

OPEN WIDE

ACT 1

Scene 1

It is ten minutes to seven on a Saturday evening in summer. Roger' s ground- floor flat is tastefully furnished. A gentle piece by Mozart plays on the stereo. There is a side-table with plenty of glasses and bottles on show, and a fine selection of nibbles. As the curtain opens Roger is flitting about adjusting things. Although it is still daylight he switches on a lamp, draws the curtains and lights two taper candles on the side-table. Pleased with the effect, he hums to himself, goes to the mirror, checks his teeth and his breath and rubs his hands. He seems satisfied with everything. Then his expression changes. He looks at his watch, goes to the bathroom door and says, with some degree of agitation...

ROGER. I hate to rush you, but how much longer do you think you're going to be in there? (*He listens, but there is no response.*)...You said you were just going to powder your nose...(*Still nothing. Exasperated, he plumps the cushions on the settee and fiddles with the coffee table, switches off the stereo, checks himself in the mirror and returns to the bathroom door.*) Are you all right?...You haven't had a heart attack, or

something? (*to himself*) God, I hope not. First aid never was my strong point!

(*There is the sound of a toilet flushing, and then the bathroom door opens and Sid appears, drying his hands. He wears scruffy jeans and an old sports vest.*)

SID. You're a life saver!

ROGER. Open the window, for Gods sake!

SID. Sorry!

(*Sid goes back into the bathroom*)

ROGER. And then, if you wouldn't mind leaving. Nothing personal...you're just in the way.

(*Sid re-enters.*)

SID. Oh, yes?...In the way?

(*He helps himself to some nibbles.*)

ROGER. (*picking bits up*) Be careful, you're dropping crumbs on the carpet.

SID. You're not usually so particular.

ROGER. I've explained...

SID. Oh yes, you've explained...but all this lot...you're up to something.

ROGER. I've told you...it's a business meeting. I've invited a work colleague round, that's all.

SID. (*suggestively*) For nibbles?

ROGER. Do call again...

SID. It *is* a woman, though, isn't it?

ROGER. Sarah *is* a woman, yes.

SID. I knew it!

ROGER. But then with a name like Sarah there's a reasonable chance she would be.

SID. You're so cool!

ROGER. Sidney, it's not an arrestable offence...

SID. You know your trouble, don't you?

ROGER. No, but you're going to tell me anyway.

SID. You don't know when you're well off.

ROGER. Is that a fact?

SID. If Pamela had any idea what you were up to...

ROGER. (*With mock alarm*) Goodness, is that the time! If you don't hurry you're going to miss the kick-off.

SID. You've had it too easy.

ROGER. Are you kidding! You should try fiddling around in people's mouths all day!

SID. I'm talking about Pamela. A woman like that would be more than enough for most men!

ROGER. (*after a pause*) What's that supposed to mean?

SID. You don't deserve her.

ROGER. True, true!

SID. (*still nibbling*) Mind you, I suppose it's only to be expected. I was listening to this phone-in the other morning...

ROGER. When were you ever up before mid-day?

SID. It reckoned dentists were the second most sexually active group...after funeral directors.

ROGER. Given half a chance! Look Sidney, it's nice that you feel so at home here, and so concerned about my moral welfare, but will you please shove off?

SID. Don't you feel even a twinge of guilt?

ROGER. Ask me in the morning!

SID. You *are* up to something!

ROGER. It's a level playing field, Sid. Pam knows the score. We've agreed it's best for both of us if we take a breather...

SID. A breather...?

ROGER. We've been getting on one another's nerves lately. You must have noticed? We both need a break.

SID. And you just happen to have a bit of totty lined up...

ROGER. I've told you, it's a business meeting.

SID. Pull the other one...

ROGER. Now we've gone private we're making a number of changes. Sarah's got some ideas about the new uniforms, that's all.

SID. On a Saturday evening? Who d' you think you're kidding?

ROGER. It's as good a time as any...Sarah's really into uniforms!

SID. What?

ROGER. Why am I even discussing this with you? (*pushing him to the door*) Goodbye Sid.

SID. You could always pass Pamela on to me!

ROGER. Now that *would* be casting pearls before swine!

SID. At least I know how to treat a woman.

ROGER. Yes, a pie and a pint and Match of the Day!

(*The door bell rings. Roger becomes agitated.*)

Oh, God! surely it's not her yet! It's only ten to...What's she going to think?

SID. About what?

ROGER. How do I explain you? You'll have to be a tradesman.

SID. You're a snob as well.

ROGER. Only with you. That's the trouble with these flats, there's no escape route...except the window.

SID. Get lost! I am not climbing through a window!

ROGER. I was thinking of throwing you out of it.

SID. Introduce me.

ROGER. Are you mad? Wait in the bedroom.

SID. Won't you be needing that?

ROGER. Not till later. I'll sneak you out somehow. Look, stay out of the way and there's a tenner in it for you.

SID. I'll see what I can do.

(Roger shoves him in the bedroom. He goes to the door and opens it. A policeman stands there.)

ROGER. Oh!

CRISPIN. *(taking off his helmet)* Good evening sir. I'm sorry to trouble you.

ROGER. Good evening Officer.

CRISPIN. I bet you're surprised to see me?

ROGER. Why, do I know you?

CRISPIN. No, no, I mean it's unusual for a policeman to knock on your door on a Saturday evening.

ROGER. How do you know that? Maybe it happens every Saturday evening.

CRISPIN. Oh!

ROGER. A good police officer never makes assumptions.

CRISPIN. I'm sorry. I haven't been in the job very long.

ROGER. It shows. You'd better step inside.

CRISPIN. Thank you sir. I won't keep you long.

ROGER. Good, good...because I'm expecting someone any minute.

CRISPIN. So I observe sir...from the very effective low lighting...and the array of delicious looking food on display.

ROGER. Yes, yes...How can I help you Officer? Nothing wrong, I hope?

CRISPIN. There's no need to be alarmed sir. I'm just calling on local residents and advising them to be vigilant.

ROGER. Vigilant?

CRISPIN. We've received a report of a young man acting suspiciously in the vicinity of these flats.

ROGER. I see.

CRISPIN. You're probably aware of the drugs problem in the area. You get some funny types hanging round.

ROGER. Really?

CRISPIN. You wouldn't believe! *(confidentially)* We pulled in one chap last week. He had half a kilo of marijuana down his trousers.

ROGER. What?

CRISPIN. Sewn into the lining...It's a favourite trick.

ROGER. Well that's very interesting...

CRISPIN. We think this chap's a carrier for Mr. Big.

ROGER. Who?

CRISPIN. The big spider in the middle of the web.

