

# 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 thekitchen.*

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*

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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.