

## **SCENE 1. VIKING RETAIL PARK. NIGHT.**

*A FORSAKEN LOOKING SIGN BY THE STAGE READS 'WESTVIEW RECREATION GROUND'. WINTER WIND HOWLS AS MALADITE, A SHORT BESPECTACLED MAN IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES DRESSED IN WINTER GARB TREKS THROUGH THE AUDIENCE. HE IS SUDDENLY CONFRONTED BY A TRIO OF DANGEROUS LOOKING HOODED YOUTHS, THE LEADER OF WHICH IS CLUTCHING A CHARITY DONATION TIN. THEIR FACES ARE OBSCURED BY A COMBINATION OF HOODED TOPS AND SCARVES. THEY EYEBALL MALADITE BEFORE BREAKING INTO GARBLED, TUNELESS SONG.*

HOODED YOUTHS (SUNG): We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Hood tidings we bring to you and your kin...

*THE LEADER RATTLES THE DONATION TIN AT MALADITE. THE GANG FALLS SILENT AS HE REACHES INTO HIS POCKET, RETRIEVES CHANGE AND SLIPS IT URGENTLY INTO THE TIN. MALADITE TRIES TO LEAVE BUT THE GANG STAND FIRM.*

HOODED YOUTHS (SUNG): Deck the halls with boughs of holly; Fa la la la, la la la la; Tis the season to be jolly; Fa la la la la, la la la la; Don we now our...(HESITATION)...gay apparel; Fa la la la la, la la la...

*MALADITE AGAIN REACHES INTO HIS POCKETS, PLACING AS MUCH CHANGE AS HE CAN INTO THE TIN. HE TRIES TO LEAVE BUT YOUTHS BREAK INTO YET ANOTHER SONG...*

HOODED YOUTHS (SUNG): When the snowman brings the snow; Well he just might like to know...

*THE YOUTHS SCATTER AT THE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING POLICE SIREN. MALADITE WATCHES THEM GO BEFORE FLEEING HIMSELF.*

## **SCENE 2. BURGER FANTASTIC STAFF ROOM. NIGHT.**

*IN THE CENTRE OF THE STAFF ROOM IS A RADIO SET, SAT UPON A GRUBBY COFFEE TABLE AND TIRED LOOKING SOFA. TO THE LEFT IS THE KITCHEN DOOR BESIDE WHICH SITS AN ANTIQUATED PAYPHONE. TO THE RIGHT IS A WALL OF METALLIC LOCKERS. CENTRAL TO THE ROOM IS A WINDOW WITH BLINDS. SOMEONE HAS TRIED, NONE TOO SUCCESSFULLY, TO DECORATE THE ROOM FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON.*

*A CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATED WITH A SINGLE BAUBLE SITS PATHETICALLY BY THE SOFA AND A CALENDAR ON THE BACK WALL READS 'DECEMBER 24'. GAVIN, A ROUND PORTLY MAN IN HIS MID THIRTIES, WEARING A SUIT AND BURGER FANTASTIC NAME BADGE ENTERS. A PA PUMPS SLADE'S 'MERRY CHRISTMAS'. THE PAYPHONE RINGS.*

GAVIN: Russell! Kill the Christmas tunes; we simply cannot afford any more legal action from atheists.

*'MERRY CHRISTMAS' CEASES AND IS REPLACED WITH APPALLING, SPIKE MILLIGAN BAITING MUSAK. GAVIN CROSSES OVER TO THE PAYPHONE, CLEARS HIS THROAT AND ANSWERS.*

GAVIN: Good evening you're through to Burger Fantastic, home of the Chunky Cheese 'n' Chicken quarter pounder and it's perfect accompaniment the healthy Carrot Crunchy Snack, this is Duty Team Manager Gavin Richards speaking, how can I make *your* day fantastic...? (PAUSE) Good evening...? (PAUSE) Can I make you fantastic? (PAUSE) Who is this? Whoever you are, you're not funny. If you're going to make prank calls, at least have the courtesy to breathe heavily. Hello?

*MALADITE, CLUTCHING A CLIPBOARD AND DRESSED IN HIS BURGER FANTASTIC GARB, WHITE SHIRT, BLACK TROUSERS, RED TIE AND A BRIGHT, PISS-YELLOW COLOURED APRON, ENTERS AS GAVIN HANGS UP. MALADITE TOO IS SPORTING A GARISH NAME BADGE EMPLAZONED WITH THE UGLY BURGER FANTASTIC LOGO.*

MALADITE: Was that another crank call?

GAVIN: Tenth today, why are they picking on us? An honest, family orientated business chain.

*SHANNON ENTERS, SHE IS DARK HAired, PETIT AND WEARING THE SAME BURGER FANTASTIC GET-UP BUT WITH A SKIRT INSTEAD OF TROUSERS.*

SHANNON: Opposition to unions, third-world exploitation, Chlorofluorocarbon packaging...

MALADITE: And the Ostrich Burger fiasco.

GAVIN: There was no fiasco Maladite. First condition of being promoted; show loyalty! Now if you could settle down and line up, we'll commence with the (RAISES VOICE) team briefing.

*RUSS ENTERS. HE IS IN HIS LATE TWENTIES, TALL AND HANDSOME. HE TOO IS IN THE FAMILIAR BURGER FANTASTIC WEAR BUT WITH AN UNTUCKED SHIRT, MESSY HAIR, LOP-SIDED APRON AND SKEW-WHIFF TIE. HE BELCHES HARD AND THROWS HIMSELF ONTO THE SOFA.*

RUSS: Ready for the meeting.

GAVIN: It's a *briefing* Russ.

RUSS: I doubt it'll be brief.

GAVIN: Stand for the briefing please, I like everyone to be on their feet when I am.

*RUSS RISES AND LEANS AGAINST A WALL, HANDS IN POCKETS.*

GAVIN: In a line.

*RUSS APPROACHES SHANNON AND MALADITE THEY ATTEMPT TO FORM A HAPHAZARD LINE, EVENTUALLY SETTling IN HEIGHT ORDER, RUSS FIRST, MALADITE THEN SHANNON.*

GAVIN: Now, could I begin with a reminder that the staff notice board *is* for work related notices only, so I've removed the 'back waxing for a fiver' offer and who put up 'singer seeks band'...?

SHANNON (SIGHS): Me.

MALADITE: Another? What happened to Inflatable Skinhead?

SHANNON: They grew hair.

GAVIN: Er...focus people, focus. I know this is the graveyard shift *and* it is Christmas Eve but Shannon, Russ, I'm detecting you're feeling neither fantastic *nor* customer focused?

SHANNON: Correct, I'm so through with punk.

GAVIN: Then perhaps you should concentrate on being LAITE?

RUSS: / try.

MALADITE: No, (SPELLS LETTER BY LETTER/GAVIN NODS APPROVINGLY) L.A.I.T.E; Leave All Ills and Troubles Elsewhere.

SHANNON: Maybe you need to concentrate on getting (SPELLS LETTER BY LETTER) L.A.I.D.

MALADITE: What's that an acronym of?

SHANNON: It isn't.

GAVIN: Moving back to real world matters...I trust the locker check is now complete?

RUSS (SURPRISED): What?

SHANNON (HORRIFIED): No one said anything about a locker check.

GAVIN: Of course not, it'd be pointless if you were forewarned.

*MALADITE HANDS GAVIN THE CLIPBOARD.*

MALADITE: Anomalies found include two empty bottles of 'Avocado Implosion', a paper bag purported to contain 'Magic Beans' and a pistol-shaped novelty lighter...

SHANNON (NERVOUS): Anything else?

MALADITE: Several pirated DVD's including 'Seven Lesbian Sisters', 'Ghent Rent' and 'Rambo Five – Afghanistan Again'.

GAVIN (TUTS): All staff lockers remain the property of Burger Fantastic Holdings PLC and as such intoxicants, lubricants, banned substances and non-work related items are *banned*. You have one month to come forward, accept your disciplinary and claim the confiscated goods before they go in the incinerator.

RUSS: No!

SHANNON (SUDDENLY ELATED): Yes!

GAVIN: Anything to declare Russ?

RUSS: No...no, no. But take it from me; DVD's don't burn well.

GAVIN: Consider all your staff privileges suspended.

RUSS: They're already suspended.

GAVIN: Well now they're double suspended! Right, I'm handing over stewardship to Maladite and as trade is slow, I would like the kitchen, stores and executive areas scrubbed, cleaned and sterilised in time for the Boxing Day rush.

*SHANNON EXITS. GAVIN HANDS A SET OF KEYS TO MALADITE.*

GAVIN: Here's your copy of the master keys, lockdown codes and rape alarm.

MALADITE (NERVOUS): Why would I need one of those?

RUSS: It's not like he's attractive...

GAVIN: It's a challenge! Show yourself worthy and a major pay rise will come your way. It'll be useful for your self-publishing ambitions.

MALADITE (ENTHUSIASTIC/UNSURE): I'm on it!

*MALADITE EXITS.*

GAVIN (TO RUSS): I want no shirking either, if there's time to lean, there's time to clean. I'm not being harsh for harsh's sake; I've had a memorandum from Head Office suggesting that we concentrate on BEER.

RUSS: Now they're starting to talk my language.

GAVIN: Behaviour, Effect, Expectation, Results (RUSS SIGHS).

*RUSS PRODUCES A PAPER BAG WHICH HE OPENS AND OFFERS TO GAVIN.*

RUSS: Magic Bean? Premium jellied sweets.

GAVIN: More?

RUSS: Harmless! Great for opening your...*mind*...

GAVIN: Don't mind if I do, I am rather partial to confectionary.

*GAVIN EATS A COUPLE OF 'MAGIC BEANS'.*

GAVIN: Have a wonderful yuletide and (STERNLY) get working! *And* (GESTURES TO RUSS AND THE DECORATIONS) get all this non-regulation dross taken down. I don't think I've ever seen such pathetic looking decorations, especially the tree.

RUSS (HUGS TREE): Leave it alone!

GAVIN: It violates health and safety on at least three different grounds, not to mention aesthetics.

*MALADITE RETURNS WITH A CABLE SPORTING A SOLITARY FAIRY LIGHT.*

GAVIN: There, management approved decoration.

RUSS (SARCASM): *Enchanting*, I always wondered what Christmas in Albania looked like.

GAVIN: Have an amazing holiday all and remember, just because I'm not watching (SHOUTS) doesn't mean the CCTV cameras aren't!

*GAVIN EXITS, DOORS SLAMS. MALADITE HANGS THE FAIRY LIGHTS WHILST SHANNON RETURNS, CLUTCHING A PAIR OF MOPS. SHE HANDS ONE TO RUSS AND THEY BEGIN MOPPING THE FLOOR.*

RUSS (SOTTO): I'm getting out of here.

SHANNON (SOTTO): How?

RUSS (SOTTO): Maladite's no manager, he's out of his depth. I've worked with him long enough to know. It's snowing.

SHANNON (SOTTO): *Lightly*.

RUSS (SOTTO): Spin him some bullshit about being snowed in and he'll let us go.

*MALADITE FINISHES HANGING THE FAIRY LIGHTS.*

MALADITE: Right, I'm in charge everyone...

RUSS: I'm 'Titanic' confident. Just hope we don't get *snowed in*.

MALADITE: That's not likely, what's coming down is only sleet and there's only been three white Christmas's in the last century.

RUSS: Indeed, three white Christmas's that killed Captain Oates, Mr Atkin of the 'Atkins' diet fame and Morrissey from the Smiths.

MALADITE: How?

RUSS (COUNTS ON FINGERS): Starved in a snowstorm, slipped on ice and couldn't face Christmas after his eighth album bombed.

SHANNON (SOTTO): Bollocks...!

RUSS (SOTTO): Do you wanna get out of here and be sipping Absinth or not?

SHANNON (SOTTO): I'm not interested...

RUSS (SOTTO): I am, shut up! (NORMAL VOLUME) So maybe it's best if we leave early?

MALADITE: Oh God, right. Um...who finishes their shift first?

SHANNON (IRRITATED): Me.

MALADITE: Cool, well, we're not too snowed under...um, busy, so you can...

SHANNON: ...wallow in the over-commercialised greed driven cesspit of self-delusion, the annual façade of fun, good will and exploitation we know as (SILLY VOICE) 'Christmas'.

MALADITE: I was going suggest you leaving first?

SHANNON: Why has everyone got to be so happy? It brings such a false sense of enthusiasm and belonging. This time of year makes me so depressed.

RUSS (SOTTO): Along with spring, summer, autumn, Easter and birthdays...

*SHANNON REMOVES HER APRON AND PUTS HER MOP ASIDE.*

SHANNON (TURNING ON RUSS): I just think it's so superficial, another Hallmark Holiday, autocrats in striped suits telling us what to celebrate.

*SHANNON REACHES INTO A LOCKER TO RETRIEVE HER BLACK, BADGE AND ANTI-WAR SLOGAN DECORATED BOMBER JACKET.*

RUSS: Don't you look forward to the pressies?

SHANNON: Nope. My Auntie Andi always, always and I mean every year always without fail, buys me a paltry box of fruit shaped Marzipan sweets, you know, the ones everybody *hates*.

MALADITE: I'm sure there's starving kids in Africa who'd enjoy them.

RUSS: I wouldn't say no.

SHANNON (IGNORING RUSS): Every year, thinks I don't notice, God I wish she'd croak.

*SHANNON FORCES HER JACKET ON AND TAKES A GIFT WRAPPED CYLINDER FROM HER POCKET, HANDING IT TO MALADITE.*

SHANNON: I'm through with this festive season crap. Here's your Secret Santa present. Bon soir.

MALADITE: Oh, brilliant. I won't open it until Christmas morning.

SHANNON: Why, what significance has that? Keep sane.

*SHANNON EXITS UNDER A CLOUD, SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HER.*

MALADITE: I think that went OK.

RUSS: You let the one member of staff who *detests* Christmas leave early. Good call Mr Management.

MALADITE (IGNORING RUSS): A Secret Santa present. I'm surprised she bothered. Should I open it now?

RUSS: Go for it. I've opened mine.

MALADITE: When?

RUSS: Last Thursday.

MALADITE: I think I'll save this one for the proper time. Wonder what it could be?

RUSS: It's a pen with a picture of a *bloke* on. When you turn it upside down, his clothes drop off.

MALADITE: *Thanks*, that'll be a nice surprise. How do you know?

RUSS: She got me one as well.

*RUSS REMOVES HIS APRON AND TOSSES HIS MOP ASIDE.*

MALADITE: Erm, time to start sweeping the kitchen...

RUSS: Bollocks to the kitchen. Thanks to *you* I'm here 'till midnight. Fancy getting a bit merry with me?

MALADITE: Not so *merry* that I can't do my job.

RUSS: Scrubbing a few poxy ovens? If we get a bit of tippie down us the hours'll whiz by. Then can I clear off home, collapse on the sofa and raise a glass to Saint Nick before rising in the PM and downing twenty pints to celebrate the birth of (CHECKS WATCH)...*Jesus Christ*, is that the time? Gotta rush if I'm gonna get beer. The all night garage closes at nine so...may I be excused?

*MALADITE NODS AND RUSS TAKES A SUEDE JACKET FROM HIS LOCKER.*

MALADITE (SARCASM): It's good to see the original spirit of Christmas prevailing.

*RUSS ZIPS HIS JACKET UP.*

RUSS: Exactly, a winter festival of hard booze and fondling workmates designed to make Jesus more appealing to pagans.

*RUSS SMILES AND EXITS, SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HIM. MALADITE SHAKES HIS HEAD AND PICKS UP THE DISCARDED MOPS, SWITCHING ON THE RADIO AS HE DOES.*

RADIO NEWSCASTER (OS): ...during the worst disturbances the city has seen in a decade, shop window dummies stripped of over two thousand pounds worth of designer clothing and taken, along with cigarettes, food and alcohol...

*THE TELEPHONE STARTS TO RING. STARTLED, MALADITE SWITCHES OFF THE RADIO AND BACKS AWAY. THE RINGING CEASES AND AN ANSWERING MACHINE MESSAGE KICKS IN.*

GAVIN (VO): Hello caller, please don't hang up, I'm Gavin, part of the Burger Fantastic team, number one for customer service, freshness and ethics. This machine records calls for training purposes but in accordance with Kabbalah teachings does not capture your soul...



*ANSWER MACHINE TONE.*

MRS MALADITE (OS): Message for Joseph Maladite. Joseph, it's your mother...!

*MALADITE KILLS THE ANSWERING MACHINE. RUSS RETURNS AND SLUMPS ON THE SOFA, SOGGY AND FRUSTRATED.*

MALADITE: You were quick.

RUSS: Have a gander out the window.

*MALADITE APPROACHES THE WINDOW AND PEERS THROUGH THE BLINDS.*

MALADITE: There must be a foot of snow out there!

RUSS: Positively Himalayan.

MALADITE: So what about...?

*A CRASH OF DOORS, HOWL OF THE STORM.*

SHANNON (OS): Fat cats! Stinking toilet of board members, shareholders...

*RUSS AND MALADITE MEET EYES AND WINCE AS SHANNON ENTERS, TOSSING HER JACKET ASIDE AND SLAMMING HERSELF DOWN ON THE SOFA.*

SHANNON: ...and capitalist bloodsuckers, leaving you freezing on the platform before cancelling the train! This wouldn't happen in Australia!

RUSS: If their trains run late don't they refund your fare?

SHANNON: No, it's summer over there.

*MALADITE SWITCHES THE RADIO BACK ON...*

RADIO NEWSCASTER (OS): ...freak blizzards causing chaos on the roads. The AA have urged drivers only to travel if absolutely necessary...

*...AND SWITCHES IT OFF.*

SHANNON: What we gonna do?

MALADITE: We'll just have to sit it out, there's plenty of work to do.

SHANNON: Which we won't get paid overtime for.

RUSS: No, no way! Christmas Eve! People to see, drinks to drink, presents to open! (TO MALADITE) You don't seem in any hurry?

MALADITE: Staying here suits me fine.

RUSS: At work? In the cold? Things must be seriously dull at home if this is your idea of a good time.

MALADITE: I don't like family gatherings, too much inquisition; 'Do you have a lady friend', 'How is your job'. My second cousin is single and I swear my aunt is gunning for an arranged marriage. I always resist but mother trots out emotional blackmail, 'Come home, if not for me then for Nana, it could be her last Christmas'. I don't like to speak ill of the ill but it's been Nana's last Christmas for the last decade. I don't have a choice...

RUSS: Maybe this year you do. I'm so cold...

SHANNON: I'm so hungry...

*RUSS REACHES INTO HIS POCKET AND PRODUCES A PAPER BAG, WHICH HE OPENS AND OFFERS TO SHANNON.*

RUSS: Magic Bean?