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Tim and Poppy

Also Tim and Lloyd

NOISES OFF SIDE #6

ACT II

The living room of the Brents' country home. Wednesday afternoon. (Theatre Royal, Ashton-under-Lyne. Wednesday matinee, February 13.)

But this time we are watching the action from behind; the whole set has been turned through 180 degrees. All the doors can be seen — there is no masking behind them. Two stairways lead up to the platform that gives access to the doors on the upper level. Some of the scene inside the living room is visible through the full-length window. There are also two doors in the backstage fabric of the theatre: one giving access to the dressing rooms, and the pass door into the auditorium. The usual backstage furnishings, including the prompt corner and props table, chairs for the actors, a fire-point with fire buckets and fire-axe, etc.

(TIM is walking anxiously up and down in his dinner jacket. POPPY is speaking into the microphone in the prompt corner.)

Start

— POPPY. *(Over the tannoy.)* Act One beginners, please. Your calls, Miss Otley, Miss Ashton, Mr. Lejeune, Mr. Fellowes, Miss Blair. Act One beginners, please.

TIM. And maybe Act One beginners is what we'll get. What do you think?

POPPY. *(To TIM.)* Oh, Dotty'll pull herself together now we've called Beginners. Now she knows she's got to be on stage in five minutes. Won't she?

TIM. Will she?

POPPY. You know what Dotty's like.

TIM. We've only been on the road for a month! We've only got

to Ashton-under-Lyne! What's it going to be like by the time we've got to Stockton-on-Tees?

POPPY. If only she'd speak!

TIM. If only she'd unlock her dressing room door! Look, if Dotty won't go on...

POPPY. Won't go on?

TIM. If she won't.

POPPY. She will.

TIM. Of course she will.

POPPY. Won't she?

TIM. I'm sure she will. But if she *doesn't*...

POPPY. She must!

TIM. She will, she will. But if she *didn't*...

POPPY. I'd have five minutes to change. Four minutes.

TIM. If only she'd say something.

(The pass door opens cautiously, and LLOYD puts his head around. He closes it again at the sight of POPPY.)

POPPY. I'll have another go. Takes your mind off your own problems, anyway.

(Exit POPPY in the direction of the dressing rooms. LLOYD puts his head back round the door.)

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

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