

Second revision

# Two man double act

A play for reading

Peter Fox

# Preface

This started as a couple of comic sketches for a friend's double-act with anonymous characters, but then I wanted to get to know them better. So I wrote and watched what happened. Very few episodes turned out as expected, but it was very enjoyable seeing them cope with the unexpected and discovering patterns in lives.

This was originally conceived as a script for performance so there are some background explanations and suggestions for presentation that have been removed from the body of the text and put into footnotes. You can imagine whatever setting and context you like. By the time I thought the two main characters should have proper names I'd grown so used to just A and B that I couldn't face it.

Two slashes, "//" are used to indicate interruption. Either on separate lines where one character interrupts another or together when someone interrupts themselves as in "... I was going to say//but here is a different thought..."

All of the characters and situations are completely fictional except for a strange episode when I was accosted in a pub by 'Tracy and her sister' desperate for me to do clairvoyanting. I prevaricated but thinking about it later, I think I may have fathomed their background as portrayed here.

## Revision history

2nd Revision 1st October 2011

Ep 27 became 26a. Ep 27 - 35 added

# Episode 1

*Two friends known only as A and B are men in their early twenties.*

B: Hello A

A: Hello B

[A opens a sketchpad and starts sketching B. B is surprised. A continues sketching through the dialogue.]

B: What are you doing?

A: Sketching

B: Sketching me?

A: Yes

B: I didn't know you were an artist

A: Its my new thing

B: Thing?

A: Yes - Keep still!

B: How do you mean thing?

A: Portraits - That sort of thing

B: And you're going to do a picture of me?

A: [pause] Yes.

[B straighten's up and strikes a pose. A continues sketching]

B: Who'd want my picture?

A: You'd be surprised

B: Surprise me

A: Oh, once people know you they want to buy it

B: [Slow realisation that 'you' is ambiguous. Cautiously...]  
But not many people know me.

A: No not [emphasis] you. [More emphasis] Me! <sup>1</sup> Us [Emphasis] Bohemians  
soon build up a devoted following. Now please keep still.

B: But you're a furniture shifter for the Co-op. Do you hold seances in the  
lower basement during your tea breaks?

A: 'Soirees' actually. A seance is where you try to contact the dead. And  
yes, there are some very cultured people in the Co-op. Driver Jim writes  
gritty poetry – a bit proletarian for me obviously – but you have to have to  
encourage that sort of thing. Then 'Amazing auntie Ada' from accounts  
has dyed her hair even more red and taken up guerilla drumming.

B: What's guerilla drumming?

A: Drumming with anything anywhere - Shopping trolleys are her latest  
thing.

B: In Tesco?

A: I'm afraid so. [Looks hard at B.] Do you think you could you be a bit more

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<sup>1</sup> strikes artistic pose, undoes shirt, tousles hair

iconic?

B: Iconic?

A: Oh sorry – shorthand you know – powerful, noble.

B: [B wriggles and grimaces etc.] How about that

A: Oh yes! Hold it. That's perfect.

B: So that's all there is to being a Bohemian – a few loonies at the Co-op?

A: No of course not.

B: Can anyone join?

A: Errm. You have to be overflowing with natural talent and be inspired by the inner beauty of things.

B: Now we're getting to it. You fancy that Cynthia in the sandwich shop. I've seen you in there using long words and pretending to read "Das capital".

A: [Long pause] Very good at quilting.

B: Quilting? Who Cynthia?

A: Oh yes. Shows what you know about the tectonic power of art. Don't underestimate the strength of passive resistance against the grey and the gutless. The vivid stitch-work of the 'Mothers of the 30<sup>th</sup> May revolution' is amazing.

[A demonstrates to B a certain stiffening of sinews and stony straight-ahead face. Particularly forearms horizontal, fists un-clenched, one forward one back.]

B: So did you get the lovely Cynthia in the sack then [sarcastic] 'Lenin'?

A: Yes actually! A very beautifully embroidered sack if I may say so. Could you look like you're whistling

B: Oh OK [Experiments with faces]

[A resumes sketching]

B: So this Bohemian business is all about getting the girls' knickers off then?

A: Umm. How to say this? ... And the boys'

B: BOYS! [Faces A straight ... remembers to un-pose]

A: You work for an Estate Agent. – You know what goes on?

B: Do I?

A: You know... "Saisir maset"

B: What?

A: "Tu ne comprend?" : "Must have. – Separate cottage" I thought you knew these things.

B: Speak English!

A: You are an intellectual pigmy. "Tout confort" – "well equipped" Are you?

B: Just because you speak in French doesn't mean you have to shag boys.

A: MEN

B: You've started painting and now you're shagging everything except Driver Jim

A: [Nothing - possibly a 'look']

B: Err. Really? Anyway how's your portrait getting on?

A: [Emphasis]Your portrait you mean. I think that's enough.

[B drops pose. A starts folding over sketch pad as if it's private.]

B: Let me see.

A: It's not very good

B: I know that but I'd still like to see.

[Slight struggle. B unfolds or grabs the sketch block. Flips forwards and backwards in a bit of confusion.]

A: What do you think?

B: These are all steam engines.

A: Exactly

B: Exactly?

A: Yes that's what I do - Steam engines.

B: You were supposed to be painting me!

A: Yes I did. Here it is. Very 'you'.

B: It's a steam engine!

[All the drawings in the sketch pad are steam engines.]

A: 2-6-0

B: 2-6-0 be blown!

A: Now don't get cross. That is my oeuvre.

B: I can't believe that I've just stood there for 10 minutes so you could draw a steam engine.

A: Artists need models.

B: Well get a model steam engine then!

A: You don't understand.

B: No I don't. And that's shorthand for "Who do you think I am? Thomas the tank engine?"

A: Have I drawn you as an intellectual pigmy? [Shows the picture to the audience]

Have I drawn you as broken down and short of steam?

No. Proud. Powerful. Perfected for purpose.

B: [B looks closely] What you have drawn, and may your Fairy Godmother give you some decent crayons, is a dirty, unreliable machine that spewed sulfurous filth from every orifice. Is that meant to represent me?

A: Can't you see it's whistling?

B: Whistling Colonel Bogey I suppose?

A: Sorry, that's all I do. Steam engines. Very iconic.

B: Well I have to admit it beats making chains of paper clips at the estate agents. But I am writing a comedy double-act to keep the brain alive.

A: Good for you.

B: It's early days and I haven't really got any good material yet.

A: Keep at it. Must go now. Cheerio "Tolstoy".

B: Cheerio 'Picasso'.

# Episode 2

B: Hello A

A: Hello B

B: How are the Co-op crochet communards getting on?

A: Up and down. Anyway it's quilting – and that's what Cynthia's mob do. We're more abstract happening and scything critiques of decay and discarded generations.

B: Avant-garde in tooth and claw.

A: Exactly. I see that despite being an estate agent's clerk you have an understanding of the vital force that is building a new world.

B: [Confused] If you say so.

A: I do. Don't be a wabbit!

B: Wabbit?!

A: Rabbit to you. As a small wedge in the crumbling monolith that is suffocating our society we've decided to shine the spotlight of uncertainty on forces of reaction by changing names by adding double-us when they need a kick up the arse – Postewior.

B: I think you're nuts.

A: You've got to start somewhere. This is fun and easy for the err less advanced to grasp.

B: Wabbit! Makes you sound like a skinny upper class twit. "Gorsh how tewible". [sarcastic] That'll make them twemble in their Wange Wovers.

A: Look B, the Co-op communards as you call them are just a start. They haven't had the benefit of a university education. Stirring their tea is a major intellectual exercise for some. I work with the raw materials at hand. Sandra from soft furnishings only comes because she treats the horoscope in the Daily Mail like the lottery: One day it will make everything golden – But she thinks I can make it happen specially for her.

B: [sympathetically] You are her personal mystic?

A: I'm afraid so. It's like ringing a bell with no clapper – "A" she says "look in the tea-leaves"

B: Tea-leaves?

A: Can you imagine what it would be like if I had a crystal or tarot cards - nightmare!

B: Scary

A: "Look in the tea-leaves" she says - Well what would you do? Extra difficulty: Tea bags. That's what we have in the Co-op.

B: Earl grey? Without milk?

A: Stop taking the piss I've got to deal with 'Miss stupid 2009'<sup>2</sup> who carries a tape measure with her in case any dark strangers appear who need to be

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<sup>2</sup> Feel free to alter specifics. 2007 is just a place-holder.

checked for tallness.

B: Does the lovely Cynthia know?

A: [Exasperated] Cynthia has nothing to do with this.

B: It's obvious. She has designs on your body. It's just a ploy to get see if Mr. clever clogs is clever in the naughty gymnastics department.

A: I resent that! I'm one of the few messengers dedicated to awakening the masses from their anaesthetic.

B: And how did you 'awaken' the lovely Sandra?

A: She's not the 'lovely' Sandra.

B: Plain. Flat chested. Cheesegrater – "Cheeseewater" Sandra?

A: [Pause] A bimbo - Dimbo OK?

B: [Sarcastic] Awaken me Oh Master.

A: You don't understand. Somebody has to lead - Show an example - Be the oracle.

B: Admit it. You were just waiting for her to make a sacrifice on your altar.

A: If you'd stop interrupting I'd have told you that I got her to bring in her own tea leaves.

B: Then what?

A: Then told her what I saw – when I'd swilled round a saucer

B: Any old saucer?

A: What do you think? No of course not. A '1990 Co-op "ace-autumn"'.  
B: And what did you see there - Oh Scryer of the saucer?

A: Tealeaves.

B: [Gipsy-rose-lee] "Beware of tea-leaves." Scores a big round zero on the Tantric sex scale doesn't it oh leader of the lame.

A: No stupid! I had a look. A careful look. Concentration is everything with the dim. They think it is magic from another spiritual world. They don't expect Napoleon to turn up on the first date but a hint of Michael Jackson and they'll be begging.

B: How did you learn this?

A: Very quickly – Hell hath no fury like... err .. you can't fight gravity and believe me these girls have dense black holes for brains.

B: These?

A: Err yes. One bit of the 'tall dark strangers' to Sandra and they were all bringing their tea-leaves.

[pause]

B: [now contrite] Trapped like a err wabbit.

A: A bit like that. It's unfair. All I wanted to do was educate a bit and suddenly my every word is gospel.

B: Why not tell the bimbos to get lost?

A: I tried making excuses but it didn't work. It's like trying to wipe off something sticky – it just spreads more widely.

B: So you made something up about unhappiness in the past and hints of joy in the future and she fell for it.

A: [Amazed] How did you know?

B: Oh we've all done that. – I do it every day.  
A: What?!

B: Second nature old boy. That's what selling property is all about.  
A: With tarot cards?  
B: No stupid.  
A: Tea-leaves?  
B: [Exasperated] No. Imagine some lady comes in looking for a little cottage in the town and you haven't got any little cottages in the town. Do you say "This may distress you but you'd better remove yourself elsewhere"? Does the wabbit get fed if he does that?  
A: So you lie.  
B: No never. – Well not me - I like to [emphasis] educate my clientele. In the moments my computer is supposedly not working I ask them about themselves in my best 'met-you-at-the-garden-party' voice and before you know it they've agreed to have a look at something you've been trying to get rid of for ages.  
A: And?  
B: From there it's plain sailing if you can keep up the air of mystery. It doesn't work all the time but people buy houses because they have the urge - never underestimate 'the URGE'. Whatever you do make sure there's a chair in an empty property and sit the customer down and get them to start imagining all the friends they can have visiting and chatting and complimenting on good sense in buying this err distinctive [quickly] but practical property.  
A: But that's awful?  
B: What's awful about that?  
A: You're just conning these ladies into buying something unsuitable.  
B: No I'm not. I'm giving them something to live for.  
A: Fooley  
B: We'll I admit they may have to deal with the builders come to deal with the dry rot but who knows where it will lead?  
A: You sound like a dating agency.  
B: Yes that's what I like to do. Wouldn't you like to be a fairy Cupid instead of a squalid part-time Svengali?  
A: Are you mad! It's dangerous enough as it is. "Can we dim the lights?" "Can we hold hands?" "Loose clothing helps me relax."  
B: Don't do it then.  
A: I can't just bring the axe down. They're fanatics. I could be lynched.  
B: Maybe the estate agents isn't such a bad billet after all.  
A: You have the Scylla of boredom and I have the Charybdis of dangerous excitement.  
B: Let's hope there is something less extreme in store... [Mischievously] I tell you what. Perhaps it says something encouraging in your horoscope.  
A: [pause] I know what it says in yours mate! Beware of friends dropping a box of anvils on you.



- B: I wish they would. It might give me some ideas for my double-act. It's a desert so far I'm afraid.
- A: We all have bare patches. I'm still stuck with steam engines.
- B: I think I'll try a steam engine dialogue then.
- A: Cheerio 'Stevenson'
- B: Cheerio 'Madame Zara'

## Episode 3

- A: Hello B
- B: Hello A. Done any more painting?
- A: Not had any time.
- B: I know the feeling.
- A: Oh? What have you been up to that takes all your time?
- B: I'm taking my first steps in show-business.
- A: [*Hughie Green*] "And now ladies and gentleman a really wonderful act. A young man who has come all the way from Colchester to be with us tonight. What are you going to do for us B?"
- B: Well/ <sup>3</sup>
- A: /Tonight ladies and gentleman, B who has come all of the way from Colchester is going to give us impressions of famous estate agents.
- B: [Pause] Do you want to know or not?
- A: [contrite] Alright - It's not singing is it?
- B: No. But I'll have you know that actually I do have a good singing voice – Baritone
- A: Baritone. Hmmn. That's posh.
- B: I used to be with a, now don't laugh, a barbershop quartet.
- A: [Doesn't quite laugh but shows he finds it funny - possibly some miming] Go on.
- B: Well that's all there is.
- A: What were you called?
- B: Umm The 'Close shaves'
- A: [Mimes singing with finger clicking and mouth 'woo woo's and head shaking as per OTT up-beat quartet singing.] When was this?
- B: I suppose you could say it started in a restaurant where another table were being a bit noisy. You know the Rose?
- A: Yes. Go on.
- B: Well – my table was the Tabernacle teens – some of us were 20 – we were

3 / ... / indicates an interruption.

the subversives - going to the pub after the prayer meeting and that sort of thing. Every night out was unisex but you don't realise how green the grass is on the other side is when you're chained to the straight and narrow. It was high-octane entertainment in those days just going as a bunch of spotty youths to a pub on the other side of town.

[A has changed his tune and is a lot more sympathetic]

A: B, you know I was taking the piss earlier. I didn't realise that you were repressed.

B: [Thinks] 'Repressed' I'll have to think about that - There's some truth in that. Still we kept out of drugs and all that.

A: And only got to meet nice girls who played bridge

B: [Absolutely] Yes [realises this isn't fashionable] Umm yes some lovely girls ... but I'd have liked to tried out the deep end.

A: How did you get into this barber shop quartet?

B: Ah yes. We were having a meal at The Rose when one of the drunks on another table started singing. Herberts from the local constabulary. "Down by the old mill stream" and naturally I joined in the harmony and before you knew it we'd done it twice. It turns out that there are plenty of coppers who can't stand the infestation of [particular diction] 'soles. Anyway, from that we formed a barbershop quartet, a trio to start with but we learned. There were two coppers, an estate agent and me - I was working for my dad's firm then.

A: Sounds fantastic. I'm making notes old son.

B: Stop being sarcastic.

A: I'm not. Don't you see you were all escapees... .. rejecting your conventions.

[Long pause]

B: I see what you're getting at there but you've got it all wrong.

A: How?

B: Look, [emphasis] you're a revolutionary and political agitator - you won't understand - we were glad to get away from iron rations of life to um 'wooden' rations. Anyway we escaped, but only at weekends.

A: Throw off your chains.

B: You still don't understand! We didn't have chains we were just well trained. As soon as the chief constable said "heel" the coppers were panting waiting for a biccie.

A: And what about the estate agents. I assume that's how you joined the capitalist bourgeoisie.

B: No I was one of the bourgeois before I started. Brain dead as per the plan. Then I gradually realised that teens must tell their parents to fuck off.

A: "Fuck Off" That's the first time I've ever heard you swear.

B: Oh Yes - Look at stupid B who doesn't swear. Grow up mister leader of the revolution. I started as a sterile robot and then what happened?

A: [cowed] I don't know?

B: I'll tell you then sunshine. Pin back your ears.

A: [softly] Go on

B: So I started as a simple, honest, accounts clerk with no free time because my parents thought that free time meant devil's time. I was allowed to exchange pleasantries with suitable ladies of the opposite sex and occasionally flirt. You have no idea how erotic a glance - an ankle – yes I mean it -an ankle deliberately displayed could be.

A: Oppression can affect anybody.

B: Listen! So then I was corrupted?

A: [Suddenly interested] Corrupted?

B: Yes. Go to church on Sunday, prayer meeting on Tuesdays, community service on Fridays and you were OK. That's a horrible straightjacket - I realise it now. But then I was corrupted.

A: Yes?

B: The barbershop quartet was a stepping stone towards the abyss.[despair]

A: Calm down B. I'm your friend.

B: Dear A. Yes you are my friend. You are possibly my best friend – one with whom I can share things I wouldn't with anyone else ... like how you are a brilliant at burrowing when you should be building ... So I'm going to tell you about the abyss.

A: [long pause] OK

B: So there I am in the quartet and this Robert takes a liking to me. Well we are all good friends who understood each other. You have to be if you're going to rub along.[Very long pause of recollection]

A: Rubbing along. So there you were rubbing along with two coppers and an estate agent. Then what happened.

B: Would I like to join the estate agents?

A: How is that jumping into the abyss? "Read all about it! Man who has wears collar and tie in his sleep joins estate agents"

B: There are certain rules for estate agents. Wearing a collar and tie is one of course but that's not a problem for me. I can have a nice haircut, be clean, polite, helpful and defer to my customers but it turns out there's a lot of grey areas where the grey men are at work scratching each other's backs. Planning applications nodded through, cover-ups, stitch-ups and convenient mistakes. The basic philosophy is get away with as much as you can. All Masons of course.

A: That's bad.

B: Too f-bloody right.

A: Are you in trouble?

B: No not as such. But the trap is closing on me.

A: What's the problem?

B: I could go with the flow. No doubt there would be some perks, but I know I'd always be one of the servants, never accepted by the real thieves.

A: So don't do it.

B: I used to be harmless now I'm propping up the evil empire of the respectable underworld.

- A: We're all pawns in the rich-man's game.
- B: I know the difference between right and wrong. This is wrong. I'll have to leave and get a job filling shelves for your Co-op.
- A: No. Let's think this one out. There might be alternatives. [pause] Have you thought about turning queen's evidence - shopping the lot of them?
- B: Yes/
- A: /No. Too dangerous. Wouldn't work. ... What about blackmail? Collect the documentary evidence and get a bonus?
- B: No - You need to be a grunting gorilla to take on these apes.
- A: Aha! How about? .... No, I've got a better idea. Get advice from your dad - and you must have some good chaplain, priest, rector or whatever at your Church who you can discuss it with.
- B: Good try A. But I can't burden my father with my temptations. And the pastor is a flimsy fog-head who won't offend anyone, let alone apply brain cells. And before you know it he'll be using me as a cause celebre - he'd be so excited about a real problem that he'd call meetings and stir pots that haven't got anything in them.
- A: OK then. Here is my first suggestion: Have the courage of your position and refuse to do anything shady and also make it clear to your boss when you spot something shady. Then the problem is his. If he says it will be OK just say it's against your principles and refuse to budge.
- B: That's fighting talk there A: You're the first person that's come up with anything positive.
- A: But I'm the only person you've talked to.
- B: True, but I'll give you this: You may be a idling agitator but you can listen for long enough to reply sensibly. I'll certainly think about that.
- A: Thank you B. Brains!
- B: Umm. Brains possibly - More like plenty of time to daydream.
- A: And my second suggestion.[deliberate 'do you want to know' pause]
- B: Yes?
- A: Why don't you become a rector or priest or whatever? You've got the right from wrong bit, you've got the clean and wholesome bit, you come from the right sort of family, and you know you could do a better job than the present bod standing on your head.
- B: Perhaps one day - Part time. But that's enough worrying about the future for now. Cheerio A.
- A: Cheerio B.

# Episode 4

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B. How are you getting on at the estate agents?
- B: Let's not talk about that now. If you like we can find out how your cross-stitching with the lovely Cynthia has been going.
- A: Well I have tried.
- B: Tried what?
- A: Cross stitch. I thought I'd show willing.
- B: And?
- A: [mugging] 'Mr. clumsy' had to give up
- B: What! I thought you were getting on well with her.
- A: No, I only failed at sewing. Otherwise my needle was all over her pin-cushion.
- B: Oh. I don't get much opportunity in the pin-cushion department.
- A: Just a little prick.
- B: [slow on the uptake] Ha ha. Just a little prick.
- A: Jolly good. Now may we continue?
- B: Ah yes. I'm pleased to see you as I'd like your opinion on my double act.
- A: Double act? [Looks around for 2<sup>nd</sup> person]
- B: Yes, trade has been a bit slow at the estate agents the last few weeks
- A: Slow in the Co-op as well.
- B: I've thought of this double-act I could do.
- A: "The devil makes things for idle"/
- B: /I knew you'd try to put me down Just when I've come up with a brilliant idea. You don't have a monopoly on ideas so this may be a bit of a shock.
- A: No not at all. I'm all ears.
- B: That's a very sarcastic 'all ears'.
- A: Look B, at the Co-op I am up to my neck in intellectual puppies who want to lick my face, chew everything and crap in the corner. "Sit!" is the only word of command I know.
- B: You only have yourself to blame! You started the basement seances.
- A: Soirees!
- B: That's a posh name for tea-break.
- A: Sorry B. [pause] Already I have let you down. I can see you were relying on me. Tell me about this [micro pause] double-act.
- B: Well, as I was sitting in the estate agents with nothing to do I thought I might do some stand-up comedy. Obviously this idea was only fleeting – but like a nagging feeling that you've left the tap on when leaving the house, it began to occupy my mind.
- A: [About to butt-in sarcastically at 'occupy mind' but stops]
- B: I thought I could be billed as 'the estate agent from hell' – bit rough – bit

on the edge – you know.

A: That narrows it down!

B: “The estate agent from hell” I could recount funny stories and inside insights on an estate agent’s theme./

A: /But the phone rang and your dozen witty estate agent jokes were lost to posterity.

B: I can’t tell if you’re serious?

A: Neither can I. Go on.

B: Well actually you’re wrong Mr. clever clogs because there weren’t lots of Estate agent jokes.

A: Really?

B: No.

A: How many?

B: [Short thoughtful pause]

A: The only joke is that an estate agent thinks that they don’t come from hell in the first place.

B: [Grappling with the concept] But I don’t have anything to do with hell.

A: I know. But you’re not a real estate agent are you. You’re filling in between being an accounts clerk in your dad’s firm and a career in show business.

B: [Realising this is OK] Yes.

A: So the sale of plan A fell through?

B: Yes

A: And you had another desirable property in your mind?

B: Yes

A: [Sarcastically] Ventriloquism.

B: [Deadpan] Yes

A: [Pause of amazement] And?

B: I couldn’t think of a puppet.

A: And the throwing the voice bit?

B: [Casual] Never tried. Why bother until you’ve got your puppet worked out?

A: I’d/

B: /All water under the bridge now mate. I’ve decided to do a double act.

A: Not with me!?

B: Oh no – You’re too serious. What the public wants is non-stop witty banter with a wry twist.

A: If you say so.

B: I’ve got something.

A: I hope it isn’t contagious. Ha ha – see that wasn’t serious.

B: [serious] Droll.

A: [exasperated] Come on then. What is it? Hymns ancient and modern played on a missionary’s pelvic bone? Or something more ‘witty and wry’ ... how about the audience has to guess how many of your customers you shagged while showing them round Shaggy Cottage in Nooky Lane?

B: It's nothing to do with my day job. Let me finish.  
A: Go ahead. Don't let me gazump you.  
B: I am going to be the world's first one-man double-act.  
[Long pause]  
B: What do you think of that then? Original or what?  
A: Original. Definitely original. Have you thought of a name for this double act?  
B: "Only B"  
A: Accurate. Nothing to do with estate agents?  
B: No.  
A: Is this a comedy act B?  
B: Very much so - But with witty and wry observations thrown in.  
A: Perhaps I have mis-understood. You are going to be a double act on your own.  
B: Yes that's right A.  
A: I like the 'witty and wry observations' B. All in all I think that's the bit which I like the most.  
B: Really?  
A: Yes B. In this day and age where every other word uttered by the so-called stand-up comics is a lacerating swearword related to fornication, wit would be a real ray of sunshine.  
B: And what about the wry observations?  
A: Very satirical B.  
B: 'Satirical'. Oh A thank you. Do you really think so?  
A: No B. I haven't heard the faintest whisper of your act so I am hardly in a positional to comment on the satirical content of it.  
B: Oh. Ok. I thought I'd have a useless imaginary friend. This friend would be interrupting and I would argue with him and give him advice.  
A: That's certainly bizarre.  
B: I thought he could offer to show his tattoos to the audience.  
A: [slowly - serious/thoughtful] That's very clever B. Anything particular about these tattoos?  
B: Oh yes. Think about it – the first one might be droll; the second rude, possibly with a mistake or looks like something else from an angle; but then the third is in a rude place.  
A: And you would be simultaneously horrified and intrigued?  
B: Exactly.  
A: You'd have to practice  
B: Plenty of spare time at the estate agents  
A: I don't have much experience of imaginary friends myself...  
B: Oh it's nothing serious A.  
A: Serious?  
B: Well don't your account books talk to you?  
A: [pause - trying to be sensitive] No. But then I've never had account books.  
– What sort of things do they say?

B: Just attention seeking really. [weedy voice] "I haven't been audited recently - you don't care about me". Then there are the huge tomes of tax rules and all that sort of thing. They're the biggest, most dense books on the planet. Each time you pass them their enormous gravity sucks some life from you until you become a dried out husk.

A: [believing it all - rather worried] But they haven't got you yet – have they.

B: [enjoying it] Booming words of dreadful authority "Thou shalt not discount the earnings before the due date" paralyse me.

A: [believing it all – conned!] Are you really a slave to these books?

B: [can't believe A is fooled] Oh yea! Enslaved as my fathers before me and their fathers before them. I am but a decimal point in their schemes. "Obey" is the only word I have known since the age of 4. [Ham grief] I know my father would sacrifice anything for me. A calculator. A ledger of my very own to keep track of my pocket money. An action accountant. Finally a spreadsheet... ..with formulas and everything.

A: [Shocked silence] My friend – I never realised.

B: Nine o'clock tomorrow morning on the dot my eyes will glaze over and I will become an accountant.

A: Err.. I though you were an estate agent now?

B: [micro-pause] I'm a sleeper. Waiting until the amortised time is ripe to take over the world. Once an accountant always an accountant – there is no escape once you have been captured by the columns of figures.

A: You already have taken over the world.

B: [micro-pause] Oh bugger - Nobody told me.

[long silence]

B: I was kidding

A: About what?

B: Everything

A: [Not quite sure=important] You mean you're not enslaved by the accounting books?

B: No of course not. Did you...

A: [Silence]

B: ...You did didn't you

A: [pause] You were very convincing

B: Hurrah! That's a pint you owe me. If I can convince you then I can convince an audience I have an imaginary friend.

A: That's more difficult.

B: Why? Are they cleverer than you?

A: No. But I listen and care about you.

B: Fair point. But why have they come to a show if they don't want to be entertained?

[pause]

A: [Back to normal levels of control and credulity] Is there any reason why your imaginary friend is a him not a her?

B: [pause] Is Francis a girl's name? Hardly



A: Yes. F-R-A-N-C-EEE-S. Anyway – Hold-on! Why 'Francis'?

B: I don't know. [pause] We only meet occasionally. Francis runs a boutique in Montmartre.

A: [pause] B you are 'evil'. Francis doesn't have any tattoos but you were going to drag him on stage to show off his body. How do you think that would make him feel?

B: [Thinks] Useless?

A: And betrayed. Your friend, FrancIII, who is only a friend, [pause] an imaginary friend, you see once in a blue moon, [pause] wouldn't like to be paraded in front of an audience like a circus animal would he?

B: Yes. Err No.

A: OK. So you have completely made up this 'imaginary' friend – and let me say what a clever idea I think that is if I haven't said so already. Brilliant. [Thoughtful] Strange how imaginary friends are same-sex – Is that how best friends should always be?

B: It works for me.

A: I'm trying to picture this happening on stage.

B: It's not difficult. I'm there being sensible and trying to get on with telling jokes with a bit of wry humour while Francis thinks it is all boring.

A: So we have the interruptions

B: And innuendo on my face

A: You're reacting.

B: Yes. I'm trying to hold back this rough diamond, this simple savage, this wandering shipwrecked soul in search of a beach.

A: [micro-pause] To strip off and show his tattoos?

B: That's the general idea. You said it was brilliant earlier!

A: B. Listen to me. Why not get interrupted by somebody else's imaginary friend. That way it won't hurt so much.

B: Shall I tell you how I thought I could finish?

A: Go on.

B: [A bit slow] Then it would get really stressful with [micro-pause] the friend working up to ending it all by throwing himself off the stage.

A: And does he?

B: Yes! Brilliant eh?

A: [Good humour] At least one of us needs to ask ourselves how we chose our friends.

# Episode 5

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B. How are you getting on at the estate agents?
- B: Let's not talk about that now. If you like we can find out how much trouble your crystal ball gazing has got you into.
- A: Tea leaves actually. And as I told you before I don't want to do it.
- B: So no trouble then?
- A: No, but I'm going to have to put a stop to it. There's three of them and 'would I go round to their friends after work'.
- B: Are you sure they're not pulling your leg? Sounds suspicious to me.
- A: No they're too dopey. They've got more brains in their handbags.
- B: Still, I should go carefully.
- A: It's harmless.
- B: It could get complicated. And what if the management found out you were doing black magic in their basement?
- A: It's not black magic.
- B: Doesn't sound convincing to me. Dark secrets – getting up to things with impressionable young ladies – rumours must already be circulating.
- A: What sort of rumours?
- B: You know: Anything to do with silly girls is bound to get out of hand.
- A: There's nothing going on!
- B: You try telling that to the other assistants. [Girly] "Guess what Sandra from shoes been getting up to in the basement with that furniture shifter" Jealousy will be boiling over. I'm surprised you haven't been lynched by the dowagers from furnishings.
- A: They're sworn to secrecy.
- B: Oh no! Even worse. How long do you think they can keep their mouths shut? I can hear their twittering from here.
- A: You've got me worried - I thought I only had a bunch of silly flies buzzing round me - Now you're telling me that men with DDT are spraying anything and everything.
- B: No not 'men' – \*Women\* – Full of jealousy and pique
- A: Look I've told you: The brake's hard on.
- B: But it keeps on rolling. I expect they're boasting between themselves how much you fancy them. Barbara from bedrooms is ahead in the race by a pretty neck followed closely by Lucy who really ought to get new elastic for her knickers and Fiona from Funerals who wants you to view the body.
- A: Don't keep reminding me! Try being useful.
- B: [Pause] Why not tell them stupid things, you know: "You will meet a tall dwarf tram-driver from Barcelona who plays the tuba"

- A: You don't understand. They want to believe so badly that if I refused point blank they'd think, [emphasis] no know, that I was holding something back deliberately. And that would make them orgasmically certain of my hidden powers. The more hidden they are the more powerful the powers must be.
- B: And then they'd be jealous and bitchy and plunge into spitefulness.
- A: Whatever - Horrible.
- B: Why not pass them on to somebody who is a real sooth-sayer? "Sorry girls, I was only kidding – but why not go and visit so-and-so who is well up in those things.
- A: They'd be disappointed. Badly. They wouldn't have their own tame tea-leaf reader/
- B: /But better than the alternatives - [sarcastic] Oh mighty summoner of spirits.
- A: [Thinks] I don't know any so-and-sos I could palm them off onto.
- B: Are you sure?
- A: Well unless you can do Tarot readings for a fiver a throw.
- B: Tenner a time old son. No make it twenty. OK Tea-leaves a tenner.
- A: What do you know about it?
- B: And what do you know about it?
- A: I have an aura?
- B: Aura my foot. You're just an amateur. I'm a professional. My job is channelling people's dreams.
- A: Foey you're a bricks and mortar man - I operate in a higher plane.
- B: Not foey all. Do you think I sell them 17 thousand bricks, half a ton of mortar, fourteen gross of roof tiles and chuck the windows in for free?
- A: I suppose not.
- B: Well what then?
- A: I suppose you pander to their needs
- B: I prefer 'develop their consciousness' to 'pander to their dreams'.
- A: [pause] Umm That's very spiritual – a bit 'new age' that developing consciousness bit don't you think?
- B: What do you think if a single lady wants a three bedroomed house? Would that be one bedroom for her and the others for the cats or for a family?
- A: Oh I see, she want's to join the happily married with two children brigade.
- B: Good try but very amateurish. Most likely the cats. Start with the cats and you won't go far wrong.
- A: So are you volunteering to be a mystic sooth-sayer?
- B: Ish.
- A: Ish?
- B: I could give it a try... ...Hey yes in fact it ought to be a doddle. Half truths are my stock-in-trade
- A: And you've already sold you soul to the devil.
- B: No I haven't - not yet - I kept well clear of joining the Masons and their

hangers-on – parasites to you. Evil, blood-sucking, corrupting, disgusting parasites.

A: Purity – That’s beautiful.

B: Are you being sarcastic? Just because I’m a Christian.

A: No. Just an observation – I hope you don’t mind?

B: Get on with it.

A: A person who’d never got dirty would never need to wash would they?

B: No

A: So this talk of ‘Purity’ means you know what dirt is.

B: No! You don’t have to experience something to know about it. ... For example how often have you heard someone being interviewed on the telly saying “It sounded like a bomb going off”. Oh Yes? How many bombs had this person been acquainted with I wonder? Many people who are near enough to an actual bomb going off are dead or not happy to talk about it to the nearest television reporter.

A: They’ve heard enough explosions in films and on the telly.

B: What they’ve heard is the televisual version. Do you know what a bomb really sounds like?

A: Yes.

B: Go on.

A: An almighty bang

B: And?

A: Err. Debris falling?

B: Now go inside the glass screen as if you were actually there. Now what?

A: I don’t know.

B: [Fierce] Exactly.

A: [pause] Sorry...

B: It sounds TOO BLOODY CLOSE and TOO BLOODY REAL.

A: B...

B: Yes?

A: Is there something you want to get off your chest?

B: LOTS you oaf – no nothing

A: [pause] I tell you what my good friend B. When you’re ready I’ll be reat/here. I haven’t got a clue what’s going on but I’ll do my best. Look mate - if you want a pal to talk to then I’m here.

B: [pause] I appreciate that A. One day - perhaps any day...

A: I know B. There’s something about experience that makes you think that you’re the only person who is capable of handling it.

B: How do you know?

A: One day I’ll tell you.

B: You’re trying to get me on this mysterious charlatan mystic business. You’re a furniture shifter.

A: You see that’s where you’re wrong B. Of course I’m an amateur but I know better than to sell people their own dreams. What happens then? Their dreams soon turn out to be dust blowing in the wind and then they

hate you for ever.

B: But I've got their money

A: True. Actually you personally have got a tiny, if not minuscule fraction of it.

B: But it is still actual money.

A: Granted. You are a true professional.

B: You can be a sarcastic bastard.

A: Whereas us amateurs, of course, we don't sell people's dreams back to them. How horrible! No. We give them dreams for free. It's all about invisible hopes turned into inevitable happenings.

B: Aha! But that's for the people without money and means. I deal with those who have pockets of readies. Let me ask you a question A: If one of these girls asks you for next week's lottery numbers – how much should you charge her?

A: Err. [unable to answer]

B: A commission? Flat fee of ten pounds? What does it depend on?

A: I hadn't thought of charging anything. I'm not giving anything valuable.

B: Oh yes you are. If it wasn't valuable then they wouldn't be pestering you would they?

A: No. Stop being silly. They just want a bit of fun [pause] You know like reading the horoscope in the paper - We all know those are rubbish but some are more gullible than others.

B: But why? Do they sense/

A: /Because they're lonely. And insecure. And a bit easily led.

B: [decent pause] "Easily led" that's your problem. If you were having prayer meetings in the basement with the frigid nuns of kitchenware then nobody would bat an eyelid – but you leading the easily led ones god knows where. And as you know "easily lead" is an anagram of "loose knicker elastic".

A: Does it err I mean...

B: Whatever it means it means trouble. Now you want to gather the intellectuals for discussions of art and poetry. That's wholesome – if a little ambitious – let me give you the benefit of the doubt for being such a hopeful enthusiast – who knows what may come of it. But look what's happened: [stops]

A: [pause] Umm not what I expected.

B: Full marks to you for getting something going. You never expected these people to grasp 'Descartian duality' or whatever philosophical twaddle, but you started them on artistic awareness and having a go themselves. Well done. Now you've got some wasps coming along to your picnic as well. And you know what wasps are like if you try shooin' them away - they get angry don't they?

A: That's a funny way of putting it – but I suppose you're right. But how can I keep them away? I can't dictate rule, and let's face it – they've got as much right as the others to join in.

- B: But they're not joining in, just pestering you for fortune-telling. You need to get rid of them.
- A: But they're not doing any harm.
- B: Eh? OK back to square one! Their artistic contribution is what?
- A: Nothing. But they're good listeners.
- B: No they're not. They just keep quiet when they know they can't keep up with the rest. I bet they think that Existentialism is a new perfume.
- A: [Suddenly develops confidence] Thank you B for showing me how important it is for me to take these abandoned girls under my wing. They obviously need special attention. I can't abandon them like so many have before me. Why should they be left on the scrap heap.
- B: [!]
- A: Well?
- B: Because that's where they want to be. They haven't got a shred of artistic feeling in them. ... Ever tried feeding fish on nuts?
- A: No?
- B: Why not? Because fish like worms.
- A: You've lost me?
- B: Exactly
- A: Exactly?
- B: Yes. See I lost you there didn't I. You couldn't grasp my metaphor. It was like I was feeding you the wrong sort of ideas.
- A: Oh I see. I was a bit slow I suppose. Perhaps you could have been clearer.
- B: I was illustrating my point – If you don't cotton on to what I'm saying then we're both wasting our time. The same goes for the people at your soirees.
- A: But everybody gets their own thing from it. It's not for me to dictate what they learn.
- B: Are you a teacher, a leader, a guide? Or just someone who knows long words?
- A: Teacher/
- B: /Good. At least you admitted it
- A: Admitted it! It's not a crime!
- B: So you say.
- A: I object to your tone.
- B: Listen Gandhi! I've told you before that they're not in class to learn, and there are people who may get the wrong impression about what's going on in your classroom and be happy to tell the head master - or in your case the chief general manager.
- A: It's all harmless fun.
- B: What you don't realise is that any fun that other's aren't having is a just cause for them to stamp it out. If they can't have fun why should you?
- A: They're not like that in the Co-op.
- B: Oh yes they are - They're like that everywhere.

- A: You're exaggerating
- B: OK. So if you were the chief general manager and had a choice between persistent rumours of unspecified goings-on in the basement and asking A to leave which would you choose? Which would enhance your career? Which would put you in good standing with the shareholders?
- A: So you're saying I'll get the sack for having poetry readings in the basement in the tea break? How ridiculous!
- B: Tomorrow I will have a word with Reg - He's a good bloke actually - but if it was you or the dragons of ladies fashion then I'm sure you'd come second.
- A: What do you mean - Have a word with Reg?
- B: Reginald Bailey Esq. Manager of the Co-op. Owes my boss some favours.
- A: [Thinks] You could put in a good word.
- B: Yes but the good word will only buy time.
- A: There's something not right about all this.
- B: OK. Why not knock on his door tomorrow morning and explain your problem yourself.
- A: But I don't have a problem
- B: For the last time! You do have a problem. Various females are expecting various things and other various females are jealous of what they think the first set of various females are getting that they aren't. You can't deliver what the first lot want and the second lot make it up as they go along.
- A: You are winding me up.
- B: Let's see shall we? I bet I sleep sounder than you tonight.
- A: You're a wind-up merchant
- B: I was hoping you'd listen to my new one-man double-act routine but that'll just have to wait until another time.

## Episode 6

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B. I see you've got your imaginary friend with you
- B: Have I? - Oh Just your little joke.
- A: Yes - Only kidding. I'm keen to find out how your one-man double-act is getting on.
- B: Ah - That's a shame as I haven't brought him along with me this evening. If I'd known I would have, but before you weren't interested.
- A: We got distracted.
- B: And you've kept your job and your trousers at the Co-op. The harpies from

hardware haven't shopped you to the management or scratched you to bits yet?

A: Just keeping my head above water there in the sooth-saying department. I've got them all to agree that 'it's all a bit of fun'.

B: And did that work?

A: It took the pressure off a bit but they're all deadly serious underneath. 'Can I get a message from their Mum', 'can I give a message to their mum' and so on.

B: Hold! on! Last week you were looking at tea-leaves. Now you're doing the full 'cross-my-palm-with-silver' thing. Are you mad?

A: No choice really. And it's so easy.

B: What? Getting a message from their mum? How easy is that.

A: You work at the estate agents - you know the ropes.

B: Are you suggesting I make everything up?

A: No. Not at all. Simply find out what the customer wants then give it to them.

B: [Takes a while for this to jell] So you say to some secretary from accounts "and what do you want to hear from your mum?" and then you put on a pointy hat and repeat it back to them.

A: No pointy hat!

B: But I'm sure there is lots of Hocus-Pocus

A: A bit. – What do you do when a client comes in to see you? You find out about them in all sorts of ways don't you. Are they married, divorced. Have they got lots of cash, are they desperate, naive, making a break or simply bored. You find out by subterfuge whether you can convince them that they need a garage instead of parking their precious car on the road. For some a school next door is wonderful and for others a dread. You soon learn how to pick up these vibrations don't you.

B: Yes. It's about reading character. - Often two at a time!

A: And you hunch over your computer screen as if coaxing messages by your skill and mysterious understanding.

B: Umm Yes I suppose I do put on a bit of a show.

A: This fortune-telling thing is the same. If Tanya from textiles want's a message from her passed-on mum then I find out what sort of message.

B: That's playing with people's lives!

A: And flogging houses isn't?

B: [no answer]

A: It is a huge responsibility of course – and I'm only just learning, but so worthwhile.

B: You sound like a precious charlatan.

A: Well it is. [pause to gather thought] Would you go to a fortune teller?

B: No

A: And why not?

B: Because I don't have a problem

A: Exactly. People are bringing their problems to me – I suppose it is a bit



like people in your church taking their problems to the vicar.

B: [cautious] But they don't try and get in touch with the dead

A: Really? How do you know? Don't they like to think the spirits of their dearly beloved departed ones are hovering nearby?

B: Yes but that's just a – hmm – atmosphere of generations at prayer. There's no "Ask Uncle Charlie where he left the key to the parrot cage."

A: Now you're being silly.

B: Well what are you doing then – Lucky Madame 'Zarzar'? – Mumble mumble mumble your lucky stone is Topaz and your colour is puce. That'll be five quid please.

A: More subtle and sensitive. Firstly, they wouldn't be asking if they didn't have a reason. Often the reason is not nice and it is in their childhood. [pause] Did you ever bully other kids at school?

B: No

A: But if you had would you be ashamed and be thinking how nice it would be to say sorry if you could go back.

B: Possibly.

A: Well this is all about getting the guilt off their chest. They're desperate.

B: Is that all there is to it?

A: It's the main thing.

B: But those things are in the past - Surely they're coming to you trying to get a few clues to the future.

A: Ah yes – that's another matter. People need things to believe in – well some people do. It's a bit like how people buy tacky souvenirs when they go on holiday. They can't help buying a plastic Colosseum ashtray

B: I don't understand

A: They need something definite to get hold of – ashtray or actual holy relics or Madam Zarzar giving them a cast-iron-style view of the future made from the best hogwash.

B: People don't visit the future

A: Of course they do. Everyone does, or the future comes to us, it's the same thing.

B: Oh I see. So this souvenirs business: You're giving them – selling them – sort of souvenirs of the future they can cherish.

A: Exactly. Very well put. "Please can we have some cheap token from the future to remind us that we'll be going there one day". 'Souvenirs of the future' I like that.

B: A china thimble from next Tuesday? Or a mock leather key fob embossed with October? How about a/

A: /stop being silly/

B: /a handpainted – ethnic – jockstrap from Christmas 2014

A: Be serious/

B: /best quality linen tea-towel with pictures of events from next year and a slogan/

A: /stop it/

B: /saying welcome to the year of the frog where every swallow is a summer.

A: Finished?

B: Go on

A: Sure?

B: Yes

A: Well, thinking about it, you've got it about right. Look at horoscopes – how much more tacky can you get. I'm just thinking a bit more up-market, personalised service.

B: I can see you want to have a try in a Svengali sort of way. Hoodwinking silly shop girls gives you a thrill doesn't it. But a GUILTY thrill isn't it.

A: That bit is somehow unclear. I want to be a bearer of the truth not a trumped-up tat merchant.

B: That's why I was so concerned with you getting into these 'black arts' – I know that's not your thing.

A: But I'm good at it. Maybe it's easy but they're eating out of my hand.

B: And when they get indigestion? When somebody sees you feeding these pigeon brains and feels left out? Ooohhh.

A: But I'm trapped! I have to keep going.

B: [Says nothing]

A: And anyway there's the dealing with problems bit. That's where imagination, a steady gaze and little bit of shady dealing really help. For example/

B: /No you shouldn't be telling me personal details given to you in confidence.

A: Well, you go to church, does your mob have confessions?

B: No, not like the Catholics. But if there's something on somebody's mind they can give it out in public or in private with the pastor.

A: Well imagine you're the priest – pastor – wouldn't you want to deal with somebody's distress? Help them get rid of their burden?

B: Yes. That would be my job.

A: Well that's what I'm doing.

B: But you're not trained or qualified

A: I'm learning quickly. Can you get training?

B: I presume the church wouldn't let naive Herberts loose. They must get training.

A: And personally? In your experience are they savvy and sensible?

B: Now you mention it they're the ones who seem least likely to have the imagination. I've never thought of going to our pastors with a personal problem – I don't know, its like they have a book of formulas.

A: The only way these girls will talk to me of their problems is if I show signs of delivering a supernatural answer.

B: What do you know of girl's problems?

A: It's not boyfriends and 'Dear Marge' stuff. This is deeper and about exorcising the past. Here: Just imagine you're the oldest child, where dad comes and goes and is alcoholic and beats mum. Then Mum dies.

Who looks after the family now?

B: She does?

A: [emphasis]You do. Now what sacrifices and compromises do you have to make?

B: I don't know?

A: Come on if you're going to be the next pastor then you've got to keep up.

B: I don't//Look forget pastoring. I only mentioned it once.

A: You might make a good pastor - but leave that for now - you're looking after the family because you have to. OK?

B: OK

A: So how do you do that?

B: I don't know

A: Well how did Tr// err this thirteen year old know?

B: I don't know

A: Well I guessed some then she filled in some of the gaps: Basically she became 'mum' and organised the family. You see their dad was supposedly caring for them so they didn't get put in care. To be honest if the children were not bruised the school and social services had others to attend to. Probably there was a network of aunties involved, but she was the one doing the looking after of everyone else. And don't forget she had to look after drunk dad as well.

B: That's brilliant!

A: How do you mean?

B: I couldn't do it. Suddenly becoming the mother of the whole family.

A: What's brilliant about that?

B: [Conscious of some unknown faux-pas] How she coped

A: Hmmn. Yes she deserves a medal - a medal that nobody gave her - but she didn't deserve to be dumped in the deep end. That's not brilliant is it?

B: Oh. I take your point. What I meant was "well done girl". Horrible situation - do the best you can.

A: And if you're busy being mum to three children and a drunk I expect school gets a bit left behind. Tracy//Err!

B: Tracy on cosmetics? My lips are sealed.

A: They'd better be.

[pause]

A: What's the next thing that goes wrong? Living on benefits, dealing with officials, being strict with drunken dad - luckily not violent to her.

B: Anything could go wrong so easily.

A: As if things aren't already bad

B: But you said she was coping

A: Would you cope today if you had to live in the same flat as your father as an unpredictable drunkard?

B: [pause] Err Well ... I'd leave. Looking after people isn't my thing

A: The next thing that goes wrong is dad dies.

B: Wrong?

- A: Come on B I told you before now they're going to get taken into care
- B: Oh. Nasty.
- A: She, [sotto voce] Tracy, is about to have her family taken away from her - she's done nothing wrong - everything right but social services don't see it that way. Actually they did - sort of - because she asked them what they could do for the children that she hadn't been doing for nearly three years and got out a notebook and wrote down their answers. So she turned social services into caring thoughtful people which is another miracle.
- B: Brilliant//err Another medal.
- A: A compromise was found. An aunt took over official responsibility.
- B: Well done everyone.
- A: It goes on. This aunt was not an angel let's say.
- B: How can such evil things happen?
- A: Not evil as such. Unlucky circumstances and, bless her, she did her best which was more than you could do... ..and more than I could do.
- B: And you guessed all that?
- A: Not really. I stumbled across the key and the rest fell into place. She wanted to speak with a dead person. Well who would a 23 year old accompanied by her younger sister want to speak with? It had to be a parent. Guess Mum. Mum can't have died last week as there wouldn't be a compelling need to catch up. So wind the clock back in my mind and twig the mum dies and leaves daughter in charge. Why daughter? Because dad is not capable or suitable. Why - What 's the most likely cause. So, as it was obvious, don't ask me to say why, but it was obvious that Tracy was the oldest and in-charge I asked "how many children in the family" and "was dad absent or alcoholic". The bull's-eye told me I was on the right track but after putting a few twos together there wasn't much more to know.
- B: So what did you tell her?
- A: I said "As I told you before I'm not a fortune teller but let's try something" We held hands – all in the centre, not a ring – Tracy, her sister and me - Then we thought about the family in times past and I waited for some hints.
- B: And did you get them? What happened?
- A: After a while I guessed that for Tracy that was the most worthwhile time of her life and now she was redundant. I thought her sister was probably supportive but just a follower. The struggle of those years, dealing with fears, having an older sister to make things better, not being ignored or discarded - all of those things earn medals in wartime and now the battles were over.
- B: And I know what you're going to say: Great leaders can't cope when peace comes.
- A: Yes. How did you know?
- B: So you're worried about Tracy now?

A: And I know why she wants to reconnect with the past

B: That's ... ..What did you do?

A: I told them I knew exactly the problem. I told them it was something a little bit different for each of them. I said I could see the past, feel the present but the future needed a bit more thought - but there was good reason to be optimistic.

B: Did you tell them about the general being lost after the war?

A: No. I said we'd never be able to forget but we'd never need to relive the past either.

B: But what about medals?

A: One step at a time! I was in the deep end and although getting a buzz from the revelation I knew I was a beginner. One step at a time.

B: Well done.

A: I've never been asked such important questions before and amazingly I could handle it.

B: Careful! Don't let your head get too big just because you made one lucky guess.

A: I suppose it's like being able to see in three dimension – binocular vision – for the first time. Things get put in perspective. There's me: And I can look inside people and myself. I tell you what, this fortune telling business may be a sham but it's bloody interesting.

B: So have you worked out the answer yet?

A: Yes and no. Yes the answer is find a way to recognise the emotions of the past and leave them there while hopefully finding something rewarding in the present.

B: [Pause] Someone should marry her if being a mum is her thing. Ideal. All ready prepared for raising a family.

A: How can she? Think about it?

B: Why not? Two plus two is four.

A: All the adults she's been involved with have been drunk, abusive, selfish or jealous or a combination. So here you have a young lady, pretty, terribly educated but good at stretching pennies - every man's dream - but scared out of her wits that it will all go wrong again.

B: Cake. Cake makes things better. Have some cake at your next seance.

A: I've told you before it isn't seance but soiree.

B: Therapy session then.

# Episode 7

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.  
A: Hello B.  
B: I've brought the imaginary friend for my one-man double-act with me.  
A: Oh I was wondering when we'd meet.  
B: This is Carl. Meet A.  
A: Pleased to meet you at last. <sup>4</sup>  
B: What do you think?  
A: As imaginary friends go – I should say – average.  
B: I thought I'd imagine him a little bit unusual  
A: Well, an imaginary friend is by definition a little bit unusual.  
B: [Not certain if he's the butt of a joke] A bit special in certain ways.  
A: Exactly. [Pause] Carry on.  
B: Oh yes. With my act you mean.  
A: Whatever takes you.  
B: [Takes script out of pocket] I'm still developing it. [Cross checks details with Carl]  
A: How do you want me to listen B?  
B: [Confused] How do you mean?  
A: As myself or a drunk student in the arts centre or perhaps say a judge for a nationally televised talent contest.  
B: [Boggled by a new idea] This is hardly mass entertainment fodder.  
A: OK - Just asking.  
B: Though I suppose if it was well received in the local venues an invitation would be something to consider.  
A: No it wouldn't. Do you have star quality? Your act is about sad things and that isn't a vote winner.  
B: You haven't seen any of my act yet so how can you say its sad.  
A: Reflective in a sort of melancholy way?  
B: Err Yes. Makes people think  
A: Well that's where you say bye-bye to television.  
B: But I might get another, different, act  
A: What do you think Carl?  
B: [blocked - 'unscripted'] I can tell Carl is unhap//He's focussed on this act. One thing at a time. "Stick to one road if you want to get somewhere".  
A: [To Carl] Very wise. [To B] Don't let me interrupt  
B: [Unsure] No. Well done A - I'm hoping for your feedback.  
A: Carry on.  
B: [Looks at Carl] Are we ready?

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4 Imagine a performance with good actors where both A and B can 'see' a real Carl even though he is at the very least invisible.

Carl [No reply] <sup>5</sup>

B: Ready?

C: [No reply]

A: [Pause] Come on Carl. We're all friends here.

B: [To A] he's very shy

A: Ah that explains it

B: Explains what?

A: Why he hasn't said anything.

B: Umm. I've been trying all week to get Carl to speak. I'm sure if I persevere he will get over it.

A: [To B but B thinks he's speaking to Carl] Are you getting psychiatric help?

B: [Waits expectantly for Carl to reply. Then to Carl.] Psychiatric help? Do you think that might help? [To A] Sad isn't it. I can tell you it puts a bit of a strain on our relationship.

A: It would. Now normally any friend of yours is a friend of mine, but between you and me B, Carl seems a teensy-weensy bit weird. As at the moment he's sadly not capable of telling me himself – perhaps he should get some therapy – you might know somebody who could help him – I wonder if you could give me a bit about his background.

B: Fair enough A. Carl is a bomber pilot.

A: [Pause] Flies aeroplanes? Drops bombs?

B: Yes. That's what bomber pilots do.

A: Would this be world war two? Sheepskin jackets, leather flying helmets and all that?

B: Spot on A. A young man hardly out of his teens. Responsible for the lives of his crew. He has to protect them from deadly danger in the night that could blast them apart out of invisible nowhere. But also on the ground back at base officialdom tries to steal the special togetherness from them.

A: But how can he protect them against enemy flak and fighters?

B: Exactly. By confidence. Bravado. Quiet heroism.

A: Pretending he knows everything will be alright?

B: Yes. That's what leadership in battle is. Sounds flaky to me. Ask veteran Tracy.

A: Tracy!?

B: Your Tracy buckled down against impossible odds. She deserved a medal for leadership and determination.

A: She's not 'my' Tracy... ..But I'm beginning to see what you're getting at.

A: [Pause] So this guy [remembers he's present] Carl - sorry - is a bit of a hero to you as well

B: I suppose so. Bravery and leadership seem to be things of the past.

A: Would you have liked to pilot a Lancaster bomber B?

B: Yes. And all that goes with it.

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<sup>5</sup> Imagine! Carl doesn't really exist but his silences punctuate the script and may be interpreted by A and B or the audience.

A: Including dropping bombs on people? And killing them?  
B: I was thinking more of the camaraderie of the crew.  
A: [pause] So if you had to chose between camaraderie and having to drop bombs and being an estate agent and not dropping bombs which would you chose?  
B: [Immediately] Dropping bombs.  
A: And what about the bastards dropping bombs on you?  
B: They weren't// wouldn't be dropping their bombs on me in particular.  
A: But you could still get killed in particular.  
B: Yes but I could still get killed if I was in my Lancaster.  
A: [To B] And what has Carl got to say? Do you think Carl feels the same way? After all he was there and you're just imagining it.  
B: Carl wasn't flying Lancasters  
A: I'm confused.  
B: Carl isn't British  
A: [Slowly at first] An American? Canadian? [No response from B] Australian? new Zealander? That is weird – and wonderful. You guys drop everything and come to help a tiny foreign country across the ocean. That's cool.  
B: Try again  
A: Try again? [To C] Did you fight somebody else's war?  
B: [For C to A] Yes. Carl is German and flew Heinkels.  
[Long pause. Uncertainty(A) and innocence/challenge(B)]  
A: [Eventually, exploring] So you've invented this imaginary friend, for the purpose of having a partner in a double act, who is a German bomber pilot. That's not going to be all that popular. Not comedy gold is it?  
B: Well you said yourself it was more sad than funny.  
A: People don't want 'sad' - Give them a few simple gags  
B: So people don't go to see, say, Macbeth or King Lear any more?  
A: That's different.  
B: How?  
A: They're not going to something billed as comedy which turns out to be tragedy.  
B: Who said I was going to be a comedy double act?  
A: It's sort of assumed  
B: Dangerous assumption then.  
A: The audience will be confused and give up.  
B: No they won't. They'll be temporarily confounded then shown alternatives to their complacent assumptions.  
A: My my. You are full of long words today.  
B: There's nothing wrong with long words.  
A: There's nothing wrong with Antelopes but I wouldn't want a herd in my house.  
B: Your buffooning is beginning to annoy me. I thought you'd be able to offer some constructive criticism but instead you're trying to cover it up.



A: I'm not criticising - just observing.

B: You're not paying attention

A: Yes I am

B: Not with your brain

A: Yes I am

B: No you're not. You haven't started asking questions. You even said yourself that Carl was a bit of a weird friend but haven't bothered to investigate. Aren't you curious?

A: Well yes I am curious.../

B: /But you don't know where to start. Out of your depth.

A: No I'm not. It's just that things take time to//sometimes the oblique approach is the best - 'slowly slowly catchee monkee'. Actually I may be going down lines you've never thought of.

B: Oh really?

A: [Serious] Yes! I've got it now. It's all coming together. I can see where this 'imaginary' friend comes from. He's really your dad.

B: [Appalled at such an incorrect assertion] A? Shut up! This friend was imagined from scratch. My father was too young for the second world war. His passion was playing football - so the bastards put him in a submarine for his national service. Pick the bones out of that.

A: Oh. Sorry.

B: [Pointedly] I tell you what. I could bring on the ghost of my dad - 'Skimmer' The great book-cooker who could get away with whatever was possible. 'Loophole Lew' The man who could juggle a whole set of accounts in his head and spot the mistakes - and better still who was making them, and who got to benefit. Yes that would be perfect: "Mister memory - The man with the computer mind"

A: You're trying to make a point

B: I am! For the last five years of his life he couldn't remember what he'd had for breakfast let alone figures. "Ladies and gentlemen! Let me introduce Skimmer the human computer. And now be amazed: Are you ready? ... Then here's your first question: What did you have for breakfast today? ...

A: [silence]

B: ... But I won't. Pathos is the low-hanging-fruit of tragedy - That's sad things happening to other people - Standing on a hill watching others drown in a flood sort of thing. My aim is to make the audience comfortable with new ideas. It's not about old jokes. It's not about confirming their prejudices. It's about giving them nourishment - a new sort of food for their minds.

A: B, you may be taking this too seriously. Fancy a drink?  
B: I could murder a pint  
A: Let's go. <sup>6</sup>

## Episode 8

B: Hello A. Good to see you.  
A: Hello B.  
B: How are you coping as guru of the Co-op?  
A: Well I haven't been lynched by spinsters or sacked yet.  
B: Only a matter of time  
A: Which?  
B: [Thinks] I'd say you'll get an unexpected nasty talking-to first for threatening the decorum of the store but really caused by pique.  
A: Correct! And I managed to pull a rabbit from a hat. Most appropriate as it was Hattie – not her real name, but everyone calls her that – head of ladies fashion with a penchant for millenary who wanted to 'have a word'.  
B: Spinster?  
A: By all accounts.  
B: And you were about to get ground into very small pieces unless you could escape the clutches of Godzilla?  
A: A determined lady but not // actually very shapely. She's not got to the stage where she needs preservative. "Tres elegant" I believe they say in the fashion world.  
B: Oh. Spinster though. Unmarried. Delicate perfume?  
A: Err yes. Very nice perfume.  
[pause]  
B: Go on. There you were in her boudoir and then what?  
A: Stock room./  
B: /Delicately perfumed stockroom  
A: Yes/  
B: Shapely legs.  
A: Yes! Yes all right! Maria// Hattie was harassing me with her charm.  
B: And you complained?  
A: Mm No.

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<sup>6</sup> [B turns towards A (away from Carl) as if ready to march off. A: 'looks round' B to Carl quizzically. B remembers Carl, turns, looks Carl in the eye, snaps his fingers in a 'disappear' gesture. B resumes his march-off stance. A looks at Carl, shakes his head, looks at the audience with a slow resigned look then walks off with B.]

- B: [Husky female voice impersonation] "Oh I do like a man with such strong thews"
- A: Stop making fun. It wasn't so funny at the time. In my mind I could see the giant hat pin and I didn't want to be stabbed like a butterfly.
- B: Fatal
- A: Fatal and painful and embarrassing. [small pause] Imagine the caterpillars talking amongst themselves: "I see daddy has been mounted [micro pause realises another meaning of mounted] on a card." That wouldn't do my credibility as the iconoclast leader of the Co-op cognoscenti much good.
- B: Calm down.
- A: You weren't there.
- B: What's your problem? Hattie – or shall we call her Maria – are you on first name terms? Hattie has heard you're someone to watch, someone to investigate, a bit out of the ordinary... ..a bit of cute muscle perhaps so now she has a chance to pin you down. But what have you got to fear? A passionate weekend in Brighton might clear the cobwebs nicely... ..all those fresh sea breezes. [pause] Another notch in your belt.
- A: Listen! There I am about to get the third degree in Hattie's storeroom. I'm not sure if she's friendly or pretending. I've got to keep my job, so I can't upset her but I still don't know what her list of demands are.
- B: So was she after your body or after your head?
- A: That's 'mans logic' you're using there B. She wanted what she could get.
- B: Point taken. And what was that?
- A: What all women want
- B: Money?
- A: No
- B: Not money!
- A: No POWER.
- B: Alright point taken.
- A: Power over men mostly.
- B: Look around at the fine male specimens Homo sapiens and ask if they should be left in charge? [micro-pause] Rhetorical question. [odd voice] I for one welcome our new female overlords.
- A: Wimp! You're not supposed to give in. It's the spirit of resistance that keeps them on their toes. And just think how boring their lives would be if you agreed with them all the time.
- B: But I'd quite like a boring, non-argued life – It would give me the chance to get on with my own things.
- A: Poor soul: B Have you ever been pinned down by the question "Do I look good in this?"
- B: No A.
- A: Alright, let's play pretend.
- B: OK
- A: [Girly voice] Do I look good in this? [Does a twirl etc.]

B: Yes dear. I think it suits you lovely.

A: Very good. That's the correct answer. At least from a man's point of view.

B: Regardless of whether it does.

A: Of course. Except, as you're a man it has to be the wrong answer. "A man's place is in the wrong"

B: Wrong? I thought I was doing the right 'yes dear' things.

A: [Girly voice] You're only saying that.

B: Oh shi// Really?

A: Sorry B but you'd better get used to being wrong.

B: OK. "I am a snivelling worm not fit to comment" How about that?

A: Arghh! How simple can I make it. They're not interested in excuses. All they want is for you to have an opinion that turns out to be unacceptable and never mentioned again. You're not well acquainted with the ways of women are you? – what with your strict tabernacle upbringing and all that.

B: I have lots of lady customers in the estate agents – from all walks of life.

A: But they're not interested in you. They have acquired some money, who knows where, and are focussed on getting their own property. They know you don't have influence, special powers or even negotiate a discount. [small reflective pause] You need to invent 'friends' and friendships – strings that can be pulled, then let the rich and beautiful know that a word from you in a volatile market might clinch the deal.

B: But that would be lying!

A: Yes, but you're an estate agent.

B: That's going too far. For the time being I'm an estate agent but one day I'll have climbed out of the pit and I don't want lying lying on my conscience.

A: Back to the Co-op. Let's get that over-with.

B: OK

A: Don't you hate it when people ask you irrelevant questions and you can't escape.

B: Eh?

A: You know at a job inter // suppose you have somebody in your office looking to buy a house but they're wittering on about 'will the weather hold out for the cricket' somehow your answer is going to queer the pitch if you get it wrong.

B: It's never happened to me.

A: Really?

B: Well we do keep up with events in the Telegraph to impress the customers who can't come to the point. Time is money so we take the initiative. [pause] And?

A: "How long had I worked at the Co-op?" "Did I enjoy it here?" "What did I like about it". Arghh.

B: I feel your pain - a bit.

A: "It must be difficult working in a shop with so many young and pretty girls"

B: No right answer.

A: Yes there was – It screwed my chances with Tracy and Cynthia but it was check-mate to here in one move unless – I cracked it! I CRACKED IT I tell you. Confession.

B: Eh?

A: Yes. Skip the impossible question bit and go straight to the 'I am in the wrong' bit.

B: Go on.

A: "I am a bit of a libidinous fellow and my life is hard. Even more so in the last couple of weeks there have been members of staff hanging on my every word. The strains of dealing with girls who were so desperate to believe they would take anything I said as holy writ were beginning to tell. My defences against simple girly admiration were weakening. I was forced into fortune telling and couldn't stand the play-acting. I didn't know how much longer I could deal with them in a purely Platonic fashion." BINGO! I'd cracked it. I knew the answer. "Miss Hattie", I said, "I get urges – I'm sure as a mature lady you understand – I'm trapped with the youngsters who are just not my type."

B: [Husky female voice again] Who is your type?

A: Yes. You've got the picture. Trapped.

B: Trapped in a delicately perfumed stockroom – just the two of you? – Ow ow ow that must have hurt.

A: Err it was a bit of a shock.

B: And

A: Err

B: Will you be making a complaint?

A: No. I'll tell you one thing: The older ladies don't hang around.

B: Toy boy eh?

A: Possibly. But Maria has got what she wanted and wants to keep it. I could live with that.

B: Wimp! That's the phrase isn't it?

A: [Resigned] I suppose so

B: See you on Saturday?

A: Sorry no. I'll be in Brighton.

# Episode 9

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B.
- B: Haven't seen you for a couple of weeks. Everything all right? Last time you were in the clutches of Hattie the hat lady.
- A: Exhausted! She's the real thing. Suffice it to say she's delightful when she's being coquettish. Very passionate in bed – opened my eyes I can tell you. That's the good side.
- B: You have a hunted man look about you A.
- A: 'The female of the species is more deadly than the male'.
- B: Oh dear. I knew you were putting your head in a trap but/  
A: /'the flesh is weak'
- B: It's always a bad sign when people are philosophical.
- A: As we sow so shall we reap.
- B: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
- A: Yes, that as well! Look I'm out on parole and don't have much time.
- B: "They are not long, the days of wine and roses:  
Out of a misty dream  
Our path emerges for a while, then closes  
Within a dream."
- A: B you are irritating in a wonderful way. I've been in danger of being snuffed out like a spider with a vacuum cleaner. Now you're trying to gently swill me down the plug-hole: I don't have time! I'm on the run – Let's get to the point.
- B: "A man running from a woman is a hero"
- A: Who said that? Anyway let's get on. Maria is scarily jealous – very scarily. Scary to the point of insisting I comment on the legs of the girls passing by. We're walking along the promenade and she gets me in a half-nelson hug and asks me what I think of the girl in the orange dress. I have to say something. "OK" I say. "What about her breasts" she says? "OK" I say sticking to my formula. She says: "Ugly legs - Dress by binliner – what do you think A?"
- B: [Pause reflecting the seriousness of the hole A is in] Tough. "As you sow..."
- A: All this time, fractions of a second that seemed like minutes, she was gloating – I can tell – like a torturer showing you the instruments.
- B: [formal/silly voice] Tell me A was it excruciating?
- A: [matching B] B. Let me tell you it was excruciating.
- B: Oh the irony. [pause... quickly] Your pain is safe with me. What did you

say? Not “OK Err Right number of legs and that’s always a bonus” I hope.

- A: [Jaw drops at the H-bomb retribution if he tried comic quips against jealousy] Stop it B! I’d be toast. Very dead toast.
- B: Sorry A. Just trying to picture the scene.
- A: I know you’re trying to help B but please listen. Question: “Ugly legs - Dress by binliner – what do you think A?” I can’t agree outright or disagree outright. I can’t think of any answer that doesn’t get me into trouble of the ‘Mr carving knife meet Mr balls’ variety.
- B: So what did you say in the end?
- A: B, I was caught in the system. Unexpectedly trapped - A week before I’d been free. And it was BRILLIANT! How can this happen? There’s a bit in Oscar Wilde’s ballad of Reading gaol.

*“I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,”*

It gave me hope. Something that they bashed into you at school. That’s why I’m a rebel. [pause for effect]

- B: [Sceptical] Oscar Wilde turned you into an anarchist?
- A: B you are being so deliberately obtuse I could kiss you.
- B: Please don’t. Kiss me? Why? [A bit frightened]
- A: (A) Because you’re so wonderfully deliberately obtuse. I need argument like an archer needs a target. How else can I practice. Come on you must know how a bit of sparring sharpens your wits.
- B: Yes. All the time if you’re ready to learn and work at your embarrassments.
- A: And B, you’re the best target in the world because you neither disintegrate or try to win. Stolid... // [pause] The British tommy in the trenches for example. Oh how I wish I was not so well educated.
- B: You’re in a bad way A.
- A: Terrible. You don’t know the half.
- B: All those quotes. And now saying how proud of me you are. I could hug you. [Beams relaxingly]
- A: [Hug! -Eeek!!!] Blokes manage these things at arms length. But there I am on the front at Brighton with Triceratops looking indifferently into the distance in that way which means you better have a really good note from your mum - and they’ve seen a few. [Emphasis] Anyway it was brilliant! All that blue sky at Brighton sub-consciously rescued me. Get outside. Get outside! I summoned my strength. Oh yes. More by luck than judgement I said “Umm.. Dress by binliner you say – oh that’s very clever – still isn’t it every woman’s right to wear what she wants?”
- B: And?
- A: What do you think? You know I could only get a draw after extra time and a few disputed goals. If I fence with you we do it for fun, but the fragrant Maria was after my soul. No more looking at girls. I won the battle by

flake but with women you earn hatred not respect. They're not used to resistance.

B: Have you got a few minutes of freedom left?

A: No. I've been living on borrowed time for the last fortnight.

B: Why?

A: I have to account for every minute. If I take a fridge-freezer to a lady's house I get interrogated to make sure I haven't transgressed.

B: Transgressed how?

A: You tell me. There's this sort of force-field that she has which... ..Hey you told me all about it but I didn't take it seriously: "A man's place is in the wrong".

B: Can you stay silent for 15 seconds?

A: Err. Yes

B: [After 15 seconds-ish] Right! Firstly I'm not having you chased by the Cheetah Maria - and believe me, when she abandons your carcass the jackals will tuck-in. The Tracys and Cynthia's ... not to mention the management. Secondly you need to exert your superiority.

A: How?

B: Come on! Who was bamboozling the horoscopists a few weeks ago? You should be a past master at this now.

A: [Completely lost. grasping at straws] You haven't been zombified.

B: Look it's obvious. Why is she so desperate to keep you in her dungeon? - Im sure there are pleasures in this dungeon as well as spiky threats. Because she's insecure. She thinks you can't wait to leave her for a younger bit of stuff. She's doing the only thing she can think of.

A: She's not insecure

B: Yes she is. You know those plants that flower once just before they die? - That's where she is. You are her one and only bee. Lovely scent you think. Let's buzz a little closer you think. So what's to stop you wandering off?

A: Scary

B: Scary? From you point of view or hers?

A: Err. Hers mostly.

B: But you're not thinking of wandering off in a hurry are you?

A: No. We're sort of happy together - just so long as she can keep her suspicions under control.

B: And you're happy for her to take Vogue as her bible?

A: I don't quite understand what you're getting at.

B: How many in-depth discussions of dialectic materialism have you had?

A: None. Oh I see. She's not had the benefit of a decent education.

B: So not a soul-mate in the intellectual-bohemian sphere then.

A: You're a bit quick to judge there old boy.

B: Does she want children?

A: I think so. [Admits it:] Yes definitely.

B: Big responsibility.



A: [No reply]

B: Noisy squealy things

A: Look B, I appreciate your comments – in fact they've been very useful – but I'm not going to be a dad any time soon. That's something that needs planning.

B: Family planning. Err like putting a pin through a condom packet.

A: You/

B: /Bastard? Who has been doing the planning for families A? You or her?

A: Shit! Do you think so?

B: No. Not unless she's really desperate.

A: So reassuring!

B: Look A you could have a long, lovely and err fruitful relationship, but obviously not if she's going to be jealous and sniping.

A: [no answer]

B: [Being helpful not sarcastic] Aren't you Bohemians and intellectuals supposed to have more than one relationship on the go at a time? Respectable outside with hints of scandal leaking out from underneath.

A: I'm too tired to care.

B: They were all at it. Lesbianism and homosexuals as well. You don't have to be gay to be bohemian but you certainly have to, had to, jump into bed. It was just part of making friends.

A: What are you suggesting?

B: Success breeds success. When word gets around that furniture shifter A has been conquered by spinster Hattie so all the others will be lining up for a try. Whether to settle some feminine score or herd instinct I don't know.

A: But I daren't! If she thought I was contemplating/

B: /Yes? What could she do?

A: Explode.

B: Well don't let her.

A: You don't know what you're talking about.

B: Yes I do. [pause] You want the best of both worlds don't you?

A: Eh?

B: You want to spend your nights with Maria but your days in intellectual pursuits which are far beyond the glossy pages of the fashion magazines.

A: Err. Yes Ideally. Best of both worlds.

B: You can explain. You can be the hero who has to go away but will always come back. How cool is that?

A: Cool but impractical.

B: Heroes have been going away to wars – so they say – for hundreds of years. Whether they're genuinely sorry or secretly pleased to get free we can't say. But people wrote songs about it so they must have been important in their way.

A: I can't say to Maria she'll have to share me.

B: You must.

- A: 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned'
- B: "Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd,  
Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn'd."
- A: I'm trapped.
- B: Silly billy. Make her love you more. Show her that your love for her isn't in jeopardy.
- A: How can I do that!
- B: Tell her and then prove it. Show her that you have enough to spare.
- A: Prove it?
- B: Show her that you like her company, attention and being with here is just the most lovely thing.
- A: But it isn't. She's got the brain of a tomato.
- B: Exactly. She must realise that you 'have needs' she can't supply.
- A: I don't know.
- B: She suspects enough even if she can't put her finger on it. Look you're onto a winner here if you've got the balls. You can't be with her any more than a horse can be in harness all the time. Sometimes you need to run around the field. Find out what sort of animals she likes and run with that.
- A: I still don't see what you're getting at.
- B: Look A. You have a lovely relationship developing except it is poisoned by fear, insecurity and jealousy. This could be the greatest relationship of your life. You're the only one who can do something to stop it being spoiled.
- A: For goodness sake how!
- B: She knows enough to hold an emotional gun to your head so she'll understand it when you say you can't cope with being chained-up and will have to reluctantly call it a day or come to a loving compromise. Show your strength. You've got a good education you could use that. Intellectual stimulus is something that might be so alien to her that she will accept that it's that nonsense and therefore not a threat.
- A: I lost you there. You say I should say it's you or my books?
- B: Ish. But it's not one thing or the other but a bit of the books to you is like the surface of the sea to a whale – You have to come up to breathe.
- A: Well put. But how does that help me?
- B: Give her confidence. Force her to trust you. Make it clear that even if you have a fling with a Tracy or two you still belong to her.
- A: I'm way out of my depth.
- B: Yes. And I haven't mentioned the pincer movement from the other ladies who are circling saying what is meat for one of them should be shared or else...
- A: I know I'm in trouble.
- B: No you're not. You're in clover - All you have to do is get Maria to believe in you and your 'gifts' - gifts she doesn't understand but must be unique.
- A: I can't do that. I wouldn't know where to start.

- B: Of course you do. If you can do fortune telling for Tracy then you can stand back for a few minutes and do the same for Maria.
- A: [Uncertain]
- B: Are you back to Maria's tonight?
- A: Yes. Half an hour ago!
- B: Very well. I'll tell you what. You know I told you success breeds success?
- A: Yes. It's a bit of a blur.
- B: Tell her that tomorrow at 3 o'clock precisely I'll visit the Co-op, seek her out and ask her if she'd like to come ballroom dancing with me. Tell her my name and anything you like about me. But you **MUST** tell her I won't be upset if she graciously refuses.
- A: What!
- B: Trust me A. If you want a looser relationship then she needs to feel the same.
- A: Err.
- B: You might be good at winking out secrets from the past but you're trapped in quicksand when it comes to the present. Oh and by the way – you're still stoking the fires of the other petty jealousies and disappointments caused by giving young girls a cheap thrill by dabbling in the black arts.
- A: I'll deal with that another day I must go.
- B: I may be able to help you out there too.

## Episode 10

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B.
- B: I got the job.
- A: Job?
- B: Yes. Teaching Maria dancing
- A: Oh she said she was going to give you a chance on the dance floor but nothing about you teaching her.
- B: Strange. How did she react when you told her?
- A: She wanted to know about you. How old. How tall. Handsome etc. I said you were a polite and well brought up lad who I'm sure was a lovely mover on the dance floor. You [emphasis] can dance can't you?
- B: Oh yes. Got medals. The trouble is while I got medals in the Rumba I wasn't getting medals in the hows-yer-father department. There you are in no-man's land holding a panting girl in permanent 'go on snog me'

position but unable to do so. There's a battalion of mothers and other girls watching for the slightest suggestion of lustful groping in the middle of your Latin Hip Motion during the dance and instant return to the trenches at the end.

A: And now you'd like to have a go with Maria – my Maria – to have a little grope in the do-si-do.

B: Oh yes.

A: Oh yes! Hands off her.

B: Too late old boy. – Don't worry. Remember what it's really all about. I'm taking the pressure off you.

A: I'm not under pressure.

B: Yes you//Ah I see it's already working.

A: I don't want you to steal her now I've broken the ice.

B: Look A. I know you can't see the wood for the trees when it comes to dealing with the present but you know you'd suffocate if she had you under her thumb all the time. You'd drown in a sea of pink, chintz and, and I think this is what you made most clear, vapours from a brain made of mashed potatoe.

A: You're being harsh.

B: That's what you told me. And I haven't mentioned jealousy.

A: She is insanely jealous I'll admit.

B: And I haven't mentioned 'spending all your money with gay abandon'

A: She hasn't/

B: /She will

A: I think you may be right.

B: Spider and the fly

A: Err

B: Which one of you is the spider?

A: Oh yes. I see what you mean. [pause] Those gruesome nature documentaries

B: Spider and the spider?

A: Yes. 'Hello sailor want a good time' and before you know it your head's been bitten off.

[reflective pause]

B: Do you want to have your wallet bitten off – ooohh – arrrhhh – owowow – yesss – shared bank accounts!

A: She's not that bad. In fact I'm beginning to take exception.

B: Look A, I'm not saying you should give her up, just that you have to admit you are a bit of a trophy and you are being advertised as such, especially in the Co-op, whether you like it or not.

A: She wouldn't.

B: Why not?

A: Because we just – clicked. Two people welded together in a magical moment. This is [emphasis] it B we're the most romantic lovers you could ever wish for.

B: And I'm very happy for you both. You're happy?

A: Yes

B: And she's happy?

A: Yes

B: So what could possibly go wrong?

A: Nothing

B: That's not what you said before. You admitted she was jealous 'dangerously' I think you said. Problem?

A: Possibly.

B: You admitted she had the intellectual capacity of a squirrel. Petite, furry and easy to pet but still with squirrel-brains.

A: And so what? We can't all be Einstein.

B: But you told me that the only use of crayon-brains would be being melted down to make more crayons.

A: I've changed my mind since then. It is the duty of the better educated to reach down to the others. I'm surprised you haven't cottoned on to that by now.

B: Bless you Mahatma. Except that you've got to put up with Maria wittering on about this month's fashions for the rest of your natural. And heaven help you if you accept a cup of tea from a nice lady for delivering a wardrobe. Ouch Ouch Ouch!

A: I don't know why I'm taking advice from the virgin verger but yes – you do have a point B. [pause] I'm sorry I've been so difficult. You have to realise I am trapped and .../

B: /...mesmerised?

A: Exactly. Two weeks and I've lost all my connection with reality.

B: And two hundred pounds?

A: Umm.. [calculating expenses] Nearer four hundred

B: Ouch!

A: Ouch as you say – but I'd do it again.

B: Now. How to turn that four hundred pounds into an investment? B's investment rescue service at your service. For the umpteenth time – perhaps you can now see a bit more clearly my plan is to take the pressure off you enough for you to get a grip on reality. Just because I give Maria a squeeze doesn't mean you're kicked out in the cold. Remember I've been brought up to do the right thing.

A: That's easy to say until she's squeezing your hand and asking you to take her home.

B: I have lived with temptation.

A: But you only need to succumb once

B: And, just hypothetically, what's the problem you have with that?

A: What?

B: Me being dragged back to Maria's for a Sunday afternoon of gymnastics

A: Bedroom gymnastics

B: No. [micro-pause] Press-ups

- A: Press?//Oh I see. You mean Sex on a Sunday don't you?
- B: [short space of no reply]
- A: And I thought that was against your religion.
- B: You dolt. Don't you see that if – and I stress 'if' – that was to happen, and I can't see why it should – but if it did, then that's your get out of gaol free card that you've been looking for. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: If she's free to take her pleasures then you should be too.
- A: Sort of.
- B: Yes 'sort of'. I shouldn't think you could get away with any friendly gesture in the female department – however innocent, a trivial pleasantry, bit of gentlemanly assistance – will probably bring jealous retribution. But reading poems, I should emphasise the gloomy intellectual ones to start with, then with any luck she'll switch off. Painting – I know you were having a go at that. You'll need to sell paintings to be allowed to carry on doing them...
- A: You have an accountant's view of everything.
- B: Yes. It's called looking at the facts.
- A: But/
- B: /No you don't. Rose tinted. Very. Pink chiffon nighty tinted spectacles mate. Just remember you're where you are today because Maria trapped you. Are you going to be saying "yes dear" for the rest of you life? "Yes dear that man on the telly is awful". "Yes dear that dress doesn't suit her" "Yes dear? A new kitchen? Absolutely agree dear"
- A: But we love each other. That sort of thing just doesn't apply.
- B: How much has it cost you?
- A: Err. nearly five hundred pounds.
- B: I thought you said four hundred
- A: I was embarrassed.
- B: [face man to man] A. My intention is to water down the intensity of her attack. Remember you're a bit of easy meat and she's glad of anything she can get. By the way, for such a sexy woman why has she passed up all the other opportunities until now?
- A: I don't know
- B: Surely she should have a hundred hunks eating out of her hand. That's something to think about then. In the meantime your job is to try to get back to the real world. The basement crowd must be wondering whether you are their pure leader or just another dirty opportunist.
- A: "Purity". that's a funny word... ...B you've struck a chord. I want to be pure [emphasis] and have my shirts ironed. Honest teaching and a missus to tell me how to put an ensemble – see! 'ensemble' is already in my vocabulary – how to dress properly.
- B: Your people need you A
- A: They do.
- B: So let me see if I can neutralise Maria for you. Just think how lovely it will be if you can solve her jealousy problem. That would be a major

achievement.... ..on a par with getting Tracy to trust adults again.

A: I'd forgotten about her problem

B: She needs your help A.

## Episode II

A: Hello B.

B: Hello A. Good to see you. Still all in one piece?

A: Just about but why is life so complicated? I'm on the edge of an abyss with Maria and trying to get the bohemians back on track.

B: Is she looking forward to tomorrow's dancing expedition?

A: She's not mentioned it in a 'not to be mentioned' sort of way of not mentioning it.

B: Odd. [pause] Now have you any clues why this pretty little thing hasn't been snapped-up years ago? Any scars from previous disasters. Any rumours of what happened to the last bloke? The rotating knives could be closer and sharper than you think.

A: Perhaps she's just very shy. No confidence.

B: A born spinster?

A: I'll just have to keep my wits about me.

B: And the Canteen Communards? Have you squashed the fortune telling?

A: Mostly. I've said that I'll do a bit of tea-leaves and Tarot by special appointment at a time and place to be agreed by all of those that want to have a go all together.

B: And?

A: Partial success. The horoscopers are busy organising what they call a seance. Not four people sitting round a kitchen table which was what I had in mind but crystals and a Ouija board.

B: Sounds scary but you can get it over and done with in one go.

A: Scary is an understatement. They've already decided what they want to hear. How am I supposed to guess what it is? They're going to be very disappointed and might turn ugly.

B: At least you can't be accused of taking advantage of impressionable girls in the Co-ops time. The management can't really complain if you're up to dark arts out of work time. And if you do it just the once, for kicks, the bubble bursts and the pressure relieved. Problem solved.

A: What about Tracy? I said I'd work out a solution. I'm overdue there.

B: And what about Maria? What does she think of all this?

A: [Emphasis] I haven't told her. She hasn't mentioned it. I might be able to

get away with it. She need never know.

B: [Deliberately abstractly] Very jealous lady is Maria. A hanging offence if you ask me.

A: What do you suggest?

B: She'll have to know sooner or later. If she finds out – or somebody makes a point of telling her – then you're for the high jump mate. Why would you keep it secret if you weren't up to something you shouldn't be?

A: You speak as if I need permission... ..I suppose I do.

B: You're not used to this are you. Neither am I, but I can see it from the outside. You're on a tight reign held by a desperate woman A. It's the old 'are you a man or a mouse' thing.

A: Comes as a shock.

B: If I was you I'd keep quiet until there is a definite date – if she finds out before then you can say it was just silly girls with vague ideas. Then leave it as late as you dare before telling her what other people have organised. You mustn't give her time to make other arrangements for you. "Surprise I've booked a week in Spain for us" or a mystery illness.

A: And I can't let them down. It's my duty. It's only fun and I don't want to do it anyway but I can't get out of it. Yes! Who but a bunch of silly girls would want to do that, but it showed how much they were pinning their hopes on me. Me! Who doesn't believe a word of it.

B: Very noble. But I shouldn't overdo the saintly martyr bit it might sound a bit fake.

A: Right - Just a bit of stiff-upper-lip-duty sort of thing.

B: So that's sorted out then. There's light at the end of the tunnel. You're closing down the fortune telling, may undermine Maria's possessiveness thanks to me and a bit of the old Foxtrot, and you can get back to inspiring the bargain basement intellectuals to explore their creative muses.

A: I'm not sure it is all plain sailing on that last point B. The horoscopers have picked up the artistic ambiance and are now writing poetry.

B: What's wrong with that?

A: [Takes out a piece of paper.] Ignoring the spelling mistakes, this masterpiece comes from the biro of Jayne in carpets. [pause] Are you ready. There's a potted plant within easy reach over there if you need to throw up. [pause to get resolve]

*Oh pretty flowers*

*I could watch for hours*

*With lovely scent perfume*

*But then you die too soon.*

B: [Amused] Lyrical. An overpowering aroma of pathos finished with glorious bathos to/

A: /Shut up! I'm supposed to be the arbiter of good style. I'm supposed to set the standard. It's my responsibility to see this sort of thing incinerated. Now put yourself in my position. What would you do when



Jayne presents this, ode, that she's sweated over? You don't hack a puppy to death because it's been sick on the carpet.

- B: Oh I see what you mean. Criticism might come over as being a bit harsh. You can hope for improvement. It could hardly get worse. Look on the bright side.
- A: Tell me B do I look a fraction despondent to you?
- B: Weary.
- A: That's because now they're all at it and Jayne has brought forth a dozen. Anything you want to know about Roses, or Tulips, or Bluebells (– with 'smells'), or trees or butterflies? I expect by next week to have the complete flora of Equatorial Guinea encapsulated in exquisitely compostable verse.
- B: You can talk. All you can draw is railway engines.
- A: That's different. It's an interpretation, a little eccentric I admit, but I don't put on a blindfold and throw crayons at the page. And you can talk! A one-man double-act with an imaginary friend
- B: [Turns to C] Carl is a very useful asset.
- A: You seem to have all the answers at the moment. Any suggestion?
- B: Since you ask, yes. Don't say good or bad but complain it is very 'samey'. That gives you the opportunity to introduce some other poets with a gentle 'come back when you can do that'.
- A: Look B, I've had an idea. You don't want to stand-in for me at this seance as well do you? That would get me out of a lot of trouble. You can get to know these young ladies – have them feeding out of your hand and I don't have to risk the incandescent rage of Maria.
- B: Blimey! How much do you want. I'm already rescuing you from Maria by a cunning plan [emphasis] at my expense! You're the guru you'll just have to learn quickly.
- A: Oh well. Just a thought.

## Episode 12

- B: Hello A. Good to see you.
- A: Hello B. What happened?
- B: Maria must have told you.
- A: She told me something vague but I'm not sure that's what actually happened.
- B: Oh. Got you. A tricky time.

- A: You survived OK though?
- B: Survived but not sure what I achieved. Did you get positive feedback?
- A: Planet Maria must be a funny place because everything she said about you was good. She was really pleased with your posh gear, polite and proper attitude, and how considerate and careful you were. Ten out of ten. Nice young man who knows how to treat a woman.
- B: And?
- A: And yet she comes back with a thumbs-down. I can't make it out.
- B: I was going to say she took to dancing like a duck to concrete. – I was prepared for a number of excuses and of course hoping for letting the dancing take over and give us an hour when nothing else mattered – but this was weird. I know she can do at least some of those dances, but it was like a bird plucking its feathers out to prove it couldn't fly. "Look at me I'm a Dodo".
- A: You've lost me.
- B: I thought you were the one who can spot fractured personalities?
- A: By luck and logic.
- B: Well get your logic working on this or else I'll have to do it again and I'll break her shell.
- A: Break her shell?
- B: You're not a dancer are you? You don't know what music and movement does to hormones. [Small pause] Adrenaline - you know struggling to perform your best and – and err 'sexaline'. The thrill of the chase – you're sweaty, close – quickly changing perspectives – shared scares when feet get confused – teamwork and temptation together. Brains are at work to steer smoothly but bodies are at work to do what healthy bodies can't help doing.
- A: Mechanical marionettes is how I've seen that dancing they have on the TV.
- B: Mechanical! That's the exact word to use for Maria. Bless her she knew the all steps but couldn't dance. [Emphatic correction] Wouldn't. She could smile all the way through the tricky parts but I was dancing with a robot.
- A: [Silence - nothing to say]
- B: Weird. A robot. – [optimistic/wistful] But she may have been coming round a bit at the end.
- A: [Silence - nothing to say]
- B: Bizarre! For me it brought back memories of girls who were alive as dancers but robots when it came to flirting. When you've carried waxworks round the floor – a Maria in the headlights is nothing.
- A: She said you had a nice cream tea afterwards.
- B: Am I good to you? If I'd had a free rein I'd have dusted her off properly! You're a man who can't help helping women in distress so you'd understand. Maria has a 'block'. Have you noticed?
- A: No?

B: Oh come on! Why has such a sexy, desirable, energetic lady not been taken off to the land of matrimony long ago?

A: I don't know. You asked me this before didn't you. To be honest I didn't pay much attention. If there wasn't a problem then why should I bother fixing it?

B: But there is.

A: Is there?

B: Yes of course. Stop being so 'simple'.

A: Maria is a lovely lady and we're getting on like a house on fire - like a house struck by lightning. I can't understand all this 'robotic' stuff.

B: This may come as a bit of a shock to you/

A: /you didn't did you!/?

B: /No listen! That's what I'm trying to tell you Dummkopf.

A: You've lost me

B: Maria is one something short of a something in some department – or perhaps dropped down a well...

A: Down a well? I'm not with you.

B: And can't get out.

A: [pause for thought] Psychologically?

B: [At last! Emphasis] Yes. Your Maria. I emphasise 'your' Maria. She's obviously been around – but hit a buffer – or got thrown down a well.

A: Thrown down a well? How?

B: Come on mister sooth-sayer. Use your brains because I don't know.

A: She hasn't told me.

B: Of course not stupid.

A: Stupid?

B: Yes. Think! She's suddenly got a very innocent boy who makes love to her without any baggage. [emphasis on toy] Toyboy.

A: You're jealous!

B: Good for you. Everybody is happy. You're happy and she's....

A: Happy

B: No she's hunting for 'happy'. You've shown her 'happy' still exists but for her there's something else that is still just beyond reach.

A: [Sour] What do I know?

B: Don't be like that. I'm your friend. I was so close to stealing her from you yesterday. And killing that thing that has undermined her confidence.

A: She looks like she has complete confidence to me.

B: I had a trump card that I didn't play.

A: Just so you could meet her again on another pretext.

B: A. What are friends for?

A: Err...

B: When do friends really matter?

A: [Slowly] When you need them

B: Exactly. Now listen to your friend.

A: But I'm not in need.

B: Yes you are.  
A: Hardly! I've found a super-sexy lady. How can that be a problem?  
B: Today is never a problem until the past catches up with tomorrow.  
A: [pause] Too deep for me B. – By the way you are my friend – we just see things differently.  
B: [Didactic] Remember Tracy?  
A: Yes.  
B: Tracy who you discovered had a – tough – past. It's bothering her isn't it?  
A: Yes.  
B: And well done to you for finding it out.  
A: More by luck than judgement.  
B: Well it shows you can listen and make intelligent guesses.[stops]  
A: [Fills in eventually] I try to.  
B: Excellent. So can you listen to me? I'm a friend after all.  
A: Of course  
B: Really?  
A: Of course yes.  
B: OK then listen. Ready?  
A: Yes go on.  
B: The lovely Maria has something in her past.  
A: That's it?  
B: Now guess what it is  
A: I can't see anything.  
B: Look just take it as read will you otherwise I shall have to play my trump card  
A: OK I'll take your word for it that Maria has some awful secret. Now what's your trump card?  
B: Going to church.  
A: Going to church!  
B: That shook you didn't it.  
A: The mind boggles  
B: [pause] Does it. Is your mind working at all?  
A: Of course it is! What would Maria want with Sunday service?  
B: Good Catholic name Maria...  
A: [Silent eh?] I'm not with you B.  
B: She might have a Catholic upbringing and that means going to church. If you're a Catholic you go to church. It's not a tick-box thing.  
A: OK so Catholics take their church seriously so...?  
B: So what happens if you quit? Nasty eh?  
A: [slowly] A traitor.  
B: Exactly! I see you're beginning to think like me. There's the possibility that Maria was once a prim young thing who went to church every Sunday and confession and all that/  
A: /And you're suggesting that she got seduced by the priest and/  
B: /No I'm not suggesting that. It hadn't occurred to me. But it is a

possibility I'll admit. No, the stress for a religious person when they're cast out of their church is enormous and will leave scars. Good guess by the way. I don't really think that's near the mark but now do you see what I mean about there's [emphasis] something in her past?

A: And the Catholics are pretty strong on guilt.

B: As you say A. In my view, as your religious affairs correspondent, I want to see the Catholic priests burned at the stake.

A: Hold on. They don't want your priests burned do they!

B: Yes they do. Very much so but we don't have priests as such.

A: But you worship the same god

B: Supposedly. – That's the problem: They claim first knockings. They confuse one and only god with one and only priesthood.

A: But you were going to burn them!

B: If it turns out that father Murphy had got your Maria pregnant then got her to have an abortion, would burning be on your agenda.

A: Yes. No. I'll have to think about it.

B: [Long pause] And? Don't forget the choir boys and the boys in the orphanage.

A: Aren't you being a bit harsh.

B: Don't forget them. I'm not making a judgement. Don't forget them.

A: This is weird. I'm the revolutionary and you're the saintly middle class god botherer and yet I'm the one who's preaching moderation. Ooops! 'preaching' – sorry.

B: Nothing to be sorry about A. That's what friends are for. In my heart of hearts I want to see all the Catholic priests tortured to death. Slowly.

A: [Long pause] Friends – where would we be without them?

B: I don't need psychiatric help for that.

A: Oh no. Will a bit – little bit – tiny bit of understanding be enough?

B: All we can hope for. It's often the outsider that can see what's happening within.

A: I'm out of my depth in this religious crusade sort of thing.

B: So what are you crusading for mister revolutionary?

A: Errr. I believe in/

B: /not what you believe in - What are you crusading for? Where are your barricades?

A: [pause] Well I've rather tried to map out the lie of the land, if you know what I mean. Napoleon didn't dig his own trenches.

B: So you are with the brass-hats at base then. Just so we've got that straight. "One more push and we'll be in Berlin"...

A: [pause] OK There's some truth in what you say. I'm an agitator not a fighter.

B: 'Objector from Tunbridge Wells'

A: Come on. You know I'm/

B: /Yes. I know.

A: Friends are sometimes funny things to have.

- B: Comfort and outrage. No barricades. No bastards being burned.  
Complain why don't you: Dear sir for the second year in a row the council haven't cut the verges.
- A: Before you have a war you need to recruit your troops. Before the plane will fly it needs to build up enough speed. I haven't heard reports of religious hit squads engaging in turf wars. [Godfather parody] "The Father says how would you like to go for a walk on the holy water"
- B: Between the professionals in England it is pointed bitchiness but – you tell me – what's it like in say Northern Ireland?
- A: Worse than that.
- B: Don't underestimate the strength of the poison!
- A: I had. I admit I'd not appreciated the awfulness of religion quite so much.
- B: I belong - OK to a very unfashionable and self-effacing sect - but I still belong to the Christians just like you belong to "The British". Both of us. I belong but I can't erect a barricade without being on the outside?
- A: [Has been thinking] B you are a great friend. I don't know how to help you in your dilemma but perhaps one day I will.
- B: Understanding goes a long way.
- A: Now what was it about Maria? Your trump card?
- B: [Pause due to change of thread] I have a suspicion that if we'd gone to a church of her choice and lit a candle there would have been a lot explained that we don't know now. Or at least a clue.
- [Pause]
- A: Why don't I ask her?
- B: We went through this before. There's too much at stake for honest answers. She doesn't want to lose you.
- A: But how will she lose me?
- B: You know you're 100% loyal but insecurity doesn't work that way. She daren't risk it.
- A: I could try
- B: 'Try' and cause so much misery.
- A: What's the harm in asking?
- B: The truth is not for the asking
- A: But – you don't understand – we're ...
- B: Whatever you say. What question were you thinking of asking?
- A: [pause] I haven't put it into words.
- B: Try. Words, those naughty things that stick pins into people.
- A: Err. What was it about going to church that was so important?
- B: Stop changing the subject A! Take the victim back to the scene of the murder – err/
- A: /I know what you mean B.
- B: OK then: What do I mean A
- A: Err - I meant I know you meant well.
- B: Of course I mean well stupid.
- A: Sorry

B: I fancied that I'd be on her wavelength if she wanted to discuss anything.  
A: But you didn't. Why not?  
B: Do bomb disposal experts rush in willy nilly or take their time to calmly defuse it?  
A: Maria isn't a bomb.  
B: Well she's a sultry sex bomb for a start. You've started her ticking again haven't you? But I didn't mean that. You should know because you're trying to make Tracy safe. I know Tracy isn't actually ticking but there's a heap of bad news in there.  
A: And what about Maria?  
B: Everything shouts caution.  
A: But you know how it is between me and her.  
B: Not much caution there. [Pause] So who's going up close to have a look? You or me?  
A: I can't talk to Maria about religion. Anything intellectual is a bit of a strain to be honest.  
B: But you could if she was dying from cancer and had only a few weeks to live?  
A: [Pause] You don't know something I don't?  
B: No - Purely hypothetically.  
A: You've touched a nerve there B.  
B: Let's call it a day eh? That's something to talk about another time.  
A: Perhaps you're right. - Thanks for taking Maria dancing. You're a good friend. My best friend.  
B: Thank you. I like to think my sacrifice wasn't in vain.[smiles]  
A: [smiles in return] I must get my perspectives sorted out.  
B: Good night

## Episode 13

B: Hello A.  
A: Hello B.  
B: Keeping your head above water?  
A: Just about. You know I've been thinking about something you said.  
B: Good. That shows you're alive. Which thing in particular?  
A: You said how I couldn't talk to Maria about religion/  
B: /No you said that.  
A: Let me finish. You said that I would be able to if she was dying from cancer.  
[B waits like a good listener should]

- A: That made a big impression on me B. It's so true.
- B: [Soft and friendly] Does she have cancer?
- A: No. Not to my knowledge.
- B: That's a relief. I don't know why I said it. A bit callous really.
- A: No. Well done because you put your finger on a spot. A spot that I'm a bit ashamed of. That business of people dying and not knowing what to say to them – That makes me squirm with embarrassment.
- B: And the regret.
- A: How did you know?
- B: Because you're not alone. You're not the only one to wish they had the words, the courage to have words in that situation. Remember I haven't studied for the priesthood but I've spend nearly 20 years thinking I could do a better job than the person leading the worshippers.
- A: Really?
- B: Yes from as early as I can remember, five or six, I thought "what a silly man". From a child's eye things were wrong. Umm. Like "God can see us here" and I'd look around and under the benches and up in the gallery and in the ventilator to see where he was hiding.
- A: [Chuckles]
- B: Chuckle if you like but 'a' you weren't supposed to make people look fools even if they were and 'b' that sense of the person in charge is only in charge because there's nobody else better – not because they were good at it in absolute business terms.
- A: Business terms! Anyway what you're saying is that a million Sundays in church have given you an insight into people.
- B: Goodness! That was very concise for you. Spot on. – Actually you have no idea how desperate you are for something to occupy the mind when there's blethering going on.
- A: So why didn't you run away at the first opportunity?
- B: Now that's a good question.
- [A's turn to be a patient listener]
- B: I don't know. I believe in God – or something like a god – in the same way as err say 'life after death'
- A: [!] You believe in life after death
- B: In a way. Some people are remembered after they die. Sometimes in our minds they fade away. What they achieved can't be described or catalogued and so their 'after-life' is short and hazy. But others jump out at you when you're slacking. I bet you can remember a school teacher who looks over your shoulder every time you try to spell 'potato' or write a rude word or – you know what I mean. As far as you're concerned they will never die.
- A: Is that life after death?
- B: In a way. And remember I said I believed in God in the same way. Let's call it 'godliness floating around'. Not 'a particular god', not a god who happens to bless a particular war, not a god who whispers secrets to



beardies in dresses who then command the burning of heretics or stoning women to death. I am your 100% atheist in that respect.

[B runs out of thought. A respects the confidence. Silence.]

B: Bastards!

A: God has a lot to answer for.

B: He certainly does but [emphasis] he doesn't exist.

A: So who does answer for it?

B: All the various churches – and temples, mosques etc.

A: All of them?

B: Sad sad sad! All these religious institutions beavering away at godliness but missing the point by so many miles. It's as if they were being paid to be un-godly.

[A listening silently]

B: It makes me angry.

A: It makes me angry too. But I'm an outsider. I don't see it as treachery – just an affront to common decency. What's wrong with women priests?

B: I think they'd be better.

A: At least 3000 years says you're wrong. Don't ask me why! I'm only reporting the fact that even where there were priestesses they only did the magician's assistant bit.

B: They'd be better. Don't forget in my church we have sex equality. The women are confident enough to tolerate the occasional irrelevant man.

A: Is that what 's kept you from becoming a preacher? The women waiting to tear you apart?

B: No. And by the way it's not quite that bad.

A: How did we get there?

B: Err. I know. You were surprised because I was so hot on the 'we all feel inadequate when there are important things that should be discussed'.

A: Yes that's right.

B: Go on

A: [Aside-ish to B] You're sure Maria hasn't got cancer?

B: Yes. [micro-pause] Well she never said anything

A: Not saying anything isn't the same thing as denying it.

B: Now you mention it [deliberate screw-you-up pause] it never occurred to me. Not at all. Not one bit. I was too busy in the here and now - or the there and then depending on how you look at it.

A: It's just that I have this feeling that you'd know – a sort of sixth sense – you've told me so much already about Maria that I can't believe you wouldn't spot something like that.

B: Do you think I'm clairvoyant?

A: Yes – in a way.

B: In a "Tracy I see your past laid out before me" sort of way?

A: [Oops! pause. Then regaining his confidence] Yes. There's that moment when you 'know'. A missing bit of the jigsaw suddenly appears and everything makes sense.

- B: So how are you getting on with fixing Tracy's traumatic past?
- A: To be frank B I've tried but don't really know where to start.
- B: Now I've taken your Maria dancing and might have to take to the church of her choice this Sunday – don't ask me why because I don't know – but are you really so short of ideas that you can't cope with Tracy? I shall have to start charging if this carries on!
- A: I am a bit hamstrung at the moment. How can I have a personal and emotional conversation with Tracy when word is bound to get back to Maria?
- B: There is an obvious answer to that.
- A: Really? What?
- B: Why not ask Maria to give her assessment. Kill two birds with one sto/
- A: /Stop there! 'a' I can't tell Maria what Tracy told me in complete confidence and 'b' Maria is one of those people who would simply say "Leave her alone. She'll get over it" She's not the same generation.
- B: But then you're not Maria's generation.
- A: Have you been thinking about Tracy then?
- B: Yes. This is what godliness is supposed to be for. "Let's sort this out - whatever it takes it's better than the alternative." So I am your man. I'm not keen on joss sticks and mumbo-jumbo.
- A: You'd want to make it better by screwing her.
- B: If necessary.
- A: If necessary!
- B: At the moment Tracy would make somebody a wonderful older sister – Agreed?
- A: Sister and mother.
- B: We don't want that do we? We either want the happy-go-lucky youngest sister or a brand new wife. What are the chances of that?
- A: Umm. I'd never thought what result I was hoping for. I suppose I'm more of a 'cast off your chains' and the rest will sort itself out sort of person.
- B: That's a bit reckless isn't it? Meddling in other people's affairs without thinking what the result might be.
- A: I didn't ask to get involved in Tracy's difficulties. In fact I tried to avoid it, but when I couldn't I tried my best and went carefully. [Emphasis] And I stopped short of suggesting a solution when I didn't know. I think that's very responsible.
- B: OK I'll give you that. But what about leading the lost tribes of the Co-op out of their comfortable ignorant existence into the land of Bohemia? A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Will that make them happier?
- A: Err/
- B: /Notoriously stressed and depressed the artistic types. Plenty of addiction and suicides. Practically a requirement.
- A: You might be over estimating my progress in that department. A few poems and daubings doesn't really turn anyone into a loose trolley.
- B: You're playing with fire.

- A: So what do you suggest about Tracy?  
B: What does Tracy suggest about Tracy?  
A: Eh?  
B: Look A. She must be boiling over with frustration. You did a clever thing and now she thinks you can do more magic. That's how minds work. She's depending on you.  
A: But I can't do magic.  
B: She's going to be more than disappointed. Haven't you got something you can suggest?  
A: No. And I as I've explained I can't swan around doing a little bit of light hocus-pocus and see what happens.  
B: Do you want me to have a go for you then? She has a sister as well you say?  
A: Yes. They're both got see-through heads.  
B: Surely not.  
A: Brains are not their strong point  
B: How do you know. Perhaps they're just children full of promise.  
A: So you want to take Tracy and her sister to church?  
B: No! Of course not. A café or quiet corner of a pub will do.  
A: I can't just hand them over like a crate of bananas.  
B: Why not. Just arrange a meeting then vanish.  
A: Cowardly.  
B: You could be brave and tell Maria all about it later  
A: I see what you mean. OK.  
B: And why not go to, say, Canterbury for the day, wander into the cathedral and see what happens?  
A: What do you think will happen?  
B: You'll have a nice day out.  
A: You're hiding something.  
B: No I'm not. Ask yourself what's hidden and who's hiding it and who they're hiding if from and how you'll get them to unhide it and why you want it unhidden.  
A: I got lost in all that.  
B: Just do it.

# Episode 14

- B: Hello A.
- A: Hello B. I've not had a chance to progress with Tracy or Maria yet. You'll just have to keep your hands of my women for a bit longer you rogue.
- B: [Pained] I'm not trying to/
- A: /I know I was only being humorous.
- B: Oh.
- A: Yes. There's far too much seriousness in the world today so a little bit of lighthearted fun is always welcome.
- B: [Suspicious] Ha ha. [Gets own back] Yes I suppose you provide me with plenty of amusements what with your plans for the education of the proletariat in the basement of the Co-op always backfiring.
- A: They do not! Just teething problems.
- B: So how's the flood of poetry getting on? ... [Significantly no immediate response from A] ... You must be very proud. You first 'discovery'
- A: OK. Bit of running before walking there. Still it's up to me to channel Jayne's enthusiasm. And I will be proud. The first water in the desert and it bursts into bloom. That's better than the alternative.
- B: Yes I suppose so. And your plan in that department is what exactly?
- A: You always put your finger on the spot! I wish you would at least give me a chance to have a go myself first.
- B: I'm the [emphasis] super Samaritan. Why would I wait until you're mugged and unconscious? Would you like me to hang around until you're a painful breath away from death?
- A: [Confused silence]
- B: [Ahem] Only being humorous there. – I've got the cape and everything
- A: No you weren't. You've stepped in to save me being savaged by disappointed and jealous women. But you haven't actually got me out of the jungle.
- B: What more do you want? You're the one who keeps chucking logs on the fire.
- A: Sometimes I wish you weren't such a good friend. I know what you're going to say now. You're going to tell me that I can't handle the poetry flood. Well I will – [Emphasis] On my own.
- B: An excellent resolution.
- A: [Digests the various meanings of 'resolution'] 'Resolution' it is then.
- B: You have a plan?
- A: Yes as it happens B I do. – I'm going to teach her how to write poetry properly.
- B: Excellent. How will you start? With your favourite poets as an example?
- A: Yes/

B: /Who are?

A: Lorca. Ambrose Bierce. Stevenson perhaps. Oh! Seamus Heaney. [Pause] And McGonagall – William McGonnagall he wasn't rubbish at all. One of my heroes.

B: An odd selection – all men?

A: [Perplexed for a moment] A woman poet? Umm let me think – ...

B: [After a while] A woman's viewpoint might strike a chord with Jayne. McGonnagall was a dour Scottish man who didn't start writing poetry until his 50s what sort of role model is that?

A: Words don't have sex

B: Yes they do! – OK, maybe: 'They can have'.

A: No

B: Oh yes they can. If you were a dog you could hear high pitched whistles but as a human you can't no matter how hard you try. If you were a woman you could hear things in poems that you as a man can't no matter how hard you try. You can only guess at by observing how women react.

A: Rubbish. That's like saying if a man climbs to the summit of Everest a women could climb higher.

B: [Pause as a strange realisation happens] Yes. That's right. Any man with any sense will agree with that.

A: But that's ridiculous. Everest is 28 whatever thousand feet high and that's that.

B: And thus spaketh the man who does the pub quiz.

A: [Perplexed]Eh?

B: Ow. Ow. Owowow!

A: Owowow?

B: If Maria says the capital of Spain is Barcelona then are you going to put her straight.

A: [Immediately] Of course.

B: Owowow.

A: Owowow?

B: If I told you Everest was 29 thousand feet high not 28 thousand would you be upset?

A: No. Not if it was true.

B: It is actually. What if it wasn't true?

A: No not really. Why would I be upset?

B: That's male deafness speaking. Women can interpret your knowledge and confidence as arrogance.

A: Now I think you are putting me in to a pigeon hole there B. I'm not a male chauvinist. I know I only picked men poets but my sympathies are completely sex-free.

B: It doesn't matter how hard you listen if you're deaf.

A: You're saying I turn-off to female chit-cha//chat – yes I do I admit – I don't want to eavesdrop on their twitterings.

B: Hold on! We're not talking about twitteings we're talking about

statements of fact directed at you. “Do you like this” “Are you having a nice time” “Isn’t Chatham nice at this time of year”

- A: I just try my best.
- B: Bye bye mister lemming!
- A: What are you on about?
- B: The female of the species [deliberate pause knowing A will join in]
- A: ... more deadly than the male
- B: has a motto. Do you know what it is?
- A: No.
- B: Sure?
- A: Not a clue
- B: Their motto is “Agree” [medium pause] “or else”
- A: [After assessing this] That’s dictatorship.
- B: Hitler was a dictator
- A: [Confused] Hitler? He wasn’t a woman
- B: Full marks there A. Look. Let’s get off your Kamikaze ignorance of women. Brave but not too bright. I’ve brought Carl along today.<sup>7</sup>
- A: Carl? [Momentarily perplexed] Oh yes your imaginary friend. [Remembering his manners] Pleased to meet you again Carl.
- B: [Interrupts quickly to ‘take control’] Carl is pleased to meet you. Obviously Carl knows lots about dictatorships. Herr Hitler and all that.
- A: German bomber pilot. [To an imaginary Carl] ] If you weren’t imaginary I wouldn’t know whether to shake you hand. On balance I’d say yes. Definitely yes. A soldier is just a pawn.
- B: Remember I invented Carl to be the ‘other person’ in my one-man double-act. He’s 100% fictitious.
- A: I’m glad to hear it B. I wouldn’t like to think that you were foisting real imaginary friends on the paying public. ...That would be grotesque. Remind me again B... What purpose does Carl serve?
- B: He’s a contradiction – no a contradictory voice – which gives me something to bounce off with my act.
- A: And how are you getting on with your act? [No reply] [Emphasis] Two blokes I notice – So far he, err Carl hasn’t spoken. Is it me or is there some difficulty here?
- B: It’s not simple. He doesn’t understand English only German.
- A: [Long pause - This is going to be a long night!] He’s your imaginary friend. You invented him. He doesn’t understand English.
- B: Yes that’s right.
- A: And you don’t speak German
- B: I’m learning. Obviously.
- A: [Pause] Well done B. An imaginary friend that doesn’t speak your language is certainly err ‘imaginative’.

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<sup>7</sup> Remember Carl is completely imaginary so it is up to the performers to convince him into existence. When Carl ‘speaks’ lines they are of course purely imagined.

B: Are you being sarcastic?  
A: No.  
B: So that's OK then?  
A: Yes. Absolutely B. I never said it wasn't.  
B: I detected a certain negative tone that was all.  
A: Oh no. Not negative. Just the that complications seemed at first glance, to an outsider like me, a bit baroque. [pause] You know – rococo embellishments.  
B: [Enthusiastically latching onto "rococo"] Oh yes definitely rococo. That's spot-on. Rococo – definitely.  
A: [Eh? (stop agreeing with me you bugger!)] Why German?  
B: Because he's a German! That his language.  
A: Aha. So//never mind ... Is there any particular reason why you invented Carl for your double act?  
B: I need somebody who is different to spark-off against. Imagine how boring it would be if we agreed on everything.  
A: You might agree for different reasons. That would be interesting.  
B: Give me an example?  
A: Agree to disagree for starters?  
B: Yes. And then?  
A: [Thinks] I know. Just for example we could agree that you having an imaginary friend called Carl was a great idea.  
B: Well I think it's a great idea.  
A: Oh yes – and me too [pause] so that's all agreed.  
B: [suspicious] Yes. But what's your reason  
A: What's your reason?  
B: I should think that's obvious. He's a friend who can help me develop my one-man double-act. I think you might be jealous.  
A: No. If you ask I'd be happy to comment on what you've got so far. After all you've been doing so much for me lately it's the least I could do. But I'm not jealous. I've got enough real people to look after as it is who need a little bit of encouragement.  
B: OK Maybe I was hasty there. I didn't mean jealous. It's just that you're not the only one round here who is creative.  
A: And what are you going to talk to Carl about? Religion and politics?  
B: Religion certainly - He's got interesting views on religion.  
A: That'll be interesting  
B: Yes very orthodox Christian but believes in reincarnation  
A: Aha I thought so  
B: [Annoyed by being patronised] Thought so?  
A: He's the type. A few Hail Mary's then 'poof' it's being reborn as butterfly. [Mimes a butterfly on his hand which flies off.]  
[Carl to B - "Butterfly"? What's that?]  
B: [To Carl] "Butterfly" err [Quickly gets out pocked English-German dictionary] Ah. "Schmetterling"

[Carl: "Arghh! I can't stand them"]

Schmetterling?

[Carl: "No I can't stay here" - rushes off - semi-restrained by B]

[B lets him go. Both are a bit stunned]

A: So he's got a serious phobia about butterflies as well. That was a bit unexpected.

B: Yes. Fancy that?

A: [Parody] "Don't mention the schmetterling!"

B: I suppose I'd better go and find him.

A: Just a thought B. It might be best not to introduce him to people until you've got to know him a bit better.

B: I'm sure it was just nerves A

A: I'll go and look for something to worry about too.

## Episode 15

B: Hello A.

A: Hello B. How's Carl?

B: He's a nervous wreck I'm afraid. That butterfly business must have set off a chain reaction.

A: Understandable. I expect being a bomber pilot is very stressful. Especially if he isn't occupied with flying. Worry turns to fear, turns to terror.

B: [Thoughtful pause] That's very deep for you A. You're not usually on that wavelength. I hadn't thought about it either but possibly not flying is eating his confidence.

A: Actually – I hope you don't mind – I discussed Carl with Maria last night...

B: [Short pause – not sure if he minds]

A: ...And she was on the case straight away...

B: [waits as a good listener should]

A: ... It was as if she knew him.

B: That's unlikely. What's the chances of that? Her having the same imaginary friend as me.

A: The friend you [Emphasis] made up

B: Yes that one – err Carl.

A: [Highly suspicious, but let it pass] I didn't say she had an imaginary friend. Just that it was as if she'd met him before and knew all about him.

B: What did she say?

A: Nothing really but [emphasis] she listened. Then she thought. That's not



- like her. A side I haven't seen before.
- B: You've only known her a couple of weeks
- A: But I've tried to get her interested in intellectual things with complete lack of success. And you didn't make her crack.
- B: Anyway some progress. Did you follow up with Tracy?
- A: Good god no! – It was getting very late.
- B: Weren't going to risk it eh?
- A: I don't know where the subtle-button is on Maria yet.
- B: Look on the positive side. You've got a hint she understands fear and stress and idleness. Hey. You don't have any of those things so perhaps that's why she likes you so much.
- A: Err? Opposites attract?
- B: Just an observation. – And if opposites attract then what about Tracy?
- A: [Thinks] Confidence ... .. and no worries about what people think.
- B: That's true – Doesn't solve Tracy's insecurity and poor education but good for a rough and ready theory.
- A: Poetic Jayne? I can't quite see how she fits into the pattern. – A volcano erupts of its own accord. I was just unlucky to be in the vicinity.
- B: Rubbish. You prodded the beast with you 'horse's head' cane. As I've told you before it's nothing to be afraid of, just use your brains and you've got a protégé. Possibly the first of many.
- A: But why me?
- B: Because you're one of the people who makes things happen. 'Try it and see' makes life more interesting doesn't it. I wish I had your knack.
- A: I'd like to think so but perhaps the Co-op isn't the best place to start.
- B: Is it a really bad place to start?
- A: No. Not at all.
- B: You're a big fish in a small pool. Just think if you had to compete with graphic designers and media studies graduates trying to sell you their unwritten, and unpublishable novels.
- A: But it's not the real thing is it. Let's face it. This is the never going to be the birthplace of the reawakening of the artistic soul of the country.
- B: Why not?
- A: Because. Because nobody will want to join the Co-op for artistic reasons.
- B: How do you know?
- A: You actually have to work.
- B: Is that so bad?
- A: It puts off a lot of people.
- B: "Curse of the drinking classes" and so on.
- [Pause]
- B: You never told me how someone with your education came to be humping furniture in the Co-op rather than wearing a white coat improving the formula for hair spray.
- A: Simple. Dropped out of university.
- B: Why?

- A: It didn't suit me
- B: Why?
- A: It just didn't
- B: But I want to know. I never had the opportunity. I was shoved into the family firm.
- A: Hmm. I think you'd have enjoyed it and done really well - got into the swing of things.
- B: What makes you say that?
- A: Err. Accepting what's on offer as genuine. Does that make sense?
- B: Not much?
- A: Did you always do your homework at school?
- B: Yes of course.
- A: And you read the books and did the example exercises until you got them 100%?
- B: Yes.
- A: You're an unusual person B. Many are just lazy. Others are not brain boxes or were not paying attention when the teacher made everything clear. Others worked just as hard enough to pass – but you worked late into each night with grim determination.
- B: Yes. That's a good summary. How did you know?
- A: I went to school once
- B: Once?//Oh I see - Once upon a time of course. But did you play truant?
- A: No never. I was a bit like you. I worked hard – but not always at the official syllabus. In the sixth-form I had a subscription to Libération which/
- B: /Libération?
- A: French progressive – somewhat radical daily paper. A bit like the Guardian with balls. It was my way of being a rebel.
- B: Cool!
- A: And I read it. The school wanted me to do yet another A-level when they realised I was pretty fluent. Typical - There was nothing in it for me just a cheap bonus for them. I'd got enough on my plate doing four science A-levels.
- B: Star pupil.
- A: I said the only way I'd consider it was if I could lounge in the town's café arguing, smoking and drinking like the French boys of my age.
- B: Clever. – See – When you want to you can solve a problem.
- A: I didn't want to smoke but it was a good card to play.
- B: Really cool. All the masters secretly envied you.
- A: [Eh?] Now you mention it – at the time I was just pleased with the riposte and let it go. [Slowly recalling] Yes – I'm just thinking that begins to make sense. Envy? Sympathy perhaps. They would have loved to be younger and free to lounge in the café.
- B: Brilliant bit of revolutionary work there A. You know what you did don't you.

- A: No?
- B: You got the opposition secretly on your side.
- A: Hardly. I was on the watch list as 'suspect'.
- B: No. Somebody worth watching. Not the same thing.
- A: I have to admit there were some very friendly and sympathetic masters. – The strangest reaction was from 'Eddy' Higgs. He must have been near retirement. In the middle of triple maths he said: "Whoever invented triple maths was an idiot - A tell us what's happening in France." The first time I was completely unprepared but managed quite well. Higgs would encourage me in french and go round the class asking weird questions. "Killick. Name two french painters" "Taylor, Translate: Le carré de la longueur de l'hypoténuse est égal à la somme des carrés des longueurs des deux autres côtés." – Taylor was the swot of swots but with pin-hole vision. "Rogers" – he was the rugby captain – "Next week I want to know about history of french rugby."
- B: Like minds
- A: How do you mean?
- B: You and Higgs
- A: What?
- B: He played fair by giving you a break from maths but then expected something in return. And you couldn't help but say that overall it was a good thing. Let's face it the rugby bod having to find out a bit about French rugby was amusing to the rest of you.
- A: So how does that make me a like mind?
- B: Really? You don't see?
- A: No
- B: Two things: Firstly he was prepared to break the rules. Secondly he looked on you as possibly having unknown talents worth exploring. He was very clever.
- A: And now I'm doing the same in the basement of the Co-op.
- B: Exactly. Isn't that wonderful. Higgs would be proud. Do you keep in touch?
- A: But there's one other thing. This became a fixed intermission and would sometimes go on for an hour. All things French would interest him. But he never taught French.
- B: That's strange.
- A: He was completely fluent. I eventually realised the fluency must have a reason and simply asked him.
- B: What did he say?
- A: He'd lived "amongst french-speaking people for a while".
- B: Which didn't really answer the question.
- A: There was a wink, a smile and a shrug which filled in the gaps.
- B: And Higgs got away with breaking the ranks, you got a kick to see if you were a fraud, the class got a break from triple maths and everyone was happy. Aren't you proud to be continuing the tradition? Do you keep in

touch?

A: It was just a few minutes a week.

B: So is a kiss on a bus.

A: [Seriously] Do you really think that I'm acting out Mr. Higgs in the Co-op?

B: No. Like minds. Perhaps you have an inheritance.

A: Chance.

B: Anyway it shows you can spot potential in people. Higgs could have asked the rugby bod to waffle on about rugby as a break. He could see you were the one with brains and knew how to use them - or at least a little bit.

A: And now I hump furniture for the Co-op

B: I thought you were happy humping furniture.

A: I am but perhaps I've got more potential.

B: Of course you have. You're doing a good job encouraging others but what about yourself?

A: Sore point.

B: I suppose it is. Not easy jumping off the university express. Especially if you had a first class ticket.

A: [Digests this unusual metaphor] It was impossible. I hated the degree factory. It was about a ticking the boxes on a syllabus. Disgusting pretence at education.

[Silence]

B: A Would you say that you had enriching, empowering teenage years followed by disillusionment and then – now – just treading water?

A: [Thinks...] Yes/

B: And isn't that the same problem Tracy has?

A: [Getting interested slowly] I suppose so.

B: So, and this is just a shot in the dark // No let's leave it there for now. Something for you to think about.

A: Oh alright. I'll think about it.

## Episode 16

B: Hello A.

A: Hello B.

B: What's today's problem?

A: I don't have a problem. As I've told you before problems aren't my thing.

B: So being stuck in Maria's clutches when you can't communicate with her on any intellectual level isn't a problem?

- A: Not a problem. Bit of a difficulty that needs sorting out sometime. It'll probably get sorted out by itself as we get to know each other.
- B: Or possibly not?
- A: That's typical of you B – You always look at life as a series of problems to be solved.
- B: And you expect problems to evaporate.
- A: Do you see me bent under the stress? Do you see me looking through 'Which?' to find the most efficient, most reliable, gas oven to end it all?
- B: No A you are happy-go-lucky.
- A: What's wrong with that?
- B: Drifting.
- [A is a bit sour but says nothing]
- B: Aimlessly .
- A: [Attack is the best form of defence] And you're not?
- B: I'm drifting – pretty aimlessly too. – Not brilliant is it?
- A: No, I suppose you're right – again!
- B: [Friendly - about to admit himself] Do you feel guilty? All your promise and talent being thrown away?
- A: [Conventional] Yes and no. [Angry/passionate] No! O-levels, A-levels, degree, success! A conveyor belt full of fudge and fraud and exclusion and pretending and pigeon-holing. It's sad the system wasn't flexible and makes me cross that the system only recognises tick-box talent.
- B: Strong words A. And yes I'm drifting too.
- A: But you've got a good job as bullshitter at the estate agents. It's only a matter of time before you end up with a respectable wife and the opportunity to make tidy profits from insider deals.
- B: Dodgy deals amongst the corrupt councillors are not my thing A. And you have to be "sound" to marry into money. You know what I mean by "sound"?
- A: Morals of a err Mason?
- B: Exactly. Good phrase.
- A: Well I haven't got the answer B.
- B: I might have a suggestion for you A
- A: Go on. I know you hover round a problem like a bee round a honey pot so go ahead.
- B: You are a pretty fluent in everyday French. Fashion, Maria's only subject, is closely associated with France. Can't you find a way to combine them? Perhaps start by getting a glossy french fashion magazine and read it to her.
- A: Yes. I suppose so. [Warming to the idea] That would impress her/  
B: /And show her you take an interest in what she's interested in.
- A: I expect I'll be out of my depth with the technical terms though.
- B: Umm. No that's OK you can have fun – [emphasis] she can have fun guessing – what certain strange words mean. It's a fun game then. You can have the intellectual exercise of translation while she can luxuriate in

the fantasy world of haute couture – and gloat about owning a man who is so posh he can read french.

A: Where does that get me?

B: Firstly in Maria's good books. Must be worth it alone. Secondly you can learn about fashion.

A: But I don't want to learn about fashion

B: Why not?

A: Good question I suppose

B: Very creative - Just up your street. Beats poetry.

A: I see what you mean.

B: But frocks like railway engines may be a little avant-garde to start with.

A: [Enjoying the joke] Oh I was so looking forward to that - Do you mean to say I'll have to start with trolleybuses and work my way up?

B: The world of haute couture may need some time to adapt A. "And here is Maria showing us the Flying Scotsman in lined-out apple green livery with brass trimmings – and a lovely tender behind."

[Both laugh]

A: But there's something in that B. If you can create something beautiful out of metal then why not use the energy of the design to do the same with clothes?

B: "And here is Maria presenting a smelly, snorting, incontinent steam engine. The dress is set-off by the filthy fireman's cap and a coal-hammer accessory completes the ensemble."

A: But steam engines are romantic.

B: Ah yes: Gently swaying to the sound of a whistle. The sweet scent of warm steam. Hot cinders dancing like fireflies. Ah yes how romantic were those summer nights on the Côte de Clapham Junction.

A: Well anyway. You made a good suggestion there B about getting through to Maria. Top marks.

B: There's more.

A: You have been giving this a lot of thought haven't you B.

B: I've told you. Nothing much happens at the estate agents for long periods.

A: Go on then.

B: Listen. Once you have studied fashion – I'm sure you could do the necessary homework in a week – and sussed out the french scene, then you're ready to go to the chief buyer of the Co-op and ask them what your next step is. I'm sure they're on the look out for young staff with management potential.

A: That would be rather cheeky.

B: Somebody at head office I presume.

A: I haven't got a clue. I don't even know my Chippendale from my Hepplewhite and I'm in the furniture department.

B: But you could easily find out if you wanted. That's my point. You're a clever person who can fillet a flock of books//err fillet a shoal of books//

umm [resolved] Go down the library and learn in an hour what most people will never learn in their lifetimes.

A: Maria's secret ambition is to run her own dress shop. I could get roped into that.

B: Oh. That's a bit scary.

A: Yes. Horribly.

[Pause]

B: You'd be a big attraction. Especially if you had a bit of a french accent.

A: It's not me B. What do I say when 'madame' asks "does my bum look big in this?"

B: It's the basics of selling A. Everyone has a problem they want you to solve/

A: /There you go again inventing problems

B: No I'm not inventing them just spotting them amongst the camouflage – the camouflage so often created by the person involved.

A: [Acting] "Ah good day madam. I see your problem is that you're ugly, vain with a face like a wet barbecue. I can recommend the builder's merchants in Queen Street - They have a range of tarpaulins - one might be large enough to cover the damage until repairs can be effected."

B: [Slowly] Honesty is not always the best policy A. I should know. The customer wants something and who are we to judge them. – Well apart from how much money will they be spending – oh and how gullible are they?

A: B! You! The paragon of honesty to the point of pernicky irrelevance. I know you do this estate agent thing of taking people to see houses you can't sell on the off-chance but that's just time wasting not taking them for a ride.

B: I'm afraid the gullible and ignorant are putty in my hands – and I'll have you know that the savvy ones, they're more interesting actually, don't roll me over either. It's all about educating them to see that despite what they might have vaguely thought at breakfast what you have to sell is absolutely just what they want. Problem solved.

A: That's hypocritical.

B: In one small sense yes, but in another it is being a Good Samaritan. There is no possibility of somebody finding something that is perfect in every detail so some compromises need to be made or else they would never find somewhere to live. But Saint B – I am the Mother Theresa of Estate agents – solves their problem with gentle and sinc// guidance.

A: Ha! Not "sincere" then.

B: Mercenary. [Pause slow emphasis] And sincere. Very very sincere. That's what you have to fake. Fake to the point of believing in it. They have an ingrowing toe-nail and you offer to donate yours for a free transplant – OK, I may be exaggerating – But here's the magical thing. As you profess your desire to help them you actually begin to want to help them. Well if they're not conceited and rude.

A: Praise be the lord!

B: Stop taking the piss. I'm trying to teach you something and all you can do is come up with sarcastic comments.

A: Sorry B.

B: Now are you listening?

A: Yes of course.

B: So you're minding the frock shop when a lady comes in.

A: OK

B: I've told you the two things you have to assess.

A: Money and stupidity

B: Almost. How much they might spend and how gullible.

A: Same thing.

B: Hold on! Not at all. There are very rich and very stupid people who won't spend any money and won't be persuaded to look outside their narrow minded vision.

A: [pause to digest] OK. So – One: How much money is crying to be let out of their purse and two: Are they up for discussion as how to spend it.

B: Excellent. Now what's three?

A: [pause]

B: [Hint] It's my favourite subject

A: What's their problem.

B: Spot on. [pause to change gear slightly] So there you are A what are the three most likely problems the [emphasis] potential customer has?

[Short Silence - A is perplexed]

B: Why has she come into the shop?

A: Oh I see. Umm To buy a new dress ... .. or hat etc.

B: Good

A: [Pause – run out of ideas] No sorry B.

B: Reason one is that she [emphasis] needs and new dress, hat etc. A wedding perhaps. She may [emphasis] need it for the same reason people need a cigarette. pure 'need'. In any case it's your job to see that she gets something whatever it takes.

A: Even if she can't pay for it?

B: Arrange credit. See all these retail problems have been solved years ago. Second – any ideas?

A: No. I thought people went into dress shops to buy dresses!

B: Second then she may have come in because she's bored or hasn't got anything else better to do.

A: Ah. A time-waster.

B: Do you like that? Ladies wandering around without buying things?

A: That sounds like a trick question

B: Stop thinking of tricks. Get back in the shop. Do you object?

A: [Slowly] 'Yes' on principle – but 'no' from a practical point of view.

B: Wrong and wrong. Sorry about that A.

A: Where's the good in wasting everybody's time? What planet are you on?



- B: Earth. Come on in the water's lovely. Now pay attention: Which is better? (a) Having ladies wandering around your shop or (b) having ladies doing other things with their lives. Which contains the possibility of a sale?
- A: [Cottoning on] I want them in my shop so I have at least the chance to sell them something.
- B: Correct. Also passers-by don't like to walk into deserted shops, but if they look busy then the herd instinct kicks-in. Don't knock the herd instinct.
- A: OK So I have to be nice to time-wasters.
- B: But they're not time wasters except in their own minds - You know. They have 20 minutes before their [emphasis] luncheon appointment and its raining.
- A: So I have to swoop down upon them like the 'wolf on the fold'?
- B: Of course. They don't want to be ignored. When you find they don't [emphasis] need anything then try gentle flirting. It's not selling bit it is marketing. Use charm.
- A: What for?
- B: To encourage her to come back again.
- A: But I'd rather have one in the hand than two in the bush. 'Come again another day' doesn't sell frocks.
- B: Yes it does. Love is broadcast. One bee finds pollen, rushes back to the hive and does a little dance to say "come on everybody I've found pollen". Women do the same - so, a bit, do men - They rush back to their girlfriends and say "oh gosh I've gone all weak at the knees" or something similar, and so word gets around.
- A: [Not particularly happy] So reason two is "Im bored" and I'm supposed to be charming.
- B: Yes. You don't need to do flirting if you're a [emphasis] perfect gentleman. You have a gift that women naturally trust you so I'm sure that will be alright.
- A: What's the third reason?
- B: To seduce you.
- A: What?
- B: Yes it happens all the time. Pop out for a pot of tea and a cake.
- A: Hang on B! You've led me right up the garden path here: French, fashion, boutique and now toyboy to the twinsets.
- B: [Straight] I have haven't I
- A: Yes you have!
- B: And here's the thing you agreed with every single bit. I can see you'd have to square it with Maria about having afternoons off to service the rich bitches but I'm sure she'd understand the commercial benefits.
- [A is speechless]
- B: And here's the really good part. You can try out some intellectual stuff on them. That would be different to the basement of the Co-op.
- A: Why's that better? The 'rich bitches' are probably just as narrow minded -

poorly educated I should say, as the workers at the Co-op.

- B: Because they have money. Money to do lots of creative things with. And friends. Probably the sort of friends that can get a couple of thousand given to an arts festival as small change.
- A: B, you are an amazing and devious person. I start off without any problem but you end up selling me a career as the town gigolo. [Pause] I think I'm beginning to see a pattern.
- B: Glad to be of assistance sir. Do come again. Oh by the way I'm ready for Tracy as soon as you like.

## Episode 17

- B<sup>8</sup>: Hello A.
- A: Hello B.
- B: Guess what
- A: Umm. I know. Carl has died and been reincarnated as a butterfly so now he's got a phobia about himself and isn't very good company?
- B: Good guess A
- A: Well what?
- B: I only ask the questions - I haven't thought of any answers.
- A: Do I detect a certain smugness? Are we footloose and fancy free today?
- B: [Smugly] Possibly.
- A: I know. Doctors have removed the Peruvian nose flute from some orifice that got wedged there during a freak game of hide and seek at nursery school.
- B: So close. In fact it wasn't Peruvian but from Hong Kong. It wasn't a nose-flute but a kaleidoscope. And it wasn't removed from an orifice. But the result is the same.
- A: [Pause. Sarcastic] I'm so proud and happy for you B. You know I once tried to sign up to be a Kaleidoscope donor but it didn't matter which orifice they looked in they couldn't find one. Not even a small one. But people like you, salt of the earth, fine upstanding citizens – when the call comes you're ready and able to do your bit. [Friendly-menacing emphasis...] Now tell me how you got on with Tracy or do the words "prickly pear" mean nothing to you.
- B: As you wish oh master. Thy will is my command. I shall commence my narrative forthwith. Without any further/
- A: [Ragged]/ Get on with it!

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<sup>8</sup> Note for actor. Definite change of character: More reckless. More libido.

B: Firstly you might have told me that you told her I was psychic. I'm helping you out and you're dropping me in it.

A: I had to get her interested.

B: Secondly you might have warned me about her rude remarks. Anything that might be slightly mis-interpreted she'd guffaw and sneer at. In public, in the café. Trumpeting like an elephant then smirking like a five year old who's learned to say 'botty'.

A: Sorry about that. I'd sort of got used to it.

B: Well 'Pe bo belly bum drawers' to you!

A: Ok I've got the message.

B: But I tell you what – between ourselves – we ought to find an excuse for a scripted public performance with Tracy as the star.

A: That's cruel. Hey! That's not like you! Is the Good Samaritan on holiday?

B: Yes he is. Hooray.

A: You're not abusing any substances are you B?

B: Just a little freedom.

A: [Concerned] This has all got to do with kaleidoscopes, orifices and raucous Tracy?

B: Yes. Intimately.

A: Not a 'chance passionate meeting on the veranda Carruthers'?

B: No. Not that intimate. NEBF.

A: 'NEBF'?

B: No exchange of bodily fluids. Actually no snogging, groping or hows-your-father.

A: N-S-G-O-H-Y-F?

B: Exactly. Chastity is my middle name – Or at least it is when it comes to Tracy. I have to ration myself out to cope with the demand on my body.

A: I know what you mean there B. Now take it slowly. You're not usually excitable.

B: As you know because you arranged it, we met at 5.30 at the Pagoda café. Even though you'd told me her background I was taken aback by the way she switched between aged six and thirty six. How old is she really? 22?

A: About that I suppose.

B: One minute I was having a deep conversation and the next she was giggling and wriggling. Hard work.

A: But you spotted the pattern and got it under control?

B: Yes I did. For example I nearly said "look at that pretty selection of coloured iced cakes", it's contagious – you try to talk on their level, but realised that every one would have to be discussed at length [girly child's voice] "That one's pink. Pink is a pretty colour. What do you think? I like pink."

A: Scary.

B: Instead I just asked her to pick the cake she thought [Emphasis] I ought to have implying I wasn't really allowed cake but a man has to eat. – And it worked! It brings a whole new meaning to "Who'll be mother". The rest of

the conversation was mainly referring to how we might help her younger sisters and she was as good as gold.

- A: Sorry about that B. I didn't realise she was quite so childish when not being mother.
- B: A natural counter-reaction I expect. When she can't get respect as a mother she plays for sympathy by what she thinks is the shortest route.
- A: So what's all this about kaleidoscopes?
- B: Right. You had to know sooner or later.
- A: I think I know what's coming B – I've known you for a fair while – It's tied up with imaginary friends isn't it?
- B: I'm afraid so.
- A: You gave her your imaginary friend to look after
- B: [Amazed] How did you know?
- A: Sixth sense – maybe I really am clairvoyant.
- B: So how long have you known about my imaginary friend?
- A: Ever since you introduced him. I thought: Somebody just doesn't invent an imaginary friend for a one-man double-act. There must be a history behind it. Mind you, I was worried when you said he only spoke German.
- B: No no. You don't understand. Carl was made-up. He was invented just for the one-man double-act. (He's a bit of an odd-ball if you ask me but I was happy to go along with it for the purposes of better entertainment.)
- A: Oh I'm sorry B. I thought you'd had an imaginary friend for a long time and just used the excuse of a one-man double-act to – err – bring him out of the closet so to speak.
- B: Ah! I see where the confusion lies. There's no apology required A. I do have an imaginary// [emphasis] I did have an imaginary friend called David since about as long as I can remember.
- A: And you've given him to Tracy?
- B: Yes. Clever eh?
- A: I've got a lot of catching up to do here B. Hmm. Start with the kaleidoscope.
- B: David lives in the kaleidoscope. Well not actually 'lives' and not actually 'in'... More he's where the kaleidoscope is.
- A: And you've given him – the kaleidoscope – to Tracy to look after knowing that 'looking after' is the thing she's really good at and err.../
- B: /Gives her energy and something to focus on.
- A: OK Good enough.
- B: I only lent it to her for a week.
- A: And you explained the kaleidoscope was where David lived.
- B: Yes.
- A: So how does that help Tracy?
- B: Well. I wasn't sure what she was really after so I gave her a friend who was really good at listening and who after a time you can imagine making suggestions.
- A: Hold on! You're the master salesman who detects everybody's problem as

they walk onto the premises.

B: There are exceptions. I thought I did really well to tame her as much as I did. Of course I wanted to know: Was she held back by the past, or just no hope for the future but I can only walk one high-wire at a time.

A: And what's the benefit?

B: Firstly she has to come back in a week's time. Secondly she'll know she's dealing with a deep and mysterious person who need the adult persona to engage with not the child. Thirdly when she tells me how she's got on with David that will tell me a lot more about her.

A: And what if she gives him back?

B: [Slowly] You've noticed haven't you?

A: I couldn't miss it.

[Long pause]

A: All those years.

B: Have I done// No that's what I [emphasis] would have asked.

[Triumphant] I've done the right thing.

A: Except now Tracy's got him.

B: Let's deal with that later. I've got to come to terms with evicting David.

A: Did you know he was a – err – problem?

B: No. Not the foggiest. Just part of my life.

A: But he wasn't evil or malevolent was he.

B: No. The rain isn't evil or malevolent but it still soaks you and makes you miserable.

A: But I've never known you miserable.

B: That's not the point. I've been happy despite David. I've made the extra effort. I've been dragged back a little bit each time by him. Hooray the bastard isn't coming back. Not in a million years.

A: B, we've talked about friendship before. You are a special friend to me and I like to think I can give you any help – no matter how personal – you need. Today it is [emphasis] you that are reborn, reincarnated. A lovely butterfly just trying out its wings after cracking out of a chrysalis.

B: I do feel full of beans A.

A: By the way. Keep away from Maria you randy man about town.

B: [Smiling] Ho ho. Perhaps I should show her a property or two – know what I mean!

A: Good. So now you have four days to prepare for return of the David.

[Silence]

A: I thought that would shut you up. Don't worry I wouldn't let it happen. But you've still got to steer Tracy towards a solution otherwise you'll just be another adult who has let her down.

B: What about this poetry lady? Is she sweet and pure or what?

A: You've just got rid of one and now you're angling for another except this time you won't be able to wish it away.

B: [Insistent] What about her.

A: OK. Imagine being tipped head first into a huge basket of po-pouri. Well

her poems would be the po-pouri and she'd be the twee wicker basket.

B: With a doily?

A: Yes B – Complete with doily.

B: So that's a no?

A: [Sigh] I'll introduce you and I'm sure you'll have a great time exchanging fluids but don't ask me to be fairy godmother. And by the way: Hearty congratulations on your loss B.

## Episode 18

B: Hello A.

A: Hello B.

B: [Phoney french accent - shared silly amusement] And how is Monsieur the Maitre de haute couture doing?

A: It is a slow and rocky road. You even had me considering taking up the life of a gigolo with part-time supervision of a salon. You know since then I've been looking at the way women dress and been pretty disappointed. I'm beginning to see why Maria goes around constantly tut-tuting.

B: Quite right! We can't have slatterns wearing last week's fashions.

A: Hold on B. I haven't caught the 'must have the latest thing' bug yet – just that when you look with a trained eye you can see the missed opportunities and delusional dressing that goes on.

B: See. I told you that you'd pick it up in a few days.

A: Knowledge is a dangerous thing B.

B: Why? What are you going to do with it that's dangerous? [Newscaster voice] "The provisional wing of Christian Dior claimed responsibility for yesterday's destruction of the Southampton British Home Stores. Police are looking for a man with a beret and striped shirt seen in the area."

A: [Exasperated] I'm stuck in the quicksands of mistrust – How can I build a bridge to Maria if she treats every interest I show in fashion with grave suspicion?

B: Life is full of opportunities to learn. Lucky you. Look for the silver lining. [micro pause] "Just look at that lining - lovely bit of schmutter."

A: B. If you don't shut up I'll see to it that Tracy gives you David back. How would you like that?

B: [Knows when not to push his luck] About that A. You know I've seen Tracy again?

A: No. I thought that was tomorrow.

B: Well I gave her a quick call. You know just to reassure her.

A: [Sarcastic] Ah. How sweet. Hold her little hand and comfort her. Loosen

her clothing if she gets a little agitated. Hide under the bed clothes with her in case the Bogey-man is about.

B: [Unconvincingly annoyed] Hardly. Obviously I had to be prepared for a sudden eruption of emotion but// well anyway – we met outside the clock-tower, walked along the river

A: [Inquisitorially] Upstream or downstream?

B: [Train of thought broken] Err. What does it matter?

A: Just showing I'm paying attention

B: Well let me finish.

A: But was she well dressed?

B: [Exasperated] What do I care// No. [Pause] And strangely yes.

A: Make up your mind

B: It doesn't matter

A: Yes it does

B: Why does it matter?

A: Because I want to know. I'm your friend aren't I? How can I solve your problem if you won't tell me important things?

B: You are my friend. I will tell you. But remember it's you that has problems and me that solves them. I wouldn't trust// No that's unfair – sorry A – It's just that you don't have much of a track record. To be honest you're the person who breaks an egg and needs somebody else to come along and show you how to make an omelette.

A: I just like seeing other people trying to get to grips with things. It is good for them to have a challenge. The only thinking most people have in their whole lives is deciding which channel to watch on the TV.

B: Right then Monsieur Einstein. err – what was the question?

A: I asked was she well dressed. You said no and yes

B: OK She was wearing sensible servant's clothes on her half-day off. Dowdy, practical, hard wearing, cheap and boring – and yet with a bit of embroidered decoration. ... That was my undoing. How unfair!

A: [Says nothing - he is a good listener]

B: All I did was politely remark on the pretty butterflies she'd sewn on – all over top and skirt – just dozens of butterflies./

A: /Schmetterling!

B: Schmetterling?

A: Butterflies. In German remember. So that was the No. What about the 'yes'?

B: It summed her up I suppose. It fitted. Perfectly.

A: But you were – pardon the expression – 'undone'?

B: If she was a dog I would have had my face licked-off.

A: For a casual comment about butterflies

B: She'd spent many private hours on that flock or whatever it is you call dozens of butterflies, and nobody had noticed.

A: Until you remarked how pretty just for something to say.

B: I am undone.

- A: Slow down B. I can see you're stressed about this. You've only been walking along the river for a couple of minutes and she's electrocuted you. Tell me in your own words what happened next.
- B: Who's words did you think I'd use?
- A: Sorry B, I'm getting mixed up in all this – I'm paying so much attention I'm forgetting.
- B: Forgetting what?
- A: Forgetting not to interrupt. I want to know what's happened – just like you want to know how the phoney fashion war with Maria is going. So what happened?
- B: I don't exactly know. "Electrocuted" is a good description. OK I admit I wondered if there might be the possibility of something in the 'hows your father'/'
- A: /"And what about the workers"/'
- B: /department. Now I've got rid of David I've got a lot of catching up to do.
- A: But you're only a kid B. David's devious do-good, be-good, act the perfect gentleman protected you from this sort of thing and now you're a minnow amongst the sharks.
- B: But at least I'm in the water; swimming. [Throw away...] Anyway Tracy's only a kid. [...realises the difficult truth.] Ah.
- A: See. You've put it into your words. You've just said "Tracy's only a kid."
- B: [Slowly] I did. And until you made me put it into words I knew it - or the bit that was David knew it – anyway the bit of the brain that nods widely but doesn't say anything knew it. But in words it's so much more real.
- [Friendly recuperative silence]
- A: And a kid electrocuted you.
- [More silence]
- B: She's so happy.
- A: And you're stuck.
- B: Possibly for the first time in her life somebody had the simple courtesy to praise something she'd done by her own hand with her own mind. And the floodgates opened.
- A: "Into each life some rain must fall"
- B: Not tears! No. The sun came out – blossom – roses – and every other happy thing – bluebirds I expect, though I wouldn't know a Bluebird if I saw one – In a fraction of a second she'd made up her mind that I was her most lovely husband.
- A: Where was David?
- B: [Pause for reflection] David wasn't there.
- A: Was anything said?
- B: Err? [Cottoning on] I tried to make light of the suggestion. It's very difficult when you're being praised and hugged and smiled at to wriggle out. David wasn't there but I still couldn't kick her in the teeth and tell her to find her own way in life.
- A: Good for you B. I believe the term is "an item". [Respectful pause] Do you



remember that I got 'itemised' by Maria.

B: Oh I see. You're an expert. I should have spotted it.

A: Welcome to the prison B. You don't have to have done anything wrong to get here – normally a silly mistake is enough.

B: But you're having the time of your life shagging the sexy Maria nightly and twice on Saturdays. Stop complaining.

A: The food's lovely but the view isn't terribly great. Not to put too fine a point on it: 'You have to obey orders'.

B: I haven't got anywhere near bed with Tracy

A: But you're still captured. 'Out on bail' as it were.

B: Depressing isn't it?

A: Well. What are you going to do about it?

B: I don't know. [pause] I know I'm supposed to be the one who can solve problems but at the moment I'm stuck. I haven't the heart to disappoint Tracy.

A: Well then get on with it.

B: Get on with what?

A: Make an honest woman out of her

B: What! Me get married! You must be jo// I suppose it does have it's good points – otherwise why would people keep doing it?

A: You are a very marriageable fellow. No 'chain'. 'Freehold'. 'Well situated' and you get the idea. You've not got dry rot or subsidence ... .. and you've just got rid of the bats in your belfry.

B: Bats in belfry?

A: David

B: Oh I see. Do you really think I should simply give-in to the first girl that grabs me?

A: Impossible to tell. Hmmn. I'd say you need to get to the bottom of her historical hang-ups first. But on the whole – if she's harmless – and you're willing then you don't need identical IQs just enough realisation of what might happen if you don't meet expectation.

B: [Slowly] Meet expectations? I've failed on that so far.

A: But now you don't have David.

B: But what if she uses David as a weapon to force me to submit-or-else?

A: [A problem-solving pause] Perhaps you'd be better off getting her to chuck David – the kaleidoscope in the river.

B: Good idea. I'll try that. You've been a great help – really I mean it. Even if you were interrupting to be silly.

A: Me!

B: Sorry. It was me wasn't it.

A: Well you've just been through a bit of an emotional revolving door with David and Tracy so I'm not expecting you to be thinking straight.

B: It's unfair. No sooner have I thrown David out than Tracy tries to make a nest.

A: Oh dear. You really are mixed up if you use the word "unfair". Get back in

charge of your life pronto. Put up a 'no vacancies' sign.

B: Easier said than done.

A: Just another learning experience!

[They both see the funny side.]

A: The sooner that kaleidoscope is destroyed the better.

B: And the sooner you convince Maria you're a silver lining not a cloud the better.

A: "Wish me luck as you wave me good bye".

## Episode 19

*A has a black eye.*

B: Hello A. What's happened?

A: She hit me.

B: No!

A: As you suggested I got hold of some French style and fashion magazines to impress Maria.

B: Not impress. Get on the same wavelength.

A: Err – OK. Anyway I did a little research about the main Paris fashion houses and launched my offensive.

B: Oh no! You weren't supposed to make her feel insignificant against your towering intellectual genius.

A: I'm wiser now but you should have warned me.

B: I thought you had common sense. Go on tell me.

A: "Here you are dear I've brought you the real thing from the home of fashion". I've never seen a beam go out so quickly when she realised it wasn't something to wear. That may have put her in a bad mood. She did try to appear grateful but it wore a bit thin when she found them full of meaningless French gossip. Actually B I was really looking forward to getting into Purple<sup>9</sup> - one of the magazines, myself – quite artistically stimulating. So her hero comes to her rescue and saves the day.

B: [Guessing] Un balon de plombe?

A: Just for starters. When I let on I was fluent and rattled off some of the text she was curious for a moment but then silently started sucking all the warmth out of the room.

B: Oh. Not what you'd expected?

A: But I had an insurance policy having researched the Paris fashion houses

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<sup>9</sup> Purple is a French fashion, art and culture magazine.

and a couple of recent events.

B: And did it work?

A: Emphatically no. And the more interested I was the more chilly and silent she became. I gave up after a couple of 'look at this' attempts.

B: But you didn't surrender.

A: How did you know? Are you secretly in touch with Maria?

B: That bruise is coming along nicely. [Pause] What did she hit you with?

A: Hand or fist I think. It was sudden and unexpected.

B: Oh dear. I'm sorry A. You were just getting your feet under the table there and then it turns from happy jealousy into explosive regrets.

A: You were there! You must have been.

B: These things happen like apples fall from trees.

A: Well then mister Isaac Newton why didn't you warn me Maria was not an apple but a crate of Acme anvils?

B: I didn't know.

A: But you suspected didn't you?

B: Yes. I suppose so.

A: And you thought it might be 'good for me' to find out.

B: And was it?

A: Not sure about 'good' but I'm certainly learning about – no not learning – discovering lots of things that I never knew existed but don't really understand.

B: So she burst into tears?

A: [Emphasis] You were there!

B: Remember when you looked into Tracy's past and saw what had happened? Well this is the same.

A: Uncanny.

B: And was it the first time you's ever had to wipe somebody's eyes who can't stop crying?

A: Yes. [Thoughtful pause]

B: Noble and manly isn't it.

A: She nearly had me at it. [Recalling] It was so sudden. OK so there was something wrong but – well I tried my best to be normal – then BAM! – then immediately fountains, really fountains.

B: You know why of course?

A: Errm. When you put it like that I'm not sure I do. I'd upset her in some way. She lost her rag and was immediately sorry for her stupid anger getting the better of her.

B: Now I haven't seen Maria since we went dancing. I have spoken to her once since then which you know about. I am you friend not your rival. Is that clear?

A: Yes B – I think you know a lot more about what's going on than I do. I'm feeling a bit left out of it really.

B: Why did she hit you A?

A: I don't really know.

B: Well let's work it out together. Something was building up – What?

A: [Pause] Anger I'd say?

B: That's an emotion. An emotion needs something to drive it.

A: Does it?

B: What was driving it do you think?

A: [Pause] Can't you just tell me the answers? This question and answer is a bit stressful.

B: Remember I wasn't there. Have you ever been out at night in the countryside and seen something in your torch and/

A: [Exasperated] /let's get on with it.

B: Am I making you a bit cross?

A: [Crossly] Yes.

B: You see I'm building up your anger just like you did to Maria by being a know-all on French fashion.

A: Oh. [Pause]

B: Perhaps she's had to work very hard to get where she is today and be the fashion expert. – How do you think she would feel when a scruffy furniture shifter can grasp all the details in an afternoon? And I expect your confidence didn't help either with your casual chic superiority that goes with being fluent in French?

A: Not happy.

B: [Emphasis] Threatened!

A: [Long pause] Really?

B: You tell me – you were there.

A: Quite likely.

B: You don't sound very confident.

A: Well I'm not. I'd have thought she could trust me to encourage her and build up her position.

B: Would you say – now remember her jealous-possessive streak/

A: /I know what you're going to say. "Is she secure. Does she feel secure".

B: [Admiringly] Yes! Spot on A.

A: [Realising for the first time] No. Of course. You bastard B! You knew all along she felt insecure.

B: Yes – But I assumed it was obvious.

A: Not to me.

B: So now you're wiser.

A: I want to be wiser before the event. That's what wisdom is about. Experience is what comes after. The school of hard knocks is for others mate! Did you know B that you don't need a parachute to go sky-diving?

B: [Forced to reply to a rhetorical question] Go on

A: Unless you want to do it more than once. [Pause] I'm one of those funny people who listens to [emphasis] and remembers, the bit in the plane where they say where the emergency exits are.

B: Jolly good A. Does your nappy need changing?

A: What!

B: Make up your mind A. Do you want a nanny [micro pause] or a friend?  
A: [Pause for a moment to digest] You win B.  
B: No I don't! It's not a game or a fight.. We're not competing. We're friends who discuss things not try to score famous victories.  
A: Sorry B. I know you're a friend who's trying to be helpful without trying to run my life. You really are that magic thing – somebody who can be trusted to know the difference between 'suggest' and 'suggest with menaces'.  
B: You're getting to understand how the world works A. [Small pause] So are you happy we've sorted out why Maria hit you?  
A: [Thinking] I suppose so.  
B: That's excellent A. [Odd emphasis] I like to see you happy..  
A: [Pause] You're making me feel – hmm 'paranoid' – uncomfortable anyway, when you leave things hanging like that.  
B: [Fake innocense] Really - What was I leaving hanging?  
A: That there might be something more?  
B: That's because there is - A whole world more. That was just the warm-up. You're sure you can cope?  
A: Stop being patronising.  
B: [Grinning] Only joking there. But you are about to see the 'dark side of the moon' as it were.  
A: Come on. In the last couple of minutes you've been a good teacher and I've been showing my stupidity at every opportunity. I'll try better but can't guarantee anything.  
B: Well said A. You've got a lot to learn about the dark side of women, and you're picking it up very quickly – well done. It's the sorts of things that you can't put a formula on. But now let's move on. [Pause] There's a shock coming up.  
A: Do you know B, I'd really like to lead a life without being hunted by she-wolves, rotating knives round every corner and boxes of anvils dropping on me. Women. Women. Women! They always seem to be the cause.  
B: A temporary phase A. You've had a tough month or so.  
A: Will it end?  
B: No. No now you've started, but you'll get used to it.  
A: Thanks a lot.  
B: Ready? Now we're going at 'the dark side of the moon' if you like.  
A: Go on - I'm so confused I'll take it all.  
B: [Deliberately] 'Aggression and isolation'.  
A: [Expecting B to continue - but is forced by the power of silence to say something] I'm lost. Errm. She was aggressive? Is that something to do with it? [Emphasis] I wasn't aggressive.  
B: Before you met her was she isolated?  
A: [Quickly realises] I suppose so. Didn't mix much.  
B: Reputation for being a bit fierce or stand-offish. Well done A. Now any thoughts on 'aggression'?

A: Before or after I met her?  
 B: Before.  
 A: [Thinking hard, knowing the answer is 'yes' but can't see it.] Sorry B you've got me stumped.  
 B: Do angry people swear and upset people cry?  
 A: [Pause for thought] I suppose so.  
 B: So?  
 A: So [pause for more thought] she was upset at hitting me.  
 B: Very upset - not just a bit.  
 A: [Remembering] Yes very.  
 B: Did you hold her tightly and say nice things?  
 A: Yes. Self preservation instinct more than anything.  
 B: Well done.  
 A: That's another of those nice things you say but leave hanging.  
 B: Yes I'm afraid it is. But well done for containing the situation. I'm sure you were the sweetest straightjacket Maria/  
 A: /straightjacket! That's a bit harsh/  
 B: /true. You held her tightly but not the slightest bit more than necessary. Sounds like a straight jacket to me. – And then she saw the shock and confusion on your face?  
 A: And burst into tears.  
 B: And you were still confused. [Small pause] And upset?  
 A: Confused yes. Upset no. Never get upset in a crisis! What's the point of that?  
 B: You're not going to like this A but it's my favourite subject. 'What's the problem" You can't fix the problem 'till you know what it is.'  
 A: I'm only just in touch with you here B.  
 B: So why did she burst into tears?  
 A: Because ... [long pause]/  
 B: /Because it's happened before.  
 [Long pause]  
 A: How do you know these things B? Your experience of women is negligible.  
 B: Because it happens with everyone, it's just that women are more likely to find themselves at the sharp end. – You know what 'sharp end' means?  
 A: [Eek!] No  
 B: Bad things happen that you can't run away from. [small pause] [emphasis] Sharp things. Sharp things carried by nasty people.  
 A: Or ignorant foot-soldiers – automatons.  
 B: Yes the ignorant, angry and confused sometimes carry sharp things. 'Aggression and isolation' - 'Aggression and ignorance' – same thing really.  
 A: I'm still lost here B.  
 B: The past is a place we all visit.  
 A: Eh?

- B: Some people - Tracy for instance – have a secret garden in the past. Magic – good or bad – keeps them going back. You've never broken a magic spell?
- A: What are you talking about. Magic doesn't exist.
- B: But spells do. Spells that entrap people in the past. Spells that won't let go. It's not magic it's just people.
- A: Of course I've never broken a magic spell.
- B: I know.
- A: This is getting bizarre.
- B: I suppose it is. Do you really think Maria bursting into tears after hitting you can be explained as a bit of anger overspill?
- A: ['realising'] No. She thought I was out to take her job.
- B: No no no. [Sigh] We did the casus belli before. Forget everything else. Why did she burst into tears straight after hitting you?
- A: You told me. "Because it had happened before".
- B: Exactly. Welcome to the dark, sharp side.
- A: But she's never hit me before
- B: And she's probably never hit anybody else before - ever. [Small pause] [Slowly] So why/
- A: /because – sorry B I've been so stupid – she's been on the receiving end. [Pause]
- B: In the past.
- A: [Holding back the tears] In the past! What did you say? Aggression and ignorance? Oh my god. Arrogance and ignorance – What a cocktail I brought to the party! Well it must have seemed like arrogance.
- B: Water under the bridge now.
- A: Tears under the bridge.
- B: Off you go. Soonest mended is soonest mended.
- A: I'll be off then. Thank you B.
- B: Give my love to Maria – she needs all the love she can get
- A: Thank you B. One of these days I'll thank you properly.
- B: Don't probe. [Emphasis] 'Do' 'not' 'probe'. One thing at a time. You can't erase the past with a kiss and a hug.

# Episode 20

- B: Hello A.  
A: Hello B. [Hugs B]  
B: So it worked out OK between you and Maria A.  
A: [Emotional] You can't put a value on happiness B.  
[Happy silence]  
A: You've made two unhappy people happy B.  
B: Good. One unhappy/  
A: /two!  
B: [Emphasis] One. [Plain] Let's face it you were 'bewildered'.  
A: No I was upset.  
B: Stop fooling yourself A. Confused for someone like you means a 'bit of an oh-dear' perhaps I ought to look into this sometime'. I know you like to think of yourself as a superior intellectual. . . .and you are – that's what you do – that's who you are – You are knowledgeable and clever – and even better you soak up knowledge and thrive on puzzles. You were puzzled but not upset.  
A: I was after you'd explained how stupid I'd been.  
B: Why?  
A: [Pause] Because I'd been so stupidly insensitive.  
B: No not really – But because you'd let Maria down by not picking up on her horrible past.  
A: Yes, you're right B. It's so difficult to think straight when you're in the front line.  
B: Fraternising with the enemy eh?  
A: That's a funny way/  
B: /I didn't mean it seriously but that's what "front line" suggests doesn't it.  
A: And how are you gett//fraternising with Tracy?  
B: Since you change the subject – I'm not sure. She hasn't hit me yet, and I think she genuinely likes me, but I can't bring myself to love her. I haven't got the heart to bluntly refuse, it would be like drowning a puppy.  
A: You only met her a few days ago for a cup of tea and went for a walk along the river.  
B: She's already picking off hairs and fluff and brushing my jacket shoulders.  
A: And like the good gentleman that you are you haven't mentioned her childish personality. That would take some coping with.  
B: But she thinks it's a done deal. A trip up the aisle on the next convenient day off from work. I've got to break it to her that Father Christmas doesn't exist.  
A: That's [lost for words] You can't let her...  
B: Say something useful! What's the point of having a friend if you're not



- going to help me out. Come on engage your brain!
- A: But I'm still in the beginner's class. I don't know.
- B: Well at least suggest something.
- A: [Thinks] I know. Tell her you're already married.
- B: Oh dear I seem to have left my Neutron-space-blaster at home:  
Otherwise you would now be a pool of bubbling lava.
- A: I tried.
- B: Yes I was a bit hasty. Well done for trying. Now have another go.
- A: Marry her.
- B: I've spent all my life unmarried so why should I start now?
- A: Get it over and done with.
- B: What? You mean like going to the dentist?
- A: Yes. Pretty much the same.
- B: More like going to the vet!
- A: Split the problem into parts. If her umm 'inner child' I suppose, could grow up a bit would that make a difference?
- B: Yes. But I don't want a friend or wife. I've just got rid of 'kaleidoscope David' and I'm slowly learning how to make up my own mind without having a little voice that wants to be consulted. Freedom!
- A: [Pause ... Brainwave] Right! That's the answer. You confess to Tracy that since childhood you've been suffering from the err bullying? of your imaginary friend and the wounds of that trauma are too fresh to consider a new relationship.
- B: Rule one: Don't slam the door shut.
- A: Exactly. Disturbed childhood, she'll relate to that. It'll give her something to think about anyway.
- B: But it doesn't get rid of her. What happens if she sees it as just a few weeks of postponing the wedding bells.
- A: Burn that bridge when you get to it. Can you think of something better?
- B: I feel bad about giving David to Tracy.
- A: Why. You're better off without him.
- B: But I've given him to a very immature woman.
- A: [Emphasis] Lent him. You can get him back.
- B: But can I? He might be preying on her. Bound to be.
- A: You didn't know his bad influence when you handed him over. You thought you were doing the right thing.
- B: An impressionable child would be easy meat for David.
- A: Come on, Tracy is not a ten year old.
- B: Sometimes she acts like one. And she's hungry for relationships. Look A do you mind if I go round to Tracy's now and get him back.
- A: No of course not. But wait a moment and think it through. You turn up on her doorstep all flustered demanding David back. What if she refuses? Perhaps as a child she just wants to be awkward or perhaps as a 'mum' she thinks you're too desperate to have him back and want to know more. It's not going to work out well is it.

B: Err-um. I'm beginning to sense your foreboding A

A: And once she says "no" even just for fun then that's made the situation worse. She is entrenched and no amount of pleading will reverse her decision.

B: [Pause] Grim. Thanks for that rescue A.

A: We still ought to get David off her though.

B: By subterfuge.

A: Well some other way at least. [Thinks] I suppose you could always find the lie of the land first. Why not ask her. Don't let on how badly you want 'KD' back. Don't let on at all. After all it would only be natural to ask.

B: Then what.

A: Right. Objective number one is to get 'KD' into your hands. That's the key thing. After that you can chuck him or it in the river or whatever to finally and publicly destroy him or it.

B: What! All the way to Mordor!

[Both laugh - the seriousness is broken]

A: It won't be easy 'kaleidoscope bearer' – There are no buses on Sundays.

B: 'One kaleidoscope to rule them'.

A: It could be dangerous. There are dark shapes scudding across the sky. In the ancient dwarvish language they're called "clouds".

B: I'll take an umbrella.

A: And most of all avoid rings [pause for effect] and white dresses, bells and confetti.

B: [Back to serious] You said 'destroy in public'. Why?

A: And make sure Tracy sees you do it.

B: Why?

A: You tell me.

B: I've run out of 'think'.

A: All the more reason for finding some then.

B: Alright. [Pause for thought - realises] So there's no doubt - nothing sneaky can be going on. Hey. That was easy really when I gave it a bit of thought. Why didn't I think of it.

A: So you've got a rough plan sorted out.

B: Umm I've had another thought.

A: Go on. I'll get a wet tea-towel ready in case your brain bursts into flames.

B: Fairly serious actually: What about Carl? Is he a David mark two?

A: Carl is an imaginary imaginary friend – does he count?

B: He could be a fifth columnist, the enemy within, you know.

A: It would mean the end of an extraordinary double-act. I know you haven't actually got anywhere with it yet but have you thought of talking it over with him?

B: No. Why should I?

A: Just checking because I know you've got a soft spot for poor Carl and you wouldn't dream of hurting someone's feelings.

B: No Carl is just a made-up imaginary friend. A puppet.

A: So how would you get rid of him?  
B: Just by ... /  
A: /it's not that easy is it. You can't just leave him at home in a box like a puppet because he's still in the box.  
B: Maybe I could send him on a suicide mission.  
A: How about a 'for one night only' performance where Carl gets shot for being a spy.  
B: That's a bit cruel.  
A: I know. You can kill two birds with one stone. First chuck 'KD' in the river and get that out of the way. Then go through the 'what to do with Carl' routine with Tracy. Convince her you're a raving nutter, a bit weird and creepy and she'll scoot off and you'll never see her again.  
B: [Pause to digest this] But what if she comes up with a good answer?  
A: Who cares. Have fun. You're free now. Invent bizarre excuses. Lie away without 'KD' questioning you.  
B: This imaginary friend business is really weird isn't it.  
A: You could say that.  
B: Lucky I've got a real friend.  
A: [Assuming B is referring to somebody else] Who?  
B: You of course.  
A: Aha! [Joking] But I could be your imaginary real real imaginary friend.  
B: [Joking] Well then here's a tip old buddy: If I catch you creeping into my double-act, then um [trying to think of something] then you won't get any funny lines.  
A: [Joking] Oh no. Not even the liquid paraffin joke?  
B: What's that?  
A: You say "I've got a gun and I'm not afraid to use it" I say "I've got a gallon of liquid paraffin and I'm not afraid to use it" Then I pause to give the audience time to catch up and be prepared for the punch line." [Stops]  
B: [Forced by silence to ask] Go on what is it?  
A: "We all go together".  
B: Hold on! You [emphasis] are trying to get in on my double-act. [Joking] I've got my eye on you A.  
A: Don't worry B. I'm not any sort of imaginary friend. Real friends don't have claws. [Pause. Holds up hands as evidence. Shakes B's hand. Puts arm around B's shoulder as they walk off.] [Joking] Tut tut. You'll have to do something about the fluff on your jacket.

# Episode 21

- B: Hello A.  
A: Hello B.  
B: Let's get this over with. I've got myself in more trouble and it was me who put Reg up to it.  
A: Oh. I was//Oh I'm sorry to hear you're in trouble.  
B: So you don't mind?  
A: No. But it would have been polite to let me know first.  
B: It was spur of the moment. Now I don't have to worry about everything I just get on and do it.  
A: So is 'KD' history? - Sounds like it.  
B: Yes! As far as I'm concerned. Listen to me A: Never have an imaginary friend.  
A: Why not? Just because yours kept putting a dampener on things doesn't mean he was all bad. And I know you're an atheist-Christian which I want to know more about another time. David may have been keeping you out of trouble – you know a guardian angel.  
B: The Fates were lying in wait.  
A: If I may say so B, you don't seem too despondent about all this trouble.  
B: Look on the bright side. Live life today and leave everybody in the lurch tomorrow.  
A: Oh. Do I detect a bit of the "Divine winds".  
B: Divine winds? [Cottoning on] Good god no. I'm not on a suicide mission – more looking for a sack of oats so I can sow them.  
A: Wild oats. That sack belongs to somebody else - That's why they're 'wild'.  
B: Ha ha A! You may think I'm limiting myself to the Co-op chorus line but I've decided to out-evil the evil ones.  
A: The Masons, councillors and fellow travellers! – Um [pause to marshal arguments] have you heard the saying "Friends come and go but enemies are for life"?  
B: No. But it's a very good saying. – Except for you'll always be my friend. Even if I have to assassinate you you'd still be my friend.  
A: That's such a nice thing to say B. If it's any consolation I'd like to pay my sincere respects at your funeral.  
[Silence. Both realise the serious and silly side]  
B: True friends can make you say things you didn't quite mean to say then take those words and twist them into what you never understood you knew all along.  
A: [After a while] I'll take//twist your words for it.  
B: [Emotionally enthusiastic] Are we lucky? Am I lucky to have you as my friend? I'm so lucky.

A: But it was you who summed it up in a nutshell

B: But I wouldn't if you hadn't encouraged me.

[Friendly silence]

A: If the wages of sin is death then what is the currency of friendship?

B: [Thinks] Fairy dust?

A: I don't know either.

B: We do but we don't.

A: Imagine being able to bottle it.

B: [Joking] Mercenary!

A: [Still in elated/amused mode] Come on B let's hear about the 'Perils of Pauline' I mean the "Troubles of Tracy".

B: [Happy as Larry] /

A: /Whatever the trouble is pales in comparison with getting rid of 'DK' this is a happy and unexpected day for me.

B: [Angry] Unexpected! Didn't you think me capable of killing off David?

A: No. Ten days ago I didn't know he existed. That's why it's unexpected.

B: [Placated] Sorry A. I didn't know either//There you go again friend – have some fairy dust.

A: Oh no. Please not fairy dust – I'm allergic.

B: [Taken in for a moment] Sorry// [Realising the leg-pull] Stop it and listen.

A: Sorry B. Force of habit. Come on – you're prowling on the loose – and?

B: [Small pause] I suppose I am. A how can you be so much better at seeing what's going on than me? I was there – befuddled coping with things as they came along and you're sitting with your feet up looking at a radar screen of incoming issues.

A: Far be it for me to interfere. Actually B I haven't got a clue what you're talking about. Get on with the story.

B: It turned out that Tracy thought the kaleidoscope was 'pretty but stupid' and the concept of an imaginary friend was outside her experience.

A: Relief all round.

B: She said how sweet it was that I'd got this imaginary friend.

A: [Emphasis] Evil imaginary friend

B: "Gosh what a saint I must be to look after him all these years."

[Stunned silence - women's logic!]

A: So from Tracy's point of view that's all right then! Nothing wrong in putting up with him all these years and nothing wrong with killing him off.

B: It's weird. I didn't kill him off. He just didn't exist anymore!.

A: David is gone. You're free.

B: I would have liked to see the body.

A: Body of an imaginary friend?

B: Yes. Tracy didn't actually bring the kaleidoscope with her. There was no actual burial. Dead in theory but I'd be happier with the proof. And I don't want Tracy experimenting with KD.

A: So despite what you say, David still exists.

- B: [Confessing] Well only as a memory. I can't forget the power of his influence in a week. I must be certain he's gone for good and can't get his claws into Tracy.
- A: So you still need Tracy to give you the physical tube back.
- B: Yes. It's all a bit fishy. You can't be too careful.
- A: So what's the trouble? Be nice to Tracy and bide your time. After a week she'll have forgotten all about it.
- B: There are 'gentlemen', 'cricketers' and 'mates' – then there are women. Here's what happened: After a walk by the river who should we meet but your pet poet Jayne and her friend Sindy from the library. It was obvious this was by arrangement – only Tracy could have arranged it – and so off to the Colonnade café together we go.
- A: What's wrong with that? You're privileged.
- B: Stop taking the piss. Tracy was parading her new possession to her mates. Not only that but in the sure knowledge that now I was [emphasis] hers, spoken for, out of bounds. Come and meet B, stroke him, pat him, pet him, feed him a cake, but see that lead he's on [emphasis] that means he's mine.
- A: That's not trouble is it? A bit of an odd situation but – come on you didn't submit did you?
- B: Did I heck! I'm free now. That's why I'm in trouble.
- A: If you're free why are you in trouble?
- B: Because I thought: OK if I've got the seal of approval from Tracy then the others will accept that without question. So I flirted in that outrageous way that is obviously so outrageous that it can't be taken seriously but ahem isn't completely dismissed either. Do you want to know the details?
- A: Yes! Of course.
- B: [Evil chuckle] I'm a bastard.
- A: Well they were being a bit likewise to you.
- B: What would you do?
- A: I don't know B.
- B: Mister bastard was at home to lord and lady bastard. I said to Tracy confidentially that I thought I'd quite like to shag the plump librarian – and Jayne was gagging for it so, and this is the best bit, would [emphasis] she make a few suggestions or should I take the initiative?
- A: Oh shit! [Laughs Shakes B by the hand.] You are a devious, really devious bastard. Brilliant. If I had a ceremonial headband I'd give it to you, you deserve it. You are a bastard – I like the way you smacked Tracy with a 'heads I win tails you lose' trap. Very clever mister B.
- B: More by luck than judgement.
- A: [Still chuckling] Without David you're a menace to all chaste women!
- B: Don't forget the unchaste!
- A: Sorry B. By the way I haven't forgotten the masonic wives but let's have that later. Carry on.
- B: I'm not exactly sure how it was arranged but, well I was brought up as a

practising celibate so anyway the short story is I completed my sex education shortly after.

A: With Tracy?

B: No she was playing bastard. Bastard-bastard. The other two, Sindy and Jayne, this was in Sindy's flat, soon managed to find what they were looking for and had their wicked way.

A: Don't come the raw prawn with me. Anyway a good time was had by all. Well done to you B. [Realising] What was up with Tracy?

B: She took me away on a lead. Not a real lead but it might as well have been. Amazing. There were unspoken words like "If you're good I'll let you have another go at him next week". Suddenly I've become Tracy's performing pet – available for rent.

A: And did she shag you later?

B: No. I bailed-out. [pause] You know I believe she's got that David whispering in her ear.

A: Oh come on. You think she's hijacked David?

B: Or David has hijacked her?

[Pause]

A: So possibility number one is that your imaginary friend David who we think is a bit of a damp rag has found a nice warm home in Tracy. And what would he be whispering in her ear B?

B: It doesn't make sense.

A: OK Let's get this out of the way: Do imaginary friends make sense anyway?

B: No. They're completely illogical. I should know I had one for fifteen years.

A: I'm glad we've cleared that up.

B: I just can't tell

A: Can't tell what B?

B: Am I really her toy?

A: But you're not anyway. You're free. What Tracy thinks is irrelevant. You don't love her. She's a wasp at your picnic. Why do you care?

B: [micro-pause] Because I do.

A: Fair enough.

[Silence]

A: You 'transgressed some law' so that's why you're in trouble?

B: Yes and no. I detect a bit of chill in the Tracy department - That's all to the good - sort of – but now I'm expected to be page boy to the ladies of the library [emphasis] and the chorus girls of the Co-op. Flood-gates and all that.

A: Bit of a shock I expect – especially for you.

B: Thrown in the deep end where all the sharks are.

A: Oh come off it B. Goldfish.

B: Nibbling you know where.

A: But you're free – Oh yes and you were going to knock-off the Masonic

wives.

- B: That's my evil plan A. I've already made a list of lonely housewives if you know what I mean.
- A: But why when you're already fully booked?
- B: Errm. I hadn't thought of that.
- A: Can you make money. What's in it for you?
- B: Youthful enthusiasm I suppose.
- A: Why not start with one. Walk before you run.
- B: But I want to fuck them all.
- A: I know you hate the Masons and so on but we're talking about their wives - are they all secretly available?
- B: Unknown territory A. More research needed. There's a cocktail party on Thursday - officially a development zone presentation - I shall take my diary nudge nudge wink wink.
- A: Live dangerously!
- B: They must know their wives try sportier models. That's part of the game. And vice versa I expect.
- A: Pace yourself B. I've had my fair share of 'stand and deliver' from Maria which is not a joke.
- B: Sorry about not discussing giving Reg the idea you should put together a show for the Co-op. But you'll thank me in the end.
- A: B! Friends don't say that.
- B: What?
- A: "You'll thank me in the end"
- B: But you will.
- A: I expect to do so. Yes your idea to make the basement 'above board' was really clever and yes I should be grateful, ecstatic even that The CGM, or "Reg" as you call him, called me into his office this morning for a friendly chat. On the other hand I'm not sure that name "The Co-op players" epitomises the spirit of Bohemian creativity that I was hoping to achieve. I may be able to subvert it yet but we'll have to see.

## Episode 22

- B: Hello A.
- A: Hello B.
- B: I hear you've got the basement buzzing.
- A: Yes and I could do with your help there. What happened to your one-man double-act?
- B: Carl got the chop.



- A: Great. I need somebody to work with the budding writers and performers to tidy them up and give them punch. We're going to start with a cabaret sort of thing for ourselves and if it is any good do it in public. I've got musical contacts from the area Co-op brass band. Mention 'charity' and there is a lot of goodwill.
- B: But I'm not a professional writer or performer.
- A: You're head and shoulders above the rest B. And – I hear you've conquered Jayne and tamed her poetry. That deserves a medal.
- B: Nothing really. I just told her straight.
- A: That's not what she told me. She said you'd pulled her poem to bits then showed her how to do it better. Positively glowing with – gratitude I suppose.
- B: Well I did tell her it was rubbish. OK I admit even mister bastard couldn't help but comfort her when she burst into tears. I suppose I did explain a few wordy things and read her some bits.
- A: Of yours?
- B: No. Old favourites. 'The road not taken', Plath's 'Insomniac', 'The Men Who Wear My Clothes' by Vernon Scannell. Pretty random. Yes she was really entranced.
- A: Maybe you have a bit of magic? Sunday afternoon magic.
- B: What's special about Sunday afternoons?
- A: [Warmly] Congratulations B. I'm under strict instructions not to show you this but I think I ought to. You didn't discuss sonnets did you as this has 14 lines 4-4-4-2.
- B: No. KISS. 'Keep it simple stupid' is one of those management mottos for training and presentations.
- A: Read this.[Hands over paper]
- B: *I had words but not music*  
*I had pictures but not thoughts*  
*I had pleasure but not perception*  
*I had colour but not depth*
- Then jagged shock rocked*  
*Then bloody grief grew*  
*Then blasted pain came*  
*Then broken dreams screamed*
- Slow awakening*  
*Slow appreciation*  
*Slow affection*  
*Slow Sunday afternoon sex*
- Writhing seeds of life inside me*  
*Will be the birth of poetry*
- [Pause] Basic. Blunt. A bit mechanical.

- A: [Grinning with pleasure] Less mechanical at the end. A bloody good start. [Realises ambiguity] It starts well with a manifesto sort of thing and also it's a good start at better writing.
- B: [Re-reading it silently] Sorry A I was just thinking. I may have covered some of those things I suppose but that first bit is all her words not mine.
- I had words but not music*  
*I had pictures but not thoughts*  
*I had pleasure but not perception*  
*I had colour but not depth*
- A: Only one question?
- B: Yes.
- A: How are you going to get on with the people you're not going to shag on a Sunday?
- B: [Slow catching up. Angry for a second as a reflex. Relaxes] I'm not an all-round genius A. Just fluke. What's sex got to do with it?
- A: Don't knock it. Without David your long-repressed 'mister bastard' personality is uncovering hidden talent. How about Driver Joe – you remember, the effing and blinding poet. He needs a haircut and shave and swearing isn't funny or clever so knock him off his perch for me and see if he has anything to say.
- B: I'll introduce him to Jayne and they can sort it out themselves.
- A: Umm. OK Try that. I suppose Jayne has more between the ears than we thought.
- B: A? Look. Well done to you for trying to get the proles connected with the arts in your basement. Well done. But have you any idea how patronising you are? One moment you're trying to get them to embrace the err – liberal arts and [emphasis] at the same time, treat them like sub-normal children.
- A: "Proles" see! You're at it as well!
- B: Just by way of illustration.
- A: Well what would you suggest? "Prole" is a fairly accurate description.
- B: A bit pejorative.
- A: But accurate. Proletariat. For how long has "Proletariat" been a term of abuse?
- B: Since it was invented I guess. Like "Billy boys" and "Sons of Abraham" All good bigot-fodder. The labels were probably given by the opposition but adopted with pride by the people themselves because until then they'd never had any name to unite them.
- A: It takes oppressors to make the oppressed.
- B: So I'd suggest less tarring people with the same broad brush. How about "Enthusiasts?" They have enthusiasm.
- A: Sounds like a great name B. – It's like you're in the back of my head sweeping out the neglected rooms and showing me the junk you've found.
- B: [Silent]
- A: How many people would be as lucky as me to have a friend like you in the

- last month? One day I'll write a book.
- B: Not yet mate! You've got enough on your plate. And yes I will be 'executive producer' to your 'director' or 'director' to your executive producer.
- A: Ah. Problem! The CGM, "Reg" to you, has bagged that role. I'm the one who produces the talent and he takes care of putting it on.
- B: [Very thoughtful] I could// No I tell you what I'll offer my services to Reg as assistant producer. – Why don't you suggest it? I'm sure he'll appreciate it.
- A: But I need you to straighten out my acts not have management meetings about who to invite to the gala opening.
- B: Do you want a spy in the enemy camp?
- A: Oh I see mister bastard. [Pause] But hold on, then he'll have you spying out my camp.
- B: What's wrong with that?
- A: I don't want interference.
- B: But you would like encouragement, issues fixed by a little bit of string-pulling magic. So who is the best person to be a bridge?
- A: [!] Hey you're angling to be apprentice CGM
- B: What? I hadn't thought of it. [Pause] But you're right! I do have a chance in that department if I can be patient and work my way up. Business is my background and I have some contacts. [Thinks] Five years of hard work and I could be a popular choice. Something to think about. Thank you A, it never occurred to me.
- A: Glad to be of assistance.
- B: Where were we?
- A: Err. I wanted you to coach the /
- B: /Ah yes. But I think I can be more useful as assistant to Reg. And now you've mentioned it that's a revelation. Between you and me; he's a bit of a ditherer but as he smooths everything out and leaves the policy decisions to a couple of shady, well not very shady, characters so everything is happiness and light.
- A: Go on then. – I expect great things from 'production'
- B: [Emphasis] You should suggest it. Hmm. Say that I'm keen on business as well as the arts. Say I have to be kept away from the ladies or else they all get infatuated so I'd be better off organising publicity and so on.
- A: He'll never believe that
- B: True though isn't it?
- A: OK.
- B: When I'm CGM I'll see you're well looked after – I'll even get you a new warehouse coat, that one is beginning to show it's age.
- A: [Angry for a split second - Realising it is a serious/leg-pull] I'll start growing a forelock to tug 'young master'.
- B: [Mock serious...] Prole. [...Bursting into smiles]
- A: Mister bastard is at home and long may he be there. You realise you

- couldn't have done any of this, or contemplated running the Co-op with David – Just a kaleidoscope.
- B: Water under the bridge
- A: But how many other people have kaleidoscopes? Tracy for a start. And Maria.
- B: Have you got to the bottom of that?
- A: No. I don't want to rock the boat.
- B: Have you been with her to Canterbury to look at the cathedral?
- A: No.
- B: Have you read her Jayne's poem.
- A: No. I haven't got permission – It's supposed to be secret remember.
- B: Well here's a thought – sorry A that was a bit sarcastic – // I'm mister bastard aren't I. Well how about you being the nice guy. You could say to Jayne/  
 A: /Hold on B. We use 'Mister B' as a shorthand but you're really a softy. You can't resist a damsel in distress. I admit 'Mister B' may have a tendency to make them distressed in the first place, but I know that SS membership card in your pocket is a fake.
- B: [Momentarily confused by this last bit] SS card?
- A: Metaphorical.
- B: Oh I see. Sorry.
- A: I'm beginning to like you Mister B.
- B: [Mock serious] Beginning!
- A: Come on. You know you're always my friend. Umm that sounded like a trite cover-up. [Pause] You're a good friend - best friend. [Small pause] And if you're not I'll tell you straight.
- B: [Slight pause] Well that's worth a bushel of Fairy Dust. You're right I'm not a fully developed bastard yet. It is early days and now I'll be properly mixing it with the 'real bastards'/
- A: /Masons etc.?
- B: Yes that lot. – I may acquire some unpleasant habits.
- A: [Humourously] You can't blackmail me
- B: [Not so humourously] I'll find a way! [Both burst into genuine laughter] [Short silence] Anyway if I was you I should say to Jayne how effective the poem was and especially you'd be grateful if you could show it to someone who is close to you? She won't have a problem with that so long as you beam when you give praise.
- A: Yes I'll/
- B: /I've just realised. Oh no. Did you hear what I just said?
- A: Yes. "Give praise."
- B: [Sad/resigned] "Give praise" Notice the religious connection?
- A: What? "Praise the lord and pass the ammunition" sort of thing?
- B: That'll do. [short pause] I still have God.
- A: As an imaginary friend?
- B: [Pause] Wow! That's weird. I'd never thought of him as an imaginary

friend. I see where you're coming from. There's a Yes and No in there somewhere. [Thinks]/

A: /Deep waters! Should we talk about that now?

B: [Thinks] Next time. – Yes. Next time for definite. I suppose I'll have to sort that out. [Shivers] It's making me feel creepy already.

A: Good idea B. Next time – and perhaps a few times after that.

B: [A bit annoyed at implication of ongoing interference] No need to be so nosy.

A: [Taken aback. He thought he was being sensitive.] Sorry B. It's not nosiness I was thinking of, more that these deep things don't get sorted in five minutes. You know I'm not religious – can't stand the stuff – but you're my friend and if you want to err adjust your religious views then I know that's going to be a bit of a strain.

B: [Unusually short] Maria.

A: Yes? Maria.

B: Have you sorted out your differences?

A: We had a quarrel because I was stupid and now that's fixed.

B: Still happy in bed?

A: [A bit annoyed at this abrupt question] Yes. I hope you're leading to something important here B. That was a bit blunt.

B: As with my god so with your Maria.

A: Eh? You've lost me. Seriously lost me there B.

B: Bear with me. I'm not being nosy. Should we tell what we see?

A: [Thinks] Yes. [Emphasis] We should. What's the point of lying to our friends?

B: Saves pain

A: But 'into each life some rain must fall'

B: But who'd be the messenger?

A: I see what you mean. Grief tends to be indiscriminate in blame.

B: Not just grief [Thinks] Unpleasantness.

A: So you're suggesting unpleasantness with Maria? I've never been happier.

B: What is Jayne's poem about?

A: [Thinks] Finding there's more than meets the eye.

B: Good. And is it plain sailing?

A: No. [Consults paper]

*Then jagged shock rocked*

*Then bloody grief grew*

*Then blasted pain came*

*Then broken dreams screamed*

B: Then something happens to make it better and better and better.

A: Yes. I've lost you.

B: Has it occurred to you that Maria may not be your perfect life partner?

A: No. – OK it did initially. And I did wonder when she hit me.

B: But not any more?

- A: No  
B: I think you should. – Perhaps we should discuss it next time.  
A: Look I'm beginning to settle down. To be honest it's lovely. Warm.  
B: OK. Until next time.  
A: Until next time.

## Episode 23

- B: Hello A.  
A: Hello B. I meant to ask you how you were getting on with Tracy.  
B: [Sarcastic] Well now we've got the pleasantries over with. [Emphasis] Come on in the waters lovely and warm – positively tropical – full of sharks  
A: Sorry B. I'm getting less wishy-washy as responsibility falls on my shoulders.  
B: Why? Is Maria pregnant?  
A: [Taken aback] No. – Not as I know. Is she?  
B: How should I know? It was just the way you said it:  
A: [Emphasis] Slow [pause] down  
B: Sorry A. I suppose I'm getting this virus  
A: What virus?  
B: The one that makes you treat life as a series of boxes to be ticked – and the supervisor will be along in a minute.  
A: Well let's try to forget that. [Pause] [Sarcastic] Or shall I refer to you as 'colleague'.  
B: Yeukk. You're so right A. "Colleague" belongs in the home of the neutered rats.  
A: [Pause] "Neutered rats" – I'm beginning to like you B.  
[They shake hands and are overwhelmed by their cleverness and empathy]  
B: Let me answer the Tracy question. Then you can answer the Maria question. Then I'll answer the god question.  
A: But first: Did Jayne show you her poem?  
B: Yes.  
A: Oh good.../  
B: /Yes I was very moved. Her voice added so much. I had to tell her to shut up when she started explaining it afterwards! What bastard does that? The irony is she thinks it's about poetry.  
A: Are you sure? Just poetry? Jayne is a bit of an unknown quantity.  
B: It's a good assumption.

A: Worth checking out I should say.

B: I haven't got the time or energy to investigate everything.

A: Come on. Such a valiant effort deserves a decent response.

B: Dear Lord protect me from lonely women. And so to Tracy: Not so much lonely as lost her calling.

A: Here's a thought: I think Maria needs to let go of something, like you let go of David. Jayne has found something but there was nothing she had to shake off. Does Tracy need to let go of something or find something or both?

B: You've changed A. I have the excuse of evicting David but what's your's? You used to be the one who needed the lie of the land explaining to you but now you're doing it to me.

A: Am I? No. I'm just the same old enthusiast bumbler.

B: Not from where I'm standing. No really.

A: Well how have I changed then?

B: You're getting sensitive to people and trying to understand their problems enough to show some light and suggest solutions.

A: Whereas you're getting to be the one that acts now and deals with the consequences later.

B: Are you sure you haven't chucked out an imaginary friend?

A: I've never ever, had an imaginary friend.

B: So if you haven't let-go of anything you must have got hold of something. Maria perhaps?

A: She's certainly changed my life.

B: So I'll take that as a yes.

A: But I've also got official backing for an arts club and that's already taking over.

B: So you've found two things.

A: If you like. But why should that change me?

B: Come on you're the clever one now. A new environment, a new challenge, an opportunity to do things you've wanted to do. All of those things must change your outlook on life.

A: But if that was true there wouldn't be any miserable gits, sad embers or frustrated entrepreneurs in the world.

B: Yes there would be. We've seen beneficial changes but it's early days. I could end up as a real bastard playing very dirty because I won't let anybody stand in my way to climb the greasy pole of promotion and local politics - not to mention wrecking a few marriages. And you could end up having a nervous breakdown under the strain of trying to organise a bunch of crazy 'enthusiasts' and being abused by a jealous wife who hates your independence and achievements.

A: But she//... You have a point B.[Pause] But what happened with Tracy?

B: Remember that plan 'A' was to get the kaleidoscope from her then let her see me toss it in the river. Symbolic I think you artistic types would call it. Well apparently, according to Tracy "I've been naughty so can't have it

back yet". I admit I blatantly shag her friends and have managed to keep one step ahead of her in the "name the happy day" stakes so I can see she'll be frustrated.

A: Ironic.

B: How?

A: Two ways: Firstly you've never before got close enough to screw a woman but now they're queuing up. Secondly the only reason you want it back is to destroy it.

B: No I want it back so that Tracy can't fall under David's influence.

A: [Cautiously] If Tracy doesn't know/

B: /But she does. Remember that's why I gave him to her in the first place.

A: [Pause] Right. [Emphasis] I'll have to tell her. I can't have her playing silly blackmail games, and obviously the more you plead the worse it will get.

B: You'll have a better chance than me but if it's her only hold over me then she's not going to let it go.

A: I have a plan. Hurrah I've solved her problem. I know how to give her back to herself.

B: You've lost me//Oh I see. Give her a grown-up personality without lurching back to intense parenting.

A: That's the bit that's been beyond me.

B: And me.

[Silence]

B: Go on. How?

A: I'll explain how [emphasis] you need a adult to be equal with. Not a sergeant major. I'll explain how childishness gets up everyone's noses. You're not going to be bossed about and you're not going to love a child. Give her an incentive.

B: So I'll be the bait in your trap?

A: Yes. You'll have a Tracy eating out of your hand and David will be at the bottom of the river.

B: I don't like the idea of being bait.

A: You're already in the trap. She's already put the oven on, laid the table and is off down the shops for an orange to stuff in your mouth.

B: Isn't there another way?

A: I hope so because if this fails we've still got to deal with the problem.

B: I could just tell her to get lost.

A: And where would that get you B?

B: I'd have got rid of her.

A: More likely you'd find a very very cross loud-mouthed enemy you wouldn't want to meet. Think for a moment with her history how tough she must be inside. If she can deal with social services then you're toast.

B: I don't understand how this has happened. You were the one who turned over the stone but I'm the one dealing with the monster underneath.

A: Stop exaggerating. Tracy isn't a monster – just one of those heroes that



can't cope with peace.

B: OK. What do I have to do?

A: Nothing. Don't negotiate and don't aggravate. She will come to you. Be nice and relax. [Emphasis] Relax. Remember the object is to get rid of David. [Emphasis] Relax. What have you got to do?

B: Relax?

A: But be firm. All you have to do is fake being relaxed. Pretend you're selling a rat-infested ruin. You wouldn't raise your voice to a customer. You're the salesman. Didn't you tell me that you have to suss-out what somebody wants when they come into the shop.

B: But I don't/

A: /Yes you do. She wants a dolly and you're the dolly.

[Silence B is not quite catching up]

A: Mother and child in one.

B: And I have to go "Mama"!

A: No because I'll have fixed it – I think. Just look out for the change and encourage it.

B: And if you haven't?

A: Then you're no worse off than you are now.

B: You make it sound so logical.

A: Where has your logic gone B? David didn't do that as well?

B: The pressure keeps distracting me. I'm thinking the logic of what can go wrong.

A: Look you've solved Jayne poetical diarrhea problem. That was easy wasn't it.

B: No it was horrible.

A: Horrible? I thought mister bastard shredded her pride, showed his infinitely superior grasp of poetry then gave a demoralised and helpless girl a good fuck to round off a hat-trick.

B: That's the horrible thing. I'm not really mister bastard. Only sometimes.

[A is a good listener so keeps quiet]

B: So when I'm not mister bastard I think back on my callous actions and ... .. It's horrible.

A: You've only had mister bastard since you got rid of David. That's is right?

B: Perhaps. I don't [emphasis] "have" mister bastard, I [emphasis] am mister bastard. David stopped me being mister bastard.

A: No. It's only a counter-reaction to the shackles being released. You're bound to over-compensate to begin with.

B: I'm not sure. Mister bastard is fun. I like him.

A: Gets girls too.

B: But sometimes he goes too far.

A: Why worry. A good slapping worked wonders for Jayne. Upsetting Tracy – confusing Tracy? I'm not sure which is correct; has opened the door to fixing her problem. I should say that's a very positive result.

B: But it is still too fierce for mister normal.

- A: [Thinking] You don't have [emphasis] another imaginary friend by any chance? One that lurks in the background to chide you when you might have transgressed a moral code?
- B: There's God of course. That's where these feelings probably come from.
- A: And is he an imaginary friend?
- B: No of course not.
- A: More of an imaginary enemy?
- B: Stop being// No. I know you're trying to be helpful. God doesn't talk to me. Well not [emphasis] me. Other people in church seem to be on speaking terms but not me.
- A: So he's there but not speaking to you? That must be a bit/
- B: /No. Not sulking. He is only an echo in my mind. You know "Wouldn't it be a good idea to give some money to charity" that sort of thing.
- A: So would you say you were a bit of a fraud in Church? Going along for the ride?
- B: Look everybody is happy. They're happy. I'm happy. The people at church wouldn't go if they weren't happy. – Well some make a point of suffering but they're happy about suffering really.
- A: This is getting complicated. Let's get back to why do you feel so guilty about behaving like a bounder?
- B: Not 'guilty' – shocked by it. Errm. Like there's blood and gore at a road accident and you help the victims. 'Well done' at the time but a horrible experience looking back on it.
- A: Well don't look back on it then.
- B: You still haven't told me what bugs Maria
- A: I still don't know to be honest. I didn't have the courage to ask.
- B: Get her to tell you.
- A: How?
- B: Be mister bastard and insist.
- A: But I couldn't.
- B: Good for you. That would be horrible wouldn't it? How do I know? – Because I've just done some horrible things. They may be working out in the end but it's still not nice.
- A: It's not a burning issue
- B: But what if you want to put on a Co-op fashion show? That would be good fun and if it was for charity I'm sure I could sell lots of tickets.
- A: You think she'd resent it?
- B: Possibly. Why don't you ask her and go from there.
- A: That's a great idea of yours B. I'll suggest it to the manager.
- B: Manager? Reg or Maria?
- A: Both I suppose.
- B: I'm still curious about Maria. What is she looking for? Can you provide it?
- A: Lots to think about.

# Episode 24

- B: Hello A.  
A: Hello B.  
B: How are you coping with the cabaret?  
A: It's constant work - but fun and I'm beginning to see people getting their acts together. - Literally.  
B: What have you got?  
A: I got the guerilla rhythm lady, Auntie Ada from accounts, to team up with Jayne to see if they couldn't come up with something together and they say they've got a thing called 'rattle round the kitchen'. That's the good thing we can get all the props we need.  
B: And you could put it in the window.  
A: Eh?  
B: Instead of a boring pile of pots and pans in the window you could jazz it up as a promotion for the cabaret.  
A: This is a try out - but I see what you're getting at... ..We could get each department to put up a department related act. You know. "Grandma's old rocking chair" by furnishings or "the day father papered the parlour".  
B: [Not being sarcastic] Brilliant. A tableau in the window of silly things happening with wall paper will make people laugh.  
A: But will it sell wallpaper?  
B: Of course. People will remember your window when they are thinking of decorating. Or they may be relaxed and make them think about doing some decorating. And best of all they'll know that the Co-op is full of real people who look on the sunny side of life. How many people want to go to a builder's merchant's and be made to feel stupid by a bloke in a flat cap and overalls? Nobody.  
A: Sounds fun. "Cabaret for fun and profit"  
B: And you don't need the cabaret. The idea stands on its own.  
A: I wonder if there are other music hall songs we could use for other displays?  
B: Doesn't have to be music hall. It could be musical or Gilbert and Sullivan or films. Travel - South pacific. Ladies underwear... No that's beaten me.  
A: Follies Bergère.  
B: Mens clothing?  
A: We can't do all that. Miss Spooner the head window dresser - she's 95 - would faint.  
B: Suggest it to Reg. How are you getting on with him?  
A: Ah. He's a bit too enthusiastic. He wants to be a great impresario and join in with everything.  
B: [Carefully] Between ourselves would you say he was doing a bit of

'escaping'?

- A: I don't know. I haven't had anything to do with him before.
- B: And anyway, all play-acting has an element of escaping so 'nothing to see here move along'.
- A: He is like a puppy – all cuddly and prone to forgivable mistakes. A bit annoying when you're trying to get things sorted out though.
- B: So set him onto Miss Spooner.
- A: Oh. Yes I see. Good thinking.
- B: I've got the job of assistant producer so I'll make sure the essentials get done.
- A: Talking of essentials, sorry B, I haven't seen Tracy about at work yet.
- B: Why not phone her up?
- A: I couldn't do that. Pestering people at home isn't right.
- B: It's quite important.
- A: All the more reason for doing it properly.
- B: It's worrying.
- A: Don't worry. I'll do my best to seek her out tomorrow. Remember I'm often out doing deliveries.
- B: Please. It's important we don't let her get attached to David. Anything could happen.
- A: OK. Sorry for the delay. It's top of my list.
- B: And, sorry to be nosy but I'm worried for you, how did Maria react to the idea of a charity fashion show.
- A: Now that was strange. She sort of went – hmm – 'remote' for a minute, that had me worried, and then I got the impression she was simply repeating the 'official party line'. A sort of "yes good idea that will fit in with my plans nicely". There's something wrong.
- B: Dishonesty?
- A: Somebody is not being quite straight with somebody else.
- B: So you've achieved something.
- A: Have I?
- B: Yes. She's not being quite straight with herself is she.
- A: Goodness you're hot on these kinks in personalities. Mister bastard meet mister Freud. That's Reg and Maria you've dissected in five minutes.
- B: Selling teaches you to read people.
- A: I used to think I could do that – but now I'm not so sure.
- B: So what did Maria actually say to this fashion show business?
- A: Well she said "Yes – good idea".
- B: Then what?
- A: Nothing?
- B: What. Nothing? No suggestions? No ideas? No restrictions?
- A: No.
- B: That's bad news A.
- A: Is it?
- B: Of course it is. If you ask somebody about their interests you don't expect

just a "Yes good idea".

A: Hmm. She's just being cautious after the last time. Avoiding a sensitive subject.

B: ['Deep breath'] What did she really say?

A: She said exactly that. I'm not covering up anything.

B: There's something fishy going on

A: That's what we've known for a long time with Maria

B: No we haven't. We think she's got some secret in her past that's holding her back or something she's looking for she can't find. You haven't winkled it out – I'm not blaming you, you're in the front-line, but that's not the same as this fishiness.

A: This mister Freud and mister bastard combination isn't very nice.

B: I know I've suggested it before but in the cause of best friendship I'll say it clearly. I don't think Maria should be your life partner. The two of you can't be – err – in harmony about the things that are important to you. Fashion, education, culture are deadly nightshade growing in your garden.

A: That's something I'll have to think about B.

B: Of course. I'm only handing you a torch so you can see your way.

A: I know you mean well but I don't know how to deal with women.

B: Yes you do. Of course you do. Who was it who had all those flocking admirers which got you into the situation in the first place.

A: That must have been fluke. [Pause] I'm like a tree planted in the sea – Don't know which way is up and I've lost my shadow.

B: Who wrote that?

A: Err – Nobody. I just imagined being a tree planted in the sea and what would happen.

B: But you also imagined a tree on the land – otherwise you wouldn't have twigged about the shadow. That's brilliant. "Tree without a shadow" is... ..so thought provoking.

A: Out of nowhere – honestly.

B: I believe you. You were that tree.

A: [Humorously] Mister monkey-puzzle at your service.

B: Mister Araucaria

A: Araucaria?

B: Alternative name for the Chilean pine or Monkey-puzzle tree. I shall remember that shadow thing. It makes me shiver.

A: [Slightly bemused] I've got some catching up to do. I can see a shadow and tree go together but it's a bit complicated – the sort of complication gets scary with so many possibilities – [ha ha] branches if you like.

B: Why not talk it over with Jayne. Give her an emotional conundrum with spooky connotations and she'll be away. Spread it around [micro pause] like you used to do.

A: I suppose that's what poets are for.

B: You've got a good eye for words yourself.

A: [Deep in thought] I'm shivering now. "Good eye for words" – Original?  
B: I presume.  
[Happy silence]  
A: I'm so lucky.  
[Long pause]  
A: So lucky to share good things  
[Long pause]  
A: So lucky to be alive – [emphasis] Alive  
B: Beats the alternative. The dead aren't much fun. [Pause] What with one thing and another the drawbacks don't outweigh the advantages.  
A: [Not unfriendly] I'm going to come back to haunt you B!  
B: With or without your shadow?  
A: [Pause for thought - pretend malicious/friendly] I will rustle// When you hear the wind rustling the leaves in the trees you'll think of me. [micro pause] And this moment.  
B: When I see a tree without a shadow I'll think of you.  
A: You never will  
B: Yes I will. [Pause][Horried at internal thoughts] Not actual trees.  
[Silence]  
A: I've lost the thread there.  
B: Shadow friends.  
A: Oh. [Pause – falls-in] David.  
B: I'm not embarrassed.  
A: You're not a tree! You don't need a shadow. You're a person – you need to grow on your own.  
B: Something to think about.  
A: And you experimented with a second.  
B: It's all I knew.  
A: Funny. I've never had a shadow, ball and chain or any clutching connections but I was the one to think of shadows inexorably connected to trees.  
B: Well get onto Jayne and see what she makes of it.  
A: I'm going to have to think about this some more. Shadows. Do you know I remember my auntie talking about 'shadows on x-rays' meaning TB scars. I didn't know what x-rays were but whatever these shadows were they were bad news – lurking in there with malice.  
B: I've got rid of mine. Now what about everybody else?  
A: Yes. Tracy. Maria.  
B: Mister Araucaria  
A: Me?  
B: What's your shadow A?  
A: I haven't got one. Not as I know.  
B: Exactly. You are only aware of your shadow when you look for it. You normally don't notice it.  
A: And I know what you're going to say: Maria is my shadow.

B: Not quite.

[Silence]

A: You may be right B. Connected but on different planes.

B: But you were the one who said you were a tree without a shadow.  
Explain that.

A: I can't

B: She's not your shadow A. A shadow is creeping, gripping thing. She's just roosting in your branches.

A: I'm too tired to work all of this out properly. [Positive] B I take your point about Maria - I'm open to the possibility of alternatives but it is all a bit much at the moment – especially after such a magical conversation.

## Episode 25

B: Hello A.

A: Hello B.

B: Is it me or has life suddenly got more complicated?

A: [Thinks] Richer perhaps.

B: [Contemplates this response] Richer as in a greater variety of threats and shackles.

A: Chill out B. That's what life is: A series of threats and shackles.

B: No it isn't. Where did you get that idea?

A: It's one way of looking at it.

B: [Dismissive] Rationalising being on the receiving end.

A: Shit happens.

B: Occasionally the world trips you up but that isn't a threat or a shackle.

A: OK – Threats, shackles and custard pies.

B: [Semi-concerned, semi-annoyed] Are you alright A? You haven't resorted to boot polish?

A: No.

[Confused silence]

A: But I tell you what I've had an epiphany.

B: Oh no.

A: Why the scorn B? What's wrong with an epiphany?

B: I'll tell you what. An epiphany is supposed to be when you see the light.

A: Yes.

B: And a great weight of confused thoughts go to the abattoir.

A: You're in a funny mood yourself.

B: And a great weight of confused thoughts go to the abattoir

A: What are you trying to say?

B: And a great weight of confused thoughts go to the abattoir

A: That's three times you've said that.

B: And three times you've brushed it off.

A: What am I supposed to say?

B: "Do you want fries with that?" After they've come out of the mincer.

A: Perhaps I should have a pint of whatever you're having. To be honest B you're not making much sense.

B: An epiphany is an excuse to promote some simple idea and abandon the difficult bits. [Pause] In short, a cop-out.

A: It's a periscope looking out from a submarine being buffeted by the currents of life.

B: So what's this [sarcastic] epiphany then?

A: Trying to fix the world is not a matter of absolutes. Instead Maria says I should try to harmonise.

B: Harmonise?

A: You know. Get on the same wavelength and go from there.

B: No. Are crystals involved? Do you have to sit cross-legged and go "om"?

A: You know. You're a salesman. You know how it works. Get to know your customer, empathise with them, understand their hurt.

B: Aha! That's where the psycho-babble becomes landfill. Get to know your customer: Yes. Empathise with them: No. Pretend to: Yes. As for hurt: Next time you're delivering a wooden table why not go and hug a tree in the customer's garden to understand the tree's hurt at being chopped up and used for furniture.

A: You're making it complicated for your own reasons

B: What reasons?

A: I don't know.

B: A You're a twit! If your car runs out of petrol do you empathise with it – slit a vein perhaps – Show solidarity at least? Or swear a bit and start walking?

[Silence]

A: You're mixing real life with simplistic examples.

B: OK. So how did this epiphany come about A?

A: Last night Maria could see I was tense and tired. Bless her, she spent nearly an hour on massage and relaxation.

B: That sounds very nice.

A: It was. When you're wrestling with uncertain talent, Reg's interfering enthusiasm, and trying to keep the few good ones interested while the dross bulldoze their way to a place in the final for persistence then [emphasis] that is complicated.

B: And all those things can be solved by –err– harmonising?

A: It's a better approach to getting things done.

B: You call it harmonising. I call it cop-out compromising. Just because it's hard work doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong.



- A: But it's easier to motivate people if you're on their wavelength and understand their needs than if you barge-in issuing orders.
- B: Of course but is that really all you're trying to do? Tidy up a few acts with some encouraging criticism?
- A: How do you mean 'all'? That's what I have to focus on.
- B: And why are you putting in all this effort? What's your motivation?  
[A is blank]
- B: Have you lost your missionary zeal to bohemianise the proletariat?
- A: No. I don't see the issue.
- B: What's the difference between 'motivate' and 'inspire'?
- A: Well I suppose 'motivate' is encouraging while 'inspire' is – ...
- B: ... How about 'enthuse' or 'stoke self-motivation'. [Pause] Do you really want to be constantly pushing limp-brains or would you rather be guiding their dashing energies?
- A: Um. I see what you mean. It's easy to forget the main reason when real issues need dealing with today.
- B: It's your job to [emphasis] inspire as well as tidy up and trap sillinesses. That's what [emphasis] leadership is. You have the confidence, knowledge and energy to show people what they have to do for themselves. You are a leader. Admittedly you sometimes start and don't know how to continue but look at Jayne for example: You started off that and now, after I put her on the right road, she's beginning to mature. That's what you started.
- A: Why is that not compatible with harmonising?
- B: Because an inspiring leader gets people to harmonise with him. He will be sympathetic and spot difficulties the rank and file are having and act calmly and [emphasis] decisively based on getting the best out of each person.
- A: Are you saying I should take some lessons from mister Bastard instead?
- B: It worked with Jayne didn't it.
- A: But there were special circumstances. I can't even flirt – Maria would have a fit.
- B: Build up your image a bit. If you don't want to make all the decisions then get a group to discuss issues according to your agenda. You set the problems and get them to provide the solutions between them. By the way that was [emphasis] team work so now you've had the full management course in 2 minutes.
- A: Decision making isn't easy.
- B: But harmonising is. Go with the flow. Where does flow go A?
- A: [Thinks a moment] Downhill.
- B: I should make the most of a relaxing massage but use the time to get your decision-making done.
- A: Well really I think – no I'm sure – that Maria really wants me to just be another performer not a leader.
- B: Bit of a problem there then. Leadership is in your blood.

- A: [Pause] Here's a funny thought. While Maria is trying to de-stress me I'll be consumed by the contradiction, the sure knowledge that she either doesn't understand my motivation or she does but doesn't like it.
- B: When she says "you should harmonise" who do you think she means with?
- A: [Sigh] Her.
- B: You're not that tired of life yet are you.
- A: [Resigned] You were right B. We're not made for each other are we?
- B: And it's going to be horrible for you.
- A: What if I could get Maria to see things my way.
- B: Whatever you do, don't try mister Bastard on her – she has a thin-skin and violent streak. Why not 'harmonise' by giving her a massage and introduce your –err– reverse epiphany gently and see how that goes. Do what a man's got to do and that sort of thing. You have to be free to be a noble hero. You can't change the world if you admit it might change you. Then it's up to her to submit or admit to incompatibility.
- A: I'll give it a try.
- B: Att-a-boy. See you're resolved. Teamwork! Now help me with Tracy.
- A: Didn't it work?
- B: No it worked fine. Kaleidoscope David is no more. You'll never guess what – so I'll tell you. She brought it round in broken bits in a bag. She stamped on it as soon as she got home from work. Some fine motivation there A. She was flushed with excitement and I was completely caught off-guard by her militant zeal. What's the famous French revolutionary lady?
- A: Marianne.
- B: Yes. I was dragged off to liberation. It was emotional as I watched myself and a new Tracy glowing with inner energy hurrying down to the tow path. She'd let her hair down as if to say 'only the basics matter'. Very lovely twisting tresses flowing from her lovely profile fixed on the future...
- A: You don't need my help B.
- B: I was going to be clever and do 'equality' and 'fraternity' but.../
- A: /Stick to the magic moment B. Describe what happened when you chucked David into the river.
- B: The actual chucking was an anti-climax. No build-up. No speeches. No hesitation. No reminiscences. I might as well have just put him in the bin. She did it.
- A: Actually threw it in
- B: No. I threw him in. But she made the moment a million times more important than the past.
- A: Congratulations. Welcome to 'Maria land'.
- B: No it's not like that. Tracy is a positive organiser.
- A: Yes it is. Listen to the voice of experience – OK only a few weeks I admit – Tracy has captured you hasn't she?
- B: If you want to put it like that.

- A: Does that suggest an explanation for way she was so keen to get rid of a rival. You've had you allowance of fun with the other girls and now 'mum' eliminates the only other rival by stamping on him.
- B: [Shocked] Never. Tracy is honest.
- A: Erratic. Distorted personality.
- B: [Factually triumphant] That's been solved!
- A: [Happy a long-running issue has apparently been fixed] Really? You're a genius if you've solved 'Tracy'.
- B: I think so. Early days of course. But back to your suggestion that Tracy killed-off the competition, because I'd like to clear that up: Remember it was [emphasis] you that lit the blue touch paper by telling her that David was holding me back in an unspecified evil way. Well done. Thank you. Thank you a lot A. [Pause] You hoped it would offend her and appeal to her caring nature and it did. You [large emphasis] inspired her A. You didn't tell her what to do. You didn't ask a favour. You showed her what friendship is.
- A: [Bashful] No you're reading too/
- B: /She told me that. She told me that with her hair streaming, eyes sparkling, mouth on a reckless roller coaster and body gripped by happy confidence. – [Pause] An epiphany if you like.
- A: For her? – Or you?
- B: The past is over. For both of us.
- A: [Sincere] Congratulations. I don't think you're out of the woods but a good start. No A really lovely start.
- B: And I still need your help.
- A: Oh yes? So you said. Really?
- B: [Emphasis] I was able to let David go – eventually. [Emphasis] You, although you are my best friend could let me go – but Tracy can't abandon her younger sister – Kelly. She thinks that Kelly depends on her. Obviously they're close having been through the mill together but [tense] – well she won't leave Kelly on her own.../
- A: [Resigned] /OK I can see what's coming. What's this Kelly like?
- B: [Relieved] You've met her at you cod seance remember.
- A: An exaggeration. A forced fortune telling. Kelly? [Thinks back.] She was half Essex teenage tart and half personal assistant. Made notes under cover of her handbag.
- B: Would you at least invite her out. She's shy.
- A: [Genuine] Of course B. I know you've thought hard about asking so all I can do is say yes. It will be my pleasure – even if it isn't.
- B: The definition of a friend: You set them on fire and they apologise for making so much smoke.
- A: [Laughs] To answer your initial question B – Yes life has suddenly got more complicated.

# Episode 26

- B: Hello A  
A: Hello B  
B: [Happy] The world's a wonderful place and we're lucky to be here.  
A: Sweet and sour at the moment B.  
B: What happened with Maria and Kelly?  
A: The results came back from the biopsy.  
B: [Utterly surprised] What! You didn't tell me?  
A: Why would I worry you with a cancer scare?  
B: Because telling me makes you stronger. Go on tell me now.  
A: Yes. They chop it out on Friday.  
B: [Matter of fact] Deadly then.  
A: 50 percent.  
B: See! Matter of fact. Nothing complicated like women.  
A: [Pause Bursts into tears] Anything I can do for you in the next couple of days B?  
B: [Pause] Who knows about this?  
A: Answer my question damn you!  
B: My cup of friendship overfloweth already. Let's not // Hey look // Who have you told?  
A: Nobody except you.  
B: Good boy. I don't think I could face all the sympathy, questions and morbid curiosity. Now give me a clue.  
A: Skin cancer. If they kill it then that's fixed if not it's a matter of months.  
B: Hospital. At least you'd make life richer for the other patients.  
A: What's the point if life is three weeks of pain-killing drugs?  
B: Good point A. But it may be many years of cancer-free skipping about.  
A: That's what I expected you to say. Friends have to look on the cheery side. 'Oh you don't want to worry about that. Medical science has come on in leaps and bounds. Blinded by a freak crochet accident? I'm sure you'll have bionic eyes and be playing darts by Christmas.  
B: You see. The patient always looks on the negative side and the friends know this – it's just having a more balanced view.  
A: So B: Who should I tell?  
B: And [emphasis] what should you tell them?  
A: Err Yes.  
B: You should tell me whatever you want. [Pause] And also [pause] Whatever I want to know. I'm on the outside looking in.  
A: OK. Anything else you want to know?  
B: Yes: Are you going to die next week?  
A: Bastard.

- B: I could issue a communiqué in your direction regretting your ill-health then bugger-off to the pub – or perhaps I could find out the things that matter and do my best with the facts at my disposal?
- A: The answer to your question is. I suppose they could kill me on the operating table but – even if the op fails it won't be curtains next week.
- B: But it could easily be a complete – or partial success.
- A: But we don't know.
- B: What's the use of worrying. Once, when I was little, I had an older brother. He died.
- A: You've got Mari//Tracy now. Tell her.
- B: His name wa/
- A: /tell her!
- B: David
- A: [Sarcastic] Surprise.
- B: You're upset.
- A: Of course. I'm not used to being interrogated on forthcoming date of death.
- [silence]
- B: Life's gone from being complicated to 'involved' hasn't it. [Practical] Come on let's deal with it.
- A: Maria is practically history. I think she may be re-adjusting.
- B: Or re-group// Forget it. A few days will clear a lot of things.
- A: And I really clicked with Kelly.
- [B is a good listener and keeps quiet.]
- B: That's good. Who got onto who's wavelength?
- A: I was being ultra polite and attentive. She was anxious to please. It was scary. I think we were both being manipulated by two puppet masters B and Tracy. She was cautious because she was on a mission. I was cautious because I wasn't. But she offered to help me organise my life// no I don't mean my life. My cabaret duties.
- B: And you filled in the 'my life' bit?
- A: In my dreams.
- B: So how do you fancy a pretty personal assistant?
- A: It has potential.
- B: Is that what she thinks?
- A: When she gets rid of the voice in her head telling her what to do I'll find out.
- B: Do you mean she has an imaginary friend?
- A: No. A real relation. Tracy.
- B: You mean Tracy is a bit of a David?
- A: Exactly what I mean.
- [Silence]
- B: A? If you didn't have me would you invent a friend?
- A: [Pause for thought] No I can't see why I'd do that.
- B: So you're sure I'm not really your imaginary friend.

A: You are my real friend.  
B: I'll come to your funeral.  
A: And I'll appreciate it.  
B: But I'm afraid you'll have to wait – For years.  
A: In the light of cancer marriage looks different.  
B: Stop getting all dramatic.  
A: But it does. All my choices are telescoped.  
B: Let's get the next few days over with.  
A: I have your number.  
B: You [emphasis] will call wont you. [Pause] Promise? Promise me?  
A: That's the first time [emphasis] ever you've demanded I do something to suit you.  
B: Better get used to it if you're thinking of getting married.  
A: [Laughing and crying] Friends! With friends like you who needs to care about the future.

## Episode 26a

[B answers the phone]

A: Success. Everything looks good.  
B: Thank goodness. I was worried I'd have to cope with Tracy and Kelly on my own.  
A: Not to mention Jayne and Maria  
B: And Cynthia  
A: Oh god, I'd forgotten about her.  
[Happy silence]  
B: The currency of friendship is friendship  
[Contented silence]  
A: Fraternité as your Marianne would say.  
B: I don't know where this comes from. I might have made it up:  
*The price of freedom is death*  
*The price of friendship is friendship*  
*Comrades... Comrades let us be free*

# Episode 27

*Some weeks later. A and B are glowing with satisfaction immediately after the Co-op cabaret*

A: Phew!

B: Congratulations A. You did it.

A: It worked!

B: I liked the rocking horse gag. That was brilliant. Who's idea was that?

A: Driver Jim. He worked the whole thing out.

B: Good acting - So simple but spot on.

A: Auntie Annie from accounts coached him. They've 'got a 'thing' going'.

B: [Chuckling] It's got to go in the window. I'll tip-off the paper it gets cleaned up every morning at ten. Within a week everyone in Chelmschester will know the Co-op sells rocking horses.... ..and shovels.

A: And is full of nutters.

B: Cheerful nutters. And cheerful news travels fast.

A: A sign in the foyer: "Have you tried our rhubarb?"

B: [Mighty grin] Now you're getting silly.

A: [Thoughtful] Now what?

B: [Own train of thought] Fear, sweat and laughter.

A: Good show title B

B: In retrospect.

A: Success - Hurrah!

B: And you've got the whole Co-op buzzing. You're the man of the moment everyone's talking about.

A: Yes but Reg supplied the enthusiasm and you – you kept me up to the mark.

B: Me? I just did some administration.

A: Well you set the budget, set the date, covered for me on my sick days and sold the tickets. Did we make a profit?

B: [Humourously] Oh so now you want a cut of my money? Financially we earned enough to pay for a substantial buffet and a glass or two of wine for everyone.

A: Where next?

B: Broadway!

A: No silly. That was a scratch pilot and everyone wants to repeat it.

B: Well do it again – once more. Then give them a pep-talk. You know "We've amazed ourselves and had a lot of fun out of thin air. Where do we want to go from here?"

A: Where do we go from here?

B: Where do [emphasis] you want to go?  
A: I don't know – It's a bit of a shock to find myself this far.  
B: Was it only four months ago that you were trying to create the basement bohemians? That must still be something you cherish?  
A: Yes I suppose so. I've been rather preoccupied.  
B: And you've been surfing in shark-infested waters. – What's the latest?  
A: I can't break away from Maria. I think she's been holding-off because she knows I'm so intensely involved with the show.  
B: Holding-off?  
A: I'm expecting a backlash.  
B: Why? You've had a deadly health scare – perhaps she's mellowed?  
A: No. She had a ticket but she didn't show up. Declaration of war or what?  
B: Oh shit. – Right! You're coming back to my place tonight.  
[Silence]  
A: But it isn't her fault.  
[Silence]  
B: You're not making sense A. You tell me she's declared war and now you're trying to make excuses for her.  
A: I'm not good at relationships B.  
B: I know you were adopted and rejected your surrogate parents and yes that's a poor track record but that's no excuse for turning up on time for your beating.  
[Silence]  
A: You don't realise what Maria means to me.  
B: I think I might. She is your David. She's your first permanent relationship.  
[Silence]  
A: [Crying. B keeps distance.] I don't know why I'm crying B. Because I'm bloody stupid or because I'm so lucky to have you to tell me.  
[Silence]  
B: Tears are full stops in the story of our lives.  
[Silence]  
B: Come on. Let's move on to the next sentence.  
[Silence]  
A: You're a guardian angel watching over me B.  
B: Don't all friends watch over each other?  
A: I suppose so. Is that a definition of a friend?  
B: It'll do until we think of something better.  
A: But you can't fight my battles for me.  
B: I can stop you reporting for slaughter.  
A: I am emptied. Drained. Exhausted.  
B: You are a successful leader of a rag-tag army of thespians. You have just won your first battle. Even as we speak people are carving out a plinth for your statue.  
[Silence]



A: But I'm not a hero. Just/  
 B: /Yes you are A. You've conquered lazy and ignorant and most importantly 'worthless'. And 'nothing worth saying'.  
 A: Ironic isn't it?  
 B: It's not ironic stupid! Would a silly rocking horse shit gag ever see the light of day if you hadn't been nurturing it?  
 A: Oh come off it B. That's not my talent, not my creation.  
 B: Yes it is. You are the can that goes round the beans.  
 A: You've lost me  
 B: Have you ever seen baked beans on sale without a can?  
 A: No?  
 B: You provided the can that made the beans sellable.  
 A: I'm sure that's important but it sounds very ugly.  
 B: Sorry A. You've done a great job opening the pens...  
 [Silence]  
 B: Perhaps I was a bit too blunt there A. Of course/  
 A: /No apology needed B. It's one way of looking at it. All of us are in pens. Being fattened up/  
 B: /no we're not. Some of us – you and me for starters, are stopping-off temporarily for a good feed. Now A wouldn't it be a good idea to put the wind up Maria by staying at mine tonight? Show her you are independent.  
 A: But I can't let her down.  
 B: How are you letting her down?  
 A: By not letting her know I'm Ok.  
 [Silence]  
 B: That's the first time you've ever lied to me A.  
 A: [Slowly] I know.  
 B: If you go back to Maria tonight will she hit you?  
 A: Quite likely.  
 B: You're a tough furniture shifter. How can a petite lady like Maria hit you?  
 A: [Sadly] A mystery.  
 B: She doesn't really hurt you does she?  
 A: Yes.  
 B: Oh.  
 A: Don't worry about me B I can take it. It's the only love Maria knows.  
 B: [Pause] What's the difference between love and attention?  
 A: [Pause] I'm not sure.  
 B: Where does this violence come from? Can't you short-circuit it? [Pause] Or fight fire with fire?  
 A: Maria isn't a kaleidoscope to be stamped into little bits.  
 [Silence]  
 B: Are you worried that if you snap her little thread of power she'll crumble to dust?  
 A: What would you do?

B: Hmm... I'd ask somebody else what to do.  
A: Eh? I Just have.  
B: No I mean// Yes you did// What I meant was I'd think who was the person who would be most likely to have the answer and ask them.  
A: Well you're nearest and the only one I'd really trust.  
B: What do I know about relationships A? Dogged by imaginary friends. Can't communicate with my parents and now I'm about to be carried away on an ocean of Tracy - I'm up to my knees already.  
A: I haven't heard any cries for help.  
B: You haven't exactly been sending up distress flares with Maria.  
A: Let's not argue.  
B: We're not/.../ Oh I see you really are tired. Sorry A it's the wrong time to be dealing with these matters.  
A: No let's.  
B: No let's not. You are tired and the adrenaline of the show is wearing off.  
[A cries - This time B puts his arm around A]  
B: It's a natural counter-reaction to the high of the show.  
A: Honestly I'll be all right.  
B: You're still convalescing. I expect it's the antibiotics or whatever. I tell you what I'll give you a choice. Either come back with me or I'll call Maria and ask her to take you to her flat.  
A: No. Don't bother Maria. It's only fifteen minutes walk.  
B: It's 'either' - 'or' A.  
A: No I'll/  
B: /You lied to me earlier and this is the payback: 'Either' or 'Or'. Either have Maria take you home or come back with me. You asked me what I'd do and now I'm doing it.  
A: [Long pause] [Happy] You are a bastard B. A wonderful bastard. One day I promise to do the same for you.  
B: Well you asked me what I'd do and I've done it. So which is it?  
A: I can't see why Maria has to collect me but I am tired and you are wonderful bastard. Give her a call.  
B: And I'll take you up on that promise when you're fit. Keep taking the medication - Seriously - You're not out of the woods yet.  
[A and B hug]

# Episode 28

- A: I need your help B.  
B: And I need yours.  
A: Thanks for the other night. You were brilliant. How can you be such a cold-blooded bastard and so loving.  
B: I don't know what you're talking about A.  
A: You do. You held me in your arms when I was weak and lonely and I call that love. And you relentlessly steered me away from self-harm-stupidity.  
[Silence. B has nothing to say]  
A: How can I help you? I'll try but you're the genius round here – I'm just a furniture shifter.  
B: What should I do?  
A: I don't know. What's the problem?  
B: Good question. I'm not sure.  
A: Well go on. [Pause] Tracy?  
B: Tracy isn't a exactly a problem - More a phenomenon.  
A: You're smitten.  
B: Verily smote [realises!] No not hit, nothing physical. I have not been smited.  
A: I can't laugh although I'd like to. I have been smote, smitten and smited by Maria.  
B: [Concerned] Not recently?  
A: No - Your ploy worked. Don't ask me why – I daren't think about it. I ought to because you saved my skin.  
B: And who knows, you could have cracked under the strain.  
A: What? I don't understand.  
B: You might have hit her back.  
A: [Pause – shocked] Was I that far past caring?  
B: Sober as a judge and who knows what may have happened?  
A: Alcohol is a funny thing.  
B: Not so funny really  
A: You know what I meant – Funny peculiar. There must be a reason we keep a tiger as a pet?  
B: Tiger as a pet? You've lost me there.  
A: Something to stroke and cuddle up to at night/  
B: /Oh I see. But will eat you if it likes.  
A: Yes. Why do we do it?  
B: You don't need alcohol when you've got Maria do you/  
A: /Oh shit. [Realises] Do you know what I've just said?  
B: Yes. Maria is a tiger you cuddle up to.

[Silence]

B: Perhaps you should sign up to 'Marias anonymous'.

[Silence]

A: I know I need to kick the habit but don't know how.

B: And deep inside don't want to.

A: How do you know these things?

B: My dad's alcoholic.

[Silence]

B: And Tracy's dad was a drunk.

[Silence]

A: Perhaps my adoptive parents were alcoholics. They could certainly put it away. Now I look back on it. I just put it down to affluence.

B: Lessons for us all.

A: Indeed//I'm confused. There's too many things in this equation. Tracy, Tracy's dad, Maria, tigers, your dad, my adopters.

B: Look A you know Maria is a drug. You've admitted it. I've told you that being drugged is not a way to live the rest of your life and I'll leave it at that because I know you agree with me. Now you tell me about Tracy: Is she a drug that'll take me over or just a new shirt.

A: New shirt?

B: You know. Starts posh for best occasions, then everyday utility, then for slopping around in.

A: [Takes time to think about this.] I don't know B. – Is she harmless?

B: No of course not. She means well. Nobody means well more than Tracy. I wouldn't call that harmless would you? She's stealing the careless youth that I never had. Ten days between ditching David and acquiring Tracy. Ten days when I was going to wantonly ravish every girl in town, seduce the oh-so prim and proper wives of the Masons and use them for my own greedy gain. And now? – I'm back where I started.

A: When you suggested that Maria shouldn't be my life-partner that made me sit-up. How about you and Tracy and life-partnership?

B: [Pause] I don't know. I'm not a good person to ask. You tell me.

A: [Self mocking] I'm glad you asked me that B as I'm an expert with years of experience.

B: More than me.

A: But you were always the one who would tell people what their problems were and then how to solve them. What's happened to you?

B: A lot. David was the nosey one. Always asking about who and why and why not.

A: Oh I see. [Pause for thought] So it's down to me. You're relying on a failed real friend rather than a proven imaginary one. Ironic.

[Silence]

A: [Idea!] Look I'm not the real friend you want for this. Try Jayne. She knows Tracy and she knows you – you gave her a good screwing and a used violence on her poetry – brilliantly if I may say so. I know what you

- mean about missing 'mister bastard'.
- B: Yes that's what I mean about my lost youth. Mister Bastard could get away with anything – even having Jayne and Sindy right in front of Tracy. I'm sweating at the thought of it now. But is that going to be legendary. I was mister bastard. Ha ha! [Sadly] For ten days.
- A: Could you have kept it up?
- B: I don't know. I don't care. For a moment I was a Berserker. Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. Fearless youth ... Fantastic!
- A: Now it makes sense. I was wondering about the 'freedom and death' bit when I broke the news that you wouldn't be coming to my funeral just yet.
- B: *The price of freedom is death*  
*The price of friendship is friendship*  
*Comrades... Comrades let us be free*
- A: The price of freedom is not giving a damn about death?
- B: Remember Carl? A World War two bomber pilot who was up for daily death. He was living his youth and his parenthood together.
- A: Parenthood?
- B: He was responsible for the safety of his mates – his family if you like. Not a like a fighter pilot hunting in a private world.
- A: But he couldn't cope with a butterfly.
- B: I couldn't cope with any of it.
- A: You miss him don't you?
- B: I suppose I do.
- [Silence]
- B: You've shone a spotlight A. Until a moment ago I hadn't thought of kid bomber pilots growing old in days.
- A: And who else grew old in days B?
- B: [Confused for a moment] Oh! Tracy! Shit!
- [Silence - Turning to unspoken friendship.]
- A: [Parody] 'I'm off on a daylight raid to British Home Stores - If I don't come back tell A his Spaghetti Bolognaise was horrible'.
- B: [In the mood] 'Bandits over Marks and Spencer's at ten thousand feet'
- A: 'Woolworths is being plastered'
- B: 'Looks like the Halifax has brought it'
- A: 'O-Oxfam can you hear me? Over.'
- B: 'There's an out-of-town retail park at two o'clock'
- [Sudden silence as the train of fun stops rather queasily.]
- A: Who needs imaginary friends?
- B: When you've got imaginative friends.
- [Silence while A and B re-adjust themselves to where they were before.]
- A: Tracy could be your life partner. Just think of the growing up you could do together.
- B: Sorry A you've lost me. We need ungrowing up.

A: [Micro pause] Well that's up to you.  
B: Help me! [pause] Sorry. I know you're trying. How to explain? ...//... How about: I can't do it all on my own. Imagine I'm trying to hold something but I don't have thumbs. [Idea] I know – You can't draw pictures without a model even if I'm the model and you draw a steam engine!  
A: And I can't handle – see HANDle – Maria so either I quit or.../  
B: /...grow thumbs...  
A: I wouldn't know how.  
B: Me neither. Either you're born with them or you aren't.  
[Silence - Trying to refocus]  
A: Get Jayne to // No. [Emphasis] Ask Jayne.  
B: What if she leaks it to Tracy?  
A: What's the worst that could happen?  
B: She could [pause – becomes a long pause] /  
A: / She won't hit you.  
B: How do [emphasis] you know?  
A: Because she's had enough of hitting – she's seen what it can do – and where it leads. [Micro pause] Trust me I'm an expert on hitting.  
B: Well if you're such an expert how come you haven't dealt with it?  
A: [Angry for a moment] It's not simple. Yes it is. I don't know how.  
B: I do. Quit. There are plenty of fish in the sea.  
A: I can't abandon Maria. – If you moved would you turf out your pet to fend for itself?  
B: Take her down the Maria rescue//[Realises bad taste] Sorry B It just came out. Forget it.  
A: I'll never forget it B but it is instantly forgiven.  
B: [Takes a moment to digest this] That takes a moment to appreciate A.  
A: I'm shocked – not by what you said but that ... .. the slate of true friendship is so easy to clean.  
B: I'm shocked that I said it at all.  
A: I'm pleased you said it. That's what friends are for: Saying what nobody else will say.  
[Silence]  
B: Well go on then. Say if you think Tracy and me should be life-partners.  
A: Would I be a true friend if I guessed and made it up?  
B: I guess not.  
A: Come on. Be definite! Ask Jayne. Or shall I?  
B: You bastard!  
[Laughter]

# Episode 29

- A: Hello B.  
B: Hello A.  
A: Hitting a woman is wrong isn't it.  
B: [Pause] Usually. Tell me all about it.  
A: I didn't hit her. Honestly.  
B: What happened?  
A: She exploded/  
B: /And you crushed her.  
A: Yes. Just a bear hug.  
B: Good lad. That was easy for you - she's only small. And then what?  
A: She crumbled. I cried more than she did.  
B: Now listen! Did she trot out excuses or emotions?  
A: Blow me B you're deep – keep it up – Umm That was some more growing up I did. When you've got a screaming child in your arms what do you do? Bloody hell I realised I'd got a child in my arms.  
B: Hold on. Maria was acting childishly?  
A: No she was [emphasis] actually a child. Scared, bullied, desperate to get out to play.  
B: How was that?  
A: She was a child. It's difficult to describe.  
B: You never had brothers or sisters.  
A: This was something more ... .. desperate... .. desperate to escape from a childish hell.  
B: [Silence] But stuck in it.  
A: Trust. She doesn't trust trust.  
B: Sad. Very sad.  
A: Can you take her to church on Sunday for me?  
B: Yes of course.  
A: Thank you B  
[Silence]  
B: Why?  
A: Because you offered.  
B: Fair enough. I did and I will. What's the objective?  
A: Break the log-jam.  
B: Cor. I'll try. Err Have you suggested it to Maria? And by the way I'm lapsed.  
A: Lapsed. [Pause] Not regular? Or anti?  
B: Half and half.  
A: Its your own business – I don't pretend to understand religion.

- B: So what makes you think something religious will solve whatever it is with Maria?
- A: I don't know. Just getting her to relax. Take her dancing again then try the church and see if that's the key. Would you mind?
- B: It's the Last Chance saloon.
- A: I promise. If that hasn't mellowed her then I'll give her up.
- B: That's the second lie you've told me.
- A: Honest!
- B: Come on A, I am your friend. You don't have to promise me anything. You don't owe me anything. You don't need my permission - not ever. Friendship is not about giving promises and then forgiving the breaking of them. That's what they show you for dramatic effect on the telly.
- A: [Doesn't know what to say]
- B: It's about leaving the other person to do their best with best encouragement. If it goes wrong then there are no broken promises, no blame... ..There may be some tearing you off a strip for stupidity but if your friends won't show you your weaknesses then who will?
- A: You're losing me B. I don't want to let you down.
- B: It's not me we're talking about. If I do an afternoon of quickstep and evensong and still you let Maria hit you then you haven't let me down. We're just both wiser. You're bruised and I'm more keen to try something else.
- A: But if all your time and patience is wasted then you're bound to be cross.
- B: Why?
- A: Because I'm a leach – sucking your life away on fruitless exercises.
- B: Helping people has its rewards
- A: But if they won't help themselves
- B: But you're my friend. You are trying. Results may not be perfect, but we learn.
- A: [Pause] I've admitted it haven't I?
- B: Admitted what A?
- A: That I can't give Maria up.
- B: All the more reason for solving the problem. My fault perhaps. I may have taken my eye off the ball there. What happened to that seance you were going to have with the 'tea leaf tarot' brigade?
- A: It kept getting postponed until another fashion came along. Hospital and all that.
- B: What about taking Maria to a professional fortune teller?
- A: Maria's not a child! She can go on her own... [realises] How weird.
- B: What's weird
- A: One moment she's a child and the next she isn't.
- B: And the next? When she hits you?
- A: [Thinks] Child? – Teenage child.
- B: Am I your friend?
- A: Yes of course.



B: Well I've got a better idea – [emphasis] you get Maria to take you dancing.

A: But I can't dance.

B: Never tried. That's the whole point. Give her something to be superior about.

A: I'll try anything. [Thinks] Yes, good call B.

B: But for heaven's sake don't get good at it.

A: Why? – Oh I see, it's her show.

B: I'll drop in on her tomorrow at the Co-op and tell her how you'd love to have a go dancing really but are too proud to admit it.

A: It's OK B I can do it myself.

B: But what if she gives you a flat "no" to your face? Just more aggro. If I do it she doesn't need to give me an answer there and then so there's no pressure on her.

A: She can still say no.

B: But it isn't shouting time is it.

A: Promise not to try selling her a house.

B: [Laughing] Damn! You've seen through my little plan.

A: [Laughing too] Just watch it B or you'll find a king-sized double mattress squeezed in your hallway.

B: I'll send the surveyors around!

A: [Godfather parody...] You wanna wake up with a chainsawed boudoir table on your bed?

B: Ohh nasty. You wouldn't like to meet Dry Rot Jimmy.

A: You could end up covering a three piece suite.

B: I'm not afraid of you. I could wait in all day and you wouldn't appear.

[Happy silence]

A: Tracy?

B: I'm so angry. Inside. Apart from one week I've always been owned by some other character.

A: Surely not owned. David didn't own you and neither does Tracy.

B: Well they had – have the power of veto.

A: What about the god squad – straight jacket or what? And your father forcing you into the family business.

[Silence]

A: You are pawn destined to be a queen.

B: [Passionate] Exactly! And for a moment I was a queen.

A: But you are still a queen.

B: But I can't move anywhere.

A: Is it just Tracy?

B: That evening when Tracy crushed David, she was a queen too. Direct. Powerful. Noble.

A: [Pause] Have you told her that?

B: No. I've only just put it into words.

[Silence]

B: Thank you A. How is it that between us we can stoke each others fires but other people's relationships end up being "here! Catch this".

A: [Thinks] Luck.

B: And "As you didn't catch it I'll throw it harder next time"?

A: Trust?

B: If I said to you, say, lend me £100 so I can live my own life, the only reason you'd ask me questions is to make sure I got the best value for money, not bicker about the details. And if you said you hadn't got the money then that's something sad shared between us not a suspicion of selfish excuses.

[Silence]

A: But we're not women.

B: Come off it. I know we've both got entangled with twisted ladies but that's exceptional. Think of parents. [... realises] Sorry A I forgot.

A: It's OK B. We can't all have parents. [realises - laughs] What a daft thing to say.

B: That makes you a 'double bastard'. – Welcome to the 'Bastard club' A.

A: [Serious] Oh. I didn't know.

B: No [Laughing] As far as I know I'm the real child of my real parents but you recall that when David was out of the way I became 'Mr Bastard'. I quite liked that.

A: He was scary fun.

B: Lend me a pound A

A: [Looks in pockets... ..Hands over the money with a smile] There you go Queenie bastard.

B: Just for that I'll never give it back.

A: [Laughing] Ooo you queenie bitch!

B: That's worth a pound of anybody's money wouldn't you agree?

A: At least.

B: Well here is your pound back [returns it] – and [searches in pockets] another for the insult.

A: [Laughing] You realise this means war. I'm going to have to accept your charity and have a chip on my shoulder for the rest of my life.

B: Well give it back then!

A: I can't. What would I do with the chip on my shoulder?

[Happy silence]

[More happy silence]

A: I think mister B might lead you into your own version of Maria – a tornado of trouble.

B: I think you could be right there. But remember I'm a bastard so it won't be me in the firing line, I'll recruit some cannon fodder.

A: [Serious] Not Tracy?

B: Oh shit.

A: Welcome to the 'Martyrs' club B.

B: What? You think Tracy carries a mean right hook and sharp left jab?

A: No. How can you be so glib about hooks and jabs?  
B: That's Mister Bastard. He really is quite good.  
A: Well how is mister B going to deal with Miss T?  
B: He doesn't know.  
A: Here's that extra pound back. Now we're quits OK?  
B: [Taken aback] OK.  
A: We//You got rid of David. Mister B isn't a brother is he? He really is you.  
B: [Without hesitation] Me. Yes me. The real me. One hundred percent me.  
A: Phew. [Pause] The time for shadow personalities is over.  
B: Yes. I agree. But I've lost the thread.  
Together: "Ariadne! – the thread"  
[Pause to recover from lovely shared moment]  
A: David, and I suppose all the others, were claiming you as 'their boy' but the real you is Mister Bastard.  
B: So I'm really the devil?  
A: No. [Pause as implications of "devil" emerge. Goes slowly.] Mister Bastard is a fun-loving member of the awkward squad. In disguise. [inspiration] I know – Puck. Everybody's friend and everybody's undoing in the end.  
B: Perhaps I should have made that two pounds – That's good stuff there A. But what do I do about Tracy.  
A: Easy. Find a way for her to help you. I'm sure she likes fun.

# Episode 30

- A: Hello B.  
B: Hello A.  
A: Your tête-à-tête about dancing worked.  
B: Great.  
A: I've just about worn out the carpet practising.  
B: Did you remember to tread on her toes a few times?  
A: No need to remember. Left and right! How simple is that! If I wasn't confused at the start I soon was. I'm going to the doctor's tomorrow to get one leg sawn off so I don't get clobbered with this left and right business.  
B: Ha ha. – That was mister bastard talking there.  
A: My good friend "Mister B" - Glad you're with us.  
B: No. I'm not with A and B but just with A. Remember it was you that said B is mister bastard; not a shadow.  
A: Hold on. Take it gently. Walk before you run.  
B: I'm only a part time 'mister bastard' at the moment.  
A: Good to hear it.  
B: But I'm working on it. Those slithery councillors, the desperate masonic wives, the establishment worms – I will make them dance to my tune. Ha Ha! – [Smiling] Sorry I haven't got the hang of 'evil cackle' yet.  
A: Can I have my pound back?  
B: I don't owe you a pound - We're quits remember.  
A: But I want it now because I have this feeling you're going to take it off me later. [That was a joke... ..but not this] You're going to have to work on your disguise.  
B: Absolument mon frère  
A: Hold on! You're not supposed to know French!  
B: Très simple I guess.  
A: [Thinking] Knowledge [strong emphasis] is power  
B: And by cracky I'll be using it.  
A: [Pause for a run-up] I hereby christen you "Kip" K-I-P "Kip"  
[Silence]  
A: "Knowledge is power bastard".  
B: To his friends  
A: Just "Bastard! Bastard! Bastard!" to his enemies. [Pause] And what about the err 'camp followers'?  
B: You've hit a nerve there A.  
A: Oh no I'm sorry B.  
B: [Realising A has read too much into the last statement] If you mean

Tracy – There’s no catastrophe there. She’s a patient sort of girl. Let me explain: Umm.. [Pause for thought] Suppose, say, I was a member of the French resistance then should I have Tracy by my side or send her out of harms way? Mister Bastard – thanks to you – is not a bounder, arsehole or ...

A: ... I understand. Mister bastard [emphasis] acts the bastard.

B: Yes. Vraiment.

A: You haven’t got a French bomber pilot imaginary friend have you?

B: Mais non.

A: But you have been studying french haven’t you.

B: Seulement revision.

A: Bienvenue **Monsieur le Bâtard**. But enough of the silly French. If we keep this up people will think Godot is about to arrive any minute.

B: Waiting for Godot. Pha! Waiting for Monsieur le bâtard. [Pause] What was that all about anyway? I switched off after the first five minutes.

A: Oh that’s easy: Life is boring and pointless and even when something’s going on you’re the victim.

B: [Digests this] I’m impressed. Really impressed A. Sometimes the arty farty brigade bullshit about – err – stuff : existentialism, post-modern deconstructivism or the role of the banjo in neo-colonial ethnic opera. But you just did a the hole in one. – I don’t know if it was the right hole and really I don’t care. It sounds right.

A: I wish I’d known the answer before I’d started and I wouldn’t have sat through it either.

B: Learn by your mistakes.

A: Obviously as fluent french speaking teenager I had to try it out. – Don’t bother my dear. But that was years ago.

B: [Big grin] Oh yes – all those years ago at school – before the talkies.

A: [Grim-humourously] Mister Bastard is fun - Really. But let’s find out what mister ‘Knowledge is power’ is getting up to.

B: He doesn’t know.

A: But he does exist?

B: You only christened him a couple of minutes ago! Give me a chance. Remind me What’s the difference between mister B and mister K?

A: "Mister B" is your unfettered genius – /

B: / Cor that sounds good. "Unfettered genius" – I may let you polish my Rolls Royce later.

A: [Happy as Larry] Brilliant. -- But sadly, I don’t have a rag worthy of it.

B: [Happy also] In-between Mister B and Mister K I am working at what is the switch-on button for Tracy. It happened for a moment. Imagine a magnet.

A: Yes OK magnets.

B: Two magnets can attract or repel. That’s not rocket science. Snap! And you’re attached. But there’s another way: What about a magnet and bit of steel? Snap!

- A: [Trying to follow] Carry on.
- B: You know full well what I'm talking about. You and me are plain bits of steel minding our own business when we get caught by magnets. Don't you see that we are not the magnets but we get stuck anyway.
- A: If that was the case then these magnets would be picking up every iron filing from miles around but they're not. It's not a general thing - Much more like finding a shoe that fits just right.
- B: Chance you mean.
- A: Yes. We all know there must have been lots of girls with the same size feet as Cinderella but unless they were particularly twisted they wouldn't be unique. And you know what it's like when you find something to wear that you get attached to.
- B: And keep wearing after it's too tatty for polite company.
- A: Exactly. Like little friends warming you inside.
- B: What's this got to do with Tracy?
- A: As much as magnets. The point is don't generalise unless you can follow the logic through. People are like trees – they grow up. So what? Do some shed their leaves in autumn? Hey they have roots – but only in a sense and it doesn't tell us anything we didn't know already. It doesn't shine a new light on the subject.
- B: OK So forget magnets.
- A: [Thinks] Here's one-man-plan. – See what you think. You like Tracy and she likes you. You want a chance to be yourself - explore the mister bastard in you, and she needs a chance to be a scatty youngster. So that means say six months of being wild daft kids for both of you. Getting paralytic drunk on cider, buying stupid clothes, writing awful poetry, missing the last train in Inverwotsit because you couldn't be bothered to take a map, eating disgusting food at the seaside.
- B: Not to forget riding a scooter.
- A: [Seriousness broken] Of course. With the exhaust buggered to sound like a wasp with diarrhea
- B: [Laughing] Sorry A I've lost the plot.
- A: You tell Tracy those nice queeny things. Then explain you want to explore your bastard side before putting her into danger. Explain that you really want her to share your ambition but it's a man's thing you have to sort out yourself.
- B: But if I'm taking risks she'll want to take on all comers on my behalf. That will just wind her up more. You know. Protective instinct and all that.
- A: [Thinks] I know – [Emphatic realisation] Of course! What Tracy needs is some other ambition than to turn you into a perfect family man.
- B: [Pause] No. [Emphasis] I need something to distract her for a while. Just to take the pressure off.
- A: Great. You've solved your own problem.
- B: Err Have I?

A: Yes tell her that.  
B: What. "Dear Tracy, stop pestering me."  
A: Tell her those nice queeny things. Tell her – tell her what I think. About taking six months for both of you to grow some roots for your maturity.  
B: See those trees came in useful  
A: Trees? Hey didn't we discuss trees a few weeks ago?  
B: Yes. You were a tree without a shadow.  
A: Was I?  
B: Floating – no planted in the sea. [Emphasis] Planted. I remember it because it was such a vivid description.  
A: What was it about?  
B: Um. It must have been you and Maria.  
A: Oh. All at sea with women?  
B: Well we're in shallow waters now.  
A: [Pause][Ironic] Oh goody! Where all the waves crash on the shore.  
B: [Takes from pocket - Happy] For that here's a pound you can owe me.  
A: Slow slow quick quick splosh.  
[Happiness]

## Episode 31

A: Hello B.  
B: Hello A.  
A: Free?  
B: Eh? Free?  
A: Got Tracy off your back?  
B: Oh I see. You are flavour of the month with Tracy A. She thought for a moment then said how clever you were.  
A: What happened?  
B: [Slightly accusingly] She said: "And then will we get married?"  
A: Didn't you see that coming?  
B: No.  
A: Sorry B, I'd taken it as read.  
B: [Slightly disgusted] Thanks for the warning.  
A: Come on B. You have your cake // You don't have to have your cake for six months. In the meantime you're free.  
B: No - On a long leash.  
A: But what's Tracy going to get up to?  
B: Guess.  
A: I don't know that was your job.

B: She's going to Nepal. To a convent.

A: Reall...

B: [Slightly shirty] No she's going to be queen bee amongst all the unmarried girls in the Co-op and for miles around.

A: [Fishes in pocket] Now here's that pound I owe you. You're going to need it to pay for the wedding. Give my sympathies to the bride to be.

B: [Overcome with good feelings] You are my puncture kit.

A: 'Puncture' or 'Puncture repair'?

B: Puncture.

A: [Confused silence]

B: Where is reality A? You have it. – Well some of it. I'm confused and you shake me up. Bizarre isn't it. "Oh I see you're in a bit of a muddle: Let me add a stick of dynamite, ten thousand volts, a spoonful of Vaseline and see if that makes it any better".

A: Is this an official complaint?

B: No twerp! It's brilliant. – I'm not saying you get it right every time but it's better than the alternative.

A: Oh. I don't mean to puncture you B. Especially not with Vaseline.

B: But you do and I love you for it.

A: [Long pause] I've just messed up your life and you're loving me for it.

B: No. Thanks to you I've organised my life.

A: So where does all this upset with the Vaseline come into it?

B: I couldn't see the wood for the trees.

A: Oh I see. [Confused pause] Really?

B: Yes.

A: That's worth a pound of anybody's money.

B: But who owes it to whom?

A: Anybody. It's his money!

B: So yes, I'm off the immediate hook.

A: Now at this point I could volunteer ... ..to be best man which will get my lights punched out by mister twitchy or – wait for it – Godfather to your first child!

B: [Pause] You do realise it is me that's been giving Maria a pound for every time she hits you.

A: Do you know B that makes me feel better.

B: Really?

A: Yes. Of course I want to know the source of Maria's aggression.

B: I want to know the source of your submission.

A: Magical love.

B: Or Black magic? Perhaps she is a witch casting a spell over you.

A: No. – Otherwise she'd have captured hundreds of swains before now.

B: Maybe she has and they're all in her cellar.

A: But she lives in a flat.

B: Maybe she turned them into wallabies and they bounded-off down the road never to be seen again.



A: I think word would have got around.  
B: Perhaps you're right. – No cauldron? No bats? – Aha! black cat?  
A: You want me to say she's not a witch so you can say "but she's bewitched me"  
B: That's another pound I owe you A.  
[Silence]  
A: I've got a plan for the time being. You might say it's an umbrella against a monsoon but so far so good.  
B: Good luck with the dancing A. I would give you a lesson but it's your job to be inferior so I won't – unless asked.  
A: "You're going on a dangerous mission A. Chances are you won't come back. I could give you a gun and tell you where the enemy are but this way is more character building. Good luck and bleed happily in the knowledge your King wants you to die."  
B: [Unexpectedly seriously] You're a bit negative A. Can you really see the light at the end of the tunnel?  
A: No. You said it – weeks ago – she's an automaton – I'm something to occupy the time with. She makes me do the steps but as soon as I get the hang and start swinging her around she resists.  
B: Have you had enough?  
A: [Pause] I think so.  
[Silence]  
B: Right. I offer to be your puncture repair kit.  
A: [Long pause] Thank you B.  
B: What's the fall-out A?  
A: I don't know. I only decided a moment ago. [Pause] I think – "I love you" is appropriate.  
B: [Pause] Funny isn't it?  
A: Yes. Tables turned.  
B: No. I didn't mean "one point for B then A scores an equaliser" but how things get decided. Important things. Deep things.  
A: [No response - too enclosed]  
B: You're going places A. Don't be downhearted.  
A: Thanks B.  
B: Cheer up A.  
A: A couple of minutes into it and I'm overwhelmed by sad.  
B: [Long pause] Paint a picture of it.  
A: [Angry] Don't be stupid!  
B: Try. Railway engines may not be your thing. Try painting – or sketching sad – What does a sad railway engine look like.  
A: Stop being facetious.  
B: I'm not. I'm serious. You never know.  
A: [Still angry] You're winding me up - You've got Mister Bastard in tow again.  
B: No I'm not. What do [emphasis] you do when the Co-op crowd // Jayne

say, erupt all over the place. Do you say "put a sock in it" or try to get them to tame it?

A: [Still angry] You're mocking me.

B: No I am not.

[Silence]

B: One way or another you have to come to terms with your grief.

A: It's not grief.

B: OK it's anger, rage, frustration, stupidity, and most of all love gone wrong.

A: Avalanche.

[Silence]

B: [Sympathetic] Avalanche of what?

A: All those things.

B: I'm sorry to see you like this. If you don't start being manly and smile through your tears I'll have to have a little sniff myself.

A: It's at times like this I don't want friends.

B: [Emphasis] "Times" not "Time", so you're a veteran.

A: [Not angry any more] Bastard.

B: So you still love me?

A: [Smiling through the pain] Yes of course I do.

B: I've got good news, good news and good news for you A

A: It won't mean anything to me at the moment I'm afraid. I have to take time out to get over Maria.

B: OK. Well when you've come through that then there's lots of good stuff to come. – Oh and tricky stuff as well. And don't forget I'm not out of the woods with Tracy yet.

A: [Concerned] But I thought you and Tracy were sorted.

B: There's a [emphasis] plan.

A: Better than two plans.

B: As my learned friend says "One plan is better than two" I leave it to the jury to pontificate upon the single plan.

A: It's not much good you shouting down a mineshaft in you authoritative voice that "The weather up here is sunny". That's not much help.

B: I didn't offer to help.

A: Exactly.

B: Exactly. Why would I when I'm right beside you? Have I pestered you with 'what are you going to do in the next hour?' If you're drowning then I'll try that resuscitation business - but you're a long way from that yet. Lead on.

A: I don't know how.

B: You could stay round mine tonight. [Pause] Do you want me to phone Maria and tell her?

A: Tell her what?

B: That you're staying round mine.

A: But she'll want to know why it's not me phoning? She won't be happy.

B: So? Maria is history. You don't have to play by her rules anymore.

A: That's awful.  
B: Yes it is rather tough – but I'll manage.  
A: You bastard. You are trying to take control.  
B: I knew I shouldn't have offered to help – see what happens.  
A: [Pause] Sorry B. Sorry.  
B: Can you face talking to Maria on the phone just now?  
A: [Hesitates] Probably best if you did it.  
B: Maria isn't evil - She's just got this thing about hitting you. Are you sure you've pulled yourself up by the roots?  
A: Yes. Absolutely. But don't ask me again.  
B: You asked me if I was free.  
A: Did I? Oh yes.  
B: How about you?  
A: I'll tell you tomorrow.

## Episode 32

A: Hello mate.  
B: Hello mate. It's been a tough week for you.  
A: It's all the glances and whispering. The Co-op is one big gossip shop. I would like to get it out in the open and post a notice saying "Maria likes nothing better than beating up men" but I can't really do that.  
B: I'm sure everyone knows.  
A: Why is it that the man in the middle can't join in?  
B: Because then they'd have to take sides. People don't like doing that while it's a hot potato.  
A: But they do takes sides.  
B: Inside yes. But they won't say so in public until it gets to the stage of 'everyone knows' collective opinion.  
A: You know a lot about this B.  
B: Ahem. I have been deploying some public relations resources on your behalf. I think it's called off-the-record briefing.  
A: I'm not with you.  
B: Tracy tells her friends a carefully prepared story and it goes from there.  
A: Mister Bastard going about his daily manipulation.  
B: Good isn't it.  
A: Makes me feel a little queasy.  
B: Are you a sheep or a dog?  
A: [Small pause] Dog.  
B: Of course. You mustn't let the sheep undermine your authority.

- A: But I don't have any authority.
- B: Of course you do. It's overflowing and a bit tousled but remember how Maria reacted to your easy grasp of French and fashion. Remember how you have powers to tell fortunes. And who else goes round adding a pinch of fertilizer to the seedling artists, writers and guerilla drummers that makes them burst into flower.
- A: You do!
- B: No. I might do a bit of pruning. How's Jayne doing?
- A: Funny you should say that... ..Hmm another suspiciously lucky guess there B. You put her up to it didn't you.
- B: Just a tiny hint. Honest.
- A: [Takes paper from pocket and reads]  
*The sun sets  
 But he will rise again*
- The sun isn't sad  
 But the night gets cold*
- The sun doesn't die  
 Only the watchers wither*
- The sun is all light  
 Shadows are not his fault*
- Love and kisses Jayne*
- A: Driver Jim seems to think I can't be allowed to carry the heavy end. Inside that shaved skull there may be a brain. Auntie Annie may be having an effect. And Kelly dragged me out and quizzed me about how she could help with my next project.
- B: What did you expect?
- A: [Taken aback] Expect? I didn't expect anything.
- B: But now you're wiser.
- A: No I'm not.
- B: You're now back on the market.
- A: What! So soon. The harpies are circling like vultures.
- B: Would they be circling over some scraggy dry husk?
- A: Can't they wait a moment?
- B: No of course not. Do you want to know why?
- A: Yes please.
- B: Because they're your friends. Friends are 'now' people not 'I meant to' people.
- A: But they're not my friends.
- B: Yes they are. They are. [Pause] Lucky you.
- A: Come off it. They're just spouting sympathy being manipulated by mister Bastard.

B: Believe me they're not. And I haven't.

A: [Emphasis] Yes you did! You gave Jayne a big hint.

B: [Exasperated] I don't know. I open people's eyes and I'm accused of being a manipulator. Jayne is like a ball on a pool table that keeps going round the angles to end up at the start point. She needs a bit of a nudge from time to time.

A: And by nudge you mean – what was it? "Slow Sunday sex" I recall.

B: Not this time A. Mister Bastard is on strict rations.

A: Still you prompted her.

B: Just a thought and she did the rest.

A: I can't help but think you're [micro pause] interfering.

B: Just arranging the scenery.

A: [Long pause] Why am I so ungrateful? I know you are doing a Tracy looking after me... ..Oh. What have I just said B?

B: It's true. Some of the Tracy toughness has rubbed off on me. Mister bastard loves it.

A: And what about B? Does he love it?

B: B is struggling. Mister Bastard is using him. Soon he'll be a mask.

A: Sun setting for good there?

B: Good point.

A: [Pause] Who does Tracy think she's going to marry? B or Mister Bastard?

B: What a good question. I haven't the foggiest.

A: Ask her quickly. – Here, have a puncture.

B: [Long pause] Thank you A. Sunny A. My marvellous friend. [Long pause] B appreciates your warmth. Mister Bastard is a creature of the shadows.

A: Is it that bad? I mean is Mister Bastard a sort of devil-may-care version of David preying on the real B.

B: It's horrible in a way – now you shine your light on it.

A: How is it horrible? Oh no! I've caught it a whiff of it: I could hint to Jayne that you're going schizophrenic! Sorry B. – It's contagious.

B: It's horrible because Mister Bastard is shiny and new and fun but he isn't really me.

A: But he [emphasis] was you originally, when you got rid of David. Many times you've said he was part of you not a friend on the side. What's changed?

B: Slow down.

A: What's happening on the church front?

B: B goes but gets drowned out by his younger brother Mister Bastard. And do you know the strange thing? There are girls at church I've grown up with who have suddenly started giggling and adding a bit of make-up.

A: Oh dear. I foresee a Rake's progress.

B: I'd read about 'fluttering eyelashes' but never thought they were real.

A: So this is going to be a bit tough for you B.

B: I suppose it is.

A: Who is the strongest, toughest person you know B?

B: [Small hesitation] Tracy.

A: Do you want me to manipulate her B?...

... Woof woof. Easy Shep.

B: [No humourous pick-up] No. I'll do my own...

A: A joint effort perhaps?

B: I've just spent three weeks getting rid of Tracy breathing down my neck and now you're suggesting I get her back to – err – take me in hand.

A: Yes.

B: Well suggested. I'm fed up with swapping a pound coin with you A. Can we skip that?

A: This time. Special case.

B: Head case more like.

A: Come on. You're bound to bounce around the extremes after killing David.

B: I think I need Tracy to get me back on the straight and narrow.

A: Tell me why.

B: Oh. [Pause] Because Mister Bastard is not safe.

A: But perhaps Tracy really likes Mister Bastard? Remember when you shagged Jayne and the librarian in front of Tracy: Did she explode in shards of bloody murder? That was you remember. Unbelievable.

B: The fresh out of prison me – All my teenage bravado concentrated in one hour.

A: What I'm saying is that Tracy may have her own agenda. Not B's or Mister Bastard's. You need to find out what it is.

B: I know how it was with you and Maria.

A: Well get to the bottom of her inner energy before putting you head in the Lion's jaws.

B: Easier said than done.

A: Better done than talked about.

B: Mister Bastard says "You should marry Kelly"

A: Mister A says "It had occurred to him"

B: Mister B says "You don't need my help. You need a family"

A: B or Bastard?

B: Definitely B. Through Tracy I know Kelly has been stalking you for a while now. You can't have failed to notice.

A: [Realisation] Oh. So "can I help you with organising the cabaret" was just an excuse.

B: No. Not an excuse. Team work. An experiment.

A: So you're not pulling the strings here B?

B: No – not there, but here's a string-pulling confession.

A: Go on.

B: Any word from Reg?

A: Yes. 9 a.m. tomorrow in his office.

B: This is the best of B and Bastard together here A. What do you think of

Reg A?

- A: [Thinks] Full of nit-wit energy. He was always poking his head in and tinkering in the cabaret.
- B: Desperate to be one of the crowd?
- A: Possibly.
- B: And what did you do to encourage him?
- A: Nothing. Encouragement was the last thing he needed.
- B: Really? Sure?
- A: Err – Yes. But the way you say it means that's the wrong answer.
- B: Ok. So work it out.
- A: Give me a clue.
- B: You have a whole bunch of enthusiasts in the Co-op basement. What do you do with them?
- A: Educate. Channel their energies.
- B: And how is Reg different?
- A: [Thinks] He's the boss.
- B: That just means he's a bigger firework factory for somebody to drop a match in.
- A: Forget fireworks. Reg was full of enthusiasm/
- B: /Overflowing
- A: Yes.
- B: So how should you handle overflowing enthusiasm?
- A: [Having to think hard – pause] I'm working this one out slowly, bear with me, I can tell you're being deliberate here... Encourage I suppose. [!] You just told me that! I should listen more.
- B: No you're doing alright. I didn't get much sleep the other night thinking about this so I have the advantage.
- A: You lay awake thinking about me or Reg?
- B: Everyone. Umm Everyone except me I suppose.
- A: [Pause] If you ever need anybody to think about you at three in the morning you can phone me up. [Pause] In this life or the next.
- B: [Very internal pause] Funny time three in the morning.
- A: Sliding down the razorblade of life in the moonlight.
- B: But in the morning it fades with the dew.
- A: Quick! Call Jayne.
- [Laughter]
- A: No really, look at it this way: I haven't got anything more important to do than sleep at three am so a call from you must be a better way of spending my time on this planet.
- B: Promise me you'll do the same.
- A: Friends don't swear promises.
- B: They take liberties
- A: And long may it be so
- B: Hear Hear. Back to Reg. – Would you say you were neutral, neither encouraging or discouraging his involvement in the cabaret?

- A: Yes. Everything was hectic.  
B: Why do you think Reg is so keen?  
A: Because he's got that// I was going to say "that Co-op ethos" – A big happy family where if we all put a bit in we can get a lot out. But I know you're going to tell me different.  
B: [Slight pause] To be honest. I hadn't really appreciated the depth of that Co-op culture [Pause] Reg is lonely. Be nice to him tomorrow.

## Episode 33

- A: Hello B.  
B: Hello A.  
A: You are very naughty man.  
B: So people are beginning to tell me. That's the recognition I want.  
A: [Laughter] So long as the dark side doesn't get hold. Speaking of [deliberate mischievous pause] Tracy – or did I mean Mister Bastard? Are you on a level keel?  
B: Yes. Tracy is the Beefeater to my Tower. She's on patrol scaring the shits out of miscreants.  
A: Eh? Beefeaters are about as tough as retired drain inspectors.  
B: Aha. You've forgotten the secret weapon.  
A: What secret weapon?  
B: That's a secret!  
[Laughter]  
B: Sorry. Obviously you can't guard the crown jewels with a uniform copied off a tea towel. Red felt doesn't meet the British Standard 1234 for body armour. OK they carry those pike//halberds which could do you a nasty mischief if you stood too close, but not much of match to an AK47 so it stands to reason that they must have something up their sleeve. Much more scary that way.  
A: And recent terrorist attacks on the Tower of London have been few and far between.  
B: Proves my point. Which is why I have decided to recruit Tracy to guard my body against intruders and interlopers.  
A: Aha! A prisoner in your own tower.  
B: [Shock] No. Come on.  
A: Only joking. [Second thoughts - serious] No It's something to think about.  
B: Yes I will think about it. I've been thinking a lot recently about who is in charge of my life.  
A: That's an easy one: B.  
B: I wish you'd told me earlier!



- A: Easy in a sense: Work out what you want to do then get on with it.  
Emphasis on the first part.
- B: It's much easier to help a friend than help yourself.
- A: Yes. You have been nudging my life a bit.
- B: That's what mister devil-may-care Bastard does.
- A: [Not angry] Oh no you don't. Mister Bastard wasn't around when you threw me under the wheels of Maria.
- B: I didn't! You got yourself into it. Quite enjoyed it as I seem to recall.  
Numerous times despite the rotating knives.
- A: I'm not complaining. Just pointing out that mister Bastard might get addicted to creating situations just to see what happens.
- B: Point taken A. Mister bastard needs to be ruthless if he's to succeed.
- A: No. It's B that has to succeed and mister bastard who is the office boy and always will be. You mustn't let him depose you.
- [Silence]
- A: Who is always going to be in charge B?
- B: Me.
- A: Me who?
- B: Me B.
- A: Congratulations from your puncture kit. Now before I tell you what happened with Reg – Good news – I want to puncture the puncture.
- B: No, come back to me later – It sounds too complicated to take in all in one go. What happened?
- A: OK. You have been pulling strings haven't you? A little twitch on Reg's strings and untangling mine. Thanks for tipping me off he was lonely. His over-enthusiasm in the cabaret was an obvious sign when you think about it.
- B: Not obvious. – Suggestive.
- A: Now I'm not cross but I want to know. Did you tell Reg I was an orphan?
- B: No. I told him you were looking for a family as you didn't have one of your own.
- A: How can you talk to people like that?
- B: Simple. Find an excuse to get involved with something technical. Build a bit of trust then drop a bit of bait. A compliment about an employee in this case. Pick your time of course.
- A: It's a pit personal, talking about other people's lives like that.
- B: That's the interesting bit. The more personal I am about you the more I find out about Reg. Don't forget I need to know all about him so I can organise a coup in a few years time.
- A: Are you really thinking of doing that? I know you said so a while back but that was when you were going to cause mayhem in the masonic wives and havoc among the rest of the leeches.
- B: Yes. That is my ambition.
- A: Assassinate Reg so you can take his place.
- B: No. Steer him towards a happier and more fulfilled retirement. There's

still a lot of B in me. Mister Bastard may have prompted the idea but B, the nice one, is calling the shots.

A: Which brings me back to what I wanted to say before you diverted me to telling what happened with Reg. You and Tracy are back together as happy teenage sweethearts, but does she know about mister Bastard?

B: [A bit put out] Teenage ! – Hardly.

A: Grow up. Err no don't. Falling in love makes you feel a lot younger. That makes you – anyway both of you need to do a bit of filling in for teenage years you missed out on.

B: But/

A: /Neither of you has ever been on the roller coaster of teenage rebellion. You were in solitary confinement let out to be radical with your barber-shop quartet and she was on the high wire of looking after a family with social services breathing down her neck.

B: But we're past that now. We've moved on. Why would I want to get drunk on cider at some ear-shattering disco? Why would Tracy?

A: Because you have to rebel before you can chose your own colours to fly from your mast?

B: Eh? I haven't got a clue what you're talking about there A.

A: OK. Forget it. If you're happy then get on with it.

B: Get on with what.

A: Cosy snuggles.

B: What's wrong with cosy snuggles?

A: You vividly described the moment you were captured by Tracy – when she took you off to hurl the bits of David into the river. That electric moment. That inner purpose. The do-or-die glow on her face...

B: ...Yes?

A: That's not cosy snuggles is it?

B: [Pause] So you're saying it's the opposite.

A: I'm not saying she should rush off and join the provisional wing of the league against cruel toys but perhaps a short-cut to cosy snuggles might... ..leave a hole – something missing that causes aching in later years.

B: Come off it people don't work like that.

A: Yes they do. [Pause] I know. You spent ages watching people at your church. How many of them were leading straight lives when the world was curved. Failing to negotiate the bends if you like.

B: [Thinks] That's a definition of any problem.

A: No it isn't. Some people are always veering off a simple straight road.

B: What's the difference?

A: OK. Your life was simple and straight until one day you evicted David. Church and a safe job were just right. You were even toying with the idea of doing the preacher's job you knew it so well. Then there's a sharp bend and [emphasis] hooray! you didn't carry straight on. [Emphasis] And accelerated round the bend.

B: [Pause] So that's my teenage rebellion over and done with.

A: [Pause] How many roads do you know with just one bend? What happens when you get to the next one 'rocket man'?

B: Burn that bridge when I get to it.

A: When you [emphasis] and Tracy on pillion hit it. You and Tracy and a family. And you've got the cool, charismatic mister bastard with you. All tattoos, booze, and likes to show off his violent streak.

B: [Pause] I'm not 100% following you here A but I get your drift

[Silence]

B: There's too much imagery there for me to take in in one go, but you say watch out for the bends that I've got to take and watch out for the boring straights where mister Bastard may get up to tricks.

A: That'll do.

B: Umm. I don't know how to ask this.

A: Go ahead. I'm your friend and you're the one who doesn't have a problem talking to anybody about anything.

B: Well I'm – embarrassed now.

A: [Softly] Go on. It's just us. Let's get some practice in.

B: [Pause] Would you do me a favour. You'd be better asking it than me. I'd like to see what Jayne makes of that motorbike type analogy.

[Silence]

A: Difficult without discussing your personal life. [Pause] How about if I discuss it in general then...// No. Nobody else knows about mister Bastard. I would never let on – Crikey! That would be a whole can of worms. We need to invent an alternative...

[Silence]

A: How about. If this is too painful then tell me to stop. How about an echo of an older brother who got killed, who you've secretly admired etcetera.

B: [A bit shocked] Close to the bone. But better and [emphasis] A you are my brother.

[Silence]

A: [Suddenly urgent] Well listen 'brother' you need to introduce Tracy to mister bastard. You don't need Jayne to paint a picture of what could happen. I've been dying to tell you for the last fifteen minutes that I think Tracy is the one who could tame mister Bastard - Take him out of the cage to frighten people but always have him on a lead. Anyway that's what I hope. [Pause] Of course she could just run off with him. How'd you feel about that?

B: How can she? He doesn't exist.

A: Of course he does. Look I'll tell you what. Driver Jie is a bit of a biker – I'll nudge him to take Tracy for a Sunday afternoon spin. How about that.

B: [Caught unexpectedly emotional] No!

[Silence]

B: I mean Yes.

A: Jim won't hurt her. He'll have to clear it with Auntie Annie.

B: She's mine.  
A: Not completely  
B: How do you mean.  
A: What I've been trying to tell you. She may not be complete yet. Give her teenage thrills and see.  
B: Somewhere you have your own mister Bastard. I'm pleased about that.  
A: All of which is annoying me because I was going to tell you about the bends in my life. Another time.  
B: Wow. Fifteen minutes of revelations and more to come.  
A: Congratulations on catching Tracy. Look after her. Bye.

## Episode 34

A: Hello B.  
B: Hello A. Come on I'm dying to know what happened when Reg called you in.  
A: You're not changing the subject first are you? There's nothing rough between you and Tracy.  
B: [Surprised] No. Everything is 'snuggly'.  
A: Good to hear it. Sorry, just checking...  
...Right:  
  
Reg: You did a brilliant job with the cabaret A.  
A: Thank you mister Botley.  
Reg: Call me Reg.  
A: Is this about Miss Cook?  
Reg: No. Sorry to hear about that. I want my staff to be happy.  
A: Nothing for you to be sorry about Mist//Reg. Puppy love.  
Reg: Come on A. I've been sitting here like God in his heaven with my fingers crossed for both of you. Yes of course I check up on my staff they're the only asset I have so I look after them like a shepherd keeps his flock. Does that surprise you?  
A: Yes.  
Reg: It's not my job to control your life, but if I see an opportunity I like to help things in the right direction.  
A: Would you interfere if things were going in the wrong direction.  
Reg: Yes.  
A: Is that why you got involved with the cabaret?  
Reg: Gosh no. I want to join in with the fun. Does that surprise you?  
A: Yes mist//Reg. Somehow when the officers mix with the

troops, as it were, it makes people uneasy.

Reg: I know. It's a bit offputting at first but when I show I'm human and positive and not putting on an act then people respect me more. I'm very grateful for you giving me the opportunity to in in.

A: It was your idea Reg. I only mix and match people and jobs.

Reg: Funny you should say that...[Stops deliberately]

A: [Takes time to catch-up/cotton-on] Oh I see. That's what you do.

Reg: Hard work but rewarding isn't it.

A: Yes and yes.

Reg: And you're always developing the talents.

A: Yes.

Reg: And having to be a bastard

A: Eh? Um. Give me an example.

Reg: You have to tell people, your friends, or people who look up to you, when they are not up to the job.

A: Oh I see -- dampen their expectations.

Reg: Sack them.

A: [Chilly pause] Upsetting.

Reg: And killing them. I killed two people in cold blood when I was in the Army...

[Silence]

B: There's no answer to that.

Reg: Once upon a time, long ago, I was Major Botley. Northern Ireland in case you were wondering. My job was to train one group of kids to kill another group of kids. Both sides knew there were the older ones pulling the strings. I was only obeying orders. [Sharply] Where have you heard that before?

A: Err. War trials, Nuremberg.

Reg: Two executions. [Pause] Who's to blame A?

A: Not you. You're a decent sort.

Reg: Of course I'm to blame. We were all to blame: Us. Them and [emphasis] the system.

A: [Pause] Now you are the system.

Reg: Exactly... I think you have ideas for the display windows.

A: This caught me off-guard

A: Yes. That rocking-horse shit sketch could be adapted. Suppose you told the press that you had to clear the display every day at 11am. "Because some people had been offended". Then what about decorating. Everyone hates actually doing it so make them relax with the Co-op. Dummies doing it all wrong. Everyone knows it's a joke and will tell their friends. And now the message has gone round that the Co-op sells wallpaper people will know we are cheerful souls who will

laugh with them not at them. And what's the chance that Maggie on the wallpaper counter that day will know somebody who went to school with the customer? Better than nothing. If it's a transaction on the Internet who cares, but the Co-op is a different place.

Reg: What about summer gardens and patios?

A: I thought a moment

A: I know. Ha ha, it's obvious. What's the thing that everyone complains about? The rubbish English summer. So we can't control the weather, everyone knows that so we dress a couple of dummies in parkers from the 'outdoors' department. - Better still a furry bikini and Russian fur hat. - Hey and a dummy blackened with soot at the barbecue looking for his toasted hair.

Reg: How will that sell barbecues?

A: By getting people into the shop.

Reg: How?

A: Firstly because everyone tells their friends. So you've now got ten times the number of people interested and they've all used the Co-op brand name. Secondly because they know the people at the Co-op are everyday people. In two years time when they need a new hosepipe where are they going to go? Here!

Reg: And what happens when they get here?

A: That's your job.

Reg: That's why I'm asking you.

A: He shouldn't be allowed to do that!

B: I didn't say he was stupid, just lonely.

A: Surely it is the staff's job to break the ice. Get people talking about whatever.

A: See B. I remembered your lecture on minding the boutique fashion shop.

A: Everyone coming in has a problem and it's for the staff to find out.

A: Inspiration!

A: How do you go about shopping for things Reg?

Reg: I // Oh ... I don't go to other places.

A: What about - I hope you don't mind me asking - your wife.

Reg: Hmm. Good question. I try not to get involved.

A: Bit of a sticky wicket!

A: Of course you suss-out the opposition.

A: I'm blushing B.

A: But you're more in it for the long-term. Slow and steady

A: Listen to me! I Could bullshit for Britain.

B: Keep practising mate

Reg: Slow and steady is the how the Co-op works. That's why I've

asked you here this morning. The Co-op needs funny, fast and furious otherwise we'll become the forgotten. Reliable, knew your auntie and can order the exact pattern of lino you had in the flats in Paradise Street before they were knocked down but [emphasis] forgotten. Passed into history like parlours, promenades and pubs. So young A, if there's going to be a Co-op in five or ten years time it is people like you who will make it thrive in the high street of the future.

[Silence]

Reg: A little birdy tells me you're interested in fashion. What I really want to know is why are you shifting furniture.

A: It pays a wage with no responsibility and the company is civilised.

Reg: It pays a wage and [emphasis] what was that about responsibility?

A: Um. I'm not expected to... .. Well I have to take the responsibilities of the job seriously.

Reg: Relax. Only testing. Would you agree that however limited your responsibilities are you must take them seriously?

A: Oh yes. Hmm. I nearly said "honour of the regiment" there but I think you know what I mean. "Honour of the Co-op doesn't sound right".

Reg: We've got a brass band – don't knock it son.

A: Then he dropped me right in it.

Reg: How should I deal with Miss Spooner? She was in charge of windows when Queen Victoria was on the throne. Rocking horse shit and comedy capers won't go down well.

A: Don't you have an official retirement age?

Reg: Yes, but she's on the board, got plenty of shares and shareholder friends of the her generation.

A: [Thinks] I could ask her directly. Perhaps we're inventing a non-existent problem. Perhaps she can see things our way.

Reg: I can't let you do that – not directly [thinks] but I may be able to give you a back-door.

A: Hold on! I don't want a back door to do your dirty work when all you have to do is buy the clock and send her on her way.

A: That floored Reg. I'm sure he was surprised when I spotted the trap.

B: Well done A. You're young, revolutionary but most of all nobody is going to manipulate you while you've got two brain cells to rub together. – Apart from Tracy and mister Bastard – but I'm watching over you there.

A: Like a guardian angel.

B: Like a guardian mister Bastard.

A: There's no such thing.

B: There is now.

A: So what does a guardian bastard watch out for then?

B: It's not about trying to cope with being on the receiving end but how to make the most of dealing it out.

A: So is mister Bastard your guardian bastard?

B: No. I only invented the guardian bastard a minute ago. Mister Bastard is safely in his kennel... .. I think.

A: Let's hope so. – So the ball was now in Reg's court.

Reg: [Not military] Sliding out of it eh? Who told you to disobey orders A?

A: You did sir. Nuremberg through to Northern Ireland sir.

Reg: Correct. Absolutely correct. You have no idea how irritating it is when you give somebody a task and they refuse for a good reason.

A: Teamwork.

B: Good call.

Reg: You've passed the interview A. You're a clever, knowledgeable, young with huge potential, really huge, in all sorts of ways and ideally suited to the Co-op. Do you really want to get into the fashion side of things?

A: Not particularly. It was just because I was with Maria and did a bit of research. To be honest I haven't got any career goals.

Reg: Well I'm not going to put up with you slopping about shifting furniture much longer A. One day you could be a shop manger – an empire with people to encourage, bills to pay and an indifferent public to woo. I hope you'll be a Co-op manager – if there are any left in twenty years time, there are a lot of tricky changes ahead.

A: I'm keen but don't know where to start.

Reg: [Laughing] You've made a good start already. You've shown your personal and management qualities. Could you cope with wearing a collar and tie and studying business?

A: Yes.

Reg: Good. I'll get the Human Resources people to sort out formalities. I want them to do things properly. In the meantime there's no promotion until you have recruited a replacement furniture shifter. Ask Suzanne in HR to find out how that happens and make it happen.

B: I don't think he's got children. You could be his surrogate son.

A: That's a creepy thought.

B: Why?

A: I've already been through that and it didn't end well.

B: You realise this means I'll have to kill you.

A: No. What?

B: We can't both be Chief General Manager.

A: [Seriously] I'm scared.

B: [Taken aback] Come on A. You'll thrive on getting things done and



business studies will be a cinch for you.

A: No. What you just said. I know it was not really deadly, but I don't want enemies. That's what scares me.

B: I promise not to kill you if you promise not to kill me.

A: [Seriously] I'm still scared.

B: Look A, your confidence has taken a battering in the last week, and being kicked upstairs must be a bit of a shock. Don't let it get you down.

A: It's difficult on your own.

B: Try Kelly. She's easy to talk to.

# Episode 35

- A: Hello B.
- B: Hello A. The sky's not fallen in on you yet?
- A: No. I'm on a bit of a wave actually.
- B: That's good to hear as last time you were full of doubts.
- A: Well to tell you the truth I've still got doubts but everyone at the Co-op is full of smiles.
- B: That's nice.
- A: What are we going to do about this competition for the post of Chief General Manager. I don't want to meet Mister Bastard on a dark night.
- B: I lost some sleep over that as well, but I think I've solved it. I'll settle for chief finance officer.
- A: [Serious] Phew. You have no idea what a load that is off my mind B.
- [Silence]
- B: That would have been awful if we knew one day it would be a fight for supremacy.
- A: That's what I was worried about.
- [Silence]
- A: How is it we can solve these things so easily when the rest of the world goes mental with sulks, arguments, feuds, anger and crimson rage?
- B: It's that fairy dust of friendship.
- A: Bloody magical stuff.
- B: Mister Bastard had an interview with Tracy, and being mister bastard he soon had her fully on his side. Yes! She was all for some aggressive shenanigans with the murky masons if it meant material gain. Yes please: Could she have some of the good things of life even if it means twisting the definition of ethical. So Mister Bastard has official approval.
- A: Did you tell her you're aiming one notch lower now?
- B: Who says it is one notch lower? Finance manager with lots of power and especially money to be used where he thinks fit will suit me.
- A: You're really serious.
- B: Yes. Not to screw the Co-op but a few risks and the odd copy of documents to be used as insurance certainly.
- A: That's a bit shocking B. A while ago you were 100% ethical. Now you're prepared to get involved with bribery and blackmail.
- B: I'm going up the slippery pole – and you're going up the escalator.
- A: [Pause] Funny old world. Neither of us was going anywhere in the spring now the doors are opening.
- B: A bit scary. But we're young and healthy.. ...Are you really out of the woods A?
- A: Yes. If you've had it once the doctors say you're slightly more at risk but

basically nothing to worry about.

B: Can I ask? How many people knew you were going into hospital for a life-threatening condition?

A: Let me see//of course you can ask.

[Silence. B waits like a good listener]

A: [Slowly] Thank you for asking. Your question is held in a queue. Press 1 for/

B: /Sorry I asked if I could ask. It gets difficult then.

A: No. You did the right thing I suppose. It's a sensitive subject and you showed you were sensitive. Well done. But it's awkward when your best mate turns a sensitive question into a loaded one.

B: I know. Sorry.

A: I want you to know how many. Good question. Thank you for asking. You, Maria, the Furniture manager at the Co-op and presumably he told HR at the Co-op – and I sent a picture postcard to my adoptive parents – but didn't say which hospital or when.

B: You don't want to be a burden on others do you?

A: No. What have they done to deserve that?

B: But you told me.

A: But you're different.

B: How?

A: You're my best friend.

B: [Not angrily] So why darken my life?

A: [Pause] I suppose there are things that friends have to share – Good things and bad things. Problems and triumphs.

B: Have you written since to your adoptive parents?

A: No. [Shock]

[Silence]

A: I'm horrible aren't I.

B: Casual, ignorant, bastard.

A: [Sadly] To go with casual, ignorant parents

B: Two lots when you think about it.

A: Thank you B. I'll write tomorrow.

B: Tonight?

A: Yes. Thank you B.

[Silence]

A: [Enormity of sin sinking in] I didn't mean to be a bastard. How stupid of me. They must think I'm dead.

B: Hello A. Mister Bastard here. That might be a good thing. Then you won't have to worry about them ever again.

A: [Pause] No. I've been horrible. I can't live with that.

B: Hello A. B here. You don't have to do what mister Bastard says.

A: Thank you B. [Pause] How weird. You chuck me in the deep end, puncture my water wings and hey – I find I can swim.

B: You're easy to float A. Who else is doing some chucking in the deep end?

A: Reg of course.

B: Things don't always work out, like with Maria, but you'll never learn to swim if you don't get wet.

A: [Pause] And you could see I was in trouble there and were ready to pick me out.

B: Come on. You've helped me out of all sorts of trouble

A: Have you ever?//yes you have! You were thinking of out-priesting your priest/

B: /Preacher.

A: Sorry. Have you given up on your church completely?

B: Not quite.

[Silence]

A: Now Tracy has met mister Bastard what about taking her along to church? Just to see what happens?

B: Now you're scaring me.

A: Just a thought. You've obviously got a lot of 'help thy neighbour' in you. From what you were saying that's what your church was all about. – It seems a shame to throw it all away. You'd make an excellent counsellor-cum-preacher.

B: [Thinks] I may be like my church as you are with your adoptive parents. Talking the same language but no longer on the same wavelength.

A: Do your mother and father go?

B: Yes.

A: How many//Do you mind if I ask: How many people have you told that you and Tracy are engaged.

B: We're not.

A: [Smiling] Yes you are. You know it. It's a done deal. What is it? 'Sold subject to contract'. This time it's for real.

B: I think you may be right.

A: Is she ready?

B: What about me!

A: Hey. Just like you ahem 'nudged' Reg to recruit me perhaps I should nudge Tracy to go to church and introduce herself to your mother and father... ..in-law.

B: [Horror] Christ no!

A: [Laughing] That got you going. Funny[odd] isn't it?

B: You wouldn't do that.

A: Heh heh. Why not?

B: Strewth! Mum would curl up at barely literate Essex tart and... ..Oh no – dad would start molesting her in an ahem 'fatherly' way.

A: [Smiling] How did I guess.

B: You're winding me up.

A: Of course I am.

[Happy silence]

B: Good point.

A: [Pause] So who's going to be the ambassador? I take it that your parents don't know about Tracy.

B: Too true.

A: What have you just said B?

B: [Thinks] Something that isn't//doesn't reflect well on me.

A: There's nothing wrong with Tracy but...

B: ...I don't want my parents involved.

A: You're going over the waterfall and I've punctured your water wings.

B: Puncture kit! Bless you.

A: I'm guessing, but if you think about it Tracy is the sort of decisive do-or-die person who would introduce herself whether you wanted her to or not.

B: I suppose you're right.

[Silence]

B: Mister Bastard here... ..No forget it.

A: No go on. Just for the record.

B: No.

A: Come on. I need to know//We both need to know about mister bastard. He's a dangerous bucket-full of gunpowder.

B: Ok. Mister Bastard thought it might be a good idea for Tracy to do what you said: Introduce herself.

A: Cowardice in the face of//No I didn't mean that B. Cowardice//...Perhaps I did mean that.... ..I've just had a disturbing thought. Mister Bastard is a happy-go-lucky tough old bird but B is a wimp.

B: But now I've got Tracy who is hard as nails.

A: B could learn for himself though... ..couldn't he?

B: [Pause] I suppose so.

[Silence]

B: You're going to make me swim this one aren't you?

A: Seems a good idea to me. What about you?

B: I'll ring mum tomorrow.

A: What about tonight?

[Silence]

A: And I've got a favour to ask.

B: Go ahead.

A: Stop me going straight over the waterfall with Kelly. She's such a good listener and intelligent understander. I want her and she's available, but I need time to see where I am.

B: She's a nice girl. Tracy's brought her up strict.

A: The perfect personal assistant in [emphasis] all respects.

B: I promise not to interfere.

A: Please do – see what you can do in the brake department. My life is hectic enough at the moment and I only want to do one waterfall at a time. Tell Tracy to tell Kelly – I presume that's how you work – to be patient and I'm sure everything will come out right.

B: Ok. I'll do my best.

[Silence]

B: Do you know. I've just had a thought. Think ahead say 20 years. We'll both be business executives working full-time with millions. And what about our wives?

A: Not to mention families.

- END -

Peter Fox lives in Witham, Essex, England and writes computer programs during the day. People often call him a character, usually "?" or "!". Before writing *Two man double act* he was certain in his own mind that short pieces for fun and poems for brain exercise were all he was interested in. Oh for those happy carefree days again. He has never had an imaginary friend.



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author@vulpeculox.net

# Two man double act

Peter Fox

Friends are fun.

Real imaginary friends are evil.

Imaginary imaginary friends are bizarre.

Girlfriends are unknowably dangerous

A few weeks in the lives of two well educated but 'drifting' men in their early twenties reveals hidden pasts and troublesome relationships with women that they attempt to sort out with the good humour of good friendship. We see them discover things about themselves and mature in response to unexpected happenings.

The entertaining story is told by conversation between just the two characters themselves at their frequent meetings. Chuckle at bizarre situations and reflect on deeper relationships.

What is the currency of friendship?