

**The Astounding Works  
of  
Simon Trout  
A Play in One Act  
by Owen Lewis**

(For Lovely Lottie Lou)

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## **Dramatis Personae**

David Carter.....55 Father

Barbara Carter.....45+ Mum

Karen Carter...20/24 Daughter

Terry Carter .....20/24 Son

Simon Trout .....23+ (3,000 Years Old)

*The action is initially in Karen's bedroom and then the Carter family kitchen - diner. They are just an ordinary family from Grasswich. Terry is unemployed. David Carter works in a joke shop; Karen is a gap-year student, and Mum works part-time in a supermarket called **Fine Mace**.*

*The scene: set in 1999. Karen's bedroom is an ordinary teenage room, with a dressing-table and bed. The bed is Stage Left, the same side as the door; the dressing-table is opposite the bed, Stage Right.*

**Simon's Voice:**

‘When the wind has cruelly twisted

Every branch in every tree;

When you hear the storm a-calling

It's calling out for me.

When the night is darkened black,

And the stars are all you see,

I won't be very far away -

And you can wish for me.

Indisputable and raging -

Hard and dark and cold:

Just call for me, and I will come.

You will have my hand to hold -

I am always there, and ready -

And let there be no doubt,

My name will live in history:

The Astounding Simon Trout.

*(Lights up) Karen enters the room in an agitated state, and shouts through her bedroom door.*

**Karen:** *(Through bedroom door)* you're wrong, wrong, wrong! I'm going to bed - goodnight!

*She sits on the stool facing her dressing table, she doesn't see Simon and starts to take off her jewellery and make-up. Simon Trout is sat on her bed, playing with a Rubik's cube.*

**Karen:** Every time he gets everything, and I get nothing. (*Mimicking*) 'Dad, can I use the car?' 'Yes, Terry.' 'Mum, can I have my breakfast in bed?' 'Yes, Terry love, of course you can.' 'Dad, can I borrow a fiver?' 'Yes, Terry, no, Terry, three bloody bags full, Terry!' 'Mum, can you do my washing?' 'No, Karen!' 'Mum, can you sign this form for Uni?' 'Not now, Carol, *Corrie's* on.' I'm sick of them. I will show them - I will show them!

*She turns, and sees Simon on the bed. She screams, and falls into a faint on the floor. Simon gets a glass of water, and throws it over her, and she comes round. She screams; he screams, whilst trying to shush her, but she screams again, and faints. Simon gets in a panic, and tries to wake her.*

**Simon:** Come on, Karen, wake up!

**Karen:** (*Groggily*) who are you?

**Simon:** Simon!

**Karen:** Simon?

**Simon:** That's right, Simon.

**Karen:** Simon who?

**Simon:** Trout - Simon Trout, at your service!

*He helps her up, and sits her shakily on the bed, and goes and sits in a lotus position on the stool opposite.*

**Karen:** Well, who are you again? What are you doing here?

**Simon:** Just give me a second, and I will tell you.

**Karen:** Dad!

*She screams loudly... a voice is heard from downstairs - it's Dad.*

**Dad:** Karen...keep it down, there's a love! Your Mum can't hear *Des O'Connor*.

**Karen:** But, Dad.....?

*Quick as a flash, Simon crosses, sits on the side of the bed, and tries to silence Karen. He puts his hand over her mouth, but she bites him. All the time he is saying, 'Shush...' Eventually he sits on her, and puts a pillow over her face. He waits for her to calm down, and removes the pillow.*

**Simon:** Shush, Karen...I am your friend - you called for me, and I am here. Shush, now...Shushhhhhhh!

*He climbs off Karen, and stands; she regains her composure, and sits up on the bed.*

**Simon:** Are we calm now?

**Karen:** You might be, but if you don't mind, I have just found a complete stranger on my bed, in my bedroom. He has leapt on me, assaulted me - and you ask me to be calm.

**Simon:** *(Aside ...)* why is this bit never easier? *(To Karen...)* Allow me to start again. My name is Simon Trout and you called me here. *(He bows)* I am your friend.

**Karen:** How are you my friend? How did you ever get in? What do you want?

**Simon:** It's not what *I* want: that's the question *I* ask you.

**Karen:** What?

**Simon:** I ask *you* that. I say, 'Karen, what is it you want?'

**Karen:** Hang on...who are you again?

**Simon:** Trout

**Karen:** What sort of a name is 'Trout'?

**Simon:** I don't know.

**Karen:** Hang on - you say you're here to help me - you say your name is 'Trout'?

**Simon:** Guilty of both - as charged!

**Karen:** I think I shall scream again.

**Simon:** Do it, Karen - no one will come.

**Karen:** Why not? What have you done to them?

**Simon:** I have done nothing - they just won't come: it's *Corrie* and *Des O'Connor*, if you remember?

**Karen:** They never come.

**Simon:** Now we are getting there. (*Measuring her mood, and changing his tone*) Please may I sit?

*She consents with a nod, and he gets back on the dressing-room stool, again in the lotus position.*

**Simon:** Thanks, Karen.

**Karen:** You have one minute to tell me exactly who you are, please.

**Simon:** It would take more than a minute - that's for sure!

**Karen:** Well, OK, take your time, but just tell me why you are here.

**Simon:** What, as an organic being, or just here?

**Karen:** Just here, for now.

**Simon:** Every time I arrive I get faced by this ludicrous questioning. I ought to carry a card to give out, and save any of this awkwardness.

**Karen:** Sorry to put you out.

**Simon:** Thank you - that's thoughtful.

**Karen:** I was being sarcastic.

**Simon:** Oh yes - you humans and your sarcasm!

**Karen:** Hang on....'humans'?

**Simon:** What?

**Karen:** You said, "...you, '*humans*'", like *you* weren't one.

**Simon:** Did I?

**Karen:** Yes, you did.

**Simon:** Anyhooo...getting back to it. I am here because you called me last night.

**Karen:** Last night?

**Simon:** Yes - you had been arguing with Terry about the last sausage in the fridge. Do you remember?

**Karen:** This is creepy - there was only the two of us there.

**Simon:** So - it's true - you did?

**Karen:** Well, I did. 'Ere - you were listening in at the window, weren't you?

**Simon:** I was actually in bed when the call came in. I answered, and what did I hear?

**Karen:** Go on!

**Simon:** I heard you and Terry going hammer and tong.

**Karen:** So what happened next, then?

**Simon:** Your mum came in, and ate the sausage. As she left she said that that would stop you both.

**Karen:** Who are you, really?

**Simon:** Who?

**Karen:** You!

**Simon:** Simon Trout.

**Karen:** I know that bit - I just don't know who you might be.

**Simon:** Are you calm?

**Karen:** A little more than I was.

**Simon:** The boss says I am not allowed to tell you the full story until I know you're completely calm.

**Karen:** The boss?

**Simon:** Yes, the boss. We all have them, you know. Someone we answer to, someone we hope to please, someone who tells us our purpose. Don't tell me you humans don't have them.

**Karen:** There it is again.

**Simon:** What?

**Karen:** You said 'humans'.

**Simon:** Did I?

**Karen:** Yes, you did - you said, "Don't tell me you *humans* don't have them!"

**Simon:** That's odd. Well, I was just nodding off when the phone rang, and you said you wished they could see things your way. And here I am.

**Karen:** Eh?

**Simon:** You said you wished they could see things your way. And here I am.

**Karen:** No, no, this is too freaky. You heard me arguing last night, and now you have forced your way into my bedroom and started weirding me out.

**Simon:** Ok, ok, I hear you. Let me start from the beginning, please.

**Karen:** Are you really here to help?

**Simon:** Yes.

**Karen:** Go on then, tell me!

**Simon:** My name is Simon Trout. How I got here is a miracle in quantum physics, anatomy, alchemy and lunacy. Many years ago, at my birth, the dubious mission of helping humans was bestowed upon me.

**Karen:** 'Humans' again? Are you a Martian?

**Simon:** No, silly - there aren't any, although you haven't found that out yet. No, I am... please don't laugh... promise!

**Karen:** I promise.

**Simon:** I am a sprite. There I said it: a Sprite, a Sprite, a Sprite!

*Karen sits, quietly at first, and then bursts into gales of laughter.*

**Simon:** Don't laugh - it's hurtful!

**Karen:** But there's no such thing as 'sprites'!

**Simon:** Now that is where you are wrong. I come up against this a lot. It is not my problem I am a sprite, it's yours for being so narrow-minded.

**Karen:** What's a 'sprite', then?

**Simon:** I am.

**Karen:** So you said. But what is a 'sprite'? Where are you from? What do you do? Why are you here, even?

**Simon:** Too many questions. Listen to this story, and all will be revealed.

*He moves, and sits facing her, with her on the edge of the bed, and him on the floor.... I was born amongst the little people hundreds of years ago.*

**Karen:** Oh, come on - this is ridiculous: get out of my room! Go on - this is just stupid! I shall close my eyes, count to ten, and you will be gone!

*She closes her eyes, counts loudly to ten, and opens them. Simon is sitting quietly waiting for her to stop. She stops, opens her eyes, and finds him there still.*

**Simon:** As I was saying, the power to travel around time was bestowed upon me, helping humans to remain happy. When they are happy they leave us alone, and we can get on with our lives. So far, I have been successful in preventing World Wars Three, Four and Five. I was asleep through the first one, and my alarm didn't go off until the British were on the beach at Dunkirk in the second one. I hit snooze, and boom! Hiroshima! So, ever-vigilant, I get in at the earliest possible stages to prevent the teeniest niggles escalating, and war breaking out.

**Karen:** So, hang on, you are an inter-galactic peace-keeper?

**Simon:** 'I never said that, 'inter-ga...' what?

**Karen:** A space-traveller?

**Simon:** What's the date again?

**Karen:** June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Simon:** What year?

**Karen:** 1999.

**Simon:** Oh, of course - you lot don't find out that there is absolutely nothing in any galaxy anywhere in the entire solar system. Space flights for holiday-makers haven't happened yet.

**Karen:** This is mad.

**Simon:** No, saying you are from God is mad...this is just maybe, a little eccentric. Ha...no, no, I joke, it's just silly to say you're from God, but not mad given the year. No, I was earth born to the little people - the people that live parallel to your world. However, my family is a member of the Irish Trouts: we came across to England to join the world - famous Sabrina People.

**Karen:** Sabrina people? (*pause for thought*) Go on, I know... don't tell me; Sabrina is the goddess of the longest river in Britain, the Severn? Hence the name Trout?

**Simon:** Hence, the name Trout?

**Karen:** Yeah - river, River Severn, Sabrina, fish..... Trout?

**Simon:** No, no connection at all.

**Karen:** Go on then?

**Simon:** I am from the great Sabrina family. My father was a trout, and a peacekeeper. My father's father was too. In fact, it is argued that he wrote the definitive book on 'Spriting'.

**Karen:** Go on - don't tell me your father's, father's, father was a 'sprite' too?

**Simon:** No, he was a fishmonger. Anyway, we sprites are mischief-makers, and we use these powers to prevent anything that may bring disharmony, and cause universal upset. So - to get back to the story - now everything is clearer, I am here to bring harmony to you and your family. If you all fall out, someone will go out of the house, takes the bad mood to work: it affects colleagues - they go home, take it out on their families and then every family gets cross. They all fall out and argue: divisions are made, battle-plans drawn up, and there it is.....**war!** In the meantime we get squashed, walked on, marched on - our little homes are destroyed - we become unhappy, and then we die. So that's it, really.

**Karen:** What can you do to help me?

**Simon:** Well, hearing you down the phone last night I just don't know. But I do have some plans.

**Karen:** Go on - I'm intrigued.

**Simon:** Good - now are we done with screaming and have we calmed down?

**Karen:** Yes, I'm ok, I promise!

**Simon:** Hmm.... I'm not sure. How do I know you are not going to scream again?

**Karen:** I'm not going to scream again.

**Simon:** Good!

**Karen:** I do have one question, though.

**Simon:** Go on.....

**Karen:** For a little person you are not very little, are you?

**Simon:** That was a fact not a question. But I think you were asking me *why* am I not little?

**Karen:** Yes.

**Simon:** I can be what or who I want to be at any time - I am like a chameleon: I can change to fit the brief. I thought any young girl would welcome a complete stranger into her bedroom, if he was as good- looking as me.

**Karen:** How many ways is that wrong? Let me count the ways. So what's your plan, 'Mr. Trout'?

**Simon:** Well, see me as a 'fine-tuner', if you like: I will help you explore how to fix things. Do you ever feel ignored?

**Karen:** Yes....

**Simon:** You feel that no one cares about you?

**Karen:** Yes....

**Simon:** You think you could change things for the better, if only you could make them see things your way?

**Karen:** That's exactly what I believe. If only...

**Simon:** Well, I can help you there, but you have to accept that the changes I bring have worked, and that things will be peaceful for ever.

**Karen:** 'Peace ever after.' That's ambitious.

**Simon:** It's all I can hope for - it's my job.

**Karen:** Ok, I accept: Simon Trout, you have a family to sort out.

*Shake hands*

*Lights down*

*Scene: The kitchen-diner. Terry, Mum and Dad are sat down to dinner.*

*Simon and Karen enter stand together top stage left with the family in view)*

*(NB When the dialogue is Simon and Karen's they have their own lights, the family will freeze in a semi wash light. This is reversed when the dialogue is with the family.)*

**Simon:** Ah, supper time!

**Karen:** Just in time. We can't stand here - they'll see us!

**Simon:** They can't see us. Now, Ssssssh! Let's just listen!

**Terry:** Nice chicken, Mum!

**Mum:** Yes, well eat it all, and I might let you have a pop tart.

**David:** Eh?

**Mum:** I said there are pop tarts for afters.

**David:** *(Sarcastically)* Creative, Darling!

**Mum:** Thanks.

**Terry:** I think Dad was being sarcastic.

**Mum:** Here, never mind that. Have you been to the Job Centre today?

**Terry:** Yes.

**Dad:** No!

**Terry:** Did.

**Dad:** Didn't.

**Mum:** Did you?

**Terry:** Well, yes ... and kind of, no.

**Dad:** Told you.

**Mum:** Go on?

**Terry:** Well, I was me way, and I met Bilbo from the Cock Inn darts team. He said he was in my part of town to get a puncture repaired on his bike. I said, "Don't take it to the shop. If you've got a kit I'll do it." Then we turned his bike upside down on the pavement, and I fixed his tyre. As we were finishing a little dog slipped his lead. I think it was a Jack Russell puppy – anyway, this little girl was screaming, and as quick as a flash I said, "See you!" to Bilbo, and I was off through the traffic - and right in front of a huge lorry. I dived and saved the little thing. Luckily I done a rolling dive and saved the puppy. The parents - who were now trying to console the little girl - were so happy when I returned with Fido they went for their purses. I said, "No, thank you," and walked away. Just as I did someone was about to throw themselves off the suspension bridge. I talked her out of it, and sent her away with a cheery wave, and a brand new outlook. Anyway, when I got to the Job Centre they were closed. It was a Fire Drill, and would have taken thirty minutes for it all to be sorted, so I looked in the window. There was nothing in there for me ....

**Dad:** What as - as a novelist?

**Terry:** Eh?

**Dad:** Even for you son, that is one hell of a story!

**Terry:** Well, it's true and I really don't think this bullying is fair. I saved a life today.

**Dad:** Look you sort this out, son, or I will throw *you* off the bloody suspension bridge!

*They freeze in tableaux. Lights down*

*Lights up on Simon and Karen.*

**Simon:** Oh dear, what a problem we have here!

**Karen:** I told you they are nuts - always fighting and arguing, bickering and back-biting. Dad's on to Terry, and Mum's on to Dad, and Terry's on to me ... and so it goes.

**Simon:** Well, how would you like them to? So be it, so far this to me looks like pretty normal family behaviour to me.

**Karen:** I knew you wouldn't understand. I hate my family, and I know there will be trouble sooner or later. Someone will say something they can't take back, and then what?

**Simon:** OK, so watch this, and see if you like it.

**Karen:** What are you going to do?

**Simon:**

*(In a large gesture he weaves his spell)*

So, family, sitting as you are

Let truthfulness be your guiding star,

No matter how hard you try,

You cannot seem to tell a lie.

*With a tingling 'Zing!' the spell is cast. (NB Simon has an idiosyncratic gesture/sound effect every time he weaves a spell.)*

*Lights down.*

*Lights up on Mum, Dad, Terry*

**Mum:** How's your sausage, David?

**Dad:** Is that what it is?

**Mum:** What do you mean?

**Dad:** It's just that I thought I was eating a dog turd. Mind you, it's tastier than that cottage pie last night. There were bricks and tiles in that!

**Terry:** Ha, Dad, remember *the* Shepherd's Pie? I got tweed stuck in my teeth from his trousers!

**Dad:** Remember 'Fondue Night'? Fondue? Fon-due? Fon -, bleeding don't!

**Mum:** How dare you? Sitting there like some Lord of the Manor. I am so tired of skivvying for you: cooking, fetching and carrying, and what do you do?

**Dad:** I work!

**Mum:** Work? Opening a shop twice a week on Thursdays and Saturdays is not work. And what's the shop, eh? A joke shop ha! You're the joke, and always have been. But you know what the trouble here is?

**Dad:** Oh, do tell?

**Mum:** You're not even funny - a joke- and trick-seller with no sense of humour.

**Terry:** Mum's right there, Dad - you are very dull, but Mum, you're not so hot yourself: this sausage isn't burnt – it's carbonised! Just like everything else you ever cook. I bet you could burn Cornflakes.

**Dad:** The milk is off too - it has tainted my tea...if that's what this muck in my cup is.

**Terry:** Oh, I hate turned milk -glad you got it, not me, Dad!

**Dad:** Barbara, have I told you lately I love you?

**Mum:** No, not for years.

**Dad:** Phew, thank God for that!

**Mum:** Oh I see the boring comedian has more to add. So, go on - what else don't you like about the way I look after you?

**Dad:** (*In harsh tones*) well, there is something else, yes, now you ask. You know when you bought that new dress, and I said you liked it?

**Mum:** The red one - what about it?

**Dad:** Yes, the red one.

**Mum:** What about it?

**Dad:** You looked like a frump – there, I said it – a frump!

**Mum:** Well, that's kind!

**Terry:** Dad's right, Mum - you do look like a sack of squashed tomatoes in it.

**Dad:** No need for you to chip in, you lazy slob! I am still waiting with bated breath - as only the mortgage-payer may wait: to find out why you really didn't go to the Job Centre today?

**Terry:** I met Bilbo, and we went in the park. He had some weed, so we bought a bottle of Omega cider - tasted like shite, but we chugged that, and smoked spliffs all day.

**Mum:** You know, Terry how I have stood by you through thick and thin. But I think you mistook me for your slave. I have always wanted to say this. You are a bone idle, lazy slob, and I am sick of cooking and cleaning for you. You contribute nothing. At least Karen....

**Terry:** (*Interrupting*) Oh, here we go - the Archangel Karen, who can do no bloody wrong.

**Mum:** Well, I wish you were more like her.

**Dad:** Aye, you could do no better than by following her example.

**Terry:** Oh yeah, how's that then? College? Oh no, she never bothered going back? Maybe the corner shop where she is supposed to work? Oh no, she went on long-term sick with her nerves, if I remember.

**Dad:** When you look at it that way, he has a point!

**Mum:** You leave Karen's nerves out of this. Talk about mine, and how you both get on them.

**Terry:** What?

**Mum:** Nerves...you two. I am fed up of you!

**Dad:** Ha, what can you do?

**Mum:** Well, there is something: I am not chained to the oven. Mr. Anderson the choir-master has asked me out for a drink, look.*(Starts showing Dad her phone text and snatches it smartly away when he goes to take it from her.)* He knows I am unhappily married, and he knows that he would only have to snap his fingers and I am gone out of here, and I would happily leave you all in your own filthy mess.

**Dad:** Good at last some peace. Oh, don't worry about the mess - we will wallow! I like wallowing.

**Terry:** Yeah, bugger off, Mum! I'm fed up of your nagging.

**Mum:** *(Tearfully)* I wish you were all more like Karen.

**Dad:** Talking of Karen she is funny-looking don't you think?

**Terry:** Ha, I agree, Charlie Harper in the Bull says he thinks she's 'gorgeous '! God how we laughed. We all take the piss now, and call him 'Karen's Crocodile'. We call him that because of the warts on his hands. Actually, I ought to make a note never to shake his hand. There you are, though: it's people like him - the misguided - that really keep the market competitive by taking the ugly goods.

**Dad:** Oh, I get it, you are top shelf material eh?

**Terry:** Something like that, Dad.

**Dad:** With your conk I'm surprised people don't throw buns for you!

**Terry:** Hang on, Joke Shop man...take a look in the mirror: your face is sour enough to have turned the milk. Yeah, that's it - no wonder it's off!

**Dad:** You're not too big for a good hiding my lad.

**Terry:** Don't make me laugh, pipsqueak! You know what I do at night? When I am in bed, I mean?

**Dad:** I dread to think, you dirty perv!

**Terry:** No, not that - I lie and think of easy ways to kill you both, and dispose of the bodies. I know exactly what to do. And don't think I won't. I mean, what is wrong with smoking weed and drinking cider? The world has changed mon père et mon mare!

**Mum:** Kill us - why?

**Dad:** Don't listen - he's a liar - that's all he is - a lazy-bone, idle, benefit-cheating, dope-smoking, cider-drinking liar. Everything he says is a lie.

**Terry:** Hang on - I always tell the truth, I do.

**Dad:** See that's a lie again - he just opens his mouth, and out comes the sewerage and gutter-talk. And don't you ever talk French again! It's a beautiful language, and doesn't need your expert touch to make it sound good. In fact, I reckon that was the extent of your French knowledge. God, I wish you had been born a girl!

**Terry:** You know what? Sod you all! You never ever support me - you don't seem interested in anything I do - you criticise me at every opportunity - you tell me my sister is better than me - you call me names, and when I do something good you say nothing.

**Dad:** That's cos you never do anything good!

**Terry:** Hang on - what about the puppy, and the potential suicide? Both would now be dead if it wasn't for me.

**Mum:** Yeah, but that didn't happen though, did it?

**Terry:** It might have!

**Mum:** Yeah, but did it?

**Terry:** Yes of course it did, they were all lucky I was there. I saved a cat and saved someone's life in fact there was two people wanting to jump...Saved 'em both.

**Dad:** Prat!

**Terry:** I am going to kill you - now!

*Terry jumps up, and starts towards Dad.*

**Simon:** Stop

*Family tableaux. Terry is standing and frozen with his fist just about to contact Dad.*

*Lights down.*

*Lights up on Karen and Simon.*

**Simon:** So you see, Karen, to be totally honest all the time isn't a brilliant strategy. Would you like this level of honesty to stick?

**Karen:** No - change them back!

**Simon:** No, we must try every possible scenario to find out how best it might be to fix this muddle of a family.

**Karen:** Well, that was awful! Mum does her best - we all know that. No, there is no room for complete honesty in this family!

**Simon:** But some of you don't think that Mum does her best for you. I know - let's see if a bit of love and compassion would make a difference.

‘Oh family fair, we learn today,  
To be honest doesn't always pay,  
So let us see how you might be,  
When love and beauty's all you see.

*Tingling Zing.*

*Lights down on Karen and Simon.*

*Lights up on the family*

*Terry, who was about to hit his father, now shakes his hand warmly.*

**Terry:** Oh Dad, I love you!

**Dad:** I love you too, son. Now, let's eat this delicious dish that your mother has prepared for us. Oh, thank you, sweet wife!

**Mum:** And thank you - I love to make you both happy. In fact, I have learned a new word which was in one of your books, Terry. It says you three are my *raison d'être*.

**Dad:** Oh, look at you speaking French! How lovely, my wife!