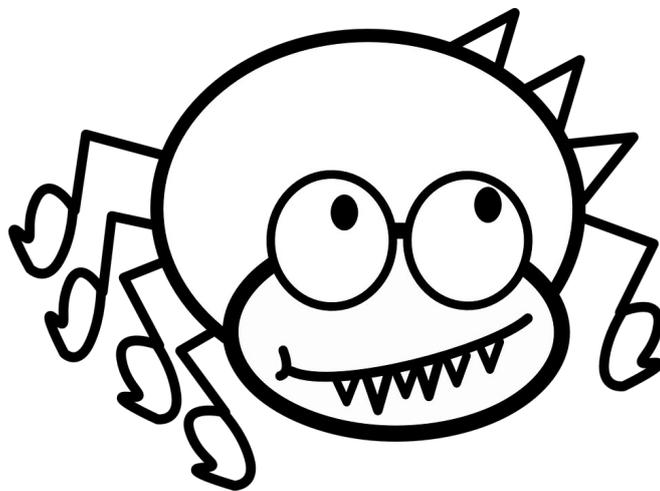


'Crawl to be kind'

by

Troy Banyan



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'Crawl to be kind'

by

Troy Banyan (pseudonym)

Characters

Pat.....early – late 40's recent divorcee

Mona.....Pat's early – late 60's mother

Annabel.....mid 30's – mid 40's snobby neighbour

Jonathan..... mid 30's – mid 40's snobby neighbour

Les.....early – late 50's removals man

Jill.....late 20's – late 30's electricity worker

The whole play takes place in one set, the back kitchen of Pat & Mona Crawley's new house.

Rear centre is the door through which all the external entrances and exits are made. In the wall next to it on the R is a window, through which people can be seen approaching from the front (right) of the house. Below the window is a sink/drainage with cupboard beneath. Down R are wall mounted cupboards which join onto a breakfast counter which goes along roughly a third of the way across the room. Further down R is a door which leads into the rest of the house. Along the rest of the back wall and then down the L side are a mixture of cupboards, which house an ironing board and more household implements, and racks, containers etc, ie general kitchenware. Down front is a kitchen table, around which are three basic chairs. As a lot of the action takes place at or around the counter, the table should be offset slightly to the left.

The back door is heard unlocking then it opens and in breezes Pat. She looks all around her, unable to contain her happiness at moving into her new house. Mona shuffles in, wearing a big coat and clutching her handbag tight.

Mona: That hedge could do with a trim, is it yours or theirs next door ?

Pat: You're not going to get to me today. This is the start of the rest of my life.

Mona shuffles over towards the breakfast counter

Pat: Just look at this, a proper sized kitchen, not like the galley I had in the last place.

Mona: Well, there was only you using it..*(pointedly)*..in the end.

Pat: I told you..not today. Besides, you know Bill and I split up through mutual consent.

Mona: Yes, and you knew I was getting ready to sell my house and move into Sheltered Housing, where my friends are.

Pat: Are you trying to tell me that you'd sooner be confined in a place where you're guided by others and aren't truly mistress of your own destiny, in a stale, inner city environment, rather than be out here in the country, able to do what you like when you like...whilst breathing in beautiful, unpolluted air ?

Mona: *(unconvinced by pitch)* We'll see..*(walking towards counter and shivering)*..God, it's colder in here than outside..*(picking up piece of paper from counter top)*..what's this ?

Pat walks over to the counter.

Pat: Let me see.

Pat yanks the piece of paper out of the squinting Mona's hand and starts looking at it.

Mona: By all means..you read it.

Pat: Aw, it's from James and Clare..*(reading aloud)*..'Dear Pat..and mother...'

Mona: Charming.

Pat: I never told them your name, that's all.

Mona: Oh, that's better then.

Pat Ssh. Now, where was I ? Oh yes..*(reading out again)*.. ‘Hope you have as many happy years here as we did’ ..Aw, isn’t that nice ? ‘P.S As we’re flying out today there’s some stuff left that we couldn’t take, like tea, coffee, powdered milk and biscuits in the cupboard: it’s all yours’.

Mona: Just yours..or ‘the mother’s’ as well ?

Pat: *(shaking head and ignoring Mona)* Aw, they really are thoughtful, aren’t they ? P.S.S Also, we decided to leave you the kitchen utensils as you said you liked to create things...

Mona looks at the rack with utensils – especially rolling pin – then askance at Pat

Pat: They must have thought my creativity lay in the kitchen..*(reading note again)*..‘we’re sure you’ll make great use of them and.. *(putting hand over mouth to mask emotion)*..give them a loving home’..they really are the kindest people I think I’ve ever..oh, it says PTO..surely not more things they’re leaving me ?

Mona: And ‘the mother’, don’t forget.

Pat: *(ignoring Mona and turning page quickly)* ‘P.S.S.S Tommy dropped his terrarium when bringing it downstairs and Terry his tarantula escaped. Unfortunately, we were unable to find him and couldn’t waste any more time looking. Tommy’s upset but we’ve promised him another one when we get to Australia. In fact, he won’t be able to get away from them over there. Ha-ha. We cleared up the pieces of the terrarium however. Seriously though, be careful if, or when, you see him. All the best.. James and Clare’..*(lowering the page in shock)*.

Mona: Well, what do you know, they did leave us something else..and they saved the best to last. It’s almost like they were softening you up with those other P.S’s..*(walking to cupboard)*..suddenly Sheltered Housing doesn’t sound so bad..*(opening and closing cupboard doors)*..does it ?

Pat: Wh..What are you doing ?

Mona: Looking for the stuff they left to make us a drink.

Pat: What ? You can’t do that now.

Mona: Oh no, of course not..the kettle and crockery are still packed up. Talking of which..*(looking out of the window)*..where’s that removal van ? They were right behind us on the way...

Pat: No, I mean..we can’t stay here with that..that..I can’t even bring myself to say it...

Mona: Hairy, eight-legged creature on the loose ?

Pat swoons forward with eyes closed and holds onto the counter to steady herself.

Pat: Oh, do you have to be so graphic ?

Mona: Call yourself a writer ? No wonder you’ve never had anything published.

Three toots of a van’s horn are heard off. Mona looks back out the window.

Mona: Ah, here are they are, at long last. Remember, every little thing they do - or don’t do more like – lessens the tip you give them. Right ?

Pat: *(still standing in shock)* Wh..what ?

Mona: Oh come on, what's wrong with you ?

Pat: *(stunned)* Wh..what's wrong with me ? What's wrong with me ? How about the fact that I'm petrified of spiders; even a money spider brings me out in a cold sweat. You ought to know that.

Mona: He'll be miles away by now, once he sensed freedom he was out of here as fast as his eight legs could carry him.

Pat: He's a tropical spider. From the tropics. The terrarium kept him warm. This is England in freezing cold November, do you honestly think he'll be racing to get outside in this climate ?

Mona: Good point. He probably dangled one of his eight hairy legs outside, shivered and then made a b-line for where there's heat, towards bodies. They sense body heat you know, that's how they track down their pr-

Pat: *(swaying again)* - Oh will you shuttup about it. When did you become such an expert on spiders ?

Annabel: *(off)* Coo-ee.

Mona: God, has that removal guy been sucking on helium ?

Pat: Sshh, that's Annabel from next door...

Mona: What, her with the hedge ?

Pat: Yes, and she's a very nice lady, so keep quiet on the uh..spider front until..until...

Mona: Until we all see it scuttling across the kitchen floor ?

Pat sways again but before she can say anything Annabel – holding a large dish covered with a tea-towel – opens the back door and pokes her head inside.

Annabel: Hello Patricia, welcome to the neighbourhood..*(looking at Pat)*..is this a bad time to call ?

Mona: You could say that.

Pat: *(laughing uneasily)* Hah, now this..this woman here is, well..she's my mother

Annabel: How quaint. Does she have a name ?

Mona: No, I'm like Clint Eastwood, but I'm the 'Woman With No Name'

Pat: *(quickly)* Oh she's a warm order my mother, you'll get used to her quirky sense of humour...

Jonathan: *(off)* Hello hello..*(poking head inside door)*..room for another one in here ?

Annabel: Come on in Sweetness.

Jonathan edges through the door into the kitchen

Jonathan: Ah, there she is..the light of my life.

Annabel and Jonathan kiss without any qualms right in front of the surprised Pat. Mona does a disgusted 'sticking her finger down her throat' motion, which only Pat sees, making her jump in quick.

Pat: Ah, Jonathan..nice of you to come in..*(pointedly)*..as well; it's a pity we haven't got anything unloaded yet as we're..um..unable to..um..um, you know..um...

Mona: What my daughter's trying to say - Ann and Jon - is that you're a bit premature with the welcome, so if you'd like to toddle back home perhaps we can touch base later on...

Annabel: Actually..we much prefer Annabel and Jonathan..if you don't mind.

Mona: Life's too short and I'm not getting any younger. I have to keep things to a bare minimum, save on syllables and breath wherever I can. Now, if you'll excuse me..*(walking towards down R door)*...

Pat: Wh..where are you going ?

Mona: Where women my age have to go when they've been somewhere longer than five minutes...

Pat: But what about..you know ?

Mona: I'll take my chances.

Mona exits through the R door but leaves it open. Pat runs over to the door and closes it after her.

Annabel: Mmm, she's a charmer your mother, we never got her name...

Pat: Mona, and yes..I know it's 'by nature' as well.

Jonathan: Um..Patricia..I was just wondering what, exactly, was Mona 'taking her chances' with ?

As Pat goes to speak Les arrives in the doorway carrying a cardboard box

Les: All right missus ? I've got the essentials here, kettle, mugs, spoons etcetera..*(looking at Annabel and Jonathan)*..what's this..a 'welcoming party' ?

As Annabel and Jonathan go to answer Les barges past them with the box

Les: 'Scuse me..*(plonking box on counter)*..here do ?

Annabel: Actually Patricia..I've been waiting to be told where to put my gift..*(holding out pie)*.

Les: *(lifting up tea-towel on dish)* Ooh, that looks tasty, should go well with a nice cuppa that. What do you think missus ?

Pat goes to answer but then starts to sniffle

Pat: You'll have to excuse me...

Annabel walks to Pat, still holding the dish, and puts her arm around her

Annabel: Oh, we understand, it's a big upheaval moving out to the sticks at your time of life...

Pat: It's not *that*, it's...

Jonathan walks to Pat and also puts his arm around her

Jonathan: Being duty bound to have a miserable mother in tow...

Pat: Ah, now that's not strictly true, I...

Les: I won't join the throng but I will say that - in my line of work - I see many emotions bubbling to the surface when people move, after all..it's right up there with bereavement for stressful things that can-

Pat: *(jumping in)*..There's a tarantula loose in the house.

Annabel and Jonathan look terrified, pull their arms off of Pat then hold each other with them instead. Les gives a sharp intake of breath then walks to the back door

Les: *(shouting out)* Deano. Get the Code of Practice out, there's a good lad.

A barely audible inquisitive muffled voice is heard off

Les: *(shouting louder)* I said..*(sighing)*..oh don't bother I'll come back out..*(to the rest)*..they've saddled me with a right 'un today, he quite literally is the epitome of all brawn and no brain..*(going to walk out but stopping)*..my gut feeling missus is that we won't be doing any shifting until the arachnid is apprehended. See you in a bit.

Les walks out and the barely audible inquisitive muffled voice is heard off again.

Les: *(shouting off)* In the glove compartment you simpleton.

Annabel: *(sarcastically)* Oh, that's unusual to see; a loud, opinionated tradesman...

Jonathan: Oh bravo dearest, you beat me to it, although I was going say 'uncouth' instead of 'loud'...

Annabel: That would have been equally as amusing dear.

Annabel and Jonathan give each other a peck

Jonathan: Never mind all this frivolity, how come you have such an exotic, and potentially lethal, thing roaming around ?

Pat: Apparently, the lad Tommy dropped the..the terrarium..it smashed, Terry his spider got away and they couldn't find it...

Annabel: Oh, I've just thought of a terrific tongue twister, 'Tearaway Tommy Turnbull's terrarium toppled and out tumbled Terry his tarantula'

Jonathan: Oh, you are on fire today, come here...

Jonathan holds Annabel by the waist and they kiss passionately again. Pat walks to them and reaches for the dish which Annabel is still holding

Pat: I know, why don't I relieve you of this..*(taking dish)*..and you two go back next door where it's not quite so..*(coughing deliberately)*..public ?

Just as Pat is ushering the canoodling couple out the back door Jill, turns up in the doorway and gives a polite, but unnecessary tap on the open door

Jill: Hello, are you Mr and Mrs Crawley ?

Annabel and Jonathan just carry on engrossed with each other and Pat has to look around them for her and Jill to make eye contact.

Pat: Actually..this pair of lovebirds are from next door. I'm Ms Pat Crawley and my husband is now my ex. I actually share the house with...

The sound of Mona screaming off is heard, followed by her opening the door and standing inside it panting

Pat: What is it ?

Mona: I..I think I saw a mouse ?

Pat: Just a mouse ?

Mona: Eh ?

Pat: It wasn't running from something, was it ?

Mona: I don't know, I was too busy running from it.

Pat goes over to Mona, closes the door behind her then leads her to the counter, which Mona then leans against. On regaining her composure, Mona sees that there are now three other people in the room who might be wondering about their conversation then looks pointedly at Pat and does an exaggerated nod towards them all

Pat: It's all right, they know.

Mona: *(shocked)* What ?

Jill: Know what ?

Pat: Oh yes, of course you don't know yet, do you ? Who are you, by the way ?

Jill walks around the amorous couple and shows Pat the nameplate on her lapel

Jill: I'm Jill Smith from the Electricity Company, I'm here to re-connect you...

Pat: Oh, I see. Well, as I was saying Jill, we..*(realising)*..what ?

Jill: I've come to turn back on your supply. The last occupants had it recently disconnected.

Mona: God, no wonder it's so cold in here. The skinflints..*(to Pat)*..there's another little surprise James and Clare left us. Have you taken those rose-tinted glasses off yet ?

Annabel: Yes, if we're honest..we never really took to them as neighbours, what with their laissez faire attitude towards things and their Bohemian lifestyle...

Jonathan: So..*(pointing at Pat)*..we'll be looking to you to cut the mustard as a neighbour, to restore some respectability and, dare I say, meet the expectations of the community.

Mona: And, of course, the Invisible Woman here will also do her bit to help.

Pat: Mother !

Mona: Actually..Ann and Jon..as you're still here..perhaps – as we're going to be without juice for a while – you could toddle off back to your own house and make a nice, hot, steaming flask of tea for us.

Pat: I was rather hoping that Jon..*(remembering)*..athan - being the man around here - could perhaps try and resolve 'our problem' for us ?

Jonathan: Eh ? Oh, I don't know about that Patricia, I think it needs an expert with the right equipment to tackle such a..um..precarious situation.

Mona: There was a name for men like you in the war you know.

Annabel: You surely can't expect my beloved husband to search aimlessly around this house and risk being bitten by a venomous spider, can you ?

Jill: *(shocked)* What ?

Mona: Now she knows.

Les enters through the back door with a massive, lever-arch file packed full with pages and dividers. He slams it down on the counter, having heard the conversation as he passed the window

Les: Yes, now we all know, and I'm afraid it doesn't look good for getting things moved in, as things stand at least.

Mona: What ?

Les: That's what I said missus..*(opening up file)*..Part six, Section three..*(flicking pages over)*.. Sub Section Five A, Clause Six, Two Point Three of Rickard's Removals Code of Practice says..*(pausing to put on half-glasses)*.. and I quote..*(running finger pedantically down page)*.. "if the removal operatives"..*(peering over glasses at all)*.. which, in this instance, is me and the lad out there, "if the operatives believe that there is potential risk to themselves due to a 'clear and present danger' in the house then they are within their rights to withdraw their services and refrain from moving articles from the vehicle until such time as the said 'clear and present danger' has been removed, repaired or resolved". In short, we will be moving nothing until the arachnid is apprehended.

Les slams the file shut and officiously removes his glasses, putting them back into his top pocket

Jill: And I'm afraid that the same goes for me

Les: So, I guess this is what you call an impasse.

Mona: Yes, and without the juice turned on no-one will be able to have a cup of tea, unless Ann and Jon go and get that flask of course.

Annabel and Jonathan shake their heads in disbelief at Mona's nerve

Les: Nice try missus but your attempt at psychological blackmail won't work. As much as I could literally murder a brew, I have to put the health and safety of the lad and myself above all else.

Mona: Do you know what ? I can't bear to be around jobsworths and shirkers so..*(opening handbag)*..I'm going to search this house..*(taking out a pair of black woolly gloves)*..and I'm going to hunt down that spider..*(donning gloves and closing the handbag)*..until we're mono e mono..*(taking rolling pin off rack)*.

Annabel: What are you going to do, kill it ?

Mona: No, I'm going to give it a cookery lesson.

Annabel looks at Jonathan and derisively shakes her head, which is reciprocated in acknowledgement

Pat: But mum, you could get bit and die.

Mona: Is it better to be remembered as someone who died at the fangs of an exotic creature or as yet another OAP who died of dementia or hypothermia...?

Pat: But mum, you're fully compus mentis now..I think, and as for dying of the cold..I don't think that...

Mona: *(jumping back in to regain the moment)* Yes, I'm going back out there, I'm going to track it down and kill it, or die trying..*(walking to door)*..unless someone insists on going instead of this frail, old woman of course.

Mona stops and looks optimistically at the other five in the room but no-one answers or moves

Mona: *(frowning)* I didn't think so. Sod the lot of you then.

Mona wrenches open the door and storms out of it, leaving it open behind her. Jonathan sighs then pulls away from Annabel and walks towards the door

Pat: *(relieved)* Oh, thank you Jonathan, you've no idea how much that means to...

Jonathan merely closes the door behind Mona

Jonathan: We must keep mission control a safe and sterile environment. This is the place from which operations will be directed. We can't risk compromising the integrity of Strategic Command.

Pat: *(bemused)* What-ting the what of where ?

Les: Unless, of course, it's already in here to start with guv'nor.

Annabel: *(shivering)* Hmm, I'm feeling decidedly uncomfortable here Jonathan, I suggest we go back to our own abode.

Jonathan: I know what you mean, it's always time to leave when the tradesmen start giving cod advice and – in addition to calling the women 'missus' - start calling the men 'guv'nor'.

Annabel and Jonathan walk to the back door, then Annabel turns one final time to Pat

Annabel: Perhaps we'll pop back later Patricia, or when your unwanted guest is got rid of.

From behind Les, Annabel looks at him as she and Jonathan exit, so that it is unclear as to whether she means that Les goes or the spider is caught

Les: *(sitting at counter)* Methinks that final comment was a wee bit double-edged..*(sighing)*..I really am sorry about this missus, it's the last thing we need as well as you, but if that spider were to bite us the liability would fall on you, and I wouldn't want that..you seem like a nice lady.

Pat realises she is still holding the dish and puts it down on the counter.

Pat: Tell you what, why don't you dig yourself a spoon out of that box and tuck into this pie ? In the meantime, I'll see if I can ring a pest exterminator, that's unless the phone's been disconnected as well..*(to Jill)*..you wouldn't happen to know, would you ?

Les feels down inside the cardboard box and pulls out a spoon and starts tucking into the pie

Jill: Sorry Ms Crawley, it's not my domain.

Pat: Do you want some pie then ?

Jill: No thanks. In fact, I'm going to go out to my van and report in to the office, see if I can get some guidance on this whole situation.

Jill walks out of the room and Pat slumps against the side of the cupboards

Pat: Oh dear, this isn't going at all how I'd planned.

Les, feeling sorry for Pat, offers up the spoon for her to dig in. She shakes her head. The front doorbell then rings out a tune.

Pat: Who could that be ?

Pat goes to turn the R doorknob then realises the need to keep the kitchen 'contained', so she turns and walks towards the back door

Pat: I'd better go the long way around, to be safe.

Les nods with his mouth full and waves the spoon in acknowledgement. Pat exits through the back door. As soon as she does, the right door opens and Mona pokes her head around it.

Mona: Psst, sorry to interrupt your brunch but I got the spider, so you can get on with unloading now.

Les: (suspiciously) Mmm, I'll need to see evidence of this.

Mona: Um, you can't, I've already disposed of the body, it wasn't pretty.

Les: Mmm, how did you do it exactly ?

Mona: What are you, the Spanish Inquisition ?

Les: Well, if you don't mind me saying, it doesn't sound very feasible.

Mona: All right. I can see that the 'shirking jobsworth' comment is still rankling, so I'm going to level with you, but you must promise not to tell my daughter this..*(looking around)*..there is no spider. It doesn't exist.

Les: Now missus, do you really expect me to believe that either ?

Mona: What ?

Les: Look, I know you want to get moved in – and believe me, I want us to get you moved in – but to tell an outright lie like that..well...

Mona: It's true. I came out to look at the house with some friends a few months back unbeknownst to my daughter - so I could have an objective look at it - and the previous owners said...

Les: *(stuffing face)* James and Clare.

Mona: Yes, James and Clare..*(pausing to watch Les eating: sarcastically)*..are you enjoying that by the way ?

Les *(with mouthful)* Mmm lovely..*(holding out spoon)*..want some ?

Mona: No thank you, and I don't think you should be eating any more as you won't want to be moving things around on a full stomach, will you ?

Les Oh, I think we both know that that's not going to be happening any time soon, don't we ?

Mona: What ? But I just told you, the escaped spider story was made up.

Les: But..why would you do such a thing ?

Mona: Well, like I was saying, when I came out to the house James and Clare told me this place was prone to spiders, and knowing how much Pat hates them I thought it would be a good idea to...

Pat, with Jill, walks past the back window as Les takes another mouthful of pie

Mona: Oh, forget it..*(backing out of door)*..and remember..*(waving rolling pin at Les)*..don't say anything to Pat.

Les: *(with mouthful)* Don't worry, not a word will pass my full mouth.

Mona shakes her head in disbelief and backs out the room, closing the door behind her, just then Pat and Jill walk in through the back door.

Pat: Well, if it wasn't you or the movers ..who could it have been ?

Jill: Knock out Ginger ? Kids welcoming you to the neighbourhood perhaps ?

Pat: I know it sounds terrible to say it but I was rather hoping it was someone saying they'd found a squashed tarantula outside the house.

Jill: I'm sorry to add to your misery Ms Crawley...

Pat: Please, call me Pat.

Jill: Well, Pat, when I rang the office they confirmed what I thought..that it would be too dangerous for me to go about re-connection with...

Pat: *(patting Jill's arm)* It's okay, I fully understand. The sight..and thought..of **non**-venomous spiders makes me feel faint. You know, I've got a good mind to get on to James and Clare's estate agents..or solicitors..and get them to sort this mess out. Being left a tarantula was not part of the contract at all.

Les: Yep, I've been to places where there've been 'undesirable sitting tenants'..and they've literally had to dynamite them out.

Pat: Oh, don't give my mum any more ideas..*(pausing)*..I wonder where she is she by the way ?

Annabel: *(off)* Coo-ee.

Pat: *(closing eyes)* Oh no, not again.

Annabel appears in the back doorway, holding up a flask

Annabel: Never fear, the cavalry's here. We decided to act upon your mother's 'suggestion', for want of a better word.

Les: Oh that's great, I could really do with something to wash this pie down with..*(taking flask from Annabel)*..I'll do the honours, it's the least I can do.

Les delves into the box and starts getting out mugs and spoons, putting them on the counter

Annabel: I didn't think it was possible to do any less than what you're doing already.

Les: *(unperturbed)* You know, I'm starting to think you don't like me much.

Annabel: Let's just say you have an unerring knack of managing to be at the centre of everything whilst doing nothing..which, in my humble opinion, is the exact opposite of what a tradesman should be.

Les: Please, don't hold back on my account.

Annabel: *(resuming tirade)* Whereas not only have I gone home and prepared what appears to be – for you at least – the elixir of life.. but my darling husband Jonathan..*(looking bemused towards back door)*..has also acted on the rather pointed words of Patricia's delightful mother..*(walking to back door)*..so, never let it be said that the Crosby-Smythes can't take a hint..*(looking out of back door)*..here he is, my knight in shining armour..who is soon to be your knight in shining armour.

Jonathan walks through the back door dressed entirely in a silver metal suit, including gloves and shoes, carrying a big lidded jar. As he somewhat robotically enters, Pat and Jill are dumbstruck, but Les is still facing front - still chomping merrily away on the pie – and doesn't immediately see the entrance

Pat: Um..what is..? I mean..why is ? I mean..I don't know what I mean.

Jonathan: Let me save you the problem of further word-searching Patricia. I am here to seek out and capture the arachnid, so that you can get moved in.

Les turns to see Jonathan and starts choking on his pie with shock then tries to subdue his laughter

Les: Ho-ho, where are you off, to see The Wizard ?

PAT: Um, I don't think this continual antagonism is really hel-

JONATHAN: - As it so happens I did wear this costume for my performance as The Tin Man in the Village Players' recent production of The Wizard of Oz...

ANNABEL: And to rave reviews..*(saucily hugging Jonathan)*..then I insisted he kept it afterwards.

Jonathan hugs Annabel back and then they kiss. On seeing this Les pushes the dish away and puts down spoon

Les: Suddenly, I've lost my appetite..*(picking up flask)*..which means it must be drink time. Anyone for a brew ?

Jill: Not for me thanks.

Les: No ? It might help you loosen up a bit ?

Jill: *(shocked)* I beg your pardon ?

Les: No, I didn't mean it like that...

Jill: *(still surprised)* Like what exactly ?

Les: Oh dear, I seem to be putting my foot in it all over the place. What I meant was, we are clearly in the same boat – you and I – in that we are on the starting-blocks as it were, liked coiled springs waiting to jump up and get on with things...

Annabel: The only thing you want to get on with is a second course...

Les: What I meant was-

Pat: I think we all know what you meant Les. Why don't you just pour the rest of us a cuppa ?

Les: Message understood missus.

As Les starts pouring the tea from the flask into the first mug both Annabel and Jonathan look with disdain at the drinking vessels

Jonathan: Um, not being rude Patricia but we don't do mugs.

Pat: Oh, I'm afraid our best bone china is in a box still on the van.

Les and Jill both smile at Pat's gentle jibe whilst Annabel and Jonathan just suspect that she is being sarcastic

Pat: Right, so it's just me and you then Les..*(quickly)*..oh, I suppose I'd better go and ask mother, she must be parched after all her exertions.

As Pat goes to walk towards the R door Jonathan steps across her

Jonathan: Oh no you don't Patricia, that's why I'm here and dressed like this..*(walking stiff-leggedly towards the R door)*..it's time I went and seized the moment..as well as the spider.

Annabel: *(clasping hands over heart)* My hero.

Jonathan opens the R door and starts exiting through it

Les: *(calling out)* Watch out spider, here comes 'Robo Next Door Neighbour'.

Jonathan goes to respond but can't be bothered to turn, so continues walking out, closing the door behind him

Annabel: Better that than 'The Fat Controller'.

Jill sits at the table sniffing. Pat sits next to her and holds her shoulder

Pat: Are you all right Jill ?

Jill: I'm sorry, it's just that I've not been doing this job very long. In fact, this is my first time out alone..and I've got other places to go to after this, so everything's gone haywire straight away.

Pat: But, it's not your fault, surely the others will understand that ?

Jill: And also – although I don't like to admit it – I'm scared of spiders.

Pat: *(tightening grip on her shoulder)* Well, if it's any consolation at all, I'm absolutely petrified of them. Plus, can you imagine the flack I took when growing up..*(in childish voice)*.. "Oh, here comes Creepy Crawley, she's scared of creepy-crawlies".

Jill: If you didn't like your surname when growing up, why did you change it back when you got divorced ?

Pat: My married name was Pigglessthaite.

Jill: Point taken.

Les: *(conscience getting to him)* Actually, on the whole of the issue of..*(air quoting)*..'the spider'...

Annabel: I thought you'd have a view...

Pat: Okay, that's enough now, I'm putting my foot down as head of Mission Control, or Strategic Command, or whatever Jonathan sees this kitchen as. We must all think and act as one to get over, or around, the problem of this spider.

Les: I was only going to say...

Mona is heard screaming off. Pat jumps up and runs to the R door

Pat: Oh God, has it got her ? *(opening R door)* Mum, what's happened ?

Mona runs in without the rolling pin. She leans against Pat, trying to get her breath back and holding her chest

Pat: Did it bite you mum ? Tell me.

Mona: No, I got the spider..but when I turned around..there was a giant alien walking towards me, all silver it was, quick..*(closing door)*..barricade ourselves in, although I don't know what use it will do...

The R doorknob slowly turns. Mona looks at it in horror

Mona: Oh no, it's the end..*(grabbing Pat's arm)*.. don't let it get me, I'm too old to be beamed up and probed.

The R door slowly opens and Jonathan peeps inside

Jonathan: Just thought I'd better check on Mona before I resume my spider-hunt...

Mona: You ? What do you think you're doing..you..you great lummoX ? You nearly scared me half to death.

Annabel: *(exasperated)* Well, there's gratitude...

Jonathan: *(gripping Annabel's shoulder)* Now now dearest, perhaps I did appear to Mona out of the blue, like some gleaming apparition..

Annabel: You don't have to make excuses. I've got a good mind to take this flask of tea back home and...

Mona: *(spotting the flask)* Um, oh let's not be hasty. Jon was trying to help but, like I said, I'd just killed it, so probably my adrenalin was still pumping.

Pat: *(patronisingly)* Yes, that's probably what it was.

Mona: Yes, we faced up to each other – like gunfighters in the noonday sun – and before he could make a move I'd smote him with the rolling pin.

Les: (*pointedly*) Really ?