SCENE TWO: MUCH PIDDLING BY THE SEA

A CHARMING, OLD-FASHIONED SEASIDE TOWN. IN THE FOREGROUND, ON EITHER SIDE, THERE ARE QUAINT, LITTLE SHOPS OR BEACH HUTS, BRIGHTLY PAINTED. THERE IS A LARGE SIGN WHICH READS 'WELCOME TO MUCH PIDDLING BY THE SEA (TWINNED WITH SKEGNESS). IN THE BACKGROUND, THERE IS A LONG STRETCH OF GOLDEN SANDY BEACH, A CALM SEA WITH SAILING BOATS AND A LIGHTHOUSE ON A ROCK AND A BLUE SKY WITH WISPY WHITE CLOUDS.

Enter BERNIE SLOBBER, the debt collector. BERNIE can be bossy and supercilious but is often bungling and hapless.

BERNIE: Now Barney, who's next on the list? (*Looking behind*) Barney? Barney! Where are you?

BARNEY: (*Calling from offstage*) I'm over here, Bernie!

BERNIE: Well, get here! I've been talking to myself.

Enter BARNEY DRIBBLE, BERNIE's assistant. He is incompetent and gullible but cheerful and eager to please. He is holding a clipboard and pen.

BARNEY: That's the first sign of madness.

BERNIE: No, talking to you is the first sign of madness. Stop dawdling!

BARNEY: I'm writing a poem for Lucy.

BERNIE: Lucy who?

BARNEY: Lucy Lastic who works at the bakery.

BERNIE: The one with long, blonde hair down her back? (*Beat*) None on her head, just down her back.

BARNEY: That's the one. I'm trying to woo her.

BERNIE: I thought you had a girlfriend?

BARNEY: She dumped me.

BERNIE: Never?

BARNEY: Yeah, but I'm not that bothered. We weren't getting on very well – she said I was nosey.

BERNIE: Did she?

BARNEY: Well, she never actually said it but I read it in her diary.

BERNIE: Why d'you think this Lucy might be interested?

BARNEY: She called me her little flower.

BERNIE: Plain or self-raising?

BARNEY: D'you want to hear this poem? See what you think?

BERNIE: If I must.

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BARNEY: (*Reading*) Lucy, you are beautiful,
Be still my beating heart,
You give my tummy butterflies,
As if I'm going to . . . faint away.

BARNEY pauses as BERNIE looks out incredulously at the audience

BARNEY: I couldn't think of anything at the end to rhyme with heart.

BERNIE: You're the only one who couldn't.

BARNEY: I need to get my hair cut before I deliver it to her. I want to look my best.

BERNIE: I thought you went to the barbers this morning.

BARNEY: I did. He asked me if I wanted my hair cutting 'round the back.

BERNIE: Why? Was there no room in the shop?

BARNEY: He said my hair needed cutting badly. I said, I don't want it cut badly, I want it done good and walked out.

BERNIE: Well, you haven't got time now. We've got debts to collect. Who's our next client?

BARNEY: (*Checking the clipboard*) Erm . . . Mrs Crusoe.

Enter BILLY CRUSOE. He is a bright, bubbly young man with real charisma but he can be cheeky, silly and over the top. When he sees BERNIE and BARNEY, he turns on the spot and tries to exit.

BERNIE: Er . . . where d'you think you're going Billy Crusoe?

BILLY: (*Reluctantly turning back around*) Oh! Good morning, Mr Slobber. I didn't see you there.

BERNIE: We need to speak to Mrs Crusoe. Where is she?

BILLY: Er . . . Mrs Crusoe? Do I know her?

BERNIE: She's your mother.

BILLY: Oh, that Mrs Crusoe! She's at the amusements on the edge of town, selling fish and chips from the cart.

BERNIE: Right, Barney, let's go before she moves off somewhere else. See you later, Billy!

Exit BERNIE and BARNEY

BILLY: (*Calling off*) Not if I see you first! (*To the audience*) Phew! That was close. You see, my Ma will be here soon and if they'd spotted her, there'd have been trouble. You see, she owes them loads of money. She had to borrow tons of cash to set herself up in business when dad left and she still hasn't paid it back. Anyway, I suppose I'd better introduce myself. My name is Billy Crusoe and this is where I live with my mum and brother – Much Piddling by the Sea. I love living at the seaside, it's the best place! The

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funfair, the arcades, making sandcastles – I was on the beach just now. I was wondering why my frisbee kept getting bigger and bigger – then it hit me! Ha! I saw this French man in sandals walk past me – his name was Phillipe-Flop. Ha, ha! D'you get it? Ha! I'm sorry, ignore me - I've always been a bit daft. Ma is always telling me off for being silly. In fact, you lot might be able to help me out. Every time I come on and shout 'Alright mates!', you could shout back 'Don't be silly, Billy!' as a reminder and then hopefully I won't get told off as much. Let's have a practice.

Call and response routine with audience

BILLY: Fantastic! Do it like that every time. Now, don't forget or my Ma will tell me off. (*Looking offstage*) Talking of Ma, here she comes now! With my brother, Robinson.

Enter ROBINSON and MA CRUSOE. ROBINSON is pushing the family fish and chip cart, The Frying Squad. He is daring and dashing but is a little reckless and prone to making impetuous decisions. MA CRUSOE is an outspoken and uproarious woman with an outrageous dress-sense.

ROBINSON: (*Approaching BILLY*) Billy, there you are!

BILLY: Bro, how you doing?

MA CRUSOE: Where have you been hiding, Billy Crusoe?

BILLY: Oh, there you are, Ma! I was just looking for you.

MA CRUSOE: A likely story. You were avoiding work as usual.

BILLY: You told me business was slow and there wasn't enough work on the fish and chip cart for the three of us.

ROBINSON: She meant one of us needs to get another job.

BILLY: Then why can't you?

ROBINSON: I can. But that would mean you pulling your weight with the family business.

MA CRUSOE: And you're as much use as a windscreen wiper on a submarine.

ROBINSON: There's a job going at the zoo, cleaning out the cages.

BILLY: I'm not trained.

MA CRUSOE: You don't need training – you just pick it up as you go along.

ROBINSON: You could learn to be a fisherman.

MA CRUSOE: That's a good idea. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish . . .

BILLY: (*Interrupting*) And he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

ROBINSON: Yeah, actually that maybe isn't such a good idea.

BILLY: Don't worry, I'll have a new job soon. I'm going to be a Summer Season entertainer at the end of the pier.

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ROBINSON: What sort of entertainer?

BILLY: A bit of everything. I'm going to tell jokes, sing songs . . . I'm learning to do magic as well.

MA CRUSOE: There's no money in show business.

BILLY: I'd earn enough.

MA CRUSOE: We need more than enough – we need oodles of the stuff.

BILLY: Why do we need so much money?

MA CRUSOE: Because we're skint.

ROBINSON: And money talks.

MA CRUSOE: All mine says is goodbye.

BILLY: Are we that hard up?

ROBINSON: Have you checked your balance lately?

BILLY: (*Standing on one-leg*) Seems okay.

MA CRUSOE: Yesterday a man knocked on the door and asked for a small donation towards Heckington swimming pool – all I could give him was a glass of water.

ROBINSON: Look, instead of standing here talking, maybe we ought to try and sell some more chips. (*Looking offstage*) It looks quite busy down on the promenade at the moment.

MA CRUSOE: You're absolutely right, Robinson. You two run on ahead and I'll catch you up. I can't run in these heels.

ROBINSON and BILLY exit, pushing the cart

MA CRUSOE: Toodlepip, dears! I'll see you in a minute. (*To the audience*) Actually, do you like my shoes? They're made of bread – yes, they're a pair of loafers. Ha ha! And they were really cheap, on sale at Shoes R Us. I like a bargain – I can see a lot of you do too. See this dress, forget DKNY, this frock is CPL – Cats Protection League! You see, I have to watch the pennies. I can't afford luxuries. I was in the butchers this morning asking for some tripe – he gave me a box set of Love Island. It's all my ex-husband's fault – I had to set myself up with a mobile chippy business when he left. Well, I say left, I kicked him out in the end. I should never have married him in the first place. Our marriage was like a walk in the park – Jurassic Park! So, he had to go! And I have vowed to stay single and independent. However, that doesn't mean I don't like having a bit of fun. I still like going out on dates. (*Looking into the audience*) Oh, I've just made eye contact with a handsome chap. What's your name? (*Response*) Ooh! [*Name*], that's a nice name. Can I call you [*name*]? (*Response*) When's a good time? Actually, I've already got somebody else in mind for my next date. I've got my eyes on the town mayor – I just need to get my hands on him now. (*Looking offstage*) Look out! Here he comes!

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Enter MAYOR PERKINS. He is often be pompous and snobbish although he can be well-meaning and kind-hearted.

MAYOR: Ah! Mrs Crusoe, I've got a bone to pick with you.

MA CRUSOE: Can't you treat us to a Chinese take-away instead?

MAYOR: I was going to the Co-op this morning and your dog went for me.

MA CRUSOE: Well, he's never been for me.

MAYOR: I should report you to the police.

MA CRUSOE: What? For my criminally gorgeous beauty?

MAYOR: You must be joking.

MA CRUSOE: Mayor Perkins, you called me pretty last time I saw you.

MAYOR: I called you pretty annoying.

MA CRUSOE: I only focus on the positives. (*Beat*) I know you fancy me really?

MAYOR: I wouldn't fancy you even if I was wearing a blindfold in thick fog.

MA CRUSOE: Is it 'cos I'm a little overweight. I'm on a diet, you know. I haven't had a steak bake since breakfast. And, yesterday I lost two hundred calories – a seagull stole my Mars bar.

MAYOR: You're not overweight.

MA CRUSOE: Is it 'cos I'm getting on a bit then? For my age, I'm still quite well-preserved, you know.

MAYOR: That's because you're always pickled.

MA CRUSOE: You push all my buttons.

MAYOR: I'm looking for mute.

MA CRUSOE: You make me flutter in places I didn't realise still fluttered.

MAYOR: When will you get it into your deluded head? I am not interested in you. You are not my type. Good day, madam!

Exit the MAYOR.

MA CRUSOE: (*To the audience*) I think he might be warming to me. (*Calling off*) Oh, Mayor Perkins! Just one more thing!

Exit MA CRUSOE. Enter ROBINSON and POLLY PERKINS from the opposite direction. POLLY is a calm and collected woman who is loyal and strong-willed.

ROBINSON: It's a good job you saw your father, we could have walked straight into his path.

POLLY: And that wouldn't have gone down very well.

ROBINSON: I can't believe he's forbidden you from seeing me.

POLLY: Like that's ever stopped me before.

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ROBINSON: But we're always hiding in the shadows, looking over our shoulders. It would be so much easier if he approved of our relationship.

POLLY: That is never going to happen.

ROBINSON: I'm perfect boyfriend material though – a real catch.

POLLY: If father caught you, he'd throw you back in the sea.

ROBINSON: Why? I'm intelligent, witty, kind, good-looking . . .

POLLY: Modest?

ROBINSON: Exactly! What is his problem?

POLLY: Because you're also poor. And my father sets more store by that than anything else. However, he is not going to stand in our way! We just need to work out how to solve the situation. (*Beat*) You are the one I want and we are going to live happily ever after, I promise.

MUSICAL NUMBER *– an upbeat love duet performed by ROBINSON and POLLY*

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