

STEALING THE SCENE

by Phil Willmott

(Produced: Man In The Moon Theatre, London 1991, revived there 1992 then at New Dramatists, Off Broadway, New York in 1993 and on BBC Radio 4 1994)

Sam & Joe (Late teens)
Ted (Early 30s)
Diana (20s)
Alan (20s)

ACT ONE.

MUSIC: ANOTHER OPENING ANOTHER SHOW. FADES OUT INTO-

TED SHOVELS COINS INTO THE PAYPHONE BACK STAGE.

TED: (INTO THE PHONE) Angela...Angela...yes it's me...How are you....Your very faint. I can hardly hear you...fine, I'm fine...Doing rather well actually. I'm in a play. Rather a smash here in London actually ...Yes Angela....Angela... I wondered if I could have a word with Chris ...Why? ...Because he's my sonBecause it's his birthdaybecause he's six years old ...Angela!

SHE HAS HUNG UP.

VOICE OFF: Five minutes to curtain Ted.

BLACK OUT.

MUSIC: A BLAST OF WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF FUN BY MADDNESS.

A RUN DOWN FLAT IN CATFORD, SOUTH EAST LONDON. SMASHING OF GLASS IN THE DISTANCE. SAM AND JOE WITH TORCHES.

SAM: Put the light on.

JOE: I don't know where the light is, do I?

SAM: Well, try by the door.

JOE: Where's the door gone?

SAM: I don't know. Look.

JOE: I am looking. Got it.

HE TURNS ON THE LIGHT. THEY LOOK AROUND

Is this it?

SAM: Shut up.

JOE: It's not exactly "Sale of the Century" is it?

SAM: Look at these books. Everywhere.

JOE: Messy bugger.

SAM: Hundreds of books.

JOE: Not hundreds.

SAM: There is.

JOE: Where's the telly? He must have a telly. Where's the telly Sam?

SAM: Perhaps he hasn't got one.

JOE: Don't be stupid. Everybody's got a telly.

SAM: Well he hasn't.

JOE: What's he do then, instead of watching telly?

SAM: How should I know?

JOE: Well he doesn't tidy up that's for sure.

SAM: Perhaps he reads the books.

JOE: What, all of them?

SAM: Not all of them.

JOE: How does he know then what books he's read and what books he hasn't?

SAM: He'll remember.

JOE: No way.

SAM: He will.

JOE: There's too many.

SAM: Yeh, but they're all different aren't they.

PAUSE

Let's piss on them.

JOE: Which ones?

SAM: It doesn't matter.

JOE: Yes it does. What if we piss on the wrong ones?

SAM: What "wrong ones"?

JOE: I'm not going to piss on just anything.

SAM: Don't be stupid. Sit down.

JOE: What?

SAM: Sit down, relax, make yourself at home.

PAUSE. THEY SIT. SAM IS AT EASE, TAKING EVERYTHING IN, JOE IS UNCERTAIN.

JOE: What if he comes back?

SAM: He won't. he never comes back until eleven o'clock. I've watched him.

JOE: Where does he go then?

SAM: He's an actor.

JOE: He's not?

SAM: He is.

JOE: How do you know?

SAM: I heard these two old dears talking about him.

JOE: An actor?

SAM: Yes.

JOE: Where does he go?

SAM: Acting.

JOE: What, you mean he's acting now?

SAM: I reckon.

JOE: Shit! Maybe he's on the telly now. Maybe we could sit here and watch him on the telly. We're doing over an actor's house. You're brilliant you are. An actor on the telly. Maybe we'll be in the papers, maybe we'll be on too. Let's turn it on. Let's see him.

SAM: We can't.

JOE: Why not?

SAM: Think about it.

JOE: Oh yeh. Pause Let's piss on his books instead.

SAM: Nah! I don't want to do that now. Let's just relax, take it all in.

THEY SIT FOR A WHILE

JOE: Are we being him?

SAM: If you like.

JOE: After a hard day's acting.

SAM: A hard night.

MORE SITTING

JOE: It's boring being an actor, isn't it?

SAM: No it isn't.

JOE: Especially without a telly.

SAM: Don't be stupid. You'd be sick of telly, wouldn't you, if you'd been doing it all day. You're not gunna want to come home and watch it.

JOE: So what do you do?

SAM: I don't know.

JOE: Boring if you ask me.

SAM: I didn't.

JOE: Are we going to do the place then?

SAM: In a minute.

JOE: There's not much to take.

SAM: I thought it'd be better than this.

JOE: It's just books.

SAM: What's that!?

JOE: Where?

SAM: Ah ha!

JOE: What?

SAM: A compact disc.

JOE: What is it?

SAM: Baroque (BARO-CUE) favourites.

JOE: What favourites?

SAM: Baroque favourites.

JOE: Rock?

SAM: Well.....BAA roque.

JOE: Give it here. -baraoke, (LIKE KARAOKE) baraoke favourites.

Prat!

SAM: You don't know what that is.

JOE: Yes I do - it's crap.

SAM: It might not be.

JOE: What are we supposed to do with it.

SAM: Nick it, of course.

JOE: But they're a crap band, Sam.

SAM: Look, this is the home of an actor. He's not going to waste his time listening to crap bands.

JOE: If you want to take it, Sam, you take it, but there's got to be something worth our while.

SAM: This is a C.D. right?

JOE: Right.

SAM: What does it tell us?

JOE: Actors like crap bands.

SAM: It tells us that somewhere round here is a compact disc player.

JOE: Maybe with some good records?

SAM: Not as good as this. This'll be his favourite.

THEY SEARCH.

SAM: Here it is.

JOE: It's a posh one.

SAM: Right stand back.

JOE: You're not going to piss on it?

SAM: No I am not. We're going to listen to a few tracks.

JOE: Baroque favourites.

SAM: Yes.

JOE: Shit.

SAM: This is what he does when he gets home from work. He doesn't watch telly, he listens to this.

JOE: So?

SAM: I want to know what it's like.

JOE: Why?

SAM: Because I want to be an actor too.

JOE: Yeh, and what will it be next week.

SAM: I do.

JOE: Fuck off.

SAM: I do.

JOE: You're a prat you are. You don't do you?

SAM: Yes.

JOE: Are you serious, or is this like when you wanted to be All England darts champion?

SAM: This is different, I've been giving this a lot of thought. Why shouldn't I be an actor? Ever since we were kids. Have we ever been to the pub when we haven't been space fighters or bank robbers or bloody Judith Chalmers reporting on the best package deals from the Costa del Sol?. Whatever was on the telly the night before. That's all acting is. Pretending to be other people. I can do it for myself and I want other people to be sat in the dark watching me.

JOE: Do you?

SAM: Yes. Yes I do. That's my dream, that's what I want to do. Not nick things. Not prat around into thin air but have lots of people watch me and get a kick out of it.

JOE: Pay you millions.

SAM: Yeh.

JOE: Invite you round their houses.

SAM: Yeh.

JOE: Be your mate.

SAM: Yeh.

JOE: Sam, I've got something to tell you about, too. Something happened. I met someone the other night. When you were away with Martin. I don't really understand it but I'm thinking about it all the time. It's a bit scary.

SAM: Don't be scared, go for it.

JOE: You won't like it. Nobodys going to like it. Dad would fucking kill me.

SAM: Who gives a toss? We can do what we like, you and me.

JOE: Yeh, how are we going to get you on the telly then?

SAM: I don't know Joe but we will. I thought there might be some kind of a clue around this place, a phone number, or something, on a bit of paper. Put that CD on, let's search to actor type music.

THEY PUT ON THE CD AND LISTEN TO THE FIRST FEW BARS IN DISGUST BUT THEN WITH DELIGHT AS THEY REALIZE IT'S THE MUSIC FROM THE HAMLET CIGAR ADVERT.

Do we have any cigars on our person Joseph?

JOE: Hang on. I think I've got a roll up down the lining of my jacket.

SAM My brother.

THEY SIT AGAIN, LIGHT CIGARETTES AND DRAG LUXURIANTLY.

SLOW FADE. END OF SCENE

DARKNESS. THE ACTOR TED PUSHES OPEN THE DOOR. HE IS IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES POTENTIALLY VERY HANDSOME BUT HIS LIFE STYLE MAKES HIM LOOK HAGGARD AND WASTED. HE DRINKS TOO MUCH. THIS DOESN'T HELP HIM NOW, TERRIFIED TO HEAR HIMSELF GREETED BY ENTHUSIASTIC CLAPPING IN THE DARKNESS

TED: Who's there? Who is it?

JOE: Lights!

JOE FLICKS ON THE LIGHT.

JOE AND SAM ARE WEARING BALACLAVA MASKS.

Music!

SAM TURNS ON THE CD WHICH PLAYS THE PAGANINI THEME THAT INTRODUCES "THE SOUTH BANK SHOW".

JOE IS POINTING A GUN AT TED.

THE MUSIC IS FADED DOWN. SAM, AS IF INTRODUCING THE SHOW TO AN AUDIENCE

SAM: Good evening. Tonight on my show I have a very special guest. A man I'm sure you will all know from his famous acting. I want you to give a warm welcome to....

JOE: What's your name?

TED ABSOLUTLEY TERRIFIED.

What's your name?

Tell me your name or I'll blast your fucking head off.

TED: (CAN HARDLY SPEAK FOR TERROR.) Ted, Ted Ford.

SAM: Ladies and gentlemen I'd like you to meet my guest for tonight Ted Ford.

JOE CLAPS, FREE HAND ON THIGH, AND CHEERS VERY ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

HE CONTINUES TO DART ABOUT THE ROOM POINTING THE GUN AT TED,

SAS. STYLE.

JOE: I'm watching you.

SAM: Ted welcome, please take a seat.

HE RELCTANTLY DOES SO

Thank for interrupting your busy schedule to join us here tonight.

JOE: Yo Ted!

SAM: Tell me, what are you working on at the moment?

TED: Don't hurt me.

SAM: Ted, Ted nobody's going to hurt you. We're your fans. We just want to know what you're up to these days. We haven't seen you on the telly much recently.

JOE: I haven't seen him on the telly at all.

SAM: Shut up Joe. But it would seem you're working on something at the moment? Is that right.

JOE: We've been watching your house.

TED: The theatre, I'm working in the theatre.

SAM: Are you?

TED: Umm..yes.

SAM: Not the telly?

TED: No,

SAM: The theatre?

TED: Yes.

SAM: What's that then?

TED: What do you want?

SAM: Just answer the questions Ted. There's a lot of people out there very interested to hear what you have to say.

TED: Is this a joke? I don't understand.

JOE: We know we're not really on the Telly. It's a game, we play it all the time. We thought you could play too.

TED: What if I don't want to ?

SAM: That's a tricky one. What do you think Joe?

JOE: Then we shoot you.

TED: I see. And if I play along with this? Then you'll leave me alone?

SAM: Course we will.

JOE: If you play nicely.

SAM: You' re doing your acting in this "theatre" are you?

TED: On the fringe.

SAM: The what?

TED: The fringe, fringe theatre.

JOE: I thought you said he was an actor.

TED: I am.

JOE: Shut up. What's going on?

SAM: Just a minute. This ...fringe theatre...that's acting is it?

JOE: Millions of people. They watch this do they?

TED: Well, only the six tonight.

SAM: Six million!

TED: No six people. We've had worse. The first night we got the director's mother and a man from Time Out.

JOE: I should stick to telly Ted.

JOE TAKES OFF HIS BALACLAVA MASK.

SAM: What are you doing !

JOE: Well Ted's not exactly Mr Brain Box is he.

SAM: He'll recognise your face.

JOE: He won't. Anyway I'll get spots. Take yours off, Sam.

SAM: Don't use my name, you idiot. Now he knows my name and he's seen your face.

TED: Please stop waving that gun around.

JOE: This? O.K. It's not real anyway.

SAM: Ssh!

JOE: I like Ted, I think he's funny.

TED: Would you mind if I have a drink?

JOE: 'Course not, we've got some lagers in the bag.

TED: I'd prefer some whisky. There's a bottle in the kitchen, if you'll just excuse me.

HE GETS UP TO GO. SAM BLOCKS HIS EXIT. HE'S IN A DANGEROUS MOOD.
JOE ATTEMPTS TO PLACATE MATTERS.

JOE: Oh no you don't, Ted. You sit there, I'll get it.

SAM: Yeh, Joe'll get it.

JOE: There, that's friendly isn't it?

SAM: What?

JOE: Now every body knows every bodies name.

SAM: Shit!

SAM TAKES OFF HIS MASK.

TED: I don't know what you want from me. I've got nothing to steal.

JOE: You do live a bit frugally, Ted.

SAM: Nice compact disc though.

TED: Oh my god, not the compact disc. Please don't take the CD. It's not even paid for.

SAM: Actors have to nick things?

TED: I'm paying in instalments. Take anything else but not that.

JOE: There's not much of a choice is there?

SAM: Not unless you're into books.

JOE: Which we're not.

SAM: We might be. Why shouldn't we be? We're not stupid, it might be nice, a few books....which ones do you recommend?

TED: You're asking me which of my books you should steal?

JOE: Look on the bright side.

TED: What?

JOE: We were going to piss on them.

SAM: Joe!

SAM LEADS JOE APART FROM TED. WHO'S LEFT LOOKING COMPLETELY BEWILDERED.

JOE: What!

SAM: Do you have to be such an uncouth wanker?

JOE: It was your idea.

SAM: It was not! We're not going to piss on anything. We're not even going to steal anything.

JOE: Aren't we?

SAM: No.

JOE: Well I'm not sure about that. I think we should have the CD.

SAM: All right we might steal the CD.

THEY BECOME AWARE OF TED LISTENING. THEY BOTH TURN. SMILE AT HIM.

JOE: We might not though, Ted.

SAM: No.

JOE: I'm not saying we definitely will, I'm not really uncouth, Ted. I'm not am I, Sam?

SAM: No, you're not.

JOE: You don't think I'm uncouth, do you Ted?

TED: No..no.

JOE: I'm just a bit disappointed you see, because when we got in here, I thought we were going to steal things.

SAM: That's what we do mainly. Nothing major of course, steal-

JOE: - Piss on things.

SAM: Will you shut up about that!

JOE: I'm just putting Ted in the picture.

SAM: But you're a bit special, Ted, you see because you're an actor.

JOE: But I didn't know that when we first got in. So I might still nick your CD. OK?

SAM: Just put a sock in it will you.

JOE: Why?

SAM: Go and get Ted some whisky.

JOE: You haven't got a telly, have you? I'd settle for a telly. Radio cassette?

SAM: GO!

JOE GOES

PAUSE. SAM SMILES AT TED.

I'm sorry about my brother. He's all right really. You Ok?

TED NODS

Well I'm going to come right to the point, Ted. I broke in here tonight for a special reason. I've been watching your house for ages, ever since I heard you were an actor. You see that's what I want to be too. Do you think that's stupid? I mean you did it, didn't you. You're an actor. So just tell me how you do it and we'll be off.

TED: You broke into my house to find out how to be an actor?

SAM: Yes.

TED: That's ridiculous.

SAM: Ted, don't be angry, we wouldn't have taken anything, not from you. See nobody will take me seriously. At school I nicked this file. It said I "displayed immature and fanciful ideas about my future and should be encouraged in a more constructive direction."

TED: So you became a burglar?

SAM: Well, yes.

TED: Brilliant. For this we pay poll tax!

SAM: If you don't want to go on a scheme you're a trouble maker.

TED: And have you learnt anything from this filthy rat hole I live in?

SAM: I'm a bit confused really.

JOE RETURNS WITH A PLATE OF BISCUITS

JOE: Here's your whisky Ted. I found some biscuits.

SAM AND TED STARE IN AMAZMENT AT THE PLATE THEN AT JOE.

SAM: What have you done with them?

JOE: What's it look like?

SAM: They're on a plate.

JOE: So? There's nothing uncouth about me.

TED: It's clean.

JOE: I washed it up, didn't I. You should see it out there, Sam, it look's like a road accident.

SAM: What's going on? This isn't what I expected at all.

TED: What did you want? Oscars on the mantelpiece?

SAM: I just want to know how you get on the telly.

TED: All right Mickey and Judy let's do the whole show right here in the barn. (HE TAKES A GENEROUS SLUG OF WHISKY) I've always wanted to do this. Ready? Lights! Music! Action!

INTO:

SOUTH BANK SHOW MUSIC AGAIN. THIS TIME JOE IS THE HOST.

JOE: Good evening and on this weeks show we'll be asking the question "What makes an actor?"

TED: ...And here's one I prepared earlier..

JOE: Shut up Ted.

TED: Sorry.

JOE: My guests tonight are Sam Pritchard.

SAM CHEERS

One of south east London's rising stars and Ted...

TED: Ford.

JOE: Currently thrilling audiences on the fridge.

TED: Fringe!

JOE: Sorry Fringe. First though Mr. Sam Pritchard.

ANOTHER BURST OF MUSIC. EVERY ONE CLAPS. SAM JOINS JOE. MUSIC

STOPS CLUMSILY.

JOE: Thank you for joining us this evening Samual.

SAM: Thank you for inviting me Joe, if I may call you Joe.

JOE: Please do. Now am I right in thinking you want to be an actor?

SAM: That is correct Joseph yes.

JOE: And what is it you do at the moment?

SAM: Nick things.

JOE: I see. A bit of a long way from the glittering world of shaking the hand of princess Di back stage at the Royal Variety.

SAM: In a way you could say that, yes but in a way no.

JOE: Confident words there Sam.

SAM: I'm in a confident mood Joe.

JOE: But what about all that stuff on BBC2 where they shout a lot in tights. You know when you switch over late on a sunday night looking for some snooker and they're there sweating and chucking great swords about. Could you do that?

SAM: Yeh, yeh course I could.

TED: No you couldn't.

JOE: What was that?

TED: I said no you couldn't.

JOE: Ladies and gentlemen that voice belongs to my second guest of the evening. I'd like to welcome him now. Ted come on down.

TED: Bollocks!

JOE: Please Ted, There may be children watching.

TED: Bollocks! I'm playing Judge Brack in a profit share production of Hedda Gabler. That's the first job I've had in 18 months and I had to beat thirty or so other poor sods to get it. A Profit share over a pub. And that finishes on Saturday night. Next week it's me, this

flat, and radio 4. Hair of the dog with Brian Redhead and the "Today" team, A quickie with Jennie Murray and Woman's hour, A lunch time tippie with "The World At One", then "PM" , a drunken abusive joust with "The Archers" and it's down hill all the way to the late night shipping forecast.

JOE: What's your reaction to that sam?

SAM: You've just got to get on the telly Ted. Tell us how you do that.

TED: Well, An Equity card will help.

SAM: What's that?

TED: An actors union card.

SAM: How do you get one of those then?

TED: Well, in my day you could stick on a sock puppet and inflict your self on party's of helpless children, pretending you charged fifty quid a time. You got this down in writing plus a few photos and it proved to them you were qualified to, as you put it, " shout a lot in tights". But they've cracked down on this much to the relief of huddled groups of infants and OAPs. You can of course still take your clothes off to earn your card, either for the artistic directors of certain repertory theatres or as a stripper. This too proves to the powers that be that you have what it takes to make a living in the profession and sometimes I can see what they mean.

JOE: So did Jason Donovan have to take his clothes off to get on the telly?

TED: Who knows. I've always thought of him as a sock puppet man myself.

SAM: I'm not taking my clothes off.

TED: In that case your best bet is probably drama school. You'll need to audition, competing against 300 educated, eloquent kids. They wont know anything like as much about life as you two, the Raffles and Cat Woman of Lewisham but of course you will hardly be able to bring up your colourful twilight existence where as they, on the other hand, will be able to prove what well rounded perfectly formed individuals they are because surprise, surprise, yawn, yawn they've all spent at least a fortnight on a kebutz. But let us assume that you've been given a place shall we?

SAM: Yes.

JOE: I could murder a kebutz.

TED: That's a kebab, now be quiet and listen. When you leave, if you're lucky you'll work for a few years in theatre where the minimum anyone has to pay you is £145 a week. So even if you manage to work that means no car, no mortgage, no savings. You've got to really want to be up there on stage because there won't be much more to life.

SAM: (HE'S GETTING VERY PISSED OFF) It's different on the telly. Tell me how I get on the telly. I want to know. TELL ME!

TED: It's not that simple-

SAM SUDDENLY PRODUCES A FLICK KNIFE AND THREATENS TED WITH IT

SAM: You don't fucking know do you?!

TED: I....

JOE: Sam!

SAM: Go on admit it. You don't know. You're talking out of your arse because you haven't got a clue.

TED: Of course I don't know. Do you think I'd be stuck in this hole if I did?

SAM: You're a failure, I don't believe you've even been on the telly and why is that?

TED: You need an agent, to get an agent they have to see you in something good, to get in something good at my age you need experience. I've got nothing to show people I'm up to that.

SAM: Because you're crap.

TED: No.

SAM: You are.

TED: I'm not crap I can do it.

SAM: Then why aren't you on the telly then?

JOE: (KINDLY. HE'S A BIT BEWILDERED BY ALL THIS STRONG FEELING)
Perhaps you could do something else?

TED: No, no one day I'm going to make it.

SAM: Well, why can't I?

TED: I'm not stopping you. Go ahead please do. It's a powerful dream. It gets you up in the morning, just, but you need to want it pretty bad to face the fact it's the only thing you have.

JOE: You've got a nice compact disc player.

SAM: Shut up Joe.

JOE COMES OUT OF THE SCENE.

JOE: And so we come to the end of tonight's programme on the tragic world of the actor. Next week's edition of "At Home With A Self indulgent Wanker" will be at the later time of ten thirty.

COMPLETE CONTRAST.

DELICATE AND GHOSTLY MUSIC.

HEDDA GARBLER WAFTS IN AS IF FROM ANOTHER WORLD.

THEN TED, AS JUDGE BRACK.

BUT THEN ALAN, WEARING ONLY A PAIR OF BOXER SHORTS AND CARRYING HIS COSTUME AND HALF A PINT OF LAGER, ENTERS A DRESSING ROOM AREA ON ANOTHER PART OF THE STAGE.

THE MOOD IS NOW SUDDENLY BROKEN WHEN THE SOUND OF LOUD ROCK MUSIC, AS IF FROM A JUKE BOX IN A ROOM BELOW US, CRASHES IN.

ALAN IS ABOUT TWENTY FIVE AND VERY SEXY. HE'S PLAYING TESSMAN IN TED'S HEDDA.

JOE PASSES HIM. HE'S VERY SHY BUT OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO SEE ALAN.

ALAN: This is back stage, you're not supposed to be back stage.

JOE: It's also the passage to the gents. I need a slash.

ALAN: You're supposed to be completely gripped by the world of Hedda Gabler, it's not even supposed to enter your head that you

want a slash. Anyway you don't. You were on the edge of your seat from the moment I came on stage and you saw it was me. I asked you to stay away from me.

JOE: I didn't know you were an actor.

ALAN: No? You just fancied an evening of vintage Norwegian naturalism. I wish the rest of London agreed with you. Hold my lager.

JOE: We came to see a friend of ours.

ALAN: Who.

JOE: The Judge.

ALAN: Ted Ford? How would you know him? Poor bugger, he's not on form tonight, he had a burglary yesterday and it's really shaken him up.

JOE: Well he's more a friend of my brother's. I don't believe this.

ALAN: What do you want?

JOE: Why don't you turn the music down?

ALAN: We can't. It's the juke box from downstairs. The land lord getting his own back for having to put up with us.

JOE: What a bastard.

ALAN: Yes well, not very good for his image is it? Theatres, they attract queers. Though not enough to boost profits.

JOE: I've been back to the club a few times. Don't you like it there anymore?.

ALAN: You know why I haven't been back. Did you really go and look for me?

JOE: Yeh, it was tough. It's my brother you see. We go every where together. I have to try and get away with out him noticing.

ALAN: It didn't bother you the other night.

JOE: He was away the other night. I've been thinking about you all the time.

ALAN: Yes, well.

PAUSE.

JOE: Have you thought about me?

ALAN: Of course I have but I've told you I don't want to get involved. You following me home the other night, I live with some one, it could have been very awkward. That was a very unfair thing for you to do.

JOE: Why did you kiss me then, that wasn't fair.

ALAN: No it wasn't, I'm sorry.

JOE: Why did you do it then?

ALAN: I couldn't help it. I was a bit drunk and you were so ...sweet.

JOE: Sweet!

ALAN: Sorry.

JOE: I always walk past our club. Last month I counted. I walked past 362 times. I've seen you going in and out.

ALAN: Not 362 times!

JOE: No. 15.

ALAN: For God's sake! Why me?

JOE: You look great. Your clothes and the way you move, I love watching you. And you kissed me. Why did you do that if you don't like me?

ALAN: Of course I like you. You're very attractive, you won't have any problems.

JOE: Except with you.

ALAN: I've got a boy friend, I don't want any trouble. Look at you, jail bait. I bet you're not even twenty one.

JOE: Nearly.

ALAN: Haven't you got anyone else you can talk to?

JOE: No, well, I thought not, but maybe Sam, maybe he'd understand. I'm finding out things about him I never guessed. Like he wants to be on the telly. Have you ever been on the telly?

ALAN: I wish. Three more nights of this and I'm back tearing tickets at The Coliseum. What do you think of the play.

JOE: I like you best.

ALAN: Apart from that.

JOE: Kiss me again.

ALAN: I'm back on stage in a minute. I've got to try and sort out that wife of mine.

JOE: That bird with the gun? She's great. Please.

THEY KISS

ALAN: Now, leave me alone, please.

JOE: I've written my number down here for you.

HE HANDS ALAN A PIECE OF PAPER AND RUNS OFF LEAVING ALAN EXASPERATED.

ALAN SEPS FORWARD INTO THE HEDDA TABLEAUX.

THE SOUND OF THE JUKE BOX SWELLS AND THE FINAL MOMENTS OF THE PLAY BEGIN.

HEDDA: Well, at least I shall not trouble you tonight Judge.

I am feeling terribly-

FROM BELOW THE SOUND OF THE JUKE BOX COMES TO A JUDDERING HALT. THE ACTORS ARE THROWN MOMENTARILY.

- tired, if you'll excuse me I shall go and lie on the sofa for a while.

SHE LEAVES THE "STAGE" AREA WITH GREAT COMPOSURE AND THEN

RUNS INTO THE DRESSING ROOM, PICKS UP A CASSETTE PLAYER AND TURNS IT ON TO PLAY WILD PIANO MUSIC.

TESSMAN CALLS AFTER HER-

TESSMAN: Hedda please! I must concentrate.

SHE TURNS OFF THE CASSETTE. AND THEN BELTS BACK ROUND TO THE STAGE. TO REGAIN HER POISE FOR:

HEDDA: Does it disturb you? But how am I to occupy myself on these endless winter evenings.

BRACK: Oh don't worry Mrs Tessman I have no intention of neglecting you. I'll be here every single evening and how we shall entertain each other.

HEDDA: That is for you to decree now, isn't it, Judge Brack? Now you are king of the castle.

SHE RUNS TO THE DRESSING ROOM AREA AND FIRES A GUN IN THE AIR.

SHE THEN AJUSTS HER KNICKERS, TAKES A SWIG OF LAGER AND RELAXES DURING THE FOLLOWING "ON STAGE."

TESSMAN: She is playing with those guns again.

HE GOES AFTER HER, RETURNING IMMEDIATELY.

TESSMAN: Judge, Judge! She's shot herself. In the head. Who would have thought it?

BRACK: Dear God! But people just don't do that sort of thing. Do they?

BLACK OUT.

SAM AND JOE CHEERING AND CLAPPING ENTHUSIASTICALLY WITH A FEW OTHER PEOPPLE.

THE CURTAIN CALLS. TED'S FIRST, TO ALLOW HIM TO GET IN POSITION FOR THE START OF THE NEXT SCENE.

END OF SCENE.

THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS OFF. LIGHTS UP ON TED IN HIS FRONT

ROOM LATER THAT NIGHT.

TED: For God's sake, why can't you use the door like any one else?

JOE AND SAM BURST IN EXCITEDLY.

SAM: Ted, Ted where did you go after the show? We was looking for you.

JOE: Why did that bird shoot herself?

SAM: It was really great. You were really creepy. I wanted to hit you. Well, not you of course Ted, because it wasn't you really, was it, Ted? It was the man you were acting. It was amazing, you were so close, it was like watching the telly but it was real. You were right there in front of my nose doing it for real.

JOE: Why did she though, Ted?

SAM: I didn't dare move in case any one in the story saw me. It was like listening to someone and hoping they don't notice.

JOE: Are you all right?

SAM: Yeh, you look a bit peaky. I expect you're tired though eh? I thought you might of stayed for a drink afterwards, there was a woman looking for you as well.

JOE: She must have been a fan. Hey, you've got fans, Ted, like pop stars.

SAM: I'm going to come and see it tomorrow night as well.

TED: It's not on tomorrow night.

SAM: Yes it is . It's on until Sunday night. I wonder if I could get our mum to go and see it.

JOE: Don't be stupid. She's going to want to know what you're doing hanging around theatres.

SAM: I'll tell her. I'll tell anyone now, I don't care, I'm going to be an actor like Ted. I'm going to go to drama school and learn all that stuff. I'm still going to be on the telly of course, but I don't mind doing a bit of that stuff first. You'll help me, Ted, won't you?.

TED: Get out.

SAM: What?

TED: Just get out.

SAM: But we came to see your play and we're going to go again.

TED: GET OUT!

JOE: If it's about the window.

TED: After weeks, months, no years, it really is safe to say years, I finally managed to get a top agent to come and see me perform tomorrow night. It was all agreed, all set up.

SAM: They're the people who get you on the telly aren't they? That's great Ted.

TED: No, no it's not great, because what you saw tonight was unexpectedly the final performance of Hedda Gabler

JOE: Shit, that wasn't a real gun was it?

TED: NO IT WAS NOT A REAL GUN! The brewery have thrown us off the premises. Apparently someone from our audience was seen pouring half a pint of lager down the back of the juke box.

SAM: What Juke box?

JOE: You must have heard it Sam. It was playing really loud down stairs. I couldn't concentrate on what Ted was doing?

SAM: I didn't hear it.

TED: Please, please go away. I've got a splitting head ache.

SAM: Yes, yes of course. We 'll come back and see you tomorrow. And don't worry about a thing we'll sort it all out. We'll get the bastard who did it.

TED GROANS.

SAM: See you Ted. Come on Joe.

SAM HAS GONE.

JOE: Bye Ted. Ted what's the Colisium? No don't worry about it, you just

look after your self. We don't want you playing with any guns do we?

SAM: (OFF) Joe!

END OF SCENE.

JOE AND SAM BECOME AMERICAN TV DETECTIVES

SAM: Detective Pritchard, come in to my office please. Any news on the Drama School case?

JOE: Nothing Sir. The city's scum are closing ranks tighter then a fleas ass.

SAM: I don't care Joe, I need results I've got the Mayor's office breathing down my neck every hour of the day on this one. Drop every thing else. I want names, dates addresses, every thing we need to crack these bastards.

JOE: With respect Sir, The Coliseum case? I can't leave that one, it's hot. A few more days and I think I can crack it.

SAM: Shelve it like we did with the Juke Box killer. The public aren't interested any more.

JOE: But just when I'm closing in-

SAM: Drop it Pritchard or this department will drop you like a hot potato. If you want to put your butt on the line chasing some two bit scheme, you do it in your own time and I don't want to hear about it.

JOE: I don't think you even guess what it's about.

SAM: I don't want to know. This department is facing the greatest challenge of its twenty year history and I intend to see to it that my officer's rise to that challenge. Do I make myself clear, detective?

JOE: Yes Luitenant sir.

SAM: Now get out on those streets and get results.

END OF SCENE. DIANA, A TV PRODUCER, USHERS TED INTO HER OFFICE..

DI: If you'd like to come into my office Mr. Ford. I'm Diana Harris. Thank you for coming to see me at such short notice. We don't seem to have an agent down for you.

TED: I'm currently between representation.

DI: I see. I don't know whether my secretary mentioned this to you, but I saw your performance at the Plough and Harrow last night. A very enjoyable evening. I must say I don't normally venture along to fringe theatre, but a friend of mine had a spare ticket, so...

TED: We seem to get most of our audience by accident.

DI: Well, it's a great shame. I imagine it doesn't help there being two productions on at the moment.

TED: Are there?

DI: I'm pretty sure I read a review of some travesty in Time Out.

TED: Oh.

DI: Well I just hope that cast get along to see yours. I loved how you stripped it down to just the four characters. It pointed up some fascinating new dimensions. Any way I haven't asked you in to chat about Ibsen. As I'm sure you'll have read we're looking for a third presenter for our popular Youth programme "The Last Word". What I hope to find during the course of these interviews is people with an interesting angle on their work with kids, something which we could make a short feature on, see how the subject responds in a "hands on" television situation, so to speak, and if it's a success take it from there.

TED: I see.

DI: So inspire me. What can you offer to set the televisual taste buds a-tingling?

TED: Well..

DI: How long is it since you last worked with kids?

TED: Umm, well, five years or so now.

DI: Do you have any children of your own?

TED: I do have a son. He'll be six now. I'm afraid I've only ever seen the occasional photograph. You see my wife left me. She's married someone else, in Portugal.

DI: Ah. So not much actual "hands on experience" recently then?

TED: Not as such, things have been rather quiet for me recently. No big projects. I did actually consider a one man show a while back. "The unsung war poets"-

DI: You sing?

TED: Well no. Not them. I mean nobody does. That's the point. Not that you sing them anyway...

DI: Well thank you for coming to see me, Mr. Ford. To be perfectly honest I don't really think there's anything much we can do for each other at the present time.

TED: Oh please give me a chance. Please! I'll do anything. This is the first real audition I've had in two years. I'm very good with children, really I am. All the kids used to love me. I used to tell them jokes, I was very popular. I could do it again. Please give me a chance.

DI: Darling I'd love to, really I would, and I'm sure you'd be a big hit, but it's not me you'd have to convince, and the people upstairs want features. Now if you'll excuse me I've a line of skate boarding, puppeteering, gazu playing Philip Schofield lookalikes to see before lunch time.

TED: Wait. There's very little on television of direct concern to the less privileged, unemployed kids, with time on their hands-

DI: And dole in their pockets. Yes go on, I'm listening.

TED: Well, I think they might be interested in a little scheme I've started up in one of the poorer areas of south east London. I'm working with some young people who've taken to crime, through no fault of their own, just because there's no outlet for them physically, and most importantly, imaginatively. So they begin to vandalise, steal, piss on thi-, anyway, I've been trying to introduce theatre into these kid's lives as a way of enriching them, but also

as a means of escape, and I think we could do a pretty "hands on piece" about one particular lad who came to me a few weeks ago, broke down, confessed to being a burglar and begged me to help him out of the trap his life had become. He wants to be an actor, and gradually I've been coaching him to take his dreams one step further and make it into one of our top drama schools.

DI: Is he any good this kid?

TED: Brilliant, amazing. I've never seen such talent. Very raw of course, but I think you could have yourself a feature on creating the next Albert Finney.

DI: I'm interested. I'll get the paper work round to you this afternoon, in the meantime keep me informed, and I'll be in touch as soon as possible to work out the details.

END OF SCENE.

TED: Oh my God! What the Hell have I got myself into? I don't even know where the little bastard lives.

END OF SCENE

A BURST OF MUSIC, MADNESS - "WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF FUN", TAKES US TO SAM AND JOE IN THE PUB

SAM: Hello boys and girls. Do you know where we are today? Yes, that's right, we're down the pub. We were down here yesterday, weren't we? And the day before, and the day before that. And why do we come here, boys and girls? We come here to cheer ourselves up because it's less bloody miserable then being sat at home. But it doesn't cheer us up, does it, boys and girls? In fact can you remember the last time we had a good time in this pub? The last time we didn't sit in here, staring into space and pushing a chewed up beer mat around in a pool of lager? Yes, that's right, it was about five years ago. It was my birthday. Have you had a birthday? It was my birthday and I was sixteen years old. That turned out to be a magic number didn't it? Because since that special day I was allowed to be in here, and it's never quite been the same since. Look at Joe. He's especially miserable today. Do you know why? No I'll be fucked if I do either. He's been huffing and blowing and heaving and sighing and wingeing and whining all

day. Shall we sing him the "if my brother doesn't cheer up in a minute I'm going to jam his head into a snooker pocket and break both his legs with a bar stool " song?

Let's go and see Ted.

JOE I don't want to see Ted. Why are you pissing him about with this being an actor lark. You know you'll get sick of it as soon as the wind changes.

SAM: Not this time. Any way that's not what's hacking you off. Why don't you tell me what's bothering you?

JOE: You won't understand.

SAM: Of course I will. Who are you like?

JOE: What?

SAM: Who are you like on telly with your problem?

JOE: That's part of it. This...what I'm feeling now I've never seen it on the telly.

SAM: You must have done.

JOE: No I haven't.

SAM: Why not?

JOE: It doesn't happen like this. Not on the telly. Not to men.

SAM: To women then?

JOE: Well, yes I suppose...No, not really, not in the same way.

SAM: What is it? What's happened to you? You can't decide which powder's going to get your old mans shirt whiter?

JOE: I'm... in love with some one.

SAM: You what!

JOE: I said I'm in love. I suppose.

SAM: You stupid wanker? Do I know her?

JOE: No, no you don't and it's not-

SAM: Tell me who she's like on the telly. Who's she got tits like?

JOE: Sam-

THERE IS A DISTURBANCE OFF.

SAM: Hey what's going on over there? Bloody Hell it's Ted.

TED STAGGERS OVER. BLITZED OUT OF HIS HEAD

TED: Landlord, Landlord, your indulgence please, here are the two honest men and true with whom I wish to communicate.

SAM: It's all right, Trev, we know him. Ted it's only five o'clock, how did you get in this state?

TED: I've been looking for you boys in every pub between here and Catford bridge. (FOR THE LANDLORDS BENEFIT, MUCH TO THE BOYS HORROR.) Such is the nature of South East London hospitality the licensee does not look favourably upon those entering his premises with out making a purchase.

JOE: (SHUTTING HIM UP) What's wrong with soft drinks?

TED: My boy, My boy! If you had but suffered at the hands of your Dentist like myself, you would far rather risk your liver than your teeth.

SAM: You came to see us Ted. That's great.

TED: Great? Great? It is indeed great. Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them. Boys, prepare to be thrust.

SAM: Eh?

TED: Pygmalianed. Together we are going to get you into drama school!

SAM: Great, Ted. I knew you'd come round to it in the end. When do we start?

TED: Now, this evening. We are going to start this very evening.

JOE: He's busy this evening.

SAM: No I'm not.

JOE: You were talking to me, you remember.

SAM: We can talk any time. Joe can come too, can't he Ted?

TED: Of course. The three of us are going to make our way back to the aforementioned Catford Bridge Station and in the arms of Network South East wing our way to theatre land.

JOE: No thanks. I'll give it a miss.

TED: The magic of the West End where we can take our pick from the glittering prizes which await to inspire us. Ah the very names! The Lyric, The Shaftesbury, The Vaudeville, National Theatre, Palladium, Coliseum.

JOE: What was that?

TED: What?

JOE: The last name you just said?

TED: The Coliseum. Well, that's an opera house really, I don't think we'll go there.

JOE: It's a theatre! Of course it's a theatre. "I'll be back tearing tickets at the Coliseum". I've been wandering around all day looking for Ben Hur, lions and chariot races. But it's a theatre! That's it. That's where we want to go tonight.

TED: But I mean an opera. We can if you like but it wasn't quite the idea.

JOE: I don't care. That's where we want to go.

TED: But the critics said-

JOE: Fuck the critics.

TED: Yes, yes, well, right. Ok with you Sam?

SAM: Ted, you haven't had to put up with him ever since we saw your play last night. If it makes him this happy we'll eat the place.

TED: To the Colisium then!

BLACK OUT.

STATION ANNOUNCER:

(ON TAPE) Catford bridge, this is Catford Bridge. The train now at platform 1 is for Ladywell, Lewisham, New Cross, London Bridge, Waterloo East....AND THE WEAT END!

DRY ICE.

TED AND THE BOYS PERFORM A FRED ASTAIRE DANCE ROUTINE TO THE TUNE OF PUTTING ON THE RITZ.

TED: Have you seen those Matinees?
 3pm on mid week days,
 Put your brain in nutral gear,
 When the dancing man appears.
 Now things are looking rosey,
 It's time to be as posey,
 Something in the air,
 Calls for Fred Astaire.

Fred could take a dead beat
 From out the back streets
 And make the boy a star instead.
 It wouldn't bother Fred.
 He just tilt his hat,
 then smile that smile
 and tap dance across the screen instead.
 It wouldn't bother Fred.

THE BOYS: Okay he's a goofy looking slime-

TED: He's not complaining.

Tap dancing on the wing while aeroplaning.

THE BOYS And singing in the raining.

THEY DANCE.

IN THE CLOSING MOMENTS THE DANCE FALLS APART. SAM AND JOE COLLIDE. MAYBE SAM SNAPS AT THE AUDIECE. MAYBE TED FLOUNCES OUT "KIDS TODAY, NO STYLE"

JOE CARRYS ON. HE'S INTO THE DANCING. HE LOOKS UP TO DISCOVER

HE'S ALONE.

JOE: (DISAPOINTED) I was enjoying that!

SAM: (OFF) JOE!

THE MUSIC ENDS.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

THE AUDITORIUM AT THE COLISEUM (3 CHAIRS IN A ROW).

JOE, SAM, AND TED IN THE AUDIANCE OF THE MAGIC FLUTE. WE HEAR THE THOUGHTS OF EACH, LOOSLEY IN TIME TO THE MUSIC.

JOE: You think you've conquered puberty,
But it keeps on pulling strokes,
It sprouts your pubes,
It drops your balls,
Then it makes you fancy blokes.
(Just when I was getting a bit straight)
(Well, when I say straight...)

I don't understand what I'm feeling,
One snog from a man and I'm reeling,
Or that's how it seems to appear,
To think all that time I was....
(I did Wonder.)
(Well you do.)
(Don't ya.)
Kylie did nothing for me.
Could it be chasin Jason I need.
(I wonder if Jason goes to the opera)
(Probably make a change from all that surfing)

SAM: So now I'm going to be a star,
Not many'd have the balls,

and to those bastard teachers,
I can finally say Up Yours!
They made me feel a fool,
Now attitudes the rule.

This is only the start of the story,
Jackanory is going to get gorry.
I'll remake every programme there's been,
The girls'll be licking the screen.
(I'm wicked,
I'm sexy,
I'm.. I'm.. I'm..)
I'm not very BBC2.
Blue Peter is gun'a get blue.
(Perhaps I'll read the news too.
Nah, I'll be too busy being it.)

TED: Everything is going well,
I can't believe my luck.
I took the plunge,
She took the bait,
Now things are on the up,
There wasn't a hiccup.
This time I won't cock up.

Oh God it'll be a disaster,
I'll never become a broadcaster,
They say every dog has his day,
Well, the daylight is slipping away.
(I'm frightened
well, nervous,
No terrified.)
There's no way I'm pulling this off,
Turning over night into Frank Bough.
(I haven't got the smile.
And I look crap in sweaters.)

BLACK OUT.

THE INTERVAL.

THE SOUND OF THE AUDIENCE CLAPPING.

LIGHTS UP ON TED RESTRAINING SAMS RATHER TOO RAUCOUS CHEERS.

JOE: That wasn't as long as your play Ted.

SAM: It's half time you prat.

TED: Can everybody follow the story?

BLANK STARES FROM THE BOYS

No me neither.

ALL THREE STAND TO ALLOW SOMEONE PAST THEM, OUT ALONG THE ROW.

SAM AND JOE STARE AFTER THEM.

JOE: There, isn't half some fat people here.

SAM: (AGGRESIVELY, TO THE PASSER BY WHO SEEMS TO HAVE HEARD)
What?

TED PULLS HIM DOWN.

TED: If only we could afford a programme. They print the story in them.

SAM: Don't worry I'll nick one.

TED: NO! listen I want to make this very clear. If I'm going to get you on television you'll have to stop stealing things. Do you understand.

SAM: Why.

TED: It won't look good you picking some ones pocket on the way up to collect your Oscar.

SAM: I wont need to flog it then.

TED: Just stay out of trouble. From now on if you so much as use one piece of loo paper too many then we're wasting our time.

SAM: All right, keep your hair on. I'm just off to the gents.

TED AND JOE STAND TO LET SAM PAST, BUT HE GRINS AT THEM AND CLAMBERS OVER THE BACK OF THE SEAT INSTEAD.

JOE: So You're getting big brother on the telly?

TED: Well, hopefully.

JOE: Ted, what happens if he lets you down?

TED: He won't. He knows this is a golden opportunity if he works hard and we all keep our noses clean. Joe, where did you go half way through?

JOE: I needed a bit of fresh air.

TED: You're behaving very oddly tonight. I want to know where you got those tickets from.

JOE: Don't you worry about a thing, Ted. You just sit back and enjoy the rest of the show.

TED: Did you steal them?

JOE: No.

TED: Did you do anything you should be ashamed of?

JOE: No. Leave me alone. I got you some tickets, didn't I? That's what you wanted. I got them from a friend. I must say it's a bit boring if you ask me but I'm glad I got them 'cause it was what you wanted, so why are you being so FUCKING SHITTY TO ME?

TED: (SMILING EMBARRASSEDLY AT SOME PEOPLE IN NEAR BY SEATS) I didn't mean to be. Look, if you didn't steal them I'm very grateful to you. I haven't been to the theatre in ages.

JOE: We'll go lots from now on, the three of us. It's no problem, leave it to me.

SAM RETURNS.

SAM: (PRODUCING WITH A FLOURISH) One programme!

TED: I don't beleive this.

SAM: Sory Ted, it sort of slipped into my hand. One programme.

TED: Right, this is the last time I will tolerate your blatant criminality.

SAM: Not quite Ted.

TED: What do you mean?

SAM PRODUCES A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

SAM: I found us a bottle of Moet and all.

END OF SCENE.

TED SAT IN THE AUDITORIUM. THE SOUND OF AN ORCHESTRA TUNING.
THE HUSHED VOICE OF OF THE CLASSICAL MUSIC ANNOUNCER -

TED: Good evening. We welcome Radio 3 listeners live to the London coliseum for the second half of their acclaimed production of Mozart's "Several people about to have their lives screwed up by multiple cases of mistaken identity".

The count has taken under his protection two peasant youths who attempted to rob him on the local high way. Racked with guilt the count spends several sleepless night roaming the barricades of his Italian des. res. worried that the youths will discover his true identity. He is in fact a Florentine fortune hunter. Drowning these thoughts during a chirpy "villagers on the green" type drinking song the Count's mind turns to the identity of the two peasant youths. Are they in fact the thigh-slapping simple swains that they appear or does something murky and Welsh National Opera like lurk below the surface.

Patrons are reminded that the taking of photographs and the sound of digital watches can prove distracting and advised to fasten their seat belts, hold very tight and not cough in case they miss something.

THE NEXT DAY. A PHONE IS RINGING. JOE ANSWERS IT.

JOE: Hello.

ALAN Can I speak to Joe Pritchard please?

JOE: Speaking.

ALAN This is Alan.

JOE: I came to find you last night. Where you work. At the Coliseum.

ALAN I'm not due back there until Tuesday. Hedda wasn't supposed to have finished yet.

JOE: Oh yeh.

ALAN What the hell do you think you're playing at?

JOE: What do you mean?

ALAN You know very well what I mean. You couldn't find me but you found someone else, didn't you? earned yourself some tickets? Where did he take you? The back of the cloakroom or under the orchestra pit?

JOE: I.. How did you know?

ALAN He couldn't wait to get on the phone and tell me about it.

JOE: Why?

ALAN Perhaps he wanted to compare notes. It was me you were going around asking everyone for.

JOE: He thinks we've....

ALAN It's going to be all over the building by now. You stupid little tart. Is that the kind of thing you want to get mixed up in?. What if Michael hears about it? He'll kill me.

JOE: It's your own fault for running away from me. Why can't you let me see you now and again?

ALAN I love my boy friend. I don't want to get mixed up with a kid like you.

JOE: So why did you keep my number then? Why did you phone me?

ALAN I don't know why I kept your number, but I'm phoning you because I don't want to see you get hurt by some one like him.

JOE:
I am hurt. You hurt me.

ALAN: Can't you see if you go around getting off with any man who'll go with you you're just going to get used?

JOE: He gave me some free tickets.

ALAN Well congratulations. There's plenty of that out there if it's what

you want.

JOE: It's more than that. I enjoyed it. We got to see the opera and for the first time since you kissed me I was able to feel good about the way I am. You never gave me that.

ALAN I'm sorry it's that way.

JOE: And I think you're jealous.

ALAN I'm not, I-

JOE: Don't feel sorry for me. You let me down and now you can't expect me to sit at home because you don't like what I've found instead. From now on I'm going to enjoy myself.

SAM ARRIVES. JOE HANGS UP.

SAM: Who was that?

JOE: My mate what can get us the tickets. D'you fancy going to the theatre tonight?

SAM: Nah, I've had a bellyful at Ted's.

JOE: I think I might go.

SAM: What, on your own?

JOE: Yeh, why not?

SAM: What do you want to do that for?

JOE: Well, I'm interested. I thought you were.

SAM: Well, yeh, yeh I am, it's just, well this acting lark it isn't quite what I expected. Ted, he spouts on at me all the time about things which I know you don't need to have on the telly and you should see the stuff he makes me work on. It doesn't make any sense to me. It's all a load of crap.

JOE: I knew this would happen. Look, you can't let him down Sam. He's working so hard for you. This is real. It's actually going to get you somewhere. You'll be on the telly. Don't throw it away.

SAM: Yeh, yeh I know, but I was thinking maybe it would be easier if I became a pop star, you know, formed my own group and did it

that way. I mean that's what Sting did, didn't he?

JOE: You're not going to go through with it?

SAM: Of course I am, yeh, I was just thinking that's all. He's given me this play to read, "Romeo and Juliet".

JOE: I've heard of that.

SAM: Everybody's heard of that it's really famous isn't it. "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" all that, but you try reading it. I was looking at it on the bus. See if you can make any sense of it.

JOE: Which bit am I supposed to read?

SAM: The bits in the heavy letters. The rest of it tells you what it means.

JOE: What, all that to tell you about these couple of lines?

SAM: That's what the man says.

JOE: "Two households both alike in dignity in fair Verona where we lay our scene." Nah, I can't make head or tail of it. But you've got to, mate. You've got to get on the telly with it.

SAM: I suppose so. It is worth it, isn't it?

JOE: Of course it is.

SAM: All the same, do you remember Colin Villers?

JOE: Year above you at school?

SAM: That's right. Well, he's got his own band now. They're playing at the Brockley Jack tonight, I thought I'd go and see them. Have a word with him afterwards, see how he got started. Do you want to come?

JOE: No thank's I'm going to head up to The West End, One of us had better. Just in case it turns out you're not Elvis.

END OF SCENE.

THE NEXT DAY. THE BOYS IN TED'S FRONT ROOM.

TED: Listen Boys, I've had a call from Diana at the television station, she wants a meeting with us. I think it would be an excellent opportunity to try out your audition speeches. Did you read Romeo and Juliet?

SAM: Most of it.

TED: Where did you get to?

SAM: I got to the end.

TED: I don't understand.

SAM: I skipped bits.

TED: Which bits?

SAM: Well, where it got a bit boring, you know.

TED: Did anything grab you?

SAM: Eh?

TED: Any favourites? Any speeches particularly jump out at you for your classical in the audition?

SAM: Umm, well yeh. This one here.

HE IS SELECTING AT RANDOM

TED: Which?

SAM: Well the old "Two households, both alike in dignity" one.

TED: You liked that one, did you?

SAM: Yeh, yeh I did.

TED: Why was that?

SAM: Why?

TED: Yes why?

SAM: Well, it spoke to me, Ted. I mean a lot of this stuff, frankly, it doesn't say much these days does it, but "Two households," we've all got houses, haven't we? Well, unless you live in a flat.

JOE: I saw this programme once in which people lived in a caravan.

SAM: And there's boats isn't there? Some people live in boats. And tents.

JOE: What about igloos, there's not much for people who live in igloos in that bit.

SAM: Joe's got a point there. See this is where the whole thing starts to fall in, isn't it, Ted? It's all so old-fashioned this stuff. There are loads of people who this won't mean anything to.

JOE: Cave dwellers.

SAM: That's what puts you off, you see Ted, this kind of stuff, and you know it's just not relevant to the way we live today. So you kind of lose interest.

TED: And skip bits.

SAM: It's the fault of the writing.

TED: But you did get to the end.

SAM: Oh yeh, "For never was there a story of such woe as Juliet and her Romeo" Great stuff, that.

JOE: Just a minute, that's wrong. It should be Romeo and Juliet. Everybody knows that.

SAM: Well spotted, Joe. All this going to the theatre. It's turning you into a bit of an expert. Ted, I reckon you could pick up a thing or two from Joe.

JOE: (A VIRTUOSO PERFORMANE) I saw a great play last night, Ted. There was this bloke and he started out in prison but he shouldn't have been really so he clobbered this guard and then he went on the run and he became a mayor but mean while this woman was getting loads of grief at work cause she wouldn't have it off with her boss, right, and he was jealous 'cause she had really beautiful hair and a baby. Anyway she sold her hair and gave the money to the man who escaped from prison. He went and took it to the baby, who was a little girl now and she lived in a pub, where

everybody stood on the tables. And then when she grew up they all went and lived in Paris where this young bloke falls in love with her but he's also in love with this other girl who's the daughter of the landlord. Anyway this doesn't work out because there's a war on. I didn't really understand that bit because I had to nip out in the middle and get a bit of fresh air. Anyway all the way through there's this policeman who's after the prisoner and during the war when all the houses in the street go round and round on a turn table and in the end fall over, he recognises his old enemy and they have a fight but he gets let off so he throws himself into a whirlpool. The first girl, the one who used to live in the pub gets so pissed off because the young goodlooking one doesn't love her and because her dad is a bit of a bastard to her and because it's raining that she kills herself and this little kid does as well. And another man, when he dies, falls over backwards with a flag, it's dead dramatic that bit. At the end of all this the first man's daughter and the young man get married and the dad of the girl who kills herself robs them all at the wedding but nobody minds because it's funny and the ghost of everybody who's died led by the woman from the beginning with the nice hair comes back and they all sing about going to heaven. It sounds really depressing when you tell it back, Ted but it wasn't because it was really exciting. It was in French, what it was called, but you could understand every word.

SAM: That is depressing Ted. The frogs are doing it better than us. Why didn't you give me something with a little bit of action?

TED: Perhaps a car chase?

SAM: Yeh! well I couldn't really do that in my audition. Could I?

JOE: You could use lots of chairs.

TED: Romeo and Juliet is the most passionate tale of romance, death and revenge ever told. Which you would know if you had taken the trouble to read it. But you haven't, have you? This is all proving a little bit too much trouble, isn't it? Because for once stealing from someone else isn't going to help.

SAM: I can do something with this shit if I want to. I did that other thing didn't I?

TED: "Thing"!

SAM: That Jimmy in " Look Back In Anger".

TED: Did you? You feel you've conquered that one do you? Because all I've seen is a very bad impersonation of how you imagine Captain Kirk in the role. Or is it Kojak? At any rate it's not you. We've been through it and through it and you still can't be bothered to find something in yourself to use.

SAM: How am I supposed to know what it's like watching my old man die? He's got more energy than the Electricity Board. I saw this programme once where this woman's baby died. But she was Scotch. Shall I do it Scotch?

TED: No. It's no use just reproducing what you've seen on the Television. You can't spend your whole life stealing things. You've got to create something yourself. You've got to start putting your back into this. I can't carry you, I'm doing all I can, but this has got to be a partnership.

SAM: You love all this, don't you, Ted. You've lost weight, you've cut down on your drinking. It's like you're feeding off me. It's disgusting.

TED: We should be feeding from each other.

SAM: Because I don't think you've any idea what you're talking about half the time. You're just a lonely old wanker who's so out of touch he's going to screw up the whole thing. I never said I wanted to be an actor. That was all you. You talked me into it. I said I wanted to be on the tele. and I'm going to be, but not by doing the load of shite you want to do. I'm going to do it by being in a band. Acting? You can stuff it. Even Joe has to go out for a breather in the middle of a play and he's into all this crap.

END OF SCENE.

SHOW BIZ MUSIC. JOE AS IF READING THE NOMINATIONS FOR AN OLIVIER AWARD

JOE: And the nominations for this year's Society of West End Theatre Award is: Rob for the back of the cloak room at English National Opera. Kyle for the late comer's lounge at the Barbican, Ian for the lift in between The Lyttleton and The Olivier Upper Circle, Roger for the lost property cupboard at The Duke of Yorks, Gary for the ice cream store at Her Majesty's and the loser is...and the loser is....and the loser is...

SAM AS IF BEING INTERVIEWED ON WOGAN

SAM: Well Terry, I think the trouble with the youngsters in the music business, you know your Kylies and your Jasons, is they've got no soul. As I was saying to Micky Jagger over a few beers last night we still miss the King. When I think of those long hot afternoons, me and Jimi Hendrix jamming away, Dave Bowie might be having a bit of a warble over the top, Elvis would come into our front room, he'd lean his head over to one side in a thoughtful listening sort of way and he'd say "Boys, Boys you've got to have soul" And that would be my message to Bros and the Curiosity Killed the Cat lads who ask me "Why is it the girlies are still wetting their nickers over you year after year while we have as much street credibility as a Rubic's cube. I say to them just think of Elv in "Blue Hawaii" and I can see them doing so. A tear comes to their eyes and before you know where you are everybody's humming "Old Shep"

END OF SCENE.

TED'S FRONT ROOM. HE'S IN A BAD WAY.

TED: Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child..

How sharper then a serpant's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child...

THE SOUND OF SMASHING GLASS FROM OFF

TED: Sam! Sam! is that you? Sam!

JOE ENTERS

JOE: Ted, didn't you hear me knocking?

TED: Oh, it's you.

OE: How are you doing?

TED: Is Sam with you?

JOE: No Ted.

TED: Where is he?

JOE: I don't know, I haven't seen a lot of him recently.

TED: Will you see him tonight?

JOE: I don't know, maybe.

TED: Will you give him a message from me? Will you ask him to come round and see me? Tell him we can make it work. We won't do those plays I set him if he doesn't want to. We'll find some he does like. He can call the shots. Only tell him to come round and see me.

JOE: It's no use. He's going to be a pop star now. He's decided. He's like that. I'm sorry.

TED: It won't work. They won't be interested. If they'd wanted groups they'd have asked for them. They're looking for new ideas. We had that.

JOE: Yeh well, he doesn't want to be an actor now, does he?

TED: He's a bloody fool. Are they any good, this band?

JOE: Don't know, shouldn't think so. He'll look good though.

TED: Yes, yes he'll look good.

JOE: Our dad's really behind it. He's going to buy him some really sharp gear. This all leaves you in the shit though, doesn't it?

TED: Well, the story was all about me coaching a kid into drama school, if I haven't got anyone to coach it's not going to be winning any BAFTAs is it? Wait a minute, what about you? I could work with you. You're a bright lad. We could get you into drama school.

JOE: Well, I read that play, Romeo and Juliet, that's what I came to talk to you about.

TED: You did?

JOE: Yes.

TED: Well, let's get started then. We'll show that ungrateful little shit.

JOE: Don't be stupid. I don't want to be an actor. I don't want to be on the tele. Well I wouldn't mind, but I wouldn't be any good at it.

TED: What are you doing here then?

JOE: I told you. I read that play, Romeo and Juliet. I read it, it was hard work. I had to keep looking things up but at the end I thought about it and I realised that you and me and Sam, we've got something wrong.

TED: Very good. You've spotted that have you? Once again as I bow down to greet life it kicks me in the teeth.

JOE: I've got to talk to you about this play Ted. It's going round and round in my head. It makes everything I've got seem like yesterday's take away.

TED: I thought you said you didn't want to be an actor.

JOE: I don't. Stop thinking about that. It's so boring. There's some thing more important than that.

TED: What? If you won't co-operate what the hell have I got left?

JOE: Nothing the way things stand. Neither have I, any of us.

TED: Exactly, then why are you bothering me? Leave me alone.

JOE: Don't you want anything else out of life then having strangers watch you? What are they going to see. I heard you shouting at Sam telling him he had to find things inside him to use for his acting. Well I don't think you could do any better. What's inside you except wanting to be an actor and a lot of cheap whisky? And quite frankly Ted, I've listened to you going on and on about how tough that is, and I'd be far more interested in watching chips go cold.

TED: Real! How real would you like me to be? A failed marriage, a wife and kid who won't even talk to me, dreams which make me so hungry I'm chewing up my insides waiting for them to come true.
Joke: Why didn't the actor open the curtains in the morning?
Answer: To give himself something to do in the afternoon. I've been living that existence for five years now. Is that real enough for you?

JOE: Alright, tell me about Romeo and Juliet then. When you read about them going through all that, what they went through, what does it make you think about?

TED: It is some of the most beautiful poetry ever written.

JOE: Bollocks to the poetry Ted. They die for each other. They love each other so much that they die for each other. I want somebody to love me like that Ted. That's got to be worth more than being asked for your autograph or fucking around the West End.

TED: How long do you think their love would have lasted? If it had all turned out nicely? If they'd had a lovely fairy tale wedding with a frock by the Emanuells and Laura Ashley table napkins at the reception, do you think any body would have written about them? They only died because they were young and stupid enough to believe it was worth the apothecary charges. Once the adventures are out of the way and they're free to ask who's holding who back it's not such entertaining viewing.

JOE: I don't believe you feel that Ted. I don't reckon that's what you really think, because I saw you the last few weeks working with Sam. You came alive. And it wasn't just because you were going to get your face on the telly.

TED: I'm not into little boys.

JOE: But you're into other people. Or you could be if you would let yourself remember what it was like. Better than acting.

TED: I've got things to do. Paperbacks to re-arrange, repeats of last Thursday's "My Music" to listen to.

HE EXITS.

PAUSE.

JOE: (CALLS AFTER HIM) Do you think I'm being stupid.

TED: (OFF) You're being twenty.

JOE: Why are you such a cynical bastard? You don't want to hear what I'm saying because if I'm right you've really screwed up.

TED: (RETURNING) I don't want to hear what you're saying because it's boring. I've heard it all before. I believed all this at your age. It's like puberty, vegetarianism and the Rocky Horror Show, we all go through these things. I got married, remember, had a child, worked myself to a frazzle sand papering down my brain to teach O level geography and that wasn't Sado Masochism, I did that because I believed in what you're saying but as time goes on you begin to realise that not only is love not worth dying for, it's apparently not worth a birthday card from your six year old son.

JOE: Why did your wife leave you?

TED: She didn't understand how much being an actor meant to me.

JOE: I bet she did. That's why she left, Ted. 'Cause she could see it meant more to you than she did.

TED: You're twenty years old. What the hell do you know about anything? You've never taken a risk in your life, well maybe to steal a stereo but not for anything worth while.

JOE: What's "worth while"? Dressing up in old clothes and pretending to be somebody else? You don't know nothing, stuck in this pig sty, listening to your ponsy radio programmes. I'm not going to let myself end up like you. I'm going to fight.

TED: For what?

JOE: Mind your own business. Someting more important then what you want.

TED: Why don't you just enjoy the poetry and forget the fairy stories?

JOE: Why don't you set me an example? You're very good at telling me what's worth while but I don't see any fight in you. You're a loser, you lost your family and you lost being on the telly. And you're just sitting here feeling sorry for your self.

TED: Go away. Stop talking to me. You're a child, you're too young, You don't understand.

END OF SCENE

JOE AS IF TALKING TO HIS FATHER.

TED AS IF TALKING TO DIANA

TED: Diana? Yes, I can see you're in a meeting but I have to speak to you.

JOE: All right Dad? Dad can I ask you something. No I don't want any money, I don't want anything really. I want to talk to you. There's something I've got to tell you. You watching the telly then? What is it? Some new quiz? Dad listen a minute.

MUSIC. DIANA AND SAM AS IF PRESENTING THE TACKIEST OF TACKY GAME SHOWS

DI: Hello and welcome to today's "Tell the Truth"

SAM: The show in which telling the truth can win you big, big prizes.

DI: But the wrong truth can lose you a lot, a lot a points.

THE CONTESTANTS ARE TED AND JOE. DIANA WITH TED, SAM WITH JOE.

DI: Now boys, you both get four chances to win those big, big prizes.

SAM: But mind how you go, because everybody's listening.

SAM AND DI: "TELL THE TRUTH!"

A DRUM ROLL STARTS OR PERHAPS SOMETHING LIKE THE CLOCK SOUND IN COUNT DOWN

TED: "B" please.

DI: How's the project going?

TED: Blown it. I've blown it. The kid won't play ball any more. I dare say it is possible to take a kid like that and get him into drama school, but he's not the one and even if he was, I'm not the person to do it.

DI: Correct.

JOE: "P" Please.

SAM: What "P" makes his father ashamed and wish his son had never been born?

JOE: Don't know.

SAM: A Poof.

TED: "T" please.

DI: What "T" have you been doing a lot of in the last week?

TED: Thinking. I've been thinking about this whole set up. It strikes me that it doesn't matter things have fallen through because all you were doing was using people like me to find items for your programmes. You intended to get an established telly celeb to be your presenter right from the beginning. The whole thing is a con.

DI: Correct.

JOE: "F" please.,

SAM: What "F" is an ungrateful, vicious, little snake who's going to break his mother's heart?

JOE: Don't know.

SAM: A Faggot!

TED: "C" please.

DI: Which "C" will you give us one more of.

TED: "Chance", I'll give you one more chance. I know I could do the job. I've been taught to listen to what younger people say and not to crush it because of the mistakes I've made in my life.

DI: Correct.

JOE: "S" please.

SAM: Which S is going to get beaten half dead for making his father cry for the first time in thirtyfive years?

JOE: Don't know.

SAM: "Shit stabber"

TED: "R" please.

DI: What "R" would you like us to take?

TED: "Risk". I'm asking you to take a risk and let me try out for the job and I give you a promise too, that you wont regret it.

DI: Correct.

JOE: "J" Please.

SAM: What "J" can get out of the house, out of his father's sight and forget he ever had a family?

JOE: I don't know.

SAM: The answer's "Joe".

JOE: No! please, I love you. Mum! Dad! Please!

SAM: The answer's Joe.

JOE IS SAVAGELY BEATEN UP.

SAM KICKS JOE ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING

Queer! Nancy boy! Turd burglar! Aids bag! That's you Joe. YOU! YOU! YOU!

END OF SCENE.

JOE, BLOODY AND BEATEN IS AT TED'S FRONT DOOR.

JOE: I'm sorry Ted. I couldn't think of anywhere else to go.

TED: Who did this to you?

JOE: It doesn't matter.

TED: I'll fetch a doctor or something.

JOE: Just....hold me....please.

TED: All right.

JOE: Let me stay here. Just for a while.

TED: Of course, of course.

END OF SCENE.

IN THE DARKNESS, MUSIC:

Though he may not be the man,
Some girls think of as handsome,
To my heart he carries the key.
Won't you tell him please,
To follow my lead,
Put on some speed,
Oh how I need-

Some one to watch over me.

TED'S FRONT ROOM. DIANA AND TED. SUCCESSFUL NOW. TED IS PACKING A CASE.

TED: How did it go?

DI: How could you do this to me? I'm shown into the board room and there, spread out on the table, amongst our reviews and the increased rating figures since you joined the programme, are this mornings papers. Banner headlines - "Ted ear bashing on queer bashing". On the day we bid to get you your own show!

TED: Oh, they didn't use "queer bashing" did they? That was the whole point.

DI: How long was your speech? The Independent had it at forty five minutes, The Times and Guardian an hour. No mention at all in the Telegraph of course. At least some people are reliable. What on earth is going on?

TED: You're always telling me I'm able to see things like a twenty year old. That that's our secret.

DI: Yes.

TED: I've had a good teacher.

DI: What do you mean?

TED: He should be here soon. Do you remember that boy I was trying to get into drama school?

DI: I don't think I ever met ...oh wait a minute, yes. The one with a

band but there wasn't actually a band. Not him? He was a nightmare.

TED: No. His brother, Joe. He lives here with me.

DI: "Lives?"

TED: Yes.

DI: Is that "lives" as in lives or "lives" as in....lives?

TED: His family turned him out for being gay.

DI: I see. And you've "taken him in"....as it were. Weren't you...didn't you used to be...

TED: Married? Yes. I don't understand. I don't pretend to. All I know is he's changed my life for the better. Having him around has given me a chance to take a fresh look at so many things and adding my voice to that rally on Sunday was my way of celebrating us. I must say I didn't think the implications through. I don't care about me but you had a lot riding on this project didn't you?

DI: Only my professional reputation. Possibly my career.

TED: It can't be as serious as that. You're one of the best. Get yourself a new presenter. You'll be away.

DI: I think I'll slug things out a bit longer with you if you don't mind.

TED: But-

DI: They love you?

TED: What?

DI: They love you. A new approach for the mid-nineties, that's what they want. New brooms in all departments. They see you becoming a sort of crusader figure for the young. Not just gay issues, anything that's topical.

TED: Wow!

DI: But it needs to be played carefully, controversy is a very delicate balancing act. You're a rising star, Ted. People are going to want to do profiles, interviews, they'll want to know about your personal life.

TED: What, you mean you think I ought to get one? Photogenic hobbies for "Hello"?

DI: You don't see what I'm getting at do you?

TED: No.

DI: Standing up for gay rights is one thing but living with some one so much younger than you? I mean I don't care if he's your Gynecologist darling, but rightly or wrongly this country is very touchy about who is talking to their children. Think of Clause Twenty Eight.

TED: The age group we're dealing with aren't children any more. Good God, they're old enough to vote, marry, have their own kids, fight for their country, listen to Gardener's Question Time. I'm sure they can cope.

DI: Do you have to live under the same roof?

TED: We love each other. A family means a lot to him. The family he had beat him half to death. Why shouldn't I be there for him?

DI: When he gets in from bragging about you to God knows who.

TED: He's not like that.

DI: Why take the risk? Look, you claim you love each other, right?

TED: We do.

DI: Well, if that's the case he'll understand if you ask him to move out. Explain the situation. If he does love you he'll see it's for the best.

TED: No. The last time I put career above everything else, I lost my family. He's my family now and nothing's more important than that.

DI: It's some relationship where one person is scared to ask something of the other, in case he'll be rejected.

TED: It's not like that.

JOE: (FROM OFF) Ted!

DI: Think about what I've said. I'm going to leave you to it, I know you've got a plane to catch.

TED: Diana, trust me.

DI: Congratulations anyway, you've got your own show.

WE HEAR THE FRONT DOOR CLOSE AS SHE LEAVES. JOE COMES IN.

JOE: You're not gone yet then? Do you want me to drive you to the airport?

TED: No thanks I've ordered a taxi.

JOE: Portugal, eh? I wish I was going with you.

TED: I wish you were too. Maybe one day it'll be possible.

JOE: Has she got a nice place, your ex missus?

TED: I don't know. I don't know what I'll find when I get there, except I'm not expecting a very warm welcome.

JOE: She's seeing you isn't she? That must mean you're worth something to her.

TED: I hope so. We were great together once. It's time we were friends again.

JOE: I'm glad I caught you before you left. I'll miss you.

TED: I'll be back on Tuesday!

JOE: Yeh well.

(OUTSIDE A TAXI SOUNDS ITS HORN)

TED: Right, I'd better be off. Look after yourself.

JOE: I love you.

TED: I should hope so too, don't leave this place in a tip. I got the telly thing by the way.

JOE: Great.

TED HAS PICKED UP HIS CASE AND GONE. END OF SCENE. SAM APPEARS.

SAM: And so it seems that we have pending
A glowing, sunset, happy ending.
Hard work, courage and truth won through
As with luck they sometimes do.
But don't forget the other brother
Here contented smiles to smother.
Have the good guys won the day?
Or is there one last card to play?

END OF SCENE.

JOE ALONE IN THE FLAT. SMASHING GLASS OFF. HE STARTS UP.

SAM ENTER

SAM: So this is where you hang out.

JOE: Sam!

SAM: You've made it nice. A bit more money around these days.

JOE: You look good.

SAM: I look like shit.

JOE: I've missed you. I've tried to leave messages at home but they put
the phone down on me.

SAM: They don't want you round our house anymore.

JOE: I know.

SAM: I hear dad gave you a hard time.

JOE: Beat the shit out of me.

SAM: What do you care?

JOE: Eh?

SAM: What do you care? You've got out. I envy you Joe. I hate it at
home, stuck with them day after day. Dad slobbering round stinking
of B.O. and fags. Mum crying all the time. You've got away from

all that. I wish I could.

JOE: Do you still want to be on the tele?

SAM: Show business it's a mug's game. Full of wankers. I might be an explorer, I was thinking.

JOE: What are you going to explore? Lewisham?

SAM: Don't take the piss out of me Joe, I won't have it. you're my brother.

JOE: Sorry Sam.

PAUSE

SAM: So you're a poof are you.

JOE: Yeh.

SAM: Are you happy?

JOE: Yeh.

I miss you. Where have you been? I've been looking for you all over. Nobody at the pub knew anything.

SAM: I had to go away and think things through. I had to think about a future for us.

JOE: Us?

SAM: Yeh, you and me. We've got to get you out of this.

JOE: I like it here, Sam.

SAM: They've got us. I was going to be a star but they were jealous, they dumped all over me, and they took you away and made you into a poof.

JOE: Nobody made me anything .

SAM: I know you believe that now Joe, because they've turned your mind against me, but we'll get away from here and you'll see. They're not interested in us. Just what they can screw out of us. We don't need to be part of this. I've got a plan,

JOE: Plan?

SAM: Yeh, we're going to France.

JOE: France! What do we want to go to France for?

SAM: It's beautiful in France, Joe, I've seen pictures. You can do grape picking there. They take the grapes and squeeze out wine from it and they need loads of people.

JOE: You're scaring me. Why are you talking like this. You're talking like a kid.

SAM: No not a kid. I'm seeing things clearly now. Come on.

JOE: "Come on" what?

SAM: We're going to do what we should have done in the beginning we're going to do this place over. There's more worth nicking these days. We'll sell it and then off to France. No books.

JOE: I'm not taking anything, Sam. This is my home.

SAM: No, no it's not. You're home is with me Joe.

JOE: And where is that? television land where we're pirates, or aliens or explorers searching Elephant and Castle for grapes with stripes on? For the first time I'm doing all right. I don't need to pretend.

SAM: I'm not talking about acting. I'm talking about France. I was thinking maybe we could nick some motor bikes. You and me on the open road, riding through the countryside, the sun on our faces chatting up the birds. Beautiful women over there Joe, they'll sort you out.

JOE: I'm gay Sam and I like it. Look at you. Your eyes are like saucers. Stay here with Ted and me, he won't mind, we'll get you sorted out.

SAM: And end up like you. A soft nancy boy faggot. No thanks.

(QUIETLY) Joe what's happened to us?

JOE: It's all right Sam. Good things have happened, except you can't see it at the moment because you're all fucked up.

SAM: Come on, let's start getting some of this stuff out of here.

SAM PICKS SOMETHING UP. JOE WRESTLES IT OFF HIM

Joe you've got to help me. I need you.

JOE: I will help you, Sam. I will help you. Ted too.

SAM: I saw him in the papers. He's famous because of me, because I went to drama school and we did shouting in Scotch.

JOE: You didn't. You didn't do any of those things. But may be you still can. Ted, he's a great bloke.

SAM: He's a wanker.

JOE: I love him, Sam!

SAM: What!

JOE: I...love him.

SAM: I didn't want to have to do this, Joe, you're making me do this.

JOE: What are you on about?

SAM: I can't let this happen, I can't. What he's done to you...it's against the law.

JOE: It's not. It's not. Why should it be. No one gets hurt, it's just a different way to love.

SAM: It's against the law for him to do what he did to you.

JOE: He's never done anything to me I didn't want him to.

SAM: When we met him you weren't old enough.

JOE: Old enough? Old enough for what? What do you reckon I wasn't old enough to do?

SAM: Screw.

JOE: Don't be stupid. You haven't stopped screwing since you were eleven. You've got two girls pregnant.

SAM: That's different. The law is you can't with a man until you're over twenty one.

JOE: Don't be stupid.

SAM: It's the truth. I read about it.

JOE: Nobody takes any notice of that.

SAM: Help me clear out this flat or I'll go to the pigs, I'll tell them. I can't let them steal you, Joe, those filthy queers.

JOE: It won't work.

SAM TAKES A NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS FROM OUT OF HIS POCKET AND HANDS IT TO JOE.

SAM: Read this then. It's about someone just like him...and like you.

JOE: (READS IN HORROR) No! I don't understand.

You've got to allow us something. We have to have some way to get you back to us.

JOE: Get me back? I never went anywhere Sam. I'm still the same, still your brother. I can't let you do this to him.

SAM: Then come with me now. Let's get the hell out of here, forget it ever happened.

JOE: Sam, please don't do this.

SAM: I'm doing it for us.

JOE: What about Ted?

SAM: He's nothing to us. We'll have some money. Make a new start.

JOE: I won't leave him. He wouldn't want me too.

SAM: You think he'd want people to write about him like this. It would be the end for him. They wouldn't have him on the tele after this.

JOE: Don't tell anyone.

SAM: Start putting some of this stuff into a bag then.

JOE: No.

SAM: Do it or I go to the police, and I will, Joe.

JOE: You wouldn't?

SAM: I'd do it for you. You're my brother. I've got to look after you. That's why they make the rules, to look after you.

JOE: So I can be like you, you mean?

SAM: Start packing.

SAM BEGINS ROOTING THROUGH TEDS POSSESSIONS. JOE WATCHES HIM IN DISGUST.

JOE: GET OUT!

SAM: What?

JOE: I said... get out.

SAM: You don't mean that. You can't say that. Not to me.

JOE: (SLOWLY. IT BREAKS HIS HEART) Get out, Sam.

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER.

END OF PLAY.

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