

SEIZE THE CROWN

A Two-act Comedy

by Toby Hill

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Cast of Characters

The Ladies. [Appearances (spoken) in brackets]

JOYCE. (60)

The Group Leader. A bit bossy, full of self importance and a tad overbearing. A social climber with unreasonably high standards.

ELLIE (47)

In thrall to Joyce and more of a wannabe social climber. Prim and humourless, her default expression that of a middle aged woman being compelled to suck a lemon.

MANDY (35)

Brassy and rather 'common,' Says her piece, especially fond of bating Joyce and Ellie.

RITA (64)

A new addition to the Group. A little rough around the edges, but has undeniable cachet as a 'real actor.'

SUE (19)

Married to Kev who irritates her, frequently. Never going to be a 'star,' but is desperately keen. Her relationship with Kev is constantly in danger of exploding.

JAN (28)

A friend of Ellie. Eager to please, hates confrontation, a would be mediator. Not an actor, but keen to help out wherever help is needed.

VIV (15)

Self styled dogsbody. No desire to appear on stage, but does everything else. Very opinionated, particularly on subjects about which she knows nothing. Looking, hard, for a man.

The Gentlemen

TED (55)

Coarse, inclined to be vulgar and certainly no gentleman. Opinionated. Has a good heart and never lets the Group down. Surprisingly, one of the better actors.

WILF (23)

A friend of Ted and happy to join in when the tones of conversation goes downhill. Very keen and seeks the best parts, even though his range is self evidently limited. An annoying pedant at times, especially where the English language is concerned

COLIN (41)

Brother of Rita. He suffers from Tourette's Syndrome and is, unavoidably, disruptive, but also occasionally enlightening. He declaims rather than speaks, has facial tics, emits random yelps, but there's rather more to Colin than first impressions suggest.

KEV (19)

Married to Sue. A serial complainer and irritant, most of his volleys are

directed towards his wife. A hanger on and chauffeur, in his own words.

TIM (20)

Nice but Dim, Tim as he's unfairly termed. Very, very posh. Madly keen, but without obvious ability. Attempts to salvage awkward circumstances invariably make things worse.

'ORLOF' (unknown)

Alcoholic 'tramp' who turns up, uninvited, to meetings. Enjoys the refreshment breaks. Tolerated in the main, but his 'ladies' man' act can be wearisome. Prone to dramatic poses and declarations at inopportune times.

ACT ONE

The scene opens in a rehearsal room, actually an empty restaurant with chairs arranged around tables. The Theatre Group have collected a dozen chairs together to form a meeting point.

Everybody is talking at once with bursts of laughter. Chaos.

JOYCE, the Group Leader, raps her knuckles on the bar for silence. She is ignored.

JOYCE

Ladies and Gentlemen, please.

(Nobody takes any notice. If anything, the chaos becomes even more marked)

JOYCE (louder)

Ladies and gents, your attention, please.

(One or two glance at her, but mostly the noise continues unabated)

JOYCE (shouting, loudly)

Quiet!

(They fall silent, looking at her)

JOYCE

Thank you so much. Can we please get on? Welcome, old and new, to this first meeting of the Group since the triumphant conclusion of our last performance.

VIV

Can't see anyone new. Same old ugly mugs, looks like to me. No sign of an unattached and available man, that's for sure.

ORLOF (obsequiously)

Wouldn't say that, lovely VIV. I'm both unattached and unavailable, if that helps

VIV

It doesn't, not by a long chalk.

ORLOF

The offer stands. Same for all you delightful ladies.

(He stands, doffing a non-existent hat to each of the women in turn. They ignore him and he resumes his seat)

JOYCE

Well, before we start, I'd just like to say how disappointed I am..

TED

Here we go

JOYCE

Yes, Ted, but just for once I'm not aiming my ire in your direction.

TED (To others)

Aiming her what?

ELLIE

Her ire, dear, she means she's not cross with you.

TED

Better not be, only just parked me bum down and she's off on her high horse.

JOYCE (glaring around)

Well, when you're ready to listen.

(She waits, expectantly as they come to order.)

JOYCE

It's such a shame that after I sent you all at least half a dozen emails we're not at full strength and since our last performance as yet no one has approached me with any suggestions for fresh bodies.

(TED sniggers, then quietens)

JOYCE

As some of you may recall, I indicated at our last meeting my willingness to carry on leading this group..

(She pauses in anticipation, but there is silence. Belatedly a few calls of 'bravo' and hear, hear' break out)

JOYCE

Yes, with one caveat: that we at least make an attempt to develop, as actors and as a Company. To this end..

TIM (interjects)

For she's a jolly good fellow

For she's a jolly good fellow

For she's a jolly good fellow

(Reluctantly, the Group join in finishing with a spirited rendition of 'and so say all of us'

Tim's attempts at a second verse fall flat)

KEV

Not before time, if nobody minds hearing from a mere hanger on and unpaid chauffeur.

SUE

Oh, you want payment now? Be careful what you wish for if we're setting out prices for services provided. I think you know what I mean.

KEV (ignoring SUE)

Merely agreeing with JOYCE that the Group needs to do something or risk another fiasco like last time.

(Uproar as the members shout insults at KEV and then each other)

TIM (shouts until he gets attention)

Not having that, not having that. Below the belt, old bean. That last production was simply marvellous. In every way.

KEV

Not from my seat in the stalls it wasn't. Not without fault anyway. Far from it.

SUE

What isn't without fault, KEV? Name me one thing that makes you crack a smile. Moan, moan, moan, like a broken record or one of them on Trip Advisor who find fault everywhere.

KEV

If the cap fits, darling. Your so called performance was one of the reasons it ended up as it did.

JAN (looking very upset)

Now then, Kev, you and me...

WILF (interrupts)

You and I, not you and me.

MANDY

Oh give it a rest, WILF

WILF

She's mistreating the English language and I'm supposed to just sit here and allow it to happen? I don't think so.

JAN

Correct English or not, KEV and I (she stares pointedly at WILF) are two non-combatants, so to speak. We're not actors, we don't tread the boards and yet while one of us finds fault with the efforts of others I deeply respect the efforts of those who are up there, doing what neither I nor KEV have the sheer guts to do. I thought that last show was just splendid.

(She subsides, to much acclamation and approval)

ELLIE

Well said, JAN

TIM

As I said it was marvellous and the notices were glowing. The one in the local rag was particularly splendid.

TED

Oh come on, soft lad, everybody knows JOYCE writes the one in the local paper. She's not going to say we were all crap, is she? Not that we were, of course.

KEV

Just expressing my opinion. I couldn't reconcile what I saw on stage with that puff piece in the local paper. I'm out there, in the audience, I see what they see and it was all a bit of a shambles.

SUE (furious)

Put a sock in it right now or take me home. You're embarrassing me and yourself.

JAN

SUE, don't get upset, he doesn't mean it.

KEV

Do you all think it went well then? (Pointing at TIM) he only had about a dozen words to say, all in, and still forgot almost every one of them. At one stage the prompt was working harder than the actors as he wasn't the only one.

(The whole group bicker amongst themselves with much of the anger directed at KEV. As it shows no sign of abating VIV seizes a tray and bangs it on the bar, restoring order at once)

VIV

That's better. KEV may not be an actor, but he does have a point. I was on prompt and I tell you now I was sweating cobs back there. At one point I was prompting every other line.

KEV

Told you. My darling wife, was it thirteen times or fourteen you ended up with your mouth open and nothing coming out? All that time I spent going over your

lines with you and come the performance, poof. Out of your head it all went.

SUE

It was three times at the most.

WILF

Sorry, SUE, but you kept me waiting for my cue so long one time I got myself mixed up and said the wrong line.

SUE (angrily)

Oh, come on Robert de Niro, you only had three lines and you got every one of them wrong so don't you dare blame me.

WILF

I said them in the wrong order. Nobody even noticed.

ALL (Loudly and in unison)

Yes, they did.

JOYCE

I've been casting my net widely and as some of you know I had a very interesting proposition put to me the other day.

(She stops abruptly, staring at TED as if defying him to comment. He smirks, nudges the woman next to him, MANDY, who almost falls off her chair, but says nothing.)

JOYCE

We've had an opportunity to be somewhat daring, to broaden our horizons, stretch ourselves both inwardly and outly.

MANDY (to TED)

Is outly a real word?

TED

No idea, but then again most of what she says sounds made up.

JOYCE (ignoring the whispered reactions)

Yes, a new venture. Now then, who's up for something exciting? A new work by a young highly regarded playwright. Bold, fresh, modern, virile, perhaps even a little avant-garde, how does that sound?

(There's silence then ELLIE pipes up)

Virile, Joyce? Just how exactly are you thinking virile applies in this context? Not sure I want to be involved in anything risqué. I have my position to...

TED (interrupts)

What position's that, then? Too good for us are you, eh, like JOYCE there since she moved up the hill on the back of her old man's mother's legacy?

ELLIE

Certainly not, but some of my neighbours have expressed an interest in attending our next production and I don't wish to give them the impression we've involved ourselves in anything too, well you know what I mean...

(She tails off.)

TED (scornfully)

Think you're someone now, do you? Too good for us now, is that it? Like Mrs Bossy Drawers over there. (he jerks a thumb towards Joyce)

JOYCE

Edward, I can assure you that is not the case at all. I may have moved my place of residence...

TED

Your house?

ELLIE

Yes, my house, but it's not the case at all that I have forgotten my roots.

TED

Not forgotten, but from where I'm sitting you're due a touch up pretty soon.

(He guffaws, nudges Mandy again and this time she does fall off her chair. In the ensuing consternation, two new arrivals walk in a look around a little uncertainty. Rita is quite garishly dressed and her companion, Colin, appears reluctant to be here)

RITA

Is this fag end productions? Only I had an email from some dead posh sounding woman saying they were after new actors to join up. I'm Rita, by the way and this is...

(She stops talking when Colin burps, very loudly)

JOYCE

The email was from I, RITA, you're very welcome.

(MANDY whispers 'some dead posh sounding woman' to TED who bellows with laughter.

TED

See, JOYCE, even folk who'd never met you think you're dead posh.

TED (In an aside, to RITA)

Didn't used to be as bad as she is lately, happened when she moved to live up the hill.

RITA

Ooh, it's dead posh up there, so they say. One of the girls in my Pilates class is an au pair in one of them houses. She reckons it's a mansion.

JOYCE

I can see I need to nip this in the bud once and for all. I have recently moved house. I now live on the hill. Not at the top of the hill, by any means and the house in question has three bedrooms, it is not, repeat not, a mansion. My last apartment also had only the same number of bedrooms. Three. I fail to see what has changed.

MANDY

Be fair, JOYCE, you were always a bit up yourself. Even the way you say you used to live in 'an apartment.' I still live in that block, but every other bugger there says they live in a flat. Not a poncey 'apartment.'

(TED guffaws loudly and the others join in, apart from ELLIE who looks a little anxious. JOYCE purses her lips, but tries to preserve her dignity.)

JOYCE

Can we move on?

TED

You're not moving again are you? (He laughs but the tone of the meeting has sobered so he calms down)

TIM

I don't think any of you are being fair to JOYCE. She can't help her nature.

JOYCE (To TIM)

TIM, I know you mean well, but that's not exactly helping.

ELLIE

But you always kept your flat looking so lovely.

(TED and MANDY shout out together 'apartment' after ELLIE says 'flat' and there's uproar once again)

ELLIE

Well, you did. I used to treasure my occasional visits.

RITA (to MANDY)

Is it always like this?

MANDY

No, most of the time we fall out.

(TED guffaws and COLIN burps, very loudly.)

JOYCE

Thank you, ELLIE, as did I. You must come and see us in the new place soon.

TED

Bloody hell, ELLIE, 'ain't you even had an invite yet? She's been left here best part of four months.

(ELLIE looks a little upset but says nothing)

MANDY

Any reason you never popped in to see me, ELLIE, seeing as my 'apartment' used to be just down the way from Joyce's old place? Not grand enough for you, is that it? If I knew you were coming I would have moved my knickers off that washing line I string over the bath while they dry.

ELLIE (sniffily)

Probably because I've never been invited, that's why.

TED

Best not offer any invites to my place then. Drying knickers over the bath would be the least of your worries. One bedroom flat, kitchenette, a crappy little balcony overlooking the communal rubbish bins and a bog that won't flush if you leave any sort of a decent offering. Not a mansion, anyway. (with a pointed stare at Joyce)

JOYCE (Sighing heavily)

TED, for the last time, I live in a perfectly ordinary house, not a mansion by any means.

TED

Posh though, I bet.

JOYCE

Well all I can say with absolute certainty is that if you ever moved into a house like mine, it would look exactly as your present flat looks now within a week.

(Surprised laughter ensues at Joyce scoring a point, led by WILF and Mandy.)

TED

At least she said I live in a flat not a bleeding apartment.

ELLIE

Listen everybody, we have new people here, let's try to get along, shall we?

TIM

Absolutely. TED, you need to at least try and pretend you don't hate JOYCE for the sake of the group.

WILF

Very helpful, TIM. Was it the Diplomatic Service you were in, just remind me?

TIM (looking confused)

No, not at all. I was a Merchant Banker.

WILF

Or something that sounds very similar.

(TED guffaws and the others appear exasperated)

JOYCE (sharply)

Thank you, gentlemen.

(JOYCE turns to RITA and then with some alarm to COLIN who has gone 'walkabout' making shrill sounds as he touches every new surface)

JOYCE

RITA, isn't it? Perhaps you could tell us a little about yourself?

RITA (to COLIN)

Sit down, COLIN, please.

COLIN sits down, at the far edge of the group and remains very still until RITA looks away.

COLIN

Arseholes.

RITA (ignoring him)

RITA

My name is RITA, like I said, and that's COLIN, my brother over there. He has Tourette's, which means he sometimes shouts out words that come into his head. It's a condition, he can't control it. You won't even notice after a while

COLIN

Bollocks! (He laughs, shrilly)

ELLIE

Oh, I really do think I will notice, dear.

RITA

Anyway, he's suffered from Tourette's most of his life, but it's my turn to look after him now.

WILF

Look, my dear, I know you mean well, but surely what you mean is the poor boy is 'living' with Tourette's.

RITA

No, I don't, he's living with Tourette's, right enough, but he's bloody well

suffering from it. As I am. He can't help it, he's lovely, he really is and he tries so hard, but it's so hard, so keep your pious opinions to yourself, you tosser.

(TED laughs and MANDY mouths the word 'tossler' at WILF)

WILF

I'm not used to being spoken to like that, young lady.

RITA

Better make a start then and not sure if you've noticed yet, but I'm no lady.

WILF (subsides, muttering)

No, you certainly aren't.

COLIN (shouts)

Shurrrup bumface

(TED roars with laughter. Gradually, they all laugh, except WILF who remains affronted.

JOYCE (encouragingly)

Go on, RITA, you were saying...

RITA

Right then. Like I said to you in the emails, after I left RADA...

(There's a collective gasp from the group, apart from JOYCE who just looks around, smugly)

JOYCE

I scattered my bread upon the waters and brought forth...

MANDY

A proper actor. A real one. Go on, RITA, keep going.

RITA.

Well, I did a stint in Rep, mostly up North, Royal Exchange in Manchester, Liverpool Everyman, that sort of thing, then Trevor asked me why I hadn't been to London, so I...

MANDY

Trevor? That your boyfriend?

RITA

Oh sorry, no, Trevor Nunn.

(There's a huge collective gasp as the actors visibly draw closer, shuffling their chairs which spooks COLIN

COLIN

Bollocks!

(This time nobody appears to notice)

RITA

Well, let me think, where next? The National, the Old Vic, the Young Vic, I was very lucky getting parts, and one thing led onto another.

MANDY

Not too much resting then?

(They all laugh, all actors together sharing an in joke)

RITA

No, very lucky, like I said. I was doing a two hander in Richmond, supposed to be transferring to the West End at the end of the Provincial run and the Director said he wanted to keep me on when Bennie came on board.

ELLIE

Bennie, dear?

RITA

Oh, sorry, Benedict Cumberbatch, I just call him Bennie. Anyway, long story short, my dad got banged up and so I had to pull out and come here to look after COLIN.

(Everybody looks at COLIN, still sitting apart, who giggles nervously.)

COLIN (stands up and declaims)

Winter is coming.

(He sits down again)

WILF

Game of Thrones fan, then?

RITA

Yeah, just a bit.

COLIN

I am the sword in the darkness. I am the watcher on the walls. I pledge my life and honour to the Night's Watch, for this night and all the nights to come.

VIV

Are we okay for a break, JOYCE, only those sausage rolls keep whispering eat me?

JOYCE

Yes, why not? Come on everybody, ten minute refreshments break.

(They surge towards the food spread out on a side table, led by ORLOF who seizes a handful of food and dashes off to a distant table. VIV, JAN and TIM remain behind)

VIV

When she says 'banged up,' do you think she means her dad has had an accident, or, you know?

JAN

Oh, you mean, (she lowers her voice) prison?

VIV

Well, could be, couldn't it?

TIM

Oh, I say.

JAN

Rita, I'm sure she's lovely and all that, but she does have a bit of a rough and ready side to her, doesn't she? Stands to reason her father could well be, well you know...

(She stops talking as RITA enters)

RITA

What's occurring?

JAN (flustered)

Nothing. Not anything at all.

TIM

We were just saying (JAN and VIV look at him in horror and he stops in mid sentence)

RITA

Go on, TIM, spit it out.

TIM

I was just remembering an old school chum whose father was once wrongly arrested. Shocking miscarriage of justice, it was, actually, and we were wondering how many other perfectly decent chaps could have been, well, you know...

(He tails off in confusion)

RITA (grinning)

Ah, so you were all talking about my old man.

VIV and TIM together say

Certainly not

(While at the same time JAN says)

Well, yes.

RITA

Which is it, then?

JAN

We were just wondering if he had been badly hurt, in his accident.

RITA

What accident? Oh, I get it, I said he'd been banged up. No, you were right the first time, he's inside, doing porridge, in clink, behind bars, like I said, banged up.

JAN

Oh, how awful

RITA

Nah! Where he belongs. Not the first time, but likely to be the last. He's getting on and it's a long stretch so... only problem is he was at least pretty good with Colin, took him down the pub, fishing, you know, boys' stuff and now the poor devil's stuck with me. I have to take him with me everywhere.

JAN (watching Colin throwing peanuts in the air and catching them in his open mouth)

Oh dear

RITA (shouts)

COLIN, pack that in and get over here

COLIN (affably, as he walks through the crowd)

Bollocks

JOYCE (returning with the faithful ELLIE in tow)

Aren't you partaking? It's not much, but what can one expect when VIV regards Iceland as posh and ignores anywhere else that doesn't have LIDL on the door?

JAN

Yes, she does love the bargain basement, but then again, do you remember when we elected TED to do the catering?

JOYCE

Oh, I'd blotted it from my memory. That last night party, after the best performance any of us could remember. Everybody buzzing and what did TED serve up?

(JOYCE looks at JAN and both together they say)

White wine and Twiglets! (They both laugh)

(The others wander off to where the food is laid out. TED is being extremely raucous. JOYCE winces at his latest outburst)

JOYCE

Remind me again why we tolerate TED in this Group.

ELLIE (ticks off points on her fingers)

Well, he owns a van so can move props and costumes.

He's happy to forswear alcohol for the evening if we need a designated driver.

He's reliable, in as much as he never misses a rehearsal.

He can remember his lines. Not everybody is so blessed.

(They both stare pointedly at the rowdy group around the refreshments table)

He hasn't got much else in his life, other than the theatre group. Well, nothing really.

JOYCE

Okay, enough of his virtues. Just need a reminder from time to time.

(The others wander back in dribs and drabs, taking their seats and all looking at JOYCE

VIV and JAN remain behind, still picking at the food)

JAN (to VIV AT THE SIDE TABLE)

Meant to ask about that advert you were thinking of sending in.

VIV

Oh, the Lonely Hearts? Yeah, done it, sent it off. I was pretty keen not to rule anyone out.

JAN

In what way?

VIV

Well, I put something like no necessity for sense of humour. Necessity, see, a bit classy. Then, what else? Oh yes, non smoker but prepared to take it up if necessary, going out not an issue, own place so not cost you anything, likes all food, think that's about it. Oh, I put in easy going nature so they know I'm up for it.

JAN

Oh right, isn't that making you sound a bit...

VIV

Desperate? I am desperate. Anyone with a pulse is okay. Not too old though, need a bloke with some lead in his pencil, not with knackers like an old Hoover bag, full of dust.

(Behind her, COLIN bursts out laughing. VIV looks around in consternation)

VIV

Blimey, you forget he's here until he pipes up, don't you?

JOYCE (shouts across)

Are you joining us, ladies, or shall we proceed as actors only?

JAN

Oh, sorry, on our way (they rejoin the group)

COLIN

Desperate Dan on the line.

JOYCE

Well now, refreshed and ready for the fray, we can move on. Our next project, yes?

(The Group nod agreement with a fair degree of expectation)

JOYCE

As I hinted, the project I have in mind will be challenging, but I feel sure we're up to the task. Several of the roles are of a good length with plenty of oomph to them. So, big meaty parts for many of us.

TED

I've always wanted big parts

WILF

Not to mention meaty ones.

(they both laugh, uproariously)

MANDY

Ah yes, the old ones are the best, aren't they lads?

ELLIE

There's a time and a place for vulgarity, you two, and it's not here and not now.

TED and WILF

OOOH!

(They slap each others' wrists, giggling.)

RITA

Here's a novel idea. Why don't we all pay attention to what JOYCE is saying? It may well be the next production so why not at least try to adopt a more professional attitude?

(TED and WILF look a little abashed)

JOYCE

Thank you, RITA. You've caught us on a bad day, I fear. We normally behave much better than this, don't we everyone?

(Most manage a token nod, apart from KEV who laughs and MANDY who says)

MANDY

Not really. This is about par for the course, Rita. Not what you're used to, I bet.

RITA

Oh, I wouldn't say that. I did three weeks rep in Chester once and rehearsals were shambolic. I had to take over the production in the end or we'd never have got a performance out. They needed discipline, simple as. That's the key to success in the theatre, after all. I'm sure we all agree on that?

(They all nod)

COLIN (ominously)

The night is dark and full of terrors.

SUE

Is that Game of Thrones too?

KEV

Yes, as you'd know if you watched the box set I bought you for Christmas.

SUE

Well, if I stayed up half the night watching tv like you, maybe I would, but I need my sleep, thank you very much.

KEV

If that's what beauty sleep is supposed to produce, I'd say the concept is very overrated

SUE (furiously)

Oh, I've had it up to here with you today, KEV.

JAN

Come on, now. Let's stay on topic, shall we? Maintain the flow?

(SUE glares at KEV and very pointedly moves to sit further away from him. He blows her a kiss)

TED

Talking of maintaining the flow, I'm sorry to say nature calls and I must obey.

ORLOF

Eh?

TED

Need a pee, mate. Maybe a bit more than a pee if I'm reading the signs right.

(TED stands up and exits towards the Gents)

JOYCE

Anyone else in need of a break? If so, go now so we can move on.

(Almost everyone stands up and heads for the exits, leaving only RITA, TIM, JAN, COLIN, MANDY and JOYCE behind. JOYCE looks around in exasperation)

JOYCE

Oh, if one cannot beat them one must forsooth join them.

(She bustles off to the the Ladies)

RITA

A bit shambolic today, isn't it?

JAN

Yes, but unusually so, I'd say. Even so we do seem to muddle through and get a play out in the end.

TIM

Oh yes, rather! Rapturous applause as the end result, that's all we all want as actors, eh what?

MANDY

Rapturous applause? Must be a different theatre group you're thinking of. Polite applause, maybe, not much rapture out there.

RITA

Why is that? If you don't mind me asking?

MANDY

Choice of play, ability or lack of ability in the cast, audiences who feel obligated to be be there and wouldn't be there if they could get out of it, where do you want to start?

JAN

Oh, MANDY, you're being a bit unfair there. We do our best. I don't even act and yet I can see how everybody tries hard to do the group justice.

MANDY

Just being realistic, JAN. We're not very good. We do it because we enjoy it, but there's no mistaking us for a professional company of real actors with a real Director, is there? RITA has been there, done that, if she thinks we're a

shambles, she's best placed to know that, right?

RITA

Oh please, I'm not speaking out of turn, I hope, but I can see so much here that could be better. You have enthusiasm, that's half the battle. Trust me, I've worked with many a jobbing actor going through the motions, just to pay the mortgage, so the professionals often leave much to be desired.

TIM

Well, nobody here goes through any motions.

MANDY

Feels like it sometimes. Knee deep in the stuff. Any ideas, RITA, on how we could all get better?

RITA

Oh, not for me to say. You have JOYCE as leader and I assume she usually takes the lead role and Directs as well?

JAN

Oh yes, JOYCE is a real leader

MANDY

Not having a pop at JOYCE, obviously, but I'm pretty sure RITA ought to take the lead in the next production. With all her professional experience.

(She turns to RITA) As for directing, have you much experience of..

RITA

Oh God, loads. At RADA, I directed, produced, wrote, acted, sang and danced, the full hit. Not to mention the stage manager, front of house, lighting, everything really. It's expected, especially for those lucky enough to be chosen for special fast track experience in the business. Since then I put on a one woman show, up North, that did rather well and ran a rep company, but it's absolutely not my intention to waltz in here and disrupt anyone's routine.

MANDY

But, you could take us where JOYCE couldn't.

COLIN

Bollocks

(Rita glares at her brother and waves a self deprecating hand towards the others)

As far as I'm concerned, my role if any will be at the discretion of JOYCE. If I'm fortunate enough to be offered a part, no matter how lowly, I'll knuckle down and give it my best shot. I've no intention of rocking the boat.

(COLIN

When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground.

(He laughs, maniacally, as the others drift back in)

TED (wiping wet hands on his trousers)

There we are, girls, fresh as a daisy now after a right good...

COLIN (interrupts)

Shit.

TED

Well, I was going to say crap, but thanks for the help, COLIN. Like the one o'clock gun in Edinburgh Castle, I need my three o'clock dump

ELLIE (outraged)

TED!

TED (defensively)

I only said dump. Could have been worse.

COLIN

Shit

TED (laughing)

There you go, see? Only natural, ELLIE, or are you claiming you don't ever have a right good clear out now and again? One in the morning, one at night and a mid afternoon special, that's me. Regular as clockwork. My mates at work used to call me Timex. Clockwork, see?

JAN

Too much information.

WILF

You had mates?

TED

'Course I had mates.

WILF

Tell us more about your ablutions, why don't you? Fascinating topic.

TED

Watch it, sunshine, just 'cause you've supped a pint or two out back don't give you the right to get mouthy. I bloody well am going to tell you all now. You can blame WILF.

I used to do early shifts, six till two. In bed to quarter past five, then up, shower, shit shave and out to the bus stop with a piece of toast in hand by half five. Every day for donkeys' years.

KEV

Fair play, fifteen minutes is pretty good. Takes SUE an hour and a half to put her face on and then look at the result.

SUE

At least I don't leave a smell like a sewage farm behind me every time I visit the bathroom.

TED

Eh, you pair, these are my ablutions, not yours. Shit, shower, shave, fifteen minutes tops, can't beat it. These days I miss one of 'em off now and again.

ELLIE

The shower, I suppose.

TED

Eh, watch it. I meant I don't shave every day now. Always have a shower though.

WILF

Not forgetting the...

COLIN (Shouts)

Shit.

RITA

All useful information, but perhaps, JOYCE, we could get back to to discussing the next venture.

JOYCE

Yes, yes, quite right. (She claps her hands) come along now, let's have proper order.

COLIN (stands up and shouts)

Knock, knock

(Nobody responds)

COLIN

Knock, knock

KEV

Oh, go on, I'll bite. Who's there?

COLIN

Nobody

KEV

Nobody who?

(Colin sits down and keeps quiet. After a few moments he starts laughing)