

# SOAPSUDS

by Sue Morris

*All is quiet. There is a deserted room before the guests for this evening. Suddenly, a clap of thunder is heard rolling in the distance. As it fades, a woman, obviously agitated, enters, and moves towards the centre of the room. A man, clearly very angry, is a couple of steps behind her. They are arguing.*

**MARTIN** Don't walk away when I'm trying to talk to you.

**MELISSA** *(without stopping)* I've explained it all to you once, please don't make me do it again.

**MARTIN** Oh, yes you will...

**MELISSA** Why? Do you think you can catch me out if I do?

**MARTIN** *(spinning Melissa around to face him)* You were with him, I know it.

**MELISSA** In that case why ask me?

**MARTIN** *(after a momentary hesitation)* Admit it!

**MELISSA** All right, I will. Yes, I was with him. We were together all of yesterday afternoon, and all through that long hot sticky night. Is that what you want? Is that what you want to hear?

**MARTIN** I knew it. I...I...

**MELISSA** You what? Oh, this is just awful... and pointless. I'm leaving.

**MARTIN** No! *(he grabs hold of Melissa by the shoulders)*

**MELISSA** Stop it, please, let go of me.

**MARTIN** You're not leaving me!

**MELISSA** *(becoming a little scared)* You're hurting me, let me go.

**MARTIN** *(pulling her to him)* No, you're mine, not his.

**MELISSA** *(struggling to get away)* I don't belong to anyone. You, or him.

**MARTIN** He shan't have you...no-one will, if I can't. *(He moves his hands up to her throat, and applies pressure. She is unable to fight against him)*

**MELISSA** Please... can't breathe... You know... I didn't... *(she goes limp in his arms)*

**MARTIN** Oh, my God, what have I done?

*Enter Darcy.*

**DARCY** Daddy!

**MARTIN** An ambulance! For God's sake call an ambulance... now!

*The scene freezes. There is a shout of 'cut' from the back of the set, as Roly Tanner, the director walks forward. Melissa, Martin and Darcy all relax. Also, Sally Kramer, a journalism student, enters. She is working as a production assistant during her college holidays. She and Darcy have become quite friendly.*

**ROLY** Well done, my lovelies, it's an American Express.

**SALLY** }

**DARCY** } *(together in a mock American accent)* That'll do nicely.

**ROLY** It will, it will. This should help sort out our little ratings problem, eh?

**MELISSA** *(Sharply)* Thank you, Roly. *(Rubbing her throat)* Do something about those nails, Martin. They dig in. I'm all scratched.

**MARTIN** *(in a slightly camp voice)* You should be, Melissa. I was trying to throttle you.

**MELISSA** And doubtless enjoying it. You've snagged my tights too. Damn.

**MARTIN** Very restrained for you, darling.

*Melissa switches speedily to sweetness and light as a young girl is brought forward from the audience for an autograph, and then changes again equally rapidly to snap back at Martin through a fixed smile and clenched teeth, as the little girl goes back to her seat.*

**MELISSA** Yes, well, I don't like swearing in front of old women.

**MARTIN** Bitch!

**MELISSA** Ooh, you got out of the wrong side of someone's bed this morning.

**ROLY** *(warningly as he darts past Melissa and Martin)* Photographer...

*Melissa and Martin simultaneously swing around to face the photographer presenting their best 'we're still deliriously happy to be together' smiles. This time it is Martin who retorts through the smile and clenched teeth.*

**MARTIN** Oh, so you were home last night. There's a change. What's the matter, come to 'Z' in the telephone book?

*The photographer leaves. During that last interchange, Sally has moved to Melissa with the make-up box, and brushes. She starts to tidy Melissa's hair as Martin finishes speaking.*

**MELISSA** Ow! Can you be a little more careful, sweetheart. It is attached you know.

**SALLY** I'm sorry, Mrs Maxwell.

**MELISSA** *(Snappishly)* Give me the comb. I can do it better myself. *(She snatches the comb from Sally, and positions her where she wants her with the mirror.)* There, I suppose that will have to do. *(She thrusts the comb back at Sally.)* And its Miss Dacy, Sally.

*Sally beats a retreat to Darcy, stood to one side throughout all this speaking to Roly, who now leaves the girls and goes over to Melissa. Sally has left her make-up box and Martin somewhat fussily fixes his hair, and touches up his make-up.*

**ROLY** You look wonderful, darling.

**MELISSA** *(sarcastically)* Thank you, darling. Are we needed again today?

**ROLY** No, I think you're all done for today.

**MELISSA** Good. *(Getting up)* If you do need me, Roly, I'll be in my dressing room. Now, I do need something to eat. I asked Cis to organise something. Where is she?

*Cis enters hurriedly carrying a plate of sandwiches, and crosses to Melissa.*

**CIS** I'm here, Melissa. It's all sorted.

*Cis holds out the plate of sandwiches. Melissa inspects them.*

**MELISSA** For Heavens's sake, Cis, you know I can't eat those. Get rid of them and get me something I can eat.

**CIS** *(looking closely at the sandwiches).* Oh no! The canteen's given me the wrong ones. I don't know how that could have happened...

**MELISSA** How could you be so careless! Trying to see me off or something? Take them away!

**CIS** I'm sorry, Melissa. I'll take them back in a minute, and get them to replace them. I'll make them myself if needs be.

*Roly grabs the plate of sandwiches.*

**ROLY** Seems a shame to waste them. I'll dispose of them, Cis, leave them with me.

*Roly takes the plate from Cis and exits. Sally goes to assist Martin with his make-up/hair. Cis joins them making a note of the make-up used by Melissa for the last scene, in the event of any of it needing to be re-filmed. She also overhears the following conversation...*

**DARCY** *(approaching Melissa)* Melly, can we talk for a few minutes?

**MELISSA** Not right now, Darcy, can't you see I'm tired. It can wait until tomorrow can't it?

**DARCY** Every time I ask, that's all you say, Melly. You know what I want to talk to you about...

**MELISSA** *(sharply)* Tomorrow, Darcy. I'll be in my dressing room if anyone wants me.

**MARTIN** Doubtful. *(As he finishes fixing make-up and without looking at her)*

*Sally listens to the next conversation as sorts out her box. As she does so, she inadvertently drops a small book, un-noticed by anyone, onto the floor.*

**MELISSA** *(as she leaves, and with a look of derision)* I'll ignore that.

**MARTIN** *(in normal voice)* What's wrong, sweetheart?

**DARCY** She still won't talk to me about this film part I've been offered. Paul Stanford's coming here tomorrow to talk to me about it. Every time I mention it to her she just changes the subject. This is the chance of a lifetime for me, Daddy. I can't believe she's being like this with me.

**MARTIN** *(after a moments hesitation)* I'll speak to her. She just needs to adjust to the idea.

**DARCY** Would you?

**MARTIN** Of course, I will. You know I can't refuse you anything.

**DARCY** Thank you, Daddy. *(Hugs Martin)*

**MARTIN** Go on, get out of here.

*Darcy and Sally leave chattering. Cis finishes the notes she was making and turns to Martin..*

**CIS** How are you going to do it, Martin?

**MARTIN** We'll think of something.

**CIS** We?

**MARTIN** It's up to both of us to sort this out for Darcy. You love her too.

**CIS** I've always loved her, from the first moment I set eyes on her.

**MARTIN** What would any of us have done without you?

**CIS** You did... It might have been better if you all had... at least better for me... *(She turns to leave. **Martin** pulls her back)*

**MARTIN** We need to discuss this.

**CIS** There's that 'we' again. You know, I've almost forgotten just who we all really are. You, you're one person on screen, you're another with Melissa, and different again with Darcy. Which one is the real you these days?

**MARTIN** Well, you know the old saying, always leave 'em wanting more, well I like to leave 'em guessing, it's much more fun.

**CIS** *(in exasperation, as she goes to leave a second time)* Oh!

**MARTIN** *(again stopping **Cis** from leaving)* I'm sorry, Cis, that was uncalled for. You know the real me. There has never been any pretence with you.

**CIS** *(Very quietly)* Hasn't there?

**Darcy re-enters.**

**DARCY** Daddy, have you managed to speak to Melly yet?

**MARTIN** Hardly, sweetheart, you only asked me a few minutes ago.

**DARCY** Oh, God, I hope you can persuade her to release me.

**MARTIN** *(with a glance at **Cis**)* We'll sort it out.

**DARCY** I mean, surely she wants me to do well, she's my mother.

**CIS** You're mother loves you very much, Darcy. Always remember that. I promise you she does. It will all get sorted out.

**DARCY** *(hugging Cis)* Thanks, Auntie Cis, sorry I'm getting a bit wound up about this. I'll go away and try not to mention it again- oh, for at least a half hour.

*Darcy exits.*

**MARTIN** She has all her mother's talent, she deserves this break.

**CIS** She does. *(After a moment's hesitation)* And she's better than her mother ever was.

*Cis exits, Martin follows her. As Cis and Martin leave, Melissa re-enters from the opposite direction. A moment later, Roly follows her, from the same direction*

**ROLY** Darling, a word, if I may.

**MELISSA** Can't a woman get a moments peace, in this place?

**ROLY** Sorry, darling, just wanted a little chat about the old contract.

**MELISSA** What about it, Roly? It runs out in two months, doesn't it?

**ROLY** Bang on, old darling, and - er - no-one's mentioned the little matter of renewal.

**MELISSA** Does the name Paul Stanford mean anything?

**ROLY** Done quite well for himself over the years. Versatile chap, done a few different things.

**MELISSA** Spot on, old darling. So well, in fact, I was thinking he might like to move to a regular slot, on an established show.

**ROLY** You mean like this one?

**MELISSA** No, darling, not like this one, *(he looks relieved)*... this one.

**ROLY** *(half panicking, half persuading)* Darling, you can't mean it. We've been together ages. We're a team. Like Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise...

**MELISSA** *(briskly)* They're also dead. Like this partnership. You're on the transfer list, Roly.

**ROLY** You don't mean it. You can't. I mean, we've been through a lot together... old mates... good times... awful times. You don't mean it...do you?

**MELISSA** You're right Roly, we do go back a long time. Oh, nearly twenty years.

**ROLY** *(relaxing a little, as he thinks Melissa is coming around)*. You're right, darling, right back to...

**MELISSA** Right back to the time of that little indiscretion of yours. Who else would have employed you then, Roly?

**ROLY** *(almost an aside)* Who else would have worked for that money?  
*(directly to Melissa)* How could I have known, darling? She assured me she was eighteen.

**MELISSA** Sure you didn't get that figure from the label inside her blouse?

**ROLY** *(trying to laugh it off)* But, it all got sorted out, and I recall, as I was about to say, that you and I had a rather pleasant little fling... just afterwards.

**MELISSA** *(this whole speech is spoken with malicious satisfaction)* We did. You know, I was just thinking, that young girl... by your arithmetic, darling... ooh, she would have been about the same age as Darcy is now.

**ROLY** *(Looking a little startled)* ...Er, what are you saying to me, darling?

**MELISSA** *(Still in a malicious tone)* Nothing, darling, nothing. You're very fond of Darcy, aren't you?

**ROLY** *(paling a little)* Like an uncle, old darling, a... a second father. She's a lovely girl, lovely.

**MELISSA** *(patting his cheek)* A second father, of course. Well maybe it's time for papa Roly to... take things a little easier. *(Becoming very brisk and businesslike again)* I'll have details of the severance package sent to you. I'll see you later.

***Melissa starts to walk away, leaving Roly staring after her. Paul Stanford enters from the opposite direction. He hesitates on seeing Roly there.***

**PAUL** Sorry, am I interrupting something?

***Melissa spins around to face him, as does Roly.***

**MELISSA** *(in an accusing tone)* Paul! What a surprise, you're a day earlier than expected.

**ROLY** *(acidly)* And don't worry about interrupting anything, we're completely finished anyway. *(He exits past Paul)*

***Paul joins Melissa centre set.***

**MELISSA** *(embracing him)* Paul, do come and sit down. *(She suits action to words, indicating for Paul to join her on the sofa on set.)*

**PAUL** I presume Darcy told you that I was coming to see her.

**MELISSA** She did, but she said tomorrow.

**PAUL** That's right, but unfortunately, I have to be somewhere else tomorrow, and, as I knew you were filming today, I thought I'd be able to catch up with her. I really want her for this film I'm doing, Melissa. She'd be perfect for the part. She's fresh, she's new...

**MELISSA** Like I was, once.

**PAUL** She has an innocence that... *(He hesitates slightly)*

**MELISSA** Oh, it's all right, Paul, go on, say it. That I always lacked.

**PAUL** If you want to put it that way, yes.

**MELISSA** You were always honest, about – nearly – everything. *(After a momentary hesitation)* How is Leslie?

**PAUL** Fine, thank you.

**MELISSA** And your mother? She and I got on quite well, I remember.

**PAUL** Yes... I think she had some hopes of you as a daughter-in-law.

**MELISSA** In vain, Paul, in vain. But you and Leslie are quite happy, aren't you? I mean, no regrets, no second thoughts?

**PAUL** We live very quietly. We're fine.

**MELISSA** And does mother visit often?

**PAUL** I... usually visit her. It's easier that way.

**MELISSA** Yes...no children, though, of course. And I remember how you always loved children.

**PAUL** *(He looks at her a little strangely and then deliberately changing the conversation)* Melissa, will you release Darcy so that she can do this film for me?

**MELISSA** No.

**PAUL** Why not?

**MELISSA** I've a much better idea. I want you to direct this show for the rest of the series. It's another three months, then I intend to retire, and you can have your little Darcy for as many films as you like.

**PAUL** You expect me to give up the opportunity to do this film... to come and direct a daytime soap?

**MELISSA** Paul, with me in the lead... our little Darcy too, of course, and you directing, this will be the biggest audience pull since JR got shot.

**PAUL** Melissa, we're talking daytime TV here.

**MELISSA** Oh, yes, darling I know that. We're talking people who believe in the reality of what they see on that little screen, and I want a good director to see me and my audience through the grand finale - will she, won't she survive? A trial for attempted murder. A possible last minute reconciliation. A distraught daughter (*Almost to herself*) They'll be begging me to keep the show going after that.

**PAUL** And what about all the others, Melissa?

**MELISSA** I've carried them all for years, Paul. The gravy train is rolling to a halt. Let them find another.

**PAUL** I had heard recently that the gravy train was running out of juice, and audiences.

**MELISSA** Nonsense. I'm just ready to call it quits. I'm tired. And I want to go out on a high. Nothing wrong with that is there? And... it will give you time to get to know Darcy better.

**PAUL** No, Melissa, there isn't anything wrong with that, but I don't think I'm the person to help you. I've worked long and hard to establish my career, slowly and surely. I don't propose to take a backward step now.

**MELISSA** (*barely curbing her anger*) Oh, I think you are, Paul. I usually get what I want you know... maybe I should visit your mother... for old times sake.

**PAUL** Threaten all you like Melissa, mother's well aware –

**MELISSA** I wouldn't dream of it, darling, but, you know, I was just thinking how nice it would have been for your mother to have known a grandchild, a lovely little girl let's say... A child so desperately wanted to carry on that old, old family name of yours... but, it's all simply so much water under the bridge now, and, of course, any child - of ours - would be a young woman now... Think about what I've said, Paul. Doing it my way, will make life so much ... pleasanter for all of us. (*She kisses him briefly, and exits*).

*Paul remains seated, looking a little stunned, as Sally enters from the opposite direction. As they start their conversation, Roly enters, unseen by either of them, he shrinks back into the edge of the set from where he cannot be seen but can hear what is said. Paul is lost in thought as Sally approaches him.*

**SALLY** Mr. Stanford.

**PAUL** *(Snapping out of his thoughtfulness)* Sorry?

**SALLY** Mr. Stanford, I'm Sally Kramer. We spoke on the 'phone.

**PAUL** Oh. Yes. So we did.

**SALLY** Have you thought about it?

**PAUL** *(Still with only half a mind on the conversation)* Er - yes. It was an interesting proposition. Why come to me with it?

**SALLY** I do my research. I know you're the right person. You're thorough, you're well thought of, and 'the man of the moment'. You've turned your hand to a variety of subjects over your career, and you did a good job with all of them.

**PAUL** I thank you, little lady. And, I could be very helpful to your career.

**SALLY** There is that, of course.

**PAUL** *(with a short laugh)* You remind me of someone I used to... know.

**SALLY** *(with a satisfied smile and nod)* Mmn. I'm ambitious, yes. I intend to get to the top in my career. If I'm going to be a good journalist, there's no room for sentiment, just good, impartial, and interesting reporting.

**PAUL** And this is impartial?

**SALLY** It's the truth.

**PAUL** Sometimes the truth is best left buried in the past, where it belongs. Have you thought about the people this will effect?

**SALLY** It's a good story, you know it is. It's my story and I have the right to tell it. If you won't do it, I can always find someone who will, someone, perhaps, who doesn't have your integrity.

**PAUL** *(Paul considers her a moment, shaking his head at her)* Do you have any proof of what you've told me?

*Sally hands a document to him. It is a copy of her birth certificate. He slowly reads it, considering its contents. He looks up from it slowly. He stares at Sally for a moment.*

**PAUL** We have to talk about this.

*Sally slowly nods her agreement. They exit together. Likewise Roly. In an echo of the opening scene, Melissa and Martin re-enter.*

**MARTIN** Melissa, let her go. You have no right to do this to her.

**MELISSA** The little darling's under contract to me. I've every right.

**MARTIN** You've always used people, Melissa. Can't you think of someone else for once in your life?

**MELISSA** And why should I? No-one ever looked out for me. I've sorted everything out, for everybody, always.

**MARTIN** To suit yourself, and this is Darcy we're talking about, for Heaven's sake. *(A momentary pause)* Cis and I both think she should have this chance.

**MELISSA** You and Cis! How nice. And have you and Cis thought about what we're going to do without Darcy?

**MARTIN** We've had our day, Melissa. This show's finished, you know it is. Look at the reality. Let her go, don't spoil it –

**MELISSA** For our little girl?

**MARTIN** That's rich. You've hardly shown any kind of maternal feelings towards Darcy.

**MELISSA** Oh, I'd say I've done a pretty good job of bringing up baby, wouldn't you?

**MARTIN** Cis and I have brought her up. Not you. You were hardly there.

**MELISSA** Well, you know, I always kind of felt in the way. You all looked so right together.

**MARTIN** Good God, don't tell me your jealous, Melissa?

**MELISSA** Oh, please, Martin, jealous, really!

**MARTIN** You are! For once somebody has something you could never have.

**MELISSA** That's a cruel thing to say, Martin.

**MARTIN** Not half as cruel as some of the things you've done.

**MELISSA** Whatever I've done. I've -

**MARTIN** You did for you! Now, let Darcy go.

**MELISSA** And what if I don't?

**MARTIN** Let her go.

**MELISSA** Make me.

**MARTIN** Maybe I will! *(He storms off)*

*Melissa storms off in the opposite direction after a moment. Sally and Darcy enter leisurely. The first half of their conversation is on the level of girly chatter until Sally changes to a more serious tone.*

**SALLY** What are you going to do if she won't let you go?

*Darcy flops down onto the sofa on set, Sally joins her as they continue speaking.*

**DARCY** I really don't know. I'm hoping that my Dad will be able to persuade her to agree.

**SALLY** He's quite different from your Mother, isn't he?

**DARCY** They're like the proverbial chalk and cheese. I do wonder why they got married at all.

**SALLY** For you, I imagine.

**DARCY** It's hardly necessary, in this day and age, though, is it? And neither of them are happy, that's perfectly obvious. Dad gets on better with auntie Cis.

**SALLY** I think your Mother likes to present a perfect picture to her adoring public.

**DARCY** Well, this particular member of her public won't be feeling too adoring if she won't be reasonable about this film part.

**SALLY** You don't count, you're her daughter.

**DARCY** It feels a bit like that sometimes. Oh, I shouldn't be speaking like this, about my mother. Take no notice of me.

**SALLY** *(In a somewhat more serious tone)* Darcy, if you want this film part, you must make sure you get it... do whatever it takes to get it. Don't

rely on others to sort things out for you. Fight for what you want, who you want to be. Who you are.

**DARCY** Getting a bit serious there -

**SALLY** I wasn't... brought up with your advantages. Lots of love, yes. I think - I know - I was wanted very much, but, I was taught to rely on myself, fight my own corner. You're... my friend, and I like you. I'd like to see you succeed (*lifting the tone again to one of lightheartedness*) ...and I await my front row ticket to the premiere, hopefully to be accompanied there by Tom cruise, Brad Pitt, or any other young hopeful who could also benefit from my advice, and sparkling wit and company. We can leave Nicole, and Jennifer at home for the evening.

**DARCY** (*Laughing and shaking hands with Sally*) You have a deal.

**SALLY** (*After a very brief pause*) Darcy, your auntie Cis just how long has she been with your mother?

**DARCY** For as long as I can remember. Forever, I think. She's not just my mother's dresser. She looks after the three of us, like a second mum really.

**SALLY** (*In melodramatic tone*) So, she'd know all the family's darkest secrets.

**DARCY** (*Laughing*) Oh, definitely, if we had any.

**SALLY** She isn't your real aunt, though, is she?

**DARCY** No. I've just known her so long, like, uncle Roly, that when I was little it seemed a bit cheeky to call them by just their first names.

**SALLY** And yet you call your Mother by her first name?

**DARCY** Melly? I know. Apparently I found it easier to say than Mummy when I was little, and now that I'm getting older I think it lets Melly forget that she's getting older too.

**SALLY** Oh, by the way, have I told you that Paul Stanford's here?

**DARCY** What! Here? Now? Today?

**SALLY** Yes.

**DARCY** I must find him, speak to him. Speak to Melly. We'll catch up later.  
(*Darcy hurtles off*)

**SALLY** We will.

***Roly enters from the opposite direction.***

**ROLY** Now, here's a young lady I'd like to speak to. (*Roly settles himself on the sofa next to Sally, as ever enjoying the company of a young lady*) Er.. saw you speaking to that chap earlier.

**SALLY** Which... chap?

**ROLY** You know, that director fellow. Seemed to be having rather a serious conversation from where I was standing.

**SALLY** You mean listening.

**ROLY** Beg pardon?

**SALLY** From where you were listening.

**ROLY** Have to admit you're right. Couldn't help overhearing really.

**SALLY** What?

**ROLY** What?

**SALLY** (*A little exasperated*) What did you overhear?

**ROLY** Oh, that.

**SALLY** Yes.

**ROLY** Not sure, to be honest.

**SALLY** Is there a point to this conversation?

**ROLY** Hope so.

**SALLY** So do I.

**ROLY** Right. To come to the point...

**SALLY** I wish you would.

**ROLY** Well, I will.

**SALLY** Please do, but can we make it before midnight, possibly.

**ROLY** Right.

**SALLY** So?

**ROLY** What were you talking to him about?

**SALLY** I thought you were listening.

**ROLY** I was. Couldn't figure it out though. Hoped you'd explain. Could be to our mutual advantage. Sussed you've got a story to tell. I like to tell 'em. Thought maybe we could help each other here. Possibly. Give you the benefit of my experience. *(Leering a little)*

**SALLY** *(Unfazed)* I don't know.

**ROLY** Think about it.

**SALLY** I will.

**ROLY** *(His conversation with Melissa in mind)* Sudden thought! It's not about me, is it?

**SALLY** *(As she gets up and leaves)* That would be telling now, wouldn't it?

*Roly chases after her.*

**ROLY** Just one other thing, Sally.

**SALLY** Yes?

**ROLY** Er... you are eighteen, aren't you?

**SALLY** *(Bemused)* Nearly nineteen.

**ROLY** You're sure?

**SALLY** *(Stopping momentarily and glancing back over her shoulder at Roly).*  
Yes. I could even show you my birth certificate to prove it, perhaps.  
*(She turns away and exits followed by Roly)*

*Cis enters. She goes onto the set and is looking for something. Melissa thought she may have lost a silver wrist chain there when filming earlier. Melissa enters a moment later.*

**MELISSA** Is it there, Cis?

**CIS** Can't see it anywhere. Are you sure that you had it on?

**MELISSA** Positive. Check again will you, it must be there somewhere. And did you sort out those sandwiches for me?

**CIS** I did. The canteen was sending them up straight away. They should be in your dressing room by now.

**MELISSA** Good. I'm ravenous. Keep looking for that chain. *(She exits).*

**CIS** Melissa! I wanted to talk... to... you.. *(Her voice trails off as she realises Melissa has already left).*

*Sally enters a moment later as Cis stoops down and picks up a small book from the floor.*

**CIS** Melissa - Oh, Sally its you.

**SALLY** Did you want Miss Dacy? I think she was heading for her dressing room.

**CIS** It doesn't matter. I'll speak to her later. Sally, is this yours? I've just found it on the floor. *(Cis indicates the book she has picked up).*

**SALLY** *(Taking the book from her and looking at it)* Yes. It is. It must have fallen out of the make-up box earlier. It's my address book. Thank you. I'd be lost without it.

**CIS** *(Still vaguely looking for Melissa's chain)* The initials were a bit of a give away. What does the middle one stand for?

**SALLY** The 'E'? Elisabeth. With an 's'.

*Cis stops what she is doing and looks at Sally before saying quietly...*

**CIS** Elisabeth. It's a nice name.

**SALLY** I'm told it was my mother's.

*There is a sudden and piercing scream from off stage.*

**DARCY** *(off stage)* Daddy!

**MARTIN** *(off stage)* An ambulance. For God's sake, call an ambulance, now!

*Everyone enters from different directions. Last in is Martin and Darcy. Martin has his arm around his daughter, comforting her.*

**CIS** Martin! What's happened? Darcy! Are you all right?

**MARTIN** We're fine. It's Melissa. She's collapsed in her dressing room. Darcy found her. It was obviously a dreadful shock.

*Darcy goes to Cis who comforts her.*

**CIS** Have you called for help?

*Enter Inspector Foot of the Yard, who is, in fact, already seated in the audience.*

**FOOT** No need, Madam. Foot is already here.

**PAUL** Who are you?

**FOOT** *(Producing his identity card)* Inspector Foot of the Yard, Sir.

**ROLY** Got here a bit sharpish, Inspector.

**FOOT :** In the audience, sir. The wife's a bit of a fan. Got some tickets, dragged me along. *(to Mrs Foot, in the audience)* Yes, dear, I'll remember to get all their autographs later. After I've taken their fingerprints. *(He looks accusingly at the cast)*

**MARTIN** Inspector, if you'll come with me, I'll take you to my wife.

**FOOT** Why? Is she expecting me?

**MARTIN** She is the person who has collapsed , Inspector.

**FOOT** Have you called for help?

**PAUL** I'm beginning to think we may need to.

**MARTIN** An ambulance is on its way. Inspector? *(Indicating off stage)*

**FOOT** Lead on...

**MARTIN** *(cuts him short)* No. its Maxwell. This way, Inspector...

***The two men exit. Sally goes to Darcy.***

**SALLY** What happened? Are you okay?

**DARCY** Yes. I think so. I went to talk to her, about this film. I thought she was asleep, but when I touched her, she fell onto the floor. It was horrible.

**SALLY** Is she..?

**CIS** Let's not even think like that, for the moment.

**PAUL** Who was the last one to speak to her?

***They all look hopefully at each other.***

**ROLY** Don't look at me. *(to Sally)*

**SALLY** I'm not, but why did you say to me you'd be free to... you know.

**ROLY** Help you with your little tale telling?

**DARCY** Tale telling. What tale?

**PAUL** You have a budding investigative journalist in your midst.

**CIS** Investigating what?

**SALLY** A story. An old story.

**PAUL** And just what would you do to... er... make it a better one?

**SALLY** Not what you're thinking, obviously.

**ROLY** Says you.

**SALLY** Oh God! Darcy, when I said do whatever it takes to get the film part, I didn't mean...

**DARCY** I didn't do anything! How can you say that! I just found her...

**CIS** Stop this! You started us off on this, Mr. Stanford, asking who spoke to Melissa last, but, it seems to me that you're the only outsider here who just turned up out of the blue today. Is that simply a co-incidence?

**PAUL** I'm not answerable to you...

*Un-noticed Martin and Inspector Foot have re-entered.*

**FOOT** But you may be to me, sir, that is the law, or one of you is.

**CIS** What do you mean, Inspector? Not...?

**FOOT** Yes, ma'am-

**DARCY** No!

**FOOT** Miss Dacy... *(pause for effect- Footy is enjoying his moment of fame!)* was murdered.!

*All gasp audibly. Foot addresses a member of the audience.*

**FOOT** I will now take the suspects...*(indignant reaction from the cast)* hence to a lawful place of questioning, or somewhere in here, *(glaring at everyone accusingly)* where I will take statements from each one of you.*(To the imaginary Mrs Foot in the audience)* No, dear, I won't forget to ask them to sign them for you. *(To a member of the audience)*. While I do that will you, sir/madam, keep an eye on this shower. *(That is the audience)*. You look an honest sort, or at least the best of this

bunch. Let no-one leave the building. I may want to speak to some of you later. Now, you lot...(turning back to the cast), you will accompany me to...

**MARTIN** Where, Inspector?

**FOOT** I should think the canteen will do. Supper's ready and I want to be first in the queue.

*As soon as Foot mentions the word supper, there is a stampede to the door. He is generally trampled on in the rush, and then follows hurriedly shouting after the others to 'form an orderly queue', and 'ere, don't you nick that one, that one's mine' etc.*