

Characters (The Potter Effect)

- Max (M/F)** - A tired overworked vet.
- Ava (M/F)** - Rabbit owner.
- Nadine (M/F)** - A tired overworked vet nurse. *Doubling possible.

Characters (The Interpreter)

- Rachel (F)** - House occupier.
- Julian (M)** - A salesman/representative, but this is not obvious until end.
- Postie (M/F)** - Four lines only at beginning. This part could easily be doubled by Julian.

Characters (Confusion at the Gentlemen's Outfitters)

- Shop Manager (M)** - Professional and enthusiastic.
- Lady (F)** - Rather posh.
- Mrs Buttle (M/F)** - Busy assistant.

The Potter Effect

Scene 1 – Vet’s office

(SFX. A short extract from the song ‘Rabbit’ by Chas and Dave. Max enters. Yawns. Sighs. Runs hand through hair. Slumps down in chair. Closes eyes. SFX. Dreamlike music starts, with short extracts played softly throughout the sketch. Suggest Ravel’s ‘Miroirs III. Une Barque sur L’Ocean.’ Ava enters in a flowing and soundless way. Carries an apparently empty small animal carrier. Looks at Max. Coughs to wake him)

Max: (Opens eyes blearily. Blinks. Stands up) Excuse me – I’d dropped off. I thought we’d finished for the day. We’ve got one vet off sick, and another on holiday; it’s been rather hectic. (Looks at carrier. Smiles) You are?

Ava: Ava.

Max: I’m Max; one of the vets. (Nods towards animal carrier) What have we got here?
(Ava puts animal carrier on table. Pretends to extract an animal from it, and places invisible animal on table. Looks at Max)

Max: (Looks at table) I think it’s still in its carrier? (Peers inside carrier. Concerned) No – it’s not. Has it got out into the waiting area? I’ll get one of the vet nurses to take a look. (Moves towards door)

Ava: (Points to table) No need. It’s here.

Max: (Max stares at table. Stares at Ava) What exactly is it that you’ve brought in?

Ava: A rabbit.

Max: (Looks puzzled. Half smiles) Are you pulling my leg?

Ava: Not at all.

Max: (Perplexed) I’m afraid I can’t see anything at all on the table. Have you forgotten to bring it?

Ava: No. It’s there alright. You can’t see it because its invisible.

Max: Can you see it?

Ava: (Shakes head) No, that’s why I’ve brought it in.

Max: (Warily) If it’s invisible – and neither you nor I can see it, how do you know it exists?

Ava: Because you can feel it of course!

Max: How can I feel something that’s invisible? (Rather annoyed. Waves his hands over the table in a token gesture. Suddenly his hands stop as if on an object. His hands move over the object, as if from head tail. Astounded) Good grief! It is a rabbit!

Ava: I told you it was!

Max: **(Shakes head as if to wake himself up)** Can you give me a bit of the history of this – er ailment?

Ava: Yes. It all began when we started watching repeats of Harry Potter on the telly; she's a house rabbit, so she was in her basket. She likes a bit of telly. Well, the minute she saw Harry Potter perform his cloak of invisibility spell, called Disillusionment, a change came over her. Now she thinks it's one of the characters from Harry Potter.

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Max: Which one?

Ava: Hermione.

Max: **(Amazed)** Hermione? How do you know?

Ava: **(Shrugs)** I can just tell from the way she acts. Anyway, she remembered the spell, and it works. No one else in the house can do it, but she can. Explain that! We think she must have some sort of special rabbit extra sensory perception.

Max: **(Flummoxed)** And, and, apart from thinking that she's Hermione from Harry Potter, er – is she in good health?

Ava: I'd say so.

Max: So – it's just the invisibility problem that's worrying you?

Ava: **(Snorts)** I like the way you say 'just the invisibility problem'! You've no idea how embarrassing it is socially! If invite the neighbours round for coffee, I more or less have to ask them to crawl around on their hands and knees to avoid stepping on her. And when it comes to taking her out for a walk on her lead – well! If she sees an animal she doesn't like, she does her spell and becomes invisible. I look really ridiculous, holding an empty hopping lead.

Max: So, she's not invisible all the time?

Ava: No. Just when she's feeling contrary, or there's something she dislikes.

Max: Why is she invisible at the moment?

Ava: She doesn't like coming to the vets.

Max: Oh. I see. Does she know any other spells?

Ava: Oh yes. Lots. There's a really annoying one called Mobiliarbus Levitate where she gets her food box to lift off the shelf, and then tip out into her bowl. She's put on no end of weight.

Max: **(Feels rabbit to assess weight. Astonished)** Goodness. I see what you mean. She's huge! She's enormous! She'll have to go on a diet! Oh, oh! **(Max's feet start dancing around rapidly and involuntarily. Keep going until he apologises a few lines further)** Oh, oh – what's happening?

Ava: She didn't like you saying that. **(Points to Max's feet madly dancing)** That spell is called Tarantallegra, after the Spanish dance Tarantella. You'll have to apologise to get her to stop.

Max: **(To rabbit)** I apologise! I apologise! **(Dancing slows, then stops. To rabbit)** Thank you.

Ava: **(Nods head knowingly)** She used the Finite Incantatem charm to get your feet to stop then.

(Max wipes brow)

Ava: What was I saying – oh yes, it's not only her own food she tips out. She and the cat have formed a bit of an alliance.

Max: Does the cat think it's a character from Harry Potter too?

Ava: **(Rather worriedly)** Not at the moment. But I am quite concerned in case he catches one. I've seen him staring at Ron Weasley on the screen.

Max: That could be a problem.

Ava: It certainly could. Ron drives a car.

Max: How does your rabbit, I mean Hermione, make the spells – does she have a wand?

Ava: **(Stares at vet)** No, of course not. She couldn't hold a wand – she's a rabbit! Whenever she wants to make a spell, she just waves a paw in the air, and points it at the object.

Max: You have stopped her from watching the Harry Potter films of course?

Ava: Pah! You try! We tried locking the telly away in a cupboard, but she just uses the Alohomora spell to unlock it again. Then she uses the Mobiliarbus charm to lift it out.

Max: **(Worried)** So, we're up against magic here.

Ava: I suppose we are.

Max: Have you considered that you may need a wizard, more than a vet?

Ava: **(Stares at Max)** A wizard! And where are you going to find one of those in real life. Harry Potter is a story!

Max: How about trying to tug her coat of invisibility off? **(Gives tentative little tugs in the air around the rabbit)**

Ava: I really wouldn't do that if I were you, she doesn't like it.

Max: **(Immediately stops tugging. An idea forms. Shows enthusiasm)** Tell you what. How about if I try and cover her cloak of invisibility with an opaque powder? Then the powder will show up, over her cloak and everyone would know where she is? I've got some dusting powder somewhere – **(looks around for it)**

(Ava moves away in a flowing and soundless way while the music is playing and exits. Nadine enters yawning. Then stares worriedly at Max)

Max: **(Does not notice that Nadine has entered. He picks up the plastic tub of dusting powder, and sprinkles it liberally over the apparently empty table.)**

Stares at table. Sighs) Well, that didn't work! I think that you're going to have to keep your cloak of invisibility on for the time being Hermione. Darn, I didn't ask if there was a spell that removed the cloak of invisibility! How stupid of me. **(Stares at where 'Hermione' might be on table)** And you're certainly not going to tell me are you Hermione!

Nadine: **(Calls)** Max!

Max: **(Turns and see Nadine)** Yes.

Nadine: What are you doing? Are you rehearsing for a play or something?

Max: No, **(Points)** I'm trying to remove this rabbit's cloak of invisibility. **(Looks around)** Where's Ava gone to?

Nadine: **(Perplexed)** Who's Ava?

Max: **(Points)** The owner of this rabbit.

Nadine: Max, the front door's locked. We've not had anyone in for at least half an hour. We've cleaned up and ready to go home. You're overworking; when did you last have a day off? I insist on driving you home. **(Assertive)** Now please go and get in my car.

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Max: **(Frowns puzzled. Yawns)** Thank you Nadine, I am rather tired. You must be too. Oh, **(Points)** we need to hold on to Hermione here for a day or two for observation; try and resolve this cloak of invisibility problem. And for goodness sakes don't let her near a telly! **(Exits)**

Nadine: **(Puts hands to face in worry. To self)** This is what comes of not taking a day of when you're due! **(Notices table where dusting powder is sprinkled. Gets a wipe or paper towel and goes to dust it off. Her hand meets an object. Frowns, and runs her hand over the apparent shape of a rabbit. Feels it's ears. Gasps aloud)** It is a rabbit! **(Nervously lifts the apparent rabbit up, struggling a bit because of its weight. To invisible rabbit)** Blooming heck – you weigh a ton! **(Her feet begin to dance wildly)** Oh, oh, what's going on? Oh, oh, oh **(Exits dancing wildly still holding 'rabbit')**

(Cast enter to take bow. For fun Nadine enters with the imaginary invisible rabbit, or a large toy one in her arms)

The end.

Scene 1 – Front Door (The Interpreter)

(SFX. Extract from ‘Cat Duet’ by Rossini and Pearson, sung by Chichi Enu and Adrienne Livey. Rachel enters as if just approaching her front door, back from a shopping trip. She is carrying a bag or basket.)

- Postie:** **(Enters with handful of post. Cheerily)** Good morning.
- Rachel:** Good morning; anything exciting?
- Postie:** Let’s have a quick look. **(Quickly assesses post in hand.)** Mostly advertising I think; oh, I was wrong, there’s a letter for you. **(Hands Rachel the mail.)**
- Rachel:** **(Receives handful of mail/junkmail.)** Thank you. I’ve got a love-hate relationship with digital technology – it’s so handy, but it’s killed letter writing. I used to love receiving letters.
- Postie:** A lot of people say that.
- Rachel:** **(Sifts through the mail; extracts the letter, looks at back of envelope for clues.)** Perhaps this is something exciting.
- Postie:** **(Smiles)** Perhaps. **(Exits.)**
- Rachel:** **(Rips open letter. Groans. Reads)** ‘Having trouble with troublesome weeds on your driveway? Call.....’ **(Sighs. Holds bundle as if wishing to dispose of leaflets. Looks around as if missing an object. Talks to self. Tetchy.)** Where’s the recycling bin got to? Oh, it’s still on the pavement I wonder if the bin lorry’s been round yet? **(Sighs.)**
- Julian:** **(Enters)** That’s a big sigh if you don’t mind me saying so.
- Rachel:** **(Appraises Julian. Wearily.)** If you’re selling something I’m really not in the...
- Julian:** **(Interrupts. Shows he’s not carrying anything.)** Do I look like I’m selling something?
- Rachel:** A survey then – you’re doing a survey?
- Julian:** You’re very suspicious.
- Rachel:** I have reason to be. Nine out of ten callers try to sell me something – double glazing, veggie baskets, tree pruning, gas, electricity, horse manure....**(Temporarily runs out of steam. Deep breath, continues.)**...roof repairs, tarmac laying... **(Interrupted.)**
- Julian:** **(After surreptitiously checking for house number, interrupts.)** Is this number eighty-eight?
- Rachel:** **(Relaxing.)** Oh, no, it’s not – I’m number sixty-eight. Sorry to be suspicious.
- Julian:** No problem.
- Rachel:** **(Points)** You just need to go up the road a bit for sixty-eight; same side.
- Julian:** **(Casually points as if to a cat in front garden.)** That’s a fine cat – a Siamese?
- Rachel:** Burmese.
- Julian:** Unusual.

Rachel: **(Con conversationally.)** Yes, there's not too many around.

Julian: I get on with cats, we've just been having a nice chat.

Rachel: He likes a fuss. He's a happy bunny.

Julian: Bunny?

Rachel: It's an expression, haven't you heard it?

Julian: Oh, I've heard it. He doesn't like it though.

Rachel: How can you tell?

Julian: He told me.

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Rachel: **(Taken aback.)** He told you?

Julian: Yes, Tin Win told me.

Rachel: You know his name?

Julian: Of course. We had a name exchange. I'm Julian. And your name is?

Rachel: **(Somewhat reluctantly.)** Um, Rachel.

(Julian holds out his hand in friendly but assertive manner, to shake Rachel's hand. Rachel transfers leaflets to her left hand in order to shake Julian's hand. A couple of them flutter to ground.)

Julian: **(Quickly picks them up and hands back to Rachel.)** Continuing with our conversation, yes Tin Win said it's demeaning for him to be compared to a rabbit.

Rachel: **(Laughs.)** You are pulling my leg!

Julian: Not at all. I have this special gift of communicating with cats; call me a feline interpreter. I don't expect you to believe me.

Rachel: I don't believe you.

Julian: Very well. I'll tell you one or two other things that he said.

Rachel: **(Folds arms.)** Go on then.

Julian: He says he doesn't like the cat food you've been giving him.

Rachel: Oh? And what sort is that?

Julian: He says he's really bored with cod and chicken, and why did you buy such a big box? Was it a cut price deal?

Rachel: **(A little taken aback.)** He said that?

Julian: Yes.

Rachel: There's gratitude.

Julian: He suggested you try another flavour, and brand.

Rachel: Did he make any, er, suggestions?

Julian: Well, he did suggest you might try – oh there’s a coincidence – you have the leaflet in your hand. Excuse me. **(Leans forward to extract leaflet from Rachel’s hand; looks at it.)** Here we are, yes, Tin Win did suggest you change to Kitty’s Kitchen. You can order a monthly selection of his top flavours.

Rachel: **(Cynically.)** And what are Tin Win’s top flavours?

Julian: Er, anything from Kitty’s Kitchen he says. And that’s not all.

Rachel: You appear to have had quite a long chat.

Julian: Sufficient. He was obviously bursting to get things off his chest. If you come across someone who speaks the same language, it all comes out in a flood doesn’t it.

Rachel: I wouldn’t know. What else did he say?

Julian: Well, I don’t know if I should repeat it; especially as it was probably spoken in confidence.

Rachel: If Tin Win has a grouse – **(Interrupted.)**

Julian: **(Studying leaflet in his hand. Misinterprets)** No, no, he said definitely no grouse. Salmon and turkey, or tuna and trout, but no grouse – **(Interrupted.)**

Rachel: I mean, if he has a complaint, perhaps I ought to know so that I can try to remedy it.

Julian: Ah, well, you do have a point Rachel. It’s about your settee, it’s uncomfortable.

Rachel: What! The one in our front window?

Julian: **(Points as if to Rachel’s window.)** Yes, that’s the one, Tin Win said.

Rachel: He definitely said the one in the front window was uncomfortable? Not for instance, the one in the conservatory round the back?

Julian: No, no, he doesn’t mind the rattan settee in the conservatory, with the deep floral covered cushions.

Rachel: **(Takes a deep breath.)** He was that specific about it?

Julian: Yes. I mean there’s not much point in saying anything if you’re not going to be specific, he said.

Rachel: **(Looks through leaflets in her hand.)** What sort of settee does Tin Win fancy then?

Julian: Oh, something like, oh, excuse me again, **(Spots an advertising leaflet with a settee on in Rachel’s hand. Leans forward and points.)** something like that one there, he said. **(Admiringly.)** I must say he has very good taste.

Rachel: **(Looks at advertising leaflet and frowns.)** Expensive taste.

Julian: Would you expect anything less? I mean he’s an expensive cat.

Rachel: Yes, with expensive tastes. Did he say anything else?

Julian: Please don't think that our conversation was all about his grumbles. We discussed other things too.

Rachel: Such as?

Julian: Oh, the weather; same as people really. Nice day for it etc.

Rachel: Anything else.

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Julian: Well, he doesn't want to worry you, but –

Rachel: Oh, don't hold back. He's been fairly forthcoming so far.

Julian: **(Looks towards where Tin Win might possibly be.)** Don't be too harsh; it's not every day that he meets someone like me, who can really truly understand him.

Rachel: Once in a blue moon I should think.

Julian: Yes. I surprise people all the time when I tell them what their cats say. It's not always welcome, but then the truth isn't always welcome, is it? Oh, you were asking me what else he said it concerns your garden. He told me that next door's garden has a much better layout.

Rachel: Which side next doors?

Julian: This side **(Points)**. The lawn is immaculate, no weeds infesting the drive; there's that pretty little pergola with climbing clematis, bushes to hide in.

Rachel: Why does he want to hide?

Julian: To spy out the land.

Rachel: What for?

Julian: Oh, you know cats or perhaps you don't. They're instinctual hunters.

Rachel: He's not without his faults then?

Julian: He's a cat.

Rachel: Perhaps he's just hungry, what with going off his cod and chicken dinners?

Julian: That would certainly increase his killer instinct. **(Leans forward pointing to a leaflet showing an example of a landscaped garden.)** If you look at the example of landscaping on this leaflet, you'll see that no inch of ground is wasted, unlike yours. There's a raised dais for him to lie on as well. In fact – **(Interrupted.)**

Rachel: **(Thrusts leaflets towards Julian. Warily.)** Take them, you've a few to get through yet. **(Shuffles leaflets, pointing to various examples.)** How about the fitted kitchens leaflet? Or the better bathrooms? Or Merry Maids home cleaning?

Julian: **(Accepts leaflets back.)** Oh, that's such a negative attitude Rachel. Tin Win doesn't like cynicism – look, look at him twitching his tail with displeasure.

Rachel: Well, if Tin Win is cross, he can always go home.

Julian: Pardon?

Rachel: Home! **(Points to house next door with landscaped garden etc.)** He comes here when his owners are at work. He just loves my unruly garden. And if I don't watch him, he'll sneak through the cat flap and gobble up my cat's leftovers – cod and chicken; then he'll have a kip on the front room settee.

(Julian opens mouth, closes it. SFX. Of bin lorry.)

Rachel: **(Airily.)** Sounds like the recycling lorry's on its way to take away the empty cat food tins you've been looking at. Tell you what, you've just time to pop those leaflets in to join them on your way out. And do tuck Tin Win's name tag in again on his collar; it's a bit of a giveaway. Oh, and I do know you were sneaking around the back of the conservatory before I arrived home because you left the gate open. Goodbye Julian. **(Exits.)**

Julian: **(Shrugs. Scratches head; looks at house next door. Ever optimistic, addresses invisible cat positively.)** Well Tin Win, time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted. If you prefer this garden, this settee, this food I'll put my skates on and look in next door's recycling bin for clues. **(Looks at his watch.)** Your owners will probably be back from work soon. What do you say?

(SFX. A Meow.)

Julian: Exactly. **(Exits with leaflets whistling cheerily.)**

(Cast enter and take bow. For fun Rachel could have a toy cat tucked under her arm.)

The end

Scene 1 – Clothes Shop (Confusion at the Gentlemen’s Outfitters)

(SFX. Extract from ‘Dedicated Follower of Fashion’ by The Kinks. Manager enters with rolls of material. Places on table. Mrs Buttle enters with swatches of cloth. Places on table. Exits looking purposeful, as if has work to get on with. SFX. Shop bell rings. Lady enters)

- Manager:** (Approaches lady) Good afternoon, madam, how may I help?
- Customer:** (Spoken as if she had just been passing by) You are a gentlemen’s outfitters I notice.
- Manager:** (Proudly) Of distinction madam.
- Lady:** That’s what I want to hear.
- Manager:** We have an excellent reputation; we’re not cheap, but we don’t do cheap. You won’t find horsehair in any of our cloths.
- Lady:** Rather coarse I should imagine.
- Manager:** Absolutely madam.
- Lady:** Right then to business; I’m willing to pay, but there will be some adaptations to my order.
- Manager:** (Smiles reassuringly) We’re used to that madam; a discreet increase in the cloth here, to hide an expansive girth; a padding of the shoulders there, to give an impression of power. Narrower vertical stripes in the material to increase the perception of height. May I enquire if the tailoring is for your husband?
- Lady:** Smaller.
- Manager:** Ah, the young master of the house.
- Lady:** I’ve been buying clothes off the shelf ready for him to wear; but we had a simply ghastly experience at a charity tea party recently. Ghastly! We arrived, him spruced up and looking his best, and there were three others wearing the very same outfit! Well, I had a quick cup of tea and went home. I said to my husband, never again, never again will we be embarrassed in that manner.
- Manager:** (Soothingly) I should think not madam; a most unfortunate incident. Rest assured dear lady, you’ve come to the right place; you’ll never be embarrassed again.
- Lady:** Good. Now then, I want properly fitted garments for every possible occasion; cricketing whites for when he accompanies my husband to a cricket match; a nice football shirt for when he goes to a football match; a country jacket for long country walks; a blazer for the tennis season; a mac; a winter coat; oh, dinner jacket naturally; pyjamas – um beachwear – something tweedy for shoots –
- Manager:** (Suggests) Knickerbockers?
- Lady:** Why not. Of course he’ll need a little cut away at the back.
- Manager:** (Puzzled, but trying not to show it) A cut away madam?
- Lady:** Naturally; one wouldn’t wish him to be caught short.

Manager: **(Doing his best to understand)** No, one, er, certainly wouldn't, on the, er, grouse moors.

Lady: And other places too of course.

Manager: **(Repeats, pretending to comprehend)** Other places too – yes, yes, understandably. **(Reassuringly)** I'm sure it's a, er, common problem among, er, the country set.

Lady: **(Slightly doubtful)** Do you think so?

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Manager: Well, er, very prickly gorse – er, **(Claps hands together with sudden enthusiasm to move conversation along)** Wonderful, wonderful! I can see the little sir in his new wardrobe now. To save on expense, I can put a discreet tuck in here and there to allow for growth.

Lady: I shouldn't think he'll grow much more.

Manager: A tall lad; well, well, you never know with these youngsters; you think they've finished growing, and then suddenly they shoot up another six inches.

Lady: I'd be extremely surprised, but carry on.

Manager: **(Gestures to cloth)** We have some wonderful materials to choose from, Egyptian Cotton for the whites, Harris Tweed for the jacket, all manner of twills and twists, stripes and squares. All manner of shades. What is the little sir's name, so I can begin to get a picture of him?

Lady: Jack

Manager: Jack; wonderful, wonderful. You didn't by any chance name him after cousin Jack in 'The Importance of Being Earnest'? I'm a great fan of Oscar Wilde myself, such fun.

Lady: No, we named him Jack, because the surname is Russell.

Manager: **(Claps hands together in delight)** Oh Mrs Russell, what a sense of humour you and your husband must have! It's a pity he's not here, because I'd love to see his colouring, so I can advise on complimentary shades. Complimentary shades are so important to the overall effect.

Lady: He is here, but I didn't bring him in; he's rather excited today.

Manager: **(Effusive)** My dear lady, I get excited *every* day, when I come in and see the glorious array of materials. Bring him in, bring him in! I can measure him up while he's here.

Lady: He might run around.

Manager: Youthful exuberance! It shows a zest for life.

Lady: Or sit on your knee.

Manager: Really? How old is the young sir?

Lady: He's four. My sister-in-law has a girl the same age; bitch.

Manager: **(Taken aback)** Oh dear, I am sorry to hear that.
(Lady looks at manager puzzled)

Manager: **(Suddenly spots something out of window. Frowns. Turns away and calls urgently but discreetly to assistant)** Mrs Buttle, could you come here please.
(Mrs Buttle enters and stands aside to wait for Manager)

Manager: **(To Lady)** Excuse me for a moment; we have a slight problem. We do get them now and again, being on the High Street, with the world passing by our window as it were. **(Recommends)** Do take a look at our material swatches; feel them; imagine Jack in them. **(Moves over to assistant)**
(Lady looks at and feels material swatches as if comparing)

Manager: **(Speaks low and confidentially, but audibly)** There's a little dog outside. Someone's left it tied to the lamp-post on a long lead, and it's wee'd all up the shop window. Throw a bucket of water over it will you. **(Returns to lady. Smiles reassuringly, and hands her another couple of material swatches to inspect)**
(Lady thoughtfully looks at and feels new material swatches)

Mrs Buttle: **(Re-appears with a bucket. To manager aloud)** Over the window, or over the dog sir?

Manager: **(Moves to assistant. Looks as if out of window. Audibly)** Perhaps just the window Mrs Buttle, on second thoughts both! It won't do. It really won't do! Disgusting little dog!

Mrs Buttle: **(As if looking at window with disdain)** Yes sir.

Lady: **(Looks at bucket and out of window. Suddenly becomes aware of what they are discussing. Thrusts swatches back at manager)** Disgusting little dog? I have never been so insulted in my life! How dare you! How dare you! That's Jack!
(Exits in huff).
(SFX. Shop doorbell rings. Door slam.)

Lady: **(Offstage indignantly calls to waiting dog)** Come along young sir; we shall take our custom elsewhere!
(Manager and Mrs Buttle stand staring, as if out of window)

Manager: **(Recovering composure. To assistant)** Just the window then.

Mrs Buttle: Right sir. **(Exits with bucket)**
(Manager smooths his material swatches. Exits. SFX. A bark.)

The end