

MATTHEW. Mum, all games have arbitrary rules. That's literally what a game is. Get the ball in the hole, but don't let it off the field. Go down the snakes and up ladders.

EDITH. Then what's the point?

MATTHEW. The point is to have fun, Mum.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). That's right, Billy the Bed-wetter. Isn't everybody having fun?

MATTHEW. Is everybody ready? Let the Bedlam Begin!

*CARRIE lays a card, then SHEENA, then ADAM, then MATTHEW/FRANCIS and then EDITH. CARRIE lays another card.*

EDITH. Carrie, you're being rather quiet.

*SHEENA lays a card, then ADAM, then MATTHEW/FRANCIS over the next few lines.*

CARRIE. Oh, well, I don't want to overdo it and embarrass Matthew.

MATTHEW. Hey...

EDITH. Matthew embarrasses very easily. He's what I call 'exasperatingly oversensitive'.

*Rule 1 becomes live; it will remain live until MATTHEW gets a compliment.*

MATTHEW. Mum? Don't say that... (*Sitting, eating.*) It's not true.

EDITH. Just ignore him. You're an actress, if you can't entertain everybody then what good are you?

*Rule 2 becomes live: it will remain live until CARRIE gets a laugh.*

*(Laying a yellow five.)* Oh look, I can play: a yellow five.

CARRIE. Oh, oh... (*Standing, dancing around, singing.*) Five gold rings! Four colly birds, three French hens, two turtledoves and a partridge in a pear tree!

MATTHEW (*sitting and eating*). I'm not exasperatingly oversensitive. Am I?

*Having failed to get a laugh, CARRIE must tell another joke.*

CARRIE (*standing, dancing around*). Oh, I know a rude version! On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me, a hand-job in a pear tree!

MATTHEW. I've no idea why you'd say that about me.

*SHEENA wordlessly gives EDITH a penalty card from the pack.*

EDITH. Thank you, Carrie, please sit down, it's your turn.

CARRIE. On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me, two bulging balls and a –

*MATTHEW restrains CARRIE by sitting on her lap, he fakes a laugh.*

MATTHEW (*sitting, eating, forcing a laugh*). Ha ha! That's hilarious.

*Having got a laugh, Rule 2 is no longer live.*

CARRIE. Why thank you, baby. I'll be here all night.

EDITH. Matthew, don't speak with your mouth full.

CARRIE. You're hilarious. And I love you.

*Having got a compliment, Rule 1 is no longer live.*

MATTHEW (*standing*). Thanks. Thank you. Sorry, Mum. Carrie, it's your turn.

CARRIE (*laying her penultimate card*). Oh sorry, here. Sheena?

*SHEENA is about to lay a card when FRANCIS tries to lay a card instead.*

MATTHEW (*remaining standing*). Actually, Dad, it's not our turn yet.

*FRANCIS insists on playing the card.*

We're going round the circle and it's Sheena's turn.

Start



EDITH (*cleaning*). Why don't we skip Sheena's turn. / I go after Francis.

SHEENA (*drinking, interrupting*). No, hang on, I'm not missing a turn, that's not fair.

FRANCIS *tries to speak – he wants to insist that he hasn't made a mistake, the only word he can say is 'No'*.

EDITH. I know it's confusing, isn't it? I've no idea what's going on.

FRANCIS *repeats the word 'No'*.

No, I'm sorry, I didn't mean *you're* confused, I mean *it's* confusing.

ADAM (*attempting to calm FRANCIS*). Hey, hey, Dad, it's all right. Listen, Carrie, did you know you were sitting across from the 'Crime Silk of the Year' three years running?

CARRIE. I've no idea what that means, but it sounds good.

ADAM. It's the best. Dad was the very best.

FRANCIS *brightens*.

This is the man that UK Chambers called – (*Affecting accent.*) The Phenomenon.

CARRIE. Very impressive.

ADAM. Our grandfather was a solicitor, but that wasn't good enough for Dad. He was determined to be a barrister, and not only that, a judge.

FRANCIS *gestures to his sons with his good hand*.

EDITH (*translating*). Yes, our boys will make fantastic solicitors one day.

FRANCIS *repeats the word 'No'*.

No, no that's right... barristers. Not solicitors, barristers.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). Judge Dredd over here thinks solicitors are *second class*.

CARRIE. But you're both soli-

MATTHEW *shushes* CARRIE.

EDITH. Whose turn is it please? We skipped Sheena, Francis played, so... it's my turn.

EDITH *lays a card, followed by* CARRIE.

CARRIE (*playing her final card*). Oh, oh, that's my last card, I win! / Do I win?

SHEENA (*drinking, interrupting*). No, no! Third person! Third person! Pick up a card, Carrie!

CARRIE. Oh what, no...!

CARRIE *picks up a penalty card from the deck*.

ADAM (*affecting an accent*). I've figured out something about this game, chaps: I think it might be impossible to win.

MATTHEW. That's loser talk if ever I heard it.

SHEENA. Exactly. Exactly. Thank you. Loser!

ADAM (*awarding SHEENA a penalty card from the deck*).

Adam says you're not speaking in the third person.

CARRIE. Carrie's wondering, is that a six or a nine?

EDITH. Carrie asked a question: curiosity penalty.

ADAM (*awarding EDITH a penalty card from his own hand*).

Adam says you're not talking in the third person.

SHEENA (*drinking, interrupting*). No, no, did you just try and palm one off from your own hand?

ADAM (*serving SHEENA another penalty card from his own hand*). Liquid infraction.

SHEENA (*returning the card to ADAM*). That's cheating; take it back.

ADAM. Why's that cheating?

SHEENA (*serving him a penalty card from the deck*). Curiosity penalty.

ADAM. Why's that cheating?

SHEENA (*serving him another penalty card from the deck*). Curiosity penalty.

Stop

