



Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

DRAMA

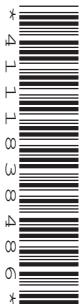
0411/12/T/PRE

Paper 1

May/June 2015

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

To be given to candidates on receipt by the Centre.



READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the stimuli and on the extract from Neil Simon's play *Rumours* provided in this booklet.

You may do any preparatory work that is considered appropriate. It is recommended that you perform the extract, at least informally.

You will **not** be permitted to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination. A clean copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the Question Paper.

This document consists of **28** printed pages.

STIMULI

Choose **one** of the following three stimuli and devise a piece of drama based on it. You should work in groups of between two and six performers. Your piece should last approximately 15 minutes.

In the Written examination, you will be asked questions about your piece that will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

Stimulus 1

Title: *One great day for my family*

Stimulus 2

Poem: *The Orange* by Wendy Cope

At lunchtime I bought a huge orange –
The size of it made us all laugh.
I peeled it and shared it with Robert and Dave –
They got quarters and I had a half.

And that orange, it made me so happy,
As ordinary things often do
Just lately. The shopping. A walk in the park.
This is peace and contentment. It's new.

The rest of the day was quite easy.
I did all the jobs on my list
And enjoyed them and had some time over.
I love you. I'm glad I exist.

Stimulus 3**Photograph:** *Fans of the Rolling Stones*

A picture of policemen holding back excited Rolling Stones fans in New York where the band were on tour in 1964.



EXTRACT**Taken from *Rumours* by Neil Simon**

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Neil Simon's play *Rumours* was first performed in America in 1988, and was later adapted slightly by the playwright for performance in Britain. The extract in this booklet is taken from the British edition.

The play is in the style of a farce, and centres on the unlikely happenings at an affluent dinner party to celebrate the tenth wedding anniversary of Charley Brooks, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, and his wife Vivian. The eight guests then struggle to protect their host, and themselves, from a possible scandal. The style involves improbable, bizarre twists in the plot, and characters behaving strangely.

The play is in two Acts, and the extract consists of a shortened version of Act 1.

Characters (in order of appearance)

Chris Bevans	An attractive but nervous woman in her mid-thirties.
Ken Bevans	Her husband, aged about 40. A barrister.
Claire Cummings	In her mid-thirties.
Len Cummings	Her husband.
Ernest Cusack	A psychologist, aged about 50, and Charley Brooks's analyst.
Cookie Cusack	His eccentric wife. A TV chef in her mid-forties.
Glenn Cooper	A politician, standing for election to the British Parliament.
Cassie Cooper	His wife, with whom he has a difficult relationship.

The action of the play takes place in the living room of a large house outside London at 8.30pm on an evening in May.

ACT I

A large, tastefully decorated two storey house, about thirty minutes outside London. It is about eight thirty p.m. on a warm pleasant evening in May.

An entrance doorway ^{UR} leads on to an open vestibule. To the right of the door is a bathroom. One step down is the large, comfortable living-room. Against the upstage wall are a table and a stereo system enclosed in a cabinet. Between these two pieces is a closed door leading down to the cellar. From the living-room, a curved staircase leads to a landing and two doors, each to a separate bedroom. On the landing is a railed banister. ^L of the second floor landing is an archway leading to a hallway and, presumably, other bedrooms. Through the living-room at left, double swinging doors lead into a dining-room and then into the kitchen, unseen, of course. A large window at the ^R wall looks out on the front wooded lawn of the house. Headlights of approaching cars may be seen through this window.

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As the CURTAIN rises, CHRIS BEVANS, an attractive but nervous woman, in her mid-thirties, paces anxiously back and forth, looking at her watch and biting one nail. She is elegantly dressed in a designer gown. She looks at the phone, then at her watch again. She crosses to the cigarette box, looks around to see if anyone is watching, takes out a cigarette, then decides against it and puts it back. She paces.

20
25

CHRIS: Oh, God! [*She decides on the cigarette, takes it out, is about to put it in her mouth*]
At that moment an upstairs bedroom door opens. CHRIS drops the cigarette.

KEN BEVANS, *about forty, smartly dressed in a tuxedo, but looking flushed and excited, comes out to the rail.*

KEN: Has he called yet?

CHRIS: Wouldn't I have shouted up?

KEN: Call him again.

CHRIS: I called him twice. They're looking for him... How is he?

KEN: I'm not sure. He's bleeding like mad.

CHRIS: Dear God!

KEN: It's all over the room. I don't know why people decorate in white... If he doesn't call in two minutes, phone the hospital.

CHRIS: I'm going to have to have a cigarette, Ken.

KEN: After eighteen months, the hell you are. Get a grip on yourself, will you? [*He rushes back into the bedroom and closes the door*]

CHRIS *paces again*

CHRIS: I can't believe this is happening. [*She crosses to the cigarette box, reaches for one*]

The phone rings
[*Calling out*] Ken, the phone is ringing.
The phone rings again. She doesn't want to answer. She hesitates then rushes to it and picks it up

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35
40
45
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Hallo? Dr Dudley? ... Oh, Dr Dudley, I'm so glad it's you.
Your service said you were at the theatre.
The bedroom door opens and KEN rushes out

KEN: Is that Dudley?

CHRIS: [*into the phone*] I never would have bothered you but this is 55
an emergency.

KEN: Is that Dudley?

CHRIS: [*into the phone*] I'm Chris Bevans. My husband Ken and I
are good friends of Charley Brooks.

KEN: Is that Dudley? 60

CHRIS: [*turning angrily, hand over phone; to KEN*] It's Dudley! It's
Dudley!

KEN: [*annoyed*] Why didn't you say so?
He goes back in and closes the door

CHRIS: [*into the phone*] Dr Dudley, I'm afraid there's been an 65
accident. I would have called my own doctor but my husband
is a barrister and under the circumstances, he thought
it better to have Charley's own physician... Well, we just
arrived at Charley's house moments ago, and as we were
getting out of our car, we suddenly heard this enormous— 70

KEN: [*rushing out of the bedroom*] Don't say anything.

CHRIS: [*covering the phone; to KEN*] What?

KEN: Don't tell him what happened.

CHRIS: Don't tell him?

KEN: Just do as I say. 75

CHRIS: What about Charley?

KEN: He's all right. It's just a powder burn. Don't tell Dudley about
the gunshot.

CHRIS: Don't tell him? They dragged the poor man out of the theatre.

KEN: Tell him he stumbled down the stairs and conked his head. 80
But he's all right.

CHRIS: But what about the blood?

KEN: The bullet went through his ear lobe. It's nothing. I don't want
him to know.

CHRIS: But I already said we were getting out of the car when we 85
heard an enormous—what?

KEN: [*coming down*] We heard—

CHRIS: [*into the phone*] One moment, Doctor.

KEN: We heard ... we heard ... we heard—an enormous *thud!*

CHRIS: *Thud?* 90

KEN: When he tripped down the stairs.

CHRIS: Good. Good. That's good. [*Into the phone*] Dr Dudley? I'm
sorry. I was just talking to my husband. Well, we heard this
enormous—thud... Thud... T—h—u—d... Yes. It seems
Charley tripped going up the stairs. 95

KEN: *Down!* Down the stairs.

CHRIS: *Down* the stairs. But he's all right.

KEN: He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

CHRIS: He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

KEN: *You!* 100

CHRIS: *You!* He'll call *you* in the morning.

KEN: You're *terribly* sorry you disturbed him.

CHRIS: I'm *terribly* sorry I disturbed you.

KEN: But he's really fine.

CHRIS: But he's really fine. 105

KEN: Thank you and goodbye.

CHRIS:	[to KEN] Where are you going?	
KEN:	<i>Him! Him!</i> Thank <i>him</i> and say goodbye.	
CHRIS:	Oh. [<i>Into the phone</i>] Thank you and goodbye, Doctor.	
	KEN <i>starts upstairs</i>	110
	What? ... Hold on. [to KEN] Any dizziness?	
KEN:	[<i>stopping</i>] No. No dizziness. [<i>He starts up again</i>]	
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] No. No dizziness... What? [To KEN] Can he move his limbs?	
KEN:	[<i>irritated</i>] Yes! He can move everything. Get off the phone.	115
CHRIS:	[<i>shouting at KEN</i>] They got him out of <i>Miss Saigon</i> ... Probably waited a year for the tickets. [<i>Into the phone</i>] Yes, he can move everything... What? [To Ken] Any slurring of the speech?	
KEN:	<i>No! No slurring of the speech!</i>	120
CHRIS:	Don't shout at me. He'll hear it. [<i>Then she notices she hasn't covered the phone with her hand</i>] Oh. [<i>Into the phone</i>] No. No slurring of the speech.	
KEN:	I've got to get back to Charley. [<i>He starts up the stairs again</i>]	
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Any what? [To KEN] Any ringing of the ears?	125
KEN:	I can't believe this... No. Tell him no.	
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Yes. A little ringing in the ears.	
KEN:	I told you to say "No".	
CHRIS:	It sounds more plausible to have ringing [<i>into the phone</i>] Who? ... His wife? Vivian? ... Yes, Vivian's here.	130
KEN:	[<i>rushing down</i>] She's <i>not</i> here. Don't tell him she's here. He'll want to speak to her.	
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Dr Didley? <i>Dudley?</i> My mistake. She's not here. I thought she was but she's not. Here, I mean.	
KEN:	She just stepped out. She'll be back shortly.	135
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] She just stepped back. She'll be out shortly... Yes, I'll tell her to call.	
	KEN <i>starts back up</i>	
	Thank you so much, Dr Dudley. Hope you enjoy the play. Ken and I saw it. We loved it. Adored the big production number in the second act.	140
KEN:	Are you going to review the entire damn show?	
	KEN <i>goes back into Charley's room</i>	
CHRIS:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Oh, Charley's calling me. [<i>Calling out</i>] Yes, dear, I'm coming. [<i>Into the phone</i>] He sounds so much better. And thank you for everything, Dr Pudley. <i>Dudley</i> ... Goodbye... Bye bye. Goodbye. [<i>She hangs up, turns and shouts upstairs</i>] Don't you <i>ever</i> do that to me again... He must suspect <i>something</i> . I didn't get his name right once.	145
	KEN <i>comes out of the bedroom</i>	150
KEN:	If anyone calls again, don't answer it. [<i>He starts back in</i>]	
CHRIS:	Then why did you tell me to answer <i>that</i> one?	
KEN:	Because I thought the bullet went through his head, not his ear lobe. I left Charley standing in the shower.	
CHRIS:	If he drowns, <i>you're</i> calling Dr Dudley.	155
	KEN <i>goes back into the bedroom</i>	
	Don't know why we're always the first ones to arrive. Rush rush rush and then have to deal with this mess. [<i>She crosses to the cigarette box. She takes one out</i>]	
	<i>The doorbell rings.</i>	160
	KEN <i>comes out of the upstairs door</i>	
KEN:	Who's at the door?	

- CHRIS: Have I opened it? Do you see people in here? Do you think I get around on roller skates?
- KEN: Let me think a minute. 165
- CHRIS: Take your time because I don't open doors. I only speak to Dr Dudley.
- KEN: All right, it's got to be Leonard or Ernest, one of the others. We've got to open the door.
- CHRIS: You've got arms, reach down. 170
- KEN: I've got to dry Charley off and bandage his ear. Don't tell them what's happened. Stall them any way you can.
- CHRIS: Don't—you—move...! Charley's best friends are coming to his tenth wedding anniversary, his wife isn't here, he shoots himself in the earlobe and when the guests arrive, you want me to involve them in chit-chat...? I'm lucky I can still speak English. 175
- KEN: Charley Brooks is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance. A shooting on his part could make a pretty ugly scandal. He is a personal client of mine and he's my best friend. I've got to protect him, haven't I? Just play the hostess for a few minutes until I figure out how to deal with this. 180
The doorbell rings again
- CHRIS: You play the hostess, I'll bandage his ear.
- KEN: You're a barrister yourself. Can't you figure out something to say? 185
- CHRIS: Contracts! I draw up legal publishing contracts. If someone comes in and wants to make a deal on a new book, *I can handle that!*
- KEN: Calm yourself. Hold steady. I'll be right back. 190
The doorbell rings again
- CHRIS: Put some slippers on Charley and tell *him* to answer it.
- KEN: Will you just relax.
The doorbell rings impatiently
KEN *runs into the bedroom and closes the door* 195
CHRIS *crosses to the front door and opens it*
CLAIRE CUMMINGS *comes in. She is about CHRIS's age, wearing a chic evening dress. She holds a handkerchief to the side of her mouth, her bag in the other hand. She is more angry than in pain* 200
- CHRIS: Claire, darling, you look stunning. Where's Leonard?
- CLAIRE: In the car. We had an accident. A brand new BMW, two days old, the side door is smashed in. Don't tell Charley and Viv, I don't want to ruin tonight for them. [*She crosses to the mirror on the wall and examines her injury*] 205
- CHRIS: How awful for you.
- CLAIRE: My lip has puffed up like a plum pudding... Oh, it hurts to say that.
- CHRIS: Where's Leonard?
- CLAIRE: He's coming. He's walking slowly. He's got whiplash. His seat belt went round his neck and pulled him straight up. I left him dangling. 210
- CHRIS: I'm so sorry, Claire. Poor Leonard.
LEONARD CUMMINGS *comes to the front door. He is in formal attire. One hand holds the back of his neck, the other holds a gift box from Asprey's. We hear him speak before he enters* 215
- LEN: [*off; trying to be cheerful*] Charley! Viv! We're here! Sorry to

	be late. [<i>He comes in. He walks in pain</i>]	
CHRIS:	They're upstairs, Len.	220
LEN:	[<i>to CHRIS</i>] Did Claire tell you what happened? Some twit shoots out of his garage like a Polaris rocket. I've got four doors on one side of the car now.	
CHRIS:	How does your neck feel?	
LEN:	Stretched out, over to one side. I must look like a Modigliani painting.	225
CHRIS:	Do you want a drink?	
LEN:	I don't think I could swallow past my shoulders.	
CLAIRE:	Of all nights to happen.	
LEN:	[<i>holding up the box</i>] Here's their gift. A crystal vase from Asprey's [<i>He shakes the box—the broken glass rattles</i>] If someone brings them a pot of glue, they'll have a lovely gift. [<i>He sits and starts to dial the phone</i>]	230
CLAIRE:	[<i>looking in the mirror again</i>] I could have lost the tip of my tongue.	235
LEN:	[<i>waiting for his call</i>] A brand new spotless car, untouched by human hands. Buffed and polished in Munich and now it looks like a war memorial. [<i>Into the phone</i>] Hallo? This is Leonard Cummings. Is Dr Dudley there, please?	
CHRIS:	Dr Dudley?	240
LEN:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Yes, it is. I have a whiplash injury... I see... Do you know what theatre he's in?	
CHRIS:	Oh I need a cigarette so badly.	
LEN:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Could you? It's important. I'm at— [<i>he looks at the phone</i>] 01295-77482. ...Thank you very much. [<i>He hangs up</i>]	245
CLAIRE:	I've got to settle my stomach. Is there anything to eat?	
CHRIS:	[<i>looking around</i>] Well, actually, no. I haven't seen a thing.	
CLAIRE:	Nothing? No canapés? Where's the cook, Mai Lee? She's a whiz at canapés.	250
CHRIS:	Mai Lee? I didn't see her. I think she's off this week.	
CLAIRE:	The week of their anniversary party?	
CHRIS:	I think she had to go back to Japan. Her mother was ill.	
CLAIRE:	Mai Lee is Chinese.	
CHRIS:	I know. Her mother was visiting Japan.	255
LEN:	[<i>still holding his neck, as he walks</i>] I can only look up. I hope tall people are coming to this party... Where's Ken?	
CHRIS:	Ken? He went to the bathroom.	
LEN:	And where's Charley and Vivian?	
CHRIS:	They're still getting dressed.	260
LEN:	They're not ready? We had a car accident and we're on time.	
CLAIRE:	[<i>looking in her hand mirror</i>] My lip is getting gigantic. I don't think I have enough lipstick to cover it.	
LEN:	Nothing to munch on? I missed lunch today. I had twelve damn tax returns to file this week. [<i>To CLAIRE</i>] Claire, find me something to nibble on, would you, please? [<i>He starts for the stairs</i>]	265
CHRIS:	Where are you going?	
LEN:	To the loo. I haven't had a chance to do that either.	
CHRIS:	There's a guest bathroom down here.	270
LEN:	Isn't Ken using that?	
CHRIS:	No, he's using the one in the guest bedroom upstairs.	
LEN:	[<i>pointing to the bathroom</i>] Why didn't he use this one?	
CHRIS:	I don't know. He said he had to go badly and he ran upstairs.	

LEN:	If he had to go so badly, the one down here is closer.	275
CHRIS:	You know how it is when you have to go badly. You don't want to stop running.	
LEN:	But this is a shorter run.	
CLAIRE:	Leonard, it's not an Olympic event. Why don't you just go?	
LEN:	That's why they build guest bathrooms. [<i>He starts for the bathroom</i>] If Dr Dudley calls, I'll be right out.	280
	LEN <i>goes in, closes the door</i>	
CHRIS:	[<i>turning quickly to CLAIRE</i>] Claire, we must talk.	
CLAIRE:	What is it?	
CHRIS:	I'm coming apart at the seams.	285
CLAIRE:	Your dress?	
CHRIS:	No. My nerves. I feel I'm about to crack.	
CLAIRE:	I can see. [<i>She takes CHRIS's hand</i>] Your hands are like ice. Something odd is going on here, isn't it?	
CHRIS:	Oh, God, you're so smart. So quick to see things.	290
CLAIRE:	You're frightening me, Chris. Tell me what's happening.	
CHRIS:	Well... Ken and I arrived here about ten minutes ago, when suddenly we heard this enormous—	
	<i>The upstairs door opens. KEN pops out</i>	
KEN:	Claire, darling. You look lovely.	295
CHRIS:	Yes, I was just telling her that. She looks <i>enormously</i> well, doesn't she? [<i>To CLAIRE</i>] Isn't that the dress you wore for the Cerebral Palsy charity dinner?	
CLAIRE:	No, I got this for Leukaemia... Hallo, Ken.	
KEN:	Where's Leonard?	300
CLAIRE:	He's in the loo. Where's Charley and Viv?	
CHRIS:	[<i>to KEN</i>] Still getting dressed?	
KEN:	Yes. Still getting dressed... How's the new BMW? Is Leonard happy with it?	
CLAIRE:	Delirious.	305
KEN:	Did he get the new features he asked for?	
CLAIRE:	<i>More</i> than he asked for.	
KEN:	Splendid.	
CLAIRE:	Are you through up there, Ken? I have to go myself. [<i>She starts for the stairs</i>]	310
KEN:	I think Vivian's in there.	
CLAIRE:	Then I'll use Mai Lee's bathroom. Call me if she gets back from Japan.	
	CLAIRE <i>goes through the dining-room doors</i>	
KEN:	[<i>waving his arms at CHRIS</i>] Up here! Quickly! CHRIS <i>rushes up the stairs</i>	315
	Hurry! Hurry!	
	<i>Breathlessly, she gets there</i>	
CHRIS:	What did you tell them about Charley and Viv?	320
	I can't remember. I was talking so fast, I didn't listen. Why can't we tell them the truth? They're going to find out sooner or later.	
KEN:	I don't <i>know</i> the truth yet. Charley is still mumbling to himself. Now go inside. He wants to see you.	
CHRIS:	See me? Why does he want to see <i>me</i> ?	325
KEN:	He's crying like a baby. I can't stop him. He needs a woman.	
CHRIS:	To do what?	
KEN:	To cry on. I can reason with him but I can't comfort him. Let him cry on your shoulder for two minutes, would you, please?	330

- CHRIS: [opening the door] Is he still bleeding? I paid nine hundred pounds for this dress.
CHRIS goes in
At that moment, LEN comes out of the bathroom
- KEN: [looking down] Leonard! Hallo there. 335
LEN: [looking up, wincing] Oh, hallo, Ken. Did you hear about my BMW?
KEN: Yes. Congratulations. Excuse me. [He turns to go]
LEN: Where are you going?
KEN: To the loo. 340
LEN: Didn't you just go?
KEN: [pausing] Yes. but not enough. Be right with you.
KEN goes back into the room
At that moment CLAIRE comes out of the dining-room, with pretzels in an unopened clear plastic bag 345
- CLAIRE: This is very bizarre.
LEN: Give me that. I'm starved. [He grabs the bag, tries to open it]
CLAIRE: There's plenty of food in the kitchen but nothing's cooked.
LEN: Why didn't you open this first? [He struggles with the bag, tries biting it open] 350
CLAIRE: There's a goose, roast ham, smoked turkey, all defrosting on the table. There's pasta sitting in a pot with no water.
LEN: [struggling with the bag] This would be a safe place to keep your jewellery.
CLAIRE: Everything's ready to go but there's not a soul around to cook it. Chris started to tell me something and then she clammed up. 355
LEN: The door on my BMW opened like tissue paper but this thing is like steel. [He bites one more time then throws it on the table in disgust] Damn it!
CLAIRE: And why are they taking so long to get dressed? What is that about, I ask you?
LEN: What are you getting at?
CLAIRE: The rumours.
LEN: What rumours? 365
CLAIRE: Don't pretend you haven't heard rumours.
LEN: Yes, I've heard rumours. I've heard gossip. I've heard talk. But I refuse to listen to malicious, idle remarks. He is my friend, she is the wife of my friend.
CLAIRE: Very well. Then let's drop it. 370
LEN: Don't you agree with me?
CLAIRE: Completely. I won't be party to it either.
LEN: [after a pause] All right. I'll tell you what I've heard. Come here. [He crosses downstage, away from the stairs]
CLAIRE: What's wrong with here? 375
LEN: They could hear us there. They could all come out of the loos at the same time. Will you come here?
She crosses down to him
There's talk about Charley and Vivian. Naturally no-one will tell it to my face. They know he's my closest friend and that I'm his personal tax consultant. We've been chums since we were schoolboys. 380
- CLAIRE: Skip the biographical information, get to the point.
LEN: Very well. Your friend Vivian upstairs is having herself a thing, all right? 385
CLAIRE: What kind of thing?

LEN: Do I have to spell it out? A thing. A man. An affair. Is that clear enough?

CLAIRE: You don't know that. You've only heard it. You haven't seen it.

LEN: Of course I haven't seen it. What's wrong with you? 390

CLAIRE: You are so naïve, Leonard. Open your eyes. Vivian's not having anything with anyone. Your friend, Charley, however...

LEN: Charley? My friend, Charley? Not a chance. He wouldn't even look at another woman. Where did you hear this?

CLAIRE: Someone at the tennis club told me. 395

LEN: *Our* tennis club?

CLAIRE: People gossip there.

LEN: Bunch of hypocrites. Sit around there in their brand new Nikes and Reeboks and destroy people's lives... Who told you this? 400

CLAIRE: I'm not going to tell you because you dislike this person intensely.

LEN: What difference does it make whether I like them or not? Who told you?

CLAIRE: Carole Cochran. 405

LEN: *Carole Cochran?* I *knew* it! I *knew* it! I *hate* that damn woman. She has a mouth big enough to swallow a can of tennis balls.

The upstairs door opens and KEN steps out to the railing

KEN: [*affably*] How are you two doing? 410

LEN: Just fine, Ken.

KEN: Had anything to eat yet?

LEN: Just a plastic bag.

KEN: Fine. Be right back.

KEN goes in, closes the door 415

LEN grabs CLAIRE and pulls her farther away from the stairs

LEN: Wasn't it Carole Cochran who spread the other rumour?

CLAIRE: What other rumour?

LEN: The rumour that you and I were breaking up.

CLAIRE: No. It wasn't Carole Cochran. 420

LEN: It wasn't? Then who was it?

CLAIRE: It was me.

LEN: *You* started the rumour?

CLAIRE: Me, you, the both of us. When we were thinking about separating, didn't we go around telling everyone? 425

LEN: We told friends. That woman told strangers.

CLAIRE: Wrong. Carole Cochran didn't start the rumour about Charley. Someone else at the club told her.

LEN: Who?

CLAIRE: You don't know him. 430

LEN: Tell me anyway.

CLAIRE: Harold Greene.

LEN: I don't know him. Who on earth is Harold Greene?

CLAIRE: He's a new member. He was just voted in last week.

LEN: I never voted for him. 435

CLAIRE: Yes, you did. By proxy. We were in Malta.

LEN: I don't believe it. An unknown proxy new member spreads rumours about my best friend? Who does he play tennis with?

CLAIRE: He doesn't play tennis. He's a social member. He just eats lunches there. 440

LEN: No tennis? This unknown non-tennis playing proxy social

new member just eats lunches and spreads rumours...?
 What does he do for a living?

CLAIRE: He sells BMWs. 445
The upstairs door opens and KEN comes out

KEN: Did anyone else arrive?

CLAIRE: Not to speak of, no.

LEN: Is anything wrong?

KEN: [*coming down*] Why? Does anything seem wrong to you? 450

LEN: You mean aside from the fact there's no food, no guests, no host, no hostess, and that you and Chris only appear one at a time and never together, yes, I'd say something was wrong.

KEN: I see... Well, I can't keep this quiet any more. I think we'd better talk... Please sit down. 455
They all sit
 [*Pausing*] I'm afraid we have a rather large problem on our hands.

LEN: Aha! What did I just say, Claire?

CLAIRE: You just said "Aha". 460

LEN: [*glaring at her*] What is it, Ken? Tell us.

KEN: Charley... Charley, er... Charley's been shot.

CLAIRE: *What?*

LEN: *Shot?*

CLAIRE: Oh, my God! 465

LEN: *Shot?*

CLAIRE: Don't tell me this.

LEN: I can't catch my breath.
CLAIRE and LEN wail, their heads down

CLAIRE: } [*together*] { Please don't let it be true. 470
 LEN: } { Charley, Charley, no. No, Charley, no.
 KEN: } [*shouting*] Calm down, will you? He's not dead. He's all right.
They stop wailing

CLAIRE: He's not dead?

LEN: He's all right? 475

KEN: He's alive. He's fine.

LEN: Thank goodness he's alive.

CLAIRE: Where was he shot?

KEN: In the head.

CLAIRE: In the *head*? The *head*? My God, he was shot in the head. 480

KEN: It's all right. It's not bad. It's a superficial wound.

LEN: Where did the bullet go?

KEN: Through his left ear lobe.

CLAIRE: The ear lobe? That's not too bad. I have holes in my ear lobes, it doesn't hurt. 485

LEN: I saw this coming, I swear. The truth, Ken, did *she* do it?

KEN: Who?

LEN: Vivian, of course. Who else would it be?

KEN: Why would Vivian shoot Charley?

CLAIRE: You don't know what's going on? 490

LEN: You haven't heard?

KEN: No. What's going on?

CLAIRE: Charley's been having an affair with someone.

KEN: Who told you this?

LEN: Some awful woman at the club named Carole Cochran. 495

CLAIRE: She is *not* an awful woman. And she only told me what Harold Greene told her.

KEN: Who's Harold Greene?

LEN: [quickly] Some non-tennis playing proxy social new member who just eats lunches and spreads rumours. 500

CLAIRE: That's still not reason enough for Vivian to shoot Charley in the head.

KEN: Listen to me, will you, please? Vivian didn't shoot him. Charley fired the gun. He tried to kill himself.

CLAIRE: Oh no! 505

LEN: Don't tell me.

CLAIRE and LEN wail again, heads down

CLAIRE: } [together] { I don't believe it. Not Charley.

LEN: } { No, Charley, no. Charley, Charley, no.

KEN: [shouting] Will you stop it? It's enough grieving. He's all right. 510

They stop wailing

CLAIRE: Poor Charley.

LEN: It's all because of that no-good Harold Greene. He's out of the club. I can get the votes.

KEN: Can we stick to the main topic here? No-one knows if anyone had an affair. I don't know why Charley shot himself. 515

LEN: How is Vivian taking this? She must be devastated.

CLAIRE: [rising] I should go up to her. I must see her at once.

KEN: Don't go up to her. There's no point in going up to her. She's not here. She's gone. 520

CLAIRE: Gone? Charley shoots himself in the head and Vivian leaves the house?

LEN: She walks out on him now? Now when he's lying up there with a bullet in his ear?

KEN: It's not in his ear. It went through his ear. Will you listen to me, please? Perhaps she wasn't even here when it happened. Chris and I were driving up when we heard the shot. The front door was locked. I ran round the back and broke in the kitchen window. 525

CLAIRE: I saw that. I thought perhaps Mai Lee did it and that Vivian sacked her. But I didn't know then that Mai Lee's mother was in Japan. 530

LEN: [looking at CLAIRE] Don't speak for a while. Let Ken and I talk. You just listen. [To KEN] Now then, you broke in and rushed upstairs. Was he on the floor? 535

KEN: No. He was in bed. The television was on. A bottle of sleeping pills was on the night table. He was half-conscious. I thought perhaps he took a pill or two to make himself drowsy, started to fall asleep and accidentally shot himself through the ear.

CLAIRE: Is that blood on your shirt, Ken? 540

KEN: [looking down] Where?

CLAIRE: Below the second stud.

KEN: Damn! Must have rubbed off as I turned him. That won't come out, will it?

LEN: Is that what's worrying you? A stain on your dress shirt? 545

KEN: I don't give a damn about my shirt. I'm trying to protect Charley from a scandal. When the others arrive, I don't want to explain to them how I got blood on my good silk shirt.

CLAIRE: You could borrow one of Charley's.

KEN: He's two sizes too large for me. 550

CLAIRE: I don't think they'd notice your cuffs if Charley has a large bandage on his ear and Vivian's not even at the party.

LEN: [to CLAIRE] Let him finish the story, will you, please? [to KEN] Did he tell you anything? Did he say what

happened? 555

KEN: Not a word. He was barely conscious.

LEN: Did he leave a note or anything?

KEN: He had a sheet of paper in his hand. I tried to take it from him, but he tore it up and threw it into the bowl and flushed before I could get to it. 560

CLAIRE: Did you call the police?

KEN: No. Just his doctor. We told him he fell down the stairway. As long as he wasn't hurt, I didn't want to make this thing public.

LEN: But we *must* call the police. This is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance. It would make the front page of every rag and tabloid in this country. 565

KEN: Exactly. That's what I'm trying to avoid until we find out what happened.

LEN: If we keep this quiet, we're all involved. I'd be the first one they questioned. 570

KEN: Why you?

LEN: I'm responsible for his personal portfolio. People might start inquiring how a civil servant could afford a large house like this, not to mention a lavish flat in Mayfair.

KEN: That's no secret. Vivian's a wealthy woman. It's all her property. 575

CLAIRE: It is? I didn't know that.

LEN: [to KEN] You see? In the morning Carole Cochran will know of it and tomorrow the world.

Car lights flash on the window 580

CLAIRE: I hear a car pulling up. [*She crosses to the window*]

KEN: [to LEN] Is it Charley you're worried about or your reputation as a tax consultant? Whose books are you afraid the authorities might want to see, yours or Charley's?

LEN: Are you accusing me of conspiracy to defraud the tax people? 585

CLAIRE: [*at the window*] It's pulling up the driveway.

LEN: Suppose the neighbours heard the gunshot and have already called the police?

KEN: I'll deal with that problem when it arises. 590

LEN: Maybe that car *is* the police. Maybe the problem has *arose*?

CLAIRE: [*at the window*] It's a Volvo estate.

LEN: A Volvo?

KEN: [to LEN] Now I suppose you're worried it's the *Swedish* police. 595

CLAIRE: It's Ernest and Cookie.

LEN: Ernest and Cookie?

The upstairs door opens, CHRIS steps out

CHRIS: [*calmly*] Ken, may I speak to you a moment, dear? 600

KEN: What is it?

CHRIS: Vivian and I are having trouble with her zipper.

KEN: No, you're not.

CHRIS: I'm not?

KEN: They know about it.

CHRIS: About Vivian's zipper? 605

LEN: We know that Vivian's not here. Ken told us.

CHRIS: Oh.

CLAIRE: [*at the window*] They're stopping to look at our BMW.

CHRIS: [to KEN] Did you tell them about Charley cutting his ear shaving? 610

KEN: They know *everything*. The gunshot, the ear lobe, the blood, the flushed note, everything.

CHRIS: [*coming downstairs, angrily*] Why didn't you tell me you told them. I feel like an idiot.

LEN: How is Charley? 615

CHRIS: He fell asleep. He's hugging his pillow with his thumb in his mouth.

CLAIRE: They're coming in. I can't believe she's wearing a dress like that to a party like this.

KEN: All right, what do we do? Do we tell them or not? 620

CLAIRE: Why not? Ernest is Charley's analyst. Everything you tell your analyst remains confidential.

LEN: What his *patients* tell him. We're not his patients. His patient is asleep sucking his thumb.

CHRIS: I can't believe I'm paying a baby sitter for this night. 625
The doorbell rings

KEN: Well? Do we tell them or not?

CHRIS: Let's not. Cookie has her cooking show on television. Suppose she accidentally says something on the air?

LEN: On a cooking show? What's wrong with you? 630

KEN: I still think we say nothing till I find out what's happened. Better safe than sorry. Claire, open the door.

LEN: Chris, get some drinks. Let's pretend we're having fun.
CHRIS rushes to get the drinks

CLAIRE: [*to LEN*] Say it again. We're telling Ernest but we're not telling Cookie? 635

LEN: *We're not telling either one of them! I'm sorry we told you!!*
Just open the door.
CLAIRE crosses to the door as CHRIS sits on the sofa and hands LEN a drink. She has one as well and takes a long sip. 640

KEN: [*dashing up the stairs*] Claire, don't open it till I get up the stairs. If Charley wakes up, perhaps I can get the story from him.

CHRIS: [*to KEN*] I took the sleeping pills away from him. I hid them in the medicine cabinet. 645

KEN: Really? What a good hiding place.
KEN goes into CHARLEY's room
CLAIRE starts for the front door. LEN and CHRIS quickly start to chat and laugh 650

LEN: [*to CHRIS*] And Mrs Thatcher replies, "I don't know. Perhaps it's in my umbrella stand".
He and CHRIS laugh uproariously

CLAIRE: [*to LEN*] Shall I open it or do you want to start that story from the beginning? 655

LEN: *There is no beginning!* Just open the door.
CLAIRE opens the door. CHRIS and LEN break into laughter again
ERNEST and COOKIE enter. ERNEST, in his formal attire, is about fifty and carries a gift box. COOKIE is in her mid-forties and wears an ugly evening gown. She carries a small cushion for her ever troublesome back 660

CLAIRE: Cookie! Ernest! It's so good to see you. [*She hugs them both*]

CHRIS: Oh, Leonard, that is absolutely riotous. You should have been an actor. 665

CLAIRE: Everyone, it's Ernest and Cookie.
LEN: [*still laughing*] Cookie, darling. Ernest, old boy.
ERNEST: Hallo, Chris. Good to see you, Leonard.
CHRIS: [*to LEN*] Please finish the story. What did Mr Gorbachev say? 670
LEN: Mr Gorbachev? He said, [*with a Russian accent*] "I don't know, I never ate cat food before".
He and CHRIS laugh again
ERNEST: Sorry we're late. Did we miss much? 675
CHRIS: [*getting up*] Oh, you simply *must* get Lenny to tell you the story about Mrs Thatcher and the cat food.
LEN *shoots CHRIS a dirty look*
ERNEST: [*laughing*] It sounds funny already. Heh heh heh.
COOKIE: Everyone looks so beautiful. 680
CLAIRE: Cookie, I am *mad* about your dress. You always *dig* up the most original things. Where *do* you find them?
COOKIE: Oh, dear, this is sixty years old. It was my grandmother's. She brought it from Russia.
CLAIRE: Didn't you wear that for Muscular Dystrophy in June? 685
COOKIE: No, Emphysema in August. [*She crosses to the table where the pretzel bag is*]
CLAIRE: [*looking at her cushion*] What a lovely cushion. Is that for Charley and Viv?
COOKIE: No, it's for my back. It went out again while I was dressing. 690
[*She picks up the pretzel bag and opens it with one swift correct pull*]
LEN *looks at it as if she just performed a miracle*
ERNEST: Are you all right, pet?
COOKIE: [*biting a pretzel*] I'm fine, pussy. 695
CHRIS: You and your back problems. It must be awful.
COOKIE: It's nothing. I can do everything but sit down and get up.
ERNEST: By the way, Leonard, is that your BMW? [*He laughs*] Looks like you put quite a few miles on in two days.
LEN: [*scowling at him*] Had an accident. Some lunatic blind sided me. I've got a definite whiplash injury. 700
COOKIE: Oh, my best friend had whiplash. it lasted six years. [*She picks up the Asprey gift box*] She still can't turn her head to the left.
LEN *doesn't look pleased* 705
Oh this looks lovely. Who brought this? [*As she looks at the label she misses her step, trips, and the box falls to the floor*]
Oh, my goodness. Did I break anything? [*She shakes the box. We hear shattered glass*] What was it?
LEN: A crystal vase from Asprey's. 710
COOKIE: Oh, dear, don't tell me. Leonard! Claire! I'm *so* sorry.
ERNEST: It was an accident, dear. [*To LEN*] We'll replace it, of course.
LEN: [*graciously*] Certainly. If you want. I don't mind. [*He looks at CLAIRE and CHRIS*]
They look away 715
CHRIS: What about a drink, everyone?
ERNEST: I'll have something.
CHRIS: What would you like?
CLAIRE: I'll get it.
LEN: No, let me. 720
ERNEST: You're all getting me a drink? Such friendly people.
COOKIE: I should have let what's-her-name pick it up.

CHRIS:	Mai Lee... Here you go, Ernest. [<i>She gives him a drink</i>]	
COOKIE:	Where's Ken?	
CLAIRE:	Ken? Ken's with Charley.	725
COOKIE:	And Vivian?	
CLAIRE:	Vivian's with Ken. They're waiting for Viv to get dressed.	
COOKIE:	[<i>screaming in pain</i>] Aaaaaaaghh! Aaaaaaghh!	
CLAIRE:	What is it?	
COOKIE:	[<i>calmly</i>] A spasm. It's gone. It's fine. It just shoots up the back. [<i>She seems unconcerned</i>]	730
ERNEST:	You all right, duck?	
COOKIE:	I'm fine, lamby.	
LEN:	Listen, why don't we all sit outside? It's such a lovely evening. Out on the terrace.	735
ERNEST:	Hallo hallo hallo. What is this? Three people want to get me drinks. Chris wants me to hear this funny story. Len wants us all to go outside. Everyone creating a diversion. Why, I don't know. Am I right?	
CHRIS:	No wonder you're such a keen doctor. Very well. Someone is going to have to tell them.	740
LEN:	Tell them what?	
CHRIS:	About the surprise.	
LEN:	What surprise?	
CHRIS:	The surprise about the party.	745
COOKIE:	What surprise about the party?	
CHRIS:	Well, I think it's the sweetest thing... Isn't it, Claire?	
CLAIRE:	[<i>startled</i>] Oh God. Yes!	
CHRIS:	Tell them about it.	
CLAIRE:	No, you tell it better than I do.	750
COOKIE:	I'm sorry. I think I'm going to have to sit down.	
CHRIS:	[<i>quickly</i>] I'll help you.	
LEN:	I'll do it.	
CLAIRE:	I've got her. <i>They all ease COOKIE on to the sofa, putting the cushion behind her back</i>	755
ERNEST:	You all right, poodle?	
COOKIE:	I'm fine, pigeon... Now then, what's the big surprise about?	
CHRIS:	Well... Charley and Vivian decided ... because they're having their closest friends over to celebrate their tenth anniversary ... they weren't going to have any—servants.	760
COOKIE:	[<i>nodding</i>] Uh uh.	
CHRIS:	No Mai Lee, no anyone.	
COOKIE:	Uh uh.	
CHRIS:	Isn't that splendid? No help. Just us.	765
COOKIE:	What's splendid about that?	
CHRIS:	Because! We're all going to pitch in. Like in the old days. Before money. Before success. When we were all just starting out. Those were the best times in our lives, don't you think?	770
COOKIE:	No. I hated those times, I love success.	
CLAIRE:	But don't you find these are greedier times? Lazier? More selfish? No-one seems to want to work any more.	
COOKIE:	I work fourteen hours a day. I cook thirty-seven meals a week. I cook on my television show. I cook for my family. I cook for magazines. I cook for my dogs. I was really looking forward to a relaxed evening... But I don't want to spoil the fun. What do we have to do?	775

CLAIRE:	We have to cook.	
COOKIE:	You mean all of us? Cooking in the kitchen together?	780
CHRIS:	Everyone except Charley and Vivian. Claire and I told them to stay up there and relax. We'll call them when we're ready.	
COOKIE:	And what are we going to make?	
CLAIRE:	It's all laid out. Ham, smoked turkey, goose and pasta.	
ERNEST:	Ham? Goose? That's too much cholesterol for me.	785
LEN:	Ernest, we didn't come here to live longer. Just to have a good time.	
COOKIE:	I don't understand why we're all wearing our best clothes to cook a dinner.	
CLAIRE:	Those aren't your best clothes. It's a fifty-year-old Polish dress.	790
COOKIE:	A sixty-year-old Russian dress.	
ERNEST:	The dress is hardly an issue worth arguing about.	
COOKIE:	I didn't say I wouldn't cook in it.	
ERNEST:	She didn't say she wouldn't cook in it. Why is everyone getting so worked up about this?	795
CLAIRE:	All right, Ernest, let's not turn this into group therapy, please.	
ERNEST:	This is nothing like group therapy, Claire. You, of all people, should know that.	
LEN:	Oh, fine. Let's just name <i>all</i> the people in your Thursday night group, Ernest.	800
COOKIE:	Why are Ernie and I being attacked? We barely walked in the door.	
CHRIS:	Please lower your voices. We're going to spoil the surprise for Charley and Vivian.	805
ERNEST:	What surprise? It was their idea.	
COOKIE:	Please. I don't want to take the blame for ruining the party. It would be much simpler if I did the cooking myself and Ernest did all the serving.	
CLAIRE:	Oh, no. We couldn't ask you to do that.	810
CHRIS:	It's too much work.	
CLAIRE:	It isn't fair.	
LEN:	Yes, it is. If it makes them happy. They can clean up too.	
COOKIE:	Then it's all settled. [<i>She gets to her feet</i>] Just give me thirty-five minutes and I promise you this will be the very best dinner party we ever had.	815
	[<i>We hear a gunshot from CHARLEY's room</i>] COOKIE <i>screams and drops quickly back on the sofa as the others all freeze</i>	
CLAIRE:	Did someone knock at the door?	820
ERNEST:	What on earth was that? CHARLEY's door opens and KEN comes out, looking dazed but trying to stay calm	
KEN:	It's fine, it's nothing. All under control. Hallo, Ernest. Cookie...! Oh, Chris, darling, may I see you up here a moment?	825
	KEN goes back into CHARLEY's room, closing the door	
CHRIS:	[<i>politely</i>] Would you all excuse me a moment? [<i>She starts up the stairs</i>] I hate it when this happens. CHRIS goes into CHARLEY's room, practically squeezing through the door	830
ERNEST:	Am I crazy or was that a gunshot?	
LEN:	A gunshot? Nooo. I think it was a car backfiring.	
ERNEST:	In Charley's bedroom?	
COOKIE:	[<i>to ERNEST</i>] Sweetie, why don't you go up and see?	

LEN:	Why? Chris, Ken, Charley and Vivian are up there. There's more of them than us.	835
COOKIE:	You just can't ignore a gunshot.	
LEN:	No, no. I know exactly what it was. It was a balloon. They've been blowing up balloons up there all day for the party.	
ERNEST:	How big a balloon would you say? The Hindenberg?	840
LEN:	I'll go up. You and Cookie get dinner started. Charley and Viv must be starved after all that blowing. Someone get me something to drink. [<i>He rushes upstairs</i>] I'll be right down. Claire, tell them the Margaret Thatcher joke.	
	LEN <i>goes into the room</i>	845
	<i>The telephone rings</i>	
CLAIRE:	I'll get it. [<i>She rushes to the phone</i>]	
ERNEST:	I still think it sounded like a gunshot.	
COOKIE:	Let's get dinner started, Ern. Help me up.	
	<i>He starts to pull her up</i>	850
CLAIRE:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Hallo?... Who?... Dr Cusack?... Yes, he is. May I ask who's calling?	
ERNEST:	Is that for me?	
CLAIRE:	[<i>into the phone</i>] Ah. I see. [<i>To ERNEST</i>] It's a conference call. Mr and Mrs Clive, Mr and Mrs Platt and Lord and Lady Bagley.	855
ERNEST:	Oh, it's my Friday night group. I have a telephone session with them.	
COOKIE:	You go on, puppy. I can get up myself.	
	ERNEST <i>runs into the kitchen</i>	860
CLAIRE:	[<i>into the phone</i>] He's coming, ladies and gentlemen.	
	<i>The other line on the phone rings</i>	
	[<i>Switching buttons</i>] Hallo?... Yes, it is. No, my husband just called.	
	COOKIE <i>gets carefully down on her hands and knees and crawls slowly towards the kitchen</i>	865
	[<i>into the phone</i>] Yes, I'll tell him.	
	<i>The upstairs door opens and LEN comes out</i>	
LEN:	Who's on the phone?	
CLAIRE:	Dr Dudley's service.	870
	LEN <i>nods and comes down the stairs. As he does, he sees COOKIE and grabs the railing</i>	
LEN:	What's that?	
COOKIE:	It's all right. I do this all the time. It takes the pressure off my back. [<i>She crawls on slowly</i>]	875
LEN:	[<i>Coming down</i>] Where's Ernest?!	
CLAIRE:	[<i>pointing to the kitchen</i>] In there. He's having a session with his Friday night group.	
LEN:	They're all in the kitchen?	
CLAIRE:	No. On the telephone.	880
COOKIE:	[<i>on the floor</i>] Aaaagh! Aaaaagh!	
LEN:	Your back again?	
COOKIE:	No. Little shirt pins on the floor. [<i>She crawls on</i>] Oooh. Oooh. COOKIE <i>exits into the kitchen</i>	
LEN:	[<i>to CLAIRE</i>] She must be such fun to live with.	885
CLAIRE:	What happened upstairs? Is Charley all right?	
LEN;	He was sleeping. Ken wanted to hide the gun in the closet so Charley wouldn't find it. He tripped on the rug and the gun went off next to his head. He can't hear a thing in both ears.	
CLAIRE:	Ken or Charley?	890

- LEN: Ken. Charley was out cold from the sleeping pills. [*He reaches for the phone*]
- CLAIRE: They hung up. I already took the message.
- LEN: Couldn't you tell me that while I was still up on the landing? What did they say? 895
- CLAIRE: They said Dr Dudley already called this number. He doesn't want to be called out of the theatre again.
- LEN: [*angrily dialling*] I'm getting a new doctor. I'm not putting my life in the hands of the Harley Street drama critic. [*Into the phone*] Hallo? This is Leonard Cummings again. Dr Dudley did *not* call this number. Please have him ring me again. It's important. [*He hangs up*] 900
- CLAIRE: What did Ken want Chris upstairs for?
- LEN: To tell Ken's doctor to ask him what to do for his ears. Ken wouldn't be able to hear what the doctor prescribed on the phone. I've got to get back to my post. [*He starts back up the stairs*] 905
- CLAIRE: You mean she told the doctor a gun went off? Then she'll have to explain about Charley.
- LEN: No, she was going to say Ken was outside and a gas main exploded next to him. 910
- CLAIRE: That's a good idea.
- LEN: Except the doctor wasn't in. His service said he was at the theatre as well. Do you think there's some sort of epidemic on the West End? [*He runs upstairs*] 915
When he gets there, the phone rings
- CLAIRE: They purposely wait till I get up here. Answer that, will you? This is all too hard to follow. I need a bookmark in my head or something. [*She picks up the phone*] Hallo?... Oh, Dr Dudley, thank you for calling back. 920
LEN comes down the stairs
- LEN: [*to LEN*] Do you want to speak to him?
- CLAIRE: No, I'm taking a stress test. Of course. If Ernest can't figure out that something's wrong here, I'm not going to his group any more. 925
- LEN: [*picking up the phone*] Hallo? Dr Dudley. Good of you to call. ... Well, I was in an accident. Brand new BMW... I've got whiplash here. ...Charley? Charley Brooks? ... No, I wasn't calling about Charley. Why? [*He covers the phone. To CLAIRE*] Good God! Dr Dudley is Charley's doctor as well. 930
[Back into the phone] No. Charley seems quite better. He's resting now. [*Into the phone*] Chris Bevans? ...You know Chris and Ken?... Yes, I think she *did* call. [*He covers the phone. To CLAIRE*] He's Ken's doctor too.
- CLAIRE: I'm sure he treats Mai Lee's mother as well. 935
- LEN: [*into the phone*] Hallo? ... A cold compress? Splendid idea... Yes. Let me connect you to Chris. Hold on. [*He looks for the button to push*] Which button rings in Charley's room?
- CLAIRE: Why? Who's going to hear it up there?
- LEN: [*to CLAIRE*] I should have been a doctor. I could have been at the theatre tonight making a fortune. [*Back into the phone*] Dr Dudley? Can you hold on for Chris, please? Thank you. [*He presses the other button. Into the phone*] Chris? Dudley. Gladly. Righto. [*He hangs up. To CLAIRE*] I should have told him about Cookie's back and made a clean sweep of it. [*He starts up the stairs*] See where Ernest is with my drink, will 945

you?
 LEN *goes into CHARLEY's room*
At that moment, ERNEST comes out of the kitchen with LEN's drink. He is wearing an apron. 950

ERNEST: I thought I heard Len in here. I have his drink.
 CLAIRE: I'll hold it for him. How's Cookie?
 ERNEST: Not well. I gave her some aspirins for her back but she dropped them in the sauce.

CLAIRE: Good. Then we'll all get rid of our headaches. 955
 ERNEST: Did Leonard say what that sound was?
 CLAIRE: The gunshot?
 ERNEST: It *was* a gunshot?
 CLAIRE: No, I was referring to the sound you *thought* was a gunshot.
 ERNEST: It wasn't a balloon, I know that. 960
 CLAIRE: No. It was a can of shaving cream. It exploded.
 ERNEST: Shaving cream exploded? Incredible.
 COOKIE *comes out of the kitchen in an apron, holding a saucepan*

COOKIE: Ernest, I need you to put out some garbage. 965
 ERNEST: I'm not through talking to my group, dear.
 COOKIE: They're quarrelling with each other. I put them on hold.
 COOKIE *and ERNEST exit into the kitchen*
 CHARLEY's bedroom door opens and LEN comes out with KEN. KEN *holds a towel over his ears* 970

LEN: This should clear up any minute. These things don't last long.
 KEN: Do you think this will last long?
 LEN: [*opening the door to the guest bedroom*] Lie down in the guest room for a while, Ken. You'll feel better. 975
 KEN: Perhaps if I lie down in the guest room for a while.
 LEN: Good idea.
 KEN *goes into the guest bedroom*

CLAIRE: [*to LEN*] what did the doctor say to Chris?
 LEN: He referred her to another doctor. He's not feeling well himself now. My neck is killing me again. 980
 KEN *comes out of the room*
 Lie down, Ken. I'll reheat your towel.
 KEN *goes back into the bedroom with LEN*
 The kitchen door opens and COOKIE comes out 985

COOKIE: Would you be a dear, Claire, and help me? Ernest went out the kitchen door to put out some rubbish and the door locked. My hands are full of grease. Could you let him back in?

CLAIRE: Of course. We would all miss him terribly. 990
 CLAIRE *crosses into the kitchen*
 COOKIE *is about to follow when ERNEST comes in through the front door. He looks at COOKIE*

ERNEST: I purposely went around so you wouldn't have to go to the door. 995
 CHRIS *steps out of CHARLEY's room*

CHRIS: Oh! Where's Claire?
 COOKIE: She went out to the kitchen to let Ernest in.
 CHRIS: [*looking at ERNEST*] Oh... Very well.
 CHRIS *smiles, as if she understands, and goes back into CHARLEY's room* 1000
 CLAIRE *comes out of the kitchen*

- CLAIRE: [to ERNEST] Oh, there you are... Cookie, the water's boiling over on the pasta.
- COOKIE: Why didn't you turn it down? 1005
- CLAIRE: I don't know. I never watch your show.
- COOKIE: I'll do it. Ernest, get another bag of ice for my hip. I'm melting.
COOKIE *exits into the kitchen*
- ERNEST: [following her] I'm beginning to feel like one of my patients.
ERNEST *is gone as well* 1010
CHRIS *comes out of CHARLEY's door*
- CHRIS: [smiling innocently] Well, everything is just *fine*.
- CLAIRE: Relax. They're in the kitchen.
- CHRIS: [She comes downstairs, scratches under her arms] I'm getting hives under my arms. Did you hear about Ken? He's deaf. 1015
- CLAIRE: He's better off. He's out of this thing now.
- CHRIS: Why are we protecting Charley this way? Ken is deaf, Leonard has whiplash, Cookie has spinal damage and I'm getting a blood condition. For what? One more gunshot, the entire world will know anyway. 1020
- CLAIRE: The entire world isn't interested. Do you think Venezuela is going to hear about this?
We hear another car and see the headlights through the window 1025
LEN *comes out of the guest room, with KEN's towel*
- LEN: There's another car coming up. Was anyone else invited?
- CHRIS: Harry and Joan, but they cancelled.
- LEN: That's right. They're on vacation in Venezuela.
- CLAIRE: Well, maybe Venezuela *will* hear about it. 1030
- LEN: Then who's that coming up the driveway?
- CHRIS: Perhaps it's Vivian. Perhaps she's come back.
- LEN: Vivian drives a Jaguar. This car is an Audi.
We hear a loud crash from the kitchen
What is that? 1035
- CHRIS: Cookie probably didn't like the dishes.
- LEN: [waving the towel in his hand with each command from the landing] Chris, go inside and see what happened. Claire, go to the window and see who's coming. I'll go up and see how Ken and Charley are doing. [He rushes towards CHARLEY's door]
At that moment ERNEST enters from the kitchen
- ERNEST: [waving his two hands in pain] Damn, I burned my fingers. Hot hot hot, oh, God, it's hot.
- CHRIS: Oh, dear. 1045
- ERNEST: [flicking fingers] Damnations, it hurts.
- CLAIRE: What happened?
- ERNEST: [quickly, without stopping] Cookie dropped the ice bag and slipped against the stove. The hot platter was about to fall on her, so I grabbed it. Then I dropped it on the table and it broke the water jug and the glass shattered on her arm and she's bleeding like hell. I got a tea towel on her wrist and I propped her up against the fridge. But I need some bandages for her arm and some ointment for my fingers. I never saw anything happen so fast in my life. 1050
- LEN: I can't believe he's in pain and said all that without missing a word.
- CLAIRE: [to LEN] Get the bandages. Why are you standing there?

LEN: I was hoping there was more to the story.
 LEN *rushes off into CHARLEY's room, closing the door* 1060

ERNEST: I'm sorry, Claire. Did you ask for a drink?
 CLAIRE: Don't bother, dear. You have other things to think about.
 ERNEST: Yes, I do, don't I?
 ERNEST *exits quickly*
 CHRIS and CLAIRE *look at each other* 1065

CLAIRE: If this keeps up, we won't have enough room for the casualties.
A car door slams shut outside

CHRIS: There's the car. I don't even want to know who it is. Why don't you go and look? 1070

CLAIRE: I hardly think it's going to be good news. [*She crosses to the window and looks out*] It's Glenn and Cassie.

CHRIS: Glenn and Cassie Cooper? Together?
 CLAIRE: That's how they're walking.
 CHRIS: I heard they were having trouble. 1075

CLAIRE: Not walking. [*She comes away from the window*]
 CHRIS: Did you know that Glenn is standing for Parliament?
 CLAIRE: So?
 CHRIS: If word gets out that he's part of a hushed-up suicide attempt by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, he can say farewell to his career. 1080

CLAIRE: Perhaps Charley will explain everything before they ring the doorbell.
The doorbell rings

CHRIS: Well, it's going to be an uphill campaign. 1085
 I'm going to the bathroom. You get the door, I'll be right out. [*She starts for the bathroom*]

CLAIRE: Just a minute. I haven't gone since I arrived here.
 CHRIS: Yes, you did. In Mai Lee's room.
 CLAIRE: Yes, but no-one was at the door then. 1090
 CHRIS: Forget it. Someone else will get the door. Come on.
They both go into the bathroom and close the door
The doorbell rings again
 LEN *comes out of the guest room*

LEN: [*leaning over the rail*] Is anyone getting that...? Chris...? Claire...? Cookie...? Ernest...? I'll bet they've all gone to the cinema.
 LEN *goes back in*
 ERNEST *comes out of the kitchen. He has little paper napkins wrapped around most of his fingers, held on with rubber bands. He shouts up* 1100

ERNEST: Leonard? have you got my bandages?
The doorbell rings
 No-one getting that door...? Perhaps they've *all* gone deaf. [*He crosses to the front door and tries to open it with his burned fingers. It's a delicate job. He finally manages to get it open with his open palms*] 1105
 GLENN and CASSIE COOPER, a handsome couple, looking more elegant than the others, stand there. GLENN holds a gift. CASSIE seems very much on edge 1110
 [*Smiling*] Hallo.

GLENN: Good evening.
They walk in. ERNEST closes the door with his foot.

ERNEST: [*looking around*] No-one seems to be about.

CASSIE:	You mean we're the first?	1115
ERNEST:	No. They're all here. They're just—spread out a bit.	
GLENN:	May I have a drink, please?	
CASSIE:	[<i>without looking at ERNEST</i>] And me, please.	
ERNEST:	Certainly. No trouble. I don't believe we've met. I'm Ernest Cusack.	1120
GLENN:	Are you? Pleasure.	
ERNEST:	I'm afraid I can't shake your hand. Little accident in the kitchen.	
GLENN:	Oh?	
ERNEST:	I would stay and chat but my wife is bleeding in the kitchen.	1125
GLENN:	Your wife?	
ERNEST:	Cookie. A water jug broke, cut her arm. I burned my fingers.	
GLENN:	Pity.	
ERNEST:	Nothing to worry about. We'll have dinner ready soon. Nice meeting you both.	1130
	ERNEST <i>hurries into the kitchen</i>	
GLENN:	A bit friendly, wasn't he?	
CASSIE:	Do I look all right?	
	GLENN <i>glances at her, but looks at himself in the mirror, and fixes his tie</i>	1135
GLENN:	Yes. Fine.	
CASSIE:	I feel so "frumpy".	
GLENN:	[<i>still looking in the mirror, straightening his jacket</i>] Nonsense. You look beautiful.	
CASSIE:	Can you see me in that mirror?	1140
	<i>He turns, looks at her</i>	
	My hair isn't right, is it? I saw you looking at it in the car.	
GLENN:	Your hair? No, I don't think so.	
CASSIE:	What <i>were</i> you looking at then?	
GLENN:	The road, I suppose.	1145
CASSIE:	I can always tell when you hate what I'm wearing.	
GLENN:	I love that frock, dear. I always have.	
CASSIE:	This is the first time I've worn it.	
GLENN:	I always have admired your taste is what I meant.	
CASSIE:	It's so hard to please you, isn't it?	1150
GLENN:	What did I say?	
CASSIE:	It's what you <i>don't</i> say that really drives me insane.	
GLENN:	What I <i>don't</i> say? How can it drive you insane if I don't say it?	
CASSIE:	It's what you're thinking. It's the disapproving looks you give me.	1155
GLENN:	I was not giving you <i>any</i> sort of looks.	
CASSIE:	You look at me all the time.	
GLENN:	Because you're always asking me to look at you.	
CASSIE:	It would be nice if I didn't have to ask you, wouldn't it?	1160
GLENN:	It would be nice if you didn't need me to look which would make it unnecessary to ask.	
CASSIE:	I can't get any support from you. You've got all the time in the world for everything and everyone else but I can't even get your attention when I walk in a room.	1165
GLENN:	You mean tonight? We walked in together. It was already done... Can we please stop this, Cassie? We're forty-five minutes late as it is. I don't want to ruin this night for Charles and Viv.	
CASSIE:	We're forty-five minutes late because you scowled at every	1170

- dress I tried on.
- GLENN: I didn't scowl. I smiled. You always think my smile looks like a scowl. You think my grin looks like a frown and my frown looks like a yawn.
- CASSIE: Don't sneer at me. 1175
- GLENN: It was a peeve, not a sneer.
- CASSIE: Oh God, this conversation is so banal. We sound like some comedy couple on the telly.
- GLENN: Oh? Getting into insults now, are we?
- CASSIE: No, Mr Perfect. I don't want to risk a scowl, a frown, a yawn, a peeve or a sneer. Heaven forbid I would show a hint of human imperfection, I'd wake up in the morning with the divorce papers in my hand. 1180
- GLENN: What is this constant mention of divorce? I have no intention of divorcing you. And if I did, I wouldn't slip the papers in your hand while you were sleeping. 1185
- CASSIE: I don't know what it is you want from me, Glenn, I really don't.
- GLENN: I don't want *anything* from you. I would just like it to be the way we were before we got to be the way we are. 1190
- CASSIE: God, you suffocate me sometimes... I want to go home.
- GLENN: Go home? We just arrived. We haven't seen anyone yet except the butler.
- CASSIE: I don't know how I'm going to get through this night. They're *your* friends. How do you expect me to behave as if nothing has happened? 1195
- GLENN: Nothing *is* happening. What are you talking about?
- CASSIE: Don't you lie to me. The whole city knows about you and that cheap little...
- GLENN: Will you keep it down? Nothing is going on. You're blowing this up out of all proportions. I hardly know the woman. She's on the Conservative Party Fund-Raising Committee. I met her and her husband at two cocktail parties, for heaven's sake. 1200
- CASSIE: Two cocktail parties, eh? 1205
- GLENN: Yes.
- CASSIE: Do you think I'm stupid?
- GLENN: No.
- CASSIE: Do you think I'm blind?
- GLENN: No. 1210
- CASSIE: Do you think I'm a troublemaker?
There is a pause as he looks away
- GLENN: You are so hyper tonight, Cassie. So pent up. What's causing this bizarre behaviour?
She takes out a six inch long quartz crystal from her bag and begins to rub it slowly 1215
I knew it! Your quartz crystal. You've been rubbing it again, haven't you? Those crystals are dangerous.
She rubs it around her neck, face and arms
- CASSIE: Please put it away. Don't let my friends see what you're doing. 1220
- CASSIE: Fine. Don't let *my* friends see what *you're* doing.
The guest room door opens. LEN comes out
- LEN: Glenn! Cassie! I thought it was you. In good health, I hope.
- KEN: [*from the guest room*] I'm feeling much better, thanks. 1225
- LEN: [*turning; shouting*] Not you, Ken. It's Glenn and Cassie.

GLENN: We're splendid, thank you. Absolutely super.
 LEN: Did it suddenly freeze up out there?
 GLENN: Freeze up?
 LEN: [*pointing down*] Isn't that an icicle Cassie has there? 1230
 GLENN: Oh. No. It's a quartz crystal. Energizes the spirit, they say.
 CASSIE *puts it back in her bag*
 LEN: Ah. And where's Chris and Claire?
 KEN [*from the guest room*] Did someone come in?
 LEN: [*turning; shouting*] Glenn and Cassie! I told you! [*To GLENN*] 1235
 It's Ken. His ears are blocked up. Bad head cold... Who let you in?
 GLENN: The butler.
 LEN: [*surprised*] The *butler*? Is the butler here?
 GLENN: Yes. He's getting us drinks. 1240
 LEN: Is he alone?
 GLENN: No, the cook is with him.
 LEN: [*more amazed*] Mai Lee? God, what a relief. They came back. We were short-handed here for a while.
 GLENN: Really? Where's Charles and Viv? 1245
 LEN: Charles and Viv? In their room, I imagine.
 KEN: [*from the guest room*] My towel fell off, Leonard.
 LEN: I'll get you a towel! I've got to get the bandages first. [*To GLENN*] Excuse me, will you? I've got to get some bandages. [*He knocks on CHARLEY's door, his back to the audience*] Charley? Viv? May I come in? [*He does VIV's voice in a high falsetto*] Certainly, dear. Come in. 1250
 LEN *goes in and closes the door*
 The guest room door opens and KEN comes out
 KEN: [*looking around*] Leonard...? Leonard, where are you? 1255
 GLENN: [*looking up*] Ken? Down here. It's Glenn and Cassie.
 KEN: [*looking around*] Who's talking? Leonard? [*He looks down*] Ah. Glenn! Cassie! Leonard, look who's here.
 GLENN: We understand you have a cold.
 KEN: You think I look old? Haven't slept much... You look lovely, 1260
 Cassie. Do the others know you're here?
 GLENN: Yes. We just saw Leonard.
 KEN: Haven't seen Leonard, have you?
 GLENN: Yes. He went into Charley's room.
 KEN: I'm sorry. Can't hear a thing. A gas main blew up next to my 1265
 ear.
 GLENN: That's terrible.
 KEN: I said, "*A gas main blew up next to my ear*".
 GLENN: Yes. I hear you.
 KEN: Sorry. I can't hear you... Anyone getting you a drink? 1270
 GLENN: Yes. The butler.
 KEN: Sorry there's no help here. They're in the Orient somewhere.
 CASSIE: I think he's gone loco.
 KEN: Yes, some cocoa would be nice... I'm going to see if Leonard is in Charley's room. We'll all be down soon. [*He knocks on CHARLEY's door*] Vivian? Mind if I come in? [*He opens it a crack*] 1275
 LEN: [*off; in high falsetto*] Certainly, dear. Come in.
 KEN *goes in and closes the door*
 CASSIE: Charming party. I'll be right back. 1280
 GLENN: Where are you going?
 CASSIE: To rinse off my crystal. [*She starts for the bathroom*] I

- suppose you'd like to make a *quick* phone call while I'm gone, right? [*She turns to open the bathroom door but it's locked*] Is anyone in there? 1285
- CHRIS: [*off*] Who is it?
- CASSIE: Cassie. Who's that?
- CHRIS: [*off*] It's Chris. Just a minute, Cass.
We hear a flush
- CHRIS *comes out and closes the door.* 1290
- I didn't hear you ring, Cassie. I would have opened the door.
Glenn, darling.
- GLENN: Is anything going on here?
- CHRIS: I don't know. Who have you seen?
- GLENN: Well, Leonard and Ken for a brief moment. And the butler and Mai Lee. 1295
- CHRIS: You saw Mai Lee and the butler? My, I must have been in there for a long time.
- CASSIE: Are you through in the bathroom?
- CHRIS: Me? Yes. I'm through. 1300
- CASSIE *tries the door again. It's still locked*
- CASSIE: You left it locked.
- CLAIRE: [*off*] Who is it?
- CASSIE: Cassie. Who's that?
- CLAIRE: [*off*] It's Claire. Just a minute, Cass. 1305
- We hear a flush*
The door opens and CLAIRE comes out
- Cassie, darling. And Glenn. How nice. Where are the boys?
- GLENN: Well, Leonard and Ken are up with Charley and Viv. Viv sounds excited. 1310
- CLAIRE: You spoke to Vivian?
- GLENN: No. I heard her talk to Ken and Len.
- CLAIRE: I'd love to have a copy of that conversation.
- CASSIE: Is anyone else in the bathroom because I have to go.
CASSIE *looks inside, then goes in and closes the door behind her* 1315
- CHRIS: [*to CLAIRE*] Mai Lee and the butler are here.
- CLAIRE: Well, why not? Where's Ernest and Cookie?
- GLENN: I just met Ernest. Isn't he the butler?
- CHRIS: Oh. No. All right. We've got that one cleared up. 1320
- GLENN: Then they're just back from the Orient?
- CHRIS: I imagine so. You're so well-informed.
- GLENN: Why is everyone up in Charley's room?
- CHRIS: Oh. There was something on the telly they all wanted to watch. 1325
- CLAIRE: Yes. Right. Very good Chris.
CHARLEY's door opens and LEN comes out
- LEN: [*jovially*] Well, this is beginning to look like a party.

BLACKOUT AND CURTAIN

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