

Act I

Scene I

Curtains open on to a living room in the late evening. A woman is in her robe on the sofa dozing in front of the TV. Man enters noisily in overcoat with bag.

Linc Sent you to sleep did I? Didn't think it was that bad. What did you think? Got anything to eat - I'm starving. *(He kisses her)*

Mic No of course not you didn't send me to sleep - you were good. I didn't expect you back yet. There's some shepherd's pie in the fridge.

Link Oh good *(He rushes off to the kitchen)* Is there any gravy?

Mic In the fridge by the pie. I thought you were going out to dinner with them afterwards.

Linc *(off)* No fear - what a load of wankers!

Mic There's some apple pie if you want some.

Linc *(off)* Apple pie? This could earn you untold sexual delights.

Mic *(Very flatly)* Oh good.

Linc *(off)* That didn't sound very enthusiastic *(he enters)* Am I losing my appeal? Good apple pie.

Mic I thought you were having shepherd's pie.

Linc I am - that's in the mic. I thought I'd eat this first. Well come on - how was I?

Mic Fine.

Linc Fine? What do you mean fine? Come on now let's have a little more detail here. Was I funny? Erudite? Sexy?

Mic Yes - as usual you were funny, very sexy, I'm not sure what erudite means - is that better? *(he grunts with a mouth full of apple pie)*. Why didn't you go out for a meal with them afterwards? That's the way to make contacts.

Linc Oh I couldn't - there weren't three working brain cells between them and as for that Scottish pratt who hosts it - what stupid questions he asks. How do people like that get a chat show on prime time TV?

Mic I hope you were nice to him. Seventeen million people watch his show and he gave your new play a wonderful plug. I think he's a fan of yours. You must learn to be nice to people who support you. You were nice to him weren't you. *(No answer)* Linc! You were nice to him weren't you?

Linc Ye-es.... most of the time.

Mic Oh Linc - you.....

Linc No I was - honest - he's invited us to the party at the end of the series.

Mic Oh good - when?

Linc I don't know - at the end of the series I suppose.

Mic Where?

Linc Ah yes - I remember that. Somewhere swanky up West - I've forgotten the name.

Mic You're bloody useless! Why do you think I bought you a diary and a pen and put them both in your pocket before you went out?

Linc *(Finishing apple pie and grabbing her)* Don't get on to me Mic. Was I good - really?

Mic You know very well you were. It would have been a poor old show without you. You were the only good thing on it.

Linc That's very true. Mind you not a lot of opposition you must admit - a silly old fart from a soap, a spotty juvenile from a pop group and a sacked politician caught with his hand up the skirt of his minister's wife. You know compared with politicians the rest of us live like monks.

Mic No one could ever accuse you of living like a monk.

Linc What do you mean by that? We've been together now for three years - have I ever strayed off the straight and narrow? Go on now - be honest.

Mic Well thank you very much! Being with me for three years hardly constitutes celibacy Still I suppose it is the first time in your life you've managed with one woman at a time.

Linc Now Michelle - I think this is unfair - very unfair.

Mic Now Stanley - I think this is fair - very fair. You've been married twice and had two or three mistresses on the go all your life.

Linc Don't call me Stanley!

Mic That's what it says on your plays - "by Stanley Lincoln" - and don't change the subject you've always been oversexed.

Linc Don't be unfair - that was just the hot blood of youth.

Mic What three years ago?

Linc Shut up woman - I don't wish to discuss it.

Mic Why?

Linc My shepherd's pie is ready. *(He rushes out)*

Mic I'm going to bed.

Linc *(Off)* No don't! Wait until I've eaten the pie and I'll come with you.

Mic Yes - that's what I'm afraid of. You're so high, you'll keep talking all night and I'm tired.

Linc *(Entering)* Don't be a mean bitch. Of course I'm high. I've been appearing in front of seventeen million people - it gives you a bit of a buzz you know.

Mic I'm tired Linc.

Linc If you leave me in my hour of need I shall ring up an old flame to give me solace.

Mic And I shall be packed and gone before you've tucked your shirt tail in.

Linc You're a hard and unreasonable woman Mic - do you know that?

Mic Yes.

Linc But you're bloody marvellous. *(He kisses her)* You're all the woman I want or will ever need.

Mic What do you want?

Linc Make some coffee - please.

Mic Oh alright *(She exits)* *(Off)* I've got to go to work in the morning you know.

Linc Whose fault's that? Have the day off. Resign.

Mic *(off)* Oh you'd love that wouldn't you? *(She enters holding a coffee jar)* I'd be at your beck and call then - for every little whim - wouldn't I? *(She exits again)*

Linc Quite right. You could cosset me.

Mic *(Off)* Fat chance!

Linc Martin says I shouldn't do any more chat shows for a bit. He says I'm getting over-exposed. What do you think?

Mic *(off)* He's the expert.

Linc I know - but what do you think?

Mic *(Entering with coffee)* I think you'll do what you like anyway.

Linc That makes me sound pig-headed.

Mic You are.

Linc Who me? I'm not! Yes - I am aren't I?

Mic Yes you are - but I wouldn't have you any other way.

Linc Quite right - I'm bloody perfect. I just hope this next play goes well. It's hard times in the theatre at the moment.

Mic It's got to be your best.

Linc Is it? Why do you think that?

Mic You told me so this morning.

Linc Did I? Ah well - in that case - I suppose it will be. How do I do it? Success after success. Mind you I think I earned more last year through chat shows and personal appearances than I did from my writing. I've become a celebrity you know.

Mic I had noticed.

Linc What's it like - living with someone famous?

Mic Well - I still leave it for five minutes before following you into the bathroom in the mornings.

Linc How coarse you are - but I'll say one thing for you - you do keep a man's feet firmly on the ground.

Mic Well you need it now and again my sweet.

Linc I tell you what else I need *(He snuggles up to her)*.

Mic In that case - it's a quarter to one and I need to be up at six - so bed! Now!

Linc Oh no - not yet. Let's talk some more.

Mic Honestly - I'm out on my feet. I'm sorry love but it's been a long day.

Linc Bloody career woman!

Mic That's not fair Linc.

Linc A joke! It's just a joke! You pop off to bed. *(He kisses her)* I'll watch a bit of telly.

Mic You don't mind?

Linc No - of course not - Goodnight. Did you record me?

Mic *(Exiting)* Yes - it's in the recorder.

Linc *(Picking up the remote starts to play the VCR)*

Voice *(With Music)* And welcome to Creative People of our Time *(tremendous applause, cheers and whooping)*.

Linc Oh shut up you bloody moronic maggots!

Voice Tonight on our programme we have George Melville - the lovable Sid from our favourite soap who has often been described as.....

Linc A talentless twat!

Voice A British institution. Mark Munro - the latest teenage idol *(shrieks and screams)* I see he has a few fans in tonight

Linc Some of them in shitty nappies.

Voice Perhaps we can persuade him to sing his Song for Europe

Linc Oh Christ No! I'd sooner die!

Voice And tonight Ladies and Gentlemen we have a scoop for you. With us and promising to reveal all about his resignation from the House - Sir John Cannon.

Linc I could tell he was a Cannon by the size of his balls!

Voice And last, but by no means least, that writer of smash hit plays for stage and screen - wit and raconteur Stanley "Linc" Lincoln. (*Cheers and applause - Linc joins in - the front doorbell rings*)

Linc Bollocks! Who can that be at this time of night? (*He turns of VCR and exits*)
(*off*) Hello - that's very kind of you. (*Indistinguishable female voice is heard*) Do come in - you did my makeup didn't you? (*Linc enters with a girl of about 20, attractive, sexy*) Come in for a minute. I can't think how it came to fall out of my bag. I use it to record when I'm doing research. How did you know it was mine?

Louise I listened to the tape.

Linc (*Takes tape out of machine and looks at it*) Ah yes - that one. I should think you've learned a few new words.

Louise No - not really - I've heard them all before.

Linc It's very good of you to bring it back - especially at 1 o'clock in the morning.

Louise (*Sitting on sofa and crossing legs in a very short dress*) That's alright. I've just finished and I pass here on my way home.

Linc Oh - you live around here?

Louise Not exactly. I said I pass here. This is a bit grand for me.

Linc Yes - I suppose so. I shouldn't think the Beeb pay a lot to makeup girls.
(*Conversation goes quiet*). Do you want a drink or something?

Louise I thought you'd never ask. Whiskey please - a large one.

Linc Are you driving?

Louise (*Kicking off her shoes and tucking her feet under her*) Well that depends doesn't it?

Linc (*Pouring her drink*) Look - I think you've got this all wrong. I'm not here alone. My girlfriend is in the bedroom where I intend to join her in a few minutes.

Louise No - I think you've got it wrong. It depends on how much I drink, whether I drive or whether I ring for a taxi.

Linc Ah - sorry. Here you are. Do you want anything in it?

Louise No thank you. Just as it comes. Aren't you having one?

Linc No.

Louise Why not?

Linc Bit late for the hard stuff I'm afraid - it gives me heartburn.

Louise You're a bit different to your public image aren't you?

Linc In what way?

Louise Well you give the impression you drink like a fish and will bonk anything that moves.

Linc Listen to me young lady.....

Louise Louise.

Linc What?

Louise I'm Louise.

Linc Right then Louise - you don't know anything.....

Louise Louise Halliwell

Linc You say that as if it should mean something to me.

Louise Should it?

Linc I don't know.

Louise Does it?

Linc No - I don't think so - should it?

Louise No - not really.

Linc What does not really mean? Do I know you?

Louise No of course not. I'm only teasing. You're a bit uptight aren't you.

Linc I wasn't. I was just sitting quietly watching myself on TV.

Louise Do you enjoy watching yourself?

Linc That's an odd question.

Louise No it's not - it's quite simple. Do you enjoy watching yourself?

Linc No of course not. Nobody does. I just watch to analyse how well I'm doing. (*He looks at her - she shakes her head slowly*) No you're quite right - I love watching myself. I'm a real fan of me. I never remember what I say so it all comes back to me fresh as if it was the first time. I crease myself.

Louise The crew were saying how funny you were afterwards.

Linc Were they? Well they never let on while you're there.

Louise You were good last week as well.

Linc You saw that too did you? Yes - it went well - but that was on the other side wasn't it? You know - the enemy.

Louise Yes - but I happened to catch it. I saw your new play last night as well.

Linc Did you? Well I am impressed - it's only been on just over a week. Did you have trouble getting tickets?

Louise No - I only wanted one and I rang weeks ago - as soon as they announced where it would be on.

Linc Well I am most gratified that there are people who are so keen on my work. It makes

a person feel humble.

Louise Oh no it doesn't.

Linc What?

Louise It doesn't.

Linc No you're quite right - it doesn't - it makes me swell up and crow like a rooster.

Louise That's better. Being humble really doesn't suit you, but this might feed your ego. Do you know I've seen everything you've ever written on stage or TV.

Linc Everything?

Louise Yes.

Linc I doubt that's possible. How old are you?

Louise 20 and seven months.

Linc How precise. Well Louise - for your information - my first play "Men Like Me" hasn't been performed professionally in London for 15 years.

Louise Yes that's right - it was at the Shaftsbury - I saw it.

Linc Now my pretty little liar - you would have only been 5 - and seven months.

Louise I'm not a liar. My mother took me.

Linc Your mother?

Louise Yes. She'd seen it on the first night and she wanted to see it again.

Linc And she took her 5 and a half year old daughter to see "Men Like Me". Hardly juvenile theatre - I'm surprised they let you in.

Louise Theatre box offices just sell tickets - they don't care who sits in the seats. What about another drink - or are you off to bed?

Linc No. Same again?

Louise You're happy to stay up and talk about yourself eh?

Linc Oh yes - it's a subject I never tire of. If your mother was there on the opening night she must have been either a critic - or in the business - or someone I owed - or perhaps even liked. *(He pours a drink)* I think I'll have one too. I shall regret it later but who cares? Who is your mother then?

Louise Was. She died ten years ago.

Linc Oh did she - I'm sorry.

Louise Why?

Linc Er - I don't know.

Louise Why say it then?

Linc For Christ's sake - that's what people say - it's just good manners.

Louise You've never been noted for your good manners.

Linc Bollocks! I'm as polite as the next man.

Louise Yes - provided the next man is an ill-mannered oaf.

Linc Now look here young lady - you come here.....

Louise Louise.

Linc Now look here Lou-bloody-ise. I don't have to listen to you slanging me off - and without an invitation as well.

Louise You'll wake up Madam.

Linc Eh?

Louise Her upstairs.

Linc Oh Christ - yes. Look finish up your drink - it's time I turned in.

Louise What you mean is - it's time I went. Just because I said you were ill-mannered?

Linc Don't be stupid - it's not that.

Louise Yes it is - you were quite happy when we were talking about how good you were. I just wanted to talk to you without a load of old bullshit. When you're honest you're at your best.

Linc Yes alright - you're right, but you'll learn no-one takes any notice when one is reasonable. You have to be bloody outrageous for the world to take any notice.

Louise They noticed you when you did a mooney to the press in Fleet Street.

Linc Yes I've bared all for my art - even my arse - and on a freezing January day as well. Serves them right - they shouldn't have said evil things about my TV series.

Louise It ran for five years after that.

Linc Yes - mind you I'm sure it wasn't the beauty of my posterior that did that. Even though, say it as I shouldn't - it photographed very well.

Louise I rest my case. Obviously good manners are not your strong suit.

Linc That's very true, but you musn't mix up a person's private and public face.

Louise Or arse.

Linc Yes - or arse - they may be very different, even though the difference between my arse and my face is very slight. *(They both fall about laughing)*

Mic *(Off)* Linc! Linc! What the hell are you doing? Whose down there?

Linc Oh Christ! Come on now - off you go.

Louise Frightened are you?

Linc Here's your coat. Just go.

Louise I haven't finished my drink yet.

Linc Bigger your drink. Piss off!

Louise Charming! And to a fan as well - what are you afraid of?

Linc I'm not afraid of anything. Why should I be? It's just that I'm.....(*Mic enters*)

Mic Linc what on earth are you..... Who are you?

Louise (*Still relaxing with her drink - feet tucked under her*) Louise - Louise Hardiman. You must be Michelle.

Linc Louise made me up tonight.

Mic Did she indeed?

Linc At the studio.

Mic I see.

Linc With make-up - you know.

Mic Yes - I know make-up. What is she doing here?

Linc She came to ...er.... (*desperately trying to remember*)

Mic Yes.

Linc She came to...er... What the hell did you come for - I've forgotten?

Louise Surely not.

Linc (*Seeing his recorder*) It was my recorder! I left it at the studio - she brought it back Here it is!

Mic Oh Linc.

Linc Honest! It's true. She dropped it in. She lives near here.

Mic So you live in this area do you?

Louise No.

Linc You said you did.

Louise No I didn't.

Mic What the hell's going on Linc?

Linc Oh for Chrissake - don't be so stupid. If I were up to something I could organise it a bloody sight better than this!

Louise Well from what I've heard you've certainly had the practice.

Linc Do what?

Mic You heard her. Can I have a few answers please. Now young lady....

Louise Louise. Louise Halliwell.

Mic Yes - Miss Halliwell - what are you doing here?

Louise Well Linc has told you - don't you believe him?

Linc Yes - I bloody well told you! Now you bugger off and let us get some sleep.

Mic Oh no - not yet. Look - I came down here and I found a little tart sitting on my sofa, drinking scotch in her bare feet. You say she called in to deliver something - but you've forgotten what. She delivered it because she lives in the area - which she doesn't. And all this at 1.30 in the morning. I think I deserve a better explanation than the one you've given me.

Louise I'll have another drink while you explain to her that I'm not a tart.

Linc You'll what? I don't believe you! I should throw you out on your ear. And as far as I am concerned you are a nasty little tart.

Louise Does that mean I'm welcome to a drink or not?

Linc Why not? Help yourself! What do I care?

Louise *(Getting herself a drink)* Anybody else want one?

Linc Yes - I'll have another one - a large one - who bloody cares? *(He falls back into his seat)*.

Louise Alright - but be warned. You'll be the one who gets the indigestion.

Mic I'm still waiting for an explanation.

Linc I've told you what happened. If you don't believe me that's your problem. Every word I've said is the truth.

Mic *(To Louise)* Is it?

Louise *(Sitting down with her drink)* Everyone says Linc is honest to the point of rudeness.

Mic Generally he is, but as far as women are concerned that has not always been so.

Louise That's true.