

**Act One. Scene One - The office of the Topspot Casting Agency. Monday morning**

As the theme music dies, the curtains open on an empty stage.

After fumbling with the lock, Jenny enters. She is wearing an outdoor coat. As she opens the door she spots a small pile of mail lying on the floor. She picks this up and flicks through it. She takes off her coat and hangs it up on the hat stand. She crosses to her desk and puts the mail on it.

She looks at her watch, and sighs. She sits behind her desk, picks up the mail again, and sighs even louder.

**Jenny**                    **Five bills, two final demands and an advert for breast enlargement.**  
(She spins on her seat and drops all the mail into a wastepaper basket which is off to one side of the desk)

She sits for a moment, looking thoughtful, looks down at her boobs, cups them in her hands briefly, looks inside her blouse, shrugs her shoulders and retrieves one envelope from the bin. She puts this into a desk drawer then switches on the computer.

**FX**                        **Computer beep.**

**Computer**                **You have no e-mails, no friends very little personality and terminal body odour.**

**FX**                        **Knock on the door**

Without waiting to be asked in, David Mackay enters. He is carrying a handful of post. He closes the door behind him and sits down on a chair in front of Jenny's desk.

**David**                    (As he crosses) **Hi Jenny, how are you?**

**Jenny**                    **I think I've got a virus.....**

**David**                    **I've got some paracetamol in the office if that'll help.**

**Jenny**                    **No, not that sort of virus. There's something wrong with the computer.**

**David**                    **Oh, what?**

**Jennt**                    **Listen.** (She hits a button on the keyboard)

**Computer**                **I've told you once you sad cow. You have no messages because nobody likes you.....and you look cheap in that blouse.**

**David**                    **Must be that new Touretts Virus I've read about. You'll have to get the engineer out.**

**Jenny**                    **I can't**

**David**                    **Why not?**

**Jenny**                    **Two reasons. First, I still haven't paid him for last time and.....**  
(She gestures towards the other desk)

**David**                    (Looking towards desk) **She's still at it then?**

**Jenny**                    **Totally man mad. Never been the same since Peter dumped her. Now it's anything in trousers as long as it has a pulse, and I think even that's optional.**

David looks around

**David**                    **So where is the wonderful Shirley then?**

**Jenny**                    **No idea....she should have been here first thing to open up. Anyway, never mind that, why have you honoured us with this visit?**

David hands over the post

**David**                    **We must have another new postman. Most of your mail was on my mat.**

**Jenny**                    (Taking post) **One of us really has to change our business name. We can't carry on having the Topspot Theatrical Agency next door to the Hotshot Detective Agency**

**David**                    **Yes well....how is business?**

**Jenny**                    **Don't ask. I blame all these shows like Pop Idol, the X-Factor and Fame Academy. No-one thinks they need agents anymore. Mind you, with the talent on my books they could do a new series called I'm a Nonentity – Get me in Somewhere**

**David**                    **Things can't be as bad as all that.....**

**Jenny**                    **I've tried everything. I've advertised, done mail shots. I even phoned Who Wants to be a Millionaire but they hung up**

**FX**                        **Computer beep.**

**Computer**                **You have mail.....**

Jenny goes to type something on the keyboard

**Computer**                **Only kidding....and do you really think you should wear that colour lipstick at your age?**

**Jenny**                    **Bloody machine....anyway, never mind that, how're things with you?**

**David**                    **Not bad. In fact, I might have something lined up that should prove very lucrative.....**

**FX**                            **Police car speeding past with sirens.**

**Jenny**                        **Tell me more.....**

**David**                        **My lips are sealed. That's why I'm a private detective.** (He emphasises the word "private" and taps his nose)

The door burst open and Shirley enters, looking somewhat dishevelled. She has her back to Jenny and David and is struggling to get out of her coat.

**Shirley**                    **Sorry I'm late. There's been a robbery in town and the police are pulling everyone over to ask if they've seen anything suspicious. The policeman who interviewed me was very nice. I went round the block eight times.**

**Jenny**                        **Why didn't you phone me and tell me you were going to be late? You've got a mobile haven't you?**

**Shirley**                    **I didn't want to tie the line up. I'm expecting an important call.**

**Jenny**                        **Oh?...Who from?**

**Shirley**                    **Any of the forty three lonely hearts ads I replied to last week.**  
(She turns, finally) **Oh hello David. I didn't notice you sitting there.**

Shirley sidles up to David and rubs herself suggestively against him.

**David**                        **Well er...I'd best be off...work to do.** (He half runs from the office)

Shirley, looking disappointed, takes the post off Jenny's desk and goes over to her own desk.

**Jenny**                        **So what's all this about the police stopping people?**

**Shirley**                    **That big jewellers in the High Street was robbed. They got away with some loose gems. Worth a fortune according to Paul....he's that nice policeman I was telling you about.**

**Jenny**                        **What happened exactly?**

**Shirley**                    **Like I said, they were pulling people over to ask if....**

**Jenny**                        (Interrupting) **No....what happened in the robbery?**

**Shirley**                    **Oh, some guy went in just as the shop opened. He had a gun and held up the manager.....there was a driver in a getaway car parked outside.....**

**Jenny**                        **Any description?**



**Shirley**                    **What you mean like penicillin?**

**Beryl**                        (Standing) **No....some opera** (She begins to sing “Just One Cornetto” – very badly. Jenny and Shirley just stare at her in disbelief.)

**Jenny**                        (When Beryl has stopped) **Well it’s certainly different**

**Beryl**                        **So you think it will improve my chances then?**

**Jenny**                        **I wouldn’t go that far**

**Shirley**                      **It’s a shame they’ve stopped making the Inspector Morse series.**

**Beryl**                        **Why, because he was an opera fan and they could have used my singing**

**Shirley**                      **No because it was filmed in Oxford and we wouldn’t be able to hear you from there.**

**Beryl**                        **So you didn’t like it then?**

**Jenny**                        **Well it could do with a little more work**

**Beryl**                        **I’ll try and think of something else then....Leave it with me**

Jenny starts to usher Beryl to the door.

**Jenny**                        **No hurry Beryl. Just take your time**

**Beryl**                        **I might pop in tomorrow then**

**Jenny**                        **We’ll look forward to it won’t we Shirley?**  
(They both look over to where Shirley is pulling faces. Shirley tries to hide the fact.)

Beryl leaves

**Jenny**                        **Well, if I hadn’t heard it, I wouldn’t have believed it.**

**Shirley**                      **I’ll just add the details to her CV**

**Jenny**                        (To Shirley) **Don’t touch the computer. You can do it later.**

**FX**                            **Phone ringing**

Jenny slowly reaches out for the phone but Shirley runs from her desk, almost throws herself forward and grabs the receiver.

**Shirley**                      (Posh sexy voice) **Topspot Theatrical Agency, Shirley speaking, how may I possibly be of assistance? (Pause) Just one moment, I shall see if she’s**

**free. (Pause) I'm afraid she's on the other line, will you hold (Pause)**

Shirley then holds the phone about two inches from her mouth and starts to hum  
"Greensleeves"

Jenny tries to snatch the phone. They struggle for a few seconds but Shirley continues to hum the tune. Finally she pushed Jenny away a couple of feet.

**Shirley** (Into phone, rather breathlessly) **Putting you through now....**(She cups her hand over the mouthpiece) **It's Patchwork Television Productions**

Jenny snatches the phone from Shirley's hand.

**Jenny** **Hello, Jenny Reed speaking, how can I help? (Pause) Of course....I'll just check my database.**

She moves her chair so that she is in front of the computer keyboard. She presses a key.

**Computer** **Your roots need doing.**

**Jenny** (To computer) **Shut-up.....**(Down phone) **No, not you.** (She hits a few keys) **So you're looking for a couple of men, aged around forty, who look as if they could be hardened criminals** (Taps a few more keys) **Yes....fine.... well I'll get something sorted out for you.....when exactly are the auditions..... right....bye**

She puts the phone down

**Jenny** **Houston we have a problem**

Jenny looks very pensive

**Shirley** **What's the matter?**

**Jenny** **Well, the nearest we have to two hard-looking men aged about forty is a five-foot tall transvestite with a limp and a woman with the words Live and Heat tattooed across her knuckles.**

**Shirley** **Live and Heat?**

**Jenny** **The tattooist was dyslexic**

**Shirley** **We'll have to find someone new then.**

**Jenny** **Now why didn't I think of that Sherlock? Could it be because the last time we took on anyone with any real talent Michael Jackson was still black.**

**Shirley** **Cheer up....maybe there's something in the mail....**

Jenny goes across to Shirley's desk and sits on the edge.

**Jenny**                    **Go on then, let's have a look**

Shirley opens the first envelope

**Shirley**                    **It's a letter from the landlord demanding his back rent, Written in his usual charming manner.....(She points to the letter as she shows it to Jenny) I always thought that word was spelled with just the one F didn't you?**

Jenny takes the letter from Shirley, glances at it, tut-tuts and hands it back

**Jenny**                    **Charming....file it with the others.....**

Shirley picks up a bin, puts it on her desk and drops the letter into it. She opens the second envelope.

**Shirley**                    **Letter from the landlord's solicitors; Messrs Throgmorton, Fester and Scroat.....see.....they spelled it with one F**

Jenny takes the letter from Shirley and drops it into the bin. Shirley turns to face Jenny.

**Shirley**                    **Look, how much money do we actually need?**

**Jenny**                    **Well, with the rent, electricity, phone, hire purchase, getting the computer fixed, wages and all the rest.....I reckon we need about eight thousand.**

**Shirley**                    **You can always leave paying me 'til next week**

**Jenny**                    **Okay then, seven thousand, nine hundred and fifty. Open the next one.**

Shirley opens the next envelope

**Shirley**                    **See, things are looking up. You've definitely won a major prize....either twenty thousand pounds, a brand new Range Rover, a Caribbean cruise or a top of the range computer system. And all you have to do is send a fifty pounds administration fee.**

Jenny takes the letter from Shirley, rips it up and drops it into the bin.

**Jenny**                    **There's one born every minute. Next.....**

Shirley opens the fourth letter and takes out a photograph and a sheet of paper.

**Shirley**                    **Ooh, now this is promising. This guy wants to be taken on by us. He's ideal.**

**Jenny**                    **(Looking excited) What, he fits the description Patchwork are looking for....fortyish and looks like a gangster?**

**Shirley** No, of course not. He's twenty-two, tall, dark and rugged and looks like a young Sean Connery.

**Jenny** What's ideal about him then?

**Shirley** He's single and lives five minutes away from me.

**Computer** Just thought I'd remind you that you still have no mail and your bum does look big in that.

**Jenny** Open the last one then.....

Shirley opens the fifth envelope

**Shirley** It's hand delivered....from Carlo the Happy Clown. (Reading) **By the time you read this, I will be dead** (Starts reading to herself)

**Jenny** **Oh no, not again.** (She crosses to her desk, picks up the phone and hits three numbers...she pauses) **Hello, emergency services.....Jenny Reed here from Topspot...can you send an ambulance to 35 Westwood Towers, Grey Street.....yes....Carlo's at it again...thank you.** (Puts phone down)

**Shirley** Can't we find him something? No wonder he's depressed. He's been on our books for seven years and we haven't found him a single job.

**Jenny** Not true. I booked him at a party in a hotel but he got the addresses mixed up and ended up at an undertaker's convention. He hasn't been the same since. (She starts to pace) **So, nothing in the post and no actors on our books who fit the brief.**

**Shirley** When are the auditions being held?

**Jenny** Thursday morning at the studios. How're we going to find two men in three days?

**Shirley** I usually look in the lonely hearts.

**Jenny** Don't be stup.....(She pauses) **Hang about, that's a brilliant idea.**

**Shirley** What?

**Jenny** We'll advertise in the local paper. Let's work out what we want to say.

Shirley takes out a writing pad

**Shirley** How about; two tall good-looking, virile, financially secure....

**Jenny** (Interrupting) **We're looking for actors, not potential husbands. Now, how should we word it?**

**Shirley** Thugs wanted, must be dog rough?

**Jenny** You haven't grasped the finer points of the English language have you?

**Shirley** Well you do it then.

Jenny thinks for a moment

**Jenny** **Actors wanted. Must be suitable for action roles. Ex-boxers would be ideal....Add the address and that's it. I'll ring the paper and tell them we want it in tonight's edition.**

**Shirley** I'll make us a cuppa then....

Shirley exits to the kitchen, through the door on the right of set. Jenny picks up the phone and dials.

**Jenny** **Oh hello....advertising department please....hello it's the Topspot Theatrical Agency here, we'd like to place an advert....yes, we will pay cash....how much do you charge per word.....in the Situations Vacant I suppose.....and how much extra for a boxed advert that'll stand out.....and what time does it need to be there for tonight's issue.....okay, thank you.**

As Jenny puts the phone down, Shirley enters.

**Shirley** **Kettle's on. We need more teabags though. The one we've been recycling is developing a sort of greenish tinge.**

Jenny goes to her computer.

**Computer** **Has anyone ever told you how lovely you are....no, I thought not.**

**Jenny** **Shut up (She starts to type as Shirley watches) Right, now it's going to cost twenty pounds fifty. Get the copy from the printer and take it straight down to their offices on the first floor. You can get some more teabags while you're out.**

Shirley goes back into the kitchen. Jenny finds her purse and gets out thirty pounds in cash. When Shirley comes back in she has a piece of paper with her. She then gets her coat and starts to put it on. Jenny hands over the money.

**Jenny** **And don't forget....I want change.**

**Shirley** (Leaving) **Don't we all dear.....don't we all?**

Jenny opens a desk drawer and gets out a yellow pages.

**Jenny** **Right....let's find an engineer for this damned computer**

She puts the yellow pages onto the desk with a thump.

**Computer**            **You don't have to throw your weight around, just because you've got a lot of it to throw.**

**Jenny**                (Shouting) **If I wanted to be insulted every five minutes I wouldn't have got a divorce.**

After a slight pause, David pops his head around the door

**David**                **What's the matter? I saw Shirley go but then I heard raised voices**

**Jenny**                **It's just this computer winding me up.**

**David**                (Coming in further) **But apart from that, things are okay?**

**Jenny**                **Oh great, couldn't be better. The landlord wants to evict me, his solicitors are after money, Carlo's had another go at topping himself, and we've run out of teabags. The only hope is to find two bank robbers before the end of the week.**

**David**                **Surely that's a bit drastic?**

**Jenny**                **Don't be stupid.....not real bank robbers....it's a couple of actors I need.**

**David**                **What for?**

**Jenny**                **Have you heard of Patchwork productions?**

**David**                **Can't say I have.....**

**Jenny**                **Well, they're looking for a couple of heavies, that's why I've sent Shirley out.....**

**David**                **Where's she gone then.....Weightwatchers? (He laughs at his own joke)**

**Jenny**                **Be serious. I'm in trouble here. My last chance of making some money is if I can place two actors as robbers in a new drama series. If I can pull this off, I can save the agency. Otherwise it's curtains for us. That's why I've just sent Shirley out to put an advert in the paper.**

David sits down.

**David**                **Is that wise? Don't you remember what happened last time you trusted Shirley with an advert?**

**Jenny**                **Look, she made one mistake that's all. She didn't check it through.**

**David**                **Yes, but what did that one mistake lead to? Instead of the headline "Staff**

**Wanted” you had “Stiff Wanted”. You got thirteen calls from undertakers, a visit from the murder squad and a very strange reply from that chap who sent you a picture of himself wearing just a smile.**

**Jenny** It should be alright this time. I typed the advert myself.

**David** Anyway, can you trust her down there with all those men in the office?

**Jenny** It’s not a question of trust. They’ve got a restraining order on her. She’s not allowed within three feet of any male staff there.

**David** Well, if you say so....

**FX** Phone rings

**Jenny** (Into Phone) Topspot Agency, Jenny speaking.....what.....she’s done what.....I’ll be right down. (She puts phone down and stands up)

Jenny rushes over to the coat rack and starts to put her jacket on.

**Jenny** David, can you watch the office for a couple of minutes?

**David** Sure, but what’s wrong.

**Jenny** Apparently Shirley has developed a four-foot long reach. (She leaves rapidly, slamming the door behind her)

**Computer** Warning....warning.....angry woman with PMT....

**David** (Shouting) I’ll look up a computer engineer for you.....

David takes off his jacket and puts it on the back of his chair.

He flicks open the Yellow Pages. He then picks up a pencil but there is no paper to write on. He walks over to Shirley’s desk and opens a drawer. There is nothing of interest there so he opens another drawer and takes out a writing pad.