

THE SHOW'S THE THING

A Play

by

Andra Bishop

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

THE SHOW'S THE THING

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CAST

Elizabeth	<i>Dressed in Victorian costume. She is an actress who considers herself a professional amongst amateurs. She has a superior, condescending air about her.</i>
Victoria	<i>Also dressed in Victorian costume. She is a younger actress than Elizabeth. She thinks she should get a bigger role.</i>
Julian	<i>The play's Director. He gradually gets more and more upset as things go wrong.</i>
Deirdre	<i>Julian's secretary. She looks after Julian. A seemingly efficient woman.</i>
Trevor	<i>An actor. He plays Baron Blackheart. He is "new to the acting game". Enthusiastic but not very good.</i>
Maud	<i>Julian's elderly aunt who is supposed to be prompting but constantly loses her place in the script.</i>
John / Tim	<i>The lighting crew. Not very efficient.</i>
Jeremy	<i>An actor. He plays Gordon Goldheart. A pleasant young man.</i>
Miss Primble	<i>The pianist. She spends most of her time knitting away, unsure of what her cue is.</i>
Jeff / Robin	<i>The backstage crew who think nothing of making the scenery on the stage as the actors try to rehearse around them.</i>
Carl	<i>The Stage Manager. He thinks actors get in the way of the production. A coward when faced with a determined lady.</i>
Wilhelmina	<i>The playwright. An earnest lady who believes she has written a masterpiece.</i>
Props	<i>Mandy is an experienced props mistress.</i>

- Sam** *The trainee assistant to the props mistress. Very new to the job.*
- Vicar** *A pleasant and polite gentleman blissfully unaware that he is interrupting the rehearsal.*
- Mrs. Smith / Mrs. Jones / Mrs. Higginbottom** *Three ladies enthusiastic organisers of the church Jumble Sale. Totally ignorant of things theatrical.*
- Bert / Fred** *Two cheerful scene shifters eager to take to the stage as stand up comedians.*
- Mrs. Forbes** *A very pushy mother who thinks her child is another Shirley Temple.*
- Penelope** *Supposedly a child prodigy who, in fact, clams up the minute she is on stage and becomes rooted to the spot with stage fright.*
- Gladys / Beryl** *The two village hall cleaners who just want to get the hall cleaned up before nine o'clock.*
- Miss Crabbe** *A ferocious lady who is chairwoman of the Village Gentlemen's Guild. She will allow no opposition, particularly from men.*
- Miss Feeble** *Miss Crabbe's rather dowdy and mouse like companion.*

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A Village Hall.

Before the Curtains open MISS PRIMBLE seats herself at the piano and begins knitting. JULIAN is sitting on the front row lounging with his legs outstretched. DEIRDRE is sitting beside him busy writing notes.

CURTAINS OPEN

VICTORIA is sitting on a stool. ELIZABETH is standing beside her in classic depressed stance. They are in Victorian costume).

Elizabeth: Oh woe is me. Today our rent money to Baron Blackheart is due. Have you any money, Victoria?

Victoria: My purse is empty, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Then we shall be thrown out onto the streets!

Victoria: Hark! I hear footsteps.

(They stand huddled together looking stage R. There is a pause).

Victoria: *(louder).* Hark! I hear footsteps.

(They resume their position looking stage R. Pause. ELIZABETH starts tapping her foot).

Elizabeth: Where IS the silly fool?

(JULIAN stands up from the AUDIENCE with DEIRDRE at his side).

Julian: Okay, loveys, just hold it for a moment. Trevor, TREVOR, where are you? *(TREVOR appears round Curtain R.)*

Trevor: Sorry Julian. I forgot I was on in this bit.

Elizabeth: I'm sorry Julian. I am not used to working with AMATEURS. I have trod the boards of the PROFESSIONAL stage.

Trevor: Sorry girls, I'm a bit new at this acting lark.

Julian: Now keep calm loveys. DEIRDRE, make a note to go over all Trevor's entrances will you?

Deirdre: Yes Julian.

Julian: Can we go back to Hark! I hear footsteps.

(JULIAN and DEIRDRE sit back in audience. TREVOR exits R. ELIZABETH and VICTORIA resume positions).

Victoria: Hark! I hear footsteps.

(TREVOR enters R).

Trevor: AH HA! Two defenceless sisters at my mercy. *(To JULIAN).* Got the entrance right this time.

Elizabeth: *(throwing herself at TREVOR'S feet).* Oh Baron Blackheart please have mercy on us. We are two defenceless sisters.

Miss Primble: Is that my cue? Is this where they sing their song?

Julian: Not yet Miss Primble, lovey. There's a bit of a way to go yet. Carry on.

Victoria: *(throwing herself at TREVOR'S feet).* Please give us longer to find the rent money.

(There is a pause. ELIZABETH and VICTORIA look at each other then mouth at TREVOR).

Trevor: Pardon?

(ELIZABETH and VICTORIA mouth at TREVOR again).

Trevor: What? Oh, it's my line. Sorry Julian.

Elizabeth: *(getting to her feet).* And WHERE is the prompt?
(MAUD peeps round Curtain L).

Maud: I'm sorry Julian dear. I seem to have lost my place in the book.

Julian: Deirdre, go and find Aunt Maud's place for her.

Deirdre: Yes, Julian.

(DEIRDRE goes up on stage).

Maud: The light is so bad backstage Julian dear. My eyesight isn't quite what it used to be. The words just seem to jump up and down.

Victoria: I blame Julian for asking his old aunt to prompt for us.

Elizabeth: I have never experienced such incompetence in all my career.

Maud: Are your lighting people here Julian dear?

(JULIAN walks up on stage).

Julian: John, Tim, are you out there?

John: *(from back of AUDIENCE).* What do you want Julian?

Deirdre: Julian's Aunt Maud would like a word with you.

(JOHN and TIM walk through AUDIENCE to stage with a cup and a sandwich in their hands).

Tim: What is it? We were in the middle of our tea break.

Maud: Can you fix me up a little light backstage dears? These glasses can't work well in my dim little cubbyhole.

John: It's SUPPOSED to be dark backstage.

Julian: Just sort it out will you?

Tim: We'll give it a go but I warn you it could overload the electrical system.

John: I've never heard of setting lights up BACKSTAGE.

(JOHN and TIM exit L).

Maud: I'll just sit on the side of the stage if you don't mind Julian dear. I can see here. I'll go back into my little cubbyhole when they've fixed me up a light.

(MAUD gets a chair and sits L).

Trevor: We'll just act round her shall we Julian?

Elizabeth: *(to VICTORIA).* He couldn't act his way round a ball of string.

(JEREMY enters R).

Jeremy: Can we get on now Julian? I've been hanging around for ages waiting for my entrance.

Julian: Certainly, certainly. Come on Deirdre. Has Aunt Maud got the right page now?

Deirdre: Yes Julian.

Julian: Let's continue then. Take it from Please give us longer to find the rent money.

(JULIAN and DEIRDRE sit back in AUDIENCE. ELIZABETH and VICTORIA fall on their knees again).

Victoria: Please give us longer to find the rent money.

Trevor: This is the line I can't remember.

Maud: No.

Trevor: Pardon?

Maud: You say no.

Trevor: Oh, right, NO!

Elizabeth: Oh, will no one save us from this wicked man?

(Enter JEREMY R.).

Jeremy: Fear not ladies, it is I, Gordon Goldheart, at your service.

Miss Primble: Is that my cue?

Julian: Not yet Miss Primble.

Trevor: Leave this house you impudent dog!

Jeremy: Not until these ladies are safe.

(Enter JOHN from L with electric cable He goes slowly across the stage in front of ACTORS).

John: Slowly does it Tim. Let it out gently.

(TIM appears L).

Tim: Where will you plug it in?

John: *(pointing R).* The only free socket is over here.

Jeremy: I say chaps, it's a bit difficult acting with you snaking cables across the place.

Tim: We won't be long. Just ignore us.

(JEFF and ROBIN enter R with a piece of scenery. They lay it on stage and start hammering. JOHN continues unravelling cable, until he exits R. TIM exits L. ACTORS stand open mouthed. JULIAN runs up on to the stage closely followed by DEIRDRE).

Julian: What ARE you doing?

Robin: Hammering.

Julian: What are you hammering?

Jeff: Your scenery mate.

Julian: You can't do it now. We're rehearsing.

Robin: *(looks around)*. You could have fooled me!

Julian: Deirdre, get the stage manager.

(DEIRDRE exits R).

Maud: Can I just go to the little girl's room Julian dear? At my time of life one can't go very long, you know, without a visit.

Julian: Yes, yes, go.

(MAUD exits down into auditorium and out the back of the theatre. ROBIN and JEFF resume hammering. ACTORS cover their ears. Enter DEIRDRE and CARL, the stage manager R).

Carl: Hold it lads.

(ROBIN and JEFF stop hammering).

Julian: I thought you and your stage crew were coming into the hall last night to do the scenery.

Carl: We couldn't get in mate. The ballet class were in. We didn't want to mess with the ballet teacher, she's a real dragon!

Jeremy: But you can't do the scenery while we're on the stage.

Carl: Get off it then! *(ROBIN and JEFF laugh)*.

Julian: Deirdre, get me a couple of aspirins will you? I feel one of my headaches coming on.

(DEIRDRE exits L).

Jeff: Do you want scenery in this play? If so you've got to let us get on with it.

(ELIZABETH storms up to them).

Elizabeth: Pick up that scenery.

Robin: Yes ma'am.

Elizabeth: Get it off this stage.

Jeff: Yes ma'am.

(CARL, ROBIN and JEFF take the scenery down to the floor in front of the stage. They begin to hammer).

Elizabeth: NO!

Jeff/ Carl/Robin: Sorry! *(They stay crouched round the scenery. Maybe get out sandwiches and a flask. Enter DEIRDRE L).*

Deirdre: Here's your aspirin Julian.

Julian: Now, can we PLEASE continue.

(JULIAN and DEIRDRE sit back in AUDIENCE. MAUD enters from back of auditorium)

Maud: COO EE! Wait for me! *(talks to AUDIENCE as she comes through the hall to stage)*. You need to take a tissue with you ladies. The little girl's

room has run out of paper.
(*MAUD sits back down on the left of the stage. ACTORS resume positions*).
Trevor: Leave this house you impudent dog!
Jeremy: Not until these ladies are safe.
Trevor: Forsooth sir.
Jeremy: You wicked scoundrel.
Trevor: (*to JULIAN*). I say.
Victoria: Now what?
Trevor: These lines are a bit of a mouthful aren't they? They're so old fashioned.
Wilhelmina: (*from the AUDIENCE*). It's set in Victorian times. It's Victorian language.
Jeremy: Trevor's right. These words are too old fashioned. The audience won't understand what we're on about.
Trevor: And they're terribly difficult to remember.
Wilhelmina: (*standing up*). How dare you blame the lines for your inability to remember them?
Jeremy: Who are you?
(*WILHELMINA comes on stage*).
Wilhelmina: I am Wilhelmina Slackspur. I WROTE this play.
Maud: You have a lot to answer for!
Wilhelmina: It took a whole year of blood, sweat and tears to get these lines on paper. This is my masterpiece. '*The Sad Story of Two Sisters, a Victorian Melodrama*', by Wilhelmina Slackspur.
Carl: I prefer something a bit more modern myself.
Robin: Yeah, me and the missus never miss Eastenders.
Jeff: We prefer Coronation Street.
John: (*sticking his head out stage R*). I like a good film. I've seen all the Rocky movies.
Tim: (*sticking his head out stage L*). I prefer Schwarzenegger.
Wilhelmina: Philistines!
Maud: I like a nice bit of opera.
Victoria: Since you're here Miss Slackspur...
Wilhelmina: MS Slackspur.
Victoria: I really think MY part should have a few more lines. The part of Victoria seems considerably smaller than the part of Elizabeth.
Elizabeth: My dear girl, that is because I am the star!
Victoria: You most certainly are not!
Elizabeth: I have always taken a professional approach. I'm an old hand at the acting game.
Victoria: You're certainly old, yes.

(VICTORIA and ELIZABETH start to fight. TREVOR separates them).

Trevor: Ladies, this is very disagreeable.

Victoria: *(to WILHELMINA).* Will you give me more lines?

Wilhelmina: I could try I suppose.

Jeremy: You can't change the script at this late stage.

Wilhelmina: Why not? Most of you weren't keeping to the script anyway!

(JULIAN gets up and goes on stage, followed by DEIRDRE).

Julian: Wilhelmina lovey. I can call you Wilhelmina, can't I?

Wilhelmina: NO.

Julian: Listen lovey. The show is being performed next week. We can't change the script now, much as we might want to.

Wilhelmina: And what do you mean by that?

Julian: Well, some of it isn't really very good is it lovey, if we were really being truthful?

Maud: I can't make head nor tail of it.

Deirdre: It's good enough for a little village show of course. The audience are only here to see members of their family taking part, so it doesn't really matter how bad the script is.

Wilhelmina: Bad! BAD!

Miss Primble: Is that my cue?

Everyone: NO MISS PRIMBLE.

Wilhelmina: I have never been so insulted in all my life.

Elizabeth: You surprise me.

Wilhelmina: I am leaving! But before I go let me say I have never, in all my career as a playwright, even taking my name from the Immortal Bard, I have never seen such a shambles. How you have the audacity to call yourselves actors I shall never know, You should be had up under the trades description act. You have turned my masterpiece into a piece of rubbish. You shall be hearing from my solicitors. *(WILHELMINA exits L).*

Trevor: Perhaps she ate something that disagreed with her.

Maud: She probably didn't take a tissue with her to the little girl's room.

Julian: Let us rise above these petty distractions. Carry on.

(JULIAN and DEIRDRE sit back down. ACTORS resume positions).

Jeremy: Just before we start Julian. I don't seem to have my sword.

Julian: PROPS!

(PROPS, MANDY, enter L).

Props: What's the matter?

Jeremy; I haven't got my sword.

Props: SAM! *(SAM enters R).* Sam, didn't I tell you to make sure all the props

were laid out on the shelf stage right?

Sam: Yes Mandy.

Props: Then where is Mr. Jeremy's sword?

Sam: Sorry Mandy.

Props: Go and get it, quickly. (*SAM exits R*). I'm sorry about that Julian. He's new. He's very keen but he doesn't realise everything that's involved in being responsible for the props. (*SAM enters R*).

Sam: Here it is.

(*JEREMY takes sword*).

Victoria: Can we PLEASE start now?

Deirdre: Clear the stage.

(*PROPS and SAM exit R*).

Trevor: Leave this house you impudent dog!

Jeremy: Not until these ladies are safe.

Trevor: Forsooth sir.

Jeremy: You wicked scoundrel. (*They draw their swords*).

Vicar: (*from back of AUDITORIUM*). Hold on a minute.

Julian: (*stands up*). Now what?

(*VICAR walks up to stage through AUDIENCE*).

Vicar: Good evening, good evening. How wonderful to see so many people working together enjoying themselves.

Miss Primble: Is it the song now?

Julian: No Miss Primble. Patience please.

Vicar: (*to JULIAN*). I hope you don't mind us intruding like this but it's the church jumble sale tomorrow in this hall. Some of my ladies thought it would be a good idea to bring along the jumble this evening so it's not such a rush tomorrow morning. (*calls*). Come along ladies.

(*MRS. SMITH, MRS. JONES and MRS. HIGGINBOTTOM enter from the back of the AUDITORIUM dragging in bags of jumble. They carry them onto the stage*).

Vicar: Don't mind us will you? You just carry on while we sort a few things out.

Elizabeth: I don't believe this is happening!

Vicar: (*to ELIZABETH and VICTORIA*) How splendid you two young ladies look. I always had a dream of treading the boards you know. In my youth I was quite a Thespian. Now I put on two shows every Sunday! (*He laughs at his own joke. The ACTORS scowl*).

Mrs. Smith: Just put the bags down here girls.

Mrs. Jones: We've got a nice lot of things donated this year.

Mrs. Higginbottom: We'll soon have the roof repaired vicar if we get all this lot sold.

Mrs. Smith: (*holds up baby outfit*). Well, take a look at this.

Mrs. Jones: What's the matter?

Mrs. Smith: This used to belong to my little Johnny.

Mrs. Higginbottom: It's ten years old then. It's worn well.

Mrs. Jones: How do you know it's your Johnny's after all these years?

Mrs. Smith: He was always crawling off so I sewed this little rhyme onto his outfit:

If this little lad should roam
Please return him safely home

And then I put our address on the label at the back, see?

(*MRS. JONES and MRS. HIGGINBOTTOM look at outfit*).

Mrs. Higginbottom: So it is.

Vicar: (*to ACTORS*). You should have a look through these bags. I'm sure you'd find something suitable for costumes.

Mrs. Jones: (*holding up an Indian Squaw's outfit*) How about this?

Victoria: It's hardly right for a Victorian Melodrama, is it?

Mrs. Jones: Suit yourself.

Carl: Julian, if you've stopped rehearsing now can we get on with this scenery?

(*CARL, ROBIN and JEFF begin to hammer*).

Julian: No, no. Stop that hammering. Continue with the rehearsal. Where had we got to Aunt Maud?

Maud: You wicked scoundrel.

Vicar: I beg your pardon? Are you talking to me?

Jeremy: No Vicar. It's my line. Just move out of the way a bit will you? You're in the way of our fight.

Vicar: Oh don't mind me.

Jeremy: You wicked scoundrel!

Trevor: I'm going to teach you a lesson. (*They draw swords and begin to fight. MRS. HIGGINBOTTOM is bending over bag sorting out jumble. All lights go out. TREVOR stabs her*).

Mrs. Higginbottom: Aaaaah! I've been stabbed!

Jeremy: What on earth is going on?

Julian: Will somebody PLEASE put the lights on?

Vicar: Don't panic everybody. Stay exactly where you are.

Victoria: I don't like the dark.

Maud: Julian dear, I've lost my place in the script again.

(*The lights come on again. MRS. HIGGINBOTTOM is lying down on the stage moaning. JOHN enters R, TIM enters L*).

John: Sorry about that Julian. I just plugged in that light for your Aunt Maud.

Tim: You overloaded the system John. But it's all right. I've mended the fuse.

(TIM and JOHN exit L).

Elizabeth: Why is that woman lying on the stage?

Mrs. Smith: Mavis, Mavis, are you all right?

Mrs. Jones: You've killed her!

Vicar: Speak to us Mrs. Higginbottom. Oh, what a calamity!

Mrs. Higginbottom: Send for an ambulance.

Trevor: I'm most terribly sorry. I tripped when the lights went out and stabbed her with my sword.

Elizabeth: Oh for goodness sake you stupid woman, it's only a plastic sword. It's a stage prop, not the real thing.

Mrs. Smith: Come on Mavis, up you get.

Mrs. Jones: How do you feel dear?

Mrs. Higginbottom: Oh I do feel funny. I'm all shaky.

Vicar: It's the shock. Come along ladies, let's go back to the vicarage for a nice cup of tea to calm our nerves. It's rather too dangerous up here.

Mrs. Higginbottom: *(to TREVOR).* You want to be more careful where you're putting that thing young man.

(VICAR and his LADIES exit through AUDIENCE and out through AUDITORIUM).

Julian: Props, remove these bags of rubbish will you.

Props: This isn't really our job you know.

Jeremy: I'm sorry Julian, can we take a break? I've completely lost track of the whole thing now.

Julian: All right everyone, take five.

(JEREMY, TREVOR, ELIZABETH, VICTORIA, MAUD, JULIAN and DEIRDRE exit L).

Carl: *(shouts offstage from the hall floor).* Bert, Fred, bring in that other bit of scenery will you?

(Enter BERT and FRED from R. with piece of scenery. They bring it to middle of stage).

Bert: Here you are then. Is this all right?

Fred: We finished it off round the back.

Carl: Just set it up will you?

Bert: Where does it go?

Robin: Oh just put it anywhere. Julian won't notice.

(JOHN and TIM rewind cable back across stage from R. to L).

Fred: Okay then John?

John: Yeah. I'll be glad when all this is over though.

Tim: Julian's Aunty Maud is just going to have to do without her backstage light.

(TIM and JOHN exit L)

Bert: Let's put it here Fred.

Fred: Looks okay to me.

Bert: What's it being held up with?

Fred: I dunno. Haven't you brought any screws?

Bert: You never told me to.

Fred: Got any string?

Bert: No.

Fred: Never mind. We'll just stand here and hold it up ourselves. *(They stand on either side of scenery).*

Bert: Hey Fred.

Fred: Yes Bert?

Bert: I always fancied meself as a bit of an actor.

Fred: I never knew that. Well, you've got the stage all to yourself mate. Have a go.

Bert: Shall I?

Fred: Yeah, go on. I'll hold the scenery for you.

(BERT moves downstage and stands awkwardly. Shyly he tells a joke).

Bert: My dog has no nose.

Fred: How does it smell?

Bert: Terrible. *(FRED, CARL, ROBIN and JEFF laugh).*

Fred: That was great. My go now.

Bert: Hang on. Wait till I've got hold of that scenery.

(FRED moves downstage. He is more confident. He tells a joke).

Fred: Every day my dog and I go for a tramp in the woods.

Bert: Does the dog enjoy it?

Fred: Oh yes, but the tramp is a bit fed up.

(BERT, CARL, ROBIN and JEFF laugh. JULIAN, DEIRDRE, MRS. FORBES and PENELOPE enter L).

Julian: What do you think you're doing?

Deirdre: Go away.

Bert/Fred: Sorry.

(BERT and FRED return to holding up the scenery).

Mrs. Forbes: I must insist that you do Penelope's scene now Julian. She's been kept hanging around long enough.

Julian: What about the other actors?

Deirdre: They're still down the pub.

Julian: Very well Mrs. Forbes, by all means let us see Penelope's scene now.

Mrs. Forbes: Remember Penelope, stand up straight, open your mouth wide, speak clearly.

(JULIAN and DEIRDRE sit back in AUDIENCE. MRS. FORBES stands to L of stage. PENELOPE stands awkwardly in middle of stage. There is an embarrassed silence).

Julian: Come along then Penelope. *(PENELOPE stays silent).* Deirdre, do something with her.

(DEIRDRE goes up on stage).

Deirdre: Come on Penelope dear. What are you waiting for? *(PENELOPE whispers to her).* She says she's waiting for the piano.

Mrs. Forbes: Of course she is. She's the little flower seller and she sings a song all about red roses and blue lavender. Has the pianist gone to sleep?

Julian: MISS PRIMBLE! It's your turn now.

Miss Primble: Oh goodness me! I'm sorry Julian. Right you are. Here we go.

(MISS PRIMBLE starts to play. PENELOPE is silent).

Deirdre: Come on little girl. Don't be shy.

Mrs. Forbes: Of course she's not shy. She's been going to Drama classes for the past year. She's had all the shyness knocked out of her.

Miss Primble: We'll try it again shall we? After 3. One, two, three.

(MISS PRIMBLE starts to play. PENELOPE is silent).

Julian: They warn you never to work with children or animals. I can see why. Do something Deirdre.

Deirdre: Would you like a sweetie Penelope? *(PENELOPE nods).* You would? Say yes please then.

Penelope: Yeth pleath.

Deirdre: Well Penelope, you can have a sweetie if you sing your song.

Mrs. Forbes: Come on Penelope. We've practised and practised at home. Don't let the lights and the fact that all these people are watching you put you off.

Miss Primble: Are we ready then? Off we go.

(MISS PRIMBLE starts to play. PENELOPE is silent).

Mrs. Forbes: I'm warning you Penelope. Your Drama teacher gave me a GLOWING report of you. She said she'd never had anybody like you in the group ever before. She says you're unique. You're going to be a second Bonnie Langford. Open your mouth and get on with it.

Julian: Get her off Deirdre.

Mrs. Forbes: She's just got a bit of stage fright, Julian. She's such a SENSITIVE child. It'll be all right on the night Julian. Penelope was BORN to be a star.

Julian: Get her off.

(DEIRDRE tries to remove PENELOPE. She won't move, frightened rigid to the spot).

Mrs. Forbes: You were my passport to fame and riches Penelope. You were going

to be another Judy Garland. We were going to travel the world.

Julian: Get her off.

Deirdre: I can't budge the child Julian.

Carl: We'll sort it out Julian. Bert, Fred, shift her.

(DEIRDRE holds on to scenery. BERT and FRED lift PENELOPE off R, followed by MRS. FORBES. Enter GLADYS and BERYL from back of AUDITORIUM. They have mops and buckets and proceed to clean the floor up to and around JULIAN. They sing snatches of a well known pop song).

Miss Primble: Is that my cue?

Deirdre: No Miss Primble.

Julian: Ladies, what are you doing?

Gladys: What does it look like we're doing? We're cleaning up.

Beryl: And you haven't half made a mess, haven't they Gladys?

Gladys: They have Beryl. It'll take us all night to get this place to rights.

Beryl: We'd better start now. *(BERYL shoots mop under JULIAN'S legs).*

Julian: You can't clean up yet. We're still rehearsing.

Gladys: We have to be in and out by nine or it's double time mate.

Beryl: The sooner we start the sooner we're finished and my varicose veins are giving me gyp.

Gladys: So clear your bits and pieces away and let us get on with our job.

Beryl: It'll take us a good half an hour to pack away all these chairs.

Gladys: *(to AUDIENCE).* And just look at the mess you've made on the floor.

Beryl: I don't know where some of you were dragged up, the things you leave behind.

Julian: Go away, go away, go away!

Deirdre: Now calm down Julian.

Gladys: Yeah. Don't get your knickers in a twist.

Beryl: Ooooh! That's a good one Gladys. You should be on the stage. You'd make a great comedian.

(BERT and FRED enter R to tell jokes).

Bert: Did someone say they wanted a comedian? Did you know dolphins are so intelligent that within a few weeks of captivity they can train a human to stand at the edge of their pool and throw them fish three times a day.

Fred: A cannibal came home to find his wife chopping up a snake and a very small man. "Oh no", he moaned, "Not snake and pygmy pie again".

Bert: Did you hear about the vegetarian cannibal?.... He only ate swedes!

Fred: What's red and stupid? A blood clot!

Gladys: Oh they're ever so good, aren't they? Are they the stars of your little show then?

Julian: No they are not. They are the scene shifters. *(to BERT and FRED).* Hold

that scenery up.
(BERT and FRED do so).

Beryl: Temper, temper. Tell you what, we're not unreasonable. I'll go and rest my varicose veins for half an hour while you finish your play.

Julian: *(sarcastically)*. Thank you. Thank you SO much. Deirdre get everyone on stage.

(GLADYS and BERYL exit R).

Deirdre: *(calls)*. Everyone on stage please. Everyone on stage.
(JEREMY, TREVOR, ELIZABETH, VICTORIA and MAUD enter L).

Elizabeth: *(to BERT and FRED)*. What are you doing?

Fred: Holding up the scenery.

Victoria: Ask a silly question.

Deirdre: You just relax Julian. Are those aspirins working yet? *(She sits him down)*. I'll get everything sorted out for you. *(to ACTORS)*. Come along ladies and gentlemen places please.
(Enter MISS CRABBE and MISS FEEBLE from back of AUDITORIUM).

Miss Crabbe; YOU THERE! What are you doing on the stage?

Deirdre: We are rehearsing a play.

Robin: We're building the scenery.

Tim: We're setting up the lights.

Fred: We're holding up the scenery.

Miss Crabbe: Oh no you're not.

Everyone else: Oh yes we are.

Elizabeth: This is getting more and more like a pantomime.

Miss Crabbe: Miss Feeble, what is the date today?

Miss Feeble: May the fourth Miss Crabbe.

Miss Crabbe: EXACTLY. And what does the diary say for May 4th Miss Feeble?

Miss Feeble: Meeting of the Village Gentlewomen's Guild in Village Hall, Miss Crabbe.

Miss Crabbe: EXACTLY. Now, get off this stage.

Trevor: My dear woman we have booked this hall for our Dress Rehearsal.

Miss Crabbe: Don't you dear woman me, you lout! Get off this stage.

Miss Feeble: *(showing diary to ACTORS)*. There it is you see, in black and white, Village Gentlewomen's Guild. WE have booked the hall for tonight.

Miss Crabbe: *(to CARL, ROBIN and JEFF)*. You three, get up on this stage and set up my chairwoman's table.
(CARL, ROBIN and JEFF go on stage and bring on table).

Miss Feeble: Just set it up at the front of the stage here. *(They do so)*.

Miss Crabbe: *(to MAUD)*. Get up off that chair. I shall be using that.
(MAUD gets up. MISS FEEBLE puts chair by table).

Carl: Well Julian, it looks as if you won't be needing us anymore. Me and the lads are off.

Robin/Jeff: Bye.

(CARL, ROBIN and JEFF exit R).

Maud: Julian dear, I really can't be expected to stand for any length of time, not at my time of life.

Miss Feeble: Let me help you out dear.

(MAUD and MISS FEEBLE exit L).

Miss Crabbe: *(Looking off L).* You two men skulking about in the shadows there, come out. *(JOHN and TIM enter L).* Now clear off!

(JOHN and TIM exit R. MISS FEEBLE enters L).

Miss Feeble: *(to BERT and FRED)* Put that bit of scenery away will you and bring on our Gentlewomen's Guild shield. It's just round the back there.

(BERT and FRED take out scenery R and return with shield which they hold where they had been holding scenery).

Julian: I don't believe this is happening to me. You booked the hall for us Deirdre, didn't you?

Deirdre: I thought YOU'D booked it Julian.

Julian: You're my secretary. Booking things is YOUR job.

Deirdre: I'm sorry Julian.

Julian: You're fired! *(DEIRDRE exits L, crying).*

Miss Primble: Is that my cue Julian?

Julian: SHUT UP MISS PRIMBLE!

Miss Primble: Well, If you're going to take that tone I withdraw my services as pianist. Your wretched little play will be musicless. *(She shuts piano lid, puts away her knitting and stands up).* I'm going to take my place in the audience and attend the meeting of the Village Gentlewomen's Guild. It looks INFINITELY more exciting than what I've seen so far. *(MISS PRIMBLE goes to sit at back of AUDIENCE).*

Jeremy: Is that it then Julian?

Trevor: It's all over is it?

Julian: *(comes up on stage).* No it is NOT over. We WILL finish this rehearsal. PROPS!

(MANDY and SAM enter R).

Props: What's the matter?

Julian: Hand out the swords again. We will do the fight sequence.

Miss Crabbe: Over my dead body.

Elizabeth: If necessary.

(MANDY gives JEREMY his sword. SAM gives TREVOR a sword he did not use

last time).

Julian: Props, remove the excess baggage.

(MANDY twists MISS FEEBLE'S arm behind her back and they exit R. SAM makes to grab MISS CRABBE).

Miss Crabbe: You lay one finger on me young man and you'll be sorry. I'm a black belt in Ju Jitsu.

(SAM backs away and runs off R).

Victoria: *(to MISS CRABBE)* This won't take long now. Gordon Goldheart slays Baron Blackheart and it's all over.

Julian: From the top then.

Jeremy: You wicked scoundrel!

Trevor: I'm going to teach you a lesson.

(They draw swords and fight. TREVOR trips and stabs MISS CRABBE who collapses over the table).

Miss Crabbe: Aaaah!

Trevor: I'm terribly sorry. I tripped.

(MISS FEEBLE runs in R).

Miss Feeble: She's been stabbed. You've killed her!

Elizabeth: Oh for goodness sake. How many times do we have to explain to you people? The sword is a prop. It is made of plastic. It is not real.

Miss Feeble: I am fully trained by the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and I tell you she's dead.

Victoria: She does look rather LIFELESS, doesn't she?

Jeremy: I say, Julian. I think she really has been stabbed!

Julian: PROPS!

(Enter MANDY and SAM R).

Props: NOW what's the matter?

Julian: Who gave Trevor the sword?

Sam: I did.

Trevor: You gave me a REAL sword.

Props: Oh Sam. Did you take it from the props shelf?

Sam: No. I saw it lying about in the cupboard. I thought any old sword would do.

Props: You can't blame him, he's new to the job. Better pick it up, clean it and put it back Sam so no one's any the wiser.

Sam: *(Picks up sword).* Sorry everybody.

Props: Come along Sam, you'll know better next time.

(MANDY and SAM exit R).

Miss Feeble: Next time! Isn't anybody going to do anything about poor Miss Crabbe?

Elizabeth: There's not much that CAN be done is there? Her hair was a mess, her

make up frightful and I shudder to think where she got those clothes.

Fred: Can we put this shield down now?

Miss Feeble: I suppose so. I think we'll have to cancel tonight's meeting of the Village Gentlewomen's Guild. Miss Crabbe was going to give us a talk entitled 'Men, Why on earth were they invented?'

Bert: I tell you what, why don't you have Fred and me to talk?

Fred: Yeah. We're great stand up comedians.

Bert: We'll have them laughing in the aisles.

Miss Feeble: What a wonderful idea. The meeting will be saved.

Fred: Come on then. Let's discuss what sort of jokes you want.

(MISS FEEBLE, BERT and FRED exit L).

Trevor: Well I didn't think the rehearsal went too badly on the whole.

Julian: You were all absolutely marvellous.

Elizabeth: As we professionals always say, bad Dress Rehearsal, good performance.

Jeremy: All down the pub then.

Victoria: I would like to discuss with you Julian about adding just a couple more lines to my part.

(TREVOR, JULIAN, ELIZABETH, JEREMY and VICTORIA exit R. Enter GLADYS and BERYL L).

Beryl: Well, they took long enough to clear out.

Gladys: Yes. I've gone through a whole packet of jelly babies.

Beryl: And just look at the state of the place. Bits of scenery left lying around.

Gladys: A shield.

Beryl: A table.

Gladys: A chair.

Beryl: They've got shocking habits these theatricals.

Gladys: *(pointing at MISS CRABBE).* And if they think I'm cleaning THAT up they've got another think coming.

Beryl: It's a disgrace. I've got a good mind to down mop and bucket Gladys.

Gladys: I'll join you Beryl. Our contract says nothing about removing bodies.

Beryl: Come back to my place and I'll put my varicose veins up while you open another packet of jelly babies.

Gladys: Right you are Beryl.

(They move to back of stage and then turn back to look at AUDIENCE).

Beryl/Gladys: The theatre, RUBBISH!

(BERYL and GLADYS exit R).

THE END