

You Must be Joking Part One

Five short language teaching plays

Dad Wins the Pool

The Computer

Have You Heard?

Action Moscito

Shopping

The plays are written in natural English - the English of everyday conversation and they are well within the level of a student who has been learning English for 2 years.

Dad Wins the Pools

Characters

George

Penelope, his wife

Nellie, their daughter

Hilary, their son

George is in the living-room. He has just studied the Newspaper.

GEORGE Penelope! Where are you?

PENELOPE What's the matter? Are you hurt?

GEORGE No. Where are you?

PENELOPE I'm here. In the kitchen, Is anything wrong?

GEORGE No. Everything is okay.

PENELOPE Why are you shouting, then?

He runs into the kitchen.

GEORGE Look!

PENELOPE Look at what?

GEORGE The paper.

PENELOPE I haven't time for the paper now. Can't you see I'm cooking?

GEORGE I've won the pools.

PENELOPE And so what?

GEORGE AND SO WHAT?

PENELOPE George, please, I've just put the cutlets on the frying pan.
 Could we talk about it later, whatever it is?

GEORGE You didn't hear what I said, did you?

PENELOPE George, I'm busy.

GEORGE I told you I've won the pools.

PENELOPE I heard you, George. It's probably a false alarm, just like
 four years ago.

GEORGE No. This time I've hit the bull's eye. I've won 100.000
 pounds.

PENELOPE I beg your pardon?

GEORGE 100.000 pounds.

PENELOPE Are you sure?

GEORGE Of course I'm sure. Look for yourself.

He hands her the paper. She studies it.

PENELOPE It's marvellous. What a surprise. Oh George, how could
 you?

Nellie and Hilary enter.

NELLIE Are you arguing?

PENELOPE We never argue. You know that.

HILARY You WERE shouting, weren't you?

PENELOPE Dad has won the pools.

HILARY The pools? Congratulations.

NELLIE How much?

PENELOPE 100.000 pounds.

HILARY That much? I can have a new bike, then, can't I?

GEORGE Of course you can.

HILARY I'd like to have a lightweight Reynolds with 12 gears and racing saddle. Is that okay?

GEORGE Of course it is.

NELLIE I want a portable television of my own, Dad.

GEORGE You'll have it.

HILARY I could use a new skateboard, Dad.

GEORGE Yes, yes, yes.

NELLIE What do you want, Mummy?

PENELOPE I don't know. Actually I have to think it over. Perhaps – as a start – I'd like to have the kitchen painted. What about you, George?

GEORGE I think I'll buy a new car.

There is a knock on the front door.

GEORGE Who's that?

PENELOPE I'll have a look.

She goes to the the front door and comes back with a paper.

GEORGE Who was it?

PENELOPE The man next door. He borrowed the paper an hour ago and promised to come back with it.

GEORGE The paper?

PENELOPE Yes. He's retired and can't afford a daily newspaper. So I lent him ours.

George looks from one newspaper to another. Horror is in his eyes.

GEORGE So This is not today's paper?

NELLIE No. Look, Daddy. It's from last week.

GEORGE Good grief! Ohhhh.

PENELOPE You havn't won the pools, then?

GEORGE No. What a pity.

NELLIE I dare say.

HILARY No bike.

NELLIE No telly?

HILARY No skateboard.

GEORGE No car. Nothing at all.

NELLIE Mummy, LOOK!!! The smoke!

HILARY It comes from the kiitchen.

PENELOPE Oh dear!!!

She opens the door

.
GEORGE The cutlets are burning!!

HILARY Pooh – what a black, greasy smoke.

PENELOPE I've never seen the like, George.

GEORGE Neither have I.

PENELOPE Now we HAVE to paint the kitchen.

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THE COMPUTER

Characters:

Bridget, a housewife

Trevor, her husband

Anthony, their son.

Bridget and Trevor are in the living room. Trevor is reading the newspaper.

BRIDGET You must talk to Anthony.

TREVOR Yes.

BRIDGET We shouldn't have bought that computer for him.

TREVOR Yes.

BRIDGET You're not listening, are you?

TREVOR Yes.

BRIDGET No, you are not. Will you please put down that paper.

TREVOR What did you say, darling?

BRIDGET You must talk to him.

TREVOR Talk to whom?

BRIDGET Anthony.

TREVOR Anthony?

BRIDGET Our son, Trevor. We gave him a computer this Christmas and since then we've scarcely seen him. When he comes home from school he disappears into the basement. He spends all his time in front of that machine. He doesn't do his homework. He doesn't feed the budgie which is one of his duties, and he doesn't walk the dog and he completely forgets to feed it. That's his duty too. He's completely swallowed up by that devilish device.

TREVOR And so what?

BRIDGET You have to talk to him. We hardly see him at meals and we can't get him into bed until very late at night. Haven't you noticed?

TREVOR What shall I say?

BRIDGET You must bring him to his senses. Tell him there are other things in life. Bring him to understand that his life is being eaten up by that monster machine.

TREVOR Isn't that putting it rather strongly?

BRIDGET No, it isn't. I'm not exaggerating. Not at all. Get up. Follow me to the basement and look for yourself.

TREVOR Okay, okay, I'm coming.

BRIDGET Mind the step.

They descend into the basement.

TREVOR He isn't here.

BRIDGET He has to be. He went down here when he came home.
 Besides, the computer is on. – I don't like that green light.

TREVOR Anthony! Anthony! Where are you?

BRIDGET Listen. It's growling.

TREVOR Growling?

BRIDGET Yes. Growling.

TREVOR Bridget, my dear, computers don't growl. They buzz.

BRIDGET Look, Trevor, LOOK!!

TREVOR Where?

BRIDGET On the table. In front of the computer.

TREVOR Oh no. What' that?

BRIDGET Bones, Trevor. They're bones. And there's meat on them.

TREVOR Meat?

BRIDGET And blood. BLOOD, Trevor.

TREVOR It can't be true.

BRIDGET It's fresh blood, Trevor.

TREVOR We must be dreaming.

BRIDGET No, we're not, Trevor. They are real bones. Oh, the computer has swallowed him up and spat out the bones. It's horrryfyng.

TREVOR It can't be true.

BRIDGET Oh yes, it is. Look at the screen. It's winking at us. Look.

TREVOR Oh my God.

BRIDGET There are some letters coming up.

TREVOR What do they say? GAME OVER.

BRIDGET That's it. It has eaten eaten Anthony and spat out his bones. We'll never see him any more.

TREVOR It's terrible. Why didn't we come down here until it was too late?

BRIDGET Listen, Trevor. Can't you hear a creaking sound?

TREVOR Sure I can. It's like a creaking door.

 Anthony enters.

ANTHONY Hello.

TREVOR Is that you?

ANTHONY Yes. Sorry I forgot to switch off the computer while I was out.

BRIDGET But the bones? We thought that you ... well ...

ANTHONY I bought them on my way home from school. They are for
King.

BRIDGET Our dog?

ANTHONY Yes. But I forgot to buy bird seed, so I had to run to the
grocer's.

BRIDGET I see.

ANTHONY Do you want to have a try at my computer, Mum? It's
marvellous. It helps me to do the homework.

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HAVE YOU HEARD?

Characters:

Alice

Brenda

Cindy

Deborah

Eleanor

Florence

Gemma

Helen

Alice and Brenda are on the playground.

ALICE Helen steals.

BRENDA Oh Alice, you shouldn't say a thing like that.

ALICE It's true. I saw it myself. I was in the classroom. All alone. She came in, but she didn't see me. She tiptoed to Gemma's bag and opened it. She took out her pencil case and stole a yellow pencil.

BRENDA You're joking.

ALICE No, I'm not. I watched her all the time. She put back the pencil case, closed the bag and tiptoed out again with the pencil hidden in her pocket.

BRENDA What an awful thing to do.

ALICE Well, now you know. I'm off.

When Alice has gone Cinda enters.

BRENDA Hello, Cindy. Have you heard? Helen steals.

CINDY Are you kidding?

BRENDA No, I'm not. She went into the classroom when there was nobody there and she took out Gemma's pencil case from Gemma's bag. Alice saw her doing it.

CINDA I can't believe it. Do you know that Gemma keeps all her money in her pencil case?

BRENDA Well, when I heard about it I said, "It can't be true." But now ... I've thought it over and I can't believe it, but Alice saw her doing it and I trust Alice.

CINDY Do you think Helen is that sort of a person?

BRENDA I'm afraid she is. - Sorry, I have to leave you now. Hi.

(When Brenda has gone Deborah enters.)

DEBORAH Hi, Cindy.

CINDY Hi, Deborah, have you heard what Helen has done?

DEBORAH No, tell me.

CINDY She has stolen a pencil case from Gemma's bag.

DEBORAH Are you sure?

CINDY Of course I am.

DEBORAH It doesn't make sense to steal a pencil case, does it? At her age?

CINDY Gemma keeps her money in it.

DEBORAH So she stole her money?

CINDY Alice saw her doing it.

DEBORAH Really?

CINDY Yes. You have to excuse me. I'm in a hurry. See you later.

(When Cindy has gone Eleanor enters.)

DEBORAH Hi, Eleanor. Have you heard? Gemma's money was stolen this morning.

ELEANOR Her money? All of it?

DEBORAH Yes. Her bag was ransacked.

ELEANOR Gosh! Who would do a thing like that?

DEBORAH Helen did it. That's the truth. Alice saw it. What do you think?

ELEANOR I'm not surprised. I've never trusted her. She is not one of my friends.

DEBORAH I'll go and tell the others. So long.

(When Deborah has gone Florence enters.)

ELEANOR Hi, Florence. Have you heard the latest news? Helen has stolen Gemma's bag.

FLORENCE What?

ELEANOR And all her money as well.

FLORENCE You aren't serious, are you?

ELEANOR It's true. Just ask Alice. She saw it with her own eyes.

FLORENCE It's incredible. We've got a thief in our class?

ELEANOR It *is* true. If you don't believe me ask Alice. ... Oh we're in luck. Here she

comes. ... (Alice enters) ... Hi, Alice, come over here and tell Florence what you saw in the classroom.

(Gemma enters.)

FLORENCE And there is Gemma. Come on Gemma and tell us what happened this morning.

GEMMA Hello, have any of you seen Helen?

ELEANOR No.

FLORENCE No, I haven't seen her either.

ALICE I haven't seen her since the first break. Gemma, do you know that she ...

ELEANOR Hush! ... Quiet ... Helen is coming.

FLORENCE What are we going to say?

ALICE I don't know.

(Helen enters)

GEMMA Hi, Helen.

HELEN Hi, Gemma. I've been looking for you. I've got your pencil. Here you are.

GEMMA It wasn't hard to find it, was it?

HELEN Oh no. It was in your pencil case in your bag just as you told me. Thank you for lending it to me and thank you for trusting me.

GEMMA Don't mention it.

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ACTION MOSQUITO

Characters:

The narrator

The dinosaur

The brontosaurus

The ant

The mosquito

NARRATOR Once upon a time, in the old, old days, millions of years ago before man set foot on the earth, two prehistoric animals met in the forest.

DINO Hello, Bronto, how are you?

BRONTO I'm fine. How are you, Dino?

DINO I'm hungry. What about you, Bronto?

BRONTO I'm starving. I haven't had anything since breakfast.

DINO I suppose you could do with a lunch break, couldn't you?

BRONTO I sure could, Dino.

DINO I know a place where the food is good.

BRONTO Let's go and have a look at the menu.

NARRATOR So off they went, heading for their lunch in the forest canteen. Suddenly, in their path, they saw an ant. They stopped and looked at it in anger.

DINO Get out of my way!

NARRATOR The ant was an old female ant carrying a heavy straw. It was so strenuous that she didn't hear what the dinosaur said. Besides, the

head of the dinosaur was very high above her. The dinosaur shouted.

DINO GET OUT OF MY WAY, YOU FOOL!

BRONTO Don't you know we're the absolute rulers of the forest?

DINO We're bigger and stronger than anyone else in the world.

BRONTO For millions of years we've been developing and we're now known as the armoured reptiles which nobody can defeat.

DINO You haven't developed at all! Everybody can beat you.

BRONTO Look at the armoured plates around my body.

DINO Look at my sharp teeth.

BRONTO Look at my claws. They are like swords.

DINO Look at my tail. It's hard as steel.

BRONTO This is the result of our armour developing scheme. You must admit that we've succeeded.

ANT I'm so sorry.

NARRATOR The ant quickly moved away so that the enormous animals could pass by. In a tree nearby sat a mosquito. He had heard what the big reptiles said.

MOSQUITO These monsters behave as if they own the whole world. I could well do without them.

ANT So could I. I'm sick and tired of them always ordering us about.

MOSQUITO They are very particular.

ANT Yes. We always have to please them.

MOSQUITO We ought to stop doing that.

ANT Pleasing?

MOSQUITO Yes.

ANT What else can we do?

MOSQUITO Tell them not to sit on us.

ANT You try that and they'll step on you. Well, I've had my say. I'd better go back to work. Goodbye.

NARRATOR The ant took the straw and dragged it along. For a very long time she didn't see the mosquito. But as time went by she noticed that there were fewer armoured reptiles than there used to be. A year later she met the mosquito.

ANT Hello, how are you?

MOSQUITO I'm fine, how are you?

ANT Oh, life has become much easier. I haven't seen any of those big animals for the last three months.

MOSQUITO I know.

ANT How do you know?

MOSQUITO They've died out.

ANT How come? Think of all the armour they had!

MOSQUITO Well, I dipped my teeth in poison and bit them between their armoured plates. They tried to think of something they could do to prevent me, but they couldn't. You see, it's no use developing your armour and not your brains.

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Shopping

Characters:

The tourist

The shop assistant

- TOURIST Good afternoon.
- ASSISTENT You can't bring your bike in here, sir.
- TOURIST I'm a tourist.
- ASSISTENT It's not allowed for tourists either.
- TOURIST I'm very unhappy.
- ASSISTENT Unhappy?
- TOURIST I'm almost in tears.
- ASSISTENT This is a supermarket, sir.
- TOURIST I know. I have a hole.
- ASSISTENT A whole what?
- TOURIST Exactly. That's why I'm almost in tears.
- ASSISTENT Are you feeling alright, sir?
- TOURIST No. This hole of mine. It's bad.
- ASSISTENT I'm afraid we can't help you, sir. There's a doctor just round the corner. Maybe he can patch you up.
- TOURIST I'm not looking for a doctor. I want to buy something.

ASSISTENT I see. Please put your bike in the stand outside the shop and come in again.

The tourist parks his bike in the bicycle stand outside the shop and returns to the supermarket.

ASSISTENT Can I help you?

TOURIST Yes, you can. I need help. My air went out.

ASSISTENT Your air?? I'm afraid I don't understand. It doesn't make sense, sir. What do you want to buy?

TOURIST I don't know.

ASSISTENT You don't know?

TOURIST Yes, I do, but I don't know the English word.

ASSISTENT Is that it? No problem, sir, we'll find out. What colour is it?

TOURIST It's green.

ASSISTENT Is it large or small?

TOURIST Well, in my country we've got both big ones and small ones. I think a small one will do.

ASSISTENT I see. It's small and green.

TOURIST It isn't green.

ASSISTENT You said green!

TOURIST The box is green.

ASSISTENT It's in a box? Good. Something small in a green box.

TOURIST The big ones are in the box too. In my country at least, and there's a flag on it.

ASSISTENT A small one with a flag on it?

TOURIST No,, the flag is on the box.

ASSISTENT Let me put it this way, sir. What is it used for?

TOURIST I want to put the small one on my hole.

ASSISTENT You what???

TOURIST I told you. I have a hole.

ASSISTENT A hole? Where do you have this hole?

TOURIST Sorry, I don't have a hole.

ASSISTENT *(aside)* Good grief! This man is mad.

TOURIST My bike has a hole.

ASSISTENT Your bike?

TOURIST Yes. My air is gone.

ASSISTENT Oh, now I understand. You've got a puncture. A flat tyre. And now you want to mend it.

TOURIST Yes, thank you.

ASSISTENT You need a patch. Just a moment.

He goes away and returns with a small box.

ASSISTENT Here you are, sir. Repair outfit, that's what you are looking for.

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Five more sketches
– not identical with those you've just read –
may be found in
You must be joking part two.