

ACT I Scene 3

MADDIE and PAM in shop. Enter boy and girl.

BOY How about this?

GIRL shakes her head. They prowl around the shop. Boy holds up a bowl.

GIRL For the Duchess to be sick in?

BOY Yes.

GIRL Okay.

BOY and GIRL come to counter and silently hand over cash to PAM. They exit.

MADDIE What was all that about?

PAM Heaven knows. They come in nearly every Saturday. I can't bear to ask them what they're doing. It would spoil it.

MADDIE I'm just going to have to ask them next time. *(Puts coffee mug down on wobbly table)* This table is awful. Needs something under one of the legs.

PAM There must be something around here that would do. I'll just go up and sort those clothes while it's quiet.

MADDIE Okay.

Enter RICHARD

RICHARD Hello. I've brought some stuff in for you.

MADDIE That's very kind of you. Thank you. Having a clear out?

RICHARD *Lifts carrier bag onto counter)* To tell you the truth, my wife left me last week and I just want to get rid of everything she's ever bought me.

MADDIE Oh, I'm sorry.

RICHARD You like that shirt?

MADDIE I've begun to do quilting, you see. I'm doing a sort of quilt picture of my garden and that shirt would be just right for the compost bin. Oh dear! Sorry again.

RICHARD Not at all. I've often thought that myself. (*Lifts another bag onto counter*). I can't think why I said that about my wife. I was just going to drop the bag in and go.

MADDIE Perhaps it's something about charity shops and getting rid of stuff you don't want.

RICHARD Have you got stuff you don't want?

MADDIE Me? No, I suppose it was the other way round for me. I came here to get stuff I didn't have.

RICHARD What do you do, fill your pockets with jewellery and candle stick holders and try to sneak them out at the end of the day?

MADDIE No.

RICHARD I'm sorry – you were serious, weren't you? What haven't you got?

MADDIE Well, what all my friends have got actually – a husband and children and grandchildren.

RICHARD You never married?

MADDIE Oh yes, I married alright, but he discovered that it wasn't women he was interested in, so we parted. Quite amicably, but there weren't any children, and I didn't get another chance.

RICHARD So what have you been doing since?

MADDIE Working. I suppose that took the place of a family for me. But I suddenly realised, as you do, that there were fewer years to look forward to than to look back on and I wanted to live a bit, so I took early retirement last year and moved down here from Lincolnshire.

RICHARD And you're enjoying it?

MADDIE Yes, I am. I really am. I'm having such fun. Everything is new – new house, new people, new activities. Do you know - I have to do something brave *every single day!* Do you know how good that makes you feel about yourself?

RICHARD And there was me thinking you were feeling sorry for yourself!

MADDIE Most of the time I don't, at all, but when someone comes along and offers sympathy, well I'm not going to turn it down!

RICHARD And it doesn't sound as if you have much time now for sitting about feeling sorry for yourself.

MADDIE You're right there. You say yes to one little thing and the next thing you know your diary is stuffed full of things to do.

RICHARD And then you find you've triple booked yourself, or at least I do.

MADDIE Yes, sometimes I could do with a bit of a breather.

RICHARD I put fake events in my diary.

MADDIE Fake events?

RICHARD So that I can say "no" if I want to, without hurting people's feelings.

MADDIE What a brilliant idea!

RICHARD The trouble is, I forget sometimes what's real and what isn't. I ended up hanging about on Platform 1 at Yeovil Junction for hours once. It wasn't till I got home that I remembered the person I was supposed to be meeting had been dead for about seven years. *(Both laugh)* Do you like Rowan Atkinson?

MADDIE I'm sorry?

RICHARD They're putting on one of his films at the village hall tonight and I just wondered if you might like to go with me.

MADDIE Oh..er..

RICHARD I'm sorry – I shouldn't have ...

MADDIE No – no – that's alright. I'd love to come. We'll go Dutch though, won't we?

RICHARD Okay. As long as you let me buy you an ice cream at half time.

MADDIE Make it a glass of wine and you're on.

RICHARD Quarter past seven, then, outside the hall.

MADDIE Sure there's nothing in your diary? Not got to meet the Pope or anything?

RICHARD I'll put him off.

MADDIE Fine. See you then.

RICHARD Bye.

Exit RICHARD. Enter PAM. MADDIE suddenly sits down.

MADDIE Pam, did you see that man?

PAM No – who was it?

MADDIE I don't know. I don't even know his name and I seem to be going on a date with him tonight.

Enter JEFF and OWEN, struggling to get a large wardrobe through the door.

PAM Oy! What do you think you're doing? You can't bring that in here!

JEFF *(Continuing to bring wardrobe in)* Lady at No. 45 said to bring it round. No room in the new place, she said.

OWEN Lovely, she is. Blonde. Big knockers. *(makes cupping gesture)*

JEFF Uncle – I've told you – if you're gonna give me a hand, you're gonna have to behave yerself. Can't go about saying things like that to ladies.

OWEN Sorry, Jeff bach. It just slips out, like.

JEFF Anyhow, she says as she's no room for it and she'd like for you to have it.

PAM There's no room here, either. Just take it back where it came from.

JEFF Can't do that. The next people will be in in a minute. They won't want a dirty great wardrobe in the middle of their lounge now, will they?

PAM Well, we don't want a dirty great wardrobe in the middle of our shop. Look at it! How're our customers supposed to get round that?

OWEN You could always hammer out the back wall of it and then they could walk through it, couldn't they?

PAM Now why didn't I think of that?

JEFF Better get off now – left the van in the High Street.

OWEN Yes. Causing a bit of an obstruction it is.

JEFF Thank you very much, ladies.

PAM But..but... *(Exit JEFF and OWEN, leaving entrance of wardrobe facing door)* Well... of all the nerve!

MADDIE I wonder if there's anything inside.

Goes to front of wardrobe to open door.

PAM Hang on, Maddie. Don't! Don't open it. I heard something...

MADDIE What? Inside?

PAM Listen!

Slight creaking/scratching noise from inside wardrobe.

MADDIE Oh gosh!

PAM Do you think it could be a ..a... rat.. or something?

MADDIE Oh don't! If there's one thing I can't stand...

PAM Look...open the shop door wide – that's it – now, come round the back here and bang the back of the wardrobe with something. This'll do...
(picks up a shoe and hands it to MADDIE)...I'll open the wardrobe door and hopefully whatever it is will run outside.

MADDIE bangs back of wardrobe as PAM opens door. Young man in boxer shorts jumps out and makes for door, just as DI and JULIE enter. DI screams. JULIE opens her arms.

JULIE Well hello, gorgeous!

ACT 1 SCENE 4

LESLEY and MADDIE in the shop. Enter VINCE PALMER with box of books.

VINCE Hi Lesley! Some books from Mrs Johnson.

LESLEY Thanks, Vince. Just leave them there, will you? Thanks.

VINCE Bye.

Exit VINCE.

LESLEY That was Vince Palmer, one of the Grim Reapers.

MADDIE The what?

LESLEY The Grim Reapers – that’s what the old people round here call the History Group. It’s a bit of an in joke. They know they must be on their last legs when one of the History Group comes round to talk about the old days.

MADDIE I shall be really nervous now if they knock on my door.

LESLEY Oh, you’re no good to them – you’re from foreign parts, you are. Better have a look through, I suppose. I don’t think we’re going to shift many of these, though. “Vanquishing Woodworm”, A Guide to Tram-Spotting”, “Scouting for Boys 1923” – well, you never know – that might be worth a bit. “Harry Potter” – well, well! That’s a bit modern for Mrs Johnson.

MADDIE I’m on the third Harry Potter book at the moment. A friend of mine lent me the whole lot. Have you read them?

LESLEY Love them!

MADDIE Have you noticed, though, she’s got this thing about sausages? J K Rowling - she’s absolutely sausage obsessed.

LESLEY No – I can’t say I noticed that.

MADDIE Sausages. Every other page. Talking of which – I’ll pop up and fetch that frying pan set.

Exit MADDIE

LESLEY: “Breeding Championship Rabbits 1961”. “Mrs Popplewhite’s Fatal Mistake” – a bit of lighter reading there. “Autumn Rose” – *Autumn Rose!* Oh my God! It can’t be!

Door of shop suddenly slams open. LESLEY drops book face down. DOREEN PATERSON, dressed flamboyantly, rushes in, shuts door hastily and stands with her back to the shop, looking furtively out of door.

LESLEY Nan! What on earth are you doing?

DOREEN Lesley! Quick! Under here! *(She drags LESLEY into an alcove underneath some hanging clothes)* They’re up there. *(Points to sky)* In a helicopter. Watching every move I make. If I go out that door... *(Makes throat cutting motion)*

Enter MADDIE. Looks round for LESLEY and sees her crouching with DOREEN in alcove. DOREEN sees MADDIE, overcomes her fear and darts out to drag MAGGIE into safety of alcove.

MADDIE What's going on? What's the matter?

DOREEN We're all in terrible danger. It's the Russians! Don't go out there!

MADDIE Wouldn't we be safe standing up?

DOREEN No – no – they've got infra red cameras. Safer under here.

LESLEY Don't worry, Nan. I've got an idea. *(Crawls out. DOREEN lets go her hold on MADDIE and grabs for LESLEY but misses. LESLEY rushes over to set of saucepans, picks up a lid and puts it on her head)* Look, special protection. They can't see through this! *(picks up two more lids and takes them back to DOREEN and MADDIE who put them on their heads)* Right – come on, Nan! We'll go out the back way.

DOREEN What about her?

LESLEY You'll stay under here, won't you, Maddie? She'll be fine, Nan

MADDIE Oh. I'll be absolutely fine. If my knees hold out.

LESLEY pulls DOREEN out of alcove and they exit together out of back door. DOREEN pops her head back in for a minute.

DOREEN Remember – they're everywhere! Check under the bed tonight, girl!

Exit DOREEN. MADDIE comes out of alcove and stands with saucepan lid still on her head. Enter DI and JULIE. MADDIE snatches lid off head.

MADDIE Good morning.

DI and JULIE look at MADDIE suspiciously. MADDIE crosses to desk and sits down.

JULIE Morning. *(Aside to DI ..)* Weird or what?

DI Foreigner.

JULIE Where's she from?

DI Martock. 'S what I heard.

JULIE Ah!

DI and JULIE look through clothes on rail. MADDIE notices wobbly table leg. Looks for something to put underneath. Sees "Autumn Rose" face down on floor and uses this. Jiggles table and nods in satisfied way as it is steadier.

MADDIE Can I help you with anything?

JULIE No, just browsing thanks.

DI We're fine.

MADDIE Well, I'll just be upstairs if you need me.

Exit MADDIE. JULIE picks out dress with plunging neckline.

JULIE What d'yer think?

DI Your Jim'd have a heart attack.

JULIE Nearly had one last night when I said what about an early night?

DI Julie!

JULIE Know what he said this morning?

DI What?

JULIE Said he'd seen this woman's gravestone with "Peace at Last" written on it.

DI Mmm?

JULIE Said her husband must have had that put on, and he knew what the chap felt like.

DI Poor old Jim!

JULIE Daft old coot, more like. What would he do without me? That's what I'd like to know.

DI Spend his life up the Club, I 'spect.

JULIE More or less does that now. He came in the other night and I said, pretending not to recognise him, you know - "you'd better not stay long. I'm expecting my husband home." He didn't get it though.

DI Well, I must love you and leave you. I need to pick up some posters from the printers' before they close.

JULIE Down trading estate?

DI That's right. That nice man – Richard Smith – he did all the flyers for the fete for free. Really helpful, he is.

JULIE Isn't that the one whose wife's left 'im?

DI No! Really? I hadn't heard. What was she like? I've never seen her in the office.

JULIE You wouldn't have. She never went near the place. Bit of a cold fish by all accounts.

DI I tell you what though – I saw him at that film in the village hall on Saturday night, and he had a woman with him then.

JULIE P'raps they're back together. Well, I wouldn't say no to him.

DI Julie! What about your poor Jim?

JULIE A girl can dream, can't she?

Exit DI and JULIE

ACT 1 SCENE 5

PAM and MADDIE are sorting the shelves.

PAM And so I said to Lesley, "you didn't get in for your shift yesterday then?" and she said no she didn't. Mrs Grant had to come in to cover for her. Lesley and her Mum had their hands full with her grandmother and she hadn't had a minute to think about anything. Her Nan just escapes, apparently. She's like Houdini. They lock the door and she climbs out of the window. I mean, she's a really nice old lady but completely off the wall when she doesn't take her pills. Course – you know all about that after the other day in the shop. Must have been so funny!

MADDIE Yes, it was.

PAM Mrs G. thinks she should be in a home, but then she probably thinks that about all of us.

MADDIE Yes.

PAM You alright, Maddie? You seem a bit quiet today?

MADDIE Yes, I'm fine. Well, I've got a bit of a headache actually.

PAM Oh, you poor thing! Do you want a tablet?

MADDIE No – I'm okay – really – I took some first thing. It'll go off in a minute.

Enter CUSTOMER

PAM Look Maddie, if you don't feel well, don't worry about staying to the end of your shift. I'll be fine till Mrs G. and Lesley get here at eleven.

MADDIE Do you think Lesley will come in today then?

CUSTOMER approaches desk with item.

PAM Doesn't look as if it's been worn, does it, dear?

CUSTOMER No – look – it's still got the price tag on! I only dropped in to waste time while waiting for the bus but I couldn't resist. *(takes change from PAM)*
Thank you.

PAM Bye. *(Exit CUSTOMER)* Yes, Lesley said she thought things had calmed down at home now. Oh and she was saying something about a book she had to look for in the shop.

MADDIE A book?

PAM Something about roses. I didn't know she was interested in gardening. Oh Maddie – I haven't seen you since Saturday, have I? What was the film like – with that Richard? Tell me all!

Enter RICHARD

MADDIE Oh! Richard!

PAM So you're Richard! How did you enjoy the film?

MADDIE I'll just take this upstairs, Pam.

PAM No – let me take that.

Exit PAM

RICHARD Everything alright, Maddie?

MADDIE Yes, of course. I was just.. we're a bit busy at the moment.

RICHARD Well, I can see you've people queuing up to be served.

MADDIE I mean we *have* been busy, and there's a lot of stuff come in which needs to be sorted.

RICHARD Oh. Right. Would you like me to come back later when it's calmed down a bit?

MADDIE Er..well...

RICHARD Well, some time then... (*turns to leave*)

MADDIE Richard?

RICHARD Yes?

MADDIE Oh, nothing.

RICHARD See you soon, then?

MADDIE Bye.