

## SCENE ONE

The lights rise on Mr and Mrs Raglan at breakfast. Mr Raglan is sitting at the table reading the Daily Telegraph. He wears a smart jacket and tie, but no trousers. His trousers are being ironed by Mrs Raglan. Tim, slouched on his bed, stares into space. The sound of sizzling bacon fades up.

Tim [aside to audience] Parents are so predictable.

Mum We're running low on bread, darling. Will one slice do?

Dad Isn't Tim down yet?

Mum Will one slice do?

Dad One slice of what?

Mum Bread, darling. [leaps from ironing board to bread bin]

Tim [aside] It's the same every morning. Mum forgets to take the bread out of the freezer. Dad never has a second slice anyway. But they still have to argue about it.

Dad [shouting upwards] Tim!

Tim [aside] And now they want an audience.

Dad [shouting upwards] What are you doing up there?

Tim [shouts down] Nothing!

Dad [to Mum] Did you hear that?

Mum What, darling?

Dad [frustrated] He's doing nothing. [checks watch] Again.

Tim [to audience] I'm under siege in this household. Always poking their noses into my things. Mum's the worst. I've had to put a lock on my door. And a chain. [exits via bedroom door and moves towards kitchen] Locking things is a sign of status in their world. I think she respects me for it.

Dad [shouting up] Come down NOW and have some breakfast!

Tim I wish I could put a bloody lock on Dad's mouth.

Mum [as Tim enters kitchen] Ah, there you are, darling. {hands him a pair of boxer shorts} Clean pants.

Dad            Sit down and have some bacon.

Tim            No thanks.

Mum           It's best gammon.

Tim            [aside] A cooked breakfast is their solution to everything. A nation marches on its stomach, according to Dad.

Dad            A nation marches on its stomach, Timothy. Britain was great in the era of cooked breakfasts.

Mum           Robert, darling . . .

Dad  
another . .    Up and down the country, families sitting down together, talking to one another . .

Mum           Robert dar . . .

Dad           Communicating . . .

Mum           Ro . . .

Dad           There's an article on just that point in yesterday's Telegraph.

Tim            [aside] I reckon he owns The Daily Telegraph.

Dad           'Youth delinquency and the decline of the cooked breakfast.'

Mum           Let's not talk politics, darling.

Dad           I'm not talking politics. I'm talking sausages.

Tim            [aside] Which is what he always talks, in my opinion. I don't know how Mum puts up with him. She must be on crystal meth, or something.

Mum           Cornflakes?

Tim            I'm not hungry.

Mum           I could do you a kipper.

Tim            Why? Why must I eat anything? Why must I eat at all?

Mum           Oh Tim, you're not turning anorexic?

Dad           Don't be ridiculous, Kate. That's for girls. He's just bone idle. [to Tim] Chewing too much like hard work, eh? Mastication beneath you? Admit it. Look me in the eye. Both eyes. Admit it. You're bone idle!

Tim [sighs] Well, I'm certainly feckless. And a scrounger. And a total waste of your money.

Dad [enraged] What?

Tim [aside] If there's one thing parents can't stand, it's being robbed of a good fight.

Dad How can you look me in the eye and say you're a total waste of my money? Kate . . . did you . . . he said he's a total waste of my money!

Tim [aside] All they can do is repeat themselves.

Dad A total waste of my money!

Tim [aside] Pathetic, isn't it?

Mum [cajoling] Timothy, you know we only want what's best for you.

Tim [aside] And then Mum comes over all 'social services'.

Mum We were young once, you know. Even your father.

Dad Look at his hair!

Tim There's nothing wrong with my hair.

Dad And your room!

Tim What about my room?

Dad It's locked.

Tim So?

Mum Why don't you give me the key, Tim? I could pop in and do a little tidy up.

Tim [aside] A little snoop, more like. Mum could have been a Mata Hari if she didn't have all those varicose veins.

Dad Why should your mother clean your room? You do it. She's not your skivvy.

Tim Whatever.

Dad [clicks his fingers] Trousers. [Mum hands him his trousers which he starts putting on. To Tim] I've ringed a few job adverts for you. Thought you might like to read them. And while you're at it, have a look on page five.

There's an article on unemployment and low protein levels. I've ringed it in red

Tim [aside] That's his main method of communicating with me - ringed items in the Daily Telegraph in red biro. If the paper folds, the rest is silence.

Mum Eight o'clock, darling.

Dad [checks his watch] Spot on. [picks up briefcase] Important meeting this morning. Stashcash versus Dosh Duccat and Dubloon.

Mum Be good.

Dad You too. [a quick kiss]

Mum Coc au vin for supper.

Dad Any problems just text me. [heads towards exit]

Mum Darling. [he stops] Umbrella.

Dad [takes umbrella] Spot on. [exits]

Tim [starts clucking like a hen] Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck. Off goes the big brave rooster to his cage in the city. [heads back towards his bedroom] Well, I may not have your pedigree, Dad. But at least I'm free range. [he flaps around the stage, clucking. Lights fade to black]

## SCENE TWO

Traffic noises. Jackie jogs across the stage, wearing attractive jogging outfit, and exits. Tim enters from opposite direction, panting heavily.

Tim What I love best about jogging . . . is the moment it actually stops. [he grinds to a halt] So why do I do it? To get out of the house, I suppose. To prove I'm still alive. [he shouts heavenwards] I'm still alive! [jogs in a circle] If I go round and round long enough, I'll probably transnavigate the globe. I should have reached Calais by now. [looks around then shrugs] Where are all those gorgeous French girls?

[puffed out, he sinks to the ground] Peaceful, anyway. All those morons racing up to the City and here's me, sitting in the park, at one with nature. It's good being unemployable. It's really good. [pause] No hassle. You just sit around . . . sit and . . . well, just sit really. A lot of sitting. A lot of low-paid sitting. When it comes to high-paid sitting, Dad's up there with the best. I mean, Dosh, Duccat and Dubloon reward his buttocks with £160 an hour. £160! That's £80 per buttock. [he lies back sighing] Ah, that's better.

Jackie [jogs back on stage and observes him] You're not very fit, are you?

Tim [rapidly sits up] Eh?

Jackie Been at it long?

Tim [fixing his hair] What do you mean?

Jackie Jogging.

Tim Half an hour. Why?

Jackie Fancy working up a sweat together ? [Tim's mouth opens in desperate hope] Race you to the High Road. [laughs and races off]

Tim What ? Hey ! Wait for me! [sets off after her] The things you do for sex. [exit]

Jackie [running around auditorium if feasible) Lift, lift, lift! You can do it.

Tim You're going too fast!

Jackie If I go much slower, I'll fall over.

Tim I've got a stone in my Nike.

Jackie Arthritis, more like. [laughing and panting, she crosses the stage and whistles] You blind as well? I'm over here.

Tim (staggers on stage and collapses) Ahhh.

Jackie You should see your face.

Tim What about it?

Jackie It's purple.

Tim You're joking. [aside] I'm going to die.

Jackie Lean up against the wall, and breathe deeply. [she assists him] That's better. [Tim yelps] What's wrong?

Tim I've pulled something.

Jackie Let me have a look. [she feels his leg]

Tim I'm in terrible pain. [aside] This is the life! [to Jackie, weakly] Be gentle with me.

Jackie Does this hurt?

Tim [he yells out in genuine pain] Aah!

Jackie [laughs] Good. That means you're o.k.

Tim Bitch.

Jackie What's your name?

Tim That hurt!

Jackie I'm Jackie.

Tim [aside] I wonder if she's this rough in bed. I could need major surgery.

Jackie Why aren't you at school?

Tim School?! [aside, nervously] She's winding me up.

Jackie Touched a raw nerve, have I?

Tim Makes a change from dislocating my groin. [aside] She's fit though. [to Jackie] I'm between jobs at the moment. What do you do?

Jackie At work, you mean?

Tim [aside] She means there's something else she does ? Something at home. In the bedroom. In a skin-tight silk basque . . .

Jackie I'm a chippy at McDonald's.

Tim A chippy?

Jackie It's not bad money.

Tim That must be . . . interesting.

Jackie You are joking? When you've seen one McNugget you've seen them all. [pause] Oh look. Over there. [she points into the audience] An aquarium shop. I love fish.

Tim Tropical fish? That's a bit retro.

Jackie I think I was a guppy in a previous life

Tim A guppy? [aside] She's a nutter.

Jackie Or a conger eel.

Tim [sudden optimism, aside] Maybe she's a sex addict. [Jackie and Tim peer into the audience, as if into a shop window]

Jackie It's huge. Look at its mouth.

Tim Do they breathe like that?

Jackie Idiot! They breathe through their gills. Don't you know anything? Look. There. Those red slits where the ears should be.

Tim Oh.

Jackie He's a pompous old twat, isn't he?

Tim Reminds me of someone.

Jackie A big fat man with asthma.

Tim [clicks his fingers] My father.

Jackie [laughs] Really?

Tim When he's giving me one of his lectures. [imitates sound and appearance of a fish mouth opening and closing] Wob, wob, wob . . . you can't sleep all day. . . wob, wob . . . sleeping isn't a career. . .

Jackie [laughing] You should be on telly.

Tim If that fish had a copy of the Daily Telegraph stuck under its fin, it'd be the spitting image. Spot on.

Jackie Let's buy him and grill him for tea.

Tim [aside] There's that sado-masochism again. Maybe she'll handcuff me before she rips off my . . .

Jackie [looking into audience] All those fish just floating about. Doesn't it make you feel kind of relaxed? [she lets her body hang free] Sort of fluid and primitive and without inhibitions.

Tim [aside] Yes! I am going to score! [to Jackie] I'll buy you.

Jackie What?

Tim The fish.

Jackie Are you serious?

Tim Of course.

Jackie I can't have pets.

Tim I'll keep it at mine. You can come over and . . .

Jackie To your place?

Tim [forced casual] Yes. To my place. Stay over if you like. Me, you . . . and the fish of course. [goes into blissful reverie, aside] Bobbing together in the bath, her hair floating apart to reveal two perfectly naked breasts . . .

Jackie Are we going in then?

Tim What?

Jackie To the shop?

Tim Yes. Yes let's go in.

[Lights dim and bubbling sounds fade up]

### SCENE THREE

(A salesman is instructing his new assistant)

Salesm. Right then. [he points out where everything is] You've got your piranha on your left. You've got your red-tailed sharks on your right. Your clown loaches. Your guppies. Your gold fish. [the assistant attempts to take all this in] You've got your large tanks. You've got your small tanks. You've got all your pumps down there. Books over there. Fish food. Gravel. Plastic weed. Any questions

Assist. Er . . .

Salesm. Good. Get on with it.

[Jackie and Tim are browsing round the tanks. The Salesman observes them, while the assistant hovers behind him]

Jackie Oh, look at this one. Isn't it ugly? Yuk. Let's buy it.

Salesm. A Clown Loach, Miss. Ugly, but full of personality.

Tim [aside] Takes one to know one.

Jackie [ignoring the salesman] Oh, look at these.

Salesm. The red-tailed Black Shark, Miss.



Jackie                    They look evil.

Tim                    [aside] Fifty nine quid each! They'd better be evil at that price. [to Jackie] Don't you fancy one of those?

Salesm.                The goldfish, sir.

Jackie                    [mocking] You're not going to buy a goldfish?

Tim                    What's wrong with goldfish?

Salesm.                A big hit with our younger buyers.

Tim                    [aside] Bastard. [to Jackie] Well how about this lot here, then?

Salesm.                Very attractive, the Lion Tail. Popular in Japan.

Tim                    To hell with the cost. I'll take four.

Salesm.                That'll be ninety pounds, sir.

Tim                    Ninety pounds!

Salesm.                Or was it the minnows at £5 you were after?

Tim                    [aside] Shit. [aloud] No. We'll take a Lion Tail.

Salesm.                Lion tail in the singular, sir?

Tim                    Just the one.

Assist                    [timidly repeats] Just the one.

Tim                    And for that price, you can gift wrap it.

Assist.                    [timidly repeats] Gift wrapped.

Salesm.                Very droll, sir. [to assistant] No. [assistant pulls back]

Jackie                    You'll need a tank.

Tim                    [aside] A tank!

Salesm.                You're a beginner, I see sir.

Tim                    [aside, sarcastic] Great. Next thing he'll be telling me I'm a virgin. [aloud] Intermediate, actually.

Assist.                    Intermediate.

Salesm. I suggest a 20 inch then, sir. And an under gravel filter, naturally . . .

Tim Naturally.

Salesm. . . . and an air pump, a thermostat and heater, a cable tidy . . . a supply of gravel, ornamental logs, a starter's handbook, a fish net, magnetic algae removers . . .

Tim [aside] Bugger. I've only got forty quid.

Salesm. . . . a supply of fish flakes, white spot treatment, fin rot treatment, Aquasafe treatment . . .

Tim [interrupting] How much is it all going to cost?

Man Our starter set is £145 pounds, sir. Plus V.A.T.

Assist. Plus V.A.T.

Tim [aside] Think Tim, think, think, think. [aloud] I'm not sure if I'm ready for that level of responsibility yet. A fish's welfare is at stake.

Jackie Are you skint?

Tim Me? No. No, no, no.

Jackie Then pay up.

Tim [aside] The things you do for sex. [to salesman] We'll take the fish and the tank. For now.

Salesm. For now, sir.

Tim (handing over cash) I'll come back for the rest tomorrow.

Salesm Of course you will, sir. [takes the money and holds each note up to the light] I look forward to seeing you again very soon.

Jackie [to Tim] Look, if you're stuck for money, why don't you come and work at MacDonalds?

Tim I'm not stuck for money.

Jackie They've got stacks of vacancies.

Tim Have they?

Jackie Yes. When they've run out of dead dog, they throw bits of us into the Big Macs instead. [pause] Only joking.

Tim [aside] She's a definite psycho, this one. (aloud) What time do you start work today?

Jackie Four O'clock. It's the McDonald's in Regent's Street. If you come along I'll slip you a free burger. [peering out at the audience] Ooh, Piranha. I love Piranha. They're only little, but they can strip a man in three minutes.

Tim [aside] Crickey. [aloud] You're on.

[Black out]

#### SCENE FOUR

Evening. Dad, in shirt sleeves, holds a pair of shoes. Mum is on the phone, nodding and agreeing with the person on the other end of the line. Tim is in his bedroom, dressed in jeans and a T shirt. He is dangling his hand in a fish tank.

Tim Hey, don't nibble my fingers! [to audience] I've called her Jacky - Jacky with a 'y'. She's got a gorgeous tail. Swishes it about like a real pro. Don't you, Jacky? It must feel a bit bare floating around in a tank like that. I'll get you some weed when I can afford it. And a little under-water castle. Would you like that?

Dad [shouts up] Tim!

Tim [looks at his watch} Blast! [starts to get ready in a hurry]

Dad [shouts] We're going to be late.

Mum [to Dad, hand over receiver] Angelica could be a head buyer by the time she's twenty five.

Dad Where's the black shoe polish?

Mum She's got two people under her already. [back on phone]

Dad Under who?

Mum What darling?

Dad My shoes. They're scuffed.

Mum They're fine.

Dad You haven't looked at them.

Mum [not looking] They're fine. (continues her phone conversation)

Dad [shouting up] Tim! Did you hear me?

Tim [putting the finishing touches to his appearance] I'm too sexy for my shirt, da, da, da, da, da . . . [sprays under his armpits] I hope she likes Eau Sauvage. [he snarls like a tiger and makes his way 'downstairs']

Mum [on phone] We'll be there in ten minutes. Yes. I'm sure it'll be delicious. Yes. Always is. Yes. [puts down receiver] A head buyer. Think of that.

Dad What?

Mum Angelica De Silva. [Tim rushes in] Ah, Tim. [observes] Well, at least the T shirt's clean.

Dad [to Tim] Any news for us Tim?

Mum Let's try and behave like a family for a change.

Tim News?

Dad Yes. News?

Tim [aside] I'll give him news. [aloud, heavy with significance] Yes, I do have news.

Mum [thrilled] I told you a proper c.v. would pay off.

Dad [to Tim] Morgan Stanley? Goldman Sax? Citibank?