

# **NOT OF THIS EARTH**

**AN OUT OF THIS WORLD COMEDY**

by Troy Banyan

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## 'NOT OF THIS EARTH'

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

- **Vic**- Middle-aged man
- **Molly** – Vic's late teens/early 20's daughter
- **Doreen** - Vic's mother
- **Elsbeth** - Vic's mother-in-law
- **Arthur (aka R4)** – Alien in human form in 60's
- **Howie** – Vic's drinking mate in 30's
- **Eve** - Vic's female work colleague in her 30's
- **Gillian/Quazanela** – Vic's middle-aged ex-wife/The alien duplicate of Gillian
- **Geoffrey/Bip** Gillian's new boyfriend/ The alien duplicate of Geoffrey

### There are 2 important issues to note regarding (1) the cast and (2) the set:

1. The play has been written so that the actors playing the dual roles of Gillian/Quazanela and Geoffrey/Bip can get on and off stage in good time, making re-appearance relatively simple.
2. When characters look through the right window into the room they then 'go around the back of the house' to then enter through the kitchen which is downstage left. Obviously this means that whilst they are looking like they are carrying on walking downstage left they will need to double-back 'out of view' to then go behind the set to enter downstage left. The same applies to the dual actors who sometimes have to come through the centre-back door next. This could, however, be easily re-jigged to suit whatever set-up any theatre has.

### All the action takes place in the lounge of the Francis household over 2 days and the sets and scenes are as follows:

#### Act 1

Scene 1 – Friday evening

Scene 2 – Saturday morning

Scene 3 – Saturday morning

#### Act 2

Scene 1 – Saturday afternoon

Scene 2 – Saturday afternoon

Scene 3 – Saturday afternoon

### Approximate length is 2 hours 10 minutes.

## ACT I SCENE I

**(Elspeth is rolling on the exercise ball in tracksuit and leggings. Doreen is sitting in her recliner.)**

**Elspeth:** He's late tonight.

**Doreen:** Huh, he's probably drowning his sorrows with that deadbeat mate of his, Howie. He *knows* I'm waiting for my chips before I turn in for the night.

**Elspeth:** Oh yes, that's right, you must get your regular dose of saturated fat intake to lie in your stomach overnight.

**Doreen:** Correct, otherwise that self-same stomach would be rumbling all night and keeping you awake. Would you prefer *that*?

**Elspeth:** Actually, I wasn't even wondering about Victor, I was referring to Arthur.

**Doreen:** **(Suspiciously.)** Why are *you* worried about *him*?

**Elspeth:** I'm not *worried* about him. He's just not normally home this late from the university.

**(Molly enters centre back.)**

**Molly:** You two at it again?

**Elspeth:** We were just wondering where your dad was.

**Doreen:** *You* weren't.

**Elspeth:** Ah yes, Arthur as well, mainly because he's been looking a bit frail these days.

**Molly:** Huh, Arthur. I don't know why we need a lodger anyway.

**Doreen:** Because your dad's stuck in a dead end job with no chance of promotion and because that leech of an ex-wife bled him dry during the divorce...  
**(pointedly at Elspeth.)**

**Elspeth:** It's no good looking at me like that Doreen...you're pushing against an open door.

**Doreen:** Huh?

**Elspeth:** You know full well how I feel about Gillian. Even though she's my own flesh and blood I will never forgive her for what she did to Victor.

**Molly:** *And* me?

**Elspeth:** Yes...and you Molly.

**Doreen:** Let's face it, all of us have suffered to some extent but, looking at it selfishly...

**Elsbeth:** Do you have any other way?

**Molly:** Good one Nan One.

**Doreen:** Yes, very good. As I was saying...(realising.) wait a minute, why is *she* Nan One?

**Molly:** Why not?

**Doreen:** Huh, very scientific.

**Molly:** Science was never my strong suit at school.

**Doreen:** What subject was?

**Molly:** Touché.

**Elsbeth:** Anyway, all this bickering is not solving why Arthur (**quickly.**) and Victor...are not home yet.

**Molly:** You could always ring or text them, if you're that concerned.

**Elsbeth:** Oh I don't do technology...as you well know.

**Doreen:** No, which is why I have to sort out the remote controls, work out your calorie intake, do your online research, place your online casino bets, no...that's just me.

**Elsbeth:** I prefer to have an agile *body* than an agile mind...and I'm sure Arthur does too.

**Doreen:** Of course he doesn't...he's an academic, so he's interested in the cerebral ...not the (**pointing to the ball.**) silly ball.

**Elsbeth:** Ha-ha, very funny. I'm sure he'll have a laugh at that later on when comparing my firm, taut, shapely body with your slouching, recumbent, chip-scoffing one.

**Doreen:** Ah, the chips...which leads us right back to square one. Where's that son of mine and those deep-fried, golden-brown, salt and vinegar drenched shards of decadence? (**Sniffing.**) Aahhh, unless my proboscis is playing cruel tricks on me...they are wending their way up the path as I speak.

**(Doreen rubs her hands excitedly. The front doorbell rings.)**

**Doreen:** He must've forgotten his key, better *that* than the chips.

**(All three look at each other expectantly.)**

**Doreen:** Don't all rush to answer it.  
**(The doorbell rings again.)**

**Elsbeth:** *You're* the one who wants the chips.  
**(Doreen sighs heavily, goes to move but then winces and holds her back.)**

**Molly:** Oh *I'll* go.

**Doreen:** Good girl. I might give you a chip as a reward.

**Molly:** **(Opening centre back door.)** Wow **(exiting.)**

**Elsbeth:** You really do spoil that girl.

**Doreen:** She may as well keep her body active as her brain's not doing a lot at the moment: a bit like you actually.

**Elsbeth:** She's had *you* too long as a role model, **(pointedly.)** Nan Two.

**Doreen:** Sshh, **(rubbing hands excitedly.)** the chips approacheth.

**Elsbeth:** Yes, get your snout ready for the trough.  
**(Molly enters centre back with Howie, carrying a wrapped up bag of chips.)**

**Molly:** It's Howie.

**Doreen:** **(Incredulously.)** What?

**Elsbeth:** Good evening Howard.

**Howie:** Evening Mrs Rudge.

**Doreen:** Um Howie, and I mean this in the nicest way possible, what the hell are *you* doing here?

**Molly:** He's looking for dad.

**Doreen:** Um, correct me if I'm wrong, but haven't you been out drinking with him all night?

**Howie:** Well, that's just it. We were in the pub, putting the world to rights, as usual, then I went to the loo to...

**Elsbeth:** Yes, I think we know why Howard.

**Howie:** Sorry Mrs Rudge, **(resuming.)** then, when I came out and went back to our table, he'd gone. His pint was still half full.

**Doreen:** Now, that *is* unusual.

**Howie:** What worries me though is that...well, I've never seen him this low before. He was trumping me at every turn with his woes, about his job, his finances, even his state of mind...saying that *how* he was feeling now he really feared for his sanity.

**Doreen:** Hmm, I see. Are those *chips* by any chance Howie dear?

**Howie:** Eh? Oh yeah, for the gannets back home...you know.

**Elsbeth:** Yes, we know, we have one here.

**Howie:** Anyway, what do you think we should do?

**Doreen:** I think you should open that well stocked bag of chips then Molly will butter some bread and I can...I mean we can...

**Howie:** About Vic.

**Doreen:** Well, when he gets back with his you can replenish your bag with some from-

**Howie:** I mean what are we going to do about *him*? You don't think he's gone and done...something stupid, do you?

**Doreen:** Like forgetting my chips? I don't think he'd have the nerve to-

**Elsbeth:** Oh Doreen...can you please take your mind out of the deep fat fryer for two seconds and think where your son and heir might be.

**(Doreen sulkily crosses her arms.)**

**Molly:** What makes you think dad might...you know?

**Howie:** It's just that he was saying things like...there's no way out, no solution he could see. He said he'd reached the point of no return, the job was crushing him at work, Gillian had squeezed him in the divorce, his creative writing juices had drained out of him, and life home here was **(stopping himself.)**...

**Elsbeth:** Go on Howard, say it.

**Howie:** I can't, I've said too much as it is. It's for him to...well, you know. I'm just *that* worried about him that I...

**Doreen:** ...still stopped off in the chip shop on your way home. I bet you even finished off the rest of his pint in the pub.

**Howie:** Well, you know, waste not want not, and that *had* been my round.

**Doreen:** Very thoughtful.

**Molly:** I'm worried about dad...Nans One and Two. I think we ought to go out and look for him.

**Elsbeth:** I think that's a good idea Molly, I'll just go and change.

**Doreen:** Change? It's not a fashion show.

**Elsbeth:** Well, unlike you Doreen...I *care* about how I look.

**Howie:** Well, I'm with you Moll, I'll get out there now and....

**Doreen:** Whoa, whoa, whoa. Why all the panic... when we've not even explored the obvious? Why don't we just ring him? **(Producing her mobile.)** It's simple really, **(pressing key.)** isn't it?

**Howie:** Actually Doreen...I tried that earlier but was met by a...

**(SFX: High-pitched tone emanates from Doreen's mobile. She bolts and drops the phone.)**

**Howie:** Yes, *that's* it.

**(Doreen picks the phone back up and presses the off button to make the sound stop. She then wiggles her finger in her ear.)**

**Elsbeth:** My word...what could have caused that?

**Molly:** He's not got a fax on there, has he?

**Elsbeth:** A what?

**(SFX: Front door opening OS.)**

**Doreen:** Ah, here he is now, no doubt we'll get some chi-...some answers.

**(The centre back door opens and Arthur, carrying a briefcase, wearily enters.)**

**Elsbeth:** Oh Arthur, we were starting to get worried about you. Do you feel all right?

**Arthur:** I'm a bit tired if I'm honest.

**Elsbeth:** Aw, would you like me to get you a nice drink to help you unwind?

**Doreen:** **(Struggling to feet.)** Don't harangue the man as soon as he walks through the door Elspeth, **(to Arthur.)** would you like your dinner Arthur? It will need warming up though...**(edging towards downstage left door.)** ...as it was made a few hours ago...

**Elsbeth:** **(Blocking Doreen.)** Actually Doreen...I was just getting to that.

**Doreen:** **(Jostling with Elspeth.)** Well, you know the old adage...'you snooze you lose'.

**Elsbeth:** (Jostling back.) What *exactly* do I lose?

(Doreen and Elspeth lean against each other to stop the other one getting to the downstage left door first. Arthur watches with a pained expression.)

**Arthur:** Actually ladies, if I'm honest I'm not really that hungry and might just turn in for the night.

(Neither Doreen or Elspeth relent as they battle for supremacy. Molly shakes her head at them.)

**Molly:** What about if I warm it up and bring it up to you in your room Arthur? After all, it was *me* who cooked it, as it is *every* night.

**Howie:** Actually Molly...that reminds me, there's a job going down at the publishers and they were asking workers if they knew someone who might be qualified and interested, rather than go through the whole official recruitment rigmarole.

**Molly:** (Interested.) Yeah? What doing?

**Doreen:** Does it matter? She'll do it.

**Elsbeth:** It's *her* decision, not yours.

**Doreen:** If she gets a job the quicker she can go for a place of her own, so we won't have to share a bedroom anymore.

**Elsbeth:** So, what exactly is this job Howard?

**Howie:** It's a bit of a 'jack of all trades' position, but they said that there will be scope to learn from journalists, do day release at college and...

(Arthur holds his head and starts swaying.)

**Howie:** And then, as time as goes on, you'll be able to...

(Arthur slumps into the sofa, holding his head in one hand and clutching his briefcase under his other arm. Doreen and Elspeth immediately disengage from each other. Elspeth pulls free quickest and moves to sit on his right side holding his right arm, rubbing his right hand.)

**Elsbeth:** Arthur, are you all right?

(Doreen then, less quickly, copies her, sitting on Arthur's left side, holding his left arm, rubbing his left hand.)

**Doreen:** I'm here for you Arthur, tell me what's wrong.

**Elsbeth:** I asked first. Can I get you a glass of water?



**Doreen:** Or something stronger maybe?

**Arthur:** **(Removing arms from grips.)** Please, ladies, I really think the best thing for me will be to take a few tablets and turn in for the night. Now, **(reaching into inside pocket.)** if I could just settle up the rent **(producing wallet.)** with Victor **(pulling out notes.)** before I...

**Elsbeth:** Oh, he's not home yet Arthur, **(taking notes from Arthur.)** I'll make sure he gets it.

**Doreen:** Actually, **(snatching notes from Elspeth.)** I'll take it as I stay up later than you.

**Molly:** Actually...**(snatching notes from Doreen.)**...as I'm the one who's lumbered with buying everything...I'll take it. Do you need a receipt Arthur?

**Arthur:** Pardon?

**Molly:** Well, as you're here on business I thought you might have to produce receipts for your employers, you know...to prove where you're staying and at what cost.

**Arthur:** **(Defensively.)** Um...oh no, that's not necessary, they trust me to tell the truth.

**Molly:** **(Suspiciously.)** Do they?

**Arthur:** **(Uneasily.)** Anyway, so Victor's not home yet, any idea where he might be?

**Howie:** That's what we're trying to get to the bottom of. I'm his best mate see.

**Arthur:** Oh, I see. Howard, yes?

**Howie:** That's right, Howard Pilbeam...and you're Arthur, right? **(Leaning down to Arthur, offering hand.)**

**Arthur:** Right.

**(Arthur gingerly shakes Howie's hand and Howie recoils.)**

**Howie:** Blimey Arthur...where you been all night...sat in a fridge?

**Arthur:** Like I said...I think I'm coming down with something, so it's probably best if I just...

**Elsbeth:** I know Arthur...**(jumping up.)**...you put *these* on...**(rolling the leggings off her legs.)**...these will warm you up a treat...**(rolling them up to re-roll on.)**...from the legs up, just what you need.

**Arthur:** Oh, I don't know about that...

**Elsbeth:** Nonsense, **(rolling one over Arthur's shoe.)** and they'll still be warm from the heat of my firm calves. **(straightening the legging up.)** There.

**Doreen:** He said he didn't want them on...Cloth Ears.

**Elsbeth:** Of course he does, **(rolling second one over Arthur's other shoe)** it's the next best thing to having two bodies hugging together to create warmth. **(Straightening the legging up.)** There. How's that?

**Doreen:** **(Loudly.)** Oh, why don't you just strip off naked for him?  
**(SFX: Key turning in the front door OS, breaking the awkward silence.)**

**Molly:** Oh thank God, he's home just in the nick of time.  
**(The centre back door slowly opens, to show Vic standing there, staring straight ahead, with his hair dishevelled. He walks in slowly, almost trancelike.)**

**Molly:** Oh God dad, what's happened to you?

**Howie:** God Vic, are you all right?  
**(Molly and Howie then each guide him by an arm towards the table.)**

**Doreen:** **(Sarcastically.)** Does he *look* all right?

**Elsbeth:** He's only worried Doreen. No need to bite his head off.

**Doreen:** Sorry Howie, it's the 'chip deficiency' making me snappy, **(looking Vic up and down.)** talking of which...

**Elsbeth:** **(Tersely.)** Doreen, look at your son's appearance...not what he has or hasn't got about his person.

**Doreen:** **(Mumbling to herself.)** It's 'hasn't', I can see that now **(folding arms grumpily.)**

**Molly:** Therefore, whatever happened to him occurred between the pub and the chip shop.

**Howie:** Good detective work Mol, that's the sort of thought pattern that will be useful at the interview.

**Arthur:** **(Wearily.)** Could I suggest we move off the subject of chips, locations and interviews...and actually probe Victor about...?  
**(Vic sits up bolt upright and stares straight ahead.)**

**Elsbeth:** **(Rubbing Arthur's shoulder.)** Ooh, look at that, you can rely on Arthur to crack the code.

**(Doreen goes even grumpier and re-folds her arms likewise. Arthur weakly breaks free of Elspeth's grip and shuffles up to the table, looking deep into Vic's eyes.)**

**Arthur:** Victor, it's Arthur. Why don't you tell us exactly what...

**(Vic screams, jumps up and starts strangling Arthur. Molly and Howie quickly jump in and un-grip him from Arthur's throat. Arthur staggers backwards. Elspeth runs to him and guides him back to the sofa, where she fusses over him. Doreen angrily storms to the table and stares at Vic. Arthur's eyes start gradually closing as the scene continues, until asleep.)**

**Doreen:** Right, this has gone on long enough, leave it to your mother to sort things out, as usual...**(slapping Vic's face.)**...snap out of it, stop this attention-seeking...*now*. **(Vic, for the first time, un-trances and looks pathetically at Doreen).**

**Vic:** They took me mum. They took me and...did things to me.

**Doreen:** I've told you to steer clear of the towpath, haven't I? Molly, you should go to your room.

**Vic:** There was a bright light, I had no escape.

**Doreen:** Had torches did they? Well, it is dark down th...

**Vic:** I was beamed.

**Doreen:** Okay Molly...I really think you should go to your...

**Molly:** **(Moving closer to Vic.)** Dad? What...what are you trying to say?

**Vic:** **(Looking bemused.)** Well, isn't it obvious? On my way home...I was abducted by aliens.

**(There is a long, pregnant pause full of awkward glances, throat clearances, feet shuffling and thumb twiddling.)**

**Doreen:** See? Talking about chips doesn't seem so bad now, does it?

**Howie:** **(Approaching Vic.)** Um...I left shortly after you Vic mate...and followed the same route. Where did this 'abduction' take place?

**Vic:** I...I don't know.

**Molly:** What do you mean...you don't know? You know the area, you've lived here all your life. You've done that walk from the pub to here a million times...so why wouldn't you know where this 'beaming' took place?

**Vic:** Well, I guess – although I can't be certain – that it was a sort of...I don't know... perhaps a mobile sort of abduction, you know...one minute I was there...the next I was 'zapped'.

**Elsbeth:** And when were you 'returned'?

**Vic:** I was in exactly the same place, at the same time...as if nothing had happened.

**(There is a long silence as all the others again shuffle and twitch. A look of horrific realisation comes on Vic's face.)**

**Vic:** Do...do you not believe me? Any of you?

**Howie:** Um...you know mate...some of the things you were saying in the pub... about there being 'no way out', 'reaching the point of no return'...'fearing for your sanity' ...

**Vic:** Yes?

**Howie:** Well, you know, they sounded a bit...prophetic.

**Elsbeth:** Now Howard, I won't have you talk about my son-in-law like that.

**Molly:** **(Sighing.)** He said 'prophetic' Nan One...not 'pathetic', **(under breath.)** although how this story's going I don't know.

**Vic:** **(Crumpling sadly.)** Molly, please tell me *you* believe me. My own flesh and blood.

**Molly:** Dad, I was on the computer earlier, I happened to open that folder that you conveniently leave in view on the screen...'Vic's Tricks'. There's a document in it...setting out things...a manifesto. It charts your life, especially what's gone wrong in it, how you've tried to rectify it so far...and what's left to try.

**Vic:** Oh, you read that did you?

**Molly:** Yes. I'm sorry if I shouldn't have...but as it was just on the screen – not hidden or protected – I thought it might be something fun. I was wrong.

**Vic:** I'm a writer love, or I want to be. I like to try things, different styles and content, you know...be creative...

**Doreen:** Yes, with the truth.

**Vic:** What?

**Doreen:** We've all read it in here, well me and Molly, Elspeth's I.T illiterate...

**Elsbeth:** Heh.

**Doreen:** Well, you are...aren't you?

**Elsbeth:** Well, yes...but...

**Doreen:** And in that document you rant on about how everything's gone wrong for you and how bad your life is...saying at the end that there's only two avenues left for you: one is...the unthinkable, and the other – less drastic – option is to 'feign madness'. And now... *this*. Coincidental, or what?

**Vic:** Well, I guess it could be perceived as that, but...

**Howie:** You were knocking those drinks back earlier mate...are you sure you didn't have a sort of 'blank out' episode, you know...where you sit down...or lean against something ...and just drift off for a few minutes...or seconds even?

**Vic:** I'm sure I didn't.

**Elsbeth:** Aren't we overlooking something, or someone, here? Arthur. He's an academic so will no doubt be able to shed some light on this...**(to Arthur.)** ...what do you think Arthur?

**(Arthur is asleep with his head lowered. Elsbeth is concerned and gently shakes his arm.)**

**Elsbeth:** Arthur?

**Doreen:** Is he still alive, or did my son throttle him to death?

**Elsbeth:** **(Feeling Arthur's neck pulse.)** Yes, he's still with us.

**(Elsbeth stands back and looks admiringly at the sleeping Arthur.)**

**Elsbeth:** Aw, just look at him. He looks so cute just sat there like that. We should take a photo of him, to remind us for when he leaves as we don't know how much longer he'll be with us.

**Doreen:** Do you mean in this house...or life in general?

**Elsbeth:** What do you mean?

**Doreen:** Well, you have to admit...he's been looking more frail and tired than usual of late.

**Elsbeth:** He's just missing his home, that's all.

**Molly:** Where *is* his home by the way?

**Elsbeth:** Eh?

**Molly:** Well, *I've* never heard him say from which part of the country he hails.

**Elsbeth:** Oh, what does it matter? Just get that camera of yours and take a proper photo, not a mobile snap.

**Molly:** **(Sighing.)** Yes, Nan One.

**(Molly trudges over to the sideboard and bends over to open the side door of it. Howie walks over to Vic, stands behind him and holds his shoulder.)**

**Howie:** I'm here for you mate. Do you want to go back out there and we'll re-trace your steps?

**(Vic just buries his head in his hands.)**

**Doreen:** And while you're there...pop in the chip shop this time.

**Elsbeth:** **(Snapping.)** Doreen. Can't you see your son's in pain?

**(Doreen crosses her arms disappointedly. Molly gets the camera and prepares it to take)**

**Howie:** Actually...**(holding up chips.)**...I'd better get these home to the hungry horde.

**Elsbeth:** Oh, before you go Howie, after Molly's taken this picture could you help Arthur up to his room? You know...**(quietly.)**...save waking him up.

**Howie:** Huh?

**Doreen:** I get the picture Elsbeth, but all this sucking up to Arthur counts for nothing when he's not actually awake.

**Elsbeth:** I'm just looking out for the welfare of a fellow human being, that's all – you ought to try it some time. Now, Molly, take the photo of Arthur in all his serene splendour.

**(Molly sighs deeply and takes a picture of the recumbent Arthur.)**

**Elsbeth:** Now, Howie, can you carry him up to his room, second on the left, and just lie him on top of his bed?

**Howie:** What about the leggings?

**Elsbeth:** Oh, don't worry about them, I'll pop up in a minute and make sure he's prepared for sleep.

**Doreen:** **(Under breath.)** I bet you will.

**(Howie moves to Arthur but, on realising he still has the chip bag, puts it on the table then walks to the sofa and easily shovels Arthur up into his arms. Arthur doesn't stir so Howie picks him up, swivels**

**and walks to the back centre door with him. As he looks back in he sees Doreen avariciously walking to the table.)**

**Howie:** Um...just keep an eye on those chips will you Mrs Rudge?

**Elsbeth:** Of course I will Howard.

**(Doreen again crosses her arms in frustration as Howie exits with Arthur.)**

**Doreen:** Heh Elspeth, mind you don't knock your halo off when you go up.

**Elsbeth:** I feel sorry for you Doreen.

**Doreen:** Well don't, the last thing I need is your pity.

**Molly:** Oh, will the pair of you just give it a rest. Can't you see we have a real problem here?

**Doreen:** What...(noddng to Vic.)...him? I read that thing as well Molly...and when you've both gone to bed I will be having a serious mother-to-son discussion with him about it.

**(SFX: Fast footsteps coming downstairs, followed by the breathless re-appearance of Howie through the centre back door.)**

**Elsbeth:** It's all right Howard, she never opened it.

**Howie:** Oh, well I never thought she...

**Doreen:** Say goodnight Howie, your work here is done.

**(Howie almost guiltily reaches across the table and picks up the chip bag.)**

**Howie:** Um...right, well...I'll be off then.

**Doreen:** **(Tersely.)** Goodnight...Howard.

**Howie:** Right, goodnight then...(moving away then stopping by Molly.)...um...I'll let HR know you're interested in the job Mol. I'll e-mail them your phone number tonight as they'll be in this weekend, so that they can...

**Doreen:** Goodnight Howard.

**(Molly looks angrily at Doreen then ushers Howie to the centre back door.)**

**Molly:** I'll see you out Howie.

**(Howie stops in the doorway and looks back in.)**

**Howie:** See you Vic...mate.

**(Vic doesn't move, with his head still in his hands. Howie dejectedly walks out the door, followed by Molly. Elspeth walks to her exercise ball and looks derisively at Doreen.)**

**Elsbeth:** You know...I think you've hit a new low tonight, even for you.

**Doreen:** What do you mean?

**(Elsbeth starts rolling her ball away to the up left corner of the room.)**

**Elsbeth:** You've managed to alienate...

**(Doreen gives a derisive chuckle.)**

**Elsbeth:** Okay, you've managed to rub everyone up the wrong way tonight...and all because you haven't been able to shovel a bag load of grease-laden potato slivers down your neck...

**Doreen:** Well, at least I haven't all but lap-danced for a virtual stranger who would probably drop dead at the thought of carnal relations.

**Elsbeth:** At least I *can* dance...and not just trudge.

**Doreen:** I can dance.

**Elsbeth:** Yes, the hokey-cokey after six bottles of stout.

**(Molly re-appears in the centre back doorway and closes her eyes in disbelief at the bickering still going on.)**

**Doreen:** What did your husband used to think of you flaunting your body at each turn?

**Elsbeth:** He loved it actually. You should have tried it with yours...he might not have looked elsewhere then.

**Doreen:** At least he didn't drop dead.

**(Elsbeth goes to answer but is both too upset and angry, so just turns and walks out the centre back doorway, brushing past Molly en route. Doreen looks reflective as footsteps are heard running off upstairs.)**

**Molly:** Well, I think you've just hit a new low.

**Doreen:** Oh, don't *you* start.

**Molly:** I won't, I'm going to bed...goodnight dad, things will look different in the morning.

**(Molly walks out the centre back doorway, closing the door behind her. Doreen struggles to her feet and starts hobbling around.)**



**Doreen:** Well, I've upset my bunk-bed roommate, I'm now firmly Nan Number Two in Molly's eyes, I was brusque with Howie because he had chips and I didn't, and I'm well off the pace in the race for Arthur's affections, **(clamping hands on Vic's shoulders)**, at least I'm going to get one thing right tonight, **(almost shaking Vic with her grip)** I'm going to sort *you* out.

**Vic:** What?

**Doreen:** I'm going to get you, my only offspring, back on track with your life. It's bad enough that people pity you for your life...but I'm damned if I'm going to have them laugh at you over this ridiculous alien thing.

**(Vic jumps up making Doreen stumble backwards.)**

**Vic:** Is it any wonder they pity me? My wife runs off with another man, I get fleeced in the settlement...and the only thing I get custody of is not one but two mothers: two women who do nothing but argue all day long until I get home from the job I loathe...when their bickering then transfers on to me.

**(Doreen slumps into the sofa as Vic stalks around.)**

**Vic:** And the one thing in life that I love to do – writing – I'm both physically and mentally too drained to do after a day in that place and an evening in here.

**Doreen:** **(Defensively.)** Well...you've managed it all right in that...that manifesto of yours.

**Vic:** But...that's not being creative, that's...that's just putting down on screen how I feel, it's a rant, it's a form of therapy...so that I don't, quite literally, explode.

**Doreen:** Huh...therapy. In my day people - especially men - just put up with things, suppressed them, and just carried on as normal.

**(Vic chuckles and walks around the room. He then chuckles a bit louder.)**

**Doreen:** Something funny?

**Vic:** Yes, you.

**Doreen:** What?

**Vic:** I bet that's the sort of thing you used to say to dad...when he came home from the job *he* hated.

**Doreen:** Not exactly, I...

**Vic:** I bet that's what drove him into the arms of that strumpet Beryl.

**Doreen:** But...but...

**Vic:** I'm not surprised he left you, any normal man would have. Now *I've* got you, the Francis Curse continues.

**Doreen:** What do you mean?

**Vic:** Well, you got left, I got left, no doubt Molly will as well.

**Doreen:** She has to *get* someone first.

**Vic:** **(Ignoring Doreen.)** And no doubt we'll still all be left in a three-generational household of dumpees.

**Doreen:** *And* Elspeth. No doubt she'll still be with us.

**Vic:** But she was bereaved...and I *had* to take her in because George's unpaid debts took all her money and her house.

**Doreen:** So, what about me then?

**Vic:** Well, you made such a fuss about her being here 'in the bosom of her family' that you gave up your council house...so I was duty bound to have *you* as well, even though it meant disrupting everything in the house to accommodate you, all because you thought you were missing something.

**Doreen:** Oh...and I suppose Elspeth never does anything wrong?

**Vic:** I didn't say that. She's just more positive than you and tries to look on the bright side of things, despite everything that's happened to her in recent years.

**Doreen:** But...what about me?

**Vic:** Everything that's happened to you you've brought on yourself. In fact...it's probably hereditary why I'm like I am, stuck in a self-pitying downward spiral.

**Doreen:** Oh, so I'm to blame for how *you* are as well, am I?

**Vic:** Well, as they say, the apple never falls very far from the tree.

**Doreen:** Is there anything else you want to fit me up for while you're at it? Black Wednesday? The Kennedy Assassination? The Potato Famine?

**Vic:** **(Sighing.)** You know what mum...let's just drop it, I'm going to bed.  
**(Vic walks towards the centre back door, stops and looks back.)**

**Vic:** This is so typical of you. I've come home after the most momentous event of my life... then, after five minutes of being embroiled in yet another argument, you've made me almost forget about it.

**Doreen:** **(Under breath.)** Only almost?

**Vic:** What? Oh, I've had enough of you, I can't even be in the same room as you anymore.

**(Vic turns and walks back out the door, pulling it behind him but it doesn't shut. Footsteps are heard running off upstairs. Doreen just shrugs and starts talking to herself.)**

**Doreen:** Ah well...it was worth a bit of flak to take his mind off of **(thinking.)** it was a bit hurtful though.

**(SFX: Doreen's stomach rumbling loudly.)**

**Doreen:** Huh, why did I have to mention the potato famine? Ah well, **(looking at watch.)** tummy over tumult, **(walking towards downstage left door.)** methinks it's time to crank up the old deep fat fryer.

**(Doreen trudges out through the downstage left door. A short pause is broken by the centre back door opening and Arthur walking in, wearing nothing but long johns and long socks. He looks as if he is sleepwalking and starts walking around the room. Elspeth then quickly enters centre back, looking flustered, sees Arthur and starts following him around the room.)**

**(SFX: Doreen whistling inanely from OS left.)**

**(Elspeth panics. The downstage left door then opens and Elspeth stands in front of Arthur, trying to shield him from Doreen's view.)**

**Doreen:** Ah, I'm glad you came back down. About earlier on, I...

**(Elspeth shuffles and the somnambulist Arthur becomes partially visible behind her.)**

**Doreen:** What the...? What's going on?

**(Arthur then walks into full view and starts walking around again.)**

**Doreen:** Hang on, how come he's undressed?

**Elspeth:** **(Defensively.)** Um, well...he clearly took off his clothes, all on his own.

**Doreen:** What, in the two minutes between Howie carrying him up and now he...woke up, got undressed, went back to sleep, then started sleepwalking?

**Elspeth:** Well...yes. Anyway, what is this...the Spanish Inquisition? Besides, the man should be comfortable, after all...he does pay to live here, unlike us.

**(Arthur arrives back at the sofa, standing between the two women – still asleep – and there is an awkward silence. He then picks up his briefcase.)**

**Elsbeth:** Ah, his subconscious must have willed him to get out of bed and come down to get his case.

**Doreen:** Mmm, what will it tell him to do next I wonder?

**Elsbeth:** I don't know, **(holding Arthur's arm)**...but I think it's dangerous for him to remain down here, **(manoeuvring Arthur towards centre back door)** they say you should never wake up a sleepwalker you know.

**Doreen:** Do they? You seem to know a lot about somnambulism.

**Elsbeth:** Eh? **(Leading Arthur through centre back door.)** What's that?

**Doreen:** Sleepwalking. **(Quickly.)** Where're you taking him?

**Elsbeth:** Back up of course. **(In doorway.)** Night.

**Doreen:** Hang on, why *you*?

**Elsbeth:** Well, you're cooking your chips, aren't you?

**Doreen:** How do you know that?

**Elsbeth:** You're nothing if not predictable Doreen Francis.

**(Doreen goes to respond but Elspeth turns agitated in the doorway.)**

**Elsbeth:** He's gone again, I'd better follow him.

**Doreen:** Hang on, I'd better come and...

**(SFX: Smoke alarm going off OS.)**

**Elsbeth:** **(Smiling.)** I'd better go. Bye.

**(Elspeth exits after Arthur centre back. Doreen is caught in two minds but eventually moves towards the kitchen.)**

**Doreen:** Damn it. Bloody chips. **(Stopping at downstage left door.)** Huh, where Arthur's concerned...I think I've already *had my chips*.

**(Doreen exits through the downstage left door and in a few seconds the sound of the smoke alarm stops. (Lights off.)**

## **ACT I SCENE 2**

**(It is the following morning and the curtains open to show that the set is exactly the same as at the end of the last scene but the curtains are drawn back, letting in daylight. Vic merrily enters from the downstage left door carrying a pot full of coffee and a mug. He sits at the desk in the swivel PC chair and pours himself a cup. He starts typing really quickly on the keyboard. The centre back door opens and Molly, dressed in a smart suit, enters, fitting in her earrings.)**

**Vic:** (Without turning.) Good morning Molly, you're up bright and early.

**Molly:** I could say the same about you. How did you know it was me by the way?

**Vic:** (Still not turning and typing furiously.) Must be your aura. What's the occasion then?

**Molly:** Oh, Howie said his place was looking for someone and he e-mailed them my details when he got home last night. They picked it up and have just rang to ask if I can come in and see them this morning.

**Vic:** That sounds a bit odd.

**Molly:** Well, it's a chance too good to miss.

**Vic:** No, not that...the process, the procedure.

**Molly:** Well, they (stopping.) are you all right?

**Vic:** Yes. Why?

**Molly:** Well, you're different somehow.

**Vic:** No, I'm not, carry on with the job story.

**Molly:** Well, they said that as I'd been recommended by an employee – Howie – they would have a long chat with me this morning...and if they like what they see I will be able to start Monday morning...as I've not got a job so wouldn't have to work out a notice.

**Vic:** Mmm, short-cutting the system...but what the hell? Good luck with it.

**Molly:** Thanks. What're you working on there?

**Vic:** Oh, nothing really.

**Molly:** You're typing mighty fast for nothing, aren't you?

**Vic:** Am I? I hadn't noticed.

**Molly:** Dad, about last night.

**Vic:** What about it?

**Molly:** Well, you know, what you said happened to you on the way home.

**Vic:** What was that exactly?

**Molly:** Well, about...you know. Oh, I can't concentrate with you typing like that.

**Vic:** Sorry love but when the muse strikes...you have to go with her.

**(Molly shrugs and on seeing her camera on the table walks over and picks it up.)**

**Molly:** I guess it's where I get my artistic bent from.

**Vic:** I guess so. Why do you need your camera?

**Molly:** Oh, they said they'd like to see photos I took during my course, my technique... and they'll probably want to see what my writing's like as well of course...

**Vic:** Ah...you'll knock 'em dead.

**Molly:** Thanks dad. We'll be all right, won't we?

**Vic:** Of course we will love.

**(Doreen trudges in through the centre back door in her dressing gown, yawning and rubbing her eyes.)**

**Molly:** Ah, The Kraken wakes.

**Doreen:** Huh?

**Molly:** Oh...and the next time you have a midnight snack can you wash up after yourself? There's a congealed layer of fat on everything in that bowl.

**Doreen:** And good morning to you too.

**Molly:** Anyway, I'm off. **(Walking towards centre back door with camera.)** I should rest in a minute dad...you'll wear out your fingers otherwise. **(Opening door.)** Bye.

**(As Molly exits Doreen looks at Vic still typing furiously on the keyboard. The front door is heard closing off.)**

**Doreen:** I wondered what that tapping was, I thought we had death-watch beetle.

**(Vic carries on typing madly.)**

**Doreen:** Have you still got the hump with me as well?

**Vic:** No, I'm just busy doing what I love doing.

**Doreen:** Fair enough. So, where's madame going at such an unearthly hour?

**Vic:** Interview she said.

**Doreen:** God, that was quick, **(looking at Vic's coffee.)** I'd ask if you wanted a drink but you look well stocked for the day.

**Vic:** Mmm.

**Doreen:** Coffee, eh? That's not like you. I'll just get myself one then.

**(Doreen trudges off downstage left. Vic finishes off his mug then re-fills it from the cafetiere.)**

**(SFX: Bloodcurdling scream from Elspeth OS. A yelp from Doreen OS. Utensils falling onto floor OS. Footsteps running downstairs OS.)**

**(Vic just carries on typing furiously, then Doreen re-enters from downstage left.)**

**Doreen:** What the hell was that?

**Vic:** Eh? Oh, I don't know. No doubt we'll find out soon.

**Doreen:** **(Sarcastically.)** Do you think?

**(The centre back door swings open and Elspeth runs in. She is dressed as she was in the last scene. She stands, distraught, almost hyperventilating and unable to speak. Vic just carries on typing, unaffected by the interruption.)**

**Doreen:** What is it? What have you done?

**Elspeth:** It's...it's...

**Doreen:** Hang on, didn't you have that on last night?

**Elspeth:** I...I...

**Doreen:** You did. That wasn't you in the top bunk when I came up last night, was it?

**Elspeth:** I...I...

**Doreen:** You put pillows under your quilt so that I'd think you were asleep, didn't you?

**Elspeth:** Arthur...Arthur...

**Doreen:** Yes, Arthur...you dirty stop-out. You knew how to get your own back on me so you...you...

**Elspeth:** Arthur...

**Doreen:** Yes, I get the picture, you don't have to tell me the gory –

**Elspeth:** No, Arthur, he's dead.

**(Vic at last stops typing and slowly stands up.)**

**Doreen:** You mean you...you....

**Elsbeth:** Contrary to what your dirty mind is thinking...nothing happened between Arthur and me.

**Doreen:** So, it wasn't like when George died then?

**Elsbeth:** **(Firmly.)** No, it wasn't. True...I was in his room with him...but I was just sat in the seat, watching him, checking on him.

**Doreen:** Well, you didn't do a very good job, did you?

**Elsbeth:** Well I obviously dozed off, didn't I?

**Vic:** Can you two please stop it? I've got a dead lodger upstairs. I must get things sorted out.

**Doreen:** He paid up to date...if that's what you're worried about.

**Vic:** **(Snapping.)** Mum. **(Thinking.)** Who did he give it to?

**Doreen:** Your darling daughter, after she came over all righteous with him.

**Vic:** Right, I wonder when she's going to get the shopping then?

**Elsbeth:** **(Holding chest and swaying.)** Oh God.

**Vic:** What is it?

**Elsbeth:** Arthur, last night, the more I think about it, I wonder if...he *knew*.

**Doreen:** Knew what?

**Elsbeth:** That his time was nigh. The 'feeling tired and ill but not worrying about it and not taking anything for it', the 'just wanting to sleep'...and the need to 'settle up'. Oh God...I feel faint.

**Doreen:** He was never exactly a hive of activity, and as for...

**Elsbeth:** And look at how he got treated on his last night on Earth. Me and you doing our usual fighting over him, Molly giving him the third degree over his business, me forcing the leggings on him, then the final act he probably remembered...Vic almost strangling the life out of him.

**(There is a long silence while all three look down then around. Doreen then grasps the mettle.)**

**Doreen:** So, you definitely didn't have sex with him then?

**(SFX: Front doorbell ringing. Doreen, realising the potential tongue-lashing from Elspeth, walks towards the centre back door.)**

**Doreen:** I'll go.

**Elsbeth:** **(Pointedly.)** Are you sure?



**(Doreen exits through the centre back door.)**

**Elsbeth:** So, Vic, what are we going to do about Arthur?

**Vic:** **(Glibly.)** Well, I think it's a little late in the day to do *anything*, don't you?

**Elsbeth:** **(Taken aback.)** No, I...I mean...you know, do we contact a doctor...or...or...

**(The centre back door opens and Doreen trudges in, holding the door open. She looks at Vic.)**

**Doreen:** It's that bird you work with.

**(Eve walks in behind Doreen.)**

**Eve:** It's Eve Mrs Francis, **(under breath.)** I remember *you*.

**Vic:** **(Surprised.)** Oh, Eve, what are you doing here?

**Eve:** You need to ask? When you left work yesterday you were at the Gates of Hell, but all the postings you've made this morning, particularly on Palpage, your blog...and my Church, well...

**Vic:** Oh yes...those. Yes, I guess I have been very productive this morning.

**Doreen:** Um, I'm sorry to interrupt this cosy conversation...but what are we going to do about **(nodding upwards.)** you know?

**Elsbeth:** Quite right Doreen...this is all very disrespectful.

**Eve:** What is it? What's happened?

**Vic:** Well...

**(Just as Vic is about to explain, the centre back door opens and Arthur, wearing a dressing gown, with his black socks still on, walks in, sounding quite chipper.)**

**Arthur:** Morning everyone.

**(Elsbeth goes wide-eyed, fans herself, then flops back onto the sofa in a faint. Arthur is concerned, sits on the sofa and holds her hand. Doreen frowns.)**

**Arthur:** Elspeth, **(patting her hand.)** what's wrong? **(Holding her head.)** Speak to me.

**(Doreen plonks herself the other side of Arthur and nestles in.)**

**Doreen:** Oh, she's fine. **(Patting Arthur's hand.)** More to the point Arthur...are *you*?

**Arthur:** Yes, I'm fine Doreen, why do you ask?

**(Elspeth comes around and, on seeing Arthur turn to Doreen, holds Arthur's other hand to distract him away from her.)**

**Elspeth:** Because...because, **(choking up.)** oh Arthur.

**Arthur:** Really, what *has* been going on here?

**(Both Doreen and Elspeth go to answer but Vic, rather tersely, interjects.)**

**Vic:** Basically Arthur...Elspeth thought you were dead and had just delivered this news to us, **(turning to Eve.)** so, Eve, what exactly is it you want to discuss?

**Eve:** Well...your *revelation* of course.

**Elspeth:** Hold on, **(sitting up.)** you're talking as if nothing's happened. I know what I saw - or rather didn't see – and that was a pulse or any sign of life.

**Arthur:** What happened then? Were...were you in my room?

**Doreen:** **(Mischievously.)** Yes, all night long.

**Elspeth:** Um, well...yes I was, but that was only because I was so worried about you, you were really frail and tired last night. **(Hugging Arthur.)** Oh, thank God you're okay.

**(Arthur reluctantly reciprocates and hugs Elspeth back. Doreen, feeling left out, hugs his back whilst trying to prise him away from Elspeth.)**

**Doreen:** Yes, we were *both* really worried about you.

**Arthur:** **(Muffled, squashed in between the two women.)** Well, as you can see ...I'm fine, I'm also very hungry and thirsty,**(squeezing out.)** so I think I'll just **(standing up.)** go and...

**(As Arthur starts walking towards the kitchen, Doreen and Elspeth both stand up and follow him.)**

**Elspeth:** Yes, that's a good idea, I'll make you a nice breakfast and-

**Doreen:** No, I think I'd better do it...you've already got one thing wrong today.

**(Arthur's head drops as he walks towards the kitchen with the two women fussing over him yet again.)**

**Elspeth:** I can get on with preparing it while you start washing up the mess that no doubt left last night.

**(Arthur exits downstage left. Elspeth follows.)**

**Doreen:** But the mess on the floor is all *your* fault.

**(Doreen also exits downstage left. Eve looks expectantly at Vic but he just looks at his nails. She then coughs deliberately.)**

**Vic:** Oh, I expect they'll make *you* a drink as well if you want, **(looking at cafetiere.)** or you can have some of *this*, if you really want.

**Eve:** No, it's all right Vic.

**Vic:** So, what is it that's so urgent it couldn't wait until Monday morning?

**Eve:** **(Taken aback.)** Are...are you teasing me? **(Pulling a piece of paper out of her pocket.)** This.

**(Vic looks a bit vacant, so Eve unfolds it and starts reading from it.)**

**Eve:** "Last night I saw the light and all became clear. The history, the mystery, the reason why we're here. From now on in there is no doubt, you can all rest assured. Your minds can all be set at rest by what I have endured".

**Vic:** Oh, *that*.

**Eve:** I always knew your atheism was a front, something your mother had forced upon you at an early age. Oh...I feel so close to you now.

**(Eve grabs Vic's hand and immediately gets a shock off of it, making her release the hand.)**

**Eve:** Wow, all that PC usage is making you shock. Oh, what the heck, **(re-holding his hand.)** it's worth it. Oh...I feel so close to you right now. You must know that I'd always...well **(shyly.)** had these feelings for you, but I knew my religious beliefs meant I had to conceal them while you were married, but now...now you're no longer married... *and* have seen the light, well...oh **(getting flustered.)** you must know what I'm trying to say...so please don't make me say it **(holding Vic's arm.)**

**Vic:** **(Surprised.)** Did you think I was on about religion?

**Eve:** **(Withdrawing her hand.)** W...weren't you?

**Vic:** No-o-o-o-o-o. In fact...you could say it's the exact opposite.

**Eve:** You mean...you *didn't* see the light?

**Vic:** Oh, I saw the light all right.

**Eve:** W...what do you mean?

**Vic:** Well, on my way home last night I was abducted by aliens...then when I woke up this morning I knew how life on Earth had begun.

**(Eve stands dumbstruck.)**

**Vic:** Yes, I've been up for hours typing it all up. I can't stop. Just think...yesterday I had the writer's block to end them all, and today...my creative juices floweth over.

**Eve:** Aliens?

**Vic:** Yes. You sound surprised.

**Eve:** Aliens?

**Vic:** Yes, they hold the key to everything.

**Eve:** Right, **(swaying.)** um...do...do you mind if I sit down for a while?

**Vic:** Sure, help yourself. You don't mind if I carry on with my writing do you? **(Sitting back at desk.)** Only I just don't seem able to stop the flow, **(tapping keyboard.)** nor do I want to.

**(Eve sits disappointedly at the table, trying to make sense of it all.)**

**Eve:** Um...could I just ask one thing?

**Vic:** **(Typing furiously.)** Fire away.

**Eve:** Why me? I mean...why did you post on a site that you know I virtually live on? And e-mail the church website that you know I'm the administrator of?

**Vic:** I shouldn't flatter yourself Eve...I've been posting, blogging, e-mailing to anyone and everyone while I've been writing this...this, well...I guess it will be construed as...a bible.

**(Eve takes a sharp intake of breath and holds her chest.)**

**Eve:** Oh Vic...tell me you're not serious.

**Vic:** Huh?

**Eve:** Well, I can take your rejection of me, as painful as it is, and I can tolerate your atheism as that's your choice...or non-choice, but to...to...well...it's just plain sacrilegious.

**Vic:** Not really as I'm not religious in the first place. Look, obviously I want my book published and for people to buy it in their droves but I'm happy to give you a sample of it now. **(Clearing throat.)** Here we go.

**Eve:** **(Covering ears.)** I'm not listening.

**Vic:** Right, here we go. **(Reading from screen.)** It all started many, many years ago – the figure doesn't matter as a year is just an earthling construct

anyway, and where this story starts time did not exist. In fact the only thing that *did* exist...was *them*.

**(Eve starts humming inanely to block out Vic.)**

**Vic:** **(Speaking louder.)** The race – known as Ogzanicans – were once intellectually superior and more advanced compared not just to Earth dwellers but every other inhabited planet in the universe. Because of this superiority they knew they had to expand beyond the confines of their own planet to quench their thirst for further knowledge, to satisfy their growing curiosity...and for experimentation purposes.

**(Eve sings out louder and looking away from Vic. Just then the downstage left door opens and Arthur strides in purposefully, looking somewhat peeved, followed by an anxious Elspeth.)**

**Elspeth:** Look, Arthur, I'm sorry...I just didn't think you'd want to sleep all night fully clothed.

**Arthur:** Elspeth, what goes on beneath a man's clothing should be his – and only his – concern.

**Elspeth:** But I didn't see anything...or even try to, if that's what you're worried about.

**(Vic looks with disdain at having his train of thought disturbed. Doreen then slinks inside from the downstage left door, looking pleased with herself.)**

**Vic:** Can you both be quiet please, I'm trying to read something to Eve.

**Elspeth:** **(Turning angrily to Doreen.)** This is all *your* fault, he'd not even questioned his state of undress until *you* mentioned it.

**Doreen:** Oops, sorry, slip of the tongue and all that.

**Elspeth:** You are a mean, malicious woman Doreen Francis.

**Doreen:** Oh, lighten up, look upon it as a wake-up call, he's clearly not up to the 'permissive lifestyle' you were used to with George.

**Vic:** **(Shouting out.)** Will you all please just shut up? I'm trying to recite something to Eve.

**Eve:** **(Uncovering ears.)** Please, don't worry about me, if you want to discuss whatever it is you want to discuss then I really won't mind if you...

**Vic:** **(Clearing throat purposefully and orating.)** The planet Ogzanica Minora, with – as I said earlier - its superior race of Ogzanicans decided – billions upon billions of Earth years ago – to scour the universe for other planets that they hoped would have the potential to propagate life...

**Eve:** (Covering ears back up.) Please Vic, stop.

**Arthur:** (Blurting out.) No, don't. Oh, I'm sorry (to Eve.) we haven't officially met, I'm Arthur, (holding out hand.) the lodger.

**Eve:** (Shaking Arthur's hand.) Who is very much alive I see.

**Arthur:** Oh *that*, it was just a misunderstanding on Elspeth's part.  
(Doreen smiles at the already downbeat Elspeth.)

**Eve:** You do feel unseasonably cold though.  
(Arthur quickly withdraws his hand and rubs it with the other one.)

**Arthur:** I...I guess I'm just a cold-blooded sort of guy.  
(Doreen again smiles at Elspeth.)

**Arthur:** Anyway, I'd very much like to hear where Victor is going with his story.

**Eve:** Then I'm afraid I must excuse myself as I cannot listen to such...such...  
(Eve stands up but goes light-headed, sways and holds onto the table for balance.)

**Eve:** Oh dear, I...I feel a little faint.

**Doreen:** Mmm, there's a lot of that about in here lately.

**Eve:** It must be due to all the excitement. Could I trouble you for a glass of water?

**Vic:** Yeah yeah, knock yourself out.  
(Eve is a little put out by Vic's nonchalance and is a bit lost. Doreen steps in.)

**Doreen:** Here, come with me, I'll get my drink as well and we can have a nice chat.  
(Doreen beckons Eve and she follows her off through the downstage left door.)

**Vic:** So, Arturo, you seemed interested in my theory before I was rudely interrupted.

**Arthur:** What did you call me?

**Vic:** Um...I can't remember now. I've got so many things flying around in my head this morning, it's like a race-track in my brain.

**Elspeth:** You called him Arturo.

**Vic:** Oh yes, that's right, it seemed to suit at the time. What do you think Art? Art now. Where did that come from? Garfunkel. How's Simon these days? Feel free to call me Vicarage if you want.

**Arthur:** Are you sure you're all right Victor?

**Vic:** Surely it is *I* who should be asking *you* that, after all...you're the one who was bereft of life earlier on.

**Arthur:** Look, I think we've established that that was just a misunderstanding on Elspeth's part.

**Elspeth:** **(Sniffing.)** And a very upsetting one at that. **(Crying.)** Excuse me.  
**(Elspeth exits centre back in tears and her footsteps are heard off, running upstairs. Arthur is visibly torn between staying and pursuing her.)**

**Arthur:** Mmm, I suppose I'd better go after her.  
**(Arthur walks towards the centre back door. SFX: Front doorbell ringing OS.)**

**Vic:** Can you get that on your way up Arty?  
**(Arthur derisively shakes his head and exits centre back. Vic resumes frantically typing. The centre back door half opens and Howie appears in it but is talking back out to Arthur.)**

**Howie:** Nice to see you looking livelier than last night Arthur.  
**(Howie fully enters the room and footsteps trudging upstairs are heard off.)**

**Howie:** **(Cagily.)** Morning mate, how are *you* this morning?

**Vic:** **(Still typing.)** Fine. Why?

**Howie:** No reason. Arthur just said something about...**(realising Vic isn't really listening)**...oh, never mind.  
**(Howie starts walking around the room, steeling himself to say something.)**

**Howie:** Um, Vic mate, I...I've got something I need to tell you.

**Vic:** Oh, right, because I've got something I need to tell you as well. You go first.

**Howie:** Okay...but can you just stop typing for a while?

**Vic:** If you insist.

**(Vic stops typing and Howie takes a deep breath.)**

**Howie:** Well, I just passed Molly going to her interview, so I wished her luck...and we hugged...and then we kissed...just for a few seconds but, well, I guess it was more than just a good luck kiss, **(quickly.)** but obviously there's... there's nothing more to it than that, well...not on my part at least, I'm a happily married, family man, as you know...I...I just feel bad about it and felt I needed to say something.

**(Vic gets up and thoughtfully walks around the room.)**

**Vic:** Mmm, so you could say...'you owe me one'?

**Howie:** **(Confused.)** Eh? I...I thought...**(more confused.)**...eh?

**Vic:** Well, you know, you feel you've wronged me – your best friend – and you want to put that right.

**Howie:** Well, I guess so...but it was more just wanting to explain the situation, the madness of the moment...and to hope it didn't affect Molly at the interview.

**Vic:** **(Disinterested.)** Yeah yeah, all that stuff will come out in the wash, but going back to the issue of you 'owing me one'...I need your word on something.

**Howie:** Well, you know you can trust me...normally, but I still feel that...

**Vic:** - We've not got much time, I need to tell someone...and you're it. **(Grinning excitedly.)** Phase One of my Plan has started.

**Howie:** Phase? Plan? What do you mean?

**Vic:** **(Nonchalantly.)** Well, my feigning madness of course. The alien abduction last night and the fallout from that, it'll show them in work that I've finally cracked...and *that* can only lead to – at best – early retirement on health grounds, or at worst...transfer to a less mind-numbing and stressful job. Why do you think I got Eve involved?

**Howie:** Why?

**Vic:** Of course, you haven't met her yet. She's in the kitchen with mum, reeling from my revelation.

**Howie:** But who...? Why?

**Vic:** Well, she's got the hots for me in work...plus she's very friendly with the HR mob there. Because of the job we do she will know that you can't have a loose cannon advising the public about things so she will feel duty bound to pass on details about my 'state of mind'.



**Howie:** But - given that all that happens - won't you have to undergo tests carried out by experts to get to the root of your problems?

**Vic:** Probably...but I feel up to it, in fact I feel like I could face anything at the moment, **(drinking from mug.)** perhaps it's all this caffeine.

**Howie:** I think it's just a stimulant...not a personality changer.

**Vic:** What do you mean?

**Howie:** You've changed Vic. I've only been here two minutes but I can see that...well... you're not the same person.

**Vic:** Well, you'd better get used to it because until I get that early retirement this is how I'm going to be.

**(The downstage left door opens slightly, Doreen's and Eve's talking voices are heard OS.)**

**Vic:** And remember...

**(Vic actions mouth-zipping to Howie. Doreen then enters downstage left with two mugs of tea and Eve enters behind her with a glass of water in her hand.)**

**Doreen:** There, that didn't take us long to do those dishes, did it Eve?

**Eve:** **(Sarcastically.)** No, I don't know what I would have done without your supervision Mrs Francis.

**Doreen:** Please, call me Doreen, **(walking up to Howie.)** thought I heard your dulcet tones Howie. I made you a cup as well **(giving mug to Howie.)**.

**Eve:** Well, you boiled the kettle.

**Doreen:** I like this one Vic, she gives as good as she gets. She could be a keeper.

**Eve:** Oh no Mrs Fra...I mean Doreen. Victor and I aren't *that* way...you know.

**Doreen:** But...you did nothing but talk about him in the kitchen.

**Eve:** **(Getting flustered.)** Eh? Oh I...I don't think that's strictly true Doreen, I...I was merely showing an interest in his...his...

**Doreen:** What? His alien story? Don't take any heed of *that*. Of more interest is if you two kids get it together...what will happen house-wise? Do you have your own place Eve?

**Vic:** **(Quickly.)** Yes, thank you mother. Don't you have something you should be doing elsewhere?

**Doreen:** (Sitting down.) Nope, (blowing on drink.) in the immortal words of Louis Armstrong..."I have all the time in the world", (slurping.) but thanks for asking.

**Vic:** Right. Oh, where are my manners? Howie...this is my work colleague Eve. Eve... this is Howie, my...

**Eve:** I know...your booze buddy, the man who leads you astray every Friday night.

**Howie:** (Shocked.) What?

**Eve:** We all know what the demon drink can do to people, it can make them see things that aren't there, or believe things that haven't happened.

**Vic:** Yes, that's true, but...as Howie will profess...I do not drink to excess...and last night, when I left the pub, my faculties were well intact, (pointedly.) isn't that right Howie?

**Howie:** Yes, that's right Vic, as were mine.

**Eve:** I'm not saying they weren't, all I'm saying is...the cumulative effect of prolonged drinking can... (pointedly.)...or will...ultimately affect the way the mind *perceives* things.

**Vic:** Are you trying to say that my close encounter last night never happened and is just the concoction of an alcohol addled mind?

**Eve:** Well...

**Vic:** Because if you are...then every religious person in the world must be under the influence because *they* believe in things that others can't see...and then try to convince those others that these things exist. Am I right?

(Eve goes to reply but visibly struggles to find an answer.)

**Vic:** Howie?

**Howie:** Um...yes, that's true. I've known Vic for years and in all that time his beliefs – or disbeliefs – have never altered, no matter how much alcohol he's consumed.

**Vic:** (Wincing.) What Howie means is...

**Eve:** It's okay, I've heard enough, anymore and I'm sure I'll end up feeling even more disappointed than I already am.

**Vic:** How do you mean?

**Eve:** I've only been here a matter of minutes and I don't think I've ever been on such a rollercoaster of emotions in my whole life. I really thought you'd had some sort of epiphany...and that you'd chosen *me* with whom to share this.

**Doreen:** And to find out if you fancied her as much as she fancies you, of course.

**Eve:** Really, I...I...(getting flustered.)...I don't think I can stay here a moment longer.

**(Eve walks to the centre back door. Vic glares at Doreen then fumbles for words.)**

**Vic:** Um...um...what's that Howie?

**Howie:** Eh?

**Vic:** You know...where you said you hoped she wouldn't tell her colleagues about this whole situation. Well, if she wants to discuss it with them at work on Monday morning... who am I to...?

**Eve:** *Who* I talk to, and *what* I talk to them about, is entirely up to me.

**Vic:** No, I...I, what I meant to say was...

**Eve:** I don't care what you meant, I'm leaving now. Goodbye.

**(Eve exits, slamming the door behind her. Vic walks to Doreen.)**

**Vic:** Happy now?

**Doreen:** What?

**(SFX: Front door slamming shut OS.)**

**Vic:** You and your "do I fancy her as much as she fancies me?". What are you...ten?

**Howie:** Um...I think I'd better go as well, I can always talk to Molly later on.

**Doreen:** What about?

**Howie:** **(Floundering.)** Um...um...

**Vic:** **(Jumping in.)** Well, he obviously wants to see how she got go on, after all...it was him who got her the interview.

**Doreen:** **(Suspiciously.)** There's something funny going on here.

**Vic:** Um...um, if you must know...Howie's taken a shine to Eve himself.

**Howie:** What?

**Doreen:** **(With disdain.)** Howie, how could you, with that beautiful wife and kids of yours at home? You don't want to throw it all away for the sake of a tawdry fling do you? Look no further than me and Vic for examples of cuckolded spouses. You wouldn't want to be the cause of that, would you?

**Howie:** **(Pointedly to Vic.)** No, I wouldn't.

**Vic:** **(Uneasily.)** Anyway, changing the subject...

**(SFX: Elspeth screaming OS.)**

**Doreen:** God, what has she done to him now?

**(SFX: Footsteps quickly descending the stairs OS. Elspeth then breathlessly bursts in through the centre back door.)**

**Doreen:** What is it this time...Arthur died again?

**Elspeth:** Yes...and this time it's for real.

**Vic:** What happened?

**Elspeth:** Well, I ran up the stairs...**(pointedly)**...upset as you know, and I heard his footsteps following me up...so just waited in my room for his arrival. Then I waited some more...then a bit more...

**Doreen:** Yes, we get the picture...you waited.

**Elspeth:** Then, when he didn't appear, I went out on to the landing...and there he was...led on the floor, lifeless.

**(Elspeth starts crying. Vic starts walking towards the centre back door.)**

**Vic:** I'd better go and have a look.

**Howie:** I'll come with you, **(pointedly.)** we can have a chat about things on the way.

**(Vic, followed by Howie, exit through the centre back door.)**

**Doreen:** Those two are up to something, I know it.

**(The centre back door opens back up virtually straight away and Vic and Howie, with Arthur, re-enter the room.)**

**Vic:** So, Arthur, you're still feeling okay then?

**(Elspeth goes wide-eyed, screams out and faints on the sofa.)**

**Doreen:** Here we go again.

**Arthur:** No, in Elspeth's defence...I did go very light-headed and, I think, did pass out, so it was quite natural that she should...

**Doreen:** How many more chances are you going to give her?

**Arthur:** Eh?

**Vic:** **(Quickly.)** You know Arthur...perhaps you should see a doctor about these episodes you keep having.

**Arthur:** **(Defensively.)** Never mind my episodes...what about poor Elspeth, isn't anyone going to see to her?

**(Arthur sits on the end of the sofa at Elspeth's feet and rubs her ankles.)**

**Doreen:** **(Enviously.)** Oh, why don't *you* give her a 'seeing-to' Arthur...you clearly want to.

**(Doreen storms out of the centre back door in a huff, leaving the men looking at each other in bemusement. The fracas makes Elspeth stir from her faint.)**

**Arthur:** Ah, there she is...back with us at last.in the land of the living.

**Elspeth:** / am...but how can *you* be...again?

**Arthur:** Okay, the time has arrived for me to come clean. I'd hoped it wouldn't happen during my relatively short spell here but, well, I suffer from hypoglycemia – it's a severe lowering of blood pressure to the point of appearing lifeless...dead even. It's very rare, indeed it forms part of my work at the university. Also, when you have one bout it's not at all unusual to have another one soon after...

**Elspeth:** **(Holding Arthur's arm.)** Oh, Arthur **(resting her head on his shoulder.)**.

**Arthur:** In fact, because of these bouts I've made a decision to return home, so that my GP can check me over and put me back on the right track.

**Elspeth:** **(Tearfully.)** You...you're leaving?

**Arthur:** I'm afraid so, my project is coming to an end anyway. You knew I was only staying short-term, **(panning around to Vic.)** didn't you?

**Vic:** **(Sighing.)** Yes, I remember you saying that Arthur.

**Arthur:** Oh, don't worry about rent Victor...I'll ensure you're paid up in full...and a bit extra for any inconvenience caused.

**Vic:** Oh, well...thanks Arthur, that will help while I try to find another lodger?

**Elsbeth:** Is that all you can think of? He's not a commodity, **(choking up.)** he's a human being.

**(Elsbeth runs out of the centre back door, clearly upset. Vic sits back at the PC and starts typing away again.)**

**Howie:** Well Arthur, I take my hat off to you.

**Arthur:** Why?

**Howie:** Well, you've got two women eating out the palm of your hand.

**Arthur:** **(Bemused.)** Eh?

**Howie:** Doreen and Elspeth. Most men would give their eye teeth to have two women fighting over them. What is it you've got?

**Arthur:** I don't know, I've never given it any thought.

**Howie:** Well, you should...then bottle it. L'eau D'Arturo perhaps, for the older man who doesn't have to try...at all.

**Arthur:** Mmm.

**Howie:** Yes, well I can see I've overstayed my welcome, **(walking to Vic.)** I might pop back later on...and see if I can catch Molly.

**(Vic just carries on frantically typing away, not taking any notice of Howie, who wants to get his message across but is wary of Arthur's presence.)**

**Howie:** Will that be okay Vic?

**Vic:** Hmm? Oh yes. Mi casa es su casa Howie.

**Howie:** **(Bemused.)** O...k then. I'll see you later.

**(Howie exits through the centre back door. SFX: Front door opening then closing OS. Arthur stealthily approaches Vic at the PC.)**

**Arthur:** So, Victor, what's this all about?

**Vic:** What?

**Arthur:** This. These changes in your character, your demeanour...and your ability to be so creative and productive.

**Vic:** I don't know...but long may it continue.

**Arthur:** You're not at all...'curious' then?

**(Vic stops purposefully then turns to Arthur with a smile. He then starts scratching the back of his head.)**

**Vic:** Okay, as you're not going to be here much longer, and I trust you to keep schtum: it's all an act.

**Arthur:** Act? What do you mean?

**(Vic resumes typing with one hand while scratching his head again with the other.)**

**Vic:** I've realised that I can't go on as I am, with the pressures at work and home here, my stifled creativity, everything closing in on me...so I'm feigning madness.

**Arthur:** And the alien abduction?

**Vic:** **(Scratching head again.)** Concocted of course. Everyone knows they don't exist, don't they?

**Arthur:** **(Walking behind Vic.)** Mmm, so how then are you able to write so lucidly about them?

**Vic:** **(Scratching head madly.)** That's a good point. I'd just assumed that my making this life-changing decision had given me a sense of release, smashing through the blocking dam and freeing up all my creative juices...

**(Arthur stealthily creeps closer towards the back of Vic's head as his scratching of it with one hand, and his typing with the other one, grow in intensity, all the while being unaware of Arthur approaching him.)**

**Vic:** You know, reaching that make or break, do or die, moment...the point of no return. Do you know what I mean?

**Arthur:** Yes, yes **(peering closely at Vic's head.)** carry on.

**Vic:** I must admit...I'm as surprised as the next man by my choice of subject material, after all...I've never been a sci-fi buff.

**(Arthur reaches towards Vic's head with his right index finger.)**

**Vic:** But...well...it came to me in a dream so lucid...it was as if I was on another planet myself...and you have to go with the muse, don't you?

**(Arthur lightly touches Vic's head. There is a loud crackle, lights go on and dim back out and Arthur flies backwards onto the floor, where he lies lifeless. Vic, unmoved, stands up, sees Arthur, looks closer at him then walks to the centre back door which he then opens and looks upwards.)**

**Vic:** **(Calling out.)** Can you come down? I think Arthur's died again.

**(Lights off)**

### ACT I SCENE 3

(The lounge is empty. SFX: Front door opening OS. Molly then enters through the centre back door, carrying a bag, and looks all around the room.)

**Molly:** Anyone here?

(Molly walks to the downstage left door and peers around it into the kitchen. She shrugs then walks back to the table. She opens her bag then pulls out of it a large, thin square object wrapped in brown paper wrapping. She ponders what to do with it then just puts it down onto the table, picks up her bag and walks out of the centre back door. As she does the downstage left door opens and Vic enters the room with a screwdriver in his hand. His hair has gone really frizzy but he's not paying any attention to it. He walks to the main light switch, tries it a couple of times to no avail, presses the on-button on his PC, shakes his head then walks back out the downstage left door in frustration.)

(SFX: Front doorbell ringing OS. Molly's muffled voice is heard OS. Knocking at the front door. Seconds later Howie appears outside the Right window, peering inside whilst shielding his eyes from glare.)

**Howie:** (Off.) Mol? Vic? I know you're in there.

(Howie then disappointedly disappears down right, to go around the back of the house. SFX: Molly's running footsteps then hurtling down the stairs OS.)

**Molly:** (Off: calling out.) Hold on...hold on...hold on.

(SFX: Front door opening OS.)

**Molly:** (Off: calling out.) Is there anyone there?

(SFX: Front door closing OS. Molly walks back in through the centre back door. She looks confused then walks over to the PC. She moves the mouse around a bit then pushes the on- button of it. She then looks at the socket on the wall to see it's still plugged and switched on. She then walks to the telephone, picks up the receiver and is about to dial but realises it's dead. She then slowly replaces it and with a perplexed look she flicks the light switch, which still doesn't work. She then taps her mobile but to no avail, then exits centre back. As she does, Howie enters through the downstage left door. He looks around and is bemused. As he walks towards the centre back door Vic enters through the downstage left door.)

**Vic:** Ah, The Howster.

(Howie turns and then does a double-take on seeing Vic's curly hair.)



**Howie:** Vic?

**Vic:** Who else?

**Howie:** Who else indeed? And what did you just call me?

**Vic:** Um...Howser I think it was.

**Howie:** Actually it was 'The Howster'...but why?

**Vic:** Oh, you know, mix things up a bit.

**Howie:** **(Walking furtively to Vic.)** Don't you think you're 'mixing things up' a bit too much?

**Vic:** How do you mean?

**Howie:** You know...the nutty professor wig.

**(Vic is perplexed by this and reaches above his head. He feels the curly foliage and looks genuinely perplexed.)**

**Vic:** How the hell has that happened?

**Howie:** Vic mate, **(wringing hands nervously.)** I...I think that...you know...all this... well, you just might be getting in over your head.

**Vic:** **(Chuckling.)** Hah, that's a good one **(feeling hair.)** Anyway, what are you doing back here?

**Howie:** Um...well...I...um...thought I saw Mol-ly come back from the...um...um...

**(Molly enters through the centre back door and sees Howie first, then Vic.)**

**Molly:** **(Uneasily.)** Oh...um...hello Howie, I didn't expect to see you here. Who's your friend?

**Vic:** **(Chuckling.)** "Who's your friend?". I like it.

**Molly:** **(Looking harder.)** Dad? Is that you?

**Vic:** Of course. Why do you ask?

**(Molly is dumbstruck and looks at Howie, who grins awkwardly.)**

**Vic:** Anyway, enough of this idle chit-chat, there's so much to do and I'm not going to get any of it done without electric.

**Molly:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that. How long's it been out?

**Vic:** Mmm, let me think. It was around the time Arthur died again.

**Molly:** **(Shocked.)** What?

**Vic:** That's right Molski, but obviously it was yet another false alarm.

**Molly:** What?

**Vic:** Well, he's still alive, isn't he.

**Molly:** No, what you just called me.

**Vic:** Why, what was wrong with it?

**Molly:** Oh, never mind. Of more importance is Arthur. It's almost as if **(pointedly.)** his body isn't coping anymore, isn't it?

**Howie:** Ah, that would explain why I saw Doreen and Elspeth dragging him into your car a while back. They must have been taking him to the hospital.

**Molly:** How did *you* see that? Where were you?

**Howie:** **(Awkwardly.)** Um, well...I sort of walked around for a while then went in the pub up the road, so I could see the house from the lounge window there.

**Vic:** But, why?

**Howie:** Phew...**(tugging at collar.)**...is it hot in here or is it me?

**Vic:** It's you. What's your problem Howie? You're being very defensive, just like earlier on.

**Molly:** You've been here already today?

**Howie:** Well, I...**(tugging collar.)**...cuh, never mind your electric not working...I think your gas central heating is on the –

**Molly:** Howie...

**Howie:** Okay, I came earlier. I wanted to see you but when I found out you weren't here I decided to go in the pub and wait for you to return...and build up a bit of Dutch Courage as well I guess.

**Molly:** But...why?

**Vic:** Oh, I remember now, you two kissed, didn't you?

**(SFX: Front door heard swinging open followed by Doreen's and Elspeth's bickering voices getting louder**

**OS.)**

**Vic:** Well, that is either the best or worst bit of timing ever.

**(The centre back door swings open and in walk Doreen and Elspeth, with Arthur held up between them.)**

**Arthur:** Will you two please let me walk on my own.

**Doreen:** I'll let go if she will.

**Elsbeth:** And I'm not letting go until I know he's fine, all right?

**Arthur:** **(Getting worked up.)** And I've told you both a thousand times **(loudly.)** I'm fine.

**(Just then the light in the room flickers on and off. SFX: Music from the radio starts up then goes off and the PC cranks back up. This makes Vic sit quickly back at it and pressing keys, as before.)**

**Molly:** **(Looking suspiciously at Arthur.)** Mmm, that's strange, the power went out when Arthur 'died' again...then came back on when his life force returned, isn't that right dad?

**Vic:** **(Disinterested.)** Mmm.

**Doreen:** **(To Molly.)** Now, what exactly are you getting...**(stopping then looking at Vic.)**...oh dear God, what have you done *now*?

**Vic:** Hmm? What do you mean?

**Doreen:** **(Flummoxed.)** Um...let me think, is there something different about you? I don't know.

**Vic:** **(Feeling above head.)** Oh...*this*, actually it's starting to grow on me, pardon the pun. Do you like it?

**Doreen:** Don't go playing that insanity card with me my boy, **(walking over to Vic.)** a mother knows when a son is trying to pull a fast one.

**(Doreen walks behind Vic and starts pulling at his hair but it stays firm and Vic yells out in pain as he tries to stop her hands from tugging.)**

**Elsbeth:** **(Snapping.)** Will you two stop it?

**(Doreen disdainfully pulls her hands off Vic's hair.)**

**Doreen:** Huh, it's good glue, I'll give you that.

**(The phone rings and Molly walks over towards it.)**

**Molly:** Mmm, that's also funny, the line was dead before Arthur came back. **(Picking up the phone.)** Hello.

**Elsbeth:** What is that girl getting at?

**Molly:** **(Sighing into the phone.)** Oh, hello mother, what do you want? What? Yes, yes I'm sure I'm all right, yes...*and* nan, oh...*and* dad and the other

nan in case you're interested... oh, you're not. Why do you ask? **(Pausing.)**  
Who's Geoffrey?

**(Vic and Doreen look knowingly at each other.)**

**Molly:** **(Still into phone.)** Oh, I didn't even know you *had* a new boyfriend, **(looking at others.)** *did* they? And he what? Well, so what if he does work for the National Grid?

**Arthur:** **(Shuffling uneasily.)** Anyway, what say we all have a nice cup of...?

**Molly:** **(Still into phone.)** And this address showed up *what*? The biggest single-premise power surge ever known followed by a cut-out. Mmm, interesting. No, no it must've happened while no-one was here. So, what about this Geoffrey then? Is he...hello...hello. That's odd...she's gone. Didn't sound like she was cut off, more like she just...drifted away.

**(Molly pensively replaces the receiver. An awkward silence prevails.)**

**Arthur:** **(Rubbing hands.)** Right then, about that tea...

**Molly:** **(Looking at Vic and Doreen.)** You two knew she had a new bloke, didn't you?

**Doreen:** Well, yes...but so did your precious Nan One over there.

**Elsbeth:** You *had* to, didn't you? You just *had* to.

**Vic:** Oh, so what if she does? It's over between us anyway. I didn't tell you because I didn't think you cared what she did anyway. In fact, no-one in this house cares what she does so why are we having this argument?

**Howie:** Perhaps of more importance is (a) why is *she* worried about a power surge here, and (b) why is this Geoffrey character checking out this house while he's working?

**Molly:** Mmm. Good issues raised Howie, which takes us right back to how and when the surge happened?

**(All eyes gradually turn to look at Arthur, who fidgets awkwardly and starts loosening his collar.)**

**Arthur:** Phew, is it getting hot in here or is it me?

**(No-one answers and all just keep looking at Arthur. He then starts to sway and staggers onto the sofa, where he wanly groans out. Elspeth goes to walk to him but Molly puts her arm across her to stop her.)**

**Molly:** **(Pointedly.)** So, what exactly happened earlier? I mean...where had you been with Arthur?

**Elsbeth:** Well...

**Doreen:** Hang on, why do *you* have to explain it?

**Elsbeth:** I don't *have* to, I was just *going* to. Why, do *you* want to explain what happened?

**Doreen:** I didn't say that, it's just the presumption that...

**Molly:** **(Losing patience.)** Oh, I don't care who says it, I just want to know what exactly made this man here pass out and where you two went with him.

**Vic:** *Why* do you want to know?

**Molly:** I have my reasons. Now, Nan One, you start.

**(Elsbeth and Doreen look at each other in surprise at Molly's assertiveness.)**

**Howie:** **(To Vic.)** This is the sort of assertiveness they'll be looking for in that job.

**Molly:** Ssh Howie, I'll get to you in a minute. Now, **(to Elsbeth.)** off you go Nan One.

**Elsbeth:** Okay. Well, your dad shouted out that Arthur had died again then when we ran into the room - well...*I* ran in and *she* trudged in after me – Arthur was prostrate on the floor...and your dad was nowhere to be seen. We didn't know what had happened, for all we know your dad might have hit him.

**Doreen:** But then I – as ever the voice of reason – asked would he really have shouted out to us and drawn attention to the fact?

**Elsbeth:** Then *I* said...in Victor's current state of mind who knows *what* might have went on?

**Doreen:** To which I suggested we should get him to hospital urgently...in view of all the funny turns he'd had lately, so as I'm the only one who can drive I got the car out and we plonked him in the back seat.

**Elsbeth:** With me.

**Doreen:** With her.

**Molly:** I see, this is all very interesting but...

**Doreen:** Hang on...that's only half the story.

**Molly:** Oh, let me guess what happened next. You started driving to the hospital then Arthur came to whilst being cradled in Nan One's arms, asked what was happening then - when he was told - he created such a fuss that you had to pull over. Then he made you turn around and come back here. Am I right?

**Elsbeth:** Well, there was a bit more to it than that.

**Molly:** Oh yes, I expect there was much bickering between you two as to whose idea it was, who was most worried and then – when it was clear he wasn't happy with the plan – whose fault it was. Now am I right?

**(Doreen and Elspeth look at each other coyly then away from each other. Molly walks to the table.)**

**Howie:** **(To Vic smugly.)** See how she takes control of situations? Think of the kudos I'll get for putting her name forward for that job.

**(Molly picks up the bag and walks back with it.)**

**Vic:** **(Pointedly to Howie.)** Remind me...is it a mistress you want her for, or another daughter?

**(Howie baulks but before he can answer Molly has positioned the bag on its edge on the table, ready for an unveiling.)**

**Molly:** Right, I'm about to show you something that will shock you...and make you see things in a different light, **(slowly peeling down the bag.)** which will probably mean you'll never think of Arthur in the same way...ever again.

**(Molly pauses to build tension. Arthur opens one eye then closes it again but Molly sees this and then pulls the bag all the way down to reveal a blown-up photograph of a hideous, reptilian creature. It is green with bulging eyes and scaly skin. There is a long pause as everyone just looks it with disdain and in bemusement.)**

**Vic:** Well, thanks for sharing this with us Molly but I can't see how showing us a picture of a hideous monster is going to...

**Molly:** It's not a picture, it's a photo. In fact...it's a blow-up of the last photo taken on my camera...(ominously)...last night.

**Elsbeth:** But...the only photo you took last night was of...of...

**(Everyone looks at Arthur, who very slowly re-opens his eye, followed by the other. On seeing everyone staring at him he shuffles uneasily then sits up on the sofa.)**

**Arthur:** I can explain, **(going to speak.)** no I can't.

**Elsbeth:** Arthur, are...are you...an alien?

**Arthur:** Yes. Yes I am. I am classed as N.O.T.E...Not Of This Earth.

**Doreen:** Not so cute now, is he Elspeth?

**Molly:** So, **(remorsefully to Vic)** you were telling the truth after all dad.

**Vic:** (Confused.) That's right...and I'm shocked to think it was in any doubt.  
(Vic looks sheepishly at Howie who narrows his eyes. Vic then remains confused by the revelation.)

**Doreen:** Hang on, something doesn't tie up here. Vic's episode only happened last night and Arthur's been here for weeks now, in fact he was home when it happened.

**Arthur:** Okay...but will you promise me that you won't blow everything until I've gone?

**Elsbeth:** Are...are you really going then?

**Doreen:** He's a reptilious alien Elspeth...surely you can't still fancy him?

**Arthur:** (Smiling.) Nicely put Doreen. The irony is that my guard slipped for that brief period and the only thing that can reveal my true identity happened - a photograph was taken of me while I slept. Keeping up my human facade takes a lot of willpower, and de-oxidation – or electron replacement – can be very tiring.

**Molly:** I knew there was something not quite right about him, something that didn't quite add up.

**Howie:** Can we hear what Arthur was going to say? I'm interested to hear what...

**Doreen:** Why are *you* worried? You haven't had him living amongst you for weeks on end, doing God knows what to you.

**Howie:** No, but Vic's my mate...and if something's happened to him that's making him act strangely then I...

**Arthur:** (Standing with hand aloft.) All right. Can everyone just relax? No harm has, or will, come to you, any of you. My mission is a peaceful one, but before I explain anything (walking towards Vic.) I just need to...  
(SFX: Front doorbell ringing several times OS.)

**Doreen:** Oh no, just ignore it, we can't have anyone else in on this.

**Elsbeth:** Oh God.

**Molly:** What is it?

**Elsbeth:** What if it's like that film...where the authorities get wind of him...then come and take him away?

**Howie:** Oh yes, E.T...with all the quarantine tents and sterile tube tunnels.  
(SFX: Front doorbell again ringing several times OS.)

**Doreen:** They're not going away...whoever it is.

**Elsbeth:** Oh, what are we to do Arthur? Arthur? Is that even your real name? Are you known by something else on your planet, whatever that is?

**(SFX: Knocking at the front door. OS.)**

**Arthur:** I'm afraid I've already revealed too much, my position has been compromised. To say any more could result in my decommissioning, ex-communication...or even worse.

**Elsbeth:** **(Covering mouth with hands.)** Oh God, could that be your superiors come to 'deal with' you now?

**(Eve appears outside the right window and taps on it.)**

**Eve:** **(OS.)** Vic? Is that you?

**(Vic, now in some sort of trance, turns and trudges over towards the Right window. Eve's eyes widen on seeing him. Molly follows him over.)**

**Eve:** **(OS.)** What...what's happened to your hair?

**Vic:** I...I don't really...

**Molly:** Dad? What's that in your head?

**(As Molly goes to touch Vic's head Arthur shudders in remembrance and yells out.)**

**Arthur:** No-o-o-o-o, don't touch it.

**(Molly retracts her hand and Arthur slumps back in the sofa, wide-eyed and breathless.)**

**Doreen:** Oh God, he's off again.

**Elsbeth:** **(Snapping.)** Doreen, leave him alone.

**Doreen:** Surely you concede now that you and he won't be walking up the aisle together? Well, not on this planet at least.

**Eve:** **(Outside: tapping on the right window.)** Vic? What's happening in there?

**(Vic shrugs his shoulders.)**

**Howie:** What are we going to do about Eve?

**Molly:** Well, we can't let her in, we must contain this is as much as possible.

**(While Molly is talking no-one sees Eve move away from the window, walking around the back.)**



**Molly:** It's okay, she's gone.

**Elsbeth:** Well, I for one don't care who or what Arthur is. All I know is that throughout his time with us, carrying out his mission...

**Doreen:** Huh, whatever that was.

**Elsbeth:** Well, no doubt he will tell us when he comes around...yet again...and I think that in the meantime...**(walking to the table.)**...we should make him feel at home for however long he has left with us...**(picking up the picture and cringing.)**...by having this keepsake of the real Arthur...**(walking to the shelf.)**...on display for all to see... **(placing the picture prominently in the middle of the shelf.)**

**Doreen:** Sorry Elsbeth but when did your name go on the house deeds?

**Elsbeth:** **(Pointedly.)** The same time as yours.

**(Eve appears in the downstage left doorway.)**

**Eve:** Ah, there you all are, **(walking in.)** didn't anyone hear me at the...**(seeing picture.)** aagh, who – or what – is that?

**Molly:** Excuse me...but who *are* you exactly?

**Howie:** Um...Mol, this is Eve, she's a work colleague of your dad. She was here earlier when things were...

**Eve:** Vic, can you please tell me what's going on here?

**Doreen:** Ah, the sixty-four thousand dollar question.

**(Vic almost lurches towards Eve and is clearly affected by everything going on.)**

**Vic:** Um Eve...this isn't really a good time to...to...

**Eve:** Well, I can see you're not up to having guests but I just thought I'd tell you that when I was coming in I saw your ex-wife, with presumably her new boyfriend, coming down the road, to no doubt add to the throng.

**Molly:** That's quick, I didn't speak to her that long ago. I'm sure she said Geoffrey was at work because it was *him* that noticed the power surge at the house.

**Arthur:** **(Groggily.)** Wh...what was that about power surge?

**Doreen:** Oh, he's rallying again. He's had more comebacks than Frank Sinatra.

**Molly:** That's right Arthur, apparently something happened to the power which resulted in one of your previous episodes, but no doubt you...

**Arthur:** **(Jumping up.)** No-o-o-o-o.

**Elsbeth:** Arthur, what is it?

**(SFX: Footsteps in the hallway approaching the centre back door. Everyone in the room waits tentatively. The door then opens and in walks Quazanela followed by Bip, but because they are exact duplicates of Gillian and Geoffrey no-one knows this.)**

**Molly:** Mother? You don't normally use your key when you come around. Come to think of it...you never come around, so perhaps we should have it back.

**Quazanela:** I don't have it. The door was slightly ajar.

**Eve:** No it wasn't. I wouldn't have just spent several minutes trying to get in if the door had been already open, I can assure you.

**Quazanela:** And *you* are?

**Eve:** Not that it's any concern of yours but I am a work colleague of your ex-husband.

**(Quazanela looks around and sees the now huddled figure of Vic.)**

**Quazanela:** Ah Vic, aren't you going to give your darling wife, ex-wife, a kiss?

**Elsbeth:** Gillian? Are you all right?

**Quazanela:** I'm fine, why do you ask?

**(Elsbeth goes to answer but Quazanela turns straight back to face Vic.)**

**Quazanela:** So, Vic, how are things going with you?

**Eve:** Don't answer her Vic, she's just trying to goad you.

**Quazanela:** She sounds very interested in you Vic. I don't know why but I must profess to feeling a little jealous.

**(Bip narrows his eyes and tugs on Quazanela's sleeve. Vic lurches forward a bit)**

**Vic:** Look, I don't mean to be rude, but what are you...**(looking at Quazanela and Eve.)** *both* of you doing here?

**Eve:** Well, *I'm* here because I couldn't stop thinking about what you said earlier – and all that stuff you've been posting online and blogging about – well, it now all makes sense to me.

**Doreen:** **(Surprised.)** It *does*?

**Quazanela:** Ooh, please do go on, I've never known anyone be interested in what Vic's had to say before.

**Eve:** Which beggars the question why you ever married him then, doesn't it?

**Doreen:** **(Sniggering.)** Ooh, I *do* like this one. She's feisty.

**Elsbeth:** Gillian, I really don't think you should just swan back in here as if nothing's happened.

**Quazanela:** Oh...*can* it mother. My daughter's here and half my life's here, so I think I have the right to come here and discuss things with my husband if I want...

**Eve:** **(Pointedly.)** Your ex-husband...and in my humble opinion he is well rid of you. This man is a saint...and I know that – as a deeply religious person – I shouldn't bandy that word around lightly, but some of the things he has had to put up with...well. And now – in no more than a blink of an eye – he has crystallised everything for me.

**Vic:** I have?

**Doreen:** **(Whispering.)** Oh dear, she's gone over the top.

**Eve:** Yes, you see...I'd always secretly struggled to reconcile there being an almighty God, creating the world in seven days, and the planet only being six thousand or so years old, etcetera, not with the masses of irrefutable evidence about it being billions of years old, and there being dinosaurs, and all the various ages, eras and eons and, of course, evolution.

**Vic:** And?

**Eve:** Well, the revelation you had about aliens planting and nurturing life on Earth. This means that life *didn't* just happen through amoeba and primordial slime. Someone – or something – started it off all those billions of years ago, and evolution was programmed in.

**Quazanela:** Mmm, interesting. So, Vic, how did you come by this theory?

**Doreen:** Um, that's not important right now. So, Gillian, are you not going to introduce us to Vic's replacement?

**Quazanela:** Ah Doreen, still as rude as ever I see...even as an ex-mother-in law. Go on Geoffrey, give them a potted history of yourself if you want.

**Bip:** **(Nervously.)** Um, I don't really feel it's necessary for me to...

**Quazanela:** **(Firmly.)** Do it.

**Bip:** Well, my name's Geoffrey – as you know – although I'll also answer to Geoff, Geoffo, the G-Man if you prefer.

**Doreen:** Well, thanks for the selection G-String...I mean Man.

**Quazanela:** You *can* go beyond your nomenclature Geoffrey.

**Bip:** Yes, your highness.

**Doreen:** Hah, perhaps he's not a doormat after all.

**Bip:** **(Confused.)** Doormat?

**Quazanela:** **(Jumping in.)** Look, what does it matter? I've moved on and this may be difficult to take but, well, I've found love again, and I'm hoping that - at my time of life – you might forgive me and wish me happiness in my new relationship.

**Molly:** I'll never forgive you.

**Quazanela:** Okay, I deserved that, but if you could all just leave the room I have something very important I need to discuss with Vic, in private. It won't take long. I promise.

**Doreen:** No way are we leaving you alone with him. You ruined him last time. Isn't that right Elspeth?

**Elspeth:** For once I agree with you Doreen. Besides, *you* can't want that either, can you Geoffrey?

**Bip:** Um...

**Quazanela:** Geoffrey does what I tell him, don't you?

**Bip:** Well, I am an outsider in this issue...so I wouldn't presume to...

**(SFX: Phone ringing.)**

**Elspeth:** Wouldn't presume to what Geoffrey?

**(SFX: The phone keeps ringing. Molly walks towards it, looking suspiciously back at proceedings.)**

**Molly:** Yes, **(pointedly.)** Geoffo, what is it about this whole situation that... makes... you...

**(As Molly's hand hovers over the receiver Bip looks nervously at it then at Quazanela.)**

**Bip:** Um...um...

**Howie:** Yes, G-Man, what is it? Sorry, I couldn't resist getting involved.

**Doreen:** Just answer the damn phone Molly.

**Molly:** **(Picking up receiver.)** Hello?

**(Molly's look turns to one of shock and she turns to face Quazanela. Into the receiver.)**

**Molly:** Mum? But...but...

**Quazanela:** Huh, must be a crank caller, there's so many of them around these days. Isn't that right Geoffrey?

**Bip:** Um...I guess so.

**Molly:** Well, we'll soon know...(replacing receiver)...because she's on her way around here now...

**(There is a pregnant pause.)**

**Molly:** With Geoffrey.

**(Arthur suddenly bursts out of his trance, stares at Quazanela then points at her, then at Bip.)**

**Arthur:** Aagh. Duplicati. Duplicati.

**Quazanela:** Shuttup you old fool.

**Elsbeth:** Don't you dare talk to Arthur like that. I never raised you to cheek your elders.

**Arthur:** **(Horried.)** You never raised her. Full stop.

**Quazanela:** **(Loudly.)** Enough...(walking towards Vic shouting)...enough.

**(Quanzanela then touches then back of Vic's head and lights start flashing on stage.)**

**Quazanela:** **(Screaming.)** Enough-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h.

**(Quazanela's maniacal laughter is then heard as the lights flash off altogether.)**

**(Lights off. Curtains)**

**END OF ACT 1**

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