

**Rats Nests**

A play by

Michael Ross

Royalty Free Play.

## **CHARACTERS**

**EDWARD**, *male*.

**VICTORIA**, *female*.

*The characters are seen at six points in their life- in their 60s, as tramps; at 50, as tenants in a Bed and Breakfast; at 38, as property developers; at 30, as young professionals buying their first house; at 24, as revolutionary squatters; and at 19, as students. Scenes occur in reverse chronological order.*

## ***LOCATION***

London. 2017, 1999, 1987, 1979, 1974, 1973 and 1968.

## Scene One

### Tramps (2017)

*London, night, winter. Two tramps, a man and a woman, both in their late 60s, living rough down by the South Bank, wearing long overcoats and woolly hats.*

*The woman, VICTORIA, sits, swigging mouthfuls from a bottle of white wine.*

*A short way away sits the man, EDWARD, rubbing his hands to keep warm. He notices the audience-*

**EDWARD:** *(to Victoria)* Vic! A prospective buyer has come to view, Vic, quick! Look smart! *(to audience)* Welcome! *(to Victoria)* Say hello to our guests, Vic.

**VIC:** *(to audience)* Piss off!

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Please, pay her no heed. She's got a heart of gold, truly she has. She'd take a bullet for you, or stick her foot in a Dutch dike to save a city from flooding. *(to Vic)* Isn't that true, dear?

**VICTORIA:** *(to Edward)* Piss off!

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Come closer, get a good look at the property. Come on, don't be shy. We won't bite.

*Victoria growls and gnashes her teeth like a vicious dog.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* This property's most saleable feature, as I'm sure you've already noted, is its expansive skylight, commanding a stunning view of the London skyline. And we may as well be upfront and say this now, save us from any ugly disputes later, but, yes, there is a *slight* vermin problem, isn't there Vic? I'm talking, of course, about our little furry rodent friends. And Vic and myself *do* like to regard them as *friends*, don't we Vic? We find it helps. And as Vic has often remarked herself, "Who exactly is infesting who?" She's quite the philosopher! Aren't you Vic?

**VICTORIA:** *(uncomprehending)* What?

**EDWARD:** That *was* what you said, wasn't it Vic? Do please correct me if I've misquoted you.

**VICTORIA:** *(to Edward)* Who the fuck are you?

**EDWARD:** *(chuckles)* She is such a wag! Isn't she a wit? "Who the fuck are you?" *(chuckles)* Gets me every time!

Tell me, is this your first night 'Al fresco' as it were?

*(as if responding to something audience has said)*

Yes, I thought so. Run away from home, have you?

Chin up! Once you've got through tonight it'll get easier, trust me.

Look, I won't romanticise things, but there are positives.

When myself and Vic were thrown out of our last hostel, we could so easily have crumbled into pieces, but we didn't did we? No, we picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves down and we counted our blessings.

You see, there *is* a certain freedom. No bills, taxes, paperwork. None of that. We took back control of our destiny and now we're standing up on our own two feet!

*Edward shakes unsteadily and then stumbles to his knees.*

**EDWARD:** Bugger! No, please, no need to help me up! I'll be fine down here.

*Edward sees that Victoria has fallen asleep, the half empty bottle of wine held loosely in her hand.*

**EDWARD:** Look at her, bless! Sleeping like a baby! *(hushed; to audience)*  
Fancy a drink? Yes, that'll warm you up, won't it? I'm sure Vic won't mind if we borrow a teensy drop of her tippie.

*Edward warily approaches the sleeping Victoria. Very gently, he prises the bottle of wine from her hand. Suddenly she murmurs and seems to be stirring- Edward freezes in horror- but Victoria remains asleep. Edward, relieved, steps back and offers the bottle to the audience.*

**EDWARD:** *(still hushed)* Go on, have a guzzle! No glasses I'm afraid, have to swig it straight from the bottle, but as they say *(laugh)* 'when in Rome.'

*(pause)*

No? *(hurt)* Fine! A little ungracious, some might say.

*(beat)*

No, too late now! You had your chance.

*Edward swigs from the bottle.*

*Victoria wakes from her slumber. First thing she sees is her empty hand, she is outraged;*

**VICTORIA:** BURGLARY!

**EDWARD:** We were just having a little sip, dear.

*Victoria looks up to see Edward holding the bottle red-handed. In fury, she lurches towards him and grabs hold of the bottle but Edward won't let go, so they grapple.*

**EDWARD:** Vic, please, we have an audience!

*In the process of their tussle, the remains of the bottle are spilt onto the ground. Vic lets out a sob of despair. Edward lets go of the empty bottle, leaving it in Victoria's possession. She swings it in the air and brings it down hard onto Edward's head, knocking him down. He lies motionless on the ground.*

**VICTORIA:** RAT! *(to audience)* What you fuckin' lookin' at?

*Straight into Scene Two;*

## **Scene Two**

### **Bed and Breakfasters (1999)**

*Edward and Victoria remove their overcoats and hats to reveal different clothes underneath. They are not tramps now but tenants in a B & B, in poverty but still making an effort, they've smartened themselves up for the new year and are wearing paper party hats on their heads. They are aged 50.*

*Victoria sits on the bed. There is a table with a cheap glass of white wine, a supermarket bottle of fizzy water and some plastic cups.*

*Edward stands centre stage, addressing audience.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Please, do join us! You live downstairs don't you? Stupid how we never talk to each other in this place, isn't it? I'm Teddy, *(gestures to Victoria)* this is Vicky. Champagne? Vicky, a glass of Champagne please for our guest!

*With resentful reluctance, Vicky gets to work, she pours some white wine into a plastic cup. Then she reaches for the bottle of fizzy water.*

**EDWARD:** Uh, Vicky! Remember to shake it!

*Victoria glares at Edward, shakes the bottle, then pours in some fizzy water.*

**EDWARD:** Voila! Champagne!

*Victoria staggers over and grumpily hands the plastic cup to a random member of the audience. She then returns to the bed, slumps back down.*

**EDWARD:** Exciting isn't it? This 'end of the millennium' malarkey!

**VICTORIA:** Random numbers. Signifying nothing.

**EDWARD:** Yes I suppose she's right, when you put it like that! *(laughs)* Still, there'll be fireworks. A 'river of fire' or whatever it is? Might just be able to glimpse something out of our window if we're lucky. *(to audience)* Do you plan on visiting the Dome? Vicky is *gagging* to gain a glimpse of the Body Zone, aren't you dear?

**VICKY:** A giant circus tent, but empty, devoid of any circus.

**EDWARD:** Ooh, she's a veritable oracle of wisdom tonight, isn't she? Very pithy. But we shouldn't judge it until we've paid it a visit, eh Vicky? *(to audience)* Tell me, have you been staying at this B & B a while? We haven't been here long at all. Actually, how long *have* we been here now, Vicky? Getting on for a few months now I guess, but-

**VICTORIA:** Three years.

**EDWARD:** Don't be ridiculous!

**VICTORIA:** Three fucking years!

**EDWARD:** Nonsense! *(pause)* Well, we won't be staying for much longer. Things are looking up. New year and all that. *New millennium*, indeed. We just had a minor setback. You should have seen us in the 80s. *(chuckles)* Yes we certainly had some fun didn't we, Vicky? Certainly lived the 'good life', dined in the swankiest restaurants, jetted across the globe on Concorde, but, well, Black Wednesday and all that.

**VICTORIA:** And the lawsuits. Don't forget the lawsuits.

**EDWARD:** *(embarrassed)* We were ahead of our time really, trailblazers. But as is often the case with business innovators, there were unforeseen problems.

**VICTORIA:** Weil's disease.

**EDWARD:** Let's not dwell on the gory details, darling.

**VICTORIA:** Comes from pregnant rats piss.

**EDWARD:** I'm sure our guest isn't interested, Vicky dear. Shall we see what's on the telly?

**VICTORIA:** Leads to blindness. Or worse.

**EDWARD:** Yes, well, it was all very regrettable, but one can't dwell on these things forever. This is just a brief pause whilst we dust ourselves down and get back on our feet. No, if I was looking at us from the outside, and if we were a property, I'd be saying, 'those two, Teddy and Vicky, they're a prime bit of real estate! Ok, sure, a



little dilapidated I grant you, seen better days, but with a wee spot of investment and a new lick of paint they'll back on the market in no time and fetching a very tidy sum.'

**VICTORIA:** All property is theft.

**EDWARD:** Yes, thanks for that Comrade V. *(to audience)* Tell me, can I ask you a terribly personal question? *(beat)* Do you have a job? *(pause)* Oh, we're both aboard the good ship 'HMS Job-seeker', aren't we Vicky? *(chuckles)* It's a hard knock life, isn't it? Which Job Centre do you 'frequent' as it were? The one on Park Road is it? Oh yes, that's our 'local' too, isn't it Vicky? Silly me, of course it would be! Do you know Carmen? Caribbean lady, works there. Very jolly. A bit, err, 'horizontally challenged' as I think they say these days, but absolutely lovely, real saint, runs the Back To Work programme. Had a spot of good news before Christmas! Carmen took me aside, asked me if I'd like a job. 'Absolutely!' says I. I mean, they'd have cut off my benefits if I didn't take it, but I'm not one of those folk content to idle my life away at the taxpayers expense. *(glances pointedly at Victoria)* There's a dignity in work, don't you think? One can really feel proud of oneself after a hard day's toil. In fact I'd go so far as to say that work is, *in of itself*, spiritually fulfilling, if that doesn't sound too ridiculous!

**VICTORIA:** He's working in Woolworths.

**EDWARD:** And there's no need to be so snooty about it. *(to audience)* It's a start, though, isn't it? As Carmen said to me, she said, (I won't do the accent) "with someone like you, baby doll, they'll be offering you management in no time!" Sorry, I don't mean to gloat. I'm sure they'll find you something soon enough! The economy's booming, so they say. Lots of opportunities! Especially if you're good with computers. Are you a techno wiz? *(pause)* Oh well, they offer free courses, you know. You should ask. Although having said that, what with this 'Millennium Bug,' we could be back to the Dark Ages very soon, or to a pastoral idyll- depending on

your persuasion. Yes, complete chaos, so they say. *(looks at his watch)* Not long to go now! *(chuckles)*

**VICKY:** Bring it on!

**EDWARD:** Oh dear.

**VICKY:** Let the planes fall from the skies, let the nuclear reactors break down, let the missiles launch, let the hospitals black out and all their patients die screaming. *(laughs)*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* More champagne? Or do you want to hold off further celebrations until 12?

**VICKY:** Genocide, disease, riots, looting, bombs, bring it all, bring it now! Let the fireworks commence!

**EDWARD:** On the positive side, I think there's a lot to look forward to in the coming century. The future's bright, if you want my opinion.

**VICKY:** We don't!

**EDWARD:** No no, you've made your predictions, Vicky. Now it's my turn. The Cold War is over. Both sides in Northern Ireland have kissed and made up. Democracy catching whichever way you look. Europe united in peace. Indeed, most of the world is at peace now, minus, alas, a few regional squabbles here and there. But soon Israeli will embrace Palestinian. Terrorism will be tossed into the dustbin of history. Things Can Only Get Better. Never mind the end of the century, I say it's the 'End of History'!

**VICKY:** Bollocks!

**EDWARD:** And good riddance! ‘Fuck off, History!’ say I! ‘Get outa town! What good did you ever do anyone, *History*, with all your horrible *events!*’ I mean, when you look back on the 90s you have to conclude, don’t you, that it was a bloody boring decade, don’t you think? I mean, what happened, when you really cast your mind back? A princess died in a car crash, that’s *all that happened!* But how sublime, don’t you think, that it was so tedious? You know that Chinese curse? “May you live in interesting times.” And it *is* a curse, isn’t it? (*holds his cup up for a toast*) So my sincerest wish for the new millennium is that the rest of the world discovers stifling boredom too. Let it be boring in Rwanda and the Balkans, let it be boring in Gaza! Let boredom spread across the whole globe!

**VICKY:** I think I’m going to be sick!

*Vicky gets up, moves towards the back of the stage.*

**EDWARD:** No, no, not in the sink, Victoria, we’re not savages! To the toilet. Come on, down the corridor, off you go! (*to audience*) Let her through, please, let her through!

*Vicky runs out through the auditorium, exits.*

**EDWARD:** (*to audience*) Sorry about that! She’ll be tickety-boo in a minute. (*looks at his watch*) Almost time! Steady the buffs, everyone, this could be the end of us all! (*chuckles*)

*A scream, off stage.*

**EDWARD:** Vicky?

*Victoria runs back through the auditorium, back onto the stage. She is shaken.*

*She runs off stage, can be heard just off, vomiting.*

**EDWARD:** *(groans)* I said *not* in the sink, Victoria!

*Vicky returns to the stage, still shaken.*

**EDWARD:** What is it? What happened?

**VICTORIA:** *(horrified)* In the toilet, just lying there, it's in the toilet. Oh God!

**EDWARD:** What?

**VICTORIA:** *(shuddering with disgust)* Just there, in the bowl, just *lying there!*

**EDWARD:** Well, I haven't been there since lunchtime, and I definitely flushed after I went so it *wasn't me!* *(to audience)* Was it *you?*

**VICTORIA:** A rat.

**EDWARD:** What?

**VICTORIA:** It's a rat. A dead rat. It must've-

**EDWARD:** A rat?

**VICTORIA:** Must've crawled up through the pipes, Oh God, must've tried to climb out but it couldn't, fell back in and it drowned.

**EDWARD:** Fuck!

**VICTORIA:** They can't keep out. Little bastards. Everywhere we go.

**EDWARD:** It's ok, Victoria.

**VICTORIA:** Why can't they *leave us alone?*

*Victoria stomps around the room, yelling into nooks and crannies, shouting at the floor, at the walls.*

**VICTORIA:** Stay away! You hear me? Leave us in peace!

*She collapses on the bed, in tears. Edward joins her, puts his arms around her.*

**EDWARD:** It's ok, Vicky, we'll get rid of it. Shhh. *Shhhh.*

*Victoria quietens down. Edward rocks her gently as she falls asleep.*

*Big Ben chimes midnight.*

*Edward lays Victoria down on the bed, comes back out to face the audience.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* I don't suppose you could, err, dispose of it could you? *(He scrabbles around just off stage)* I've got a plastic bag and some rubber gloves you can borrow. *(he re-emerges with plastic bag and rubber gloves, goes up to random member of the audience)* Here you are! Come on. Just go in, fish it out and pop it in the bag, won't take a minute. *(beat)* Now look, we all have to share that loo! *(beat)* Fine, I'll do it then!

*Edward storms out through the auditorium.*

*The sound of fireworks.*

### Scene Three

#### Yuppies (1987)

*A newly refurbished luxury flat, awaiting a buyer. Victoria stands centre stage, looking very glamorous.*

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Come in! Come in! *(shouting towards the back of the auditorium)* Bring some wine Eddie.

**EDWARD:** *(off)* Which one, darling?

**VICTORIA:** The pinot grigio, Eddie. Only the very best for our special guest. *(to audience)* Nice flat, yes? I should warn you this is the last one left in the complex, all the others have been snapped up. You're not put off by the location, I hope? Some blanch at Brixton.

*Edward enters with a tray on which are three glasses of white wine. He too is also the picture of elegance.*

**EDWARD:** *(pouring wine)* Technically of course, we're actually in Herne Hill.

**VICTORIA:** Yes, but we split the difference and say Brixton, don't we Eddie?

**EDWARD:** *(handing an audience member a glass of wine)* There you go. Enjoy.

*Edward and Victoria both take their own glasses of wine.*

**VICTORIA:** Eddie thinks I'm a fool to stress it's in Brixton but I know my onions. When those riots broke out a few years ago, I said to Eddie... what did I say Eddie?

**EDWARD:** Oh yes. We were watching the news, and she turned to me and said 'Brixton's about to go upmarket.' I just laughed!

**VICTORIA:** He thought I was kidding, but I was deadly serious.

**EDWARD:** She has this theory that a riot puts a place firmly on the map.

**VICTORIA:** Well, look at Notting Hill!

**EDWARD:** Anyway, it's a lovely little place here, whatever the location.

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Did you observe the mural on the side of the building?

**EDWARD:** God, yes, the mural! Do tell us what you thought of the mural!

**VICTORIA:** I almost wet myself when I first saw it.

**EDWARD:** All the different colours, all the different faiths-

**VICTORIA:** Yes, real Sesame Street stuff, isn't it? Women of different ethnicities holding hands beneath a rainbow. Terribly sweet and charming in it's naivety, of course, but howlingly funny all the same, bit like a Billy Bragg record.

**EDWARD:** When I saw it, I said to Tori, 'we'll have to get that painted over.'

**VICTORIA:** And I said 'don't you dare! That's its selling point.'

**EDWARD:** She was absolutely right, of course.

**VICTORIA:** The fascinating thing about this place, of course, is its history.

**EDWARD:** Yes, this used to be a hostel for homeless women.

**VICTORIA:** I first stumbled across it when writing for the *New Statesman*. I'd come round to file a sob-story about how the council were cutting it's funding. It *was* desperately sad of course and a real moral outrage, but what could one do?

**EDWARD:** She instantly spotted it's potential.

**VICTORIA:** With the money daddy had left me, we had just enough to buy the place and convert it into luxury flats.

**EDWARD:** And that was the start of our great adventure as 'property developers.'

**VICTORIA:** Something we'd simply never envisaged becoming.

**EDWARD:** But we haven't looked back, have we Tori?

**VICTORIA:** We were born to do it. It's a bloody creative job, actually and we've got a talent for it, if that doesn't sound too pretentious.

**EDWARD:** Well, *Tori* has a talent for it. I merely coast along on her coat tails.

**VICTORIA:** I had observed how, out in the sticks, people were converting barns and water mills into luxury homes. So I thought- well, what if, here in the city-

**EDWARD:** What if people wanted to live in abandoned warehouses?



**VICTORIA:** Or disused power stations?

**EDWARD:** Multi storey car parks?

**VICTORIA:** Or Victorian lunatic asylums?

**EDWARD:** Nobody wants to live in a mansion in Chelsea anymore.

**VICTORIA:** Not our sort of people, anyway. And why is that?

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Tori has a little pet theory about this.

**VICTORIA:** People often say we live in a snobbish, class-obsessed society, and they're absolutely right of course, although they tend to get it *the wrong way round*.

**EDWARD:** Here she goes!

**VICTORIA:** In fact, the reverse is true. The bulk of class snobbery comes from the *bottom* of the social scale and is directed at the *top*. I've felt this most acutely when visiting Eddie's family.

**EDWARD:** Yes, I do have rather humble origins.

**VICTORIA:** From their high-rise council estates, they look down at us with withering contempt. They think we're worms!

**EDWARD:** Tori, I've told you before; my parents do *not* think you're a worm.

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* But that's how we must look from that height. Worm-like.

**EDWARD:** She'll be on about the tramp, next.

**VICTORIA:** Ah, yes- the tramp! There's a tramp who lives down our street.

**EDWARD:** Every day he asks her for change.

**VICTORIA:** I never give him any, of course.

**EDWARD:** Out of concern for his welfare. He'd only spend it on booze or drugs.

**VICTORIA:** *But you should see the look of disdain he flashes me.* No duchess or earl could match it.

**TEDDY:** *(to audience)* So what's your verdict on the flat?

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* I can see you're taken with it. You are *our sort of person* aren't you? What do I mean by 'our sort of person?'

**EDWARD:** Yes, clarify what exactly you mean by that, Victoria.

**VICTORIA:** I don't just mean urban professionals.

**EDWARD:** Although that we *are*.

**VICTORIA:** I don't just mean we have money.

**EDWARD:** Although that we *do*.

**VICTORIA:** No, it's more than all that. We're.... Oh, what's the word for us, Eddie?

**EDWARD:** I don't know, Tori.

**VICTORIA:** Yes you do, Eddie! It means unconventional, non-conformist, a certain reckless frontier spirit. What's the word I'm thinking of, Eddie?

**EDWARD:** I really don't know Tori.

**VICTORIA:** It's a bit like 'gypsy' but not 'gypsy.'

**EDWARD:** A bit like 'gypsy', but not 'gypsy'?

**VICTORIA:** Oh yes, you know! We like to veer off the beaten track, burrow into strange places, frequent the rather run-down and yes, perhaps slightly seedy sides of town. We're, we're... Oh what's the word I'm looking for, Eddie? Come on Eddie, what's the word? We're.... *We're....*

**EDWARD:** Rats?

*A horrified silence. Victoria glares at Edward in shock, then turns, smiling, to audience.*

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Bohemians. That's the word I was thinking of.

**EDWARD:** *(appalled)* Sorry, yes, that's what I meant. I meant 'Bohemians.'

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* You're not going already?

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* You're not leaving on account of what I said, I hope?

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Please, stay. You haven't finished your wine.

**EDWARD:** *I'm* the only rat here. That's all I meant.

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Thank you so much for coming. Let me show you out.

*Victoria walks towards the exit, still holding her glass of wine. At the door she turns back to face Edward- they're alone together. Edward holds up his hands apologetically. Victoria throws her wine in Edward's face.*

## **Scene Four**

### **First Time Buyers (1979)**

*Edward and Victoria at age 30, sat side by side in front of the desk at an estate agents.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Tell me, is it true you don't need any formal qualifications to be an estate agent?

*Pause.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* So no diploma? Nothing? So just *anyone* can be an estate agent?

*Pause.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Sorry, I don't mean to imply simply anyone can do it, of course not, I daresay you need to be special sort of person, don't you? Tough job, I bet? Well paid though, right? No, I'm sure you earn much more than I do being a teacher.

**VICTORIA:** *(mutters)* Money money money.

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Oh no, we do have money! Oh yes, absolutely, we *have* money! God no, we're not wasting your time. We've got money, oodles of it! Don't we darling?

**VICTORIA:** Do we?

**EDWARD:** Yes. *(laughs)* Of course. *(to audience)* My wife's father left her some money. That's how we can afford to be here. Not that we aren't both doing very well in our respective professions, because we are. My wife is a journalist. She's very talented. She had an interview for a job at the Guardian last week.

**VICTORIA:** Didn't get it.

**EDWARD:** Not this time, maybe. But clearly people on Fleet Street are sitting up and taking notice, that's what I keep telling her, they're reading her stuff in the South London Press and they're saying, "ooh, this *is* good!" and they're passing it round to each other. There's a buzz about her, she's making a name for herself!

**VICTORIA:** *(snorts)* I write about school sports days and council meetings.

**EDWARD:** But you manage to make it all interesting, darling, obviously, or they wouldn't be sitting up and taking notice-

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* I *sent* them an envelope stuffed with my press cuttings, that's the only reason they 'sat up and took notice'.

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* We were just looking in the window, and there were a few nice houses in our price bracket. Weren't there darling?

**VICTORIA:** Were there?

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* It's just the two of us at the moment, but I don't doubt there'll be the pitter patter of tiny feet sometime in the future, *(puts his hand on Victoria's knee)* won't there, darling?

**VICTORIA:** Will there?

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* So we were thinking two, maybe three bedrooms? And it would be nice to have a back garden.

**VICTORIA:** With a little path and a pond!

**EDWARD:** Yes, that would be lovely.

**VICTORIA:** And a white picket fence!

**EDWARD:** *(laughs indulgently)* Yes darling.

**VICTORIA:** The house *must* have a white picket fence!

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* My wife's little joke. The house doesn't need to have a white picket fence.

**VICTORIA:** The white picket fence is non-negotiable!

**EDWARD:** *(laughs)* She is funny, isn't she?

**VICTORIA:** And a golden Labrador.

**EDWARD:** Houses don't come with pets included, darling.

**VICTORIA:** And we must have Felicity Kendal and Richard Briers living next door to us!

**EDWARD:** *(laughs)* Yes, ok darling. *(to audience)* Are you a fan of the Good Life? Very funny, isn't it? Bet it's had people flocking to live round here, hasn't it?

**VICTORIA:** We must have a lawn we can mow every Sunday, and a patio for barbecues in summer. The garden must be similar to all the other gardens in the street, but not identical. We must be able to stand in our garden and look over our white picket fence with a mixture of amusement and mild disapproval tinged with furtive envy as we observe Richard Briers and Felicity Kendal wrestle with a pig.

**EDWARD:** Vis a vis location, we do want something fairly close to the station. Within walking distance. Because we're both working in the 'Big Smoke' for our sins!

**VICTORIA:** For our crimes.

**EDWARD:** And the great thing about Surbiton is it's so quick, just 20 minutes on the train and whoosh, you're at Waterloo! Honestly I think we'll spend about the same time commuting as we do now, if not less!

**VICTORIA:** I insist the trains will have to be busy!

**EDWARD:** It's a busy station, darling, but there are plenty of trains into London all the time, aren't there? Especially in rush hour.

**VICTORIA:** In rush hour we must have sweaty armpits thrust in our faces every morning.

**EDWARD:** Well, we have that now darling.

**VICTORIA:** We must be crowded in like cattle.

**EDWARD:** Darling?

**VICTORIA:** And this must be repeated every evening on our way home. Can you guarantee that? Oh, and also, our expressions must be tired and dazed and miserable, our eyes must be dead. And we must be surrounded at all times by commuters with identical expressions.

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* I'm sorry about this, she's been very stressed lately

**VICTORIA:** The dead eyed commuters are non-negotiable!

**EDWARD:** Darling, perhaps you'd like to pop out, go for a walk and have a cup of tea. I saw a nice little café opposite the station.

**VICTORIA:** Can you absolutely guarantee the packed trains with the dead eyed commuters, returning us every night to our little cages and our little prison yards? Can you guarantee that this will be repeated every day, every year, for the rest of our working lives until retirement, by which time we are too old and exhausted to do anything but sit on our lawns in willed senility, staring numbly over our white picket fences thinking "what the fuck did we do with our lives, what was it all actually *for*"?



**EDWARD:** *(stands up)* Ok, let's go!

**VICTORIA:** We're the pinnacle of evolution yet we find no better model for our society than the *termite colony*? Don't you ever want out of this rat race?

**EDWARD:** *(chuckles)* Mixing your animal metaphors there darling. If you were one of my pupils, I'd have to mark you down.

*Victoria lets out a loud mighty howling wail of anguish and despair, it becomes a scream.*

*Edward is mortified.*

*Victoria collects herself.*

**VICTORIA:** I feel much better now.

**EDWARD:** Ok, we're going.

*Victoria sits back down.*

**VICTORIA:** But we haven't even started, Teddy! *(to audience)* So, what have you got for us?

**EDWARD:** Victoria?

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Yes, and how *do* you go about becoming an estate agent, exactly? No, please, tell me, I'm genuinely quite interested!

## Scene Five

### Inmate (1974)

*A cell in Holloway women's prison. Victoria has adopted a cockney accent.*

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience, gesturing expansively around the cell)* Welcome to my manor! *(laughs)* I'm Vicky, but everyone calls me Vix. Don't worry love, I won't ask what you're in for! We never talk about that shit in here. Who cares anyway? The real robbers and murderers are on the outside, if you ask me, in the banks and in the government. We're all amateurs far as they're concerned. Sorry, I'll get off me soap box and give you the grand tour! *(adopts 'fake' posh voice- a posh girl faking cockney faking posh)* As you can observe, the owners have done the place up in a modernist, minimalist style. The array of cracks in the walls are a trademark artistic flourish by our designer, I'm sure you'll agree they lend the place that aura of institutional chic that is much sought after nowadays. And over here we have a delightful open plan toilet. Let us take a moment to admire its simple majesty. And over here we have the window, commanding stunning views of the property's capacious grounds. As you can see there's a lovely latticed effect on the window which casts exquisite patterned shadows on the walls, as well as providing that extra sense of protection and security so you can sleep at night safe in the knowledge no criminals can climb in- *(laughs)* they just have to come through the front gate in the morning the normal way. Now, I feel I must warn you that we do have several other parties who have also expressed an interest in the property so I would advise to snap it up pronto. The property comes of course with it's own in-house staff, including a world renowned cordon bleu chef. Our servants will attend to your every needs and escort you should you need to leave your quarters. They will also ensure the doors are securely locked at all times for your protection. And over here we have our state-of-the-art two-tier sleeping area. *(back to cockney)* Which bunk you want? I'm in the bottom one but don't mind changing. Nah, honest, I'm not fussed, you want to sleep there you can, love. *(hushed)* 'Ere, fancy a drink? *(she takes out a bottle of wine and two cups, pours into them)* Yeah,

don't grass on me, one of the screws gave it me, Mandy, you met her yet? Nice enough, as they go, one of the good ones. She's taken a bit of a shine to me, if you know what I mean? (*hands a cup to random female member of the audience*) There, get that down yer gullet. Go on, guzzle it down! Nice, isn't it? She gets 'em from some fancy French place, apparently. Never asks me for anything in return, thank God. If she ever starts asking me to do her 'favours' or taking liberties I'll tell her where to sling her 'ook, don't you worry! I weren't born yesterday! But she hasn't, not yet anyways. Nah, she's alright, it's just 'cause she's a Trot and likes having someone she can talk to about Kropotkin. (*with concern*) You alright love? Hey, it's ok, first night's the worst. It gets better, honest. You adjust, you get used to it. You'll be alright. A few rough sorts but I'll watch your back for you. Anyone gives you any hassle you just tell 'em Vix would like a word wiv em, you got that? It's them screws you wanna keep an eye on though. Right bunch of bastards. Apart from Mandy, 'course. But I can handle the screws an' all! Nah, blokes prisons are the worst, so they say. Got a couple of mates doing stir in Brixton, having a really tough time of it, have to watch their back all the time, and I don't just mean in the showers. (*laughs*) But this place aint so bad once you get the hang of it. It's just like boarding school really. (*hastily*) Or so I imagine. You got a fella on the outside? I were seeing this bloke before I got nicked. Teddy. (*smiles*) My 'Teddy Bear'. Says he's gonna wait for me, the daft git! "However long it takes, Vicky." (*tearful*) I say to him, "I could be all old and grey by the time these bastards ever let me out, you do realise that?" I mean, I been here a year already and I still aint even had me trial yet and the Home Sec says he's gunning for us. But Teddy just says, "they'll let you go," and I keep saying to him, "you don't know that," and he keeps saying "I do know that Vicky, trust me, they'll let you go," and I say "it's not up to you though, is it?" and he just says, "however long, Vicky, however long, I'll be here waiting, but trust me, it won't be long, don't ask me how I know but I just *do*." Sometimes I think I don't deserve 'im. (*pulling herself together*) Sorry 'bout that. It's the vino, gets me all sappy! You just slap me next time I start jabbering on like that, ok? (*laughs*) Another drink? Come on, let's get rat-arsed!

## Scene Six

### Undisclosed Location (1973)

*Edward is tied to a chair in darkness, terrified. A bright light is shining in his face.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* No, I just lived there, that's all. It was somewhere to live. I only moved in because....you're not going to believe this but it's the truth, I swear to God; I moved in because of a girl.

Haven't you ever been in love?

No, I didn't agree with them. Vicky used to say England was like some big old rotten house and the whole thing needed bringing crashing down, reduced to rubble and swept into the dustbin of history. But I used to say to her, "then where will we all *live*, Vicky? Don't we need to build a new house *first*? Wouldn't that be a better idea?"

Please, do you have to shine that light in my face? Look, *you don't understand*. I want to help you. *I'm on your side!* Why are you doing this to me? I don't understand.

Please! I went to the police didn't I? I did the right thing, *didn't I?* If this is how you treat people on your side then I can believe all the stories about the Irish!

I'm sorry, I just don't understand what's going on.

I didn't take them seriously, not at first. I just thought 'yeah, yeah, posh kids playing at revolutionary dress-up' I'd had three years of that at University, they all end up at the BBC sooner or later.

But Roy was different, he's something else; dangerous, fearless. He had this effect on people. Not me, when I looked in his eyes I just saw these two black voids and it made me shudder, but the others, they were hypnotised, they'd do anything he told them.

It was just property at first. That was the deal. We'd just attack property, because that's all the ruling classes give a toss about. There was no talk of attacking people, absolutely not, that wasn't on the table, not then. We'd only attack when we knew the buildings were empty. We'd call ahead so they could evacuate. We hurt *nobody*. We killed *nobody*. But nothing got reported, complete press blackout, so Roy said we had to step up our operation, he said we'd have to start 'collecting scalps' that was his phrase, he said that way Fleet Street would definitely sit up and take notice, and that's when I knew it was all madness, that's when I went to the police.

I am not a rat. Let me make that clear. I believe in this country, in democracy, in the rule of law, *that's* why I came forward. You know who my hero is? Not Marx, not Trotsky, it's George Orwell. He knew what was right and wrong and he wasn't afraid to say so, even if it meant being branded a traitor.

No, I'm not comparing myself to Orwell, I'm just saying, "it will not do to say I refuse to choose". And I chose. In the end I chose *you*, don't you see? I chose England!

Why aren't you thanking me? I saved the life of a cabinet minister! Did you want her dead? They've got a whole list of names and addresses, a big fat book of targets. Why aren't you *giving me a medal*? You should have the fucking Queen in here right now, knighting me!

Please, I've betrayed the only person I care about in my life! What more do you want from me?

You know what, you deserve a revolution. You deserve to be at the end of bayonets, your backs against the walls, the gutters running red with your blood! Fuck you, fuck England! Let the whole stinking rotten fascist edifice come crashing down!

*Starts to sob.*

Please, let Vicky go. Don't hurt her. That's all I ask in return. Do what you want with me. But just let Vicky go. Please. Just promise me that.

**Scene Seven**

**Squatters (1973)**

*Victoria stands centre stage, smiling.*

**VICTORIA:** Comrades! No, please, please, remain seated! Welcome to your new home, you shall be shown to your rooms presently. I can see you are all impatient to begin the work of revolution. Aye, me too, comrades, me too. And apologies that Comrade Roy cannot be here to welcome you. He has his hands full bombing a beauty pageant. In a moment we shall all introduce ourselves. and say a little about we would most like to achieve from the coming revolution. But first a few words on your new home.

*Edward enters carrying a very heavy box. He looks startled to see the audience, drops the box, spilling guns and bullets all over the floor.*

**VICTORIA:** Comrade Ed!

**EDWARD:** Oh shit! *Fuck!*

*Edward nervously and hastily gathers up the guns, puts them back in the box.*

**VICTORIA:** Please, ignore him. No, I beseech you comrades, remain seated, Comrade Ed can clear up his own mess.

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* Please comrades, forgive my language.

**VICTORIA:** *(laughs, embarrassed)* Comrade Ed, we have no time for bourgeois niceties here, you *must* know that *by now!* *(to audience)* Comrade Ed speaks with the authentic tongue of the proletariat and he has *absolutely no need* to apologise for that.

**EDWARD:** No, no, but I'm an educated man, its really quite inexcusable-

**VICTORIA:** Comrade Ed, please continue loading the van!

**EDWARD:** Yes, Comrade V.

*Edward shuffles off stage with the box.*

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* We are all equals here. There is no hierarchy here, no class structure. 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.'

*Edward re-enters.*

**EDWARD:** *(to audience)* So what do you think of the house, then? Nice, isn't it?

**VICTORIA:** Yes thank you, Comrade Ed!

**EDWARD:** You should have seen the place when we first moved in. Complete tip!

**VICTORIA:** Yes, well, those *capitalist bastards* had sent their lackeys in to (*checks herself*) No, no, not their lackeys, they sent in *exploited workers* to pull cables from the walls, pull up floorboards and fill the toilets and the taps with concrete. Oh, how the fascists love to play divide-and-rule with the working classes!

**EDWARD:** But Comrade V fixed it all up in no time!

**VICTORIA:** No, really, it was a group effort.

**EDWARD:** Don't believe her, it was all down to her! She's a wiz, she really is! And you should have seen her with the council!

**VICTORIA:** Yes, I should make it clear, this is a *negotiated* squat.

**EDWARD:** Police were trying to chuck us out-

**VICTORIA:** (*spits*) Pigs!

**EDWARD:** But this one, she went to the council and she got them to agree to let us stay!

**VICTORIA:** But fear not comrades, we are not collaborators-

**EDWARD:** She had them eating out of her hand, she did! *And* she got them to switch the gas and electricity back on!

**VICTORIA:** Let me make this absolutely clear, comrades. The negotiated nature of our squat is merely a *means to an end* to keep the Old Bill off our backs. Because we don't want the Fascist Pigs poking their snouts into our business all the time, do we? Not with what *we've got planned*, eh Comrades?



**EDWARD:** Oh, and has she mentioned we've got hot running water?

**VICTORIA:** Perhaps you would like to fetch the milk, Comrade Ed?

**EDWARD:** Oh, are we having tea?

**VICTORIA:** No, Comrade Ed, the *milk*. For tomorrow morning's *delivery*?

**EDWARD:** Ah-

**VICTORIA:** Yes, Comrade Ed.

**EDWARD:** But-

**VICTORIA:** Now, Comrade Ed!

*Edward nods, exits.*

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* And why the hell shouldn't the council let us stay here? A perfectly good property with four floors and a basement, with *ten bedrooms*, and it's right in the heart of London! Yet it's *lying completely empty* whilst people are forced to sleep on the streets. It's an absolute disgrace!

*Edward re-enters carrying a crate of glass milk bottles, all filled with what looks to be milk. He carries it with great trepidation.*

**EDWARD:** Where do you want me to put it, Comrade V?

**VICTORIA:** Bring it here Comrade Ed.

**EDWARD:** But-

**VICTORIA:** Now, Comrade Ed!

*Edward stands beside Victoria clutching the crate. Victoria picks up one of the bottles.*

**EDWARD:** Please be careful, Comrade V!

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* This may look like an ordinary bottle of milk.

**EDWARD:** *(hushed)* Comrade V! Is this wise?

**VICTORIA:** Comrade Ed?

**EDWARD:** *(hushed)* It's just, so soon? *(referring to audience)* Do we know we can trust them yet?

**VICTORIA:** I am shocked, Comrade Ed!

**EDWARD:** No, really, I didn't mean anything by that, *(to audience)* it's not that we don't trust you-

**VICTORIA:** We have no secrets in this house, Comrade Ed, no privileged information owned and fiercely guarded by a select elite. Here, all information forms a common treasury for us all.

**EDWARD:** I know, but-

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* This may look like milk but it is in fact a highly concentrated potassium solution which explodes when in contact with oxygen.

**EDWARD:** I think that's all they need to know right now.

**VICTORIA:** And tomorrow morning-

**EDWARD:** Oh dear.

**VICTORIA:** We shall deliver these milk bottles to the doorstep of a certain cabinet minister.

**EDWARD:** I think that's enough excitement for one day.

**VICTORIA:** The education secretary will open her door and reach down to *snatch* up her milk-

**EDWARD:** I better pop these back in the basement, Comrade V.

**VICTORIA:** But instead she will be snatching up our lethal potassium cocktail. She will take it through to her kitchen, boiling the kettle, taking down her cup.

**EDWARD:** They don't need to know all this, Comrade V!

**VICTORIA:** Then, whilst the kettle boils, she reaches across to the milk bottle. But as soon as her thumb pushes down on the lid, then; *KABOOM!*

*Edward jumps, shaking the bottles in the crate.*

**EDWARD:** Shit!

**VICTORIA:** The member for Finchley will receive a small dose of her own lethal medicine, the milk of inhuman unkindness!

**EDWARD:** No!

**VICTORIA:** I beg your pardon, Comrade Ed?

**EDWARD:** I can't do this anymore, Vicky!

**VICTORIA:** Perhaps you would like to go and have a lie down, Comrade Ed?

**EDWARD:** This is madness!

**VICTORIA:** Comrade Ed!

**EDWARD:** I want out.

**VICTORIA:** *(to audience)* Meeting adjourned, comrades! Perhaps you would all like to go to your rooms, get yourselves settled in? *(to Edward)* What is the meaning of all this?

**EDWARD:** I'm going, and you're coming with me.

**VICTORIA:** *(laughs)* I most certainly am not!

**EDWARD:** This is *wicked*.

**VICTORIA:** *(shakes her head)* Those clapped out, bourgeois terms.

**EDWARD:** No, no, this is intrinsically, universally, empirically *wicked*. What you're planning to do is pure evil.

**VICTORIA:** You *rat*!

**EDWARD:** Vicky?

**VICTORIA:** You filthy little capitalist rat, sneaking your way in here-

**EDWARD:** Vicky, please!

**VICTORIA:** RAT RAT *RAT!*

*Edward grabs Victoria's wrist.*

**VICTORIA:** Let go of me!

*She shakes off his hand.*

*Edward snatches the milk bottle from Victoria's hand.*

**EDWARD:** If you don't come with me, Vicky, I'm opening this bottle.

**VICTORIA:** *(laughs)* You wouldn't dare!

*Edward presses his thumb onto the lid of the milk bottle.*

**EDWARD:** This is your last chance!

**VICTORIA:** Edward, don't be stupid!

**EDWARD:** I won't let you do this, Vicky! I'd rather die. I love you.

*Edward shuts his eyes.*

**VICTORIA:** Please Edward, NO!

*Edward pushes in the lid of the milk bottle.*

*Victoria throws herself to the floor, screaming.*

*Pause. Edward opens his eyes.*

*Another pause. Finally Victoria raises her head and looks round.*

*Edward is laughing. He drinks from the bottle. .*

**EDWARD:** Milk. It's just sodding milk!

**VICTORIA:** But- the *potassium*?

**EDWARD:** I chucked it all. I replaced it all with milk!

*Victoria stares at him, furious yet relieved.*

*Edward laughs even harder.*

*Victoria starts to laugh too, then stops.*

**VICTORIA:** Now get out!

**Scene Eight****Students (1968)**

*A bed-sit, five years earlier. Edward and Victoria are now shy, slightly hippie-ish 19 year old students.*

*Victoria is sat on a bed, Edward stands facing her, holding a bottle of white wine. Edward speaks with a Yorkshire accent.*

**EDWARD:** Sorry there's nowt to sit. Don't usually have guests, you see.

**VICTORIA:** This is perfectly comfortable, Edward.

**EDWARD:** Thanks for the wine. Really kind. I'll err, just open it-

*Edward starts hunting around the back of the room, behind Victoria, searching for something.*

*Victoria faces front, looking at an (imagined) bookcase along the fourth wall.*

**VICTORIA:** You like Orwell, I see. You don't find him reactionary at all?

**EDWARD:** Reactionary? Why do you say that?

**VICTORIA:** He said the working classes stank.

**EDWARD:** No he didn't.

**VICTORIA:** Oh? I thought he did.

**EDWARD:** That's a common misconception.

**VICTORIA:** Well, he was viciously anti-communist.

**EDWARD:** Well, yeah. Is that bad?

**VICTORIA:** *I'm* a communist, Edward.

**EDWARD:** (*shocked*) Are you?

**VICTORIA:** Absolutely! The sooner the Russians invade the better.

*Victoria is slightly perturbed by the fact Edward is suddenly near her feet, peering under the bed.*

**VICTORIA:** What are you doing, Edward?

**EDWARD:** I'm looking for the corkscrew.

**VICTORIA:** You keep it under your bed?

**EDWARD:** It might've rolled under there, or, or-

**VICTORIA:** (*stands up*) Would you like me to help you look for it?

**EDWARD:** No no! Thanks, but no. You sit down. It'll turn up soon, I'm sure.

*Edward continues rooting around the room.*



**VICTORIA:** It's a perfectly nice place you've got here, Edward. I don't know what you were so worried about.

**EDWARD:** It's only until I get my degree. Then I'll get somewhere nicer.

**VICTORIA:** I'd be more than happy here.

**EDWARD:** Not the sort of place you're used to, I bet?

**VICTORIA:** Oh, and what sort of place am I '*used to*', Edward?

**EDWARD:** (*flustered*) Sorry...It's just well, you're, y'know, a lady, aren't you?

**VICTORIA:** (*snorts*) A *lady*? Don't be absurd Edward. I'm nothing of the sort!

**EDWARD:** Sorry, I meant you're...you're...*well brought up*, is all I meant.

**VICTORIA:** (*laugh*) '*Well brought up*'?

**EDWARD:** I meant it as a compliment.

**VICTORIA:** (*sweetly*) I know you did, Edward. But you're quite wrong, you know. I was very badly brought up by the worst sort of people with rotten, greedy, capitalist values. (*looking around room*) But honestly Edward, isn't this all any of us needs? Four walls, a roof, a bed, a gas stove and a sink? I think people in the West have far too much. Don't you agree?

**EDWARD:** I'd like a house with a garden. With a garden path down the side. And a pond.

**VICTORIA:** People live in far worse than this, Edward. (*hastily backtracking*) Not that I mean this is bad! This isn't bad at all, Edward. Not in the slightest. There are people out there on the streets, sleeping rough. This is luxury!

**EDWARD:** If you say so.

**VICTORIA:** Edward, do you ever dream about being a tramp?

**EDWARD:** (*surprised*) I do, I have these nightmares where I'm-

**VICTORIA:** (*not listening to him*) Just throwing everything away, roaming the streets, completely free, untrammelled by any responsibilities! Must be frightfully liberating in its way, don't you think?

**EDWARD:** (*dubious*) Maybe.

**VICTORIA:** No job, no property, no money. Outside of the whole rotten racket of it all! And yet still here, right in the thick of things, the spectre at the feast of capitalism! (*laughs*) Sometimes I imagine myself curled up in a doorway on the Kings Road and daddy driving past in his Bentley-

**EDWARD:** Your father's got a Bentley?

**VICTORIA:** And he clocks me, a look of sheer horror on his stupid face as I wave to him. (*noticing Edward on his hands and knees in the corner of the room*) You do *have* a corkscrew, don't you Edward?

**EDWARD:** 'Course I do.

**VICTORIA:** I won't think any less of you if you don't.

**EDWARD:** I do have a corkscrew, I just hardly ever use it, that's all.

**VICTORIA:** Oh God, how ghastly of me, of course you don't have a corkscrew!

**EDWARD:** No, I do have a corkscrew, Vicky!

**VICTORIA:** I am such an idiot. I'm so sorry, Edward, swanning in here with my smug bourgeois assumptions that everyone in Britain owns a corkscrew. "Not everyone throws dinner parties, Vicky dear!" Please forgive me, Edward.

**EDWARD:** But I do have a corkscrew, Vicky, I really do!

**VICTORIA:** *(pats the bed)* Come and sit down, Edward.

**EDWARD:** Would you like a cup of tea instead?

**VICTORIA:** I don't want a thing. I just want you, Teddy, sat beside me.

*Victoria gently pulls Edward down onto the bed beside her.*

**VICTORIA:** Do you mind me calling you Teddy?

**EDWARD:** I'd rather you didn't, to be honest, Vicky.

**VICTORIA:** *(amused)* What's wrong with Teddy?

**EDWARD:** Makes me sound like, well, y'know...

**VICTORIA:** A teddy bear?

**EDWARD:** Aye.

**VICTORIA:** But I'm afraid that's what you are to me, Edward. A soft, cuddly, rather raggedy little bear. Oh dear, I've embarrassed you, haven't I?

**EDWARD:** (*embarrassed*) No.

**VICTORIA:** God, you're beautiful!

**EDWARD:** (*stunned*) Am I?

**VICKY:** Absolutely.

**EDWARD:** (*shyly mumbling*) So are you, y'know, Vicky.

**VICTORIA:** No I'm not, Edward, I'm repulsive.

**EDWARD:** (*shocked*) Repulsive?

**VICTORIA:** I hear myself talk sometimes, I want to rip my tongue out!

**EDWARD:** Rip your tongue out?

**VICTORIA:** I sound hideously middle class. Really, Edward, I don't know how you can stand it at the university. Surrounded by all of us, cawing away like crows.

**EDWARD:** You think you sound bad, how do you think I sound?

**VICTORIA:** Like an angel, Edward. Don't ever change.

*Victoria and Edward look into each other's eyes and kiss.*

*They break off. Victoria is on the verge of tears.*

**EDWARD:** Vicky? What's wrong?

**VICTORIA:** I don't deserve you.

**EDWARD:** Oh don't be daft!

**VICTORIA:** I've....never done this before Edward.

**EDWARD:** Never done - ?

**VICTORIA:** What we're about to do, no, I've never done it.

**EDWARD:** You haven't?

**VICTORIA:** You must think me frightfully wet behind the ears, Edward.

**EDWARD:** No no no!

**VICTORIA:** Some ghastly gauche little girl from the country who's just stepped off a pony-

**EDWARD:** Vicky, I've never done it neither!

*They both laugh, relieved.*

**VICTORIA:** Well that takes the pressure off somewhat, doesn't it?

*Finally they relax and move in close again, start to kiss.*

*Suddenly all the lights go out- complete blackout.*

**VICTORIA:** Oh dear!

**EDWARD:** It's the bleeding meter, its run out!

**VICTORIA:** Ah! Of course.

**EDWARD:** Sorry about this, Vicky.

**VICTORIA:** Don't apologise, Edward.

*The sound of Edward clambering about in the dark.*

**EDWARD:** I was just about to put some coins in before you came round but then-

**VICTORIA:** That's quite alright Edward.

**EDWARD:** -well, then you came round and I forgot.

**VICTORIA:** I understand. This is actually awfully exciting, Edward, being plunged into darkness like this. Do you need any money? I've got some change-

**EDWARD:** No no no, it's quite alright, Vicky-

*The sound of Edward inserting coins into an electricity meter.*

*The lights come back on.*

*Victoria suddenly notices the audience, stares straight at member of audience, screams in horror, leaping up onto the bed.*

**EDWARD:** Vicky?

**VICTORIA:** *(pointing at someone in audience)* Rat!

**EDWARD:** *(clapping his hands loudly at audience member)* Shoo! Shoo! Go on, get out!

*The rat gone, Victoria slowly kneels on the bed, calms herself down.*

**EDWARD:** I'm so sorry Vicky. Should've mentioned the rats.

*Victoria embraces Edward and starts to laugh.*

**VICTORIA:** Oh Edward! I want to take you away from this place. I want to airlift you out of this horrid little slum. You deserve so much better. I'm going to get you far away from here and you'll never ever *ever* have to set foot in a place like this again!

*They hold the embrace, happy and in love, their future ahead of them.*

*Lights down.*