

Act 1

Scene 1- Sitting room

(Lights up. Tabs open. The scene is the sitting room of Max's house somewhere in suburbia. Door at back of stage leading from entrance hall. Door to kitchen stage right. Door to garden stage left. A couple of settees, odd easy chairs. Drinks cabinet and a bookshelf. A few greetings cards on the shelves. Some pictures on walls. Generally tidy. When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Enter Beryl from garden door. She is followed by Brian – they tread carefully, as intruders do, looking around them and taking in their surroundings. They speak in hushed tones and examine the furniture, ornaments, pictures on walls etc)

Brian: I'm surprised your old door key still works Beryl. How long is it since you've been here?

Beryl: Years. *I'm* not surprised though – Max never was one for change.

Brian: Why don't you just tell them straight out what's going on? After all, I'll bet you put up some cash when he bought the place.

Beryl: When *we* bought the place, you mean - Max and me! Anyway, I told you - I'll let them know I'm back when I know *exactly* how much Max was worth when he died. Bruce said it must be a pretty penny.

Brian: Yeah – pity they didn't mention *that* in the newspaper.

Beryl: They didn't mention *anything* in the newspaper. Max hated newspapers. Said they were only good for putting your chips in.

Brian: So how do you know your husband has finally departed?

Beryl: Text.

Brian: He sent you a text on his deathbed?

Beryl: No, you idiot. Christine sent me a text.

Brian: Your daughter Christine?

Beryl: No, a complete stranger *I've* never heard of texted me to tell me that my estranged husband had finally kicked the bucket! Get real, Brian!

Brian: Well, that was nice of her.

Beryl: She's the only one who still talks to me. Mind you, she doesn't know who I *really* am.

(Pause)

Brian: Anyway, this is a well-to-do neighbourhood, so the house itself must be worth a bob or two. **(Looks around)**. So, you left all *this* to run off with Max's brother?

Beryl: Yeah, well it wasn't quite as simple as that. Mark and Max weren't just brothers - they were identical twins.

Brian: Ha! I bet you didn't know if you were coming or going.

Beryl: *And* they hated one another.

Brian: Why? Because of you, my little temptress?

Beryl: Not really – I think they just weren't very much alike.

Brian: But they were identical – you just said.

Beryl: That's right, but - well, Max was an ambitious writer and Mark was... **(Pauses)**

Brian: Mark was...?

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Beryl: He was just bloody good in bed.

Brian: Too much information. **(Looks around again)** Still, Max must have done well to own a house like this. Must be worth a packet.

Beryl: Yeah – on the face of it, but for all *we* know he could've taken out equity release. I mean, I don't want to inherit his debts, thank you very much. He could have been up to his eyeballs.

Brian: Yeah! And he *was* pretty tall.

Beryl: Not *that* tall – well under two metres!

Brian: That's big though! Must be nearly seven feet in old money – he didn't look it –

Beryl: You never met him.

Brian: I've seen photos. But if he was *that* tall, he should have been in the Guinness Book of Records.

Beryl: Well, he wasn't was he!

Brian: Why not?

Beryl: Because he wasn't tall enough.

Brian: What? At seven foot...?

Beryl: He was six foot one when we got married.

Brian: He got shorter after you got engaged?

Beryl: **(Sighs)** You know Brian you do worry me sometimes.

Brian: Yeah, but - do you know what worries me Beryl?

Beryl: No. What?

Brian: What *really* worries me?

Beryl: I said no. So - what *really* worries you?

Brian: Well, Beryl, now that you ask, I'll tell you. Normally I don't like to talk about it, but as you are so pushy, I will tell you. Reluctantly mind. What worries me is *the not knowing*.

Beryl: You've completely lost me.

Brian: How do you know that *you* haven't been... **(Pauses, searching for words)**.

Beryl: Just tell me Brian.

Brian: In a word?

Beryl: In a word.

Brian: Well, in *nine* words – how do *you* know that *you* haven't been cloned?

Beryl: Did you say *Cloned*?

Brian: I did Beryl and they *really* worry me.

Beryl: *Clones* really worry you?

Brian: Repeating it doesn't make me feel any better.

Beryl: You're worried about cloning?

Brian: It scares me to bits. Ever since I read about it in the newspaper.

Beryl: What does? Being cloned?

Brian: No – not *being* cloned – that I *may have been* cloned.

Beryl: Oh God! Please tell me there are *not* two of you! That *would be really scary!*

Brian: No – but - Have you ever wondered what happened to the *original* Brian.

Beryl: Will you stop it, you idiot? You have *not* been cloned. Who would want to clone *you*? Now, let's get back to the matter at hand please.

Brian: You mean your shrinking dead husband?

Beryl: **(Sighs)** I daresay Max *has* shrunk with age – most of us do.

Brian: Unless he was cloned.

Beryl: He *wasn't* cloned, Brian! No one has been bloody cloned!

Brian: Well you brought it up.

Beryl: I... Oh, for heaven's sake.

Brian: **(Peering around the room)** There's some good stuff here, must be worth a lot of dosh.

Beryl: The one thing Max *was* good at was making money.

Brian: Well, that *is* good.

Beryl: Unlike Mark, who was *extremely* good at losing it.

Brian: That's not so good.

Beryl: No, Mark never was any good with money. Believe it or not he thought a **Grand** was a big piano! But Max? Somehow, he just churned out romantic book after romantic book and they made him money hand over fist. Mind you, if you ask me, he only made money from his writing because his publishers knew their onions.

Brian: What? He wrote gardening books?

Beryl: No – Romantic novels! Strange that the most unromantic man in the world could write such good romantic fiction.

Brian: And Mark?

Beryl: He could hardly write his name.

Brian: What does Max write about?

Beryl: Romantic stuff –for ladies, you know – Mills and Boonsy – with the most unrealistic plots.

Brian: Like people being cloned?

Beryl: *No!* But believe it or not women of a certain age actually *like* them!

Brian: Maybe Max and Mark *weren't* identical twins. Maybe they were clones?

Beryl: What? Oh! Give over, Brian!

(Beryl shrugs her shoulders in dismay, and they potter around the room examining the contents)

Brian: **(He peers at a painting hanging on the wall)** Here, this is a David Kernockerman isn't it? It must be worth a bit up at the auction rooms.

Beryl: **(Slowly and precisely)** I think not, Brian – *look at it* - "A" it's a *print* not an original and "B" it's "Hockman" with an aitch not "Kernockerman" with a "KAY" - and "C" it's *nothing like* a David Hockman – it just shows how much you know about art – i.e., *nothing*.

Brian: Well – I never studied art like you did, Beryl.

Beryl: Neither did Max or Mark for that matter. – Max was into art it in a smallish way I suppose, but he was more interested in chronology.

Brian: Is that anything to do with cloning?

Beryl: Brian! - *Chronology – Clocks!* From the Greek word *Chronos*, something to do with time. He had lots of clocks and watches.

Brian: Who? This Chronos guy?

Beryl: No, Brian – *Max!* But he gave his clocks up when he got into steam engines.

Brian: **(His attempt at humour)** You mean his *time* was *up!* **(Laughs)**

Beryl: Most amusing. I'll try not to lose my spleen while laughing hysterically.

Brian: Well, I never could get to grips with Art. It wasn't my subject.

Beryl: No, of course not – unless you were stealing it.

Brian: I wish you wouldn't keep bringing that up, Beryl; we *are all only* human you know, *and* it was a long time ago, yonks in fact. Besides, I'm a reformed man.

Beryl: Are you? Is that why you just helped me break into this house?

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Brian: Oh! Come on - you had a key. Anyway, for what it's worth, I still think we should've just knocked on the front door and told them what's what. **(He goes towards the drinks cabinet)**. Look – there's some whisky here. I could do with a stiff drink

Beryl: Leave it alone, please, Brian. I'm not having you get drunk – *certainly* not before all the fun starts. Besides I had enough of all that boozing with Max. He could really put it away.

Brian: **(Sighs)** It isn't going to be much fun without a drink. **(He takes a greetings card from a shelf and opens it)** Here, Beryl – look at this birthday card **(reads the inscription)** “To dear Dad from Chris and Martin, Happy Birthday.” I don't believe it! Max died on his birthday, the poor beggar!

Beryl: Shakespeare did that.

Brian: What? William Shakespeare? **(He reads from the card again)** “Dear Dad from Chris and Martin, Happy Birthday” – that does *not* sound like a quote from Shakespeare to me. Wouldn't he have said **(Shakespeareian intonations)** “Havest thou a Happy Birthing Day” or something like that?

Beryl: Shakespeare didn't write on the card, you nerd –I'm just saying that he also died on his birthday.

Brian: What? On Max's birthday? The same date?

Beryl: No! His own!

Brian: Well, I hope you didn't send him a birthday present.

Beryl: Of course, I didn't - He's been dead for four hundred years!

Brian: Not Shakespeare, Beryl – Max!

Beryl: That would have been just as daft - I haven't seen *him* for nearly forty years –*and* he thought I was dead – a birthday card would have been a dead giveaway.

Brian: Oh yeah! You're supposed to be dead aren't you! I forgot. (**Looking around him at the contents of the room**). You pretended to be dead and now Max is dead. I can see you both must have had a lot in common. *And* Max and Mark both dead! (**Pauses and looks around the room again**). So – what do you think its worth – all this furniture and stuff?

Beryl: Not much, but the house will be worth a pretty penny – and then there's what he's got in the bank and all his uncollected royalties. We were never divorced, you see, so I should get the lot.

Brian: Lovely. We can live in object luxury. Just you and me.

Beryl: You mean *abject luxury* not *object luxury*. And have you no feelings for the poor departed?

Brian: No.

Beryl: Me neither.

Brian: Well, being as you were shackled up with his identical brother for years, I'm not at all surprised. What about the kids though? Won't they get anything?

Beryl: Why should they? Haven't seen my daughter, or my son for that matter, in years. I only stayed in contact with Christine by text and Facebook.

Brian: How maternal.

Beryl: Mark kept me informed about them. After all, he was their uncle.

Brian: So, did you tell your daughter that you were alive?

Beryl: No. It isn't a subject that you can easily talk about.

Brian: Unlike cloning.

Beryl: Will you stop it with the cloning?

Brian: But your daughter was texting you even though she thought you were dead?

Beryl: She didn't know it was me.

Brian: She thought you had been cloned?

Beryl: Oh, for heaven's sake!! I befriended her on Facebook. But I told her my name was Gladys Golightly.

Brian: She thinks *you're* Gladys Golightly?

Beryl: Yes.

Brian: *The Gladys Golightly?*

Beryl: Yes.

Brian: You don't look a bit like her. Anyway, who is she?

Beryl: I don't know. I made her up.

Brian: What like an imaginary friend?

Beryl: I made up Gladys Golightly to try to find out what was going on in the family. I was keeping tabs on them all.

Brian: How clever. Well done Gladys

Beryl: That's how I found out that Max had died.

Brian: On his birthday.

Beryl: If you say so.

Brian: It would have been Mark's birthday as well.

Beryl: How clever of you to work that one out!

Brian: But what about your son?

Beryl: What? Kevin? He's pretty hopeless - a failed writer who thinks he's a clone of his father.

Brian: A what?

Beryl: **(Sighs)** I truly wish I hadn't used *that word*. Kevin is *not* a clone. Anyway, he and I haven't spoken since I left. He didn't even come to my funeral.

Brian: But you didn't die.

Beryl: Yes, but Kevin didn't know that. *And* I had the most wonderful pretend funeral, some lovely words were said about me - and my son didn't even attend. That really upset me, Brian. It was hardly worth the trouble of pretending to die.

Brian: Children can be so hurtful.

Beryl: Of course, Christine and Kevin were only young children when I ran off with their uncle. They probably hardly knew I was gone, and I suspect Max poisoned them against me - so now I need to make up for all that lost time.

(SFX. There is a noise of clattering pans from the kitchen.)

Brian: **(Nervously)** what's that?

(Beryl goes closer to the kitchen door and listens)

Beryl: There's someone in the kitchen, at least I think it's the kitchen. It's years since I was here.

Brian: Who's in there?

Beryl: How do I know? I'm not psychic.

Brian: Maybe it's the family.

Beryl: No - it's probably the caterers – the kids must have organised some sort of wake for after the funeral.

Brian: Well, good caterers are worth their weight in food. **(Pauses thoughtfully)**. It's funny that they call it a *wake* – it doesn't make sense does it? – The guy's dead so he's hardly likely to wake up again is he? Not in this world anyway.

Beryl: Will you stop over analysing everything? It's just a figure of speech, Brian. Gaelic, I think.

Brian: That probably explains it– they use it to keep the vampires away– so maybe it works for the undead as well.

Beryl: I said *Gaelic*, not *garlic* you idiot.

Brian: Sorry I spoke! But who is it in there – in the kitchen?

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Beryl: I don't know do I?

Brian: Well, I suppose we'd best get out of here anyway – it's a bit early, but I could do with a drink before the funeral.

Beryl: Yeah – I think that'll be for the best. **(She consults her watch)** I wonder where it is.

Brian: You don't know?

Beryl: No. Gladys Golightly asked Christine, but she didn't reply.

Brian: Gladys Golightly? Oh yeah! Your alter ego.

Beryl: Christine texted back that the bash was on today, so I assume she meant the Wake.

Brian: It's funny that they call it a *wake*

Beryl: We've done that one already! OK – I think we're done here, we'd best be off to the cemetery. –

Brian: Which one?

Beryl: I assume it's the same one as where they buried Max and Mark and their late parents.

Brian: Did you go to Mark's funeral?

Beryl: How could I? I was pretending to be dead.

Brian: **(Sighs)** Huh! This is getting very complicated. Why don't we just rob the house and be done?

Beryl: Cos that's not part of the plan! Like I said we'll wait at the funeral and watch from the shadows, but we won't go too close – we don't want anyone realising who we are until we're ready to spring it on them!

Brian: OK. **(Pauses)**. Spring what on them?

Beryl: Do keep up Brian!
(They exit via the side – garden door.)

Brian: **(offstage)** Are you sure I'm not a clone?

(SFX. After a few seconds - Sound of car driving off. After about twenty seconds Martin enters from hall door, carrying a newspaper. He stands at the centre of the stage. Christine follows him from hall)

Chris: Where have you been, Martin? We need to talk about Wanda.

Martin: I thought I'd wander out and get a newspaper.

Chris: Well, while you've been out *wandering* Wonder woman Wanda, has been in the kitchen sucking up to daddy!

Martin: She's in there with Max, is she? **(Sighs)** That woman doesn't miss a trick does she!

Chris: She's got a nerve, that's all I can say. I've a good mind to...

Martin: **(Interrupting)** Not now, Christine. There's no point in making a scene. Max will only take *her* side.

Chris: Yes – I know - I'm just saying - she's got a nerve being here at all. It's supposed to be a family birthday lunch for daddy and *she's* not family. Mind you, I did invite Gladys.

Martin: Gladys?

Chris: My friend Gladys Golightly. You remember.

Martin: Oh yes Gladys Golightly. The woman you've never met. How can you be friends if you've never met her?

Chris: We're online friends.

Martin: Online. That gets right on my nerves.

Chris: What does?

Martin: Online this and online that. Social media, Facebook, Instagram.

Chris: It's here to stay Martin. It's the future.

Martin: Well it doesn't help when you're in the newspaper business. Before we can write the story and have it printed, the whole world and its mother know all about it – and where from? The bloody Internet that's where from.

Chris: Stop being a bore Martin and concentrate on the matter at hand.

Martin: Which is?

Chris: My father and that bloody interfering witch, Wanda!

Martin: But Max must have invited her.

Chris: He probably *thinks* he invited her, but I'll bet she invited herself - You know how pushy she is, and she's got daddy wound around her little finger. There's something about that woman.

Martin: You can say that again.

Chris: It's just that it's not a normal relationship is it? I don't begrudge him having a lady friend – it's good to have companionship – particularly after my mother treated him so badly.

Martin: You mean when she ran away with another man. Who was he?

Chris: The man she ran off with?

Martin: Yes.

Chris: Well he had to be someone close to the family.

Martin: Do you think Max knew who it was?

Chris: I've always thought he did. Anyway, he's besotted with Wanda - he can't say "no" to her, can he? It's almost as if he believes all women are like the characters he writes about in his books. I said as much to Gladys Golightly.

Martin: Ahh! the mysterious Gladys Golightly. You're actually speaking to her now are you? With your voice?

Chris: No, we communicate by text or on Facebook. In fact, I sent her a text this morning inviting her to Daddy's birthday bash.

Martin: Oh, so we'll be meeting her shortly will we?

Chris: I hope so. She's been a great comfort to me. **(Takes her phone out of her pocket and checks her text messages)** She hasn't replied and.... Oh shit.

Martin: What?

Chris: My text to her.

Martin: What about it?

Chris: I meant to text that she should come to Dad's birthday lunch today and how we're so happy he's reached such a good age, especially as his brother, Mark, recently died.

Martin: So, what happened?

Chris: The predictive text completely mucked it up.

Martin: In what way?

Chris: The worst possible way – what it actually said was he reached a good age and then he died.

Martin: Who died?

Chris: The text made it sound like Dad died – but I meant Uncle Mark.

Martin: But he died some while ago.

Chris: I know, but I was giving her some background. I said he was daddy's identical twin brother, but he'd died and I just sort of wanted to say we're grateful daddy didn't die early like him

Martin: But you said....

Chris: I know what I *meant* to say, but the bloody predictive text said otherwise. Now Gladys will think it was Dad who died and not Uncle Mark.

Martin: Well they were identical twins so you would expect them to have a similar life span wouldn't you.

Chris: Yes, but I didn't check the text properly and I've made a total mess of Gladys's invitation to the lunch. –

Martin: Complicated. It sounds like a plot from one of your Dad's books. His last main character was unbelievable – a young bimbo has an affair with a genetically modified chimpanzee and gives birth to a half-man half-ape who then turns into a caricature of King Kong and threatens to take over a flea market in Bermondsey. Mad or what?

Chris: Yeah – I know – it *sounds* mad, but it turned out to be a best seller.

Martin: Anyway, come on love, forget Wanda - loosen up - it's a family lunch for the old boy's birthday.

Chris: But that's my point – Wanda's *not* family. She shouldn't be here.

Martin: Well – cut her a bit of slack, Chris. She hasn't got any family of her own has she.

Chris: Yeah – like I believe *anything* she says. She's probably got a stack of kids somewhere and *none* of them want anything to do with her.

Martin: Bit like your Mother.

Chris: (**Offended**) My Mother died, Martin! I know she ran away and left us, but she died very soon after. I hardly knew her.

Martin: Yes. Sorry. I didn't mean it like that. Anyway, maybe your dad asked Wanda in to help.

Chris: Help? Help with what?

Martin: You know - with the cooking.

Chris: Help dad with the cooking? I don't think so! He loves to do his own cooking; He thinks he should be on Master Chef.

Martin: I did suggest we should all go out to a restaurant – save him the trouble of cooking.

Chris: I know, I know, but he looked up Trip Adviser and that put him right off. For every one that says a place is good there's someone else says it's lousy. You know how fussy he can be. But that's not the point, Martin - I don't know why *she* has to help him with the cooking. I offered, and he turned me down.

Martin: Well, you're his daughter so he knows... **(stops - with worried look)**

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Chris: Knows what?

Martin: Knows... Knows that you... You are a loving daughter...

Chris: Really?

Martin: ...And that you – er – that you don't really like cooking.

Chris: I might have liked it if I'd had a mum to teach me – but I never did any of those mother-daughter things. I never got the chance. Anyway, I'd be happy to cook if anyone appreciated my cooking!

Martin: I do.

Chris: No, you don't. You pretend to like it, but I've seen you chuck it away when you think I'm not looking. Don't think I don't know what you did with my Shepherd's pie last week...

Martin: I – er – ate it.

Chris: No, you didn't – you chucked it out the window and next door's dog ate it – and before you say anything, he went to the vet afterwards to get his injections, *not* because he ate my pie.

Martin: Oops! Hurriedly changing the subject – Where are the others?
Your brother and sister-in-law are *always* late.

Chris: Yeah, I know – *and* where are Toby and Nicola?

Martin: Toby's not coming. Didn't I tell you?

Chris: No, you didn't. He really is shocking that son of yours! What's his excuse this time?

Martin: He's *our son*, Christine and he's got a bout.

Chris: About what?

Martin: No – he's *got a bout* – (**with emphasis because Chris appears puzzled**) *a bout*.

Chris: Yes – but *about* what? Don't be so evasive, Martin.

Martin: I'm not being evasive – *he's got a bout*. Like he told us – he's into *cage fighting* – and they have *bouts*, it's a bit like boxing and Toby has a bout!

Chris: Really?

Martin: Yep – *really* – He didn't want to tell you in case you worried he'd get hurt.

Chris: Well of course I worry. He's my bloody son isn't he!

Martin: Well at least his sister is a nurse. Nicola was always the sensible one. Besides, Toby is just a chip off the old block – he's following in my father's footsteps.

Chris: Oh yes, I remember – Your dad was a boxer wasn't he. Didn't he get his nose broken in three places?

Martin: (**Sarcastic**) Yeah – *That's right* – Wolverhampton, Wapping and Warrington.

Chris: Toby must be doing it for the money. He's got a big student loan.

Martin: Yeah – but I don't think he cares about that. I don't think he's got any intention of paying it back. He's hoping his granddad will bail him out.

Chris: Fat chance! Wanda will probably get her hands on the money first!

Martin: Don't go on about it, Chris. Besides, Nicola will keep Toby on the straight and narrow. Her Doctorate in Criminology should help.

Chris: I don't see how. It sounds crazy to me. Why is she so interested in crime? Does she want to be a crime fighting *nurse*?

Martin: I think she was inspired by a character in one of your father's books.

Chris: Not Isabella Delcronco, the pregnant detective, who fell in love with Sebastian Mandrake the renowned art thief from Monte Carlo?

Martin: Probably. Anyway, I nearly forgot – what with all this Wanda this and Wanda that - did you hear?

Chris: Hear what?

Martin: It was on the local news this morning – it must have been while you were at the shops. Nicola will be so shocked!

Chris: Hear what, Martin?

Martin: Her tutor – Jake Offbridge – he's been arrested.

Chris: What? The Professor on her Criminology Course? What's *he* been arrested for?

Martin: You'll love this! Impersonating a Professor of Criminology. Turns out the bloke's a crook. He's some kind of confidence trickster *and* a computer hacker – big time. (**He rubs his hands together gleefully**) I'm going to run a big -big expose in this week's paper.

Chris: What? After it's been reported by the local radio? That's hardly a *hold the front-page expose!*

Martin: Come on! This could be something big, Chris. A story like this could save the paper.

Chris: If you want to save paper Martin - don't print on it.

Martin: Oh, but that's only the half of it. Apparently, he's been hacking peoples' bank accounts – he's got away with thousands. His "Professorship" was just a front for his criminal activities. Nicola will be horrified. You know what a *do gooder* she is.

Chris: Was that on the radio as well?

Martin: About Nicola being horrified?

Chris: About the hacking of people's bank accounts.

Martin: Yes, it was.

Chris: So, it will be old news by the time your newspaper comes out.

Martin: Oh! Yeah! I suppose you're right. (**Pause**) Here – do you think he's hacked into Nicola's account?

Chris: I hope not.

Martin: So, do I – cos if the kids are expecting us to pay off their student loans, they've got another think coming. There's no way we could afford it - things are not good in the world of local newspapers, that's thanks to the rotten internet.

Chris: They're not. As I said they're expecting their rich grandfather to pay it.

Martin: Well, they may be a mite disappointed, cos as you so rightly said dear old Wanda might end up with the whole caboose. Anyway, Look, Chris - to get back to the subject in hand, I told Max - your dad...

Chris: Yes Martin, I know Max is my dad.

Martin: As I've already said, I told him we should all go out to a restaurant instead of him cooking. There are lots of local places – OK they're all a bit pricey, but he can afford it.

Chris: I know, and he *was* considering it until Wanda convinced him otherwise.

Martin: You'd have thought he wouldn't want to over-celebrate, considering that his twin brother recently popped off this mortal coil.

Chris: Yea, but you're forgetting this wasn't a normal twin situation - dad hated Uncle Mark and, to be fair, the feeling was mutual.

Martin: Heart attack wasn't it? With Mark.

Chris: Yes. Apparently, he had some kind of a shock.

Martin: Poor bugger. I quite liked him, although I could never tell them apart. They were the most identical twins I've ever seen. They looked so....

Chris: Alike?

Martin: Yes, that's the word. Well it's your father's birthday Chris. I suppose he should at least have the kind of birthday lunch that he wants.

Chris: I know. Self, self, self.

Martin: I didn't even realise it was his birthday.

Chris: Neither did I. But *I can't get my knickers off quick enough* Wanda told me it was.

Martin: Really?

Chris: *And* she mentioned something about an announcement.

Martin: Oh no! Do you think they're going to announce their engagement?

Chris: Heaven forbid. To tell the truth though I'm not sure daddy has ever wanted to re-marry, he's never really got over mothers' tragic death in India all those years ago. It was an accident, but I think he would have preferred to have murdered her.

Martin: I can understand that – after all she left him and you *and* your brother high and dry! She really was a piece of work.

Chris: Well she was hardly mother of the year.

Martin: She died in some kind of train accident in India, didn't she?

Chris: So, Daddy told us.

Martin: What was she doing in India in the first place?

Chris: Ordering a curry! How do I know? I was tiny! But the point is that daddy's in the kitchen *now* cooking for his own birthday lunch, slaving away over a hot stove and what do you think Wanda was doing when I looked in on them?

Martin: Washing up?

Chris: Washing up! Don't make me laugh. **(Loudly)** She said she was making a cake, but she was drinking – and she probably still is. Drinking! And it's not cooking sherry either! It's brandy – I could smell it on her breath! **(Louder)** Don't look at me like that! I'm not jealous.

Martin: I know – you're on the wagon.

Chris: I know I'm on the wagon– you don't have to remind me! But I'm OK! I don't crave it anymore – it's all under control – it's no problem. **(Consults watch – shrieks)** Oh God! I haven't had a drink for three weeks, four days and twenty-three minutes!

Martin: What about the Prosecco you had last night?

Chris: I was just cleaning my teeth. I hate our tap water! Anyway, don't keep changing the subject.

Martin: What subject?

Chris: You know what subject – *Wanda*. **(Loudly)** I don't think it's right the way she makes up to daddy.

Martin: OK – OK – But don't speak so loudly. They'll hear you in the kitchen.

Chris: **(Not quite so loudly)** I don't care!

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Martin: Well, you should, the last thing we want is for your dad to hear you criticising Wanda – you'll just drive him straight into her arms and that's the last thing we want. Anyway, I'm surprised you went so close you could smell her breath.

Chris: I didn't go *that* close. She came to me. And you know I can't stand it when she pretends to be my best friend and gives me one of her slobbering kisses and says "halloooo" in that funny voice of hers.

Martin: She hasn't got a funny voice Chris. It's normally slurred cos she boozes a lot...

Chris: Well, at least *I* had the good sense to give up drinking – now I feel like a new woman.

Martin: I'll see if I can find one for you.

Chris: Don't be an arse. You know what I mean.

Martin: Yes. I'm proud of you.

Chris: It's not like I was an alcoholic or anything.

Martin: I know.

Chris: I just stopped drinking and smoking to improve my health.

Martin: But you never smoked.

Chris: That's why it wasn't hard not to start.

Martin: Exceptional will power, that's what you have.

Chris: Thank you. Pity we can't say the same about boozy Wanda. I could smell the booze as soon as I went in through the kitchen door - and it *wasn't* your common or garden

paint stripper either! It was good stuff - I'm an expert so I know – it was daddy's favourite – she had the bottle in her hand and she's probably been at it all morning!

Martin: Oh come on, Chris. It's a celebration – the big seven O - she's your dad's friend and he's invited her to his birthday lunch.

Chris: Friend?

Martin: Well yes. Sort of.

Chris: She's a darn sight more than his bloody friend Martin. It's obvious – It's all for the money! My...Our inheritance! Yeah – And there's something else.

Martin: There always is.

Chris: I know we haven't been the sort of family that normally celebrates birthdays – except for when the kids were little, of course – but I thought dad's birthday was earlier in the year.

Martin: Don't you know your own father's birthday?

Chris: When's my birthday Martin?

Martin: *Your* birthday?

Chris: Yes, my sweet. *My* birthday.

Martin: Well it's in J...J.... J...

Chris: September.

Martin: That's it J...J...J...September.

Chris: But if it isn't his birthday what is this bloody birthday family lunch all about?

Martin: Well maybe he *thinks* it's his birthday.

Chris: Well that's possible. – He doesn't seem to be himself recently. He's become a lot more forgetful.

Max: No – that's an act – he does it for effect – or maybe it's because he's getting deafer and he doesn't hear what's going on. Either way we can't get Power of Attorney over his affairs – if you'll excuse the expression. He's still got too many of his marbles. **(He goes towards drinks trolley).** I'm going to have a drink.

Chris: Lucky you. I'd love a brandy – yeah yeah, I know - I'm on the wagon. I've given up the drink. You don't have to keep going on about it!

Martin: I haven't said a word.

Chris: **(Sighs).** OK, OK, I'll have tonic water – with bubbles. At least I can enjoy the bubbles – it'll be something other than the Wanda Woman getting up my nose!

Martin: Tonic it is then – with bubbles up your nose!

(During the next few lines Martin pours drinks and sits on two-seater settee. Christine hovers about, unable to settle)

Chris: And another thing - the moment I walked into the kitchen Wanda buttoned up her blouse.

Martin: I didn't know it had buttons.

Chris: Oh, you've checked, have you?

Martin: Just a polite observation.

Chris: For pity's sake Martin, she's as old as dad. Maybe even older.

Martin: But very well preserved. **(Hands Christine her drink)**

Chris: She's an old tart, not a pot of jam. **(Scrunches up her face after she sips her drink)**
I hate tonic water.

Martin: Try to focus on something else. Something other than the tonic water.

Chris: Wanda!

Martin: I had a feeling you were going to say that.

Chris: It's *got* to be his money! That's what she's after!

Martin: Yes – *Probably*.

Chris: It's got to be. Why else would she be running after him?

Martin: Well, he's quite an attractive man, I suppose, in his own way.

Chris: What now you fancy my dad as well?

Martin: Don't be daft, I'm just saying.

Chris: Well she's not a very attractive woman, is she?

Martin: I wouldn't say that Chris.

Chris: Well what would you say?

Martin: She's got a nice.... nose. It's a sort of a nosey nose without being too – nosey.

Chris: **(Scoffs)** That's because of the amount of war paint she slaps on her face every morning. But of course, you're a man so you wouldn't notice. You can see the cracks in it for goodness sake! Sometimes her face resembles the surface of the moon. Huh! Men!

Martin: What about men?

Chris: You're all the blooming same. A woman has only got to stick a layer of crud all over her face and you can't see what's underneath.

Martin: Ah!

Chris: And come on, don't pretend you haven't noticed. She's got lines all over her face.

Martin: Well she is in her advanced years, although I have to say, she doesn't look or act her age.

Chris: She's a gold digger! Why else would a woman of her age bother with a man in his seventies?

Martin: But you just said she was about the same age as your father.

Chris: Well maybe she is younger than dad and she just looks older!

Martin: **(Takes a large gulp of his brandy)** I wish you'd make up your mind.

Chris: Anyway, mark my words, Martin, she's a gold digger and she's after only one thing.

Martin: You mean S-E-X?

Chris: What? No - *Money. Dad's money! Our money. She's all for the money!*

Martin: Yes... And probably S-E-X.

Chris: What? Dad? *Sex?* At his age? I think that boat has truly sailed.

Martin: Well I don't know Chris. By all accounts, your dad was a bit of a lady's man in his time.

Chris: Well that was a long time ago.

Martin: Anything in a skirt – or out of it, I've heard.

Chris: Yes, yes, yes. I know all those old stories. But that was when he was a much younger man.

Martin: Old Max. **(Laughs)** Apparently, he *was* a bit of a lad. But seriously, Chris – don't you think that he and Wanda are getting it together?

Chris: I don't know do I? But I do think we need to find out what's going on.

Martin: Or what's coming off.

Chris: Martin! We need to know how serious this thing is with him and Wanda.

Martin: Yes – is it only about the money? Or are they bonking each other?

Chris: An unfortunate way of putting it, but yes. You've got to ask him!

Martin: Yes.... What? *Me?* Ask Max if he's having sex with Wanda? You've *gotta* be joking! **(Gulps down the remains of his brandy)**

Chris: Well, I can't can I? I'm his daughter.

Martin: And I'm his son-in-law. And I'm not exactly on good terms with him at the best of times, am I?

Chris: Nonsense - daddy is very fond of you Martin.

Martin: Is that why he calls me Morris and tells me his daughter could have done a whole lot better than to marry the editor of a local newspaper? Or, as he put it – a local *rag*.

Chris: That's just daddy's way of being affectionate.

Martin: I don't want to be around him when he gets angry.

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Chris: Well it didn't help when you did that article about his brother.

Martin: Well I thought he would have been pleased.

Chris: They hated one another. They fell out after dad and mum got married – I've seen the wedding photos, so I know Uncle Mark was at the wedding, but after that they didn't speak to each other again.

Martin: But it was his *twin* brother. Twins are supposed to have a lifelong bond of fellowship and understanding. Whatever set them at each other's throats must have been something pretty big *and* important.

Chris: Well, daddy and Uncle Mark – I wasn't even allowed to call him *Uncle* Mark, by the way – I wasn't even allowed to refer to him as anything – they hated each other. Well at least daddy hated him. I think it was something to do with my mother.

Martin: What? You think he killed her?

Chris: What?

Martin: Your uncle Mark.

Chris: What is wrong with you?

Martin: Or perhaps your father killed her.

Chris: No one killed her! **(Pauses)** She just ceased to be.

Mark: Now that would be a great story for my newspaper.

Chris: The fact that it isn't true isn't an issue for you then?

Mark: Of course not. Why would it be?

Chris: You are *not* writing a pack of lies about daddy and Uncle Mark in your newspaper, Martin. No wonder dad doesn't like you!

Martin: You just said he was very fond of me.

Chris: I was lying. **(Takes another sip from her drink)** Oh, how I would love a gin in this. Anyway, this is all beside the point.

Martin: And what is the point?

Chris: The point is, that *you* should be able to ask Daddy about his sex life. That's what men do isn't it?

Martin: Not me. I don't talk about my sexual exploits. Mainly because I haven't got any – but if I did have, I still wouldn't talk about them.

Chris: I'm glad to hear it! But lots of men sort of hint at it don't they – nudge nudge wink wink – that sort of thing.

Martin: But I'm not that sort of guy – and I'm not on those sort of terms with your father.

Chris: Well, you should be.

Martin: Chris, he doesn't even remember my name. He's not going to tell me about his intimate sex life.

Chris: We've been married for over twenty-five years and you've never really bonded with him, have you?

Martin: I've hardly bonded with you.

Chris: Martin!

Martin: Well, we don't have much in common, do we? Me and your Dad, I mean. Apart from his writing all he's interested in is steam engines. When he's not writing his penny dreadfuls he's out in his shed polishing his pistons...and I bet that makes his eyes water! Not to mention getting his pig irons up to pressure, or whatever he calls them.

Chris: It's true - Dad *does* love his steam trains. especially that little engine we nearly bought him last Christmas, that he's set up in his shed.

Martin: We didn't buy it. Wanda did.

Chris: Only because she heard us talking about buying it for him and she got in first! You can't tell me she didn't do that to get into his good books! She's nothing but a bloody gold digger.

Martin: Yes, how wicked of her to buy your father the best present he's ever had.

Chris: Don't be sarcastic Martin, it isn't becoming. Wanda is like a character out of one of his books.

Martin: They're *awful* Chris, penny-bloody-dreadfuls! I can't believe people actually *read* them.

Chris: But he's made loads of money out of those so-called penny dreadfuls. They've been very successful. They even made a television drama out of one of them. What was it called now?

Martin: The Wanda of you?

Chris: Funny. Very funny. I remember now. It was called '*The Long-Lost Son.*'

Martin: Oh yes, that's right. It was about an old man, who discovered he had a son from a previous relationship who became an accomplished and famous police detective.

Chris: That's right. And he investigated the old man's murder.

Martin: The old man who was really his father.

Chris: Yes.

Martin: It was rubbish.

Chris: It was. But it made a lot of money. (**Chris drinks some more tonic water, while Martin helps himself to another brandy**) Wait a minute, perhaps Uncle Mark was jealous of daddy's success.

Martin: Maybe, but the books are still a load of romantic rubbish.

Chris: They might be to you, but they're very popular amongst women of a certain age. Most of my friends can't wait for the next one to come out. They love his main character, Lothario Languista

Martin: Sounds like some sort of pasta.

Chris: I think there's talk of another television drama as well.

Martin: What from his last book?

Chris: Yes. *'Death In India'*.

Martin: I wonder where he gets his inspiration from.

Chris: Anyway, you have to talk to daddy, Martin.

Martin: I'm *not* asking him about his sex life! And that's that!

Chris: I don't see why not. You have that Agony Aunt thing in your newspaper, don't you? Isn't that all about sex?

Martin: Actually, it's about relationships and I only do it when Cassandra isn't available.

Chris: Cassandra? Who's Cassandra?

Martin: Our Agony Aunt. The Column in the paper is entitled 'Ask Cassandra'.

Chris: Ask Cassandra?

Martin: That's not her real name, of course – her real name's Kitty Pornster; she just calls herself Cassandra for the newspaper.

Chris: Pornstar?

Martin: No – Pornster – with an "E" – not an "A" - We didn't think it was an appropriate name for a newspaper Agony Aunt. So, we decided to call her Cassandra.

Chris: So, what qualifies *her* to be an Agony Aunt?

Martin: Nothing really – she hasn't got any qualifications if that's what you mean. Although, as it happens, she has had five husbands. She's working on number six at the moment although number five is still around, in a supporting role.

Chris: And that qualifies her to advise other people about their relationships?

Martin: Well actually, she's very good. She always gives me sound advice, her main message being 'in love and sex you must follow your instincts.'

Chris: 'Oh really! 'Follow your instincts'!

Martin: Did I say that out loud? No - what I meant is...

(Enter Kevin and Celeste).

Kevin: Are we interrupting anything? Is everything OK?

Chris: We're fine, thanks. Martin and I are just discussing his little problem.

Kevin: Oh good. Did Cassandra help then Martin?

Chris: What?

(Kevin realises he has put his foot in it and embraces his sister, while Celeste just stands there filing her nails)

Kevin: So – Sis - What's this lunch all about?

Chris: **(Glances in Martin's direction).** I'll be talking to *you* later.

Martin: That'll be nice.

Chris: I was just saying to Martin, Kevin, that we just can't let daddy make a fool of himself over this bloody Wanda woman.

Celeste: I used to love Lynda Carter.

Chris: What?

Celeste: Although Gal Gadot did a good job in the movies.

Chris: What are talking about, Celeste?

Celeste: You know, Diana Prince.

Chris: Wanda woman, not Wonder Woman!

Celeste: Oh.

Kevin: It's a simple mistake to make.

Martin: Simple being the appropriate word.

Kevin: You are absolutely right, Chris.

Chris: I know I am... about what?

Kevin: We can't let Wanda walk away with all Dads' money when he finally kicks the bucket.

Celeste: She'll get hold of Max's cash, over my dead body.

Martin: I think you mean over Max's dead body Celeste.

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Kevin: So where is Dad now?

Martin: He's in the kitchen! Cooking.

Kevin: Cooking?

Chris: For his birthday lunch today.

Kevin: Right. Funny though cos I was saying to Celeste that I didn't think it was his birthday anytime soon.

Chris: Neither did I.

Kevin: **(He goes to the kitchen door, opens it, peers in – Calls)** Hi dad, hi Wanda – we've arrived.

Max: **(Calls from kitchen)** Of course I'm alive! Don't you start spreading rumours!

Kevin: **(Calls)** No dad – I said, "We've arrived", not "are you alive?"

Max: **(Calls)** Of course I can drive! Why not? I'm not that old! I'll see you all in a minute.

Kevin: **(Closing kitchen door)** Why doesn't he wear his bloody hearing aid?

Max: **(Still from kitchen)** I heard that!

Kevin: She's in there with him, that Wanda woman.

Celeste: And *I* thought she was in love with Steve Trevor.

Chris: For the last time, Celeste, *Not* Wonder Woman from the bloody movies! - Wanda woman! *Wanda* Woman!

Kevin: She's in there drinking whisky - *and* draping herself all over dad's body.

Chris: Brandy.

Kevin: No – definitely whisky – I recognised the bottle. It's Chivas Regal.

Celeste: I didn't realise things were that serious.

Martin: They're extremely serious. That's *my* bottle of Chivas Regal!

Celeste: So, what *are* they cooking?

(They all sniff)

Martin: Whatever it is I think they're burning it. Maybe they're not concentrating enough on the actual cooking.

Chris: Perhaps you should ask Cassandra for some advice, *Martin dear*.

Martin: The kitchen isn't her speciality.

Chris: What *is* her speciality? Pinching other women's husbands?

(Martin gulps down his second drink)

Kevin: What *are* they cooking for lunch?

Chris: Dad said we were having goose. He gets them from the local farm shop.

Kevin: Sounds delicious – but look – seriously - how are we going to find out what exactly is going on between dad and Wanda?

Martin: Well, if you ask me *someone* just needs to come right out with it and ask them.

Celeste: Ooh I say, that's a bit rude isn't it?

Chris: Well I've asked you to do that, Martin, but you keep refusing.

Martin: I've told you before - It's not my place to ask your father if he's....

Celeste: If he's what?

Martin: Well you know...

Kevin: What? Bonking her?

Chris: I would recommend that, whoever does it, puts it a little better than that.

Kevin: Well, they could be, couldn't they? Michael Quantas was doing the same thing.

Martin: Who the heck is Michael Quantas?

Kevin: The principal character in my latest book. '*Quaint Arse Quantas*'.

Martin: Catchy title.

Kevin: Michael Quantas was bonking a woman half his age.

Martin: Cool! What happened?

Kevin: Turned out she was an alien being from the planet Gatrob.

Martin: Even cooler. It all ended happily, I hope, happy couple riding off into the sunset together. Or should I say *into the sun*?

Kevin: No – they had a row and he fell into her cooking pot – So she ate him.

Martin: Charming.

Celeste: It's a really good book. I couldn't put it down.

Chris: Glued it to your hand, did he? Besides, I didn't realise you could read.

Martin: Has the book been published?

Kevin: Well, when you say *published* not exactly.

Martin: I'll take that as a no then.

Kevin: I've only had ninety-seven refusals. It could still be accepted.

Martin: Don't spend the royalties quite yet then.

Celeste: Just because he was having it away with her it doesn't mean he wanted to marry her you know.

Chris: I beg your pardon?

Celeste: And she only ate him because she loved him. That's what they do on the planet Gatrob. You know – like spiders.

Chris: God help us. She's talking about Michael Quantas.

Celeste: Well truth *is* stranger than fiction, you know and there's nowt as strange as folk.

Martin: Especially if they come from planet Gatrob.

Chris: Celeste - Forget alien eating women will you!

Celeste: She didn't eat any women, did she Kevin? Not so far as we know.

Kevin: No. Just Michael Quantas. Women are usually the pudding – but she didn't like pudding.

Celeste: She was on a strict diet.

Chris: Lord help us! Look - Can we please get back to daddy? If we don't find out his intentions over Wanda, there might not be enough left of his estate for a bloody day trip to Cleethorpes.

Celeste: I've never been to Cleethorpes.

Martin: Well I'm still not asking him about his sex life. Why don't *you* ask him, Kevin?

Kevin: What? Me? I'm his son. I mean - he's my dad. Would you ask *your* dad if he was bonking his girlfriend?

Martin: He should be so lucky. He passed away ten years ago.

Celeste: **(Light bulb moment)** *I've got it!!*

Chris: May I suggest a course of antibiotics?

Celeste: No. Seriously - I've had an *epippiney*.

Martin: I think you mean an epiphany.

Celeste: Well whatever it's called, *Christine* could ask Wanda - you know - Woman to woman.

Chris: What?

Martin: Sounds like a plan.

Chris: Even better - why don't *you* ask her, Celeste? Girl to girl.

Celeste: I don't know her well enough do I!

Chris: Neither do I.

Celeste: But you have much more in common with her than I do Christine.

Chris: Such as?

Celeste: Well you both like a drink or ten.

Chris: I beg your pardon!

Martin: Ladies – ladies! I'll tell you what – why don't you *both* speak to her? Together.

Chris: **(Together)** You must be joking!

Celeste: **(Together)** You must be joking!

Kevin: Look - I'm having a drink. Anyone else want one?

Celeste: I'll have a small G & T darling.

(Kevin goes to the drinks cabinet and makes a gin & tonic for Celeste and a whisky for himself)

Martin: I'll have another brandy Kevin.

Chris: No, you won't, you've had enough.

Martin: Apparently, no I won't, I've had enough. **(Martin goes to stand by the French window, which looks out into the garden. He looks out)**

Kevin: **(After a few seconds, Kevin joins Martin)** Lovely day for it.

Chris: Is it?

Martin: Arguing amongst ourselves isn't going to help, you know.

Chris: Was that Cassandra's advice?

Martin: (**Ignores Chris**) Hey! Your dad's chopped down that big tree he always hated.

Kevin: (**Proudly – and with a swagger**) No – I did it for him.

Chris: Did you now? (**She goes to the window**)

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Kevin: I most certainly did.

Chris: Well if you did, that's *not* the one he said he wanted chopped down is it?

Kevin: Well - if you're going to split hairs.

Chris: Well is it Kevin?

Kevin: Well...

Chris: I mean, it's the other one that's blocking out the light and *that's* still there. (**She turns to Kevin accusingly**) You cut down the wrong *bloody* tree didn't you, brother dear!

Kevin: No! Well, when I say no, I actually mean.... yes.

Martin: Well that's easy to follow.

Kevin: But it was dad's fault.

Chris: Of course, it was.

Kevin: He told me over the phone he wanted a tree taken out and I said I'd come over the day before yesterday and do it for him – he was supposed to be here, so he could tell me which one.

Chris: And?

Kevin: He wasn't. He was out with Wanda. So, I used my initiative...

Chris: And?

Kevin: And I had the tree cut down. The biggest one. How was I to know it was the wrong one?

Chris: You should've waited to ask him.

Kevin: The Tree Surgery Company wanted to charge him three hundred quid.

Martin: So - How much did it cost to cut down the wrong tree?

Kevin: Mick MacNelly and his brother Shaun did it for a hundred pounds - and I only charged Max two hundred.

Chris: You made a hundred-pound profit for chopping down the wrong tree?

Kevin: Yeah! But I saved dad a hundred as well. So that's two hundred.

Celeste: My Kevin is so resourceful.

Chris: Your Kevin's a bloody Pratt!

Kevin: Well it's our inheritance isn't it?

Martin: Technically it's not - not until he dies.

Kevin: But if *he* spends it all there'll be nothing left for *us* will there? And I need the money. So, I was just being...

Chris: Stupid!! As usual, you were just being *bloody stupid*.

Celeste: I wish you would get off the fence and say what you actually mean, Christine.

Kevin: Look, Sis - I'm in debt.

Chris: Well, that might just be because you haven't earned any money since Mafeking was relieved. You keep writing books that are never published, and you've never actually earned any money from any book you've ever written, have you? Truth is you're trying to sell *your* work based on daddy's name, because in all honesty, although daddy might be a half deaf controversial old bugger, he can certainly write books that sell, whereas *You*, Kevin, struggle to write a bloody cheque!

Celeste: What about the script Kevin sent to the BBC?

Chris: You sent a script to the Beeb?

Kevin: I did yes.

Martin: What's it about?

Chris: Probably an old man who wakes up one morning to find someone has cut down the wrong tree!

Kevin: Very funny sis. Actually, it's about an old man with a frog phobia, who magically turns into a garden gnome.

Martin: Turns what into a garden gnome?

Kevin: Himself.

Martin: Oh! I thought it would be the frog.

Kevin: No - that wouldn't make sense.

Martin: Oh? Right. Any joy from the BBC?

Kevin: Nothing. *Zilch*.

Chris: Now there's a surprise.

Kevin: Same thing happened with my other script.

Martin: Also sent to the BBC?

Kevin: Yes. It was really good as well.

Chris: I bet it was.

Kevin: It's about a rich old man who loves fishing – you know – he's an angler – and he takes up with a younger woman - she steals all his money and then poisons him with a birthday cake in the shape of a fish.

Martin: What did you call this one?

Kevin: *'Happy Poisson To You'*.

Chris: Another masterpiece.

Celeste: But I think the problem is *that other writer* - he keeps stealing Kevin's plots.

Kevin: Yeah – he does.

Chris: What other writer? Who is he?

Celeste: I can't think of his *name*, can I? But he stole Kevin's plot.

Kevin: The whole plot.

Martin: And?

Kevin: And what?

Martin: And did the BBC take it on, this script that you say had been plagiarised?

Kevin: He won a BAFTA with it.

Martin: With *your* plot?

Kevin: He called it *All For The Money*.

Celeste: Your title was better Kevin.

Kevin: I thought so.

Martin: And did it resemble anything that you had actually written?

Kevin: Well, his main character was called Dominic Winklebottom.

Chris: And *your* main character?

Kevin: Winkle Dominicbottom.

Chris: That *could* be a coincidence!

Martin: (**Peering through window for a closer look**). Why don't you just give up writing and get a proper job?

Celeste: I'll have you know my husband has got writing in his blood.

Martin: Well then, he should see a doctor.

Chris: (**Looks out the window**) It looks like you've knocked down the garden fence as well.

Kevin: Ah! Yes!

Martin: Mick MacNelly and his brother Shaun?

Kevin: Yep. The tree fell the wrong way.

Martin: I thought you were going to say the fence moved.

Celeste: (**Darkly**) No – but Mr McGriff won't like it.

Martin: Of course, he won't.

Chris: Who's Mr McGriff?

Martin: No idea.

Celeste: He's Max's next-door neighbour.

Chris: That's nice.

Celeste: He's not a nice man. He always looks at me.

Martin: What do you mean he always looks at you?

Celeste: Through the curtains. He looks at me through the curtains.

Martin: Mr McGriff?

Celeste: Yes. With his eyes.

Chris: He looks at you - with his *eyes*?

Celeste: Yes.

Martin: How outrageous.

Celeste: They're very close together his eyes - I think he's a pervert.

Martin: Lots of people look through their curtains with their eyes. – They're not *all* perverts.

Celeste: Yes, but their eyes are not that close together – and they're not naked either.

Martin: What? His eyes are naked?

Celeste: No – but his body is.

Chris: What?

Celeste: Well he usually doesn't have any clothes on. And it's not even his birthday. Usually.

Kevin: Anyway, it's OK for the time being.

Chris: Is it?

Kevin: Yes – He's on holiday.

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Martin: Mr McGriff?

Kevin: Yes. He doesn't know the fence came down and half the tree landed in his garden. I got Mick MacNelly and his brother Shaun to chop most of it up and take it away, so Mr McGriff will never know what happened.

Celeste: What if he stares at me in the nude again?

Chris: Well don't take your clothes off.

Celeste: *Him not me!*

Kevin: Dirty old bugger! If he looks at you again, doll, you just tell me and I'll...I'll...

Chris: You'll do what, Kevin? Take his fence down?

Martin: Again?

(Enter Max)

Max: **(Loudly)** Offence? Who's taken offence?

Chris: No, Dad, no-one's taken offence – we were just saying – Mr McGriff's fence has been knocked down.

Kevin: Like I said - I did it by mistake, Dad. *And* I said I was sorry, didn't I?

Max: Did you? Oh, forget it, Kevin – I have! I'm not taking offence either – **(laughs)** Ha! Ha! There's no harm done. We'll just get someone in to put up a new one. It's no problem.

Kevin: Thank you Dad.

Chris: Dad. I don't think you get the point - *Kevin has knocked down Mr McGriff's fence!*

Kevin: Oh, I'm really glad you are on my side sis. I'd hate you as an enemy.

Max: Look - anyone can make a mistake - I did when I had Kevin.

Kevin: Oh! Thanks for nothing, Dad.

Chris: But it'll cost a fortune to replace it – you should make Kevin pay, dad.

Max: Don't worry, Christine - He's going to.

Kevin: What?

Max: I may be hard of hearing but I'm not stupid!

Kevin: How can I pay for it? You know I haven't got that sort of money, Dad!

Max: Take it out of the extra hundred pounds you charged me for chopping down the wrong tree. It's time you faced up to responsibilities, Kevin. And that goes for *all* of you!

Chris: Excellent Dad.

Max: And that includes you Christine.

Chris: Me?

Max: I know you are just waiting for me to die, so you can inherit all my money.

Chris: Daddy, how could you think such a thing?

Martin: **(Shouts)** Max!

Max: What Morris?

Martin: **(Pauses. Looks at Christine and then at Kevin, before returning his attention to Max)** How's your sex life?

Max: My ex-wife? *That* was a long time ago -

Martin: No – your Sex life! Well, maybe you're right - *it was* a long time ago.

Max: If you have a problem with yours Martin, I suggest you speak to Cassandra -again. See, I'm not as deaf as you think I am!

Chris: Again?

(Enter Wanda from kitchen carrying a birthday cake, with candles. She is a little worse for drink and slurs some of her words.)

Wanda: Hello everybody. I've made a c-cake.

Chris: Very nice, Wanda.

Wanda: Look - I've g-got c- candles too. Big big big ones.

Max: And very nice they are too.

Kevin: Who says size doesn't matter?

Max: I'm not getting fatter!

Kevin: No, I said...

Max: Wanda keeps me perfectly in trim, don't you Wanda. She's my Wanda woman you know.

Celeste: Ahh! There you see!

Chris: For heaven's sake don't start her off again.

Wanda: I have made this c-cake for my handsome M-Maxie boy.

Chris: Did she say M-Maxie Boy? It gets worse!

Martin: It sounded like M-Maxie boy! But it can't get any worse!

Chris: Yuck!

Celeste: What's in it, Wanda?

Wanda: What's in what?

Celeste: The cake.

Wanda: Well I was just going to mix up some mixed fruit for the cake, but then I found I had an enormous p-pear...

Max: And very nice they are too!

Wanda: Thank you M-Maxie boy.

Chris: I'm beginning to feel sick.

Martin: Well don't eat the cake.

Wanda: So I chopped it up.

Chris: You've lost me now. You chopped what up?

Wanda: The p-pear. And then I p-put it in.

Chris: P-put what in?

Wanda: The p-pear!

Chris: You put the p-pear *where*?

Wanda: Into the c-cake - as well as all the other stuffy stuff –

Chris: What other stuffy stuff?

Wanda: That b-bottle of b-brandy, which just happened to be h-handy.

Martin: What? The whole b-bottle?

Wanda: Of course, not Morris! – I had to sample it first to make sure it wasn't off. It wasn't – so I had a b-bit more! About eight glasses to be precise. I put what was left into the cake.

Kevin: Anyway, it sounds good – I'll have a slice now if you like.

Celeste: No, you won't, it might be p-poisonous, besides it'll spoil your lunch.

Max: Ahh! About that.

Kevin: What are we having for lunch Dad? I've always loved your cooking.

Chris: Suck up to him why don't you!

Max: Sorry – I didn't make any. That is – I made some – goose, actually – but it got burnt.

Wanda: Burnt to a cinder.

Chris: What?

Max: There isn't any lunch.

Martin: Well what have you been doing in the kitchen all this time? Apart from burning the bloody goose, that is.

Wanda: (**Sniggers**) My Maxi boy's been sampling my p-pears. I mean wares.

Max: And very nice they are too!

Martin: I don't think we need to ask *that* question anymore Chris.

Chris: Oh, *that* question. You may have a point there, Martin. Yuck!!

Max: We might not have any lunch, but we've got wine.

Kevin: I'm getting very confused. I thought Wanda p-put that in the c-cake.

Martin: No - that was brandy.

Max: We've got Red wine, white wine and that rosy stuff.

Kevin: But no lunch to go with it?

Max: No Punch. Why would I make punch?

Kevin: Not punch, Dad – (**Shouts**). *Lunch!!*

Max: Yeah – I don't mind if I do. Is the table laid?

Chris: I don't know – we've not been into the dining room. And what's the point if there's no lunch?

Max: No punch either.

Wanda: Yes, Max – the table was laid this morning. And so was I.

Max: Was it?

Wanda: It was. And so was I. You did it and then you did the table and you did it very well if I may say so - because *you* are a very good layer.

Max: (**Sniggers**). And my Doctor told me my laying days were over.

Martin: What are you? A chicken?

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Chris: Oh, for heaven's sake!!

Martin: They are insatiable.

Celeste: Does this mean we *are* having lunch, or we are *not* having lunch?

Max: For goodness sake woman! For the last time. I haven't made any punch. (**Turns to Kevin**) I think there's something wrong with her hearing.

Wanda: Don't upset yourself Maxi boy. It's not good for your blood pressure.

Max: Thank you my Wanda Woman. She's always looking after me you know. Now is everybody OK? (**He peers around**) Where're the kids? I especially wanted them here today – I've got a lot to tell you all. Not that you'll like it.

Chris: Sorry, daddy, Toby's not coming. He's in a bout.

Max: About when?

Chris: No – a bout – a boxing bout. And Nicol is having her thesis assessed.

Celeste: Ooh. Sounds painful.

Chris: It's just the usual - *Uni* stuff Dad.

Max: What's *she* got to do with it?

Martin: Who?

Max: Eunice Tuff.

Chris: Who?

Max: *Eunice. Eunice Tuff.* You know I haven't seen her in years. In fact, I thought she was pushing up daisies.

Celeste: Oh, that is a shame. What a tragedy. Poor woman. I feel terribly sad.

Martin: You *are* terribly sad. There is no Eunice Tuff!!

Max: Yes, there is Morris. – I thought she was *dead*. Haven't seen her since I was around eleven.

Martin: Eleven years old?

Max: Well not eleven o'clock, Morris. Of course, eleven years old! She was my teacher. Taught me English you know. She was forty something then. Can't believe she's still alive. Let's ask her to lunch.

Chris: No, Daddy – not Eunice Tuff –*uni stuff!* University stuff.

Max: Oh! You know I had a hunch she wouldn't be coming to lunch.

Martin: You just said there isn't any lunch.

Max: No – there's definitely no punch.

Chris: **(Irritated)** This is ridiculous, dad! Why aren't you wearing your hearing aid?

Max: What?

Chris: I said...

Max: You said, "Why aren't you wearing your hearing aid?" I heard you perfectly, Christine – and I'm telling you that I don't *need* a hearing aid.

Chris: Yes, you do, you went with me to the audio specialist and he said you needed one – so we got one for you.

Max: Well I'm not wearing it.

Chris: That's obvious! But what's so wrong about wearing a hearing aid, dad? Is it a felony to wear a hearing aid? If so what's the crime?

Max: **(Looks at his watch)** A quarter to one!

Chris: I give up!

Max: **(Very loudly)** Listen up people – I have to make an announcement - as we're all together today for Wanda's birthday – it's an ideal time for ...

Wanda: **(Interrupting)** Sorry, Max – but did you just say it was *my* birthday.

Max: That's right – that's what it's all about today. *Your* birthday and it's a good time to get together to discuss **(with emphasis)** *important things*.

Kevin: But – Dad – we thought it was *your* birthday. Not Wanda's.

Celeste: We haven't bought you a present Max.

Max: Good, cos it's *not my* birthday.

Wanda: (Voice a little slurred) It's not mine either.

Max: It's not?

Martin: Whoa! Wait a minute. What's this all about? What's going on? If it's not *your* birthday Max and it's *not* Wanda's birthday, whose *bloody* birthday is it?

Max: I could have sworn it was Wanda's.

Wanda: And I th-thought it was *yours*. (Points finger accusingly at Max)

Chris: I thought it wasn't dad's because it's not the right time of year – I always forget the exact date, but I know it's not this time of the year.

Max: No, it's not – my birthday's in May – just shows how much you care! Anyway, it's July now and a perfect time for Wanda's birthday– that's what I thought when she mentioned it.

Wanda: (Still tipsy) But *I* didn't mention it – It's not *m-my* birthday – *m-my* birthday's in October. Or it *was* last year and the year before that! But we were definitely talking about birthdays. Perhaps it was the Queen's birthday – that's around now isn't it?

Chris: That's in April – or June. I forget which.

Martin: Both I think – she has *two* birthdays.

Celeste: How can she have *two* birthdays? That's just greedy.

Martin: One's real and one's official. Don't ask! More to the point – is it anybody's birthday today? If *not*, why are we here celebrating everybody's *unbirthday*? Oh God! I feel a Lewis Carrol moment coming on. Can I be the Mad hatter?

Kevin: Well – while we're all here we may as well celebrate *something*. I know – as we can't celebrate Dad's *actual* birthday let's celebrate the fact that he's still here with us, alive and kicking at his venerable old age.

Chris: (Very loudly) And the nomination for the biggest sucker- up in a supporting role goes to...*Kevin!*

Max: Well, So, it isn't anyone's birthday, but that isn't going to stop me.

Celeste: That's okay Max. If you want to have a birthday celebration you have one.

Wanda: We *can* still make our announcement can't we honey bun?

Max: Of course, we can my darling little Wanda Woman.

Chris: What announcement?

Kevin: We could always have a bit of a send-off for poor old Uncle Mark. Late, but very sincere.

Max: I've told you young man that we don't talk about *him* –Ever! I don't mind celebrating the fact that he's no longer with us, but I draw the line at you calling him "*poor* Uncle Mark". Poor nothing - that man was a swine. A grade A one hundred per cent gold plated waterproof swindling swine!

Chris: But why shouldn't we talk about him dad? He was your brother. Your identical twin brother.

Kevin: And you've never told us why you fell out.

Max: I told you – we didn't see eye to eye. On anything.

Kevin: But something must've started it off – it must've been serious cos, let's face it, dad, it was a long feud. You two didn't speak to each other for years.

Chris: Aunty Marion said it was something to do with a balloon flight.

Max: Your Aunt Marion was a nutcase. That balloon flight had nothing to do with it. Yes, we were on a hot air balloon flight – and yes, we had a row – and yes, we both fell out – but that's all I'm going to say on the subject.

Kevin: Let's toast him anyway.

Max: That I agree with - Let's roast him. He deserves to be roasted!

Kevin: Toasted, Dad not roasted. **(Pleading)** Look – Dad -why don't you wear your blooming hearing aid?

Max: **(Sigh)** I heard you quite clearly, son. I would just prefer to roast him! Preferably in the roaring flames of hellfire!

Martin: Forgiveness has never been one of your strong points has it Max?

Chris: Dad, I can't help feeling that you would be a whole lot happier if you wore your hearing aid.

Max: Alright – I admit it.

Chris: Admit what?

Max: I've lost it.

Chris: What do you mean you've lost it?

Max: I put it down somewhere and I couldn't find it again.

Chris: But it's *impossible* to lose it. It had that special app thing on it.

Celeste: What special app thing?

Martin: It's the latest technology - a *smart* hearing aid with AI - Artificial Intelligence – it cost a ruddy fortune! We explained it to you when you got it.

Max: Did you?

Martin: Yes, don't you remember? You synchronise it with your mobile phone and then, if you lose track of where it is, you go on to the app on your phone and the hearing aids beeps at you. Beep beep beep it goes – so you can find it easily.

Max: Well I couldn't find it, could I?

Chris: Why not?

Max: *Cos I couldn't hear the bloody thing beeping!*

Chris: But why not?

Max: *Because I wasn't wearing my frigging hearing aid, was I?*

Wanda: **(Hesitant)** Er – Max, darling - Was it white with a little red button?

Max: I think it was, why?

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Wanda: No reason - Just be careful when you bite into the cake.

Max: Well, as I was saying - it's a good opportunity for me to make an important announcement...

Chris: **(Interrupting)** Announcement?

Max: Yes. And it affects you all.

Chris: I knew it! Didn't I tell you, Kevin? And Martin?

Celeste: Did you tell *me*?

Chris: I don't even acknowledge that you're here Celeste.

Celeste: Thank you.

Chris: You're welcome. Any time.

Martin: Chris, stay calm. It may not be...

Chris: **(To Wanda).** Did you really imagine that we wouldn't suss you out, Wanda?

Wanda: **(Still slightly tipsy)** What?

Chris: We know what *you're* up to.

Wanda: You do?

Chris: We most certainly do.

Wanda: Oh great! Can you tell me? After that last brandy, I can't actually remember anything.

Max: **(Outraged)** How did *you lot* find out? You shouldn't have. I thought these things were carried out in the strictest possible confidence.

Kevin: Yeah – Well. It's bloody obvious isn't it?

Max: It is to us.

Wanda: Is it?

Chris: Of course, it is!

Martin: Yes – it’s bloody obvious.

Chris: We can all see right through you Wanda.

Wanda: I thought this dress was a little transparent. **(Hiccups)**

Chris: Well, we are not going to stand for it.

Max: You’re not? Then you’ll have to sit down.

Chris: I mean – come on, Dad, she’s only after your money! Surely you can see that!

Max: If you’re talking about Wanda, she means a lot to me Christine.

Chris: You must be blind, Dad – *she’s just after your money!* I’m sure of it. **(To Wanda).** Next thing you’re be telling us that you befriended our father because you like steam engines?

Wanda: Well, we did meet at a steam fair!

Max: Yes - We had a steamy affair.

Chris: She said steam fair dad, not an affair.

Max: I know exactly what she said.

Kevin: No – you’re after his money, Wanda. Why else would you be hanging around him?

Max: What are you all talking about?

Chris: Well, we - *your loving family* - are asking you *not to do it*.

Max: Do what?

Kevin: She doesn’t deserve it.

Max: Deserve what?

Chris: To marry you.

Kevin: And to walk off with our inheritance!

Max: *What?*

Wanda: What are you talking about? I’m not going to marry Max! I have no intention of marrying Max. Sex yes. Marriage no.

Max: Besides we can’t get married.

Kevin: Why not?

Max: Do you want the truth?

Chris: What's wrong with the truth Dad?

Max: There's nothing wrong with my tooth.

Chris: Oh! I could scream. In fact, I *will* scream (**Screams**).

Martin: Louder darling, your father can't hear you.

Chris: (**Screams even louder**) There!

Martin: So why can't you get married?

Max: I'd rather not say.

Kevin: We've cottoned onto your cunning plan, Wanda. We've really got *you* sussed, lady.

Celeste: Yes – you're nothing but a Gold Digger. After his money.

Wanda: (**Sobering up**) *No I am not after his money!*

Kevin: I wish we could believe that.

Max: I don't care if you believe it or not.

Chris: Just give us one good reason why you couldn't marry him?

Wanda: Because he's already married.

All: (**Except Wanda**) He's *what*?

Wanda: He's still married.

Chris: To whom?

Max: That's not important right now.

Chris: Mum?

Max: Your Mother's dead you know that.

Kevin: Then who?

Max: I'm not going to say.

Chris: You are not going to say?

Martin: For heaven's sake - Let's cut to the chase - what's this big birthday announcement?

Celeste: It isn't his birthday, Martin.

Martin: I know.

Celeste: Or Wanda's.

Martin: I know!

Chris: Then what's this all about Dad?

Max: It's about Bruce.

Martin: (**Sarcastic**) Well of course it is – We should have guessed. Who the hell is Bruce?

Max: Bruce Twayne.

Celeste: Batman?

Martin: That's Bruce Wayne.

Chris: Who is this Bruce Twayne?

Wanda: Ahh well....

Chris: Is he your husband Wanda?

Wanda: Why would you say that?

Chris: Isn't your surname Twayne?

Wanda: Yes...but...

Max: Bruce is not Wanda's husband.

Kevin: Is he her dentist?

Max: No.

Celeste: Her gynaecologist?

Max: No.

Chris: Well who the bloody hell is Bruce Twayne?

Wanda: He's my son.

Chris: Your what?

Wanda: My son.

Chris: You have a son?

Wanda: Yes.

Kevin: How old is he?

Wanda: He's 44.

Martin: 44?
Wanda: I had him young.
Max: She did.
Chris: She did what?
Max: She had Bruce when he was young.

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Kevin: How do you know?
Max: Because Kevin, Bruce is my son as well.
Kevin: Your what?
Max: Bruce Twayne is my son!
Chris: But you said he was 44!
Wanda: I did.
Chris: But I'm only 40!
Max: That's right.
Chris: You mean? No, you can't mean...
Max: Yes Christine, Bruce is my eldest child, and quite naturally I am leaving everything in my will to him.
All: (apart from Max and Wanda. Aghast) But...But...
(Tabs close. Lights off.)

End of act one

Act 2

Scene 1 – Sitting room

(Same Set, action continues immediately from the end of Act One. Everyone is in exactly the same position on the stage)

Wanda: Yes – You heard right! – Max and me - We have a son.

Chris: Dad, before I faint or go into a coma for the next twenty years, please can you tell us that this is an elaborate joke?

Max: This isn't a joke Christine.

Martin: Just as well, because no one's laughing.

Max: Bruce is my eldest child.

Wanda: And I've got the certificate to prove it.

Celeste: But...but... I've never met Bruce.

Kevin: None of us have met Bruce!

Chris: We didn't even know he existed.

Kevin: So, you two had a fling before Max was married to my mummy?

Wanda: No! We had a fling *while* Max was married to your mummy.

Martin: (Sarcastic) Oh well that's okay then.

Chris: Oh, my goodness, dad, you cheated on mummy!

Kevin: So where is this Bruce Twayne now?

Max: As a matter of fact he's on his way - he'll be here in just a few minutes.

(Enter Beryl and Brian).

Beryl: (Interrupting - Very loudly) Excuse us bursting in like this, but I thought if I warned you we were coming you'd padlock the doors to keep us out!

Martin: What the...?

Chris: (Suspicious) Who are *you*?

Brian: We've just got back from the cemetery - they called off the funeral - why did they call off the funeral?

Martin: Funeral? What funeral?

Beryl: We were there, but nobody else turned up. It was a really rotten turn out.

Brian: Even the corpse didn't turn up.

Chris: Who the...?

Beryl: **(Interrupting)** The people in the cemetery offices wouldn't explain why there was no funeral - they just... - **(She sees Max. Shocked.)** – *Is that you Max?*

Max: **(Shocked)** Wait a moment, this is impossible!

Beryl: It can't be! It just can't be!! *You're* dead...No – except maybe – no – Mark died some time ago. So...?

Chris: Who the heck *are* you two?

Brian: My latest name is Brian Grimes, but some people still call me Big Willy Wilks. **(Turns to Beryl)** and this is... Gladys Golightly.

Chris: Gladys Golightly? My Facebook friend?

Beryl: Not *now* Christine.

Chris: Now just a minute!

Beryl: I said *not now* Christine!!

Chris: Who do you think you are? Ordering me about as if you were my mother!

Beryl: I *am* your mother.

Max: **(Still shocked)** *Janet?* **(He collapses back onto the settee)** No – it can't be!

Beryl: I call myself Beryl now.

Celeste: But he just said you were Gladys Golightly. Are you Gladys's clone?

Beryl: No and I'm only Gladys on Facebook.

Max: Janet! I thought you were dead, Janet. *You should be dead.*

Beryl: And so should *you*, Max. I got a text from Christine saying you were dead.

Chris: That was a mistake.

Beryl: Don't tell me! Bloody predictive text!

Chris: Forget the text - did you just say you're my mother?

Kevin: She's our mother?

Chris: But I sent the text to Gladys Golightly. How come you got it?

Beryl: Don't you see - That was me! I'm also Gladys.

Martin: Can someone tell me what the hell is going on here?

Beryl: It's simple – Christine texted me – when I was pretending to be Gladys Golightly - to say *he* was dead. (**She points to Max who is half lying and half sitting on the sofa, being comforted by Wanda**) *He* being Max!

Chris: I told you – the text was a mistake! It went wrong. The Predictive text changed it and got it wrong. It said daddy was dead by mistake.

Max: Well, as you can see, I'm alive and ready to kick someone! Anyone!

Beryl: So, it seems - and let me tell *you* this is *very* inconvenient.

Brian: It's not just inconvenient - it's ruined our day.

Chris: Wait a minute here. (**To Max**). Daddy, you told us our mother died years ago.

Kevin: Yeah! That's right, Sis.

Max: She did. At least everyone thought she did.

Martin: Well, she's looking very well for a corpse.

Beryl: Thank you very much!

Max: Look - There was that train accident in India over forty years ago. They found your body, Janet...

Beryl: That's what Mark and I wanted you to believe.

Max: Oh yes! Mark!

Chris: Uncle Mark?

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Beryl: We were lovers.

Max: My bloody no good brother! I knew you know.

Martin: So *that's* why you didn't get on with your brother!

Celeste: Some people can be very over sensitive.

Beryl: Mark and me - We faked my death, so we could run off together.

Chris: Why didn't you get a divorce?

Beryl: What? In a divorce the lawyers get most of the money – this way I get what's rightfully mine.

Wanda: I beg your pardon. Rightfully *yours*?

Kevin: What money?

Beryl: The money in your father's estate!

Martin: But he isn't dead.

Beryl: I can see that now, smart arse!

Chris: How dare you talk to my husband like that!

Beryl: Be quiet Christine!

Chris: Yes Mum. Sorry Mum.

Kevin: *Really?*

Beryl: I came back from the dead to claim all your money. As your *one and only* legal wife.

Brian: Metaphorically speaking.

Celeste: Does Gladys Golightly know you're still alive?

Martin: Celeste, do try to keep up.

Wanda: Does anyone fancy a piece of cake?

(Everyone stops and silence descends on the stage for a few seconds while they all stare at Wanda). O.K. Please yourselves!

Chris: I need a drink, not a piece of cake!

Martin: I don't think so, Christine.

Chris: **(Dangerous)** Get me a bloody drink! And make sure it's at least ninety per cent alcohol!

Martin: Yes dear. **(Goes to the drinks cabinet and makes Christine a Gin & tonic).**

Beryl: Max, your brother told me on his death bed....

Brian: I had nothing to do with it, he died of *almost* natural causes.

Beryl: ...On his death bed he said *you* were on death's door!

Martin: While *he* was also on death's door?

Beryl: Yes.

Martin: What were they? Revolving doors?

Max: Well, let's just say Mark always did like to exaggerate.

Beryl: You were never dying?

Max: What's the point of crying?

Chris: Dying! She said dying! Kevin, give me a cigarette.

Kevin: You don't smoke.

Chris: I bloody well do now. (**Kevin hands her a cigarette, which she puts in her mouth, but doesn't light**).

Beryl: Just before Mark went, he said you had been very ill and you wouldn't make it. That's why I wasn't surprised when I got that text.

Max: Oh no! No! I only had a hernia operation.

Beryl: A hernia operation?

Brian: I almost had a hernia once - I was trying to pinch a four hundredweight cast iron safe.

Max: Well, I may have made it sound a little more serious than it actually was.

Kevin: Because?

Max: Because I thought if Mark thought I was dying; he'd stop carrying on about me and Wanda.

Beryl: Wanda?

Wanda: That's me. (**She waves**).

Beryl: Don't tell me you and Wanda are at it again after all these years!

Chris: Oh dear – are you jealous?

Beryl: Don't make me tell you again young lady.

Chris: Sorry Mum. Anyone got a light?

Martin: Mark didn't approve of Wanda?

Max: He said she was only after my money.

Brian: No, that's us.

Celeste: Get in the queue.

Chris: (**To Beryl**) But Beryl or Gladys or Janet or whatever your name is you said Uncle Mark and you had run off together?

Beryl: We did, and we were quite happy until...

Kevin: Until?

Brian: Until I got released from prison and robbed them. There I was, rummaging amongst Max's family jewels, when Beryl saw me and was struck by my awesome handsomeness. It was love at first sight.

Martin: More like love at first fright!

Beryl: And Mark had a heart attack.

Max: So that's what killed the old sod.

Chris: And this person (**points at Beryl**) is she *really* our mother?

Celeste: I thought your mother was Gladys Golightly?

Max: Oh! Of course, you were too young to remember – allow me to formally introduce you - This is Janet, Christine - your mother, now calling herself Beryl.

Martin: Parent of the year and uncle killer.

Beryl: I didn't kill Mark. It was just an unfortunate accident.

Brian: That's right. Just ask my brief.

Beryl: So now you know the full story - I was Janet when I was with your dad.

Kevin: And now?

Beryl: Now I'm known simply as....

Martin: Another Gold digger.

Beryl: (**Ignores Martin**). Beryl. But I'm still your mum.

Kevin: But dad, *you told us mum was dead*.

Max: *I told you - I thought she was dead - everybody* thought she was dead. Caught up in a tragic rail disaster in India forty years ago! But instead she was shackled up with that bastard of a brother of mine. I always suspected something was going on between them.

Wanda: What made you suspect?

Max: When I caught them in bed together and they both convinced me that it was me in bed with her and not Mark.

Martin: What?

Max: I was *very* drunk at the time and they were *very* convincing.

Martin: But he was your *twin brother*, Max!

Max: Exactly – and there was a big mirror in the bedroom, so that made four of us! No wonder I was confused! I didn't know who was who, did I? Anyway - Yes, I *know* he was my twin brother, Morris – but he was twisted – you couldn't trust him as far as you could throw him!

Martin: Evidently, as he was shagging your wife, pretending to be you.

Beryl: A little respect please. The man has passed on.

Brian: God rest his soul.

Martin: So, Janet or Beryl, how did you survive when your train came off the rails at – wherever it was in India?

Max: Kelamangalam.

Beryl: Actually, it *wasn't* Kelamangalam, not quite, it was Hosur - at the crossroads between Uddanapalli and Parradarrapatti.

Max: OK – I'll take your word for it.

Beryl: And I survived, because I *wasn't* on the train. Mark just told you I was.

Celeste: I've never heard of *those* places before. Are they anywhere near Hackney?

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Beryl: Of course, not – they're in India.

Celeste: No wonder I've never heard of them! I've never been to India. But I know an Indian lady who lives in Hackney. She makes a wonderful curried goat's liver. She used to sing a lovely song called fifty ways to love your liver.

Kevin: That wasn't her it was Paul Simon – or was it Art Garfunkel?

Wanda: Anybody fancy a piece of cake?

(Everyone stops and silence descends on the stage for a few seconds while they all stare at Wanda)

Wanda: O.K. Please yourselves.

Celeste: Vindaloo.

Beryl: What?

Celeste: It wasn't just curried goat, it was Vindaloo.

Beryl: Who is this - this *person* anyway? **(Indicates Celeste)**

Kevin: She's my wife if you must know. Now your daughter-in-law.

Max: So, Janet - here you are after all these years, coming out of the woodwork and after my money.

Beryl: Our money!

Max: I paid for your cremation you know. That was a pretty penny.

Beryl: No way - *I* paid for my own cremation.

Brian: You must have been hot stuff in those days, Beryl.

Beryl: I paid for it. Not you Max!

Max: No – no- no - I remember very clearly sending the money to Mark. Oh! Now I see it...

Brian: Bloody crook.

Beryl: That's rich coming from you.

Kevin: So, Mum, you had a cremation, even though you weren't really dead?

Celeste: How sad.

Beryl: Well, we had to make it look real. And it was such a lovely funeral.

Celeste: Ahh, that's nice.

Beryl: Not that any of you lot turned up.

Chris: We were too young to go – we were babes in arms.

Beryl: And why didn't you go Max? Too busy bonking *her*, I suppose. (**indicates Wanda**)

Max: What? Are you actually criticising me for not attending your *fake* funeral?

Beryl: I was your wife!

Max: You were shagging my brother.

Beryl: You never said anything.

Max: You'd vamoosed by then - and I was too busy.

Beryl: Bonking Wanda or writing those books of yours?

Wanda: Wrong!

Beryl: So, he wasn't bonking you?

Wanda: No – he was bonking his second wife.

Beryl: His *what*?

Chris: Did you say...? (**Turns to Martin**) Did she say...? (**Gulps down her drink**) Get me another drink!

Martin: But....

Chris: Just get me another bloody drink Morris!

Beryl: Are you telling us that Max remarried?

Max: Well, you were dead.

Beryl: But I wasn't.

Max: But I thought you were.

Chris: Hold the front page a minute here. We don't know anything about a second marriage. **(Turns to Kevin)**. Do we Kev?

Kevin: Well *I* don't.

Martin: **(To Max)**. Who did you marry? **(Bringing Chris another gin & tonic)**.

Max: I didn't carry anyone.

Chris: Marry! Not bloody carry! This is serious stuff, dad. So, who did you marry? **(Downs drink in one and waves cigarette in the air)** Someone light this bloody fag for me!

Max: Someone - a young lady.

Celeste: Well, there's a novelty for you!

Chris: What young lady?

Max: Her name was Duava Fondle.

Kevin: Did I hear that right?

Max: Yes - I'll always remember when she first introduced herself - She said "Duava Fondle". So, I did, %Harvey Weinstein% style. She didn't mind. She was a showgirl.

Martin: Did she do the merengue?

Chris: What?

Martin: Sorry - a Barry Manilow moment.

Max: I met her in Las Vegas. I was drawn to her by her atrocious French accent - she was American, of course, brought up in a little township in I don't know -

Martin: You mean Idaho.

Max: No - I don't know! All *I* know is it was in the middle of nowhere, but her accent was very very sexy - and she *just loved* my little foibles.

Beryl: Yeah - they are pretty small!

Wanda: **(Atrocious French accent)** O Contraire! **(To Max)** Mon Cherie - you 'ave such fabulous petite foibles! I just love to play wiz zem! Bloody French tart!

Chris: I remember now - you went to Las Vegas to get over Mummy's death.

Kevin: And where were you Wanda, while dad was in Vegas? Out of the bonking zone I presume.

Wanda: You presume correctly **(Haughtily)** *I* was busy bringing up a child on my own - bringing him up to be a respectable young person.

Chris: (Slurred) Ooooh! Hark at you, Madame toffee nose!

Max: Actually, I went to Vegas every year. And every year I'd meet up with Duava - and things just happened.

Beryl: They just happened?

Max: Yep. And the last time I went there we were married by an Elvis impressionist. Our witnesses were two dwarves from a juggling show. As I recall it, at the very moment we were making our vows they were there juggling with their balls.

Chris: God! This nightmare knows no bounds. Someone please light my frigging cigarette!

Kevin: What happened to her?

Max: Who?

Kevin: Duava!

Max: Do have a what?

Kevin: Your bride!

Max: Oh, Duava Fondle.

Kevin: Yes!

Max: She left me.

Chris: When?

Max: Well, it didn't last long.

Wanda: But they never got divorced. Not even Las Vegas style.

Max: I heard later that she had a kid – I might have been the dad, but she never got in touch to tell me – now she has a grand daughter who also works in Vegas as a showgirl.

Celeste: I've heard of that before – dancing legs often run in the family!

Max: Quite – Anyway, the funny thing is the grand daughters' using the same stage name – Duava Fondle. Anyway, apparently my Duava, silly whatsit, thinks she's still my lawfully wedded wife.

Beryl: That's irrelevant – because *I'm* still legally married to you and *I* was the first one to tie the knot!

Wanda: Also, irrelevant - because I was Max's first love and now, I'm his last love. *And*, as I told you before *I am the mother of his eldest son*. Allow me to introduce you to our dear son Bruce. **(She calls out)**. You can come in now Bruce. **(Enter Bruce)**. Oh – and anyone for a piece of cake?

(Enter Bruce)

Bruce: Hello family.

Chris: What did he say? What family?

Wanda: He's your brother, Christine. Well, half-brother.

Kevin: But *I'm* her brother. How can *he* be her brother?

Wanda: He's your brother too, Kevin.

Celeste: I'm very confused.

Martin: No change there then.

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Beryl: How do I know this is true? This person could be anybody.

Max: Oh, come on, Janet, Beryl or whoever! You've pretended to be dead for forty years. I had a life to lead you know. I had to get on with it after I thought you were dead.

Beryl: But I wasn't even cold.

Martin: You weren't even dead!

Bruce: **(Clears throat loudly)** I would just like to say a few words.

Chris: **(Very slurred voice)** Piss off, Bruce or whatever your name is. Morris, get me another drink.

Beryl: Christine! Language.

Chris: Sorry Mummy.

(Martin takes Christine's empty glass and goes to refill it)

Beryl: But she's right – you can piss off, Bruce!

Chris: Well said, mummy.

Wanda: Listen to my son, please.

Max: Our son.

Bruce: Look, folks, I know this is a bit of a shock to you all, but when I inherit my father's – that is Max's here – *entire* fortune, lock, stock and very full barrel, including all the unpaid royalties from his bestselling books, the rents from the three hundred properties he owns and all the dividends from his millions of shares and bonds – all that - I promise to treat you *all* very fairly.

Chris: No kidding! **(Turns to Kevin)**. Is he still talking?

Kevin: Yes – and I don't like what he's saying.

Max: I suggest you listen to Bruce, Christine.

Bruce: As the *sole* beneficiary of our father's *vast* estate, I assure you that I will ensure that you will *all* receive good presents on your birthdays and at Christmas. I will even treat some of you as if you are family.

Kevin: (**Aghast**) What? *We are* family!

Max: I think that's very considerate of you, Bruce.

Beryl: Considerate, Max? *I'm* your wife and that is the worst offer I've ever heard in my life!

Max: When I'm gone what he does with my estate will be up to Bruce, Beryl. And may I remind you, that so far as I'm concerned you've been dead for the last forty years. Mark told me you were dead. D -E- A- D. Deaded – kerplunketed!

Brian: She looks pretty well alive to me.

Max: But she *pretended* to be dead. I think you will find that's fraud.

Brian: He may have a point there, Beryl.

Beryl: What are you now, Brian, a witness for the prosecution?

Celeste: But what happened to your other wife, Max? Duava Whatsit?

Martin: (**Mockingly**) Huh! She probably ran off with Gladys Golightly.

Celeste: Nice one!

Max: Anyway, *that* was my big announcement for Wanda's birthday lunch.

Wanda: It isn't my birthday.

Martin: It isn't anyone's birthday. Especially with news like this!

Celeste: It's not been anybody's lunch either – I'm starving!

Beryl: Look, Max, be reasonable. I don't think you should be taking revenge on me after all these years. I know I did wrong, but I wasn't in my right mind all those years ago. I had a good job before we got married – and then suddenly there I was with two little kids and no job and having to stay home and look after them and.....

Max: Get to the point.

Beryl: Would saying sorry suffice?

Max: No.

Brian: Worth a try.

Beryl: I wish you *were* dead; it would save a lot of trouble.

Martin: So far as I can make out, the only person who's actually died was Mark.

Chris: *Uncle Mark.*

Max: My bastard brother.

Martin: He *was* your identical twin. Identical in every way?

Celeste: Well, no one's perfect.

Beryl: I can see you were attracted by Celeste's superior intelligence, Kevin.

Kevin: Well, at least she hasn't had an affair with my brother!!

Bruce: Or so you think.

Kevin: **(Aghast)** *What?*

Bruce: Just a joke, Kevin, just a joke.

Wanda: He's such a scamp. Has me in stitches.

Max: I hate witches.

Chris: Stitches! She bloody said stitches!

(Martin hands her another drink)

Martin: So, let's just reiterate here, assuming that I understand things correctly. **(Turns to Beryl)** You left Max for his identical twin brother Mark, when Christine and Kevin were just babes in arms.

Beryl: What can I tell you? I needed a change.

Martin: By running off with a man who looked identical to your own husband.

Beryl: Yeah, but Mark was funny.

Max: I'm funny!

Beryl: No, you're just *odd*.

Martin: But just leaving him wasn't enough. You and Mark faked your own death.

Beryl: I explained that.

Martin: And then you, Max, thinking that Beryl...

Max: Janet.

Martin: Janet was dead, you go to Las Vegas and marry a showgirl that you hardly know.

Max: It seemed like a good idea at the time. And I'm telling you - she had *moves and what a French accent*. She could've been French!

Kevin: Was it legal though? I mean it wouldn't be legal if you didn't consummate the marriage.

Max: Who says we didn't consummate the marriage?

Chris: Charming! **(Gulps down her drink)**

Martin: But even before you married Duava...-er - what was it again?

Max: *Fondle*. That wasn't an instruction - that was her name, but *I* took it as an invitation.

Martin: And I gather that even before you married Beryl.... Janet. You and Wanda were.... were....

Wanda: Lovers. We were lovers!

Max: We were never brothers. You were never transgender.

Chris: Lovers! She said lovers!!

Martin: And you had – have - a child?

Bruce: That would be me.

Beryl: Wait a damn minute. Bruce, how old did you say you were?

Bruce: I'm forty-five. Today as a matter of fact.

Celeste: At last, it's *someone's* birthday today.

Wanda: Cake anyone?

Beryl: Max and I were married forty-six years ago.

(Pause while this sinks in)

Bruce: Happy anniversary.

Beryl: You strumpet, Wanda! You were having an affair with my husband and you had his love child before I was even dead and while he was still married to me! Strumpet! Strumpet! Strumpet!

Wanda: I'm not sure you can actually take the moral high ground here Beryl, so don't call *me* a strumpet!

Max: I don't think she does.

Beryl: Does what?

Max: Play the trumpet.

Chris: Oh God! **(Sighs)** So, he really is our brother - Bruce. **(Wearily)** I need another drink.

Martin: I think you've had....

Chris: And I need it *Now!*

Martin: Well as you asked so nicely. **(Takes Chris's glass and walks back to the drinks cabinet)**

Kevin: You really are our brother then, Bruce?

Bruce: Half-brother – but I inherit *everything*. Lock, stock and barrel.

Max: Well, not until I'm dead.

Beryl: Which maybe sooner than you think.

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Chris: This is all your fault mum. If you had never left us to run off with Uncle Mark....

Beryl: It's *not* my fault. Your father was already shagging Wanda and creating illegitimate children.

Celeste: Are there any more cupboards with skeletons in them?

Beryl: No! **(Pauses)**. Are there?

Max: No.

Beryl: Thank heavens for that!

Max: At least not with Wanda.

Chris: What did he say?

(Martin, hands Chris another drink. She is getting more and more intoxicated)

Kevin: But you *still* left us – **(with irony)** *Mummy*. You can't change that fact.

Beryl: Well you were two screaming brats – I never had a moment's peace, what with the dirty nappies and pushing mashed-up baby food into your screaming cake holes.

Chris: What did you expect? – I was three years old and Kevin must have been about one and a half. You just left us without a second thought! No regrets.

Beryl: I'm just not the maternal type.

Max: It's more than just hype.

Chris: *Type!* Dad if you don't get a new hearing aid soon, I'm going to spontaneously combust. **(Gulps down another drink)**

Max: There's nothing wrong with your bust Christine. A little flat maybe, but nothing to worry about.

Chris: Oh, I give up.... And my chest isn't that flat! Martin, tell him about my chest.

Martin: It's a chest worthy of Marilyn Monroe and Dolly Parton rolled into one. It's as huge as the Hindenburg and as airworthy as a first world war Zeppelin it's...

Chris: **(Interrupting)** Enough already! **(Waves cigarette in the air)** Pipe down and light my fag for me.

Martin: No! You might explode.

Beryl: I just don't like kids!

Kevin: That's no excuse, Mum, you left your husband and your children without any regrets.

Beryl: I did regret it later – not coming back I mean. But after what I'd done I couldn't could I? I mean I'd have been arrested or something.

Chris: You should've been shot!

(Enter Nicola – she carries a handbag and a smartphone.)

Nicola: Who should have been shot?

Martin: Nicola – where have you been?

Nicola: Sorry – important stuff at Uni, for my thesis.

Martin: You've heard the news I take it.

Nicola: What news?

Martin: Your Lecturer – *whatsisname*? Jake Offbridge. He's been arrested.

Nicola: **(Shocked horror)** Oh no! What for?

Martin: *Professor* Jake Offbridge – has been arrested for *not* being a Professor. Am I putting it in my newspaper? *You bet I am!*

Kevin: You don't get arrested for *not* being a Professor! I'm *not* a Professor and *I haven't* been arrested!

Martin: I mean he was *impersonating* a Professor.

Kevin: Which one?

Martin: What do you mean "which one"? He was impersonating himself.

Celeste: How can you impersonate yourself? You're either you or you're not you.

Martin: I mean he was *pretending* to be a professor...

Celeste: A Professor of what?

Martin: Criminology...!

Kevin: The rotten crook!

Celeste: You mean he was a crook pretending to be a Professor? Or was he a professor pretending to be a crook?

Kevin: Either way he's a crook!

Chris: Look - Is this important at the moment? Don't we have more important matters to discuss?

Martin: **(Ignoring Chris)** Not only that – he was a cyber scammer. They reckon he's hacked into thousands of peoples' bank accounts and stolen their hard-earned savings.

Nicola: I always thought there was something dodgy about him.

Martin: Yes - he was a rotten hacker.

Max: What's he been in?

Martin: Eh?

Max: What's he been in? I might have seen him on telly? Not that I watch much telly, but if he's in East Enders or Coronation Street I'm sure I would recognise him.

Chris: Not an *actor*, dad!!!– A *hacker*. A computer hacker. I do wish you would find your hearing aid and put it in those cloth ears of yours! **(shouts) Morris!**

Martin: Yes, I know. Another drink. That bottle's getting pretty low. **(Takes Chris's glass and returns to the drinks cabinet)**

Nicola: A computer hacker. I wondered what he was up to. Wait a minute.... **(She frantically taps at her electronic tablet keyboard)** Oh no!

Chris: What?

Nicola: A couple of days ago he said his computer had crashed, so he used mine.

Martin: You didn't give him your password, did you?

Nicola: Well – yes – I never thought he'd... **(Peers at screen)**. Oh no! The swine – he's cleaned out my bank account! I'm broke!

Martin: Oh, this day just gets better and better!

Max: I don't need a sweater. It's pretty hot in here as it is.

Chris: *Dad!*

(Martin hands Chris yet another drink)

Nicola: Who knew? I thought he was nice. Really nice.

Chris: But you said he was a bit dodgy.

Nicola: Well now I *know* he was a *lot* dodgy.

Martin: So, you gave a guy you thought was dodgy the use of your computer?

Nicola: It wasn't my fault, dad. I never thought. It was early in the morning and he said he had to do some urgent stuff on-line, so I let him do it while I was in the shower.

Chris: In the shower? What was he doing in your flat while you were taking a shower?

Nicola: Oh mum! Get with it. We'd spent the night together.

Chris: You were sleeping with him? At your flat?

Nicola: Get real, mum – his wife and kids were at his.

Martin: So – you've been having an affair with your married lecturer! Did I say lecturer?

Kevin: Who was really a con man *and* a hacker?

Nicola: Doesn't everybody sleep with their tutor? This is the twenty first century. I don't smoke, I don't do drugs, but I do do men – you should be pleased.

Martin: Why didn't you tell us?

Nicola: It's not the sort of thing you tell your mum and dad is it? But I did let it slip to Great Uncle Mark just before he died.

Chris: You did *what*?

Beryl: And Mark told *me*.

Brian: And naturally Beryl told *me*.

Nicola: Sorry – but who are *you*?

Chris: So, all these people knew except your mother and father?

Martin: Who else did you tell?

Nicola: Only Bruce.

Chris: So - You know Bruce?

Nicola: Uncle Bruce? Yes.

Bruce: Don't look at me like that! Nicola asked me not to tell anyone that she knew *me*, and I knew her.

Chris: But how did *you* know about Bruce? *We* didn't.

Wanda: I told her. Well, Nicola wanted to be a criminologist and as Bruce is a policeman, I thought it would be useful if they met.

Brian: Did you say *policeman*? A copper? A plod?

Bruce: Actually, a Detective Inspector.

Brian: Sorry, I have to go. I've got a fence that urgently needs creosoting. In Australia.

Bruce: I'd really prefer it if you stayed Brian. Or should I call you Big Willy Wilkes?

Brian: Why do I have a bad feeling about this?

Nicola: Well now that you know about Jake and me. I expect I'd better tell you the rest.

Martin: Don't tell me you're pregnant.

Nicola: Yes. I am.

Martin: What?

Chris: You're having *his* baby? The crooked Professor's baby?

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Beryl: Oh, Nicky! This is *so* exciting! You're having a baby and I'm going to be a great-grandmother! Gimme a hug! **(She approaches Nicola to hug her)**

Nicola: Get off me! Anyway, who *are you*?

Brian: This should be fun.
Chris: She's my mother.

Kevin: *Our* Mother.

Max: And my late wife.

Wanda: Who's not dead. Not even late!

Nicola: Not dead?

Chris: She doesn't look it, but I suppose she's one of the undead. Get out the garlic!

Celeste: Spooky!

Nicola: But I thought grandma died in India? Some sort of accident with a train.

Beryl: It's a long story, darling. So, come on and give your grand mummy a great big hug.

Nicola: But I didn't even know I had a grand mummy.

Beryl: Yes, you have – and I'm it.

Chris: I know you're surprised, Nicola darling, we are as well.

Kevin: And that's a frigging understatement!

Martin: Everything today is a frigging understatement!

Nicola: (To Beryl) So - er – Grandmama - Why did you leave Grandpa –?

Chris: She was having an affair with Uncle Mark.

Nicola: Great Uncle Mark?

Max: My identical twin brother.

Celeste: Did I know him? Who did he look like?

Brian: And I thought *I* was thick!

Nicola: Mark always told Toby and I that he felt like a grandfather to us. That must be why!

Beryl: Who's Toby?

Nicola: My brother.

Chris: And my son. You know it wasn't easy on my dad when you left, Beryl. **(Pauses)** **(To Nicola)** Hang on a moment – Nicola did Uncle Mark tell you about Beryl and how he and she were - you know...*lovers*?

Nicola: Yes. But that was after Beryl left grandpa and before she was killed, I mean before we thought she was killed in that accident.

Martin: Chris, don't go there. Please don't go there.

Chris: You don't think....

Martin: It's possible.

Kevin: You really think so?

Celeste: I think so.

Martin: You do?

Celeste: No - I haven't got a clue what you're talking about.

Brian: Oh good. I thought that was just me.

Celeste: **(To Brian)** You know, you *are* quite cute.

Chris: Mum! Is it possible?

Beryl: How should I know? They both fancied me and they both looked the same – and let's be honest – nobody and I mean *nobody* could tell them apart. Especially in the dark when...you know, *IT* happens.

Chris: You're not serious!

Martin: Max are you following this?

Max: I think I'm ahead of you, Morris.

Martin: My name is Martin!! M A R T I N!!

Max: I know that Morris. And I'm still ahead of you.

Chris: And it was *then* that you deserted us Beryl- me and Kevin – and – and dad. And ran off with Uncle Mark.

Beryl: Well things were different in those days. And it was complicated.

Kevin: Complicated in what way?

Beryl: Max had all the money – but...

Chris: But what?

Beryl: Mark was better in bed. That was the only way I could tell the difference.

Brian: How did he compare to me?

Beryl: You haven't got any money.

Brian: I mean in bed.

Beryl: You haven't got any money. In fact – I don't know *why* you're even here.

Chris: Was it so bad living with us, though mum – did you hate daddy *that much*?

Beryl: I didn't hate him – well, not when we were first married – but then he started getting up to his tricks.

Celeste: Really! I didn't know you were a conjuror, Max - can you make people disappear?

Max: Well, I seem to have done a good job with your mother-in-law - it's taken *her* forty years to reappear.

Beryl: Not *conjuring* tricks. *Other women*.

Wanda: Other women?

Brian: What do you think Duava Fondle was?

Celeste: An instruction?

Bruce: **(Clears his throat noisily)** Do you mind if I interject?

Brian: Not as long as you clean it up afterwards.

Bruce: I am not just here as the sole beneficiary of my father's last will and testament.

Kevin: He's not dead! Don't count your chickens.

Bruce: I'm actually here in an *official capacity*.

Kevin: Official capacity?

Wanda: Go on Brucy. Make Mummy proud.

Bruce: I don't believe that Mark died of a heart attack.

Kevin: You mean he's alive and well?

Celeste: It doesn't surprise me - No one stays dead for long in this family.

Bruce: No. I mean, I think he was murdered.

Beryl: Murdered?

Bruce: Murdered?

Nicola: Well that's terrible.

Celeste: Even worse for Mark.

Martin: What makes you think he was murdered?

Bruce: We found poison in his alcohol stream.

Kevin: You mean in his blood stream.

Bruce: No, he was a heavy drinker.

Beryl: Mark wasn't a heavy drinker.

Wanda: No, Max is the heavy drinker.

Bruce: Yes, so it seems. He's a bit like you in that respect.

Max: Well, folks, this is all very interesting, but I think it's time I went for my afternoon walk.

Chris: What afternoon walk?

Max: I always go for an afternoon walk.

Chris: Since when?

Max: Since now. I'm starting today.

Bruce: I don't think so.

Martin: What *is* going on here?

Chris: Bruce – my dear long-lost brother - will you kindly get to the point?

Bruce: Certainly, long-lost Sister.

Chris: Please don't call me that.

Wanda: He's a very affectionate boy. Takes after his mother.

Bruce: There's also a matter of fingerprints.

Brian: I didn't think I left any.

Bruce: Not yours, Brian.

Beryl: Well *there's* a first.

Bruce: Mark's.

Nicola: You found Mark's fingerprints on Mark's body? How careless of him.

Bruce: No. We found Max's fingerprints on Mark's body.

Celeste: How careless of *him*.

Chris: There must be some mistake.

Bruce: When I say we found Max's fingerprints on Mark I should make something clear.

Martin: That would be helpful since I don't know what you're talking about.

Bruce: Mark had Max's fingerprints.

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Chris: Pardon?

Bruce: The prints on Mark's fingers were not Mark's they were Max's.

Celeste: You mean Mark had Max's fingers? How odd.

Bruce: Odd indeed.

Brian: They must've been transplanted – I must learn how to do that.

Bruce: Nope, I don't think they were transplanted. Mark must have been born with those prints.

Nicola: But that can only mean....

Bruce: That Mark *wasn't* the deceased.

Wanda: What?

Bruce: **(Turns to Max)** My father - Max.

Chris: And my father - Max.

Kevin: And my father - Max.

Celeste: Is this what they call maxing out?

Bruce: Yes – But you see - Max was the murder victim. Not Mark.

Beryl: Then this must be... **(Points to Max)** Mark?

Bruce: Bingo.

Celeste: So, he is dead after all. I think?

Martin: Are you saying that this isn't Max?

Brian: He could be a clone of his former self.

Bruce: No – I don't think so. But what I do think is that this **(indicates Max)** is not Max – it's Mark.

Martin: That's exactly what I'm thinking.

Celeste: Does he know he's not Max?

Bruce: I think he has a pretty good idea.

Beryl: So, Max you are really Mark!

Max: Well, depends on how you look at it.

Brian: How do *you* look at it?

Max: Well, that I'm Mark. Remarkable Mark!

Chris: You killed your own brother?

Kevin: Our father?

Nicola: Why would you do such a thing?

Max: Well, there's no point in lying – I did it for the money.

Brian: Can't argue with that.

Beryl: Excuse me, but I'm a little confused - am I entitled to any cash? Now that we know that Max is no longer with us?

Chris: Money Money Money! Is that all you can think about?

Wanda: But - Who have I been sleeping with, Bruce? Mark or Max? Or both?

Bruce: I don't know do I! And I also don't know who my real father is – or was.

Chris: Was Max my father? Or was it Mark?

Kevin: Was it Max? Or is it Mark?

Brian: Or was it a clone of one of them? Or even both?

(This time they all stop and once again silence descends on the stage for a few seconds while they all stare at Brian)

Bruce: (To Max) I'm going to have to arrest you, sir.

Max: But I'm your father.

Bruce: Are you?

Max: Ha! You can work that one out for yourself. The important thing is... *I'm not going to die – ever – or at least not in any of your lifetimes.*

Martin: What's he talking about now?

Max: *I have made other arrangements!*

Brian: What? Prison?

Max: I said I needed the money – well, I needed it for *Cryogenics*.

Kevin: Isn't that where you get frozen?

Max: Ten out of ten! Yes! I've signed up with the Whatsitcold Cryogenics Company. Just before I die, I'm going to be frozen and I'll *stay* frozen until the medics can cure whatever it is I *would have* died of. **(Manic laugh)**. So - I'm going to come back and haunt you –all of you - or, if not you, your descendants. In other words, I'm going to come back and *spend Max's inheritance* **(Manic laugh)** Or is it Mark's inheritance? You'll never know. **(Maniacal laughter)**.

Beryl: He's barking mad.

Bruce: Mister Mark Stuart – I am arresting you on suspicion of murdering your identical brother Maximillian Stewart...anything you say etc., etc. Or, alternatively, if I've got it wrong and you really are Max - I am arresting you on suspicion of murdering your identical brother Mark Stewart...anything you say etc. etc.

Kevin: Here! Wait a minute, Beryl or Janet or whatever your name is – You should know cos you *are* my birth mother, was Uncle Mark my father or was it Max?

Chris: Yes, Beryl – who *is* our father?

Beryl: I don't know do I! I don't know who *anybody* is anymore. They were identical twins, so how the bloody hell am I supposed to know who was who, who did what to whom and who the hell *anyone's* father is?

Bruce: Either way. Mister Mark Stewart or, alternatively, Mr Max Stewart, come along with me.

Wanda: But you can't arrest him Brucie. He's your father.

Bruce: Is he? Are you sure Mum?

Wanda: Of course, I'm.... Well, I'm practically.... **(To Max)**. Are you Max or Mark? Come on – you're going to have to tell us sooner or later!

Max: No, I'm not. it is a bit of a lark though isn't it.

Chris: Mark! Not lark! Mark! **(Gulps down her last drink and bursts into hysterical laughter)**

Bruce: Come on Max – or Mark – you're going to have to go down to the station with me.
(Bruce and Max make their way towards the exit door)

Wanda: **(Following in close pursuit)** I'm sure there's been some mistake – Max is innocent – or is it Mark that's innocent? – one of the two and either way I love him, and I shall stand by him – or is it them?

Beryl: Well, I ain't letting him out of my sight – he's our meal ticket - come on Brian...

(Bruce, Max, Wanda, Beryl and Brian exit leaving Martin, Chris and Nicola onstage)

Chris: **(Holding her head)** Ooh! I feel dizzy. I must go to the Loo...

Martin: It's all that drink – it's gone to your head or more likely to your bladder.
(Chris wobbles uncertainly towards the hall door)

Nicola: Be careful, mum – oh! I'd better help you.
(Chris and Nicola exit leaving Martin alone on the stage. He stands there bemused for a few beats. Enter Duava Fondle – the younger version, being the grand-daughter of Max's "wife" – scantily dressed)

Duava: **(Terrible French accent)** Oh! Hi! Is zis ze omme de Monsewer Maximillian Stewart?

Martin: Yes, that's right. Who are you?

Duava: Duava Fondle.

Martin: Is that a request or an instruction? Either way, Cassandra was right – and *I don't mind if I do...*

(Tabs close. Lights off.)

The End