

# CLASHPOINT

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*A play in two Acts*

*by*

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*and*

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*Music by Jules Hardwick*  
*Song 'Burn the Moon Dry' composed by Miguel Richards*

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**CAST**  
*in order of appearance*

Mrs CLARKE JONES	Headmistress of East Moor School; about 50, old school Cambridge-type educator
Mr MOHAN VARMA	Deputy Head; Indian, has a quiet and wise authority about him
SURESH PATHAK	Head Boy of the school; Indian, brainy and mature for his age
CORNELIUS BROWNE	Deputy Head Boy; West Indian, big, explosive and extrovert
PAT JENNINGS	A prefect; warm-hearted girl
Mrs HAZEL BROWNE	Cornelius's mother; works in the local hospital, is a staunch member of the church and innumerable civic groups
Mrs ROSE JENNINGS	Pat's mother; very intelligent and political woman, deep in every sort of political activity
JOHN JENNINGS	The Jennings' son; about 21, unemployed
TOM JENNINGS	The father of the Jennings family; has been in the Labour Movement all his life and is Branch Secretary of his firm's union
PADDY	An old Irishman who keeps 'Paddy's Place Cafe' (can be played by the same actor as plays Mr. Jennings)
HOSPITAL RECEPTIONIST or NURSE	(Can be played by the same actress as Pat)

## SCENES

The play is set in a large industrial city in the North of England. It would work best with a multi-purpose set, with, hopefully, several different levels. The acting areas needed are:

**STUDY OF THE HEADMISTRESS** – functional, some bookshelves, desk and telephone, headmistress's chair plus two others. A window looks out on the playground.

**THE BROWNE HOME** – Cosy warm colours, a settee, armchair, table, standard lamp.

**THE JENNINGS HOME** – Functional; kitchen table, four chairs, kitchen dresser and phone.

**PADDY'S PLACE** – Greasy spoon cafe where the students meet. Table, chairs and candles in bottle. Blackboard with menu chalked on it.

**A HOSPITAL** – The Reception area, reception desk, telephone, two chairs set as in a waiting room. Large notice with directions . . . X-Ray Dept → Casualty ← outpatients, etc. on it.

The action of the play takes place over three months in summer.

ACT 1 Scene 1

*As the house lights fade we hear screams and shouts through the auditorium. Three children run through audience. Pat appears on the front of the stage and shouts.*

PAT                    Cornelius! Suresh! It's in the Upper School playground. Come on!

*Cornelius and Suresh come stampeding up through the audience.*

CORNELIUS        (To Suresh) Come on, man. You scared, or something? (Exits)

*They join Pat and rush off stage right. Telephone bell rings insistently on stage. Lights up on headmistress's desk. Mrs Clarke Jones enters and picks up phone.*

Mrs CJ              Yes? Oh yes, Miss Phillips. . . ? Seven stitches and a broken collar bone? And Vincent? Front teeth broken . . . yes . . . and Billy? Well, ring me back when you know. Yes, I've been in touch with the parents and they're coming down. No, I haven't got to the bottom of it yet. I've got the prefects coming up at any moment and then perhaps we'll know more. (There is a knock and Mr Varma looks in) Bring them in, Mr Varma. Well will you give me a ring when you know more definitely about Billy. Very well, goodbye. (The senior prefects, Suresh, Cornelius and Pat have filed in followed by Mr Varma). Now I want to hear in detail about this incident.

PAT                    Are they alright, Mrs Clarke Jones?

Mrs CJ              They're not dying, any of them, if that's what you mean, Patricia. But it appears to have been a very ugly fight and I want to know what started it.

(*Oppressive silence*) Look, we have got to get to the bottom of this. I want to know what happened.

SURESH I didn't see what started it, Miss.

CORNELIUS You know darn well what started it.

SURESH I do not, not for sure.

CORNELIUS You blind or stupid or something?

Mrs CJ Cornelius, I want the Head Boy's account first, then yours. Suresh?

SURESH I was in the Sixth Form study, Miss. By the time I got there Vince, Sam and Billy were on the ground and at each other's throats, and practically every other kid in the playground was laying into someone else. The girls were screaming their heads off and there were leaflets all over the place.

Mrs CJ Leaflets?

PAT These, Miss. They're British League stuff.

Mrs CJ (*Taking one from her*) 'The battle's lost if we're too feeble, East Moor School for our own white people'. Feeble . . . people . . . is that supposed to rhyme? Did Billy James bring this stuff in?

CORNELIUS 'course he did, Miss. His Dad's in the League, isn't he? Billy and Kevin and that lot of skins were splashing them around in break this morning. I confiscated what they had left and told them to come to me in detention at dinner time. Well they didn't come. (*To Suresh*) Did they?

Mr VARMA Why not?

CORNELIUS You ask Suresh.

Mrs CJ Suresh?

CORNELIUS He stopped them, didn't he. He's always undermining what I do.

SURESH (*With weary superiority*) I'm not. I didn't know you had given them detention. How can I back you up

if you don't tell me what you're doing?

Mrs CJ

Why can't you two work together? If one of you countermands what the other says, no wonder some of the youngsters think they can get away with it.

CORNELIUS

Him work with me? Joke of the week!

SURESH

I try to deal with things without too much aggro.

Mrs CJ

Well, you've both been very irresponsible. You should have reported this leafleting business to me. Political propaganda of this kind is absolutely forbidden on school premises and it's for the staff to deal with. Patricia, do you have anything to add to this story?

PAT

The kids are scared, Mrs Clarke Jones – about the League, I mean. Kevin and his lot – they're getting more brazen every day. And there are slogans going up all over.

Mrs CJ

Yes, I've seen them. We spent a lot of time and money scrubbing them off our own gate-posts last week.

PAT

It's been coming, Miss, a bust up like this, and it could get worse.

Mrs CJ

I had hoped to establish a principle at this school – no racism and no fear.

CORNELIUS

We're not scared, Ma'am. But we're not going to take discrimination lying down. Those Leaguers got something coming to them. . . .

PAT

You may not be scared, Cornelius, but a lot of the younger kids *are*. It's OK in school, but outside the gates they stick around in bunches and go home in mobs together.

Mrs CJ

I think that much of this is a result of what we're getting through the media. Trouble is infectious. Now listen, all of you. If you find any child bringing in leaflets or wearing badges of *any* political persuasion, I wish him to be brought to me. I take



this morning's outbreak very seriously. We have three children in hospital and a dozen more receiving treatment from Miss Leigh here on the premises. We cannot allow this to be repeated, and I'm going to crack down on trouble-makers. Do any of you have any further comments?

PAT                   The Leaguers are planning a march next month.

Mrs CJ               Yes, I was aware of that.

PAT                   And SWOP are planning a counter-demonstration.

Mrs CJ               You all know how I dislike this modern habit of describing every organisation by its initials. Please give me the whole name.

PAT                   (*Embarrassed*) SWOP. Society for World Oppressed People. My mum's the President.

Mrs CJ               (*Sarcastically*) Yes, that bit of information had reached me, too. Well, her Society has a very high-sounding name and doubtless very left-wing policies, but I hope that I have made it perfectly plain that I do not want pupils of East Moor School out on the streets that day on *either* side of the demonstration.

CORNELIUS       But, Ma'am, all that Nazi lot'll be there with the police protecting them. We've got to show them they can't ride over us that way –

Mrs CJ               I'm sorry, Cornelius, but that's final. And you, my friend, cannot afford to lose a day's work; your academic work has been falling off and you need to keep your nose . . . (*Stops in mid sentence as she catches sight of Suresh's derisive smirk*) Suresh! do you have anything to say?

SURESH             No, Mrs Clarke Jones.

Mrs CJ               And you two must stop these juvenile dissensions. You are both exceptionally able and intelligent young men and the school depends upon your leadership. I am looking to you to set an example.

*There is a further commotion outside. Some very young voices are chanting:*

‘Out, out, out, Leaguers out.  
Out, out, out, Leaguers out’

Mr VARMA (*Looking out of window*) It’s a bunch from the Rosebay Estate – third formers. I think.

Mrs CJ Cornelius, will you go and deal with that? Get them back to their classes.

CORNELIUS Why me? ’cos I’m black and they’re black?

*Mrs Clarke Jones does not answer but simply waits for him to obey – which he does, muttering.*

CORNELIUS White justice!

Mrs CJ Now, you two, back to your classes. I must go to Miss Leigh and see how her patients are getting on.

*She exits followed by Pat.*

Mr VARMA Suresh, stay behind a moment. What is the matter between you and Cornelius?

SURESH Nothing, sir.

Mr VARMA Oh, come on –

SURESH He’s so touchy, sir. He wanted to be head boy himself, so every thing I do is wrong. You saw how he went for me in public just now. He talks big all the time, as though his lot were the only ones who get discrimination. (*Bitterly*) Well, he doesn’t know anything. He doesn’t know what we get, only we don’t make a big noise about it.

Mr VARMA Are your family having troubles?

SURESH No, sir.

Mr VARMA You’ve just been saying that they were.

SURESH Well, it’s a lot of little things.

Mr VARMA What sort of things?

SURESH Well, my mum – she can't speak English, and these kids come and shove her off the pavement and she won't go out of the house alone now – one of us has to go with her. Then they're always stitching us about the smell of our curries.

Mr VARMA Who?

SURESH The neighbours. Dad gets letters about it. They all use our shop because we're open late but the kids come in and nick things and. . . . (*He peters out*)

Mr VARMA I see.

SURESH Dad says, 'Don't make a fuss'. He thinks that when I get a degree and become a doctor or a lawyer they'll all respect us, but. . . .

Mr VARMA And what do you think about that?

SURESH I don't know, sir. But I shall get the degree.

Mr VARMA Yes, I expect you will. (*He crosses and sits on the edge of the desk*) You have given up cricket, I notice? . . .

SURESH (*Embarrassed*) I don't like the game any more.

Mr VARMA Is that the only reason?

SURESH What do you mean, sir?

Mr VARMA It had nothing to do with Cornelius?

SURESH 'course not. I just don't care for the game any more.

Mr VARMA It's a pity, you know. You were a good steady batsman.

SURESH I just don't – (*Mr Varma laughs and joins in with his refrain*) care for the game any more. (*Suresh looks sulky and then bursts out*) I . . . he . . . it's so stupid, sir. He goes out there to bat and all the school cheers. He makes jokes and everyone falls about. It's pathetic. I could do as well, but I have to study, don't I?

Mr VARMA It's no good for the school, this bad feeling between you.

SURESH           What do you expect me to do?

Mr VARMA        Try and work with him, make friends. . . .

SURESH           You must be joking! (*Mr Varma looks at him sternly*)  
Sir.

Mr VARMA        Your inner voice will tell you the way to do it.

SURESH           Sir, you're always talking about the inner voice. I  
don't know what you mean.

Mr VARMA        (*Getting launched into his favourite subject*) It is our  
faith to seek a wisdom from the inner voice. The  
voice that tells what is right and wrong. It is part of  
our culture and tradition – hasn't your father ever  
spoken to you of these things? I myself have received  
much help this way. If I have a difference with a  
friend, I seek truth, absolute truth, the way  
Mahatma Gandhi taught us. Then I go to my  
friend, and I say, 'Look here, this is no good. You  
don't trust me and I don't trust you. But something  
has to be done. We must work together. . . .' I  
believe the divisions in this school could be greatly  
changed if you and Cornelius worked together.  
Listen to the inner voice and see if there is anything  
you can do about it.

SURESH           But, sir, it's all his fault.

Mr VARMA        Think about it, Suresh. Alright, you can go.

*Suresh leaves as Mrs Clarke Jones returns.*

Mrs CJ           (*Wearily*) Nothing too serious. Mostly scratches and  
bruises, but they're quite shaken up. One hopes  
that it might teach them a lesson about fighting, but  
I doubt it!

Mr VARMA        What are you going to do about the March?

Mrs CJ           I think we should have a couple of assemblies on the  
subject. (*She picks up the leaflets on her desk and studies  
them*) The Jennings woman is behind the SWOP  
march isn't she?

Mr VARMA Oh, yes. She's very militant about the rights of the immigrants.

Mrs CJ Dreadful woman. It's one of the latter-day wonders to me how such an awful woman could produce a delightful child like Patricia. (*Her attention returning to the leaflets*) It makes me so angry – no one would take any notice of those British Leaguers, their march would fizzle out; but, oh no, this fatuous Society for World Oppressed People must leap in and exploit the situation for their own ends.

Mr VARMA You're not going to close the school and send the children home for the day?

Mrs CJ Certainly not. I'm not having a bunch of political lunatics disrupting my school routine.

Mr VARMA Look, those marchers are bound to pass us here – we're on the biggest road into town and they'll be making for the Town Hall.

Mrs CJ It's on a weekday – they won't get such huge numbers.

Mr VARMA It does not take many to make violence, and there are so many unemployed. The children would be much safer at home.

Mrs CJ They wouldn't be at home! A day off school? They'd be off to join the march before you could say Jack Robinson!

Mr VARMA I don't like the thought of them all being here together. Feelings are running so high . . . you get a mob mentality. They would be much safer with their parents.

Mrs CJ I wish I shared your faith in paternal authority.

Mr VARMA (*Getting onto his high horse*) In our community the parents *do* have authority. If the father says 'stay at home', the children stay at home. It's my firm belief. . . .

Mrs CJ            (*Cutting in*) It's not your community I'm worried about. . . .

Mr VARMA        (*Reluctantly*) Very well, but I think you're making a mistake.

Mrs CJ            (*Practical*) Now, about these Assemblies. Next Tuesday and Thursday I think. (*Consulting diary*) I've got a Governors meeting on Tuesday. Could you take that one, and I'll take Thursday?

Mr VARMA        Certainly.

Mrs CJ            None of them are to be out on the streets for any purpose whatsoever in school hours the day of the demonstration. Explain the ruling to them. Come down hard on this, and then if you can find anything to say about our community and our mutual responsibilities to one another –

Mr VARMA        (*Getting launched again*) Oh yes, I will certainly speak about that, I am certain that the different ethnic communities in the country could prove a great enrichment to each other, you know. These marches foster antagonisms which only breed worse trouble, you know. It is my firm conviction that a spirit of real community fellowship could be achieved if we were all to follow the principles of Truth and Ahimsa. . . .

Mrs CJ            (*Cutting in with a twinkle*) . . . er . . . keep it down to earth, Mr Varma . . . you know, succinct. . . .

Mr VARMA        Alright, alright . . . you think that sometimes I go on a bit, but. . . .

Mrs CJ            I don't *think* my friend, I *know*. I used to wonder whether to ring a bell in your assemblies.

Mr VARMA        Alright, alright . . . but I still think you are making a mistake to keep the children here on that day.

Mrs CJ            Well on my head be it, but I will promise you one thing, I shall talk to the police. If they recommend that we send the children home, then I will

reconsider my decision. Thank you, Mr  
Varma. . . . (*She picks up the phone and dials*) Could  
I speak to Chief Inspector Bowman please? (*She  
looks at Mr. Varma who reluctantly leaves the room*)  
It's Mrs Clarke Jones here, Headmistress of East  
Moor School. . . .

*BLACKOUT*

ACT 1 Scene 2

*As the lights fade on the school study they come up on Suresh standing irresolutely on the side of the stage, while the lights come up on the Browne home. Mrs Browne is sitting doing medical revision. Cornelius is stretched out on the floor with a girlie magazine and the radio full on.*

Mrs BROWNE Functions of the liver are – *(She counts on her fingers)*  
Storage of glycogen with formation of urea –  
Cornelius, turn that radio down. Heat production  
. . . I can't study with it going like that . . . storage  
of vitamin B and iron . . . why aren't you doing your  
homework? . . . The desaturation of fats. . . .

CORNELIUS Can't study with you muttering all that medical  
mumbo-jumbo.

*During these speeches, Suresh has been trying to summon up the courage to knock on the door. He's got to it once and turned away.*

Mrs BROWNE And what's that magazine you're sniggering at? Why  
you want to fill your mind with that trash? . . . The  
storage of glycogen – no, I've said that once –  
Cornelius, turn that radio down!

CORNELIUS What's for tea, Mum?

Mrs BROWNE Plasma protein, albumen and globulin –

CORNELIUS What!

Mrs BROWNE Pork and beans . . . and general metabolic functions  
including the production of heparin. *(Suresh has got  
to the door and raises his hand to knock as Mrs Browne  
shouts.)* Cornelius! Will you turn that radio down!  
*(Suresh loses his nerve and retreats. Mrs Browne is now  
thoroughly roused. She puts down her book)*  
You heard me the first time, when I tell you to turn  
that radio down you turn it down, when you go



out and earn money you can do as you like, you can walk out of that door and look after yourself, but while you under my roof you do as I say . . . and stop reading while I'm talking to you. (*Takes mag from him*) You think that when I was being at home I read a trashy magazine in front of my mother? I'm not going to have no bad man in my house, I'm just about sick of you, Cornelius. Till I had you I had the easy life, but now I work the fingers to the bone for you. . . . Why you think I study for my SRN? So as to earn more and help you, but I'm not stupid, if you aren't going to work you go out and look for a job. (*Looking at magazine for first time*) Where did you get this filthy dirty stuff? It ought to be banned. . . .

CORNELIUS     Job, what job? There *are* no jobs, and when there are, white boys get it over us all the time.

Mrs BROWNE    Nobody's going to offer you a job if you don't get some qualifications. (*Goes to bash him with the magazine*)

CORNELIUS     Nobody's going to offer me a job if I *do* have qualifications. Dole queue's lousy with blokes bustin' with qualifications. You're too naive, Mummy. You think you get your SRN and all doors open, swoosh . . . you go to the top of the Health Service. Well, I tell you, you've got a big shock coming to you.

Mrs BROWNE    You talk stupid, I'm a good nurse, and that's not just my boastin' pride sayin' it. All the staff says it, and the patients too.

CORNELIUS     Sure you're good at givin' bedpans and spreadin' loving kindness, but just you wait till they want a high up boss nurse. Won't be you that gets the job.

Mrs BROWNE    And that's enough rudeness out of you, Cornelius. Like I tell you, the door of my house is over there, you can just. . . .

*Suresh meanwhile has summoned up courage and there is a knock at the door.*

Mrs BROWNE Go and see who it is . . . go on, Cornelius. (*Another knock*) Go an answer the door!

*Cornelius goes – and confronts Suresh.*

CORNELIUS Well, man . . . who asked you to come here?

Mrs BROWNE Ask them in, Cornelius.

CORNELIUS What you want?

Mrs BROWNE Who is it? Please forgive my son's manners – oh, Suresh!

CORNELIUS (*Bowing mockingly*) Welcome to the Taj Mahal, sahib.

SURESH I . . . I . . . er . . . I didn't want to disturb you, Mrs Browne.

Mrs BROWNE Come in and sit down, Suresh – you're very welcome.

SURESH Oh, thank you. (*Apprehensive*)

Mrs BROWNE What would you like? Cornelius will get you a cup of coffee . . . or orange squash?

CORNELIUS Oh, sure, champagne, anything you like!

SURESH No, nothing, thank you.

Mrs BROWNE But you must have something. A cup of tea? Now, I would like a nice cup of tea. Cornelius, put the kettle on and we will have a cup of tea.

*Cornelius goes, unwillingly. Awkward pause.*

Mrs BROWNE I expect you're studying very hard? . . .

SURESH Yes. . . .

Mrs BROWNE A levels?

SURESH Yes. . . .

Mrs BROWNE (*Struggling to keep the conversation going*) And how

are your family, Suresh? They're alright?

SURESH

Yes.

Mrs BROWNE

Your father? And the shop?

SURESH

He's fine, thank you.

Mrs BROWNE

Your mother – I think I met her at the PTA?

SURESH

She's fine too.

Mrs BROWNE

You have a brother don't you?

SURESH

Gopal is my cousin brother. He lives with us.

Mrs BROWNE

'Cousin brother' – now isn't that nice!

CORNELIUS

*(Returning with tea and imitating an Indian accent)*

Oh, very nice, very, very nice. . . !

Mrs BROWNE

And Mr Pathak, the greengrocer – he's a relative of yours, isn't he?

SURESH

He is my father's sister's husband's cousin *(To Cornelius who is offering him tea)* Thank you.

Mrs BROWNE

You have a big family.

SURESH

*(To Cornelius who is offering him sugar)* No. *(To Mrs Brown)* Yes. *(To Cornelius)* No.

CORNELIUS

What you mean, yes or no?

SURESH

No sugar, thanks. *(Suresh sits nervously on the edge of his chair. Cornelius makes a huge charade of serving tea)*

Mrs BROWNE

It's so nice to have Cornelius's friends round for a cup of tea – *(At the word 'friends', Suresh has choked. And tea goes everywhere and spills)*

SURESH

I'm sorry . . . so sorry. . . .

Mrs BROWNE

That's all right, don't worry at all. I'll get a mop. *(Suresh is covered with embarrassment. Mrs Browne bustles out to the kitchen. Cornelius roars with laughter)*

CORNELIUS

Man, if you could see your face! Here, give me your cup, I'll get you another.

SURESH No, please don't trouble.

CORNELIUS No trouble, pot's made. (*Exits with cup as Mrs Browne enters with cloth, mops and returns to kitchen. Cornelius returns with tea. Everything settles down. Suresh is determined to finish his conversation with Cornelius*)

SURESH Cornelius, I've been thinking –

CORNELIUS (*Still mocking*) Thinking! Oh, very good man!

SURESH (*Firmly*) You and I have got to talk.

CORNELIUS Well, talk man.

SURESH The situation at school is getting bad.

CORNELIUS Don't see what's so bad about it.

SURESH You and I have got to get it together –

CORNELIUS Don't know what you're getting at.

SURESH We ought to have worked together yesterday to sort out Billy James and his lot – but I don't find it easy to ask you for help.

CORNELIUS You don't have to tell me that, man. You never talk to me about anything. I am Deputy Head Boy but it's like I don't exist. You suck up to old Clarky Jones . . . all we hear is how brilliant you are – scholarship to University, a credit to East Moor School! I tell you man, it makes me sick.

SURESH Well, go ahead and be sick, then. I'm going to get on in life if I can. (*More calmly*) Anyway, my parents expect me to work hard and I have to respect their wishes, that's our culture.

CORNELIUS All this talk of Asian culture.

SURESH (*Angry*) You haven't any culture of your own, that's why you don't like ours.

CORNELIUS We got a culture – three hundred years of British culture. You just plain ignorant or something? We

got more right than you have, so don't you sneer at me, mister snob-brain. I could get to University if I wanted to, I could do it. . . .

SURESH Hell, I didn't mean to say that about your culture –  
CORNELIUS (*Carrying right on*) But where'd it get me? No higher up the job list at the end of it. But you – you'll be OK, won't you! There'll be a job waiting for you. Making up prescriptions in Daddy's shop!

SURESH Cornelius! Will you listen to me! (*Cornelius stops and shrugs*) Look, I thought I was better than you, yes. And I'm sorry. It's so stupid – but I've been jealous of you, too.

*Mrs Browne comes to the door and listens*

CORNELIUS Jealous?

SURESH Yes. You, you're good at cricket – you've got this great social life, you know, parties and such. I feel a darn fool telling you this; but I would like to make real friends with you, try if we can to work together.

CORNELIUS (*Cool*) Alright, man. I will work with you, you just tell me what you want me to do.

SURESH Well, I thought we might call a prefects meeting – talk things out, see if anyone's got any good suggestions. Then I thought it might help if we both played in the school cricket match.

CORNELIUS Well, that's up to Mr Bonner, I don't choose the team. Anyway, I thought you'd given up cricket?

SURESH I'm going to take it up again.

CORNELIUS Up to you. . . .

SURESH What are you doing right now – the next hour?

CORNELIUS Why?

SURESH Well, we could go down to the nets, get some practice, and talk too. You could give me some tips on my batting.

CORNELIUS      So you want to get ahead of me there too, eh?

SURESH            Oh, hell, what's the use? (*He rises and walks to the door with angry dignity*) Thank you for the tea, Mrs Browne. And you (*To Cornelius*) you can go take a running jump. . . . (*Exits leaving stunned silence*)

Mrs BROWNE      (*Really angry*) Cornelius, why you want to treat him like that? That boy wanted to make things up with you, to be friends with you – and you throw him out like that like! I'm ashamed of you. It's not Christian the way you behave – as St Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, 'Be ye angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your anger'.

CORNELIUS        Well, St Paul didn't write nothin' like that to me.

Mrs BROWNE      And don't you talk blasphemy like that about the Holy Bible, you got no shame? You had no right to speak rude and harsh to Suresh, in your own home too, you shamed me up, front of that boy. . . .

CORNELIUS        Oh, pshaw, Ma!

Mrs BROWNE      What's eating into you these days, boy? You talk bitter, you don't work, seems like you hate just about everybody. I don't know what to do with you. Your teacher says you have a good intelligence, but if you're going to get on you've got to apply your mind. Your school reports say –

CORNELIUS        All school reports say the same thing. 'Has ability but must work harder'. It don't mean a thing.

Mrs BROWNE      They're not half strict enough with you in that school to my mind. When I was being young back in Jamaica they really made us work. . . . I tell you I walked without shoes to get my education.

CORNELIUS        (*Muttering*) Flippin hell!

Mrs BROWNE      Listen to me while I'm talking to you, Cornelius! I don't want no badness from you, if you had a daddy now you'd get a good beating for your lazy ways . . . I tell you. . . .

CORNELIUS     Aw . . . you always cursin' me. . . .

Mrs BROWNE     And if you are going to talk rude to your Mother  
then there is the door, it is always open . . . you can  
walk right out through it. . . .

CORNELIUS     Alright I walk through it. . . .

*He slams out of the house.*

Mrs BROWNE     Oh Lord. What is going to happen to him, what I  
going to do with that boy? . . .

*Lights fade into next scene.*

ACT 1 Scene 3

*Lights up on Cornelius, alone, kicking about and feeling miserable.*

CORNELIUS (Sings)

Feel like the whole world's stacked against me,  
Ain't got nobody to be my friend.

There don't seem no way out of this prison,  
When will it end, I'm asking, when will it end?

Don't nobody round this place need me?  
The thought-work of my head, the skill-work of my  
hand?

What you gotta do to make them listen,  
What you gotta do to make them understand?

Cry, oh cry, man, burn the moon dry,  
Rip out the belly of the silent night.  
Watch the heart of the volcano burn over,  
The fire burns red, man, but the ash blows white.

Feel like the whole world's stacked against me,  
Ain't got nobody to be my friend.  
There don't seem no way out of this prison,  
When will it end, I'm asking, when will it end?

*(Finishing his song he starts to practise his batting and  
bowling strokes. Then he begins to work out in his  
mind how he would coach Suresh. . . .)*

Suresh! Well, I suppose he could become a good  
player – if he played straight! *(Addressing imaginary  
Suresh)* Suresh, if you're going to be a batsman you  
must play straight – You've got to lead with your  
left shoulder and head into the line of the ball.  
*(Demonstrates)* And your left elbow – if you drop it  
your bat will always be at an angle *(Fiercely)* Get  
your left elbow *up!* That's better. *(Grunts)* Well,  
you'll make a player yet.



*Imperceptibly, in the imagination of Cornelius the practice becomes an important match at the Oval with himself and Suresh a winning partnership, saving the match, piling on runs and winning eternal fame!*

*A commentators voice creeps in, describing the match and the brilliant role played by the young England batsmen, Cornelius Browne and his reliable partner, Suresh Pathak.*

BRIAN  
JOHNSTON       What an amazing Test Match. The final over of the last Test with England needing four runs to beat Australia and their last pair together. What more could you ask – Trevor, your comment?

TREVOR  
BAILEY         It's a perfect finish. This has been an outstanding innings by Cornelius Browne – a world class player. And we mustn't forget Suresh Pathak. Played straight with great responsibility. But of course, it's still anybody's game.

BRIAN  
JOHNSTON       Thank you Trevor. This great Oval crowd has gone absolutely silent as Lillec waits at the end of his long run to start this over with Browne facing. Here he comes, with that beautifully controlled approach. He bowls! *(There is a roar of applause and over it Brian Johnston can be heard shouting)* It's all over! Browne has driven the ball straight back over the bowler's head for four, and England have won! The Oval crowd has erupted and the crowd is swarming across the field to engulf the players. Now Browne and Pathak are being carried shoulder high towards the Pavilion.

*The match is won, everyone is on their feet, shouting. Supporters pour onto the field. Fellow players are winging his hand, lifting him shoulder high . . . when a slight sound comes from behind him. Cornelius is back in his home street and Suresh is standing watching him, open mouthed.*

CORNELIUS      Oh, er, Suresh. . . . What are you doing?

SURESH         *(Hesitantly)* Nothing.

CORNELIUS      We could probably find a net free at the Rec. *(And as Suresh still hesitates)* Come on man. . . .

*Lights fade as they go off together.*

ACT 1 Scene 4

*Breakfast time in the Jennings home. Pat and John at the table, John reading newspaper, Pat reading back page. Mrs Rose Jennings in and out with 'SWOP' placards piling them in a corner ready for march.*

JOHN               What's so scandalous or catastrophic that you can't wait until I've finished with it?

PAT                 I'm reading my horoscope. Pisces. 'A dark stranger will come into your life today. Romance is highlighted!' Cor! 'You may receive a large sum of money from an unexpected source'. Wow!

*Phone rings. Mrs Jennings answers it.*

Mrs JENNINGS    Rose Jennings speaking. Yes, 12 a.m. North Moor Park. *(Continues the conversation)*

PAT                 A car, I think, red of course. A stereo and loads of records. Then a holiday on the Costa Brava and me and my dark handsome man will sit hand in hand on the golden sands watching. . . .

JOHN              The beer cans wash in and out! Hey, Mum, look at this bit about FOG. It's very slanted, of course but it's good publicity. *(Reading)* 'The latest colt from the Red stable is a new group that calls itself the Freedom One Group'. Red stable, hmmm, I rather like that, Red stable. 'FOG is an alliance of extreme left-wing militants who see their role as that of mobile agitators, ready to go wherever militant action is required -'

Mrs JENNINGS    Will you shut up, I can't hear! Sorry, I was talking to my son. Can you give me any idea of your numbers?

PAT                 FOG . . . sounds like a league of smokers! *(Pretends to grope around in the fog)* Help, I'm lost in a FOG in a SWOP shop. . . !

JOHN           Very funny, ha ha. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS Yes, coaches in the station car park. *(To Pat)* Pat, get those eggs off, they must be done by now.

PAT           *(Exiting, collecting egg and placing in eggcup)* I'm lost with all these groups you join. Last month it was The Mind Bogglers.

JOHN           *(Severely)* The Militant Brotherhood, if you please.

Mrs JENNINGS *(On phone)* Keep it up, good. Believe me, we're striking a decisive blow for education. Yes, see you on the day. Goodbye.

PAT           All we ever talk about in this house is politics, politics, politics. You can't move without falling over banners and leaflets. We live half the time out of the freezer and the other half fending for ourselves on what's left over. Why can't we live like everyone else?

Mrs JENNINGS Now look here, Pat. I know I don't have much time for cooking, but what we're doing is important. The kind of society we have in the future in this country depends on it.

PAT           *(Who has heard it all before)* As soon as I leave school I shall get a grant and go to the polytechnic. I shall set up in my own flat with a couple of friends and every meal will be a feast. Chicken chasseur, beef bourguignon, I can just see it now. It makes my mouth water. And of course, politics will be banned!

JOHN           *(Helping himself to milk from the bottle)* You will be the fat lady of East Moor!

PAT           *(Snatching bottle)* And you have just hogged all the cream from the top of the milk!

*Tom Jennings comes in and sits at the table. He is in an aggressive mood. John's good humour vanishes and he becomes wary.*

Mr JENNINGS Has anyone seen those notes I made of the Branch Meeting? I've looked everywhere, I can't find them. *(Looking at John)*

JOHN                   What would I want with your notes?

Mrs JENNINGS (*Between them*) They're out on the fridge – you left them there last night.

Mr JENNINGS (*To Rose*) Did you water my leeks? (*Phone rings and thankfully she escapes to answer it*) Paper! (*To John*)

PAT                    How are they getting on, Dad, the leeks?

Mr JENNINGS       Not bad, Pat, there are some in the third row that look very good indeed. I'm just beginning to allow myself to hope that they might shape up for a prize.

PAT                    That's smashing, Dad. You'll make the headlines yet – we'll have the 'Look North' team featuring our vegetable patch and dustbins yet!

Mr JENNINGS       Oh, Pat, love, there's always such a gap between our hopes and what actually happens. Just the same, if they get enough water at this stage – (*He sees his wife's face*) You didn't water them did you, Rose? You didn't bloody water them! Here give me a cup of tea.

JOHN                 (*Into his cup*) Incredible. A few leeks and we're organising SWOP demos. Petty bourgeois attitudes.

Mr JENNINGS       You'll be organising demos with a thick ear, my lad, if you go on like that. And somebody left the plug in the basin and the soap in the water again.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Into phone*) It's a clear case of police harrassment. We'll get our lawyers onto this!

Mr JENNINGS       If people had to pay for these commodities themselves, they wouldn't be so wasteful.

JOHN                 Dad, quit laying into me! Do you think I like being on the dole?

Mr JENNINGS       Try the Youth Opportunities scheme –

JOHN                 That lot!

Mr JENNINGS       Learn a trade, get your hands dirty! Get those

polytechnic ideas out of your system! This egg is boiled solid, it's uneatable.

JOHN I'm not going to be cheap labour fodder for some firm. Besides, this way it gives me the time to do some effective political work –

Mrs JENNINGS Will you two shut up! (*Into phone*) Sorry. . . .

PAT One piece of toast, Dad, or two?

Mr JENNINGS One'll do. I'm late already. (*Persuasively*) Look, John, the art of politics is very like growing leeks. You may know what you want, what the perfect leek should look like, but it takes time. You've got to have patience. In politics you've got to know how to take people along with you. (*There is no response from John and Mr Jennings suddenly becomes bitter*) Oh, get off your backside, John, and get yourself a job – any job. It'd bring you down to earth and you wouldn't have time to dream up action which divides the Union membership.

Mrs JENNINGS (*On phone*) I'll call you back – goodbye.

JOHN You mean that you're divided from the other members!

PAT John, that's ridiculous – Dad is their Branch Secretary!

Mr JENNINGS I've given years to serving this Union, put in hours of my own time, now I find there's a move to oust me, because your dear brother's friends don't think I'm militant enough.

PAT John? Is that true? You would do that to Dad?

Mr JENNINGS He would! Of course I'm militant, but these young fellows, they know nothing about life, nothing about the battle we've fought.

PAT But what's it all about?

Mr JENNINGS You remember Jack Grant? He began the trickle back to work during last years strike. We had to

send him to Coventry – but I really hated doing it.

PAT I remember.

Mr JENNINGS One of the best, he is. Would fetch the top brick off the chimney if he thought it would help anyone.

Mrs JENNINGS But, as you said yourself, it had to be done.

Mr JENNINGS You mind your own business.

Mrs JENNINGS Get your coat on, you'll miss your bus.

Mr JENNINGS Just got to go and see if the leaks have suffered.

Mrs JENNINGS Those leaflets – about the demonstration – they're in the hall. (*Exits to kitchen*)

Mr JENNINGS (*Exiting through hall*) Has that ginger tom from next door been in our garden again?

Mrs JENNINGS (*Off*) I think you said you'd do a thousand to begin with.

Mr JENNINGS (*Off*) I know what I'm doing!

PAT (*After a silence*) What is all this about the branch secretaryship?

JOHN Some of the works members of FOG think that he's shown a soft streak in his attitude towards Jack Grant and last year's strike. That he's putting sentiment before the Party. He'll be a brake on everybody if he gets attacks of conscience when something has to be done.

PAT And you go along with all that?

JOHN (*Uneasily*) He hasn't got what it takes to be Branch Secretary during a struggle like this.

PAT But this is your own father you're doing this to! Dad's worked on behalf of those men for years, felt every injustice personally –

JOHN Tackling injustices has to be harnessed to co-operating with the forces behind the dialectic of

history, which is the inevitable class struggle. Now the superstructure of the enemy –

PAT *(Interrupting)* Oh, come off it! Take the record off! Think of the negotiations Dad has coming up. He needs your backing, John, not your stabs in the back. He needs you, John. Oh, you make me sick!

JOHN Needs me? He's never needed me! He never wanted me in the first place. You heard him this morning – I'm a financial disaster in his eyes. He won't even talk straight to me.

*Door bell rings. Mrs Jennings calls from off.*

Mrs JENNINGS I'll go! *(Enters and crosses to other side)*

PAT John, you. . . .

JOHN Oh, wrap it up, forget what I said.

PAT *(Sings)* Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!

Mrs JENNINGS *(Off)* Oh, Mrs Browne, come in. I'm afraid things are still a bit chaotic round here at the moment. Shall I take your coat? Come on in and Pat will get you a cup of tea. Pat, get Mrs Browne a cup of tea. I'll just go and get the leaflets and the route map. *(Exits)*

Mrs BROWNE Morning Pat. I've heard a lot about you from Cornelius.

PAT Help!

Mrs BROWNE He's always coming home and making me laugh with the funny things Pat says!

PAT Blimey! How do you like your tea, Mrs Browne? Oh, this is my brother, John.

Mrs BROWNE Hello, John, nice to make your acquaintance. Now I've met all the Jennings family –

JOHN *(Under his breath)* Thrilling for you. . . .

Mrs BROWNE Milk and sugar please.

JOHN Will you excuse me? I've got to go and see some students about the demo.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Off*) John, you're covering the Polytechnic and Casters Engineering aren't you? Could you do Marshall Textiles and Jameson Scotts as well? I'm not going to get around to them.

JOHN (*Shouting back*) You need a pass to get into Scotts.

Mrs JENNINGS Give them out at the gate then, or get your dad to give you an introduction to the shop stewards. But get into the canteen at lunch and talk to the men – for Heaven's sake, you know the drill. (*Entering as John leaves*) There's leaflets in the hall and get them to bring their banners! Sorry, Mrs Browne, there never seem to be enough hours in the day. Pat given you some tea? Good. Now here's the leaflets and here is your route map. Is your Minister coming along? In his dog collar? We want as many of the clergy as possible. What about Church banners?

Mrs BROWNE (*Uneasily*) I don't know. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS 'St. Margarets against racism' – you could make a banner!

Mrs BROWNE Mrs Jennings, I'm getting very worried about this demonstration.

Mrs JENNINGS So are the police! They're drafting men in from all over the county. With any luck, it's going to be national news!

Mrs BROWNE I'm worried. I don't like it.

Mrs JENNINGS You mustn't get cold feet now.

Mrs BROWNE It's getting so big. If the British League want to have a march, let them. Their numbers are not so great, and the police will stop them going through our estate.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Wearily*) Mrs Browne, we've been through all this before. We cannot let loose fascists go unopposed.



We've had three committee meetings on it and you, if I remember rightly, voted for the march.

Mrs BROWNE I know I did, but some of our members in SWOP speak with such a fine, fiery passion – they talk about commitment and total revolution. They make you feel so cowardly if you don't want to go out on the streets and fight for your rights. And then everyone puts up their hands and I don't like to look like I'm afraid. But when I get home, I begin to think, when will it end? There must be another way to get justice for our people, and something inside me says to me, 'you are the coward, Hazel, not to speak up in the committee – if there is violence and people get hurt, it will be your fault.'

Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Browne, believe me, there is no other way.

Mrs BROWNE But there must be another way; violence is not right. The Bible says, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword'. Matthew 26, verse 52.

Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Browne, you've been fooled by Christianity – it's just a drug, you know! What has it done for us in two thousand years – what's it done for your people? Christian men kept them as slaves and helped themselves to your women, after reading the Bible every day, of course! (*Bitterly*) There's no God, don't kid yourself.

Mrs BROWNE I am a Christian, Mrs Jennings. I believe Jesus came to die for us – all of us. And what if Christianity were lived? Really lived, I mean?

PAT (*Entering, ready for school. Crosses, taking fruit from bowl*) Bye, Mum. Bye, Mrs Browne.

Mrs JENNINGS Bye, dear, have a good day at . . . Pat, do you ever comb your hair?

PAT You're as bad as Mrs Clarke Jones. (*Imitating*) Dear me, Patricia, what have we here? It seems the birds have been nesting again. Ta ta.

*She exits. There is silence. Mrs Jennings is waiting for Mrs Browne to go so she can get on with her work.*

Mrs BROWNE Some of our community problems are our own fault, you know. There has always been a lot of trouble between us and the Asian community. Our people call them coolies and they think of us as riff-raff.

Mrs JENNINGS Yes, it's well known.

Mrs BROWNE My son Cornelius has never got on with the head boy, Suresh. There's always been a terrible rivalry between them. Well, last week Suresh, he come round to our house. And apologised for his side of the feud. Cornelius is a much happier boy since then. He's even begun to work and that's something, I can tell you! It's made me think a lot.

Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Browne, could we just go over the route for your contingent? I have an awful lot to get through this morning.

Mrs BROWNE You haven't listened to a word I've been saying!

Mrs JENNINGS Of course I have – don't be so touchy!

Mrs BROWNE Look, I'm not happy about this march. I don't think it's right. Couldn't we call it off?

Mrs JENNINGS You must be mad!

Mrs BROWNE We will be passing East Moor School – there may be violence. People may get hurt, our children may get hurt.

Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Browne, I'm sorry, but it's all decided. Believe me, I know what I'm doing.

Mrs BROWNE Yes, I think that you do know what you are doing. But it's not for me. *(She unpins her 'SWOP' badge and places it on table)* I can't be part of it. I am resigning from SWOP.

Mrs JENNINGS You can't resign, you're the only West Indian we've got on the committee – *(She stops, realising what she's said)*

Mrs BROWNE Well, if all you want is a black face to make your committee look respectable, you can find someone else. What is more, I'm going to do everything I can to prevent our people supporting this march.

Mrs JENNINGS But you can't do that. This march is for your people. For Heaven's sake, how else are you going to make the authorities listen to you? You've got to fight, even if people get hurt!

Mrs BROWNE You don't give a damn about my people. You don't really care, you just want to use our sufferings for your own political ends. You say you care, but you don't listen to what we say. I've been suspecting this for a long time, now I know. It's just the same old story of exploitation – you white people, you're all the same.

Mr JENNINGS You're out of your senses!

Mrs BROWNE I'm just coming to my senses. I've been too trusting. You have all these laws about race discrimination and social workers running around the place, and organisations like SWOP saying they're going to fight for us – but it don't change people's hearts. And who controls it all? That's what I'm asking. Who controls it all? Whites like you! You don't really care about us or listen to what we say.

Mrs JENNINGS We do care. We in SWOP have sweated our guts out on your behalf. We've found you lawyers, exposed police harrassment, campaigned. Personally, I care desperately about every injustice. I've suffered under the system myself. My God, the ingratitude of it! If you knew what I've suffered to build up this organisation – I've sacrificed money, job, family life – I've suffered for this cause!

Mrs BROWNE Well, I'm sorry, but it's not my cause.

*There is a terrible silence. Mrs Jennings is nearly in tears.*

Mrs JENNINGS I think you'd better go

*Mrs Browne picks up her coat and goes to the door, then pauses.*

Mrs BROWNE I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you, sister. I am supposed to be a Christian, but I used harsh words. The Bible says –

Mrs JENNINGS Oh, get out of this house with your stupid Christianity!

*Mrs Browne stares at her then leaves the stage*

**BLACKOUT**

ACT 1 Scene 5

*Sign on stage 'Paddy's place'.*

*As the houselights fade, Suresh and Cornelius enter, through the audience. Both in high spirits, carrying cricket gear and radiol/cassette.*

CORNELIUS     Yeah, man, you're really making progress. Just a bit more practice with your Uncle Cornelius, and England selectors, here we come!

SURESH        (*Laughing*) Don't fool yourself, Cornelius. I'll never be as good as you – I haven't the eye.

CORNELIUS     Oh, I don't know. I've hopes of you, yet, man. We'd make a good team . . . India, Australia, West Indies. . . . I can just see it. Crowds on the street . . . oh, yeah, man, I can just see it. Clive Lloyd, Vivian Richards, move over, here comes the great Pathak himself! Girls! No crowding now! You want this gentleman's autograph? Well, you'll just have to wait. My friend Pathak's got a date with Olivia Newton John tonight!

SURESH        Oh, stuff it! What a hope!

CORNELIUS     What do you mean, what a hope? These famous men, why the girls come around them like flies! What's biting you, man? Don't you like going with the girls?

SURESH        'Course I do – but it's our culture.

CORNELIUS     Huh . . . your culture!

SURESH        My dad would do his nut if I went out with a white girl. I've got to choose a wife from the girls he selects. But he'll have to keep on and on selecting, though.

CORNELIUS     Till you choose someone gorgeous, eh?

SURESH           *(Laughing)* He'll get so fed up! But all same, don't knock our culture and family life, it's a good thing. Keeps us together.

*Paddy enters. He is an old Irishman who has seen it all before. Pat is coming up through the audience.*

CORNELIUS       OK, Paddy, where's that wine list? *(He is given a grubby menu and makes a great act of studying it)* I think I will have a coke, yes, I will have a coca-cola for my Indian friend here . . . two cokes and make it fast. . . . Hey, there's Pat! Hey, Pat, come and have a coke! Me and Suresh have just founded a league to put the school right. We've got ideas on how to solve every problem! Yeah, man, every problem. You got troubles? You come to Browne and Pathak and Company Limited! You want to join? You want to be in 'the Company'? *(Pat has sat with them)*

PAT               Yeah, sure.

CORNELIUS       Browne, Pathak and Jennings Limited! Have solution, will travel!

PAT               Why stop at the school? Why not put the rest of the world to rights as well while you're at it?

CORNELIUS       Why not? Why not indeed. Vision, man, vision, that's what we need. Why not put the whole world aright while we are at it? Won't take long and then we could go and have another bash at the nets before tea!

SURESH           *(Laughing)* Have mercy on me!

CORNELIUS       What you want to drink, Pat? Paddy, a drink for the lady. An extra special deluxe coca-cola for madame! Paddy, you is being addressed by the World President of the League of Problem Solvers! This here gentleman from India is my vice-president and the English lady on my right is the secretary. You want to join?

PAT Elects himself President – such modesty!

PADDY I'm not the joining sort. Everyone in my country joins one thing, marches for another – and they're none of them any bloody good!

CORNELIUS What is your country, Paddy?

PAT Paddy's Irish, you clot!

CORNELIUS Ireland! Yeah, well, there is a problem. . . .

PAT And if we are going to put the world to rights, Cornelius, what about something nearer home? What about our two mums, then?

CORNELIUS (*Suddenly serious*) Yeah man, you said something there, you really said something. My mum's real upset.

SURESH What happened?

CORNELIUS (*To Pat*) You tell him.

PAT Well, you know my mum, politics is her life – well, Cornelius's mum doesn't agree with the SWOP march – she came round to our place and resigned from the committee. They had a real set-to, I gather, and Mum's been in an awful state ever since. Keeps asking us what we think you people think of her. And when my mum begins to worry what people think of her, wow, then we know that something's wrong! She keeps sighing, 'Oh God, Oh God', and we can't decide if she's just letting off steam, or whether she's gone religious all of a sudden!

CORNELIUS My mum's the same, only she keeps saying, 'Oh Lord, Oh Lord', and I get a Bible quote between every dish for my dinner! Trouble is, I agree with your mum, Pat. I think this SWOP demo's right. If it wasn't for old Clarky J keeping us in, I'd be out there and show these British Leaguers what they can do with their dirty mugs. I'm British, same as they are, born here, same as them. This country

has got to listen to the voice of us black British, or maybe one day they'll wake up and it'll be too late to listen. I don't go with 'turn the other cheek' crap – all this 'Love your neighbour'. You don't get nowhere without violence, history shows that.

SURESH Not always. Mr Varma lent me a book by Mahatma Gandhi. It was called 'My Experiments with Truth'.

CORNELIUS 'Experiments with Truth'. (*Going Indian*) Oh, very deep, very profound! Oh deary me! Deary, deary me. . . !

SURESH (*Ignoring the mockery*) Gandhi had this campaign of truth and non-violence. He gained Indian independence that way. He forced the British out of India without bloodshed. It's not historically true that you have to be violent to get your rights.

CORNELIUS Yeah, well, that was all a long time ago.

SURESH So what? It was done once, it could be done again.

CORNELIUS 'Truth and non-violence'. Huh! That's a dish of custard. What else did old Varmy Sahib tell you? 'Look here, my friend, you should listen to the inner voice.' (*Imitating Varma*)

SURESH The Inner Voice must need a million-watt system to get through to your brain, Cornelius!

PAT Hey, look who's over there. It's your mum, Cornelius. Let's give her a coke to cheer her up. Mrs Browne! Mrs Browne! Come and join us!

*Mrs Browne, laden with shopping, enters and sits.*

Mrs BROWNE Hello, everybody. Suresh, Pat. Thank you, I will sit down for a moment or two, take the weight off my feet. What are you all doing?

PAT This is a foundation meeting of an important new movement – it's called the SFPWA.

Mrs BROWNE The SFPWA? . . .



- PAT 'The Society for Putting the World Aright'. . . .  
 'How I dislike this habit of describing every organisation by its initials. (*All three imitate Mrs CJ's middle class accent*) Please use the full name in any essay you submit to me!' (*Laughter*)
- CORNELIUS Yes, The Society for Putting the World Aright. We are the founder members. You want to join?
- Mrs BROWNE (*Sadly*) I've begun to think that I'm not very good at putting the world to rights. Oh dear, I've come to the conclusion that if you want to put the world right, you've got to start with yourself. (*To Paddy, who has entered*) Cup of tea, please.
- CORNELIUS Cup of tea – cure to all ills.
- Mrs BROWNE I wish it were.
- PAT Cheer up, Mrs Browne. You know, I think it was very good what you said to Mum. She's so used to getting her own way in committee meetings, it's good when people stand up to her. She's had so much work to cope with recently that she gets like a pressure cooker – but she does care, you know.
- Mrs BROWNE Yes, I believe she does, Pat. It's me that's so confused. Sometimes I feel like I am torn in two pieces. The politics side says you've got to work and fight to get the rights for our people, and the church side of me says that His Kingdom is not of this world – and I don't know what to do. . . . (*There is a silence*)
- PAT Don't give up, Mrs Browne. I . . . I think Mum needs you.
- Mrs BROWNE But you see, I came to hate her. Yes, really hate her, and hate is always wrong. As the Good Book says, 'If a man says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar. If you don't love your neighbour who you can see, how can you love the Lord you can't see?' (*The Bible quote is received with slight embarrassment*) And I do love Jesus, my Saviour. So it just isn't

right that I should hate your mummy. I wish I could talk to her again, but after she threw me out. . . .

PAT (*Thoughtfully*) I do wish you *would* talk to her again. She's really miserable and Dad and John are at each other's throats. Our house is like a loony bin. (*She has an idea*) Look, leave it to me. I'll get her to ask you back. You would come if she asked you? Wouldn't you?

Mrs BROWNE Yes, I'd come.

PAT Right then, leave it to me. (*Sings*) Be it never so humble, there's no place like home!

CORNELIUS Howzat! Society for Putting the World Aright doing it's stuff! That's great, man, great. Right, Suresh, what world problem shall you and me settle next?

PADDY You settle your bill, sonny boy, and pay me for three cokes and a cup of tea. (*Cornelius pays up. Paddy leaves*)

*Pat turns on radio/cassette with 'Clashpoint' theme tune. As the music plays they begin to speak their thoughts within the phrasing of the music.*

Mrs BROWNE How I wish that it could happen,  
A move to put the whole world right!

PAT No more leaguers!

CORNELIUS No more dole queues!

Mrs BROWNE No more mums that fight!

SURESH There must be things that could happen,  
Things an ordinary bloke could do.

CORNELIUS Do, like what, man? Quit that dreamin'.  
World's too big for you.

PAT Some idea, though, what your Ma said,  
it must start inside.

Mrs BROWNE Inside the heart, inside the mind?

PAT                    Before you tackle wrongs outside.

CORNELIUS        But what could *we* do? You need power  
If you want to see things change.

SURESH            Just a moment, there *is* power!  
*(Pause. Drums only phase of music)*  
A different power, simple, strange.  
The inner voice, the power of truth *(He is searching  
for words)*  
That micro-chip of fire.  
Call it anything you like –  
That I think is the source of power!

*Fairly long pause in dialogue as they think about that one and listen to the music. Then Cornelius starts beating the rhythm on his cricket bails. Pat takes up the rhythm with a spoon.*

PAT                    Do you think it could happen?  
A move to put the whole world right?

CORNELIUS        It's a good dream, keep on dreaming.  
Roll on summer, life's alright!

*By now they have all begun to bang on every available bit of wood, crockery and coke tins, taking the beat and counter beat. Mrs Browne has the top line.*

Mrs BROWNE      Roll on summer, life's alright.  
Roll on summer, life's alright.  
Roll on summer *(Pause, then in harmony)* life's  
alright!

*Ends with a burst of joy and cacophony of sound.*

**BLACKOUT**

*INTERVAL (if required)*

ACT 2 Scene 1

*The Jennings home. Mrs Jennings, Mrs Browne and John are just finishing a meal.*

Mrs BROWNE No more, thank you. That was a lovely meal.

Mrs JENNINGS Glad you liked it. Just stack, John, I know you have to go.

JOHN Er – Dad got a meeting tonight, Mum?

Mrs JENNINGS A late one, about eight-thirty, I think.

JOHN I won't be in for supper.

Mrs JENNINGS Oh, John!

JOHN (*Helping himself liberally to dessert*) I don't eat much these days anyway.

Mrs JENNINGS Hmm! It's not because of Dad, is it?

JOHN Course not! I've got to meet some friends. (*They both look at him*) Oh, hell! This morning was bad enough, but I'm not going to sit here the whole evening with him not speaking to me. I've a right to my convictions – he's living in the Stone Age!

Mrs JENNINGS How long is this going to go on? You can't stay out every night! Do you want me to keep a plate hot for you?

JOHN Er – well . . . yes, thanks. (*The phone rings*)

Mrs JENNINGS Hello . . . yes, speaking. (*Conversation continues quietly*)

Mrs BROWNE I've always felt so envious of boys who did have a dad. (*John looks a question*) You see, I'm not married. I call myself Mrs Browne, it's easier. But I wish we had a proper family. I wish Cornelius had a dad.

JOHN He's not missed much.

Mrs BROWNE You don't mean that John.

JOHN Dad and me, we've never hit it off.

Mrs BROWNE He's a good man. Does a lot for the men at the works.

JOHN (*Bitterly*) Oh, yes, he'd do anything for the men at work! (*More thoughtfully*) Funny, I used to think the world of him. Mum took me to a works meeting once when I was about thirteen – there was Dad up on a sort of box thing, talking to the men. It was a strike vote . . . he brought them all out. I never forgot the faces of those men as they listened to him. It was a very cold day, and they were all muffled up, with breath looking like steam, but there was a sort of heat there. They were all with him . . . it was wonderful.

Mrs JENNINGS (*On phone*) No, I'm sorry, but there are no central funds for that sort of contingency. You'll have to find the money for yourself.

Mrs BROWNE (*Sympathetically*) And now? . . .

JOHN Now? I don't know . . . he doesn't want me around. And he's gone all soft. You know something? I wouldn't be surprised if he hasn't sold out!

Mrs BROWNE Sold out?

JOHN Yes. I don't think he believes in Socialism any more! He'll probably vote SDP!

Mrs BROWNE (*Knowing she's supposed to be shocked*) Yes, well, I see . . . that's quite something, yes sir, quite something. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS (*Putting phone down and returning*) For heavens sake, some people seem to think that SWOP's a charity organisation! (*To John*) And where are you going?

JOHN Where do you think? Vladivostock! (*Exits*)

Mrs JENNINGS Oh dear. . . . My God, he terrifies me sometimes! You don't approve of my methods? If you knew what his lot were planning it would make your hair stand on end! (*Long pause*) Mrs Browne, I appreciate what you said to me earlier. I'm not sure that you're the one that should have apologised – I think probably it should have been me! (*Fetching coffee from upstage table*) I've been very shaken by what you said – that I've been exploiting people for my own political ends. I've seen myself as a fighter in a just cause, but I don't know. I've been in this struggle for years now, and we still don't seem to be any nearer our goal. Your people don't trust me; my husband and son aren't speaking to one another – I don't know what to do, or where to go from here.

Mrs BROWNE Why don't you pray about it? Ask the good Lord what to do next? As the scripture says, 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you' – Matthew 7, verse 8.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Half laughing*) I might have guessed you'd say something like that! I have no religion, Mrs Browne. I have a great respect for Jesus Christ, as a man, of course. But I think God is just a myth. Now, how can I ask for help from someone I don't believe in?

Mrs BROWNE Don't you believe in anything?

Mrs JENNINGS I believe that man has got to stand on his own feet and work out his own destiny. That's what Marxism taught me. You look surprised. I was a party member for years; I resigned when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, but I'm still a Marxist. It's the only possible route to economic justice. More coffee?

Mrs BROWNE Thank you. (*Economic arguments leave her cold. She returns to the subject she cares for – families*) Tell me, why does John hate his daddy so much?

Mrs JENNINGS It's a long story. You know my Tom drinks rather

a lot? Well, there was a terrible night five or six years ago – he'd got an unofficial strike on his hands – had a bit too much and then came home late to find John nagging him to give him money to buy a motorbike. Well, Tom hit the roof. He blurted out that John's birth had been a financial disaster to us. My goodness, it was too, but we'd never have dreamt of telling John – not until Tom got drunk. I could have killed him that night.

Mrs BROWNE What did John say?

Mrs JENNINGS Nothing at the time, and it went out of my head, but from things he's let slip lately, I realise it went very deep with him – made him feel unwanted and despised. That and being unemployed.

Mrs BROWNE Perhaps that's why he feels that he has to be so militant, to justify his existence. . .

Mrs JENNINGS (*This remark catches Mrs Jennings on the raw and she reacts with force*) Not at all – of course not. He's always had a social conscience – we brought him up to care. It makes me so angry, this arrogant idea that people are militant because of some psychological hang-up or personal grievance. Do you think you Christians have the monopoly of sincerity and honest care? (*She sees Mrs Browne's face*) I'm sorry. Hell's teeth, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have blown off at you like that, but the truth is that you throw me off balance, and I end up questioning the reason for everything I do. (*Mrs Browne opens her mouth to say something*) And if you quote the Bible at me once more, I'll scream!

Mrs BROWNE (*Laughing*) All right, no more scripture. Does Tom still drink too much?

Mrs JENNINGS Only when he's under pressure. He'll go months without touching a drop and then things will get on top of him and he'll go out and get stoned. He didn't drink at all when we first got married – came from a Methodist family, his dad was a lay preacher.

Here, this is us – (*Shows an old wedding photo*)  
Hard up but happy, that was us. Had more hair in  
those days! (*Another photo*) And this is the town  
Leek Growers Club! Leek growing's the religion  
round here – the fuss they make about it. One of  
the contestants had his leeks stolen just before the  
judging day last year – did you see about it on the  
telly? It was the top news item – you'd have thought  
it was the great train robbery! I think Tom loves  
his leeks almost as much as his lads at the factory.  
I've always felt I had to be the tough one of the  
family. (*Front door bell rings*) Excuse me. (*We hear  
her conversation with someone at the door and then  
John tiptoes into the room, hushing Mrs Browne, who  
is watching in amazement. He tries to listen to the  
conversation outside the room*)

Mrs BROWNE John – what? . . .

JOHN Sssh, I want to hear. (*Listens*) Right. Look, Mrs  
Browne, I've not been here; you've not seen me,  
right? Promise.

Mrs BROWNE John, I. . . .

JOHN Please, Mrs Browne.

Mrs BROWNE All right, but what's it all about?

JOHN I'll explain later – but please don't tell Mum. OK?

Mrs BROWNE OK. (*John tiptoes out*)

Mrs JENNINGS (*Entering*) That was the police, asking for John. I  
could wring his neck!

Mrs BROWNE What's he done?

Mrs JENNINGS It seems that this morning he and some of his mates  
got inside the upper school playground and started  
putting pressure on the kids to join the SWOP  
march. Mrs Clarke Jones telephoned for the police,  
but the prefects had already got them out.

Mrs BROWNE Cornelius!



Mrs JENNINGS Yes, Cornelius. It would be funny if it weren't so awful. Your son having to throw my son out of the school playground! (*Laughs wryly*) I thought he was looking a bit battered when he came in for lunch. I told him not to go near the school until the day of the march.

Mrs BROWNE I wanted to ask you, I still don't understand why you are so determined to take our people past the school – you could avoid it, you could use Sutherland Avenue? . . .

Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Browne. . . .

Mrs BROWNE Please call me Hazel.

Mrs JENNINGS Hazel, all right. I'm Rose, by the way. Hazel, there are some fairly complex reasons for this, which I don't need to go into at length. Did you know that I had been put up as a Governor for that school? Well, I've been a Borough Councillor, I've done a lot in community relations, I was a fairly obvious candidate. But I was turned down because of my politics. So you see, I've been discriminated against too.

Mrs BROWNE And you still feel very bitter?

Mrs JENNINGS There's a lot more to it than that, but yes I do. Very bitter.

Mrs BROWNE How terrible!

Mrs JENNINGS Nothing terrible about it. It's justified.

Mrs BROWNE Even when it hurts those people you love most?

Mrs JENNINGS (*Sharply*) What do you mean?

Mr JENNINGS (*Off*) Rose! Rose! (*Entering, angry and a bit drunk*) Rose, did you know about this Jameson Scott affair?

Mrs JENNINGS What about it . . . what's happened? . . .

Mr JENNINGS . . . don't pretend you don't know. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS Know what?

Mr JENNINGS John and a mob of Trots wormed their way into the Scotts canteen yesterday . . . distributing leaflets and recruiting for FOG.

Mrs JENNINGS . . . but I told him to go through you to the shop stewards.

Mr JENNINGS You weren't born yesterday. You knew if he went there he'd bypass me. They'll do anything to make me look a fool on the shop floor. I've had Bill Clarke on the phone . . . the convenor . . . blistering my ears . . . well I'm not going to make it easy for that bunch, worming their way in everywhere, undermining the whole labour movement . . . and you encourage him.

Mrs JENNINGS . . . I don't. . . .

Mr JENNINGS . . . going behind my back, undermining everything I do . . . and you encourage him. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS He's *not* undermining you . . . not deliberately. . . .

Mr JENNINGS . . . he knows what he's doing.

Mrs JENNINGS They're young, Tom, and idealistic . . . they're doing it for the SWOP march. . . . (*She waves a bunch of SWOP leaflets at him*)

Mr JENNINGS SWOP, SWOP, SWOP . . . it's SWOP everything . . . you'd swop me if it suited you. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS . . . don't be ridiculous. . . .

Mr JENNINGS Ridiculous, ridiculous . . . that's what you think of me (*He either grabs the leaflets from her, tears them up or sweeps a whole lot of the leaflets off the table onto the floor*) . . . well that's what I think of this whole SWOP affair. . . .

*Mrs Browne has risen and is standing looking scared.*

Mrs JENNINGS I'm sorry, Hazel . . . (*Whispers*) he's had a drop. . . .

Mr JENNINGS . . . and don't apologise for me, I'll say what I like in my own home. . . .

*Mrs Browne picks up the coffee cups and retreats to the kitchen. There is a silence.*

*Mr Jennings slumps into a chair.*

Mrs JENNINGS (*With resignation*) Tom, you're stoned out of your mind.

Mr JENNINGS (*Bitterly*) No . . . I've just had enough. . . . I've worked my guts out to give John the best . . . everything *we* didn't have as kids, and now he despises his father, well this Scotts thing is the end. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS Go easy on him, Tom, he feels you never wanted him . . . that you don't care for him. . . .

Mr JENNINGS He's always run to you hasn't he . . . and you encourage him. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS You've said that three times already. . . .

Mr JENNINGS (*His anger rising again*) I'll say it twenty times if I have to . . . I've had enough . . . you don't give a damn about me Rose, you don't give a damn about my meals, my men . . . did you water those leeks?

Mrs JENNINGS (*She hasn't*) I'm sorry . . . I've had Mrs Browne here and. . . .

Mr JENNINGS Every black in the country comes before me (*Mrs Jennings makes frantic signs to indicate that Mrs Browne is in the kitchen*) . . . and don't dictate to me what I may say in my own house . . . you worry about their feelings, don't you? . . . well what about mine? (*He looks about him*) Indians! Chinese? . . . women's libbers? . . . nuclear crackpots? . . . they all come before me . . . this house is like a flaming campaign office. . . . (*Rose is in despair*) . . . where are the car keys? . . .

*Her eyes go to where the keys are on the dresser but she is not going to tell him.*

Mrs JENNINGS . . . where are you going?

Mr JENNINGS . . . out . . . out of this house. . . .

*He has found the keys.*

Mrs JENNINGS Tom . . . you can't go like this. . . .

Mr JENNINGS Leave me alone, Rose. . . . (*He makes for the door*)

Mrs JENNINGS Tom . . . Tom . . . come back. . . .

Mr JENNINGS (*Pausing*) . . . don't assume I'm coming back.

*He leaves and we hear the car drive off at speed. Rose is shattered. . . .*

Mrs JENNINGS Dear God . . . what have I done. . . ? (*She looks towards the kitchen area*) Hazel . . . I'm sorry . . . he didn't mean it . . . he's been drinking. . . . (*Sharply*) Hazel. . . ? (*She rushes into the kitchen*) . . . Oh no. . . . (*She comes slowly back on . . . despair! . . . Tom has walked out on her, Hazel has gone . . . she sits down at the table again*)  
Dear God . . . show me what to do. . . .

*FADE OUT*

ACT 2 Scene 2

*Spotlight comes up on John. He has a satchel full of leaflets and is giving them out on a street corner.*

*(This can be staged by John coming up through the audience)*

JOHN           Join the anti-fascist march.  
                  Protect your rights, protect your freedom.  
                  Join the anti-fascist march.

                  Yes mate, gathering at the park at eleven, everyone's  
                  welcome. Join us on the route if you can't make  
                  the whole time.

                  Join the anti-fascist march.  
                  Protect the rights of our black brothers.  
                  Decent education for all our kids,  
                  Join the anti-fascist march.

                  Alright, you stupid Tory cow, throw it back in my  
                  face.  
                  You don't know what's coming to you. . . .

                  Join the anti-fascist march.  
                  Solidarity with all working people.  
                  Solidarity with the world's oppressed.  
                  Join the anti-fascist march.

                  Alright, you blue tie, toffee nose, turn your eyes  
                  away.  
                  I'm an embarrassment. Step aside, turn away. I'm  
                  the unemployed. . . .

                  Join the anti-fascist march,  
                  Fight discrimination, fight depression,  
                  A fair deal for our children, *now*

*We get the feeling that fewer and fewer people are taking leaflets and listening to him.*

Bloody hypocrites, they don't give a damn.

They've got a meal.  
Others can cry for it.  
They've got a job,  
You're out in the wind.

I'm a human being, not a can of beer,  
Drink me dry and throw me away!  
Not a plastic cup to end up on the garbage.  
Listen, listen to the cry of the dustbin generation.

Listen, you lot who sit in offices,  
You talking heads who make decisions.  
I don't want to end up on the dump of the City  
Cleansing Department.

Listen to the cry of the dustbin generation.  
*(More quietly, addressing an unseen presence in the night sky)*

I want a job, I want a place.  
I want something to do.  
I want the world to listen because I am me. . . .

I want a goal that is worth it.  
I want to make a difference.  
I want a world of justice.  
I want a destiny.

*(Back to the bitter note)*

Listen, you lot who sit in offices,  
You talking heads who make decisions,  
I don't want to end up on the dump of the City  
Cleansing Department.  
Listen, listen to the cry of the dustbin generation.

**BLACKOUT**

ACT 2 Scene 3

*Back in the study of the headmistress of East Moor School. It is the day of the demo. Mrs Clarke Jones is going through lists. Mr Varma is stationed at the window. They are both fairly tense.*

Mrs CJ Adam, Allan, Anson . . . he should manage at least two B's. Austin – He's been a real trouble maker this term. Any sign?

Mr VARMA Nothing yet. Family trouble, I'm afraid. His dad walked out on them last year, and mother has installed a new boy friend.

Mrs CJ Oh, dear, that would account for it. If only parents knew what it does to them. Bailey, Barnes . . . we've done our best for those two, but their parents will blame us if they don't get their A's. I'm finding it almost impossible to concentrate.

Mr VARMA It's the waiting, isn't it?

Mrs CJ I remember during the war, we had these buzz bombs – they were a sort of pilotless plane. There was a moment after the engine went off and before the explosion – the waiting was awful.

Mr VARMA I was hoping the police were going to re-route them.

Mrs CJ Apparently that would have taken them through the Rosebay Housing Estate.

Mr VARMA Ah, the middle of the West Indian community. . . .

Mrs CJ I notice that Cornelius and Suresh are getting on much better.

Mr VARMA Ah, good. They must have taken my little lecture to heart. I have always maintained that a spirit of co-operation. . . . (*The telephone rings*)

Mrs CJ

Yes? Yes, Chief Inspector, yes, I can assure you that we have all the children safe inside the school, and I have staff on every door. How big is it? The British League about three thousand and the Society for World Oppressed People about five thousand? I see. And you are going to be able to keep them apart? I see. Well, thank you for your warning. (*Putting down phone*) I had such hopes for this school when I took the job. About the same time I was offered a very well-known girls school in Hampshire. It was very tempting. But I wanted to come back up here and try to improve the educational chances of the children in this city. I was born up here you know. There was a lot of unemployment about in those days, too. It's tragic really, we seem to have come full circle. (*The telephone rings again*)

Yes? Who? Mrs Jennings and Mrs Browne, in your office? No, no, there's no way I can see them today. Tell them to make a date for next week. Urgent? About the march? No, no, I have no intention of giving that Jennings woman any quarter whatsoever. She is one of the organisers of this march and . . . look, I'm sorry. I don't care how insistent they are, the answer is *NO!*

Mr VARMA

I think you should see them.

Mrs CJ

(*To Mr Varma*) Mrs Jennings is a rabid communist. She is behind the whole thing.

Mr VARMA

All the more reason for you to see her and hear what she has to say.

Mrs CJ

(*Cutting in*) I don't trust her. (*Into phone*) One moment, Miss Phillips. (*Back to Mr. Varma*) It might be some very devious plan to get into the school.

Mr VARMA

She's not with the marchers, you notice. And she has got a daughter at the school. In my experience of these kind of troubles it is better to listen to what people have to say, maintain an open mind whatever the circumstances.



Mrs CJ                    (*After thought*) Very well. Miss Phillips, all right, send them up. And will you tell the staff to keep the children away from the windows, especially on the east side. Thank you. Well, I wonder what this is all about. (*Mr Varma begins to put chairs in place for the two visitors*) Please don't go. I always feel the need of every reinforcement I can muster when confronted by this Jennings woman.

Mr VARMA              You don't care for her?

Mrs CJ                    She's a mystery to me. I get on well with most of the other parents, but I always feel waves of dislike coming my way whenever I meet her.

Mr VARMA              She always very friendly to me.

Mrs CJ                    Of course she is, Mohan, you're one of the immigrant community! You're persona grata with that kind of woman. Me, I'm a wasp, the wicked middle-class white! It's the new type of snobbery.

Mr VARMA              Does it bother you?

Mrs CJ                    It irritates me! I think it's all so mindless – this interminable preoccupation with outdated class concepts.

*After a brief knock, Mrs Jennings and Mrs Browne storm on.*

Mrs JENNINGS (*As she enters*) Mrs Clarke Jones? Mrs Clarke Jones, I have to have your permission to use your public address system!

Mrs CJ                    I beg your pardon?

Mrs JENNINGS (*Impatiently*) You have a public address system that reaches the playground and can be heard up and down the road. I had hoped to call the SWOP march off – but the machinery was rolling, it was all too far gone. So I am asking you for a chance to address our marchers through your system.

Mrs CJ                    (*Slowly*) I am quite stunned by the effrontery of this request. You are one of the main movers behind

this Society for World Oppressed Peoples. You initiated this march . . . a demonstration which appears to have been deliberately contrived to create conflict in my school. A school, Mrs Jennings, where you yourself have a daughter, where innocent children may get hurt. And you have the audacity to come here and ask to use my address system to harangue your marchers? I am speechless!

- Mrs JENNINGS Mrs Clarke Jones, I appreciate that this must seem to you an extraordinary request. But I have had a considerable turn round in my views this last week. (*Desperately*) Look, I'm telling you what I know. I have information that the League are planning to rush your gates and plant their racial banner over your sixth form centre.
- Mrs CJ (*Sharply*) How do you know this?
- Mrs JENNINGS We have had one of our own people infiltrate them.
- Mrs CJ Go on.
- Mrs JENNINGS Well, we had planned to get there first, to use the situation. You must let me speak to the marchers.
- Mrs CJ Mr Varma, get on to the police tell them this. . . ! (*He exits*)
- Mrs JENNINGS The police may be able to stop the break-in but not the violence in front of your gates. I think I may be the only one who can do that. Please, I'm asking you to let me have a try. . . .
- Mrs CJ This is an affair for the police, crowd control is their job. And nothing I know of your character or motives would persuade me to trust you with my school address system.
- Mrs BROWNE You've got to tell her, Rose. You must tell her.
- Mrs CJ Tell me what?
- Mrs JENNINGS There isn't time, they're coming up the hill. They'll be here in minutes.

Mrs BROWNE It's the only way.

Mrs CJ What is all this about?

Mrs JENNINGS (*Making a very difficult decision*) Does St Jude's Terrace mean anything to you?

Mrs CJ Yes, I lived there as a child.

Mrs JENNINGS So did I.

Mrs CJ You lived there?

Mrs JENNINGS Yes, I did. Your father was the local doctor.

Mrs CJ He was.

Mrs JENNINGS (*With steady deliberation*) I lived at the working class end of that street. My dad was unemployed, my mother had pneumonia. We hadn't paid your father's bills. We couldn't – no health service in those days. My mother got worse and worse, but she wouldn't ask for your father to come. Dad went away south, looking for work. In the end I had to send for your father. He came through our gate and I rushed out to him. He said, you've called for me at seven o'clock in the morning, and you haven't paid your last bill yet. Half an hour later I was in the kitchen and he came in and said, I'm afraid your mother's dead. And walked out.

Mrs CJ Walked out!

Mrs JENNINGS I was fourteen. I had to tell my younger brother and sister, had to try to reach Dad. I was here at East Moor School at the time.

Mrs CJ What was your name?

Mrs JENNINGS Blake, Rose Blake.

Mrs CJ My God! Rose Blake!

Mrs JENNINGS (*Passionately*) It was the indifference, Mrs Clarke Jones, that was so hard to take. The middle class indifference to what we were suffering down our end of the street. I was teased at school for my tatty

clothes and my shoes with holes in them. Up your end of the street I could see the mothers going home with their bulging shopping baskets – down our end of the street we were often desperate as to how to buy food at all! And in the end, you won the scholarship to university that I had hoped to get.

Mrs CJ           (*Very shaken*) I don't know what to say . . . I don't know what to say.

Mrs JENNINGS   Mrs Clarke Jones, I resented your appointment to this school. I felt that you were the wrong person to take care of children who were the victims of race and class discrimination, deprived children. But in this last week, I have found out that many people feel about me exactly the same way as I feel about you. It's made me question the motive for everything I do. Because of the past, I have tried to discredit you in this town at almost any cost, and it's been wrong. That's why I'm here, to try and stop any more. . . .

*During this the noise of the demonstration has grown and they are interrupted by a loud chant:*

England for the English,  
Niggers out, niggers out.

England for the English,  
Niggers out, niggers out.

*And the SWOP cry:*

No discrimination in East Moor School  
Fascists, fascists, kill, kill, kill.

No discrimination in East Moor School  
Racists, racists, kill, kill, kill.

*The chanting and shouting grows. There is a sound of breaking glass and fighting. Pat rushes in closely followed by Suresh, Cornelius and Mr Varma.*

PAT               Miss, miss, my brother – they're killing him!

Mrs CJ           What's this?

PAT                   *(In tears)* My brother John. Some of the League have broken into the yard. My brother got in too and is fighting them. They're ten to one out there. Let me go – please let me go and get him out of it. . . !

Mrs CJ               The police?

CORNELIUS       The police are holding the gates. They can't help. Let me go!

Mrs CJ               *(Taking charge)* Mr Varma, get five of the toughest men on the staff – get Bonner and Trent. Get them out there to hold off the Leaguers and get the Jennings boy out. Cornelius! No you – you'll be a target *(They are already rushing to the door)* Not you Pat – Cornelius, don't let Pat get hurt!

Mrs JENNINGS   Pat, come back!

Mrs CJ               *(Shouting after them)* Cornelius, don't let Pat get hurt! Suresh, put Mrs Jennings onto the public address system. Turn it up high so that will reach the road. *(Mrs. Jennings is standing bewildered)* Go on, Rose, it's what you wanted, isn't it? *(Suresh hurries Mrs Jennings out of the room. Mrs Browne and Mrs Clarke Jones go to the window to watch)*

Mrs CJ               Dear God, don't let anyone get hurt. Can you see anything?

Mrs BROWNE      No, it's all around the corner.

*The public address system comes on crackling with Mrs Jennings voice.*

Mrs JENNINGS   Comrades, move on now. This is Rose Jennings, your SWOP president speaking. Move on now. Stewards move everyone on. The war's over. Everybody get moving down Fulham Street. Stewards, move everyone on now. Get going, everyone. On you go, down Fulham Street. *(Then she begins to sing 'We shall overcome'.)*

*Gradually the crowd takes up the tune and we hear the tramp of marching feet.*

Mrs BROWNE They're moving – they're marching away! I can just see them going down Fulham Street. She's done it!

Mrs CJ Thank God.

Mrs BROWNE Praise the Lord!

*There is a commotion in the passage. Mr Jennings and Mr Varma enter, supporting Cornelius, who has blood down the side of his head.*

Mrs BROWNE Oh, Lord, what's happened? Cornelius?

Mr JENNINGS We were trying to get John out – Cornelius was fighting like a tiger, with bricks and bottles flying everywhere. Then something caught him –

CORNELIUS (*Very confused*) I'm all right. I feel sick. (*Loses consciousness*)

Mrs BROWNE My God. Lay him on his side. His skull is fractured. . . .

Mrs CJ (*To Mr Varma*) Have you sent for the ambulance?  
(*He nods*)

*Mr Jennings kneels down to ease Cornelius' position.*

Mrs BROWNE (*Fiercely*) Don't touch him. Don't touch him.

*We hear ambulance sirens as lights fade. Newsbroadcast fades in:*

NEWSCASTER ' . . . and following the clash in the grounds of East Moor School sporadic fighting has broken out in several districts of the city. Shops were broken into and looted, several cars were set on fire and petrol bombs, bricks and bottles caused extensive damage. Two policemen were severely hurt and are still in hospital. The coloured youth injured during fighting on the school premises is still in a critical condition. Police report that within the city, everything is now under control. . . . '

*Broadcast fades as lights come up on hospital reception area.*

ACT 2 Scene 4

*Nurse/Receptionist enters. She stops and replies to someone in the wings.*

NURSE           Outpatients? Down the passage, third turning to the left.

*John enters from opposite direction. Hesitant and unhappy, he looks around.*

JOHN            Er . . . Miss . . . Sister . . . excuse me. . . .

*Nurse takes no notice as she goes off. His eyes follow her. She re-enters.*

JOHN            Er, could you tell me. . . .

NURSE           Be with you in one moment. *(She crosses stage and is heard talking off)* I'm afraid you're in the wrong block for radiography. It's across the road, down an alley and on your right. *(Re-enters crossing in front of John)*

JOHN            Sister, Nurse, could you tell me please how Cornelius Browne is?

NURSE           *(Stopping reluctantly)* Browne . . . which ward is he in?

JOHN            I don't know. He was brought in yesterday from the riots, with head injuries.

NURSE           Well, wait here and I'll see what I can find out for you. *(Exits)*

*John sits down and waits. Tom Jennings enters. He is surprised to see John there, takes it in and then crosses to sit with him.*

Mr JENNINGS   Any news?

*John shakes his head and they both sit in silence.*

Mr JENNINGS   *(Gloomily)* Your mother, she's taking this very hard.

JOHN                   It's different when it's someone you know.

*Phone rings, nurse re-enters and answers it. Tom and John watch her in apprehensive silence.*

NURSE                Have you got an appointment? Well, the way is quite clearly marked. Follow the signs. Take the lift to the third floor and you'll see the waiting room ahead of you. *(Crosses to the Jennings)* Browne, Cornelius. Yes, he's in intensive care.

JOHN                 Is he . . . how is he?

NURSE                His condition is stable and he is as well as can be expected under the circumstances.

JOHN                 What the hell does that mean!

NURSE                I'm afraid that's all I can tell you.

JOHN                 Is he – will he be all right?

NURSE                *(Her silence speaks volumes, then she adds brightly)* I'm sorry, but you can't see him. Only his mother is allowed to be with him. Shall I tell her who called?

JOHN                 No, no. Don't tell her. Thanks. *(The nurse leaves. John turns to go. His father follows him and puts his hand on John's shoulder in a gesture of sympathy)*

*FADE*



ACT 2 Scene 5

*Lights come up on the Browne sitting room. Mrs Browne is setting out a tray of lime juice. Mrs Jennings enters with plate and cake. She rings the front door bell.*

Mrs BROWNE (*Slightly reluctant*) Oh, Rose, come in.

Mrs JENNINGS I've brought a little offering. My kids love chocolate cake, so I thought perhaps. . . .

Mrs BROWNE Thank you, you shouldn't have troubled. (*Mrs Jennings stands uncertainly in the middle of the room*) You never came to see me, Rose, all these months. You never even 'phoned. Pat came, all his friends from school, Tom came, and John. But you never came.

Mrs JENNINGS I . . . I . . . oh, my God, Hazel, I thought you'd never want to set eyes on me again. I didn't know how to look you in the face. I felt so responsible for the whole incident and for the terrible consequences.

Mrs BROWNE (*Automatically*) You mustn't blame yourself – it was an accident.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Fiercely*) Please don't say that Hazel, don't let me off the hook. I planned that march, I routed it. All my life I've shoved the blame somewhere else – the police, the system, Tom, anywhere but where it belonged. These past weeks have been a nightmare. The violence, the suffering and the avalanche of hate – and it's what I planned for! 'Violence is the mid-wife of the new world order'! I believed it, God help me, but I never dreamt the victim would be the son of the friend to whom I owe most.

Mrs BROWNE Please stop. I don't want to talk about it, I don't

want to talk about that day or the riots or Cornelius.  
I just don't want to talk.

Mrs JENNINGS I'm sorry. Would you like me to go?

Mrs BROWNE No. (*Long silence*)

Mrs JENNINGS (*Tentatively*) Can I do anything useful?

Mrs BROWNE No (*In tears*) It's been terrible these last months, Rose. I was so scared he was going to die. I watched him lying there with his head all covered in bandages, not knowing his own mum. And I thought, 'Lord, Lord, where are you?' and there seemed to be no answer. Dark, bitter thoughts kept crowding into my mind like crows, hating thoughts, wicked thoughts. I said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan' but they kept coming back. 'Why my son?' I thought. 'Why did it have to happen to my boy?' Then one day it seemed like the Lord was saying, I gave my Son – He suffered too. That was the day he came out of the coma. That was the day I knew the Lord had not forgotten us. But it's like I've been in deep waters, Rose and they nearly came over the top and drowned me.

Mrs JENNINGS But he's all right? . . . after effects?

Mrs BROWNE (*Soberly*) They don't know, Rose. It always takes time with the head injuries. The Consultant, he come and look at him yesterday and give him the OK to come home, but he said it'll be two years before he's really recovered . . . and maybe he'll have some troubles from it all his life.

Mrs JENNINGS Oh my God. . . .

Mrs BROWNE He's . . . slower . . . he can't read so well and it's no more sports for him. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS . . . cricket?

Mrs BROWNE (*Shakes her head*) . . . he's taking that very hard.

Mrs JENNINGS I've been praying . . . me the atheist . . . the *ex*

atheist . . . I've been praying that Cornelius would recover and that God would forgive me, and that you would too.

Mrs BROWNE Of course I forgive you, Rose. Do you think the Lord hasn't been speaking to me too? Me and my folks, we've got to stop blaming the whites for everything. We've got to stop excusing the looting and stealing. . . .

Mrs JENNINGS Hazel, you mustn't blame those kids too much – this is a very deprived area, and they've got nothing to do all day.

Mrs BROWNE No, now I say it to you: don't let us off the hook! Looting is looting, stealing, and violence is violence. You make us into second class citizens if you think we don't know right from wrong.

Mrs JENNINGS (*Taken aback*) Oh!

*Door bell rings and Pat rushes in with some flowers*

PAT Hello, it's me. I've got some flowers to welcome the hero home. Hello, Mum. Isn't it great he's coming home at last! Do you know, even that thug, Billy James, gave three pence towards flowers for Cornelius! 3p! What a concession! Suresh is going to look in, too. (*Door bells rings*) Oh, talk of the devil! (*Suresh enters with flowers*) Aren't they gorgeous!

SURESH Wait a moment, there's a bunch from the school as well, and a present from Mrs Clarke Jones – a record. (*Looking at it*) Well up in the charts, too. What do you know! And a book from Mr Varma.

*Enter Cornelius, John, Mr Jennings. Everyone sings 'When the Saints come Marching In'.*

CORNELIUS Well, well, well. Look at everyone come to welcome the old cripple home. Oh, my! Look at all those beautiful flowers! Looks like a wedding. You got some blushing bride for me hidden under those

daisies, Suresh? Come on out, sweetheart, I won't bite you! Oh, Mum. . . . (*Hugs her*)

Mrs BROWNE Good to have you home, son.

CORNELIUS Oh my, she's crying . . . my mum's the best old mummy in the world! Thought you'd have been glad to have old trouble man out of the house for a bit! I'm to sit here? Oh, ho, ho! Seat of honour, eh? I'm going to get my head bashed in more often if this is the treatment it gets me at home.

Mrs BROWNE You got trouble with the swollen head more ways than one, my lad.

CORNELIUS Wow! Everybody's here! Chocolate cake too . . . oh yes please, a big piece. Yeah man, everybody's here . . . we've got the whole committee of the SFPWA.

JOHN The what. . . !

PAT The Society for Putting the World Aright, that's us.

Mrs BROWNE You want to join?

JOHN Er . . . I'll think about that!

PAT Any words of wisdom for us, Mr President?

CORNELIUS Oh sister, you've really put me on the spot. Well, there's still quite a bit of righting to be done right here . . . what you say Suresh?

SURESH (*With conviction*) I'd say, let's keep going, we only just got started. (*He hands a book and a record to Cornelius, everyone has settled down with their bits of 'eats'*)

PAT I second that. . . .

CORNELIUS A record from Clarky Jones! Now that's really nice of her (*He peers at the record, but cannot read it, shows it to Suresh who names the record . . . something trendy*) What about that . . . thought the old girl 'd know nobody but Mozart.

SURESH And a book from Mr. Varma.

PAT                   Bet it's about Gandhi.

CORNELIUS       (*Opening it*) No, it about Martin Luther King. Some man that. (*Reads slowly . . . with difficulty*) Martin Luther King, 1926 to 1968. 'I have a dream. . . . (*It is hard for him, he hands the book to Suresh*)

SURESH           Go on, you can do it (*Gives the book back. The lights focus down on the two young men*)

CORNELIUS       'I have a dream. I have a dream that some day this nation will rise up and live the true meaning of its creed. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skins, but by the content of their character. (*With growing confidence in his voice*) I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exhalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low . . . and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it . . . together.'

*BLACKOUT*

*CURTAIN*