

The following rules are displayed to the audience for the duration of the scene:

Rule 1: Matthew must sit and eat to tell a lie

Rule 2: Adam must affect an accent and name-call to mock

Rule 3: Edith must clean and self-medicate to keep calm

ADAM. I'm good, Dad...

FRANCIS tries to engage ADAM in conversation about his cricket practice, but the only words he is able to articulate are 'bat', 'ball' and 'line'.

ADAM. Things are looking good at the firm. We... what's that? Is that... ball? Is that cricket? Mum, I don't...?

EDITH (translating). What's that, Francis? Oh yes, yes – line and length.

ADAM. Line and length? Yeah... 'line and length' I remember you telling me. Dad was always full of advice about the cricket. That didn't work out so well for me though, did it?

FRANCIS becomes confused.

ADAM. I don't play cricket any more. I haven't played for years. I'm a solicitor now. You know that...

FRANCIS becomes frustrated.

EDITH. Francis, Matthew has some wonderful news. Matthew, tell Dad your big news. Matthew?

MATTHEW. I... I've been offered partnership by the firm.

EDITH. Isn't that fantastic? Astonishing.

FRANCIS tries to speak – he wants to talk about MATTHEW's performance as the Major General, but the only word he is able to articulate is 'Major'.

MATTHEW. What's that, Dad...? I can't...

EDITH (translating). Major...? Oh yes, Major General.

MATTHEW. Major General...?

EDITH. He was wonderful in the Pirates of Penzance, wasn't he? Do a bit for your dad. Go on.

MATTHEW. No, I don't sing any more. I gave that up a long time ago.

FRANCIS becomes confused and upset.

Matthew, Adam, Edith & Francis (pg 68-70)

MATTHEW. I'm a solicitor now, Dad.

FRANCIS becomes frustrated and angry.

EDITH. It's all right, darling. I know, it's confusing.

ADAM. Mum, what's happening?

EDITH takes a good gulp of pain medication.

EDITH (cleaning). Sometimes he gets confused and I find that if you correct him, it's all the more upsetting. Apparently it's fairly common after a setback of this kind.

ADAM. What kind? What exactly did the doctor say? What were his exact words?

EDITH (cleaning). He said it's called a 'delayed... stroke'.

ADAM. What!

MATTHEW. A stroke!

EDITH (sipping medicine, cleaning). A minor stroke, a very minor, very common side affect of cardiac surgery and most people fully recover.

ADAM. How could you not tell us about this?

EDITH. I didn't want to worry you over nothing. *(To FRANCIS, cleaning him.)* Darling, I'm sorry, talking about you as if you're not there – how rude of us.

ADAM. We need to talk to a doctor

EDITH (cleaning, sipping medicine). It's Christmas, there are no doctors to talk to. And it won't do any good to cause a scene. He's on some very strong pain medication, and for now, he remembers what he remembers.

ADAM. Which is what?

EDITH. Well, clearly he still thinks that his youngest son acts and you still...

ADAM. Play cricket.

EDITH (cleaning). Yes. And I'd be very grateful if you would please...

MATTHEW. Play along.

EDITH (cleaning). It's only temporary.

ADAM. But, Mum, this is

EDITH (cleaning, sipping medication). Darling, it's Christmas.