



Preview Script

“ Bye-bye, Mr Heim!”

A black comedy in one act

by

Tony Layton

Bye-bye, Mr Heim!

by Tony Layton

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| <p style="text-align: center;">THIS IS A PREVIEW SCRIPT. The full version is available from Plays and Musicals.</p> |
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Cast

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Walter Heim (1) | Wealthy, Jewish business-man. Mid-fifties. Wears full head bandage. |
| Walter Heim (2) | Appears in short flashback, before the accident. |
| Linda Heim | Walter's long suffering wife. Early-fifties |
| Gloria Heim | Twenty one year old daughter. Spoilt and materialistic. |
| Nurse (Jane) | Hard-working. No fool. Ambitious. |
| Dr Reed | Thirty(ish). Thirsts for romance. |
| Andrea Epstein | Walter's other wife, a sharp operator. |
| Alex | Gloria's weird boy friend. |
| Woman in Black | Mysterious messenger from the criminal underworld. |
| Lucy | Attractive bait. |
| Sister in hospital | |
| French waiter | |
| Voices of Medics and Radio DJ | |

Author's Note

I'm sure directors will realise that as Walter's head is covered by bandages throughout the play, that it is possible for another actor to play the part of Walter when he is talking to Lucy. It is also possible for whoever plays Walter in the hospital to also play the part of Dr Reed when he is masquerading as Walter during the escape. There are also clear opportunities for doubling in other parts in this play.

Synopsis.

Walter Heim is the victim of car crash. As he lies helpless in intensive care his complicated, somewhat illegal, lifestyle is revealed. This pillar of the community has much to hide and there are those who seek a horrible revenge. The crash was no accident, but a plot to end his life. Unable to speak, Walter is forced to listen to all those around him who seem to be hell-bent on his total destruction. However, every one has a price, and Walter finds that his money can talk him out of a deadly trap. An impoverished nurse comes to his aid, but, as we know, money has a way of corrupting the nicest people ... even those wonderful nurses.

Running Time

One hour approx.

Set

The set should always be minimalist and suggested, rather than cluttered. The effective use of lighting to suggest a change of scene will help the action to move along smoothly. A hospital bed, a chair and a bedside cabinet represent the main items of furniture in the central scene. The required intensive care monitor is an item that will give ample opportunity for the technical crew to demonstrate their creative imaginations.

Incidental Music

'My Way' by Frank Sinatra
Muzac (calming, 'wallpaper' music)

NOTE : Producing Organisations are reminded that the use of any background or incidental music suggested in the play, whether live or pre-recorded, prior to obtaining a suitable licence from PRS (Performing Rights Society) or some equivalent body is an infringement of copyright. This may not apply outside the United Kingdom, where different rules may apply.

Conventions Used

Text in upper case is shouted, and underlined text is spoken with emphasis.

BYE, BYE MR HEIM!

The stage is in darkness. SFX of an ambulance with loud sirens approaching at high speed is heard. It screeches to a halt. We hear doors being kicked open, and the heavy breathing of medics as they struggle with the effort of running in with a stretcher.

Medic 1 (With pace) We've got a bleeder! We've got a bleeder! IV running.

More SFX of medics running with the stretcher down a hospital corridor with much opening and banging of doors. The sound of a beating heart monitor is heard in the background. Slow fade in LX during the following dialogue. Walter Heim is in a hospital bed centre stage. The bed is lit by a strong shaft of white light.

Dr Reed Can you hear me? ... What's his name?

Nurse Here's his driving licence. Walter, Walter Heim.

Dr Reed Walter! Can you hear me? You've been in an accident. You're all right! You're going to be fine! You've lost a bit of blood so we're putting that right. Okay? Don't worry about all these tubes and things. We need those to keep a check on you. We're pumping a drop of blood back into you. All right?

Walter *Grunts as he understands the message.*

Dr Reed You can't talk at the moment. Your jaw's been fractured so you're pretty well sown up. Okay? Nothing to worry about. You'll be as good as new in no time.

Walter *Grunts in appreciation.*

Dr Reed Have we got a home address? Is there a wife?

Nurse She's on her way. Claremont Park.

Dr Reed Your wife's on her way Walter. We'll just pop you up to the unit. Okay?

Walter *Grunts.*

Dr Reed Off we go! *(He pushes the bed around the stage, eventually ending back in the centre, to coincide with the end of the following sequence. Fade heart monitor. Then to Nurse).* Why the sideways looks?

Nurse If you don't know ...

Dr Reed I told you last night ... she suspects something. She doesn't miss a trick.

Nurse Then tell her!

Dr Reed I will! I will!

Nurse Good!

Dr Reed But not yet.

Nurse *(Cynically smiling)* Bastard! Bastard! Bastard!

Dr Reed Not far now Walter. Nearly there. Doors please, Nurse.

Nurse *(Sarcastically)* For you Doctor, anything.

Fade LX. Fade up SFX with a collage of nightmarish hospital sounds (eg electronic monitoring devices, oxygen pump, the dripping of a solution into a bowl accompanied by the increased heavy breathing of Walter). Enter Linda. Fade up LX.

Nurse Mr Heim! Walter! Walter! *(The breathing eases. Fade SFX).* Wake up, Walter. Your wife's here. She's here. That's it! Back in the land of the living are we? That's it!

Linda Can he hear me?

Nurse Oh yes. Can you see his eyes ... a little flicker. See it? There! See it?

Linda Walter?

Nurse I'll leave you to it. Buzz if you need anything!

Linda *(To nurse)* Thank you! *(To Walter)* Walter! I don't believe this. I had your supper on the table ... everything. Now this! This is all we need. Look at you! What do you look like? You look like a mummy ... all tied up. They've got everything under the sun plugged into you. My God!

Walter *Grunts.*

Linda Our anniversary in two weeks, and now this. Thank God my poor mother isn't alive to see this. I don't want you to worry, Walter. Don't worry about it. I'll worry. Leave it all to me. I'll cancel the caterers and whatever. What about the holiday? Did you take out insurance? Walter, listen to me! Did you take out insurance ... for the holiday?

Walter *Grunts twice.*

Linda I hope that's a "yes", Walter. Was that a "yes"? Can you nod your head or something? Here! Hold my hand. Squeeze once for "no" and twice for "yes".

Walter *Painful moan.*

Linda Sorry! Sorry! I didn't see the splint there. ... I take it that's a "no" then. I've got my fingers crossed, Walter. Fingers crossed. No insurance and it's five thousand down the tubes. I know you. You say you're going to do something and you forget. Remember last year? Twenty-four hours on a bench at Heathrow, because you forgot the tickets. Twenty-four hours! The whole holiday was ruined. Because you said you'd put the tickets in your wallet. "I've got them. Don't get your knickers in a twist," you said.

Walter *A low moan.*

Linda What's that, Walter? Is that pain? Are you in pain? What do I do? Do I call the nurse? Can you move your head? Can you nod? Here, let me raise your head up a bit. You look all ...

Walter *Loud, agonised moan.*

Linda Sorry! Sorry! I apologise. Whoops! This tube's slipped out of your arm. Nurse! Nurse! She was here a moment ago. I'll slip it back in. There! Good as new. I didn't have time to get you anything ... grapes or anything. Anyway, there's nothing open at this time. The taxi cost me a small fortune. Thirty-five pounds. I told him, I said, "You people today, you take advantage of a situation", I said. "I know it's three o'clock in the morning, but this is an emergency, if it wasn't I wouldn't be travelling at this time. Because we live in a good neighbourhood you think we're made of money", I said, "Perhaps we do live in a big house with a nice garden and that, but we didn't spend our money on gambling and nights out". Do you know what he said? Nothing. He said nothing! He was speechless. I think I hit home all right. He gave a little snidey grin, like they do, you know, but I could tell I'd touched a nerve. Oh yes. I told him, "And don't expect a tip, because you're not getting one". He laughed out loud at that, and nearly drove into a milk float.

How are they going to feed you with your mouth all covered up like that? Presumably they know what they're doing, although if you believe the papers, they're either on drugs and stoned out of their minds, or too tired to care.

Mrs Elias ... remember her? Nice woman. Widow. Her husband used to be in advertising. Stuck his head in a polythene bag and killed himself. Anyway, she went in for a hysterectomy and came out hysterical. She said she could feel them cutting through her. Imagine! She could actually feel them. And she even remembers what they were taking about. I told her, I said, "Take them for every penny". No-one deserves that sort of treatment. It's barbaric. I said, "You go now ... see a solicitor ... I'll come with you and we'll sort it out". She wouldn't do it. Afraid of the publicity. Why, I don't know. I was looking forward to that cruise, and I can't go on my own.

Fade LX. SFX of heart beat increases in volume and then fades. Fade up LX. Walter is breathing heavily.

Nurse Walter? Walter? Wakey, wakey! Just slipping a tube in your mouth so we can give you something to drink. Okay?

Walter *His breathing eases and he relaxes.*

Nurse There we are. How does that feel? Comfy? That's it! Now let's see ... can you suck, Walter? Suck?

Walter *He makes a long sucking noise as he sucks on the tube.*

Nurse That's very good. Good boy! I'll leave you with it. I'll stick the container down here ... so if you keep your arm still it'll be all right. Okay? Fine! I'll be back in a sec to give you another little injection. Enjoy!

Walter *Moans inwardly.*

Dr Reed *(Approaching)* How is he?

Nurse *(Businesslike)* No problems. Everything's stable. No complications. That's how you like it, isn't it! Uncomplicated!

Dr Reed *(Secretly)* I can't rush things.

Nurse Don't tell me. Always mañana!

Dr Reed *(Loudly)* Do you think ... *(softly)* Do you think I enjoy living with Samantha? Do you?

Nurse Excuse me! Can I get to the trolley? ... Thankyou.

Dr Reed Well, do you?

The Nurse clatters the hyperdermic syringe and attachments as she prepares for the injection.

Nurse Are you asking me what I think?

Dr Reed Yes, I bloody well am.

Nurse That's novel. Didn't think it mattered what I thought.

Dr Reed Not that old song. Give me a break!

Nurse What you want is a little bit on the side. All of the fun, none of the responsibility. True or not true?

Dr Reed Not ... look I ...

Nurse Excuse me, Doctor, Mr Heim is waiting for his injection, aren't you Mr Heim?

Walter *Moans.*

Nurse Let's have that tube out of your mouth for a second ... there we are. Now then!

Walter *Makes a short, sharp moan.*

Nurse All over! There we are. Tube back in. That's it.

Dr Reed Is that what you think?

Nurse What?

Dr Reed That's all I want? A bit on the side? Is that what you think?

Nurse Shh! The patient.

Dr Reed He can't hear much through that lot. Jane ...

Nurse You're standing in my light, and your breath smells of garlic. Excuse me!

Dr Reed Coffee ... or something stronger ... after work ... later on. What do you say? Jane?

Nurse Perhaps!

Dr Reed Perhaps? What do you mean, "perhaps"?

Nurse *(Moving away)* Perhaps! Savvy?

The Nurse exits followed, after a brief pause, by Dr Reed. Walter is heard slurping at his drink which gradually fades away as the LX fades to black. Fade up LX. Walter is in a deep sleep. We hear pop music from a radio getting closer. Walter begins to come round disturbed by the noise. Enter Gloria and Alex. Alex has dreadlocks and a ring through his nose.

Walter *Makes a confused moan.*

Gloria Turn it off!

Alex What?

Gloria Turn it off!

Alex Oh, yeah!

The radio is turned off.

Gloria Hi Dad! Dad! It's me, Gloria. He doesn't look too clever to me. Dad, can you hear me? It's me, Gloria

Alex Hi Mr Heim. We've come to see you. How are you?

Gloria That's a stupid question. How are you? Look at him. You can see how he is.

Alex Well I don't know, do I? I can't see through bloody bandages, can I? *(Gloria shakes her head in disbelief).* What's all this lot ... all this lot around him?

Gloria Whatever you do don't touch. Don't want you fiddlin'! It's not a hi-fi. Dad, can you hear me?

Walter *Moans weakly.*

Gloria Dad, we came as soon as we heard. We dropped everything and came straight over.

Alex Yeah! We had some really heavy stuff going on back there, man. Really cool, ya know what I mean.

Gloria *(Sharply)* Alex! *(Alex responds with an elaborate bow and then proceeds to roll a weed in front of her. She fights to grab hold of the weed, and whilst having what appears to be normal dialogue, they dodge around the bed).* We don't believe it, do we Alex?

Alex No.

Gloria Why you? Why us?

Alex Exactly. Why us?

Alex puts his hands up in defeat and places the weed into a tin in his pocket. Gloria sits by the bed whilst Alex inspects the various tubes attached to Walter.

Gloria Don't believe it. It's a nightmare. Alex! Stop squeezing that thing!

Alex What is it? Blood or what?

Gloria Of course it's blood. What did you think it is? Coca-cola? ... I think I saw his eyes flicker.

Alex Oh my God. Real blood. I feel sick.

Gloria Well, go outside. Go in the waiting room or somewhere. Sit by the fire bucket ... out there. *(Alex moves away groaning to himself).* Drip! *(To Walter)* The nurse said they're very pleased with you. That's good isn't it. You can't nod or ... no, suppose you can't with all that lot. *(She feels in her*

jacket pocket and takes out a couple of apples which she places on the bedside cabinet). Got you some fruit when you're up to it ... Yes ... well ... it's lousy out. You're better off in here, I tell you. Pissin' ... pouring down. *(In a Yorkshire accent)* "Coming down like stair rods", as Auntie Maureen says ... yes ... so ... Alex has an interview for a job this morning. Office work. A charity organisation. He says he doesn't mind working for something like that. It doesn't upset his sensitive work ethic.

Walter
Gloria

Makes a moaning sigh.

I know you've never liked him Dad, but when you get to know him, well ... he's not as black as some people paint. Just because he has dreadlocks and a ring through his nose, doesn't make him a bad person. He's a baby really. Very poetic when he wants to be. He should be in bed now, really, so he's fresh for the interview but he thought it was more important to come here to see you. That's the sort of person he is. Anyway, some good news. That little car you ordered for me, for my twenty-first? It's arrived. They rang us yesterday. It's there, in the showroom, all yellow and new. I can't wait. They said as soon as they get your cheque for the balance, they can release it. Where is your ... er ... Nurse! *(shouts)* Nurse!

Nurse approaches.

Nurse Everything all right?
Gloria Fine! Fine! Do you know where Dad's things are, his wallet and stuff?
Nurse In a locker next door. If you come with me I'll show you.
Gloria Back in a tick, Dad.

Gloria and the Nurse move away.

Walter *Moans in understanding.*

Dr Reed approaches and checks for vital signs.

Dr Reed Everything seems to be cooking away nicely. You'll be pleased to hear Mr Heim, that there's no serious brain damage, and the spine appears to be in one piece, so that's a relief. In a couple of days you'll be out of here and into the ward. Plenty of fresh young nurses down there to pamper you. You'll be up and about in no time, no time at all. By the way, I brought this in for you. The local rag. Didn't know we had a celebrity on our hands. Can you see it? Can you see the headlines? You're on the front page. See? "Finance wizard in mysterious car crash". And there's a picture of you. At least we know what you should look like now.

Walter

Makes a deep heartfelt moan.

Dr Reed

Not in any pain are we, Mr Heim? Tell you what we'll do. Give you a another shot. Keep you comfortable. *(He loads a hyperdermic needle on the trolley).* Financial wizard are we? Wish I was. You need to be a magician to balance my salary, I can tell you. My wife is somehow under the mistaken impression that a doctor's life style must be on a par with cretinous pop stars, or people of that ilk. A prostitute makes more than I do, and that's a proven fact. There was a fascinating article in The Lancet recently. A young quack lived in a Manchester bordello for a month ... researching the physical effects of sustained sexual activity. That was an eye opener, I can tell you. I should say. Makes you think. It certainly does. They make a small fortune. Here we are!

He inserts the needle into Walter

Walter *Gives a loud prolonged moan.*

Dr Reed

Sorry about that. Must have been some hard skin. Heard you financial bods were thick skinned, eh? *(He laughs at his own joke which fades away when he realises that it is in poor taste)* Yes ... well. You can have the paper. I'll leave it on the bed. See you anon. Bye!

Walter

Moans a goodbye.

Enter Linda.

Linda

(Businesslike) Walter! It's me! Your wife! Your obedient, faithful and foolish wife. Still can't talk? A pity. I say pity because you, Walter, have got lots of talking to do. You got the paper. Good! Everyone's got the paper. I've never seen so many people reading the paper in our neighbourhood. I can't take a step without someone saying how sorry they are. I go into the butchers to get some chopped liver and this woman comes up to me. She says how sorry she is. I never saw her before. The God's honest truth, she was a complete stranger. Suddenly I'm a celebrity, which under normal circumstances would be fine. Unfortunately, these circumstances are not fine are they, Mr

Heim! I've read that article a hundred times. I still can't believe it. I'm reading it with my own eyes, and I think I must be dreaming.

Read what it says! Come on! I saw your eyes move. See that! I'll read it! This is what it says. This is the bit. (*Reading*) "Mr Heim's Bentley hit a tree after skidding off the track in Bishop's Wood, a place often used by courting couples at this time of year. Police found items of ladies' underwear on the back seat, together with a bouquet of flowers and a half eaten box of Belgian chocolates".

If my dear mother were alive to read this it would have killed her ... stone dead. "A police spokesman said that there was real evidence that someone, a young lady, had been travelling in the front passenger seat with Mr Heim at the time of the accident, but, mysteriously, there is no sign of her. A search of the surrounding area is in progress today", and so on and so forth. I can't go on. It's bad for my ulcer.

I've got questions. Have I got questions! Where do I start? I've got to ask ... God, tell me, who is this man I've been sharing my bed with for the last twenty-five years? Please tell me.

Walter

Makes a long agonised moan.

Linda

Yes, moan. I don't care. Bishop's Wood? "I'll be in the office all day", he said. Chocolates! You never eat chocolates. You get migraine. That's right moan. Go ahead! What am I doing, talking about chocolates? Who was the girl, Walter? Who was she? What sort of girl wears that sort of underwear? Open crotch panties! It says here, "open crotch panties". Walter, you're fifty-five years old. You've got everything you want. You've worked hard. You've got respect. Now you're going to throw it all away for some girl who wears open crotch panties? What do I do? What do I do? Please God, what do I do? (*She begins to cry*).

Walter

Gives a long moan.

Enter Gloria.

Gloria

Mother! Mum! Hey! Come on! He's going to be all right. The nurse says he'll be good as new in a few days. (*Linda cries louder*). What are you pointing at? His legs? No! The paper? The paper! Why, what ...? It's Daddy! On the front page.

Linda

Jeykell and Hyde. I've been whatsisnamed ... cuckolded.

Gloria

Bishop's Wood? ... chocolates ... open crotch pant...

Linda

That's your father. I know! I don't believe it either.

Gloria

Mother, calm down! You're jumping to conclusions here.

Linda

You don't go to Bishop's Wood in the middle of the night to eat chocolates. Right?

Gloria

Right!

Linda

Right! The girl's got her underwear on the back seat, right?

Gloria

Right!

Linda

So what's your father doing riding around with a naked girl in the front passenger seat of the Bentley? Is that the behaviour of a normal man? Is that my husband, your father, we're talking about here. This is a nightmare! I'm going to the toilet. Where's the toilet? Nurse? Where's the ladies' room?

Walter

Coughs, splutters and moans.

Gloria

(*Kindly*) You crafty old devil! My old man's got a bit on the side. My father, the man of high morals ... the man who tore me off a strip when I slept with my boyfriend ... he's got a bit of fluff. Hope she's all right. It says here that the Police want her to come forward. Her testimony will be treated in confidence. I'd better go and see what Mum's up to. Oh, I've found your cheque book, and made it out for sixteen thou ... Can you move your hand to sign it? Or shall I do it?

Walter

Gives a low moan.

Gloria

If I hold your hand ... like this ... and ...

Walter

Moans louder.

Gloria

If you hold the pen ... like that ... and together we write your signature ... like that.

Nurse

(*Calling from the middle distance, offstage*) Your mother's calling for you, Miss Heim.

Gloria

Coming! Don't go away, daddykins.

Exit Gloria. Walter gives a huge sigh and a long sobbing moan. Enter Andrea.

Andrea

(*Getting close in to Walter, menacing*) Hello Walter. It's Andrea!

Walter

Makes a short gasp.

Andrea Either you're very pleased to see me or you've got an enormous splint around your balls. Shall I squeeze them to make sure?

Walter *Breathes heavily, agitated.*

Andrea No! I couldn't do that. Not cricket! Saw your photo in the paper. Financial wizard? That's a laugh. Con merchant more like. Although you can do a great disappearing act when you want to. What's that? A cheque! Very nice too! Sixteen thousand ... made out to ... nobody. Interesting. So, you call yourself Heim when you're not with me. I'm not stupid, Walter. I knew you were up to something. What husband goes away on business for the same four days every week, including Christmas? Actually, it suited me down to the ground. You were so regular, Walt, I could time you down to the second.

I've got a confession to make. I've got a lover. Had him for the last four years. Not bad, eh? He's very good. Got a bit more life in him than you have. So, what do you get for bigamy these days? What should I do, Walter? Blow the gaff, or live in the manner, etcetera, etcetera? For starters, take this lovely cheque ... now if I take out my charming little gold pen that you bought for my last birthday ... see, always close to my heart ... and if I change that to one hundred and sixteen thousand ... and make it out to Andrea Epstein, your devoted wife, then that helps to ease my grief somewhat. As long as I get my ten thousand at the end of every month you've got nothing to fear, Walter.

Enter Linda and Gloria. Linda is in the final stages of sniffing.

Gloria Hello! Are you a friend of my father's?

Andrea And you are?

Gloria I'm his daughter, Gloria, and this is my mother, Linda Heim.

Andrea So, you're Walter's wife.

Linda Hello! I'm sorry I ...

Andrea I know! I know! It's all very distressing.

Linda Twenty-five years, and now this. The publicity! The strain!

Gloria Have you known my father long?

Andrea Ten years, off and on.

Gloria Ten years? And you're Mrs ...?

Andrea Epstein! Andrea Epstein.

Linda One of the Manchester Epstein's?

Andrea Maidenhead, actually.

Linda What did she say?

Gloria Maidenhead, mother.

Linda Oh! And you've known my husband for ten years! I wonder why he never mentioned your name.

Andrea It's purely a business relationship. He throws money my way and I invest it. We wheel and we deal. I'm more or less just a sleeping partner.

Linda Andrea? You don't mind if I call you Andrea?

Andrea Please do, Linda.

Linda I've got to ask you a very personal question.

Gloria Mother!

Linda Gloria, quiet! To tell you the truth I don't know which way to turn here. I read about this sort of thing all of the time. It's never going to happen to me in a million years, and now, boom, right out of the sky, a bolt of lightning comes down, and my life is in ruins. Tell me, Andrea, are you married?

Andrea I am married, yes.

Linda You are! A good marriage?

Andrea I can honestly say my husband and I are very close.

Walter *A weak moan.*

Linda That's good. Good. Believe me it's like a breath of fresh air to hear you say it. Everywhere it's adultery and bonking, everywhere you look.

Andrea True.

Linda Believe me it hurts me to ask you this. It hurts. Ten years you've known my husband you say.

Andrea Correct!

Linda Did he ever, during that time ... did he ever ... you know ... did he make any ... did he try to ...
Gloria ... did Dad ever get you into the sack? Is that what you want to know, Mother?
Linda You can be crude sometimes, Gloria.
Andrea It's okay! Linda, I can honestly say that whenever Walter was with me, my husband was there by my side. Must rush! Got some pressing business to see to.
Gloria Excuse me?
Andrea Yes?
Gloria You haven't seen a cheque lying around have you. I left it on the bed by his ...
Andrea Cheque? (*Moving away*) No! Sorry! Bye!
Linda Bye! What cheque?
Gloria Nothing. Not important. I'll make out another. See to it later. (*Moving away*) Better go and sort Alex out. See you outside.

Exit Gloria. Linda moves close to Walter.

Linda Can you hear me, Walter? See this ring around my finger, this band of gold? Look how smooth it is. The pattern's worn down. That's through me touching it. Every day for twenty-five years I've touched it to remind me about our marriage vows. I didn't tell you that did I. I haven't told you everything. You think I'm plain, frumpy, cosy, wifey. You do, I know you do. I needn't have been. There's been times when certain gentlemen have approached me with very attractive offers. Yes, I could have spent all my time making myself look feminine and sensuous. But I didn't. I didn't, because I trusted you, Walter. Even though for the past ten years you spent half the week away from me, I trusted you, and I wanted you to trust me. Not the sort of thing to make headline news is it? "Wife remains faithful for twenty-five years". A long time, Walter. A very long time. All my best years.

Listen, Walter! I'll come a bit closer to make sure you can hear. Walter, I feel very bitter about all this. You can understand that I'm sure. Things can never be the same again between us. I've thought about it and I've decided that, well, in short, I don't want you to come back to me. I know what the Rabbi would say ... "Turn the other cheek". Perhaps some women could. I can't. How many times does a married woman have to turn her cheek, I ask myself? I'm dizzy turning cheeks. It's over. I'm sorry. Get well.

Walter *His breathing increases in intensity.*

The Nurse approaches.

Nurse That's nice!
Linda What?
Nurse It's true isn't it. Personal tragedy always pulls people together. I felt quite moved seeing you up close to your husband like that.
Linda I've got to be going.
Nurse There's no therapy like love. Oh, yes. I've seen some in here with half of Mr Heim's injuries and they've just pegged out. Nothing to live for you see. Gone out like a candle.
Linda Nurse, please be straight with me. I can take it. What are his chances, seriously? The truth.
Nurse Seriously, I don't think you've got anything to worry about. Vital signs are good.
Linda Thank you. (*Moving away*) Now I can make plans.
Nurse Don't worry, Mrs Heim. We'll take good care of him for you. (*Exit Linda*). Well, you have had a busy time. Let's have a look at your pulse. Mmm! Racing away a bit. She still turns you on does she, your wife? Lovely lady. Very reliable I would imagine. Salt of the earth. You're a very lucky man, Mr Heim. You're causing quite a stir you know. They did a thing on the telly news about you this afternoon. The police have already been round, but don't worry, I gave them a flea in their ear. They won't be back in a hurry. This bandage needs changing. Has someone been playing around with your tubes? We can't have that now, can we, Walter. Wonder what happened to that girl you had in the car? I don't mean 'had' had, I mean the girl who was with you ... aw, you know what I mean. You can't walk around starkers for long this time of year. Unless, of course, you've done away with her, which is nonsense because she was in the car with you when it crashed, wasn't she.
Walter *Makes several moans.*
Nurse Are you trying to move your head, Walter? I wouldn't advise that. Lie still if you can. You never know what you might do. Relax! Come on, relax! That's it. Close your eyes. Try to sleep. That's it!

Enter Dr Reed.

Dr Reed Can I borrow a shoulder?
Nurse I'm busy.
Dr Reed It's important.
Nurse It will have to wait, Doctor. Sorry!
Dr Reed Damn important.
Nurse Damn important, eh? *(She begins to giggle, and mimics a pompous voice)* "Damn important! I say old chap, is it really?" *(Back to normal)* If you could only see yourself.
Dr Reed I think I've made a decision.
Nurse Have you!
Dr Reed Last night, I think I finally decided what to do.
Nurse Which is?
Dr Reed Will you look at me and at least try to listen to me properly.
Nurse Is that better? I'm listening.
Dr Reed You're being flippant.
Nurse I'm listening.
Dr Reed Very well. Last night I told Sammy, that, er ... we'd come to the end of the tunnel, the road, that we were at the crossroads, and ... it would be best all round if we both bit the bullet and steered a different course, and that she went one way, and I went the other to find calmer waters.
Nurse *(Calmly)* I see.
Dr Reed And I told her she could have the house, the car, the caravan, the new leather suite ... and she can even have the water-bed and the hi-fi. I'm keeping my books and my exercise bike.
Nurse You've decided.
Dr Reed I've decided.
Nurse Finally decided.
Dr Reed Finally decided. I think. No, absolutely certain. Positive!
Nurse *(Sighing)* So, you're out on your uppers.
Dr Reed Yeah! I'm down on my uppers, up on my downers, basically down and out.
Nurse Square one.
Dr Reed That just about sums it up. How are you fixed for a quick snifter in the sluice to celebrate?
Nurse What do we celebrate? Poverty?

Dr Reed's bleeper sounds.

Dr Reed *(He reads the text on the pager and moves quickly away)* Sorry! See you! How about a candlelight dinner sometime?
Nurse Where? In the canteen? *(To Walter)* How about some music Walter? I'll plug you in. Pop these over your head. *(The sound of Frank Sinatra's "My Way" is heard through the headphones. Walter moans).* There we are. See you later.

The music fades. The radio DJ is now heard through speaker system

Radio DJ "And I did it my way until the girlfriend complained, then we had to do it her way. *(Giggles)*. Yeah, well, enough of that. The next record is for Melissa Carter in Maternity who has just delivered her eighth, a bouncing baby boy. Well done Melissa. *(Walter moans with a sigh)*. And I would also like to dedicate this next record to our celebrity up in intensive care ... you must have seen the cameras. Wow! We're national news! For Walter Heim and Melissa Carter it's "The Sun Has Got His Hat On". Now come on everyone. Bang those bed pans, wriggle those toes, sing out loud if you like, and join in and smile".

The music begins. Walter moans in time to the music. Fade out LX and SFX. Fade up LX. Walter is snoring loudly. The Nurse speaks to him over the snores.

Nurse Open wide, Mr Heim. Mr Heim! Wakey, wakey! Mr Heim! *(Walter stops snoring)*. Back in the land of the living, Mr Heim? Open wide! That's it. A nice drink for you. Lots of calories in that. Got to build you up haven't we. *(Walter slurps on the straw)*. You did have a good sleep. That's very good. Good boy. We've taken the drip off now, so that's better isn't it. I'll just prop you up a bit so you can see what's going on. *(She cranks up the bed, or plumps up his pillows)*. That's better. Now you can see everything. There's a lady to see you. Early bird. She looks very dramatic. All in black. A

cloak down to her ankles. Always fancied one of them. She's not a relative. Sounds Italian. Business associate she said. I wasn't going to let her in, but she made a very large donation to our benevolent fund, so what could I do ... and she said it was important. I'll let her stay for two minutes. Don't want to wear you out with business calls do we. *(She moves away and calls)*. Would you like to come in?

Woman *(Off stage, with a thick, Italian accent)* Thank you, Nurse. *(She enters and approaches Walter)*. Thank you. Very kind.

Nurse I can only allow you a couple of minutes.

Woman I understand. *(Close to Walter)*. I understand. He can hear me, presumably.

Nurse Oh yes. But he can't talk, naturally.

Woman No. I can see he's locked up good and tight in that department.

Nurse *(Moving away)* I won't be far away.

Woman So, Walter Heim ... you are a survivor, are you? Was that a frown? I think I saw a frown. You don't know me. I come as a messenger ... a favour for my brothers and cousins. They've told me the whole story because naturally I'm inquisitive. I like to know what's going on over here in the UK. It's my business to know. We have no secrets. We're a family. A good family has no secrets. That's how we survive. This is what I know. For the last twenty years or so we have been giving you good business. For us you have been laundering lire, francs and dollars. Every month you handle millions of dollars from our Vegas operation alone. You hold a position of trust, Walter Heim. Not many men are given that privilege. But you betrayed that trust. That we can't forgive. We had you investigated, Walter. A moron could see through you. You live above your means. Two wives, four houses, a finger in this, a finger in that. You're a rich man, Walter. Unfortunately, you're too rich. You've been robbing us. Only a fool pisses in his own well. That's why we organised your accident. It was easy. We know your weakness for young women. Remember the girl in the lift. She was carrying flowers and chocolates ...

Cross fade to stage left area. Walter Heim is standing close to a young woman in a lift.

Lucy Aren't you Walter Heim?

Walter Mmmm?

Lucy Penthouse suite? Stirling Products And Exports?

Walter That's me.

Lucy I thought it was. Love your car ... the white Bentley. It's gorgeous!

Walter Do you?

Lucy Love it! Love it!

Walter Celebrating?

Lucy These flowers and chocolates? It's my twenty-first. Girls in the office gave them to me. Smell!

She places the flowers in Walter's face.

Walter *(Sniffs deeply)* Yes ... very ... er ... very ... can I give you a lift somewhere?

Lucy In the white...

Walter ...in the white Bentley ... with the soft leather seats.

Lucy Soft leather seats. The smell of leather turns me on.

Walter Really?

Lucy Really, really!

Walter We'll celebrate your birthday. How about some pink champagne?

Lucy This is not happening to me. Are you serious? I mean ... you're Walter Heim and I'm a filing clerk in Fairfax Industrial Cleaning.

Walter What you are, is a very attractive young lady, and I would be privileged if you would spend an hour or two in my company. It would be my honour.

Lucy You know, there's something about older men. They know how to talk to a woman. Young men have no idea. They're slobbs most of them. Okay! Why not! Kind sir, I kindly accept your invitation.

Walter Call me Walter!

The sound of a lift comes to the foreground as it hums to a halt. Fade LX at SL. Fade up SFX of hospital ICU again, then fade the sound of noisy monitors into the background. Fade up LX in the hospital. The Woman is leaning over Walter.

Woman After that, it was all straightforward. She fed you a couple of drugged chocolates. Threw some underwear and stuff on the back seat. Drove you out to Bishop's Wood, put you back in the driver's seat with the help of my brothers, Antonio and Enrico, who were waiting, pointed the car towards a tree, and bang! It all appealed to our artistic natures. I find those American gangster movies such an inspiration, don't you? Result? The untimely demise of Walter Heim under mysterious circumstances and enough evidence to implicate you in some hanky panky. We didn't want your widow to grieve for too long, Walter.

Walter *Moans as he realises the facts.*
Woman Pity about the lovers and their damned mobile phone. They came along a few seconds later ... and so here you are. That was very lucky, Walter. That sort of luck you do not deserve. So I tell you what we're going to do. Hospitals have accidents. You read about it all the time. Tired doctors don't know what they're doing ... you know what I mean. We got it all set up, Walter. We got someone on the inside who can juggle the drugs around and make sure you get a special cocktail that'll send you on your way. And you've got to admit, we won't be the only people glad to see you go. When is this going to happen? Who knows? All I can tell you, Walter, is that it's some time soon. Very soon! Bye, bye! Bye-bye Walter Heim!

The Woman exits. Walter is breathing heavily and irregularly. The Nurse enters.

Nurse Your friend gone? Lovely lady. Left us all some chocolates too. *(She notices the monitor).* Now what's going on here, Walter? Calm down! Come on! Try to relax. If you're going to be like this I'll have to stop visitors coming in, won't I? *(SFX of pulse on monitor increasing. She presses a buzzer on the monitor. A red light flashes. She monitors Walter's vital signs).* Nothing to worry about, Walter. Happens all the time. We'll soon settle you down. A quick jab and it'll all be over.

The remainder of this play has been deleted from this preview copy, but the following synopsis completes the action ...

Walter manages to communicate to Dr Reed and the Nurse that he will give them a large amount of money, if they will help him to get out of hospital and escape his underworld 'friends'. After some prevarication, they agree and hatch a plan to make it appear that he has discharged himself.

Walter and Dr Reed swap places, and with the Nurse's help, Walter is placed in the mortuary, whilst Dr Reed (who looks just like Walter in his bandages) is left sitting in reception, waiting for a taxi, having 'discharged' himself. In the final scene, we see Walter (still in his bandages) and the Nurse sitting in a Paris Café. The Nurse asks for an English paper, and sees an article (which she reads out loud to Walter) about the death of a hospital Doctor, who has died in mysterious circumstances, apparently after eating Belgian chocolates whilst disguised as one of his patients.

Realising that his pursuers will still be hot on Walter's tail, she suggests that Walter gives her more money, on receipt of which she will spirit him away to an exotic hideaway. Desperate to escape, Walter does so, only to find that her caring professionalism has deserted her as she absconds with his cheque, leaving him to be caught by the local Gendarmerie.

For further details on purchasing a full copy of the script, or for information on royalties, please contact :-

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