

Lloyd, Garry, Belinda, Freddy

22

NOISES OFF

SIDE #3

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?

BELINDA. Oh no!

GARRY. Not already?

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