

AUDITION PACKET

NOISES OFF

AUDITION DATES: FEBRUARY 2, 6:30-8:30PM AND FEBRUARY 3, 6:30-8:30PM
at the Sharon Stark Auditorium at West Hills
560 Dunnell Drive Owatonna, MN

Hello, my name is Zackery Knapton, I will be the director for Noises Off, and I thank you for considering auditioning for LTO's Spring Play, Noises Off. At auditions, please feel free to wear anything you would like that is comfortable and appropriate. Costumes are not necessary for the audition. We have provided segments from the show that you will be asked to perform at the theatre for your audition. You will interact with others who are auditioning and each person will be asked to play a different role. You may be asked to play a role you are not planning on auditioning for, this is just to be able to see as many people in as many of the roles as possible.

If callbacks are needed, they will take place on Tuesday, February 4. Everyone who auditions will receive a call from me on Thursday or Friday about whether or not you have been cast in the show. If you are cast, we will have a read-through on February 17 at 6:30pm. Rehearsals will begin on February 24 at 6:30pm. Rehearsals will be Monday - Thursday from 6:30-9pm in the Sharon Stark Auditorium in West Hills at Little Theatre of Owatonna from Feb 24 until opening night on April 25. Tech Sunday will be on April 13 and should be the only weekend rehearsal unless otherwise needed.

Thank you again for choosing to audition for Noises Off!



Little Theatre of Owatonna

Audition Number

AUDITION FORM

Show: Noises Off

Show Dates: April 25-27 & May 2-4

Preferred Name: _____

Age: _____ Height: _____

Phone(s): _____ Email: _____

Recent Theatre Experience or Roles: Attach resume if you'd like.

_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____
_____	Theatre	_____	Year	_____

Role You're Auditioning for: _____

2nd Choice: _____ 3rd Choice: _____

Would you consider other roles? YES NO

If auditioning for the roles of Frederick or Brooke: Are you comfortable with minimal nudity? YES NO

Anything else you'd like us to know?

Other opportunities with us:

If not cast as a performer, are you interested in helping with the production in another area? YES NO

Other Theatre Skills – Circle any that apply:

- SET PAINTING ARTISTIC EFFECTS MAKEUP HAIR SPECIAL EFFECTS PROPS
- SEWING/COSTUMES SET BUILDING FRONT OF HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY MUSIC LIGHTBOARD
- SPOTLIGHT SOUND BOARD LIGHT/SOUND DESIGN STAGE CREW GENERAL AWESOMENESS

Your preferred contact info:

Preferred Name: _____ Phone: _____

Text: YES NO Best time of day to contact: _____

Email Address: _____

Potential medical or other conditions to note:

Are you currently performing/ rehearsing anything now? If so, please note any possible scheduling conflicts below.

Are there any other potential scheduling conflicts you are currently aware of? Please list below.

How did you hear about our auditions?

NEWSPAPER FACEBOOK INSTAGRAM LTO WEBSITE FRIEND OTHER

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name: _____

Parent or Guardian info (If Under 18): _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

Safety Volunteer Background Checks must be completed for all volunteers 18 years and older at no cost and will be completed every 3 years.

Thank you for auditioning!

Character Descriptions:

Dotty Otley (40-60) - A late-middle-aged actress. Plays Mrs. Clackett, the housekeeper for the Brents' home in England in Nothing's On. Dating the much younger Garry.

Lloyd Dallas (Any) - The director of the play-within-the-play, Called Nothing On. Involved with both Brooke and Poppy.

Garry Lejune (20-35) - A stuttering actor, easily fired up. Plays Roger, the estate agent looking to let the Brent's house in Nothing's On. Dating Dotty and prone to jealousy. **Pratt fall down stairs**

Brooke Ashton (20-35) - A young inexperienced actress from London. Plays Vicki, who works for the tax authorities and is trying to woo Roger in Nothing On. She pays no attention to others, either in performance or backstage, and

persists in her role as scripted regardless of any interruption or mayhem. She is always losing her contact lenses, without which she is blind. Dating Lloyd. **Minimal Nudity, bra and Underwear/lingerie**

Poppy Norton-Taylor (Any) - Assistant Stage Manager. Emotional, skittish and over-sensitive. Dating Lloyd and, by act two, pregnant with Lloyd's baby.

Frederick Fellowes (Any) - Has a serious fear of violence and blood. Plays Phillip Brent, who lives out of the country with his wife Flavia to avoid paying taxes and is on a secret visit in Nothing On. Well-meaning, but lacks confidence and is rather dim-witted. **Minimal Nudity, loses pants**

Belinda Blair (25-45) - Cheerful and sensible, a reliable actress. Plays Flavia, Philip Brent's wife, who is dependable, though not one for household duties.

Tim Allgood (Any) - An overworked Stage Manager.

Selsdon Mowbray (50-70) - Elderly and with actorly mannerisms. Plays Selsdon, a burglar and an old man in his seventies, breaking into the Brents' house.

MRS. CLACKETT. It's no good you going on. I can't open sardines and answer the phone. I've only got one pair of feet. *(She puts the sardines down on the telephone table by the sofa, and picks up the phone.)* Hello... Yes, but there's no one here, love... No, Mr. Brent's not here... He lives here, yes, but he don't live here now because he lives in Spain... Mr. Philip Brent, that's right... The one who writes the plays, that's him, only now he writes them in Spain... No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here... Am *I* in Spain? No, I'm not in Spain, dear. I look after the house for them, but I go home at one o'clock on Wednesday, only I've got a nice plate of sardines to put my feet up with, because it's the royal what's it called on the telly — the royal you know — where's the paper, then...? *(She picks up the newspaper lying on the sofa and searches in it.)* ... And if it's to do with letting the house then you'll have to ring the house-agents, because they're the agents for the house... Squire, Squire, Hackham and who's the other one...? No, they're not in Spain, they're next to the phone in the study. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on, I'll go and look. *(She replaces the receiver. Or so the stage directions say in Robin Housemonger's play, 'Nothing On'. In fact, though, she puts the receiver down beside the phone instead.)* Always the same, isn't it. Soon as you take the weight off your feet, down it all comes on your head. *(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, still holding the newspaper. Or so the stage-direction says. In fact she moves off holding the plate of sardines instead of the newspaper.)*

(As she does so, DOTTY OTLEY, the actress who is playing the part of MRS. CLACKETT, comes out of character to comment on the move.)

DOTTY. And I take the sardines. No, I leave the sardines. No, I take the sardines.

(The disembodied voice of LLOYD DALLAS, the director of 'Nothing

On', *replies from somewhere out in the darkness of the auditorium.*)

LLOYD. You leave the sardines, and you put the receiver back.

DOTTY. Oh yes, I put the receiver back.

(She puts the receiver back, and moves off again with the sardines.)

LLOYD. And you leave the sardines.

DOTTY. And I *leave* the sardines?

LLOYD. You *leave* the sardines.

DOTTY. I put the receiver back and I leave the sardines.

LLOYD. Right.

DOTTY. We've changed that, have we, love?

LLOYD. No, love.

DOTTY. That's what I've always been doing?

LLOYD. I shouldn't say that, Dotty, my precious.

DOTTY. How about the words, love? Am I getting some of them right?

LLOYD. Some of them have a very familiar ring.

DOTTY. Only it's like a fruit machine in there.

LLOYD. I know that, Dotty.

DOTTY. I open my mouth, and I never know if it's going to come out three oranges or two lemons and a banana.

LLOYD. Anyway, it's not midnight yet. We don't open till tomorrow. So you're holding the receiver.

DOTTY. I'm holding the receiver.

LLOYD. 'Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on...'

(DOTTY resumes her performance as MRS. CLACKETT.)

MRS. CLACKETT. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on, don't go away, I'm putting it down. *(She replaces the receiver.)* Always the same, isn't it. Put your feet up for two minutes, and immediately they come running after you.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, still holding the newspaper. Only she isn't holding the newspaper.)

ROGER. Yes. Well. Yes!
MRS. CLACKETT. *(To VICKI.)* And we'll enjoy having you.
(To ROGER.) Won't we, love?
ROGER. Oh. Well.
VICKI. Terrific.
MRS. CLACKETT. Sardines, sardines. Can't put your feet up on an empty stomach, can you.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT to service quarters.)

VICKI. You see? She thinks it's great. She's even making us sardines!
ROGER. Well...
VICKI. I think she's terrific.
ROGER. Terrific.
VICKI. So which way?
ROGER. *(Picking up the bags.)* All right. Before she comes back with the sardines.
VICKI. Up here?
ROGER. Yes, yes.
VICKI. In here?
ROGER. Yes, yes, yes.

(Exeunt ROGER and VICKI into mezzanine bathroom.)

VICKI. *(Off.)* It's another bathroom.

(They reappear.)

ROGER. No, no, no.
VICKI. Always trying to get me into bathrooms.
ROGER. I mean in *here*.
(He nods at the next door — the first along the gallery. VICKI leads the way in. ROGER follows.)

VICKI. Oh, black sheets! *(She produces one.)*

ROGER. It's the airing cupboard (*He throws the sheet back.*)
This one, this one.

(He drops the bag and box and struggles nervously to open the second door along the gallery, the bedroom.)

VICKI. Oh, you're in a real state! You can't even get the door open.

(Exeunt ROGER and VICKI into the bedroom. Only they can't, because the bedroom door won't open.

The sound of a key in the lock, and the front door opens. On the doorstep stands PHILIP, carrying a cardboard box. He is in his forties, with a deep suntan, and writes attractive new plays with a charming period atmosphere.)

PHILIP. ... No, it's Mrs. Clackett's afternoon off, remember.
LLOYD. Hold it.

(Enter FLAVIA carrying a flight bag like GARRY's. She is in her thirties, the perfect companion piece to the above.)

LLOYD. Hold it.

PHILIP. We've got the place entirely to ourselves.

(PHILIP closes the door. Only the door won't stay closed. A pause, while GARRY struggles to open the door upstairs, and FREDERICK struggles to close the door downstairs.)

LLOYD. And God said, 'Hold it.' And they held it. And God saw that it was terrible.

GARRY. *(To FREDERICK and BELINDA, the actor and actress playing PHILIP and FLAVIA.)* Sorry, loves, this door won't open.

BELINDA. Sorry, love, this door won't close.

LLOYD. And God said, 'Poppy!'

FREDERICK. Sorry, everyone. Am I doing something wrong?
You know how stupid I am about doors.

BELINDA. Freddie, my sweet, you're doing it perfectly.

FREDERICK. As long as it's not me that's broken it.

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

LLOYD. And there was Poppy. And God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fetch Tim to fix the doors.'

(Exit POPPY into the wings.)

BELINDA. Oh, I love technicals!

GARRY. She loves technicals! *(Fondly.)* Isn't she just, I mean, honestly, she loves technicals! Dotty! Where's Dotty?

BELINDA. Everyone's always so nice to everyone.

GARRY. Oh! Isn't she just, I mean, she really is, isn't she. *(Enter DOTTY from the service quarters. To DOTTY.)* Belinda's being all, you know.

BELINDA. But Freddie, my precious, don't you like a nice all-night technical?

FREDERICK. The only thing I like about technicals is you get a chance to sit on the furniture. *(He sits.)*

BELINDA. Oh, Freddie, my precious! It's lovely to see you cheering up and making jokes. *(She sits beside him, and embraces him.)*

FREDERICK. Oh, was that a joke?

BELINDA. This is such a lovely company to work with. It's such a happy company.

DOTTY. Wait till we've got to Stockton-on-Tees in twelve weeks time.

BELINDA. Are you all right, Lloyd, my precious?

LLOYD. I'm starting to know what God felt like when he sat out there in the darkness creating the world. *(He takes a pill.)*

BELINDA. What did he feel like, Lloyd, my love?

LLOYD. Very pleased he'd taken his Valium.

BELINDA. He had six days, of course. We've only got six hours.

LLOYD. And God said, 'Where the fuck is Tim?' *(Enter from the wings TIM, the company stage manager. He is exhausted.)* And

there the fuck *was* Tim. And God said, 'Let there be doors, that open when they open, and close when they close.'

TIM. Do something?

LLOYD. Doors.

TIM. I was doing the front of house.

LLOYD. Doors.

TIM. Doors?

LLOYD. Tim, are you fully awake?

BELINDA. Lloyd, he *has* been putting the set up all weekend.

LLOYD. You're not trying to do too much, are you, Tim?

BELINDA. Tim, my love, this door won't close.

GARRY. And the bedroom won't, you know.

TIM. Oh, right.

(He sets to work on the doors.)

BELINDA. *(To LLOYD.)* He hasn't been to bed for forty-eight hours.

LLOYD. Don't worry, Tim. Only another twenty-four hours, and it'll be the end of the day.

(LLOYD comes up on stage.)

BELINDA. Oh, look, he's come down to earth amongst us.

LLOYD. Listen. Since we've stopped anyway. OK, it took two days to get the set up, so we shan't have time for a dress rehearsal. Don't worry. Think of the first night as a dress rehearsal. If we can just get through the play once tonight for doors and sardines. That's what it's all about. Doors and sardines. Getting on — getting off. Getting the sardines on — getting the sardines off. That's farce. That's the theatre. That's life.

BELINDA. Oh, Lloyd, you're so deep.

LLOYD. So just keep going. Bang, bang, bang. Bang you're on. Bang you've said it. Bang you're off. And everything will be perfectly where's Selsdon?

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

POPPY. He's not in the dressing room.

DOTTY. You've looked in the lavatories?

POPPY. Yes.

DOTTY. And the scenery dock and the prop room and the paint store?

POPPY. Yes.

FREDERICK. *(To DOTTY.)* You've worked with him before, of course.

LLOYD. *(To POPPY.)* Ring the police. *(Exit POPPY into the wings. To TIM.)* Finished the doors? Right, get the Burglar gear on. *(Exit TIM into the wings. Enter SELSDON MOWBRAY from the back of the stalls. He is in his seventies, and is wearing his BURGLAR gear. He comes down the aisle during the following dialogue, and stands in front of the stage, watching everyone on it.)* I'm sorry, Dotty, my love.

DOTTY. No, it's my fault, Lloyd, my love.

LLOYD. I cast him.

DOTTY. 'Let's give him one last chance,' I said. 'One last chance!' I mean, what can you do? We were in weekly rep together in Peebles.

GARRY. *(To DOTTY.)* It's my fault, my precious. I shouldn't have let you. This tour for her isn't just, do you know what I mean? This is her life savings!

LLOYD. We know that, Garry, love.

(BELINDA puts a hand on DOTTY's arm.)

DOTTY. I'm not trying to make my fortune.

FREDERICK. Of course you're not, Dotty.

DOTTY. I just wanted to put a little something by.

BELINDA. We know, love.

GARRY. Just something to buy a little house that she could I mean, come on, that's not so much to ask.

(BROOKE puts a hand to her eye.)

BELINDA. (*To BROOKE.*) Don't *you* cry, my sweet! It's not *your* fault!

BROOKE. No, I've got something behind my lens.

FREDERICK. Yes, you couldn't expect Brooke to keep anyone in sight.

DOTTY. (*Pointing at SELSDON without seeing him.*) But he was standing right there in the stalls before we started! I saw him!

BROOKE. Who are we talking about now?

BELINDA. It's all right, my sweet. We know you can't see anything.

BROOKE. You mean *Selsdon*? I'm not *blind*. I can see *Selsdon*.

(*They all turn and see him.*)

BELINDA. Selsdon!

GARRY. Oh my God, he's here all the time!

LLOYD. Standing there like Hamlet's father.

FREDERICK. My word, Selsdon, you gave us a surprise. We thought you were... We thought you were... not there.

DOTTY. Where have you been, Selsdon?

BELINDA. Are you all right, Selsdon?

LLOYD. Speak to us!

SELSDON. Is it a party?

BELINDA. 'Is it a party?'

SELSDON. Is it? How killing! I got it into my head there was going to be a rehearsal. (*He goes up on to the stage.*) I was having a little postprandial snooze at the back of the stalls so as to be ready for the rehearsal.

BELINDA. Isn't he lovely?

LLOYD. Much lovelier now we can see him.

SELSDON. So what are we celebrating?

BELINDA. 'What are we celebrating?'

(*Enter TIM from the wings.*)

TIM. I've looked all through his dressing room. I've looked all through the wardrobe. I can't find the gear. (*LLOYD indicates*

SELSDON.) Oh.

SELSDON. Beer? In the wardrobe?

LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Tim, you need a break. Why don't you sit down quietly upstairs and do all the company's VAT?

TIM. VAT, right.

LLOYD. (*Discreetly.*) And Tim — just in case he and the gear *do* walk off together one night, order yourself a spare Burglar costume.

TIM. Spare Burglar costume.

LLOYD. *Two* spare Burglar costumes. One to fit you, one to fit Poppy. I want a plentiful supply of spare Burglars on hand for any eventuality.

TIM. Two spare Burglars.

(*Exit TIM into the wings.*)

BELINDA. He has been on his feet for forty-eight hours, Lloyd.

LLOYD. (*Calling.*) Don't fall down, Tim. We may not be insured.

SELSDON. So what's next on the bill?

LLOYD. Well, Selsdon, I thought we might try a spot of rehearsal.

SELSDON. Oh, I won't, thank you.

LLOYD. You *won't*?

SELSDON. You all go ahead. I'll sit and watch you. This is the beer in the wardrobe, is it?

BELINDA. No, my sweet, he wants us to rehearse.

SELSDON. Yes, but I think we've got to rehearse, haven't we?

LLOYD. Rehearse, yes! Well done, Selsdon. I knew you'd think of something. Right, from Belinda and Freddie's entrance...

(*Enter POPPY from the wings, alarmed.*)

POPPY. Lloyd...

LLOYD. What? What's happened now?

POPPY. The police!

LLOYD. The *police*?

POPPY. They've found an old man. He was lying unconscious in

a doorway just across the street.

LLOYD. Oh. Yes. Thank you.

POPPY. They say he's very dirty and rather smelly, and I thought oh my God, because...

LLOYD. Thank you, Poppy.

POPPY. Because when you get close to Selsdon...

BELINDA. POPPY!

POPPY. No, I mean, if you stand anywhere near Selsdon you can't help noticing this very distinctive...

(She stops, sniffing.)

SELSDON. *(Putting his arm round her.)* I'll tell you something, Poppy. Once you've got it in your nostrils you never forget it. Sixty years now and the smell of the theatre still haunts me.

(Exit SELSDON into the study.)

BELINDA. Oh, bless him!

LLOYD. Tell me, Poppy, love — how did you get a job like this, that requires tact and understanding? You're not somebody's girlfriend, are you?

(POPPY gives him a startled look.)

BELINDA. Don't worry, Poppy, my sweet. He truly did not hear.

(Enter SELSDON from the study.)

SELSDON. Not here?

LLOYD. Yes, yes, there!

BELINDA. Sit down, my precious.

DOTTY. Go back to sleep.

LLOYD. You're not on for another twenty pages yet.

(Exit SELSDON into the study. Exit POPPY into the wings.)

LLOYD. And on we go. *(He goes back down into the auditorium.)* Dotty in the kitchen, wildly roasting sardines. Freddie and Belinda waiting impatiently outside the front door. Garry and Brooke disappearing tremulously into the bedroom. Time sliding irrevocably into the past.

(Exeunt DOTTY into the service quarters, GARRY and BROOKE upstairs into the bedroom, and FREDERICK through the front door.)

BELINDA. *(To LLOYD, with lowered voice.)* Aren't they sweet?

LLOYD. What?

BELINDA. *(Points to the bedroom and the service quarters.)*
Garry and Dotty.

LLOYD. Garry and Dotty?

BELINDA. Sh!

LLOYD. *(Lowers his voice.)* What? You mean they're an item?
Those two? Tramplemain and Mrs. Clackett?

BELINDA. It's supposed to be a secret.

LLOYD. But she's old enough to be...

BELINDA. Sh! Didn't you know?

LLOYD. I'm just God, Belinda, love. I'm just the one with the English degree, I don't know anything.

(Enter GARRY from the bedroom.)

GARRY. What's happening?

LLOYD. I don't like to imagine, Garry, honey.

(Exit BELINDA through the front door.)

GARRY. I mean, what are we waiting for?

(Enter DOTTY from the service quarters, inquiringly.)

LLOYD. I don't know what you're waiting for, Garry. Her sixteenth birthday?

DOTTY. Mind where you put your feet, my love.

FREDERICK. Yes, everyone look under their feet.

GARRY. No one move their feet.

BELINDA. Everyone put their feet back exactly where they were.

FREDERICK. Pick your feet up one by one.

(They all trample about, looking under their feet, except BROOKE, who crouches with her good eye at floor level. LLOYD comes up on stage.)

LLOYD. Brooke, love, is this going to happen during a performance? We don't want the audience to miss their last buses and trains.

BELINDA. She'll just carry on. Won't you, my love?

FREDERICK. But can she see anything without them?

LLOYD. Can she hear anything without them?

BROOKE. *(Suddenly realizing that she is being addressed.)* Sorry?

(She straightens up sharply. Her head comes into abrupt contact with POPPY's face.)

POPPY. Ugh!

BROOKE. Oh. Sorry.

(BROOKE jumps up to see what damage she has done to POPPY, and steps backward on to GARRY's hand.)

GARRY. Ugh!

BROOKE. Sorry.

(DOTTY hurries to his aid.)

DOTTY. Oh my poor darling! *(To BROOKE.)* You stood on his hand!

FREDERICK. Oh dear. *(He hurriedly clasps a handkerchief to his nose.)*

BELINDA. Oh, look at Freddie, the poor love!

LLOYD. What's the matter with *him*?

BELINDA. He's just got a little nosebleed, my sweet.

LLOYD. A nosebleed? No one touched him!

BELINDA. No, he's got a thing about violence. It always makes his nose bleed.

FREDERICK. (*From behind his handkerchief.*) I'm so sorry.

LLOYD. Brooke, sweetheart..

BROOKE. I thought you said something to me.

LLOYD. Yes. (*He picks up a vase and hands it to her.*) Just go and hit the box-office manager with this, and you'll have finished off live theatre in Weston-super-Mare.

BROOKE. Anyway, I've found it.

BELINDA. She's found it!

DOTTY. Where was it, love?

BROOKE. In my eye.

GARRY. In her eye!

BELINDA. (*Hugging her.*) Well done, my sweet.

LLOYD. Not in your left eye?

BROOKE. It had gone round the side.

BELINDA. I knew it hadn't gone far. Are you all right, Poppy, my sweet?

POPPY. I think so.

BELINDA. Freddie?

FREDERICK. Fine, fine. (*He gets to his feet, looks in his handkerchief, and has to sit down again.*) I'm so sorry.

LLOYD. Now what?

BELINDA. He's just feeling a little faint, my love. He's got this thing about... (*She tries to demonstrate.*)

LLOYD. This thing about what?

BELINDA. Well, I won't say the word.

(*FREDERICK gets to his feet.*)

LLOYD. You mean blood?

FREDERICK. Oh dear. (*He has to sit down again.*)

BELINDA. (*To FREDERICK.*) We all understand, my precious.

LLOYD. All right, clear the stage. Walking wounded carry the stretcher cases. (*LLOYD returns to the stalls, DOTTY to the service quarters, POPPY to the wings. GARRY and BROOKE go upstairs. BELINDA helps FREDERICK to his feet.*) Right, then. On we bloodily stagger. (*FREDERICK has to reach for a chair again.*) Oh, sorry, Freddie. Let me rephrase that. On we blindly stumble. Brooke, I withdraw that. (*Exit BELINDA along the upstairs corridor, FREDERICK into study.*) From your exit, anyway. 'OK, I'll take it off.... In here, in here.' Where's Selsdon?

FLAVIA. Darling, are you coming to bed or aren't you?

(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom.

Enter ROGER and VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

ROGER. What did you say?

VICKI. I didn't say anything.

ROGER. I mean, first the door handle. Now the hot water bottle...

VICKI. I can feel goose-pimples all over.

ROGER. Yes, quick, get something round you.

VICKI. Get the covers over our heads.

(ROGER is about to open the bedroom door.)

ROGER. Just a moment. What did I do with those sardines? *(He goes downstairs. VICKI makes to follow.)* You — wait here.

VICKI. *(Uneasily.)* You hear all sorts of funny things about these old houses.

ROGER. Yes, but this one has been extensively modernized throughout. I can't see how anything creepy would survive oil-fired central heating and...

VICKI. What? What is it?

(ROGER stares at the telephone table in silence

The bedroom door opens, and FLAVIA puts ROGER's flight bag on the table outside without looking round. The door closes again.)

VICKI. What's happening?

ROGER. The sardines. They've gone.

VICKI. Perhaps there is something funny going on. I'm going to get into bed and put my head under the...

(She freezes at the sight of the flight bag.)

ROGER. I put them there. Or was it *there*?

VICKI. Bag

(VICKI runs down the stairs to ROGER, who is directly underneath the gallery.)

ROGER. I suppose Mrs. Sprockett must have taken them away again... What? What is it?

VICKI. Bag!

ROGER. Bag?

VICKI. Bag! Bag!

*(VICKI drags ROGER silently back towards the stairs.
Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom with the box of files. She picks up
the flight bag as well, and takes them both off along the upstairs
corridor.)*

ROGER. What do you mean, bag, bag?

VICKI. Bag! Bag! Bag!

ROGER. What bag?

(VICKI sees the empty table outside the bedroom door.)

VICKI. No bag!

ROGER. No bag?

VICKI. Your bag! Suddenly! Here! Now — gone!

ROGER. It's in the bedroom. I put it in the bedroom.

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

VICKI. Don't go in there!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

ROGER. The box!

VICKI. The box!

ROGER. They've both gone!

VICKI. Oh! My files!

ROGER. What on earth's happening? Where's Mrs. Spratchett?
(He starts downstairs. VICKI follows him.) You wait in the bedroom.

VICKI. No! No! No!

(She runs downstairs.)

ROGER. At least put your dress on!

VICKI. I'm not going in there!

ROGER. I'll fetch it for you, I'll fetch it for you!

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom.)

VICKI. Yes, quick — let's get out of here!

(Enter ROGER from the bedroom.)

ROGER. Your dress has gone.

VICKI. I'm never going to see Basingstoke again!

(ROGER goes downstairs.)

ROGER. Don't panic! Don't panic! There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this. I'll fetch Mrs. Splotchett and she'll tell us what's happening. You wait here... You can't stand here looking like that... Wait in the study... Study, study, study!

(Exit ROGER into the service quarters.)

VICKI opens the study door. There's a roar of exasperation from

NOISES OFF

BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement. *(He climbs in.)* No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags! So what are they offering? *(He peers at the television.)* One microwave oven. *(He unplugs it and puts it on the sofa.)* What? Fifty quid? Hardly worth lifting it. *(He inspects the paintings and ornaments.)* Junk ... Junk... If you insist... *(He pockets some small item.)* Where's his desk? No, they all say the same thing... They all say the same thing...

SELSDON. Yes? Line?

POPPY. *(Off.)* 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. What?

LLOYD. *(Wearily.)* 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. Hard to what?

OTHERS. *(Variously, off.)* 'Adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. It's also very hard to hear if everyone talks at once.

(LLOYD comes up on stage.)

LLOYD. It's a question of authenticity, you see, Freddie. *Do Arab potentates wear trousers under their robes? I don't know. Maybe they do. But not round their ankles, Freddie! Not round their ankles!*

FREDERICK. Sorry. It's just frightfully difficult doing a quick-change without a dresser.

LLOYD. Get Tim to help you. Tim! Where's Tim? Come on, Tim! Tim!

(TIM, wearing the sheet as PHILIP's double, gets to his feet and gazes bleakly at LLOYD.)

TIM. Sorry?

LLOYD. Oh, yes. You're acting.

TIM. I must have dropped off down there.

LLOYD. Never mind, Tim.

TIM. Do something?

LLOYD. No, let it pass. We'll just struggle through on our own. Tim has a sleep behind the sofa, while all the rest of us run round with our trousers round our ankles. OK, Freddie? You'll just have to do the best you can. On we go, then... (FREDERICK hesitates.) Some other problem, Freddie?

FREDERICK. Well, since we're stopped anyway.

LLOYD. Why did I ask?

FREDERICK. I mean, you know how stupid I am about plot.

LLOYD. I know, Freddie.

FREDERICK. May I ask another silly question?

LLOYD. All my studies in world drama lie at your disposal.

FREDERICK. I still don't understand why the Sheikh just happens to be Philip's double.

GARRY. Because he comes in and we all think he's, you know, and we all, I mean, that's the joke.

FREDERICK. I see that.

BELINDA. My sweet, the rest of the plot depends on it!

FREDERICK. I see that. But it *is* rather a coincidence, isn't it?

LLOYD. It *is* rather a coincidence, Freddie, yes. Until you reflect that there was an earlier draft of the play, now unfortunately lost to us. And in this the author makes it clear that Philip's father as a young man had traveled extensively in the Middle East.

FREDERICK. I see... I see!

LLOYD. You see?

FREDERICK. That's very interesting.

LLOYD. I thought you'd like that.

FREDERICK. But will the audience get it?

LLOYD. You must tell them, Freddie. Looks. Gestures. That's what acting's all about. OK?

FREDERICK. Yes. Thank you, Lloyd. Thank you.

LLOYD. And it will be even more powerful when you do it with no trousers.

FREDERICK. Of course. (Takes his trousers off.)

LLOYD. Right, can we just finish the act? From Belinda's beautiful line, 'You toss me aside like a broken china doll!' (LLOYD returns to the stalls.) I'm being so clever out here! What's going to be left of this show when I've gone off to do *Richard III* and you're up there on your own? Right — 'You toss me aside like a broken china doll!'

LLOYD. Has she gone?

TIM. Lloyd! I didn't know you were coming today!

(LLOYD comes in. He is carrying a bottle of whisky.)

LLOYD. I wasn't. I haven't.

TIM. Anyway, thank God you're here!

LLOYD. I'm not. I'm in Aberystwyth. I'm in the middle of rehearsing *Richard III*.

TIM. Dotty and Garry ...

LLOYD. I don't want anyone to know I'm in.

TIM. No, but Dotty and Garry ...

LLOYD. I just want two hours alone and undisturbed with Brooke in her dressing room between shows, then I'm on the 7:25 back to Wales. *(Gives TIM the whisky.)* This is for Brooke. Put it somewhere safe. Make sure Selsdon doesn't get his hands on it.

TIM. Right. They've had some kind of row...

LLOYD. Good, good. *(Takes money out of his wallet and gives it to TIM.)* There's a little flower shop across the road from the stage-door. I want you to buy me some very large and expensive-looking flowers.

TIM. Right. Now Dotty's locked herself in her dressing room...

LLOYD. Don't let Poppy see them. They're not for Poppy.

TIM. No. And she won't speak to anyone...

LLOYD. First house finishes just after five, yes? Second house starts at seven-thirty?

TIM. Lloyd, that's what I'm trying to tell you — there may not be a show!

LLOYD. She hasn't walked out already?

TIM. No one knows *what* she's doing! She's locked in her dressing room! She won't speak to anyone!

LLOYD. You've called Beginners?

TIM. Yes!

LLOYD. I can't play a complete love-scene from cold in five minutes. It's not dramatically possible.

TIM. She's had bust-ups with Garry before, of course.

LLOYD. Brooke's had a bust-up with Garry?

TIM. Brooke? Not Brooke — Dotty!

LLOYD. Oh, Dotty.

TIM. I mean, they had the famous bust-up the week before last, when we were playing *Worksop*.

LLOYD. Right, right, you told me on the phone.

TIM. She went out with this journalist bloke ...

LLOYD. Journalist — yes, yes...

TIM. But you know Garry threatened to kill him?

LLOYD. Killed him, yes, I know. Listen, don't worry about Dotty — she's got money in the show.

TIM. Yes, but now it's happened again! Two o'clock this morning I'm woken up by this great banging on my door. It's Garry. Do I

know where Dotty is? She hasn't come home.

LLOYD. Tim, let me tell you something about *my* life. I have the Duke of Buckingham on the phone to me for an hour after rehearsal every evening complaining that the Duke of Gloucester is sucking boiled sweets through his speeches. The Duke of Clarence is off for the entire week doing a commercial for Madeira. Richard himself — would you believe? — Richard III? (*He demonstrates.*) — has now gone down with a back problem. I keep getting messages from Brooke about how unhappy she is here, and now she's got herself a doctor's certificate for nervous exhaustion — she's going to walk! I have no time to find or rehearse another Vicki. I have just one afternoon, while Richard is fitted for a surgical corset, to cure Brooke of nervous exhaustion, with no medical aids except a little whisky — you've got the whisky? — a few flowers — you've got the money for the flowers? — and a certain faded charm. So I haven't come to the theatre to hear about other people's problems. I've come to be taken out of myself, and preferably not put back again.

TIM. Yes, but Lloyd...

LLOYD. Have you done the front-of-house calls?

TIM. Oh, the front-of-house calls!

TIM. Nothing, nothing! *(He puts the money behind his back and automatically produces the whisky with the other hand.)*

POPPY. Whisky!

TIM. Oh... is it?

POPPY. Where did you find that?

TIM. Well...

POPPY. Up here? You mean Selsdon's hiding them round the stage now? *(She takes the whisky.)*

TIM. Oh...

POPPY. I'll put it in the ladies' loo. At least he won't go in there. *(Enter BELINDA from the dressing rooms.)* No?

BELINDA. You know what Dotty's like when she's like this. Freddie's trying now... *(She sees the whisky.)* Oh, no!

POPPY. He's hiding them round the stage now. *(Enter FREDERICK from the dressing rooms.)* No?

FREDERICK. No.

BELINDA. You didn't try for very long, my precious!

FREDERICK. No, well... *(He sees the whisky.)* Oh dear.

BELINDA. He's hiding them on stage now.

(Exit POPPY to the dressing rooms, holding the whisky.)

FREDERICK. No, Garry came rushing out of his dressing room in a great state. I couldn't quite understand what he was saying. I often feel with Garry that I must have missed something somewhere. You know how stupid I am about that kind of thing. But I think he was saying he wanted to kill me.

BELINDA. Oh, my poor sweet!

FREDERICK. I thought I'd better leave him to it. I don't want to make things worse. He's all right, is he?

BELINDA. Who, Garry? Anything but, by the sound of it!

FREDERICK. I mean, he's going on?

TIM. Garry? *Garry's* going on. Of course he's going on. What's all this about *Garry* not going on?

BELINDA. Yes, because if you have to go on for Garry, Poppy can't go on for Dotty, because if Poppy goes on for Dotty, you'll have to be on the book!

TIM. This is getting farcical.

BELINDA. Money.

TIM. Money?

BELINDA. You're waving money around.

TIM. Oh, that's for... Oh...!

(TIM hurriedly grabs his raincoat from a peg and exits into the dressing rooms.)

FREDERICK. She's a funny woman, you know — Dotty. So up and down. She was perfectly all right last night.

BELINDA. Last night?

FREDERICK. Yes, she took me for a drink after the show in some club she knows about.

BELINDA. She was with *you*? You were with *her*?

FREDERICK. She was being very sympathetic about all my troubles.

BELINDA. She's not going to sink her teeth into you! I won't let her!

FREDERICK. No, no, she couldn't have been nicer. In fact she came back to my digs afterwards for a cup of tea, and she told me all *her* troubles. Sat there until three o'clock this morning. I don't know *what* the landlady thought!

(Enter POPPY.)

POPPY. And another thing.

BELINDA. Nothing else, my sweet!

POPPY. Where's Selsdon?

BELINDA. It turns out that it's Freddie here who's the cause of all the... Selsdon?

POPPY. He's not in his dressing room.

BELINDA. Oh — I might have guessed!

POPPY. Oh — the front-of-house calls!

BELINDA. You do the calls. I'll took for Selsdon.

FREDERICK. What shall I do?

BELINDA. *(Firmly.)* Absolutely nothing at all.