

Folder Writing 2011 An Evening with Jack and Harry 2. File: Full Length An evening with Jack and Harry 3 Duos.

ANTHONY AND MONICA

by Christopher Owen.

CHARACTERS:

JACK – any age from 60 years old.

HARRY - any age from 60 years old.

SETTING: A Pub – Jack and Harry sitting – a table between them – each with a pint of beer.

JACK: You all right, Harry?

HARRY: I have to say no better, no worse, thank you, Jack.

JACK: Harry's, he's got his bad knees, eh? Isn't that so, Harry?

HARRY: I got bad knees. No truer word.

JACK: Harry and me, we used to go to drink in the Queen's Arms, didn't we, eh?

HARRY: We used to drink in the Queen's Arms, eh?

JACK: I don't know if anyone here ever went to the Queen's Arms, Harry. We were going there when Peter was the landlord for – oh, I don't remember how many years. More or less the same crowd, the same regulars coming in.

HARRY: The Queen's Arms, it was home from home.

JACK: It was. It was. Then the brewery came in, eh? The brewery came in – refurbished it. They brought in the TV screen, the fruit machines, the loud music, the fancy décor – they bring in the young people with all their money to burn, eh, Harry? None of the old crowd go in there now. Unrecognizable.

HARRY: They've changed its name from the Queens Arms to The Frog and Fig Leaf.

JACK: (CORRECTING HIM): The Frog and the Fruit Fly.

HARRY: The Frog and the Fruit Fly.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: We met up with a few people over the years there at the Queen's Arms, in the old days, some characters who came in there, when Peter was the landlord, eh?

HARRY: Yeah.

JACK: You remember Anthony and Monica, her and Anthony?

HARRY: That was tragic, that was.

JACK: What happened to that young woman, it was beyond belief.

HARRY: It was beyond human comprehension, Jack.

JACK: That's it, Harry. She was a lovely girl, she was.

HARRY: She'd have made some fella a very nice wife. Women, forget it, no good asking me, eh? - they're way outside of my understanding.

JACK: Monica, she was big boned young woman, wasn't she? Eh?
There's no arguing with that.

HARRY: Jack and I reckon she was, when we first knew her, 10 ½ stone.

JACK: A comfortable type.

HARRY: Homely.

THEY DRINK.

HARRY: Her measurements at a rough estimate, they were Chest 40, regular arm, waist 36 – halve it, 18 – inside leg 30.

JACK: Well covered, one might say, eh, Harry?

HARRY: With regard to the aforesaid halving of the waist measurement, Jack Metclaf and I, Harry Kent here, each of us for over 20 years, were members of staff in the Gentlemen's Formal Wear Hire Department at Webber and Son, London's West End Branch. It was the custom at Webber and Son Formal Wear Hire for the gentleman's waist measurement to be halved. We'd take the gentleman's measurements. His waist, it was, say, 42, we'd halve it. We'd say to the gentleman "waist 21, sir, thank you, sir". Halving the waist measurement was understood as a show of respect toward the gentleman, wasn't it?

JACK: It was a tradition. It went all the way back to the founder, Lionel Webber, all the way back to 1904.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: As we were saying, Monica, she used to come into the Queen's Arms – she was a big jolly girl, she was.

HARRY: She was full of the joys of her young life, Jack.

JACK: It was truly upsetting what happened to Anthony and Monica.

HARRY: No mistake. It was a tragedy.

JACK: Anthony, Anthony, he was an artiste – a conceptual artiste.

HARRY: Conceptual. He was making a name for himself even those days, wasn't he? Eh?

JACK: He was, Harry. He was in the running for the Turner, so we understood it, eh? He worked with tin cans, bits of stick.

HARRY: Anthony, he's the artiste who worked with the blue tac, that's him, isn't it?

JACK: No, no, not the blue tac, Harry. The artiste who worked with the blue tac, he was one of them who won the Turner, as I recall. The blue tac artiste, he was up there with the Gods in the world of the conceptual. The blue tac fella, he was in the premiership, so to speak, like Manchester United. Anthony, as I understand it, he was at most in the Championship, like Blackburn. Although he and Blackburn nowadays are on the up and up or so I am given to believe. Anthony, he was causing quite a stir among the conceptual art lovers worldwide with his tin cans and bits of string.

HARRY: None of that blue tac and that, then?

JACK: No, no, no. That was the other fella. No doubt, Anthony, he was kicking himself, him not thinking up the blue tac idea, but the other fella, he came up with it first. That's the idea in the world of the conceptual. It's him who comes up with something first that gets the prize. Got to be new, Harry. Blue tac one year, elephant shit the next. The lights going on and off the year after. What's it this year? Empty room, is it? Empty room, that's not be done before, see. It's a hard world, the world of the conceptual artiste, Harry. It's cut-throat.

HARRY: Every man and woman for him and herself, eh?

JACK: That's it. This Anthony, him working with tin cans, bits of stick, he came in the Queen's Arms those days from time to time.

HARRY: It was a tragedy what happened there.

JACK: That's it, Harry.

HARRY: Tell them.

JACK: What happened there, it was tragic. Anthony and his Monica, they were getting on like a house on fire, weren't they, and then, out of the blue, he ditched her. He said to her: "No more. Thanks for the memories. Off you go and shut the door behind you."

HARRY: He gave her the elbow, didn't he?

JACK: That's it. According to George's Charmain, Monica was devastated. Charmian and George, they'd come in, once, twice a week, before they'd go off for a hot Indian in the High Street.

HARRY: He'd look at her like he was all set to eat her, eh, Jack? She'd look back at him like she was saying, well, that's all right with me, George - you go ahead. They were very taken with each other, no mistake about that. Eh? Their cigarette stubs, his and Charmain's, all stubbed out, all mixed up together in the ashtray.

JACK: That's it.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Monica, she reckoned her Anthony gave her her cards on account of her being, in her mind's eye, a large woman. She turned against herself, that's what Charmain told us. She came in the Queen's Arms one evening. Her hair, that used to be fair and down to her shoulders, she had had it cut short. It was no more than a quarter of an inch in length.

HARRY: She'd dye it black. Eh? It didn't look natural, did it, Jack? We say "Hello, you making some changes here, aren't you, Monica?" She says, 'What's that to do with you?' she says. 'Fuck off,' she says. Very snappy she was. She wasn't the same.

JACK: Charmain told us – this was later, eh?

HARRY: When it all comes out in the open, eh?

JACK: She told us that Monica, she gave up her job at the Halifax. She took on a part-time job with a firm of builders not far from where she lived. She went on a diet. She got herself down from ten and a half stone to eight - so Charmain told us.

HARRY: (TO JACK): You want a packet of crisps?

JACK: No.

HARRY: No. Jack sees her one day outside Marks and Spencers. She was as thin as a rake, wasn't she?'

JACK: At a glance, from experience, one would say she was no longer the comely young woman she was, that's for sure. She was no longer chest 40, regular arm, waist 36 – halve it, 18 – inside leg 30.'

HARRY: She was no longer chest 40, regular arm, waist 36 – halve it, 18 – inside leg 30.

JACK: Out there, 'outside Marks and Spencers, in the brief moment I see her, I'd say she was chest 28, regular arm, waist 16-

HARRY: Halve it.

JACK: **8**.

HARRY: Waist **8**.

JACK: Her inside leg 30.

HARRY: 28, regular, 16 – halve it: **8** – 30. That wasn't a happy state of affairs. Not at all. Eh? Her arms were same length, weren't they, Jack? Like was her height. Head to toe, no alteration there. But, as Jack says, the chest, the waist, they were significantly diminished. And it didn't end there, did it?

JACK: No.

HARRY: No, it didn't. Women, eh? According to Charmain, Monica, she went on dieting more and more, didn't she?

HARRY: Her monthlies stopped.

JACK: So Charmain told us. No matter. She sticks to what she wants to do.

HARRY: It's all or nothing with Monica.

JACK: She's not the woman that she was before Anthony the conceptual artiste, him with his tin cans, and bits of stick, gave her the heave-ho. She gets herself down to seven stone. There was nothing to her.

HARRY: She was a bean pole, wasn't she?

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: She was a twig. She was a stick insect, Jack.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Monica, she went out and bought herself a 'little black number', didn't she, Harry? - a tight-fitting black jacket - and a narrow ankle-length black skirt.

HARRY: A 'little back number'. She 'phoned the builders where she'd been working since she left the Halifax and told them she can't come in any more. She went to the doctor, asked him for a sick note. He told her

she was underweight. He started asking his questions. She went home to her flat, locked the door. She doesn't answer the phone.

JACK: Charmain told us as how Monica, she's not eating - she goes down to 6 stone.

HARRY: Her measurements, a rough estimate, chest 22, regular arm, waist 14 – halve it, 7. Inside leg 30, like it was before.

JACK: She sits on a chair in her living room, doesn't she, Harry? She reduces her diet to a cup of tea and a dried biscuit a day.

HARRY: She was in fear of obesity - so Charmain let it be known. We learn all this from Charmain later, when it all comes out in the open.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: Monica, she takes 'her little black number' – the jacket and skirt. She takes it in, doesn't she, Jack? – the chest and waist, the hips(and that). She stands before the mirror in her bedroom - she is not seeing herself as what anyone else in their right mind would be rightly seeing her - she was seeing herself as obese. She thinks God help us, look at those hips, look at those thighs.

JACK: Women, eh?

HARRY: She was overwhelmed by the enormity of her bones, she was. She was consumed with intent.

JACK: You can say that again.

HARRY: She was consumed with intent.

JACK: Charmain, she called on Anthony for Monica's mother's phone number. Monica's divorced mother lives in Malta. Charmian, she called on Anthony in his studio. Anthony put aside his tin cans, bits of stick. He finds the number on a board by the kitchen door. 'I'm phoning her mum,' Charmain tells him. 'She never goes out. No one ever sees her.'

Charmain phoned Monica's mother. Her mother phoned Monica, but she got no answer. She wrote to her to tell her she was coming over. She took a taxi from the airport to Monica's flat.

HARRY: She rang the bell. No answer, eh?

JACK: She banged on the door – nothing. She and Charmain go to the police. The police break down the door. They find her, slumped in an armchair, an untouched cup of tea and a plain tea biscuit on the table at her side.

HARRY: She was dead. It was tragic. No other word for it.

JACK: Her little black number, the little black jacket, the black skirt, that she was wearing when they found her, we were told, it engulfed her.

HARRY: It swamped her.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: They have the funeral wake at Charmain's, in her flat in Shepherd's Bush. Don't they, Harry? He was there – Anthony. He didn't stay long.

HARRY: No.

JACK: There were a lot of people come along. Harry and me, we were there. Monica's friends, they spoke of her as how, before she became ill, she was such a lively soul. They kept on saying she was so lively. Tragic.

HARRY: Some of them there at the wake, they blamed Anthony for what happened to her, to Monica, Jack. They said how he broke her heart. You want a packet of crisps?

JACK: No.

HARRY: No.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: There was this woman at the wake who was very forthright about the whole business. You remember her, Harry? She said - didn't she? - how Monica's illness, as she spoke of it, was brought on as a consequence of the culture of male domination within society. She said Monica's death was a protest, wasn't it? - an expression of defiance, a call to all women to take up arms.

HARRY: I didn't care for her over much.

JACK: No.

HARRY: She kept looking at me, funny like, Jack. Like she had plans for me.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: Plans that frankly I'd rather not be included in. I didn't like her. I could have done without her there.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: Monica's mother, she says to me as how she couldn't believe her daughter could have done what she did. There was another woman there, Jack – eh? - not the woman who looked at me like she had plans - but another one who could have been a friend of hers. She declared she blamed Monica's psychological deterioration on the media and fashion industry. This gave rise, didn't it, Jack, as we remember, to a discussion about Monica and her demise as related to the burgeoning billion dollar diet industry. If I recall rightly, someone else started on about the decline of religious education in our schools. And the loss of social coherence and the sense of community and that.

JACK: It was all very high powered, it was.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: It was sometime after the funeral – some weeks, as I recall – one of Charmain’s friends told Harry, who she met outside ASDA where she’d been to do her weekend shopping, as how she, Charmain, and Monica’s Anthony had taken up with each other.

HARRY: Charmain had moved in with him, eh? She’d moved in with Anthony.

JACK: Charmain told Harry and me as how, she now being, as she referred to herself, Anthony’s bitch –

HARRY: She was Anthony’s bitch. She was Anthony’s bitch.

JACK: - it was possible, if not more than likely, she’d become immortalized.

HARRY: A celebrity in her own right, Jack.

JACK: That’s it, Harry. Just so. She says to Harry and me, Anthony, the artiste, him doing all right, it was on the cards that in time he’d become famous.

HARRY: Like the fella with the blue tac.

JACK: That’s it, Harry.

HARRY: Charmain, in the course of time, may find herself hanged in the Tate Gallery.

JACK: That's it. As we understand it: Anthony, he asked Monica's mother before she sailed back to Malta if he could have Monica's 'little black number' – the little black jacket and skirt that she died in. Her mother, she sees no reason why he can't have it.

HARRY: It was no use to her any more.

JACK: He takes the outfit back to his studio –

HARRY: This were according to Charmain –

JACK: Yes. He takes the outfit – rough estimate: chest 23, regular arm, waist 14 – halve it, 7 - inside leg 28 –

HARRY: Chest 23, regular arm, waist 14 – halve it, 7 - inside leg 28 –

JACK: - he cuts away the lapels, the sleeves, the cuffs, the length of material from the collar to the waist. He cuts up the skirt. He arranges the pieces separately, then he glues them with his tin cans and his bits of stick to the hardboard backing. Not as they have been, but different, in a new way. A lapel here, a sleeve there, tin cans, bits of stick here and thereabouts.

HARRY: It was a montage.

JACK: He's had it exhibited in a gallery south of the river.

HARRY: He calls it "Sunrise Over Shepherds Bush Green".

JACK: So we hear: he's put it in for the Turner prize. Eh?

THEY DRINK.

JACK: It was tragic that.

HARRY: Tragic. I don't begin to understand women, Jack.

JACK: No.

THEY DRINK.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

END OF DUOLOGUE 1.

(Next duologue: PETER AND TINA)

DUOLOGUE 2: PETER AND TINA

JACK: You all right, Harry?

HARRY: Same as ever, Jack. (TO THE AUDIENCE): I've got the bad knees – the knees.

JACK: That's it, Harry. He's got bad knees – as we say.

A BRIEF PAUSE.

JACK: It was tragic what happened to the Queen's Arms, to Peter the landlord, to his wife – his wife Tina, eh, Harry?

HARRY: It was a tragedy. It was beyond human comprehension, Jack, eh?

JACK: Peter's wife, Tina, she wouldn't go out, leave the flat upstairs - that was the problem – that's how it all started, eh?

HARRY: She wouldn't go out anywhere, eh, Jack?

JACK: Tina, as we understand it from Peter, she arrived over here, in Great Britain, from Poland. Tina, it wasn't her real name, was it, Harry? It was something like Tineska - but Peter called her Tina. It was easier than Tineska, eh?

HARRY: When she first arrived over here she didn't have any more than

half a dozen words of English, did she, Jack?

JACK: No, she didn't. She came over here on account of her not getting on with her family back in Poland, so we understand it. The long and short of it is, as Peter told us, she turned up one day at the Queen's Arms. She was looking for a job. Peter, he needed someone to do the lunches, the snacks. He took her on.

HARRY: He took her on. He gave her a chance.

JACK: And it's not long before the two of them, they got married. Eh? She moved in upstairs. She kept the flat up there spic and span. She did the lunches, the snacks.

HARRY: Peter's Tina, she made the best shepherd's pie in all of London, that's what we used to say, eh? Her spaghetti Bolognese wasn't up to much, but her shepherd's pie and her red bean lasagne were exceptionally palatable.

JACK: Right. Tina, she was upstairs in the flat - you remember, Harry? - eleven, half eleven of an evening - most evenings - we're in the bar - she'd start to play her music - her CDs, tapes, whatever. We'd hear it coming down from up there - songs from the shows. 'Don't Cry For Me, Argentina', 'The Hills Are Alive With The Sound of Music'.

HARRY: It was a signal, wasn't it?

JACK: It was her way of telling Peter she wants him to close up for the

night, to come up to her, have a spot to eat, and so forth. She'd put on 'Don't Cry For Me, Argentina,' 'The Hills Are Alive With The Sound Of Music'. Tina, her and Peter, to all intent and purposes, they were as happy as Larry. No doubt about it.

HARRY: That's it.

JACK: Only, not long after they got married and she moved in to the flat upstairs, up above the bar, she didn't want to go out - not ever again. She wouldn't leave the premises. Peter, he tried to persuade her, but she wouldn't budge on the issue. She was adamant. She put her foot down. Peter, he said, 'Well, alright, sweetie pie, no one's forcing you,' he said, 'No harm done,' he said, 'You don't want to go out, it's up to you,' he told hers. So she stayed upstairs, didn't she?

HARRY: Tina, she'd not go out.

JACK: It was three, four, years, wasn't it, Harry? And she'd not had no fresh air, nor no sunlight, not for three, four years.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: We're in the bar, Queen's Arms, ten, ten thirty of an evening – Friday evening – Tina, her in the bath upstairs, in the flat upstairs, her and the bath come through the ceiling down into the gent's toilet in the bar. That's right, isn't it?

HARRY: Jack, he comes out of the gent's toilet only seconds before Tina comes down into it, doesn't he? Jack comes out, and we hear this crash

from inside the gents.

JACK: Harry and me, the lot of us in the Queen's Arms that evening, we hurry over to see what's up. We open the gents' toilet door, there she is, there's Tina, in the bath - naked.

HARRY: Tina, she's 22 stone.

JACK: She is.

HARRY: Her measurements, at an estimate, her lying there in the bath, they were: chest 48 – double D cup or possibly G – regular arm - waist 50 – halve it, 25 – inside leg 32.

JACK: That's it, Harry.

HARRY: With regard to the aforesaid halving of the waist measurements, Jack Metcalf and I, Harry Kent here, we worked in the Gentlemen's Formal Wear Hire Department at Webber and Son, London's West End Branch for a total of 63 years – Jack: 32, me: 31.

JACK: I think we may have told them that already, Harry.

HARRY: As I say, it was the custom in the Webber and Son formal wear hire department for the waist measurement to be halved. Eh?

JACK: We told them that, Harry.

HARRY: That's it. At a glance, rough estimate, no more, Peter's wife

Tina's measurements, they were: chest: 50. Double D cup -

JACK: - Double D cup.

HARRY: – it could be a G, Jack.

JACK: It could be, Harry. Could be a G.

HARRY: It could be a G – if there is a G.

JACK: That's it. As Harry say – if there is a G, it could be a G.

HARRY: Tina, she's 22 stone. Chest 50 – cup Double D stroke G – the cup not being a thing Jack and I have the appropriate professional expertise by what to make an accurate estimate – Jack and I being in the gentlemen's formal wear hire, us not having no experience of a ladies' formal wear, you understand –

JACK: Nevertheless –

HARRY: - Nevertheless, Tina's chest: 50 - her cup Double D or G -

JACK: - Allegedly -

HARRY: - Allegedly. Her cup, however you look at it, substantial –

JACK: - substantial –

HARRY: Tina: her chest 50 – the cup –

BOTH: - as aforesaid –

HARRY: - her length of arm regular, the waist 50 – halve it: 25. Inside leg -

JACK: - at a guess –

HARRY: - 32.

JACK: She was big.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: It was that night she came through in the bath, Peter, he told us about Tina not ever leaving the flat upstairs in all of three years. Apart from not going out, Peter, he didn't have any complaints about Tina, did he?

HARRY: He didn't have any complaints about Tina. She was a lovely cook, Jack, eh? She upstairs, she played her CDs: Don't Cry For Me, Argentina, The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Music.

JACK: That's it, Harry.

HARRY: Peter and Tina, they bath together. That wasn't to be sniffed at, eh, Jack?

JACK: Peter didn't object to Tina and him in the bath above the gents, no mistake.

HARRY: She soaped him. Eh, Jack? Her, all 22 stone, chest 48, cup double D stroke G, regular arm, waist 50 – halve it, 25 – inside leg 32. Her and a bar of soap, Peter, he was in paradise. That's what I reckon. How they both got into that bath together is another matter. But, apparently, so he told us, they did. In consequence of which, Peter, he was delirious.

JACK: On the other hand, Harry, as he gave us to understand, it wasn't all fun and games. Eh? No. It wasn't without its dangers - you recall him telling us, eh? - them bathing together, it nearly finished him off. Eh?

HARRY: It nearly damn well killed the bugger.

JACK: He told us. They're in the bath, the two of them, she's soaping him – God help us – she's kneeling over him - in that bath – she's kneeling over him, him underneath her - she slips, falls onto him, she can't get up, stuck – 22 stone.

HARRY: Chest: 48 – cup Double D stroke G - regular arm - waist: 50 – halve it: 25 - inside leg: 32.

JACK: It's a narrow bath – she can't budge herself - him, Peter, under the water, his head under the water, he's bloody drowning. Isn't he? He's struggling, fighting to get up out of there, push her off, but she's not budging. Eh? She damn well near killed him.

HARRY: She damn well near killed him.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: From what he told us, he had to give her a sharp hard knee to her privates. Eh? That so, eh, Jack?

JACK: Had to give her a number of blows to her head.

HARRY: Damn well near drowned him, she did.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: What got Peter in the end about Tina not going out ever, what made him decide he'd got to do something, was after he heard on the tele about a woman somewhere who wouldn't go out, couldn't go out, and there was this fire in her house and she was burned alive. That was what got Peter thinking enough's enough. He read this book, he told us. Book on agoraphobia. Entitled 'Behavioural Modifications.' A step by step carrot and stick technique. One step of progress, so to speak, you get a carrot. Decline to take that step, don't do it, and the possibility of a carrot is withdrawn – which, as I seem to remember, is the stick. Eh, Harry?

HARRY: It's the stick.

JACK: Peter, he took the bull by the horns. The night Tina and the bath came through the ceiling of the gents' toilet, he said to her, 'That's it, Tina, sweetie-pie - you get yourself outside that front door or you're not having any more gin,' he said.

HARRY: Tina liked her gin, make no mistake, didn't she, Jack?

JACK: Peter, he took the bottle she had with her upstairs, he emptied it down the sink.

HARRY: He meant the business, didn't he, eh?

JACK: He did. He said to her, to Tina 'Now then, you want a gin, sweetie pie, you've got to come down to the front door. You take two steps out of that front door, out on the path outside, and I'll give you a bottle of gin,' he said. She said, 'I'm not going outside, teddy bear,' she said.

HARRY: He said, 'Right-oh then, sweetie pie, no gin.'

JACK: It hurt him to say that.

HARRY: He made that quite clear, didn't he, Jack?

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Tina, two, three days later, she's in urgent need of her gin rations, isn't she, eh, Harry? She says to Peter if he promises to give her a bottle of gin, she'll have a go - two steps out of the front door onto the path outside.

HARRY: She has a go, doesn't she?

JACK: She stands at the top of the stairs, in her pink summer dress.

HARRY: He opens the front door.

JACK: He opens the front door. He calls to her, 'Two steps out, front door, you get a bottle of gin,' he calls. Down them stairs she comes. Her all 22 stone. She's terrified. She's coming down those stairs, she's got her eyes shut. He shouts: 'Open your eyes, woman. You'll fucking fall, you silly bitch, you have your eyes closed,' he calls.

HARRY: He's calling, 'Come on, Tina baby,' he's calling.

JACK: She is coming down those stairs and Peter, he's thinking God help him, she'll never make it, she's gonna come a cropper.

HARRY: She calls out, 'I can't do it, teddy bear, don't make me go, teddy bear.' She's crying and shouting, 'Give me the gin, teddy bear, give me the gin.'

JACK: Peter, he's backing out of the front door. 'Come on, baby,' he's shouting at her, and he's thinking God help us, I hope the neighbours aren't looking out of their windows. She's down on her knees out there on the front path.

HARRY: She's crying out, 'Don't make me go, teddy bear, don't make me do it.'

JACK: 'On your feet,' he's telling her, 'Get on your feet,' he's shouting.

HARRY: The neighbours, they're hanging out of their windows. Men, women and children. They're calling out, 'What the fuck's going on down there?'

JACK: Tina, she's on her feet, and Peter, he's cheering her on.

HARRY: He's cheering her on –

JACK: He's cheering her on – and she's done it!

HARRY: And she's done it!

JACK: She's done the two steps out along the path. She grabs the bottle off Peter and takes herself back up to the flat upstairs.

HARRY: Peter, he's out there on the front path dancing for joy, eh? And the neighbours and passersby, they're throwing things at him, eh? Old shoes.

JACK: 32 inch Panasonic television.

HARRY: Eggs, tin of beans - like it was Harvest Festival.

JACK: 'She's done it,' he shouts out to them. That was step one.

HARRY: The carrot and the stick.

JACK: The book: Behavioural Modifications.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Tina, she did it two or three more times, as we understand it, eh? – two steps out, then next time another two steps, and so on.

HARRY: That's it.

JACK: Then she said to him she's not doing it, not going outside any more. Never again, she told him. He said, 'Right, no more gin, sweetie pie.'

HARRY: She said, 'Right, no more soaping, teddy bear.' Eh?

JACK: He wasn't happy about that, not one bit of it. He relied heavy on the soaping, so we understand.

HARRY: It was an integral part of his life, wasn't it, Jack? Soaping was comforting and arousing and, Jack and me, we reckon soaping, it led to other intimacies, which we don't have any need to go into.

JACK: Soaping was just the start of it.

HARRY: As one might say - no soaping: Peter's life, it became a stony ground.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: A couple of days later, Peter, he went upstairs after closing up the pub for the afternoon, Tina, she was in the bedroom, standing by the bedroom window. She was wearing her pink summer dress and a blue hat.

HARRY: She had her handbag over her arm.

JACK: She'd got into the store room and helped herself to a couple of bottles of the Gordons, and, to put no finer point on it, she was plastered, eh?

HARRY: She was a danger to shipping.

JACK: That's it. She was talking Polish at him, wasn't she? So Peter told us. She walked towards him, she was three sheets and more to the wind, she was swaying all over, she started shouting at him, in Polish. He told her, he said, 'It's no good you going on like you are, talking the Polish, cos I can't bleeding understand, can I? Cos I don't speak it. Speak bleeding English,' he told her, didn't he, Harry? 'Calm down, speak English or I'll hit you,' he said to her. And he hit her.

HARRY: He had to.

JACK: Across her face, so as to startle her, to bring her to her senses. It did the trick – that's for sure. It pulled her up, she stopped her Polish nonsense, she spoke English again.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Peter was down in the bar, he was closing up for the afternoon, he turned round, he saw Tina standing there at the back of the bar, all done up in her nice blue coat and blue hat and her handbag. 'I'm going out. Onto the pavement,' she said. He said to her, 'You don't want to rush things. You don't want to overdo it, sweetie pie'.

HARRY: He said, 'Steady as she goes, sweetie pie. One step at a time,' he said.

JACK: He reckoned he knew what was best for her, didn't he?

HARRY: He was her coach. It was the carrots and the sticks technique, wasn't it? The book he read. Eh?

JACK: She says to him, 'I got to try it on my own, teddy bear. Without the Gordon's.'

HARRY: 'Come along then, baby' he says, 'let's see how you get on,' he says.

JACK: They're out in the hallway, she says to him, 'Watch me from the bedroom window, teddy bear. I've got to try it by myself.'

HARRY: He isn't at all sure about that one, her doing it on her own.

JACK: But she insists, doesn't she? So he says, ok. And he goes up to the bedroom like she tells him to.

HARRY: He watches her from the bedroom window, doesn't he?

JACK: That's it, Harry. And there she is, out on the front path. Cool as a cucumber.

HARRY: She's wearing her summer dress, her blue hat and coat – and she's got her handbag.

JACK: That's it, she's got her handbag. There she is, she's walking down the path, very slowly and concentrated. And Peter, he thinks, 'here's a turn up for the books'. He tries to get the window open so as to call down to her, but it's stuck.

HARRY: The paint where he one time painted the window, it's stuck - he can't get the bloody thing open.

JACK: She gets the front gate open, and she's walking out onto the pavement outside.

HARRY: Peter, he's banging away on the window pane. He's trying to get her attention, isn't he?

JACK: He's trying to get her to look up at him at the bedroom window. He sees her stepping out on to the pavement outside in the street. She doesn't seem to hear him banging at the window, for God's sake. She's not looking up at him, him in the window. He runs down those stairs, and he's out of the front door, but she's not there.

HARRY: She's not there.

JACK: No. He runs down to the gate. He's out on the pavement. He looks up and down the road. He runs up to the corner. He looks up the next road. He looks up and there she is.

HARRY: She's getting on the bus.

JACK: She is.

HARRY: She'd not been outside in the open air for all of three years, and there she was, getting on the 259.

JACK: He called out to her, 'Baby, baby, come back here, sweetie pie.' She didn't look round or anything, does she?

HARRY: She was on that bus.

JACK: You can imagine how he felt. The bloody woman had gone mad. He was gob smacked.

HARRY: Three years inside and suddenly she was driving off inside the 259.

JACK: He gets his car, but he couldn't find her anywhere.

HARRY: He phoned the police. Missing persons.

JACK: Put yourself in his place.

HARRY: Put yourself in his place.

JACK: He was going spare, wasn't he?

A BRIEF PAUSE

JACK: He got a phone call. It was her brother. In Poland. The brother said she'd gone back home. Tina was sorry, but she wasn't coming back.

HARRY: That's it, Jack. All those years she was with Peter she wouldn't go outside – she went outside, caught the 259, she didn't come back inside.

JACK: That's it, Harry.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: It was tragic what happened there. Harry, me, the next evening we're on our way over to the Queen's Arms, everywhere we look, on the pavements, the roads, on garden walls, up the side of the buildings, there for all the world to witness, sprayed in red paint: 'Teddy Bear Loves Sweetie Pie'. We're outside the Queen's Arms, all over the front of the pub, on the walls, the windows, the front door, the pavement outside, sprayed in red: 'Teddy Bear Loves Sweetie Pie'. The place shut up. No lights on. We look through the window, same thing:

BOTH: 'Teddy Bear Loves Sweetie Pie'.

JACK: It's on the ceiling, on the walls, the bar counter, all across the mirrors. It's sprayed in red on the tables and on the carpet.

HARRY: Peter, he'd lost his marbles.

JACK: The brewery comes in, takes over. The place refurbished.

HARRY: They tart it up, new carpets, new bar, they bring in the music, eh, Jack? - the television, the big screen.

JACK: The fruit machines – the fruit machines flashing never ending.

HARRY: They're after the youth. The youth, they drink more.

JACK: There's more money in the youth, make no mistake. (AFTER A MOMENT): None of us go there now.

HARRY: No. There's no more of Tina's shepherd's pie, her playing her CD's in the flat up there when she wants Peter to close up in the bar for the night, when she want him upstairs. There's no more of her songs from the shows coming down into the bar as it was. No more 'Don't Cry For Me, Argentina'.

JACK: No more 'The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Music', Harry.

HARRY: Not now, no.

A BRIEF PAUSE.

JACK: (RE: BEER): Another one?

HARRY: Won't say no. **(THEY START TO RISE)**. Have a quick ciggy out there in the open.

JACK: Right. That's it. While you're having a ciggie, I'll have a quick slash.

HARRY: Back in 15 minutes, then.

JACK: Give me 20.

HARRY: Having trouble getting started, are you?

JACK: That's it.

THEY PREPARE TO LEAVE THE BAR.

HARRY: You remember the songs we used to sing in the Queen's Arms?

JACK: The songs – that's it.

HARRY: When You're Smiling, was one of them. Eh?

(SINGS):

'When you're smiling.. (JACK JOINS IN.)

When you're smiling

The whole world smiles with you

When you're laughing

When you're laughing
The sun comes shining thru
But when you're crying
You bring on the rain
So stop your sighing be happy again

JACK: Talking of rain, Harry – got to go – can't wait.

THEY MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE EXIT.

HARRY: 20 minutes, then.

JACK: Make it 25.

THEY EXIT.

END OF DUOLOGUE 2. PETER AND TINA.

INTERVAL

DUOLOGUE 3. FITTING UP THE GENTLEMEN.

JACK AND HARRY HAVE BEEN DRINKING.

JACK: What happened to Webber and Son Formal Wear Hire - at Johansen Perry as it had come to be - it was beyond belief - eh, Harry?

HARRY: It was tragic that, what happened to Webbers, Jack, to Formal Wear Hire. Jack and me, we worked in the formal wear hire department, Webber and Son, West End of London Branch, for a total of 63 years – Jack 32, me 31. Eh?

JACK: Monday the 23rd of June, 1973. That's a day we'll never forget. Monday 23rd of June 1973. A terrible, terrible day. Harold Wilson was out of office – Edward Heath was in. The unions going mad. Terrible. It was the beginning of the end. A hell of a lot happened on that day, and no mistake.

HARRY: The country was in a mess, wasn't it, Jack?

JACK: A mess – that's it. The Unions. NUM. The miners, the trains, and the rest of them – bringing the Country to her knees. Inflation, it was over 8%. The Arabs, they holding onto the oil.

HARRY: The Arabs, they got us by the goolies, Jack.

JACK: You're right, Harry. Harry's right. Monday the 23rd of June, 1973. Six months earlier – it was the previous January - Sammy Webber, he sold out to a company by the name of Johansen Perry. Johansen Perry, they took over, they brought in new working contracts - reduced basic pay, increased commission.

HARRY: They got rid of Edmund Roy, didn't they, Jack?

JACK: They got rid of Edmund Roy. Edmund Roy, our colleague in the formal wear hire department, him, like the rest of us, in his smart navy blue suit. Edmund Roy, he wore a navy blue suit and a navy blue tie same as the rest of us, only, unlike the rest of us, Edmund Roy, his tie had a red dot on it.

HARRY: He liked to stand out from the crowd, didn't he, Jack?

JACK: He did. He was a little fella, he was, eh? – Edmund Roy. 5 foot 2 inches. Very dapper.

HARRY: Edmund Roy, chest 36, extra short arm, waist 30, halve it 15, inside leg 29.

JACK: As I say, compact.

HARRY: The waist measurement, it was halved, wasn't it, Jack? Eh?

JACK: As we well know, Harry, thank you.

HARRY: That's how it was, formal wear hire, Webber and Son. The waist measurement was halved.

HARRY: Old Benjamin Davids, he taught Jack and me about taking the measurements when we first started, eh, Jack?

JACK: That's it, Harry. That's it.

HARRY: This was back in the early 60's. Eh? The inside leg - that was something Benjamin Davids was most particular about, wasn't he, eh? He says to me, when I first come to Webbers, he says, 'Taking of the inside leg measurement is a delicate matter, Mr Kent,' he says, 'You hold one end of the tape measure, you hand the gentleman the other end. You say to the gentleman "I'd be greatly obliged to you, sir, if you'd be kind enough to hold this end of the tape measure up into your V, sir, thank you very much." You take the end you got hold of, Mr Kent, lad,' Benjamin Davids says, 'You take it down inside the gent's leg to the top of his shoe, you read the measurement. "Inside leg 33, or whatever, sir," you say. Benjamin Davids, he tells me 'You never, never, never, Mr Kent, stick your hand up into a gentleman's V.'

JACK: A gentleman's V is his own business.

HARRY: Benjamin Davids, he told the both of us, eh?

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: 'A gentleman's V is out of bounds, Mr Kent. You don't never not go there - never, not even,' he says, 'should the gentleman in question indicate a desire for you to do so. And there are those, Mr Kent,' he says to me, me then in my 20's, 'as you will readily find out, who might well quite fancy you sticking your grubby little hand up into his V. But you don't. Not never no how.

JACK: He was a gentlemen was Benjamin Davids.

HARRY: He was one of the old school. He'd been with the firm since the thirties. It was him who taught Jack Metcalf and me, the both of us, the art and craft of taking a gentleman's measurements. Eh, Jack?

JACK: That's it. Eh?

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Johansen Perry came in and they gave him, Edmund Roy, the push. They get rid of Fred Robinson, Fred Robinson, him in his slippers in reception.

HARRY: Old Fred Robinson, all those years he's on his feet he gets bunions, doesn't he? They're the size of a walnuts, they are. Sammy Webber comes down from Sales on the first floor – this is in the late sixties - he brings down a pair of black leather slippers, makes a present of them to Fred. Tells him to wear them. He sits him out behind the desk in reception. Make yourself comfy, he says.

JACK: That was Sammy Webber.

HARRY: Sammy Webber, he gives Fred Robinson the slippers, Johansen Perry comes in, they give him the boot. That was Johansen Perry. Eh?

JACK: They get rid of Fred. They stick Alec Garfield - down from accounts on the second – put him in reception, on the tannoy speaker system, calling staff to reception when the gentlemen come in, like Fred used to do. Alec, as I well and truly recall, making a balls up of it, wasn't he?

HARRY: He was well and truly bugging it up.

JACK: Him calling us to see to a gentleman who we were already fitting up. No idea. Him put in there on the tannoy till the Company put in a new department manager, who, we were told - eh, Harry? – who we were told was coming in that same day - Monday 23rd of June 1973.

HARRY: Monday 23rd of June 1973.

JACK: Fred Robinson, Edmund Roy had gone, that just left Harry and me, with Vince Pettit and Teddy Harris. We had to make the best of it. We'd got to try to keep to the old principles, that was it. Keep the flag flying.

HARRY: A steady hand in the midst of a perfect storm, that's Jack Metcalf.

JACK: Things would settle down, as I remember saying. Little did we know.

HARRY: Little did we know, Jack. Tell them, Jack.

JACK: Cheers.

HARRY: Cheers.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: It was the morning of Monday the 23rd of June 1973.

HARRY: The morning of Monday the 23rd of June 1973.

JACK: Vince Pettit, he was out at Ladbrokes placing a bet.

HARRY: Vince Pettit, he was a great man.

JACK: Vince Pettit, he joined Webbers two years after Harry and I started.

HARRY: He was a big fellow, Vince was. 6 foot 4. Half Irish on his mother's side. 6 foot 4. 22 stone. His chest 52, long arm, waist 46, halve it 23 - inside leg 34.

JACK: He was voted the best tipped member of staff, Webber and Son Formal Wear Hire, known to man. Vince, he couldn't miss. He'd lean on his gentlemen. Eh, Harry? He'd have them in the corner by the cash tills, the gentleman with his Webber and Son outfit case - the blue case with the yellow band - all ready to take his leave, him paying his bill, Vince,

he's angling for a handsome tip, he's telling the gentleman about his four daughters. Only he didn't have any daughters. Did he? Eh?

HARRY: He didn't have any daughters, Jack.

JACK: That didn't stop him telling his gent who he was leaning on about them. He says to them: 'Oh, sir,' he'd say, 'the cost of the four daughters of mine – **(HARRY JOINS IN):** want this – clothes, books, education. Love them all four of them as I do, sir, **(JACK WITHOUT HARRY):** they'll force me into bankruptcy they will,' he tells his gentlemen. He had the gentlemen in the palm of his hand.

A BRIEF PAUSE.

JACK: As we were saying, eh? – that morning –

HARRY: Monday the 23rd of June 1973.

JACK: - Vince Pettit, he was over at Ladbrokes. Teddy Harris, he was going bananas, wasn't he, Harry, as was his custom, since Johansen Perry came in and reduced the salaries, put the emphasis so to speak on commission.

HARRY: Teddy couldn't handle it.

JACK: He couldn't. He was desperate. Teddy Harris, he had ideas above his station in life, eh? He sent his kids to private. Private schooling, and him on basic salary plus commission, Webber and Son, formal wear hire, thank you very much. His wife, it was her we reckoned who was behind it.

HARRY: It was her who wore the trousers in that marriage, Jack.

JACK: He and his wife had this house down in Orpington. Orpington, Kent. They had this mortgage hanging over them. Right. That's it. Teddy, he worked evenings and weekends, Petrol Station. He was feeling the pinch, like the rest of us. Like the rest of the Country, like Edward Heath, Teddy, he'd got financial problems.

HARRY: They were desperate men. They were clutching at straws, Edward Heath and Teddy Harris.

JACK: Vince used to take the piss out of him. Eh, Harry? Teddy rushing here, rushing there, trying to get through as many gentlemen as he could – earn the commission – Vince, he'd be calling out after him, 'watch out, here come speedy Gonzales', calling out 'how's the kids, Teddy?' 'Don't wear yourself out, Teddy - your missus has all that housework for you to do when you get home before you go out to the petrol station.' 'You keep your hands off my customers, Teddy Harris,' he shouted at him, 'you keep your fucking hands off my customers or I'll have your bollocks off you, chum.'

HARRY: He told him, didn't he, Jack?

JACK: He did.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Terrible, that – how it turned out.

HARRY: It was tragic, eh, Jack?

JACK: The unions bringing the country to her knees, as they were.

HARRY: It was that fella, Mick McGaffey, Scottish NUM – Young Arthur Scargill – dyed in the wool commies, eh?

JACK: That's it, Harry. I was fitting up my Mr Penrose with a set of Greys, morning tails, for Royal Ascot - very nice – very smart – he says to me as how the British communist party were being financed by communist Russia, he tells me - eh, Harry? He tells me - had it on good authority, he said - the Russian Embassy in London, every month, they arrange for thousands of pounds to be secretly delivered to the British communist party headquarters in a large brown leather hold-all.

HARRY: They delivered it to the British communist party in a large brown holdall.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Teddy Harris, that Monday afternoon about 3 o'clock, he comes in from reception with Mr Simmons, eh, Harry? Mr Simmons was one of Vince's regular gentlemen, wasn't it?

HARRY: That wasn't wise of Teddy at all, was it. Eh, Jack? That was a terrible business. Eh?

JACK: Never a truer word.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Mr Jimmy and his male punters used to come in. Eh? Mr Jimmy, he used to come in from time to time with his male clients. He comes in, pays us – Vince, Harry and me – a small rental. He's in and out 10, 15 minutes at the outmost.

HARRY: If it wasn't us, it'd have been someone else, eh, Jack?

JACK: You can't change human nature, Harry.

HARRY: The archetypal demands of the libido.

JACK: Mr Jimmy and a client comes in – he goes into fitting room 1, Harry's fitting room. Mr Jimmy and his male client leave – Harry, before entering with one of his gentlemen, it was his habit - eh, Harry? - he'd get the disinfectant spray from behind the cash register, spray the fitting room, give it a good spray.

HARRY: A good spray - sandalwood and sea musk warmed with sunny notes of tangerine and orange blossom. You want a fitting room nice and clean for your gentlemen. Hygiene, eh? Health and Safety.

JACK: That's Harry for you. Fastidious.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: I've got my gentleman - Mr Penrose, as I recall - dressed and ready to make up the bill, Mr Jimmy and his male client is in fitting room 1, Teddy's got Vince's regular Mr Simmonds in fitting room 5, there's this call on the tannoy - it's calling Harry to reception - a gentleman arrived. Only - it's isn't Alec calling, no. The voice of the tannoy calling for Harry is that of a woman.

HARRY: A woman.

JACK: A woman in gentlemen's formal wear hire, Johansen Perry, formerly Webber and Son, London's West End branch. They'd put a woman in reception. You can imagine. Eh? The shock.

HARRY: The horror.

JACK: We're struck dumb. A woman.

HARRY: A woman in gentlemen's formal wear hire. She was calling me to go to reception, wasn't she, Jack?

JACK: That's it. Harry goes off to reception – he comes back – the woman out there in reception, she goes by the name of Mrs Freshwater.

HARRY: She's the new Department Manager - who we've been expecting.

JACK: The gentlemen in the fitting area with their trousers down about their ankles and a woman, a Mrs Freshwater, is lurking about in reception. We don't want anything to do with her. No. I'm not taking any responsibility for my actions.

HARRY: She was a big woman, wasn't she, Jack? Mrs Freshwater.

JACK: She was.

HARRY: She was powerful looking, she was. She was all of 13 stone. At a rough estimate: chest 40, regular arm, waist 38 – halve it, 19 – inside leg 32. She was big.

JACK: She was. She was substantial.

HARRY: And she had a handbag, Jack.

JACK: That's it. She had a handbag. A substantial handbag.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Vince, as far as he's concerned this woman arriving on the scene, this was war. He made that quite clear. He was fitting up a gentlemen in fitting room 3, as I recall, eh?

HARRY: Mr Barton.

JACK: Mr Barton. A snooty bugger. Very full of his own importance. Mr Barton he's a suitable case for The Dry Cleaners in Villiers Street, Vince says to Harry and me. Never mind about the woman, Mrs Freshwater, she's not going to stand in Vince's way – he makes that very clear, eh?

HARRY: The Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street.

JACK: I'm not letting no fucking woman putting me off, Jack Metcalf, he says. This fucking lot Johansen Perry can stick a fucking woman in – that's up to them – I'm doing The Dry Cleaners in Villiers Street.

HARRY: The Dry Cleaners in Villiers Street, it was Vince Pettit's speciality, it was, wasn't it, Jack? His tour de force. Vince's major role.

JACK: One of smartest and remarkable bit of fund-raising you're ever liked to see. Too true.

HARRY: You witness Vince Pettit executing The Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street, you were watching a star on the stage of a West End of London theatre. John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, young Albert Finney, Sir Donald Wolfit, not one of them could have performed The Dry

Cleaners In Villiers Street not no better than Vince Pettit. He took your breath away. He was stunning.

JACK: A gentleman comes in, doesn't he, Harry? He's a fellow who thinks too much of himself and too little of the rest of us – he's a challenge. The Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street. Eh? Vince measures him, he comes back to the store room, fishes out a morning coat what you'd

not wish on your worst enemy. Too small – shabby - a mess. He takes it back to his gentleman, has him try it on - the gentleman is not happy - Mr Vince Pettit is not at all happy. 'Oh, my God, sir,' he says.

HARRY: The usual routine, eh, Jack - the usual patter, eh?

JACK: 'Oh my God, sir,' he says, like this was the worst bleeding coat he'd ever had dealings with, eh? – that's it, Harry - 'It's not right, sir', he says. 'We've had such a run on the greys, the morning coats, sir, there isn't nothing left, not that I'd ask you to wear, sir. Not you, sir. I couldn't do it.'

HARRY: We'd heard him enough – knew it as well as he did – the patter, it was a set piece, it was, eh?

JACK: (HARRY FROM TIME TO TIME SPEAKING THE WORDS UNDER JACK): 'I'm sorry, sir,' he says, 'I am not letting you out of these premises not wearing that coat or none like it. I wouldn't sleep, sir', he says. **(HARRY JOINS IN):** 'You could try Moss Bros or Lipman's, sir, Lipman's in the Charing Cross Road, but I hear they're in

the same pickle as what we are, sir. **(JACK ONLY):** They've had the same sort of run on the greys, the morning coats as we have, sir.' Vince Pettit there with the gentleman in his fitting room, his fitting room 3, he sighs deep, tears in his eyes. Sudden thought. 'There is one possible solution, sir,' he says, leaning on the gent, all theatrical and intimate, 'The firm's dry cleaning premises in Villiers Street, sir,' Vince says, 'Mr Williamson, him and me are good friends, he owes me a favour.

(HARRY JOINS IN): Give me five minutes, sir, just five minutes, if you have the time, I'll run, run, sir, down to the firm's dry cleaning premises in Villiers Street, slip Mr Williamson a couple of quid, a couple of quid, if that's all right with you, sir, **(JACK ONLY):** get him to hand over one of the morning coats, the greys outfit that has come in only this morning and has, as is the custom here, been sent down to Mr Williamson for cleaning, sir. Now, sir, if I do this, and I would very much like to do this for you, sir, we can't have you or no one saying nothing about it to management – cos it's against management rules, sir – and if they find out I'm favouring one customer such as your good self over and above any other, Mr Pettit here,' he says, leaning into the gent, his eyes narrowed with meaning –

HARRY: - he was a star.

JACK: - 'Mr Pettit here,' he says, 'is likely to be handed his cards, if you take my meaning.' Anyhow, the outcome of this is the gentleman slips our Vince a couple of quid and agrees to wait for five minutes while the good chap buggers off to Mr Williamson, Dry Cleaners, Villiers Street. Which, to the best of the knowledge of any of us in formal wear hire, has never been known to exist either in formal wear hire or nowhere – so as to come up with the smartest greys outfit, morning coat, mankind has

ever had the pleasure of wearing. That's it. 'I'll just pop off, down to Villiers Street, get you the outfit you well and truly deserve, sir – best money can buy. I'll be back soon as I can possibly make it. As the Bard wrote, sir: I'll put a girdle round about the earth in 40 minutes.

HARRY: Puck - The Midsummers Night's dream.

JACK: Fucking Puck.

HARRY: That was part one, eh, Jack?

JACK: Vince, he was a genius. He comes back into the store room, he says to me, he says to whichever one or another of us is present, 'Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street Part 1,' he says. 'Time for a nice cuppa tea.' This was about 3.30. Time for tea. On goes the kettle.

HARRY: Jack's was in charge of the kettle. Vince settles down with a ciggy – Senior Service no 6.

JACK: You couldn't do that nowadays. Not with all these laws. You can't do anything now. Eh?

THEY DRINK.

JACK: We're in there, the store room, all of us, me, Harry, Vince and Teddy. As I say, it's afternoon tea time. Nice cuppa, biscuit.

HARRY: Garibaldi.

JACK: That's it. The woman comes in. The Mrs Freshwater woman comes into the store room- gentlemen's formal wear hire, Johansen Perry, formerly Webber and Son, London's West End Branch.

HARRY: The woman comes in, Mrs Freshwater.

JACK: The woman comes in. Oh, she says, 'Good afternoon. I'm Mrs Freshwater. Department Manager.' She's got a list in her hands. She's reading out our names. One by one. Like it's the school register. 'Mr Kent?' 'Yes, here.' Up goes Harry's hand. **(HARRY PUTS HIS HAND UP)** That's it. 'Mr Whiteley?' Paul Whiteley puts his hand up. It wasn't anything we could do about it.

HARRY: We're in a trance. Eh?

JACK: Harry here, he forgot to put his hand down, eh, Harry?

HARRY: I forget to out my hand down.

JACK: Had to have his attention brought to it. 'Put your hand down now, Mr Kent,' Mrs Freshwater, the new Department Manager says to him. 'As you know,' she says – 'you may put your hand down now, Mr Kent,' she says – put it down now, Harry –**(HARRY PUTS HIS HAND DOWN)** 'as you will know,' she says, 'the management are bringing in a number of changes, this with the intention of modernising the department's procedures, of widening our customer base.'

HARRY: They were bringing the department up to date.

JACK: Over the following weekend the cash registers in the fitting area were to be removed, she told us. From that coming Monday all payments by the customers were to be made to her at the cash register in reception. This, it was intended, would speed things up and increase productivity. Security cameras, she told us there - Harry with his hand up - had that past weekend been installed throughout the premises - in reception, the fitting area, and there in the store room. She said if we'd care to look about us, we might see if we could spot them. She informed us an engineer was coming later in the day, eh? The cameras were to be operable before the end of the afternoon. I'll never forget it. She told us cameras were now the standard practise in retail.

HARRY: In combating theft, she said. Eh?

JACK: With a view to creating a welcoming relaxed atmosphere for the customers and the staff and again in keeping with modern practice, music was to be played during opening hours - the music relayed from speakers which, as with the security cameras, she said, as some of us may have already observed, over the previous weekend, had been installed in the store room and in all areas of the department.

HARRY: I spotted the speaker, eh, Jack? We were all looking weren't we? Eh? Looking about. I was the first to spot a speaker. Mrs Freshwater, she congratulated me. 'Well, done, Mr Kent,' she said. Didn't she, Jack? There were two of them - the speakers, eh? Weren't there, Jack?

JACK: Two - yes.

HARRY: We were looking here and there up in the ceiling, top of the walls, below the ceiling – she was encouraging us – ‘you’re getting warmer,’ she said. Then I see it. The second one. ‘Well done again,’ she says. ‘Three cheers for Harry Kent,’ Vince says. ‘Hip hip horray. Hip hip horray, hip hip horray.’

JACK: Harry Kent, that month’s winner of the Johansen Perry Gentlemen’s Formal Wear Hire Best Performing Award, and much deserving recipient of a Mercedes Benz 450SL. That’s it. Mrs Freshwater, she tells us, she won’t keep us from our work any longer. ‘I know you’re busy,’ she said. ‘You know you’re not allowed smoke in the store room,’ she said to Vince. ‘Thank you for your time,’ she said. Off she went. Cameras. Security cameras everywhere. Dear God. Dear God in Heaven. The cash registers taken away. How were we to secure the gratuities when the gentlemen were paying up to her out there in reception? It was the beginning of the end, it was.

HARRY: It was the end of the bloody world.

JACK: You can say that again.

HARRY: It was the end of the bloody world.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Teddy Harris – it was a set back for him. Vince said the cash registers removed, Teddy, he was going to have to take on a newspaper round on top of everything, eh? Teddy wasn't happy. None of us were. Cameras, cash registers – bloody music. The gentlemen didn't want music. We'd never had music. Never.

HARRY: Perry Como.

JACK: What?

HARRY: Perry Como. That's what Mrs Freshwater was playing, was coming over on the speakers – Perry Como. Him and Andy Williams. 'And I love you so, if people ask me how, how I've lived till now, I tell them I don't know.'

JACK: Vince, he picked out a Greys outfit – smart outfit – 'right,' he says, The Dry Cleaners in Villiers Street Part Two. I'm getting 3 quid out of this gentleman, if it kills me, he said. He returned to his Mr Barton in fitting room 3. We've seen him, eh, Harry?

HARRY: He was a star, he was.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: There was none could touch him.

JACK: He opens the door to the fitting room, he's all out of breath, barely able to hold himself up from the exertion, hangs onto the side of the door frame –

BOTH JACK AND HARRY: 'Sorry to have kept you so long, sir,' -

JACK: - he says to his gentleman, Vince himself hardly able to get the words out on account of the breathlessness, 'Mr Williamson, he not there, sir, on his holidays, quite forgot, his assistant there, Mr Dixon, not an easy fellow, sir, took a bit of persuading if you know what I mean - had to give him an extra quid, sir. Got a lovely outfit, morning coat here, sir,' Vince says, 'Just newly cleaned, sir, almost brand new.' **(JACK AND HARRY TOGETHER):** 'If you'd be good enough to try it on for me, sir, thank you.' **(JACK ONLY):** The morning coat, whole outfit, fits the gentleman like a glove, perfect.

HARRY: The gentleman, he's pleased as punch, he is.

JACK: He is. He settles his bill, pays Vince the 3 quid he is supposed to have handed over to Mr Dixon in Villiers Street, tips Vince a further 2 quid for all the hard work on the gentleman's behalf 'and thank you very much, Mr Pettit,' says the gentleman. 'And thank you very much indeed, sir,' says Vince. Vince, he's made 5 quid. 5 quid.

HARRY: A fiver. A fiver, it meant a great deal in the 70's.

JACK: It did, Harry. The Dry Cleaners in Villiers Street. Forget your Ibsen, your Shakespeare, your Harold Pinters, The Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street can rightfully be claimed the greatest drama to be witnessed anywhere and in any theatre in London's West End.

HARRY: Forget John Gielgud, forget Laurence Olivier, Sir Donald Wolfit, Dame Peggy Ashcroft, forget Albert Finney, Vince Pettit in The Dry Cleaners In Villiers Street was, in his day, unsurpassable. A star.

JACK: Top of the bill.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Vince comes out of the fitting room. Teddy's on his way to the store room for an outfit for one of his gentlemen. Vince he collars him.

HARRY: He'd found out, become cognisant of that fact that Teddy had been fitting up one of his regulars, hadn't he?

JACK: He bangs him against the wall, knees him in the bollocks, beats the hell out him. You don't fucking fit up my regulars, he told him.

HARRY: You didn't cross Vince Pettit, not in those days.

JACK: He's beating the hell out of him, he's telling Teddy as how Steve Carter, who was with us till about a year before, how Steve Carter fucked Teddy's wife Julia – this was during Sammy Webbers Farewell Party. He

fucked her - Steve Carter and Teddy's wife Julia Harris back of morning tails rack 38 long arm.

HARRY: They were on top of trousers drawers waist: 44 – halve it: 22 – inside leg: 33.

BRIEF PAUSE.

JACK: The next thing is – Vince is given his cards. Eh? Given the push. Tell them, Harry – tell them.

HARRY: I go to reception to collect the gentleman, don't I? - only it's one of Vince's regulars. I say, 'the gentleman is one of Mr Pettit's regulars, Mrs Freshwater,' I say. 'No, no,' she says. 'Mr Pettit,' she says, 'is no longer with us. He's been dismissed on charges of embezzlement.'

JACK: Embezzlement. No. The odd scam. Maybe the odd overpaid bill – nothing more than that.

HARRY: She said he'd had his fingers in the till in a big way.

JACK: Of course Teddy made out he wasn't surprised.

HARRY: He said as how that property Vince had in Spain, it was not one apartment, it's two. He says as how Vince told him so at Sammy Webbers Farewell Party - Vince with a good deal of Guinness inside him.

BRIEF PAUSE.

JACK: Vince, he came down from the office on the 2nd. I'm leaving, he says. He'd worked there for 27 years, he said, he hadn't worked his bollocks off for Webbers then Johansen Perry to have them accuse him of embezzlement - fingers in till. We couldn't believe it. Eh, Harry? We tried to tell him, didn't we? For God's sake. The place, it wouldn't be the same without him, would it?

HARRY: It would be the same.

JACK: Webbers, Johansen Perry without Vince Pettit – the gentlemen coming in, they weren't going to like it.

HARRY: Vince, he wasn't having none of it.

JACK: He wasn't.

HARRY: He was leaving.

JACK: That was that. Eh? He went over to the trouser drawers –

HARRY: Trouser drawers waist 50 - halve it 25, inside leg 29, eh?

JACK: He fished out a brown leather holdall.

HARRY: A brown leather holdall. Like what Jack's gentleman Mr Penrose spoke of. Russian Embassy – financing the British Communist Party.

JACK: Vince Pettit was a patriot. He was British to the core. He hated the unions.

HARRY: He said so himself often enough, that's true.

JACK: Him and that brown leather holdall. It was enough to break your heart. Monday afternoon, 23rd, July, 1973. That woman Mrs Freshwater, her and her handbag, laying down the law - the changes, cash registers, security cameras, fucking muzac – Perry Como, Andy Williams – Teddy with a broken jaw. Vince - Vince Pettit sacked.

HARRY: He fucked off with the brown leather holdall. He went to live in Spain. So we heard.

JACK: He never came back – we never see him again.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: Teddy comes into the store room, he tells me as how Harry is leaving. Harry had given in his notice. Alec Garfield in Accounts had told him – Alec, no doubt, having got it from Personnel.

HARRY: I'm sorry about that, Jack.

JACK: I not know, did I? I wasn't told about Harry leaving, was I? No.

HARRY: I'm sorry, Jack. Only I was going to tell you, I hadn't wanted to upset you.

JACK: He'd got a job, 3 ½ days a week, menswear sales, at Austin Reeds.

HARRY: It was my knees. My physio, she'd told me, if I didn't slow down, I'd have no more knees to complain about.

JACK: The Freshwater woman, the cash registers, cameras – the fucking music. Vince sacked. My wife – Janice – she dying, three weeks before, wasn't it? Right.

HARRY: Sorry about that, Jack. Jack's wife, she'd got cancer.

JACK: That's it. Right. Harry Kent leaving. Fucking off to Austin Reed. That fucking woman Mrs Freshwater comes in and everything goes kaput.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: We said we'd have a meal together – you remember, Harry? – I said come over, my house, I'll cook us up something. We'd get together over a bit of dinner. Only we haven't – have we, eh?

HARRY: We meet for a drink most evenings. Still meet for a drink, Jack.

JACK: That's it. Harry saying he was leaving that day, Monday afternoon 23rd June 1973 – I tell you – I thought that was the last straw. Nothing worse could happen.

HARRY: Only it wasn't the last straw was it? Eh?

JACK: No, it wasn't. The world turned on its head between half two and half five on a Monday afternoon – all in 3 hours, Harry – 3 hours. I went back to the store room to select an outfit for a gentleman just come in, there was Teddy, he was throwing a tea mug at the tannoy speaker, at Mrs Freshwater, her on the tannoy speaker.

HARRY: It was Jack's mug he was throwing, wasn't it, Jack?

JACK: That mug was given to me on my birthday by Fred Robinson, him with the bunions and the slippers.

HARRY: Jack threw Teddy's mug at Mrs Freshwater on the tannoy speaker.

JACK: That's it.

HARRY: I threw my own mug at Mrs Freshwater on the tannoy speaker, didn't I, eh, Jack?

JACK: Only he missed, didn't he?

HARRY: I missed.

THEY DRINK.

JACK: We're back with the gentlemen, fitting them up nicely, the music Perry Como, Andy Williams - I'm saying to my gentleman – what was his name? – Deaken? - as how staff and gentlemen were signing a petition to present to management, Johansen Perry requesting the removal of Mrs Freshwater. My gentleman – Mr Deaken - he says – as how he's read in The Times that morning as how Johansen Perry were selling up – the premises, the building is going to be made into a supermarket. Tesco's. Webber and Son West End Branch was to become a Tesco's.

HARRY: Tesco's.

JACK: A fucking woman comes in, takes over as Department Manager, and, before you can say Jack Robinson, we're pulled down and made into a fucking Tesco's.

THEY HEAR MUSIC COMING FROM THE PREMISES IN WHICH THEY ARE RELATING THIS STORY. THEY RECOGNIZE THE SONG. THEY JOIN IN. AND AFTER A WHILE, THE SONG CONTINUING, THEY EACH PUT ON THEIR OUTSIDE COATS, THEIR HATS, AND EXIT AND LEAVE THE BUILDING.

JACK: You hear what I hear, Harry?

HARRY: Perry Como – if I'm not mistaken. That woman, she was always playing that one.

JACK: Time to make a move, Harry. Eh?

HARRY: Home we go then, eh, Jack?

JACK: That's it. Knees all right?

HARRY: I reckon they'll make it.

JACK: On we go. That's it. Coats. Your hat. Right.

JACK GOES OVER TO WHERE THEIR COATS AND HARRY'S HAT IS HANGING. HE TAKES THEM, AND HELPS HARRY INTO HIS COAT, AND THEN PUTS ON HIS OWN. FINALLY HE PUTS THE HAT ON HARRY'S HEAD.

JACK: Here we are, my old salt. There. Nice coat, Harry.

HARRY: It's lasted.

JACK: They knew how to make coats then – when you bought this, eh? Right. (HELPING HARRY ON WITH THE COAT): On we go. That's it.

HARRY: Much obliged, Jack.

JACK: Nice and comfy. Eh? (PLAYING THE PART): 'Fit's you well, sir. Always a pleasure to serve you, sir.' Eh?

HARRY: (PLAYING THE PART): 'The Unions, as you say, sir, bringing the country to its knees. That Mr McGahey.'

JACK: (PUTTING ON HIS OWN COAT): That's it. Eh?

THEY START JOINING IN WITH THE SONG THEY CAN HEAR.

JACK PUTS THE HAT ON HARRY'S HEAD.

JACK: Here we go. No hurry. One step after another. That's it.

HARRY: Here we go.

JACK: Say goodnight, Harry.

HARRY: Goodnight, Harry.

THE MUSIC SWELLS AND THEY EXIT.

END