

HE'S BEHIND YOU!

BY PENNY JONES

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SCENE ONE

The scene is set in a scruffy church hall where some tables are untidily pushed together with several chairs around, a counter with tea urn and cups, and lots of signs prohibiting everything. Payne Display is sitting at the table as the lights go up, reading a script and looking at his watch impatiently.

Payne: Ten o'clock should mean ten o'clock. (*Consults watch*) It is now ten-oh-four which means, by my reckoning, that every single one of them is late. Disgraceful. Tardiness is a trait that is highly prone to provoke my annoyance, and now I'm beginning to wonder why I agreed to participate in this thing in the first place. Pantomime indeed! Huh!

(There is a long silence where he consults his watch several times)

And now it's ten-oh-five. Disgusting! At ten-oh-six exactly I shall pick up sticks and remove myself from this unpleasant situation forthwith. (*Sits and literally watches the second hands ticking away on his wristwatch.*)

(Bill Dersbum enters USR and gives him a hearty slap on the back.)

Bill: Ok, mate? How's it going? You here for B.A.P.S?

Payne: I hardly think so, my friend.

Bill: Not that kind, you filthy bugger! (*Parps an imaginary pair of boobs in front of him*) Parp, parp! I mean B.A.P.S. – the amateur panto group.

Payne: Oh, that clears up your meaning somewhat. In that case I am in fact here for B.A.P.S. And what, pray may I ask, does that particular acronym represent?

Bill: Dunno. (*Feels pockets*) Shit, I forgot my fags. Got a fag I can bum off you, buddy?

Payne: Certainly not. I have never smoked a cigarette in my life.

Bill: Oooh! Calm down dear!! (*Goes over to counter to look for stray fags/ make a cup of tea*) You didn't do last year, did you, Cuz?

Payne: No. I did not, and if the rest of the group don't expedite their arrival I'm not doing this year either. Their discourtesy will precipitate an uncontrollable fury in me for which I shall not, nay cannot, be held accountable.

Bill: Oh, take a chill pill! What's your name then?

Payne: I'm Payne Display. I'm a traffic warden by day.

Bill: I'm Bill.

Payne: How do you do? Pleased to make your acquaintance.

Bill: Payne by name, pain by nature, eh? (*Laughs at own joke*) I'm fucking hilarious, I am. That's why they're letting me come back this year - can't manage without me.

Payne: The syntax of that phrase, i.e they're 'letting' you back, would indicate a problem of some kind? Have you transgressed in some way? It would indicate a previous misdemeanour, methinks.

Bill: Um, no, not really. So what role are you playing then? I'm an ugly sister, of course.

Payne: Actually, I too am playing one of the ugly sisters - the one with the lion's share of the dialogue as it happens. I counted the lines twice, and highlighted them in green, and in fact I have virtually familiarised myself with them already.

Bill: Well, I can tell you're going to be a bundle of laughs, Bud (*belches*).

Payne: That's correct, Bill, although my sense of humour tends to be respectful and I shall pick my moments carefully.

Bill: Your comic timing must be frigging awesome! (*Sits down and picks nose*)

(*Enter Beau C Boots carrying a Director's chair, and Chelsea Boots USL*)

Beau: Absolutely ridiculous, the amount of time it takes you to put your death mask on in the morning, woman. You've made us late again.

Chelsea: Tough.

Beau: Tardiness makes me look so unprofessional.

Chelsea: But you're not a professional, dear.

Beau: I'll ignore that bitchy remark, and assume that it's just the menopause talking.

Chelsea: Ha, I'm not as far along in my mid-life crisis as you.

Bill: Ha, ha, I like it! Mid-life crisis! Bet he's got a convertible sports car and a bit of stuff on the side with big boobs.

Chelsea: You're probably not far off, Bill.

Beau: Yeah, I don't have a convertible yet.

Chelsea: Oh, get lost the pair of you - I'm off to powder my nose (*she exits USR*).

Beau: (*Shouts after her*) You can't get any more powder on there, can you?

Bill: She means she's going for a slash, mate.

Beau: Really? (*Straightening furniture*) Who the hell's been meddling with these tables?

Bill: Yeah, either that or dropping the kids off at the pool.

Beau: (*Absent-mindedly*) We don't have any kids.

Bill: (*Under breath*) Bloody Yank.

Beau: Who the hell's moved my script? (*Realises he is holding it*) You can't trust anyone around here. (*To Payne*) Ah, Payne, so glad you could make it to our little group.

Payne: Oh, I never renege on a promise, even in the most trying of circumstances.

Beau: Glad to hear it - I like your professionalism.

Payne: But perhaps you could enlighten me on a certain point, Beau?

Beau: It's not about last year's fracas is it? Only we don't like to talk about that.

Payne: So I believe. No, I was wondering for what the acronym B.A.P.S. stands?

Beau: (*Visibly relieved*) Oh, that! It's Burlington Amateur Production Society my friend, although under my captaincy it's hardly amateur.

Bill: So nothing to do with tits, then?

Beau: Don't start. I will enrol you as a member when I discover where my stupid, inept wife has put the paperwork, Payne.

Payne: Nobody mentioned enrolment? Is it mandatory? Is it really necessary?

Beau: I'm afraid so, Payne, I like to have things shipshape on my watch.

(Beau sets up his Director's chair, struggles to get in to it, then sits down to read his script. Major De Saster and Turner Page enter USL)

Bill: Oh, happy days - here come the Galloping Major and his stuttering sidekick.

Major: What's that, Bob the Bloody Builder? Some wisecrack before we've even got into the room, no doubt. I'm surprised they let you back this year, say what?

Bill: They're never going to let a massive talent like me get away (*scratches bum and smells hand*). Yuck! (*Goes up close to Turner*) BOO!! (*Turner jumps a mile*) Cat got your tongue, speccy-four-eyes?

Turner: N .. n.. n.. no. I've just ... um.. got a terrible hangover.

Bill: You've never had a drink in your life - who are you trying to kid?

Turner: (*Trying to be cool*) N..n..n..no way. Last night I got p.p.p.. ...

Major: Language, boy.

Turner: Positively drunk.

Bill: Oh yeah, what were you drinking then?

Turner: P..p..p..Pernod (*pronounces it as it is spelt*)

Bill: Per-nodd? Per-nodd? You little bullshitter!

Major: Leave the lad alone or you'll have my walking stick up your arse, boy!

(*Burberry Bling and Lonsdale Bling saunter in casually USL with earphones in.*)

Beau: You're late.

Lonsdale: Yeah, we know. So what?

Beau: (*Standing*) Yes, well you wouldn't get away with that in the professional theatre, you know.

Lonsdale: Good job this is just a pile of amateur crap then, innit? (*Looking around*) Where's Chelsea?

Major: She's just popped orf to the lavvy, gels.

Payne: She's paying a visit.

Major: To the WC, don't you know?

Bill: She's gone for a dump. Hope she sprays.

Payne: That is wholly repellent and, for your information, not in the slightest bit funny, shame on you!

Bill: Just saying! Better an empty house than an angry tenant though, eh?

Turner: Hey g...g..g..girls. I take d..d..drugs now - quite a lot, actually.

Girls: Yeah, right.

Turner: I've sniffed a fair b.b.bit of Copydex over the last couple of months.

Girls: Get lost, Loser!

Turner: Stuck to my nose hairs, though, b.b.but it was worth it for the b.b.buzz.

(Chelsea enters USR)

Chelsea: Aw, hi guys, lovely to see you all again. *(To Payne)* I'm sorry, I don't know who you are - you must be the new one my darling husband was telling me about?

Payne: *(Nodding)* I'm Payne Display.

Chelsea: (*Simpering and offering her hand to be kissed*)
Lovely to meet you, Payne.

Payne: Likewise.

Chelsea: I'm Chelsea, I'm the director's wife.

Beau: Oh, for God's sake, why don't you stick to the itinerary (*pointing at clipboard*) and stop dangling from my shirt tails, woman? You know I like to stick with the schedule, and you're hardly impressing anyone, introducing yourself as someone's wife! Is that all you've got?

Chelsea: (*Salutes and clicks heels*) Yes Mein Führer.

Bill: Christ, he even looks like him doesn't he? Just needs a moustache. (*Takes out a felt pen, and attempts to draw a moustache on Beau - who gets really angry.*)

Beau: Oh, cut the childish crap, Bill. You've only been here a few minutes and you're already causing trouble.

Major: After last year's antics, Bill my boy, you should know better.

Payne: Why, what precise set of circumstances materialised last year to incur such clandestine reticence? Won't somebody please elucidate?

Major: (*Tapping nose with cane*) Aha, that's for me to know and you to find out.

(Enter Chay USL, in good humour)

Chay: *(Air-kissing and high-fiving everyone he passes)*
Morning, darlings - morning all. Soz I'm a bit late. How are we all? Mwah, mwah.

All: Morning Chay, etc.

Chay: Oo la la, that colour really suits you Chelsea darling! You should wear it more often - perhaps with a different top though? *(Making a beeline for Payne and invading his personal space)* Oooh, and who are you, you delicious young man? You're new this year, aren't you – fresh meat for Chay to play with!

Payne: *(Backing off in disgust)* I'm Payne Display, and you are?

Chay: *(Curtseys)* I'm just little old Chay, the dance captain. Do you know, you remind me of a young Sean Penn with a little hint of Graham Norton. Who does your hair darling *(touching and invading personal space again)*?

Payne: *(Backing off in disgust again)* My wife – why?

Chay: *(Disappointed)* Oh, you're married - that's nice.

Bill: Yeah, he doesn't fart rainbows, so no good looking there for a bit of action.

Chay: Worth a try though, Sweetie.

Chelsea: Shall we get on with the read-through then?

Beau: Back off Chelsea - I'm perfectly capable of running my own rehearsal, thank you.

Lonsdale: Get a move on then - I don't wanna be stuck here all day, Bruv.

Burberry: No - CBA, innit?

Turner: No - CAB, innit Bruv?

Girls: It's CBA, loser.

Chay: I have a new routine for warm-up, guys, and guess what cheeky old Chay's been doing these last few months? (*Flexes biceps*) That's right, I'm a little gym bunny now.

Bill: (*Laughing uncontrollably*) Oh my Christ, what are they? Walnuts?

Chay: They're better than your big fat muffin top. (*Pokes Bill's belly.*) Oooh, it's three quarters pork pie!

Bill: (*Slapping belly*) It's all paid for, mate.

Major: Join the army, my boy - they'll put muscles on your muscles. Three months of assault courses and you'll have a body like mine (*tries to flex his weedy arms*).

Payne: Might I take the liberty of advocating and promoting a career as a traffic warden? Pounding the pavements for

eight hours a day toting a ticket machine - that will undoubtedly make a man of you.

Bill: You need steroids, mate. Tip me the wink, and I'll get you some cheap.

Chay: Steroids? Aren't they bad for you?

Bill: Christ no! They're good for you.

Chay: Are they?

Chelsea: Yes, they are. I think I saw it on '*Lorraine*' the other day.

Chay: OMG, really? (*Claps hands*) I just looove Lorraine, I absolutely adore the woman! Well, if she takes them I'm definitely going to. I might have my hair cut like hers as well. (*Sidles up to Payne*) Do you think it would suit me?

Beau: Right, let's not waste any more time. I want you all to give a brief outline of who you are and what role you are playing. This is what we, who work in the professional theatre, do as a matter of course.

Payne: I had no idea you were in the professional theatre, Beau.

Beau: Oh, yes, I've been involved since I was small.

Bill: You're still small, mate.

Payne: (*Ignoring Bill*) Intriguing. And what is your role within the professional theatre, Beau?

Chelsea: (*Giggling bitchily*) Yes, what role do you play in the professional theatre, my darling? Tell the nice man.

Beau: (*Uncomfortable*) Well, I'm more a behind the scenes sort of a guy, Payne.

Payne: Oh, what a piece of engrossing information! So might I surmise that you are either a producer or director?

Beau: More sort of managerial, you know - running the place.

Bill: He works in the frigging box office.

Beau: I'll have you know that I run 'the frigging box office', Payne – a very important position within the theatre.

Bill: Utter bull crap.

Beau: This is ridiculous - undermining my professional status and expertise like this. (*Trying really hard to control his temper*) I can't believe I fell for your bullshit about behaving yourself this year, Bill. Believe you me, you are skating on very thin ice already, and if there is any sign whatsoever that there will be a repeat of last year's trouble, you will be out with no questions asked.

Payne: I'm becoming somewhat agitated that nobody has as yet made me au fait with this piece of elusive information.

Major: Nothing to concern you, my boy.

Beau: And now, finally, down to the business of getting this year's production under way. So (*referring to script*) it's to be *Cinderella* - one of your great nation's favourite pantomimes, so please go around clockwise in a circle and give us a brief introduction to yourself and the character you are playing, then we can move on and get to the interesting bit.

Bill: Interesting bit, my arse! There's no interesting bit in pantomime.

Beau: Well, there we shall agree to differ, shall we? 'Pantomime' is derived from 'Commedia Del Arte', an ancient and respected form of Italian theatre - (*Bill pretends to fall asleep and starts snoring*) - and when done to a high standard it showcases multiple and varied skills.

Bill: (*Pretends to wake up*) What's that? Oh yeah, like I said, it's a pile of shite.

Chelsea: Ahem, moving on. I'll start, shall I? I'm Chelsea Boots, and I will be playing Cinderella. (*Gives a modest little bow as though expecting praise*)

Payne: Good Lord above!

Chelsea: (*Sharply*) What?

Payne: Oh pardon my instinctive reaction. Merely a little astounded.

Chelsea: (*Insulted*) Why would you be? I know this role like the back of my hand.

Bill: What, with all those wrinkles! It's like Spaghetti Junction!

Lonsdale: It's just that you're a bit old, innit Chels?

Chelsea: Pardon?

Lonsdale: Like, Cinderella's supposed to be a young girl, like, know what I mean, like?

Chelsea: Well, I'm not that old, and there's no reason why a slightly older girl like myself can't play the part, is there?

Lonsdale: You ain't slightly older though, is you? You is well old, LOL!

Burberry: You ain't no girl, you is a old bat, LOL!

Turner: Yes, you is an old bat, CBA.

Lonsdale: I shoulda been Cinderella, and you shoulda been the Furry Godmother.

Chelsea: 'Furry Godmother'?

Lonsdale: Yeah - we should swop parts - Granny, innit?

Beau: Stop this inane jabbering. Who's next?

Bill: I'm Bill Dersbum, I work on a building site, and I'm playing the dame, which is just as well because I certainly know my way around a woman!

Payne: That is a very off-colour remark, and I shall deign to ignore it and move on. I'm Payne Desplay and I'm playing the other dame.

Chay: Well, darlings, you all know me, of course. I'm Chay Kitt, the dance captain (*does a twirl, gets dizzy and has to sit down*).

Bill: Christ, if you're the dance captain what are we, the *Titanic*?

Chay: Oooh, Bill, you little bitch. You know I'm good at what I do (*winks*). We'll have a little tap (*does a little demo*), a little jazz (*does a demo*), and even some jive if there's enough room on stage for you to throw your big, fat, wobbly bodies around (*slaps Bill on his beer belly*).

Lonsdale: No way - I'm not dancing to sad old people music.

Beau: You'll do as you're told. Just introduce yourself, please.

Lonsdale: All right, keep your hair on! I'm Lonsdale, and I'm doing the Furry Godmother.

Chay: Fairy, dear heart.

Lonsdale: Yeah, I know you are, innit.

Chay: No, it's Fairy Godmother. Not 'furry'.

Lonsdale: Whatever.

Burberry: I'm Burberry, and I'm doing Prince Charming.

Lonsdale: Bet you wish you were!!

Burberry: What you on about?

Lonsdale: 'Doing' Prince Charming. *(Both girls cackle rudely, snapping fingers etc., like real chavs.)*

Major: Attention! I'm Major De Saster, but you can call me Bertie. I almost made Lieutenant-Colonel, but shrapnel in my groin put paid to all that, and I was honourably discharged with a complaint I shan't be bragging about. I shall be taking the role of Baron Hardup.

Beau: And don't forget your other role, Major.

Major: Oh, and also the ghost chappy in the chasing-off scene, don't you know? Multi-faceted, me. You have to be when you're in the army trying to dig a latrine with a fifty tonne tank thundering towards you.

Payne: And what, may one venture to ask, rather tentatively I might add, is the 'chasing-off scene'?

Beau: It's in Scene Four– the usual panto gag you Brits seem to find so funny, where the ghost chases off the characters one by one. It's immediately after the interval, Payne, so you will have time to change costumes. Continue please. Turner?

Turner: I'm T..T..Turner P..Page, I work in the library, and I'm going to be B..B..Buttons.

Burberry: Ooooh! T..T..T..T..T..Turner P..P..P..P..Pathetic! What's the matter with you, though?

Lonsdale: Yeah, why are you talking all funny-like, innit?

Turner: I just have a b.b.banging headache from my h.h.h.hangover. Oh, and lots of Copydex, innit, LOL, Bruv.

Bill: Yes, his mystery hangover, from all the invisible per-nodd he drank on his imaginary night out with his non-existent friends.

Chelsea: Why are you picking on the poor boy, Bill? Just leave him the hell alone.

Bill: I'm not picking on him, am I, mate? Just having a bit of bants.

Chay: Oooh! You are so picking on him, you nasty cow!

Bill: Trust you to chime in with your stupid opinion, you puny git.

Chay: Just because I don't have a hod-carrier's biceps and a builder's crack hanging out of my trousers doesn't make me a puny git. I work hard on my physique and flexibility. (*Tries and fails to touch toes.*)

Bill: Pathetic. Get some steroids down you.

Chay: Well, I might just do that. Not that I need them of course, having the finely-honed body of a top athlete.

Bill: Right you are - got some in the van.

Chay: I'll pay you later. Right, on your feet peeps, and let's shake booty!

(All get up with various groans, and the twins shuffle off into a corner and do the whole thing with attitude. Bill stands brazenly at the front and does just the arm movements in a lacklustre fashion) And stretch, and flex, and stretch and flex, etc.

(They all attempt to copy him, and end up with the whole group attempting and failing to do the splits.)

And now let's put some of those moves to music.

(He puts on 'Your lips are moving', and they all crash around trying to dance but ending up in a heap.)

(Enter Pastor Ise, carrying several posters, and Crystal Ise.)

Crystal: Oooh! An orgy! How fab!

Pastor: (*Sharply*) Crystal!! Don't encourage these imbeciles, and please try to remember that you are a respectable lady of the church.

Crystal: Oh, you wish, Derek - I'm a totally free spirit! As free as a bird!

(*Starts swaying/twirling/dancing*)

Pastor: Have you been sniffing the pineapple rings again, Crystal?

Major:(*Creeping up to her puffing/panting/mopping brow*) Oh, there are lots of things you can do with pineapple rings, aren't there, Crystal?

Crystal: (*Giggling*) I don't know what you can mean, Bertie!

Major: Oh yes you do!

Crystal: Oh no I don't!

Major: Oh yes you do!

Pastor: (*Pulls Major away from Crystal*) Oh no she doesn't! Put her down.

Crystal: Oh, I'm a sixties child – and we're all very fruity!
(*Dances off dreamily*)

(*All scramble up from the heap on the floor as the Pastor puts up some of his posters*)

Pastor: (*To Beau*) Aha, there you are. I have the contract for the room hire here.

Beau: Just leave it on the side, and I'll have a look later when I've got time.

Pastor: That won't suffice, I'm afraid. After last year's shenanigans you're lucky we've agreed to let you use it, so I expect you to adhere to these rules stringently.

Beau: Get on with it then, man: I have an extravaganza to create.

Payne: Why - what was the mystery occurrence to which you all allude? Can somebody please enlighten me?

Pastor: (*Consulting paperwork*) Right, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each Saturday between now and Christmas, £10 an hour - use of the kitchen facilities is forbidden.

Beau: Oh, all right. Where do I sign? Ten pounds an hour to use this dive?

Pastor: Take it or leave it, I really don't care.

Beau: Can you at least remove some of this jumble-sale rubbish for us?

Pastor: I'll see if I have the time.

Bill: How am I going to get a brew going then, if we can't use the kitchen facilities? Can I bring a kettle to use in here?

Pastor: No, you cannot, and I'm very surprised that you have the bare-faced gall to ask. Kettles bear germs – I don't want you infecting the WI with campylobacter.

Bill: Christ, it's only a kettle!

Pastor: The point is moot, it is not for negotiation.

Bill: Ah bugger it - I'll bring a bottle of whisky instead then.

Pastor: Alcohol is forbidden on these premises. We don't have a licence.

Bill: Oooh, diddums! We don't have a licence! Oh no! What are we going to do?

Pastor: For your information, you need a licence to do anything on church property.

Bill: Christ, wish I had a licence to kill – you'd be the first to go.

Pastor: Well, perhaps the feeling is reciprocated?

Chay: Yes, and not just by you vicar! Most of us would love to finish him off. (*Starts to sing Bond Theme, and turns into James Bond, make-believe gun in hand, dodging bullets, and doing karate chops*).

Beau: We haven't got time for you to visit your fantasy world right now, Chay - if you wouldn't mind waiting until you get home instead?

Chay: (*In Sean Connery voice*) Stand back, Miss Money Penny - I'll handle this!

Beau: (*Slaps Chay across the face*) And we're back in the room.

Chay: Sorry, Beau, sorry. You know me, I do get a bit carried away.

Beau: Carry on, Pastor.

Pastor: Right, well, don't put the blinds down. Keep the back door locked, and the side window ajar, bring your own toilet rolls, and don't sit on the chair with the saggy cushion.

Beau: Why not?

Pastor: The springs have gone – you'll never get out of it. Especially a little- 'un like you.

Bill: (*Saluting*) Heil Hitler!

Beau: Oh for God's sake, must I endure being pigeonholed into these childish stereotypes?

Pastor: Ahem. (*Crosses himself*) Blaspheming in a church hall? Really?

Beau: Huh, when you've quite finished interrupting we have a rehearsal to do. (*Storms off USR*)

Major: Well, bugger it all, Pastor, you're not telling us now that we have to be practising Christians to use the hall to rehearse in, are you?

Pastor: Language, please! That sort of foul-mouthed tirade brings on my migraines.

Major: Because you know where you can stick it if that's the case.

Pastor: (*Exploding*) I suspect I know to where you are referring, although in your case perhaps the pineapple rings would get in the way.

Crystal: Derek! Who told you about the pineapple rings?

Major: Pineapple rings my arse!

Pastor: (*Shouting*) Exactly!

Major: Crystal, my dear, you have managed to hitch yourself to a very uncouth man. (*He goes off in a huff*).

Crystal: Derek, that wasn't necessary. Stay calm until we can get to your heart tablets. Repeat after me, Derek - Peace and love. Peace and love!

Pastor: Don't preach that new age tripe to me! I can't stand the man, the poisonous little toad. And you don't help things

when you encourage him to flirt with you, so please desist henceforth.

(He follows the Major into a corner, and they begin finger-pointing and arguing in the background, before the Pastor exits angrily USR, and the Major exits angrily USL.)

Chelsea: *(Putting her arm around Crystal)* Oh dear, Crystal, hubby a bit cross is he?

Crystal: *(Dabbing eyes)* Oh, it's nothing really, dear, it's just that Derek seems to think that the Major has a crush on me, and that I encourage him.

Chelsea: The Major has a crush on you? Huh, I don't think so!!

Crystal: Derek thinks we are having an affair! He won't accept that my days of free love are over and done with!

Chelsea: Well, if you will go around reminiscing about Woodstock, quoting Bob Dylan and taking hallucinogenic drugs he may well find it difficult to accept that you've left it all behind, Crystal dear.

Crystal: Well, it's only a few tiny little relapses, but maybe you're right.

Chelsea: I mean, if it was you who had misread the signals, my dear, what with your previous hippy lifestyle and

persistent ingestion of magic mushrooms, it wouldn't be much of a surprise if your judgement was clouded.

Crystal: That's so true. Thank you for understanding. I don't know what the hell's going on around me half the time!

Chelsea: I know, I know. But a boring old fart like the Pastor? How could he be so deluded?

Crystal: Deluded? Really? You think it's deluded that a man like the Major would want a woman like me?

Chelsea: I see I will have to spell it out to you then, Crystal - the Major is in love with *me*. We're just waiting for him to have his double hip replacement and his cataracts done, and then I'm going to be kicking Beau out of the house and installing my darling Bertie there instead.

Crystal: Oh! Your poor husband!

Chelsea: Oh don't worry about him! He probably won't even mind, as long as he gets the surround sound, and his bone china mug with Princess Diana on it.

Crystal: Well, I shall pretend that you never confided any of this in me, Chelsea. If asked I shall deny all knowledge, and please don't refer to it again.

Chelsea: Not that you'd remember, you half-wit. Talk to the hand, hippy! (*She marches away angrily, and exits USSR*).

Chay: (*Leaps upstage, followed by Turner, Lonsdale and Burberry*) And then when the transformation scene takes place you will move upstage to where I'm standing now, and do your pas de deux.

Lonsdale: Get stuffed! That's poncy!

Turner: Yeah, get...erm...stuffed!

Chay: Turner! I'm shocked that a nice boy like you would be influenced by these two!

Turner: I'm not influenced by anyone. I'm real hard cord.

Burberry: Core?

Turner: Core. I ain't doing no poncy French dancing neither mate, innit, LOL, RSPCA!

Bill: You're not fooling anyone, kid, so just stop it.

Turner: Sorry, B.. Bill.

Bill: Chay, my son, you're looking weedier by the minute. You'd better come out to the van and I'll get you fixed up with anabolics right away.

Burberry: Annie Bollocks?

Lonsdale: Who's she? Is she the one in Year Four that's just had a baby?

Chay: Are you sure that they are safe, Bill? I mean, you can't afford to get into any more trouble after last year's doings.

Payne: Methinks that possibly now would be an opportune moment for you to make me conversant with precisely what happened last year.

Bill: Nah, you don't want to bother with all that, mate, whatever it means.

Payne: Perhaps you two lovely young ladies would like to illuminate the situation for me?

Girls: What? Whatever.

Payne: Chay, you seem like the sort of enlightened fellow who would promulgate such information for my amusement?

Chay: I'd like to help, but I don't know what that means, sweetie. (*Sidling up to him*) But, oooh, look at you! There's something else I can help you with if you like?

Payne: Why should I require assistance, perchance?

Chay: (*Licking finger, and wiping down Payne's shirt*) I could help you get out of these wet clothes?

Payne: Now look here, let's get things straight ...

Chay: Not a concept I'm very familiar with, to be honest!

Bill: Chay. Van. Now, before one of us gets booked for double-parking...

(Bill and Chay exit USL)

Lonsdale: I'm going to the chippy for me dinner - you coming, Burbs?

Burberry: I ain't got no money, like, innit.

Lonsdale: It's all right, we'll pay for a chips between us, and nick a couple of pickled eggs, LOL.

Turner: C..c..can I c..c..come with you? I'll nick some stuff too.

Lonsdale: Oh all right then, as long as you walk behind us.

Turner: W..w..what? W..w..why?

Burberry: We ain't gonna be seen in public with a nerd like you, Turner.

(They traipse out, with Turner following behind, leaving Payne alone on the stage)

Payne: *(Takes out his sandwich box, and tucks in to his lunch)* Yum, fish paste sandwiches - conceivably one of life's greatest pleasures. Hmm, now that I find myself companionless I should take stock of the situation. *(Looks at watch)* We've been here for only fifty seven minutes, and

already I am indubitably shrouded by a cloak of mystery regarding the abstruse events of last year. Nonetheless, I hold my own powers of analysis in very high regard, and can safely postulate that said events cannot be overly consequential to my own safety, taking into account the innocuous personalities of those involved. As a conclusion, I must own that I am anticipating that my own involvement with BAPS will be very satisfying. Very satisfying indeed.

(There is a loud bang, and lots of screaming/shouting/arguing voices from offstage – Payne calmly tucks into his sandwich as the curtains close.)

SCENE TWO

Rehearsals are under way, and the set is mid-construction, with debris all around. Chay has developed massive muscles, a manly voice and a foul temper as a result of his steroid abuse (bodybuilder suit under t shirt), and is putting Chelsea, Lonsdale, Burberry, The Major and Turner through their dance moves to “Uptown Funk”. They are trying to be sexy, but all going the wrong way, out of rhythm etc.

Chay: Chelsea, you clumsy cow, you’re supposed to land in the arms of Prince Charming, not squash his bunions.

Burberry: Yeah, you is well heavy – how much do you weigh?

Lonsdale: You’ve squashed her trainers, LOL!

Chelsea: God, don’t blame me, if you’d been in the right place I wouldn’t have landed on you!

Burberry: Mum’ll do her nut! They proper matched my Paul’s Boutique bag as well!

Lonsdale: You’ve ruined them! We’ll have to claim compo.

Chelsea: What, for a pair of scruffy trainers?

Lonsdale: They ain’t scruffy, innit - they is well cool: that’s what the kids wear, like.

Burberry: You is well old-fashioned, innit Bruv?

Chay: Stop your stupid squabbling, and get a bloody move on! How many times have I got to show you these steps? It’s all so easy – watch (*does a twerking demonstration*). Shake what your Momma gave you girls! Come on, come on, just watch and learn! Oh for God’s sake! Try it again. (*They all begin the routine again, but even more out of sync*)

Enter Beau, Bill and Payne USR)

Beau: Come on, come on - time’s up! I can see you still don’t have a clue with that routine. According to my

schedule you should have this down pat by now, and be working on the Finale.

Bill: Yeah, come on losers - out the way!

Payne: (*Sitting down*) Would it be un-gentlemanlike of me to comment upon your unlikely new physique, Chay?

Chay: I'm buff - get over it.

Beau: (*Tapping watch*) Your time's up – we always go by my watch, and my watch says that it's bang on half past, so pack up and jog on.

Bill: Come on, make way for the real talent, you left-footed pricks.

Chay: (*Squaring up to him*) I'll go when I'm ready, and not a second before, you gut bucket.

Bill: Ooooh, who's the big man now he's got a few muscles? Calm down, dear!

Chay: And don't use that ridiculous tone with me - you'd better start treating me with a bit more respect.

Bill: Or what?

Chay: (*Squares up to him*) Or else!

Bill: Oh no! Mummy! I'm scared of the dancing hippo! Help!

Payne: So, Chay, may I be so bold as to enquire by what method you increased your physical bulk tenfold?

Bill: It's the steroids, Payne. That's what's made him bad tempered as well.

Beau: Children, please stop all this and let's get on with the rehearsal, so that we can abide by my schedule. Major I shall need you for the next couple of hours as well.

Major: Right-oh, General. As you command. What's the battle plan then, what ho?

Beau: It's Scene Four - the dames' routine leading into the chasing-off scene.

Major: Yes, Sir, right away, Sir. I shall be back in one minute fully costumed, say what?

Bill: (*Salutes*) Dismissed!

Beau: Just to recap, this is directly after the interval, so you will have your change of costume on. Make your entrance together upstage right. Payne, you will then come downstage onto the apron, and Bill you do your bit of slapstick business slightly upstage of Payne, before joining him on the apron for the routine. (*Payne and Bill are both confused but both pretend they know what it means*)

Payne: I do most fervently hope that you can now enact this scene without referring to your script Bill?

Bill: Dunno. I'll give it a go. I've added a few bits of my own just to make it funny.

Beau: Absolutely not, Bill. Under no circumstances.

Bill: Right. Here we go. (*Assumes voice of his character as they go into their routine*). Oh, Demelza, I can't go any further, I'm absolutely knickered.

Payne: (*Puts on Dame voice*) Don't you mean knackered, Pandora?

Bill: No, knickered. My breath's coming in short pants!

Payne: Oh, that's a shame, Pandora, because you used to be so fit when you were younger.

Bill: I know, I know - I remember it well.

Payne: When you were a little girl, you used to do ballet.

Bill: Not any more though, Demelza - I've got too fat.

Payne: Yes, you'd need a three-three.

Bill: Just hang on a minute, I've just realised that all these jokes are poking fun at me, but I'm supposed to be the comedy act.

Beau: You've had this script for months, Bill - it's no good complaining now. Carry on.

Bill: (*Grudgingly*) I went to the pet shop the other day, Demelza.

Payne: Oh, what for?

Bill: I thought I'd buy some livestock, seeing as eggs are going up.

Payne: Well, that'll surprise a few chickens!

Bill: Then I thought I might buy a goldfish.

Payne: Do you want an aquarium?

Bill: I don't care what star sign it is! (*Back to own voice*) Oh, for God's sake, I can't do these lame jokes - they're just not funny!

Payne: I personally feel that they will achieve the maximum amount of merriment from the audience whilst causing the least offence.

Bill: Exactly, the least offence. I mean, that's just not panto is it? What about a couple of chav jokes? They're quite topical and I know a few off the top of my head.

Beau: Oh, very well, but I would prefer to stick tightly to the script and I'm not promising we'll keep them in.

(*Pastor and Crystal enter USR*)

Yes, can we help?

