

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

by
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Thin Man Films
9 Greek Street
London
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Credits.

A bright, sunny day. An attractive young woman rides her bicycle through Central London. Her hair blows free, and she is relaxed and contented. Occasionally, she waves and smiles at passers-by.

She gets off her bicycle and chains it to some railings, alongside some other bikes.

Now she is walking through a busy market. She glances briefly at a stall, then notices a bookshop. She looks in its window.

A moment later, POPPY, for that is her name, enters the bookshop. Looking round, she spots a book, and smiles. She pulls it out a little. It's 'The Road To Reality' by Roger Penrose.

POPPY

'The Road To Reality'. Don't wanna be going there!

(She laughs to herself. A young male shop assistant is working behind the counter. He wears a woolly Rasta hat, and has a beard and dreadlocks. He is white.)

POPPY

Hiya. Oasis of calm in here; mad out there.

(No reply from the assistant, who is preoccupied with his computer.)

POPPY

Gorgeous day for it, though, isn't it?
(She moves away, into the shop.) Never been in here before.

(Poppy enters the children's book section. She picks up a brightly coloured book called 'Kingdom Of The Sun'. She opens it, and smiles.)

A few minutes later, in another part of the shop, she is reading an adult book. The ASSISTANT comes over and puts some books on a shelf next to her.

POPPY

I like your hat.

(He reacts a little as though she's said something outrageous, then slopes off. She glances after him.)

A few moments later, POPPY drifts over to the counter.

POPPY

Busy? *(He ignores her.)* Hello! *(Still no response.)* 'Avin' a bad day?

(He looks at her. Pause.)

ASSISTANT

No.

POPPY

Ooh! Not 'til I showed up, eh?
(Laughing) You look like a rabbit caught in the headlights. I won't bite! Don't worry: I'm going now. Have a good day! Stay happy! *(She opens the door. Cockney accent)* "I ain't nicked nothin'. Honest guv'nor!" *(She makes the sound of a burglar alarm.)* Beep! Beep! Beep!

(She laughs. As she leaves, a youth with long hair and spectacles enters the shop.)

Poppy walks briskly back to where she parked her bicycle. It has been stolen.

POPPY

Oh, no - no! Come on! *(She looks round. Lots of people and traffic, but no bike. She laughs.)* That's just brilliant, that is! Oh, no! I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye.

(She walks off.)

A large, packed dance hall. Spotlights. POPPY and four other young women are bopping energetically to 'Common People' by Pulp.

Dawn. An empty street. The five women meander along, chattering. A taxi drives by.

They arrive at a flat over a corner cafe and enter a side door.

A little later. We are in POPPY's living room - cluttered, eclectic, jolly, jokey. Daylight, just, through the closed curtains, but the lights are on. POPPY, ZOE, her flatmate, SUZIE, POPPY's sister, and DAWN and ALICE, SUZIE's friends. Much laughter and giggling throughout this scene.

DAWN

The music's stopped.

ALICE

It stopped ages ago. *(She bursts into giggles.)*

ZOE

(Smoking)

Yeah, I was just enjoying the silence.

(ALICE and POPPY shriek with laughter.) What? What's so funny?

ALICE

I don't know!

(SUZIE, in a multi-coloured anorak with the hood up, has been dozing.)

SUZIE

Can you just - *(She makes a gesture that sort of means "make less noise".)*

ZOE

Oh, your sister's woken up, Poppy.

(POPPY imitates SUZIE's gesture - forefinger and thumb half an inch apart.)

DAWN

Suzie, what's that?

ALICE

What is it?

POPPY

Is that your latest conquest? Aah - bless 'im!!

(POPPY, ALICE and DAWN laugh.)

ZOE

Don't you ever pray that you were adopted, Suzie?

POPPY

(miming being stabbed)
Ooh! Oh!

SUZIE

Yeah!

POPPY

You got me, Zoe!! (She pulls out the imaginary dagger. ALICE and DAWN giggle uproariously.)

SUZIE

S-ssh!

ALICE

Who are you shushing?

POPPY

No, no! No, no. No, she's right...let's all enjoy the silence together. Dawn, will you shut up? Because no-one else can get a word in!

(DAWN and ALICE make 'ssh' sounds.)

DAWN

Sorry.

ALICE

Fingers on lips. (She does so.)

POPPY

Fingers on the tits. (She does so.)

ALICE

Fingers on tits. (She does so.)

POPPY

(Pointing to her lower region)
Fingers on the lips.

DAWN

(to ALICE)
Can I borrow yours?
(She puts her finger on ALICE's bosom.)

(ALICE squeals with mirth. POPPY pulls out two pink rubber breast pads.)

POPPY
Fingers on the tits!

ZOE
Oh, that is properly disgusting!!

POPPY
Chicken fillets. Lunch, anyone? - ooh:
hello? *(She puts a pad to her ear like
a telephone.)*

DAWN
Can I have a go?

POPPY
(Handing it over)
Course you can, Dawn - you don't need
to ask! Anyone, over there?

*(She chucks the other pad over to the
sofa, where it lands between ZOE and
SUZIE.)*

ZOE
I know where that's been.

(DAWN is putting the pad inside her dress.)

ALICE
(Laughing)
You have gone down in my estimation.

POPPY
Oh, I'm sorry, Alice!

SUZIE
I don't get why you wear'em, Poppy!

POPPY
Oh, don't you?

SUZIE
I mean, you just...put them in your
bra...

ZOE
Yeah?

POPPY
I like the way they make me feel,
Suzie!

ZOE
Like a natural woman.

POPPY
That's right.

DAWN
(inspecting her own bosom)
I think it's in t'wrong place!

(ALICE prods DAWN's bosom.)

ZOE
Oh, look - you've got three tits.

POPPY
She's like you, Zoe!

ZOE
No, that's three nipples.

POPPY
Oh, right.

SUZIE
Have you got three nipples?

(Zoe laughs.)

POPPY
She doesn't like to talk about it! I'm going to give her a little hug.

(She crawls across to ZOE on all fours.)

(ALICE pats POPPY on the bottom with her shoe.)

ALICE
Over you go!

POPPY
Oh, that's quite nice - do it again.
(ALICE does so.) Oh!!

(Much giggling all round. POPPY climbs onto the arm of the sofa, and squats behind ZOE.)

Look at your cleavage! It looks great from up 'ere!

ZOE
(Drily)
Thank you!

POPPY
I've got a bird's-eye view! Come on ladies! Cop a load o' this!

ZOE
Oh, yeah - roll up! Roll up!

POPPY
Look at that!

(ALICE and DAWN gather round.)

ALICE
Oh - they're great.

ZOE
It's good, isn't it?

DAWN
They're amazing!

(POPPY indulges in a bit of jokey slapstick: she falls off the sofa, winding up in a bizarre position with her head between her feet. Laughter.)

ZOE
I think we know where Poppy's sleeping tonight!!

Viewed from an upstairs window, DAWN and ALICE link arms as they walk away from the flat.

A little later, in POPPY's bedroom. POPPY opens the curtains. She has shed her exotic clubbing appearance, and is wearing jeans and a top.

POPPY
Time to get up, Sleepy-Head.

(Suzy is in Poppy's double bed. Poppy sits by her. She is carrying two mugs.)

POPPY
Cuppa tea here. Come on - you can do it. *(SUZIE sits up slowly.)* That's it. Nearly there! There we go... and she's up!! Hey! *(She gives SUZIE her tea.)*

SUZIE
Thanks.

POPPY
You alright?

SUZIE
Yeah. I slept good.

POPPY

I heard you. (*She makes a snoring sound.*)

SUZIE

You always start that. (*POPPY laughs*)
I don't snore.

POPPY

I know. You never have.

SUZIE

I don't!

POPPY

(*Funny voice*)
"I don't!"

(*Pause. They sip their tea.*)

SUZIE

They still asleep?

POPPY

No, they buggered off ages ago.

SUZIE

Did they?

POPPY

Yeah.

SUZIE

Oh, right. What's the time?

POPPY

About ten past twelve.

SUZIE

Oh. They've got a bit of work to do.

POPPY

Have they?

SUZIE

Dawn's late with her dissertation.

POPPY

Oh, no! When are your exams?

SUZIE

Three weeks tomorrow.

POPPY

You'll be alright.

SUZIE
Yeah. I'm totally chilled out about it.

POPPY
Course you are.

SUZIE
I'm cool...

POPPY
Yeah.

SUZIE
I'm just really stressed.

POPPY
(Laughing)
What like an Eskimo with a headache?

(ZOE appears at the door.)

ZOE
Does anyone want any toast?

SUZIE
Yeah!

POPPY
Yes, please.

SUZIE
With marmalade - two slices.

ZOE
Yeah, I know - cut on the diagonal.

SUZIE
Yeah.

POPPY
No crusts.

ZOE
Got it. Oh - d'you know what?

POPPY
Oh!

(Hung-over, ZOE makes for the bed and flops on her back at POPPY'S and SUZIE'S feet).

ZOE
Oh, yeah...

POPPY
(Laughing)
She's gone!

SUZIE

The thing is, we're starting with Criminal Justice.

POPPY

Is that your first exam?

SUZIE

Yeah - it's crap.

POPPY

Yeah.

SUZIE

If we had Cyber Crime first, or like, Crime and Pleasure, I could ease myself into it. No probs.

ZOE

Oh, you'll be alright, Suzie.

POPPY

Yeah. If we can get a degree, any idiot can.

ZOE

Are you calling your sister an idiot?

POPPY

I'm calling you an idiot.

ZOE

Thank you.

POPPY

Crime and Pleasure. Now that sounds good.

ZOE

Sounds like last night.

SUZIE

Yeah.

POPPY

You'll be alright.

SUZIE

Yeah.

A little later. SUZIE opens the front door, and steps into the street. POPPY leans in the doorway.

SUZIE

See you later.

POPPY

Alligator. When are we going to see Helen?

SUZIE

Oh, yeah. When's the baby due?

POPPY

I dunno - soon. She's been texting me.

SUZIE

Me, too. She's getting worse.

POPPY

I know - bless her. Don't you want to wait 'til after your exams?

SUZIE

I want to get it over with.

POPPY

Alright. Don't worry. Leave her to me.

SUZIE

Text me, yeah? *(She walks off.)*

POPPY

Work hard. *(SUZIE makes a rude gesture, without turning round)* Sooze! *(SUZIE turns round.)* You know it's that way, don't you?

SUZIE

Oh, yeah.

(SUZIE does a joke sideways crab-walk out of sight. POPPY laughs. Then SUZIE reappears, and resumes her earlier direction. POPPY watches her for a moment, then comes in, closing the door.)

A little later. POPPY takes some old wooden rods out of a hall cupboard. She is also carrying other assorted sticks, paper and egg-boxes. She climbs a small staircase, coinciding with ZOE, who is coming down the main staircase with an armful of books. Both women go into the living room. POPPY dumps her load on the coffee table. ZOE sits on the sofa and opens a large coloured children's book.

Now POPPY comes down the stairs, with a further armload of assorted items, included a toy seagull, and plenty of books. Again, she unloads on the table.

A few minutes later. POPPY and ZOE are now both on the sofa. Each is looking through a coloured picture book.

POPPY
Be amazing to fly, wouldn't it?

ZOE
You reckon?

POPPY
Just - phooo!

ZOE
What, like 'Mr Vertigo'?

POPPY
Oh yeah. I love that book.

ZOE
Yeah.

POPPY
Oh, vultures. Met a few of them.

ZOE
These could be useful. *(She gives POPPY her book.)*

POPPY
Oh, yeah - they're great! Oh, look at him - he's gorgeous!

(ZOE holds up some pictures of owls.)

ZOE
We could do an owl - they've got big heads.

POPPY
Good idea. Huh! Got your eyes, look!

ZOE
Oh, cheers, Poppy!

POPPY
No, they're lovely. Do penguins emigrate?

ZOE
What, do they move to the Costa del Sol?

POPPY
Alright - emigrate, migrate - whatever. What about parrots?

ZOE
Oh, yeah - definitely.

POPPY

Or a toucan. (*Looking at picture.*) Oh, look at his beak.

ZOE

They're good colours.

POPPY

Beautiful.

(Pause. They turn pages.)

ZOE

So, are you going to get another bike, then?

POPPY

Oh, no. I couldn't replace my old Lovely. He's flown the nest, now. Definitely going to learn to drive, though.

ZOE

Gonna book lessons?

POPPY

Might do, might not.

ZOE

I told you - you're not learning to drive in my car!

(POPPY gently mocks this with funny chicken noises.)

POPPY

Chickens - we could do chickens!

ZOE

Chickens don't fly.

POPPY

Lazy buggers! What are we gonna make, then?

ZOE

I don't know - what d'you think?

POPPY

I dunno.

Now ZOE has a large brown paper bag over her head. Her forefingers are pointing to the position of her eyes. POPPY is armed with a big felt-tip pen.

POPPY

Where are they?

(She puts two fingers on the bag.)

ZOE

Here.

POPPY

They're that far apart, are they?

ZOE

Yeah. Don't poke me!

POPPY

I wasn't going near you.

(She draws two dots. ZOE takes off the bag. POPPY has one, too. They each proceed to cut holes in the bags with pairs of scissors.)

ZOE

You should ask an adult to help you.

POPPY

(Smiling)

I don't know any!

POPPY rushes down the stairs. On her head is her paper bag, now decorated with eyes and a beak and some colours. She is draped in a large piece of boldly striped fabric, and is making squawking noises and flapping her arms. She sails across the room to a large mirror that is leaning on the mantelpiece.

POPPY

I think they're quite good.

(ZOE is still on the sofa, head unadorned.)

ZOE

Yeah. What d'you reckon? *(She puts her bag over her head. It too has eyes and a beak.)*

POPPY

(Raising her bag to reveal her face)

I think we could pull in these.

ZOE

Definitely.

POPPY

Pub?

ZOE

Hair of the dog.

POPPY

I'm ready. Put a bit of lippy on, and away we go!

(The bag-mask back over her face she makes bird-tweeting noises to her reflection.)

The next day. An urban environment. Old buildings. Lots of parked cars. A small, yellow Fiat pulls up. ZOE gets out, and takes a large cardboard box and a bag out of her boot. A woman passes her.

ZOE

Hi, Liz.

LIZ

Hi, Zoe. How are you?

Meanwhile, POPPY is standing in a crowded bus, which jolts suddenly. POPPY laughs, sharing the moment with a friendly middle-aged man in a suit. She is holding various bags and rolls of coloured paper.

She runs along a line of trees and a wall. She goes through a pair of high yellow modern gates, and enters a low building.

Now POPPY is standing in front of a large, brightly coloured home-made map of the world. She is teaching a class of seven-year old children.

POPPY

And birds that live here, in North America, they fly all the way to South America. Yeah? Now that's a journey-and-a-half, isn't it? But the biggest journey of them all is of the Arctic tern; cos he flies from the Arctic, yeah? - all the way - wow! - across the world! - to the South Pole. Isn't that incredible? From the North to the South Pole, and that is - sssh! - and that is, nine thousand, three hundred miles - that's right! Wow. Wow!!

A little later. POPPY crosses her classroom. She carries plastic paint bottles. She speaks to an unseen kid.

POPPY

Alright, Nick? You can do the other side, now.

The kids are making bird masks from their paper bags - cutting out, painting, gluing. POPPY is sitting at a table with three kids, helping one of them.

POPPY

What we can do...Shall we give him - shall we give him a few bits - ? D'you wanna give him...?

A few minutes later. A boy at another table is painting his mask purple. POPPY picks up the mask she's been working on.

POPPY

He's got eyebrows, look. *(She laughs)*
Yeah? *(The kids laugh.)* I think that's brilliant. That's brilliant!!

Meanwhile, in her school - a different one - ZOE is supervising her children and their mask-making.

ZOE

Now, then...Shall I put some more yellow in that? *(She refills a pot.)*
There we go. What colours d'you think your feathers should be? You're gonna do a rainbow colour? That's a good idea, isn't it?

CHILD

I'm doing rainbows.

ZOE

Do rainbows - rainbows, like parrots... Don't do that one yet. *(She sits at a table.)* Finished it? Let's have a look. Little bit more - what about the little fringe in there?

ZOE

You can do a little more on the fringe in there, couldn't you? *(To another kid.)* You're hungry? It's going to be lunchtime soon, isn't it? But I'm not a cook. We'll be going to lunch in a minute. *(To a girl.)* You can wash your hands.

Back in POPPY's classroom, all the kids have their finished bags on their heads and are standing up.

POPPY

Who's ready?!!

CHORUS

Me!!

Hey!!

POPPY

(POPPY leads them all in flapping their wings, jumping up and down and making exuberant bird noises.)

POPPY

Oh, wow! That's fantastic! Look at you go! Woh!! Flap your arms! Flap your wings!!

(They do so. Great fun all round.)

Later, in POPPY's now empty classroom. TASH, another teacher, is sitting on a desk, examining one of the masks, while POPPY packs away her lap-top etc.

TASH

Bit dangerous, innit?

POPPY

What?

TASH

Putting these over their heads.

POPPY

I'm trying to suffocate them. That's my goal. Little buggers.

TASH
They look great.

POPPY
How was your weekend?

TASH
Crap.

POPPY
Oh, no! Why's that, then?

TASH
Didn't do much. Just stayed in,
really.

POPPY
It's the weekend, Tash!

TASH
I know! I had a run-in with my mum...

POPPY
Did you?

TASH
Mm. My sister was working Saturday; I
had to look after Jasmine.

POPPY
How is she?

TASH
That girl eats too much.

POPPY
Bless her!

TASH
She ate three chicken legs and four
jam tarts, and then wants to tell me
that she's starving.

POPPY
The little piglet!

TASH
I dropped her off to my mum's...

POPPY
Yeah?

TASH
I said, basically you've got to tell
Cherie-Ann that she's got to put this
girl on a diet!

POPPY

Give her a complex - she's only seven!

TASH

All of a sudden, Mum doesn't want to get involved, for the first time in her life.

POPPY

Right!

(POPPY is now fully loaded with her stuff, ready to leave.)

TASH

Then, I'm just leaving the house, and my two aunts arrive from Dollis Hill.

POPPY

Oh, no!

TASH

So we get the Spanish Inquisition. *(POPPY laughs. TASH does a Jamaican aunt voice)* "Tash, you got a boyfrien'? You gettin' marry soon? Why don't you give your mother another grandchile? You know she nearly sixty! She gettin' old!" *(Sympathetic mirth from POPPY.)* I was like, "No, I haven't got a boyfriend; no, I won't be getting married soon; and, no, I won't be investing in a property with a mortgage in the near future. Thank you very much. And I just closed the door and left.

POPPY

End of.

(They leave.)

A gym. POPPY is bouncing on a trampoline. Several young women and men are doing the same.

ZOE is stirring a wok in the kitchen. POPPY comes in, wearing a dressing gown, and with a towel on her head.

POPPY

Are you cooking?

ZOE

Yeah, are you cooking?

POPPY
I'm cooking with gas, baby. What are we having, then?

ZOE
Food!

POPPY
Oh - makes a change!

ZOE
Are you hungry?

POPPY
I'm ravishing.

ZOE
Aren't you, just?

POPPY
Thank you!

(She pours two glasses of orange juice from the fridge.)

ZOE
So how did it go today?

POPPY
What, with our flying flock of little feathered friends?

ZOE
Yeah.

POPPY
Yeah, it was good - they loved it! Flap-flap-flapping away, they were.

ZOE
Were they?

POPPY
Yes, bless 'em!

ZOE
I had to nip it in the bud with my lot, before they went nuts, and flew out of the window.

POPPY
It was okay, though, was it?

ZOE
Oh, yeah - I played them Stravinsky after lunch, just to calm them down.

POPPY
What d'you play?

ZOE
Rite of Spring.

(POPPY laughs)

POPPY
I booked my first driving lesson.

ZOE
Did you?

POPPY
Yeah.

ZOE
When is it?

POPPY
Twelve o'clock, Saturday.

ZOE
Excellent - well done, you.

POPPY
I'll set the table.

ZOE
Yeah, it's nearly ready.

(POPPY takes out two plates, picks up the orange juice, and goes out.)

A busy, trendy bar. A light summer evening. POPPY, ZOE and TASH, dressed for a night out, are sitting at a table with their drinks.

ZOE
Oh, I love the end of the week.

POPPY
You don't say!

ZOE
Yeah, I do actually.

POPPY
Oh, do you?

ZOE
Yeah.

POPPY

Oh!

ZOE

You know I take this dance class on a Friday afternoon, Tash, for Golden Time?

TASH

Yeah.

ZOE

I swear to God, like, half the kids are bigger than me.

POPPY

That's not hard, though, is it, eh? Titch?

ZOE

No, I don't mean taller. I mean wider.

POPPY

Well, you want to be careful - you know: you don't want the kids jumping about, expressing themselves - bit dangerous!

ZOE

Yeah.

TASH

Well, you do all that on Friday, but then they spend the rest of the weekend indoors, glued to their Nintendo DS.

ZOE

Totally. Right, a couple of weeks ago, I came in on a Monday morning - I told Poppy, right - sat the kids down for Carpet Time, asked them what they'd been doing over the weekend...

TASH

Yeah?

ZOE

Really gorgeous weather. Not one of them had been out - they'd all been sitting at home on their Play Stations.

POPPY

And then you couldn't get them off the carpet again.

ZOE

Yeah, when they did get up, they were, like, wheezing.

POPPY

Well, that's pollution for you.

ZOE

We always used to go to the park.

POPPY

Yeah, but a lot of them don't have parks to go to.

TASH

Yeah, exactly.

ZOE

Yeah, I know, but then again you don't need a park to go for a walk.

POPPY

Yeah, but if Mum and Dad don't go out, the kids don't go out.

TASH

Yeah, a lot of parents are too frightened to let the kids play out. Even a bit of green outside their estate, they don't let them play there.

POPPY

Yeah, but it's hard for a lot of mums and dads, isn't it? I mean, they've had a hell of a week, they're under a lot of pressure and stress -

ZOE

Tell me about it!

POPPY

They get back from work - if they've got work to get back from. You know...a lot of them are single mums. They're exhausted. It's completely understandable if they don't take their kids out for a lovely picnic with strawberries and cream.

TASH

Yeah, but it's not acceptable. I know life's hard. If you want to find a way, you find it, innit? Some parents just can't be bothered.

POPPY

Yeah, I know.

ZOE
Yeah, so instead they let their kids
stay up half the night on chat-rooms.

TASH
Yeah.

ZOE
Yeah - that's worrying.

TASH
Scary.

POPPY
Makes me so angry!

TASH
You know, a lot of seven-year-olds
know more about the Internet than we
do.

POPPY
Well, at least people are talking
about it. That's a good thing, isn't
it?

ZOE
Is it?

POPPY
Well, yeah - it means we're aware.

ZOE
Well, I'm aware smoking's bad for me -
doesn't mean I'm going to stop.

POPPY
Well, as long as you know what's going
to kill you!

ZOE
Oh yeah - thanks!

POPPY
That's alright - any time!

TASH
I know drinking's bad for me, but you
know...*(West Indian accent)* I can't
help myself!! *(She takes a swig.)*

ZOE
Oh, shame! *(She lights a cigarette.)*

POPPY
Cheers!

ZOE

Cheers, everyone! Here's to our livers, and all who drown in them. Careful, Poppy - you've got your first driving lesson tomorrow!

TASH

Oh, boy!

POPPY

Oh, yeah - quick put that down!! *(She puts down her drink.)*

TASH

You don't want to mess up your blind spot, Poppy!

POPPY

Oh, wow! That sounds good. *(She covers her eyes.)* Oh, it's here. *(ZOE holds up two fingers behind POPPY's head.)* How many fingers?

(They all laugh.)

The next day. POPPY and ZOE's hall. The doorbell rings. ZOE comes out of the kitchen, holding a mug and a cigarette. POPPY rushes down the stairs.

ZOE

That must be for you.

POPPY

(Sings)

I'm so excited!

ZOE

Yeah, I think you should do some deep breathing, before you get in the car. *(POPPY does mock deep breathing, and looks out of the window.)*

POPPY

Ooh! Can't see him. *(Going.)* Wish me luck!!

ZOE

Good luck! I'll keep the Emergency Services on stand-by.

POPPY

(Off)

Any excuse, eh? I know what you're like with firemen!

In the street. POPPY comes out of the flat.

POPPY

Hello. Scott?

(SCOTT is a severe-looking chap with a goatee beard and an earring.)

SCOTT

Are you Poppy?

POPPY

That's me! Nice to meet you.

(She holds out her hand, but SCOTT walks away.)

SCOTT

Right, the car's just here.

POPPY

(cheerful)

They're not infected! What're you like? *(SCOTT gets into his car.)*
They're clean. I just washed them, specially. Honest! This it, then?

SCOTT

Will you get in the passenger seat?

POPPY

You know it's me that's learning to drive?

SCOTT

Yeah. But we've got to talk a few things through first.

POPPY

Oh, have we? Fair enough. If you insist! *(She goes round the car, and gets in.)* Did you choose this colour car, Scott?

SCOTT

Right, make yourself comfortable.

POPPY

Thank you. This your car?

SCOTT

No, it's the company's car.

POPPY

Oh, right. What's your car like, then?

SCOTT

It is my car.

POPPY

Thought you just said it was the company's car! Make your mind up!
(*Giggles.*)

SCOTT

Have you got your Provisional Driving Licence?

POPPY

Yep. (*She hands it over.*) There you go. (*He looks at it.*) That's me on a bad day.

SCOTT

Is that your real name - Pauline?

POPPY

That's right.

SCOTT

Okay, everything seems to be in order.

POPPY

Does it? That's good. (*She puts away the Licence.*)

SCOTT

Now: have you ever had a driving lesson before?

POPPY

Yeah. No. It wasn't really a lesson. It was in a Cadillac. In Miami. Bunny-hop, down the beach. I was a bit pissed. It was hilarious! (*She laughs.*)

SCOTT

Well, we're not going to be pissed when we're driving this car.

POPPY

No.

SCOTT

Okay? We're not going to bunny-hop. We're going to focus, and concentrate.

Now I'm going to take you to a spot where we take all the learner drivers.

POPPY

Are you, now?

SCOTT

And we're going to go through what we call the Cockpit Drill.

POPPY

Oh! Naughty!

SCOTT

So: you're going to listen, and take responsibility.

POPPY

See what I can do.

SCOTT

Okay. Put your seat-belt on.

POPPY

Will do, Captain Scott. *(They put on their belts.)* Here we go, gigolo!

A few minutes later. They are driving through Victorian suburban streets.

SCOTT

So you spoke to the office.

POPPY

That's right - spoke to your boss.

SCOTT

He's not my boss. I work for myself, I'm my own man.

POPPY

But it's his car...? It's your car...? Someone's...! *(She laughs)*

SCOTT

And they told you the price? Twenty-two pounds fifty an hour.

POPPY

Yeah, that's right. Cheap as chips you lot, aren't you?

SCOTT

We may be cheap, but we're better.

POPPY

Are you?

SCOTT

You wanna go with the big companies, they use inexperienced instructors.

POPPY

They don't!

SCOTT

They've just passed their test, and they charge more.

POPPY

Bastards!

SCOTT

Us experienced instructors, we go with the small companies, and we charge less.

POPPY

That makes a lot of sense, that does.

SCOTT

Cheapness is relative.

POPPY

Yeah, it is - you're right! Bang on!
(*She laughs.*)

SCOTT

So d'you want the same time every week?

POPPY

Go on, then!

SCOTT

Well, do you or don't you? I need to know.

POPPY

Well, if you need to know....If it's good for you, it's good for me, Scott.

SCOTT

Okay. Twelve o'clock, every Saturday.

POPPY

Do you like working Saturdays?

SCOTT

I only work half day, Saturday.

POPPY

That's good.

SCOTT

You're my last pupil.

POPPY

What d'you do for the rest of the day?
You going out tonight?

SCOTT

I shall go home, and read my book.

POPPY

Oh! Must be a good book. What is it?

(Pause.)

SCOTT

It's a book.

POPPY

Yeah, well - we worked that much out.

(She decides to leave it at that. They drive along.)

A few minutes later. The car is stationary. They have changed places - POPPY is now at the wheel. (POPPY finds much of this scene hilarious, and giggles and laughs throughout.)

SCOTT

Okay, you see three pedals in front of you.

POPPY

Yeah. Yep.

SCOTT

Will you please put your foot on the left-hand pedal, and push it all the way down?

(She does so.)

POPPY

Ooh! He's a bit frisky, isn't he?

SCOTT

Okay, Pauline, please take your boot off the pedal.

POPPY

(Laughing)

Nobody's called me Pauline since I was two years old. Makes me laugh!

SCOTT

Well, what am I supposed to call you?

POPPY

Oh, how about...Poppy?

SCOTT

Poppy?

POPPY

Yeah.

SCOTT

Oh, yeah.

POPPY

No, whatever turns you on, Scott. I don't mind.

SCOTT

Okay, Poppy. Your boots are inappropriate for a driving lesson.

POPPY

Why? What's wrong with them?

SCOTT

You can't control a car in high heels.

POPPY

Oh, no - I can do a lot of things in these. You should see me in these babies on a dance floor!

SCOTT

Well, they may be good on a dance floor -

POPPY

No, they're not just a good on a dance floor, they are - ooh!

SCOTT

They may be good, in a pink Cadillac, on a beach, when you're pissed with your boyfriend, but they're not suitable for driving.

POPPY

You're funny!

SCOTT

Now, next week, I want you to bring flat-soled shoes.

POPPY

I don't look any good in them.

SCOTT

I don't care how you look - it's how you drive.

POPPY

Alright - I'll see what I can rustle up for you, Scott. Leave it to me.

SCOTT

Good. Right. You see three mirrors -
your two side-view mirrors and your
rear-view mirror.

POPPY

Yeah.

SCOTT

They make a Golden Triangle.

POPPY

Oh, is that like the pubic triangle?

SCOTT

It's the pyramid, and at the top of
the pyramid, you see the all-seeing
eye, Enrahah. Can you repeat that,
please? En-ra-hah.

POPPY

Are you talking about the Eye of
Lucifer?

SCOTT

No.

POPPY

Because I don't know if I want to look
in there, thank you very much!

SCOTT

It's not Lucifer. There are two fallen
angels before Lucifer. There is
Enrahah, Raziel and Lucifer.

POPPY

I'm sorry, I don't have them in my
phone-book.

SCOTT

Well, bear with me.

POPPY

Is there? Where is he?

SCOTT

Bear with me.

POPPY

I can't see him.

SCOTT

It's a teaching tool.

POPPY

Oh, is it?

SCOTT

Let me explain something to you about teaching, Poppy.

POPPY

Go on, then.

SCOTT

The teacher's job is to bring out good habits in the pupil, and to get rid of bad habits. He does that through frequent, repetitive thinking, and he does that by creating clear and distinct images that are easy for the pupil to retain.

POPPY

Oh! Does he, now?

SCOTT

Yes.

POPPY

Don't worry - it's buried in there!
It's buried in there!

SCOTT

You see. You remember. You will remember Enrahah till the day you die, and I will have done my job.

POPPY

Why don't you have something nice up there, like a giant strawberry, or something?

SCOTT

Because it works. Believe you me, it works. Okay - stop!!!

POPPY

Oh! What? What am I doing now?

SCOTT

Please take your hand off the gear. Off the gear-stick.

POPPY

(Doing so)
Alright, alright!

SCOTT

Please take your foot off the pedal.

POPPY

Alright - I'm not touching anything!

SCOTT

Let me explain to you something,
Poppy.

POPPY

Yeah?

SCOTT

This car is my livelihood. This car is
how I earn my living - I mean, I don't
know how you earn you living, right?

POPPY

Yeah...

SCOTT

But if I walked into your pub or your
discotheque or your club, and I walked
up to the DJ, and I scratched all his
records, or I smash all the glasses,
and I said, 'I'm sorry, I didn't know
what I was doing', that wouldn't be
acceptable, would it?

POPPY

Well, there's only one problem with
that. I don't own a bar or a disco.
I'm just a primary school teacher.

SCOTT

Are you?

POPPY

'Fraid so, kiddo! Are you a Satanist,
Scott?

SCOTT

No. In fact, I'm exactly the opposite.

POPPY

Are you the Pope, then?

SCOTT

It's the same thing.

POPPY

Is it. Does he know that?

SCOTT

Right. You have three pedals - A, B, C-

POPPY

Yes...

SCOTT

Accelerator, brake and clutch.

POPPY
(Singing)
 "A.B.C. Talking about -" Lovely.

SCOTT
 Good.

POPPY
 Lovely.

That afternoon. POPPY and ZOE are walking briskly through a busy market, carrying shopping.

ZOE
 So what was he like?

POPPY
 Oh, you'd love him.

ZOE
 Would I?

POPPY
 He made me laugh. He's funny.

ZOE
 What, like funny ha-ha, or funny peculiar?

POPPY
 Bit of both, actually.

ZOE
 So what happened then?

POPPY
 He shouted at me.

ZOE
 What, he gave you a telling-off?

POPPY
 He's a little bit uptight. Just a little bit.

ZOE
 Bet you wound him up.

POPPY
 Said I'd set you up with him.

ZOE
 Is he fit?

POPPY

Yeah. No he's not fit at all. Just your type.

(As they pass the steps to an upper shopping level, SUZIE comes down with a BOYFRIEND. They are having a fierce row.)

SUZIE

That's what you can get out of it.
What do I get out of it?

BOYFRIEND

You can get a shag whenever you want.

SUZIE

Oh yeah? When was the last time that happened?

BOYFRIEND

Well, whose fault is that, eh? *(She walks off.)* Where are you going?
Suzie!!

(POPPY and ZOE, having noticed them, have stopped to wait. SUZIE sees them.)

SUZIE

You alright?

POPPY

Alright?

ZOE

Hi, Suzie.

POPPY

What's going on?

(SUZIE keeps walking.)

SUZIE

(to POPPY and ZOE)
Come on!

POPPY

(To the BOYFRIEND)
Shouting at my little sister?

BOYFRIEND

No!

POPPY

Doesn't look like it, does it?

SUZIE

Poppy!

BOYFRIEND

(To SUZIE)

Where are you going?!

SUZIE

Fuck off!!

POPPY

Ooh! You're not coming with us,
apparently. Adios!

(She catches up with SUZIE and ZOE, who have gone on. The BOYFRIEND watches them go off, then turns on his heel and scuttles off in another direction.)

POPPY trampolining. We watch her in slow motion. She is contented and happy.

Next day. A school corridor. POPPY is carrying a globe of the world.

POPPY

Oh! (She suffers a sudden twinge in her back. Her head teacher, HEATHER, comes out of a room, and walks along with POPPY.)

HEATHER

Morning, Poppy!

POPPY

Alright?

HEATHER

What's the matter?

POPPY

Buggered my back, haven't I?

HEATHER

Looks like it.

POPPY

Trampolining.

HEATHER

Trampolining? Really?

POPPY

Yeah, I go every week.

HEATHER

What, after school?

POPPY

I love it!

HEATHER

Great!

POPPY

Well, you've got to keep the muscles a-pumping, haven't you?

HEATHER

No, cos I've just started Flamenco.

POPPY

You haven't!

HEATHER

It's fantastic.

POPPY

I've always wanted to do that. Bit o'that. *(She does a Flamenco gesture, but it hurts.)*

HEATHER

Careful!

POPPY

I'm alright.

HEATHER

Come along, if you want.

POPPY

When is it?

HEATHER

Every Tuesday. Six-thirty.

POPPY

Mmmm...

HEATHER

Well, see how you feel.

POPPY

Alright.

(They part company. POPPY goes off to her classroom. As HEATHER moves away, she stops for a moment to do a Flamenco step. A schoolgirl passes her.)

HEATHER

Morning, Leanne.

SCHOOLGIRL

Morning, Mrs Duckworth.

The next day. POPPY and ZOE are walking along a street.
They pass a large, bold mural.

POPPY
Stink of urine round here.

ZOE
I can't smell anything.

POPPY
You peed your pants again?

ZOE
Yeah - sorry!

POPPY
You're a naughty girl!

ZOE
Tell me about it.

POPPY
Ow! *(A twinge in the back. She stops still.)*

ZOE
You alright?

POPPY
Yeah.

ZOE
Come on - we're nearly there.

(They set off again.)

POPPY
You lost your sense of smell, or something?

ZOE
Yeah - smoking dulls your senses.

POPPY
And your brains.

(They arrive at a Physiotherapy Centre.)

POPPY (CONT'D)
Here we go.

ZOE
Go on, then.

(They go in.)

They are sitting in Reception. POPPY is holding a clipboard. ZOE is reading a magazine. The young woman RECEPTIONIST comes in.

POPPY

Done that.

RECEPTIONIST

All done?

POPPY

Yeah, thanks. *(She gives her the clipboard.)*

RECEPTIONIST

Okay.

(A very large osteopath arrives, speaking to a leaving patient.)

OSTEOPATH

Take care. *(He comes into the Reception room.)* Okay, who have we got next?

RECEPTIONIST

Poppy Cross.

OSTEOPATH

(to Zoe)

Poppy?

ZOE

No, I'm Zoe. Nice to meet you. *(She shakes his hand.)*

POPPY

(Getting up)

No, I'm Poppy. *(She shakes his hand.)*
Don't know who she is.

ZOE

I'm her friend.

OSTEOPATH

My name's Ezra.

POPPY

Hello, Ezra.

EZRA

Would you just follow me upstairs?

(She does so.)

POPPY
You're big, aren't you?

ZOE
Good luck!

EZRA
Just take your time.

POPPY
What're you going to do to me? (*A twinge as she ascends the stairs.*) Oh! Makes me laugh!

In EZRA's consulting room. POPPY is wearing her bra, pants and tights. She is standing. EZRA stands behind her. POPPY remains jolly throughout the following.

EZRA
Okay, I'm just going to feel the muscles in your back...

POPPY
Alright.

EZRA
And you let me know where the pain is.

POPPY
Send you a text. (*He works his way down her back.*) Strong fingers. It tickles! Oh! - Bang on the money!

EZRA
Okay...(*continuing*)

POPPY
Ow!

EZRA
And this side?

POPPY
Yeah! (*She laughs.*)

EZRA
Okay, d'you want to just reach down to your side, as if you were picking something up?

POPPY
Pickin' chickens. (*She leans to one side.*) No, sorry - I can't do that! Ow! Oo - hoo!

Down in Reception, ZOE is still reading a magazine. She glances at a sweating, overweight MAN, who has arrived since POPPY went upstairs. He is holding his back, and is clearly in pain.

ZOE
Is it your back?

MAN
Sorry?

ZOE
Cos it can affect everything, can't it?

(The MAN says nothing. He isn't happy. The RECEPTIONIST looks at ZOE for a moment.)

ZOE
Like your mood, and everything.

Back upstairs, POPPY is sitting on the examination table, which EZRA is raising with a foot-pedal.

POPPY
Nice action.

EZRA
Lie on your back for me, please.

POPPY
Get one of these. Come in very handy.
(She lies down.) Oh! Ow!

EZRA
Okay, I'm just going to ask you to roll yourself onto your side, facing me.

POPPY
You don't ask for much, do you, eh?

EZRA
I'm just going to feel the muscles in your spine again. *(He does so.)*

POPPY
Oh...Ow! What-d'you-m'call-it? Ding-dang-dilly-dilly-dadah, hoo-hoo!

EZRA
Okay. Alright. Lie back.

POPPY
(doing so)
Oh. Here we go.

EZRA
There's a joint in your spine that's
jammed up.

POPPY
Oh, no!

EZRA
Would you like me to release it for
you?

POPPY
Is it serious?

EZRA
No, it's not too bad.

POPPY
What're you gonna do? Will it hurt?

EZRA
(laughing)
It may, for a few days.

(POPPY considers for a moment.)

POPPY
Go on, then - go for your life!

EZRA
Are you sure?

POPPY
Aw...If you're quick! *(She covers her
eyes.)*

EZRA
Okay.

**A few moments later, EZRA has hold of POPPY's body with
both hands.**

EZRA
I'm going roll you over, and you're
going to feel a short, sharp click in
your back. Okay! Breathe in, and...

POPPY
Oh, wait a minute! *(She laughs)*

EZRA
Okay. Are you ready?

POPPY
Yeah.

EZRA
Okay. Breathe in. *(She does so.)* And release! *(We hear the click.)*

POPPY
Oh! Koochickara! *(She laughs.)*

EZRA
Okay. Just relax for me.

POPPY
I didn't know you were going to do that.

(EZRA lowers the examination table.)

EZRA
Just relax, and breathe normally.

POPPY
Hey! *(She relaxes.)* Ah!

EZRA
Okay - d'you want to sit up for me?

POPPY
Yeah. *(She does so.)*

In SCOTT's car. Victorian tree-lined streets again. SCOTT is driving.

SCOTT
Is this going to be a regular occurrence, chopping and changing?

POPPY
Sorry, Scott. Something came up.

SCOTT
Well, I've got a life too, you know.

POPPY
I had to make an appointment.

SCOTT
Isn't this an appointment?

POPPY
I couldn't help it.

SCOTT

The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

POPPY

Sounds like fun. Having a bad day, are you?

SCOTT

I had a bad pupil this morning.

POPPY

Oh, no - what'd he do?

SCOTT

He was late, he refused to pay his money, he slammed the door, and he swore at me.

POPPY

You shout at him, did you?

SCOTT

I drove off. I'm not teaching him again.

POPPY

You show him.

SCOTT

He's rude, he's arrogant, he's over-confident, and he's too 'street'.

POPPY

You don't like that, do you?

SCOTT

He's been over-indulged, and encouraged to express himself.

POPPY

Express himself? Quick! Chop his hands off!

SCOTT

You know what it means, when they express themselves?

POPPY

Go on.

SCOTT

How little do they know. How little do their mothers know. (*POPPY laughs.*) And they smell.

POPPY

It's not easy being you, is it, eh?

They have pulled up. POPPY and SCOTT get out and change places, passing each other on the way.

POPPY

Fancy meeting you 'ere! *(She laughs)*
You don't have to laugh - I'll let you
off!

(They get into the car.)

Moments later. The car inches slowly out into the
centre of the road.

SCOTT

Okay - gently, gently, gently, gently,
gently - steady progression -

POPPY

Sorry...

SCOTT

Okay, take your foot off the brake -
there's no need to put your foot on
the brake.

POPPY

Alright.

SCOTT

D'you know what's doing that?

POPPY

What is doing it?

SCOTT

Your boots.

POPPY

My feet.

SCOTT

Your boots are doing that.

POPPY

No, I was just taking my feet -

SCOTT

Your boots - no, Poppy -

POPPY

I panicked.

SCOTT
Your boots - they're inappropriate
boots. Okay - on.

(They drive on. Much of the following dialogue overlaps.)

SCOTT
Poppy! Come on, let's pick up some
speed, okay?

POPPY
Alright, alright! Don't shout at me,
Scott, please! I'm just learning.

SCOTT
Well, don't dilly-dally, let's just go
- okay? We're going to do a next -

POPPY
I'm just learning.

SCOTT
Left-hand turn. Okay?

POPPY
Panic me.

SCOTT
So: mirror, signal, manoeuvre.

POPPY
Gets me right there.

SCOTT
Enraha! Enraha - both hands on the
wheel. Enraha. Enraha.

POPPY
Don't like that. Gives me the creeps!

SCOTT
Okay, Poppy. Indicate. Mirror, signal,
manoeuvre.

POPPY
Indicate...*(She indicates.)*

SCOTT
Signal! Okay...

POPPY
How am I doing?

SCOTT
Put down the brake - put down the
clutch, or you're gonna stall...

(The car stops.)

POPPY
Oh!

SCOTT
Okay - find your biting-point, and
peep and creep.

POPPY
There you go.

SCOTT
Put it in first gear.

POPPY
First gear.

SCOTT
Peep and creep; peep and creep.

POPPY
Peepin' and a-creepin'...

(The car moves slowly off.)

Minutes later...

SCOTT
So...when you get to the end of the
road, we're gonna turn right.

(A young man crosses the road.)

POPPY
Oh, he's nice!

SCOTT
When we get to the end of the road,
we're gonna turn - can you please
focus on the driving? Okay: enraha;
enraha, enraha, enraha...

POPPY
Yeah, that's a bit weird...

SCOTT
Okay. Put your foot on the brake, put
down the clutch, you don't want to
stall. Find your bite - okay: can you
feel you're slightly on a hill?

POPPY
No.

SCOTT
 Okay. Put the hand-brake on; find your
 biting point...

(Two black guys cycle past the car.)

SCOTT
 Okay - lock your door, lock your door!

POPPY
 Don't be ridiculous!

SCOTT
 Poppy - there's two of them.

POPPY
 Are you taking the piss?

SCOTT
 Lock your door!

POPPY
 Are you taking the piss?

SCOTT
 On you go, okay - let's go! Let's go,
 Poppy! Let's go!

POPPY
 I don't believe you just said that.

SCOTT
 Let's go! On you go.

POPPY
 Let's go that way.

(She means the way the cyclists went.)

SCOTT
(Hysterical)
 POPPY!! LET'S GO!!! WE'RE ON A BEND!!!
 NOW LET'S GO!!!

POPPY
(Good-humouredly)
 Blimey O'Reilly!

SCOTT

Right! On you go! Keep to the left of
the centre of the road.

(The car drives off.)

**Outside POPPY's flat. The car has pulled up. SCOTT is
back in the driver's seat. POPPY is taking money out of
her bag.**

POPPY

Usual time next week? Twelve O'clock?
(SCOTT takes the money.) You can check
it, if you like. See you.

*(She gets out of the car. SCOTT pockets the money.
POPPY makes an "I'm watching you!" gesture. SCOTT looks
at her, then drives off. As POPPY is opening her front
door, a man walks past with a dog.)*

POPPY

Alright, doggie?

(She goes inside.)

**A little later. POPPY is kneeling next to ZOE, who is
sitting in an armchair, holding open a copy of The
Highway Code.**

ZOE

Okay. Here's another one.

POPPY

Yeah.

ZOE

Circle; completely red -

POPPY

What, like a tomato?

ZOE

For instance; white horizontal line.

POPPY

Give us a clue, Zoe.

ZOE
Horizontal. (*Demonstrates, with her arm.*) Parallel to the horizon.

POPPY
Thank you, Miss Marsh.

ZOE
You're welcome.

POPPY
So, it's not up and down, like a yo-yo? (*She holds her fore-arm vertical.*)

ZOE
No.

POPPY
Right.

ZOE
What is it?

POPPY
Vertical.

ZOE
No, you muppet - the sign!

POPPY
That'd be 'No Entry', Zoe.

ZOE
For what?

POPPY
For black boys on bicycles.

ZOE
Don't get me started on that again.

POPPY
It just popped out of his mouth. I couldn't believe it.

ZOE
You could always get another instructor.

POPPY
Yeah, I know. See how it goes, eh? Ask me another.

ZOE
This is also a red circle.

POPPY
Yep.

ZOE
Black car - this isn't a racist thing.

POPPY
I'm glad to hear it.

ZOE
Next to the black car is a red car.

POPPY
That's Mr Golly overtaking Mr Noddy.

ZOE
(Shaking her head.)
Enrahaah.

POPPY
Enrahaah to you.

ZOE
What is it?

POPPY
No overtaking.

ZOE
Enrahaah!

POPPY
Enrahaah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah!

ZOE
He sounds like a nutter.

POPPY
He is a nutter.

ZOE
So how's your back?

POPPY
It's alright, actually. He sorted it.
Magic fingers. He was sweet, wasn't
he?

ZOE
He was fit. *(POPPY laughs.)* Octagonal
sign with "STOP" written on it.

POPPY
"STOP".

(Pause.)

ZOE
Alright, then.

(She closes the book. POPPY laughs. They stare at each other.)

POPPY

Who's going to blink first? *(They move closer to each other, until their noses almost touch.)* D'you want a cuppa tea?

ZOE

Yes, please.

POPPY and HEATHER rush out of their school. HEATHER is speaking into her mobile.

HEATHER

No, you have the lasagne tonight - we can finish the chicken tomorrow, alright? Look, I can't talk now. See you later!

(They have arrived at HEATHER's car. They get in.)

POPPY

Think we'll make it?

HEATHER

Depends on the traffic.

POPPY

Should be alright.

(They leave at great speed.)

Now they both rush into a large civic hall, where the Flamenco class is just starting. About twenty-five adults, mostly women, are spread out, facing the teacher, who is standing in front of a line of mirrors.

TEACHER

(Spanish accent)
Come in, ladies - quick as you can. D'you want to put your bags? Then there's a couple of places.

HEATHER

Sorry we're late.

POPPY

Sorry!

TEACHER

No problem - it's very Spanish to be late. Just take your places, then we can start the class. Here! *(She points to a gap, to which HEATHER and POPPY go.)* I was just introduc'in' myself to the peoples what don't know me. Is lovely to see you again, and lovely that you bring a friend. Welcome in my class.

(She bows. POPPY curtsies back - a sort of comic, mock-curtsy. She exchanges a smile with a large young woman next to her.)

TEACHER

So! My name is Rosita Santos, and I'm comin' from Seviglia, in Spain. Or "Seville", what you say here. What is famous for our bullfighting *(imitates bull)*, for our beautiful oranges, what you English peoples turn into disgusting marmalade, and also, is the birth home of FLAMENCO!! *(She strikes a flamenco pose.)* So...

(HEATHER has gestured to POPPY that her sun-glasses are still on her head. So POPPY now runs over to put them with her bag, which she has left on the other side of the room. She does a comic mock-unobtrusive sort of a run. The TEACHER, unamused, waits until POPPY is back in her place.)

TEACHER

Then everybody is ready? I hope! *(She looks pointedly at POPPY.)* So, feet in parallel. Hip distance apart. Pulling up from the waist, opening across the chest; shoulder blades drawing down to the spine; arms relaxed. And taking the head over to the right, feeling that lovely stretched-up neck.

(During this, POPPY accidentally catches the eye of a defensive-looking young man just behind her. She is, of course, quietly amused by this.)

TEACHER
Then to the left.

POPPY
(whispers to HEATHER)
Not very Flamenco, is it?

HEATHER
(gestures)
S-sh.

TEACHER
To the right. Bring the head back to
the centre. And relax. Lovely.

(POPPY does an exaggerated reaction to a twinge in her neck.)

A few minutes later...

TEACHER
So, guys. We're going to reverse the
abs now. Thighs to the front. Liftin'
up from the elbows. Like they got
strings attached - like little
Pinocchio. Lifting, lifting. Keeping
the shoulders down. Arms above the
head. Framing the face. "Here I am."
Proud. Then bringing the arms down in
front. Pressing, pressing, pressing.
Keeping the tension. Keeping the
strength. But fluid, as well. Then
lifting up again, from the elbows.
Like the eagle, spreading his wings.
Beautiful. Angry. Ferocious.

(POPPY acts out the last three attitudes, appropriately scowling and grimacing with gusto.)

TEACHER
And guys...When you're lifting your
eagle wings, remember that this dance
comes from the pain, from the
suffering of los gitanos, em, what you
say? - the gypsies. I know this word
not politically correct. But these
guys, they've been squashed down by
society for centuries, centuries. And
they say, "We don't need this! We got
pride! We got dignity! We got art! We
got FLAMENCO!!"

(Again she strikes a Flamenco pose. POPPY is quietly amused.)

TEACHER

They say, "This...my space." *(She stamps her feet twice.)* My space!
(Stamps.) My space. *(Stamps)* My space!
(Stamps.) Everybody do this! One, two!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

And again!

ALL

My space!

(POPPY enters into the spirit of it. Everybody stamps their feet.)

TEACHER

Vamos, vamos!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

And again!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

Vamos, Vamos!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

With meaning!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

But, guys -

ALL

My space!

TEACHER

One more time!

ALL

My space!

TEACHER
With expression!

ALL
My space!

TEACHER
I don't believe it!

ALL
My space!

Later in the lesson. POPPY is doing her best.

TEACHER
Okay, guys. I give you two counts in,
then we're going to stamp and clap the
compas, okay?

(The class is arranged in two facing lines. They advance towards each other, stamping and clapping. Suddenly the TEACHER breaks through the centre, halting the proceedings.)

TEACHER
Guys! Guys! Guys! What are you doing?
Joder! Where is the passion? Where is
the revenge? Where is the blood? This
is Flamenco! That clapping, it's so
polite. It's like the end of the
opera. "Excuse me. How many sugar you
want in your tea?"

(The LARGE YOUNG WOMAN laughs. The TEACHER points to her, and addresses HEATHER.)

TEACHER
This woman has been spending every
Wednesday afternoon for a year, with
your husband in a hotel in Paddington.

(She points to a man, and addresses another girl.)

TEACHER
This guy has been having an affair for
five years with your best friend!

Your boyfriend, what you give your
love, your spirit, for five years,
betrays you with a Swedish bitch what
is twenty-two years old. You want to
cut off his balls!

(She is distraught, and covers her eyes.)

TEACHER

He's such a bastard! I hate him!

POPPY

(quietly)

Are you alright?

(The TEACHER runs out of the hall. The door slams. The class is stunned.)

In a pub. POPPY and HEATHER, at a table, are sipping white wine.

POPPY

Didn't bargain for that. That was something else wasn't it?

HEATHER

I know. But all credit to her, though. She picked herself up, she came straight back into the class.

POPPY

As if nothing had happened. Like a little fireball, wasn't she?

HEATHER

Not a grain of sentimentality.

POPPY

No! Wipe the tears! Bless her - I just wanted to give her a hug.

HEATHER

I don't think she'd have quite appreciated that.

POPPY

No. *(The TEACHER's voice)* "This is my space - get off me!!" Does leave a nasty taste, though, doesn't it? Exploding her heart all over the floor.

HEATHER

Then it was, "put that away."

POPPY
"Stick that back in the box."

HEATHER
"Get it out another time."

POPPY
Perhaps never!

HEATHER
You'll be lucky!

POPPY
Yeah, I know. She must be going through some shit, though, mustn't she?

HEATHER
She's actually a good teacher.

POPPY
Oh, yeah. Definitely.

HEATHER
She's just going to burn herself out.

POPPY
I believed her when she said she'd cut off his balls, though. Didn't you?

HEATHER
I don't expect the guys'll be back next week, then.

POPPY
No. Snip! Snip!

(She mimes big scissors. They laugh.)

HEATHER
How's your love-life?

POPPY
How is my love-life?

HEATHER
Nothing doing?

POPPY
Not a sausage.

HEATHER
You okay with that?

POPPY
Oh, yeah!

HEATHER
Good for you!

POPPY
Cheers!

HEATHER
Cheers!

(They drink their wine.)

POPPY
How's your Beth?

HEATHER
Darren's dumped her.

POPPY
Oh, no!

HEATHER
Just before her eighteenth birthday.
Thanks, Darren!

POPPY
Why do men always do that, eh?

HEATHER
I know.

POPPY
Christmas, Valentine's Day - Voom!
They're gone!

HEATHER
I'm just hoping he's not going to turn
up to the party.

POPPY
Name off the list!

HEATHER
I'm looking at her, and I'm thinking,
"Don't call him. Don't call him!"

POPPY
Don't do it Beth! Don't do it!

HEATHER
You can't say anything, though. You've
just got to let'em get on with it.

POPPY
You can't help being protective,
though, can you? Course, she's got her
A-Levels coming up, hasn't she?

HEATHER

Fingers crossed, she's going to Manchester.

POPPY

Fantastic. What does she want to do up there?

HEATHER

Sociology.

POPPY

Lovely.

HEATHER

I'm hoping she's going to take a gap year. Travel.

POPPY

That's important. Get out there - see the world!

HEATHER

Yeah, I think so. Cos I never got the chance.

POPPY

Nor me.

HEATHER

You made up for it later, though.

POPPY

Did I, just!

HEATHER

Where were you?

POPPY

All over the place. Taught in a school in Thailand. For six months. Me and Zoe. Started off in Australia. Zoe's got relations in Melbourne - and Sydney. Bali. Java. Malaysia. Vietnam - beautiful. Then Thailand.

HEATHER

Fabulous!

POPPY

Amazing. Gorgeous kids. Loved learning. Sixty in a class.

HEATHER

Sixty?!

POPPY

Oh, yeah!

HEATHER
 Fantastic! Great challenge!

POPPY
 And for them!

HEATHER
 Especially for them!

(They both laugh.)

POPPY
 D'you want another one?

HEATHER
 I'd love to. But I'm driving, aren't I?

POPPY
 Course you are. Got to be good. Work tomorrow.

POPPY's school sits in the London landscape. It's playtime.

In her empty classroom, POPPY is tidying books. She glances out of the window. Children are playing. She notices two boys in particular. One looks as though he is bullying the other. She observes them for a moment.

Another driving lesson. POPPY is at the wheel.

SCOTT
 Okay, Poppy. This is your third driving lesson.

POPPY
 Oh, I'm getting quite good, aren't I?

SCOTT
 No, you're not good. You're smug.

POPPY
 Ow!

SCOTT
 You're too easily distracted. You're distracted by squirrels, by dogs, by children in the park, by old ladies in surgical stockings -

POPPY
 Oh, but bless her!

SCOTT

By half-naked men in their gardens.

POPPY

Oh, well; he was quite fit, wasn't he, eh?

SCOTT

No, he wasn't fit - he had a paunch.

POPPY

Oh, I didn't know you were checking him out so carefully, Scott!

SCOTT

Poppy, all you have to do is, keep your eyes focussed on the road. This car is a lethal weapon. If you don't pay attention, you're going to kill somebody. Keep to the left of the centre of the road.

POPPY

Oh, but come on, Scott! How often d'you see a squirrel sending a text like that?

SCOTT

Left turn. Mirror, signal - Enrahaah! Enrahaah!

(POPPY mimes a squirrel sending a text - waggling its little thumbs. For a split second, she has taken both hands off the steering wheel.)

SCOTT

Enrahaah!! I can't believe you're a teacher. I can't believe they've put you in charge of forty children.

POPPY

I know. I took me by surprise to be honest. It's thirty.

SCOTT

Thirty. You have no respect for order, you are arrogant, you're destructive and you...you celebrate chaos.

POPPY

I slipped through the net, didn't I?

SCOTT

No, you are the net. Believe you me, Poppy, you are the net.

Okay, we're going to do the next left turn. Mirror, signal, manoeuvre. Enrahaah. Keep with it, Poppy. Okay. Get away from the bend. Get away from the bend. Get away from the bend. D'you remember the pyramid?

POPPY

Don't remind me!

SCOTT

D'you remember the shape of the pyramid?

POPPY

Enrahaah?

SCOTT

No. Enrahaah is the eye at the top of the pyramid. I'm talking about the bottom of the pyramid.

POPPY

Are you?

SCOTT

Those at the bottom of the pyramid in this world are kept in total ignorance of what those at the top of the pyramid are achieving. Enrahaah. Enrahaah.

POPPY

Where are you on the pyramid?

SCOTT

Me, I'm outside the pyramid, and I'm looking in.

POPPY

Ah - course you are!

SCOTT

But where are you? Where are you? That is more to the point? Where are you, and where are the children?

POPPY

That is the question - where are we all, eh?

SCOTT

Okay, we're going to do the next left turn - Enrahaah.

POPPY

Did you like school, Scott?

SCOTT

I'm afraid it didn't agree with me.

POPPY

Oh, that's a shame.

SCOTT

Now, let me tell you something about the education system, Poppy.

POPPY

Oh, go on, then.

SCOTT

The education system produces left-brain prisoners. D'you know what that means?

POPPY

I do, actually.

SCOTT

No, well I'll tell you. (*POPPY smiles.*) The left brain - our brain has two sides, the left brain, and the right brain. The left brain - keep going! Keep going!

POPPY

I'm going!

SCOTT

The left brain...is information: data. It's dead. The right brain is individuality. It's where the soul lies. And the education system, it works like this: "I will give you a world view."

POPPY

Right.

SCOTT

"And if you repeat my world view, if you reconfirm my world view, you will pass your exams, and you will go higher and higher and higher, and you will become a policeman, a magistrate, a lawyer, a general, a politician, and you will be happy and you will succeed, but if you think for yourself, if you think outside the box, then you will be unhappy and you will fail." That's how the education system works - left turn. Enrahaah - signal. Enrahaah.

POPPY
Were you bullied at school, Scott?

SCOTT
You're going to do the next left turn.
Enraha!

POPPY
Kids - they can be cruel, can't they,
eh?

At school. POPPY rushes out of the classroom, into the playground.

POPPY
Nick!

(The same two kids. NICK is on top of the other kid, thumping him. POPPY runs over them.)

POPPY
Nick! Nick! *(She pulls NICK off.)*
What's going on? Eh? Are you alright,
Charlie? *(CHARLIE sits up.)* Now what's
going on?

Another Flamenco lesson. The class is successfully performing a flamenco stop in unison, moving across the hall. The TEACHER is clapping the rhythm, and shouting encouraging instructions ("Venga! Venga!" And counting, "un, dos, tres...") POPPY is enjoying herself. She is wearing her boots and a long, coloured frock. They all come to a standstill.)

TEACHER
Bravo, everybody! I have to tell you,
I am slightly impressed. Much better
than last week - though of course,
this is not difficult! And still could
improve! But...it will do. For now.

POPPY's classroom. The children are all working. Some are drawing. Most are writing in their books. POPPY sits at one of the tables with a group. NICK is punching another kid - not CHARLIE, this time. POPPY looks over and sees. She gets up.

POPPY
(to her table)
 You carry on with your work. Carry on.
 You draw a picture now.

(She joins NICK and the other kid.)

POPPY
 Hold on - what's going on here? D'you
 want to stop that, please?

OTHER KID
 He's hurting me.

POPPY
(to NICK)
 Are you hurting Ayotunde? *(NICK nods.)*
 Are you alright? Did he hurt you hard?
 Did he hit you? *(to NICK)* Come here.
 We do not hurt our friends. *(She gets
 up.)* You come and sit over here. *(To
 other kids.)* You get on with your
 work. *(She leads NICK across the
 room.)* Are you hurting Ayotunde? For
 no reason - that's not very nice. It's
 not what we do our friends. *(To
 another kid.)* Yes, you can. You can
 get on with that. *(A girl speaks to
 POPPY)* Okay, Chelsea. *(To NICK)* What's
 happening here? Eh?

(POPPY has settled NICK at her table.)

**A little later. The classroom is now empty. NICK is in
 the same seat. POPPY is sitting on the table beside
 him.**

POPPY
 You can talk to me...you know.
 Anything you want to say. I'm here to
 help you. Cos I'm your mate, aren't I?

NICK
 Yes.

POPPY
 Yeah. That's right. That's what mates
 do. Isn't it?

NICK
 Yes.

POPPY

Yeah. (*NICK rubs his face.*) What's making you so angry? I'm going to help sort this out.

In a school corridor. POPPY bustles by some kids who are dawdling out of the main entrance.

POPPY

Come on! Chop-chop!

(She proceeds along the corridor. A woman comes out of a room. POPPY greets her, then knocks on HEATHER's door. HEATHER is typing.)

HEATHER

Poppy!

POPPY

Got a minute?

HEATHER

What's up?

POPPY

We might have a problem?

HEATHER

(Getting up)

Come in. Sit yourself down.

(POPPY sits. HEATHER closes the door, and joins her. They speak. We observe them for a few moments through the glazed door.)

Later that afternoon. POPPY walks slowly through an attractive park. Nobody is around. POPPY is in a reflective mood. She stops for a while for a think.

Now it's dark. POPPY is in a bleak, empty inner city street. A few parked cars. Somebody walks by in the distance. A male voice can be heard somewhere, uttering a strange, indistinguishable chant. As POPPY proceeds, the voice becomes louder. She looks round. Then she stops. Slowly, she walks towards where the sound is coming from.

Where is she? It's an urban, maybe industrial place of some kind, but it's quite impossible to recognise. Steel girders and burning electric lights stretch into the darkness.

Suddenly, POPPY comes across the chanting man. He is bearded, unkempt, dirty. Let's call him a TRAMP. He sits alone, chanting. Then he sees POPPY, and stops singing abruptly. He speaks with an Irish accent.

TRAMP

D'you know what I mean? You know? You know? D'you know?

POPPY

I know!

TRAMP

It's -, it's -, it's -, it's -, it's,
it's -, it's -,

POPPY

Isn't it, just? (*She moves slowly nearer him.*)

TRAMP

You know? You know, it's...you know,
they, they, they, they, they -

POPPY

Do they?

TRAMP

They're not, they're not, they're not -
they're not; they're not. D'you know?

POPPY

No. (*Pause. POPPY sits facing him, on a kind of ledge.*) Are you warm enough?

TRAMP

(*Sings, Sinatra*)

"I know I said that I was leaving!"

POPPY

That's nice.

TRAMP

He's, he's, he's -

POPPY

Is he?

TRAMP

You know? He's....And, and, and, he's,
he's, he's - d'you know, he's -

POPPY

Oh, no!

TRAMP
He's, he's, he's...

POPPY
Oh, no!

TRAMP
He's, he's, he's...

POPPY
What is he?

TRAMP
He's a prick!

POPPY
(laughing)
Oh! I know a few!

(He gets up suddenly, and launches into a vigorous round of shadow boxing.)

POPPY
There you go! Steady!

TRAMP
(Shouting)
D'YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? - YOU KNOW?!!

POPPY
Yeah, yeah!

(He moves back towards POPPY.)

TRAMP
She's, she's, she's, she's, she's,
she's, she's - you know, she's, she's,
she's - you know, she's, she's, she's,
she's, she's, she's, you know, she's,
she's - she was, she was, she was
so...

POPPY
Was she?

TRAMP
She wouldn't, you know - she wouldn't,
she wouldn't, you know, she wouldn't -
I'm, I'm, I'm, you know, I'm, I'm, I'm
not, you know - I'm not, you know,
I'm, I'm, I'm...he...he...he...he, you
know, he ...but you know, they're,
they're, you know, they're,
they're...you know what I mean?

POPPY

Yeah. I do.

(They are now standing very close to each other. POPPY looks into his face. She is sympathetic and unafraid.)

What's your name? Eh?

(He looks at her. Then - _

TRAMP

Come on! *(He scuttles off.)*

POPPY

Where are you going?

TRAMP

Taxi!

POPPY

Oh! That'll be for me!

(He stops and turns to her.)

TRAMP

Come on! 'Sake!

(He walks off. POPPY follows him.)

POPPY

Keep your hair on! I've only just met you. My mum warned me about going with strangers. *(She catches him up.)* Where are you going?

TRAMP

Longest way out, shortest way home!

POPPY

Sod's Law!

(He mutters something to her, and seems to push her against a wall, or something.)

POPPY

Alright! What? Ease up!

(He puts his finger to his lips.)

TRAMP

S-sh...

POPPY
 What? *(He whispers in her ear.)* You
 what?

TRAMP
(audible whisper)
 Is he gone?

POPPY
 Is who gone?

TRAMP
(audible whisper)
 The rubber knocker man.

POPPY
 You what?

TRAMP
(louder)
 The rubber knocker man.

POPPY
 Oh! The rubber knocker man! Why didn't
 you say?

TRAMP
 Ssh - is he gone?

POPPY
 Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah - no, he's
 gone, he's gone. *(She points
 somewhere.)* I see him - he's a-
 runnin'. He's a-rubbin' 'is knockers!

(But the TRAMP has scuttled off.)

POPPY
 Oh! He's gone! Hang about.

*(She starts to follow him. But he is going to urinate
 in a corner. POPPY stops.)*

POPPY
 Oh. There you go! *(She turns away.)*
 Found the en suite, then? Shake it all
 about. *(She looks around her.)* What am
 I doing?

*(The TRAMP is coming back towards her, wiping his
 hands.)*

POPPY
All done, then?

(He stops a little distance away, and looks at her in wonder.)

POPPY
Alright?

(A train passes somewhere not too far away. The TRAMP walks past POPPY and sits down. She follows him, and stands near him.)

POPPY
Have you had your dinner?

TRAMP
No.

(POPPY sits next to him. She considers for a moment, then takes some money from her bag, and proceeds to put it in his hand.)

POPPY
Here. Take that.

TRAMP
No.

POPPY
Something to eat.

TRAMP
No, thank you.

(POPPY puts the money back in her bag.)

POPPY
Where are you going to sleep tonight?

TRAMP
In a bed.

POPPY
Oh?! Course you are! Silly me!

(She laughs. Then he looks at her very intensely. Pause.)

POPPY
(*sensitively*)

What?

(A charged, emotional moment. Then he goes to touch her face, but POPPY can't help flinching slightly, and he pulls his hand away. She smiles gently. A moment of connection.)

TRAMP

You know?

(Pause. She does.)

POPPY

Yeah.

(Then the TRAMP gets up abruptly and scuttles off, disappearing into the darkness. POPPY watches him for a moment; then she gets up, puts her bag over her shoulder, and leaves, stopping to give one last glance in the TRAMP's direction.)

Now POPPY walks briskly through a very busy night-time street. Lots of people and traffic. She passes a man carrying a dog on his shoulders outside a burger bar.

ZOE is on her bed, reading 'Hideous Kinky' by Esther Freud (the Penguin edition, with Kate Winslet on the cover). POPPY comes in. ZOE looks up.

POPPY

Are you asleep?

ZOE

Yeah.

(POPPY sits on the bed, and leans on ZOE's knees.)

ZOE

So what have you been up to?

POPPY

This 'n' that.

ZOE

Ducking and diving.

POPPY
Wheelin' and a-dealin'.

ZOE
So where you been?

POPPY
Toin' and a-froin'.

ZOE
Seriously.

POPPY
Seriously. *(She takes off her boots.)*
I went for a walk.

ZOE
I thought we were going out for a
drink.

POPPY
Oh, yeah. Sorry.

ZOE
Left you a message.

POPPY
My battery died on me.

(POPPY clambers onto the bed, and lies beside ZOE.)

ZOE
So how was your day?

POPPY
How was your day?

ZOE
Fantastic - the earth moved.

POPPY
I've got a violent pupil in my flock.

ZOE
What's he doing?

POPPY
Being violent.

ZOE
What, is he hitting you?

POPPY
He's hitting the other kids.

ZOE
What're you doing about it?

POPPY

I spoke to Heather. Poor little
bugger. You've got to love 'em,
haven't you?

ZOE

Yeah - otherwise you'd kill 'em. So
where did you go tonight?

POPPY

The eternal question. Where have we
been? Where are we going? What's the
meaning of life? I went to the moon;
and then back again.

ZOE

Wow, you walk quickly.

POPPY

I've got great legs.

ZOE

Yeah, you've got great legs. Not that
you're my type.

(POPPY dives on ZOE's legs and hugs them.)

POPPY

These are great legs!

ZOE

Hey, get off!

(POPPY lies back. ZOE takes hold of POPPY's hand.)

ZOE

Read your palm. *(She "reads" it.)* I
see a very strong line. It's your
bullshit line. And I see a tall, dark,
handsome...

POPPY

(enthusiastic noise)

ZOE

...turd.

POPPY

Oh.

ZOE

And next to it is a bloke.

POPPY

A bloke?

ZOE

Yeah.

POPPY

Let's see. (*ZOE shows her*) Oh, yeah - there he is! Isn't he gorgeous?

ZOE

Not my type.

POPPY

(*Smiling*)

No. Where have all the good men gone, eh?

ZOE

Well, they're not hiding in here, are they?

POPPY

Come out! Come out, wherever you are! We're ready and waiting.

ZOE

They haven't got the balls.

POPPY's classroom. NICK is alone, reading a book. HEATHER comes in, followed by POPPY and a tall young man.

HEATHER

Alright, Nick?

NICK

Yeah.

HEATHER

How are you doing there, then?

NICK

I'm reading.

HEATHER

What are you reading?

NICK

"Yuk!"

HEATHER

"Yuk!?" That's nice, isn't it?

POPPY

It's a classic, that.

(*The adults all sit down.*)

HEATHER
Nick, this is Tim.

TIM
Hi, Nick.

NICK
Hullo.

HEATHER
Now, Nick, when I asked you the other day, did you know what a social worker was, can you remember what you said?

(NICK rubs his eyes.)

NICK
A social worker helps you on...hard things.

HEATHER
A social worker helps you with hard things - yes, that's right -

TIM
That's true.

POPPY
Very good.

HEATHER
Yeah...That's right. And I was thinking, how could I help Tim to get to know you a bit better, and I was thinking - cos you've been doing some very good learning this year -

POPPY
Oh, I should say so, yeah...

HEATHER
He has, hasn't he? And I was thinking, would you mind showing Tim some of your work?

NICK
No.

HEATHER
That's a good idea, isn't it?

POPPY
It is, isn't it?

TIM
Oh, I'd love to see it.

HEATHER

Is that "no, you don't want to", or
"no, you don't mind"?

NICK

No, I don't mind.

POPPY

I didn't think you would.

HEATHER

No, you don't mind - well, that's
good, isn't it? What's it going to be?
(*She gets up.*) Come on, Tim, you come
and sit here.

TIM

Oh - thanks. (*He moves.*)

(*POPPY sifts through a pile of exercise books.*)

POPPY

I think you should show off your
maths.

TIM

Let's have a look - oh, are you good
at maths, Nick?

POPPY

I should cocoa.

HEATHER

(*To NICK*)

Are you alright, sweet? Are you tired?

POPPY

Let's have a look at this. Here! Look.

TIM

What's this, then? Tick, tick, tick,
tick.

HEATHER

Nine out of ten.

POPPY

Yeah.

HEATHER

They're neat, as well, aren't they?

POPPY

Oh, he's good at his numbers.

TIM

He's very good.

POPPY
Yeah, smiley faces.

HEATHER
(to NICK)
Alright, pet. I'm going to see you
later - okay?

(She leaves.)

POPPY
See you.

TIM
Thanks, Mrs Duckworth - see you soon.

(POPPY turns the pages of NICK's book.)

POPPY
Smiley face - big smiley face there.

TIM
Smiley face; ticks, everywhere. Very
good.

POPPY
All last term, this was. Isn't it? Not
bad.

TIM
Is it good this term, as well?

POPPY
Er...(equivocal gesture.) It's a bit
on and off, innit? Not so good. We'll
get round that, though.

TIM
Of course. You know you're not in
trouble, don't you, Nick?

NICK
Yeah.

POPPY
Yeah.

TIM
Good.

POPPY
No-one could be angry with you. Not
for long.

TIM
You've been a bit angry lately,
though, haven't you?

NICK

Yeah.

TIM

What's made you so angry?

NICK

I don't know.

TIM

You don't know? What's it like at home?

NICK

Fine.

TIM

Yeah, with you and your mum?

NICK

Yeah.

POPPY

Yeah!

TIM

You get on with your mum, don't you?

NICK

Yeah.

TIM

Does anybody else come to the house?

NICK

No.

TIM

No? What about any of Mummy's friends? Has she got a boyfriend?

NICK

Yeah, she does.

TIM

She does? What's his name?

NICK

Jason.

TIM

Jason. Is Jason nice?

NICK

No.

(POPPY looks at TIM.)

TIM
Has he been making you angry, Nick?

NICK
Yeah.

POPPY
That's no good, is it?

TIM
Have you got a piece of paper, Miss Cross?

POPPY
Yeah. I'm sure we could rustle one up.

(She gets up, and goes to a drawer.)

TIM
Are you good at drawing, Nick?

NICK
Yeah.

TIM
Okay.

(POPPY returns with a piece of paper, and sits down.)

POPPY
Here we go...

TIM
Let's get you a pencil. (He takes one from a pot on the desk.) Take that, Nick. And what I'd like you to do is draw me a house.

POPPY
D'you think you can do that?

NICK
Yeah.

TIM
Yeah.

POPPY
Yeah. Thought so!

A few minutes later. NICK has drawn a house. He has drawn a person in each of the two upstairs windows.

TIM
That's your mum, in her bedroom. Who else is there?

(NICK draws a third person in the downstairs window.)

NICK

Jason.

TIM

Jason's there. Where's he?

NICK

He's...in the living-room.

TIM

In the living-room. You're all in different rooms, aren't you?

NICK

Mm-hm.

TIM

Why are you in a different room to Jason?

NICK

Cos he's not nice to me.

TIM

He's not nice - what does he do to you?

NICK

He hits me.

TIM

He hits you.

NICK

Yeah.

TIM

You know that's not right, don't you, Nick?

(POPPY looks at each of them.)

A little later. POPPY and TIM are at the main door of the school.

POPPY

Well, it's lovely to meet you.

TIM

Yeah, you too.

POPPY

Thank you. I think he's going to be alright.

TIM
Course he is.

POPPY
Yeah.

TIM
He's got a good teacher.

POPPY
Has he? Where is she? I can't see her!

TIM
I'm looking at her.

POPPY
Thank you very much!

TIM
I wouldn't mind looking at her again,
actually.

POPPY
Oh? I'm sure she wouldn't mind looking
at you again.

TIM
Really?

POPPY
Yeah.

TIM
That's good.

POPPY
Give us your number, then.

TIM
Okay. I'll write it down.

POPPY
That's a start.

*(TIM takes out a notebook, and jots down his number,
which he tears out for POPPY.)*

TIM
There you go!

POPPY
Thank you very much!

TIM
You're welcome.

POPPY
Good bye!

TIM

See you!

*(He leaves. She goes back to work.)***Yet another driving lesson. SCOTT is at the wheel.**

POPPY

You alright? Had a good week?

SCOTT

Yeah.

POPPY

Oh - that's a bonus. *(She sniffs.)*
Smells in here. I didn't know you had
a dog.

SCOTT

No, it isn't a dog - I've just had a
lesson.

POPPY

Oh! Bit stinky, was he?

SCOTT

You could say that. *(POPPY laughs.)*
You got a dog?

POPPY

No. Live in a flat. Be cruel, wouldn't
it. I'd love a dog. You ever had a
dog? Your mum and dad got a dog?

SCOTT

My dad's dead.

POPPY

Oh. Sorry to hear that. How d'you get
on with your mum?

SCOTT

I don't.

POPPY

Oh.

SCOTT

You live with your mum and dad?

POPPY

No! *(She laughs.)* How old d'you think
I am? Twelve?

SCOTT

Twenty-two, twenty-three.

POPPY

Oh, I like you - you can stay! I'm thirty. Old maid now!

SCOTT

So d'you live on your own?

POPPY

No. I live with my flatmate. Nearly...ten years now. She done well, bless her.

SCOTT

It's a long time.

POPPY

She's gorgeous. I love her.

SCOTT

What d'you mean, you love her?

POPPY

I mean, I love her, she loves me, we love each other! *(She laughs.)*

SCOTT

What, so you - ?

POPPY

What? *(Pause. Then she gets it, and laughs.)* Yeah. That's it! That's us! You got a problem with that, Scott?

SCOTT

No. Nothing to do with me.

POPPY

No. I don't think it is.

A little later. A quiet, leafy street. The car is stationary. POPPY is at the wheel.

SCOTT

Okay, check your mirrors - Enrahah.

POPPY

Checkin' chicken!

SCOTT

Okay, indicate and knock on the door - let them know you want to come in.

POPPY

Ding-dong!

SCOTT

Okay - you put down the clutch, put it in first gear. Okay find your biting-point just before you go - okay, stop!!

POPPY

What?!

SCOTT

Put the car in neutral -

POPPY

What?

SCOTT

Put the car in neutral, put the hand-brake on, take your hand off the steering-wheel, your foot off the pedal, and turn off the ignition key.

POPPY

I haven't even started yet.

SCOTT

I don't care. I've stopped. Now you tell me why I've stopped.

POPPY

Got a headache?

SCOTT

No - yes, I have got a headache, and you tell me why I've got a headache.

POPPY

Mmm...I dunno - time of the month? (Pause.) Well, give me a clue.

SCOTT

Think. Top to toe. Top to toe.

POPPY

?

SCOTT

Boots, Poppy - boots!

POPPY

Oh, here we go!

SCOTT

Every week, I ask you, please wear appropriate footwear, and every week you insist on wearing those stupid boots.

POPPY
Yeah, yeah - sorry about that.

SCOTT
You know what this is? This is vanity
before safety.

POPPY
Oh, right.

SCOTT
"I'm sorry, Mrs Jones - I'm sorry.
Poppy killed your child, but don't
worry: she looked really cool in her
sexy, seductive boots."

POPPY
Are they keeping you awake at night,
Scott?

SCOTT
No.

POPPY
Are you sure about that?

SCOTT
(No reply)

POPPY
Shall we get on with the lesson, then?
Yeah?

SCOTT
Are you going to do something about
your boots?

POPPY
No, I don't think so - they're fine.
I'm comfy in these. A lot of people
drive in heels.

SCOTT
Very well. On your head be it.

POPPY
Yeah. Okey-dokey.

(The car sets off down the road.)

SCOTT
Keep to the left of the centre -
Enrahaah, Enrahaah. When we come to this
bend, what do we do?

POPPY
Oh, yeah - expecting the worst!

SCOTT
We keep to the left - okay, we expect
the worst - we expect the juggernaut -
okay?

POPPY
Expecting the worst! -

SCOTT
We expect the worst -

POPPY
Ready -

SCOTT
Okay, more gas.

POPPY
Expecting the worst, expecting the
worst -

SCOTT
More gas, more gas.

POPPY
Expecting the worst...

SCOTT
More gas.

POPPY
OH, NO - THERE'S A JUGGERNAUT! - GET
DOWN!!!

(She ducks down. SCOTT grabs the wheel.)

SCOTT
POPPY!! KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE WHEEL,
AND KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD!!!!

(They have turned the corner.)

POPPY
There's a juggernaut.

SCOTT
What're you doing?

POPPY
That was a juggernaut!

(The car has stopped. There is no traffic in sight.)

SCOTT
There wasn't a juggernaut!

POPPY
There was!

SCOTT
That's a stupid thing to do.

POPPY
It was a little joke!

SCOTT
That was a stupid thing to do.

POPPY
I'm sorry - it was a little joke! I'm
sorry, I'm sorry!

SCOTT
Give me gas! Give me gas - let's get
away from the bend. Give me gas.

**A few moments later. The car pulls up by a wall and
some trees.**

SCOTT
Right, Poppy...

POPPY
Yeah.

SCOTT
I'm not going to allow you to endanger
both of us, just for you to have your
stupid little joke - okay, I mean, if
you want to make jokes, if that's what
you want to do -

POPPY
Yeah?

SCOTT
Then I will gladly sit here, and you
can take the mickey out of me for
twenty-two pound fifty an hour - it's
your money - I'm big enough, I can
take it -

POPPY
Can you?

SCOTT
But, but I will not allow you to
endanger yourself, myself and other
road users just for your amusement.

POPPY
I wasn't taking the mickey, Scott,
alright - I'm sorry.

(She touches his shoulder.)

SCOTT
DON'T TOUCH ME!! DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH
ME!!!

POPPY
Alright! Alright!

(SCOTT leaps out of the car.)

SCOTT
Right. That's it. Get out.

POPPY
What's happening now?

SCOTT
Get in the passenger seat.

POPPY
Why?

SCOTT
The lesson is over. I'm taking you
home.

POPPY
Oh. So that's that, then, is it?
Alright, then.

(She gets out. They change places.)

SCOTT
And you can speak to the office, and
when they ask you, you can tell them,
I can't teach you.

*(They both get into the car. SCOTT loses his temper
with his seat-belt.)*

SCOTT
FUCKING THING!!!

POPPY
It's alright, Scott - it's alright!
(Pause.) Well, come on, then, let's
go. It's costing me enough money, as
it is.

SCOTT
All I ask is that you behave like an
adult.

POPPY
What, like you, Scott?

(SCOTT bursts out of the car again, and marches round to POPPY's side.)

POPPY
It's like musical cars, this.

(SCOTT opens her door.)

POPPY
What now?

SCOTT
Get in the driver's seat, please. I've never given up on a pupil.

POPPY
Oh, so that bit's over, is it? *(She takes off her seat-belt.)* Well, make your mind up. *(She gets out of the car.)* D'you want to have a walk, get a breath of fresh air, or something?

(SCOTT ignores her, gets into the car, and slams the door.)

POPPY
No? Alright, then. *(She goes back round the car, and gets into the driver's seat.)*

SCOTT
Check your mirrors.

A few minutes later. They are driving along.

POPPY
What about that guy you gave up on the other week, eh?

SCOTT
He passed his test this morning.

POPPY

Oh? That's good.

SCOTT

He didn't deserve to. He was very rude. He didn't even say thank you.

POPPY

I don't know. Some people. It doesn't take much.

SCOTT

It's just the little things.

POPPY

That's right.

SCOTT

Enrahaah. *(He points to the mirror, then adjusts her steering.)* Keep to the left of the centre of the road. You know, you can make jokes while you're driving, Poppy, but you will crash, and you will die laughing.

POPPY

(laughing)

Well, if you're gonna go, it's the best way to go, I suppose! *(Pause.)* Are you scared of death, Scott?

SCOTT

No, I'm not scared of death. I'm scared of dying. That's why I woke up.

POPPY

Oh, when d'you wake up?

SCOTT

A long time ago.

POPPY

Who set the alarm?

SCOTT

I set the alarm. I opened my eyes, and I saw.

POPPY

And what did you see?

SCOTT

I mean, you can laugh while Rome is burning, but believe you me, Poppy, it is burning, and if you don't wake up, then you will be burnt to a cinder.

(POPPY looks at him reflectively.)

SCOTT

I mean, look around you - what do you see? What do you see? - Do you see happiness? Do you see a policy of bringing happiness to people? No, you see ignorance and fear. You see the disease of multiculturalism. And what is multiculturalism? Multiculturalism is non-culturalism. And why do they want non-culturalism? Because they want to reduce collective will. The American Dream never happened. The American nightmare is already here. I mean, look at the Washington Monument. It is five hundred and fifty-five feet above the ground, and a hundred and eleven feet below the ground. Five hundred and fifty-five plus a hundred and eleven is six hundred and sixty-six. Six-six-six, Poppy. Six-six-six. *(Pause.)* Keep to the left of the centre of the road.

POPPY

Are you an only child, Scott?

(Pause.)

SCOTT

Enrahaah. Use all your mirrors. Watch your speed.

(Another reflective glance from Poppy.)

Later. The car pulls up opposite POPPY's flat; causing a small flock of pigeons to disperse. POPPY takes out her money, and gives it to SCOTT.

POPPY

Same time next week?

SCOTT

Of course.

POPPY

Of course! *(She gets out.)* Stay happy!

(SCOTT drives off. POPPY crosses the road, to the flat.)

Shortly later. POPPY and ZOE's living-room. POPPY is sitting by the window, sorting through her bag. ZOE walks over to the window. She is holding some CDs.

ZOE
Oh, come on, Suzie.

POPPY
Don't worry, she'll be here.

ZOE
What time's Helen expecting us?

POPPY
She wanted us there by four.

ZOE
She's going to go nuts!

POPPY
Not much I can do about that - runs in the family.

ZOE
How was your lesson?

POPPY
I dunno...dark.

ZOE
How d'you mean, dark?

POPPY
Dark as the night.

ZOE
He hasn't been feeling you up, has he?

POPPY
I'd like to see him try.

ZOE
Touching your knee, instead of the gear-stick - that old chestnut.

POPPY
No.

ZOE
You alright, Poppy?

POPPY
Yeah. I think I'm just worried about Helen.

ZOE
Really? How d'you mean?

POPPY
I should've gone to see her ages ago.

ZOE
Yeah, families, eh?

(SUZIE appears across the road.)

ZOE
Oh, here's Suzie.

(SUZIE sees ZOE. She smiles and makes a rude gesture.)

ZOE's little yellow car speeds out of the city. At the seaside, it drives along the coast road and the promenade, past the fun-fair.

Then it proceeds along a quiet, modern, suburban street with neat lawns, finally screeching to a halt outside a bland, semi-detached house. HELEN and her husband JAMIE appear at the door, as ZOE reverses, then pulls into their driveway. Much laughter and jollity from POPPY, SUZIE and ZOE inside the car.

HELEN
Hello!

JAMIE
Alright?

(POPPY throws some luggage out of the car. Then she gets out, clutching some flowers.)

POPPY
Look at this! Oh - mind the tree!

(She runs towards HELEN, who is standing in the porch. She passes JAMIE, who is on his way to the car.)

JAMIE
Alright, Poppy?

POPPY
Alright, Jamie?

(POPPY kisses JAMIE on the cheek, then proceeds to HELEN, who is very pregnant.)

POPPY

Look at you!

(She kisses HELEN. JAMIE joins ZOE and SUZIE, who are getting stuff out of the car.)

ZOE

You alright, Jamie?

JAMIE

Alright? Yeah.

ZOE

Long time no see.

JAMIE

Yeah, long time no see. You alright, Suzie?

SUZIE

Alright, Jamie?

JAMIE

Alright?

(POPPY starts running back to the car, but remembers the flowers in her hand.)

POPPY

Ooh. These are for you.

(She gives HELEN the flowers, and runs back to the car.)

POPPY

Lovely....

ZOE

I got you a bottle of bubbly.

JAMIE

Oh, thank you very much. That's lovely.

(POPPY gathers up her things.)

Minutes later. JAMIE comes into his living-room with POPPY's luggage. POPPY and SUZIE are laughing. POPPY is holding her shoulder bag and her boots.

JAMIE
 Alright? I'll put these upstairs for
 you.

POPPY
 Oh, lovely, Jamie. Thank you very
 much.

(JAMIE goes upstairs. SUZIE goes out onto the patio.)

SUZIE
 I guess we're having a barbecue.

POPPY
 Whatever gave you that idea, Suzie?

*(She laughs at a picture in a frame. JAMIE returns from
 upstairs.)*

POPPY
 Keep on running, Jamie!

JAMIE
 Yeah.

(He disappears into the kitchen.)

POPPY
 Better put these down, shall I? That's
 a good idea.

(She joins ZOE in the hall. SUZIE arrive from outside.)

POPPY
(to ZOE)
 Oh, having fun, yet?

ZOE
(drily)
 Yeah.

(HELEN shouts from the kitchen.)

HELEN
 Take your shoes off, Suzie!

SUZIE
(angrily)
 Alright! *(She kicks them off.)*

HELEN

And you, too, Poppy. I'll give you a grand tour. *(She goes into the toilet.)* This is the downstairs toilet.

POPPY

Oh, I thought it was the wine cellar.

ZOE

I wish!

(HELEN leads the others into the living-room.)

HELEN

Through here, this is the living-room.

JAMIE

Ta-da! Yeah, we went with a blue-and-silver theme in here.

POPPY

Oh, did you, Jamie? It's very nice, isn't it, Suze?

SUZIE

Yeah.

HELEN

Here's our little dining area.

POPPY

Lovely.

HELEN

There's usually another chair here, but we've put it outside for later.

POPPY

What, for the foxes?

HELEN

(acknowledging joke)

Yeah.

JAMIE

Yeah.

HELEN

We only got this last week, didn't we, Jamie?

JAMIE

Yeah - flatpack.

ZOE

(drily)

Really?

(POPPY laughs.)

A little later. POPPY is standing in the middle of HELEN's garden. ZOE is smoking a cigarette and holding an ashtray. SUZIE is lurking in the background. HELEN joins POPPY and ZOE.

POPPY
Beautiful, Helen! Haven't you got green fingers, eh?

ZOE
Is it alright to smoke, Helen?

HELEN
Yes, s'pose so. Can you make sure you get the ash in the ashtray, please?

ZOE
Yeah - I'll try not to miss the potty.

POPPY
You've been trained, haven't you?

HELEN
Come and see my roses.

(POPPY joins HELEN enthusiastically.)

HELEN
I only planted these last year.

POPPY
You didn't!

HELEN
They've done really well. I want to grow them into a big bush.

POPPY
Oh!

(ZOE sniggers and POPPY hits her playfully.)

HELEN
Yeah. They look lovely.

POPPY
Yeah, don't they, just!

HELEN
And my lavender...put that by the compost.

POPPY
Best place for it, really.

HELEN
Hydrangea wants perking up a bit.

POPPY
Bit down in the dumps, is he? Hello,
there - might never happen!

HELEN
Busy Lizzies are doing very well.

POPPY
Oh?

HELEN
Beautiful flowers.

POPPY
Been a bit busy, has she?

HELEN
Going to plant more of these next
year.

(SUZIE has joined them.)

SUZIE
That looks crap.

HELEN
Thanks, Suzie. *(She points to a tree.)*
Eucalyptus.

POPPY
Oh, Zoe - gum tree!

ZOE
(simultaneously)
Gum tree!

POPPY
Brings back a few memories, doesn't
it? *(Australian accent)* G'day blue!
How's it goin'?

(JAMIE arrives with a tray of drinks.)

JAMIE
Drinks up!

ZOE
Oh, cheers, Jamie - let me give you a
hand.

POPPY
Oh, cheers! Lovely!

(The drinks are dispersed.)

ZOE
Cheers, everyone!

POPPY
Cheers!

HELEN
Cheers!

JAMIE
Cheers!

Now the women are all sitting round the table on the patio, enjoying their drinks. JAMIE is standing, attending to the barbecue.

POPPY
So you've spoken to Mum, then, have you?

HELEN
Yeah, I spoke to her last Sunday. She's alright.

POPPY
Lovely. Is she coming down?

HELEN
Yes.

SUZIE
What's she coming down with, syphilis?

(POPPY and ZOE chortle.)

HELEN
(unamused)
When did you last speak to her, Suzie?

SUZIE
Oh, leave it out!

HELEN
You should give her a ring.

POPPY
I spoke to her.

HELEN
They're both very excited.

POPPY
Of course they are.

HELEN

They're going to come down when the baby's born.

POPPY

Yeah.

ZOE

Get on with the in-laws, then, do you, Jamie?

JAMIE

Yeah, I do, as it goes.

HELEN

Yeah. You get on with Dad, don't you?

JAMIE

Yeah, we have a nice chat from time to time.

(POPPY and SUZIE laugh.)

SUZIE

Do you?

POPPY

It's more than we ever do!

HELEN

(to POPPY)

Doesn't it seem funny, your little sister having a baby?

SUZIE

Yes - it is a bit weird.

POPPY

No, it's perfectly natural.

ZOE

I'm an auntie.

JAMIE

Oh, yeah?

ZOE

Yeah, I've got two nieces - my brother's kids.

POPPY

Yeah, they're lovely, aren't they?

ZOE

Yeah, well, they're alright.

HELEN

He's kicking.

(POPPY feels HELEN's tummy.)

POPPY

Oh, yeah - that's amazing! Hello, little man in there! It's your auntie speaking! There's your other auntie here, Auntie Suzie - does she want a word?

SUZIE

What're you gonna call it?

POPPY

No! *(Laughs.)* Oh, yeah - have you chosen a name yet?

JAMIE

We weren't actually going to say, were we?

HELEN

We're not telling anyone yet.

POPPY

Oh, go on - your secret's safe with us!

HELEN

No, it's bad luck.

JAMIE

It's Nathan.

(Pause. POPPY and ZOE are amused.)

POPPY

It's lovely.

SUZIE

Nathan?

JAMIE

Yeah.

POPPY

It's a lovely name, Helen.

ZOE

Is there a Nathan in the family, then?

JAMIE

No.

HELEN

No. Just feels right.

ZOE

Right.

POPPY

Well, that's the important thing.

SUZIE

Nathan Lightfoot.

HELEN

Yes, Suzie - Nathan Lightfoot.

POPPY

"Nathan Lightfoot, Esquire"!

SUZIE

It's boring!

POPPY

Take no notice of her!

HELEN

It's not.

POPPY

Cheers! Cheers, Nathan!

JAMIE

Let me get you another top-up. Suzie?

SUZIE

Oh, yeah, please.

ZOE

Thanks, Jamie.

POPPY

Lovely. Thanks.

Later in the evening. HELEN and JAMIE's living-room. The curtains are drawn and the lights are on. All five are sitting around. SUZIE is next to the television.

(Pause: a conversational hiatus.)

POPPY

I know: let's have a go on your Play Station, Jamie.

SUZIE

Oh, yeah.

POPPY

- Yeah!

(JAMIE gets up and joins SUZIE.)

JAMIE
Yeah, I'll start it up.

HELEN
No, Jamie!

POPPY
Zoe's favourite, isn't it, Zoe?

ZOE
(drily)
Yeah, I just can't get enough.

SUZIE
What games you got?

JAMIE
'Sonic The Hedgehog', 'Splinter
Cell'...

SUZIE
Oh, cool.

HELEN
We can't start with that now, Jamie.

POPPY
Why not?

HELEN
It's too late.

SUZIE
Shut up!

POPPY
Why, what's the time?

JAMIE
Five minutes...

HELEN
No!

SUZIE
Come on, let's play.

HELEN
Jamie, I said leave it!!

POPPY
(touching her arm)
It's alright, lovely.

HELEN
Sit down!

SUZIE
Oh, for fuck's sake!

(JAMIE goes back to his chair.)

ZOE
Bane of my life, Play Stations.

JAMIE
Oh, you got one?

ZOE
No, the kids at school.

POPPY
(miming)
They're like that, under the desks,
aren't they?

HELEN
I always confiscate them in my class.

POPPY
Do you?

SUZIE
Oh, what a surprise!

POPPY
They must love that.

JAMIE
Well, maybe in the morning, eh?

POPPY
Yeah. Before we go for a walk.

JAMIE
Yeah.

(Pause.)

HELEN
Incredible to think I'm going to get
even bigger.

(POPPY mimes HELEN's bulge exploding.)

HELEN
Only ten more weeks.

POPPY
Exciting! Strap yourself in. *(Safety-belt mime.)*

HELEN

Doesn't it make you both feel a little bit broody, you girls?

POPPY

No, actually. How about you, Zoe?

ZOE

'Fraid not, with all due respects.

HELEN

But you want a baby, though, don't you, Poppy?

POPPY

No, thanks - I've just had a kebab!

HELEN

I didn't mean that. Eventually.

POPPY

Maybe. Who knows?

HELEN

At thirty-five, you're considered a high-risk mum.

POPPY

Oh, give me a chance - I've just turned thirty!

HELEN

It's only five years away. You've got to make plans.

POPPY

What, Five-Year Plan? Like Stalin?

HELEN

When are you going to get on the property ladder?

POPPY

Oh, I need a step up, first!

HELEN

You got to get yourself a mortgage.

ZOE

We don't want the hassle.

HELEN

You really need to invest your savings.

POPPY

Oh, I just stuff mine under the mattress, Helen.

HELEN

You got yourself a pension yet?

POPPY

You gotta be joking. Have you got a pension?

HELEN

Of course - we've both got pensions, haven't we, Jamie?

JAMIE

Oh, yeah.

POPPY

Oh, great! Where d'you keep your Zimmer Frames?

HELEN

You've got to take life seriously, Poppy.

POPPY

Have I?

HELEN

You can't go on getting drunk every night - partying. However much fun it is.

POPPY

I don't get drunk every night. Do we?

ZOE

No - she's an adult now, your big sister.

POPPY

("quotes" gesture)
"Unfortunately".

HELEN

You have to take responsibility, Poppy.

POPPY

(touching her gently)
Okay - take it easy, darling.

HELEN

I am taking it easy. I just want you to be happy, that's all.

POPPY

I am happy.

HELEN

I don't think you are.

POPPY

I am. I love my life. Yeah, it can be tough at times - that's part of it, isn't it? I've got a great job, brilliant kids, lovely flat; I've got her to look at, I've got amazing friends. I love my freedom. I'm a very lucky lady - I know that.

HELEN

Alright - there's no need to rub it in.

POPPY

What? What am I rubbing in?

HELEN

I know what you're saying.

POPPY

What am I saying?

HELEN

You think I've taken the easy option.

POPPY

Hey!

ZOE

Hang on, Helen - she didn't say that!

HELEN

That's what she meant!

POPPY

No, I didn't.

SUZIE

No, you're just blatantly insecure about your own life.

POPPY

(firmly)

Alright, Suzie!

HELEN

That's not true, Suzie.

SUZIE

Well, then why are you trying to control everyone else?

HELEN

I'm not!

SUZIE

Yeah, you are!

HELEN

No, I'm not!

SUZIE

Whatever. You're boring me.

POPPY

Leave it, Suzie!

HELEN

Why are you all attacking me? It's not fair!!

(She gets up and runs out, slamming the door.)

ZOE

No-one's attacking you!

JAMIE

We're not attacking you, Hel.

(Pause.)

POPPY

Blimey!

SUZIE

It's pathetic!

POPPY

(remonstrating)

Suzie!

SUZIE

Sorry.

JAMIE

She'll be alright in a minute.

POPPY

Yeah.

JAMIE

It's hormones.

(POPPY and ZOE share a sense-of-humour moment.)

ZOE

You alright?

POPPY

Yeah.

(Pause.)

SUZIE

D'you want to play a game, then, Jamie?

JAMIE
Yeah, yeah...

(He starts to get up, but Helen returns.)

JAMIE
No - let's leave it 'til the morning.

HELEN
I think we should all go to bed now.
It's getting late.

POPPY
Alright, then.

HELEN
Jamie, go upstairs - get the bedding
for Suzie. *(JAMIE gets up.)* You're
looking tired, Suzie.

ZOE
She always looks like that.

SUZIE
It's just my face.

ZOE
Thanks for the barbecue, Helen. Jamie.

JAMIE
Any time.

POPPY
It was gorgeous.

SUZIE
Yeah, thanks.

HELEN
We'll go for a walk by the sea
tomorrow.

POPPY
Be lovely.

HELEN
Be nice.

(SUZIE looks less than enthusiastic.)

**The next day. On the promenade at HELEN's seaside town.
Crowds of holiday-makers and day-trippers. A fun-fair
not far away; a long pier stretching out to sea.**

POPPY and SUZIE run along the beach wall exuberantly. ZOE, HELEN and JAMIE are more subdued. POPPY persuades JAMIE to give her a piggy-back, much to SUZIE's amusement and HELEN's consternation. But JAMIE's back hurts, and POPPY gets off him with great concern. They all move off. Two large bearded men sit on the wall.

Later, on the way home to London. At a petrol station. ZOE is filling up. SUZIE lounges on the back of the car. POPPY is a little distance away, talking on her mobile.

POPPY

I'm alright - how are you? Good weekend? Huh. Heavy night, last night, was it? That's what I like to hear. Good boy! Well, d'you fancy going out some time, then, do you? How's Friday looking for you? D'you think you can squeeze me in? *(She laughs.)* Oh, go on, then - I don't drink. But...yeah, maybe just the one. *(Another laugh.)* Yeah - somewhere like that. Alright, then. See you then, then, then - then, then... *(She laughs, and walks towards the car.)* Alright. See you, sailor. Bye.

Now ZOE's car drives along a leafy street. As they near the corner, POPPY suddenly spots SCOTT, standing under a tree. He is looking in the direction of their flat.

POPPY

Scott!

(On seeing POPPY, SCOTT immediately runs off at great speed. ZOE parks outside the flat. They all get out of the car. ZOE and SUZIE attend to the luggage. POPPY crosses the road to look for SCOTT. But there's no sign of him. Concerned, she walks back to the flat.)

Minutes later. POPPY and ZOE are standing together, looking out of their living-room window. SUZIE is in an armchair, reading a magazine. Pause.

ZOE

What was that all about, then?

POPPY

Search me.

ZOE

Bit weird.

POPPY

Isn't it, just? It gives me the
creeps, to be honest.

ZOE

Yeah.

(Pause.)

POPPY

So, what are we doing for tea, then?

ZOE

Takeaway - what d'you reckon?

SUZIE

Chinese.

POPPY

Oh, hello! Look who's here - little
piglet!

ZOE

Yeah, are you paying?

SUZIE

No.

POPPY

Course she's not!

ZOE

Don't worry, we'll take care of it.

POPPY

Mum and Dad?

ZOE

Which one am I?

POPPY

Dad, of course!

ZOE

I hate being Dad!

POPPY

You love it! *(She kisses ZOE.)*

ZOE

Oh, get off, Poppy! *(She walks away.)**(SUZIE goes back to the magazine. POPPY looks out of
the window.)*

POPPY
It's a beautiful sky.

(We see the sky. It is beautiful.)

In a bar. POPPY carries two drinks from the counter, and joins TIM at a table.

TIM
Thanks.

(POPPY sits down.)

POPPY
So where were we? What brings you here?

TIM
I met a girl.

POPPY
Oh! Very nice! What's she like then?

TIM
I can't talk about it.

POPPY
Can't you? Why not?

TIM
It's a secret.

POPPY
I'm good with secrets.

TIM
It's between me and her, though.

POPPY
Oh, fair enough. I won't pry. Who is she?

TIM
I couldn't, possibly.

POPPY
Trust me.

TIM
She's a teacher.

POPPY
Is she?

TIM
She's gorgeous.

POPPY
Oh? I hate her already! Haven't you
got lovely eyes?

TIM
Thanks.

POPPY
Beautiful colour.

TIM
Really?

POPPY
Yeah.

TIM
Picked 'em myself.

POPPY
Did you? Where from?

TIM
Down the market.

POPPY
You're joking me.

TIM
No.

POPPY
I'd say you'd got yourself a bargain
there.

TIM
You've got one, as well.

POPPY
Have I? Just the one? Which one?

TIM
That one.

POPPY
This one?

TIM
Yes.

POPPY
Particularly lovely, is he?

TIM
He is! You don't want to upset the
other one, though.

POPPY
Oh no, she's alright.

TIM
Is she?

POPPY
Yeah. We've had a chat about it.

TIM
Oh, good.

POPPY
Yeah - she's over the worst, now.
Yeah. Anyway, she's got other talents.

TIM
Has she?

POPPY
Oh, yeah.

TIM
What are they?

POPPY
So many. She can juggle.

TIM
Obviously.

POPPY
Yeah - goes without saying. She can
wink on demand.

TIM
Really?

POPPY
Yeah.

TIM
Let's see.

POPPY
Are you sure?

TIM
Yeah.

POPPY
It's pretty spooky.

TIM
Go on.

POPPY
Aw...okay, are you ready?

TIM
Yeah.

(POPPY winks elaborately)

TIM
She is good!

POPPY
This one tries to join in.

TIM
Don't let him!

POPPY
I won't. Anyway, he's lovely, so -

TIM
Well, she's lovely, too.

POPPY
Don't try to claw your way out of it now!

TIM
Sorry!

POPPY
'ts alright! Cheers!

TIM
Cheers!

(They clink drinks.)

TIM
Again.

(A warm moment between them.)

TIM
This is nice.

POPPY
It is nice.

(A smiling, loving moment.)

Dusk. A modern block of flats. POPPY and TIM are walking along a top-floor exterior landing. They arrive a flat with a bright yellow door.

TIM
Here we are.

POPPY
Wow!

TIM
Welcome to my humble abode.

POPPY
Thank you!

(They go in. Just as the door closes, they kiss.)

In TIM's bedroom. Clean, simple design. A big, low lamp. Venetian blinds. POPPY and TIM are kneeling on the bed, kissing.

POPPY
Aren't you high up?

TIM
Yeah.

POPPY
Yeah. What's it like up there?

TIM
'ts okay.

POPPY
Oh. *(TIM lowers his position.)* That's better. *(More kissing.)* I think you must be too hot.

TIM
Yeah, it does feel hot.

POPPY
Yeah, I thought so. I'm usually right. *(She undoes his shirt.)* Though it's not really my job.

TIM
No - you're very good at it.

POPPY
I know. Hidden talents. *(She takes off his shirt.)* Oh, wow! *(She strokes his body.)* Now that's what I call a bargain!

TIM

Yeah?

POPPY

Yeah. *(They kiss again. POPPY slides the bangles off her wrists, letting them fall to the floor.)* One, two, three! I'm a bit hot, too...

TIM

Yeah?

POPPY

Yeah.

TIM

Maybe this'll help? *(He helps her off with her top.)*

POPPY

I think you might be right.

TIM

What about if this...*(He is referring to her vest.)*

POPPY

Oh, yeah, and that one.

TIM

Yeah?

POPPY

Go on, then. *(The vest gets stuck on her head.)* Oh! I quite like it like that! Oh! *(They laugh. She slides the vest onto his head, and they continue kissing.)* What's it like in there? *(She pulls the vest back over her own head, so that they are now both under it. Laughing and still kissing, they fall on to the bed. After a few moments, they get rid of the vest, and love-making proceeds.)*

Next morning. POPPY and TIM are on his private balcony, leaning on the balustrade, and looking out at the London cityscape. She is wearing one of his t-shirts. They are a foot or so apart. POPPY slowly slides towards him. They share a warm moment. Then they kiss.

TIM

I'll go and make that tea.

POPPY

Okay.

(He goes inside. POPPY stays to enjoy the moment.)

A FEW SECONDS LATER. TIM IS MAKING THE TEA. POPPY JOINS HIM AT THE KITCHEN COUNTER.

POPPY
I'm gonna be late for my lesson.
Heigho! There you go.

TIM
I'll give you a lift.

POPPY
Will you?

TIM
Yeah. Means I keep you for longer.

POPPY
Thank you very much.

TIM
Its okay.

POPPY
So when are coming back to school?

TIM
Oh...next week? I'll see how things go
with his mum.

POPPY
He'll be alright.

TIM
He'll be fine.

(POPPY crosses her fingers. Pause. A warm moment.)

POPPY
Hello!

TIM
Hi.

(The warm moment continues. Then TIM takes the milk from the fridge, and attends to the tea. POPPY watches him.)

POPPY
Are you happy...in your life?

TIM
That's a big question.

POPPY
Isn't it, just?

Now POPPY and TIM rush out to TIM's car, jump into it, and drive off quickly.

ZOE is leaning in her living-room doorway, holding a book and a mug. TIM is on the landing.

ZOE
So you play football, then?

TIM
Yeah, five-a-side, every week.

ZOE
Oh, right. Is that indoors or outdoors?

TIM
No, outdoors.

(POPPY rushes down the stairs, and joins the others. She has changed into jeans and a denim jacket.)

ZOE
Oh, here she is!

POPPY
Made it - just.

ZOE
Why aren't you wearing any jewellery?

POPPY
Oh, it's that kind of day!

(She laughs and combs and ties up her hair. TIM laughs, too.)

ZOE
So are you doing anything tonight?

TIM
Yeah, it's a mate's thirtieth. A load of us are meeting in a bar.

ZOE
Oh, great!

TIM
What are you two up to?

ZOE
Oh, cinema.

POPPY
Yeah - see a film.

ZOE
Yeah, popcorn.

POPPY
Sit in the dark, hold hands - you know!

ZOE
Yeah - no necking.

POPPY
She's only saying that cos you're here.

ZOE
Oh, yeah - normally I'm all over her like a rash!

TIM
I don't blame you!

(POPPY laughs, and hits him playfully.)

ZOE
He's a right smoothy, isn't he?

POPPY
Isn't he, just?

(The doorbell rings.)

POPPY
Oh - here he is! *(Going.)*

TIM
(going)
Nice to meet you, Zoe.

ZOE
Yeah, nice to meet you, Tim.

POPPY
Yeah, nice to meet you, Zoe!

ZOE
Yeah - whatever.

(POPPY and TIM go down to the street.)

TIM

(off)

Have a good time tonight.

POPPY

(off)

Come on, you!

*(ZOE reflects for a moment; then she goes into the living room to enjoy her book.)***Down in the street. The door opens, and out come POPPY and TIM. SCOTT is waiting.**

POPPY

Hiya, Scott! This is Tim - he's coming with us today. - Just joking!

(POPPY and TIM laugh.)

TIM

Hi.

(He holds out his hand to SCOTT, who doesn't respond. He gives them both a disgruntled look, and walks off.)

POPPY

Oh! Can't win 'em all.

TIM

Apparently not.

POPPY

See you later, then.

TIM

I'll call you.

POPPY

Will you?

TIM

Yeah, I will.

POPPY

Oh, good!

(They kiss. SCOTT observes them from the corner, then walks off. The kiss over, TIM goes off down the street, and POPPY catches up with SCOTT. They talk as they walk quickly along a row of shops.)

POPPY

So what happened on Sunday, Scott? You should've stopped to say hello.

SCOTT

I don't know what you're talking about.

POPPY

Don't you?

SCOTT

I was in Stevenage on Sunday.

POPPY

Stevenage?

SCOTT

Yeah.

POPPY

That's funny. You must have a twin, then.

SCOTT

I was there all day. I was looking after my mum. My aunt's dying.

POPPY

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

SCOTT

It's alright.

POPPY

I don't believe you, Scott.

SCOTT

It's up to you. I was there 'til midnight.

(They have arrived at his car. They get in.)

POPPY

I don't think so, gigolo!

(SCOTT drives off aggressively.)

A few minutes later. The aggression continues. SCOTT becomes increasingly manic and hysterical. POPPY is concerned - and even frightened.

SCOTT

Okay, concentrate, Poppy -

POPPY

Yeah.

SCOTT

Concentrate. Watch what I'm doing, right?

POPPY

Okay.

SCOTT

Now I'm going to indicate - I keep in lane. In a roundabout you keep in lane, okay? You keep in lane - alright?

(They screech to a sudden halt, too close to a taxi. POPPY is nervous.)

SCOTT

You take responsibility for other drivers, and you take responsibility for yourself. And you keep in lane, okay? This is a roundabout. Concentrate. Pay attention.

(They move off.)

SCOTT

Good.

(A white van cuts in.)

SCOTT

Are you - oh, yeah - was that a request, or was that a demand? Did he bully me then? Did he just shove in then, or did he ask?

POPPY

Did he?

SCOTT

No, he didn't ask. You see, what roundabouts do? Roundabouts - if you keep in lane, if you keep in lane, and you keep going, you're gonna be fine.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You're following the rules, and you're keeping everything the way it should be - everything in check.

POPPY

Yeah -

SCOTT

But if you get selfish, if you get selfish and you step out of it, then it goes wrong, and it gets dangerous - d'you see what I mean?

(SCOTT overtakes the white van, putting himself on the wrong side of the busy main road. A cyclist crosses SCOTT's path.)

POPPY

(Fingers in mouth)

Woowayah!!!

(A car horn sounds, urgently.)

SCOTT

I'm not waiting for him, I'm not waiting for somebody who can't keep in lane on a roundabout, I'm not waiting. Everywhere you see - look at the cameras, look at them, everywhere you go, they're watching you, they're seeing you, they're watching you, they're seeing you, they're watching you, look at them, everywhere you go. This place, it stinks. COME ON!! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!!!

POPPY

(quietly)

Alright...

SCOTT

JESUS CHRIST!!! Look - another camera, speed cameras. Why d'you need speed cameras? There's two guys in the back of the road there, selling drugs, and you have a speed camera. Why d'you need a speed camera?

POPPY

Alright...

SCOTT

You can wait. YOU CAN WAIT!!!

POPPY

He -

(She gasps. SCOTT sounds his horn violently.)

SCOTT
 COME ON!! DRIVE THE CAR!!! You're not driving a camel!! Okay? This is not a bazaar. We have rules in this country - we have regulations, and you keep to them!!!

Now the car races violently along a quiet street.

SCOTT
(screaming)
 FUCKING MORONS!!!

(The car screeches to a halt, hitting the kerbstone sharply. SCOTT adjusts this position. Then he and POPPY get out, and change places. She gives him a wide berth as she passes him.)

Inside the car...

SCOTT
 Right, check your mirrors, check your seat. Make yourself comfortable.

POPPY
 No, I don't think so.

SCOTT
 Put your seat-belt on.

POPPY
 We're not going anywhere, Scott.

SCOTT
 What d'you mean?

POPPY
 You're in no fit state to take this lesson.

SCOTT
 Poppy, I am the driving instructor, you are the pupil.

POPPY
 You need to calm down.

SCOTT
 I am calm.

POPPY
 You can't drive like this.

SCOTT

How dare you comment on my driving?

POPPY

I think I can comment on your driving, when you're putting yourself in danger, you're putting me in danger, and you're putting other people in danger!

SCOTT

It's not me - it's them!

POPPY

That's bullshit, Scott! It's all bullshit, yeah, that's it - I don't want it.

SCOTT

What, you want this lesson to stop?

POPPY

Yes, I do. I don't want you to teach me any more, alright? I'm sorry.

SCOTT

Okay - great. Fantastic. You get in the passenger seat, and I'll drive you home.

POPPY

No, I don't think so. You're not driving - I'm driving.

SCOTT

No, you're not!

POPPY

Yes, I am.

SCOTT

Poppy, if this isn't a lesson, then you can't drive.

POPPY

You're not driving anywhere, Sunshine.

SCOTT

You've got two choices: either I drive you home, or you walk.

POPPY

I don't mind walking, but I can't let you drive this car.

SCOTT

You can't stop me.

POPPY

Yes, I can.

(She pulls out the ignition key.)

SCOTT

Poppy, give me the keys.

POPPY

No.

SCOTT

Give me the keys to my car.

POPPY

No, I don't think so.

SCOTT

Poppy, I'm going to ask you one more time please give me the keys to my car.

POPPY

I'm sorry, Scott, I can't -

(SCOTT grabs hold of POPPY's hair violently. She screams.)

SCOTT

GIVE ME THE FUCKING KEYS TO MY CAR,
YOU FUCKING BITCH!!!

POPPY

Get off me! Get off me, you -

SCOTT

Give me the keys!

POPPY

Get off me!

(They struggle and swear for a few moments, then POPPY escapes from the car.)

SCOTT

Give me the fucking keys!

POPPY

Get off me - you get away from me!

(SCOTT gets out of the car.)

SCOTT

Give me the fucking keys!!

(POPPY runs round the rear of the car.)

POPPY
You can't touch me, Scott!!

(SCOTT runs round the front of the car.)

SCOTT
Give me the fucking -. Give me...

(He moves round the car, but POPPY runs across the road. SCOTT chases her.)

POPPY
You can't touch me, you're out of order, Scott!!

SCOTT
Give me the fucking keys!!

POPPY
You're out of order! You're out of order - I'm calling the police!!

(SCOTT stops dead.)

POPPY
D'you want me to call the police? Do you?

(Pause. A car drives past.)

POPPY
Right. So let's just calm down, shall we? Okay? We're disturbing the peace here.

SCOTT
I just want to get in my car, and drive away.

POPPY
I'm sorry, Scott, that's not going to happen.

SCOTT
Jesus Christ, Poppy! You're doing it again - you never give up, do you? - YOU NEVER GIVE IN, FOR FUCK'S SAKE, YOU FUCKING BITCH!!!!

POPPY
Scott, you need help.

SCOTT
DON'T PATRONISE ME!!

POPPY
I'm not patronising you.

SCOTT
Yes, you are patronising me - you're always patronising me.

SCOTT
This is what you always wanted - this is what you set out to achieve, this is the game you played. You prodded me, you poked me, you stroked me, you teased me, you flirted with me, you sucked me in. You wore your high-heeled boots and your short skirt and your low-cut top, and you flashed your tits, you tossed your hair, you played with the gearstick - YOU LIED TO ME!! This is all about you. The world has to revolve around you. I'm a driving instructor. I just wanted to do my job - you had no intention of learning how to drive. You got in that car with one thing in mind: to reel me in. And why? Because you have to be adored - you've got to be wanted. And you drink it in, and you leave me, with a spring in your step; and you go off, and you fuck your boyfriend, and you fuck your girlfriend, and you all drive around in that stupid little yellow car!!

(Pause. POPPY watches him. He lowers his eyes.)

POPPY
Scott...

(Pause.)

POPPY
Come on, now.

(Pause. Kids can be heard playing somewhere nearby.)

SCOTT
I just want to go home.

POPPY

I'm sure you do. (*Lightly*) Don't we all, eh?

(*Pause.*)

POPPY

I'll tell you what. Why don't we have a talk about it? We'll sit in the car;

POPPY

and we'll have a chat, okay? Alright? And then I'll give you your keys.

(*Pause. The children can still be heard playing. SCOTT walks quickly to the car. He sits in the driver's seat. POPPY watches him for a moment. Then she walks across the road, goes round to the passenger side of the car, bends down and looks through the open window. SCOTT is in a very emotional state.*)

POPPY

I'm sorry if I upset you, Scott. I wish I could make you happy.

SCOTT

I was happy.

POPPY

Okay.

SCOTT

And I was in Stevenage last Sunday.

POPPY

Sure.

SCOTT

You can ask my mum.

(*Pause. POPPY looks at him.*)

SCOTT

So, same time next week?

(*It takes POPPY a long time to reply.*)

POPPY
I'm sorry, Scott.

(She gives him the keys.)

POPPY
There you go. I'll just get my bag,
alright?

(She opens the rear door.)

SCOTT
I'm a good driving instructor.

POPPY
Yeah, I know you are.

*(She has retrieved her bag. She closes the door, and
looks through the front window again.)*

POPPY
Take care, Scott.

SCOTT
Was that your boyfriend?

(POPPY looks at him.)

SCOTT
Before. Was it?

*(He is in tears. POPPY continues to look at him. There
isn't a reply. A long pause. Then SCOTT starts the car,
and drives off.)*

**POPPY stands on the pavement for a while. Then she puts
her bag over her shoulder, and leaves.**

**POPPY now takes a long, reflective walk along a busy
shopping street. Then she sits on some steps, and
reflects some more.**

And then, a little while later, she's on a lake in a London park, in a rowing-boat with ZOE. There are a few other boats around.

ZOE

I think I should give up smoking.

POPPY

(laughing)

That's a good idea. What can I give up?

ZOE

You could give up being too nice.
(POPPY laughs) Seriously: you can't make everyone happy.

POPPY

There's no harm in trying, though, is there? Bring a smile to the world.

ZOE

Come on, Poppy!

POPPY

I know. I know.

ZOE

I still think we should call the police.

POPPY

No. That's not going to help him, is it?

ZOE

I dunno.

POPPY

You know what?

ZOE

What?

POPPY

We're lucky, aren't we?

ZOE

Yeah, we are. Well...well, you make your own luck in life, don't you?

POPPY

Some of us do. Some of us miss the boat completely.

ZOE

Yeah, it's hard work, being a grown-up, isn't it?

POPPY

Yeah, it is. It's a long trip.

ZOE

Yeah, tell me when we get there.

POPPY

(laughing)

Don't worry! I'll let you know! You keep on rowing, and I'll keep on smiling...

ZOE

Are we there yet?

(POPPY laughs. Pause.)

POPPY

We've got a hell of a way to go.

(PAUSE. They've rowed a little distance.)

POPPY

We're getting good at this, aren't we? Nothing to it.

(POPPY's mobile rings. She takes it out of her bag, laughing in recognition.)

POPPY

Hello, you! Missing me already? That's nice to hear. Nightmare. Yeah. I'm still alive - just. Well...it's a long story. I'm on a lake. With Zoe.
(Laughs.) Yeah. The bathroom flooded. Yeah. It's alright now. We found a boat. *(Laughs.)* You're funny!
(Laughs.) Yeah...

The camera has risen into the sky; white birds circle round the boat as we look down on it.

It floats away. And POPPY keeps on laughing.

End credits.