

ACT 1
SCENE 3

AT THAT MOMENT THE DOORBELL'S TUNELESS CHIME GOES OFF AS SYLVIA ANSWERS THE DOOR PULLING HER OVEN GLOVES OFF AS SHE GOES.

Sylvia: I've got it! (*SHE PAUSES AT THE FRONT DOOR FOR A SECOND TO TIDY HERSELF UP, THEN OPENING THE DOOR A BIG SMILE PLASTERED ON FOR HER GUESTS*). Come in, come in, welcome. Let me take your coats. Just go and grab a seat in the living room; there are plenty of nibbles, I'll just put your things in the cloakroom.

Belinda: Ooh snacks (*YELLING*) Sylv is it okay to start on the nibbles?*(PICKS UP A RAMEKIN OF NUTS AND OFFERS THEM TO EDNA WHO DECLINES AND MAUDE WHO ACCEPTS. BELINDA TRIES ONE OF THE BIRD SEEDS AND PULLS A FACE AND HANDS THE RAMEKIN TO MAUDE WHO CARRIES ON EATING THEM).*

Edna: For god's sake what's wrong with you; have you got worms or something Belinda?

Maude: You shouldn't take the Lord's name in vain - it's blasphemous.

Belinda: Nah just big boned, 'ere Sylv's even put tissues with the paper plates, now that's classy (*EATING A CHEESE SANDWICH*).

Edna: Big boned? Only if they're dinosaur bones you're hiding under that shirt.

Maude: They're not tissues they're serviettes or if you will napkins.

Belinda: Just because you don't know how to use that tanning bed there's no need to pick on me.

Edna: At least I can fit on to a tanning bed - they'd have to do you one fat arse cheek at a time.

Belinda: That's true but at least I don't look like someone set fire to my face then beat the flames out with a pitchfork.

Maude: If you two are going to spend the night arguing I might just as well go home now; I don't know why I came anyway.

AT THAT MOMENT SYLVIA RETURNS.

Sylvia: No need to stand on ceremony we don't charge. Would anyone like a drink? We've got Babycham for those driving and Lambrini for those in the party mood. I also managed to get some Blue Nun and Liebfraumilch.

Edna: I'll have some sherry if you've got any.

Belinda: You haven't got any beer have you?

Maude: I've got a bit of a tickly cough and I don't want to mix alcohol with my medication just in case, so I'll just have a cup of tea if that's alright with you; I'm not really much of a drinker. I have to say these nuts are nice.

Belinda: No offence Sylv but those nuts tasted like they'd come out the bottom of the birdcage.

SYLVIA GOES RED IN THE FACE AND IS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING WHEN MAUDE ANSWERS BELINDA.

Maude: Oh don't be silly, they are an acquired taste and you just don't have that kind of a palate.

Edna: Yeah if it was a pint of mild and some salmon paste sandwiches she'd be right as rain wouldn't you?

Sylvia: *(STRAINED LAUGH)* Oh, err I think I can sort most of that out for you; I'm sure Trevor's got some home brew left.

Belinda: Thanks Sylv, that's a good spread you've put out; when I get married I want you to do the catering, *(HOLDING UP A SMALL AND LIMP SANDWICH)* 'course it'll have to be larger portions though.

SYLVIA HEADS TO THE KITCHEN FOR DRINKS.

Edna: When *you* get married? That brings a new terror to heterosexuality.

Belinda: Some men like the fuller figure. It gives them something to hold on to when they're going for it.

Edna: Yeah but if they fall off at that height they could do themselves some real damage.

Maude: I don't wish to hear about your love life. Edna, how are your two children these days. I can't remember the last time I saw them at Sunday school?

Edna: You wouldn't see those two there unless it was to steal the lead of the roof. I tell you they've ruined my body, my home and now they've started to smell. And as if that wasn't bad enough I think they've started stealing from my purse.

Maude: Oh that's just children growing up.

Edna: I wish. I have to stand on a chair to clip 'em round the ear 'ole and their bedroom is a tip. I can't move for crusty Kleenex and their bed sheets are as stiff as a board; I have to roll them up before they'll fit in the washing machine. And as for their pants I daren't pick 'em up without tongs. Honestly they could be used for germ warfare.

Maude: Children are God's gift to the one true union of man and woman.

AT THAT MOMENT DOROTHY COMES BACK IN TO THE LIVING ROOM.

Dorothy: So nothing to do with a knee trembler behind the bike shed then?

Edna: Do you ever have a conversation where you don't try and shoehorn God in to it?

Maude: *(PAUSE)* No, but then again God is always by my side.

Edna: Even when you drop the kids off at the pool? , Bloody 'ell that even makes my eyes water.

Maude: Drop the kids off at the pool? Can't they take themselves; I mean they are what 13-14 now?

Belinda: No, no, dropping the kids off at the pool it's the same as releasing the hounds, laying a cable, dropping poo anchor in porcelain bay, cock-a-doodle-poo, bumbay mix...having a dump Maude.

Maude: That's disgusting!

Edna: We all do it even your god; though I imagine his smells of potpourri.

Belinda: Wotcha Dotty; didn't expect to see you here, I thought you'd be off to bingo?

Dorothy: What and miss an evening of smut and gossip; with a few glasses of plonk thrown in for good measure. I should cocoa. I just been looking at that sex catalogue. Not for those of a nervous disposition eh Maude.

AT THAT MOMENT SYLVIA WALKS IN WITH THE TRAY OF DRINKS AND HANDS THEM ROUND AS JANET ENTERS FROM THE DINING ROOM.

Sylvia: Oh perfect timing, everyone, this is Janet the host for tonight's little gathering. *(EVERYONE SAYS HELLO ETC)* Although if any man asks this is a Tupperware party.

Edna: I thought you were going to go with Amway?

Sylvia: Yeah but in the end I thought it was a bit exotic for round these parts.

Dorothy: Two of 'em comes round to the home trying to flog their cleaning stuff. They're like Ken and Barbie dolls come to life; I bet they ain't even got sex organs just a makers mark and plastic knickers like action man!

Edna: I don't even answer the door to them; anyone who smiles that much and isn't an Osmond has got a secret to hide, probably a serial killer. I mean they got the cleaning stuff to help dispose of the body parts.

Sylvia: Did I just miss something? How did we get from Tupperware to serial killers? *(AT THAT POINT THE DOORBELL GOES AGAIN)* Oh 'scuse me I'll go and just get that.

SYLVIA LEAVES THE GUESTS ON THEIR OWN WITH JANET, ALL IS QUIET AND SLIGHTLY AWKWARD. THE SILENCE IS BROKEN BY MAUDE WHO IS STILL EATING THE GRAINS WITH SINGLE-MINDED DETERMINATION.

Maude: I say these grainy nut things are very moreish. Anyone else want any? *(POINTS TO COVERED BIRDCAGE)* Here Dorothy is that the same budgie I got Sylvia; how long ago was that?

Dorothy: 12 years at least.

Janet: Twelve years, I didn't think they lived that long.

Dorothy: I'll let you in to a secret, they don't, that's Simon mark four but no one's got the heart to tell Sylvia. She thinks she's got an everlasting budgie.

Belinda: What happened to the other three?

Dorothy: *(COUNTING OFF ON FINGERS)* Well the original Simon died of old age, Simon mark two managed to get out of his cage but he couldn't get out of the cat. We think Simon mark three ran off with the hamster and Simon mark four is still with us, just. The cat had him the other week and got a couple of toes; so if we replace him we have to find either a canary missing two toes or get a new one and cut a couple of...

SYLVIA RETURNS WITH ELIZABETH WHO IS STILL IN HER NURSES UNIFORM.

Belinda: Hi ya Liz, I didn't know you were going to be here?

Elizabeth: What and miss a girls night out, wild horses couldn't stop me from being here.

Maude: Hello

Elizabeth: *(SHAKES PROFFERED HAND)* Hello.

Edna: Hello Liz, I'm surprised your old man let you out?

Elizabeth: He's got his model railway enthusiasts club tonight; so I told him to take the kids for once. They'll love all them toy trains.

Sylvia: Let me introduce you; Eddy and Bel you already know, this is Maude my old next door neighbour and this is Janet who'll be showing her wares later.

Dorothy: Am I invisible?

Sylvia: (*SIGH*) and this is my Mum, Dorothy.

Dorothy: Hello my friends call me Dotty; by name and by nature. And for my sins I'm Sylvia's Mother.

Sylvia: Would you like a drink or some nibblies before we start?

Elizabeth: (*POINTING*) Ooh is that Babycham?

Sylvia: I think I'll join you, (*NOTICES DOROTHY DOESN'T HAVE A DRINK*) Mum do you want anything?

Dorothy: Thanks luv I'll have a Mackeson if that's alright?

Sylvia: Well you know where it is, can you get me and Liz a couple of glasses from the kitchen whilst you're out there?

Dorothy: (*TCHT!*) What did your last slave die of; oh nothing I'm still here.

Sylvia: Eddy make some room so Liz can sit down. I'll go and get a spare chair from the dining room.

Belinda: Yeah stop hogging the sofa Eddy (*LAUGHING*).
EDNA GIVES BELINDA A 'YOU'RE KIDDING' LOOK, THEN MOVES AS ELIZABETH TRIES TO SIT DOWN AND SYLVIA RETURNS WITH A CHAIR; AS EVERYONE SETTLES DOWN DOROTHY RETURNS WITH HER BOTTLE OF BEER AND TWO GLASSES FOR THE WOMEN. SHE LOOKS AT EVERYONE ELSE SEATED APART FROM JANET.

Dorothy: Where am I going to sit? I'm 83 with varicose veins and bunions bigger than walnuts, and you expect me to stand for the whole thing?

Sylvia: Oh err there really isn't room to fit another chair in here.

Belinda: That's okay she can have my space (*STARTING TO GET UP*).

Sylvia: No that's okay; Mum there's the beanbag by the bureau.

Dorothy: The beanbag! I doubt I could get in to the damn thing, and I have no wish to flash my gusset at anyone as I try to get out of it again. Oh for god's sake; pass it here will you Maude luv, thanks.

MAUDE: PASSES THE BEANBAG ACROSS AND DOROTHY TRIES TO SIT ON IT LIKE AN UNFOLDING DECKCHAIR; IN THE END SHE HITCHES HER SKIRT UP, FLASHING HER GUSSET TO EVERYONE SAT ON THE SOFA, TUCKS IT BETWEEN HER THIGHS AND THROWS HERSELF IN TO THE BEAN BAG LIKE SOMEONE DOING A PARACHUTE JUMP.

Sylvia: Are you settled now Mum?

Dorothy: Yes thank you dear.

Sylvia: Alright if everyone's comfortable, I will let Janet get these proceedings underway.

THERE IS A POLITE SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE AS DOROTHY STARTS TO SINK LOWER IN THE BEANBAG.

Janet: Thank you all for coming, my name is Janet and I am the founder of the housewife's favourite collection. First of all let me say you don't have to buy anything. And second of all this is a man free zone for the next few hours so no need to get embarrassed. We're all women together and what we talk about in here stays in here.

Edna: I wouldn't worry about embarrassment luv. Once you start pushing out kids you got no dignity left. I've had so many doctors' hands up my fanny I feel like I should be in a Punch and Judy show.

Belinda: *(IN PUNCH VOICE)* that's the way to do it.

Dorothy: You're telling me they were all doctors?

Sylvia: I know when I was in hospital I always got a gown that never quite covered my bottom.

Dorothy: You wore it with the gap at the back? I thought it was a dressing gown and the gap was meant to be at the front. Well that explains a lot.

Janet: Well with this range of underwear you don't have to flash anything unless you want to. You can see some of our stock in the brochure and I have brought along a few samples for you to try out. It's all very high quality underwear no matter what kind of figure someone has; in fact I'm wearing some now.

JANET HANDS OUT THE BROCHURES AND THEN GETS OUT FOUR PACKETS OF UNDIES.

Edna: You'll need a fair old amount of material to cover Belinda's ass, mine as well come to think of it. And I can't be doing with any of that see

through stuff that looks more like a spider's web than a decent pair of apple catcher's.

Dorothy: (*PULLING OUT A BLACK THONG*) Look at this! More like an eye patch or a kids catapult than a pair of knickers, as for that bit off string going up the bottom, that's no protection. When I was at school the nuns made us wear two pairs of knickers at a time. One in case we got a cold down below and the other in case of accidents.

Belinda: I reckon the two pairs was to stop you from having a fiddle or leavin' marks on the furniture.

Janet: Here's a pair I had especially sent over from Paris, France to see if there is any kind of a market for them. They look like a regular bra and knicker set but if you can get your head around this; they are edible...You can get your partner to eat them off of you.

Sylvia: No (*SHOCK*) what do they taste of; I mean what do you have with it. Is it better as an accompaniment or on its own?

Janet: I think they're meant to be eaten in the throes of passion not as a starter.

Edna: Yeah it's not like Sunday dinner, and puddings your sweaty gusset. Most men can barely do one thing at the best of times. Probably end up with concussion and bite marks on my bottom.

Belinda: Wouldn't be the first time would it. Do they come in different flavours? (*GIVES THE KNICKERS A SURREPTITIOUS LICK*).

Janet: At the moment it's only available in cherry liquorice but I have been told if the range sells well they will do more flavours.

Belinda: It's a very subtle flavour I can barely taste it (*SHE HANDS THE KNICKERS TO DOROTHY TO VIEW WHO TAKES A LARGE BITE TRYING TO EAT THEM*).

Dorothy: (*THROUGH A MOUTHFUL OF GUSSET*) they're a bit chewy aren't they?

JANET LOOKS WORRIED AND SEARCHES THROUGH HER BAG AGAIN AND PULLS OUT A SIMILAR UNDERWEAR SET.

Janet: Oh god, I am so sorry that's my bathing costume. I am so sorry, here are the edible ones. I can't apologise enough.

Dorothy: (*LIKE A GOAT STILL WITH THE UNDIES IN HER MOUTH*) That's alright love I'm sorry I tried to eat your knickers; I'm sure the marks from my dentures will come out (*TRYING TO RUB OUT THE TEETH*)

MARKS ON THE GUSSET). I thought these didn't taste of cherry, more like Daz?

Maude: I always said you can't trust the French. They start with Sasha Distell and Charles Aznavour then its eating frogs legs and snails; now edible knickers. It's the garlic; they put it on everything, it makes them go funny in the heat. You just can't trust all that foreign muck.

Elizabeth: Oh I don't know, I talked my husband into going to Benidorm last year and it was lovely. They even do English food, no garlic, even the beans are Heinz. You should tell your husband I'm sure he'd enjoy it.

Maude: I'm afraid I can't, the good lord called him back to his side. It was a heart attack. They always say the good die young.

Sylvia: (*EDNA HOLDS UP A RED PEEPHOLE BRA AND KNICKER SET WITH BLACK FUR TRIM*) what on earth are these? They're more hole than knicker. They aren't going to cover up much.

Janet: These are new in; imitation fur trim, 60% polyester, matching peephole bra and knickers. For the woman who wants to add a little spice to the bedroom. They're designed to give the man ease of access and drive him into a frenzy of sexual desire.

Edna: I don't think I could drive any man in to a frenzy of sexual desire; not without a 12 volt battery and a couple of jump leads anyway.

Sylvia: I always chuck my knickers out when they get holes in them.

Dorothy: That's a waste they're perfectly fine as dish cloths or dusters.

Sylvia: You clean your windows with your knickers, No wonder the neighbours keep giving me funny looks!

Dorothy: I'm not wearing them when I do the actual windows.

Edna: That's an image. You perched on a stool rubbing your bony ass against a window as the neighbours walked by...actually that reminds me of a German film the ex wanted me to watch.

Dorothy: I lived through a war you know and we didn't have the luxury of wasting perfectly good material.

Edna: Which war was that the Crimean?

Dorothy: No the war of the sexes when I burnt my bra.

Belinda: Edna did the same thing in the 60's but she forgot to take it off first.

EVERYONE ONE HAS A SMILE AND LAUGH AT THIS SEMI-FRIENDLY BANTER.

Janet: Our underwear comes in a range of sizes and styles for all occasions, even cleaning windows (*GENTLE LAUGH*).

Maude: (*HOLDING UP PEEPHOLE KNICKERS*) my husband bought me a set of underwear like this. It's what killed him in the end.

EVERYONE ONE MAKES A SHOCKED EXCLAMATION AT THIS POINT.

Sylvia: I thought your Reggie died of electric shock rewiring a plug?

Maude: No, it was my birthday and Reginald had done his usual thing of a card and a box of Quality Street with all the orange creams taken out, he used to love those. All of a sudden he pulls out a little packet that's very daintily wrapped, had a bow on it and everything. He tells me to go and try on my "special birthday present." It looked like a very expensive swimming costume made of silk but with a dirty great big hole in the knicker and boob department. I thought I can't wear them like that so I got a needle and thread and sewed up the hole in the knickers. I'm no prude but that was a bit much even for me. I put the outfit on and laid on the bed trying to look all languid and wanton.

Belinda: What happened?

Edna: What do you think!

Maude: He came in singing happy birthday wearing nothing but a big red bow tied round his doodad and a pair of black socks; he always suffered from bad circulation. Anyway he clambered on top of me and after a minute he started to huff and puff, then his eyes bulged and that's when he had his heart attack and collapsed on me.

Edna: How did you get out I remember your Reginald was a big lad?

Maude: I banged on the wall until the neighbours came to complain and then they called the ambulance. But by then it was too late poor Reginald was gone.

Elizabeth: I don't think it was your underwear that gave him the heart attack. It was probably his diet.

Dorothy: What diet? Fried breakfasts and beer every day can't have been good for him. He was an accident waiting to happen. Still you shouldn't blame yourself our kid.

Sylvia: Don't be rude Mum!

Maude: You don't understand it wasn't the food or drink that killed him it was me! If I hadn't stitched up those knickers my Reginald would still be here today...probably.

THE BULK OF BELINDA IS STARTING TO SHAKE UNCONTROLLABLY.

Dorothy: It must have been a sight for the poor ambulance crew; you trapped under Reggie in your unmentionables.

Sylvia: My good friend Maude is baring her soul and this is the best you can offer you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

EVERYONE IS TRYING NOT TO LAUGH, STIFLING GIGGLES WITH KNUCKLES OR FOOD BUT TO NO AVAIL. THE BANKS OF BELINDA BURST AND CARRIES EVERYONE ELSE WITH HER GOOD HUMOUR.

Belinda: *(LAUGHING)* I'm sorry, I'm sorry I can't help it. You stitched up the hole! It must have been like trying to strain custard!

Edna: *(LAUGHING)* perhaps your knickers should come with a warning; alterations will invalidate the warranty and may cause death.

Dorothy: *(LAUGHING)* At least he went doing what he loved.

Maude: What?

Dorothy: *(GIGGLING)* Sorry I meant he was with you, with the one he loved. Although dying in the saddle is every man's dream isn't it? One moment he's coming and the next he's gone.

Maude: It may be every man's dream to die in the saddle it's not so much fun when you are the saddle. 30 years a good catholic who never so much as flashed an ankle in public; then in one night my beloved dies in my arms and the neighbours, ambulance crew, policemen and fire brigade all get an eyeful of my front bottom.

Belinda: Why the fire brigade?

Maude: They couldn't get him down the stairs. So they had to call the fire brigade to remove the upstairs window and use a winch to get him down; of course by that time the television people had turned up as well.

Belinda: *(BREATHLESS WITH LAUGHTER)* Oh God, stop before I wet myself!

Dorothy: *(LAUGHING)* too late!

Maude: The papers called it a tragic sex game gone wrong. They christened me "The Black widow" because I had sex then killed my mate, even if it was by accident.

Belinda: I know it's a tragedy Maude but you've got to see the funny side.

BY THIS POINT ALL THE WOMEN ARE ROLLING AROUND LAUGHING.

Maude: You know now I come to tell someone else I realise it is quite amusing. Well it is if it isn't you. I say does anyone mind if I borrow your bathroom I've come over all funny?

Belinda: It's alright I'll go with her.

BELINDA AND MAUDE: HEAD OF TO THE BATHROOM.

Sylvia: I think this would be a good time to take 5 minutes to sort ourselves out.

Dorothy: Yeah I need to get a clean pair of bloomers. I'm afraid I've added to my duster collection. Poor old Reginald I bet he wondered what the hell happening, poor sod (*CHUCKLE*). If nobody minds I'll nip down the shed and' have a quick rollie.

DOROTHY MANAGES TO TOSS AND TURN HER WAY OUT OF THE NOW DAMP BEAN BAG AS JANET HELPS HER UP.

Janet: You could always buy yourself some of the underwear I've brought with me?

Dorothy: Ooh you don't miss a trick do you; sign of a good saleswoman that. It's a very kind offer but I'm a widower sexy undies really aren't of much use to me. Although it might be fun when Dr Rajesh comes round to give me a medical; it's the closest I get to sex these days. He looks like a brown Liberace. I could have a good game of hide the sausage with him; I'd even take me dentures out.

Sylvia: For goodness sake Mother.

Dorothy: Alright, alright I'm going so I don't embarrass you anymore daughter of mine. 'Ere Janet can you give us a hand I'm a bit unsteady.

Janet: Of course.

AS JANET AND DOROTHY LEAVE THE LIVING ROOM ELIZABETH IS INSPECTING THE CONTENTS OF THE RAMEKIN.

**ACT 1
SCENE 4**

Elizabeth: (*INSPECTING A LARGE BLACK SEED*) Sylvia where did you get these seeds from?

Sylvia: What? Err Trevor picked them up the other day, I'm not sure where from.

Elizabeth: Well I'm not a hundred percent sure but they look like poppy and cannabis seeds. No wonder your friend Maude was being so...open, she's off her face on drugs.

Sylvia: She can't be it never did Simon any harm.

Elizabeth: What?

Sylvia: It's Simons birdseed, it's never done him any *harm* (*EDNA AND ELIZABETH LOOK ON IN SURPRISE*). I needed nuts for the buffet and didn't have any so I used Trill budgie food.

Edna: Well you've definitely got at least one nut now and by the sound of *it* (*CUPPING EAR*) she's being violently sick in your new bathroom. I have got to say this is turning out to be a great evening's entertainment. First Miss prim and proper turns out to be a right goer and now you've got her off her face on drugs, classic.

Sylvia: What am I going to do, should I call an ambulance?

Elizabeth: Let's not jump the gun, first no more seeds or alcohol just get her drinking lots of fluids and don't let her drive home. Also she might have a bit of an appetite.

Edna: But she drove me and Belinda here how are we going to get home?

Sylvia: I'll see if I can sort something out later.

AT THAT MOMENT BELINDA RETURNS HOLDING UP A VERY PALE LOOKING MAUDE: WHO SLUMPS IN HER CHAIR MOANING.

Maude: I'm sorry Sylvia I feel really ill, I don't want to spoil anyone's evening so I'll just go home if nobody minds. Let me just find my car keys.

Sylvia: No! No need for that you just stay here amongst your friends and I'll get you some water or err (*LOOKING AT ELIZABETH FOR CONFIRMATION*) milk?

Edna: Yeah you'd have to be on drugs to want to go now just as it's becoming fun. Have you got anything else you'd like to confess?

SYLVIA LOOKS DAGGERS AT EDNA WHO GETS A POKE IN THE RIBS FROM ELIZABETH AS SYLVIA HEADS INTO THE KITCHEN.

Maude: I think I'm going to be sick again...

Edna: Then it's a good thing we've got a nurse on standby eh Liz?
SYLVIA RETURNS WITH A GLASS OF MILK AND A GLASS OF WATER.

Sylvia: I thought I'd get you a glass of each and some water biscuits to help settle your tum.

Belinda: Is someone having a bonfire; I can smell burning?

Sylvia: Oh god the crumble!

AT THAT MOMENT THE BACKDOOR OPENS AND JANET COMES IN AS SYLVIA REMOVES A BURNT RHUBARB CRUMBLE FROM THE OVEN.

Janet: Your mum is just finishing her cigarette.

Sylvia: Ooh ta I'm just going to serve pudding. Although I have to say it does look a bit singed round the edges.

Janet: I think it looks nice.

SYLVIA PUTS THE CRUMBLE ON THE COFFEE TABLE NEXT TO SOME CHILDREN'S PAPER PLATES AND SPOONS.

Sylvia: Help yourselves I'll just go and get the custard.

BELINDA IS THE FIRST ONE WITH THE SPOONS AND PLATES AND STARTS TO DISH UP.

Belinda: I have always said you're good at this kind of stuff Sylv I don't even eat this well at home.

AT THAT MOMENT DOROTHY RETURNS.

Dorothy: I've wrung me draws out and had me nicotine fix, I'm ready for round two. I'll tell you Sylvia the only advantage of you making me traipse all the way to the shed for a smoke is if I need a widdle I can go in there and no one knows.

Sylvia: You use *our* coalbunker! The place where Trevor grows his rhubarb which I've just served up to our guests for your toilet business! Please tell me it was only number ones?

Dorothy: Of course what do you think I am?

Sylvia: I'm beginning to wonder.

Dorothy: It's not like I'm squatting over the damned stuff. Anyway you wash it thoroughly don't you? Doesn't really matter; It all adds to the rich, natural, earthy flavour.

Sylvia: Mother!

SYLVIA RUSHES IN PANICKED.

Sylvia: Don't eat that it's poisoned!

A CHORUS OF "WHAT, EH, PARDON" AND "COME AGAIN."

Sylvia: I mean I think I might have put paprika in it by accident and I don't want to make any of you unwell (*LOOKS AT MAUDE:*) more unwell.

Belinda: No worries you might have discovered a new flavour combination. You could be the next Fanny Craddock (*SHE HAS A LARGE MOUTHFUL RIGHT BY HER LIPS*).

Sylvia: Nooo!

Belinda: What's the matter it's only a rhubarb crumble?

Sylvia: No it isn't.

DOROTHY STEPS FORWARD.

Dorothy: What my daughter is trying to say is that I may have inadvertently widdled on the rhubarb in your crumble.

FOR A SECOND THERE IS DEATHLY SILENCE AS JANET, ELIZABETH AND EDNA PUT THE DISHES BACK ON THE TABLE. BELINDA LOOKS CROSS-EYED AT THE RHUBARB CRUMBLE UNDER HER NOSE.

Belinda: It's not the worst thing I've ever put in my mouth (*SHE EATS THE MOUTHFUL OF CRUMBLE WITH WHAT LOOKS LIKE RELISH*). Yeah that's not bad. If nobody else wants it Sylv can I take it home with me?

Sylvia: Err yeah sure I'll put it in a plastic container for you.

Maude: It's a bit bright in here any chance you could turn the lights down a bit Sylvia?

Sylvia: These aren't dimmer switches they're either on or off. I've got some sunglasses somewhere if that's any good?

SYLVIA HAS A ROOT AROUND IN A BUREAU DRAW AND GIVES SYLVIA THE GLASSES.

Edna: Look at her less breakfast at Tiffany's and more dawn of the dead.

END OF SCENE. FADE TO BLACK.

(OPTIONAL SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 5

STAGE IS IN BLACKOUT AND LIGHTS COME UP ON A CENTRE SPOT WITH TWO MEN SURROUNDED BY DARKNESS. CECIL IS THE SOMEWHAT BEFUDDLED OCTOGENARIAN HEAD OF THE GRAND ORDER OF THE STAG. NEXT TO HIM IS CLIVE WHO IS WEARING A SMALL BUT ORNATE PAIR OF ANTLERS; BOTH MEN ARE IN BLUE BLAZERS AND SLACKS.

Cecil: Are you sure this friend of yours is reliable, we don't want any old Tom, Dick or Harry joining our hallowed ranks do we, and he's late already *(CHECKS POCKET WATCH)*.

Clive: When I first mentioned to him that we had a possible opening for him, he told me he'd swim across a lake of vinegar in pants made of paper cuts to join us. Seemed pretty eager to me; I'm sure he will be here Cecil.

Cecil: I hope so I put off going to my painting class, and tonight is nude modelling.

Clive: I didn't know you'd taken up painting again?

Cecil: I haven't, I'm the nude model. Two pounds for two hours sitting around naked is not to be sniffed at. Have you spoken with him about your little opportunity?

Clive: Not yet I thought it would be wiser to wait until I've got him to see the full investment potential first.

Cecil: It's not one of those pyramid schemes again is it?

Clive: No, no, I've checked this one is completely above board and legal. It's called a ziggurat scheme.

BOTH MEN ARE STOOD IN SILENCE, CECIL IS VAGUELY CONFUSED WHICH IS BY HIS VERY NATURE HIS DEFAULT SETTING AND CLIVE IS LOOKING AT HIS WATCH IN IRRITATION.

Clive: Err I'll just go and see what's holding Trevor up I'm sure he'll be here soon...

Cecil: (*ABSENTMINDEDLY*) Hmn? Whatever you think is best Clive.

CLIVE LEAVES AS CECIL IS UMMING AND ARRANGING AS TO WHETHER TO STAY PUT OR WANDER OFF. STOOD ALONE FOR A MOMENT HE CONSPIRATORIALLY LOOKS AROUND TO MAKE SURE NO ONE IS NEARBY THEN PASSES WIND AND SHAKES ONE RAISED LEG. AFTER A MOMENT HE GIVES THE AIR A SURREPTITIOUS SNIFF AND PULLS A DISDAINFUL FACE AS TREVOR RUSHES IN, PANTING AND OUT OF BREATH.

Trevor: Sorry I'm late Grand Master err my driver managed to get himself lost; err he's new to the area.

Cecil: (*WAFTS HIS HAND AROUND TO DISPERSE THE SMELL AS HE SHAKES TREVOR'S*) that's the trouble these days, no one takes pride in their work. I blame the schools myself; in my day we'd start every morning with a cold shower and be chased up hill and down Mrs. Dale by our Welsh rugby captain Mr Beasley. And woe betide anyone who was slow. Six of the best if you couldn't keep up and if you fell behind more than twice you got a good bugging by your house prefect if Mr Beasley wasn't available. Poor old Jenkins was always bringing up the rear. Still, it helped make me the man I am today.

Trevor: Oh err that's good then. (*SNIFFS THE AIR, PULLS A FACE AND THEN CHECKS THE SOLES OF HIS SHOES IN CASE HE'S TRODDEN IN SOMETHING*) um I don't mean to be rude Grand Master but can you smell something...odd?

Cecil: What oh err yes I think they must be fixing the drains yes that's it fixing the drains. Um Clive tells me you're some big wallah in catering. So tell me are you looking forward to joining our happy little band of businessmen?

Trevor: Yes very much so.

Cecil: I know it's not fashionable to have all male bastions of business these days but as far as I am concerned the fairer sex has no place in the modern workplace; unless it's as a secretary of course. I can't start the day without a good cup of tea and a digestive and I'm damned if I know how to make the blessed stuff. I leave that and opening the mail to Mildred my secretary.

Trevor: Yes I know exactly what you mean I like to start the day with a strong cup of tea and some Marmite.

Cecil: Eh did you say sodomite?

Trevor: Err?

Cecil: You're not a brown hatter; shirt lifter...are you into all that man on man action?

Trevor: No, no I'm happily married, to a woman.

Cecil: Oh...well you won't like Thursdays very much then.

CLIVE RETURNS WITH AN IMPOSSIBLY LARGE SET OF MOOSE ANTLERS WHICH HAVE A PAIR OF Y-FRONTS HANGING FROM THEM WHICH CLIVE GRABS BEFORE CECIL PROCEEDS TO PUT THE HEADDRESS ON.

Clive: *(QUICKLY STICKING PANTS IN POCKET)* I bet that was those scallywags from the youth club. I will be having words about their behaviour.

Cecil: Oh we've all done silly things in our youth Clive. I remember having a drunken three way with my wife and her mother when I first got married. Absolutely fabulous when I was younger; real Mrs Robinson stuff. Of course now that she's into her 90's and her hips have gone it's not so much fun. Me and the wife still go round on a Sunday and give her a go. It gives her something to look forward to.

Clive: Err yes well I'm sure it brightens her day up. Glad you finally made it Trevor. Wouldn't be much of an evening without the guest of honour eh?

IN THE BACKGROUND WE CAN HEAR THE BARITONE VOICES OF THE REST OF THE LODGE CHANTING (THE TUNE IS THE FLYING MONKEY'S THEME FROM THE WIZARD OF OZ).

Cecil: Oh sounds like they're playing my tune. Best get this party started what! Before some of the older members start running out of steam; don't want to have to call the ambulance, again.

END OF SCENE. FADE TO BLACKOUT.

**ACT 1
SCENE 6.**

LIGHTS UP BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM.

Belinda: So Janet what about the err you know... clockwork stuff has that got any guarantees as well? *(ALL HEADS IN THE ROOM TURN TO STARE AT BELINDA)*. What? I'm a single girl, I got needs. Anyway I don't think our mam would appreciate her daughter going all cross-eyed and sweaty as she bounced across the kitchen on her washing machine. It's already on its last legs.

Dorothy: It's not that, I'm just wondering what you're planning on doing that'll break one of those Bilbo's. They're just a lump of plastic aren't they?

Sylvia: Dildo Mum dildo! Bilbo's from that children's book about a dwarf that lives in a deep dark forest.

Edna: So does a dildo by all accounts.