

SHARON

A one act play by Phil Lewis

SHORTENED **SAMPLE** VERSION

For full version please contact:
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Approx: 55:00 mins with scene changes and entrances/exits.

Cast:

SHARON:	20+
ROSEMARY:	20+
DUVALL:	30+
NICKI:	18+
JOHN:	30+

Scenes:

Scene 1. Mid morning - Friday -	time: 10.00
Scene 2. Later the same morning.	time: 11.30
Scene 3. During lunch -	time: 12.35
Scene 4. Later that afternoon -	time: 14.45
Scene 5. Later that afternoon -	time: 15.00
Scene 6. Later that afternoon -	time: 16.00
Scene 7. Much later that afternoon -	time: 17.30

(THE SCENE IS A MODERN OFFICE. SHARON HAS A TABLE AND CHAIR, CENTER STAGE. ON THE TABLE IS A TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD SYSTEM, A KEYBOARD, COMPUTER (CAN BE UNDER THE TABLE) AND SCREEN. (IF POSSIBLE, SHARON WEARS A CORDLESS HEADSET FOR TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS. THIS ALLOWS HER TO FILE AND MOVE AROUND THE OFFICE WHILE TALKING ON THE PHONE. SHE HAS THE USUAL PARAPHERNALIA OF OFFICE SECRETARIES, 'IN' AND 'OUT' TRAY, NOTEPAD, ROLADEX, ETC.

IN A VERY VISIBLE PLACE IS A TRAY CLEARLY MARKED 'DUVALL'. THIS IS THE FULLEST TRAY OF ALL.

SHE SPEAKS AND PERFORMS HER JOB WITHOUT PAUSING, OR SECOND THOUGHT. SHE IS SUPER EFFICIENT WHICH BELIES HER APPARENT 'ESSEX' BACKGROUND.

THERE IS A FILING CABINET IN THE CORNER OF THE OFFICE, STAGE RIGHT. ALSO IN THE OFFICE IS ANOTHER DESK, WITH MISCELLANEOUS OFFICE ARTICLES.

SEATED AT THE OTHER DESK, STAGE LEFT, IS ROSEMARY, WHO IS DILIGENTLY WORKING HER WAY THROUGH A PILE OF FINANCIAL REPORTS. SHE HAS A TELEPHONE ON HER DESK, BUT NO COMPUTER.

TO STAGE RIGHT IS THE ENTRANCE TO DUVALL'S OFFICE. TO STAGE LEFT THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE OFFICE.

IF POSSIBLE, SOME SORT OF CLOCK REPRESENTATION (EITHER PROJECTED, OR A PRACTICAL WHICH IS ALTERED DURING SCENE CHANGES)

SCENE 1. MID MORNING - FRIDAY - TIME: 10.00

(OPENING SOUND. CAPTIAL RADIO MORNING SHOW. THERE IS THE SOUND OF A TELEPHONE RINGING AS THE LIGHTS COME UP. FADE RADIO EFFECT. SHARON ANSWERS THE TELEPHONE)

SHARON: Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youu? Bob, hi.... Sure..... Natch. I'll tell him, byeee.

(WITHOUT PAUSING FOR BREATH SHE CONTINUES A CONVERSATION WITH ROSEMARY, WHO IS BARELY LISTENING. WHILE TALKING, SHARON IS DIALING ANOTHER NUMBER)

....weren't going to see 'er at all. So.....I says, 'well, Gillian, well?' (INTO THE PHONE) Bob Dawson says the price is okay and to send 'im the quote officially....No probs, byeee. (TO ROSEMARY).....and she says 'well what, Shas? I tell ya I was gettin' really.....(SHE ANSWERS AN INCOMING CALL) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youuu? Jude, hi..... Nuffin', why?Great, see ya at seven firty..... I dunno. I'll ask.....(TO ROSEMARY) She jus' wouldn't tell me, ya know. (ROSEMARY NODS, ABSTRACTLY). So I asked 'er straight out. I said, Gillian are ya.....(INTO THE PHONE) Mary? Jude and I's going art for a drink Sat'dy. Comin', or what?Great! See you artside ya 'ouse, then. Byeee. (TO ROSEMARY AS THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN).....Are ya seeing Bob, or what? Do ya no what she said?

ROSE: No. What?

SHARON: (INTO PHONE). Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youuu? Triciar, hi.No, what.....never. I say. So what did 'e say.....? Cheeky git! Wait till I see 'im. Tell ya what....I'll give him a fax an' an arf. Leave it wiv me.No prob. Byeee. (TO ROSEMARY). What wiv the way e's treated ya, Gills, and the way e's gone bangin' on about ya. (SHE RAPIDLY TYPES AS SHE SPEAKS). Give me a break Gills, I said. Give us all a break. After all, if she were any more stupid, she'd 'ave to be watered twice a week. Do ya Know, she told me one day, that she kept going to the front door. Back 'an forf. Why? I says. 'Cause my computer said I 'ave mail, she says. Daft Ca! So.....Chuck 'im. I told 'er straight. So....the followin' day she calls me at 'ome and says she's only bloody dun it. Great, says I, quite relieved, as ya can imagine. Great, I says. (SHE HITS THE KEYS THAT SENDS THE FAX AND DIALS ANOTHER PHONE NUMBER) Then she 'its me wiv it. She's only goin' art with Darren, aint she? Darren, my ex. Not chuffed. I was not chuffed, I can tell ya. So...I says. (INTO PHONE) Hello, Triciar.Fax gone. That'll keep 'im quiet, eh?No prob. Byeee. (TO ROSEMARY) Nice one, Gills, I said. So I get 'er off the fone and gives Darren a bell, don' !! Not for what ya think, na. I weren't gonna 'ave a go at 'im or nuffin. Na, I just want'd to tell 'im that it were all right by me. (INTO THE PHONE) Jude? Yeah that's fine. Mary an' me will see ya at abart seven. Byee. (TO ROSEMARY) Don' get me wrong, Darren 'as 'is bad points, an nat, (PHONE RINGS AGAIN) but 'e's all right is Darren. But I know 'ow sensitive 'e is and fought I'd put 'is mind at rest. (INTO PHONE) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youuu? Bernie!!!Stop that, you're very norty. Oo did ya want?Na, 'e's not busy at the moment. I'll put ya frew..... Stop it, you'll get me the sack you will. 'Ere ya go.

(SHE TRANSFERS THE CALL AND MOVES TO THE FILING CABINET AND GETS OUT A THICK FILE, RETURNS TO THE DESK WHERE SHE PLACES IT IN FULL SIGHT OF THE AUDIENCE. SHE TALKS CONTINUOUSLY)

I knew he'd be feelin' guil'y, Darren ...an 'e was. So after that, 'e was all right too. I just fink she's a little.....well, got the six pack, but lacks the plastic thingy to 'old 'em together. Know what I mean! 'E needs someone a little...brighter. Where was I wiv this?....oh yea. That was over two years ago na, an what I was gonna say was, they've just 'ad their first kiddy. Gel it was, Trixy. Bloody silly name.....

(DUVALL ENTERS IN A SLIGHTLY AGITATED STATE AND INTERRUPTS THE CONVERSATION)

DUVALL: Get me the Johnston file.....

(WITHOUT LOOKING UP OR INTERRUPTING HER CONVERSATION SHARON PICKS UP THE FILE SHE HAS JUST RETRIEVED FROM THE CABINET AND HANDS IT TO DUVALL, WHO TAKES IT WITHOUT A WORD.

DUVALL EXITS TO HIS OFFICE)

SHARON: if you ask me. Trixy! But they're 'appy, I suppose that means a lot.

ROSE: And you're all right with that? I mean, your ex-boyfriend and best friend, getting married?

SHARON: (DIALING A NUMBER) Na. They ain't married, or nuffin. But I'm fine wiv that, honest. Since I found Don, I couldn't be 'appier. Honest. I tell ya. (INTO PHONE) Hello, Mr. Wilson? Yeah, me, Sharon.Yeah, I know, recognise me voice anywhere. (SHE LAUGHS). How are ya?Great, ta. I expect Mr. Duvall will wanna word wiv ya in a minute. 'Ang on, 'ere we go. (SHE SWITCHES THROUGH TO ANOTHER CALL) Yes, Mr. Duvall, I 'ave 'im on the line for ya..... cos I jus' knew ya would. Ta. Go ahead Mr. Wilson..... Yeah, you too, ta. (TO ROSEMARY) I loved Darren an nat, but he weren't really the right bloke for me, know what I mean? (INTO PHONE) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youu? Mr. Richards, hi. How are youuu?Great, fanks. How can I help youu?Really? When did ya want it?Yesterday? I'm sure it has gone. Let me check. (SHE PUTS THE CALL ON HOLD).

(WHILE SHE IS TALKING SHE LOOKS FOR AND FINDS THE MISSING DOCUMENT IN THE BOTTOM OF THE 'DUVALL' TRAY AND MAKES A FACE AT ROSEMARY WHO SMILES BACK. SHARON MAKES ANOTHER CALL)

SHARON: Roddy, urgent post needs sending. Now please. Prompto mondo..... Ta.

(SHE TRANSFERS THE ORIGINAL CALL BACK TO HER HEADSET. MEANWHILE, SHE PLACES A COMPLIMENT SLIP AND THE DOCUMENT INTO THE ENVELOPE AND WRITES THE ADDRESS ON THE FRONT, APPLYING A STAMP. ALL THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED WHILE THE CONVERSATION IS GOING ON)

SHARON: 'Ow's the wife, Mr. Richards?Did she?That's all right. Mr. Duvall luvs to send 'is best customers flarrs on the wive's birtfdey..... No probs. An' the kids?.....Great. Na, not me. Not yet anyways.....Yeah, while I'm young an' nat. Ta.

(SHARON PLACES THE FINISHED ENVELOPE INTO THE CLEARLY MARKED 'POST' TRAY)

- SHARON:** Yes, the information you wan'ed has definitely bin sent, Mr. Richards..... Look, I tell ya what. If you don' get it first fing tomorra, I'll bring a copy over meself. Okay?Fine. Bye. (HANGS UP) Sorted.
- ROSE:** He actually sent flowers to a client?
- SHARON:** Naa. I did that. 'E wouldn't remember anyfing.
- ROSE:** Doesn't Duvall ever get anything done in there?
- SHARON:** Rarely. Not while e's got me, eh?
- ROSE:** He doesn't deserve you, Sharon. He takes advantage of you. Too much.
- SHARON:** 'Es alright.
- ROSE:** He's not very well liked in the rest of the company. I suppose you do know that? He's regarded as having a room temperature I.Q. He's holding you back.....promotion wise.
- SHARON:** Ya gotta look on the uvver side too, ya no, Rosey. 'E just lets me get on wiv it. 'E never bovvers me, or nuffin'. I'm kept busy. I never get bored, an' nat. There's a great element of freedom, ya know!
- ROSE:** That's because you do all YOUR work. And HIS! You should be doing his job and getting paid his exorbitant salary too. He just lets all the work pile up, dumps it on to you and thinks you pass it on to someone else to do it. I'm sure he's no real idea that it's you doing all his work for him. You really should make him aware of what you really do!
- SHARON:** Naaa. It's jus' a job, Rosey. I jus' 'ave....a knack, that's all. Jus' a job in it? I 'ate gettin' bored an nat. 'Ere we go. It's 'im again. (Into the phone) Mr. Duvall..... Certainly..... Right away..... Yes I'll be right in.

(THE TWO GIRLS LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND SIMULTANEOUSLY SPEAK).

SHARON & ROSEMARY

He wants 'is (his) coffee.....(Na!) Now!

(FADE TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 2. LATER THE SAME MORNING. TIME: 11.30

(LIGHTS COME UP ON THE TWO GIRLS IN THE SAME POSITION. THE 'IN' TRAY IS EMPTIER AND THE 'DUVALL' TRAY IS NOW PILED HIGHER)

- SHARON:** Well, Darren and Gills' daughta, Trixi's Godfather, Arnold, rents this small flat up in Dulwich. 'As dun for years apparently. Well, the landlord, 'Arry somebody or uvver, owns quite of few of these 'ouses. Quite well off, actually. So....'e knows alota people wiv money, like. Rich nobs, an nat. According to Darren, 'e knows fousands of people what are rich. Na then, one of these blokes owns a little bit of land near the docks. Wapping, is it? I dunno. Anyway, near the docks on the Thames sumwhere. Bought it for peanuts and don't give a monkeys.....So anovver of 'Arry's mates decides to build on it. No 'ouses, na. Not offices, na, but a bleeding gymnasium, don 'e! What's more, you'll larf at this, it only makes 'im a fortune, don it! Didn' you used to go to a gym?

ROSE: (STOPS WORKING FOR MOMENT TO TALK) For a while yes. It cost me nearly three hundred quid and I didn't lose a pound. Apparently you have to show up. My attitude is, no pain, no pain.

SHARON: (LAUGHS) I 'ate all that. I 'ave to exercise in the mornin' before me brain figures art what I'm doin'. If God meant us to touch are toes, e'd 'ave put 'em further up are body.

ROSE: Now, the only reason I'd take up jogging was to hear heavy breathing again. But, I do need to feel fit.

SHARON: You'll find somebody else, Rosey. Another dad for Michael. Soon 'an all.

ROSE: (SHRUGGING AWAY HER THOUGHTS AND CONTINUING WITH HER WORK) You were saying?

SHARON: Oh, yeah. So 'Arry's mate goes an' builds more and more. Each gettin' bigger than the one before, until 'e's got 'imself a huge bleeding Leisure Centre, norf of Islington. By na, see, 'e's got 'imself what is called a business empire. Course, the guy's as thick as two short 'uns, but 'e's megga rich and 'is ego won't let 'im stop. So...'e carries on buying up land, building and selling, and more building, an all that malarkey. Well, 'e only goes and buys up the block of flats what's rented by Gill and Darren, don 'e! So 'eres (here's) Darren talking to this bloke, what owns 'arf of London. Now Darren's a talker, you met 'im once, didn't ya? Yeah. June nineteenf, coupla years ago. Remember? He came 'ere to pick me up and you'd just started. Remember?

ROSE: Vaguely.....

SHARON: So.....Darren says to, I fink 'is name's Bert, or sumfin', Bert, 'ow do ya manage to run your business empire, mate, on yer own like? Bert says to Darren, na, I've got loads of bods doin' all the work for me. So Darren says, this'll get ya, Rosey, I know a bird that'll run anyone's empire for 'em. Me, Rosey, 'e was talking about me! That's my Darren.....

(DUVALL ENTERS AND SPEAKS ACROSS THE TWO GIRLS CONVERSATION)

DUVALL: Sharon, what's the time of my.....

SHARON: (BEFORE HE CAN FINISH) 3.30, ya due on the course. Nine 'oles only, mind. 7.30 ya've drinks with Robinson, Taylor and Varney. Dave, Tom and Harry. 9.30 ya expected at HOME! and tomorra ya've a meetin' at 9.30 with the people from Dollards.

DUVALL: (SLIGHTLY EFFACED). I know. I meant with regard to Celia.....

SHARON: 'Er birfdey's next Tuesdee. I've bought a card and ordered flars. I've also booked ya a table for 7.30 at Romanos. I 'ad to cancel ya poker night. Ya need to read this lot too. (SHE HANDS HIM A PILE OF DISTINCTIVE PAPERWORK WHICH HE TAKES CASUALLY). It's IMPORTANT! Stuff in there ya need ta know!

DUVALL: Right. Okay.

(HE TURNS AWAY BEMUSED, TRYING TO REMEMBER IT ALL. HE FLICKS THROUGH THE PILE DISINTERESTEDLY. GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT HE ISN'T GOING TO READ IT.

(DUVALL EXITS TO HIS OFFICE)

SHARON: (CONTINUING AS IF NOT INTERRUPTED) Well, to cut a long story short, an nat, this bloke says to Darren, get 'er to giv me a call'. Bert only givs Darren 'is business card and Darren givs it to me. Tells me to call the bloke, quick as ya like. So I did. (TAKING A CALL) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youu?.....Mr. G. 'Ow the devil are ya?.....Great fanks. 'An the good lady wife? Good.....Really? Common that is. Me Gran's going deaf. At least that's what me Grandad said. 'E told me the ovver day that he stood behind 'er and said, alright, sweet'art? She didn' answer. 'E moved nearer and said it again. Alright sweet'art? Still no reply. An' 'e got right up close behin' her and said it again, alright sweet'art? She turned rand and said, FOR THE FIRD TIME, YES I'M ALRIGHT! (LAUGHS AT HER JOKE)...Do I? Well fanks.....It makes me day talkin' to you, too. Did ya want to speak wiv 'im? I'll put ya straight frew. Byeeee. (TRANSFERS THE CALL)

ROSE: So, what happened?

SHARON: Oh, yeah. I went to this enourmus building, Stratford way, for an intavue. I never did meet this bloke Bert, but I met one of 'is secretaries. Janice. Very nice gel. Very posh looking, but comes from near my way. We got on like an 'ouse on fire, we did. I tell ya, I never fought it was an intavue at all. We 'ad a nice chat an' I went 'ome. Well, a week later I get's this letter offerin' me a job as P.A. to a Mr. Davidson and can I start as soon as poss.

ROSE: Wow! Well done. You must have impressed them then?

SHARON: Well I dunno 'ow! I only met this Janice the once.

ROSE: What's the name of this company?

SHARON: Oh....Davmark International. I fink.

ROSE: That sounds familiar.

(ROSEMARY LOOKS THROUGH HER SHEETS OF FINANCIAL FIGURES)

Yes. Here it is. Davmark international. Well....they're one of our main branch's largest customers.

SHARON: I've never 'erd of them before the uver day!

ROSE: Yes.....I see. Davmark is the Group company. Their subsidiaries are.....Williams and Co....

SHARON: Oh.....Rebecarr...I speak to 'er often.

ROSE:Romulous Limited.....

SHARON: Bernie! The cheeky sod.

ROSE: Dane and Son.....

SHARON: Greta and John. Lovely couple them.

ROSE: (LOOKING UP) The list goes on. You seem to know them all. More importantly, they all know you.

SHARON: Well....what'd ya know!

ROSE: I think you've impressed more people than you realise, Shas. All except one that is. (SHE LOOKS TOWARDS DUVALL'S OFFICE)

SHARON: Yeah. Can't win 'em all.

ROSE: So?

SHARON: So what?

ROSE: Have you accepted the offer of the job?

SHARON: Naah.

ROSE: Why not?

SHARON: I dunno. Jus' didn't fancy it. I only did it for a larf. Keep Darren 'appy, an nat. Let 'im fink 'es bein' 'elpful.

ROSE: You only went for the interview because you thought it would please Darren?

SHARON: Yeah.

ROSE: So you're not interested in the job?

SHARON: Nah.....(THE PHONE RINGS) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youuu?..... I'm afraid 'es tied up until tamorra. Leave a message?..... I'll tell 'im.....Yes I will. Byee. (STILL TYPING) 'Ere, I bet ya didn't no, the words 'stewardesses' and 'reverberated' are the longes' words typed wiv only the left hand. An' the longest word typed usin' only the right hand is, 'lollipop.' Funny that, i'n it?

ROSE: No, I didn't. Seriously, you deserve a better job than this, Sharon. I'd take Bert's offer if I was you.

SHARON: Naa. Not interest'd. Must go pee and then off for me lunch. I've got to take a few hours off this afternoon. I 'aven't seen much of ya since ya bin back, 'ave I? I've sumfin' to tell ya later. Sumfin' that'll surprise ya.

(SHARON EXITS AS THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 3. DURING LUNCH - TIME: 12.35

(ROSEMARY IS EATING HER LUNCH WHILE WORKING. SHE IS ALONE AS DUVALL ENTERS FROM HIS OFFICE WITH A PILE OF PAPERS. HE THROWS THEM INTO THE 'IN' TRAY AND STOPS AS ROSEMARY SPEAKS)

ROSE: Mr. Duvall?

DUVALL: Yes?

ROSE: Has Sharon been put forward for promotion yet?

DUVALL: What? Oh, Sharon, yes.

ROSE: She works very hard.

DUVALL: Yes. What are YOU working on at the moment?

ROSE: Final accounts for year end.

DUVALL: Good. Profits up on last year?

ROSE: Looks that way, so far.

DUVALL: Good. (TURNS TO GO).

ROSE: I don't think you realise how much background work Sharon does for you, Mr. Duvall. I think she needs reassurance she's appreciated here.

DUVALL: Really? I think you should get on with your work and allow me to get on with mine.

ROSE: Yes, Mr. Duvall. I just thought you might like to know that if you're not careful, you may well lose her. That's all.

DUVALL: She hasn't complained.

ROSE: She's not the type. You know that. That doesn't mean she's not.....

DUVALL: Listen, Miss Squires.....

ROSE: It's Robins. Robins!

DUVALL:Sharon has one of the premiere jobs in this building, working for one of the most successful Directors. Me. For what she does, she's extremely well paid. Whereas I appreciate your concern, I'd be grateful if everyone just got on with their own jobs and left me alone to deal with mine.

ROSE: I was just trying to help.....

DUVALL: You've just had several months on maternity leave and I suggest you've a fair bit of work to catch up. I granted your Department Head permission to use this office space as a favour, but if you're going to be disruptive to my staff and have an adverse effect on my business, you'll be out on your ear. Understood?

ROSE: I was only trying to

DUVALL: I really don't care what you were trying to do. My business is MY business. I strongly resent outside interference.

ROSE: I didn't mean to

DUVALL: I remain the most successful Director here because ofWHAT, do you think?

ROSE: Sharon.....?

DUVALL: Sharon! Miss Squires....

(SHE TRIES TO CORRECT HIM ON HER NAME AGAIN, BUT HE CARRIES ON TOO QUICKLY)

Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak. Sharon is not the issue here. This department is successful because I know what I'm doing and get on with it. I don't interfere in.....(WAVES A HAND AT THE PILE OF PRINT OUT ON HER DESK) finance, other departments. I sell. I make a fortune for this company.

ROSE: I'm sorry. I.....

DUVALL: Sharon is my SECRETARY. She does what I tell her. Nothing more, nothing less. Do you have a problem with that, MISS Squires?

ROSE: Put that way....no.

DUVALL: Good. I don't want to hear about this again. Understood.

ROSE: Yes, Mr. Duvall.

DUVALL: I don't want Sharon getting ideas above her station. Especially from junior clerks like you. Get on with your work.

ROSE: (STUNNED AND INSULTED) But, I never.....

DUVALL: Conversation over.

(DUVALL EXITS.

ROSEMARY STIFLES HER ANGER AND IS INTERRUPTED BY NICKI ENTERING THE OFFICE.

SHE SMILES GRANDLY AT ROSEMARY AND WALKS TO SHARON'S DESK. SHE PLACES HER MOBILE PHONE CAREFULLY ON THE DESK, HER LARGE CARRIER BAG ON THE FLOOR AND SITS DOWN. SHE TAKES A PERFUNCTORY LOOK AROUND THE OFFICE AND SETTLES BACK IN THE CHAIR)

NICKI: Hi. I'm the temp, NICKI.

ROSE: Hello, Rosemary. Temp? For whom?

NICKI: Well apparently Sharon called downstairs and asked if anyone was free to take over while she was out this afternoon. (WRINKLES HER NOSE AT THE SMELL) Nice perfume, but must she marinate in it? Busy here is it?

ROSE: Sharon's busy, yes.

NICKI: Right. I'm only here for a few hours. All right?

ROSE: I suppose so. I didn't know anything about a temp!

(DUVALL ENTERS AND LOOKS AT THE WOMAN SETTling INTO SHARON'S SEAT)

DUVALL: Where's Sharon?

NICKI: She's out for a few hours.

DUVALL: Who are you?

NICKI: I'm NICKI. I'm temping for a week in Sales.

DUVALL: Why're you here?

NICKI: Sharon wanted someone to cover while she was out. I think.

DUVALL: Fine. Here are four letters that need an immediate response.

NICKI: I don't do typing.

DUVALL: Well they're urgent. Perhaps you could give the names on each of these a call and tell them a letter will be forthcoming.

NICKI: Do I look like a people person? I don't do receptionist work, either.

DUVALL: What ARE you here for then?

NICKI: I told you, just to cover for Sharon.

DUVALL: (EXASPERATED) Give her these as soon as she gets back, then.

NICKI: Sure.

(DUVALL EXITS, MILDLY ANNOYED AND THE TEMP WINKS AT THE OPEN-MOUTHED ROSEMARY)

NICKI: You have to lay the ground rules, you see. If they know you're not going to do it from the start, they don't give much to you at all. Works every time.

(SHE SETTLES DOWN AND BEGINS TO READ A MAGAZINE. THE PHONE BEGINS TO RING AND SHE IGNORES IT, UNTIL ROSEMARY FINALLY SPEAKS)

ROSE: Aren't you going to answer that?

NICKI: Oh, yeah. (SLOWLY SHE PICKS UP THE PHONE). Hello?No it isn't.No she isn't..... I don't know..... I'll tell her.

(SHE REPLACES THE RECEIVER AND CONTINUES READING)

ROSE: Who was it?

NICKI: Some bloke called Morten, or something.

ROSE: Was it urgent?

NICKI: I don't know. They wanted to speak to Sharon. I told them she wasn't here and I'd tell her they called.

(ROSEMARY SHAKES HER HEAD AND TRIES TO WORK. NICKI BEGINS TO TALK AND THEN GETS IRRITATED AS THE PHONE CALLS INTERRUPTS HER CONVERSATION)

NICKI: I like your hair.

ROSE: Thank you.

NICKI: You should try it up.

ROSE: I do sometimes.

NICKI: It'd suit you. I was a hairdresser once, you know.

ROSE: I can believe it. How long for?

NICKI: Ohh.....six months. At least. Didn't like it.

ROSE: (RESIGNING HERSELF TO HER CONSTANT CHATTER) Why?

NICKI: Bloody hard work. Sweeping up, washing hair. More bloody sweeping up. (PUTTING DOWN THE MAGAZINE FOR A MOMENT) Do you know, they never let me cut a single hair. Not a strand. Waste of time it was.

(THE PHONE RINGS AND NICKI RELUCTANTLY ANSWERS IT AFTER A STARE FROM ROSEMARY)

NICKI: Hello?.....I really don't know.....No, I don't, sorry.....Okay. (SHE HANGS UP).

ROSE: Then you went temping?

NICKI: Nooo. Let me see.....Pizza delivery. Kept falling off my bike. You should've seen the state of my knees and elbows. Do you know the punters rarely gave me a tip, either.

ROSE: That's probably because you were late delivering the Pizzas!

NICKI: That's what the manager said, so I told him where to get off his bike.

ROSE: After that?

NICKI: He sacked me!

ROSE: No, what job did have after that?

NICKI: Well.....I worked for a while in the Post Office.

ROSE: Sorting?

NICKI: Delivery.

ROSE: Let me guess....kept falling off your bike?

(SHE IS TRYING NOT TO LAUGH. NICKI SEES HER MIRTH AND DECIDES TO CONTINUE READING)

Then what?

NICKI: (DECIDING SHE WAS SERIOUS) You really want to know?

ROSE: Yes. You've got me interested.

NICKI: Nothing.

ROSE: Ahh...then into temping.

NICKI: Sort of. I have a friend who does temping and she put in a word for me.

ROSE: So you CAN type, use a dictaphone, that sort of thing?

NICKI: Not really.

ROSE: Don't you think you should learn if you're going to be temping?

NICKI: Stepping stones. Temping is purely a stepping stone to my next career move. I won't be temping for much longer, you know.

ROSE: I can believe it.

NICKI: No. I'm doing a business course to get a diploma and letters after my name. Then I'll get a good job and earn what these lot in Sales are earning. I've seen them and what they do. I can do that little and get paid a lot too. It's easy.

ROSE: Really!

NICKI: Sure.

ROSE: Career minded are you?

NICKI: Very.

ROSE: So you're NOW working on becoming a professional Secretary?

NICKI: Being a Secretary is not a career! Get real. This is just to get me over the financial hump, until I get my real credentials.

(THE PHONE INTERRUPTS AND NICKI SNATCHES IT UP)

Hello!.....no.....no.....no.....goodbye.

(PUTS THE PHONE DOWN)

ROSE: Surely passing exams takes hard work, effort and time?

NICKI: Not really. They're not very bright here, are they? I mean, if THEY can do it, I know I could.

ROSE: That's not necessarily the case. Although people may not seem to make much effort in their jobs, they've normally worked hard and gained a great deal of experience to get where they are. It's experience that make it look easy.

NICKI: This lot! I don't think so.

(THE PHONE RINGS AND NICKI LIFTS IT UP AND DROPS IT AGAIN)

ROSE: (BECOMING MORE INCREDULOUS) What exams have you got to take?

NICKI: I don't know yet.

ROSE: Then what courses are you taking?

(NICKI RUMMAGES IN HER BAG AND PULLS OUT A FEW MANUALS)

NICKI: This one?

ROSE: (READING FROM HER DESK) That'll challenge you.

NICKI: You've done this too?

ROSE: Years ago.

NICKI: And this is as far as you've progressed? Still pushing paper?

ROSE: I'm not sure.....

NICKI: Once I've passed this (WAVES HEAVY MANUAL), I'm going to demand the best job and make them pay me a huge salary. It's my fool-proof plan.

ROSE: (UNDER HER BREATH) Nothing is fool-proof to a sufficiently talented fool. (TO NICKI) I think you may have to adjust your ambition to meet your abilities.

NICKI: All you need is confidence, a bit of chat and a smile. It works every time, I can tell you.

ROSE: Really?

NICKI: Really!

(THE PHONE RINGS AND NICKI SNATCHES IT UP)

NICKI: (IRRITABLE) Yes?.....I've really no idea.....Then I'm sorry.....Yes, call back later. (SHE REPLACES THE RECEIVER WITH SOME AGITATION)

ROSE: Well, good luck with the exam. I suggest you spend the spare time you've created for yourself to revise your course material.

NICKI: It's all so boring!

ROSE: In which case, how can you expect to pass?

(THE PHONE BEGINS TO RING AND THIS TIME GOES UNANSWERED)

There won't be anyone in the examination room that will listen to your chat, or look at your smile. However confident you may feel.

NICKI: Look.....just because you've done nothing with your exam results, don't think others won't. All right?

ROSE: Have it your way.

NICKI: I will. You'll see.

ROSE: In the meantime, I suggest you answer the phone and try and keep the one job you do have.

NICKI: (RELUCTANTLY PICKS UP THE RECEIVER) Hello..... No. I don't know..... Yes, all right..... Yes..... Yes..... Okay. I'm sorry, but I'm trying hard here to

imagine you with a personality. Bye. (PUTS DOWN THE RECEIVER) Too many freaks and not enough circuses!

(SHE CONTINUES WITH THE MAGAZINE, IGNORING ROSEMARY WHO HAS RETURNED TO HER WORK)

ROSE: (AFTER A MOMENT'S SILENCE) When did Sharon ask you to temp for her?

NICKI: This morning. Why?

ROSE: She asked for you? Specifically for you?

NICKI: (GRINNING, PROUDLY) Yeah. By name.

ROSE: Ah..... it all makes sense now.

(FADE TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 4. LATER THAT AFTERNOON - TIME: 14.45

(SHARON ENTERS FROM HER BREAK AND NICKI PICKS UP HER PHONE AND BAG IMMEDIATELY. SHE MOVES TO LEAVE)

NICKI: Right, I'm off now then. You've got an easy job here, Sharon. Nothing ever happens. It's been so quiet compared to Sales. In fact, this day's been a total waste of makeup. Byeeee.

(NICKI EXITS WITH A SMIRK DIRECTED TOWARDS ROSEMARY, WHO HAS HER HEAD DOWN WORKING. NICKI ALSO WAVES AWAY THE SMELL OF SHARON'S PERFUME AS IF DISTASTEFUL. SHARON LOOKS AT THE PILE IN THE IN-TRAY)

SHARON: What did she mean by 'quiet'? There's a pile of work 'ere she aint finished!

ROSE: She hasn't FINISHED anything, because she never STARTED anything.

(SHARON SITS AT HER DESK AND PICKS UP THE LIST OF MESSAGES, SMILES AND SIGHS)

SHARON: What's she bin doin'?

ROSE: Her nails, mostly.

(SHARON DIALS A NUMBER)

SHARON: Mr. Duvall, I'm back now. Okay. (HANGS UP. TO ROSEMARY) 'E'll be right art.

(SHARON FLICKS THROUGH THE NEW PILE OF WORK AND BEGINS TO PROCESS IT)

ROSE: Where do they get these people from?

SHARON: What people?

ROSE: The temps. She was useless. At least she brings joy whenever she leaves the room.

SHARON: Can't get the staff these days, eh?

ROSE: She was really aggravating. Her arrogance, her expectation of a good job and high salary without even knowing where to begin!

(DUVALL ENTERS WITH ANOTHER PILE OF FOLDERS)

SHARON: She's in for a lifetime of disappointment then, in't she? Ya 'ave to pity 'er don't ya? Mind you, "The fuchaa belongs to those 'oo believe in the beau'y of their dreams." I read that sumwhere.

DUVALL: Good! You're back at last. I need all these and the previous lot before close of play, Sharon.

SHARON: Why didn't ya get the temp to do 'em all?

DUVALL: She doesn't type. Apparently.

SHARON: She does for Sales. That's why I asked if she could cover for me. I 'new we was busy. Now I've gotta do it all meself, wiv no time left in the day!

DUVALL: Then you shouldn't have time off when we're busy, should you? I'll be in my office.

SHARON: I'll try an' get 'em all done.

DUVALL: No, Sharon. They WILL all be completed!

(DUVALL EXITS QUICKLY)

ROSE: He gets worse. He really does.

SHARON: 'E's only comfortable wiv me doin' 'is work. That's all. 'E don' mean anyfin' by it. 'E's jus' 'aving a bad day today, that's all. Between you an' me, 'e's jus' lost a big contract an' e's not an 'appy bunny. 'E only needs an 'undred grands worf of business to meet 'is target for the year.

ROSE: Sometimes I wonder whether you're a saint, or just stupid, Sharon.

SHARON: How about Saint Stupid? (THEY BOTH LAUGH). Anyways, 'e's gotta surprise comin' to 'im later today.

ROSE: What do you mean?

SHARON: Course, ya don't know do ya. What wiv you bein' on maternity leave an nat.

(THE PHONE RINGS AND INTERRUPTS THEIR CONVERSATION)

SHARON: Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help you?

(SHARON LOOKS QUICKLY AT ROSEMARY WHO HAS RETURNED TO HER WORK. SHARON LOWERS HER VOICE SLIGHTLY.)

ROSEMARY'S PHONE RINGS AND SHE ANSWERS IT. SHE TALKS QUIETLY.

DUVALL ENTERS WITH MORE WORK. SEEING BOTH WOMEN OCCUPIED HE PILES THE WORK ON TOP OF THE OTHERS AND EXITS TO HIS OFFICE)

SHARON: Yeah great. Fanks for lunch..... Are ya sure?Yeah. I'm looking forward to seeing ya on Munde. Yeah, I really do appreciate it..... Ta. Fanks. Byee.

(SHE HANGS UP THE PHONE. SHE SITS AND THINKS FOR A MOMENT. A LOOK OF CONCERN CROSSES HER FACE)

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 5. LATER THAT AFTERNOON - TIME: 15.00

(THE OFFICE IS EMPTY AND THE PHONE IS RINGING.)

AFTER A MOMENT, DUVALL ENTERS TO REALISE NO-ONE WILL ANSWER IT. HE DROPS THE ORIGINAL PILE OF PAPERWORK INTO HIS 'OUT' TRAY, OBVIOUSLY UNREAD. IN EXASPERATION HE PICKS UP THE RECEIVER)

DUVALL: YES!Who?.....(HIS MANNER CHANGING TO CHARM)...ahhhh, yes. Pollins and Clarke. Long time since we did any business, eh.....It's just that you've come through on my private line and my Secretary isn't here at the moment to.....Well that's good news. Very kind of you to consider us here at Mornington....What?.....Well, yes. Of course. (HE FINDS SOME PAPER AND A PEN AND MAKES NOTES). A quote for.....huh, huh, which model? Good choice. And the next? Huh, huh. Next?...hummm. Any more?.....Great. Quantities? (HIS MOUTH OPENS IN AMAZEMENT) Five hundred thousand?.....off each? Thank you. Business must be good. Yes, yes I'll get it out today. I promise. And your name, please?.....Mrs. Robins. Two 'B's? One. I'll fax it later today and an original will be with you tomorrow.I'll see to it personally, yes.....No, thank YOU. Bye.

(HE PUTS DOWN THE PHONE CAREFULLY AND PUNCHES THE AIR. HE LOOKS AT HIS NOTES AND MAKES A QUICK CALCULATION)

DUVALL: Two million! Yes. Unstoppable now.

(SHARON ENTERS WITH A CUP OF COFFEE)

DUVALL: (WITH A SMIRK) Prepare a quotation for these people, Sharon. This is my biggest deal yet.

SHARON: (LOOKS AT THE FIGURES ON THE PAPER) Wow! How did you get this?

DUVALL: It's what I DO, Sharon. Get a fax off to them this afternoon and an original in the post. Chase them up first thing tomorrow for a reaction.

SHARON: Tamorra?

(DUVALL EXITS TO HIS OFFICE WITH A BROAD GRIN. SHARON STARES AT THE SHEET WITH A PUZZLED FROWN. ROSEMARY ENTERS, WITH AN AIR OF CAUTION. SHE SITS QUIETLY AT HER DESK AND RESUMES HER WORK)

SHARON: This is funny, Rosy. There's a woman 'ere with the same surname as you. Same spellin' and everyfing. Odd, init?

(DUVALL ENTERS PUTTING ON HIS JACKET. HE MOVES TO WALK STRAIGHT OUT OF THE OFFICE)

DUVALL: I'm off now. I'm UNCONTACTABLE, Sharon. Understood?

SHARON: To the golf course?

DUVALL: (AWARE OF ROSEMARY'S PRESENCE) Just..... UNCONTACTABLE!

SHARON: Leave ya mobile on. Jus' in case. There's some projects in the pipeline that're.....

DUVALL: What part of the word 'uncontactable' are you having trouble with? Nothing that should be urgent today. UNCONTACTABLE, Sharon. You handle it. And make sure that quote goes out for Pollins & Clarke. Bye.

(DUVALL EXITS IN A RUSH. ROSEMARY STARES IN DISBELIEF AND SHARON CONTINUES WITH HER TYPING AND FILING, AS IF NOTHING IS UNUSUAL)

SHARON: 'E won't listen. Ever.

ROSE: How does Duvall survive doing so little? How does he get all the best leads in this company, without apparently making any effort?

SHARON: Dunno. Very good point. (SHE BEGINS TO DIAL A NUMBER)

ROSE: Well it wouldn't harm you to try and find out.

SHARON: (ON THE PHONE). Saraaa. 'Allo it's me, Sharon..... Yeah, fine fanks. Well I wus wonderin' if ya could answer a question for me..... Ta..... Yeah. Well.....I wus wonderin' how it wus Mr. Duvall get 'is inquiries an nat. You know, 'e always seems to get the ones what are lotsa money an nat. I don' deal wiv that end, ya see, an' I wus jus' wonderin'.....Really!He said that to ya? He actually asked you to do that? Well fanks anyway.....I would say.....naa, actually..... If ya wouldn't mind..... Fanks. Bye.

ROSE: (LOOKING UP) Well?

SHARON: 'E's told her to only pass on inquiries to 'im that were over an 'undred fousand.

ROSE: What a nerve! All the others have to handle the crap while he gets the cream of the business without effort.

SHARON: Seems that way.

ROSE: What're you going to do about it?

SHARON: What can I do, Rosey?

ROSE: Stop him. That's cheating. Worse than cheating, that's stealing.....!

SHARON: 'Ard to prove though, in it?

ROSE: There must be something we can do about it?

SHARON: I jus' did.

ROSE: What?

SHARON: Saraa jus' asked me if she wus doing right in passin' on only the big 'uns. I said 'Naa' and she said she wouldn't do it no more and I said fanks. I don't fink she realised what wus 'appenin'. I reckon should could get inta trouble because of this. Poor caa.

(THE PHONE RINGS AND SHARON ANSWERS IT)

SHARON: Mr. Duvall's office. How can I 'elp youuu? Oh, hello Mrs. Jacobs.....Naa, not at the minute. Can I give 'im a message?....All right, yeah. If ya like. Later then.....Byee. (HANGS UP)

ROSE: Duvall won't be pleased when he finds out he's lost his high rated source.

SHARON: I don' give a monkeys. By the time 'e finds out 'e'll 'ave a lot more on 'is plate.

ROSE: What do you mean? (THE PHONE RINGS).

SHARON: (SHE ANSWERS, MOUTHING 'I'LL TELL YA LATER' TO ROSEMARY) Southgate, Mornington, Dixon an' Greeves. How can I help youuu?..... I'm afraid 'es uncontactable, Mr. Donaldson..... Yeah I know..... Very sorry, an

nat..... I appreciate it's urgent, an nat. (SHE HAS TAPPED IN ANOTHER CALL) Yeah, it's a very large order indeed. Let me giv 'is mobile a call. (SHE LISTENS TO THE RECORDED ANSWER SERVICE AND GRIMACES) Sorry, 'es switched it orf. I per'aps shouldn't say this, but as it's extremely urgent an nat, may I suggest ya contact Mr. Emery at Southern Tompkins?Yes 'e will. Mention me name, Sharon Burns..... 'E will, yeah. I'll tell Mr. Duvall that ya order had to be agreed today. I'm jus' sorry I can't give ya the go ahead meself..... I'm jus' a sec'try. Sorry..... We do need 'is decision, an nat..... You're welcome. No probs. Byee.

ROSE: That'll put the cat amongst the pigeons.

SHARON: More like some pigeons coming home to roost.

(FADE TO BLACKOUT)

EDITED