

LEEDS LS80

by

Jonny Magnanti & Jason Quinn

©Jason Quinn & Jonny Magnanti 2008

[jason.q@terra.es](mailto:jason.q@terra.es)

## PROLOGUE: SUMMER 1980

"Kiss my arse copper! Yer'll never tek me alive!"

"Shut yer mouth, Dick'ead. Let's see how 'ard yer are after a night in the cells."

Shoved in a cell. Fallin' over me own feet. Two beefy coppers laughin' as they slam the door. Tchhh! Fightin' again. Not my fault. Never is. It was that Barry fuckin' Eccles.

He's the one they should've locked up. Him. Not me.

Leeds, 1980. Grim. Too long spent living in it's industrial past. The Town Hall, a proud building, symbolic of it's rich history now stands dark , caked in a century of city grime.

Black and foreboding. In need of a good clean. God, you could say that about everything. Including this cell. Damp, austere, chilly. Just like my mood...

It all started in the pub. A quiet pint of Tets. Me tellin' the lads me plans. How I was gonna be an actor, be rich, be famous. Barry Eccles couldn't keep his big gob shut. Started laughin'. Takin' the piss.

"Only puffs do actin', Dunno. Yer gonna tek it up the shitter then?" he sez.

"Am not 'avin' that," I sez.

I chinned the fucker. Next thing you know it's all kickin' off. Just like in those old Westerns. Everyone scrappin' an' chairs an' glasses flyin' all over the shop. Didn't take long for the coppers to show and here I am. End of story. Reapin' me just desserts, as Mam would say.

They leave me here for a couple of hours. The usual drill. I look at the graffiti on the wall. "DUNNO IS ROCK, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1977," scrawled in red biro. Fuck, that was my first time in here. Nearly three years ago.

The cell door opens. It's Abigail, me case worker. She don't look too chuffed to see me.

"Okay, Dunno," she sez, tossin' me a pamphlet. "Here are the details for the Drama courses at Royal Park College and this is the enrolment date. This is also goodbye."

"Eh?! What yeron about? Yer me case worker. Yer s'posed ter look after me."

"I'm sick of it Dunno." She stares at me and sighs. Then she goes on. "More to the point, I'm bored of it and I can't be bothered helping someone who hasn't got the sense to help himself. You can lead a horse to water and all that..."

"But Abigail, Barry Eccles said acting woh fer puffs, an' a te..."

"Who gives a fuck what Barry Eccles says, Dunno?" She had a right mad on. I could tell coz shi never swears. Also, she woh prattlin' on about 'osses which woh going well over mi head. "This is what I'm sick of." She starts jabbin' the air with her finger. " All this macho posturing and over-sensitivity about who says this and who does that. You've got a massive chip on your shoulder and it's not my responsibility. You can't just go around thumping people who say things you don't like. It's not on."

"Burrit's the law o' the jungle!"

"You're not in the jungle, Dunno. You're in fucking Leeds. I'll represent you at juvenile court on Monday and tell them you're going to enrol at Further Education College to study Drama. That you hope to train to become an actor. Let's hope the magistrate deems that a worthy enough cause to keep your sorry arse out of Borstal. If you don't agree, then I'm going to cast you adrift and you can do what you bloody well like...Is that understood?"

"Yer beauuuuutiful when yer angry, Abigail."

"And you are one big pain in the arse...Are you ever going to grow up Dunno?"

"Yes love, I am. I promise..."

## A NEW LIFE!

Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1980

"Mam, am moving out."

"Thank fuck fer that. A thought t' day would never come!"

"Can a go an' live above the shop?"

"I knew it. I fuckin' knew it! Thez always a catch wi' you in't the', yer little twat?"

"Aww come on, Mam...A'm startin' college next week an' a need ter live somewhere away from here, where no-one knows me. A'm allus gettin' inter trouble an' a've run out o' chances."

"In my day yer dint get no chances...Yer got yer arse kicked an that woh that."

"Aye, alright, Mam. Look a'll tart the place up an' give it a lick o' paint... C'mon Ma, it's lyin' there empty...A'll be able ter help yer out when yer busy... An' wi' someone in there, there'll be less chance of it gerrin robbed. What d'yer say?" She thinks about this fer a bit, mekkin' mi sweat.

"Alright....but first sign o' trouble an' yer out".

"Thanks Mam...A love ya!"

"Yeh, yeh. Get off wi' yer yer sobby get."

My own place. A new beginning. A new life.

I'm gettin' ahead of mesen a bit I think. See, me Mam's got this fruit an' veg shop in Beeston. A real old fashioned traditional corner shop nestled in amongst row upon row of two-up, two-down terraced houses. It had three big rooms above it, but I don't think Mam ever thought about livin' in it. She just used it as a place to bung all her empty fruit an' veg boxes.

Determined to make a go of me new life, and to fight off the nerves of the impending start date, I threw mesen into makin' the place as homely as possible. First off, I got rid of all the boxes an' clutter, an' that an' then I cadged some paint off our Wayne. He's got an apprenticeship with a firm of painters an' decorators. Well, I say cadged, it'd be more accurate to say I waited til he got back from the pub well pissed up, and when he were dead t' t world, nicked his keys and helped mesen from the back of his firm's van. I know it's not on, but they've got tons of paint. They won't miss it.

Abigail came round to see how I was gettin' on and she were dead chuffed at the progress I'd made.

"Oooh, well done, Dunno! You've got the place looking lovely."

"Thanks, Pet."

"Well? You all set then?"

"Am a bit nervous ter be honest wi' yer....What if ther all silly posh cunts, or summat?"

Abigail winced. One of them toothache winces. She's a right nice lass an' all that, but she must have 'ad a bit of a sheltered upbringing, coz she hates bad language. Yet here

she is like loadsa other posh educated birds, stickin' her neb into what she calls the 'deprived ' an the 'underprivileged', helpin' to keep us all on the straight an' narra. It's a bit sad really. She could've been quite fit if she med an effort, but these social worker types are all the same; lank hair an' glasses, long skirts an' baggy jumpers, sandals, even in winter when it would be sandals an' thick socks, all lookin' like they need a really good bath. I bet she's got a right hairy muff an' all. Thanks, but no thanks.

"Well you're finally making all the right decisions, Dunno. Halleluia! I think this course will be the making of you. Remember. Don't get intimidated. Everybody will be nervous. It's natural. It's how you react that's important. Keep calm. No more hit first, ask questions later."

"Alright love, fuckin' 'ell! Am not that bad."

"No, you're not, that's the trouble. Underneath all that bluster and bravado there's a really nice lad desperate to get out."

"If yer say so Abigail."

As she were turnin' to go, she took summat out of her bag. It was wrapped up in a WH Smiths paper bag.

"This is for you, Dunno."

"Ace. A love presents."

I opened it an' tried to look pleased instead of dropped on. It was a big thick desk diary. For fuck's sake. What's she think I'm gonna do with this?

"Thanks, Abigail," a said, forcin' a smile.

"I want you to write all your thoughts in it, Dunno. You're about to embark on the adventure of your life. Write it all down. You never know, it might help keep you out of mischief."

"Aright." She must be jokin'.

"Promise?"

"Aye. Okay then." Owt for a quiet life.

She stands up on tip-toes and gives me a kiss on the cheek. Then she waves an' goes. I'm blushing. Fuck knows why. Still, it was quite nice though. Nicer than I thought it would be. After she was gone I got to thinking about what she'd been on about. I suppose she had a point really. You see ever since I first saw Marlon Brando in *On The Waterfront*, I'd been wantin' to have a go. It was other people who put me off. They were all quick to point out how actin's not a proper job, an' how people like us don't do stuff like that. Abigail was the first person to tell me that way of thinkin' woh rubbish an' that we can do owt we want, within reason. Peter O'Toole might sound posh but it was all put on. He cem from round the corner. Richard Burton...posh? Once again, he might talk like a cunt but he was about as posh as my bell end. Aye, maybe Abigail's right. If they can do it, why not me? I'm gonna change me whole life round, starting right now.

I picked up the diary. Started writing. It's weird gettin' a wrist ache when it's not from wankin'. Weird, but sort of satisfyin' too.

## FIRST DAY

Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1980

I were like a little kid on his first day at school today when I climbed the steps of Royal Park College of Further Education. Through the swingin' doors, the first thing I saw were a group of layabouts loungin' on these big PVC pouf kind a things in the foyer. One of 'em's right skinny, hair like a scarecrow, all floppy an' danglin' over his forehead. He takes a puff on a bent spliff and passes it to some girls who're all giggling away like they've just stepped out of Saint Trinians.

"Scuze, mate, d'yer know where t' drama class is?" I ask the scarecrow, givin' 'im me friendliest grin.

"It's in there?" he sez, pointin' ter two double doors on his right.

"I dunno, mate," I sez at a loss. "Is it?"

"Yeh?"

All that dope must of addled the silly cunt's brain. I turned to another feller, a little skinny bloke with floppy hair an' big specs. He was wearin' one of those right old

fashioned tweed suits that country doctors in the 1930's used to wear, complete with a spotty bow-tie. He reminded me of that feller on Call My Bluff.

"D'you know where it is?" I asked, hopefully.

"That's for me to know and you to find out, my fine friend," he sez with a smirk. Two of the birds started gigglin' like he'd just said summat funny instead of spoutin' a load of rubbish. I struggled with me temper. It wouldn't do to give him some biff on me first day... even if he was askin' for it.

"Can yer just fuckin' tell me, where a've got ter go, please?" I sez, and in an attempt to try an' sound pleasant, I refrained from addin' "Yer silly cunt."

Dicky bow takes a drag on Scarecrow's joint and sighs. "It's not on your left but it is on mine. To your right, is the place where noble Thespis will dine."

"Eh?"

"It's in there," sez a tall blonde bird with baby blue eyes. Quite cute really.

"Thanks, pet."

I went towards the double doors an' decided to make a grand entrance. If I were goin' to be an actor then I were determined to make a good impression straight away. None of that hangin' back waitin' to be spotted nonsense. I'm goin' straight to the top me. I pushed the doors aside with a resoundin' crash an' stepped inside.

"Dunno, at your service, my lords!" I boom in me deepest basso profundo voice, lettin' it rumble along in me chest like Richard Burton.

"GET OUT!" yells a tall beaky nosed middle aged bloke with a mop of snow white hair. He were deep in conversation with some other little middle-aged bloke in cowboy boots with a comb over.

I stared at him, takin' in the surroundings. It was fuckin' smart. A proper theatre, with raised seats an' a massive stage with proper lights an' that. The two blokes were chattin'

on the centre of the stage an' they din't look too chuffed about me interruptin' them.

"Are you deaf? I said OUT!" sez the white haired feller, hands on hips.

"But a'm here fer t' drama class. A'm doin' Drama O Level."

The one in cowboy boots puts a hand to his face an' turns away shakin' his head.

"Oh God. I get them all. My Lord! My Lord! Why hast thou forsaken me?"

"What time is it?" sez the white haired feller stridin' towards me.

"Ten ter nine."

"And what time does your class start?"

"Nine."

"Exactly. Now GET OUT!"

"Aright. Keep yer wig on," a sez, turnin' ter go.

"Excuse me?" sez cowboy boots.

"Yeh?"

"What did you just say?"

"A said keep yer wig on."

He held up a hand to his combover. "Are you trying to be funny?"

"No. A wont talkin' ter you, a woh talkin' ter him. A din't notice yer woh goin' bald, mate."

"Think you're a big man do you? Yeh? A big man with a big voice?" He were starin' at me with venom. A bit of spit hit me in the eye.

"Ner. A dote."

"Good, because you'd be wrong. You're a little man here. A little man with a little voice. Understood?"

"Aright. A'll see yer in a bit then."

I fucked off quick. As I opened the doors the dope smokers started laughin' an' cheerin' like cunts. The fuckers had stitched me up. It's gonna be hard keepin' a grip on me temper in this fuckin' place, ther all fuckin' weirdo's.

I made sure I wasn't first in at nine, coz I dint want another mouthful from that feller with the white hair. I followed the twat in the dicky bow an' the scruff with the spliff (now smoked an' consigned to one of a collection of overflowing ashtrays in the foyer) and a bunch of others inter the theatre. We sat down on the front two rows. There were about twenty or so of us an' we all looked expectantly at the white haired feller an' the cunt with the combover who were lookin' down their nebs at us from the stage. When we were all settled, the white haired feller steps forward an' someone darkened the houselights an' framed him in a bright spotlight. Nice effect.

"Bloody hell," he sez, his voice all deep an' modulated ( a real actor's voice).

"Do I smell, Derek?" he asks, turnin' to combover man.

"No, Gavin," he sez. "Nice aftershave though. What is it, Brut?"

A murmur of laughter from t' assembled students. Fuck knows what they were laughin' at though.

"Old Spice, Derek, you should try it some time," sez the white haired feller. Then he turns his piercin' gaze on us. "So, I don't smell, and I don't bite and I'm not a crazed sex maniac.....yet. So why don't you all give my vocal cords a favour and come and sit down here on the stage? You're studying drama, aren't you? Then your place is on the stage, not in the bloody stalls."

We all obliged an' plonked oursens down on the stage at his feet. Just then I heard the sound of heavy breathin' an' felt summat wet on the back of me neck.

"Wahh!" a yelled. I hate bein' taken by surprise, coz surprises are never good uns

in Halton Moor. I wheeled round an' saw an elderly, fat black labrador dribblin' away an' waggin its tail at me.

"Ahhhh!" cooed all the birds in unison.

"Meg!" barks the white haired gent. "I've told you before. Don't eat the students. You don't know where they've been." Meg shuffled slowly through us an' sat down next to her lord an' master. "Now my name is Gavin Rhine. It's my burden to be head of drama at this establishment, so I bid you all welcome. This gentleman here, is Derek Wales. It is his lot to teach you, get you through your O Level and coach those of you who wish to proceed, on to Drama School. Also throughout the year we will be directing you in a series of plays and musicals which will be open to the public. Anyone not happy with that, then the door is open, there lies your way....You may be jogging whilst your boots are green!" No-one said owt, mainly coz no-one knew what the fuck he was on about. "Excellent! Derek, they're all yours."

Gavin Rhine strode out of the theatre, Meg ambling along slowly behind him.

"Right, you, big man," sez Derek Wales, standin' over me with his denim encased crotch inches from me face. "What's your name, big man?"

"Dunno."

He turns to face the rest of the class. "He doesn't know his own name. Is he trying to be clever? Because if he is, he's being incredibly stupid. Are you being clever?"

I shrugged and felt mesen goin' red. "Ner. It's mi name, Derek. Dunno. It's short fer summat else. Dote ask me what."

"Yeh? Well I'm not interested in what it's short for... You could be called Daisy for all I care, but to you I'm Mr. Wales, not Derek. Understood?"

"Aye."

"Right...Name Game," he bellows, an' picks up a basketball which he throws at me hard. It bounces off me head. "You're supposed to catch it, say your name and then say the name of the person you throw it to. It's hardly rocket science, Daisy."

"Aright. A'm not a fuckin' mind reader am a?"

He gets up right close to me then an' once again I'm showered in his spit. "I won't have profanity in the theatre. Get the ball and throw the fucking thing."

I picked up the ball. "Dunno. Derek...a mean Mister Wales..." I threw it right at 'im, but he caught it, no probs, an' sent it back at me.

"Someone else. Dunno."

"But a dote know anyone else."

"Then ask them."

I threw the ball at the scarecrow who was so stoned he were half asleep. It hit him in the balls an' he crumpled up in a heap.

"Don't hospitalize the whole class on the first day, Dunno," sez Wales. "You okay son?"

"Yeh?"

"Well, tell us your name and throw the ball."

"Sly?" He throws the ball at the cunt with the dicky bow.

"My first is in Jump, but never in Hump," sez dicky bow feller. "My second in Lump but never in lamp. My third is in So but not with a thread, my fourth is in tit and also in tat. My fifth is..."

"Just say your name, man!" yells Wales.

"Justin." He chucks the ball at the girl with the blonde hair and baby blues.

"Celia," she giggles. "Celia Breeze. Mi mates call me Sea Breeze." She started cacklin' away like a mad ol' fishwife an' chucked the ball at a tall, bronzed bird with hair

like honey an' eyes like emeralds. "Friga."

"Friga," sez the goddess in a slight foreign accent, luggin' the ball at a dark an' sultry bird in tight white jodphurs. "Pauline..."

Pauline didn't get to chuck the ball coz the doors to the theatre opened an' in comes this tall good lookin' lad, in a black trench coat.

"Hi," he sez in a thick Irish brogue. "Am I in the right place?"

"This isn't a building site, Paddy, so I doubt it," sez Wales, glarin' at the newcomer.

"Is it the circus then? I can see a few clowns in here," he retorts.

"Yeh...Great, another comedian...Why are you late, boy? What's your name?"

"Mark. Mark O'Hagan. I was held up in a traffic jam. What have I missed?"

"So, the big Spud wants to be an actor?" sez Wales, struttin' up to him.

"Big Spud wandering around out there, without a care in the world, dreaming of Sweet Molly Malone."

"Who? I don't even know her."

"Keep it zipped, big Mark. A suitable name. Mark. It's like a stain. A mark. A stain. Get it?" Nobody laughed. "Sit down. You're giving me a headache."

Big Mark settled down next to me.

"Hi," he sez, shakin' me hand.

"You can talk to your boyfriend after class, Daisy," sez Wales. "Now, for next time, I want each of you to prepare a piece for me."

I held me hand up. "A piece of what?"

Wales holds his hands out ter heaven. "God save us from imbeciles. A piece. A speech. Modern or classic. Learn a soliloquy, Dunno, prepare it and then blind us with

your talent tomorrow."

"Oh. Right." I still didn't have a fuckin' clue what he were on about.

"Now listen to me, all of you," Wales went on. "I don't expect you to love me, but I do expect you to fear me. I am going to drag what tiny embers of talent you have, and fan them into a flame, even if I have to rip open your wombs to do so."

"I haven't got a womb, sir," sez Big Mark.

"Ahhh. Save that for the comedy master class, Spud. I might have the energy to laugh then," sez Wales, grimacing with disgust.

Next he had us all doin' summat called animal exercises. He told me I were a sheep an' had me on all fours baain' an' chewin' pretend grass. I wish I could've been a wolf like Big Mark? Or a sloth like that hippy Sly who looked like he were hibernatin' in a corner.

At last the bell rang an' Wales dismissed us. Thank fuck for that. This drama lark is rubbish. No wonder Barry fuckin' Eccles took the piss. I'd jack it in only me Mam'd never let me live it down. She's always bangin' on about how I never stick at owt. On the positive side, it was different, I'll give it that, and those birds were well tasty. Maybe I'll give it til the end of the month.

I was right grateful to get back to the sanctuary of me new abode. I let mesen in an' scuttled off upstairs to make a well earned cuppa tea. So far me flat woh furnished with a mug, a kettle and an upturned tea-chest for a table. I'd been sleepin' on some flattened cardboard boxes, in me sleepin' bag. It were excitin' though, coz it were tidy an' all freshly painted. Just like a blank canvas. I heard the door to the back of the shop slam an' me Mam comin' up the stairs.

"Aright Mam," I called out, "A'm mekkin' a cuppa tea, d'yer want one?"

"Aye love, that'd be smashin'." She came bustlin' into the room, " So, how d'yer get on?"

"Aww, am not sure if a like it."

"Oh yer fuckin' silly cunt! Are you ever gonna change? Cart yer stick at anything fer longer than two minutes?"

"But Mam, they're a right bunch o' wankers...all pretentious an' poncy an' like hippies an' that, wi' daft 'air an' clothes, The teachers are worse! They think ther't dogs bollocks an are all nasty. Full o' themselves wi' big loud theatrical voices."

"Are yer sure its not you, yer big girl's blouse? Rome wont built in a day yer know? Yerv got ter give these things time, love...Owt new teks some gettin' used to. Give it a month eh?"

"Aye, alright. If yer say so." I handed her a mug of tea.

"Ta. Well, yer've got the place lookin' nice a'll say that ferya. A think our Wayne wants ter move in. So that'll be company for yer."

"EH? He cart!"

"Why not? It's got two bedrooms...and it's my fuckin' place remember."

"Aye, a know, it's just that...I've....er....I've got a lodger! Yeh, that's right...There's a kid at college a met terday, desperate fer a flat, a said he could move in."

"A thought yer said they woh all pretentious poncy types? A'm not sure if a want 'one a those' under me roof. A might catch summat. A'd be 'appier if it woh family."

Under no fuckin' circumstances was I sharin' a flat with our Wayne. "Yeh but Mam, this kid sez 'iz willin' ter pay yer £35 a week...That's £140 a month cash in hand, tax free!"

"Per calendar month."

"Aye....per calendar month." Whatever fuckin' difference that makes.

"Fuck our Wayne then," sez Mam. "He can stay at home. What's he called, this mate of yours?"

"Sly." I know, I know. It was the only name I could remember.

"Aye well, bring him round first...A wanna meet this Sly. An' if he can pay rent, then so can you. A want £50 a week. Divvy it up 'owever yer wont."

"Eh? Where am a gonna get the money from?"

"How the fuck do I know? Get a fuckin' job like any other cunt."

"Aright then Mam. If yer gonna play at bein' a landlady, then it's your responsibility ter furnish the place, beds, telly's, the lot."

"Fair enough yer cheeky get. A'll get on ter ya Uncle Ian.

"Fer fucks sake Ma he clears dead peoples 'ouses... God,no expense spared eh?" "

"Beggars cant be choosers Dunno, an' it's not like they'll miss it. Anyway, chances are 'e'll 'ave some decent stuff. Jesus, yerv only been at that place an hour an already yer a snob" sez me mam, handin' me her empty mug an' going back downstairs.

Great. So tomorrow I've got to go back to college and convince someone I've met only once an' thought was a bit of a stupid fuckin' drugged up hippy, to leave home, move in with me an' give me fifty quid a week for the privilege.

I needed a drink an' time to think this thing through, so I hopped on a bus into town for a pint. Gettin' off outside the Grand Theatre on Upper Briggate, I nipped into the Elgin for a pint of Tets. I grabbed an Evenin' Post an' sat in the corner to look through the jobs section. I could sign on I suppose. Now I'm a student I reckon if I enroll an' get a student card chances are they'll pay me rent...I'll look into it termorrow.

"Yer lookin fer a job, pal?" It were the Landlord, he were collectin' glasses and could see me readin' the job section.

"Aye, a wunt mind...Am at college studyin' ter be an actor like, an' a reckon a need a few quid ter pay me rent an' that."

"Why dote yer try Pattons next door. It's a big place an' his always lookin' fer new staff."

"Cheers mate, I might just do that. What's he called then, the owner, d' yer know?"

"Aye I do, MacCartney. Bruce MacCartney."

Pattons was a big American Diner that served burgers, steaks and pizzas. It was dead popular. I only ever went once an' I remember it had dead fit waitresses who wore tight T-shirts without bras. I decided to grasp the nettle while it were still hot. I finished me pint and went over to Pattons. The front door was locked. It was only five so it weren't open yet. Tradesman's entrance round the back, straight into the kitchens and I'm face to face with an Italian feller, kneadin' a big pile of dough.

"Bruce about?"

"Si, try the office."

"Right. Where is it?"

"Downa there. You canta miss it."

"Ta."

I came to the office. The door were open. Inside were a little man, with a little beard an' great big jamjar specs, hunched over a calculator.

"Hello, can I help you?" he asks.

"Aye. Mi name's Dunno. Feller in t' pub next door told me yer might be lookin' fer staff?"

"Aye we're always lookin' fer staff. Can yer cook?"

"Nah."

"Have you worked in a bar before?"

"Nah."

"Rright....Can you wash up?"

"Oh aye, yeh, any cunt can wash up!"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"A'm no mug Bruce. A reckon a could learn ter cook an' do bar work. A wunt let yer down. Honest!"

"That's what they all say. Do you want to have a go at washing up?"

"Sure...When?"

"What about now?"

I think about it for a minute. I hate washin' up. Then again, I hate havin' no money.

"Fuck! Aright then, what 'ave a got ter lose?"

"Good man." He got up and shook mi hand. "Come on I'll show you where everything is. The others'll be drifting in in twenty minutes or so. Once yer settled in I'll introduce you ...Welcome aboard!"

Two hours later an' I'm in the kitchen all hot an' fucked. Sadly not the good fucked but the bad fucked. I'd washed up before, don't get me wrong. Me tea cup doesn't clean itself after all. But these great big fucking industrial pans with burnt on chilli an' burnt on white sauce are another thing completely. After what seemed like an eternity, Vincenzo, the Italian chef said I could go for a break. It was just as well coz me hands'd

turned into big floppy sponges. I'd noticed that the staff all went an' sat on the steps that led up to the store rooms, so I went an' sat there.

I wasn't alone. Sat there, havin' a fag was a waitress...she was beauuuuutiful. Short denim skirt, smooth brown shapely legs and a tight T-shirt with the slogan "Pattons - Everybodies favourite American dining sensation" emblazoned over a pair of lovely, ripe knockers. True to form she weren't wearin' a bra an' I could see her perky little nips peekin' through the cloth, just like the little nubs on the end of a pencil. I had to cross me legs to hide the hard on developing slowly in mi' pants. It don't always make a good impression, havin' a stiffy when your chattin' to a bird for the first time. Some like it, but others don't take it as a compliment. "Hello love," she sez. "Are you new? Come and sit right next ter me an' tell me all about yerself. I'm Carol, by t' way. Nice to meet yer."

"Dunno. Nice ter meet you too."

"So, you just started then?"

"Yeh. Tonight's me first night."

"And what d'yer think of it so far?"

"A'm not sure, it's a bit too much like 'ard work ter be honest."

"Blimey! Give it a chance. Yer've only been at it a few hours."

"A know...a know, it's just a bit boring, yer know, just washin' pans an' that."

"Then why don't you ask Bruce if yer can learn how to do the bar or make pizzas or be a grill chef? He likes people who show initiative an' are willin' ter learn. Especially the pizzas. There's only Vincenzo and Jonny. Their pizza's are right lovely...proper Italian ones, Jonny started off doin' what you're doing but then Vincenzo trained him up. He's leaving soon so that'll leave Jonny on his own, so the quicker you learn, the quicker you'll be off pan washing duty. Plus you'll get a lot more dough...'scuze the pun."

"Food fer thought," I flashed her me lady charmer grin. "So are all t' lasses here as fit as you?"

"Give over yer cheeky bugger!" She blew out the last of her fag smoke and stubbed her ciggy in the ashtray. Then she turned back, gave me one of those smiles you'd kill for and said, "Are they fuck!"

I went back to me pan washin' duties, the old loins feeling suitably stirred. The Italian feller was a right nice feller but Donny, the other chef was a born knobber. He was from Essex or somewhere down south, an' his claim to fame was that he used to be head chef at Butlins.

"Ya fink Froiday an' Sat'day noights 'ere are busy....wait til ya 'ave to prepare eight hundred froyd eggs and two faaarsand rashers a bacon in an 'ouwer!"

I had no idea whether Friday or Saturday was busy. Nor did I care. Luckily the pan washin' area was round the corner from the range where he was cookin', so I didn't have to put up with too much of his shite.

At just after ten Bruce came over an' clapped me on the back. "Nice job Dunno, well done. Will you be wantin' something to eat?"

"Aye, that'd be ace, what can a have?"

"Anything on the menu that's not too pricey! So no steaks, basically."

Tcchhh! "Canav a pizza?"

"Sure...Carol tells me you might be interested in learning how to make them, is that right?"

"Yeah. Alright. A'll give it a go."

"Great, the quicker you learn how to do everything, the less boring working here will be."

"Yer cart say fairer than that Bruce."

"Now tell Vincenzo what pizza you want an' I'll get you a drink."

"Thanks Bruce, thanks a lot...Okay Vinny, A'll 'ave a pepperoni wi' plenny o' French mustard"

I've got a feelin' I might like this place.

## SPEECH

Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980

Royal Park's got a right ace library. I gave it the once over first thing this mornin', tryin' to find a speech for Derek Wales. Trouble is I don't know any plays. Never read one. Never seen one. Except for the panto once a year down at Halton Moor Social. As I were browsin' I saw Sea Breeze an' that Friga with a couple of other girls from the class, doin' homework for one of their courses.

"Aright, girls. What yer doin'?" I asked, all breezy an' self confident.

"Shhhhh!" hissed Friga.

"Soz!" I whispered.

I know when I'm not wanted so I backed off, trying not to look like I was bothered. Sea Breeze whispered something to her friends an' came over to me. I think she fancies me.

"What yer doin'?" I asked again.

"Workin' on an essay on George Eliot fer English lit."

"Who's he then?" I asked, tryin' to sound interested.

She started laughing that ear-splittin' laugh. "His a She, yer daft 'appeth."

"Eh? Is shi a lezzer then or what?"

"Ner. Shi just had a feller's name, thought it would be easier fer her ter be tekken seriously."

"Oh." Sounds like a right nutter. "Gorrany ideas fer a piece fer Drama?"

"Yeh," shi sez. "A'm gonna do summat from A Day in The Death o' Joe Egg."

"Oh. Nice one."

"Wharrabout you?" shi sez.

"Fuck knows."

"Why don't yer do a sonnet?"

"Eh?"

"One of Shakespeare's sonnets. Do one o' them."

"Aright. A will. Cheers."

"Do Sonnet 18. It's a good un fer a feller."

I picked up a copy of the Complete Works of Shakespeare an' found the sonnet she were on about. Fuckin' 'ell. It was gibberish. "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" If yer must. Do what yer like pal, jus' don't go on about it. Sadly, that's one of the things this bard feller does best; go on about stuff. Never say owt in one word when yer can write a whole fuckin' sonnet about it. Why can't he just say your fuckin' gorgeous love? Instead of goin' on about seasons, an' the face of the sun an' all that bollocks?

All this pokin' about in libraries had given me a rare appetite so I thought I'd head off to the refectory an' have a bit of brekky while I was learnin'. As I chewed me way through me second bacon sarnie I looked at the clock on the wall. Fuck. Ten minutes to learn the fucker. It were hopeless. I flicked through the book for summat a bit shorter.

Derek Wales weren't in a good mood. I don't think he's capable of it an' when he smiles he looks like a crocodile with a tash an' a turnipy beard, all sharp teeth, wispy hair an' evil eyes.

First to go were Big Mark or Spud as he now called 'im. He did summat or other about Mercy gettin' strained an' with the best will in the world I've gotta say, it were shite. I don't know about mercy gettin' strained but it were a fuckin' strain on my ears I'll tell you that for nowt.

Things bucked up when Friga the lovely Danish goddess got up an' did summat in her own language that Derek said were 'inspired'. It wasn't that good, but she was certainly a feast for the eyes. Sea Breeze's thing about eggs were a bit dull an' if I hadn't been so nervous I would've nodded off.

"Right, Big man. Your turn. Dazzle us all," sez Derek.

Feelin' like a condemned man takin' his last stroll to the gallows I got to me feet an' proclaimed in me best posh deep voice, "To be or not to be..."

"Go on, lad," sez Derek.

"That is the question." Me voice echoed around the theatre. It were brilliant.

"And?" sez Derek, his teeth glintin' in the gloom.

"And what?"

"What about the rest, lad?"

"The rest o' what?"

"The rest of Hamlet's soliloquy."

"Oh. Is there more? A thought that woh it. It's the only bit people ever say."

To prove me wrong he got up an' pushed me out of the way. "This is how it's done, Daisy. Pay attention. This is the way to do a classic soliloquy."

He then spouted on for about ten minutes about slings an' arrows an' consequences an' what not. To my disgust everyone clapped when he finished. To tell the truth I thought he were shite, but I didn't say owt.

"Daisy, I want a proper speech learnt for next time and don't give me any of your nonsense. I want at least twenty lines. Understood?"

"Aye aright."

As I were goin' out the door a leather clad arm fell on me shoulder an' a cloud of smoke blew in me face. It were Sly.

"Hey, man? Love what you did in there? Two sentences? It was rad?" Justin the guy in the bow tie was just comin' up behind him. Sly called out to him. "Hey Justin...meet Dunno? Bigger freak than John the Baptist?"

"That would be a difficult feat indeed, if we are assuming the definition of 'freak' to mean unusual, or strange. John the Baptist lived on locusts and honey and would often fast for months on end. I don't think Dunno's exploits in O Level Drama really compete."

"Aright," I sez. "Keep yer milk fresh. A never said owt about him. Dote go gettin' offended or owt."

When we were in the refectory I approached Sly about sharin' me flat.

"So where d'yer live then, mate?"

"In Crossgates?"

"Do yer?"

"Yeh?"

"Look, why d'yer always ask questions?"

"Why do you?"

"Err...look mate, 'ave gorra flat wi a spare room, d'yer wanna move in wi' me? It'll only cost yer fifty quid a month."

He gave me a look with just a hint of suspicion in it. "Look Dunno," he sez, "I've got nowt against gays? But it's not really my scene? I'm flattered though? Happy ter be your friend?"

"Eh? No, mate. It int like that. A need a flatmate ter share me flat in Beeston. Well, it's mi Mam's flat burrunless a pay her tons shill mek me share wi' me brother. An' he's a birruva cunt."

"Fifty quid a month?"

"Calender month, yeh."

"Jus' so happens I'm lookin' for a place to lay my muse...I'll give yer twenny?"

"Thirty."

"Hmmm, Ok, man. Deal! Here's to the start of something beautiful?"

"Ace." We shook 'ands

"I'll move in tomorrow then?"

"Aright. Yer can help me learn me new piece."

New flat, and flatmate sorted.....

## DON'T GO DOWN TER THE WOOD'S TONIGHT

Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1980

Saturday mornin'. Not the right day of the week to get woken up by car horns honkin' outside the flat. I got up off the floor an' poked me head out the window. Me Mam an' Uncle Ian were standin' next to a big lorry, lookin' up at me.

"D'yer want this furniture or what yer lazy little get?" sez Mam. "Open t' door. Yer Uncle's got a house clearance ter do in an hour."

Mam an' Ian had done us proud. The back of the truck were full of furniture, all good sturdy old stuff, even if it was a bit grubby an' smelled of mould and wee. There were two cast iron double beds complete with mattresses. Ace. No more kippin' on the floor for me. I can tell you, that's one novelty that soon wears thin.

"Shall we get t' beds up first?" I asked Ian.

"Yer'll have ter shift 'em on yer own," sez Ian. "A've gorra bad back."

"But how did yer get it in t' lorry in t' first place?" I ask.

"I gev him an 'and," sez Mam. "A'm not doin' it again. Go on, big strappin' lad like you wote 'ave any problems."

I hefted the bedstead out of the van. Fuck, it were heavy. I gave Ian a hopeful look but he was busy lookin' the other way, towards the pub down the road.

"A'm gonna go an' get a pint," he sez. "Mek sure yer finished in half an hour."

I dragged the bedstead to the door an' then just as I were at breakin' point, a ray of sunshine came into view in the form of Sly, amblin' down the road carryin' his bags.

"Ace one mate, yer just in time ter gi' us a hand wi' t' furniture," a sez.

"Great?" sez Sly. Then he looks at mi Mam an' then at me, then he teks off his sunglasses an' looks at her again an' then turns ter me. "Who's the centrefold?"

"Gerraway, yer cheeky beggar," sez Mam, pretendin' ter clout him round t' ear. I could tell she were well chuffed.

"Mam, this is Sly, the lad a woh tellin' yer about."

"Yer mean the one yer said woh a poncey posh puff?" sez Mam, holdin' out her hand fer him ter shake.

"Did he say that? The little tinker!" sez Sly.

"Er..."

"If I was a puff, I think your beauty would be enough to make me change team? Surely you're too young to be his Mum? Were you five when you had him?"

Mam cackled wi' laughter at this. "Ooh, a like this one, Dunno. He's alright."

"Aye well, a'll like him a bit more if he gi' us a hand wi' all this stuff."

"You hold yer hosses, son," sez Mam. "I think a want ter get ter know this young man a bit more if his gonna be mi tenant. You come with me down t' pub, an tell me a bit about yerself."

"Sure? No probs? See yer later Dunno? Oh, yer couldn't take these up for me could you?" He dropped the heavy bags off his shoulder .... "Don't strain yerself, they're pretty heavy?"

The pair of them fucked off sharpish, leavin' me to bust me 'nads gettin the furniture up the stairs an' into the flat. The bedsteads were bad enough, but have you ever tried humpin' two double mattresses upstairs? It's hell. Especially if they're right spongy an' keep fallin' on top of you.

I'd jus' put the mattress on the bed in my room when I noticed an 'orrible brown red stain on it. For fuck's sake. I humped it into Sly's room an' swapped mattresses. When I'd got the other mattress into place I were well hacked off. There were an even bigger stain on it. It were then that me Mam an' Sly an' Uncle Ian came rollin' in, a little bit bleary eyed.

"Uncle Ian," a sez. "Look at t' state o' these mattresses. Woh someone murdered in 'em. It looks like they're covered in blood or summat."

Uncle Ian shrugged. "Ner. It in't blood. It's probably body fluids, lad. T' old dear who had it last, died in it. They din't find her fer over a week. Fluid leaks out of bodies if yer leave 'em. Just nature workin' it's way. Nowt ter worry about."

I felt sick.

"Stop messin' him about Ian," sez mi Mam. "She din't die in her bed. She died in 'ozzy. It looks like some poor girl woh caught short wi'out a plug."

"Eh?"

"Monthly dribbles, son. That's all it is. Cover it wi' a sheet an' yer wote even know it's there."

"I've got no problem with monthly dribbles?" sez Sly. "Healthy sign of fertility? In the old days men used ter drink it? They thought it gave them more stamina? In the bed department?"

"Aye well, times change," sez Mam suddenly all stern. "We dote do that sort of thing round here. Got that?"

"Yeh?" sez Sly.

"Aye well, if yer'll both just gimme the rent me an' Ian'll be off an' let yer get settled in."

Sly handed over thirty quid an' a gev her twenny.

"It's a month in advance," sez mi Mam.

"That is a month," a sez. "Fifty quid a month. Like yer said."

"It's fifty a week, an' you know it."

"A woh jus' kiddin' Mam. What d'yer think this is? The Queen dote pay fifty quid a week an' she lives in a palace. This is Beeston, Mam. Get real."

She looked dropped on.

"He's right my love?" sez Sly. "I read about it in the Times only last week? The Queen pays thirty quid a month fer Buckin'am Palace? The Government want to raise her rent? But she said no?"

"Oh. Oh well. Look, Sly love tek twenny quid back. I dote want ter charge yer more than the Queen pays. If you pay ten an' Soft Lad there pays twenny, yer cart say fairer than that."

"Eh?" I sez. "Why's he pay less than me?"

"Coz he's your guest," sez Mam. "It's only right. Come on Ian. Let's be off. A've got the meat on at home."

After we'd got the furniture in order Sly insisted on watchin' Doctor Who on the telly. It were all about some gangster lizards, but I'd missed the first part so I couldn't really tell what were goin' on. I'll tell you what though, his companion is a right big hit with Sly.

"So what's goin' on then?" I asked, tossin' Sly a can of Tets.

"Shhhh," he sez. "That Lalla Ward's really raw? Don't yer think?"

"Aye. A suppose."

He got out a little tin an' began rollin' a joint.

"Hey hey!, A'm not 'avin' any o' that hippy shit in 'ere. Mi Mam'd go mental."

"She's not here, is she?" sez Sly, winkin' at me.

"Ner but that int the point, is it? A'm norraavin' yer turn this inter a opium den, yer mucky hippy cunt."

"My dear new friend, don't be scared of the unknown? Have you ever tried it?"

"Ave a fuck!"

"You'll like it? It'll help release yer muse?"

"Me what?"

"Yer muse? Yer creative spirit? Have a blast on this an' yer'll rock Derek Wales off his cubans? And yer'll have the girls eatin' out of yer hand?"

"Will a really?"

"Deffo?"

He lit the joint, took a big puff, coughed a bit an' passed it to me. I took a puff.

"It's all soggy."

"As the Bishop said ter the actress? Have another toke, chum?"

I did. It tasted like old socks. But after a bit I started laughin'. Then as I watched the telly I began to realise what Sly meant about that bird on Doctor Who. I were suddenly horny as fuck.

"Someone likes it?" sez Sly noddin' at me crotch which were strainin' to get out of me kegs.

"Fuck off," I giggled. "It gets shy if fellers look at it."

"Don't mind me, mate? I've got better things ter look at?" He turned his attentions back to the lovely Lalla on the telly.

"One day, when a'm a big star a'm gonna fuck 'er," I said.

"You an' me both?" giggles Sly.

Then I felt meself gettin' really hot. Sweat were burstin' off me.

"Fuck. A think a'm gonna chuck up."

"It always does that, first time. Have another toke an' yer'll soon feel better?"

I had another blast. An' felt me head liftin' off me shoulders. Doctor Who were over, but my trip through space an' time was only just beginning.

"Fuckin' 'ell? You look like one o' them lizard guys?" sez Sly. "Yer've gone green. Hee-hee-hee!"

"Ha fuckin' ha," a sez, takin' another blast. "Come on, let's go get some fresh air, pardnuh."

"Pussy Patrol?"

"Eh?"

"Shall we go on pussy patrol? Yer know, lookin' fer fanny?"

"If yer like."

Me hard-on had gone, but the nausea were passin' too.

"Let's have a couple o' hot knives before we go?"

"Eh? What the fuck're they?"

"Watch an' learn Kimo Sabe?"

He took the top end of a plastic bottle which had been cut in half out of his bag an' led me into the kitchen. Then he stuck two knives on top of the rings on the cooker. When they were red hot an' glowin' he plonked a little bit of dope on one of the knives.

"Hold the bottle an' get ready ter breath in?" he sez.

He pressed both knives together an' I breathed in the fumes an' almost choked. Suddenly it felt like I were tryin' to see through a couple of thin slices of raw meat.

"Now do the same fer me?"

When I'd finished coughin' I obliged. Sly took it in, like an expert.

"That woh fuckin' 'orrible," I choked.

"Let's go, comandante? I know just the place. Adel Woods here we come?"

Adel Woods is way over the other side of town an' we had to take two buses, which is actually a lot of fun when yer flyin' high as a kite. The familiar surroundings of me home town looked completely different. It were like goin' on a magical mystery tour.....

Eventually we arrived at our destination an' Sly led us ter the outskirts of the woods so we were stood by the garden wall of one o' the old houses there.

"Sly, would yer mind tellin' me what we're doin' here?"

"Give us a leg up, Dunno?"

He was straddlin' a tree, tryin' to reach the first branch which were just out of reach. I let

him climb up on me shoulders an' get into the tree.

"What yer doin', yer mad 'ippy?"

"Shhh."

We waited in silence fer a bit. Then Sly let out a quiet little whoop o' joy.

"Oh boy. Get up here, Dunno. Yer missin' a treat?"

"What is it?"

I tried to climb up but I couldn't. I reached up a hand an' Sly pulled me up onto his branch. Then he pointed at a winder in the house opposite. Fuckin' 'ell. It were Friga the gorgeous Dane an' she were naked as the day she were born.

"How did yer know about this?" I asked in a whisper.

"Justin told me? He lives down the road? He sez, Friga's lived here about a year, an' she always walks about the flat naked? I didn't believe him, but a thought it worth a visit? I wish a'd bought my camera?"

"Yeh. Me too. Shall we go knock on t' door?" I suggested.

"Ner. She'd only go and put some clothes on? Let's just sit back an' enjoy the show?"

"Good thinkin' Sly Man."

It was then that I heard a twig or summat snappin' down below on ground level. I looked around an' held me finger to me lips. I didn't wanna get nicked for pervin' at birds. When I saw what I saw, I almost fell out of the tree. It was Derek Wales. He were crouched behind a bush, a bit further off from us, lookin' up at the window through a pair of binoculars.

"Fuck? What do we do now?" whispered Sly.

"Cool yer boots.....He han't seen us, so we wait. Jus' relax an' keep quiet."

It were a long fuckin' wait. Derek were just sat there, in his bush, enjoyin' the view. I don't think he were wankin' though. I wish he was, then at least he'd fuck off after he came. But no. He were determined to get his money's worth out of the great Dane.

Darkness fell, and we were gettin' bitten ter fuck by midges, when Friga went out of the room an' turned off the light. Now we couldn't see owt. After a bit I heard a rustlin' noise followed by the crunching of shoes on dead leaves as our pervy teacher fucked off into the night.

"Let's go get a pint?" sez Sly.

"Aye aright."

We crossed the road to the Weetwood Arms an' I were orderin' two pints of Tets when a pair of beady eyes caught mine on the other side of the bar. It were Derek Wales.

"Aright Mister Wales, had a fun night?" sez Sly givin' me a cheeky wink.

Wales came over an' stood between us. "I'm in here for a quiet pint, the last thing I want is you two lowering the tone. Buy me a drink. Drink up, and get out."

"You from ...er, this neck o' the woods then?" sez Sly orderin' him a pint.

"No, I'm not actually."

"Right, what brings you up here then, sir?" sez Sly.

"None of your fucking business. As I said, drink up and get out."

"I am drinkin'," I said. Ter tell yer the truth I didn't fancy spendin' any more time with this cunt than I had to.

"We're not from round here either" sez Sly, conversationally, "Justin from t' course was tellin' us this is where he lives, an' that Friga lass too? Thought we'd pay 'em a visit? Trouble is we're not sure of the addre..... Hey, you dote know where she lives do you, Mr. Wales?"

I can see now why they call him Sly.

"How the fuck should I know you grubby idiot? And why should I care?" Wales gave Sly a cold, calculating look. "You drink like a little sparrow," he said, suddenly turnin' to me, then downin' his pint in one. "I'll show you how it's done." Then he took my pint an' downed that too. "Goodnight, gentlemen."

I'm tellin' yer I've knacked people fer less than that. It's a good job he's a teacher or the doctors at St Jimmy's would've had their work cut out tonight.

"Come on Sly. Dote wanna miss t' bus."

"Yeh? See yer, Derek?" sez Sly.

"Mister Wales, toe rag," sez Wales.

"Sure? Don't get lost in the woods?"

I dragged Sly out quick.

"What were all that about?" I asked Sly as we made our way over to the busstop.

"Listen, brother, 'ave got two words ter say to you...Yorkshire Ripper?"

"EH?!"

"Yorkshire Ripper. Don't you think it's weird? Just what was Derek Wales doing in a wood in the dead of night?"

"The same as us Sly. Lookin' at a fit bird runnin' around in the knack."

"No, no, no, my friend, this is different? We're young and we're students? Skulking around in woods, stoned, looking at naked fanny is expected of us? He's what? Late thirties? That's ancient! He should be married with kids? Yet here he is stalking his next victim? You know it all fits into place? A loner? Nasty? Creepy? Pervy? This Ripper nutter's already killed tons o' birds an' fuck knows how many more he's attacked. You heard him say he's not from here, yet some of the girls have been attacked in this

area? I tell you, we better watch him. Now, how much money you got? I am starving. I could murder some fish an' derks?"

"Anyway," I said, "That Ripper feller's got a Geordie accent."

We were back at Dunno HQ smokin' a massive joint. It's fair to say I'd acquired a taste for it. Life's funny innit? Two weeks ago I would've been givin' someone like Sly a bit o' biff an' askin' questions later, or to put it another way, if someone said in two weeks time I'd be smokin' drugs an' livin' with a hippy I'd've told 'em they were mad. The truth is I really enjoyed this evening's adventure, an' Sly's approach to life were certainly a lot different to anything I were used to.

"Gaaarrrrr-bage, Dunno, the man fancies himself a thespian, he could easily put on a funny accent? He didn't need much persuading to launch inter Hamlet the other day did he? Anyway the police now think that tape is a hoax?"

"D'yer think we should tell Friga?"

"Yes that would probably be wise?"

"How do we go about that then?"

"Easier said than done?"

"Do we confess how we saw Derek Wales?"

"No, she'll think we're just as bad?"

"Stop with the questions! Blimey, it's doing my head in. Look Sly, you deal with Friga, ter be honest I find 'er a bit of an ice maiden. She in't that friendly is she?"

"Is that a question?! Nah Dunno, don't you know owt about birds? That's just a front? Underneath she's a shy an' vulnerable pussycat...The kind of pussy I wun't mind strokin' if yer get me drift?"

"That Sea Breeze bird is a different proposition though, I reckon I could be in

there if I play me cards right."

"That's the spirit Dunno? Leave it wi' the Sly-Guy? A'll arrange us a cozy little foursome an' yer'll be in her knickers in no time? Not that they'll suit yer mind? Can I have two sugars this time, mon ami?" The cheeky cunt passes me his empty mug.

When I came in with two mugs of tea ten minutes later, Sly had an old phone book open an' were hunched over it on the floor. He let out a low whistle.

"Woah, look at this Daisy? Mr. D. Wales, 226 The Avenue, Roundhay. You know what that means don't you?"

"That his gorra few quid? And please dote call me Daisy...that's what that arsehole Wales called me an' it's the sorta nickname that'll stick."

"Fair enough, hombre? No, mate it means, he's livin' right at the heart of all the Ripper activity? In fact two of his victims were actually attacked in Roundhay Park?"

"C'mon Sly. We've gorra be careful here mate. There's a big difference between someone being an arse hole and a mass murderer."

"You mark my words Big D, that man's a wrong 'un, I'm sorely tempted to ring that anonymous helpline an' dob him in?"

"Yeh, you do what yer like mate. Okay, Now 'ave yer any idea what I can do for a speech this week?"

"Actually Dunno I have just the thing for you? It'll knock 'em dead."

## OUT! AGAIN!

Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1980

Monday mornin' found me tired an' thick-headed, a combination of Sly's dope an' tryin' to learn the speech he'd given me. I had me reservations about it to be honest but Sly kept sayin' "Nah...It's really dramatic, Honestly, yer'll get a round, a promise yer?"

"A round what?" I asked.

He just looked at me funny an' said, "C'mon, it's our stop."

We got off an' crossed the busy road to the entrance of Royal Park. The usual crowd were hangin' around outside the theatre. That big Mark feller was there on time today an' a swear he were wearin' eyeliner. He had his mouth set in a pout. Tryin' to look enigmatic for the lasses I reckon. Friga was lookin' statuesque an' breathtakin', the image of her naked form flashin' through my mind made me look away ashamed. As I approached I could hear Sea Breeze's distinctive laugh, a raucous explosion that'd put Sid James to shame.

"Morning, Cats!" said Sly. "Ready for another morning's dream making?" He swept into the theatre with his little entourage all followin' him in like he were the pied piper. I couldn't help but admire his confidence.

Derek Wales were there posin' with one cowboy-booted leg propped up on a chair surveyin' us wordlessly, lookin' all the lasses up an' down like a greedy fat cat eyein' his dinner. We sat down an' when the room fell silent, he kicked the chair away so it slid forward a few feet an' stood, legs apart like a gunslinger.....sad, posing twat.

"It was the great Stanislavski that said the immortal words that every actor should adopt as his mantra from this day forth; Don't act - BE! Yeh? You listening? Don't act.....BE! Yeh? Yeh. In time we will cover Stanislavski along with the other great

theatre practitioners, but for the moment, mindful that the big man, Daisy here is gonna give us his speech, I thought it wise to impart a little bit of his wisdom now. So....Mr. 'Don't Know,' or what ever your name is, if you'd like to take to the stage?" He turned to face the lighting box at the back of the theatre. "Ok Horace, whenever you're ready?"

I could see from my position centre-stage, a small, old feller with National Health glasses an' a really bad wig, giving Derek the thumbs up. Suddenly the house lights went off plungin' us inter darkness an' a single spotlight came on, highlighting a small circle in the centre of the stage...

"Find your light Mr. Dunno, the stage is yours. Command it!"

I walked over to the spotlight. I felt nervous but powerful and exhilarated. What a feeling. I cleared my throat an' took a deep breath:

"I'm Jack. I see you are still having no luck catching me. I have the greatest respect for you, George, but Lord, you are no nearer catching me now than four years ago when I started. I reckon your boys are lettin' you down, George. They can't be much good, can they? The only time they came near catching me was a few months back in Chapeltown, when I was disturbed. Even then it was a uniformed copper, not a detective.

I warned you in March that I'd strike again. Sorry it wasn't Bradford. I did promise you that, but I couldn't get there. I'm not quite sure when I'll strike again, but it will definitely be sometime this year, maybe September, October or even sooner if I get the chance. I'm not sure where, maybe Manchester; I like it there, there's plenty of them knocking about. They never learn, do they, George? I bet you've warned them. But they never listen.

At the rate I'm goin', I should be in the book of records. I think it's eleven up to now, isn't it? Well, I'll keep on going for quite a while yet. I can't see myself being nicked just

yet. Even if you do get near, I'll probably top myself first.

Well, it's been nice chatting to you, George.

Yours, Jack the Ripper.

No good looking for fingerprints, you should know by now it's as clean as a whistle. See you soon. 'Bye. Hope you like the catchy tune at the end. Ha-ha."

There was a stunned silence, and then applause from my fellow students.

"STOP!" roared Derek Wales, his face livid. "What do you think your doing? Is this some kind of sick joke? There's some maniac on the loose butchering women and you think it's funny to do the tape message he is taunting the police with?"

"But...I...Er..."

"Get out!"

"Eh?!"

"Get out...You're an idiot. No-one takes the piss in my lectures."

"Just a minute, Mr. Wales...." It was Big Mark. "You said we had to learn a speech and it had to be dramatic, well correct me if I'm wrong but that was a dramatic speech and I thought yer man there did it well."

"Yeh, Yeh? The class clown has spoken! You can get out as well...Why don't you come back on April Fool's Day?"

"Coz I'll probably bump into you!"

"Go on, get out.....an' don't come back!"

We left through the double doors, an' our eyes took a few seconds to readjust to the daylight. Mark had a big friendly smile on his face.

"Fuck him, the big eejit, don't worry mate, he can't sling you out fer doin' a speech... I thought that was really good by the way. What made you do it?"

"That fucker Sly. He's got in his head Wales is the Yorkshire Ripper."

Mark laughed then after a moment's thought he turned to me, a frown on his face. "Jesus... now you mention it..."

I didn't feel like moping around in the college. "Am gonna head off inter Town...You comin'?"

"Aye, Why not? So, yer called Dunno...Is that your first name or your surname or what?"

"It's just me name, That's it. So you wanna be an actor then?"

"Not want to, Going to. I'm gonna do me studies, be in a few productions and get a bit of experience, then I'm gonna go to Drama School in London, do a bit of TV and theatre. Then I'm off to Hollywood to be a big Movie star.....Nothin' to it!"

Before I could reply he had bounded over to a middle-aged guy walking past us.

"Arthur! Arthur! I haven't seen you for ages...well, since the operation...How the devil are...Oh I'm so sorry! I thought you were someone else!"

The guy went off shakin' his head and Mark came back to me, lookin' well chuffed.

"Did yer think yer knew him?" I asked.

"God, no....I've never seen him before in my life."

I better watch him, I thought, I'll have me hands full with this cunt. I was thinking of Mark's future plans. I could see one big flaw in them.

"Yer assuming of course that we'll still 'ave a college ter attend?"

"Bollocks Dunno. Don't worry about that arsehole. he's a classic middle-aged lecturer. A bully with the boys and a lechy twat around the girls. He's just a teacher, only we're not at school now...He has to respect us just as much as we have to respect him, the little gobshite. Gladys! Yoo - Hoo!" He ran over to an elderly lady who looked startled an' a bit bewildered. "Hello me old flower bun....Oh sorry pet, you're the spittin'

image of someone I know."

"Why d'yer keep doin' that?" I asked when he came back over.

"It's just Drama Dunno, call it street theatre, if you like."

I had another name for it, and it wasn't street theatre. We walked on in silence, past Leeds General Infirmary til we got to the back of the Town Hall.

"Where you headin' Dunno, d'yer fancy a coffee?"

"No thanks mate, I'm headin' fer Pattons. I've gorra job there. Thought a'd go in early, they're training me up to be a chef like."

"Nice one, okay, well I'm off for a coffee, maybe browse a few record shops...I'll see you tomorrow...." He saw someone he 'knew'. "Hey Tony....!"

"Oh, Hi Mark, How's college going?" replied 'Tony' much to my surprise. With a cheery partin' wave he was gone. Irish Nutter.

When I got to Pattons, there were no sign of Vincenzo, just some geeky lookin' carrot top with spots, shovin' flour into a stainless steel bowl. I guessed he were the kid sexy Carol had told me about.

"Aright mate. Are you Jonny?" I asked, givin' him me mitt to shake.

"I am yeh. Yer look surprised?"

"A thought yer'd be a bit older, that's all."

"How old d'yer have ter be ter mek pizzas?" he sez with a smile. "It's just glorified cheese on toast."

I introduced myself an' told him that Bruce wanted me to learn the ropes so I'd come in early to see if I could pick anything up.

"That's good timin' then, I'm just mekkin' t' dough."

He took me through the whole process and then when it were kneaded and resting under a damp tea towel we went for a break. I told him I'd just started Drama at Royal Park.

"Ad love ter do that....We did Shakespeare plays at school and I really loved it, I wunt mind being an actor."

"What's stopping yer then, there's still time ter enroll."

"Nah, a need ter work. Vinnie's leaving soon, so I'm gonna be full time here and I've just bought a house, so I need ter keep the money coming in."

"Eh? How old are yer?"

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen and yerv bought an 'ouse?"

"That's right Dunno. Well a wanned ter leave home, an' a figured rent is just dead money. Vinnie's my Godfather so when he fixed me up with a full time job a reckoned a mortgage'd be just the same as rent."

"How does someone so young get a mortgage, and how come you ended up wi' an Italian Godfather?"

He looked at me like I'd just fallen from a tree. "You should never fear men in suits, Dunno, there is always a way.." Whatever the fuck that meant. "And believe it or not I'm half Italian. The bottom half! No, me Dad's from Roma and me Ma's from Leeds...A volatile combination, believe me, why d'yer think 'ave left 'ome?"

"Where's yer house then?"

"Funny enough, it's just behind Royal Park College in the 'Claremonts.' One of me neighbours is on the A level course, Ted Smailler, d'yer know 'im?"

"Nah, a've only bin there a few days, I an't really met anyone yet. What's this place like then?"

"It's great...Can get a bit hectic at the weekend but there's a good crowd works

here. Some of the waitresses are horny as fuck."

"Aye, a know, a've met that Carol."

"God! A'd love ter fuck Carol," said Jonny wistfully. "Shiz fit as fuck, but she knows it mind. Anyway, there's plenty more ter choose from believe you me. Yeh, everyone's really nice, well apart from Donny, but even he's harmless enough I guess. Likes to think he's the head chef. Ha! We make Burgers an' Pizzas fer fuck's sake! Anyway, I'm being churlish coz I've got a bone ter pick with him. He keeps callin' me Ginge. I fuckin' hate it!"

## DOWN IN THE BOGS

Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1980

The next day at college, me and Big Mark were called before Gavin Rhine. Derek Wales was pacin' the room behind him like a malevolent midget, the sunlight coming through the slats in the blinds and occasionally catchin' the top of his head, highlighting his hair implants. They reminded me fleetingly of the rows of onions Dad used ter grow down the allotment.

"This Ripper business is a sensitive subject Dunno. There are girls in Leeds too afraid to go out after nightfall for fear of who might be lurking in the bushes."

I was sorely tempted to look at Wales but I kept me eyes firmly fixed on Gavin Rhine.

"However, there's no denying that the tape sent to the police is very dramatic and if you can tell me honestly that you recited it for dramatic intent and not juvenile titillation then I'm sure my colleague Mr. Wales will be happy to overlook the matter."

"A can assure yer, Mr. Rhine, that a woh dead serious about doin' the speech an' a din't expect Mr. Wales ter react like he did, but a wont tekkin' the piss, a promise yer."

"Excellent," boomed Gavin Rhine. "Glad we got that sorted, is there anything else before we draw a line under it?"

"Aye, there is" I said turning to Derek Wales. "Me name's Dunno, not Daisy. Call me Daisy again in front o' the whole class, an' a'll rip yer fuckin' head off."

There were a stunned silence, in which I noticed for the first time that Big Mark could piss 'imself laughin' without makin' a sound. It were the shoulders that gave it away.

Sadly, Gavin Rhine didn't find it funny. He lost it. He came up to me an' prodded me in the chest. "Listen. I've been looking at your file. It doesn't make for a pleasant read. You have trouble with aggression. Spoiling for a fight all the time is not going to do you any favours here, son. The way you're going, the only options you'll have is

selling your arse down Tottenham Court Road."

Derek snorted. "Yeh. He'd barely make the rent. Look at him."

"That's enough, Derek," sez Rhine.

"Why Tottenham Court Road?" sez Mark. "Couldn't he sell his arse down the Headrow? It'd save him the train fare and a long trip."

"Shut it, Spud," a sez. I wasn't havin' anyone takin' the piss out of my arse.

"That's right, pipe down," sez Rhine. "I'm offering you a chance to make good. Keep your nose clean. Work hard and you could have a future. Carry on as you are and you'll end up in prison...or worse. Now, apologise to Mr. Wales."

I took a deep breath. I've never found it easy to say sorry, and it's even harder when I haven't done anything wrong. But I could see Gavin Rhine were offerin' me a lifeline. I'd've been a fool not to take it. I stuck me mitt out. "Soz. A dint mean ter tek the piss out o' yer, an' a wote rip yer 'ead off. Honest."

"Hmm. Fair enough," sez Wales, shakin' me hand.

"And as for you," sez Rhine turning ter Spud. "I don't like stirrers and trouble makers. Don't think a pretty face will keep you out of trouble. I'm watching you."

Spud just shrugged. "I just spoke my mind. That's all. Doesn't the college approve of that?"

"Not when you're a smart arse. Now, an actor needs to be fit and you two are looking pretty pasty-faced. You need to get out more. So, take Meg for a walk."

I heard a snufflin' sound an' saw Meg the ancient black labrador, strugglin' to her feet under the desk, a trail of drool danglin' from her gob like a jungle vine in a Tarzan flick.

"What a lovely dog!" gasps Spud gettin' down on his knees to give her a cuddle.

"Who's a beautiful girl? Who's a beautiful girl? You are! Yes you are. You're gorgeous."

"For fuck's sake!" sez me an' Derek Wales together. As soon as the words were out of our mouths we looked at each other an' he flashed me an icy smile.

Meanwhile Spud's display was obviously havin' the right effect on Gavin Rhine and Meg. Both of 'em were lovin' it.

"Make sure you have her back in forty-five minutes. She needs a heart pill," sez Gavin, smiling like a proud parent.

"Ahhh. Has poor little Meg got a poorly heart?" sez Spud. "Don't you worry, Gavin. We'll look after her like she's our own baby sister, won't we Dunno?"

"Aye," I agreed. "Come on then."

Meg shuffled around like an' old lady on a zimmer frame an' before we had her out of the college she'd taken a steaming dump in the foyer. It were big an' runny.

"Fuckin' ell," I sez to Spud. "Wharra we gonna do now?"

"Get out o' here sharp before someone makes us clean it up," sez Spud with practical common sense. "Come on girly."

"Not so fast you two," sez Horace the little caretaker with the bad wig. I couldn't help but notice how his balls seemed to be hangin' down by his knees. Either that or he had summat really dangly in his pockets.

"What's up?" sez Spud, flashin' Horace his Prince Charmin' smile.

"That!" sez Horace pointin' at the steamin' puddle of runny shite on the floor.

"Yeh. Terrible isn't it?" sez Spud. "Some people just can't hold it in."

"It was your dog. I know it was. Anyway, dogs aren't allowed in the foyer unless you're blind."

"Well, we better take her out quick then," sez Spud. "See yer Horace."

"Not so fast lads. One of you will have to clean this up."

"We can't. We've got to take the dog out. College rules. She's a bit wild. She takes two of us to control her. We better hurry before she turns nasty."

"It'll still be waiting for you when you get back, lads," sez Horace.

"Excellent, that's a date then," sez Spud, draggin' the dog out the door.

When we got back, the pile of shite had been trodden all over the foyer and I could even see shitty footprints goin' all the way down the stairs to the refectory.

"Am off fer a piss," I told Spud. "You can tek 'er back ter Gavin."

Spud were happy enough to comply. "Fair enough. Have a good one. Come on Princess."

I watched him carry her up the stairs to Gordon's office.

To the side of the theatre was a bog that were nice an' quiet an' I thought I'd cut through the back of the theatre while there were no lectures or owt, to get to it. I was definitely hooked by this magical building. When you came in from the bright outside into the quiet, peaceful dark interior it were like entering a big old cathedral, and when the stage lights were on it made your hair stand on end. I just stood for a good few minutes takin' in the atmosphere. It was then I heard what seemed like an argument. A male voice speakin' in an aggressive whisper...

"Listen to me you little prick tease, you're not dealing with one of your spotty little virgin boyfriends now...You play with fire you'll get your fingers burned...Do you understand?"

I heard a shaky female voice say "Yes."

I crept round as quietly as I could to get a better look. It were Derek Wales, an' he had a girl pinned up against the wall.

"So no more games, Simone, Yeh? You're gonna meet me like we arranged, aren't you?"

"Yes, Derek. Okay."

"That's a good girl," he said, brushing his hand against her cheek. "You don't want to be messing around with me Simone...Yeh? I'm not the sort of man you mess around...Believe me."

I slipped silently away an' headed to the bog for a big splashy wee.

I'd just unfurled the python in the urinals when in came Sly's mate, Justin, with his silly dicky bow. Observin' urinal etiquette he moved to the end urinal, leavin' one free in between us. Even so, with another bloke standin' in the same room, I find it hard to piss.

"Let loose the flow of amber liquid," sez Justin. "Amoniac, and salty is its aroma. It rhymes with tea and also with hiss. It also rhymes with a kitchen griddle. Blessed relief it doth bring. Is that not so, Dunno?"

"Aye. A suppose so." I just wished the silly cunt'd hurry up an' fuck off.

Just then the door swings open an' in comes Derek Wales.

"Lads," he sez as he teks his place between us, lookin' well pleased wi' 'imself. It were useless. There were no way I could piss now. Even Justin seemed ter be havin' trouble coz he'd stopped bletherin' on an' was focusin' his attention on the ceilin'. Now I'm no puff but sometimes you can't help but glance down when a bloke's pissin' beside you. Derek Wales were hung like a fuckin' bull an' torrents of piss were sloshin' out, splashin' up an' over the side of the urinal. As he shakes it he glances down at my own member which'd retreated back up into me belly.

"You know what your trouble is don't you, Dunno?"

I felt a hot little splash on me hand. "What?" a sez.

"You're a fool," he sez with a sneer. He zipped up an' walked out, without

botherin' to wash his hands.

I glanced over at Justin.

"Takes one to know one?" sez he.

Maybe he isn't as big a twit as I thought. He finished off pissing and went to wash his hands.

"Are you cruising for boys, Dunno?" he asks as he's dryin' his mitts. "Coz it doesn't look like you're pissing. I'd hurry it up if I were you or people will start to talk."

He went out and at last I were free to piss in peace.

As I were makin' me way back through the foyer I saw a pretty blonde girl coming out of the theatre, her eyes looked all puffy as though she'd been cryin'. She hurried past, an' I felt guilty for lookin' at her arse...It was lovely. It were then that I saw Horace with a mop an' bucket cleaning up Meg's sloppy effort.

"You should be doing this," he sez, lookin' well fucked off.

"Tek it up wi' Gavin Rhine, 'ead of Drama," I said. "It's 'iz fuckin' dog." An' I made me way down the steps to the refectory, with a mind full of troubled thoughts...

I was sat on the steps outside Pattons, havin' a break when Carol comes over an' sits down beside me. She smelled beauuutiful.

"You look troubled?"

"Ah, it's nowt really."

"You fancy me don't you?"

"Blimey you dote mince yer words." I looked into those brown eyes an' felt meself drowning. "Nah, yer not my type."

"Bollocks," she snorted. "I saw that bulge in yer pants when we first met. Yer cun't keep yer eye's off me tits.... Either that, or yer very possessive of yer rolling pin."

What can you say to that? I didn't get a chance to say owt, as it happens, coz with a lingering stroke up me inner thigh she got up an' were gone.

Things are going well at Pattons. The actual making of the toppings, an' the dough itself was relatively straightforward. It's the lobbin' them about, gettin' them from a ball to a disc which took a while to get the hang of. Jonny an' Vinnie were tossin' them about with gay abandon, chuckin' them like frisbees, spinnin' 'them on their fingers an' all sorts, an they'd all land with a splat, flat an round. But it's like riding a bike an' after a few false starts an doughy disasters I were startin' to get the hang of it.

I don't think that Jonny's cut out to be an actor, though. He were pumpin' me about Royal Park, what's it like an' that, an' I was tellin' 'im about me speeches up in front of the whole class, in the spotlight, an' I put on me big, posh, classical actor voice. He had to lean backwards to avoid me spit, but I could tell he were impressed. Nah, He'll never make it. He's not got the basic ingredients. I'll tell you what he has got though, a massive thing for Carol. His eyes follow her all over the shop whenever she's around. Mind you, who can blame him?

"I'm really toying with the idea of enrollin'. It sounds like summat 'ad really want ter do...." We were sat on the steps again havin' a break. "That fucking Clifford St Ledger keeps naggin' me, threatens he'll sack me if a don't...."

"Who's he, then?"

"He's the restaurant manager on Sunday nights, big flamboyant puff, directs opera. He's a nice enough guy but he fancies me an' it's 'orrible. Keeps makin' double

entendres an' that. Mind you, a like working Sunday's here, yer get a nice crowd an' he plays some relaxin' music, it's a nice antidote to the madness of Saturday night."

"Yer fancy that Carol, then?" I sez, not beatin' about the bush like.

He looked at me for a moment, blushed like a beetroot an' nodded "Aye. A fuckin' do." Then he got up, an' went off to check on his dough.

Later, at the end of the shift when Jonny were in the kitchen knockin' up some staff meals, I were sat waiting, minding me own business when Carol came over and sat next to me.

"So when did yer come out the closet then?" she asks.

"Eh, what yeronabout?"

"Well, we've ad a few chats now, and you've not asked me out yet, so that must mean you're gay, or you've got no taste whatsoever."

"Aye, if yer say so love, who am I ter argue wi' such an expert? Anyway a dote wanna be treading on anybody else's toes."

"Oh yeah? And who's toes d'yer reckon you'll be treading on then?"

"That ginger kid, Jonny"

"Awww, me little Ginger puppy. He fancies me like mad, bless him. Sadly my busy lifestyle doesn't run ter baby sitting duties. He'll just have to make do wi' mopin' an' dreamin'. So, where do you live, with yer Mam and Dad?"

"Oh aye, yeah, just because you obviously do, but like ter mek out yer dote, dunt mean yer can tar everybody else wi' t' same brush. A'm a big boy me, love, an' a dote play games. A've got me own pad. Yer more than welcome ter come round after work

fer a smoke anytime yer like...Presumin' of course yer not too scared of real men...an' yer Mum an Dad let yer play out after ten." I looked deep into her beautiful brown eyes an' saw them flash with anger. God she were gorgeous. Believe you me, I'm usually crap with birds, but the mix of the new flat, Park Royal and her big head, brought summat out in me that I quite liked.

"Alright then Big Boy. I'm on again in a couple of nights. Afterwards we can go back to yours. Assuming of course you know what you're doing?"

I gave her me best hard man look. "Yer dote have ter worry about me love." Inside, me heart were beatin' like a bastard an' I had to restrain mesen from leapin' all over her and rippin' all her clothes off. It was then that I saw Ginge had brought some dishes to the table and had heard our conversation. He looked completely dropped on, and after givin' me one of them searchin' looks that say a million an' one things and nothin' all at the same time, he slipped quietly away.

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF

Thursday, September 18th 1980

We were wolfin' down steak 'n' kidney pie an' cheese sarnies in the refectory, ignorin' the squares from the Business Studies classes, and now that I'm an expert, discussin' the merits of the different birds in our class.

"Am tellin' yer Sea Breeze is fit," I asserted. "A love them thigh high black boots shiz always wearin'."

"That laugh of hers gives me a fuckin' headache though," sez Spud.

"Who cares about her laugh, compadre?" sez Sly. "Just make sure you don't make her laugh? Shun't be hard for you, that Dunno?"

"Ah, but laughter is the food of love," sez Justin.

"That's music, yer silly twat," sez Spud.

"I beg ter differ, my fine Fenian friend," Justin argues. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

"Cart disagree wi' yer there, chum," a said, helpin' mesen ter one o' his chips.

"And the way ter win fair maid is through the gift of laughter," he continues. "Of course, it helps if you've got a big cock. That's one thing you don't want her laughin' at, so it looks like you're on a hiding to nothing, Dunno."

"Yer cheeky cunt. A bet my cock's way bigger n' yours."

"You forget, I had the dubious pleasure of seeing it the other day in the Gents. For a minute I thought I needed an eye test. Then I realised I'd need a microscope."

Sly an' Spud were lappin' it up.

"A'm not sure a like you very much. Yer a cheeky cunt. An' yer a liar."

"Tis plain, not pretty, cold not witty, clear not opaque, friends it hurts and foes it makes. What is it?" sez Justin.

"How the fuck should I know?" I snap.

"Is it water?" asks Sly.

Justin snorts contemptuously.

"Is it piss?" asks Spud.

"Since when did piss hurt your friends unless you splash it in their eyes?" sez Justin. "Give up? "

"The Truth!" sez Sly, with a grin.

"Bravo!" sez Spud. "We have a winner, the Puzzler does it again."

A shadow fell over t' table an' a deep oily voice boomed. "Hello boys."

Now I'm a big feller, but the lad loomin' over us was a fuckin' giant. He had that sort of flabby but strong build, a bit like a young Oscar Wilde, an' he were wearin' one o' them American fraternity jackets in bright green satin. His face were larger than life too, all big an' sort of ugly attractive if you know what I mean.

"So you guys are the new bugs?" he sez. His voice were dead posh an' his aftershave carried more than a whiff of brimstone with it. I could tell he was a villain. He sounded jus' like that tiger in the Jungle Book. "I'm Ted Smailler. No doubt you've heard of me."

"No," sez Spud. "Should we have?"

For a second Ted looked a little put out. Then his smile returned. "Yes. If you're serious about drama. I'm the north's leading practitioner."

"You've got the wrong man," sez Spud. "I think that's me you're talking about. Mark O'Hagan."

Spud offered Ted his hand an' Ted took it. But instead of shakin' it an' lettin' it drop he started squeezin' it. Hard. Lookin' all the while intently at Mark. Spud winced a bit but didn't say owt.

"I'm going to offer you boys the chance of a life time," sez Ted, lettin' go of Mark's hand and lookin' at me, Sly an' Justin the fuckin' Puzzler.

"What's that then?" asks Sly.

"I want the three of you to appear in my new one man show."

"Eh? How can it be a one man show if thez four of us in it?" I ask.

Ted chuckles a bit, indulgently. "I'm the one they come to see. Lunchtime theatre. I like to treat the college to a different show each month. Interested? If Gavin Rhine sees you, it could win you a part in the college production."

"What's it about then?" I ask.

"Leaders and Sheep," sez Ted. "It's a series of structured impro sketches. I want you boys to be my foils. Eat up and come along to the theatre and we'll have a rehearsal. I want to put the show on tomorrow lunchtime."

I looked at Sly an' Puzzler. They shrugged an' nodded.

"Aright. Ted. We're yer men."

"What about me?" Spud asks.

"Don't worry yourself, pretty boy," sez Smaller looking at Spud contemptuously. "I just want people who look like they know what they are doing."

"I know what I'm doing," sez Spud.

Smailler sighed. "Okay. I'll see if I can squeeze something in for you to do."

We followed him into the theatre. Derek were in there with that blonde bird, Simone. He moved away from her as we came in an' looked a bit annoyed til he saw Ted.

"Teddy! I was just going through a couple of speeches with Simone. What's going on?" It were weird. Derek Wales was actin' almost human.

"Just running through a few pieces for tomorrow's lunchtime extravangza," sez Smailler. "I've got a few recruits. Thought I'd show 'em the ropes."

Derek nods his head an' strokes his beard. "Well, well, well. Good choice Ted." Then he turns to us. "Lads, you're about to learn one of the prime lessons of the actor manager."

"Ace," a sez. "What's that then?"

"Always surround yourself with inferior talent. That way the audience only has eyes for you."

Derek left us alone just as I started feelin' uncomfortable. Was this Smailler feller gonna make us look like a bunch of cunts?

"Right, the name of the game is impro," sez Ted. "So we won't actually do a run through. Leave most of the work to me and just follow my instructions. As I said, this is a series of sketches on the nature of leadership and sheep. I need a couple of Nazis? You'll do...Daisy is it?"

"Dunno."

"Right, Dunno. You're Nazi one. Bow Tie boy, you're Nazi two. Irish, you can be the prisoner, and you... what's your name?"

"Sly?"

"Sly. I want you to operate the lights. It's simple enough. You just turn the houselights down on my signal and flick on the spot after ten. Got that?"

"Yeh? Is that it?"

"This time, yes. I'll give you something juicier next time. Okay? Great. We meet up here tomorrow at half twelve. Curtain up at one sharp. Oh and do this well and you can come to my pad for an after show party tomorrow night. Girls galore. You do like girls, I take it?"

I kept on gettin' those tremors whenever I thought about tomorrow's lunchtime performance. Impro's a new thing to me an' I know fuck all about it, an' all these new kids I'd met were all cocky bastards. Not at all like the nutters from Halton Moor I grew up with. Mind you, there were summat strangely likeable about them. They were all confident fuckers an' really optimistic an' emotional about everything...like the world belonged to them. I could get to like that way of thinkin'.

When I got to Pattons, Jonny was barely speakin' to me. It was just as well that it were Carol's day off. I could also see why he gets fucked off with that Donny. It were "Ginge, can ya do this....and Ginge can ya do that!" And he were just gettin' on with it without sayin' boo to a goose. During a break I said he should tell that Donny where to get off.

"When the time is right, I will strike," he sez all enigmatic.

Those were the only words the silly cunt said to me all night. Luckily for me Bruce came over at seven an' told me ter go down to the bar an' have a go there this evening coz they were one short.

"Nigel will show you the ropes."

It were a piece of piss. Any twat could do it. At the end of the night I were sat round the staff table when Jonny put a pepperoni pizza with plenty of French mustard down in front of me.

"You ant flegged in it 'ave yer?" I asked.

"Ner, why would a do that?"

"Coz yer heard me invitin' that Carol round ter mi gaff the other night."

"It's a free country and you can invite who you want...Shiz not my girlfriend."

"A Know...Shiz a ball breaker mate. Shi'll lead yer a right merry dance. Yer've got no chance. Shiz not interested. All's fair in love and war. Jus' dote be fucked off if somebody else has a crack at her."

"No, A wote bi fucked off. Like yer say, shiz a ball breaker. Have a good time."

Does that carrotty conniver know summat I dote?

Fuck. I'm lyin' in bed. An' I can't sleep even though I'm knackered. Tomorrow's the day. Will I be a star or a twat? Come on... the world belongs to me. The world belongs to me. The world belongs to me. Ah fuck it. I'm gonna try countin' sheep instead.

## MEN OR SHEEP?

Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1980

It were the day of me first ever proper public performance. I was shittin' it. Me an' Sly met up with Justin, Spud an' the Devil's Apprentice, Ted Smaller at half twelve, in the theatre as planned. Me nerves were janglin' and me belly were doin' impressions of a Russian gymnast.

"So what are we gonna be doin', then?" I asked. All this not knowin' were doin' me head in big time. I had the feelin' we were bein' set up for one fuckuva nasty fall.

"I told you boys," sez Ted. "You follow my lead. Here, I got you and dicky bow boy some costumes out of wardrobe."

He hands us some black Nazi uniforms left over from last term's college production of The Dancing Years.

"What do I get to wear?" sez Spud.

"These," sez Ted, pullin' out some old pyjamas. "You're a prisoner of war. Pyjamas were standard issue."

Spud sniffed them. "Thez skid marks in 'em."

"They didn't have a laundry service in POW camps, Paddy," sez Ted.

"What are you gonna wear?" asks Justin the Puzzler. I could tell he were just as nervous as me coz he weren't botherin' with any of his enigmatic riddles or owt.

"This," sez Ted, pullin' out a gold crown from his bag. "It's symbolic. Right, Sly, go out into the foyer and start rounding up punters. I want a full house in here."

"Yeh? Everyone wants to see Dunno take centrestage?" sez Sly.

Ted laughs like a blocked up drain. "Nice one. No offence but Dunno is nothing. Stick with me though lads, and some of the glory'll rub off on you all."

Ted showed me the tabs for pullin' the curtains on the stage.

"When I give the word you pull them open."

"Yes bwana." I were gettin' a bit sick of the posh twat bossin' me about, but I knew it'd be worth it. Me first ever show.

It were ten to one when the audience started comin' in. I peeked out from the curtains. Fuck the place was really fillin' up.

"Break a leg, lads," whispered Ted, puttin' his great meaty hand on mi shoulder. "Curtain up."

I pulled on the curtain an' Sly dimmed the houselights. Then on came a spot. Ted were whisperin' to Justin. Justin nods an' walks into the spot.

"Greetings!" sez Puzzler.

A roar of female cheers went up from the front row. "We want Ted! We want Ted! We want Ted!"

Fuckin' 'ell. There's no understandin' birds. They all loved the big ugly fucker.

Justin held up a hand. "All good things to those who wait. Once in a generation, a man will rise up above the herd. A wolf perhaps? Or a leader? Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Teeeeeed Smailler!"

The cheers were rapturous. The lucky cunt'll be gettin' well shagged tonight. You'd think he were John Travolta the way they were goin' on.

Ted whispers to me. "Get on all fours and carry me on."

"Eh?"

"Do you want to look a fool in front of all these people?"

"No a dote."

"Then do as I say."

"Aright."

I got on all fours an' Ted Smaller sat on me back. It were like givin' a baby elephant a piggy back.

"Now move into the spot."

I shuffled slowly on stage, me back screamin' almost as loud as the girls. I looked up an' saw Derek Wales an' Gavin Rhine sat there too, pointing and laughing. I suppose I must've looked a sight. A Nazi with a big fucker with a crown on his back.

"Gee up, horsey!" yells Ted, imperiously, givin' me a smack on the arse.

I'm not used to strangers touchin' me arse an' I reered up, sendin' Ted crashin' to the stage with a bump.

"Ow! My fucking head!"

There were an intake of breath from the birds and I heard Sea Breeze cacklin' away like a demented witch. Then when Ted got to his feet an' wagged his finger at me the audience began applaudin'.

"I think this horse needs the fire taking out of him," sez Ted. Then he bows an' addresses the audience. "Some men are born to ride and others are born to be ridden." He pointed at me, an' Derek Wales let out a wolf whistle. "Thus it is now, and thus it has always been. Men, bring in the prisoner." He glares at me an' Justin an' we rushed backstage an' bundled Spud out.

"A chair!" sez Ted. "A chair! My kingdom for a chair."

Sly got his moment of fame bringin' a chair onto the stage. For the occasion he'd manufactured a limp an' was dribblin' like a loon.

"Yeth mathter?" he sez.

The audience laughed but Ted didn't look as if he appreciated someone tryin' to upstage him. "Begone, slave!" he sez.

"Yeth master?" sez Sly gettin' on his knees an' crawlin' towards Ted. "But firht

allow me ter kithh your feet? Kind mathter?" He covered Ted's boots in dribble an' just as the big fucker was about to give 'im a kick he skuttles off, bowin' all the way.

"Sorry about that, ladies and gentlemen," sez Ted. "You can't get the help these days. Now, men, tie the prisoner up."

Me an' Justin plonked Spud down in the chair an' looked at each other.

"Herr Spray, zere ist nein rope for to tie der verdamt prisoner," sez Justin.

"Use your belts."

A undid me belt an' me Nazi trousers started slowly ridin' south. Me undies weren't me best ones, but the audience thought it were all part of the act an' were lovin' it. Justin's kegs must've been a better fit coz he didn't have any problems. We tied Mark up with the belts.

"Now, tell us all you know little man," sez Ted, bendin' over Mark.

"About what?"

Ted sighs an' turns to Justin. "Hit him."

Justin pretends to slap Mark across the face an' makes the sound effects to go with it "SHLAPP!"

"Not a pretend slap, fool," sez Ted. He hands me a leather glove. "Here, show him how it's done."

I gave Mark a tap across the clock with the glove.

"Harder," sez Ted.

I slapped Spud a bit harder.

"Ow!"

"Now," sez Ted to Spud. "Who is your master?"

"I 'aven't got one."

"Wrong answer. Boys, push the prisoner onto the floor."

"He might hurt himself," I whisper.

"Just do it, or you'll ruin the show," sez Ted, glaring.

We pushed Spud's chair over so he was helpless on the floor.

"Again. Who is your master?"

"Yer a fuckin' maniac. Yer've done mah back in."

Ted then squatted over Spud an sat on his face. "I'll ask you one more time. Who is your master?"

"I can't fuckin' breathe. Gerroff!" came the muffled shrieks from Spud.

Ted grimaced an' then let rip with a beefy, thunderclap of a fart right in poor Spud's face. All you could hear from Spud now were spluttering chokin' noises. The audience went mad, cheerin' an' stompin'. I know birds don't like farts and that, but the birds in Ted's fan club obviously did. I glanced at Justin, who didn't look too happy.

"I feel another one brewing," sez Ted. "One moment please."

As he let rip in Spud's face with another scorchin' fart I raced back stage an' grabbed the first thing I could get me hands on.....It were a wastepaper bin. I hurried back into the theatre an' tipped it all over Ted's head.

"Arrrghh! You cunt!" sez Ted, covered in yoghurt, banana skins an' all sorts of crap from the bin.

I turned to the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen," I sez in me best boomin' actor voice. "The sheep revolt. Long live Lord Dunno!"

"Long live Lord Dunno!" Sea Breeze started chantin' from the audience. Then Friga an' the rest of our class started joinin' in. Even some of Ted's fan club of rough birds were chantin' it too. Sly dimmed the lights. Justin shoved Ted off Spud an' untied him. Then as Sly brought the lights back up we all gave a bow an' headed off to get changed, the sound of applause ringin' in me ears.

After I'd pulled the curtains closed, Ted Smailler came up to me, still drippin' in bin shit. He didn't look happy, so I stuck out me chest an' stood square on, lookin' him in the eye. Ready.

He stared back, then grinned. "Nice work boys. Impro. Thinking on your feet. Nice turn. Revolution. Very clever. I like it." He shook me by the hand tryin' to crush it, so I crushed his back. Then he turns to Spud, whose eyeliner was smeared either from sweat or tears I'm not really sure. "No hard feelings about the farting? It's all theatre."

Spud nodded. "I'll live." Then he clapped me on the back. "Good one, Dunno. That was the business."

When we were changed a gang of our classmates were waitin' for us. A cheer went up.

"Dunno, you were great," sez Sea Breeze. "Yer really put that big fuckin' wanker in his place."

"Thanks pet."

She gave me a peck on the cheek an' I felt mesen turnin' red.

"Come on, lets get summat ter eat."

"Before you go, you'll have to clean that mess up," comes a voice. It were Derek Wales. "I suppose you think you're clever, spoiling all Ted's hard work for a few cheap laughs, eh, Big Man?"

"I think it were cheap laughs he were after," I sez. "Fartin' an' that."

"Yeh, yeh. An answer for everything. You obviously don't know your French Farce, and comic impro genius when its laid out in front of you. Get it cleaned."

As I were clearin' up the mess on the stage. Ted came back in, wearin' a clean shirt but he still had bits of shit in his hair.

"By the way, Plebians. The invitation's still on for tonight. Party at my pad. Be there or be square, turkeys."

"A'm not sure a wanna go ter a party at that big arsehole's place. Hiza cunt. Anyway A've got ter do a shift at Pattons."

We were back at the flat an' I were just cookin' up a couple of bacon sarnies for me an' Sly.

"A know he is?" sez Sly. "And yer can come after yer've finished work. Party wote be in full swing til then anyway? More brown sauce, brother?"

"Put yer own brown sauce on it, yer lazy cunt."

"Suddenly everyone's a cunt? Chill out a bit, tiger? So, Ted Smailler's a cunt? I'm a cunt? You're a bit of a cunt too?"

"Eh?"

"I'm just sayin' it dunt matter? We're all cunts but Ted's a pussy magnet? Birds flock ter him like flies ter shit? Well, then? A'm not being funny or owt but I've not seen you with a bird since the day I moved in, an' that Justin the Puzzler said he caught you in the Gents the other day showing Derek Wales yer cock? C'mon Dunno, are you a bum boy or what?"

"You berra watch yer mouth Sly. Yer headin' fera smack! A'll have yer know am supposed ter be bringin' a well fit bird back here fer a smoke after work tonight, so if you all fuck off ter the party, that'll leave the way clear fer me an' a bit o' Dunno action....."

"Nonsense... Bring her to the party? Look.....We're on for a pussy marathon tonight? Spud and Justin are going? If Spud can let bygones be bygones, why can't you eh, amigo mio?"

Sly had agreed to meet me outside Patton's at closin' time an' I'm not sure how good an idea that was coz the cunt couldn't keep his eyes off Carol. After work we walked to Ted Smailler's house, Carol in the middle linkin' her arms through me and Sly.

Ted Smailler's place were just round the back of the college. It were in a quiet little square, but the music blarin' from the house was far from quiet. It were Rod Stewart screechin' Do ya think a'm sexy?

"A fuckin' 'ate Rod Stewart," I grumbled as we got to the door.

"I dote," said Carol, "I think he's dead fit!"

The door were opened by a middle aged woman with one of them elfin type hairdos. I'd heard the word 'Bohemian' before, but I never knew what it meant until now. She were wearin' a see-through gossamer thing an' yer could see her bra. At first glance her boobs looked pretty good. She was definitely what Sly'd call a fine lookin' woman. An' he did.

"Hot stuff?" sez Sly. "You are one fine lookin' woman? D'yer know Ted? We're mates of his?"

"I'm his Mummy," she sez in a deep, sexy voice.

"No fuckin' way? Scuze my Francais. But that is unbefuckinlievablaisement? I thought you were one o' the petite femmes in our class?"

She gave him a bright smile an' told us to come in. Carol didnt need no second invitation. With a whoop of delight she galloped off into the room playin' the loudest music an' disappeared.

In the hall there were kids neckin' an' makin' out. Ted's Mam didnt seem to pay 'em any mind.

"Ted's upstairs, get yourselves a drink from the kitchen if you like," she sez.

"Cheers."

Justin an' Spud were in the kitchen talkin' ter Sea Breeze, Friga an' Pauline from the course.

"Hey look, it's Lord Dunno," sez Spud, tossin' me a can of Double Diamond.

"So, can I get you a drink?" sez Sly to Ted's Mam.

"Oh, sure. Mine's a martini."

"Leave it to Sly?"

Straight away he was jugglin' bottles of vermouth and gin an' tossin' olives in the air. I couldn't help but notice Justin givin' him a fierce black look.

"What's up wi' you?" I asked.

Justin shrugged. "Nothin'. Why?"

"Yer dote look very 'appy wi' Sly."

"He can't keep his hands ter himself. You'd think he'd treat a lady like Mrs. Smailler with a bit more respect."

"His mekkin' her a fuckin' martini, yer puzzlin' ponce. What more's he supposed ter do?"

"It's what he wants to do that bothers me."

So that was it. Justin had the hots for Ted's Mum. With all the quality totty in the place you'd think he'd choose someone a bit closer to his own age. But then that's the Puzzler for you.

"Shall we have a look round?" sez Sea Breeze sidlin' up to me.

"Aright," a sez, openin' me can of Double Diamond.

A jet of foam sprayed up in me face. That fuckin' Spud did it on purpose. He were laughin' fit to burst. I didn't dignify it by sayin' owt though. I jus' wiped me hands on me kegs an' me face on me sleeve and sucked the froth off the top of the can.

"Let's have a look upstairs?" sez Breezey.

Oh yes. I knew she fancied me. Talk about gettin' the green light. We stumbled over neckin' couples all the way up the stairs til we came to a black door. I opened it an' went inside.

The room was all painted black with a big pair of red lips on the walls an' a four poster bed in the centre of the room. A drum kit stood beside the window an' as I looked up I saw meself lookin' back down at me. The whole ceilin' were one big mirror. I heard movements comin' from behind the curtains of the four poster bed. Sea Breeze pulled open the curtains an' we were greeted by the sight of Ted's massive arse humpin' up an' down at top speed. At last there was a grunt an' Ted rolled off a spotty lookin' bird with teeth like a farm horse. She gave me a blissed out grin.

"Hey, Daisy...er Dunno. Who's this?" Ted treats Breezey to one of his wolfish grins.

"Sea Breeze," she sez. "Hi Ted."

"Hi. Hey Dunno. Fancy going swapsies? Gilda here's just getting warmed up, aren't you love?" He give's Horse Face a peck on t' forehead. "Come on gang. Hop in. There's plenty of room for all of us."

"No thanks. Yer alright," sez Sea Breeze backin' away.

"I'll pass this time," a sez. "No offence love," I nodded at horsey face. I didn't wanna offend the poor lass. Just coz a bird's ugly, there's no reason to treat 'em bad. "It int that a dote fancy yer. Burra had a wank before a came here."

"Who cares about that?" Ted called after us as we headed to the door. "I have about six wanks a day an' there's still plenty left for the ladies. Isn't that right, Gilda?"

"Oh Teddy," she brays. "You're an unstoppable sex machine!"

I hurried downstairs after Sea Breeze. She'd disappeared into another room. I opened a door. It was jammed with people an' there was a disco ball hangin' from the ceilin'.

Everyone was dancin' like nutters to 'Boogie Nights'. Breezey was boppin' away an' laughin' like a maniac at her partner who was wearin' a cowboy hat an' lookin' like that feller from Dr Hook. He turned around an' me mouth fell open. It were Derek Wales.

"I thought I could smell something funny," he sez, shoutin' over the booming bass of the hi fi.

I ignored him. "Wanna go outside fer a bit?" I ask Breezey.

"She's with me," sez Wales holdin' on to her waist.

"Oh. Right."

I left the room, wonderin' what to do. I didn't like leavin' her there with that psycho. Still she'd be alright so long as there were people around. I went downstairs an' saw Friga in the kitchen snoggin' some bloke up against the wall. I got mesen a fresh can of beer from the fridge an' nearly died of a heart attack when she pulled away from the feller. It was Justin.

"Puzzler, you dark horse," I said, full of admiration.

"Still waters run deep, my friend," he sez before gluein' hiz gob back to hers.

I went out into the back garden. It were one of them tiddly little squares but it was heavin' with people. Spud was chattin' up a group of lasses an' Sly were feedin' grapes to Ted's Mam like she were Cleopatra or summat.

"Sly," a sez.

"Not now, mate?"

"Spud?"

"Hey, Dunno. How're they hangin'?"

"Aright. Listen. Sea Breeze is gerrin chatted up by Derek Wales."

"Dirty fucker."

"Aye a know, but we cart let her leave wi' him."

He sighed. "Okay. Ladies, if you'll excuse us."

He stopped off at the fridge an' took a couple of cans of beer out an' began shakin' them up. Then he followed me down the corridor to the disco room. People were actually shaggin' on the hallway now. Tchhh. No self control.

Derek Wales had Sea Breeze up against the wall. She were laughin' like a donkey but it didn't seem to be puttin' him off.

"Come on, just a little kiss?" he sez. "I'm your teacher. I want to teach you about love and passion. It's my duty."

"Derek, you silly sod," she sez, laughin' away.

Spud gave his can an extra shake, an' nodded at me to do the same. Then on a silent count of three we pulled the ring tabs an' covered Derek Wales in a fountain of beer.

"Gaaaahhhh!" he yells, spinnin' round on his built-up heels.

"Oh shit!" cries Spud lookin' all innocent. "Fuck. These beers, eh Dunno? Someone must have shaken them up?"

"Yeh. Sorry Mr Wales. Wiv ruined yer shirt."

"You clumsy cunts," he snarls. "I'll see both of you tomorrow." Then he stomps out of the room, pushing people out of his way.

"Good one Spud," sez I.

"Did yer see his face?" Spud was splutterin' with laughter.

Sea Breeze started laughing too. "You did that on purpose? Yer mad fuckers. Yer've ruined me top."

"Take it off then," sez Spud, grinnin'.

"Fuck off, yer worse than Walesey," she sez. "I'm soakin'. A'm off home."

"Can a walk yer home?" I asked. A dint like her goin' home alone, not wi' Wales

on the loose in a beer soaked shirt.

"Can yer fuck. It's miles away."

"We could get a taxi."

"A'm not shaggin yer or owt," she sez.

"Fair enough."

So off we went, down to the City Centre to catch a taxi. On the way I was sure I saw Derek's MG followin' us, but it could've been me over-jangled nerves, janglin'. Sea Breeze were a dead nice girl, if you could just stop her from laughin', which were impossible. I tried kissin' her in the back of the cab but she pushed me away, laughin' like a nutter.

"Gerroff. Yer stink of beer."

"So do you," a sez.

When we got to her place in Crossgates I walked her ter her door an' a big bastard with a beer belly comes out an' has a go at her for bein' late.

"I was at a party, Dad," she sez. "This is Dunno."

"So fuckin' what?" sez her old man. "Fuck off, Dunno. Yer not gerrin' a taste o' her snatch ternight."

"A dote wanna taste it," a said. But he must've thought I were just givin' him cheek, coz he told me to fuck off again an' slammed the door in me face.

It were then that I realised I didn't have any money left. Talk about wrong decisions...I'd played hard ter get with that Carol an' I reckon I could've been in there, but I put all me money on Sea Breeze, reckonin' she were a cert. An' now here I was in the middle of fuckin' Crossgates, no money, an' not so much as a sniff of fanny...Fuck.

I set off walkin' at a fair pace. Crossgates isn't much better than Halton Moor in the rough as fuck stakes an' I figured the quicker I crossed the border into a posh district,

the better my chances of avoiding a trip to Casualty. I kept me thumb out as I walked along in the hope that some benevolent person on his way home would stop an' gimme a lift. Unbelievably me luck were in for once.

A car indicated and pulled up forty yards or so ahead. I ran to catch up.

"Where yer goin'?" asks the feller, windin' down the passenger window. He had a bit of a high-pitched voice but he seemed friendly enough.

"Beeston."

"Aye, alright. Hop in!"

"Nice one. Thanks pal."

"No problem. Am on me way back ter Bradford so a can drop yer off on the way."

Ever since me Uncle Vince used to wale into me with his belt I've had a dislike of fellers with beards, but this guy seemed alright. Mind you, his eyes were a bit funny. All black an' beady. Still, I'd only be with him for a while an' he were hardly likely to start whoppin' me with a belt on first introductions.

"So...Missed the last bus, have yer?" he asks.

"Sort of...A saw a girl home an' spent the last o' me money on a cab fer 'er. Thought a might o' bin in there, yer know."

"That's birds fer yer," he sez, fixin' me with his black eyes. "They 're always lettin' yer down."

"What about you?" I asked. "Are yer on yer way 'ome from work?"

"Ner...I've just been out with a few mates, doin' what all men our age do. Lookin' for a suitable woman."

"No luck?"

"Ner...Womankind is safe for at least another night," he said with a little smile.

"A wun't mind but a were in there wi' another bird but a left her at the party. A woh tryin' ter play hard ter get...Reckoned shi woh a birruva ballbreaker...thought a'd play it cool."

"They're all fuckin' ballbreakers, kid," he said with a bit too much feelin'.

We drove on in silence til we got to Beeston.

"Here you are then son! Door ter door service," he sez pullin' into the kerb.

"Thanks a lot mate...That's right kind o' yer. It woulda tekken me ages ter get home."

"Not at all. The pleasure was all mine."

"I'm Dunno" I sez, puttin me hand back through the open window for him to shake.

"Well, very nice meeting you Dunno," he replies givin' me a warm handshake. "My name's Peter. See yer around mate."

He let go of me mitt, gunned the accelerator, and were gone.

Dunno HQ at last! I let mesen in and walked into the kitchen to find a stark bollock naked Sly downin' a glass of water, thirstily.

"Fuckin' 'ell Sly. Not exactly the first thing a wont ter see when a come through the door. What yer doin' in the knack?"

"Havin' a fuckin' breather, brother?" he sez, fillin' his glass again. "Got a chick in there and she is in-fuckin-satiable. She can't get enough?"

"Oh God, no! Dote tell me yer knobbin' Ted Smailler's Mum?"

"No mate...Bin there, done that. It's that pussycat you introduced me to...Carol?  
She is fuckin' beautiful and really hungry fer Sly cock. I think a'm in love?"  
And before I could say owt, he was gone. Great. Just fuckin' great.

## SOMEONE SHOOT THE DEE-JAY

Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup> 1980

Next mornin', Sly sidled in to me room with a mug of tea AND a bacon sarnie...Guilty or what?

"Hey Brother why the long face?"

"D'yer need ter fuckin' ask? No wonder yer called Sly, yer cunt."

"What on earth are you talkin' about, Skipper?"

"Don't you 'Skipper' me. You know damn well. A din't chip Carol up so you could volley her in. Yer pissin' on me lamppost, pal. Get yer own birds yer sneaky twat."

"Eeek! Hey, Bro, you are destined to lose yer hair or have a massive heart attack at this rate? Are you drip fed testosterone through the night or summat? Last I saw, you were off ter get a cab with Sea Breeze an' a woh thinkin' well done, Dunno? Mission Accomplished?"

"Shi fuckin' blew me out. A never even got ter first base. Carol were me back-up plan."

"Ooooh Greedyguts! How was your old pal Sly ter know? A tell you, quality totty like Carol in that nest o' vipers in't gonna stay unattached fer long. When a saw old Walesy sniffing round, I 'ad ter get in there fast?"

"When a left yer, you were movin' in on Mrs. Smailler. What 'appened?"

"Oh boy, Where do I start? I tell you mate, you ain't lived until you've had a woman in her forties? Those chicks are sensational? They've popped out their sprogs and are realising that their little well-oiled fannies ain't gonna remain well-oiled fer much longer and if they don't get ter tick off their sexual fantasies then it ain't ever gonna happen. That foxy lady din't mess about. She lead me by the hand into her ladies

chamber and boy! She knew exactly what she wanted....'Take your clothes off ! Take off my panties! Touch me here! Lick me there! Punish me for being a naughty girl!' She was up for anything.....ATM, Back door action, the lot? Then when she felt fully serviced a was dismissed? 'I might call you again when I need you, now go! Go and enjoy the party!' What a doll! I tell you Dunno, I'm thinking of setting up a business servicing the more 'mature' ladies. What d'yer reckon?"

"A reckon yer a greedy, dirty bastard and should find yer own birds...Now fuck off an' leave me alone."

He'd jus' closed t' door when a called 'im back.

"There's no more bacon?" he sez.

"Ferget about the bacon. What the fuck's ATM when it's at home?"

He started laughin'. "Yer mean yer don't know? Arse to mouth? Yer should try it some day?"

"You should 'ave a fuckin' government health warnin' stamped on yer head, yer dirty sod. That's disgustin', that is."

I slouched about in bed all day, until it were time to go to Pattons for me shift. I left Sly watchin' Doctor Who.

"If you'd only invest in a Video Recorder I'd tape it for yer?" he sez as I'm headin' out the door.

"Dote worry. Yer can tell me all about it when a get in. Providin' yer not busy shaggin' someone else's bird."

When I got to Pattons, Bruce told me I'd be on the bar tonight. Ace. Saturday on the bar.  
It means you're out front with all the hot totty.

"Hey, Dunno, great party las' night," sez Carol comin' over. I noticed she'd got a great big love bite on her neck.

"Yer look like yer got eaten alive," I said, tryin' not to feel jealous.

"I hate guys who do that," she sez. "It's like they're tryin' to mark their territory.  
You tell that Sly he's had his last slice o' Carol Pie."

That cheered me up a bit. "Will do, pet. Watcher up to later on?"

"Keep yer nose out, nozzerk," she sez, glidin' off.

It were only then that I noticed someone fuckin' about with the sound system coz a big screech of feedback went right through me lugs.

"SKREEEEEE...PFF...PFFF....Testing...testing...this is a test...do you read me?  
SCREEEEEE..."

"Course a fuckin' do, Puzzler. What the fuck're you doin' here?"

It were Justin, all done up in a sparkly shirt with a sparkly dicky bow an' mirrored sunglasses. He were surrounded by loads of LPs an' was on his hands an' knees pluggin' cables into the PA.

"I'll give you a clue. I come in two syllables. My first is a river but not the Thames. My second is a bird who is sometimes blue but not a tit."

"Yer could o' fooled me," I sez. "Can't yer just tell me straight?"

"I'm the Dee-Jay. The River Dee...The Jay...Dee-Jay. Get it?"

"Yeh. A do now. So when did yer get this gig?"

"Today. I came in and asked for a job. That Bruce feller said he needed an experienced jock. I told him he'd got one...Me."

"Oh. Right. And are yer experienced?"

Justin shrugged. "I will be if I do it often enough. Hey, is that the bird Spud got off with last night?"

He were lookin' at Carol, who was fiddlin' about with cutlery an' lookin' over at us. She gave us a coy little wave.

"Yer mean Sly, yer silly cunt. Get yer facts straight."

Justin shook his head an' took his sunglasses off so he could get a better look. "Ner. That's her alright. She was all over Spud. Then Sly got in on the action later on. What a wild cat."

Tchhh.

As I went back to the bar Jonny came over.

"So, how d'yer get on last night with Carol?" he asks.

"Ahh," a said. "A changed mi mind about 'er. A got ter thinkin' how much you fancy 'er an' a thought it wun't be fair."

His orange head went a deeper shade o' amber an' cracked inter a big jack o' lantern smile. "Really? Nice one, Dunno. I appreciate it. I'll put extra pepperoni on yer pizza tonight."

"Cheers."

The first punters of the evenin' were comin' in. A group of birds on a hen do. They all wanted cocktails.

"I'll have a Bloody Orgasm," sez one blue-eyed little sex pot, perched on a bar stool, an lookin' ready to fall off it if a gust of wind blew the wrong way.

"Will yer?" sez I. I gave her a tomato juice with a good shot of vodka an' tequila in it. Fuck knows if it was a bloody orgasm but it looked bloody 'orrible, I'll give it that.

"Pff...Pfff...SKREEEE...Hi there...this is the Puzzler welcoming yer all ter get down an' dirty at Pattons. Julie's gettin' married in the mornin' an' this one's for her...The

Rolling Stones and Star Fucker..."

I noticed Bruce lookin' a bit tight-lipped an' if I were a gamblin' man I'd 've bet a week's wages on Justin not lastin' the night as Dee-jay. Still the girls were enjoyin' it, laughin' an' screechin away an' orderin' Blue Nuns galore.

Carol came over to collect some beers for a table of lads.

"Play your cards right an' I might be yours tonight," she sez.

"I always play me cards right, luv," I assured her, tryin' ter make me voice sound low an' sexy, mainly so as that carrotty pizza chef wouldn't hear me.

"SCREEEE....it's Collette's birthday an' her boyfriend has requested The Eagles and Hotel California... we haven't got that, so here's The Sex Pistols and Pretty Vacant..."

Carol rolled 'er eyes. "He's a bit of a one that Dee-jay, in't he?"

"Aye. Hiz a right nutter."

"Cute though."

I'll never understand birds. Just then I noticed Carol's face look as if someone'd just pinched her arse hard. She turned on her heel an' walked out. I turned to the door an' there were Sly, with Ted Smailler's Mam. For fuck's sake.

"SCREEEEE...Here's the Bonzos and Urban Spaceman for The Slyster..."

Sly gave us a wink an' allowed one of the other waitresses to show him an' Mrs. Smailler to a table. As they were glancin' at the menu, he looks over at me an' clicks his fingers, the cheeky cunt.

"A bottle of yer finest Don Perignon...iced? Cool?"

"Ask the waitress," I snap.

I felt a hand on me shoulder. It were Bruce."What are you doing? Mrs. Smailler's one of our best customers. If she wants you to bring her a bottle of bubbly,

just fuckin' do it, Dunno."

"But we ant got any Dom Perignon," a sez.

"Oh just bring us something cold an' expensive?" sez Sly. "With bubbles in it?"

"SCREEEEE...Testing...It's quiz time...babes and hunks...and first off we've got Collette's current beau, Darren. Say hi, Darren."

Darren, a red faced rugby type got up an' waved shyly.

"Now for three points how old is Collette today?"

"Errr..."

"Wack Wack Whooops! Nil Poi. Sorry Darren not fast enough. Time to look for a new squeeze, eh Collette? Let's boogie along to Yes Sir I can Boogie."

When I went for me break, Jonny followed me out to the steps.

"Hey Dunno. A'm gonna do it. Tonight's the night."

"Eh? What yer on about?"

"Am gonna ask Carol out."

"Oh. Ace." He looked so excited I decided I'd have to give Carol a knock-back. I mean, don't get me wrong, I do fancy her, but this ginger muffin's got it bad for her. An' never let it be said that Lord Dunno is gonna stand in the way of true love when it comes a knockin'..

When I got back to me station, Carol were waitin' on another table, but she kept shootin' venomous glances over at Sly an' Mrs. Smailler.

"I wunt o' thought he'd wanna eat mutton when he could've had a nice juicy little lamb," she sez.

"Yeh. Weird," I agreed.

Then she leans over the bar an' kisses me long an' lingerin'.

"Whooo-hoooo-hooo! Get yer tits out fer the lads!" the lads at Carol's table

started cheerin'.

"We better play it cool," I sez, noticin' the dirty looks from the customers, from Bruce and from Jonny.

As soon as she'd gone off to wait on a table I hurried over to Jonny.

"Listen, Ginge...er... I mean Jonny... dote go gettin the wrong idea. Shi jus' wanned ter get that lad over their jealous."

"Why'd she wanna do that?" asks Jonny, suspiciously.

"Coz shi woh shaggin' him t'other night. That's all. Burrit's okay. He dote seem interested."

Ginge weighed all this up. "A suppose a can't hold her past against her. Shiz obviously hopin' someone special'll come along an' take care of 'er."

"Aye," a sez. "No doubt about it."

"SCREEEE...Let's dim the lights an' get some under the table action going on...here's Barry White ter show yer how it's done."

The lights went down an' I noticed Sly slippin' under the table. I don't think he were lookin' for his wallet coz he hasn't got one. Sly an' Mrs. Smailler left pretty soon after, both of 'em lookin' like cats with a bellies full of cream. Carol glared at them.

"See yer, cats?" sez Sly with a cheery wave. "Compliments to the chef?"

The shift were over an' as I tucked into me pizza, I saw Justin talkin' to Bruce as he packed up his records.

"So, I bet you never saw anything like that before, eh?" sez Justin. "We'll be the talk of the town. The New York of the North. The Babylon of the twentieth century..."

"Hmmm. Well..."

"Do you want me in tomorrow, to spice up your Sunday nights?"

"Errr....not tomorrow no. In fact, we're pretty much booked up with dee-jays for the next few months. I'll give you a call when we need you. Okay?"

"Righto. But you'll have to gimme plenty of notice. I'll probably be booked up."

"Sure."

Jonny came over. "Howz the pizza?"

"Ace."

"A'm gonna go an' ask her now. A reckon am in fer a bit o' romance ternight."

"You go for it, Jonny."

He got up an' stopped in his tracks. Carol were stood in the door, draped all over Justin, the puzzlin' little chancer. They were snoggin' away like they were alone, tongues lollin' an' spit dribblin' down their chins.

"Let us begone, fair maid. Our chariot awaits," sez Justin, plonkin' his box of records in her arms, kissin' her again, an' givin' her a cheeky slap on the arse.

Jonny were speechless, an' to be honest, so was I.

"How'd that cunt get off wi' her?" asks Jonny.

"It beats me, mate."

"Oh well. Looks like I'd better book an appointment wi' mi right hand," he sez.

"Yeh, me too," I agreed. "Wi' my right hand. Not yours."

## A LAZY SUNDAY

Sunday, September 21st 1980

Spent all day in bed. Got up to go for a walk in the afternoon but it were rainin' so I didn't stay out long. Then me an' Sly got wasted an' watched Sammy Davis Junior and Bruce Forsythe on the telly. Brucey's always given me a pain with his 'Nice ter see yer, ter see yer nice' catchphrases, but I love Sammy.

"Wharra showman, eh Sly?" a sez.

Sly just shrugged. He wasn't really interested an' he wanted ter put some shite on the record player instead.

"Wait til it's over cart yer?"

He accepted this alright, but once it were over I was treated to some nutty hippy shite by the Incredible String Band. All sitars an' stuff.

"Stop moanin' an' have a suck on this?" Sly sez passin' me his homemade water pipe. That was it then... the door was open wide for freaky conversations. We ended up smokin' ourselves stupid while Sly got off on his favourite whacked out topic of how Derek Wales is really the Yorkshire Ripper.

"I'm tellin' yer, hiz a serial killer? Anyone who grows a beard ter make up fer the fact that they're goin' bald has gotter be bad news?"

"A dote think hiz hair's gorrout ter do wi' it, mate," a sez. "Thez loads o' serial killers who ant got beards or bald heads."

"Name one?" he sez, passin' me the bong.

"Er... How the fuck do I know? It int as if a've got pinups o' me top ten favourite serial killers hangin' up on the bedroom wall. A dote know what any of 'em look like."

"The original Jack the Ripper was bald? An' he had a beard?" sez Sly all serious.

"How the fuck do you know? No one knows who he was, yer silly cunt."

"Yeh? Well, it was fashionable back then? Beards an' that? Chances are he was goin' bald too?"

"Yeh an' a bet he wore cowboy boots as well."

"A wunt be surprised? It's another reason in't it? Hiz a shortarse? He's gorra be mad about that? Look at Hitler an' Napoleon?"

"Yeh an' Ronnie Corbett an' Dudley Moore. All famous murderers. Yer talkin' cock, Sly."

I headed off to bed, but I couldn't sleep too good. I kept thinkin' of the fuckin' Ripper out there... watchin'...an' if Sly was to be believed he was me fuckin' Drama teacher. Then I got to thinkin' how much Derek Wales hated me. I know the Ripper's only killed women so far, but if he's that way inclined what's to stop him havin' a go at me? Fuck...I've had it with Sly an' his fuckin' gear, makin' me paranoid.

## FATHER 'N' SON

Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1980

Back to college with a woolly head thanks to Sly. He was right as rain, an' fresh as daisies as we got the bus into town. He even tried chattin' up the bus conductress.

"You free in the evenin's love?"

"I'm old enough ter be yer Mam, yer cheeky sod."

"Mebbe a need some motherin'?"

She looked like she were about to give him a clout but instead she took a pencil out of her bag. "Gimme yer phone number if yer like?" she sez.

Sly sighed. "We ant got one put in yet?" He looked at me like it were my fault. "Why don't a meet yer after work?"

"Alright. I get off at seven. Meet me at the bus station. Me name's Julie by the way."

"I'm Sly?"

"I know you are, but what's yer name?"

"It is hiz fuckin' name," a said. "Come on, Casa fuckin' Nova. This is our stop."

Once we were in the foyer I made a beeline for Justin who was chattin' away to Sea Breeze an' the rest of the girls.

Justin, yer puzzlin' prick! How the fuck did yer pull that off t'other night?"

"Eh? I think it's you that's being a puzzle now my friend? Do what?"

"Gerroff wi' Carol?"

"Is it difficult? I hear Sly found it easy enough? As I told you before, music is the food of love and in my guise as resident DeeJay for the night I was the Music Man. Hence the job was easy. Just call me Mister Love."

"So are yer seein' her again?"

Puzzler shrugged. "Who can say? I'm a popular man. And while there are many ladies, there is only one Puzzler."

Fuckin' 'ell. There must be summat in the water an' I must be the only fucker not drinkin' it.

I nodded off in drama. We were doin' what Derek calls theory. Goin' on an' on about the Theatre Practitioners of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It were only towards the end that me ears pricked up.

"We'll be casting for the end of term show on Friday. I suggest you all swot up on Ibsen's Ghosts. A fantastic play. One of the first great naturalist plays...ever. And can you explain to us all what we mean when we say 'naturalistic', Dunno?"

Blimey, he was callin' me Dunno an' not Daisy. "Er...realistic?"

A piece of chalk flew threw the air like a bullet an' struck me on the ear.

"Bollocks! Moron! Naturalistic and Realistic are two opposing art forms. Naturalism began in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a way of creating a perfect illusion of reality."

"Oh right," a sez. "An' wharrabout Realism then?"

"Well...that's just something else. As I was saying, get hold of a copy of Ibsen's Ghosts. Learn a piece and we'll see what you can all do on Friday."

"Who's it by?" asks Spud.

"What do you mean, boy?"

"Who's Ibsen's Ghosts by?"

"It's by Ibsen, you cretin."

Spud snorted. "What a bighead. Imagine writin' a play wi' yer own name in it. It'd be like Shakespeare writin' Shakespeare's Hamlet."

Another piece of chalk flew through the air. "The play's called Ghosts. It's by Ibsen. Henrik Ibsen."

Ace. I love a good Horror Story. I can't wait.

When we were comin' out of the theatre, a shadow fell over us. Ted Smailler were there in a towerin' fury.

"Sly!" he roars.

"Yeh?" sez Sly meekly. If he were afraid, he didn't show it.

"Have you been screwing my Mum?"

Now Sly looked afraid. He's normally got a sallow complexion but now it were like paper. "Errr....well..."

Ted's enormous face cracked into a massive grin an' as he clapped Sly in a bear hug he broke into song. "Consider yerself at home...consider yerself one o' the family..."

Sly was lost for words an' so was everyone else.

"So... you're my prospective Stepfather, eh?" booms Ted. "Excellent. Couldn't have chosen better myself. Now listen kid...tonight, just you and me, we'll go for a few beers, eh? Spend a bit of quality time together. Son and Dad. What do you say?"

"Er...great?"

Wharraswizz! I picked up a copy of Ibsen's Ghosts from Austicks on the Headrow an' I gave it a glance durin' me break at Pattons. There aren't any ghosts in it or any scary bits. It's just about some silly ol' widow an' her moody son who were born with the clap an' spends all his time wanderin' about in a strop. They reckon this Ibsen feller's supposed to be the grandfather of modern drama but I can't see it meself. He's a right borin' old fart. I didn't get into this actin' lark to ponce about pretendin' to be an artist with syphillis. I want to do real classic stuff that'll be remembered forever, like Alien or

The Empire Strikes Back or if I'm gonna get all highbrow then I suppose I might consider summat like Caligula which was a pile of shite to be honest but at least there were plenty of shaggin' in it. I'm fucked if I'm gonna waste time learnin' a speech from this pile of dreary old bollocks.

I were workin' with Jonny on pizzas tonight. He seemed right full of hissen for a change, whistlin' an' jokin' an' singin' Dean Martin songs under his breath.

"What's up wi' you then?" a asked.

"Au contraire, dear Dunno. Au contraire. Everything's just tickety-fuckin-boo."

"A mean why're yer so happy. It in't normal fer you. Are yer feelin' alright?"

"Carol's said yes," he sez, lookin' like a little kid on Christmas mornin'. "Shiz gonna go out wi' me ter La Phonographique after work."

"Nice one," a sez.

I were havin' a break on the steps when Carol comes over for a fag. She gave me a right dirty look.

"What's that look for?" a asked.

"Setting me up with that fruit cake friend o' yours. Was it supposed ter be funny?" she sez blowin' smoke in me eyes.

"Eh? Which fruitcake friend o' mine? Whatcher on about? I ant set yer up wi' anyone."

"Yer know damn well. That weird dee-jay. A thought he woh right cute...yer know, the quiet ones are usually right horny in bed. Could a gerrim inter bed? Could a fuck. He jus' wanned ter talk an' read me bits from this book o' riddles hiz bin writin'. A

told 'im he could shove hiz fuckin' puzzles up hiz arse an' walked out on him. A've never bin so offended in all mi life."

So...Justin didn't shag her then? He just wanted to read to her? I knew there were summat funny about that one.

"So, a hear yer off out wi' Ginge ternight?" a sez, tryin' to change the subject.

She shrugged. "Unless summat better comes up. And no...am not goin' back ter your place. Not if that creep Sly's gonna be there."

"A think hiz goin' out wi' his step-son," a said.

"Step-son? Whatcher on about, Dunno?"

"Never mind. It's a long story."

When we went back inside, Jonny was starin' at us. All moody an' hurt. He reminded me of that cunt in Ghosts.

As I joined him at the station he whispered, "I 'ope you an't bin stirrin' things between me an' Carol."

"Have a fuck. Honest, yer in there mate. A'm not interested." It wasn't exactly the whole truth, but I reckon that Carol's nowt but trouble. Ginge is welcome to her.

We finished early coz the restaurant were empty. As Carol an' Jonny were goin' out the door, she turns back to me as I'm finishin' off me pizza.

"Sure you don't wanna come clubbin'?"

Jonny stared daggers at me, darin' me to say yes.

"Ner. Yer alright. 'Ave a good time."

I were just turnin' the key in the door back at Dunno HQ when it opened an' me Mam almost fell out into me arms. She were all red in the face an' out o' breath.

"What you doin' creepin' about in the dark, yer sneaky little git?" she snaps.

"Nowt. Am not creepin'. Am jus' comin' 'ome."

"Dirty stop out."

"A've bin workin'."

"Huh."

"What're you doin' here anyway, Mam?"

"You mind yer own business. A've bin stockin' up the shop."

"Oh."

"Well, yerve wasted enough o' me time as it is. A've gorra be gerrin home."

"I'll walk yer ter the car."

"Fuck off. If that Ripper feller tries it on wi' me a'll 'ave hiz balls fer breakfast."

She probably would too, but I walked her to the car anyway.

When I got upstairs, Sly were all naked an' sweaty, just about to go into the bathroom.

"What the fuck've you bin doin'?" a asked.

"Errr...jus' some sit ups? Got a bit sweaty? A'm gonna have a shower? Night Dunno?"

He's a shady fucker, that Sly. I wonder...no... he wouldn't...would he? Not with me Mam? For fuck's sake. I'm gonna have to keep an eye on the pair of them.

PLAYIN' GOOSEBERRY

Wednesday, September 24<sup>th</sup> 1980

Wednesday night were quiet as the grave at Pattons an' Bruce let us go just after ten.

"Fancy comin' round ter our new pad, fer a spliff an' a drink?" sez Jonny.

"Eh?"

"I've just bought a new flat. Fer me an' Carol."

"Fuck me! You move fast."

Jonny shrugged. "Well, the paperwork's not through yet, but it was my Aunt's. She said we can move in straight away."

"But a thought yer had a place by the college?"

"I wanned a fresh start. Carol gets a bit jealous. She didn't like the idea of moving into a place where I'd had other girls. I told her I hadn't had any girls. But you know what women are like. So, I got this place in Headingley. Just by the Arndale Centre."

"Ang about...what d'yer mean yer an't 'ad any girls. D'yer mean yer a virgin?"

He went redder than his hair. "Not any more mate. Carol's dinamite."

At that moment Carol came out of the ladies havin' powdered her nose or whatever it is she were doin' in there.

"Did I hear my name?" she sez.

"I was just sayin' how beautiful you are an' what a lucky man I am," sez Jonny, givin her a sloppy kiss.

"Gerroff. Yer embarrassin' Dunno."

"I an't got money fer a taxi," a said, feelin' a bit embarrassed.

"No worries, pal," sez Jonny. " I've got the Beetle. Not much ter look at but she'll

get us there in one piece."

Fuckin' 'ell. That Ginge's got everythin'. Two flats. A car. A bird. Tchhh.

I squeezed into the back an' off we headed for Headingley. As we were goin' down the Otley Road an MG came hurtlin' towards us on the wrong side of the road.

"Maniac!" Jonny yelled out the window as the car swerved aside at the last moment.

The driver flashed us a V sign an' yelled summat at us. I don't know what it was, but I knew who it was. It were Derek fuckin' Wales.

"That's me drama teacher," I said. "Hiz a right wanker."

"He'll be my teacher too after half term. A'm gonna sign up. Carol reckons a'll be a major star in no time," sez Jonny.

Carol leaned over him an' started snoggin' him.

"Hey... cart yer fuckin' wait til later? Keep yer eyes on the road. A dote wanna break mi neck jus' coz you two wanna shag yerselves silly."

As we pulled up by Jonny's flat, I noticed a load of flashin' lights just down the road. There were an army of cops cordonin' off an alleyway.

"Fuckin' nice area yer live in, Jonny. An' a thought Halton Moor were bad."

"It's probably nothin'," sez Jonny, puttin' his arm around Carol. "Don't worry sugar plum. I'll go and see what it's about. Dunno will keep an eye on you, won't yer Dunno?"

"Aye. Course a will."

She looked about as scared as a lion confronted by an angry poodle.

"Hiz a silly cunt," shi said, when his back were turned.

Jonny didn't take long. He looked worried. "There's nowt ter worry about, honey. A woman got attacked in the alley half an hour ago."

"Is she...?" I began.

"No. God no! Shiz alright. Sort of. They've tekken her ter hospital."

"Was it the Ripper?" I asked.

Jonny went purple. "Shhhhhh. No. Course it weren't. This feller tried stranglin' her. It was probably just a domestic. Don't worry, Carol."

"A'm not fuckin' worried. Can we go inside? A'm freezin'?"

It was hardly surprisin' she were cold. Her skirt barely covered her arse. It were like one of them little tissues they give yer in a Wimpy bar to clean your hands on.

The outside of the house weren't much to look at. All peelin' paint an' in need of a good lick of paint but when we got into the flat, I were surprised to see it were fully furnished in black leather. Stylish.

"Fuck. New furniture? This must o' cost yer a few bob."

Ginge shook hiz head as he led us into the kitchen. His fridge were like a submarine. All grey chrome. He tossed me a can of Double Diamond. "Ner. Not really. A just moved all the stuff in from me other flat."

He were lookin' so pleased with hissen I couldn't help but try an' deflate him a bit. "But if Carol din't wanna live in yer old place coz she din't like thinkin' of yer in there wi' other birds, dunt the same go fer t' furniture? A mean, wharrabout the sofa, or the bed? How many chicks've bin pleased on 'em eh?"

Ginge went red. Carol woh starin' at him hard. "I swear...I've never touched anyone on that bed. Or the sofa. You know I haven't, Dunno. Carol...it's true."

She shrugged her pretty shoulders. "Yer get rid o' all this shit termorrer, Jonny. Either it goes, or I go."

"Yes love. Of course," he sez. A man defeated.

We went into the sittin' room. The telly were massive an' I noticed Jonny even had a VCR with a library full of videos. The walls were lined with speakers too an' when he popped Barry Manilow on the stereo it was almost like ol' beaky was in there with us, which didn't do much to set me at ease.

I eased mesen into an armchair an' it were like lyin' back on a fluffy cloud. Ginge an' Carol were sat on the sofa. Well I say sat...more like laid out on it, neckin' an' caressin' each other.

"You make me feel so alive, Carol," sez the ginger knobhead. Imagine sayin' that in front of someone else? Me respect for the kid went out the window.

"Shall we go into the bedroom, Jonny love?" sez Carol.

"Mmmmm."

"Hey," a sez. "Wharrabout me?"

"Am not havin' you in there," sez Jonny. "Am not one o' them kinky fuckers."

For fuck's sake.

"Believe me mate, it's the last place a wanna go. Am jus' sayin', yer invited me over here. A din't come here jus' ter wait around while yer shag each other stupid. Either gerra grip on yersens or am off."

"I didn't figure you fer a prude, Dunno," sez Carol, adjustin' her skirt, what little there was of it.

"Am not. Burra fuckin' 'ate playin' gooseberry. A'd sooner go home an' listen ter Sly talkin' shite."

Believe it or not the ginger knobster got annoyed at that. "Oh well, if yer don't wanna hang out with us, why did yer bother comin' in the first place?"

"Coz yer invited me, yer silly cunt, an' a couldn't think o' an excuse not ter. A thought we'd be chattin' an' havin' a laugh."

"I was havin' a laugh Dunno, until you spoilt it," sez Jonny.

"Right, well...A'll be off then. See yer."

I didn't want to get narked with them coz it'd make workin' right difficult, but I were comin' pretty close to chinnin' that Jonny, I can tell you.

"See yer," sez Jonny an' Carol before turnin' there attention back to each other.

"Err...can yer lend us a few bob fer a taxi?" a sez. I hated askin' 'em for money after all that, but I was fucked if I was gonna walk home with some nutter on the streets stranglin' folk an' that.

"He don't wanna go, Jonny," sez the mischievous little minx. "A reckon yer were right about him. He wants ter stay an' watch."

Jonny was up like a bat out of hell. He pulled out his wallet an' handed me a couple of quid notes. "Here yer go. I want it back on Friday after we get paid. Okay?"

"Sure."

The cops were still hangin' about down the road, an' there wasn't a taxi in sight. I started walkin'... an' walkin'...an' walkin'... When I got home, Sly were sittin', naked (again), cross-legged on the floor in the livin' room, with his eyes shut.

"What the fuck yer doin'?" a asked.

"Meditatin'?"

"Well fuckin' stop it. A've had enough o' people doin' stuff they should do in private in front o' me. A feel like one o' the dirty mack brigade. Hey, did yer hear about that attack in Headingley?"

"Ner?"

"Aye. A woman nearly got strangled. An' guess what?"

"What?"

"A saw Derek Wales drivin' away from t' scene."

"Yer kiddin'?"

"Gospel truth, Sly. Now put it away an' mek us a tea."

## SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1980

Derek Wales had his A Level class come an' sit in with us in the auditions for Ibsen's Ghosts. Ted Smailler was there with his harem of slutty concubines. I was a bit fucked off to see Sea Breeze an' Friga sittin' with them too. Haven't they got any loyalty?

"Look at him. He thinks he's fuckin' King," sez Spud O' Hagan. "Well, I'll show the big fucker, you see if I don't."

Gavin Rhine were there an' all with a great big folder an' pen at the ready, his dog at his feet, slobberin' away in geriatric canine dreamland.

"Right, " sez Rhine, takin' over from Derek. He was the head of Drama an' he weren't about to let Derek Wales forget it. I've always had a suspicion the two of 'em didn't get on. "Ghosts. This term's serious drama. We'll be doing a musical too, but this is the one that's going to really test your abilities. Who's read it?"

Every hand in the auditorium went up. I bet half of them were lyin'.

Derek stepped forward then. "Good. Good. You've done your homework. Any thoughts on the play? Dunno?"

Me blood ran cold. I hate bein' put on the spot an' expected to come out with summat brainy in front of a crowd.

"Errr... well, ter be honest, Mr. Wales, a din't like it."

Wales smirked an' Rhine looked interested. "And why's that then, Dunno?" he asked.

"A felt a bit ripped off. A woh expectin' a horror story, an' all we get is some cunt...er...some feller wi' syphillis."

Wales sneered even more. "Well... Mr. Dunno thinks he's a drama critic. What

an in-depth insight..."

"Just a moment," sez Gavin Rhine. "In many ways Dunno is right. Yes, the title does make you expect a horror story. However, you're mistaken if you really think Ghosts isn't a horror story. After all, what could be worse than to be born with the stigma of a deadly sexually transmitted disease? A death sentence from birth...The sins of the father visited upon the child has seldom been more ably demonstrated."

"Correct," sez Derek. "Your thinking may be flawed Dunno, but your point is good. Imagine the horror of contracting syphilis without even the fleeting pleasure of intercourse." He directed that sentence directly to Friga, "Tragic and horrific."

"Now, do we have any takers for the part of Mrs Alving?" asked Gavin Rhine. Sea Breeze, Friga and a couple of girls from the A Level class all put their hands up and we had to listen to all of 'em recite the same speech over an' over. It were borin' as fuck but I've got to admit Friga an' Sea Breeze were the best. Friga looked ace, all Scandinavian statuesque beauty but Breezey gave it plenty of Yorkshire heart. Gavin an' Derek whispered to each other. They seemed to be havin' problems reachin' an accord.

Eventually, Gavin Rhine announced that Friga had got the part. "It's a big part my dear. Make sure it doesn't consume you."

Friga jus' gev a little nod of the head an' smiled that icy smile of hers. Sea Breeze gave her a big hug an' everyone broke into a round of applause. I was jus' relieved it was over at long last.

"Now we come to the part of Oswald," sez Rhine. "Any takers?" Surprisingly there were only two. Ted Smailler an' Spud O'Hagan.

Derek Wales started laughin'. "Oh Look. Big Mark O'Hagan, our resident Irish buffoon, thinks he's ready to tackle one of the major parts in world drama. How long

have you been acting, boy? Since breakfast? You're not digging up the roads now, you know, this is art."

Fuck knows how he did it, but Spud made the borin' drivel come alive. You actually really felt for the cunt. I hate to say it but he were brilliant. He'd even managed to get rid of hiz Belfast accent for the occasion an' sounded like a proper posh actor. We all cheered after he'd finished an' Derek Wales just glared.

"Well done, lad," sez Gavin Rhine. "I'm impressed."

"Ted?" sez Derek. "Do you want to show them how a real actor does it?"

"Can they take the excitement?" sez Ted, stretchin' like the lazy slob he is. He didn't even bother learnin' the speech. He just read it, an' he were a rotten sight reader, stumblin' over the words like a blind man. When he finished Derek whistled his appreciation.

"Well done Ted. Needs work but that's what the rehearsal process is for. With a bit of practice we'll give the punters something to remember. As for you Spud...Osvald isn't from Belfast, in case you hadn't realised. He doesn't speak with an Irish accent."

Spud were furious. I don't blame him. "He doesn't speak with an English accent either, Mr. Wales. He's from Norway."

"Yeh...yeh...yeh...always need to have the last word, don't you? Stop showing off and just use your eyes and ears and you might learn something. Look at Teddy's technique, he's got an ear for the classics. I'll make an actor out of you one of these days, young Mark. You mark my words. Mark my words, Mark."

Some of the toadies laughed dutifully.

Gavin Rhine sighed. "I thought he was good, Derek."

"Yeh... good... but not good enough. The part was written for Ted. Anyone can see that."

So that was it. Derek had his cast. The bird he fancied an' the biggest arse licker in the college. Good luck to him. It were a shite play an' we were all well off out of it. Or so I thought.

"Dunno," sez Wales. "I don't think you're suitable for anything in this. But I want you to be on the book in rehearsals and you can be assistant stage manager to Justin. Okay?"

Justin didn't look too thrilled either. "Am I stage manager then?" he asked.

"Unless you make a monumental ass of yourself yes."

"Oh goody," he sez, rollin' hiz eyes.

"Don't look at me like that boys," sez Derek, with a cruel leer. "I'm doing you a favour. You're obviously taken with the theatre, yet neither of you have the looks or charisma to make a go of it as actors. I'm preparing you both for a career backstage. It can be very rewarding. Okay, a stage manager doesn't get to screw the leading lady, but he can have his pick of chorus girls. You'll be thanking me one day."

As he turned his attentions back to Friga, an icy shiver went right down me back. Would she be alright with him? Was it any of my business? Nobody'd take me seriously. In fact with my record of fightin' people'd just think I were makin' trouble. Ner...the only thing I could do would be to keep me eyes peeled an' me ears to the ground.

I walked into the livin' room at Dunno HQ to find Sly stark naked with a huge stiffy. He were bent over it tryin' to tie a bit of string round his bell end.

"Fer fuck's sake Sly... 'ave yer no sense a decorum? A've 'ad a busy day an' your cock is the last thing a wanna see."

"Stand back and admire my friend? Stand back and admire? Surely you can concede that it is certainly a thing of rare beauty?"

"Only ter you yer silly cunt.....now down periscope an put it away....please."

"Oh I see? It's alright ter stare at Derek Wales' in t' bogs at college, but mines not good enough?"

"Watch it Sly....Yer oversteppin' the mark." Curiosity got the better of me.  
"What's wi' the string?"

"Ah-ha! Measuring the girth old chum? The ladies like a thick one... What do you think o' this?" He throw over a bit a paper he'd been scribblin' on.

*Hello Ladies! Sly Black's the name, but you can call me discreet! I'm here to banish those lonely lady blues. My AI escort services goes one way, and that's straight to your heart! So if it's a partner for the cinema, theatre or a dinner dance, or maybe just a house call to warm away the chills of a lonely bed.....Then Sly's your man.....*

"It's not quite finished?" he sez as I finish reading.

"A gathered....When are yer gonna tell 'em about the thickness of yer cock?"

"I know?" he sez, completely serious. "It's important? If they've plucked up the courage ter call then they'll want ter know it'll be worth it? Maybe Justin can help, he's good wi' words?"

"Dote know about that....He's a silly bastard, by t' time yer've worked out what he's tryin' ter say, yer'll 'ave fucked yer self..."

"Hmm, I suppose your right...Also how can I put inter words that I'm willin' ter swallow me own cum?"

"Eh?! Am a sure I 'eard yer right?"

"Yes you did? Look Dunno, a lot of ladies are happy to put the old chap in fer a bit of a gobble but they can get a bit miffed when you spray yer man fat down their

throat? So I've acquired a taste fer me own jizz? That way, if I spray they can transfer it ter my gob an' a can swallow it for 'em? Would yer like ter try some?"

"I 'ope your fuckin' jokin yer sick cunt...Now put some trousers on."

I stomped off to make a cup a tea.

I were just fillin' the kettle when there was a knock at the door. I went down to find Carol standin' there as bold as brass.

"Oh," she said, "a din't expect ter see you here?"

"A cud say t' same." a said.

"Sly told me ter come over...He's expecting me."

"What about Jonny?"

"What about Jonny? Who are you, His fuckin' Dad? It's my life an' a can do what a want. Now shift!"

She pushed me aside and went off up the steps. I wouldn't mind but Carol, as I no doubt keep sayin' is really very fit. An' she were right, I'm not Ginge's Dad. If he get's his heart broken it's not any of my business. I couldn't face going upstairs so I thought I'd take a stroll an' pick up an Evening Post.

He's a randy sod, that Sly, an' I wouldn't mind but he's nowt to look at. I had to stifle a laugh at him offering out some sophisticated old bird to a dinner dance. Her lookin' distinguished in make-up, perfume and her best frock and him lookin' like a stupid, scruffy hippy. Still, there's no denyin' the ladies go ga-ga fer 'im. There really is no justice in the world. I were stopped in me tracks by the headline at the newspaper stand.

*'HEADINGLY ATTACK WAS THE RIPPER'*

Underneath was a crude photofit of the attacker lookin' just the spit of Derek Wales...

## THE WEEKEND STARTS HERE

Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1980

I was walkin' into town to do me shift at Patton's when Sly caught up with me.

"Hold yer 'osses there partner, I'm comin' wi yer?"

"Why?"

"Well, I figured I might ask that Brucey feller fer a job? I mean if you can work behind a bar then any fucker can?"

"Thanks."

"Plus, if there are any more waitresses as hot as that Carol, then I want first crack at 'em?"

"Blimey, when the dick is hard the brain is soft Sly."

"Wise words, Kimo Sabe. It's a good job my brain is already soft and my dick is always hard then...Wanna check?" The silly sod thrust his hips right at me.

"Give over Sly....Dote be startin' all that again. I 'ad terrible nightmares the other day that a wee drowning in vats of cum."

"Woah! Tough luck compadre? Also what better way to get my new business off the ground than being on the front line as it were? Just imagine how many of my escort leaflets I could dish out on a busy Saturday night?"

"Oh aye, Bruce will be throwing job offers at you once he finds out that you're tryin' ter sell yer sorry arse to every female customer...Tek a day off from being a wanker, Sly."

We walked on in silence until a rich deep voice behind us boomed "Daddy!"

It was Ted Smailler lookin' like a right tosser. His hair were gelled back in a big quiff an' he had a big white blouse with loads of ruffles down the front, obscenely tight drainpipe trousers in which he'd obviously shoved half a cucumber or a big courgette,

and big black pointy winkle picker shoes, which because of his gi-normous feet, looked like clown's shoes or summat you'd expect the Pied Piper of Hamlyn to wear. A healthy dollop of eye liner finished off the ensemble.

"If you're heading into town to go to the talent shop, forget it. They're out of stock...I've got it all."

"If yer say so," sez I.

"Oh don't be touchy. I'm only joshing with you...It's not your fault you ain't blessed with film star looks, and as for you grubby boy," he said turning to Sly, "I've got Mummy going round the house from room to room wailing in woe for her lost love."

"Well....I...Er.."

"Nah! Only jokin' chum, the silly old slapper doesn't give two hoots. Think she's already moved onto the next....So, sorry Dad, looks like you won't be taking me to the zoo on Saturdays."

"Where are you going?" I asked, more out a politeness than owt else.

"To my favourite store. The old costumiers down Lower Briggate. Got a few ideas for 'Ghosts'. Also I was thinking..."

"Well, well well. Look who it is. Little Lord Fauntleroy an' hiz two little girlfriends. So, big famous actor...Where d'yer park yer helicopter?"

It was Barry Eccles, self-crowned terror of Halton Moor.

"Go fuck yersen Eccles."

"Haven't seen you up on the Moor fer a few weeks now. Yer gettin' too good fer us are yer?"

"That's right Barry, whatever you say."

He eyed up Sly an Smailler, "So these your new friends then? No wonder we 'an't seen yer....Yer obviously hidin' in shame. Dote wannus ter see that yer 'angin' out

wi gay Human League rejects an' dirty trampy hippies."

"Now look here my man...You better watch your mouth. You don't know what you're dealing with." Ted stepped forward trying to look as tough as possible, and that was the trouble, Barry Eccles knew exactly what he was dealing with and Ted Smailler 'playing' hard was the opening he was lookin for. A look of thunder and the devil himself swept over Barry Eccles and fists clenched, he stepped forward, coiled and ready. Ted swallowed, He wasn't expecting a look like that and was already shittin' his pants.

"Sorry Barry, yer misunderstood my friend there, what he wanted to say was this..." And without warnin' I smacked Barry Eccles as hard as I could.

It takes more than that to put a Halton Moor nutter to the floor an' I've got to confess that I might of waded in a bit. Ted Smailler scarpered for his life at the first opportunity and you couldn't see him for the cloud of dust left in his wake.

Sly looked shocked and said, "Cripes Dunno! What yer doin?"

"Soz Sly, but if yer gonna tek on someone like Barry Eccles, yurv got ter finish the job."

"Oh right, Gotcha!" He joined me in administering a few kicks.

Once we established Barry were out for the count we picked him up an' placed him on a bench. His wallet had fallen out his pocket and Sly helped himself to the contents.

"What the fuck are yer doing Sly?"

"Well, he started it? So I'm imposing an on the spot fine... It's only fair?"

There was no arguing with that logic. Sly shoved the empty wallet back in Barry's pocket and we carried on our way.

We got to Patton's to find Jonny sat on the steps with Carol perched on his knee.

"Hi Dunno, Hi Sly! Sly...Have you met Jonny?" Fuckin' 'ell she's a bold one is that Carol.

"Hi Sly," sez Jonny, all polite.

"Hi Jonny," sez Sly tryin' desperately not to sound guilty and sheepish.

"Guess what?" says Carol.

"What?"

"This!" Carol, flashed the sparkly engagement ring on her left hand.

"You are jokin'?"

"No Dunno, we're not Joking, and anyway, shouldn't that be "Congratulations?" sez Jonny.

"Oh yeah, yeah. Congratulations." I tried to sound enthusiastic but failed badly.

We left the happy couple an' went inside to see Bruce.

"Who's yer friend, Dunno?" he sez, glancin' up from the Daily Mirror an' givin' Sly the once over.

"Hiz a mate. Sly, meet Bruce."

"Hi, brother? I like that aftershave? What is it?"

Bruce looked at him askance. "Am not wearin' any aftershave."

"It must be the kitchens," a said. "Bruce, Sly wants a job."

"What can yer do, then, Sly?" sez Bruce.

"Basically, anything Dunno can do, I can do better?" sez the cheeky cunt. "I wouldn't mind a crack at the bar?"

"No fuckin' way," a sez. "The bar's mine ternight. Int that right, Bruce?"

Bruce shrugged. "If you say so, Dunno. Tell you what, Sly. I'm gonna take a

chance on you. You can do the washing up tonight. We'll see how you get on with that."

Sly looked dropped on but he took it like a man. "Okay, but I think yer missing out? Someone like me would be great out front? Putting the ladies at their ease?"

"Scaring them to death more like...You'll have to smarten up a bit if you want to work front of house, so as I say, we'll take it one day at a time. Washing up."

As I left Sly with Donny an' Jonny in the kitchen, I couldn't help grinnin'. Sly grabbed me by the arm as I were leavin'.

"Dunno, do me a favour? If you see any single ladies, give them one of me fliers?"

"Fuck off. A'm not yer fuckin' pimp. Yer can go an' stick 'em up in phone boxes when yer shift's over."

I really like Saturday's in Pattons. Bein' in charge of the bar's ace for meetin' all the sweet young things. Tonight was no exception. A crowd of birds had all stopped in for a bite to eat an' a few drinks before headin' off to the Warehouse or La Phonographique for a pose an' a boogie. It's always fun meetin' new people, especially if they're dead fit, but like the song sez it's nice to go travellin' but it's so much nicer to come home. In much the same way, it's a breath of fresh air when the gorgeous totty you're faced with turns out to be a group of girls yer know. That's how I felt when Sea Breeze blew in along with Friga, Pauline an' a couple of other girls whose names I couldn't remember, but who's figures I could...

"Whatcher doin' girls?" I asked.

"Lookin' fer cock," sez Breezey with a naughty twinkle in her eye.

"Then yer've come ter the right place," sez I. Friga spoilt it all by snorting in that Danish way of hers. "Not your cock, Dunno.

We're supposed to be meeting the boys here."

"Oh right. What boys?" I wasn't gonna let her attitude phase me.

"Are you a policeman or a barman?" she asks. "The only question I want to hear from you is 'What are you having to drink?'"

Fuck me, she's a right ice maiden is that Friga.

"Ahhhh...diddums. He looks right cute when hiz upset," sez Sea Breeze, reachin' out an' pullin' me lower lip. "Hiz gone all wobbly lipped. Don't you mind her, Dunno. Shiz jus' skittin' yer."

I got 'em their drinks an' then who should come waltzin' in but Spud, Justin, an' some freak with a dyed blonde Mohican.

"Ladies," sez Spud. "Sorry to keep you waiting. It was Justin's fault."

Justin held up his hands an shook hiz head. "Listen not to the babbling brook. It will soothe you with deceit. I've been waiting ages for these two clowns."

"Who's yer friend?" asks Sea Breeze givin' the freak the eye.

"Gaz Bleach, pleased ter know yer," sez the freak.

"Brandy Alexanders all round, barman," sez Spud, puttin' on hiz smarmy actory show-off voice.

"Eh?"

"Brandy Alexanders," sez Puzzler. "It's a cocktail. Not to be confused with the Panama which uses a light creme de cacao instead of the dark one which is essential in the modern Brandy Alexander. Just mix a generous jigger of brandy, an ounce of the afore-mentioned dark creme de cacao, and full cream. Shake with ice and garnish with nutmeg. Have one yourself. You'll love it."

Believe it or not we had all the ingredients behind the bar but when I was shakin' them together. Spud started shakin' hiz head.

"No...put some elbow grease into it, Dunno. Give it here." He snatched the shaker an' gave it a good ol' poundin', before handin' it back. "Voila."

I hate it when people tell you that your doin' summat wrong an' then do it exactly the same as you were doin' it in the first place.

Drinks in hand Spud led the others off to a table where they sat, chompin' on chips an' garlic bread all night. Spud's got a loud voice an' of course the girls love him. Sea Breeze were cacklin' away with laughter at his jokes and they soon attracted the attention of the other tables around them, includin' a bunch of fellers out on a stag do come pub crawl.

I could see them gettin' all worked up by 'them drama queens', an after a bit, four of 'em got up an' stood around Spud's chair.

Spud looked up at 'em in mid flow. "Oh hello, lads?" he sez.

"Are you fuckin' lookin' at me pal?" sez one o' the fellers, a beefy twat with tattoos that looked like scribble all the way up his arms.

"He is now," sez Puzzler who could always be relied on to make a situation worse.

"You tryin' ter be funny?" sez the big twat.

"He is," sez one of his mates, a little feller with a flick of floppy hair that dangled in front of his eyes. "He thinks hiz funny."

"No I don't," said Puzzler. "I'm simply statin' a fact. If you don't like my friend looking at you, then perhaps you should move back to your seats."

"Yeh. We're just havin' a little chat, that's all," sez Spud.

"Oh yeh," sez the big feller. "Talkin' about us, were yer? Were yer tekkin' the piss out o' me?"

"No."

The little feller started flickin' beer at Spud now.

"Don't do that," sez Gaz Bleach.

"Look at your fuckin' hair!" sez another of 'em . "What are yer, a cock-a- fuckin-too or what?"

"Yeh. Gerra fuckin' hair cut," sez the big cunt, reachin' into his back pocket an' pullin' out a Stanley knife. "I'm gonna give yer a haircut. Say hello ter me mate Stan."

I'd seen enough. This was gettin' stupid. I walked over to 'em.

"Evenin' gents," a sez. "What seems ter be the problem?"

"This cunt was lookin' at me, an' the other fucker needs a haircut," sez the gorilla.

"An' you need a wash mate, but now int the time or the place, so fuck off before a break yer fuckin' neck."

He jus' glared at me. Sizin' me up.

"Come on, lads," sez one o' them, tuggin' at the gorilla's arm. "He in't worth it."

The Gorilla turns back ter Spud, all reasonable now. "D'yer want a fight or what?"

"No, I don't," sez Spud.

"Are yer scared?" he sez. "It's alright ter be scared. Yer prob'ly think a'll de-gut yer. But look, a'll leave me knife here." He plonked the Stanley knife on the table. "Jus' me an' you. Outside now. Can't say fairer than that."

"Ner. Thanks all the same," sez Spud. "I'll pass."

"Fuckin' gay boy," he sez. Then he turns ter the girls. "Come on off wi' us girls. We'll show yer what real men are like."

Friga reached forward. In her hand was the Stanley knife, blade open, glintin' like her eyes. She grabbed the big Gorilla by the knackers and started squeezing really

hard. "If you don't fuck off now, you will be leaving your cock behind. Then we can all have a laugh at how small it is."

Fuckin' hell, those Danes might be fit but they're fuckin' scary as fuck. The feller just looked at her, twitched hiz lip turned to his mates an' said "C'mon on lads....fuck 'em, let's go to a proper bar where there aren't no gays an lezzies."

They got up an sloped off.

"I had it covered," said Spud, sheepish that Friga had stolen his thunder.

After work, I introduced Jonny to Spud, Puzzler an' the others an' asked him, Carol an' Sly if they felt like a night out at The Warehouse.

"I think me an' Carol just wanned a birruva early night, actually," sez the infatuated fop.

"No a don't," sez Carol. "A wanna dance." She was eyeing up Spud, hungrily.

Jonny spread his hands out wide. "What the lady wants, the lady gets. I'll give you all a lift if yer like."

"It's only round the fuckin' corner," a said.

"No. Come on. Let's go for a spin," sez Spud. "It'll be wild."

"Come on then, lads an' lassies," sez Jonny. "You comin' Sly?"

I've never seen Sly look like this. He looked dazed, baffled and confused. His shirt were soaked with dirty washin' up water an' he stank of cooked fish. It was obvious he'd never done a days 'ard work in his life, an' tonight had really taken it's toll.

"Well, yeh, okay? Actually, Jonny, there was somethin' a wanned ter talk ter yer about, if yer don't mind?"

"Sure. What is it?"

Sly gave us all a shifty look. "In private? Later on?"

Jonny shrugged. "Fine. Suit yerself."

We all piled into Ginge's little Beetle. Ten of us, in a car made for four. It were bloody stupid. I had Puzzler an' Sly sittin' on me lap an' Spud's mate with the blonde hair was curled up at our feet like an over-sized pussy cat. The one good thing about it was that Sea Breeze were sat next to me an' when I managed to move me elbow, it'd brush carelessly against the side of her boobs. It were a nice feelin' but it gave me a hard-on which Puzzler was quick to notice.

"Hey Dunno, why don't I sit on your knee and we'll talk about the first thing that pops up? There's something growing beneath my buttocks," he sez, speakin' over Spud's monologue about his schooldays in Belfast. "Priapus was famed and feared for his, though this is not quite as fearsome. Some call it a weapon, others a tool. Like a snake it will spit forth its venom..."

"Shut the fuck up, Justin," a said, feelin' meself goin' red.

"Oh, yeh?" sez Sly. "I can feel it now? Dunno's got a hard-on? It's alright Dunno? We're flattered?"

"I've not gorra hard on fer you, yer silly cunt," a sez.

"Yeh, right. It's got to be me or Justin," sez Sly. "Coz we're the only one's sittin' on yer lap?"

The girls were all laughin' now.

"I've gorra hard on coz me elbow keeps nudgin' Breezey's tit," I confessed. "It's got nowt ter do wi' your arse."

"You dirty bastard," cackles Sea Breeze, givin' me a sharp jab in the ribs with her elbow.

At last Ginge pulled up outside The Warehouse, an' we all piled out onto the kerb. Never has a two minute drive taken so long. I'm tellin' yer it would've been quicker if we'd walked there, backwards.

I've never liked nightclubs. I'm crap at dancin' an' you can never hear yersen think, let alone chat to anyone, and on top of that you have to pay for the priviledge of gettin' deafened, an' standin' around like a daft cunt.

As I was payin' me two quid entrance fee, Sly tapped me on the shoulder.

"Sub me the entry fee, brother?" he asks.

"Fuck off, yer spongin' get. Wharrabout that money yer got off Barry Eccles earlier?"

Sly shrugged. "A was gonna save that fer something special, but if yer gonna be tight, don't worry, I'll pay my own way."

We went inside an' elbowed our way to the bar where Spud insisted on more Brandy Alexanders for everyone. All I wanted was a pint of fuckin' bitter, but he weren't havin' any of that.

"Listen, Dunno, we want to look flash. It makes us stand out. The girls are sure to notice someone holding a cocktail. They won't think twice about some porker with a pint of beer."

Friga was an ace on the dance floor an' it didn't take long before Puzler were out there dancin' with her. He looked like a little chimp from the circus, with her towerin' over him, but she didn't seem ter mind. In fact I think it was the first time I've ever seen her smile, an' it came as a shock, coz when she smiles, it's like the sun comin' out over them Nordic fjords. I know she's from Denmark, but I don't think they've got fjords there.

"Come on let's dance, big boy," sez Sea Breeze, tryin' to drag me out onto the dance floor.

"Ner. Yer alright," a sez. "Mebbe a bit later."

"May I have the pleasure of this dance then?" sez Sly, bowin' an' kissin' her hand. Why can't he just fuck off? I mean it isn't as if he doesn't have enough girls of his own. Even if most of them are old enough ter be his mam.

"Come on then Sly Man," sez Sea Breeze, an' off they went.

Jonny an' Carol were eatin' each other's faces off an' Spud an' his mate were posin' away, poutin' at everyone an' lookin' disdainful.

"What's up?" a asked Spud. "Don't yer like it here?"

"It's fine," sez Spud. "Why d'yer ask?"

"Yer don't look too 'appy, that's all."

His mate started laughin'. "It's called being cool, Dunno."

"Yeh," sez Spud. "Cool an' elegant. You've got ter stand in just the right way, so the light casts a shadow on your temples. It makes your cheekbones stand out. Hey, do you know a good dentist?"

"No. Why?" a asked.

"I'm thinking of having my back teeth pulled. Just like Iggy Pop. It makes your cheekbones stick out more."

Fuckin' Irish nutter.

After a bit, Sly comes over. He'd left Breezey dancin' with some other feller. Sly taps Jonny on the elbow to get his attention away from Carol.

"Ginge?" he sez. "Dunno tells me you've always got an eye for a deal?"

"And?" sez Jonny.

"Well, I've got a business proposition for you? How would you like to be my

silent partner?"

"Depends on the business," sez Jonny. Then he turns ter me. "Dunno, would you look after Carol while I talk shop with Sly?"

"Aright," a sez.

Sly an' Jonny wandered off to the bogs for a bit of quiet an' left me with Carol.

"What's all this about you gettin' married ter Jonny?" I ask. "Yer bang out of order. Does he know yer shaggin' Sly an' fuck knows who else on t' quiet?"

She looks at me all hard. "Not any more, Dunno. I've changed my ways. Loads o' money really helps a girl fall in love. He may only be a kid but he's a clever little bastard and he knows how to make a buck. Make no mistake he's gonna be rich and one day, when...er...I mean if we get divorced, all that's his is gonna be mine. Now shut the fuck up an' dance."

Put like that, there was no way I could say no. I plodded along to OMD but after I'd trod on her toes for the third time she pushed me away.

"You're fuckin' 'opeless, Dunno. Plus yer cramping me style...I wanna dance wi' that Irish kid, he's fit as fuck....He makes my fanny just gush! So push off."

She made a bee-line over to Spud, taps him on the shoulder, puts her arms around his neck an' off they go, smoochin' away. Typical! Now that fucker is gonna think that standing there like a dickhead sucking in his cheekbones an' poutin' like a silly cunt actually worked.

I went for a piss an' found Jonny an' Sly in there, shakin' hands.

"Pleasure doin' business with yer, Ginge?" sez Sly.

"Sly, if we're gonna do business, drop the Ginge shit. Okay? It's either Jonny or Mister Marinelli. Understood?"

"Okay, by me, brother? No offence meant. It's just that Dunno always refers ter you as Ginge."

Ginge gives me a dirty look. "Cheers, Dunno."

I managed to keep Jonny distracted long enough for the music to stop and for Carol to disentangle herself from Spud's arms. When I was watchin' her over Ginge's shoulder shovin 'er tongue right down Spud's throat, I was really tempted to point it out, but it had fuck all to do with me, so I didn't.

At last it were time to go.

"I'll give the ladies a lift home," sez Jonny. "It's not safe out there these days."

"What about me?" sez Spud. "Can you give me an' Gaz a lift?"

"Sorry, friend," sez Jonny. "If the cops see us, with all this crowd inside they'll have me licence. We're gonna have to ditch some excess and that's all there is to it."

"Actually, my fiery-headed friend I don't think you'll be going anywhere at present," sez Puzzler. He was shoutin' coz I think his ears were still ringin' from the din of the club.

"Why's that then?" asked Jonny.

"Coz someone's jus' done a knife job on yer tyres," a said.

It were true.

Jonny looked well fucked off "Who could do such a thing?"

There was a screech of brakes and an open-top MG pulled up.

"Friga, fancy a lift home?"

It was Derek Wales, in his Saturday night best. Lookin' for all the world like the oldest swinger in town, with his white safari jacket, no shirt, bronzed old guy's chest an'

massive medallion, and dare I suggest, impeccable timing?

"Oh thank you," sez Friga, going over to the car.

"Nice one," sez Puzzler. "I live just down the road from her. You can drop me off on the way."

"Fuck off, you," sez Wales. "You can walk. Here, Friga, let me strap you in nice and tight."

He leaned over Friga to put her seatbelt on, inhaling the smell of her soft, shapely neck. Then with a cheery wave off he raced in a cloud of exhaust fumes, leavin' me an' the others starin' after them.

"I don't like this Dunno," said Sly shufflin' over to me. "I don't like this at all..."

## THE WORLD ON HIZ SHOULDERS

Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1980

Next day was me first Sunday shift at Pattons. I asked Sly if he were comin' in but he told me he wasn't up for it.

"I'm not gonna let work rule my life, Dunno? Sunday's for relaxing? Besides, if things pan out with that ginger kid, worrying about my daily bread's gonna be a thing of the past?"

"What yer on about?"

"Ah-ah. Curiosity killed the cat, tiger. I'm playing my cards close to my chest? Five card stud? Live or die?"

"Yer a fuckin' idiot, Sly." An' with that parting shot I left for the restaurant.

When I got to Pattons, Jonny was there with a bit of a mug on.

"What's up wi you Gi....onny?"

"Thought a might have bin on fer a shag wi' Carol....She came back last night and stayed over, but wun't let me anywhere near 'er. Said shi had the decorators in...."

"Well fair's fair mate, if shiz 'on' there's fuck all yer can do about it."

"Well a'd a bin more than happy ter go fer mi red wings, but nah, shi weren't havin' any of it. Tells me I'm a beast and why can't I act more like that Irish kid, Spud? I asked her what she meant, and she told me she was sick of fellers pawing her like a piece of meat. She sez that big Irish cunt is a real gentleman. Fuckin' hell, if I din't know better I'd think she had a crush on him."

I remembered the sight of her wrappin' her legs round Spud on the dance floor the night before an' kept shtum.

"Keep workin' on her, mate. Shiz sure ter give in ter that Italian charm o' yours before too long." Yeh, right.

"Anyway, Dunno, listen, I've got rid of all the furniture in the new pad, bar the double bed. D'yer wanna help me paint the place before a put the new furniture in? A'll bung yer a few quid?"

"Sure mate....Always happy ter earn a few quid. So yerv got rid of all the furniture an' yer puttin all new stuff in. That must be costin' you a fortune?"

Ginge gave me one of his 'Are you for real?' looks that I'm beginning to recognise.

"Don't be ridiculous Dunno.... I've got a warehouse that a pay a peppercorn rent for in the shittier end of town. I've been filling it full of furniture since a woh fifteen. Stuff me relatives don't want, bankruptcy an' fire sales, an' that. I've got a really tasty deal going with Yorkshire TV. Whenever they're makin' a soap, or any drama fer that matter, they come ter me ter hire the furniture fer their sets. It's a real earner! That's where all the flashy leather stuff came from, an' that's where it's gone back to. I've shown Carol a flash catalogue, told her ter pick what she wants...money no object, then off I pop down ter the warehouse and pick the items most similar...She'll never know!"

"Thank fuck fer that!" I blurted out, "Yer not as daft as a thought about this Carol then."

"What d'yer mean by that?" sez Ginge suddenly all serious.

"Nowt." Me an' me big fuckin' mouth.

"Bollocks, nowt. C'mon, explain yerself?"

"Look mate, It's none of my business."

I were saved an awkward explanation by the arrival on the scene of a large fat bloke, smellin' like a tart's handbag.

"Ahhh, There you are Jonny, my dear boy. For a minute I thought you might be hiding from me...Or playing hard to get... Or both, I hope! Now...Have you come to a decision yet? Are you going to get naked and carry my world on your remarkable, strong and for one so young, shapely shoulders? Please, say Si! Si!"

"Dunno, This is Clifford St Ledger. Cliff, this is Dunno...He works here."

Clifford St Ledger cupped me face in both his hands, his large blood shot eyes lookin' deep into mine. "What a magnificent bit of rough you are! Are you a bit of rough? Where do you hale from Mr Dunno?"

"Halton Moor."

"Ohhhh!" St Ledger let out the sort of cry you normally make when you shoot your load. "How deliciously grubby! I see I'm going to have my hands full with you two thrusters this evening. Be gentle with me!"

It had taken me the best part of twenty years and now I'd finally met my first real puff.

"I should explain" said Ginge. "Cliff's directing an' opera at the Grand an' he wants me ter play Atlas."

"Oh aye? Who's playin' the encyclopaedia?" It were a shite joke but it had Clifford wheezin' with merriment.

"Oooh...we've always got room for one more joker in the pack," he sez, wipin' his eyes on a silk, black hanky. "Ever thought about a career in Opera my boy?"

"Can't sing, mate. Soz."

"Pfah! Don't worry about that, neither can Jonathan. Atlas is a non-singing role, as is Hercules. Well?"

"Hercules?" sez I, flexin' me muscles.

"Oooh. Perfection. To the Manor Born," he said giving me bicep a little squeeze.

"Aw...a don't know. I've not got much time these days, what wi' work an' me

studies an' that."

"What are you studying?"

"Drama."

"Well, then, that's settled. Your days will be free. The work isn't hard. You and Jonny are crowd pleasers really. A piece of eye candy for the more discerning viewer. Do this for me and I'll see you both get your 'tickets'. You'll be paid up members of the Professional Actor's Union. Now, doesn't that sound tempting?"

I was impressed. So were Ginge.

"It does," a said. "So yer mean if we do this, yer can get us our Equity cards. No fuss or owt?"

Gettin' an Equity Card was one of them Catch 22 situations where you couldn't get a decent actin' job without one, but to get one you had to get an actin' job.

"Well... I may have one or two other favours to ask, before parting with such precious gifts" sez Clifford.

"Oh, right. Okay. Like what?"

"Oh, you know, a bit of sucky, sucky, licky, licky...as the Koreans say... Nothing too unpleasant. Cheerio boys. All play and no work makes Clifford a sacked manager!" He threw his head back and snorted with laughter like he'd just said summat hilarious.

"TTFN!! Ta-Ta for now!!!"

I turned to Ginge who were busy rollin' out dough. "What's he want us ter lick?"

"Well it ain't fuckin' ice-cream Dunno," he sez with a resigned sigh.

"Oh..." An' then it clicked. "Oh... Right...Bollocks!"

We knocked off at just after ten and as I were leavin' Ginge hands me a great big parcel.

'FAO SLY' written large in black marker pen.

"Hey, Dunno, would you pass this on to Sly for me?"

"Sure. What is it?"

He touched the side of his nose an' winked. "Need ter know basis Dunno. Need ter know."

"Yeh but... can a have a look inside? A love parcels."

"Does the parcel have your name on it, Dunno?"

"No...but..."

"Well then..."

"Aright, play yer little games then," I snapped, takin' the parcel an' stompin' off home.

Back home, Sly were stretched naked on the sofa, singin' away ter an African Mass on the record player. "Sanctuuu! Boom Boom!" He were singin' crashin' his hands together on the boom boom bits.

"Pack it in Sly," a sez. "Haven't a told yer about hangin' about on the sofa in the knack. Get yer pants on. Fckin' hell! Have yer shaved yer pubes off?"

I didn't like to look but you couldn't miss his bald as an egg privates. They looked all red an' raw an' painful.

"A waxed 'em? Spud told me it was painless? Why do people have ter lie all the time?"

"Fuck knows. But that int the point. Why'd yer do it, Sly?"

"It's more hygienic?"

"Try washin' 'em once in a while. Here, Ginge's got yer a present." I tossed the

parcel at him.

"That kid is a money making genius?" he cried, catching the parcel.

"Why? What is it?" I asked.

He frowned a bit. "It's probably better for you if yer don't know, at this stage?"

"Fuck off. Am not in the mood fer playground pranks."

"Errr...it's a surprise?" he sez. "I'll show yer, but not just yet. It'd spoil things?"

"Aright. Please yerself. Am not in the mood anyway."

"Why? What's up?"

"Ave bin placed on the horns of a dilemma."

"Oh aye?"

"There's this feller, sez he can get me an Equity Card."

Sly jumped up in excitement. "Dunno You spawny get! That's great news?"

"Aye, but there's a catch. A think he wants me ter suck hiz cock."

"Do it, guy. Do it. There's nowt to it? Fuck. I'd suck anyone's cock fer an Equity Card? I'd even suck yours?"

"Yer crossin' the line again, Sly. Cut it out..."

He disappeared into the kitchen an' came back peelin' a banana.

"Look, there's nowt to it? All it needs is a bit of practice?" He popped the banana in his gob, sucked at it an' then passed it to me. "Go on, have a go?"

"Yer get worse, you do. Aww Fer fuck's sake, a don't believe it... yer've got a hard on now."

"Well It was a sexy banana? You should try it?"

"Am off ter bed, an' don't try sneakin' in on me."

"As if I would? It's not as if you're offering me an Equity Card, is it?"

"No, thank fuck fer small fuckin' mercies...Good night."

## OBSESSIONS

Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup> 1980

"Some people have obsessions...They can't help thinking day and night about something like the moon...Well, I'm a bit moonstruck too, haunted day and night by this writing obsession, I must write, I must write, I must... Hardly have I ended one story when I somehow have to tackle another, then a third and a fourth on top of that! I'm always writing, can't help it, what's wonderful and brilliant about that eh? It's such a barbarous life. Here I am talking to you and getting quite excited, yet can't forget for a second that I've an unfinished novel waiting for me..."

It were Monday morning and Derek Wales was perched on the edge of the desk, denim shirt open one button too many, medallion, tight jeans revealing big package, and ridiculous cowboy boots with big heels clackin' against each other. He was reading Trigorin's speech from Checkov's *The Seagull* and tears were streamin' down his cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he sniffed. "I'm going to have to stop for a while. Have you ever come across any other writing so profoundly moving or beautiful?"

I were sorely tempted to say "What about Enid Blyton and the Famous Five?" but decided against it.

"Sometimes we have no control over who we are, or the actions we take," Wales continued. "It's like we are led by some ulterior force we cannot contain, or are able to stop. We long to cry out for help but fear that people cannot help us, nor indeed would want to if they knew what our true motives were..."

I was becoming unsure if Derek Wales was still talkin' about the play or himself. All this was made even more disturbing by the two large, deep scratches runnin' down the side of his face an' the fact that Friga hadn't turned up for college today.

"Sorry Derek, are yer talking about yersen or the fella in' t' play?"

He looked at me cold and intent, and after a pause which seemed to go on for ages said, "The play of course, you big buffoon. I'm talking about Trigorin's torment as a writer. I am imparting pearls of wisdom here... You should all be writing it down."

I borrowed a pencil off Puzzler who always has at least ten of 'em, all laid out in front of him in neat little rows.

"Is there anything that you don't have control over, Mr. Wales?" sez Puzzler, leanin' forward an' lookin' interested. "Have you got any ulterior forces at work?"

Dennis Wales gave him a strange look. Then he nodded. "That, I'm afraid, is the lot of the common man. Are we not all in some ways the twin of Prometheus?"

"More than likely," Puzzler agreed, although I could tell he didn't have the foggiest who Prometheus was. "So if Trigorin's ulterior forces are writing, what might yours be?"

"Trying to educate morons like you. I hate it. I rail against it, and yet I am forced to do it. It is my passion. My joy and my tragedy. It is my fate."

"What about girls, sir? Do you have any uncontrollable urges concerning girls?" Fuckin' 'ell. Puzzler was playin' with fire now. Wales got up an' strode across the room to stand directly in front of Justin's seat so that his crotch was just inches from his face.

"Why don't you fucking grow up?" he hissed through clenched teeth.

Justin shrugged. "I was jus' askin'. What happened the other night with Friga by the way? Any idea why she's not in class today?"

"How the fuck would I kn..." he paused an' his tone softened. "I don't know. I

dropped her off at her flat and that was the last I saw of her. I'm sure there's a good reason for her absence and I'll be sure to let her know you were concerned."

"Thanks, sir."

After class in the refectory, Sly was on the cadge for money for the pay phone.

"Come on Dunno? I need some money for the phone?"

"Why? Who yer gonna phone?"

"I wanna phone Friga? Check shiz alright?"

"Don't bother," sez Puzzler, sittin' down next to me. "I went over ter hers yesterday and this morning. She's not there."

"Fuck, Justin, this is serious?" sez Sly.

"What is?" asked Spud, comin' over to join us.

"No one's seen Friga since she went off wi' Derek Wales the other night," Puzzler explained.

"Right that does it," sez Spud. "There's only one thing for it. We dob Derek Wales in to the cops."

"Eh?"

"We call the cops. Say we've got a missing girl and that Derek who just happens to look like the photofit of the Yorkshire Ripper, was the last person to be seen with her. Anyone got a coin fer the phone? Dunno?"

"Why does everyone think I'm Mister fuckin' Moneybags all of a sudden?"

"This isn't the time to be petty, just hand it over."

"Listen, d'yer think that's wise? A mean if he finds out we've grassed him up ter the pigs, he'll be worse than ever."

"Not if he's locked up he won't," sez Puzzler.

"But..."

There was nowt for it. Sly had picked me pocket an' tossed the coin to Spud, who was already headin' towards the payphones outside the Student Union Office. We all crowded round the phone to listen as Spud dialled.

"I'd like to report a missing person, and I think I know who's got her." Spud had adopted a Cockney accent for the occasion an' he really sounded like someone else. "Yeh. Her name's Friga Olsen. She was last seen in a car with a Mister Derek Wales in the early hours of Sunday morning. He was behaving in a threatening manner and she was clearly distressed. Never you mind who this is speaking. Check out Mister Wales. I think he might have done this before...." There was a pause, then Spud turned to us an' whispered, "Where's he live?"

"Who?" a asked.

"Father fucking Christmas.....Who d'yer fucking think? Derek Wales yer silly cunt. Where's he live?"

"Roundhay," sez Sly, "The Avenue, Roundhay."

"He lives in the Avenue, in Roundhay," Spud told the operator. "Never mind about that. Do your job an' save that girl." He hung up. "Job done."

Job done, or job just starting? Spud, Puzzler an' Sly all seemed satisfied. It felt good to be doin' summat I suppose. But all I felt was dread. It were then that I had an idea. I was gonna have to find someone who could drive, an' as they say in American cop shows, "Put a tail on him."

Later...

"Are yer gonna suck Clifford St Ledger's cock then, Ginge?"

"What do you fuckin' think?"

"Well, a dunno...if it means yer get an equity card..."

"Fuck that fer a game a soljers! Yer dote have ter suck some big puff's cheesy cock ter get one o' those...Rustle me up fifty quid an a'll 'ave one fer yer by the end o' the week."

"Eh? How come?"

Ginge sighed wearily, "Davey Spence and his Big Band Bandits! A went ter school with him. He's a brilliant muso and he's always on the road touring...Basically, bung 'im a few quid and he'll say you're one of his backin' singers...He'll give yer as many contracts as yer need...That's how I'm gonna get my card anyway."

We were round at Ginge's new Headingley flat givin' it a makeover. The place was startin' to look brilliant, like a luxury apartment. I couldn't help noticing the fantastic new fitted kitchen, all chrome, stainless steel and black slate.

"Smart kitchen mate, I suppose you er..."

"Know somebody in the business? You learn fast amico mio! My cousin Little Andy. He does bathrooms as well."

"Why do you bother with Pattons? Yer clearly loaded..."

"That's no excuse ter be idle Dunno. I dote set out ter make loads a money, it just amazes me that no one else can see the opportunity's I can. Anyway, when Bruce set Pattons up he wanted to do authentic Italian Pizzas but dint 'ave a fuckin' clue. So he got Vincenzo in. He agreed to do 'em but only as a franchise, meaning Vinnie get's the money from every pizza sold. Now that Vic's left..."

"You get it..."

"More or less, Yes. Also I really want to learn the industry. Me dad's in catering. Once you learn everything there is to learn, you'll have a back up job fer life. Plus I quite fancy opening a restaurant or two one o' these days."

What I couldn't understand was how someone so canny could be so naive when it came to birds.

"Anyway," Ginge continued, "The furniture's comin' day after tomorrow, a reckon Carol's gonna be well chuffed when she sees the place."

"Aye, I only 'ope she appreciates it " I found it hard to keep me misgivings out of me voice and Ginge was on it in a flash.

"Why wunt she appreciate it? Okay, Dunno what's on yer mind? You were gonna say summat the other night before Clifford butted in. So come on, spit it out."

"It's nowt mate...It's just....How well d'yer know Carol? I mean, really?"

"Well enough ter know shiz fit as fuck and that a love her."

"Does she love you?"

"Course! Why wun't she? Anyway even if she din't, a reckon she could grow ter love me once she sees the life she could have wi' me."

"Maybe it's the life she could have that shiz more in love with Ginge?"

"Fuck off Dunno! What yerron about?"

I was painfully aware that the hole I was diggin' was deep enough now, but I couldn't get out of it, plus hand on heart, I couldn't bear to watch this whole thing unfolding and not do owt about it.

"Look Jonny, I can't help but question her motives. She likes what she sees, lifestyle wise, but when it comes to everything else shiz got a wanderin' eye. Dote jump in wi' both feet, that's all. Ad 'ate ter see yer get hurt."

"Fuck off, Dunno! Go on, get out. Who fuckin' made you relationship guru? Yer jealous that's all...Yer cart bare the fact that a really fit bird like Carol would prefer ter be wi' me an not you....Well thank s fer 'elpin' me paint, but I can take it from here."

People get too fuckin' touchy about their love lives. Well, I just hope I won't have to say I told you so to the silly ginger moocher.

I had the night off from Patton's an' now I had the rest of the afternoon free too. I'd just hit the street when I turned back an' rang Ginge's doorbell.

He stomped down to the door all red in the face. "What?"

"Can a use yer phone?"

He sighed like I'd jus' asked him to shoot his dog. "Yer better come in."

I went to the phone an' dialled Spud's number while Ginge stood over me, probably makin' sure I wasn't ringin' Carol.

"Hi, Spud?" a said.

"Hello?" came a voice at the other end. "Who is this?"

"Dunno."

"Knock Knock."

"EH?"

"Knock knock. It's a joke. Yer supposed to say who's there?"

"Who's there?"

"No. Not now. Knock knock."

"Who's there?"

"Mahatma."

"Mahatma who?"

"Mahatma Coat please, I'm leaving."

"Aye. Nice one. Look Spud, am over in Headingley."

"Sorry, who is this?"

"It's Dunno. Stop fuckin' about."

"Oh. You must be a friend of Young Al's. Just a moment."

I was left baffled an' bewildered. Who the fuck was I talkin' too? And who the fuck was Young Al? I was on the point of hangin' up when a young kid picked up the phone an' said, "Hi, how's it hangin'?"

"Fine," I said. "Look a think a got the wrong number. Sorry." I hung up. Then started diallin' again.

"Is this gonna take all fuckin' day?" asks Ginge.

"Sorry mate. Just one more call."

He sighed again.

"Hello?"

"Hello, can a spe...."

"Knock knock..."

Ah for fuck's sake. "Er...look mate, does Mark O'Hagan live there?"

"Yes he does. And who might be asking?"

"Dunno."

"But I thought you were a friend of Al's?"

"Ner. A dote even know who Al is."

"Oh. Just a minute. Mark. Mark. There's a strange lad on the phone who doesn't know who he wants to speak to."

At last Spud came ter the phone. "Knock knock..."

"Fer fuck's sake Spud, dote you start. Who woh that nutter?" a asked.

"It was my Dad. What's up?"

"You up fer tailing Derek Wales?"

"Okay. I'll borrow the ol' feller's car. Where are you?"

"Headingley."

"I'll see you by the Arndale in twenty."

"Smart."

I turned to Ginge, an' offered him me hand "Look mate, am sorry....no hard feelin's?"

"Aye, alright," he said shakin' me mitt.

"Hey Ginge yer cun't do us a good deal on a couple o' phones could yer?"

The parp of angry car horns and people shouting "Learn ter drive yer fuckin' lunatic" heralded the arrival of Spud O'Hagan outside the Arndale Centre, with the car making a few kangaroo hops as he lurched to a stop beside me.

"All Aboard! Ding Ding!!" he called through the open window. "Strap yourself in, big boy, this baby's got a mind of it's own!"

With a squeal of rubber and a lurch forward we were off, destination Roundhay. It seemed Karma was punishing me immediately for my indiscretion with old grumpy ginger bollocks coz Spud's driving had to be seen to be believed. No going round roundabouts for him when you can just go straight over them, and traffic lights were rendered redundant with him at the wheel. I really was beginning to fear for me life.

"Fer fucks sake Spud, when did yer pass yer test?"

"What test would that be Dunno?"

"Yer driving test yer big chump."

Mark looked affronted. "Driving test?! Don't be so ridiculous, I've never heard the like. I'll have you know I've been driving since I was four years old on the family farm."

"You told me yer dad were an accountant?"

"Now just you stop that Dunno, You're being petty. In Ireland all houses are like farms."

"If you say so. But seriously we're hardly gonna be discreet tailing Walesy with you driving like this. Anyway yer bound ter get pulled." An idea came to me. "So listen, look upon it as an acting exercise. I'd like you ter put yersen in the role of a chauffeur and yer work fer a fragile old lady."

Thankfully the effect was immediate. Spud slowed right down and finally brought a bit of order to his chaotic driving. We pulled into The Avenue at a little after six. It were a bright sunny evenin' and I was a bit worried that Derek Wales might notice us. I needn't have bothered. It appeared that Wales already had plenty on his plate. There were two police cars parked outside hiz gaff.

"Fuck! They must o' tekken your phone call serious, mate," a sez, slidin' down in me seat so no passersby would notice us. Not that there were any passersby. The Avenue's one of them dead posh streets. Lined with conker trees an' massive houses. People didn't go walkabout here, they drove or hung out in their massive gardens away from the public eye.

"One o' these days a'm gona buy mesen a house down here," a said.

"Fuck that," sez Spud. "I'm gonna get me a penthouse in London. And LA. And New York. You can keep Leeds."

"Yer car't ferget yer roots, Spud."

"You can when yer grow up in Belfast, mate...I...Shhh. Look!"

The cops were comin' out of Derek Wales' driveway. Wales were with them, but he didn't look too upset. In fact he were laughin'. He clapped one of the coppers on the shoulder an' they all started laughin'.

"I don't think they're gonna arrest the bastard," sez Spud.

He was right. The cops got into their cars an' Wales stood in the road wavin' after them. We ducked down as he took a look round the street, then he disappeared back inside.

There's nowt more borin' than a stake-out. At least the cops on TV always have a massive supply o' donuts an' coffee but we didn't have owt. After a couple of hours of just sittin' there, I was bustin' for a piss. I got out the car an' went up someone's drive an' started pissin' behind an' old oak tree.

"Psssttt!" Spud whispered loudly. "Hurry up. He's gettin' in his car."

I ran back in a crouch, so's not to be spotted, but ended up dribblin' wee down me leg. As I got into the car, Spud looked at me leg an' opened the window.

"Oh, c'mon Dunno, this is my Dad's car. I don't want it stinkin' of your piss."

"Give over moanin'. It's only a couple o' splashes."

He put the car into gear an' screeched after Derek.

"Careful Spud. We don't want him ter see us. Pretend yer on covert ops fer the CIA."

"Right you are Mister Bond."

We hung back as Derek turned left onto Street Lane.

"Try an' keep at least two cars between him an' us," I said, all them years of watchin' the Sweeney on telly finally payin' dividends.

His first port of call was the Deer Park pub. We pulled into the car park. I was thirsty an' could've murdered a beer. Spud checked me as I was gettin' out.

"No way. Stay put. We can't follow him in there. We just wait."

"This is fuckin' torture."

After about forty minutes, Derek reappeared an' I watched as he did a runnin' leap an' vaulted into his open top MG, like he were Starskey or summat. Silly bastard. We were off again.

"I told you," Said Spud, "Chapelton... Ripper country. I knew it! If Derek isn't our man, I'll eat your skiddy knickers."

Derek's MG pulled over next to a girl in almost invisible hotpants, who lent into the car to chat to him.

"Get ready, Dunno. This could be the next victim,"

The girl got into the car an' we followed as Derek drove into a quiet little side road. It led to a dead end with an alley at the bottem. We parked at the far end, round the corner out of sight, an' waited, windows open in case there were any sound of a scuffle.

After about ten minutes, Spud said "Fuck this, am gonna go find out what that cunt is up to." He made to open the door, just as the roar of an engine fired up and Derek Wales came out the alley.

"GO, GO GO! " I said like they do on the telly like. Spud just looked at me.

"You silly bastard," he said. "I'm not going anywhere til I see the bird he went in there with."

Fuck. He were right. What if she were lyin down the dead?

"Come on then, mate," a said. "Let's have a look."

We set off down the alley but she were nowhere to be seen.

"Where d'yer think she went?" I asked.

Spud shrugged, "Beats me. Come on, Let's see if we can catch him up."

We got back in the car an' as we headed back towards Roundhay we saw Derek's car parked outside the Chained Bull. We pulled in an' waited. A few minutes later Derek came back, hopped in an' set off at break neck speed.

Spud juddered along after him an' we seemed to be travellin' around aimlessly til we ended up in Adel Woods. Fuck. Derek was parked just outside Friga's house. He were standin' outside the car, jus' lookin' up at the darkened windows.

"A murderer always comes back to the scene of his crime," said Spud. "I bet you any money you like, Friga's buried right here in a shallow grave."

That was Derek's cue to set off again, walkin' this time. He turned the corner. We got out of the car an' followed on foot. Derek was standin' behind a tree, watchin' as the police came out of a flat. There were six of 'em, an' they were surroundin' a small lad in handcuffs.

"Fuckin' 'ell," a gasped as they pushed the kid into the back of a squad car. "They've nicked Puzzler."

Quietly as we could we headed back to the car.

"You finished playing silly buggers for the evening then?"

I nearly screamed. It were Derek Wales. He were perched like a big plump pidgeon on the bonnet of Spud's Dad's car.

"That's what happens when little boys try playing with men. Get yourselves off to bed now, its past your bedtime, your mummies will be wondering where you are. The streets aren't safe this time of night." He got up an' swaggered back to his car. He then stopped in his tracks, turned an' said "This is your last warning...You mess about with me one more time and I'll fucking kill you..."

We stood there in silence as Derek Wales drove off. Neither of us wanted to admit it but we were both shittin' it. We'd beenn so cocky, so sure of ourselves, but Derek'd been one step ahead of us all the time. He'd walked away from the cops. He'd led us on a wild goose chase across town and he'd somehow got Puzzler arrested. Now he'd threatened to kill us, an' one glance in those watery eyes of his was enough to tell me he weren't kiddin'. It was like pittin' yersen against the devil himself.

"What do we do now?" a said at last.

Spud shrugged. "Fuck knows."

"Let's head back ter Dunno HQ," a said. "We can have a cuppa an' make some plans."

"Make plans? What're yer on about? He sez he'll kill us if we don't stop muckin' him about."

"We've got to help Puzz. We can't just leave him in sittin' in stir, can we?"

Spud looked as if he'd be happy enough to do just that. "I better get the car back. My Dad needs it first thing in the morning, an' its not like we're best mates with him or anything."

"Well cart yer drop us home in Beeston first?"

Spud sighed. "If I must."

When we got back to Dunno HQ, the first thing I noticed were the smell. It was incense. Thick an' cloying. You'd've thought we'd just stepped into a Cathedral or summat. Then I noticed the dim lighting comin' from the livin' room.

"Yer berra watch out, Spud," a said. "Sly likes ter hang out in the knack." I reckoned warnin' him was the least I could do. He'd had enough frights this evening. Sly naked, with his newly waxed meat an' two veg on display might have been one shock too many, an' could've tipped a sensitive bloke like Spud over the edge.

We pushed on into the livin' room. Fuckin' hell. There were a charcoal brazier billowin' incense in the corner an' about a million candles lit the room. Sly wasn't naked. He were dressed in a shiny well-cut evenin' suit an' were wearin' a tie with a big tie-pin in it. In his hand was a cane with a silver top. Instead of smokin' a joint, he had a black fag stuck in a cigarette holder. His hair'd been cut an' he looked for all the world like he were auditionin' for the part of James Bond.

"Fer fuck's sake Sly. Where d'yer get all this clobber?" a asked.

"Ginge sent it in that package? He thinks my idea for an escort agency for the mature lady is a real winner? He just thought I should smarten myself up a little bit? What d'yer think?"

"Yer look like a dog's fuckin' dinner," a said.

"Ace! Have a look at these snaps I had taken this avvo?" he sez, passin' us a black an' white contact sheet of him in various 'action' poses. "Which d'yer think a should use for my adverts? I quite like this one?" He pointed to a picture of himself poutin' at the camera an' lookin' all dreamy with the smoke from a ciggy curlin' out his nostrils.

"Yer look like a gay dragon," sez Spud.

Sly looked hurt. He snatched the contact sheet away an' threw hissen on the sofa.

"You're just jealous?"

"Look, Sly, we ant got time fer all this bollocks," a said.

We told him all about our evening's adventures, ending with how a well pissed off Derek Wales had threatened to kill us.

"Pheeee-ooooh-eeee!" Sly sez at length, dispensin' with the cigarette holder an' rollin' up a large spliff. "That's some bad, black magic mumbo, you're layin' on me, cats? Let's have a toke on this an' see if we can find an answer from the ether?"

"From the what?" asks Spud.

"Never mind," I said. "Jus' have a smoke."

Spliff smoked, Spud hit on a plan.

"I'm goin' home."

"Eh? But wharrabout Puzzler?"

"What about him? We can't break him out of the police station, can we?" sez Spud. "Besides they've probably let him go. We'll talk about it in the morning."

"No way?" sez Sly. "Listen, bro? If it was you in jail, Puzzler would be busy workin' out all sorts of conundrums to get you out? All for one Aramis, mon brave? Come on, take us to the station? I've got an idea?"

You could tell Spud didn't wanna do owt but he didn't want us thinkin' he'd let a mate down either.

"Alright but the first sign of trouble and I'm out of there. Okay?" he sez.

"I'll be hangin' on your coat tails brother? But don't worry, this is gonna be a walk in the park?"

We all piled back into Spud's Dad's car an' by now the dope had made Spud's drivin' more erratic than ever. We juddered backwards down the road til we almost bumped into a parked car.

"Come on Spud, concentrate, or we'll all be locked up wi' Puzzler."

Spud's fear o' gettin' nicked cut through his funk an' he got into gear an' away we went.

"Er...where we headin'?" I asked. "Any idea where they'll 've tekken him?"

"Let's keep local," sez Sly. "If he was arrested in Adel, they would have taken him ter Weetwood nick?"

"Fuckin' hell," sez Spud. "It's miles away. Let's do it in the morning, guys."

"Spud, we're halfway there now," a sez.

We drove on in silence for a bit, then I noticed Spud kept glancin' in his rear view mirrer.

"What's up, Spud?"

"I think we're bein' followed."

I turned an' looked out the back. Sure enough, there was an MG behind us, keepin' two cars back... like a real pro.

"Fuckin' hell. Hiz after us," a said. "Shall we pile out an' knock him?"

Sly shook hiz head. "No way? He'd do us fer assault? It's what he wants?"

We pulled up outside the cop shop an' the MG drove past. I started laughin'. It was bein' driven by a woman. There weren't any passengers in the car either.

"It weren't Derek. It woh jus' some bird," a said.

Sly shook hiz head. "That's what he wants us ter think? He's prob'ly wearin' a wig? You know, like Norman Bates? All these serial killers like dressin' up as women?"

"Do they?" asks Spud.

"Yup. Right, come on folks. It's show time?"

Sly got out the car an' crossed the road to the police station.

"Hey, hang on," a sez. "What's t' plan?"

"Let me do the talkin'?" sez Sly. "You two jus' stick by me an' don't say a word?"

I took a deep breath an' followed Sly an' Spud into the station. It was the first time I'd ever been in the nick of me own free will an' volition an' it wasn't a nice feelin'. The desk sergeant was on the phone as Sly sauntered up an' rang the little bell for assistance.

"What?" sez the copper, lookin' Sly up an down.

"We're here ter see Justin Quinalez," sez Sly, soundin' confident an' full o' hissen.

"Oh yeh?" sez the copper, starin' hard at the three of us. "An' who might you be?  
The Three Stooges?"

"No," sez Sly. "I'm his lawyer? These gentlemen are my briefs."

"Right," sez the copper. "A lawyer in a fuckin' evenin' suit. Fuck off Bond, an' take  
Moneypenny an' Oddjob with yer."

"Eh?" a sez.

"You heard," sez t' copper. "Scram."

"Hang on a sec, pal?" sez Sly. "Can yer at least tell us why yer've arrested him?"

The copper sighed. "He's helpin' us wi' our enquiries. Now fuck off."

"You can't talk to us like that, officer?" says Sly, officiously. "We're members of  
the public?"

"You're right sir, I do apologise, Now Fuck off...Please."

MADE GLORIOUS SUMMER BY THIS SUN OF YORK

Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1980

Dead knackered when I got to college this mornin'. Sly didn't bother comin'. I had poked me head in his room when I got up an' he had told me to fuck off an' leave him alone.

"I'm through with college? Who's got time fer studies when there's millions ter be made?" he told me.

Fuck knows how shaggin' old ladies is gonna make him a millionaire, but that's his affair. I was feelin' a bit nervy headin' into college an' when I saw Spud sat on the steps outside I could tell he was in a bit of a blue funk too.

"What's Wales gonna be like today?" he asked me as I plonked mesen down next to him. His face were a picture of pure misery.

"Horrible. So what else is new? Come on, let's gerrit over with."

We went inside.

Derek Wales was there waitin' for us. He had a glance around the class then held out his hands to Sea Breeze.

"Celia. Join me if you will."

Sea Breeze looked at the girls on either side of her, then at me an' Spud. "Me?" she said, swallowin'.

"Yes, come along, lovey. I won't bite."

I swear he gave us a leer then an' in the dimly lit theatre it looked as if he'd been filin' his teeth into sharp points. He took both her hands in his an' looked deep into her eyes.

"My dear...out of another's misfortunes you reap the benefits. As Friga is apparently no longer with us, and has not notified the college of her intentions or whereabouts and as rehearsals are due to commence this evening....Congratulations!

You will now be playing Mrs. Alving in Ghosts."

Sea Breeze looked shocked. "But Friga might be back."

Derek shook his head. "Anything's possible my dear, but in these times what are we to think? There are many possibilities. One being that..."and here Derek chose to look directly at me and Spud, fixing us with his cold, snakey eyes, "Friga has fallen victim to the Ripper, or some copycat killer."

There was an audible reaction from the class.

"Tchh! Tchhh! No hysterics please. We are looking at this dispassionately as artists. Plus the chances of that are very remote...Wouldn't you say so, Dunno?"

"Well...er....Yeh, of course."

He took a long pause for dramatic effect. "Good... The second possibility is that Friga is perfectly safe but has for reasons of her own chosen to absent herself without word or leave. Now in the real world, if an actress does not turn up for rehearsals what does the director do? Pauline?"

"Fire her?" sez Pauline.

"Fire her. Correct. If Friga has left this mortal coil then not appearing as Mrs. Alving is the least of her problems. If on the other hand she has chosen to disrespect both myself, and you her fellow actors, then I have no choice but to replace her. Therefore...da-dahhh... may I introduce the new Mrs. Alving. Well done, my dear. You were always my preferred choice."

"Th-thanks," sez a shell-shocked Breezey.

"Right, now, where's Justin?" sez Wales, lookin' around.

As if he didn't know full well that Justin was still sat on his arse in a jail cell.

"Not here," I said.

Wales shook his head. "A day of disappointments. Never mind. Mr. Dunno, I am

promoting you to full Stage Manager. Congratulations. Rehearsals at six sharp tonight."

Oh fuck.

"Er...a cart do it, sir," sez I. "Am gonna be in an opera at the Grand... Soz mate."

Wales glared for a moment and then smiled. "Well, well, well. You will be treading the boards after all? I admire your spirit lad. Good for you. If you need any extra coaching on comportment you know where to find me. Right, Mr. O'Hagan, you'll be our Stage Manager in the absence of Justin and Dunno."

"Thanks, sir," sez Spud, not lookin' thrilled but feelin' as relieved as me that Walesy was bein' pleasant for once.

I hung about in the refectory for a bit after class, chewin' the fat with Breezey.

"Yer wanna come back ter my place an' learn yer lines," I asked, hopefully.

"Yeh, right, as if you wanna help me learn mi lines," she said with a snort, and then she added, "Aright, I'll come wi' yer. A wanna see what Sly's bin up ter."

Typical. I finally get a bird back to Dunno HQ an' all she's interested in is that lowlife drop-out.

Back home, I were puttin' the key in the door when me Mam came out of the shop.

"Aright, pet," she sez. "Who's yer friend?" She gave Breezey a cold look.

"Mam, this is Sea Breeze."

"Eh? Sea Breeze? What kind o' name's that? Yer dote look like an Indian."

"A'm not," sez Breezey, calmly. "An' a don't think Sea Breeze is an Indian name anyway. Me name's Celia Breeze. C Breeze. Get it?"

Mam frowned an' then nodded a bit. "Oh. Right. Clever. Look, Sly's got someone with 'im. A nice lad. I think it's to do with work, so don't you two go spoilin'

things for him."

"Mam?" a sez. "How'd we do that?"

Mam were goin' back in the shop. "Fuck knows, but where thez a willy, thez a way. Jus' dote go shaggin' or owt in front o' Sly an' his guests."

I looked at Breezey who were tryin' not to laugh.

"We'll try not ter," she sez.

I opened the door an' ushered her in as quick as I could. "Soz about that. Yer know what Mams are like."

As we went upstairs I could hear the sound of chit chat comin' from the front room. I recognised the voices. We went into the livin' room. Sly were in a silk dressin' gown an' puffin' away on his cigarette holder. Ginge was at ease, sippin' a beer an' eatin' a bacon sarney.

"Hello Sea Breeze," sez Ginge, givin' her a wave. "How's tricks? Dunno, I've got a bone ter pick with you."

"Eh?"

"Your bedroom is a disgrace! Disgusting. Mouldy socks an' soiled undies all over the place. Unmade bed, tea stains or God knows what else on the counterpain. It's not acceptable. Don't you hold wi' hoovers and dusters?"

"Yeh...but..."

"No buts. I want you ter clean your room now. Before lunch. And give the winders a wash too. They've got your greasy pawprints all over them. And...ditch the knack books. Don't leave shit under yer bed, put it away in drawers or cupboards. Not on the fucking floor."

I wasn't havin' any of that. Not in me own home.

"Ginge...sorry...Jonny...yer way out o' line here. Do a come ter your place tellin'

yer ter tidy up?"

"Ner, yer dote. Coz yer dote have ter. A'm not a fuckin' pig rollin' about in mi own slop. Now look, a'm not bein' funny. This is a place of work now and it's all gotta look ship shape an' Bristol Fashion. If yer dote like it, ship out, Dunno."

I wondered fer a moment if all his hassles with Carol had sent him teeterin' off ino madness.

"We're hoping to have people of all shapes an' sizes comin' in the door at any given moment and a dote want them gettin' a heart attack when they catch a whiff o' your smelly undies."

"What're yer on about you carroty cock'ead ?" I was beginnin' ter get well riled now. "Yer come chargin' in here wi'out a 'by your leave' tellin' me what a can an' cart do in me own fuckin' 'ouse! This from t' person who had a big cob on wi' me an weren't talkin' ter me last time I saw him."

"Can I suggest you calm down a little bit?" said Ginge remainin' cool. "Purple really isn't your colour, and those bulging veins are so unsightly. To put it simply, Sly and I were hopin' to set up a small venture using your abode as a base for liaisons between a select few, groomed gentlemen, and a more discerning, high calibre, sophisticated female clientele."

"EH?!"

"Ginge wants ter use yer house fer me an a few others ter shag loadsa old birds fer dosh?" added Sly.

"Thank you Sly," said Ginge, "David Niven himself couldn't have put it any better, I can't think how you didn't manage to extricate your friend from Weetwood nick"

Sly looked at me and said, "I was tellin' Jonny here all about Puzzler gettin'

arrested."

"Surely you can help, Jonny?" I asked. "You've got loads o' contacts ant yer?"

"Not fer that little perv I 'ant. I dote give a toss! I'm not prepared ter help anyone who sniffs round my bird behind my back."

Sly chose this moment to find sommat dead interesting in the pattern of the carpet.

"Plus, I'm sorry, but anyone who wears a bow tie at his age is obviously a paedo."

"Well I'm sorry too, Ginge," a said. "A dote want mi 'ouse bein' used as a knockin' shop. It's not convenient."

"That's quite alright, Dunno old chum," said Ginge getting up to leave. "The purpose of a business is to make money, and I really can't see us making a penny here. No. This will not do, this will not do at all."

That ginger cocksucker was a dab hand at gettin' under me skin.

"Eh? Fuck off! A decorated this place meself. There's nowt wrong wi' it. Sly, yer ter fuck as many birds here as yer can. Got that?"

"Aye aye Skipper? Fine by me?"

"This flat'd mek a fuckin' ace brothel, so dote start on about how it in't good enough, jus' coz it int furnished wi' Yorkshire Telly's cast off furniture."

Ginge were on his way to the door. "Okay, fine by me, but a think we're on a hidin' ter nothing. Still, a suppose it'll do til a can find something more suitable. Who knows, some of these ladies might have a taste for living rough. Oh by the way, this is for you." He handed me a box an' left.

On the box was written 'FAO DUNNO'. I ripped it open all excited to find two brand new telephones.

"Welcome to the twentieth century, Dunno." I heard him shout before slammin' the front door.

Ginge hadn't been gone five minutes when Sea Breeze decided to chip in with her tuppence worth.

"He does 'ave a point Dunno. Speakin' as a bird, this is a bit of a laddish lair."

"Din't stop yer comin' round in the 'ope o' seein' Sly wi' 'iz cock out," sez I, enjoyin' seein' her blush bright red in embarrassment.

"Shurrrup!" she purred.

"Hey pussy cat, I'm sure I can be a bit more accommodating," said Sly starting to undo the silk dressing gown. I could already see the outlines of a developin' hard-on hidden in its folds.

"Fuck off yer dirty get!" cackled Breezey, enjoyin' every minute an' obviously well fucked off that I was stuck there like a lemon, crampin' her style.

"Dote let me stand in yer way," I snapped, headin' for the exit.

The last thing I wanted was to watch them two idiots flirtin' like fuck with each other. I left for me shift at Pattons feelin' well fucked off. I'd love to fuck Breezey but obviously coz I'm not a grubby, spongin', work-shy no-hoper like Sly, I've no chance. I was fuming. That cheeky cunt Ginge had really pushed a few buttons. Me mind were racin' with all sorts of other stuff too. Him and Carol for a start? Its none of my business but why does it bother me so much that she's a gold diggin' bitch an' he, so obviously a clever little bastard in every other aspect of his life, can't see it? More importantly, is Derek fuckin' Wales the Yorkshire bastard Ripper? What was his business with the prostitute we followed him to that alley with? Why is Puzzler in stir, and does it really have summat to do with Derek Wales? And is Puzzler the sexual deviant Ginge

obviously thinks he is? Where the fuck is Friga? But the most nagging question though, the one that was really gnawing away at me: Why do I care? I've been thrust into a strange new world full of weirdo's and I've been swept along with it. These strange new people with their dramas and hang-ups. Is this what bein' an actor is all about? They sort of care about you an' at the same time they don't give a shit. Everythin' is right dramatic and they seem to revel in your misfortune...

I were in a world of my own when I got to Patton's. The first person I saw, sat on the steps lookin' like a cat who'd lapped up a saucer of double cream was Carol.

"Dunno!" she said, leapin' to her feet and throwin' her arms around me neck, plantin' a big kiss on me cheek. She smelt gorgeous, shower clean an' freshly perfumed.

"I understand I owe you a big Thank you for making our place look soooo special!"

"Not me, love," I replied. "I did fuck all really. It's yer boyfriend yer've got ter thank."

"Nonsense. He couldn't have done it without you. Anyway, it's his night off so let's not waste time talkin' about him. How do you fancy takin' me out after work, just you and me?"

I held her at arms length an' lookin' her square in the eye said, "Carol, why don't yer jus' fuck off and leave me alone? I hate what yer stand for and a want fuck all ter do wi' yer. Yer've got a really nice lad there, an' if yer've got an ounce o' decency in that empty, greedy, gold diggin' 'ead o' yours, you'll tell 'im what a manipulative little cunt you are an' move on ter some other sucker."

She looked at me cold, on her face a look of contempt and disgust. "One day you will understand."

Somehow, I doubt it. "What ever you say."

I headed for the bar. To be honest I really wasn't in any mood for puttin' on a smiley face for the customers. Luckily I didn't have to. As I walked past Brucey's open office, he called me in.

"Look Dunno, I couldn't help overhearing that. I'm not sure you're up fer it tonight. Why don't you go home?"

"Are yer sackin' me?"

"Of course not, I think yer've settled in well here but as I don't expect that many customers, and as I don't think you're in the best frame of mind, I think you should take the night off. I also think Carol is a fantastic, popular waitress and mebbe you should keep yer opinions ter yourself next time. So go on. See you tomorrow."

"Yeh. See yer termorrer."

I were back on the street with an evening to kill, wonderin' what to do next. As I walked down Upper Briggate I saw a coach parked outside the Grand Theatre. The driver were busy loading the boot with a pile of bags, piled up beside him on the pavement. People were millin' around, some chattin' an' some boardin' the coach. I thought, "Fuck it! A'm gonna get on it, an' if no one sez owt a'm gonna ride it ter it's final destination, wherever the fuck that might be."

I got on all nonchalant an' went to find a seat. Luckily there were more seats than passengers. No one said a word, just must've taken for granted I was part of the coach party. The driver got on an' went straight to his seat, got organised, closed the doors an' we were off!

I like a good mystery an' me impulsive decision took me mind off all my troubles as we trundled along, heading for ...Halton Moor! Fer fuck's sake! I don't believe it. Luckily we swept on by an' soon we were on the open road. We'd been goin' for about forty five minutes when, with the night drawing in, we came to a stop in a coach park in the centre of York. Everybody got up, including me, an' got off. York...

York is a beautiful town not far from Leeds an' in me whole life I've only been there once, when I were a kid. As I walked around it, I couldn't help askin' why? It's steeped in history. A lot of the Roman architecture an' the wall that once surrounded the town is still intact. York Minster has to be seen to be believed an' a walk down the 'Shambles' takes you right back in time, and through it all, the mighty River Ouse flows majestic. The place has a great atmosphere an' after walkin' for an hour, me heart were soaring but me belly was empty...

I'd cheered messen up though, so I were feelin' pretty cock-a-fuckin-hoop as I ducked into a little pizzeria to fill me big fat face. It was a quiet night, an' mostly empty save for a couple of tables here an' there with couples lost in romantic chat in the cosy candlelit atmosphere. I was greeted at the door by an extremely attractive woman who gave me a lovely warm smile.

"Hello! Table for one is it?"

"Aye."

"I'm sorry, have you booked?"

"Eh?"

"Only joking," she sez with a sexy little giggle, treatin' me to a smile which lit up her whole face. I was in love. "Come this way."

I followed her shapely little figure to a table in the corner, ordered messen a cold

beer an' before she could give me a menu said, "Don't worry about that my love, I know what a want. A pepperoni pizza, extra pepperoni, French mustard an' onions, an' a hope yer pizza chef's on tip-top form coz I make 'em ferra livin.'"

"Busman's holiday, eh?" she said with a twinkle. "Why don't you have something else?"

"Nah. Better the devil yer know."

"Don't you worry about indigestion?" she asked. "Or gettin' fat?"

"Not me pet," I said pattin' me belly, "A've got an iron constitution, an' the metabolism of a bumble bee. I'll never be fat!"

"Oh I don't know, some of those Queen bees look quite chubby. I'm Sandra by the way, but everybody calls me Sandy."

I couldn't stop messen burstin' into song; "San-dy, can't you see, I'm in Misery?"

She burst out laughing. "Hmmm, you're not a singer are you?"

"Am gonna be in an Opera, a'll 'ave yer know," I said, not mentionin' that I were just a 'bit of crowd dressing' without any words.

The rest of the evening past by in a blur, an' I was thankful the restaurant was quiet coz it meant we could just talk an' talk. Turned out Sandy was once married to a bastard who used to hit her, divorced now with no kids, she likes to live the quiet life on her own in a little place on the outskirts of York. I were tellin' her about Royal Park, Derek Wales, Spud, Sly an' Ginge an' all that, an she was askin' why I was gettin' so hacked off when me life was so full of adventure. I asked her if she ever got, yer know, lonely, for company an that, an' she said only sometimes, and anyway when it gets really bad she had a 'friend' in her bedside drawer, before I could work out what the fuck she were on about, suddenly, somewhere, a clock struck midnight. All the other customers had gone.

"Fuck! It's midnight," I said.

"It is... what about it? Are you gonna turn into a field mouse or something?"

"Nah, but I've got ter get ter Leeds, haven't I?"

"No chance," she sez, "the last train was ten minutes ago."

"So what am a gonna do now?" I said lookin' into her lovely, blue eyes, sparklin' with life an' mischief.

"Why don't you wait for me to lock up and then you can escort a lady home with a lovely moonlit stroll along the river?"

"Aye, alright," I said. "What time's she gettin' here?"

"Oh you!" She said givin' me a playful dig in the ribs.

We played grab the tail on the way home, prancin' along the riverbank with two table napkins from the restaurant stuck down our pants. The aim of the game, she explained was to try an' snatch the tail from your opponent, usin' only one hand.

"Easy," sez I, makin' a lunge for her. I don't know about Sandy, she was more like Greased Lightnin' the way she moved, skippin' out of me way. I dashed at her again like a bull an' before I knew it I was splashin' about in the river.

"A cart swim!" a cried out, the icy water clearin' the beer from me system. She reached out a hand from the riverbank to pull me up an' I yanked her in with me.

"Aaaaarggghh!" she gasped as I swam along beside her. "I thought you couldn't swim?"

"A'm a fast learner."

We climbed ashore an' squelched down the road to her house, a little two up two down cottage that looked at least five hundred years old.

"Dick Turpin, the Highwayman used ter stay here," she told me as she opened the door.

"Stand an' Deliver!" I cried, "Yer fanny or yer life."

"Dunno. Not so loud," she giggled. "You'll wake the neighbours."

We went into the parlour, a tiny little room with an open fire. Sadly it wasn't lit, but before long the central heatin' kicked in.

"We better get out of these wet things," sez Sandy. "You're drippin' all over the floorboards. If you'll excuse me, I'll go find you something to put on."

I got stripped off an' plonked me soakin' kit on the radiator. When she came back I was naked an' proud loungin' on the sofa in one of Sly's favourite positions. She were wearin' a dressin' gown an' precious little underneath.

"Oh. You're not shy, are you?" she laughed, tossing me a pink silk Japanese kimono. "Here put that on before you catch a chill."

I didn't want to seem ungracious so I did as she asked an' caught a glimpse of mesen in the mirror.

"A look like one o' them Geisha Girls!"

"Yes, a perfect picture of Oriental elegance, that's you, Dunno."

"Let's 'ave a cuddle on the sofa, eh?"

She shook her head. "Sorry. No can do. I'd like to get to know you first."

"But a live in Leeds," I groaned. "Why don't a give yer a little appetiser an' then if yer like it, a'll come back."

She shifted on the sofa an' I got a tandalisin' glimpse of cleavage. "No. I'd like you to come back Dunno. But I want you to come back because you like me, not because you think I'm an easy lay."

God, I did like her and at that moment I'd've done owt to prove it. "Oh, I'll be back love. You count on it. In fact, if yer tea makin' skills are any good yer wote be able ter get rid o' me."

"Oh my tea makin' skills are second to none, Dunno."

"Yer not gonna make me wait fer that too, are yer?"

She giggled an' we moved into the kitchen for tea an' bacon sarnies. Then, we settled down for a game of Yahtzee. It took me ages to learn how to play it, but once mastered I was unbeatable. The sun was risin' before we decided to call it a day.

"Listen love, a'd better be gettin' back," I sez. "A'm supposed ter be in college this mornin'."

She looked sad. I've never seen anyone look sad to see me go before. It was a rare treat an' it almost had me blubbin'.

"Will I see you again?"

"You bet," I said. "Give us yer number."

"I'll give you my number but I bet you never use it."

"I'll bet yer a slap up feed that a do."

"You're on."

We sealed the bet with a kiss. God. It was even better than chocolate cake.

"Silly me," she sez. "I didn't know what I was missing last night."

"I could always stay on fer a bit an' make up fer lost time?" I suggested.

She shook her head. "No. It'll be all the sweeter if we wait. Next time. If there is a next time."

"There will be."

Suddenly the tears were there an' I turned away to get back into my still damp clothes. When I was ready she walked me to the door. I gave her a little gentle kiss on the cheek and stepped out into the morning sunshine.

"See yer, Sandy."

"See you Dunno. Take care now."

## PUZZLER IS FREE

Wednesday, October 1st 1980

It were with a spring in me step that I bounded up the stairs at Dunno HQ to find Sly, Spud...and Puzzler!

"Puzz, Yer out! What the fuck's bin goin' on? Why did they lock you up?"

"Like Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean in Les Miserables, a mountain was made from a molehill."

"What? Yer stole a loaf of bread?"

"Something like that Dunno, yes."

I realised that for the moment I weren't gonna get any more than that out of the silly cunt.

"Hey, Dude," said Sly. "Thought fer a minute yer Ripper feller might o' switched codes. What happened ter you Capitano?"

I told them all about me little adventure in York and how I'd fallen for Sandy, impulsively bursting into song again at the end of my tale. "Summer days, drifting away, but, uh, oh the su-um-mer nights!"

Spud couldn't stop himself from adding, "Well-a well-a well-a ah tell me more, tell me more, did you stay for the night? Tell me more, tell me more, bet it gave her a fright!"

Once Spud's little improvised ditty came to an end, Sly suddenly came over all serious, held my shoulders, looked me in the eye and said, "Promise me Dunno? Never ever burst into song again, without warning us first?"

"Fuck off!" I said as they collapsed in childish giggles. "A'll have you know, it

woh beautiful and romantic, summat way beyond the grasp o' you three cunts. Anyway, why are you all here standing around like spare parts, shun't we be headin' fer college?"

We started gettin' our shit tergether, except Sly, who reached over for his rizzlas and started rollin' his first spliff of the day.

"Is that definite then?" I asked him. "Yer not comin' in again?"

"Affirmative, Captain! I've just got so much on my plate today, There's just not enough time fer college?"

"If yer say so Sly, but surely there are only so many wanks you can have in one mornin'?"

"Ignorance is bliss, Skipper an' if you dote know what I get up to, then yer cart be offended?"

"Yer a silly cunt, Sly." And with those wise words, we left to get the bus.

On the top deck of the bus, Spud O'Hagan took up the story.

"I got a call from Puzzler last night sayin' the cops were lettin' him go and could I come and get him." He left a pause here obviously hopin' someone would applaud the noble gesture of him going to get Puzzler.

When no one said owt, Puzzler continued the tale. "I couldn't face going back to my empty flat so I asked if Spud would take me over to you an Sly's."

"What about yer Mam and Dad? Why dint yer ring them?"

"I don't have a mother and father, Dunno, a plane they were travellin' in disappeared over the ocean one day an' they were never seen again."

I was sorely tempted to ask if his dad were Glenn Miller, but thought now wouldn't be a good time.

"It's been a difficult few days, Friga and I are very close, it's a mystery ter me why she would vanish without saying a word and then, to be accused of having

something to do with her disappearance was very hard. Very hard indeed."

"D'yer think Derek Wales might've stitched you up?" I asked.

Puzzler thought about this for a while and said, "Possibly yes, probably no".

And that is why he is called Puzzler.

"So tell me, Puzz, was she any good in bed, that Friga?" asked Spud as we were gettin' off the bus.

Puzzler went bright pink an' shook hiz head. "I don't know. We didn't have that sort of relationship. We'd kiss and cuddle and have fun. That's all. Neither of us saw the point in getting sticky and smelly."

Spud gave me a look an' rolled his eyes. "What a waste."

"Please, Spud, just coz you're a mucky pup, don't tar us all with the same brush," sez Puzzler. "There's more to life than sex."

"Oh really, oh Wise one? I never realised," sez Spud.

In class, Derek Wales looked less than thrilled to see the return of Puzzler.

"So, you're back, are you, Justin?" sez Derek Wales, givin' him a cold look. "I'm afraid I had to give your Stage Management role to Big Mark Spudulike. You can't just go taking holidays whenever you feel like it, you know?"

"I'm sorry, Mister Wales. If you're unhappy I suggest yer take it up with Her Majesty's Constabulary, as a were detained at their pleasure."

Wales shook his head. "Then let it be a lesson to you to keep your nose clean in future, boy."

The rest of the class is a bit of a blur, on account of it bein' a lecture on the rise of the legitimate theatre, and me spendin' most of it in dreamland catchin' up on some much needed zzzzzs.

I decided to head straight home after class, but I got stopped by Maggie Skipton. She was one o' them mature students, who'd come back to college in her late twenties. She might've been nice lookin' if not for the fact that she were right skinny an' had scaly skin from one of them skin diseases that make you look like a baby's arse with nappy rash. She'd had her hair bleached since yesterday, but had forgot to do owt about her eyebrows. A real Airplane blonde if ever there was one.

"Dunno?" she sez. "Are you heading home?"

"Yeh. Why?"

"I'll drive you if you like. I'm going to see Sly."

Odd. I never saw her chattin' to him before.

"Why's that then?" I asked.

She takes out one of Sly's 'SLY GUYS' pamphlets an' giggles a bit. "A girl's gotta have some fun."

"Oh. Right. Fair enough."

"Do you want to join in?"

"No thanks."

She looked a bit downcast . "It's my skin, isn't it? Am I really that revolting? You see, that's why I have to pay for it."

"No, Maggie. A think yer a crackin' lookin' bird. Honest a do. An' normally there's nowt a'd like more than ter hop inter bed wi' you an' Sly. Well, you anyway, but

a've gorra girlfriend see." Okay, slight exaggeration of the truth perhaps, but what can you do?

When we got to Dunno HQ, I found Sly in his lounge lizard outfit, lookin' like Roger Moore in Moonraker, an' the kitchen smellin' of one of them poncey teas that you call infusions.

"Aright Sly. Yer've gorra visitor."

"Hi Sexy," he sez. "Herbal refreshments?"

"Oooh, lovely."

While he was preparin' the tea, he sez, "Dunno, I'd like yer ter have a word wi' that Ginger Jonny of yours?"

"Why's that then?"

"Well, a thought he was on the ball? Yer know, a smart kid? But those phones he gave yer? I plugged them in and they don't work?"

I sighed. "Did yer call British Telecom ter set up an account?"

"Derrr! Earth to Dunno? I couldn't call anyone, Skip. There's no line?"

"Yer have ter contact Telecom ter set up a line, yer silly cunt."

Sly looked baffled. "Woah. They should use this in science classes? Chicken and egg syndrome perfectly illustrated? Listen, the little lady's chomping at the bit for a shot of Sly's love bazooka. Do me a favour and sort it? You're so good at that sort of thing?"

I sat in me room for a bit, drinkin' Sly's pot o' herbal mush but the sound of Maggie Skipton's ecstatic yowls was too much to bear. I decided I might as well head to the phone box an' sort out the phone line. It'd be ace to be able to chat to Sandy any time I felt like it.

## WIRES CROSSED

Friday, October 3rd 1980

When I got in from college at lunchtime I found the Telecom Engineer busy puttin' a connection point in the livin' room. Sly was still in his dressin' gown, watchin' over the proceedings.

"Hey mate," I sez. "Could yer put another connection in me bedroom?" Thanks to Ginge I now had two phones, so why not make full use of 'em?

"A've already put one in t' master bedroom," sez the engineer. "How many phones d'yer need?"

"The Master Bedroom?" Summat told me that it wasn't Sly's style to be thoughtful enough to ask for a connection point to be put in my room.

"Yeh?" sez Sly, not even havin' the decency to look shamefaced. "I figured it'd be better if I had one in my room? Then I won't have to disturb you late at night?"

"Yer cheeky fucker. Whose flat is this anyway?"

"Yer Mam's?" sez Sly. He's always got an answer for everythin' that one.

"Yeh, well, that means I'm the boss of the 'ouse. Right?"

"If you say so?" Sly nodded, an' rolled hiz eyes at the engineer, tryin' to make out I were a nutter.

"Look mate," a sez, turnin' back to the engineer. "Am really sorry about this, but yer'll 'ave ter put the connection point in my room, not in his. Is that okay?"

He sighed. "A woh hopin' ter knock off now fer some snap."

"A'll make yer a bacon sarney?"

"Yer on," sez the Engineer.

While he were busy drillin' points in me bedroom wall, Sly was scowlin' at me, an' lookin' right disappointed.

"What's up wi' you?" I asked.

"Nothin', boss?" he sez. "It's just a never knew yer were so, yer know.... materialistic, Dunno? Yer actin' like a right bread head. You'll be gerrin' a job in a bank next?"

"Am not even gonna dignify that with a response, Sly."

Sly jumped up an' clapped hiz hands. "Yer've jus' proven my point? See? Yer talkin' all pompous now? Like a twat?"

"I'll fuckin' twat you in a minute if yer dote pack it in."

I stomped into the room where the engineer was now testin' the line.

"All done," he sez. "Where's mi bacon sarney?"

"Oh. A fergot ter make it. Hang on a bit."

He shook his head. "Ferget about it. A've bin stuck here long enough as it is."

An' off he went lookin' none too pleased, takin' his tool kit with him.

"That feller's blood pressure must be at boiling point?" sez Sly, dismissively. "A wouldn't be surprised if he had a heart attack before the day's over?"

"Aye well, you have that effect on people."

A decided ter put the phone to the test an' sittin' down in me armchair I reached for the receiver an' glanced pointedly at Sly.

"Are yer gonna give me some privacy while a'm on t' phone then or what?"

Sly shook his head. "No? Why should I? If yer've got private calls ter make do 'em in yer room? A thought that was the point of it all?"

I went off into me bedroom not wantin' to admit that the fucker might have a point. I dialled Sandy's number, me heart palpitatin' like a bastard.

"Oh hello, San..."

"I'm sorry, Sandy's not here right now," came her voice. "Please leave a message after the beep and I'll give you a call back. Bye now....Beep."

Eh? What woh she on about? Then I realised she must have one of them new posh answerphone message things. I gathered me wits an' in a deep actory voice that would've put Derek Wales to shame I sez, "Hello, Sandy, this is Dunno, speaking. You owe me a slap up feed. Please give me a call on..." I looked for me new number, found it, gave it, an' hung up, feelin' well pleased with meself.

She still hadn't called when I had to head off to Pattons. I decided to have a word with Sly about it.

"Listen, Sly, a'm expectin' a call from a really nice girl. Dote go fuckin' it up fer me. If she calls dote go on about owt disgustin'. Is that okay?"

"Disgusting? Moi? I think you've got the wrong man, Hombre?" he protested. "I'll treat her like shiz someone's mother? Okay?"

Sadly, that did nothin' to assuage me fears. "No it fuckin' int okay. Jus' tell her a'll call her when a get in an' don't fuckin' try chattin' her up."

"Hey, have no fear, Jesu? I'll treat her like the Virgin Mary? Your woman is sacred to me?"

The night at Pattons past in slow mo. Spud and Gaz Bleach showed up with Breezey an' the girls an' wanted me to go to La Phonographique with them when me shift were over. I blew 'em off. I just wanted to get back to the phone an' speak to Sandy. In the end they headed off with Ginge an' Carol.

Before they went, Carol came over to me. It were the first time we'd spoken since our row the other night.

"Dunno, we've got to work together. It's silly givin' each other the silent treatment. I'm not really as bad as yer think I am."

"Aye. Aright," I said. "Look, if a were out of order the other day, a'm sorry. It's just a hate sein' me mates bein' tekken fer a ride."

"Jonny's a big boy," she sez. "He can look after himself. He doesn't need a big brother ter take care of him."

"Aye. Alright."

When I got home, there were the sound of Manto-fuckin-vani comin' from Sly's room, along with moans an' groans an' creakin' mattresses. I made a mug of tea an went into the livin' room, with the Evening Post. I'd just got a pen out an' were 'avin' a go at the crossword, when the phone rang. My heart was in me mouth as I picked it up.

"Yeh?"

"Is that Sly Guys?" came a throaty female voice.

"Er...yeh."

"Can I book an appointment for tonight? I'm feeling lonely? Do you do housecalls?"

I thought I'd better make an effort to sound the part. "Just a moment madam, let me check our appointment book and see if one of our gentlemen is available..."

I knocked on Sly's door.

"Entrez!" came Sly's voice.

I poked me head round the door an' saw Sly on top of Maggie Skipton.

"D'yer do housecalls?" I asked. "There's some ol' girl wants a bit o' company tonight."

"Do you wanna do it for me?" asks Sly.

"No. A dote."

Sly turns to Maggie. "Sorry, buttercup? I can't disappoint my public? Do you want to wait here until I get back?"

"No, I'd better head off, but don't do anything I wouldn't?" she sez.

"Is there anything you wouldn't do, tweety-pie?"

He ambled into the living room naked, and picked up the phone. "Good Evening, my name is Sly Black, to whom am I speaking?... Ahhh... A lovely name for what is no doubt a lovely, and verrrry sexy lady. Now you listen to me, you better tell me where you live because I cannot wait to get over there and make that evening of yours a little less lonely?" He reached for the pen, grabbed the newspaper and started writing, cradlin' the phone on his shoulder whilst scratchin' his bollocks furiously with his free hand. "Ah-ha...yeh....um, yes I know it, lovely part of town...I cannot wait, I will be with you as soon as I possibly can, au revoir mon cherie?!" He put the phone down. "Fuckin' hell, my bleeding knackers are itchy as fuck! That fuckin' Spud O'Hagan and his male grooming tips?"

"Any silly cunt who shaves off all hiz pubes deserves all he gets." I proffered.

"Very wise words, Kimo Sabe...Guess I'd better run some soapy water over the pink torpedo and prepare to launch a jizz payload over some posh old buttocks in Alwoodley?" He headed off to the bathroom. "It's good that the phone's up and running ain't it?"

"Aye, it is," I agreed.

"Call us a cab then, Capitano?"

"Yer a fucking cab, yer cheeky cunt" I said reaching fer the phone.

Ten minutes later, he were ready, lookin' remarkably smart and well-groomed in the 'uniform' Ginge had supplied. He was about to head off into the night when he suddenly remembered summat.

"Hey Dunno, a chick phoned earlier, and I've got ter say.....PHWOAR!!! She sounded sssssssssizzling hot! We had a lovely chat all about you!"

"Oh no, just what exactly did yer tell 'er, you cu...."

SLAM! Exit Sly, the sound of a car door closing and then driving away. I was just about to call Sandy when Maggie Skipton emerged from the bedroom, with a distant look in her eyes.

"Gosh that Sly... He is dreamy."

"More like fuckin' nightmarey, I'd say."

"Don't be silly Dunno...He certainly pushes my buttons."

Well you can't argue with that I suppose.

"G' night Dunno."

"Night, Mags."

Peace at last. I picked up the phone and with a tremblin' hand I dialled away.

"Hello San...."

"I'm sorry , Sandy's not here right now. Please leave a message after the beep and I'll call you right back." BEEP!

"Sa- an- dee, can't you see? I'm in miseree...."

## HEALTH SCARES

Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1980

I was beginning to regret the decision to put the phone in me bedroom as at seven o'clock, Saturday mornin' I jumped a fuckin' mile as the shrill burst of the telephone jolted me awake.

"Hello?" Me voice was thick with sleep and a touch on the grumpy side.

There was a soft chuckle on the other end of the line. "Sorry, did I wake you?"

"Sandy! There you are!" Suddenly I was wide awake. "How are yer?"

"Very well Dunno, thank you very much..."

There was a pause....Who speaks now? We both started talkin' at the same time, an after both findin' that amusing, Sandy said, "I thought it best to phone you as soon as humanly possible to avoid you singing ever again at all costs!"

I very nearly said "Fuck off yer cheeky cunt!" But just in time I realised I wasn't speakin' to Sly or any of that lot. "Give over you! Me voice in't that bad...Is it?"

"Now don't you take anything I say to heart. It's better than mine, so let's just leave it at that, shall we? Look I'm sorry to ring so early..."

"That's all right, I were up anyway."

"Ooh, liar, liar, pants on fire... you were, were you? Has someone drugged you then?"

"Shurrup you!" God it was great ter speak to her.

"Now listen, I've got the day off on Wednesday, I was thinking of coming over to Leeds and seeing you?"

"That's a great idea."

"Are you in college?"

"I am but I'll be done by lunchtime."

"Great, gives me an opportunity to do a bit a shopping first. I love shopping in Leeds. Shall we meet at one o'clock?"

"Smart! A'll see you at one o'clock, Wednesday, by one o' the lions on the Town Hall steps."

"Which one?"

"You choose."

She chuckled. "Leo then."

"Which one's Leo?"

"You choose! Bye."

"Bye..."

I were just drifting back off to sleep, post delicious wank when I heard the door slam and footsteps coming up the stairs, then I heard me door opening and someone creepin' across the room, an' then silence. Curiosity got the better of me and I cracked open one eye...an' found meself starin' straight at Sly's penis danglin' about two inches away from me face.

"Gaaahhhh! What the fuck are yer doin'?" I said jumpin' about ten foot in the air.

"I think a might have cancer of the cock? What d'yer reckon it feels like?"

"About the same as me knockin' yer fuckin' teeth out yer dirty little bastard. Fer fuck's sake Sly, yer really go to far sometimes."

"What are you on about, Hombre? Look..." he held up his finger. "Does that offend you? Of course not, it's part of my body, so what's the difference between my cock and my finger?"

"I know where your cock's been Sly, that's what."

"Touche! I've got you there! Coz my finger has boldly gone further than no cock has gone before...Wanna sniff?"

"No I fuckin' don't, Now fuck off an' mek us a cup o tea, you almost gev me an 'eart attack. "

He went off an' after a bit I could hear the rattle of kettle, cups an saucers. I got up and after a big splashy wee, started to dress. I joined Sly in the living room.

"There yer go good buddy, one cup of tea?"

"Thanks Sly, fer what it's worth, a think the chances of you having cancer o' the cock are pretty slim. However it has seen a lot of action recently an' it probably wunt do yer no harm ter have it checked out."

"Right you are Daddy-o!" He plonked hissen down on the sofa , kickin' off his shoes with a heavy sigh. "I tell you hombre, these middle-aged ladies are greedy fer pork sword. I've been up all night, a feel lucky ter get out alive...Worth it though, look at this?" He held up his wrist to show an expensive lookin' watch. "A token of gratitude from a lonely lady?"

"Listen," I said. "A'm seein' Sandy on Wednesday..."

"DON'T!" shouted Sly suddenly.

"Eh, What d'yer mean? Don't see her?"

"No," said Sly. "Don't start singin' again?" He cackled with delight.

"Fuck off, you. That's what she woh sayin' this mornin'" The penny dropped.  
"Wait a minute, what have you two bin sayin' to each other?"

"We talked about lots of stuff? I suppose we might have touched on the subject of your singing...briefly. Tell you what though Dunninnio, yer've got yersen a smart little bird there? She is lovely."

"Aye a know, so I would appreciate you keepin yer crown jewels well outta the public domain if she comes back here."

"My dear old chum, when have I ever let you down?"

I let a raised eyebrow do mi talkin' for me. "An' a want this place spick an' span on Wednesday. No used jonnies lyin' around. Got that? And no fuckin' clients."

"Fine by me? I could probably do with a day off anyway?"

"Yeh. Use the time ter have yer cock checked out, mate."

## WATCHING THE WATCHERS

Sunday October 5<sup>th</sup> 1980

Business were slack today as far as Sly was concerned.

"I've got a theory?" he expounded from his customary place on the sofa. He had his knees drawn up ter his chin, so I had the benefit of a bird's eye view of what he liked to call hiz little 'brown starfish' but what you an' me'd call hiz grubby arsehole. It wasn't the kind of thing a man wants to look at while eatin' a bowl of chilli con carne.

"Tell us about it when yer've put some kegs on," I said. "Or if that's too much ter ask, at least put yer fuckin' feet on the floor."

"Yer know how most o' me clients are enjoyin' what polite circles call their 'golden age'?" he sez, obligingly adjustin' his position.

"Yer mean they're gettin' on a bit?"

"Aye. Well, yer know how the older generation are all inter religion an' that? I think they feel it'd be a bit sinful, shaggin' me on a Sunday? Yer know, a day of rest? I think I might put that on me fliers? No business on the Sabbath? It might make them feel a bit better about themselves?"

I chewed this over. "Aye yer might have a point, but dote Jewish ladies have Sabbath on Saturdays? Why dote yer jus' say no business on weekends?"

"Ner. I want it ter look a bit religious, so they'll feel I've got a healthy respect for their beliefs? I think that might give me the edge on the competition? There aren't that many escort services that respect people's religions?"

"Aye. Well. Do what yer like. Yer normally do."

The phone went an' for a minute I wondered if it was Sandy. Fuck. What if she was cancellin' her trip over on Wednesday? I snatched it up on the second ring.

"Hello?"

"I am the one who goes by two names," came the voice on the other end. "One is my given name, the other was given to me. One could well mean only recently arrived and the other signifies an enigma."

"Eh?" I knew who it was, but I thought I'd try an' figure out what the silly fucker was on about. "'Ang on. Only recently arrived? Just in? And t'other signifies an enigma? Puzzler. Justin the Puzzler. How yer doin', pal?"

"That is relative. My health is fine and yet mentally and spiritually I am in need of the succour that only true friends can provide."

"Oh, right." It's funny but I felt quite chuffed that Puzzler considered me a true friend.

"Is Sly in?" he asked.

"Yeh. Just a minute."

I handed the phone over. They babbled on for a bit, then Sly came over all serious.

"Just a minute, comrade? Can Dunno come? Well, where is it? Can't yer just tell me? Oh it's like that, brother? Heavy duty? Okay. We'll be there?"

He hung up.

"Dunno?"

"What?"

"A pub. It's in a circular thing that horses eat?"

"Eh?"

"Puzzler can't tell us exactly. He thinks his phone's tapped?"

"He's the one that's fuckin' tapped, mate. A circular thing that hosses eat? Easy. Roundhay. What about it?"

"That's where the pub is? He sez it's a place fit for a Colonial King."

"A Colonial King? What's he on about? Oh...I get it...He must mean The White House."

"Good thinking, Robin? To the Batmobile?"

The Batmobile in our case was the bus. Two of 'em. All the way back into Derek Wales' neck of the woods. That's all I need on a Sunday night.

It were still early when we got there but there were a few young girls havin' drinks at the bar.

"Evenin' ladies," sez I, stickin' out me chest.

They tittered a bit an' then headed off to a table at the far side of the bar. Sly'd forgotten his wallet again in the rush to get out, so I got him a pint of Tetleys' an one fer mesen an' a couple of bags of salt 'n' vinegar crisps. After about twenty minutes we were joined by Puzzler. He looked terrible in a grubby t-shirt an' old jeans. He wasn't even wearin' his dicky bow.

"Fuck me, Puzz, what's up wi' you? Yer look like shit?" a said.

"I'm travelling in mufti," he sez. "Plain clothes, disguise. I'm being watched."

I took a look around the bar. No one was payin' us any mind. "Who by?"

"The cops. Ever since they let me go. I'm hearing clicky sounds on the phone and they follow me whenever I go out."

"Woah. George Orwell on bad speed?" sez Sly. "Care ter spill the beans, amigo mio?"

"They told me they'd be keeping tabs on me," sez Puzzler. He looked old an' tired an' his bottom lip was quiverin'. "They only let me go coz of insufficient evidence, but they say they know I did it."

"Did what, fer fuck's sake?" I asked.

"Killed Friga."

"Did yer?" asked Sly, tactful as ever.

Puzzler looked hurt. "I loved her. I love her. Not that that makes any difference. I wouldn't kill anyone. But they think I would. For a while they thought I'd killed all of them."

"All of who?" I asked.

A tear trickled down his cheek. "Those women. The Ripper murders."

"But he's bin killin' people fer years. Fer fuck's sake, Puzzler, yer'd have 'ad ter start pretty early. Yer'd've only bin about ten."

"That's what I told them. They said that most killers start when they're kids. They said everythin' about me matches their profiles on psychos."

"Whaddayer mean?"

"I'm a loner. They say a don't fit in. They say I think I'm inadequate sexually."

"Are yer?" sez Sly.

"No. I just don't think it's the be-all an' end all that's all. I can find a woman beautiful without havin' ter shag her. I mean, we can all admire the Mona Lisa, can't we? We don't have to fuck her?"

"A suppose so," I said. Mind you, the Mona Lisa's never really done it for me, personally.

"I'd fuck anything with a hole in, if they asked nicely?" sez Sly, helpfully.

"Oh fuck, they're here," sez Puzzler, glancin' across the bar.

There was a young feller sittin' at a table, sippin' a Coke an' readin' the paper. On the other side of the room was another feller takin' forever to choose summat to go on the jukebox. He kept glancin' over at us.

"Chill, kiddies?" sez Sly. "Who sez they're coppers? They're probably jus' interested in me? You know? They want a bit of Sly action?"

"Well if they do, why do they have to follow me everywhere?" sez Puzzler. "Why don't they just follow you?"

"Mebbe they're shy?" sez Sly.

"Listen, Justin," sez I. "Are yer sure they've bin followin' yer? Is it the same guys?"

Puzzler shook his head. "No. It's always someone different. That's the way they work."

"It's prob'ly jus' in yer head then. Yer shook up from all what's happened."

"I knew you wouldn't believe me," sez Puzzler, staring at his beer. "Nobody believes me. They're trying to drive me mad."

I didn't like to say that 'they' seemed to have done a pretty good job of it.

"So, d'yer wanna stay with us fer a bit?" I asked. "Just til all this calms down?"

Puzzler nodded. "Thanks. Yeh. That'd be great."

"You can have some of my clients if you like?" sez Sly. "Earn yerself some pocket money?"

"I'll pass if that's all right," sez Puzzler.

With Puzzler convinced the cops were watchin' us, I found it hard to relax. You can't go chattin' up totty if your mate thinks they're undercover policewomen. It cramps your style. We decided to call it a night an' head fer home. As we went out I saw two guys in a car. I recognised one of 'em. It were DC Haddock. A twat from the CID who'd questioned me a few months back over some knock off toasters that went missin' from a warehouse our Wayne was workin' in. It didn't have owt ter do with me, I hasten to add,

but I'm sure our Wayne knew all about it. Seein' Haddock there, lookin' at us, I began to wonder if Puzzler was right after all. The cops were followin' him.

I went up ter the car. "Aright Detective Constable? An't yer got owt better ter do than foller us about?"

"What the fuck are you on about, Dunno?" he sez.

"We know yer've bin followin' Justin over there. Jus' pack it in will yer. It's harrassment."

Haddock glanced at Puzzler. "What the fuck would a want ter foller that little shrimp about for? Have you bin on the wacky backy again Dunno? You wanna watch the company you keep."

I walked away. At the bus stop Puzzler pointed out two cars parked a little further down the road. One of the drivers had the bonnet up an' was checkin' his engine. The driver of the other looked like he was asleep.

"It's all the time," sez Puzzler. "The watchers are always there...Watching."

We got on the bus an' as we pulled off, I saw the drivers of the cars pullin' out from the kerb. It could've been coincidence but now I wasn't so sure.

"Look, I'm really sorry, fellers," sez Puzzler. "Perhaps I should just go home. I shouldn't have dragged you into this."

"Hey, we're pals?" sez Sly. "Pals stick together?"

A young girl got on an' sat down two seats behind us. Sly winked at her as she passed but she pretended not to notice.

"That's another one," sez Puzzler. "They're everywhere."

"Bollocks," I said. "Since when 'ave the cops recruited fifteen year old birds?"

"She might jus' be young looking?" sez Sly.

"Cheers, Sly, helpful as ever, a see."

"Well, she could be?" sez Sly, gettin' all defensive. "People say I only look sixteen and I'm eighteen. I'm old enough ter be a copper?"

Puzzler looked at him, wide-eyed as if wonderin' for a second if he'd just walked right into the lion's den.

"It's alright Puz," sez I. "No fuckin' police force is gonna employ Sly."

"I'd make a great copper?" sez Sly. "We all would. We could be like Starsky and Hutch only with three of us?"

When we got home, I looked out the window an' saw a bloke in a raincoat smokin' a fag. He was standin' across the road under the awnin' of the butcher's shop. It could've been nothin' but it could be that Puzzler was right and we were now under surveillance. I didn't like it one bit. I opened the window.

"Oi! You! Fuck off, or a'll phone t' cops an' tell 'em yer've bin flashin' at old ladies."

The feller dropped his ciggy in a puddle, stared at me in surprise an' scurried away. Maybe I'd been right an' he was just some old perv. Even so, it pays to take precautions.

"Listen mate," I sez to Sly. "It might be a good idea if yer dote bring clients back here til this has blown over. Yer dote wanna get done fer prostitution, an' me Mam wunt be too happy if shi got done fer operatin' a house o' ill repute."

"Bang on the button as ever, Chief?" sez Sly. "Now who fancies a spliff?"

"Brilliant idea, Sly," sez I. "Just what we want if the Plods come kickin' down the door."

A subdued mood descended on us as we settled down to watch a Tale of Two Cities. Even Sly kept his clothes on, not wantin' ter be caught en flagrante in case of any uninvited guests.

"Right, enough o' this, am goin' ter bed," I said, gettin' off me chair.

"Er...Dunno..." sez Puzzler. It was the first time he'd spoken in hours. "Can I sleep with you?"

"EH?!"

"I'm scared."

"But..."

"I just want a cuddle. That's all."

"I'll cuddle you?" sez Sly.

Puzzler shook his head. "No, thanks all the same. But with you a cuddle means sex. And I'm not into that. Certainly not with you. I trust Dunno not ter take advantage of me."

"Yer cheeky cunt," I sez. "As if a'd want ter."

He jus' looked at me like a little boy lost.

"Ah...fer fuck's sake, come on then, but first sign of owt funny goin' on and yer out. Got that?"

"I'll be good. Honest."

So there I was, lyin' in the dark, unable to sleep, with Puzzler's arms around me an' his dribble tricklin' into me ear. The things I do for me mates.

## NEW KID

Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup> 1980

I was woken from a fitful doze by the door crashin' open. Me first thought was that the Police had decided to come an' get Puzzler. Then as I peeled me eyes open I saw me Mam standin' there with a cup of tea.

"A've brought yer some tea. A need a hand in t' shop this mornin'. We've gorra delivery o' canned pineapples an' they're too heavy. Can yer shift 'em for us?"

"Er..."

"Oh. Sorry, a din't know yer had company," she sez, noticin' the lump under me duvet.

It was then that Puzzler sat up an' peered around like an owl without his specs.

"Fuckin' 'ell, Dunno," sez Mam. "So it's true what they say about actors. Yer've caught gay. Wait til our Wayne hears about this."

"Mam, it int what yer think," a sez.

She gave me a look as if to say, "Yeh, right."

"He's telling the truth," sez Puzzler, puttin' his specs on. "We weren't doing anything wrong. I just wanted a cuddle."

"Oh. It's like that is it," sez Mam. I could see she were tryin' not to laugh.

"So where's the pineapples then?" I sez, desperate to change the subject.

I got out of bed but I had an early mornin' hard-on an' the sight of me todger pokin' out of me undies was enough to confirm Mam's suspicions.

"Oh fer fuck's sake, Dunno," she sez. "Don't worry. I'll go an ask Sly. Where's a real man when yer need one?"

Sly was dead to the world so, me an' Puzzler had to shift the crates of pineapple chunks ourselves from the van into the store room of the shop. Puzzler counted them all. 728 cans of pineapple chunks.

"Fuckin' 'ell Mam. What yer doin' wi' all them pineapples?" I asked.

"A got 'em cheap from a friend o' yer Uncle Ian. An' you keep yer hands off 'em. A know how you woofers 'ave all got a taste fer exotic fruits."

"We're not woofers, Mam," a sez.

"Yeh. That's what that Jeremy Thorpe said, an' look at 'im. 'Ave a ter mek an appointment with Doctor Kaye for yer?"

"What for?"

"Fer turnin' queer of course, maybe he can give yer summat that'll turn yer back."

"Mam, yer dote just catch 'queer', it's summat yer born with."

"Gawd 'elp us! If 'ad a known how you woh gonna turn out a woulda thrown yer in a sack an bunged yer in the canal along wi' them kittens..."

We headed off for college then before Mam could think of owt else charmin' to brighten our day.

I was sat in the classroom chattin' to Spud when Derek came in. He stood a while surveying the room like a predator. You could see him mentally undressing all the lasses, tryin' to imagine what knickers they could be wearing . He waited til the class became aware of his presence and fell quiet.....

"And the rest is silence..." he said. "Alright class, pay attention please, I understand Mr Simon Black will no longer be joining us, which frees up a space for a

student who I hope doesn't turn out to be another time waster, and I further hope shows more talent and intelligence than you sorry lot. Class, say hello to Jonny Marinelli."

As if on cue, Ginge stepped out from behind the curtain.

"Hi all," he sez, givin' a little bow . Silly cunt.

"Now Jonny, before you make yourself at home and get your feet under the table, so to speak, just assure me that you're not gonna be a troublemaker?"

"Er, no...Of course not."

"Or a clown?"

"No."

"Do you fancy yourself as the big man?"

"No."

"Good...Then you and me are going to get along just fine... God knows this class is already oversubscribed with big men, clowns and troublemakers. Have you had a bath this morning?"

"What? Erm well, I had a shower...Does that count?" said a bewildered Ginge.

"Yeh...Yeh. You should always start your day with a bath or a shower...Cleanliness is next to godliness. Nobody likes a stinker. Right Jonny Marinelli?"

"If you say so Mr. Wales."

"Mr. Wales...Good lad, A bit of respect, I like that."

"He's a fucking weirdo! Is he always like that?" said Ginge. We were sat in the refectory havin' chip butties.

"He sure is," I said. "Spud thinks he's the Yorkshire Ripper."

"I don't think, I know."

Ginge gave him a surly look. "Yeh. Right. What are you, master detective or what?"

Spud was a bit taken aback by Ginge's attitude. "What's up with you? I'm detecting a little pinch of peppery animosity here."

Ginge sighed. His cheeks gettin red. "You and Carol. Carol hasn't stopped talking about you since the other week. If you think I'm going to let some Irish charmer make a cuckold of me before I'm even married, think again."

Spud spluttered his tea over Puzzler who was sat quietly opposite him. "I don't even know what a cuckold is."

"An Elizabethan term," sez Puzzler, comin' to life as he dabbed the tea from his specs with a spotted hanky. "It's used to describe a man with horns, given him when his wife makes the two backed monster with another man."

Spud just stared, bewildered. "I haven't made any kind of monster with Carol," he sez. "I wouldn't know how."

Ginge snorted.

"Honest," sez Spud. "She's a lovely girl but she's not my type."

"You would say that, wouldn't you?"

Spud shrugged. Then he fiddled about under the table. "Look under the table."

I glanced at Ginge an' shrugged. We both looked under the table. Spud was wagglin' his cock around. Fuckin' 'ell what is it about these people who're always gettin' their cocks out at the drop of a hat? It's like they can't get through the day without givin' it some fresh air in a public place. We looked back up at Spud.

"Well?" sez Spud. "Feel better now?"

"No," sez Ginge. "Why should I?"

"Coz that cock is all red an' swollen from a weekend's fucking. I've been shagging this right little goer I met at a Siouxi Sioux concert. She's only fifteen and she's bisexual. She was sucking me off last night while her girlfriend gave her a right old plating. Can your Carol provide that kind of service?"

"No," Ginge conceded.

"Then, you've nothing to fear," sez Spud, offering his hand for Ginge to shake.

Ginge was about to take it when he had second thoughts. "Can we shake after you've washed it?"

"I never realised ginger folk were so delicate," sez Spud. "I'm off fer a piss. I'll wash me hands and we can do the honours then. Okay?"

Ginge nodded wearily. "Fine by me."

"He's all right really, that Spud," I said.

"Aye a suppose so," Ginge agreed. "I've got to go over to my Claremont house and check the decorators have finished. D'yer wanna come fer a coffee?"

"Why yer havin' it decorated?" I asked. "Yer not livin' there."

"It's an investment, Dunno. I've got plans for that place. You coming, Justin?"

Puzzler shook his head. "No thanks. I'm working on a cryptic crossword puzzle. I thought I'd try an' finish it in the library."

"What ever shakes your tree," sez Ginge. "Come on, Dunno."

"Phweeeooo," I whistled on entering Ginge's Claremont pad. The place looked spectacular. No expense spared. "A dote get it Ginge, why go ter all this trouble when it's empty?"

"Coz I'm selling the dream, Dunno. Somebody will walk in, see it, an' want it. When I bought it the place were a shit 'ole, Spending a few quid on it doesn't half pile the zeros onter the price, I can tell you."

I nodded sagely, not knowing what the fuck he was on about.

"Anyway, I've got plans for this place for the next few months. This male escort business is a license ter print money...Yer middle, upper-class posh totty is gonna be more than happy ter be fucked good an' proper in a classy place like this."

I couldn't argue with that...but... "A thought you were using my place?"

Ginge looked at me like I'd just exposed myself at the Chelsea flower show. "My dear Dunno, Your place is perfect!" He cooed, and I felt me chest swell with pride. "It's become self-evident that there is a certain female clientele that loves to 'rough it' and feel grubby with the Sly's of the world. Getting dirty in Beeston is their idea of rampant, unbridled fantasy. There are other ladies however that want to feel naughty in comfort and a bit of class. They want to be fucked by your James Bond type and pay through the nose fer it. This place, and the likes of Ted Smailler are perfect for that. I've also enrolled Garvey Aristotle, he's a black mate of mine, a colossus, The ladies love him. Add chilled champagne at £80 a bottle and the figures soon start to speak fer themselves."

"But Ted Smailler's an oily twat!" I protested.

"God knows, the ladies seem ter love an oily twat... Smailler's the best, he can be a man fer all seasons Dunno, there's no two ways about it."

Over coffee, I was telling Ginge all about Sandy and my reservations about her coming back to Dunno HQ on Wednesday, what with Sly's propensity for running about in the knack.

"Bring her here!" suggested Ginge. "Look, I'm not planning to have the place up an' running until the end of the week. Well, not until the sauna is fitted anyway, and I've only just put the discreet ads in 'The Lady' and 'Horse and Hound Monthly', so the place will be empty. I'll give you a key. Fill your boots old son!"

"Wow, cheers Ginge. She'll be like putty in my hands once she sees this place."

"That's settled then, when's she coming over?"

"Wednesday, lunchtime."

"Perfect. It's all yours for a little mid-day tryste."

"Thanks a lot Ginge. I owe you one."

"I know Dunno. I know."

## THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA IS HERE, INSIDE MY MIND

Tuesday, October 7th, 1980

I bumped into Ginge halfway down the Headrow, an' we walked together to Pattons in companionable silence. As we went through the back door the blast of cologne told me we weren't a million miles away from the presence of Clifford St Ledger. Sure enough...

"Ah There you are! Atlas and Hercules. Now don't forget I require you for a rehearsal this very e'en. You face your public on Wednesday."

"Eh, But that's termorrer?" I stammered, feelin' a sickenin' 'woosh' of nerves. "Will one rehearsal be enough. We dote wanna fuck it up."

"Don't you worry about a thing dearest Dunno. A stage manager will lead you to your positions behind a gauze. You will get into your poses on two plinths and then when the time comes, we will take out the gauze and Voila! Atlas and Hercules in all their shimmering splendour...Audible gasps of appreciation from the crowd, aria comes to an end and goodnight Vienna! Easiest fifty pounds you'll ever make."

"Fifty quid?"

"Oh yes, dearest Dunno, one doesn't expect your services for nothing. This is opera dear boy. In opera, nothing is done on the cheap!"

"Smart."

He sidled over and bent close to me ear and whispered, "Have you given any more thought to how I can help you with your equity card?"

Oh aye yeah, me mam would have a fuckin' field day in light of the other morning if a succumbed to St Ledger's advances an' she found out.

"Oh, it's okay, Mr. St Ledger. A think 'ave got that covered."

"Very well, dear boy. If you ever change your mind, I'll be only to happy to oblige."

Behind his back I could see Ginge winkin' an blowin' me little kisses...the cheeky get.

"Come on then dearhearts, shake a leg, I want you over at the theatre, in one hour!"

"But what about our shift?"

"I've settled it with Butch...sorry, Bruce. I only need you for an hour literally to hold your hands and walk you through what you'll be doing. Gill will then want a little costume fitting and you'll be back here before anyone has missed you...impossible as that seems."

I tell yer what. I thought the college theatre was impressive. The Grand Theatre was a whole new ball game. Big, Victorian an' magnificent. The visual 'blast' to the senses when we walked into the auditorium an' saw the lights and the set is very hard to describe. Even Ginge were impressed.

"Wow," he exclaimed, his gob wide open.

It's fair to say though, I don't think Opera's my thing. Lots o' fatties in big colourful costumes warblin' away, singin' in right daft voices, doin' some really shit acting an makin' a load of fuss an' bossin' everyone about like they were really special.

Out of the black of the auditorium a lady appeared with a tape measure round her neck. "Jonny and Dunno?"

"That's us love," I confirmed.

"I'm Gillian. Would you like to come this way and try on a few things for me, my darlings?"

"Aye, alright. How long's it gonna tek?"

"Oh not long, precious!" she said unable to stop herself breaking into a huge smile.

We followed her backstage where a small section was cordoned off by thick black curtains, she pulled the curtain aside to reveal a rack of costumes illuminated by a single bulb. She started going through the rack.

"Right...Mr. Marinelli and Mr. What is your surname Dunno?"

"Dunno."

"Dunno Dunno?"

"Just Dunno."

"Here you are...So it is! Mr. Dunno. Here you are boys. Just pop your clothes off and try these on for me." She handed me an' Ginge a pair of knickers made with sheer see through material, bar two leaves made from a green silk-like cloth sewn onto the crotch and arse.

"Is that it?" I asked.

"That's it, darling" she confirmed. "Apart from you Jonny, you'll be carrying that of course!" She gestured toward a huge polystyrene globe, lyin' on the floor next to the prop table.

Five minutes later we were stood in front of Gillian looking like a coupla twats...with leaves on.

"Marvellous, perfect, maybe a bit of body make-up. Don't want you looking too pasty under the lights. Stay as you are, please boys, I need to show you to Cliffy. One has to tread a bit carefully when we are teching. He can get a bit temperamental."

"What's Teching?" I asked.

"Oh my little theatre virgin, how sweet! " said Gillian. "Teching is basically when the lights and the sound meet the performance and all the moves on stage for the

first time. It can be slow, it can be laborious and it can be tense. Very stop, start darlings, but it will give you ample opportunity to know your bit."

As if on cue St Ledger's voice boomed in the wings "No, no, fucking no! Re-set, and do it again please!"

He appeared backstage.

"Fucking amateurs!" He saw us and his tone changed completely. "Oh, my! How marvellous, perfect, just perfect. I could lick you both all over! No. Stop, now's not the time to get excited, you naughty boys. Thank you Gillian, you are a genius!"

If two pairs of knickers with leaves stuck on can be described as 'genius' then I've got a lot to learn about theatre.

"Right, come on, my loves" said Clifford. "Whilst we have five minutes to ourselves before those fuckin' imbeciles are ready to continue, I shall walk you through your 'bit'. Be a darling Jonny and grab your world."

Clifford eyed up Ginge's arse greedily as he went and picked up his huge polystyrene world and came back over. We stepped from the wings and onto the stage. I felt really self-conscious in me undies and really exposed an' vulnerable but it were weird. We were stood behind a big screen like a lace curtain or summat, and we could see the rest of the stage in front of it, but no one could see us.

"Right boys when the time is ready the stage manager will give you your cue, you will come on behind the gauze. Dunno you will stand on this plinth here and stand like this:" He did a pose that musclemen do at a Mister Universe competition. "And Jonny you will make your way over to that plinth and...give me your world dear." Jonny handed him the globe. "...And stand like this. Got that?"

"Yes," we said.

"Good. Show me."

We did it all just as he'd shown us.

"My darlings," said Clifford with a big smile. "If only everybody else was as professional as you! Right we will get to this bit in about ten minutes or so, so don't disappear. Once completed you can steal away and I will see you Wednesday at six thirty. Make me proud boys!"

I were gonna ask if Sandy could come an' watch but when I saw what I would be wearin' I figured that maybe I didn't want her to see me makin' me professional debut wearin' just a pair of see-through undies. Who would?

The rest of the night past without an hitch, an' after work I made me way home where I found Sly sprawled on the rug listenin' to some hippy rubbish about tea pots.

"Hey, Mon Brave? Yer Mam tells me you an' Puzzler have turned gay? Good on yer Dunno? You've got ter get yer rocks off where ever you can as far as I'm concerned?"

"Shurrup. A'm norrin the mood," I muttered as I stomped into me bedroom. Puzzler was in me bed, snorin' gently as he hugged me pillow. For fuck's sake! Looks like I'll be on the couch ternight. Ah well, termorrow's D-Day an' Sandy's comin', an' one thing's for certain, I'm not gonna let owt spoil that.

## HEAD OVER HEELS, ARSE OVER TIT

Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1980

Derek Wales had no sooner finished spoutin' off about how someone called Brecht was determined to break down summat called the fourth wall when the bell rang an' I was off like a starvin' whippet catchin' a whiff of a dropped sausage to meet Sandy on the steps of the town hall.

I were faster than Seb Coe an' I was sweatin' buckets as I collapsed next to the stone lion on the steps. Where was she? I felt a cool pair of hands across me fevered brow.

"Has it been raining?" came the voice of me own personal angel. "You're soaking!"

"It's good honest sweat, that is," I said, turnin' round an' givin her a kiss. It were a proper one too that culminated in me liftin' her off her feet like a caveman. I took a step back, lost me balance an' we both went clatterin' down the steps, almost knockin' over the Evenin' Post stall at the bottom.

"It's rainin' lovebirds!" sez the news seller. "Watch where yer goin' kids."

"You all right?" I asked, helpin' Sandy to her feet.

"Fine thanks," she laughed.

It was lucky fer her I'd broken her fall, coz I felt as if I'd been on the receivin' end of a right good kickin'.

"Fancy summat ter drink?" I asked.

"Sure. After I've had a full body X-Ray."

We went off to the Vic behind the Town Hall an' ordered a couple of pints of Tets and two steak an' kidney puds. I love a bird who likes a beer an' a pie. The pub were a bit

quiet so after we'd finished up I asked her if she fancied a trip round the Arcades or the Merrion Centre.

"Ner. There's only so much shopping this girl can take, buster."

Better an' better, a bird who isn't shoppin' mad.

"So, whaddayer wanna do then?" I asked.

She gave me a knowing look. "I think we could maybe go somewhere quieter..."

I looked around. There was only the ancient barmaid in the place.

"It dunt get much quieter than this, love," I told her.

"If I do what I want to do to you right now, I think the old dear might have a heart attack."

I'm not usually that slow on the uptake but after her wantin' to take things slow last week I was a bit taken aback.

"A thought yer wanned ter tek things, yer know...slow?"

"Well, there's slow and there's snail's pace. I'm not a snail, Dunno...are you?"

"Am a fuck!" I grabbed her hand an' raced back out onto the street.

We got to Ginge's pad in record time an' I fumbled with the key in the lock. Shit. The new paintjob had made it stick. I gave it a good shove with me shoulder an' it opened.

"Nice place, Dunno," she sez as I start pullin' at her clothes in the hallway. "But do you think you could have a shower first? You're a bit ripe? In fact, I could do with one too. Let's get naked!"

"Sure!" I said. Now all I had to do was find the bathroom. "Come on, I'll give yer a tour. This is the..." a opened a door. "...kitchen. And this is the...fuckin' hell..."

The sauna had been installed. And a jacuzzi.

"Fancy a jacuzzi, pet?"

"Sounds naughty!"

We piled in, an' floated in bubbly luxury. It was just as well, coz the steak n' kidney pie was payin' havoc with me innards so she didn't notice a few extra home brewed bubbles kickin' off in the water.

What follows is sort of private, suffice to say that I wish me Mam could've seen me at it, coz it would've put paid to her fears over me an' Puzzler for good. At last, we lay, pantin' in the king-size bed, sated after a four course feast of love. I glanced at me watch.

"Oh fuck! Am due in the theatre in half an hour..."

"Can I come?" sez Sandy, drowsily.

"Er...it's sold out. Soz pet." I was lyin', but I had me reasons. I didn't want her illusions of me as a masterful actor shattered when she saw me in a fig leaf surrounded by a load of fatties in big wigs tryin' ter shatter glass with their tonsils. "Why dote yer stay here, an' a'll be right back. We can make a night of it."

"Sure. Okay. I can get the first train back in the morning. Are you sure you're up for more?"

I gave me knackers a squeeze. "Thez plenty more man milk in these udders love. Jus' you wait an' see."

So off I went, whistlin' a jaunty tune an' wonderin' how life could be so good some times. The whole day had been sheer perfection... an' nothin' was gonna spoil it.

I got to the Theatre in time an' reported at the stage door where I gave me name to the old feller there. He told me that Mr. Marinelli was already in the dressing room.  
Dressing Room! Ace!

"When yer in costume and yer go down ter the stage mek sure you lock your dressing room door and hand your key in to me. A cart be responsible fer any thefts. I give it back when you leave the stage and return ter get changed...understood?" sez the old boy.

"Aye"

"Grand. Right lad, sign yersen in and welcome ter the Grand Theatre, Leeds.  
Good luck!"

"Thanks."

I knew that I had fuck all to do, just stand an pose for no more than twenty seconds, then exit in the blackout, but I were nervous as fuck. Make no mistake about it this was me professional debut right here in me home city.

The front of the theatre might've been all opulent Victorian splendour, but backstage was pretty grubby. Peeling paint on the walls, stone staircase and rustin' iron hand rails. Speakers everywhere relayed the sound of the stage being prepared. Suddenly a whispered voice on those same speakers announced; "Ladies and Gentlemen of the company, this is your half hour call, you have half an hour."

"Fuck."

Eventually I found the floor me an Ginge were on, an' walkin' down the corridor, I could hear the singers warming up in their dressing rooms. Lots of scales an' that. Suddenly a door opened and a fat fella with a big wig on and full makeup stuck his head out and clicked his fingers at me.

"You! You boy!"

"What me?" I said, stopping an' turnin' to face him.

"Yes you...These trousers need a button on the fly. Hurry along down to wardrobe with them now!"

"Do it yersen."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You heard. Do it yer-fuckin'-sen. Am not yer servant, pal."

He looked at me aghast. "How dare you! Don't you know who I am?"

"A dote care if yer the Queen o' Sheba mate, a've got better things ter do than run around after you, yer big fatty. God knows, it looks like yer could do wi' the exercise anyway."

He harrumphed in a greatly exaggerated manner, and ducked back inside his room.

I entered our dressing room to find Ginge sat there, fully clothed, calm as you like reading the property section of the Evening Post.

"Hey Dunno, they're practically giving houses away in Beeston, I might buy that little shack o' yours."

"Aright Ginge, yer not in costume yet?"

"My dear Dunno, it's a pair of knickers, its hardly gonna take hours is it? Oh and Gillian dropped this off, we're to smear it on apparently." He pointed to a pot full of brown stuff on the dressing room table.

Ginge was starin' at me in the mirror. "You're lookin' very pleased wi' yersen, you had a good day?"

"Av 'ad a fuckin' ace day thanks. We spen..." I was interrupted by the stage manager givin' the fifteen minute call. Luckily our 'bit' came in the first twenty minutes

so at least we wouldn't be hangin' about for ages in our clarts, it did mean we had to get a move on though...We started smearing the make-up on.

When we were done, we hurried down to the wings. I were busy tellin' Ginge all about me afternoon with Sandy as the orchestra struck up the overture.

"Who'd a thought it, eh?" Ginge beamed at me, lookin' like a jovial ginger Dickens character in a fig leaf. "You an' me both embarkin' on love's great adventure. Two blissful birds. So when are yer seein' her again?"

"Ternight!" I said with a laugh. "Shiz back at your place waitin' fer me, juiced up an' ready fer some more a Lord Dunno's love action."

Ginge went pale underneath the layer o' brown make up. "Eh? But a thought yer only needed the place fer the afternoon?"

"Aye well, a thought a'd celebrate me debut on t' stage in style ternight. Shiz goin' home in t' mornin'."

"But... no...she can't. We've brought forward the opening of the establishment. Ted Smailler's supposed to be meeting a very important lady there tonight. They'll be there now. That's why I had to pay extra to get the jacuzzi and sauna finished in time." Me head were in a whirl. Ted Smailler an' Sandy...together...in Ginge's posh knockin' shop! For all I know, that oily great whale would be doin' his best to swallow Sandy as we spoke. I knew he were a charmin' fucker too, an' that most girls'd find it hard to turn down hiz advances... I turned to run back to the dressin' room.

"Dunno!" Ginge hissed. "What the fuck are yer doin'?"

"Am off ter your place."

"Yer can't. We're due on!"

"Fuck that, ferra game a soldiers, A've a mermaid ter save from the jaws o' Moby fuckin' Dick. Tell the audience ter blink an' they won't miss me."

I got up to our dressin' room an' turned the handle. Locked. I skidded down to the Stage Door but the feller with the keys wasn't there. There was nowt for it. I'd jus' have to run there in me fig leaf, smeared brown like summat from the Black an' White Minstrels.

"And where do you think you're going?" sez Clifford St Ledger as I was about to step outside.

"An emergency. A've got ter dash."

"Like hell you do! " he sez, snarling. "Leave this theatre and I will make sure you never work in Opera again."

"Oh No! Tell me it's not true!" I sez, chargin' out the door.

"Come back!" he yells. "That costume is company property!"

I almost got hit by a Ford Capri as I raced across the street, an' I attracted more than me fair share of wolf whistles as I jogged down the Headrow. I wished I had some proper trainers on instead of these stupid felt slippers coz the roads were cuttin' me feet to bits.

I got to the house with a crowd of jeerin' kids followin' in me wake, all desperate to see what was goin' on. The door was locked and I could hear Rod Stewart singin' 'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?' on the stereo. I was beginnin' to recognise it as a Ted Smailler trademark and I knew he must be workin' his dirty magic in their. I put me ear to the door an' from inside I could hear the moans an' groans of a woman in full sexual ecstasy. There was no time to lose. I put me shoulder to the door, once, twice, an' it crashed open on the third in a splinter of wood an' a shatter of stained glass.

I charged into the livin' room, an' was greeted by the sight of Ted Smailler's mammoth white arse pumpin' up an' down.

"Gerroff her, you animal!"

Ted turned in shock, an' the lady he was shaggin' squealed in horror!

"Oh...fuck!" I gasped.

Ted got to his feet holdin his hands in front of his cock. "Madeleine, you told me your husband would never find out about us," he sez, givin' me a wink.

"But..." sez the old dear.

"That's right," I scowled. I didn't know what was goin' on, but I thought it only fair to play along with Ted's little game. "You bitch! How could you?"

The old lady began cackling with laughter and clapped her hands. "Oh bravo," she sez in a voice that could've cut glass. "Well done! You boys really know how to give a girl an adventure, right down to the thrill of discovery. Superb. I will definitely be back for more, next week. Portraying my husband as a Pakistani Tarzan is a stroke of genius! Now, if you would care to give a lady a moment to regain her composure in light of this illicit and clandestine revelation." She headed for the bathroom just as I heard footsteps descending the stairs.

"Dunno!" gasped Sandy, starin' at me in me bedraggled fig leaf G-string. "You never told me you were involved in this business."

"Eh? A'm not. I can explain everything. Honest!"

Ted Smailler led us both out of the livin' room an' into the kitchen, like a smooth Maitre D leading us to a cosy table fer two. He was clearly enjoyin' hissen.

Pourin' a couple of glasses of chilled champagne he said, "My word, the fun never stops with you two. When I got here and found the delectable Sandy here, I admit I thought she was the client, and goodness, I thought, aren't I a lucky boy? But alas,

Sandy soon put me straight. She's been waiting for you upstairs, haven't you, Sandy?"

"Yes," she agreed. "But what's with those pants?"

"I quite like them," sez Ted.

"They're me costume from the opera. When Ginge told me, Ted were comin' round, I ducked out o' the theatre an' got here as quick as a could."

Sandy started laughing. "How romantic."

"Mmm. We're in luck that Mrs. Belvedere likes a bit of spice in her caprices, and, unbelievably, that her husband is an Asian textile millionaire. I think your little outburst just added to the service," sez Ted, lookin' well chuffed with hissen.

"So, all's well that ends well," I sighed.

"For me, yes. Sadly, for you I don't think so," sez Ted, lookin' over me shoulder.

There in the doorway was DC Haddock an' two other coppers.

"I've got you this time, Dunno," he sez, reachin' for his notebook. "We have reason ter believe that you are in possession of stolen property."

"EH?!!"

"To whit, one costume, filched from The Grand, at approximately 19.47 hours. It's no use denying it Dunno. You're wearing it. We've got you bang ter rights, lad."

"But...Yer can 'ave 'em," I said startin' to take them off.

"Hold it right there!" shouted DC Haddock. "Thank you Dunno, that won't be necessary, I've just eaten. Cuff him, lads."

An' that was it. I was bundled into the police car, hands cuffed behind me back, still in those stupid knickers, with a crowd of onlookers gathered around. As I got into the car, the flash of a camera went off. Fuckin' Hell. Even the Press were there.

When we got to the police station I was bundled inside and up to a desk where a police sergeant asked me to hand over me valuables.

"I ant gorrowt on me," I said.

DC Haddock turned to one of the uniformed cops. "Search him. Then chuck him in the cells."

"I'm only wearin' a fig leaf, fer fuck's sake!"

"Shut it, you."

I bit me lip as the copper ran his practiced hands all over me. Then I was led into the back an' shown into me cell.

I sat on the stool wonderin' at how quick things change. This mornin' I was gettin' ready for a romantic day an' lookin' forward to me debut on the stage. Now here I was accused of nickin' a pair of undies an' locked up like a gorilla in the zoo.

As time ticked by all I could think of was Sandy, left alone with Ted Smaller. What must she be thinkin'? There's only so much feelin' sorry for yourself a feller can indulge in before he gets to feelin' even sorrier for himself. I was plumbin' the depths of despair by the time the cell door opened an' DC Haddock poked his head inside.

"You're in luck, Dunno. They've dropped all charges. You're free to go. Though if I were you son, I'd think about turnin' over a new leaf!" Him an' his copper chums all burst out laughin'.

I got up an' walked out with as much dignity as I could muster. When I got to the entrance there was Clifford St Ledger waitin' for me, a big grin on his sleazy face.

"My dear Dunno," he sez. "This has all been a terrible misunderstanding.

Darling Jonny told me all about it. If only you had taken the time to explain things to me we could have avoided all this unpleasantness. Allow me to make amends and give you a lift home."

I looked at the clock on the wall. It was half past one in the morning. I had no choice. As I were about to get in the car he wagged a finger at me.

"First things first, dearheart."

"What?"

"I think you should return my property. You won't be needing them now." He pointed at me G-string.

"But..."

"You don't want to force me to press charges do you?"

"No."

"Well then, hand them over and we shall forgo the severe spanking I was going to administer."

This humiliation was obviously punishment for my lettin' him down .Kickin' off a row wouldn't get me anywhere. I slid out of the pants an' handed them to Clifford. He sniffed 'em, then wiped his forehead with them before openin' the car door.

"Hop in, deary."

I got in, an' sat with me hands over me lap.

"Such a shy boy," he sez, firin' up the ignition. "I like that. Now, are you sure you wouldn't like to earn that equity card tonight? I mean, we're halfway there now aren't we? You don't even have to undress."

"No thanks."

"Are you sure? I think Little Dunno likes the idea. Is he perking up down there?" He nodded at me crotch. He was talkin' bollocks. Little Dunno wasn't perkin' up at all.

He was well hidden under me hands.

"Am quite sure thanks."

"Oh well, some other time perhaps."

When he dropped me off at Dunno HQ, I could feel his eyes feasting on me arse as I banged on the door.

"Sly! Let me in!" I yelled.

After what seemed an age, Sly's head popped out of the upstairs window.

"Alright, Dunno? Hey, radical? At Last? Like I've always said, there ain't no shame in the naked form, baby! Let it all hang out, man? What d'yer want?"

"I wanna come in, yer dozy cunt. Throw us yer key."

The key came tumblin' down, an' as I bent down to pick it up I heard Clifford St Ledger give a piercing wolf whistle.

"Peepo!" he bellowed, lasciviously.

"Who's yer friend Dunno?" Sly called down. "Come on up mate? I've just put the kettle on."

"Thank you, my dear angel," sez Clifford, gettin' out the car an' followin' me upstairs.

That fuckin' Sly. Why does he have to be so friendly to every fucker he meets?

Sly didn't feel it at all necessary to cover his arse in front of a total stranger, much to the delight of Clifford St Ledger.

"I'm Clifford St Ledger," he purred, "but you my dear boy can call Cliffy."

"I'm Sly. But you can call me Sly?" said the silly cunt confusin' himself.

"I would love to call you Sly, Sly."

"No, dude, just the one Sly? But if it floats your boat, capitano, yer can call me

Sly Sly, if you want?"

"Sorry?"

"It's just Sly, not Sly Sly?"

"Right you are my boy," said St Ledger his face lightin' up as he started to realise he could be in with a chance with this obvious half wit.

"Milk and sugar then, Ledgey?"

"Is it Earl Grey?"

"Negative Captain. It's Earl Tetley?" He looked over at me. "Do you fancy one then, Tarzan?"

"Course a fuckin' do!" I barked, an' left the room without further ceremony.

I had to get over to Ginge's Claremont House, it was now knockin' on for half two but I didn't give a fuck. I had to go see if Sandy was still there an' see if that oily toad Smaller was still sniffin' around. I washed all the brown shit off and finally got into my own clothes. I was mullin' over whether it was the done thing to cadge a lift with St Ledger, when Sly came in with me tea, waving a white dishcloth over his head.

"Don't shoot man!? We surrender. We come in peace?"

"Alright mate, point taken, sorry fer being a moody cunt. I've just 'ad all a can take fer one day."

"Don't worry about it amigo? But listen," he leant forward and whispered, "You can only take denial so far? Okay, like all things it started harmlessly enough with you showing Derek Wales yer cock in the toilets, then that led ter you seducing Puzzler when he were vulnerable, but now yer charging round the streets at one in the morning butt naked with a leading theatrical homosexual? Give in to it hombre. Let it go?"

"Fer Fucks sake Sly. I am not a fuckin' homosexual!"

"Shhh....shhh... There, there, that's right my friend let it all out?"

"Sly, honestly, yer've got ter know when ter stop."

We sat in silence for a moment then Sly said, "So yer not gonna suck old Ledge's cock then?"

"No Sly, am not."

"D'yer mind if I do then?" he said, "After all an Equity card is an Equity card?"

"No Sly, go right ahead...knock yersen out."

It was 3.00 in the mornin' when the cab dropped me at the bottom of Ginge's road. I didn't want to be dropped off at the door on account of the fact that the street had seen enough drama for one night. I walked quietly up to the now repaired door. All the lights were on and the sound of raucous, riotous laughter was comin' from inside. Sandy's laughter...

I took a deep breath and knocked. The door was answered by Smailler, lookin' a bit worse fer wear, joint in one hand, glass o' champers in the other swayin' like a big fat tree in the wind.

"Dunno! You're free! Cracking!" he sez. "Do come in quick before the neighbours spot you and call the police again."

As I followed him down the hall, I heard Ginge's voice, loud an' slurry. "So the daft chump's probably getting bugged senseless by Clifford St Ledger as we speak."

"I'd love to be a fly on the wall for that!" Sandy replied with a giggle.

Ginge an' Sandy were both roarin' with laughter, when I went into the livin' room an' saw 'em sprawled out on the leather couch. Sandy was wearin' a man's T-shirt an'

knickers and Ginge were only wearin' a towel. The three of 'em were all well sloshed an' stoned an' it was obvious they were havin' a really good time...without me.

"Good ter see someone's 'avin' fun," I said. "It's great ter see who yer mates are. You three gettin' smashed when fer all you knew I were locked up an' caged like an animal."

"But Dunno," sez Ginge, the smirk slippin' off his booze-reddened face.

"Dote you 'But Dunno' me, yer big beetroot. Here yer are, you an' Teddy Smaller mekkin' a move on mi bird. An' as fer you Sandy, carryin' on like that. Who's T-shirt yer wearin' anyway? An' why are you jus' wearin' a towel, Ginge? No dote tell me, it's obvious."

I'd made me point an' I turned ter go. I was stopped by Sandy.

"Dunno!" she snapped. "Who do you think you are?"

"Eh?"

"I'm not anybody's 'bird', thank you very much."

"That's clear ter see."

"I was worried sick about you, you silly fool. Until Jonny arrived and told me he'd sorted things out with that man from the theatre to make sure they dropped all charges."

"Eh? Yer did?"

Ginge nodded. "Yeh. Don't worry about it. At least I got an equity card out of the deal."

I felt crushed. Here I was thinkin' these three were jus' laughin' at me, an' Ginge had gone an' sold his cherry ter Clifford St Ledger to get me out of jail.

"Yer didn't?"

Ginge nodded. "Yes. A did. That's why a'm wearin' a towel. A wanted a good

shower after that."

I didn't know what to say. But that green-eyed monster wouldn't just lay down an' die.

"But why's Sandy wearin' yer T-shirt? Have yer bin..."

"You are un-be-fuckin-lievable, Dunno," snapped Sandy. "To think I thought I liked you. You're just a big fuckin' baby."

"But..."

"Relax, Dunno, ol' son," sez Ted Smailler. "I lent her my shirt after she..."

"Dont tell him," sez Sandy. "He's already made up his own dirty little mind. Let him think what he likes. I'm just glad I didn't waste any more time on you than I already have. You're a liar and a cheat."

"Eh?"

"You come in here making vile insinuations..."

"Steady on," sez Ginge. "They weren't that vile..."

"Shut up you. When all the time you've been lying. You tell me this is your flat when really it's a bloody bordello. You swan about town in those little pants and then you go home with that old puff. Yes. I saw you. Ted took me to the police station. We saw you get in that car with that horrible man."

"We saw you whip your pants off for him too," sez Smailler, helpfully. "Couldn't you wait till you got home?"

"It wont like that," a said. "He were gonna have me locked up again. Honest."

"Honest!" shrieked Sandy. "That's what my ex-husband used to say whenever he was lying." She started sobbing. "Get out, Dunno. I never want to see your stupid gormless face again."

Ted Smailler put an arm around her an' pulled her close. "I think you better be going, friend. Don't worry, I'll look after the little lady."

That was too much. I made a lunge for him. As I swung a punch, Ginge stood up to try an' stop me an' ended up gettin' the full force on the chin. He toppled back onto the glass an' chrome coffee table, shatterin' it.

"Fuck, a'm sorry Ginge!" a said.

For a moment time stood still. Ginge didn't move. He just lay there, with his eyes closed. Ted got up an' knelt down next to him, his hands at his neck.

"Shit! You better get out of here, Dunno," he sez, his face pale. "He's... not breathing. I can't get a pulse."

"But... a din't mean..."

Sandy was howlin' now, an' a tear trickled down Ted's face. I panicked. I turned an' ran...as I reached the door, Sandy's sobs had turned to laughter. Then I heard Ginge an' Ted both gigglin' like schoolboys. I went back in.

"Yer bastards!"

"Don't start any fisticuffs, Dunno," sez Ted. "We were just having a little fun."

"Yes, and I think a giggle at your expense is a small price to pay for getting smacked on the jaw, havin' me front door broken down and having my grandmother's favourite coffee table smashed to pieces," sez Ginge, still rubbing his jaw.

What could I say ter that. I'd made a big enough twat of meself as it was. "Look, guys, a'm sorry. It's bin a fuck of a night. I wasn't meself. Fergive me?" I batted me eyes at Sandy.

Sandy smiled and nodded. "Yes. But let's cool things down for a while, eh? I think you've got a lot of growing up to do. Besides I'm too old for you."

"Seven years int that big a difference."

"It is, when you still act like a child. I'm sorry, Dunno. Give me a ring in a couple of months. We'll take things from there."

I was crestfallen. "I..."

Ginge shook his head. "Dunno. I really think you should go. It's late. Sandy's tired. Who knows, she might feel different in the morning."

"I wouldn't bet on it," she sez. "I don't like jealous men. I'm sorry."

Ted Smailler was holdin' her hand now. It were then I realised the battle was lost. If just the sight of her holdin' that greasy git's hand made me blood boil then it was clear our relationship was far from bein' a healthy one.

"Sure. See yer around, pet."

I walked out. It were rainin' an' I didn't have enough for a taxi. Whoever sez you haven't lived till you've felt the rain down your neck needs his head examinin'...an' I never did get to find out what she were doin' in just T-shirt an' knickers...

## THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1980

Smailler an' Marinelli weren't hard to spot at nine o'clock the next mornin', both of 'em in the refectory wearin' shades and drinkin' strong black coffee. Spud, Puzzler and the girls all sat round, no doubt enjoyin' last night's revelations at my expense.

"If the rest of your career pans out like last night's then you are gonna be a star," boomed Smailler's oily voice. "The public love a hell-raiser...Congratulations!" He tossed over the morning edition of the Yorkshire Post and there I was...Front page news:

### ***WILD MAN GOES ON RAMPAGE THROUGH CITY CENTRE***

*Police last night arrested a man who alarmed the public when running 'berserk' through Leeds City Centre. Couples out for a romantic meal and cinema goers fled in terror as the man, smeared in some kind of brown 'camouflage' and wearing see-through under pants adorned with vegetation, raged like a madman along the Headrow.*

*DC Haddock who made the arrest said; "The public were very alarmed, and we received many frantic calls, at first we did not know what we were dealing with and contemplated an armed response unit with tranquilisers." The arrested man, known only as Dunno, 18, from Halton Moor...*

I'd read enough...

"Jesus, Dunno," said Spud. "What kind of opera was it?"

"A fuckin' shite one," I replied.

"Speak fer yersen Dunno, I did alright out of it," said Ginge. He turned to the girls. "I've been promised an Equity card." The girls cooed in admiration and jealousy.

"Yeh, tell the girls what you had to do ter get it, Ginge."

"That's the great part, I only 'ad ter stand on stage fer twenny seconds wi' a big world on me shoulders."

"And suck the directors cock!" I blurted.

"Don't be ridiculous Dunno, why would I wanna do that?"

"You told me you did...Yer said that's how yer got him ter drop the charges?"

"I never said anything of the sort. I said I persuaded him ter drop the charges and I got an Equity card, at no point did I ever say I sucked his cock."

"So why were you wearin' only a towel when I came round?"

"Coz Ginge an' Ted had just 'ad a filthy threesome with that dirty bitch from York," volunteered Spud, obligingly.

Smailler and Ginge exchanged glances.

"Now, now, Spud," chortled Smailler. "Stop making mischief. When Ginge returned from his performance, I pointed out to him that he was still covered head to foot in brown make up."

"...So I went and showered. You saw how grim backstage was Dunno. Plus having just installed a rather expensive bathroom I was most anxious to use it."

"But...."

Ginge raised a hand to silence me. He knew what I was gonna say next.

"Because had you not both had mad passionate sex in the afternoon? Is a lady not entitled to 'freshen up'? She also wanted to look sexy for when you came back from the opera....Sometimes Dunno, you just have to hold up your hand and say okay maybe it was all my own fault an' not anybody else's...."

The sanctimonious tangerine head. At this point the bell rang and we made our way to the theatre. I were lost in thought. It seemed to me I wasn't the only one affected by an association with a new set of friends. I'd noticed a big change in Ginge too since he's

started knockin' about with Smailler an' us lot. What's happened to that timid shy kid who was hopeless with birds? Now I weren't sure if he'd not only nicked me bird from under me nose but indulged in a threesome with blubber-boy Smailler. As we entered the theatre I couldn't help but notice a look of glee cross the face of Derek Wales when he saw me.

We got settled and Wales waited until he had complete silence.

"Mr. Dunno step up on the stage please."

I did as he asked.

"Face the class and take a bow...Congratulations big man, quite a debut...I'll tell you this now. If you make it as an actor I'll eat my own shit. You don't get it do you? Would a heart surgeon open up a chest and then fuck off? Would a pilot unbuckle his seatbelt and go and chat up an air hostess? What on earth possessed you lad? Never, ever do that. Not even if a team of pygmy sky divers are in the wings raping your mother! You had a chance there boy. The sort of chance thousands of young actors would have been desperate to take. And you blew it. And for what? Just because you thought Ted Smailler was teaching your girlfriend how to cum? A talent only a few of us can boast of. Yeh. You owe that boy a debt of gratitude, lad. Clifford St Ledger is an important and influential director. Do you think he's ever going to use a student from this college again? Yeh? Yeh...Go on sit down. I hope you're proud of yourself."

Could I be feelin' more miserable? I hate this place an' I hate all the cunts in it....

I needed to spend some time on me own, away from those sneaky cunts and seedy Sly. All I seem to do is try an' be nice an' help people as much as I can an' it always seems to get thrown back in me face. At lunchtime when the fuckers all went off down to the

refectory I stole away and made me way into town. It were a nice day so I figured I'd take a bus up to Roundhay Park an' have a good long walk round the lake an' think about where I was gonna go from here. If I went to another college would I just meet another set of cunts like them? If I went an' did summat different an' got an ordinary job would it bug me for ever more, that I didn't follow it through? You know...The dream an' all that. At least you knew where you stood in Halton Moor. There was no subterfuge an' people being horrible an' deceitful behind your back. In Halton Moor you got a good smack an' you gave one back an' that was the end of it. Trouble is the only place I were headin' in Halton Moor was prison. Maybe I should just go back to Royal Park, get me head down, crack on with it an' cool off wit the cunts. Maybe even kick Sly out an' have the place to mesen for a while.

All this was goin' through me head as the bus trundled along its merry way up to Roundhay. As it were goin' through Chapeltown, I saw Derek Wales' MG parked up a side road. It was definitely his. Only Wales would have a pretentious number plate; DER 1K. Blimey he didn't waste much time gettin' up here. Curiosity got the better of me an' I rang the bell an' got off at the next stop. I was determined to be subtle this time an' make sure I wasn't spotted.

There was a phone box on the corner so I got in an' phoned Sly.

"Sly Guys? How can a rock your boat?" came Sly's voice on the other end. He sounded a bit out of breath.

"Yer can't," I told him. "Listen, a'm in Chapeltown. Derek Wales is here again."

"Just a minute, maestro?" I heard the sound of movement, then a "Gooooooooood is goooooooooood," down the phone. "Sorry about that, Chubbo, I was just coming?"

"Oh. Have yer got a client?" Sly usually liked to keep his afternoon's free for

sleepin'.

"No, I was just having a wank? The more you prime the engine, the easier it is to get it started? You should try it, Herr Dunno."

"Yeh. Right. Listen what am a gonna...hang on... what d'yer mean callin' me Chubbo, yer cheeky cunt?"

"Down boy! Nothing really? It's just you do seem to be piling it on a bit? Too much stuffing, an' not enough fucking?"

"You keep yer dietary tips ter yerself. Are yer gonna get over here or what?"

"No can do, Dude? No funds? Can't afford the bus fare?"

"But what about all your cli..." The pips went an' I was cut off. What the fuck does Sly do with his money? He's always shaggin' clients? You'd have thought he'd be minted.

As I put the phone back in its cradle I saw Derek Wales comin' out of the pub across the road with the same tart we saw him with the other day. I plonked me drama folder up against the window so's he wouldn't recognise me. I peeked over the top to see if the coast was clear. He was just gettin' into the car. The tart stood on the pavement an' waved him off. When he was well gone I stepped out of the phone box an' hurried down the road after the prostitute.

"Scuze me?"

She turned. Eugh. Talk about rough. She were old enough to be me Mam an' hard livin' was stamped on every pore, along with needlemarks along her arms. Her mascara was smeared all down her face an' I deduced that she'd either been cryin' bucket loads or someone'd recently blasted her in the face with a hose.

"Wanna do business, darlin'?" she sez, lookin' at me, an' attemptin' a smile that revealed a row of mossy stumps.

How she did any business at all were beyond me, but as me flatmate always sez, 'yer get people who're into anything.'

"No, ta, love," I replied. "Was that feller botherin' you?"

"What feller?" shi sez, lookin' around. There was a touch of suspicion in her eyes now. I think she must've thought I was a copper or summat. What a laugh.

"The feller in the MG, goin' bald, little goatee, looks a bit like a turnip."

She laughed. One o' them laughs that sound as if you're about ter hurl up your guts. "Oh. Him. He's always botherin' me, he is."

"Why, what's he do?"

Her eyes narrowed. "You one o' them kinky types? Yer like talkin' dirty rather than doin' it? Yer needn't think it won't cost yer."

"Ner. Am not kinky. Honest. It dunt turn me on. Far from it. A were just worried that's all. Yer looked upset."

She looked at me hard, as if she were tryin' to read me mind. "So that's it. Yer one o' them Jehovah's Witnesses, gonna set me on t' right track? Is that it?"

"Nah, yer've gorrit wrong, love. Look, am sorry fer botherin' yer."

I turned to leave but she put her hand on me shoulder.

"Wait. Yer woh worried? About me?"

"Yeh. Yer know, what with the Ripper an' that. A thought there were summat dodgy about him."

"Yer thought he were the Ripper?"

I shrugged.

She gave another of them laughs an' coughed up a wad o' phlegm. She spat it out and it hit the pavement at me feet with a splat. I felt me stomach churn over.

"You thought our Derek were the Ripper? Hmm. Yer may not be wrong. They say he hates workin' girls. I'd say he hates any girls. He sure as fuck hates me."

"Why's that then?" I asked. At that moment I've gotta admit I felt sick with fear. It were like I'd reached the end of the trail. It was strange but I wanted her to laugh at me, tell me I was stupid. Derek Wales was a cock of the first order but I didn't want him to be a serial killer.

"He hates me coz he were married ter me fer fifteen years," she sez. "It were him what turned me inter this."

You could've knocked me down with a feather. I noticed a couple of lads lookin' at us from a doorway an' suddenly felt more than vulnerable stood out here in full view, chattin' to an old prostitute but at the same time I wanted to hear more.

"Look, d'yer wanna go fer a drink?"

"It'll cost yer," she sez, hard as nails.

"Bollocks. A'll get yer a drink. A dote want owt else. Think of it as a break."

She shrugged, spat an' nodded. "Right you are, boss." Then she took me arm an' led me into the pub. "I'll 'ave a pint o' mild, wi' a large whisky chaser."

I ordered the drinks an' joined her in a corner over by the bogs. I've been in some rough places in me time but this one was positively loaded with menace. From the druggies at the bar, all eyein' me with mistrust, right down to the pervadin' stench of piss an' disinfectant.

"So yer were married ter him then?"

She nodded. "Aye. The bastard. He beat me up. There wont owt new about that. He were always inter discipline, and being kinky. He's a misogynist, He loathes women. When he was a teenager he was humiliated by a girl who made him look like a fool and he's been out for revenge ever since. I was into dope which he hated, but he practically

encouraged me to take drugs, he even started buying me heroin. That's when he said and did weird things, when I was so out of me 'ead a cun't stop him. Next thing a know I'm an addict and I'm selling mesen when he's at work.... Then he flung me out, wi'out a penny. Told me a acted like a whore, so why not go out an' be one full time."

"Fuckin' 'ell," I said. "That were a bit out of order."

She raised an eyebrow. "Yer think? Aye well. A had no money an' Derek said a wunt get owt till the divorce. A had no choice. When the divorce cem up, he din't give me owt then. He'd had a private detective foller me around. He took photos of me at work an' showed 'em ter the judge. The Judge told Derek he din't have ter pay me owt. That were ten years ago. A've gone downhill a bit since then."

"So why d'yer still see him?" I asked.

She shrugged. "It's more a question of him seeing me. He gets some secret pleasure out of seeing me in this state, weirdly it's mixed with guilt fer havin' caused it. Sometimes he likes ter pretend he's just another john. He fucks me, then he fucks off wi'out payin'. Sometimes, he sez he's jus' checkin' up on me, seein' if a'm all right. He gev me money today an' he din't even want sex. Go figure that one out. He's a perv... a fuckin' control freak."

Personally I didn't blame 'im. I'd've paid her not to have sex with me too, but then, I've always been fussy. I'd heard enough an' I just wanted to get away.

"Right, well, a'd best be off, love. Yer sure yer alright?"

"Aye. You take care. Derek's yer teacher, int he?"

I nodded. It'd be pointless lyin'. "Yeh. He's a bastard."

"Aye. Well, you take care. An' even if he is the Ripper, an' am not sayin' he is mind, you keep clear of him. He's bad news. I don't know if he's killed anyone or not, but a know he could, an' a know he'd like it too. So, keep on hiz good side, eh? Yer a

good lad, a can tell."

"Thanks."

I went out of the pub, hatin' Derek Wales more than ever. The man were evil, there weren't no other word for it.

"Got a light?" came a voice from behind me.

I turned an' saw four fellers. From the way they were glarin' at me, you wouldn't think they were askin' me a favour.

"Sorry. A dote smoke." I tried to walk on but one of the fellers had stepped round me an' was blockin' me path.

"Don't smoke? What are yer, some sort of gay boy?" He shoved me in the chest an' me Drama folder went flyin' along with all me notes from Derek's lectures.

"He's a student," sez one o' the others, lookin' at me notes on the pavement.

"Then he must have a nice big grant, he can share with us," sez another.

"I an't got owt," I sez. Then, seein' there wasn't owt else for it, I chinned the twat who'd pushed me in the chest.

He bit his tongue an' howled as he turned away, mumblin' at his mates to get me. They started wadin' in, kickin' an' punchin' and somehow goin' through me pockets at the same time. I got in a few punches, an' in a way I was almost enjoyin' meself. It were like the old days on Halton Moor. No discussions, no crap, jus' an honest to goodness scrap.

I got a punch on the nose an' it splattered open, but I didn't care. I kicked out an' caught one of 'em on the shin. As he went down I got him a good clout that sent him spinnin' into the wall. Then one of them pulled a knife on me.

"Cart yer tek me wi'out a knife?" I sez.

He didn't say owt. He just lunged at me. I stepped back, an' waited for the next one. I was more fucked off than scared. Why'd he have to spoil things by usin' a knife?

There was a blast of a car horn.

"Oi! You lot! Police!" came a voice. "Fuck off an' leave him alone!"

The lads didn't stop to look around, they were obviously familiar with this scenario. They ghosted away like they'd just been beamed up by Scotty. I looked at the car. Ginge, Sly, Puzzler an' Spud were all leanin' out the windows tryin' to look hard. You could cover Puzzler in concrete an' wait for the silly cunt to set and he still wouldn't look hard. Thank fuck those lads didn't look over to where the shout was comin' from.

"You waitin' for 'em ter come back to exchange numbers? Get in yer silly sod!" yells Ginge.

I never thought I'd be so pleased to see those four twats. You know summat? Maybe they're all right after all. I mean it isn't until the chips're down that you know who your real mates are.

## ALL THE MADMEN

Monday, October 13th 1980

Puzzler had been stayin' with us for a week now, an' apart from college he didn't go out except to help me Mam in the shop. It were dead weird, but they seemed to be gettin' on like a house on fire.

"I don't care if he is a pansy," me Mam confided on Saturday night after the two of 'em had locked up shop for the night. "He's lovely. He just needs mothering. I'd like ter tek him home an' look after him."

"Be my guest," I said. "He's all yours."

To be honest I were gettin' a bit fed up with havin' him sleepin' in me bed, an' his presence wasn't doin' me reputation any good. Just last Friday I'd bumped into our Wayne an' his mates at the social in Halton Moor. All I wanted was a quick pint but they were in there doin' rugby trainin' at the bar.

"Watch yer backs, lads, it's our kid," sez Wayne.

Then they all started singin', "Don't bend down, when Dunno's around, yer might get hiz todger up yer arse!" They found it amusin' but me taste for beer had evaporated so I just went home, to find Puzzler had used the last tea bag.

...Anyway, I'm digressin'. Mam had offered to take Puzzler under her wing an' I thought, fair enough. Let him go live with her an' our Wayne. We'll soon see who's singin' songs about todgers up arses. However, I thought it only fair to try an' set Mam straight.

"Look, Mam, Puzzler int gay. Aright? Hiz jus' a bit unusual, that's all."

Mam gave me a wink. "Dote you worry, son. It dote matter anymore. A've bin

lookin' after you both."

"Eh? What d'yer mean?"

"A got the idea off yer old man. A've bin havin' Sly put bromide in yer tea. A'm not sayin' it'll cure yer, but they reckon it'll stop yer havin' dirty urges."

So that was why Sly's tea always tastes so horrible.

"Mam, Puzzler dunt get any dirty urges. An' as fer me, a like 'em. You tell Sly if he fucks about wi' me tea again, a'll wring hiz fuckin' neck."

"Yer'll do no such thing. He's only tryin' ter help yer."

Fer fuck's sake. Mothers. Who needs 'em?

Come Monday mornin' Puzzler seemed more relaxed than I'd seen him in weeks. He had a little impro to do for Derek Wales all about a fisherman, an' while it was incomprehensible to me, Derek ate it up.

"Well done, Justin," he sez. "There's hope for you yet. You see if a wimp like him can convince us that he is a hardened fisherman, he can do anything. That's what it's all about. The art of deceit."

The door opened an' a middle-aged feller popped his nut through the gap. He had one of them square Irish faces. I could tell at a glance he were a copper.

"Excuse me, we're looking for a Justin Quinaldez?" he sez.

As one the class turned to stare at Puzzler. All the joy of his performance had drained from him in an instant. He looked like he'd shrunk an' his hands began to shake.

"Here's the culprit," sez Derek, airily wavin' a hand terwards Puzzler. "Lock him up and throw away the key."

"Would you come this way, please, son," sez t' copper.

"B-but I haven't done anything," sez Puzzler, hiz voice little more than a whisper.

"Never said you had, laddy. Now will you come along please?"

Puzzler grabbed his bag an' followed the copper out of the theatre, lookin' for all the world like a condemned man on his way to the gallows.

After class we all headed off to the refectory. Sea Breeze an' Pauline an' a couple of the other girls were with us too.

"So what do you think the plod want with Justin, then?" sez Breezey, helpin' herself to one of me chips. God that annoys me that does.

"Nothin' much a shun't think," I said.

"He gives me the creeps," said Pauline.

I blinked in surprise coz Pauline hardly ever sez owt. "How come?"

"Talkin' right weird like he does. It isn't normal."

"Who wants to be normal?" said Spud. "I know I don't."

"Yes but you're weird in a cute way," sez Pauline.

It was Spud's turn to surprise me now. I'd always thought of him as one of them self servin' types. A good laugh an' all that but not someone you'd really want to stake your life on.

"So what you're saying," he sez, jabbin' his fork at Pauline, "is that just because Puzzler isn't a drop dead gorgeous son of God like me, he's a creep. Am I right?"

Pauline looked hurt. "No, Mark. It's not like that. You'd never kill anyone."

Spud rolled his eyes to heaven. "Neither has Puzzler, for fuck's sake."

"The police think he has," said Pauline. "They think he killed Friga and there's no smoke without fire, that's what I always believe."

"Yer talkin' out yer arse," I said. I admit I might've been a bit more diplomatic if

Pauline had been a bit more fanciable but them posh Moortown birds always get right up me crack. "What about when the fuse blows in yer kettle. Yer get smoke then an' yer dote always get fire."

"Yes but, it still means something's wrong, doesn't it?" said Ginge, who I think might have a bit of a soft spot for Pauline.

"Ginge, he's supposed to be a mate," Spud snapped.

"Since when?" said Ginge. "He's alright, a suppose, but how well do we really know him? Eh? Any of us?"

"I know him well enough," I said. "He wunt hurt a fly. He certainly wunt hurt Friga."

"Well Friga was our friend," sez Breezey. "Yer know how he was always creepin' about her place."

"Get yer fuckin' 'ands off mi chips, Breezey," I snapped. "Buy yer fuckin' own! They were neighbours fer fuck's sake an' they were mates. Puzzler were the only feller a ever saw Friga really happy with."

"Oh, I think she could have been happy with me," said Spud, revertin' back to type. "Anyway, jus' coz he hung around her place doesn't mean he killed her, does it? What about Sly and Dunno? They climbed up a tree so they could look in her window an' spy on her in the nuddy."

The girls all glared at me, like I'd just done summat totally unforgiveable.

"What? A did it once. A mean, who wouldn't? Shiz a crackin' lookin' bird."

"You are one low old perv, Dunno," sighed Ginge, reachin' out an' puttin' an arm around Pauline.

"It woh Sly's idea."

"Yeh. It's never you, is it, Dunno?"

Gobby, ginger cock head. He'd got me back up now.

I turned to Pauline. "Yer realise if yer shag him, he'll prob'ly leave a load o' ginger pubes stuck ter yer muff? Jus' thought I'd warn yer."

"They invented the word 'churl' ter describe you," sez Ginge with a sigh. "At least I have pubes. When are you gonna reach puberty, fatty?"

"Yeh, well they invented the word 'carrotty cockhead' ter describe you, din't they, an...what d'yer mean 'fatty'? I ain't fat!"

"Chunky, that's all," sez Spud.

Fuckin' hell. I'm gonna invest in some bathroom scales on the way home.

The canteen suddenly went quiet. I looked up, an' there was Puzzler. He looked shaken but alive. He gave us a wave an' went to get some slop from the dinner ladies. He came over with a bowl of curry an' sat down next to Pauline.

"So, how'd yer get on, Puzz?" I asked.

"Scuze," sez Pauline, gettin' up. "I've gotta go."

"Yeah, me too," sez Breezey. "See yer guys."

When they were gone Ginge turned to Puzzler. "I hope you're satisfied."

Puzzler's fork stopped halfway to his mouth an' he raised an eyebrow. "What with?"

"Scaring the girls off. I could have been in there with Pauline."

"Oh Fuck off, Jonny ginger balls," sez Spud. "You're fuckin' engaged anyway. Who cares what those fuckin' witches think?"

"What do they think?" asked a bewildered Puzzler.

"They think you killed Friga," said Ginge. "And to be honest, I'm not so sure they're wrong. You know what birds are like. They can tell these things."

"Yeh, they can also be fuckin' nasty bitches," said Spud. "I think you owe Puzz an apology."

Ginge shrugged.

Puzzler sighed. "It's okay. If that's what he thinks, then that's what he thinks."

"So...what did the cops want, Justin?" said Ginge.

Puzzler's eyes started tearin' up. "They won't leave me alone. They wanted to know where I was living. They said they knew I hadn't been home for a week and they knew I wasn't staying with you anymore. When I told them I was staying with your Mum, they wanned ter know if she knew about me and Friga. They took me over there to check up I was tellin' the truth."

"Fuckin' hell, Mam'd love that, you an' a load o' coppers comin' in the shop."

Puzzler sniffed. "She was great. A real friend." He looked pointedly at Ginge. "When one o' the cops asked how she felt sharin' a house wi' a possible murderer, she said shi felt a lot better than if shi woh sharin a house wi' a load o' prize pigs. Then shi told 'em ter fuck off an' stop bullyin' me. They threatened ter arrest her."

"What did shi do then?" I asked.

"Shi picked up that cricket bat shi keeps behind t' counter, the one wi' the nails in it, an' shi threatened ter brain the first fucker who lay a finger on her. They cleared off quick after that. Then they told me I'm ter check in at t' station every day, an' they dumped me back here."

"Look, mate," sez Ginge. "Are you sure you've told 'em everything? I mean all this... it's..."

"Ginge," I said. "Am not havin' that. If the cops should be pesterin' anyone it's Derek Wales an' you know it."

Ginge offered Puzzler his hand. "Yer right. Look, I'm sorry mate. I've bin a twat.

Anything you need, just ask."

Puzzler nodded. "Would you mind me curry, while I go to the loo?"

Twenty minutes past an' Puzzler's curry was stone cold an' he still hadn't come back from the bog.

"What the fuck 'appened ter him?" I asked.

"You better go check he's alright," said Ginge.

I hurried over to the bogs. No one were pissin' at the urinals. But I saw a pair of shiny brogues under the cubicle door of one of the shithouses. I got on me knees an' peered under.

"Puzz? Is that you?"

"Mmm," came a drowsy voice.

"What's the matter?"

"Nuthin'," he sez. " A think yer should call fer an ambulance. Maybe. If yer feel like it."

"Eh? Why?"

Then I noticed the little bottle of pills on the floor next to his feet.

"Fer fuck's sake, Puzz. What have yer taken?"

"Aspirin. Sorry mate. I just thought it'd be better. Now I'm not so sure."

"A'll be right back!"

I dashed out of the bog an' into the student union office. I grabbed the phone off some Che Gue-fuckin-vara wannabe who was sat there blinkin' at me, an' dialled 999.

"A need an ambulance quick. Someone's tekken an overdose."

By the time I'd given them the details Spud an' Ginge had joined me in the student union office an' wanted to know what was goin' on.

"Let's jus' keep him awake, eh?" I said.

We went back into the toilet an' had to kick the door down to get at Puzzler who was just sat on the khazi, starin' miserably into space.

Ginge gave him a slap.

"Stay awake!"

"I am awake!"

The ambulance fellers charged in with a stretcher an' told Puzzler to get onto it.

"What did yer take?" asked one of them.

"Aspirin."

"How many?"

"Three."

The ambulance men turned an' looked at him an' then at me.

"Is this supposed ter be a joke?" sez one of them.

"Dote look at me, mate," I said.

"No," sez Puzzler. "I took an overdose. It sez on the box not ter take more than two on an empty stomach. I had three. I'm feelin' drowsy."

"That's coz yer a dozy fuckin' idiot," snapped t' ambulance man. "Fuckin' students."

They stomped off, swearin' that we were lucky not to get prosecuted.

"Can you carry me home, Dunno?" sez Puzzler. "I'm feelin' faint."

## BRING ON THE SWEDES

Saturday, October 18th 1980

Me Mam woke me from me slumbers this mornin', so the day didn't get off to the best of starts. I mean, Saturday mornin's the one day of the week I get to have a lay in. Well, if you don't count Sunday that is. So it were nine-ish when Mam bustled into me room, opened the curtains to let in the dazzlin', grey October light an' flung open the winder to let in the blisterin' October gale.

"Phwoar! It dunt half honk in here, Dunno. Dote yer believe in washin' yer socks? No wonder poor Justin dint wanna stay wi' you. A cart say am surprised yer can never hold onter a girlfriend, or feller or whatever it is yer shaggin' these days."

"Gerrus a cuppa, Mam," I groaned.

"Yer ant got time fer that, love," she snaps. "If it's breakfast yer after, try gerrin' up at a reasonable hour, yer lazy beggar."

"Where's the fuckin' fire?" a said. "What's so fuckin' urgent that a cart have a cuppa tea?"

She folded her arms an' shook her head, proper disgusted. "Look at you, talkin' ter yer Mam that way. You break my heart, lad. Yer wun't catch our Wayne usin' that kind o' language. Still, am not surprised. Filth is as filth does."

"Yeh, right. So are yer gonna tell me what yer want then, or what?"

"Cart a lovin' mother just have a chat wi' her baby boy when shi feels like it?" she asks, lookin' like she were about to burst into tears.

"Not if yer dote bring him a cuppa tea yer cart. No."

"It's like this, a've got them swedes, Sly woh askin' about, downstairs an' a need someone ter bring 'em up."

She'd got my attention, I've got to admit. If Sly'd invited some crackin' Swede's over to play, then I wanted first crack at 'em. It'd serve the lazy sod right for loungin' about in bed all mornin'.

"Aright, a'm comin'," I said hoppin' out of me pit an' makin' her grimace.

"Put yer unmentionables away first, love, yer'll frighten away all me customers."

I pulled on some tracky bottoms an' hurried down to the shop. Puzzler was there servin' an' old lady some pineapple chunks.

"Fresh off the tree this morning, love," he sez. "I tinned them meself."

"Oi, Puzzler, where're these Swedes, Sly invited over?" I asked.

He gave me one of his puzzled looks an' pointed to two crates of swedes...the root vegetable kind.

"There they are, Dunno. I'll give you a hand carving them when I finish up here, if yer like."

"Eh? What yer on about?" I asked, me spirits plummeting. "What the fuck's Sly want wi' two crates o' swedes? They're the most borin' vegetable ever."

"Don't knock 'em, Dunno," sez Puzzler. "The good old swede is one of the most versatile of all root vegetables. You can have it boiled, roasted, in a soup and sweetened as a dessert."

"Who the fuck has it as a dessert?" I asked.

Puzzler shrugged. "I've tried it on occasion. It's not bad."

"The man's off hiz trolley," I said. "Am fucked if am goin' on a diet o' swedes."

Puzzler gave me an arch look. "You could probably do worse, Dunno. You'd soon shed those pounds if you ate them for a few days. Anyway, they aren't for eating."

"Well what are they for then?"

"Fer Halloweén," sez Puzzler. "Sly wanted pumpkins but we couldn't get any. Thought we could carve lanterns out of 'em, brighten the place up for yer Halloweén party."

"What Halloweén party?" I asked. "An' what's all this about sheddin' pounds. Am lean as an ox, I am."

The cheeky git winked at me. "Course you are, Dunno. Sly thought we'd have a party for Halloweén. In the flat. Not bad, eh?"

"He never said owt ter me."

"Are you gonna stand there natterin' or are yer gonna shift them swedes out o' mi shop?" bellowed Mam.

"Aright. Aright. Give us a hand, Puzz," I said.

"No way," sez mi Mam. "Justin's got a bad back. A'm not allowin' you ter put him in hospital jus' coz yer too idle ter carry a couple o' boxes upstairs."

I humped 'em both upstairs, cursin' Sly with every step. How many fuckin' Halloweén lanterns does he want, anyway?

When I'd got a tea down me neck I banged on Sly's door an' barged in. He were handcuffed to the bed while a naked Maggie Skipton was slappin' his arse with a feather duster.

"Fer fuck's sake, dote you ever stop?" I asked.

"What's eatin' you, hoss?" sez Sly, cranin' his neck to look at me. "Don't stop Maggie? You can do it a bit harder if you like?"

"It's okay," said Maggie, coverin' herself with a towel. "I think we can call it a day, Sly love. My arm aches."

"So what's the problem, big boy?" sez Sly, freein' himself from the handcuffs

with the ease of a conjuror.

"What's with all them swedes? An' what's all this Puzzler tells me about a Halloweén party?"

Sly leaped off the bed. "They've arrived? Fan-fuckin-tastic! Maggie, Dunno'll fix us some brekky, then we can get carving Halloweén lanterns? Does that shake your tree?"

"Okay," sez Maggie. "I like my eggs sunny side up."

"That's nice ter know," I said. Then the rumblin' in me belly reminded me that I were starvin' an' it's just as easy to cook up a scrán for three as it is for one, so I left 'em to clean 'emselves up while a prepared a breakfast of epic proportions.

"I told you all about it, bwana," sez Sly, tuckin' into his eggs an' bacon. "I've been plannin' this for weeks? Don't tell me you forgot?"

"How can a ferget summat yer dint tell me about?" I snapped.

"I did tell you, I told everyone. Isn't that right, Maggie?"

Maggie nodded. "He's invited everyone at college."

"Great," I sighed.

"Well, now we've refreshed your defective memory, how about helping me out carving the lanterns? You'd make a great sculptor, just like Rodin, eh?"

"Who?"

"Never mind, three knives and some spoons, Herr Professor? On the double?"

How I let him get away with it is beyond me, but before long the three of us were sat at the kitchen table carvin' out scary faces in the Swedes. Fuckin' hell, you need a chisel really coz they're rock hard.

"Int it a bit early fer this?" I asked. "They'll have gone off by Halloween."

"Preparation, the key to success? First lesson of the Art of War? They'll be fine

if we don't turn the heatin' on? So we have a couple of weeks of lantern light and cheaper fuel bills? Everyone's a winner?"

"Ace," I said. "You think of everything."

"I know? That's why we make a great team? I'm the brains, you're the brawn? Mind you, I exercise my brain with schemes like this? You should exercise your brawn a bit more? Why don't you go for a jog when we've finished off?"

"Fuck off, a'm fit as a fiddle."

"You could be fitter, Il Duce ? Isn't that right, Maggie?"

Maggie gave me an appraisin' look. "Yeh. Sixty minutes exercise a week, and you won't know yourself."

"Am off ter work. A'll jog all the way if it meks yer feel better."

On the way out I bumped into Puzzler on the stairs.

"I'm not too late to help am I?" he asks. "I've been doodling designs all afternoon. Look!" He pulled out a notebook full of drawin's of Halloweén lanterns.

"Very nice," I sez. "Go on in, thez still plenty o' swedes left."

"Eee-haaa!" Puzzler whooped fer joy an' bounded up the stairs.

When I got to work I found I was on pizzas on me todd. Ginge had called in sick. Fuckin' 'ell. What a day to pull a sicky. Saturday night, busiest night of the week.

As I were settin' about rollin' out the dough, Carol came over to me.

"How's things, Dunno?"

"Fine pet. Jus' fine."

Then she slapped me right in the chops.

"There, now yer can feel as shit as I do."

"Eh?"

She made to slap me again but I grabbed her by the wrists.

"Let go of me," she shrieked.

Bruce came out of his office an' glared at me. "Dunno! Leave Carol alone. We've got a busy night tonight and we need to pull together. I need you, man, but if you fuck about with my staff, I'll have to show you the door."

I let go an' he went back into the office. That was when she hit me again.

"What the fuck woh that for?" I asked.

"You know damn well, yer mixing bastard! Turnin' Jonny against me. I had him just where I wanted him. He'd do anything fer me. What have you been telling him? First he started makin' all these demands in bed, then he tells me..." she started sobbing.

Bruce came out of the office again. "Dunno. I warned you."

"I ant done owt, Bruce. Honest."

"I'm okay," sobbed Carol. "It's Jonny."

Bruce tutted an' fucked off again.

"What is it, pet?" a said, feelin' a bit sorry for her in spite of her bein' such a class one bitch.

"He told me the wedding's off. He sez we can carry on seein' each other but we've gotta be more casual, an if a dote give him what he wants and mek him happy the I might as well fuck right off! Thanks a lot Dunno, I hope you're satisfied."

## SQUASHED

Monday, October 20th, 1980

"So, tell me, Big Mark, if you were to follow in the footsteps of Antonin Artaud, what steps would you take to realise a production after the form of the Theatre of Cruelty?" said Derek Wales, as his endless lecture on theatre practitioners drew to a long awaited close.

"Er...I'd probably get myself addicted to heroin so I could understand what Artaud was on about," said Spud, tryin' to look earnest.

"Mark...you're a fool. You're a fool, Mark.....And a clown."

The bell rang, an' with a collective sigh of relief we burst out of the darkened theatre an' into the foyer. I were headin' off to the refectory for a donut an' tea, when Ginge grabbed me by the arm.

"Not so fast, Dunno. You and me have got a lunchtime date."

"Eh?"

"I'm going to have you licked inter shape if it's the last thing I do," he sez.

"There's nothin' worse than seein' someone of our age lettin' themselves go to seed."

"Fuck off! There's nowt wrong wi' me."

Ginge sighed. "You would say that. You're in denial. Truth is you're grotesque, a roly-poly pudding. If I got as fat as you, I'd kill myself."

"*I'll* fuckin' kill yer, if yer dote shurrup."

"Don't worry Dunno. You do as you're told and it'll be bye-bye flabby gut an' hello washboard stomach in no time. Take a look at mine and tell me yer not jealous."

He lifted up his shirt ter show a flat white stomach covered in patches of ginger hair. It reminded me a bit of the surface of Mars.

"Am not jealous."

He led me by the arm, out the building and into the car park where his trusty Beetle awaited. "Hop in."

"But where are we off?"

"The Judean Club. Moortown."

"Eh? But we're not Jewish."

"Doesn't matter. I'm on the board. The Vice Chairman owes me a few favours."

"So, what we gonna do there? Sink a few pints? It's a bit early fer me."

"No, Dunno, my idea of whipping you inter shape doesn't involve watching you down pints of Tetleys, an burpin' the national anthem. I'm going to thrash you at Squash."

"Eh? Int that a puff's game?"

"Should be right up your street then from what I hear.....Anyway we'll see if you feel that way after a twenty minute session."

"Hey, Ginge, what's goin' on wi' you an' Carol?" I asked changin' the subject. "Shi dint half gimme an earful t'other night about what a cunt yer bein'."

"Am not being a cunt, Dunno. I'm being a grown-up. You should try it sometime."

"A'm not havin' that, Ginge. Dote tek yer girlfriend problems out on me. I ant done owt."

He gave me a tight smile an' concentrated on the road ahead. "Soz, mate. It's just that Ted Smailler's bin teaching me a thing or two about the fairer sex. You could do worse than take a few tips from him. He's a miracle worker. Thanks ter him, a've got

fanny crawlin' out of the woodwork ter get to me. Plus business at Claremont House is brisk. Ted and Garvey are doin' me proud, I'm going to have to go on a recruitment drive...maybe Spud. The ladies love that dark, Irish...thing. Anyway, it turns out they're not all old and desperate. Some of them are very sexy and attractive and on busier nights I've had to step into the breach. A tell yer these women aren't slow in tellin' you what they want, and I'm learnin' far too many tricks ter waste on just one lass. Carol's a nice girl in her own way, but between you and me, a man needs to spread a few wild oats before he settles down and starts thinking of raising a family. I told her if she wants to wait a few months we'll review the situation then. Treat them mean, Dunno old chum. Nothing keeps a lass more attentive than a generous helping of insouciance towards them."

Fuckin' 'ell. That Ted Smailler's got a lot to answer for. "That's a pity, Ginge. You an' Carol woh made fer each other."

"I thought you said she was a heartless chancer?"

"Aye. A did."

"Yer such a wanker sometimes, Dunno...a don't know why I bother..."

"Cheers. A love you too...An' yer really dote have to, honest."

Ginge had brought along an extra T-Shirt an' shorts for me but they were a bit on the small side an' every time I tried to bend over I were terrified me pants would split. Ginge took ages teachin' me the rudiments of squash an' I were gettin' hungry an' bored an' desperate to teach the cocky twat a lesson.

"So, t' long an' the short of it is, yer whack t' ball at wall an' I have ter whack it back."

Ginge nodded. "That's about it, Brains."

"Come on then, a'll eat yer alive."

Fuckin' 'ell. How can anyone hit them balls? I tried to serve twice an' ended up bangin' mesen on the knee with me bat.

"A cart get the hang o' this, Ginge. T' bat's too small."

"It's a racquet, Dunno," sighs Ginge. "Here, let me show you."

He served the ball. It thumped into the wall at great speed, reboundin' back an hittin' me flush in the face.

"Don't eat the ball, Dunno. It's not a scotch egg. You can have a snack when we've finished, greedy guts."

The next fifteen minutes were sheer hell. It's a wonder I'm still alive. I don't think I hit the ball once.

"A fuckin' 'ate squash," I gasped, throwin' meself onto the floor.

"You'll get better. I've booked us in fer a daily session every day fer the next month."

"Why? What 'ave a ever done ter you?"

"I'm tryin' ter help you Dunno. One day, you'll thank me."

After a shower I was dyin' to try out the restaurant in the Judean Club an' I figured Ginge could be relied on to pay the bill. He were in a good mood, well chuffed with hissen after humiliatin' me on the court.

"Am starvin'," I said as I limped out of the changin' room.

"I'll have to love an' leave you, Dunno," sez Ginge. "I've got a lunch appointment." He leaned in, "These Jewish birds.....dirty as fuck!" He waved over at some lass who was sat in the foyer waitin' for us. It was Pauline... The dirty bastard.

"Hi, Jonny," she sez, givin' him a peck on the cheek. "Hi, Dunno."

"Aright?"

"Come on, Jonny, let's go. Mummy and Daddy are out. We've got the place to ourselves."

Ginge gave me a little wink, an' off they went.

I decided, fuck it, I'd treat mesen to some posh grub in the restaurant anyway, but as I was goin' in the door, the waiter stopped me.

"Sorry sir, members only."

I wasn't happy. There were a bus strike too, so I ended up havin' to walk home. It were with some trepidation that I found mesen hobblin' through Chapeltown again, me legs like jelly an' blisters formin' on me tootsies.

I were just crossin' the road when I heard the screech of a car changin' gears an' the roar of a powerful motor. I turned but I was too late. The car caught me on the hip an' sent me spinnin' to the ground. As I looked up I just caught sight of an MG speedin' down the road. Me hip were throbbin' an' me head poundin'. A little kid were bent over me, scowlin'.

"Help me," I whispered.

"Fuck off," said the kid, pluckin' me wallet from me pocket an' runnin' off.

I tried to sit up but I got caught up in a king-size wave of nausea as the lights went out an' blackness overwhelmed me.

Fuckin' squash.

When I came round I thought I were in hospital but then I saw leanin' over me, the

hollow eyes, piss-blond yellow hair an' sallow skin of Mrs. Wales and realised that I might've actually died an' gone to hell...

"Mrs. Wales...Where am I?"

"Oooh Mrs. Wales, very lardy daa!" she cackled. "Yer dote have ter be so formal wi' me love. Sandy will do...What's so funny?"

"Oh nowt, just life an' it's little coincidences...What yer doin' here?"

"Wharrit Oscar Wilde who said we are all lying in the gutter, but some of us are lookin' at the stars? A found yer at the side o the road, yurd just bin run over."

I noticed her black eye an' various other bruises. "Ave you bin run over as well?" I asked.

"A little present from my ex husband...Like a said, if it int a helpin hand, it's a punishing one."

Then I remembered the MG.

"That fucker ran me over!" I said comin' to me senses.

"Some fucker ran you over, it coulda bin anybody."

"But A saw Derek's MG."

"You saw an MG could you be certain it woh Derek's?"

The answer was no, it had all happened so fast. A doctor came round and confirmed that I had concussion an' a badly bruised hip.

"Can a go? A feel alright now."

"Ordinarily we would like to keep you in for obs but..." he gave a shifty little glance in the direction of Sandy..."we can't stop you discharging yourself."

That were good enough for me. "Ad love ter get yer some fish an derks or summat by way of a thank you, but some little fucker helped himself ter me wallet."

"Yull be needing this then," said Mrs. Wales passing over me wallet.

"Eh? How come?"

"A know that little bastard who stole it, lets just say it woh in 'iz best interests ter return it."

I looked inside. Everything including the money was intact.

"To the chip shop then!" I declared an' we left the LGI an' headed off in the direction of Brett's chippy.

"Thanks very much fer bringin' me in Mrs. Wales, yer dint have ter do that."

"Well a did actually, I 'ad some business in town an' what wi' the bus strike a reckoned if a got in wi' you a'd get a free lift in ter town."

I must've looked a bit dropped on, coz she added, "Plus yer a nice lad an' a wannad ter see if you woh alright."

"Thanks Mrs.....Sandy."

We stuffed ourselves full of fish an' chips an' then Sandy got up to leave.

"Listen love, Watch yer back. A dote know how many warnings yer need but one shoulda bin enough. Stay away from Derek Wales. The man is dangerous. A woh thinkin' what yer said about the Ripper an' all that an' yes, Derek could easily be capable o' summat like that. I even thought about goin' ter the police...but who'd listen ter someone like me? Yer a nice lad an' yer got yer whole life in fronta yer."

She looked me in the eye and I realised for the first time that I were lookin' at the ruins of a very good looking woman. "Look after yourself." An' she were gone, I saw the other diners watch her leave whisperin' an' pointin' all judgemental, and I resolved there an' then that someone had to bring this fucker Derek Wales down...and that someone was gonna be me.

## A WORD FROM THE WISE

Tuesday, October 21st, 1980

Boy, was I stiff the next day. Me hip hurt like a bastard and were all purple an' yellow an' bruised. The colour of a huge thunder storm on a summer day. That fuckin' Ginge! All this could've been avoided if he hadn't stuck his big ginger neb in where it weren't wanted. "A session a day fer a month"...my arse! I'll tell you this now, one day I might find messen in court again but it won't be a fuckin' Squash court. Me bedroom door opened and the bespectacled freckly face of the Puzzler stuck his head round the door lookin' so like an owl I were sure his first words were gonna be "Twit Twoo!" They weren't though.

"Junctions can be called this, It is the name given to specific casual shirts, something can also suit you to this?"

"A T!" I said.

"Ah you have an advantage over adversaries, as your quick mind is cloaked behind a blank an' vacuous visage." He plonked a mug of tea down on the bedside table and exited. Twat!

Next through the door was Sly, bursting in fully naked.

"Buon Giorno, Signore Dunninnio? Listen Dude, have not managed ter get to the launderette yet, can I stick a pair o' your jeans on fer the day? Don't worry about the fit...Baggy is a la mode a ce moment? Ace, Tea! Nice one?!" He helped himself an'

took a big slurp.

"Get off yer cheeky cunt, that's mine."

"Phweeeeeoooooh!" whistled Sly, "Touchy! Yer don't begrudge a close mate a little fluid ounce do you?" His cheek defied all bounds as he took another great slurp.

"Fuckin' get off!" I was gettin' well narked now...after all a man's tea is a man's tea. "What do you want jeans for anyway....A thought you din't dress til four?"

"Got a little house call to make Capitano? Private job, good money. What the fuck is that?" He was lookin' at summat on the far wall. I turned to look.

"A cart see owt?" I said . I turned back just in time to see him puttin' me mug down and beating a hasty retreat out of my room. I looked in the mug...empty. Bastard.

I'd decided ter go into Royal Park an' talk to someone about Derek Wales. Gavin Rhine was the only person I could think of. I hovered for a while outside his door before plucking up the courage to knock.

"Enter!" he boomed in his big theatrical voice.

I went in. His loyal hound looked up briefly from her basket in the corner, her tail tapped the floor a couple of times in greeting, she sighed a big ol' dog type sigh an went back to sleep.

"Ah the man of the hour! How are you?"

"Okay, a suppose."

"You suppose? You mean there is an element of doubt about your okay-ness?"

"Aye...there is."

"Let's see now. There have been a couple of little run-ins. I've heard all about your debut performance at the Grand....."

"That want strictly my fault" I interrupted. "Me bird were in danger a bein' fucked by someone else. I over-reacted, a cun't think straight.."

"And was she?"

"What?"

"Being fucked by someone else?"

"No....Well... Yes! A mean ...A dote know...Maybe!"

"Tch....'Young love, enchanting, poetical. A love that exceeds all others'..... When I was in Stratford doing a season with the RSC....." he said lookin' off into the distance dreamily, "I was desperately in love with a young lass, a student nurse she was at the time, living in Birmingham. When the curtain came down, I would rush out of the theatre like a madman, jump on the back of my trusty steed...In this case my beloved old Norton Motorcycle, and drive like the wind through the night just to smell her smell....To kiss those cherry lips...." He heaved a heavy sigh..."Alas, Father Time...Such a fickle master....."

There was a pause.

"Derek is under the impression you don't see eye to eye?"

"Well that's what a want ter talk ter you about...In confidence. A've got some strong misgivin's about De...Mr. Wales."

"Such as?"

"Well....He's a bully. He's got a dodgy attitude towards women....." How far do I go here? I didn't get the chance. Gavin Rhine saw a gap, an' jumped in.

"I'm going to stop you there Dunno, before you say something regrettable. Derek Wales is one of the best drama lecturers in the country. His pass rate for O and A level is 99%. 99%! We are lucky to have him. I'll admit, okay, sometimes he has controversial methods, but his methods work. I think you have got an overactive

imagination. You've come from a background of very little education with a big working class chip on your shoulder and you cannot adapt to his way of working. You are over sensitive, got low self esteem and you take everything he says personally. If you just concentrated on what he said you would learn a lot, pass your exams and get into drama school."

"Bollocks! Am not havin' that," I said. "A maybe young, but am no fuckin' mug. Ave seen what he is like around girls. I've met 'is ex wife fer fuck's sake! He's threatened ter kill me and last night a were run over in Chapeltown by some maniac in an MG...Him!"

Gavin Rhine threw his head back and howled with laughter. After he composed himself he said, "It's true what they say...Education is wasted on the young. I like you Dunno. You've got spirit. You are also a gullible idiot. Derek Wales tried for ages to keep his marriage afloat. His wife's uncontrollable spiral into drugs and prostitution broke his heart. Even now he drives into Chapeltown to help her out financially. Money she immediately spends on, I believe the appropriate vernacular is 'horse'. I've lost count the number of times he has tried to get her into rehabilitation."

"He beats her up...he's a sadist...He made her what she is..."

"Who told you that. Her?"

"Yes...She's told me everything...I know all about him."

"Oh Dunno, Dunno...You young fool. How much more about life you have still to learn.... The woman is a drug-addled prostitute and quite barmy. She's prone to sayin' anything...all of it shit. She'll tell you anything you want to hear as long as it doesn't get in the way of her next fix. Derek Wales is a university educated middle class lecturer. He would probably be flattered that you think he is some kind of... danger man. Okay, I'll admit, he's got an eye for a pretty face but frankly, it's one of the perks of the job, and when you get to our age you will understand that a lot better...Look, Dunno, stop

ruffling feathers, we would hate for someone with the quality of Derek Wales to feel driven out by over zealous, fantasy fuelled students...Do I make myself clear?"

If this were a game of tennis it would be game, set and match to Wales an' Rhine 6-1, 6-0, 6-1.

"Aye."

"Good lad, Now be a dear and take Peg once round the block for me?" At the sound of her lead an collar being handed over, Peg struggled to get up and shuffled vaguely in my direction. I put her collar on and opened Gavin Rhine's door and came face to face with Derek Wales. How long had he been there?

"Ah Dunno..."His snake eyes fixed on mine and he gave me the slyest of grins.. "Oh, look at the little doggy. You okay big man? You look like you've been run over. You've got to be more careful Dunno. It's dangerous out there...."

Before I could fashion an appropriate riposte Rhine shouted, "Oh Dunno, you'd better take a shit bag...I don't think she's been yet!"

Derek Wales was gnawin' at me like a hungry shark. I felt angry an' frustrated coz it were like takin' on the government. What could one lone revolutionary do when the enemy had the college an' the law to back him up an' all I had were miself an' his drugged up ex-wife.

As I was lettin' mesen into Dunno HQ, Puzzler came out of me Mam's shop.

"That's strange, you shouldn't be allowed to walk around with a face like that for another four days, three at a pinch if you're one o' those that believes the weekend starts at five fifteen on a Friday."

"What the fuck're yer on about, Puzz?"

"Your face. Wet weekend. It's only Tuesday and not a cloud in the sky."

"Huh."

Why can't he just say 'Why the long face?'

"So, do you fall in with all that problem shared, problem halved stuff?" he asked.

"Not really."

I let mesen in an' closed the door. I were halfway up the stairs before I had a change of heart. Maybe Puzzler would be the answer to me problems. It's true Sly an' Spud an' even Ginge didn't like Derek Wales, but Puzzler was the only one who really had an axe to grind about him. I mean, it were Derek who put the cops on his back in the first place. I turned round an' opened the door. Puzzler was still standin' there, jus' like he'd read me mind an' knew I'd come back.

"And sense finally arrives at its destination, having dripped through the colander of your mind," he sez.

"What are you on?" I asked.

"Fresh air and clarity," he replies. "A great combination. A cup of tea would help us gather our thoughts."

"Aye aright. Come on then."

As I opened the door to the flat, me nostrils were assailed by the stink of rotten vegetables. Those fuckin' swedes of Sly's. I knew they were bad news the minute I saw 'em. When the tea were brewed to our mutual satisfaction an' the digestive biscuits doled out, Puzzler put his hands together in a steeple shape under his chin an' stared at me.

"In your own good time, Dear Dunno. Tell me what's on your plate, apart of course, from the biscuits."

I sighed. "It's Derek Wales."

Puzzler frowned. "Isn't it always? If we lived in Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century we could have framed him for heresy. He's the devil incarnate and I don't even believe in the devil."

"He tried ter kill me, yesterday. The bastard ran me over. A tried complainin' ter Gavin Rhine but he jus' told me not ter rock the boat."

"They say that you don't hate anybody, it's just that you don't understand them. Well they're wrong. I hate him," said Puzzler. "I've never hated anyone. Not like that. But him... he destroys people. Seemingly for pleasure. If he wanted he could have us locked up just like that."

"Aye. Am at the end o' me tether, Puzzler. If he woh from round here, a'd just belt him one an' he'd fuck off. But someone like that, they never fuckin' leave yer alone."

"Smackin' him won't do any good," sighed Puzzler. "He'd have you up for assault and he'd prob'ly make it look worse than it was. No. We've got to take him on at hiz own game. We've got ter get rid of him fer good."

"Easy fer you ter say. Gavin Rhine sez the college love him. They dote even mind him shaggin' hiz students. Coz all hiz students pass. It looks good fer t' college."

We were deep in thought. Time passed. I could hear the muffled sounds of me Mam havin' a conversation with a customer. A clock ticked... Then, Puzzler slammed his cup on the table.

"You've done it, Dunno, no hidin' your light under a bushel for you, is there? We've got it. Are you ready for a war of attrition?"

"Eh?"

"A siege? We're gonna break that bastard but it's going to take all our brains to do it and it won't happen over night."

I shrugged. "Just so long as it happens. What's the plan?"

"Where we have been going wrong, well strictly speaking, where *you* have been going wrong is that he has always been aware who the enemy is. A pizza chef sans parallel you may be, a gumshoe you are not. Your desire for fairness and justice makes you 'front on' and confrontational. It plays right into his hands and he is able to stay one step ahead of us at all times. So, Dear Dunno, I say "Ninja!" - A member of a group of mercenaries in feudal Japan who were trained in stealth and the martial arts and deployed as spies, saboteurs or assassins...."

"Eh? But we're not Japanese an' a know fuck all about Kung fu..."

Puzzler sighed. "You do not have to take it verbatim Dunno. I am referring to the stealth, spies and saboteurs bit."

"Oh right. I see. A think."

"We will fight a dirty war, a psychological one. We will eat his brain from within. You tell me that he is highly thought of as a lecturer, so much so that they are willing to turn a blind eye to his...idiosyncrasies, well that gives me an idea...leave that with me. Meanwhile, we need to go underground...produce an unfortunate sequence of events where all trails lead not back to us but to dead ends...A box within a box like a Chinese toy."

"I like it Puzz. A never knew you were so sneaky."

"My friend it's like chess...Don't play the game...play the man. I was more than happy to attend Royal Park and study drama. Mr. Wales it seems, likes to take great pleasure from the misfortune of others. Friga's disappearance is deeply upsetting for me, we were...are sorry, close friends. I think, though as of yet I don't know, Wales is somehow responsible. Yet he has taken it upon himself to have me implicated in

something sinister, and life for me recently has been somewhat uncomfortable...I am not a fighting man, but I love a good challenge...Ergo I think the be..."

The door burst open and Sly charged in. He came to a stop in the centre of the room.

"Ooooooh I'm sensing all sorts of atmosphere here...Deep and rich and...mysterioso? You guys weren't about to start bumming each other were you?"

I give up. I really do.

"Summat like that, Sly," I sez. "Hey, when yer gonna get rid o' them swedes. They stink."

Sly looked hurt. "A small price ter pay fer a great effect? Think of Halloweén? Think of the reaction when they see a hundred an' thirty two lanterns? It'll blow their minds?"

"The stink will," I said.

"God, Dunno? Talk about bourgeois? You need some young pills? Yer acting like a grumpy old grandad? Isn't that right, Puzzler?"

Puzzler shrugged. "The smell is a bit on the strong side, Sly."

"God! You two? Get arty guys? Sacrifice yer nose fer art? It'll be worth it?"

Puzzler got up to go. "I'll leave you ter sacrifice yer nose, Dunno. I've got plans to execute. And remember, Mum's the word. Careless talk costs lives."

"Puzzler?" He turned to look at me "Take care."

He looked touched, an' not just in the head. "Thanks Dunno. If I was Pope I'd canonise you. You'd make a great saint."

"Cool?" said Sly. "What about me Puzzelino?"

"Sorry Sly," sez Puzzler looking rueful, "You're just a fool. No offence?"

"None taken, Paesano. None taken."

## MOBY SLY

Wednesday, October 22nd, 1980

It were six in the morning when me mam burst into me bedroom...Take it from me, it's not a nice way to start the day .

"Fer fucks sake Dunno! When no one 'ad heard from yer Aunt Addy fer five weeks, me an' yer Uncle Ian took it upon oursens ter go round and find out what she woh up to. Turns out shi'd bin dead fer a month, all bloated and decomposin' in her favourite armchair, telly still on, maggots fuckin' everywhere...The stench was un-be-fuckin-lievable. But am tellin' yer this, that stink wont half as bad as the stink comin' off those cuntin' swedes. Yer an idiot lad...yer've got half an hour ter get rid of 'em, otherwise am turnin' the hose on yer!"

"Eh? What yer tellin' me for? they're Sly's fuckin' swedes. Why aren't yer knockin' 'im up at some ungodly hour?"

"Oh that's right, blame someone else. Dote you be ropin' that lovely lad inter yer daft capers. Get it sorted."

SLAM!

I could hear the heavy stomp of her footsteps going down the stairs an' back into the shop. There were nowt for it. I 'ad ter steel mesen an' enter Sly's bedroom an' attempt to wake 'im up to deliver the bad news.

Sly were wrapped up in the arms of someone who could've been me Granma if me Granma put on about fifteen stone in weight and aged a good ten years. How the poor bastard hadn't been flattened is beyond me.

"Sly," I whispered, cautious of wakin' the slumberin' behemoth that was takin' up most of the bed.

He cracked open an eye. "Hermano? Am I alive?"

"Just about, a'd say. Can yer sneak out. A need a word."

He tried to move but a tree-trunk like leg was holdin' him in place.

"I think a'm gonna need a crane? Could you phone the council?"

"We ant got time fer that. Me Mam's on the warpath."

"Tell her ter take a deep breath an' count backwards from ninety-nine to one. That should calm her down."

"Cart see that workin' on me Mam, Sly."

He sighed an' tried to wriggle free but a massive arm swung round landing across his neck. Houdini couldn't have got out of that one.

"What's the trouble then, big boy?"

"It's them fuckin' swedes of yours. She wants 'em out. On the double. An' less o' the big boy."

You'd have thought I'd just told him his pet dog had died. He looked heartbroken. Course it might've been the effects of bein' asphyxiated under Granny Fatty who were snorin' away like a church organ, warmin' up for Sunday Service.

"Didn't you tell her they're part of an artistic process?"

"Ner. It slipped me mind but a doubt it'd do any good."

"It'd be a real waste not ter use them on Halloweén. It's only nine days away? Can't she wait?"

"No, shi can't an' neither can they. Thez maggots crawlin' about in them."

"Really? How cool is that? Okay, Tinkerbell? It's my mess. Leave it with me? They'll be gone before you get back from college? Mrs. Turner here's a cleaner. She can

give me a hand, when she wakes up."

"Ace."

Mrs. Turner leaned over an' started chewin' on Sly's ear. To his credit, he didn't look as if he was enjoyin' it all that much.

"Between you an' me, Capitano, I'm thinkin' of joinin' the church? Those celibate fuckers don't know how lucky they are?"

"Aye well, yer can look on cleanin' up the swedes as a form o' penance then. Jus' do it before me Mam comes back, will yer?"

## DO-RAY-MI

Thursday, October 23rd, 1980

"Right, chumps," said Derek Wales, when we were all gathered around him in the classroom. "I normally leave the college musicals to Gavin Rhine, but this year, due to popular demand I am going to reprise my 1974 role as Professor Higgins in My Fair Lady. The rest of the cast will be made up of...you...and the A Level class. It should be a master class in acting and singing, and attendance at rehearsals is compulsory for all, regardless of whether or not you have a part to play in the production."

Fuckin' Hell. Brilliant. Extra-curricular activities with Doctor Crippen. Tchhh!

Fan-fuckin-tastic!

"I'd like to introduce a friend of mine now. Dan Robinson. He's a professional actor and musician so I expect you to treat him with the respect his profession deserves."

A little feller with a bald head, John Lennon glasses and a beard like Lenin got up from his chair an' stepped forward. He was such an unassumin' type that even though he'd been sat in front of us for the last ten minutes, none of us had noticed him.

"Hello, kiddies," he sez, givin' us a cheery wave an' walkin' over to the piano. "Let's see who can sing then, shall we, Derek?"

"Yeh. Great idea. As Dan is going to be our Musical Director for the production, I'll let him take over. They are in your hands, Dan. Treat them with care."

"Okay, a few vocal warm-ups, to begin with." He started playin' scales on the piano. "Do-Ray-Mi-Fa-So-"

We all looked at him. Lenin, on piano.

"Come on, don't be shy. Raise the rafters."

"Do-Ray-Mi-Fa-So-"

Derek held his hands over his ears as we did as we were told. "What a racket, Perhaps a musical is a bad idea this year."

"Nonsense," sez Dan Robinson. "There's no such thing as a bad singer. The power of music lies within us all. It just needs awakening. You boy, come forward."

"Who me?" I asked.

"Yes. You. Come over here beside me. We're going to sing like angels."

"Now this I would pay money to see," sez Derek Wales. "The Big Man murdering My Fair Lady. Give it up Danny Boy. Even you can't polish a turd."

"Nonsense," says Dan, looking a bit impatient. "Don't pay any attention to Derek. He's teasing you. Now, what song would you like to sing?"

"A dote know any songs," I said, truthfully.

"Okay," sez Dan. "We'll try one from My Fair Lady itself. Get Me to the Church On Time. I'll do it first, then I'll repeat the same phrase with you joining in. Okay?"

I were shittin' meself. I'm under no illusions as to the effect me singin' voice usually has on those in close proximity to it.

"1 and a 2, and a 1, 2, 3, 4. I'm gettin' married in the mornin'. Ding-Dong the bells are gonna chime." He belted it out with great gusto. "And again! This time with you Dunno!"

"I'm gettin' married in the morning. Ding-Dong the bells are gonna chime..." I were stopped by shrieks of laughter from Derek Wales. Pauline an' Ginge an' a few others were joinin' in too.

"And Dunno sounds the death-knell for musical theatre," sez Derek. "Next!"

So I stood down, an' Puzzler got up to do his bit. To my surprise, everyone loved his voice. Even Derek Wales.

"So long as you aren't locked up in prison, you've just got yourself a part, sunshine," sez Derek.

"Thanks," said Puzzler, grinnin' shyly.

Sea Breeze was next, singin' I Could Have Danced All Night.

"Fantastic," sez Dan Robinson an' Derek together. "You are our Eliza Doolittle."

"But am already playin' Mrs Alving in Ghosts," said Breezey. "Shun't someone else have a crack at this."

"Ner," sez Derek. "A successful actress will have her fingers in many pies at once. It'll stretch you dear. Besides, I'm always on hand to help you."

We were in the refectory having a break...

"The wheels are in motion dear Dunno, our terrorist campaign has begun in earnest. Now we sit back and watch our terror seeds grow into plants of malevolent destruction. However you have to assist me in something," sez Puzzler.

"What's that?"

"We need to get hold of Derek Wales' keys. We need his car keys and his house keys. He must not know they are missing of course and I need them for the length of time it takes me ter make a copy."

"You two look serious what are you talking about?" It was Sea Breeze and the rest of the troupe.

"Puzzler here is a genius, he woh just tellin me how he woz gonna..."

"...Take this musical seriously and perhaps enrol the help of a singing coach."

Puzz had cut me off mid sentence and steered the conversation deliberately onto another topic. Why?

"You seem to be doing well Breezey," said Puzzler. "You must be careful my dear. You could end up as teacher's pet."

"I know! I think it's a bit unfair ter tell you the truth, I think he should give Eliza to someone else. Pauline perhaps?"

Pauline wasn't listening, she was lookin' all doe-eyed in adoration of Ginge who wasn't paying her a blind bit of notice.

"He can shove his musical up his arse for all I care," interjected Spud. "I haven't got into this business to be a fuckin' twirly, I'll wait for something proper if its alright with youse."

"Well said Mark, listen have you got a minute? There's something I want to ask you?" said Ginge.

"Sure Ginge. Fire away."

"In...er private?"

They both got up and walked off.

"I reckon we should be getting back", said Breezey, an' with that everybody got up to head back into the theatre. I held back with Puzzler.

"Why dyer change the subject Puzz? Wouldn't the gang be proud ter hear what yer up to?"

"Undoubtedly, Dunno, but I am afeared their might be a Judas amongst us. A spy in the camp. A Mata Hari."

"Eh?"

"Wales has always managed ter stay one step ahead. Why? Someone must be telling him, either unwittingly or otherwise. There are only a few people I can trust, and

until I am more sure, I urge you to keep our plans to ourselves. If he's not certain it's us then he will become weaker. He'll start to slip up." He looked at his watch. "Now, we better head back. I'd hate us to miss anything exciting."

"How d'yer mean?"

He gave me a sly little wink. "I'm not talking about auditions for My Fair Lady, Dunno, put it that way."

Back inside the theatre, Dan Robinson was now leadin' us all in some stretchin' exercises.

"Okay, you're made of rubber. Stretch up and go all floppy." He stretched his hands up in the air an' then dropped down to the floor like a quivery wibbly wobbly jelly. "Come on, everyone...stretch."

We all did it, feelin' like proper twats as Derek Wales watched us with a little grin of satisfaction on his face.

We were just gettin' ready to be sunflowers shootin' up in summer when the door opened an' two rough lookin' fellers with smudgy tattoos on their hands came strollin' in. They stared at us as if they were witnessin' some strange tribal ritual.

One of 'em piped up. "Derek Wales? Am lookin' fer a Derek Wales?"

"At your service," sez Derek, givin' him the ol' fish eye treatment.

"Wi've come about the flat."

"What flat?" sez Derek, frowning.

"The one yer rentin'. It sez in t' paper ter contact yer here at the college. Can we move in ternight?"

"I haven't got a flat to rent. I think you've got the wrong man."

The other feller moved over to the piano an' started playin' chopsticks on it with two fingers. He were starin' at Pauline, all the while.

"Yer like a good birra pianer do yer luv?"

She nodded nervously.

"Come over here then an' let me tickle yer keys."

"Stay where you are Pauline," sez Derek Wales. Then he turns back to the feller he'd bin talkin' to. "As I said, you've got the wrong man, and I have a class to teach."

The feller opens up the newspaper he had folded under his arm. "Look. It's here in t' Post, in black 'n' white. Cheap flat in Roundhay. Contact Derek Wales, the Theatre, Royal Park College."

Wales frowned. "I think someone's playing a joke on us my friend," he sez. "I haven't got any flat to rent."

The guy didn't look happy. "We don't like jokes, do we Kev?"

The feller at the piano shook his head. "No, we dote."

"So, are yer gonna show us the flat then? When can we see it?"

"I told you, sir, there is no flat."

The feller stalked around the room like a panther an' grabbed hold of Pauline by the hand. He pulled her close. "Do you know how long it's bin since I kissed a bird?"

She tried to get away but he just held on with a grip of iron.

"Dunno," sez Wales, his voice calm an' steady. "Go and fetch security will you."

I nodded an' went to the door.

The feller released Pauline. "No need fer that, Mister Wales. We know when we're not wanted. Who told yer we'd jus' got out o' prison?"

Wales, looked surprised. "I didn't know you had."

"Bollocks. Someone must o' told yer." He took a step closer. "I dote like people wastin' my time, Mister. You just berra fuckin' watch it, right."

"I am watchin' it," sez Derek. "But I promise you, I know nothing about this."

"I'm tryin' ter be nice about this," sez the big feller. "Int that right, Kev?"

"Yeh. Very nice."

"Good," sez Wales, with more courage than I'd have given him credit for. "Then you'd be wise to leave before either of us stops being nice. Dunno, you still here? I thought you'd gone for security."

"Am on mi way," I said.

The two fellers looked right at me. "Aright. We're off" sez the main guy. "But yer shun't fuckin' waste people's time, Mister Wales."

They pushed past me an' out the door.

Silence filled the theatre as Derek stared at us all.

"Someone's idea of a joke perhaps?" It seemed he were starin' right at me. "Whoever is responsible for that little prank, I'm going to say this just once. Grow up...or else."

I glanced around an' saw Puzzler, with a little smile on his lips. If this were his idea of a bit of fun, he could leave me out of it.

## THE WOLF'S LAIR

Friday, October 24th, 1980

It was a morning at Royal Park just like any other morning: Mark O'Hagan had one foot propped up on the seats pouting away and checking his reflection in any available window and mirror, smoothing stray hairs into place with light delicate strokes, checking with Sea Breeze and Pauline that he 'wasn't looking too jowly' and asking if he didn't look a bit too chubby in that T-shirt. Nothin' they could say or do seemed ter convince him or make him happy.

"Look, Dunno, what do you think?" he sez, raising his T-shirt. "Have I lost weight? Or am I putting it on?"

I shrugged. "A'm not too sure, mate. Yer look alright."

"Alright? I have to work hard to look like this Dunno. I did seventy-five sit-ups before breakfast this morning. You should try it. Get rid of those love handles while there's still time."

"Thanks fer the tip, Spud, yer cheeky cunt. I ant got love handles. It's just excess brawn."

Jonny Marinelli was well into the newspaper circling various things with a red pencil, stopping to do the odd sum or two on a calculator. Puzzler was buried deep in a crossword and I decided to take the opportunity to cram a couple of sausage rolls in before class. It was 8.55am. From way across the vestibule I saw Gavin Rhine emerging

from Derek's office. He strode, chest out and head tilted back like a man with a purpose.

"C'mon Peg!" he boomed without lookin' back. Poor old Peg tried desperately to keep up with her master, her legs splayed with age, tryin' to gain purchase on the smooth polished floor, pantin' away with what looked like a contented smile. Derek Wales was next to emerge, surveyin' the room like a crocodile lookin' for potential prey. He adjusted his crotch, hoiked up his jeans and strode bow-legged towards us and the theatre, like John Wayne's less famous, shorter, deformed brother.

"Okay Dunno," whispered Puzzler in me ear. "Buy me five minutes time. Talk bollocks with Derek. Shouldn't be too hard for you, old chum."

"C'mon then you miscreants," barked Derek. "Come and ruin my day..."

As everybody shuffled into the theatre I held back, an' just before Derek went in I said, "Er Derek...Can have a word?"

"Depends entirely what the word is big man. Try me."

"I er... well, I'm a bit confused by yer lecture on Antonin Artaud an a din't want ter ask in front of everybody else coz a'd a got embarrassed like, but a really dote think a know the difference between Realism and Naturalism."

"Well, well, well...the big man being kept up at night by the worry of it all...Yeh? Yeh. Well I could tell you big man but I figure that were you to look it up in the library and find out for yourself then there's a better chance of it filtering through that sludgy grey matter of yours, and of you remembering it. Yeh? In fact...Have the answer for me tomorrow morning. I'm curious to know what you come up with."

Bollocks! Derek turned to enter the theatre.

"Er Derek?"

"What?"

"Where d'yer get yer boots?"

Wales looked at me for a long moment, obviously tryin' ter work out if I were bein' funny or summat. I held his gaze with what I thought were me most innocent look.

"Dunno, yer a fool. A clown." He entered the theatre with me close behind. Inside, Puzzler was sat with the rest of the group, a self-satisfied smirk on his face.

Two hours later the bell went.

"Right class you can now go and empty your brains of all that's great and good, whilst I have to prolong this torture with the A Level group. One day you'll think back and appreciate the huge sacrifices I have made for you in the name of art."

As we walked down the Headrow, Puzzler showed me the putty casts he'd made of Derek's house an' car keys.

"I'll have these made into keys this afternoon, then it's showtime," he sez, proudly.

"Look, mate," I said, "After what happened yesterday wi' them louts in class, am not sure a wanna go through wi' this."

Puzzler laughed. "Come off it Dunno. That was nothing. Just a lark. No-one got hurt."

"Pauline woh scared shitless."

"She's a spoilt brat," sniffed Puzzler. "Anyway it shook Derek up, didn't it?"

"I dunno. He handled it pretty well, I thought."

"Don't let me down, Dunno. I want to nail that fucker. He tried to kill you. He had me locked up. He's evil. Remember that. We're only doin' what we have to do to

survive, that's all."

Put like that, how could I say no?

"Aright. What's the plan?"

"We go into the wolf's lair. I'm going to be watching it. When the time comes I'll give you the call. But you've got to promise to drop everything when it happens. I need you, Dunno. And if Derek is the Ripper, so does every woman in the city."

"Aright. I'll be there."

The call came that night at ten twenty-five. I were just servin' the last drinks of the night at Pattons when Bruce came out of his office.

"Dunno. Call for you."

I left Carol to cover for me at the bar while I took the call.

"Yeh?"

"Dunno?" came a muffled voice on the other end.

"Yeh?"

"The nest is empty."

"Eh?"

"The dragon is abroad."

"Yer what?"

"The cat is away."

"A dote get it."

"Oh, for fuck's sake," snapped Puzzler on the other end. "Am in Wales' house. He's out. Get over here, now. On the double."

"A'll be finished in half an hour. A'll need ter get Ginge ter give me a lift."

"Okay. Fine. Just get here."

The line went dead.

I went into the kitchen.

"Ginge, fancy a drive inter Roundhay?"

"Do a fuck. A'm goin' over ter Claremont House. I wanna see how Spud's gettin' on. It's hiz first night on the job."

"Yer've hired Spud then?"

"Yep. He'll go far that lad. First class rent boy."

"Right. Listen mate. A really need yer help. Please. Jus' tek us ter Roundhay. It's about Puzzler."

"What's that silly cunt done now?"

"Broken inter Derek Wales' house."

Ginge stared at me like a dyin' fish. "Yer kiddin'?"

I shook me head. "A wanna gerrim out o' there before Wales comes back."

Ginge sighed. "Alright. I'll do it coz yer a mate. But there's no way a'm hangin' about there. I'm droppin' you off an' hightailin' it out quick. I'd sooner be shaggin' mature pussy than gettin' meself arrested with you two."

"Aye well, ter be honest, so would I," I agreed. "Cheers, Ginge. Yer a mate."

"Aye well, seein' as how a'm doin' you a favour, have the decency ter call me Jonny, will yer?"

"Aright. Wharrever you say."

And so it was that as soon as the last customer were out the door, we made our excuses to Bruce an' raced for Ginge's Beetle. Roundhay bound all the way. I just hoped we'd get there before Derek got back.

"Are yer sure yer won't come in wi' me?" I asked Ginge as he pulled up just round the corner from Derek Wales' house.

"No fuckin' way, an' if you 'ad any sense you wouldn't be goin' in there either. It's Puzzler's mess. He's a fuckin' weirdo! Let him sort it out, he's lucky I don't fuckin' give him a bit o' biff fer puttin the shits up Pauline. She likes a bit o' rough, but not "real" rough..." said Ginge. "Come on, let's get out of here. I'll see if a can set you up with a tasty lady over at Chez Shag."

"Sorry, pal. A can't jus' leave the silly cunt. He needs me."

I got out of the car an' winced as Ginge shot off with a screech of tyres. I waited in the shadows a while to make sure it hadn't attract any unwanted attention. It were a cold clear night with the moon shinin' white an' sinister above, like a spotlight in a prisoner of war movie. Derek's MG wasn't parked outside the house, so I pushed open the gate an' walked up the driveway. The front garden were full of bushes an' trees, all castin' creepy shadows. I looked all over but there were no sign of Puzzler anywhere.

"Puzz?" I called in a stage whisper. I'm right proud of me stage whispers. Gavin Rhine taught us how to do 'em. It's all from the diaphragm an' a well-executed stage whisper can be heard just as clearly as someone yellin'. Course, it were only after I'd done it that I realised how pointless it was. A stage whisper's fine on stage but useless in real life coz anyone hangin' about can hear it. Havin' said that, Puzz didn't hear it. The only response I had was the sound of the wind rustlin' in the empty branches over me head.

I went into the front porch an' tried the door. Locked. I turned round an' nearly died of fright. Puzzler had crept up behind me an' was standin' there, all in black, with a black balaclava an' boot polish on the bits of his face that were showin'.

"Fer fuck's sake, yer silly cunt," I whispered harshly. "A nearly shat me fuckin' pants...creepin' up on me like that!"

"About time," he whispered. But it wasn't a stage whisper so I had to ask him to repeat himself.

"Y'what?"

"I said it's about time. Wales won't be out all night, you know. I've already had a quick mosey around but to be honest I got a bit freaked out in there on my own."

"A dote blame yer. Shall we go home then, seein' as yer din't find owt?"

Puzzler shook his head. "No. If he killed those women. If he killed Friga, then there's bound to be some sort of clue in there. Let's go in."

He put the key in the lock an' we stepped inside. It were like enterin' a museum after hours. All heavy wood panels an' antique furniture. We stood in the dark for a bit an' listened to the silence of the house. Suddenly a grandfather clock chimed the hours ominously. The noise seemed to boom round the whole house. We both jumped a mile.

"Mebbe we should go an' fetch Sly," I said, me panic mountin' fast.

"Why?" asked Puzzler. "What's he gonna do? Fuck him?"

Puzzler led the way into a little room with a writin' desk in it. He opened the drawers, one by one, illuminated by a pencil torch clenched between his teeth.

"Bingo!" he sez.

"What?"

"The log book an' papers fer hiz MG, we'll have some of that! " said Puzzler, shovin' em into the gym bag he had over his shoulder. "Come on, let's have a root about upstairs."

Each step of the stairs creaked under our weight as we ascended an' walked along the landing into the master bedroom. Puzzler shone the torch around the room.

"Nice sheets," he said. They were satin, an could've been black or dark blue.

There was another cabinet in the room an' together we started goin' through it.

"Nothin'," I sighed. "Come on, let's gerrout of here."

Too late. Light raced across the room from outside. The headlights of a car. Puzzler switched off his torch, dashed to the winder an' peered out.

"It's Derek. He's back," said Puzzler. "He's got a bird with him."

"Fuck," I said. "What if he does her in?"

"Right, maintain complete silence til I give the all clear," sez Puzz with an eerie authority.

We heard the door below us opening, and Derek's voice, askin' the girl to help hersen to drinks. I nearly wet mesen. Puzzler, calm as anythin' pointed to the bed. We climbed under it. There wasn't much space coz Derek used it for storin' shoeboxes, an' the mattress above us sagged down in the middle. Footsteps were comin' up the stairs. A light came on.

"Sit down, kick your shoes off," came Derek's voice. "Make yourself at home."

I saw some ladies shoes skittle across the floor, then the mattress sagged even more as someone sat down on it.

"Top you up?" said Derek. I heard the sound of wine pourin' into a glass. "Now, the favours I have done for you recently deserve a little kiss, don't you think?"

"I...I'm not sure, Derek," came a female voice that I knew too well.

"If you want to make it in this business, you better get used to the casting couch at an early age."

The mattress sagged down across me face as Derek clambered onto the bed.

"Just a kiss then," said Sea Breeze. "Come an' get me...Sir."

The unmistakable sounds of soft kissin' filtered through to us under the bed and the worst case scenario presented itself. Breezey started gettin' into it! She started moanin' softly, and judging by the movement of the mattress, Derek Wales was bringing his hands into play.

"Will you do something for me Celia?" he whispered his voice gettin' thick with passion.

"What?" gasped Breezey between kisses.

"Let me take your knickers off..."

"Don't let me stop you!"

Blimey! It was gonna be 'just a kiss' a minute ago...

The mattress was bouncing up an' down like fuck now as Derek Wales started tearing off Breezey's clothes. Me an' Puzz really didn't have a lot of room to play with as it pushed us down into the dusty carpet. The kissin' sounds increased along with the intensity as Breezey let out a long low moan of pleasure.

"Oh you like that do you you dirty little bitch?"

"Yes, God, Yes!"

No, God No! Derek Wales was givin' Breezey a right good platin' eight inches above the faces of me an' Puzzler...an' I felt a sneeze comin' on! The mattress was movin' rythmically now as Wales was gettin' into his strokes, Breezey's moans gettin' louder and more intense when...

**BANG! BANG! BANG!**

Someone was thumpin' on the door like a right bastard.

"What the fuck?" said Derek comin' up for air.

"Oh God dote stop!" cried Breezey desperately. "A woh cummin'!"

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Police! Open the door! Now!"

"Shit!" said Wales, the mattress juddering wildly as he jumped off.

"Open this door or we'll break it down!"

"Coming...I'm coming!" shouted Derek Wales.

"Glad someone is!" piped up Breezey in frustration.

We heard Derek move smartly across the room, along the landing and down the stairs. The mattress moved again as Breezey got off and we could hear her starting to dress smartly and move across the room to eavesdrop. As she stepped out of the bedroom and on to the landing I couldn't hold on any more.

"Ahtchoo!" I tried to suppress it as much as I could.

Breezey stepped back into the room and stood listening intently. "Hello?" she said. "Is anybody there?"

Silence.....Luckily curiosity got the better of her and she stepped out onto the landing again. I strained to hear the conversation coming up the stairs.

"No officer, just myself and a lady friend."

"It's just that a neighbour heard a car moving away at speed and then thought she heard people in the shadows whispering and acting suspicious. People are very jumpy sir, what with this Ripper business."

"I understand officer, I commend you for your efficiency. However there's no one here but us."

"Okay sir, sorry to have bothered you. Hope we didn't....er cramp your style."

"Not at all chaps," laughed Wales with great bonhomie. "Goodnight and thank you again."

The door slammed and we heard the footsteps coming back up the stairs. Breezey crept stealthily back into the room and sat on the edge of the bed just as Wales came inside.

"Never a dull moment eh? I take it our little triste is at an end?"

"Yes, that were really scary. I want to go home. Is there any chance you could drop me off somewhere?"

"Of course my dear. Let's go." Breezey got up off the bed to join him. "So has any body said anything to you?" he asked.

"About what?"

"You know damn well what" said Wales, his tone getting menacing. "There are things starting to happen that are more than a coincidence and those bastard class mates of yours have something to do with it."

"I'm sorry Derek I don't think it is. I would have heard something by now, honest, but no one's said owt."

"Well pull your fucking finger out, you useless cow," snarled Derek. "I didn't give you those lead parts out of the goodness of my heart you know. Now come on, let's go, before I change my mind and make you walk."

They walked down the stairs in silence and we heard the front door slam shut. After a short while we heard Derek's car firing up an' speedin' away. We both exclaimed huge sighs and in the darkness I could see Puzzler givin' me a strange signal.

"What the fuck are yer doin'" I snapped, still whisperin'.

"I'm giving you permission ter break silence. Stupid!"

"A'll break yer fuckin' neck in a minute, Puzz. That woh too close fer comfort, an listenin' ter Derek Wales lappin' at Breezey's snatch was not top o' my things I wanna do ternight list."

"Is that all the thanks I get for real life, exhilarating drama?" sez Puzzler

sounding genuinely perplexed. "How about you get on Derek's blower and give Jonny Marinelli a ring....see if he can pick us up?"

I picked up the phone in Derek Wales' hallway. It turned out that Jonny Marinelli wasn't answerin' his phone, an' why should he? It were late and the fucker was probably in the middle of more important things, like gettin' it on with some mature posh fanny. We were stuck. Puzzler all dressed up like a right silly cunt, head to toe in black, with boot polish strips across his face. With extra patrols of over-sensitive rozzers all out lookin' for the Yorkshire Ripper every night, we weren't gonna get far on foot or in a taxi.

"What about ringing Spud?" asked Puzzler.

"No chance. He's round at Ginge's, gettin' all jiggy. He's Ginges latest recruit."

I could feel the panic rising now. If Derek were feelin' benevolent and had taken Breezey all the way to Crossgates then we had another ten minutes to play with. However, he was soundin' well fucked off with her when they left which means he could just drop her off at a bus stop an' be back anytime now. The thought had no sooner entered me head when the glare of a car's headlights shone through the stained glass of Derek's front door. Me heart raced like a bastard and I contemplated headin' for the back door and maybe just hidin' somewhere in the back garden. Thankfully the car continued on down the Avenue.

"Fer fucks sake, Puzz. D'yer not have a plan B?"

"Please stop panicking," he sez calm as yer like, "You're making me feel a tad edgy. Give Marinelli another try."

I rang Ginge's again. After two minutes I were on the point of giving up when...

"Claremont House?"

"Ginge! Thank fuck for that! Come and fuckin' get us. Quick!"

"Why? What's up, old chum?"

"We're still in Wales' house and he is due back any minute."

"Golly, then it looks like curtains for you then coz it will take at least...oh, about seventeen and a half minutes from here."

"Don't fuck about Ginge, can you come?"

"It just so happens we do have a little window between clients, a suppose I could venture out and pop over."

Another car's headlights started to come into view. This time it was Derek's MG.

"SHIT! Ginge he's coming! Come quick! Come now!"

Puzzler reached over and grabbed the phone off me. "Hello Jonny? Hello, yes, it's Justin. How are you? Good...Good. Oh not so bad thank you...Oh, yes quite exciting."

The cars headlights were close now, instinctively we had to crouch for fear of it catching our silhouette through the front door.

"PUZZ...FER FUCKS SAKE!" I hissed.

Puzzler continued as though he was ordering a pizza. "Now Jonny, we were wondering if you could pick us up from the Close? I reckon outside number 32 should do it, that way we can make our escape from Derek's through his back garden and he won't see your car. Would that be okay? Thank you Jonny, that's most kind of you...Twenty minutes then...Lovely...Tooodle-Oo!" He replaced the receiver. Outside we could hear Dereks MG come to a stop and the car door opening.

"Now then Dunno.....Shall we?" Puzzler, still icily calm, gestured to the back of the house where I instinctively headed for the back door. "No my dear chap. An unlocked back door is suspicious where as an unlocked window will be seen as a mere oversight."

We heard the front gate opening and Derek's footsteps coming up the path. We crept into the back dining room where Puzzler unlocked the clasp of the sash windows and raised the window open. I heard the key in the front door. I tell yer I didn't fuck about as I dived through the window without touchin the sides and belted it down the back garden and into the cover of the trees and bushes at the back. I turned to see Puzzler stealthily climb out and wait, sliding the window down to time it with the opening of the front door and shutting it at exactly the same time I heard the front door slam shut. Soundlessly he came and joined me in the bushes.

"Now can we go?"

"Of course not. Don't you know anything? We wait. We wait to see if he does anything unusual which will mean he's suspicious. If he isn't, then we wait until he's settled down and there's no chance of him seeing us climb over his wall, and finally we wait because Mr. Marinelli will be..." he looked at his watch..."another fourteen minutes, approximately. Better to wait here under total cover than in the street."

We watched in fascination as Derek Wales entered his kitchen and pottered about. It was exhilarating to know he couldn't see us yet we could see him, clear as day. His demeanour was relaxed and unsuspecting. he made himself a hot drink and after a while the kitchen light went off. Everything became peaceful and still.

"Jesus fucking Christ Justin, You are weird!"

"Stuff and nonsense, dear friend. Now that the adrenaline is wearing off can you tell me honestly that that wasn't exciting?"

"Mate, that was one of the most exciting things I've ever done!"

"Well then...Shhh!"

We could hear a car coming slowly down the road and stopping at what seemed like the other side of the wall.

"Excellent!" said Puzz, "Mr. Marinelli I believe...Peg up old chap?" He locked his hands together palm up and invited me to step on them as he helped hoike me up and over the wall, joining me a few moments later right at the side of Jonny Marinelli's Beetle.

"Jesus, boys", said Ginge. "I nearly babbered mi knickers, seein' you dropping out of nowhere like that!"

"Fuck me, Ginge," I said. "Am I glad to see you."

"Talk on! Talk on! Lest I should only catch the sound of happiness, and be deceived. Careful now Dunno, you're running the risk of sounding grateful for something I've done for you."

"Shut up yer cheeky cunt. Where are we going?"

"Where do you want to go?"

"Well, I think tonight's adventure needs a proper audience, is Spud still at your place?"

"He is."

"Can we go by mine an get Sly then, an' go over ter yours?"

"...And *I'm* a cheeky cunt?"

"Alright Ginge. Point taken."

We were bombin' along through Chapel Allerton towards Claremont House and safety. Ginge wasn't too keen on us all meetin' up at his establishment.

"Actually," he sez, shiftin' gears, "we'll do it the other way round. We'll collect Spud and go to yours if that's okay. Garvey's still with a high profile client and it will be bad for business if we're all sat around with you two, looking like silly cunts..."

"It's just Puzzler dressed as a silly cunt," I corrected him.

"Alright, Dunno," sighed Ginge. "If you insist."

When we got to the house, Ginge made us wait round the corner in the car whilst he got out and went inside, emerging five minutes later with a smart, smug looking Spud in a dinner suit, looking jus' like James Bond emerging from a casino in Monte Carlo.

"I'm here you dreamers!" Spud announced gettin' in the car. "How's it hangin'?"

Ginge followed behind carryin' a wine box with about six bottles of chilled champagne.

"Aw...!An't yer got any beers?" I asked.

Ginge chose to ignore that comment an' we set off for Beeston. It were about one in the morning when we arrived at Mam's shop. I unlocked the door and our nostrils were immediately assaulted by the smell of those swedes.

"Fuckin' Hell" said Ginge. "You are kiddin' me? Have you got a house full of rottin' corpses? That's disgusting."

"No, it's swedes," I explained, wearily. "Sly's idea. We've got riddov 'em now, but fer some reason the smell wote go."

"Well it's a damn shame we didn't use this place for my business," Ginge said, a bit too airily for my liking.

"Wilkommen mein Herren!" announced Sly from the top o' the stairs... naked of course.

"Oh it just gets better and better," sniffed Ginge. He were really startin' to get on me nerves now.

Finally. We were sat round, champagne poured and me an Puzzler told our story, omitting nothing.

The silence was broken by Spud, who said, "We are of course all 100% certain that Derek is the Yorkshire Ripper, killed Friga, framed Puzzler ran Dunno over, threatened to kill you and Sly...No bad thing... and is the all round, general psychopath we are all assuming he is?"

"Coz if he isn't," continued Ginge, "that would make you a pair of psychotic, burgling stalkers, dangerously harassing a harmless, defenceless, innocent man?"

"It would be a remarkable coincidence to be run over after talking to his wife in Chapeltown by some other fucker in an MG, wouldn't it?" I said starting to sound a bit narked.

"Keep yer knickers on," said Ginge. "I'm only playing Devil's advocate."

"Yeh, well, " I snapped, "a'm runnin' outta patience wi' yer stupid games..."

"But the point is," said Ginge turning his attention to Puzzler. "If he is innocent Justin, and I'm not sayin' he is mind, how far are you intending to go with your terror campaign? It's alright for you with yer personal vendettas but when yer ropin' in innocents like Pauline, then personally I think you're goin' too far."

"Okay, I'm willin' to take that on board, and I apologise. An unexpected oversight in my meticulous planning. I didn't expect that response at that time," said Justin. "When I am satisfied that all the outstanding questions are answered, then the campaign continues, with I assure you, no more collateral damage. Friga is one of my closest friends and she has disappeared without a trace. Someone is responsible for that, and it is my, no, it is our duty to find out who."

What I didn't like to say was, after spending an evening with Justin and witnessin' at first hand his icy calm in a perilous situation, I realised he could easily be the sort of person responsible for Friga's disappearance.

"Fellow Duders!" said Sly breakin' through me thoughts, "Party! Party! Party!"  
He started doling out invitations to a Halloween house party. At my fuckin' house!

"Woah! Hang on Sly, a dote remember sayin yer could have a party here?"

"That's because you didn't Capitano...But your mum did!"

"Eh? Me mam?"

"Coooooerrrrrect-o-mondo! Give the man a coconut...So listen up, tom cats,"  
said Sly as he started rolling a big fat one, "start dishin' out the invites, though maybe  
it's only fair ter warn 'em that the candle lanterns might pong a bit?"

"Eh? A thought you got rid of 'em?"

"Technically correct, Kimo Sabe. I ...er put them on the roof until required?"

"Oh well done Sly! It's gonna tek ages to get ridder the stink now. It's crept inter  
the walls."

## DISCO INFERNO

Friday, October 31st 1980

Ginge gave me a lift home after our shift at Pattons. He'd even bought me a witch outfit to wear. I preferred his Count Dracula cozzie meself, but I suppose it were a nice thought. As we pulled into our road I were surprised to see a large group of people all in costumes, gathered outside the house, all suppin' cans o' Double Diamond, while the ladies helped 'emselves to cider an' Babysham.

I saw Sly, glidin' about dressed as a devil in tights an' suspenders with a forked tail an' horns an' a red bra.

"What's goin' on?" I asked. "A thought the party woh gonna be inside."

"Emergency Protocols, Mister President?" he sez. "It was the swedes. I kept them up on the roof an' brought them downstairs earlier, but when I lit them, the stink was too much? And I think some wasps built a nest in one of them? The flat's full of wasps and it stinks of shit? Under the circumstances, I think I did pretty well, moving the party onto the street, don't you?"

A taxi pulled up beside us, and out got Derek Wales and Sea Breeze.

"Hello, big man," sez Wales. He were dressed in Victorian cape an' top hat an' was carryin' a doctor's medical case. It looked as if he'd come as the original Jack the Ripper. "So you people still have street parties? I thought they went out with the Blitz."

"Yer'll 'ave ter ask Sly about that," I said. "Help yersen ter drinks."

"I think I'm going to have a piss first," said Wales, the teacher in him never able to stop from givin' out too much information. "Is your flat open?"

"Aye. Go on up."

I looked at Breezey. She looked pretty hot as a little devil girl. The costume certainly looked more effective on her than it did on Sly.

"You an' Derek seem ter be gettin' on pretty well," I said. "How come yer came in a taxi?"

"Someone's pinched Derek's MG," said Breezey. "It went missing from t' college this afternoon. He's furious. Listen, it din't have owt ter do wi' you lot did it, witchy-poo? He reckons it did."

Forewarned is fore armed. "No. Course it din't," I said with a straight face. "Fuckin' 'ell. What's Puzzler gone an' done now?"

"Wanna dance?"

"Sure. Okay."

We started dancin' to the Human League, which isn't really that easy to dance to an' as I was coppin' a feel of Breezey's arse, the sensation were spoilt by the knowledge that Derek Wales had already explored that particular territory in great detail. There was a tap on me shoulder an' there was the man himself, glarin' at me with undisguised hatred.

"Thanks for keeping her warm for me, big man. You can go an' entertain your other guests now," he sez.

"Er...sure thing, Mr. Wales."

As I mingled with the crowd, the first waft of burnin' assailed me nostrils. It were then that someone shouted, "Fire!" I glanced up at the livin' room window. Fuckin' hell. Flames were billowin' out.

"Sly, did you leave those fuckin' swede lanterns burnin'?" I asked.

"Er...I might have?"

I ran to the stairs, but smoke was already floodin' the place, as well as a cracklin' heat from above.

"Someone call the fire brigade," said Ginge.

"I cart. The phone's upstairs," I said.

"Congratulations, big man," sez Wales, clappin' me on the shoulder. "You certainly know how to throw a sizzling hot party." He walked away laughing, drink in hand. It was then that I heard the first sirens. What was I gonna tell me Mam?

It were four in the mornin' when the Fire Brigade finally got the blaze under control. Luckily they'd managed to keep it down to the livin' room. Mam's shop survived, thank fuck, as did the bedrooms. How had they managed to arrive so quickly?

Once everything were in order, an' the excitement was over an' there were nowt more to see, the hangers-on fucked off home. Eventually I were given permission to view the front room with a fire brigade official. It were well an' truly fucked, everything lookin' like the end of a burnt match, the acrid smell of smoke, water drippin' everywhere.

"Is this your house, sir?"

"Sort of, I rent it from me Mam."

"Are you insured?"

"A doubt it."

"Well you're very lucky. Usually by the time we get to these fires we are at the

stage of trying to save surrounding properties. This is a strange one... It's like someone had called us before the fire had started. Do you know what might've caused it?"

"A've got a fair idea. Me flat mate had made loads a lanterns with candles in. They were so smelly we left them in the house an' went inter t' street. He's a bit of a silly cunt." I added by way of an explanation.

"Well there's no doubt they were partly the cause."

"Eh? What else is there?"

"I guess the untrained nose can't smell anything, but I can. An accelerant was used here...paraffin, I'd say. From that blackened circle I see there, and the fragments of glass, I think someone came in here, threw or dropped a bottle of paraffin on or adjacent to a lit lantern and made a hasty exit. Did you see anyone entering the house prior to the fire starting?"

You bet I did.....Derek fuckin' Wales.

## AFTER THE FIRE

Saturday, November 1st, 1980

Me an' Sly spent the rest of the night gettin' bollocked off the Fire brigade coz of the swedes an' talkin' to the cops about who might've watered the carpets with paraffin. I wrestled with me conscience an' decided against tellin' them I'd seen Derek Wales comin' out of the flat minutes before it went up in flames. I knew they'd just look on it as me tryin' to stir up trouble against a respectable pillock of the community.

After the authorities had gone I went an' got out of me witch costume an' treated mesen to a bath. The place still reeked of smoke but it gave me some time to put me thoughts in order. By the time I were dry I heard the front door slam shut an' feet comin' up the stairs.

"Oh fuck!!" I thought. "It's Mam."

I wrapped a towel about me an' went into the livin' room where Mam were shakin' her head an' tutt'n' away at the damage.

"Mam!" I cried. "Am really sorry." To be honest I were terrified. "It weren't my fault."

"It never is, is it? Yer stupid soft sack o' shit."

Thank fuck. She were in a good mood.

"I'll pay fer all t' damage," I said, wonderin' where I'd find the money.

"Don't worry about it," she sez with a smile.

"Eh?"

"A said dote worry about it. Fuckin' 'ell did the smoke get in yer ears or what?"

"No. A jus... a jus' dote get it. A thought yer'd have me bollocks fer earrings."

"Aye well, who'd want them danglin' from their lugs? It's lucky fer you, yer've got such lovely friends."

"Eh?" It were me lovely friends who got me into this scrape in the first place. If not for Sly, we'd never've had the party an' Dunno HQ wouldn't be stinkin' like the pit of Hades.

"That hunky carrot top. Jonny Macaroni, came over ter see me last night. He told me all about it."

"Oh." What were that carrot top doin' visitin' me Mam? I hope he weren't tryin' to drum up business.

"He's bought the place," she said with a grin. "He gev me a lump sum, cash in hand, an' he's lettin' me keep the shop so long as a pay him a small weekly rent."

"But what about me an' Sly?" I asked, feelin' totally floored by the news.

"Dote worry," sez Mam. "D'yer think a'd see poor Sly slung out on t' street? Jonny sez yer can carry on stayin' here. But he might have ter raise the rent ter pay fer all the damage yer've caused."

Fuckin' 'ell. While part of me were relieved that Mam hadn't had me kidneys for breakfast, another part of me felt sick about havin' Ginge as a landlord.

Me an' Sly had breakfast with Mam in the shop. An' as I were moppin' up me runny egg with a bit of bread, the man himself came through the door with Ted Smailler at his side, grinnin' like one of Sly's swedes.

"Ah, however did a woman as beautiful as you give birth to such monstrous offspring?" sez Ted, kissin' me Mam's hand.

She gave a throaty laugh. "Oh he's nowt ter do wi' me. Hiz dad won him in a Christmas raffle. I'd've sooner had a tin of shortbread an' a bottle of port meself."

Ted laughed his oily laugh. "Ah, yes, well he certainly didn't inherit any of your wit, mon cherie."

"Fer fuck's sake!" I snapped. "What do you two want?"

Ted raised an eyebrow. "That's no way to talk to your new landlord." He glanced at Ginge. "Is it boss?"

"No," said Ginge. "I keep warning him about his attitude but..."

"Yer can't educate pork," said Mam. "That's what I always say."

Sly started laughin'. The cheeky cunt.

"Come on, sour puss," said Ginge, slappin' me on the back. "Let's have a look at the damage."

I showed him an' Ted upstairs.

Ginge looked at the living room an' smiled. "Hmm. Needs refurbishing. Painting, decorating...new fixtures and fittings. I'll have someone round this afternoon. Give them a couple of days and this place will be better than ever."

"Thanks, Ginge," I said. "But are yer sure yer can afford it?"

Ginge grinned. "Course I can. They give places like this away free in boxes of Cornflakes. I'm gonna have to raise your rent a bit though, to help cover costs. Same goes for you too, Sly."

The grin fell from Sly's face. "How much more?"

Ginge frowned a bit. "Well, I know money's tight so give me what you give Dunno's Mam, and you can work the difference."

"How d'yer mean?" I asked.

"We've been talking about this place," said Ted. "We like what Sly's been doing. But Sly Guy's isn't cost effective. We want to maximise the potential. Two whores on the premises makes twice the money."

"Steady on, amigo?" sez Sly. "I'm not a whore. I'm a lover?"

"Sure," said Ginge. "Course you are."

"I'm not gonna fuck old ladies," said Dunno. "It int right."

"It's a lot of fun, gringo?" sez Sly. "Jus' give it a try? You won't regret it?"

Ginge laughed. "It's okay Dunno. You don't need to shag them. We'll make do with Sly. But you'll come in handy, serving drinks and keeping out the riff raff, jealous husbands and the like. I'll have a dinner suit made up for you so you look the part."

I didn't like it but it was a lot better than bein' a rent boy.

"And hey, if one of the clients takes a shine to you, and you can put your principles aside for a moment, you could always step up and lend a hand, eh?"

"Aright but not if shiz ugly."

"Splendid. I'm not expecting you to do this full time. Two nights a week will do. The rest of the week is your own."

"Can I work three nights a week for you and not pay any rent?" sez Sly.

Ginge thought about it. "Five nights and you live here rent free. What you make on the other two nights is yours. Fair enough?"

"Okay?" said Sly. "Pleasure doing business with you."

Ginge turned ter Ted. "So do you think we should decorate the bedrooms while we're at it?"

"Thez no need," I said. "I decorated them mesen a couple o' months ago."

Ted opened mi bedroom door an' grimaced. "Ooh, chez yuk! Yes. Dunno and

Sly can stay over at Claremont House for the week. This place needs gutting, fumigating and doing up from top to bottom. Maybe we could get some nice beds in here too. That one looks like it's crawling with bugs. You leave it to me Ginge. I'll choose the wallpaper an' carpets. You can choose the furnishings from the warehouse."

Ginge went over to the phone in me bedroom an' dialled a number. "Hello. Is that the council? Great. I need to hire a skip for a couple of days. I've got a flat full of junk I need to get rid of."

For fuck's sake. Some people complain about man bein' playthings of the gods. They don't know when they've got it good. It sure as fuck beats bein' the plaything of a couple o' cunts like Ginge an' Ted Smaller.

## A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

Sunday, November 2nd 1980

At first me an' Sly were well chuffed, settin' ourselves up at Ginge's Claremont House. Me bedroom had a king-size heart-shaped bed an' an en-suite, plus of course, there was the jacuzzi an' sauna. It were like stayin' at a luxury health farm without the healthy bits.

"I might stay here full time, Scout?" sez Sly comin' out of the sauna. "I could get used to this? You'll have ter pamper me a bit more if you want me to stay with you?"

"I'll pamper yer with a kick in the arse yer silly fucker," I told him.

Our pleasure was soon marred by the arrival of Ginge an' Ted Smailler, accompanied by an elderly gent with tin-rimmed specs an' a leather briefcase.

"Okay, boys, slap yer cocks on the table," sez Ginge. "Doctor Ginnal is gonna give you the once over."

"Eh?"

"If you're gonna stay here, then I want to make sure you're all clean down there. I don't want any of you passing anything on to any of the clients."

"But I ain't gonna be shaggin' any of 'em," I said.

Ginge shrugged. "Makes no difference, sport. You'll be using the toilets won't you? Ever heard of catching stuff off bog seats?"

"Now that's strictly an old wive's tale," said Doctor Ginnal. "You're highly unlikely to contract VD from a toilet seat unless you eat your dinner off it."

"Anyway," I said. "I 'aven't had a shag in yonks. Not since Sandy."

Ginge an' Ted looked a bit uncomfortable. It was Ted that spoke up.

"Actually, that's part of the problem," he said. "Er...I hope you won't take this the wrong way but I had a bit of a dalliance with Sandy myself and shortly after, I ended up with a few unwanted guests in the old gentleman's pubic garden."

"Eh?"

"He got crabs," Ginge explained. "Now we're not saying they came from Sandy. But if they did, chances are you've got them too. I notice you're always scratching your plums, Dunno. Noticed any wildlife down there?"

"No a fuckin' 'aven't, yer cheeky cunt."

"Well, no arguments. Just whop it out and we'll all set our mind's at ease."

"Don't be shy?" said Sly, putting his erect cock on the table. "Feast yer eyes on this, Doc."

The doctor bent over it, an' started fiddlin' about with it. "Hmm. Is it a bit tender?"

"A little bit, Doc, but nothing I can't live with?"

"I recommend leaving it alone for a day or two," he sez. "You can put it away now, thank you very much."

"But what do you think of it?" sez Sly. "You must see a lot of cocks in your profession? How does it compare?"

The doctor gev him a stern look. "It's a fine penis, young man. Clean too. Not too big but not too small. Probably just right. Do you have ejaculatory problems?"

"No, Monsieur? I'm like Old Faithful? I spurt out molten man lava regular as clockwork."

"Good for you. Next?"

"Cart the rest of yer fuck off next door?" I asked. "A dote like gettin' me willy out in public."

"No can do, old man," sez Ginge. "Communal health checks are what makes us a cut above the competition."

I undid me fly an' got me cock out. Now normally I'm quite pleased with me todger. But in extreme circumstances like this, it tends to shrivel up, an' right now it were like lookin' at a toadstool in the country.

"I think you'll need some new glasses, Doc," said Ted Smailler, laughin'. "What a shrimp."

The doctor looked at it an' shook his head. "Clean as a whistle. And gentlemen, may I assure you, that notwithstanding its present condition, it is more than possible for Dunno here to pleasure a lady. I'm sure that when the time is ripe it will present arms like a proud soldier. Am I right?"

"Er... yeh."

"Put it away, Dunno," grinned Ginge. "Comedy time is over."

"I'll have yer know, it looks a lot more impressive in the right company," I said, defendin' meself.

"That's what all the penally challenged say," sez Ted. He unzipped his fly an' whipped out hiz own penis. It were like a horse with a hard-on. "Now, this is what I call a cock."

For fuck's sake. I can't wait to get back home.

## GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT

Wednesday, 5th November, 1980

I was relieved ter see Dan Robinson, the Lenin lookalike in the theatre this mornin', tinklin' on the ivories, an' no sign of Derek Wales.

"Hello, kiddies," said Dan, cheerily. "I'm afraid Derek can't be with us today. He's at a seminar in Huddersfield, so you'll have to make do with me. I thought we'd start with a few warm-ups. So everyone, get in a circle. That's it. Good."

We all stood round him in a circle.

"Now stretch up to the rafters."

"There aren't any rafters, sir," said Spud. "There's just a ceiling."

"Yes. Quite. Well, stretch up to the ceiling then. Go on...stretch. Up you go."

Feelin' like a right bunch o' twats we stretched up on tip toes.

"An' let go....fliberty-flopperty-flip all the way to the floor."

Dan Robinson, let himself unravel down to the floor. I glanced at Ginge, sighed an' did the same.

"Well done. Nice moves Dunno. You really are Mister Rubber."

After some vocal warm-ups Dan Robinson had us all singin' musical numbers around the piano fer the rest of the class. It were silly, but a lot more pleasant than gettin' insulted by Derek Wales.

After class, Puzzler collared me on me way to the refectory.

"Revenge is in the air, my fine friend," he said.

"Eh?"

"Doesn't it just burn you up, knowing Derek Wales torched your flat and you can't do anything about it?"

I shrugged. "Aye a s'pose so. Burra can't prove it woh him, can a?"

"Who needs proof when you've got guts?" he sez with a snort. "You know what tonight is?"

"Bonfire night. I think a've had enough o' bonfires."

"Oh, Dunno. Where's your spirit? Tonight we honour the spirit of the gunpowder plot and we strike a blow against tyranny."

"Eh? What yer on about?"

"We blow up Derek Wales."

Oh fuck. Puzzler's really lost it this time.

"Yer off yer fuckin' tree, Puzz. Thez no way am gonna go down fer fuckin' terrorism. Am not even Irish."

"Neither was Guy Fawkes," said Puzzler. "He was a Yorkshireman."

"Aye. He also got hissen caught, tortured an' killed, which is jus' what Derek'll do ter us if he catches us."

Puzzler sniffed. "I never thought of you as a chicken. Ginge is up for it. So's Spud. Even Sly thinks it'll be a good idea."

"Eh? Yer all fuckin' mad."

"Meet us at Ginge's pad tonight at ten. The one in Headingley. Not Claremont House."

"Fuckin' hell. Me an' Sly are supposed ter be movin' back home tonight. A've had enough o' Ginge ter last me a lifetime. Did yer know he made me get me knob checked out by a doctor?"

"Good for him," sez Puzzler. "A true revolutionary hasn't got time for cock rot."

"Am not a revolutionary. Look am not havin' owt ter do wi' this."

"It'll be a laugh," sez Puzzler, lookin' at me as if I were the unreasonable one.

"Come on. Don't you care about what happened ter Friga? An' all the others?"

I sighed. "Aright. I'll be there, burram warnin' yer, am not blowin' Derek up. It's not on."

"Suit yerself. Spoilspout; Subject whose conduct spoils the plans or pleasure of others...see yer later."

That afternoon, me an' Sly moved back into the old flat, but it were like movin' into a brand spankin' new pad. The opulence weren't as grand as Claremont House but it were still pretty plush. Ginge had even got us a new telly an' stereo too, as well as a sunken bath. Most important though, it no longer smelt a rotting swedes. It almost took me mind off Puzzler an' his crazy modern day gunpowder plot. I tried discussin' it with Sly but he jus' took it in his stride.

"So he wants to blow up Doctor Doom? Hey, who are we to stop him? Go for it? It'll be a blast.....Hey...Ha Ha! D'yer see what I did there?"

"Yer a silly cunt Sly," I sighed. "An' whilst we're on the subject" I added, not really on the subject at all, "Please dote come anywhere near this place with any vegetables."

"Present company accepted Chubbelinno?"

"Yer a cheeky cunt as well."

On the way to Headingley, the sky were lit up by rockets an' fireworks. Normally I'd be enjoyin' the atmosphere, but when two little kids threw a banger at me an' Sly I almost

jumped out of me skin.

"Oi!" I yelled. "Fireworks aren't toys. Yer could do someone an injury."

"Loosen up, big boy?" sez Sly. "You were young once, weren't you?"

"Aye a was, until you moved in. One of us has ter act like a grown-up."

When we got to Ginge's pad, I were surprised to see Sea Breeze an' Pauline there, as well as Ted Smailler an' the rest of the gang. They were all in the kitchen, helpin' emselves ter popcorn, parkin an' toffee apples. I took Puzzler to one side.

"Yer even madder than a thought," I whispered. "What's Breezey doin' here? She'll jus' go an' tell Wales everything. We're fucked."

Puzzler grinned. "That's the idea, my big brave plotter. Come on, I've got something to show you." Then he turned ter our host. "Ginge, are we ready?"

"Sure are, Justin," sez Ginge, all red in the face from chuggin' too much red wine. I've always thought red wine were a puff's drink, meself, an' seein' him, Spud, Ted Smailler an' Garvey knockin' it back did little to change my opinion.

"Then let the show commence!" cries Puzzler. "Outside everyone!"

We followed him out the back door an' into the garden.

"Fuckin' hell! That's the dog's gonads that is," cried Spud.

He were lookin' at a massive bonfire made out of old branches, broken furniture an' other bits of crap. Perched on top of the bonfire was a Guy, but it was a Guy unlike any other. It was wearin' cowboy boots, denims an' the papier mache head had wispy hair, an' a little goatee beard. It was the spittin' image of Derek Wales.

"Who made that?" I asked. "It's awesome."

Puzzler gave a little bow. "Mea culpa." He whispered to me, "I picked up the

boots an' clothes the other night at Derek's. I wonder if he's missed them."

Ginge stepped forward with a flaming branch an' set light to the bonfire.

"Step back gang," sez Ginge. "We've got a little surprise in store for Derek."

We backed away as Wale's chest was blown apart by the bangers hidden inside him. Then the top of his head lifted off as a rocket flew up into the sky.

"Death ter tyrants!" laughed Puzzler.

Everyone raised a glass an' repeated the toast. Everyone that is, except Sea Breeze who were lookin' a bit subdued.

"I told yer it was a bad idea bringin' her here," I said to Puzzler. "She'll tell him everything."

Puzzler grinned as another rocket raced up out of the bonfire. "Yup. It's psychological warfare my friend. If he knows we're taking the piss out of him, it diminishes his power. Makes him weaker. More uncertain of himself. He'll be crackin' up before you know it. Never underestimate the power of humour. Come on, let's have some fun with Breezey."

"Hi Breezey," I said.

She gave me a smile. "This is crazy. Poor Derek. He's not that bad."

"Just a bit of fun," said Puzzler. "How is Derek anyway?"

A frown crossed her face, She gave us a look that seemed to say 'I wonder how much they know?' an' her lower lip began ter wobble. "Ter tell yer the truth, lads, a think he might be crackin' up."

"How d'yer mean?" I asked.

Puzzler loaded her glass with mulled wine.

"Well, yer know someone nicked hiz car last week?"

"Oh yeh, I remember you saying," said Puzzler, all innocence. "Terrible."

"Well I don't think it wov nicked at all," she continued.

"Eh, How d'yer mean?" I asked.

"Well, yesterday, the cops told him they'd found the car. He went round so he could identify it, an' the thief shows up, calm as you like with all the correct paperwork, log book an' everything. Sez he bought it all legal like fer two hundred quid. When Derek asked him who he bought it off, the feller looks at Derek like he's a nutter. He sez 'I bought it off you. Or someone who looks jus' like you. He had the same stupid cowboy boots an' silly medallion an' baldy head an' stupid beard.' The cops made Derek pay the feller two hundred quid before he could get his car back. Gev him a bollockin' as well fer wasting their time."

"Poor ol' Derek," sez Puzzler, a faint smile on hiz lips. "Sounds like classic paranoid schizophrenia to me. They say that's what the Ripper is you know? Anyway, Breezey, how do you know all this? Are you his bird or something?"

"God no! Yer jokin' aren't yer? No, no. Ted was late fer a rehearsal an' he just started tellin' me all this fer some reason..."

We walked away, an a noticed Puzzler's shoulders shakin'. When no one were lookin' he pulled out a wispy fake beard an' balding wig from his jacket pocket.

"Am I a genius or what?" he sez with a grin, throwing them on the bonfire. "The rest of the evidence is going up in smoke as we speak. " He pointed at the bonfire. "All Derek's clothes. I thought they'd come in handy."

"You mad fucker," I said with just a hint of admiration. "Let's have a drink."

I went on to get totally hammered. Puzzler might be a lunatic, but I was glad he was on my side, and I was also glad to find out that 'blowin' up Derek Wales' was just a bonfire

party, an' not a real murder plot.

"You know what I'm gonna do now?" sez Puzzler.

"What?" I asked, nervously.

"I'm gonna seduce Derek's number one girl." He sauntered back over to Breezey.

"Hey, Celia! You look absolutely gorgeous tonight. Do you mind if I just sit and bask in your beauty?"

She went red with pleasure. "Come on, yer cheeky monkey. Let's have a dance."

Before I knew it the two of them were snoggin' away, dancin' to Ted Smailler's Rod Stewart collection as fireworks lit up the sky.

"You ready fer home, Sly?" I asked.

Sly were in the process of rollin' up a biggy for him an' Garvey. "Okay, Il Duce. Just settin' one up for the road?"

## ALONE AGAIN, NATURALLY

Thursday, November 6th, 1980

As soon as I got to college, I headed straight for the refectory for a well-earned bacon butty...well, three well-earned bacon butties actually, an' a big mug of tea. In comes Spud, pouting like he was blowing a big kiss to somebody in the distance and walkin' in a really weird manner, like he had summat jammed up his arse an' he were tryin' to squeeze it out without anyone noticin'.

"Aright mate, what's up with you?"

"Nothing...why?"

"Well yer walkin' all funny."

"God you're a Philistine, Dunno. Don't you know anything? I am perfecting my supermodel walk. D'yer know that 90% of acting jobs are decided the moment you enter the door and walk over to the desk. Your gait is everything."

"Right well, yer 'gait' needs fixin' then, coz all yer gonna do is corner the market in adverts fer 'Preparation H' .Yer walkin' like yer've got an arse fulla really bad piles."

"Bollocks! What do you know?" He looked at me butties. "Are one of those for me?"

"Fuck off!" I said firmly, to avoid any misunderstanding.

"Suit yourself, fatso. Anyway, take a look at these."

He delved into his bag, extracting today's newspapers and a pile of application forms.

"What are those?" I asked.

"Those my dear friend are the next steps to my superstardom. They're application forms to London Drama Schools."

"London?"

"That's right, my friend. If you want to take this business seriously then London is the place to be. It's the Rome of the 20th Century. A three year drama course is a smart move. I've been reading through the prospectus. You spend the first two years learning all about breathing right, singing, dancing, moving, producing shows 'in-house' only. Then in year three you just do shows and plays that the public and all the best agents in town come to. So when you finish you are the complete actor, fully trained and armed with a top London agent."

"But London's fulla silly cunts that talk funny. Why would yer wanna go there? It's a shit 'ole!"

"Have you been to London then, Dunno?"

"Well, No, not really. So what are they called these drama schools?"

"Have you heard of R.A.D.A.?"

I shook me head.

"The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Anybody who is anybody went there. Blimey, how do you expect to be an actor when you haven't heard of R.A.D.A? Did you think the magic actor fairy came and sprinkled star dust on you and you became an instant star?"

"I've heard of RADA," said Ginge, who had joined us at the table and overheard the last bit. He was immediately alert and sniffing around with great interest. "Please go on Spud," he entreated.

"Well, along with RADA, there is the Bristol Old Vic, Central, LAMDA and Guildhall, Basically you don't need any qualifications to enroll, you have to learn some speeches and go down and audition. If they like the cut of your gib then you get a recall and spend a weekend pissin' about doin' speeches and singin' and larkin' about an' that.

I'm fillin' in the application forms now. Hopefully, a year from now and I'll be down in London enjoyin' a whole new exciting life. So long Suckers!!"

"That sounds great," agreed Ginge. "London is definitely the place ter be I reckon. A could make some serious money down there. Here, let me copy summa those addresses down. I'll 'ave summa that! What d'yer reckon Dunno? Dunno?"

I hadn't listened to the last few minutes of the conversation because me attention'd been caught by an article in Spud's paper.

*"Police were saying today that they were not ruling out the possibility that an attack on a teenage girl last night was at the hands of the Yorkshire Ripper. Police are not naming the girl, believed to be a teenager as she was assaulted walking home from her grandmother's house in Huddesfield, West Yorkshire...."*

I turned to the others. "Where did Dan Robinson say Derek was yesterday?"

"At a drama seminar or summat, in Huddesfield," said Ginge. "Why?"

"That's why," I said throwing the paper over to Ginge an Spud. "More than a coincidence wun't yer say?"

"Crikey, Do you think Puzzler's antics have really started ter get to him and tipped him over the edge?" said Spud.

"Spud, yer doylem, the Yorkshire Ripper's been killin' women fer years...A dote think Puzzler pissin' about in the last two weeks will have changed anything."

"Yeah well, we seem ter be going round in circles here and it's gettin' borin" said Ginge sanctimoniously. "We think he's the Ripper but we're not doin' owt about it which is all fine an dandy til you realise that some poor girl got attacked and almost killed. Instead of acting like silly cunts, creepin' around his 'ouse smeared in boot polish we should be takin' a more positive action an' go to the police, in person."

"It weren't me smeared in boot polish an' it weren't my idea ter creep round his

'ouse," I said, defensively. "I'm not exactly gonna be welcomed at the police station after my Grand Theatre shenanigans, ter say nowt about me past history."

Ginge sighed, "No it's like anything with you innit, Dunno? If yer want a job doin' well then do it yer fuckin' self. I'll go to the police, but first we have a lecture to attend...with the man himself."

If Derek Wales was the Ripper, or if indeed he was beginning to suffer at the hands of Puzzler's campaign of terror, then he certainly wasn't givin' anything away, though it's fair to say he was subdued and got through this mornin's lecture on Edward Gordon Craig with the minimum of fuss and insults. Afterwards, Ginge headed back to Claremont house to change into smart clothes, reasoning that the police will take someone dressed smart and looking successful a lot more serious than someone dressed....."Well, like you Dunno, No offence, like..."

Meanwhile, I'd had enough out of the day, an' I must say the idea of goin' back to the newly refurbished Dunno HQ for a smoke with Sly really appealed. I wasn't needed at Pattons tonight so I hoped to get well wrecked.

On the way home, I were thinking about Spud an' Ginge and their ambitions for the future. They were way ahead of me. I really hadn't given any thought about what comes next. I hadn't got beyond doing O and A Level theatre studies at Royal Park and doin' the odd play. London and Drama School? What were the alternatives? Trying to forge a career as an actor in Leeds? How would you go about doin' that? I reacted with horror to the idea of goin' to london....Why is that? After all, where better to start a brand new life than in the big smoke itself? I'll see what Sly has to say, I thought as I turned the key in the door of Dunno HQ.

I knew summat were up straight away. The place was silent. No weird music, or sounds of shagging or any other acts of extreme weirdness associated with Sly, just a handwritten note on the new chrome and glass coffee table;

*"Mum gravely ill. Had to go home. See you whenever. Don't cry for me, Argentina...Sly."*

I sat down in silence with a mug of tea an' attempted to smoke a spliff, the first one I'd ever made, when me Mam came bustlin' in an' caught me red-handed.

"Is that what a think it is?" she asked.

"Aye it is."

"Fuckin' smart! Pass it over then, let's have a bang on it."

"Mam, what the fuck?"

"Dote be a prissy knickers. There's a lot about yer old Mam you know fuck all about, a nice bit o 'how's yer father' never hurt anybody." She took a deep drag.

I handed her Sly's note.

"Oh the poor little mite," she said, her eyes goin' all watery. "Where does his mum live then, somewhere here in Leeds?"

"That's just it Mam, I've no idea. I know fuck all about him. He never ever spoke about 'is mum."

Mam sighed, and lookin' around said, "Well 'ave got ter hand it ter that Jonny Maccaroni. A din't think this place could ever look so lovely."

We smoked the joint.

At last, mam stood up an' stretched. "Well we cart sit here like a coupla maudlin cunts, 'ave a business ter run. Oh and if yer gonna sit here smokin' joints all day, at least

have the decency ter roll 'em properly." She took one last drag and went back down to the shop. Halfway down the stairs I heard her say; "Oh hello Jonny love, yes he's upstairs in the livin' room smokin' joints. The fat lazy cunt."

Charming.

"Hello big boy!" said Ginge, entering the room. "Having a well earned rest, old chap? You must be exhausted."

"From what?" I asked.

"Exactement, yer fat lazy get! What are you doin' sat on yer arse in the middle of the day?"

"Trying ter enjoy a bit of peace and quiet, not that it's got owt ter do wi' you.....Mek yersen useful an put the kettle on then, Ginge..."

"Yes, Master!"

"And read this whilst yer at it," a said passin' him Sly's note.

I heard him whistle in the kitchen, and a few moments later he came back in.

"Where does his mum live, here in Leeds?"

"No idea. A woh tellin' Mam, a know fuck all about him."

"Blimey, there's gonna be a few broken hearted pensioners. Sly was invaluable to the 'organisation'. I dote know anybody else so willin' an' happy ter shag old ladies."

"What about Spud, Ted and Garvey?"

"Yer jokin' aren't you? They're a right set of discerning bastards. Spud would only be truly happy shaggin' himself, but will lend himself to the ladies as long as they are pleasing to the eye. Claremont House attracts a more upmarket, attractive clientele, some are a tad elderly, but all are attractive and sophisticated. I'm gonna really miss Sly. He was more than happy ter mop up the 'arse end of the market."

"Yer make it sound so romantic, Ginge."

"You should concentrate on being a bit less sniffy and start thinking about how yer gonna cover the rent."

"Eh?!"

"Dote worry mate, I ain't gonna turn into Rackman or owt, however you may have ter find a flatmate til Sly gets back. Or turn yer hand ter shaggin' old biddies of course..."

"Fuck me , yer all heart Ginge. Anyway what are you doin' here?"

"Oh yes...The Police! Well, I've just had a very interesting chat with D.C. Sweet. The police are well aware of Derek Wales. Do you know they have already interviewed him about the Ripper murders?"

I shook me head.

"Yes, as you know, the fucker looks like the photofit, and his car has been logged in Chapeltown loads of times. Problem is they think their man is a Geordie on account of the letters and tape. I told him that Derek was in Huddesfield at the same time of the last attack. He was very interested in that. Told me they would definitely look into it."

"In the meantime I guess Puzzler continues to wind him up until he gives something away..."

"Yes," agreed Ginge. "He's an odd little fellow. I'm glad I'm not on the wrong side of him. He's as tenacious as a terrier... Or you in a fight over the last bacon butty. However, if anyone can make that Wales crack, it'll be Puzzler."

"So are you interested in doing that London drama school thing as well?" I asked, jus' to make conversation.

"You bet, Dunno! I can't wait. Am gonna send off the applications tonight."

"But do yer really wanna go ter London?"

"God, yes! As opposed ter what? Getting work as an actor up here? Everything is in London, the auditions, the theatres, the whole lot. You heard Dick Whittington, Dunno. The streets are paved wi' Gold. I cannot wait...."

I wish I shared his enthusiasm...

As soon as Ginge were gone I popped Sly's favourite African Mass on the stereo, got me kit off an' lay prostrate on the sofa, in honour of me missing amigo.

## LONDON CALLIN'

Friday, November 7th, 1980

The place isn't the same without Sly. It's funny not knowing nowt. I've no idea where he is or when, if ever, he'll be back. There's a bit of me likes the peace an' quiet an' all that, but the thing about Sly was he just took everything in his stride an' didn't judge anybody...like a kid. An' like a kid he didn't pay for fuck all an' didn't do any work if he could get away with it. He only ever made me a mug of tea when he wanted summat, and he were an exasperating little get but I miss the fucker. The phone started ringin'.

"Hello?"

"Hey Dunno?" It was Ginge.

"What?"

"London calling to the faraway towns,

Now that war is declared and battle come down.

London calling to the underworld

Come out of the cupboard, all you boys and girls

London calling, now don't look to us,

Phoney Beatlemania has bitten the dust,

London calling, see we ain't got no swing

Except for the ring of that truncheon thing.

The ice age is coming, the sun's of an end,

Meltdown expected the wheat is growing thin,

Engines stop running but I have no fear,

Coz London is drownin' I...live by the river."

There were a pause while I tried to make head or tail of this enigmatic message. I gave up. "Eh? What yer on about, yer silly cunt?"

"Oh sorry, old boy, completely forgot your musical culture doesn't extend beyond Elvis Aaron Presley. London, Dunno. The time has come to banish those fears and face up to your insecurities about our fair capital. So my good self and Mr. Spud O'Hagan will drive over after Pattons and pick you up."

I could hear some excited jabberin' in the background.

"Put me on. Put me on." It were Spud's voice.

"Just a minute," sez Ginge to Spud.

"Gimme the phone," pleads Spud in the background. Then there's the sound of wrestlin', an' after a minute, Spud, breathin' harshly down the phone, gaspin' an' puttin' on hiz ultra strong Belfast accent. "Hello, Kevin?" he zez.

"Eh? Who's Kevin?" I ask.

He carries on regardless. "I know I'm too old for you. I know it. But Jasper tells me, that you told him, that I treat you worse than a dog."

"Eh?"

"Jasper tells me that you told him that I treat you worse than a dog. A dog, Kevin."

"I dote know what yer..."

"Here's what you do...set your wee alarm fer two o'clock an' I'll be round...I'm just havin' a wee drink now."

"Oh...right," a sez, figurin' it's best ter play along with him. I could hear Ginge roarin' with laughter in the background.

"D'yer want to know what I'm drinking?" he asks.

I couldn't have cared less. "Go on then."

"Rum...an' Coca Cola. Listen..." There's a clinkin' sound in me ear. "That was the ice. Slooshin' about in my glass. Did you hear it?"

"Mmm."

"I'll do it again. Here..." Sloosh...clink...sloosh.

"Smart."

"Right then, Kevin...you set your mind at rest. We'll be along later... tell Sly he can come too."

"Sly's not here, he's gone."

"Gone where?" the cod accent were gone now.

"No idea, 'iz mum's gravely ill, he's gone back 'ome."

"Where's home? Here in Leeds?"

"Tchh! How the fuck should I know?"

"Dunno... mate, maybe because he's been your flat mate for ages, you might've found out..."

"Well a dint, anyway won't it be a bit late ter go ter London, I wote be finished til around half eleven."

"So what? Do you turn into a pumpkin at twelve? Well I wouldn't worry about that, you're only a couple of ounces off being the size of one anyway. So, Ginge says to get a clean pair of undies on an' be ready. Garveys given' me a little somethin' ter keep us all awake. It'll be a capital adventure..." He rang off.

I'm startin' ter get well fucked off with all these fat jibes. There's a big difference between having a good appetite an' being greedy, and I know which one I am. Anyway looks like there's nowt for it. I'm gonna see London whether I like it or not, the prospect of which sort of excited me.

At a quarter past midnight, I'd jus' got home from me shift an' had a good scrub when Ginge an' Spud pulled up outside in a swanky new motor, the music blaring out. I went down to meet 'em but Ginge stopped me before I got in the car.

"Nah mate let's go in yours ferra sec, a've got summat fer yer."

We went inside an' he got out a little sachet an' tipped some powder onto the glass coffee table, an' then started choppin at it wi' a banker's card, until he had three straight lines. Rollin' up a ten pound note he said, "Stick a bit o' this up yer conk, it'll keep us goin' until London..."

Whatever it was, I didn't like it. It made me sneeze an' the other lines went flyin' off across the room in a cloud of dust an' snot.

"Bloody typical o' you, Dunno," sez Spud. "You're a walkin' disaster area."

"Well, it won't my fault," a sez. "Who the fuck sniffs snuff these days anyway? It's jus' fer ol' idiots in Dicken's dramas on the telly."

"Come on," sighs Ginge. "No use cryin' over spilt blow. Let's hit the road."

We piled into the motor and we were off. Next stop, London Town.

## THE STREETS ARE PAVED WITH STONE

Saturday, November 8th, 1980

Travellin' wi' Spud an' Ginge isn't my idea of fun. Spud were in the front seat, the lanky fucker an' he had the seat pushed way back so I were cramped up in the back, as they played a load o' pretentious twaddle on Ginge's posh cassette recorder.

"What's this shite?" I asked, shoutin' to make mesen heard.

"Get with it, Dunno. It's only the hottest band ever," sez Spud.

"Yeh," sneers Ginge. "Welcome to the eighties, dough boy. U2 rock."

"You Two Rock? What kind o' name is that?"

"It's just U2, Dumbo," sez Spud. "Yer write it like the letter U fer umbrella an' the number two. They're an Irish sensation."

"Aye well, they remind me of a number two," I said, chucklin' at me own joke, coz someone had to. "Let 'em 'ave their two minutes o' fame an' then they can fuck off back ter Ireland an everyone'll be 'appy."

"Bollocks," sez Spud. "These boys are the best thing to come out of Ireland since Thin Lizzy."

"Aye, well, Exactly. A rest my case."

We lapsed into silence for a bit, an' I would've nodded off in the back only I were a bit wary of Spud, playin' some stupid trick on me. At last, we pulled into Leicester Forest, which to my annoyance weren't a forest but a fuckin' rest stop without so much as a tree in sight. Yer'd think people'd name things properly wouldn't yer. If I had my way I'd just call it Leicester Rest Stop. It isn't as pretty but at least yo know what you're gettin'.

After a piss an' a coffee, I made sure I got in the front this time.

"Go on, Spud. A've gorra bad back."

"I'd say it was due to all the fuckin'," sez Spud. "But yer can't find anyone ter fuck yer, so it's probably down to over enthusiastic wanking."

I let it pass. "Jus' gerrin the fuckin' car."

We arrived on the outskirts of London at about half three, knackered an' overheated coz Ginge insisted on givin' us the benefit o' his car's "Ace new heatin' system."

"So this is London, eh?" I said, as we cruised down the darkened streets. "A've shat better."

"This is just the outskirts," snaps Ginge. "It's the cockney's equivalent o' Halton Moor so what d'yer expect?"

"Don't you go knockin' Halton Moor, Ginge," I said. "It's got more ter offer than this shit 'ole"

"But you're from Halton Moor, Dunno."

"Exactly."

"So what the fuck are you on about?"

"Dote play the smart arse, Ginge," I said startin' to get well riled.

"Hey, hey...we're the Monkees!" interjected Spud, changing the subject, "Let's find a club an' pick up some hot totty on' todd,"

"Good idea," sez Ginge, followin' the signs for Central London.

At last we came to Trafalgar Square. There weren't a soul in sight.

"The Queen lives down there," sez Ginge, pointin' through some big archway in

the road.

"Ace," I sez, "why dote we call round, see if she can recommend a good club?"

Just then Ginge saw a guy in overalls sweepin' up rubbish. He swung the car over an' rolled down the window.

"Oi, Jack! Where's t' nearest club?"

The feller looks at us like we're from Mars. Then he looks at his watch. "Bit late for a club, mate. They shut down hours ago. You might get a cuppa in Soho if your luck's in."

"Where's that then?" asks Ginge.

The guy gave us directions, an' we set off again.

"Who was that then?" asked Spud.

"Eh?" asks Ginge. "Who was who?"

"That feller, cleanin' the street."

"He was a fuckin' street cleaner. Why?"

"How did yer know his name was Jack?"

Me an' Ginge collapsed in giggles. It were nice not to be the butt of the jokes for once.

"It's a Yorkshire expression," I explained. "You're Jack. I'm Jack. Everyone's Jack."

"Bit unimaginative if you ask me," sniffs Spud. He's always got to get the last word.

We drove around in circles for a bit an' came to Tottenham Court Road Tube Station.

"Hey," a said. "Weren't this where Gordon Rhine sez all the prozzies hang out? You'll feel well at home here, Spud."

"Fuck off. What does Gordon Rhine know? If thez any prozzies here they're all

in fuckin' hiding."

It was true. Apart from a couple of hopeful taxis, the road was empty. We pulled up down a side road an' got out to stretch our legs. I've got to say this wasn't what I expected London to be like. I really thought that it would be buzzin' with funky people an' really fit birds, an' everything open 24 hours. At this time in the morning, I realised London were just like any other city...fast a fuckin' sleep...

"Let's have a stroll," I suggested.

I didn't mind the fact that it were rainin'. It gave us a chance to cool off after the furnace in Ginge's car. After a bit we came to a few places advertisin' GIRLS NAKED GIRLS in the windows, but they were all closed. Then we came to an all-night caff.

"Thank fuck fer that. Finally, Aladdin's fuckin' cave," I said.

We went in an' I ordered three cups of tea.

"I'll have a coffee if you don't mind, Dunno," sez Ginge. Then he starts chattin' away in Italian to the waitress, a pretty little strumpet. She beams at him like he's Ghandi or one of them other Italian lovers, an' brings him a massive mug full of coffee an' sprinkled with chocolate.

I looked disconsolately at me mug of grey tea. "Fuck. I want what you're havin'."

Ginge sighed. "You big fuckin' baby. You always want what someone else's got. You're never satisfied with what you have."

"Well, look at it," I said. "Who'd be satisfied wi' that? It looks like shi did the washin' up in it before shi handed it over ter me."

Ginge sighs again an' goes over to the girl.

"Get me one while you're at it," sez, Spud. "I can't drink this piss."

Ginge blethers away an' I can see them lookin' at us an' gigglin'. Eventually she comes

over with two mugs of coffee. It were delicious an' not at all like the stuff me Mam gives us.

"This in't coffee," I sez.

"It's proper coffee," sez the ginger know-all. "Cappuccino, my friend. Welcome to the world."

"It was worth the trip for this alone," sez Spud.

"It definitely was for me," sez Ginge, flashin' us a little wink. "Listen, Francesca finishes in ten minutes. I'm gonna see her home. I'll pick you guys up at lunchtime?"

"Eh?" I said. "But we've been here now. A wanna go home."

"We'll be alright, Jonny," sez Spud. "You take your time. We'll meet you in Trafalgar Square at one o' clock."

I looked at me watch. Eight an' a half hours to kill, an' I were knackered already.

"Fair enough," I sighed. "Get us another coffee then ter keep us goin'. An' a bacon butty, assuming of course they've heard of 'em in this fuckin' 'world' o' yours."

"So what'll we do now?" I asked Spud once Ginge had gone off with Francesca an' left us out on the grubby street, still with hours to kill before the dawn of a new day. Spud shrugged an' stared at hissen in a shop window. He pursed his lips an' then got out an eyeliner pencil an' started touchin' up his makeup.

"Fer fuck's sake, don't do that in public. People'll think we're a pair o' pansies."

Spud gave us a half-hearted smile. "Dunno, we're in London. Anything goes here. Capital o' the free world, my man. Hey, let's go check out RADA."

"Eh? The drama school? Why? It'll be shut."

"Just to have a look. It's gonna be my home for the next three years. I'd like to check out the lay of the land."

"Well, where the fuck is it then?"

Spud pulls a brand new A-Z street map of London out of the pocket of his big black coat. "Gower Street. Come on, it's up here."

We walked for what seemed like hours in the icy drizzle.

"A thought yer knew where we were goin'."

"It's this mapbook. It's fucked."

Spud sees a dosser sprawled in a doorway, an' goes over to him.

"Hey, Jack! How's it goin'? Yer lookin' good, man."

The dosser opens a bleary eye. "Fuck off."

"In a minute, mate. Don't you recognise me? It's me. Mark. Mark O'Hagan.

Remember?"

The guy frowns. "Oh...yeh... hi. Could you spare a few bob?"

Spud looks at me. "Give him some money, Dunno."

"Eh? Why me? He's your mate."

"He needs it more than you, yer selfish bastard."

I gave him 50p.

"So, Jack, d'yer know where RADA is?"

The guy jus' looks at us.

"How about Gower Street?"

"Oh, yeh. It's down there." He points back the way we'd already come.

"Thanks pal. Take care now."

An' off we went.

"So when did yer meet him then?" I asked.

Spud laughed. "I never. I just figured he'd be more talkative if he thought we

were pals."

We found Gower Street at last and there was RADA. We'd already walked past it .It weren't much to look at.

"Rubbish," I said. "Our college looks tons better."

Spud looked disappointed. "All that glisters is not gold," he sez. "Who gilds a lily?"

"Eh? What yer on about?"

"I'm just sayin', the place dun't have ter look great. It's the power inside it that's important. It's the place ter be. I'm gonna be a star, man." He holds out his arms an' looks up into the pissy heavens. "Thez a starman, waiting in the sky," he sings, bellowing away like a twat.

"So you're serious then? About movin' down here?"

"Yup. You should do it too, if you ever want to amount to anything more than just being a professional fat cunt."

"I'm not fat."

Spud looks at me. "Maybe not... yet. But you need to get in shape. There's a great cabbage diet I've been following. You lose stones."

"Am happy with how I am."

Spud puts his hand on me shoulder. "I'm saying it for your own good. It's a medical fact that people with big bellies get stomach cancer more often than people who are lovely an' slim like me."

"Aye well, it's swings an' roundabouts innit?"

"How d'yer mean?"

"You may not get stomach cancer, but you're much more likely ter get a smack

in the face fer bein' a cheeky cunt."

"A week of cabbage'll soon get rid of all that aggression," he sez, raisin' his leg an' lettin' rip with a long dribbly fart. "Ooooh. Get out an' walk."

A blast of a siren an' some flashin' red an' blue lights made us jump. We turned round an' saw the cop car pulled up behind us. One of the coppers got out an' came over.

"Bit late to be out an' about isn't it, kiddies?" he sez, grim-lipped as Batman.

"Well, we ant got anywhere else ter go," I said.

"Homeless, eh?"

"No."

The cop gets his notebook out. "Names an' addresses."

We give 'em out

"Long way from home aren't you?" he sez.

"We just wanted to come an' see our fine capital city. Our driver's off shaggin' a waitress," sez Spud.

"On the game, is she?" sez the cop.

"Don't think so," sez Spud. "She's just a waitress."

"And you didn't fancy her?" sez the cop.

"She was alright, but Ginge got there first."

He then took down Ginge's name an' address.

"Look, officer, we ain't doin' owt wrong," I said.

He turns to me. "I'll be the judge of that, fatty. Hangin' about at five in the morning. I'd say you're up to no good. Give me one good reason why I shouldn't take you in."

I looked at Spud an' he looked at me.

"Coz we're tourists," sez Spud. "You wouldn't want us going away telling everyone that London's just some fascist hell-hole where you get arrested for walkin' down the road, do you?"

Fer fuck's sake. Ain't the Irish cunt ever heard of tact?

"That's an Irish accent, isn't it?" sez the cop.

"Yeh."

"So why did you say you came from Leeds?"

"I didn't. I said I live in Leeds."

"Sure you're not planting any bombs?"

"Pretty sure, yeh."

"I'm going to have to search you. Step up against the car, please."

He then went through our pockets. But he didn't find owt funny.

At last he stepped away. "Go on then, I'm in a good mood so I'm letting you go with a caution. Keep your noses clean and make sure you don't miss your lift home."

What a place.

"Well if this is London, yer can keep it. Thez no way am gonna come an' live here," I sighed. "The cops are even worse than the ones at home."

"It'll be different when we live here," sez Spud with more confidence than than the situation warranted. "I mean, for a start, if we lived here we'd never see a lazy cunt like you walkin' about, wide awake at this time. Would we?"

"Aye, a suppose," I conceded.

We fucked off towards Piccadilly Circus an' found a caff just openin' for the mornin'.

"Breakfast," I said, cheerin' up. "I'm gonna have bacon an' eggs. A suppose

you'll have a plate o' cabbage."

Surprise, surprise, we both went for the fry up.

"I'll just starve myself for the next couple o' days," said Spud, justifyin' his momentary act of dietary weakness.

We spent the rest of the mornin' fuckin' about watchin' the ducks in one of them big parks an' checkin' out Buckingham Palace.

"Don't think much of it mesen," I said. "If I woh king, a'd want a proper castle."

"Aye well, she's got one o those down the road in Windsor," said Spud.

"Well this is right borin' lookin'. An' I'd make me soldiers wear decent uniforms, not them silly hats. They look like walkin' microphones. Can you imagine havin a scrap somewhere in t' middle a fuckin' nowhere an' watchin those silly knob 'eads comin' over t' horizon? Yer wunt stand a chance coz yer'd be too busy pissin' yersen laughin'."

At last, after what seemed like hours it came to the appointed hour we'd arranged to meet Ginge. I were cold, wet, tired, bored and me feet ached from jus' walkin' around with no aim or reason. If I never saw Spud ever again it'd be too soon.

No Ginge.

Two hours passed.

No Ginge.

By the time Ginge picked us up I were so fucked off I couldn't speak. I was dead on me feet. Home'd never seemed so inviting.

"Hop in lads," sez Ginge. "Sorry I'm a touch on the tardy side. I've had a brilliant time. That Francesca is something else! I mean, there's pussy and there's Italian pussy. Once you've tasted Italian pussy you'll never settle for anything less. I've just had a

beauty fuck, a lovely little snooze curled up against her lovely, tanned, shapely arse, then she got up an made me a right slap up Italian feast, another well dirty goodbye fuck an Ta Dah! Here I am! Don't you just love this fuckin' city? I cart wait ter move down here...Am I in Love? Ahhah, A must be in love!" He looked at our well miserable faces. "Cheer up lads...Ave got yer both a Mars bar!"

He then went on an' on an' on, Francesca this, an' Francesca that, until both me an' Spud were fast asleep, dreamin' of home.

Fuckin' London. Tchhh!

## AN INVITATION FROM THE DEVIL HIMSELF

Friday, November 14th, 1980

I've been stuck in bed with a ragin' flu ever since we got back from London, all shivery an' sweaty an' fucked. I'm convinced if I hadn't been forced to tramp round that Southern shit hole for hour after hour, with that Irish knobhead posin' an' poutin' an' twitterin' on talkin' his shite for hours on end, then I would've been okay. I'm missin' Sly more 'n' ever. It's horrible bein' sick when you're on your todd. Not that he'd've been much use, I'm sure the sight of his danglin' bollocks is the last thing I needed.

Mam came to see me on Wednesday an' made up a great big pot of chicken soup, which is all I've eaten all week. Last night I started to feel better an' determined to head in to college today. When I got up I felt like a new man. If only there were food in the fridge I'd've cooked mesen up a massive scran. Ah well, the lasses at college cook up a pretty good breakfast.

I were lettin' mesen out when I saw the envelopes on the floor. I picked them up an' looked at 'em. One of them were from RADA, another from a place called Theatre Centre, an' one from some other place that were just initials. I opened them up. The letters are different, but they all give the same information:

*Thank you for your interest in.... we would like to invite you to audition for the academic year 1981/82 on ...*

Fuckin' Hell, I never applied to any of them. I pinched mesen to see if I were dreamin' one of them borin' realistic dreams. I wasn't. Me first audition's at RADA in two week's time. The others are a week after. Bollocks! Not just one other trip to London, but two. I looked at the letters again. They all want two speeches one classical an' one modern, an' advise me to have a third prepared too. Just what I need. I wonder who could've applied for me, or if the drama schools just had a list of people studyin' Drama at O an' A Level an' wrote to all of 'em on spec.

I got to Royal Park an' headed straight for the refectory. I were just stuffin' down some scrambled eggs an' tomatoes on toast when Spud, Ginge an' Puzzler came strollin' in. Spud were carryin' a book of Elizabethan plays.

"What yer readin' that shite for?" I ask him.

"I'm trying to pick a piece to learn for my auditions," sez Spud. "I'm due at RADA in a couple of weeks."

"Snap!" I sez. "Me too. A think they must be desperate fer new people an' they're sendin' invitations ter everyone."

"I didn't get one," sez Puzzler.

"Aright, ter anyone who's any good then," I say with a grin, to let him know I'm jokin'. I'm not really jokin' though. Puzzler's a good lad but he's shite, even if Derek Wales does say he's got promise. I mean, what does Wales know? He never sez owt nice about me.

"You silly cunt," sez Ginge. "It was me that sent off the applications for you. I knew yer'd never get round to it if I left you ter yer own devices. You owe me fifty quid by the way for audition fees."

"Eh?"

"They're not free, ass. Like everything in this life you have to pay for it. By the way, you're gonna have a new flatmate."

"Eh?"

I knew summat bad was gonna happen when that carrotty cockhead bought me flat. It were just a matter of time.

"I'm gonna move in this weekend," sez Spud. "I wanna get a taste of the independent lifestyle before I head off to London. Besides Young Al's drivin' me round the bend."

"Who the fuck's Young Al?" I ask.

"My kid brother. He's fourteen an' a right twat."

Ah well. I suppose it could be worse. Ginge could've got Ted Smailer movin' in. The bell rang. It was time for class.

"Ah, the Big Man's back then is he?" sez Derek Wales, doin' stretchin' exercises an' gyратin' his denim-packed crotch round an' round in circles. "Good. You're needed for rehearsals tonight for My Fair Lady."

"A din't know a woh in it?" I sez.

"I need you to be an extra in the Ascot scene. But I don't want you ruining things by singing, so just learn the words and mime."

An extra. In a college production. Fuckin' brilliant.

"Why the long face, Big Man?" sez Derek, stickin' his nose into me own personal space.

"I woh jus' hopin' fer a bigger part, that's all."

"Well, yeh, maybe if you weren't off sick all the time you'd have one. As it is, there's no such thing as a small part. Just small actors."

He went off on his lecture about Arthur Miller then. As we were about to pack up to leave, he clears his throat.

"Now, has anyone given anymore thought to Drama School?"

Ginge an' Spud put there hands up.

"Ah, Jonny. Good lad. We'll see about sorting out some pieces for you."

"What about me, sir?" sez Spud.

Derek snorts. "You should have saved your Dad's money and not bothered applying. Unless you're thinking of applying for clown school that is. Anyone else?"

I put me hand up, dreadin' the onslaught.

He looks at me. "Yeh. Well. God help us. Dunno, come here, big man."

I get up an' cross the stage.

"You too, Irish."

Spud gets up too.

"This college has a fine reputation," sez Derek. "I've never had a pupil fail to get into Drama School yet. I don't want you two clots spoiling that record."

"We'll do you proud," sez Spud.

"Shut up, clown. I'm talking. Now, I'm going to have to take extra pains with you two. Yeh, yeh, call me the patron saint of lost causes. I know. I'm, a martyr to my art. I want you both round my place on Monday evening. Ten o'clock. You're going to pass those auditions even if I have to kill you. I assume you both know where I live?"

Fuckin' Hell.

"Int that a bit late, sir?" a ask.

"What, aren't you allowed out after tea?" he sez with a sneer. "I've got some business earlier on at the University. I'll be back by ten." As a departin' shot he bangs

me head against Spud's. "There, hopefully that'll knock a bit of sense into the pair of you. Be here at six o' clock sharp for rehearsals. And that goes for all of you."

Puzzler an' Ginge were waitin' for us outside.

"You want us to come along with you on Monday?" sez, Puzzler. "It's one thing us goin' inter his house when he's not there, but it's another thing entirely goin' in there when he's expecting you. God knows what he'll be planning, but it won't be nice."

I shook me head. "Don't worry, Puzz. We'll be alright. Thez two of us. He won't try owt funny."

If only I was really sure of that.

## WAITING FOR SPUDDO

Saturday, November 15th 1980

Spud told me he'd be round at about half ten this mornin', to move in, so I got up early to have a bit of a Hoover an' tidy the place up a bit. When it got to two o'clock an' he still hadn't showed up I decided to head over to 'The Cheese' for a spot of lunch an' a pint.

Dorothy, the barmaid is one of them forty summat birds that would've really got Sly's juices flowin' if he'd been around. In fact, I reckon he must've had a sniff at her snatch in days gone by coz while I was orderin' me pint of Tets she starts askin' about him.

"So where's Glamour Boy then?"

"Who?"

"That lovely Sly. I haven't seen him all week."

"Hiz mam's not well. He's gone off ter look after her."

I swear she starts piping her eye. "The poor little lamb. I hope he's eatin' well up there. I hear they stuff 'emselves wi' horrible stuff like haggis an' stuff like that."

"Eh? D'yer know where hiz mam lives then?"

"Course a do, chuck. Shi runs an art gallery in Edinburgh. Sly was always goin' on about it. Dead proud of hiz Mam he was."

"Oh Right."

Fuck me, it jus' goes to show, yo think you know someone an' yet you don't really know the first thing about 'em. Whoever it was that once said 'if you really want to get to know the truth about someone, ask the barmaid in his local', certainly knew his onions.

After samplin' Dot's dumplin's an downin' a second pint for the road, I headed back to Dunno HQ to find an angry Spud sat on the doorstep with a couple of suitcases an' countless black bin bags beside him.

"Where the fuck have you been?" he growls.

"Havin' mi dinner," I said. "If yer'd show up when yer say yer will then there wunt be a problem. A woh up at the crack o' sparrow fart cleanin' up for yer."

"Well why isn't your Mum's shop open?" he grumbles. "She could've let me in."

"I an't gorra clue," I said. "A'm not her keeper. She opens t' shop when she feels like it these days."

I open up an' help him carry his bags upstairs. He takes a glum look around the livin' room.

"I thought you said you'd cleaned the place up? What are those dirty scuddy undies doin' in the corner?"

"Fer fuck's sake," I sighed. "They're Sly's. Thez no way a woh gonna touch them." It wasn't true, but Spud's lah-di-dah ways were gettin' right up me arse. To be honest, they were an old pair of underpants I'd been usin' as a duster an' I'd forgot to tidy 'em away after me cleanin' marathon. I'm only human.

Now part o' me was tryin' to make the best of the situation. It might be nice havin' a bit o' company. I mean, Sly were a royal pain in the arse but he were a good laugh an' he never got narked or fucked off with me an' it was nice to have someone to chill out with of a night, when he weren't busy fuckin' old dears. So, in order to make Spud feel at home, I'd called in sick at Pattons so I could help him settle in. While he were unpackin' I turned on the telly an' settled down to watch Doctor Who, Sly's favourite programme.

As soon as the theme music came on, Spud pops his head into the room.

"God Dunno, yer such a baby. Doctor Who's fer kids. Is there nothin' else on?"

"Ner, there int."

He came over an' sat down anyway. Watchin' the Doctor soon got me all sentimental for Sly. He'd be skinnin' up a fat one about now, if he hadn't already got one on the go.

"Gorrany doob?" I asked.

Spud sneered at me. "Dunno, let's get one thing straight, shall we? I've got nothing against smoking a bit of weed if it's on offer, but there's no way I'm going to finance anyone else's drug habits, so no, I haven't got any doob, and if I did, then I'd be keeping it for personal use only."

"I thought it was the Scottish that were supposed ter be tightwads, not the Irish," I said, settlin' down into a sulk.

"Yeah, well, that's the price you pay for believing in national stereotypes."

I swear Spud's been spendin' too much time with Ginge, the cocky get.

After Doctor Who was over Spud gets out his copy of Elizabethan playwrights an' starts mumblin' to himself.

"What yer doin'?" I asked.

"Trying to learn this fuckin' speech fer RADA."

Hmmm. He had a point. I had me own speeches to worry about. I got out the bumpf on the drama schools an' saw that Theatre Centre had sent a selection od classical speeches to choose from. They were all gobble-di-gook to me, but one caught me eye over the others. It were a speech by some feller called Robespierre, in a play called Danton's Death. It was pretty dry stuff but at least it sort of made sense.

"Hey, Spud, d'yer know owt about Robespierre?"

"Wasn't he that French cunt in the French Revolution?" he sez, all

knowledgeable.

"Aye," a sez, hazardin' a guess. "That's him. How should a go about playin' this. It's right borin' on paper." I tossed him the speech.

Spud gives it a cursory glance, then hands it back. "Try bringing it up to date. That always works."

"How d'yer mean?"

"Well, he's French, isn't he?"

"Yeh?"

"So do it as Inspector Clouseau. Play it for laughs. That way you'll stand out from the rest o' the crowd."

"Smart idea. Cheers, Spud."

That Spud might be a vain sod, an' totally up his own arse, but credit where it's due, he's a clever fucker. Who else would've thought of doin' Robespierre as Peter Sellers? As it happens me luck was in too, coz I do a wicked impression of Clouseau, Frank Spencer, Bruce Forsythe and Larry Grayson. If nothin' else, I'd have those fuckers at Theatre Centre wettin' 'emselves.

## IT'S TEN O'CLOCK BY THE EVENING CLOCK

Monday, November 17th, 1980

I were in the library lookin' through the plays section tryin' to get some more inspiration for some speeches. Thanks to Spud I now had one under me belt, but as I've never seen a play in me life, I were strugglin' for others. I had no choice but to go over to Derek's house as requested an' hope that he had found a few things for me. I really wasn't that bothered about RADA an' drama school to be honest, but when I spoke to people about it they all got excited on my behalf an' were sayin' stuff like "Ooooh RADA! ...'She' went there and 'He' went there...." An' spouting off names of actors I'd never heard of. Also I were gettin' swept along by the enthusiasm of Ginge an' Spud. Particularly Ginge, who wouldn't fuckin' shut up about it. The tangerine tosspot had already feathered his nest an' was gonna stay with Francesca while he auditioned. Only he, could not only have sorted out accommodation, but have sex on tap to boot. An' here he was in the library, with a load of plays under his arm, lookin' like a great smug pumpkin.

"Ah good morning Mr. Dunno. Lookin' ferra speech? Might I recommend 'Cinderella'? There's a crackin' speech from Buttons in it?"

"Oh right, where's that then?" I said not without enthusiasm.

"I'm jokin' Dunno! I think you'll need ter do summat wi' a bit more substance than that."

"Like what? What 'ave you got?"

"Well, for Shakespeare I've earmarked Julius Caesar and; 'Well, honour is the subject of my story. I cannot tell what you and other men Think of this life: but, for my single self, I had as lief not be as live to be In awe of such a thing as I myself.' That's a beauty speech, that is."

"Right," I sighed. It'd bored me senseless but what do I know?

"From Henry V I've got; 'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers, For he today who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.' They'll love a bit a that, and then of course there's the man himself..."

"An' who might that be?" I asked tryin' not to sound too fucked off.

"Hamlet of course, yer big dummy. I reckon; 'The play 's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king', speech'll knock em dead. For my modern speech I'm not lookin' beyond David Storey's 'The Changing Room.' It's a northern gritty, kitchen sink drama about rugby league. The southern poshies'll love a bit o' that." God, that carrotty cock-headed, smug, sanctimonious, swatty ginger fucker had it all worked out, whereas I din't have a fuckin' clue where to start.

Ginge must have sensed how I were feelin'. "Look Dunno, there's no secret to it. You've got to find a speech that you can relate to. That's like you. Someone in your age range. There's no point playin' an old man or owt daft like that. Let's see now. What are you? Hmmm, a grumpy, miserable, selfish, aggressive, greedy, northern fat bastard. Now we've established that, it's surely just a matter of narrowing down a few peices. Not hard is it? Anyway must dash. Toodle-oo, old chum!"

The ginger cunt swanked off then, 'appy as Larry.

I were deeply suspicious of Derek Wales' motives in inviting me round to his gaff, but I felt I had no choice. There was always the possibility of course that his motives were pure an' he really did want to help me get into drama school. After all, his O and A level pass rate was very high and his success rate for student's getting in to Drama School was 100%. I had to risk it. When I got back to Dunno HQ, I remembered with a heavy

heart the flat were no longer empty. Sadly it weren't me erstwhile naked buddy. It was Spud. I hope he's calmed down a bit an' is gonna act a little less like a cross between Ginge an' some fussy old bag.

I went inside and fuck me, it's like havin' shit on the end of your shoe, you can never seem ter shake him off. What was Ginge doin' here?

"Listen fellas, " said the carroty cretin, helpin' hissen to me favourite biscuits. "I'm off back down ter London this weekend ter see that little Italian temptress an' to have a look at a few properties. She lives in Islington and I've earmarked Islington as the next big thing. Ten minutes from town, lot's of shops an' amenities, housing competitively priced. Get yersen on the housin' market down there an 'in ten years time yer'll be laughin'. Do you boys fancy comin' along fer the ride?"

The resounding silence left him in no doubt of the answer.

"Suit yersen, lads...So you both going over to the wolf's lair tonight?"

"Aye."

"Right well, if you both go the way of Friga I'll be sure to notify the authorities."

"Thanks fer yer concern Ginge, I'm sure we'll be alright."

"Well I'd better head over to Pattons," said Ginge, "Have fun tonight boys. Don't do anything I wouldn't."

We decided to get the bus up ter Roundhay an stop off for a pint in the The Regent in Chapel Allerton as it had, so Spud assured me, wall to wall fanny.

When we got there it was wall to wall two men playin' darts an' a middle-aged couple sat in the corner havin' a pub supper.

"You should see it on a weekend," said Spud, defensively.

"Yeh," I agreed. "There's four people playing darts, an yer cart get on the pool table fer at least ten minutes."

"God, you're so hilarious, Dunno," sniffed Spud, headin' for a table.

Armed with our pints, two bags of crisps, two bags of nuts an' some pork scratchin's, I asked Spud if he had sorted out all his other speeches.

"Oh aye, yeh. I'm gonna go with a speech from one of the Elizabethan playwrights I was telling you about the other night. I figure every other fucker will be doin' Hamlet or Macbeth for their Shakespeare, so fuck that. I might have a back-up Shakespeare though, just to be on the safe side, something from Richard the Second or maybe Petruchio's speech from Taming of the Shrew."

I'd not heard of neither of 'em.

"What about yer modern?"

"Not sure. I might just make one up."

"Eh?"

"Oh sure. I'll just come up with any old angry young man shit an' say it's from a brilliant brand new up an' coming talent, which is what I am anyway," he said haughtily. Fuck me, its a good job Spud hasn't got a rubber back, otherwise he'd just spend all day suckin' his own cock. "I figure they'll all be snobby, pseudo, drama know-alls who'd hate to admit they haven't heard of it, so they won't say anything. Any chance of a crisp?"

"No. Fuck off an' buy yer own."

It were ten to ten, an' as we walked down Derek's street it really did seem like the nearer we got to Derek's house the more creepy, dark an' sinister it got. I wouldn't've been surprised to hear thunder, and see lightning flashing across his pointy rooftop. All it

needed was Fred, Shaggy, Scooby Doo and the Mystery Machine parked outside and the picture would be complete. We stood on the doorstep an' waited, our bodies wracked by the odd shivery tremor. From inside the house we heard Derek's grandfather clock chime the hours. Ten O' clock.

"It's ten o'clock by the evenin' clock, everyone has a shit," sang Spud. "It's off ter the bog ter drop a log, everyone has a shit. Tick-tock-tick-tock- shit shit shit shit...it's ten o'clock by the... come on everybody, you know the words, sing it!"

"Shurrrup, Spud. Derek might hear yer."

"He's not fuckin' here, is he?" snapped Spud. "Fuck this. He ain't coming, let's fuck off home."

"Aye, yer right Spud, c'mon, A'll buy yer another pint."

Just then with a squeal of car tyres, Derek' MG came flyin' round the corner, screeching to a halt outside his gate. He jumped out of the car an' came chargin' up the path. He saw us an' looked surprised...shocked even.

"Fuck me. Tweedledum and Tweedledee, what the hell are you doin' here?"

"You invited us, Mr. wales, remember?" said Spud.

"Yeh? If I wanted to spend some time with a couple of clowns, I would have gone to the circus."

"Yer said yer woh gonna go through some speeches with us?"

He remembered. "God yes, I did, didn't I? Well I'm sorry...now's not a good time."

It was then that I noticed his hands.

"What have yer done Derek? Yer hands....they're covered in blood."

"What? Oh , yeh. That... I... er...I was coming back from the university and got a

puncture. I was trying to prise the wheel off and stabbed myself with a screwdriver. I need to go and dress it and put some antiseptic on it. I'm sorry lads...I'll see you tomorrow." He brushed past us, put the key in the door, let himself in and slammed it in our faces.

"Charming," said Spud, "I've a good mind to knock on his door and ask for a lift home or at least the bus fare."

"Hmm, somehow I dote think yer'll get it Spud. How d'yer stab yersen wi' a screwdriver changing a wheel?" I mused.

"Fucked if I know. Fucked if I care," replied Spud, huffily. "Are you gonna buy me that pint then or what?"

"Come on then."

## SEND IN THE CLOWNS

Tuesday, November 18th, 1980

We were sat in the theatre awaiting the arrival of Derek Wales when the door burst open and in he walked in his usual bow-legged gunslinging style, only this time he had a sheepish look about him and a thick bandage going from his wrist to his elbow. Without sayin' owt he got up on stage raised his hands to the heavens an' after a long pause recited dramatically in a theatrical voice;

"O, woe is me, to have seen what I have seen, see what I see!" He stopped and paused, surveying the room until his eyes fixed on mine, "That was a quote from where, big man?"

"Er... a dote know..." I stammered. "Woh it Rocky?"

"Clown! Irish?"

"Is it Cyrano de Bergerac?"

"Clown! Justin?"

"It's Hamlet, sir, act three scene one. The end of Ophelia's speech."

"Good lad, Justin. Well done son....It's so refreshing in a circus full of clowns, to meet a ringmaster!"

Puzzler's chest swelled with pride an' I detected a look that momentarily flashed across his face...Guilt.

"So I think, as there is talk of speeches in the air, and some of you, I know are preparing for the next stages of an acting career by applying to drama school," he looked over in my direction and added, "God knows why. We shall devote today's lecture to speeches. Yeh? Yeh. If I remember right, you need a classical and a modern. Personally I think it wise to learn at least four of each, and then you can find your best

two by a process of success rate and elimination. Jonny, what have you got for us?" He fixed his glare on Ginge.

"I've got three Shakespeare's and one modern, Mr. Wales."

"Bravo, amico mio. Come on then."

"Sorry? Come on then, what?"

"Mr. Marinelli, please don't disappoint me by exposing yourself as a clown too, or in your case a 'pagliaccio', perhaps. Come up on stage and give me your speeches. Imagine, if you will, you are in front of a panel of RADA lecturers and you are aiming to secure a berth in that esteemed establishment."

Ginge got up and cleared his throat, composed himself and began reciting his speech, followed by another modern one. Upon finishing, the class gave him a round of applause. The swatty, smug satsuma head.

"Well, well, well there's hope for me yet," beamed Wales. "Mr. Marinelli has just set the benchmark, class, and if you can't better it, or at least match it, then I would say don't waste your money, time and my reputation and learn a trade. Right, Irish, you're next."

Spud got up on stage and got himself into a theatrical pose, one foot thrust in front of the other, chest out, set his mouth to a pout and launched into that Elizabethan mumbo jumbo he were babblin' the other night at Dunno HQ.

As he came to an end he looked at us, grinned an' said, "Th-th-that's all folks! Sorry Derek, I haven't got a modern worked out yet, I don't know what to do."

He too got a round of applause and to my utter shock Derek said, "Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't recommend straying from Shakespeare, but in this case I can only say well done, Irish. That was excellent. For your modern you might want to look

at a new play that's just come out called Bouncers written by John Godber. There are four excellent speeches in it."

"Wow!" said Spud bowled over. "Thanks Derek. Thanks a lot!"

We were clearly seeing a side to Derek which hitherto had been completely hidden. The side with a 100% drama school success rate.

"Now, the big man himself, Lord Dunno. Yeh? What treat have you got in store for us?" His face broke out in a big smile and the look in his eyes wasn't too dissimilar to a lion eyeing up a T-Bone. I felt a tremor of fear course through me body as I broke out in a cold sweat. I'd had a cursory look through that French shite but as of yet not learnt a word of it. I were laggin' behind the others and I really din't wanna confess to that. Luckily I didnt have to coz suddenly the door burst open an' two blokes who had the reek of plain clothes copper all over them came in, flanked by three big plods in uniform.

Ginge dug me in the ribs an whispered, "Fuck me, thats DC Sweet the copper a spoke to last week."

They went marching over to Derek Wales.

"Derek Wales? Would you like to come with us please?" sez DC Sweet.

"Why officer? What's this about?" said Derek calmly.

"You know damn well what this is about...sir," said Sweet, his tone all 'don't fuck with me coz I'm not in the mood'. "Now, if you want me to spell it out in front of your students, then I will."

"That won't be necessary, Constable," said Wales gesturing to the exit. "Lead on, MacDuff."

We watched as he was marched briskly away and sat in stunned silence until Spud said, "D'yer think that's about what I think it's about?"

"What do you think it's about, Mark?" asked Sea Breeze.

"Well I hate to be the bringer of bad news," said a pale faced Pauline, "But it was announced on the news this morning, as I was driving into college that a university student was attacked and killed last night behind the Arndale Centre in Headingley. Police say it's the Yorkshire Ripper."

A ripple of shock passed through the whole group.

Sea Breeze shot up, her face all green, an' exclaimed, "Oh my God! The Yorkshire Ripper's licked my twat!"

## A FEW STIFF ONES

Tuesday, November 18th 1980

So we were right all along...Derek Wales was the Yorkshire Ripper. For months we'd been in the company, nay had many a close scrape with, one of the most notorious serial killers ever. When I thought back to me little run-ins with him it made me feel queasy. That time in the woods outside Friga's when we saw him lurkin' about in the bushes...Oh my God, Friga! Now it was really beginning to look like he might be responsible for her disappearance. It also gave me a strange sense of pride that we were responsible for his gettin' nicked. Ginge goin' to see DC Sweet must've really set the ball rollin' an' I guess after that visit they must've been tailin' him or summat coz they were soon round to get him once that poor girl's body was found. I were a bit puzzled though that if they were tailin' 'im, couldn't they have stopped it? I guess we'll never know the ins and outs of what happened last night. I know this though, after they carted Wales off, we all had to retire en-masse to the Old Vic across the road for a number of stiff drinks.

Breezey were inconsolable at first, but we soon brought her round, and after six pints she were tellin' everybody that in a strange way her twat was now probably famous...I mean she'll probably go through the whole of her life without another serial killer gettin anywhere near her snatch, let alone givin' it a good platin'. Ginge of course, never one to look a gift horse in the mouth was sat snug in the corner, with Pauline on his knee, who was lookin' a little less pale now that carrot boy was talkin' dirty in her ear. Spud was takin' all the credit, tellin' anyone who'd listen that he had been tellin' everybody all along that Wales was the Ripper and Puzzler was very, very, quiet, sat head bowed drinking Coca Cola through a straw.

"Hey Puzz, what's up?"

"We all knew it. We suspected for some time, yet we didn't act til it was too late. I don't know if we'll ever be able to forgive ourselves."

Outside it was as though the elements were comin' out in agreement as a flash of lightning and a huge clap of thunder heralded the rain which started teeming down in a monsoon-like deluge.

"A think yer bein' hard on yersen Puzz. And on the rest of us. if it hadn't bin fer us actin' so quick, then loads o' other girls coulda bin killed. We did what we could an we did it pretty well, I think."

"Aye...a suppose.."

I were about to head to the bar an' get another round in when suddenly the pub doors crashed open. Breezey let out a blood-curdling scream, the pint glass she were holdin' in her hand crashed to the floor. Standing in the doorway, framed by lightning, thunder-claps and teemin' rain, flashin' a wicked malevolent grin, eyes yellow, wild, and angry was...Derek Wales.

It were a right weird feelin'. We were all genuinely shittin' our pants. It felt like we were all kids again an' the bogeyman had risen from wherever the fuck he's supposed to rise from and had come to get us. We were all mouths agape like some classic comedy, some of us were even mumbling..."Who? What? When? How?" Britain's most wanted suddenly released without question and back on the street. Time stood still and a hush descended throughout the whole pub as Wales stepped forward, the doors swinging shut behind him, he surveyed the room slowly trying to look everyone in the eye but no one dared look at him. Finally, his eyes locked on mine and clump, clump, clump he walked slowly over to me at the bar.

"Get us a pint then, big man... I need a drink."

"Right-o."

The pub conversations all started up again and it seemed like the last five minutes had only happened in my head.

"I figured you might all be in here after today's little drama," he continued. "I didn't fancy going home to an empty house so I thought I'd come and join you for a bit. You don't mind do you?"

"Er no Mr. Wales, of course not."

"Call me Derek," he sez, as I hand him his pint. He followed me over to our table an' plonked hissen down. Then he looks around the pub an' calls the rest of the class over. "Come here, and keep your ears open, it's time for the truth and I don't want to have to repeat myself and I don't want any Chinese whispers."

Everyone gathered round him and waited while he stuck a cigar in his mouth an' took a suck.

"My wife...my ex-wife... she's not very well. In fact she's a heroin addict and has descended into her own personal hell. To cut a long story short she is now a prostitute in Chapeltown selling her arse to anybody and anything for her next fix."

This was old news to me, but there was an audible intake of breath from those students not in our inner circle.

"Yeh. Yeh. Hardly a trophy wife," sighs Derek. "I've tried everything I possibly can to get her on the straight and narrow but to no avail. I saw her yesterday and tried to convince her to come with me to a health farm in North Yorkshire where they deal with this sort of thing. She wasn't too keen on the idea. She showed her disapproval by coming at me with a knife and stabbing me in the arm. I tried to defend myself and in the heat of the moment I struck her. In the face. That is why I was arrested today."

Luckily for me, my wife has decided not to press charges and I was released. It's been a traumatic twenty-four hours and I needed some sympathetic company. I hope I've come to the right place. Yeh? Yeh."

Breezey, wiping a tear from her eye gave him a big hug. Tchh! Birds, eh? One minute she's in shock from her fanny being subjected to serial killerlingus now she's up for spreadin' 'em again...gladly.

"Oh Derek..." she cooed we all thought you were the..."

"...One who is gonna get us all into drama school," I said quickly cuttin' her big gob off in its prime. "We loved yer lecture terday it woh really helpful."

"Well thank you, big man... It may come as a surprise to you all but I do have your interests at heart. After all, your failure is my failure."

"What's happened to Friga, Derek?" Puzzler had obviously had enough of this mutual love fest and had asked the 64,000 dollar question.

Derek looked a bit confused, then he sighed. "Justin, I don't know. Honestly. We went on a date or two, and okay, I confess, I liked her... a lot. She was a great listener...Right?"

Puzz nodded his head in agreement. His lower lip wobblin'. "Yeh. She was... is."

"I thought we might have had something special going when...pooff...she vanished without a word to anyone. I pulled her records and she had submitted a Danish address. I even rang it, told them I was her lecturer, made it sound official, blah, blah, blee, blee. I was given short shrift. I was told they had nothing to say to me on the matter and not to disturb them again. I asked them if she would be coming back, at which point they put the phone down."

"So she's alive?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Justin."

At the end of a strange day we all emerged from the pub a little worse for wear. Ginge left with Pauline, Derek left on his own, with Breezey following on about five minutes later, so yer didnt have to be Agatha Christie to work that one out. I left with Spud and Puzzler. So many unanswered questions, so many loose ends suddenly brought to a conclusion. Wales was just a grown up version of us. A person with the same vulnerabilities an' insecurities. Unlike us, he was a few years ahead, so had managed to learn how to disguise them all or deal with them better. He had developed a front. An in your face aggressive cock of the walk, I don't take no shit from anybody persona that worked for him and deflected attention away from a junky wife and a sad and lonely existence away from Royal Park where he was a proud an' struttin' pea- cock.

This much I now knew. My life was no longer in Leeds. Leeds had nothing to offer me anymore. I had to escape. From now on, it's goodbye Dunno from Halton Moor. Hello Lord Dunno of London Town!

## COCK OR BULL?

Thursday, November 20th 1980

I've gotta admit I've been able to relax for the first time in yonks now that Derek Wales has cleared up this Yorkshire Ripper business. Okay, the man's a prize cunt but he in't a killer which has got to be good news, hasn't it?

He went through me speech today in class. The Robespierre one. I did it as Clouseau but he din't seem to get it. He stopped me halfway through.

"Big Man, either do it with feeling or don't fucking bother. Remember what I told you about Stanislavski? Don't act...BE! I don't believe a word you are saying. You are a boy from Halton Moor with a cod French accent. I don't want to see this again until you know it backwards. Go out in the park and say each line over and over until you know it like you know the end of your cock. Then and only then can we start playing around with it and trying to make it fit for an audience."

Blimey, that was almost praise. A week ago an' he'd've crucified me.

In the evenin' we had a full run through of My Fair Lady. It was borin' as fuck coz I'm only in the Ascot scene but Derek made us all hang around all night. Sea Breeze was alright as Eliza Doolittle but her cockney accent is worse than that Dick Van Dyke feller in Mary Poppins.

I was hoverin' about backstage tryin' to learn me speech while Derek an' Dan Robinson did their rendition of Why Can't a Woman be More Like A Man, (a song I have sympathy with in many ways) when I heard someone sobbin' behind a curtain. I took a look round the other side an' saw Breezey sat on a stool, sobbin' her heart out. When she saw me she almost jumped out of her skin.

"What's up, kid?" I asked.

"It... it's Derek," she sniffed. Her face were a mess of mascara.

"What about him?"

"We've bin wrong about him," she whispered.

I laughed softly. "I know we have. Dote worry, silly. We've cleared it all up now. Derek's all right. Thez no hard feelings. Not really."

"No... yer dote understand. I mean... I think he really is the Ripper."

"Fer fuck's sake. Pull yersen tergether, Breezey. Yer worse than Puzzler. Jus' let it go. Yer should be happy."

The tears really started then. I sat down beside her an' put me arm round her.

"Shhh. It's alright."

She snuggled into me an' ave gorra admit it felt nice even if it was a bit wet. Then a shadow fell over us.

"Big Man, that's college property you're pawing," sez Wales, his face hidden by the shadows. "Come on, Celia, you're holding everyone up. You're on."

He whisked her away an' I was left there alone. Fuckin' Hell.

We had our Ascot scene next.

As I took me position I whispered to Puzzler, "Meeting tonight at Ginge's. It's important."

He gave me a wink an' nodded.

After we were through, I did the rounds of the rest of the gang, tellin' Spud an' Ginge to meet me at Ginge's.

"Very nice of you to organise meetings at my place, I must say," sez Ginge.

"Garvey and Ted are round there, entertaining."

"Well, we dote have ter meet up in the bedrooms do we, yer carrotty cocksucker? We'll meet up in the kitchen. Yours is nearer than my place an' this is important."

"Alright, but it better be good."

I spent the rest of the rehearsal tryin' to grab a moment alone with Breezey but Derek was watchin' her like a hawk. At last as we were leavin' I sidled up to her.

"Can yer come ter Ginge's now?"

She looked over her shoulder, terrified.

"Come on Celia, I'll give you a lift home. It's not safe out there on your own," sez Wales, clickety-clackin' his way up to us. "Sleep tight, Big Man."

As you might expect, the meetin' wasn't a success. Ginge, Spud an' Puzzler were all waitin', drinking big mugs o' cappuccino, Ginge of course havin' invested in a new machine that makes them proper...Talk about havin' your head turned by London, he'll be eating fuckin' eel, mash an liqor next....and sayin 'Gawd bless yer Mr. Holmes' an' 'Wiv a little bit a bloomin lack!'

"Strictly speaking" he said pompously, "as there is more than one of us drinking it, the correct term should be Cappuccin-i."

"Aye, whatever floats yer boat, Ginge." I told them what Breezey had said.

"Stress," sez Puzzler. "We've all been under the shadow of the Ripper for so long that when Derek was cleared, her mind snapped. The poor thing can't accept that we were wrong. Either that or she's having her period" he added wisely. "Birds get very funny when they've got the painters in."

"But shi woh terrified," I said.

"Let it go, Dunno," sighed Ginge, sounding bored. "We were wrong. Stop bein' a jessy and accept the fact. Derek's all right. We need his help to get into drama school. None more so than you. Let's stop making his life a misery and just face reality, eh?"

"He's right," said Puzzler. "I hate to admit it but he's right. We've had our disagreements but the man's now okay in my book. And he seems to really care about Friga."

"A dote think Breezey's the type ter get hysterical," I persisted.

"She was sobbing away backstage?" sez Spud.

"Aye."

"An' she let you give her a cuddle?"

"I comforted her, yeh."

"And you don't think she was hysterical? She'd have to be out of her mind to let you near her."

"Yer a cheeky cunt. Shiz bin shaggin' Derek Wales, shiz hardly choosey. Anyway it woh all innocent."

Puzzler sighed. "Oh Dunno. There's a big difference to a woman between you and Derek Wales. He's a man of the world. A man of influence and a certain demonic charm. You're... well, you're you."

"Ah, fuck the lot of yer," I said, drainin' me cup. "A've had enough o' this. Am off home. But if Breezey goes missin', dote blame me."

I stomped out of the house an' headed to the busstop. While I was waitin' I heard footsteps behind me. It was Puzzler.

"I've been thinking," he sez.

"Oh, aye?"

"Just ter set yer mind at ease, why dote we head over ter Breezey's now, an' find out what shi has ter say? Then, if it's rubbish, we can all have a good laugh at you, an' if it isn't , I'll shake your hand and apologise."

It were late. Breezey lives miles away, but if owt happened to her, I'd never forgive mesen.

"We could always just ask her tomorrow?" I said.

Puzzler shook hiz head. "Seize the nettles, Dunno. Seize the iron while it's hot. Come on, we'll take a taxi. You can pay."

Fuckin' Hell. I had a tenner to last me the week.

"We'll go halves."

"Fair do. Taxi!!!"

## INTO THE BLACK

Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1980

After trackin' around Crossgates for an hour we finally got to a house that looked vaguely familiar.

"I think this is Breezey's house," I said.

"You're worse than useless, Dunno," sighed Puzzler. "Fancy draggin' us out here when yer don't even know where she lives."

"I've only been here once," I said. "An' a woh pissed too. How'm I supposed ter remember? All t' houses look the same anyway."

"That'll be three quid," sez the cabby.

"Can yer jus' wait for us fer a bit?" asked Puzzler.

The driver shook his head. "Not round here. This car's my livelihood. Am not havin' some young fuckers trashin' it for a laugh."

I paid him, an' off he sped. There were a gang of bastards hangin' about at the corner, glarin' at us.

"Aright lads?" I sez. "Any o' you know where Celia Breeze lives?"

One o' the lads turns ter a big fat fucker in a biker jacket. "Oi, Boz! This cunt's askin' after your bird."

Boz fixes us wi' a bleery, stoned glare. "Who wants ter know?"

"I do," a sez, squarin' me shoulders. Back on Halton Moor we'd eat cunts like Boz fer breakfast when there wont any bacon goin'.

He looks at me, an' a clench me fists. Then he nods.

"Aye. That's her place. Over there."

Me an' Puzzler go down the path to the door. I can hear some shite on the telly. Her Dad comes to the door, stinkin' of beer, sweaty an' unshaven in his vest an' undies.

"Aright, Mister Breeze," a sez. "Is Celia in?"

He looks at me. "You're Dunno, aren't yer?"

"Aye. That's me."

"Shi said shi woh off out ter the pictures wi' you after rehearsin' that stupid play. So where is shi? Have you bin upsettin' my little lass?"

"No," a said. "Far from it."

"Yer've bin goin' out wi' our Celia fer a month now, an' yer ant 'ad the decency ter come over an' introduce yersen properly."

"Eh?"

"If you've got her up the duff, a'll break yer fuckin' neck."

"But ... I never..." a said. "Honest... I ant even snogged her. I gev her a cuddle tonight an' that woh only coz shi woh upset." (I din't tell him that the experience gave me a hard-on, coz it won't any of his business.)

"Yer lyin' little toe-rag," he sez, his face goin' purple wi' rage.

He lunges at me an' catches me a clip on the nose.

"Arghh." I staggered back, as Puzzler scuttled out of the way, an' the Juggernaut plowed into me.

At last, tired of gettin' thumped for summat I hadn't done, I put up me dukes an' thumped him one back in the gut. I must've hit him harder than I meant to coz he crumpled up on the ground gaspin' an' dribblin' an' moanin' like a cunt.

"Fuckin' hell, Dunno. He's havin' a heart attack," sez Puzzler.

He spewed up about five gallons o' beer an' pork scratchings all over me feet, then, he looks up at me an' holds out a hand.

"That's better. Mek room fer more. Gi' us a hand up, yer dozy twat."

I helped him up. It was like tryin' to winch up a beached whale.

When he were on his feet he looks at me. The craziness had left his eyes.

"Soz about yer shoes," he sez.

"Soz about yer gut," I replied.

He nods. "So, yer an't shagged our Celia then?"

"Ner. I mean a would if a could, shiz a crackin' lass. But a haven't touched her."

He nods. "So, yer not goin' out with her then?"

"Yes he is," sez Puzzler before I could say owt. "But shiz a good girl. Shi won't let him shag her. Int that right, Dunno?"

"Er... aye." I didn't know what game Puzzler were playin' but it's usually best to go along with him in cases like this.

"Not like our Celia," sez her Dad. "Shiz normally a right little slapper. You ain't tried hard enough, mate."

"Oh." What can yer say ter that?

"So, if she int wi' you, where is shi?" he asks.

I shrug. "Ant gorra clue." I did have a clue, but I wasn't gonna tell this nutter owt. If I did, chances are he'd go chargin' round to Derek Wales' place, rip off his head an' make his daughter eat it.

"Ah well, sorry ter bother you," sez Puzzler. "We'd better be off then."

"Aye. Go on. Fuck off lads, an' take care."

He went back in an' shut the door.

As we walked away I asked Puzzler what he were up to.

"Nowt. I just figured, it's obvious Breezey's spun her family a yarn about you, so they don't suspect owt about her an' Derek. I didn't want you ter go droppin' her in it anymore than we already have."

"Mmm. Good thinkin'. What do we do now?"

"We either go to Derek's, call it a night, or we wait round the corner for her to come home."

"We could call it a night," I said.

Puzzler shook hiz head. "Not on. We've got to warn her that you blew her cover story. I say we wait here."

"But it's startin' ter rain. Am only jus' gerrin over the flu."

"Tchh!" snorts Puzzler. "You haven't lived till you've felt the Crossgates rain pouring down your back."

She still hadn't turned up by midnight an' it was lashin' down now.

"Fuck this," I said. "She int comin' back. I'm goin' home. Yer can stay the night if yer want."

"Sure yer don't wanna go check up on Derek's place?"

"No fuckin' way. Look, worst case scenario, he's killed her. If he has, then thez nowt we can do about it now, is there?"

"Aye. Yer right. Come on then. Let's go."

## HEAD TO HEAD.

Friday, November 21st, 1980

When I entered the college theatre this mornin' I was heavy headed. Me an' Puzzler had been up all night talkin' things over with Spud, who kept tellin' us we were actin' like a couple of hysterical birds on the rag. Dan Robinson was centrestage puttin' a cassette into the college ghetto blaster.

"A bit of music today while we do some stretching exercises," he sez brightly.

"Isn't Mr. Wales comin' in terday?" I asked. Part of me was wonderin' if summat had happened last night an' the cops had pulled him in again.

"Yes, he'll be here, traffic permitting," sez Dan. "Now, you'll like this. It's John Lennon's latest."

"Who?" asked Pauline.

Some little bells started ringin' an' then Lennon's voice rang out, singin' about startin' all over again. It's funny, but as we'd all been gettin' in a state about Derek Wales, maybe now was the time to put the past behind us an' start over nice an' fresh, an' with London loomin' on the horizon, the song seemed strangely apt...

"Now all in a circle and stretch!" sez Dan Robinson, his little eyes beamin' with enthusiasm behind his John Lennon glasses.

As we were stretchin' I heard the doors open an' the clickety-clack of Derek's cuban heels on the floor. There was a click an' the music stopped.

"Bloody John Lennon," he sez. "That chippy scouser has the temerity to think he's a successor to Elvis's crown. Not true. Elvis Presley, my friends is the king of rock and roll. Full stop. If I had my way I'd have that usurper taken out and shot. Yeh? Yeh. Shot...Right. Speeches. Big Man, I want you to read this."

He tosses a copy of Shakespeare's *The Merchant o' Venice* at me.

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd', take it from their."

"Er... in't that a bird's speech?" I asked.

"Yeh. Yeh. So you're not a complete ignoramus. Gender isn't important. It's the words that count. Besides in Shakespeare's day all the parts were played by men. Come on, big man."

I hate sight readin'. Am right crap at it. I'd got out a couple o' lines before Derek screams out.

"Nooooooo! You are murdering the Bard. For pity's sake, shut the fuck up, Dunno. Pauline, show him how it's done."

Pauline was just takin' her place an' I was shufflin' back to me seat tryin' to ignore Ginge an' Spud's giggles when the doors opened an' in walked Breezey. Me first reaction was relief. Still alive. Then I took a closer look an' me guts turned to ice. Her eyes, those pretty, ice blue eyes were swollen, puffed up an' purple. Her nose, which next to her tits an' those legs that promised ter stretch all the way up ter the promised land, was her best feature was swollen an' bruised. Her lips were puffy an' split. She looked like she'd just gone ten rounds with Mohammed Ali.

Derek turned an' looked at her. Then he sneered. "For God's sake, Celia. What happened to you? Walk into a door? You do realise there's no way we can have you playing the lead in *My Fair Lady* and *Ghosts* now? Maybe we should do the *Bride of Frankenstein* instead, yeh? Thank you very much, for fucks sake, spoiling all the preparations so close to opening night. How could you be so bloody careless?"

"Sorry, Derek," she mumbled, an' sat down at the far end of the aisle.

I felt me blood boilin'. I turned to Ginge who were sat next to me.

"That fucker. He did this, an' now he's takin' the piss out of her. I've a good mind ter..."

"What was that Dunno?" sez Wales, moseying over to me. "Care to share your pearls of wisdom with the class? Perhaps having shown your talent for women's speeches you were thinking of taking Celia's parts? Yeh? Well I'm afraid not. You're even more ugly than she is, and your singing is pure fucking torture...to say nothing of your acting ability."

I'd heard enough. Me ire was well an' truly up. I felt Ginge an' Spud tryin' to pull me back to me seat as I stood up. Wales took an involuntary step backwards.

"Yer bang out o' order Derek," I said, dispensin' with the Mister Wales bollocks coz I didn't wanna show the cunt any respect right then. "Yer start whalin' inter Breezey there, tryin' ter cover up yer mucky secrets. Anyone who hits a bird's lower than dirt in my book. Yer got owt ter say about that then...little man?"

Wales stared at me, shocked, speechless, stunned.

"You wanna take this outside you stunted dwarf cunt! Or don't yer hit people who can fight back? Is that it?"

"Get out."

"Fuckin' make me."

The class all looked on in shock, the King of Halton Moor in full splendour.

"Stop it!" comes an unnatural wail that could've only come from Breezey's banshee-like vocal chords.

Me an' Derek both wheeled round ter look at her. She was tryin' not to cry but her eyes were all watery anyway.

"This is all a mistake," she sez.

"Eh?"

"What?"

She looks at me. "It wasn't Derek what did this..."

"You thought I did that?" sez Derek.

"Err... yeh.

"But why?"

"Just... coz... well..." Fuck, I 'ad to come out with it. The time for pretence was over. "Coz I know shi was with yer las' night an' I know shi din't go home coz a was waitin' outside her house til the middle o' the fuckin' night and..."

"You fuckin' idiot," yells Breezey. "It's all your fault!"

"Eh?" I noticed some of the girls lookin' at me right uncomfortable like. "No it isn't."

"Yes it fuckin' is." She'd given up tryin' not to cry now. She were bawlin' like a baby. "I told my Dad I was with you. When I turned up late last night, he asked me where I'd bin. I told him I'd bin with you an' he laid inter me."

"Oh. Fuck." I put me hand on her shoulder. "Soz pet. I didn't know."

She shoved my hand away. "You useless, fat, interfering bastard."

"But why did yer tell yer ol' feller that? He tried ter kill me too."

She looked up at us, a picture of hideous misery. "Coz I din't want him ter know I was fucking a man old enough ter be me father."

"Right, that's enough," sez Derek, his face a sickly green colour. "We'll continue this in my office. Dan, you can look after these reprobates for a few minutes can't you?"

"Yes. Yes. Okey-dokey, Derek," sez Dan Robinson, all eager to please. "C'mon then chaps how about a couple of verses of Roll out the Barrel?"

We followed Derek round the back of the theatre an' into his office. As soon as he'd shut the door, he turns on us, his face all calm controlled fury.

"Celia, are you trying to get me fired?"

She shook her head.

"Good. I want you to tell everyone that you made that up. About me fuc....making love to you. Understand?"

She nodded.

"Understand Big Man?"

"Well... I..."

"Look," he sez. "You fuck people don't you, Big Man?"

"Yeh. Well...Err....Course I do. Now an' again."

"Well so do I. I'm a man of needs and common urges like any other man after all. Celia's of age. She's not a child, but lecturer's are not supposed to fraternise with the students. It looks bad, yeh?"

"Aye. Yer got that right, yer dirty get."

"I didn't force her to do anything. Did I Celia?"

She shook her head.

"Good. And as for you, Big Man, I should expel you for your behaviour. You can't just go around threatening staff. Getting rid of you would be easier than wiping my arse. It would also guarantee my 100 % entry rate into drama schools. But... I'm willing to take a chance on you Big Man. There's something I almost admire in you. You're an idiot. But you have the makings of a flawed hero. I can respect that... I think. Maybe I'm getting soft in my dotage. What do you think, Celia, should I sack the clown, or give him another chance?"

"It wasn't his fault," she sniffed.

Thank fuck for that, I thought.

"Okay, stay of execution, Yeh? Yeh." sez Wales. "But no more gossiping. Now get out. The pair of you."

We left him in there.

"Look Breezey, am really sorry, but a was worried about you. When you said you thought he really was the Ripper. I got scared. I had ter check up on you."

She tried to smile. "I don't deserve friends like you."

"D'yer wanna grab a cup o' tea?"

She nodded.

We skipped the rest of the class an' headed down to the refectory.

"So," I said, disposin' o' the last o' mi donut, "earlier, when yer said I was a useless fat bastard? Yer were jus' kiddin' right? I'm not fat. Really."

She laughed. "Course yer not, Dunno."

"That's that sorted then. Anyway, what did yer mean, last night, when yer said yer thought he really was the Ripper?"

Breezey went red. "I was just bein' stupid."

"No yer weren't. Yer were scared. Why?"

"The other night. The night they released him. I went back ter his place. I was just so happy to think he was innocent. I fucked him then. It was the first time."

"But he'd licked yer snatch before?"

She went red again. "Yes. Thank you. I don't need reminding about that if you don't mind."

"Soz. Aright, Go on."

"Well. I stayed over. We did it. Twice. It was right nice. A think it's fair ter say that the older ones know what they're doing. A good meal an' lots o' wine. I fell asleep."

"And? What happened then?"

"Well it woh weird but a felt a presence loomin' over me. It woke me up an' when a looked up, he woh standin' over me, with a really scary look on 'is face. Then he grins this awful grin an whispers, 'I am the Ripper.'"

"Fuck me. What'dyer do then, eh?"

"A got out o' the bed an' legged it quick as a could wi' him chasin' after me. He caught me at the top o' the stairs an' just started laughin'. I slapped him one in the chops."

"Nice one. How'd he take it?"

"Not too bad really. He jus' tells me a've got no sense o' humour. Said he was only messin'. Then when a wouldn't shag him again he took me home."

"Sick bastard. So d'yer reckon he is the Ripper then, really?"

"I don't know, Dunno, love. Yer'd have ter be right sick ter joke like that, but then again, sometimes he can be so sweet. He's a right good lover. Really tender an'..."

"Aright, aright... point taken'."

"Look, I'm not goin' home today, I was gonna stay at Pauline's but shiz always hangin' about with Ginge. Is it all right if I come home with you?"

"Aye. All right."

So there we were, back to square one. Is he or isn't he? To be honest I haven't gorra clue. All I know now is that I'm stuck in the livin' room, sleepin' on the sofa while Breezey's snorin' away in me pit. She said I could come in an' give her a cuddle but to be honest, an' I know I sound dead shallow, an' it's nowt ter do with sloppy seconds or

battin' on a sticky wicket or owt, but I couldn't bring meself ter shag her lookin' like that, an' it wouldn't have been all that sensitive if I asked her to turn the lights off or put a balaclava on, or just whipped her round on her belly an asked her ter stick her arse in the air. If Sly was here, I'm sure he would've obliged.

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1980

What a fuckin' day. I were up at five after not sleepin' a wink so as I could get the first train down to London for me RADA audition. Spud's got his tomorrow, which was a pity, coz even though he's a birruva smarmy git, I could've done with some company on the train down. I'd got me Robespierre bit off pat an' last night I'd had Ginge, Pauline, Spud an' Breezey in stitches with it. Spud had told me if I played it for laughs there was no way I could go wrong an' Ginge was quick to back him up.

On the way down I thought it were a pity I'd never had a chance to go through me pieces with Derek Wales. He's been good as gold this week, offerin' to help an' all that, but to be honest I was shittin' mesen an' I just didn't want him takin' the piss out of me in front of everyone. If only I'd bin as big a man as he's always callin' me, then mebbe things'd be different.

As for me modern piece, I found it hard to find owt suitable but Spud had come to the rescue yet again. He told me to do 'Thez a little yellor idol ter the north o' Katmandu,' or is it the south? I can't remember now, not that it matters unless you're plannin' to go lookin' for it. He told me that I should do it mysterious, to show I had soul, an' he persuaded me to dress up in a nappy thing and do it as Ghandi, jus' to display me range as an actor. Sound advice... or so I thought at the time.

Me audition was at 1.00pm so I'd have plenty of time to get there. Not so. The fuckin' train broke down south of somewhere I'd never heard of. I can tell yer one thing, it weren't fuckin' Katmandu, coz there weren't any little yellor idols anywhere. We were stuck for an hour, with nobody tellin' us owt. At last we all had to pile off the train an'

catch another. I finally got into Kings Cross at half twelve. I'd borrowed Spud's A-Z of London, the one that didn't work an' set off joggin' to get to RADA on time. By the time I arrived I were sweatin' like a cunt an' pantin' like a randy dog fit for nowt. It were the same shithole I remembered from our soggy trip earlier. I took a deep breath an' walked in.

"Dunno is it?" sez some young ponce with a bouffant blond hairdo. "You're on next."

"Have yer gorrany water?" I gasped.

He looks at me like I'm summat unsavoury. "No...Sorry." Then he walks out. So much for makin' you feel at ease.

He popped his head round the corner two minutes later an' started beckoning me all impatient.

"Come on. Come on. They're waiting."

I walked into the hall an' was faced by a big table an' what looked like a jury of twelve honest posh cunts sat in judgement.

"Dunno," sez one. " Right. Let's have your modern piece first, shall we? What will you be giving us?"

"Eh?"

"Performing. What will you be performing?"

"Oh. Right. Errr... it's a poem. A Little Yeller idol."

"Hardly modern," whispers one o' them, down her horsey nose.

"The way I do it is, love," i said. "Can a get changed?"

"I'm sorry?"

"I've got a costume. Can I get changed?"

A collection of sighs. The old boy in the middle nods.

"If you must. Do it here. I'm sure you've got nothing we've never seen before."

A collection of modest chortles.

"A wun't be so sure o' that," a said, strugglin' out of me kegs an' wrappin' the sheet around me.

"Thez A little yellor idol ter the north o' Katmandu..." I began in me best Indian accent. I'd been listenin' to Sukinde Verdi, an Indian kid in the drama A Level class an' I reckon I'd got the accent off pat. They weren't so impressed. They cut me off halfway through.

"I think we've seen enough," sez the old corpse, with a shudder. "You've just set race relations back twenty-five years."

"Eh? It woh an Indian who taught me how ter do it," I said. It was stretchin' the truth a bit but I weren't havin' any cunt accusin' me of bein' a racist. To me a good bloke's a good bloke regardless o' colour or creed, but a stuck up twat will always be a stuck up twat no matter where he comes from.

"Quite. Well, let's see what else you have."

It were then that I decided to experiment a bit. I didn't think they'd appreciate waitin' for me to get changed back inter me strides so I whipped off the sheet an' did Robespierre as Inspector Clouseau in Y-Fronts. Needless to say, they didn't get it.

"I'm sorry," sez the horse faced woman. "We're very busy and we have a lot more people to see."

"Right," I said. "When will yer let me know if a've got in or not?"

"I think it's safe to say you won't have to set up camp by your post box..."

"Oh. Right then. A din't wanna come here anyway...It's a dump!"

Call me a silly cunt but I locked mesen in the toilet on the train back to Leeds, an' I couldn't stop cryin'. I'd been caught cold. Ill prepared an' me dream were over before it'd begun. True, I still had two more auditions comin' up in a couple o' weeks time but what was the point? Derek Wales was right. I was a nobody. A big loser. Maybe I should just concentrate on keepin' me job at Pattons Restaurant an' forget all me dreams of fame an' glory.

I didn't have time to go home when I got into Leeds. It was straight on to Pattons for a Friday shift behind the bar. Me heart sank when I walked in an' saw Ginge talkin' to Clifford St Ledger, the old puff who'd directed that shitty opera at the Grand.

"Dunno, sweet muse," sez Clifford, claspin' me to his bosom. "What news on the Rialto?"

"Eh?"

"I think he wants ter know how yer got on," sez Ginge.

"Shite," I sez. "They hated me."

"Ah well," sez Ginge with just the hint of a smile. "You've still got two more to try for. RADA's had its day anyway."

"Well fuck it! A'm not gonna bother."

"Nonsense, dear boy," sez Clifford. "You will do them even if I have to bugger your sweet virgin arse right through the door. It so happens that I am a very good friend with Christian Yves, so I'll be sure to put in a good word for you."

"Who's Christian Yves?" I asked.

"He's only the brightest director in the whole of the south and the Principal of Theatre Centre. You're just his type. Believe me I know. Oh and I have a batchelor pad in London. I'm never there. You'll have the place to yourself."

"I..."

"And I personally will coach you all the way. Give me your piece now."

"Do a have to? Thez people waitin' ter be served."

"We can wait," sez a specky idiot at the bar.

"Come on. Chop chop. Hands to the pumps."

"Thez a little yellor idol..."

"With feeling, you wretch. With feeling."

"THEZ A LITTLE YELLER..."

"Better. See? We're making progress already."

## IN TRAINING

Sunday, 30th November 1980

I don't believe it! They all ganged up on me. I'm now stayin' at Clifford St Ledger's plush pad in Roundhay for the week so he can monitor me an' get me in shape for me auditions next week. I tried sayin' no, but Ginge an' Spud backed him up all the way.

"You'll thank us for this Dunno," said Ginge, who'd picked me pockets an' helped himself to the keys for me flat. "You're not going home until you've got yourself a place in a London Drama School. Spud's under strict instructions not to let you in the house if you try and sneak home."

"But..."

"My dear boy," Clifford gushed. "You'll be quite safe at my place. I promise not to try and steal your lush little gay cherry until after the audition. A good actor is like a prize fighter. He must get himself into shape and that means no drinking and no sex before a big show. No... it's no good looking at me like that. I wouldnt fuck you now, not for all the tea in China."

"I dote wanna fuck yer either, Cliff," I said. "But a like me own space."

"And so do I dear boy. But sacrifices must be made."

What can you do? I tried goin' home but Spud wouldn't open the door. He pretended he wasn't in, but I could hear him playin' that U2 shite on the record player, so I knew he were there.

So I went back to Clifford St Ledger's place which was just down the road from Derek's house. It was a smart ol' pad, I'll give 'im that, an' the fridge were well stocked with beer an' wine. I went to help mesen to a bottle, but Clifford was on hand like a camp old

hawk to slap me wrist.

"Naughty naughty. What did I say about no booze?"

"I thought yer were jokin'. All the best actors are alkie. So what's the problem?"

"Ah, now that's where you are wrong, sweet child," he sez, puttin' the beer back in the fridge an' helpin' himself to a glass of wine. "All the best actors didn't become alcoholics until after they had made their mark. Call it the curse of talent. If Richard Burton had behaved like he does now when he was starting out he would never have got through the door of the theatre."

He then had me do my Robespierre and sighed when I'd finished.

"Your breathing is all wrong my boy. I want you to go for a run across Roundhay Park. I'm coming with you and I want you to recite all the way."

He got his little moped out o' the garage an' then sez, "On your marks... get set... go!"

I started runnin' an' recitin' as I went.

"I can't hear you!" Clifford bellows over the sound of his backfirin' moped. I had to roar me heart out all the way across the park and back, even though me lungs were burnin'.

When we got back, I was drenched in sweat.

"Hop in the shower," he sez. "I'm going to stay in here, listening to Brahms and I want to be able to hear you recite."

Thez no fuckin' peace for the wicked. He even had me recitin' the fuckin' thing when I was havin' a shit.

At last it were time for bed.

"Not a bad day's work," sez the old queen. "Sleep well and we'll start all over tomorrow."

I was woken up in the middle of the night by a cautious hand runnin' over me privates.

"Fer fuck's sake, Cliff!" I cried. "Yer promised."

"It's for your own good," he soothed. "All the best actors are either gay or bisexual. You must open yourself up to new experiences."

"No thanks."

"Look upon it as part of your training. I practice tantric sex. I'm going to open up your chakras and I promise you I will bring you to the brink of orgasm but I won't let you actually come. You will end up ejaculating air and not semen."

"No a fuckin' won't . You can keep yer hands well away from me chakras, they don't need openin' thank yer very much."

"Suit yourself," he sez, with a pout. "It's your loss."

You can well imagine, I didn't sleep much that night, an' it wasn't coz I were busy ejaculatin' air either. It was coz I were terrified he was gonna come back. Luckily for me I think he got the message, an' I didn't see him again till breakfast.

I was gonna cook mesen a Desperate Dan scran of bacon an' eggs but he shook his head an' handed me half a grapefruit.

"This is for you," he sez.

"Cheers."

It's gonna be a long week.

## AND IN THE BLUE CORNER...

Saturday, 6th December, 1980

By the end of the week I'd come to the conclusion that if yer can't beat em, yer better fuckin' join 'em. It were a bit like Rocky in the end, well, Rocky fer swatty bastards anyway. As the week progressed I could feel mesen gettin' hungrier an' leaner an' the shame of RADA receding. I'd also learnt a proper modern speech that I were proud of an' as I ran through Roundhay park with Cliff shouting "Breathe and Speak!! Breathe and Speak!!" it really started to flow. Me Robespierre were now shit hot an' I'd managed to cram a Shakespeare under me belt too....just in case.

I were ready.... Yer don't have to look to find me...I'm here!

Cliff waved me off on the platform of Leeds City Station with a tear in his eye, clutchin' his silk hanky, reeking of cologne, like some newlywed bride sayin goodbye to her beau as he headed off for the Somme. I was armed with a key to his flat. "A little flat in Bloomsberry that I co-own with an ex boyfriend, but don't worry about him my darling. He's out in Stratford doing a season with the RSC...The shitty little cocksucker!!" I thought it best not to pry, but it felt good to have somewhere to stay, independent like. The plan was to head for Theatre Centre today, do me audition, stay at Clifford's pad an' then head over to Swiss Cottage for an audition at the Central School of Speech an' Drama the next day.

I felt totally different this time. No more intimidated workin' class boy out of his depth in the big city. I remembered back to the RADA audition an' burned with shame.

Intimidating toffs makin' me feel rubbish an inadequate. I had the same rights as them an' probably the same talent. Fuckin' London. I'm not gonna take any more shite from these southern jessies...

I got off at Kings Cross, focused. Headed for the Underground, got me ticket an made me way to the Theatre Centre, Crouch End. God, these Londoners bang on about their underground, what they didn't mention was that it din't even go to Crouch End.

"Don't blame me mate," said the irksome little cockney at Kings Cross Station. "I didn't design the fucking fing! Get off at Finsbury Park an' either get a bus or walk..." Cheeky cockney cunt.

Luckily I'd planned for this sort of thing this time round an' I got to Theatre Centre in good time. The portents were good. An old building nestled comfortably in the leafy suburbia of grand old Victorian buildings, away from the hustle an bustle of the real London.

The set up were totally different to Rada. No toff with a quiff was waiting to greet me here. I introduced mesen to a punk bird who were quite fit under all her safety pins an' black eyeliner, an' a black kid with dreadlocks an' a really thick Northern accent.

"Dunno...Three O'clock," I said.

"Hey Blood!" said the black kid, "I'm Tony T, give me some skin!"

"Eh? What yerron about? I an't gorrany..."

"No Pal, a meant lets shek 'ands, yer sound like a fellow northerner, always happy ter meet someone from the old country. So yer fancy yer chances at Theatre Centre?"

"Yeh...Why Not?" I said still playin' it cool.

"Smart," said Tony T. "Listen Pal, A dote think this place is like yer conventional drama schools. All a've got ter say ter yer is dote tek no shit. Stand up fer yersen!"

"Don't you worry about that, Tony," I said. "I will."

"Good lad Mr. D. Good lad!" Tony showed me to a waiting room occupied by three other people lookin' nervous.

"Mek yersen at home Mr. D, a'll give yer a call when its showtime!" He gave me a big smile.

"Thanks Tony."

I looked round at me three nervous companions an' surpressed a laugh. It could have been Ginge, Spud an' Sea Breeze but from a different town, an' it suddenly hit me. I didn't give a fuck. If these fuckers didn't want me or any other drama school for that matter, then big wows, who fuckin' cares? I knew that the answer was to come to London an' I knew that I wanted to be an actor, but not at the expense of somebody lordin' it over me, playin' power games. If I didn't get into drama school, then so what? There's more than one way to skin a cat.

"Mr D?" It was Tony. "Come through mate. They're ready for you."

I followed Tony through some double doors and into what seemed like a big rehearsal room with only two people in it.

"Dunno...Take a seat, Dunno."

I did. There was a long pause.

"So...Dunno," sez the feller, a chubby, smug lookin' bloke. "Tell us a little bit

about yourself."

"Fuck Off!" It just came out.

The woman, a hippyish bird with red hair, flowery skirt an' sandals, raised an eyebrow. I pressed on.

"Tell me about yourself first. I'm the stranger here, a long way from home and a know fuck all about you. I want ter be an actor. Is this the sort of place that is gonna mek that happen...or what?"

They looked at each other.

Chubby said, "Are you trying to be funny?"

"No."

"Do you think you are special...Dunno?"

"No. Not really."

"Are you a wise arse?"

"No."

"Does the world owe you a living?"

"Look," I said, standin' up. "I went over ter that there Rada, an' it woh full o' posh twats, being snobby cunts, thinking they woh better than me, all pretentious, an' ter be honest a cart be arsed wi' it. Now are you an' yer ginger mate like that too? Coz if yer are, tell me now an' a'll fuck off home an' that way we won't be wastin' anybody's time."

Chubby's face broke out into a big smile. "You're in."

"Eh?"

"You're in. Expect to receive a formal confirmation in the post next week. Congratulations Mr..." He looked down at his notes for effect "Dunno. Welcome to Theatre Centre..."

Phase one of me dream had come true. I came out with a bewildered look on me face.

"Yer look shocked," said Tony T, who was waitin' in what I suppose posh people call a vestibule. "Was he rude to you?"

"No," I replied. "He offered me a place."

"Hey, nice one! Welcome aboard, that's great news. I know you and I are gonna be firm friends."

"But...but, a dint 'ave ter do any speeches or owt...A told 'im ter fuck off an' that seemed ter swing it."

Tony T laughed. "That's Christian Yves for ya. He's unconventional. Some people love it an' thrive on it...Some don't. Listen Dunno are you headin' back to Leeds?"

"Nah, I've another audition termorrer, a'm stayin over at a mate's."

"Ace...I finish at Five, meet me back here an a'll buy yer a pint by way of congratulations."

"Yerron....A'll see yer later...."

Ten minutes later I was entering The King's Head feeling strangely euphoric. I'd come a long way from Halton Moor in a short space of time an' it had been a very interesting journey. I ordered a well earned pint.

"That's £1.10."

"No mate," I corrected him, "It's just the one pint."

"Yeah, £1.10."

"Fuckin' 'ell it's half that in Leeds!" I said.

"Go for a pint in Leeds then."

God they're all clever bastards these Londoners. These extortionate prices made me

limit mesen to one bag of crisps, nuts an' pork scratchin's but that's not a bad thing, a bit of dietary discipline never did anybody any harm.

Four pints later an' I staggered off into the early evening light to meet Tony T.

By the time I left fer Bloomsbury an' Clifford St Ledger's 'bijou apartment' I were seein' two of everything. Tony T was a hoot an' we'd had a crackin' night, whilst he filled me in on the sort of stuff that went on at Theatre Centre.

"As a said earlier, Mr. D, you either love it or hate it. They like to experiment a bit and play with you mind and perceptions. You have to immerse yourself in the whole experience..." The more he described him, the more it seemed like Chriatian Yves was Derek's older nastier brother. Talk about into the frying pan...

London's tricky enough sober, so it were well past midnight when I finally found Cliff's flat. After several attempts I got the key in the lock an' entered. Wow. So I guess this is what they mean by 'gay'. The place was immaculate and splendid. Clifford's cologne hung in the air. Maybe he paints it on the wall? I felt like a kid in a fancy hotel, staggering around from room to room being nosy like a drunken prospective buyer, until in the kitchen me eyes settled on the fridge. Two fridges! No...wait a minute....only the one. I were fuckin' starvin'. I let out a whoop a joy as me eyes settled on eggs, bacon, sausages, mushrooms...the whole works. Time for a Dunno fry up!

I found mesen a fryin' pan an' soon got to work, a generous glug of oil - I could only find summat called olive oil whatever the fuck that is - an' I threw the whole lot in, an' let the pan do the work. While that were fryin' away I went an' had a nosy at the

bookshelf in the living room, housing a load of videos in fancy covers that looked like hardbacked book covers.

A few titles caught me eye. "Cocky I and II", Oh... ace... "The Jizz Singer" Hmmm spelt wrong. Never mind, I've bin wantin' to see that for ages. Must be a pirate edition coz it's only just come out in the cinema. I love a bit of Neil Diamond. What else? "All That Jizz". Maybe the video people have got some dyslexic kid designin' the covers."Herbie Sucks Bananas," sounds like some kid's film. "Kung Fu Fisting," "Good Cock Bad Cock." Oh yes! Sounds mucky! Better an' better. Time for a bit of wrist action, I think. I slipped the video in, pressed play, pulled me trousers an' knickers down to me ankles an' settled back on the sofa to try an' rouse Dunno Junior from his drunken stupor. Once that all too familiar porn soundtrack kicked in, Dunno Junior started showin' a bit of interest, until.... Well, Good Cock Bad Cock should've been called Good Cocks Bad Cocks really coz there wasn't a single gash in sight, just lots of blokes dressed up as coppers in dark glasses, an' tight trousers showing off their big stiffies. Next thing yer know they're all lickin' each other's bottoms an' willies an' that. Now call me a prude but a strappin' fella called Officer Dong with a big hairy moustache, tryin' to put a cock in his gob is not my idea of entertainment. Nor was it Dunno Junior's. Anyway I had more pressin' concerns as the smell of burnin' was reachin' me nostrils from the kitchen.

I shuffled over as quick as possible with me trousers still round me ankles. The kitchen were full of smoky oil an' I managed to turn the pan off just before it caught fire. I were too hungry to be choosy about the burnt offerings an' I piled it all on a plate, coverin' the lot with brown sauce. Lovely.

Bollocks. Now I needed a piss. I couldn't be arsed going off to the bog so I reached over an' grabbed a milk bottle, shoved me cock in an' let the flavour flood out.

It was at this point that the flat door opened and an immaculately dressed young man and his three male friends came in. They surveyed the scene. Their mouths slowly droppin' open in horror. Frying pan smoke hung a foot below the ceiling of the whole flat, Thick an' clammy, an' there was I, in full splendour pissin' in a milk bottle, unable to contain a huge fart, rich in the flavours of Lowenbrau, crisps, nuts and pork scratchin's.

There was an eerie silence for a few moments. I looked at them, an inane drunken grin on me face, they looked at me in total shock, then from the direction of the television we heard; "That's right Officer Dong, take my cock right up your tight little ass, you know you like it!!"

## ON THE STREETS OF LONDON!

Sunday, December 7th, 1980

After we'd exchanged a few "Who the fuck are you?" "No, Who the fuck are you's?" I found mesen back on the streets. Unbelievable. London at three in the morning is beginning to hold no surprises for me. It turned out the smart 'young man' was Clifford's ex, who co-owned the flat. He was supposed to be in Stratford upon Avon doin' a season wi' the RSC. Anyway he was back for a week an' as he an' Cliff are no longer on speakin' terms he hadn't bothered tellin' him. So it's understandable that he didn't want me in the flat. He could've let me finish me scran though, an' a bit of appreciation for saving his kitchen from going up in smoke wouldn't've gone amiss either...but no.

So... Great. Me Central audition wasn't until 3.00pm an' after walkin' fer twenty minutes, I realised I couldn't face another night of wondering around London like a cunt for hours an' hours. So I found a phone box an' rang Ginge in Leeds. After an age Pauline answered, sounding groggy.

"You took yer time" I snapped.

"It's three o'clock in the morning you silly bastard, " she snapped back. "What d'yer want Dunno?"

"Put Ginge on."

"He's not here."

"Eh? Where the fuck is he?"

"Good question. I wish I fucking knew!" Brrrrrr.

Tchhh, Birds. So moody.

I tried Spud.

Surprisingly after only two rings, "Hello?"

"Spud, it's me. Listen..."

"Gerald! As I've told you before so many times! That is why the Japanese have the edge on us. Their customer service facilities are so vastly superior to ours, you just don't..."

"Spud, fer fuck's sake!"

"Oh what is it Dunno, what have you done now ?" sighed Spud, sounding bored.

"Listen Spud, am stuck in London an' am trying to get hold of Ginge."

"Where are you?"

"Fuck knows!" I squinted out into the gloom trying to focus on a street sign or a building...anything. My eyes made out a doorway, the letters above it read R...A...D...A.

"I dote believe it, I'm across the street from RADA."

"Give it up Dunno. They don't want you. Camping outside their building at all hours ain't gonna make them change their minds."

"I'll have you know that I've already got a...."

"D'yer hear that Dunno?" I could make out, faintly in the background, some sort of squelching sound..."That's the sound of fifteen year old pussy sliding up an down my cock."

"Is it fuck, yer sad cunt, that's just you with a hand in your armpit mekkin squelchy sounds."

"Well if you insist in being argumentative, Gerald!" Brrrr.

The Bastard! An' that were me last 10p. That's it. When I get back to Dunno HQ I'm kickin' that cunt out. But first I had summat far more important to do.

I left the phone booth and strode across the road. In the doorway of RADA I took me cock out and pissed all over the doors, trying ter spell "posh cunts" in urine. I'd got as far as the N in Cunts when I became aware of flashing blue lights illuminating the doorway. Yes. It was the same two coppers from a few weeks ago. Amazing isn't it? A capital city, supposedly brimful of people from other parts of England, nay, the world, yet it seemed we were the only three in it.

"Well well well, Seems like you can't stay away. D'yer mind telling us what you were getting up to in that doorway?"

"Err...Nowt."

"It didn't look like "Nowt" to us. Eee-by-gum. No excuses this time Yorkshire boy, we're taking you in, unless of course 'your driver' is gonna turn up sometime soon."

The words had no sooner left 'iz lips when round the corner came...Ginge! What the fuck was he doing here? He pulled up beside us an' got out the car.

"There you are!" he said looking at me, an' then glancing over to the coppers an' rollin' his eyes. "For goodness sake Dunno, not again. We've had half the hospital out looking for you." He turned to the coppers. "Officers, I'm very sorry, please excuse him, sometimes he's a naughty boy an' forgets to take his medication and that makes him wonder off...He's a bit..." Ginge tapped the side of his head and rolled his eyes round an round. "He's got this obsession about actors and RADA. I hope he's not caused too much trouble?"

"No sir, not at all, we were er just concerned for his well being that's all."

"Oh bless you, officer, that's very kind. Yes sometimes he can come over as perfectly normal but the truth is he's...well..." he looked at me sadly, "quite demented. Shall I take things from here?"

"If you wouldn't mind, sir."

"Thank you boys. You are a credit to the service by the way. All our coppers should be like you."

Ginge led me gently by the arm to the car, fastening me seat belt an' everything, an' with a cheery wave we set off.

"What the fuck are you doin' here?" I asked.

"It's a pleasure Dunno," Ginge replied, "Fer fuck's sake cart you do owt wi'out gettin' into trouble?"

"Eh? What yerron about?" I relayed the nights adventures to him.

"Crikey, you silly cunt, no wonder they threw you out."

"Bollocks Ginge, Make yourself at home! Those were Clifford's last words."

"Hmm fair enough" concurred Ginge. "After all you did set your own house on fire, and you are forever filling your fat face and wanking like a demented chimpanzee. I'm shocked our gay friends were so churlish."

"Yes me too.....And I didn't set me house on fire by the way. That woh Sly or Derek Wales. What *are* you doing here by the way?"

"Shagging Francesca of course, an' tying up one or two little deals...or is that tying up Francesca an' shagging up one or two deals.....A cart be sure."

"What about Pauline?"

"She didn't want to come."

"No, a mean with you shagging Francesca behind her back?"

Ginge just looked at me perplexed, "You really are an odd fellow sometimes Dunno."

We drove in silence for a bit.

"Thanks for coming to get us by the way."

"There!" said Ginge, "Now that wasn't so hard was it? It's a pleasure old chum."

I'd just shot my load when Spud rang to tell me where you were, so I was looking for something to do, anything to avoid that cuddly post sex, baby talk bollocks."

"God, when I first met you, you were this naive little kid going gaga over Carol."

"Correct. And your point is?"

"Well...Nah, nothing. By the way, I got into drama school. Start September."

"Blimey, That's great Dunno, well done. C'mon lets get some breakfast..."

## SUNDAY IN THE CITY

Sunday, December 7th 1980

"Don't know about you old chum, but you can't beat a post coital fry-up."

"Cun't agree wi you more Ginge." Me stomach had been sending frantic messages up to me brain, ever since that full plate had been whipped away from under me nose a few hours back.

"Oh really Dunno," said Ginge smiling. "Yer tryin' ter tell mi that a bit o' bum bum action took place after all? Any port in a storm eh? Didn't realise you woh that desperate."

"Give over yer carroty cock head. A can assure yer that when Clifford's ex an his mates saw me wi' mi trousers an knicks round mi ankles, mi cock in a milk bottle, letting rip a big stinky one, the last thing on their minds was a desire ter bend me over an' give me a right good bumming."

"Hmm, can't think why old sport...anyway Francesca should just about be at the caff by now, let's head over there an have our belly full o' cakes an custard."

We sped on down towards Soho.

When we got to the caff, Francesca bounded over an' threw her arms round Ginge like she hadn't seen him for a year.

"Amore mio," he said nibbling' her ear. "Two tired and hungry fellows here at your mercy, amore, any chance of two specials?"

"Certo amore...Penso io!" And she bounded off to the kitchen all ripe an' magnificent. Now I'm not being funny or owt but how the fuck does he do it? I mean he's no oil paintin' an' he's got ginger hair fer fuck's sake. But the ladies love him...I'll

just have to put it down to one of life's great mysteries.

"Come on," he said as I were moppin' up the last of me scran with a bit a toast.

"Come wi' me, a wanna show you summat..."

After he had prised himself off Francesca we got in his motor an' headed off towards North London.

Pulling up outside a Georgian row o' terraces, he announced, "Here we are." He reached in 'iz glove box an' retrieved a set of keys. "Benvenuto a casa mia!"

"Pheeeeeooooowww!" I whistled. "Very nice Ginge. It's nice and big."

"Well I've never had any complaints... Trust me, Islington is gonna be the next big thing, already there are signs on the high street of the area improving, one or two new restaurants an bars. You can always judge a high street by the quality o' totty walkin' up an down it, and here it's pretty high. So this is gonna be base fer me fer the next few years."

"Ace. Theatre Centre is just up the road from here. When can a move in?"

"Eh?" said Ginge lookin' dropped on. "How does the twelfth of never suit you?"

"Yer jokin' me? Are you tellin' me a cart move in?"

"Yes, old chap, that's exactly what I'm telling you. Look, a'm not being funny or owt but it hasn't been a year since you left home and you've already set two flats on fire."

"Pack it in. Stop exaggerating."

"Okay, look Dunno, I honestly haven't given it any thought to be honest, but a was thinking of living here on me own until a got established like. I'm in negotiations to take over an old pub that a want to turn into a pizza place so its all a bit hectic..."

"But mate, I could help you. C'mon mate, yer've got an expert pizza chef an' bar man standin' right in front a yer." I were practically battin' me eyelids at him like a bird.

"Alright mate. That's a good point. Obviously, I wunt see yer homeless when yer

just startin' Drama School, so course yer can stay here. Fer six months. An' a'll be wantin' rent from yer as well."

Why was I not surprised? Why did I also feel like he'd done me up like a like a kipper?

"Are yer not gonna go to drama school then?"

"Hmm, that's a bit of a sore point. I got a rejection from Rada too. I've got another coupla auditions comin'up. I'll play it by ear. So Central this afternoon. You gonna bother?"

"A'm not sure really. I mean, Theatre Centre's what it's all about. Tony sez they practice the method, just like Derek's always bangin' on about. Marlon Brando studied it too yer know?"

"Tell me something I don't know, Dunno."

"Aright, big brain. Anyway, a've got me heart set on Theatre Centre, but I suppose a should go along ter Central, seein' as how a've already paid fer it."

"Seeing as how I'VE already paid ferrit you mean," he corrected.

God! He can be so pedantic at times.

"Spud's got his RADA audition at twelve. I said I'd meet him there at half past to cheer him up. Bit pointless him going really. I mean if they turned me down..."

"And me," I added.

"Hmmm. Quite."

Ginge showed me round the gaff. It weren't as plush as his Leeds place coz it didn't have any furniture but the rooms were nice an' big with fireplaces in the bedrooms.

"Don't think for a minute you'll be lighting any fires in your bedroom, Dunno. Not without adult supervision, at any rate."

"Fuck off. Look, am knackered. Can a get me head down fer a bit?"

Ginge pointed at the floor. "Use your bag fer a cushion. I'll put the central heating on. You'll be warm as toast."

Ginge has no idea about the basic human body temperature. Within minutes the place were like a furnace but when I asked him to turn the heatin' down, he just tutted summat about me never bein' happy, so I stripped off to me undies an' went back to sleep.

It were mid day when he came back in an' woke me up. I'd dribbled a bit in me sleep and I was sweatin' buckets. Ginge didn't look impressed.

"God knows what Clifford sees in you?" he sez givin' me an appraisin' look.

"You look like something that should be hung up in a butcher's shop."

"Is it alright if a have a shower?"

"No it isn't. We're late. We've got ter get across town an' meet Spud in less than half an hour. So shift yer fat arse."

Tchhh. Some people just don't know the meanin' of patience.

We got back to RADA an' I saw that twat with the bouffant from my audition goin' up the steps.

"Wanker!" I yelled. He scuttled off inside. "C'mon let's chin him!" I said headin' for the entrance. Luckily for him it were then that Spud came out the door. He had a face like a smacked arse an' barely nodded at us.

"Never mind, Spud," I said. "It's a shit hole. Theatre Centre's the place ter go."

His face creased into a big grin. "Theatre Centre? Why'd I want to go to that haven for losers when the most famous drama school in the world has just offered me a place?"

"They haven't?" sez Ginge lookin' dropped on for the second time. Twice in one day, must be a record...

"Oh yes. They said something about me being a breath of fresh air and just what the school needs."

"Now yer jus' talkin' shite," I said. "Yer back in dreamland again. As if they're gonna say that."

"They did," sez Spud. "One of them said they could see me as the next Bond, and the other said I was far too classically talented for that. They think I'm going to give Laurence Olivier a run for his money."

"Tchh. Who couldn't? He's rubbish."

"Do you actually know who he is?" sez Spud, irritably.

"Course I do," I lied. "He's bin in lots o' stuff."

"Name something he's been in then."

I shrugged. "I cart remember coz everything a've seen him in has bin dead borin'."

Ginge looked at his watch. "Dunno, hadn't you better be gettin' off for your audition?"

I sighed. I was hungry again, and tired. "Fuck it. Am off ter Theatre Centre. I say we head off ter the pub an' try an' drink the Thames dry."

"For once he's not talking shit," sez Spud.

Ginge sighed. "Okay, but we're not overdoing it. We're due back at Pattons tonight."

A thought suddenly struck me. "Hey Spud since when do RADA tell you that you've got a place there an' then?"

"What are you on about? They were quick to tell you you were shite and had no

chance of getting in..."

"Yeh...But."

"And correct me if I'm wrong, but weren't you bragging on to anyone who'd listen that the Theatre Centre fer weirdos and oddballs an' people too shit for anywhere else, offered you a place there and then?"

"Yes they did."

"Well then..."

"Did they offer you a place on the spot Spud, yes or no?" said Ginge.

"Well... not in so many words, but it's obvious they want me. In fact I'll show my arse outside Leeds Town Hall if I don't get the letter confirming a place."

"I'll hold you to that," growled Ginge.

## CONQUERING HEROES

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 1980

Me an' Spud were a bit hung over when we got to college this mornin'. It was a heavy weekend all told. Our booze-up in London, came to an end when we ran out o' money an' Ginge refused to sub us anymore. Then it were off up the M1 to get to Pattons for the evenin' shift.

Clifford St Ledger were there an' when I told him a'd got in, he covered me in kisses. I ended up havin' to climb up on top o' the bar to get out of his reach.

"My sweet little chucky egg," he sez. "We must celebrate. I'm working in Sheffield tomorrow. How about Tuesday night?"

"Er... I'm not sure."

I was dreadin' this. I owed Cliff big time. He'd really built up me confidence but I wasn't too keen on havin' a night out or in, with him.

"Oh, don't play hard to get. We're going to throw a big party for you and your Irish chum Mark. Here at Pattons. Tuesday night. The drinks are on me."

Ace. A party in public. He wouldn't be able to get up to any of his new age tantric shenanigans in front of everyone.

"Cheers, Cliff," I said. "That'll be ace."

This mornin' I was feelin' the effects of weeks of tension an' the past two day's boozing. Even so, both me an' Spud were walkin' on air when we got to college.

"I cart wait ter see Derek's face when we tell 'im we got in," I said.

"It's the girls I want to tell," sez Spud. "They'll be all over us like shit on a hot afternoon."

Fuck knows what he meant by that but he were right. Sea Breeze deafened me when I told her an' then started kissin' an' huggin' me before runnin' off to get Pauline an' the others. Pauline didn't seem that fussed really, but she brightened up when we told her Ginge hadn't got in.

"About time he was cut down to size," she sez.

"Excuse me," sez Ginge, who'd been meant to overhear. "I didn't want to go to RADA. It's not really my scene. I'm thinking about Theatre Centre too."

"Sure," sez Spud. "You should get on fine there. I hear they let anyone in."

"Yer a cheeky cunt," I sez. But I wasn't angry. I don't think anyone could've spoilt my mood at that moment.

Dan Robinson was in the theatre to greet us.

"Oh boys, great news," he sez, rubbing his hands. Then he sits down at the piano and belts out, "Congratulations, and salutations...." in his best Cliff Richard voice.

"Derek's going to be thrilled to bits when he hears."

"Where is Derek?" I asked.

"Oh, he's got the day off. Apparently he went Christmas shopping to New York. Very snazzy eh? He won a competition in the Sunday People I think. I'm not too sure. I always read the Observer myself. Still, not to worry. He'll be back tomorrow. Now, a few star hops and then we'll have a run through of My Fair Lady."

Groan. I sloped off to a quiet corner an' fell asleep.

## LENNON AND LOVIN'

Tuesday 9th December 1980

I heard Spud crashin' about in the kitchen this mornin' swearin' an' cursin' about 'fuckin' cunts an' pricks' before lockin' himself in the bathroom an' havin' a shower. Time was, when Sly was livin' here, he'd have made me a cuppa in bed, but not this noisy fucker. I got up an' sloped into the kitchen.

As I was pourin' me tea out of the kettle, Spud shouted out. "Make me one, while yer at it."

It were then that I saw the letter half hidden under yesterday's left over spaghetti (His, not mine....You wouldn't find me wastin' good scan) in the bin. I noticed the RADA seal on the top an' fished it out.

*"Dear Mr. O'Hagan," it read. "Thank you for your interest in the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, unfortunately on this occasion, your application for a place has been unsuccessful. May we take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in the future... blah blah blah."*

That lying fucker. So they thought he was better than Lawrence Olivier did they? Mebbe they meant Lawrence Olivier the amdram plumber from The West Wycombe Players. I got on the phone straight away to Ginge, makin' sure I kept me voice down so's Spud wouldn't hear me.

"Ginge, a've got some news."

"What? Speak up an' stop mumblin' Dunno. Drop that Brando shit, yer not at Theatre Centre yet yer know."

"Am not mumblin'. I'm whisperin'. It's about Spud. He din't gerrinter RADA. A've jus' found the rejection letter hidden in the bin."

I were almost deafened by a gale of laughter.

"Dunno old sport, that's the best news I've heard in a long time. I knew there was no way they'd offer him a place and not me. When you get into college the donuts are on me."

"Ace."

When Spud came in for his tea, the letter was back in the bin.

"Na then Spud, What were yer swearin' about earlier?"

"Oh nothing," he sez, puttin' on the radio. "I was just doing some vocal warmups."

"Right. I suppose yer'll be gettin' yerself all in shape now for RADA, eh?"

"Mmm. I've been thinking about that. I don't really think RADA's the place for me. I'm gonna give a few other places a try before I make my decision. RADA's a bit old hat. Anyway, I didn't really approve of the way they treated you and Ginge. Fuck them. Us mates have got to stick together."

"That's nice of yer. Thez no need though. I think you'd be suited ter RADA."

"Huh."

"...*And crowds are lining up outside the Dakota Building in New York to pay their respects to John Lennon...*" said the radio announcer in a solemn voice.

"Eh? What's that?" I said.

"*The former Beatle was gunned down in front of his apartment, and was pronounced dead shortly after his arrival at hospital...*"

"Fuck me," a said. "John Lennon dead? I cart believe it."

"Me neither," sez Spud. Then he frowned. "Hang about... isn't Derek Wales in New York?"

"Aye, yeh. He won that shopping trip, din't he?"

Spud nodded. "And d'yer remember what he said about Lennon last week when Dan Robinson was playing his new LP?"

"He said summat about takin' him out an' shooting him."

"And what happens to Lennon as soon as Derek Wales sets foot in New York?"

"Someone shoots him."

"Too right, Dunno. Coincidence? I don't think so."

"Dote be daft. Thez no way."

"Why not? We already think he's the Yorkshire Ripper. What if he's bored of killing women and now he's going after rock stars too?"

It were certainly food for thought.

"Aye well, let's go inter college an' see if he's back, or if they've nicked him."

In the college we put forward our theory to Puzzler an' Ginge and the others but they weren't havin' any of it.

"They've caught the killer," sez Puzzler. "He just sat there after the shooting and let the cops arrest him."

"Well how do we know it wasn't him?" I said. "Is he back?"

Clickety-clack-clickety-clack came the tell-tale sound o' Derek's cuban heels on the tiled floor.

"That's enough chit chat, big man," sez Derek. "Into the theatre now."

As we followed him in, I whispered to Puzzler, "The cops could've caught the wrong guy."

"Drop it, Dunno."

When we were all inside, Derek does a little spin on hiz heels an' ends up pointin' at me.

"Big Man. I hear congratulations are in order."

"Aye. That's right," I said, goin' red.

"Good man. I always knew you could go far. And Mark? It's RADA for you I hear?"

"Err... yeh," sez Spud, goin' even redder than me.

"Excellent. Wonders will never cease."

"Yes Mr. Wales" said Ginge, "We're all relieved Spud got in to be honest, coz he said he'd show his arse outside Leeds Town Hall if he didn't." The Titian Tosser were lovin' every minute of Spud's discomfort.

"Hmm, well perhaps I'll write and thank the principal of RADA personally for sparing us that little horror. Now to business..."

"Ermm Derek?" It was Dan Robinson, lookin' sad an disconsolate, "D'you think perhaps a minutes silence would be appropriate in honour of Mr Lennon?"

"No, I do not!" barked Derek "And if I hear that pathetic, hippy, sanctimonious song 'Imagine' one more time today, I swear I'll scream."

I thought the rather sensitive Dan Robinson was gonna burst into tears but he just mumbled "Very well Derek..."

"Always shootin' his mouth off, upsetting the establishment. He had it coming." mumbled Derek with a sneer.

After college we all headed off to Ginge's Claremont pad to get ready for the party. Ted Smaller were there, he'd just finished servin' a client an' when he'd had a quick swill he came into the livin' room to see us, bringin' a cloud of the great smell o' Brut with him.

"I hear you two got into Drama School," he sez to me an' Spud.

"That's right," sez Spud. "Of course, it's only RADA. I think I'll still be keepin' my options open. I fancy something a bit more cutting edge."

"Well you can't get more cutting edge than Theatre Centre," sez Ted. "Will you

have a bash at getting in there?"

Spud looked uncomfortable. "Maybe. I'll have to do a bit of research into it. You hear a lot of bad publicity about that place."

Honestly, he's such a twat sometimes. Why can't he just admit he din't get into RADA instead of tryin' to steal my thunder?

There was a ring on the bell an' minutes later Ginge came in with Breezey, Pauline an' a couple of other birds. Breezey's face were still a bit bruised but she was lookin' more like her old self again. She came an' sat next to me on the sofa.

"I hear Ginge has got one o' them sauna things," she sez.

"Aye. He has."

"D'yer fancy havin' a go in it? I hear they're dead relaxin'."

Blimey...she weren't messin' about.

"Alright."

The others were all drinkin' an' chattin'. Ginge an' Ted were both tryin' to wind Spud up about RADA. Me an' Breezey went to separate rooms to get out of our clothes. I wrapped a towel around mesen an' went straight to the sauna. It were like a London fog inside but I could make out Breezey at the far end. She were stark naked, spoonin' water onto the coals. It's funny but I'd never noticed her legs before. They went all the way up to Pleasure Land. I felt Dunno Junior standin' to attention in tribute under the towel.

"Aren't yer hot in that towel?" sez Breezey.

I let it drop.

She looked at me. "That Spud's a liar," she sez.

"Eh? What d'yer mean?"

"He said yer were hung like a field mouse."

"D'yer wanna hear it squeak?" I said.

She moved closer an' we were kissin'. I pulled away. I've never liked doin' the dirty on someone else's bird, even if that person's a prize cocksucker like Derek Wales.

"What about Derek?" I asked.

"I'm through with that weirdo," she sez, pokin' her tongue between me teeth an' grabbin' a firm hold of me arse. "Your bum's firmer than it looks," she sez.

"Eh? It's solid muscle a'll have you know."

"It's another muscle I'm interested in."

I staggered back, me arse comin' into contact with the hot coals.

"Arghhh! Me arse is on fire."

"So am I, big boy," she sez, straddling me.

I had no option but to go through with it. I'm tellin' yer now, sauna sex in't for me. Too bloody hot. It's like torture.

"Do you always come so quickly?" she sez after I was spent.

"When it's an emergency I do," I sez, rubbing me scorched arse. "I don't suppose yer wanna rub some ointment into it do yer?"

"Will baby oil do?"

"Sounds good ter me."

It wasn't. I was in agony. Still, after a shower, an' a generous sprinkle of Ted's Brut, I felt more like me old self.

Ginge had laid out a powder blue pair of slacks on the bed along with a brown box leather jacket. Very Brian Ferry I've got to say. By the time Breezey had gelled me hair I looked like irresistible.

"Very sexy," she sez. "Fancy another bit of hanky panky?"

"Not just yet, luv," I sez, squirming uncomfortably.

The door opened an' Ginge walked in. He stares at me for a minute mouth open.

"For fuck's sake Dunno," he sez. "Do I have to nail everything down in here? What are yer doin' wearing my new outfit?"

"I thought yer wun't mind if a borrowed it," I said.

He shook his head. "Borrowed it? I'll be lucky if you don't split those kegs. I'm half your size."

I started to take them off but he stopped me.

"Leave 'em on, yer big twat. I don't want 'em after your arse has been in them."

He stomped off in a right old mood.

"Seeing as how yer panties are down... shall we?" sez Breezey.

It woulda been bad manners to say no.

This time, in a comfy bed, takin' me time I were more able to take in what I was seein'. Underneath the bruises, those blue eyes an' little nose had something that a lad could quite easily fall in love with if he wasn't careful. Did I really want a big relationship right now though? I'd be movin' to London within the year, surely I was just lookin' to get me heart stomped on an' kicked to shit? I'd have to play things cool like...very cool.

"So...." she sez, straddlin' me, an slidin' slowly down me cock, drivin' me wild with desire, "When can I move in with you?"

"Tonight, love! I wanna be with yer every hour, every minute, every second!"

I know. I know. It was the heat of the moment. But it's those kind of moments that can change the world. Luckily fer me she started to laugh.

"You big soppo date. I was only messin' about. Me an' you, live together? Me Dad'd have yer castrated."

We kissed. I was gettin' to like this... a lot.

After another shower we joined the others downstairs for summat to eat before headin' off to Clifford's party at Patton's. Ginge an' Ted had been loadin' Spud up with vodka an' he'd finally come clean about RADA and was rockin' backwards an' forwards on a kitchen stool.

"I'm a failure. My Mum always said I'd amount to nothing at best. Why didn't I listen to her? She's always right. Mummy always knows best. When am I going to get that through my thick skull?"

Ted was laughin' away in the background, but Ginge was lookin' guilty an' a bit ashamed of hissen.

I sat down next to Spud. "Listen, Mark," I said. "Those plums at RADA don't know owt. They wunt recognise talent if their life depended on it. Look at that Olivier feller they say is so good. Bollocks. You're way better than him. Just you wait. You'll get in somewhere way better than RADA."

He looked up at me, with grateful eyes. "You're beautiful, Dunno. I mean it. You're fuckin' beautiful."

"Aye well..."

Ted an' Ginge were wettin' 'emselves laughin' now, but Spud didn't pay 'em any mind.

"This man might not look like much," sez Spud pointin' at me. "I don't care if everyone else thinks he's a stupid fat wanker. He's my best friend. And I love him. If he was gay, I'd let him fuck me. Yes. That's how much I love him. You're not gay are you, Dunno?" he asked, looking slightly worried.

"No. Yer alright, Spud."

"Thank fuck for that."

"Come on Guys an' Gals," sez Ginge. "Let's be going. We don't want to be late for the party."

"But a haven't had owt ter eat yet," I said.

"You can stuff yer face at Patton's," said Ginge. "I'll make you one o' yer favourite pizzas."

"With mustard an' extra peperoni?"

"Aye."

"Then what are we waitin' for?"

## PARTY ANIMALS

Tuesday December 9th, 1980 (PM)

When we got ter Pattons I peeked in the window an' saw a big banner stretched across the room readin' 'CONGRATULATIONS DUNNO.' The place were full of bunting an' balloons too.

"You know Clifford's gonna expect payback for all this don't you?" Ginge warned me. "I would say at least a blow job.....Swallowin' an all, not spittin'."

"Arrr... yer jus' jealous coz a'm the only one of us who's gorrinter drama school. Look at yer. Yer've gone ginger wi' envy."

"Don't be ridiculous," harumphed Ginge. "I wouldn't go to Theatre Centre even if I fuckin' owned it. It's a loser's haven, full of Brando wannabes." He were desperately tryin' not to sound annoyed.

"Alright, Alright! Keep yer big ginger wig on. Oh, an' pass us one o' those sour grapes whilst yer at it..."

I went to the door but there were a big bruiser in a dicky bow blockin' the way, lookin' right hard an' thinkin' he was one of the Kray twins.

"Sorry, pal. Private party," sez the bouncer.

"Eh?"

"Private party. No fuckin' riff raff. Hop it, you lot," he sez.

"It's his fucking party you mindless moron!" comes Clifford St Ledger's unholy roar from behind him. "Let them in you big galloot."

"Oh." The stone faced brute cracked an embarrassed smile an' stepped aside. "Have a good evening."

"Fuck you!" sez Spud, who were too pissed to know better.

The bouncer may have been a paid lackey of Clifford St Ledger but that didn't mean he had to stand for any cheek from Spud with his lacquered hair an' mascara. He grabbed Spud by the throat an' began throttlin' him.

"The only place your goin' Irish, is home in a box. Nobody talks to me like that." Spud's eye's started to boggle an roll, an' his tongue lopped out of his mouth.

I went back an' tapped the bouncer on the shoulder. "Let him go pal. He din't mean any harm. 'Fuck you' is a compliment in Ireland. Honest. He woh just bein' friendly."

"Drop the pretty boy now you fucking marvellous and magnificent, but mindless gorilla!" roars Clifford, waddling over in a cloud of scent. "Honestly, Terence, darling. Down Boy! I hired you to stop trouble, not to beat up the guests of honour."

Terence dropped Spud an' nodded at Clifford. "Terribly sorry Mr. St. Ledger, sir. Just one o' them misunderstandings."

"Are you all right, my poor dear child?" sez Clifford, massaging Spud's throat for him. "Shall I kiss it better?"

"I'm okay thanks," sez Spud tryin' ter ease himself out o' Cliff's grasp. Not easy.

"Then it's drinks all round my little cherubs!" sez Clifford, clapping his hands together as if he expected a nymph to come out an' dance the dance o' the seven veils for us. As it was, he wasn't too far wrong.

Carol came over with a tray of tequilas. God, she looked terrific although when she was handin' Ginge his drink she spilt it all down his red satin shirt. Red shirt with ginger hair? I may be from Halton Moor but when someone looks like a cunt....?

"For fuck's sake, Carol!" he sez. "Have you any idea how much this shirt cost?"

She pretended not to hear an' sauntered off to fetch more drinks, givin' me a wink as she passed.

"Hello...Bzzzz....Tchakkk...Can you hear me? Testing? Testing? One-Two One-Two Rrrrrrrratssss!" Puzzler had taken over the PA system and was gettin' ready to put his crap Deejay skills into use. "This is for the man of the hour, Lord Dunno of Halton Moor. It's 'Work Till You're Musclebound' by those loveable scruffs, Spandau Baaaaaallet...."

I felt a hand in mine. I turned an' looked into Breezey's eyes.

"Shall we dance?"

"Eh? Sorry love, I can't dance ter this shite."

She went off an' grabbed Spud an' the two o' them pouted away on the dance floor. I felt a pang o' jealousy when I saw him coppin' a feel of her arse but she pushed his hands away an' he lost interest an' sauntered back to the bar, leavin' her dancin' with Puzzler. I knew Puzz wouldn't try owt on with her coz he isn't really into doin' the dirty on his mates, unlike Spud who thinks bein' a prize cunt adds to his charm.

"Let's have some more o' that tequila," sez Spud.

"Coming right up my boy," sez Clifford. "Has anyone ever told you, you look just like how Dorian Gray should look?"

"No," sez Spud pursing his lips. "Do you think I could play him in the movie?"

"My dear fellow," sez Cliff. "I'm thinking of staging an operatic version. Would you be interested?"

"Well, I can't really sing..."

"Don't worry about that my darling. Another tequila, dear heart?" sez Cliff to me.

"No ta. A pint o' Tets'll do me."

Carol was there again, not messin' about, puttin' the drink in front of me with a sexy little wink. The minx. I'd forgotten just how beauuuuuutiful she was. All brown skin, firm breasts an' twinklin' eyes. I took a deep draught... Ahhhh. Nectar.

Spud were knockin' back the tequila like nobody's business.

"To Dunno!" he roars. "We all thought he was a loser but he showed us."

"What d'yer mean you all thought I was a loser?" I asked, but he wasn't listenin'.

He was too busy reachin' for another drink.

"Drownin' his sorrows," sighs Ginge, sippin' a clear drink with a green lump of summat in it. It looked revoltin'.

"What the fuck are yer drinkin'?" I asked.

"Vodka Martini," he sez. "Shaken. Not stirred. Try some."

I had a sip but it tasted like earwax to me. "Aye. Well a think I'll stick ter beer mate."

"BZZZ...SKREEE... Hello... here's one for Spud O'Hagan...Scary Monsters and Super Creeps by the thin white Duke himself..."

"Oh fuck," sez Spud suddenly, "I don't feel too good."

He'd gone a weird shade of green.

"I'm not surprised," sez Ginge. "Mixin' tequila with vodka. You silly cunt. Go an' chuck it up."

"Do you want me to come and mop your brow?" sez Clifford, puttin' his hands inside Spud's shirt, an' coppin a furtive little feel of his nipple. "You're feverish, my poor little lost boy."

Spud pushed him away. "I'll be okay... I just need some fresh air."

He staggered out, an' tripped over the foot of the bouncer an' went sprawlin' in the doorway.

"Where are you goin'?" asks Ginge as I made me way to the door.

"Ter check up on Spud."

"Leave him. The silly cunt'll be fine when he sleeps it off."

"I wanna check he's all right. He's a mate. I'm not leavin' him in that state."

I picked Spud up an' helped him outside. The cold air was like a slap in the chops.

"I'm gonna be sick," sez Spud.

"Do it in the car park then," I said, leadin' him round the back of the restaurant at arm's length, coz I didn't wanna get Ginge's snazzy slacks covered in spew.

I stepped back while he painted the side of the buildin' with puke an' I decided to have a piss. It were one o' them full bodied ones that feel almost as if yer coming. I thought it'd be a good idea to hose Spud's sick off the wall with me hot piss. While I were splashin' away I noticed a familiar car parked in front of me. There was only one cunt I knew with an MG with that number plate. Derek fuckin' Wales.

It seemed like that bastard was stalkin' me all over Leeds an' I was gettin' sick of it; burnin' me fuckin' house down an' gettin' me mates arrested. Okay, he might be a teacher but we weren't in class now. I strode over to the car an' pulled open the door.

"We all know yer out here. Yer might as well come in an' have a drink."

Derek's head was in his hands an' he was wailin' like a drunken fishwife. When he looked up at me his face were wet with snot an' tears.

"Fuckin' 'ell, Derek, what's up?"

"She's dead, Dunno," he sez, hiz eyes wide an' starey. "I killed her. Her blood is on my hands, Dunno and I can't get it off..." He were gettin all hysterical an' not in the funny way.

"Eh? What yerron about Derek?"

"She's dead Dunno...I've killed her....Me! I've fuckin' killed her and I can't bring her back."

Fuck me. This was the moment we'd been waitin' for. In fact it was the moment the whole north of England had been waitin' for. We'd been right all along, after all the too-in' an' fro-in' Derek Wales really was the Yorkshire Ripper. And I was takin' the role of Father Confessor. I'd be famous...a hero... the man who collared the biggest bastard in the history of English crime. Who knows, maybe I'd even get to play meself in the movie. Or better yet, maybe Brando himself would fight tooth an' nail to play me in the movie. Marlon Brando IS 'Dunno' In "Derek Wales is the Ripper, an' I caught the cunt!" At a cinema near you from Friday... I'd have to play it right careful here an' not scare him off, I mused.

"Tell me about it, Derek."

"I can't get her blood off my hands, son." He waved 'em in front of me.

"Yer hands are fine, Derek. I can't see owt wrong wi' them."

"I was speaking metaphorically you twerp," he said, soundin' a bit more like his old self.

"Oooh... fuck! Here comes a big bit..." sez Spud behind me. This were followed by retches and the splashing sound of hot sick hitting cold pavement.

"Who've yer killed Derek," I said again, tryin' to ignore Spud and sound calm.

"Sandy. She's dead."

"Eh? That bird I shagged in York? Yer dint even know 'er. Shit! Yer din't shag her as well did yer?"

"What are you talking about Dunno? My wife, Sandy."

"Oh thank fuck fer that! No....er ..a mean, Oh my God....What's happened?"

"I've just identified her body. Heroin overdose. Oh God." He started shudderin' again. "I killed her Dunno. I shoul've tried harder. I should have stayed with her until she was clean. But I had my reputation to think of. She was lovely you know."

I'd met his wife. She might well of had a heart of gold but I doubt anyone's described her as lovely in years.

"Am sure she was," I soothed. "Is there anythin' else? Did you kill anyone else?"

He looked at me askance. "What do you mean?"

I had to ask. "The Ripper murders? Friga?"

"No I fucking didn't, you moron," he snaps. "And I didn't shoot John Lennon either, you clown."

"Oh...right... good." It's horrible but I was really disappointed. "And yer din't really kill yer wife either. Did yer? I mean you weren't the one sellin' her drugs. Were you?"

"Of course I fucking wasn't."

"Then yer've nowt ter worry about." I can't believe it but I actually felt sorry for him. I never knew he had a heart, but here he was cryin' buckets over someone who'd hated him even more than we did.

"Come on in an' get warm. It'll do yer good ter be around some friendly faces."

"I... no. I shouldn't. It's your party. Your hour of glory. I'd only spoil it."

I don't think I'd ever heard him say a truer word but I couldn't leave him in this state.

"Rubbish," I lied. "It's all down ter you that I got in there really. You've bin a

massive inspiration fer all of us." God I talk such shit sometimes, but the poor fucker needed an ego boost.

"Yeh? Yeh. I suppose I have. I... I always believed in you, Dunno."

I helped him out of the car an' watched as he tripped over Spud who were still on his hands an' knees moanin' to his Gaelic gods.

"What's that big Irish clown doing down there?"

"Bein' sick," I explained.

"Best place for him. The gutter," muttered Wales.

"We are all in the gutter Mr. Wales...But some of us are looking at the stars!" exclaimed Spud from his prone position.

"There's only one thing worse than an idiot....and that's an Irish idiot," said Derek with gusto. I felt relieved. The old Derek was coming back to life. Thank fuck for that. I was gettin' worried he might wanna be me pal full time or summat.

"I'll see you in there Spud," I said. "Are you all right?"

"I'm dyin'," sez Spud, lookin' up.

Wales looks at me with a crazy glint in his eye. "Maybe this is my chance to redeem myself."

"Eh? How d'yer mean?"

"I couldn't save my Sandy. Maybe I can save Big Mark."

"But thez nowt wrong wi' him. He's jus' had a bit too much ter dr..."

There were no talkin' to him. Derek was sitting across Spud's chest, slapping his face.

"Mark! Mark!" he was calling. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

"Three? Two? Ow! Stop hitting me. I don't fucking know."

"Open wide, Mark. There's a good boy." Derek was forcing his fingers down Spud's throat now. "Gahhh! Bite me again and I'll break your fucking neck, boy."

Derek's therapy session worked. Spud hurled up the remaining contents of his stomach. Derek snatched his hand away and looked at it in disgust.

"I dunno about blood but thez plenty o' puke on yer hands now, Mr. Wales." He looked at me, fiercely, an' then his face broke inter a grin an' he was laughing.

"Too true. Mister Dunno. Too true." He wiped the offending hand on Spud's coat an' then dragged him to his feet. "You able to walk, Irish?"

Spud nodded. He looked dazed an' confused but the cold an' the throwing up had sobered him to some extent. "Aye. Sorry about chuckin' up all over you."

"Don't mention it."

We walked through the doors an' back into the party. There were a moment's silence as everyone stared at us, an then from Puzzler's corner:

"Skreeee....Shcwum...schwummm...it's hot requests time and they don't come much hotter than this one for Mister Derek Wales. It's those rugged Irish rocksters Thiiiiin Lizzy and ....There's a Killer On The Loose... again.... rrrrrraaatssssahhh!"

Much to my disgust, Breezey made a beeline straight for Derek when we came in the door, gushing all over him like some lovesick teenager, which I suppose in hindsight is what she was.

"You've bin cryin'. You look half perished wi' cold. What's the matter Derek? Come an' have a drink."

Once he'd bought her a pint of pernod an' black she sat on his lap in a corner, whisperin' sweet nothin's in his ear. Lookin' at 'em through my jaundiced eyes it was hard to

believe that jus' minutes ago he'd been heartbroken an' wracked with guilt over the death of his wife. I know I'd told him that comin' in would cheer him up, but I hadn't expected one of those miracle cures.

"Tchhh! Birds!"

I looked around. Spud was attractin' sympathy at the bar an' Clifford was strokin' his hair. Ginge was snoggin' away with Pauline, an' a group of others were dancin' away to "I'll Play The Wild Rover" which Puzzler had just stuck on. I turned around an' there was Carol, gorgeous as ever, lookin' daggers at Ginge an' Pauline.

"He lost out when we split up," she said. "Once you've had a taste o' Carol, no other bird comes up to scratch."

"Yeh, so it seems..." I said, noddin' over to Ginge and Pauline all over each other. "I dote think Ginge has ever got over you!"

I know I should've known better. Carol was a Class A gold digger with the morals of a wayward rattlesnake. But then again, it isn't as if I had any money or owt to lose. Also, in her favour she was prob'ly the most beeeeeeeuuuuutiful girl I've ever seen an' she smelt of honey and ice cream. As I looked at her in her tight T shirt, I got to wonderin' if she smelled like that all over and if she tasted anywhere near as good as she looked.

"Could you gimme a hand wi' some cans in the store room?" she asks.

"It's mi night off," I said. "But go on then. Seeing as it's you."

"So where are these cans then?" I ask as we go into the store room.

She kicks the door shut with the heel of her shoe an' pulls her T-shirt over her head.

"Here they are," she sez. "A nice pair of tinned peaches. Wanna bite?"

"Mmm. Do I ever. Yer know, a might 'ave some cream fer those in a few minutes."

God they were tasty. After a few minutes munchin' I hoiked up her skirt an' plonked her down on me lap. That's the beauty of these petite girls, you can hoist 'em on an' off with the bare minimum of effort.

We were in full throttle when the storeroom door opened an' in came...Ginge an' Pauline.

"Oh..." sez Ginge. "Fuck... sorry...I...Dunno?"

"Er...hi?"

He scowled at me. You'd've thought he was still goin' out with Carol.

"Fuck off, Ginge," sez Carol.

He backed out quick, shuttin' the door behind him. Okay, she might've been shaggin' me to use me as some sort of revenge on Ginge, an' yeah, the thought of Ginge being here previously, spurting away, fillin' her full of his ginger love yoghurt should've put me off. But it didn't. I'd had a few, an' I tell yer Carol's bin round the houses a few times an' knew what she were doin'. She was drivin' me mad with desire, gyratin' hersen on top of me. I were in the throes of rampant desire when the door bursts open an' in came the grievin' Derek Wales an' the wanton Sea Breeze. For fuck's sake. I'll be sellin' fuckin' tickets next.

"Ah, sorry big man, Didn't realise you were in here," said Wales, his eyes feastin' on Carol's magnificent tanned, naked body. "Maybe we should pull in along side...show you how to do it properly?"

"Sure, Derek," I said. "Assuming yer can tear yersen away from yer inconsolable grief...If it's all the same to you Mr. Wales, a bit of privacy wun't go amiss right now."

"Yeh? Yeh, alright big man, whatever you say, come on Catherine my dear let us wait outside." He shot me a lascivious look. "They'll be through in a minute."

"Not if I've got anything to do with it..." whispered Carol in me ear. "Now where were we? Ah yes!" An' she started movin' rhythmically again, her hips movin' slowly round an round. This was turnin' out to be one o' the best shags I've ever had. Ginge must be mental. I were desperately tryin' to think of horrible things to stop me cummin'; Spud being sick, the time Sly sat on the glass coffee table when I was lyin' underneath for a laugh and his dirty ring smeared poo everywhere, but it were no good, Carol had me just where she wanted me an' I felt like I were gonna explode. She sensed it too.

"Come on then!" she whispered hoarsely. "Come on then!"

The door burst open again.

"Don't worry my darling boy...nobody will see us in here..."

It was Clifford St Ledger...an' Spud!

"As I've already told you, Christian Yves is a dear friend and he will do anything I tell him. So you just do this one little thing for me, and I promise you a place at Theatre Centre will be yours."

"Uh .....uh.....uh.....Aaaaaahhhhhhh!!" I exploded with desire, shootin' me load right up Carol for what seemed like ages.

I looked over to where an expectant Clifford St Ledger couldn't mask his disappointment. On his knees in front of him was Spud on the verge of taking down his fly. He looked relieved and embarrassed.

"Soz about that," I said, me face flushed with relief an' happiness. "But it's my party an I'll cum if I want to..."

"It's not what you think," sez Spud lookin' more out of it than ever. "We weren't doing anything..."

I turned to Clifford an' shook my head. "Look Cliff, a'm dead grateful an' all that fer all yer've done fer me, but dote yer think yer tekkin' advantage o' Spud? He's off his

nut. Look at 'im."

"Getting a little jealous, are we deary?" sez Clifford. "Don't worry, I still love you, my diamond in the rough. This is just sex. Pure animal sex. It doesn't mean a thing."

I turned to Carol. "Can yer help me get Spud out of here?"

She gives me a wink. "Course I can."

Between us we hefted Spud out of the store room.

"Spoilsports," said Clifford, but to his credit he didn't seem that put out.

"I'm okay," sez Spud. "I'm okay. Honest I am."

"Let's put him in a corner out o' mischief," I sez.

We put him in Bruce's office under the desk where hopefully Clifford wouldn't be able to find him.

"You sleep it off, love," sez Carol. "I'll pop in later to check you're all right."

"Is that a promise?" sez Spud, lyin' flat on his back.

"Course it is."

Fuckin' 'ell. I wouldn't put it past Carol to make a move on Spud too. She's cock mad that one.

I made me way back out front. There was a commotion at the door. The bouncer was tyin' someone up in knots. I pushed me way through the crowd to see what was goin' on. I couldn't believe my eyes.

"Sly!"

## ALL FOR ONE

Tuesday, 9th December 1980

The bouncer was doin' jus' that, bouncin' hiz head off the floor.

"Sly!" I called out.

The bouncer looked up, with a disappointed frown. "You know him?"

"Aye. I do."

"Typical." He let go his grip, an Sly dropped to the floor like a big bag o' jelly.

I ran forward an' clasped him in a big bear hug.

"Sly! Ace ter see yer! Where the fuck've yer bin? How's yer Mam?"

Sly hugged me back. "She died?" His lip were wobblin'.

"Shit. Really?"

"Yeah Last month? Cancer? It was quite peaceful at the end? Howzabout a drink then, Il Duce?"

Ginge and Puzzler came over to join us at the bar as we ordered a round of pints.

"So what was Edinburgh like?" asks Ginge. "What's the property market like up there?"

"They've got houses?" sez Sly. "So it's probably all right? It's a good place to get pissed? And the totty's to die for?"

"Sounds all right," I said. "So when are yer movin' back in? Spud's got your room at the moment but yer welcome ter the sofa until a kick 'im out"

"Excuzay-moi," sez Ginge. "But I don't think it's your place to go around sub-letting my property. I decide who goes and who stays than yer very much."

"Ah, come on, Ginge," a sez. "This is Sly. We belong tergether like cheese an' ham."

"More like cheese and cock, in your case" sez Ginge. He were obviously still

sore at me gettin' off with Carol. "Ner, seriously, it's good to have you back, mate. The business needs you."

"Actually, I'm not sure I'll be doin' that line of work anymore? And I'm not sure if I'll be able to move back in with you?" sez Sly.

"Eh? What yer on about?" I felt a bit dropped on. "Course yer can."

"Well... yer see... it's not just me? I'm not flying solo anymore, amigos? I... I... errr... I got married yesterday? This is our honeymoon?"

"Eh?" I felt a swell of rage burnin' deep down in me guts. "Now am not havin' that. Yer cart jus' go gettin' married an' not invite me. I shudda bin yer best man. It's not on. Yer bang out o' order. Tell me yer jokin' before a chin yer."

"It's no joke, kemo sabe? Oh fuck? That reminds me? She's out there in the taxi? I told her to stay warm while I checked to see if you guys were here?"

"Well go an' fuckin' get her then," sez Ginge, slapping Sly on the back. "Let's get the lucky lady a drink!"

"Aye. Go on then," I sez. I had a funny feelin' that I wasn't gonna get on with the new Mrs. Black. Me Dad always warned me that wives have a way o' spoilin' friendships between good mates.

Puzzler hurried back to the turntable to choose a special disc for Sly.

"One-Two , One -a ,Two-a ...and here's a little something for an absent friend who is absent no longer...SKREEEE..... Sly Black, welcome back..." And on comes the theme for the Lone Ranger. Where Puzzler gets his records from is beyond me.

There he was back in the doorway, whisperin' summat to the tallest bird I've ever seen. She were stood in the shadows an' seemed a bit reluctant to come inside.

"Ladies an' gents?" sez Sly. "Can we have a warm round of applause, and a big

welcome for the new Mrs. Black?"

She stepped inside smilin' an' demure. An assortment of gasps and sharp intakes of breath rippled through the bar.

Friga.

Puzzler pushed his way through the crowd of well wishers an' threw his arms around Friga's neck. The ice queen thawed an' gave him a big kiss.

"Justin. How lovely to see you."

"You're not dead?"

"I don't think so, no," she sez, givin' herself a little pinch to make sure.

The smile faded from Puzzler's face. "But you married him? I... that is... I..."

Friga turned to her husband an' squeezed his hand. "Sly is the last of a dying breed of men. A romantic. He is the most romantic man I never saw before."

"Eh?" sez me chokin' on me beer. "Come again? Romantic? Him?"

"He found me. I found him. Two lost people who found each other. When he found me, I knew he was the one. He said he could not live without me. He tell me he has searched every city in the country looking for me."

I couldn't believe me ears. Friga was one o' the coolest birds I'd ever met but here she was fallin' for Sly's twaddle.

"He went up ter Edinburgh ter look ....."

"For you, my sweet," sez Sly, cutting me off, expertly, "I couldn't face sitting here in Leeds not knowing if you were alive or dead?"

Breezey an' Pauline pushed forward an' dragged Friga off inter their own girly corner. Puzzler an' me rounded on Sly.

"What the fuck have you been tellin' her?" sez Puzzler who looked like he were about to burst into tears.

"Hey, steady on, wild man? Otherwise Borneo will want you back?" sez Sly, puttin' his hand on Puzzler's shoulder. "I just told her what she needed to hear? I didn't see the harm in letting her know we were worried sick about her? We were, weren't we?"

"Aye but that int the reason yer were in Edinburgh, was it?" sez Puzzler.

"No? Look? At first I was handin' her a line? I wanted to shag her? God knows she is a top drawer piece of ass right? But then... well I think a'm in love? You know? Funny tummy? Not lookin' twice at other birds? So... well I...I needed cheering up with Mum? You know? I let Friga know eventually the real reason , and she was a rock. So supportive in my hour of need? I was lonely? I mean finding her like that? It was like destiny? Heavy duty cosmic shit? It was meant to be?"

"So how did yer find her?" I asked.

"I was busking? Well, juggling? Outside Edinburgh Castle and I saw her? She was doing the tourist thing? I just ran after her, told her I'd caught up with her at last. The next thing we knew we were in paradise and I was up to the buffers in love juice? It's the most romantic thing that ever happened to me? I want to be with her forever and ever?"

"But what woh she doin' in Edinburgh anyway?" I asked.

Sly shrugged. "It's complicated? Her family? Bigger freaks than Haile Selassie? They're members of some Danish cult over in Denmark? They don't approve of Friga doing acting? Her brothers came and took her back to Denmark against her will?"

"Something doesn't add up here," sez Puzzler. "Since when was Edinburgh in Denmark?"

"Hey Puzzle Boy....I thought you were the brains of the outfit? Lend me your ears Duderlino's an be enlightened" sez Sly. "She took a bar job in Arhus, and when

she'd got enough money she got a boat out over to Scotland. She figured her folks'd never find her up there? I'm tellin' you, brothers, it was the best thing ever, finding Friga. Mum loved her? Friga really made her comfortable? She's an angel sent from heaven above?"

To be honest, I wasn't happy. I wanted things back how they had been. Friga'd never'd been keen on me. I decided to make an effort. If I was to get Sly back then I'd have to get pally with his missus. I went over to where she was sittin' chattin' to Breezey and Pauline.

"Care ter dance?" I asked.

She looks down her nose at me. "Yes. That would be nice. Justin! Come and dance with me."

Puzzler came boundin' over like a happy puppy an' off they went boppin' around the room.

I looked at Breezey. "So," a sez. "I thought yer said Derek was a weirdo."

"He is," she sez, battin' her baby blues at me. "But he's a weirdo who knows how to turn me on. He's not one o' those three pushes and he's off type o' guys. He knows what buttons to press. He can keep goin' an' goin.... No offence love."

"None taken..." I wondered if Derek'd be so keen ter keep on goin' an' goin' if he was sat on top o' a tray of hot coals. Somehow I doubted it.

I made me way to the bar an' ordered a pint of Tets for the road. It was time to go. Things were changing. As I looked about I realised we'd come to the end of an era. I was on me way to London. Sly was married. Derek was free of his demon wife and free of our suspicions too.

Sly sat down next to me. "Hey Gran Hermano? Head Honcho? Main Man...?Oldest and most dearest friend? I think Friga wants ter spend the night over at Pauline's? Girly girly night? How about lettin' me crash over at the pad? For old time's sake?"

I felt a lump in me throat. "Mate. Thez nowt a'd like better. We'd better fetch Spud. He's crashed out in Bruce's office."

We went into the office but it were empty.

"Fuck. Not another disappearing student," I sighed. "Yer better not marry this one if he turns up somewhere."

"I won't?" sez Sly. "He's all yours? I know how partial you are to a bit o' bum-cock action?"

I chuckled, "Dote start Sly..."

We looked around so Sly could say goodbye to Ginge but he'd vanished too.

"Fuck 'em. They'll turn up," I said. "Everyone always does around here."

We stepped out into the crisp Leeds night air and headed off towards home. As we made our way down the Headrow, we' stopped in astonishment. A crowd had gathered outside the Town Hall. At first I thought it were some late night street theatre or summat, but as I pushed through the crowds I could see it was Spud, who were standin' astride one of the stone lions wigglin' his bare arse to all an' sundry while wavin' his undies around his head like a mini lasso. Ginge, Ted Smailler and Clifford St Ledger were standin' at the bottom o' the steps cheerin' him on, laughin' like bastards and inciting the crowd into clappin' an chantin', "SPUD!SPUD! SPUD!"

"Hey, way to go Spud?" cheers Sly. "You let it all hang out? D'yer know what mate?" he sez turnin' ter me. " I've been stuck in mi undies all day?"

Before I could stop him, he'd pulled down his kegs , whipped off his shirt an' went and joined Spud, straddlin' the other lion and riding it like a jockey. The large crowd of pissed up pub leavers were lovin' every minute. I looked at Ginge an' Ted, an' they looked at me. Ginge nodded, an' we stripped down to the buff an' went an' joined Spud an' Sly on top of the Town Hall Steps.

We stood side by side in a line, and I shouted at the top of me voice, "All fer One?"

Spud, Sly, Ginge and Ted Smailler shouted back, "And one fer all!!"

On cue we all bent at the waist, and to the sound of approaching sirens, showed our arses to the good people of Leeds. We turned an' puttin' our arms round each other's shoulders took a bow as the crowd burst into spontaneous applause an' laughter.

Sly turned to me an' said, "Did yer know you should give your testicles an' unrestricted airing for at least three hours a day? It helps to up your sperm count? It's worked for me? I cum like a riot hose? Thez no stopping me?"

"That's nice ter know Sly," a sez. "That's really nice ter know."

**The end**