

Waiting for a Train.



A play by Alan Lowe.

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Cast.

Judith, the leader of the group.

Christine, the "Dim" member.

Irene, the "Life and soul of the Party."

Large man, very dishevelled.

Susan, pleasant old lady.

Mary, her irascible friend.

Alan, "Know all."

Dave, "His friend"

Mrs Dickens, middle aged harridan.

Act One.

(The scene is a Railway Station waiting room around 6-00pm in the evening. It is winter and very cold. Every 5 minutes or so there is the distant sound of a tram but no trains. The door is stage right at the back and there are three seats stage left at the front and two more stage right at the front. At the back of the stage in the centre is a Drinks Machine. The none existent wall to the front has two posters on it, one a seaside view, the other an advertisement for a show. The room is lit by one

central light fitting. The three women enter all wearing coats, scarves, gloves and carrying shopping bags, NEXT etc. to find a large man huddled in the corner.)

JUDITH. (To Irene.) "Why do we listen to anything you say"?

IRENE. "Why are you having a go at me, it's not my fault there's no train for an hour."

JUDITH. "Of course it's your fault, you said there was a train at 5-45pm and there isn't."

IRENE. "There is in the week, just not one on Saturday."

JUDITH. "And what day is it today? Oh I know, bloody Saturday"!

CHRISTINE. "No need for bad language Judith."

JUDITH. "Bad language? that is nothing to what I should be saying. I am supposed to be on my way home by now and where am I? Stuck in a bloody Railway waiting room"!

CHRISTINE. (Chidingly.) "Judith!"

JUDITH. "I'm sorry but at times Irene drives me to distraction."

IRENE. "We've missed one lousy train, there is another due in an hour....I think"?

JUDITH. "What do you mean, you think"?

IRENE. (Looking at a timetable.) "I'm not sure, but I think the next train today is in two hours not an hour, the Saturday service isn't the same as midweek."

JUDITH. (Grabbing the timetable.) Oh give me strength, let me see that thing." **(She checks the time table.)** "Wonderful, bloody wonderful no train until 7-45pm which means it won't get into Chester before 8-30pm. Sorry Christine but she could make the Pope swear, and it's bloody freezing even in here." **(Judith bangs her arms around her body to emphasise the point. Christine gives Judith a hard look but says nothing.)**

IRENE. (Changing the subject.) "Have you seen that man over there"?

JUDITH. "Yes, what about him"?

IRENE. "Well is that blood all down his coat and shirt"?

CHRISTINE. "Oh yes, now you mention it I think it is, I thought he'd spilled something on himself, you know, Tomato sauce or something."

IRENE. "Looks like blood to me, do you think we should ask him if he's alright"?

JUDITH. "You can if you want but he looks to me like he wouldn't take kindly to it if you did."

IRENE. "I don't see why not, I am only going to ask if he's okay."

CHRISTINE. "I think Judith's right, best leave him alone."

(All three sit down.)

IRENE. "Not very Christian is it, ignoring someone who is obviously hurt."

JUDITH. "When did you get religion? The last time you went to church was my wedding day twenty five years ago."

CHRISTINE. "No it wasn't, we all went to that concert by that Brass Band last Christmas and they played loads of religious music."

JUDITH. "They played some Christmas Carols but I don't classify "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas" as religious music"! **(Christine bows her head and looks away.)**

CHRISTINE. "Well I go to church EVERY Sunday."

JUDITH. (Pointing at Irene.) "Yes, but she doesn't."

IRENE. "Flaming hell Judith you don't have to be so damned argumentative. I am going to ask that fellow if he is okay." **(She walks over to him.)** "Are you okay? Can we help?"

MAN. (Very loudly and angrily.) "Go away"!

(Irene, taken aback by the outburst she retreats very quickly.)

JUDITH. "That went well."

IRENE. " I was only asking how he was, there was no need for that."

CHRISTINE. "He's worse than that Graham you used to go out with, he was a nasty piece of work."

IRENE. "Graham was okay, he just had anger issues, he had a very stressful job.

JUDITH. Yes, working in that Betting Shop was very stressful, especially when he got the sack for fiddling."

IRENE. "That was a misunderstanding, and anyway he was glad to leave, some of them punters were right rough beggars."

JUDITH. "I don't know why you are defending him, he'd been through more middle aged women than Gin and Tonic and some while he was supposed to be with you."

IRENE. "I suppose; but he could be nice, that weekend we had in Paris was wonderful and he was always buying me something."

JUDITH. "Problem was he was using money that wasn't his, how much did the judge say he'd stolen? £20,000 wasn't it? And how much did he spend on you apart from that weekend? Not much because all that jewellery he bought you was only costume stuff. I think most of it went on his wife."

IRENE. "Can we change the subject, we all know all men are bastards."

(Christine has been searching in the bags while this was going on, she stops and speaks.)

CHRISTINE. "My George isn't."

JUDITH. "No, your George is a bloody saint putting up with you."

CHRISTINE. "He's always buying me little presents and we always go somewhere nice for our holidays."

JUDITH. "The trouble is you never know where he's taking you. Last year when I asked you said you couldn't remember but it was something to do with cows. I tried the Isle of Wight, Jersey, Spain, and where were you going"?

CHRISTINE. **(Sheepishly.)** "Bulgaria"!

JUDITH. "Bulgaria, I ask you, is there any wonder you drive us daft"?

CHRISTINE. "Sorry Judith, I don't do it on purpose."

IRENE. **(Putting her arm around her.)** "We know love, Judith is just miffed because we missed the train, she didn't mean it." **(She looks pointedly at Judith.)**

JUDITH. "Course I didn't mean it, just joking, where would we be without each other." **(They go into a group hug.)**

IRENE. "What were you looking in the bags for? Don't say we've left something on the bus"

CHRISTINE. "No we haven't lost anything, I was just hoping one of you had put something we could eat in one of the bags."

JUDITH. "Something to eat? The way you hit the clothes shops we barely had time for a coffee"!

IRENE. (Looking at the man.) "He doesn't look too well to me and that is blood on him you know."

CHRISTINE. (Looking at him closely.) "You can't be sure it's his blood. Could you see if he was bleeding when you spoke to him because I can't see from here."

JUDITH. (Pulling her away.) "For God's sake, stop staring at him, Irene has upset him enough already. And anyway, it's none of our business, if he doesn't want to talk about it we should leave him be."

(Christine is looking out at the audience and sees pictures and posters on the none existent wall.)

CHRISTINE. "This picture looks like it is of somewhere in Cornwall, have either of you been there? George and I went for our honeymoon."

(Irene joins her.)

IRENE. "I don't think it's Cornwall, looks like Wales to me, what do you think Judith?"

JUDITH. "How should I know and to be honest I don't particularly care."

(Christine, now looking at another poster.)

CHRISTINE. "This one is well out of date, that show finished at the Palace months ago."

IRENE. "That was one I wanted to see but I never got around to it. That what's his name off the Tele was in it."

CHRISTINE. "I know who you mean, he was in Coro, then they killed him off, they kill off a lot of people in Soaps for some reason."

IRENE. "Adds to the drama, you have to kill some off to keep people interested, be pretty boring if it was actually like real life."

JUDITH. "Did you see Coro last night? That David makes me laugh, how could he pulled a bird like Kylie I will never know, he couldn't pull a rickshaw. And that story line where that Gary was supposed to be marrying that Alya, well come on, she'd have to be blind."

(Irene and Christine rejoin Judith.)

IRENE. "It's not real you know"?

JUDITH. "I know, but it should look real, they pair up the most unlikely people don't you think"?

CHRISTINE. "That Steve McDonald's my favourite, I don't know why he went out of it for so long, was he in a film or something"?

IRENE. "No he was ill, someone said he had a breakdown, that storyline where he was off his rocker got to him apparently. Anyway he's back now".

CHRISTINE. "I'm really glad he's back, he's funny, I hate it when the show gets too serious, I used to watch "Eastenders" but why watch people who are having a worse time than you"?

JUDITH. "You're dead right there. What I want to know is where are all the "Chirpy Cockneys" they go on about? They were supposed to be dead light hearted even during the Blitz, this lot are always moaning about something, give me Coro any time."

CHRISTINE. "Did you like the green blouse I bought, (**Pulling it out of a bag.**) it was a bit pricey but I think George will like it don't you"?

IRENE. "He'll like the underwear you bought better."

CHRISTINE. (**A little disgustedly.**) All men aren't the same you know Irene, they're not all interested in one thing."

JUDITH. "Have to agree with Irene on this one, they all do like the same thing; except of course Elton John and his mates."

CHRISTINE. "Why, what do they like"?

JUDITH. "Give me strength, they're Gay, what do you think they like"?

CHRISTINE. "Oh yes, I forgot about that."

IRENE. "Do you think Gay blokes tart themselves up to turn their partners on like women do"?

JUDITH. "I have no idea, and anyway I don't have to tart myself up for Robert, well not all the time anyway."

(They all laugh.)

CHRISTINE. **(Looking in the bags again and pulling out a big woollen cardigan.)** "I'm putting this on under my coat, I'm freezing."

JUDITH. "You and me both but there is nothing that I bought that will keep me any warmer, might make Robert warmer later though."

(They all laugh again.)

IRENE. "You know I am just wondering why that fellow is in here, we only just missed the last train, he must have been able to catch it if he had wanted to."

CHRISTINE. "Well it is cold out, perhaps he came in to get warm."

IRENE. "Then why hasn't he just gone home?"

JUDITH "How the hell do I know, and one thing is for sure I sure as hell ain't going to ask him and get yelled at. He looks vicious to me, let's just leave him alone."

(Just then two men enter. They are wearing overcoats, gloves, woolly hats and scarves)

ALAN. "God I'm glad to get inside, it's bloody freezing out there. **(Seeing the ladies.)** Sorry, didn't mean to swear but it is hellish cold outside."

(The ladies pointedly ignore him and his friend, though Christine gives them a weak smile.)

DAVE. (Quietly.) "Well they seem a welcoming trio, had a better welcome from my mother-in-law. Do you think we should have stuck around until the coppers came? that bloke looked pretty badly hurt."

ALAN. "There were plenty of people about and two looked like they knew what they were doing. That fellow I was talking to said the bloke who attacked the man was a hell of a size and didn't stop even when the guy was on the ground."

DAVE. "Did he say why he attacked the man"?

ALAN. "Just said it was unprovoked, the guy apparently accidentally bumped into him outside the pub, apologised and the fellow just went ape. Smacked him in the face and then kept kicking him while he was on the floor, he only stopped apparently when two blokes pulled him off, then he ran off as soon as one of the bystanders rang for the police."

DAVE. (Sees the man in the corner.) "Al". **(Nudges Alan.)** "Look over there."

ALAN. (Looking around.) "Where?"

DAVE. (Under his breath and indicating the man.) "Over there."

ALAN. (Sees the man.) "Oh bloody hell, do you think that's him"?

DAVE. "I have no idea and I don't think we should hang around to find out either. Come on, let's go." **(Dave makes to leave but Alan pulls him back.)**

ALAN. Hang on. what about those ladies, they obviously have no idea who that fellow is, we have to tell them."

DAVE. "And how do you propose to do that without the guy hearing you, they didn't seem too interested in our company when we came in."

ALAN. "I don't know, but we have to tell them somehow. Look, I'll just wander over and have a word."

DAVE. And if you do that the bloke will hear you, we need to get them to come over here."

ALAN. "That's not going to be easy, I could ask for a light."

DAVE. "There's no smoking in here, think of something else."

ALAN. "I know, I'll ask when the next train is and ask if they have a timetable and if they do ask to see it."

DAVE. "And what are you going to do if they don't have a timetable? And even if they have I can't see one of them bringing it to us, they will expect us to go to them and then we're back to square one."

ALAN. "Okay bright spark, you think of something."

(All this time the ladies have been chatting about the two men.)

JUDITH. "Do you think they are talking about us, they've been looking at us since they came in"?

IRENE. "Not much else to look at except the bloke in the corner. That one in the grey coat looks okay, I could go for him and to be honest his mate isn't bad either."

JUDITH. "Is that all you ever think about, men? You have no idea who they are, they could be rapists for all you know, or they're married, mind you, that doesn't seem to bother you too much nowadays."

IRENE. (Annoyed.) Bloody hell! I go out with ONE married man and suddenly I am the devil incarnate."

CHRISTINE. "Where's carnate."?

JUDITH. "Oh give me strength, how did I get lumbered with you two, one's man mad the other is just mad."

IRENE. "There you go again having a go at Christine. And it's alright for you two, you've got your fellows hog tied and trained, who have I got?, no one."

CHRISTINE. "That's not true Irene, you've got us, and anyway Judith why are you saying I'm mad, I'm not mad am I Irene."?

IRENE. "No you're not love. **(To Judith.)** See, you've upset her again."

JUDITH. I'm sorry Chris, I didn't mean you were mad but have you never heard anyone described as the Devil incarnate before? It isn't IN CARNATE it's... **(Realising she is wasting her time.)** Oh never mind, I'm sorry okay"?

CHRISTINE. "Okay. I wish I was as clever as you two but I'm not, but I do try."

IRENE. We know you do love, and we wouldn't have you any other way, would we Judith"?

JUDITH. "No, of course not, can we change the subject? **(She looks at the two men.)** Those two are giving us right funny looks, I've a good mind to go and tell them to pack it in, it's giving me the creeps."

CHRISTINE. "Don't, look what happened when Irene spoke to that other man, and anyway I feel safer with them here, I don't like the look of him."

(Indicating the big man.)

IRENE. "Shush, he'll hear you. Like Judith said, let's talk about something else. Did you hear that Marjorie Taylor has had another one"?

CHRISTINE. (Incredulously.) "No! that must make six at least."

IRENE. "Seven actually, I think they want their own football team, either that or their Catholic".

CHRISTINE. "They're not Catholic, she goes to the same church as me."

JUDITH. "She must be a Nympho then or he's sex mad, or both"!

(The three girls laugh and continue to chat amongst themselves.)

DAVE. "What are they laughing at? They wouldn't be laughing if they knew."

ALAN. "Knew what exactly? We are only surmising he's the bloke in the fight, it might be someone else entirely."

DAVE. "Bit of a coincidence if that's the case, he's big and got blood on him and he doesn't seem to be in here waiting for a train ."

ALAN. "He might be, those woman obviously are."

DAVE. "They must be all waiting for the same one, it only goes to Chester from here. I wonder where they're from? I don't recognise any of them although the smaller one looks familiar."

ALAN. "Can we get back to the matter in hand? How do we tell them who we think he is"?

DAVE. "I know..... no, maybe not."

ALAN. "What? Come on, if you've any ideas spit them out. "

DAVE. "I was going to suggest we text them, but we don't have their numbers."

ALAN. "We can soon solve that, go over and ask them."

DAVE. "Do you think that would work, do you think they would tell me"?

ALAN. (Sarcastically.) "Sure, why wouldn't they give their phone number to a total stranger in a railway station waiting room"?

DAVE. (Dave looks at his feet, deflated.) "Well if you're so damn clever you think of something. Maybe we should just ring the police".

ALAN. " We can't ring the police, what would we tell them? I am worried though, that the bloke might turn nasty without warning, he did outside the pub. It's no good I'll just have to go over and whisper to them and hope he doesn't hear me."

(Alan slowly walks towards the ladies.)

IRENE. "Hey up, one of them is coming over."

ALAN. (Very quietly.) "Can I have a word"?

IRENE. (Loudly) "Speak up we can't hear you."

ALAN. (Still quietly.) "It's about the bloke over there." **(He nods in the man's direction.)** "We think he might be dangerous."

CHRISTINE. "What's he say"?

IRENE. "No bloody idea, I think he has laryngitis."

CHRISTINE. "Is it catching? Because I had influenza three weeks ago and I was really ill, I don't want to have to take more time off work. My boss said I had taken far too much time off this year and if I took any more time off he might have to give me marching orders,"

JUDITH. "Oh do shut up Chris, I think he said something about "dangerous".

IRENE. "What's dangerous"?

JUDITH. "I don't know, I could barely hear him, ask him."

IRENE. "Did you say "dangerous" and if you did what is"?

ALAN. (**Still whispering.**) "The bloke, the bloke in the corner."

IRENE. (**Still confused.**) "What about him"?

ALAN. (**Getting exasperated and talking a little louder..**) "We think the bloke in the corner is dangerous."

CHRISTINE. (**Rather loudly.**) "Pardon, did you say someone was dangerous"?

ALAN. "For God's sake keep your voice down, we don't want him to hear us."

MAN. "What don't you want me to hear, are you talking about me"?

ALAN. (**In a panic.**) "No of course not, why would we, I was just saying that trains can be dangerous, there have been several crashes in India and there was that crash in Turkmenistan only last month." (**The man shrugs.**)

CHRISTINE. "Was there really, never saw that in the paper or on TV, mind you I have never heard of Turkmenistan so maybe I just missed it, I often miss things don't I Judith"?

JUDITH. "Yes Christine you do, like the fact that this gentleman asked you to keep your voice down."

CHRISTINE. "Sorry, but why does he want us to keep our voices down"?

IRENE. "If you shut up and listen perhaps we might find out."

ALAN. (Whispering.) "Look, I can't speak properly here. One of you come over to our side and I will tell you what we know, okay"?

JUDITH. "Yes, okay, I'll come over but I don't see why you can't just tell us here, and why are you whispering"?

ALAN. "Just come over and I'll tell you."

(Alan moves away.)

DAVE. "Well, what did they say"?

ALAN. "Nothing really, I couldn't tell them the whole story as I had to whisper and even then the fellow heard me, I had to tell him some guff about dangerous trains."

DAVE. "Dangerous trains? what the hell are you on about"?

ALAN. "Never mind that, one of the girls is going to come over here in a bit so we can fill her in about our man. I just hope he doesn't decide to follow her."

DAVE. "I don't see why he should, he hasn't moved from that spot since we came in so I doubt he'll move now."

ALAN. "He might if he feels threatened."

DAVE. "Come on! Have you seen the size of him, I can't see him being intimidated by us."

ALAN. "You have a very valid point which is why I think we should do what you suggested and leave now."

DAVE. "Let's at least warn those women first like you said."

ALAN. "You've changed your tune, one minute you want us to leave now you want to stay. God! I could murder a fag."

DAVE. "You can't smoke in here."

ALAN. (Angrily.) "You don't have to remind me, I know."

DAVE. "No need to bite my head off. I know what's up with you, you are miffed that Alty got beat."

ALAN. "No I am not, well yes I am but that's not why I'm miffed, I'm miffed because I am freezing, I want a smoke and because if we'd come off early we would have caught that earlier train."

DAVE. "That was your own fault, you were convinced we'd get an equaliser."

ALAN. "We should have except that flaming idiot number nine of ours blazed that sitter over the bar."

(Just then Judith moves to join the boys but as she does two older ladies enter the waiting room.)

MARY. "Well I said to her Susan, I don't care how much you paid, it's not much good if it doesn't work now is it? She paid £100 for that flat screen TV, supposed to be top of the range and the biggest bargain since the Dutch bought New York, but as I told her, if it doesn't work it's just a pile of junk. Are you gentlemen going to let us ladies sit down or what"?

(Alan and Dave look confused but give up their seats.)

SUSAN. **(To Alan and Dave.)** "Thank you, you are so kind."

MARY. **(Now seated.)** "As I was telling you, that TV never has worked, she does it all the time buys a "Bargain" that turns out to be a "Pig in a poke".

SUSAN. "You can't blame her for looking for a bargain, we all need to look after the pennies. I never buy that expensive butter, I buy that stuff that tastes just like it."

MARY. "If you never buy butter how do you know the other stuff tastes just like it"?

SUSAN. "Well it says so on the container."

MARY. "Do you believe everything you read"?

SUSAN. "Of course not, I didn't believe the papers that said we should leave the EU, I even put up a poster saying we should stay."

MARY. "And where did you put the poster"?

SUSAN. "In my dining room window."

MARY. "You live on the thirteenth floor of a tower block, who was going to see it, a passing Pigeon"?

SUSAN. (Looks sheepish.) "Well I did put it up, you didn't even vote"!

MARY. "What was the point, no one listens to pensioners no one listened to you, they voted to leave!" Anyway we're too old to be thinking about the future, let's just concentrate on the here and now and not the hereafter." **(She pulls out a bag of sweets and shares one with Susan.)**

SUSAN. "Talking about the hereafter, have you got a funeral plan, I had one for Bert and it was great help with the expenses when he passed on."

MARY. "No, Charlie didn't believe in them, he thought they were a rip-off. I just used some of our savings when he died, still got more than enough to bury me and the house is mine so the kids won't be out of pocket."

SUSAN. "I wanted to buy our flat but Bert wouldn't hear of it, said it was a waste of money. I wish we had now, I've only got Bert's pension and my State pension and it is a bit of a stretch to make ends meet sometimes. That's the trouble with death, you never know when it will strike."

MARY. "I've told you before, you can move in with me anytime, I rattle around that house like a pea in a tin and it's a lot to keep clean."

SUSAN. "I have thought about it, but I think I'll stay where I am, at least for now."

MARY. "Suit yourself, but the offers there."

(The action moves to Dave and Alan. Judith has gone back to the other women.)

DAVE. "Why has she not come over, I was sure she started to."

ALAN. "Those other two coming in must have put her off."

DAVE. "They are only two old ladies, why should that have put her off"?

ALAN. "Well she wasn't too keen on coming in the first place so I guess she took their arrival as a good excuse to change her mind. Anyway, we are probably totally wrong about him. **(Indicating the man.)** He is probably just a harmless bloke who is sheltering in here because he has nowhere else to go."

DAVE. "Do you really believe that"?

ALAN. "No."

DAVE. "So why are we still here?"

ALAN. "We'll go just as soon as I speak to that woman."

DAVE. "If she ever comes over." **(They turn away from the audience.)**

MARY. "Do you still miss your Bert? I miss Charlie even though he was useless around the house. I had someone to talk to in the evenings, even if he wasn't listening most of the time."

SUSAN. (**Getting up and wandering to the radiator. She touches it, shakes her head and resumes her seat.**) "Actually I do miss Bert, he was a decent enough man and he never kept me short, always found money for things I really wanted. And he was tender, you know, not rough like some men apparently are, was Charlie tender"?

MARY. "Yes, I suppose he was, mind you he wasn't exactly sex mad at the best of times and once he got High Blood Pressure well that was that."

SUSAN. "My Bert was active right up until that last week, then he had the Stroke and that was that. It's true what they say, "You never know what you've got until you lose it." If it wasn't for you I'd have given up ages ago."

MARY. "I'm the same, you maybe a pain but you're my pain."

SUSAN. "Would you consider getting married again if the right bloke turned up?"

MARY. "I very much doubt it at my age and anyway like they say, "Re-marriage is just the triumph of hope over common sense.""

SUSAN. "You're probably right but you have to admit sex is the most fun you can have without laughing and it keeps you warm which is more than I can say for that radiator."

(They both laugh.)

IRENE. "Are you going to find out what that man was on about."

JUDITH. "I was but those two ladies came in."

IRENE. "What difference does that make, it's not a secret or he wouldn't be telling us."

JUDITH. "The way he was whispering it seemed like a secret, something about that man in the corner and "dangerous"

CHRISTINE. "Dangerous! What's dangerous?"

JUDITH. "If you give me a minute I'll go and find out, but if turns out to be a wind up or just an attempt to chat us up he will regret it I can tell you."

IRENE. "Speak for yourself, I don't mind him trying to chat me up. I'm beginning to think I've crossed the line and I'm past it."

JUDITH. "You'll never be past it, you like men too much."

CHRISTINE. "I like men, well I like my George, does that count"?"

JUDITH. "What are you on about now? What has you liking your George got to do with it"?"

CHRISTINE. "You said that Irene liked men so would never be past it so I just wondered if my liking George meant I wasn't past it"?

JUDITH. "Past it? you're so far past it you can't even see where it was. I was merely saying that Irene would always be chasing a man unless at this late stage she catches one."

(Irene looks annoyed.)

IRENE. "I'll have you know I have caught a few but I chucked them back because they didn't cut the mustard. Most men are bastards anyway. There was Robert of course, I should have hung onto him but once you got your hooks into him it was no contest. You know Judith, you should count your blessings, you got a good one, even if you did pinch him off me."

JUDITH. "I did not pinch him off you, you two had already split up."

IRENE. "Only because he fancied you and you made no secret you were available."

JUDITH. "Are you saying I threw myself at him"?

IRENE. "Threw? You propelled yourself faster than a speeding bullet"!

(Judith goes to confront Irene physically. Irene squares up to her.)

CHRISTINE. **(Placing herself between them.)** "Come on you two, that's enough. You're arguing about old history and you know full well Irene that

Judith and Robert were made for each other. Now say you're sorry to each other."

IRENE and JUDITH. (Reluctantly to each other.) "Sorry".

JUDITH. "I really am sorry Irene, I had no right to say what I did."

IRENE. "It's okay and anyway you're right I do chase men. I suppose I am too choosy, I see what you two have got and want the same."

(Judith and Christine resume their seats. Irene checks the radiator.)

JUDITH. "Robert's a lovely man and I wouldn't swap him for the world but it isn't always a bed of roses you know, we have our fights, in fact we had one this morning, I knew he badly wanted to go to Liverpool to watch the match but I made a big thing about him fixing the washer when I didn't need it until next week. I don't know why I did it, I know he loves his Football and he always puts me first apart from that. In the end he stormed out and to be honest thinking about it now I don't blame him. I can be really selfish at times."

IRENE. "We've noticed. It'll be alright, he'll forgive you, he always does. Now we have settled that are you going to find out what the heck that guy was on about? And check that other radiator while you're there, this one's stone cold."

CHRISTINE. "Yes, go and ask him, I want to know what's dangerous."

(Judith starts to walk slowly over to Alan and Dave.)

DAVE. "Finally, here she comes now. What are you going to tell her"?

ALAN. "What do you think? That we think that guy in the corner is dangerous and they should leave ASAP."

DAVE. "But we don't know for certain he is dangerous and even if he is where are they, and we, supposed to go? If we just go outside he could just follow us and anyway it's bloody freezing out there."

ALAN. (To Judith.) "Hello love."

JUDITH. "I am not your love. Now what do you want to tell us"?

ALAN. (Indicating the man.) "There was an altercation outside a pub earlier and a man was badly beaten up. The thing is we think the bloke in the corner is the one that did it."

JUDITH. "Okay, but why should that make him dangerous to us, just because he was in a fight earlier doesn't mean he is going to start another."

ALAN. "Normally you would be right, but this wasn't a fight in the accepted sense, the guy just lost it and pummelled the other fellow even when he was on the ground, he only stopped when someone shouted they'd called the police."

JUDITH. "You saw all this, you know it's him"?

ALAN. "Well no, we saw a big bloke run off but we didn't see the actual attack, but a man who did told us what happened.

JUDITH. "So let me get this right. You didn't see the so-called unprovoked attack, you didn't see the face of the bloke running away but you are sure it's the guy in the corner and you think he's dangerous. Do you know how daft that sounds"?

DAVE. "She's right Alan, we don't know for certain it was that bloke in the corner and we only have that other guy's word that the attack was unprovoked and that he hit him while he was down."

ALAN. "I suppose, but we did see how badly hurt the other guy was, I'm not sure he was even still alive." So what do we do now, forget about it and just ignore the guy in the corner"?

DAVE. "Seems like a plan to me."

JUDITH. "And me. Do you mind if I go back to my friends now?"

(She walks off but checks the radiator first and frowns.) Stone cold, what's the point of radiators that don't work"! **(She rejoins her friends.)**

DAVE. "Well that went well. Now they think we are a couple of nutters overreacting to a none event. May I suggest we don't tell the other ladies"?

ALAN. "You're probably right I suppose, but I'm still not happy being in here with him sitting in the corner."

DAVE. "And the option is?"

ALAN. (Shrugs) "We don't have one I suppose, we just have to hope it isn't him and if it is he doesn't go ape again, not in here anyway."

(Dave and Alan turn away from the audience.)

MARY. "What was that all about? I heard bits of it but I couldn't make head nor tail of it. They seemed to be talking about the bloke in the corner but I couldn't hear why."

SUSAN. "Me neither, but I did hear something about a fight and the word dangerous."

MARY. "Oh well, probably nothing for us to worry about. How long before that train is due"?

SUSAN. "I'm not sure, about an hour or so I think. I'll ask one of the young men. **(Addressing Dave.)** Excuse me young man, but what time is the next train due to Chester"?

(Dave turns to face her.)

DAVE. "About an hour I think, we 're going to Northwich, where are you two off to"?

MARY. "If it's any of your business we are going home to Chester."

DAVE. "Sorry, just showing an interest."

SUSAN. "He was only being polite Mary, no need to be nasty to him."

MARY. "Nasty? I wasn't being nasty but he should mind his own business."

DAVE. "Sorry ladies, no offence intended. You both look tired, had a busy day"?

SUSAN. "We've been to see a friend in Altrincham, we haven't seen Helen in some time, have we Mary"?

MARY. "No we haven't and whose fault was that? She doesn't make you feel welcome does she? All you get is a cup of tea, no cake, not even a biscuit. Always going on about the old days and what her darling Harold used to say."

SUSAN. "He was a clever man, he worked at the University for years."

MARY. (Exasperated.) "As a Janitor not a lecturer"!

SUSAN. "Yes, but he came into contact with really clever people and he used to say some very profound things."

MARY. "Like what"?

SUSAN. " Well I remember him saying that " Banks will only lend you money if you don't need it." Which you have to admit is very true."

MARY. "He was just quoting something he'd heard, that doesn't make him clever."

ALAN. "You know missus, you're right."

MARY. "Of course I'm right, but who asked you"?

(Alan and Dave retreat a little.)

SUSAN. "She did talk a lot about the old days you're right. She used to say everyone looked on the bright side, they didn't expect things to go wrong."

MARY. "But they did. Remember that rope swing down in the woods. The boys swung on that for ages then when your Terry had a go it broke and he broke his arm."

SUSAN. "It soon mended. Nowadays they would ban it, in them days they just replaced the rope with a thicker one! Even adults could get away with acting like complete barmpots without Social Services getting involved. Do you know the council have made the "George" take down its hanging baskets as they might fall on someone. There have been hanging baskets outside the "George" since before we were born and I don't remember anyone getting hurt by one falling on them. That's the trouble nowadays they presume the worst is going to happen no matter how unlikely."

MARY. "That's true, nowadays if people smell flowers they look around for the coffin."

(They both burst out laughing.)

ALAN. "Well those two seem happy enough, they say "Ignorance is Bliss" so I suppose it's best not to say anything about our friend over there."

DAVE. "Agreed."

ALAN. "It's bloody freezing in here. **(He checks the radiator.)** She's right, it is stone cold. Bloody hell, it's not even switched on"! **(He bends down and flicks the switch.)**

IRENE. **(Irene is busy texting holds the phone in the air and then gives up. She realises that Susan and Mary are laughing.)** "What are those two silly old biddies laughing at"?

JUDITH. "How should I know. Did you do the Lottery yesterday?"

CHRISTINE. "Yes, I never miss but I preferred the show when they had "Mystic Meg" on she was good."

JUDITH. (Staggered.) Good! She was rubbish, never got anything right, I will believe in psychics when one of them wins the flaming lottery"!

CHRISTINE. "I'm not broke or anything but it would be nice to come into a bit of money but there is not much chance of that."

IRENE. "Too true, they say "Money talks" all it says to me is "Goodbye".

JUDITH. "I suppose we should just be grateful we are reasonable fit and well. My mother died when she was only thirty five, I just hope I take after my Dad, he is still "jogging along".

CHRISTINE. "What? He really goes jogging"?

JUDITH. "No of course not, he said he would start jogging when he saw one of the buggers smiling"!

(They all laugh.)

IRENE.(Indicating the man.) "Are you sure that bloke isn't dangerous? He looks dead rough to me."

JUDITH. If he was going to start on us he would have done it before those men came in, he isn't going to start now there are so many of us in here. I did consider ringing the police, but what could we say, "There's a big ugly bloke in the waiting room with us and we think he might be dangerous."

CHRISTINE. "What's wrong with that"?

JUDITH. "Well they are likely to ask why we think he's dangerous and what do we say then, "We have a hunch"?"

IRENE. "You're right I suppose, let's just forget about him and talk about something nicer."

CHRISTINE. "Like what"?

IRENE. "Well like the fact that Mark Johnson has asked me to go to London with him next week."

JUDITH. "You said earlier you hadn't had a man for ages and all men were bastards, now all of a sudden your going to London with one? "

IRENE. "Well they are, but a free weekend in London is not to be sneezed at and you will be glad to know he's not married, been divorced for over a year."

CHRISTINE. "What's he like, tall dark and handsome"?

IRENE. "Well no actually, he' a bit short, bald and a bit fat, but he is fun and he does have a bob or two even after the divorce. He works for a solicitor and he gets a damn good salary and perks. It's a perk this weekend. He has to go to see a bloke in London for his boss and pick up some very important papers that they can't risk sending by mail.

JUDITH. " I still can't get over the fact that you've just been telling us you have no one and how lucky we are to have a man in our lives, then you tell us you have a bloke! Anyway he sounds dodgy to me, are you sure he works for a solicitor."

IRENE. "Of course I am, I've met him outside his office a couple of times.

JUDITH. "Well my Mam said never trust a short man, their brains are too close to their arse."!

CHRISTINE. (Disgustedly.) Judith! there is no need to use such language."

JUDITH. Sorry, just what my old Mam used to say. Anyway why do you get so het up about swear words all the time"?

CHRISTINE. "I just don't like it when people swear, there is no real need for it. Our Vicar says it just shows a bad command of the English language.

IRENE. "Anyway when I said he was short, I didn't mean he was little, just not tall if you get what I mean". He is funny though, always telling jokes and

messing around. The only thing that bothers me about him is he does drink a lot. I asked him why he drank so much, you know what he said?" I do try to say "No" to alcohol but it just doesn't listen." (**She laughs at her own joke, the other two don't.**)

JUDITH. "Is he a daft drunk or does he get nasty"?

IRENE. "If you're asking if he has ever hit me the answer is "No" I would never stay with a bloke who hit me, I'm not that stupid."

JUDITH. "Plenty do, God must like stupid people, he made a lot of them."

IRENE. "Well I'm not one. Why do you always do down the men I go out with? Most of them have been nice enough and NONE have ever hit me. I just never found one I liked enough to make a commitment apart from John Bradford but he had issues."

JUDITH. "The main one being he was Gay!"

IRENE. (Angrily.) "He was not. He just had a problem with his sexuality."

JUDITH. Yes, he was Gay!"

IRENE. "He was bisexual actually."

CHRISTINE. "But he did go off with a bloke."

IRENE. "Okay, can we change the subject"?

JUDITH. "It was you who started it. Anyway how long have you been going out with "Shorty"?"

IRENE. "Don't call him that, his name is Mark and I have been seeing him for a couple of weeks. We met in the coffee shop near where he works. He spilt coffee on himself and I helped him wipe it off."

JUDITH. "On his trousers was it"

IRENE. (Iratly.) "No it was not, it was on his shirt. Anyway we got talking and he asked me out last week. I said "No" at first but then I thought "What the hell" and changed my mind."

JUDITH. (Sarcastically.) "And so began the story of Romeo and Juliet"!

IRENE. "You are a sarcastic sod at times, I find someone I like and you make fun of me."

JUDITH. "Sorry, you're right, I should be pleased for you and I am honestly, but you have to admit you don't have a great track record."

CHRISTINE. "Have either of you got anything to eat, I'm starving and even that drinks machine is empty." **(Pointing at a dispenser in at the back.)**

IRENE. " I could pop out and get something but I don't remember seeing anywhere on the way here except the pub and that was a good mile or so away."

CHRISTINE. "Oh well, I suppose I will have to manage, I could do with losing a pound or two before the next Slimmer's World meeting."

JUDITH. "Let's change the subject again. (**Sarcastically.**) Where are you going this summer, Bulgaria again"?

CHRISTINE. (Visibly annoyed.) No we are not! It was awful. The hotel was dirty and the food was dreadful, you know I lost over five pounds while we were there. We basically lived on fruit and gin and tonic."

IRENE. "So it's going to be Britain this year then? Sensible decision, I am really looking forward to London and Mark says we can go down to his caravan at Barmouth in the summer."

JUDITH. (Sarcastically.) "Wow, Barmouth , the jewel of the Welsh coast. Where to next, Rhyl"?

IRENE. "Okay smarty pants, where is Robert taking you this summer"?

JUDITH. "Actually I have no idea. We went to that lovely hotel on Mallorca last year. It was in a place called El Toro, about three miles from Magaluf but it was lovely and quiet where we were. We stayed in a gorgeous hotel and the view of the Marina was magnificent. While we were there the King's boat came in; he wasn't on it but it stayed for a few days. It had a helicopter on it and a great big Rolls Royce car." The best part of the hotel was it was adults only, no screaming kids causing chaos."

CHRISTINE. "But you've got grandkids, and you've been on holiday with them."

JUDITH. That's different, just don't want other people's screaming brats running around all day.

IRENE. "It must be nice, married to a man with plenty of cash."

JUDITH. (Judith stands up and angrily speaks.) "He worked hard for every penny, still does and we don't waste it in the pub and he never gambles except on the National and the Derby but everyone does that."

IRENE. "I didn't mean anything by it, but I have to survive on my wages from the bakery and there is not a lot left over after all the bills are paid."

JUDITH. "Well if this Mark is all you say he is that should solve your problems."

IRENE. "If you're suggesting I am going out with him for his money I certainly am not. He's a nice man and I would go out with him even if he was poor."

JUDITH. "I believe you, millions wouldn't but I don't blame you, love is great, but it doesn't pay the bills, before Robert got that job in the Bank we had to watch every penny and it caused many an argument."

CHRISTINE. "I never knew you and Robert argued, I thought you were solid?"

(Judith sits down again.)

JUDITH. "We were, still are, but when you have to decide between paying the Gas or the Electric it causes strain in any household."

CHRISTINE. "George and I have been lucky, he had a good job when I met him and we've always been comfortable."

IRENE. (To Christine.) "It's alright for some! Anyway, you've never said where you're going this summer, somewhere nice like Blackpool."

CHRISTINE. (Angrily.) "No we are not! We are going to France, to a little Gite outside a town called Saint Germain en Laye which is about ten miles from Paris."

JUDITH. "Never heard of it, and what the hell is a Gite"?

CHRISTINE. "It's a little cottage that you can rent in France, a bit like those in the Lake District. You can get bigger Gites but ours is just two bedrooms. George has been to Saint Germain en Laye before, he says it is lovely with loads of little shops and cafes. It also has the palace that the Kings of France lived in before they built Versailles."

IRENE. "Blimey, hark at Mary Beard. Sounds expensive."

CHRISTINE. "George says it is a bit but it is worth it as it is so pretty. And you can get into Paris on the Metro in less than half an hour."

JUDITH. "Makes you smile doesn't it. When me and Robert got married we were happy to just have a week at Butlin's and I bet you to felt the same years ago, now look at us, world travellers"! **(They laugh.)**

ALAN. "There they go again, laughing."

DAVE. "Well it's not illegal is it, why shouldn't they laugh"?

ALAN. "They won't be laughing if that bloke turns violent."

DAVE. "Let's change the record hey? As your missus forgiven you for the other night"?

ALAN. "All I did was forget to pick up the lads from school and they walked home quite happily, it's only a mile if that."

DAVE. "Putting her darling boys at risk, she was bound to be annoyed."

ALAN. "At risk? For God's sake ones thirteen and the other is fifteen, they're bigger than me, well Andrew is."

DAVE. "You still forgot to pick them up."

ALAN. "They're a pair of lazy beggars except when it comes to football, then they have all the energy in the world. I think teenagers are God's punishment for having sex."

DAVE. "Come on, you wouldn't be without them, they keep you sane, give you a reason for working, give you a reason to try to get on."

ALAN. "Get on? That'll be the day. When I find the key to success some bugger will change the lock"!

DAVE. "Well I'd still like kids but it's not likely now."

ALAN. "Why not, you're not that old."

DAVE. "True, but as far as I understand it you have to have sex to have kids and my missus seems very happy to keep our relationship platonic."

ALAN. "Oh come on, it's not that bad surely"?

DAVE. "I was exaggerating, but not much. Why do we want it all the time and women can take it or leave it"?

ALAN. "God's little joke I suppose."

(Just then the man gets up and walks towards them.)

ALAN and DAVE. "Bloody Hell"!!

End of Act One.

Act Two.

(Everyone is where they were when they first came on.)

ALAN. "Well you made a bloody fool of yourself"!

DAVE. "Well how was I to know he was just going outside"?

ALAN. "But diving to the floor and shouting "Don't hit me" was a bit over the top, he thought you were crazy, mind you it's probably a good job he did."

DAVE. "Well you moved out of his way pretty quick too, you obviously thought the same as me, that he was going to attack us."

ALAN. "Maybe I did, but I didn't make a complete fool of myself, I thought for a minute you had wet yourself. I think it might be safe now to assume he isn't the guy who attacked that other bloke."

DAVE. "Why?"

ALAN. "Well did he attack us"?

DAVE. "No, but that doesn't mean to say he won't. And why did he go outside? It's bloody freezing out there, I reckon he was checking to see if there were any police on the platform looking for him."

ALAN. "He was out there for barely a minute, hardly time for him to check the whole station for coppers or anything else for that matter.

(Sarcastically.) Maybe he went for a pee."

DAVE. "I suppose. The women must think I am a real wimp."

ALAN. "In the case of the two old ladies they just think you're nuts, the others think you've lost the plot."

DAVE. (Dave goes to the door and looks outside.) "God I wish that train would come, I feel like a right idiot with them all looking at me."

ALAN. "You are an idiot, you simply confirmed the fact."

(The two men sit down on the floor near the Drinks Machine.)

JUDITH. "Well they obviously really did think that was the man they were on about, the one who beat up the other fellow. They were terrified, did you see that one go down on his knees begging not to be hit"?

IRENE. "In fairness he is a big bloke and he does look very intimidating."

CHRISTINE. "He does, I agree, but he is doing nobody any harm just sitting in the corner."

IRENE. "Maybe he's a Psycho, you know, calm one minute then nasty the next. I mean look at that Peter Sutcliffe, when you see pictures of him he looks perfectly normal, handsome even"?

JUDITH. "And maybe he is just a man waiting for a train. We are probably getting all het up over nothing, those two blokes have no real proof he is violent, he's probably got nothing to do with the fight."

IRENE. "You know Judith, you're right, we are obviously worrying about nothing. It was funny though watching those two (**Indicating Alan and Dave.**) panicking like they did, that one, (**Indicating Dave.**) was in a right state."

CHRISTINE. " If nothing else it proves that if that bloke turns nasty we are not going to get any help from Batman and Robin."

(They all laugh.)

DAVE. (Getting up.) "See, they're laughing at me now, I'm going outside until the damn train comes."

ALAN. " Sit down, they're laughing at us both and I am certainly not going outside until the train comes, it's bloody freezing out there. Just relax, we'll be on our way in half an hour and all this will be forgotten."

DAVE. " I hope so."

ALAN. (There is the sound of a train arriving.) "Hang on, sounds like the train has finally come."

(Everyone except the man get up and get their bags etc ready to leave. Irene has picked up most of the bags.)

IRENE. "What the hell of you got in these bags Christine, they weigh a ton"!

SUSAN. "Just clothes and a couple of pairs of shoes, well four actually."

IRENE. "Four pairs of shoes! God, you're worse than Imelda Marcos"

SUSAN. "Was that her who was in Cranford"?

JUDITH. "God give me strength! No that was Imelda Staunton."

CHRISTINE. "Oh, well who is Imelda Marcos?"

(Before anyone can reply Alan reappears.)

ALAN. "Sorry everyone, wrong train, it's going to Manchester not Chester."

(There is an audible groan as everyone returns to their seats.)

MARY. "Looks like we're stuck here for a while longer, mind you those two are very entertaining." **(Indicating Alan and David.)**

SUSAN. "I've seen some daft things in my life but that just about took the biscuit. What do you reckon that was all about"?

MARY. "Well they both obviously thought that big bloke was going to batter them, but I wonder why? Do you think they know each other"?

SUSAN. "Didn't look like it, maybe they are just the nervous types. Look, I am going to ask them what was going on, it seems pretty weird to me."

MARY. "I'll come with you."

(They both approach Alan and David.)

SUSAN. "What on earth was going on with you and that bloke? Why are you so frightened of him? Do you know him, is he dangerous"?

ALAN. "Which question do you want me to answer first?"

MARY. "We don't mind, just tell us the truth"

DAVE. "Tell them Alan, they might as well know, everyone else does."

MARY. "Tell us what?"

ALAN. "The bloke in the corner, we thought he was involved in a fight in town earlier where a man was very badly hurt, turns out we may be wrong. And to answer your other question, "No" we don't know him but "Yes" we did think he was dangerous because we did, maybe still do, think he was the

man involved in the attack earlier today." (**Looking at Dave who nods in agreement.**)

DAVE. "I agree he might still be the one, we don't know for certain."

SUSAN. "That was what that woman must have been on about outside the station, she said there had been a fight."

DAVE. "Probably, don't get many fights in Altrincham , now Salford, that's a different matter"!

MARY. "So why are you not sure it's him anymore?"

ALAN. "Simply by the way he has been behaving while we've been here. He could have nailed both of us, or even those other women, but he hasn't, in fact apart from when he went outside a while ago he hasn't moved from that spot all the time we've been here."

DAVE. "Well I'm still not convinced it isn't him, he's got blood all down his shirt and he seems to be hiding in here from something."

MARY. (To Alan.) "So you think it may be a big fuss over nothing, typical men jumping to conclusions."

SUSAN. "That's a bit unfair, they had their reasons for thinking he might have been the man."

MARY. "I suppose, (**To Alan.**) have you any proof at all its him"?"

ALAN. "Look, to be honest we simply don't know, we only saw the bloke run off after the attack and we never saw his face, but he was a big bloke and that guy in the corner has blood on his clothes so it could well have been him."

MARY. "So in a nutshell you simply have no idea if he is the man or not, you simply assumed he was"?

DAVE. "Well yes, I suppose that's just about it."

MARY. "Men! Have you told the other ladies all this?"

DAVE. "Yes."

MARY. "I bet they think you're both barmy too."

(They both resume their seats.)

JUDITH. I'm going over there to find out what's going on, **(To the other two.)** coming?"

(All three approach Alan and Dave.)

DAVE. "Oh no, here come the other three now. What do they want."

ALAN. "How am I supposed to know, probably to laugh at you."

IRENE. "What is going on? **(To Alan.)** Why was your mate on the floor crying for mercy just because the guy came near you?"

ALAN. "Because he came near us, we thought he was coming to give us a good hiding like he gave that other bloke."

JUDITH. (To Alan.) "But you agreed with me that he probably wasn't the guy?"

ALAN. (Sheepishly.) "Well, yes I did, but I couldn't be sure, I'm still not sure."

DAVE. "And neither am I."

CHRISTINE. "So you do think he was the man involved in the fight earlier?"

DAVE. "Well to be honest that's the trouble, like we told the other ladies we just don't know, one minute it seems obvious it's him, then like when he walked past us to go outside and then sat down again without hitting anyone when he came back it seems likely it wasn't him."

MARY. (To the other ladies.) "I think we can put all this down to vivid imaginations don't you?"

JUDITH. "You're right, the saints preserve us from idiot men." (**She walks off and the other two follow.**)

ALAN. "Well that went well, now they think I'm as stupid as you."

DAVE. "You know, one day I am going to get something right, one day I am not going to make a fool of myself."

ALAN. "If I agreed with that, we'd both be wrong! You're always cocking things up and I'm always there to try to pick up the pieces."

DAVE.(Angrily.) "Oh pardon me for breathing, you never make mistakes, you're Mister Perfect"!

ALAN. "Well I am always saving your bacon, you're always in trouble of one sort or another and I always get dragged into it."

DAVE. "If that's how you feel why don't you just bugger off."

ALAN. "Don't tell me to bugger off. **(He goes as if to confront David.)**

DAVE. "Come on then if you think you can, I'm not afraid of you."

(They half-heartedly push each other until Mary steps in.)

MARY. "Are you sure it wasn't you two involved in that fight, why don't you grow up, or at least learn how to act grown up in public."

(Alan and Dave move apart but still looking daggers at each other.)

MARY. "Are you two going to pack this in? Come on, shake hands and apologise to each other."

DAVE. "I'm not apologising to him, he insulted me."

ALAN. "Insulted you? I just stated the facts, you're always getting into scrapes and I am always getting you out of them."

DAVE. "That's a lie and you know it."

ALAN. "The bar in Norley, the cafe in Nantwich, should I go on"?

DAVE. "Good grief that was years ago, when have you had to get me out of scrapes lately, I'll tell you, never."

ALAN. "Only because I keep an eye on you. You would have got battered by Tom Hulse in town last week the way you were eyeing up his wife if I hadn't told you to pack it in."

DAVE. "Oh come on, now you're clutching at straws, he didn't even notice I was looking."

ALAN. "But if he had he would have gone ape, and he hits first and asks questions later."

MARY. " Will you two for heaven's sake pack it in, how long have you known each other?"

DAVE. "I don't know, thirty years or so I guess, what's that got to do with anything"?

MARY. "Well it goes to show me that you are mates and this is a storm in a teacup and you both need to grow up."

(Alan and Dave, look sheepishly at each other.)

ALAN. She's right I suppose, sorry Dave, just said in the heat of the moment okay?"

DAVE. "Yeh, okay, let's let it drop."

MARY. "Good, now I can go and sit down again, and no more arguing."

(She returns to her seat.)

SUSAN. "Well done, you come in handy sometimes. What was it about"?

MARY. "Who knows, who cares, just two daft blokes trying to prove their manhood I suppose, that's what fights are usually about when it comes to men. My Charlie was always getting into fights, well "Handbags at Dawn" to be honest, he was too worried about messing up his clothes to get into a real fight, just like them two come to think of it."

SUSAN. "I was just thinking of something Helen used to say, "Just because you go to Church doesn't mean you're a Christian, my Harold spends all his time in the garage but it doesn't mean he's a car".

MARY. "What on earth has that got to do with anything?"

SUSAN. "Well, just because that bloke is big and has blood all down his front it doesn't mean he's been in a fight, he might just have fallen over."

MARY. "Why do you always go all around the houses to make a point. Of course he might not have been in the fight, but he's the only one here who fits the description."

SUSAN. "Yes, I see that but the real culprit might not be him, he might still be out there in the street."

MARY. "Can we please drop this now? It is obviously not him so we have nothing to worry about do we. Right. Can we talk about something sensible now instead of worrying about something and nothing? **(Susan nods in agreement. Mary hands her a sweet.)**

I had our Tracey around last week, not seen her in ages. The last time was just before Sheila Smith's wedding and that was weeks ago. And you know what I get as soon as she arrives? A telling off for not dusting the Living Room! Why is it no one notices when you do the housework but they notice straight away when you don't"!

SUSAN. "I have to say I don't think you dust enough, I noticed a spider's web in your front room the other day when I called."

MARY. "It may surprise you to know I left that web there for a purpose, you don't see many flies when there is a spider about."

SUSAN. (Laughing.) "Sometimes I just despair of you, I really do."

MARY. "Do you see much of your brood."

SUSAN. "Becky comes regularly, helps me change the beds almost every Monday, but I hardly ever see Danny. Boys aren't the same, like they say "A daughter is for a life, you just have a son 'til he takes a wife." Mind you our Danny's Molly's a good 'un, keeps him on his toes I can tell you and she is absolutely brilliant with my grandkids; let's them have things, but when she draws a line she sticks to it no matter how much they kick up stink. Danny, he's hopeless, just says "Yes" regardless. He would have got on well with Neville Chamberlain, anything to keep the peace. He's the kind that thinks if you keep feeding a tiger steak it will eventually turn Veggie"!

MARY. "Tracey is good to me, but I think Brian resents the time she spends with me, that's why she doesn't come much. I wish she had kids, but I doubt that's going to happen now, she'll be forty in a couple of years."

SUSAN. "You never know, forty isn't old anymore. When my old Mum was fifty she looked my age and I'm over seventy and you're older than me and you look about fifty."

MARY. "Flatterer. okay you can have another sweet"

(Laughing they share another sweet.)

ALAN. "I wish we had left when you suggested it now, I feel a bit of a prat making such a fuss about that guy in the corner."

DAVE. "You think I was right over something,? Wonders will never cease! But in fairness we did have to warn those women, if it had been him it could have turned very nasty and let's face it we still can't be sure. Anyway the train will be here in ten minutes or so and all this will be over. Make me a promise, you will NEVER tell anyone about what I did". **(Alan smiles.)** No, I mean it, promise you won't mention it down the Legion."

ALAN. "It's a great story, but okay, I promise."

DAVE. "Thanks, I'd never live it down."

(Just then an elderly woman enters.)

MRS DICKENS. (To the Big man.) "There you are you big useless idiot. Where the hell have you been all this time? **(She thumps the man and urges him to his feet.)** Come on you useless lummoX, or I'll give you another belting."

MAN. (Cringing.) "Don't hit me again Mum."

MRS DICKENS. "Hit you again? I'll bloody brain you if you don't move your fat lazy arse."

CHRISTINE. "No need for that sort of language and do stop thumping the poor man."

MRS DICKENS. (Threateningly.) I'll use whatever language I like, I don't need your permission and as for thumping this "Poor Man" as you call him, he's my son and he's bone bloody idle. I asked him to bring in some logs from the shed about three times and he just sat there watching the Tele; moved when I belted you with that pan though didn't you." **(To the Man.)**

CHRISTINE. "You hit him with a pan? You should be reported to the police."

MRS DICKENS. "If there had been something heavier to hand he'd have got that round his neck instead, now move you useless bugger." **(She shoves him hard towards the door.)** Oh and by the way, if you're waiting for the

Chester train it's cancelled. (**She laughs and the two of them leave with Mrs Dickens giving her son one last boot up the backside.**)

ALAN. "Bloody hell, after all this there is no bloody train, what the hell do we do now?"

JUDITH. "They can't just leave us stranded, they have to provide alternative transport surely?"

DAVE. "I'll go and see if there is anyone speak to, there must be someone we can ask."

MARY. "Best of luck with that, they usually all go home by six."

DAVE. "I'll go and see anyway." (**He leaves.**)

IRENE. "Fancy that, us worrying that guy was dangerous and he was scared to death of his old Mam. Just goes to show you can't judge a book by its cover."

ALAN. "I was so sure it was him you know, sorry for frightening you all, but honestly I did really think it was him."

SUSAN. "No harm done, I just hope your mate finds someone out there and there is alternative transport, I don't want to spend all night in here."

MARY. "Me either. I spent a whole night in an airport in Spain once, Alicante, my back's never been the same since. Do you know I have to take Ibuferen every night just to get a decent night's sleep and we never got any

compensation because the delay was bad weather, "Act of God" they called it, any excuse not to pay up."

JUDITH. "Well I'm not stopping here all night, I'll give Bob a ring, he should be home by now." **(She takes out her phone and starts to try to ring Robert.)**

IRENE. "You may have to go outside, I tried to text Mark earlier to tell him about the to-do but it wouldn't send."

(Judith goes outside. Mary and Susan join the others.)

CHRISTINE. "Don't worry Irene, if Roberts not in I'll give George a ring, he'll come for us."

ALAN. "One thing's for certain my missus won't come for me and Dave's missus can't drive. **(He notices the radiator here is not on so he bends to switch it on.)** Why didn't you switch the radiator on"?

IRENE.(Sarcastically.) "We were so warm we didn't bother."

CHRISTINE. (Looking daggers at Irene.) "Ignore my friend, thank you, that was very kind of you."

ALAN. "That's okay, anyway you should be on your way soon one way or another."

CHRISTINE. "Where did you say lived? If it's on our way we could drop you off."

IRENE. "How big do you think Roberts car is, it'll barely hold the three of us."

ALAN. "Don't worry, we'll sort something out."

IRENE. "I'd give Mark a ring but he's in Glasgow this weekend, doing another pick up for his boss, he was in Geneva last week."

ALAN. "Sounds like a busy man, what does he do?"

IRENE. "He works for a solicitor in Chester, always going off somewhere to deliver or pick up papers for him, they don't trust the post with some of the stuff, very important stuff some of it. He's taking me with him on his London trip, I'm really looking forward to it."

ALAN. "Well I hope it all works out for you, you deserve a bit of luck after today, we all do."

MARY. "Your mate's been gone a long time, I wonder if he's found anyone."

ALAN. "He must have done, it's not a very big station, you'd soon know if there was no one here. I never asked, what have you three been up to, how come you're all stuck here?"

IRENE. (**Sarcastically and pointing at the bags.**) "I would have thought they were a dead give away?"

ALAN. "Oh, yes, sorry, I didn't know they had a Next in Altrincham."

IRENE. "We haven't been shopping in Altrincham, we've been to the Trafford Centre."

ALAN. "Oh, is there a tram to it now?"

IRENE. "No, you have to catch a bus from here but it takes you right to the front door. The only trouble is having no car you have to cart all your shopping with you all the time. I said we should leave the actually buying until we were ready to leave, but "No", you (**Speaking to Christine.**) had to get all that stuff (**Indicating the bags.**)straight away, "Might be sold out later" you said. (**To Alan.**) I wouldn't mind but she had us helping her carry the damn things."

ALAN. "I didn't know you could get there from here by bus I've only been in the car. I see one of you likes Victoria's Secrets, you?"

IRENE. "Actually no, that bag belongs to Christine along with most of the others if it is any of your business."

ALAN. "Blimey! Wouldn't have had her down for that kind of thing."

IRENE. (**She gets up angrily.**)"But you would have me down for it, not sure how I should take that."

ALAN. "No offence meant, just that she doesn't look the type to be wearing kinky underwear."

IRENE. "But you think I would"?

ALAN. (Trying to calm the situation.) "Just think you're the more attractive of the two of you."

CHRISTINE. (Annoyed.) "So you don't think I'm attractive"?

ALAN. (Startled as he does not realise Christine is listening.) I didn't mean that. Look, I'll stop digging this hole while I can still get out, truce"?

CHRISTINE. "Go on then, truce."

IRENE. " Yes, okay, truce. You're not really interested in our shopping trip are you anyway?"

ALAN. "No, not really, just trying to pass the time."

CHRISTINE. "Why do people feel they have to talk to pass the time, it passes whether you talk or not."

ALAN. "True but it does seem to pass quicker when you are chatting with someone."

IRENE. (Dismissively.) "Well I think we've chatted long enough don't you"?

CHRISTINE. "Irene there is no need for that, he was just trying to be friendly, you're beginning to sound like Judith."

IRENE. "God forbid! In that case, I am sorry, very sorry. Is that better Chris?" **(Said sarcastically.)**

CHRISTINE. "Much better."

(Just then Dave reappears.)

DAVE. "Got good news and bad. The good news is there will be a bus put on in place of the train and it'll be here in five minutes. The bad news is that guy died. They got the man who did it almost immediately. The guy on the station didn't know who the culprit was but the guy who died was called Robert Green, he was from Chester. He was here watching Liverpool play Alty in the cup."

(Dave sees the look on Irene and Christine's faces. They look ashen and shocked.)

DAVE. "What? What have I said now?"

IRENE. "Are you sure that was the name, "Robert Green" and he was from Chester"?"

DAVE. "Yes I'm sure, why"?"

CHRISTINE. "It can't be there must be some mistake, Robert went to Liverpool, Judith said."

IRENE. "No, he went to WATCH Liverpool, oh dear God! Are you absolutely positive that was the name, Robert Green?"

DAVE. No mistake, I'm not deaf or stupid, Robert Green from Chester."

(Just then Judith re-enters.)

JUDITH. "I got a signal but no answer, can you try George Christine I don't know where Robert is he should be in by now."

THE END.

