

Scene: Back drop of a hole in an earth bank. Table and two chairs either stage left or just off front of stage. Opens to Geoff made up to look like a mouse, stood with a wheel- barrow in front of the hole. Helen, and Kate, who is made up like a mouse sit at table.

Helen: All right people this is the technical rehearsal tonight so I won't be looking so much at your acting but at getting the sound and lights correct. OK? Are you ready Daphne?

Kate: You'll be all right tonight Geoff. Just be your usual rotten self.

Geoff: Love you too Kate.

Daphne: **(Off)** As I'll ever be Helen. Do you want to open to daylight or evening?

Helen: Full daylight dear if you please. Are you ready Richie?

Richie: **(Off)** All fired up and raring to go. I'm stood at the end of the runway just waiting for the green light sis.

Kate: Who is Richie, Helen?

Helen: He's my brother in law.

Geoff: Another one?

Helen: I'm afraid so. I do have two sisters you know. But he doesn't like trains.

Kate: That's good news Helen.

Helen: He's into plane spotting.

Geoff: What? You can't be serious.

Helen: When he was young all he could think about was joining the Air Force. When he was sixteen he went to join but failed the medical. They said he had flat feet. Of course I've got flat feet he told them, if they weren't flat then I'd fall over. He lost all interest then until about ten years ago the company he works for asked him to man a stand at the Farnborough air show. That was it, he was hooked again. My sister says they don't go on holiday they go to the air show.

Kate: The poor woman.

Helen: I know! But we're safe because I dropped a CD with all the sound tracks on off at his house last night. Come along now let's get on with it.

Kate: Where are all the children? Don't you need them for this rehearsal?

Helen: Yes I do need them Kate, and I don't know where they are. I did ask their parents to have them here for six but we're past that now.

Betty: **(Entering holding a three foot long cat's paw.)** They're not coming.

Helen: Not coming? Why ever not?

Betty: Well Jason and his sister, you know the one with the funny name, went on holiday this morning to Italy. Julian's mum won't let him come because he poured paint all over Mandy Wainwright's head at school and got a detention. Mandy's mum says that she's not going anywhere until all the paint has been washed out of her hair. The three little ones can't come because their mum has to work, she's on the checkout at the supermarket and someone cried off so they asked her to cover.

Helen: God no!

Betty: It's all right for you Helen but I went to all the trouble and expense of making their costumes. That cockerel alone took me two weeks to make. It makes you want to spit.

Kate: Don't do it on stage Betty, Geoff might slip on it. Mind you it might make him look better.

Helen: You mean that we won't be having any children at all? Not even for the performances?

Betty: Oh we might get them for the performances. Well all except Jason and his sister that is.

Geoff: What colour paint was it Betty?

Betty: I don't know Geoff why?

Geoff: Well if it was red then she could play the cockerel and you do away with the headdress.

Betty: That's the bit that took me the longest to make.

Kate: You unfeeling pig.

Geoff: Sorry Betty. It was meant as a joke. I know how hard you've worked at these costumes. They look great. Especially Kate's. She looks fantastic in it. Mind you she looks fantastic all the time.

Kate: Ignore the creep Betty they are wonderful..... What did you say Geoff?

Helen: Come along children. Playtime's over let's get on. We don't want to be here all night do we?

Kate: What did you say Geoff?

Geoff: I said that you looked great in your costume. You look better out of it though.

Kate: Neanderthal!

Helen: You two should get together you know.

Kate: I beg your pardon?

Helen: I said you and Geoff should get together.

Kate: We are together when we're here.

Helen: No! I mean you should start seeing each other romantically.

Kate: Me and the Neanderthal? That's a good one.

Helen: Mmm the Neanderthal and the Ice maiden sounds good.

Kate: Ice maiden? Is that what he calls me?

Helen: That's what everyone calls you Kate.

Kate: Do they? They don't say it to my face.

Helen: When Geoff heard them calling you that he told them to make sure you didn't hear them.

Kate: Why would he do that?

Helen: So as not to hurt your feelings.

Kate: But why should he want to protect me Helen?

Helen: Maybe because he loves you Kate. God knows he's said it enough times.

Kate: I know but I thought that he was simply trying to wind me up.

Helen: The Ice Maiden and the Neanderthal has a certain ring to it don't you think?

Kate: But I insult him quite openly. I call him all sorts of names.

Helen: And he doesn't even bat an eyelid does he?

Kate: No he doesn't.

Helen: I think you ought to open your eyes and start to live in the now and see what you could have. Instead of living in the past and seeing what might have been.

Kate: What do you mean Helen?

Helen: Well Geoff has a good job at the hospital. He has his own house and car. And above all Kate, he is crazy about you. You only have to see that look in his eyes whenever you walk in to the room.

Kate: Really? I've never noticed.

Helen: That's because you're too tied up with the past. Sorry Kate but someone has to bring you into the present.

Kate: No I'm pleased you did. Wow! I'll keep my eyes open in future.

Helen: Right. Come along people. Rehearsal time. From the top Geoff please, oh and people unless you can remember the tune just say the words to the songs, if you can say them in a sing-songy way that would be better.

Geoff: These songs Helen are a bit corny, can't we just skip them? Who wrote them anyway?

Helen: I did Geoff. They're meant to be corny it's a pantomime.

Geoff: Sorry Helen.

Betty: I thought Mavis was giving the musical accompaniment on her organ.

Helen: She is Betty but she can't make it tonight.

(Exit Betty.)

Geoff: ***(Wiping his brow with his sleeve.)*** Here I am doing all this work building a new home but my life isn't whole. What am I doing it for? Who am I doing it for? What I need is someone to give my life purpose and meaning.

Daphne: ***(Off)*** I don't see how we're going to get this shadow Helen.

Helen: Forget the shadow Daphne. Just duck as though you've seen a shadow Geoff.

Geoff: If you say so Helen. ***(He runs back to the entrance of the hole.)***
Drat that Kestrel, does he never stop hunting?

(Peers out then runs to his wheel barrow and runs back to the hole with it. Picks up a spade.)

Geoff: **Why don't you just rest and relax in the sun instead of digging this home?.....**

Helen: ***(Interrupting.)*** Betty! Do you think you could be Harry's other half please.

Betty: ***(Off)*** Do you mean be his conscience?

Helen: Yes please dear.

Betty: **(Off)** I'm a bit pushed back here but I'll do it.

Helen: If you have a script Betty. We'll start that bit again. Sorry people.
From Why don't you, Betty.

Betty: **(Off)** Got it. **Why don't you just rest and relax in the sun instead of digging this home? Why are you working yourself to a standstill? When you could be lazing on the warm grass above.**

Geoff: **No! Come on lazy thing if I don't get this tunnel dug I'll have nowhere to bring someone back to when I find them. And I'll not have anywhere warm and comfortable to sleep come the winter. (He leans on his spade.) I've had enough of talking to myself, of being alone. It's time I had someone to talk to, to share this hole with. Mind how can I bring someone home to a half-finished hole?**

Betty: **They'll just have to put up with it that's all. They can help me or leave.**

Geoff: **No! No they can't leave, once I've talked them into coming here then I would want them to stay and help me finish my beautiful new home. Well it will be beautiful when it's finished. They can help me by putting their mark on it. I'll do all the hard work and they! Well most of the hard work. MMmmm! Some of the hard work and they can help by doing the decorating and things. I'll line this tunnel with wood, I think that will look quite good, then off to the right there'll be the kitchen and then the living room. To the left there'll be the bedrooms. Now the question is how many bedrooms do I need? Well at the moment I only need one but hopefully in time I'll need more, or should that be, we'll need more, but how many? Three or four? Ha! I'm becoming a poet and don't know it.**

Daphne: **(Off)** Why have you stopped? I was enjoying that.

Helen: We stopped because you should have put the lights off for the scene change then put them back on again.

Daphne: **(Off)** Should I? I don't think it's on my script to do that. What page are we on?

Helen: Page five Daphne.

Daphne: **(Off)** Oh yes I see it. Sorry. Do you want the backdrop changing as well Helen?

Helen: What does it say in your script Daphne?

Daphne: **(Off)** Let me see. Oh yes scene change to kitchen. Righto

(Lights go off then the stage is lit by green light.)

Helen: Wrong lights Daphne.

Daphne: ***(Off)*** Are they? Sorry. You want the day light again do you? It is dark back here you know? I think the bulb must have blown, I can hardly read my knitting pattern.

Helen: Please dear. ***(To Kate.)*** She's bloody well knitting during a tech rehearsal? I'll kill her. I'll bloody well kill her.

Kate: Calm down Helen. You know what she's like. If you upset her she'll not do anther play and we need her.

Helen: I know you're right Kate, but bloody hell knitting during a tech rehearsal.

Kate: You know Helen. Geoff is quite good looking, for a Neanderthal that is.

Helen: God you are hopeless Kate.

(Lights change to daylight. The back drop changes to the kitchen inside of Harry's home. A small table and two chairs centre stage. Harry packing his bag.)

Geoff: **Drat my sleeping in. I meant to set off first thing this morning but now the sun is high in the sky. I just hope that old Kestrel is off looking somewhere else right now.**

(Lights go down and up again a few seconds later but green. Geoff exits. The back drop has changed to a green tunnel.)

(Geoff running onto stage. Sound of a Spitfire going past)

Helen: What the hell was that Rickie?

Rickie: ***(Off)*** A Spitfire. Great isn't it?

Helen: It's supposed to be a Kestrel not a bloody Spitfire Rickie.

Rickie: ***(Off)*** But I don't have the sound for a Kestrel Helen.

Helen: I gave you a CD with all the sounds on. What have you done with that?

Rickie: ***(Off)*** Is that the one you pushed through the letter box the other day?

Helen: Yes it is. So you've got it. You've just left it at home have you?

Rickie: ***(Off)*** Oh! Yes! It's not at home well not exactly. The dog had it.

Helen: What do you mean the dog had it?

Rickie: ***(Off)*** Well I heard the letterbox go but before I could get there the dog had this thing in his mouth and it shattered into a million pieces.

Helen: It took me bloody days to make that CD up. I'll do you another and bring it tomorrow.

Rickie: **(Off)** Can I use this CD instead then Helen?

Helen: If you must Rickie. Try to ignore the sound effects folks. But due to circumstances beyond my control we don't have the correct ones. Carry on Geoff.

Rickie: **(Off)** Better than Neville's trains though Helen eh?

Helen: Why couldn't my sisters have married normal men?

Kate: Is there such a thing Helen?

Helen: You know I don't think there is Kate, no.

Geoff: **Now do I walk on the path or struggle alongside it? I'll risk it on the path and hope that I don't meet anything.**

(He stops and looks back.)

Rickie: **(Off)** It says on my script that it should be bird sounds Helen.

Helen: That's right Rickie.

Rickie: **(Off)** I've got a Charlie one thirty Hercules taking off or an Airbus one hundred. Which one would you like Helen?

Helen: **(Putting her head in her hands with her elbows on the table.)** I don't really care Rickie.

Rickie: **(Off)** Right well we'll have the Hercules than shall we?

(Sound of Hercules taking off.)

Betty: **(Off)** You should be sat in a chair by the front door with your feet up, reading a good book. But here you are off to who knows where, and you'll find who knows what. Plus the further you walk away from your lovely little home the further you'll have to walk back. Maybe you should be sensible and go home. It's very off putting you know Helen.

Helen: What is Betty?

Betty: **(Off)** That aeroplane noise.

Helen: Try to ignore it Betty, we won't have it for the performances. We'd better not anyway.

Geoff: **No! I've built a house for two or more. I need someone in my life.**

Betty: **(Off) But life would be quiet on your own, no one to tell you to sweep the steps or gather seeds.**

Geoff: **No one to cuddle up to during the long winter nights. I must go on.**

Betty: **(Off) Why? All the seeds and berries you gather will be your own; there'll be no need to share them.**

Geoff: **That's because I'll be lonely and I'll grow old with no one to look after me.**

Betty: **(Off) Who needs looking after? You are young and fit, well fittish.**

Geoff: **But one day I'll be old and won't be able to do the things I can do now so I'll need help.**

Betty: **(Off) Never! You'll never grow old and feeble.**

Geoff: **That's what my father thought and look what happened to him, he was too slow to outrun the Kestrel.**

Betty: **(Off) But he was unfit from all that sitting and reading. You'll keep yourself fit and healthy. Do you want me to do this on performance nights as well Helen?**

Helen: **No I'll be doing it then Betty, but I must stay out here and concentrate on this tech rehearsal.**

Betty: **(Off) Right-oh, but I'm rushed off my feet round here you know.**

Helen: **I'll give you a hand on performance nights but I have to see if everything is running smoothly tonight.**

Betty: **(Off) Even without the sound effects.**

Helen: **Yes even without the sound effects Betty.**

Geoff: **The only way I'll do that is by finding someone to share my life with, so come on sluggard, put my best foot forward and go on.**

Song:

The road goes on and on,

I just don't know how long I'll be gone.

Will my little house be safe without me?

By the stream near the old oak tree.

*What will I find along the way?
If I find her will she stay?
With me for ever and ever,
Or will she say with me never.
Over hill and down the dale,
Somehow I know that I'll not fail.
In my quest to find my love,
To share my house like a dove.
And together we'll live forever and a day,
I know that I'll never stray.*

*The road goes ever on and on,
I just don't know how long I'll be gone.
Will my little house be safe without me?
By the stream near the old oak tree.*

*I'll walk and walk until I find,
A little someone who is in the same mind.
Who is searching for the one,
To share their life with and will come.
Back to my little house by the stream,
Where together we'll make the perfect team.
And live our lives out side by side,
In the country so free so wild.*

*The road goes ever on and on,
I just don't know how long I'll be gone.*

Will my little house be safe without me?

By the stream near the old oak tree.

(He carries on walking. Lights down then up again still green. Back drop of a cross roads.)

Geoff: Now which way do I go? There are no signposts to tell me where's where. Do I go left, which might take me to the forest? Do I go right which could take me to the farm yard? Or do I go straight on which could take me to more fields. I know, I'll spin my coin.

(He takes his pack off and removes a large coin from it.)

Geoff: Heads I go left, tails I go right. ***(He spins the coin on its edge.)*** It's heads, I go left. So I'll spin it again. Heads I go left and tails I go straight on. ***(He spins the coin.)*** Mm! It's tails. That means straight on. Just to be sure I'll spin it again. Heads I go a straight on, tails I go right. ***(He spins the coin.)*** Heads. I go straight on. I only hope it doesn't take me to the farmyard.

(He puts the coin back into his pack. And starts to walk on. Lights down then up still green. Backdrop changes to green tunnel.)

Geoff: This tunnel is getting narrower and darker. If it gets any darker I'll not be able to see if anything is waiting to catch me. Just a minute. ***(He stops)*** What's that I can smell?

(A big paw comes from stage right across the stage in front of him.)

Andy: Where do you think you're going little man?

Geoff: Please sir, I'm not sure where I'm going, but I'll know when I get there.

Andy: Are you lost little one?

Geoff: No sir. I know exactly where I am.

Andy: You know where you are do you little one? Then I don't need to tell you that if you turn your head to the left you'll see my father looking at you and licking his lips.

(Geoff Jumps back as another big paw comes across from stage left.)

Geoff: Thank you. But why did you warn me? I could have been your dinner.

Andy: **You wouldn't have been my dinner; you'd have been his snack. If you come this with me I'll make sure you get safely across the farmyard out of his way.**

(Second paw exits.)

Geoff: **Why would you do that for me? I am after all, a cat's meal.**

Andy: **Because I'm not hungry at the minute and I know that my father will only play with you until he gets bored, when he might kill you or leave you to die in pain.**

Geoff: **But how do I know you won't do that to me?**

Andy: **I've told you that I'm not hungry right now so I'll take you to safety. Besides I'm not too fond of mice, not enough meat on them for my taste. And I prefer my meat out of a tin. Come along and be quick, my father has gone but he'll be back, he knows of a way into that hedgerow.**