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City Sugar

Stephen Poliakoff

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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CITY SUGAR

First presented at the Bush Theatre, London, on October 9th, 1975: subsequently by Michael White at the Comedy Theatre, London, on March 4th, 1976, with the following cast of characters:

Leonard Brazil

Rex

Nicola Davies

Susan

Big John

Jane Harris

Mick

Adam Faith

James Aubrey

Lynne Miller

Natasha Pyne

Alan Hay

Hilary Gasson

Michael Tarn

The Play directed by Hugh Thomas

Setting by Robert Harris

The action takes place in a Sound Studio of Leicester Sound, a local commercial radio station; in the Leicester branch of a supermarket (frozen foods counter); and in Nicola's bedroom in Leicester

Time—the present

NOTE ON THE SETTING

The main part of the action takes place in the Studio, in which the chief piece of furniture is the Sound Desk (see plan of this on p. 61). The back wall of the Studio is of plain brick. Half-way down the stage is a narrow gallery that runs right across, about eight feet above the ground. This gives access to the Control Box, set approximately c (see plan of this on p. 61). A narrow flight of stairs leads to this gallery, which can also be approached by another flight off-stage. The space below the gallery, on the opposite side from the stairs and Sound Desk, is filled in by a wall. This can be moved off, revealing a small inset in which the Bedroom and Supermarket scenes take place: the action during these scenes also making use of the stage in front of the insets.

The two small sets, Bedroom and Supermarket, are on trucks and are wheeled into position as indicated in the set plan on p. 61. Entrance to the Studio is also possible from behind this walled section.

CITY SUGAR

SCENE 1

The Studio

Leonard Brazil is sitting at the record desk. Rex is in the engineer's box. Pop music plays as the house lights dim, and fades after the CURTAIN rises

Leonard (*into the mike*) From nineteen sixty-eight, there, Amen Corner, featuring the unmistakable soprano of Mr Andre Fairweather-Low, and "If Paradise Was Half As Nice". Welcome back to the L.B. show. L.B.—the two most important initials in the country. L.B. on five hundred and fifty waves—that's a lot of water. (*Loudly*) *Five hundred and fifty medium waves!* (*He smiles*) Sorry. "You can do better than that, Brazil." "Yes, Boss." In a few minutes we have something for you, something special. (*He begins to open the letters on the turntable desk*) I want to say hello to those I met in North Street yesterday; people out in their gardens with *green* fingers, very definitely, and green feet, too, so I'm told. And one even with green hair. No, it was very nice meeting you. They have lovely gardens up there, don't they, lovely houses! (*In his more normal voice*) I have a few letters in front of me—I've been struggling to open. I have one from Mrs Lee, Mrs D. Lee, saying that did I know there was now a topless restaurant in this fine city of ours, and its name is the Aubergine—how's that for a free commercial, you guys over there in the Aubergine—and Mrs Lee wonders, what do I think about it? I think—it's a very classy name, *The Aubergine*, perhaps in French it is something more than just a vegetable. I wonder, since we're being blue—or *blueish*, perhaps we could ask—would any of the ladies like to see bottomless waiters approaching you with your curry? Rex is suggesting a lot of rude vegetable jokes about what that restaurant would be called, which I will ignore. Enough of this smut. I went to the cinema yesterday, saw the very excellent "Death Wish", a lot of rape and gore and blood and guts, for those of you that like your toast buttered that way—me, I prefer the lovely, the scintillating, the mind-expanding Lynsey De Paul. (*Over the beginning of the record, which he has switched on*) Nobody need fear—Lynsey De Paul is here . . . (*He turns the switch, after a few bars, the music is now playing silently while the record goes round. He drops the biro on the desk. A pause*) That was execrable. (*He flicks the intercom to speak to Rex in the box*) That was a real stinker. A loosener—and a very loose loosener at that. (*Pause; he continues into the intercom*) Come in here . . . It's the sleepy time for them at the moment, all gorged after Sunday lunch, lying in heaps

round the room—they won't want to be stirred. (*Pause; louder, into the intercom*) Get yourself in here, right now!

Rex enters behind him

Rex I'm here.

Leonard That's better.

Rex I've brought a drink.

Leonard How kind . . . (*With a slight smile*) Trying to placate me, are you? What is it?

Rex Lime juice; it's a free sample of one of the commercials we're carrying this week. I thought you'd like to try it.

Leonard It looks like a congealed shampoo. (*He puts it to one side. Suddenly staring at Rex; loudly*) Now, why haven't you filled these up?

Rex I was going to.

Leonard Going to! Everybody keeps on telling me how efficient you are, how fortunate I am to have you. I have yet to notice. Go and do these now. (*He hands him sheets of record titles to be filled in*) I warn you, it's a particularly grisly lot. (*Smiling*) I seem to have played pap for an entire week—might as well have stuck the stylus into cotton-wool.

Rex moves slightly

And why hasn't my mail been checked . . . ?

Rex (*embarrassed*) Sorry, I . . .

Leonard (*holding up a letter*) I've been asked to open another municipal pleasure pond—which is completely out of the question, of course.

Rex Why?

Leonard (*riffling through his other letters*) The last time—the one and only time I had to baptize a pond—it was in front of councillors and crowds, and all the rest—and I had to launch it—with a champagne bottle, containing—(*suddenly looking up*)—and this is completely and utterly true—frog spawn. A bottleful. I wasn't allowed to smash it against the side, of course, I had to solemnly pour it out, and of course the bloody stuff got stuck and I had to stand there shaking it, and banging the bottom, like a ketchup bottle, until, of course, I got it all over myself. (*He looks up*) What I really hate is somebody that doesn't believe a good true story. (*Loudly*) Get on with it!

Rex moves slightly

(*Loudly*) What's more, I've never seen a single person even *near* that pond—thousands of pounds spent on a small, windswept hole in completely the wrong place.

Rex I—By the way—I've left an item there—(*indicating the desk*)—you might like.

Leonard You have, have you? Worse and worse, Rex. You're having a good day, aren't you? (*Smiling*) I don't like suggestions very much, you should know that by now.

Rex Yeah, but I thought—you could—I wanted . . .

Leonard No!

Rex exits

(He turns suddenly to the mike, turns on a record over the monitor speakers and fades it down) That was Miss De Paul. I'm now struggling with another letter on pink paper—it's from Mrs Joan Parsons saying "Dear Leonard, is it true or false that you were a teacher in another life?" Well, now, I don't know about another life, Joan, but I was in this one, yes. I trained as a teacher as it happens, before I slipped into the record business, and when all that went up in a puff of smoke, I slipped back into the classroom, until of course I heard the call of Leicester Sound. I thought that everybody knew that, Joan. *(Smiling)* A joke. And a note here from a theatre group calling itself the Gracious Prayers, saying, could I give a free plug to their production of Dame Agatha Christie's *Towards Zero* on Saturday at the Town Hall, Hinkley, which seats one thousand five hundred people. No wonder they wanted their free mention. And I'm now being handed by the ever-dependable Rex, a piece of paper on which is written "DON'T FORGET". And if you don't know what that means, I do, and I'll tell you in a moment, for we have a real thriller coming up; but to change the subject—*(putting on a record)*—I have lost some weight. In fact I've lost so much weight, I'm floating out of my seat, floating round the studio. *(Ghost-story medium voice)* They've had to weigh down my trousers with *Encyclopaedia Britannicas*. *(In his normal voice)* While our friend Rex is gaining all the time, I'm afraid, he's approaching sixteen stone now, a hunky piece of flesh, can hardly fit into his box. Enough of this gibberish. DON'T FORGET means competition time. We have a stunner for you in a moment—till then, let's flash back into the dim distant past of last week. *(He switches on a record, "It's Gonna Sell A Million"; he turns it off after a couple of bars)* That was better—that was very slightly better. *(He gets up and walks)*

Rex enters

Rex Why do you keep on doing this?

Leonard Doing what?

Rex You know . . .

Leonard Putting weight on you, you mean—making you an obese lump.

It's my rather dismal little joke.

Rex I thought—you were the one for truth over the air.

Leonard I allow myself this one slight distortion.

Rex But people will discover, won't they?

Leonard No they won't, nobody's ever going to publish a picture of you, are they?

Rex Yes. *(Pause)* The local press might.

Leonard *(smiling)* Not with shares in this station they won't. In fact a

total wall of silence could be preserved about your real size for evermore. In fact if I wanted I could pump you up steadily to twenty-five stone, and then burst you. *(Pause)* Sorry. *(Smiling)* Don't worry, I do it to everyone that works for me.

Rex So I've heard.

Leonard So there's no need to look injured. You're not, yet.

Rex moves to go

Rex *(with a slight smile)* By the way, I've got Capitol on the line.

Leonard *(without looking up)* You'll have to be more convincing than that. Been listening to jabber and gossip, have you?

Rex I suppose so, yes.

Leonard Well don't.

Rex *(watching him)* Everybody knows, anyway. Are they going to make an offer, then?

Leonard It's just possible. Everything's possible. I shouldn't bank on it.

Rex For the afternoon show . . . *(Smiling)* They'll be sending spies up here. They'll be sitting in pubs with transistors and earplugs, listening away. You'll have to give them the whole works.

Leonard *(not looking up)* Will I . . . Get it ready.

Rex It is ready.

Leonard *(totally matter-of-fact)* You can have a moment longer than usual, because I'm in a generous mood.

Rex Thanks—I—

Leonard *(cutting him off, swinging round to the mike and switching on the monitor speakers; fading down the end of the record)* And now, a special competition. You heard me—a mind-tingling competition. And by my side is the ever-dependable Rex, sweating slightly, what have we got as a prize, Rex?

Rex *(nervously, standing by the mike and speaking into it; putting on almost a BBC voice)* We have their latest LP—the Yellow Jacks' latest!

Leonard *(in a brash voice)* Tell us the title, Rex—*please* tell us the title.

Rex "Somewhere Up There."

Leonard That's a fine title—is it a fine record?

Rex It's very exciting, Leonard, it really is . . .

Leonard *(to the listeners)* And you can have it a whole two or three weeks before it's in the shops, one of the very first in the whole country to have it. And what is Rex going to make us do? Well, I think he's been fiddling with his tapes.

Rex I have indeed . . .

Leonard Very posh today, aren't we, Rex?

Rex Are we, Leonard?

Leonard And what have you done with your tapes?

Rex I've slowed them down—rather a lot.

Leonard Slowed them down—we're getting even more posh.

Rex Yes.

Leonard *(loudly)* Tell me, Rex, what affect does this have on the listener?

Rex What?

Leonard (*very fast*) What effect does this have on the listener?

Rex What—well it . . . (*He dries completely and stands helpless*) I . . .

Leonard presses a button: a tape of Leicester Sound jingle cuts off Rex's floundering. Rex returns to his box

Leonard Enough of this gibberish. (*In his normal voice*) O.K., sweets—this is it. Rex is going to play one of the songs in the *Top Eleven*, and it has been sl-o-o-o-owed do-o-o-own, so it sounds a little different. And you're going to give us the singer and the song, aren't you. Double-five-three-zero-four—is the number to ring—that's right. (*In a Bogart voice*) Play it again, Rex.

Rex, back in his box, switches on a tape of "The Proud One" by the Osmonds, at 16 r.p.m.

(after a few bars, reducing the volume on the monitor speakers; talking into the intercom to Rex; off the air) Sounds a little more exciting like this, doesn't it. I shall always play it like this in future. (*Suddenly, loudly*) All records will be played at *eight R.P.M.*, and we'll talk that slowly, too.

Rex comes out of the box

Rex I'm—I'm sorry about messing things up, I didn't mean to . . .

Leonard Of course you didn't . . .

Rex You took me by surprise, I didn't think . . . I'm sorry, I won't do it again.

Leonard No, of course you won't. You won't get another chance to. Now get back into your box where you belong.

Rex returns to the box. Leonard switches the mike to go live again, and speaks loudly

Rex—what have you done to my favourite song? How's that for first-degree murder—a fine song slo-o-o-owly tortured to death. O.K., sweets, who can be the first caller—race to your phones, dial furiously. I'm touching the first prize now—all fourteen tracks of it—we're handling the two of them with rubber gloves up here—and forceps, and we're keeping them in an incubator at night, in case we can hatch a third. Seriously now—(*he puts headphones on*)—we have a caller; and the first caller is . . .

A Girl's voice (*on the telephone, amplified through monitors*) Hello . . .

Leonard (*softly*) Hello there—what's your name, love?

Girl Angela.

Leonard Lovely. Have we ever talked before?

Angela No, never.

Leonard Fine. You at home, Angela?

Angela Yeah—I'm at home.

Leonard Good—well, let's go straight into it, Angela, into the unknown . . .

He signals to Rex, who switches on the slowed-down tape again, in the background

Who do you think the noise is, this *slo-o-ow* noise?

Angela Is it—"The Proud One" by the Osmonds?

Leonard Did you say . . .

Angela (*about to correct herself*) I——

Leonard (*interrupting*) Angela, you're r-r-r-o-o-o-ight! Well done!

Rex speeds up the record to the right speed; it plays a few bars; Leonard signals to Rex and the volume is reduced

There we go—clever girl. I'm dropping your prize into Rex's hand, to be wiped spotless, and posted, jet-propelled, towards you, Angela. 'Bye, love. Let's have the next one, Rex.

A slowed-down version of "Na Na Is the Saddest Word" by the Stylistics. Leonard gets up again. Rex comes out of the box

This is an easy kill for them—they use their record-players so much at home, they all run slow anyway—those who *have* record-players.

Rex (*staring at Leonard*) I really like it, you know—(*with a slight smile*)—if I'm allowed to say so, how you always touch something when you're talking about it, even if it's the wrong record, like just now. (*He returns to the box*)

Leonard Yes. I like that, too. It's the actor in me. It's what makes it reasonably good. (*Staring round the studio*) Where is the nauseating object, anyway? (*He sees the Yellow Jacks' L.P. and picks it up*) Have you read the back, with Ross—(*in an American film-trailer voice*)—the leader singer speaking *his mind*—(*in his normal voice*)—take an example at random—and this is a nice lad from Bolton speaking—"Ross numbers among his favourite things; walnut ice-cream, honeysuckle, genuine people, starfish, and sunburnt bare feet." (*Loudly*) You realize we're going to have to play the utterances of this jellied imbecile all this week—the promoters have sent us a long tape, in a silk case, and the station's excited, too, they want it to be a lively few days, I keep getting little illiterate messages pushed under the door saying "Please remember, *maximum* required". (*Switching on the mike suddenly*) Hello—what's your name, please?

A Girl's Voice Rita.

Leonard (*with a slight smile*) Lovely Rita Meter Maid.

Rita What?

Leonard A reference to years gone by, don't let it worry you, Rita. Have we talked before?

Rita No.

Leonard You listen often . . .

Rita Yes—yes I do.

Leonard (*smiling, softly*) Good, that's how it should be. Let's go straight into it then, love, into the nitty-gritty—who do you think it is?

Rita I think it's "Whole Lot of Loving" by Guys and Dolls. (*She gives the wrong title*)

Leonard Well, Rita, you're wrong, I'm afraid.

Rita No I'm not—am I?

Leonard I'm afraid so.

Rita You sure? (*Louder*) I was certain. You——

Leonard (*cutting her off*) I'm sorry, love, you're wrong; keep listening though, for a very important reason—'bye for now. (*In a Hughie Green voice*) And let's go straight on to the next contestant! Coming up to Big John with the news at three o'clock. One down, one L.P. to go—round, crisp and shiny. What's your name, please?

Nicola's Voice Hello

Leonard A little louder please—what's your name?

Nicola (*very quietly*) Nicola Davies.

Leonard A little louder.

Nicola (*loudly*) Nicola Davies.

Leonard Nicola Davies. That's very formal. Are you at home, Nicola Davies?

Nicola Yes.

Leonard And what are you wearing, Nicola?

Nicola I—trousers . . .

Leonard A little louder—you've got a very nice voice, Nicola. You're wearing trousers; and anything else?

Nicola Yes—shoes.

Leonard Shoes, that's an interesting picture, she's wearing just trousers and shoes. Only wish we had television phones, sexy Nicola—so, to win this L.P., that Rex is just slipping into its beautiful see-through, tight-fitting sleeve—who is it, Nicola?

Nicola It's the Stylistics and "Na Na is the Saddest Sound". (*She gives the wrong title*)

Leonard I'm afraid, Nicola——

Nicola (*interrupting, correcting herself*) No, it's "The Saddest Word".

Leonard Well, Nicola—I'm afraid your first answer is the only one I can accept . . .

Nicola Oh . . .

Leonard But you were very close—and so, as you've given us *all* your name, Nicola Davies—I'm going, actually, to give it to you.

Nicola Oh good—thank you.

Leonard Just for you, Nicola Davies, but on one condition—and that is . . .

Nicola (*nervously*) What is that?

Leonard You listen for just one more moment, because I have something rather extraordinary to announce to you and to everyone. I'm going to be running many competitions this week for all ages—but one of them is different—for, to tie in with the great Yellow Jacks' concert here in this city on Saturday—we're running THE COMPETITION OF THE CENTURY—and the prize is actually meeting one of the boys. How do you like that, Nicola Davies?

Nicola Yes—what do you do?

Leonard And not only that—the winner will ride to London, after the concert, in *their* car, sitting with *them*, and what is more they will then spend four whole days in London, the capital of this fine country, at the expense of Leicester Sound. That's O.K., isn't it, Nicola?

Nicola Yes—what do—

Leonard (*cutting her off*) So everybody tune in tomorrow, for the first stage—you too, Nicola—(*smiling*)—you never know—what your luck might be. We might even speak again. (*He puts down the phone and drops his biro on the desk*)

Pause. Quiet

We're off.

The Lights fade to a Black-out

SCENE 2

A commercial is heard on the soundtrack

A Sharp Transatlantic Voice We are going DOWN! DOWN! DOWN! Yes, everything's down at Liptons. Shop at Liptons where eggs are down—(*echoing*)—DOWN! DOWN! Bacon is down and what's not down's not up.

Song Liptons makes the going easy,
Liptons makes the going great!

As the song continues there is a sudden explosion of white Light—

The Supermarket. The music of the commercial breaks into pop music playing in the background. Nicola is standing by a refrigerator, staring ahead; her face is pale. She has a postcard in her hand

Susan (*off*) Nicola?

Nicola doesn't react

Susan enters

Nicola? Here . . .

Nicola glances up, and suddenly Susan crosses over to the refrigerator, very sharply

Nicola (*surprised; nervously*) What you doing over here?

Susan What do you think?

Nicola You shouldn't have come over. You know you're meant to stick to your own counter.

Susan Why should I? I hate standing over there, by myself all the time. I've got to talk to somebody, haven't I—even you! Anyway, I start thinking funny thoughts, after a bit. (*She glances up at the strip-lighting*) If you stare at those lights long enough, it does that.

Nicola (*sharply*) You'll be seen any moment, you know.

Susan I won't. (*She feels her tunic*) Christ, I'm tired after that rush, and

it'll soon be starting again. I get so hot in this—(*pulling at the tunic*)—all over. What's that—let's see that . . . ?

Nicola Nothing.

Susan (*making a grab for it*) What you got a postcard for, with nothing on it.

Nicola Stop it! You'll get it wet. (*She puts the postcard back*) Look, if I'm seen talking to you, by the camera—(*they both glance up*)—we'll both get it, won't we? You just have to make a wrong move, and he'll see you, won't he?

Susan Don't worry, I'm watching out. (*She smiles*) It's coming now. (*She ducks*) You know what happened yesterday? Something exciting. What do you think—a cat got in here, it did. Just after you'd gone. Came through the stacks of Rivita up there, suddenly there it was. IN HERE! You know, spitting and everything. I thought it was a giant rat, we all suddenly stopped what we were doing and rushed after it, shouting and screaming our heads off. It really got everybody going. You should have seen us. Made a change. Didn't last long—you missed it!

Nicola Yes.

Susan (*loudly*) I wonder if anything else will get in here soon.

Leonard's Voice (*suddenly piping up*) That was . . . Don't fear, Leonard Brazil is here. Hello there, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, and a special hello to you. (*As if to all the girls, but strangely personal*) Yes, you down there, I'm saying hello to you.

Nicola He's quite loud today.

Susan Yes, he is.

Leonard's Voice (*running on*) I've got a lot of goodies coming up, and no bad 'uns. Every sound is freshly picked up here, specially for you, that's why they're so ripe and full of flavour. Juicy! You don't believe me, well, it's true.

Music begins

Susan He's talking a lot today, isn't he?

Leonard's Voice Very soon that special something I promised, Stage One . . .

Nicola Yes.

Leonard's Voice Until then, let's move on to the year two thousand and maybe we'll be listening to this.

Music: "Long-Haired Lover from Liverpool"

Susan (*looking into the refrigerator*) I'm so hungry, aren't you, can't stop feeling hungry.

Nicola Careful what you're doing. He'll kill us if he sees.

Susan (*putting her hand inside the refrigerator*) It's horrible inside here. We could fuse this fridge, you know—just have to get the right thing. (*She pulls at something inside the refrigerator*) Once saw it happen, all the food melts slowly, goes soggy and bad, and it all floats in a big kind of mush, you can pour the whole lot out like a lot of soup. (*She pushes the refrigerator*) It moves, too, you see!

Nicola Don't, please. I don't want trouble today, Susan . . .

Susan (*pushing the refrigerator*) It moves easily, we could push it down there if we wanted.

Nicola (*shouting*) Mind!

Susan springs back as the camera pauses

(*Nervously*) He's seen us now. Think. You're going to get us sacked at any moment now.

Susan I wouldn't mind that—I wouldn't. Anyway, he's asleep most of the time, the guy who watches it. Up in the office.

Nicola No, he's not! When there aren't many customers, like now, he's watching us all the time.

Susan Yes, he enjoys doing that. It's his sort of game. Come on! (*She calls to the camera, then ducks*)

Nicola Have you seen him yet? Do you know what he looks like?

Susan Yes, I saw him through the door once. He's very fat. I've heard all about him, he sits there all day, with one of his socks off, picking his toes, and eating the stuff, while he watches.

Nicola He doesn't do that, does he?

Susan Yes—he used to be a policeman, you know. And when he sees a customer taking something or one of us, he has them up there, and he says "he'll let them go". If he can do what he likes with them for half an hour, put his hand down you know and that. (*She mimes it*)

Nicola You're making all this up, like always.

Susan I'm not. It's true! And that's why you stare so much at the camera, isn't it? Because you wanted to get noticed—be invited up there. You want that to happen, don't you?

Nicola I don't. Well, it might be interesting. But I don't just wonder about him!

Susan Maybe he's staring at us, right at this moment, smacking his lips—about to jump. (*She looks into the refrigerator*) Have you taken anything yet, then?

Nicola No.

Susan Have you stopped taking things, then?

Nicola No, but they've started searching us, haven't they?

Susan Yes. My mum doesn't believe they search us. She can't think why they should have to, except for bombs, in case we had bombs! (*She puts her hand in the refrigerator*)

Nicola It's coming round again. Careful!

Susan Nicola—let's take something now, right now.

Nicola (*astonished*) What?

Susan Come on—take that! (*She throws Nicola a packet of food*) And that—and that! (*She throws a huge bundle of food from the refrigerator at Nicola*)

Nicola Look, stop it, Susan. Stop it, it's coming . . .!

A large can drops out of her hands and rolls down stage. At the same moment the music cuts off. Silence. Nicola turns, frightened, bewildered, and rushes out in front of the refrigerator to pick up the can

Ross's Voice Don't move, folks, stay right where you are, because yes, it's me. See you Saturday.

Leonard's Voice Those few words were spoken by you know who, Ross. I'll be playing some more of his dulcet tones tomorrow.

Nicola Shhh! I want to really listen now.

Leonard's Voice (*strangely gentle, as if half-aimed at her*) So have you got a lead pencil ready—is it in your hand—are you gripping it—hold it—tight—won't you, because we've come to that moment you've been waiting for since yesterday . . .

Susan (*loudly*) You're not going in for that competition, are you, you can't . . .

Nicola Sssh! Be quiet,

Leonard's Voice Come on, now then, are you ready, because I'm only going to say it *once*, so pin back those ears of yours, and listen—ready . . .

Sudden silence

Nicola (*loudly*) What's that . . . ?

Just silence

They've switched it off.

Susan (*smiling, teasing*) Yes—they must have known what you were going to do.

Nicola They would switch it off then!

The Fat Man's Voice (*silky, nauseating, menacing*) Attention all staff. Can Miss Lyle come into the office please. Could Miss Lyle come here immediately, please—immediately . . .

Susan (*loudly, defiantly*) It's not us—it's that old bag, seen her nicking . . .

Nicola (*moving backwards and forwards*) They were only going to say it once, weren't they? How can I find it out?

Susan You can't go in for *that* competition. You won the record yesterday. They wouldn't even let you start.

Nicola I must find it out, probably won't be something like this for ages—where's the building that it comes from?

Susan No idea. They'd never let you in, either.

Nicola No. (*She turns*) I'll phone them up, then. I know the number.

Susan (*smiling*) Can't use that phone. Only for supervisors.

Nicola I don't care. (*She moves towards the phone*)

Susan (*loudly*) Mind! Nicola!

The camera stops—and pauses

You'll never get over there without being seen. He's watching now.

Nicola stares at the phone

The Fat Man's Voice Miss Lyle . . .

Nicola It's worth a try. I'm going to. (*She moves in front of the refrigerator, sideways, crouches, dashes furiously for the phone, pauses for one second,*

then she immediately starts dialling furiously, bending to keep her head down)

Susan (*calling across*) Keep down . . . down. You haven't got long now. Hurry!

A very loud engaged tone is heard, Nicola slams the phone down, then immediately starts again

Probably hundreds of people trying—everybody. You won't get to speak to *him* again.

Nicola Sssh!

The very loud engaged tone is heard. Nicola slams down the receiver, then immediately starts again

Susan It's coming round, Nicola.

Nicola dials furiously

You're going to get seen!

Nicola glances up and freezes as the camera passes

It's on you!

Nicola (*staring up*) Go away! (*She finishes dialling*)

Very loud pips are heard

I hate that noise. (*She moves back to the refrigerator, not caring if she is seen or not*)

Susan There you are. I told you.

Leonard's Voice (*suddenly piping up*) What about that, then? What did you think of that. Souper, dooper as they say in Russia. That was only the start, remember, wasn't it?

Nicola It would happen, wouldn't it?

Leonard's Voice Of course I've been asked to repeat it, say it again for *you* that weren't listening. Yes—I mean you. Which is against the rules, and I'll probably be fined an enormous sum of money and get banned for life, but I'm going to, just for you.

Nicola Hear that?

Leonard O.K., love. Here's stage one again. The First Great Stage, and it is, if you could go anywhere in the world you can think of, with one of the Yellow Jacks, which one would you choose, where would you go, and why. (*In a jokey voice*) You're not allowed to choose me, and the *thirty* best ones get through to stage *two*. That's not so difficult, is it, in fact it's the easiest I could make it for you—*isn't it?* And now . . .

Music starts: Leonard cues a record

Susan Now you know, don't you?

Nicola Yes, leave me alone now.

Susan Your postcard's filthy, you know.

Nicola Yes, but I can still write on it, can't I?

Leonard's Voice Are you O.K., then? It's over to you.

The music comes up loud

I'm waiting for you, aren't I?

The music becomes louder still, as the Lights fade to a Black-out

SCENE 3

The Studio

Leonard Brazil is standing by his desk. A record is playing silently. A spool of tape is going round, and we hear Leonard's personal jingle over the speakers: "L.B. . . . L.B. . . . L.B. . . . L.B. . . . L.B. . . . L.B. . . ." He turns the volume up. "L.B. . . . L.B. . . . L.B. . . ."

Mick, a seventeen-year-old youth with a nervous manner, drags in four sacks bulging with postcards. Leonard flicks off the jingle and swings round

Leonard What are you doing with those?

Mick (*nervously*) I—I'm carrying them in here, Mr Brazil.

Leonard Nothing is allowed in here, you know that.

Mick Yes—Mr Brazil.

Leonard (*staring*) What are they?

Mick (*very nervously*) They're bags. I . . .

Leonard Yes?

Mick Replies from the listeners. Rex is finishing sorting them—you see—and they're so many we thought you'd like to see them.

Leonard (*casually*) Did you. (*He puts his hand into one of the bags, and pulls out some postcards*) All these are replies, are they?

Mick You really got them to write in all right, didn't you—Mr Brazil.

Leonard (*with a slight smile*) I had a ridiculous dream about these girls last night, do you know that?

Mick (*nervously*) No—Mr Brazil.

Leonard (*lightly*) I was in a small park. There was a whole line of them coming towards me—about twenty of them, and they said they wanted to give me a present—a new pair of trousers, but could they first have my old ones to burn. They must have my old ones to burn immediately. (*He looks at Mick*)

Mick (*bewildered*) Yes?

Leonard (*turning sharply, businesslike*) Come on, take these all out again—the whole lot at once.

Mick (*struggling to pick them up*) Yes, of course.

Leonard This place is meant to be the nerve centre of the City, isn't it. And you fill it with all this clobber. Go on, we have very little time. (*He brings up the record and goes on the air*)

Rex enters, stops Mick picking up the bags, and they both stand and watch Leonard from the side

No need to fear. I'm here again. And now I've got something to say, folks. (*In a gentle tone*) To all of you, I have a message from our little friends, the PO-Leese. They say a lot of people in this fine city of ours have been taking what doesn't belong to them. In plain full frontal language, STEALING, and our little friends in blue have had to go into schools and shops, and put down the deadly purple dye—so they can catch them, purple-handed. So seriously now, I know times are hard, but keep out of trouble—you will, won't you? (*His tone changes*) Very soon on this Wonderful Wednesday we have Big John with all the News In The World—till then, let's explode with a raving cataclysmic ditty from nineteen sixty-eight, the Rolling Stones and "I Can't Get No Satisfaction".

There is an explosion of sound

Mick leaves silently

Leonard listens to the music for a moment, then sees Rex and cuts the sound suddenly

What you doing?

Rex (*standing, staring*) I was watching you.

Leonard That's not permitted, especially the amount you do. Your ogling is getting on my nerves. Why do you do it?

Rex Because it really interests me, doesn't it. (*He smiles*) Have you heard anything from Capitol? (*Quickly*) Do you think they're listening now and going to—

Leonard (*sharply*) That, Rex, is a forbidden subject, and you know it is. Come on, we have three minutes to go.

Rex (*still standing there*) Yes, Leonard—I wondered if—I just happen to have an item here I thought you might like or perhaps even . . .

Leonard You could have a quick spot and read it yourself? That's what you were going to say, wasn't it? You're pushing, aren't you, lad. I do believe you're beginning to *push*. I've never ever seen somebody begin so early.

Rex I'm not . . . I—(*quickly*)—I'll just read it, shall I? (*He takes out a black notebook*)

Leonard That's the little notebook with all of Rex in it, that you keep hidden in your box.

Rex It's an absurd news item. (*He reads*) "And we've just heard that in a Wall's factory in Luton, a severed leg was found in a vat of raspberry ripple ice-cream. The authorities are checking to see if they've got a cone big enough for it."

Silence

Leonard Even from somebody like you, that is quite diabolically dreadful. You're a disgrace to this microphone. (*He suddenly looks him straight in the face*) You are!

Rex (*startled*) What do you mean? What's wrong with it? People like

black jokes now—I've some *much* blacker ones, you know. They love them—can't have enough. It's what they really want.

Leonard (*suddenly*) You don't have to tell me what they want, Rex.

Rex No, of course not. (*With genuine admiration; quietly*) I know you know.

Leonard That's better.

Big John enters; a shiny, red-faced man. He carries a file

John Hello, there, everyone. (*Smiling*) Two minutes to go.

Leonard The lad's being pushy.

John Is he? That's no surprise.

Rex (*suddenly nervous*) I'm sorry, I didn't mean . . .

Leonard We've got to go on to Stage Two in two minutes. Go on—get out!

Rex exits

(*He switches on to the air without a break, fading the record*) Hello, sweets—stand by. Very soon now you'll have you know what. Till then, here's . . . (*He plays something very cheap and nasty. As soon as he is faded out he swings round and cuts back like lightning into his talk with Rex, who has gone. Loudly*) And you make one mistake, Rex, and you're fired. (*To John, more quietly*) That boy makes me nervous.

John I didn't know that was possible.

Leonard (*flicking round, staring at John*) You look particularly cheerful today, don't you, John?

John Thank you. I'm in very good form, yes.

Leonard As usual, you've probably got a train disaster and a couple of mass murders there—(*he taps John's file*)—and your cheeks are positively glistening—Bright and Rosy.

John Thank you. (*Smiling*) But I haven't got anything really spectacular now—maybe by teatime something will come in.

Leonard (*with a slight, teasing smile*) Good.

John What's this I've just heard about approaches from the Big Wide World, from the actual Capitol Radio. Are they going to . . .?

Leonard You didn't hear anything of the kind. (*Loudly*) *Nothing* of the KIND!

John (*startled*) I'm sorry, I didn't realize . . .

Leonard No, you don't, John. You see this. (*He picks up a piece of paper*) This piece of paper—that is the competition of the century. (*He holds it up*)

John (*looking at it*) Yes, it's a real cash box week, this week, isn't it? One minute, fifteen seconds to go . . .

Leonard And you know what . . . (*He pauses*) I've done something which I've never done before, John. I've picked out an average girl for this competition. Yes, I picked out her voice. I home in on her each time I go on the air, home in on that voice. And imagine her face. It would be funny if she knew, wouldn't it?

John (*hardly looking up*) Really?

Leonard In fact, each time I pass by the window, I half expect to see her—a small dot standing right down there, staring up towards here, her spectacles flashing—if she wears spectacles. (*He glances at John, not listening*) You're the only one that knows yet, *John*.

John Yes. I've got no tongue-twisters today, luckily. One minute to zero. Peppermint? (*He sucks one himself*)

Leonard If there was an earthquake today or a full-scale revolution those girls wouldn't notice, not a chance. (*Abrasively*) I taught kids that age once, years ago! But they weren't like this. (*He taps John's file*) Got any earthquakes locked in there?

John No, thank goodness. Nothing like that.

Leonard Perhaps you should have.

John (*suddenly looking up*) You must be enjoying all this anyway—it's your greatest week ever, isn't it?

Leonard Oh, I am. I am.

John After all, you've always been wonderful at whipping people up, getting them to TUNE IN. You only have to say the word . . .

Leonard Yes?

John Just have to breathe over the air. They're all waiting for you now.

Leonard (*standing over the controls*) That's right, John. Got your little furry mascot ready, have you? Go on, *hold it up!*

John (*holding up a furry mascot so Leonard can see*) Yes, of course I have. Ten seconds to zero . . .

Leonard You dropped it yesterday in mid-sentence. Hold on to it very tightly, John. (*He flicks on a switch and fades out the music*) That was the very savage sound of . . . (*His tone changes and becomes personal*) We're coming to you very soon now, so don't fret, don't worry. It's three o'clock and here's Big John with all the News In The World.

John starts reading the news, world items of extreme unrest, mingled with local items. As he reads, Leonard moves to the far end of the studio, out of microphone range, and calls out remarks to him, trying to put him off

(*Smiling*) You know, John, I don't seem to be able to believe anything you say today. I'm talking through your news, John. I think your mascot's going to fall. (*He moves back to John*) Perhaps you need a tickle.

Leonard goes to John, who is reading the news unwaveringly, and begins to tickle him under the chin, then under the arms, in the ribs. John shifts in his chair, but keeps reading

(*Sharply, going to his desk*) It's got no life in it.

John (*on the air*) And now back to Leonard, and that competition of the century.

Leonard Our thanks to Big John for reading the news so nicely and so firmly. Stand by, love, any moment. (*Music plays. He fades it down: "Herb Alpert"*)

John Somebody'll hear you one day, Leonard. Always jealous of people

taking away your microphone, aren't you—even for a moment. Always trying to put them off . . .

Leonard Rubbish! Anyway, I never manage to . . . *(Suddenly he becomes really abusive)* Competitions have an effect on me!

Rex enters suddenly and loudly with a trolley completely smothered in objects

Rex Here you are!

Leonard *(facing him)* What are those?

Rex They're your bribes.

Leonard *(sharply)* My what?

Rex Your bribes, Leonard—from the girls.

Leonard *(completely surprised)* They sent all those? Why?

Rex *(scrambling over the trolley)* They're hundreds of them—a watch, nicked from her dad, probably—a “T” shirt with your initials on it, some cheese, some socks with toes, a whole cake with *you* on it, a walking-stick, and lots of photos of themselves.

Leonard *(quietly, staring at the trolley)* All for me . . . ? *(He picks up the photos and stares at them)*

John *(moving over to the huge stack of bribes)* You're doing very well out of this, aren't you? I don't know what you're worrying about. You're in the middle of a glorious week. *(He begins feeling objects and pawing through them)* We've never had a response like this. Could live off this for a month. *(Casually)* I wonder if there's anything there for me. *(He picks up the watch, or the cheese)* I could do with this. *(He pockets it)*

Leonard John! Go and find some more *News*. Something worth listening to, for once.

John exits

(Urgently) We're very late now. *(He glances down at the photos, then throws them on the desk)*

Rex *(looking at the photos)* What were you looking for?

Leonard *(sharply)* Nothing. I wasn't looking for anything. *(With a slight smile)* What am I going to make them do next, then?

Rex *(astonished)* I don't know. *(Excitedly, smiling)* It could be so many things. It's got to be something they can photograph for Saturday's front page.

Leonard Christ! Look at you, grinning all over your face. You're as bad as Johnson and all the rest upstairs—not that they ever are upstairs. Given half the chance, they'd have the kids tunnelling under the motorway, or buying eighty Leicester Sound “T” shirts each, before being allowed to win.

Rex Yes—they will do absolutely anything, those kids. They're desperate just to get into the Studio and meet you, and then the Yellow Jacks and everything as well!! The last concert the Yellow Jacks did here a

girl asked Ross, begged him, to sign her lip. I saw it, and he did and I wondered if she was going to cut that bit off and keep it in a jam-jar, so the signature wouldn't come off.

Leonard Stop that—you're not going to talk like that in here—understand! *I don't like it. (He switches on the music and goes on to the air: the end of Herb Alpert)*

Rex I'm sorry, Leonard.

Leonard *(on the air)* Hello, love. How are you, then? Good. I wish you could see the sight up here. The Studio is brimming with your answers, they're hanging everywhere. Rex is just handing me the postcards—perhaps *your* postcard, enabling you to get through to Stage Two. Hurry, Rex! Had a hard job sorting them, have you, Rex?

Rex *(sharing in a double act)* Yes, Leonard. We've been simply wading through entries.

Leonard Up to your knees, were you?

Rex Up to our stomachs in some places, up to our mouths, Leonard . . .

Leonard You nearly drowned our Rex, love. Pity you didn't send a few more. *(He begins to read some cards briskly)* Diane Williams of thirty Sutton Road, says she'd like to go to Scotland with Peter and climb mountains with him because he's afraid of heights. Quite a sadist, aren't you, Diane. Thank you for that. Pam Lawrence of ten Rosendale Avenue says she'd like to go to London with Ross, because that's what the real prize is. I like that, a real realist, there. Pam will go far, won't she. Linda Perry of eighteen Horseley Road says she'd like to go to the moon with Ross, that's a long way to go, Linda. Because he looks so like an astronaut, and Nicola Davies of thirty-five Pool's Road; rather a grubby postcard, isn't it, Nicola. Says she'd like to go to Kenya with Ken, that's a Nicola-type joke, and go on safari because Ken looks so good in a suntan and so I'm sure, would you, Nicola. You're through *all the way* to Stage Two, Nicola Davies. There's the music for Stage Two now, love, and a list of all those that have qualified. Get your lead pencil ready . . . *(He plays music)*

Rex *(nervously)* What happens if we don't think of something, Leonard?

Leonard What indeed, Rex. *(With a slight smile)* Disaster.

Rex Perhaps some sort of race . . .

Leonard There is of course something staring us in the eyeballs *right at this moment!* Isn't there?

Rex *(staring at the desk)* What?

Leonard It isn't original. It's been used in America several times. *(He picks up the "T" shirt)*

Rex *(excitedly)* What is it?

Leonard And it's rather cheap, not what they're used to.

Rex *(louder)* What is it?

Leonard They might just enjoy it. *Just.*

Rex What is it, Leonard?

Leonard *(swinging round)* And it is—they have to make a portrait dummy of Ross, or any of the others, *Life Size.*

Rex What?

Leonard A model, effigy. A dummy of one of the Jacks, out of old clothes, like a guy, stuffed full and life size. That's the idea, Rex.

Rex That's—that's pretty good, in fact, it's brilliant. (*Loudly*) It is.

Leonard It's not at all. It's not even good, but it'll *just* do.

Rex (*quietly*) It's great.

Leonard (*by the controls*) Christ—listen to that.

Rex What?

Leonard You can almost hear all their small ears pressed against the radio waiting for it. The competition of the century. (*He brings up the theme music really loud*)

Rex You knew the answer all the time, Leonard, didn't you?

Leonard (*on the air*) Rex is coming over with all of Stage Two in his hands.

Rex Here it is, Leonard—all of it. (*He hands him nothing*)

Leonard Thank you, Rex. (*His tone suddenly becomes personal, almost gentle*) O.K., *luv*, what we want—what I want you to do, love, is very simple and a little special, for the next stage of our remarkable obstacle race to get to the Yellow Jacks and London Town, where everything is still possible. I want you, love, to make in the next two days, a model of one of the boys—(*laughing*)—one of the great Yellow Jacks, a model of Ross or Dave, or Ken, or Pete. "What do you mean, Leonard, make a model, a dummy, how on earth do I do that, Leonard—that's impossible!" Well, love, what you do, is, you get some old clothes, and paper, and stuff it up him, right up and copy his face from a picture, and use some wool for his hair, or go to a gentleman's hairdresser, or even a ladies'. (*In a gentle voice*) Please could I borrow your shavings? No, seriously, love, don't spend any money on it, and get it to me at Leicester Sound by five o'clock Friday. Do you understand now, O.K., love? And the two who make the most wondrous accurate models will become the finalists, and come up here. That can't be bad. It's not. So do your best, love, and hurry, won't you. Good hunting.

A blast of music

(*Very abrasively*) *I don't like competitions! (He brings the music up again)*

The Lights fade to a Black-out

SCENE 4

Nicola's room

A radio is playing in the background. Nicola is pulling out a pile of magazines methodically from under the bed and side of the room, and a pile of cans, packets, etc., that she has taken from the Supermarket

Susan I don't want to stick around. Don't know why I should.

Nicola You said you would. (*She continues to pull stuff out into the room*)

Susan What you doing with all of this?

Nicola There's not much time.

Susan (*suddenly grabbing a poster from the pile*) Hey! You've got one of these. Who's it of? (*She unfolds an enormous pin-up poster of a star, holds it up and looks at it*) Oh, him! You haven't done it, have you? Don't you know the point? (*She lays it out on the floor*) Got it at shop, did you, off the market—they're from America. Don't you know what to do? You have to wet it. (*She lies down on top of it*) Wet it with anything you've got and rub it all over. Rub.

Nicola (*moving over*) Yes. (*She rubs hastily, too*) We haven't got time, really.

Susan And the top should sort of peel away. (*She is still lying on top of the poster*) And you see all the hair underneath, and you see everything. (*She rubs her hand on the poster*) It's not really his body, it's somebody else's and they cut his head off. (*Loudly*) Come on! (*She rubs frantically*) It's too old! (*Loudly*) It doesn't work! (*She rubs again; loudly*) Why not. I wanted it to.

Nicola Probably never did work. Come on—I've lost time, now. Hurry!

Susan (*lying on the poster*) I took one of these to sex education class, she was new then, Miss Booth, thought she'd be interested. She hit me across the face! (*Indicating*) Right there! Girls shouldn't have such things and all that. Why not? I saw her flushing it down the toilet, she talked like a dalek, anyway. I couldn't hear any of her sex education lessons, the traffic noise right by me. (*Loudly*) I never heard anything at school.

Leonard's Voice (*on the radio*) That was . . . How are you doing, then? Yes, I mean *you*, whoever you are, wherever you are, you with the sticking-out ears. That's right, keep it up, you haven't got long.

Nicola Yes. (*She speeds up collecting all the objects together and gets ready for the stuffing*)

Susan He's hurrying you now.

Leonard's Voice (*continuing straight on, on the soundtrack*) Rex's bulky shape is beside me here in the Studio as always. (*With sudden mock surprise*) Hey, he's moving away now, don't leave me, Rex, don't leave me. He's going. How can you do this to me, he's left me. I'm alone and afraid. Raindrops might start falling on my head—(*his tone changes*)—and yours, too.

Music begins—"Raindrops"

Nicola You know, I think he liked me a bit or something when I rang in. He spoke to me longer than the others, different.

Susan He only spoke to you longer than the others because he was waiting for the news to come up.

Nicola (*to herself*) Ready now! (*Worried*) I'm running out of time, come on! (*She suddenly pulls out the dummy from under the bed, all in pieces, the huge torso, the decapitated head, the hands, the feet, the arms, etc.*)

Susan Look at it! You'll never finish that in time.

Nicola Got to. Got to fill it up, make it stiff.

Susan (*picking up some Supermarket objects*) What are these?

Nicola Things I've taken from the shop, things I've nicked. They're all going inside. No use to me. I'm sending them all in this.

Susan (*picking up a pot of paint*) How did you get all this paint?

Nicola Saved lunch money.

Susan (*startled*) What you been eating?

Nicola Haven't. Don't need to. I can go for days without eating if I have to. And I am.

Susan You'll starve to death, you will. (*Suddenly she picks up the head and a foot*) Is this Ross?

Nicola Yes. He's the easiest to do, his face is very simple.

Susan (*suddenly loudly*) He's very big.

Nicola Yes, I made him big, so he'd notice it.

Susan We can do anything we want with him, now all his bits are here.

We can stand on his face. (*She stands on it*) Can't we? Pull his tongue out. (*She picks up the torso*) Pull his knickers off . . .

Nicola (*loudly*) Don't do that, Susan. You'll tear him—it'll tear.

Susan Yes! (*Firmly*) You're really stupid, Nicola. Do you know that even if you get this ready and Leonard just happens to pick it out, which he won't, even then you haven't really started, he can go on forever with you if he likes, *on* and *on* and *on*.

Nicola (*determined*) I know that . . .

Leonard's Voice (*suddenly piping up*) Hello, how are you doing? Yes, I mean *you*, yes you, with the popping eyes and sticking-out ears.

They both suddenly stop and stare at the radio. As Leonard's voice continues, Susan picks it up and turns the volume down. Then she sings loudly above it

I hope I'm not interrupting *you*, am I, because a lady wrote to me to say she had the radio on when, lucky lady, she was giving birth to a baby son, Dominic, and the first sound Baby Dominic heard on this earth was yours truly's ugly, grating tones pouring out. I'm getting worse and worse, aren't I? Stop polluting British steam radio. Great belches of grey filth pouring out of my mouth, straight at you down there. In a moment I'll be talking to John Robinson, who's just come out of the army and Northern Ireland and all the old troubles, and he's come home to talk to me.

Susan Hear him. (*She holds the radio up with Leonard's voice pouring out of it*) That's the nearest you'll get to Leonard—this! Not any nearer than that! (*She puts down the radio next to Nicola, having turned the volume up*)

Leonard's Voice And now *you*, *you* down there who have entered the competition of the century, time is running out. Here's some music for you.

Music begins

Nicola Yes! Quick. (*She quickens the stuffing of the dummy with the Supermarket objects*) You're going to help now.

Susan No, I don't think I want to, now.

Nicola (*swinging round*) *You've got to!*

Pause

Susan (*loudly*) Why?

Nicola Because I'm going to get there. Into the building and see him.

Susan (*quietly*) You won't . . .

Nicola Come on, there's no time at all now. Paint that yellow, quick!

Susan If I have to . . . (*She takes a big brush and splashes huge dollops of yellow paint on the body*)

Nicola stuffs the legs

Your room's too small, it'll stink of paint for ever more. You won't be able to live in here any more.

Nicola Good. I want that. Hurry—paint.

Susan (*sploshing bright yellow paint on the torso: her paint strokes getting faster and faster*) When they played at Coventry, Ken had a blue belt, the others had yellow as usual. I don't like this colour, sort of sick-looking. They ought to change it. You know I had to get back after the concert—it was twelve or after in the night.

Nicola (*to herself*) Come on . . . (*She stuffs the legs and head*)

Susan I didn't think I could get back. It was raining really hard, straight in your eyes. I got on to the road, started hitching—all these huge lorries went past, enormous. Looked much bigger in the dark. And you know, they all had their radios on. Yes! I could hear. It was Leonard Brazil. It was. He was coming from every single lorry. But none of them stopped.

Nicola (*quietly, determinedly*) Come on, quick!

Susan (*painting fast*) So I stood straight in front of one of them and waved, and he *had* to stop, or flatten me, and he stopped all right, and he opened his door, all smiling and everything, and I got in, and you know what, the seat next to him was still warm, it was all covered with chocolate. Somebody had been sitting there just a moment before—a girl.

Nicola (*to herself*) Faster.

Susan I knew he was going to try to kill me then, yes, on the motorway, in the dark, on the side, where nobody could see, you know, get me on my back and jam a stick of lipstick down my throat, and I'd hear Leonard Brazil on the radio, and suddenly it'd stop, and I'd be dead, and they'd find me in pieces like this—(*indicating the dummy as she paints*)—in a bundle, in the mud, been assaulted, flies in my eyes, and all that. And pictures of me on the telly, me being lifted up and wrapped in a sheet, you know. (*Lightly*) But nothing did happen. Nothing at all. (*Pause. She stops painting. Lightly*) I want it to.

Nicola (*suddenly very loudly*) Oh! Look, Susan, it's still not nearly full. (*She stares at the legs and then into the torso*) We've got to fill it up now. (*Very agitatedly*) Now!

Susan Put this in, anyway. (*She crumples the huge centrefold picture of the pop-star. As she does so, they both suddenly look up with a jolt and stare at all the posters and ornaments in the room*)

The same idea hits them both

Nicola (loudly) Yes! Come on. Everything . . .

They suddenly tear down all the posters and ornaments—everything in the room and throw it into the stomach of Ross. The action begins swiftly and ends furiously. It lasts under a minute

(*As they do it*) Come on down.

Susan (joyfully) Yes. It's coming down. What's that poster? Come on.

(*She rips a poster down*)

Nicola takes everything off the chest of drawers, all her furry ornaments—everything

Nicola He's got to be full.

Susan (loudly) Yes.

Susan's pent-up violence comes out in her attack on the posters, whereas Nicola is more methodical, but also very fast. The music on the radio ends

Leonard's Voice (*his tone is very personal*) Hello, there, how's it going, then . . . ? Yes, you. You down there. Keeping at it, are you, love, that's good. (*He brings up music, or a commercial*)

Nicola (*throwing in objects*) Go on—in—in—in . . .

Susan Come on down. (*She pulls the lightshade off and throws it in*)

They are both exhausted. The outburst ends, the torso is full. They both stare at it

Nicola It's finished.

The Lights fade to a Black-out

SCENE 5

The Studio. Night

A phone-in programme is in progress, the voice of the caller, Jim, about forty, is heard on the telephone, coming out of the monitor speakers. The telephone receiver is off, lying on the desk. Leonard is standing some distance away, at the back of the Studio, smiling and listening. Rex is in his box

Jim (*his voice is heard in the Black-out first*) . . . I mean, don't you agree with me, Leonard, about these vandals, hooligans, whatever you like to call them, I mean, everywhere I go I actually *see* things being smashed up, I see them doing it, and writing things up. I mean, I saw some young thugs—I don't want to use abusive terms, especially on your programme, Leonard, and I certainly won't do so, but these men—they weren't just boys, they were grown men, and they were standing round this flower bed of red tulips, and they pulled up every single one, they were pulling them out, by the roots, tearing them up and treading them into the ground—the whole lot——

Leonard flicks the switch to cut off the caller in mid-sentence. Silence. He smiles

Leonard Why do they ring me. Explain me that. Why don't they phone each other? *(He flicks the switch on again)*

Jim —and even more. And apart from that, I don't know if you find this, I mean as an important person, and obviously on the air—but I mean—these filthy phone calls—filthy phone calls—people ringing me up—

Leonard *(turning the volume down and speaking to Rex through the intercom)* Is he going to start being rude—I think he is. Thank God I only have to do this twice a week . . . *(He turns the volume up)*

Jim —you see what I mean, I don't want to mention anything filthy over the air of course—

Leonard holds his finger ready to press the cut-off button

—and I'm not going to, but I'm always getting wrong phone calls, people talking to me about things I don't know *anything about!* You know the feeling of course, being a famous person, Leonard—somebody rang me the other day, started talking about my horse, how he wanted to buy it, get hold of it. I mean, I don't have a horse. Is that clear, Len? I just don't have one. *(Loudly)* What would I do with a bleeding horse? *(Suddenly very loudly)* What would I do with a fucking horse in this fuck—

Leonard cuts him off

Leonard *(smiling, very calm)* I'd like to say goodnight now, Jim, thanks for that call, it was a Jim-type call. The time is nine twenty-three on the L.B. night show on this Competition Friday in Competition Week, so hold on tight. It's raining up here, raining black buckets just outside, so let's take a dip into the soft inside of Nostalgia Corner, go back to the golden days of nineteen sixty-seven when London was alive and wriggling and bursting at the seams, you remember, don't you? Or perhaps you don't. We were listening to this—some of us were . . . *(He puts on a record—"See Emily Play" by the Pink Floyd—turning the volume down after a few bars. He takes off his headphones)* That's enough. I don't want any more calls—you've already put through too many. I hate the smell of the new paint in the corridors.

Rex enters from the box

(Loudly) And also I've decided I'm not going to do my spot tonight.

Rex What do you mean? Why not?

Leonard I have reasons. Got to cope with Stage Three. *(Loudly)* I'm not doing it. That's final!

Rex Some people tune in specially for it. I mean you *must* do it this week of all weeks—we've never had so many calls, so many entries—perhaps you should take a few more calls—if you would—it would . . .

Leonard I should, should I? No. *(He gets up and starts searching for something)* I've never liked them—has anyone ever shown you this?

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