

Betty's Birthday

A comedy by Cenarth Fox

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Betty's Birthday takes a seriously light-hearted look at sex-education.

A fun show, an amusing and entertaining play. **Cheryl Threadgold – Melbourne Observer**

A gentle comedy that, while dealing with a serious subject, doesn't take itself too seriously. It sets out to entertain and sends the audience away feeling quite happy with a smile on its face. It has some very funny lines which keep the play bubbling along so that the audience are kept chuckling along until the final curtain. Cen Fox has a definite way of reaching an audience without preaching, allowing us to decide our own moral values. There's no crude language but plenty of laughs and so much that, I think old and young can identify with. To sum up, a very entertaining play that gave a lot of enjoyment to the audience and one that I think a lot of companies should look at. Home-grown is not always best but *Betty's Birthday* is, I think, an audience-pleasing play and deserves to be seen. **John Gunn Curtain Up**

Cenarth Fox is a prolific Australian playwright who writes just marvellous plays and *Betty's Birthday* is no exception It was a fun night and a night from which you came away thinking very closely about what you'd seen. It was a night to remember. If you get the opportunity to ever see *Betty's Birthday*, I recommend it to you. Cenarth Fox has written some marvellous shows over the years and this is one of his latest staged this time by STAG. It was really a great night. **Brian Amos Radio Eastern**

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Synopsis

How and when did you learn about sex? Three generations of one family gather to celebrate. Birthday girl Betty is an active retiree and married to retired sailor Rusty who has taken to cooking in his retirement. He's a wonderful chef.

Betty and Rusty's middle-aged son, Brian, is a complainer. He works hard and means well but is inclined to take things too seriously. Brian thinks he may have failed with his first son so is keen to succeed with son number two. Tonight Brian has an idea about the sex-education of his younger son Peter. Brian's wife Jean has a degree in long-suffering.

When Brian and Jean's son, Alan arrives with girlfriend, Leonie, the food and topic of sex tends to dominate the evening. And anything might happen.

Language

English is a language with many variations. American English, British English, Australian English and more. This play contains slang - words understood in some cultures but not in others. You may need to change some slang words to suit your area. The term *Whoosh* in this play is an uncommon family nickname for a dear relative.

Rehearsal Material and Performing Rights

Permission to stage *Betty's Birthday* or any play or musical from **FOX PLAYS** must be obtained in writing before rehearsals commence. Application forms, rehearsal material and production notes can be obtained from Fox Plays. writer@foxplays.com

Characters

BETTY (Elizabeth known as Betty, Bet and Whoosh) The matriarch, grandmother. 60+. Pleasant on the outside but with a sharp tongue. Plays lawn-bowls and golf, gambles, jealous of her husband's culinary skills, loves her grandsons, tolerates her son Brian, enjoys a drink, sports-fan, speaks her mind

IVAN (nickname Rusty) Bet's husband. 60+. Retired naval officer, marvellous cook, great sense of humour, nothing like his son Brian, adores his grandsons, gets on well with most people, puts up with his wife's nagging, easy-going and fun

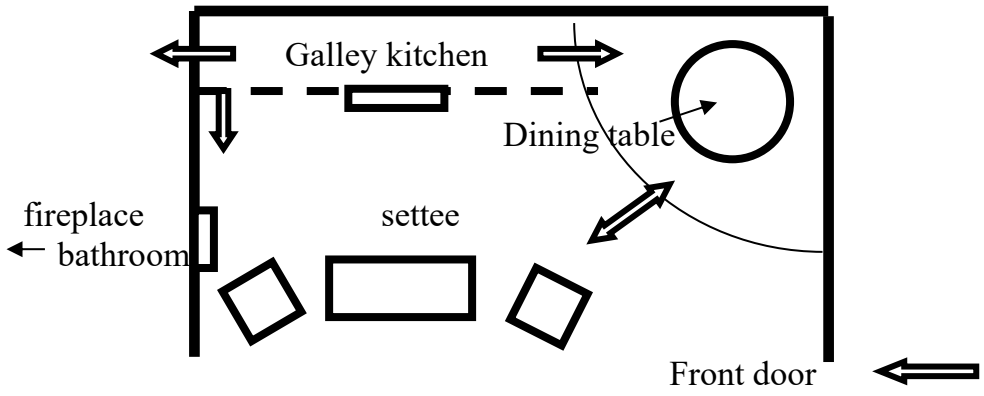
BRIAN Bet and Ivan's only child. 40+. Owns plant nursery, belongs to service club, hard-working, little humour, too serious, votes and dresses conservatively, struggling to keep up with the times

JEAN Brian's wife. 40+. Works in the family business and local school canteen. Intelligent, sense of humour, proud of her two sons, could have handled most careers given the opportunity, gets on well with her in-laws, puts up with Brian but only just.

ALAN Brian and Jean's older son, 20+. University student, talkative, touch crude, disagrees with his father's conservatism. Street-wise and much "older" than his father in the ways of the world. Constantly makes smart-alec remarks most of which are ignored

LEONIE Alan's girlfriend, 20+. Nurse. Quiet with people until she gets to know them. Mature and sensible. Keen on Alan despite his bad points

Setting



Act One, Scene One

[Curtain rises on living-room, early evening. UL is raised dining area. UC is raised galley style kitchen. There is a step down from the dining area and from the UR end of the galley. There is a door RC leading to the bathroom and the rest of the house. BET sits on settee upstage of coffee-table studying notes made on form-guide by RUSTY who has recorded winners and dividends from today's races. BET has form guide on her lap. She comments on the notes. She wears her bowling [or golfing] outfit with hat pushed back on her head. She lost at bowls [golf] and her bets are no better. She mutters as she checks the results with BET'S bets]

BET Useless ... Hopeless ... Pathetic ... *[In agony]* Ten to one! ... *[Sarcastic]* Oh, at last. *[Dismayed at dividend]* A dollar ninety! *[Looking at form-guide, she calls]* Rusty! *[Pause. BET is a touch loud and often impatient. RUSTY appears UR from pantry, wearing apron and holding large wooden spoon. BET doesn't know he's there and shouts]* What won the last in Sydney? *[Or other distant city]*

RUSTY *[Tastes concoction on spoon]* It's delicious. *[To her]* What's that, love?
[BET, looking at guide, thinks Delicious is a horse]

BET *Delicious*. *[Checking guide]* You idiot. It's *Delirious*.

RUSTY *[Leaves spoon in kitchen and comes down to BET]* 'Nother cuppa, love?

BET *[Still hasn't noticed her husband]* I think I've lost twenty bucks.

RUSTY *[Adjusts flowers on drinks cabinet UC]* Never mind, your turn next week.

BET *[Hasn't heard him. Putting betting material on settee]* Never mind; my turn next week.
[RUSTY gives a weak smile then holds up or indicates flowers]

RUSTY I bought some more flowers. Lovely aren't they?

BET *[Upset as she exits to bathroom via door RC]* One dollar ninety.
[This is the way they communicate these days. He arranges flowers]

RUSTY *[Talking to himself]* Yes dear, glad you like them.
[He starts tidying her betting material when she calls from behind door]

BET And don't touch my form guide. I haven't finished with that.

RUSTY *[Replaces her material, plumps cushions]* Wouldn't dream of it. *[Calls]* Don't be long, love. They'll be here soon and I've got some marvellous grub.

BET *[Calling. She can't hear him]* And remember what I said about the food. *[Emphatic]* Nothing fancy.

RUSTY *[Goes to dining-table]* You'll love the menu, Bet. It's all in your honour.
[BET enters wearing bathrobe, with blobs of face crème on her face, towel around hair and heads back to settee and racing guide]

RUSTY *[Concerned]* Aw, come on, Love. *[Looks at his watch]* They'll be here soon.

BET I'm running a bath. *[Picks up magazine, sits and reads]* And don't burn anything.
[RUSTY suddenly panics and rushes to kitchen]

RUSTY Oh gawd! The oven! *[He can be seen/heard fussing upstage in kitchen]*

BET *[As she reads]* Just keep it simple, stupid.

RUSTY *[Calls during kitchen duties]* You'll love the entrée. It's pancakes filled with mushrooms.

BET *[Looks up. Shocked]* Pancakes!?

RUSTY *[Heads back to her]* They're filled with mushrooms, prawns, chicken livers, artichokes and the sauce is out of this ... *[Suddenly panics and darts back to kitchen]* Oh hell! The sauce!

BET *[Still reading]* You have *cream* with pancakes; *cream*. *[She puts hand to face and feels the face crème]* Oh bugger! *[She rubs make-up into her face]*

RUSTY *[Calling from kitchen]* The main course is an Austrian receipe for *zwiebelfleisch*. It's wunderbar!

BET *[Removing/rubbing face creme]* Brian won't eat wunderbar. *[sic]*

RUSTY And wait'll you taste the dessert. *[He oozes the menu]* *Trinity College Burnt Cream.*

BET If you've burnt it, throw it out. We can have ice-cream with chocolate topping.
[She reads/works on make-up]

RUSTY *[RUSTY moves from kitchen to dining area and fiddles with table setting. He's really talking to himself]* French, Austrian, English. *International* cuisine! *[The excitement is building. He turns, sees BET, panics]* Bet, please. What are you doing?

BET What's it look like?

RUSTY But what about your bath?

BET It's too hot.

RUSTY Well, can you put in some cold?

BET *[From behind magazine]* No. It's full. *[Finally magazine come down]* Look if the others arrive, and they won't 'cos they're *never* early, give them a drink.
[Up comes the magazine again. RUSTY moves down to her]

RUSTY Bet, sweetheart, we're not having baked beans on toast. I've put hours into this meal. It's an epicurean adventure.

BET *[Magazine comes down]* Why are you doing all this fancy cooking?

RUSTY Because I can. Now I'm retired I've got the time.

BET At your age you're not supposed to have new hobbies.

RUSTY But tonight's special *[Drops on one knee]* and I want nothing but the best for my girl.
[He goes to kiss her hand and she pulls it away with a feeling of "Grow up you silly old bugger"]

BET When will you learn? Posh food for our family is like casting pearls before swans *[sic]*. Brian likes stew, sliced bread and custard; and sometimes together. *[Magazine up]*

RUSTY *[Shakes head, returns to kitchen]* A prophet is not recognized in his own kitchen.

BET *[Calling]* Alan lives on take-away *[take-out]* and Jean likes plain food.

RUSTY *[From kitchen talking to himself – food or attitude?]* Simmer, do not boil.

BET *[Annoyed]* And stop fussing. Brian's never on time. They won't be here for half an hour.

FX *Doorbell sounds*
[BET drops magazine, is annoyed. RUSTY is a cross between despair because his meal might be ruined and mirth because BET has been caught]

BET Oh, bloody hell! *[Exits to bathroom taking her betting material]*

RUSTY *[Coming down]* I'll go. *[Checks table]* Entrée, main, dessert, nibbles and drinks.
[RUSTY tidies magazine, plumps cushion and looks around to see if everything is neat and tidy - spotless actually, he's fastidious. He could adjust a painting or chair. Satisfied he moves DL and offstage to where the front-door is located. Door is opened offstage]

JEAN *[Friendly from offstage]* Hello sailor.

RUSTY *[Delighted to see them. Speaks offstage]* Good evening, Gorgeous. Lovely to see you. *[Sound of a kiss]* Come in, come in. And a very good evening to you, kind sir.

BRIAN *[Almost formal. From offstage]* Greetings, Father.
[JEAN enters first followed by BRIAN followed by RUSTY]

RUSTY *[Mock serious]* Brian. A present for me! You shouldn't have.

JEAN *[Looking for BET]* So where's the birthday girl?
[BRIAN places small present on coffee-table and sits DL]

RUSTY Ah, Madam sends her apologies. She is without, abluting.

JEAN Right. What can I do?

RUSTY *[Guiding her to settee]* Absolutely nothing. Apart from relax and enjoy yourself. *[JEAN sits on settee]*

BRIAN Turn off the charm, Father. We're family.

RUSTY *[To BRIAN as maitre d with thick French accent]* Ah, Monsieur, pardon.

BRIAN *[BRIAN shakes head in disgust. Speaks sotto voce]* It's going to be one of those nights.

JEAN *[Rising]* Well at least let me set the table.

RUSTY *[Firm but polite]* Jean, don't make me pull rank. Besides everything's shipshape and Bristol-fashion.

JEAN *[Smiling, sits]* So I see. *[Touches table surface]* And who does your cleaning? You can send them round to our place any time.

RUSTY Well I did give the vac a bit of a spin this arvo.

JEAN He cooks, he cleans. What can't he do?

RUSTY *[Mock horror appalling French accent]* Cooking! Cooking Madame! 'Ere we 'ave za gastronomic art.
[JEAN and RUSTY amused, BRIAN bored]

BRIAN So no chance of a snag on the barbie then? *[Ignored]*

RUSTY Now, drinks. *[To sideboard]* To mark the occasion we have a special aperitif.

JEAN *[Shakes head in genuine admiration]* You haven't made a new cocktail?

BRIAN *[Softish]* Unbelievable.

RUSTY *[Pouring or shaking cocktail]* It's called *Martini la Bet* - in honour of you know who.

BRIAN I'll have a beer.
[BRIAN kills the atmosphere. RUSTY stops and looks at his son. JEAN is angry]

JEAN Brian! Dad made it 'specially. *[BRIAN won't budge]*

BRIAN *[Why are they staring at him?]* What?

JEAN It's your mother's birthday.

BRIAN It's Saturday night. I'd like a beer.
[JEAN shakes her head - controlled rage]

RUSTY *[Recovers quickly. Handing glass to JEAN]* One martini for the lady.

JEAN Ooh. Thanks. Hmm, looks delicious.

RUSTY *[Exiting to kitchen]* And if you'll pardon me ... *[Ocker, macho, down-to-earth accent]* The beer's out the back, Blue. *[He exits]*
[BRIAN collects magazine from coffee-table, sits and flicks through it. JEAN is annoyed]

JEAN *[Between sips. Sotto voce but serious]* I know it's asking a lot but try not to be *too* boring. *[He ignores her]* It *is* your mother's birthday.

BRIAN *[Still looking at magazine. Unemotional]* Happy birthday, Mother.

JEAN And please eat everything. It's rude and embarrassing to leave half your food.

BRIAN *[Lowers magazine]* Look, we both know my father's showing off. He's bored to tears since he retired so now he *pretends* to be interested in cooking fancy food.

JEAN He's not pretending.

BRIAN Why can't he throw a few steaks on the barbie like any normal bloke?

JEAN You wouldn't know good food if you fell in it.

BRIAN *[Not looking at his wife]* Naturally; I've had decades of your cooking.
[JEAN fumes and is about to throw contents of her glass over BRIAN. RUSTY enters with beer bottle and goes to drinks cabinet for glass. JEAN withdraws her aggression]

RUSTY It's very quiet in here. Somebody die?

JEAN We've been rehearsing the art of good conversation.

BRIAN Mine's the beer.

RUSTY Of course. *[Pouring beer]* And with sir being a sophisticated drinker, naturally we have the boutique beverage. *[Handing mug]* Prost!

BRIAN *[Taking drink]* Ta.

RUSTY *[To JEAN]* And how is madam's aperitif?

JEAN Superb. First class.

RUSTY *[Moving to cabinet, smiling and lapping up the praise]* Madame is too kind. *[Has cocktail for himself. Proposes toast]* Well then, here's cheers.

JEAN *[Raising her glass and maybe clinking with RUSTY]* Cheers.

BRIAN *[Little movement or enthusiasm]* Cheers.
[They drink. Silence. BRIAN'S boorish behaviour promotes embarrassment]

RUSTY *[Bubbling]* Now I'm sure we're in for a very enjoyable evening.

JEAN I'm sure we are. Brian loves his mother's birthdays, don't you dear?

BRIAN Ah too right. I only wish there was more than one a year.

JEAN *[Pause. Changing subject]* Well don't keep us in suspenders. What's on the menu?

RUSTY *[Thrilled]* I thought you'd never ask. The entree is *sen-sational*.

BRIAN Yes but can we eat it?

JEAN Ignore him, Dad, he's just jealous.

BRIAN I would have said 'nervous'.
[BRIAN rises, drops magazine on table and crosses to pot plant UR. He examines plant]

RUSTY *[RUSTY straightens magazine]* Hey, if there's gunna be blood spilt, can we keep it off the carpet? I've just had 'em cleaned.

BRIAN *[To JEAN]* You know listening to you, reminds me of all those years I spent in this house living with a certain person. Now I know why you spent so long at sea. *[BET appears in doorway RC unseen by BRIAN]* You're the biggest coward of all.
[BET in new outfit, hair done, etc]

BET Really? And why's that?

BRIAN *[Thrown]* Ah, good evening, Mother.
[RUSTY and JEAN delighted at BRIAN'S discomfort. RUSTY leads BET to her chair DR. BRIAN detours to collect present]

RUSTY The guest of honour. Please, my lady, your throne awaits.
[BET sits in chair DR. JEAN rises and kisses her mother-in-law]

JEAN Happy birthday, Mum. Many happy returns of the day.
[JEAN to settee. RUSTY pours cocktail. BRIAN approaches with gift]

BET Thank you Jean. Sorry I wasn't here. Is Rusty looking after you?

RUSTY Of course.

JEAN You look great. And those ear-rings are gorgeous.
[BET smiles but not for long as her son looms large]

BRIAN Happy birthday, Mother.
[He hands over present and goes to kiss her. It's an awkward moment. The kiss is uneventful at the best of times but now the present gets in the way. BRIAN retires to his seat DL]

BET Thank you, Brian.
[BET unwraps gift. RUSTY proffers glass to BET]

RUSTY An aperitif my darling. In honour of the grand occasion.
[BET about to complain. "I'm busy". She stops. Now is not the time to be a grouch – that will come later]

BET *[Juggling glass and gift]* Oh. Thank you.

RUSTY *[Raising glass]* Now this wee drop has been named in your honour. *[Proposing toast]* A very happy birthday. *[Raises glass]* To Bet.

BRIAN/JEAN *[Toasting]* To Bet ... Happy birthday.

BET Thank you. Very nice. *[Sips then coughs]* Oh hell, Rusty! What *is* this?

RUSTY *Martini la Bet*.

BET *[BET confused]* I've never tasted anything like it.

JEAN Fancy having a drink named after you.

RUSTY I've always said her blood's worth bottling.

BET *[Opens her present – a pair of gardening gloves]* Oh, these are .... *[Gloves appear]* nice.

JEAN I saw your old ones were looking a bit frail.

BET Yes. *[To BRIAN]* What are you drinking, Brian?

BRIAN Ah, mine's a *Foster's Martini. *[*Or other well-known beer brand]*

BET Never heard of it.

BRIAN It's a beer, Mother; common drink for the common man.

BET *[Realises]* Oh, lovely. I'll have one of them.
[RUSTY takes her other glass]

RUSTY But of course, madame. *[Goes to cabinet and pours beer. Terrible French accent]* Anyzink your 'eart desirez. *[Busy at cabinet]*

JEAN *[To BET]* I see you've got him well trained. What's the secret?

BET He's been cooking all afternoon. *[Intimate – telling a secret]* I think we're having Chinese. *[RUSTY hears last bit and hands glass to BET]*

RUSTY Not quite, my dear. Actually it's French, Austrian and English.

JEAN *[Impressed]* Ooooh.

BET I don't mind him cooking but I wish he'd stick to simple things; all this fancy foreign stuff. I mean who wants it?

BRIAN Exactly.

JEAN About half the world if local restaurants are any guide.

BET Well Brian was always easy to please.
[RUSTY gives BET her beer then takes cocktail container and his glass and sits next to JEAN]

BRIAN *[Here we go]* Yes, Mother. We've heard all this before.

BET *[She ignores him]* He could live forever on stew and custard.

RUSTY Apparently they go well together.

BRIAN *[Annoyed at BET]* Aw come on. We've had the Brian food jokes for the last fifteen years.

BET *[Mimics boy Brian]* "Got any custard, Mum? Are we havin' stew tonight, Mum?"

BRIAN *[Cheesed off. Touch of anger]* Yes all right, so I like simple things. What does that make me? A cretin?

JEAN *[Mock shock]* Brian! *True Confessions*.
[You said it, pal. Pause. Silence. RUSTY covers the embarrassing break]

RUSTY Right, more drinks anyone? Brian? *[BRIAN shakes his head]* Jean. Let me top you up. *[RUSTY replenishes JEAN'S glass]*

JEAN Ooh. Lovely. Thank you kind sir. *[JEAN/RUSTY exchange smiles/winks]*

BET So how are the boys?

JEAN Fine. You know Pete's on this sleepover. My little angel's finally left home.

RUSTY Good for him. And I want to hear all about it as soon as he gets back.

BRIAN *[Looking at watch]* I told Alan not to be late.
JEAN You know Alan's bringing Leonie?
BET *[Slinging off at RUSTY]* Do we ever? His Lordship's been talking about her all week. *[Mimics]* I wonder if Leonie'll like this? Do you think Leonie likes spicy food? *[Almost nasty]* I told him. I said, "Ivan, I think you're making the meal just for her."
JEAN & BRIAN*[They are stirring]* Oooh
JEAN Ivan the Terrible *Flirt.*
BRIAN She's calling you Ivan, Father. That's a bad sign.
RUSTY Sneer away. My grandson has excellent taste in girlfriends just as my son had impeccable taste in bride selection.
[OTHERS all groan/stir at Mr Smoothie]
JEAN Oh, more, more. *[These two enjoy the joke]*
RUSTY D'you know this is the first time little Pete's missed his grandma's birthday. I'm going to complain.
JEAN Don't you dare. You don't have to live with the angelic monster.
BET I can't believe he's nearly eight.
JEAN Eight going on fourteen. They grow up much faster these days.
BRIAN Too fast. Kids don't get to be kids any more.
JEAN *[A cross between dismay and anger]* Brian, please.
BRIAN One minute they're goo-goo-ing toddlers, next they're six and know more than their parents.
JEAN *[Trying to stop him]* Brian, we don't want a party political. *[BRIAN ignores JEAN]*
BRIAN *[He's off again. On his soapbox]* Have you seen the TV news lately? The adults-only stuff starts around five o'clock.
BET *[Annoyed]* What are talking about?
BRIAN On the TV news, Mother, your seven-year-old grandson can see murder, rape, drugs, abuse, disease, famine, executions, same-sex marriage, criminal clergy and fashion news on what people *aren't* wearing. Whatever happened to floods, royal weddings and cats stuck up a tree?
RUSTY Too boring, son. If it ain't sexy, it ain't news.
BRIAN The other night, the news is on and Peter comes into the room. He looks at me and calm as you like says, "Dad, what's a paedophile?"
BET *[Shocked]* Goodness. What did you say?
JEAN You asked him if he had any homework.
BRIAN *[Angry]* I told him it was about stranger danger.
JEAN Which is another issue again and possibly misleading.
BRIAN I mean how do you explain that sort of thing to a seven year old?
RUSTY It's a nasty business all right. Of course I blame daylight saving.
BET *[Snaps]* Ivan! That's not funny. Abusing children, abusing *anyone* is no laughing matter.
RUSTY *[Peace-maker]* I know that, love. I'm just trying to lighten the mood.
BRIAN Peter's almost eight. Whatever happened to childhood and innocence?
JEAN They went the same way as hats and drive-in movies.
BET I still wear hats.

BRIAN I want him to learn the facts of life the right way. I want him to feel comfortable about sex. How the hell can you explain things with full-frontal competition from everything including the *respectable* television news?

JEAN It's not suitable for children.

BET You should have told him earlier. Children are curious. If *you* don't tell him, someone else will.

BRIAN Yes, thank you, Mother. If I want help I'll ask.

JEAN Well the way you carry on you'd think you were the only parent in the world.

BRIAN No, I just happen to be concerned about our son's education, including his sex-education, and I get the distinct impression I'm on my own.

JEAN *[Scoffs]* Now that is ridiculous. *I* was the one who asked about the school programs and *I* found those church courses and the family centre DVDs.

BRIAN They're all different. It's either plumbing, don't touch or free love. The church has its own agenda and schools have a "tippy-toe round the edge" program. The poor kid'll get confused.

BET *I'm* confused. What's "tippy toe round the edge" got to do with sex?

RUSTY I believe it's an ancient form of foreplay.

BRIAN One blurb made you think homosexuality was compulsory.

JEAN Don't look now, Brian, but your paranoia's showing.

RUSTY *[Genuinely interested]* Do they really teach sex-education at school?

JEAN Now settle down, sailor. Mature-age study does not include horizontal dancing.

BRIAN When I went to school we studied maths and spelling. Today, kids are expert at putting a condom on a banana.

RUSTY *[Usual dead-pan delivery]* I didn't know bananas had sex.

[RUSTY and JEAN enjoy joke. BRIAN fumes quietly and BET ignores her husband's remark]

BET Well I think you should just tell him. Millions of parents do - even if your father wasn't one of them.

RUSTY *[RUSTY gives himself a slap]* It's true. I was a typical father. As soon as Brian got curious about sex, I used the universal reply.

JEAN What are you talking about?

RUSTY I did what millions of dads have done and probably still do. I uttered that famous line, "Ask your mother". *[WOMEN amused]*

BRIAN It's easy for you lot to laugh. I'm the one with the curious kid. And you can't talk about sex like you would football.

JEAN Yes you can. Half the problem is you being so serious.

BRIAN And that's another example of our wonderful open-society. You sit down with your kid to watch the football and in the ad-breaks, on comes some movie promo with homicide and half-naked women. What do kids think of that?

RUSTY I must get back to watching football.

BRIAN Kids watch their favourite team in-between clips of sex and violence.

JEAN Of course foot-*brawl* and *thug*-by are perfectly acceptable.

BRIAN That's right. Miss the point. Do your red herring trick.

RUSTY We're not having fish.

BET There must be some modern books to help children learn about sex. My mother gave me something about letters.

RUSTY French letters?

BET *[Remembers]* *Letters For My Daughter*. *[Laughs]* Ha, it was absolutely useless.

JEAN *[Teasing]* I'll bet it was full of racy language and daring illustrations.

BET It was full of meaningless big words. I didn't understand a jolly thing. *[Exaggerates/mocks]* Re-pro-duct-ive organs. *[JEAN & BET share rare joke]*

RUSTY But then I came along and taught her everything.
[Stirring/laughter from OTHERS]

BET You! You knew bugger all.
[Bigger reaction. JEAN laughs. Even BRIAN is amused. RUSTY refuses to be put off]

RUSTY I'll have you know in my youth I was known as *Lusty Rusty.*
[More reaction]

BET Funny, I thought it was *The Dud Stud*. *[Reaction. RUSTY concedes]*That too.

BRIAN *[Pause. Serious again]* I made a complete hash of telling Alan.

JEAN You're not wrong there. And he knows more about sex than all of us put together.

BRIAN He *thinks* he knows more. He's like a lot of young people today. Super confident on the outside but inside they're just as nervous and confused as we were.

JEAN Hark at the expert.

BRIAN And you'd be less sarcastic if Peter was a girl.
[OTHERS react. JEAN scoffs. Sexual politics]

JEAN Rubbish!

BET Brian's right. Bringing up a girl today'd be murder. They're so independent. When I was young, I couldn't step outside the front door unless my father approved.

RUSTY And what a charming gentleman he was.

BET You hated him.

JEAN *[At BRIAN]* Hang on. Peter's as much my responsibility as yours.

BRIAN How can a kid today learn the facts of life in a quiet, friendly chat with his parents when every TV literally screams sex.

RUSTY We must have the wrong model. *[RUSTY ignored]*

JEAN It does exist, Brian. Sex wasn't invented last week. And if Peter doesn't see it on TV, the Net or in the window of the local newsagent, he'll hear about it at school or the youth club or even from Alan.

BRIAN God forbid he hears about it from Alan.

RUSTY *[Exiting to kitchen]* 'Scuse me, folks. Gotta check on the stew and the custard.

JEAN Brian, you can't pigeonhole sex-education. There's no timetable to suit everyone. Kids learn as and when the need arises.

BET Alan's okay. That boy's gonna go places.

JEAN *[Looking at watch]* I wish he'd go here. *[Rising]* That might be them now.
[JEAN wanders DL looking/listening for sign of ALAN and LEONIE]

BET Just get little Peter aside and have a nice chat.

RUSTY *[Returning from kitchen]* I think I heard Alan. What's he driving?

JEAN *[From DL]* A loud vintage plane disguised as a motorbike.

RUSTY *[Dewy-eyed]* Ah, magnificent. Did I ever tell you about my first Harley?

OTHERS Yes!

RUSTY *[RUSTY gets the message]* Right. Who needs a refill?

BRIAN Not me.
BET No thank you.
JEAN *[Unsure]* Well okay. Just a little.
RUSTY Good girl. *[He replenishes her glass]*
BET *[More serious]* I don't envy you, son. Having children today's a real worry; all these drugs and wild parties.
RUSTY *[Imitates pompous Blimp-type duffer]* They'd be far fewer delinquents if we brought back national service.
BRIAN You'd think with sex so out in the open today, parents would find it easy to tell their kids the facts of life.
JEAN Talking to kids has never been easy.
BET Well it's pretty obvious our role models are setting a lousy example.
BRIAN Meaning?
BET In the movies, the celebrity actors make great romantic stars and everything's luvvy-duvvy. In real life they swap partners every five minutes.
RUSTY You're right love. Sex in the media is sexy. Sex in real life can be bloody cruel.
JEAN Oh, you're a cheery soul.
BRIAN *[Thinking aloud]* You wonder how we learn to be a parent.
JEAN *[Give it a rest]* Oh Brian.
BRIAN I mean you have to pass a test to drive a car and you do an apprenticeship to be a plumber. What do you need to be a parent?
RUSTY How about a panel van?
JEAN Look, can we please stop talking about sex before Alan gets here or we'll have blue jokes all night.
BRIAN *[Enjoying the barb]* Not like you to squib a serious discussion, dear.
RUSTY I always thought good food and good sex went well together.
BET *[Snaps at the mischievous chef]* Ivan!
JEAN *[Frustrated, angry]* Come on, let's talk about something else, please, *[Snaps]* even the bloody weather?! *[JEAN'S lost it momentarily and the OTHERS are a tad shocked. She, after all, is the "normal" one]* Sorry.
RUSTY So Brian, what's happening with Rotary? *[or other well-known service organization]*
JEAN *[Sotto voce]* Thank God.
BRIAN Did I tell you I'm on the finance committee?
BET Several times.
BRIAN I never knew raising money for charity could be so difficult. Talk about competition.
[Pause. BRIAN'S new topic is boring. Well, BRIAN is boring]
RUSTY So have we finished talking about sex? *[OTHERS react]*
JEAN *[Almost angry]* Dad! Stop it!
RUSTY I was just going to suggest that it's a bit like cooking.
[Awkward pause. BET speaks the truth. She <u>is</u> boring. JEAN is closer to RUSTY than BET]
JEAN Look, I'm sorry Brian was talking all that nonsense about Pete.
BET *[Supports BRIAN]* That wasn't nonsense. I think Brian's doing exactly the right thing. I'm so pleased to see him caring about his children and I support him one hundred per cent.
JEAN *[Reprimanded]* You're right ... of course. *[Another awkward pause]*

BET I wish more parents were as caring as Brian. Children are the most precious thing in the world.

JEAN *[Politely sending her up]* Oh I agree. I think the best motherhood statements are about motherhood. *[Straight through to the keeper for poor old BET]*

BET I think we *[She means JEAN]* should give Brian all the help we can.

JEAN *[Pause]* Mum, do you mind if I ask you something?

BET What?

JEAN How come it's okay for you to criticize Brian but if *I* do it, you defend him to the death?

BET *[Shocked, offended]* I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about.

JEAN Actually I'm not so keen on Leonie going out with Alan.

BET Ha! See. You're the same. All mothers protect their sons.

JEAN Yes but the difference here being I'm not sure my son is good enough.
[BET shocked]

FX *[Sound of approaching motorbike]*

BET What's that noise? Is that Alan?

JEAN Speak of the devil.

RUSTY *[Calling]* I think I heard young Alan.

JEAN *[Calling back]* Yes, Dad. The whole street heard.

BRIAN *[Enters]* I told Alan to get that bloody muffler fixed. The police'll pick him up and guess who'll pay the fine? *[Stops behind settee]*

RUSTY *[Calling]* Excuse my absence but I'm needed in the galley.

BET *[Calling being a stirrer]* You'll miss Leonie.

JEAN Don't stir him, Mum. He thinks Leonie's perfect for his beloved grandson.

BRIAN Which is totally amazing. I mean Leonie's a normal, intelligent young woman. What can she possibly see in Alan?
[BET crosses to front door. She stops to adjust her hair in mirror on wall above phone-table. She speaks as she moves and whilst adjusting her hair]

BET Well perhaps Leonie thinks Alan's got style and sex appeal. Perhaps he's funny and handsome. And if he is, we can be certain he didn't get any of that from .....
[At DL, BET turns to deliver the tag – almost without pausing] his father. *[BET exits. BRIAN fumes. JEAN stifles laughter. BRIAN returns to his chair. Front-door opens off-stage and BET is delighted to see ALAN]* Al-an!

ALAN *[Equally delighted to see his grandmother]* Happy birthday, Whoosh! *[Big hug and kiss sounds]* A little something for the sexiest grandmother in the world.

BET *[Lapping it up]* Oooh. Behave you wicked boy!

LEONIE Happy birthday Missus Thomas.

BET Thank you, dear. Oh Alan, you shouldn't have. It's not necessary.
[It is. She loves presents]

JEAN *[Calling]* Hell-o? The party's in he-re.

BET Oh yes. Come in, come in.
[BET enters with present and returns to her chair. ALAN and LEONIE follow. ALAN heads to behind settee]

ALAN 'evenin' all. Sorry we're late. Blame Leonie.

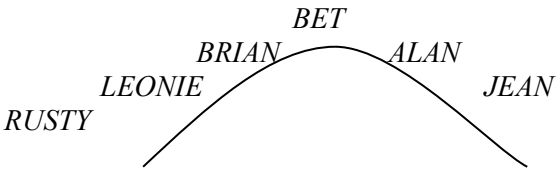
JEAN Hi Leonie. Come and sit over here.
[LEONIE sits on settee next to JEAN. They exchange pleasantries. BRIAN hasn't moved]

BET *[Unwrapping present]* You shouldn't have done this, Alan.

ALAN Forget it, Whoosh. Only cost a grand.
BET *[Thinks he's serious]* What!? *[ALAN wanders UC examining plant/s]*
JEAN Ignore him. And I bet Leonie chose it.
LEONIE Well, perhaps a small suggestion.
BET *[Too polite]* Oh yes, I'm sure she did. How are you, Leonie?
[Returns to unwrapping. BET often refers to LEONIE in the third person. No woman is good enough for her son or her grandson]
LEONIE Fine thanks. And many happy returns of the day.
[BET smiles and unwraps. ALAN calls from LC]
ALAN Hey Whoosh. This plant needs water.
BRIAN *[Comes alive. Calls without turning]* No it doesn't. Leave it alone.
ALAN *[Mock contrition]* Oops sorry. Father knows best.
[He wanders back as RUSTY appears still wearing his apron]
RUSTY What's all this noise?
BET *[Stops unwrapping to reprimand RUSTY]* Ivan! The apron!
RUSTY It's all right. They're family. *[Big grin as he and ALAN embrace/shake hands]* Evening young fella.
ALAN Hi Pop.
RUSTY And Leonie. *[All smiles, to LEONIE. He kisses her hand]* Even better than family.
LEONIE *[Smiling in return]* Good evening to you, kind sir.
RUSTY By jingo, you look smashing, absolutely gorgeous. *[More kissing of her hand/arm]*
LEONIE *[She smiles]* Thank you.
JEAN Don't look now, Dad, but I think you're drooling.
[BET is annoyed. She's out of the spotlight and determines to regain her rightful place]
BET *[Holding up scarf]* Oh, look at this. *[Meaning 'Look at me'. EVERYONE does of course]*
JEAN Mum, that's beautiful. It'll go well with your new suit.
BET Thank you, Alan. *[No mention of LEONIE]*
ALAN It doubles as a tea-towel.
RUSTY I bet Leonie chose it.
BRIAN *[Impatient]* She did, it looks great and when's tea? I'm starving.
LEONIE *[Indicates ALAN]* He's not. He had a pizza two hours ago. *[Reaction]*
RUSTY *[Dismayed]* Alan!
ALAN I can't help it. I'm a growing boy.
JEAN *[Rising]* Yes come on, Dad. We're all starving and Brian wants his stew.
[OTHERS rise. BET is helped by ALAN]
ALAN *[Genuinely distressed]* Oh we're not having stew?
RUSTY *[Playing along with joke]* It's out of a packet with lots of custard. *[OTHERS amused]*
ALAN *[In on the joke]* Now you're talking. The old man's favourite!
[ALAN offers BET his arm and escorts her upstage. RUSTY heads to table]
RUSTY *[Indicating]* To the dining-table, folks.
JEAN *[Serious]* And Alan. One other thing.
ALAN *[Mock serious]* Yes Mother?
JEAN *[She means it]* Behave.
LEONIE It's okay. I made him promise.
ALAN *[All sparkling eyes]* Yeah, I'm on a promise.
[OTHERS disgusted with or ignore ALAN. They move upstage to dining-table. Lights dim in lounge and brighten UL. There is some giggling and small talk]

JEAN *[To LEONIE - small talk]* Lovely scarf, Leonie. Where did you get it?
[We may not hear this small talk because RUSTY takes control]

Table places



RUSTY *[Indicating]* Here, our guest of honour.
[BET sits and laps up the fuss]
ALAN Way to go, Whoosh.
RUSTY Alan you're next to the birthday girl. *[ALAN sits]* Jean, you're over there. *[JEAN moves to her seat]*
JEAN *[Sitting]* Merci, monsieur.
RUSTY Brian you're here *[BRIAN moves to his seat]* and Leonie you're next to me.
OTHERS *[Stirring RUSTY]* Whooo.
[RUSTY holds chair for LEONIE who sits]
JEAN Watch him, Leonie. It's true what they say about old sailors.
RUSTY *[Collects plate with rolled pancakes]* Now folks, we begin with a small French dish ...
BET *[Can't keep her mouth shut]* It's pancakes.
BRIAN Pancakes!
ALAN Great. Where's the maple syrup?
RUSTY *[Ignores their responses]* They're called *Crepes Fourees Gratinees.*
LEONIE Sounds wonderful.
JEAN They smell delicious.
RUSTY *[Serving with tongs]* And first, of course, the leading lady.
BET Just a small serve for me.
[Lights gradually begin to fade and music begins softly]
BRIAN Yes, very small serve.
JEAN *[Annoyed]* Brian. You haven't even tasted them.
ALAN I'll have his. Somebody pass the maple syrup.
LEONIE Alan, they're *savoury* pancakes.
ALAN Fair enough. Pass the tomato sauce *[ketchup].*
BET You've given me too much. I can't eat all this.
RUSTY Leonie, you're going to love these.
[BLACKOUT. Music swells. After a few seconds, music fades. Crossfade slowly, lights up, music down. It's 15 minutes later. The entree has been consumed. The food was superb]

Act One Scene Two

[As lights come up, the group is laughing strongly – show the passage of time]
JEAN You've excelled yourself, Dad. I reckon you could open your own French restaurant. *[Murmurs of agreement]*
BET Yes, Ivan, they were quite nice.
BRIAN Didn't think I'd like Frog food.

ALAN Now don't tell me, Pop. We've had pancakes for entrée so that means soup for dessert.

RUSTY *[Rising]* Let's adjourn, folks; the main course'll be a few minutes.
[They rise. ALAN helps his grandmother]

JEAN I'll give you a hand, Dad.

LEONIE Me too.

RUSTY Nonsense, I can manage. Well, maybe one of you.

LEONIE I'll do it. *[To JEAN]* You go and sit down.

JEAN *[Laughs]* Watch him, Leonie.
[Next few speeches as they travel to lounge. JEAN joins them. BRIAN to DL chair, BET to DR chair. ALAN and JEAN to settee. LEONIE and RUSTY clear table and exit to kitchen]

BET *[As she travels]* Well that's a relief. It was certainly better than I thought.

JEAN Mum, be told. You've married a superb cook.

ALAN What I don't understand is, how come Pop retires then turns into this crash-hot chef.

BRIAN How would *you* know? You live on junk food.

BET Don't pick on the boy, Brian. Parents who criticise their children are only passing on their own problems.

BRIAN Mother, if criticism were an Olympic event, you could nit-pick for Australia.
[Or whatever country they are in]

ALAN Whoosh, don't let your son talk to you like that. Ground him. Freeze his pocket money. Send him to his room.

BET I did, many times. And look where it got me. I think that's why he hates me.

BRIAN *[Frustrated]* Oh not this again.

BET Rusty was away at sea and I had to be mother *and* father. I had to cook his tea and belt his backside. And if I sent him to his room, he'd call me all the names under the sun.

ALAN Yeah but look how he turned out; proud father, successful businessman and a genuine boring-old-fart.

BRIAN *[Sarcastic]* Great. My mother gives me a complex and my son promotes it.

JEAN Why don't we change the subject?

BET They're very quiet in the kitchen.
[Huge laugh from kitchen from RUSTY and LEONIE]

ALAN *[Calling]* Hey! What's going on in there?

JEAN Fancy leaving a young girl alone with a randy old sailor.
[RUSTY and LEONIE enter all smiles. She carries a tea-towel]

BRIAN I hope you're behaving, Father. You've just been described as a randy old sailor.

RUSTY *[Mock anger]* That is grossly offensive. I am not old!

BET *[Shock]* Ivan! The tea-towel. You're not making Leonie do the dishes!
[BRIAN takes tea-towel from LEONIE and places it under coffee-table]

RUSTY Ladies and gentlemen, I have an important announcement. *[Pause. Milks it]* Leonie and I have decided to open a French restaurant. *[BRIAN scoffs. JEAN laughs. BET annoyed. ALAN jealous. RUSTY and LEONIE have terrible French accents]* I am ze chef.

LEONIE And I am ze 'ostess.
[OTHERS respond with a laugh or caustic comment]

JEAN Sounds wonderful. Do you need a kitchen hand?

BET Just behave Ivan. Remember there's no fool like an old fool.

[RUSTY could kneel beside BET maintaining his French innocence]

RUSTY My darlink, I 'ave not heven looked at ze uzzer voman.

BET It's not the looking I'm worried about.

ALAN Now listen, Pop, there really *is* such a thing as a dirty old man.

JEAN How dare you enjoy yourselves. And what was so funny?

LEONIE Oh it was totally innocent; all shipshape and above board.

BRIAN You're old enough to be her grandfather.

RUSTY What can I say? Women find me irresistible. *[Teasing/laughter]*

ALAN In y'dreams, Pop. But come on, what was the big joke?

RUSTY Oh that. Ah … *[He and LEONIE giggle/laugh]* Well apart from discussing our fabulous new French restaurant, we had a chat about ... sex.

OTHERS What! *[Big reaction but BRIAN is displeased]*

LEONIE *[They've got it all wrong]* No, not sex as in sex.

ALAN You *are* a dirty old man.

LEONIE We were discussing how sex is much more out in the open today.

BET *[Annoyed with him]* Ivan, act your age.

JEAN Perhaps you'd better let me do the washing up, Leonie.

RUSTY But we're only up to "You show me yours and I'll show you mine".

[More reaction. RUSTY and LEONIE continue laughing. They're getting on famously. BET and JEAN manage a smile. ALAN'S not sure. BRIAN is transfixed and furious]

BRIAN *[Serious]* I suppose you think it's funny. *[This kills everything. Others stop. Different atmosphere. BRIAN is fuming]* I suppose Peter's education is a joke too.

[Big change in atmosphere]

JEAN Oh Brian, please.

BRIAN So caring about my son means I'm boring and old-fashioned?

ALAN *[Aside]* Boring's right.

BRIAN And that's about your standard; snide, smart-alec remarks.

RUSTY Fair go, son. There's no need for that.

BET *[At BRIAN]* And don't speak to your son like that. *[She does]*

BRIAN *[BRIAN gets out of his chair]* I mention giving Peter a proper sex education and you lot have a good laugh behind my back. No wonder kids turn to drugs and suicide when a caring parent is ridiculed - and by his own family.

[Pause. BRIAN is fuming. The others are embarrassed]

LEONIE *[Hesitant]* Look, I'm terribly sorry, Mister Thomas. But I wasn't laughing at you. And nor was Rusty.

RUSTY She's right. Your moniker wasn't even mentioned.

BRIAN Well it's a pretty strange coincidence. Half an hour ago we were talking about sex education.

JEAN Leonie and Alan weren't here then.

BRIAN *[Meaning RUSTY]* He was. And then two minutes ago they just happen to fall about laughing at the very same subject; pretty strange co-incidence.

JEAN Pretty big assumption, Brian; and a bloody big boo-boo if you're wrong.

ALAN *[Almost angry]* What the hell is going on?

BRIAN *[Indicating his father]* Come on, let's be honest. He told her, in the kitchen, just now.

RUSTY Not true. We joked about the restaurant and then we talked about Alan and Leonie getting married and ... *[Huge reaction from others]*

OTHERS *What!?*

LEONIE *[RUSTY'S got it wrong]* No we didn't.
BET Ivan! Get a grip on y'self.
ALAN *[Panic/anger]* Bloody hell, Leonie. Who said anything about marriage?
RUSTY *[Embarrassed]* No, sorry, sorry. I've got that bit wrong.
JEAN *[Laughing]* Oh dear. I'd quit while you're ahead, Dad.
LEONIE It wasn't like that. We were talking about opening a restaurant and how it could attract lovers of fine food and wine.
RUSTY *[Trying to recover]* Yes, that's right; lovers of fine food and wine.
LEONIE And that led to romantic dining and how people got married later now and how sex today was much more out in the open.
RUSTY Exactly. It was nothing personal. I never mentioned Peter and I would never embarrass Leonie about her plans with … *[To ALAN. It's a joke]* Sorry, son; what's your name again? *[ALAN, JEAN and LEONIE smile]*
BET I think you've said enough.
RUSTY But I never mentioned Brian and what he said before about the sex business.
BRIAN *[Annoyed – still]* It's not a business! I was talking about bringing up children.
JEAN Sex *is* a business, Brian. Try the Yellow Pages or the Net.
RUSTY Look, you've all jumped to conclusions. There was no disrespect for anyone. Leonie and I are just good friends.
[He puts an arm around her. They grin. It's obvious they meant no harm. The others are ashamed or cool off. Pause]
LEONIE And he knows everything about food.
[RUSTY suddenly remembers the food]
RUSTY Oh hell, the sorbet! *[He exits to kitchen and fusses. LEONIE sits on arm of settee next to ALAN. BRIAN returns to his chair. Awkward pause. BRIAN'S made a fool of himself. It's been a testy few moments. People have spoken out of turn]*
JEAN Well then, why don't we just talk quietly amongst ourselves?
[OTHERS look at each other, fidget, stare at ceiling etc]
RUSTY *[Calls from kitchen]* Why don't you just talk quietly amongst yourselves?
[This brings a smile from most. A scowl from BRIAN]
BET Well in all my years I've never seen my family behave like this.
[ALAN, BRIAN and JEAN scoff]
ALAN You've got a short memory, Whoosh. Last year we argued for hours about drugs.
JEAN That was last Christmas; on Mum's birthday we fought over crime and punishment.
BRIAN *[To his mother]* You even threw a cushion at your husband.
BET I don't remember that. *[OTHERS, not LEONIE, scoff]*
RUSTY *[RUSTY enters with tray, offering tiny bowls. BET is served first]* Sorry for the delay. Sorbet all round.
BET What have you got now?
RUSTY *[Offering it to BET then OTHERS]* Little palate-refresher, love.
BET Ice-cream?
JEAN It's sorbet, Mum. And home-made too.
ALAN Pancakes followed by ice-cream. I think you've been at the rum, Pop.
BET *[Eating]* This tastes like ice-cream.
RUSTY It takes away the flavour of the entrée.
ALAN You mean it kills the taste of your lousy cooking.

[Everyone eats sorbet]

LEONIE Wait'll you see the next course. Rusty has excelled himself.

BET This is quite nice.

JEAN So how's nursing, Leonie? Still being rushed off your feet?

LEONIE Yes, we are busy and I'm fully qualified now so I'll apply for a bigger hospital.

BET What sort of nurse are you?

RUSTY Bloody marvellous.

JEAN Yes Dad, you're biased.

LEONIE *[Smiles at RUSTY answers BET]* Well I do like kids and ....

ALAN Hey, easy, easy.

LEONIE So I'd like to work in a children's ward.

RUSTY But as soon as I get crook, she's promised to transfer to geriatrics.

ALAN You wish.

[RUSTY starts collecting empty bowls]

LEONIE *[Addressing BRIAN. She doesn't know what to call BRIAN or JEAN]* Actually I was interested to hear you were talking about health education for children. *[BRIAN pays attention]* I've seen some pretty sad cases of neglect and abuse and I think you should be congratulated for showing so much concern about Peter.

BRIAN *[Stunned. Chokes on sorbet]* Ah, any more ice-cream?

JEAN It's not a course, Brian. You don't have sorbet seconds.

[RUSTY collects empty bowls, takes them to kitchen then returns to between BET and JEAN]

ALAN How about thirds?

LEONIE Peter's only eight, isn't he?

BRIAN Almost, eight next month.

ALAN Acts like he's fifteen.

JEAN They grow up much quicker these days, Leonie.

LEONIE He's always asking me about nursing and hospitals and medicine.

BRIAN *[To JEAN]* See what I mean. He's inquisitive. He wants to know.

LEONIE He's very interested in science. I wouldn't be surprised if he decided to be a doctor.

JEAN Well give us a medical opinion, Leonie. Brian's concerned about teaching Peter the facts of life. What would you recommend?

BRIAN Now hang on, that's not fair.

JEAN Brian, she's a health professional. Would you like some help?

BRIAN Of course. But I was only talking in general terms.

ALAN Just what exactly went on before we got here?

RUSTY Serves you right for being late.

JEAN Brian, I'm supporting you. And I'm sure you'd appreciate a professional opinion about sex-education.

[What can BRIAN say?]

BRIAN Well, maybe.

ALAN I'm in favour of sex-education but prefer the practical, hands-on approach.

[ALAN is ignored although he and RUSTY could share a smile]

LEONIE Well there are lots of books and DVDs which help you tell your kids about sex.

BRIAN I don't need books or films. I know what goes where and what happens when it does.

JEAN Is that your opening line?

BRIAN And I'm more than happy to try and tell my son the facts of life.

JEAN Brian, if you'll shut up and listen you might learn something.

LEONIE I've seen some pretty good sex-education materials.

BRIAN What's good? I mean the mechanics are easy to explain but what about morality? Kids need values. Parents have to teach respect and self-esteem and what's right and wrong.

JEAN *[Surprised]* Brian. What's happened? You're sounding reasonable and logical.

BRIAN I just want a simple mix of plumbing and values.

BET What's plumbing got to do with it?

BRIAN I'm actually glad you're here tonight, Leonie. I've been thinking about ways parents could talk to their kids about sex.

ALAN *[Mock fear]* Father! Please. You promised never to discuss your insanity.

JEAN But Brian, Leonie may not be the slightest bit interested in your ideas

LEONIE Well actually I am interested; *really* interested. *[Apologises to JEAN]* Sorry, I didn't mean to be rude.

JEAN *[Suitably rebuked, backs off]* No, no, that's fine. You go right ahead.

LEONIE *[To BRIAN]* I'd be happy to hear your ideas on parenting.

BRIAN Thanks. But don't get me wrong. I'm just an average parent with a few simple ideas.

ALAN Simple's right.

RUSTY *[Rising]* Look I'm sorry to break up the party, folks, but it's time we returned to the table.

BET Not yet, Ivan.

RUSTY *[Mouth open]* Right.

BET *[The boss has spoken. RUSTY dare not challenge. Sits]* Go on, Brian.

BRIAN I had this idea where the parent chooses an area in which they feel comfortable.

BET What, like the lounge or the games room?

BRIAN No, Mother, not the location. You choose a *subject* you know well. In my case it's running a nursery. I know about the propagation of plants.

ALAN Is there safe sex for seedlings? *[Ignored]*

BRIAN I read somewhere that teaching is starting with what you know then moving to what you *aim* to know. So if the parent can easily explain something like their job for instance, it should be easy to use that to explain human sexuality.

BET I think that's very sensible.

BRIAN I can explain how plants reproduce then relate that to human reproduction.

JEAN Well that's fine for anyone working with plants or animals, but what about a professional footballer, a shop assistant or a motor mechanic?

BET *[She's serious]* Yes Brian, not all jobs would be suitable.

BRIAN I'm not saying it's perfect, it's just one idea.

ALAN And I think it's got huge potential.

JEAN *[Knows that an attempted joke is coming]* Alan. Don't.

ALAN I mean a priest could talk about the missionary position. *[Amusement]*

LEONIE Alan, be serious.

ALAN And an acupuncturist knows all about little pricks.
[Exasperation/Amusement builds. BRIAN is not thrilled but even he sees the funny side. Is there a funny side?]

RUSTY Yes and a cook's an expert on stuffing birds. *[Amusement builds]*

BRIAN *[Almost on their side]* All right, all right. I admit it's stupid.
BET And a plumber would know about taps.
BRIAN *[Silence. Pause. At BET]* Taps?
BET You talked about plumbing.
BRIAN I did, Mother, but I can't see the connection between taps and sex.
BET It can be a turn-on.
[OTHERS laugh or groan as the penny drops]
ALAN Hey, nice one, Whoosh.
JEAN *[Sotto voce]* Or a turn-*off*.
BRIAN Look, if parents can talk with ease about their pet subject, this might give them confidence to talk about sex.
LEONIE And make things much clearer for the child.
BET So you tell Peter about how plants reproduce and then compare plants with people?
BRIAN Thank you, Mother. Glad to see someone's on my side.
BET I didn't say I was on your side. I'm just trying to understand.
JEAN How's that main course, Dad? I'm starving. *[Stands ready for dining-table]*
RUSTY Excellent idea. *[Is stopped]*
LEONIE Oh aren't we going to hear the talk about plants?
ALAN Leonie! Please! Don't encourage him.
LEONIE This happens with *my* family. People get jealous. I'm sure they really support you and would like to hear your thoughts on helping Peter.
[Stunned silence. JEAN sits. LEONIE has put everyone in their box – politely though and nobody can therefore attack her. BRIAN uncertain]
BRIAN Yes but it's still only an idea.
RUSTY Can't it wait, son? The main course is almost ready.
BET I'd like to hear how plants reproduce.
[Groans from RUSTY, ALAN and JEAN]
BRIAN *[Not sure]* Well I'll ... I'll need a flower.
RUSTY *[Collecting a flower]* Right; only picked this afternoon. *[Gives it to BRIAN]* But I want it back in one piece.
ALAN Yes, father, be gentle.
BET I hope you've washed your hands.
ALAN And no smoking immediately afterwards.
BRIAN *[Decides not to continue]*. I knew this'd happen. It's a waste of time.
LEONIE No it's not. Please go on. *[To ALAN]* And you, shut up!
[Awkward pause. LEONIE is serious. BET'S been reprimanded indirectly and is not happy]
RUSTY *[Impatient]* Come on, son. The food awaits.
BRIAN *[Continues. Could stand behind his chair. Indicating]* Right. Flowers have a stamen and a pistil. The pollen must move from the stamen to the pistil. It can be carried by the wind or by insects. When a bee visits a flower to drink the nectar, the pollen sticks to the bee and is transferred from the stamen to the pistil which means pollination has taken place.
RUSTY Great, let's go. *[Ignored]*
BRIAN And pollination means there's a new seed and from the new seed comes a new flower. And that's one way some plants reproduce. *[Pause]*
JEAN And that's it? From there you move to human sexuality?

BRIAN I didn't say it was ground-breaking. It's just an idea.
ALAN Does the stamen have to be erect? *[Ignored]*
LEONIE I think it's got potential. I mean you'd need to work on the plant bit but as you know that subject really well, you could make the transition to humans quite easily.
BRIAN Thank you, Leonie.
BET I thought a pistol was a gun.
BRIAN Pis*til*. The pis*til* is the female part of the flower.
ALAN You realise that by having the bee involved it becomes group sex? *[Ignored]*
JEAN And Peter will be an A plus student in botany.
BRIAN *[Sick and tired of being mocked]* Right, that's my clown routine for your birthday, Mother. Now it's someone else's turn.
BET Don't take any notice, Brian. I thought you did a very good job.
RUSTY An excellent job but now, da-dah, *[Indicates table]* the main course.
ALAN Don't you mean *inter*course? *[Ignored]*
BRIAN *[Holding out flower to RUSTY]* Thank you, Father. *[RUSTY takes flower]*
BET Throw it out, Rusty. I won't be able to look at that flower without thinking about sex.
RUSTY *[Cheeky]* Right, I'll just spread it around the house. *[Her withering look kills RUSTY'S joke]* Yes, dear. *[Flowers returned to vase on sideboard]*
LEONIE Ignore them, Mister Thomas. Your idea's got potential.
BRIAN Leonie, could we cut this 'Mister Thomas' bit. Please, call me Brian.
[This provokes a reaction from OTHERS particularly JEAN]
OTHERS Ooooo.
ALAN Watch him, Leonie. He once read the back-cover of a self-help book.
LEONIE I think you'll find a lot of people today prefer the natural approach to discussing sex.
JEAN Exactly.
LEONIE And some reckon we should use whatever we feel comfortable with.
BRIAN *[To JEAN]* I think your next line is "touche".
LEONIE But your idea has a bit of what some people call "distancing"; where you avoid calling things by their proper name. Some of the ancient father/son, mother/daughter nights were classic cases of distancing.
BRIAN But that's my whole point. Just coming straight out with "babies are born like this" might be too dramatic for some kids.
BET Not to mention the parents.
RUSTY Anyone feeling hungry? *[Ignored]*
JEAN Brian, you don't have to come out with anything. The facts unfold naturally. It's part of growing up.
BRIAN So we wait till Peter reacts to something about sex on TV, then jump in with, "Oh, I'm glad you asked that, son"?
JEAN Just let it happen.
RUSTY *[Mock announcement]* This is the final call for dinner. Final call.
[They rise to go to the dining-table. RUSTY heads upstage]
JEAN And this is the final call for *not* talking about sex.
BET Let's hope we'll have some normal food this time.

[They head upstage, JEAN or ALAN help BET, LEONIE chats with BRIAN]

BRIAN Thanks for backing me up, Leonie.

LEONIE You're welcome. And I meant what I said. *[They head to table]*

BRIAN I reckon many parents still aren't sure when and how to tell their kids about sex.

LEONIE I'm sure you're right.

RUSTY Same places as before folks, if you'd be so kind. *[They sit as before]*

ALAN I'm starved, Pop. All this waiting between courses – it ain't natural.

JEAN It's called civilized behaviour, darling. *[Wearing oven mitt, RUSTY collects pot]*

BRIAN *[He's changed]* Well all that demonstrating has given me an appetite, Father. What's on the menu?

RUSTY *[Places pot on table]* Meine Damen und Herrern - *Zwiebelfleisch.*
[RUSTY lifts cover. Oohs/ahhs as the food is revealed. Lights begin to dim, music begins]

BET Looks like steak 'n onions. *[It* is *steak and onions]*

BRIAN *[BRIAN is becoming remotely human]* Smells nice.

JEAN It's the sauce.

LEONIE Goodbye France, hello Germany.

RUSTY *[Preparing to dish up. Whispers]* Actually it's Austria. *[Winks at LEONIE]*

ALAN *[Mock German accent]* Meine Damen und Herren. You vill all za food eat. Ja?
[Laughter/gossip. Music swells. Blackout. Short pause between scenes]

Act One Scene Three

[Music fades. Lights up. It's twenty minutes later. The meal continues to be a culinary triumph. The eating of the main course over, the conversation is relaxed as wine is being consumed. Show the passing of time with a hubbub when lights return]

RUSTY Leonie, let me top you up. *[Offers to pour wine for LEONIE]*

LEONIE No, no, stop. I've had too much already.

ALAN Keep at her, Pop. I need all the help I can get.

BET Well you can put me down for six Christmas puddings, Brian.

BRIAN Thank you, Mother.

JEAN Now where would charities be without Christmas? Every year Brian's service club sell thousands of Christmas puddings.

BRIAN Try hundreds of thousands. And we're always on the lookout for new ways to raise money.

ALAN Father, I don't want you to take this the wrong way.

BRIAN Are you still here?

ALAN I've got an idea to help your fund-raising. It'll make much more than those Christmas pudds. *[OTHERS react]* I'm serious.

BRIAN It's genetically impossible for you to be serious.

RUSTY Okay, folks, let's retire while I rustle up dessert. *[Ignored]*

ALAN I'm not joking. It's a simple, inexpensive way for charities to raise mega-bucks.
[Pause. Maybe ALAN does have something worthwhile to say]

JEAN This had better be good, Alan.
[Another pause. EVERYONE looks at ALAN. He's under pressure. Tension]

ALAN It's all about **...** sex. *[Big angry reaction]*

LEONIE Alan!

BRIAN You just can't help yourself!

JEAN I feel so sad, Alan, that we never taught you the difference between being funny and being plain, bloody stupid!

RUSTY *[Defending his grandson]* Hang on, Jean. Let the boy explain.
[Pause. Suddenly there's the possibility this might not be a wind-up]

BET *[To ALAN]* Yes, come on, darling. I'm sure you've got something sensible to say. *[Crawler]*

ALAN *[Pause then speaks slowly – for him]* My idea involves selling a book about sex-education.

BRIAN *[Pause. He's trying hard to be patient]* How? Exactly?

ALAN When Father did his flower routine before, what did we think? Come on, be honest?

BRIAN Yes, all right. It was ridiculous, I made a complete fool of myself.

ALAN It was ridiculous but entertaining. We all had a good laugh.

JEAN *You* had a good laugh.

ALAN And I'll bet the mountain of sex-education books out there are all written by professionals. I'll bet there's hardly any silly sex-education books written by untrained nobodies like us.

JEAN What's this 'us' business?

ALAN Why not a humorous sex-education book written by local yokels? You could call it, *"How Not To Tell Your Kids About Sex".*

BRIAN What's the catch?

ALAN There must be heaps of crazy ways people have tried to tell their kids about sex.

JEAN Including not telling them at all.

RUSTY *[Raises hand]* That's me! I used that method.

ALAN And Father's plant patter is perfect. Put some loopy ideas in a book and you'll make a fortune.
[Stunned silence. ALAN is serious for a change and what he's said may actually be true]

BRIAN I still think it's a wind-up.

ALAN *[Exasperated]* Look, forget me, think about the idea. It's got enormous potential.

LEONIE And Christmas puddings are sold only at Christmas whereas sex happens 24/7.

ALAN *[His old cheeky self]* Really? *[Ignored]*

RUSTY *[Rising]* Speaking of puddings, I'll go and check ours while you lot retire. *[Exits]*

JEAN *[Rising]* Dad, I'll give you a hand.
[Exits after RUSTY. OTHERS rise and move back to lounge talking as they go. BET is helped by ALAN who then sits beside LEONIE on settee]

ALAN This book can sell any time, anywhere. It's not a joke, Dad. I'm serious.

BRIAN It must be. You just called me "Dad".

ALAN And it's not just a book. There's a board game, DVD, web site; you could even get on the speakers' circuit. Sex and humour go really well together.

LEONIE What about the fine detail, Alan?

BRIAN Well said, Leonie. Come on Einstein, give us the aims, strategies, projected costs and income *and* the possible pitfalls.

ALAN *[Gets settled to make his pitch]* Okay. The aim is to make money, lots of it – legally of course - but all proceeds go to charity.

BRIAN My God, he speaks Morality.

ALAN *[Enthusiastically]* The idea's simple. We produce a book, maybe a CD and other items, but certainly a book about the funny, silly or crazy ways people have told their kids about sex. It's not meant to be a serious book – well, serious about being successful – but it's obviously all done in fun.

LEONIE Actually it could do a lot of good. Humour's a great ice-breaker.

ALAN The writers are ordinary people. This is not a book written by experts or health professionals. It'll come under *Humour* not *Healthcare.*

BRIAN Ordinary people may not know how to write.

ALAN Yes but the stories are true. They're real. A professional editor and a graphic artist provide the polish. Your service club approves the proof copy and a plan is drawn up re printing, promotion and sales.

BRIAN Give me strength. This sounds almost feasible.

ALAN I told you it was good.

BRIAN Pitfalls?

ALAN Ah, pitfalls? *[Pause]* No, can't think of any.

BRIAN What about lack of content or worse, lack of quality content? What about a budget? You need details of projected income and expenditure.
[ALAN pauses. He moves upstage thinking]

JEAN *[Enters]* Very subdued in here. Don't tell me Alan's run out of jokes.
[JEAN ignored. ALAN enthusiastic. JEAN moves down and sits]

ALAN I can't give exact details now but quotes can easily be arranged.

BRIAN *[To JEAN]* Dare I say it, Jean, our son is being positively normal.

BET He's got Brian in a flap. Alan's got all these ideas and Brian can't fault him.

BRIAN Now let's not get carried away.

RUSTY *[Enters]* Not long till dessert, folks. *[Ignored as was JEAN]*

ALAN There'll be no shortage of content. Sex-education is universal.

RUSTY Not for me it ain't.

BET *[Glares at hubby]* Shhhh.
[RUSTY makes a face, mimes "Sorry" then observes]

ALAN Local printers are everywhere and I'll do the layout for free.

BRIAN My God, he *is* serious.

ALAN Projected income ... ah, let's say five thousand copies at twenty bucks.

BRIAN *[Shocked]* Five thousand!

ALAN That's a hundred K less expenses which would be minimal because you'd sell through members and car-boot sales.

LEONIE I'm proud of you, Alan. It's potentially brilliant and your presentation has been totally professional. *[To BRIAN]* So come on, Brian, what do you say?
[Wow! What can he say? Not only has ALAN been thorough and precise but LEONIE'S supported the scheme. Pause]

ALAN And I bet if we all put our heads together, right now, we'll come up with at least six crazy sex-education schemes. *[Hops up]* Got any paper, Pop?

RUSTY *[Rising goes to cabinet UC]* Pen and paper coming up.

BRIAN Hang on, hang on. *[Is ignored. ALAN has taken control]*

ALAN Now who can think of a crazy way to tell kids about sex?

OTHERS *[Pointing. Not BRIAN]* Brian!

RUSTY *[Handing pad and pen to ALAN]* Here you go, young fella.

ALAN *[Writing]* *Pistils ... and ... stamens* from Brian. Who else?

BRIAN *[Re RUSTY]* Don't let *him* off the hook. He told me nothing. He just changed the subject.

ALAN *[Writing] Change ... the ... subject.*

RUSTY I didn't want to confuse the lad *[Friendly scorn]*

ALAN So we've got *Plants* and *Change The Subject.* What else?

BET My mother used the hell-fire routine. Do it and you'll roast in hell.

ALAN *[Writing] Hell ... Fire.*

JEAN If you want a really stupid way, include the honeymoon lecture after the wedding. Some older brides'll know what I mean.

BET *[Amused]* Oh I got one of those.

JEAN It was hilarious.

RUSTY What, the honeymoon?

JEAN *[Ignores RUSTY]* Mum must have thought I'd been living in a cave. I mean I was twenty-three and did have a general idea.

ALAN *[Mock shock]* You mean Father had already had his wicked way with you?
[Sudden mood change. BRIAN is angry]

LEONIE *[Annoyed] Alan!*

BRIAN *[Rising]* Right that's it. We're off. *[Starts to exit]* Come on Jean.

RUSTY *[Despairing]* Brian, wait. We haven't had the pudding.

BRIAN *[Turns, angry]* I'm not prepared to sit here while Alan plays his sordid little game and has a laugh at my expense. The serious bit was just a cover for his usual sleaze.

JEAN *[Angry]* Leaving the party before the hostess is in very bad taste.

ALAN *[Contrite]* Dad, I'm sorry. I apologise for that last remark. I didn't mean it literally. And can't you see, I'm trying to help you raise money?

BET Don't be so serious, Brian. The boy was only joking.

ALAN *[Genuinely sorry]* Please Dad**.**
[Pause. BRIAN hesitates]

JEAN Brian if Alan's idea is any good you'll have something worthwhile for your committee.

ALAN This'll make you a star at the service club.

BRIAN We don't have stars. We're there to *help* people.
[Pause. BRIAN doesn't want to back down. LEONIE appeals to him]

LEONIE Please, Brian. I'm sure Alan didn't mean to offend. *[Back to Alan]* Did you Alan?

ALAN *[Remorseful]* No, of course not. I'm sorry. *[To JEAN]* I'm sorry, Mum.
[Another pause and BRIAN looks at everyone. He can't resist LEONIE and reluctantly returns to his chair. Pause. Everyone settles]

BRIAN This is your last chance, Alan. *[BRIAN sits]*

ALAN Okay, I've got four whacky ways of talking about sex. Come on.

JEAN What about yourself? Mister Innuendo and Double Entendre.

ALAN Thank you, Mother. *[Writing] Sleazy ... Slang.*

LEONIE And the exact opposite is over-use of medical terms.

ALAN *[Writing]* Thank you, Leonie. *Medical ... Terms.*

LEONIE Some of the older courses were very strong on the plumbing.

BET Look I hope this idea's not going to poke fun at anyone. I don't fancy you lot all laughing at me.

JEAN We won't be laughing at anyone, Mum. Just the things we once did. Look, in years to come, Brian's petals and pollen will seem hilarious.

ALAN It's already hilarious and the basis of this brilliant book.

LEONIE You could include a chapter on silly expressions. My sister's girlfriend goes out with a bloke who calls his willy, Eric. *[Reaction]*

RUSTY You mean Eric the one-eyed trouser snake? *[OTHERS amused]*

LEONIE The couple will be at a dinner party or visiting relations and the boyfriend says, "We have to go. We promised to collect Eric in half an hour." *[Amused reaction]*

BET *[Doesn't understand]* I think I missed something. Who's Eric? *[Bigger laugh]*

LEONIE Or he'd pretend Eric was a dog and say, "It's time Eric had his exercise".

ALAN *[Over the OTHERS laughing]* Hang on, *I'm* doing the slang.

JEAN You have to be careful when using made-up names with kids. My cousin, Kate didn't see a photo of a man's 'Eric' until she was ten and when she did was shocked to see it wasn't a peanut. *[Laughter]*

BRIAN My God, just think of all the ignorance there's been when it comes to sex.

LEONIE Apparently I was an expert when I was only six – according to my baby brother.

RUSTY *[Declaring her greatness]* You were a child prodigy.

LEONIE I think Mum told me some pretty basic stuff so then I told my little brother that Mum and Dad had sex three times; once for me, once for him and once for Christmas. *[Reaction]*

BET I remember my sister telling me she once thought sperm used to swim across the bed from the man to the woman. *[Reaction]*

ALAN Breaststroke?

BRIAN So Alan, when will this fantastic idea of yours finally bear fruit?

RUSTY You mean when does it reach its climax? *[Groans]*

ALAN Let me just check the methods. *Plants, Change The Subject*, *Hell Fire, Honeymoon, Slang* and *Plumbing*. Agreed?

JEAN It's your idea, Alan.

BRIAN Exactly. Now put up or shut up.

ALAN A simple illustrated paperback with humorous ways people have tried to talk to their kids about sex would be a great way for any service club to make money.

RUSTY Sounds a damn good idea to me.

BET It does but I still don't know where Eric comes in. *[Reaction]*

RUSTY *[Nudge, nudge]* He *comes* in a variety of shapes and sizes. *[More reaction]*

ALAN And with a huge range of names and nicknames.

JEAN *[Whispers to BET]* Eric's his thingy.

BET *[Realises and is annoyed, even swipes at RUSTY]* Oh Ivan, you stupid old man.

RUSTY Come on, love. There have been some funny times.

BET And nobody wants to hear them.

JEAN Yes we do.

ALAN We'll put 'em in the book.

BET No!

RUSTY When I was at sea, we used to send short messages to our wives and girlfriends. Once I sent Bet a telegram which read … "Hello, love. Life Normal."

BET Only it was printed incorrectly and I received it as "Hello. Love life normal." *[Reaction]*

RUSTY And boy did I cop it.

BET There I was, the lonely, over-worked housewife, missing my hubby while reading about his girl in every port. *[Laughter]*

JEAN You're right about one thing, Alan**.** Sex and comedy go well together.

ALAN Of course I'm right. This book'll have true stories from ordinary people who'll laugh at how others did it.

LEONIE *Do* it. I'll bet parts of those methods are still used today.

RUSTY Damn clever Alan. You get your good looks from your mother and your brains from your grandfather. *[OTHERS amused]*

ALAN So there it is, Father. What do you say? Is it brilliant or is it brilliant?

JEAN Yes, Brian. What's wrong with it?

ALAN And we haven't touched on the board game, web site, DVD, caps, tees and keys.

RUSTY You should get him to promote the nursery, Brian. He's a real entrepreneur.

LEONIE If you keep it low-key, it might be taken for what it is - a bit of light-reading fun.

JEAN But capable of making money.

ALAN Big money. Every parent, everyone who's hit puberty, will relate to this book. Come on, Dad. Give us all a break and say you'll do it.

BRIAN Do what? The committee won't look at anything without a detailed costing and proper working model.

LEONIE *We* could produce a working model.

JEAN Exactly. If it's rubbish, forget it. If it's got potential, take it further.

BRIAN You want *us* to write the damn thing?

ALAN Got it in one, Sherlock.

BRIAN What, now?

ALAN No time like the present, pater.

BET This is the most unusual birthday I've ever had.

BRIAN I'm not a writer. I run a nursery.

ALAN Just jot down what Pop told you about sex.

RUSTY That'll take three seconds.

BET He's called your bluff, Brian. Put up or shut up.

BRIAN *[Reluctantly]* All right; anything to avoid looking at family photos.

LEONIE *[Genuinely excited]* Oh I love family photos.

OTHERS *[Not LEONIE. Emphatic]* No! *[LEONIE put back in her box]*

ALAN *[Up and organising]* Right. Everyone write details of how they heard about sex. Pop, *Change the Subject*, Whoosh, *Hell Fire.* Mother, the *Honeymoon Caper* and Father, *Petals and Pollen.*

BRIAN Thanks for nothing.

ALAN Leonie's got *Plumbing* and I'm doing *Slang*. So let's get pen and paper and make ourselves a best-seller.

BET Rusty's got some writing material in his study.

LEONIE *[Genuinely interested]* Oh, I haven't seen your study. *[Reaction]*

RUSTY Well please, young lady, walk this way.
[OTHERS react. RUSTY exits UR with daggy walk and LEONIE follows mimicking him]

ALAN *[Upset]* Hang on.

JEAN He's unbelievable.

RUSTY *[Calling]* Wait'll you see my etchings, Leonie.

OTHERS *[Not ALAN]* Oooooh.

[He and LEONIE exit laughing]

ALAN *[Unhappy]* We're supposed to be writing.

BET Brian, the plants on the back porch are a bit sick.

JEAN *[Rising] I'll* look at them. Come on, Mum.

[BET and JEAN exit RC]

ALAN *[Calling]* Hey! What's happening? Don't forget your writing.

JEAN *[Calling]* We won't. We'll help each other.

[The women exit leaving BRIAN and ALAN alone]

ALAN Paper, Father? *[Hands him pad and pencil]* I'll get some more. *[Starts to move upstage]*

BRIAN Wait. *[ALAN stops]*

ALAN *[Thinks he's about to get a lecture]* Oh please, not a lecture.

BRIAN Just listen. *[Points to settee and ALAN sits]*

ALAN I'm not trying to be funny. I think it's a good idea and I really believe you could make some money; a lot of money.

BRIAN I agree.

ALAN *[Surprised]* What?

BRIAN I think it's got great potential and I think you're sincere.

ALAN Well, thanks. But?

BRIAN A word from the boring old fart. Be careful about getting personal. People like to laugh about sex, it can be hilarious, but the joke turns nasty if things get personal.

ALAN I wasn't trying … *[Stops when he realises it's time to listen]*

BRIAN *[Pause]* Some things should remain private. If you remove someone's dignity, it hurts. And embarrassment and ridicule can *really* hurt. Just learn where to draw the line.

ALAN Sure. *[They look at one another then BRIAN exits to front door]* Dad! Don't go. I said I'd behave. Please.

BRIAN *[Stops at door]* There's a garden catalogue in the car. I want my petals and pollen routine to be *really* ridiculous.

[Pause. Half a smile each. BRIAN exits]

ALAN *[Clenching fists. Excited]* Yes! *[Goes to phone. Picks up receiver, dials and waits]* Ron, it's Alan ... Yeah, good mate. Listen I need some slang words for sex.

[Lights dim and/or curtain falls. INTERVAL]

Act Two Scene 1

[Curtain rises. No time lapse. ALAN is on the phone. ALAN is talking to his second cousin, Ron who is an expert on lavatory jokes and sexual innuendo]

ALAN Don't ask, it's a long story. I need some slang words for ... That's it. *[Laughs]* Hang on. I'll write 'em down. *[He laughs as he writes and listens]* *Pecker ... Dickie ... Whopper ... Ferrett ... [Laughs]* What? *Pork Sword*? Okay, what else? ... *Virile Member ... Unruly Member ... Dearest Member ... Captain Winkie ... Tally Whacker*. *[JEAN enters from DR and sits on settee. She doesn't interrupt ALAN who is engrossed/excited about the info he's obtaining]* Hang on. *[Finishes scribbling]* Right, fire away *[He continues speaking and writing]* *Donger ... Doodle ... [BET enters from DR and is shushed by JEAN. They listen to the unsuspecting ALAN] Middle-stump ... Magic Wand ... Hornpipe*. Pop'll like that. *Tossle ... Tool ... Better Than Chocolate ... [ALAN keeps writing and grinning but turns to see his mother and grandmother staring at him almost expressionless]* *Saus-age ... [ALAN freezes. Pause. He tries to cover up]* Yeah, look if I want that part, I'll give you a bell. Later. *[ALAN hangs up and tries to look cool]* Just a mate helping me out with the bike.

[BET moves towards ALAN]

JEAN I didn't know a Harley Davidson had a middle stump.

ALAN *[Uncomfortable]* Sorry?

BET *[Moving to her grandson]* Or a magic wand.

ALAN Ah, yeah, it's slang for … Now have you two finished your crazy sex spiels?

BET Not quite. We're still looking for ideas. *[BET reaches for the pad, takes it and reads silently]* My goodness. *[ALAN squirms]*

JEAN So what about your routine, Alan? How's that coming along?

ALAN Ah, I'm still doing background research.

BET Well you haven't done a very good job.

ALAN What do you mean?

BET You forgot something.

ALAN *[Squirming]* Whoosh.

BET You've left out *Eric*.

[She thrusts pad back into ALAN who takes it as JEAN and BET roar with laughter. BET returns to her chair with JEAN on the settee]

JEAN Caught with your pants down, darling.

ALAN All right, so I was chatting to Ron. But he's a genius when it comes to sex.

JEAN I think you mean *sleaze*.

BRIAN *[Enters looking almost bright and breezy]* Right, that's my floral tribute complete.

JEAN *[Can't believe it]* You've finished? Already?

BRIAN Of course. *[Hands screed at ALAN]* Here you go. *[BRIAN sits DL]*

ALAN *[Impressed]* Father. What can I say? Thanks.

BET We haven't even started ours.

ALAN *[Upset]* Aw, Whoosh!

BRIAN *[Reprimanding]* Not good enough, ladies. We're supposed to be helping the lad.

[Laughter is heard upstage from RUSTY and LEONIE]

JEAN *[Incredible]* Those two are at it again.

ALAN *[Upset the women are slacking]* Now come on, you've gotta make an effort.

LEONIE *[Enters but calls upstage to RUSTY]* Sing out if you need a hand.
RUSTY *[From offstage in the gallery]* I'll be fine.
ALAN Well?
LEONIE Well what?
ALAN Where's your article for the book?
LEONIE Give me a break, Alan. I had to look up some dictionaries. And you should see Rusty's study. You won't believe what he showed me.
[Reaction. RUSTY no longer wears the apron in Act Two]
RUSTY *[Enters]* Time for dessert, folks, if you'd kindly return to the table.
BET We've only just sat down in here.
ALAN Pop, where's your crazy sex-education course?
RUSTY Fair go. I've got the pudding and the coffee and I had to show Leonie my collection of erotic art.
[Reaction. RUSTY'S leg-pull goes over well except with ALAN]
ALAN *[Frustrated]* Look, this is not bloody fair. You all promised to write your sex-education stuff-ups.
BRIAN So where's yours?
ALAN I was collecting background information when I got interrupted.
RUSTY Would that be *coitus* interrupted? *[Laughter]*
ALAN *[Not amused]* Oh ha bloody ha.
BRIAN Now you know what's it like to say something serious and have y'leg pulled.
RUSTY Sorry young fella. I'll finish it straight after dessert. Promise.
BET Why can't we have dessert here? Why do we have to traipse off to the dining-table every few minutes?
JEAN Oh come on, Mum. Rusty's set the table beautifully.
RUSTY No, no. It's Betty's birthday. I'll serve it down here.
BET We always have a tray on our laps in front of the telly.
JEAN *[Hops up]* I'll give you a hand.
RUSTY *[Stops her]* No you won't. You help the lad finish his book.
[JEAN sits. RUSTY to kitchen. Pause. Lull]
BRIAN Just relax, Alan. You'll get your six chapters before we leave.
ALAN I'm serious. This book is a damn good idea.
JEAN We agree, Alan. We'll finish it after dessert.
[ALAN grunts. Mood is a little strained. LEONIE is next to JEAN on settee. ALAN is on arm beside LEONIE. Pause]
BET I've been thinking.
BRIAN Good for you, Mother. And I take back what I said about Father's cooking. It wasn't too bad.
LEONIE Not bad? I thought it was brilliant.
JEAN What were you going to say, Mum? You said you'd been thinking.
BET I was thinking about the old days, about all those birthday parties we had when I was a kid. With the fairy floss and the buttered bread with hundreds and thousands and the lemonade that really made you burp.
ALAN So that's what happened in the Middle Ages. *[Ignored]*
BET It sure wasn't the time to learn about sex.
OTHERS *[Stunned]* Sex!

BET Everything Brian said tonight is true. *[She's day-dreaming]*

ALAN Is this for the book, Whoosh?

BET *[Is off down memory lane]* What would my grandmother think today? She grew up in a small country town where *ever*yone went to church.

JEAN And wore hats. *[BRIAN shushes JEAN]*

BET There was no TV, newspapers had few pictures and if movies had a romantic scene, it was extremely chaste or left completely to our imagination.

LEONIE I love those old movies.

BET Rusty took me to the movies last month and the film had only just started when out came this incredible language; effing and blinding. And you should have seen the sex. I didn't know where to look.

JEAN What were you doing there in the first place?

BET It was a fund-raiser for the hospital. People walked out and I don't blame them.

BRIAN Sounds like a bad choice for that type of crowd.

BET And then there's the gay and lesbian parade watched by millions. I mean can you imagine my grandmother coming back and seeing that today!

ALAN She'd probably be in it. *[Ignored]*

LEONIE They get enormous crowds.

BET And have a look in your local newsagent. Not even inside, I mean the headlines in the window. *How to seduce your lover. How to improve your sex life.* One headline last month said *Cross-dressing and bondage can be fun.*

ALAN Well Pop in suspenders'd be awesome. *[Still ignored]*

BET When I was a kid we knew next to nothing so imagine what it must have been like for my grandparents. If they went to the beach it was all chaperoned and even neck to knee was daring. Now they wear nothing. I mean have you seen the bikinis they wear today?

LEONIE It's not the size, it's the price.

ALAN *I* don't object to the size. *[Ignored]*

BET But where's it going to end? What follows nudity?

ALAN Me.

BET You'd think with all the information about sex today, teenage pregnancy would be a thing of the past. But there are unmarried mums all over the place.

BRIAN And STDs.

BET Surely today they can't blame ignorance like we did. We used to think you couldn't get pregnant if you did it standing up.

ALAN *[Mock surprise]* Can you do it standing up? *[Ignored]*

BET Apparently the internet is flooded with sex.

BRIAN How come you didn't say all this when I was doing my bit about Peter?

BET Now if kids today are swamped with sex information, how come the divorce rates are so high? We might know about the plumbing but we know bugger all about relationships.

JEAN I'm not sure the two are necessarily linked, Mum. And society keeps changing. Once kids didn't need sex-education as whole families slept in the same bed.

BET Today's morals are a real worry to a lot of us older people.

JEAN True but what do you mean by morals? Today, morals mean sex. Once morality meant honesty, respect, fair play, manners and good language.

BET So you think today's morals are okay?

JEAN *[Trying to be patient]* No, Mum. What I said was that today people equate morality with sexual morality.

LEONIE And there's some doubt today as to whether sexual morality has really changed.

BET *[Begins a slow anger]* Oh so the massive divorce rate is just a media lie?

BRIAN Mother! Take it easy.

LEONIE Maybe people stayed married before because it was harder to obtain a divorce or because women were more dependant.

BET *[Attacking LEONIE]* Oh so now older couples are still married because they have to be? They're living together because they have no choice? Is that what you're saying?

LEONIE *[Shocked]* No, not at all.

BET *[Really wound up]* And I suppose you think having sex when you're a kid and before you're married is fine?

JEAN Mum. *[OTHERS concerned about BET'S fanatical attitude]*

ALAN Steady Whoosh.

LEONIE Actually I think it's got potential to do lots of harm.

BET This family may be old-fashioned and boring but at least it's got standards. My son might be the butt of jokes but at least he cares and takes responsibility.

BRIAN *[Concerned]* Mother.

ALAN *[Really concerned]* Hey Whoosh, settle down.

BET *[Rises]* The trouble with some people today is that they can't even spell loyalty let alone know what it means. At least my family is loyal!
[She storms out DR/RC. Stunned silence]

LEONIE *[Upset]* What did I say?

JEAN It's not your fault, Leonie.

ALAN The silly old bitch.

BRIAN *[Snaps]* Alan.

JEAN *[Exiting]* I'll go after her. *[JEAN exits]*

RUSTY *[Calling from kitchen]* Stand by on the main deck. You're going to love this.

LEONIE *[Rising]* I think we should go, Alan.

ALAN Don't be stupid. She'll calm down.

LEONIE No, I'm leaving. *[Exiting DL]* I'll get a taxi.

ALAN Leonie! *[Goes after her. They both exit]* *Leonie!*

BRIAN Bloody hell. *[He looks around then goes after his son]* Alan! *[BRIAN exits]* *Alan!*
[Pause. RUSTY enters holding tray on which are bowls of dessert, jug of cream, etc. He comes DC and is concentrating so that he doesn't trip]

RUSTY Now then, here we have the piece de resistance. *Trinity College Burnt Cream.*
[He holds tray higher as he gets closer to coffee table]

BRIAN *[Calling from offstage DL]* Come back here!

BET *[Calling from offstage RC]* I'll say what I want to say!

RUSTY *[Realises]* Arguments and an empty room. It must be Betty's birthday! *[Blackout]*

Act Two Scene Two

[Pause. Perhaps brief musical interlude. Lights up on same scene twenty minutes later. The runaways have returned, albeit reluctantly, and a fragile peace has settled on the household. The delicious dessert has been consumed and the bowls removed. BET is in her chair DR. JEAN and LEONIE are on the settee, BRIAN DL chair and RUSTY and ALAN are absent. RUSTY is cleaning-up in the kitchen and organising the coffee. ALAN'S slipped outside. There is a mood of tension following BETTY'S recent outburst]

JEAN Well that dessert was one of the nicest I've ever tasted.
[Pause. Silence]

BRIAN It was. The whole meal was very nice. *[In his absence]* Well done Father.
[Pause. Silence]

BET What's keeping Alan?

LEONIE He just wanted to check the bike was okay.

BET I can't understand why he had to start it in the first place.
[Pause. OTHERS restrain themselves]

BRIAN He said he had some brilliant idea about this sex-education book.

JEAN And the sooner we co-operate the sooner he'll drop the whole thing.

BRIAN Next year I'll stick to something safe like the weather.

RUSTY *[Enters]* Coffee's on the go. And I've whipped up some yummy chocky biscuits.

LEONIE I can't eat another thing. I've had far too many calories tonight.

RUSTY Go on with you. You've got a fabulous figure.

BET *[Snaps at the old smoothie]* Ivan!

RUSTY Almost as good as my lovely wife's. *[OTHERS are not in the mood to laugh. Pause. Door opens offstage]* Here's Alan.

ALAN *[Enters excited]* Eureka!

BRIAN Here's trouble.

ALAN Don't know why I didn't think of it before.

JEAN Alan, maybe we should write our chapters some other time.

ALAN There's no need to write anything. *[Reaction]*

BRIAN But I've already done mine.

ALAN There's a much better way. Instead of writing, let's perform.

OTHERS *[Stunned]* What!?

ALAN It'll bring out the really loopy aspects of the material.

BRIAN Alan, we are not actors.

ALAN Come on, where's your spirit of adventure?

JEAN Do you know what time it is?

ALAN It'll take minutes, half an hour tops. And we can have our coffee as we work.

BRIAN This is your grandmother's birthday.

ALAN Pop, you're first. Then Whoosh, Father, Mother, Leonie and me.
[Reaction]

LEONIE Alan. Stop being so bossy.

ALAN Well someone's gotta take charge. You lot need a bomb under you. Now, Pop, get yourself in position and tell us your tale.

RUSTY *[Being pushed gently DL]* But I have to get the coffee.

ALAN As soon as you've done your thing. *[Announcing]* Take it away, Pop!

FX *Sounds of the outdoors, birds, gurgling stream, etc*

[BLACKOUT. RUSTY collects two small camping stools and places them DL. He sits as restricted lighting comes up where RUSTY is seated by a river or stream. BRIAN is standing slightly upstage putting on summer hat. Now begins a short series of monologues or duologues. Make them theatrical i.e. use dramatic lighting and have the actors be bigger than the character as seen up to now.

They play themselves when younger or a relative or someone. A few small, simple props are used. These should be easily located and disposed of.

N.B. Any theatrical changes are not noticed by the actors. They carry on as if the room is still the same room they've been in for the last hour. Those in the semi-darkness i.e. not involved in a particular scene, are involved and sometimes speak or respond. And once a scene begins, the lit actor/s enter into the spirit of things. They act without being self-conscious. RUSTY is a natural. He faces front]

RUSTY *[Calling]* Brian? *[Pause]* Brian?
BRIAN *[From outside the lit area speaking as himself aged four]* Yes Dad?
RUSTY Over here. Bring your fishing rod.
BRIAN *[Steps into lit area miming holding a small fishing rod]* Can you see the fish?
RUSTY Sit down and stay still. *[BRIAN sits next to his father on the second camping-stool. RUSTY helps BRIAN cast an imaginary line into the water … the audience]* Now don't rush. Take it back slowly and … that's it. Good boy. Now we wait.
BRIAN How long before we catch a fish?
RUSTY *[Sighs]* Soon. Maybe later. *[Pause]* Just think what Mum'll say when we bring home a whopper.
BRIAN *[Excited four-year-old]* Can I cook the fish?
RUSTY Sure but you've gotta catch it first. *[Pause. Points]* Hey look, on the other bank. Little sheep. *[FX Lambs bleating or the cast in semi-darkness go "baa"]*
BRIAN Baa-lambs. Is that their father and mother with them?
RUSTY Probably.
BRIAN *[Pause]* Dad? How are baby sheep born?
RUSTY *[What the hell is he asking that for?]* What?
BRIAN How are they born?
RUSTY How are they born?
BRIAN Yes. How did they get inside the mother sheep?
RUSTY Oh, ah. *[Pause then grabs the fishing rod]* I think you've got a bite. *[They manoeuvre rod]*
BRIAN *[Forgets sheep. Excited about fish]* Have I? Is it a fish? *[Struggle stops]*
RUSTY No, it's gone. Never mind. *[They settle again]*
BRIAN *[Pause]* Dad?
RUSTY Yes son?
BRIAN Does the wool on the lamb tickle the mother when the baby lamb is inside?
RUSTY *[Amused]* No, son, I don't think it tickles.
BRIAN Rodney's mum is having a baby.
RUSTY That's nice.
BRIAN Rodney says he knows how babies get inside.

RUSTY *[RUSTY concerned]* He what?
BRIAN He says the father puts the baby inside the mother.
RUSTY *[Worried]* How old is Rodney?
BRIAN He's four. Like me. *[Pause]* Dad?
RUSTY What now?
BRIAN *Does* the father put the baby in the mother?
RUSTY *[Grabs the line again]* Another bite. *[They manoeuvre rod]* This time we've got him. *[Struggle continues then stops]* No, he got away. Now keep quiet or we'll scare the fish.
BRIAN *[Pause]* Rodney's brother said he saw it.
RUSTY Rodney's brother says he saw what?
BRIAN His Dad putting the baby inside Rodney's Mum. He said his Dad was ...
RUSTY *[Coughing]* Oh yes! *[Struggles with fishing-line]* We've cuaght a fish! *[RUSTY grabs BRIAN'S fishing rod; there's no fish]* No, false alarm.
BRIAN Dad? How do baby fish get born?
RUSTY Blimey Brian; all this talk about babies.
[Pause. RUSTY smiles at his little son, pats BRIAN'S head]
BRIAN Dad?
RUSTY *[Gives in. He'll allow one more question]* Oh all right. What is it?
BRIAN Did you put *me* inside Mummy?
[Suddenly RUSTY has large coughing fit to cover his reluctance to answer. Full lighting returns with OTHERS laughing/applauding. BRIAN and RUSTY return props, if used, and return to their seats. RUSTY could head upstage to become an on-stage stage-manager]
ALAN Brilliant gentlemen. We've got our first chapter.
BET And they never did catch any fish.
BRIAN And I never did learn anything about sex.
JEAN And you still don't know. *[More laughter]*
ALAN Right Whoosh. Time for some hell fire and damnation.
BET *[Reluctant]* Oh no, I can't remember.
JEAN *[Being helped by JEAN]* Come on, Mum
RUSTY You'll be fine, love. Just think of your dear sweet, old grandmother.
[BET moves DR with JEAN who becomes the daughter. BLACKOUT. JEAN seated being berated by angry mother behind her. LIGHTS UP on women. Suddenly BET "attacks" JEAN]
BET *[Threatening]* It's the truth young lady. Do you hear me?
JEAN *[Worried]* Yes Mother.
BET *[Scary]* And anyone who doesn't believe will be struck dumb and blind.
JEAN *[Nervous]* I'm sorry, Mum.
BET Your body is a holy temple and if you defile it, you've committed sin.
JEAN I'm not a sinner, Mum, honest.
BET And sinners receive a dreadful, terrible punishment.
JEAN Please Mum.
BET Chastity is a priceless gift. Treasure it. Guard it with your life.
JEAN I will. I promise.
BET Lose it and lose your soul ... *[Louder]* for eternity.
JEAN Please, Mum, I've done nothing wrong.
BET No kiss longer than three and a half seconds.
JEAN Yes.

BET No inappropriate touching.
JEAN Right.
BET And birth control and private touching are born of Satan!
JEAN I understand.
BET Oh it's all so innocent at first. His letters promise undying love, his absence makes your heart grow fonder until he appears and you submit.
BET I didn't. I haven't. I won't.
BET You long for his touch. He swears his heart is yours. *[Dramatic crescendo]* And then, in that moment of madness, his passion pounces, you yield to wickedness and become that lowest of low creatures, the *[Loud]* fallen woman!
JEAN *[Hands to face in despair and cries until Blackout]* Nooooo!
[BLACKOUT. Suddenly lights to normal. BET is frozen in pose of hellfire preacher and JEAN is dumbstruck with terror. Stunned silence. OTHERS unsure what to say after this powerful speech. They make faces. ALAN scribbles notes. BET was never like this before. BET to settee and JEAN remains in BET'S chair]
RUSTY Wow. That makes a shotgun-wedding look like a knees-up.
BET And that was the toned-down version. *[OTHERS react]*
ALAN Well thank you Whoosh for a very scary Chapter Two.
JEAN I think mother-daughter chats are a little less dramatic these days.
BRIAN I hope that wasn't based on personal experience, Mother.
ALAN Come on, Father. We need your kinky plants routine.
BRIAN *[Reluctant]* I've already done it.
ALAN Yes but once more with feeling.
LEONIE It was so enjoyable I'd love to see it again.
[OTHERS react. BRIAN is a sucker for female flattery and, taking a flower from RUSTY, moves to one side. Lights crossfade. BRIAN lit, OTHERS in darkness. Perhaps add FX of birds in a garden, etc]
BRIAN Okay Pete, flowers have a stamen and a pistil. The pollen must move from the stamen to the pistil. It can be carried by the wind or by insects and when a bee visits a flower to drink the nectar ...
OTHERS *[Humming softly in the darkness]* Buzz, buzz, buzz.
BRIAN The pollen sticks to the bee and is transferred from the stamen to the pistil which means pollination has taken place. And pollination means there's a new seed and from the new seed comes a new flower. And that's one way some plants reproduce. Did you understand that, Peter?
OTHERS *[From darkness. Child-like voices]* Yes, Daddy.
BRIAN Good. Now we can talk about how babies are made. Every father has a stamen and every mother has a pistil. The father transfers his pollen to the mother by manipulating his stamen.
ALAN *[Voice of child from the darkness]* What's ma-nip-ulating?
BRIAN Um ... moving. *[Uses flower to demonstrate]* Gliding, shifting ... proceeding.
OTHERS *[As in immature sniggering]* Ooooo, proceeding.
BRIAN Inside the mother's pistil is an egg and when some of the pollen from the stamen makes friends with the egg, a flowering begins and this becomes a baby.
OTHERS *[Isn't that lovely]* Ahhhhh.
ALAN *[Voice of child from the darkness]* Do you need special pollen to have a baby called Rose?

BRIAN *[Gentle, humouring the child]* No, you don't need special pollen.

JEAN *[Voice of child from the darkness]* What about for a baby called Daphne?
[Laughter as lights return to normal and BRIAN to his seat. ALAN scribbles]

BRIAN Yes, all right, very funny.

RUSTY *[As RUSTY collects and replaces the flower]* What about Heather or Holly?

JEAN Thank God this is all meant to be ridiculous.

ALAN Okay, Mother, let's have your honeymoon lecture.
[JEAN and LEONIE move to performance area and chat as they set up. Lights dim. RUSTY hands JEAN a short wedding veil which she places on LEONIE'S head]

LEONIE I've always wanted to be a bride.

ALAN Easy.

JEAN Maybe not after this.
[BLACKOUT. LEONIE slips on short veil as she becomes JEAN the bride. The women are lit. JEAN plays her mother behind the seated bride. Lights up]

LEONIE *[Thrilled about being married]* Oh Mum. *[Mom]* Isn't this just the greatest feeling ever?

JEAN *[Adjusting her hair/veil. Not excited]* Yes dear.

LEONIE And I've married the most wonderful man.

JEAN Yes dear.

LEONIE We'll have our own home, we'll start a family and …

JEAN Jean, listen to me.

LEONIE *[Misunderstands]* Oh now don't go getting all teary. You promised you wouldn't cry.

JEAN *[Not emotional in the least]* I need to say something.

LEONIE *[Misunderstands again]* Yes Mum and I love you too.

JEAN It's about … sex.

LEONIE *[Laughing]* Oh not now, Mum, please. I'll be late for my honeymoon.

JEAN I just don't want you to be disappointed.

LEONIE I'm sure I won't be.

JEAN It's true what they say about sex.

LEONIE What's that?

JEAN *[Quoting Chesterfield]* "The pleasure is momentary, the position ridiculous, and the expense damnable."

LEONIE *[Concerned]* Mum, are you okay?

JEAN I was very nervous on my wedding day. I wanted some advice on sex.

LEONIE Look I'll be fine. Stop worrying.

JEAN I asked my mother what intercourse was like.

LEONIE *[Surprised]* Really?

JEAN She looked very strange and said, ... "Painful".

LEONIE Well Grandma is a bit odd.

JEAN Men can be very demanding my darling and it's important to … to …

LEONIE *[Gleam in her eye]* Get my order in before he does?

JEAN *[Shocked]* Jean!
[Pause. This is outrageous. Then it's not outrageous as both women burst into laughter as lights return to normal. Applause/ribbing and laughter from OTHERS. JEAN back to seat. LEONIE heads upstage where RUSTY takes her veil and holds her white coat and stethoscope. ALAN scribbles]

RUSTY Was that the lie-back-and-think-of-England routine?
BET You won't believe what my mother told me. *[Reaction]*
RUSTY So *that's* why you hid in the bathroom? *[Laughter]*
ALAN Now, Leonie. We want your incomprehensible medical explanation.
LEONIE *[Heads to DL performing area with medical white coat and stethoscope around her neck]* Oh it's that all right.
RUSTY This will be fantastic.
BRIAN It'll have to be pretty weird to top my sex-in-the-garden routine.
[OTHERS laugh/agree. The mood is friendly. The "game" so far is funny and successful. Lights go down on company and up on LEONIE. She mimes using a pointer for her lecture. She uses the pointer to indicate a series of slides which are imagined. She could wear a medical white coat. LEONIE is lecturing. OTHERS are in darkness but pretend to be in the lecture-room audience and make mock-serious comments]
LEONIE Today's lecture is about human reproduction. Now if we can have the first slide. *[We pretend it has appeared]* Can you all see that?
OTHERS Yes.
LEONIE Good. The sperm cells are the smallest and here, *[She uses her pointer]* this mid-section is the mitochondria and can be referred to as the cell's engine-room.
RUSTY *[From the darkness]* Is the mitochondria important?
LEONIE Vitally important and *[Pointing]* this chart demonstrates how millions of sperm cells endeavour to contact that all important of female cells, the ovum. Is that clear?
OTHERS Yes ... Perfectly. *[etc]*
LEONIE Excellent. So moving right along we see *[Another slide appears]* that the ovum moves to the uterus. Now several hundred sperm cells could reach the ovum but only one gets to be intimately involved in the fertilization process.
BRIAN Is this a case of survival of the fittest?
LEONIE It is; absolutely. *[Slide changes]* Here digestive enzymes from the sperm cell penetrate the ovum's jelly resulting in the nucleus from each cell merging to complete the programme of fertilization.
JEAN I believe this talk is quite magniloquent. *[pompous]*
OTHERS *[Agree]* Hear, here ... Oh indeed ... I agree *etc*
LEONIE *[Takes it as a compliment]* Thank you, I'm pleased you like it. So in summary, and using layman's terms, *[Big crescendo and accelerando]* the speedo-clad spermy-ites swim swiftly to seriously inseminate the sheila's solitary, supreme cell and so cement the start of Shelley or Schammy Shells by the shee-shore. *[Big breath]*
[Lights to normal. Laughter and much applause. LEONIE to seat as OTHERS show their appreciation. RUSTY impressed taking LEONIE'S props. ALAN scribbles]
RUSTY *[Still applauding]* Marvellous, bloody marvellous.
BET I couldn't see the slides.
BRIAN Shee-bers, Leonie. That makes my randy rose routine seem positively normal.
ALAN *[With torch/flashlight in hand, moving to performing area DL]* Thank you, Leonie. And now folks, our final chapter in the soon-to-be-published bestseller, *Whacky Ways to Explain Sex* – starring *moi.*
[Blackout. Creepy noise from cast]
OTHERS Ooooh.
ALAN Shhhh. *[Puts torch light under his chin]*

[Soft lights up on ALAN who has torch – flashlight which he places under his chin. He and an imaginary Peter are in their bedroom with the main lights out. The OTHERS play Peter]

ALAN Psst. *[Pause. Whisper]* Pete, over here. *[OTHERS huddle/lean forward]* Shhhh. I've got something awesome to tell you.

OTHERS *[Whisper]* Is it about football?

ALAN Much better.

OTHERS *[Whisper]* Is it about vampires?

ALAN Listen. Big brothers are cool. What am I?

OTHERS *[Whisper]* Cool.

ALAN I know the facts about how babies are made.

OTHERS Wow!

ALAN You are so lucky to have a groovy big brother. Males of my age group know *every*thing about sex. Okay?

OTHERS Okay.

ALAN Now the action kicks off with a guy's sporting equipment when Percy and his ging-gang goolies get set for a spot of honey-pot dive-bombing. Any questions so far?

OTHERS No.

ALAN Suddenly Private John Thomas springs to attention and shakes hands with the wife's best friend. Hi ho Silver, you're in like Flynn as you Bury the Bishop with a ding-dong cock-a-doodle-do. *[Aside]* Didja follow that?

OTHERS No.

BET *[Whispers]* Who's the wife's best friend?

OTHERS *[Not BET]* Shhhh.

ALAN It's time for some whip-crackin', knacker-lacquing, honky-bonky, bushy-whacking. Got it?

OTHERS Got it.

ALAN Hooley Dooley, bro, let's launch next year's fun on wheels. It's full-on fooling around with the horny forni-cation and nookie with the cookie of your dreams. Brother, you is in the groove. *[Pause one beat]* Yo!

OTHERS *[Mimic ALAN]* Yo!

[Blackout. Silence. Pause. Lights to normal and ALAN is grinning. The OTHERS are frozen, speechless. They don't know how to react. ALAN thinks he was brilliant]

ALAN So how about that for a whacky description of sex?

BRIAN I'm changing my will.

BET I've been going to church for years but I've never heard of burying the bishop.

LEONIE Alan, who in the world will understand all that slang?

ALAN *[Peeved]* Big brothers like me who know everything.

BRIAN Who *think* they know everything.

RUSTY And I thought sailors could swear.

JEAN Never mind, darling. We know you were only playing a role.

ALAN *[Back into entrepreneur mode]* Right, that's the first six chapters. Now I want you to talk to your friends and get at least ....

BRIAN *[Loud, definite]* No!

ALAN Father, come on.

BRIAN I am absolutely not talking about this to my friends.

ALAN But we need more whacky ways to talk about sex.

BRIAN I will never mention this to my friends.
BET You haven't got any.
JEAN Perhaps we should keep our insanity private, Alan.
ALAN *[Frustrated]* Aw, come on. This is a great idea but we need more content.
LEONIE Why don't you advertise?
BRIAN *[Shocked]* Advertise!?
LEONIE Tell the world you're publishing a book about crazy sex-education schemes and ask for contributions.
RUSTY She's brilliant; brains *and* beauty.
BET *[Reprimand]* Ivan!
ALAN Aw, come on, we've hit on a brilliant idea.
JEAN Somehow you and 'serious' don't go together, darling. But it's certainly been an eye-opener.
BET How will we top this for my next birthday?
RUSTY What about highland dancing with*out* the kilts?
[Phone rings. RUSTY moves to phone]
BRIAN That'll be the neighbours complaining about your orgy, Mother.
BET You started it.
LEONIE Next year we'll be counting the money from the sale of our book.
[OTHERS respond then go quiet as RUSTY answers the phone]
RUSTY *[Answers phone]* Hello …. Yes, she's here, Karen. Hold on. *[Holds phone for JEAN]* It's Karen from the sleepover. *[JEAN quickly to phone. Tension builds]*
JEAN Karen, hi! … *[Anxious]* Oh no! Is he all right? … When? … Oh thank goodness. ... Ah, no, make it here ... Number fourteen. ... Are you sure? ... It'll save us a trip. … Okay, thanks, that's great. See you soon. Bye. *[Phone replaced]*
BET Not bad news I hope?
JEAN They had a downpour and the tents were flooded. The kids are okay but they're already on their way home. *[Reaction]*
BRIAN Do they want us to collect Peter?
JEAN No, Karen's going to drop him here.
RUSTY That's fantastic. I can't wait to tell my little grandson all about tonight's party.
OTHERS *[As one. Loud]* No!
RUSTY *[Teasing]* It's a joke, Joyce.
BET The boy is far too young and tonight's debacle must never be mentioned.
BRIAN Debacle? You just said it was your best birthday ever.
BET I said it was strange, not good.
ALAN Oh come on, Whoosh, it's been wicked. And Father's now got half a dozen ways to explain sex to Peter.
LEONIE Alan, they're all ridiculous.
JEAN Your brother's not even eight. This whacky book, if it ever appears, is meant for adults.
ALAN Okay but let's pretend. Which of the six methods was the closest to being normal?
JEAN What's normal?
BRIAN None of them. They're all loopy. Even mine.
ALAN Answer the question. Which is the *closest* to being normal?

[Pause. OTHERS uncertain. It's a good question]

RUSTY Well mine was true.

BET So was mine.

BRIAN Mine was unique.

LEONIE Mine was scientifically accurate.

ALAN In a nonsensical language.

JEAN Nonsensical! Yours was mumbo-jumbo.

RUSTY Why don't we take a vote? *[OTHERS scoff]*

JEAN *[Don't be stupid]* Dad. The whole thing was a laugh. None of us took it seriously.

BRIAN I say we use first-past-the-post.

ALAN *[Finding slips of paper and pencils]* Nice one, Pater. *[Distributes materials]*

BET What's happening?

LEONIE Preferential might be better; less chance of a dead-heat.

JEAN This is insane. No normal adult would ever use our methods. *[Doesn't want to lose, sudden change of position]* Does anyone want to swap preferences?

ALAN Write the six methods in order of best to worst. Of course mine'll be first. *[Reaction]*

LEONIE In your dreams.

RUSTY *[Writing]* Top of the list … Rusty. *[OTHERS laugh/scoff and write]*

BRIAN Don't tell us, Father. It's a secret ballot.

BET Is there a prize?

JEAN Yes the winner does the dishes. *[Reaction]*

ALAN *[Has finished voting]* Right c'mon. Hand 'em in. *[Protests but slips are handed to ALAN]*

BRIAN And I demand a scrutineer.

ALAN *[Sorting votes on dining-table]* That's one for Brian … and one for Rusty.

LEONIE *[Goes to check the voting]* You'd better not be cheating, Alan.

ALAN And another for Brian and one for Jean … *[Has finished the count]* No simple majority. It's time for preferences. *[Reaction]*

RUSTY Why don't we call it a draw? We're all brilliant and we're all winners.

BRIAN Look, on a serious note .... *[Groans from OTHERS]*

JEAN Brian, please, no speeches.

BRIAN *[Determined to have his say]* I want to thank you all for helping me tonight.

RUSTY A pleasure, Son. My account's in the post.

BRIAN I have a new confidence in talking to Peter about sex.

JEAN Stop making such a big deal out of it. Anyone can do it.

ALAN Even your loudmouth son.

LEONIE *[At ALAN]* Not with all that slang you can't.

ALAN *[Back at her]* Well it's better than your medical mumbo-jumbo.

RUSTY *[The peacemaker]* Now, now, now.

BRIAN Excuse me, I was speaking.

BET I could tell him. *[OTHERS stop and stare]* A kind grandmother will give the facts without embarrassment or silly language.

BRIAN Thank you, Mother but Peter is *my* responsibility.

RUSTY Actually the best person to tell him is probably me.

OTHERS *[Scoff, laugh]* You?

BRIAN What, just like you *didn't* tell me?

RUSTY We all learn from our mistakes and Pete and I are the best of pals.
JEAN Yes but I'm the one he comes to with problems. I know him inside and out.
BRIAN Stop. This is ridiculous. Now you're all budding sex-educators.
BET What's the matter, son? Scared we might do a better job?
ALAN You're being challenged, Brian.
BRIAN *[At ALAN]* Show some respect.
JEAN You've got five enthusiastic teachers ready to take your place.
[Pause. They all stare at BRIAN who is speechless]
BRIAN I don't believe this.
FX *[Doorbell rings]*
RUSTY *[Heads to door]* That'll be young Pete. We can all tell him the facts of life ... *[Stops at door, turns back to them]* together.
OTHERS *[Suddenly shocked]* Together?
RUSTY *[At door]* Just decide who goes first? *[Grins then exits]*
[Sudden tension from OTHERS]
BET *[He can lead, we'll follow]* I think you should go first, Brian.
BRIAN Will you please mind your own business.
ALAN We're all family, Father.
JEAN So who *is* going first?
RUSTY *[From offstage]* Peter! Hello little man. Come in, come in. Have we got a story for you.
[Pause. Worried faces. Then in mild panic mode, OTHERS rise and exit in different directions. BRIAN could head to the door to greet his son, freeze then panic and run and duck down behind the settee. BLACKOUT or the curtain falls quickly]

[MUSIC begins and cast re-enter to take their bows]

Ends

Performing Rights

If you wish to stage *Betty's Birthday*, you must obtain permission in writing before you commence rehearsals. A show application form can be obtained from Fox Plays.

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Another Comedy from Fox Plays

Agatha Crispie

85 minutes, 9 roles [5F/4M] and 2 male and 2 female roles can be doubled. One set.

"Agatha Crispie was an outstanding success. We were delighted with your excellent script" **Gundaroo Dramatic Society**

"The cast found Agatha Crispie fun to stage and the audiences received it very well. Although most of the references to Christie's mysteries went over the younger heads, the older members of the audience found them hilarious" **Newman College**

"Our audiences thoroughly enjoyed our season of Agatha Crispie" **Barossa Valley Drama Society**

Delightful spoof on Dame Agatha and her wonderful detectives Miss Marple and Hercules Poirot.

Agatha Christie and her mystery stories are well-known. But who has heard of her contemporary, the completely unknown writer of mystery stories, Agatha Crispie?

In the south of England not long after WW1, Agatha Crispie scribbles away. Her second husband, Archibald Walloman is big on digging. He owns half of Cornwall. Agatha's mother-in-law and step-daughter are outstanding snobs and regard Agatha's literary efforts as nothing short of scandalous. Even Archibald demands that his wife should attend to dinner parties and flower arranging.

Only Pimms, Agatha's long-serving tipsy maid stands by the unpublished author.

One day a well-known writer, Dorothy S. Layers, pays a visit and Archibald is bowled over. But horror of horrors. The lights go out and Archie is left with a body in the library. A body with a peg on its nose. Archie rushes out to get the others but when he returns the body is missing. Agatha is fascinated and wants the police to solve the crime. The others are furious. Absolutely no police.

They compromise and the little old spinster from the village is invited to investigate. Miss Mary Mead has a reputation for solving crimes without making a fuss. Well Miss Mead does solve the mystery and the results are shocking. So shocking that Agatha is hounded into submission by her overbearing relatives. Does this mean Agatha's classics will never see the light of day? Will the world never read *Murder on the Blaunau-Festinniog Express? Witness for the Defence? The Rat Trap?*

The pressure is too much. Agatha disappears. It takes a week for her family to admit she's gone. But where? Pimms is concerned about the ashes in the fireplace. Oh no! Agatha's been murdered! Or worse. She's done herself in! The ashes are scattered in the rose garden. Everyone is sworn to secrecy. Absolutely no scandal!

The family are furious. How dare she embarrass them like this! What can they do? Archie has recently written letters to various people. Agatha was to post the letters before she disappeared. The plot thickens. The new butler arrives. His name is Hercules Grey-Cells and he's from Belgium. He examines the ashes in the rose garden. This butler is more like a detective. Then Chief Inspector Bland from Scotland Yard arrives. This is too much. And when Miss Mary Mead returns, the family are in a spin.

It all races to a perfect ending with the goodies winning the day and all mysteries solved. It's a very funny play. If you know anything about Agatha Christie and some of her famous characters, the play is hilarious.

Excellent reviews from seasons in Britain and Australia.

Free preview script at www.foxplays.com