

ADAM

(A play in three acts)

Characters:

JASON *DONAVAN*

JOYCE:

SEAMUS

BIDDY:

EBENEZER: *Jason's Internet correspondent and adviser, who appears on computer screen.*

ACT ONE

(A dining-room in a suburban house converted into flats. To the right there is a bookcase and a drinks cabinet between two doors which lead respectively to the bedroom and a kitchen. The entrance to the flat is on the left. Centre, is a table with six chairs. A

section of the stage to the left of the main set displays a narrow section of a bar counter that is unlighted until required in Acts Two and Three.

JASON wearing tee-shirt and jeans is sitting, with his hands poised over a laptop computer. He makes a despairing gesture, stands up, walks three times round the table, knocks down the chair and says 'Bugger!' He picks it up and resumes his position facing the computer with which he appears to be having a love-hate relationship.

JOYCE comes in through entrance door (left) and sweeps past him, holding a carrier bag containing food, which she takes as far as the kitchen door.

JOYCE: Did you get the Chinese seaweed from the deli?

JASON: No, I forgot. Sorry.

JOYCE: Damn! (Enters the kitchen and returns.) Don't you ever remember anything! Seamus and Biddy are coming in for supper. You know those are the only greens she'll eat.

JASON: Her hair always looks like seaweed. Who was that Greek

lady who never went to the hairdresser?

JOYCE: Bidy may be a hardbitten journalist but she isn't Medusa.

What have you been doing? The washing-up is still in the machine.

JASON: I've been working on my play.

JOYCE: May I have a look? (She walks round and inspects the

laptop screen) That's very impressive. "A Play by Jason

Donavan' and *zilch*, nothing else. Come on. Put it away.

You bought the computer to help you write and all you've

done is carry on a correspondence through E-mail with

someone in Detroit. Not one of the seven plays you've

written has been staged.

JASON: What about Baden Powell.

JOYCE Boy Scout stuff doesn't count. Have you cooked the chicken.

JASON: Yes, yes. It's ready to eat. I'm starving. Did you buy ice cream?

JOYCE It's in the freezer.

(Jason fiddles with his computer)

JOYCE Jason, put that thing down. I have something to say to you.

JASON: (Absently) What?

JOYCE I want you to get a job.

JASON: I'm working three evenings a week in the wine bar.

JOYCE I mean a proper job.

JASON: There are no proper jobs. When the school made me redundant we agreed that writing plays would be my job.

JOYCE That was before we thought of starting a family.

JASON: You're not pregnant?

JOYCE Not yet.

JASON: Well, thank heavens for that! Time enough to start a
family

 when I'm successful.

JOYCE: I shall be an old lady by then. Don't you want a ba-
by?

JASON: This (cradling his computer in his arms) satisfies all
my

 parental longings at the moment.

JOYCE: But you haven't written a word today.

JASON: Babies don't have words before they are born. The
play is still in its embryonic stage.

JOYCE: I want you to take this seriously. If I'm going to be-
come

 pregnant I shall need your support. Starting a baby is
not

 as easy as switching on a computer. I'm thirty-six
and

 getting on.

JASON: Switching on a computer is a bit like starting a baby. Both events are unpredictable. I wrote an outstanding line this morning and it vanished into thin air. All my precious words were lost. It really cheesed me off.

JOYCE: Well, *you* certainly are predictable. Seven plays written and

seven rejected – that’s what I call consistency.

JASON They all received favourable comments.

JOYCE: Only because theatrical directors are too soft-hearted to tell

you the truth. It’s no wonder your plays are rejected.

The

first one would have needed the Bank of England to finance it. What was it? A cast of eighty-five plus a zoo keeper to look after the animals, which included two lions.

JASON: Well, it was all about a circus. I did once write a play that

required only a robot and a phone booth. That wouldn’t have cost much to put on but Equity

weren't pleased because it didn't require any actors.

JOYCE: I've got news for you. I have decided to get pregnant whether you're successful or not.

JASON: You're forgetting something, darling. You'll need my

cooperation...Hey...just a minute. There's some e-mail

coming through. (He studies the computer screen.

And then says excitedly) Ebenezer has just sold his play The Foundry— the one he's been working on for the past eleven years. He says it should earn him

twenty-thousand dollars. Isn't that great!

JOYCE: Twenty-thousand dollars for eleven years work.

That's

about fifty pence an hour – well below the minimum

wage.

JASON: You're missing the point, He has been doing something he enjoyed.

JOYCE Well, I enjoy teaching. But I wouldn't dream of working for peanuts.

JASON: It's a good augury. He'll be paid handsomely for anything

 he writes in the future.

JOYCE Ebenezer? Is that really his name?

JASON: It's his Internet name.

JOYCE Why doesn't he use his own name?

JASON: So that he is free to say things that are controversial.

JOYCE I think you Internet buffs are all mad.

JASON: The Internet is the purest form of democracy. Soon, we shall be able to make collective decisions by pressing a button.

JOYCE God spare us from five-hundred million anorak-clad nerds

 pressing the nuclear button and then discussing the plays they've written until they're blasted off the face of the earth.

JASON: I've learned a lot from the Internet. My next play is going to be a winner. I feel it in my bones. The drama

teacher praised the play I wrote for the school production.

JOYCE Only because she fancied you. Anyway, let's face it, even if you managed to write something decent the chances of getting financial backing are so slim it's hardly worth considering. We'll never be able to afford to start a family until you go back to work.

JASON: Don't worry. When this one is finished, we'll be able to afford a whole gaggle of children. (He tries to unplug the ephone line attached to the computer and swears as he becomes entangled in the wires.)

JOYCE Go and get the wine while I lay the table.

JASON: (Goes to kitchen and returns with the wine, which he examines critically.)

Oh, my God, what's this? Albanian Chianti! You know

Seamus is a wine buff.

JOYCE: Nobody who drinks as much as he does can have a sensitive palate.

JASON: Well, I suppose it'll have to do.

JOYCE: And try to avoid the subject of babies. Bid-
dy is hav-
ing her tubes blown next week. She's longing to have one.

JASON: Blowing tubes sounds like a church organ.

JOYCE: Don't be so flippant. It's not a joke.

JASON: Being childless isn't all that bad. Children are the
one

commodity the world isn't short of.

JOYCE: Bid-
dy and Seamus just want a child of their own.

And so,

for that matter, do I.

JASON: Time enough when I've sold my play.

JOYCE: You haven't even started the wretched thing yet.

JASON: I'd show you the synopsis if it hadn't vanished into
thin air.

Shall I tell you what it's all about?

JOYCE: There's no time. They're coming.

(She rushes into the kitchen. Jason smooths his hair
and

places the computer on top of the bookshelf. He welcomes BIDDY and SEAMUS as they enter. BIDDY, an attractive forty-year old, works on a women's magazine.

JASON: Come in. Come in. Good to see you. Have you designed

any maternity hospitals lately, Seamus?

SEAMUS: I'd be glad of the chance to design a public loo. The building trade has completely collapsed.

JASON: Biddy, white wine?

BIDDY: No thank, Jason. Some carbonated water will do fine.

JASON: And you, Seamus. Your usual?

SEAMUS Yes, a glass of Guinness would go down very nicely.

How's the writing going?

JASON: (Carefully pouring drinks)

I've an interesting idea but it's all in my head at the moment.

BIDDY: (Reaching for her glass) Ideas don't work unless you work

at them. What's your play about this time?

JASON: I'll tell you later on. (He punctures his thumb trying to open a can of Guinness.)

JOYCE: (Approaches her guests with a welcoming smile)
Well, how are you two. (Aside to Jason) I'll have a glass of wine, darling.

BIDDY: We're fine, except that Seamus has come up with the sudden surprising notion we should get married. I think he's after my money.

SEAMUS: Don't be absurd.

JOYCE: When are you going into hospital?

BIDDY: Next Thursday. But I'm not getting much encouragement from Seamus. He has this fixed notion that childless marriages work best.

SEAMUS: That great comedian W.C. Fields was right when he asked: rhetorically: How can you dislike a man who hates children.

May I have a look at your laptop, Jason?

JASON: Sure.

(Jason and Seamus move over to the laptop standing on the shelf and discuss its technical merits in subdued voices. 32 megabytes of ram. Eight gigabytes hard drive. And so on.

JOYCE: I'm sure your gynaecologist will solve your problem, Biddy. But I do sometimes wonder why we are so keen to have children. They ravage your tits, ruin your figure and then go off and leave you when you need them the most.

I've heard wizened old grannies saying they sometimes wish they hadn't bothered.

BIDDY: Most old people seem glad enough to have family around to care for them. But I agree with you, having children doesn't really make sense from a strictly logical point of view. When are you going to start?

JOYCE: Jason says the play is his baby at the moment. But he'll never get anywhere. If we knew someone in the theatrical business it might help. Funnily enough, though...(Notices that Jason has just plugged the telephone wire back into the computer.) Jason. You're not going net surfing now. It's time to eat. Help me put the food on the table. Seamus, Biddy, do sit down. It's just something from M and S.

(The stage darkens momentarily. When the lights come on again, they are seated at table. Jason, a little drunk, is proposing a toast.

JASON: I'd like to propose a toast to Ebenezer, a friend of mine who lives in Detroit. We both took part in an Internet Forum about play writing. Ebenezer has just sold his first play, The Foundry. Isn't that great!

JOYCE: You didn't mention it took him eleven years to write.

JASON: It could be earning money for him for the next eleven years.

JOYCE: Isn't he a helpless, hopeless dreamer. What on earth am I going to do with him!

BIDDY: Men have always been the romantics in this world.

SEAMUS: "For men must work, and women must weep
And there's little to earn and many to keep,
Though the harbour bar be moaning."

BIDDY: It's the men who weep now while their wives face the

storms. Women trawler skippers! That might make a
good

feature.

SEAMUS: Women shouldn't go fishing when they're
pregnant. The decks are too slippery. And it's
women drinking in the wine bar who keep moaning.

BIDDY: What on earth are you talking about? It's absolutely
true

what Joyce said. Men are romantic dreamers.

JASON: Aren't I going to be allowed the chance to defend
myself.

BIDDY: Go ahead.

SEAMUS: Go and tell them, Jason.

JASON: Okay. My live-in lover here says I am a romantic
dreamer because I insist on writing plays. She didn't accuse me of be-
ing a romantic when I was a school teacher. The only job I've been of-
fered since the school closed down is in Durham. And we'd be no
better off financially if I took it, because there's no job for Joyce up

there. So what I am doing is the most practical thing in the world. keeping our partnership together and nursing the modest hope that one day I shall have the kind of success that my internet friend Ebenezer has just achieved.

SEAMUS: Hurray! (He claps noisily.) You've put up a damned good

defence. Men are romantic because in the long run that's

1 the most practical thing to be. We may be dreamers but we make our dreams come true. I don't doubt that the Wright brothers' wives called them hopeless dreamers. But it's because of their romantic dream about flying that we have jetliners and space travel today.

BIDDY: Not all dreams come true, playwrights' dreams hardly ever. You haven't told us yet what your play is about, Jason.

JASON: (Looks embarrassed, fiddles with his empty glass.

Pours a

few drops from the almost empty bottle. Opens a new

1 bottle and after replenishing everyone's glass says):

portentously: Okay. Okay. I might as well tell you --
my

play is all about angels.

SEAMUS: Angels are hopelessly out of date. Why don't you
write

about something sensible that we can all believe in --
creatures from outer space. Or metempsychosis -- that would make a
good subject.

BIDDY: What's that?

SEAMUS: Reincarnation --the migration of souls.

BIDDY: You can't possible believe in that junk.

SEAMUS: Half the world's population believe it. And the other
half

would like to believe it.

BIDDY: Doesn't the Bible suggest that all good people be-
come angels in Heaven.

SEAMUS: Reincarnation has no quarrel with that notion.

BIDDY: Seamus, I knew I could never rid you of that inbred
Irish

religiosity.

SEAMUS: There is no scientific evidence to prove that angels don't

exist.

BIDDY: That same argument could be applied to fairies.

SEAMUS: If an angel gave you a kick up the arse, you still wouldn't

believe in them. There's a strong case can be made for

reincarnation. And angels, too, for that matter.

BIDDY: Look at him, Joyce. He can act the maggot to perfection.

Not a wisp of a smile on his face.

SEAMUS: Why should there be? I'm in deadly earnest. Back to reincarnation. Life forms run from bacteria and other lowly organisms through to insects, animals and human

beings. Why should that be the end? There's no reason to believe that were are at the apex of

Creation. The Bible is full of references to angels, seraphim, archangels and so on.

BIDDY: And aliens from outer space. I suppose you believe these

strange creatures take an interest in us?

SEAMUS: Of course -- in the same way as we take an interest in our pets. A dog on a leash prevented from running into

the traffic doesn't realise that it's his guardian angel who's

keeping him out of trouble.

BIDDY: I wish my guardian angel would tug at my lead

SEAMUS: He will. Or she will. You mark my words. So you might as well write about angels, Jason, as anything else.

JASON: You folks have got it all wrong. I didn't mean that kind of

angel. I'm referring to the people who put up the money for a

stage show.

BIDDY: Oh, I see. Why didn't you say so.

JASON: It's so damned hard to get the finance to put on a show

these days that I thought I'd write a play about a group of people in a small local theatre trying to raise money to put on a play written by their local playwright.

JOYCE: Darling, that sounds a hoot. Why didn't you tell me.

JASON: I only thought of it today. And when I had drafted out the synopsis, I was so excited I went into the kitchen for a cup of coffee and switched off the computer without saving what I had written.

BIDDY: I can see the possibilities.

SEAMUS: How long will it take you to write it?

JASON: Not too long. The characters are all in my head. The trouble is that angels, like their mythical counterparts, are

impossible to find. It has taken my Internet friend
Ebenezer eleven years to find a backer.

SEAMUS: That's a long time. I can put up a skyscraper in less
than two years from drawing board to completion ... At least I could
when I got an order. Anyway, I wish you luck. I couldn't write a play if
I sat down for a thousand years.

JOYCE: Eleven years is a long time to wait for a baby.

JASON: I thought it took nine months.

JOYCE: Now all the men have lost their balls, it can take a
lifetime.

JASON: Babies have to be fed, clothed and educated. And we
need to buy a house -- this flat isn't suitable.

JOYCE: Have the baby and worry about those things after-
wards. My
grandmother used to say that babies brings their own
good
luck.

BIDDY: A child needs to have a good start in life.

SEAMUS: It costs a fortune these day to raise and educate a child.

BIDDY: I can see why Joyce is worried. You certainly need to have he angels on your side in order to start a family.

You'd better write a damned good play, Jason and find someone who'll put it on.

JASON: I'm confident that this one will be a winner.

(The telephone rings. Joyce goes out to answer it.

Jason pours out more wine. Joyce returns)

JOYCE That was my sister. She wants me to go with her to see the Adam Donavan musical. It's just had its first night in the West End and got rave reviews. It's all about tennis.

SEAMUS: Donavan? Adam Donavan? Is he any relation of yours?

JASON: I think he's a cousin. But I have never met him.

SEAMUS: Perhaps he could help you with your play.

JASON: I don't like to trade on a family connection.

SEAMUS: Bullshit. If you know someone in the theatre world,
make
 use of him. If I were you I'd get to know him in
 double quick time.

JOYCE: You never told me you were related to Adam Dona-
van.

JASON: I believe he's the son of my thoroughly disreputable
 Uncle Tom.

JOYCE: You never mentioned him to me.

JASON: Uncle Tom was the black sheep of the family. Mar-
ried five
 times and had any number of children- most of them
on
 the wrong side of the blanket. His son, Adam, has
followed a similar path.

BIDDY: I've been thinking of getting an interview with Adam
Donavan for some time.

JASON: My family strongly disapproved of his father. Adam Donavan has had three wives already and is reputed to have slept with half the starlets in Hollywood.

BIDDY: That's no reason why you shouldn't contact him.

JASON: The fact that we share the same grandparents doesn't give me any claim on him.

BIDDY: He might want to help you.

JASON: My family did nothing to help him, so why should he help me? When his father died he was put into an orphanage. I

can't just telephone him out of the blue and say I'm your long lost cousin. I want you to do me a favour.

BIDDY: If I get an interview with him, I'll casually mention that I know you.

JOYCE: That would be wonderful, Biddy.

(The lights go down. When they come on again

Joyce and Seamus are bustling around clearing up the remains of the dinner party.)

JOYCE: Put the best cutlery away.

JASON: Your sister gave us that when she thought we were going to get married.

JOYCE: What difference does it make now?

JASON: Nothing. I just wondered if you would like to follow Biddy's and Seamus's example and get married.

JOYCE: You don't seem at all keen on the idea of my becoming pregnant.

JASON: That can wait a while.

JOYCE: Biddy and Seamus waited too long. The older a woman becomes the harder it is to get pregnant.

JASON: You're four years younger than Biddy.

JOYCE: It could take that long for you to finish your wretched play.

JASON: Not really. Not now it has formed in my mind. I might do some work on it before I go to bed.

JOYCE: Will you promise me that if Bidy manages to get an interview with Adam Donovan you'll ask him to read your play?

JASON: I doubt very much if he'll want to see me.

JOYCE: Well, you must do your best. If you don't take such a golden opportunity you might just as well give up.

JASON: You're not worried about me getting into bad company.

JOYCE: No so long as you got your play produced.

JASON: You're getting very cynical.

JOYCE: I'm just being practical.

JASON: You weren't very keen to have your cousin Sandra here

when you learned her love life is a bit dodgy.

JOYCE Dodgy! She's a nymphomaniac. She practically eats men.

JASON: Precisely the point I'm making. She's just a female version of cousin Adam.

JOYCE: Yes, but there's a fundamental difference. He can do you a bit of good.

JASON: Your cousin might have done me a bit of good.

JOYCE: Oh, shut up!

JASON: I bet you'd welcome her here if she had lots of money to invest in a play.

JOYCE: I'm prepared to put up with anything that would improve our financial situation and enable us to afford to start a family.

(Jason caresses her)

JASON: You really want a baby badly don't you.

JOYCE: Mmmm.

JASON: Is that because you love me?

JOYCE: Yes. (Kisses him)

JASON: Even though I'm a selfish, wannabe playwright.

JOYCE: I suppose so.

JASON: Come on, then. Let's go to bed.

JOYCE: I thought you wanted to do some work.

JASON: That can wait.

(Holding her hand, he leads her through to the bedroom.)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The Donovan dining-room two months later. JASON is pacing the floor in a paroxysm of creative zeal.

JASON: Come to life, oh ye characters! Let me see every

expression on your face and hear every inflection in
your
voice, let me smell your perspiration. (Pause) But I
suppose you'll end up as just pale reflections of me,
with
all my weakness and strengths. (Pause) Hell!...

Strengths? Have I got any? I persist in writing this bloody play,
even though I've had so many failures that Joyce no
longer believes in me ... But *courage, mon ami. Le diable est mort.*
Come along, Josh, Julia and Basil. Let me see the stuff you're made
of... Basil, why are you so reluctant to go your bank manager? False
pride perhaps? Ah, must get that down. (Removes the Internet phone-
line wire from the computer, disentangles it from the table leg and
plugs in the telephone. He sits down and just as he is about to begin
typing the telephone rings. He swears and then answers it.)

JASON Yes, who's there. Oh, hello Biddy. How are your
tubes?

Oh, sorry. Shouldn't have asked. No, I had something else on my mind. Yes, my play is nearly finished. A few mistakes to be sorted out and a new ending, that's all.

You've got an interview with Adam Donovan! Terrific!

Great! I hope you told him what a great playwright I am. I

appreciate that very much. Yes, yes ... I suppose it will push up your circulation a notch or two. Joyce said she enjoyed your editorial last week. What was it about? Oh, right. No, Joyce doesn't suffer from it. She does go off sex occasionally and screams at me and calls me a lazy swine.

Oh, that's what they call PMT is it? Yes, well, I suppose I am a lazy

swine. Not all the time. Writing all day isn't all that easy.

My mind stays blank, along with the computer screen for

long periods of time. What do I do for inspiration? I
talk to
myself. How's Seamus. Still building castles in the
air?

But who am I to talk ... I'll tell Joyce when she
comes in. A thousand thanks. Goodbye.

(Jason studies the computer screen again.)

Now where was I? Looks at his watch. Six o'clock.
That's
one o'clock in Detroit. I'll have a word with Eben-
ezer. He
might be able to get me out of this situation.

(Changes the telephone plug again. Joyce comes in
quietly, without him noticing and stands beside
him.)

JOYCE: I don't believe it. You're on the Internet again.
You'll
never finish your play at this rate.

JASON: I was about to get through to Ebenezer. I have a little

problem with my ending. I thought he might be able

to

help me. How are you?

1JOYCE:
smoking

My nerves are very ragged. I caught some boys

bring

hash. They threw the evidence away, so I couldn't

them before the Head.

JASON:
it's very

You should have smoked some yourself. They says

good for ragged nerves.

JOYCE:
made a

That would be setting a fine example. Have you

meal?

JASON:
get an

Sort of. Bidy phoned just now. She's managed to

interview with my cousin, Adam.

JOYCE:
him your

Wonderful. I'll invite him here and you can show

play.

JASON: Are you sure? He's probably used to being wined and dined in the best places.

JOYCE: He was brought up in an orphanage, remember. That can't

have been very grand.

JASON: But why should he want to know us?

JOYCE: Bidy says he told her he would like to know more about

his family background.

JASON: He's the only one in the family so far who has distinguished himself. The Donavans are just a load of

bourgeois, middle-class dullards. . Strange, isn't it.

No

education to speak of and he's made it into the big time.

I've seen him on television.

JOYCE: Never mind. I'm sure he'll want to read your play.

Producers spend their whole lives looking for good

material. Oh, by the way, I was thinking, when you discuss your relations with him, try to make them sound

interesting.

JASON: They're the dreariest lot you could ever imagine.

JOYCE: Well, you can always invent stories about them.

JASON: Shall I tell him that Aunt Beatrice --the magistrateC used

to dance naked with the gypsies by the light of the moon.

JOYCE: Sure. Why not.

JASON: And that Uncle Joe gambled away the whole of the capital

of a merchant bank?

JOYCE: No, that's far too commonplace. Say that he streaked across the pitch at the girls schools hockey finals, bought

the school and converted in into a brothel.

JASON: Uncle Joe a streaker! I doubt if his wife has ever
seen him
naked!

JOYCE: It doesn't matter. We must keep your cousin amused
and
entertained. He must go home thinking you're an
amusing
character, capable of creating a string of successes in
his
theatres.

JASON: I'm beginning to regret that we ever heard of him.
Supposing he says my family are a heartless, degen-
erate
lot of hypocrites, which they are of course, who
stood idly
by and let him be put into an orphanage. How shall I
answer that?

JOYCE: Just say how much you admire the way he has suc-
ceeded

by his own efforts. Make him feel good about himself. Tell him that it was just as well he did go into a orphanage, because if your family had been around they might have stifled his originality.

JASON: Exactly what they did that to me.

JOYCE: No. They tried very hard but they didn't succeed.

JASON: All I have to show for my efforts is one school play that sullies the memory of a basically good man, Baden Powell.

JOYCE: A little more egg on Baden Powell's bust won't make any difference. From what I have seen so far of your latest

play it deserves serious consideration. It's a nice mix
of

tragedy and comedy.

JASON: Do you like the scene where the angels are solemnly
Debating.

OYCE: Yes, that's a wow. And the opening scene is ex-
tremely

funny.

JASON: There's only one thing.

JOYCE: What's that?

JASON: I hope Adam doesn't think that we're taking the
mickey out

of producers.

JOYCE: Oh, but you are.

JASON: And you don't think he'll mind.

JOYCE: No, he's an old trouper. He trod the boards himself
for a

while. He couldn't have got where he is today if he

lacked

a sense of humour.

JASON: Right. Right. Okay, I'm well briefed. There's only one

thing lacking now.

JOYCE: What's that?

JASON: An ending to my play. I must consult Ebenezer. He's very

good at endings. I'm better at beginnings.

JOYCE: Okay. Do it while I'm changing. But be quick about it.

Don't forget it's your wine bar evening. (She goes into the

bedroom) Jason goes through the pantomime of plugging

in the telephone wire to the computer. But it won't stretch.

He finds that it is entangled in the leg of a chair.

Eventually, he stares into the computer screen and appears

horrified by what he has learned. He taps in a few words

and then hurriedly unplugs the telephone wire and with a

gesture of despair goes into the kitchen.

(The lights dim.)

When they come on again they illuminate the extreme left

of the set. Part of the counter of a wine bar is visible.

(Jason polishes some glasses then engages in a telephone conversation, using his mobile.)

JASON: Seamus, how are you? I'm at the wine bar --things are a bit slack. I thought I'd ring you up. How's Biddy? Still desperate to get pregnant. Never mind, it's fun trying. I

think I've persuaded Joyce that we should wait until I have

a success on my hands. I would find the patter of
little feet
something of a distraction at the moment. I had a
disappointment today. Ebenezer, my Internet buddy,
has
been asked to rewrite the entire third act of his play.
So he
hasn't got time to help me. Oh, sure. I'll think of
something. But I'm in a hurry. Bidy and Joyce are
arranging for my long-lost producer-cousin Adam to
come
to dinner soon. I want to hand him the finished
script.

How did she find him at the interview? Well, I
wouldn't
worry too much about that --it's only natural she
keeps talking about him when she's had to write a five-thousand word
biography. Don't be so paranoid, Seamus. Women don't fall in love
just like that. Would Joyce fall for him? That's a joke. She is the most

level-headed women I have ever met, except, that is when she's suffering from

premenstrual whatsit. You're imagining things, Seamus. All those rumours about him sleeping with half of Hollywood and most of the royals is probably all rubbish, too, except possibly for the royals ...

Stop worrying. You'll get some work one of these days. Must go. A customer has just come in...Cheers, Seamus.

The wine counter light dims. The lights in Joyce and Jason's sitting-room come on again. Bidy is

sitting in an armchair, with a drink in her hand.

Joyce is

examining the screen of the laptop computer.)

JOYCE: Can't get the hang of this thing. It's not at all like the one

we use at work. Why don't they standardise computers. If

television sets all worked on different principles, nobody

would ever switch one on. It's this bloody mouse --
it
won't click properly. Ah, just a minute. I think I've
got it. That's it. No, he hasn't finished the third
act.

BIDDY: Well, tell him to get a move on. Adam Donovan said
he's
looking forward to meeting him. I told him Jason
has written a remarkable play and said you'd telephone his secretary
soon to invite him to dinner.

JOYCE: If he accepts, you and Seamus must come as well.
Now tell
me all about him. Where did you interview him?

BIDDY: In his office in Wardour Street.

JOYCE: What's he like?

BIDDY: Not young, not old --what you might call mature.

JOYCE: They say he's a something of a lady-killer. But I
guess you
were safe enough in his office.

BIDDY: There is nowhere you could be safe with Adam Don-
avan.

JOYCE: What do you mean?

BIDDY: It was like being attacked by an octopus with sixteen
arms..

JOYCE: Perhaps I shouldn't invite him here after all.

BIDDY: You want to help Jason get his play produced, don't
you?

JOYCE: Yes, but ...

BIDDY: No buts. I'm looking forward to meeting him again.

JOYCE: Even after that dreadful experience. Apart from tell-
ing me

 that he's a randy old sod, you haven't really told me
much

 about him.

BIDDY: Didn't you read my article?

JOYCE: Your magazine hadn't come in at my local news
agent when I asked.

BIDDY: I have a copy in my bag. Would you like me to read
it to
you?

JOYCE: Yes, go ahead. I want to know all about him.

BIDDY: "He came rolling into the room like a sailor with his
mind
firmly fixed on debauchery, sat down beside me on
the
sofa and whispered: 'I went swimming this morning
without ear plugs and it's left me a little deaf. I can't hear much -- I'll
have to move closer.' Then edging
sideways until we were in intimate bodily contact,
he
sniffed my perfume and announced that he envied
Don
Giovanni because he had had eleven-hundred
women and that left him in the shameful situation of falling be-
hind. At this stage it felt that I was attacked by an octopus with innu-
merable limbs. Struggling to keep my clothes on, I complained, 'Mr

Donavan, I'm here to conduct an interview. ' To which he replied: 'And I'm here to give you great shafting. Honey, let's do a deal. I'll loosen my tongue, if you loosen your knickers. ' I slapped him so hard that you could have heard the report in Shaftesbury Avenue.

He complained that nothing like that had happened to him since he was fourteen-years old. I said briskly: 'In that case it was long overdue. Now let's get on with the interview. How did you get into show business?' Looking bewildered and hurt like a child who's been unjustly chastised, he said I was the kind of stupid woman who knew all the overtures but didn't understand the opera. Then he suddenly and surprisingly shone a brilliant smile at me and declared: 'Okay, honey, I'll give you five minutes but not a second longer. I'm a very busy man.'

Adam Donovan ran away to sea when he was thirteen.

After sailing round the world he jumped ship at Boulogne, bought a ticket to Paris and signed on at the Folies

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Bergere.
'As what?' I enquired.

'As a hooper.'

'Where did you learn to hoof?'

'In Valparaiso. But that's another story.'

JOYCE: Bidy, sorry to interrupt, but did he really attack
you?

BIDDY: I would have been naked in two seconds flat if I had
let

Him have his way. He is utterly crude - brutal al-
most. A a lecherous old sod with about as much
control over himself as a chimpanzee in a banana
shop. But I have to admit -- it's strange, really -- that I detected under-
neath a certain *je ne said quoi*.

JOYCE: What do you mean?

BIDDY: Well, a certain kind of rough tenderness ...I can
hardly tell you

what happened later. I couldn't put it in the article.

There

have to be limits.

JOYCE: Of course. But I want to know *everything*. Especially the censored items.

BIDDY: Oh, there's something else I want to tell you. When I told him that his cousin Jason had written a very good play, he launched into an anecdote about a blocked playwright who thought a cruise at sea might put him in the right creative mood. Apparently, the sea worked like a charm for the playwright. He had never felt in a more creative mood.. Halfway through the cruise he was in his cabin, on the point of finishing his finest work, when he thought he could mell smoke. A few minutes later the alarm bells rang. He iis hustled by a steward into a lifeboat, having left his

precious manuscript in the cabin. A couple of hours later, found himself sitting in a lifeboat a hundred yards or so from the ship, cursing himself for leaving his manuscript behind. After a while the fire aboard the ship seemed to calm down. Unable to tolerate the thought of losing his play, he dived off the lifeboat, swam back to the ship and climbed up a rope ladder to the deck rail. The deck was extremely hot but he made his way towards the gangway which led down to his cabin. On the way down he thought he heard a baby crying. He peeped in and found a new-born baby lying on a bed in the cabin adjoining his. Coughing violently because of the smoke, he rescued the baby, carried it back on deck, struggled down to the water line and then swam with the baby back to the lifeboat. Just as he was about to make a second trip to retrieve his manuscript, there was a huge explosion and the cruise ship sank. All the passengers were eventually rescued. But no one claimed the baby and so the playwright and his wife adopted it. Adam then asked me if I knew who the baby grew up to be. I said no and he told me with a straight face that it was Harold Pinter. I said

thought Pinter's father was a tailor in the East End of London.

'That's right,' he said solemnly. 'His father was so completely dispirited by losing his play that he never wrote another line and spent the rest of his life sewing buttons onto trousers. Adam then gave a huge guffaw, to express his delight in talking such a load of waffle. He's an outrageous liar among other things. It's impossible to believe anything he says.

JOYCE: It must have made it difficult to write your article.

BIDDY: Not really. That particular story told me a great deal about

Adam Donavan.

JOYCE: What did it tell you?

BIDDY: That underneath all that blustering there is a sensitive soul.

His message is that you should put people before Art.

JOYCE: Well, he certainly likes babies. He's had seven children

from his three wives.

BIDDY: Would Jason have rescued his play rather than the baby do you think?

JOYCE: He would have carried on writing until the ship went down.

BIDDY: Talking of babies what with Seamus's sperm count being low and my Fallopian tubes being in such a parlous condition, there's not much hope of us ever having a family. Seamus doesn't really want one. All he is interested in is getting a commission to design an interesting building.

JOYCE: I'm not very confident of ever having one. Jason isn't keen, either.

BIDDY: I blame it on the chemists.

JOYCE: For selling contraceptives?

BIDDY: No, not the high street chemists -- the manufacturers of chemicals. They say everything we eat and drink these days is so contaminated that it's reducing the men's sperm count as well as the size of their balls.

JOYCE: It'll be a sad day when they don't fancy us any more.

Still,

it doesn't appear to have affected Adam Donovan.

Tell me

more about him. The censored items.

BIDDY: Should I?

JOYCE: Yes, go on.

(Jason strolls in)

JASON: Hello ladies. (Notices his laptop is switched on)

Have you

been reading my play?

JOYCE: Just checking to see whether you had finished the third act.

You had better get a move on. Your famous cousin has

told Biddy he would like to come here to dinner.

(Seamus fiddles with the laptop and then switches it

off.)

JASON: So how did the interview go.

BIDDY: Terrific. I was just telling Joyce about it.

JASON: Seamus says that you took quite a shine to him.

BIDDY: Not exactly.

JASON: I gather he made a pass at you.

BIDDY: Something of the kind.

JASON: Perhaps we had better not invite him here.

BIDDY: Why not? That was the whole point of my making

the

connection. So that he could come and assess your

play.

JASON: Well, yes but. I mean if he's liable to cause trouble ...

JOYCE: Don't be so absurd, Jason. You're beginning to

sound just

like the rest of your relatives. Biddy has just been

telling

me about her interview. All he did was get a little fresh.

JASON: (Takes out a magazine article and reads)

'It was at this stage that I was attacked by what seemed like

an octopus with twice the natural number of limbs. Struggling frantically

to prevent him removing my clothes, I complained, 'Mr

Donavan, I'm here to conduct an interview.' To put it mildly it certainly sounds as if he made a fast move on you. (Puts the magazine onto the table.)

BIDDY: Did you like the article?

JASON: It was quite amusing. But since he's obviously an unprincipled ruffian, I'm not sure we should invite him

here.

JOYCE: You sound like a real old-fashioned prude. What's come

over you?

JASON: I can't understand how Biddy could possibly have any truck

with such a chauvinistic pig.

BIDDY: It's all in the day's work.

JASON: You seem to like the man even though he groped you.

BIDDY: Sure, why not.

JASON: Groping a woman is disgusting.

BIDDY: It depends on who's doing the groping.

JASON: What does Seamus think?

BIDDY: He appreciates that I do a tough job. I've had to put up with

a lot worse in my time. For a playwright, Jason, you don't

sound very worldly-wise.

JASON I was only trying to see it from Seamus's point of view.

JOYCE: Seamus can look after himself. Was it busy in the wine bar

tonight?

JASON: So so. How about a cup of coffee.

BIDDY: Not for me, thanks. I must be off home.

JOYCE: I'll see you out. (Whispers as they approach the outer door)

You must tell me more about the naughty bits. I'll give you

a ring tomorrow. (Returns to the room and says):

JOYCE: Okay, I'll have a cup of coffee. Decaffeinated.

(Jason exits to kitchen. Joyce goes over to the table, glances at the laptop, gives a disilluisioned shrug.

She then

picks up the article, sits in a chair and is absorbed in it

when Jason returns with mugs of coffee.)

JASON: What do you think of Bidy's experience?

JOYCE: He certainly gave her a rough time.

JASON: I wonder how he manages to support all those wives and children?

JOYCE: Biddy asked him that. He says the secret is to make everything work for you -- your wives, your employees and above all your money.

JASON: He sounds an arrogant sod.

JOYCE: You're no better. Aren't you making *me* work for you?

JASON: Oh, come off it. That's bloody unfair. I contribute what I

earn from the wine bar to the upkeep of this place.

JOYCE: That's not enough.

JASON: I've told you. As soon as I

JOYCE: (Mimics him) As soon as I've sold a play.

JASON: Well, perhaps the sooner we meet Adam Donavan the

better. He probably represents my last chance of getting financial backing.

JOYCE: You haven't even finished it yet.

JASON: It's just the final scene of the third act I can't quite get. It's very important because that's what the audience remember as they leave the theatre.

JOYCE: Can I help you.

JASON: I doubt it.

JOYCE: Jason, I want to ask you something.

JASON: Go ahead.

JOYCE: If you were on a burning ship and you had to choose between rescuing somebody's baby or the manuscript of your play, which would you choose to rescue.

JASON: That's a stupid question.

JOYCE: No it's not. I really want to know.

JASON: It's obvious isn't it.

JOYCE: No it's not. The play is your life's work. Which do you choose?

JASON: You're testing me out, aren't you. It's something to do with this guy Adam Donovan, isn't it. I'm damned if I'm going to give you an answer.

JOYCE: Okay, then answer me this: What do you think your cousin Adam would do?

JASON: I don't give a shit. I don't suppose he could write a play in a million years. People like that live on the artistic endeavours of other people. They're leeches -- parasites. All they know about is money.

JOYCE: The theatre can't function without money. You of all people should know that. If your play fails to make a good impression on your cousin you're sunk. In fact we're both sunk.

JASON: I don't have to like or admire him just because he's an old lecher with bags of money.

JOYCE: You still haven't told me whether you would rescue
the

baby or your precious manuscript.

JASON: You'll never know the answer to that one.

JOYCE:: (Almost sobbing) You're so obstinate and cruel.

JASON:: You're the one who's putting me on the rack by asking me

such ridiculous questions.

JOYCE: But do you know why I am asking it?

JASON: I can guess what you're leading up to.

JOYCE: Then why don't you do something about it?

JASON: I've said we'll have a kid when we can afford it.

JOYCE: Time isn't on our side. The window of opportunity
is gradually getting smaller.

JASON: Now you're becoming hysterical. I can't bear it when
you

behave in this ridiculous fashion.

JOYCE: So you think it ridiculous.

JASON: I sure do. Instead of having this argument I could be

working on the last act.

JOYCE: Let me read what you have written so far.

JASON: Here read it. (He switches on the laptop. Joyce sits down in

front of it and studies the screen for a minute or two as

Jason paces agitatedly up and down the room.)

JOYCE: I've got it. You have to send the audience away happy,

feeling they've had a good evening.

JASON: That's pretty obvious. But how do I do it?

JOYCE: By fulfilling their deepest desires.

JASON: And what are they.

JOYCE: The same as mine.

JASON: But what are your deepest desires?

JOYCE: If you don't know that you have no chance of ever being a

successful playwright.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

The Donovan's dining-room room seven months later.

Biddy and Joyce, both heavily pregnant, advance from

opposite sides of the room until their bellies meet centre

stage. The table is laid out for a dinner party for five.

(They shuffle their feet and perform a little dance.)

BIDDY: Snap!

(Both women laugh delightedly)

JOYCE: Well, it happened to both of us. Sorry I haven't seen you

all this time.

BIDDY: Did you have a good time in New York?

JOYCE: Great. Jason's play has been an enormous success.

Adam expects it will go on Broadway early next year.

That's almost unprecedented for a non-musical.

BIDDY: Fantastic.

JOYCE: How's Seamus?

BIDDY: In great form. He's got the contract to build a new theatre in Manchester and all due to Adam.

JOYCE: That interview with you did with him has done wonders
for us all.

BIDDY: It was lucky Jason remembered he had a cousin in show
biz.

JOYCE: Doesn't it prove that blood is thicker than water!

BIDDY: (Looking down at her bulge) I wonder if our little treasures will ever realise that they owe their existence
to that interview. Perhaps one day we'll tell them about the lucky chance that brought them into this world.

JOYCE: I'm going to call mine Serendipity, if it's a girl.

BIDDY: Isn't that a boy's name?

JOYCE: Does it matter? President Clinton's daughter is
named

after a football team.

BIDDY: Impending motherhood hasn't made quite as pro-
found

an impression on me as I thought it would. Perhaps

I

have become old and cynical. That's what journal-

ism

does for you.

JOYCE: Why should it?

BIDDY: We are always so busy chasing after the sensational
that

we fail to appreciate every day things.

JOYCE: And how does Seamus feel about becoming a father?

BIDDY: He says he doesn't mind as long as he doesn't have
to

foot the bill. Mind you, he could well afford it now

gave
that his firm has this lucrative contract that Adam
gave
him.

(The two women look at each other for moment and
then spontaneously break into laughter.)

JOYCE: (Still laughing) And isn't it amazing that it all hap-
pened
because of Jason remembering he had a long-lost
cousin.

BIDDY: Was Jason pleased when you told him you were
pregnant?

JOYCE: Now he's got used to the idea he's okay. He was
very
surprised. I finally managed to convince him that
accidents can happen. He had thought until then
that
condoms are a hundred-per-cent safe. He's happy
enough now that his play is making money. Would
you

believe it, he suggested to me the other day that if it was a boy we should call the baby Adam after his cousin. I counter-proposed with the name Ebenezer, his

Internet friend.

BIDDY: Ebenezer!

(Both women dissolve into hysterical laughter.

JOYCE: Seriously, though, I think we owe a lot to Ebenezer.

It was his ending that did it. Of course, Jason had to do a lot of re-writing -- if anybody knows what makes a

successful play, it's Adam. Oh, by the way he telephoned before to say he won't be here till nine o'clock. He's video-conferencing at his office. He complained that you can't *smell* people when

you're

video-conferencing. He says he can tell what people are thinking by their smell... I never know when to

take him seriously.

BIDDY: Custom shall not stale HIS infinite variety. That's the secret of his charm and his success.

JOYCE: He told me he has only ever had two flops ... I hope Jason's play runs and runs.

BIDDY: It looks as though it's going to. Adam told me that he sees the public as a gigantic woman with two huge breasts. First she likes her comic tit sucked one minute and then

her tragic one. After that she demands The Big Surprise. The lecherous leer on his face when he said it would put you off your food.

JOYCE: He's terribly vulgar.

BIDDY: He told me nobody ever becomes rich by overestimating

the taste of the general public.

JOYCE: I wonder why Jason's play appealed to him so much.

BIDDY: Perhaps it was because it's all about angels. Persuading

people to put up money to finance shows is Adam's forte.

He is fantastically good at it.

JOYCE: Don't ever tell Jason that I once went out to dinner with him.

BIDDY: Did he try to seduce you?

JOYCE: He used every weapon known to man and a few more

besides. When all else had failed he tried to persuade

me by using a casuistic argument. He said that genetic

engineering makes an utter nonsense of the whole concept of fidelity. The idea of promising to be faithful

was to reassure a man that he was fathering his own children who would carry on his genes. But now, with

genetic engineering, babies can have genes that
differ from

from their parents, which makes fidelity obsolete.

Then he said: 'Now you understand that, there's
absolutely no reason why you shouldn't sleep with
me.'

BIDDY: You poor girl! Never believe a word he says.

He'll do anything, say anything and use any argu-
ment to

get a woman into bed.

JOYCE: He's the devil incarnate. No wonder all his marriages
failed.

BIDDY: That reminds me Seamus and I are planning to get
married soon.

JOYCE: After all these years living together! It doesn't seem
very

logical.

BIDDY: My dad used to say that if logic ruled, we would all
commit suicide before our fourteenth birthday.

JOYCE: May I ask a favour. Don't let Jason know that you slept with Adam.

BIDDY: Of course not. Why on earth should I? I suppose you're worried that he might suspect you fell for Adam's sweet talk as well. Did you really manage to resist him?

JOYCE: Just about.

BIDDY: What stopped you?

JOYCE: When, after trying every other trick in the book, he threatened to withdraw support for Jason's play. I told him that I utterly refused to be blackmailed. Surprisingly, he wasn't angry. In fact he seemed more amused than anything else and said it was such a good play it would be wicked to waste it. After that we

had a very pleasant evening.

BIDDY: I told him it was a damned good play.

JOYCE: I appreciate that very much, Biddy. But don't tell me that you slept with him to help Jason!

BIDDY: No, I just fell for him. He overwhelmed me and that was that.

JOYCE: How could you possibly fall for such a monster -- a man who's had three wives and boasts of having had all those mistresses?

BIDDY: It was that that made him appear so damned attractive.

JOYCE: Is he a good lover.

BIDDY: Not particularly.

JOYCE: Well you must keep away from him from now on.

BIDDY: Why?

JOYCE: Because how can you possibly have a relationship with a

man who can never remember from one night to the next which woman he's slept with. And anyway it might make Seamus suspicious. After all, you

have

got what you want from Adam now that you're pregnant.

BIDDY: I intend to see him occasionally.

JOYCE: You must be mad! What on earth is the point in getting

married to Seamus, if you intend to go on having an affair with the world's worst womaniser. Seamus is eventually bound to suspect something.

BIDDY: I have told him that I had artificial insemination. He knows the child isn't his.

JOYCE: Then why bother to get married?

BIDDY: Because I want my child to grow up the old-fashioned

way with the security of a family.

(The telephone rings. Joyce answers it)

JOYCE: That was Adam's secretary. He's had a slight accident

and may be a little late... Does Adam know you are bearing his child.

BIDDY: Good heavens, no.

JOYCE: Isn't he entitled to know?

BIDDY: Certainly not. There's no point in telling him.

JOYCE: Isn't a man entitled to know when he becomes a father?

BIDDY: An old oak tree like Adam doesn't in the least care about all the acorns he shakes off when the wind blows.

JOYCE: It does seem a little unfair not to tell him.

BIDDY: Just because he gave me a little bit of his gism doesn't

give him any rights. Anyway, Seamus will make a far

better daddy.

JOYCE: Shouldn't Seamus know the truth?

BIDDY: Joyce, you show surprising naivete at times. Seamus is

perfectly happy with the explanation I gave him that while I was in Los Angeles I paid for artificial insemination from an anonymous donor. If I tell him what actually happened it might break up a partnership

which has lasted for nine years..

JOYCE: The baby might resemble Adam -- or Jason for that matter. They are first cousins.

BIDDY: In that case I shall tell him that Jason is the father!

JOYCE: Bidly, you are impossible! (They both laugh)

BIDDY: Are you sure there's nothing I can do to help with the dinner?

JOYCE: No, everything is ready. Jason has just gone to the wine bar. He'll be back soon.

BIDDY: Seamus should be here by now. He was working late at the office.

JOYCE: Isn't that what men always say when they are having
illicit sex with their secretaries?

BIDDY: Seamus wouldn't know what illicit sex was if you
rubbed his face in it.

JOYCE: Just because a man has a low sperm count doesn't
mean
that he's incapable of having an affair. Ah, here they
are.

(Seamus and Jason come in through the door carry-
ing
drinks in carrier bags. They are both a little drunk.)

JASON: We ran into each other down the road, so we had a
couple of drinks in the wine bar.

JOYCE: That much is obvious.

JASON: The Big Man hasn't arrived yet?

BIDDY:: He's had a slight accident. His secretary said he'd be
a
little late.

SEAMUS: Probably fell off his wallet.

BIDDY: Don't be so facetious, Seamus. He has been incredibly

generous to us.

SEAMUS: Only because of that disgusting article you wrote about him. Didn't you think it was smarmy, Jason.

JASON:: It certainly made him sound like Superman.

BIDDY I intended to show him as a monster.

JASON: As far as I'm concerned he's the best thing that's happened since sliced bread.

SEAMUS: His private life isn't much to boast about.

JOYCE: Why should that worry you? On your own admission you'd be bankrupt if it wasn't for the way he helped to

get you that building contract. And Jason would still be

struggling to sell his play.

SEAMUS: Okay. Okay. I'll drink to Adam Donavan -- when somebody offers me a drink, that is. I was just making

the point that when you're rich and famous your sins become as white as snow.

BIDDY: Hardly a new discovery, Seamus. You're getting soft in the head.

SEAMUS: Better soft in the head than anywhere else, eh, Jason.

JASON: What? Oh, sure. Will you have your usual?

SEAMUS: Yes, a glass of the black stuff. It's supposed to do wonders for your manhood.

BIDDY: I hope you're going to behave yourself during dinner. (Jason puts the wine in a cabinet and pours out a Guinness.)

SEAMUS: Oh, sure. I'll be as nice as pie to Adam Donavan. He is a bastard, though, isn't he. But then every one's a bastard in one way or another. I don't actually dislike him. I just wish he'd go away. He's like a bad dream.

That's exactly what he is -- a bad dream.

BIDDY: How can you say that, Seamus!

SEAMUS: In vino vitriol, or whatever the saying is. I just can't help

resenting him. He throws his weight around like a power-mad dictator just because he's rich. I'm just an ordinary guy and I hate manipulation whether it's me being manipulated or anyone else. But above all I suppose I'm envious. All those women he's had.

There

should be a law against an unfair distribution of mistresses. They should be rationed like food in war time.

BIDDY: What's come over you, Seamus. What happened to all

your Catholic principles.

SEAMUS: Oh, I've changed. Don't we all from day to day.

Supposing I told you that while I was up in Manchester

I had fallen for the lady in charge of the theatre building project. That would surprise you, wouldn't it.

BIDDY: If it's true I would welcome it. It's about time you showed a bit of spunky independence.

SEAMUS: No, it's not. Of course it's not. How could I be unfaithful when you've gone through all that disgusting

business of getting laid by a syringe in L.A. It must have been a ghastly experience.

BIDDY: It was.

SEAMUS: Just as a matter of interest, can you cite a syringe as co-respondent in a divorce case?

BIDDY: We're not married yet. And you don't have to marry me.

I can manage perfectly well without you.

SEAMUS: There you go, you see. She only wants to make me feel

useless. I only managed to get some work because
she
made some sugar-daddy impresario feel important.
And
now that I am about to become a surrogate father
she
says I'm not really necessary. It's enough to make a
man weep.

BIDDY: Oh, come on, darling. It's not as bad as that. That
baby
I'm carrying inside me needs you desperately,
doesn't
she. (half joking, half serious, as she appeals to
Joyce
and Jason.)

JASON: I know, let's all get sloshed so we can surprise old
Golden Balls when he comes in. Don't go on about
him, Seamus. My cousin was born to trouble like
the

sparks fly upwards. Accept him as he is -- one of those

lucky guys who can make your dreams come true.

He's

a nice guy, but nobody likes him. If I was a cynic, which I am not -- I would say that making people's dreams come true brings out the worst in them. It's ironic, isn't it that he's made us all rich, enabled

Joyce

and I to afford a family and yet we all hate his guts.

(He

goes to the drinks cabinet and pours out drinks for everyone, including a large one for himself, which he swigs down carelessly.)

BIDDY: Correction, Jason. You said everyone hates him. I don't.

JASON: Three out of four isn't bad.

BIDDY: None of us should hate him.

JASON: We don't exactly hate him. What gets up Seamus's

nose, and mine to some extent, is that he can buy women like loaves of bread. Of course I'm glad he got

my play produced. But I deserved a bit of success anyway after working for twelve or more years. I don't

see why I should lick his boots just because he just happened to come along at the right time.

BIDDY: He didn't *happen* to come along. I got an interview with

him and turned it to your advantage.

JASON: Yes, well bless you for that good deed, Biddy. But I mean, apart from that and the fact that he happens to be

a blood relative of mine, I've no reason to like him.

JOYCE: Jason, why should you be jealous just because he's had a

lot of women? If that's how you would like to behave,

go ahead, I'm not stopping you. But don't bother to come back to me.

JASON:

No need to take me literally. What I meant was that

he

acts like some macho bullfighter. His whole life

style is

designed to make Seamus and myself feel small. I

don't suppose for a moment that he's such a great

stud.

He's just a lucky sonovabitch who's struck it rich.

BIDDY:

He didn't manage to acquire a huge fortune, marry

three

wives and father seven children by sheer luck.

JASON:

I'm sure I could have had done the same if I had

wanted

to. It's just that I have an entirely different set of

values.

I just wanted to write a half decent play and that's

where my energy has all gone. There's nothing

marvellous about fathering numerous progeny The world is already over-populated.

BIDDY: It is also overpopulated with plays. Of the making of plays there is no end; and watching them is a weariness

of the flesh.

SEAMUS: Oh, come off it, Biddy.

BIDDY: I just happen to be on Joyce's side. She's had to put up

with an awful lot over the years. Toiling away while Jason was tapping away at his word processor.

JOYCE: Well, it has paid off, so everybody is happy now. Why

don't we all relax and enjoy ourselves until he arrives.

JASON: He's damned late.

SEAMUS: Probably screwing some bird.

BIDDY: Oh, shut up, Seamus. I simply don't understand. He has

done us a power of good and you're so reluctant to
acknowledge it?

SEAMUS: It all came about because of that article. Why don't
you

write one about me?

BIDDY: Because you're not a celebrity.

SEAMUS: But I would become a celebrity if you wrote articles
about me.

BIDDY: Don't be so damned ridiculous. Can't you get any-
thing

straight in your mind!

(She bursts into tears. Joyce tries to comfort her

then addresses Seamus and Jason)

JOYCE: (To Seamus and Jason) Go back to the wine bar. I'll
ring

you up when Adam arrives. (Exit Seamus and Jas-

on)

(The lights dim. When they come on, Joyce is

comforting Biddy. The women draw apart.)

JOYCE: You shouldn't keep praising Adam Donavan. Are you

sure Seamus doesn't suspects anything?

BIDDY: No, of course not. He's jealous of him. But he'd be jealous of his own shadow.

JOYCE: Still, it's tactless of you to keep praising Adam. Seamus

obviously hates being beholden to him.

BIDDY: "Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus; and those petty men walk under his huge legs

and peep about to find themselves dishonourable graves." Doesn't that sum him up?

JOYCE: I can't understand why you're so gone on him. You said

he wasn't such a marvellous lover.

BIDDY: He's more than adequate. Anyway, sex isn't the most important thing in the world.

JOYCE: It is when you want a baby.

BIDDY: I had actually intended to have artificial insemination. I

had no idea when I slept with Adam that I would have a

child by him. It wouldn't have happened if Seamus had

been capable of producing more sperm ... I'd have much

preferred to have his child. It would have been so much

simpler.

JOYCE: It will become complicated later on if you keep seeing

Adam.

BIDDY: Swear you'll never tell Seamus what happened.

Because if you do, I'll tell Jason that you went out on a

date with Adam. Anyway, it's a whole lot of fuss
about
nothing. Did you ever hear the expression "Holding
a
candle to someone." It refers to the ancient custom
of
courtiers holding a candle while they watched the
monarch perform on his wedding night, in order to
ensure the legitimacy of any offspring. They proba-
bly
use security cameras nowadays C they seem to be
everywhere. Anyway, looked at logically, why
should I
be ashamed of cuckolding Seamus? We're not le-
gally
married. It is only the difference between a prick
and a
syringe.

JOYCE: I happen to believe that a great deal more than that is

involved. But we won't argue about it.

BIDDY: Don't get high-minded with me, my girl. I'm still not sure you didn't sleep with Adam.

JOYCE: Well, I didn't. Would it make you jealous if I said I had?

BIDDY: Ridiculous as it may sound, the answer is yes.

You're

my friend, so I would be more jealous of you than I would be of ten thousand other women. It's crazy, I know. It must be my hormonesC they are all upset because I'm in this condition. I'm in a terrible

mood. A

terrible mood ... And I'm terrified of giving birth.

JOYCE: (Comforting her) Never mind. It'll all be over in a few

weeks.

BIDDY: Still, I'm very glad it has all happened. It has brought

us

closer together. Do you realise that this little bundle
of

joy inside me means that we shall be related.

JOYCE: Related?

BIDDY: Of course. Adam is Jason's cousin. So my child will
be

second cousin to your child.

JOYCE: Of course!

BIDDY: I was an only child and so were my parents. I never
had

any extended family. They say you can choose your
friends but you're stuck with your relatives. But I

did

choose you and Seamus as friends and now be-

cause

of what happened you have become my relatives as
well.

JOYCE: Isn't that lovely. (She pushes her bulge against
Biddy's

and says:) And never forget it, kiddies. You're kith

and

kin.

(The lights fade. They come on shortly afterwards,

revealing the counter of the wine bar, against

which

Jason and Seamus are leaning.)

JASON:

I say, man, you shouldn't keep on about Adam Don-

avan.

SEAMUS:

I don't see what Bidy sees in him. Or you, or Joyce

for

that matter. It's different for you, of course. He has

put

your play on. A good play. A very good play. I'm

sure it

would have been put on by somebody else, if he

hadn't.

He just happened to spot it because of Biddy's
interview. And he's making good money out of it,
isn't

he, Far more than you'll ever make.

JASON: I'm happy with what I'm getting.

SEAMUS: Sure. But you don't have to feel you owe him any-
thing.

People fawn on him just because he's got money.

Biddy

says he's a celeb. What's a celeb? We're all celebs
while we're alive. And that isn't very long because
we're dead for much longer than we are here on this
earth. Anyway, it's getting to the point that the only
people with real power are the people on TV and

the

ones you read about in the newspapers. I've been on
about this for a long time now with Biddy. She's

part of

the whole set up herself. She can't see it clearly.

The

trouble is that, like the rest of the media, she's beginning to believe her own lies.

JASON:

Oh, leave her alone, Seamus. We have to make allowances for women when they're pregnant. They

go

through a helluva lot. (He whispers something to Seamus who recoils in horror.)

SEAMUS:

You're kidding me. Is that true?

JASON:

(Laughing) So someone told me.

SEAMUS:

That's an old wife's tale. Women are always trying

to

get sympathy. And what about us men. We build factories to produce the goods the women want to

buy.

And what's the result? Industrial pollution that re-

duces

our sperm count and makes us infertile. The privileged few who have any sperm left are obliged to masturbate into test tubes to provide the babies the world needs.

JASON: Don't exaggerate, Seamus. You should really appreciate that Biddy was prepared to get pregnant at her age.

We're both going to become daddies. It wouldn't worry

me if we swopped babies. It's the rearing and loving

that counts not how they were conceived.

1SEAMUS: It reminds me of the story of the father who caught his

daughter using a vibrator. The next day when she came

home she found him sitting with two drinks and the

vibrator in front of him. She asked him what the hell

he

was doing and he said: 'I'm having a drink with my son-in-law.' I suppose I could confront the syringe

they

used to inject Bidy and absolve it from the sin of committing adultery.

JASON:

Oh, come off it, Seamus. You're making a big fuss about something that's totally unimportant. Nature doesn't care how a new baby comes into the world

as

long as it does.

SEAMUS:

Well, it seems unnatural to me.

JASON:

Tell me, were you joking when you mentioned that woman up in Manchester. Are you having an affair?

SEAMUS:

No, I wouldn't cheat on Bidy. I'm too fond of her.

JASON:

(Drunkenly solemn) That's why you're so jealous of

the

syringe.

SEAMUS: No, not really. It's just that I wish I had had enough
spunk to work the miracle myself.

JASON: It may have been her fault not yours. Didn't she have
to
have her tuba blown.

SEAMUS: Her what? Oh, her tubes... Yes, that's what made it
possible for her to conceive.

JASON: Then you might as well say the true father of the
child is
the surgeon who did the operation. In a sense Adam
Donavan is the father of my child, because it was he
who made it possible for me to afford to start a fam-
ily!

So you see, man, we are all cuckolds in a way.
Let's
drink to that.

SEAMUS: (After a pause) It seems to me that we men are no
longer
necessary -- all a woman needs to be fulfilled in a

vibrator, a syringe and a healthy bank account.

JASON: Now you're getting cynical. It's time we were off home.

SEAMUS: (Muttering as he gets off his bar stool) That bloody cousin of yours is always calling the shots.

(The lights in the wine bar fade. They come on again in

the Donovan's sitting room. Joyce, Jason, Biddy and

Seamus are seated around the table. The fifth chair is

conspicuously empty)

SEAMUS: I'm bloody hungry.

BIDDY: He is very late Do you think we should start without him.

SEAMUS: I was always taught that punctuality is the politeness of

princes.

BIDDY: Oh, shut up, Seamus. His secretary said he had had a

slight accident.

SEAMUS: What sort of accident?

JOYCE: She didn't say.

BIDDY: Perhaps you should ring up and find out.

SEAMUS: He's probably busy shagging his secretary.

JOYCE: Don't be absurd. He was attending a video-conference.

They sit around with cameras trained on them and discuss the progress of shows in New York.

SEAMUS: That wouldn't stop Adam Donavan from shagging his secretary. He loves doing everything in full view of the cameras. He's probably also into Internet pornography..

BIDDY: You're so ignorant, Seamus. The man has to do business with his opposite numbers in America. And you of all

people should know how these conferences can drag
on.

Why do you keep on running the man down.

SEAMUS: Because he's a monster who sets a thoroughly bad
example to the younger generation.

BIDDY: Don't be so small-minded, Seamus. You should
know

by know that higher a man climbs up the ladder of
success the more you can see of his arse. He's not a
bad man. Adam has provided wonderful entertain-
ment

for the British and the American public.

SEAMUS: I still think he's a monster.

JOYCE: Perhaps I'd better ring up his office again and see if
he's

left.

(She leaves the table. Goes to the sideboard and dials
the
telephone.)

Oh, my God. That's terrible. Yes, I understand. Perhaps

you'll ring me when you have news.

BIDDY: What's happened?

JOYCE: It wasn't such a slight accident after all. He fell down and hit his head against a bookcase. He said he was all

right and carried on talking to his opposite number in

New York. A few minutes later he passed out. They have called an ambulance. A doctor is attending to him

now.

SEAMUS: Don't look so alarmed, Biddy.

JASON: The man's banged his head, that's all.

JOYCE: Well, that's the end of our cheerful little dinner party that

was supposed to celebrate the success of Jason's play. I

suppose I should serve the food now.

BIDDY I'm not hungry.

JOYCE Okay. We'll leave it a while. Jason, you can ring up a little later and find out what's happening.

JASON I imagine they'll take him to the nearest hospital. In the meantime let's have a drink.

JOYCE: Don't you think you've had enough.

JASON; We're supposed to be celebrating, aren't we.

JOYCE: Not when the man who's responsible for helping us all is seriously ill.

JASON; I'm sure he'll be okay. He can afford the best of medical attention.

BIDDY; Don't be so petty minded, Jason. If they've called an ambulance, he must be seriously ill.

SEAMUS: If you don't mind my asking, why exactly did you invite

him here this evening, Joyce.

JOYCE: To thank him for the enormous difference he's made to our lives. Jason and I were really struggling until he financed Jason's play.

SEAMUS: Did Jason tell him all about his long lost relations?

JOYCE: He did. When we first told him over the telephone he was all agog to know more. But he rapidly lost interest.

BIDDY: It can't have meant much after all those years. I do hope he's all right.

SEAMUS: There's one thing that puzzles me and that is why -- with all due respect, Jason ==he picked out your play from all the hundreds that are offered him by literary agents. Something must have intrigued him.

JASON: I think he could identify with one of the characters who,

like himself, had a poor start and has to gamble
everything he possesses in the world to help put on

a

show. Which is exactly how he started.

BIDDY; I admire gamblers -- people who go right up to the
wire.

SEAMUS: You weren't very keen when I wanted to buy shares
in
that building company.

BIDDY: I'm talking about gambling one's all. Not a flutter on
the
stock market.

JASON; I'll ring up his office again and find out which hospi-
tal
he's been taken to.

(He goes to telephone and returns to the dining-table
shortly afterwards, looking sad and bewildered)

BIDDY; What's the matter, Jason?

JASON: It's bad news, I'm afraid. He died suddenly a few

minutes ago .

(The lights dim. When they come on again, the table

has

been cleared. Biddy is pacing up and down the

room)

BIDDY: Why. Why. Why does such a dreadful thing happen to someone who did so much good in the world.

SEAMUS: He wasn't exactly an angel. Biddy.

BIDDY; That's not in the least funny. He was an angel -- a fantastic character who benefited millions of people,

ple,

which is more than you can say of most of us. He

gave

laughter, pleasure and entertainment to the masses.

That's what I shall put in his obituary.

SEAMUS; Perhaps you'll mention that he made a few bob for himself in the process.

BIDDY: Don't be so malicious and petty. He deserved to make

money. I only hope he left enough to keep his large family.

SEAMUS: Perhaps he left some to Jason.

BIDDY: Don't be daft. Why should he do that?

SEAMUS: He is a relation.

BIDDY: We must get in touch with someone about the funeral. I

don't know who will organise it.

JOYCE: His secretary will know.

BIDDY: If noon else is doing it, I should like to.

SEAMUS: Don't be stupid, Biddy. Why should you do it. You hardly know the man.

BIDDY: I know all I needed to know about him. He was a fine

man. He rose above the handicaps of his birth and became an outstanding figure in the world of the theatre and entertainment.

SEAMUS: You don't have to rehearse the funeral oration now, Biddy. What's come over you.

JOYCE: She's very upset. It's come as a terrible shock to us all.

When you and Jason have sobered up, you'll realise what a terrible tragedy has occurred.

JASON: I'm perfectly sober. But I'm worried about my play.

JOYCE: Don't worry. Its future is assured. Be thankful you contacted your cousin when you did. He couldn't help you now.

JASON: It's strange. If I put in one of my plays that a man died during a video-conference, the audience wouldn't believe it.

JOYCE: A man died the other day when a pawnbroker's ball fell on his head.

SEAMUS: Do they call the people who put all that dirty stuff on the Internet pornbrokers.

JANUS: That reminds me, I must inform Ebenezer of what has just happened. He knew Adam. They exchanged opinions about the last act of my play. Adam loved the suggestion from Ebenezer, which was the one we finally adopted.

BIDDY: I'm going to ring and find out if Adam's secretary is still in his office. I want to ask her about the funeral arrangements

JOYCE: She must have gone home by now.

BIDDY: Her number is in my handbag. (She rummages through it)

SEAMUS: How come you have his secretary's telephone number?

BIDDY: I needed it when I arranged the interview, stupid.

(She goes to the telephone. After a pause she speaks.)

BIDDY: Carol, it's Biddy Hurley. I can't tell you how sad I am. It

must have been a terrible shock. I am ringing to request

that you let his cousin Jason know when and where the

funeral will be held. He would like to attend. I would as

well. A private funeral? Only close relatives? That will include Jason Donovan, of course.

(She listens for a while, then replaces the receiver and

returns to her chair. After a while, Biddy whispers:

BIDDY: You're not going to believe this, Jason. You are not Adam Donovan's cousin.

JASON: How can that be? I asked him if his father was Tom Donovan and he said that he was.

BIDDY: You're forgetting that Donovan is quite a common name

and so is Tom.

JASON:: So why didn't he tell me, if I wasn't his cousin?

BIDDY: The politeness of the heart, Jason. He didn't want to upset you. Your play was okay and that was all he

needed to know.

(Jason brings over the laptop computer from the sideboard and sets it up on the dining-room table.

He

plugs in the telephone wire.

JASON: Will you excuse me just a moment. I should like to let

Ebenezer know what has happened.

(He taps away for a minute or two. The lights dim.

A TV with a screen large enough for the audience to see is substituted for the laptop screen on the dining-

room table. The face of a black man wearing a serious expression appears.)

EBENEZER: (Video-taped recording) Hey, man, I'm mighty sorry to hear that Adam Donovan has died in a tragic accident.

Bad, bad news. He really understood theatre. I was very proud of the fact that he approved of the ending I suggested for your play. It really made me feel good.

And dying dramatically in front of the cameras is exactly the way he would like to go. A perfect exit for an ex-hooper. If I appear to be taking this lightly, man, it ain't really so. In the world of entertainment men like

him are rare. He was in the mould of Barnum, Zeigfield, Sam Goldwyn and Loyd-Webber. He

could turn anything into theatre. A Rock concert in
Grand Canyon, Opera in the Coliseum in Rome,

Hamlet in Trafalgar Square. Remember? He was a
big angel

among small angels. He didn't do it just for the
money.

He was really concerned about keeping people hap-
py. He seemed to have kept a lot of women happy in his time as well.
But that was the old Adam in him. You couldn't restrain him in any
direction. He was a force of nature. He just loved variety -- in his
shows, in his friends, among whom I am glad to be counted, and
in his love affairs.

Who are we to criticise? He was a juggler who could
keep more balls in the air than we could ever dream
of.

I sure hope he left enough money to look after his
wife

and numerous progeny. Jason, he plucked us out of

obscurity and now he's gone that is exactly where
we
will likely disappear again. As they say, one swal-
low
don't make a summer and one hit don't guarantee an
income in the worst-paid profession of all. So I'm
resigned to going back to the foundry where I
worked
before. There's a lot to be said for it, even though
it's
so noisy you can't talk and you have to mime
everything. That was the theme of my play, how
you
can communicate with your workmates even in
dumb
show. By contrast being a playwright is an unnatu-
ral,
lonely occupation. The Internet can't replace the
comradeship of the work place. So is it back to the

classroom for you, Jason? At least there you'll al-

ways

have a good audience. My advice is: use all the

skills

you developed for the theatre to make the little hor-

rors

pay attention. Do that and you could become a real

successful schoolmaster. And your girl friend --

how

has she taken it? She's bursting at the seams you tell

me. Tell her I've got six of the best kids you could

ever

have and they are a delight to their old daddy. I

wouldn't swap my play for any one of them. But

I'm

glad it made enough money to help them through

college. Of course, even without Adam you might

still

make some money from your play. Mine is doing
the
rounds still. But like everythin' else in life it will
eventually die the death. That's why I'm planning
to
go back to the day job. Regarding our great
impresario, from what I hear he rampaged through
the
female sex like an out-of-control locomotive. I'm
sure
glad he didn't take a fancy to my wife, Amelia. I
once
asked her if she would sacrifice her virtue to get my
play put on. Do you know what she said? If it don't
make it on its own, it won't make no difference if I
lie
on my back wavin' my legs in the air. And she was
right, man. Do you know what got my play put on.
It

was the fact that there was no speech at all, only stage directions, because that's what it's like in a foundry. But do you know what that old sonovabitch Adam said: You ain't written any speech, man. So you only get fifty per cent royalties. Of course, he was only joking. But it was unholy difficult casting THE FOUNDRY. Not enough actors with experience of mime. But here I go talking about my play like it's the only one that's ever been written. I hope your play makes some solid dough for you. I discussed it with a lot of guys on the Internet Theatre forum. There were numerous suggestions as to how it should end. One guy

want
your
eth
And
the
right
prince.

suggested a quote from Hamlet. But first of all, I
to say this. I figure that the fact that Adam was not
first cousin after all don't make no difference.
Mathematically everyone on earth is everybody's
fiftieth cousin. Yes, Jason, old son, I am your fifti-
cousin. And it's because we are all cousins is the
reason we can all chat so happily on the Internet.
so to the ending...
Without archangels like Adam Donovan who raise
money there wouldn't be no theatre. So it's seems
and proper to end by saying 'Goodnight, sweet
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.'

(The large screen on a television set is replaced by the laptop computer before the lights come on again.)

JASON: I agree wholeheartedly, Ebenezer. We in this theatre celebrate the life of Cousin Adam with Hallelujahs. (As the lights come on the cast surge forward, ecstatically praising the audience, saying: But you are the real angels, because your coming here enables us to do the thing we love best. God bless you, angels. God bless you all.)

FINAL CURTAIN FALLS

