

They make these noises

The play takes place in a large, unspecified city, in an unspecified country. There is a cast of two; young male and young female. Both are from ordinary working class backgrounds. They have only just met and are not yet a couple. But they like each other and under normal circumstances might well become a couple. This is the first night they spend together.

Cast

IAIN 21 year old male, ordinary style, clothes and appearance. A working class city boy who has come to this much larger city to work. He is from a much smaller city, way up north. At present he is out of work. He has no qualifications and works at anything he can. He is just managing to hang onto his current lodgings – one tiny room – while he is between jobs.

PAULA 19 year old girl; ordinary style, clothes and appearance. She is also from a working class background, but from a small town way south. Here in the big city she is working as a nurse, in relative security, regular meals and accommodation provided in the nurses' apartments on the grounds of the hospital where she works.

SCENE 3 is the longest Scene, and the only one that makes use of the full stage area.

SCENES 1 and 4 can be played using the down stage area only.

The scene change between SCENE TWO and SCENE THREE can be carried out from SCENE 1 to SCENE 2

Props As directed

Time This play is set in “real time”. It is a “period piece” but I see it as a major error to set the play in the 1960s, or the 1970s, or even the 1980s. The company should pay attention to props and voice and let the “time” announce itself. The only “time” that matters is what exists between the young couple.

SCENE ONE

TIME 11.30 PM.

PLACE A QUIET CITY ROAD. THE ENTRANCE TO THE NURSES' QUARTERS ON THE GROUNDS OF A GENERAL HOSPITAL. INSIDE THERE IS THE GATEHOUSE, THE SECURITY LODGE. A SECURITY GUARD SITS INSIDE

LIGHTS MOONLIGHT, STREETLIGHTS, AS APPROPRIATE

A YOUNG COUPLE APPROACH, STAND OUTSIDE. THEY DON'T HAVE THEIR ARMS ROUND EACH OTHER. THEY HAVEN'T BEEN TOGETHER FOR LONG.

IAIN GLANCES UPWARDS] I think I felt rain there

PAULA Oh no

IAIN Yeh

PAULA It is cold [SHIVERS, PULLS HER COAT MORE TIGHTLY ABOUT HER SHOULDERS]

IAIN Yeh

PAULA SIGHS] I better go in

IAIN Oh . . . Yeh, I suppose

PAULA I better

IAIN SHRUGS

PAULA GLANCES AT HIM

IAIN I thought you were like allowed out till midnight before they shut the gate?

PAULA Oh well I am . . . Just if the rain starts . . . [GAZES UPWARDS] I don't want to get soaked.

IAIN Maybe it won't

PAULA I thought you said it would

IAIN Yeh but only maybe [PUTS HIS HAND PALM UPWARDS] I don't feel anything. Maybe it's gone off

PAULA AMUSED] Maybe this and maybe that

IAIN Well!

PAULA SHIVERS AGAIN; PULLS HER COAT MORE TIGHTLY ABOUT HER SHOULDERS

IAIN You really are cold!

PAULA I am, I was cold earlier too

IAIN Were you?

PAULA Yeh

IAIN SNIFFS. A HESITANT MOVE, PUTS ARM ROUND HER

PAULA SHIVERS, INCLINES HER HEAD AGAINST HIS SHOULDER

IAIN I didn't know you were cold earlier

PAULA I didn't either, not at the actual time [STILL WITH HER HEAD AGAINST HIS SHOULDER, AND RELAXED

IAIN Yeh. [SLOWLY] You don't mind me putting my arm round you?

PAULA BARELY AUDIBLE] Mm

IAIN You don't mind me eh . . .

PAULA No

THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER, STAND FOR LIKE THIS, ENJOYING BEING TOGETHER. PAULA BEGINS HUMMING A TUNE TO HERSELF

IAIN WHISPERS] Hey, I can see the security guard sitting in the office. [POINTING TO SECURITY LODGE] Look

PAULA ONLY HALF LOOKS] I know

IAIN You can see him through the window

PAULA It's Danny, yeh, he's nightshift

IAIN PAUSE] A big cup of hot tea, look . . .

PAULA You don't even know it's tea, it might be hot chocolate

IAINY Hot chocolate . . .? [BAFFLED]

PAULA It might be

IAIN Huh!

PAULA SHIVERS

IAIN You still cold?

PAULA A little

IAIN Oh man, I bet you it's roasting warm in there and he's got like toast and cheese, maybe a radio, yeh, he'll have a radio going, and the newspaper to read.

PAULA It's books if it's Danny

IAIN Books?

PAULA Danny, yeh, he's always reading them

IAIN Whohh . . . Reading books! Man! What a job! How come people get jobs like that! Jeesh!

PAULA Oh Danny's okay.

IAIN SIGHS

PAULA Some of the other security people aren't. Like they just aren't friendly. They act like they own the place. They do, honest. Danny doesn't, he's nice, he's quiet

IAIN NODS POLITELY

PAULA But he can be so funny, you should hear him!

IAIN Mm

PAULA He's just got a great sense of humour. Really, he has, he just makes you laugh. Oh you would like him

IAIN What is he an old guy?

PAULA PAUSE] Who?

IAIN POINTING TO LODGE] The guy in the uniform, Danny, or whatever you call him

PAULA Oh I don't know, about thirty or thirty five

IAIN UNCONVINCED] Aw . . .

PAULA He's got three kids.

IAIN MORE BRIGHTLY] Oh, okay

PAULA NUDGES HIM WITH HER ELBOW] What did you think?

IAIN Nothing

PAULA GRINS. PAUSE; HOLDS HAND PALM UPWARDS] Oh that was the rain there.

IAIN I never felt it

PAULA Yeh. I better go in. I better

IAIN SHRUGS, EXTENDS HAND PALM UPWARDS] I can't feel it

PAULA MOVES FROM HIM

IAIN SIGHS, NOW RUBS HIS HANDS TOGETHER WITH A SLAP

PAULA What's wrong with you?

IAIN Nothing [PUTS HANDS IN HIS JEANS' POCKETS].

PAULA STEPS A LITTLE CLOSER TO HIM

IAIN TRACES SOMETHING ON THE GROUND WITH THE TOE OF HIS SHOE

PAULA PEERS DOWN] What's that?

IAIN STOPS IT] Nothing, just drawing; sometimes I draw with my foot

PAULA GRINS] What do you draw?

IAIN I'm not telling you

PAULA CHUCKLES; THEN SIGHS, GAZES TOWARDS SECURITY LODGE, HEAD INCLINED ON HIS SHOULDER AGAIN

IAIN I thought you were allowed out till midnight?

PAULA RELAXED, NOT REALLY LISTENING TO HIM] Mm

IAIN SNEAKS A GLANCE AT HER] Before they shut the gate?

PAULA BARELY LISTENING] Excuse me?

IAIN I thought they shut the gate at midnight?

PAULA SHE IS GAZING TO THE PORTERS' LODGE] Mm . . .

IAIN GAZES AT PORTERS' LODGE, THEN RELAXES, PUTS HIS ARM ROUND HER SHOULDERS AGAIN

PAULA SIGHS, BEGINS HUMMING A TUNE TO HERSELF

IAIN You're right, it's a book the guy's reading. He turned the page there! I saw him do it, just like turning the page. Man!

PAULA He's a writer

IAIN What!

PAULA A writer

IAIN A writer! [ASTONISHED] Who, the security guard?

PAULA yeh

IAIN The security guard is like a writer?

PAULA Danny, yeh,

IAIN Good God . . . [PAUSE] What does he write?

PAULA Stories.

IAIN Stories . . . Huh! What are they from real life?

PAULA I think he just makes them up

IAIN [SURPRISE] Huh, jees. Yeh, look he has got a sandwich there. I knew it!

PAULA [ELBOWS HIM IN RIBS] Don't be so nosey

IAIN No, I'm just looking.

PAULA ALSO LOOKS

IAIN See . . .! [PAUSE] I wonder what it is, maybe one of these big crispy rolls with thick butter and then ham, and with like mustard, English mustard

PAULA English mustard!

IAIN English mustard, that's what they call it

PAULA You think I don't know!

IAIN No, I'm just saying, that's what they call it. English mustard, it's tasty on ham.

PAULA [AMUSED] Hungry Horace!

IAIN Yeh, sorry. You laughing at me?

PAULA Well no wonder! You always notice food.

IAIN No I don't

PAULA Yeh you do

IAIN Do I? Huh! Oh well. Hey, come on we'll walk for a little bit, where nobody can see us

PAULA Oh Danny wouldn't bother. Maybe the other guards would, but not him

IAIN PAUSE] You like that guy don't you?

PAULA AMAZED] What!

IAIN You just seem to talk about him a lot

PAULA He's old!

IAIN Not that much

PAULA Yes he is, and he's got three children

IAIN SHRUGS

PAULA PUNCHES HIM ON THE SIDE OF THE ARM] Don't be so silly

IAIN PLAYFULLY] Ah, that was sore!

PAULA TRIES TO PUNCH HIM AGAIN. IAIN LAUGHS, PUTS HIS ARM ROUND HER SHOULDER

PAULA You can be sarcastic you know

IAIN So can you

PAULA Not as bad as you

IAIN You're worse

PAULA No I'm not [SHIVERS] I'm not

IAIN SUDDENLY] Hey, fancy a coffee?

PAULA In your apartment I suppose!

IAIN SMILES] Well it's warm . . . I've got a chair

PAULA Not just one I hope!

IAIN SERIOUSLY] Eh . . .yeh . . .

PAULA Tch.

IAIN NETTLED] Listen if you know any place else then we'll go there I mean I don't care, I was only like eh a place to go, that was what I meant, it was just like if it does start raining . . . [SHRUGS]

PAULA I'm only joking.

IAIN Yeh . . .

PAULA You are just so serious all the time. Don't be so serious!

IAIN I'm not

PAULA Yes you are

IAIN I'm not really

PAULA I think you are

IAIN Not deep down I mean I'm not serious deep down

PAULA LAUGHS

IAIN What you laughing at?

PAULA HAND TO COVER MOUTH] I don't know

IAIN CHUCKLES

PAULA Just deep down, i don't know why you said that

IAIN Neither do I!

PAULA It just sounded foolish

IAIN I know!

PAULA Sometimes you say things that are silly

IAIN Do I?

PAULA You do

IAIN Oh well [SHRUGS]

PAULA Sorry. But I have noticed that about you, if it's not serious it's silly.

IAIN God . . . [DISAPPOINTED]

PAULA Oh but it isn't too bad

IAIN CHEERILY] Come on [MOVES FROM HER] let's go . . . (STEPS ON A COUPLE OF PACES

PAULA GAZES AFTER HIM

IAIN GLANCES BACK] Come on

PAULA STEPS AFTER HIM, SLOWLY

IAIN Come on . . . [CHEERILY) I'm too tired to rape you!

PAULA SHARPLY] That is not funny, that is just not funny

IAIN Sorry . . .

PAULA It just isn't.

IAIN HANGS HEAD, GENUINELY APOLOGETIC

PAULA IS STILL ANNOYED

IAIN I didn't mean it the way it sounded

PAULA PAUSE,] I know you didn't. [PUNCHES HIM ON THE ARM, SMILES]

IAIN Ahhh! You're always punching me!

PAULA No wonder, when you do so many foolish things. And then you say so many foolish things, you're just foolish altogether

IAIN I thought I was silly

PAULA Silly is foolish

IAIN Oh. Well thanks very much

PAULA Are they all like that where you come from?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA I bet they are

IAIN Yeh [PAUSE] Even my grannie

PAULA LAUGHS

IAIN PUTS ARM ROUND HER SHOULDER

PAULA What do you think you're doing?

IAIN I thought you were cold

PAULA SARCASTIC] Cold!

IAIN You were shivering

THEY START WALKING

PAULA No I wasnt
IAIN You were
PAULA I never noticed
IAIN You were
PAULA That was a long time ago
IAIN It wasn't
PAULA Yes it was

THEY CONTINUE WALKING

IAIN It wasn't really
PAULA I think it was

LIGHTS OUT

IAIN Well I don't
PAULA Well I do

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

TIME: TWENTY MINUTES LATER

PLACE: ON THE CURB AT THE FOOT OF THE SHORT FLIGHT OF STEPS UP TO
THE DOOR INTO APARTMENT BLOCK WHERE THE IAIN LIVES. BUT THE
ENTRANCE HE USES WILL BE ROUND THE BACK

LIGHTS MIDNIGHT

IAIN WHISPERS] This is the place [LEADS ACROSS FLOOR]
PAULA You don't have to whisper

IAIN QUIETLY] I suppose not.

THEY PAUSE HERE, AND HE POINTS TO THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING]

IAIN We have to go round the back here. See the alleyway? [MAKES TO WALK
THERE

PAULA HANGS BACK

IAIN Coming?

PAULA SHIVERS]

IAIN Don't worry

PAULA Ohhh

IAIN Come on

PAULA It isn't very inviting

IAIN No . . . [LOOKING AT IT] But it only looks that way, I use it all the time
[WHISPERS] And it'll be warm inside.

PAULA Oh

IAIN It will [TAKES OUT DOOR KEYS, THEY RATTLE LOUDLY] Oh jees!
Goddam keys, they make so much noise, damn rattling. [HOLDS UP KEYS
TO SHOW HER] Three of them! You would think it was a royal castle or
something

PAULA Huh

IAIN That's the landlady, she just worries about security, she's old.

PAULA CHUCKLES BUT STILL HANGING BACK

IAIN We have to go quietly [MAKES A MOVE TOWARDS THE ALLEYWAY,
THEN LOOKS BACK TO PAULA] Come on. [EXTENDS HIS HAND TO
HER

PAULA HESITANT THEN MOVES TO HIM; SHE GLANCES BACK, REACHES TO TAKE
HIS HAND

EXIT

LIGHTS VERY DIM

IAIN AND PAULA WALK ROUND THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING. THEY ARE OUT OF VIEW BUT THEIR VOICES ARE HEARD PLAINLY, AT ALL TIMES

IAIN LOUD WHISPERS] No females allowed in here you know

PAULA Don't be so silly

IAIN They aren't though, honest, it's true. Not under any circumstances

PAULA WHISPERS] Really?

IAIN Yeh. It's men-only!

PAULA AMUSED] Men-only!

IAIN Ssh

PAULA I can only stay five minutes anyway.

IAIN DISAPPOINTED] Five minutes!

PAULA It's just so late

HE OPENS THE BACK DOOR ENTRANCE. DOOR CREAKS OPENS

LIGHTS OUT

PAULA Why is it creaking like that?

IAIN Ssh

DOOR CLOSES.

THEY ARE DARKNESS: BUT HEARD PLAINLY, THEY WALK INSIDE THE HALLWAY

PAULA Oh my it's so creepy!

IAIN Not really

PAULA Yes it is. And what's that old smell? My God. Oh, it's real old. Why can't you put on the light?

IAIN Sshh [KICKS FOOT AGAINST STEP, STUMBLING] Oh jees! [STEPS INSIDE; WHISPERS] Come on

PAULA Can you not put the light on?

IAIN LEADS HER TO THE STAIRCASE] It's up the stairs

PAULA Oh dear

THEY CLIMB THE STAIRCASE

IAIN It's okay

PAULA SNIFFS] Oh what a smell, it's all fuisty

IAIN What do you mean?

PAULA SNIFFS] It's just an old fuisty smell

IAIN Well it's an old house

PAULA It's horrible

IAIN No it's not

PAULA Yes it is

IAIN Sshh

PAULA Can I not even get talking!

IAIN Wait till we're in the room

PAULA The room!

IAIN What d'you say?

PAULA Never mind

THEY ARRIVE ON THE UPSTAIRS LANDING

IAIN UNLOCKS DOOR, PUSHES IT OPENS

THEY ENTER

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

TIME SOON AFTER

PLACE A SPARSE ROOM.

PROPS SINGLE BED, WOODEN DINING CHAIR, ASSORTED CLOTHES ON DINING CHAIR AND BED. A CHEAP LITTLE RADIO, SMALL CUPBOARD, SMALL PILE OF PAPERBACK BOOKS ON TOP. A SINGLE WARDROBE. ANCIENT GAS FIRE; ONE TOWEL DRAPED OVER THE WARDROBE DOOR; CUPS AND ELECTRIC KETTLE, TEABAGS, CIGARETTES, MATCHES, SUNDRIES AS DIRECTED

LIGHTS: DULL

PAULA ENTERS, HESITANTLY

IAIN FOLLOWS, CLOSING DOOR VERY CAUTIOUSLY.

IAIN SIGHS] Jeess oh! Whohhh, we made it!

IAIN GOES TO BED, LIFTS CLOTHES AND STICKS THEM OUT OF SIGHT. SITS DOWN, RISES AGAIN AND STANDS BY THE WALL, ALLOWING HER SPACE TO ENTER

PAULA LOOKS ABOUT, WITH DISTASTE] Can we not put the light on?

IAIN RISING FROM BED] Sorry. [SWITCHES ON ROOM LIGHT

LIGHTS BRIGHTEN

PAULA I was beginning to wonder!

IAIN Yeh. It's just the landlady.

PAULA What about her? You make her sound as if like . . . something, I don't know!
[SHAKES HEAD, SMILING]

IAIN She is fierce

PAULA Yeh but

IAIN No, I mean real fierce, she is like whohhh!

PAULA STILL HAS COAT ON, PUTS HER HANDS TO HOLD HER ELBOWS, LOOKS ABOUT.

IAIN You okay?

PAULA It's tiny

IAIN Tiny . . . [LOOKS ABOUT] Yeh.

PAULA STEPS SIDeways, STILL LOOKING AROUND] It's quite bare too

IAIN HADN'T REALIZED THAT UNTIL NOW

PAULA Isn't it?

IAIN SLOWLY, LOOKING ABOUT] Yeh, I suppose it is

PAULA No suppose about it

PAULA STARES AT THE UNMADE BED, WALKS AROUND IT

IAIN NOTICES OLD TOWEL LYING, WALKS TO WARDROBE, LIFTING THE TOWEL;
HE OPENS THE WARDROBE DOOR, FLINGS TOWEL INTO ONE SIDE], HOPING SHE
HASNT NOTICED

IAIN SNIFFS] Yeh, I haven't got it right yet eh I mean you know the room. I
will though - sorry

PAULA TURNS FROM THE UNMADE BED; SEES THE PAPERBACKS ON THE
CUPBOARD AND MANTELPIECE, BEGINS LEAFING THROUGH THEM.

IAIN NOTICES THE BED IS UNMADE.

IAIN Jees. [GOES TO BEGIN MAKING IT QUICKLY]

PAULA What is it?

IAIN Oh just eh . . .

PAULA WATCHES HIM SURREPTICIOUSLY, BOOK IN HAND

IAIN I forgot to tidy up before I went out

PAULA Oh

IAIN Actually I was late and just had to rush out

PAULA Oh . . . [ABSENTLY, HER ATTENTION TO THE BOOKS]

IAIN I didnt mean eh . . . sorry. [QUICKLY MAKES THE BED]

PAULA SHRUGS, NOT INTERESTED, THEN SHE IS SHOCKED BY SOMETHING SHE
READS.

PAULA Oh my!

IAIN NOTICES, SMILES, EXPECTING HER TO COMMENT

PAULA IGNORES HIM, CONTINUES BROWSING

IAIN SPOTS SOILED CLOTHES LYING ON THE CHAIR; GATHERS THEM IN AND GLANCES AT WARDROBE, WONDERING WHERE TO PUT THEM

PAULA SEES THE BED IS NOW TIDY AND RETURNS BOOK TO PILE ON MANTELPiece]

PAULA You know you should talk to Danny

IAIN VAGUELY IRRITATED] What?

IAIN IS DISTRACTED, GOES TO CUPBOARD BESIDE WHERE SHE STANDS AND STICKS THE SOILED CLOTHES IN BOTTOM DRAWER

IAIN Excuse me.

PAULA Danny is always reading. You would like talking to him. Just books, books and books. I like reading too.

IAIN Yeh?

PAULA I have a friend and that's all she ever does like even at breakfast, she reads the backs of the cornflakes packet

IAIN GRINS] Yeh!

PAULA She never stops. Then if you try to talk to her, she doesn't hear you. It's just very off-putting

IAIN My brother's like that!

PAULA I do like her though

IAIN Yeh well I quite like my brother

PAULA Is he older?

IAIN Older?

PAULA Well I mean older than you

IAIN Oh yeah. I mean yeah, yeah he is.

IAIN JUST LOOKS AT HER, NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY MORE ABOUT HIS BROTHER

PAULA WAITS A MOMENT] I used to read more.

IAIN Right. [INTERESTED]

PAULA I've lost the habit

IAIN DISAPPOINTED] Aw.

IAIN MOVES TO FIREPLACE, TAKES OFF HIS JACKET, THROWS IT ON THE EDGE OF THE BED THEN RETRIEVES IT QUICKLY, WONDERS WHERE TO PUT IT. THEN HE HANGS IT ON THE WARDROBE DOOR, WHERE THE TOWEL WAS

PAULA SEES INSIDE THE WARDROBE, AND DOES A DOUBLE-TAKE

PAULA AMAZED] Is that food in there?

IAIN Eh

PAULA It is!

IAIN AS THOUGH SURPRISED] Oh!

PAULA Goodness me!

IAIN Well I mean really it's just eh I mean tea bags and stuff, coffee and all that I mean it's not eh . . .

PAULA PULLS THE DOOR OPEN WIDER] Is that not milk?

IAIN Milk? Eh, yeh, yeh I think so.

PAULA Why do you keep it in the wardrobe? [SNIFFS] It's a bit of a smell isn't it

IAIN Smell?

PAULA GREAT DISTASTE] It's smelly!

IAIN Smelly?

PAULA Really, it is. My goodness it's a foolish place to keep milk, in a wardrobe

IAIN SHRUGS] Yeh, well, I don't have a fridge

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN There's kind of a communal one but it's like downstairs in the basement

PAULA In the basement?

IAIN Yeh like the kitchen, that's where the kitchen is, it's in the basement so everybody's got to like . . . [SHRUGS].

IAIN ASSUMES SHE WILL GUESS WHAT HE MEANS BUT PAULA IS UNCOMPREHENDING, JUST GAZES AT HIM

IAIN It's for everybody. Everybody who lives here, they all use it, the same kitchen. [PAUSE] I don't

PAULA No, neither would I.

IAIN SHAKES HIS HEAD

PAULA It sounds horrible

IAIN Whohh, yeh, it is kinda horrible [RELAXING] Except if you don't use it . . . well, really, you are better to use it [SHRUGS] I would use it

PAULA BAFFLED] Pardon me?

IAIN Oh just because well if you don't . . . See we arent supposed to keep any food in our like room, know what I mean, I'm talking about in here [LOOKING ABOUT THE ROOM] except tea-bags and stuff, coffee.

PAULA What?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA My God.

IAIN So at least if you do use the fridge, like if you got food, real food . . . [SHRUGS] It means you can keep it all fresh

PAULA Well yeh, my God!

IAIN SHRUGS] You would just put up with the kitchen and all, being in the basement. You would just get in the habit. That's what I would do. I would try to anyway

PAULA APPEARS TO MAKE SENSE OF IT

IAIN SHRUGS] Like I mean if I had all the food and stuff

PAULA Yeh . . . I'm not a big eater. My sister is, my God! [HER ATTENTION WANDERS TO THE WARDROBE AGAIN, AND ITS DOOR LYING AJAR. SHE PEERS INSIDE] Eggs! Oh my . . . [LIFTS OUT A CARTON OF EGGS] It's half a dozen eggs!

IAIN JUST WATCHES HER

PAULA HOLDS THE PACKET] Eggs!

IAIN Yeah. [SCRATCHING HIS HEAD]

PAULA OPENING THE PACKET] You've only got one left

IAIN SHRUGS

PAULA RETURNS EGG PACKET, POKES AROUND INSIDE WARDROBE

IAIN SQUINTS TO SEE WHAT SHE IS UP TO

PAULA CALLS] You love frankfurters dont you!

IAIN DEFENSIVELY] Eh . . .

PAULA All these tins of frankfurter sausages!

IAIN Yeah they're good, I mean like . . . [SHRUGS]

PAULA Six of them! [LIFTS ONE OUT, EXAMINES AND READS LABEL] *Frankfurter sausages, made from the finest meat.* I didn't think they were even made from meat! Frankfurters? Did you?

PAULA LOOKS TO IAIN AWAITING AN ANSWER. BUT IAIN DOESN'T HAVE ONE

PAULA I thought they were just . . . I don't know, ham or something like that but not actual meat like beef or whatever!

IAIN Huh!

PAULA Six tins of them!

SHE TAKES OUT ANOTHER TIN AND COMPARES THE TWO TINS

PAULA ALMOST SURPRISED] Exactly the same..

IAIN Yeh, you just heat them up. [SHRUGS] Then that's them, once you've heated them, ready. Or else you can eat them cold. I do that too. So I mean you just open the tin. [SHRUGS] Then you eat them. And if you've got a couple of tomatos, or else beans, if you've got beans

PAULA Yeh, of course . . . [RETURNS TINS]

IAIN GOES TO FIREPLACE] I'll switch on the fire. You cold?

PAULA A little bit [SHIVERS, FOLDING HER ARMS] That's an old fire!

IAIN Yeh, it's ancient

PAULA I've not seen one like that for years

IAIN I've never seen one like it at all

PAULA I don't think I have either

IAIN I know, it's just like well yeh, it's prehistoric.

IAIN GOES DOWN ON HIS KNEES TO SWITCH ON THE OLD FIRE

IAIN I didn't even think they had electricity

PAULA You expect to see coal in it!

IAIN I know. or else rubbing sticks.

PAULA My God

IAIN You wonder where she got it, maybe brought it from Italy. That's what she is, the old landlady, Italian, Eetaliano.

[NB. ACTOR SHOULD NOT OVERDO THE EXAGGERATED ITALIAN.

IAIN HITS THE SWITCH ON THE FIRE BUT FUMBLES IT AND JUMPS BACK AS THOUGH SUFFERING AN ELECTRIC SHOCK

IAIN Ah, fuck! fuck! Whohh! [PAUSE, SHAKES HEAD] Sorry

PAULA Did you get a shock, was that an electric shock?

IAIN IRRITATION] No, just that goddam switch, I think it's broken. Every time I just . . . ! God! [GLANCES AT HIS FINGERS] It cuts yer finger., [BLOWS INTO HIS HAND]

PAULA It's far too old

IAIN I know, God. I hardly ever use it

PAULA No wonder

IAIN Yeh. And they charge you for it anyway

PAULA What? Money!

IAIN Yeh well . . . that is the charges, electricity, you have to pay for it

PAULA Oh

IAIN You wouldnt mind if it worked right

PAULA They need to get a new one

IAIN There's nothing new in this place

IAIN BENDS TO SWITCH ON THE FIRE AGAIN, CAUTIOUSLY. HE RETREATS BACK AS THOUGH SCALDED, RUBBING HIS HAND

IAIN Ahh!

PAULA FEARFUL] My God!

IAIN Goddam static [LAUGHS, BUT NERVOUS]

PAULA AMAZED] Static!

IAIN Yeh, I get it all the time it's terrible, just all the time, just wherever like where I'm going, I can be going anywhere, escalators, subways, moving stairs - anything - but that thing there [POINTING AT FIRE] That is the worst. That is just the total goddam worst of all, it's just like electricity I mean really like an electric current bursting through you!

PAULA HAND OVER HER HEART] My God.

IAIN Yeh . . .

PAULA I thought it was going to explode!

IAIN I know! You can never tell either because one minute it's okay the next it's like hell's bells I'm going up in smoke!

PAULA My God!

IAIN It's so damn temperamental. [AMUSED AFTERTHOUGHT] Temperamental! A woman made it!

PAULA PAUSE, THEN SHE GETS IT] Don't be so cheeky

IAIN Sorry

PAULA IRRITATED SIGH

IAIN It was only a joke

PAULA It was sexist. I don't like sexist jokes. They are demeaning to women. You said one outside too. It wasn't very nice at all

IAIN I didn't mean it the way it sounded. Sorry

PAULA STARES AT HIM. THEN HER MOOD LIFTS] Where's the stove?

IAIN Eh well really, I don't have a stove, like an actual proper one. They've got a big one down in the basement, I mean like a real big one, in the kitchen. It's enormous and it's got like three complete bits in it - sections or compartments or whatever.

PAULA Oh.

IAIN It's communal too so I mean like everybody uses it - for their cooking and all whatever.

PAULA DISTASTE] Oh my.

IAIN It's okay though I mean for making meals like if you have your food and all that

PAULA Mm

IAIN I don't bother with it very much. [SHRUGS] It's mainly a bunch of old guys down there.

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN Old guys, it's mainly old guys use the kitchen. In fact it's all old guys.

PAULA SHUDDERS] Ohh!

IAIN Yeh . . . [BRIEF SMILE] They've got their own kind of . . . routines.

PAULA Routines?

IAIN DEFENSIVELY] Well they just eh, you know like they have their own spaces and that, they plank their food.

PAULA What?

IAIN I mean like they hide it. And then in the fridge, they keep all their stuff in there

PAULA What stuff?

IAIN Well their food.

PAULA Oh

IAIN USES HANDS TO DESCRIBE] and like they have their own little bits inside it, their own spaces, and you've not to go into it or disturb stuff, if ye knock anything over they get all upset and shout at you.

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN They don't want you putting your stuff into them at all. Your eggs or whatever, if it is their space. And then sometimes one of them's got no butter left or else got no milk. So they take yours.

PAULA Without asking?

IAIN Or if you've got cheese, I used to leave my cheese in there and it just got taken.

PAULA Did you say without asking?

IAIN Sure, yeh, it was like well I suppose, what it was, they just stole it. Some of these old guys, like, whoh, they are just thieves. You get big arguments because of it. They shout at you! So you've got to shout at them. Because if they shout at you I mean like . . .

PAULA STARING AT HIM IN AMAZEMENT

IAIN Yeh you just have to watch it, you know. You even get fights

PAULA HORRIFIED] Excuse me?

IAIN Yeh, because they've got real bad tempers, One time one of them stuck a knife in a guy's belly. [DOES STABBING ACTION]

PAULA HORRIFIED

IAIN GRAPHIC] Right in – whoh, I'm not kidding, he just like right in, shoved it right in, right into his belly.

NB ACTOR SHOULD NOT OVERDO ANY OF IAIN'S DESCRIPTIVE ACTIONS; IT'S COMPLETELY NATURAL TO HIM, AS THOUGH HE HAS SEEN SUCH FIGHTS ON MANY AN OCCASION

PAULA HORRIFIED] Oh my God!

IAIN Yeh, so one took some of the other guy's milk, just for a cup of coffee or something, you know, a little tiny drop, and the other guy came in and saw him. Oh that's my goddam milk, he says. Although he didn't say goddam, it was worse than that, it was just like real heavy swearing! [RESUMES DOING ACTIONS] And then he grabs the knife off the table and sticks it in the guy's belly, right in to the hilt, he just - bump - right in, pohhhhh [STABBING ACTION, WITH RELISH] Stuck it right in, up to the hilt, and the blood was bleeding all over the floor

PAULA HAND TO COVER MOUTH] Oh my God

IAIN There they were rolling about, kicking and biting lumps out each other and the blood flying everywhere.. And they were both really old too; they were just like these ancient ancient old guys. So then they had to call an ambulance for the one that got stabbed

PAULA Oh God!

IAIN And the other one as well, him that done the stabbing, he had to go to hospital too because whatever happened to him, I dont know, but something did.

PAULA What?

IAIN I think he just about collapsed altogether. He was just like completely exhausted. Maybe he did collapse. Maybe it was an actual physical heart attack. I think it was.

PAULA My God

IAIN They took him away too. So that was the pair of them in the same ambulance. Sitting looking at each other. Imagine!

PAULA ASTONISHED BY THE VISION

IAIN SUDDENLY] Maybe it was your hospital they took them to

PAULA DISTASTE] I don't think so

IAIN Ah well, maybe it was because I mean yours is the nearest.

PAULA I'm glad I wasn't on duty!

IAIN But you could have been

PAULA Thank God I wasn't [SITS DOWN ON CHAIR, TUGS COAT ROUND HER SHOULDERS]

IAIN Imagine you were but, imagine you were the nurse!

PAULA My God. [PAUSE] It must have been horrible to see.

IAIN Yeh! I'm glad I didn't. I just actually heard about it. I didn't see it with my own eyes

PAULA Oh but it's still horrible

IAIN Yeh. All because of a drop of milk. It was before I came

PAULA Thank goodness

IAIN Lucky he didn't die though with the knife going right in like that. [DOES THE ACTIONS] Some knives just go straight in the flesh. [PAUSE] Hey, imagine if it had been like a steak or something, not just a cup of milk. Or a pork chop, a big like sizzling pork chop. [ACTIONS WITH HIS HANDS] And onions. Imagine that, a big pork chop and juicy onions, and you had just been cooking it, and then maybe you went away to wash your hands or something, and when you came back – oh man where's my food! Somebody's away with it and just ate it up, you know, and you're starving, like it was maybe your last meal till next pay day

PAULA LOOKING AT HIM IN HORROR

IAIN GESTURING] And then whoever it is, they're just like sitting there eating your goddam pork chop, and you walk in and you see them. Whoh! you would want to kill them! You would just want to kill them!

PAULA Oh! [AS IF TERRIFIED, HER HANDS GRIP THE SIDES OF HER ARMS]

IAIN PAUSE] Sorry. Hey, you want to take off your coat?

PAULA SNIFFS] No

IAIN Are you sure?

PAULA GIVES HIM A SARCASTIC LOOK

IAIN SHRUGS, AND CHEERILY] It is getting warm.

PAULA SARCASTIC] Oh is it!

IAIN Yeh, honest

PAULA HESITATES] Well, okay

PAULA TAKES COAT OFF, HANDS IT TO HIM.

IAIN HOLDS COAT FOR A MOMENT NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO WITH IT. THEN HE GOES TO THE WARDROBE, FINDS A HANGAR, HANGS COAT INSIDE

PAULA I hope my coat won't smell of food!

IAIN No, I doubt it

PAULA PEERING AROUND THE ROOM] Is it really only the one chair you have?

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA I thought you were joking [GLANCING ROUNDABOUT] Where's the television?

IAIN PRETENDS TO BE SURPRISED BY THE QUESTION.

PAULA Do you not have one?

IAIN Eh no, no I dont [SHRUGS]

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN I hate the goddam thing, television. That was all my family ever done was watch it, it drove me nuts, when I was a kid, my mother and father and like everybody, they watched television all the time. [PAUSE] I just used to stare at them.

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA While they were watching it?

IAIN Yeh. My old man hated me doing it. Oh stop that, stop staring at me, you're driving me crazy with that staring! Yeh well you're driving me crazy, that was what I said to him

PAULA Oh

IAIN Yeh, people just like insult you.

PAULA They do. I notice that too

IAIN It's like everywhere you go is insults!

PAULA That is so true. People are so rude! It's the big city, and just arrogant, people are just so arrogant. What do they think about big cities, as if everybody else is just little and foolish, it is so insulting

IAIN I know

PAULA I get so mad

IAIN Yeh, me too, and when it is like your own family . . . !

PAULA My God yeh

IAIN Know what I mean, that television stuff, they were staring at it all the time, it was like never off. Even if they had the radio on or music, they just turned down the volume, so it was like they were watching that stupid screen even if they were listening to their music, if you can call it music. Oh man it was just so excruciating, I was going nuts with it, just like insanity, I mean real insanity

PAULA No wonder

IAIN What a family! They never turned it off at all. Not even in bed, when they were in their bed asleep!

PAULA AMAZED] What!

IAIN PAUSE FOR AFFECT, THEN LAUGHS

PAULA AMUSED] Oh you . . . !

IAIN SMILING

PAULA LOOKS ABOUT ROOM

IAIN ALSO LOOKS ABOUT THE ROOM] Yeh but I do need stuff

PAULA Yeh

IAIN Just like everything, I need everything! But it takes money. I gotta save. But first comes a job, if I get a decent job, so I can like just save and get my money. [LOOKS ABOUT] And a sound system, one with a clear clear sound, a proper one. [SIGHS] That's all I've got there, that old effort [POINTS TO SMALL RADIO ON MANTELPIECE

PAULA What is it?

IAIN It's a radio

PAULA A radio! That old looking thing.

IAIN I know. It's hopeless. You know the word antedeluvian? It's antedeluvian.

PAULA SHE DOESN'T KNOW THE WORD BUT NODS AS IF SHE DOES

PAULA We've got the very best in the lounge at the Nurses Home.

IAIN Have you?

PAULA It is just beautiful, and the very best quality

IAIN Do you use it a lot?

PAULA We do but not so much as all that. Usually somebody's got on the television so then . . . [SHRUGS]

IAIN SHAKES HIS HEAD] Goddam televisions. See? I really hate that, especially if it is music. I love music

PAULA Me too [SHIVERS]

IAIN PAUSE] Sit nearer to the fire if you are cold.

PAULA I'm not cold

IAIN Pull in the chair.

PAULA I'm okay, really [GLANCES ABOUT] I'm just looking at everything

IAIN ALSO GLANCES ABOUT

PAULA It's very dismal.

IAIN Dismal?

PAULA Sorry. [PAUSE] Maybe if you just . . .if you had some decoration

IAIN SURPRISED] Yeh!

PAULA There's a lot you could do. Even new paint. Or if you had a hanging basket. [EXCITED] A friend of mine has a hanging basket and a potted plant sits in it. Or you could have candles. Or a nice piece of linen or embroidery or just a sort of material or a decorative glass

IAIN FROWNS

PAULA What?

IAIN She doesnt want people tampering with her things, not with clothes and fancy stuff. I mean like the landlady, if you want to do things, she doesnt like it. She kicks up a fuss. Some of the old guys try it and then you want to hear her! She gives them a real hard time, you know a row? I'm talking about a row. Oh man, she shouts and bawls at them

PAULA AMUSED] Oh she doesnt!

IAIN She does, she screams the house down. She is a real battleaxe

PAULA You're just prejudiced

IAIN I'm not

PAULA Because she's a woman, you think she should just let people walk all over her

IAIN No I don't, I don't at all think that

PAULA AMUSED] Yes you do

IAIN I don't

PAULA If she's just an old Italian woman

IAIN Yeh but

PAULA That's what you said

IAIN Yeh but she is a real battleaxe. Everybody's scared of her

PAULA I don't believe you

IAIN Honest

PAULA KICKING OFF HER SHOES, STRETCHING HER LEGS OUT. GAZING DOWN AT HER FEET, WIGGLES HER TOES

IAIN STARING AT HER LEGS] And she is like . . .

IAIN LOSES THE THREAD AND BECOMES SILENT

PAULA APPEARS NOT TO NOTICE THE EFFECT HER LEGS HAS PRODUCED IN IAIN

PAULA It's an old fashioned way of looking at people.

IAIN DOES NOT KNOW WHAT SHE IS TALKING ABOUT

PAULA It really is. I think you are old fashioned.

IAIN Who me?

PAULA Yes you. I think you are . . .

PAULA GAZES AT HER OWN LEGS NOW AWARE THAT IAIN TOO IS GAZING AT THEM

IAIN MANAGES TO SPEAK] Well I don't think I am

PAULA CATCHES HIM LOOKING

IAIN LOOKS AWAY

PAULA It's just a funny place to live, all old people and just oh I don't know it's just so funny, it's just so funny and old fashioned

IAIN Yeh, but I'll be finding a better one soon

PAULA I hope so

IAIN It'll be better than this.

PAULA I'm not being critical. I'm just lucky, I know I am. It's subsidised accomodation where I live

IAIN NOT QUITE UNDERSTANDING

PAULA We don't have to pay the full rent

IAIN You don't?

PAULA Because it's subsidised.

IAIN Jees.

PAULA I am lucky

IAIN PAUSE] Do you get food too?

PAULA Food? Yes, of course, if you want, I mean they have a bistro place on the premises, it's a kind of self service thing, you know, like a buffet?

IAIN Whoh. That must be great. An actual buffet?

PAULA Yeh

IAIN You just go in and take your own food?

PAULA Yeh

IAIN Whoh. Is it the different meals you get as well like I mean your dinner and all that, breakfast, like what, your lunch?

PAULA Of course. [CHUCKLES] What did you think?

IAIN AMAZED] I don't know

PAULA You have to pay though

IAIN Aw yeh, okay.

PAULA They deduct it from your wages

IAIN Exactly. You don't get it for nothing, that's the catch. There's always a catch in this life. Ever notice that? [BRIGHTENS] But still I mean if you can just like help yourself!

PAULA NOT SURE WHAT HE MEANS

IAIN Can you just help yourself to the food?

PAULA Of course. It's a buffet [FOLDS ARMS IN EMPHASIS]

IAIN Yeh!

PAULA But people don't always go

IAIN Pardon?

PAULA They don't.

IAIN What do you mean?

PAULA They go out to eat.

IAIN Huh!

PAULA Maybe a restaurant or whatever. Or they do it themselves. We have cooking facilities, proper ones. So if you're trying to save money . . .

IAIN JUST LOOKS AT HER IN AMAZEMENT

PAULA It means you can . . . [PAUSE, SHE CONCEALS A YAWN]

IAIN IS STILL WORKING IT OUT.

PAULA GLANCES AT HIM AND SMILES. SHE BEGINS HUMMING A TUNE QUIETLY, AND STRETCHES OUT HER LEGS AGAIN. SHE YAWNS AS A WAY TO DISGUISE THE EFFECT THIS VIEW OF HER LEGS HAS ON IAIN ONCE AGAIN

IAIN [BECOMES SELF CONSCIOUS] Some music!

IAIN GOES TO SWITCH THE RADIO ON. HE CROUCHES THERE WHILE TUNING IT BUT THE INTERFERENCE IS PHENOMENAL

IAIN Oh Jees what a racket! Goddam thing

IAIN FINDS A STATION WITH MUSIC, KEEPS THE VOLUME LOW BUT SO LOW IT CANNOT BE HEARD.

PAULA [TRIES TO LISTEN]] I can hardly hear it at all

IAIN [DEFENSIVELY] Yeh

PAULA Honestly

IAIN It's her, the landlady she hears a pin drop,

PAULA She's real strict eh?

IAIN IRONIC] You talking about food!

PAULA Food? No.

IAIN Oh . . . I thought ye were. Because never mind cook in your room we're not allowed even to eat in our own room.

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN She doesn't allow it. Only sandwiches. That's how I keep them frankfurter sausage things

PAULA CANNOT FOLLOW HIM

IAIN POINTS TO THE ELECTRIC KETTLE ON TOP OF THE CUPBOARD

IAIN See the electric kettle there?

PAULA Yes

IAIN It's great for frankfurters. You just empty them into that electric kettle

PAULA The frankfurters?

IAIN Yeh, you just empty them into the kettle there, then add water and just boil the water; like so you get it boiling?

PAULA Oh

IAIN Yeh, that heats them up. [SHRUGS] It boils them. So then when you're ready you just eat them. You're better having a bowl so you can empty them into it. Plus then you've got your hot water too, it's boiled, so if it's for a coffee or a cup of tea. [SHRUGS] It's like two things at once. Or even maybe that soup-powder stuff, so then you can eat it with your hot-dogs and it's like a meal, sausages and soup.

PAULA Oh but that's a mess

IAIN Yeh but you clean the kettle after

PAULA Oh no.

IAIN Honest, it works good

PAULA I can see how you might boil an egg.

IAIN Boil an egg! Did you say boil an egg? [LAUGHS]

PAULA BAFFLED

IAIN Whoh! You never do that! Never never boil an egg! You have to like poach it. You get the water in to boil, right? So then it heats up. So then it boils. What you do now you just crack your egg then drop it the raw thing straight out. Then you get the kettle boiling again, and that cooks your egg. So that is it, poached

PAULA DISGUST] Poached?

IAIN Yeh well the boiling water! That poaches it. [CHUCKLES] You would get poached too, if you fell in, the boiling water would cook you right through.

PAULA HORRIFIED

IAIN Oh jees can you imagine it, falling in!

PAULA EYES WIDEN] I don't think so

IAIN You would just get so cooked.

PAULA Excuse me!

IAIN Anything would! Look what happens to a lobster! Poor old thing! And some are just young, just like chickens, chicken-lobsters, I mean like babies. Yet we think they are so tasty, little babies

PAULA Oh my God

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA That is so horrible

IAIN SHRUGS] And they start off blue Before the boiling water hits them. But then once they are on the plate, when the folk are going to eat them, they've turned red

PAULA PAUSE] But they are white, if it's lobsters

IAIN Oh well yeh the flesh, the flesh is white. It is red then it is white. First it is blue. Eggs are different, they just go white

PAULA YAWNS, SLEEPY.

IAIN NOTICES

PAULA YAWNS AGAIN] Why can't you boil them?

IAIN SHRUGS] Because they've got the shells round them. The shells go against the element at the bottom of the kettle. [SHRUGS AGAIN]

PAULA BAFFLED

IAIN So you can't do it. I've tried it! [BIG ACTIONS] Boom! [LAUGHS] I nearly blew up the goddam building.

PAULA My God

IAIN Lucky for me the landlady and her husband were away out visiting their relations, otherwise she would have threw me out, I would have had to get another place.

PAULA You nearly blew up the building?

IAIN Yeh, it was like a real shocker. I had my bread out and I was buttering two slices and so then I was just waiting - I was starving - so then I was waiting and just listening and the egg was knocking against the element, just bump bump bump, and then WHOHH! WHOHH!!! [DOING ACTIONS OF EXPLOSIONS, THEN REALISES HE HAS BEEN TOO LOUD, AND WHISPERS] Ssh, oh jees . . .

PAULA What happened?

IAIN Just boom!

PAULA Oh my God

IAIN I had to throw the kettle out, it was ruined. So I got a new one, that thing there [POINTS TO IT]

PAULA It doesn't look new to me

IAIN No

PAULA It is ancient

IAIN Yeh. One of the old guys gave me it. He was finished with it and was just going to dump it out like with the garbage. His daughter bought him a new one or something. So I was there and I just well I said to him if he was like well going to throw it out, or what, and I was here and I needed one, just if he was throwing it out, maybe he would just give it to me.

PAULA My God, you actually said it to him?

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA What did he say back?

IAIN He didn't say nothing. He just kind of looked at me and then he gave me it! A really old guy I mean he was like very very very old, and his garters hanging down

PAULA Garters!

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA PAUSE] Did you meet his daughter?

IAIN No. Why?

PAULA Oh nothing. But that was nice of him, that old man

IAIN Yeh. Maybe a new one wouldn't be so good for cooking.

PAULA You talk about food a lot. [PAUSE] You do

IAIN Yeh well . . . I used to work in a kitchen

PAULA DOUBTFULLY] Did you?

IAIN Yeh. Kitchens are good places to work, if it is wintertime, you walk in and it is warm, real warm. Even in the freezer room, it is freezing cold but then you come out and it is like roasting hot. Then your food. I could eat whatever I wanted. Whenever. Like if you are hungry, you know, if you want to eat, you just eat. People buy all that food then they dont even eat it, they just leave it. So you can.

PAULA You mean old food?

IAIN Not old food no.

PAULA But somebody else's?

IAIN Well it just gets left. People leave it on their plates. The plates come in from the dining room area and you are supposed to dump off all the food before you wash them so I mean you can just take it if you want.

PAULA NOW HORRIFIED

IAIN It's not like stealing. [CHANGES TACK] Usually I didn't have to anyway. The women just gave me stuff. It was good. Except I got sick of dirty plates all the time. [POINTS TO WARDROBE] That's how I just use paper ones now. Real plates drive you nuts, I'm talking about washing them all the time, and you see the same ones coming back, they all have their own little marks, maybe a chip or whatever, or a crack, they all had cracks.

PAULA That isn't very healthy.

IAIN Well they all had them

PAULA Cracks give you germs

IAIN Yeh?

PAULA Excuse me? Of course they do. Half the people who come into my hospital have food poisoning. Their stomachs are just like ruined

IAIN DISBELIEVING!

PAULA Honestly!

IAIN Oh man

PAULA Their linings are all gone

IAIN Whoh, that is scary. Can you imagine it if you are eating!

PAULA What . . .

IAIN If you don't have any lining like in your stomach! Where does it all go!
[GUFFAWS]

PAULA It's nothing to joke about. I'm surprised it didn't happen to you. You just seem to eat anything!

IAIN Not anything

PAULA Well the way you talk

IAIN Yeh but not anything. The women that worked in the kitchen gave me stuff. Going home at night, they done the same.

PAULA Huh

IAIN They put it in a bag for me

PAULA They must have liked you

IAIN GRINS. PAULA WAITS BUT HE SAYS NOTHING

PAULA They must have

IAIN Well I was hungry. They were feeding me up

PAULA SURPRISE] Were they immigrants?

IAIN I don't know. They laughed all the time as well, that was what I liked. They were all old. They all had like five kids.

PAULA Five kids!

IAIN They were funny, they used to tell jokes. And some of them were quite . . . you know . . .

PAULA SMILING] What?

IAIN Well just like I don't know, what you would say - sexy

PAULA Excuse me!

IAIN I mean the jokes they told! They forgot I was there. They were just laughing and talking and I don't think they saw me. I just carried on rinsing the dishes and the cups and then just like well then I listened

PAULA Did you?

IAIN Sure, because if they were talking and you were there standing, I mean if you were beside them, well you had to hear what they were saying . . . It was a real laugh

PAULA SEEMS PUT OUT BY THIS, EVEN HUFFY

IAIN NOTICES HER REACTION] It was just really good fun

PAULA Was it?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA Just good fun

IAIN HESITANT] I quite liked it

PAULA So why did you leave?

IAIN CAUTIOUSLY] Eh . . .

PAULA If it was so great and all good fun all the time, why did you leave, if you liked it so much, if it was such a great job, being a dish-washer and just eating other people's old food, why did you ever leave?

IAIN SNIFFS, PLAYING FOR TIME

PAULA I'm just surprised you ever did leave, you might have been there forever

IAIN I didn't like it that much

PAULA Oh I thought you did

IAIN No

PAULA Well you said you did

IAIN No I didn't

PAULA Yes you did

IAIN I didn't

PAULA Excuse me! You very much did

IAIN Did I?

PAULA Huh

IAIN Well, if I did, I'm sorry

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN BAFFLED

PAULA I don't know why you're sorry

IAIN VAGUE DEFIANCE] I'm just saying it

PAULA I don't know why

IAIN Sorry

PAULA Don't say sorry to me

IAIN SCRATCHES HIS HEAD

PAULA YAWNS] The way you were talking about all these women!

IAIN Was I?

PAULA Huh!

IAIN I didn't mean to, they were just funny

PAULA Well I'm glad. And if they were feeding you up, I'm sure you must have been starving to death with all your frankfurter tins

IAIN I wasn't starving to death.

PAULA It sounds like it to me, talking about food all the time

IAIN I don't.

PAULA Sometimes you do.

IAIN It was just because of the plates, all coming back all the time, all the same ones. People didn't even eat their food. Honest! Piles and piles of it, just these big steaks and awesome just brilliant potatoes, roasted ones, or else like garlic fries and cajun fish and salsa, oh man, you were just like . . . [STOPS HIMSELF GETTING CARRIED AWAY]

PAULA I think you would have been in that job forever! [PAUSE] I'm only teasing

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA But why did you leave it? Why did you?

IAIN Oh well! Jeess!

PAULA No, really.

IAIN It was just – whohhh! - because of a fight. A real big one. Me and that what-do-ye-call-him, the cook guy, the chef or whatever, yeh I mean he like threw a stick at me! [DOES THROWING ACTION]

PAULA What!

IAIN And it had like this big thing on the end! He just threw it straight at me! Pohhh [KNOCKS HIMSELF ON THE SIDE OF THE HEAD

PAULA AMAZED] What?

IAIN A big kind of metal thing fastened on the end, like a cup, a heavy one. [DOING THE DESCRIPTIVE ACTIONS]. So he threw it at me, this guy, the cook. Whohhh. Man! It battered me right on the side of the head! Goddam gravy stuff all over me, like my shoulders and my neck

PAULA Oh my God!

IAIN Yeh! This big heavy thing - pohhhh [DOES THE ACTIONS OF THE STICK HITTING THE BACK OF HIS NECK]

PAULA A ladle?

IAIN Yeh, that was it - a big goddam ladle thing, metal. Bam! Right on the side of the head! So I just grabs it off the floor and lifts it. They were all looking at me, all the women and people all just looking and like, What's he going to do, what's he going to do!

PAULA Oh my God!

IAIN DOING THE GRIPPING ACTIONS, WIELDING THE STICK] So I just gripped it and ran across the floor and whacked him with it

PAULA What!

IAIN Yeh, whohh, right on the side of his head, I just whacked him with it!

PAULA APPALLED

IAIN Well no wonder. See how he likes it! Yeh, if he done it to me, I done it back to him. I just went up and bump whohhhh [DOING ALL THE ACTIONS] I let him have it, pohh, it bounced right off his skull. He's like, [NOW MIMICS A PETULANT, SNOBBISH VOICE] Oh my head oh my head oh my head, oh oh oh he's going, oh oh oh, I'm getting the police to you. I'm getting the police

PAULA HAND TO MOUTH] Oh my God!

IAIN Yeh. And I'm like oh get the goddam police, get the goddam effing firebrigade I don't care, cause I'm like I don't care at all, just go and get them and lock me up, what do I care.

PAULA GAPING AT HIM

IAIN Well what right did he have to do that to me? I wasn't doing nothing to him. He was just showing off. That was all it was. Because I was a new guy and just like young. So he thinks he's going to get away with it. He thinks he can do what he wants, I'm a nothing to him, he's up there and I'm down here, you know, just like a kitchen worker. Yeh. He was just showing off, goddam boaster. So that was me, that was how they gave me the chop.

PAULA What?

IAIN Yeh, they took his side of the story

PAULA My God

IAIN So then they dumped me

PAULA That is not fair it is just so not fair, just really so so horrible

IAIN Yeh

PAULA And you liked that job too.

IAIN SHRUGS

PAULA But you did!

IAIN Well it was okay I mean, for a job. Except for him, because he was the chef guy and I was just like the one washing up. And it was a total slave-camp too. And then him swearing at you all the time.

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN At the women too. That was him, pardon the language, fuck this and fuck that, it was terrible, you should have heard him!

PAULA My God!

IAIN Yeh. But then if you swore back at him! Whoohh! He hated it, he just went crazy man he just went completely off his head. Don't you swear at me! Don't you ever ever swear at me! I am going to fire you, I am going to fire you. And pointing at me all the time.

PAULA Oh and if he is swearing at you?

IAIN I know! Yeh. I'm like well you stop swearing at me and I'll stop swearing at you.

PAULA I should think so

IAIN So I mean that wasn't fair either. And there was some good things about that job. There was. Seeing how to do stuff. I learned a lot, like with omelettes and big stews. Then learning the poached eggs. I saw him doing it in a pan. It was just great the way he done it. So I thought well if it's boiling water in a pan, that is the same as boiling water in the kettle

PAULA Oh that's good

IAIN Yeh, so it would be the same idea. So I just tried it and then that was that, it worked. Except there was wee bits of egg like floating about. So if you're having a cup of coffee or tea or whatever, it's all lumpy and like cobwebs

PAULA Oh, that's disgusting

IAIN Yeh, but okay if it is soup-powder, then it just fits I mean eggs and soup, they go together. or like with frankfurter sausages

PAULA Mm.

IAIN SHRUGS] I just try things. [GAZES ABOUT THE ROOM, SCRATCHES HIS HEAD]

PAULA Oh but it's not very fair of the landlady, if she doesn't let you cook. You pay good money for your rent. So how can you eat, you have to eat!

IAIN Yeh, I mean even take-aways, she doesn't like them either.

PAULA ASTONISHED] Excuse me?

IAIN That is the way she is, like an old Italian lady. She doesn't want you bringing anything in, except if it's sandwiches. Pizza's okay but not if it's fries or garlic, she says it smells out the house! Curries especially. She hates them, then if they splash on the carpet. [LAUGHS] She can't get the stains out, that's what she says. Eeevreethin go yellow. One time she threw a guy out for eating enchiladas.

PAULA What!

IAIN She did. He ate them all the time but the cheesy stuff spilled on his bedclothes and it was just like greasy all over his room. She went nuts! She went in his room and saw it. She just walked right in. She does that.

PAULA HORRIFIED

IAIN Honest! Even when you are not there, she just goes in.

PAULA Excuse me, that is not even legal.

IAIN Yeh, well, that is what she does, so you have to hide your stuff

PAULA I think it is against the law

IAIN Yeh?

PAULA It should be too.

IAIN Yeh well, she doesnt care about stuff like that, the law, not if it is her house. Oh eet ees my house! That is what she shouts. One of the old guys was telling me, Ramon, he's a plumber. She is a law to herself, that's what Ramon says, that old lady, she is law to herself.

PAULA Ramon . . . ?

IAIN He's a good old guy. He was saying maybe he could talk for me, like get me a job

PAULA Oh, that is just really really nice of him

IAIN Yeh, he works in construction; his nephew's got a good position there.

PAULA What a nice old man

IAIN Yeh, Ramon. [PAUSE] He's divorced

PAULA Oh. [DISAPPOINTED] Tch

IAIN It was his own fault, that's what he told me.

PAULA SURPRISED] Does he talk to you about it?

IAIN Yeh . . . Well, if he's been drinking.

PAULA FROWNS

IAIN QUICKLY] He's not a big drinker.

PAULA I'm glad

IAIN He says I'm a good listener.

PAULA Are you?

IAIN I don't know. [SHRUGS] Just if it's old people, if you hear them. Well, some of them. They've got good stories.

PAULA NODS] I like hearing them too, and if they go back into history.

IAIN Yeh, just how things used to be, that is what I like. [CHUCKLES] And when Ramon talks, guns and like revolutions all the time

PAULA Oh my God!

IAIN I just find it exciting, it's great listening to him, and then some of the other ones, Charlie, he just tells all sorts, just really good fun, but hard stories as well. Charlie's really old. And the other ones too, you get them laughing and all, it makes them good company. Only just their noises,

PAULA What?

IAIN You have to put up with their noises. Old guys you know?

PAULA STARING AT HIM

IAIN They make these noises

PAULA STILL STARING AT HIM

IAIN [HESITANT] It's how like their wind you know, pardon me, if they're walking up the stairs or else if they're all down in the television lounge and it's a big fight on television or like a football game

PAULA What?

IAIN And they're all in watching it, you know, sitting all together in the same room, maybe having a beer or whatever. [HESITANT] So like if you're sitting there with them and it's like their bellies . . .

PAULA STARING AT HIM

IAIN I mean their stomachs and eh . . . well . . . if it is their eh like rear ends

PAULA DOESN'T HEAR HIM

IAIN Sorry.

PAULA SNIFFS DISCREETLY

IAIN You're a nurse though. [WAITING A COMMENT FROM HER]

PAULA STARES AT HER FEET

IAIN I mean like being a nurse . . . You must be used to it.

PAULA IGNORES HIM. HUMS TUNE TO HERSELF, STRETCHES LEGS,

IAIN UNCERTAIN, WATCHING HER, THEN REALISES THAT SHE IS DELIBERATELY NOT HEARING HIM.

SOUND INTERFERENCE ON THE RADIO AGAIN. BUT THIS RESCUES HIM

IAIN STEPS ACROSS AND GRABS RADIO, SHAKES IT] Goddam thing
[RETURNS IT] You can never get a station worth listening to

PAULA Is that all you have?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA It's so ancient looking. Did one of the old men give you it?

IAIN Eh . . . no . . . [SNIFFS, GUILTILY]

PAULA FROWNS, WAITING FOR MORE

IAIN IS KEEPING THE REAL STORY TO HIMSELF. HE FIDDLES WITH RADIO BUT THE INTERFERENCE IS BAD

IAIN Goddam effing . . . ! [ALMOST LOSES HIS TEMPER, SWITCHES OFF
RADIO] To hell with that! [RETURNS RADIO TO MANTELPIECE]

PAULA JUST WATCHING HIM, RATHER CAUTIOUSLY

IAIN NOTICES] Sorry

PAULA You're impatient aren't you

IAIN I just feel like throwing it out the goddam window, goddam stupid load of
junk. [LIFTS RADIO UP FROM THE MANTELPIECE] Sorry, do you want
it on?

PAULA Oh I don't mind [PUSHES HER LEGS OUT AGAIN, STUDIES THEM,
WIGGLING HER TOES]

IAIN STARING AS SHE DOES THIS

PAULA KNOWS THE EFFECT SHE IS HAVING] I don't mind.

IAIN SLOWLY] Yeh.

PAULA It's warmer now. But it's so quiet. [SHIVERS. PEERS UP AT THE
CEILING. GRADUALLY SHE FROWNS, STILL PEERING UP] What's
wrong with the ceiling? Look, that side isn't painted? See, it's just that old
yellow colour and the other side's white

IAIN LOOKS AWAY FROM HER LEGS, GUILTILY, GAZES UP.

PAULA Why is that?

IAIN LOOKS BACK TO HER LEGS, SURREPTICIOUSLY

PAULA It's a funny kind of colour. [LOOKS STRAIGHT AT HIM

IAIN I don't know. Probably it's from smoke, these old guys all smoke, most of them.

PAULA Oh but not in their room surely, that's not allowed

IAIN Well they don't care.

PAULA Oh but it is the law!

IAIN They don't care about the law. Not the ones in here, some of them are like chain smokers, even in the kitchen

PAULA ASTONISHED] Excuse me? In the kitchen?

IAIN Yeh, you are eating your food and they're in there and smoking away and you think maybe the ash will go into your plate

PAULA AGOG] Huh

IAIN Then if they're coughing, it's just germs everywhere.

PAULA Oh my God

IAIN You should hear them, It's a hooo hooo, a hooo hooo [DOES THE ACTIONS OF A CHESTY SORT OF COUGH] The landlady shouts at them for it but they still do it when she goes away then they spit in the sink

PAULA HORRIFIED] Why doesn't she throw them out?

IAIN Because of her husband. He smokes a pipe, Mister Pernacci. He is always spitting in the sink. So she comes and puts in stuff like what you-call-it down the drain

PAULA Disinfectant

IAIN Yeh. He is like my grandad's age, maybe older

PAULA Huh.

IAIN GAZES UP AT CEILING] The guy in here before me, he was a big smoker too so it might have been him [WAVES HIS HAND AT CEILING] So then if he sat there on the chair underneath [NODS TO HER CHAIR]

PAULA LOOKS DOWN AT HER CHAIR] What happened to him?

IAIN Don't know

PAULA Maybe he died . . . It would be a lung disease, respiratory or else a cancer, if he was a smoker. I was on that ward a few months ago. They die off. It's terrible. You hear them croaking. [PAUSE] My mum used to smoke, she was heavy, she gave it up last Christmas.

IAIN Oh.

PAULA SHIVERS, LOOKS ABOUT] Do you never find it creepy in here?

IAIN Creepy? [THEN QUICKLY] Yeh . . . Yeh . . . [FIRMLY] I do find it creepy,
as a matter of fact

PAULA SURPRISE] You do?

IAIN There are things go bump in the night here. I've heard them.

PAULA Oh ha ha!

IAIN No, honest,

PAULA I don't believe you

IAIN Honest I'm not kidding

PAULA GRINS

IAIN Really.

PAULA You are kidding

IAIN I'm not

PAULA IS PREPARED TO LAUGH, BUT DOESNT; FOLDS HER ARMS WAITING

IAIN You wouldnt believe it but it's true. [CONTINUES IN EXAGGERATED,
STAGEY VOICE] It was one dark winter's evening . . . very late at night and
uh . . . [GAINS CONFIDENCE] it was like cold, just so cold outside and then
misty and with a slow rain falling . . . [DOING GESTURES] a cold drizzle,
drizzling down

PAULA LOUDLY] What?

IAIN WHISPERS] Sshh . . . So this old guy, you saw him like coming out of the
mist just so slowly, dragging his legs, like he a real ancient old man . . . he was
coming home from a bar, late, you know, it was just so very late and still in his
working clothes.

PAULA AGOG

IAIN It was around the time of last century and it was like whohhh! [DOING
THE GESTURES] This aged old man, that was what he was, and he was so
tired like really weary, he had finished his shift and that was him, glad to put
his feet up. He was a navvy

PAULA PUZZLED] Huh?

IAIN That was his trade. That is what they called them back in the olden days. It was like a construction worker, he was building a railroad or something right across the entire country, one sea to the other, and all mud and swampy ground where he worked, the guys all soaked through, tired and cold and muddy . . . that was him, just coming up the stair

IAIN TURNS TO GLANCE ACROSS TO THE DOOR.

PAULA ALSO GLANCES TO TE DOOR] My God . . .

IAIN Maybe he was Irish or like Scottish or something, an old widower guy, his wife had died, away years ago, and he was coming back from the bar just drowning his sorrows, then he got his fish and chips, and here he was coming home, still wearing his working clothes, his big rubber boots and like whatever, a scarf wrapped round his neck and he's just coming up the stair so weary and tired, clump clump, clump clump

PAULA EXCITED) Oh I don't believe you!

IAIN Yeh. And he was singing an old sea-shanty to himself, a real old one, away back from the pirate days and the old sailing ships going across the Seven Seas heading for lands-a-plenty and fighting for buried treasure [DOING ALL THE ACTIONS] And he was humming the tune as he climbed the creaky old staircase and there was an owl hooting up there, and he was making his way along to this very landing [GESTURING AT THE DOOR]

PAULA ENTHRALLED] Huh

IAIN Right to that very door there . . . [GESTURING AT DOOR

PAULA STARING AT THE DOOR, WHISPERS] Oh my . . .

IAIN GAZING AT HER FOR A MOMENT. PAULA DOES NOT NOTICE

IAIN And so, then, just as he passed that very door on his way up, just as he passed it, well, what happened, what happened . . . [TRYING TO THINK OF SOMETHING] Well, he like stopped dead in his tracks right there and then. And he was in complete terror of his life man he was just the most scared ever you saw, you could never get more scared. Because up at the top of that very selfsame stair what did he see but a death's-head!

PAULA PUZZLED] A death's head?

IAIN Yeh . . . whohhh [ALL THE ACTIONS] And it was staring down at him. A death's head. And it was just like laughing at him with these bony teeth and its jaws all scarefied. And that was what it was it was a real death's head as true as you could get. And he was a brave old guy. But that's him and he's like rooted to the spot. And it was right there at the top of these very stairs, right from in the gloom and the dark shadows.

PAULA ENTHRALLED

IAIN Well he let out a blood-curdling scream and went staggering back and toppled right down the steps, right the way down, banging on that very door as he went.

PAULA STARING TO THE DOOR

IAIN And do you know what they say?

PAULA What? [GAZING AT HIM]

IAIN SMILES

PAULA THE SPELL IS BROKEN] Oh you!

IAIN No, honest. To this very day they say it, if you climb these stairs, and it is really late at night, you'll see a death's-head wearing a hat and a pair of rubber boots

PAULA SARCASTIC] Is that what they say! [GRINS] If I believed everything you said . . .

IAIN Well you should because I only tell the truth

PAULA Oh yeh, some hopes [FOLDS HER ARMS, SLIGHT SHIVER)

IAIN Are you cold?

PAULA SIGHS, STARING AT HER TOES

IAIN Want a coffee?

PAULA No

IAIN Tea?

PAULA I don't mind.

IAIN Cup of tea?

PAULA If you're having one.

IAIN Well I'm not but I mean if you eh if you . . .

PAULA Oh I'm not fussy [WIGGLES HER TOES

IAIN SNIFFS, GAZES AT HER LEGS

PAULA CATCHES HIM LOOKING] Oh I meant to say, there are jobs going in the hospital for basic-grade workers. The man you see is a Mister Harvey.

IAIN POLITELY] Mmm

PAULA Oh but he wants people smart.

IAIN PAUSE] What d'you mean?

PAULA Well for clothes, just if you go for an interview with him. He wants people smart, just the way they like dress. I think you would wear a shirt and tie

IAIN Right

PAULA There's definitely jobs going

IAIN LACKING INTEREST] Mm

PAULA'S BEGINS HUMMING A TUNE AGAIN; A BIT SELF CONSCIOUS.

IAIN PRTEENDING INTEREST] What tune is that?

PAULA It's from a musical

IAIN I heard you singing it before

PAULA It's an old one. My mom sang it a lot when I was little.

IAIN I prefer faster numbers.

PAULA You would!

IAIN What?

PAULA SMILES. THEN SUDDEN GLANCE TO DOOR, AND WHISPERS] What was that?

IAIN What?

PAULA WHISPERS] I think somebody's outside the door

IAIN GESTURES TO HER TO BE QUIET, AND CREEPS ACROSS TO THE DOOR]

PAULA HORRIFIED] Oh my God

IAIN Sshh . . . [LISTENING INTENTLY BY THE DOOR]

PAULA Oh don't open the door, please don't

IAIN I'm not going to. [AGAIN LISTENING INTENTLY] No, there's nobody . . .

PAULA Oh are you sure?

IAIN They'll all be in their bed. [OMINOUSLY] Unless maybe . . .

PAULA What?

IAIN It might be the landlady. Sometimes she creeps about. Even in the middle of the night, if you're out at the bathroom, you can bump into her

PAULA Out at the bathroom?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN If you're out at the bathroom [GESTURING AT DOOR] It's along the corridor

PAULA Oh my God!

IAIN It's not too far.

PAULA OVERWHELMED BY THE THOUGHT] You've not got a bathroom . . . !

IAIN Eh . . .well . . .

PAULA But if you're asleep in bed . . . What if you're like asleep in bed . . .

IAIN WAITING FOR HER TO MAKE HER POINT

PAULA And you need to go?

IAIN Eh . . . [STILL DOESN'T GET IT]

PAULA But if you are just in bed and you need to go? what do you do?

IAIN Oh, well, yeh. You just skip along

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN You go fast. You open the door and you look from left to right. If nobody's there you just . . .well, you just step out and then you just like zoom, you skip along fast.

PAULA SHUDDERS] Oh my God

IAIN CONCERNED] Do you need to go?

PAULA SHUDDERS] No

IAIN But it'll be okay if you do, people don't use it through the night, not usually, not unless it's just well . . . [PAUSE]

PAULA What?

IAIN I don't know.

PAULA What do you mean?

IAIN Nothing. Just I mean if somebody needs to go, really needs

PAULA BAFFLED BY ALL THIS, JUST GAZING AT HIM

IAIN But they lock the door if they're using it. So it's like nothing to worry about . . . It's the landlady, if she's prowling about. The old guys won't even hear you. If they do they won't care. It's nothing to them, people in the bathroom. Only the landlady . . . [SUDDEN WORRY] Jees if she sees you, oh man, what a disaster! That would be like a real disaster. She'd throw me out.

PAULA What?

IAIN She would go nuts. She's a Catholic too!

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN Yeh

PAULA I'm a Catholic . . .

IAIN Oh she wouldn't care about that. She is like a real mental case, honest, the way she is, she already told me when she gave me the key to the house. She didn't even want me here in the first place! She really didnt

PAULA Why not?

IAIN Because I'm young.

PAULA INCREDULOUS

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA Well that is not fair, that is just so not fair

IAIN It was only because of her husband she took me in, Mister Pernacci. He goes for a coffee in a wee cafe along the way - same one I go sometimes - so me and him got talking

PAULA SURPRISED] You did?

IAIN SURPRISED BY HER SURPRISE] Yeh

PAULA You just talk to anybody!

IAIN No I don't. It's just people. Old Mister Pernacci, he likes boxing and so do I. It was on the television, and I was watching it too and we were talking, you know. I was saying about the last job I worked and that cook guy and all what happened. [GESTURING WITH HANDS] And then how I was needing a room, I needed out that other place fast, just fast. Oh man, that last house I was living in! They were all friends of that goddam cook guy, all these hotel

people, all like snobby shits and just like oh man I needed to get out of there so fast.

PAULA Oh my God

IAIN Yeh, so I was saying to Mister Pernacci and he was laughing

PAULA Laughing?

IAIN Yeh, he was just like oh ho ho ho, ho ho ho, you know, just like an old guy

PAULA Is he Italian too?

IAIN Yeh, eetaleeano [NB ACTOR SHOULD NOT EXAGGERATE THIS]. He spoke up for me,. He went to the landlady and just like said it to her, here is Iain needing a place to stay, he's got kicked out his job, but he is a good boy

PAULA That was nice of him

IAIN He told me what to say to her, to the landlady; that's his wife, Mrs Pernacci. I had to watch what I said and be very polite. She is just so strict. If I said stuff she didn't like, she would dump me out in the street. It's her runs the place. She is the big boss. That was what Mister Pernacci told me, she is the big boss. He doesn't get involved except if it's like doing handyman jobs, changing fuses or whatever, burst pipes and mending door hinges. She does everything else.

PAULA Does she!

IAIN Yeh. He waited behind the door when I went the first time. to see her. Then in she came just like looked at me [DOING ACTIONS]

PAULA OFFENDED] That doesn't sound right

IAIN I know

PAULA It is kind of like bad manners

IAIN I know.

PAULA How would she like if you were to do it to her? [PAUSE] She would hate it. It is just so typical. People do things to you and don't think what would happen if you did it to them. Just walking round and looking at you!

IAIN No women! [MOCK ITALIAN VOICE, WAGS HIS FINGER] No women. [SHRUGS] I didn't even ask her, she just said it [MOCK ITALIAN VOICE] No women! [WAGS HIS FINGER] No women! [NOW OWN VOICE] And she was wagging her finger at me [DOES ACTION AGAIN] That's how she does it. No women!

PAULA SUDDEN GIGGLES, HAND TO MOUTH

IAIN LAUGHS. THEN HE CUTS IT OFF] Ohh shhh

PAULA Sorry [QUIET GIGGLING FIT] Oh sorry

IAIN Sshhh.

GIR FINDS TISSUE, SNIFFLES INTO IT, COMPOSING HERSELF

IAIN Honest, she'll not have a woman in the house.

PAULA SETS HER OFF GIGGLING AGAIN

IAIN ALSO GIGGLES, STOP HIMSELF] She'll hear us. She's got ears like a goddam elephant.

PAULA FINDS HER TISSUE AND SNIFFLES INTO IT

PAULA But what does she mean by it anyway, not having a woman in the house,?

IAIN Eh . . .

PAULA She must mean something,.

IAIN I suppose she just worries

PAULA UNCOMPREHENDING

IAIN Because it's all men

PAULA SMILES] Yes but it's not all men! [PAUSE] It's not like all men!

IAIN What, in this place? [PAUSE]

PAULA It's all men?

IAIN MATTER-OF-FACT] Yeh

PAULA HORRIFIED] In the whole house?

IAIN I think so

PAULA Oh but that is horrible, that is not allowed, that is just discrimination!

IAIN DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT.

PAULA And it is a woman doing it! My God that is just like so inexcusable, so so inexcusable

IAIN Well, yeh . . . [DEFENSIVELY] except eh I mean . . .

PAULA What?

IAIN Nothing I mean but if you are cleaning up or what I mean . . .

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN Well just . . . if it is like a mess, like a real mess. Not just if it is the kitchen. Even I mean like the bathroom. I've seen messes in there and I mean people have to go in and clean it up, so if it is a woman. It just wouldnt be very nice for her. Even just if it is splashes or whatever

PAULA Splashes . . .!

IAIN She's always shouting about that. Oh you men men men, you are beasts of the field, beasts of the field. That is what she says, Oh you men men men!

PAULA Are you the only young one?

IAIN Yeh. It's just the way she is, her and her husband come from a little village in the very tip of Italy.

PAULA Oh [POLITELY]

IAIN But apart from being strict, really, she's okay

PAULA SMOTHERS A YAWN, STRETCHES

IAIN You get used to her

PAULA Mm [SMOTHERS ANOTHER YAWN, NOW WIGGLING HER TOES

IAIN STARING AT PAULA'S FEET, THEN HER LEGS

PAULA JUST GAZING DOWN AT HER TOES

IAIN SLOWLY] Your legs are beautiful . . .

PAULA SEEMS NOT TO HEAR

IAIN RISES, VERY QUIETLY, WALKS SLOWLY TO BEHIND HER

PAULA SHIFTS IN THE CHAIR SLIGHTLY] Where are you going?

IAIN Just to uh get the clock . . . [IT'S IN THE OTHER END DIRECTION] Uh, eh, it's on the mantelpiece

PAULA GLANCING TO CLOCK] I think it's stopped

IAIN Oh . . . [STOPS BEHIND HER BACK

PAULA CRANES HER HEAD TO SEE BEHIND

IAIN I'm just uh . . . [PUTS HIS HANDS ON HER SHOULDER

PAULA SHIVERS, THEN QUIETLY] What do you think you're doing?

IAIN LEANS DOWN AND KISSES HER ON THE NECK, BUT CAUTIOUSLY

PAULA QUIETLY] What do you think you're doing?

IAIN Nothing [KISSES HER NECK AGAIN] I like your neck

PAULA That's a funny thing to say

IAIN It's nice how it's shaped

PAULA How it's shaped?

IAIN KISSES HER AGAIN ON THE NECK, HIGHER, LIFTING HER HAIR

PAULA Oh . . .

IAIN BEGINS MASSAGING HER SHOULDERS GENTLY

PAULA What do you think you're doing?

IAIN CONTINUES

PAULA ALLOWS HER HEAD TO LOLL WITH THE RHYTHM

IAIN SIGHS. UNBUTTONS THE BACK OF HER BLOUSE, KISSES HER NECK AGAIN.
SLOWLY PUSHES THE BLOUSE OVER HER SHOULDERS]

PAULA What do you think you're doing?

IAIN Just . . . [PLACES BOTH HANDS ON HER BARE SHOULDERS]

PAULA Oh . . . [SWALLOWS]

IAIN NOT SO CAUTIOUSLY NOW] I like your shoulders

PAULA Oh . . .

IAIN They are just, they are just so beautiful. [LEANS AROUND TO KISS HER
ON THE FOREHEAD. THEN FIDDLES WITH HER BRA CLASP,
FUMBLING

PAULA PAUSE] Don't

IAIN Oh, sorry

THE SPELL IS BROKEN HERE AND IAIN WITHDRAWS HIS HANDS. SHUTS AND
OPENS HIS EYES.

PAULA RISES FROM THE CHAIR, HOLDING HER WRISTS AGAINST HER BRA TO
KEEP IT FROM FALLING, AND IGNORES HIM, IN A DELIBERATE MANNER.

IAIN IS AMAZED, JUST WATCHING HER.

PAULA MANAGES TO UNDRRESS TO HER BRIEFS, STILL CONCEALING HER BREASTS. LEAVES HER CLOTHES ON THE BACK OF THE CHAIR AND CLIMBS INTO BED, STILL HOLDING THE BRA TO COVER HERSELF.

PAULA PULLS THE SHEET AND DUVET UP TO HER NECK. NOW SHE DISCARDS HER BRA, DROPPING IT TO THE FLOOR, BUT STILL SHIELDS HER BREASTS. SHE SHIVERS, LOOKS OVER AT IAIN

IAIN WATCHING INTENTLY

PAULA GRINS AND POKES OUT HER TONGUE IN A CHEEKY, GIRLISH MANNER.

IAIN NOW BEGINS TO UNDRRESS, AND IS S SELF CONSCIOUS. HE STOPS AT HIS BOXERS - LOOSE BOXERS, MORE LIKE SHORTS - AND KEEPS ON HIS SOCKS

PAULA LAUGHS, HAND TO HER MOUTH

IAIN What?

PAULA GESTURES AT HIS LEGS] You and your boxers and your skinny legs

IAIN GRINS AND MAKES TO TAKE THE BOXERS OFF

PAULA Oh just leave them on! [LOOKS AWAY FOR A MOMENT

IAIN UNCERTAINLY] Leave them on?

IAIN GAZES DOWN AT THE BOXERS AND THE SOCKS, NOT SURE TO WHICH SHE REFERS

PAULA LAUGHS] Take off your socks

IAIN GRINS AND DISCARDS SOCKS. LOOKS AT HIS FEET FOR A MOMENT.

PAULA GIGGLES WATCHING HIM, HAND TO MOUTH

IAIN ALSO GIGGLES, MOVES QUICKLY INTO BED BESIDE HER

PAULA PULLS SHEETS OVER BOTH IMMEDIATELY] You made the bed bounce!

IAIN Oh sorry

PAULA GIGGLES

IAIN Jees, the landlady, sshhhh, she's got ears like an elephant!

PAULA A FIT OF GIGGLING

IAIN Sshhh [BUT ALSO GIGGLES] she really has, she'll hear you

PAULA Put out the light

IAIN Oh jees [GIGGLING, GETS BACK OUT OF BED AND DOES SO

LIGHTS DULLED HALF-LIGHT

IAIN RETURNS QUICKLY] Ohh [JUMPS IN BESIDE HER]

PAULA What about the fire?

IAIN Leave it on

BOTH SETTLE UNDER THE SHEETS, MOVEMENT OF THEIR FEET

PAULA Oh your feet are like icicles

IAIN So are yours

PAULA GIGGLES

IAIN Shhh

SOUND BOTH OVERCOME BY GIGGLES

IAIN Oh man she rises at the crack of dawn!

PAULA What?

IAIN The goddam landlady, you'll need to like sneak out early, you'll need to be out of here in - oh man what time is it!

PAULA It's only half past two

IAIN Oh no - six o'clock!

PAULA ASTONISHED] Excuse me?

IAIN Six o'clock! You'll need to be out of here at six!

PAULA Oh my God!

IAIN Honest

PAULA Oh well you as well [PUNCHES HIM ON THE CHEST] If I am you are

IAIN No! [FENDING HER OFF] I'll just meet you tomorrow!

PAULA No you won't [PUNCHES HIM ON THE CHEST]

IAIN Yes I will [FENDING HER OFF] Outside the hospital gates

PAULA Well you just better be there!

IAIN Why? What will you do if I don't?

PAULA STARTS PUNCHING HIM

IAIN GIGGLING] Aahh, you're always punching me

PAULA No wonder! If I'm out at six so are you!

IAIN Not me . . .

PAULA ALSO GIGGLES

IAIN Oh sshh

PAULA I can't help it

BOTH OVERCOME BY GIGGLES AGAIN

LIGHTS OUT

IAIN Sshh

PAULA I can't help it

BOTH LAUGHING

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

TIME MID EVENING

PLACE OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE TO HOSPITAL

PAULA DRESSED IN NURSE'S OUTFIT, CHECKS HER WATCH. SHE IS WATCHING FOR IAIN.

ENTER IAIN AT OTHER END OF THE STAGE. THEY DO NOT SEE EACH OTHER. HE IS CARRYING TWO BAGS, ONE IS BIG AND HEAVY; THE OTHER MUCH SMALLER. THESE CONTAIN HIS LIFE'S POSSESSIONS. HE WALKS SLUGGISHLY, AIMLESSLY. HE SITS FOR A REST, THEN RISES TO CONTINUE

PAULA SEES HIM COMING, GIVES A BRIEF WAVE

IAIN ACKNOWLEDGES THE WAVE, SMILES

PAULA SURPRISED LOOK TO SEE THE BAGS

IAIN Yeh [WEARY. NODS AT HER UNIFORM] Still wearing your uniform?

PAULA I have to work on. Someone called in sick.

IAIN Oh

PAULA They asked me to.

IAIN Could they not have asked someone else?

PAULA I don't know. They needed cover. [PAUSE] They asked me.

IAIN WIPES HIS MOUTH WITH HIS WRIST, JUST LOOKING AT HER

PAULA I have to work through. What's wrong?

IAIN SLOWLY] Nothing

PAULA What's wrong? Why have you got the bags?

IAIN IRONIC SIGH, DROPS THE SMALLER BAG TO THE GROUND

PAULA Huh?

IAIN [PAUSE] She kicked me out!

PAULA What?

IAIN The landlady

PAULA She kicked you out!

IAIN Yeh

PAULA My God

IAIN DEFIANTLY] Yeh

PAULA What happened?

IAIN Oh ... [SHRUGS]

PAULA What?

IAIN She just like dumped all my stuff out on the kerb. After I walked you home this morning

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN After I left you, I went straight back to the house. When I got there all my bags were just like lying there on the goddam steps, right outside the front door

PAULA That is awful.

IAIN Yeh

PAULA That is so so awful

IAIN STILL AVOIDING EYE CONTACT] She just dumped them there. Anybody could have come and lifted them, just stole them,

PAULA But she can't do that

IAIN Yeh well she did.

PAULA That is absolutely not fair, it is so so not fair

IAIN Yeh

PAULA It is against the law

IAIN SHRUGS

PAULA Surely!

IAIN LOOKS DIRECTLY AT HER] She cleared out my room. Everything. Just like all my stuff, every damn thing.

PAULA Your food too?

IAIN Food! Jees! Don't talk about food! She must have went right inside the wardrobe. She saw everything! [NOW ASSUMES LANDLADY'S VOICE] Oh you do not put the food in wardrobe!

PAULA My God

IAIN STILL IN LANDLADY'S VOICE] This is bedroom not kitchen!

PAULA PAUSE] So what did you do?

IAIN Well, I just - do you mean this morning?

PAULA The whole day, what have you been doing?

IAIN Walking about.

PAULA Walking about?

IAIN Yeh I mean . . .

PAULA Oh my. What are you going to do?

IAIN SHRUGS. LOOKS UP AT THE SKY

PAULA Where are you going to go?

IAIN I dont know.

PAULA Oh God.

IAIN There isn't really anywhere.

PAULA It's so terrible

IAIN Yeh

PAULA GLANCING AT HER WATCH] Oh God look at the time I have to run. But how could she just do that to you? [POINTING AT HIS BAGS] All your things like that!

IAIN Yeh . . .

PAULA That old woman is a witch, to do something like that. She is just so mean. She is. She is just mean – I would punch her, I would, people being so mean as that, it is just so terrible. I would punch her.

IAIN Well, you can't punch her

PAULA But if she does that to you!

PAULA GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH, SLIGHT AGITATION

IAIN SMILES] She pushed me

PAULA Excuse me?

IAIN Whohhh yeh, she was just like so angry. [IN VOICE] Oh you you you . . . [WAGGING HIS FINGER] Just like wagging her finger at me. Oh you you you [POINTING] Your bags are there! All your things, yes, I pack for you everything, everything. And food is there. Eggs! Oh then she shouted at me. Eggs! You have eggs in my house! Eggs! What is eggs got to do with it,. Whohh! I thought she was going to stab me! Like if she had a knife

PAULA She has no right to touch your things

IAIN I know, but she did

PAULA People just do what they like, it is so bad

IAIN Yeh.

PAULA Surely the police could do something?

IAIN The police!

PAULA Yeh

IAIN The police wouldn't do nothing at all. Except grab me! Even if that old lady stabbed me! I would be lying there and they would grab me! Hey you know she wouldn't let me in the goddam house. She is like, Oh no oh no [DOING THE ACTIONS, WAVING SOMEONE AWAY] You cannot come in here, you are not in my house. I pack here for you. But I've got all my stuff. [WAVING AWAY] Oh no no no, I pack everything, everything. You must leave now, you must leave from my house, you are bad boy

PAULA Oh my God [GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH]

IAIN That is what she said, Oh you are bad boy. I am not a bad boy I says, you can't just throw me out! Then she pushed me! [DOING GESTURES] I am not silly! You think I am silly? I am not silly. [WAGGING FINGER] You are bad boy. You have woman in my house!

PAULA Oh my God . . . [HAND TO MOUTH]

IAIN Yeh, you have woman in my house. She knew. And I'm like no I didn't, no I didn't. And she is like [IN VOICE] Oh you tell me! Don't you tell me! [WAGS FINGER] I tell you no woman, you have woman in my house!

PAULA SIGHS, GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH

IAIN I says it to her, that is not fair. Whohhh! She nearly went off her head! [IN VOICE] You don't tell to me! You don't tell to me! I say to Mister Pernacci

No! No young man. But he says you are good boy, steady boy, hard working. This is how you treat us! This is the way! And Mister Clark, he say he hear noises

PAULA ANXIOUSLY] What!

IAIN He's the old guy in the room up above me. He says he can hear a pin drop. A total goddam lie. I told the landlady. It is not true! [BACK IN VOICE] Oh yes it is true, yes, Mister Clark, he tells me. Mister Clark I says Mister Clark! Whohhhh He is the one goddam liar in the whole house. I know him! He is just a complete goddam liar. That is all he is, he tells lies all the time.

PAULA AGOG

IAIN About your washing too. The landlady hates it if you wash your stuff in the bathroom but people do it, just their socks maybe and their underwear. But he's always got to moan. That old shit Clark, he goes and tells her. [BACK IN VOICE] Oh Mister Clark hear noises! Well he's a liar. If you believe him. I said to her I will go and get that lying old shit right now. If you believe him instead of me, we'll soon see. Oh, she says, you are not nice boy being cheeky to me! I am not being cheeky I said but if Mister Clark is saying stuff about me, he is telling lies. [WAVING HAND] Go now. Go now. You are not nice boy.

PAULA You not nice and she's shrowing you out on the street!

IAIN Exactly. Whohh, I says, what you are doing, throwing somebody into the street like this that is not very nice. Oh she says, don't talk with me - not very nice with woman in my house! Never in many years. [PUSHING ACTIONS] So now she comes towards me and I'm on the steps and she actually just pushed me. Now you go [DOING THE PUSHING ACTIONS] Hey, don't push me, I says, don't push me. But she just pushed me again!

PAULA My God!

IAIN I just laughed. It was just so crazy! Here she is and she is nearly ninety nine years of age!

PAULA What?

IAIN Well I don't know, real ancient, and she is pushing me! Oh you must go now, go now. Can't behave this way in people's houses, if blood is there, don't tell to me

PAULA QUIETLY, AND VERY GUARDED] What?

IAIN STILL IN VOICE] Yes yes, don't tell to me. What would your mother say? You are not nice boy. Please go now, never in many years. [PAUSE] She was just raving, just shouting about stuff . . . [GAZES AT PAULA] I didn't even know what she was talking about, blood is there . . .

PAULA SUBDUED, PULLS NURSE'S CLOAK ABOUT HER SHOULDERS

IAIN TENDERLY] Are you cold?

PAULA A little. [GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH]

IAIN You got to go to work?

PAULA NODS

IAIN REACHES DOWN TO HIS BAGS] She packed everything in. So she said like I mean that's what she said. I hope she did. I haven't looked to see.

IAIN LIFTS THE HEAVY BACKPACK AND ADJUSTS IT, THEN GLANCES AT HER, EXPECTING HER TO COMMENT

PAULA PAUSE, QUIETLY] It is so so not fair

IAIN LOOKS TO HER, BUT AVOIDS EYE CONTACT, LIFTS THE HEAVY ONE TO HIS SHOULDERS

PAULA QUIETLY] Oh God. [GLANCES AT HER WRISTWATCH] What you going to do?

IAIN I don't know. [SMILES TO REASSURE HER]

PAULA CHECKING HER WATCH, AGITATED] I've got to run. Oh God it is my fault, I don't know what to do.

IAIN It's not your fault

PAULA Yes it is.

IAIN No it's not.

PAULA Where are you going to go?

IAIN LOOKS AT THE SKY] I think I need a hat...

PAULA Have you got money? Have you?

IAIN PAUSE] Yeh. Yeh, I've got some

PAULA Oh you haven't, I know you [AGITATED GLANCE LEFT THEN RIGHT] Oh I don't know what to do. [CHECKS HER WATCH. LOOKS AT HIM, SLOWLY] I wish I hadn't agreed to do this shift

IAIN GAZING AT HER

PAULA AVOIDS HIS EYES] I just have to do it

IAIN It's okay

IAIN REACHES TO TOUCH HER WRIST BUT WITHDRAWS, WITHOUT DOING SO.

PAULA APPEARS NOT TO HAVE NOTICED] Sometimes I hate this job.

IAIN Yeh [TUGS UP HIS JACKET COLLAR

PAULA WORRIED] Will you be okay?

IAIN Yeh. I know what I'm going to do

PAULA Oh good.

IAIN I'll call you tomorrow

PAULA ANXIOUSLY] Will you?

IAIN Of course

PAULA SMILES, MOVING AWAY] You better!

PAULA WALKS OFF, TURNS, LOOKS ANXIOUSLY BACK, WAVES]

IAIN WAVES BACK, CHEERILY

PAULA EXITS

IAIN STARES AFTER HER, THEN HALF TURNS, SCRATCHES HIS HEAD,
LOOKS LEFT, THEN RIGHT, ADJUSTS THE HEAVY BAG ON HIS SHOULDERS, HOLDS
THE OTHER ONE, STARTS WALKING

LIGHTS OUT

END