

And us came

Ophelia

different  
entry

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**AND IN CAME OPHELIA**

**A Comedy**

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**CHARACTERS**

**JAMES MARVIN, ACTOR**

**LIZZY TURNDALE, VISITOR**

**TOM CROWELL, THEATRE MANAGER**

**ONE**

THE SCENE opens on the empty dressing room of MARVIN JAMES at the Vic in the Strand. Our first impression is of a bright extravagant show-biz version of a dressing room that might be suitable for a musical, and indeed it is a surprise that MARVIN doesn't open with a song. Being the size of a stage it is equipped as one, with a slight rake and a sophisticated light and sound console, the whole space having once been a rehearsal room frequently hired out to ballet companies.

Downstage actor's right there is a dressing table with the conventional dressing room mirror framed with naked light bulbs, except that there is no glass in the frame and we see MARVIN JAMES through it when he makes up.

On the dressing table are two wigs, one grey (for the play which MARVIN won't dare name but which takes place in Scotland) and the other a deep blue-black (for HAMLET). They are on mounts.

At MARVIN's right hand is a further table containing the light-and-sound console, together with a land-line phone, a mobile phone, a loose radio mike and unopened letters.

This spoiled man is thus connected to every part of the theatre below him. His swivel chair is a soft leather article coloured burgundy.

At roughly centre stage there is a settee partly covered with play-scripts which can easily be thrown off if sexual dalliance is scripted, and there is for this purpose a thick outsize blanket

and an ample supply of gaudy cushions.

The staircase entrance to all this is actor's right, its doors made of Perspex.

Upstage there is a wide screened-off area with an inner room whose wide windows look out on rooftops and afford a view---to those who go close to it---of the street below and the entrance to the Stage Door.

Downstage, left, there is a cupboard in which MARVIN keeps certain props of a theatrically historical value.

When the action begins the scene is empty.

Then the staircase door is pushed open slowly by a cane.

The cane is followed by a yellow-gloved hand and an elegantly cut sleeve owned by MARVIN JAMES, a handsome man in his (to say the least) early middle age. He is dressed urbanely in a striped suit and his hat is set at an angle last seen in Jack Buchanan's day.

He walks to the console and deftly touches a button with his stick to bring up the theme music from one of his musical shows, May Buds. This music has a highly rhythmic, dramatic aura best suggested by Brian Eno (The Jezebel Spirit and Help me Somebody are useful models).

MARVIN at once goes into his dance routine from that show. We don't expect such expertise when combined, as it is, with a suave dated appearance. Soon his steps pick up to make a real performance.

At the end he switches the sound off and deposits his stick in a rack for that purpose near the door and then sits down at the dressing table.

He finds, as usual, a copy of The Times before him and with astonishing rapidity races through every page and every column and then in fury screws it up into a ball and throws it in the wastepaper basket.

He returns to perfect calm at once, gazing at himself with the detachment of an actor who has been through almost everything. Just as he begins making himself up the land-line phone rings. He takes no notice. It stops ringing. He pencils in wrinkles. He leaves this to try on his wig for the Scottish Play, as he calls it.

The phone rings again. He nonchalantly fits the wig. He returns to the wrinkle pencil, tipping the phone deftly off the hook. There is the faint crackle of a voice at the other end. As he paints the face in we see that he clearly favours a Henry Irving view of the Scottish Gentleman as sardonic and evil. He then dries his hands and picks up the phone.

MARVIN: Hullo?.....Yes.....You what? Could you repeat that?.....You want a pair of my socks?.....No you can't, you can bloody well sweat in your own! What an idea, collecting great actors' socks! Anyway, how did you get my number?.....What?.....Well why in the hell didn't you say so in the first place?.....Ah, you've had a series of *shocks*, I thought you said *socks*!...But when were you anything but shocked? And when were box office receipts anything but down?.....Listen, I told you ages ago, they'll never take another play by the Old Chap this year, particularly after that lousy Lear. I was all for doing a Coward revival.....Yes I know there've been three this year but they *are* safe. Having once filled the Henry Miller theatre with Present Laughter I know what I'm talking about.....It had nothing to do with your direction, a Coward play directs itself! They were touting tickets at hundreds of dollars! Forty percent

of my capacity was black. I refer to the colour of their skin. Coward was pure WASP until I came along!.....What? You've been told that wherever I appear the house is always paper? I've never had paper in a show of mine, you must be delirious!.....What? you don't know what papering a show *means*? So am I really talking to Nigel Burbage, the director of most of my shows? You must be in a state of mental collapse, man! Very well, let me remind you of what papering a show means. It's when you send free tickets to nurses and other organisations and you make-believe you have an audience, only the box office doesn't get a single penny!... Well of course it's going to be paper for The Play, we'll be lucky to sell the first row! It makes me *sick* doing The Play---I mean he's such a miserable old bugger, murdering people in their beds and getting on his wife's nerves and having nightmares at the dinner table. I know what *I'd* have told him to do with that brief candle if *I'd* been his wife! Anyway, what are the takings?.....Oh my God! Very well! I shan't go on! Full dress rehearsal this evening and miserable takings, I won't do it!.....What's that? I'm upset because The Times didn't mention me this morning? I've told you repeatedly I don't give a damn about The Times, I don't even take it, let alone read it (with a bland glance at the wastepaper basket). As for you, you're sore because you can't direct, it's simply not within your range of gifts, it never has been. I shall never forget the time I stood behind no fewer than fifteen armour-clad henchmen at the Final Dress and your little voice comes piping up from the stalls---'Marvin's completely masked!'. Masked, I was obliterated! Nobody could see the top of my head, let alone hear me speak! That's not blocking, that's blundering!.....I see, you're too distraught to speak are you? And you've heard it all before have you?.....Your who? Your *ex-wife*? I didn't even know you were married.....She what?.....Well of course she left you, you got a divorce didn't you?.....You went back together?.....You married her twice? And what's the state of play at the moment?.....She ran out of the house---

LIZZY TURNDALE enters right via the Perspex door, a cup of coffee in her hand. She is a bright attractive young woman with wide black eyes and she is in a very fine costume.

She stands there uncertainly, glancing about the dressing room in an inquisitive, even insatiable manner.

MARVIN (cont.) To *what*---bring me *a cup of coffee*? And what the devil for?...  
Because she's in love with me? Oh for God's sake man they all say that! Anyway I'm not responsible for your domestic skirmishing. As far as I'm concerned you've cooked your bloody goose this morning---you've lost the play and its male lead in one fell swoop! I'm certainly not going to play to a 55% house. But I'll tell you what I *am* going to do. I'm going to play *Hamlet*.

LIZZY nearly drops the coffee with surprise. He slams the phone down and only now seems to realise what he has just said. He leans back in his burgundy chair gazing before him in a dream.

MARVIN (to himself, mumbling) Ha, ha? Are you honest?

LIZZY: Me?

MARVIN (jumping out of his skin) Who the---?

He stares at her, then at the cup she is holding. He rises with studied courtesy and takes it from her, then deposits it on his dressing table.

Suddenly he turns and grabs her. She is about to scream but he puts his hand over her mouth.

MARVIN (cont.) Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?  
(Breaking from her) No dammit, it just won't do!

He returns to his dressing table sulkily and resumes his making up. But suddenly he tears off his wig and begins creaming out his wrinkles.

He puts on a smoother foundation and is quickly a younger if not young man. He tries on the blue-black wig and leans

back with some satisfaction.

During all this LIZZY's astonishment gives way to steady curiosity. She sits down quietly on the settee.

MARVIN (cont.) Whose idea was that, bringing me coffee? Not our director's by any chance? Not Nigel Burbage's, your *husband's*? What a ridiculous idea to assume the name of an Elizabethan actor, don't you think so? Burbage my foot! He's gone mad anyway, I've just talked to him---he suddenly can't remember what papering a show means! (He sips the coffee) You've put sugar in. (Resuming his making up) Never put sugar in Marvin James's coffee. Put it in his tea. Not his coffee. They know it at the Savoy and the Alconquin but in the theatre where he's been resident star for fifteen years news is apparently slow to travel. (Without looking in her direction) Why are you here? Wheedled your way into the job to get my autograph or something? Are you after my socks? Chap on the phone this morning was after my socks. You have nice tits, I'll say that.

LIZZY: Me?

MARVIN: She speaks but one word---`me'. (Turning to her with a leer) Me, me, me, me!

LIZZY: Who the bloody hell do you think you are?

MARVIN: Oh my God not *that* line! (Continuing his make-up) Not after Eliza Doolittle! What's your name anyway? I mean your maiden one.

LIZZY: Lizzy Turndale.

A stunned silence. He turns towards her slowly.

MARVIN: No one's called Lizzy Turndale. It's impossible. And you've made a bad thing worse by abbreviating the Elizabeth, don't you see that? However, it's the turn in Turndale I dislike most. Turning round, turning away, turning up, turning out, it's all bad news, reminding one of funerals, Wednesday matinees and Number Two tours, not to say the closing of shows on second nights. It spells something rather worse

than doom---the drab. Elizabeth has been overdone anyway---two queens and Taylor. No, Lizzy Turndale's completely self-defeating. What's your real name?

LIZZY: Jean Stokes.

MARVIN: That makes me like Lizzy Turndale.

LIZZY (gazing at him) It's exactly what he said. You're completely unreal.

MARVIN (unruffled) Who said?

LIZZY: Nigel Burbage of course! My husband! And he's just about to direct you in Mac---!

MARVIN (jumping up in wild panic) STOP! *What* did you say? Oh my God! You said it! You said the word (dragging her up from the settee and pulling her roughly to the staircase door). YOU NAMED THE SCOTTISH PLAY! IN A THEATRE! Get out, go on! (Pushing her out through the staircase door and closing it smartly, then at the top of his voice) KNOCK! KNOCK THREE TIMES!

LIZZY (off) What?

MARVIN: What, what, get off the pot! This is a matter of life and death! Knock on the fucking door three times!

LIZZY knocks rather deafeningly on the door.  
He is vastly relieved.

MARVIN (cont.) You may come in.

She re-enters.

MARVIN (cont.) Now turn round three times. Turn! QUICK!

He whirls her round three times.

MARVIN (cont., hurrying back to his dressing table) I'll have to tell Nigel about this. It'll kill him. In fact we can't go on. (Grabbing the phone) Oh my God. We'll have to do Brighton and all stations to Richmond, oh my

God (dialling), I told him we'd never be able to open cold like this. Nigel? The woman, God knows who picked her up for the kitchen, she came in here and named the fucking Play...Yes, she actually named it! She'll be whistling next, the stupid bitch! I sent her outside but it's a bad omen Nigel and I think we'd better open at Brighton.....(Aghast)  
She's an---an---?

Very quietly he puts the phone down, leans back in his chair and takes a leisurely sip of coffee. Then he gets up and approaches her.

MARVIN (cont., quiet and measured) So you're an actress. (Putting his nose within an inch of hers, as she is about to speak) You came here on the pretext of bringing me my morning coffee and---! hey, wait a minute! Didn't he tell me you were in love with me? (Sitting down by her) Now let's go into this sensibly. What's the *real* reason you're here?

LIZZY: I'm in love with you.

MARVIN: Quite normal, but why did you name The Scottish Play?

LIZZY: Because you don't want to play in it.

MARVIN (rather taken aback) That's perfectly true. Now why don't I want to play in it?

LIZZY: Mostly I think because you don't know how to.

MARVIN: That's because I don't *want* to.

LIZZY: For one thing you're too old-fashioned for the part.

MARVIN: Old fashioned?---I'm the most avant garde man in the business, students travel from all over the world to see my Shakespeare as *a new event!*

LIZZY: But all that's old hat!

MARVIN: Avant garde means ahead of the time darling!

LIZZY: People don't even say 'avant garde'! Mostly they don't even know what

it means! And all you do is turn plays on their head---Julius Caesar a fairy, Othello a dwarf and deathly pale when he's actually black! and the top brass don't like it---your males always have to be in drag and your females in high boots carrying whips, it's all so *obvious!*

MARVIN (gasping for air, hardly audible) But everyone knows---my characterisations are diaphonous, pellucid---words used by the critics---you see, the Old Chap's plays work far better for the surface being flawed, I play *against* the character, don't you see that?

LIZZY (with a touch of compassion) But you go too far---your Romeo behaves as if he hates Juliet and sneers his way through the tender lines and in such a rush you can't understand a word, Hamlet says everything like he's in a pub reciting the sports section, King Lear's just had his twenty-first birthday and has a thing about being old and his daughters are his sisters and they egg him on to think he really *is* old and he screwed his own mother, and by the end no wonder one of the critics said this was the Shakespeare interpretation of all time and he looked forward to Lord and Lady Macbeth as two queens, Hamlet as his own father's ghost and A Midsummer Night's Dream as an ice drama.

MARVIN (weakly) As a matter of fact I did have something like that in mind---that critic you just mentioned was bloody awful, drank himself to death---my idea was Lady Mac as a dike and Mac himself AC DC and they hire somebody else to play Lady Mac and she takes the rap for the murders because they both want the next king to be a woman.

A puzzled silence, shared by him.

LIZZY: But don't you see, everybody's *ignorant* now? You can't stand Shakespeare on his head if they know nothing about him *on his feet!* I mean, people want to know what the words mean and they don't *get* it! And all you do is try and shock! It's like the Royal Court fifty years ago, all you needed to get an audience was put your hand in a pram and bring it out with shit all over it---*but the list of outrages has been exhausted Marvin!*

MARVIN (jumping up with a scream) NOT MARVIN! You will not call me Marvin! I am Mr. James!

LIZZY: Conversation doesn't move with you, does it? That's exactly what Nigel

says---‘it just goes put-put-putting on but the vehicle remains stationary’, that’s what he said.

MARVIN (very quietly) Then why are you in love with me?

LIZZY: The walls could crack, trees could grow through the auditorium, rats could overrun the dressing rooms and every other man and woman could be dead but you'll still be up here recording yourself and looking in that damned mirror and seeing your audience through it.

MARVIN: But my acting, you must be in love with that too!

LIZZY: You see? You can't be other than yourself.

MARVIN (abjectly submitting to his need for an immediate answer) You won't tell me if you're in love a little bit with my acting??

LIZZY: I think it's because you never change, never listen. (Gazing at him with tenderness) If the earth shrivelled up you'd go on being yourself as a little spot of grease.

MARVIN: Tell me how I could be other than myself?

LIZZY: All my life you've captivated me. In the end people don't care if Shakespeare's been shot to hell, it's your movements and your voice that count, you could be saying hickery dickery dock for an hour and forty minutes, nobody would notice the difference.

MARVIN: Do I look old, is that your complaint?

LIZZY (sighing) You even talk old, like it was 1900. (Looking round) Do you know what Nigel calls this dressing room?

MARVIN: Why don't you tell me?

LIZZY: The Vic Upstairs. The successful stuff takes place at the Vic downstairs while Marvin jerks himself off upstairs. Shall I tell you something else? When I walked through the auditorium downstairs just now I noticed that every seat was occupied. There's an audience downstairs such as you wouldn't believe! Not an empty seat! And there was a man on the stage talking to them, and behind him there was a big

screen.

MARVIN: What about it? He's probably lecturing school kids on the Old Chap!

LIZZY: They were all adults. And the screen?

MARVIN: Well, obviously---we run films from time to time. I've made at least three.

LIZZY: One. And it got a week's showing as an art film, meaning none of the Hollywood biggies would touch it. (A silence) Have I hurt you?

MARVIN (quietly) The question isn't that. (Almost to himself) It's how I'm going to hurt *you*.

LIZZY (this passes her by) If you just played *straight*---! Your walk and your voice and your fascinating way of being absolutely nothing---that's what used to draw the crowds! There's nothing *inside* you and you don't need there to be, you can somehow play empty and get away with it! And since you dress like Jack Buchanan you might as well hear what he said about acting---he said an actor sends *thought* into the auditorium, the *words* come second. *And you can't think mate.*

He fixes his eyes on her for a long time, during which she fidgets uncertainly, and then he rises briskly.

MARVIN (cont.) Well, to work!

He goes to a drawer at his dressing table and seizes a bunch of keys, then walks smartly to the staircase door and locks it. There are three locks and he does the job slowly and precisely.

MARVIN (cont., as he walks back to her, holding up the keys) For the insurance people, you know. They insist on three locks. Now, Miss Turnout (sitting close to her), I think we can agree on one thing---that I have to change. Isn't that what you've been suggesting? A rebirth? And then we have to remember that you too have a career. And that needs a brush up, doesn't it?

LIZZY: Well---

MARVIN (screaming with quite horrible force) IS THAT RIGHT?

She jumps and backs off.

MARVIN (cont., in a normal voice) It's why you came here isn't it? Let me tell you something about actors---everything about them is autobiographical, even their tears at somebody's grave are rehearsed! First of all are you *vulgar* enough for the stage?

She is silent.

MARVIN (cont.) Do something vulgar.

She puts two fingers in her mouth meaning to produce a deafening whistle.

MARVIN (cont., gripping her round the throat in horror) STOP, STOP! How is it you know *nothing* about the theatre---eh (tightening his grip), eh, *eh*?

She manages to scream so loud that he loosens his grip at once and stands back, gaping.

MARVIN (cont.) What an extraordinary noise. (Affably) So where were you?

LIZZY: I was saying---

MARVIN: No for God's sake, I mean what drama school?

LIZZY: Oh, RADA.

MARVIN: I *thought* that was a RADA scream! I'll also say this. For somebody married to Nigel Burbage you're remarkably intelligent. Not that intelligence goes with acting awfully well.

LIZZY: It certainly doesn't get in *your* way.

MARVIN: And your repartee's good. Talent for improvisation---in the event of Marvin James ghosting. You see, my dear, I'm going to call this Operation Rebirth. No doubt you think you'll be leaving here for lunch.

Nothing of the sort. You'll be lucky to be out of here in a week. You're going to pay for that line about intelligence not getting in my way, I'll have your guts on display for it.

LIZZY: Listen---

MARVIN: Now don't start that television-response stuff, you'll be saying let me out of here in a minute.

LIZZY (jumping up) Let me out of here I've got claustrophobia!

MARVIN (pushing her roughly back on the sofa) The idea *isn't* to keep you in, Miss Turnoff---it's to keep others out! You see, my dear, I'm going to take you hostage.

He returns to his dressing table and resumes making up.

MARVIN (cont.) And you're going to be my Ophelia. Did you ever read Hamlet by the way?

LIZZY: Of course I did! I know Hamlet by heart! At least all the bits with Ophelia in them!

MARVIN: How very gracious of you! But (studying her) I must say it's a nice part for you because you wave sex in everyone's face. Good. So you shall play it for sex.

LIZZY: I always do. 'Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,

He at once joins in, unable to stop himself.

BOTH: And dupped the chamber door!  
Let in the maid, that out a maid---'  
Never departed more.

By Gos, and by Saint Charity,  
Alack and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't if they come to't,  
By cock they are to blame!

Quoth she 'Before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.

NARVIN (alone) So *would* I 'a' done, by yonder sun,  
An thou *hadst* not come to my bed!

LIZZY: Exactly what I said, Ophelia the sex-pot!

MARVIN: But there's something you overlook madam. That she was mad when she said those words, and in any case *she sang them*. Hamlet had driven her mad, you see, just I'm going to drive you mad! (Walking round and thus displaying his stride, stopping for pauses in his narrative and careful to face the auditorium) They denied Hamlet to me as a young man. They then ridiculed the idea when, in my early forties, I was still eligible for the part. They said I was too big in the middle area. Which was true but it isn't now---these days I'm prime Lear material, *thin in the shank*. You see, I shall give them a livelier Hamlet than they've ever seen! They say a woman can't play Juliet until she's too old for it--- (swinging round to LIZZY) the same is true of Hamlet, Miss Turnout! (Sitting at his make-up table and switching on the mirror lights) My mother, I mean the woman playing Gertrude the queen, will probably be half my age but she shall be seen *as a crone* next to my adolescence.

LIZZY: But you admit I can play Ophelia.

MARVIN: You don't witness me at this moment removing Mac and replacing him with Hamlet? You don't hear me say Mac shamelessly, thus joining you in the clever bad spell you put upon our production almost the moment you walked in? You've given me courage my girl! (Busy with his face) And I can see you're a marvellous fuck. But why, you will ask, make up as Hamlet two months before rehearsals can possibly begin, and when the opening of The Scottish Play is billed for the coming Thursday, namely tomorrow? Let me tell you! Because this is DELIVERANCE! Talking time is over. The *real* screaming will now begin, my dear. And you will provide it!

LIZZY: Nigel says that actors never commit crimes, they're not interested in anybody enough to murder them.

MARVIN: The first part's right but not the second. They don't murder because they murder a thousand times onstage and know what a bore it all is

compared with a nice cup of tea or a bounce in bed. Don't worry, my dear, it's *all* going to be acted.

LIZZY: And the endless speeches. He mentioned those.

MARVIN: This time *he*, Mr. Burbage, is going to listen to every word. (With sudden earnestness) I hope he's still in love with you? A little bit?

His earnestness sweeps her out of her scepticism.

LIZZY: Oh yes! He knows I only run after men who can do without me, that's why he divorced me, to show he can do without me, which he can't.

MARVIN: So he will hear your screams with a measure of concern!

This time he speaks into a radio mike.

MARVIN (cont.) Nigel. I have your ex-wife here. Listen carefully.

MARVIN beckons LIZZY towards him. She comes. He suddenly seizes her and, jumping out of this seat, manages to grip her so that his arm is locked round her neck from behind. He is still gripping the radio mike.

MARVIN (cont.) I intend either to strangle her or plunge a dagger in her neck. I haven't decided which---take this as a joke if you like but I warn you she may be found dead. If I were you I'd remember your own words, Marvin James is as mad as a hatter, you addressed it once to my mother, who agreed.

He tightens the grip and she screams frantically.

MARVIN (cont.) Did you recognise the voice? But we can do better than that!

He lays the mike on the dressing table and releases her, leaving her staggering about clutching her throat. He goes

briskly to the cupboard upstage and pulls it open. She watches with horror as he draws out a dagger.

LIZZY (grabbing the phone) Nigel, Nigel! He's mad! He's---!

MARVIN approaches her menacingly, after a little chase. She tries to bite him but he plunges the knife into her neck and blood gushes forth. She screams blue murder and her dress is covered in no time.

MARVIN calmly takes the phone again, wiping some blood from his hand and throwing the dagger into the wastepaper basket.

MARVIN (at the phone) All I did was draw a little blood, Nigel. I promise not to kill her yet. Hadn't you better notify the police? This is serious, not a rehearsal, Nigel. Not a play. But first let me get your ex-wife seated. I need to kill her later, you see, which requires her to be alive now, so I missed the jugular, just.

He helps the sobbing, quivering LIZZY to the settee.

MARVIN (cont., hissing at her) Stop blubbing, it was only superficial!

LIZZY (inspecting the blood and then tasting it) This is ketchup! You fucking---!

He signals her frantically to silence, then returns to the phone.

MARVIN (at the phone again) As I said, I managed to avoid the jugular, this is where a little knowledge of pathology counts, Nigel. Now these are my demands. First the Final Dress and the previews will not take place. You will inform not only the police but the media about this. You will tell them that your ex-wife who left you for good not an hour ago is being held hostage by an enraged Marvin James in his dressing room at the Vic on the Strand, and for God's sake don't say New Vic as if we're

an imitation of the Old one, you were always such a bloody fool about that kind of thing. By the way, any attempt to batter down Marvin James's door will produce an entirely dead Lizzy Turndown in a split second. How the hell did she get that name by the way? (Turning to LIZZY) Didn't you tell me Stokes?

LIZZY (trying to speak as she wipes the ketchup off) !

MARVIN: Understandably she's distraught, Nigel, you can perhaps hear the gurgles, she must have lost a pint of blood at least. Amazing how much we have of it, isn't it? And its brightness, due I believe to the presence of oxyhemoglobins or did I get my lesson wrong? But to return to business you will announce this morning a Hamlet production with me in the title role, at this theatre, I mean at the Vic Downstairs as I believe you call it.....What?.....Oh for God's sake man youth depends on the legs and mine are in mint condition.

He crashes the phone down. LIZZY has in the meantime staggered to the cupboard and is staring at its contents.

MARVIN (cont.) I must say that last scream was even better than the first.

LIZZY: I wasn't acting that time.

MARVIN: You never do otherwise than act, my dear, we are of the same breed. (Taking her affectionately round the waist) I suppose you're wondering what that little display of knives is about?

LIZZY: Yes I am.

MARVIN: It's my little museum. Several of the daggers date back to 1701. (Pulling one out) Garrick! (Replacing it and pulling out two others) These were used to murder Duncan in Henry Irving's Lyceum production in 1888. (Replacing them) And then of course there are the most up to date ones you can find on the market. I used a 1963 spring dagger on you which quite frankly I didn't expect to work. But, as you see (indicating her blood) it was most efficient. Now why don't you slip behind that screen and put on my dressing gown? (Drawing her to the screen) You'll find a wash basin, hopefully it won't have stained your lovely costume too much, put it in soak of course.

She follows his instructions helplessly, disappearing behind the screen. We hear running water.

MARVIN (cont.) That *is* Clarissa's dress from *May Buds* isn't it?

LIZZY (off) Yes.

MARVIN: I have eyes in my little arse don't I? Did you put it on to flatter me?

LIZZY (off) I thought it might give you pleasure.

MARVIN: Where did you find it?

LIZZY (off) An opera house.

MARVIN: Which one?

LIZZY (off) That's my business. I know someone in Wardrobe there. They'd want fifty pounds a day for it otherwise.

MARVIN: You see how everything fits? (Sitting at his dressing table again and gazing before him with pleasure) You arrive here in a costume from one of my most successful shows! That's destiny working! To buy that costume you'd have to pay thousands!

LIZZY (off) Vivien Leigh used it for Antony and Cleopatra.

MARVIN (disregarding this, since it is about another actor, with a characteristic sideways movement of the head) Do you know I exhausted three leading ladies during the Broadway run of *May Buds*?

LIZZY (off) Nigel told me they couldn't stand you always dropping your lines and never being letter word perfect even by the end of a run. He said you had half your speeches pinned to the back of the furniture.

MARVIN: They could have done the same, the silly cows! Acting isn't learning lines!

LIZZY (off) He said it was only the Americans kept you alive because of all their stuff about the Brits and tradition and all that. He said you're an effigy rather than an actor and that's why The Scottish Play tomorrow was going to play to 15% capacity.

MARVIN (quietly) Fifty-five.

LIZZY (off) Fifteen. That's another thing you do, wishful listening. He said fifteen.

MARVIN (stunned almost to tears) I filled the Henry Miller theatre with Present Laughter for over a year! I held court every afternoon at Sardi's! And do you see these lights? (All but sobbing) What actor in the world has his dressing room equipped with an elaborate light and sound system by means of which he can simulate a performance in perfect privacy? (Throwing himself on the console and, after plunging the stage into darkness, introducing silver strobe effects). It cost thousands, thousands!

LIZZY is suddenly there behind him, naked under his silk dressing gown, her feet bare, a jerky figure under the strobe effect.

LIZZY (putting her hand on his shoulder) Marvin... (He becomes still) I didn't know you could be hurt. He said you couldn't be hurt.

She lowers her head to his shoulders and also seems to be crying.

LIZZY (cont.) Change the lights to something sweet darling!

MARVIN: How about this? Golden autumnal!

The strobe effect is killed and a mellow harvest light steals up.

LIZZY (suddenly looking into his utterly dry eyes) I thought you were crying!

MARVIN: Oh I could never manage *that*. They used to squirt water in my eyes from the wings. Ask any actor who's played with me---they always

used to ask why does old Marvin walk over to prompt side when about to shed tears? None of them ever cottoned on!

LIZZY (walking away) Did you know how you got your nickname?

MARVIN: Nickname---?

LIZZY: `Hamlegs'.

MARVIN (with horror) Hamlegs!

LIZZY: From the famous Marvin quote `My legs are in mint condition'!

It is too much for him---with a roar he jumps up and grabs her by the hair.

MARVIN: You're a critic aren't you? A fucking reporter! I suspected it in that second scream--- (Shaking her) A damned feminist---a radical---you're a friend of Vanessa Redgraves!

LIZZY (flinging him off with unexpected success so that he reels away) No wonder playwrights fly to the Bahamas when you announce an interest in one of their scripts! `Old Marvin', they say, `old Marvin's a nostalgia record, he's already in Madame Tussaud's!' (Sticking her face in his) But Hamlet's more than legs!

MARVIN: Tell me this, you slobbering moist bitch, how is it Nigel keeps me in this theatre, and my photos in the foyer, and my bust in the circle bar?

LIZZY: Because he's in love with you! Because he's a pouf!

MARVIN: !!!

The phone rings.

MARVIN (cont., picking the phone up with a furious gesture and bellowing into it) What is it? (Turning to LIZZY and waving the phone at her) This phone has saved your life! (At the mouthpiece again, very quiet and urbane now) Oh really? (Again to LIZZY, with sarcastic charm) It's your husband. (At the phone again) No, my dear, I repeat this isn't a joke. I'm already ankle-deep in your ex-wife's blood and she happens

to be hanging on to life by the merest thread. Believe me, if you don't get your over-used arse up here in ten minutes flat she will never scream again! Secondly, I'm going to unplug this phone and you will talk to me from now on, and so will the police, by means of the intercom system. You will not, repeat not, negotiate with me through the door because, being an actor, I need my voice.

He puts the phone down, then detaches it.

LIZZY (creeping up to him venomously) You're a fucking intellectual without an intellect, that's what *you* are! Look at the way you played that scene. You might have been a radio announcer. You just stalk and talk! (Putting her face close to his again and shouting as if he were deaf) You remember what Hamlet said? `Suit the action'---action, action, Marvin!---`suit the action to the fucking word, the fucking word to the action!' All you do is moon around trying to mask everybody else. No wonder the Scottish Play receipts are five percent of capacity!

MARVIN (hopelessly) You said fifteen!

LIZZY: Five! You don't think Nigel would dare tell you that do you? He wants your arse! (As MARVIN lunges at her and she pushes him back) Let's go through that scene you always turn into a Purcell Room recital.

He allows himself to be led to centre stage.

LIZZY (cont.) Take it from I did love thee once.

MARVIN: What?

LIZZY: What, what, get off the pot! Say the line for God's sake!

The moment she says this MARVIN is in automatic performance mode.

MARVIN: I did love thee once.

LIZZY: Indeed my lord you made me believe so.

MARVIN: You should not have believed me. For virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.

LIZZY: OK now get hold of me---like this (grabbing his hand and putting it over her mouth, then drawing his head close to her ear).

MARVIN (hissing in her ear, not without personal malice) Get thee to a nunnery.

LIZZY: Good, now turn it round and smile.

He leers at her.

LIZZY (cont.) Smile!

MARVIN: That's a Marvín James smile dammit!

She takes his hand and puts it down the slit in her dressing gown, obliging him to fondle her breasts.

MARVIN: Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?

LIZZY: Not why wouldst thou! It's why comma wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners!

MARVIN: That's interpretation! And *the wrong one!*

LIZZY: Oh shut up and drag me to the floor!

Finally she pulls him down. Then she draws his hand up her leg, under the gown.

We hear police sirens in the distance.

LIZZY (cont.) Next line please!

MARVIN (considerably distracted by the sirens) I am myself indifferent honest but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother---

A hubbub on the staircase.

MARVIN (cont.) It were better my mother had not---

A stern male voice comes over the intercom.

Hostage Negotiator (VO) As you've probably gathered Mr. James the police are here in considerable force. The Home Office has been informed and I'm your Hostage Negotiator.

Shocked out of their wits, MARVIN and LIZZY sit up and stare at each other.

H.N. (cont., VO) Mr. James I want you to spare Miss Turndale any more distress or injuries. Mr. James, you will at once go to the door leading to the staircase and open it.

She gestures to him frantically to obey and he runs to his table, grabs the keys and with marvellous speed has reached the door and starts to fiddle with the locks, hands shaking, until he can push the door-leaves wide open.

H.N. (cont., VO) Thank you Mr. James, so far so good. We are now sending up an officer who happens to be a crack shot. He is armed with a sub-machine gun Mr. James. Within seconds from now you will be covered. He wishes to have a look at you, particularly Miss Turndale, to see if she's been seriously injured. He won't hesitate to shoot you if you even move a whisker against the doctor Mr. James, he'll lay you flat and you'll never rise again.

We hear heavy running steps on the staircase and the tip of a machine gun appears in the hands of a half-crouching POLICE OFFICER with an intercom mike close to his lips. He only advances as far as the threshold, his gun at the ready.

**POLICE OFFICER:** Just puts your hands up! Quick, both of you! Stay on the floor! Now move away from each other---(as they do so). That's enough! (Lowering his gun somewhat) Right, Miss Turndale, I just try to get up if you can. If you can't, shake your head (she shakes her head slowly, with enormous grimaces). Now I'm going to step back to make way for the doctor (quickly drawing back to the staircase area and disappearing, though we still see his gun targeting MARVIN), as you see I've still got my sights on you Mr. James and I'll be covering the doctor with this gun, so I don't want any funny business, got it? Just do what the doctor says, both of you! (Calling down the staircase) Can the doctor come up please?...Oh, there you are! All right, doctor? You get some peculiar call-outs sometimes, eh? But none to beat this one! There you go! Mind your step...Just a quick check-up if you please, doctor, especially the lad. I'll be keeping you well-covered, don't worry about that. All right doctor you can go right in.

**THE DOCTOR** appears with the telltale stethoscope round his neck and a black medical bag. He goes over to them without a word and puts the bag down, clearly none too happy with this assignment. He examines LIZZY first.

**DOCTOR:** Tongue!

She puts her tongue out and he shines a small medical torch onto it, then he examines her head with it but she starts back with pain.

**DOCTOR:** Pain in the head?

She nods vehemently as MARVIN stares at her with terrified disbelief. **THE DOCTOR** now examines her chest, back and front, with his stethoscope.

**DOCTOR (cont.)** Put your arms out sideways (she does so but with painful effort) Now raise your leg, one at a time---no, bend it (She makes an agonising Ay-

yoo scream). Right miss, I've been instructed to tell you that you can leave this building under escort. So if you will please get your clothes on.

LIZZY: I'm not going to leave this room!

DOCTOR: And why is that Miss?

LIZZY: Because he's holding me in here---!

MARVIN gapes at her with renewed disbelief.

LIZZY (cont.) With his terrifying will! He's a *demon*---he's got inside me (clapping her hands on her belly) and I can't get free, what's more I refuse to be free! I'm in his clutches and that's where I want to stay, so help me God!

THE DOCTOR looks round helplessly at the hidden marksman. He apparently gets the answer to leave the matter there.

THE DOCTOR: All right Miss, you've made your choice. Stay where you are.

He gathers up his black bag and makes for the exit at a spanking pace.

H.N. (VO) Well, Miss Turndale, you've made your rather strange decision and all I can say is please, both of you, return as best you can to some sort of domestic peace. You must both be quite hungry. By the way, you must on no account meddle with the door to the staircase, night or door. It must remain open exactly as it is now.

He cuts out.

MARVIN staggers to the sofa and throws himself down.

BURBAGE (bursting in frantically, VO) Lizzy this is Nigel! Are you OK? Talk to me Lizzy!

Suddenly LIZZY screams in the most bloodcurdling fashion.

MARVIN (hissing at her) What the fuck are you doing?

LIZZY (hissing back) Tell him you mean business, go on!

As he fails to act she screams again.

BURBAGE (VO) Oh Marvin, Marvin don't hurt her Marvin! Let her alone for my sake Marvin! I shan't tell the police about that scream if you let her go!

MARVIN: She keeps on doing it for God's sake, I can't stop her!

We hear police sirens in the distance.

MARVIN (cont.) Shit, more police!

LIZZY (vehemently) And the more the better!

MARVIN (gasping) *Better!*

LIZZY: I'm a household name at last! That's all I want---a fame like yours! And I'm there!

MARVIN (quietly) At the cost of life imprisonment. Mine at least.

With a sudden determined athletic dash she retrieves the mike and shouts into it.

LIZZY: Oh Nigel, he's got guns as well! He's got two 45-calibre rifles, a .357 Magnum pistol, a sawn-off shotgun, a 9mm Walther pistol, an AR-7 survival rifle, about three .22 calibre pistols, a .30.06 with telescopic sights!

BURBAGE (VO) Marvin, Marvin, don't do anything unwise, we'll have the Hamlet production---!

She gives MARVIN an intimate you-see? expression.

BURBAGE (cont., VO) This is Burbage again, Marvin, we'll strike The Scottish set now, there'll be no Final Dress tonight! (Yelling frantically) Marvin, Marvin, are you there Marvin?

MARVIN (to LIZZY, pulling the mike away from her, then hissing) What are you talking about, 'guns'?

LIZZY: That was a Bonny and Clyde hash-up I did in rep.

MARVIN (raising the mike to his lips) I'm going to tell them the truth!

LIZZY: It'll be the first time in your life you ever did *that*! Don't you see? You've got what *you* want too! The Hamlet production! And with me as your Ophelia.

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR  
breaks in.

H.N. (VO, his voice low with weariness) And now an arms cache---(mumbling to BURBAGE at his side) is that right Mr. Burbage? (We hear Burbage say yes) Mr. Marvin, we must talk this over very calmly. You are sealing your fate in the most terrible way!

MARVIN (quivering) I'm not doing anything of the kind! She made that arms cache up! Guns terrify me! Even stage ones!

LIZZY (shouting) He has more demands, get him to tell you what they are!

H.N. (VO) Yet more demands Mr. Marvin?

LIZZY (hissing) Tell him you want me as your Ophelia!

MARVIN (an automaton now) I want Miss Turnpike as my Ophelia.

H.N. (VO, also in automaton mode) Very well, Mr. Marvin, your Ophelia she shall be.

MARVIN (suddenly screaming) I've been trying to get rid of this woman ever since she set foot in this place, *she's* the one calling the shots, not me!

H.N. (VO) Indeed! Since you have an arms cache at your disposal I don't wonder you talk about shots!

MARVIN (hissing to her) This'll ruin us both!

LIZZY (hissing back) Only you! I'm the hostage, remember?

H.N. (VO) Very well, Mr James, Mr Burbage is at my side and we understand your wish to (mumbling to BURBAGE) you wish to cancel the Mac--- (interrupted) ah, the Scottish play---you want the public refunded for the bookings on that show and a Hamlet production to be scheduled and announced, and the booking to start as soon as possible, with Miss Lizzy Turnpike as Ophelia. (Another whispered exchange with BURBAGE) I'm so sorry, I believe the name is Turndale, my apologies Miss Turndale.

LIZZY (to herself) I should bloody-well think so.

H.N. (VO) Please return to your domestic life while I await the Home Office decision.

LIZZY (hissing at MARVIN) Now wipe old Mac off your face and put Hamlet on! Lift your chin up for starters! (Into the mike) He says you must alert the principal radio and television stations and press agencies at once. He says a news broadcast must go out at once!

H.N. (VO) If it's publicity you need Mr. James you can trust the media to provide more than is healthy for you, they are already talking and writing about nothing else! Every headline is Marvin James and Lizzy Turnpike!

He cuts out. A silence for mutual thought.

MARVIN (with sudden wonder, despite himself) We're in the news!

LIZZY: You see?

MARVIN: We could put on any show we liked!

LIZZY: And we will!

MARVIN: In prison?

LIZZY: You think I'm going to allow *that* do you? I'll tell them it was all a hoax, and we'll get a fine or suspended sentence or community service! I shall tell them my screams were fake.

MARVIN (sneering) 'The best screams in the profession'!

LIZZY: They are! They chill to the bone! Do you think Nigel Burbage believed you when you were said you were taking me hostage? Of course he didn't! He hasn't believed a word of yours in twenty years! It was my screams that saved the day!

THE HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR  
breaks in again.

H.N. (VO) Just to elaborate on your request for publicity Mr James there have already been a number of special news broadcasts. Two television crews are setting up outside this theatre and will give hourly coverage of what has become known as the Vic siege. We're told CNN are running a special story with clips from your Coward season on Broadway. Mr Burbage tells me that he has announced your new Hamlet but so far the media hasn't taken this up. He's confident however that all this publicity will ensure early booking, the courts permitting of course. Thus all you asked for and more has been conceded---

LIZZY (grabbing the mike) He says he doesn't believe you're real police!

H.N. (VO) Thank you for clearing that up Miss Turnpike. Mr. James, if you don't believe we're real just take a peep out of your window and you'll see at least a dozen there, fully armed. Will you do that? Please do that Mr. James.

Together MARVIN and LIZZY  
race to the rooftop window  
upstage and stare below. Having

confirmed the presence of the police they stare at each other with chastened astonishment and in this mood steal slowly back to the downstage area aghast as H.N.'s voice comes over again.

H.N. (VO)        Have you taken a look Mr Marvin?

MARVIN (taking the mike)    Yes I have!

H.N. (VO)        Are you satisfied that the metropolitan police force is here in some strength?

MARVIN:        Yes I am.

H.N. (VO)        Thank you Mr James.

He cuts out.

MARVIN:        Oh my god!

LIZZY:         That's another of your nicknames.

MARVIN:        What is?

LIZZY:         Oh my god. They say Oh My God's threatening to do a one-man show called 'On the Boards'.

MARVIN:        On the b---! I discussed it *once* dammit, in New York, with Paul Merrick---no one else!

LIZZY:         There isn't much I don't know about you---another one of your nicknames is 'dammit'. You're going to end on the rocks and not on the boards unless you listen to me.

MARVIN:        Oh my god!

LIZZY:         All these years, I'm nineteen now (he registers mouthing disbelief), you've figured in my masturbations! I think I saw every London production you were in, and several of the Brighton flops. (As he is

about to protest) I had to go secretly because mummy would have been furious had she known.

MARVIN (sneering) 'And her mother came too'!

LIZZY: So I want my name next to yours on the boards, and I mean *above the play-title*. I was born for Ophelia!

MARVIN (his mettle up) Ophelia my arse! You can get any actor in the world to put his hand up your skirt without picking on me! Ophelia isn't a hot-pants any more than Hamlet is just a pair of legs! (Striding about dramatically while she watches him first with curiosity, then with awe) Why for God's sake was I given so much charisma? Why the magnetic personality, the eyes that turn heads with a glance, the smile that while it hasn't exactly launched a thousand ships has flooded a thousand hulls with moist thoughts! I never had a leading lady who didn't fall in love with me! I never knew in all my life a single girl who didn't buckle at the knees on touching my hand! (Closing in on her) My mother told me all about your damnéd breed! Yes I too had a mother! And a finer actress never crossed the boards! She warned me early what seething cauldrons of manipulation you pussy-people are, using our natural terror of the mother to install a new reign for yourselves! Why else do you think Hamlet told her 'If thou wilt marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them'? I pleaded with mama, for God's sake inhibit my charisma I said, the girls are going to give me trouble, they'll hang round the stage doors, solicit my agents, sleep with my managers to get me for life! Why insist mama that my eyes should be hypnotic, my lips beyond reproach, my walk, my stance, my gaze, even my way of thinking and choice of words so far beyond ordinary capacities that into whatever drawing room I set foot they turn towards me as one creature and ask each other with importuning nudges 'Who is *that*'?

A dead silence after a speech that seems to stun even him.

LIZZY: You see, you really can act when you want to.

MARVIN: !!

LIZZY: I mean, when that play was running you gobbled all the words like they

were little balls of arse paper. I saw it as a girl of thirteen. Of course I realise you were supposed to be a ham actor in it but even ham actors have natural feelings sometimes. (Gazing at him with some puzzlement) Even when you were throttling me a little while back it felt like a stage throttle. And when you were playing with my tits it felt like I was reading a book about it. So the first didn't scare me and the second didn't turn me on.

MARVIN: Would you have wished me to use a real knife? Or make love to you hardly knowing your name?

LIZZY: But it isn't only Ophelia I'm after, it's a production of Hamlet *on my terms*, got it? No more talking heads. No more striding round the stage in that fucking drag I know you're going to bring out, swishing your dress in all our noses and letting the audience see the good side of your face and never the bad, which is the most of it.

MARVIN (drunk with insults now) You're trying to get into my pants, that's all *you* want but don't be so sure you'll like it once you get there---a lot of ladies have had their little fannies burned, they remained in agony for the rest of their lives, hoping for a repeat and never getting it! Two suicides, untold nervous breakdowns, the close of at least five promising stage careers! Why deliberately invite a situation in which you retire to a low-rent suburb for the next sixty years with photos and memories to live on? Oh I admit you're quite intelligent! You can talk like a character out of George Bernard Shaw but, Miss Turnoff, this won't end in an upper class drawing room in a gale of laughter but the Tower of London for me and Wormwood Scrubs for you! Because you're colluding in the kidnap, I'm going to tell them that right now---

LIZZY (managing to retain the mike by hitting him in the balls with it) And *I'm* going to marry you!

MARVIN (writhing from the blow) *Marry* me? Nobody's ever succeeded in doing that!

LIZZY: Why else do you think we were flung together? Don't you see what a wonderful story we're cooking up between us? World famous actor marries his own hostage! Tries to cut her throat but suddenly sees her as his leading lady and they play together for the rest of their lives like Lunt and Fontann! (Approaching him as he draws away) Darling, I

saw the potential the moment that phoney dagger touched my neck---I thought this is all too ham, no one's going to believe him---I'm going to have to scream, it'll bring half of Scotland Yard round! You needed a woman to push you into a knighthood, Marvin!

MARVIN: I'd rather die than be a duke in *your* fucking arms!

LIZZY: Oh nonsense, you go green with envy every time a fag gets hit on the shoulder with the royal sword! (Imitating his highly individual pronunciation of English) `Why no heteros? What's unknighatable about a normal sexual impulse?'

They sit in frightened silence.

LIZZY (hushed with terror) Is it true what you said to the hostage negotiator just now that you fully accepted that---

MARVIN (with an equal hush) Come on , come on!

LIZZY: That you fully understood what it means to have this place surrounded by policemen?

MARVIN: Of course it's true.

Another long pause for fear.

LIZZY: It's no good is it?

MARVIN: What's no good?

LIZZY: Being actors. And theatres. What's the good if it kills you!

MARVIN: Prison sentence not hanging.

LIZZY: But it was no use being in theatre was it? It's no use this place being a theatre! Theatre didn't get us anywhere!

MARVIN: No, it didn't.

LIZZY (her face puckering) So it's no use, theatre.

MARVIN: No.

She cries silently to herself.

MARVIN (cont.) We're in life now.

She nods through her tears.

MARVIN (cont.) You see, they don't care about theatre and we did and it ended our lives but that's what theatre is you see, it's courage.

LIZZY: I don't have any now.

MARVIN: But when you're waiting to go on, you're waiting for your cue and you think to yourself I can't make it, I can't get my legs to walk out there and then bang on cue you walk out and you're yourself any more, you're planting yourself in the audience, you're just working and the audience thinks that you're playing and you're not, you're giving them the illusion that you're real, it's difficult to explain if you see what I mean which you don't because you've never got beyond provincial rep. You ghost and you corpse, you're no better at playing comedy with a deadly straight face than flying in the moon.

LIZZY: No I'm not.

MARVIN: It's courage that makes you see that. You're getting the courage of theatre and that's what's going to take you downstairs with handcuffs round your wrists and a copper at your back, you won't care, you'll be saying to yourself I'm theatre, I'm strong and if this is where theatre leads, I go happily there.

A strange distant rush of applause  
(as it from below?) comes over.

MARVIN (cont.,) Wasn't that applause?

LIZZY: Our ears are playing us tricks.

MARVIN: Yes. Theatre again. For God's sake why can't we be ordinary? Shall we try to be people? For the last moments? Real people, with real courage.

A silence.

MARVIN (cont.,) You see, we don't know how. We can't even make love. Theatre took us there.

LIZZY (with a touch of spirit) The love wasn't theatre!

MARVIN: More than you think.

LIZZY: So why don't we feel it now?

H.N. (VO, in some panic) This your Hostage Negotiator! I'm afraid there are fuse problems in the house! There may be a blackout and our communications may be severed! Meanwhile keep calm! Oh *damn!*

BLACKOUT.

**TWO**

The scene opens on the same BLACKOUT. We gradually discern dim street lights at the upstage window. Nothing stirs.

There is the sound of slow, weary footsteps on the staircase. We perceive a moving light. This is from a hand-held torch of considerable power and it is in the hands of a stout POLICE WOMAN. She has a radio mike attached to her head, its mouthpiece a few centimetres from her mouth.

It is solely through the agency of her lamp that we see that MARVIN and LIZZY are asleep on the settee. LIZZY is more or less on top of him and he is still in his dressing gown.

Her panties are on the floor with her shoes, and leisurely examination of them by the lamp reveals them to us.

**POLICEWOMAN:** This is Ada speaking...Ada...Is this on film---only they've got to have it first thing in the morning, right?...What's that? keep my voice down? You don't think I could wake these two buggers do you? not after what *they've* been up to, mate! I was on duty outside, so I know! You never saw anything like it! I was embarrassed, I thought I could certainly use my husband tonight, I haven't seen him for twenty years! In fact I nearly walked off duty. I didn't know where to put my face! (Opening the theatrical knives cupboard) As to the arms cache, there's only where he keeps his knives, these are the ones he tried to kill her with, talk about bonkers eh? (Wandering upstage and disappearing from view) I'm in the kitchen area now, she's got a dress

hanging up over the bath, it's wet, also somebody here don't know how to pull the chain, it's her by the look of it, there's toilet paper galore down there, well that's a woman if you ask me, a man just flicks it doesn't he?

She sets the WC going.

POLICEWOMAN (cont.,) What tickles me is when you see 'em on the stage it brings you out in goose pimples, doesn't it, they can do what they like with you, make you laugh and cry all in the same breath! It must take some doing you know, stands to reason doesn't it? Anyway, I've finished up here. (Strolling to the staircase area) Just let me get down the stairs, mate, then you switch the lights back on. That'll stir 'em up a bit! If you ask me (her light is disappearing) they've been pulling the wool over everybody's eyes, including Scotland Yard's!

Her heavy steps on the stairs, and her hand-held light, have gone.

The scene for a time remains blacked out, then the lights come up full and blinding.

Blinking awake LIZZY and MARVIN are surprised to find themselves where they are, and with whom, and at what degree of proximity.

They slump helplessly back into sleep.

H.N. (VO) Mr James. Miss Turndale.

They fail to wake.

H.N. (VO, cont.) Are you there Mr James?

MARVIN stirs.

MARVIN (mumbling) What happened for christsake?

LIZZY (her eyes still closed) I'm probably pregnant. That's what happened.

MARVIN: I'm asking him not you.

H.N. (VO) Mr James, Miss Turnout, the light cables have just been repaired. Could you report back that your lighting system works? Are you hearing me?

MARVIN fumbles for the mike under LIZZY.

LIZZY (eyes still closed) God, not again! Do you want my blood as well?

MARVIN: I'm looking for the fucking mike!

He finds it. LIZZY sighs with pleasure, still mostly asleep.

MARVIN (cont., into the mike) Yes we've got lights.

H.N. (VO) A simple fuse, Mr.James. Due to all the excitement no doubt. The police are still rather worried about your arms cache. They didn't want to burst in and kill you both as a safety measure.

MARVIN: This idiot Turnstile made all that up! Her screams were fake too! (As LIZZY struggles to get hold of the mike, landing them both on the floor amid bedclothes)!

H.N. (VO) Then you're unarmed sir?

MARVIN (clinging to the mike) Well of course I'm unarmed! The only gun I ever used was a stage gun and that scared my balls off.

H.N.(VO) It was only yesterday Miss Turnpike told us you had an arms cache sophisticated enough to make the police green with envy.

MARVIN: She knows no more about guns than I do---that was a quote from a play she was in about Bonny and Clyde.

H.N. (VO) Are you saying then that the idea of taking her hostage never came into

your head?

MARVIN: Oh in a dramatic sort of way it did but not seriously.

H.N. (VO) Then may I ask, putting aside our doubts about your truthfulness, what was Miss Turnpike's motive in all this?

MARVIN (they are fighting for the mike now) Publicity for God's sake! The fact is she wants to play Ophelia to my Hamlet. If you ask me she couldn't play Hamlet's skull!

She lands him a blow in the balls which forbids further speech on his side but he clings to the mike with a determination she would at any other time have admired.

H.N. (VO) And what about her screams?

MARVIN (his voice stretched with pain) They were faked!

H.N. (VO) They were very convincing to us, not to say the police.

MARVIN: That's because they're RADA screams---the best in the profession!

H.N. (VO) But what was her *motive* in screaming?

MARVIN: Publicity! What else?

H.N. (VO) Publicity for *what*?

MARVIN (dodging a blow from her) Herself! She wants to be a household name without having worked for it!

H.N. (VO) Very well. Now if Miss Turndale can corroborate what you've just told us, which means her telling us right now that she hasn't been injured or molested, which we know she has, I think we might be able to expunge a few of the charges against you but no means all, seeing how many policeman have been called off their usual duties.

MARVIN (hissing from under the table at LIZZY) Why the hell don't you *speak*?

LIZZY (hissing back) I've got nothing to say!

H.N. (VO) We hear nothing from Miss Turndale. So I'm afraid all we can do is to offer a solemn prayer---a prayer that God intercedes to bring about as clement a sentence on you as possible. (Whispering a prayer) May God's mercy intercede to bring mercy into the hearts of the High Court judges.

LIZZY (hissing) Say Amen!

MARVIN: Balls!

The intercom cuts off. He crawls out from under the table.

MARVIN (cont.) Trust a rep actress to get me in the courts. We'll be here for months and months---it takes the Home Office two years to file a receipt for fifteen quid that should have gone to the War Office anyway. (Going close to her) If we walk out of this alive, Miss Turnoff, I shall file charges against you.

LIZZY (with a smile) But I have your baby inside. I mean you not only fucked me, you fucked me as if you'd never had a woman. I know young men who would have been hospitalised after less than what you did. It was like one of those plays which, instead of ending, develop ever more facets of plot, making one yearn for the refreshments bar while still rivetted to one's seat.

MARVIN: That's out of a show. I don't remember which.

LIZZY: You weren't in it, I was. At least I think so, my mind's wandering this morning.

MARVIN: It didn't wander all through the night.

LIZZY: Oh, I get hot at the sound of a zip. Where the hell's the loo?

MARVIN: You *are* in a state. Straight on and turn left.

He paces up and down as we hear

the lid of the loo being slammed down, followed by the sound of her peeing.

MARVIN (cont., as she returns) I always find that women can be divided into two categories, those who leave the door of the john open and the lavatory un-flushed, and those well-bred enough both to close the door and pull the chain. I've just realised, by the way, who you remind me of.

LIZZY: Who except your mother?

MARVIN: My mother. She used to leave the john door open. And she never washed her hands afterwards.

LIZZY: Soap's bad for the skin.

MARVIN: That's what *she* always says. And she talks to her lovers like you talk to me. To soften them up in case they ever play opposite her. She played opposite some of the greatest men---

LIZZY: And screwed them all, I know! 'Dame Helen James plays offstage games'. 'Down comes the curtain, up goes her skirt, One thing's certain, he'll get his little squirt.'

MARVIN: You perfectly horrible creature!

LIZZY: 'First the play, then the lay, Helen James will have her way.' 'Helen's on the hunt, with her outsize---

MARVIN (clutching her throat) This is my mother!

LIZZY: 'She plays little tricks with gentlemen's---

H.N. breaks in over the intercom.

H.N. (VO) Are you there Mr James? I've been in conversation with both the Home Office and the police and I'm relieved to say we've won an hour's reprieve. During that time none of us will move from our present quarters. The police have meanwhile withdrawn from the immediate vicinity of the theatre to a mobile canteen. Do you have provisions Mr

James?

MARVIN looks round for the  
mike and LIZZY is already  
holding it out for him.

MARVIN (into the mike) A few tins of baked beans, a ham, some cheese biscuits, milk  
and coffee and tea and there's some booze, also caviar.

H.N. (VO) Well supplied if I may say so Mr James!

H.N. cuts out.

MARVIN: Listen to me. Here's what I propose. If we leave here safe and sound  
I shall give you an income for life and provide for the kid, supposing  
you're pregnant, which since you say you are you almost certainly  
aren't. But there's to be nothing more intimate than that between us, do  
you hear?

LIZZY: Not even your weekly visit to see the child?

MARVIN: No phone-calls saying the money hasn't arrived this month and the little  
chap has been having a bad time with his teeth---

LIZZY (tenderly) It's going to be a boy?

MARVIN: It usually is where the woman's an ox and the man sensitive, it's a  
genetic reaction. Anyway I don't intend to allow the greatest  
dependency syndrome ever devised by female oxen to develop.

LIZZY: You love me don't you?

MARVIN: That's precisely why I'm getting all this straight now, to prepare you for  
the letdown. (Sitting on the sofa) The very fact that I make love to you  
three times in a row at my age is my cue to pull out much more quickly  
than even I would normally do. You see, Miss Turnout, I was my  
mother's domestic slave and you've got mother written all over your  
empty face. From the age of ten I served her breakfast in bed.  
(Stopping suddenly, and staring before him) Do you know, Lizzy---?

LIZZY (rapture) You called me Lizzy! (Running to him) What's wrong Marvin?

He clasps her to him and  
stares before him.

MARVIN: We're finished! They'll arrest us! A trial!

LIZZY (about to cry) I know!

MARVIN: And we did it ourselves!

They sit clasping each other,  
cheek to cheek in their terror. For  
the first time they cease to be  
actors.

LIZZY: What are they going to do with us?

MARVIN (with unusual coolness) Put us in prison. We went too far.

She nods vehemently.

MARVIN (cont.) All right then, let 'em do just that! We'll go out performing! (Still shaking) Ours is a proud profession! Proud and brave! They can arrest us while we're playing! With handcuffs on our wrists we'll go on playing! Yes! (Standing up slowly, as if busy with his memory) You remember what your brother told you about me?

LIZZY: I don't have a brother.

MARVIN: His name's Laertes!

LIZZY (still shivering with fear) Ah! Yes!

MARVIN: He's just off to France and he warns you against Hamlet, he says keep away from him because he's not an ordinary man, he's the future king!

(Acting) 'Hold it a fashion and a boy in blood:  
A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
Forward, not permanent; sweet, not lasting.

LIZZY (acting too, with genuine shivering sorrow) No more but so?



MARVIN (without taking the letters) Ha, ha? Are you honest?

LIZZY (bowing) My lord.

MARVIN: Are you fair?

LIZZY: What means your lordship?

MARVIN: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

LIZZY: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

MARVIN (gazing at her with love) Ay, truly, for the power of beauty---!

They are suddenly interrupted by  
H.N.

H.N. (VO) This is your Hostage Negotiator. I'm going to take a great personal risk!  
I'm coming upstairs to see you!

He cuts off.

LIZZY: Coming up *here*?

They wait, gaping at the staircase  
area. We hear heavy footsteps,  
running.

TOM CROWELL appears.

CROWELL (marvelling at them) You've *done* it! You've *done* it! It's what we've all  
been waiting for! That scene you've just played---I'm Tom Crowell by  
the way, Crowell!

They gape.

CROWELL (cont.) You've come back to the living stage, Marvin! All this has been  
terrible for you both, you must have suffered desperately but I've  
struggled too! Up and down those bloody stairs being two police  
officers, one a man and one a woman, also a crack shot with a sub-

machine gun, also a doctor, and don't forget I had all those bloody Hostage Negotiator speeches to do, in a way they were the worst of the lot, all that bloody improvising, my biggest fear was getting hoarse, then the game would have been up, but you see it was all being watched by my clients downstairs, that was very encouraging for me, in fact those people held me together with their laughs. You see, Nigel Burbage and I decided we had to do something drastic and then again I wanted to see if my take-offs were any good, I mean they're secretly the pride of my life. Don't you see, we had to get you closeted together like a couple of pigeons! And we decided on a course of deception so complete as to be positively cruel! And now you've done it, both of you! You don't even need a script, we've got it all on screen downstairs! I can play it over to you again, everything you two people did and thought for a whole week! It took some doing and now I'm a rag!

He staggers to seat himself while the other two gape harder and harder.

MARVIN: It was all---?

CROWELL: A hoax, yes, but for me it was a hard gruelling uphill climb, especially as I had to imitate Nigel Burbage as well!

MARVIN: No threat of---imprisonment, *any* imprisonment, even two weeks?

CROWELL: Nothing, nothing!

MARVIN: All made up?

CROWELL: For your good, Marvin! To get you performing again!

MARVIN: It was---*all, all*---untrue?

CROWELL: All!

LIZZY(studying him intently) You're Nigel's counsellor, aren't you---the shrink?

CROWELL: Not shrink. Transactional analyst. I also do neuro-linguistic programming.

MARVIN (with utmost poise) Most intriguing. So there was never a question of life sentences hovering over us?

CROWELL: Never.

MARVIN: Your name is close to 'cruel', Mr. Crow-well!

COWELL: I've already confessed to the cruelty but Nigel and I thought it was the only thing that could work. We puzzled for weeks about how to get you in front of a live audience again, instead of living in a wanker's palace staring at yourself in a mirror! As you now know, our plot was intricate but also thorough, worked out to the last detail. When your good Ophelia here told Nigel she was in love with you and begged him to let her come upstairs as your coffee girl he jumped at it! He said I can feel they're a couple, it's only a hunch but it's worth trying, what do you say? He asked me. And I said yes.

MARVIN: A neat if cold experiment.

LIZZY (turning on him) This *is* a wanker's palace! At least it *was*!

MARVIN (jumping up) And now it isn't! You're perfectly right! Do you like champagne Mr Crow-bar?

CROWELL: If you mean me, yes I would---nothing better! In fact we can drink to your future success!

MARVIN goes to the upstage area.

LIZZY (shouting at MARVIN) Why the hell do you have to play about with people's names all the time?

CROWELL: Don't be angry with him, Miss Turn---Turn---?

LIZZY: For the last week I've been Turndown, Turnout, Turnoff and Turnpike---Turnpike was *your* favourite.

CROWELL (heated) But as your Hostage Negotiator I had to accept *his* variations, didn't I? I mean *officially* I knew nothing about you!

LIZZY (quietly) Oh do shut up.

CROWELL: Now that's one thing I can't oblige you with! It's time I talked straight and the first thing I'm going to say is that my workshop downstairs has been providing all the money for this theatre and so it has for at least the last two years.

The pop of a champagne cork flying comes from the upstage area.

CROWELL (cont.) Of course you both played your part and you provided my audience not only with a perfect moment by moment picture of autism but also wonderful entertainment, which went to their hearts! You see, autism is my subject.

MARVIN comes clinking in with a tray of champagne already poured..

COWEL (cont.) If Bettelsheim were here today---Bettelsheim originated the word autism---I think he would give me top marks for the finest motion-picture account of autistic behaviour *ever*.. He described autists as driving a sort of car through life---everything in the car has been made by them and reflects only them, without any suggestion of the world outside! The walls, the pictures, the fittings and the curtains and the carpets are all mirrors of themselves, and wherever they go they drive this vehicle in dreamy disregard of other people's lives! Don't you see that actors are natural, born autists? You afforded my audiences downstairs a daily living example of everything I was teaching them! Which, since they were financing your fool's paradise up here, was rather fortunate for you both wasn't it?!

MARVIN: You mean to say we were on film night and day ---(as CROWELL opens his mouth to speak)---so may I ask Mr. Screwball what they felt about, well, my voice, personality, comportment, and of course Miss Turndale's Ophelia?

CROWELL: They thought you both utterly bewitching!---these two *live* their theatre, they said, they have that lovely trick of making you feel inside them as

*they are inside you!*

MARVIN: And are we on film now?

CROWELL: Oh yes!

MARVIN (at once turning his best to the audience and setting the tray down with a special elaborate grace) It was a long haul, Mr. Crumble, a cruel one, very frightening, but as long as were appreciated!

LIZZY (to CROWELL) I wasn't *quite* convinced by your take-off of my ex-husband Nigel Burbage, more especially as I knew he was in Pennsylvania touring a pre-Broadway show.

MARVIN: I wish you'd told *me* that!

LIZZY: I suppose I lost confidence in my own judgement.

MARVIN: Like me! I should have realised when I was talking to Nigel Burbage that of course it wasn't him I was talking to---I mean this new Burbage, this counterfeit Burbage, had suddenly forgotten what papering a show meant! Yet I never cottoned on. Lizzy and I were both mesmerised!

CROWELL: By your own fears. I learn that every day as a therapist! But (anxiously) my impersonations in general, are they good do you think?

LIZZY (as Marvin sets her glass down by her) Unsurpassable.

CROWELL (glowing) It used to annoy my mother---she said 'you and your bloody take-offs, why don't you be *yourself* for a change? (Wistfully, as MARVIN hands him his champagne) A good question, seeing that I didn't feel I *had* a self. (Raising his glass) And now let us drink to 'And in came Ophelia!'---!

MARVIN: What's that?

CROWELL: The show you're going to play downstairs! To a live and kicking audience!

MARVIN: But where's the script?

CROWELL: It's all on film for you to see! You're going to play on stage what you see on film! I shall play it over to you both until you've learned your parts---the script is what you're going to see on film! You can run the film a hundred times until you're letter word perfect, as I believe you say on the stage! And do you know what we're going to call it?

MARVIN: Your performance downstairs to capacity houses! 'AND IN CAME OPHELIA! So now let us drink to your future success (raising his glass)!

MARVIN: We will do nothing of the kind sir! In the theatre drinking to the success of *anything* is the VERY KISS OF DEATH! Let us simply drink to each other.

CROWELL: Then to your health Miss Turndale, to your health Marvin.

MARVIN (as they touch glasses, with irony ) And to yours for snatching us from a bogus death!

CROWELL (after they have drunk) And you won't forget that I brought you together in a love I hope will never perish! May we drink to that too?

MARVIN: We may indeed!

He touches glasses with LIZZY and they give each other a long doubtful look, then touch glasses with CROWELL.

MARVIN (cont.) And this house will be our sole venue!

CROWELL: But downstairs!

MARVIN: We shall appear nowhere else!

CROWELL: Hear, hear!

LIZZY (with a shrewd managerial look) Except when on tour.

MARVIN: Except when on tour.

CROWELL (after they have drunk, jumping to his feet) I must rush. My workshop has already assembled. And this evening you must both come downstairs and start blocking your moves on a *real stage!*

MARVIN: But who's our director?

CROWELL: You have yourselves on film! That's your book, your director, your assistant stage manager, everything! Just play the film over and over to yourselves again and again!

LIZZY: But we must have Nigel's approval!

CROWELL: He's given it already! He's in raptures! (On his way out) *I sent him the film!* (Stopping) Oh and I should mention that I'm letting this space out as from tomorrow---to ballet companies---as it always was in the past, if you remember---so can you find alternative digs?

MARVIN: *Digs?* I have a three-bedroom apartment in Marylebone!

LIZZY (brightly) Oh! (Socially, as if they'd never met before) Do you really?

MARVIN: My mother bought it for me years ago hoping I'd never set foot in her house again---which to her intense annoyance I never did!

CROWELL: Ah Marvin, you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth---not like me, eh, a working class boy!

MARVIN (as he tries to leave again) I have just one more question. Where did all those policemen come from? We ran to the window and saw hordes of them!

CROWELL: Very simple. I dressed twenty willing members of my audience in police outfits and stood them at the Stage Door. Hiring those costumes cost me a pretty penny too!

They stare after him as he leaves.

LIZZY: He's not such a bad chap really, is he?

MARVIN: Yes but fancy saying *autist* for *artist*! I mean it's *so* affected!

LIZZY: And what was all that about autists driving around in rooms?

MARVIN: Only he can know! Then he brings up a German name---Bettle something---what's a *German* doing in all this? I mean the word 'art' was Latin, *I* always thought! (Imitating CROWELL) 'Cezanne was an autist! Picasso was an autist'!

They fall about laughing.

LIZZY: And we're perfauming autists!

MARVIN: Quick, we're going to lunch! I'm taking you to White's, it's visitors day!

LIZZY: We're going to feel so funny, walking about the streets!

MARVIN: Better hurry then---in case it proves untrue! (As they both rush to get their coats) I mean 'autists'---if you can't pronounce ordinary common words how can you even mimic people, though I must say he's a genius at *that*. (Getting into his hat and overcoat while LIZZY returns in a wild flowery hat and a cloak we haven't so far seen ) Good God! That's my mother's cloak---it's marvellous on you! And you've got her Dolly Varden on!

BOTH: 'And her mother came too'!

MARVIN (cont.) Actually what I was thinking while old Cow-pad talked his head off was we'll do the Old Chap straight! That'll shake 'em!

LIZZY: Not in original costume?

MARVIN: In original costume! It's the only avant garde thing left. We'll show the kids how you make up, what it feels like to put a doublet and hose on---

TOGETHER: We'll teach them how to stand and breathe and project! We'll turn this nation of slouches into men and women!

CROWELL (over the intercom system) But Marvin that's a lovely idea! It's so important to reach out to communities! Wonderful! Wonderful! And my clients down here think so too! Can your hear them clapping?

## Class preferences

- Standard class
- First class

55

They stare at each other as the sound of clapping comes from below.

MARVIN (as he sets his hat at an angle and takes up his stick) Where was that last bit from by the way?

LIZZY: May Buds!

MARVIN: Of course!

TOGETHER (as they walk off and the music from May Buds comes over) I'll get that bloody peerage yet!

Silence. Then we hear slow heavy steps on the staircase.

CROWELL appears, out of breath. He is in overalls now, and has a radio mike at his lips. He stands gazing around.

CROWELL: Am I on film?

A great cry of YES! from the auditorium below.

CROWELL: Here I am, ladies and gentlemen. Well, they've gone! And what an exit eh? for people without two pennies to rub together! You tell me theatre doesn't make people brave? But now we're going to put them on the map aren't we ladies and gentlemen? 'Autists' or no 'autists'!

To the sound of laughter and applause from below he begins hauling the furniture to the staircase area, beginning with the dressing table.

CROWELL (cont.) Know where they're going right this moment? To Nigel Burbage's of course---Lizzy's got the key! He no more has a flat in Marylebone

than I have. But this evening they'll be on a *real* stage, the one you all are seated in at this moment. They'll be blocking their moves for 'And In Came Ophelia'. You don't know what 'blocking their moves' means? It means fighting each other like hell to grab the best positions on stage, the motto being 'steal the show for yourself wherever you can'! Well, ladies and gentlemen, we open to the public two Thursdays from now. Curtain-up at eight o'clock sharp and I hope you'll all come--and even pay for your seats!

Laughter and a burst of applause from below as CROWELL throws LIZZY's May Buds costume over his shoulder and begins to exit.

### **THREE**

THIS SCENE CAN BE AS MUCH AS 30 PAGES