



THE DEACON POSERS

BY

NICK HIBBERD

Extract

A SMITH SCRIPT

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Synopsis

When the local Council confirm that they are shutting down their retirement home, a small number of the residents decide to raise the money to buy back the business. But how? The suggestion of becoming the next 'Full Monty' does little to raise their hopes of collecting the much needed £1 Million. An 'accidental' a cappella group is formed and with the business acumen of retired marketer, Carol Nathan, and the chorister skills of Elsie Dent, the story of the pensioners fighting to 'save their home' hits the public's imagination – but not enough.

At their first fund raising competition, Carol has a heart attack and dies but as well as £14,495 legacy that she puts in the trust of her good friend, Terry, she has entered them into Talent of Britain – not to win but for the additional publicity it will raise to promote their cause. They don't win but with the media coverage and the £12,500 bet placed by Terry with William Hills they are able to raise a substantial amount for the 'sealed bid' required to secure the future of the home.

The play is designed to hit all emotions as a comedy, a tragedy and a musical with a number of a cappella songs and melodies included to help create the moods. It is also designed to highlight the plight of the elderly and the potential impact of cutbacks having to be made by Councils, the strength and adversity of people uniting together and what they can achieve and the way that the elderly can be given a new lease of life when given a focus and a value.

Most of all, it is fun to rehearse, fun to perform and we received excellent feedback:

"Nick, we've had fantastic fun playing it and we just hope that you get the recognition you fully deserve."

"It has a little bit of everything in it and was thoroughly entertaining."

"Brilliant. Absolutely Brilliant."

"I enjoyed it that much on the first night, I immediately bought more tickets for the last performance."

"You would think it was a straight forward story but there are so many twist and turns in it."

"I can't wait for your next one."

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CAST LIST

Scheme / Floor Manager / Nurse	Can be played by a male or female aged 35+ <i>(Requires various costume changes and many props)</i>
Richard Head / TOB Announcer	Fairly young, business like character with no sense of humour
David	Role played is aged 55-90 <u>must be a good singer</u>
Terry	Role played is aged 55-90 <u>must be a good singer</u>
John	Role played is aged 55-90 <u>must be a good singer</u>
Elsie	Role played is aged 55-90 ex teacher (let herself go a little)
Carol / Judge 3	Role played is aged 55-90 ex business woman. Smart
Cleaner Mick	Male aged between 55+ <u>must be a bass singer or soprano</u>
Judge 1 / Comp Announcer	Male
3 or more Dancers	Young girls (can also be Domino, Jessica & Kimberly)
Michelle Marceu / Judge 2	Comedian / Mime – (Could also be Judge 2)
Paramedic 1 / Vicar	Male or Female (Could be Vicar but disguised)
Paramedic 2 / Mr Jenson	Male or Female (can also be Judge 4)
Janice Nathan	Aged around 55 – 60 (could also be judge or paramedic)
Mr Jenson / Judge 4 / Paramedic	Male or Female (Mature) <i>(Could also be Domino)</i>
TOB Presenter	Male as a Dermot O’Leary type
Jessica with her dog	Young Lady of between 10 and 30 (dog could be a toy dog)
Young Girl/Boy	Can be any age but the cuter the better as they would need to get votes on Talent of Britain

PROPS LIST

Zimmer Frame	Brief Case	Papers	Pen	Dominoes
Ashes Urn	Mop	Bucket	Clipboard	Tyre Lever
Envelopes/Letter Glasses	Face Mask	Plunger	Air Spray	Safety
Drill Gloves	Hammer	Bee Suit	Weld Goggles	Weld
Hot Water Bottle	Tube / Hose	Rubber Gloves	Serving Tray	Glasses
Lollipop Lady Coat	Lollipop	Postman Outfit	Wall Plaque	Betting Slip
Brief Case	Large Cheque	Stuffed Dog	Heart Monitor	Bed
Hospital Room items	Defibrillator type bag	Scrabble	Dictionary	

THESE ARE SUGGESTED IDEAS FOR A SONG LIST – COPYRIGHT HAS NOT BEEN GAINED SO ENSURE THE VENUE IS LICENSED FOR MUSIC

- 1) **Simple harmonising song** (*suggestion Only You – Flying Pickets*)
- 2) **Any harmonising Song** (*suggestion Stand By Me – Ben E King*)
- 3) **Brief Medley of songs** (*We did a Four Seasons Medley that we copied off Youtube Acappellas*)
- 4) **An Emotional Song** – (*Could be Goodnight Sweetheart by The Spaniels but change the word ‘Goodnight’ to ‘Goodbye’ – and only sing the first verse*)
- 5) **Any gospel type song** – (*Could be You’ll Never Walk Alone or Peace in the Valley*)
- 6) **Wants to be the same as 3 but stopped part way through**
- 7) **Your Emotional Song 4 (in full)** (*suggestion Goodnight Sweetheart by the Spaniels*)
- 8) **Rock and Roll Medley** (*ideally any upbeat foot tapper to close the show on. We did a Buddy Holly Medley starting off with True Love Ways, increasing the tempo to finish on Peggy Sue got married – 6 parts of song in total so leads can take a lead and their bow to first four songs and walk down to last two songs*)

YOU CAN CHANGE THE SCRIPT TO SUIT YOUR OWN SELECTION BUT YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THESE AS AN ACAPELLA FORMAT

ALL THE NAMES IN THIS PLAY ARE FICTION AND ANY RELATIONSHIP TO ANYONE LIVING IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.

ACT 1 SCENE 1 *The scene opens in the communal room of a standard retirement home. Chairs are around the edge of the room. Key Characters are a sleeping old lady (Elsie) who only wakes up when its meal time and to go to bed (where she complains of never sleeping). She is hard of hearing and has a wind problem.*

ACT 1 SCENE 2 *The scene opens in the communal room Terry, David and John walk in and pull three chairs around a table and start playing dominoes. There is no one else in the room. It is straight after lunch for continuity as timing is essential only for the dialogue. For this scene we approached a local community radio company to use some of their jingles (they then helped to promote the play on air)*

ACT 1 SCENE 3 *The scene opens in the communal room. Elsie is sat in her chair asleep. Carol has brought in a CD Player and has created a CD with some tracks and a few other Rock and Roll tracks on it. Terry, David, John and Mick reading through lyrics also printed off by Carol*

ACT 1 SCENE 4 *The scene opens in the communal room Terry, David and John walk in and pull three chairs around a table and start playing dominoes. There is no one else in the room*

ACT 1 SCENE 5 *(The scene is carried out front of tabs and is a talent competition.)*

ACT 1 SCENE 6 *Scene six opens in a darkened hospital intensive care room. Carol is lying in bed with tubes coming out of her arm, wires connected to monitors and a nurse moistening her lips. Terry enters the room with Gordon's Ashes in his arms. He sits in the chair beside the bed.*

ACT 2 SCENE 1 *The scene opens in the communal room of the retirement home. We are joining Carol's wake. There is the usual crowd plus a few extras, including some distant relatives of Carol's. The Scheme Manager is dressed as a serving waitress/waiter. She has an empty tray in her hand.*

ACT 2 SCENE 2 *The scene opens on the set / auditions of Talent of Britain (Can be front of Tabs). The Deacon Posers are on stage. On the floor in front of the stage are four judges but only seen from the back.*

ACT 2 SCENE 3 *The scene is set in the communal room. Terry, David and John enter with scrabble / dictionary*

ACT 2 SCENE 4 *The scene opens and we are back on the set of Talent of Britain (Can be front of Tabs). The Deacon Posers, A comedian, A small Girl, A magician and a woman with her dog are on stage. On the floor in front of the stage are four judges but only seen from the back.*

ACT 2 SCENE 5 *The scene opens back in the communal room of the retirement home. Everyone is sat around the domino table but this time the laptop is open in front of them*

SCENE 5 ACT 6 *The scene opens back in the communal room of the standard retirement home. There is a party going on and in attendance is Richard Head, The Scheme Manager, the group and a few others.*

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The scene opens in the communal room of a standard retirement home. Chairs are around the edge of the room, nearly all are occupied. Key Characters are a sleeping old lady (Elsie) who only wakes up when its meal time and to go to bed (where she complains of never sleeping). She is hard of hearing and possibly has a wind problem.

Scheme Manager: *(Carrying a clip board)* Morning all. Thank you for your time. This is Richard Head from the Council and he's here to carry out an annual review on all retirement homes. The Council is doing one of those surveys to see how we're doing. I'll leave you to it. I should be back in about five minutes if you need me *(Exits)*

Elsie *(to neighbour)* What did she say? Is he the new chef?

David No, he's a nobody from the Council, here to check us over?

Elsie Do I need to get undressed?

David No – *(shouting)* He's from the Council he's not a doctor

Elsie *(she looks him up and down)* Shame.... Is it lunch time yet?

John No, go back to sleep Elsie, It's nothing important.

Richard Thank you *(Sarcastically)*. May I sit down?

Terry Yes you can sit there if you want *(the group sniggers as RICHARD takes an empty seat)*. It's Sally's seat but she's got an appointment at the clinic.

Richard Nothing Serious I hope? *(trying to be chatty and friendly as he opens his briefcase on his lap)*

Terry No, she just has a touch of incontinence. That's why that seat was empty. No one wants to keep it warm - for obvious reasons..... Richard Head from the Council did you say? That's very fitting. So Dick, how can we help you?

Richard Its Richard *(reaching into his briefcase and pulling out a questionnaire)*, not Dick.
We're visiting all the council run buildings, including the retirement homes like this, to get a better understanding of how they're run and their state of repair. It's what we call a property stock check. We'll then finish it off

with a simple questionnaire from the residents, collate all the information and....

Terry

....See what you can do to cut costs and make savings.

Richard

See what we can to cut costs and.....What? No No!.... We just want to check out all our buildings so we can budget for the future works and get a feel for our clientele.

Elsie

What did he say?

David

He says he wants to feel the clientele?

Elsie

Well he's not starting with me? I'll wait until his hands warm up a bit

Richard

(Exasperated) That's not what I mean. We have set standards that we have to meet by law and we can only do this if we have a full awareness of what we've got to work with.

David

That sounds like business speak to me. Well all of the buildings have been here long enough. Most of them were built before I was born

Terry

Aye! and last decorated just after Come on Dick

Richard

Richard

Terry

.....Mr Head. *(standing and pacing)* You know and I know that the Council has been told to cut over £40 million from their budgets. So, apart from getting rid of all the good staff, most of who had the sense to get out with the first wave of redundancies, they've now been left with jumped up College Graduates or 'has beens' that didn't have the sense or time served with the Council. You know, cheap to employ and haven't a clue what they're doing – Bean Counters – no offence

Richard

None Taken

Terry

And getting rid of those businesses expenses that you like to run up. You know, the quick jaunts to Europe. To places that no one has heard of, to supposedly check out industries that have absolutely no interest in investing in our town.

We all know that the only way to get the budgets down is to make large cuts on retirement homes, focus on the running costs and then charge the residents the highest rent that you can get away with True?

Richard *(getting flustered)* No...Not at all. We at the Council take our responsibilities very seriously and looking after the elderly is one of our key targets for the future.

David Well there's no point in investing the youngsters. The clever ones go to University and never come back. As for the others, planning for the future is to get enough money to be able to go out at the weekend.

Let's face it, we're living in an aging Town Dick....

Richard Richard...

David ...and the big problem you and your diminishing Council has got is that we're all living too long. The mines just aren't there to kill us off anymore like they used to. And with no jobs for the young and no new families moving in, there's no one left to pay your council taxes. So, the stash gets smaller with more people dipping into it.

So what's it to be, Dick?

Richard Can we go back to the here and now and our assessment, please?

Terry Fire away

Richard *(reading from the form and filling it in as he goes)*. Place of residence?.... Deacon Court. Address?..... Pontelfrace Road, Barmelsy..... Number of Residents?

Terry 34 this week *(jokingly)* but there are a couple that look as though they could be on their last legs so you might want to count them out.

Oh and we had one potential new applicant who put us down as his third choice so we should be up to around thirty five in a week or two.

David What was the first choice.... A bench in the local Park and the second, one of the lockable bins at the shopping precinct?

Richard *(reading)* ...Ten residents below our full capacity of 45. Male? *(checking notes)* 14, Females, 20

DavidThat's questionable – you wouldn't want to meet some of these ladies in the dark on their way back from the bingo

Richardmales. Okay, White British?, Black British?, European?, Asian?, African?, Americas?, Christian?, Muslim?, Hindu?, Buddhist?, Spiritualists, Other? Transgender?, nilLesbian?....

Terry Sounds interesting; can I get their details through the freedom of information act? – I'll need ages and addresses?

Richard *(ignoring Terry)* I'll get these details later when the Scheme Manager comes back... So, how many are Self funding? (pause)....One.

How many on benefits?... thirty three.

Here we go. Details about the property.

That's interesting. It says here that the average number of complaints from all of our resident homes throughout the Borough is fifteen a month.

From the Deacon we get that many a week. *(reading from a pile of papers)* Squirrels in the attic, toilets backed up, lights not working, fire alarms going off, electrical faults on the heating, fences falling over, subsidence in the car park, plaster falling off, tiles slipping, gutters splitting... need I go on.

John That covers my flat. What about everyone else?

Dave Well at least it's got us noticed.

Richard Oh it's got you noticed alright...There's been that many complaints put through, last week we arranged for a professional builder to come in and carry out a full assessment based on your own issues.

John They could have worked off my list

Richard *(ignoring the comment)* Whilst they found that a few of the issues raised were, let's say, a little exaggerated, their report did give us a detailed breakdown of what it would cost to bring Deacon Court back up to the required Decent Homes Standard.

David They'd need a big abacus

Richard You're not joking. *(reading off the paper)* £733,357 and 53 pence.

Terry I can scrape up the 53 pence if it helps but it would be cheaper to knock it down and start again

John It would be cheaper just to knock it down and put us in caravans at Filey

Richard Funny you should say that.... Unfortunately the report provided such a negative overview, I regret to inform you that I have to formally notify you that the future of the building is now officially under review.

I must warn you that there is every likelihood that at the end of the current financial year, we will be looking to close the property for safety reasons - unless we can find a private investor to take it on, of course.

Terry And exactly how long is that?

Richard It is exactly eight months, twenty-three days 13 hours and (*Looking at his watch*). 36 minutes

David And in Eight months, twenty three days, 13 hours and (*looking at his watch*)... 36 minutes, if you don't find a private investor, what happens to us?

Richard Do you have a caravan on the coast? No I thought not.

Well, you can apply for residency at one of our other retirement homes, but you'll need to be quick there is a 14-month, seven day and (*looking at his watch again*) 11 hour waiting list.

Terry But if there's a 14-month, seven day and (*looking at his watch again*) 11 hour waiting list, how come we're under capacity?

RICHARD Have you seen the complaints about this place? – who in their right mind would want to live here?

David Good point! And has anyone expressed an interest in buying it?

Richard (*Looking for a paper in his brief case*) Oh yes! It's not all total doom and gloom. The Company that carried out the assessment for us has made a formal offer for the building and the land - at (*pretending to read*) £650,000.

Terry And do they plan to refurbish it and run it as a private retirement home?

Richard Don't be daft. We..... *(Coughs)* They want to flatten it and build private affordable homes here. There's a good buyer's scheme running with the Government at the moment – they'll make a killing.

Terry And who's the Company

Richard Head 2 Head Building Services of Barmersly. You might have heard of them?

It's my Uncle's and his twin Brother's business

John And his twin brother is?

Richard My Dad – Richard Head Senior

David So, there's a senior Dick Head after our home and a Junior Dick Head here to tell us the good news. We should have known.

John So, just out of interest, what's your uncle called ...Beachy?.... Beachy Head!!!

Richard No, Its Gavin, Gavin Head.

Terry *(Stifling his laughter)* Giving Head and Dick Head. It must have been one hell of a christening I'm glad you gave us the heads up on that one.

David I wonder if their favourite group's Motorhead

John No, they'll probably like some other 'headliner'

Terry Sorry we got a bit 'ahead' of ourselves a little there

Carol *(glaring at Terry)* And what if we don't want to be moved out. Is there an appeals process we can go through to try and save our apartments?

David Yes... A sort of a 'Head Honcho'

Richard Of course. If you contact the Council they will send you the relevant documents, or you can download them off the internet. But a piece of advice, I wouldn't bother. We need to make cut backs and your home is just a small part of it.

So, if you'll excuse me, I've got two primary schools, a creche and a possibly a couple of regional libraries to close. *(he stands and turns his back to the audience to pack his brief case to reveal a big wet patch on the back of his trousers where he's been sat on the incontinence chair).*

Oh I love my job

Dave Dick Head!

Richard Yes!

Dave That was an expletive.

Richard Good day Gentlemen.....Ladies (he exits)

Elsie *(waking up)*. Oh, has he gone? What a lovely man and his hands were so warm and professional. What was his name?

Dave Dick

Elsie *(dreamily)* Such a romantic name. My late husband was a Dick....I hope he comes back soon *(she goes back to sleep)*

Scheme Manager: *(carrying a large jar of Vaseline)* Well that was short and sweet. Did he have anything interesting to say? Sorry, I've got another call to deal with.

Mrs Russell in flat six has got the vacuum stuck again. I should be back in about five minutes if you need me *(She Exits)*.

Carol Well you all handled that well..... Not!

I don't know about you but I actually like living here and I thought I'd see my days out in my little flat.

So do you three musketeers have any ideas?

No, I thought not.

Terry He's just trying to scare us. They know that the press would be all over them like a rash if they tried to kick pensioners out onto the street.

David Well, they shut down the disabled factory without a second thought. That only made page five in the Chronicle.

John And what about the special needs school? They shipped them all off to Rotherham

David Then there's the kids homes, the drop-in centres, the

Terry Keep going David, you're doing a great job

Carol So come on then. What are we going to do?

Terry We'll fight them

Carol How?

Terry I don't know yet but we'll worry about it when they officially notify us. You know how the Council works. They've got to give us written notice and I doubt we'll hear anything for months.

SM *(entering with a handful of envelopes)* Post's here *(The scheme manager distributes letters to each of the residents)*. Here you go Carol, Terry, David, John, Elsie *(shouting)*.

Elsie – Post!

I'll just take these to the other flats. I'll be back in five minutes if you need me *(she exits)*...

Carol *(Opens letter and reads)* So....Is now the right time to worry?

Dear Carol Nathan.

Blah blah blah..... After careful deliberation we regret to inform you that the Council is reviewing their property portfolio. To this effect, please accept this letter as formal notification that the council is now entering a consultation period with appropriate investors that could inevitably result in the closure of Deacon Court at the end of the current financial year.

We apologise in advance for any inconvenience this may cause.

Signed Richard Head, Assistant Property Manager

PS Barmelsy Council – A brighter future for all!

futures?
Well that's a laugh – A brighter future for all. What about our bloody

Terry Don't worry, something will turn up.... If not, we'll all club together and buy it ourselves.

How much did they say?

David £650,000 for the building and land

Terry So that's just over £18,500 each. I'm only a few thousand short

David You might be. All I've got is my funeral policy and the only way to get that is when I'm pushing up the daisies.....

John Don't tempt us.....

David So just out of curiosity, how many thousand are you short?

Terry Eighteen thousand, four hundred and seventy-five pound short – but it's a start.

John Great, just another £649,475 to go then.

We'll have to do some fund raising.

Terry How?

John We could do what they did on that film they put on the other night.

Terry What? Carry out a major bank heist, drive minis through the streets of Rome and escape back here to sunny Barmelsy?

John No, not that film, the other one - You know, the one based in Sheffield where they were all on the dole and wanted to raise some money.....
(thoughtful)

Oh, what was it? *(thoughtful)*The Full Monty!

All *(exasperated)* The Full Monty!

John We wouldn't have to go all the way....just down to our Y fronts.

Carol John. If I want to see your Y fronts I just have to go into the laundrette.

How do you manage to get them the same mucky grey like that?

John I don't know, they've been that colour for at least the last ten years – but I'll buy some new ones for the show.

Carol That would explain it.

Sorry John but I don't think that's going to resolve our problems. Even as a comedy, I don't think you'd sell enough tickets to fill the dining room at Deacon Court, let alone the Lyceum Theatre (*local theatre*).

John Well, do you have a better idea?

Elsie (*suddenly jumps up*)Lunch (*immediately followed by the sound of the dinner bell*)

Terry How does she do that?

David Ex School teacher. She's spent her life working to the bell. She's like Pavlov's Dogs. As soon as that bell is due to sound she starts salivating.

Terry (*he puts his arm around Carole as they walk out*) Don't worry, something will crop up....it always does

All exit and the scene closes – END OF ACT 1 SCENE 1 (the curtain can stay open as it's just a short passage of time when they go for lunch (sound effect could be dining room sounds)