

Somebody's pinched my **Bottom!**

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Somebody's pinched my Bottom!
A play in 2 acts

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CHARACTERS

MR JENKINS – manager of Theatrical Properties Ltd, late thirties approx, smartly dressed, quickly stressed and sometimes short on temper

CAROL – Jenkins’ secretary, pretty, late twenties/early thirties approx, keen but easily distracted by lengthy phone calls about her friend’s outrageous love-life

MR BEAVER – fifties, Something in the City, pin-stripe suit, rolled umbrella, highly pompous and requiring a classical bust

HARRY HAWKINS – a Geezer in a loud suit, age indeterminate, a wide-boy prankster requiring a large comedy bottom

MRS BEAVER – fifties, long-suffering wife of Mr Beaver, very Country with twin-set and pearls and rather Horsey

OPHELIA BEAVER – nearly twenty-one, daughter of the aforesaid Beavers, pretty but neurotic with an inclination to wild mood-swings

ERNEST FALTER – a carpenter, age indeterminate, no sense of humour, no sense of adventure, basically a nerd

MRS GUSSETT – bombastic tally-ho chairperson of the Women’s Institute, no-nonsense manner in her late seventies/early eighties

WORKMAN – is never seen, simply a voice-off, but a jobsworth with a belligerent attitude

The play is set in the outer office of Theatrical Properties Ltd, somewhere in London.

The time is the present.

ACT 1

The outer office of Theatrical Properties Ltd. It is a fairly basic room with a window in the back wall, a door to the corridor in the right-hand wall, a second door to an inner office towards the back of the left-hand wall. A reception and enquiries desk is forward of the rear wall, slightly angled to face the door to the corridor. A sign stands on the desk reading: THEATRICAL PROPERTIES LTD – ENQUIRIES. There are several cabinets with drawers against the walls, each drawer labelled: WIGS, NOSES, HATS, BOTTOMS, etc. There is an amount of theatrical paraphernalia scattered about the room.

When the curtain rises, CAROL is seated at the desk glancing through paper work. She is in her late twenties, early thirties, attractive, efficient enough but liable to get distracted. She is the receptionist and assistant. After a brief moment the telephone on the desk rings and she picks it up, answering brightly. There are to be significant pauses between Carol's replies as a voice fires questions at her from the other end of the line.

CAROL: Good morning! Theatrical Properties Ltd. How can I help you?... Yes, yes that's right, we do hire out costumes and props... No, you don't need to be a theatre company putting on a play... No, not at all. We hire out to individuals and... Yes a hire charge and a small deposit which is refunded when the costumes are returned.... Yes... No.... Yes....
(CAROL begins to look weary. She also thinks she recognises the voice talking to her. She seizes on a brief pause in the endless diatribe)

Is this Mrs Gussett, by any chance?... Yes, I thought I recognised your voice.... From our conversation last week. And the week before... What exactly did you have in mind this time, Mrs Gussett?... Uh-huh.... Mmmm.... Yes, I see... Mmmm.... Right... That should be no problem at all, Mrs Gussett. Let me just check I've got everything correct. You want eight full Amazonian costumes, with head-dresses, spears, blowpipes... Yes, and the sandal things that lace up around the shins... And face paints as well... And that's for the Womens' Institute Annual Dinner a week on Thursday... Yes, Mrs Gussett, collection Wednesday afternoon will be fine... Yes, Mrs Gussett, I've got it all written down... Including the sandal-things that lace up around the shins,

yes.... Yes, Mrs Gussett, we'll see you a week on Wednesday... Yes, I'm sure you'll all have a lovely time. Goodbye, Mrs Gussett.

CAROL puts down the phone and stares at it.

CAROL: Just don't ask me to be the guest of honour. There's not one of you that's under eighty!

CAROL begins to fill in a form for Mrs Gussett's order when loud music erupts from somewhere outside. She gets up and goes to the window to look down into the street.

MR JENKINS enters from the right-hand door. He is possibly in his forties, smartly dressed in a suit and carrying a briefcase. He runs the business, and currently looks harassed by the loud music.

JENKINS (*voice raised over the noise*): Good morning, Carol!

CAROL: What?

JENKINS (*louder*): Good morning!

CAROL: What?

JENKINS (*screaming*): I said good morning!

The music stops abruptly. JENKINS looks a little flustered and repeats quietly:

JENKINS: Good morning, Carol.

CAROL: Good morning, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: What was that dreadful row?

CAROL: Somebody going by in the street with a radio turned up full, I think.

JENKINS: Disgraceful.

CAROL: Well it's gone now.

JENKINS glances at the papers on the desk as CAROL returns to her seat.

JENKINS: Anything new?

CAROL: Mrs Gussett from the Womens' Institute.

JENKINS: Not another mass order for Wonder Woman costumes?

CAROL: No. Full Amazonian costumes this time. With the sandal things that lace up around the shins.

JENKINS: Blowpipes?

CAROL: Naturally. And spears.

JENKINS: Well just make sure it's all accounted for when she brings it back. We're still five pairs of fangs short from when they had their Dracula night last Halloween.

CAROL: They must be totally off their heads, the lot of them. Dressing up like that at their age! They're all well into their eighties, you know.

JENKINS: But they're good for business, Carol. So long as they bring everything back in one piece I don't care if they hire plastic fig-leaves for an Adam and Eve night at the town hall!

CAROL: Actually that's a very unpleasant thought, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: Yes. Yes, it is. All those wrinkles.

There is a moment's silence as they both contemplate the notion. Their expressions reflect the distaste of it. Then JENKINS pulls himself together and becomes businesslike again.

JENKINS: I shall be in my office most of this morning, Carol. I've got a lot of sorting out to do.

CAROL: Okay, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: Could you bring me some coffee in about ten minutes?

CAROL: Yes, Mr Jenkins. Biscuits too?

JENKINS: What sort are they?

CAROL: Crinkley Creams.

JENKINS: Crinkley?

CAROL: Creams.

JENKINS: Mrs Gussett and her fig-leaf party. I'll just have the coffee, thanks.

He turns to exit through the left hand door into his office then remembers something and turns back.

JENKINS: Oh yes! Don't forget that statue thing that's being collected this morning.

CAROL: The what?

JENKINS: The statue thing. What d'you call it? It's a - .

He mimes a head and shoulders. CAROL looks confused. JENKINS is irritated and gestures at a large box standing near another slightly smaller box near her desk. The larger box is clearly upside down. On its base, facing upwards, is a large label reading 'Bottom'. On the visible side, but upside down, is a label reading 'This Way Up'.

JENKINS: That! Near the bottom drawer of your desk.

CAROL: Oh that?

JENKINS: Yes that. It's a – oh what's it called? Ah yes! A bust!

But his final word is obliterated by the loud music which again erupts from somewhere outside. JENKINS and CAROL stare at each other, then towards the window.

JENKINS: Oh my God! What the - !

He storms to the window and peers down. CAROL follows him halfway but doesn't want to get too close to him in this mood. Their following conversation is shouted over the racket. Neither can really hear the other's words:

CAROL: What is it?

JENKINS: What?

CAROL: What is it? Can you see?

JENKINS: What?

CAROL: Can you see where it's coming from?

JENKINS: Shut up a minute! I'm trying to see where it's coming from!

While CAROL looks slightly put out by this, JENKINS cranes his neck further at the window. Suddenly he stiffens with indignation.

JENKINS: It's a workman!

CAROL: Sorry?

JENKINS: A workman!

CAROL: A Walkman? Must be a powerful one.

JENKINS: Not a Walkman! A workman! On the pavement right below! He's got a radio!

CAROL: A Turkish man with a faded what?

JENKINS: Not a Turkish man! A workman! A workman with a radio! Come and look! Come and look!

He beckons CAROL to the window. Together they peer down into the street.

CAROL: Oh! A workman!

JENKINS: Yes. But he doesn't appear to be doing any work!

CAROL: Nice radio though!

JENKINS: Never mind his radio! It's too loud! We can't put up with this all morning! We'll never hear ourselves think!

CAROL: What did you say?

JENKINS: My point exactly!

CAROL: Well we can't really stop him, can we?

JENKINS: Oh can't we?

He goes to open the window. CAROL looks worried.

CAROL: Mr Jenkins, what are you doing?

JENKINS: I'm going to give him a piece of my mind.

CAROL: But he won't hear you.

JENKINS: He'll hear me, don't you worry!

CAROL: Now Mr Jenkins...

JENKINS: What?

CAROL: Well we don't want any unpleasantness, do we?

JENKINS: I shall be perfectly pleasant. Just firm. Firm but fair, that's my motto.

CAROL (*doubtfully*): Yes...

JENKINS: Firm but fair.

CAROL (*a last attempt*): But remember your blood pressure, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: There's nothing the matter with my blood pressure.

CAROL: Not at the moment, no...

JENKINS: Look! Just stand back and leave this to me.

CAROL retreats to her desk while JENKINS opens the window decisively. He half leans out. The music becomes louder. JENKINS addresses the workman in the street below. He is firm, terse, just on the safe side of polite.

JENKINS: You down there! I say! You! You down there!

There is no reply. Just music. JENKINS leans out a little farther.

JENKINS (*louder*): Hello! You down there! You down there with the spade and the radio! Hello! Hello!

Still no response.

JENKINS (*yelling*): Down there! You! Can you hear me?

WORKMAN (*voice off*): You talking to me, mate?

JENKINS: What? Sorry?

WORKMAN (*vo*): You talking to me?

JENKINS: What? Yes, you! Yes I'm talking to you!

WORKMAN (*vo*): What?

JENKINS: I said I'm talking to you!

WORKMAN (*vo*): Can't hear you, mate!

JENKINS: What?

WORKMAN (*vo*): Can't hear you, mate! You'll have to speak up!

JENKINS: Well turn it off!

WORKMAN (*vo*): You what?

JENKINS: I said turn it off!

WORKMAN (vo): No good, mate. Your mouth's moving but nothing's coming out!

JENKINS: TURN IT OFF!

WORKMAN (vo): Hang on a minute, mate. I'll turn this off.

There is sudden blessed silence.

WORKMAN (vo): Now then. What d'you want?

JENKINS: What are you doing?

WORKMAN (vo): Working, mate.

JENKINS: Working at what?

WORKMAN (vo): Digging an 'ole, mate.

JENKINS: But there isn't a hole.

WORKMAN (vo): Not yet, there isn't. Haven't started yet. But there will be. When I start. Big 'ole. Just 'ere.

JENKINS: Well could you possibly dig it more quietly, please?

WORKMAN (vo with sharp intake of breath): Don't know about that, mate. Heavy work, you know. Digging an 'ole. Bound to be some subsidiary audio overspill.

JENKINS: What?

WORKMAN (vo): Noise, mate. Superfluous noise. Digging an 'ole. Noisy work, that is.

JENKINS: I mean the music.

WORKMAN (vo): What music?

JENKINS: The music that was blaring out of your radio.

WORKMAN (vo): I've turned that off.

JENKINS: Yes, well you have now.

WORKMAN (vo): Yes, well that's ambient sound, mate. To help me concentrate.

JENKINS: Well it's not helping us concentrate. We're trying to work up here.

WORKMAN (vo): Well I'm trying to work down here.

JENKINS: But you haven't done anything yet.

WORKMAN (vo): That's cos you're distracting me.

JENKINS: Well just keep the noise down, alright?

WORKMAN (vo): You're the one raising your voice, mate.

JENKINS: Just keep (*more quietly*) – Just keep the noise down.
Please.

WORKMAN (vo): Whatever you say, guv. Whatever you say.

JENKINS: Thank you so much.

He slams the window shut, clearly flustered by the encounter; then calms himself, turning back to CAROL. He is now a little smug.

JENKINS: There. Think I handled that rather well.

CAROL (*suppressing a smirk*): Yes, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: You just have to be firm with these – these hole-digging types. Let them know who's boss. They soon spot natural authority and back down.

CAROL: Yes, Mr Jenkins.

JENKINS: Now. I shall be in my office.

As JENKINS heads for the door left, the music blares out again, just for a few seconds. JENKINS freezes and is about to return to the window. The music stops.

WORKMAN (vo): Sorry, mate. Hand slipped!

JENKINS draws in a deep breath, clenches his fists by his sides, bounces once on the balls of his feet, then silently goes towards his office door. He trips on the smaller of the two boxes on the floor by Carol's desk, somewhat reducing his dramatic exit, but continues into the office regardless, nose in the air, leaving the door slightly ajar. CAROL releases the snigger she has been containing with difficulty. She gets up to realign the box. It now conceals the label on the larger box which reads 'This Way Up'. The phone on her desk rings. She returns to the desk and picks it up.

CAROL: Good morning. Theatrical Properties Ltd. How can I...
Oh Brenda! Hi!... Yes, yes I can talk. He's just gone into his
office.... Last night?... Did he?... He did what?

*CAROL now remains engrossed in the lengthy story Brenda is
telling her over the phone. From time to time CAROL makes
little noises of surprise and appreciation.*

*During this we begin to hear sounds coming from Jenkins' office
– the odd grunt and growl. CAROL glances towards the door
occasionally but remains fascinated by Brenda's love-life. The
grunts and groans grow louder until suddenly there is an
almighty crash and splintering sound.*

JENKINS (*off*): OH NO! You bloody stupid thing!

CAROL: Just a moment, Brenda.

*CAROL still has the phone to her ear as JENKINS appears from
his office door. He holds the frame of a desk drawer.*

JENKINS: Half of my desk has collapsed! That's all I need! Carol,
call a carpenter – (*spots she is already on the phone*) – oh,
you're already on the phone. Never mind. I'll do it!

*He marches back into his office, leaving the door ajar. CAROL
watches him go in confusion, then realises Brenda is still on the
phone.*

CAROL: No, Brenda, I'm still here. No I'm not sure what it was
exactly. Go on with what you were saying. You'd got to
where he'd put the oven glove on his – yes, that's it.... He
never did!

*CAROL reverts to listening intently while making the odd
appreciative sound. Meanwhile JENKINS' voice can be heard
coming from his office, clearly on his own phone.*

JENKINS (*vo*): Hello? Hello? Is that Falter the Carpenters? It is?
Good. Listen. I need help urgently. There's been a disaster.
I've dropped my drawers. Yes, that's what I said. I've
dropped my drawers and now my bottom's fallen out –

*CAROL reacts while still listening to Brenda on the phone.
During JENKINS' ensuing dialogue she wheels her typists chair
gently backwards to peer into JENKINS' room.*

JENKINS (vo): No, no I'm very serious! It's a complete disaster. My bottom's dropped, I tell you. It's gone all over the floor.... Yes, if you could please. As soon as possible. There's a horrible mess in here... What? Oh. Theatrical Properties Ltd. Yes, that's the one. You can't miss it. There's a workman right outside being very offensive.... Thank you. As soon as you can, please. Yes, thank you. Goodbye.

CAROL hastily wheels herself back behind her desk.

CAROL: No, Brenda. It was Mr Jenkins. Mid-life crisis, I think. Now go on. He'd got the rubber duck from the bathroom and...

CAROL is again immersed in Brenda's story. After a moment MR BEAVER enters through the right hand door. He is smartly dressed in a city suit, carries an umbrella, middle-aged and clearly very pompous. He exudes wealth. CAROL, turned away in her chair, does not immediately notice him. He looks around the room as if there is a bad smell in the air; hurrumphs, is still not noticed by CAROL so hurrumphs again. He picks up the enquiries sign from the desk, examines it then pointedly returns it with a bit of a bang. CAROL now spots him, but Beaver has noticed something on his shoe. With more hurrumphing he removes a white handkerchief from his top pocket and bends to wipe his shoe. Meanwhile CAROL has glanced away to end her call to Brenda.

CAROL: Sorry, Brenda. Got to go. Just at the best bit, I know. I'll call you back.

She replaces the phone, turns with a smile to BEAVER but cannot now see him as he is hidden by the desk as he bends to wipe his shoe.

CAROL: Good morning! Can I – oh!

She looks around briefly, wondering where he has gone, then hears another hurrumph from beyond the desk. She stands warily and leans over the desk just as BEAVER stands up. They come almost nose to nose. Both are briefly startled and back away.

CAROL: Hello.