

ACT I

Time - the present. The action is continuous and takes place in the lounge of a modern house on a summers evening.

(Rex is sitting in the chair reading the newspaper. Linda, his wife, enters.)

Linda For Christ's sake are you still here?

Rex *(Whining)* I don't see why I have to go out.

Linda I told you - they're coming at seven thirty.

Rex So what?

Linda It's a lingerie party!

Rex Well I've seen girls in their knickers before now.

Linda Well you're not going to tonight! Go up and get changed. It isn't usually so difficult to persuade you to go down to the pub!

Rex You're always complaining I don't take enough interest in your friends.

Linda Don't give me that! You couldn't escape quick enough when I had the Crockery Party.

Rex Ah well, it was the snooker finals at the Club that night.

Linda In fact you showed no interest in this party until you knew I'd invited Tracy from next-door.

Rex What are you talking about?

Linda You know very well what I'm talking about. I saw you.

Rex What?

Linda Last Sunday

Rex Sunday?

Linda Yes when you suddenly decided the roses needed pruning.

Rex They did need pruning.

Linda Oh yes? And I suppose it was just a coincidence that the only one you

pruned just happened to be next to the hole in the fence where Tracy was sunbathing on the other side.

Rex I don't know what you're talking about.

Linda We had 18 rose bushes in that back garden. Now we've got 17 and a stump.

Rex You have to cut them back hard you know.

Linda What - in June?

Rex Well, I'll do the others next weekend.

Linda Oh I'm not arguing with you - just go up and get changed. Go on!

Rex I could watch the telly in the bedroom.

Linda Don't be ridiculous - the girls will want to get changed in our bedroom.

Rex I don't mind.

Linda Out!

Rex But-----

Linda Out!

Rex Oh Alright!

Carol *(off)* Yoo Hoo!

Linda In here Carol.

Carol *(Carol enters, Bumps into Rex)* Ooh Rex! Hello - am I the first here? I thought he was going out.

Linda He is.

Rex I don't see why.

Linda Don't sit down again.

Carol What's the matter with him?

Linda He wants to stay to the party.

Carol Why?

Linda Because he knows Tracy's coming that's why.

Carol That's your new neighbour isn't it?

Linda Yes - and I just happened to mention that she might model one or two of the garments---

Rex That's got nothing to do with it!

Linda Oh no Sexy Remy? You are in danger of becoming a Dirty Old Man you know. Anyway you're wasting your time because Tracy isn't doing any modelling - I am!

Rex Oh in that case I'll go up the pub then. (He exits)

Carol You're not modelling are you?

Linda No - do you want a drink?

Carol Ooo lovely yes - I could just do with one - what a day I've had. (*Linda gets drinks*)

Linda White wine OK?

Carol Great! (*She sits down*) Who else is coming tonight then?

Linda Well - there's Dawn, obviously, she's the Rep for Lady Lace - I thought she'd have been here by now - she said seven o'clock - then there's Sharon if she can get a babysitter - and I had to invite Doreen -

Carol Oh no, not after what happened last time!

Linda Well it's difficult.

Carol Why?

Linda When you work with people - you know. Anyway she says she's alright now.

Carol She said that before.

Linda I know, but - she doesn't get out much -

Carol I'm not surprised!

Linda Anyway she's coming - and I've invited Dot from work and she's persuaded Emma to come.

Carol Emma?

Linda Yes - you know - I told you about her - her husband left her at Christmas and she's not been out since.

Carol Oh great! This sounds like its going to be a riot! They'll be Sharon talking non-stop about "THE BABY", this wimp Emma who hasn't emerged for the last 6 months, snotty Dotty and Doreen - well enough said about her!

Linda It'll be alright. You should learn to be more tolerant people can't help the way they are can they?

Carol What's your new neighbour like?

Linda Tracy? Oh she's fine - newlywed - they only moved in a few weeks ago. She's - well - she's an honest type.

Carol What do you mean honest?

Linda Well - sort of - oh you'll see. Her husband seems a nice sort - very ambitious though - the kind that gets on in the world - very good-looking. Talking of which - how's your love life coming along?.

Carol Don't ask! Honestly, I went out with this new bloke from work last night, Kevin. I thought he was really nice - considerate - you know - but it's funny - as soon as a bloke finds out you're divorced something comes over them. You can see it in their eyes "SHE'S DESPARATE!". He's quite right of course I'm seeing him again tomorrow. Talk about an octopus! I wish I could find a real man.

Rex *(off whining)* Linda? - Where's my black socks?

Linda Don't we all dear - don't we all?

Rex *(off)* Linda?

Linda *(shouting)* In the airing cupboard!

Rex *(miffed)* There's no need to shout - I'm not deaf! *(Linda and Carol exchange sympathetic looks. There is a knock at the door)*

Linda Oh - I expect that will be Dawn. *(She exits - noises off - "I'm sorry I'm late --- etc. - Dawn enters Carol gets drink)*

Dawn Oh hello you must be ---

Carol Carol.

Dawn Carol - yes you're er --- er -- *(she waves vaguely in the direction of Linda)*

Carol Linda?

Dawn Linda yes Linda's er - mm -

Carol Sister!

Dawn Sister - yes - super - What a lovely room - super - I'll just get the rest of my things. *(She exits)*

Carol *(mimicking)* Super. *(To Linda)* My God Linda where do you dig them up?

Linda Oh - she's alright.

Carol You attract these sort don't you?

Linda Shut up! *(Dawn enters with a large suitcase/rail for garments puts on table at back of stage)*

Dawn I had a lot of trouble getting this down the drive. Is that your car in the drive - with a little Garfield on the back window?

Carol No - that's Rex's - he loves Garfields. *(Move to rack)*

Dawn Does he? Super. *(Another knock at the door)*

Rex *(off)* I'll get it! I'll get it!

Linda I bet you that's Tracy - he's been watching for her out of the window - I think he's going senile!

Carol He wants locking up for his own good.

Linda Shut up!

Carol Well he does.

Dawn Mmm - Super. *(Rex ushers in Tracy)*

Rex Here we are then - this is Tracy everyone. Now do you know everyone my dear? This is Linda --- *(Linda glares)* but of course you know Linda don't you? And this is Carol, Linda's sister, and this is - er

Dawn Dawn. I'm your Lady Lace Representative for this evening. (*Dawn starts unpacking the lingerie*)

Rex That's right - Dawn.

Tracy Hello.

Rex Sit down my dear. Can I get you a glass of wine?

Linda I'll get it Rex.

Rex No trouble sweetheart - no trouble (*he rushes to the drinks cabinet*). Now what has the little woman opened? Oh Liebfraumilch - nectar of the Rhine Valley no less - not my taste I must admit - I like something with a little more (*he leers at Tracy*) body - but nonetheless --- (*he pours*)

Linda Don't let us keep you Rex.

Rex Oh - I'm in no hurry. Here we are then (*he hands Tracy her drink*) - and what about you my dear?

Dawn Oh no thank you not for me. Lady Lace doesn't approve - not while we're showing our undies. (*Carol chokes - Linda nudges her - Dawn carries on unpacking, Rex watches very intently as something very flimsy indeed is unpacked*)

Rex They're very nice.

Dawn (*Launching into her sales patter*). They are aren't they! We call this our Bambino line - they come in black, white, aquamarine, taupe, magenta and flame. They come with full stretch gusset and peek-a-boo side panel. It's one of our best selling lines - Super. (*She gives the garment to Rex - who holds them rather uncomfortably*)

Carol Try them on Rex - or are they for Garfield?

Linda (*snatching them from Rex*) Now leave things alone Rex - Dawn is trying to get everything set up!

Rex I was only looking.

Linda Well don't.

Dawn Oh no - please it's quite alright. As we always say "Lady Lace for girls designed. But always made with man in mind". Super.

Carol Oh `eck!

Rex *See? (Another knock at the door - Linda goes to answer it. Rex sits as close to Tracy as possible - noises off - Carol goes to look at the display of undies).*

Rex Well - and how are you settling in my dear? I must say Linda and I have always found this a very select neighbourhood - attracting a more discerning class of person - don't you think so?

Tracy Oh it's OK. Actually we're only here temporarily with my Wayne's job. I expect we'll get something better soon.

Rex Oh quite! Quite! Linda and I only stay here for sentimental reasons really. I'm expecting promotion myself any time now and then I expect we'll be moving on too. Most of the people in my office live on the Castlemaine Estate.

Tracy Office? That's funny I thought Linda told me you worked in the Rubber Factory.

Rex Ah yes - but as an Executive in a rubber factory.

Tracy She said you were a Foreman!

Rex Executive Foreman - yes - my job requires a little more aptitude than most - I feel the need to expand with each situation that arises - I like to be mentally stretched. *(Linda has entered during this last - followed by Dot and Emma)*

Linda You'll be physically stretched if you don't make yourself scarce!

Rex Really Linda! I'm sure the ladies wouldn't mind me staying - I'm sure the ladies would benefit from my experience - after all - I've always considered myself rather a connoisseur of....

Linda We haven't got enough chairs - by the time Sharon and Doreen get here we'll be ----

Rex *(in horror)* Doreen? She's not coming is she?

Linda Yes - I invited her yesterday.

Rex *(Hurriedly)* Oh well in that case - - if you're sure you ladies can manage without my wealth of experience - I'll pop to the local - *(he beats a hasty retreat).*

Linda *(to everyone generally)* He's going senile. *(They all nod understandingly)* Now sit down you two - Dot I don't think you've met

Tracy from next door.

Dot Hello dear - Hello Carol.

Carol)
Tracey)

Linda And this is Emma - I don't think you've met Emma.

Carol)
Tracey)

Linda And this is Dawn.

Dawn Hello Ladies - I'm Dawn - your Lady Lace Representative for this evening, super.

Dot)
Emma)

Dot Is that Doreen really coming? My back's still not right from the last time. *(They all sit)*

Linda I'm not sure.

Dot Well I'm not staying if she comes.

Linda Well we'll see. Dot? Emma? White wine?

Dot Not for me dear - I'd sooner have a cup of tea if it's not too much trouble.

Linda Oh right! Emma?

Emma Just a small one thank you. I'm not used to drink.

Dot Quite right too. There's far too much drinking goes on among women in my opinion. It leads to a lot of goings on! *(Linda passes drink to Emma)*

Carol If you're lucky! *(Dot glares at Carol, Tracy laughs, Emma looks worried - the phone rings in the hall).*

Linda Oh Excuse me *(She exits, Everyone looks at one another - exchanging forced smiles - not talking, Carol tries some conversation)*

Carol Not been a very nice day today has it?

All No it hasn't - it's turned quite cold - etc. etc.

Dot I said we'd suffer for the mild winter didn't I?

Emma Yes Dot - you did.

Dawn Well I can assure you ladies that - I'm sure Lady Lace will find something to suit you all - whatever the weather. As we always say "Rain, snow, sleet or storm Lady Lace will keep you warm" Super.

Dot *(disapprovingly picking up something flimsy)* I don't think this would keep anybody warm!

Dawn Well no - not that one perhaps - but that is part of our Bambino range - they come in black, white, aquamarine, taupe, magenta and flame. They have full stretch gusset and peek-a-boo side panel - it's one of our better selling lines. Super. *(She takes it from Dot and puts it back on the display. Linda enters)*

Linda That was Sharon - she's not coming. The baby's vomited all over the baby sitter, who's gone home to change so she can't leave him.

Carol *(sarcastic)* Oh shame!

Dot She's over-feeding him. I told her. He's too fat! He'll suffer for it later on. The damage is always done in the first year! When we were babies, during the war – we didn't have a chance to get fat I can tell you. There wasn't enough food about for that.

Tracy *(innocently)* Still - you've made up for it since haven't you?

Dawn *(quickly)* Do you think we should start - er - *(she can't remember Linda's name)*

Linda Linda!

Dawn Linda that's right. Or are there any more ladies to come?

Linda Well there's Doreen - but she's rather late - perhaps you should start - you can always recap for her when she comes can't you?

Dawn Super.

Dot I think if that Doreen comes we should all sit quiet and perhaps she'll go away.

Linda That's not very charitable Dot.

Dot She's lucky she's not in the Sunday papers she is. *(Dot clears her throat and looks martyred)*

Linda Oh Dot - you haven't got your tea have you? Sorry Dawn - can we just wait until I've made Dot's tea?

Dawn Super. *(Linda exits, More uncomfortable silences and forced smiles).*

Tracy) Has anyone tried---
Dot) I was reading in the paper---

Tracy) Sorry
Dot) Sorry

Tracy You go ahead please --

Dot I was just going to say - I was reading in the paper this morning that there's another ice age on the way. *(No one knows quite how to react to this)* Its effects are already being felt in some parts.

Carol I can believe that.

Dot Aerosols!

Carol My sentiments exactly.

Dot That's what's doing it - upsetting everything.

Tracy I've stopped using them myself.

Emma I never did.

Dawn Well I'd like to assure all you ladies that Lady Lace products are ozone friendly - in fact "Lady Lace are very keen to keep our planet bright and green". Super.

Tracy Oh really - I suppose all you demonstrators are green as well.

Dawn Oh definitely *(More silence, Linda returns with cup of tea)*

Dot Oh thank you.

Tracy I was going to ask earlier if anyone had tried the new Indian Restaurant at the corner of Victoria Street.

Dot Foreign muck! I don't hold with it.

Carol *(smirking)* Oh I don't know - I like a nice Indian myself - it's not always easy to get one in this area though, especially one that speaks English. *(Tracy laughs – Dot glares - Emma looks miserable - Dawn is oblivious)*

Tracy What about you Emma - do you eat out much?

Emma Me? Oh no - that is - well we used to - my husband and I - but that was before - i mean - oh dear -- *(She bursts into tears)* Excuse me - *(She rushes out of the room, Linda shrugs helplessly and goes after her)*

Dot Now see what you've done! It took me a week to persuade her to come here tonight!

Carol I don't know why you bothered.

Dot It's being charitable that's what it is!

Carol I can't understand what's wrong with her. When my old man left I did a cartwheel! I wonder where he is now?

Dot I know exactly where my Ron is - he's at home – cleaning my oven like I told him to. You can believe me or believe me not!

Carol I believe you - I believe you. But you can never be sure can you? I mean look at Emma - I expect she felt sure of her husband before he cleared off.

Dot Ah well - I blame her - she was too soft with him. Let him out on his own too much. It always leads to goings on.

Tracy Do you know. My Wayne doesn't like me doing anything on my own - not even taking a bath.

Dot What? You don't mean to say he comes into the bathroom while your taking a bath?

Tracy Oh no *(pause)* he gets in with me.

Dot Well - I never heard the like - my Ron knows better than to disturb my ablutions I can tell you.

Carol It's caring for the environment Dot. Save water – bath with a friend. Now all I need is a friend.

Dawn Well I don't know about that - but my husband, Maurice, actually insists that I go out. *(Silence)* It's true!

Carol Fancy.

Dawn It was him who brought the Lady Lace brochures home. I wouldn't entertain the idea of leaving him at first. I mean men take so much looking after don't they? And then there are so many little jobs to do in the home – but Maurice insisted. He can be very forceful at times. But I've had to let things go rather - you know - at home. *(She drops to a confidential whisper)*. I must confess I don't service the car anymore. *(Stunned silence)*

Carol Well - I think it's time we had another drink. Tracy?

Tracy Yes please. *(Carol pours more wine)*

Carol What about you Dawn?

Dawn Oh not for me thank you - not while I'm working.

Carol You're not working are you? You're just waiting.

Dawn Well - er -

Carol Oh come on - be a devil!

Dawn Oh alright - just a teensy one.

Carol That's right. Dot?

Dot No thank you - I'll have another cup of tea soon.

Carol Oh go on - everyone else is.

Dot I don't like wine!

Carol Well how about a nice, sweet sherry instead?

Dot I only partake of sherry's at Weddings and Funerals thank you.

Carol *(Pouring her one anyway)* Well this is like a bloody Funeral! Here you are. *(Dot takes it as though it is poison)*

Carol Right - a toast to men everywhere. *(Linda enters)*