

WENDY BURTON

Two front gardens with a hedge down the middle. Downstage is a green wheelie bin positioned outside one of the houses. Houselights dim. WENDY exits her house and begins sprucing up her garden, humming to herself. She spots the audience. And pulls them near.

WENDY: Evening. Here's a good one. Mrs. Ollerenshaw at Number 25 asked me how much training I had to do to be a refuse acquirer... I just told her I picked it up as I went along. *(She laughs at her own joke)* Now, I know what you're thinking. What is a single, twenty-something *(pause)* ok sir, I saw that look, thirty-something, refuse acquirer doing in front of an audience? Don't worry, I'm not about to sing. Well, it's a story really. You know the saying 'you won't believe me if I told you'? Well I'm going to tell you, and to be quite frank I couldn't give a monkey's whether you believe it or not because it's already happened. First of all, some vital statistics. Wendy Burton. Born a Gemini but should have been Pisces. I live with my goldfish 'Chips – 'Haddock 'died, heart attack – in the town of Leamington. Not Leamington Spa, we're not quite posh enough for that. Just Leamington. Oh, and I spend my spare time staring at Brian.

Cecil Thompson-Rigall

WENDY: *(to audience)* You're probably wondering who this fruitcake is. Well, at this point, you were not alone. Perhaps, for the sake of artistic license, he'd care to introduce himself?

CECIL: *(To the audience still peeling the orange)* The name's Cecil, Cecil Thompson-Rigall, my mother died before my conception and my father, *(sighs)* the best gamekeeper and ploughman there ever was. You name it, he ploughed it. Very popular with the chambermaids. I vowed that I would make my parents proud and follow in my father's footsteps. I've tilled and furrowed many a field with the tractor and I've clipped many a hedge, but that's because I never got my tractor licence. The gamekeeping, however is my main passion. You name it, I've shot it. There's nothing like heading out, shotgun over your arm, hunting down a pair of pheasants, and bracing yourself. *(continues to rummage)* So here I am, gamekeeper of Edna Davenport's manor house, Leamington Hall, with my faithful companion here, Steve.

Brian De La Cruise

BRIAN: Good evening, I was wondering if... Oh I beg your pardon, is this a bad time?

CECIL: I could say exactly the same to you!

BRIAN: I wouldn't want to trouble you.

CECIL: Name, rank, number.

BRIAN: Brian De la Cruise, insurance broker three years, my card.

WENDY: Insurance broker?

CECIL: Pull the other one! What kind of insurance broker skulks about covered in cowshit?

WENDY: *(to audience)* He's clearly working undercover.

BRIAN: It's rather foggy outside, afraid I've made a mess of myself.

CECIL: Oh it's your shit is it.

BRIAN: Certainly not. It's so foggy out there, I tripped over something.

CECIL: Tripped over what?

BRIAN: The cow, actually. You're not Edna Davenport are you?

CECIL: It's not that foggy, surely. Come inside, you're letting the heat out.

CECIL brings BRIAN inside and shuts the door. WENDY creeps around to the front door, and opens the (very squeaky) letterbox to eavesdrop.

BRIAN: What a quaint little cottage.

CECIL: It's a lodge.

BRIAN: Is there a difference?

CECIL: Certainly there's a difference; I'm a lodger, not a cottager. It's all right Steve. Brian, Steve.

BRIAN: Hello there. Fancy dress night is it?

EDNA DAVENPORT

EDNA enters, pushing a trolley, which CECIL is bound and gagged to.

EDNA: I have called the local constabulary and they'll be with us shortly. I honestly can't thank you enough. I doubt I could have wrestled the gun off him and gaffa-taped him so strongly onto this tea-trolley all by myself. It's really quite a work of art, you know.

WENDY: Not trouble at all. Er... Ms. Davenport...

EDNA: Please. Edna.

WENDY: No, my name's Wendy, but you're understandably quite distraught... What do you make of... make of...

EDNA: Well, strictly between you and I, I'm not entirely sure. You see, I didn't know Cecil was even looking for a new dog.

WENDY: But it's not a dog, is it...

EDNA: Isn't it?

WENDY: (to audience) I'm even beginning to doubt myself now....

Enter BRIAN.

BRIAN: Well, a very quick survey of the four floors Ms. Davenport, and I can definitely advise that this is a premium property. You were right to contact me. And if I may say so, you have a couple of extremely desirable objects.

EDNA: Oh Mr. De La Cruise. You flatter me. I was just saying to your, er, assistant here, that you should both be very proud of yourselves. Are you sure you haven't carried out a public arrest before?

BRIAN: Well, that would be telling...

WENDY: Have you?

BRIAN: ... No.

EDNA: I've just got off the phone. The Chief Superintendent is a personal friend of mine and is going to handle the case personally.

WENDY: We could have taken him down the station ourselves, couldn't we Brian. I daresay you're well in with the local force.

BRIAN: I didn't really fancy wheeling Mr. Thompson-Rigall all the twenty-seven miles into town though, Miss Burton. Not in this fog.

EDNA: Always best to get the police involved as soon as possible. I've had many an 'unfortunate incident' over the years out here on the moors.

WENDY: Unfortunate incidents?

EDNA: My husband, Randal, sadly lost his life falling down a mineshaft and hitting his head.

WENDY: Oh gosh, I am so very sorry Ms Davenport.

EDNA: Please. Edna.

STEVE

- STEVE: My mother was very happily married.
- WENDY: Though clearly not as happy as when she got a triple word score.
- STEVE: Call it the seven year itch, but she fancied a.... change of scenery. Dad's wife abandoned you, you say?
- CECIL: Sheila didn't take easy to motherhood. She found breastfeeding an arduous task. Within weeks, we'd both taken to the bottle.
- STEVE: She left to join the circus and worked as a trapeze artist.
- CECIL: This is true. Unfortunately, she couldn't draw anything else at the circus.
- STEVE: Anyway, two weeks ago the MP's office received this letter. Mother decided to come clean. While she was dusting, I read the letter. "Dear Steve. You won't me know me but my name is Oswald Thompson-Rigall, gamekeeper at Lemington Manor. Thirty-eight years ago, your mother and I had an illicit affair, the result of which was you, and still is. I fear time for me is not on the generous side, and there are truths to be told. You have an older half-brother called Cecil, who will no doubt take over from me as the gamekeeper. We are alike as two peas in a pod; many is a time I've spotted him sneaking out the house for a quick bang. You both stand to inherit a large fortune. I overheard that the owner of Lemington Manor is planning to hold an imminent ARSE here. This could be quids in for us. Please come and meet me at my lodge to the west of the grounds on Sunday."
- WENDY: By which point, Oswald was dead.
- STEVE: Murdered, as my investigation has proved.
- BRIAN: By Edna?
- STEVE: There is none more likely a suspect.
- BRIAN: Then why didn't you arrest her?
- WENDY: He needs proof, Brian.
- STEVE: Hence why I went undercover. In order for everything to fall into place, I too much get to the bottom of ARSE. Just like my brother here. Cecil. I never meant to deceive you.