

BILLY LIAR

by Keith Waterhouse

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BILLY FISHER lives in an industrial town in the North of England in a fantasy world of his own invention. This causes confusion and exasperation for his parents, his employers, Shadrack and Duxbury Funeral Furnishers, his best friend and the three girls who all think they are engaged to him. As his stories seem to close in on him, BILLY sees no option but to escape with yet more lies.

BILLY: The Fisher residence. Can I help you? (His manner changes.) Oh, hullo, Mr Duxbury. No, well, I'm sorry but I've had an accident. I was just leaving for work and I spilt this hot water down my arm. I had to get it bandaged... Oh, well, I think there's a very simple explanation for that, Mr Duxbury. You see, there's a lot of those figures that haven't been carried forward... I use my own individual system... No. No, not me, Mr Duxbury. Well, I'm sure you'll find that there's a very simple explanation... What? Monday morning? Yes, of course I'll be there. Prompt. Thank you, Mr Duxbury. Thank you for ringing. Good-bye, then

(BILLY puts down the telephone for a moment and is lost in depression. He brightens as, in his imagination, he addresses his employer)

Well, look Duxbury - we're not going to argue over trivialities. As soon as I've finalized my arrangements with Mr Boon I'll get in touch with you.

(He picks up the telephone.)

Hello, Duxbury?... I'm afraid the answer is 'no'. I fully agree that a partnership sounds very attractive - but frankly my interests lie in other directions. I'm quite willing to invest in your business, but I just have not the time to take over the administrative side... Granted! I take your point, Mr Duxbury. What's that little saying of yours? 'You've got to come down to earth.' It's not a question of coming down to earth, old man. Some of us belong in the stars. The

best of luck, Mr Duxbury, and keep writing...

(BILLY breaks off as Barbara approaches down the stairs and, for her benefit, he goes into another fantasy as she passes him and enters the living-room.)

Well, doctor, if the leg's got to come off— it's got to come off

(BILLY replaces the telephone and looks speculatively at the living-room door)

It's not a question of coming down to earth, Mr Duxbury.

(He pauses.)

Some of us, Mr Duxbury, belong in the stars.