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SF PERUSALS

One For The Road

A Play

Willy Russell

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

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ISBN 978-0-573-11320-8

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ONE FOR THE ROAD

An earlier version of this play was first presented at the Nottingham Playhouse on 7th March 1979, with the following cast of characters:

Pauline Cain	Elizabeth Estensen
Dennis Cain	Alun Armstrong
Roger Fuller	Philip Jackson
Jane Fuller	Rachel Davies

Directed by Mike Ockrent
Designed by John Gunter

A revised version of the play, upon which this Acting Edition is based, opened on 4th February, 1985 at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon, prior to a national tour, presented by Meridian Productions, with the following cast of characters.

Dennis Cain	David Cardy
Pauline Cain	Ishia Bennison
Jane Fuller	Helen Shapiro
Roger Fuller	Patrick Monckton

Directed by Deborah Bestwick
Designed by Glenn Willoughby

The action of the play takes place in the lounge of the Cains' dormer bungalow on a modern housing estate in the north of England

Act I Early evening
Act II Some time later the same evening

Time—the present

ACT I

Before the play begins and as (hopefully) people are beginning to gather, we should hear Joni Mitchell's album, "Blue"

The stage is a lounge in an "executive" dormer bungalow, situated on an estate a few miles from a major northern city. The furnishing is augmented Habitat. The people who live here are "first generation" middle class; their parents still pay rent. Amongst the gadgets and gear there is a dining table and chairs, a video recorder, a stereo unit, a reproduction writing bureau. The set should include a window, with a venetian blind that is pulled up to reveal the back garden, beyond which can be seen row upon row of dormer bungalows stretching into the distance

As Houselights go down we see Dennis enter from the hall. He surreptitiously unlocks the drop-down flap of the bureau and puts something inside. He locks the bureau and puts the key into his pocket. He goes to the stereo and sifts through records. He scowls at a John Denver album, snorts at a Manilow record, almost throws up at a Richard Clayderman album then laughs aloud at a second John Denver album. Finally, he finds the Joni Mitchell album, "Blue". He places it carefully on the stereo, sits, and places the headphones on his head. We hear, faintly, the sounds to which he is listening.

Behind him, unseen and unheard, Pauline (his wife) enters. She is obviously distraught. She does not see that he has on the headphones. She pulls out a dining chair and sits

Pauline Dennis. . . . I've had enough. From now on . . . that's it. No more. That's it. I will no longer have our child mixing with those Parnes kids, not when he comes out with words like that. I know he gets it from them. They've got mouths like open sewers, those Parnes kids. Well there's going to be a stop to it. I'm not having it: I'm not having my child telling me that Jack and Jill did not go up the hill for a pail of water but went up for a . . . Well. You know. It's a disgusting thing for an innocent child to come out with. You're going to have to deal with it Dennis. You're going to have to put a stop to it Dennis. Dennis! Dennis! (*Sensing that she's talking to herself*) Dennis! (*Seeing the situation she goes to the amplifier and plunges up the volume*)

Dennis screams and leaps out of his chair, ripping off the headphones

You sit there, oblivious, while I'm left to deal with a crisis in the family. Dennis, for God's sake, what's wrong with you?

Dennis (*in agony*) Me ears . . . me ears . . .

Pauline I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about all this buryin' your head in the sand while I'm left to cope with one calamity after another.

Dennis So what's wrong now?

Pauline What's wrong, Dennis, is that we have got a seven-year-old child coming out with obscenities.

Dennis Like what?

Pauline John has just informed me that the hill which Jack and Jill climbed was not the scene of collecting water but of . . . of sexual intercourse.

Dennis Is that what he said, sexual intercourse?

Pauline I think you know very well what he said.

Dennis What?

Pauline He swore.

Dennis Well, I realize that, but what did he actually say?

Pauline He used a word meaning sexual intercourse.

Dennis Which one?

Pauline Which one?

Dennis Yes, which one?

Pauline If you must know, the worst one.

Dennis Fuck?

Pauline Dennis!

Dennis Well, there's loads of words with that meaning . . . There's . . .

Pauline Well, I dare say there are, but I don't want them spoken in this bungalow.

Dennis There's shag . . .

Pauline DENNIS! (*She grabs the headphones and clamps them over her head*)

Dennis And root. As in, "I could really root that one".

The following two speeches are spoken simultaneously

And there's "a leg over", and there's the old fashioned style, "roger", and the more current versions like "shafting" and "balling".

Pauline I'm not listening, Dennis. I don't know why you want to behave like this. I don't know what's been wrong with you lately but if you ask me I think you should see a doctor.

Dennis I can't think of anymore. That's about the lot. You can take the cans off now, Pauline. (*He motions to her*)

She turns her back. He goes to the amplifier and plunges up the volume. She screams and rips off the headphones

Pauline Shit. You shit!

Dennis AHA! So now we know where John's been gettin' this filthy language from.

Pauline Dennis, I'm warnin' you. In matters of this nature I teach John the correct terms, you know I do. I've told you, he's getting this language from those Parnes kids.

Dennis He doesn't get it from the Parnes kids. If a bomb dropped on this estate the poor bloody Parnes kids'd get the blame.

Pauline Well if he doesn't get it from them you just tell me where he does

pick it up from. I've never heard other children from Phase Two section of the estate who use language like that.

Dennis Pauline, people swear whether they're on Phase One, Phase Two or Phase Three Thousand and Sixty-Nine. People swear everywhere.

Pauline They don't Dennis.

Dennis They do.

Pauline They don't.

Dennis They do.

Pauline Do they? And when was the last time you heard Sue Lawley say "Here's the bleedin' news.".

Dennis I'd forgotten about Sue Lawley.

Pauline When we moved to Phase Two I thought we'd be gettin' away from all that. Well, that's it, no more. In future John doesn't go out to play in the street. From now on he can just roam the garden.

Dennis But you can't *roam* a twelve foot lawn.

Pauline It's not twelve foot. Since we had the greenhouse moved there's a good sixteen foot lawn out there.

Dennis You can't stop him playin' out. It won't do him any harm.

Pauline Oh no. It won't harm a seven-year-old if he's subjected to endless obscenities.

Dennis Of course it won't. Listen, if you want to know, I taught him most of the words myself.

Pauline (*stunned*) You did what?

Dennis I had to! I heard him, out in the avenue, tryin' to swear like the rest of them. Poor kid was soundin' like a medical dictionary.

Pauline Yes. Because I tell John to use only the correct terms. And that's how it should be.

Dennis But not when you're supposed to be swearin'. It doesn't have quite the same effect.

Pauline So you'd rather him come out with . . . with that sort of language?

Dennis Well, why not?

Pauline (*disappearing into the kitchen*) All right. All right, if you won't take any notice of me, just wait till your mother gets here. You ask her if you should teach her grandchild the correct terms or the obscenities.

Dennis I will.

Pauline Yes, you do.

Dennis "Now Mother, what do you prefer, cock, or penis?" (*Imitating his mother*) "Well son, if you don't mind, I'd rather just have the mixed salad."

Pauline (*entering from the kitchen*) Anyway, it won't be long now. Their days are numbered, you mark my words.

Dennis Whose?

Pauline You know very well whose. Whoever it is who's responsible for it.

Dennis For what?

Pauline Dennis, do you walk around wearing ear-plugs and a blindfold? The whole estate has been up in arms about it for the past month.

Dennis About what?

Pauline About the fact that in the last four weeks there have been countless

attacks; a dozen garden gnomes have been found with their heads severed. A whole range of fountains and patio waterfalls have been contaminated with Radox; instead of cascading they now do nothing but foam! And what about Shelagh Bennet's Venus de Milo?

Dennis Well. What about it?

Pauline It's had arms stuck onto it. Only a warped mind could dream up something like that. What terrifies me is who the next victims will be. We've escaped so far.

Dennis We have, haven't we?

Pauline So have Jane and Roger. I should think they have. Who's gonna risk meddling with property belonging to the chair person of the Ladies Karate Club?

Dennis Ey! Maybe it's them who's doin' it?

Pauline Dennis, don't be stupid, Jane and Roger are the backbone of Phase Two.

Dennis But she's always out joggin' isn't she?

Pauline What's that got to do with it?

Dennis Everythin'. She's joggin' along late at night, right? No one pays any attention, it's just Jane joggin'. But as she jogs up to some gnome infested garden, she leaps over the wall, pulls a lump hammer from out of her track suit and wallop, wallop, wallop! There's gnomes heads all over the lawn, but by the time anyone notices, the jogger has gone! Right. What time are they arrivin'? When Roger an' Jane get here we'll have to be on the lookout for clues, little things like a lump hammer in her handbag or . . .

Pauline Why do you always laugh at Jane?

Dennis Who's laughin'?

Pauline You are, Dennis, and I'm getting fed up with it. When we moved up here to Phase Two Jane could easily have ignored us, pretended that she didn't know us. But she didn't. She made sure that we were included. Jane made sure that we were accepted on this estate.

Dennis (*assuming a mock American film-trailer voice*) Jane, a woman . . . or a legend? Jane, the fabulous female of Phase Two. Before I met Jane I was just a quivering working-class slob. Before I met Jane I thought lasagne was a swedish actress, before I met Jane . . . No! There was no "*before*" . . .

The telephone rings. Dennis answers it

(*On the phone*) Hell . . . (*To Pauline*) Phone box. . . . Five-oh-oh-nine . . . Hiya ma!

Pauline Is that your mother? Here . . . (*She takes the phone from him*)

Dennis goes into the kitchen

(*On the phone*) Mother . . . you were supposed to be getting here early . . . But I told you to get off at the first bus stop. (*Covering the receiver and shouting to Dennis*) Dennis, they've got lost, they've got off at the wrong bus stop again. (*On the phone*) Mother, you've been to the bungalow God knows how many times, why can't you or Dad remember where it is? . . .

Oh no, they do not all look alike. . . . We do not have a number, Mother, because we do not like to deface the façade of the bungalow . . . Look, exactly where are you? . . . Right, now go out of Brahms Close and take the first right into Sibelius Street. At Elgar Drive, turn right, go past Mahler Crescent, till you get to the Beethoven Underpass. When you come up from the Underpass you'll see Wagner Walkway right in front of you. . . . That's right . . . yes . . . and Symphony Avenue is just on the left . . . that's right we're three houses down from Torville Dene . . . No, no number! . . . just "The Haven" . . . that's right, "The Haven" . . . We'll see you . . . Oh Mother, mother . . . Do you think Dad will like hachis au parmentier?

Dennis comes in from the kitchen carrying a can of lager

She's just asking him. . . . Hello . . . Hello? . . . (*She replaces the receiver*)

Dennis Well? Does he like hachis au parmentier?

Pauline He asked if that was the pebble-dashed semi on the corner.

Dennis Well why didn't you tell her it was cottage pie?

Pauline Because Dennis, it is not cottage pie, it is "hachis au parmentier". Oh, Dennis, you're not drinking already are you? I don't want you getting drunk. You get loud when you're drunk. Why don't you drink in moderation, like Roger?

Dennis Have you seen the amount Roger gets through? Roger drinks like Margaret Thatcher promises tax cuts—often, indiscriminately and always at the expense of others.

Pauline But he doesn't become loud with it. At least Roger approaches alcohol as an aid to social interaction and not as an aid to lunacy.

Dennis But I like lunacy.

Pauline All right, but come on, there's lots to do before they arrive. It is for your birthday that we're having this dinner, the least you could do is help get things ready.

Dennis What d' y' want doin'?

Pauline Have you cleared up that mess in the hall yet?

Dennis Which mess?

Pauline There's your old haversack lying all over the place.

Dennis Rucksack.

Pauline You could put that away for a start. (*She goes into the kitchen*) We're not taking it to Spain with us if that's what you think. You can't get on a shiny new jet with an old rucksack. I don't know why you took it out in the first place.

Dennis I took it out because I wanted to look at it and feel it and put me head inside it and smell its smells of diesel oil and grass and Anglesey and beer and Edinburgh and old perfumes and sea salt and sand.

Pause

Who put moth balls in it?

Pauline enters from the kitchen. She is looking for something

Pauline . . . Table mats . . . (*Thinking*) Oh, I know . . . (*She goes to the bureau*

and tries to open it only to find that it is locked) Dennis . . . I can't get into the bureau. Dennis, I need the table mats. Dennis, it's locked.

Dennis I know.

Pauline Well where's the key?

Dennis You want table mats? (*He goes to the bureau and opens it whilst concealing its contents*)

Pauline Dennis, what's in there? Why do you keep it locked? What's in . . .

Dennis (*handing her the table mats*) Nothing.

Pauline Well, why keep it locked if . . .

Dennis Me poems. I keep me poems in there. I do still write, you know.

Pauline But why do you keep them locked away?

Dennis I keep me poems locked away, Pauline, (*conspiratorially*) in case someone tries to steal them.

Pauline (*laughing, relieved*) Oh Dennis . . . (*She embraces him*) Who'd want to steal your poetry?

Dennis Pauline . . . Who'd want to graft arms on to a Venus de Milo?

Pauline Do you really still write poems?

Dennis nods

Sometimes I take out your old poems and read them. They make me sad.

Dennis Why?

Pauline I don't know. Things were just . . . just easier then weren't they? I mean, I know we didn't have the same . . . things then, a car, a beautiful home . . .

Dennis . . . a marvellous microwave, digital dishwasher, vacuum cleaner dimmer switches . . . hachis au parmentier . . . I'll tell you what I'll do—for your next birthday, I'll write you a new poem. Would you like that?

Pauline (*nodding, smiling*) Ah, Dennis. That'll be lovely, thank you.

Dennis Don't thank me . . . saved me a hundred and twenty quid. I *was* gonna get you a new sewing machine.

The phone rings. Dennis answer it

Hello Dad. . . .

Pauline Oh no . . .

Dennis Hello, five-oh-oh- . . . Hello Dad, that chest's not so good is it? Go on, take it easy, get y' breath back first. . . . That's better, go on. . . . So, exactly where are you now? . . . Erm no, no that's not exactly nearer . . . erm, it sounds to me as though you've wandered into the adjoining estate. . . . Yeh . . . yeh I know they all look alike. . . . Listen, have you found that little pub on the corner? That's right, *The Crotchet and Quaver* . . . Well, go up the pedestrian precinct (*spelling it out*) Pedestrian precinct. . . . The street, go up the street. . . . Listen it'd be much easier if y' just let me pick y' up in the car . . . yes, I know me mother gets indigestion if she has to travel in a car. Well look . . . just, just get back onto the other side of the road and follow the instructions Pauline gave you. . . . All right, OK we might see y' by next Christmas then? Tarrah.

Pauline Dennis, what are we going to do? I wanted to have them here early so that we could get them settled in before Jane and Roger arrive. What are we going to do?

Dennis Just pray that they turn back before they reach the Pennines.

Pauline exits to the kitchen and Dennis puts on a record at low volume

Pauline You know how Jane always casts a critical eye on things. Dennis have you opened the wine yet?
Dennis What for? There's no-one here yet.

Pauline comes back from the kitchen

Pauline Dennis, what is wrong with you? Surely you've learnt by now that wine needs time to breathe.
Dennis Breathe? It's Italian plonk on special offer. That lot wouldn't breathe if it was in an oxygen tent.
Pauline What's wrong with you? You've been in this mood all day haven't you?

He stares at her

Ah, I'm sorry if I'm moaning at you, Dennis, but you won't take anything seriously. Tomorrow Den, you'll be thirty-five—you're a father and a mortgagee. I mean, I used to laugh at your antics as much as anyone when we were young. But we're not young any longer, Den, but you're still acting as if you were, and Dennis, it's really not fitting.

She looks at him and realizes that he hasn't been listening to a word

Dennis, are you listening to me?

He merely stares, absorbed

Dennis, I'm taking time off from the kitchen to talk to you an' you're not even listening to . . .
Dennis Listen.
Pauline What?
Dennis Listen . . . Listen to that.
Pauline Listen to what Dennis?

He goes to the stereo and replaces the needle on the track. He turns up the volume and we listen to the verse before he turns the volume down again

Dennis (*reciting the verse we have just heard*) Richard got married to a figure skater/An' he bought her a dishwasher and a coffee percolator/And he drinks at home now/most nights with the TV on/And all the house lights turned up bright.
Pauline Well?
Dennis That's me.
Pauline Who?
Dennis Us. You're the figure skater and I'm Richard.
Pauline But you're Dennis.
Dennis And Richard. Richard. That *is* me, isn't it?
Pauline Dennis, I don't know what you're going on about. (*Returning to the kitchen*) But if you're going to change your name it's not going to be Richard. I'm not having people rushing round this bungalow shouting out "Dick".

Dennis (*more to himself than Pauline*) The song . . . it's about a feller who used to drink in the bars. And the girl loved him but . . . for some reason they went their separate ways until years later when they run into each other again. And the feller, Richard, who used to drink in the bars and sing with his crowd and talk and talk and talk, about what him and the rest of them were going to do, where they were going to go, well . . . he hasn't done any of it. He hasn't gone anywhere. When the girl knew him, they'd all been young and where they were all headed to was somewhere good and alive and continuing. But when the girl meets him again. . . . He doesn't drink in the bars now. He just goes down to the corner and gets a six pack and takes it back home. He drinks it with the telly flickering before him and all the house lights turned up bright.

Pauline (*from the kitchen*) What happens to the girl?

Dennis It . . . it doesn't say. It's not about the girl. It's about him, the song, not her.

Pauline Ah yeh, but it's all right for him, isn't it?

Dennis Why?

Pauline Well, I mean, he's settled down hasn't he? He's got a house and everything. But what's the girl ended up with? Is she married?

Dennis I don't know.

Pauline Yeh. See what I mean. Hey Den, why don't you play your guitar these days? Mm? I used to like it when you gave us a song. Why don't you play it anymore?

Dennis Hey, maybe I will. I could get it out the garage tonight, put some new string on it . . .

Pauline Agh, not tonight, Dennis. Not when we've got people coming. Put a record on if you want some music. Let's have something classical—let's have Richard Clayderman. No, perhaps not. Classical might be a bit heavy for a Saturday. Oh Dennis, put John Denver on. Nobody could take exception to John Denver.

Dennis I could. I hate John Denver.

Pauline Dennis, you love John Denver.

Dennis I do not. I have got a glorious loathing of John Denver.

Pauline Well you used to like him. You used to try and comb your hair to look like John Denver's.

Dennis Pauline, I'd rather have any hair in the world other than John Denver's—even Arthur Scargill's.

Pauline But you used to be so fond of John Denver.

Dennis Well, now I hate him.

Pauline Dennis, don't keep saying "hate". If you don't like him you could at least say "detest".

Dennis But I don't "detest" him.

Pauline I told you.

Dennis I "hate" him. Hate, hate, hate, hate, hate.

Pauline You carry on like that and you'll have Val next door hearing you. She's very fond of him.

Dennis goes to the window, opens it and shouts out

Dennis I, Dennis Cain, of The Haven wish it to be known that I have a passionate and terrible hatred of John, Goldilocks, Denver.

Pauline enters from the kitchen and begins to struggle with him to get him away from the window

John Denver should be garrotted with his own G string and . . .

Pauline finally manages to pull him away

Pauline Dennis. Have you gone mad? What are you trying to do? Shouting stuff like that . . . My God, don't you realize how many people you could upset? John Denver's very well thought of on this estate. (*As she closes the window*) Oh no . . . there's Val. Hello Val. Yes I thought I heard someone shouting too. That's why we were looking out. I think it came from your side, Val . . .

Dennis Definitely your side, Val.

Pauline Ah yeh, that's true, it probably was them. You know what they're like, those Parnes kids.

Dennis They want throttlin', Val.

Pauline I'll have some strong words for them when I see them again. . . . OK, Val. Bye.

Dennis Bye, Val. Y' know, you could get to feel very sorry for those poor bloody Parnes kids.

Pauline Well, what do you expect me to do? Tell her the truth? Oh, don't worry Val, it was just Dennis treating the estate to his opinion of John Denver. Well I hope for your sake that Roger and Jane didn't hear you. John Denver's a god in *their* eyes.

The telephone rings

Dennis, you get it. Look at the time and I'm not even changed yet.

Pauline exits

Dennis (*on the phone*) Hello, Control Tower. . . . No, it's me Mother . . . Dennis. Control Tower? It was a joke. Well . . . I know it's nothing to laugh at. . . . Well, if you'd let me pick you up in the car. . . . I know you get indigestion in cars . . . yes I know everywhere looks the same on these estates . . . Mother, you're lucky, a woman went out for a loaf of bread once an' was gone for six months. Look, did you find *The Crotchet and Quaver*? That's where you're phoning from? Right, look. . . . Get someone to direct you to the hypermarket and you'll see a phone there. Telephone when you get there an' I'll fetch the car for you. . . . No, Mother, you won't have to travel in the car if you don't want to . . . I'll drive very slowly and you an' me Dad can follow the tail lights . . .

The door chimes play a snatch of the William Tell Overture

I'll have to go Mother, the Lone Ranger's at the door. Tarrah. Good luck.

Dennis exits to the front door

(*Off*) Aye, aye.

Roger All right, kid.
Jane Evening, Dennis.

Dennis enters followed by Jane and Roger. Roger is carrying a bottle of wine and a birthday present

Dennis Pauline's just gettin' changed.
Jane Not ready when her guests arrive? A little black mark for Pauline.
Roger Black mark for herself, eh?
Jane It's a good thing you're entertaining us and not some of the others I could think of on this estate. You know that some people would hold a mistake like that against you for life.
Dennis Jane, that very thought crossed my mind as I opened the door. How lucky we are, I said to myself, how lucky we are that it's only Jane and Roger!
Roger (*handing Dennis the wine*) There y' go, kid. Brought y'a little bottle of somethin'.
Dennis Ta, Rodge. Red. I'll put it by the cooker to keep warm.
Jane Warm? Dennis, that is Beaujolais Nouveau. I thought everybody knew that Beaujolais is the one red wine which must be served chilled.
Dennis Oh, of course, trust me. Chilled it must be. Well, Jane, I'm sure, if you held on to it for half an hour . . .!
Roger It's the only red wine we drink in summer, isn't it love? You know what they say about red wine in summer don't you kid? "In summer, big bold burgundies should be abandoned".
Dennis I shun them, Rodge!
Roger (*producing the box-like, wrapped object*) Now kid, bought y'a little pressy. Here. You'll love it. He'll love it won't he?
Dennis Thanks, Rodge. Ta, Jane. (*He begins to unwrap it*)
Jane Mum and Dad not here yet, Dennis? I was just saying to Roger, it must be years since I saw them.
Dennis It might be years still. (*He unwraps the gift to reveal a record-carrying case*) Ogh, thanks. A record-carrying case.
Jane Look inside, Dennis.
Dennis (*lifting the lid*) Oh. (*Without enthusiasm*) A record as well.
Roger You'll never guess who it's by, kid.
Dennis I think I might just, Rodge.
Jane Well, there's no need to guess, Dennis—just take it out and have a look.
Dennis Do I have to?
Jane Not if you don't want to see your present.
Roger He's just savourin' the moment, aren't y', kid?
Dennis Yeh.
Roger Well . . . go on, go on.
Dennis (*pulling out the record*) John Denver.
Roger 'Ey, double album that is. Take y' two hours to get through that.
Dennis Fabulous.

Pauline enters

Pauline Hello, everyone.

Roger Ogh . . . Now look at that. You look great, kidder. Doesn't she look magic?

Jane That's a lovely little dress, Pauline.

Pauline Thank you, Jane. Oh, Dennis, what's that?

Dennis It's a present, from Jane and Roger.

Pauline Ogh . . . a record-carrying case. Isn't that lovely. When you go out you'll be able to take all your records with you.

Dennis Take them for a walk.

Pauline Ogh, and a record as well. What is it? (*She takes out the record, sees what it is, drops it back and slams the case shut*) No-one's got a drink. Who'd like a drink? Dennis what are you doing not offering our guests a drink?

Jane (*laughing*) Another black mark, Dennis.

Dennis Another one. If we carry on like this it'll be the firing squad for us won't it? Lined up at dawn, in Sainsbury's car park an' shot by a platoon of the best hostesses on the estate.

Pauline Dennis, will you please offer Jane and Roger a drink?

Dennis Ah . . . but, my love, it seems that when I purchased the said red I was forgetting that in summer big bold burgundies should be abandoned. Trust me to forget that. That's obviously why it was on special offer. Everyone else on the estate knows of the summer burgundy curse, but not me. I rush in and buy up seventeen litres of the stuff. Well, at least there'll be something to look forward to when winter comes. That's if we last that long, now that we've got seventy-nine black marks in the book and an evening of desperate sobriety ahead, Jane what do you prefer, cock or penis?

Pauline Dennis!

Jane Oh, don't worry Pauline. I'm used to him. Anyway, he can't fool me—I know there are no such wines on the market.

Roger Anyway, kid, we don't mind drinkin' red. I mean, we're not exactly connoisseurs. What we said about the burgundies, we just read it in the paper last Sunday.

Jane I didn't read it in the paper.

Roger We did, love.

Jane (*an Exocet glance*) Roger, you may well have done. But I did not. For as long as I can remember, I have known about the big bold burgundies.

Roger But I remember . . .

Jane Roger.

Dennis Watch it, Roger.

Jane Anyway don't you think there are more important matters than wine to discuss?

Roger Oh aye. I'd forgotten.

Pauline What is it? Jane what's wrong?

Jane My God, is nothing sacred? Are we all to be brought down by the times in which we live? Are we all to be victims of this sickness?

Pauline Jane . . .?

Jane It's wicked. It's mindless.

Pauline What's happened?
Dennis What's up then, flower?
Roger Don't push her, kid. She's had a shock, we both have.
Jane I don't really know if I can bear to talk about it.
Dennis Well if you don't tell us how are we to discuss it, Jane?
Roger I think kid, with what's been goin' on lately, you just might be able to guess.
Dennis Oh no, Rodge, not that!
Pauline What, Dennis, what?
Dennis Is that it, Jane? I've guessed it. Oh, what a black day. So. Barry Manilow's going to have a nose job. A government spokesman has said that this could solve Britain's unemployment problems.
Pauline Dennis shut up!
Roger Don't shout at him, kidder. It's not his fault.
Jane You mock Dennis, but you might be next.
Dennis Next what?
Roger The next victim, kid, the next victim.

Pause

Y' know what we woke up to this mornin'? Broke my heart, didn't it love? Shocked I was.
Jane The entire garden . . . defiled.
Dennis Get away.
Pauline How?
Roger Y' know that row of cabbages, Dennis, them with the lovely little hearts in them? Everyone of them covered in paint.
Pauline No.
Jane But not painted at random Pauline, oh no.
Roger No. Not content with mere vandalism this lot had to display their artistic talents as well. . . . Those grand little cabbage hearts had been painted to look like . . . well . . . like, well I'll be frank . . . like breasts.
Pauline Well, what a thing to do.
Roger For the sake of decency I'll not tell y' what they did to my organic cucumbers.
Dennis Roger, Roger, what's decency at a time like this . . . did they paint your cucumbers to look like. . . .
Jane There hadn't been an ounce of chemicals on those vegetables, had there, Roger?
Roger Pure, my soil is. Pure. You could eat off that soil. Surgeons could operate in my garden. It's true.
Pauline And have you lost all your little organic vegetables?
Roger Oh no, they'll still grow, Pauline love. But that's not the point is it? I mean what are we gonna do when we have people round to dinner? You know our dining table faces the garden. Many a guest has lingered over coffee and been moved to comment upon the state of my garden. But what we gonna do now? Ey? We can hardly have our bloody guests sittin' there starin' out at a row of tits an' pricks can we?
Jane Roger. Language!

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