

BEMUSED

A comedy on Youth and Age

By Paul Symonloe

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Characters:

Graham: A man in his early sixties with tousled brown, thinning hair.

Anne: A woman in her mid-fifties with curly blond hair; she wears a streak of blue running through the fringe to emphasise, (she hopes) her youthful outlook.

Tom: An eternal teenager aged thirty. He's one of the so-called *Boomerang Generation*. His day consists of *gaming*, watching films and visiting the fridge. He's out of work, but prefers the phrase *pre-employed*. He has an *on off* girlfriend, Amy.

Polly: Tom's sceptical younger sister aged twenty-nine, who left home at eighteen, and has two children from a *semi-detached* relationship. She has a very modern view of the world, especially in the area of women's rights.

Leo: Polly's son aged 9; hyperactive and funny.

Lottie: Polly's daughter aged 11; maternal and gentle.

Amy: Tom's *on-off* girlfriend; she's assertive and eternally frustrated with Tom's lack of *get up and go*, but defensive of him too, especially around Polly.

Max: Graham's best friend; he tends to embarrass Graham in one way or other.

Barbara: Anne's sister. She is conflicted; she wants a relationship but doesn't seem to like men.

Mr Boulderstone: The elderly next door neighbour. Known to everyone as "Mr B". He's *old school, genteel* and polite. He points out aspects to life the others haven't yet considered.

Gary: Polly's *live out* boyfriend; father to Leo and Lottie. Referred to, but does not appear in the play.

Suzie: Max's wife referred to, but does not appear in the play.

Act 1 Scene 1

CURTAIN UP. LIGHTS UP

Props: Two mugs of tea. One laptop. One newspaper on-stage.

(The setting is a kitchen-diner in a standard semi-detached house. Currently sitting at the kitchen table is a man, GRAHAM, in his early sixties reading a newspaper. His wife, ANNE, who is slightly younger, has just made tea, and plonks two mugs down at the table; and goes to sit at the opposite. She looks sceptically at a laptop, and proceeds to start the machine up. A fairly long pause follows while she struggles with this process, pressing buttons impatiently and muttering under her breath. Her husband continues to read his paper not looking up).

Anne: (Abruptly, and in a loud voice, still looking fixedly at the laptop)

Graham, are you still getting your pop ups!?

(We can tell from ANNE's tone she intends no double meaning)

Graham:

(Momentarily startled, jerks his head upwards, synchronised with Anne's exclaimed *pop-ups*, and looks with *wild surmise* at his wife. Without replying, his gaze travels, in eloquent silence, from her still downward head, across the stage to the audience, where it rests "to camera" for quite some seconds)

Anne: (Still not looking up)

Well!?

Graham:

(Eventually, with vigour)

..Well if you must know, not as often as I did!

(A further but shorter pause...)

Anne:

(Not getting his suggestive meaning)

It asks: allow pop-ups, **yes or no?! ...**

(ANNE waits for a reply but none comes. She continues after a longish pause.)

(Impatient) ...So... should I?!

(Another pregnant pause follows while GRAHAM struggles with his emotions, again looking directly at the audience. ANNE continues)

...I mean, I remember when you'd start fiddling with your ... you know... your ... apparatus first thing in the morning; after a few... seconds... no, no actually it was a few minutes... you'd suddenly shout out: Look! I've got a pop up! So, have your pop ups slowed down or have they stopped altogether?!

Graham: **(Taking his time)**

Well... does it give you the option of once in a while by any chance?

Anne: **(A little irritated at this non-committal response; she clearly hasn't caught on to his reference to their youthful passions.)**

Once in a while?! What on earth are you talking about Graham?!

Graham: Or once in a blue moon perhaps?

Anne: *No! It just asks yes or no!*

Graham: **(Seeing that she hasn't "clicked")**

Definitely no then!

Anne: *Good, if there's a choice I always say no!*

Graham: (Gloomily and with feeling) *Yes, I know!*

Anne: Ok good, I'll press that one then.

(She hits the keyboard button hard and with obvious pleasure)

There! I enjoyed doing that! No more pop ups now **or ever!**

(GRAHAM winces visibly as though she's terminated something much more personal. ANNE continues)

Besides, why must these damned machines ask the same question over and over again? I've clicked "yes" six times now! Why doesn't it believe me? It's just like you whenever I buy new clothes. I tell you they're inexpensive and cheerful, but do you believe me?

Graham: That my sweetness and light, is because by the time the credit card bill arrives they've

mysteriously morphed from "inexpensive and cheerful" into "costly and designer!"

Anne:

By which you mean that dress I suppose?

Graham: SSSSSSS.

Anne: **(Looks over at him with more attention).**

What's the snake impression for?

Graham: **(Hissing theatrically)** The ess's signify dressesssss darling, in the plural.... **(Pause while he calculates, then delivers the next line staccato with an "s" for each dress).**

and four ess's denote four dress-s-s-s-es!

Anne: **(Conclusively, matter of fact).** Well, that was your fault.

Graham: **(Incredulous.)** My fault!?

Anne: Yes! You implied my bum looked big in one of them!

Graham: **(Still incredulous)**

Implied?! I did no such thing! You asked me if your bum looked big in the red one, at which point I looked at the price tag and remarked that it certainly did!

Anne: **(Challenging voice)**

So why didn't my bum look big in the black one?!

Graham: **(With feeling)** Because it was half the price!

Anne: So, you lied to me?! You lied to achieve your own mean, tight-fisted selfish ends?

Graham: Yes of course I did, it saved me 200 quid!

Anne: *Why couldn't you just be honest with me?*

Graham: **(Conclusively)** *Because you wouldn't have liked it!*

Anne: **(Defensively)** And why is that?

Graham: **(With a sense of foreboding)**

Because women know perfectly well the "does my bum look big in this" question is in reality a trap! If we're dishonest, of course you don't believe us, and continue to be angst-ridden. If we're totally honest we're obliged to say: actually darling, your bum looks big in everything! I mean, why would one inanimate item of clothing take on the titanic challenge of abbreviating your whole posterior and another item of clothing not!?

Do some items of apparel possess the power to defy the laws of physics!?

Anne: **(Getting animated)**

And just what do you mean by the words "whole" "titanic" and, for that matter, "the laws of physics" may I ask?

Graham: **(Falteringly)** Well...I mean when you include the, err whole ...err item... I mean all of it; that is... well both ... um cheeks, and... well ...

Anne: **(Outraged)** And!? What exactly does "and" mean in this context Graham?!

Graham: **(Hesitates, thinking even in jest, he may have taken things too far)**

Well I was going to say **and** the sort of ... um extra bits.

Anne: **(More outraged)** Extra bits! What "extra" bits Graham!? Please think very carefully before you answer!

Graham: **(Caving in under the pressure and speaking quickly in an attempt to put the conversation to bed).**

Actually ... I think I must have imagined them darling. Never mind. Let's get on shall we? What are you doing with your day?

Anne: Oh yes, now you want to escape from the subject! Well, I have some observations of my own on the matter of size!

Graham: Oh here we go! You always blow every little thing out of proportion.

Anne: **(Echoing with feeling)** Blow every little thing out of proportion!? As if every little thing could be blown out of proportion! Chance would be a fine thing!

Graham: **(Seeing he has over-stepped the mark. Trying to win her over)** Okay, okay point taken. I'm very sorry Annie...

(Tentatively)

...kins

(Anne is clearly not placated, but seeks to move on too, since the subject of her rear isn't

bringing her any pleasure. They settle down to their separate tasks again for a minute or two. In the background we see two children sneak in to the kitchen unobserved. Suddenly rushing like a wild thing Leo, their grandson, jumps on top of Graham with affection.)

Leo: Gramps!

(Graham recovers himself from this assault, and with equal affection, gives his grandson a kiss on the top of the head.)

Graham: Leo the lion! Oh, and Lovely Lottie with the Long Luscious Locks! What are you two doing here?

(He gently catches Lottie, his grand-daughter, by a hand and kisses her too. She runs to embrace Anne and they too exchange hugs.)

Anne: Well now what a lovely surprise! Where's your mother?

Lottie: Oh, she's giving dad a piece of her mind!

Tom: (Walks in to hear this. Jokily)

Well, let's hope it's not a big piece; she hasn't got much to spare!

LEO/LOTTIE: (The children run up to embrace their much-loved uncle)

Uncle Tom-Tom!

Tom: (With feigned disgust) *Ugh! Who are these unidentified small people!? Make them go away! It's a bad dream!*

(He mock-slaps his own face and scratches his head theatrically as if to wake himself up.)

Aaarrrrgghh nooooo... they're still here!

(The two children pull him in all directions with delight)

Tom: Help, help! I'm being attacked by Smalls!

(Tom's on-off girlfriend, Amy, walks in smoothing her hair and clothes, at this point obviously having been upstairs with Tom until now)

Amy: Tom when are you ever going to grow up!?

Tom: No immediate plans my little femme fatale.

(He pronounces this as "fatal" without the final "e".)

Amy: Ok I'm off then. See you sometime never!

(She stalks off)

Tom: Hey, wait up precious- come back! I'm sorry babe! I was downloading some stuff. We'll have some together-time later yeah?

(He watches her retreating figure with mock desolation, thumping his heart theatrically)

'Aint life unkind!

Graham: (Snorts loudly)

Unkind!? That's hardly the word for your life! You're still blissfully unemployed are you not? Or has a miracle intervened since you downloaded the entire contents of the fridge for breakfast!?

Tom: (Puffs out his chest with dignity)

I prefer the term pre-employed father if you don't mind!

Graham: (Quick to reply)

Yes, and I prefer the terms: own home, own food and own income!

(Tom sees the danger in this exchange since living at home is comfortable and convenient. Thus he always has a series of well-planned reasons why he can't move out)

Dad, you know I'm in a spot at the moment. I mean obviously I'd love my own place and a job. Nothing would please me more...

Graham: (Interrupting drily)

*That's an uncanny coincidence, because **nothing** would please us more either...*

Tom: **(Continuing)**

...But, as I was about to say, I would love all of those things, and would jump at the chance to move out...

(Graham looks suddenly expectant, as though some miracle is about to save him from a life supporting an adult child. Tom shatters the dream however)

...Only, as you know dad, I really can't move until I get my results in from uni can I?

Graham: **(Again dry and resigned)**

Ah yes! The long-delayed results from uni; remind me when they're due out?

Tom,

(Defensive)

I... err... I... well, as luck would have it, and as you have brought it up... I have to call them again... err... tomorrow actually. They should have marked my last module and then... soon after that they'll award me my degree... and then, hey presto! I'll be in a job and out of your hair!

(Graham opens his mouth to speak, but Tom retreats quickly from the pressure to the kitchen where he encounters his sister, Polly, coming in through the back door. She's dressed very colourfully, sporting a pair of rather "over-the-top" glasses. She takes a look at him and sniffs loudly.)

Polly

(To her parents)

He knows the word for "to borrow" in ten different languages. Anyhow, I didn't know they'd released him in to the community. Has he been subverting my kids again?

(The two children, who had disappeared in to the garden re-enter the kitchen. They're pulling an elderly gentleman gently with them as if he were a delicate human balloon. They let him "float" gently in to the kitchen. At the same time Tom re-enters and flops on to the sofa.)

Mr Boulderstone

(Brightly)

Good day one and all!

Graham

(Warmly)

Morning Mr B! How are you?!

Mr B.

Dear me, hello Graham, you've got a full house this morning I see! Well I'm blessed!

Anne

Sit down and have a cuppa Mr B.

Mr B.

How kind dear lady! Yes indeed! I would very much welcome a fortifying beverage.

Polly.

Dear Mr B. you'll have to speak a little more simply to my little brother, he's rather simple himself!

Tom

Grapefruit juice Polly? On second thoughts no, you're sour enough already.

Polly

Do you have any detectable personality Tom or am I missing something?

Tom

*Are you still a rampant human-hater sis, or **am I missing something?***

Polly

*What I **hate** is when some people spend their lives sponging off their nearest and dearest, if that's what*

*you mean. I think that's a fair view don't you? Or don't you **do** fair?*

Tom

*Let's just say I don't **do** judgemental as well as you pol.*

Polly.

(To all)

Do you think he didn't grow up because he had the box room? Apparently goldfish only grow according the size of the bowl they swim in. I reckon it may be the same for people too.

Graham

(Interrupting)

*Please children, can we be **civilised** please? Can't you see we've got guests!*

(The two grandchildren produce a gadget and start playing with it. They approach the kindly Mr Boulderstone. They're clearly intrigued by his age, manners and the odd way he speaks.)

Leo

Mr B. do you like our tablet?

Mr B

(Puzzled)

Tablet? Won't you need chalk in order to write on it?

Lottie

(Equally puzzled)

Why would you need chalk for a tablet?

Graham

Mr B. means that years ago children had a different kind of tablet made out of a kind of stone called slate. They used chalk to write things down on them in class.

Leo

Nah, we're not allowed tablets in class Mr B!

Mr B

(Still puzzled)

But then children, however do you learn your ABCs?

Lottie

(Also puzzled)

What are ABEEZEES?

Tom

(Suddenly springing up)

They're giant wasps, Lottie you clottie!

(He pretends to catch one, chasing the children around the room making loud buzzing noises. They squeal with pleasure and run away.)

Polly

(Calling after them in a strict mother tone)

Come back please Mr B hasn't finished saying what he was saying!

(The children reluctantly return to their places with a sense of appeasing some mysterious grown-up code.)

Polly.

(To Tom)

If you're going to be the eternal child, can you grow up at more or less the same rate as my children please?

Tom

*I think sour sibling, it's being so chillingly **grown-up** that drives away your semi-detached **live-out** boyfriend!*

Polly

*No, it's simply that **I** have to consider other people. **I** have children.*

Tom

So I'm a free spirit! Can I help that?!

Polly

*No Tom you're just **selfish**. You place yourself at the centre of everything. Nothing else bothers my younger brother! You're the grand terminus from which all trains of thought arrive and depart!*

Tom

You know Pol, if you had an interesting mind you wouldn't need to wear such interesting clothes; bright clothes - dull mind.

(Polly snorts with contempt)

Anne

(Ignoring the fuss and continuing with the children)

Mr B. is telling you about spelling Lottie; it's how children used to learn.

Mr B

(Taking an interest in the kids' gadget)

Well I must say Leo my boy that looks like an interesting machine!

(Mr B certainly doesn't understand the device, while Graham wants to seem savvier than the older man)

Graham

*Oh, you mean **laptop** Mr B?!*

Polly

*It's a **tablet** I think dad.*

Leo

*Actually it's a **hand-held console!***

Mr B

When I was your age children I played with a hoop and stick.

Lottie

A hoop and stick! What's that?

Mr B

It was very simple but great fun Lottie my dear. The hoop was a large round piece of wood like a bicycle wheel only thinner, and the stick was just a plain straight piece of wood. What you did was to start the hoop rolling by hand and every time it slowed down or

looked as if it would fall over, you hit it in just the right place with the stick to keep it rolling along!

Lottie

(Laughing)

I'm not sure I would have liked that!

Mr B

I think if you'd been born when I was you'd have loved it!

Leo

(Pulling at his sister's arm)

I'm bored now. Let's go in to the garden and play Armed Attack of the Maniac Murderers on the tablet Lot.

(The children exit laughing at Mr B's idea of such a low-tech game)

Anne

What was life like for you then Mr B? Did you live near here?

Mr B

No I grew up on the South Coast; Eastbourne. We were a family of three; mother father and me. They've been gone for many years as you can imagine. I never married, so I've been on my own most of my life.

Anne

Oh poor you!

Mr B

No, no. I don't see it that way at all. I've had a full life, and living alone gives you time to observe the world, and the people in it. You can find a great deal of humanity out there if you look for it. Now little Lottie there, she doesn't know it, but if she'd been born a hundred years ago, or two hundred, the scenery may have been different, but the people pretty much the same. They were all human beings; all subject to the same frailties; the same needs and wants. Actually if you simply swapped all the folk then for all the folk now, in human terms nothing would really change.

Anne

(Making a move to leave)

I'm sure that's quite true Mr B. You have a lot of experience of the world. Anyway, I'm off to have a mother-daughter chat with Polly. Will you see yourself out?

Mr B

No, I'll be off too my dear. I have some errands to run.

(They leave the stage together)

Act I**Scene II**

(Anne and Polly are sitting together at the kitchen table)

Anne

Do you think the children should spend so much time on those bloodthirsty games darling?

Polly

It's the new tree climbing mum, you can't stop them. If you were to try, they'd blow you away, scattering your body parts to Mutant Ninja Alligators in the Swamp of the Damned.

Anne

Ah, very much like life with your father then? You have no idea how rude he can be these days? Grumpy isn't just in Snow White you know!

Polly

(Looking at her mother with more attention and concern)

What's the matter mum, have you two been rowing again?

Anne.

Oh it's nothing; he's just blind to my sensitivities that's all. Men are aren't they? Added to which, your father has a knack for putting unreasonable things in such a reasonable way- it's infuriating!

Polly

Yes! That's just one of the reasons why I don't let any in to my life mum!

Anne

(Putting on her mother-counsellor hat)

*Yes darling, but you did let **one** man in to... well, well you know **where**... at least **twice** didn't you? Which is why you've got two beautiful children; and they **do** need a father figure surely?*

Polly

Mum! Let's not revisit the "birds and the bees" now shall we? Anyway, there's no point in shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted!

Anne

Isn't it more like bringing up two lovely little Champagne corks after the bubbly has overflowed and watered your garden my dear!

Polly

(With feeling and a little disgust)

*Mum **please**!! Anyway they **do** have a father figure; his photo's on the mantelpiece! They know what he **looks** like!*

Anne

*Yes, sorry darling, but it's not the same is it? He should be **in** their lives. He should be around, guiding them though life.*

Polly

Yeah mum, guiding them right in to a life of gambling and drinking you mean?

(Anne looks down and up again with a sigh)

Yes, I suppose you're right. It's just as well they have the rest of the family to reply on.

(Graham comes in with Tom trailing slightly as if wary of potential censure at any time. His phone is making loud buzzing and pinging noises.)

Graham

*Tom! Can you **turn yourself off** please?! You sound like a one-man mobile theme park!*

(Tom reluctantly turns the phone off.)

Graham

Mr B is trying to understand the kids' game. I think it reminds him of Crimea!

Tom

What's cooking in the witches' cauldron then? Are you planning lunch? I'm starving!

Polly

So, you've worked up an appetite with Amy have you?

Tom

Jealous are we? I suppose the nearest you get to a hot date these days is a night in with a vindaloo?!

Polly

How any woman can stand you Tom is beyond me. Do they sleep with you out of sympathy, or are you drugging them?

(Tom grins, not in the least phased by a sister with whom he is seasoned in combat.)

Tom

*I have **innate charm** sister dear. I don't lay guilt and judgement on them, and I give a very good level of service! I don't talk ceaselessly about men versus woman like you do in your war-games with the opposite gender. I focus on the person- it's a more intelligent approach I find.*

Polly

*That's because you **have** time to focus on the person, and that's because you don't actually do anything! What was your "big job" today then- opening the curtains?*

(Graham and Anne look at each other and roll eyes.
Polly continues)

*Those of us who actually grew up don't have time for focus on anything except **work**!*

Tom

*I think you've missed the point Pol... **Pot**!*

("Pol Pot" refers to the murderous Cambodian leader)

Restraint is the most beautiful motif in all art forms. I give myself sparingly but exquisitely to my fellow human beings.

Polly

(Snorts)

*Restraint! Give us a break! Yes, building up to things, yes expectancy, then the grand finale; all great. However in your case there never is a **grand finale** is there Tom!?*

Tom

I think Amy would disagree with you there!

(Polly impatient at his suggestive comment)

Polly

*No Tom! I mean you're so busy being **restrained** you haven't actually completed a day's work in your life!*

(She grabs the kettle from the kitchen and holds it over him. Then she mock pours boiling water over his head. He jumps up alarmed)

Do you even know what this does!? You never use it yourself. Mum brings drinks to your bedroom. Did you think it was some kind of reverse dehumidifier?

Tom

(Sits down again not bothered)

Unlike you Pol, I don't see life in terms of "plusses and minuses". I may not contribute much in work or hard cash, that's because my gifts are of a more metaphysical nature. You wouldn't recognise them!

Polly

(With disbelief)

"Plusses and minuses?!" For the rest of us "plusses" come in the form of income and "minuses" in the form of bills! And.....By "metaphysical" I assume you mean non-

existent, except in the "twilight zone" inside your head?

Tom.

(Smilingly, still unconcerned)

You know, you should uninstall that "prejudice software" in your head Pol. Your life would a whole lot be sweeter without an acid tongue!

Polly

(Exasperated)

Mum, dad I think it's time to leave "Alex in Wonderland" here to his own magic-mushroom induced devices, bye.

(She calls to the children together still in the garden and makes her way out of the back door)

Act II**Scene I**

(The setting is still the living room, but now a few hard plastic chairs have been placed in front of two computers in the format of work-stations. Anne and Graham are at respective screens while Amy and Tom are supervising an impromptu class in getting familiar with computers.)

Tom

Ok, Mum let's try moving some money from your account to another account.

Anne

(Suspicious)

Oh yes?!

Tom.

No I don't mean to mine mum! This is just to show you how it's done.

Anne

Ok let's try. I'll move it my ISA.

(She hits a few keys. Some moments pass and she gradually loses patience.)

What the fiddlesticks is going on?! I'm on a screen with no exit! Where do I go?

(She starts touching the screen and trying to swipe the page away)

Amy

You can't do it like that Anne, it's not like a tablet, you have use the keyboard- look

(She demonstrates)

Anne

(Still impatient and frustrated)

Ok. Where do I go now then? There's no escape from the stupid screen. I can't make it smaller and I can't delete it! I'm trapped here forever! What next?

Graham

(Hopefully)

A cuppa?

Anne

Not now Graham! I'm still trying to escape from a screen-Alcatraz!

Graham

(Now getting annoyed with his own computer)

Damn this thing! I feel like I'm on some kind of hi-tech "trip!" Every time I press something the whole screen jumps about like a Picasso on speed!

Tom

Calm down parents. What do you want to know?

Graham

Well, since you ask: I'd like to know why it takes five times longer to pay for anything at a modern till. You have to wait for the "cash or card sir?" question, then

the swiping of the loyalty-card ceremony, then the presenting of the vouchers ritual, then the asking if you want the special-offer shenanigans. Ten minutes; as opposed to the old cash register which took ten seconds: That's 2 shillings please, thank you. Ting! There's your change sir; good day to you!

Tom

I meant what do you want to know about computers dad. I sense a lot of anger here dad! That counts as **till-rage** if you ask me!

Graham

Really?! Well that's nothing! When I scour the twelve hundred or so channels on our over-priced cable package for an interesting documentary or history programme, why is it I only ever get some numbskull trying to sell me a radish peeler priced at "only £9.99"? This or so-called "rom-coms" vomited hourly in to my living room? These **without fail**, featuring a "lonely guy" who quits his high-powered job in LA and returns to his "home-town", where he meets his childhood sodding sweetheart! Are all American "home-towns" knee-deep in unattached childhood sweethearts?! It goes against nature if you ask me!

Tom

Anything else dad? Get it all out of your system!

Graham

Yes! Then, then... what's this new wave of numbskulls who walk down the street texting without looking where they're going? The next thing you know, they're **on top of you** like an amorous Labrador!

Amy

Come on Graham try to focus on the class! Now have you got the password for this site?

Graham

Right yes another pestilence! Passwords! Damn all these bloody passwords! Every time I create one I forget where I've put it! Don't they need to be in a secure place so nobody can steal them?

(Getting a touch hysterical)

Yes, that's it! Tell you what; I'll put them in the safe behind the bloody picture! Only thing is, I've forgotten the sodding code for the safe! So it's very safe safe isn't it?!

(Amy and Tom look at each other deciding it's time for a break from the class.)

Tom

Look me and Amy are just off to the shops for a while. You two just keep practicing what we've been showing you, okay?

(Tom and Amy slip away with obvious relief at not having to spend more time teaching the un-teachable. A few moments pass of frustrated key-punching passes. Anne finally looks over at Graham.)

Anne

Weren't you going to look at garden birds? I thought you saw one you'd forgotten the name of this morning?

Graham

True. Wait a minute I'll look it up.

(He proceeds to click a way for a minute, and then sits bolt upright, frozen stiff with a look of awe and alarm. He darts a furtive look at Anne. She looks over and sees the look on his face, which he quickly tries to hide.)

Anne

*What **is it** Graham? Have you found what you were looking for?*

Graham.

(Sounding guilty, but strangely pleased too. He gulps before delivering the next line)

Yes... I think I probably have!

Anne

(Now curious, tries to look at his screen, while he, clearly hiding something, turns the screen away on its swivel bracket. There follows some slapstick with Anne running round to see the screen while Graham keeps turning it way. Eventually he loses the game, and Anne stands staring at the screen aghast but also intrigued)

Anne.

Graham! You old pervert!! What do you think you're doing?!

Graham.

(Defensive and alarmed)

What!? It's nothing to do with me! It... I mean... they, just appeared from nowhere! Anyway not so much of the old thank you!

Anne. *A likely story! You must have done something to summon up... these ...*

She stops and thinks what to say...

These huge great ... great...

Graham completing her sentence

Tits! Tits! Great Tits! But I was looking for Great Tits, not Great Tits! Great Tits of the garden variety!

Anne. *Well what you've got there sunshine are great tits of a much more indoor variety, and by the look of it the bedroom-based variety. I can't believe you wouldn't have guessed this kind of thing would come up Graham!*

Graham. (Alarmed)

Listen, nothing has come up okay!? Anyway I didn't do this on purpose honestly! I don't have that kind of mind!

Anne

*Graham, **all men** have that kind of mind!*

Graham

*Oh Ok! I can see you've made up **your** mind so I won't confuse you with the facts!*

(Recoiling)

Christ!! Look at that!

(The couple contort themselves; turning their heads through strange angles to see what's happening on screen)

Ann

Can people actually **do** that?

Graham

It doesn't look physically possible to me!

Anne

Anyway turn it off before someone comes in Graham!

Graham

What?! Yes, yes I'm doing it - look!

(He starts clicking frantically, becoming increasingly desperate)

Oh my God!! What in the name of all that's holy is that!!?

Anne

Graham, I think I'm going to faint!

Graham

Well you'll certainly have something to grab hold of if you do!!

Anne

How can it have got that big!!?

Graham

It's must be all the rain we've been having! Maybe it was left out in the garden with the Great Tits!

Anne

(Desperate)

Graham!!

Graham

(Hysterical)

What?! What!?

(Voices can be heard outside the kitchen door. It turns out to be Max, Graham's embarrassing childhood friend. He's the worst possible person to stumble in on this scene)

Anne

(Louder and more desperate)

Graham turn it off!!

Graham

(With increasing volume)

I'm trying, I'm trying! Things keep popping up like multi-headed monsters!

Anne

(Shouting)

*Graham **turn it off!!***

Graham

(Still panicking.)

It's a bloody Hydra! The more I click off the more things pop up! It's unpopable; I mean unstoppable!

Anne

(Raising her voice again)

Christ!! It's a dream and a nightmare rolled in to one!
Turn it off!!

Graham

What in heaven's name is wrong with this site? This doesn't happen when I'm shopping for large screws or tightening nuts!

Anne

(Shouting in panic now)

Well I'm pretty bloody surprised it doesn't! Have you no common sense!? And do not start typing in large screws Graham I'm warning you! We're having enough trouble with the Great Tits as it is!

Graham. (Quick fire)

Oh god oh god oh god!

Act II**Scene II**

(The same setting a few moments later. The door starts to open and a voice calls out)

Max

Gra! Gra! Are you in? Hope you're not up to anything in there!

(Laughs)

Or rather I hope you are!

(Graham and Anne are still in a panic, scrambling to pull themselves together. Trying to sound normal and failing Graham and Anne in unison)

Nooo!! Nooo!!

Anne

But hold on just a second Graham...

(They both click away at the machine as if swatting an imaginary intruder. Finally they subdue the porn and in unison flop in to their respective chairs looking as if they have been doing something guiltily energetic. Max comes in and looking half amused and half suspicious. He uses a mock policeman's voice)

'Ello 'ello 'ello what's going on 'ere then?!

(Graham and Anne together over zealous)

Nothing!!

Max

*Oh yeah!? Methinks the couple doth protest **too** much!*

Graham

Shut it Max! Anyway what are you doing here? Where's Suzie? Has she kicked you out again?

Max

(Defensively)

No. She's gone up to her sister's in Manchester. At least that's what she told me.

Anne

*So she's kicked **herself** out this time?*

Max

Look, it's not easy living with Suzie. I didn't think she was going to be so...

(He thinks for a second or two)

*So **structured**...*

Anne

You mean she wants you to abide by minimal standards of civilised behaviour?

Max

(Indignant)

*Yes, precisely! She wants everything **just so**. I mean, I'm not a cat am I? I can't just come in for meals and to use the bog can I?*

Anne

I know plenty of men who do! Besides, you're all pretty reliable when it comes to turning up just before mealtimes!

Max

(Still composed and continuing his theme.)

When I come in to the house she lays down sheets of old newspaper or asks me to sit on a bin liner! It's humiliating!

Graham

Never mind mate! You'll due time off for good behaviour soon. We're still going to the game on Sunday right?

Max

(Hesitantly)

Yes I think so. I'll see how she feels when she gets back from her...

(Sceptically)

"Sister's"

Anne

You make her sound like an ogre Ma; She's not!

Max

*Yeah right! She's still working her way **up** to zero tolerance!*

Anne

Max!

Max

It's true! She'd have been bloody good at running a small dictatorship in Latin American in the 1960's that's all I can say! She's probably a direct descendant of General Pinochet!

Graham

Even though she comes from Margate where her father had a stall selling sticks of rock and her mother was a dinner-lady at the local primary school?!

Max

You never know. These dictators are pretty slippery customers some of them!

Anne

And the names of her parents, Mr and Mrs Snodthorpe, put you in mind of a Latin-American dictator for what reason exactly?

Max

Okay let's forget it. What you two have been up to is more interesting!

(Graham and Anne look at each other guiltily again, but brazen it out staring him down)

Graham.

(Feeling that a deflection would help.)

Well Max we were about to make love if you must know!

Anne

(Looks shocked.)

Graham!

Graham

*Yes I said: darling let's go upstairs and make love.
And you said well you'd better choose one or the other
because I can't manage both!*

(They laugh at this.)

Anne

*So Max, what's your **real** reason for coming over?*

(Max Defensively.)

*Can't I just come over to see my oldest and best mate
to talk over old times?!*

(Pause...)

Graham

(Echoing Anne)

*So Max, what's your **real** reason for coming over?*

Max

*Ok, ok! I'm thinking of leaving Suzie. We're just not
getting along, and also I think she's seeing someone
else.*

(Graham and Anne both look shocked)

Graham

(Worried)

Max, are you okay?

Max

(Pauses. Looks down then up again reflectively.)

Yes, I guess so. I mean I think we came to terms with not loving each other some time ago. It's no good keeping things like this to yourselves. Me and Suzie should have talked this out years ago, but it just felt easier to keep going. Believe me that's the worst thing you can do!

(He looks a little emotional and Graham puts a hand on his shoulder)

Graham

Don't worry old chum this is the hard part. It'll get easier.

Anne

Is Suzie okay Max? What does she say to all this?

Max

I don't know. She's shut down recently and says nothing but have you put the rubbish out?

Anne

And have you?

Graham

Anne! That's a bit unfeeling!

Anne

Well when it comes to escaping household chores he's got "previous", haven't you Max? I'm just trying to understand the situation Graham. I mean you two have always been rather lazy and juvenile, especially in combination.

Graham

*Hey, wait a second. I'm not on trial here! Anyway we haven't **started** being anything. We're just as we always were!*

Anne

Exactly! The world has moved on from the caveman days Graham haven't you heard?! Today's woman demands more help and more understanding from their man.

Graham

(Shocked)

So now you're a feminist!?

Anne

(Patient but resolved)

All women are interested in fairness. If that makes me a feminist then yes I am!

Graham

*Yes ok, but equality is never enough is it? Don't tell me very many women are **not** looking to be "on top" rather than just equal!*

Anne

(Sniffing)

*Yes, well **you** men have had your go Graham. Now it's **our** turn!*

Max

(Continuing as though he hasn't heard this exchange)

*We don't talk any more. She's been too distracted by...
by ...*

(Struggling with his feelings)

*Whoever **he** is- the swine!*