

# The Way We Live Now

An English Comedy in Two Acts

by

**Michael Black**

“The history of York is the history of England”

*George VI*

**There were 280,704 domestic burglaries in England  
and Wales 2007/08 (one every two minutes)  
Home Office BCS Crime Survey 2007/08**

**The average cost of a wedding in the UK is £15,244**  
([www.uknetguide.co.uk/Lifestyle\\_and\\_Leisure/Article/Wedding\\_Costs.html](http://www.uknetguide.co.uk/Lifestyle_and_Leisure/Article/Wedding_Costs.html))

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## A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

**Michael Black** was born in 1962, and grew up in south Manchester. He was educated at York University, where he completed a degree in European Literature and History, and then at Cambridge University, where he completed a doctorate in South African anti-apartheid literature.

His plays have been performed in London, Cardiff, Manchester, York and Edinburgh at home, and in Timisoara, Iasi and Bucharest abroad. They include *The Life To Come* (Edinburgh 1984, Cardiff 1985), *Pure Walking Evil* (London 1989, National Theatre of Romania 1990/91) and *The Amber Room* (London, 1998). *Pure Walking Evil* has most recently been performed at the Cowgate Central Theatre, Edinburgh Festival, 2004. His play *Panharmonicon* had a reading at the Nottingham Playhouse 2002, and his play *Madame Polina* a reading at the Genesis Guild, New York, 2003.

Michael has been awarded three Arts Council England Playwriting Bursaries.

In 2007 Michael finished *The Minotaur*, set in Paris in 1945/6 just after the liberation of the city from the Nazis. The play concerns the relations between Picasso and his three mistresses at the time. *The Minotaur* is to have a rehearsed reading by the Moving Parts Theatre Company in Paris, April 5<sup>th</sup> 2009.

Michael's most recently finished play is *The Lady Of The Camellias*, adapted from the Alexandre Dumas *filis* novel (1848).

## CHARACTERS

- DONALD Engineer in a wheel chair. In his seventies, a man of remnant physical power with broad shoulders. Intellectually and socially uncompromising.
- ELEANOR His wife. In her late sixties, a woman of elegance and poise. Tall and commanding.
- PETER Their son. In his late twenties. Pony-tail, wears jeans and jumpers with something like an Amnesty International T-shirt.
- VICAR In his fifties. Affable, bumbling, of concerned but ineffectual demeanour.
- GINA In her later forties, expensively dressed, Joan Collins as role model.
- CLIVE Her husband. In his early fifties, dressed in designer golf casuals.
- KARIN Their daughter. In her late twenties. Dresses in a pin-stripe trouser suit. Stunning. Bright eyed, intelligent. Everything.
- PROZAC A tramp in a raincoat full of pockets. Any resemblance between him and Harpo Marx in *Animal Crackers* or *Duck Soup* is totally intentional. Tramp of Our Times.
- STEVE Salt of the earth. Typical tradesman.
- TOWNSEND Somewhere past forty. Bluff and powerful Yorkshire man.
- BOY Demonic twelve year old. Sinewy and threatening. Wears a *Hitler World Tour 1939-1945* T-Shirt.
- DOG An amenable Jack Russell, who must be capable of sitting quietly in an actors lap for twenty minutes.

Britain's strictures to foreign governments are being mocked from Iran to the Turks and Calcos Islands, as world leaders seize on stories about MPs' bloated expenses claims as evidence of moral decay in the UK.

Accounts of MPs billing the taxpayer for duck houses and moat cleaning have been lapped up around the world and have posed a problem for British diplomats who have previously been vocal in criticizing corruption.

**Financial Times, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2009, p.1**

# ACT ONE

*(Morning. The set is the living room of Donald and Eleanor Weldon's Victorian town house. The door off centre at the back of the set is the front door of the house, and there are two other doors, stage right and left. These are used when characters exit into the hall/shed/toilet/study or into the kitchen respectively. There is also an under-the-stairs cupboard stage right. At the back of the set there is also a large front sash window. The set is a classic English box set, except that all the walls and doors are at skewed angles, as if the world is out of joint. The room is full of old once valuable furniture, now worn. There is a large reproduction of Picasso's "Guernica" on the stage left wall, and a small framed photograph of Isambard Kingdom Brunel on the stage right wall. The room also contains a CD player, and a small portable TV, on a stand clearly meant for a much bigger one. Donald is sitting in his wheelchair at the breakfast table, reading the "Yorkshire Post". He is smoking a cigarette. Enter Eleanor with an umbrella and a bunch of daffodils)*

ELEANOR Brrrrh! Another wet and windy day

DONALD Summer's set in with its usual severity. Coming in from the shed I got soaked. *(Pointing to his newspaper)* Look at this! Despite the expenses scandal, MPs have blacked out half their expenses claims! "Second home 'flipping' will remain hidden despite pledge"! Scandalous!

ELEANOR Oh no! And we've forgotten to vote! The local elections were yesterday!

DONALD They're tomorrow

ELEANOR Are they?

DONALD Yes. Today is Wednesday

ELEANOR Oh of course it is

DONALD Midweek in York, the heart of historic England. Rather like Lincoln but with extra Vikings and Romans thrown in

ELEANOR And you're smoking again. And you know it's not good for you. You'll be justifying a bottle of Scotch next

DONALD The idea of justifying anything after a bottle of Scotch is a contradiction in terms

ELEANOR Besides, if you put more water in it, it would cost us less

DONALD Water? Look how it rots your boots! Think what it does to your stomach!

ELEANOR I never did understand why you drink whisky anyway. It tastes like turpentine

DONALD It tastes like nectar

ELEANOR It tastes like turpentine

DONALD It tastes like nectar with an after-burn of turpentine. That's the kick

ELEANOR (*Eleanor puts the daffodils in a vase*) Well, kick or not, we can't afford it

DONALD Daffodils, daffodils, more bloody daffodils!

ELEANOR Well Peter won't bring any flowers will he? He never does

DONALD Completely unnecessary expense

ELEANOR Not as unnecessary as your cigarettes. After bills, we have precisely one hundred and thirty two pounds a week to live on, and you send at least twenty five of it up in smoke. And we can't afford it! And the roof leaks. And there's dry rot in the rafters, and ... (*Eleanor goes towards the under-the-stairs cupboard*)

DONALD ... there's no need to do the hoovering now

ELEANOR Donald. The carpet's filthy. (*Opening the cupboard*) What's this?

DONALD It's a vacuum cleaner

ELEANOR It's a *new* vacuum cleaner

DONALD As a matter of fact, it's a new dual-cyclone bagless vacuum cleaner, the wondrous invention of a latter day English genius by the name of James Dyson. There's no bag to clog up, so the suction is much more reliable, and your hoovering ...

ELEANOR But is it built properly? You can see all the insides

DONALD It's rather like a Richard Rodgers building - display the unseen. The Lloyds building, or ...

ELEANOR How much did it cost?

DONALD Eleanor

ELEANOR How much did it cost?

DONALD Are we overdrawn?

ELEANOR No, but we were last year, and so we ended up with even less this year

DONALD I bought it to make the hoovering easier for you!

ELEANOR I don't believe that for a moment. "Income twenty shillings, expenditure twenty shillings and six pence. Everlasting misery". Dickens was right. Remember Mr. Micawber

DONALD Bugger Dickens. ( *Holding up the newspaper* ) Look at this. Two years after the collapse of Northern Rock, the accountants still don't know how big the bill is to bail the bank out. God I hate bankers! And all because of the collapse of the building society movement. No one knows anything in this country any more. The building societies were about ordinary people saving for bricks and mortar, but nowadays, all the building societies turned banks are interested in is house price inflation, and that bubble has well and truly burst. Can you imagine giving anyone a 125% mortgage? Utter madness!

ELEANOR What on earth has that got to do with a new vacuum cleaner?

DONALD Don't you realise? The next time I go to a bank with an idea for a new invention, I'll have even fewer assets to present to them because our house price has gone down. And all through no fault of our own. We paid off our mortgage years ago ...

ELEANOR Donald!

DONALD Never mind the knock on effects. If people stop buying and selling houses, which seems to be the only thing the English know how to do any more, then that's all the new kitchen and bathroom suppliers out of work as well. And the decorators. We're in a big recession Eleanor, and there's no way out of it

ELEANOR Donald! What was wrong with the old vacuum cleaner?

DONALD If you must know, I bought the Dyson because I suddenly realised you can probably use the same technology to filter particulates out of diesel exhaust

ELEANOR Oh no! Not another new idea!

DONALD But of course

- ELEANOR But they always fail!
- DONALD The ideas never fail. It's people's reception of them that's the problem. But I go on. Try, fail. Try again, fail better
- ELEANOR We'll discuss this later, after I've made the place look respectable for the homecoming of our one and only son. The country has changed, that's all, and you refuse to accept it
- DONALD The problem with this country is institutionalised mediocrity, and the mediocrity comes from the top
- ELEANOR Yes dear, so you keep saying. But the rebel as usual, you refuse to go with the flow
- DONALD Go with the flow? Whatever happened to actually believing in something? Or has that been market-tested out of existence? And anyway, what's wrong with being a rebel? And why can't rebels be rich? If the rebels are always poor they'll always lose, and I want the rebels to win
- ELEANOR You want Newcastle United to win the League. Oh, the post (*Goes to the front door, and picks up letters*)
- DONALD There won't be anything for me. There never is. (*Reading from the newspaper*) Meanwhile, Woolworth's has just gone down the pan and Rupert Murdoch has just bought the *Wall Street Journal*!
- ELEANOR What's wrong with that?
- DONALD What's wrong with it? D'you know what he said? "I'll make sure the page 3 girls have MBAs".
- ELEANOR Well least Prozac's Housing Benefit cheque is on time. The only problem now is, where is he?
- DONALD I'm sure he's walking amongst us somewhere
- ELEANOR (*Sorting through the letters*) Let's hope so, but if the police have picked him up again I'll be furious. All they do is take him to Bootham Park to free up another cell, just for honking his horn too much in Parliament Square, or for singing Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> by the river at four in the morning and waking up the yacht-crowd! And Bootham Park section him for no real reason apart from he paints "Consultant Psychiatrists are the Thought Police" on the walls, and then I spend months of effort trying to get him out! You know, I think the truth is we have no real

tolerance of difference or originality any more, and psychiatry reflects that. We lock up the awkward voices, the inconvenient voices, which means the only voices left are the dull ones

DONALD Well said in best Somerville manner

ELEANOR Mind you, at least they've closed the Clifton Park Asylum down. Thousands of patients hidden from view, entirely cut off from the rest of us for years on end! People used to get put in there and never come out

DONALD Clifton Park. "Now an exclusive development by Treetops Homes. A series of four-bedroomed town houses for the rising executive"

ELEANOR Eskdale Ward becomes Eskdale Gardens, complete with plastic Georgian columns, and double garages that are too small to actually double park in... Oh Donald, look! The insurance cheque for the burglary's arrived! (*Showing Donald the cheque*) Well, cheer up! It's not every day you get a cheque for one thousand three hundred and twenty four pounds fifty seven pence, is it?

DONALD I need a considerably larger cheque than that. Something more in the region of forty grand, just to build a working prototype

ELEANOR Perhaps you'll hear something tomorrow. In the meantime, let's be thankful

DONALD Thankful for what? Thankful for closing down the railway works where I used to be chief engineer?

ELEANOR Thankful for today. Yesterday is history and tomorrow is uncertain, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present

DONALD I spent forty years arguing for more money for the railways Eleanor, forty years! Everyday of my working life. We were right all along, but no one could give a flying fuck! From Dr. Beeching onwards, they've just asset stripped the entire network, and now the only thing left is the property portfolio. And the track is still falling apart, that's a fact!

ELEANOR I don't think I'll bother with the Castle Howard Spectacular this year you know

DONALD Anything to change the subject

ELEANOR You're getting over-excited Donald, and it's not good for you

DONALD Over-excited!

ELEANOR And I don't think I'll replace all the CDs that were stolen either. I mean how often do we play the Fauré? Or the Verdi?

DONALD A *Requiem* sounds very apt to me

ELEANOR That's not the point. You have to learn to let the railways go

DONALD They were my life Eleanor

ELEANOR No. Not this year. Castle Howard is lovely, but do I draw the line at the theme from *Brideshead Revisited*? Or *Pomp And Circumstance*? Again! Oh, and we have a leaflet from a Burglar Alarm Company. Perhaps I should ring them up? After all, we've been waiting on the Crime Prevention Officer for weeks now

DONALD Eleanor. I don't think we're very high on the Crime Prevention Officer's list

ELEANOR Well we should be

DONALD Why? Because you're in charge of the flower arranging roster at the Minster? Because you organise Meals On Wheels? Because you're the last living remnant of a once famous Empire family? No one remembers the exploits of Captain Spalding any more

ELEANOR Well perhaps they should. My great-great-uncle Captain Spalding helped set up some of the first missions in Kenya

DONALD A smoke screen Eleanor. He was after the loot. They all were

ELEANOR (*Looking at the stage right wall*) What's happened to the Constable?

DONALD It wasn't a Constable. It was a print of a Constable, and a bad one at that

ELEANOR Donald. What's happened to it?

DONALD I swapped it at the Sue Ryder shop

ELEANOR What for?

DONALD (*Pointing to the same wall, where the photograph of Brunel hangs*) For that

ELEANOR I see. Who is it?

DONALD They didn't know in the shop either. That's why it was so cheap

ELEANOR So you just threw out *The Haywain* without a bye or leave?

DONALD Correct. I was sick of looking at a painting where everyone was looking backwards. The haywain, the cartsman, the horse and even the

bloody dog. Everyone. That's probably why it's so popular, and that's why I got rid of it

ELEANOR For a very small photograph of an anonymous Victorian?

DONALD Correct again. Besides, I hardly see why I should have to (*looking at "Guernica"*) look at a bloody great war crime all day if I can't have a choice of my own

ELEANOR We decided on the Picasso together

DONALD I agreed to go along with it. But it never went with the Constable anyway

ELEANOR It was supposed to contrast. It was supposed to be a statement of my eclectic sensibility

DONALD A fake rustic past and a blitzkrieg. Some sensibility that is

ELEANOR How did you take it down, anyway?

DONALD With my walking stick. And that's how I put the photograph up as well

ELEANOR For a man who can't put the pans away, remarkable

DONALD That's entirely different. The pans won't stay on the end of a walking stick with their handles in the air, whereas balancing the end on the top of a picture frame was easy (*the door bell rings*)

ELEANOR Good gracious. A world first! Peter's early. (*She opens the door*) Peter! (*Standing in the doorway is the Vicar*)

VICAR (*Entering*) Oh Eleanor!

ELEANOR Reverend!

VICAR There's been a terrible accident. A man at Rowntree's has fallen into the chocolate mint Aero mixing vat

DONALD An entirely new meaning to death by chocolate

VICAR It sounds very serious. And I was wondering if you could stand in for me at the Meals On Wheels crisis meeting

ELEANOR Yes, of course

VICAR They want me there for the last rites

ELEANOR Oh no!

VICAR Just in case. Nothing like this has happened at Rowntree's for years

DONALD It's Nestlé's now

ELEANOR It'll always be Rowntree's to me

DONALD     How typically English. Ignore the facts, and continue as if nothing has happened

ELEANOR    Nothing has happened. The name's changed, that's all

DONALD     The ownership has changed. We still think it's English, but actually it's Swiss

VICAR       *(Looking at the photograph)* Whoever's that?

DONALD     Who d'you think it is?

VICAR       Livingstone, Stanley, Darwin, Rhodes, General Gordon. Tennyson? The young Kipling?

DONALD     Not even warm

ELEANOR    Who is it then?

DONALD     It's Isambard Kingdom Brunel

VICAR       Oh!

DONALD     The most significant engineer of his age

ELEANOR    What are you implying?

DONALD     I'm not implying anything

ELEANOR    Yes you are. You'll be telling me you're a direct descendant next

DONALD     Only in spirit

ELEANOR    He doubtless drank whisky as well

DONALD     In outrageous quantities

VICAR       Yes. How very interesting. But I really must be going. If you could very politely persuade Mrs. Willoughby that I completely understand the need for a new cooker, but I really do think a new microwave is unnecessary

ELEANOR    You can rely on it

VICAR       I'd rather you than me to be honest. Once Mrs. Willoughby starts organising meetings, there's no stopping her

ELEANOR    Leave it to me *(Vicar exits. Eleanor closes the front door)*

DONALD     I would have thought you'd learned about crossing Mrs. Willoughby after her hostile take over of last year's parish car boot sale

ELEANOR    It takes more than a brand new Range Rover to frighten me

DONALD     I'm glad to hear it

ELEANOR    But I'm not glad about the Constable. I've no objection to a photograph of Brunel, but I can see this is all part of your perennial discontent.

And who's going to be the brickbat? Me. Again. Well, all I can say Donald is that I'm not standing for it. Not this time. Just because you can't raise the money for your latest invention doesn't mean you can endlessly take it out on me

DONALD All I've done is put a photograph of an engineer on the wall

ELEANOR You've done it to spite me. I can see we will soon be back to the innate creativity of engineers, and the small minded enfeebledness of virtually everybody else, particularly charitably minded artistically inclined once aristocratic English women who spend their time with vicars, flower arranging, troubleshooting Mrs. Willoughbys and generally trying to keep the local community in some kind of moral order

DONALD I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about

ELEANOR We can't all spend our lives slinging bridges across canyons, damming up fjords, thinking up new and wonderful ways of making things stronger, taller, faster or bigger ...

DONALD Or cleaner ...

ELEANOR ... all the time can we? It's not the only kind of job that matters

DONALD I never said it was

ELEANOR You've said it lots of times, always conveniently forgetting the people who clear up all the rubble, make the tea, do the accounts, clean the suit...

DONALD ... and do completely meaningless part-time M.A.'s in Nonsense Poetry at York University

ELEANOR ... and do completely meaningless part-time M.A.'s in Nonsense Poetry at York University

DONALD ... which they never finish

ELEANOR ... which they never finish. (*She starts to put her coat on to go out*)

There you go again! You just rant and rage at the world, and worse still, most of the time you seem to think the world is me! I can be anyone from Robert Mugabe to Ossama bin Laden depending on what you hear on the news

DONALD Eleanor, what has Afghanistan...

ELEANOR ... and I just don't think it's fair, I really don't. I mean it's not my fault I boarded at Marlborough is it? No one asked me. And it's not my fault I

was brought up on a thousand acres of now defunct stately home  
Mummy had to sell because of death duties ...

DONALD You mean because of inherited incompetence ...

ELEANOR ... and it's not my fault that Uncle Freddie lost half of what was left  
playing the Stock Exchange, and the rest of it gambling in Monte  
Carlo. And it's not my fault I went to Somerville College Oxford  
either...

DONALD It is your fault you keep talking about it though. It's over forty years  
ago

ELEANOR I just did what I thought I was supposed to do Donald. Which is what  
most people do most of the time, as a matter of fact. And then I met  
you. And I thought I was being rather brave marrying a red haired Celt  
from a Tyneside grammar school who talked about cantilevered girders  
at dinner parties and insisted on drinking the "Newcy Brown" when  
everyone else was drinking sherry. In fact Donald, I did it to escape  
from what I was supposed to do

DONALD Eleanor...

ELEANOR Because I could have married any number of gin and tonic Nigels any  
time I liked, and ended up running some ghastly colonial polo club in  
Nairobi ...

DONALD ... and been terribly bored

ELEANOR ... and been terribly bored. But I married you instead, because you  
excited me, and I wanted to find something new ...

DONALD Eleanor...

ELEANOR ... but you've spent almost our entire marriage reminding me what I  
was before. And I just don't think it's fair. In fact, if I'm honest Donald,  
I've spent at least half our marriage wondering whether you wanted to  
be married to me at all

DONALD Eleanor. I have never regretted marrying you for one single second.  
I've cursed the day I ever met you a million times, but regret marrying  
you? Never. Not once

ELEANOR Really?

DONALD Really and truly

ELEANOR Oh darling. And we honeymooned in Dar es Salaam

DONALD     The Harbour of Peace. Just a shame we didn't stay there (*The door bell rings*)

ELEANOR    (*She opens the front door*) Peter! (*Standing in the door is Gina*)

GINA        (*Entering into the middle of the room, with Clive carrying bags behind her*) Hello. You must be Mrs. Weldon. Eleanor. I'm Gina. How funny. You're going out just as I'm coming in! Lucky we got here in time, isn't it Clive?

ELEANOR    I'm sorry?

GINA        Gina and Clive Stansted

CLIVE       (*Shaking hands with Donald and then Eleanor*) Pleased to meet you. Pleased to meet you (*Eleanor holds her hand in pain*)

GINA        And it's as well for the parents to get to know one another after all. And I said to Clive, Swindon's not that far from York is it, and York's a lovely place to visit, well worth it on its own if you see what I mean. So here we are. Gina and Clive Stansted. Karen's parents

ELEANOR    Karen?

GINA        Your son is getting married to our daughter

DONALD     He's doing what?

GINA        Peter is getting married to Karen

ELEANOR    Oh! Kar-in

DONALD     First we've heard of it

GINA        You can take it from me. Peter's coming home to tell you today! I opened his mail

DONALD     Which is a criminal offence ...

GINA        I just had a feeling that letter was important, and Karen was still working on her program or whatever it is, which is why she didn't get the letter herself because she'd been called away, so I was all on my own, and curiosity got the better of me. Well, it always does actually, but then that way I always know what's going on. And if I know what's going on, I know I'm happy

ELEANOR    Good for you

GINA        (*Looking out of the window*) And as soon as I'm here the sun's come out! It always happens when I arrive, I'm walking sunshine itself, aren't

I Clive, that's what you always say! Now, why don't you go and make some tea, and Clive will see to the suitcases, won't you Clive

ELEANOR Tea, yes of course, but I'm afraid I have to go out. You see Mrs. Willoughby wants a new microwave, and I have to tell her "no". It's very important

GINA But there's so much to talk about. A wedding! A wedding! How exciting! And I've bought all the magazines. The *OK Wedding Guide*, *Dolce Vita*, *Bride And Groom*, *Wedding Hair And Beauty*, *You And Your Wedding*, *For The Bride*, the lot! Leave it all to me

DONALD (*Holding his legs*) Ah! Lord Hanson strikes again

ELEANOR How bad is it?

DONALD One of the worst

GINA Lord Hanson?

ELEANOR Donald has hardening arteries in his legs, which can be very painful, and he's christened them Lord Hanson, after the entrepreneur ...

DONALD ... after the asset stripping bastard who sold Ever Ready to Duracell for a song and whose partner is actually proud to admit he's never visited the shop floor of a single company he owns

ELEANOR You are still taking the tablets?

DONALD (*Lighting a cigarette*) Yes, yes. For what it's worth

GINA Would you mind putting that cigarette out. I can't bare smoke

DONALD As a matter of fact I would. It's my house

GINA It that your car outside?

ELEANOR Yes

GINA It's not very new, is it

ELEANOR A mere ten years. Average for us

GINA Can't be worth much

ELEANOR It's cheap to run

DONALD And building a new car takes more energy than it will ever use in petrol, so buying a new one isn't the answer

GINA We've got a BMW

DONALD So have we. In a manner of speaking

GINA That's a Rover

- DONALD Exactly, Rover, bought for too much by BMW from British Aerospace, then sold on for too little, and now struggling once again. Unless the Chinese can turn it round. Our car is a relic of a dim and distant past when the country I lived in still owned at least some of its own industry. But not any more. BMW own Bentley, the Indians own Jaguar and Land Rover, Volkswagen own Rolls Royce and of course Nestlé own Rowntree. I think we still own Kendal Mint Cake, but probably not for much longer
- GINA The new BMW 3 Series doesn't even have an ashtray
- DONALD Well, that's a good reason not to buy one then
- GINA And that's a very small TV on a very big stand
- ELEANOR (*Putting her coat back on a stand*) Yes, well, we did have a big TV, but it got stolen, and the insurance cheque only arrived this morning. That TV is from the study, where I'm writing my MA
- GINA What's an MA?
- DONALD Good question
- ELEANOR We also had a hi-fi system ...
- DONALD ... with Wharfedale speakers, Britain's finest
- ELEANOR ... but that got stolen too, hence the portable CD player
- DONALD ... which is fine for Radio 4, but it's got no bass
- ELEANOR ... which is fine for Radio 4, but it's got no bass. Donald!
- DONALD Exactly the same to Mrs. Willoughby last week. Word perfect!
- GINA I can see I'm going to have to organise that tea myself (*opens the door to the hall and closes it again*). Where's the kitchen?
- ELEANOR (*Pointing*) Through there (*Gina exits*)
- CLIVE You'll get used to my wife. Everyone does. Eventually
- ELEANOR I must say, all this is a bit of a shock
- CLIVE Um, I don't suppose you'd mind if I...
- GINA (*Re-entering from the kitchen*) And Clive, don't you go having cigarettes behind my back
- CLIVE Of course not dear
- GINA It's against the terms of his BUPA policy
- CLIVE Critical illnesses, and all that
- DONALD Critical what?

- GINA Clive's got a critical illness policy. If he has a heart attack and dies, I'll pick up more than a three hundred thousand. But only if he doesn't smoke
- DONALD What's in it for him?
- GINA It makes him more secure, knowing I'm provided for. *(Aside to Clive)*  
You should see the kitchen! It's not really a kitchen at all. It's just somewhere you cook! They've even got lino on the floor! And it's cracked! *(She exits back to the kitchen)*
- ELEANOR So, um, what's your line of work?
- CLIVE Me? I'm in banking. And yourself?
- ELEANOR I'm doing an M.A. in Nonsense. Amongst other things. *(To Donald)*  
Why did I say that?
- DONALD I'm a freelance inventor. By force of circumstance. And a railway engineer by inclination
- CLIVE Really? Haven't met an engineer in years
- DONALD You surprise me. My inventions include the solar panel heated hot water tank, the clockwork radio designed for the polar regions, the solar powered radio designed for Africa, an early catalytic converter, prototype fibre optic cable, the plastic motorbike wheel, satellite controlled geostationary positioning equipment for oil rigs in up to Force 13 gales, and last but not least sulphur filtration systems for coal fired power stations, which would solve acid rain problems in no time. The defining feature of each of these advances in technology, aside from their breathtaking originality, has been my inability to secure the necessary investment from bankers for every single one of them! Except of course it's not really my inability, it's more bankers' inability to ...
- CLIVE Well you know what they say. If you want to make God laugh show Him your business plan
- ELEANOR And we really thought we were onto a winner with sulphur filtration ...
- DONALD ... British coal having such a high sulphur content ...
- ELEANOR ... Whoever would have thought that they'd close down the entire coal industry instead!

- CLIVE Oh! The dash for gas! Had a lot of clients put their money there, I can tell you. Cleaner burn, and no storage problems
- DONALD Yes, but the gas will run out inside thirty years, whereas ...
- GINA *(Entering with tea-tray)* Tea time! *(The door bell rings)*
- ELEANOR *(Opening the front door)* Peter! *(Enter Prozac, who honks)*  
Ah, Prozac. We were wondering what had happened to you! *(Prozac stands in the centre of the room in his raincoat, and vast numbers of knives and forks fall out of his coat lining)*
- ELEANOR Gosh. Heavens
- GINA Now all you need is some spoons *(Vast numbers of spoons fall out of Prozac's coat lining)*
- ELEANOR Well, thank you. And I can explain. I asked Prozac to find me some new cutlery for Meals On Wheels you see, and as you can amply see, he has *(Prozac honks his horn gleefully)*. How much do I owe you? *(Prozac whistles)* Nothing? *(Prozac whistles)* Are you sure? *(Prozac honks)* We'll have to pay you something
- GINA Why's he called Prozac?
- ELEANOR He's called Prozac because he's been through so much he never gets depressed *(Prozac honks and whistles)*. And he's written a book on the need for a radical change in the way our future affairs must be conducted if we are to survive long time as a species on the planet, which really is quite brilliant
- GINA What's it called?
- DONALD *Circular Solutions For A Round Planet: Against Progress And Linear Thinking (Prozac blows his whistle. Twice)*
- ELEANOR And he's very proud of it. The only trouble is, we've lost it. First it was turned down by every publisher in the country, then Prozac's floppy disk corrupted, and then, I'm sorry to say, the floppy disk he'd given us was stolen with all our CDs, where I'd hidden it
- DONALD A disaster
- ELEANOR And if that wasn't bad enough, it was also wiped off the university server where he'd hidden another copy, which apparently is normal because so many students hide pornography amongst the system files
- DONALD Not to mention the professors

- ELEANOR Of course, Prozac also distributed copies to the homeless on the streets of York, but they all seem to have been moved on, so we can't find any of them either. Consequently Prozac has entirely lost his faith in words, and refuses to talk. Previously he was a highly respected biologist with research papers by the score, but in the end he rebelled, and instead of perpetuating the specialist language of his profession, he said what he meant in plain English, and you never get forgiven for that (*Prozac honks his horn*)
- DONALD Why add more words to a world with too many already, and so many of them the wrong ones?
- ELEANOR But cheer up Prozac, here's your Housing Benefit cheque!
- GINA So he lives here?
- ELEANOR Yes, but he normally sleeps in the Dean of York's dustbin, standing up, like a horse
- GINA So he doesn't live here?
- ELEANOR Officially he does live here, and he's welcome any time he wants
- GINA And he claims Housing Benefit for living here, and then you give it him straight back?
- ELEANOR Well, in a manner of speaking
- GINA That's Benefit fraud
- ELEANOR It's my money
- GINA He doesn't live here at all!
- ELEANOR (*Prozac honks and whistles, persistently*) Prozac lives here more than he lives anywhere else
- GINA Why doesn't he write the book again?
- ELEANOR It's not that simple. After various courses of ECT courtesy of the psychiatric services, he's got a memory like a sieve
- DONALD Putting electricity through someone's brain never sounded like a good idea to me
- ELEANOR And besides, he says if it's worth remembering, others will remember it for him. Prozac has ultimate faith in the natural democracy and decency of the people
- CLIVE If the book was any good, he'd have found a publisher
- DONALD Are you serious?

- ELEANOR Anyway, there's no point getting depressed, so I've decided to play a little game. We're all going to remember Prozac's Book together!
- GINA But how can we remember something we've never read?!
- ELEANOR We'll all just have to learn to be creative! And to start off with, I can remember the title of one of the chapters, *Emission Impossible...*
- DONALD ... which was about car pollution, and the need to build high-efficiency cars for life. If you want a new one, you just change the body shell, but use the rest again ...
- ELEANOR ... and I also remember a metaphor about a frog in boiling water, but I'm not sure why. (*Prozac whistles. To Prozac*) Oh, I see. Then mind how you go. (*To the rest*) Prozac says he's going to the Peasholme Centre to see if anyone there has a copy. The Peasholme Centre gives food and advice to the homeless
- DONALD But strangely, in this historic city full of historic plaques, there's no plaque outside the Peasholme Centre, so very few people know it's there
- ELEANOR (*To Prozac*) Alright then, but come straight back. And don't go distributing photocopies from *The Complete Works Of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* around the wards of Bootham Park
- DONALD Or handing out extracts from *The Communist Manifesto* at Fulford Police Station
- ELEANOR You know what will happen. You'll get arrested, fall asleep in the cells, and it'll be me who gets you out after a great many arguments over proof of identity. (*Prozac honks and whistles*) Yes, I know it talks about the rise of global capitalism one hundred and fifty years before it's time, but the Sergeant on duty won't care. You'd be much better off waiting for the past the sell-by date sandwiches to get binned outside Sainsbury's. (*Prozac whistles and rubs his stomach*) Bree and Grapes? Really! How exotic (*Prozac exits, Eleanor closes the front door*). And come back soon
- GINA (*Looking at the wall*) Who's that?
- DONALD Isambard Kingdom Brunel
- GINA What did he do?
- DONALD He was an engineer. The greatest ...

ELEANOR He build bridges

DONALD Amongst other things

ELEANOR And bridges are very important things to build, aren't they Donald?

DONALD Of course dear. But along side bridges Brunel also built the first steamship to cross the Atlantic, *The Great Western*, the first ocean-going screw-steamer, *The Great Britain*, and also designed a great many ground breaking steam engines, as well as every single tunnel, viaduct and bridge on the Great Western Railway...

CLIVE Oh, he rings a bell now! He's the man who built the railway sheds in Swindon

DONALD The very same

CLIVE Retail park soon you know, we've put money in that

DONALD Jesus!

GINA And what's that?

ELEANOR That's a Picasso

CLIVE Can't be a real one. You'd keep a real one in a safe

ELEANOR No no, it's a print. *Guernica*. I got it from a Spanish magazine. It's really a very large jigsaw, lots of small prints stuck together. (*The door bell rings. She opens the door*) Peter!

STEVE (*Standing in the doorway*) Hello Mrs. Weldon

ELEANOR Ah, Stephen. How are you?

STEVE Not bad. Considering. Is Mr. Weldon about?

ELEANOR Yes of course. Come in (*Steve enters*)

DONALD Steve!

STEVE Sorry to trouble you Donald, but I need a favour. Can I borrow your drill? Mine's been stolen from the van again

ELEANOR Aren't you insured?

STEVE Oh yes Mrs. Weldon, but there's a £500 excess on the policy. In my dreams ...

DONALD The drill and all the bits are in the shed. Take anything you need

STEVE Thanks (*He goes out through the door to the hall*)

ELEANOR Yet more crime. And it's not as if he lives on a council estate or anything, he lives in a perfectly respectable semi

DONALD I don't think that makes much difference any more

ELEANOR *(To Clive and Gina)* Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Stephen is our handy-man...

DONALD Steve's a first rate chippy, and a spark

ELEANOR Donald! Stephen is a carpenter and an electrician. And there's really nothing he can't do. He's helped us out umpteen times

DONALD Practically patched up every window frame in the house

GINA Oh, all ours are plastic

DONALD Yes, well ours aren't

ELEANOR I don't think they'd give the right *melieu*

STEVE *(Entering with drill etc.)* Thanks Donald. And it's a metal one too! Heavy in the hand. Completely forgotten

DONALD Black and Decker's finest circa '71

STEVE I've taken the drill and the sanding attachment. OK?

DONALD Fine

ELEANOR Stephen. Allow me to introduce Gina and Clive Stansted, soon to be Peter's in-laws

STEVE Oh, Peter's getting married! Congratulations! Is he here?

GINA No, he's late

DONALD The wonders of the privatised railways yet again! Hasn't it made all the difference!

GINA Karen's very punctual. He'll have to change

STEVE Anyway, must be off. How's that window doing?

DONALD It's still there, spliced to perfection

ELEANOR But it needs painting. Donald keeps saying he'll do it, but he never does

DONALD I've been inventing

STEVE Really? Must hear all about it

DONALD Maybe next time

STEVE Must be off *(Steve exits through front door of house)*

GINA I'll tell you what I think. Picasso or no Picasso, I wouldn't have that painting in the house. It's an eyesore

ELEANOR Well of course, it's not supposed to be pretty

GINA So why put it on the wall?

ELEANOR It's about the destruction of a Basque village by the Nazis in '37 you see ...

DONALD Guernica being the seat of the old Basque parliament, until the Luftwaffe decided to use it as a rehearsal for the Blitz

ELEANOR ... hence the title, and to me, it represents all the bloodshed of our harrowing, wartorn lifetimes. When I look at that painting I can see it all. Auschwitz, Dachau, Dresden, Hiroshima, Cambodia, Rwanda, Vukovar, Kosovo. All of it. And I think that's important

GINA All I can see is a bull's head. And a funny light bulb

ELEANOR You can't help recognise the screaming surely. Particularly the horse, the terrified, uncomprehending horse. And of course in the Spanish Civil War Picasso chose exactly the right subject - a kind of hideous rehearsal for what was to come. And we mustn't forget all the young men in the International Brigade who went to Spain either, including Auden

GINA Oh and we've been lots of times too, haven't we Clive! Torremelinos, Marbella ...

ELEANOR Auden went to Spain to drive an ambulance, and Isherwood stayed behind, though I never did fathom that one. And I don't know how much driving Auden did, but he did write some very fine poems

DONALD Hitler must have been shivering in his boots

ELEANOR And mummy had a real Picasso, don't you know, a study for *Weeping Woman*, but we had to sell it to pay off yet more of Uncle Freddie's debts. Heaven knows where it is now

DONALD Probably owned by the Saatchis

GINA Or Jeffrey Archer! He's been collecting Picassos hasn't he Clive?!

CLIVE No, no, that's the Warhol estate. Higher yields ...

ELEANOR (*Sighs*) Talk about selling off the family silver

GINA We should be talking about the wedding

ELEANOR And it was really something to own a genuine Picasso then you know. Everyone was astonished. Anthony and Guy and Kim and Donald, and Christopher, and Auden as well for that matter, though he'd never admit it

DONALD You can't possibly have known all those people

ELEANOR Oh, I met them all, and a few things were obvious then, even to a knock-kneed sixteen year old. I mean you could tell they were benders

from fifty paces, but then everyone in MI5 always is. And the funny thing was, Mummy was convinced there'd be war as soon as Isherwood and Auden left for America. The Europe they could breathe in had simply vanished. *(The door bell rings. Eleanor opens the front door quickly)* Peter! Darling! *(Peter enters, hair in a pony tail, ruck sack on his back)*

- PETER *(Kissing Eleanor)* Mum. Dad! Here I am at last! And I've even brought you some daffodils *(hands them to Eleanor from behind his back)*. Oh, you've got some
- ELEANOR No, no, those are old ones *(takes the daffodils from the vase and puts them straight in the bin. Puts Peter's daffodils in the same vase)*
- DONALD He probably stole them from next door
- GINA I never buy real flowers anyway. Artificial ones last so much longer
- DONALD Congratulations son!
- ELEANOR Yes! Congratulations! *(She kisses him)*
- PETER Congratulations?
- GINA Marrying Karen of course!
- PETER Oh. Kar-in
- GINA Yes. Karen. Our daughter! Gina and Clive Stansted, her parents
- PETER Oh. Delighted to meet you. What a pleasant surprise
- CLIVE *(Shaking Peter's hand. Peter grimaces)* Welcome to the family
- PETER But how d'you know? I was coming home to tell ...
- GINA I opened your letter. I just knew it was important. And knowing so soon I'll have more time to organise everything, so that's good too isn't it!
- PETER Yes, well, perhaps ...
- GINA Because we don't want any hiccups do we. Karen's the most wonderful girl in the world...
- PETER Oh, you don't have to tell me, I'm the one who's marrying her...
- GINA ... and it's her special, special day, isn't it! So it all needs planning, and don't you worry about a thing because organisation is my middle name. Never mind a Rolls, never mind a horse and carriage, I was thinking we should fly Karen to the ceremony in a helicopter!

PETER Great! Tremendous. But if you're waiting for Karin, I'm afraid she's late and won't be here until this evening

GINA Oh dear

PETER She's been delayed debugging something or other

ELEANOR Oh really? What a shame. Why don't you take a quick look round York

GINA We had a look before we came here

ELEANOR Then have another look

DONALD Walk down *The Shambles*. See York's finest ye olde worlde street all for yourself. Go on a ghost walk

ELEANOR Visit the Minster, ride in a pony trap

DONALD See Dick Turpin's stuffed horse

CLIVE Well, why not eh? Why not?

ELEANOR It's such a beautiful city...

GINA Off we go then. But you're not getting married with you hair like that young man, I can tell you

PETER What's wrong with it?

GINA A pony tail?!

ELEANOR Perhaps it does need a slight trim. (*She ushers Clive and Gina out of the front door*). Just walk straight down Bootham and you're there. Have tea and cakes at Betties!

GINA We won't be long. And don't start planning things without me!

ELEANOR No. Of course not (*Gina and Clive exit*). Phew!

DONALD You've a Mother-in-Law from Hell there son, that's for sure

ELEANOR Having second thoughts perhaps?

PETER Not at all. Karin's the business, and she keeps Gina at arms length

ELEANOR Obviously not when it comes to a wedding

PETER We don't want anything big

ELEANOR I don't think what you want comes into it. You're not who the wedding is for

DONALD You're only the people getting married. Need a gypsy's (*he exits through the hall door*)

ELEANOR So darling, how are you?

PETER Oh, fine. Still a postman. Still working at the garage

ELEANOR You're wasted on work like that

PETER Everyone says that. But it's just all this "take control of your life. Build a career" and so on. I mean, do I have to? What's the point? And that's what I like about Karin. She doesn't care

ELEANOR And she is?

PETER She's a programmer. C++. Java. The Internet. It's all lost on me

ELEANOR What's her background?

PETER University of Plymouth

ELEANOR You mean a polytechnic. And you went to Oxford. It's not you who should be the postman is it?

PETER It doesn't work like that any more Mum. And I love her. Anyway. How's Dad?

ELEANOR Oh, the usual. Inventing something or other in the shed and generally implying I couldn't organise a piss-up in a brewery. But it does worry me that he won't actually say what the invention is, which means it's either extra-special, or he's spending all day in the shed drinking

PETER Wouldn't you know?

ELEANOR Hard to say. Alcohol long since ceased to have any noticeable effect on Donald. And either way it's trouble. It's trouble if he's drinking, and it's trouble if the invention's extra-special, because he'll get all buzzy and start seeing the world as it should be and not as it actually is

PETER He's a rebel mum, a born romantic

ELEANOR Yes, but it's not good for him. He'll start believing in talent being recognised and all manner of unlikely things. And I'd be very good at organising a piss up in a brewery by the way. I've had enough practice married to your father

DONALD *(Re-entering)* I haven't been drinking in the shed all day by the way, I've just been thinking about it a lot

ELEANOR That's not good for you either

DONALD Jesus *(the door bell rings)*

ELEANOR Heavens! It's one of those mornings *(she opens the door, Gina walks in, followed by Clive)*

GINA Only me!

ELEANOR Back so soon?

GINA Well, I was half way down Bootham when I suddenly thought "there's no time like the present", and for some things there isn't. So sit down young man

PETER Me?

GINA Yes, you. (*Peter sits down*) Now, why do you want to marry my daughter?

PETER Why?

GINA Yes, why?

PETER Because she's the most interesting woman I've ever met, and I love her and she loves me

DONALD There you are! What more could you ask for?

GINA And what do you do for a living?

PETER I'm a part-time postman, and a part-time garage attendant

ELEANOR But he did go to Oxford. Classics...

PETER And it's a very busy petrol station! It's a much more demanding job than ...

GINA You mean you don't earn much

PETER Not as much as I'd like, no. But then who does?

CLIVE Oh, I do

GINA Yes, Clive does. And sometimes more. So I hope you don't think you can live your life scrounging from Karen

ELEANOR Well, I'm sure he doesn't now, so why should he start?

GINA And that haircut is even worse than I thought. Karen's not going to the altar with a hippy, I'll tell you that for nothing

PETER I'll get it trimmed, washed and cleaned. You have nothing to worry about (*the door bell rings*)

ELEANOR Heavens again! (*She opens the front door. In walks the Vicar*)

VICAR Eleanor. Have you spoken to Mrs. Willoughby yet?

ELEANOR I haven't even left the house. It's been a hectic and surprising morning

VICAR I'd still rather you than me

DONALD What happened to the man in the chocolate vat?

VICAR Oh, he's still there. It's a very big vat. They're calling the fire brigade. Peter! I didn't know you were coming home! You've been travelling I hear

DONALD He was planning to backpack around the world, but he only got as far as Folkstone

VICAR So what have you been doing?

GINA He's been delivering the post. Which is hardly what we had in mind...

ELEANOR ... Reverend! We have a wedding on our hands! May I introduce Gina and Clive Stansted

VICAR Oh! So you're the in-laws. Delighted. Delighted

GINA And you are?

VICAR The Reverend Wingfield-Digby. At your service. Or rather, theirs. Peter and ...?

GINA Karen

PETER Kar-in

GINA Karen. And if I know Karen, she'll want everything perfect, and the *OK Guide* says start with the music, so what do you suggest?

VICAR Oh. Well. How about *Endless Love*? That used to be very popular. Sadly, though it's gone down the charts now. *I Will Always Love You* is still popular though

GINA Oh yes. And I do like Whitney Houston

VICAR *Everlasting Love* and *Unchained Melody*, they're good old evergreens. Things like *Fight The Good Fight* shouldn't be in though because that's not encouraging

DONALD Could be very appropriate though

ELEANOR Donald!

VICAR Well, you'd be surprised Eleanor. *Often Danger Often Woe*. I've had that one before. And *Match Of The Day*. They love that one before the ceremony. They love the signature tune of *Songs Of Praise*. It's amazing

GINA What about *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*?

VICAR Oh. You're giving away your age!

GINA Oh. Am I?

CLIVE Is that what we had? Is it? Can you remember?

GINA No it wasn't. We had *It's Not Unusual*

CLIVE Well, how about it anyway?

ELEANOR I'm sure Peter and Karin will have their own ideas

GINA            Their ideas? We're paying

VICAR           And there's very good guidance to choosing music before the wedding and after the wedding these days you know. And of course being an overture and an ending, it's very important. You've got to set the scene properly

GINA            I've got all the magazines

VICAR           ... but there's nothing like talking to the Vicar

GINA            Well I am talking to the Vicar

VICAR           And if the Vicar's sensible, he always talks to the organist. They're the one's playing after all. A mine of information

ELEANOR       What's the most popular form of service these days?

VICAR           Well, it varies. The new one actually in the *Alternative Service Book* is getting very popular. Because it's nicely phrased. And the 1928 service is still quite popular. 1662. Forget it. It talks about "brute beasts" and things like that and it's not on for your wedding day is it?

ELEANOR       Are people still going out of their way to make sure "obey" is left out?

VICAR           Well you negotiate. Because if they want "obey", then the bride has to... No! If she says "obey", then the bridegroom has to say "All my worldly goods I thee endow"

DONALD        Which in Peter's case amounts to bugger all

ELEANOR       Oh. So there's a trade off

VICAR           There's always a trade off. But it generally works quite well, although you've got to be careful...

GINA            Well, on such an important day, it's got to be right, hasn't it

VICAR           Absolutely. And if you get it right it's just wonderful...

ELEANOR       Marvellous

VICAR           Just marvellous. Delighted to meet you Mrs. Stansted. And if you've got any other problems about getting to the church on time, the cake collapsing or even the Mums' hats clashing ...

ELEANOR       Oh, that won't happen ...

VICAR           ... anything at all, then don't hesitate to ask. But I must be going. The man in the chocolate vat calls (*the Vicar opens the front door to leave. Karin is standing in the doorway with a bag, a four-pack of lager, and with her MP3 player on, singing Natalie Imbruglia*)

KARIN "IGNORE REALITY THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!!"

GINA Karen!

PETER Karin!

VICAR Ah, you must be Peter's fiancée. I'd love to ignore reality, but unfortunately it won't ignore me. Duty calls. I'm sure we'll meet again  
*(The Vicar exits)*

KARIN *(Switching off her MP3 player)* Mum! What are you doing here?

GINA I opened Peter's letter, but then if a wedding isn't a mum's business then what is?

KARIN Right. Fine. So I know I'm in the right place

PETER Karin

GINA Karen

PETER You're early! I was going to meet you at the station. *(Kissing her)* Let me introduce you to my mother

ELEANOR Oh, there's no need to be so formal. Call me Eleanor

PETER And this is my Dad, Donald

DONALD Call me The Greatest Engineer of the Twenty First Century

ELEANOR Call him Donald

KARIN I'll call you the Greatest Engineer if you like!

GINA And you can call Karin Karen. That's her real name

KARIN You can call me Karin. *(To Peter)* I'm dying for a tab

PETER Go ahead, Dad smokes all the time

DONALD *(Holding out a packet of Benson and Hedges)* Have one of mine

KARIN Oh no, too strong for me, and besides, I'm a complete fashion victim.  
*(Lighting up)* Silk Cut

GINA Karen!

KARIN Marketing! Fraudulence dressed up as invention. Oh, and here's a four pack of lager, but I didn't steal it, and I didn't buy it either. So how did I get it? Created grief, that's how. I'm standing in the supermarket when I see one of those big lager stands with "13½% free" written on every can, so next time, I went back with a billy can. And I say to the girl at the checkout "excuse me, but I want to take 13½% out of all those cans of lager and put it in this billy can, because it says the 13½% is free".

Next I insist on seeing the manager, and I'm right in his face, and eventually, he gives me a four pack for nothing just to get me out of the shop. So there you are Donald, a present, (*gives Donald the lager*) and Stella Artois too, the only good thing to ever come out of Belgium

- ELEANOR What about Rene Magritte? What about Paul de Mann?
- DONALD Eleanor! Thank you. And well done
- KARIN And, wow! A Dyson bagless vacuum cleaner. D'you know James Dyson built 5000 prototypes? And took on Hoover and Electrolux, the biggest in the business, and won!
- DONALD As a matter of fact I did
- ELEANOR It's only a vacuum cleaner
- KARIN It's a design statement, and great engineering too
- DONALD (*Opening a can and lighting up*) I can see we're going to get on famously
- ELEANOR Donald! Not straight from can!
- KARIN Sod Einstein, sod  $E=MC^2$ . The point is,  $I^3=AV$
- DONALD Sorry?
- KARIN Invention, information, and intelligence equals Added Value
- DONALD Sounds interesting
- KARIN People talk a lot of rubbish about creating wealth when they actually mean just making money. Because wealth creation is impossible without added value, and there's a vacuum cleaner that proves it. The product has been fundamentally improved and reinvented...
- DONALD ... for opposite, see railways...
- GINA Anyway, now we're all here, we can starting talking about the wedding
- KARIN Do we have to?
- GINA You're the one getting married
- KARIN Oh. Peter (*hugging him*). I love you, I love you
- PETER Can't it wait?
- GINA No it can't
- KARIN What's the difference between cheese and men?
- PETER I don't know
- KARIN Cheese matures. Why do policemen have numbers?
- GINA Karen!

- KARIN To stop them getting lost. Did you know that 78% of Star Trek conference attendants are men, and only 13% of them have girlfriends?
- GINA Karen! Will you please pay attention! Getting married is a serious business!
- PETER How's the Virtual Boyfriend program?
- KARIN Virtual Boyfriend is fine. Predictable, vain, boasts too much, and fundamentally dishonest about his size and prowess. And he comes as two options, Normal Male and Advanced Male. Normal male thinks about football, drinking and sex, and Advanced Male thinks about football, drinking and sex, plus cricket and cars. But Virtual Girlfriend has far too much to say for herself. She's too in your face. Apparently. But then the boss really wants a blow-up doll whereas I want a sussed woman who knows it all, global warming and the boiling frog included
- ELEANOR What about the boiling frog?
- KARIN It's a complacency metaphor. If you put a frog in a pan of cold water and gradually heat it, instead of trying to get out when it gets too hot, the frog just gets comfortable with the gradual warming, and eventually lets itself get boiled alive, never recognising the critical temperature of no return
- ELEANOR Well, how useful, the first piece of Prozac's Book recovered! What a shame he isn't here. *(Sound of a horn honking outside)* Oh, well, he is here! *(She opens the front door)* Prozac, come in. Peter's home, and with his fiancée, Karin *(Prozac enters, carrying a Sainsbury's bag, honks his horn, shakes hands with Peter, and kisses Karin on the back of her hand whilst bowing)*. A true gentleman
- GINA He can't talk, and he smells. And we should be talking about the wedding! And you look a bit peaky Karen. How about going to a Health Farm?
- DONALD Good news Prozac, we've remembered the metaphor of the boiling frog!
- DONALD Prozac's been writing a book you see, a book that could save the world
- KARIN Oh
- DONALD But we've lost it
- KARIN Oh!

- GINA I've had enough of this. Clive, come with me (*Gina and Clive exit through the front door, Prozac honks his horn and hands Eleanor the Sainsbury's bag*)
- ELEANOR Oh! The past the sell-by date sandwiches! Bree and grapes included! (*Prozac honks, and then exits front door*)
- KARIN Where's he gone?
- ELEANOR He's gone to claim the Dean of York's dustbin. If you want to sleep there, you have to get in early
- GINA (*Entering with Clive, Clive holding a mannequin in a wedding dress, which he places near the front door*) Your wedding dress Karen. I bought it from Droopy And Browns this morning. It's your size, and it's just so, so you! It's got a twelve feet train, and that's even longer than the one Posh married David Beckham in!
- KARIN Yes. Great Mum. You shouldn't have
- CLIVE Well, aren't you going to try it on?
- KARIN Dad! I can't try it on with Peter here! In fact, he shouldn't even see it!
- GINA Oh yes! (*Rushing to stand in front of the dress*) I'd forgotten that!
- PETER It really doesn't matter. I didn't look, promise
- DONALD Karin. Who's that on the wall?
- KARIN Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Why?

## INTERVAL

## ACT TWO

*(The next day. Morning. The Weldon's living room continued. The sash front window is half open, and a window pane is missing. The wedding dress on its mannequin has been aerosoled reds and other garish colours. The CD player and the television are missing. Enter Karin...)*

KARIN *(Talking on a mobile phone)* What! What d'you mean she's not submissive enough! She's too submissive already, that's the problem! Exactly, the more you get to know her the cleverer she gets. More enticing. Especially if you get to the Mistress of Mind Games level. OK, OK. Then how about calling it Countess of Conspiracy. If they give up, then they're not the right kinds of players, are they! Empress of Embellishment? No? Princess of Principle. This girl is serious. And the boys have to realise that. And they won't do if the game is easy, will they! Then I resign! Same to you too. *(Switches off the phone)*  
Mistress of the Universe. You're on your own

ELEANOR *(Entering from the hall door, seeing the window)* Oh no! We've been burgled! Again! Where's the television? Where's the CD player? Didn't you see anything?

KARIN I've only just got up. And I've been ...dreaming

ELEANOR What? Asleep?

KARIN No. Wide awake

ELEANOR What on earth have they taken this time? It's the small things that bother me most. You have no idea what's gone missing until you can't find it two months later. And then it's too late to claim

GINA *(Entering from the hall door)* Look at the wedding dress! Look at the wedding dress! Oh my God! Look what they've done to the wedding dress!! Clive! Clive! *(She exits)*

ELEANOR In Heaven's name. How could anyone...?

DONALD *(Entering from the hall door)* The shed's been cleared out. All my tools have gone. Good job Steve's got the drill

ELEANOR This does it. This time we get a burglar alarm

DONALD That just means next door get burgled instead

ELEANOR I don't care. And I'm certainly not going to waste my time ringing the Crime Prevention Officer again! It's horrible. Where have they been? And what have they touched?

GINA *(Entering with Clive)* Look! Look at the wedding dress! Karen! Look at the wedding dress

KARIN Shame

ELEANOR It's just plain vandalism. No rhyme or reason

GINA Are you insured?

CLIVE Oh, it's insured on my Amex card

DONALD That's alright then

ELEANOR Two burglaries in a month. This is bound to put the premium up

PETER *(Entering from the hall door)* Mum. Karin? What's all the noise?

DONALD We've been burgled Peter. Again

ELEANOR They didn't even break the window. They took out the whole pane of glass. Look. It's the same kids isn't it?

DONALD Probably

ELEANOR Don't they have any homes to go to?

DONALD Depends what you call a home

ELEANOR Well, at least they didn't aerosol *Guernica*

GINA Would have been a big improvement if they had *(The front door bell rings)*

ELEANOR Heavens. Not now *(She opens the door. Enter the Vicar)*

VICAR Good news, good news! The man in the Aero vat is saved!

DONALD Lord have mercy

VICAR *(To Eleanor)* What about Mrs. Willoughby and the microwave?

ELEANOR I'm terribly sorry Reverend, but I've had no time whatsoever. And now we've been burgled. Again. You'll just have to tell her yourself

VICAR Me?

ELEANOR Yes, you. Donald *(gives Donald the day's newspaper from the letterbox)*. The paper

VICAR On my own?

ELEANOR Yes, on your own

VICAR But she'll ignore me. She always does. You're the only one she listens to

ELEANOR Then tell her that Mrs. Weldon has considered the microwave, but the answer's still "no", and if she wants a row she can come round and we'll have it out face to face

DONALD That's it, the Bulldog spirit

VICAR Row?

ELEANOR No, no. Say discussion. But she'll get the message. Just because she increased the car boot sale revenue by 50% doesn't mean she can ...

VICAR I wish I had your fortitude

ELEANOR Well, if she rings she rings. And anyway, I think the real reason she wants a new microwave is to use for herself

DONALD Shocking

ELEANOR Now, the burglar alarm man (*She finds the leaflet and picks up the phone*)

GINA And we need a new wedding dress

DONALD And a new international banking system...

VICAR Oh, yes, the wedding. Have you fixed a date?

GINA I wonder how much notice you need to hire a helicopter?

KARIN Mum! I don't want ...

VICAR I'm sorry?

GINA Arrival by helicopter, and then a fanfare as the bride meets the maids of honour

KARIN Mum!

DONALD Jesus! (*Waving the newspaper*) Ford, Chrysler and General Motors want loans off the US government of seventeen billion dollars, and the two biggest prime American mortgage lenders are going to have to be bailed out by the US government to the tune of three *trillion* dollars! What's going on?

VICAR How about The Arrival Of The Queen of Sheba?

ELEANOR (*On the phone*) Donald

DONALD Does anyone realise the degree of national debt that means?

ELEANOR Hello. Mr. Townsend? Yes. Well, as soon as possible...

- DONALD I said, does anyone realise the degree of national debt that means? A trillion! That's ten to the power of twelve!
- ELEANOR Donald!
- DONALD Jesus! And all along, I've been saying it for years from the sale of council houses to the privatisation of the railways. Free market solutions don't work within the public sector
- ELEANOR This morning? Wonderful! (*She puts the phone down*) Now how's that for service! Much better than the Crime Prevention ...
- GINA Arrival by helicopter. The only thing is, we'd need a church with enough space to land one
- VICAR Oh well, Clifton Green would be perfect. And it's virtually opposite! Mind you, the oak tree might get in the way
- GINA Then cut it down!
- VICAR I really don't think ...
- GINA It's only a tree! And then of course there's the cake. Now Posh's was 500 pounds and twelve tiers. So we'll have to do better than that! Which reminds me. Who was that man who broke into the Queen's bedroom and frightened her?
- DONALD The Duke of Edinburgh
- GINA Because you want a four-poster for the honeymoon night, don't you
- VICAR Well I suppose I could make enquiries, but I really must be going
- ELEANOR And screw your courage to the sticking-place!
- VICAR I'm sorry?
- ELEANOR Tell Mrs. Willoughby what's what!
- VICAR Yes. I'll try. Goodbye (*he exits, Eleanor holding the front door open*)
- GINA (*To Clive, standing by the wedding dress*) We'll have to go back to Droopy And Browns and see if they can make another one
- ELEANOR Yes, what a good idea! And whilst you're about it you can see some more of the sights!
- DONALD Have lunch at the Ye Olde Starre Inne!
- ELEANOR Try the Yorvik Centre. That's very exciting. You'd probably find the Minster and the Roman Baths rather dull
- GINA It takes more than a few vandals to stop me planning a wedding! Come along Clive

CLIVE Right ho

GINA We've got work to do! (*Gina and Clive exit through the front door*)

ELEANOR And if you'll excuse us Karin, I must help Donald sort out the shed

DONALD The insurance is new for old isn't it?

ELEANOR I don't know darling

DONALD (*Eleanor starts pushing Donald to exit via the hall door*) Because if it's not I'm in trouble. I need new replacements, but if they just give me the value of the old ones I'll be left with nothing

ELEANOR Haven't you kept the receipts?

DONALD Receipts? I hope President Obama knows how to ask for a few receipts, that's for sure! (*Eleanor and Donald exit*)

PETER Well, what d'you think of Mum and Dad then?

KARIN I like them, they're very decent. And your Dad's very perceptive. But they're history. And they don't even know it

PETER I think Dad does as a matter of fact. That's why he's so angry. Whereas Mum always reminds me of Baroness Warnock

KARIN Who?

PETER You know. The Great and the Good

KARIN The Great and the Good don't actually exist, they're just a figment of their own imagination. They might run the BBC and sit on Select Committees, but they can't control satellite TV, and they can't control the Net, or anything else digital for that matter. They're irrelevant

PETER Give us a kiss (*Karin kisses him. They embrace*)

KARIN Peter. I'm keeping my own name

PETER You didn't need to tell me that

KARIN Just checking. Umm, I could eat you, devour you

PETER I thought you already had. I'm covered in you

KARIN I can taste you

PETER You need a shower

KARIN With you as well?

PETER No, go on. Then we can get out and about

KARIN Exactly. Find out what's possible. (*She kisses him, and then exits through the hall door. Enter Eleanor*)

PETER Well Mum, what d'you think of Karin then? She's some girl eh?

ELEANOR She most certainly is. But why ...?

PETER Why what?

ELEANOR Why d'you want to marry her?

PETER Because I love her. And because she's so sharp

ELEANOR Yes. She is very ... independent

PETER What's wrong with that?

ELEANOR Well, nothing I suppose. It's just that ...

PETER Just that what?

ELEANOR Well, call it what you will, she's from a polytechnic really, and in my day ...

PETER Oh, rubbish! And I wish I'd done her courses. They sound a damned sight more interesting than mine

ELEANOR And there's something else as well. She is very "in your face"

PETER Yes, she is. I need a shower Mum

ELEANOR Yes, you probably do (*Peter exits through the hall door. The door bell rings. Eleanor answers it. Enter Mr. Townsend*)

TOWNSEND Mrs. Weldon? Alan Townsend (*they shake hands and he walks into the living room, complete with tool box*). Domestic Security Consultant. At your service. So, you've been burgled?

ELEANOR Yes. Twice

TOWNSEND (*Looking at the window*) Just took the pane of glass out the second time eh?

ELEANOR As a matter of fact they did

TOWNSEND Should have rung me before. Burgled once, burgled twice. They know the putty's still wet from the first time, so they don't 'ave to break a window, they just take out the pane. And they know you'll probably have replaced the stuff they nicked the first time. So they come again. It's like car theft. Someone gets their Mercedes lifted from their own bloody drive and ring me about security. And I say "anything unusual 'appen recently?". And they say "a lad on a motorbike followed me home two nights ago and scarpered when I got to my house". I've 'eard that so many times! The thief's just decided on the car he wants to nick and followed it home so he knows where to find it!

ELEANOR Yes, well, there's no chance of anyone stealing our Mercedes ...

TOWNSEND But you want the place safe and secure?

ELEANOR Of course

TOWNSEND Well, first thing is alarm all the downstairs doors and windows

ELEANOR I see

TOWNSEND Got anything valuable, sentimental, whatever?

ELEANOR Only some old jewellery. But it's not worth much. At least not any more. I inherited several very valuable pieces from Mummy, but over the years ...

TOWNSEND Where's it kept?

ELEANOR Upstairs in the bedroom

TOWNSEND Well, you should be OK just alarming the downstairs then

ELEANOR And when can you start?

TOWNSEND I can start right now

ELEANOR Well excellent. Would you like a cup of tea?

TOWNSEND Would I like a cup of tea? Was Fred Truman a Yorkshire man? Strong, milk, two sugars

ELEANOR Coming up (*she starts to exit to the kitchen*)

TOWNSEND Hum. Sash windows. And I'm not 'appy about this door frame. 'Ave you thought of plastic windows?

ELEANOR Yes we have thank you, and the answer's "no"

TOWNSEND You mean you can't afford them

ELEANOR Would it make a lot of difference?

TOWNSEND Well, the windows are much harder to get through, but the doors aren't really. You just melt the plastic round the locks with a blow torch

ELEANOR Good heavens! Two sugars?

TOWNSEND Two sugars (*Eleanor exits to the kitchen. Enter Karin*)

KARIN Oh, hello. You must be the man about the burglar alarm. I'm Karin

TOWNSEND Alan Townsend. Domestic Security Consultant. Pleased to meet you

KARIN I'd imagine your business is on the up and up, given the recession

TOWNSEND Oh aye, can't do enough. And I'm doing more to stop crime than I ever did in the police. The police need 'ard evidence to catch the little bleeders, but I just need me nouse. And when I catch them, I bray the bastards down an alley. Slap 'em as a warnin' if they're not nickin' yet, slap 'em as punishment if they are. Fair either way. Down the road it's

Coronation Street. Terraces with back alleys and yards. Perfect for thievin'. That's half the problem

KARIN And what's the other half?

TOWNSEND The other 'alf is big time. Lloyds Bank off Rougier Street robbed three times in a year. 'Eld up with a shooter! Dixons turned over three, four times in six months. Concrete slab through the window, load up the van and straight down the M62! Hull one way, Liverpool the other! And they all listen to the police radio on their own bleedin' receivers! In fact, there's a bloody great aerial stickin' out of a shed near the Spar shop! Aye, aye I thought! I know what that is! 'Ave to take that one out! The police 'ave to speak in code now you know, but they keep forgetting what it is! And Acomb! Acomb's like Beirut! I wouldn't be a WPC round there!

ELEANOR *(Entering)* Your tea Mr. Townsend

TOWNSEND Tar very much. And then there's the currency forging

KARIN Currency forging!

TOWNSEND Big time. 'Alf the shops won't take fifties any more. Now, I'll get me tools from the van, and get crackin'. Standard Alarm Entry system for the downstairs is it?

ELEANOR Yes, that sounds fine. How long d'you think it will take, only ...

TOWNSEND Oh, I'll be through today *(he exits via the front door)*

KARIN And I thought York was so serene and peaceful

ELEANOR Yes. It was. Once. Now, Karin. I'm glad I've caught you alone

KARIN *(Holding up her arms in mock surrender)* Have I done something wrong?

ELEANOR No, no, not at all. It's just ... I don't know how to say this, but I'm going to. Why do you want to marry Peter? Because frankly, I think you're much too ... thrusting

KARIN Thrusting?

ELEANOR Thrusting

KARIN You mean I'm too "in your face"?

ELEANOR Well not in my face no. Oh dear. But let's be honest, Peter's not exactly ambitious is he, whereas you obviously are

KARIN He supports me, and he isn't jealous of my success, which makes a change

ELEANOR I see. And how would you describe yourself? Politically

KARIN I don't see myself politically. I see myself creatively. I'm interested in the exceptional, in whatever way, all the time. The thing about Beethoven, Michelangelo, Joan of Arc, Picasso, Brunel even, isn't that they're fundamentally different from the rest of us, but that they're fundamentally the same. So the question should be "why are so few people capable of matching them?". What part of himself did Michelangelo discover that most people don't? I think everybody is born with the innate talent of a Mozart or an Einstein, but they get it knocked out of them. Talented people aren't remarkable because they're talented, they're remarkable because somehow their talent managed to survive

ELEANOR D'you really think so? Because in my experience...

KARIN You just like to be superior. You're very good at it, and you mean well, but at the end of the day, you're only interested in improving other peoples' lives so long as after they've been improved their social status is still lower than yours. I mean, do you have *Guernica* on the wall because you like it...

ELEANOR ... I don't think *like* is the ...

KARIN ... or because it gives you an opportunity to lecture people about modern art?

ELEANOR Surely it's one and the same

KARIN I don't think it is

ELEANOR And what d'you want to do with your life?

KARIN I want to re-invent the planet

ELEANOR Good Heavens! And how are you going to do that?

KARIN It's a secret

ELEANOR Yes, I suppose it would be

KARIN But it's to do with the 'Net. And having digital dreams that inspire us all

ELEANOR That's as maybe, but I don't see what's so wonderful about designing Virtual Boyfriend programs

- KARIN Neither do I. I'm going to wire the world with the knowledge needed to change it
- ELEANOR I suppose Donald's always wanted to re-invent the planet. Although he'd probably settle for re-inventing the 6.57 to Kings Cross
- KARIN You can't say it's not needed. Look around you! A shambles!
- DONALD *(Entering)* Have you been down it yet? *The Shambles*. York's quaintest ye olde worlde street!
- ELEANOR Ah, Donald, Mr. Townsend has arrived about the burglar alarm, and he says alarming downstairs should be enough, since the only valuable thing ever upstairs was Mummy's jewellery, and we had to sell most of that years ago
- DONALD That was your decision
- ELEANOR And your need! What particular invention was I investing in that time?
- DONALD Sulphur filtration. Which is still a bloody good idea. You can't blame me for the economic mismanagement of an entire country
- ELEANOR Maybe a burglar alarm isn't the answer. Maybe we should move to a sleepy little village somewhere like Helmsley
- DONALD Here's as good as anywhere Eleanor. There's The Burton Stone for a decent pint, there's a picturesque public school at the top of the road with a pleasant stroll down to the river, there's a dodgy council estate not 500 yards away to exercise your social conscience, and if it all gets too much, there's even a mental home half way down Bootham Bar just in case you have a nervous breakdown
- ELEANOR That's not funny. The last time it took me three months to get Prozac out of there. And getting him off the drugs took even longer. Abilify, Respiradol, Olanzapine, Chlorpromazine, Haloperidol, Modicate, Procyclodine, Clozaril, and of course, Prozac. I began to think it would never end
- TOWNSEND *(Standing in the front doorway with tool box)* Can I come in?
- ELEANOR Yes, yes. Mr. Townsend, my husband Donald
- TOWNSEND Pleased to meet you
- ELEANOR I was just saying to Donald how much more secure we'd be somewhere like Helmsley

TOWNSEND Oh, you're not safe there! Why I left the Force. This bloke I nicked for burglary, well, the magistrate didn't send him down, he fined him three grand instead! Bloody stupid! I mean, where's 'e going to get three grand from? So 'im and 'is mates get in the van and do every decent house in 'elmsley on a Sunday morning whilst 'alf the village is out 'unting!

ELEANOR Really?

TOWNSEND Really. Why I left the Force. I mean, you know who's doin' it, half the bloody village knows who's doin' it, but you still can't prove it, so you sit there pushing paper and doin' bugger all. And we're talkin' kids doin' fifty or sixty 'ouses, but you 'ave to catch 'em at it! Now, how many rooms are there downstairs?

ELEANOR Um, kitchen, living room, dining room and my study. And a toilet

TOWNSEND All got windows?

ELEANOR All except the study

TOWNSEND Then that makes four. So you'll get away with a six zone box

DONALD What about alarming the shed?

TOWNSEND Where is it?

DONALD Bottom of the garden

TOWNSEND I'd have to run different wires outside

ELEANOR Then the shed will have to wait

DONALD But...

ELEANOR Donald. We can't afford it

TOWNSEND Right, well I'll start workin' out where I'm goin' to put me wires.

*(Opening the door to the hall)* Is it alright if I ...

ELEANOR Yes, yes, go ahead *(Townsend exits)*

KARIN And I'm going to find Peter. We were going to go into town

ELEANOR Oh, well, there are several things you could get for me if you don't mind. I'll make a list

DONALD And could you get me a packet of Bensons?

KARIN Not a problem *(exits through door to the hall)*

ELEANOR You can't be through the one's I bought you already!

DONALD Two packets got stolen from the shed. Honestly *(Eleanor exits to the kitchen. Enter Steve through the front door, which is still ajar)*

STEVE Donald?

DONALD Come in Steve. How's it going?

STEVE It's going alright. And here's your drill back (*puts it down near the wall*)

DONALD Lucky you took it. We've been burgled. Again

STEVE No! Getting out of hand in' it

DONALD Can you put the window pane back in and re-putty it?

STEVE Yeah. Sure. Is that the same one I spliced back up?

DONALD It is

STEVE Well, should last you another five years, but really, the frame's knackered

DONALD I know

STEVE This drill's great though! Me new one! Bosch's finest. Look at this. You don't just put the screw driving bit in the drill chuck. There's this separate plastic cone. Look at it. A plastic cone, with a plastic washer and a fluted metal one inside. And what is it? A slipping clutch. Talk about clever. So you can't overscrew and strip the drill gears. As soon as there's too much torque, the clutch starts slipping

DONALD Bloody brilliant

STEVE I mean why can't we make things like that, you know?

DONALD We can Steve! Eleanor's Rover's got a slipping clutch

STEVE (*During the following dialogue, Steve sometimes talks from the outside of the living room window, with the sash up, as he re-puttys the glass*)  
Don't talk to me about cars. D'you know, when I went to get the new tools, after the little bastards had cleaned out my van, again, there wasn't a single British drill in the whole place. People think there is, because of Black and Decker, but they're American. So there was the choice. American. Two German, and two Japanese. And I said "Is that it?" And Pete serving me said, "oh no Steve, there's a new Korean one in this morning". Can you believe that?

DONALD And Virgin trains are ordering new trains from Germany that are supposed to tilt round corners. I was working on that thirty years ago. The Advanced Passenger Train. The APT. The original tilting train, my pride and joy. And where is it now? It's at the railway museum,

that's where, but it's not inside on display like all the shiny steam trains, it's on a siding outside rotting to pieces. And you look at it and think "if this is the way we treat invention, then what's the future for any new ideas?" Why do we polish up steam trains and leave the future to rot in the rain?

- STEVE GM foods worry me. Strawberries with anti-freeze from the genes of flounder fish! And hermaphrodite Polar Bears near the North Pole full of some chemical called PCBs. And what's it called? Xenotransplantation? Using genetically modified pigs hearts to replace your own dodgy ticker! What happens if I start craving for truffles? Or grunting at the wife? And all those perfectly round apples and tomatoes! I mean what do they do with the rest? The World Stand Up For Odd Shaped Vegetables
- DONALD God Stand Up For Bastards
- ELEANOR *(Entering)* Middle England Unite And Fight For Beauty Salons In Sainsbury's
- DONALD Lunatics Of The World Unite And Fight For A Saner Planet
- ELEANOR Where are Karin and Peter? *(She exits back to the kitchen. Steve comes back inside having puttied the window)*
- STEVE Anyway, 3.10 at Doncaster. What d'you reckon?
- DONALD What are the odds?
- STEVE *Punter's Folly* 10-1, *Mug's Game* 17-2, *Bookies Revenge* 20-1, *Unlikely Lad* 14-1
- DONALD Sounds promising
- STEVE I reckon *Bookies Revenge*. Only run once all season for an honest fourth, fresh as a daisy, and likes soft ground
- DONALD Can you put the bet on for me?
- STEVE And Mrs. Weldon doesn't know a thing?
- DONALD Of course. There you are. Two quid. Last of the big spenders
- STEVE It makes more sense than the Lottery!
- DONALD The curse of working class gambling reinvented as a harmless flutter
- STEVE And the odds! 57-1 against winning a tenner! The horses are much better than that! You sure you don't want a plastic window in there?
- DONALD Yes Steve. Totally sure

STEVE           It's just that ...

DONALD        I know it makes sense Steve. But Eleanor thinks they're common

STEVE           *Bookies Revenge* it is then, dead cert (*he exits through the front door.*  
*Enter Karin and Peter from the hall, and Eleanor comes out of the*  
*kitchen at the same time*)

ELEANOR        Ah, there you are

PETER           We're just off out Mum. D'you want us to look out for any bargain TVs  
and CD players?

DONALD        It would be a start

ELEANOR        Yes, but there's the humble shopping list as well. Now, I've made a list  
of everything I think we need

KARIN           Let me see it

ELEANOR        Oh, it's not very interesting

KARIN           Maybe it is. Maybe it's a poem in disguise. A list of secret desires

ELEANOR        I doubt it, it's mainly groceries and if it's not it's Donald. Cigarettes,  
whisky ...

DONALD        There's plenty of poets who've relied on that

ELEANOR        But I'm not a poet

KARIN           But that's just it, maybe you are! A glorious soaring poet trapped by  
circumstance

ELEANOR        Oh! Being born with talent of a Mozart!

KARIN           Precisely. But you need to dream

ELEANOR        D'you know, I haven't had a dream I can remember in years. But if I  
write any passable symphonies whilst you're out, I'll let you know.  
Otherwise, the groceries please

PETER           Fine Mum

ELEANOR        And far be it from me to dictate ...

DONALD        When do you ever do that?

ELEANOR        ... but I do recommend the Roman Baths and the Rose window of the  
Minster itself. They're central to the real history of the city. So many of  
the other attractions are just tacky, particularly the Yorvik Centre and  
Dick Turpin

PETER           We've already planned quite alot Mum. (*With Karin*) Bye (*they exit*  
*through the front door. Enter Townsend from the hall door*)

TOWNSEND Where d'you want the control panel? How near the door?

ELEANOR About there, but it will have to be quite low down for Donald's wheel chair

TOWNSEND This high? That high?

DONALD About three feet

TOWNSEND Right you are (*exits again into the hall. The door bell rings. Eleanor opens the door. Enter the Vicar, without shoes*)

VICAR It's bad news Eleanor. Very bad news. I said "no" to Mrs. Willoughby

ELEANOR Well she hasn't come round here!

VICAR She went straight to the Archbishop!

ELEANOR And what did the Archbishop say?

VICAR He said believe in the Resurrection. Which is all very well for him! We can all believe in the empty tomb, but how many sandwiches does that give to the homeless?

ELEANOR But surely, you do believe in the Resurrection?!

VICAR I don't know what I believe, except that here was a man who was scorned and abused and said he was the Messiah, so his values have eternal significance. But who else believes it? They're more likely to believe Cristiano Ronaldo's the son of God than Jesus. And with all this talk of efficiency, I always think the powers that be would regard twelve apostles as a serious case of industrial overmanning. "Oh, surely, six would be enough"

ELEANOR What's this got to do with Mrs. Willoughby?

VICAR I give sandwiches to the homeless. They come to the door. So I give them sandwiches ...

ELEANOR ... you should talk to Prozac

VICAR ... and they're from me, not from the Church, because the Church hasn't got the money, but then neither have I ...

ELEANOR You haven't got any shoes on!

VICAR No. The night before last, one man came for shoes, so I took mine off and gave them to him. The trouble is, last night he came back evangelising with fifteen friends. What do you do? (*Starts crying*) Just what do you do? And it's been like this ever since I started with the

mission in Botswana. When the children built an effigy of Santa on the Cross for Easter, I knew there was something I wasn't getting right

- ELEANOR What you need is a good stiff drink. Have some whisky
- DONALD Can I have some too?
- ELEANOR No (*she pours the Vicar a whisky*). A large one
- DONALD That's my whisky!
- ELEANOR And it's his need
- DONALD You never allow me that much
- VICAR D'you mind?
- DONALD Not as long as you remember one thing. My only religion is I never climb the stairs
- VICAR I think the problem is that Christ looks too weak upon the Cross. We want to worship him, but know we can't. He looks too much like a victim (*Gina and Clive enter through the front door, which is still ajar*)
- GINA Is Karen here? Because she bought me a Weekender camera for Christmas, and what I want to know is will it work during the week?
- ELEANOR I'm afraid you've missed them
- VICAR The question is, is God kind or cruel ...
- ELEANOR I've always imagined God as a sort of all seeing benign literary critic. A celestial conjunction of F.R. Leavis and Frank Kermode sitting benignly on a cloud
- GINA There can't be a man called Kermode!
- ELEANOR Why ever not?
- GINA Kermode?
- ELEANOR No, no. That's commode. C-O-M...
- DONALD She's right. It's like being called toilet. Or loo. Or bog. Or Karzy. Or shithouse
- ELEANOR Donald!
- GINA You just can't be God with a name like Kermode
- ELEANOR Well I still think I'm right. Critics validate art just as God validates existence. For instance, both Arnold and Leavis argue for a culture pre-determined by an elite - that's me - since most people have no taste and want to fly in brides via a helicopter
- DONALD Eleanor!

ELEANOR Arnold for instance speaks constantly of sweetness and light, but all around us ...

VICAR I'd rather run the Lottery than be a vicar

ELEANOR Whatever for?

VICAR Because the Lottery is what the Church has always wanted to be. Wealthy and universal. Or maybe I could run the NHS. It's the only religion the English really possess

GINA Clive and I have got comprehensive private cover! The Norwich Union. I'm not going on any Waiting List! I want service! *(The door bell rings)*

DONALD That has to be Mrs. Willoughby

ELEANOR Gird your loins! *(She opens the door. In walks a twelve year old boy)*

BOY I 'ere you've been burgled again. Ten quid a week, and we'll put a stop to that

ELEANOR What? Who's we?

BOY Me and me mates

DONALD You mean you're not gone twelve and running a Protection Racket?

TOWNSEND *(Entering from the hall)* Get out you little bleeder! I know it was you! It's always you round 'ere, and I'll bloody bray the lot of you when I catch you. And it were you who untied the ladders off me van wasn't it? Well bugger off then, else I'll 'ave you 'ere

BOY You'll not 'ave me

TOWNSEND I bloody will

BOY You fuckin' won't. My Dad's got a shooter. Ten quid a week, and no more nicking *(he exits through the front door)*

ELEANOR *(Calling after him)* Um, excuse me, but if it was you who burgled us, amongst all those CDs you took you wouldn't still have a floppy disk would you? I mean, it's worth nothing to you but it's rather important to us! A friend of mine, Prozac, he's written a book...

DONALD Eleanor. It's pointless

TOWNSEND Bloody 'ell. A shooter. And he'll be wanting the protection money to get into drugs. Bloody 'ell. I'm getting out of this game

DONALD Well, we're not paying him

TOWNSEND Oh, he won't do you with a burglar alarm. It's not worth it. Reckon he came to frighten me and 'e 'as. Folks get very nasty about drugs

CLIVE So, er, what's The Burton Stone like then?

DONALD Well, it's not bad, average kind of local

ELEANOR But Donald doesn't go in there much any more do you darling

CLIVE Well, d'you fancy a snifter now? Leave the girls to talk shop

DONALD What a good idea!

ELEANOR Donald!

CLIVE (*Pushing the wheel chair*) Off we go then

DONALD No, no. I use my arms. At least some of me still works (*Clive and Donald exit through the front door*)

ELEANOR (*Under her breath*) Thank you very much

GINA Well, that's got them out of the way. Clive's so obedient, does anything I say

ELEANOR Which can't be said of Donald

GINA So, what d'you do for the other then?

ELEANOR I'm sorry?

GINA Oh don't be. You know. Riding someone else's horse

ELEANOR I haven't been near a horse since I was a teenager

GINA No! Rumpety tumpety

ELEANOR I'm not with you

GINA Nooky. SEX!

ELEANOR Oh. I see

GINA What d'you do for it? You must have someone on the side. But then, I'm very attractive for my age. And Clive's away so much. Just what's a girl supposed to do?

ELEANOR I really don't know

GINA Well you must do something! I mean you can't have a good rogering from a cripple can you?!

ELEANOR I don't do anything thank you very much. And what's more, it's none of your business if I did

GINA Oh come on. Just between us girls. It's perfectly natural

ELEANOR Deceit?

GINA No! Sex! After all, if you can't find what you want at Sainsbury's you go to Safeway's don't you

ELEANOR I'm sorry?

GINA Supply and demand, just like Clive always says. Mind you, it's difficult keeping it quiet once they've been with me, I can tell you. I've even had a couple of celebrities along the way, and they didn't disappoint, that's for sure. Mind you, if you're big on the telly, you're probably big elsewhere too aren't you. It follows doesn't it

ELEANOR It doesn't follow at all! In fact, I'd suspect the exact opposite

GINA But then you haven't got a telly have you?

ELEANOR Not at this minute, no

GINA We've got Sky. All the channels. And Sky Digital. And HD. And Bluray. We're never lost for something to watch, I can tell you

ELEANOR I can't ever really imagine having hundreds of channels, although Mrs. Willoughby says the Discovery Channel is fascinating ...

GINA ... you're just being coy, I can tell. We've got so much in common! I can feel it

ELEANOR Good for you

GINA I just like to know

ELEANOR You don't know anything

GINA Yes I do

ELEANOR No you don't!

GINA Come on! All girls together

ELEANOR That's it! Prozac's Book! In any democratic system, 51% of all representatives should be women!

GINA What are you talking about?

ELEANOR That way, every time the men tried to start another war or destroy another rain forest, the women could gang up and out vote them!

GINA What? I asked you his name

ELEANOR I'm sorry to disappoint you, but my list of clandestine lovers really is remarkably short

DONALD *(Entering with Clive through the front door)* You can't possibly defend it! No one can. The prime mortgage market in America has been relaxed and relaxed to soften up opinion for the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan! The current recession is the domestic side of the War On Terror gone wrong. And if the banks are in trouble, where does the US Treasury find three *trillion* dollars from?

- CLIVE Interest rates are very low you know. It could be worse...
- DONALD But if interest rates go much lower, we'll be into deflation, and that's a disaster!
- ELEANOR Donald, that was a quick drink
- DONALD How many people are going to end up unemployed because of this! Jesus!
- GINA Now where are Karen and Peter? Karen's never normally late. Not with a job like hers ...
- ELEANOR I don't think they actually said how long ...
- GINA It's bound to be Peter's fault
- TOWNSEND (*Entering from the hall*) Right. That's all the windows done
- ELEANOR Oh wonderful
- TOWNSEND Just the front door then, and the box. Everything alright? But I'll tell you. I'm gettin' out of this game. Shooters ... (*he exits*)
- ELEANOR I must say I do think Kar-in is a lovely name
- GINA We've never liked it, have we Clive? (*The door bell rings*)
- VICAR (*Head in hands*) Not Mrs. Willoughby please
- ELEANOR Well I'm going to have it all out with her! Giving the parish priest a nervous breakdown! (*She opens the front door*) Mrs. Willoughby! (*Enter Prozac with a Jack Russell on a lead*) Oh. Prozac! Good news! I've remembered some more of your book! The 51% female bias in all democracies. Mother Nature in control! (*Prozac honks and whistles gleefully*) And what's this? More sandwiches (*he honks*) No? The dog. Well what's it called? (*He whistles*) Spider? Well, why not!
- GINA We called Karin Karen didn't we Clive. But then she went to college, and starts calling herself Kar-in. Just like her friend Sarah, who ended up Saira!
- ELEANOR I'm sorry, I didn't catch the difference there
- GINA (*Triumphantly*) Precisely. It was S-A-R-A-H, but she changed it to S-A-I-R-A! It's ridiculous. Mind you, it's not as ridiculous as calling your dog Spider!

- DONALD     What's wrong with that?
- GINA         A spider's not a dog, is it? We'd never have called our dog Spider, would we Clive?
- DONALD     What did you call it?
- GINA         Little Willy. From the Peter Mayle cartoons. Clive thinks they're just wonderful, don't you Clive
- DONALD     You really are a wanker, aren't you
- ELEANOR    We used to have a labrador, but Donald can't walk a dog any more. And I don't want to walk one, because you meet so many vicious ones these days
- GINA         Little Willy likes labradors. What was it called?
- DONALD     Stonking humongous hard on
- GINA         Why's he got a dog with him anyway?
- ELEANOR    Ah well you see Prozac found it tied up, and Jack Russells are much prized possessions, born ratters, and if you sleep rough, the rats at night are one of the biggest problems. So he's waiting to find someone to give it to, because he doesn't need it since he sleeps in a dustbin
- DONALD     And there are no rats there. In fact, that's why he sleeps in a dustbin
- ELEANOR    In fact, most of the homeless would probably swap for a dustbin, but there aren't enough to go round! (*Prozac honks and whistles*)
- VICAR       I'll have him Prozac (*Prozac gives the dog to the Vicar. Enter Townsend*)
- TOWNSEND   Right. The control panel 'ere OK?
- DONALD     That's fine (*Enter Karin and Peter through the front door, looking slightly sheepish, but also incredibly pleased. Karin is wearing a simple cream dress. They carry two parcels*)
- GINA         Karen! Where have you been? There's so much to organise. And Peter. You're still wandering around like a hippy. Get your hair cut!
- KARIN       (*Pause*) Mum. Dad. Eleanor, Donald. Peter and I have just got married! (*Silence*)
- DONALD     Jesus
- CLIVE        Well, that's a turn up isn't it. That's really a turn up
- GINA         What!
- CLIVE        That really is a turn up isn't it!

GINA Married!

KARIN Married

TOWNSEND Married! (*Having screwed in the control panel*) Congratulations! Now, what number d'you want? Can't 'ave four the same, and not yer date of birth, they can find that out

DONALD 1927

TOWNSEND 1927. Right then (*keys in the code*). Don't mind me (*he exits through the door to the hall*)

GINA Married! How dare you!

ELEANOR Congratulations darling. Congratulations to both of you. Donald?

DONALD It's got some guts Peter. I'll give you that. Well done

PETER It was Karin's idea

DONALD Jesus

PETER But I bought the bubbly

GINA It'll be Karen's money Clive. It's all Karen's money. Karen! How could you! I was going to organise everything, and there isn't even any confetti (*Prozac starts throwing confetti from his pockets around the room*)

ELEANOR Prozac to the rescue!

GINA Stop it, stop it!

KARIN Mum, it was all too much

ELEANOR (*Concealing a smile*) So you just got married? On the spur of the moment. Simple service ...

KARIN Yes

ELEANOR That's what Donald and I did actually. Mummy was furious

GINA Where did you get married?

PETER Bootham Registry Office

GINA Without asking me?

KARIN Yes

GINA What about the witnesses? It can't be legal you know, it can't be

KARIN We used a girl selling *The Big Issue* from outside the St. Michael le Belfry

GINA She hasn't got an address! I told you! You're not married. You can't get married without a legal witness. You'll have to get married again

KARIN The Dean said she could use his address. It's perfectly legal Mum, and it really made her day

GINA Karen. I've always said you've never been the same ever since you called yourself Kar-in, haven't I Clive? And this proves it

ELEANOR Let's open the champagne!

PETER I'll get some glasses (*he exits to the kitchen*)

DONALD Have a cigarette

KARIN A Bensons? Don't mind if I do

DONALD Just look at it. A design classic

KARIN They're ten times stronger than the ones I smoke, and if you just have one every fortnight or so, the kick you get is tremendous. Paradise!

DONALD Paradise to me is walking again, and chain smoking my way down an autobahn in a brand new Jaguar XK8 convertible with Kate Moss in the passenger seat. Brilliantly engineered, gorgeous to look at, awesomely quick

KARIN What about the four litre engine? What about global warming?

DONALD In this case I am only a sign post. I point in the right direction, but have no intention of going there myself

PETER (*Re-entering with the glasses. Eleanor starts pouring*) Karin and I thought we could celebrate with a demonstration of your latest invention Dad!

DONALD What a bloody good idea!

ELEANOR Stop right there. What is it?

PETER It's the world's one and only water powered rocket

ELEANOR Really. Are you sure it's wise Donald? Indoors?

DONALD It's the best idea I've heard all year (*exiting through the hall door*)

GINA This isn't champagne! It's lemonade with hairspray! And the glasses are all chipped! And where did you get the dress from?

KARIN Peter bought it from the Sue Ryder shop. Thirty quid

GINA You bought your wedding dress from a porn shop?

KARIN That's Ann Summers Mum

GINA It can't be legal, it can't be

KARIN It is Mum. We're married

- GINA I want a wedding. I want a wedding. (*Shouting*) I WANT A WEDDING!!! (*Enter Donald from the hall door, carrying a large cardboard box*)
- DONALD Now Peter, I reckon the safest launch point is the middle of the room
- PETER So do I. Tripod first then (*Peter takes various components out of the box and assembles them. Playwright can supply design on request*). Oh. Water. Mustn't forget the water (*Peter takes the coke bottle into the kitchen*)
- ELEANOR This worries me. I have no idea what's going to happen next (*Peter comes quickly back from the kitchen with the bottle half full. He completes the setting up*)
- DONALD And finally, the power supply. (*Holding it up*) A bicycle pump! Prozac. Fancy doing the honours? (*Prozac honks*) Just keep pumping until you get lift-off. Yes, I know. It'll get harder as you go. Pump hard as you can! (*Prozac whistles*) Harder! (*Prozac keeps pumping*) Keep going! Harder! (*Prozac pumps, and the rocket explodes off the ground, jettisoning the water inside the rocket/bottle as it does so. All the water lands on Gina's head. Peter and Karin clap. Eleanor holds her head in her hands*)
- DONALD And there you are. The world's first water powered rocket, assembled from a French cork, a German plastic bottle, a Japanese bicycle pump, a Spanish cardboard box and English compressed air
- GINA I'm soaked. I'm soaked. (*To Prozac*) You planned this, didn't you, you scrounging homeless layabout!
- ELEANOR (*Pause*) Somebody say something. Anything
- KARIN Did you know that the average cow farts enough wind in a week to fill a hot air balloon
- DONALD Bloody hell. That much methane is a lot of green house gas
- KARIN And wasted energy
- GINA Wasted energy? It's me who's wasted all the energy. And if you're already married Karen, there's not much point us staying. Clive. Get the suitcases
- CLIVE Right oh (*exits through the hall door*)
- KARIN Oh, Mum, don't be like that

ELEANOR You could still have a Blessing. Perhaps she could organise that

DONALD Are you having a honeymoon?

PETER We most certainly are. Three nights in Bridlington

GINA Bridlington?!

ELEANOR Please stay. We can still have a party

GINA No. I think we should go

ELEANOR Then at least let me make you some sandwiches. Ham or cheese?

GINA Ham

ELEANOR With gherkins or cucumber?

GINA Cucumber

ELEANOR Coming up (*she exits to the kitchen*)

DONALD The answer to the question I'm sure you asked my wife by the way is that legs or no legs I can shag like a stallion

GINA What did you just say?

DONALD Perhaps you'd like a demonstration. (*Prozac honks*) And Prozac wants to shag you too. (*Prozac honks again*)

GINA What does that mean?

DONALD He wants to do it again already

CLIVE (*Entering with suitcases*) Ready when you are

KARIN Mum. Dad. (*Eleanor enters with sandwiches*) Peter and I have bought you a present

GINA (*Unwrapping it*) *The Illustrated History of York*

ELEANOR Oh, from the founding of the Roman Eboracum to the splendour of the medieval walled city. You were safe then inside the walls, but unfortunately not any more

KARIN And Donald. Especially from me. Your very own bottle of *Rebel Yell*

DONALD (*Takes the bottle*) Thank you. And what a wonderful name! *Rebel Yell* Eleanor! American sour mash bourbon

KARIN It's got a kick like wild peppers on the warpath, and there's a big vanilla buzz too

ELEANOR Well, since it's a present I can't really object, but I do. And your sandwiches (*Gina snatches them*)

DONALD I'll keep it in the shed to celebrate my best ideas

GINA Well, come on Clive, we've got a long drive

ELEANOR Are you sure you won't stay the night?

GINA A helicopter would have been wonderful

ELEANOR And you must come again

GINA Yes, maybe in the Spring, but Clive's got to choose a new car before then. He wants a coupé, I want a convertible, he wants a 3.2, I want a 2.4, he wants ABS and I want satellite navigation. Problems, problems...

KARIN Bye Mum. Dad (*she hugs both of them*). I'll ring you from Bridlington

GINA I'd been thinking of the Florida Keys. Or Thailand. We went to Las Vegas

CLIVE Well, Peter, nice to meet you, and welcome to the family

PETER Thanks (*They shake hands. Peter grimaces from the grip*)

GINA Come along then Clive (*Clive and Gina exit through the front door*)

ALL Bye! Safe journey! Bye! etc.

PETER Well, I suppose we ought to be on our way too. We've a train to catch. Is Bridlington alright by the way? Because there's always Skegness

DONALD Or even Filey

KARIN Bridlington's fine

PETER Right, well, off we go then. I'll get our stuff (*he exits through the hall door*)

ELEANOR Well, Karin, you will make a difference to the family. There's no question about that. And good luck "re-inventing the planet"

DONALD You'll need it

KARIN Whatever you do, do it all the way. No surrender

DONALD Absolutely not

KARIN There's just one last thing though. The water powered rocket would never work. No matter what the take off velocity, it would lose speed from then on, and to break free of gravity, a rocket has to accelerate as it goes

DONALD Well spotted

KARIN But it was still a good trick

DONALD I was much more than a good trick once you know

KARIN You still are!

DONALD And it does show what you can do. The benign power of water. And two-thirds of the planet is full of it

KARIN Not to mention the power of compressed air. And there's an entire atmosphere full of that!

DONALD And if cows fart entire hot air balloons, I wonder what the global warming human fart factor is. Must be massive

KARIN *(She kisses him)* Goodbye. And I'm very proud to have you as a father-in-law

DONALD You take good care of yourself. Peter's a nice lad, but I certainly wouldn't rely on him

KARIN There's more to him than you think. But really *(she kisses him again)*. It's great to know someone like you

ELEANOR Well, at least with you two getting on so famously I don't have to do my normal impersonation of a United Nations Peace Keeping Force. Well intentioned but utterly useless

DONALD But you do it so well. All you need is the blue helmet *(Prozac takes a blue helmet out of his coat)*

ELEANOR Thank you Prozac *(she puts the helmet on. The door bell rings. Eleanor opens the front door. The burglar alarm goes off. Enter Gina)*  
Donald! What do I do? What do I do? What's the code?

DONALD 1927

GINA *(Eleanor types in the number. The alarm stops)* I've bought a present too. For Eleanor and Donald *(she gives them a large wrapped picture frame. Eleanor opens it)*

ELEANOR Oh, how lovely! A picture of the Minster

GINA You can put it on the wall instead of that fake Picasso. It'll make the room look so much brighter!

ELEANOR Yes. Thank you

GINA *(To Prozac)* And as for you! What you need to remember is you're lucky! You're lucky, and you don't even know it

ELEANOR D'you really think so. Because in my opinion ...

GINA Anyway, can't stop. Goodbye. And Karin. Have a nice honeymoon. But it won't be as nice as the Florida Keys

KARIN Thanks Mum. Bye *(holds the front door open for Gina)*

GINA           And I can still organise your next wedding. After you're divorced  
*(Gina exits)*

DONALD       The funny thing about the Minster is it's always covered in scaffolding,  
but it never is in the paintings. Is it being rebuilt, or is it falling apart?

ELEANOR      Why is the code 1927?

DONALD       Last time Newcastle United won the League

PETER         *(Entering with bags)* Ready then?

KARIN         Ready. Let's go zooming off down life's highway!

ELEANOR      Yes, well, all the best to both of you. And come again soon *(kisses all  
round. Prozac stands by the door throwing more confetti and gives  
Karin and Peter an out of date sandwich)*

PETER         For our train journey? Thank you! Chicken tikka and chives!  
Wonderful! Bye!

KARIN         Bye! *(Karin and Peter exit. Eleanor watches them go through the  
window)*

ELEANOR/

DONALD       Bye etc.

ELEANOR      Oh, no! The car's up on bricks!

DONALD       Good job you didn't offer to drive them to the station then

ELEANOR      It's that boy with the Protection Racket. And there's an excess clause  
on the insurance, and we can't possibly afford a new set of wheels. And  
we can't find Prozac's Book ...

DONALD       ... but we have remembered a couple of chapters

ELEANOR      ... and the Vicar's having a nervous breakdown ...

DONALD       ... but he has found a dog. And you're wearing a silly blue helmet

ELEANOR      ... and I'm wearing a silly blue helmet. What a frantic couple of days!  
We used to have stories that explained how we got here, what we're  
doing here now, stories you could live your whole life in. The Bible,  
the Enlightenment, A Land Fit For Heroes, The New Jerusalem. And  
now what have we got? The Credit Crunch! I mean, what sort of a  
story is that?

DONALD       What do you know about the credit crunch?

ELEANOR      I know that Woolworth's has shut. And I know that unemployment  
corrodes the soul. It's not just another liberal platitude

DONALD So you do admit to them then?

ELEANOR No!

DONALD Go on. Just one

ELEANOR Well yes then. But this is different. It's about how we understand ourselves. We can only cure what we can care about. What we dismiss or despise will ultimately destroy us

DONALD I agree. Excellent. Well said

ELEANOR You're only saying that because you think I won't mind if you have a whisky early

DONALD Not true. But will you? Very impolite not to try Karin's...

ELEANOR But she's gone

DONALD Even so

ELEANOR Got it! The last chapter of Prozac's Book! *Why Quantum Physics Is A Complete Waste Of Time!* (*Prozac honks his horn, and blows his whistle*). Why are we staring hundred of millions of light years into space at galaxies that don't even exist any more? Why are we staring at infinite stars when we can't solve the problems on earth? (*Prozac blows his whistle, joyfully*) Is there anyone on earth who really understands Stephen Hawking?

DONALD Is astrophysics actually a conspiracy between Darth Vader, Captain James T. Kirk and Jodrell Bank? How many planets can we destroy, and have we already destroyed them before! Perhaps we once lived on Venus, now the ultimate greenhouse planet, with carbon dioxide levels 3000 times our own (*Prozac honks the horn*). We ruined Venus and now we're ruining the earth

ELEANOR Will we ever learn, or just rape and pillage fresh planets as we go? How dark is the Force? And what is the Force? The Force is the weight of history, which can only perpetuate disaster. The only thing to do with history is forget it and start again (*Prozac honks*). Is that the end? Well, it was certainly worth remembering. Perhaps we are all born with the talents of a Michelangelo

DONALD The problem with this country is institutionalised mediocrity, and the mediocrity comes from the top

ELEANOR Yes dear, I know

VICAR Who's a lovely Spider then?

DONALD What we need is a revolution of the mind (*Prozac whistles*)

ELEANOR Revolutions are about earthquakes and giant floods Donald. And the English are about babbling brooks and silvern streams. More tea, Vicar?

VICAR I think Spider needs some water

ELEANOR I think you need some new shoes

VICAR I wish I'd done the honours at Peter's wedding. I've known him so long (*he looks at "Guernica"*)

DONALD There are worse things

VICAR By the authority granted in me by Someone I No Longer Believe In, I pronounce you ...

ELEANOR I suppose we should start in the shed. We'll make a full list of what's been stolen, and at least we know the procedures this time. And then there's the business of funding your rocket

DONALD D'you know why I called him a wanker?

ELEANOR Because you didn't like him darling

DONALD No. I called him a wanker because he's a banker. He told me he's starting a Futures Market in Pollution quotas. Seriously! He wants to start trading the atmosphere!

ELEANOR We'll start in the shed, and then the lounge, and then the kitchen. Umm? Come along, best foot forward

DONALD Eleanor. I can't walk. Oh (*he holds his legs*). Lord Hanson strikes again

ELEANOR You never quite know when or where do you?

DONALD No. Crewe, Derby, York, Swindon. Doncaster. Hardly a railway works left

ELEANOR (*She starts pushing him out of the room towards the hall door*). They did say they wanted cucumber and not gherkins, didn't they

DONALD They did

ELEANOR Good. Because I used gherkins

DONALD So subtle an insult that they won't even realise it was one

ELEANOR I didn't go to Somerville for nothing. Oh, no! We forgot to vote!

And look at all this confetti! (*She gets out the vacuum cleaner and starts Hoovering, and then stops again*) I'm still annoyed about the expense Donald, but I will admit, it's a very good vacuum cleaner

DONALD Of course it is! I wouldn't have bought it otherwise

ELEANOR And what was that you said about diesel dust?

DONALD You should be able to use the same technology to filter diesel particulates out of car exhausts

ELEANOR What a good idea! Another one! You must look into it. And I do have a few small investments left. I've stuck with you through thick and thin, so I might as well carry on through thin and thinner. (*Pause*) Poor Prozac. He was born with the gift of laughter, but so mad is the world it's rendered him mute

PROZAC (*Standing*) We are all born free, but everywhere we are in chains!

**THE END**

## USEFUL QUOTATIONS

In fifty years time, Britain will still be a country of long shadows on the county grounds, warm beer, dog lovers and invincible green suburbs.

*John Major, 1993*

The problem with a classless society is it hasn't got any.

*Tina Brown, 1992*

Most women cannot win. Not because a woman cannot fight strategically. But because no one wants her to win, and often neither does she. Both she and her opponents see to it that she fails. She herself may become consumed by guilt if she wins – guilt for having created another's loss. Men hate losing to a woman; this can prompt a counterattack. And to another woman, a triumphant woman is a lifelong threat.

*Harriet Rubin, The Princessa, 1997, p.89*

The best we can hope for is that things get worse, slowly.

*Chairman of Vauxhall UK, 1986*

I spend my life selling rubbish to people who don't need it and can't afford it.

*Disillusioned Marketing Consultant 1997*

What will the service industries be servicing when there is no hardware, where no wealth is actually being produced?

*Lord Weinstock*

The money game is fine but industry is the only way for a country to survive, and I wonder how the British expect to make a living in the future.

*Nobuhiko Kawamoto, President of Honda Motor Company, on the sale of Rover to BMW, February 1994*

The Thatcher and Major governments [have] ... redefined the citizen as customer, society a supermarket and the state as a kind of Securicor. Those who can, shop; those who can't, beg. Inside the supermarket anything goes. On the streets huddle the excluded.

*David Marquand, Guardian, 26/5/93, p.18*

Loss of status has demoralised not only academic scientists, but also the engineers and technologists on whom Britain's industrial future depends. Politicians' lack of interest has perpetuated a tragic waste of resources.

*Anthony Sampson*

The key to success is to risk thinking unconventional thoughts. Convention is the enemy of progress. As long as you've got slightly more perception than the average wrapped loaf, you could invent something.

*Trevor Baylis, inventor of the clockwork radio*

Few of us can easily surrender our belief that society must somehow make sense. The thought that the State has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. And so the evidence has to be internally denied.

*Arthur Miller*

It does not matter whether the product does good or evil, what counts is that it is consumed – in ever increasing quantities. Since everything the corporation does has as its ultimate goal the creation of profit, it offers its workers no deep personal satisfaction, no feeling of contributing anything worthwhile to society, no true meaning to their activities. Go to work for a corporation and you are, through good salaries and various fringe benefits, installed as a faceless link in the lengthening chain – completing the circle by becoming one more consumer of all that junk.

*Disgruntled executive at IBM*

Market values have penetrated into areas of society that were previously governed by nonmarket considerations ... I contend that market values have assumed an importance at the present moment in history that is way beyond what is appropriate and sustainable ... We have become market fundamentalists.

*George Soros, The Crisis Of Global Capitalism, 1998*

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

*Alan Kay, head of research, Apple Computers*

In software alone there are now around 50,000 businesses in Britain, anyone of which might have the potential to become the Microsoft of 2010. More Britons now work in computer services than ever worked in coal mines.

*Economist, The World In 1999, p.34*

There was no secret agenda to close down the mining industry, as far as I am aware.

*Lord Whitelaw, March 1994*

... the London stockmarket, always intolerant of the long-term investment horizons associated with new ideas and high technology, will remain [as] risk-averse [as ever] in the bear mood of 1999.

*Economist, The World In 1999, p.35*

Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption. We need things, consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever increasing rate.

*Victor Lebow, Retail Analyst*

We are living beyond our means. As a people we have developed a life-style that is draining the earth of its priceless and irreplaceable resources without regard for the future of our children and people around the world.

*Margaret Mead, 1901-1978, anthropologist*

A monopoly is a terrible thing unless you've got one.

*Rupert Murdoch*

Our world risks both explosion and implosion. It must change ... [and] one thing is plain. If humanity is to have a recognizable future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millenium on that basis, we shall fail. And the price of failure, that is to say, the alternative to a changed society, is darkness.

*Eric Hobsbawm, The Age Of Extremes, p.585*

This will further cripple British industry. Two hundred thousand manufacturing jobs have been put on the line by the Bank of England's vendetta against manufacturing.

*Ken Jackson, Gen. Sec. AEEU, on an unexpected interest rate rise to 7.5%, 4/6/98.*

*Times2, 5/6/98, p.29*

Economic efficiency is a necessary element in the life of any sane and vigorous society, and only an incorrigible sentimentalist will depreciate its significance. But to convert efficiency from an instrument into a primary object is to destroy efficiency itself. For the condition of effective action in a complex civilisation is co-operation. And the condition of co-operation is agreement, both as to the ends to which effort should be applied, and the criteria by which its success is to be judged.

*R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Pelican Bks, 1980 (1926), p.277*

The free market is a theoretical abstraction. It does not exist in reality, never has and never will. *Francis Pym, 1984*

When everything about a people is for the time growing weak and ineffective, it begins to talk about efficiency. Vigorous organisms talk not about their processes, but about their aims.

*G.K. Chesterton*

Public finances are one of the best starting points for an investigation of a society. The spirit of a people, its cultural level, its social structure, the deeds its policy may prepare – all this and more is written in its fiscal history, stripped of all phrases. He who knows how to listen to the message here discerns the thunder of world history more clearly than anywhere else.

*Joseph Schumpeter, 1954*

England, like that other great empire of Rome, is dead. Like Rome, it survives as a legal system and a literature. It has become a place of the mind.

*David Starkey, Daze Of Empire, Guardian, 11/1/95*

The truth is that the Sixties inaugurated a post-religious age in which neither Jesus nor Marx is of interest to a society now functioning mostly below the level of the rational mind in an emotional/physical dimension of personal appetite and private insecurity.

*Ian McDonald, Revolution In The Head, p.26*

Capitalism survives by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible. This was once achieved by extensive deprivation. Today in the developed countries it is being achieved by imposing a false standard of what is and what is not desirable.

*John Berger, Ways Of Seeing, Penguin, p.154*

Not only do we not reward thought, we punish it as unprofessional.

*John Ralston Saul, The Unconscious Civilisation, p15*

[Manufacturing is] the engine room of the economy and, unless it's a vital sector, we will lose all our know-how and ultimately our services sector will decline as well... There's this obsession with style over substance and dislike of the long-term, and that's summed up for me in the [Millennium] Dome, a gravy train for designers. [We are becoming] a slave camp.

*James Dyson, inventor of the bagless vacuum cleaner, technologist and entrepreneur, Guardian, 5/9/98, p22*

The average life expectancy of the long term homeless is 42...

Where chaos begins, classic science stops... The irregular side of nature, the discontinuous and erratic side – these [are] puzzles to science.

*James Gleick, Chaos – Making A New Science*

Today, our world is dominated by bits ... and virtually no limits. It is ... devoid of control – [it is] something new, naturally chaotic and very fast to react and change.

*Peter Cochrane, Head of Research, BT Laboratories, from "The Global Grid of Chaos", Masters Of The Wired World*

First Mrs. Thatcher legitimised avarice, then the National Lottery institutionalised it.

*Guardian, 26/11/96, p.24*

No one would remember the story of the Good Samaritan if he hadn't had money... Economics is the method, but the aim is to change the soul.

*Margaret Thatcher*