

# 'DROP-IN'

By

Brian Havers

A Comedy

## Cast of Characters

Janet Lewis: Middle aged director of the Advice Centre.

Maggie: A volunteer.

Barbara: A volunteer. Similar age to Maggie.

Katie: Young helper in the Advice Centre.

Mr Fosdyke: Official from the local council. Similar age to Rose.

Robert: A young man. Around same age as Katie.

Rose Richardson: An ageing hippie.

Kasimir Gorbovski: A Polish man of similar age or possibly a few years younger than Janet.

Danny: A Council workman

Davie: Katie's brother. Could be played by same actor as Danny

ACT I  
Scene 1

*Janet, the manager of the Drop-In Advice Centre, enters SR carrying several newspapers. She removes yesterday's newspapers from the rack and replaces them with today's. She straightens a few chairs then sits at the desk, picks up a 'worldwide' holiday brochure and starts looking through it. The cordless phone rings and she picks it up.....*

JANET

Good Morning, Advice Centre, Janet speaking, how can I help you?..... Oh, hello David, how are you? You got my message then? Thanks for calling me back. .... What bad news?.....Oh, I see .... Yes, I'm sorry for putting you on the spot with your fellow directors..... You're right of course, I'm afraid we've probably relied a bit too much on your company's donations in the past..... Of course I understand. Money seems to be tight everywhere at the moment, and there are so many other worthwhile organisations in a similar position to us, all constantly needing money. Can I just say thank you once again for all the help that you've given us over the years..... and I wish you and your colleagues well too David. Yes, thanks...bye.

*Janet is deep in thought. Maggie and Barbara enter SL. As they are taking off their coats they are initially oblivious to Janet's presence..*

BARBARA

He said to me "Go on, it won't hurt you". I said "What, with my back?" There's no way I'm getting into that position. I mean after all, he only gets it out two or three times a year these days anyway. When we were younger we did it every weekend and I had no trouble with it then. Well you can when you're young can't you?

MAGGIE

So what happened?

BARBARA

Well, he had to go to the classic motorbike meeting on his own..... Well, you know I've always been a martyr to my back. I can go for weeks sometimes without a hint of trouble, then all of a sudden 'TWANG' something goes. It's not dignified anyway, sitting legs akimbo on that rusty old thing.

MAGGIE

You should exercise more. You know? Sit-ups, touching your toes, that sort of thing.

BARBARA

If God had wanted me to touch my toes, he would've fitted them to my knees. Give me your coat. Good morning Janet.

*Janet remains deep in thought. Barbara takes her and Maggie's coats and exits SR.*

MAGGIE

Mornin'. How are you this bright and beautiful morning? *(Janet remains deep in thought)*.. Are you okay Janet? Everything alright?.... Janet? Janet?

JANET

Oh. Good morning Maggie. How are you?

MAGGIE

I'm alright, but what about you. You were away with the fairies just then. What's the matter?

JANET

Nothing's the matter. I'm fine, really. Where's Barbara? You two usually arrive together.

MAGGIE

Now I know there's something up. We did arrive together. If you can sit through two minutes of Babs' yakking and not hear a thing, then you must either have a serious hearing problem or have something pretty serious on your mind.

JANET

Really, I'm okay. Honest.

MAGGIE

Hang on a minute. I know what it is.

JANET

You do?

MAGGIE

*(Picking up the holiday brochure)* It's this isn't it? You were dreaming of lying on a beach in a far off land.

JANET

Actually, I was looking at Peru. *(Maggie starts sweeping the floor)*

MAGGIE

Oh no, no. Not Peru. It's all mountains, potatoes and pan pipes. No, you wouldn't catch me in a place like that. I'd rather go somewhere exotic, like Majorca.

*Janet remains sitting at the desk, thinking to herself. Maggie continues sweeping the floor and starts singing. Barbara returns with a cloth and wipes the tables*

BARBARA

I'd sue if I were you.

MAGGIE

Eh?

BARBARA.

The singing teacher, I'd sue him if I were you.

MAGGIE

But I'm not having singing lessons.

BARBARA

It was a joke you idiot.

*Barbara and Maggie look over at Janet.*

MAGGIE

Come on. It's not just a holiday on your mind is it? There is something else isn't there?

JANET

I've told you. There's absolutely nothing wrong. Now, you'll have to excuse me for a little while. I have a phone call to make. I'll be in the office if you need me. *(She exits SR, taking the cordless phone with her)*

MAGGIE

There's definitely something not quite right about her this morning. She's never usually that secretive is she.

BARBARA

How do you mean?

MAGGIE

Well, she never usually goes into the office to make phone calls does she? And she's taken the phone with her when there's already one in there. That can only mean one thing.

BARBARA

Yes. You won't be able to listen in. Ha Ha.

MAGGIE

Yeah. Bit of a blow that.... But there's something going on, just as sure as eggs are eggs. You mark my words.

BARBARA

It's just your over-active imagination running away with you again. You're not happy unless you think there's some sort of conspiracy going on.

MAGGIE

Hey. Don't knock it. You can't beat a good conspiracy theory to liven up a dreary day.

BARBARA

The workings of your mind remain a complete mystery to me.

MAGGIE

There is nothing wrong with having a vivid imagination.

BARBARA

Alright then Miss Marple. What is it that you think is bothering her?

MAGGIE

Well.....She could be looking for a proper job couldn't she? After all, she *is* the only one of us here who actually gets paid, but she pays herself peanuts doesn't she? Or she could have found a boyfriend at last. I mean, have you ever seen her with a bloke, eh? eh?

BARBARA

Come to think of it, no I haven't. We've known her what.... five or six years, and there's never been a sniff of a man in her life.

MAGGIE

Eeeugh Babs. Not a nice choice of phrase that. But at least you're beginning to open your mind up to other possibilities. Good fun isn't it?

BARBARA

Of course there is another possibility that you haven't thought of, and it could explain the absence of members of the opposite sex in her life.

MAGGIE

What's that then?

BARBARA

Well as you said, we've never seen her with a man.

MAGGIE

No.

BARBARA

Well? Think about it.

MAGGIE

You don't mean?

BARBARA

Well anything is possible.

MAGGIE

You mean she could be..... er...thingy? You know? Batting for the other side.

BARBARA

You *are* allowed to say the actual word you know.

MAGGIE

Alright then. Do you think she's a LESBIAN!

*Janet enters*

JANET

Lesbian? Who's a lesbian?

MAGGIE

Oh...er....er, no-one in particular. I don't know how, but we somehow managed to get onto that subject.

BARBARA

Well it's quite acceptable these days isn't it? If I knew anyone who was that way inclined, that is any friends or acquaintances, I wouldn't treat them any differently from anybody else. Would you Mags?

MAGGIE

No, not at all.

BARBARA

I mean, if you were to suddenly announce that you were one, or even you Janet....well, we are all women of the world after all aren't we?

MAGGIE

Well I can say without a shadow of a doubt that I am not one. What about you Jan?

JANET

No I am not one either, as you so eloquently put it Maggie.

*Katie enters*

KATIE

Hiya. Y'alright?

JANET

Hello Katie.

MAGGIE

Hello Katie. Will Robert be dropping in today by any chance?

KATIE

I don't know. How would I know. I don't know what you mean. What makes you think that I would know whether or not Robert will be coming in.

MAGGIE

Come on. There's no point in hiding it. We've seen the way you look at each other. I don't know why you haven't just grabbed hold of him by now and snogged his face off.

BARBARA

Leave her alone Maggie. You're embarrassing her.

MAGGIE

Only joshin' with you Katie. Mind you, he is rather tasty isn't he? I mean - if I was a few years younger, I wouldn't mind....

BARBARA

A few decades you mean.

MAGGIE

Blimin' cheek!

JANET

Thank you ladies. Thank you. Take no notice of them Katie. Would you mind popping into the office and finishing off the filing that's on the desk in there please?

KATIE

Okay Jan. *(She exits SR and cheekily sticks her tongue out at Maggie when she passes. Maggie returns the gesture)*

JANET

Actually, she could do a lot worse than Robert couldn't she. I know he's currently living in the hostel and he's jobless at the moment, but I have a good feeling about him. I'm sure that he's going to come good soon, you just wait and see. He's an honest, well mannered young man. Quite mature for his age.

BARBARA

Would you like a cup of tea Janet?

JANET

Do you know? I thought you were never going to ask.

BARBARA

*(To Maggie)* Come on you. You can make us one of your legendary and totally unhealthy bacon sandwiches. *(They exit SR)*

*Janet sits at the desk and looks through papers and talks to herself.*

JANET

Come on Janet Lewis. You can do this. It's only a few overdue bills. We've been in financial trouble before and always found a way out of it. Think woman, think. There must be something you can do.

*Mr Fosdyke enters SL carrying a briefcase*

MR. FOSDYKE

Ah, good Morning Mrs Lewis. I'm glad I've found you alone.

JANET

It's Miss actually. Good morning Mr Fosdyke. To what do I owe the pleasure? I don't for one minute expect that this is a social call.

MR. FOSDYKE

First of all Miss Lewis, may I just say that it gives me no pleasure at all in having to persistently put pressure upon the Drop-in Centre and indeed your good self. However, it falls upon me to remind you once again that your business rates are now almost a full year overdue.

JANET

I don't need reminding Mr Fosdyke.

MR. FOSDYKE

Then we can only assume that you either do not have the funds to settle the debt, or you simply don't intend to.

JANET

We don't quite have the money at this moment in time, but only this morning I have been speaking to one of our corporate benefactors, and I am sure that very soon, we will be in a position to.....

MR. FOSDYKE

Let me stop you there Mrs Lewis.

JANET

Miss. It's Miss.

*Maggie enters with a mug of tea*

MAGGIE

There you are Janet.

JANET

Thanks Maggie.

MAGGIE

Would the gentleman like one?

JANET

No. Mr Fosdyke won't be staying. *(Maggie exits SR)*

MR. FOSDYKE

Miss Lewis. As I informed you last week, the Town Council has run out of patience. The amount outstanding now exceeds four thousand, five hundred pounds. You, that is the Drop-in Centre, have had ample opportunity to settle the arrears and I must remind you also that you already benefit from a substantial rate reduction.

JANET

All I am asking for is a couple of weeks more. I am convinced that we will soon be able to settle the debt.

MR. FOSDYKE

As I have said - the time for waiting is over. We have given you fair warning. It is now my duty to advise you that unless the full amount of four thousand, five hundred and twenty pounds is paid by the close of business tomorrow, then as I advised you last week, we will have no option but to close you down. *(He hands her a legal looking document)*

JANET

But you have no right to simply waltz into the Centre and take over the premises.

MR. FOSDYKE

On the contrary, we have every right. Have you forgotten that the building is owned by the Town Council? When you took over the premises, the agreement was, that the Centre could remain here on a rent free basis on the strict condition that your rates were kept up to date.

JANET

*(Upset)* Right. I see. That's it then. The end of of the Drop-in Centre. Just like that. Have you any idea how many people we have helped over the years we have been operating?

MR. FOSDYKE

I appreciate that you offer a valuable service here and have helped many people. Maybe it would have been wise to have spent just a little more time dealing with the Centre's financial problems instead of concentrating solely on other peoples.

JANET

That's not fair Mr Fosdyke. You know we rely totally on charitable contributions.

MR. FOSDYKE

I realise that Mrs...sorry, *Miss Lewis* but unfortunately, as I am sure you are aware, we cannot bend the rules just for charitable organisations such as yours. We have to be seen to be fair. Look, I'm afraid I have to go. I have several more calls to make.

JANET

Going to brighten up someone else's day are you?

MR. FOSDYKE

I beg your pardon?

JANET

Off to upset some other poor unsuspecting souls are you? Throw someone out of their house maybe?

MR. FOSDYKE

There is nothing to be gained from my bandying words with you *Miss Lewis*. I will call in tomorrow. I bid you good day. *(He exits SL leaving his briefcase behind on the floor)*

JANET

Goodbye, and good bloody riddance! Bastard!

*Janet sits and ponders. Robert enters SL - dressed for a job interview.*

ROBERT

Hello Mrs Lewis!

JANET

MISS..MISS..Its MISS Lewis! Why on earth can't anyone seem get it right?!

ROBERT

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. I didn't mean any harm. Sorry.

JANET

No. It's me that should be sorry Robert. That was uncalled for. Please forgive me. I have a lot on my mind, but I've got absolutely no right to take it out on you.

ROBERT

That's okay Miss Lewis. Is there anything I can do to help?

JANET

Thank you Robert. That's very kind, but this is something I have to sort out myself. Anyway, I must say, you do look smart today. Do you have another job interview?

ROBERT

Yes. This afternoon. It's with that big electrical company on the industrial estate. I'm really hopeful this time. That's what I am you know... by trade...an electrician. I was wondering. Do you think someone would be able to help me fill in my job application form, you know, with spelling and stuff?

JANET

I am sure we'll be able to help you. Take a seat for a little while and I'll send Katie out to go through it with you just as soon as she's finished what she's doing in the office. You're not in too much of a hurry are you?

ROBERT

*(Sitting)* No, no. My interview isn't until half past two, so I'm okay for a while yet.