

The Pressure-Cooker

**Steve Barlow
& Steve Skidmore**

The Pressure-Cooker

This play was the first piece of work that Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore had published together. It was written in 1988, when the 2 Steves were both working at a school in Nottingham, UK.

The Pressure-Cooker was published as part of a collection of short plays by Oxford University Press, called NEW PLAYS 1.

The volume was edited by playwright, Peter Terson and the series of three books contained work by luminaries such as Arnold Wesker, Howard Barker, Barry Hines, David Campton and Alan Plater to name but a few.

It has been widely read and continues to be studied by German students as part of an English programme.

There are follow-up activities written by the 2 Steves to aid further work on the play if you wish to do so.

If you would like to put on a performance of the play, please do contact us by email at 2steves@the2steves.net.

Characters

Andrea
Graham
Dawn
Andrea's Mother
Ian

Most human beings are capable of absorbing a lot of mental and emotional punishment. Sadly, some aren't. When someone attempts suicide, their reasons often seem trivial to an outside observer, who will be unaware that the immediate motive for a suicide attempt may be only the tip of the iceberg that has been building up for weeks, months or even years.

We invited several students at our school to improvise a number of scenes showing the build up to such an attempt, and from their work, scripted this play. It's their work as well as ours, and if it reads and sounds convincing, it is a tribute to their commitment and imagination that it does so.

SCENE 1

[*Outside School. Enter GRAHAM and ANDREA*]

ANDREA: She'll kill me.
GRAHAM: Who will?
ANDREA: My mum.
GRAHAM: Why?
ANDREA: Don't you listen to me?
GRAHAM: Not usually.
ANDREA: Graham!
GRAHAM: Only joking. Look, so you get bad results. It doesn't mean that your mum's going to turn into Jack the Ripper and kill you.
ANDREA: You don't know my mum.
GRAHAM: (*Judge's voice*) Andrea Payne. You have been found guilty of obtaining low marks in your mock exams. I sentence you to be hung at dawn to set an example to other people who may...
ANDREA: You're just not funny.
GRAHAM: Sorry! Sorry I spoke. Sorry I breathe. Sorry I live.
ANDREA: Shut up! I can't believe I did so badly.
GRAHAM: Well, I'm rather pleased with my results.
ANDREA: How did you get on?
GRAHAM: Bottom in all of them! First time it's ever been done. A unique achievement Jonesey said.
ANDREA: You're stupid. I don't know why I bother with you.
GRAHAM: Probably because of my stunning good looks, charm, wit, intelligence, and above all, my great modesty.
ANDREA: Grow up, Graham.
GRAHAM: You're in a right mood.
ANDREA: Didn't think I'd do so badly.
GRAHAM: What does it matter?
ANDREA: A lot. What am I going to tell mum?
GRAHAM: Don't tell her.
ANDREA: She knows I get the results today. What's she going to say?
GRAHAM: I dunno. Mine won't say anything.

ANDREA: Your mum's different to mine.
GRAHAM: They're just mocks!
ANDREA: I did badly in them. How am I going to do in the real ones?
GRAHAM: Exams don't mean anything.
ANDREA: Yes, they do! I want to go to drama college. What will I do if I fail them?
GRAHAM: Do what I'm going to do – go on the dole.
ANDREA: Oh, yes, you can have a really great time on the dole.
GRAHAM: There're no jobs anyway, even if you've got exams.
ANDREA: I don't believe how stupid you are sometimes.

[Enter DAWN]

DAWN: What's wrong with you two?
GRAHAM: It's her. Worried about her results.
DAWN: They're only mocks.
ANDREA: Don't you start. I suppose you did brilliantly.
DAWN: I did OK. Anyway, I didn't revise for them.
GRAHAM: Neither did I.
DAWN: How did you do?
GRAHAM: Came bottom in all of them!
ANDREA: I did revise and I still did badly. Mum's going to murder me...
GRAHAM: Here we go again.
DAWN: You could do retakes in the sixth form.
ANDREA: I can't. Mum says she can't afford to keep me on if I fail.
GRAHAM: I thought your mum wanted you to go to university.
ANDREA: She'll pay for me to do A levels. Not retakes. She reckons it's fair because my brother did A levels and went to university.
DAWN: Mum and dad want *me* to go to university.
ANDREA: Well you're clever enough to get there.
GRAHAM: I've not decided whether it's Oxford or Cambridge for me.
DAWN: University?
GRAHAM: No. Dole office!
DAWN: Very funny.

ANDREA: You really are stupid.

GRAHAM: That's what Jonesey said. Bottom in every subject, Dawn. A unique achievement, he reckoned.

DAWN: Well done! Anyway, I thought I'd remind you about my party on Saturday.

GRAHAM: Great! I'm really looking forward to it.

ANDREA: Who's going?

DAWN: Everybody. Starts at eight o'clock. Mum and dad are going out, so it should be good. Bring a bottle.

GRAHAM: Will milk do?

DAWN: Ha, ha! You ought to be on TV. Then we could switch you off. Are you coming Andrea?

GRAHAM: Of course she is.

ANDREA: Yes. Mum says I can go.

DAWN: What are you two doing now?

GRAHAM: Nothing.

DAWN: D'you want to come round to mine and watch a film? Mum and dad are out.

ANDREA: I can't. I've got to cook tea tonight. Mum's going to a meeting.

GRAHAM: Stop worrying about your mum all the time. It's *your* life, not hers. Do what you want to do for a change.

DAWN: Puts off telling her the results.

ANDREA: That's true.

GRAHAM: Go on, live dangerously.

ANDREA: Oh, alright.

DAWN: Good.

GRAHAM: About time too. Stop worrying about everything. Enjoy life.

ANDREA: OK. Sorry. What's the film?

GRAHAM: *Zombie Zapping Vampire Flesh-Eaters? Or The Hacksaw Massacre?*

DAWN: Actually, it's *Bambi*. I thought you'd like it Graham.

GRAHAM: Ha, ha, very funny. Come on, let's go.

SCENE 2

[*Andrea's Home. MOTHER is getting ready to go out. ANDREA enters: she is surprised at seeing MOTHER still in.*]

ANDREA: Oh!

MOTHER: So you've come home. What time do you call this?

ANDREA: Sorry, Mum, I was at Dawn's watching a film.

MOTHER: Watching a film! Never mind about getting tea ready; never mind your mother's got a meeting to go to. Andrea's at Dawn's watching a film. Very nice indeed. Well thank you Andrea.

ANDREA: I said I was sorry.

MOTHER: Honestly, Andrea, it's not fair. I work all day so that you can have a decent home. I get no help from you. You do nothing in the home. Not a thing.

ANDREA: That's not true.

MOTHER: When was the last time you hoovered or dusted? God knows it's hard enough without your father. I thought you might help out a bit.

ANDREA: I do, you know I do.

MOTHER: Well. Maybe you could do a bit more. For instance, you could cook the meal when you know I've got a meeting to go to.

ANDREA: Alright, Mum, don't go on.

MOTHER: "Don't go on!" That's a fine thing to say: "Don't go on". Thank you, Andrea. Anyway, because you weren't here, I had to cook the meal. There's some meat in the oven and potatoes and carrots in the pressure-cooker.

ANDREA: You know I don't like spuds out of the pressure-cooker. They go all soggy.

MOTHER: Perhaps you should have thought of that when you were watching the film. I had to use the pressure-cooker because I'm in a rush. So you'll have to like it. And don't try to take the lid off before it stops hissing. You're lucky to get anything at all.

ANDREA: Sorry.

MOTHER: I should think so... Pass my lipstick, will you? It's on the side.

ANDREA: Here.

MOTHER: Thank you – oh yes, another thing; you were getting your results today. How did you get on?

ANDREA: [*Quietly*] OK.

MOTHER: Oh, Andrea, you've not let me down have you?

ANDREA: Did my best.

MOTHER: What do you mean, you did your best? How bad were they?

ANDREA: Bad.

MOTHER: How bad is "bad"?

ANDREA: Very bad.

MOTHER: Andrea, I give up with you. How much revision did you do?

ANDREA: Loads. You know I stayed in and worked.

MOTHER: You obviously didn't work hard enough. How did the others do? How did Dawn do? I bet she did well, didn't she? I bet she did a lot of revision.

ANDREA: Didn't do any.

MOTHER: But I bet she got good marks, didn't she? Andrea, you've got to work harder. If you don't, you'll never get to university.

ANDREA: I don't want to go to university. I want to go to drama college.

MOTHER: Don't be stupid, Andrea. We've talked about this. Just because you're in the school play you think you're going to be a great actress.

ANDREA: I want to go to drama college.

MOTHER: I'm not discussing this any more. We've decided that you're going to university.

ANDREA: *You've* decided.

MOTHER: I want you to do well for yourself. Like Ian.

ANDREA: It's always Ian, isn't it? Ian this. Ian that. Isn't Ian wonderful?

MOTHER: Don't be so cheeky.

ANDREA: You want me to be Ian.

MOTHER: No I don't. Don't be so silly.

ANDREA: I'm not Ian, I'm me. I want to do what I want to do, not what everyone else wants me to do. It's my life.

MOTHER: That's right. And I want the best for you. I want you to go to University and get a decent job and do well. I want what's best for you.

ANDREA: What's best for me is what I want to do.

MOTHER: Getting bad results?

ANDREA: I didn't mean to get bad results?

MOTHER: You didn't mean to get good ones, either. If you had, you'd have spent more time revising instead of seeing *him*.

ANDREA: Who?

MOTHER: You know who I mean. You see far too much of that boy.

ANDREA: He's got a name, mum. He's called Graham.

MOTHER: Yes, that's him. Graham. I don't know what you see in him. Honestly, I don't. How did *he* get on in the exams?

ANDREA: What's it matter, how he got on?

MOTHER: I see, as badly as you, I imagine. I've told you, Andrea, I'm not letting you stay on to do retakes.

ANDREA: Mum, I worked as hard as I could, honestly.

MOTHER: You still went out though.

ANDREA: I can't stay in all the time.

MOTHER: It wouldn't hurt! Perhaps if you had, you might have got better results. Ian never went out, and he got good results.

ANDREA: Ian again. Ian. Little favourite Ian. Goody-goody Ian. [*Mimics mother*] Oh, Ian's so clever. Andrea's so thick. My son Ian, he's at university. I love Ian so much. He's a lovely boy. Is that why Dad left? Because you loved Ian so much?

[MOTHER *slaps* ANDREA'S face. ANDREA *starts to cry*.]

MOTHER: Don't you ever talk to me like that. It was because of you that he left – not Ian. Left me to bring up both of you. And I will. And you'll get good qualifications and good jobs. I'll make sure you do. If you can't help yourself, then I'll have to do it for you. Understand? First of all, you're staying in. No more going out until the exams are over.

ANDREA: You can't make me.

MOTHER: Can't I? Just you see. For a start, you're not going to that party tomorrow.

ANDREA: You said I could!

MOTHER: Well, after tonight, I've changed my mind.

ANDREA: But I've told Graham I'm going.

MOTHER: That's another thing – no more seeing him. You've got work to do.

ANDREA: I don't care what's fair, Andrea. You're staying in, and that's that.

ANDREA: I hate you.

MOTHER: You'll thank me in the long run.

ANDREA: [*Running out and slamming the door*] No I won't. I hate you.

SCENE 3

[*Outside school. GRAHAM is propping a wall up. ANDREA enters looking sheepish. He affects not to notice her.*]

ANDREA: Hiya.

GRAHAM: Oh, hello.

ANDREA: Sorry.

GRAHAM: Sorry? What for?

ANDREA: The party.

GRAHAM: What about it?

ANDREA: Not going.

GRAHAM: Oh, you was going to go, was you?

ANDREA: Oh come off it.

GRAHAM: Off what?

ANDREA: [*With determined patience*] I'm sorry I couldn't go to the party.

GRAHAM: Couldn't?

ANDREA: That's right, couldn't. Mum wouldn't let me out.

GRAHAM: Oh, well, that's OK. We had a great time.

ANDREA: Oh yes?

GRAHAM: Yeah, really great party. Pity you *couldn't* go.

ANDREA: I couldn't!

GRAHAM: You said.

GRAHAM: You don't understand.

GRAHAM: Right.

ANDREA: I really wanted to go.

GRAHAM: So why didn't you?

ANDREA: I told you, Mum wouldn't let me.

GRAHAM: Oh? What did she do, then? Tie you to a chair? Lock you in the bathroom and swallow the key? Make you take a bath and then wash all the towels?

ANDREA: She says I'm seeing too much of you.

GRAHAM: Oh, she does?

ANDREA: She says I've got to stop going out in the evenings. Got to stay in. Study.

GRAHAM: And what do you say?

ANDREA: I've got to get my exams...

GRAHAM: So you're giving in. As usual. [*Puts on a Master of Ceremony voice*] Ladeez an' Gennulmun, we proudly present – the world's leading ventriloquist, Councillor Payne, with Andrea! [*Snooty female voice*] "Now Andrea, I want you to stop seeing Graham." [*As doll*] "Googy, Graygam."

ANDREA: Don't be like that.

GRAHAM: How d'you expect me to be?

ANDREA: WE don't have to stop seeing each other. I mean, we can still walk to school together. And back.

GRAHAM: Yeah, great relationship. Could talk a lot then, couldn't we?

ANDREA: You're not talking to me now.

GRAHAM: 'Course I'm talking to you now – what d'you think this is?

ANDREA: You know I'd've come if I could.

GRAHAM: No, it's not your mum at all. It's you. You don't want to see me anymore – but that's alright, Andrea.

ANDREA: It's not that!

GRAHAM: Yes it is. Getting dead snobby, you are. All this about going to drama college. What d'you want to go there for? Doing stupid plays with a bunch of woofers. Won't be good enough

for you then, will I? Just 'cos I'm not going to college, you think I'm nothing.

ANDREA: You know that's not what I think.

GRAHAM: It's what your mum thinks, isn't it? So it's what you think.

ANDREA: That's not true.

GRAHAM: Isn't it? You could still go out with me, couldn't you? You wouldn't have to tell your mum.

ANDREA: What if she found out though?

GRAHAM: What if she did?

ANDREA: She said, if I didn't stop seeing you, she'd stop me going to drama college.

GRAHAM: [*Sarcastic*] Oh, well, that's alright, then.

ANDREA: Look, I really love you – I've told you before.

GRAHAM: You really show it, don't you?

ANDREA: I do!

GRAHAM: Just not enough. Why don't you fight her for once?

ANDREA: I can't, I'm not that strong. She overpowers me all the time.

GRAHAM: You let her.

ANDREA: Graham...

GRAHAM: What?

ANDREA: Nothing.

[*Pause.*]

ANDREA: Good was it then? This party?

GRAHAM: Yeah, we had a great time.

ANDREA: We?

GRAHAM: Yeah, well, everybody.

ANDREA: Dance with anybody?

GRAHAM: A few.

ANDREA: Who?

GRAHAM: Just girls.

ANDREA: I guessed that. Who?

GRAHAM: Well, if you'd been there, you'd know, wouldn't you.

ANDREA: Why don't you want to tell me?

GRAHAM: Isn't that the bell?
ANDREA: Graham?
GRAHAM: [*Snapping*] Look – I went there on my own, right. You know I hate going places like that on my own.
ANDREA: She wouldn't let me out!
GRAHAM: You didn't even phone to say you weren't coming.
ANDREA: You knew when I wasn't there, I wasn't coming. You knew my mum'd kill me for my exam results.

[DAWN *comes by.*]

DAWN: Hi, Graham. Hello Andrea. Come on, you'll be late for registration.
GRAHAM: Coming.
DAWN: See you tonight, then, Graham.

[DAWN *goes.* GRAHAM *looks and sounds sheepish.*]

ANDREA: What's going on?
GRAHAM: How d'you mean?
ANDREA: Dawn. You. With Dawn. At the party. My best mate.
GRAHAM: So what if I was? Can't blame me, can you?
ANDREA: Yes, I can. You just don't care, do you?
GRAHAM: In a way, yeah.
ANDREA: In a way?
GRAHAM: I thought about you a bit.
ANDREA: A bit? Oh thanks, Graham.
GRAHAM: Yeah, a bit. On the way there, I thought, "I wonder how Andrea's doing."
ANDREA: I thought about you all night. All the time. Couldn't do my work. Couldn't do anything. Thinking about you. And there you were. You and Dawn. Brilliant mates I've got.
GRAHAM: So whose fault's that? Always somebody else's fault, isn't it? Me, your mum, Dawn. Not you, never you.
ANDREA: Don't.

GRAHAM: Try thinking about someone else for a change. [ANDREA goes] Miss I Am. Me, me, me. I love me, who do you love? Who do you love, Andrea? Who loves ya baby?

ANDREA: [From a distance] Nobody.

SCENE 4

[School. The form room. Several pupils are chatting. ANDREA is reading a magazine. DAWN and GRAHAM come in.]

GRAHAM: [Snatching magazine] Studying again?

ANDREA: Hey! That magazine's mine! Give it back!

GRAHAM: Ought to be ashamed of yourself. What would Mummy say? What's this? *Teentalk*. Very intellectual.

DAWN: Ohh, don't you know some big words.

GRAHAM: Watch it. Here look, she's only reading the problem page, isn't she?

DAWN: Oh, Andrea.

ANDREA: What's it got to do with you? It's my magazine – I can read any page I want. Give it here.

DAWN: Oh, sorry I spoke.

ANDREA: Give it back, Graham, please.

GRAHAM: hang on a minute, good for a laugh these letters are. Here's one – listen to this: "Dear Emily..."

DAWN: Emily?

GRAHAM: That's her name: "*Teentalk* helpline – having problems with boys, your work, your parents or your body? Write to me, Emily..."

DAWN: Emily!

GRAHAM: Shut up and listen. "Dear Emily, I've got a boy-friend and I really like him, but he keeps asking me to go to bed with him. I don't want to because I want to be a virgin when I get married, and anyway, it gives me a headache..."

DAWN: Stupid! You made that up.

GRAAHAM: They're all made up, aren't they? No one'd really write a letter like that to go in a magazine where everyone'd see it.

DAWN: Nobody *did* write a letter like that.

GRAHAM: Alright, I'll read one out of here – oh here's a good 'un.

ANDREA: No!

GRAHAM: "Dear Emily, I'm only thirteen, but I have very big breasts for my age. [*All the others in the room react: oohh!*] My mum's very strict and she says I can't have a bra because I'm too young, but they keep moving about under my pullover. [*Laughter and lewd comments*] The boys in our class keep looking at me, and the girls say I'm showing off. What can I do?

DAWN: I bet you made that up as well.

GRAHAM: I never – it's here, look. You're not telling me someone'd really write that in to a magazine.

DAWN: People do.

GRAHAM: Come off it.

DAWN: Some of the advice they give is really helpful.

GRAHAM: Could do better myself.

DAWN: Oh yes? Give it here then. Let's try you out.

ANDREA: Stop it. I want my magazine back.

DAWN: Just a minute. Right. "Dear Aunt Emily..."

GRAHAM: [*Auntie voice*] Yes?

DAWN: "When I was at junior school, I got worms. [*Reaction: uurgh!*] When I started secondary school, I got them again, and my mum was furious and said if I got them again, I'd have to go into hospital and have an operation. Now I have got them again, and I daren't tell my mum. I always wash my hands when I've been to the loo, so it's not my fault. Worried *Teentalk* reader."

GRAHAM; [*Auntie voice*] "Dear Worried *Teentalk* reader, the answer to your problem is very simple. After you've been to the loo, you must wash your hands *before* you bite your fingernails. [*Others laugh*]"

DAWN: Oh, very funny.

GRAHAM: Come on, then, I'll do one for you. Here we are – the Star Letter from “Desperate reader”. “Dear Aunt Emily...”

ANDREA: Graham! Stop it! Give it back! *Give it back!*

[ANDREA *struggles to get the magazine. DAWN holds her.*]

GRAHAM: Hey up, hang on to her. She's going mad. Here we go: “Dear Aunt Emily, I'm writing to you because I don't know what else to do...”

ANDREA: No! Give it to me! It's mine!

GRAHAM: Oh don't be so mardy... “I haven't got a dad, only a mum, and I can't talk to her, she's always out at meetings” Cor, real tear-jerker this, isn't it?

ANDREA: Stop it. Please. Please stop it, Graham.

GRAHAM: “Anyway, she doesn't listen. She wants me to go to university. We keep having rows about it. I want to go to drama college, but I've mucked up all my exams...” Hey, this could be you, Andrea. “On top of that, she's told me to stop seeing my boy-friend.”

DAWN: Graham, pack it in.

GRAHAM: Just a minute, nearly finished. “I really love him, but he's started going out with mu best mate...” [At last he has become aware of the silence: uncertainly] Here. What's up?

ANDREA: You pig. You filthy, rotten, dirty pig.

[ANDREA *snatches the magazine and goes.*]

GRAHAM: What's got into he?

DAWN: You can be really thick sometimes, can't you?

GRAHAM: You what?

DAWN: You even said it yourself.

GRAHAM: You mean - she did write that letter? Andrea?

DAWN: Congratulations.

GRAHAM: I never thought...

DAWN: You never do. You've really upset her now.

GRAHAM: Me? What about you? Best mate.
DAWN: You asked me out.
GRAHAM: You didn't exactly fight me off, did you?
DAWN: You shouldn't have read that letter out.
GRAHAM: How was I supposed to know?
DAWN: You shouldn't have teased her.
GRAHAM: Oh, I might've known it was all my fault!
DAWN: I wonder if she's alright.
GRAHAM: She's alright.
DAWN: I should go round and see her tonight...
GRAHAM: What about the film?
DAWN: We can go another time.
GRAHAM: Finishes tonight.
DAWN: I suppose I could go round tomorrow. Or the day after. Don't know why I should feel guilty, anyway – I didn't make her fail her rotten exams. Bet she wouldn't want to see me if I did go.
GRAHAM: See you after school then.
DAWN: Yeah, see you. Poor Andrea. The look on her face. Bit of a laugh though, wasn't it?

SCENE 5

[*Outside ANDREA'S house. DAWN rings the bell. IAN answers.*]

DAWN: Oh hello. Is Andrea in?
IAN: No.
DAWN: Oh. Um – you're Ian aren't you? Andrea's brother?
IAN: That's right. Are you a friend of Andrea's?
DAWN: Yes – at least – we had a bit of a row... she hasn't been at school for a day or two. I wondered...
IAN: Are you Dawn?
DAWN: Yes.
IAN: You'd better come in. Through here – in the kitchen. I'm just cooking supper. Don't want to leave it.

[The pressure-cooker is whistling.]

DAWN: What's that noise?

IAN: Pressure-cooker. I'm doing the spuds. The safety-valve's letting off a bit of steam. I'll turn the heat down: it'll stop in a minute.

DAWN: Make's a racket, doesn't it?

IAN: You've got to have a safety-valve on a pressure-cooker. Could blow up if you didn't.

DAWN: Will Andrea be home soon?

IAN: No.

DAWN: Well, I could come back tomorrow.

IAN: How'd she been? These last few days?

DAWN: Well...

IAN: Bit upset would you say?

DAWN: A bit, yeah.

IAN: Any idea what about?

DAWN: Well, exams. And she was worried her mum might not let her go to drama college.

IAN: And?

DAWN: We had a bit of a row, like. About a boy. I wanted to make it up.

IAN: That all?

DAWN: Well, there was this letter. In a magazine.

IAN: I found the magazine.

DAWN: We were laughing about it. At school. Didn't know it was her. She was upset. A bit.

IAN: A bit. Just a bit. Only a bit.

DAWN: Look, can I see Andrea?

IAN: Andrea's in hospital.

DAWN: What?

IAN: That's why I'm here. Mum called me at university.

DAWN: But – what? – I mean – was it an accident?

IAN: Not an accident. She swallowed mum's sleeping pills. Nearly a whole bottle. Mum was out.

DAWN: Oh my God... I never thought... Not Andrea. Why?

IAN: Don't you know?

DAWN: I can't believe it.

IAN: You can go and see her – she's all wired up like Frankenstein's monster – tubes going in, tubes coming out, in her arms, down her throat.

DAWN: I'll go and see her – or is your mum...?

IAN: Mum's at a meeting.

DAWN: At a *meeting*? Not at the hospital?

IAN: There's no point. Andrea's in a coma. Know what that means?

DAWN: 'Course I know what it means. Don't the doctors know when she'll wake up?

IAN: The doctors don't know *if* she'll wake up. They said they'd ring if anything happened.

DAWN: Oh, my God, it's my fault. Poor Andrea.

IAN: Bit late to be sorry, isn't it.

DAWN: What d'you mean?

IAN: Pity you weren't sorrier a bit earlier – you and this Graham.

DAWN: How d'you know about... how did you know who I was?

IAN: She mentioned your names. In the note.

DAWN: Note?

IAN: They always leave a note. [*Pause*] There, see, it's stopped.

DAWN: What?

IAN: The noise from the steam. That means the pressure's back to normal. Unless the safety-valve's got blocked. I've heard of that happening. Then you could be in dead trouble. You can't always tell, can you?

[*In another part of the house, the telephone starts to ring.*]