

ROUGH SLEEPERS - AUDITIONS

Auditions will be held on Monday 20th and Wednesday 22nd May, 7.00-9.00pm, at the Carriageworks.

Come to the bar on Level 3 on either evening at a time convenient to you. Someone will be there to meet you and take your details. You will be heard as soon as possible.

Auditions for speaking parts - Captain, Sylvia, Col Megginson, Mrs Megginson, Brenda and Charlie - will require the auditionee to perform (with script in hand) one of the scenes below.

The scenes chosen for Col Megginson, Mrs Megginson and Charlie take the form of a dialogue with another character. That character's lines will be spoken by a member of the audition panel.

Auditions for non-speaking parts - The Dead (3m, 1f) and Lucy - will consist only of a discussion of the nature of the part, its physical demands, costume, make-up and rehearsal schedule.

CAPTAIN

Now, where shall I go to get my breakfast? I'm hungry after my good night's sleep. Where shall I go? Any suggestions, Mrs Byram? What would you have said if I'd come to your door and asked if you could spare me a bite to eat? You wouldn't have turned me away, would you? People didn't then. I would have been expected to earn it of course, doing odd jobs. Odd jobs! Those were the days. The disappearance of odd jobs has changed the face of Britain. Take it from me, the women who used to open the door to you in those days had no end of jobs to do. They were always happy to give one to someone like me in exchange for a bacon sandwich.

(Pause.)

The odd jobs have all gone now, what with vacuum cleaners and automatic washing machines and tumble dryers and dish washers and ride-on lawn mowers and leaf blowers and what not. There's been an odd job revolution. It began across the Atlantic, came here, then spread like a plague all over Europe and beyond.

(Short pause.)

Western Europe anyway. They probably still have odd jobs in Poland.

(Pause.)

There was a time when feeding men like me was like feeding the birds. It was something the woman of the house used to do out of the kindness of her heart. Or the housekeeper or the cook.

(Short pause.)

They don't even feed the birds now like they used to do. They used to feed them with scraps and left-overs. Now they have special bird food that they buy from garden centres and put in bird feeders. Bird feeders! That's no good to me, is it? In the old days, the birds got the rind and I got the fat and a bit of the bacon. I can see the farmer's wife now, cutting up the rind with her scissors and throwing it out of the door. My bit of fat bacon's sizzling in the pan and I'm outside sweeping up the leaves or washing the windows. Bird feeders!

SYLVIA

(Addressing the audience as if speaking to children in a school assembly.)

Good morning, children! It's lovely to see you all! I can see you're dying to go back to your classrooms and start work. You are, aren't you? Aren't you?

(Puts her hand to her ear as if waiting for them to answer.)

Of course you are! Well, I promise not to keep you long, but Mrs Byram has very kindly asked me to come and talk to you in assembly this morning. You know who I am, don't you? I know some of you do, because I've seen some of you in church. I've seen you, haven't I, Emma? Hello, Emma! But even if you haven't seen me in church, you still know who I am, don't you? How do you know?

(Short pause, waiting for someone to answer. Touches her collar to give them a clue.)

Ah, yes! Lots of hands going up now!

(Picks someone out.)

Yes? You. Yes?

(Waits a moment, then nods vigorously.)

That's right! Easy, wasn't it? I'm the vicar of St Mary's. The new vicar, which is why some of you haven't seen me before. I'm sure you all knew the vicar before me, didn't you. Can you remember his name? Yes, of course! Mr Jenkins. The Reverend Gilbert Jenkins. Well, Mr Jenkins has retired now and I've taken his place. Mrs Byram told you my name when she introduced me, didn't she? Can you remember? That's right! Reverend Sylvia Collingwood. But I much prefer to be called by my first name. That's easier, isn't it? Shall we practise? Ready? Good morning, children.

(Puts her hand to her ear.)

Come on! I'm sure you can do better than that. Good morning, children.

(Puts her hand to her ear again.)

Good morning, Sylvia!

(Pause.)

Now, children, I wonder if anyone has noticed anything different about me? Different from Mr Jenkins, I mean. Anyone?

(Waits for an answer.)

That's right! I'm a woman. There was a time when only men could be vicars, wasn't there? But now anyone can be a vicar and there are quite a lot of other women in other parishes in this diocese, but I'm the first one to be vicar here. So I hope all you girls will make the most of your opportunities now and do whatever you want to do in life, just the same as the boys. Anything they can do, you can do... just as well!

BRENDA

(Talking to someone on her mobile phone hands free, walking to and fro.)

No! ... Really? ... Who? ... No! Where? ... I don't think I do, no. Where is it? ... Oh, yes! I know! ... On her horse? ... I know, yes.... Only once. Gave me a sore arse. Anyway, go on. What did she see? ... I thought you said she was on her horse. That's like being on a double decker bus, isn't it? ...Go on... I wish she'd seen them. You've no idea who it was? ... Perhaps it was Reggie... I don't know. Planning the wedding? ... Well, it would be different... You mean all she heard was the voices? ... Even so... It was definitely her then? Jenny Byram? ... Whoever it was, he was definitely talking to her? ... I know, yes... Yes... Well, obviously... Why else would she be meeting a man in a graveyard? ... Neither can I, but you never know... There might be some perfectly innocent explanation... Caroline, you had the filthiest mind of anyone at the Girls' High School and you haven't changed a bit... Honestly, Caroline! ... I wish she'd been able to see them. Tell her to go on a bigger horse next time or stand up on her stirrups or something... What? ... Oh, Caroline, you're a hoot, you really are! ...Honestly! ... Of course I won't tell anyone... Who else have you told? ... Lorna? ... Caroline, I don't believe you! You know what she's like! It'll be halfway round the village by now... Just a minute, there's another call coming in.

(Taking her mobile phone out of her handbag.)

What do you bet it's her ringing to tell me?

(Looks at mobile phone.)

No, it's only Charlie. I'll ring him back.

(Putting mobile phone away, walking out.)

Go on. What else did she hear? ... I know. Me too... Of course I won't. You know what Charlie's like...

COLONEL MEGGINSON

(Enter COL MEGGINSON holding a whisky glass and a sherry glass.)

COL MEGGINSON *(Calling to his wife.)*

Here's your sherry, darling. Sorry I'm late. Charlie phoned. Kept me talking.

(Enter MRS MEGGINSON, taking off her gardening gloves. COL MEGGINSON holds out the sherry glass.)

MRS MEGGINSON *(As if to a child who has to have everything explained to him.)*

Just put it down until I can take it, dear.

(COL MEGGINSON looks round for somewhere to put it. MRS MEGGINSON puts her gloves on the bench and takes the sherry glass from him.)

What did Charlie want?

COL MEGGINSON Wanted to know if he could go a bit over budget on the fireworks.

MRS MEGGINSON What did you say?

COL MEGGINSON He said it was for one of those rockets that go off in stages, you know, when you think it's all over and then there's another one, and another, and another. Different colours. Oohs and aahs all over the park. You know the kind of thing. Grand finale.

MRS MEGGINSON He does it very well.

COL MEGGINSON Ah yes, but it has to be better every time, you see. That's the thing. Has to outdo himself.

MRS MEGGINSON It's what everyone expects. Charlie's fireworks are legendary.

COL MEGGINSON "It's simple economics, George," he said. "Invest in the fireworks, you make more on the hog roast." Well, I could see the sense in that. I didn't take much persuading. It wasn't a lot he wanted anyway.

MRS MEGGINSON All the same, he has to get your approval, doesn't he? You are the chairman after all. Or do you have to consult the committee?

COL MEGGINSON Oh no. Executive decision. It's in the constitution.

(Pause.)

MRS MEGGINSON You won't forget the privet, will you?

COL MEGGINSON What? Oh yes. I was meaning to say.

MRS MEGGINSON What?

COL MEGGINSON I was going to do it yesterday, when you were out for your Ladies' Lunch. I went to get the shears and I couldn't find them. I thought you must have moved them.

MRS MEGGINSON Why on earth would I do that? Where did you look?

COL MEGGINSON In the shed.

MRS MEGGINSON If that's where you put them last time, that's where they'll be.

COL MEGGINSON That's where I always put them. There's a hook on the back wall of the shed.

MRS MEGGINSON I couldn't reach them even if I wanted to. I can't get my arm high enough.
(Raising one arm.)
This one.

COL MEGGINSON Gave up looking in the end. Went in and watched the rugby.

MRS MEGGINSON Ah!

COL MEGGINSON I suppose I must have put them down somewhere last time and forgot to put them away.

MRS MEGGINSON In the garage?

COL MEGGINSON Perhaps. I'll have another look tomorrow.
(Pause.)
France won. Good match.
(Pause.)
How was your lunch?

MRS MEGGINSON It was lovely! Jennifer Byram's youngest has got engaged.

COL MEGGINSON Anyone we know?

MRS MEGGINSON Staveley-Wainwright. Reggie. Not from round here.

COL MEGGINSON I could always borrow Charlie's hedge trimmer.

MRS MEGGINSON I'm getting cold.

COL MEGGINSON Knowing Charlie, he'd probably offer to do it himself.

MRS MEGGINSON Why don't you ask him?
(Finishing her sherry.)
I'm going to go in and have a wash and then you can pour me another.
(She gives him her glass, picks up her gardening gloves and goes out.)

COL MEGGINSON Perhaps I will.
(Finishes his whisky.)
Chairman's privilege.
(Follows her out.)

MRS MEGGINSON

(Enter MRS MEGGINSON and BRENDA, each with a glass of wine in her hand.)

BRENDA Honestly, darling, I'll be glad when it's over.

MRS MEGGINSON Oh, don't say that, Brenda! Everybody's looking forward to it. They've been looking forward to it for weeks!

BRENDA It's all I hear about.

MRS MEGGINSON Because he's a perfectionist, dear. Everything has to be just so. And there's the health and safety aspect too.

BRENDA Tell me about it!

MRS MEGGINSON He has to get that right. And he does, every time! There has never been the slightest problem in all the years he's been doing it. How long is that now?

BRENDA Forever?

MRS MEGGINSON He's got it off to a fine art.

(Brief pause.)

George tells me he's planning a special climax.

BRENDA That'll be the day!

MRS MEGGINSON What?

(Brief pause.)

Oh, Brenda! Stop it! I mean a big rocket or something.

BRENDA Oh yes?

MRS MEGGINSON *(Slaps her playfully on the arm.)*

Behave yourself, Brenda. No smut, please!

BRENDA Please, darling, let's talk about something else. I hear enough about the fireworks at home.

MRS MEGGINSON You said you had some gossip for me.

BRENDA So I did! It was something I heard. I'm not supposed to tell anyone, but I've heard the same thing or something like it from at least three different people now. Anyway, I can trust you, can't I?

MRS MEGGINSON Is it about Jenny Byram?

BRENDA *(Disappointed.)*

You've heard.

MRS MEGGINSON Go on anyway. Say what you were going to say.

BRENDA Jenny Byram seen, or rather heard, with a man in that old churchyard down whatever it's name is, that lane that goes past the old chapel down to the footbridge.

MRS MEGGINSON Do you know who the man was?

BRENDA You're going to tell me, aren't you?

MRS MEGGINSON A tramp.

BRENDA You're joking me!

MRS MEGGINSON A down and out. What do they call them now? A rough sleeper.

BRENDA What on earth was Jenny Byram doing with a rough sleeper? I've heard of slumming it, but that's going a bit far, isn't it?

MRS MEGGINSON George saw him when he was what he calls 'walking the bounds'. He's just an old nosey parker really. Goes off on a route march round the village now and then. Other people go for a run, George goes for a march. Anyway, he was going past the chapel and he heard something or saw something and went in to investigate and found this tramp there.

BRENDA What happened?

MRS MEGGINSON Well, he challenged him, asked him what he was doing.

BRENDA And?

MRS MEGGINSON The tramp told him he had permission from the vicar.

BRENDA Sylvia?

MRS MEGGINSON So George went straight round to the vicarage and it turns out he had.

BRENDA You mean Sylvia likes a bit of rough as well as Jenny?

MRS MEGGINSON (*Shocked.*)
Brenda! Please!

CHARLIE

COL MEGGINSON Come on, then, Charlie! What's the plan?

CHARLIE It's very simple, George.

COL MEGGINSON The best plans always are.

CHARLIE We can manage it all ourselves, I think. The fewer people who know about it, the better.

COL MEGGINSON Absolutely!

CHARLIE Just you and me, Elizabeth and Brenda. Brenda driving, Elizabeth in front with her, you and me in the back of the van.

COL MEGGINSON The van?

CHARLIE Horse van.

COL MEGGINSON You can get one?

CHARLIE No problem. I'll borrow my sister's. Don't worry, I'll make something up. She lets me borrow it for the fireworks. I'll tell her it's something to do with that.

COL MEGGINSON It won't arouse any suspicions?

CHARLIE None at all. The only question is when.

COL MEGGINSON Sooner the better. Element of surprise. No point putting it off.

CHARLIE Tomorrow?

COL MEGGINSON Why not?

CHARLIE Good! We'll pick you up here about eight. Have him in the van by half-past. Sunday night, the streets will be quiet.

COL MEGGINSON Where are we taking him?

CHARLIE Brenda's going to do a recce in the morning and decide the best place to leave him. All she'll have to do tomorrow night is stop, give us the signal...

COL MEGGINSON What's the signal?

CHARLIE Knock on the partition?

COL MEGGINSON (*Looks doubtful.*)

Hmm...

CHARLIE Better still, she can ring me on my mobile!

COL MEGGINSON Good idea!

CHARLIE Not while she's driving though. We don't want to risk getting stopped by the police.

COL MEGGINSON Elizabeth could do it.

CHARLIE Of course she could! Brenda tells her when we're nearly there, Elizabeth rings me in the back, you and I are ready to bundle him out

as soon as we stop, jump back in and away we go.

COL MEGGINSON Well, Charlie, I haven't felt so excited since the last time my regiment played war games with the Yanks.

(Short pause.)

You miss it, you know. You miss it.

CHARLIE All set then! Operation Rough Sleepers!

COL MEGGINSON Operation Rough Sleepers! Never mind coffee, I want a whisky! You too?

CHARLIE I wouldn't say no.

COL MEGGINSON Come on! Let's go in and tell them the plan.

*(Puts his arm around **CHARLIE**'s shoulders and walks off.)*

Well done, old boy! Well done!

CHARLIE *(Speaking as they go out.)*

It was all Brenda's idea.