

CHAIN REACTION

BY

STEVE DAVIES

ACT I SCENE 1

DEREK AND JANE ARE SITTING AT THEIR  
RESPECTIVE DESKS. DEREK'S OFFICE HAS PAPERS  
EVERYWHERE AND IT IS VERY UNTIDY.

THEY ARE BOTH ON THE PHONE HAVING SEPARATE  
CONVERSATIONS

JANE: It's happened again this morning

DEREK: I'm not surprised, the amount of crap you keep shoving down

JANE: It's horrible

DEREK: Well it's bound to be

JANE: I feel all bloated

DEREK: Stick your finger in

JANE: A ginger biscuit works better

DEREK: Try that then?

JANE: I have

DEREK: And?

JANE: I feel sick

DEREK: Well, do something

JANE: I can't

DEREK: What?

JANE: It's all too quick

DEREK: Grab a bucket

JANE: Too late. All over the duvet

DEREK: You've got to stop it

JANE: I've tried but nothing seems to work

DEREK: How long has it been like it?

JANE: Two months

DEREK: That's ridiculous

JANE: No it's not. My last period was two months ago

DEREK: Have you tried using the plunger?

JANE: No

DEREK: Well use something else

JANE: I've got one of those things that you wee on (HOLDS UP A PREGNANCY TESTING STICK)

DEREK: Good God woman, don't do that, you'll make a right mess. What's happening?

JANE: Nothing. You have to wait

DEREK: Come on, jiggle it about.

JANE: You just have to be patient. If it turns blue then...

DEREK: It's gone mouldy that's why. Is it moving?

JANE: I not sure

DEREK: What about the plumber?

JANE: Who?

DEREK: The plumber?

JANE: Well, it's either him or the Polish fisherman I met down the club

DEREK: Phone him up.

JANE: I can't. I don't think I'll see him again

DEREK: What?

JANE: He's busy gutting cod in the Bering Sea wherever that is?

DEREK: It's under the sink

JANE: What am I going to do?

DEREK: Stopcock

JANE: Oh no, I couldn't do that, I enjoy it too much

DEREK: You're going to have to

JANE: I don't know how. I've been doing it since I was fourteen

DEREK: Get a good grip and then give it a twist

JANE: Will that work?

DEREK: Of course it will

JANE: But what about a prick?

DEREK: That's what's caused it in the first place.

JANE: I've just never tried acupuncture before. No. I've got a Doctor's appointment this afternoon. I'll ask him for some of those patches

DEREK: Marjory! Just turn off the stopcock. It's under the sink and I'll call the plumber

THE NEXT FOUR LINES ARE SAID OVER THE TOP OF  
EACH OTHER

JANE: See you later. Bye

DEREK: Yes I'll do it now. Bye

JANE: (SHOUTS) Mr. Figge!

DEREK: (SHOUTS) Jane!

DEREK PICKS UP A MUG OF COFFEE FROM HIS DESK  
AND GOES TO THE OFFICE DOOR

DEREK: Jane, have you seen my sweeteners?

JANE: (HURRYING PAST HIM. FEELING SICK) Sorry Mr. Figge, I've got to Go.  
Look in my desk drawer (EXITS)

DEREK: But, Jane you know I can't (TO HIMSELF) have sugar I'm on a diet

GOES TO JANE'S DESK AND STARTS TO LOOK  
THROUGH THE DRAWERS

Ah! Here we are. (PULLS OUT SOME SUGAR LUMPS) I shouldn't...  
(LOOKS AROUND) Oh sod it. (DROPS THREE LUMPS INTO HIS COFFEE)  
Spoon, spoon... Jane have we got a tea spoo... (SPOTS THE WHITE  
PREGNANCY TESTING STICK) Ah. (STIRS HIS COFFEE AND PUTS IT  
BACK ON THE DESK)

PHONE STARTS TO RING

(SHOUTS OFF) Jane... Jane... Phone... Jane the phone's ringing. What do I pay  
her for? (ANSWERS THE PHONE) Good morning Cascara and Figge Estate  
Agents. Moving the Nation since nineteen twenty-seven. Yes madam... Yes...  
Yes, we do... Certainly. In that price range we have a beautifully located, quasi-  
baroque, Georgian town house, briefly comprising of... You are. Very good see  
you later. Many thanks. Bye bye. (GOES TO THE DOOR) Jane!

JANE: (ENTERS) Sorry Mr. Figge. False alarm

DEREK: What's the matter with you?

JANE: Sorry Mr. Figge

DEREK: I need you to be out here Jane

JANE: I'm sorry Mr. Figge but I...

DEREK: You're the front line of the organisation

JANE: I know Mr. Figge but you see...

DEREK: As the customer relationship, liaison, support manager...

JANE: But, there's only me

DEREK: You're the crucial interface between the client and the upper echelons of senior  
management. Ensuring the smooth, efficient flow of communications between  
the client and said management. As well as maintaining the corporate fiscal  
policy within stringent budgetary constraints

JANE: I know. I do the typing and make sure we don't go overdrawn at the Bank

DEREK: Precisely. So where the heck were you?

JANE: In the Khazi. I thought I was going to throw up

DEREK: Too much information

JANE: That's rich coming from you

DEREK: What exactly are you alluding to?

JANE: Why use one word when forty-five will do

DEREK: Jane, we are in the business of guiding, cajoling and assisting the members of the general populous through the difficult process of selecting their dream dwelling. Whilst at the same time relieving them of coin of the realm

JANE: There you go. You could have just said “We flog houses”

DEREK: Jane, Jane, Jane, if you are hoping to become a successful purveyor of previously cherished abodes then you must learn to articulate in the appropriate manner

JANE: What?

DEREK: Learn the lingo

JANE: Right

DEREK: If it was good enough for Marcel Proust it’s good enough for me

JANE: Who?

DEREK: Marcel Proust

JANE: I can’t stand mime artists

DEREK: Dear, oh dear, oh dear. He’s not a mime artist. He’s probably one of the finest novelists that ever lived

JANE: (DOING A MIME) I thought he was that bloke that did things like walking against the wind and being trapped inside an invisible box

DEREK: No, you’re thinking of Marcel Wave

JANE: That was Kenny Everett wasn’t it?

DEREK: No that was Sid Snot or Gizzard Puke or some such. I’m referring to probably the greatest literary genius of all time

JANE: What did he write?

DEREK: I beg your pardon?

JANE: What books?

DEREK: Oh, they are many and varied. Too numerous in their proliferation to enter into a lengthy discourse on...(what they are entitled)

JANE: Name one

DEREK: Is that my phone?

JANE: I can't hear anything

DEREK: I think I can. It's on vibrate

JANE: You don't know any, do you?

DEREK: Of course I do my dear, of course I do.

JANE: Well

DEREK: There it is again I'd better answer it (DASHES INTO HIS OWN OFFICE. SITS AT HIS COMPUTER FURIOUSLY TYPING AND CLICKING AWAY)  
Proust? Proust. Ah! Here we are

MAIN OFFICE PHONE RINGS. JANE ANSWERS

JANE: Good morning Cascara and Figge, moving the nation since nineteen twenty-seven. Certainly sir, number sixteen Victoria Street is on at one hundred and ninety five thousand nine hundred and ninety five pounds ninety five pence... Ninety five pence... Yes that's right... No idea... A unique doer upper opportunity... Yes... No, it means it's falling apart sir. Very good, thank you. Good-bye. (PHONE RINGS) Good morning Cascara and Figge, moving the nation since nineteen twenty-seven. Mr. Figge? Yes he's here. Who's speaking please. Just a minute (SHOUTS) Mr. Figge.

DEREK: Use the communications system

JANE: (SHOUTS) What?

DEREK: I said use the communications system

JANE: (SHOUTS) There's someone on line one for you

DEREK: Use the... Good grief... (GETS UP AND GOES TO THE OFFICE DOOR) Look use the communications system (STARTS TO GO BACK TO HIS DESK)

JANE: The what?

DEREK: The bloody intercom thingy (SETS OFF BACK TO HIS DESK ONLY TO BE STOPPED BEFORE HE GETS THERE) I don't know

JANE: (SHOUTS) Which button is it?

DEREK: (STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS. WALKS ALL THE WAY UP TO JANE'S PHONE) It's that one there that says Intercom (SETS OFF BACK TO HIS DESK)

JANE: (PRESSES THE BUTTON AND SHOUTS) It's Sid. H says it's urgent

DEREK: (STOPPED HALF WAY. TURNS ROUND AND COMES BACK) Don't shout. Just press the button and speak into the receiver

JANE: (DOES AS SHE IS TOLD. BUT SPEAKS VERY QUIETLY) It's Sid. He says he's pushed for time so tell that poncy Figge to get his finger out

DEREK: Jane. (WALKS BACK TO HER) Wait until I get back to my desk first and then put him through (GOES BACK TO HIS DESK)

JANE: Not be a minute Sid, he's going back to his desk. How's little Sid? Oh good I am pleased it's cleared up. No, I know it can be nasty mumps. Especially if you get 'em at your age...

DEREK: Jane

JANE: That's ok then if you had it when you small. You should be all right. It can be very painful...

DEREK: Jane! You can put him through now

JANE: It can make you, you know, sterile

DEREK: (LOUDER) Jane

JANE: Oh Sid (GIGGLING) Cheeky devil

DEREK: Flippin' 'eck (GETS UP AND COMES TO THE OFFICE DOOR.) Jane. You can put him through now. (GOES BACK TO HIS DESK)

JANE: I'll put you through now Sid. He's done messing about. (SHOUTS) Sid on line two

DEREK: Use the blessed inter... Oh never mind. (ANSWERS PHONE) Sid. What's up?... Look it'll be fine... Yes, yes. Every one you can find. Yes... all of them. Yes...and oh, don't forget the other... Right you've got it... Don't worry (HANGS UP)

#### MAIN PHONE RINGS

JANE: Good morning Cascara and Figge, moving the nation since nineteen twenty-seven... Oh Hello Mrs. Figge, yes he's here. Just a sec. (SHOUTS) Mr. Figge. It's your wife

DEREK: (SHOUTING) Use the bloody intercom

JANE: (GETS UP AND GOES TO THE OFFICE DOOR) What?

DEREK: (SHOUTING) I said use the... (QUIET) use the intercom

JANE: Oh right (GOES BACK TO HER DESK)

DEREK: (FOLLOWING HER TO HIS OFFICE DOORWAY) It doesn't matter now just put her...

JANE: (USING THE INTERCOM) Mr. Figge. Mr Figge. Come in Mr. Figge. Ten four, breaker, breaker, come in rubber duck

DEREK: (DASHING BACK TO HIS DESK. USES THE INTERCOM) Yes Jane  
(NOTHING. TRIES PRESSING THE BUTTON A FEW TIMES) Yes Jane.  
Good grief (GETS UP AND GOES TO THE DOORWAY) Take your finger off.

JANE: What?

DEREK: Take your finger off the button

JANE: Right. Sorry (TAKES FINGER OFF)

DEREK: Thank you

DEREK SITS AT HIS DESK WAITING FOR JANE TO  
CALL HIM. AFTER A PAUSE HE GOES TO THE  
DOORWAY

DEREK: Well?

JANE: Well what?

DEREK: Use the intercom to tell me there's a phone call

JANE: (PRESSES THE BUTTON AND SPEAKS) There's a phone call for you Mr. Figge

DEREK: Not now. Wait until I'm back at my... Oh never mind. Who is it?

JANE: It's Mrs Figge, Mr Figge

DEREK: Oh blast. The plumber. I forgot. Get me the number of that one we used at number thirty two Salisbury Crescent

JANE: Are you sure only...

DEREK: Yes, yes. Now just put the wife through

JANE: Putting you through now Mrs. Figge

DEREK: Hello dear... Yes I have, he's on his way... What? Your feet are getting wet... Eh? Good grief those are Gucci sandals. Why don't you wear your riding boots? What? They don't go with your blouse... No I don't think you should go and change. Have you turned the water off? Good. Just sit tight and wait for the



plumber to get there... He's not going to care what you're wearing. It's the plumber not Trinny and Susanna. Bye (HANGS UP) Jane have you got...

ENTER JANE WITH A POST IT NOTE

JANE: Do you really think you should use him? You know after what happened at Salisbury Crescent

DEREK: Just give me the number Jane

JANE: I just thought...

DEREK: Jane, the number please

JANE: Yeah, but, if you remember

DEREK: Look, he's less expensive than anyone else. (HOLDING HIS HAND OUT) The number

JANE: He's cheap. If you recall, after he put the central heating in you could turn on the tap and the lights would come on. Switch the lights on and water came out of the taps

DEREK: A minor aberration on the technical schematic leading to a rerouting of some of the major services

JANE: Not to mention what happened if you used the loo. That poor woman

DEREK: I paid for counselling didn't I

JANE: He screwed up big style

DEREK: Jane, just give me the number. Whilst you're standing here debating the relative merits or otherwise of the domestic sanitary engineer, it's costing me a fortune in designer footwear

JANE: On your own head be it (GIVES HIM THE POST IT NOTE)

DEREK: Thank you

JANE GOES BACK TO HER DESK

DEREK: (DIALS) Hello. James, my dear boy. \ I have an urgent job for you... No, not a week on Thursday, now

JANE: \ (AT HER DESK. PICKS UP THE PREGNANCY TEST STICK) Oh my God (DIALS THE PHONE) Rita?

DEREK: Yes

JANE: It's gone brown

DEREK: I don't care

JANE: It's the stick thing, it's gone brown?

DEREK: It's not my problem

JANE: But what's that mean?

DEREK: It's an emergency

JANE: I know that

DEREK: Remember the last job you did

JANE: Yeah, I'll have to do it again

DEREK: Damn right you will

JANE: Ok, I'll do it now and ring you back

DEREK: OK. So, grab your tools and get round to my house a.s.a.p (HANGS UP. HAS A DRINK OF HIS COFFEE AND PULLS A FACE) Yuck! I'll kill that cat. Jane!

JANE TRIES TO GET PAST HIM ON HER WAY TO THE  
LOO

JANE: 'scuse me. Got to go to...

DEREK: À la recherché du temps perdu

JANE: Pardon?

DEREK: À la recherché du temps perdu

JANE: That's what I thought you said. if you'll excuse me I need to...

DEREK: Marcel Proust wrote À la recherché du temps perdu

JANE: Good, I'm pleased, I need to go to the...

DEREK: You see Jane, I am well versed in the master's great works

JANE: What's it mean?

DEREK: Jane, Jane, you mean you don't know what À la recherché du temps perdu means?

JANE: It sounds double Dutch to me

DEREK: Everyone knows it's Latin

JANE: Latin? What for?

DEREK: Beware of the dog

JANE : I thought that was Tempus fugit. (STILL TRYING TO GET PAST)

DEREK: Dear Jane, do you not know anything. This is why I'm the boss and you're...

JANE: Trying to get to the loo... Ok. What's it about?

DEREK: What's what about?

JANE: A lap re church do trampled doings, thingy

DEREK: À la recherché du temps perdu?

JANE: That

DEREK: I would have thought it's obvious

JANE: (SARCASTIC) Yes.. Of course it is

DEREK: Absolutely... It's clearly not just about a dangerous canine

JANE: It isn't?

DEREK: Course not. It's more to do with the ethereal concept of the likely existence of a potentially dangerous situation. In an existential manner of speaking

JANE: You've not read it have you?

DEREK: Jane, one doesn't have to have read such a great work to understand the subtle nuances of such a classic. The title says it all

JANE: I thought not (PUSHES PAST HIM)

#### PHONE RINGS

DEREK: Jane! The phone's ring... Oh never mind. (PICKS UP JANE'S PHONE)  
Good Morning Cascara and Figge moving the nation since nineteen twenty seven.  
Sid I don't care what you do with them. Just get rid of them. Anywhere. Bye  
(HANGS UP)

#### ENTER JANICE INTO THE SHOP

Good morning Madam. Welcome to Cascara and Figge. Estate agents of distinction

JANICE: Isn't that an oxymoron?

DEREK: Sorry?

JANICE: Nothing

DEREK: How may I be of assistance today?

JANICE: Strangely enough I'm looking to buy a house

DEREK: In that case madam, can I say that you have come to the right place. Cascara and Figge have been moving people effortlessly for years

JANICE: No kidding

DEREK: Do you have a property that you wish to place on the market?

JANICE: It's sort of on the market

DEREK: Excuse me?

JANICE: I put it up for sale with Blenkinsopp's...

DEREK HAS A NERVOUS TWITCH AT THE MENTION OF  
BLENKINSOPPS

Are you alright?

DEREK: Sorry madam, yes. You were saying?

JANICE: Yes, I put it up for sale with Blen...

DEREK: The other firm

JANICE: Last week but I got up this morning and the sign had disappeared