

The Harlem Shuffle

A

New Play

by

ROBERT STARR

SYNOPSIS

The Harlem Shuffle;- *a beautiful and deadly choreographed dance where only the choreographer knows how to put all the moves together and where each move is dependent on the one before and the one to follow.*

Backstage at the latest production of the local amateur dramatic society all is in place for a fantastic new show. That is until the writer clashes with the director and the stage manager clashes with the writer and everyone clashes with the Hollywood star who just happens to be the replacement for an injured cast member.

What starts out as just another show by the local amateur dramatic society soon turns into something else; possibly the greatest Harlem Shuffle yet!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- WENDY The Writer. Age anywhere between 40-60. Very calculating and seeking a payback for not having made it as the big star.
- KATIE The Hollywood Star. Aged anywhere between 35 to early 45. Big star of the Hollywood screen, having had her first break playing a lead in Wendy's one and only success.
- JESS Director. Any age. Director of the local Amateur Dramatic Society, although she has also Directed some Professional shows as well.
- LIZZIE Member of the Amateur Dramatic Society. Any age. This is her first time ever on the stage and the nerves always seem to get the better of her.
- LUCY Committee member of the Amateur Dramatic Society and also one of the performers. Any age. She takes her role on the committee very seriously; as long as it benefits her.
- ASH Stage Manager at the Theatre Royal. Any age. Not at all happy that the local Am Drams are putting on a show at 'his' theatre.
- JOE Member of the Amateur Dramatic Society. Aged late 20s - 30s. An impressionable, almost nerdy man who quickly becomes very star struck. He also has a little secret he's hiding, one that he would prefer to keep to himself.
- PAT Member of the Amateur Dramatic Society. Age 50s onwards. An old pro at Amateur Theatre. He just has too much to say.

COSTUMES & SET

ACT ONE

Around 50 minutes

SET

1. Stage with props lying around
2. An office with a filing cabinet and desk

COSTUMES

WENDY	Own Clothes then Play costumes
KATIE	Own Clothes then Play costumes
JESS	Own Clothes
LIZZIE	Own Clothes then Play costumes
LUCY	Own Clothes then Play costumes
ASH	Jeans and T Shirt with Crew printed on it
JOE	Own Clothes then Play costumes
PAT	Own Clothes then Play costumes

ACT TWO

Around 45 minutes

SET

1. Mid way down the stage the curtain is down as if there is a stage on the other side.
2. Stage with props lying around
3. An office with a filing cabinet and desk
4. Basement of the theatre with bookshelves

COSTUMES

WENDY	Play costumes
KATIE	Play costumes
JESS	Own Clothes
LIZZIE	Play costumes
LUCY	Play costumes
ASH	Jeans and T Shirt with Crew printed on it
JOE	Play costumes
PAT	Play costumes

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ACT I

Scene One

Prologue

The stage is set as in a Court Room. Someone is standing trial and is on the podium. The person is listening to the judge talk. You can only see the silhouette of the person, so it could be a man or a woman.

You can not see the Judge, just hear his voice.

JUDGE You stand before this Court accused of murder. All the evidence given by the prosecution points to this as murder. Over 700 people saw you pull the trigger on that fateful evening. Despite this you still put forward a plea of "innocent".

Members of the jury you have heard all the evidence and now it is time for you to reach a decision. The defendant stands before you and before all this damning evidence admitting to pulling the trigger yet still denying the murder. It is a matter most peculiar, but it is a matter that needs all your attention, for whatever the circumstances, someone still lost their life on the evening in question.

Your job ladies and gentleman of the jury is to decide whether or not the defendant pulled the trigger knowing that the gun contained a real bullet; that and only that is the decision you have been asked to make.

BLACK OUT

ACT I

Scene Two

The lights come up on the stage and then we see ASH, the stage manager, bringing JESS, the Director, onto the stage.

ASH Here you are. If you need anything else I'll be in the crews kitchen.

JESS follows him onto the stage and walks to the far end as ASH is walking off.

(looking up and shouting)

Martin, get down here, you can do the flies later, its coffee time and it's your shout for the cakes.

JESS *(looking around at the empty stage)*
Where's the set?

ASH *(stopping and turning around)* What?

JESS The set? Where's my set?

ASH *(looking at the sheet in his hand)* It says here that "your" people are organising the set.

JESS What people? Do I look like I have people!

ASH Well that's what it says here; your people are doing it.

Going over to him and grabbing the paper from him.

JESS What it actually says is "OUR" people.

ASH Exactly. *(turning to leave again)*

JESS What do you mean 'exactly'!

ASH *(stopping and turning back with the obvious needle)* "Your" people.

JESS "Our" people, means "your" people not my people.

ASH I thought you said you didn't have any people.

JESS I don't?

ASH Then who's going to build your set?

JESS Give me strength. This is your schedule not mine. It says "Our" people because it's yours, therefore "Our" people means "your" people.

ASH Look lady I don't know what the hell you're talking about, but I want to start the technical rehearsal on time and my crew won't be doing any overtime. So if the set's not up by then you won't have a set will you.

*ASH walks off muttering
"Flippin Am drams, this is
meant to be a professional
theatre for Christ's sake"*

WENDY *(walking on past ASH)* What's all the shouting about. And where's my set, it should have been built hours ago?

JESS It seems "our" set is still in storage.

WENDY But it should be up by now, how the hell are you going to get it done before we start the tech? This is a bloody disaster.

JESS Don't start shouting at me WENDY; since when is building a set the Directors job.

JESS starts to walk off

WENDY Where the hell are you going?

JESS To find my cast.

JESS walks off in a strop

WENDY Well that's just great! I knew I shouldn't have trusted my masterpiece with amateurs. Bloody amateur theatre, it's a joke.

KATIE walks on

KATIE I'm not mistaken it was 'bloody amateur theatre' which gave us our first break in this business. Without the good old Am Drams we wouldn't be where we are today, *(whispering)* not that you're actually anywhere! I think perhaps you should be a little more thankful to them.

WENDY *(spinning around to face her)* KATIE, darling, you made it?

WENDY rushes over to her and kisses her on both cheeks and takes her hand.

KATIE pulls her hand away and wonders around the stage.

KATIE So, back at the Theatre Royal then. What is it, ten years since we opened here? Our lives certainly took different paths after that didn't they. *(turning to face her)* It's a shame really; I always thought you'd be more than a one hit wonder.

WENDY, clearly angry with her is about to react when LIZZIE and PAT walk onto the stage.

LIZZIE Oh my god it's KATIE Michaels. I told you PAT, didn't I, I said she was going to cover the part.

PAT You did say. *(to KATIE)* You know I remember you from WENDYS first play, here wasn't it about ten years ago. Ten years? Seems like yesterday, one minute here and the next gone. Talking of yesterday, I visited my Mum at the home yesterday morning, I told her LIZZIE said you might be stepping in to save the day, you know she said she remembers you; still got a good brain she has, even if she can't get about much.

CONT: I always try to visit her on Tuesday afternoons, you know, take her some cakes, they don't give her much in the nursing home, they're good to her but she prefers my little treats. I said you might be in our play, she's too old to come and see it poor love, but she did see you in WENDYS first play though, you were only young she said, she saw you in that musical you did as well, the one they turned into a movie, she saw it at the old Odeon, not there anymore I don't think, shame, nice old building, used to be a theatre actually; what was it called that movie, I always forget things like that, what was it, it was like that other one I like, you know that one with that lady, the one with the long red hair and one leg shorter than the other..

KATIE (*interrupting him*) Do shut up you silly man. (*turning to WENDY*) Who are they!

JOE enters the stage, with a bag on his shoulder.

JOE Who the hell are you, talking to him like that! Flippin film stars, you shouldn't even be here; you're not even a paid up member of the society are you?

WENDY Paid up member! JOE do you have any idea who this is!

JOE I read the papers.

KATIE I can guess which ones.

JESS comes back on stage

JESS Here you all are? I've been looking everywhere for you. Right then, you've all met Ms Michaels I see. (*going over to her*) When WENDY said you'd step in I just couldn't believe it.

KATIE Neither could I (*glaring at WENDY*)!

JESS You've learnt the script then and you've read the directions I sent over to you?

WENDY Of course she has, she's a professional for Gods sake JESS.

KATIE *(taking JESS'S arm and turning away from WENDY)*
Ignore her darling, she's just an old grouch.
Of course I've learnt them. There were a few
directions I wanted to clarify, a few changes I
thought might help; maybe we should go over to
the production room and talk them through, you
don't mind if we use your room do you WENDY,
I'm sure you don't.

JESS Right you lot; JOE, you and PAT go and get
settled in your dressing room, all your
costumes are in there. LIZZIE, you're sharing
with LUCY. Where is LUCY by the way, has
anyone seen her.

LIZZIE She called a few minutes ago, she's still at
work. She said she was just leaving.

JESS Another prima donna, what is it with this
society; everyone has to be the star don't
they.

JOE Just because she's on the committee she thinks
she can do whatever she wants.

LIZZIE I hope she's not too long, she promised to
bring me in some sickness pills, I've been
feeling a little off colour all morning.

PAT I wanted to join the committee you know, I
could've really helped. I was on the committee
for my last group, did you ever see anything we
did, it was very professional you know,
everyone said we were as good as the West End,
in fact one of the critics said I could easily
have turned professional, you know just like
KATIE did, but I had other commitments you see,
I had the shop and of course my mother to look
after and . .

KATIE Oh do shut up you annoying man!

PAT shuts up mid sentence.

JESS Keep an eye out for her LIZZIE and make sure
she lets me know when she gets here. And
WENDY..

WENDY *(still angry)* What.

JESS Lose the attitude first of all and then get ASH
back in here and sort out the set.

WENDY How dare you order me around like some, some
amateur. I am the writer of this piece for
christ sake.

JESS And don't we know it!

*With that everyone leaves, apart
from WENDY who is left standing
there; clearly annoyed at the
situation.*

WENDY Oh for pity's sake! ASH, where are you?
(walking off) ASH. . .!

*As WENDY walks off stage LUCY
walks on from the other side.
Her mobile is to her ear and she
is talking loudly into it.*

LUCY *(into her phone)* Just put Lionel on will you.
(slight pause) Lionel its LUCY, yes I know I
did, I know, I remember, I know, for Gods sake
Lionel will you just listen to me for a second!
I told you it was my dress rehearsal today
didn't I. Of course I can't miss it I'm the
star aren't I. I know it's important but so is
this; that's why I told Susan to do it first
thing. How was I to know she didn't have the
password!

*LIZZIE walks on stage, part
dressed in her costume. She
spots LUCY and goes straight
over to her.*

LIZZIE LUCY you're late.

LUCY Can't you see I'm on the phone.

(into the phone) Not you Lionel.

LIZZIE Sorry LUCY, it's just. . .

LUCY In a minute LIZZIE!

(into the phone) I'll give Susan my password and she'll have to do it right away. Well that's all I can do isn't it. *(slight pause)* I'm sorry Lionel but that's the best I can do.

LIZZIE But JESS said she needs to see you.

LUCY ignores her and walks away, but LIZZIE follows close on her heels.

LUCY Susan I can't believe you didn't write the password down. Of course I told you. Of course I did. Just get a pencil and write it down.

(to LIZZIE) LIZZIE this is private.

LIZZIE But JESS said. .

LUCY LIZZIE!

LIZZIE Sorry.

LUCY gives LIZZIE a glance making it clear that she should back off so as not to listen in.

LIZZIE walks a few feet away from her.

LUCY *(into the phone, in a slight whisper)*. It's, you've got the pencil haven't you?, Ok, it's "Always Have", A L W A, fine, you sure you've written it down. Well get it done immediately and make sure Lionel gets it by four fifteen, At The Latest!

She closes the phone and shakes her head before turning to LIZZIE.

I don't know why I bother to have a secretary, no-one seems capable of doing anything these days. Well then LIZZIE, what is it?

LIZZIE It's JESS. .

LUCY (*interrupting*) Yes I got that much.

LIZZIE She needs to see you urgently, and you need to get ready for the rehearsal, we don't have that long left.

LUCY I don't suppose as the 'star' I'll be getting my own dressing room.

LIZZIE You're not the star LUCY, all the parts are equal.

LUCY I have more to say than you!

LIZZIE Only about two lines more.

LUCY More is more. Anyway they do have a 'star' dressing room here, I've seen it, I'll have that. Everyone else will want to share anyway won't they, and I've got committee work to do as well so I'll need the extra space.

LIZZIE Actually KATIE Michaels got the star dressing room, you're sharing with me.

LUCY (*surprised whistle*) Really? So she turned up then did she, the big Hollywood star turning up the local amateur dramatic society, a little bit odd wouldn't you say?

LIZZIE Well I . . .

LUCY (*interrupting her*) I don't know how WENDY managed to get her to do it, I knew they were friends, but still. Mind you I don't know why she bothered, far to much trouble, you read about them all the time, wanting this and wanting that; the society can't afford any extra luxuries for her you know. As treasurer I keep a very tight budget, no over spending, not on my shift.

LIZZIE LUCY we really must get going.

LUCY *(ignoring her)* I told JESS I'd swap my part for Hilary's; I could easily have played that part and I am on the committee. I'd auditioned for that part in the first place, I was way better than Hilary, she couldn't get the accent right anyway, did you hear her when she said that line to the policeman; that wasn't French at all, it was more like Italian.

LIZZIE Please don't talk about Hilary like that LUCY. Poor love, I can't believe she was mugged, it must have been awful. She could be in hospital for weeks.

LUCY Well she should have fought back shouldn't she, you can't just lie down and take it. If they'd have gone for me they would have got it right where it hurts.

LIZZIE *(looking at her watch)* It's really getting late and you've got to see JESS before we start.

LUCY Tell her I'll be in my dressing room getting ready.

LIZZIE I can't go I'm not ready yet myself and I'm feeling a little sick, I think maybe I should sit down for a few minutes; PAT said technical rehearsals can on all night. I don't suppose you remembered to collect my sickness pills did you?

LUCY I knew there was something I was meant to do; you'll just have to do without them won't you

LIZZIE But I can't, what if I feel sick again.

LUCY You shouldn't have auditioned in the first place should you. I told the committee it was a risk giving a part to a first timer; stick to the chorus for a few years, we've all had to it.

LIZZIE But I didn't ask for the part in the first place, I was only there to make the tea.

LUCY Well there's no point in worrying about it now is there, we go on tonight. I'll be in my dressing room if any one needs me.

LIZZIE By Jess said. .

LUCY (*ignoring her*) On the way back grab me a bottle of water will you I'm dying of thirst.

LUCY turns and leaves the stage leaving LIZZIE on her own. As LUCY is about to leave WENDY and ASH come back on.

WENDY (*to LUCY*) Oh you decided to come then, how kind!

LUCY (*as she's walking off*) Why don't you just...

ASH WENDY I haven't got all day, this is meant to be my tea break. There are rules in theatre you know, or has it been so long that you've totally forgotten the etiquette?

WENDY I've forgotten more about theatre than you've ever known so don't start quoting union rules to me. And in case you've forgotten not only did I have a show in the West End but it was made into a major Hollywood film. What have you ever done, apart from this little job?

ASH If you're such a Bigshott then why are you giving the AmDrams your new play then.

WENDY How dare you!

JESS comes on stage

JESS Has LUCY shown up yet?

ASH How dare I! How dare you bring amateurs to 'my' theatre, this is a professional theatre not some church hall.

WENDY 'Your' theatre, that's a laugh, you're just the stage manager.

ASH Just!

JESS (*shouting above them*) Shut up the pair of you! I'm the Director of this play and as of this minute I'm in charge, so put your petty problems aside until next week.

ASH You can't talk to me like that!

JESS We may be just Amateurs to you ASH, but we've paid the going rate to hire this theatre and let's not forget, we are about to present the audience at 'your' theatre one of Hollywoods biggest films stars. So yes I think I can talk to you like that.

WENDY Exactly and another thing. . .

JESS (*interrupting her*) And as for you Miss bigshot, you're lucky our society are even bothering to do your play at all, especially at such an illustrious theatre. Don't go forgetting that we're only doing it because you begged us to. You were very lucky that we lost the rights to stage Remember Remember and I can assure you that if you hadn't promised to cover our losses we would not be presenting this at all; it's certainly not the greatest piece of writing I have ever had to direct.

WENDY Begged you! I used to be able to fill a theatre twice this size.

JESS Exactly, Used To! Now you're just like the rest of us, someone who once did something. So why don't we all just get off our high horses and get back to the job at hand. I suggest you two sort out the mess with the set and I'll go and sort out my cast.

LIZZIE has walked on stage whilst this was going on, carrying a bottle of water for LUCY.

LIZZIE JESS.

JESS (*turning and shouting at her*) Yes LIZZIE what is it!

LIZZIE (*a little frightened*) It's LUCY.

JESS Don't tell me she hasn't turned up yet.

LIZZIE Oh no, she has turned up.

JESS Then where is she, I asked you to send her to me?

LIZZIE That's the thing you see, I did tell her, but she went straight to our dressing room and told me to ask you to go there.

JESS Incredible, is there no-one in this place who would like to show the Director a little respect.

LIZZIE She forgot my sickness pills as well, she promised to collect them for me.

JESS You'll be fine, everyone gets opening night nerves; even the director does!

PAT has walked on stage

PAT JESS I was wonder..

JESS (*turning to face PAT*) This is not a good time PATRICK.

PAT It's just that I'm meant to come on Stage Right at the opening and I wasn't sure which is right, is it right as in my right hand facing the audience or is it right from the audiences point of view as in my left hand, you see I've never been that great with left and rights, my mum always used to say I wouldn't know my right even if I was always right, funny lady my mum, always saying clever things like that.

ASH (*interrupting*) Who the hell is he!

WENDY Don't ask!

JESS PAT please go back to your dressing room and get ready. I'll show you the lefts and rights later. ASH please can you and WENDY somehow get our set together, and LIZZIE. .

LIZZIE (*eagerly*) Yes JESS.

JESS LIZZIE, you and I are going to find LUCY and establish some ground rules once and for all.

PAT goes back offstage whilst JESS takes LIZZIE'S hand and leads her off stage the other way.

LIZZIE *(as she's being taken of stage)* Theatre is so exciting isn't it JESS.

ASH and WENDY are still on stage. They stay silent for a second listening to the quiet.

ASH This is exactly why I hate AmDrams.

WENDY Me too.

ASH Then why are you letting them do your play?

WENDY They were in a corner, they'd booked the theatre already but had lost the show they were doing. If I hadn't offered them my new play they would have lost their deposit altogether.

ASH They were doing that new Guy Fawkes musical weren't they?

WENDY Well yes, they were meant to be.

ASH So you stepped in to save them; somehow I don't see you as the good Samaritan?

WENDY To be honest with you it's a little embarrassing. You see I feel partly responsible for them losing it. I was at this theatre event in London, you know the type of thing, anyhow I was introduced to the writers of the show and I just happened to let slip that I knew this group quite well and that musicals were not really their strong point. Well the next thing I hear is that they had withdrawn their permission for the show and gave it to a group in another part of the town. I felt so bad that I offered them my new play; well it was the least I could do wasn't it.

ASH I suppose it was; but still it seems out of character.

WENDY Well maybe there's more to me than meets the eye.

ASH I guess.

WENDY Anyhow see what good intentions do, look at the mess I'm in. My new play is about to open and we don't even have a set to speak off.

ASH So what do you want to do then?

WENDY I don't know; it's too late to put the set up isn't it?

ASH I don't know why everyone thought I was doing it anyway. You lot have hired the theatre, it's your responsibility not mine. Me and my crew are always happy to help out, but the Union rules are quite clear when it comes to set building. . .

WENDY *(interrupting him)* Well there's no point in arguing about it now is there. We've got to do something haven't we, we can't open like this, it's your neck on the line as well you know.

ASH How so?

WENDY Because now we have a big star about to grace your stage and the press would just love it if it all fell apart on the opening night. Your theatre would make the front pages for all the wrong reasons.

ASH Fantastic, just what I need, I've only been in the job six months.

WENDY So you'd better help me then hadn't you.

ASH Alright, come with me, I've got an idea. We've got a huge props store downstairs; we can dress the stage instead, I can make a decent enough set with props and curtains for tonight and we can look at your set in the morning.

WENDY If it's all we've got.

They walk of stage together

It's a bloody disaster though, you know I'm beginning to wish I'd never got involved with them at all.

The stage is empty for a few seconds until JOE comes on with a bag over his shoulder. He is alone. He looks around to make sure no-one is there and then walks over to where JESS had left her handbag hanging off some old scenery on the side of the stage. Checking again that no one is looking he picks up the bag and examines it closely. He takes off his own bag and unzips it and is about to put JESS'S bag in it..

Unknown to him KATIE has walked onto the stage and is watching him.

KATIE Anything interesting in there?

JOE *(startled and turning to face her)* I was er, I found this and was er trying to see who it belonged to.

KATIE *(walking over to him)* Well it looks like the one JESS was carrying earlier, she's the only one I remember carrying a bag like that.

JOE You could be right, I was just checking.

KATIE It's OK I won't tell anyone, it'll be our little secret.

JOE *(getting agitated)* I just saw it that's all, I was just checking and, and! What are you accusing me off!

KATIE Nothing. Honestly, it's nothing to do with me. I've seen a lot worse going on in a Hollywood film set I promise. *(holding out her hand to shake his)* JIMMY isn't it, I'm KATIE Michaels.

JOE *(shaking her hand nervously)* It's JOE actually,

KATIE JOE, of course, sorry I always forget names. Well JOE it seems like you and I have got off to a bad start haven't we. First of all I was rude to you when we first met and now it seems I've accused you of stealing from JESS'S handbag; when in fact all you were doing was looking out for her.

JOE I was?

KATIE Of course, I can see that now. I know, let's start again shall we. Hi JOE I'm KATIE, very nice to meet you.

JOE holds out his hand to shake hers, but KATIE kisses him on both cheeks. JOE is suddenly embarrassed.

JOE Er Hi.

KATIE So what part are you playing then?

JOE Part?

KATIE In the play JIMMY. What part do you have in the play. You're not the one I have a mad passionate affair with are you?

JOE *(getting flusters by her)* Er, well yes, er no, I don't know.

KATIE I'm just teasing. *(taking his hand)* To be honest it's good to meet you on my own. I feel a bit like a fish out of water; like the big star trying to upstage the local amateur society, you lot must really resent me. But it's not like that, not really. I'm only doing it to help WENDY out and I'm really excited to be working with real actors for a change. I think that amateur dramatic players really are so much more professional than most of those fake Hollywood types I meet.

JOE Thanks?

KATIE You know what, I think you and I are going to become really good friends, don't you.

JOE Are we?

KATIE I tell you what, why don't we just leave JESS'S bag here, I'm sure she'll come back for it later. We can forget the whole thing, what do you say.

JOE Oh right, yes let's, it was just a misunderstanding anyway wasn't it.

KATIE Of course it was JIMMY.

JOE It's Er, JOE.

KATIE Sorry, JOE. You seem to have found your way around this theatre quite well, how about you give me a little tour, so I can get my bearings; I haven't been here for years and I'm sure it's changed.

JOE Shouldn't we be getting ready for the dress rehearsal though.

KATIE We can be a couple of minutes late can't we; there're hardly going to start shouting at me for being late are they, and I can always say I made you do it.

JOE If you really think so?

KATIE I tell you what. Why not show me WENDY'S room, I tried to get in there before but it was locked and I'd like to see what dressing room the writer gets, it better not be as big as mine! You seem quite a handy man; maybe you could find a way in for me?

JOE Er, sure, I could try.

KATIE *(grabbing his hand)* Excellent, come on then, how exciting.

KATIE drags a bewildered JOE off the stage.

LUCY comes on the stage speaking into her mobile phone and holding a cigarette in her mouth. She is holding a lighter in the other hand.

LUCY Just do the deal with him Lionel. I don't care if it's less than we wanted, we have to shift the stock now, otherwise we'll be stuck with it for months.

Why not? Oh that's nonsense, he's talking crap. Just do it will you. I don't care if it's at cost we can't afford to hold it any longer . . .

ASH walks on stage carrying a small coffee table.

ASH *(interrupting her)* You can't be on the phone in here, it'll interfere with the sound check. And put that bloody cigarette away, you'll get us shut down.

LUCY *(ignoring him)* No just wait a minute, who's the manager here, me or you!

ASH *(going over to her)* Listen lady. . .

LUCY *(to ASH)* Shhh I'm on the phone.

(into the phone) No not you, I'm in the theatre.

ASH puts down the table and snatches the phone from her and turns it off.

LUCY *(grabbing the phone back)* What the hell do you think you're doing?

ASH points to a sign on the wall which says 'no mobile phones on stage'

ASH Rules lady! They're for your own safety.

He also pulls the cigarette from her mouth and points to the 'no smoking sign'. As he starts to tell her off for smoking something falls from the ceiling and crashes right near her, making her jump back in fright.

LUCY Christ!

ASH How did that happen!

LUCY Well it had nothing to do with my cigarette did it!

ASH Alright calm down, no-one was hurt.

LUCY That's easy for you to say, I could've been killed!

ASH Don't be so dramatic.

LUCY I could sue you, you know.

WENDY walks on carrying a chair.

WENDY What was that crash.

LUCY I was almost killed!

ASH Oh please. Something fell from the ceiling and almost hit her foot, now she wants to sue you.

WENDY Sue me, (to LUCY) why me, what I have ever done to you?

LUCY I never said you.

ASH Look it was nothing, nothing happened to you did it. (*picking up the fallen object*) I'll get rid of this and go and check the fly's, something must have come loose that's all.

ASH walks off carrying the fallen object and shaking his head in annoyance.

LUCY Is that it then, I'm meant to just forget about almost being killed am I?

WENDY When the show is over you can sue whoever you bloody well want to, but until then just keep your big trap shut, you're not spoiling this for me, do you hear.

LUCY Now wait just a moment. .

*With that WENDY strops off.
Followed closely by LUCY.*

ACT I

Scene Three

*We go to WENDYS dressing room
and see JOE and KATIE inside
standing at her desk.*

KATIE I don't think I should ask how you picked that lock JIMMY, it was way too professional!

JOE Best you don't ask to be honest.

KATIE *(flattering him)* Well I for one am very impressed.

JOE Why did you want to come here, it's nothing special is it, just a room.

KATIE To be totally honest with you JIMMY..

JOE It's JOE!

KATIE . . I wasn't really that bothered about seeing WENDYS room.

JOE Then why did you make me break in?

KATIE I don't know if I should tell you, I really don't want you to get into trouble.

JOE What do you mean?

KATIE I shouldn't; really you don't want to know. Maybe you should just go, I'm sure I can re-lock the door when I'm finished.

JOE But I might be able to help?

*KATIE takes JOES hand and looks
deeply into his eyes*

KATIE You're so sweet JIMMY I really don't want you to get into trouble just for me. It's my problem not yours, I couldn't bear it if you were caught.

JOE Caught? Doing what?

KATIE Breaking into her desk.

JOE You want to break into her desk? Why?

KATIE Well I shouldn't say.

JOE Oh right. *(about to leave)*

KATIE You wouldn't tell anyone would you? No, of course you wouldn't.

Staying very close to him and making him flustered.

The thing is JIMMY darling, WENDY and I go back quite a long way. She wrote the first show I ever played a lead in and because of that I went on to be this big Hollywood star whilst she shuffled back into obscurity. She's always been bitter about it and for some reason she blames me? I don't know why, jealousy I guess. Anyhow she's got these photos, the sort of thing that I'd rather the public not see, you know the type of thing?

JOE Er no?

KATIE Let's just say that I had to grace a few casting couches on my way to fame and fortune. It would be so embarrassing if anyone saw them.

JOE Is that why you're doing her play. Is she blackmailing you?

KATIE It's not nice is it, especially after I tried so hard to promote her in Hollywood when I first got there.

JOE How did she get hold of the photos?

KATIE It's complicated JIMMY; the important thing right now is that I get them back.

JOE And you think they're in her drawer?

KATIE I shouldn't have told you. Really you'd best leave, if you're caught here with me. .

JOE I can open this no problem.

KATIE Really, can you?

JOE Off course. I can't believe she'd do that to you, it's just not right.

WENDY *(from outside the room)* I told you LUCY, I'm not interested, I'm just the writer; sue the theatre, sue the society, sue the queen for all I care; just leave me alone.

Footsteps are heard outside and the door swings open. As it opens KATIE grabs JOE and kisses him. WENDY walks in.

WENDY What the hell!.

KATIE pulls away from JOE and slaps him across the face.

KATIE How dare you?

JOE What, I, what. . .

KATIE I saw him breaking into your room and followed him in to see what he was doing and he just started kissing me.

WENDY JOE how could you!

JOE I, er, I.

WENDY If this wasn't the opening night I'd call the police right now.

JOE But I er. .

KATIE It's OK, I'm sure he didn't mean it to go that far, he was probably just a bit star struck. I'll let it go this time JIMMY, just don't do it again.

JOE But I. . .

KATIE Go on JIMMY, back to your own dressing room, be a good boy now. *(pushing him out)*

JOE leaves, feeling very confused by the whole thing.

WENDY What the hells going on?

KATIE I just told you, I followed him in here.

WENDY But what was he doing in here?

KATIE I think he has a little problem, you know,
 helping himself to things that aren't actually
 his.

WENDY He's a thief?

KATIE Ok, so give it a title if you have to.

WENDY *(looking around the room anxiously)* What was he
 taking?

KATIE I saw him with JESS'S handbag earlier.

WENDY I mean from me?

KATIE I surprised him before he could take anything.

WENDY We need to tell someone.

KATIE Absolutely of course we do, but let's wait
 until after this week shall we. Let's keep it
 to ourselves, no point tipping the apple truck
 so close to opening the show.

WENDY Well I'll be watching him.

KATIE Me too.

WENDY So do you want to tell me what you were doing
 in here then?

KATIE Like I said I saw him breaking in and just
 followed.

WENDY Do you really think I'd hide the photos in my
 draw, I'm not as stupid as I look you know.

KATIE Aren't you?

WENDY Now listen here. .

KATIE WENDY all that's forgotten, it's old news. I would've done your play anyway, all you had to do was ask, I'm pleased to see you writing again, I'm excited to help.

WENDY Oh don't give me that crap.

*KATIE goes over and kisses
her on the cheek.*

KATIE Don't be so paranoid darling; we've got history together you and I, it means a lot.

*With that KATIE walks out,
leaving WENDY just
standing there.*

ACT I

Scene FOUR

*Back on the stage and we see
JESS with ASH and PAT.*

JESS So where is everyone then. (to ASH) You did
put out the call didn't you?

ASH Of course I did.

PAT I heard it, nothing gets passed me. I might be
the old one here, although I don't think you
could really call me old, not these days, not
like when I was a kid and my Dad was my age,
now that really was different, that really was
considered old back then, but people had a
different respect for age in those days, I
remember my Dad saying. . .

JESS Not now PAT! ASH can you put out another call
please, we've got to get this tech started and
I want to run the dress rehearsal straight
afterwards.

ASH I've already put out my call, I never do two,
professionals don't need two calls to stage.

JESS Well we're not professionals as you keep
pointing out, so please put out another call.

*LUCY comes onto the stage and
heads straight for JESS*

LUCY Did he tell you then?

JESS Where have you been LUCY, we've been waiting
ages for you, didn't you hear the call to
stage?

LUCY Oh I see, he didn't tell you then. (turning to
ASH) You didn't tell her then.

ASH just shrugs

WENDY and KATIE come on stage

JESS Tell me what?

WENDY Look at the time, if we don't start now we'll have no time to complete the tech and then we'll have to miss the Dress as well, this is ridiculous. I can't work like this, I'm a professional writer for God's sake.

KATIE Not really darling.

WENDY throws her a look

Look we're all here now, let's start. Are we going from the top, or do you want to go straight to my entrance?

LUCY So that's it is it? I almost die and no-one cares, great!

JESS What are you talking about LUCY?

PAT Shoudn't we wait for LIZZIE?

JOE comes on stage, clearly embarrassed by the earlier scene.

JESS JOE, where the hell have you been?

JOE Well, Er, (*looking at KATIE*) I, er.

JESS JOE?

KATIE (*walking over to JOE and taking his hand in hers*) It's not important now is it JESS darling. Shall we just get on.

PAT But LIZZIE'S not here yet.

LUCY Fine, lets forget all about it then shall we.

ASH Oh leave it will you, nothing happened.

JESS (*shouting above everyone*) Will you all just shut up for a minute, I can't hear myself think above all this racket!

The room goes silent for a second.

PAT But. .

JESS Not now PAT! Right then let's get started.

JOE Where's LIZZIE

JESS Is she not here? (*looking around*) Where's LIZZIE

PAT That's what I've been saying.

LUCY So typical of that girl, she's never around is she. Do you know how many rehearsals she's missed, I swear that she's missed over half of them, I told you she shouldn't have been given the part.

PAT It's not her fault.

LUCY Then who's fault is it PATRICK. I've been to every rehearsal, I'm always the first there and always the last to leave, and that's despite me having a very important job, as well as keeping this society going.

JOE You don't keep us going, KEITH'S the chairman, you're just the treasurer.

LUCY Just, you have no idea. .

PAT (*interrupting them*) Shall I go and see if she's alright?

LIZZIE has meanwhile come onto the stage.

LIZZIE Sorry I'm late JESS.

JESS Where have you been.

LIZZIE I wasn't feeling great and . .

LUCY (*interrupting her*) You're not feeling great! I was nearly killed before and does anyone care!

JESS (*ignoring everyone*) Right then we've rehearsed the play time and again and I'm sure that KATIE is more than capable of picking everything up during the Dress Rehearsal. For now I want to concentrate on the technical stuff. ASH, tell the DSM that I want to start in a few minutes. Let's check the lights and playback the sound.

As ASH is walking off

JESS CONT: Oh and ASH

He stops with a huff

Can you get the guns and make sure they're loaded this time.

ASH *(as he's walking off)* I wish!

JESS Right then, everyone take their places for the final scene. PAT you're over there stage right.

PAT goes to stage left

'Stage Right' PAT, other side!

LIZZIE you're standing stage left looking off stage, as if you're waiting for JOE to come on.

JOE you come on as soon as you see KATIE enter from top stage right. Run over to her as if you're going to give her a hug.

JOE *(embarrassed)* OK.

JESS KATIE.

KATIE I know. I come on from top stage right and run towards JIMMY *(winking at JOE)*. Then I see LUCY come on pointing a gun to me and as she raises it up I pull out my own gun and shoot her before she shoots me.

JESS Very good KATIE, thank you.

KATIE *(taking a mock bow to the cast)* Why thank you.

JESS And LUCY

LUCY Yes I know. I come on from stage left and get shot and fall down dead.

KATIE Very good.

LUCY Not for the first time today.

JESS Excuse me LUCY?

LUCY Nothing. Shall we start then?

JESS *(shaking her head in exasperation)* Let's.

WENDY I'm going to watch from the circle.

JESS It would be more useful if you got some more props for the stage, otherwise it's going to look empty.

WENDY *(in a strop)* Sure why not, I'm only the writer.

WENDY walks off stage

JESS Right then, positions everyone.

LUCY What about my gun.

JESS *(shouting)* ASH the guns.

KATIE He gave me mine already.

ASH *(from off stage)* The other one's here.

JESS *(to LUCY)* Get it from ASH when you go off.

Everyone takes their positions as directed. JESS goes to the side to watch.

JESS Right then, everyone is set. The lights will throw shadows on the stage and we can hear the violins playing in the tavern. KATIE your Cue line is; who Cues KATIE?

PAT Me, I'm talking to myself, pretending. .

JESS Just do it PAT will you.

PAT *(acting)* "Oh how did it get to this. Sitting here all alone whilst all around me life goes on. If only I had . ."

JESS PAT, just skip to the cue please.

PAT Oh sorry JESS. Er, oh yes. . "So once again we see that the sins of the father are placed firmly at the feet of the son"

KATIE comes on and looks around the stage at the same time as JOE comes on and sees her. They rush to each other. All of a sudden there is a loud bang and we see LUCY fall onto the stage from offstage, unconscious.

LIZZIE *(rushing over to her)* Oh my god LUCY.

The others rush over as well. JESS takes the lead.

JESS Get back will you and give her some room.

JESS pushes LIZZIE out of the way. LIZZIE is unstable on her feet and stumbles. PAT is near her and goes to her giving her support.

LUCY are you alright, can you hear me, LUCY?

ASH rushes on

ASH What was that. I was out the back getting myself a cup of. . *(he spots LUCY)* Oh know not again, what is it with her.

LUCY *(waking up and slowly sitting up holding her head)* What happened?

ASH It looks like something must have fallen and hit you.

LUCY Again?

JESS What do you mean again?

LUCY *(holding her head)* My head?

JESS It's alright dear, someone get her a glass of water. Just stay where you are LUCY, don't move darling. Where's that dam water

Everyone stands together to see what will happen

ASH I'm getting it *(ASH goes offstage mumbling to himself)* Bloody drama Queens.

JESS Can you remember what happened sweetheart?

LUCY One minute I was standing there waiting for my cue and the next something hit me on the head.

KATIE What was it?

LUCY I don't know, it all happened so quickly.

KATIE Is it bleeding.

LUCY *(feeling her head)* Ow!

JESS Let me have a look.

LUCY *(pulling away, and reverting to type)* No thank you, I can manage. *(feeling her own head)* I don't think it broke the skin, but I've got one helluva bump.

JOE Perhaps we should get an ambulance. *(seeing LIZZIE is not quite right)*, actually you don't look too good either LIZZIE.

LIZZIE I'm OK.

JESS *(turning to her)* Can someone please find LIZZIE some bloody sickness pills.

LUCY Er excuse me, hello!! I'm the one who was almost killed for a second time not her!

JESS Of course dear, of course. Has anyone called the ambulance yet?

PAT *(getting his mobile phone out)* I'll call one shall I?

JESS *(shaking her head in exasperation)* Yes PAT, please call one.

ASH comes on stage with the water, he sees PATS phone and then takes the water to LUCY.

ASH What the hell are you doing, you can't use a mobile in here, I've just got the sound check done, it'll ruin everything.

PAT I'm calling the ambulance.

ASH Not from in here you're not.

JESS ASH!

LUCY Oh thanks for the concern.

JOE That's rubbish, it won't effect your equipment at all.

ASH How do you know?

JOE When I was in pris, er I mean in my last job, I worked in a ..

PAT Is that the ambulance service?

JOE . . conference centre, we dealt with sound all the time.

PAT There's been an accident at the Theatre.

ASH Well this is my equipment and I think I understand it better than you!

PAT The Theatre Royal. We're dong a new play, it's a murder, very exciting. What, oh sorry, no there hasn't been a murder I was just saying. .

JESS has got up and has gone over to PAT. She grabs the phone from his hand shaking her head.

JESS Hello, yes this is the Director. One of my cast has had an accident.

LUCY I'm fine, I don't need an ambulance.

LIZZIE has gone over to LUCY

LIZZIE You do LUCY, you could be hurt.

LUCY Stop fussing LIZZIE I'm fine, anyway I thought you were the one pretending to be ill, maybe you need it

LIZZIE walks away and goes back to PAT for comfort.

I'm fine, I don't want an ambulance.

JESS Sorry can you hold a second. LUCY I don't think. .

LUCY (*very aggressively*) I said I'm fine!

JESS LIZZIE?

LIZZIE I'm fine JESS, just a little off colour that's all.

LUCY Off colour, more like trying to grab the limelight from me.

JESS (*into the phone*) I'm very sorry about that, it's just a false alarm. OK I understand, it won't happen again.

She turns off the phone and hands it back to PAT.

KATIE You know I'm pleased I was forced to do this play, it's more exciting than a Hollywood film set.

JESS What do you mean, forced to do it?

WENDY walks on stage carrying another prop.

WENDY Why is everyone just standing around, what is it with you lot!

LIZZIE There's been an accident.

JESS Thank you LIZZIE! There's been an accident.

WENDY Another one?

JESS Why does everyone keep saying that? What else happened.

ASH It was nothing.

LUCY To you maybe.

ASH A small weight fell down from the platform earlier that's all.

JOE And almost hit LUCY on the head.

ASH Exactly, almost.

JESS ASH is there a problem with your crew that I should know about.

ASH I knew this would happen, I knew I'd get the blame.

WENDY Well you're in charge back stage aren't you.

ASH Look this had nothing to do with me or my crew. Everything is fine back stage thank you very much.

LUCY Then why do things keep falling on me.

JOE Bad karma!

JESS JOE!

WENDY So how bad is it.

ASH Well if my bosses think it's my fault. . .

WENDY Not you ASH, how bad is it LUCY?

LUCY Well it hurts like hell. I've got a huge bump forming on my skull, my heads banging like an over worked drummer and my paranoia that someone has it in for me is getting seriously worse.

WENDY But can you go on?

JESS WENDY!

KATIE She's right, we need to know.

PAT Maybe I should call the ambulance again? They can check her out, they'll know whether she's fit to perform, I remember back when I was in the army, god it must be forty years now, can you believe it, I remember young Timmy Watkins, he played in the orchestra with me, fantastic flutist, he had a fall, actually I think he was pushed. .

JOE (*shouting*) PAT!

PAT (*turning sharply*) Yes JOE.

JOE What's your point.

PAT Point?

JOE The ambulance for LUCY?

PAT I was just saying that they'll know whether she's fit to perform or not.

JOE Then why are you prattling on about Johnny and his clarinet.

PAT It was Timmy and he played the Flute, bloody good he was too.

JOE *(getting irate and heading towards PAT)* What the hell's wrong with you man, can't you see we've got a crises and all you can do is prattle on like some madman.

KATIE steps in his way

KATIE We're all a little stressed at the moment JIMMY, I'm sure PAT didn't mean to go on.

JOE *(getting slightly annoyed now)* It's JOE!

PAT What did I say?

KATIE Nothing PAT, you said nothing and perhaps you can continue with saying nothing for a while.

LIZZIE goes to PAT to comfort him for the rebut from KATIE

I would love a glass of water "JOE". Could you do that for me do you think?

JOE Er, I guess so.

KATIE Thank you. ASH, any chance you could show him where the kitchen is.

ASH *(still in a strop)* I suppose so.

ASH and JOE leave the stage

KATIE PAT I think that LUCY needs a cushion for her head, there's one in your dressing room. And LIZZIE, you really do look like you should have a little lie down, try to get some colour back in your cheeks.

LIZZIE Actually that would be good to be honest.

LIZZIE and PAT leave

KATIE Right then now that the drama Queens are all gone perhaps we can sort this mess out.

LUCY What about me, has everyone forgotten me or something.

JESS Hardly, it's been about nothing else but you since you got here!

KATIE How do you feel? Do you feel well enough to go on stage tonight.

LUCY *(calming down)* To be honest I'm not sure. My head really is hurting.

WENDY Oh that's just great, we open in less than four hours and she wants to drop out.

LUCY I never said that!

KATIE Well someone else will have to go on for her won't they.

WENDY This is amateur theatre for God's sake, we don't exactly have a team of understudies on call.

KATIE Actually we do have one.

JESS Really, that's news to me?

WENDY And me?

KATIE WENDY?

WENDY Excuse me?

KATIE You wrote it and knowing you, you've been at every rehearsal getting under JESS'S feet.

JESS *(shaking her head)* Every one!

KATIE There you go then, you do it.

WENDY But I'm the wrong age.

KATIE This is theatre darling, live theatre. It's all about perception. If you believe it then so will the audience. It's all an illusion; act younger, speak younger and hey presto, you're younger.

JESS Problem solved then.

WENDY And I have no say in the matter.

JESS Not if you want your play to go you don't.

Everyone files back onto the stage, except LIZZIE. JOE carrying water followed by ASH and then PAT carrying a pillow.

WENDY Alright then if I've got no choice.

JESS It's settled then. OK everyone, WENDY is going to take over from LUCY.

ALL *(Mumble under their breath)*

JESS It's the best we can do at such short notice.

WENDY Oh well thanks a lot.

LUCY Have I got no say in this at all.

KATIE You're hardly fit to go on tonight are you.

LUCY But I've got friends coming in to see me and I arranged for a reviewer from the gazette to write an article on me, I mean us, and . .

KATIE They'll all just have to come back tomorrow wont they.

WENDY That's right, you'll be better by tomorrow won't you, it's only for tonight.

LUCY But it's the opening night tonight, I've worked so hard.

JESS Well if you really think you can do it?

WENDY *(shouting)* She can't.

*Every turns to face WENDY for her
outburst*

I mean, how can she, it's ridiculous, look at her. I'll do it tonight and she can do it tomorrow.

JESS But if she really thinks she's OK?

WENDY This is my play and I don't want it ruined by her letting us down in the middle of it. We've already had to replace Hillary for KATIE, we don't need another drama right in the middle of it.

LIZZIE Perhaps she's right LUCY. I mean you don't look that great to be honest.

WENDY That's settled then, I'll do it tonight and LUCY can take over tomorrow.

KATIE Very keen all of a sudden aren't you?

WENDY I'm just being practical.

LUCY So I have no say in it then.

JESS If LUCY feels she can go on then so be it.

WENDY But . . .

JESS I'm the Director WENDY, it's my call. Well LUCY, get up then, that'll be a good start.

*LUCY gets up but immediately starts
to stumble. KATIE grabs her and PAT
rushes over to steady her as well.*

I think that answers my Question. WENDY you're on for tonight. LUCY go and lie down for now, you can use my room, then tonight, if you are better, you can sit in the Royal Box with the Mayor and represent the Group, OK?

LUCY *(defeated)* OK.

ASH Surely you should sit with the Mayor, it's the Directors job?

JESS After today's dramas I think I'd feel safer back stage, anyway LUCY is more than capable of representing the group; *(sarcastically)* she is a committee member you know.

KATIE *(also sarcastically)* We had heard.

JESS Right then everyone do you all think we can get started.

WENDY Where's LIZZIE?

JESS Oh God I forgot about her.

PAT I'll go and check on her.

PAT goes off stage to check on LIZZIE

JESS This is all we need.

JOE What if she's not well enough to go on.

JESS Then I'll go on OK. Actually you know what, WENDY you can take LIZZIE'S part and I'll take LUCY'S part, I think the dynamics will be better that way.

WENDY *(shouting)* Absolutely not, no way.

JESS Excuse me?

WENDY I'm doing LUCY'S part, that what we agreed, I'm doing LUCY'S part.

JESS Why should you care which part you do?

WENDY Well I, I, I just do. I'm doing LUCY'S part and that's it.

JESS Now hold on a moment. .

PAT and LIZZIE come back on stage interrupting them.

LIZZIE It's OK JESS I can do it, I do feel a little better now.

JESS *(turning to her)* Where have you been?

LIZZIE I just needed to lie down for a few minutes.
I'm fine now.

JESS Are you sure.

WENDY She's fine, she said she's fine.

LIZZIE Really I'm fine.

JESS OK if you say so, but please try to stop
running off every few minutes.

ASH *(picking up LUCU'S gun)* So who gets this then?

WENDY I do.

*ASH hands her the gun then walks off
stage.*

JESS Alright, go on then everyone, let's try to get
this done without anymore problems. Right then
places everyone, I really need us to get the
last scene under our belt as it's the most
technical. Just so you all understand, we've
now got under 4 hours left, that's it. We
still need to do a full technical rehearsal and
a dress rehearsal and be ready to open at 7.30
sharp. So LIZZIE please don't over do it and
PAT please stayed focused, and WENDY...

WENDY *(defensively)* What?

JESS Just a thank you for stepping in.

WENDY Oh.

*Everyone starts shifting
uncomfortably at the thought of
what lies ahead for them.*

JESS Well then, come on, jump to it.

*Everyone starts to head back to
their places.*

PAT, you're cue line please.

(calling out) And ASH, for God's sake get
me a set!

PAT *(acting)* "Oh how did it get to this. Sitting here all alone whilst all around me life goes on. If only I had . ."

JESS Give me strength! PAT, just skip to the Cue

PAT Oh sorry JESS. Er, oh yes. . "So once again we see that the sins of the father are placed firmly at the feet of the son"

Everyone moves as expected. JOE comes on down stage and KATIE comes on from up stage. They see each other and rush forward. At the same time WENDY comes on and raises a gun, pointing it at KATIE. KATIE, seeing her, pulls out her gun and fires it at WENDY.

The gun rings out and WENDY crashes to the floor. A scream is heard from on stage as the lights black out.

END ACT I

ACT II

Scene One

The stage is set as if we are now behind the curtain in the theatre. At the back of our stage the curtain is drawn and in front of that curtain is the imaginary stage and audience. Our stage is set as if it were backstage.

The play has started and we can hear some muffled noise from the back of the stage behind the curtain as if the play is in full swing.

JESS is there holding a script.

PAT comes on looking all flustered and is pacing back and forth

JESS PAT, calm yourself down.

PAT *(too loudly)* Which is stage right, I keep forgetting.

JESS Ssh PAT.

PAT *(quieter and pointing)* Is that stage left or stage right.

JESS *(turning the pages)* Shouldn't you be on now PAT.

PAT Well yes I should.

JESS Well for God's sake get on then.

PAT heads for stage left

The other side!

PAT quickly swaps and goes through the curtain on stage right.

Give me strength!

ASH comes on and goes to JESS

ASH We've got problems.

JESS What now?

ASH Lizzie's got locked in the toilet.

JESS What! She should be on stage not in the bloody toilet.

ASH I told Martin to go and help her, he's down there now.

JESS Why didn't you just do it!

ASH I need to get to the flies don't I, otherwise the mirror won't fly in.

JESS But Martin was in the flies, he could've done the mirror himself.

ASH But I had to send him to try to help LIZZIE out of the toilet.

JESS But you said, oh never mind. Just get to the flies, we can't be late for the mirror or it'll ruin the whole act. I'll go give Martin a hand.

ASH *(running off)* LIZZIE will be back shortly I guarantee.

JESS heads offstage to be DSM as KATIE and JOE walk on from the other side.

JOE But we don't have time.

KATIE We've got plenty of time JIMMY. WENDY will be on stage now for at least another twelve minutes and we're not on until she comes off.

JOE But if we're late on JESS will go mad and I know I'll forget my lines.

KATIE You'll be just fine.

She kisses him on the cheek.

Trust me.

JOE OK, but we'd better be quick.

*They run off stage, passing PAT
as they go.*

PAT Where are you going, we're on soon.

ASH comes back on

ASH For goodness sake man the audience will hear
you, keep it down.

PAT But JOE and KATIE just ran that way and we're
on next from this side.

ASH Don't worry about them, you just concentrate on
what you have to do.

PAT But. .

ASH Just get over there, you're on next.

PAT walks off as JESS comes on.

JESS Where have you been ASH, I've been looking
everywhere for you?

ASH Is LIZZIE back?

JESS Yes she is, poor girl. She wasn't locked in
the toilet at all.

ASH What do you mean?

JESS Well let's just say that Martin burst into the
cubicle just as she was, well, pulling her
costume up.

ASH Oh my God!

JESS Quite. Poor thing, she was so embarrassed.

ASH So she's back on stage then?

JESS Yes, but missing her que once again. And
Martin went straight back up to the flies
grinning from ear to ear.

ASH I didn't know she wasn't stuck, she'd been gone
for ages and that door always gets stuck, how
was I meant to know!

JESS Forget about her for the moment, I need you
stage right, the smoke machines gone a bit mad;
I think PAT'S about to choke midway through his
monologue.

ASH Oh that's just typical, this is becoming a
bloody farce.

*ASH runs off to fix the smoke
machine, followed by JESS.*

SCENE II

The Set changes and we are back in WENDYS dressing room.

JOE and KATIE are by her filing cabinet.

KATIE Well done JIMMY, I knew you could get through that padlock.

JOE It's JOE.

KATIE Sorry, JOE. *(gently runs his shoulder)*

JOE I don't think she's actually allowed to put a lock on her door, I'm sure it's against fire regulations.

KATIE There you go then, you've actually done her a favour, maybe even saved her life. Now be a love and help me look, they've got to be here somewhere.

KATIE starts to look in the filing cabinet whilst JOE picks up a briefcase that WENDY has left on the desk.

Where the hell are they?

She continues to rifle through the cabinet whilst JOE opens the briefcase and takes out some large photos.

Looking at them he whistles.

JOE Blimey *(he turns one around and bends his head)*. How did you do that?

KATIE *(turning to him)* You've found them?

JOE Sure have. Wow you were something!

KATIE I certainly was

JOE Sorry I was just, well I . . .

KATIE *(snatching them from him)*. I'll take those if you don't mind.

JOE I still don't understand how she got hold of them?

KATIE It's a long story. Let's just say that WENDY can be very persuasive when she wants to be.

JOE What are you going to do?

KATIE First of all shred these. Then, well let's just say I'll have my revenge on that conniving bitch.

JOE You're not going to do anything stupid are you?

KATIE Of course not, but blackmail is not a very nice game is it JIMMY; I do deserve to have some revenge don't I.

JOE Are you going to drop out of the play?

KATIE Absolutely not. I wouldn't' let you and the team down, especially not half way through the show. Actually I was kind of hoping that maybe you could help me.

JOE I don't know, I don't really want to get into any more trouble.

Across the tannoy we hear, "KATIE and JOE to stage left"

KATIE It'll only be a bit of fun, nothing to be worried about.

JOE I don't know.

Across the tannoy we hear, "Last call for KATIE and JOE to stage left, going on in two minutes"

KATIE *(leaning in close to him)* Just a little help, it'll be fun I promise. I thought we were friends?

JOE We are friends.

KATIE *(batting her eyelids)* So I can count on you then?

JOE You don't understand, I need to keep my nose clean.

KATIE *(all of a sudden realising)* There's a little secret hiding away in there *(pointing to his head)* isn't there JIMMY.

JOE Just forget it.

KATIE You're in some kind of trouble aren't you; is it the police?

JOE If anyone finds out. .

KATIE We're friends JIMMY, I wouldn't say anything. Anyway you know my secret now don't you, it'll even things up.

JOE OK, but you've got to promise.

KATIE Cross my heart.

JOE I'm on bail.

KATIE Bail? You mean from Prison.

JOE It wasn't anything bad, well, not really.

KATIE How exciting! What did you do?

JOE I got caught up in a robbery, it was really bad, guns, get away cars, everything, there I was surrounded by the police and. . .

KATIE looks at him in a 'knowing' way.

 OK then, maybe it wasn't quite like that.

KATIE What was it 'quite' like then?

JOE *(embarrassed)* I was caught stealing lady's handbags from a department store.

KATIE What!

JOE It was over a number of years. It started out as a bit of fun that's all. I took one from a department store as a dare when I was younger and it kind of just became, well an obsession.

KATIE How many did you take?

JOE In a year?

KATIE *(laughing a little)* In total.

JOE I don't know, I guess maybe two thousand.

KATIE Two thousand, bloody hell JIMMY where did you keep them.

JOE In my Mum's garage. She thought I was a handbag salesman.

KATIE *(laughing)* God JOE you're a dream. I need to get you to Hollywood, I swear there's a part for you in a new film I'm doing.

JOE Please don't tell anyone, I couldn't bear it.

KATIE Is that why you were looking at JESS'S handbag earlier.

JOE I wasn't going to take it, I was just looking that's all. It was a classic, a genuine seventies bag, 1972 I think, I had one like it and. ., oh god please don't tell anyone.

KATIE You're secret is safe with me I promise. I tell you what, you help me get back at WENDY and I promise to get you a first edition Gucci direct from Hollywood as soon as I get back.

JOE Er, well, I guess so, as long as we're careful.

From the Tannoy "Last call for KATIE and JOE, under one minute, where the hell are you!"

KATIE I knew you'd come through for me JIMMY. Come on or we're gonna miss our Cue.

KATIE grabs his hand and drags him out of the room towards the stage.

SCENE III

Back on the main stage we see PAT come on choking from the smoke machine inhalation, followed by LIZZIE. A few seconds later ASH comes on as well.

PAT *(Coughing)* I thought I was going to choke?

LIZZIE *(patting him on the back)* Poor love, are you OK.

ASH *(joining them)* He'll be fine, it was only dry ice.

LIZZIE Only! It was all over him, he could hardly breath.

PAT I think I'm OK LIZZIE, thanks. It's not the first time that's happened to me you know, back when I was playing in the army band, god it must be fourty years ago, me and Timmy Watkins, great flutist was young Timmy, could have gone pro if that explosion hadn't taken off his left hand, dam shame really, we were playing at the officers dinner, black tie it was, fantastic night too, until a fire broke out in the kitchen. . .

LUCY comes on stage and goes over to them, closely followed by JESS.

LUCY PAT are you alright, I saw it from the box, I thought you were going to choke?

PAT Oh hi LUCY, I was just telling them about a similar incident at the officer's dinner back in my old army days.

JESS You alright PAT?

ASH He's fine isn't he, just listen to him, does he sound like he can't breath!

JESS You and I need to have a chat about this ASH, the way things are going I'm going to have no cast left.

ASH It's not my fault.

LUCY Who's fault is it then, you're in charge
backstage.

ASH Who asked you to join in.

LUCY I'm the members rep for the group, it's up to
me to look after their interests, so I have
every right to . .

JESS *(interrupting her)* ASH who's on the curtains.

ASH Shit *(running off and calling out)*, Martin drop
the curtains for end of act I.

JESS I'm pleased that's over, it was a bloody
disaster.

*WENDY, KATIE & JOE come on stage
having just finished the end of
ACT I.*

WENDY That was a bloody disaster. *(turning to KATIE)*
You forgot those lines on purpose.

KATIE No I didn't.

WENDY Yes you did.

JOE I thought she was great.

WENDY Shut up JOE.

LIZZIE Actually I thought she was really clever as
well, I couldn't change the words on the spot
like she did.

WENDY And as for you, you missed two whole scenes,
where the hell were you?

LIZZIE I'm sorry, I was eh, well I was in the toilet
and this man burst in and, oh my god it was so
embarrassing.

WENDY *(turning to the others)* What the hells she
talking about now!

PAT Leave her alone, she obviously wasn't feeling
well.

LUCY Wasn't feeling well, oh poor love! Typical of her.

LIZZIE I'm sorry, I couldn't help it, I needed to a wee and then this man crashed the door down, oh god I can still see his face.

LUCY Well if it were down to me you wouldn't even be in the show, let alone the toilet.

JESS Well it's not down to you is it, I'm the Director so it's my call.

LIZZIE I'm sorry JESS, I just didn't realise the time and . .

JESS *(interrupting her)* Well actually it's not OK LIZZIE. If Katie hadn't jumped right in and covered your lines I don't know what would have happened.

JOE Actually I think KATIE made a rather dull scene quite funny if you ask me.

WENDY *(turning to JOE)* Well I didn't ask you!

KATIE Oh come on WENDY, these things happen, no-one would have noticed.

WENDY That's not the point.

ASH comes back on

ASH Will you lot keep it down, they can still hear you out there.

JESS ASH's right, keep it down. I've got a few notes to give and then you can go and relax a little before Act II.

LUCY Actually I've got a few notes as well. From where I was sitting in the Royal Box with the Mayor. .

JESS *(interrupting her)* Thank you LUCY but I think I can manage it.

LUCY I was just saying.

JESS Right then, first of all I would like to say that despite a fairly weak script...

WENDY How dare you!

JESS . . the audience seemed to mostly enjoy it.
The scene with PAT was a bit messy thanks to
ASH's crew. .

ASH Now hold on!

JESS . . but we somehow got away with it. LIZZIE,
when you do manage to make it onto the stage
would you please project more, it's important
that they hear you.

LIZZIE I think my radio mike's not working very well.

JESS Then get it over to the sound desk for
checking, it might just be the battery, but
anyhow you still need to project more.

LIZZIE walks off, seemingly dejected.

And JOE you've got to stop looking down when
you speak. The audience need to see you to be
able to hear you. If you talk to the floor
then that's where your words will end up.

JOE OK.

JESS And please JOE, do stop staring at KATIE. I
know in real life she's a big star and very
fascinating but in 'this' play you're meant to
be her "secret" lover, so perhaps less staring
and more acting?

JOE I wasn't staring at her.

KATIE It's OK JIMMY I don't mind.

JESS Yes you were, please just bear it in mind.

JOE (*embarrassed*) OK

JESS And WENDY. . .

WENDY I was just fine thank you, probably the best
one there.

KATIE Get her!

JESS I was going to say well done for stepping in so late, but obviously you don't need my praise. Right everyone please go back to your dressing rooms. You've got 20 minutes to grab some water, relax and then be back here ready for Act II. And please, all of you, take on board my notes and let's try to salvage this play shall we.

LUCY JESS's right, we've got a lot of people out there, including the press and . . .

JESS (*interrupting her*) Thank you LUCY but I think I've said it all; perhaps you should go back and keep the Mayor company.

LUCY Actually he left after the first 20 minutes, so I'm going to stay back here and do some committee work.

LIZZIE You can use my dressing room if you want to?

LUCY 'Our' dressing room, I am still a member of the cast you know.

JESS Just don't get in the way LUCY, ASH seems to be having enough problems without you getting under his feet.

ASH I am not having problems.

JESS (*forcefully*) Go on then everyone, off you go. ASH I'd like a word please, in my room if you don't mind.

JESS walks off followed by ASH who is muttering 'bloody Am Drams, they shouldn't even be in my theatre'

Everyone else wanders off except KATIE, who grabs JOE by the arm to keep him there as well.

KATIE Right then let's get to it.

JOE Excuse me?

KATIE My revenge JIMMY, my revenge.

JOE I don't know, I mean is it really worth getting into trouble for, surely it's best forgotten.

KATIE Forgotten! The bitch is blackmailing me. She was going to sell those pictures to the papers if I didn't do her crappy play. For all I know she's kept copies, I wouldn't put it past her.

JOE But if she kept copies then surely by doing something to her it'll just make her mad and she'll sell them anyway.

KATIE That's the point isn't it; I've got to do something to stop her. I've got to find a way to stop her once and for all.

JOE Why don't you just call the police, tell them what she's been doing.

KATIE You don't get it do you. I'm a film star, I play all the 'girl next door' parts don't I; if the police see them then they'll soon find their way into the papers and then that's it for my career; no more 'English Rose' parts for me. My career will be dead in the water, I can't risk it, I've got to stop her.

JOE But I really don't want to get involved, I'm sorry.

KATIE I don't know if I can do it without you JIMMY. (*getting very close to him*) Please, I really need you.

JOE I don't know, it's just. .

KATIE (*getting even closer*) Please! this is the last time I promise. I'll be forever grateful, really grateful.

JOE (*flustered*) It can't be anything too bad.

KATIE Of course it won't, just something that will shake her a little, you know, letting her know I've got something on her as well.

JOE What do you have in mind?

KATIE This way JIMMY, I've another little lock for you to pick.

KATIE drags JIMMY off the stage. At the same time from the other side of the stage WENDY comes on. She's looking around to make sure no-body is watching her.

She goes over to a props table near the side of the stage and pokes around looking for something. She clearly can't find what she wants. She starts to look through some boxes on the floor, getting agitated at not finding what she wants.

From the same side of the stage she hears JESS and ASH talking.

She quickly runs off the other side just as they come on.

ASH Happy now then?

JESS Just make sure everything stays like that. We can't afford anything else falling on people or toilet doors getting stuck, or not stuck as the case might be. How is Lizzie anyhow?

ASH Avoiding Martin by the looks of things.

JESS Poor girl.

ASH So can I go now? (*looking at his watch*) I've probably missed all the biscuits.

JESS Just be back here before we go up for Act II. I want to make sure everything's ready.

ASH I'll be here, you can count on me.

JESS (*under her breath*) If only.

LUCY comes on from the other side.

LUCY JESS I need to talk to you, it's really important.

JESS What is it now LUCY.

LUCY Well WENDYS been playing my part all wrong. It's meant to be more, well, more sexy and stronger, much stronger.

JESS She did write the part, so she probably knows how it should be played. And to be honest LUCY I did keep asking you to play it down didn't I.

LUCY But the character is much more like me, much sexier, way more powerful. Look, if I'm taking over tomorrow night I just can't do it like that, it isn't right. *(grabbing JESS by the arm and dragging her off stage)*. Let me show you the page I mean.

JESS *(being dragged off)* Give me strength!

SCENE IV

*KATIE and JOE are in the
basement room of the theatre.*

*There is a bookcase filled with
old scripts and books.*

JOE What is this place?

KATIE I used to come here with WENDY when we were in
the chorus together, I wasn't even sure it was
still here.

*JOE is looking at the bookshelf,
thumbing through old books and
scripts.*

The original theatre manager used to keep a
single copy of all the plays and shows that
they produced here, some are over 100 years old
and were never done again.

JOE So what are 'we' doing here.

KATIE There's a very important play that we need to
find.

JOE How's an old play going to help you?

KATIE Because it's the one that WENDY copied.

JOE Copied?

KATIE Did you really think she could have written
such a big hit? You're in her new play; do you
really think the author of this crap was once
capable of writing something so fantastic.

JOE I hadn't really thought about it; I guess not.

KATIE A couple of years before we put her play on we
were here doing The Mikado. During one of the
breaks WENDY and I found this old room and
started using it in the coffee breaks, it was
our secret smoking room. We used to grab the
oldest looking scripts and read through them.
Some of them were so cheesy it was hysterical.
But one of them, amazing, it just took our
breath away, it was fantastic. Why it never
got anywhere is a mystery, I guess that's
showbiz.

CONT: Anyway we got so hooked on it that we missed the whole of the second ACT, you should have heard the telling off we got from the Director, I can still hear him now. It had been gathering dust for years and as far as we knew it was totally unknown and had probably not been seen for well over a hundred years.

JOE So WENDY copied it?

KATIE You never knew her back then JIMMY, she was sharp, a real devious cow. As soon as we finished reading it you could see her mind working. It was about a year later she came up with her fantastic 'new' play. All she'd done was change the names and locations of the one we'd found, updated it a little and put her own name to it. That was it, instant hit and instant fame, well almost instant.

JOE And no-one ever knew.

KATIE Nope.

JOE But that's plagiarism.

KATIE It certainly was.

JOE Why did you go along with it, you could have got into serious trouble?

KATIE Ah but WENDY had a plan and I was very much part of it. She'd planned it all, right from the moment we finished reading the play. The thing about WENDY was the planning, she always planned things so well, everything, down to the minute detail. She used to call it the Harlem Shuffle.

JOE The what?

KATIE The Harlem Shuffle; it's the ultimate con. It's like a complicated dance where only the choreographer knows the steps, each move dependent on the last one and ready for the next one.

The first thing she did was get herself elected onto the general committee and then she made sure she headed up the part that chose the shows; naturally their next show was 'her' play. She managed get them to use this theatre, which at the time was unheard of, she got me the lead role and then somehow she managed to get one of the top London Producers to come to the opening night. The last part of her plan was the master stroke, me. I was a bit of a looker back then and she knew this Producer had a reputation for his casting couch.

JOE She asked you to sleep with him?

KATIE She knew that if I could get his 'full' attention then he'd definitely come to see the show.

JOE But you could have said no.

KATIE Why? This was my big chance. Here I was just a chorus girl in my local group and I had the chance to play a lead at the Theatre Royal in front of the West End's top Producer.

JOE *(disappointed)* So you slept with him then?

KATIE Oh don't be so judgemental JIMMY, we all do things we're not proud of don't we; just ask you're Mum how proud she is of you.

JOE shuffles uncomfortably.

Anyway the show was a massive success and our Producer took it on. The classic Harlem Shuffle; all neatly planned, well nearly, there was one little thing that she didn't bargain on.

JOE What?

KATIE The original script, she lost it, or so she thought. She'd brought it to the theatre during one of the rehearsals because she needed to change something and needed it for a reference. Anyway I saw it and stole it and hid it back in here.

JOE Why would you do that?

KATIE At the time it was just an impulse thing; maybe subconsciously it was an insurance policy for later life, I guess no different to her getting photos of my, liaison, with the Producer. Anyway it looks like it was a good idea after all.

JOE So if we find it then you can stop her blackmailing you.

KATIE Hell yes. So you're going to help me find it then?

JOE Of course I will.

KATIE You start over there, I'll start over here, I know I left it here somewhere and it doesn't look as if anyone's been down here in years.

They start to look and the scene blacks out.

SCENE V

WENDY is back on stage looking around for the guns when she is interrupted again, this time by PAT and LIZZIE.

WENDY What do you two want.

LIZZIE We were just looking around. It's exciting isn't it.

WENDY What is?

LIZZIE Being backstage at the Theatre Royal. I've never been backstage at a real theatre before.

PAT I have, lots of times. My last group, very professional we were, we always used to. .

WENDY Do I really need to hear another story from you.

LIZZIE There's no need to be rude.

WENDY And as for you, why don't you just concentrate on what 'you're' supposed to be doing. You've already missed most of the first act, we don't need you to be ruining the second Act as well.

PAT There's no need for that, she's not been feeling well.

WENDY And who's faults that! She should have stayed backstage and left the acting to the actors.

PAT Why do you have to be so rude to everyone.

LIZZIE Please PAT, leave it.

PAT Well we shouldn't have to stand here and be
insulted like this.

WENDY Well if you go somewhere else and you won't
have to be will you.

LIZZIE I think we should. Come on (*taking PATS hand*),
all of a sudden I don't think I like it here so
much.

LIZZIE drags PAT off stage.

WENDY (*now alone*) God I hate these people.

*She carries on looking
around when she hears ASH
on the tannoy*

ASH (*on the tannoy*) This is your five minute call.
Five minute call.

WENDY Dam it.

*WENDY carries on looking,
but this time more
urgently.*

*ASH comes on stage and sees
her.*

ASH What are you doing?

WENDY (*seeing him*) Nothing.

ASH I saw you!

WENDY I dropped something that's all.

ASH You've only got five minutes until we start
again.

WENDY (*getting up*) Alright I'm going, I'm going.

ASH What about the thing you dropped?

WENDY It'll wait.

*WENDY strops of the stage,
leaving ASH to tidy up her mess.*

*JESS comes on stage and goes
over to ASH*

JESS So where is everyone?

ASH I put the call out, I've done my bit.

PAT comes to stage

JESS Right get into position for your entrances.
PAT, you go on first followed by LIZZIE.

PAT You mean WENDY don't you?

JESS Sorry, WENDY.

WENDY has come on stage.

WENDY What about me?

JESS *(turning to see her)* WENDY, right you follow
PAT straight on.

WENDY I do know that, I did write it you know.

JESS Just for once can you please just say 'yes
JESS'.

WENDY *(sarcastically)* Yes JESS.

JESS Thank you. Now where's LIZZIE, she goes on a
few seconds later from the opposite side.

PAT She wasn't feeling well, she went to get some
water.

JESS For heavens sake, what's up with that girl.

PAT I think she nervous, she's never done a play
before.

WENDY Then why the hell was she cast!

JESS There was no-one else suitable, all the other
women of her age auditioned to do the show we
lost.

WENDY This is a bloody disaster, if that girl ruins
this for me I'll. .

LIZZIE has come on stage.

LIZZIE Sorry I'm late, I was a little sick.

WENDY (*turning on her*) Listen lady if you ruin all my
hard work I'll bloody kill you.

PAT There's no need for that, she can't help it.

LIZZIE I'm really sorry, I thought I'd be alright but,
oh god . .

*LIZZIE runs off stage holding her
hand to her mouth.*

ASH (*calling out to LIZZIE*) You've got two minutes
then you're on.

JESS Ash do me a favour and go and check on her; get
her some water or something.

ASH I'm busy.

JESS Just bloody do it!

ASH strops off.

WENDY If she messes up again..

JESS She'll be fine, just worry about your own
lines. (*looking around*). Where are KATIE and
JOE? Has anyone seen them?

ASH comes back with LIZZIE

LIZZIE Sorry, I'm fine now, I was just feeling a
little sick again.

JESS (*shaking her head*) Everyone get into position,
ASH put out an urgent call for KATIE and JOE,
I'll go and check the dressing rooms.

Everyone moves into position whilst ASH and JESS go off stage.

We hear the audience start to clap and then PAT, LIZZIE and WENDY go through the curtain onto the supposed stage.

JESS comes on our stage from the left just as JOE and KATIE come on from the right. KATIE is carrying the two scripts under her arm.

JESS Where the hell have you two been?

JOE We, Er. .

KATIE Sorry JESS darling we lost track of time.

JESS You two are on in like ten seconds.

JESS starts pushing them into position. She sees the two scripts that KATIE is holding and grabs them from her.

KATIE What the hell are you doing?

JESS You can't very well take these on stage can you.

KATIE *(all of a sudden panicky)* But they're important.

JESS You'll get them back, I'll put them in your dressing room.

KATIE No! Just hold onto them. I'll get them off you as soon as I come off. Just make sure you keep them safe.

JESS Just get a bloody move on will you.

JOE and KATIE run into position and then go onto the supposed stage through the curtain.

JESS just stands there, shaking her head muttering "drama Queens"

LUCY comes on the stage.

LUCY I heard ASH on the tannoy, have you found them yet.

JESS They just turned up, thank God. This play's going to give me a heart attack if it carry's on like this.

LUCY I'll bring it up at the next committee meeting if you like. I knew we shouldn't have allowed WENDY to bring a 'star' in. I know it sells seats, but they're just too high maintenance. Anyway the audience come to see us don't they, they don't need to see some big star from. .

JESS (*interrupting her*) LUCY do me a favour and hold these for KATIE will you.

JESS hands her the scripts

She'll be off stage in a few minutes, wait here and hand them to her for me.

LUCY But I was going to get myself a drink?

JESS She only be a couple of minutes.

JESS walks off muttering "Give me strength!"

LUCY Bloody hell, I'm not some lacky you know, I am on the committee!

ASH (*from the wings*) Keep it down LUCY .

LUCY stands there looking annoyed. A few seconds later WENDY comes from behind the curtain (off from the pretend stage)

WENDY (*going to LUCY*) You should be watching this you know, maybe you could learn a thing or too.

LUCY For your information I'm doing a very important job for JESS at the moment. A Director always needs a person they can trust.

WENDY Good for you.

WENDY is about to walk off

LUCY Where are you going?

WENDY To my dressing room, that's if you don't mind!.

LUCY Actually you could do me a little favour.
Could you pop these (*handing the scripts to*
WENDY) into KATIE'S dressing room.

WENDY I'm not here to help you do. . did you say
KATIES?

LUCY That's right. She gave them to JESS just
before she went on and asked her to look after
them. The thing is I'm dying for a cup of tea,
I haven't had a drink all day and my head is
really starting to hurt again and. .

KATIE (*grabing them*) Of course, of course. Don't
worry, I'll see she gets them. Off you go,
take as long as you want.

LUCY Oh right, thanks. I won't be too long.

*LUCY runs off, leaving KATIE on
stage on her own. She looks at
the scripts.*

KATIE (*to herself*) You crafty cow, so that was what
you were doing. (*to the script*) I think it's
about time you met your maker.

*WENDY walks of stage. At the
same time KATIE comes on stage
from behind the other stage and
also JESS walks back on.*

KATIE goes straight over to her.

KATIE See, no problem at all, the audience didn't
even notice we were late. Live theatre,
nothing like it. So my papers, can I have them
back please.

JESS LUCYS' got them. (*looking around*) I asked her
to wait here with them?

KATIE *(raising her voice)* You gave them to LUCY! I asked you to keep them.

JESS Keep it down, the audience'll hear you.

KATIE *(as loud)* Fuck the audience, where the hell are my papers.

LUCY walks on carrying a cup of tea.

KATIE What have you done with my papers?

JESS Calm down dear, she'll get them for you. LUCY give her the papers back will you.

LUCY I haven't got them anymore.

KATIE *(getting right up to her face)* What have you done with them you stupid cow?

LUCY *(nervously backing away)* Nothing. I just asked WENDY to put them in your dressing room.

KATIE You gave them to WENDY! Have you any idea what you've done!

KATIE spins around and runs off stage after WENDY.

LUCY What was that about?

JESS I have no idea?

LUCY I told you didn't I, we shouldn't have people like her in our shows, we just don't need them. I'm going to bring this up in committee, you just see if I don't!

BLACK OUT

SCENE VII

*We are in WENDY'S dressing room.
KATIE bursts in through the door
just as WENDY has shredded the
last of the papers.*

She sees KATIE come rushing in.

WENDY You're too late, sorry.

KATIE *(stopping her in her tracks)* What have you
done.

WENDY What I should have done ten years ago, shredded
it.

KATIE What you should have done ten years ago is come
up with your own play, not copied someone
else's.

WENDY It didn't do you any harm did it. Anyway, no
proof exists that I copied anything does it.

KATIE There'll be another copy of that play
somewhere.

WENDY I've spent the last ten years looking for one
and it doesn't exist. So go on then, give it a
go if you want to.

KATIE Maybe I will.

WENDY And maybe I'll show your dirty photos to the
press.

KATIE *(smugly)* What photos.

WENDY *(pulling out her case and seeing them gone)*
Touché. So now what?

KATIE Now I rip that scrawny head of your shoulders.

*ASH pokes his head into the
room.*

ASH Will you two keep it down, they'll hear you in
the back of the stalls at this rate.

KATIE Don't worry about it, I've nothing more to say to her.

WENDY Me either!

KATIE Except, that this is way from over. One of these days I'll make you pay for this you bitch.

KATIE turns and walks out.

WENDY *(calling out)* Too right it's not over.

BLACK OUT

SCENE VIII

Back on the stage we see JESS peeping through the curtain at the other stage. LUCY is with her looking over her shoulders.

KATIE comes on. LUCY and JESS see her. LUCY backs away and heads off stage whilst JESS goes over to her.

JESS Is everything alright, you seemed really stressed before. Is it the play, is something wrong?

KATIE *(softening)* Sorry, I shouldn't have shouted at you or LUCY. It's just seeing WENDY again, you know, old issues from the past that's all.

JESS OK as long as you're alright.

KATIE I'm fine. I do need to go on though?

JESS *(looking at her script)* Christ of course you do.

KATIE Sorry but I've only rehearsed this once. Is it upstage or down stage.

JESS *(looking at her notes)* Downstage, right.

KATIE Thanks, and sorry again.

KATIE rushes onto stage.

PAT and LIZZIE come off stage at the same time.

LIZZIE Oh my God I can't believe I fell over.

PAT Did you hurt yourself.

JESS Go on then, what happened?

LIZZIE Well I . . .

PAT She was just about to deliver her big dialogue about the sad loss of her dog, when she slipped on something; I think it might have been the water that JOE drank in Act I, I would have thought that ASH should have cleaned up after ACT I, I know in my old group the stage manager, Jim he was called, Jim Brown, funny guy, he always went on stage during the interval to check the stage, in fact I remember once..

ASH comes on and joins them.

JESS PAT please! LIZZIE did you get your speech out, it was pivotal.

ASH Now hold on one moment. It's not my place to check the stage after each Act, that's down to the props lady. She should check her props and make sure nothings out of place, even spilled water. I can't be held responsible for her not doing her job, I've enough to do with. .

JESS *(interrupting him)* ASH, no ones blaming you.

PAT I was just saying that old Jim Brown. .

JESS Not now PAT, please! LIZZIE did you or didn't you get your monologue out.

LIZZIE Of course I did, well most of it. Although I did do it sitting on my backside with my skirt up around my chin. I don't think anyone minded though, in fact someone on the front row even blew me a kiss.

JESS Give me strength!

PAT It sounded just fine, I thought maybe we should keep it in, the audience seemed to like it, some of them were even clapping.

LUCY comes storming on stage over to JESS.

LUCY I need to talk to you, it's important.

JESS Can't it wait until after the show LUCY, we are all quite busy.

LUCY I've been reading the society rules and it clearly says that anyone who is not a 'paid up' member of the society by the opening night of the show is unable to go on. And I know for certain that KATIE MICHAELS has definitely not paid any membership fees.

JESS Please LUCY not now.

LUCY It clearly states that this is against Health & Safety regulations as non paid up members are not covered by our company insurance.

JESS *(turning on her angrily)* So what would you have me do! Shall I go on stage in the middle of the second Act and drag off our only capable actor and tell the audience that I am sorry but our insurance just won't provide her with cover.

PAT I think that's a little unfair JESS. LIZZIE and I, and JOE for that matter, although maybe not as much as me, we are all capable actors. In fact LIZZIE is doing remarkably well despite her nerves, especially when you consider that this is her first ever show.

LUCY *(ignoring PAT)* I was just pointing out . . .

JESS *(interrupting her)* I know what you were pointing our LUCY, but at this particular moment I really couldn't care less. Now please leave my stage before I ask ASH to throw you out.

ASH My pleasure.

LUCY I have every right to be here, as a committee member I. . .

JESS ASH!

ASH Absolutely.

LUCY Alright, alright, I'm going. But I'll be bringing this up at the next meeting.

LUCY walks of stage.

JESS *(to ASH)* Surely you should be busy at this point?

ASH That's why I'm here. I need this, (*bending down to pick up a prop*) it should have been on stage at the beginning of the scene. I can slide it on during the next blackout, no-one will notice. Actually one of you lot could give me a hand, I need to hold the curtain back as well.

PAT I need to get ready to go on again in a minute.

LIZZIE Me too.

JESS (*shaking her head in exasperation*) I'll do it. You two get into place. Go on then. .

PAT and LIZZIE leave the stage.

Come on then ASH it'll be dark in a few seconds.

JESS and ASH leave the stage as well.

WENDY comes on stage. She looks around to see the stage is empty and heads over to the props table. She sees the two guns on the table and quickly picks one up.

Looking around again to make sure no-one is near, she pulls out a box from her pocket. She extracts some bullets and loads them into one of the guns.

She doesn't see JOE come off the other stage onto this stage. He watches her for a few seconds. Then she turns to see him. She quickly puts the gun back onto the table and the box into her pocket.

WENDY What are you looking at!

JOE What were you doing?

WENDY It's none of your business.

JOE I saw you doing something on the table.

JOE walks over to her.

WENDY I was just checking the props for my next scene if you must know.

JOE It didn't look like that to me.

WENDY What did it look like then? Do you think I'm going to be hiding props for my own play? What sort of an idiot are you!

JOE I was just saying it looked like you were fiddling with the guns, that's all.

WENDY Well yes I was actually, I was making sure that KATIE and I had the correct guns and that the props lady had put the blanks in. The last thing we want is to be firing them on stage and no noise coming out.

JOE Oh, right, sorry.

WENDY Maybe you would do better just minding your own business. Actually it wouldn't hurt if you did mind your own business, that way you'd get to the stage on time instead of being late for every entrance.

JOE That wasn't my fault and it was only once.

WENDY Only once! Once is more than enough, this is live theatre you know. I knew I should never have let amateurs do my show; I knew you'd wreck it. Not one of you can act and as for remembering your lines. .

JOE *(getting aggressive and going right to her)*
You're lucky we're doing it at all, you probably didn't even write it in the first place, you probably just copied it.

WENDY *(taken aback slightly)* What!

JOE You heard, you stuck up cow. You probably just stole someone else's script and put your own name on it, it's what you do isn't it.

WENDY What's KATIE been saying to you!

JOE The truth.

WENDY She wouldn't know the truth if it bit her on the arse.

JOE She showed me.

WENDY Showed you what?

JOE The script that's what. I was with her in the basement, I found it for her.

WENDY That bitch, I'll bloody kill her.

JOE You brought it on yourself. Blackmailing her over those photos, she told me everything, you disgust me.

WENDY You know nothing about her. She's taken you in, just like she takes everyone in. The big Hollywood star, batting her eyelids and you all come running. It was because of her that I got nothing for that play.

JOE You can't blame her just because you never made it.

WENDY I bloody well can. I'd arranged everything and she doubled crossed me.

JOE You made her sleep with the Producers just to get your show on.

WENDY Everything she did, she did for herself.

JOE Sure she did!

WENDY You don't get it do you, we were in it together, both of us. I set it all up, everything, all she had to do was follow my instructions. Once the play was a success the film rights were on the table. Just as I'd planned she got a part in the film, but then it all went to her head. It was simple, all she had to do was make sure the film producers knew how much she wanted the part and that I'd sell them the rights for a percentage of the box office.

CONT: But no she wanted me out of the way, she wanted all the glory for herself. So she talked me into signing away the film and stage rights to the producers on the promise that they'd give me a three script deal.

JOE And you signed it all away just like that, after all your planning? Do me a favour.

WENDY Yeh well I was desperate. She told me this was the only way they'd do the deal. I trusted her, we were in it together, why would I think she'd screw me. She told me that if I signed away the rights away for a few grand that she could guarantee me that I'd be commissioned to write for them. Of course as soon as she became this huge star she conveniently forgot all about me. I was left to rot in this shitty town whilst she went on to earn millions out my play.

JOE But it wasn't you're play was it.

WENDY That's hardly the bloody point.

JOE I don't believe you; she just wouldn't do that.

WENDY Believe what you want, I really couldn't give a dam. You'll soon learn, as soon as she no longer needs you she'll dump you.

JOE You're lying, you just wait. .

WENDY (*interrupting him*) Wait, wait for what. For her to ruin my life once again! She did that ten years ago, there's nothing else she can do to me now.

JOE Then why bring her back, you could have got anyone to do your play, why her.

WENDY Because she needs to pay that's why.

JOE You still want your revenge, even after all this time?

WENDY (*very cool and calm*) Well wouldn't you! She got Hollywood and what did I get, bloody amateur theatre. Well not any more, this time she'll just have to share the headlines with me.

JOE What do you mean?

WENDY (*almost to herself*) The Harlem Shuffle, that's what I mean.

JOE What did you say?

WENDY (*straight at him*) The Harlem Shuffle.

With that WENDY simply turns around and walks off stage holding her own gun, leaving JOE just standing there. KATIE comes off the other stage onto our stage. At the same time JESS comes back on to see her.

JESS That was great KATIE, you really turned it on, fantastic.

KATIE It's what I get paid for; well usually get paid for!

JOE goes over to her.

JOE KATIE, I need to talk to you, in private.

KATIE I don't have time, I'm on again in a couple of minutes.

JOE But it's urgent.

KATIE (*ignoring JOE and talking to JESS*) I'm not totally sure about the last scene JESS, you know, my motivation, it's not really that clear in the script.

JOE Please KATIE, it's important.

KATIE (*turning away from him*) How do you want me to play it, more Garbo or more Davies.

PAT and LIZZIE come back on stage, whilst WENDY can be seen going back through the curtain.

JESS You're doing it just fine, just carry on as you are.

ASH What the hells going on! *(to JESS)* He was meant to be stage on ages ago, WENDYS out there on her own having to make it up.

KATIE Serves her right.

ASH *(turning to JOE)* If we get bad reviews because of you!

JESS Give me strength. JOE get on there now before the whole play ends in disaster.

JOE *(to KATIE)* Why are you treating me like this, we were friends?

JESS JOE!

JOE, clearly upset runs to go on the other stage.

PAT Was he really in prison?

JESS Right everyone, let's not lose focus now. We're nearing the last scenes and god knows how, but the audience are still out there. Let's all get into place and get this finished as best as we can.

LIZZIE Oh god I think I'm going to be sick.

PAT *(grabbing LIZZIES arm)* Come on LIZZIE.

PAT drags LIZIE down stage.

WENDY comes back on stage and goes over to the props table. She picks up KATIES gun.

WENDY KATIE?

KATIE What.

WENDY Your gun.

She hands KATIE the gun.

JESS Is it loaded?

KATIE I'll check.

WENDY I've already checked them.

JESS Fine. Go on then and good luck both of you.

KATIE and WENDY turn away from each other and head onto the stage.

LUCY comes back to the stage and stands next to JESS.

JESS I thought I asked you to stay front of house.

LUCY It's nearly the end, I wanted to be here to congratulate everyone.

JESS *(sighing)* OK; just don't make a sound, let's try to at least get through the last scene without any disasters.

The Curtains separating the two scenes open enough for our audience to see what is happening.

We see KATIE come on stage and run towards JOE. Then we see WENDY come on pointing a gun at her. As she raises it up KATIE pulls out her own gun and shoots her first.

We hear KATIE's gun fire and WENDY goes crashing through the curtain area onto our stage. We hear a gasp from the supposed audience and then the curtain falls and blackout.

The lights come back on almost instantly. We see all the cast our side of the stage. We hear clapping from behind the curtain.

WENDY is lying still on the stage whilst all the rest of the cast are around
JESS. ASH also comes on.

JESS That was a great ending, fantastic job everyone. I really didn't think we were going to ever get there. Only another five shows left, god help us. LIZZIE do you think your stomach will hold out for another five shows.

LIZZIE I think so.

JESS LUCY do you think you're up to it or would you prefer it if WENDY goes on again tomorrow.

LUCY Of course I'll do it.

JESS I suppose we should all say thank you to WENDY for not only giving us a new play to perform but for also stepping in at the last (*turning to WENDY*) moment . . .

Everyone turns to face WENDY.

LIZZIE (*grabbing PAT'S arm*) What's wrong with her.

They all rush over, KATIE staying at the back.

JESS WENDY are you alright? WENDY?

She sees the blood

(jumping back) Oh my God.

PAT What is it?

JESS She's bleeding.

PAT (*going to WENDY and checking her out*) She's been shot?

LIZZIE What?

JESS My God?

ASH Shot?

JOE Are you sure?

PAT *(backing away)* Very sure, I saw it in the army, back when we were on training manoeuvres; it was a bad day, raining if I remember, it always rained on manoeuvres. . .

LIZZIE *(putting her arm on his shoulder)* Not know eh PAT.

KATIE Is she alive?

JESS Oh my God, I didn't check.

JESS rushes back to her and checks.

She's still breathing. Someone get an ambulance.

ASH And the Police. This is going to ruin us, I can see the headlines now, "playwright dies on stage".

PAT Anyone got a phone?

LUCY Here, use mine.

LUCY hands PAT her mobile. PAT dials.

ASH Then again you know what, this could actually work in our favour. JESS do you think you'll still go on tomorrow.

JESS What!

PAT We need an ambulance, someone's been shot.

ASH Think of the publicity, we could be full for a month on this.

PAT No really she has, someone's really shot her It's not the play this time, honestly it's not.

JESS ASH I'll forget you even said that.

ASH I was just saying.

PAT And the police, you'll deal with that as well will you, OK, thank you.

JESS What did they say?

PAT Try to keep her warm, but don't move her. An ambulance and the police will be here soon.

KATIE Someone get a blanket, I'll stay close to her.

LIZZIE goes off to grab a blanket and comes on again very soon after.

KATIE moves in, but ASH gets in her way.

ASH No you don't lady.

KATIE Get out of my way you imbecile.

ASH JOE, get over here and hold her with me.

KATIE What the hell are you doing?

JOE goes over and he and ASH hold onto KATIE very tightly.

JESS ASH have you gone mad?

ASH Think about it. She had the gun and she pulled the trigger.

KATIE What?

ASH We all heard them arguing, I even heard her threaten her. She must have switched the bullets when we weren't looking.

KATIE Why would I do that?

LIZZIE comes on and puts a blanket over WENDY.

LIZZIE He's right, in the interval you were screaming at each other.

LUCY And the way you went for me just because I gave WENDY those papers.

KATIE I didn't do it, I've got nothing to do with this.

JESS There has been something going on between you two all day, and now this? It can't just be a coincidence can it?

LUCY And don't forget me, someone hit me on the head.

KATIE I was on the bloody stage at that time, you all saw me?

LUCY Oh yes. Still, you could have arranged it, with all your money and everything; you could easily have arranged it.

KATIE JIMMY, for gods sake back me up.

WENDY *(rasping)* Let her go, I need to speak with her.

They all turn to WENDY, almost as if they had forgotten her. KATIE pulls free of them and goes to kneel by her.

KATIE What did you do?

WENDY Big Hollywood Star kills local writer. Headline news don't you think *(coughs)*.

KATIE Oh my God, you did it to yourself, you planned it all from the start didn't you?

WENDY You're going to go down for a long time for my murder and I'll be in the headlines at last, me...

(WENDY dies)

KATIE *(standing up and facing them all)* Don't you see, she did it herself, she set me up, she made me shoot her for real.

ASH That's crazy, why she would do that.

KATIE So she could upstage me. I can't believe it, the crazy bitch *(laughs)* killed herself just to upstage me.

ASH and JOE grab her again whilst the others all stand there in shock.

ASH The police will be here in a minute. You'll
get life for this, you wait and see.

KATIE (*realising her predicament*) JIMMY, please, tell
them, I beg you.

JOE Tell them what?

KATIE The blackmail JIMMY, the photos she had. And
the scripts, tell them about the script.

JOE What script?

KATIE It's the Harlem Shuffle JIMMY, she planned it all
along, all of it. She had HILLARY mugged to make
way for me, she attacked LUCY so she could play
opposite me, she put a bullet in my gun, bloody
hell for all I know she even made you lot lose
that musical you were doing. JIMMY, tell them,
for god's sake, tell them everything I told you.

JOE What are you talking about.

KATIE Just before, you said you saw her by the table,
by the guns. You said she had the guns?

JOE No I didn't?

KATIE JIMMY please, help me.

JOE The names JOE.

BLACK OUT

Epilogue

The stage is once again set as in a Court Room. KATIE is standing trial and is on the podium, facing the audience. The judge is talking. You can not see the Judge, just hear his voice.

JUDGE You stand before this Court accused of murder. All the evidence given by the prosecution points to this as murder. Over 700 people saw you pull the trigger on that fateful evening. Despite this you still put forward a plea of "innocent".

Members of the jury you have heard all the evidence and now it is time for you to reach a decision. The defendant stands before you and before all this damning evidence admitting to pulling the trigger yet still denying the murder. It is a matter most peculiar, but it is a matter that needs all your attention, for whatever the circumstances, someone still lost their life on the evening in question.

Your job ladies and gentleman of the jury is to decide whether or not the defendant pulled the trigger knowing that the gun contained a real bullet; that and only that is the decision you have been asked to make.

KATIE For God's sake she set me up, don't you get it. The crazy bitch made me kill her. I didn't know there was a real bullet in the gun, I didn't.

JUDGE Mr Forman, have you reached a decision.

FORMAN Yes My Lord we have.

KATIE *(still tearful)* Don't you see it, she set me up.

JUDGE Do you find the defendant innocent or guilty of murder?

The stage goes black.

THE END