

Continuity
Of the
Parks

By

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PROLOGUE

VOICE IN OFF

A man enters a park; the park is closed but he enters the park anyway. Walks along the paths till he comes to a bench and sits down on it; the park is closed but he sits down on the bench anyway. He's wearing a somewhat outdated grey suit; but it doesn't matter because the light at this time of the day is soft and dim. He takes a box of pins from one of his pockets, a small box with about a hundred pins. The park is closed but he takes the box of pins out anyway. One by one he pierces each leaf on each of the trees in the park which is closed at this time. The metallic shine of the pins on the dull green of the leaves. There are just three pins left when he returns to the bench. He throws one to the ground in front, just right in front of him. Then he takes the remaining two and pierces each eye with one, the shiny stiletto *slowly..... cleanly* penetrating the pupil and not a drop of blood shed. The park is closed but he sticks the pins into his eyes anyway cleanly and without shedding a drop of blood. But then only faces can be shed.

THE PEARL NECKLACE

A park. Two men sat on either end of the same bench: EDGAR – around thirty, restless with an odd look about him. Constantly looking at his watch. He appears to be waiting for somebody – and MR. HEAD – slightly older, fortyish perhaps, reading the newspaper quietly.

EDGAR: You were here earlier, weren't you? Seated on this very same bench. A few hours back.

MR. HEAD: Earlier?

EDGAR: Yes, not very long ago. You found a gold mounted pearl necklace. A relic, a true relic.

MR. HEAD: I don't know what you're getting at. To tell the truth this is the first time I've....

EDGAR: It was engraved; it had a tiny engraving on one side, on a tiny golden plaque.

MR. HEAD: What on earth are you trying to tell me? Look, I'm telling you this is the first time I've.....

EDGAR: It doesn't matter. It was some time ago, some months or maybe some years back.

MR. HEAD: Now look here! I'm not in the habit of explaining myself to strangers. Are you accusing me of something that I.....

EDGAR: Look, I never for one moment said I was accusing you of anything.

MR. HEAD: You..., You, you said "some years back." Now you're telling me "some years back" when before you'd said "a few hours ago".

EDGAR: And, what's that supposed to mean?

MR. HEAD: That... that... that time jump, that lie straddling across time. Who the hell do you think you are? What makes you think you've got the right to harass me just because you've taken the fancy...

EDGAR: I met her years ago

MR. HEAD: Who?

EDGAR: Her

MR. HEAD: Her?

EDGAR.: Yes, her ..

MR. HEAD: Well, look you'll have to excuse me I haven't got time to waste on absurd dialogues. Good afternoon. (*He gets up ready to leave*).

EDGAR: Amanda. She was found under this bench. Somebody had slit her throat. Her body was covered in bruises there was a brooch pin stuck in her groin. Right under this very bench lying in the middle of a large pool of blood. Somebody'd stolen her pearl necklace.

MR. HEAD: (*He turns back visibly affected*). The pearl necklace..... I met Amanda

EDGAR: Of course you knew her.

MR. HEAD: I was with her once. We coincided at....

EDGAR: A party.....

MR. HEAD: Near the lake

EDGAR: Some years ago now.

MR. HEAD: It was she who came up to me...

EDGAR: She'd been drinking and was feeling a bit dizzy....

MR. HEAD: She must have realised I was getting bored. She asked me to take her home.

EDGAR: Which you did.

MR. HEAD: No, no I didn't, I didn't take her. When she went to get a drink a man came up and warned me not to.

EDGAR: A stupid man

MR. HEAD: He told me to leave her alone and mind my own business. I didn't know ... There was a strange look on his face though not enough to frighten, if you know what I mean.

EDGAR: What exactly did you say to him?

MR. HEAD: I told him not to bother me, and that I didn't know what he was talking about, and that I wasn't in the habit of explaining my business to strangers..

EDGAR: And did she come back with the drinks?

MR. HEAD: Yes, she did. He saw her coming. He stood staring at her without uttering a word and left. I never saw him again.

EDGAR: Did she say you were attractive?

MR. HEAD: Who?

EDGAR: You

MR. HEAD: I don't know. I think so ... She might have said so but I was little tipsy myself too. All she did was to....

EDGAR: What?

MR. HEAD: Seduce me. Yes, that's the right word I think.

EDGAR: And the stupid man spent the whole evening staring at you both.

MR. HEAD: Oh no. He upped and left the party. In the end, there were only six of us left in that house near the lake.

EDGAR: Was she wearing the necklace?

MR. HEAD: Yes, she was wearing the necklace. And asked me to caress the pearls saying their coldness to the touch couldn't be bettered. There was definitely a provocative note in the way she said those words. And er yes I er did, I er caressed those pearls. Although I told her I knew nothing about jewellery making. An....and I recall she laughed.

EDGAR: Did you go up with her to one of the bedrooms?

MR. HEAD: Quite frankly I think that's none of your business.

EDGAR: But afterwards you accompanied her home, didn't you?

MR. HEAD: She told she'd come in her own car.

EDGAR: So you just let her go home alone, then? Somebody must have flagged her down along the way and dragged her to the park, to this very park.

MR. HEAD: Look, she was old enough to look after herself.... Now listen here, I don't know what your game is. I've agreed to talk to you about something which I have only a vague recollection. That woman captivated me that's all. It was just an innocent game. I was still thinking of her days later, although I never saw her again. I knew nothing more of her until that fated day. I assure you I'm free of all blame. These things happen you know and that's all there is to it. A pause. As to the rest it doesn't matter, you know the before, the after.,

EDGAR: You mean you're really capable of acting as if nothing important had happened?

MR. HEAD: *(Ever more restless)* Yeah, it's not important at all. I regret what happened that's all. After so many years

EDGAR: Not so many.

MR. HEAD: Things erode with time. But you turn up here and bring them back to life, but differently, much colder and no passion at all. True I regret it, but that's it. You

EDGAR: I invited her to that party. I told her to let me work that night and to go to the party alone. I didn't want to go with her.

MR. HEAD: Were you married?

EDGAR: You what? ... Oh no. She never wanted to ... The next day they called me to identify the body. Her body was covered in bruises and the head Oh my God! Her head was barely attached to the body.

MR. HEAD: Please don't go on, I beg of you.

EDGAR: I've been trying to find you for a long time.

MR. HEAD: Why me? I told you I didn't have anything to do with it. You're not going to make me feel guilty now.

EDGAR: Yes, I realise that. I mean, I know that very often the person who is truly to blame never feels guilty.

MR. HEAD: Oh no you don't my friend. Find yourself another scapegoat. My past and my conscience are both clean.

EDGAR: But I was only trying to get the necklace back.

MR. HEAD: Well do so somewhere else, without bothering innocent folk. Got that, have you?

EDGAR: Yes, perfectly sir *(MR. HEAD leaves the stage while EDGAR shouts at him)* But I still think you're one who killed her, and that it was you who stole the pearl necklace!

(EDGAR remains smirking and pensive awhile. A woman appears a short while later. She's attractive and around forty. She's wearing a pearl necklace similar to the one described in the previous scene.)

AMANDA: Edgar?

EDGAR: Amanda, you're early. I wasn't expecting you until ...

AMANDA: I know, but I finished earlier and decided to come by and see whether you were here yet.

EDGAR: You know what Amanda? I just don't understand people.

AMANDA: Why not? What's up now?

EDGAR: A man ... Just a few minutes ago there was a man sitting here right on this very bench, who openly confessed a crime he'd committed.

AMANDA: *(Somewhat sceptical)* A crime?

EDGAR: Yes! To me a complete stranger. He told he'd once entered a house to burgle. He said his business had gone down the drain. he talked to me about the dirty tricks fate plays. The house was supposed to be empty. However, it wasn't as it turned out. They'd told him wrong. A couple and their child. They heard him rifling in the sitting room and went to see what was going on. Then he started shooting at them.

AMANDA: *(Incredulous)* Good God, how awful!

EDGAR: Yeah. He shot the man's head off in front of her, right in front of his wife. At that moment the son appeared. The woman tried to protect him jumping on the man, but he whacked her on the jaw with the rifle butt and beat her until he smashed her brains out. The son went running towards the bedrooms while he went after him shouting like a madman . The only thing he'd managed to steal so far was a pearl necklace, a bloody pearl necklace. *(AMANDA smiled as she played with the necklace. He takes her by the hand taking from the stage as EDGAR continues with his story)* . When he had the boy cornered he put the barrel in his mouth and pulled the trigger several times. Blood splattered all over the walls, staining them red.....

MARES IN THE NIGHT

Mr. SPECK, a man of about forty sitting on a bench quietly reading his newspaper. Four youths appear, apparently normal, what I mean is they didn't look like hooligans, who occupied the rest of the bench. Each one takes out a Bible and starts reading in a low voice to finish shouting between giggles and expansive gestures. MR. SPECK starts feeling uncomfortable, glances at them and then returns to his reading uncomfortably. One of the youths sat at the other end pushes his mates, so MR. SPECK falls off and onto the ground.

(NOTE: Considering the four youths were hooligans I shan't bother to give them names).

MR. SPECK: What're you playing at? Bloody hell, if you want to play go do so elsewhere, will you? and leave me in peace.

1: That git's an eye.

2: A marble, a billiard ball. That git, git, git....

1,2,3 and 4: Riiiiinnnnnggg!

3: Wake up you idiot!

4: We've already read the paper and it's got nothing to interest you.

MR. SPECK: But .. what the? What's up with you lot? You deaf or what? Didn't yer hear me? If you dunno how to behave yourselves in public bugger off.

1: Bugger off! Didn't yer hear me?

3: You deaf or what? Ears, ears, more than ears.

The youths turn back to their bible reading in silence. MR. SPECK stares at them mouth agape. A few seconds later they start picking out the odd sentence mocking it. MR. SPECK seems to be getting more and more nervous, ends up folding his newspaper and gets up to leave. The youth nearest him stops him making him sit down again.

4: You've got to learn to turn the other cheek.

Meanwhile, another attacks from the other side hitting the newspaper throwing it to the ground.

3: We've already read the newspaper and there's nothing of interest for you. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

MR. SPECK: But, what the devil! I... I... What're you doing to me? Can't you behave normally like the rest of the people?

1: This git's a marble.

2: The shadow of a hard-boiled egg.

3: D'you know, d'you know? I'm wearing emerald green natural silk boxer shorts. But there's no way I'm lending you them.

MR. SPECK: You what...?

4: I'm not lending you mine either. So fuck you!

MR. SPECK: What the? What's up with you lot? Have you taken something? What d'you want? Can't you just leave me alone? Please, that's all I'm asking?

2: We're not all the noise in the world. There's more, much more.

MR. SPECK: Is it a habit? You've got a habit of going about doing this and it's my turn today, is it or what? No, no I can't believe this. There are other people, other benches in this park or anywhere else for that matter. You could go somewhere else and do this, couldn't you? You could even do it by yourselves amongst yourselves. Y'know climb a tree

4: What a genius! What a genius!

2: We've dreamt about you, about this moment, for so long

1: All the round cheeses in the world, have dreamt about you

2: Stamp! *(the four of them stamp the ground at the same time)*

MR. SPECK: I don't understand what's going on, believe me I don't understand! Somebody paid you to annoy me have they? Was it Ted Forrest that bloody Jew I owe money to? Was it him? Yep, no doubt about it, it must've been him. Bloody hell! All right, all right, you can just knock it off now. Now go and tell that bugger I'll come by and pay 'im tomorrow. Tell 'im, will yer?

1: Tell him what?

2: Tell who? What?

3: Tell, who? What? When?

4: Tell who? What? When? And what's more important, where?

3: You know what? We've got a tinkerbelle hanging from our foreskin. Yeah sir, we're wearing it. And every time a good looking bird goes passed us you'd think we were four kitten tinklers.

1, 2, 3 and 4: *(Swaying their hips)* Miaouw, miaouw!

2: Nope, we ain't Santa Claus' reindeer

1: What language do yer speak, marble?

2: Too much tongue for such a goose face.

3: 'is memory's failing.

2: Chicory for the memory

4: This git doesn't speak our language. He's playing golf, can't you see? Anyone make sense of it?

MR. SPECK: Well Enough! I've already told you I'll pay up. What more d'you want? Give me a break. What a nightmare!

4: There's just one mare in the night and it's the one you're riding.

A woman walking through the park at the moment goes towards the bench. The youths are struck dumb as they gaze at her in silence. Some bells shyly tinkle. The woman reaches the man, who taking advantages of the youths' distraction to get up and move away from the bench.

WOMAN: Is anything the matter? Are you all right?

MR. SPECK: Pardon? What did you say? Is anything the matter with me? Yes, I'm absolutely desperate

WOMAN: Oh come on, surely you're exaggerating.

MR. SPECK: Exaggerating!, you say, when one can't sit quietly reading a newspaper without being disturbed.

WOMAN: If you need somebody to talk to, go ahead I'm listening. I don't mind. To tell you the truth, I was very surprised. Ever since I first caught sight of you some minutes ago now, you've done nothing but talk to yourself.

MR. SPECK: *(Perplexed, looking alternately from the woman to the youths, now grinning broadly)* To myself? To myself?

The tinkling of the bells gets louder as the curtain falls (over the head of poor MR. SPECK). Now, seriously THE CURTAIN.

SEDUCTION

A man enters the park, ALASTAIR, who is tall and good-looking, and around forty although looks somewhat younger due to his casual way of dressing. He approaches the bench and sits down. He might be waiting for somebody as he glances about him constantly. In the background, on the other side of the park railings another man appears, CHARLES. He is wearing a rather outdated beige suit and carrying a small handbag. He must be about the same age as ALASTAIR, but looks older. His gestures are stilted He watches him from afar and approaches the bench.

CHARLES: *(Clearing his throat).* Look er I hope you don't mind my saying ... *(ALASTAIR looks at him)* Truth is I don't know quite where to begin....

ALISTAIR: Tell me.

CHARLES: Well, um perhaps you've noticed, um you might have realised.....

ALISTAIR: Yes , go on.

CHARLES: Yes, that?

ALISTAIR: Yes I had realised. You've been following me now for over half an hour.

CHARLES: Yes, exactly. Ever since you entered the park.

ALISTAIR: Well, I could have sworn that ...

CHARLES: You're right. In fact, it was before that, um that is, since you left the corner shop.

ALISTAIR: Aha, I see. Odd, don't you think? And, is there any reason for this?

CHARLES: Well, yes one. There's one reason.

ALISTAIR: And, would you mind telling me what that reason is?

CHARLES: um, well um maybe it might come as a bit of a shock I mean it's not usual. It might even be the first time that somebody

ALISTAIR: No, no, not at all.

CHARLES: ¿oh really? Um, well there are all kinds of people I suppose. Um I mean it's not normal to follow somebody you don't know.

ALISTAIR: No well to be honest it isn't very normal.

CHARLES: Well, not unless it's by request

ALISTAIR: Oh so it's?

CHARLES: Oh no, no! It's rather um.... Let's say it's of my own free will.

ALISTAIR: Indeed

CHARLES: Of course, and at some time this afternoon you probably thought: "Why on earth's that man following me.

ALISTAIR: Well, no. The truth is I didn't. It never even crossed my mind. Quite frankly I've got many more things on my mind.

CHARLES: Yeah, well maybe Maybe if I were to tell you

ALISTAIR: Yes?

CHARLES: If I were to tell you I've come here to Well, umm to tell you

ALISTAIR: What?

CHARLES: (*Nervously*) ... Well, it's not easy.

ALISTAIR: Come on, try.

CHARLES: Oh ...er.. Well.. I fancy you.

ALISTAIR: Come again?

CHARLES: I fancy you. There's something about you which attracted me from the moment I laid on eyes on you.

ALISTAIR: Aw come on. You serious?

CHARLES: Oh absolutely. Of course, I'm serious. Although to be honest it was difficult to pluck up the courage to tell you. But now we've got this far, may I be frank with you?.

ALISTAIR: Of course, be my guest.

CHARLES: Um I am

ALISTAIR: (after a brief pause) You were right.

CHARLES: About what?

ALISTAIR: Nothing like this has ever happened to me before.

CHARLES: Yeah .. You see I told you so. Nor me either, you know? I don't usually have the guts. I don't normally go around telling strangers I fancy them. Quite the opposite in fact. You see I'm a little shy.

ALISTAIR: Oh, so you're a little shy, are you?

CHARLES: Yes, shy. I'm rather timid., if you know what I mean.

ALISTAIR: Yes, of course. Rest assured I know exactly what you mean

CHARLES: Ah yes! But today's different. Today I feel like fizzy lemonade all bubbles and fizz. I knew that if I didn't do it, if I waited just that little bit longer, you'd disappear.

ALISTAIR: Do you drink?

CHARLES: I beg your pardon?

ALISTAIR: Do you drink. You know alcohol or any other kind of drink that goes to the head.

CHARLES: No, no .. Well, yesNot very often though mind you (*Encouraged*) Are you suggesting we go for a drink somewhere, to a pub or your house perhaps?

ALISTAIR: No, no I didn't mean that. The thing is I thought

CHARLES: Ah, ah, you thought I Nooo, not at all. It's a totally sober sentiment. Let me show you, I can prove it, I can prove to you I'm stone cold sober. Watch! (*He places the handbag on his head keeping it balanced*)

ALISTAIR: There's no need I assure you, I believe you. Please. You're obviously stone cold sober. My question wasn't intended to, you know....

CHARLES: Oh I am pleased, truly I am pleased. Would you mind if I sat next to you?

ALISTAIR: Well, look I er really should be going. (*He makes to get up. CHARLES stops him and sits next to him*)

CHARLES: No. Please. Just give me five minutes

ALISTAIR: Five minutes, why should I?

CHARLES: You think I'm barking up the wrong tree, don't you?

ALISTAIR: What d'you mean?

CHARLES: In other words, you think I should've sat down beside you in silence and waited for you to...?

ALISTAIR: Not I ...

CHARLES: No, of course, you wouldn't ..That's why I decided to take the plunge

ALISTAIR: You know? Deep down, I understand you.

CHARLES: Indeed? You really understand me?

ALISTAIR: Well yes actually. I have to admit that something similar did happen to me once. Mind you circumstances were totally different of course.

CHARLES: What..? What happened to you?

ALISTAIR: It happened one afternoon at a fair. I'd already spent hours idly wandering around, stuffing myself with sweets....

CHARLES: Umm I love sweets!

ALISTAIR:When suddenly I took it into my head to stop in front of a shooting gallery. There was... There was.... Somebody causing quite a stir, knocking all the heads off the ducks as they popped up, not to mention all the rabbit and boar heads. He must've won at least a dozen teddies when he decided to call it a day. Then he handed all the prizes to the folk who'd been milling around watching and cheering him on.

CHARLES: What about you, what did you do?

ALISTAIR: Humph, well he didn't even notice me. And yet I felt a sudden overwhelming attraction for that person. I followed him around for awhile until we reached the big wheel. He bought a ticket and so did I. I kept on his heels, when all of a sudden I found myself sitting next to him, moving slowly upwards between each stop, up to the heights.

CHARLES: That's incredible. How come you never told me that before...?

ALISTAIR: Well if YOU'D just let me finish.

CHARLES: Oh sorry, please do go on.

ALISTAIR: It was on the second turn when I decided to confess my feelings for him. I turned and came head on with his eyes. Oh God! he was looking at me. And right at that very moment I suddenly felt terribly giddy. His eyes and the big wheel turning were making me giddy. I had to

speaking to him right away. I couldn't wait any longer, because my stomach had started churning from the giddiness upset my stomach. I opened my mouth to tell him ... Oh God! It was awful.

CHARLES: Awful? What do you mean awful? I'm ...I'm absolutely stunned.

ALISTAIR: I I started feeling sick and finished throwing up on him. You can just imagine the rest. The only conversation we had was yours truly apologising profusely over and over again as I wiped him clean with Kleenex.

CHARLES: An unfortunate end. But this is totally different you see. We've got our feet on the ground, we're not going round and round in mid-air. Not only am I not giddy but I don't feel sick either. I've already taken the plunge, I've openly confessed that.

ALISTAIR: Yeah I know, it's just that I

CHARLES: Why don't we have a go at it?

ALISTAIR: A go at what?

CHARLES: Go and have a drink. Let's just go for a drink.

ALISTAIR: Look really um I don't know.... Where would you like to go?

CHARLES: *(Nervous)* Oh, I don't mind. I haven't got any preferences to tell you the truth.

ALISTAIR: *(Shaking his head)* Well .

CHARLES: "well" , does that mean a yes?

ALISTAIR: No. "Well" means I don't think you're altogether sure.

CHARLES: Oh yes I am, let me assure I am. It's just that I don't know where to go.

ALISTAIR: Look, er forget it. It's late and there are some things I'd like to do before going home.

CHARLES: ... A hotel!

ALISTAIR: Come again?

CHARLES: What about a hotel?

ALISTAIR: *(Completely changing his tone)* A hotel?

CHARLES: What...? What's up? Now what've I said wrong?

ALISTAIR: Aw! Come on! A hotel! ... I mean ... I mean don't you think that's coming it a bit strong!

CHARLES: It is?

ALISTAIR: Yes IT IS! It is.

CHARLES: So?

ALISTAIR: So?! You've cocked it up.

CHARLES: Done that, have I?

ALISTAIR: Yes! You have, you've cocked it up. It was all going smoothly, damn you! You started well. You could've brought it off. But, a hotel? you bloody idiot!

CHARLES: But, I thought

ALISTAIR: You thought.

CHARLES: Couldn't think of anything else, my mind was a blank. I didn't expect you to.....

ALISTAIR: Look I told you to keep yer wits about you for the surprise element, didn't I?

CHARLES: But I was! Honest! All that story about the fairground, the big wheel, feeling giddy and what have you, did surprise me. Honestly I didn't expect it, really! In fact, I think I handled it rather nicely.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, of course you did. But as soon as I left the field clear for you to take me somewhere you cocked it up. You're never going to get anywhere at that rate.

CHARLES: Are you sure? You sure I'm not going to get anywhere?

ALISTAIR: Look a woman you've almost won over, but isn't 100% sure, you can't coerce her. Look how many times have I got to tell you? Just take it easy. You know just one step at a time.

CHARLES: What's wrong with a hotel?

ALISTAIR: Gordon Bennett! That the best you can come up with? "What's wrong with a hotel?" Well, look at that very precise moment, it's the worst thing possible. But I mean, for heaven's sake! Haven't you learnt anything from all these days we've been coming here to the park to practise? A hotel, a sauna. One day you throw yourself at me the moment you see me, another day you tell me all the ins and outs of yer family. I mean d'you really think a woman would put up with that?

CHARLES: Yeah, but you could've given me another opportunity.

ALISTAIR: Look you've gotta think carefully about what you're going to say before you say it OK!. All right, I'll give you another opportunity, but another day, OK? Come on, let's go home
(They get up and walk towards the exit)

CHARLES: And supposing I'd suggested the cinema. What would you've said then?

ALISTAIR: Better, yes, that's definitely better. It's a subtle intimacy.

CHARLES: A subtle intimacy. I like that! I can't wait to have another go. I know I'll get right.

ALISTAIR: Another day, OK?

CHARLES: The day I've got a woman in front of me, I'll do it to perfection. Subtle intimacy! I'm gonna think about that I am.

(They leave)

CORDLESS

A young woman – ALLISON, around twenty-seven, is sitting on the park bench. She looks rather worried as if she was constantly mulling over something. She took a folded piece of paper and a biro from the inside pocket of her jacket. She rests the unfolded paper on a book next to her and starts writing. Just then a woman appears in the background – FIONA, around forty, wearing beige flannel suit, white blouse, and vibrant neck scarf. She's carrying a large bag on her shoulder. Reaches the bench and sits down. She then opens her bag and takes out a large chunk of dry bread, crumbling it between her fingers and throwing the crumbs down in front of her.

FIONA: Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!

(ALLISON stares at her perplexed then returns immediately to her task in hand. Just then a halting insistent beeping).

ALLISON: There's a bell ringing.

FIONA: Beg your pardon

ALLISON: A bell, can't you hear a bell? An intermittent ring, a kind of beep-beep, y'know what I mean?

FIONA: A beep-beep?

ALLISON: Yes!. It's not a ringing, no it erm..um..... it doesn't sound like a clock, it's more of an alarm clock.

FIONA: An alarm clock?

ALLISON: No, no. Well, it's more like, um

FIONA: Like what?

ALLISON: Like what?, what? Intermittent?... No, no it doesn't sound like an alarm clockHave you got um...have you er um an alarm clock in yer handbag?

FIONA: No, no. Of course I haven't got an alarm clock in my handbag.

ALLISON: How strange.

FIONA: What?

ALLISON: That beeping. It's strange. I don't think it can be a car burglar alarm. Either way it sounds very close by....., y'know it's as if it were coming from your handbag.

FIONA: Well, um to tell you the truth, electrical, electrical, um I couldn't really say. The thing is erm...Well, I um have got ... (thinking)

ALLISON: A telephone!. It sounds like a mobile phone.

FIONA: A mobile phone! That's it. I've got a mobile phone in my bag.

ALLISON: Well, um er it's ringing.

FIONA: It's ringing? My phone? I didn't hear it...

ALLISON: Yes. It must be your mobile that's ringing.

FIONA: Thanks. I um hadn't, I hadn't heard it ... To tell you the truth, it's the first call I've had. I bought it yesterday, you know? And I er had no idea what the ring was like.

ALLISON: Humph!

FIONA: Would you like to see it? It's very strange device.

ALLISON: You ought to answer.

FIONA: It gives me the willies.

ALLISON: Beg your pardon?

FIONA: Um it gives me the willies. It's rather like the way you'd feel the first time you did a parachute jump. You start thinking: And , what if it doesn't open? and if something goes wrong? ... I er um, I er feel rather like that, you know um, and what if it doesn't work? and suppose NOBODY answers?

ALLISON: It's working... the ring ... it sounds ok. Everything sounds ok to me.

FIONA: Um er yeah, I....I'd never heard it before um before that is. It's funny, isn't it?

ALLISON: Y'right, it's funny (*brief pause*) Aren't you going to answer?

FIONA: Yes, of course. Now that I've bought it, there's no option is there. (*As she takes it out of her bag, she becomes rather nervous*). Wow! This is um... this is exciting ... quite an experience, you know, 'cos it's cordless ... Can't see the wire anywhere, can you? And here we have this little thing (*shaking the phone in her hand*). Somebody's calling.

ALLISON: I'd have answered it already. I mean it er must be .. what I mean is, if somebody insists like that it must be for a reason...

FIONA: Oh! yes, yes, of course, I'd er better say: "hello" (*opens the phone and at long last the beep stops*) "Hullo?... Uh, yes, yes. Just a moment please." (*approaches ALLISON*). It DOES work! You can hear, you can hear everything ...(*to the phone*) "Beg your pardon, what did you say? ... Who?... oh, um, yes, yes. No. You must be mistaken. I'm..... er.... beg yer pardon?" (*to ALLISON*) He's asking whether I'm in a public park sitting on a public bench. What d'you make of it?

ALLISON: A joke of some kind. I'd say somebody's playing a joke on you. It's not normal.

FIONA: Let's find out, shall we? (*Over the phone*) "Hallo? You still there? .." (*To ALLISON*) Yes, he's still there. Now he's asking whether I've got enough battery. Battery? For what?

ALLISON: For the telephone, I suppose. Probably wants to have a long chat with you. That's probably the reason for asking.

FIONA: Yeah, suppose so. Yep, that must be it. Battery for the telephone. That's like a car, isn't it? Just like a car, they need batteries, don't they? (*Over the phone*) "Hallo? Yes, I'm still here. Yeah, I've got enough battery and I can hear you loud and clear. .. Come again..?" (*To ALLISON*) "What strange questions this man's asking.

ALLISON: What's he asking now, then?

FIONA: He's just asked um... er He said: are you easily exhausted /tired? I... I...er ..um I'm a strong woman. I know he can't see me and so I can't understand why he should think such a thing... you know, that I ... er.. could tire easily. I mean, you know we've er just started talking.

ALLISON: No, you no. I think he's probably referring to the battery.

FIONA: Oh right, of course! Anyhow..... what a pain in the neck. (*over the phone*) "Hallo? Who did you want to speak to me or the battery?..... Come again?.... Oh, no no, it's not the wrong number. Yes sir, this is the number, so tell me...."

ALLISON: Might be the telephone company. Maybe they're testing your phone. Ask him, ask him if he's from the telephone company.

FIONA: (*To ALLISON*) Oh right, yes (*over the phone*) "Look um, I er just wanted to ask whether your were" (*To ALLISON again*) . No, he's not from the telephone company.

ALLISON: D'you what?

FIONA: (*Over the phone*) "Come again ...? (*To ALLISON*) He heard your question, he's heard you.

ALLISON: Eh! He heard me.

FIONA: (*Over the phone*) "Yes? Hers? Who? (*Pause*) Wow! You can hear loud and clear with this gadget. It's as if you were standing next to me. "Where are you? ...Where?At home" (*To ALLISON*) He's at home. Obvious, really? (*Over the phone again*) "And what is it you wanted? You've already spent the last 3 minutes trying to explainYes? Well, you see it's the first call I've had and I'm a bit tense ... Aha, I see Duncan"

ALLISON: Duncan?

FIONA: *To ALLISON*) Duncan, he says his name's Duncan (*over the phone*) "And so..?"

ALLISON: Gardiner?

FIONA: Gardiner. He says he's Duncan Gardiner

ALLISON: Oh my God!

FIONA: (*Over the phone*) "Come again? Look if you're called Duncan Gardiner that's all right by me. I don't even know you pardon...Yesyes Allison, I see.

ALLISON: Oh my God, of for goodness sake!

FIONA: “No, no it’s not me, I’m Fiona.. (*listening attentively*) Here? Now? With you?Oh no! With you no, with me ...Well, um er let’s see, I I came to the park alone, you see I had a break at work so I decided to come down to the park and feed the pigeons. I was waiting for them, honestly. I was sitting on this bench waiting for the pigeons ... Beg yer pardon? (*To ALLISON*) This chap’s very strange, I’m trying to explain to him that er.....

ALLISON: What does he want? What the hell does he want?

FIONA: I dunno ... (*Over the phone*) “Whaat?...What the hell do you want? (*To ALLISON*) He wants to talk to Allison even though I’ve already told him my name’s Fiona Let’s see, let’s see, let’s see. (*Over the phone*) “Now look here, I’ve already told you my name’s Fiona, I’ve come out for a walk alone, that this is a mobile phone and I don’t know anybody with.....?”

ALLISON: I’m Allison.

FIONA: Pardon?

ALLISON: I’m Allison. He wants to ...erm well I don’t know how but he’s managed to find me. He’s found me damn it! We’d had an argument, and I told him to leave me alone, and not to call me anymore. An’ somehow I dunno howHe must want to talk to me.

FIONA: (*Flabbergasted*) This ... this is amazing (*over the phone*) “Just a minute please, don’t hang up” (*To ALLISON*) Would you mind repeating what you just said? I mean, did you really say you were Allison, that you’re the Allison Duncan’s asking about, you really know each other I mean? (*ALLISON nods her head*) But, how on earth? Didn’t I say, didn’t I say I was nervous about answering. Humph, and that was without knowing THIS might happen, and in this way. So maybe, if somebody were to call my house and ask for my neighbour whose phone is from time to time out of order But this ... THIS is quite something else I mean you could hardly be considered my neighbour just because you’re sitting next to me on the bench. It’s obviously not the same. After all one doesn’t always have the same “neighbour” sat next to one on a public bench.

ALLISON: I don’t want to talk to him.

FIONA: Pardon?

ALLISON: Just tell him I’m not here, that there’s nobody next to you, and that you’re surrounded by pigeons, or just simply hang up on him.

FIONA: No, I ...er ..no I can’t because, you see?, something so incredible, so marvellous doesn’t happen everyday. You really ought to answer, seeing as how things have come about, you really ought to say something to him.. Frankly, I wouldn’t dare hang up on him. I’m a Christian, you know?

ALLISON: Oh all right. Give me the phone. (*FIONA hands it over*). “Duncan? It’s Allison. What the hell ...? Whaat?...” (*Listening*)

(From then on until she hands up ALLISON only talks to Duncan on the phone).

FIONA: *(to herself)* I'm not surprised something like that's happened. I should've realised something like that could happen. Such a small gadget, you can take anywhere you like ...Nope it's not normal, it couldn't work out.

ALLISON: Yes, I know. But it's not my fault, you've never wanted to Duncan, Duncan! Just listen to me, will you...."

FIONA: Come again?

ALLISON: "Yes, I know....Yes, maybe.... well a little bit, just a little bit, ok? ...But you have to admit..."

FIONA: *(Checking her watch)* Heavens! It's getting late. I ought to return, I haven't got all morning. Actually, I only had half an hour. And .. er ..um seeing as how the pigeons haven't appeared ..., they obviously prefer birdseed to dry bread anyhow, I ... er ..ought to ... No, it's er just that you seem to have a lot to say to each other. Um, I don't know ..er --

ALLISON: "Yes, yes, but you know things"

FIONA: Things are such that it doesn't do to arrive late for work. Perhaps...um you could call him from another phone. There ought to be phone box some where in the park I'm sure.

ALLISON: "No, no, no"

FIONA: Well, p'raps it doesn't really matter *(checks her watch again)*. I'm already late as it is. I just knew it wasn't going to work out. Look, um, er excuse me...

ALLISON: "Yes, of course I understand"

FIONA: Er, excuse me...

ALLISON: "But you've also got to understand that "

FIONA: Nothing. Forget it. Just carry on. Erm, when I finish, um when I finish work I'll come back for the phone.

ALLISON: "Indeed!, you don't say?"

FIONA: Yes, um, look I'll just erm come back and collect the phone. You'll still be here at half past two, won't you?

ALLISON: "Yes, yes."

FIONA: Righty oh. I'll see you then. Look after it will you?, look after it as if it were your own, will you? It's just as I said, it couldn't be normal, so small and cordless. *(She gets up to go)*. A mystery, an absolute mystery just like the washing machines, televisions, radios, computers, music boxes.... *(she leaves talking. She crosses with an executive just coming in who stops by the bench as if waiting for someone)*.

ALLISON: *(Who still hasn't realised FIONA's left)*. "Oh all right, all right. Let's meet up tomorrow then No I can't ...I can't go on talking. Tomorrow ... Yes, me too. Okey doke. See you then." *(Hangs up. Looks around. Can't See FIONA. She looks around about)* Where ..? Where did that woman go to? And now, what am I supposed to do with this? What the hell am I going to do with this? Oh for heaven's sake! I'd better go to the telephone company, maybe they can tell me P'raps they can take charge of itOr maybe in lost objects. Oh I dunno. I've got to think of something, I can't

(While ALLISON was talking another executive has entered and approached the first, and greeted each other. Just then, when both of them were about to leave, the phone rings again. The two executives each take out their mobile phones at the same time, with a quick mechanical movement as if they were drawing revolvers. ALLISON opens hers after turning livid on hearing the ring).

THE THREE OF THEM: *(Altogether)*. Hullo, who's calling?

ALLISON: "Just a minute please".

(The two executives grin at their mistake and look at ALLISON, who indicates it's hers with a gesture. They put their phones away)

ALLISON: "I beg your pardon, what did you say ..? Who? ... Eh, just a moment, just a moment please" *(towards the executives who were on the point of leaving again)*. Erm, er Excuse me! Is either of you ...? Is either of you Hamish MacMah?

AN EXECUTIVE: McMahan, yes, McMahan. That's me. What the ...?

ALLISON: Well, er um look er I know this is going to sound rather strange, um but the er fact is.... Well, this is not the first time that er...

AN EXECUTIVE: What's the matter?

ALLISON: Well, er, um you see er this call ...Well, they're asking for you.

BOTH EXECUTIVES: Bloody hell!

UP THE SLEEVE

On a bench in the middle of a park. LAWRENCE, a man around fortyish is sitting on it comfortably. He placidly looks around him. Another individual comes into, known as "SMARTIE", a scruffy young individual. He notices Lawrence and looks about him nervously moving towards the bench. Just as he was about to tackle Lawrence a couple enters the scene. Smartie turns and sits down next to Lawrence, who eyes him suspiciously. The couple who are eating ice-cream slowly cross the stage talking about trivial things in a low voice. Smartie watches them out of the corner of his eye as if waiting for them to disappear.

LAWRENCE: *(Turning slightly to face Smartie)* So?

"SMARTIE": *(Looks at Lawrence surprised)* I never said a word . An' I 'aven't said anythin' yet.

LAWRENCE: *(looks at his watch as if answering him)* A quarter past six.

" SMARTIE ": *(surprised yet again)* A quarter past six? Good time that. Yessir, a good time *(turns to look again at the couple who 've stopped a while in the background).*

LAWRENCE: Not at all *(looking at Smartie and beyond him).* Lovely evening, isn't it?

" SMARTIE ": *(suspicious and supercilious)* Lovely, oh yeah lovely .. What's more it's gonna get even lovelier.

LAWRENCE: Look er I'm sorry but er I haven't got ...Well actually it's not so much that I haven't as the fact I don't smoke. I no longer smoke. I've given it up. I gave it up some time ago.

" SMARTIE ": *(looks at him as if to say "this guy's bonkers")* Not ... even ... a reefer?

LAWRENCE: *(After a pause)* Five minutes, ten at the most. *(looking about him)* What the..? What's all that giggling about then?

" SMARTIE ": *(following the game)* Those giggles, damn it! *(looking at the couple about to leave the scene nervously).* Jeezus.

LAWRENCE: Ooh I dunno. I don't know if we'll all fit. *(moving to one side nervously)* Anyhow ..er um, Well er I ...um I could move to another bench. This one means nothing to me in particular

" SMARTIE ": *(Getting up as well)* Where are you off to? Where're you going?

LAWRENCE: Oh, now that's very kind of you. You really didn't need to, you know. If you've got things to talk aboutI don't mind really, I can erm...

" SMARTIE ": No, no mate no. Sit down.

LAWRENCE: Oh, uh, thank you very much (*sitting down*) A bit tight after all, don't you agree?

" SMARTIE ": (*still standing, glancing at the couple who've just left*). All right, I've 'ad enough. Enough. I say. Stop playing silly buggers, will yer?. You're gettin' me narked now.

LAWRENCE: (*puts his hands up nervously and looks next to him frightened*). What's up? (*looking about him*) What d'you want?

" SMARTIE ": Look mate, I've already told you, stop bugging me about, will yer? that understood? I ain't got time to waste (*pulling a knife out*) See this

LAWRENCE: (*looking the other way*). Look, don't hurt me, ok? Take whatever you want. but ...

" SMARTIE ": That watch, the one showing quarter past six. 'and it over.

LAWRENCE: Yes, of course, whatever you say. Honestly. Keep calm. I'll give you whatever you want. But one by one, ok?

" SMARTIE ": Look 'ere mate, I said I want ..

LAWRENCE: (*talking all around him*) The watch? Oh yes, of course. It's not worth much, but...All right, all right (*taking it off*) Who ...?

(*SMARTIE puts his hand out. LAWRENCE looks doubtfully all around him. Stretches his hand out to the opposite side of SMARTIES and makes as if he was handing over the watch, which vanishes into thin air*)

" SMARTIE ": But, what ..? What the fuck're you doin'? What the fuck're you playing at? Where's the watch?

LAWRENCE: (*Pointing in the opposite direction*) I gave it to him. I er um... It's not my fault. Sort it out between yourselves. Who...? Who's the boss?

" SMARTIE ": But, wha' fucking boss're you gabbing on about? Look mate, I'm getting pissed off. Here I am all by my little self, there ain't nobody else, Got it? Nobody else. So just do as yer told, will yer

(*LAWRENCE puts his hand inside his jacket*)

" SMARTIE ": (*Putting the knife against his neck*). Keep yer 'ands still...

LAWRENCE: (*Quickly taking his hand out*) B..b...but that guy just told me to hand over my wallet.

" **SMARTIE** ": Do what? But 'oo the fucking 'ell's that? Now look 'ere, now just let me get things clear, will yer? Look me in the face (*LAWRENCE continues to look all about him*) Look at me for fuck's sake! I'm muggin' you. ME, Smartie. I work alone, got it? Alone.

LAWRENCE: But..

" **SMARTIE** ": No buts. Look mate no buts, all right, I'm gettin' riled, right? Just 'and over whatever you've got, understood? And not a peep outta yer, an' no funny games, right?

LAWRENCE: All right, all right ...

" **SMARTIE** ": There's a good chap. Just 'and over yer wallet.

(*LAWRENCE slowly takes his wallet out. He's about to hand it over to SMARTIE, but makes a small movement with his arm and the wallet vanishes into thin air.*)

LAWRENCE: (*Petrified*). It was him, it was him, honest. Don't kill me. I don't know whyHe just took it. I .. er .. um I was going to hand it over to you. I swear it!

" **SMARTIE** ": Fuck you!...What the hell're you playin' at? (*catching hold of his hands*) Where...? Where's the wallet? What did ya do with it? Where the fuck did you put it?

LAWRENCE: (*Pointing to the opposite side*). He's got it. That chap with the beard, he took it. I was going to give it to you. You asked for it and just when I was going to hand it over, that guy with the beard

" **SMARTIE** ": Shit! Why does it 'ave to 'appen to me! (*trying to calm down*). You mean there are more people, I'm not alone you mean.

LAWRENCE: You joking? you're joking, aren't you?

" **SMARTIE** ": Of course, of course its' a joke. (*looking to the other side*) Look guys, why don't you go home, an' I'll deal with this. Honest, I can deal with it meself. (*Making gestures*) Go on, shoo, shoo...There you are you see? See 'ow easy it is. Now there's just you and me. So...

LAWRENCE: (*looking behind him*) Why ...? Why aren't they leaving? Are you going to argue? Are you? Because, ..er um, look er I er don't want to be in the middle of a union fight ..

" **SMARTIE** ": I see, I see. Now we understand each other .. So, um, they're still there, are they? they 'aven't gone yet, then 'ave they?

(*LAWRENCE turns to look behind him making a gesture to Smartie as if to say: of course*)

" SMARTIE ": Well, so they're still there, are they? (*pointing*) Over there. OK well, they're not gonna move from there sure. GUARANTEED. So let's get back to business ..What's left? Money? Some big notes?

LAWRENCE: I don't know. In my wallet.. the one that guy's got, there was ... (*he routs through his inner pockets*) I'm not sure... But maybe (*he pulls out some notes*) Fifteen thousand, that's all I've got.

" SMARTIE ": That'll do. Hand'em over.

(*LAWRENCE looks behind him uncertainly. And slowly stretches out his arm. When Smartie makes to grab the money. LAWRENCE throws his arm backwards and the money disappears.*)

LAWRENCE: (*Straightening up*) Hey, now that's enough. It's not my fault if you don't know what's going on. Things can't go on like this.

" SMARTIE ": (*Desperate*) What the fuck...! Well, of course things can't go on like this! (*Catching hold of LAWRENCE's arm and opening his hand*) Where's the money?

LAWRENCE: One of those guys took it.

" SMARTIE ": Nah, .. nah I can't take any more.. You're bonkers raving bonkers. Bonkers! 'Oo told me to....I'm the leader of a gang what doesn't respect me, and wot's worse I can' even see 'em. There's thousan's of people. People all around me...But I can't see 'em. Who the fuck's robbin' me?

LAWRENCE: Hey, now look here, you're the one who's robbing.

" SMARTIE ": Wot me robbin'? Robbin' wot? Tell me wot I've robbed. Tell me, 'cos I dunno. Call the cops, go on call 'em. I'm as clean as whistle tha' ain't never been used.

LAWRENCE: I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry about all this ... I ..er really don't quite know what to say. It's your friends' fault. They've left me without a penny not to mention yourself. Unless of course you divide it out later. (*turning sharply*). Humph, they're laughing. Looks like, they're not going to share it. If I er could ..er I don't know... Would you like my shoes? They're brand new and...

" SMARTIE ": Yours shoes? No way. I don't wanna see 'em runnin' off by themselves. I've 'ad enough for one day. Enough. I'm goin' 'ome an' I'm gonna try an' forget about wot's 'appened, an' tomorra's anuver day. A normal day with normal people. 'Cos ...'Cos frankly this ain't normal. It ain't normal at all ... An' I'm not the superstitious type (*he makes to leave and then stops. Then looks behind him at LAWRENCE*). Come on lads, show's over. Time to go 'ome and share the booty. (*leaving*).

(*LAWRENCE leans back nonchalantly smirking. Just then another man appears, JOHN*)

JOHN: Thought I'd find you here.

LAWRENCE: Hello John.

JOHN: Just knew you'd be here. You couldn't be anywhere else. Harking on all morning about how beautiful the park opposite was, and that it was a pity to be shut up all day in that building. You chose it, it was you who told me about this congress. I...

LAWRENCE: I was fed up. Not because what was being said and done wasn't interesting but...

JOHN: Well, it was getting interesting... It's a pity though ...Well you know, not many magic congresses are organised in this country. But that doesn't mean to say they're not a good opportunity.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, I know.

JOHN: How about going for a drink?

LAWRENCE: Yeah, ok why not *ì* (*he gets up. Takes his watch from a pocket and looks at the time*). Hey, but shouldn't you...

JOHN: I've already told you it "was" getting interesting (*grinning wickedly*). It was until Vadacaccioli came on (*LAWRENCE smiles. Both start walking*). You know what, he started with the one about the egg

LAWRENCE: About how to make an omelette between the pages of a newspaper... And of course then he ate it..

JOHN: Oh no not him, a congress member with a cast-iron stomach (*they laugh*).

LAWRENCE: I dunno how you could leave at such an interesting time ... So what else did he do?

JOHN: I could only stick one more. Just one: the one about the glasses and the cake.

LAWRENCE: Oh no.

JOHN: Oh yeah, the one about the glasses and the cake.

LAWRENCE: Well I'm damned. (*They leave*)

MARES IN THE NIGHT II

MR. SPECK a man of around forty, sitting on a bench quietly reading a newspaper. A few seconds later, MR. SPECK becomes restless, looks to one side then returns to his reading uncomfortably. Suddenly, MR. SPECK starts and almost falls to the ground.

MR. SPECK: What're you up? Bloody hell! why don't you go off and play somewhere else, and just leave me alone

(Returns to his reading uncomfortably. Pause).

But, what's the matter with you? You deaf or what? Didn't you hear me. If you don't know how to behave in public then just get lost, will you?

(Looks next to him in disbelief. Another pause. He seems to be getting more and more restless/nervous, and ends up folding his newspaper, gets and makes to leave. Takes a step forward, but was if the bench forced him to sit back down again. His face shows hi surprise. The newspaper he was holding in his hands suddenly drops and falls on the ground.

But what's up with you lot... I ... I.... What are you trying to do to me? Can't you behave normally like everybody else?

(looks to one side disgusted)

What the ...?

(Now looking to the other side)

But what the ...? What's up with you lot? You on a high, or what? What d'you want? Can't you just leave me alone? Please, that's all I'm asking of you.

(Pause)

Do you make a habit of this? Are you in the habit of doing this and it's my turn today. Oh no, no I can't believe it. There are other people, other benches in this park or anywhere else for that matter. Couldn't you just go somewhere else and do the same? You know, I mean couldn't you even just do it amongst yourselves like? Go take a run and jump

(Puts his hands to his head in despair)

I don't understand this, believe me. I don't know what's going on! Somebody paid you to annoy me, 'ave they? Was it Ted Forrest that bloody Jew who I owe some money to? Was it

him? Yeah, no doubt about it. Must've been him. Bloody hell! All right, all right, just knock it off now, will you. Tell the bugger I'll come by tomorrow and pay him. Go on tell him.

(looking all around him, as if something or someone was surrounding and he's in total despair).

Oh for God's sake ...Enough! I've already told you I'll pay up. What else d'you want? Give me break, will you! You're a bleeding nightmare, that's what you are!

(Suddenly, as if seeing the possibility of escape, he gets up quickly moving away from the bench. After taking a few nervous steps, he stops and stares ahead of him, listening carefully).

Come again? You what? You wanna know what's up with me? Desperate, desperate is what I am.

(Pause)

Making a fuss over nothing am I?! For Crissake, one can't even sit quietly reading the newspaper without being disturbed ...

(Pause. Suddenly, perplexed he looks ahead and then towards the bench behind him).

ALL BY MYSELF, AM I? ALL BY MYSELF ?!

(bells can be heard tinkling gradually getting louder. MR. SPECK petrified, runs off as the CURTAIN falls)

RED RAG TO A BULL

Two men 1 and 2, around forty years of age sitting on a bench. Both wearing tracksuits. Man 1 is talking on his mobile. Man 2 with a placid smile on his face staring into the distance

MAN 1: ... A sprain or something similar. The thing is it's painful... No, no I can't walk...Anyhow are you coming to pick me up or not? On the bench next to the oak tree. You know which one I mean, that big one? Well, that's, OK the elm; how should I know...Yes. What else can we do if there's nothing else for it. OK, right, in half an hour then. I'll be right here waiting. I've already told you I can't walk .. Eh!

and bring me some water please. A litre bottle. I'm {dying of thirst... Right, OK, see you soon. (hangs up) {parched

Little by little while he was talking he'd moved his head to look somewhat anxiously in the same direction as Man 2.

MAN 1: Have you noticed?

MAN 2: Noticed what?

MAN 1: Your dog. Your dog's annoying mine

MAN 2: My dog?

MAN 1: Yes your dog. That one over there, isn't that your dog?

MAN 2: Which one?

MAN 1: The white one with black spots

MAN 2: Oh! you mean that dog. He's called *Kapicpoquinit*. Yeah, but he's not my dog though. He's a friend's dog

MAN 1: But it was you who brought him to the park. And I'm sure I saw you arrive with him.

MAN 2: And you'd be right. Yes, sir. It's my turn to dog sit. My friend's had to go away on a trip.

MAN 1: In other words you're responsible for whatever your friend's dog does.

MAN 2: I think so.

MAN 1: Well your friend's dog is annoying my dog.

MAN 2: Well, that's a nuisance. And what exactly is *Kapicpoquinit* doing to annoy your dog.

MAN 1: Can't you see. He's practically riding my dog's back. And he's been like that some time. On top, with that queer movement, yer know what I mean like.

MAN 2: Yeah, now I can see what you mean. But it doesn't look like he's annoying your dog, but rather to the contrary.

MAN 1: Are you implying that that persistent harassment, that “backdoor activity” is to my dog’s liking? And note I’m saying “dog”, i.e. I’m using the masculine term, 100% male. He can’t like that, it’s impossible. And anyway, I know my dog’s gestures perfectly, his entire repertoire, from head to tail.

MAN 2: Couldn’t put it better myself.

MAN 1: And that particular gesture, which he has been making ever since your friend’s dog jumped on his back, means he’s upset.

MAN 2: Oh, really! You don’t say.

MAN 1: Yes, it’s the very same gesture he makes when you take his ball away, you make him get down off the sofa, or you tell him he’s not going to get any more food, or you make him stay in his kennel or my two year old son kicks him.

MAN 2: So, from what I can gather then that gesture’s got a whole world of possibilities and meanings.

MAN 1: No, only one: Disgust. I don’t think you’re taking me seriously, are you?.

MAN 2: Excuse me, but ..but .. Does your dog really think that making that gesture of “disgust” he’s going to get rid of the other on top? I’m afraid somebody’s very mistaken here, you or your dog. I’m sure that if he were really disgusted he wouldn’t just make that face and stand still while the other was having his way with him. We’re talking about an animal, and animals act on instinct. You know what I mean stimulus-reaction. Surely you’re not trying to tell me that your dog feels bad about getting my friend’s dog on his back because he’s afraid to hurt his feelings, and that’s why he’s just standing there with that look of disgust on his face? Can’t be because he’s afraid since it’s obvious your dog’s bigger than my friend’s. A snarl, growl or nip in time ... and *Kapicpoquinit* would be off like a flash.

MAN 1: My dog’s been well brought up, he has. Docile and polite.. But are you just going to sit and do nothing then?

MAN 2: No, what do you want me to do, if they’re happy as they are?

MAN 1: Is, is, is, IS ... Do not pluralize!

MAN 2: Is it yours or my friend’s?

MAN 1: Ah! (Calling the dog) Frisky! (whistles) Frisky!

A youth comes in, listening to music on his walkman. He sits on the ground, a little way off from the bench. He’s got a lead in his and is staring into the distance.

MAN 2: Frisky?

MAN 1: Come on handsome Where's the king of the house, the most handsome? Who's coming with daddy? Ah! that's my little lad, my little lad! Frisky, gorgeous! Frisky!

MAN 2: No doubt about it, he's better off where he is, under my friend's dog.

MAN 1: It's because he can't hear me he's not coming. He can't hear me, can't you see Maqui-pongui...., your friend's dog is panting down his ear. And like that it's impossible.

MAN 2: Signal to him. Haven't you got a distance code?

MAN 1: It's a pity I can't move. Frisky! Frisky!! Frisky!!!

MAN 2: No good. I'm afraid apart from having just one gesture Frisky's deaf. On the other hand, my friend's dog's got a well tuned ear and by the look of things your shout's egging him on: (*Imitating the sound of bed springs*) "Friki-friki-friki-friki.."

MAN 1: (after a pause and controlling himself) Would you be so kind as to hand me that stone? Let's see if I can knock that *randy beast*, that won't leave my dog alone, for six from here.

MAN 2: You're not very fond of animals, are you?.

MAN 1: It's some animal owners I'm not fond of.

MAN 2: You're not referring to me by any chance, are you? I'm not an animal owner.

MAN 1: No, what you are is.... is an animal.

MAN 2: Hold on! now that's enough. I don't want to argue any more. You want to deprive your dog of the pleasure of my friend's dog's company, do you? Right you are then ... (*going towards the dog*) *Kapicpoquinit*, leave that gentleman's dog alone! (*a second later*) There you are, that's it, done.

MAN 1: I don't believe it ...It's not even your dog and it's obeyed you immediately...So couldn't you have done that earlier? Couldn't you..? Well, anyhow, forget it, I'm much obliged to you .. (*Turning back to look at the same point*) Oh! for God's sake! And who does that other dog belong to? But ..., But what's up with dogs in the park today? Why won't they leave my Frisky alone? And why the bloody hell is Frisky letting them do that to him?

MAN 2: Maybe it's a relief area he's set up there in the corner

MAN 1: Now for crissake! don't start that all over again, I beg you. Just knock off the sarcastic remarks, would you? Because this has got nothing to do with you now. Whose is that dog?! Whose is that ... cocker?!

MAN 2: Setter. The hazel brown one. Cockers are smaller.

MAN 1: (*Turning to the youth nearby them*). Excuse me. Hey! That dog, the brown setter, is it yours?

YOUTH: (*Looking into the distance*) The hazel brown one? The one that's having a whale of a time with that bitch?

MAN 1: Dog. Dog. D-O-G. The one underneath is a dog.

YOUTH: Ooops....Well, yes that setter's mine.

MAN 1: Well turns out he's having a whale of a time with mine. In other words he's annoying my dog.

YOUTH: You sure about that? Well, that's not the impression I've got judging by the look on his face. He's got a kind of half smile.

MAN 2: It's a look of disgust.

MAN 1: Just shut up will you.

YOUTH: Honest to God he certainly looks as if he's really enjoying himself.

MAN 2: (*To man 1*) He's questioning Frisky's masculinity

MAN 1: Would you mind telling your dog to leave mine alone.

YOUTH: Yeah, sure. But I don't understand why your dog isn't doing something about it. I mean you know if he doesn't like it ...Anyhow, what..... You all right?

MAN 2: Good question

MAN 1: I don't know. I just don't know what's up with him. Maybe he's putting me to the test, trying to humiliate me so that I feel humiliated. He wants to punish me for something... I just don't know why. Or maybe he's just got into his head to do that. Look, I've hurt my ankle and can't move. and I'd like that cocker to leave my dog alone so that when I call him, he could hear me and come over here. I want to have him next to me.

YOUTH: No problem about that, now don't you worry. *(To his dog)* Casio! Casio!, do something else *(To man 1)* That's it sorted out.

MAN 1: Much obliged to you. And now I'm .. *(To man 2)* But, well I never, what's that? your friend's dog's at it again .. But hasn't he been taught how to respect others?

YOUTH: A right cheeky little rascal

MAN 2: Yeah, but his is always in the line of fire. It's like the beach: free space you see, free space you occupy.

MAN 1: *(To youth, while he's trying to get up)* Give me hand please, I beg you. I've got to get over there by any meansIt's disgusting. I can't take it any longer...

MAN 2: Jesus! I didn't know that posture.

MAN 1: For Chrissake!

Another man comes running in and addresses them.

MAN 3: Any of you here the owner of that pit-bull bitch?

MAN 1: Me. ME.... And it's a dog. Although it might not look like one today it is a DOG.

MAN 3: Good job I found you. I've spent the last ten minutes asking all over the park I'm sorry but I've got to tell you um ... she's dead...er ... Dead. I mean he's dead....

MAN 1: What?

MAN 3: 'Fraid so. My wife realised a while ago. We've been asking all round the park. And we were going to ring the town hall.

MAN 2: Shit!

MAN 3: If there's anything we can do.

MAN 1: I don't know.... Christ! If you could just bring him over here to me. I.... I'm waiting to be picked up.

MAN 3: Yes, of course.

YOUTH: I'll give you a hand. At least he died with a smile on his face ...

Both exit. Man 1 sits down on the bench completely bewildered pressing his hands to his face.

MAN 2: I'm sorry. Please.. Please accept my most sincere condolences. I... I've got to go now ... *(And as he leaves)* Kapicpoquinit! Here! Come here! Fancy doing it with a dead dog. Come on, head for home, you little pervert.

Man 1 after some moments of stillness separates his hands from his face. He looks around him perplexed. A woman "in a tracksuit" comes in and does towards the bench.

WOMAN: Right come on then.

MAN 1: What?

WOMAN: Let's go. I'm here.

MAN 1: Where are we going?

WOMAN: Where do you think? We're going running.

MAN 1: I ... I can't. I'm... *(He gets up and is surprised he can walk without problem)* What's going on ...? And Frisky?

WOMAN: Who?

MAN 1: Frisky, our dog? He was lying dead, over there ... And there was a load of dogs doing nothing but annoy him. And I couldn't do anything because I'd sprained my ankle...

WOMAN: Look darling. You and I haven't got a dog. We've never had a dog. We live in a sixty square metre flat with our son Abel. And there are no other living creatures. We can't have a dog at home. So ...Wait a minute ... This morning... Oh my God, not again! Abel What did you take this morning? Are you sure it was paracetamol you took when you told me you had a headache? Try and remember. What colour was the tablet?

MAN 1: It wasn't my head that hurt, it was my ankle ...

WOMAN: Oh yeah, come off it. It wasn't white, was it? Jesus! Come on, we'd better get to the doctor's right away

MAN 1: And Frisky? What are we going to do with him?

WOMAN: I'll tell you later. *(Keeping her temper under control)* I'll kill him this time!

MAN 1: You can't, he's already dead....

WOMAN: Yes all right, all right, don't you fret over it. Now come on, let's go.

They exit. The woman tugs at man 1, who can't help looking to where the dogs "were?"

GREEN LIGHT

Two men: A and B. B, a man of around 40 casually dressed sitting on a park bench, quietly reading a newspaper. A enters running, after a whistle is heard. He's around 30 dressed as an executive and carrying a briefcase. Reaches the bench and sits down next to B.

A: Morning! To Washington Square please.

B: Come again?

A: To Washington Square, along the seventh of Local-age. Um, actually I'm in a bit of hurry.

B: To . er, um ...Washington Square, did you say?

A: That's right. Along the seventh of Local-age. Come on sir, start her up.

B: *(perplexed not quite knowing how to react)* Look, er I'm terribly sorry. But er I'm not....

A: Oh, er having lunch, were you? I thought I saw your green light on. Truth of the matter is I've already been waiting half an hour. So as soon as I saw your taxi ..

B: My taxi?

A: Yes, your taxi. And I said to myself: "At last. This one's mine". I've still got half an hour left, so I'd rather you finished your lunch than have to get out and hail another taxi. I'm out of luck. Definitely not my day today.

B: Well, er .. I ..er. Truth is, I wasn't having lunch. I was just reading the newspaper.

A: Oh that's marvellous. That means we can start now. And then I'll have time for a coffee before the meeting ... Along the seventh of Local-Age

B: Very well sir ... (*surprised at himself*). Here we go then. We're off.

A: Don't mind if I sit in front do you?

B: In front?

A: Er, yes, in front. I don't like going in the back, I'm not one of those chaps who likes to discriminate people. I like sitting in the front and keeping company with whoever's driving. (*Pause*). The metre.

B: Come again?

A: The metre. You haven't switched it on. Well, you know, because if not, once you reach your destination, then you have spend half an hour arguing over the fare. And I like things clear and straightforward, everything above board, know what I mean?

B: Yeah, ok .. um Well and er, how are things?

A: What d'you mean?

B: The park, do you often come to this park?

A: Ah! You mean the park we've just left behind?

B: Yes, yes... that's right, the very same.

A: Well, actually not too often. I only leave the house to go to work even though I live nearby. Got no time to enjoy life, you see ... Hey, watch out, the light's red, it's red.

B: Oh yes. Of course. Red.

A: I've got my own car, so I don't normally take taxis. But the thing is, when I got up this morning, my wife'd left me a note say: "Darling, I'm going to the centre, so I've taken the car. Love and kisses". Just like that, no prior warning. Just a note and nothing I can do about it. Just a note and bugger all.

B: Erm, green. It's green now, isn't it?

A: Yeah. My wife's like that, everything's all of a sudden. No pre-planning. For example: she starts cooking, then halfway through when the smell's filled all the house and got into bones, making yer stomach rumble – because I've got to admit it, she's a fantastic cook – she says: "Darling, let's eat out, shall we". And you've got to put up with it. It's a strange kind of

madness an' there's nothing you can do about it. It'd be much worse if you tried, much worse. Because then she'd probably fly off at a different tangent. And your family?

B: My family?

A: Yes. I mean the photos on your dashboard. It's your family, isn't it? Your wife and son.

B: Hey, how do you know?

A: How do I know what?

B: How d'you know I've got a wife and son?

A: Well, erm by the photos. I guessed as soon as I spotted them. I said to myself that must be your wife and the lad your son.

B: Christ, that's incredible! But you can't be seeing...

A: Um, er would you mind keeping your eyes on the road, or we'll end up having an accident. I haven't got any children. I had wanted one once. But it occurred to me to mention it to the wife and she said: "But I can't have children darling". She just told me straight out. After three years of marriage she comes out with she can't ... Are you infertile? I asked. And d'you know what she answered?

B: No. What did she say?

A: She told me she couldn't have children because she didn't want to and because she wouldn't how to look after them or bring them up.

B: But that's something you learn.

A: That's exactly what I told her. I said: "You can learn to. I'll be encyclopaedias and we'll study it in depth." But she stood her ground about not being able to have children. She just didn't want to and that was all. And it's no use contradicting her.

B: Phew! what a woman!

A: Oh but she's an angel, a real angel. You don't mind my winding down the window, do you?

B: No, no, why should I mind. To tell the truth it was beginning to get a bit to stuffy.

A: (*looking to one side*). The TTC, Turner Transport Company. The competitor. A great building bang in the middle of the sixth avenue. I enjoy going past knowing they're there, getting better and more powerful everyday. Not that I'm thinking of leaving mine and trying to join them. No, it's not that. It's just that I know that one of these days p'raps within a few years,

we're going to knock them for six. When they're at the height of their glory, we're going to well and truly fuck them. Excuse the language. Yes Sir. That is what I call a real incentive.

B: Well ok, if you say so. But it's got nothing to do with me.

A: Oh, do you mean this is your entire business?

B: What d'you mean?

A: Your taxi.

B: Of yes, of course my er taxi. Yes, indeed it's my sole business. Apart from the odd plumbing jobs, when they come up.

A: An "impasse", a deadlock. We've all gone through that at some time. I was just a messenger boy at my company when I was fourteen, but now look at me. A tweed suit, silk tie, "Oakland" shoes. Everything comes in time. Besides which you've got a son, and I haven't.

B: To cap it all

A: Oh come on. It maybe just one taxi now but in the near future you could well be the owner of a public transport company, you mark my words. The future's only black if you want it to be. You mustn't let the hard times get you down.

B: No, you're right. Truth is things aren't doing too badly. I mean whenever look up at all those forty storey buildings and watch people dying everyday, in their homes or wherever, I always tell myself I could take place of anyone of them and that a large sunny office is waiting for me somewhere.

A: That's the attitude! I'm sure of it. You've definitely got the spirit to overcome your shortcomings. Not like my wife. She always moves backwards like a crab. She just lets the world go past, while she stays on the kerb, she 's got no interest in anything. I told her: "Study something, you're still young, take the chance". And d'you know what she replied? She just looked at me and said: "Darling, I'm no longer eighteen. I've got no phosphorus left". Phosphorus! But I mean, what the hell's phosphorus got to do with all this, I ask you?

B: Fish. She should eat fish.

A: That's exactly what I said: "Eat fish". But she wouldn't have it, she doesn't eat fish. "You know I can't stand fish darling". And I can testify to that, she cannot stand fish. So how on earth could she have any phosphorus left in her body?

B: Definitely a difficult woman.

A: Yeah, but then what woman isn't? Eh! tell me that. Oh! I see you've turned down Stevenson Boulevard. That's great, that'll make a nice shortcut. Y'know you're a real honest bloke. I like that.

B: And why shouldn't I be?

A: Exactly so, and why indeed shouldn't you be? But the truth is, given the world we live, it's easy for anyone to become dishonest. Take your business for example, and undoubtedly you know better than I, that there are those who take the long route in order to make more money. And yet you go straight, no unnecessary turns, and I like that. *(Pause)* Oh my God! Just.....look..... atthat! will you?!

B: Look at what, at what?

A: That *(pointing just in front)*

B: What're you talking about? What's that?

A: Brake, brake. Bloody hell!

B: What's happening?

A: No idea. But I'm not getting out to have a look. What on earth are all those people doing in the middle of the street?

B: In the middle of the street?

A: But can't you see them?

B: Yes, of course I can see them ...

A: Maybe there's been an accident.

B: an accident?

A: Somebody commits an offence and the only result is forty people hovering about whilst another forty of us arrive late for work. Nothing else matters. Fines are insufficient my friend. More than one ought to be sent to the electric chair. I suggest you take the first on the right. *(Pause)* It really gives me the pip, all this just drives me mad.

B: Oh come one, it's not that bad. I'm sure it wasn't as bad as it looked.

A: Well, perhaps it wasn't so bad. But anyway it really gets on my pip. That's way I am, you see? There comes a time where there are so many things that I find them difficult to understand, an' I just can't stand it. But anyway, at least it doesn't happen too often. Generally speaking I'm

a pretty stable chap. Which is probably why things ... You know, you really are quite a strange fellow, you know?

B: Indeed? Me? strange?

A: Yes, you're really quite strange. I mean it's really amazing we've just come upon an accident and you've taken it all in your stride, as if nothing had happened in front of us, you know what I mean, as if it'd been nothing more than a mirage.

B: I didn't, did? Well! fancy that.

A: Yes, amazing isn't it? Sometimes, I think that what I need is a cool head.

B: Well, I er, um.... I suppose you've got a cool head for other things.

A: What other things?

B: Yes! I mean, take your wife for example. Ooh I could never ... I mean could never put up with her eccentricities.

A: (*Grinning*) Humph! her eccentricities

B: Oh well erm...look um...I hope I haven't upset you I er.....

A: No, no not at all. It's just that you hardly what her eccentricities are. For instance. And I can assure you a cool head isn't need. Merely location, i.e.: where am I, who am I and what do I want. Which all in all sounds perfectly normal, and that is precisely what is so extraordinary. You just get used to in the end. (*Pause*). I asked her one day.

B: What did you ask her?

A: Well, I said: "Darling, have you ever asked yourself where you are, who you are and what you want?" And d'you know what? She answered with another question.

B: Indeed? What?

A: "Are we ever going to move this cupboard somewhere else?" But then, what else was she going to say? Do you think she'd ever be capable of asking herself such questions? I mean d'you think she's really capable of doing that? Not a hope in a hell. The only thing that occurred to her was to ask about something else. I'd have liked to have said "The only cupboard here that needs moving somewhere else, is you darling." But! I contained myself. I mean I've already got answer to all those questions, and frankly it's not worth getting het up about it. No sir, it ain't worth it.

B: Well yes, You certainly know how to face up to life.

A: And, why shouldn't I? I mean, you know, I only put up with what I want to. You know, don't think for one minute I'm one of those chaps who quietly accepts everything put before him. Good lord no, I mean if I don't like somebody I just tell them so: "Look, friend I don't like you. I'm not interested in anything you have to say. It's codswallop right from that start. So nothing more to be said." And they can say whatever like, that they've been recommended by ... they're friends of ... I mean, I've also got friends, you know? And none of them's stupid enough to present me to somebody they know I'm not going to like. I mean nobody likes to be pissed off, do they. Excuse the language. *(pause)*. Hey! The Saroyan Department Store!

B: Exactly, the Saroyan Department Store.

A: Yep, we're almost there. Know what? I'd travel with you blindfold.

B: Know what? I'd do the same with you. I mean you could say, you've almost driven the taxi yourself.

A: Indeed sir, you are a most extraordinary chap. Second block on your right. Fifth doorway. Go slowly, they're being done up.

B: Don't you worry, now don't you worry sir. It's ages since I had an enjoyable ride like today. I mean we all know the city's out there, right in front of our very nose, and yet we don't see it. I mean I don't see all those folk walking around there and who simply live there. I don't hear them, I don't smell them. And yet, those folk are the city's heartbeat. And you know what? one just simply dwells on one's own problems never letting a mere stranger open a door for him ... the door of his taxi.

A: Oh absolutely! That's absolutely true. Look friend, I'd invite you for a coffee, but I fear you wouldn't enjoy being surrounded by a load of executives who can't see further than their own desks. Nope, I doubt very much whether you'd enjoy that menagerie ... *(Pause)* Well, here we are, we've arrived. Tell me, how much do I owe you?

B: Nothing, I er...

A: Oh come on, nobody does nothing for nothing. This is your job. Thirty-five point eight, is what the metre shows.. Remember? the metre, I've already warned you. Here's forty and keep the change.

B: But, really, I can't ...

A: I insist *(he pays him)*. Good day to you. I hope we meet up again some time, you know, another morning when the wife's taken my car just leaving me a note without more ado. See you around.

(A leaves the stage. B remains a few minutes in thought. Another individual comes on and sits down on the bench next to him. He takes out a cigarette and lights up).

B: And where do you want to go?

CURTAIN