

The Shop
By Harvey D'Souza

Scene 1.

(Couple sit impatiently in room. The man wears a sling, the woman looks pregnant. There is a huge pile of clothes in the room.)

Wife: Oh darling, we have waited so long for this day! Nine months, and finally the day has arrived. Are you sure the delivery date is today?

Husband: Of course. They said it was today.

Wife: Well, it's quite late and I'm getting worried about this delivery...
(The door bell rings)

Husband *(rushing to the door)*: That must be them! I'll get it.

Two men are at the door carrying a heavy box.

Man 1: Delivery from Argos. Please sign here.

Husband: *(to wife)* I was right. It's the delivery men. *(To delivery men)* Can you put it in the kitchen, please?

Man 2: I'm sorry, sir, but we are not allowed to carry the box.

Husband: What! My wife is pregnant and I have a broken arm.

Man 2 *(cheerfully, but making no move to carry the box)*: Health and safety regulations, sir. Sorry about that. Can you sign here, please?

Wife: That looks like a very big washing machine.

Man 1 and Man 2 exchange glances.

Man 1 & Man 2 *(quickly)*: Can you sign here, please.

Husband *(signing)*: Okay...It says 'received sofa.' Sofa? We ordered a washing machine.

Man 2: Oh, we don't know anything about that. We are only the delivery men.

Wife: But that's not what we ordered.

Husband: Please take this back.

Man 1: I'm sorry, sir, but we cannot. We only deliver the goods.

Man 2: You have to call up the company and sort it out with customer services.

Wife: Wait a minute. You can't do that..

Man 1: Bye now, we have to go. Call up customer services, sir.

The delivery men leave the house.

Husband (*looking nervously at wife*): Hmmmm...

Wife (*glaring at husband*): Well?

Husband: I guess I better call up customer services.

Wife: Yes, you'd better.

Husband (*opening the Yellow pages and dialling*): Right. Argos Customer Services. 08002001040.

Husband (*telling wife*): It's ringing. Oh, damn, it's the answering service.

Scene 2.

(The spotlight now comes on in another section of the stage. This is the call centre for Argos. Operators move around this section, laughing, joking, playing cards. Phones ring all the time but are ignored by the staff. One operator is listening to an iPod. A female operator is doing her makeup, polishing her nails etc.)

Operators (*speaking together*): Argos Customer Services. All lines are busy. Please call after 12 midnight. Please hang up now.

Spotlight comes back on couple.

Husband (*sighing*): All lines are busy, they say call later.

Wife (*looking at Yellow Pages*): Try this number. 0871200100

Husband (*dialling*): It's ringing. Damn, it's the answering service again.

Operators (*speaking together*): Argos Complaints Department, premium rates apply. One pound a minute. All calls are recorded to improve customer service.

Operator 1: Please choose from the following 200 options.

Operator 2: Press 1 to be transferred to Sales and Marketing.

Operator 3: Press 2 for expensive offers and pathetic discounts.

Operator 4: Press 3 to talk to a call centre operator who speaks Punjabi.

Operator 1: Press 4 if you are bored, fed up or losing patience.

Operator 2: Press 5 for counselling.

Operator 3: Press 6 to listen to Lady Gaga while you wait for option 2.

Spotlight switches to couple.

Husband: This is going to take forever.

Wife: Oh no...

Finally, spotlights on both sections of stage.

Operator 2 (*finally*): Argos Complaints Department, Hannibal speaking. How can I help?

Husband: We ordered a washing machine but got a sofa instead.

Operator 2: Right sir, I need to first confirm some details for your security. Your name and postcode, please?

Husband: Mr Lee Wing, my post code is TF1 2FT.

Operator 2: The date of your wedding anniversary?

Husband (*scratching his head*): Wedding anniversary? Well, er... Sorry, I don't know that, I'm afraid.

Operator 2: Not many men can answer that. How about the name of your cat?

Husband: We don't have a cat.

Operator 2: The maiden name of your wife?

Husband: Wong.

Operator 2: Thank you, sir. Now, what's wong with the sofa? Don't you like the colour?

Husband: I said I did not order a sofa. I paid for a washing machine.

Operator 2: It says here you ordered a sofa.

Husband: I ordered a washing machine nine months ago. The catalogue number is LQJ2133.

Operator 2: Hold on a minute, sir. Let me bring up your details on the computer. (*Operator 2 goes to make himself a coffee, and comes back leisurely*)

Operator 2: Right sir. That product was discontinued six months ago. But we have some very good offers on sofas.

Husband: Look, I just want to return this sofa and get my money back.

Operator 2: Very well sir, I will have to transfer you to my colleague in the Returns Department, who will solve your problem.

Husband (*patiently*): All right.

Operator 3 (*comes very leisurely to the phone*): Argos Returns, Rambo speaking. Your name, postcode and date of marriage, sir.

Husband: My name is Lee Wing, my postcode is TF1 2FT, I can't remember my wedding anniversary, I don't have a cat and my wife's maiden name is Wong.

Operator 3: Thank you sir. I have your details. It says here you ordered a sofa.

Wife (*grabs the phone from husband and shouts*): Look, we've been trying to explain to your colleague for the last one hour that we didn't order a sofa. We already have one in our house and we have no place for another. We ordered a washing machine but got a sofa instead. Now we want to return this sofa.

Operator 3: Very well, madam. You will have to post it to us in the same wrapping. Once we receive the item we will reimburse you, after deducting our delivery charges.

Wife (*still shouting, very upset*): And what about MY postage charges?

Operator 3: I'm sorry, madam, but for that you will have to call Argos Customer Services and press Option 188 for the Postage and Delivery Department.

Wife (*angrily*): Well, can't you transfer me to that department?

Operator 3: One minute, I will try. (*Gets up, goes to make a drink and comes leisurely back to the phone*). Sorry, madam. That line is busy. You will have to call them directly. Is there anything else I can do for you?

Wife (*beaten, exhausted*): Well, no.. Look, can you please give a washing machine and take this sofa back now?

Operator 3 (*pleasantly*): Have a nice day, madam.

Scene 3.

(At the bus stop. Husband and wife are sitting on the sofa, waiting for a bus.)

Wife: Are you sure bus number 44 goes directly to Argos?

Husband: Well, no. It stops a mile away from the Argos shop; we have to walk the rest of the journey.

(Pause. Wife and husband sit very sadly on the sofa, not saying a word. Just then they see their neighbours Mr and Mrs Lesniewska come to the bus stop carrying a huge, but smaller box.)

Wife (to husband): Hey, those are our neighbours, Mr & Mrs Lesniewska.

Mr L: Hello, what are you doing here with that big box?

Wife: Well, we are off to Argos.

Husband: We ordered a washing machine but they delivered a sofa to us instead.

Wife: So now we are going to return it.

Husband: And what are you doing with that big box?

(Mr and Mrs L look at each other.)

Mr & Mrs L: We are off to Argos, too.

Mr L: We ordered a sofa but got a washing machine instead.

Mrs L: So now we are going to return it.

(Mr and Mrs Wing look at each other.)

(Everyone speaks at the same time, excitedly.)

Mr Wing: Hey, so that's it!

Mrs Wing: Now I see!

Mr L: What a blunder!

Mrs L: They got it all mixed up!

Mr & Mrs Wing: We got your sofa!

Mr & Mrs L: And we got your washing machine!

Mr & Mrs Wing: So let's exchange. You take your sofa.

Mr & Mrs L: And you take your washing machine.

All: Right! Okey-dokey! Brilliant idea! Great!

(They exchange boxes and start to go home.)

All: Bye now.

Mr & Mrs L: Nice washing machine.

Mr & Mrs Wing: Lovely sofa.

(All laugh and go home.)

www.englishwithharvey.com