



Selsdon

(A pane of glass shatters in the mullion window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch.)

LLOYD. Ah. And here it is.

(The window opens, and through it appears an elderly BURGLAR. He has great character, but is in need of extensive repair and modernization.)

BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarm. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement.

(He climbs in.)

LLOYD. All right, Selsdon, hold it. Let's take it again.

BURGLAR. No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults!

LLOYD. Hold it, Selsdon. Hold it!

BURGLAR. What am I doing now?

LLOYD. *Hold it!*

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

BURGLAR. I'm breaking into paper bags!

POPPY. Lloyd wants you to hold it.

(Enter BELINDA.)

BURGLAR. Right, what are they offering... ?

BELINDA. Stop, Selsdon, my love! Wait, my precious!

(SELSDON stops, restrained at last by BELINDA's hand on his arm.)

LLOYD. It's like Myra Hess playing on through the air raids.

SELSDON. Stop?

POPPY. Stop.

BELINDA. Stop.

LLOYD. Thank you, Belinda. Thank you, Poppy. (*Exeunt BELINDA and POPPY.*) Selsdon...

SELSDON. I met Myra Hess once.

LLOYD. I think he can hear better than I can.

SELSDON. I beg your pardon?

LLOYD. From your entrance, please, Selsdon.

SELSDON. Well, it was during the war, at a charity show in Sunderland...

LLOYD. Thank you! Poppy!

SELSDON. Oh, not for me. It stops me sleeping.

(*Enter POPPY from the wings.*)

LLOYD. Put the glass back once more.

SELSDON. Come on again?

LLOYD. Right. Only, Selsdon...

SELSDON. Yes?

LLOYD. A little sooner, Selsdon. A shade earlier. A touch closer to yesterday. All right? Freddie! (*Enter FREDERICK. To SELSDON.*) Start moving as soon as Freddie opens the door. (*To FREDERICK.*) What's the line?

FREDERICK. 'I've heard of people getting *stuck* with a problem, but this is ridiculous.'

LLOYD. Start moving as soon as you hear the line, 'I've heard of people getting stuck with a *problem*...'

FREDERICK. 'Stuck with a *problem*'?

LLOYD. 'Stuck with a *problem*, but this is ridiculous.' And I want your arm through that window. Right?

SELSDON. Say no more. May I make a suggestion, though? Should I perhaps come on a little earlier?

LLOYD. Selsdon...

SELSDON. Only there does seem to be something of a hiatus between Freddie's exit and my entrance.

LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Listen. Don't worry. I've got it.

SELSDON. Yes?

LLOYD. How about coming on a little earlier?

SELSDON. We're obviously thinking along the same lines.

(Exit SELSDON through the window.)

LLOYD. Am I putting him on or is he putting me on? Right, Freddie, from your exit.

PHILIP. *(Flapping the tax demand.)* I've heard of people getting stuck with a *problem*, but this is ridiculous.

*(Exit PHILIP into downstairs bathroom.
Enter BURGLAR as before, but on time.)*

BURGLAR. No bars, no burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement. *(He climbs in.)* No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags! So what are they offering? *(He peers at the television.)* One microwave oven. *(He unplugs it and puts it on the sofa.)* What? Fifty quid? Hardly worth lifting it. *(He inspects the paintings and ornaments.)* Junk ... Junk... If you insist... *(He pockets some small item.)* Where's his desk? No, they all say the same thing... They all say the same thing...

SELSDON. Yes? Line?

POPPY. *(Off.)* 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. What?

LLOYD. *(Wearily.)* 'It's hard to adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. Hard to what?

OTHERS. *(Variously, off.)* 'Adjust to retirement.'

SELSDON. It's also very hard to hear if everyone talks at once.

(Exit BURGLAR into the study.)

Enter ROGER from the service quarters, followed by MRS. CLACKETT, who is holding another plate of sardines.)

ROGER. ... And the prospective tenant naturally wishes to know if there is any previous history of paranormal phenomena.

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, yes, dear, it's all nice and paranormal.