

**MR PARTRIDGE** Oh, I had a terrible one last night. I was doing me Punch and Judy show and the crocodile kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And then it ate me. It was horrible. I shall have to stop working with that crocodile you know.

*GLADYS enters from the side door carrying a yellow envelope.*

**GLADYS** Now, everybody, Mr Fairbrother will be along directly.

**SYLVIA** (*mimicking*) Mr Fairbrother will be along directly.

*GLADYS stops to glare at SYLVIA. She knocks on the office door.*

*The lights come up on the office.*

**BARRY** I think she's got one of those letters from our founder, Joe Maplin.

**TED** How do you know?

**BARRY** I detected one of his tasteful envelopes. Yellow, with a pink candy stripe border.

*JEFFREY rises, heads towards the door and opens it.*

**JEFFREY** Good morning, everybody.

**ALL** Good morning.

**JEFFREY** Thank you. I shan't be a tick, and erm, hi-de-hi!

**ALL** Ho-de-ho!

*GLADYS and JEFFREY step back into the office.*

*PEGGY returns by the side door and quietly replenishes the sugar bowl with lumps.*

**GLADYS** (*handing over the letter*) Here's another letter from Joe Maplin for you to read to the staff.

**JEFFREY** Oh good lord, I find it so embarrassing. Can I use my own words this time? (*He opens the letter and scans it quickly*)

**GLADYS** No. It might get back to him. He likes them read out exactly as he dictates them to his secretary.

**JEFFREY** Very well.

*JEFFREY leads GLADYS to the door.*

**GLADYS** I see you've got your trousers on.

*JEFFREY stops at the door and turns, a puzzled look on his face.*

They hang beautifully.

*JEFFREY slowly leaves the office.*

*The lights go down on the office.*

*The staff all gather facing JEFFREY. GLADYS joins him at his side. PEGGY busies herself with some dusting behind the group.*

**JEFFREY** I'm going to start the meeting. I received a letter from Joe Maplin this morning. I don't know about you, but I really do enjoy reading these letters, 'cos, erm, 'cos Joe writes as he thinks, and they really are, er, sincere. (*Reading*) "Get this into your thick heads." That, that's the letter, it's not me... (*Reading*) "You got to pull your socks up about your pool fun. Last week I dropped in on the Warmsley Camp, that was Sunday afternoon and their pool fun were pathetic. No one was ducking anyone, and no one was chucking anyone in. Get this. I want plenty of ducking and chucking, and not so much loafing around. Let's have some new gimmicks. Neptunes and octopusses is old hat." He means octopi, he's got pussies, it's not right. (*Reading*) "How's this for starters. Host throws comic in. Comic grabs host by ankle and pulls him in. Punch and Judy man dives in to save them."