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ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

by Alan Ayckbourn

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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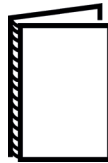


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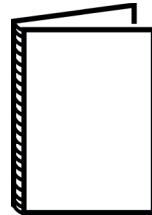
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Alan Ayckbourn has worked in theatre as a playwright and director for over fifty years, rarely if ever tempted by television or film, which perhaps explains why he continues to be so prolific. To date he has written more than eighty plays, many one act plays and a large amount of work for the younger audience. His work has been translated into over thirty-five languages, is performed on stage and television throughout the world and has won countless awards.

Major successes include: *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, and *The Norman Conquests*. In recent years, there have been revivals of *Season's Greetings* and *A Small Family Business* at the National Theatre; in the West End *Absent Friends*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *Relatively Speaking* and *How the Other Half Loves*; and at Chichester Festival Theatre, major revivals of *Way Upstream* in 2015, and *The Norman Conquests* in 2017.

Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph theatre from 1972–2009, where almost all his plays have been first staged, he continues to direct his latest new work there. He has been inducted into American Theater's Hall of Fame, received the 2010 Critics' Circle Award for Services to the Arts and became the first British playwright to receive both Olivier and Tony Special Lifetime Achievement Awards. He was knighted in 1997 for services to the theatre.

Image credit: Andrew Higgins.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play was originally written for an adult cast of eleven actors (six men and five women) plus two non-speaking girls, aged 7-12.

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ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

The World premiere took place on 6 August 2013 at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough

With the following cast:

EZ Elizabeth Boag
 QUENTIN Terence Booth
 CHARLES / JESS / HUSBAND John Branwell
 ESME / GIRLFRIEND / DAISY Rachel Caffrey
 MOTHER / HILARY / PAULINE Sarah Parks
 TOURIST / DEBS / DAISY Emily Pithon
 SHERWIN / NORMAN / SON / CERASTES Ben Porter
 STUDENT / FREDDIE / SUSPECT / YOUNG BARRY James Powell
 CHAPLIN / CLIVE / WISBY / ROB Richard Stacey
 NADINE / LILY / WIFE Sarah Stanley
 BARRY Kim Wall

Director: Alan Ayckbourn
 Design: Jan Bee Brown
 Lighting: Tigger Johnson
 Fight Director: Kate Waters

The New York premiere took place on 29 May 2014 at 59E59 Theaters

With the following cast:

EZ Elizabeth Boag
 QUENTIN Terence Booth / Bill Champion*

* Terence Booth initially played the role of Quentin during the tour, but due to ill-health he had to step down from the role. His part was initially taken by the understudy Peter Halpin before Bill Champion took over for the remainder of the tour and the season at the 59E59 Theaters, New York.

CHARLES / JESS / HUSBAND	Russell Dixon
ESME / GIRLFRIEND / DAISY	Rachel Caffrey
MOTHER / HILARY / PAULINE	Sarah Parks
TOURIST / DEBS / DAISY	Emily Pithon
SHERWIN / NORMAN / SON / CERASTES.	Ben Porter
STUDENT / FREDDIE / SUSPECT / YOUNG BARRY.	James Powell
CHAPLIN / CLIVE / WISBY / ROB	Richard Stacey
NADINE / LILY / WIFE	Sarah Stanley
BARRY	Kim Wall
Understudy (2014 tour)	Peter Halpin
Understudy (2014 tour)	Lucy McCabe

CHARACTERS

EZ (*formerly* ESMÉ) SWAIN – a soldier, 23

BARRY HAWKINS – a traffic warden, formerly a builder, 50s

CAPTAIN QUENTIN SEXTON (*acting Major*) – O/C SSDO Unit,
aged late 40s

The SSDO Unit

SHANE HUGHES, playing the HUSBAND

CAZ WALTERS, playing the WIFE

DON SIMKINS, playing the SON

RO MERRIVALE, playing the MOTHER

DAVID SCULLION, playing the STUDENT

RITA GILROY, playing the GIRLFRIEND

GRETA TEASDALE, playing the TOURIST

TOMMY WISBY, playing the WORKMAN

The SUSPECT

CERASTES

Ez's Past

NADINE SWAIN – her mother, between 27–37

ESMÉ SWAIN – between 10–12

ESMÉ SWAIN – between 15–18

FREDDIE SWAIN – her father, 28

SHERWIN COOPER – between 32–35

ROB STAGMORE – Esmé's boyfriend between 23–24

CHARLES STAGMORE – Rob's father, 60s

HILARY STAGMORE – Rob's mother, 60s

AN ARMY CHAPLAIN

Barry's Past

YOUNG BARRY – between 27–43

DEBS (DEBRA) (NEÉ FOX) – his wife, between 20–35

YOUNG DAISY – his daughter, 7

DAISY HAWKINS – 14

DAISY HAWKINS – 26

JESS FOX – his father-in-law, 55

PAULINE FOX – his mother-in-law, between 50–65

CLIVE WARD – his childhood friend, 30

LILY GILL – Fox’s accountant, between 20–41

NORMAN SCULLION – an auditor, 50s

SETTING

A remote area of a London Mainline Rail Terminus and various half-remembered locations.

TIME

Currently, the present and occasionally the past of Ez’s and Barry’s memories.

STUDENT You're supposed to be my girlfriend.

GIRL Well, I'm not your sodding girlfriend, don't keep doing that! It's disgusting.

STUDENT (*as they go*) No, but I'm meant to be your boyfriend, aren't I?

GIRL I'm not that desperate...

They go off, presumably to rejoin the rest of their group offstage.

As this sequence finishes: -

Sequence 4 starts. A foreign female TOURIST appears, carrying a heavy rucksack and holding a map. She meets the WORKMAN coming from the opposite direction, evidently a painter and decorator judging from his splattered overalls.

TOURIST (*speaking with a slightly dodgy accent*) Excuse, please... excuse...

WORKMAN Yes, darling, what can I do for you?

TOURIST Hig. Hole. Born. Hig Hole Born.

WORKMAN Hig Hole Born? No. Don't you speak any English, darling?

TOURIST No. See. (*Indicating the map*) Hig Hole Born. There. See.

WORKMAN Oh, you mean High Holborn. That's pronounced High Holborn, darling.

TOURIST High Ho Born.

QUENTIN Keep working on that accent, Teasdale! I'm not yet convinced by it!

TOURIST Sir!

QUENTIN Carry on... (*To himself, despairingly*) God!

WORKMAN You're quite a walk from there, darling. Your best bet is go out the main door there and get yourself a taxi.

TOURIST (*as they move to the door*) Taxi? No, I walk, I walk... I walk to High Ho. Need hoss. Tell.

WORKMAN (*as they exit*) Oh, you mean a hostel. Hostel.

TOURIST (*as they exit*) Hostel. Hi Ho Hostel.

They go off. As this and other offstage sequences complete more or less together, QUENTIN impatiently blows his whistle and stops his watch.

QUENTIN (*angrily*) Alright, alright, stop stop stop! Hold it right there! That was a dire, disgraceful, disgusting shambles! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. It's like we never rehearsed it at all. You lot need to get your acts together! We've got – (*Consulting his watch*) – just over forty minutes till the real thing. Football supporters, over there! Yes, you four lurking behind the notice board! I can see you. Have you been drinking? You hear me? Have you been drinking this morning?

CHORUS No, sir.

QUENTIN You sure? Because if I find you've been drinking...

VOICE (*offstage*) We was just acting, sir!

CHORUS (*off, triumphantly*) Yeah! Yeah! Charley Skinner, Oscar winner! Hey! Hey! Hey –!

QUENTIN That's enough of that! You have been warned, you four! Take this seriously or else. Well, we'll just have to keep on doing it, won't we, till we get it right? Back to your start positions, everyone, please!

An offstage groan from the football supporters.

Quickly now! Quickly! The clock is ticking! The clock is ticking, people! And ready? Here we go again!

QUENTIN *blows his whistle and restarts his watch once more, taking up his own position, monitoring things,*

and occasionally cueing the various sequences to start. The footballers start up their song again.

The sequences re-start as before. Clearly the dialogue has been largely improvised and starts to vary slightly from the first take.

Sequence 1. The young couple enter as before, HUSBAND with the stroller, WIFE with the baby.

WIFE Where you been?

HUSBAND Had to move the car. They wanted me to move the car. *(As he starts unfolding the stroller)* You got her to sleep?

WIFE Just this minute. Here, hold her, I'll do that. Try not to wake her up again.

She hands him the baby while she sees to the stroller. The HUSBAND now holds the baby as if handling unstable nitro-glycerine.

QUENTIN *(seeing this)* Good! Good! That's a lot better, young couple with baby. That's better, Hughes.

HUSBAND Thank you, sir...

He hands the baby back to the WIFE who puts the baby in the chair rather less gently than before. She is clearly getting bored with the repetition and wedges the bedclothes round the tot. They move off together.

WIFE *(as they go, muttering)* How many more times are we going to do this...

QUENTIN Until you get it right, Walters! Till you get it totally spot on...

They then walk off together. As they do so: -

Sequence 2 starts the same with the SON standing with his flowers, though when the old MOTHER enters she is now having trouble shifting her suitcase at all.

SON (*seeing her*) Mother!

MOTHER (*struggling, muttering*) Fucking hell-fire!

SON (*presenting her with the flowers*) Here! Welcome to London, Mum.

MOTHER What you put in here?

SON (*cheerfully*) Breeze blocks.

MOTHER Breeze blocks?

SON (*presenting her with the flowers*) Here you are, Mum, welcome to London.

MOTHER (*hitting him over the head with the flowers*) Stupid pillock!

SON Ow!

QUENTIN That'll do, Merrivale! That's quite enough of that! That's your final warning, you two!

MOTHER Sir!

SON Sir! (*Pulling the case with difficulty*) Oh, Mum, you haven't lugged this all the way from Milton Keynes, have you?

MOTHER Fucking feels like it...

They both exit as before, the SON lugging off the impossibly heavy case. As this ends: -

Sequence 3. The GIRLFRIEND with three paper mugs of hot coffee slowly enters as before. Halfway across she is again met by her STUDENT boyfriend who takes one of the cups from her. As she turns away the STUDENT touches her bottom. The GIRL jumps and spills some of the coffee down her.

GIRL Oh, shit! David!

The STUDENT laughs. The GIRL turns angrily and throws the contents of one of the mugs down the front of the STUDENT's trousers.

STUDENT (*reacting*) OW!

QUENTIN Stop that!

STUDENT Ow! That was hot, you know.

QUENTIN (*dangerously*) One more sound...

STUDENT That was hot, sir.

GIRL Cooled you down, anyway...

STUDENT I'm scalded.

The GIRL laughs and goes off.

The STUDENT follows her, unfastening the front of his jeans.

(*as he goes*) Look at this, she's scalded me.

As this last finishes: Sequence 4. The young foreign female TOURIST carrying a heavy rucksack and holding a map appears, as before. She meets the same WORKMAN coming from the opposite direction.

TOURIST (*in an even dodgier accent*) Excuse, please...
excuse...

WORKMAN Yes, darling, what can I do for you?

TOURIST Totty. Cot. Rod. Totty Cot Rod, please.

WORKMAN Sorry, darling, Totty?

TOURIST Totty Cot Rod.

WORKMAN Totty Cot Rod? No. No, never heard of it darling.
Sure you're in the right country?

TOURIST No. See. (*Indicating the map*) Totty Cot Rod. There.
See.

WORKMAN Oh, Tottenham Court Road. That's pronounced
Tottenham Court Road, darling.

TOURIST Totty Court Rod.

QUENTIN (*interrupting*) Just a minute! Teasdale, what the hell sort of accent is that?

TOURIST Norwegian, sir.

QUENTIN Norwegian? Have you ever been to Norway?

TOURIST No, sir.

QUENTIN Well, neither's that woman from the sound of it. The closest she's ever been to Norway is Botswana...

TOURIST I'll try that, then, sir, shall I? Botswanian.

She and the WORKMAN go off.

QUENTIN Stop! Stop! That was no better. In fact in some cases it was actually worse. We're against the clock, people, the clock is against us. (*To someone off*) ...Two clergymen over there! You're supposed to be in a hurry...you both look half asleep...get a move on... Carer with man in wheel chair, for God's sake, slow down! It's not a race track, woman, what the hell were you playing at?

VOICE (*offstage*) Running to catch a train, sir!

QUENTIN (*grimly*) Right. We're going to have to go once more...

A chorus of protest from off.

Alright, starting positions again, everyone! On my whistle! Ready?

QUENTIN *has taken up his start position and is poised with watch and whistle ready to restart the proceedings once again, when EZ wanders on. She is in her early twenties dressed in a plain dark tracksuit and carrying a rucksack. She appears drawn, tired and rather tense, as if she hasn't slept much of late, altogether low key after the colourful figures that have preceded her.*

(*seeing EZ*) Just a minute! Hold it! You! Who are you? What are you doing here?

EZ (*flat*) I was told to report here.

QUENTIN This is a restricted area. You've no business here.
This is off limits to civilians. (*Calling*) Wisby!

EZ (*not fazed by this*) I'm not a civilian. I've been told to report here.

QUENTIN (*calling*) Wisby!

The WORKMAN (WISBY) enters.

WISBY Sir?

QUENTIN Who is this woman? Did you let her through?

WISBY She arrived a few minutes ago, sir. She was standing watching.

QUENTIN Standing watching? This is a top secret operation, man. She had no business watching.

WISBY Thought you knew about her, sir.

QUENTIN She has no business being here. What is she doing here? (*To EZ*) What are you doing here?

EZ, who has been standing impassively, now holds out a piece of paper.

What's that? What have you got there? (*Taking the paper from her*) What's this?

He briefly scans the document. The others wait.

(slightly mollified) I see. I see. I've been told nothing about this. I should have been informed about this. Who is this other person? Civilian witness it says? What civilian witness?

EZ (*deadpan*) I'm afraid that's top secret information.

WISBY *smirks secretly.*

QUENTIN (*suspiciously*) I'm going to check this out. I'm going to have it verified. For all I know, you could have forged it. Wait there. Wisby, keep an eye on this woman. Don't

let her out of your sight. (*As he sets off, yelling*) Alright, everybody, as you were, stand down! Five minutes! While I deal with this.

QUENTIN goes off, clutching the document. **EZ** and **WISBY** watch him go.

WISBY Wanker! (*Slight pause*) No. He's alright. Known worse. (*Sitting on a bench*) Got a ciggie on you, darlin', have you?

EZ shakes her head. She remains standing.

What you doing here, then, middle of this circus?

Silence. EZ does not respond.

Ah. Top secret, is it?

EZ does not reply. She appears to be in a world of her own, barely listening to him. **WISBY** seems untroubled by her silence.

I tell you, don't get mixed up in this unit, darlin'. SSDO. Strategic Simulated Distractational Operations. I volunteered, didn't I? I didn't reckon on running round in circles all day long, play acting, did I...?

His voice fades away as the lights and background sounds change slightly. WISBY's lips move silently for a second or so longer. Then he freezes, indicating that these memory sections, whatever length they are, in real time occupy only a brief second. This convention is observed throughout the play.

It is 2000. A different place as we share one of EZ's memories.

NADINE, aged twenty seven, appears holding ten-year-old **LITTLE ESMÉ**'s hand. A distant triumphal military band is heard. **NADINE** encourages her young daughter to run and greet someone we cannot see.

NADINE There's Daddy, Esmé, see. Can you see Daddy, Esmé? Go on, Esmé, say hallo to Daddy. Give Daddy a big hug, Esmé! Run to Daddy, now!

Propelled by her MOTHER, LITTLE ESMÉ runs forward, arms outstretched to embrace her father. As she runs off, NADINE steps back into the shadows and things return to normal. EZ's fleeting memory has passed. She is smiling to herself rather sadly. EZ passes a hand in front of her eyes.

WISBY *(his voice fading back in again)* ...I mean who does he think he is, Shakespeare?

Silence.

Have you read it, then? Shakespeare?

EZ *(without looking at him)* Yes.

WISBY Oh. Intellectual, are you? *(Pause)* You sure you ain't got a smoke on you, darlin'? I'm gasping here. *(Slight pause)* Fuck!

Another silence.

QUENTIN *returns, holding a mobile phone, still clutching EZ's documentation.*

WISBY *rises.*

QUENTIN Alright, Wisby. I'll take over from here.

WISBY Right sir. *(To EZ, without irony, as he goes)* Nice to have chatted with you, Miss.

WISBY *goes. QUENTIN waits till he's out of earshot.*

QUENTIN *(waving the document)* Alright. I've had this thoroughly checked out and it has been officially ratified. But I'd like it known that I was never informed and I've said to them that your presence here, plus a civilian, is in my view liable to jeopardise this entire operation. I've made

that clear. Just keep well away from my people, that's all, well away from them, please.

EZ Certainly will.

QUENTIN gives her another suspicious look, unable to discern her attitude. EZ remains impassive.

QUENTIN Right, Swain, we haven't got a lot of time. I've been asked to bring you up to speed on this. According to information received, our target, codename Cerastes, parked his hire car at Harrogate station and boarded the 0919 hours, calling at intermediate stations, arriving at Leeds at 0956 hours. There, Cerastes was observed catching the 1015 calling at Wakefield Westgate...

His voice fades away, his lips move for a moment or so, then he freezes. The lights and background sounds have changed as before. We revisit EZ's earlier memory in almost exact detail. It is 2000. Band music as before. NADINE appears holding LITTLE ESMÉ's hand.

NADINE There's Daddy, Esmé, see. Can you see Daddy, Esmé? Go on, Esmé, say hallo to Daddy. Give Daddy a big hug, Esmé! Run to Daddy, now!

Propelled by her MOTHER, LITTLE ESMÉ runs forward, arms outstretched. This time her father, FREDDIE aged 28, appears, good-looking and dressed as though returning from a tour of duty. Arms outstretched, he swings his daughter through the air. NADINE also runs forward and kisses her HUSBAND passionately and tearfully. The three of them move off clinging to each other, a happy family re-united. As they leave, things return to normal and EZ's fleeting memory has passed. She smiles to herself rather sadly.

QUENTIN *(his voice returning)* ...Doncaster, Grantham, Stevenage – are you listening to this at all, Swain? –

EZ rubs her eyes again.

(*glaring*) – and finally arriving here at 1228 hours. An overall journey time of 3 hours and 9 minutes. Cerastes is apparently still aboard, due to arrive here in just under 40 minutes. Once he steps off that train, my people here will be ready for him, primed and ready to swoop. Once they're mixed in with the hundreds of other people legitimately disembarking from the train, my chaps will be virtually invisible, just another 25 innocent travellers going about their business. Mingling with the throng...

EZ What's to stop him getting off on the way?

QUENTIN Just let him try. We have all intermediate stations covered, with a particularly impenetrable ring of steel round Stevenage.

EZ And you know who you're looking for?

QUENTIN Male, medium height, aged between 25 and 45 wearing a distinctive red and white anorak. That's enough to proceed with.

EZ Unless he takes it off and ditches it. If he knows you're following him, that's the first thing he'll do...

QUENTIN He doesn't know. I can assure you, this operation has been kept tightly under wraps.

EZ Maybe he's chosen to wear a distinctive red and white anorak for that reason? So he'd stand out? Helps him to disappear later.

QUENTIN He has absolutely no idea we're on to him.

EZ (*deadpan*) On the other hand, what if a hundred other blokes get off the train all wearing distinctive red and white anoraks, then?

QUENTIN Oh, don't be absurd –

EZ You never know, maybe they're all the rage in Leeds at the moment, distinctive red and white anoraks –

QUENTIN That will do, Swain –

EZ Maybe they're the latest Yorkshire fashion statement. Eh, lad, I must just go up London in me distinctive red and white anorak, by hecky thump –

QUENTIN (*low and angry*) Listen, I don't care for your attitude, Swain, I can't say I care for it at all. It's coming over as extremely negative and defeatist. I won't countenance that sort of talk, do you hear? Not within earshot of my unit.

EZ Fine by me, mate.

QUENTIN And less of that, Swain. Less of the 'mate', if you don't mind. I note that I do outrank you and I'd be obliged if you'd observe the usual niceties, even within the confines of this covert operation.

EZ I'm so sorry, sir. I didn't realise. I mistook you for a chauffeur.

QUENTIN *glares at her.*

QUENTIN Your witness is here merely to provide additional identification. Belt and braces. When he arrives. Where is he? Why isn't he here, anyway?

EZ He's on his way, sir. He landed ten minutes ago.

QUENTIN Landed? Where?

EZ Battersea.

QUENTIN Battersea?

EZ Heliport. They're currently driving him over from there.

QUENTIN Flying him all the way down from Yorkshire? They must reckon he's worth it. I take it he's worth it, is he?

EZ As worth it as a traffic warden ever gets.

QUENTIN A what?

EZ He apparently tried to write the target a parking ticket.

QUENTIN Oh, dear God. Well as soon as he arrives I'll have him brought over. We'll need to keep a close eye on him.

(*As he goes*) A Yorkshire traffic warden, that's all we need!
Wait there, Swain, don't move!

EZ Sir!

QUENTIN *hurries off. EZ gives his back a rather sarcastic salute. She droops slightly. She is clearly very tired. She sits for the first time on the bench and plunges her head in her hands, massaging her eyes. She stares round the station.*

The lights and sound change.

2002. It is EZ's recollection of a 29 year old NADINE in a patch of sunlight at a military airport with sounds of planes and birdsong faintly heard. She is again accompanied by LITTLE ESMÉ, this time twelve-years-old. Both are dressed sombrely for the ceremonial return of Freddie's body. Solemn music is heard distantly.

An ARMY CHAPLAIN approaches them and exchanges quiet words with them both. Whatever he says proves too much for LITTLE ESMÉ who walks stiffly away from them, shaking her head and struggling to control her tears.

NADINE (*calling after her*) Esmé! Esmé, darling... Don't just walk away... Esmé...!

LITTLE ESMÉ goes off. NADINE and the CHAPLAIN step back into the shadows and the memory ceases abruptly as QUENTIN returns.

QUENTIN I've just been glancing over your record, Swain. And I have to say, it makes very sorry reading. Very sorry reading, indeed.

EZ (*muttering*) I thought it was supposed to be confidential.

QUENTIN (*sharply*) What? What did you say?

EZ I thought my record was supposed to be confidential. Sir.

QUENTIN Listen, if I have someone attached to my unit, I need to know their history. Their background. Where they're coming from. I want assurances that they're not going to put the rest of my chaps at risk. Now as far as I can judge, your file comes with a capital T on the front cover.

EZ Trouble?

QUENTIN No, not trouble, Swain, though no doubt there's plenty of that in there too, judging from your attitude. No, the T stands for Tragic. What the hell went wrong, woman? Head of your class, fast track promotion, every prospect of going straight to the top. A proud family tradition. Your father, Freddie Swain, he was a legend in his –

EZ Leave my father out of it, if you don't mind...sir.

QUENTIN Yes, I'd think he'd prefer to be left out of it, too. His daughter drinking, brawling, assaulting her fellow officers...

EZ Is that how they described it?

QUENTIN You put the poor woman in hospital, Swain. You broke her jaw. She's still on sick leave. If your father knew about this he'd die of... (*Realising what he is saying*) ...he'd have... I'm sorry...

EZ Die of shame.

QUENTIN I'm sorry. That was thoughtless.

EZ Except, of course, he's already dead. Like all the best heroes. (*Flatly*) Hooray!

QUENTIN (*not unkindly, moving closer to her*) My God, Esmé, you're a right muddle, aren't you, girl? What on earth went wrong?

EZ (*resenting the familiarity*) Ez.

QUENTIN What?

EZ Ez. I no longer answer to Esmé. Sir. If you don't mind.

QUENTIN (*coolly, stepping back from her*) Very well. If you prefer to take that attitude, in future I'll refer to you as

Private Swain, formerly Second Lieutenant Swain, and, following your pending court martial in a week or so, probably thereafter private citizen Swain. In my opinion the sooner the army gets shot of you the better. You're a disgrace to your...

EZ ...to my non-uniform. Thank you very much, sir.

WISBY *appears.*

WISBY Civilian's arrived, sir. They just delivered him.

QUENTIN Ah, right. Let him through, Wisby, show him through.

WISBY Sir! Bit of a delay. He threw up in the chopper. All over the co-pilot, apparently.

WISBY *goes off briefly.*

QUENTIN This is your traffic warden, presumably. Can I rely on you to keep an eye on him, Swain? Keep him from under our feet.

EZ That's what I'm here for, sir. CBSD.

QUENTIN What?

EZ Civilian Baby Sitting Detail, sir.

QUENTIN Oh, yes. In the unlikely event of trouble, his personal safety is your sole responsibility, is that clear?

EZ I'll take care of him, don't worry.

WISBY *returns with BARRY. A Yorkshireman in his fifties. He is friendly and eager to be of help, excited by the status of stardom with which he has temporarily been granted.*

WISBY Mr Hawkins, sir.

BARRY *(cheerfully)* How d'y'do?

QUENTIN (*with charm*) Ah, Mr Hawkins, hallo there! Do come and join us. Quentin Sexton, O/C SSDO, D Division, how do you do? Thank you so much for agreeing to help us out.

BARRY My pleasure. Entirely my pleasure, squire.

QUENTIN Thank you, Wisby. Carry on.

WISBY Sir!

BARRY Apologise to the bloke for his helicopter, will you? I left it in a right state.

WISBY *goes off.*

Never want to ride in one of them again. Worse than the big dipper, eh? We started buzzing sheep over Buckinghamshire. That's what did for me. All on taxpayer's money, eh? I don't know. You'll be the man in charge?

QUENTIN (*modestly*) Yes, indeed, I am he.

BARRY What rank are you, then?

QUENTIN Technically, I hold the acting rank of major.

BARRY (*impressed*) Right. Major, eh?

QUENTIN But being an undercover unit, we tend to avoid –

BARRY You'll be my highest so far, then.

QUENTIN Sorry?

BARRY So far today, I've had three sergeants, two corporals, one lance corporal and a couple of privates. I've also, very very briefly, had a Captain. Only he was only passing through, like.

QUENTIN (*a trifle bemused*) Busy day for you, then?

BARRY Not over yet is it? Best is yet to come, eh?

QUENTIN Did you have a pleasant journey down? Apart from your – er –

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