

# The Master's Boy

By Phil Willmott

Freely adapted from Strindberg's Miss Julie

Setting:

The general strike of 1926.

A store room at the back of a London bus depot. Night.

Characters:

Charles 20s Upper class

Sandy 20s Lower class

George 20s Lower class

IN THE DARKNESS THE SOUND OF SOMEONE BREAKING AND ENTERING.

GEORGE, NICKNAMED MUSTARD, EMERGES FROM A PILE OF RAGS UNDER A WORK BENCH. HE PICKS UP A SPANNER WITH WHICH TO ATTACK THE INTRUDER. HE IS FRIGHTENED. HE TRIES TO SPEAK BUT HIS VOICE IS DAMAGED IN SOME WAY AND THERE IS ONLY THE FAINTEST GRUNTS.

SANDY ENTERS CAUTIOUSLY.

SANDY: Don't worry Mustard, It's only me. Blimey, anyone'd think this place was the bank of bloody England not a bus garage. They've got a soldier guarding the gate! Who had ever thought I'd have to break into me own workplace. (HE TAKES THE SPANNER FROM MUSTARD) Now that's not a good idea is it? I told you to lie low if you want to stay here. (SOFTER) Did them toffs frighten you this morning? Well listen, the word is they'll be driving the busses again tomorrow too, trying to break the strike. Remember I told you about the strike?

GEORGE; Stru -

SANDY: That's right. Well, we can't let them get away with it. We can't let them bring us to our knees. So I want you to do a bit of tampering with the engines, something not easy to spot, make it so they won't get further then the end of the road.

GEORGE LOOKS BLANK.

Do you understand? Stop the engines working properly. You can do it. Mustard? Do you understand?

MUSTARD RUNS INTO HIS ARMS LIKE A FRIGHTENED CHILD GOING TO A PARENT.

CHARLIE ARRIVES AND WATCHES THEM, UNSEEN, FROM THE SHADOWS.

SANDY COMFORTS GEORGE.

Alright, Alright, this has been very confusing for you. All the comings and goings, new faces, we'll go through it slowly. But try to concentrate Mustard, for the love of God. We haven't got much time.

Look the prime minister, Mr. Baldwin right, he says... well, we've got show him what the working men of this country went through in the war...

GEORGE LOOKS BLANK.

(TRYING TO REMIND HIM) Look, the war, all that... what you went through... in the... in... what was it all for eh? We were fighting the Hun so we could have a future right? But now they... Baldwin... the owners, the... them... the toffs... they're trying to deny us that future. They want to grind us down, keep us in our place like before. The miners, right. They're offering them less wages, locking them out of the pits.

These are people with nothing, nothing Mustard, nothing, like you and me and they're being sacrificed by them with everything to keep the profits rolling in. We've got to show them this is a whole new world. It's different to before... we've been through too much to keep letting them do us over.

(GETTING EXCITED) All across the world, the workers are standing up for themselves... in Russia right... in Russia they...

HE REALIZES GEORGE ISN'T GOING TO UNDERSTAND.

Look that's not important, the important thing is... the workers of Britain have downed tools, stopped working in a great... magnificent... act of solidarity with our brothers in the mines. If there's no transport, no docks, no postal service, them at the top of the heap will soon learn the country can't be run for their benefit anymore. We've got to stop them making fools of us.

Lord Charlie Darlington rode my bus down the strand this afternoon like it was a stage coach out of the Wild bleedin' West. 'all the girls waving at him. Like he was some kind of hero. We'll show that smug bastard.

LOSING HIMSELF IN THE STORY, THE DARLINGTONS ARE HIS OBSESSION.

You should have seen him tonight, him and his mates. About nine thirty they came breezing into the dog and duck as bold as brass. Right along the bar from Ellis and that lot. "So what is it we working men drink?" He says. Ellis is ready to punch his head off but of course that's what they want. They're fit those buggers, sports and everything. There's no guaranteeing who'd come off worse. "Landlord", he cries. "The gentleman over there, the ruddy faced gentleman" Meaning Ellis. "Refill his glass and a pint of what ever concoction he's drinking for my comrades here." And all the toffs roar with laughter. Seems ridiculous don't it? Him with all his clubs and operas and dances to go to. What's he want with the public bar at The Dog and Duck, eh? 'Cept to rub our noses in it.

Perhaps he's drowning his sorrows. His engagement got broke off. She was out of it like a shot. My mum's still cook at their house. 'says there was such rows, the servants used to quake in their beds on a night and the names she would call him. Something terrible. 'Maid walked in on them once and he and was pulling his hand all across her face to wipe the make off. He said she looked like a tart. He said he was training her. Trying to make a lady of her. Well, she couldn't make a gentleman out of him.

His father's the same. A bully and a snob. I saw him once walking into the stock exchange. A bloke got in his way and he just knocked him flying with the head of his cane. Violence is all they understand men like that and no one stands up to them.

Well, we're not going to be intimidated by him or his son. Lets show that toffee nosed brat that there's more to driving a bus for an honest living then leading a parade through town.

The toffs are trying to undermine us by volunteering to do our jobs until we're forced back to work. Well, that's no good is it, Mustard? We don't want a load of over privileged ponces driving our buses. (BEAT) Are you going to help me fix the bus? Fix them?

CHARLIE: My, my this is cosy. I don't think you strikers should be in here should you?

SANDY: (DEFENSIVE) Lord Darlington, I was just checking on my mate. His brain got messed up in the trenches, he sleeps under the bench in the mechanics bay, never does anyone any harm. He's got nowhere else to go. (ASSERTIVE) What do you want here? The busses don't go out for a couple of hours yet. All you lot want is to deny honest working men the right to fight for a decent wage.

CHARLIE: (CALM) Yes, yes, yes. Lets not get into all that again shall we? My chums and your comrades are still at it hammer and tongs in the public house. I've never heard such overblown, tired rhetoric. We can leave it to them can't we? After all, I believe, you and I, we have a history.

SANDY: You remember.

CHARLIE: Of course I remember. Your mother worked in our kitchens. I haven't thought about you for years and then tonight, out of the blue, there you are staring at me just as you used to.

SANDY: (TO GEORGE) Mustard, go and have a look around will you. See if anyone's coming. Remember what I said. The war? Mr Baldwin? The engines? Fixing 'em. Fixing 'em real good.

GEORGE LEAVES.

CHARLIE: Do you know, driving that bus all day -

SANDY: My bus.

CHARLIE: I felt like I was leading a cavalry charge, or like a roman emperor processing home in triumph. People were actually cheering!

SANDY: Not everyone was cheering?

CHARLIE: No, no. There was some hostility. Quite a lot on parts of the route. But that just fuelled the adrenalin.

SANDY: This strike isn't a bloody game!

CHARLIE: So here I am before you, pumped up from an honest day's labour, and fired up with good working men's beer. You're friend won't disturb us will he?

SANDY: What do you want?

CHARLIE: Oh, look forget this ever happened. I'll leave. Just go back to what ever it was you and he...

HE STARTS TO LEAVE. SANDY'S VOICE STOPS HIM.

SANDY: Wait.

PAUSE. CHARLIE TURNS. THEIR EYES MEET.

CHARLIE: There's that look in your eyes again. What is going on behind those beautiful...? Oh god, you didn't think you could blackmail me did you? I'm hardly the Oscar Wilde type. Your word against mine, No one'd believe you. And I think the police have other things on their minds in the current crisis don't you?

SANDY: "Utter my thoughts." "Good my Lord, pardon me: Though I am bound to every act of duty, I am not bound to that all slaves are free to"

CHARLIE: That's? No, don't tell me, Merchant of Venice isn't it?

SANDY: Othello.

CHARLIE: Well, I'm impressed Mr. Omnibus driver.

SANDY: The unions... our supporters... these days there's all kinds of schemes where we can better ourselves, get an education.

CHARLIE: Is that what you call it? "Bettering" yourself?

SANDY: What would you call it?

CHARLIE: To be honest. I've never really given it much thought. Or you for that matter - until this evening. You've grown into quite a... well, hardly the frightened little scrap of nothing you were.

SANDY: I was never frightened of you.

SANDY: I was so lonely back then. Why did you always run away?

SANDY: Mind your own business. I know your game! This can't happen.

CHARLIE: What?

SANDY: Me with you. It can't happen.

CHARLIE: Why not? You wanted it didn't you. You wanted it back there in the pub.

SANDY: I did not.

CHARLIE: Well you want something now.

SANDY: (LUST BRINGS A BLIND DETERMINATION) I'm going to have you. Why shouldn't I have you?

CHARLIE: You want me then?

SANDY: (WITH CONTEMPT) Not "you", I don't want "you".

CHARLIE: You just said you did. And knowing who I am. Your enemy in this class war they talk about. Knowing you could make me beg, grovel with passion. Doesn't that particularly excite you?

SANDY: No.

CHARLIE: That chap in the pub tonight, Ellis isn't it? He's a very handsome man. Do you want him?

SANDY: No.

CHARLIE: Why not?

SANDY: I don't know. No. He stinks of sweat.

CHARLIE: This isn't a simple matter of Cologne. You're really quite confused aren't you Mr. Bus Driver? I don't think you know what you want.

SANDY: So why do you want *me* then? Me, the son of a cook, a bus driver with ideas above his station.

CHARLIE: Who said I wanted any of that? I'm not interested in your class struggle. Just your.. I just fancied... letting off some steam.

SANDY: So why not with someone of your own class? Wouldn't excite you

in the same way, eh?

CHARLIE: It's simply that you're here, available, nothing more. You could be anyone?

SANDY: (SARCASTIC) That right?

CHARLIE CAN'T ANSWER.

CHARLIE TAKES A SWIG OF WHISKY.

PAUSE. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER.

SANDY: Give me some of that.

CHARLIE PASSES THE WHISKY. SANDY DRINKS.

CHARLIE: You see, everyone equal in our little adventure.

GEORGE ENTERS WALKING AND TALKING IN HIS SLEEP.

GEORGE: Bully beef, boiled beef, boiled beef and mustard.

CHARLIE: He's talking.

SANDY: In his sleep. He does that.

CHARLIE: Why?

SANDY: It's like sleep releases him. Always goes on about mustard. I used to wonder why. Some bloke told me they were always terrified the enemy'd release mustard gas on them. It's like George's got the word trapped in his head. Not much use to anyone is he? But he can mend engines. Fix 'em up. Fix 'em really good.

CHARLIE: Should we wake him?

SANDY: No point. He has to sleep it off. I'll settle him.

CHARLIE: (SOME GUILT) I missed the Great War by a year.

SANDY: (SOME GUILT) Me too. (BEAT. HE EYES UP CHARLIE) Your clothes'll get dirty. If we...

PAUSE

CHARLIE: How dirty?

SANDY: Depends.

PAUSE

CHARLIE FLINCHES SUDDENLY. HE PUTS HIS HAND UP TO HIS EYE.

CHARLIE: Do you have something in your eye?

SANDY: Just a bit of dust.

CHARLIE: Let me remove it for you.

SANDY: It'll be gone in a minute.

CHARLIE: Sit down.

SANDY: It's nothing.

CHARLIE: (SLOWLY) Sit down.

SANDY SITS.

CHARLIE: There. Thank you.

HE STARTS TO REMOVE THE DUST WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF. SANDY IS FLINCHING.

CHARLIE: (NOT COY) Your such a big baby Mr. Rough Burley Bus Driver. And a moment ago you were so assertive!

SANDY: (WITHOUT CONVICTION) Shut up!

THE EYE PROCESS CONTINUES. THEY ARE BOTH AWARE OF THE GROWING TENDERNESS OF THE ACT.

IT'S DONE.

CHARLIE: There. (BEAT)

THEIR FACES ARE VERY CLOSE.

Thank me, Like a good boy

THEY NEARLY KISS.

SANDY: Listen. I think you should go.

CHARLIE: Why?

SANDY: You don't know what's going on.

CHARLIE: (ALARMED) Is this a trap?

SANDY: No.. Yes.. No.. I've wanted this to happen.. All my life.. Ever since I.. But what's the point. It can't be.. "This". If anyone caught us... We're playing with fire. You especially. You could lose everything.

CHARLIE: What are you babbling about? I don't see you as the blackmailing type, Sandy. "Sandy" a name like that... It's not the idea. It's not the idea at all. I don't want to call you that.

SANDY: (GETTING ANGRY AGAIN) I see. What would you like to call me? After one of you dogs! I've had enough of this. This is getting too mixed up. I'm supposed to be on a picket line, now. I'm expected. The lads'll wonder where I am.

CHARLIE: Oh forget the blasted strike.

SANDY: How can I? (RELIEVED BY THE DISTRACTION) You don't understand. For the first time in history we're standing up for our selves.

CHARLIE: Yes, yes, yes. You want the finer things. Why shouldn't you want what's best for your selves, for your children, for your wives? Are you married?

SANDY: Not yet.

CHARLIE: Is there someone? A girl I mean.

SANDY: Plenty.

CHARLIE: 'Ever been in love?

SANDY: (A SNORT OF A LAUGH)

CHARLIE: What does that mean?

SANDY: Have I ever been in love? Have I ever been in love?

CHARLIE: Well?

SANDY: Mind your own business. A working man doesn't ask a working man that.

CHARLIE: If I asked you as an equal. If I asked you as a friend.

BEAT

SANDY: Don't you know? (BEAT) God, I remember that great cavernous kitchen at your house as if it were yesterday... full of steam and browns and greys and scrubbing. Always someone scrubbing and then every once in a while the oven doors were opened and something wonderful would come out of the steam. When the great silver platters were taken up those stairs and into the light it was like the heart was pulled out of the room, the blood drained away, the magic was gone and it was back to the scrubbing. I wanted to climb the stairs with the meat, be carried up by the footmen up and out of that bloody kitchen.

One day you were ill in bed, you weren't eating with the rest of the family. The nursemaid needed a hand carrying a tray up to your room. Everyone else was busy with some great dinner and the butler said it would be all right if I carried it for her. I was to finally make that journey out of the steam and up into the light.

I think I remember ever single second of our procession through the great empty rooms full of beautiful objects, rich colours, even my feet sinking into the carpet. When we got to your room I wasn't allowed in of course but through the crack in the door I saw you propped up against the pillows and you looked so...

CHARLIE: Go on.

SANDY: You were in a white night shirt, the sheets were all white, you were drowning in that huge bed. Your face was pale like china and your hair was gold against the pillow. I gasped because you were a broken angel.

CHARLIE: Broken?

SANDY: That's how it seemed because I wanted to hold you. I thought that if I could hold you, you might mend.

CHARLIE: No one ever held me.

SANDY: I came back. I came back the next night.

CHARLIE: What happened?

SANDY: I watched you in the bath.

CHARLIE: Little pervert.

SANDY: More steam, like the steam in the kitchen but this time the magic that came out of the steam was you. I wanted to lick you dry. I wanted the steam to fold around us, just us in the whiteness, white steam, white skin, white tiles.

CHARLIE: Why didn't you speak to me?

SANDY: Because you were an angel and it would break the spell.

CHARLIE: There's no spell any more.

SANDY: There's still a spell, you bastard. I wish there wasn't.

CHARLIE: It's a very beautiful story.

SANDY: It doesn't end beautifully. I wanted to be clean like you, really clean. Part of the whiteness and the steam with you so I stole a piece of your soap. It smelt like lilies, it smelt of you. If I could wash myself in the smell of you.

The magic was very weak when I got down to the kitchen. I had to cup the piece of soap in my hand and breath deeply from it through my fingers. It was even weaker back at the cold dark house in poplar but I waited until everyone was out. I filled the tin bath, I lathered myself up in your soap and I lay there but I lay there too long and my cousin Billy came back from the pub with his three mates.

They smelled that beautiful, light perfume amongst the beer they were belching up and they knew it was nothing to do with them, your smell. One of them held me in the water and they all pissed in it. Then they

forced me under. I didn't struggle. I wanted to drown. You don't get any lower than that. Do you have any idea how it feels to get that low. If you survive that the only way is up.

CHARLIE: Or you run away and hide.

SANDY: No you've got to face it head on. I've known a few blokes of your class before. Had "associations".

CHARLIE: I don't want to hear about it.

SANDY: Everyone's the same underneath.

CHARLIE: Is that what you think?

SANDY: I'll go if you don't mind.

CHARLIE: Yes, I do mind.

SANDY: I won't be found here with you.

CHARLIE: Your reputation?

SANDY: The workers of this country are on strike, in case you've forgotten. If my comrades find me with you, I'll be an outcast.

CHARLIE: We're not finished. What's more, if you leave now you'll always be haunted by what could have happened with us. Here, tonight, on the floor amongst the filth and the axel grease and the cigarette ends.

CHARLIE PRODUCES A HIP FLASK.

CHARLIE: Look, why don't we have a drink?

SANDY: Blimey, my mum'd have a fit if she ever thought I'd end up drinking with you.

CHARLIE: Thank heaven's she'll never know what else I had in mind.

SANDY: Why don't you just get out? You don't belong here. Just get back to your clubs and fancy restaurants and forget the working men you've humiliated today.

CHARLIE: Please, for a few hours can't we just forget about all the... (HE

LOOKS AT SANDY FOR A WHILE) You're really not comfortable with this are you? Not because there could be something between us - two men. That's not the problem is it? Your wavering now because I'm in danger of upsetting some notion you cling to of a status quo. Very well, supposing I order you to drink.

PAUSE. SANDY LOOKS BETWEEN CHARLIE'S EYES AND THE FLASK HE'S PROFFERING.

SANDY: What ever you say, sir.

HE TAKES SOME.

CHARLIE: Was that so bad? Sharing a drink with me.

SANDY: If I may make so bold sir, I wouldn't presume to share a drink with you sir. I was merely obeying orders.

CHARLIE: I see. (PAUSE) Drink some more.

SANDY DOES.

CHARLIE: Drink my health.

SANDY: Your very good health, sir.

CHARLIE SITS AND STICKS HIS FOOT OUT IN FRONT OF HIM.

CHARLIE: Kiss my shoe.

SANDY DOES NOTHING.

What's the matter? Lacking the courage of your convictions?

SANDY: Courage doesn't come into it. I could do it. It wouldn't mean anything.

CHARLIE: Just obeying orders?

SANDY: Yes.

CHARLIE: Because as you did it, subjugated your body like that, your mind would still be free to hate me. Is that it?

SANDY: That's right.

CHARLIE: I think we should test your theory. Lick my boot then, boy.

SANDY DOESN'T MOVE

No? I wonder, are you just a little concerned you may like it.

SANDY: You what?

CHARLIE: Wouldn't it be terrible if I truly did, deep down, have some power over your mind as well as your body.

SANDY: You haven't got any power over me.

CHARLIE: I wonder how you would feel placing your mouth against the leather.

SANDY: I would feel nothing. You have no power. It would mean nothing.

CHARLIE: So why do you hesitate?

SANDY: I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it to show you that we fetch and carry for you but inside we hate you. You can humiliate us like this but ultimately it means nothing because inside we don't respect you. Your power is hollow, can't you feel that? We tolerate you while we dream of one day slitting your throat

CHARLIE: Let me feel that emptiness then. Bend down and lick my boot.

SANDY HESITATES.

SANDY: I want it. Now. Out there. Amongst the engines.

BLACKOUT

FX SOUND OF RIOTING.

## Scene 2

LIGHTS UP ON GEORGE ALONE.

HE STARTS TO TALK. VERY SIMPLY - NO GREAT WAVES OF EMOTION.

GEORGE: I'm talking to you, mustard. I am waiting for your mustard yellow smoke to fill my eyes and stop the smell of bacon.

*HE RECALLS THE BREAKFAST WHEN HE LEFT HIS FAMILY HOME AND SISTERS FOR WW1.*

Bacon on the still morning air, excited as Christmas. Keen as, keen as...

Bacon and fried bread, expectation. Baby sisters stare. I dragging bread across the bacon grease, mustard smears across the plate as... Knock, knock, knock like a game, run with the lads, tears, goodbyes, down the hill to the station. Crowds of hugs tears, expectation. Too warm for the wool, squeezed in, packed in, rattled in, waving. Apples cut, (SUDDENLY AFRAID) bite back, sharp as.. (CALMING HIMSELF) Not yet.

*RECALLING THE JOURNEY TO THE TRAINING CAMP.*

(JOYFUL) On and on, hill and hill and dale and little, little towns wave. Toffees, fags, toffees soft and toffee, chewing, waiting, exciting, jokes -

*RECALLS THE HARSH VOICE OF THE SERGEANT MAJOR DURING DRILL KNOWN AS "SQUARE BASHING"*

-Joke. We're a joke, you lot you shabby... A shower shame, shame on us shame on bashing, bashing off the square -

*AND BAYONET PRACTICE*

- stabbing the air,

*NOW REMEMBERING THE BOREDOM OF WAITING IN TRAINING CAMP FOR THE CALL TO FRANCE.*

- stories and socks and socks and sweat and stories and socks and thick, thick early morning porridge. Seas and oceans of pea soup thick porridge and coffee from a can and sausages tangy with... And then we've stabbed and bashed and waited and porridge and waited and -

*REMEMBERING THE JOY OF LEAVING FOR THE WESTERN FRONT*

- hooray today, today the sea and the fresh salt sea, salt beef bully beef and mustard. Creaking and lapping and coughing and coffee and toffee and brass bands and more waving and off out up into the sharp apple fresh, open high horizons to adventure and glory and mustard...

*THE WORD "MUSTARD" BRINGS DISTURBING ASSOCIATIONS. HE TRIES TO BANISH THE THOUGHTS.*

- no, no not mustard for mustard is.. you are...

*HE BANISHES HIS FEARS IN RECALLING THE EXCITEMENT OF THE JOURNEY TO FRANCE.*

Sea salt, wheeling screeching, high above until the France and ramps down into the khaki -

*THE MEMORY OF TRENCH WAR FARE'S DEPRESSING REALITY GRADUALLY RETURNS*

- and the grey and the blisters on and on and on until what? deeper and deeper and deeper and heavier sinking down, down heavier and heavier and stuck and cold and wet and silence. Silence heavy like the mud and some singing -

*HIS THOUGHTS ARE MOMENTARILY LIFTED BY THE RECOLLECTION OF SOMETHING NICE.*

- and coffee in a can and a sisters letter -

*BUT GRADUALLY RETURN AGAIN TO THE GRIND OF THE LONG WAIT FOR ACTION.*

- over and over. And wet bones as the grey stoops down and cuts at my face and drinks up my blood and drips through me like the cheese in the cloth and still it rains and still we sink and think and sing sometimes and wait. And then as if, as if by, as if by...

*HE IS GALVANISED BY THE RECOLLECTION OF FIRST GOING INTO BATTLE.*

We are war! Hell in my head and my ears are the enemy and on and on and on and sometimes I wait for the mustard, the sharp tangy taste to cut through the grey and send me to sleep but no mustard comes, do you?

*HE RECALLS THE OFFICER HE FELL IN LOVE WITH.*

But - he - is - there. And in his eyes he is as frightened as the singers in

their blisters but he is in charge and will not show and will not bend and will not sing in the night like the man out there in the waste who can not drink coffee from a can. Only his eyes give him away. Did you see his eyes?

*HAUNTED BY MEMORIES OF HOW THE HORROR AROUND HIM DREW HE AND HIS LOVER TOGETHER.*

And more are loosing the song until there's only bits of bone to sing and him and me for we are everything now. And when I look into his fear now I only see myself looking back for there is nothing else for him but me, fear and he is me and our eyes sing our own bone ragged song in our own no man's, no man and every man and he and I and coffee in a can and swimming fixed and held in the sureness of his eye as we look out and up for each other. Beyond, bacon and apples and toffee and porridge and coffee in a can waiting for you the mustard to come.

*HE RECALLS LYING IN A TRENCH CRADLING THE DYING OFFICER - THE MAN HE LOVES.*

In the dark I wipe the curl from his officer's eye and make more warmed canned mud to stop his shakes but he is not to be lullabied since his legs are gone and he screams in the long wait for help or you the yellow cloud, the mustard to reach us until they are not his eyes no more. He is teeth and popping veins -

*HE REMEMBERS SLITTING HIS LOVERS THROAT.*

- and I stop his animal snarl with a dirty knife trailing crimson tracks across his throat like mustard once long ago across the bacon grease.

*RECALLING THE MADNESS OF GRIEF.*

Then what is heaven and hell and Jesus and anything? What is anything but the wait for mustard? Mustard comes and takes us on it's wings they say though you never did they said.

But I can not doubt you for, sure as mud, you filled up my head with clouds of yellow as I reached for him deep into the earth. I thought it best to hide myself and you within my self but we could not fire into the dark nothing for him.

*IN HIS DESIRE FOR REVENGE HE IMAGINES HIMSELF FORMING AN ALLIANCE WITH THE DEADLY MYTHICAL MUSTARD GAS.*

*BRUTALISED BY EVENTS HE WILL BECOME A SERIAL KILLER. WHEN HE RECOGNISES THE LOOK OF FEAR HIS LOVER ONCE HAD IN OTHERS HE THINKS THEY'VE STOLEN IT FROM THAT LOVER AND REVENGES THE THEFT BY KILLING. HE RECALLS HIS FIRST VICTIM.*

We needed blood for his blood and so our first was an officer, new out from Blighty with eyes like his all frightened, and yellow mustard smoke filled my head and I saw it was my love's eyes that bragging officer had taken for his own. That thief! So in the bombs and bangs and barbed hearts we blew his head off so my love might see again.

*HE REMEMBERS MORE VICTIMS*

More came from England, officers who'd steal his frightened eyes but always by the dawn the mustard filled my head and we made them his again and sent there corpses through the yellow cloud unto heaven or hell. And no one knew it was an act of beauty and of love to kill our thieving coward betters for his borrowed eyes.

THE DAYDREAM ENDS AND HE BECOMES AWARE OF HIS SURROUNDINGS AGAIN.

In this soft, greasy oil dark time of engines thick with petrol and peace no one steals my lover's eyes and borrows with out thanks his look of fear... Until tonight.

HE RECALLS CHARLIE WITH BLIND HATRED.

HE PICKS UP CHARLIE'S EMPTY WHISKY FLASK.

There is a new thief to steal the eyes of Sandy. Come mustard. All thieves must wait for the mustard that comes.

HE ANTICIPATES CHARLIE BEING BLOWN UP IN THE ENGINE HE'S TAMPERED WITH.

Wait thief, wait for dawn and the turn of the key. Mustard and me have made a bomb and there will be tick tick tick over of the engine warming its heart to hot white burning heaven and death by mustard clouded yellow laid wires petrol and bomb. Petrol and bomb, petrol and mustard gas. The smell of flesh, the stench of bacon everything waits for mustard and washes down with coffee in a can.

BLACK OUT.

Scene 3

IN THE DARKNESS A DOOR SLAMS.

LIGHTS UP ON THE EMPTY ROOM.

SANDY ENTERS CALLING FOR GEORGE.

SANDY: Mustard?

CHARLIE ENTERS. BOTH OF THEM DRESSED AS IF THEY'VE BEEN INTERRUPTED MID FUCK AND PULLED ON SOME CLOTHES.

CHARLIE: What are you doing?

SANDY: I looked across and saw him watching us.

CHARLIE: Who?

SANDY: Mus- George.

CHARLIE: Well, so what? He's a half wit he won't understand.

SANDY: He might have done and then I heard the door slam.

CHARLIE: He's probably gone out for some cigarettes.

SANDY: You don't know him.

CHARLIE: What's going on?

SANDY: He never goes out.

CHARLIE: What?

SANDY: He never leaves here. He's too frightened. I bring him in some food and a beer each day. It's how he likes things, he never leaves. I've given up trying.

CHARLIE: What, never leaves?

SANDY: No.

CHARLIE: And now he's gone?

SANDY: Yes.

CHARLIE: Well where?

SANDY: I don't know but he's got to be pretty upset.

CHARLIE: Where's he going to go?

SANDY: Well, he'll probably wander around for a bit, probably won't talk to anyone.

CHARLIE: He can't talk.

SANDY: Well no but...

CHARLIE: I've met him. He can't talk.

SANDY: He could fetch some one though.

CHARLIE: What do you mean fetch someone? Who's he going to fetch? I told you, I sorted the soldier out side.

SANDY: He knows Ellis.

CHARLIE: Whose Ellis for Chris- oh the thug in the pub. He wouldn't go to the pub would he? I mean if he -

SANDY: He has been to the pub. Some of the lads dragged him down there last Christmas eve. He was frightened. I brought him back. But he knows the pub. What if he...

CHARLIE: You're not making any sense.

SANDY: What if he thought you were attacking me, what if he was frightened. What if he went to get help?

CHARLIE: Why would he think that?

SANDY: When he was watching us... He might have thought you were hurting me.

CHARLIE: This is ridiculous.

SANDY: Well he's not here, is he? So something must have affected him really bad.

CHARLIE: He's probably just gone for a walk. Maybe we shocked him... I don't know.

SANDY: Yes but he might have gone to fetch the others... He just might. You ought to go.

CHARLIE: We haven't finished yet.

(BEAT)

SANDY: (BRAVE) We don't have to. We don't have to finish it here. You could take me with you.

CHARLIE: Take you where?

SANDY: Away from this place. We could go somewhere together.

CHARLIE: You and I?

SANDY: Not if you don't want to.

CHARLIE: No I.. I...

SANDY: I mean a long way away.

CHARLIE: I know you do.

SANDY: I mean away from everything. Everything that makes you and me what we are. Just us.

CHARLIE: Where would we go?

SANDY: America.

CHARLIE: America!

SANDY: Yeh, have you ever been to the moving pictures?

CHARLIE: Of course.

SANDY: That could be us. We could help make them. They need loads of people.

CHARLIE: We don't know anything about it.

SANDY: Nobody does, they're learning. Things are changing all the time; it's a new world, a new industry. There's no snobbery, there's no class. A man's worth is judged by his mind and his hard work not who his parents are. I know a bloke works one of the big projectors. He told me about what goes into making one of those pictures. You wouldn't believe it and there's sound now as well. They need hundreds of people. Carpenters, electricians, painters. It's all out there for the taking. A whole new life. I could be making moving pictures, I could be a millionaire. That could never happen here.

CHARLIE: What would I do?

SANDY: You seen John Barrymore?

CHARLIE: Yes.

SANDY: You could do that.

CHARLIE: What?

SANDY: You heard. You could do that. You've got the looks.

CHARLIE: You think I could be a film star?

SANDY: Why not. Anything could happen. We'll be rich out there. We'll be the most celebrated Englishmen in America.

CHARLIE: They'll love us!

SANDY: We can do it!

CHARLIE: Of course we can.

SANDY: Let's get out of here. We can get the milk train down to Southampton. Pick up the first ship that's going.

CHARLIE: What about packing?

SANDY: What are you going to pack? We're starting again aren't we?

CHARLIE: Yes. Yes.

SANDY: We could be on our way before morning. We could be in America in three months.

CHARLIE: (SAVOURING THE WORDS) America. Hollywood. (PANICKY) But I mean, could we...? I don't even know if I.. It's a big step -

SANDY: Shut up.

HE KISSES CHARLIE HARD TO SHUT HIM UP.

CHARLIE: Right then.

SANDY: Right then, Sir.

CHARLIE: Don't play that game any more. We're equals now. We're the same.

SANDY: Not yet, not while we're in this stinking country. Everything I touch or taste or see is branding me third class. I won't have it. I want the best. I've always wanted the best.. and I know you're giving up a lot to come with me but I'm going to make it worth your while and you won't have to do anything just let me take care of you and make us rich.

CHARLIE: I don't need to be rich, I am rich.. I was. I just want...

SANDY: What?

CHARLIE: I don't know. I don't know but we'll find it together. This is the best moment of my life.

SANDY: Now we've got to think this through calmly. We can't mess this up.

CHARLIE TRIES TO KISS SANDY.

SANDY: There's no time for that. Now, how much money can you get your hands on?

CHARLIE: Well, not that much until the end of the month.

SANDY: What do you mean?

CHARLIE: My allowance. My father very carefully controls it. I get a certain amount each month.

SANDY: So you haven't got any money?

CHARLIE: Technically yes but... No.

SANDY: Well, that's it then. That's it. What are we going to do?

CHARLIE: We could stow away.

SANDY: Stow away? Stow a way? What's the matter with you? Just go!

CHARLIE: What?

SANDY: Get out. Go on. Mustard'll bring Ellis back here in a minute. I'll tell him I gave you a black eye and sent you running. In fact I might do that if you don't clear out.

CHARLIE: Oh no you don't. A minute ago you were throwing me a life line. You're dream. America. I want that. You promised me that and you're not going to take that away from me. Now you will figure out how to get us there.

SANDY: No. There's no "us" .

CHARLIE: What do you mean? You said -

SANDY: And you said you hadn't any money.

CHARLIE: I haven't. I told you. My uncle -

SANDY: What's this then.

SANDY HOLDS UP A BULGING WALLET.

CHARLIE: My wallet! What are you doing with that?

SANDY: (THROWING HIM THE WALLET) it's stuffed with notes. Take it! I don't want it if you're not prepared to back me. What did you want me to do, hustle for trade round the docks while you sat on your savings?

(BEAT) Just give me my due and we'll say no more. At least that'll get me to Southampton.

CHARLIE: Your "due"?

SANDY: Yes, fair's fair, you made me perform "unnatural acts" tonight. That don't come cheap.

CHARLIE: What do you mean?

SANDY: Pay me for what we did out there.

CHARLIE: I'm not paying you. You wanted it as much as I did.

SANDY: Of course I did. We're on strike. I needed the money. I was desperate. I'd have had to be to stoop to that.

CHARLIE: Why are you behaving like this? I'd have shared the money with you. I just wanted to be sure of your intentions.

SANDY: My what!

CHARLIE: Make sure you weren't taking me for a ride.

SANDY: You had the ride mate. You pay the fare.

CHARLIE: So my money was going to pay for your pipe dream dream?

SANDY: At first. At first but I was going to make it alright once we got out there.

CHARLIE: How can I trust you? You stole my wallet.

SANDY: You've got it back.

CHARLIE: That's not the point. I must have been mad thinking I could build some kind of future with a thief.

SANDY: I'm not a thief.

CHARLIE: A grubby little prostitute, then

SANDY: I ain't that either.

CHARLIE: Well, make up your bloody mind! (BEAT) Is there anyone on earth as wretched as I am at this moment?

SANDY: You got your bit of rough didn't you? Oh but of course you didn't get entirely your own way. No climax. 'Didn't get your money's worth, my mate went and spoilt it. He's probably out there somewhere lost, frightened thinking God knows what but lets not worry about him. His feelings aren't worth a farthing because his Lordship's "wretched". I wish he was here instead of you.

CHARLIE: That would be much simpler wouldn't it? Except he can't buy you a ticket to America. The great labour man, the striker, a man of principle? Common little tart, more like. Selling yourself for the price of a one way steerage ticket.

SANDY: And what are you then? Pretending to be the gentleman. What kind of son are you to that famous father of yours, when your kneeling before a bus driver in a pool of oil?

CHARLIE: Oh God, What have I come to. Please God let the earth open up and swallow me.

SANDY: I bet the earth don't swallow as readily as you do. God, your pathetic. I knew it the first moment I saw you.

CHARLIE: You said I was a broken angel.

SANDY: Thought you'd like that. Sometimes the ladies drop penny romances on the omnibus. I always flick through, have a bit of a laugh. There full of stuff like that. Actually when we were kids and I first saw you I thought "how can I nick that little bastard's toys".

CHARLIE: And the soap, the bath, your... punishment?

SANDY: You believe what you like.

CHARLIE: It must be a real shock to discover that the rich dope isn't as malleable as you thought he'd be. (BEAT) What a turn up for the books if your betters really were exactly that. Where would that leave you? *Who* would that leave you? With your sexual predilections you hardly fit in with your comrades at the pub. I certainly don't want you and now the halfwit who was the only one to ever take you seriously has run off. You pathetic misfit.

SANDY: Don't you call me that! Look at you. You don't know who you are. Or what you are or worse then that you have no idea who or what you want to be.

CHARLIE: You're right. You're absolutely right. It's pathetic isn't it? For the first time in my life this afternoon I felt really proud. Was I scoring a century at cricket, was I delighting society with my dazzling engagement? Winning a parliamentary seat? No! I was driving someone else's bus down the Strand.

Is it as simple as that?

All these years of wondering what could really fulfil me and could it be that all I need to make me happy is to sit behind the wheel of a bus and lie all night in the arms of a bus driver. How did I get this low?

Do you know, there were moments back there when you really made me forget myself? When all I wanted was the smell of you, the taste of you. I forgot everything and then when you talked about a future together that was the best of all. I really gave myself up to that one. What made me do that do you think?

SANDY: I don't want to think any more. I get what I've been wanting all these years and look at you? You weren't even worth the effort. Some snivelling maggot. I was going to make my future with you.

CHARLIE: My money.

SANDY: No. No! Not the money. You. You've let me down.

CHARLIE: Listen to the little cockney picture show director. Did I forget my lines? Did I forget to look at the camera? Wasn't my smile bright enough? I've ruined your plan and yet you still think you've the moral high ground. Yet when you couldn't extort my money you simply stole it. I admit I'm pretty low at this moment but I'll never be the loathsome creature you are. (BEAT) And yet every time I think of leaving this place I can't.

SANDY: You don't have to. I'll leave for both our sakes. (BEAT) You think you're in love with me don't you?

CHARLIE: Yes.

SANDY: You can drive a bloody bus if that's what you really want but

don't saddle yourself with me.

CHARLIE: No?

SANDY: Look, don't worry. We can beat this. There *is* something between us. Lust... an ache in the balls.. I don't know what it is but I'm getting over it. So you can. I'm standing here looking at you. The real you and everything I ever felt for you is now ebbing away. You've made it clear; you think I'm an animal -

CHARLIE: I didn't mean -

SANDY: - You'll never love me. So... I promise you by morning I'll be over this. We can both forget it ever happened.

CHARLIE: Lets hope so for both our sakes.

SANDY: I don't want to hope any more. I drown in hope. (PAUSE) I want you so much. When we kissed it was like that hot, spiced wine they serve you on Christmas Eve when you're so bitter cold that it powers through you like molten gold. Lets leave all of this. Leave together. We can catch the boat tonight.

CHARLIE: I don't know... I need more time. Don't you need to know more about me.

SANDY: I don't want to know. I hate what you are. I'm interested in who you could be.

CHARLIE: but what if... What if this *is* all I can be? Could you love the wretch who stands before you? My fiancée gambolled that she could change me. She couldn't.

SANDY: You know your trouble mate, all your trouble, you toffs? You take it all too seriously. Love for us is something to do on your Sunday off. If you had a proper job you wouldn't worry about it beyond whether you'll get a poke on a Saturday night.

CHARLIE: Hide behind your pathetic working class machismo but it hardly sits comfortably alongside the Shakespeare and penny romances.

SANDY: Get out. Get the hell out. Just turn and walk out of here. Do it for both of us.

PAUSE. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER.

CHARLIE: (QUIET DESPAIR) What's the point? You'd only come after me.

SANDY: Would I?

CHARLIE: Maybe not tonight but tomorrow or the next day. There's no going back after tonight. Things have been said tonight, passions stirred that won't lie down. We're as trapped in this as...

SANDY: What?

CHARLIE: Is this how it was for my father? (HORRIFIED) You're right; I've got to get free of this. I've got to try. Don't follow me. You're suffocating me.

HE STAGGERS OUT.

ALONE SANDY'S BRAVADO COLLAPSES. HE DEFLATES, STANDS FOR A MOMENT TAKES A SWIG OF WHISKY.

FOR A WHILE HE DOESN'T NOTICE GEORGE EMERGE AND STAND WATCHING HIM.

FINALLY:

SANDY: Oh Jesus Mustard! You gave me a fright. How long have you been standing there? Where have you been? Listen, did you go to the others? To Ellis, in the pub. Where have you been? Look, I know what happened... What you saw was.. Jesus, Mustard where have you been? You didn't tell anyone did you? No, how could you.. Everything's alright isn't it? You couldn't tell.. You haven't told..

GEORGE: (SINGS QUIETLY) Tell me the stories of Jesus, I love to hear,  
Tell how he

SANDY: That's right. The baby Jesus. He watches us all, he understands he'll make everything all right, nothing to worry about, nothing to worry about,

HE IS STROKING GEORGE'S FOREHEAD.

All that, what you saw, me degrading myself with him, that was for us. When I saw he wanted me I thought I could get his money off him, screw

the upper classes over same as they screw us. We would have done alright. I wouldn't have just run off and left you, you know that don't you? I would have seen you all right. But forget it, it was all a dream and they'll break us down and we'll be back at work same as we was before only poorer and more worn out. And there we'll stay day after bloody day, year after year until we're thrown on the scrap heap.

Look at you. Fit to drop. I envy you. Most nights I can't get to sleep. The bus route going round and round in my head. Like I'm a rat in a wheel. I wish I could sleep like you. Well, sleep deep and tomorrow all this will seem like a dream. Sleep now. Like little baby Jesus, in the manger, in the stable. Wake up and Jesus will have made it all better.

GEORGE: Bethlehem, Bethlehem

SANDY: (AS A LULLABY)

O little town of Bethlehem  
 How still we see thee lie.  
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
 The silent stars go by,  
 Yet in the darkness shineth  
 The ever lasting light  
 The hopes and fears of all the years...

HE BEAKS OFF. THE WORDS ARE RATTLING AROUND HIS HEAD. GEORGE IS ASLEEP IT'S NOT ABOUT HIM ANY MORE.

The hopes and fears of all the...  
 Yet in the darkness shineth  
 Yet in the darkness  
 The hopes and fears of all the..

Are met in...  
 Are met in thee.

Bastard!

SLOW BLACKOUT

MUSIC INDICATES THE PASSING OF TIME.

Scene 4

THROUGH THE NEXT SPEECH THE LIGHTS SLOWLY COME UP ON SANDY AND GEORGE AS WE LEFT THEM, SANDY MUMBLING TO HIMSELF.

Old Street, Angel, Kings Cross, St Pancras, Euston Square, Warren Street, Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Rd, Leicester Square, The Strand, Charring Cross, Embankment, Temple, Blackfriars, Mansion House, Bank, Moorgate, Old Street, Angel, Kings Cross, St Pancras, Euston Square, Warren Street, Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Rd, Leicester Square, The Strand, Charring Cross, Embankment, Temple, Blackfriars, Mansion House, Bank, Moorgate, Old Street, Angel, Kings Cross, St Pancras, Euston Square, Warren Street, Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Rd, Leicester Square.. The Strand, The Strand...

CHARLIE RETURNS.

CHARLIE: Still here I see.

SANDY: Yeh, where have you been?

CHARLIE: Up on the roof.

SANDY: You what?

CHARLIE: I wanted to get some fresh air, get some perspective on all this.

SANDY: And did you.

CHARLIE: Perhaps. A little.

SANDY: You look knackered. The sun'll be up in a few hours.

PAUSE. THEY SIT AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE ROOM STARING INTO SPACE.

CHARLIE: I'd like you to understand.

SANDY: (UNENTHUSIASTIC) Oh yeah?

CHARLIE: She was a beautiful, celebrated actress, my mother.

SANDY: I'd heard.

CHARLIE: He was infatuated. Handsome as the devil and as rich as Midas. The wedding was the society event of the season; managements closed

the West End for her farewell party. He tried to create a suitable new setting in which his jewel of a, now pregnant, wife might sparkle. The grandest of country seats.

But no matter how beautiful the furniture, the paintings, the tapestries, it was the country and it wasn't London. In the years following my birth her frustrations grew and her mood swings were constant, terrible and entirely unpredictable. She ensured that she held all our attentions quite as surely as she had once held every member of her audience.

As the finale to act one, we, the supporting cast found ourselves shivering on the lawn as our home burned down. No one knows how the fire started but it should be noted that it began the exact day the insurance had expired; and for some reason Father's payment had never reached the brokers. He was left penniless, and she had him beg for a loan from one of her old lovers.

Once a month she would get dressed up and visit this man's home with my father's repayments. She wouldn't return for a week. I gather she encouraged my father to regard these absences as a form of interest he must pay on the loan. Imagine the smirks and ill judged pity he encountered every day.

Even his suicide bid ended as farce.

But that was a turning point. Stripped of all illusions about love he rebuilt himself as a tyrant, never to be slave to his emotions again.

He paid off the debt and made a prisoner of my mother in that London house where we met. Through his towering rages and drunken beatings he made her every bit as miserable as he had been.

And he paid the toughest school he could find to beat, starve and torture me into a man who would never be as weak as he had been. On my visits home his remonstrations against the state men call love installed in me a distrust that cripples me to this day. Even tonight.

Especially tonight.

So now you know the history I must fight against, the fate I fear (BEAT)

Listen Sandy. I'm sorry I lied to you about having no money. I hardly knew you. I hardly know you now but I've been thinking. I'd really like to use it. The two of us together. I don't know if we'll last but we both need a new

start and if it can buy us that it's money well spent.

SANDY: You don't need me to start over. I need you but you can make a go of it on your own. Why do you what to saddle yourself with me?

CHARLIE: No, I can't do this on my own. I need a thorn in my side to keep me awake, keep me from slipping back into the morass of my life before tonight. You were right early on about not packing. I don't want to take any part of my life so far. When I'm with you my wealth, my position will mean nothing beyond the opportunities they can buy us. When I'm with you I believe I can start again.

SANDY: "With" me? What does that mean? What am I to you?

CHARLIE: I don't know. Yet. But as of tonight you're the only chance I have.

SANDY: Good enough. I'm ready. Let's get out of here.

CHARLIE INDICATES GEORGE.

CHARLIE: Your friend's back. Where did he get to?

SANDY: I don't know. He was singing hymns to himself. Funny that. He used to do that when I first met him, hasn't done that for a few years now. I wish he could speak. He'd tell you... how much I've changed in the last few hours... you wouldn't believe how much just talking to you has...

CHARLIE: What ever you say. Can we go now?

SANDY: He'd tell you. He'd tell you that falling in love with you was the last thing on my mind, only a few hours ago. In fact I came here tonight full of hate, to arrange for you to have a little accident.

CHARLIE: What do you mean?

SANDY: I was going to get Mustard to work his magic on our omnibus out there. You'd have got a nasty surprise when you took her out tomorrow.

CHARLIE: What kind of surprise?

SANDY: I don't know. I was going to leave it up to him.

CHARLIE: But what did you have in mind?

SANDY: Up to him.

CHARLIE: Brake cables, electrical fault, petrol leak, what?

SANDY: I don't know we never discussed it.

CHARLIE: I need to know. I need to know how far you would have gone with this. I was taking that bus out tomorrow. You knew I was going to pick up children and parlour maids and grocers wives and... you were going to make the bus a death trap.

SANDY: No. no.

CHARLIE: What then?

SANDY: Not for them. For you. You wouldn't have got to the end of the road.

CHARLIE: Before what? Before the cab exploded around me?

SANDY: Maybe. What's it matter? I didn't know you then. I didn't know you. Not like I... it's different now.

CHARLIE: You knew who I was. We grew up together!

SANDY: "Together"? "Together"? We never grew up "together". You were the master I was the boy! And just when I thought I'd shaken all the ghosts out of my head, stopped being the son of a servant, there you were breaking down the strike that I was sacrificing everything for.

I was obsessed with you when I was young. I thought I'd escaped, imagine that. But there you were. You'd stolen my childhood and you'd come back to wreck my future.

So yes, when I asked him to tamper with the engine I really didn't care about the result.

CHARLIE: Well, one blow on the back of my head with a monkey wrench ought to satisfy your blood lust. You see? I turn my back on you. You could do it easily. A sharp blow now or an accident in the morning what's the difference?

SANDY: No, no! That was then. Earlier. Things are different now.

CHARLIE: Because of what we did together out there?

SANDY: No! I thought that was what I wanted, always wanted but it wasn't. Because we've talked, We... we've reached an understanding we can escape the past. It's the future that counts.

CHARLIE: Do you honestly think a future together is possible now?

SANDY: Yes, Yes. You and me, there's a passion. When have you ever felt anything as passionate as tonight? Don't tell me you want to go back, live without it.

CHARLIE: Don't fool your self. You've got a pleasing look. That's all. But your soul. Your soul belongs in the servant's hall and I detest you.

SANDY: Don't say that. I've proved to you I can be an equal.

CHARLIE: Oh you're beyond my equal. I could never kill anyone. So where does that leave us?

SANDY: You'd got to war wouldn't you? You'd fight in a war? This strike was my war, before tonight you were my enemy.

CHARLIE: You are at war, aren't you? And you think you have... what? Morals? Honour? Convictions perhaps? Don't fool yourself. All you've ever had is jealousy.

SANDY: Jealousy!

CHARLIE: Ultimately yes. You'd love to be me wouldn't you? You'd love my money, my opportunity, my power.

SANDY: We want a living wage for our families.

CHARLIE: Oh "we". Yes "we" there *is* a nobility out there in your strike but not from you. All you have is envy. It burns you up in side, you feed on it. You spout off about your beloved causes, workers rights, decent wages, working conditions, that's all a lie. What you really want is power. When we were through there rutting in the filth I gave myself to you completely and your instinct was to take me just as hard and as long as you could until you were satisfied. Given a little bit of power you'd be no better then the most heartless capitalist. Well thank god there are plenty of us who'll see to it you stay in the gutter.

SANDY: Sod the strikers, is that what you want me to say. Well sod them. I've said it.. I don't care about any of that. I did. But you've poisoned everything, got under my skin until all I can think about is you.

GEORGE STIRS IN HIS SLEEP.

GEORGE: Bethlehem.

CHARLIE GOES TO SHAKE HIM.

CHARLIE: Wake up. Wake up please! You've got to help me. Protect me from this mad dog. This slaving wolf. You could help me tame him. I know, let's all three of us go away somewhere... Just to... I don't know. We could start a garage somewhere. We could sell cars. That's it we'll sell cars, Sandy can buy them second hand, you can do them up I'll sell them on to rich customers, Rolls Royces and racing cars and sleek, gleaming cars. I could sell them. I could make the money for us. All of us. We wouldn't go hungry. I'd look after us. Wouldn't that be nice? And we could live over the shop, the three of us, would you like that? And no one would ever bother you again because Sandy would go on protecting you and you could protect me from him and I'd keep all of us safe with nothing but the engines to keep us company. Just the three of us. You'd come to trust me, you could. I wouldn't let anything happen to us. We'd live together away from this place and strikes and my father and the constituency and just us. What do you think? What do you think? Would you come? Shall we make it work? Think of it.

GEORGE: Are you the mustard?

CHARLIE: What?

GEORGE: It was you. You made me. I didn't want to, Jesus will believe it was the mustard.

CHARLIE: (TO SANDY) What's he talking about?

SANDY: I don't know.

CHARLIE: (TO GEORGE) It's alright. We're leaving the strike behind us. We're going away. We're going to make a new life.

GEORGE COVERS HIS HEAD WITH HIS HANDS AND WHIMPERS.

PAUSE.

SANDY MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS GEORGE

SANDY: You did it didn't you? You did it for me. You tampered with the bus. Did you make it dangerous? Good boy, good boy. You put mustard in the bus. (TO CHARLIE) He did that for me. That's really love, Can you imagine doing something like that for me? Anything, everything...

CHARLIE: How cosy we shall all be at night - the socialist, the psychopath and... what ever I...

SANDY: It's nearly dawn. Your right, what you said back then, it was right. All I've ever been is jealous; it's helped me to hate you for all these years. And that hate brought me here tonight, made me want you, out there, over the engines, but hate isn't love and that's what it'd take to make me your superior. I'm still the servant your still in charge. Tell me what we should do.

PAUSE.

CHARLIE: You want to be master so much. Now's your chance.

SANDY: What?

PAUSE

CHARLIE: Be the master. Order me to climb aboard that bus and start the engine.

SANDY: (HORRIFIED) I can't do that.

CHARLIE: I'm giving you what you wanted. I'm giving you the chance of complete power over me. You've wanted me for quarter of a century, you've wanted to fuck me, bleed me, own me. Now I want that too. Take it. Be my master.

THERE'S A BANGING ON THE DOOR FROM OFF. THE SOUND OF MUFFLED VOICES.

CHARLIE: What's that?

SANDY: Sounds like the soldiers. Maybe George.. Maybe Ellis and that lot told them something's up.

CHARLIE: They'll be in, in a moment. Not much time. What's going to happen? Will you order me on to that bus?

SANDY: I can't take control of you, I can't. I don't want to.

CHARLIE: But it's what I want. Your love, your hate, I don't care what you feel for me. I've nothing to offer you in return but I want anything from that's going. I want you.

SANDY: It won't work. Earlier, out there, I looked down at you, begging for it. I knew I could do anything to you I wanted and I thought I'd turned the tables on you once and for all, like I always dreamed of. But nothing's changed. Once it was class that kept me in my place, now it's the fear that I might lose you. So here I am still begging for scraps, waiting for my orders. I hate it. I want to be your friend, brother, lover, mate... I don't know. Anything but the servant.

I'll climb aboard the bus too. I'll sit beside you. We'll turn on the engine together. I want to come with you.

CHARLIE: It's not enough for me. I want you to ask more of me. Take more. I want to give you everything.

SANDY: I don't understand. Please. I want to come. I want to be with you. I can't live without you. I'm not afraid.

CHARLIE: I don't suppose you are. But master and boy... the roles are too ingrained in us. We can't rub them out but we can switch. I can give you that. A gift.

SANDY: Tonight was just a perverted sexual game. It wasn't real life. In real life the streets are full of your soldiers, and loving you poisons everything I do. It'll be morning soon. The fantasy will fade away... My real life will begin again, my endless life as a dog at your feet. There's no power here for me.

CHARLIE: There can be. I want you to watch me climb on board that bus and turn the key in the ignition. Watch me from a safe distance and remember for the rest of your life that you made it happen.

SANDY: No. I could never... I could never...

CHARLIE: I want you to live the rest of your life, strong and proud in the

knowledge that you conquered me, that I wanted to be mastered; not just by anyone but by you. You conquered me. I'm offering myself to you. My whole future is in your hands. I'm at your mercy. I'm offering you what you always wanted. Will you take it? You'll be free of the servant's hall for ever.

SANDY: But who would I be then?

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER.

SLOW BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.