuffle has started and BARRY, suddenly returning to his senses, rushes forward.

BARRY: Hetty! Peggy!

The two of them stand agape, their hair down in all senses. Only NANCY'S voice penetrates the silence.

NANCY (flatly, like an announcement) They thought them two men was to take you away to a mental home, Mr. Barry.

SEYMOUR: I never thought that!

NANCY: Of course you did. You was in tears too!

A silence of busy brains.

BARRY: They came to look at the cages. Lance Kenning sent them. From Gower Street. Lab assistants.

SEYMOUR: Oh Barry thank god you're here!

BARRY: Surely you knew I couldn't be taken away just like that?

SONYA: I think fear had a lot to do with it. Fear of losing you.

SEYMOUR (turning on her) All right, we don't need a Greek chorus!

A ring at the front-door bell. They look at each other. It rings again.

BARRY (to SONYA) You see? Those speakers would have been useful, (TO PEGGY) I

don't know why you had to dismantle them.

INSPECTOR (off, as he climbs the stairs) It's only me!

NANCY (miming her words with disgust) It's that copper!

THE INSPECTOR appears.

INSPECTOR (looking at the silent assembly) Excuse me. The front door was open.  
(Turning to BARRY) Mr. Pillinger, I wonder if you and I could take a walk together?

BARRY: A walk?

INSPECTOR: To the station. The police station.

They all stand in silence.

BARRY: Is this an arrest?

INSPECTOR: I don't like to use big words at this stage Mr. Pillinger.

BARRY: What have I done wrong now?

INSPECTOR: Nothing wrong *now* Mr. Pillinger. I did warn you. I said please get a licence. Within the day if possible. But you waited. And the law doesn't.

BARRY: The cages are first class, the best in London!

INSPECTOR: I told you very clearly there was a question of a licence to practice laboratory researches in a private house. And a question of having animals here, captive animals, and a question also of experimenting on these animals-

BARRY: I don't do that!

INSPECTOR: From the legal point of view you're experimenting with animals if you give them full rein of the house and all the salad available and the champagne! You had no right to take the rats from the Gower Street lab in the first place. As a matter of fact London university are putting some

urgent questions to Mr. Kenning at this moment. There is also the tenants' association here in this street which is up in arms and may, in their turn, sue not only you but Mr. Cutlass. This is all law Mr. Pillinger and I told you clearly the first day we met that your offences rendered you arrestable and a prison sentence could ensue! Also the animal people are up in arms! They're putting pressure on the RSPCA to go to law.

BARRY: For not experimenting on animals?

INSPECTOR: For letting them loose among humans! Getting them drunk! Keeping them in a basement. And this morning's headline didn't help.

BARRY: What was that?

INSPECTOR: BARRY PILLINGER JUDGED CRAZY.

BARRY: You're arresting me for being crazy? Is that it?

INSPECTOR: Of course not!

BARRY: Why bring it up then?

INSPECTOR: I'm here to get you to the station, not stand here arguing the point! I would like to ask Mrs. Cutlass, unless your wife is here-

BARRY: No she isn't.

INSPECTOR: Then please Mrs. Cutlass prepare a toothbrush and pyjamas and have them sent to the station later today just in case the questioning goes on all night.

BARRY: Couldn't I just slip upstairs and do that myself?

INSPECTOR: We must leave at once, now.

BARRY: You've been told not to let me out of your sight, so it *is* an arrest!

INSPECTOR: It will be if you stand there arguing the toss a minute longer!

BARRY: Oh don't worry about my *coming*, that presents no difficulty at all! I just

want to clarify the arrest issue since I'm still a free man!

INSPECTOR: I've been given the power of arrest Mr. Pillinger! Do you want me to use it?

BARRY (to SONYA) If you could possibly bring today's notes to the police station-

INSPECTOR: I hereby caution you-!

BARRY: What do you mean, you hereby caution me? I'm being asked to take a walk on the understanding that I'm really being arrested and apparently before I'm charged and brought to trial I can't order my affairs first ! Well let me tell you something, I'm not about to surrender my rights and I have every right to ask my assistant to help me continue my legitimate researches wherever I may be-!

DAN has appeared from upstairs.

DAN: I think the officer's getting impatient Barry. (Going to the INSPECTOR and shaking him by the hand) I'm Dan Sutton, Pharmaceutical Genetics Tandem. Do you mind if I accompany you?

INSPECTOR: You mean as a witness sir? Not necessary at this stage.

DAN: I'd just like to come as his employer in the United States.

INSPECTOR: Oh well sir if you can vouch for him!

DAN: That I certainly can. (Looking at him) Are you OK?

INSPECTOR: As a matter of fact, sir, I'd rather like to cry (and his lips do pucker).

DAN: Barry has that kind of effect, officer.

INSPECTOR (nodding gloomily, then to BARRY) Do you really wish to come in your lab coat sir?

BARRY: Oh! There's a special uniform for arrest is there? Of course I want my lab coat. It's a badge of my trade and I'm proud of it. And it lets them know

at the station who they're cross-examining!

INSPECTOR (quietly) Yes Mr. Pillinger. (And this time tears are prevented only with great difficulty) Only it might turn a little cold. (To PEGGY, in a whisper) Send a blanket or two along!

DAN (as BARRY prepares another speech) Let's go Barry, think of your rats.

The three men walk off. DAN comes back.

DAN (cont.) I just wanted to say thanks for a great evening Peggy.

PEGGY: A pleasure Dan! You did say you're Barry's employer didn't you?

DAN: I did.

PEGGY: You mean no more rats?

DAN: He'll be shipping them over.

PEGGY: You're going to let him do his own research?

DAN: He'll do that in his leisure hours. In *working* ones he's a geneticist like all the rest.

PEGGY: And he agreed?

DAN: With your husband selling this house under his feet he has little alternative, right? See you later Peggy!

He has gone.

DAN (cont., off) You'll get a contract in the post Dr. Seymour!

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR) What did that mean?

SONYA: She's joining our team.

PEGGY: You mean she's going too?

SONYA: I think so, yes.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR) But you're employed by a hospital.

SEYMOUR: No I'm not, I was sacked.

PEGGY: Oh! (Seethingly) So you're going to get into my son in law's bed again are you? In Pennsylvania this time! Well, you're bloody well mistaken! And do you know why? Because my daughter's going too! And the kids! (Stalking off) I'll see to that right away!

SONYA and DR. SEYMOUR stand looking at each other.

SONYA: Sounds like *everybody's* moving.

SEYMOUR: This one isn't. I love the way that Texan doesn't even ask me.

SONYA: He told Barry you'd be ideal---you'd have two jobs---one watching the rats' sanity and the other watching Barry's.

SEYMOUR: And Barry was OK with that?

SONYA: He seemed to be. In fact he said *all* geneticists need watching for their sanity. Would you like a cup of coffee?

SEYMOUR: I certainly would. (As they go) There's just one thing I'd like to ask you.

SONYA: Yes?

SEYMOUR: How does all this square with Barry's conscience? I mean they're *using* him aren't they? Cynically! He's going to do everything he's against!

SONYA: But they've told him he can have his rat-lab as a side activity. So of course he's happy. (As SEYMOUR stares at her) After all he *is* a scientist.

(TO ADD SOMEWHERE: I saw how stupid geneticists are. They studied this unbelievable system of the genes, which are an inbuilt promoter and informer of life moment by moment, with every aspect of the life they guide and determine carefully allowed for, they studied the mitochondria cell which talks a language unknown to the organism but is tolerated by the genes and happens to be the link with the habitat which the genes must be guided by, and therefore that cell looks after the metabolism of oxygen within the cell, seeing to the moment by moment life of the creature. And all we geneticists felt when we saw this was a cocky sense of triumph at having discovered it, and utterly no wonder at all at the intelligence which devised and evolved it, and without any need for our massacre of millions of animals to show us how it worked. All right then, we didn't work with that intelligence, we did not study it to find out how best to live in its care, we promoted the world we have, which is due for the divine chopper).

smile) I can hear those drills as they tear up the bars of that bloody cage, I can hear them crash down, it's like the most wonderful music I ever heard...I can hear it now, very soft. It's soft like music.

And indeed we hear that steel crashing in the distance, and the whine of the cutters, very dimly, as he says, like music.

DAN: Do that please! I can use it in Baltimore. Was that you screaming as I walked up the stairs?

ARTHUR: Yes, it was. Martin was getting his cum-uppance.

NANCY (blaring) I'm downstairs, Mr. Cutlass.

DAN (seating himself, to MARTIN) Seems everybody here had a bad night!

ARTHUR: Peggy and I had a good night but it only started at three in the morning---we were brooming out the rats till then, they don't like brooms. Then we sealed up the doors.

DAN: You must be real happy I'm taking our genius off your hands.

ARTHUR: I like Barry---why else would I have let him take my cellar over? And above all he's our daughter's husband.

DAN: That's noble thinking, Arthur!

PEGGY (still wrapped up in her coffee) To me that sounds what Arthur would call bloody silly.

DAN: So you'll be happy to hear that the whole of Baltimore is panting for your son-in-law's arrival.

PEGGY: I'd drink to that if it was last night.

ARTHUR: You have to look on the bright side, Peggy---silver linings and so forth. That's what *I'm* doing! My cellar's been ruined---I mean I lost about every vintage I had! An 1895 Beaune, very special, I opened it this morning (shakes his head).

MARTIN: Dead as a door nail?

ARTHUR (nodding) And all my cellar gone that way. Thank God I had the champagne for Last night! From the bank, that was! We keep a supply there. Stands to reason. Too hot. 172 rats, after all. And the cages. All that steel. A cellar has to be quiet. Thousands of pounds gone. And do you know I don't give a damn? I shall build up that cellar again. (Gazing before him with a

divisible!

BARRY: I miss her warmth. The cold round me woke me up. You know how it is.

MARTIN (still amused) I do Barry.

BARRY starts to go but comes back.

BARRY: I've told my community no visits to the upper floors today, no getting under mattresses.

PEGGY: You would have done well to tell them that last night!

BARRY (To MARTIN) Thank you for giving me a second son.

MARTIN: I didn't.

BARRY: Oh yes you did. I spoke to your wife Helen this morning. I thought Pamela might be down there, what's it called---Chumlet Hatch or something? Anyway I told your Helen you were claiming paternity and she said which child is this and I said the child your husband gave my wife when she was staying with you last summer.

MARTIN (jumping up) You scatter-brained fool!

ARTHUR: Shush. Not at this hour. And Barry did exactly the right thing.

BARRY goes out one way just as DAN comes in from the other.

DAN: See you later, Barry.

BARRY: I'll be there.

MARTIN (to DAN) You'll be seeing him at the hotel?

DAN: That's right---for the final stitch-up.

MARTIN: It might be a chance for me to send a photographer over.

ARTHUR (staring at him) Only for the length of the morning Martin. (Rising creakily)  
Anyway, I must dress for the office. (Going) After all, I have to  
finance all this.

A ring at the bell downstairs.

ARTHUR (slumping back, cont.) That'll be Dan.

NANCY (OVER) Is anybody up there mum?

PEGGY: We're all here Nancy. Mr. Sutton knows where to come.

MARTIN coolly dials a number on his  
mobile.

MARTIN: It's Martin Fyffe, 8.30 a.m. Friday the twelfth. I think I've got just the  
girl for the interview. Outrageous but with authority. She'll say he's sexy.  
She also knows about commas and uses the word 'whom' sometimes. A  
good balance. I'll be at the office later.

BARRY appears in the archway, tussled and in a  
dressing gown.

BARRY: You haven't seen Pamela have you?

MARTIN: She slept with her mum. I was in your spare room so she couldn't sleep  
there.

BARRY: Why couldn't she sleep in her own bed?

MARTIN: You were in it. So was Dr. Seymour.

BARRY: Seymour went.

MARTIN: How was Pamela to know that? Was she supposed to queue up for her  
own bed?

BARRY: Pamela and I are absolutely indivisible.

MARTIN (studying him with amusement) At this moment I think you are both highly

ARTHUR (wandering) Anyway how could I NOT invite the rat-man if the ambassador was coming *solely to see him*? And don't play the innocent. You're secretly tickled. You want Barry Pillinger out of the UK, old cock.

MARTIN: More---I need him to stay away.

ARTHUR: So you can have his wife to yourself! (Fixing him with a black Lethe stare) Not a bloody hope! She wants to go with Pillinger and I want her to go too.

PEGGY makes a suddenly ghostly appearance.

PEGGY: And so do I. (As she seats herself) I thought Dan was coming?

MARTIN: So he is.

PEGGY: Is there another cup there (seating herself).

ARTHUR: Of course Peggy.

PEGGY: Will Dan have had his?

ARTHUR: Of course Peggy. You can have it all.

MARTIN slides her coffee across the bar and she drinks it thirstily.

ARTHUR (cont., to MARTIN) I hear from my daughter that you're trying to claim the child she had with you

MARTIN: My goodness, coffee *does* make the meek bold, doesn't it? Yes, there *is* a little case of paternity.

ARTHUR: Paternity my arse! Willy-nilly screwing doth not a father make.

PEGGY: Quite right too!

MARTIN: But I happen to be serious about this.

MARTIN (cont.) You look off colour. Drink this (pushing his cup across). I slept in the spare room.

ARTHUR (from the depths) There isn't one.

MARTIN: In Barry's flat.

ARTHUR: We call it the penthouse.

MARTIN: Dan Sutton wants me to lay on an interview, by the way.

ARTHUR: For whom?

MARTIN: Your son-in-law. Five thousand words. Picture. It's a delicate mission. I told him I didn't think Barry's Sunday magazine material.

ARTHUR: I can tell you what material *I* think he is.

He drinks with decision.

ARTHUR (cont.) That Dr. Seymour made an exhibition of herself I must say.

MARTIN: Wouldn't *you* if you'd just slept with Barry Pillinger?

ARTHUR almost topples off his stool.

ARTHUR: In Pamela's bed? Who told you?

MARTIN: Barry!

ARTHUR: A fat lot of brain-shrinking *she* did. Anyway, she was drunk all night, I don't blame her in a bloody madhouse like this.

MARTIN: And Barry actually invited her up!

ARTHUR: My god, sex moves faster than money in this place (holding out a limp cup and saucer). Of course that might be her way of dealing with a madman.

MARTIN: Since she's one herself.

DAN: Damn me, Barry, I like you---kind of!

BARRY: Let's go.

Rats start up in his pockets.

DAN: *Hey!* How come you have rats in your pockets?

BARRY: I make new rats by thinking about it.

DAN: You're playing with reality! Take me back to my nursing home!

They go off laughing.

## Seven

The Japanese room the morning after. There is a deep silence in the house. The mattresses and cushions have been removed. Two bar stools and a bar constitute a bizarre improvised arrangement, upstage right.

ARTHUR is sitting on one of the stools, his legs tucked up. He has last night's pants and shirt on and that's all, apart from carpet slippers over bare feet. He keeps nodding over the table.

MARTIN pads in bearing a tray full of coffee things. He is in a dressing gown, with carpet slippers.

MARTIN: Cost me five quid. (Placing the tray carefully on the table) Only way of getting Nancy out of bed.

He pours the coffees.

BARRY: I never said that. I said How Can Our Genes Which Provide Us With Our Goals Provide Us With The Goal To Modify Our Genes?

DAN: Yes but Barry---excuse me---this is a kind of little test I have with geniuses. What the hell are you talking about?

BARRY: Dan, it takes anything up to a couple of million years to modify a gene the safe way, the biological way. Humans have been doing it since they made their appearance on earth. But genes don't offer a do-it-yourself kit.

DAN: Why not?

BARRY: Because genes don't work that way. They work close to the nervous system, watching and listening and adjusting. That's their job.

DAN: Could you give me a kind of example?

BARRY: Let's take the opossum in an environment that hasn't changed for fifty thousand years, like on the island of Sapelo. She lives in trees and has the rat's long tail. And she has a very long life span. Now let's examine an opossum in a heavy industrial area where she's regularly run down by articulated trucks. She has a high mortality rate and this is noticed by the genes, which then start a mutation towards a shorter life. Now we human are in a similar situation. We have short lives. Take a man of eighty. That's supposed to be old but it's no fewer than sixty years younger than a human's full life capacity! That's because we're out of synch. So we create more and more things that are out of synch. We can't feed ourselves efficiently so we need trucks and planes and refrigeration and radiation. And we're trying to adjust our genes to all that! It's crazy!

DAN: So where do your rats come in?

BARRY: I'm observing SANE behaviour! And I'm seeing how rats react to MAD behaviour, like my rats tonight---among humans maddened by drink! Which reminds me.

DAN: Yes?

BARRY (taking his arm) You're in jet lag and need another whisky.

DAN: Look at this---my god daughter! I've been looking for you everywhere.

PAMELA (as they embrace) I've had such a lovely sleep---what's all the racket downstairs?

DAN: Oh, they're just silly---a few rats between their legs (with a hint of the private laugh)! Where do you manage to sleep in *this* house?

PAMELA: Oh, upstairs in our penthouse. No noise penetrates. And no rats, thank goodness.

DAN: You mean you don't have rats in your kitchen or at least your bedroom?

PAMELA: *Rats!* You don't think Barry'd have rats up there do you? A rat's never so much as put its nose in there! Not likely! And don't forget we eat there too! The rats are quite capable of jumping on the table---not for us, I'm afraid!

DAN: Yeah, well I suppose you have to draw the line somewhere.

BARRY: I should think we do, experimenting with them all day yes, but in your living quarters?

PAMELA (with a secret smile at DAN) I do believe Dan secretly thinks it's unfair of us to unloose them on others.

BARRY: I'm sure it's unfair! But experiments are experiments and that's that!

PAMELA (as DAN and she burst into laughter) You're damn right too!

Under the influence of BARRY's persistent whistling the noise abates and they all stand listening gratefully to the silence.

PAMELA: I think I'll get a dress on and circulate a bit, mummy gets so wound up otherwise (kissing DAN)!

She leaves.

DAN: OK, now we're alone let's get down to the small print, Barry. I've read a number of your papers and of course I especially liked your question How Can Genes Provide Us With Our Goal to Modify Our Genes?

He leaves with a wave.

BARRY (cont., with refreshing ease) He's as tight as an owl, best thing for him. As for that psychiatrist she's *imagining* them climb her legs, I mean they wouldn't dream of exploring *that* red-hot zone! And as a matter of fact they're all back in their cages.

DAN (to BARRY) Well you certainly cleared 'em out good and straight.

BARRY: Trademark and Fickle Lilly are born trouble-makers, it starts all the rest off. (With a shrug) Well, we all have our little games to play don't we?

DAN (after a quick burst of his private laugh) We certainly do Barry!

NANCY (OVER) Mum they're in the blancmange (pronounced *blermonge*), it's one little bugger, it sets all the others orf! Oh, my lord, there's three in the trifle! I think it's that pregnant one starts 'em orf between you and me, she'll lose her brood if she's not careful!

BARRY: You hear that? Nancy observes their behaviour correctly, *and* with sympathy, she calls the rat 'she', she even gets the sex right! Not so long ago she was hysterical on the subject. Did you hear the edge of concern in her voice? She's concerned at Mrs.Ferdinand getting drunk.

DAN (breathy with trying to keep the private laugh down) I thought you had an agreement with your mother-in-law not to let the rats loose tonight?

BARRY: And rob my rats of the best chance they've ever had of human company? Not me! The trouble is not whether my rats are good for humans but whether drunk humans aren't catching for rats!

DAN (above the din) What could they catch, a taste for liquor?

BARRY: You didn't know that madness was catching? Look how much of it there is in the world!

DAN (allowing time in which to study him) I hear you! I hear you!

PAMELA strolls in looking sleepy and rested, and still in her dressing gown.

PEGGY: Oh my God, do you want me to call the doctor and get you an injection?

DAN: No, honey---it was quite a friendly bite, you know the kind of little nip that lovers exchange?

PEGGY: Oh dear, you've caught the bug too! The Pillinger bug!

ARTHUR rushes in, dressed to a T.

ARTHUR: Sorry not to be at the door Dan (as they embrace and clap shoulders mutually).

They both dash out again as more shouts and screams of alarm come from below.

She dashes out again. MARTIN is thirstily downing a glass of champagne at the drinks table.

DR. SEYMOUR dashes in, her skirt held up round her legs, her shoes gone.

MARTIN: Are you OK?

SEYMOUR: Tried to get up my---my---my---!

MARTIN: Oh Dan, this is Dr. Seymour---

DAN: Hi! Are you helping to dress all the wounds doctor?

SEYMOUR (grabbing a glass of champagne) Psy-psy-psy-chiatry!

She disappears.

DAN: This is like a dream!

BARRY: Exactly! With genes designing the plot!

MARTIN: I think I'll try the food downstairs---it's the best catering firm in Mayfair, then I'll flirt with the psychiatrist, so long fellers!

when insemination takes place! We're all going round being nine months younger than we really are!

DAN (sternly) Now listen Barry you're dragging up stuff about a close friend of mine. And I won't have that! I don't want to hear about his private business, you understand that?

BARRY: But that's what I'm saying, it's not his private business because the genes hold us all together, like his wife's genes and his genes hold them together, he does all this philandering but his only love is out there in Toflin Hatchet or whatever he calls his country estate, it's where the love of his life lives---they swoon with love for each other---what I'm saying is all God's truth and Martin will tell you if it is or not.

DAN (to MARTIN) Is Barry telling the truth, friend?

MARTIN (with composure, almost as if he sees the funny side of his own affairs) Barry always tells the truth. That's his problem.

BARRY: Exactly! I just let my genes speak! Dan, it isn't that I'm clever or have anything against Martin---as Peggy always says, he has the sweetest eyes of any man alive!

DAN (with a quick very private laugh, then sober again) Well, Martin, I guess we're treading deeper and deeper into the Barry Pillinger world (the non-public laugh again).

He seizes BARRY in a hug that momentarily hides BARRY from us just as PEGGY dashes in.

PEGGY : Dan! I'm so sorry! A little crisis getting ready! How are you?

DAN (as they hug and kiss) Well. rats will be rats, how are *you* Peggy?

PEGGY: He promised me most solemnly he wouldn't let any go tonight---of all nights, with the ambassador on his way!

DAN: Oh, ambassadors see more than you think, Peggy. And as for Barry's rats, one gave me a bite in the ass!

They swing round and stare at him. SEYMOUR, failing to locate any drink, disappears.

MARTIN: Loose rats are the trouble!

BARRY (watching the mattresses) I think I know those three. One of them's Mrs. Ferdinand. The big one. She's pregnant. (Approaching the mattresses) Now come on you lot, it's feed time.

He blows his whistle and the rats at once go immobile. He picks up the mattresses and they are gone in three flashes and a squeak.

A split second later all hell is breaking loose outside—screams, chiefly women, male yells hoping for rational control and feet scrambling on the stairs.

NANCY (off) Mum! *Mum!* There's rats in the Buffet (rhyming it with 'rough-it'), they're on the table mum, oh blimey they're in the aspic mum!

BARRY: Hullo Dan, you're looking baffled. I'll clear it all up at once. You see, genes are *exciting* Dan! Look at Martin down there! I'm now going to show you how genes *look after us all!* He's just given my wife a baby and he wants that baby for his own but what I'm saying is that this baby is in my wife's womb and therefore it's me who brings the baby up and so that's what I'm doing!

During this speech MARTIN is gradually drawn out of his rat concern to listen to BARRY.

BARRY (cont.) Let me put it another way---I make his baby my own, or rather my genes do it for me! Every day I'm looking into my wife's eyes---I'm listening at her belly, the third month when the baby turns is almost due, it's a girl by the way and old Martin doesn't know it! So what am I doing? You don't what I'm doing? I'm ensuring that that baby will look like me in every respect! Because the baby in the womb is *already alive and listening!* She's in touch with me, with her daddy, though Martin says she's not my baby! We should thus measure our birth not when the baby pops out but

DAN: Does he mean right down in spirit or in person? This is some house, huh?

BARRY enters right away, dressed not in his lab coat but worsted pants and an elegant silk roll-neck---though his whistle is still there.

One of the rats makes a sudden dart to the edge of a mattress and MARTIN throws himself on it, trying to encircle it the more it darts about.

MARTIN (calling up to DAN) Get hold of your mattress! (Frantically trying to press down the mattress edges) Get your rats Dan!

DAN (clutching MARTIN's jacket from behind and trying to drag him up) What the hell are you doing? Leave 'em alone! These are research rats! Ten thousand dollars apiece maybe! Lay off! Lay off Martin! Let 'em go!

BARRY stares at them with deep composure. SEYMOUR appears, left, glass in hand, and stands watching the mattress drama with slow dopy interest.

MARTIN (still struggling) They're rats like other rats! (Trying to clamber over both mattresses) They'll infest the house!

DAN (tugging at him) The future of mankind may lie there, now get up!

In one determined yank he pulls MARTIN to his feet.

DAN (cont., wiping his face down) You hacks are crazy! You want to live for a thousand years or not?

MARTIN: Listen Dan I met those rats downstairs, they go for your legs, they're to get up women's---!

DAN: Phooey! You're talking sewer rats!

BARRY (with quiet calm) What exactly is the trouble?

MARTIN: *He* did. 172 of them. And guess where that 172 are now?

DAN: Where?

MARTIN: In this house!

DAN: Son of a bitch, he's twenty years too late! This belongs to animal studies!

They stare at the three humped forms as they slide,  
go forward, retreat, two under DAN's mattress,  
one under MARTIN's.

DAN (cont.) Listen I have to keep an open mind here. Barry Pillinger is on to new stuff, but these guys don't belong in a party, did you know they get viruses this way?

MARTIN: Humans? I *bet* they do---

DAN: No, the rats do! Humans are lethal for rats, you didn't know that?

BARRY (OVER) That's very interesting Dan but my rats are different! They love humans and humans with any brains love *them*!

DAN looks about for the voice, he stares.

DAN: Where the hell did *that* come from?

MARTIN: It's Peggy's speakers. They're all over the house so we can all talk to each other.

DAN: She enjoys other people's privacy huh?

MARTIN: She probably heard what you said.

DAN: How come we don't hear her?

BARRY (OVER) Oh, I've arranged that, I'm the only person in the house who knows how The damn thing works, so the only connection tonight is between where you are and my bedroom. By the way. I'll be right down.

define. He becomes slightly rigid, more thoughtful. MARTIN glances at him.

MARTIN: Anything wrong?

DAN: Muscles in my back. Kind of twitching. Jet lag. Now they say to beat jet lag you have to think like it was eight hours back, which means I've just finished my energy lunch and I'm bright eyed and bushy tailed but I ain't! (Suddenly staring before him) I—!

He is on his feet in one big jump, holding the back of his pants.

DAN (cont.) Somebody pinched my ass!

MARTIN (sitting up with a jerk) It's a rat!

DAN: A rat?

MARTIN: There it is!

And indeed there is humped movement under DAN's mattress.

MARTIN (cont.) There's another one (jumping to his feet)!

DAN: And where do they come from for christsakes?

MARTIN: They're Barry Pillinger's!

DAN: He has rats?

MARTIN: Cages full of 'em! In the basement!

DAN: What's he doing with rats?

MARTIN: He's brought them all here, from Gower Street!

DAN: Gower Street don't handle rats!

They lie there placid against the cushions.

- DAN: You know what started the noise about Barry Pillinger? A paper he wrote called How Can Genes Which Provide Us With Our Goals Give Us the Goal to Modify Our Genes? Some title huh? It set everybody alight.
- MARTIN: In other words we're guided by our genes even when we try to fiddle with them.
- DAN: Well listen to that! A hack understands a sentence of more than ten words!
- MARTIN: I'll go further. He's saying we need to study our genes from a non-experimental angle.
- DAN: This is fantastic! What you've just said is dumb but you're getting close! (Moving further toward him) Listen to me carefully, because this is where *you* come in. Science isn't the hype word it was even ten years ago, too many things have gone wrong, there's too much of it anyway. Science needs to change, it needs new personalities. Would you say that Barry Pillinger is an extravagant kind of personage Martin?
- MARTIN: Oh, more---I'd say he's the schizophrenic mutation in the deoxy-ribo-nucleic acid to infinity.
- DAN (who has cleverly drawn out DAN's true feeling) Oh what a bitch we have here! And an informed one! One who does his bio-chemical homework! OK this is what I have in mind for you to do. Put that personage on the world stage Martin.
- MARTIN: Not my job or interest I'm afraid. I can start the ball rolling but I can't guarantee outcomes. Anyway it's better done in the States.
- DAN: Wrong again. It's a small pool here, so you get more concentration, your papers prefer people on the spot. That's all I need from you, sweet man. (Stretching and yawning) I could sure handle a lullaby.

He gazes before him dreamily. He begins blinking.  
He seems to be aware of something he can't

NANCY:           There you are Mister.

DAN:             You're the sweetest thing.

NANCY:           Now then!

                                  She rushes out again.

DAN:             Well, here goes (they touch glasses and drink).

                                  He pats the other mattress.

DAN (cont.)       Why don't you join me?

MARTIN (lowering himself onto the other one) Mm, it feels good!

DAN:             This Peggy Cutlass knows something.

                                  He drinks contentedly.

DAN (cont., nodding at the intercom plinth) *That* don't look Japanese.

MARTIN:           It's for loudspeakers.

DAN:             Loudspeakers?

MARTIN:           They have speakers in every room. You just talk and your voice goes all over the house.

DAN:             She likes other people's privacy huh?

                                  They enjoy this.

MARTIN (pointing to the ceiling) Mikes everywhere.

DAN:             We're on air right this minute?

MARTIN:           It could well be.

MARTIN: He'll be up, he was late from the office. This was all so very sudden Dan.

DAN: I'll say! I thought if I don't move on this project right now it'll die. You know how hunch-motivated I am, I thought somebody else'll grab him if I don't.

MARTIN: Grab who?

DAN: Why, Barry Pillinger of course!

MARTIN: *Pillinger?*

DAN: Reading your mind I'd say you think he isn't a big enough name.

MARTIN: That, certainly.

DAN: Well I'm going to set you right about that. There are more people talking about Barry Pillinger in the genetic field than there are people *not* talking about him. That's a big change from six months ago!

MARTIN: If you say so.

DAN: I mean six months ago he was Arthur's son-in-law huh? That was it. Now he's world news. (Looking about him) Are there chairs around here?

MARTIN: Peggy's not into chairs at this point of time. She's gone Japanese.

DAN (as the noise increases outside) How many people here for christsakes? I had to fight my way up. My feet are killing me. (Looking at the mattresses) We're supposed to lie down then?

MARTIN (with a shrug) Well it *is* the Japanese room.

DAN: Lying down's ancient Rome, not Tokyo. (As he lowers himself to one of the mattresses) Get your history straight, you old hack.

NANCY rushes in with the whisky.

BARRY: Then whisk him past their bedroom!

She nods and disappears. BARRY makes a very soft call on his whistle.

BARRY (cont.) Now just you behave, you chaps. Dan Sutton's very special.

MARTIN FYFFE appears.

MARTIN: Dan's on his way up with Nancy. You'd better get out of that lab coat.

BARRY: Just what I'm going to do.

He hurries away.

NANCY puffs her way in with DAN SUTTON, a large sandy comfortable Texan. It would take a lot to faze him, much less erode his charm.

NANCY: There you are, this is the Japanese room!

DAN: Thank you, what's your name?

NANCY: Nancy.

DAN: Well, Nancy, could you fix me a whisky and soda?

NANCY: I certainly could! I don't blame you either, that other stuff goes right up your nose!

She is gone.

MARTIN: Dan!

DAN (swinging round) Well, look who's here! (As they clap their arms round each other)  
How's life down at Chumley Keep

MARTIN: You're invited for next weekend if you're about.

DAN: I count a week-end at the old Keep paradise. Where's the boss?

late stage is please be patient, my rats won't harm let you down, they are so docile they would sleep quite peacefully in your beds if you let them.

PEGGY (to ARTHUR) What *is* this man going to say next?

ARTHUR: If I know him he'd like us to have all the rats in our bedroom while the party's on!

BARRY: Do you think that's a possibility?

PEGGY: Oh, that would be simply lovely---until they want what my husband would call a good shit, then they'd scream to be let out wouldn't they?

BARRY: I'm glad you understand how disciplined they are, I mean they'd *never* shit in your bedroom! If you could bear with me a little longer---if only to help Pamela and me to get to Baltimore, you'll want to see Baltimore when you come to visit us, it's such a lovely place and as to the countryside where the old houses have been kept with such pride---!

PEGGY: Come on Arthur, this is turning into a bloody guided tour!

ARTHUR (as she leaves, mouthing his words to BARRY) Put a spell on him Barry!

BARRY: On who?

ARTHUR: Dan Sutton of course!

He follows PEGGY off.

BARRY (to himself) That's *exactly* what I'm going to do!

NANCY rushes in.

NANCY (her voice hushed) I 'eard all that, Mr. Barry---the American gentleman 's downstairs. He said where is everybody, shall I bring him up here?

BARRY (also in a whisper) Yes Nancy, please do! But where did Peggy and Arthur go?

NANCY (mouthing it) To their bedroom to get dressed!

lavatory?

BARRY: Well of course, Peggy.

PEGGY: And where is the lavatory, pray?

BARRY: In their cage, naturally.

ARTHUR: In my bloody wine cellar you mean!

PEGGY: So here are you calling them upstairs with that blow thing you've got round your neck and they get so excited they have to run all the way downstairs again to get to a pee or worse!

BARRY: All my whistle means is keep calm, I'm afraid.

PEGGY: Indeed! While all the *human* population has a nervous breakdown!

BARRY: My researches took control of me and I apologise but (with a shrug) that's why Dan Sutton's coming tonight.

ARTHUR: So it's as much of a problem for you too!

BARRY: Yes.

PEGGY: Well listen to that!

BARRY: The best thing to do tonight is look on the bright side and accept their company should they intrude.

ARTHUR: Accept the company of rats? Most of these people have never seen *one* rat, let alone 172!

BARRY: Well, perhaps when they see them romping and taking their playful little bites of each other it'll change their views.

PEGGY: And what if our guests have heart failure on a massive scale?

BARRY: You see, my programme got bigger than I was. And for a long time I didn't know where I was going, I confess it and all I can say at this

SEYMOUR: Are their parties always like this?

PAMELA: Peggy asks everybody, hairdressers, cab drivers. (To SEYMOUR) Who are *you* by the way?

SEYMOUR: I'm Dr. Seymour. Psychiatrist. I've just learned from your mother that I shouldn't be here.

She disappears. At that moment MARTIN FYFFE hurries in with a full tray.

PEGGY (OVER) Pamela? Are you anywhere? Your father and I have got to see Barry right away, this has gone too far!

PAMELA: How do *I* know where he is? The speakers don't reach to our bedroom!

BARRY (OVER, with refreshing calm) Of course they do, only I turn them off. I'll be right down Peggy but I have to know where.

PEGGY: In the Japanese room. My husband and I would like a word.

PEGGY and ARTHUR appear almost at once, on the war-path. He is in his shirt sleeves. BARRY appears too from the opposite side of the archway, a picture of freshness and calm.

PEGGY (cont., in the full vent of her indignation) I'd like to know what's going to happen when what my husband would call your bloody whistle, which incidentally sounds like the Last Trump gone wrong---that thing you wear round your neck morning noon and night and all it does is rouse your rats up to mischief and my husband and I want to know what the hell is going to happen tonight with guests pouring in, more especially as you're always telling that your rats love people! They certainly love us all right, we had to get rid of them with brooms last night, they took our bedroom over!

ARTHUR: Another thing, Dan Sutton's going to have you bloody-well certified if you're not careful. So stop behaving like a madman!

PEGGY (cutting him off) I'd like to know one thing, do your rats ever want to go to the

PEGGY:           You're quite right, it's foul (putting the glass back).

SEYMOUR drifts in again and makes for the drinks table with her empty glass. PEGGY stares at her with astonishment.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR) This is unexpected. You weren't invited!

SEYMOUR (trying to get out) Your son in law invited me.

PEGGY (icily)    Oh well, since the party's in his honour...

MARTIN (sitting opposite PAMELA) I'm going to imitate your daughter and rest my limbs.

The sound of guests outside begins to grow.

NANCY (off and approaching) There's people don't know where to go mum!

PEGGY (going to the arch) I told you, down there!

NANCY (appearing) There's no drink down there!

PEGGY (leaving) Then take it from up here!

NANCY seizes the champagne tray just as SEYMOUR reaches for the bottle.

NANCY:           Mr. Fyffe! You'll have to get more champagne for this room!!

MARTIN (jumping up) You bring that back here!

NANCY:           Just as you say but the wine down there's been wolfed up!

MARTIN:          Then let 'em go without for a bit!

SEYMOUR watches all this with a tiddly attempt at fact-finding interest.

SEYMOUR (with a slightly trembling lip) I try to fight for my sanity.

MARTIN: You mean disguise your little madresses, like being sweet on Barry!

PAMELA pops in, actor's left, in a dressing gown.

SEYMOUR (putting down her glass) I'd better circulate.

She slides off.

MARTIN: I don't know how Barry does it.

PAMELA: Does what?

MARTIN: Get women to fall in love with him. You look tired.

PAMELA: I'm not at all tired. Just relaxed, as no one else seems to be.

MARTIN (kissing her) Let me get you a drink, darling.

PEGGY comes in through the arch in a black and white robe hot in décolletée. We hear growing sounds from below as new guests arrive.

PEGGY: Pamela, you surely aren't still waiting for your shower? I mean with Dan Sutton, coming, and he is your godfather after all!

PAMELA: I've just had a shower! (Slumping into a chair) Now stop worrying, mummy.

PEGGY: But suppose a guest comes in! Where *is* your father?

MARTIN: Peggy, you look beyond belief (as they embrace)! Have a glass of Arthur's fizz.

PEGGY: Thank you Martin.

MARTIN (raising his glass) To two lovely women.

They drink but PEGGY all but spits hers out.

SEYMOUR: Thank you.

He pours two glasses.

MARTIN (handing her a glass) I always say my taste buds are wine-snobs! (As they sip)  
Not bad is it?

SEYMOUR: Excellent. Could be colder.

MARTIN: Rubbish, this has to be cellar temperature, or a good imitation, like putting it in the fridge.

SEYMOUR: I believe London cellars are about five degrees higher than country ones.

MARTIN: There speaks the doctor! You must be the lady who's going to join Barry's project.

SEYMOUR: First I heard of it. What project's that?

LANCE: He says you're going to observe his rat community when he moves to the States.

SEYMOUR: It's good he didn't tell *me*, I might have told him where to get off. *And* his rats.

MARTIN: You've a grievance against him?

SEYMOUR: Not at all. I happen not to be joining any rat-projects.

MARTIN: Are you sure you aren't a little attracted? Women do fall for him like skittles. (Forestalling her denial) Haven't I read somewhere that you're an ardent follower of R.D.Laing?

SEYMOUR: I've studied him, yes.

MARTIN: Didn't Laing say if you're beaten by madness join it?

SEYMOUR: No he didn't. But he easily could have.

MARTIN: 'If you find a madman you must become one'?

MARTIN helps himself to a drink but after the first sip he holds the glass up and gazes at it with suspicion. He goes to the archway.

MARTIN: Nancy! Where are you? Nancy!

NANCY (off) Third floor up and coming down!

He waits for her at the archway, glass in hand. She comes puffing along.

MARTIN (holding up the glass) Where did this come from? It's white wine with bubbles!

NANCY: I spat it out myself.

MARTIN: Listen, he's got some vintage Dom Perignon in his bedroom, his Cupboard's got crates of it, let's brave the rats and bring it up. Meanwhile take this piss away.

She grabs the tray and as she passes he puts his glass on it.

NANCY (as they go out) As long as he don't come down on *me* afterwards.

HEATHER SEYMOUR comes in, also from the right. She is dressed in muted evening shades. She looks at the champagne flutes and looks for drinks round the back of the tray,

MARTIN FYFFE returns with a new tray of champagne.

MARTIN (as he takes the tray to the table) Hullo I don't think I know you.

SEYNOUR: I'm Dr. Seymour.

MARTIN (as they shake hands) Ah yes. From the Malmsey, aren't you? I'm Martin Fyffe, newspaper wallah. What about some Dom Perignon?

ARTHUR (cont.) The American ambassador's definitely on.

PEGGY: What? Well that settles it! (Looking at her sequins) I can't wear this! (On her way out) Nancy! Bring Mr. Cutlass's jacket up please! Where are you?

NANCY (off) The first floor coming up! Mr. Fyffe's here mum! Bloody stairs.

PEGGY (to PAMELA) What are you wearing tonight?

PAMELA: I usually leave it to Barry.

PEGGY: I'm the same with Arthur, then I go for the opposite. (A whisper into ARTHUR's ear) Tell Martin I'm dressing.

She leaves.

ARTHUR (calling from the archway) We're up here Martin! (To PAMELA) How do you like the bubbly?

PAMELA: A bit funny.

ARTHUR: It'll grow. Well all this is for your husband, I hope it feels good.

PAMELA: We'll have to see.

ARTHUR: Exactly. (As MARTIN comes in) Ah Martin!

MARTIN is in elegant yet casual evening attire.

ARTHUR: Is this right about the ambassador coming?

MARTIN: It's what I heard. Dan Sutton's on his way.

PAMELA: Hullo Martin. I'm in a rush.

ARTHUR (also going) See you in a jiffy.

PAMELA and ARTHUR hurry off.

PAMELA: If this room is for family only why is that notice there (indicating the one above the drinks table)?

PEGGY: As a matter of fact it should have gone into the Buffet room.

NANCY: You can't take it down now mum. You told the workmen to screw it in good and hard. You'll have half the wall down if you try and take *that* off.

She leaves.

PEGGY: Oh dear (kissing PAMELA) I'm so nervous, I hope it's going to be all right. You're always so placid. (Calling out) Nancy you'd better go down to the front door, they'll be coming in droves as usual. And please don't call me mum tonight, we've got Americans coming and they don't believe in servants.

NANCY (coming back) It's because my mum was in service, she always said mum, really she said 'mmm', like 'yes'm'—

PEGGY: Yes we know Nancy.

NANCY: It's not really saying you're my mum, it's mmm, it's short for madam. I think I can hear somebody mum! (Going, with a quite tremendous bellow) I'm coming!

PAMELA: This champagne doesn't taste at all like Dom Perignon!

PEGGY: What you're drinking's a poison called Blanc de Champagne, he says it's the same as champagne only a fraction of the price.

ARTHUR (off, calling from above) Peggy! My dinner jacket's gone!

PEGGY (going to the archway) Nancy! Where's Mr. Cutlass's jacket?

NANCY (off, below) It's in the kitchen airing mum!

ARTHUR (off, as he comes down) Airing my foot, it's getting all the kitchen smells!

He puts his nose round the arch in his shirt sleeves.

She is about to leave by the archway when PAMELA appears, right, in outdoor clothes, with a briefcase.

PAMELA: Is that fizz?

NANCY: I don't know what it is my dear, all I know is it goes up your nose.

PAMELA takes a glass and samples it.

PAMELA: I'm used to it. They dab a fingertip of it on your tongue when you're three in this household. (Looking at the glass with distaste) Its deadly. Are we on relay?

NANCY: Not tonight. Mr. Barry took it off for your mum. She said they made an agreement he wouldn't let the rats out on party night.

PAMELA: He says he never lets them out, they just get loose.

NANCY (miming the words with a huge conspiratorial grimace) I've seen him do it!

PEGGY appears from the archway, dressed in a hail of sequins balanced on winkle pickers, yet with measure.

PEGGY: Nancy this room's for family only, don't forget. *And* special guests like Mr. Dan Sutton. You'll see a Private notice over the corridor.

PAMELA: Won't that be a bit of a put-off, right over the stairs like that?

PEGGY: Well I can't have all and sundry in here can I darling? Especially if the American ambassador comes. Well, this is the most unwilling party I've ever given, I do hope Barry's getting ready. What you do Nancy is steer everyone towards the Buffet room.

NANCY: Is that the sandwiches room mum?

PEGGY: Yes.

your skirt, stand up. (Shouts) *Go on, stand up.* (Gasping as she does so)  
What an extraordinary creature! Stand exactly where you are. I shall lift you up the stairs, to peace! I'll never let you be afraid again! Will I?

SEYMOUR: N-n-n-no!

He goes towards her (still the pockets don't move though his hands are free). He puts his arms round her and lifts her by clasping the chaps of her behind. He carries her through the arch backwards so that we see, as she clings to him, that her eyes are squeezed tight shut. They disappear through the arch.

## Six

Frank Sinatra is sounding through the house. This is the night of the party and we are still in the Japanese room. The two mattresses are there, only piled high with sumptuous cushions against the back wall. The only new item is a table with an antique lace cover in the corner upstage left. Above it, on the wall, is an elegantly printed notice in burgundy red, PLEASE TAKE A GLASS. But the table is empty. The bar-chauvinism music continues.

NANCY comes in actor's right bearing a tray of champagne flutes already filled. She has been dressed for this occasion in Victorian starch and black worsted but it takes nothing from her flaming fat red cheeks and immense voice. She crosses and puts the tray down on the corner table.

NANCY (gasping for breath) Why the 'ell she can't put a lift in I shall never know!  
(Depositing the tray) Cussedness I suppose!

She obeys tremulously.

BARRY (cont., bending down to her eye level) You see, I'm deep in a new project and I don't have time to be put away. My project concerns a certain mutation in the human brain. Now this mutation is pure and simple dementia, humans are the first and hopefully last congenitally crazy animal. Excuse me doctor!--do you know what picture you are presenting to me at this moment?

SEYMOUR (words jumping like rats) N-n-no I don't.

BARRY: The eyes in shock, digital trembling, raised shoulders, mouth open! And on what grounds are *you* suddenly mad? On the grounds of a fantasy about creatures with legs and feet and brains and spinally hung systems of nerves exactly like yourself?

She stares at him with fear.

He looks at the four shoes on the floor with sudden interest. He stops.

BARRY (cont.) Look! Shoes! Let me guess whose are Peggy's and whose are yours.

He runs to them and without disturbing his pockets kneels to smell them. He then picks one up by the teeth. He buries his nose deep in it. Meanwhile the rats are quiet, and so is the one under the mattress. She stares at him.

BARRY (cont.) Ah! (Gazing at her, then talking through the shoe in his teeth) So that's it! (Smelling again) My god! (Letting the shoe fall from his teeth) Peggy's could never be *that* sensual! (Gazing up at her with awe).

She is terrified of imminent rat activity as she watches him rise again.

BARRY (cont.) You see how quiet they are? They can feel my pleasure. Come my dear, let me take you upstairs, away from these terrors. My wife has just gone to work, the bed is still warm. Lower your legs, take your hands from

flashed by or was it just a squeak? BARRY at once lets his pockets go and rushes to the arch—

BARRY (cont., his coat flapping away) That was Mrs. Ferdinand! She's pregnant, enormously. Should be resting! (Returning and putting his hands back over his pockets) You'd better sit down again.

He picks up the fallen chair with one hand and of course this sets one of the pockets jumping. With the chair upright once more he almost pushes SEYMOUR onto it, then quickly puts his hand back to the flying pocket.

BARRY (cont.) Been sensitive like this for long?

She nods mutely.

BARRY (cont.) Before the childhood horror of rats I mean?

Again she nods.

BARRY (cont.) You were born with horror. Of everything. That right?

Yet again her child-like nod.

BARRY (cont.) I heard what Mrs. Cutlass had to say about me. So you're trying to get me put away are you?

SEYMOUR (with the shivers, watching his pockets) I w-w-w-wouldn't say that.

BARRY: What do you mean, you wouldn't say it? I heard everything she said!

SEYMOUR (her words jumping) It was Mr. C-C-Cutlass who got in touch with me. I was given only a v-v-v-vague idea of what I'm to do.

BARRY: Well let me tell you absolutely straight—(shouting) *and look me in the eyes!*

she wanted to. She has eyes for only one thing, the mattress. The long pauses in the rat's movements make it worse, as do its occasional little jumps that raise the mattress momentarily. They trigger similar jumps in SEYMOUR.

BARRY appears in his lab coat, down left. He stands watching her. He has his hands on his pockets.

BARRY: Are you the doctor?

This incursion nearly tips her off the chair again.

SEYMOUR: I'm t-t-terrified of rats, a ch-ch-childhood thing.

BARRY: I'm Barry Pillinger.

SEYMOUR: The ge-ge-ge-gene-

BARRY: Yes. Look, it's no use having your legs up like that. If a rat wants to climb up your legs it will. And it's more inclined to if you don't want it to. Anyway, how do you do?

He comes forward with his hand extended and of course the moment he takes his hand off his pockets the coat starts flapping wildly on both sides. SEYMOUR makes a leap backward that sends her off the chair, which rolls over. She begins screaming in a prolonged manner, the more as he now comes forward with both hands outstretched to help her.

BARRY (cont.) Oh I'm sorry.

He quickly puts his hands over his pockets. All is quiet, even the rat under the mattress.

BARRY (cont.) You see, it's nothing.

But she's staring at the archway. She points. A rat

SEYMOUR:      Away where?

PEGGY:          The Malmsey! Wherever you put 'em!

SEYMOUR (teeth chattering) The *Malm* —?

PEGGY (rejecting her pugnaciously) Phooey! And get your shoes off (flinging her own shoes to the floor), you can't run in those!

SEYMOUR flings her shoes off. She suddenly utters the scream that should have happened before. She is pointing desperately at one of the mattresses. Something humped is moving under it.

PEGGY (cont.) Nancy! Phone Mr. Barry and tell him a rat's frightening a doctor out of her wits!

NANCY (VO)     All right mum!

SEYMOUR:      Don't bring that man down here! Not with rats in his pockets!

PEGGY (quickly, as if getting ready to run, with continual glances at the mattress) Now listen to me. We're having a big party in a few days and officially I can't invite you. After all we can't have a Malmsey shrink wandering round the place, I mean it only takes you to walk in a room and people start feeling they're space cases, *I* certainly do. (Poised to run but deciding not quite yet) I don't mind how you do it, strait jacket, giggle suit, beefy skinhead male nurses, anything, I just want that bugger certified. On the other hand I don't want him taken out in chains right in front of the American ambassador but you won't be at the party so that's that, a pity but—(jumping up as another rat dashes across)!

SEYMOUR:      Don't leave me!

PEGGY races through the arch.

PEGGY (cont., off) Hang on to your skirt!

It is doubtful if SEYMOUR could move even if

PEGGY: *Sssh!*

A decided squeak. SEYMOUR follows PEGGY's eyes on the archway. Another squeak and this time there is a brown-spots-on-white creature with a very long tail that flies or slides along the corridor beyond the arch with such speed that it is impossible for us to gain more than a perhaps mistaken impression. In a flash up go PEGGY's legs so that her high-heeled feet are on the edge of her chair. SEYMOUR, alarmed, quickly follows suit (she manages not to scream but only by the skin of her teeth).

PEGGY: You'd better hitch your skirt up too. (Showing her) One tried to run up Nancy this morning.

Frantically, with silly fumbling fingers, SEYMOUR heaves at her skirt to bring the back round to cover her crotch and the sides tight round to complete the bandaged up effect.

PEGGY (to SEYMOUR's horror not raising her voice at all) Pamela! Pamela!

SEYMOUR glances round to see whom she is calling.

NANCY (VO) Did you call mum?

This voice from the blue almost shocks SEYMOUR'S chair over.

PEGGY: Where's my daughter?

NANCY (VO) She's upstairs in her flat with Mr. Barry mum.

PEGGY: Pamela are you on? Pamela? You'd better phone her Nancy, tell her he's loosed another lot! (To SEYMOUR) He carries them round in his pockets. You've got to put him away!

my husband thinks he's the golden boy of the century. Nothing to be done about *that*.

SEYMOUR: And what colour are the rats Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: White. Sometimes they have spots. Black or brown spots. I've never seen a streaky one but I'm told they exist. You see, you've got to keep your eye on that arch. You've pointed yourself the wrong way.

SEYMOUR (without moving) So that's where they always come from is it?

PEGGY: If I were you I'd shift your chair a bit.

SEYMOUR Of course.

She shifts the chair a little so that she can  
now take the arch in.

PEGGY: Obviously he's trying to get rid of me.

SEYMOUR: Your husband or your son-in-law?

PEGGY: The latter more than the former but I sometimes wonder if there's much in it.

SEYMOUR (control factor entering) I'm under the impression that *you* wanted to get rid of *him*, I mean your son in law. Am I right?

PEGGY: Well it's a struggle of wits isn't it?

SEYMOUR (disciplinary) But your daughter Mrs. Cutlass! What does *she* have to say about this? I met her downstairs I think.

PEGGY: My daughter? You *are* confused!

SEYMOUR: I'm sure I am. But I heard her call you mum!

PEGGY: That's—(listening intently)!

SEYMOUR: We were talking about your daughter Mrs Cutlass.

SEYMOUR: And are you taking anything?

PEGGY: What kind of anything?

SEYMOUR Sedatives, antidepressants.

PEGGY: I haven't got to *that* yet.

SEYMOUR: And where do these rats come from Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: Well he's down there letting them out isn't he?

SEYMOUR: I'm sure he is. Who's 'he'?

PEGGY: My son-in-law. Geneticist. Brought home all his rats.

A pause for appraisal from SEYMOUR.

SEYMOUR: I see. Where from?

PEGGY: Gower Street. That's where his lab is.

SEYMOUR: And what's his name Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: Barry Pillinger. An unfortunate name but then I didn't give it to him did I?

SEYMOUR: No you certainly didn't. And where does this geneticist live?

PEGGY: Upstairs in the penthouse.

SEYMOUR: Ah. So he's always over your head so to speak?

PEGGY: When his rats aren't under my feet, yes.

SEYMOUR: But the rats must come from somewhere surely? Or do they seem to come from nowhere?

PEGGY: They come from his cages of course! My husband built them for him. Cost an entire torso. Not that he's in the least grateful. But

PEGGY: Sit on the floor. And on with your shoes again, quick!

SEYMOUR (encouraging) If you wish!

PEGGY (dashing off, left) Let me get a couple of chairs.

In her absence SEYMOUR gets up and begins eyeing the room clinically. She gingerly lifts the the plinth-top. An inward taking of notes is obviously going on.

PEGGY returns with two upright kitchen chairs.

PEGGY (setting them down centre) There you are. Better safe than sorry.

SEYMOUR: Thank you (as she sits). Do you feel a little better?

PEGGY: I'll feel better when he's out of the house, not before.

SEYMOUR (staring at her as PEGGY lifts up her skirt preparatory to sitting down) You *are* Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY, having folded her pleated skirt under and around round her crotch with great care, sits.

PEGGY: Peggy Cutlass.

SEYMOUR (fascinated) How long has this been going on?

PEGGY: I saw one on my dressing table only an hour ago.

SEYMOUR: One what Mrs. Cutlass?

PEGGY: A rat.

SEYMOUR: Of course. And how many rats have you seen altogether?

PEGGY: They're mounting up.

SEYMOUR I'm from the Malmsey hospital.

PEGGY: *Hospital?*

SEYMOUR: Psychiatric. Sir Gerald Sommerson got in touch with me. He's a colleague of your husband's I believe.

PEGGY (busy with the mattresses) My husband's his boss. And there was me thinking you were pest control! How do you do?

She now shakes hands.

SEYMOUR (getting over the offence with schooled sangfroid) Sir Gerald told me you had a problem.

PEGGY: Just one? (Stepping back from the mattresses) How do you like it?

SEYMOUR (with the coolness due to what is none of her business) Very nice.

PEGGY: Japanese style. Would you like to try this one?

SEYMOUR: What, lie down?

PEGGY: To christen it so to speak. I'll try the other one.

SEYMOUR: Shall I take my shoes off?

PEGGY: Well I suppose it would be appropriate (taking off her own).

As she does so she utters a horrified gasp.  
Something flashed across the archway (a squeak was certainly heard).

SEYMOUR (not quite down yet, and every inch the observer) Can I help?

PEGGY: We'd better not do it.

SEYMOUR: Not do what?

NANCY (VO) Mum! *Mum!*

PEGGY (continuing her task, quietly absorbed) Yes, what is it Nancy and don't call me mum.

NANCY (VO) There's a doctor at the door, she's a woman.

PEGGY: What does she want?

NANCY (VO) Mr. Cutlass mum!

PEGGY: My husband's at work. Tell her to call back after nine o'clock this evening.

Some murmuring over the speakers.

NANCY (VO) She says could she have a word with you mum?

PEGGY: I'll come down to where you are, where are you?

NANCY (VO) In the room with all the furniture.

PEGGY: There's no room there so you'd better send her up here. Japanese room.

NANCY (VO) You go up them stairs doctor, two floors up and you turn left and then you'll see it on your right.

PEGGY takes the cushions and places them at the head of the beds, three on each. She stands back to study them. Returns to adjust them.

DR. HEATHER SEYMOUR appears at the arch, also in high heels. Most people would size her up as a young corporate manager except that she dresses in a manner that stretches the corporate to the candidly if not flagrantly erotic.

SEYMOUR: Heather Seymour (offering her hand without avail).

PEGGY: Come in.

MARTIN: *Buy?* The man's gone mad! Barry's not even known! He's not a top name at all!

ARTHUR: I thought that'd rattle you, her going away!

MARTIN: Meaning?

ARTHUR: I told you, she's pregnant!

MARTIN: But why tell *me*?

ARTHUR: Then it must have been one of your servants screwed her! What about that butler you hire for cocktail parties? Or the gardener? Now *he's* a stout looking chap, was he my Lady Chatterley's joy boy? (With remarkable savagery) Why don't you cross-examine your staff?

NANCY (VO) The car's ready Mr.Cutlass.

ARTHUR: We'll be right down Nancy! (With a gleam and a hiss) She heard the lot! (Taking hold of his arm) You're looking so green! And I think I know why! You're sorry to be losing Barry Pillinger!

MARTIN (his way of owning up to the truth) I do wish you'd shut up.

They go out.

## Five

The Japanese room. There are now two single mattresses to the right of the arch, their heads to the back wall. PEGGY, high-heeled and in a two-piece with a flounced i.e. not skin-tight skirt has put Indian covers on one of them and is just now covering the other. There are several large bright cushions to one side.

NANCY's voice comes over the intercom.

ARTHUR: Yes Martin, *rats*. Peggy says he talks about gazing into their eyes and they gaze back and there's an understanding between him and them, even his own wife thinks he's off his bloody rocker.

MARTIN: So why the hell doesn't she leave him?

ARTHUR gives him a flash of hatred which  
MARTIN doesn't notice.

MARTIN (cont.) Helen always said she had doubts about him.

ARTHUR: Did she really Martin? Your wife expressed her doubts about my son in law him too, did she? What frightens her about Barry is your accounts of him, old cock! I hope you didn't try and influence my daughter as well! After all, you had three months in which to chew the fat about Barry Pillinger didn't you?

MARTIN: What *are* you talking about?

ARTHUR: Pamela's three months gone and three months ago Barry was on a trip to Munich zoo on a Gower Street assignment. It raises the question of paternity--- unless he sent his sperm home by post!

MARTIN: But what has this got to do with me?

ARTHUR: You didn't introduce her to any nubile young man did you?

MARTIN (with a suavity which ARTHUR watches with detestation) We had the usual Sussex guests. Of course it's a busy household. As a matter of fact I work a damn sight harder in the summer than the rest of the year. I was probably a bit out of touch.

ARTHUR (after a glare at him) I had a call from Dan Sutton and he's on his way over.

MARTIN: What the hell for?

ARTHUR (disregarding this) So I have to organise a party for him. Here in this house.

MARTIN: But why on earth here and not Gower Street?

ARTHUR: Dan's not interested in Gower Street! His company got wind of Barry's latest project and they're so impressed they're going to *buy* him---that means ship him and my daughter over to Ardmore, Maryland!

BARRY (cont.) You stroked her! Very slightly!

PAMELA: I feel so proud! Where are you taking her?

BARRY: She won't stir. Don't worry. And we can have breakfast.

He leaves and she sinks back on the pillows again. She smells her hands, gazes before her.

## Four

The Japanese room at the same early-morning hour. ARTHUR CUTLASS is with MARTIN FYFFE, editor in chief of a daily paper. MARTIN is a compact well-dressed man with a decided strength not wholly unpremeditated. They're in their office clothes with a tray of coffee between them.

MARTIN is seated with his coffee but ARTHUR is pacing about.

ARTHUR: Shepley consoles went down a few points, gave me a bit of a scare.

MARTIN: For god's sake stop prowling around and come to the point, what's bugging you? And why this early-morning call? I have to be at my desk in half an hour.

ARTHUR: He's walked out of his job at Gower Street and I've fixed him up a bloody great cage for his rats in my basement and they've started to take over the house.

MARTIN: His *rats*?

moment. It's Mrs Ferdinand.

PAMELA (sugaring her coffee) So what do you want to talk about?

BARRY (sitting on the bed) Well, we've recently found a strange mutation in the human DNA. The kind you don't find in other animals. It suggests some kind of split in the sanity. The human mind isn't working as it should.

She sips her coffee with deep gratitude.

PAMELA: So?

BARRY: I want you to see how sane my rats are. .

PAMELA: But why at *this* hour? I've got to go to work.

BARRY: You know how you hate cruelty to animals.

PAMELA: Yes.

BARRY: Well Lance happened to be screaming down the phone that he wanted some animals for experiment, urgently, and there was some difficulty and he shouted For God's sake it's only animals I'm after, they're only THINGS for God's sake, not humans! And I happened to be looking a rat's eyes and she was pregnant and she looked back at me with such a proud and peaceful mother's gaze! (Moving) And that was Mrs. Ferdinand. And I have her in my pocket. (Moving slightly closer) Pamela see if you can put your hand on one of mine, there's no need to look, don't be afraid, she won't bite, she doesn't have human hang-ups. Just try. Just lay your hand on mine. (As she tries) There! That's the style. Slowly does it. Now what's wrong with that?

She shakes her head mutely.

BARRY (cont.) Feel her warmth. And the little heart beating.

PAMELA: Yes I can feel it.

He put Mrs.Ferdinand back in his pocket and gets up.

the bed.

PAMELA: Don't come near!

He sits on the bed. She shrinks away.

BARRY: You promised you were going to take an interest.

PAMELA: Don't take anything out!

BARRY: Let me tell you something—

PAMELA: Don't move your arms!

BARRY: I only want to *talk*. No, it's not about the Y chromosome-

PAMELA: I want my coffee!

BARRY: And you shall have it.

He hurries out right and she stretches, gasps. We hear the tinkle of a cup.

PAMELA: Barry.

BARRY (off) Yes?

PAMELA: You're not *releasing* all these rats are you? Deliberately? Just to give us hell?

BARRY (off): Of course not. I don't mind them being loose in the main part of the house but the last thing I want is rats up here.

PAMELA (to herself as she lies back) Good god.

BARRY (coming back with her coffee on a little tray) After all I work with them all day.

PAMELA: How is it (her eyes on his pockets) they're not moving?

BARRY: If I don't want them to move they don't. But I've only got one at the

Rachel otherwise. You can love Martin Fyffe as much as you like Pamela but that child is mine. The genetic differences won't mean a thing, I'll handle that. What shall we call him?

No reply to this.

BARRY (cont., VO) We'd better get ready Pamela, we're due at Gower Street.

ARTHUR (hushed) The blood in that man's veins is *ice*.

### Three

The penthouse bedroom in an early morning dimness. The curtains are drawn and PAMELA is still asleep, alone.

BARRY tiptoes in. He is in his lab coat and his hands are over both of his pockets. He stands watching her.

BARRY (whispering) Pamela. It's eight o'clock.

She doesn't stir.

BARRY (cont.) Pamela, it's late.

She moves, raises her head, subsides again. He releases his hands from both pockets and at once his coat tails start flapping wildly. She raises her head again to see who or what has awoken her. The moment she sees his flapping white coat she utters a sleep-throttled cry and with one movement is sitting up trying to melt into the wall behind her.

He quickly puts his hands over his pockets. Their inmates are quiet. He comes round to the side of

PEGGY: Just what I told her! Barry never knows exactly where he is time-wise. All you do is add or subtract a month and the baby's just another brother for John and Rachel. I don't know why you always have to be so honest, Pamela. You're honest to a defect! After all, it's perfectly usual for people to get themselves into this sort of difficulty.

ARTHUR: What difficulty's that?

PEGGY: Not knowing whose their children are.

ARTHUR: Ah.

PEGGY: I suppose it's too late to bring it off?

PAMELA: I don't want it brought off!

ARTHUR: Why not?

PAMELA: Because I love him!

ARTHUR: A man nearly twice your age!

PEGGY: Age differences happen to be *in* Arthur.

ARTHUR: All right then, marry him if that's what he wants!

BARRY PILLINGER's voice breaks in very calmly over the intercom.

BARRY (VO) Nevertheless, Pamela, you *won't* be marrying Martin Fyffe. Your father seems awfully ready to trade sons-in-law all of a sudden.

ARTHUR: Good god, that bloody relay system! You said it was switched off.

PAMELA: Well, he's switched it back on hasn't he?

PEGGY: You only switched the kitchen off!

BARRY (VO) Any new child must stay in the family, it simply isn't right for John and

PAMELA: But I'm so unhappy that I did! I mean him being your best friend!

A shrug from ARTHUR.

ARTHUR: Funny thing, I said to Martin once, I said perhaps I'm a damn fool but I'm always trying to keep up appearances, and he said there's no need to keep up what people no longer acknowledge.

PAMELA: As a matter of fact appearances are all he thinks about.

ARTHUR: You sound out of love.

PAMELA: He's claiming the child.

ARTHUR: What does that mean?

PAMELA: He wants custody.

ARTHUR: The shameless bastard.

PAMELA: No. He wants to marry me.

ARTHUR: And what about his dear wife, Helen?

She shrugs.

ARTHUR (cont.) He'd better not try walking out on *her*.

PAMELA: Oh he's just *saying* it. He only wants to make trouble.

ARTHUR (nodding) He's a very bored man, always has been.

PEGGY appears in the archway in her dressing gown.

PEGGY (hushed and respectful) So what do you think Arthur?

ARTHUR: Pamela has a baby, so it's her third Pillinger baby, that's what I think..

PAMELA: I'm having a baby.

Long silence.

ARTHUR: Anything wrong with that? A third child? We should all be dancing!

PAMELA: I'm three months gone.

ARTHUR: So?

PAMELA: Barry wasn't with me three months ago. I was away in the country. At Chumley Keep.

ARTHUR: What's wrong with that? You go there a lot. Martin Fyffe's family more or less, so is Helen, lovely house, wonderful cook. And you weren't with your husband, which was even better (stopping as it dawns on him). So who the hell's the father?

PAMELA: Martin Fyffe.

ARTHUR (jumping) Martin! How horrifying!

PAMELA: What's horrifying? I was in love with him!

ARTHUR: But Pamela! He's just not a person to fall in love with. I mean he's in newspapers! (Suddenly looking at her) And you didn't even take precautions?

PAMELA: No.

ARTHUR (subsiding) Well, you obviously meant it didn't it? You trusted him! Fyffe of all people! Runs a newspaper! (Finally, with a heavy shrug) Well a child's a child I suppose.

PAMELA: Oh daddy I do so love you, the way you accommodate yourself to everything.

ARTHUR: You obviously wanted to do it.

ARTHUR (busy at his tea) Yes darling. (When she is gone, to PAMELA) When I entered your mother's little world twenty-eight years ago I had to accept a lot I thought funny. I laughed a great deal but, tell me what you think, is there any laughter left in me?

PAMELA: Oh lots dad. Anyway she's good training. She trained me for Barry.

ARTHUR: I mean look at this intercom business! All these bloody speakers! Do you think your mother's happy?

PAMELA: Of course she is.

ARTHUR: Anyway, I think I've found somebody she can see. She needs to let off steam!

PAMELA: Who is it this time?

He points to the intercom plinth with a question mark in his eyes and she shakes her head, to denote 'all switched off'.

ARTHUR: It's a psychiatrist from the Malmsey hospital but you mustn't breathe a word, she's a gal called Hetty Seymour and she's going to treat it like a social call, she's good at that apparently. A real top psychiatrist this time.

PAMELA: According to who?

ARTHUR: Sir Gerald at the bank, (seeing PAM's tired shrug) it's no use being cynical Pam, we've got to keep on trying.

PAMELA: I suppose so.

The cage-constructing noises cease.

ARTHUR (cont.) Thank god for silence! (Sips his tea) Your mother said there's something wrong gynaecologically. Can you translate?

She gazes at him for some time, until he looks up from his tea.

JOHN (VO) OK Peggy.

There is suddenly an explosive sound of uncontrolled potty activity.

ARTHUR: For god's sake switch that bloody thing off! Here (jumping up)!

He runs to the plinth and throws a switch inside and all is now quiet. He sinks down to the floor in his former place, exhausted.

There are steps on the staircase. NANCY, a bright broad breath of fresh old-timey air, comes puffing in with the tea tray.

PAMELA is close behind her, still in her overcoat.

NANCY (puffing) Did they put you on the floor then sir?

ARTHUR: I'm afraid so Nancy.

NANCY: Never mind, this'll do you good.

Putting the tray on the floor she pours his tea. She hands the cup to PAMELA, who takes it to her father.

ARTHUR: Thank you darling. (To NANCY) I'll be down in a minute to read the paper, if you've got any chairs that is.

NANCY (going) Oh don't you worry about that! Where there's a bum there needs to be a good sit-down to my way of thinking!

PEGGY: Nancy, tell the men they can go after their tea!

NANCY(VO) Right you are mum!

PEGGY: As for me, I'm off. We're dressing tonight Arthur.

She leaves via the arch.

PEGGY (as ARTHUR sits shaking his head) Send her up to the Japanese room right away and don't over-listen, it isn't your business.

PAMELA (VO, long-suffering) I'm here mummy.

PEGGY: Your father would like a word, that's all. And please stop crying.

PAMELA (VO) I'm NOT crying! I'm not even *given* to crying!

PEGGY: We've been into that, you're crying inwardly. I can feel you.

The sound of tea cups comes OVER.

PEGGY (cont.) And, Nancy, I don't know why you have to call me mum, this is the twenty-first mum you've given me today.

NANCY (VO) Habit mum. From my mum. Being in service all her life. She was really saying madam for short and it sounded like mum.

PEGGY: Yes we know all about that, I'd like to talk to my grandson John if he's there, is he there?

NANCY (VO) He's on the potty.

PEGGY: What, a big boy like that? Get him off at once!

NANCY (VO) He says he's just trying it mum.

PEGGY: Listen to me John, do you want to go or not?

JOHN (VO) Yes gramma.

PEGGY: Number One or Number Two?

JOHN (VO) Neither gramma.

By now ARTHUR is at the end of his tether.

PEGGY: And don't call me gramma.

pan (forestalling her), all right, all right, the seventh bloody! Sprayed itself with eau de cologne every time you went, if you remember. Madame Rochas down the pan fifty times a day! And those bloody bedroom windows, eighth bloody, that opened and closed all night according to the temperature except they got stuck wide open in a freeze-up!

PEGGY: By the way Pamela's upstairs in the bloody penthouse crying her eyes out.

ARTHUR: Ah, back to daughter. Another high-optimism zone!

PEGGY: It's something gynaecological I think.

ARTHUR: What's it got to do with me? I'm here to pay the huge bills, emotional stuff goes to you.

PEGGY: Stop being *bitter* Arthur.

ARTHUR (almost to himself) I don't know, we used to have such a good time.

PEGGY: It's all those hours you spend at the bank. I'm always being asked what's your husband up to these days.

ARTHUR: What do you tell them, he's playing with his fingers?

PEGGY: They mean does he have any other life but the bank?

ARTHUR: I always hope things are going to ease up but (with a shrug)---

PEGGY: Make them ease up!

ARTHUR: If you only knew! When you make *my* money *nothing* eases up.

NANCY the housekeeper's rich voice is heard over the intercom.

NANCY (VO) I'm back now mum, I'm pouring his tea. And your Pamela's down here Mum, she's not in the penthouse like you just said!

PAMELA: You asked him to! You're always wanting a room switched on or off!

PEGGY: Talking of tears I had a good cry myself last night. Your father said you women are so lucky, your tear-ducts are your best friends.

PAMELA: And what were *you* crying about?

PEGGY: The rats Pamela! The same as you! Why does Barry do it?

A child cries over the speakers.

PAMELA (cont.) That's John, I'd better go down! Having just come up!

She leaves as a door slams below, followed by a crash. ARTHUR CUTLASS comes on the air.

ARTHUR (VO) Peggy! What's all this bloody furniture doing in the hall?

PEGGY: I'm here, there's no need to panic, you've woken the children.  
And please don't raise your voice.

ARTHUR (VO, shouting) I tripped over a bloody coffee table! And when you say I'm here where the hell's 'here'?

PEGGY: The Japanese room. Is Nancy there by the way?

PAMELA (VO) You sent her out for the evening paper, mummy.

PEGGY descends and takes the ladder to one side.

ARTHUR appears in the archway, office-clad with a briefcase. He is a good-looking man or rather would be if fret hadn't driven the lines on his face so deep. His get-up is impeccable and no one could doubt that he has a City job.

PEGGY: It couldn't be worse Arthur.

PAMELA: What *is* then?

PEGGY: Nothing.

PAMELA: So where are we going to sit?

PEGGY: Somewhere else but not in the Japanese Room! (Glancing at her) You've been crying.

PAMELA: I saw a brown one.

PEGGY: Oh that one's been around for ages. He was why your father agreed about the cages. He's actually spotted!

PAMELA: Who is?

PEGGY: The rat.

PAMELA: Daddy agrees about everything, he even agreed about all these speakers!

PEGGY: He does it to get a quiet life. After a day in the counting house *you'd* agree to everything too!

She climbs the ladder again.

PEGGY (cont.) I mean, did you expect daddy to let the rats stay in cages they could nibble their way out of?

PAMELA: He should have put his foot down! Told Barry to get them out of the house!

PEGGY: Tell Barry Pillinger! A pity *you* don't tell him! Is that why you've been crying?

PAMELA: I haven't been crying at all! Now will you please get that notion out of your head! I've never been so dry-eyed in my life!

PEGGY: You're crying *inside*. That's the worst. Your husband keeps tampering with these switches by the way.

As a background we have metallic hammering from the basement.

NANCY the housekeeper's rich belly cockney comes over the intercom.

NANCY (VO) Are you there mum?

PEGGY (quietly) *Please* get used to talking normally Nancy. I'm in the Japanese room.

NANCY (VO, still shouting) Miss Pamela's just come in and the workmen want another cup of tea!

PEGGY: Well *give* them another cup of tea, they deserve it---putting up cages is very hard work.

NANCY (VO) Yes mum!

PEGGY: And please don't call me mum.

PAMELA (VO) I'm on my way up, it's Pamela, mummy!

PEGGY: Take a look at the cages darling!

PAMELA (VO) I did already, they're splendid!

PEGGY (to herself) I think your *father's* splendid, considering how much they cost him.

She climbs down from the ladder  
and appraises what she is hanging.  
She hums.

PAMELA comes in with some shopping.

PAMELA: It's a terrible mess down there---armchairs cluttering up the hallway!

PEGGY: Well they're not coming back up here!

(Stopping) By the way, at Gower Street they don't use rats so why do you?

BARRY: No geneticists use rats. E-ones perhaps but not live ones.

PAMELA : So why are you using them?

BARRY: I need to observe them so that I can take the genetics industry a huge step Forward, Pamela!

She stalks out the way she came. BARRY unzips his pocket and puts his hand in.

BARRY (to his pocket) Don't listen to her, Mrs. Ferdinand. She'll come round.

He strolls upstage to the archway. Looking from left to right along the corridor, his back to us, he bends down as if on a bowling green and sends the rat in a long low flying swoop along the corridor to his left. We hear (but cannot be sure) a quick joyous little squeak. He strolls off down the corridor in the other direction.

## Two

The room has been cleared of armchairs. The intercom plinth is now the sole furniture.

Standing on a ladder PEGGY CUTLASS is putting up a single Japanese hanging of minimal line on a one-colour theme. She is an early-middle-aged woman with bright urchin-cut hair and clothes so tight that, combined with high heels, they resemble an infinitesimally light steel structure.

PAMELA:           Where *are* these rats?

BARRY:            In the basement.

PAMELA:           But that's where daddy stores his wine!

BARRY:            Oh I've shifted all that. It's quite a large space you know. As you say, this is Hill Street, Mayfair, the cellar's the size of two apartments.

PAMELA (slumping back) I was always afraid of something like this.

BARRY:            I could hardly go on working cramped-up like that, could I?

PAMELA:           And what about *us*, your family!

BARRY:            As I say, there's room for all of us, whatever our species.

PAMELA:           So you did everything on purpose, without a word! You let me think Mummy was seeing rodents in her sleep! Daddy thought she was seeing things too! We laughed when she said droppings!

BARRY:            One or two *have* got free.

PAMELA:           And where are they now, in the walls I suppose!

BARRY:            Pamela, they could no more exist in a wall than we could!

PAMELA:           And what about Lance? Was he happy you left? Perhaps he's relieved!

BARRY:            I wouldn't say that. He saw at once that an experimental atmosphere was no good for my rats. And of course we still run the Gower Street show together.

PAMELA:           Does he know they're all here?

BARRY:            I don't think *quite*. He knows a few have gone.

PAMELA (jumping up) I'm going to call him! You've taken things too far Barry!

PAMELA (leaping back) Don't touch me!

BARRY (his hand over the pockets again) Very well.

PAMELA: The idea, rats in Hill Street, Mayfair!

BARRY: Won't you sit down for a moment?

She does so grudgingly, eyes on the pockets. And he does too, opposite her.

BARRY (cont.) I've walked out of my job.

PAMELA (hushed with horror) You walked out?

BARRY: Yes.

PAMELA: But you're the boss!

BARRY: It's simply that my project doesn't fit Gower Street any more.

PAMELA: And now you want to work at home!

BARRY: Yes.

PAMELA (aghast) You can't have your rats here!

BARRY (quietly) They're already installed. (Pausing to weight the effect on her)

I've been bringing them home in my pocket one by one.

(Pausing again, rather doubtful about this one) For six months.

PAMELA: And how many are there for god's sake?

BARRY: Oh, about 172.

PAMELA: 172! In this house?

BARRY: I must say you haven't been very observant. Your mother notices droppings, why don't you?

BARRY puts his hand inside the plinth and throws a switch. The speakers cut out at once. She jumps as his pocket begins moving about so vigorously that the tail of his lab coat is made to flap.

PAMELA (cont.) Stop it jumping about like that! You know I can't stand rats!

He puts his hand over the pocket and the inmate is calm at once.

BARRY (as he sits) It's only a game they have.

PAMELA: Anyway, what are rats doing up here?

BARRY: They came upstairs.

PAMELA (frantic) From *where*?

BARRY: I've rigged up something up in the basement.

PAMELA (pointing) It's messing in your pocket!

BARRY: She'd never mess her food-area, Pamela. She's not a human.

PAMELA: Mummy saw droppings! And I felt something on the bed last night!

BARRY: That's impossible!

PAMELA: It was on the eiderdown! Mummy's getting the pest control Barry!

BARRY: They'd better not try and pest-control any of these!

PAMELA (on the edge of hysteria) But what are you *doing* with them here?

BARRY: Well, if you listen carefully darling—but I haven't kissed you hullo yet!

He rushes to her with his arms outstretched, which triggers off vigorous movement in both his pockets.

- PEGGY (VO) You weren't asked to contribute! Now please get off the line!
- BARRY: I'm not on a line, that's what I'm saying, I can't get off and neither can you!
- JOHN (VO) Dad are we going to get a story tonight?
- PAMELA: John, it's your mummy's here and you're to come upstairs when Nancy tells you.
- PEGGY (VO) Pamela you're in! What do you think of it?
- PAMELA: Well! It certainly works mummy, I can hear you as if you were here.
- PEGGY (VO) You don't have to shout darling, the normal voice is enough and I'm sure he'll come round to it.
- PAMELA: Who?
- PEGGY (VO, testily) Barry Pillinger, your husband my dear!
- PAMELA: Come round to it? He's the only one in the house who knows how to work it!
- This time a girl's voice comes over.
- RACHEL (VO) Granny can I have that rusk?
- PEGGY (VO) Yes you can darling and please don't push her John. Also, Rachel, don't call me granny, Peggy's my name.
- RACHEL (VO) Yes Peggy.
- JOHN (VO) She took my—.
- PEGGY (VO) It doesn't *matter* what she took!! Rachel, it's time you drank your milk.
- PAMELA (to BARRY, trying to hide her voice from the wall mikes) Switch it off for God's sake!

MALE CHILD (VO) Mum! Rachel's upset her potty! Dad! Dad!

BARRY (without moving or raising his voice in the least) This is dad. Where's Nancy?

CHILD (VO) She's gone out shopping!

BARRY: Call your mother then.

PEGGY CUTLASS (VO, gushing) It's all right Barry I'm here! (After a hesitant pause) It's your mother in law.

BARRY (in a normal conversational voice) *That* I could gather. Now listen to me Peggy. One thing you have to learn about these mikes is they're very sensitive, they're all over the walls, you don't have to shout, all you have to do is talk in your normal voice and that's going to carry you all over the house.

PEGGY (VO) Yes Barry.

BARRY (continuing with his task at the plinth) Why you need a full-blown industrial intercom service God alone knows, OK it's a big house but surely we can call down the stairs like we always used to.

PEGGY (VO) You know perfectly well I'm doing it for the children—

BARRY: But they're either at school or in the kitchen.

PAMELA PILLINGER, BARRY's wife and the CUTLASS daughter, comes in down left. She has a briefcase and is in outdoor clothes and she is trying to get BARRY to stop talking by making signs at him.

PEGGY (VO) Anyway Barry I don't think you need complain! No speakers have been installed in your penthouse, so be thankful for small mercies!

BARRY (making hullo signals to PAMELA) And then look at the expense, I mean how many thousands—!

## One

The Cutlass residence in Hill Street, Mayfair. The room is grand but has been minimalised. The pictures on the walls are in one or two muted colours with a few lines across them to suggest a Japanese hanging. There are armchairs of slung leather that look none too comfortable.

The most inexplicable item is a stout square wooden plinth, its lid in an ornate carved fruit motif. It is placed on the actor's right and a little downstage. It takes up room in an awkward position, being about a metre high and half a metre wide. This houses the controls of an intercom system that makes it possible for the CUTLASS family to communicate with itself from different rooms. Speakers and mikes are discreetly visible high in the walls.

The back wall of the room has a wide arch in its centre which gives us a view of a pristine corridor going left and right, also as minimal as possible. Apart from the arch there are two entrances, downstage left and right.

The scene is empty.

BARRY PILLINGER, a youngish man with a lively shock of hair, comes in through the centre archway in a white lab coat which has voluminous side-pockets with zips (to contain rats).

A MALE CHILD'S VOICE suddenly deafens us over the intercom speakers.

## **C H A R A C T E R S**

**Barry Pillinger, geneticist**

**Pamela Pillinger, his wife**

**Peggy Cutlass, his mother in law**

**Arthur Cutlass, his father in law**

**Martin Fyffe, editor in chief of a Sunday  
paper**

**Dr. Heather Seymour, a psychiatrist**

**Dan Sutton, a Texan executive**

**Nancy, housekeeper**

Genes  
ORIGINAL  
144 pages  
Genes - cut  
67 pages  
Letter - Michael  
Steinberg

ma