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# **The Worst Village in England**

**English  
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# The Worst Village in England

English translation by Anne-Christine Gasc

The last survivors of a dying village, forsaken by God and bypassed by the motorway, decide to take matters into their own hands and create an event that will drive traffic to their village. But it's not easy to turn the worst village in England into the next must-see tourist attraction.

## Characters

**Derek:** pub landlord (male)  
**Jackie:** pub landlady (female)  
**Charlie:** school teacher (male or female)  
**Benedict:** priest (male)  
**Felix Blatheringington-Smythe:** mayor (male or female)  
**Jason:** teenager, celebrity wanna-be (male or female)  
**Wendy:** reality tv producer (female)  
**Catherine:** journalist (male or female)  
**Ramirez:** inspector (male or female)  
**Sanchez:** constable (male or female)

## Act 1

*The Red Lion in Sodgibbon Cross, a typical small village pub. Behind the bar, Derek, the landlord is a middle-aged, working class Sun Reader-type. He is thumbing the local paper, while Jackie, the landlady, wipes glasses absentmindedly. Felix Blatherington-Smythe, the mayor, enters the pub. He looks very much like the last branch of a dying aristocratic family tree, dressed with quaint elegance and worn clothing.*

**Felix** – Hello Derek. Mrs. Jackie, my respects.

*Derek, looking surly, barely lifts his eyes from his paper. Jackie appears to snap out of her daydream and her face lights up a little.*

**Jackie** – Mr. Mayor... How's things?

*Felix takes his place at the counter.*

**Felix** – Well, my dear... I have a positively ruinous headache this morning, I'm afraid. I simply have no idea what brought it on...

**Derek** – Really? You were three sheets to the wind last night. It's called a hangover...

*Jackie looks at Derek disapprovingly.*

**Jackie** (*very friendly*) – And what can I get you, Felix?

**Felix** – I'll have a Fernet-Branca. That should right me...

**Derek** – Hair of the dog... Good call...

*Jackie serves Felix, who thanks her with a smile.*

**Felix** – You look stunning today, dear.

**Jackie** – I had a colour rinse. Nice of you to notice, because my husband...

**Felix** – Oh yes, it's certainly very....

**Derek** – Blue.

**Felix** – Dearest Jackie, your husband really doesn't deserve you. This colour suits you perfectly.

**Jackie** – I fancied a change...

*Derek observes the small talk, annoyed.*

**Derek** – Your hair color is the only thing that ever changes in Sodgibbon Cross... (*he puts the paper down on the counter*) Can you believe this? This place is so dead we don't even feature in the local paper any more.

**Jackie** – Really?

**Derek** – Look for yourself! It used to be that even if they didn't actually write about us, Sodgibbon Cross was right there, next to Greenfield Wells and Sodgibbon Pews. Now, nothing. We've been dropped from the menu!

**Felix** (*sighing*) – What can you do, my poor Derek... We are the castaways of the great rural brain drain. Today we're off the menu and tomorrow we won't even be in the specials. Soon, we won't even feature on maps, like a desert island lost in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, far from any shipping lane.

**Jackie** – At least we'd have a beach... You're right Felix. Castaways among potato fields. That's what we are.

**Felix** – Watching powerless as the small bit of land we're clinging to is being slowly submerged under the rising seas...

**Derek** – Round here you're more likely to be swept by a mud slide...

*Felix drinks his Fernet-Branca.*

**Jackie** – That's all so very sad... But what can you do, right, Mr Mayor?

**Felix** – Mayor... I'm not sure I'll be mayor for very long yet...

**Derek** – Surely you're not afraid you won't be re-elected! You've always been the only candidate in the mayoral elections at Sodgibbon Cross. And given the number of voters left, if you vote for yourself that's almost twenty percent of the votes.

**Felix** – No, it's not that... I just received a letter sent to the council... they're thinking of amalgamating us with the next town over.

**Derek** – Sodgibbon Pews?

**Jackie** – But that's over twenty miles away!

**Felix** – Twenty-three as the crow flies... Twenty as the crow walks.

**Derek** – Yes, the road is straight like a laser across the fields...

**Jackie** – There's so much nothing around here. I can't imagine why we'd need a bend in the road.

**Derek** – We'd settle for a hill, woods, even a large bush.

**Felix** – It's been a concern of mine... I considered a crest for the town but I don't know what to put on it...

**Derek** – A spud.

**Felix** – Regardless, this isn't the time to crow about it. And it could be my last term. Consolidation, that's what they call it.

**Derek** – After more than thirty years as mayor...

**Jackie** – So what're we going to call you now, if we can't call you Mr Mayor?

**Felix** – Mr Blatherington-Smythe I suppose... But you, Jackie, you can still call me Felix of course...

**Derek** – They've already removed the last park bench and the last phone booth. Now we won't even have a town hall.

**Felix** – We're witnessing the slow death of the public service...

**Jackie** – And to think of all the good you've done for Sodgibbon Cross...

**Derek** – Yeah, right...

**Jackie** – What?

**Derek** – More like the good that Sodgibbon Cross has done to his shady little business deals... Know what I mean?

**Felix** – Shady business deals? What business deals?

**Derek** – Right, because as our elected representative you've done so much for the municipality. That must be why they want to get rid of it...

**Jackie** – You're being unfair, Derek. We don't have much going for us to start with, at Sodgibbon.

**Derek** – And that hasn't stopped you from enjoying all the perks that come with the job, has it?

**Felix** – I don't know what you mean...

**Derek** – I mean the grant you managed to get from the regional council...

**Felix** – Oh, that...

**Derek** – To restore a manor in which, according to a legend that no one had ever heard of, Boudica spent a night back in 60 AD.

**Felix** – I can show you the book in which this legend is documented!

**Derek** – You wrote it!

**Felix** – Last time I checked, writing books was still allowed...

**Derek** – A manor that just you just happen to own, and that was entirely refurbished at tax payers' expense, allegedly to turn it into an AirBnB... Fitting, since air is the only thing that ever fills this bed and breakfast. Well, that and Boudica...

**Felix** – You have no idea of the responsibility that comes with owning a listed building, my poor Derek...

**Derek** – Boudica... If at least she'd shagged in that bed.

**Jackie** – Derek, please...

**Derek** – And let's not mention the grant to restore the village chapel.

**Felix** – But of course Sodgibbon Cross needed an actual chapel!

**Derek** – A chapel whose priest just happens to be your cousin. The rectory was entirely refurbished thanks to our taxes. Now it looks like a Moroccan Riad. There's even a jacuzzi in the patio...

**Felix** – A jacuzzi... Please... It's an ornamental pool.

**Derek** – Let's call it an ornamental whirlpool.

**Felix** – Derek, I honestly don't know what you're getting at...

**Derek** – Oh, I don't know... Maybe that this kind of money could have been used to improve the town...

**Felix** – Oh yes? How so?

**Derek** – Off the top of my head... We could have installed CCTV cameras.

**Felix** – To watch what? The potato fields?

**Derek** – We could have restored the school!

*Charlie the school teacher, visibly camp, enters.*

**Charlie** – Ladies, gentlemen...

**Jackie** – Speaking of the devil. Here's the school teacher. Hello Charlie.

**Charlie** – Oh, I see it's rush hour at the Red Lion.

**Derek** – Yep... it's almost a full house.

**Charlie** – I see lords and commoners. As soon as the Lords Spirituals join us, the Parliament can be in session...

**Felix** – You think you're joking, Charlie. But our democracy is in danger.

**Derek** – And Boudica isn't here to fight for us anymore...

**Charlie** (*to Felix*) – Are you finally under investigation, Mr Mayor? It's very trendy, you know.

**Jackie** – It's much worse than that...

**Charlie** – You're going to have to officiate your first gay wedding? Although, as far as I know, no one's asked for my hand... at least not to put a ring on it...

**Felix** – Sodgibbon Cross is going to be amalgamated with the next town over.

**Charlie** – Amalgamated?

**Jackie** – And that’s just the beginning, mark my words.

**Felix** – The beginning of the end, for sure.

**Derek** – Hitler started with Poland and look what happened next. If we just stand by and watch...

**Charlie** – You think you’re joking...

*Charlie takes his place at the counter, looking visibly concerned.*

**Jackie** – Don’t tell us you have bad news too?

**Charlie** – They’re talking about closing the school, believe it or not.

**Jackie** – Really?

**Derek** – That can’t come as too much of a surprise... there aren’t any pupils left. When we run out of patrons we’ll have to close down the pub too...

**Jackie** – No pupils left? Did Jason finally get his O Levels?

**Charlie** – O Levels... that’s so last century, my poor Jackie. No, but he’s over 18 so I couldn’t justify keeping him back in primary school yet another year.

**Jackie** – They also got rid of O Levels? What is the world coming to, I ask you. What can I get you, Charlie?

**Charlie** – A Sea Breeze, as usual.

*Jackie makes his drink.*

**Jackie** – So what’s Jason going to do now?

**Charlie** – Good question...

**Jackie** – Speaking of which, we haven’t seen him this morning. I don’t know where he’s hiding.

**Derek** – Hey Charlie, if they close the school you’re going to have a hard time finding another position...

**Felix** – I thought there was a shortage of teachers...

**Derek** – That may be, but with his criminal record...

**Charlie** – Criminal record... You always loved a hyperbole.

**Derek** – Well, it did involve the Vice Squad...

**Charlie** – Yes but... It didn’t have anything to do with children...

**Jackie** – Still.

**Charlie** – So what, I enjoyed teaching dressed as a woman once in a while. No one got hurt...

**Jackie** – Still, it must have been a wee bit disturbing for the kids. A school master one day, a mistress the next...

**Derek** – What did they call you again?

**Charlie** – Mrs Doubtfire.

**Felix** – That must be why they transferred you to a school without pupils... while they decide on your case.

*Benedict, the priest, enters the pub. He looks more like an ageing playboy than a priest, except for the small cross he wears discreetly on his lapel.*

**Charlie** – Father! We were waiting for you to open the Parliamentary session.

**Benedict** – Good morning, children.

**Derek** – Children... With a priest like him, you never know if he means it literally...

**Jackie** – Derek...

**Derek** – Hey Charlie, isn't life funny? If you were a priest you could wear a dress without fearing the long hand of justice. While this one, he never wears anything but street clothes.

**Charlie** – That's a shame. I'm sure you would look fabulous in a dress, Benedict.

**Jackie** – What are you drinking, Father?

**Benedict** – Dry white wine.

**Felix** – So, Father? I hope you are the bringer of the good news we've been waiting for...

**Benedict** – I'd love nothing more, Mr Mayor... But alas...

**Derek** – I won't ask you if anyone died. Apart from Jason, every last soul of our ghost village is in this room.

**Benedict** – Worse... The Church is talking about closing down the parish...

**Jackie** – No?

**Benedict** – Unfortunately, God is insolvent. Apparently, the Church needs to 'strengthen its core business and capitalise on the future' too.

**Jackie** – Shameful, that's what it is... Whatever next? It's only a matter of time before the Chinese start buying stock in the Vatican.

**Benedict** – On the other hand, no one ever came to service in Sodgibbon.

**Derek** – Despite all the trouble you went through to increase the parish population.

**Jackie** – Derek... Please, at least show some respect for religion...

**Derek** – It's not bread loaves he multiplies, but buns in the oven.

**Felix** – No town hall, no school, no church... At least we still have the Red Lion.

**Derek** – But for how long?

**Charlie** – You're not thinking of closing, are you?

**Jackie** – I wouldn't mind selling myself. If we found a buyer...

**Benedict** – Come on, you're not going to leave us, are you?... What would you do without a pub, eh Jackie?

**Jackie** – Ha, I'd start by going on a holiday. You won't believe this, but I've never seen the sea.

**Derek** – Might as well wait for the sea to come to us, with global warming and all. It'll be quicker than finding a buyer.

**Charlie** – I think you mean a sucker.

**Derek** – Who would ever buy a pub in this place? We don't even have customers...

**Felix** – Even the last inbred, alcoholic farmers have been replaced by drones controlled from Hackney.

**Jackie** – If we could only get a handful of tourists, at least during the summer.

**Charlie** – Why would tourists ever come to this hole? There's literally nothing to see for a hundred miles around.

**Felix** – For sure, it's the ideal place to rest.

**Derek** – Yeah... If you're hoping for eternal rest...

**Benedict** – Potato fields as far as the eye can see. A few crows. You really do need the faith to stay here...

**Charlie** – Crows over potato fields... Sounds like a Van Gogh painting...

**Jackie** – At least if Van Gogh came here to kill himself it would have put the place on the map.

**Derek** – That's not a bad idea, actually. If assisted suicide became legal in Britain, Sodgibbon Cross would be the best place to set up the first practice.

**Charlie** – And if everyone suffering from depression came here to kill themselves, it would blow a bit of life back into our lovely town...

**Benedict** – Come now, children, we must keep the faith. God always answers our prayers...

**Derek** – Right, well this round's on me. Let's drink to forget that everyone, God included, has abandoned us in the middle of an ocean of potatoes... Jackie, break out the sparkling wine.

*Felix looks at his pocket watch.*

**Benedict** – Ok, but quickly then.

**Felix** – Oh my... look at the time.

**Derek** – What's going on? Why are you both overbooked all of a sudden?

*Jackie opens a cupboard and cries out in shock as she sees Jason curled up inside.*

**Jackie** – Good Lord... One of these days he's going to give me a heart attack...

**Felix** – Does he do that often?

**Jackie** – Since he's a wee boy. He likes to practise hiding in the most unexpected places.

**Derek** – We even found him inside the washing machine once. But he's too big to fit there anymore...

**Jackie** – I'll never get used to it... You, come out of there!

*Jason crawls out of the cupboard. He's meant to be 18 years old but appears slow and detached from real life, obsessed with his only life goal of becoming a reality-tv celebrity. The others treat him like he has learning difficulties.*

**Jason (to Derek)** – Hi Uncle Derek.

*Derek answers with a nod.*

**Charlie** – Hello Jason.

**Felix** – I see your cousin is still a few sandwiches short of a picnic...

**Benedict** – I thought he was your nephew.

**Jackie** – It's complicated. I find it hard to keep track myself...

*Jackie takes a bottle of sparkling wine and drops it in an ice bucket.*

**Charlie** – I see... That would explain a few things...

**Derek** – I'm also his godfather, so let's just call him my godson.

**Jackie** – I mean, we just call him Jason, it's easier.

**Charlie** – Or JC for short.

**Benedict** – Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Felix** – The last young person in the village...

**Charlie** – He does look like he's carrying more than his fair share of DNA.

**Derek** – According to a legend I recently uncovered, he's actually the last direct descendent of Boudica...

**Benedict** – I had him do his First Communion last year, just in case...

**Jackie** – Now that they've dropped O Levels, his baptism certificate might be the only certificate he'll ever get...

**Charlie** – According to a study by some ologists, children named Jason who born after the year 2000 only have a one in a hundred chance of getting their A Levels.

**Felix** – So what are you going to do now, son?

**Benedict** – If he leaves too, I won't have any altar boys left...

**Derek** – And since you haven't got any female parishioners anymore...

**Jason** – I want to go to London and prepare for auditions.

**Felix** – Auditions? You mean job interviews?

**Charlie** – You want to apply for a job?

**Felix** – Maybe he wants to be a mailman, like his father.

**Benedict** – His father was a mailman?

**Derek** – Why? You thought he was a priest?

**Jackie** – He's got it in his head to audition to be a candidate on a reality-tv show.

**Charlie** – What show?

**Derek** – Britain's Got Incredible Talent.

**Benedict** – No, really?

**Felix** – What talent can this muppet possibly have?

**Jackie** – He's a contortionist. Well, according to him anyway.

**Derek** – Remember that time when the binmen found him asleep in a wheelie bin? A few seconds later and he would have been on his way to the recycling center.

**Jackie** – Maybe his parents were hoping he'd get picked up with the bulky items...

*Jason steps a few feet away from the group to play darts with a distinct lack of dexterity, which could become dangerous for the rest. Felix drains his glass.*

**Felix** – Listen, I think I'll take a rain check for that champers... There's an urgent matter I need to attend to at the town hall.

**Derek** – Urgent?

**Felix** – I need to reply to that letter.

**Charlie** – Oh that's right, the takeover bid launched by Sodgibbon Pews for Sodgibbon Cross...

**Benedict** – I'll come with you, Mr. Mayor. I need to plead for my cause too...

*The mayor and the priest leave the pub. Jackie shows the bottle of sparkling wine to Charlie.*

**Jackie** – A glass of bubbly?

*He signals that he isn't interested either.*

**Charlie** – Thanks, but no thanks. And it's not even noon...

**Jackie** – All right, I'll put it back in the fridge... Save it for a special occasion...

*Derek glances at the door of the pub with a look of surprise on his face.*

**Derek** – I think we may have one now...

*Wendy and Catherine enter the pub. Their appearance is very London hipster chic and makes a stark contrast with the locals. Wendy looks like a depressed celebrity and hides behind oversized sunglasses. Catherine is dressed elegantly but more practical and less feminine. Catherine's demeanour is determined, positive and enthusiastic, while Wendy is pessimistic bordering on suicidal. Wendy looks around her.*

**Wendy** – Did we just land in the intro sequence of an episode of the Twilight Zone?

**Catherine** – Do you want to sit down for a few minutes?

*Wendy doesn't reply but drops on a chair.*

**Catherine** – Hello everyone... I apologise for interrupting your cute meeting but... Can I ask you something?

**Jackie** – Yes...?

**Catherine** – Where are we? Precisely?

*Silence.*

**Derek** – Precisely? Well, Madam, we are precisely at Sodgibbon Cross.

**Catherine** – Oh yes, it's...

**Charlie** – In the middle of nowhere...

*Catherine glances at the screen on her smartphone.*

**Catherine** – Even the GPS doesn't even know where it is...

**Jackie** – It's a lovely, quiet place...

**Catherine** – You don't say... I thought we were in... Do you know, I think we're a little lost...

**Charlie** – It's quite unusual for anyone to come here of their own free will, you know...

*Catherine looks around her, appalled, especially when she notices Jason who is still playing darts with a visible lack of talent.*

**Derek** – Can I get you something to drink?

**Catherine** – Hmm... Sure, why not? Wendy, do you want something to drink... (*Wendy doesn't answer*) We'll have two Cokes. No ice, please.

**Jackie** – Good call, I hadn't gotten around to plugging the freezer yet. With this weather...

**Derek** – For sure, spring is rather late this year.

**Charlie** – Last year it came around the middle of August, and two weeks later it was Autumn.

*Jackie pours their Cokes.*

**Derek** (*trying to be friendly*) – Are you vacationing in the area?

**Catherine** – Yes... Well, actually... More like a short break... (*quietly, aside*) My friend had a... she suffers from exhaustion. We had to move away from it all for a bit.

**Charlie** – Well you found the right place...

**Jackie** – Sodgibbon Cross is the perfect place to rest and recuperate...

**Charlie** – It's because there isn't a whole lot to do...

**Catherine** – Yes, it's... It's charming, isn't it, Wendy?

**Wendy** – Hmm... Looks like a good place to spend one's last days...

**Jackie** – Yes, we have a big retirement community...

**Wendy** – No, I meant a good place to put an end to your life...

*Awkward silence.*

**Jackie** – So you're planning to relocate to the countryside?

**Catherine** – We haven't really had time to talk about it yet, but... why not... There is a sense of serenity here... Like in a church...

**Wendy** – Yes... or a cemetery.

**Derek** – We only have a chapel, but you'll find that it has been entirely refurbished. It looks like it was built only yesterday...

**Catherine** – Life in London is so stressful... Sometimes the thought of leaving it all behind and moving to a small village, far away from everything...

**Wendy** – Oh we're far away from everything alright... We don't even know where we are...

*Wendy takes several pills and swigs a mouthful of Coke to chase them down.*

**Catherine** – Remember what the doctor said? No more than one at a time.

**Wendy** – You're right... Actually, I think I'll go and vomit...

**Charlie** – I was like that when I first got here... But then you get used to it, you'll see...

*Jackie, concerned for her tiled floor, points towards the toilets.*

**Jackie** – This way, please...

*Wendy leaves. Catherine looks a little embarrassed.*

**Catherine** – It's probably the change of scenery...

**Derek** – For sure, the air is different here...

**Catherine** – Indeed, our lungs are used higher carbon monoxide concentrations. We'll need a bit of time to recover from withdrawal symptoms...

*She sneezes.*

**Charlie** – Either that, or the pesticides they dump on the potato fields. It takes time to build up a tolerance...

**Catherine** – Pesticides?

**Charlie** – If you have the opportunity to see it, don't miss it – it's spectacular. One of the few attractions the area has to offer. When the choppers rise out of the fog to spread their Monsanto stuff, music blaring... you'll feel as if you're in a scene straight out of Apocalypse Now.

**Catherine** – Isn't it toxic?

**Charlie** – They say it isn't, but... I wonder if that's not part of the reason for Jason... On top of his stunted family tree, obviously...

*Derek glares at him furiously. We hear the sounds of loud vomiting. Light embarrassment.*

**Derek** – And what do you do, in London? If you don't mind me asking, of course...

**Catherine** – I'm a journalist.

**Derek** – Journalist? Really?

**Jackie** – And you're writing an article on the area?

**Catherine** – We're on a vacation, but who knows? If I find something interesting to write about... Actually, I'm thinking of writing a book...

**Derek** – Oh. A book. Why not.

**Jackie** – We have a mayor who books too.

**Catherine** – How nice for him...

**Derek** – Actually, he's more into history books.

**Jackie** – And your lady friend? I mean, your friend? Is she a journalist too?

**Catherine** – Not exactly... She's a television producer (*confidentially*) WC Productions, that's her...

**Jackie** – WC?

**Catherine** – You've never heard of Wendy Crawford? WC, that's her initials...

**Derek** – So she works on the telly?

**Catherine** – I'm sure you've heard of a show called Britain's Got Incredible Talent?

**Jackie** – Have we...? Incredible Talent? But of course!

**Catherine** – Well, that's her! She's the show's producer.

**Jason** – An Incredible Talent?

*Everyone turns towards Jason, whose presence had been forgotten. But he doesn't say anything else.*

**Catherine** – It's been going for ten years. Naturally, there's a lot of pressure. She burned out.

**Jackie** – Burned out...? What's that? Like a third-degree burn?

**Derek** – A BBQ accident?

**Charlie** – Back when we still had O Levels, we used to call that a nervous breakdown.

**Catherine** – Actually, the tv commissioner decided to cancel the show. If she doesn't want to shut down her production company, Wendy needs to come up with something more modern. Unfortunately, her last show wasn't a success...

**Derek** – Ah yes...

**Catherine** – And then there's the matter of that little incident with the submarine in the Baltic Sea... You must have heard about it...

**Derek** – Yes I... Probably...

**Catherine** – It was a totally new concept... We rounded up a gaggle of celebrities from the '70s, all suffering from claustrophobia, and sent them to the bottom of the sea in a yellow submarine. To help them face and conquer their fears.

**Jackie** – I think I read something about it in a magazine at the hairdresser's.

**Catherine** – Unfortunately, the submarine pilot was an ex-airline pilot with an undiagnosed case of severe depression and he wasn't able to come back from the depths...

**Jackie** – That's horrible... But what can you do, it's fate...

**Charlie** (*with emphasis*) – Man's greatness is to accept his fate, without believing in it's fatality.

**Catherine** – Are you a professor?

**Charlie** – A teacher... in between jobs at the moment...

**Catherine** – Anyway, WC is going through shit times. So I decided to take Wendy out to pasture for a while, so she doesn't blow a gasket...

*Renewed vomiting sounds.*

**Charlie** – I hope she's going to flush that.

**Catherine** – I thought that spending time away from London would inspire her to find a concept for a new show. But so far she just seems to want to shut down the company and start over.

**Derek** – I know the feeling... We all have those moments where we'd like to start over.

**Charlie** – Except that since we're already over, we just want to start something...

**Catherine** – Actually, my plan is to write a biopic.

**Derek** – A biopic?

**Catherine** – On WC. To tell the story of her life... You have no idea how fascinating the life of a television producer can be. So if we could find a quiet place to stay for a few months, far away from the hustle and bustle of London...

**Jackie** – Well, you've found the right place. We don't even get mobile reception or the internet, we're in a white zone...

**Charlie** – Sometimes it feels more like a black hole...

**Catherine** – Or maybe even buy a secondary residence.... To put down some roots.

**Jackie** – Oh, you'll take root alright, quicker than you think.... And then you won't be able to leave...

**Jason** – Do you want to see me hide in a fridge?

**Jackie** (*mildly rebuking him*) – Jason...

*A moment of uncertainty.*

**Catherine** – This place is really special, isn't it? I've never seen anything so...

**Derek** – Authentic.

**Catherine** – No... That's not the word I was looking for, but...

**Derek** – Why don't you stay in our village for a few days... or even longer?

**Catherine** – This is a hotel, too?

**Derek** – It could be...

*Jackie and Charlie look at him, intrigued. Wendy returns.*

**Catherine** – Do you hear that, Wendy? This gentleman is suggesting that we rent a room here in the Red Lion. What do you think?

**Wendy** – I think I'm going to be sick again...

**Jackie** – Who knows, you might even end up buying the place...

**Catherine** – The pub is for sale? Do you hear that, Wendy? Wouldn't that be a hoot?

**Wendy** – Wonderful. And we wouldn't have to worry about customers interrupting our work.

**Derek** – It's a little quiet at the moment, for sure. But the tourists won't be long now...

**Jackie** – It's peak season soon...

**Catherine** (*surprised*) – In March? They come here for...?

**Derek** (*not sure what to say*) – Well... I mean... Because in the Spring...

**Charlie** –... the potato fields are in bloom. It's very romantic, you'll see...

**Catherine** – Potatoes... How interesting... Do you hear that, Wendy?

**Wendy** – I didn't even know potatoes had flowers. But if you want a bouquet for your birthday...

**Charlie** – Or how about a perfume, even? Spud by Givenchy. It'll stand out on the shelves.

**Catherine** – You're right, the tulips in Holland get all the press, no one ever thinks of the potatoes...

**Charlie** – In Sodgibbon Cross.

**Catherine** – But then the season must be very short...

**Jackie** – It depends on the type of potato.

**Derek** – Actually, we get flowers all year round.

**Charlie** – Especially from the transgenic ones, which are Beacon's special export.

**Jackie** – No, there really isn't an off-season to speak of.

*Jason joins the group.*

**Jason** – I can also fit in a wheelie bin, do you want to see?

**Jackie** – Come now, Jason... Stop bothering the nice lady... Why don't you go and practice outside? Look, I just took out the wheelie bin to the curb.

*Derek pushes Jason outside.*

**Jackie** – I'm sorry... He's not very bright.

**Derek** – It's a pretty good deal, you know.

**Catherine** – Wendy's right... It's a little dead around here, no?

**Charlie** – Well, now that they build the motorway to go around the village...

**Jackie** – It's because they're all having a nap.

**Wendy** – It's not even noon yet... They start napping early around here...

**Jackie** – If you'd been here an hour ago, you'd have seen what peak time looks like...

**Derek** – Or you could turn it into a secondary residence in the country, and invite your London friends. There's a nice flat on the first floor.

**Catherine** – In a real life, working pub, that would be a riot, wouldn't it?

**Wendy** – Do you have anything stronger?

**Jackie** – Would you like to taste our local specialty?

**Derek** – We do a mean potato hooch.

**Charlie** – And believe me, you always remember your first time.

**Derek** – Like love.

**Charlie** – And like love, it can make you blind...

**Wendy** – You've convinced me.

*Derek pours her drink.*

**Catherine** – I don't think, with the pills...

**Wendy** – We all have to die of something...

**Derek** – Would you like one?

**Charlie** – The recipe was invented by the defrocked monk who allegedly fathered one of Boudica's daughters in a barn when she stopped in our village in 60 AD.

**Derek** – The first one is on the house...

*They empty their glasses.*

**Catherine** – Oh, yes, that's brutal...

**Wendy** – You can really taste the potatoes.

**Charlie** – Spot on! And if it doesn't kill you right away, you'll feel full of beans.

**Derek** – And nothing but natural ingredients.

**Charlie** – And 100% organic compounds... Organic chemistry compounds...

*Jackie pours a second round.*

**Jackie** – The second round is sponsored by the Tourist Board of Sodgibbon Cross.

**Derek** – You won't need your pills any more after that one, believe you me.

**Wendy** – I'm sure, it feels like a much quicker way to commit suicide.

**Derek** – And get this, it's completely legal.

**Charlie** – Our mayor is the alchemist who distills this nectar in his cellar, with his illegal still.

**Jackie** – And this divine beverage is blessed once a year by our priest. A holy man if there is one...

*Jason returns, looking confused and covered in rubbish.*

**Jason** – I couldn't get in the wheelie bin, Uncle Derek. It was already full.

**Derek** – Jesus wept, what a loser...

**Wendy** – Does he want to drink some of the magic potion too?

**Jackie** – Absolutely not. He was given plenty when he was teething.

**Derek** – Go on, go play outside. The adults are talking!

**Jason** (*disappointed*) – You'll see, one day I'll go to London...

*To everyone's surprise, Jason, disappointed, starts singing a verse from the song "There's no business like show business" while performing a few dance steps from the film:*

There's no business like show business like no business I know  
Everything about it is appealing, everything that traffic will allow  
Nowhere could you get that happy feeling when you are stealing that extra bow

*Jason leaves the room. The others don't mention the incident, perhaps thinking they just experienced a collective hallucination from the potato spirit.*

**Jackie** – The region is gorgeous, you know.

**Derek** (*leers at Catherine*) – And, just like a gorgeous woman, it knows not to reveal its assets all at once.

**Jackie** – And pub landlady is a noble job. Contact with customers and all that.

**Derek** (*to Wendy*) – Surely that's just what the doctor would order for a depressive victim like you. Much better than being alone with your thoughts.

**Catherine** – I know it sounds crazy, but it could be fun, don't you think?... You're always saying how you want to start a new life...

**Wendy** – Well... I meant, changing for a better life...

*Everyone is beginning to be considerably drunk.*

**Jackie** – Come on, I'll show you the flat upstairs. You'll see, it's very cozy...

**Charlie** – And very convenient. No need for public transport. Your commute will be walking down a flight of stairs. A nice change from the Tube.

*Jackie takes Catherine and Wendy to the staircase that leads to the first floor.*

**Jackie** – After you...

**Derek** – Be careful, the staircase is rather steep.

**Wendy** (*swaying*) – I think I'm holding a steep one too.

*They leave.*

**Derek** – Talk about a gift from heaven...

**Charlie** – More like a miracle.

**Derek** – And I think they might be receptive to the magic of this place.

**Charlie** – Either that or they're feeling the effects of the potato booze. It gave me hallucinations once.

**Derek** – We absolutely must find a way to get them to stay the night.

**Charlie** – Right, I'll leave you to it. I have to get changed...

**Derek** – You're right, we need to make a good impression.

*Charlie leaves. Felix and Benedict return.*

**Felix** – Who are these two beautiful young women I saw entering your establishment?

**Benedict** – And what have you done with them?

**Derek** – They're from London. Jackie is giving them a tour of the flat upstairs.

**Felix** – London?

**Derek** – One of them is a journalist, and the other one works on the telly! Can you imagine?

**Benedict** – What are they doing upstairs?

**Derek** – If they decide to move here, they could do for Sodgibbon Cross what Ed Sheeran did for Framlingham! The capital of Hipsterland!

**Felix** – You think?

**Derek** – I'm going to try and flog them my pub.

**Benedict** – That might be harder than it sounds...

**Felix** – Do you really believe they're thinking of living here?

**Derek** – The one who works in reality-tv looks completely out to lunch, you know, anxiety-depression style. The other one's the same, but the opposite.

**Benedict** – How do you mean, the same but the opposite?

**Derek** – She's also out to lunch, but she thinks everything's amazing! Even Sodgibbon Cross! Can you imagine?

**Benedict** – How on Earth did they end up here?

**Derek** – It's a gift from heaven, I tell you. I almost found my faith again. They're looking for a quiet place to recuperate mentally and write their memoirs.

**Felix** – Quiet? They certainly won't find anything better. So you really think that...

*A man wearing a Zorro costume enters the pub, holding a gun (we later learn that it's Jason)*

**Jason** – Hands up. This is a hold up.

**Derek** – Fuck. What now...

**Felix** – A hold-up? Really?...

**Benedict** – Beacon sure is full of excitement this morning...

**Felix** – And you told them it was a nice, quiet place.

**Derek** – What's this wanker doing? He's going to fuck everything up.

**Jason** – The moolah, and hurry up...

**Derek** – Sure thing, little man, stay calm...

*Derek bends down behind the counter, pulls out a hunting rifle and points it towards the man who cocks his gun.*

**Benedict** – Aha... Snap!

**Jason** – Heh! Watch it! Mine's a toy gun.

**Derek** – I know, I gave it to you for your First Communion, moron. Along with your Zorro costume and your diving watch.

*The man removes his masque. It's Jason. Derek puts his rifle away.*

**Felix** – What a fucking idiot...

**Derek** – The hipsters will be down any minute now, what do we do with this one?

**Jason** – I just wanted a little cash to take the train and make it to the competition in London.

**Benedict** – The competition?

**Jason** – An Incredible Talent...

**Benedict** – Shouldn't we be calling the cops?

**Felix** – Or the asylum...

**Derek** – No time for that. And we can't risk frightening the ladies with the presence of cops...

*Derek points the freezer to Jason.*

**Derek** – You, get in there!

**Jason** – In there?

**Derek** – I thought you were a contortionist?

**Jason** – Yes, but...

**Derek** – I'm sure the lady from the telly will be very impressed that you can fit in the freezer...

**Jason** – You think?

**Derek** – Do you want to be in that show or not?

**Jason** – Oh, alright...

**Benedict** – He's an eager beaver...

**Felix** – Yes... I can see how his parents managed to talk him into hiding in a green wheelie bin...

*Jason steps into the freezer.*

**Derek** – Don't worry, it's not plugged in. We use it to keep the Cornettos in the summer but it's not the season yet.

*Jackie comes down from the first floor with Catherine and Wendy. Derek quickly closes the freezer.*

**Derek** – Ladies, let me introduce you to our mayor, who wanted to personally welcome you to our lovely village...

**Catherine** – Sir... Very happy to meet you.

**Felix** – Ha! See, it's funny because that's my name... Felix... It means happy in Latin.

**Catherine** – Oh, right...

**Derek** – And this is our priest, who...

**Benedict** – My child...

**Derek** – ... who was just stopping by. So, what do you think of our little love nest?

**Catherine** – Yes, it's...

**Wendy** – How do you say again?

**Jackie** – Cozy.

**Catherine** – That's it... It's cozy. Isn't it, Wendy?

**Wendy** – Yes, it's... That's exactly it.

*A moment of silence.*

**Derek** – It must be quite a change from London, of course.

**Catherine** – On the other hand, since you're looking for a new reality-tv concept... a short stay here could be the occasion to reconnect with grass-roots England.

**Wendy** – Never mind grass roots... Any lower and we'll need a shovel... to dig us six feet under.

**Jackie** – There's a bit of work to finish the decoration before anyone can move in, of course, but...

**Catherine** – We'll think about it, won't we Wendy?

**Wendy** – That's right, we'll think about it... And while we do that we'll need a place to sleep... I'm crashing...

**Catherine** – Do you know if there's a hotel in the area? Because this room, no offence but...

**Wendy** – Like you said, there's still a bit of work to be done... like installing a bathroom for example...

**Felix** – Unfortunately... For the moment we don't have anything else... apart from a few AirBnB rooms. But it will be my pleasure to...

**Benedict** – If it's just for a couple of nights, I would be happy to offer you the hospitality of the rectory.

**Catherine** – The rectory...? What's that?

**Benedict** – I am the humble shepherd of this herd of tormented sinners.

**Catherine** – A herd of what now?

**Wendy** – The man is trying to tell you he's a man of the cloth...

**Catherine** – A priest, of course! You told me earlier... But since you're not dressed like...

**Benedict** – Ah... But you should know that not all priests are cut from the same cloth...

**Catherine** – But that's very chivalrous of you... I mean... A rectory... Is that amazing or what?

**Wendy** – Yes. Spending the night in a rectory sounds exactly like something a woman must do at least once in her life...

**Benedict** – But it's only natural. Pure Christian charity.

**Catherine** – And we'll be staying with a priest, what's the worst that could happen?

**Derek** – I'll let you be the judge of that...

**Felix** – Right, so it's settled. You'll see, you won't regret it...

**Benedict** – If you'd like to follow me...

*Catherine and Wendy follow Benedict. They are about to leave the pub together. They bump into Charlie who is returning, dressed like a woman. Catherine doesn't recognise him but Wendy looks at him suspiciously.*

**Catherine** – Madam...

**Charlie** (to Wendy) – Looks like our local fresh air is already working it's magic on you...

**Wendy** (to Catherine) – Are you sure they're not taking us to the motel from Psycho?

*They leave.*

**Derek** – A journalist and a television producer! How lucky is that?

**Felix** – Do you really think these two hipsters are going to buy an insolvent pub in Sodgibbon Cross?

**Jackie** – It's very common for celebrities to buy cafes and turn them into show-biz canteens.

**Charlie** – Robert De Niro even owns a set of high-end Japanese restaurants.

**Felix** – And then there's those who move to the country to reconnect with their peasant roots...

**Jackie** – Sting makes olive oil. And Brad Pitt has his red wine.

**Charlie** – But strangely, I've never heard of celebrities interested in growing transgenic potatoes.

**Jackie** – We're trailblazers...

**Derek** – Ok, you're right, they won't buy this shit pub. But they work for the press and the telly! They could talk about our village so people will hear of it.

**Felix** – What could possibly be of interest to them here...

**Jackie** – We'll find something. There's plenty of small towns with nothing going for them that are famous for something...

**Felix** – Like what?

**Derek** – Off the top of my head, Bethlehem or even Windsor!

**Felix** – Windsor has a famous family.

**Jackie** – So does Bethlehem.

**Charlie** – In Sodgibbon Cross we only have JC...

**Derek** – The trick is finding a way to get people to talk about us! If we build it, they will come.

**Jackie** – And they'd know where to find us on a map.

**Charlie** – There will be no more talk about amalgamation with the next town!

**Felix** – We'd keep our mayor, our teacher, our priest...

**Jackie** – And we'd gain a few customers!

**Derek** – Ok, but right now what we need is an idea to keep them here.

**Jackie** – At least temporarily...

**Charlie** – Just long enough to convince them that Sodgibbon Cross's most vibrant place isn't the cemetery on All Saints Day...

**Felix** – He's right... We need to attract people to create a sense of excitement... But how?

*They think.*

**Derek** – How about a happy hour?

**Charlie** – There isn't a single customer within 20 miles... Who's going to drive 40 miles both ways for a free refill of potato booze?

**Felix** – And that's if they survive the first glass...

**Jackie** – I'll leave you to think about it... I'm going to the shops... If we're going to have company I need to fill the larder... And it's not next door...

*Jackie leaves. Benedict returns.*

**Felix** – So?

**Benedict** – They were in the jacuzzi when I left...

**Derek** – Don't you mean the ornamental pond?...

**Benedict** – Whatever... They seem to be enjoying themselves...

**Felix** – I'm sure it's amazing but it's hardly going to be enough to get them to move here.

**Derek** – The media is already here, we just need to find something about Beacon that they can talk about...

**Benedict** – How about a fete?

**Derek** – Fuck's sake... Why not throw a parade while you're at it?

**Charlie** – No, what we need is a nice, juicy gossip story.

**Felix** – You're right! People would come and check it out for themselves, if it was in the papers.

**Charlie** – Good point... The sea port where the Costa Concordia sank can't get rid of the tourists since the accident. It's become an actual place of pilgrimage!

**Derek** – On the other hand, the odds of a highliner coming ashore in Sodgibbon...

**Charlie** – No chance of a plane crash either. Even the flight path was diverted.

**Benedict** – Except for the planes who spread the pesticides on the potato fields.

**Charlie** – And there isn't a pilot depressed enough to come and crash here of his own will...

**Felix** – We have to face reality... We're more in the independent film category, budget-wise. We're going to need to something less spectacular, but very unusual...

**Benedict** – An accident...

**Derek** – Or a gruesome crime...

**Benedict** – You're not thinking of killing someone and cutting them up just to get people to come to Sodgibbon Cross!

**Felix** – We narrowly avoided an armed robbery, maybe there's something there...

**Charlie** – A dimwit with a toy gun and a Zorro face mask... I don't think it'll be enough for a front page spot.

*They hear banging noises.*

**Derek** – Shit, we forgot Jason in the freezer...

*Derek opens the freezer and helps Jason out of it.*

**Jason** – So? How did I do?

**Derek** – Very good, excellent...

**Charlie** – Good thing the freezer wasn't turned on.

**Felix** – Yeah...

**Derek** – Fuck me! I just had an idea!

**Benedict** – You're scaring me...

**Derek** – Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

**Charlie** – On the other hand, a body found in a freezer...

**Felix** – A freezer, yes, that's good... And it's within our means...

**Benedict** – As far as attracting tourists, a pub freezer with a body in it... you really think that's a good idea?

**Charlie** – We just need a good story to go with it. Context matters.

**Derek** – I can already see the headlines.

**Felix** – Catastrophic accident in Sodgibbon Cross: Incredible Talent fan freezes to death practicing for the show heats!

**Derek** – I bet our telly hipsters will love it!

*Everyone turns towards Jason.*

**Jason** – What? What did I do?

**Benedict** – What's wrong with you! We're not going to sacrifice this poor innocent soul just to give our village a bit of press coverage...

**Derek** – But he won't actually die. Well, not completely anyway.

**Benedict** – What do you mean, not completely?

**Derek** – Jason, how do you feel about becoming a celebrity?

**Jason** – Are you kidding? My destiny is to appear on television!

**Derek** – Yeah... Maybe even in the London Evening Standard or the Manchester Evening News.

**Jason** – And what do I need to do?

**Felix** – Virtually nothing...

**Charlie** – Just be dead.

**Jason** – No way, I want to be a celebrity in my lifetime!

**Derek** – Do you want us to call the cops? Armed robbery, do you know how much you'll get?

**Jason** – No, how long?

**Derek** – I don't know, but that's not the question.

**Felix** – Besides, you won't actually be dead.

**Derek** – We won't set the freezer on high.

*Jason seems to hesitate.*

**Jason** – And you'll pay for my train ticket to London?

**Derek** – Jason, I promise. Do you trust your godfather or not?

**Jason** – Ok... But I don't quite understand. I'll be dead for how long?

**Felix** – You'll be dead at first.

**Derek** – But then, not any more.

**Jason** – Oh, just like Jesus then, right Father?

**Benedict** – That's right... Just like Jesus...

**Charlie** – Everything will be fine, you'll see...

**Felix** – And at the end, you'll come back from the dead, just like Jesus.

**Charlie** – We'll film everything and we'll put it on YouTube, it'll be the bomb.

**Benedict** – It'll be sick, bro. It's going to be viral!

**Derek** – Jason, this is your moment, show everyone your incredible talent...

**Jason** – Um, alright...

*Jason goes back into the freezer. Charlie is filming with his phone. Derek turns the freezer on.*

**Benedict** – You're really going to turn it on?

**Derek** – Just on low, don't worry. Enough to give him a light hypothermia, for credibility purposes.

**Felix** – He'll come out cool as a cucumber... a different man.

**Derek** – I'll set it on two...

**Benedict** – But what if he does die? Have you thought about that? You'll be accused of murder, Derek! It's your freezer after all!

**Felix** – But he isn't going to die! Worst case, maybe he catches a bad cold.

**Charlie** – Or he loses a finger. Two at the most. Like those mountain climbers who trek the Himalayas. You can't be a hero without making a sacrifice...

**Benedict** – Yes... here we're only talking about staying in a freezer...

**Charlie** – Just between us, given what he does with his fingers... Even if he loses a couple he'll still have plenty to pick his nose...

**Derek** – He'll only stay in there long enough for us to make a bit of noise about the incident and get the village in the media.

**Charlie** – But the cops, they'll be able to tell he isn't dead!

**Derek** – That's true... You might have found the flaw in our plan.

**Felix** – The cops? You know how they are! A couple of drinks and they'll think your wife is Miss England...

*Derek looks at Felix, menacingly.*

**Derek** – I don't know how to take this...

**Charlie** – He means that if they were sober they'd think she was Miss World.

**Derek** – We can even put a few ice cubes on top, to make it look more real...

*Jason pokes his head out of the freezer.*

**Jason** – Is my hair ok?

**Derek** – Yes, yes, it's fine.

**Jason** – What about my t-shirt?

*Charlie is still filming.*

**Derek** – Go on, back in your box. Jackie won't be long now...

**Jason** – It's a bit nippy in there.

**Derek** – It's a freezer, you numpty!

**Jason** – And it's very dark...

**Benedict** – I always wondered if the light really went off after you closed the fridge door.

**Charlie** – You should be wondering if there really is life after death...

**Felix** – Well, today we'll have an eyewitness... If we can thaw him out, that is...

**Derek** – Worst case, the journalist can write about that...

**Charlie** – I can just picture Krishnan Guru-Murthy reading the evening news: Does the light really go off in your fridge when you close the door? A brave resident of Sodgibbon Cross tries a unique experiment to bring a definitive answer to this deeply unsettling question...

**Jason** – The evening news? Ok, I'm going back in...

*Jason sits back in the freezer. Derek takes the ice bucket and pours the contents on top of him.*

**Benedict** – How long are you going to leave him in there for?

**Felix** – One night should be enough.

**Derek** – We should leave Jackie out of this, that way she can be the one to find him tomorrow morning. Credible deniability and all that. She's a terrible actor.

**Felix** – Don't worry Benedict. See... if anything goes wrong he can easily get out on his own...

**Derek** – Alright, now you should leave before Jackie returns. I'm not convinced of your acting skills either...

*They all leave. Jackie returns with the shopping which she starts to put away.*

**Jackie** – I'll put the cornettos away first before they melt... (*She puts the ice cream in the freezer without seeing Jason*) Oh, I need to turn it on... Ah, Derek's already done it... But that's not high enough... I'll set it on ten... (*She closes the freezer door and places a bag of potatoes on top*) Right, I'll do the chips tomorrow, I'm knackered...

*She's about to leave but glances at the freezer once more.*

**Jackie** – I always wondered... does the light really go out after you close the door?... Ah well...

*She turns off the light and leaves. We hear banging coming from inside the freezer.*

*Black. Ellipsis for the night. Intermission (optional).*

## Act 2

*Light. Jackie enters, yawning, and goes through the motions of opening the pub, like she does every morning.*

*She takes the bag of potatoes from the top of the freezer and starts to peel and cut them into chips.*

**Jackie** – We hope it's chips it's chips...

*Derek enters.*

**Derek** – Good morning love, sleep well?

*She looks at him, taken aback.*

**Jackie** – What's wrong? Are you alright?

**Derek** – No, no, everything's fine. What are you doing?

**Jackie** – I'm peeling potatoes, aren't I.

**Derek** – Oh right...

**Jackie** – I'll freeze them. In preparation for this summer...

**Derek** – Do you want a hand peeling those potatoes?

*Jackie looks at him again, this time suspiciously.*

**Derek** – That way you can prepare a brunch for the Londoners...

*Derek starts to peel the potatoes. Jackie looks at him, now stunned.*

**Jackie** – Are you sure everything's ok?

**Derek** – Of course, why?

**Jackie** – I don't know... It's the first time ever I've seen you peel potatoes...

**Derek** (*looking towards the door*) – Ah, here they are...

**Jackie** – Brunch... Why not served in bed while you're at it...

*Catherine and Wendy enter.*

**Derek** – Good morning ladies! Did you sleep well?

**Catherine** – Like a log!

*Wendy doesn't say anything, but it doesn't look like she had a restful night.*

**Derek** – Told you, you'll end up setting roots here.

**Wendy** – For now I'll take an Earl Grey with a splash of lemon.

**Catherine** – Same for me.

**Jackie** – Coming right up...

*Jackie prepares the tea.*

**Catherine** – Do you have any croissants?

**Jackie** – Uh no... But I can make you some chips if you want. Freshly cut.

**Wendy** – No thanks, we're good...

**Jackie** – Two Earl Grey with lemon, coming right up... But unfortunately, we're out of lemon.

**Catherine** – As long as the water is hot, it'll be fine...

**Derek** – No worries there... Around here we always boil the water... We have to, it's safer that way...

**Jackie** – While the water is boiling, I'll check if my freezer is cold enough to freeze the potatoes...

*Derek smiles stupidly.*

**Derek** – Please sit down, it won't be long now...

*The two women sit at a table.*

**Wendy** (*aside, to Catherine*) – You're right, let's get out of here... It's very authentic but... they all look a little inbred, the lot of them...

**Catherine** – Remember when the priest joined us in the jacuzzi last night... what was that about...

**Wendy** – At least if he had been wearing something...

*Derek continues to peel the potatoes.*

**Derek** – I think it's going to be a gorgeous day.

*They smile politely.*

**Wendy** – Look at that one, with his long knife, peeling their transgender potatoes...

**Catherine** – Transgenic.

**Wendy** – You've got to wonder how many times it was used to slit their guests' throats. What's the name of this place again? The Red Pub?

**Catherine** (*laughing nervously*) – Stop, you're starting to creep me out...

**Wendy** – I wonder where they keep the bodies...

**Catherine** – In the cellar maybe...

**Wendy** – Or the freezer.

*They both stifle nervous laughter.*

**Catherine** – Alright... We drink our tea and we're out of here...

*Catherine jumps when Jackie screams as she opens the freezer.*

**Jackie** – Oh my God! What is... that?

**Derek** (*feigning surprise*) – What's going on?

**Jackie** – There's a stiff in the freezer!

**Derek** – What?

*Catherine looks at Wendy, aghast.*

**Derek** (*badly faking surprise*) – A stiff? But who is it?

**Jackie** – I don't know... I didn't want to look, did I! I just saw two eyes staring straight at me through the ice cubes!

*Charlie enters.*

**Charlie** – What's going on?

**Derek** – Jackie found a body in the freezer!

**Charlie** – No way! Anyone we know?

**Derek** – We're not sure yet...

*Charlie films the scene with his phone.*

**Catherine** – What a bunch of wackjobs. Come on let's go...

**Wendy** – Hang on... give it a few minutes! It's just starting to become interesting...

**Jackie** – We need to call the police...

**Derek** – What a mess...

**Wendy** – Can I have my tea, when you're done?

**Derek** – I'll take care of it right now... Tea for two and two for tea ...

*Jackie picks up the phone.*

**Jackie** – Hello, emergency services? Please come quickly. We found a body in our freezer. No, not a baby, I wouldn't be calling you for so little.

*Derek serves the tea.*

**Derek** – A dash of milk?

**Jackie** – Yes... Sodgibbon Cross. Where is it...? Around mile 22, between Sodgibbon Pews and Greenfield Wells... Thank you, we'll be waiting...

**Derek** – So?

**Jackie** – They're sending two forensic specialists...

**Catherine** – Forensics? What do you think this is, a good American tv series...?

**Charlie** – Isn't that what they call an oxymoron?

**Wendy** – CSI Sodgibbon Cross... Doesn't have quite the same ring as CSI Miami, does it...

**Catherine** – Maybe, but I still think we'll soon hear about this dump in the local paper...

**Wendy** – It's like Andy Warhol said: everyone gets their fifteen minutes of fame...

*Felix and Benedict arrive.*

**Felix** – Good morning ladies, everything ok?

**Charlie** – We've just found a body in the freezer.

**Benedict** – A body? You mean a human cadaver?

**Charlie** – Yes, a human cadaver... Not a cow cadaver cut up in handy burger packs.

*Jackie opens the freezer again.*

**Jackie** – Look! He left a note on the inside of the door...

**Benedict** – A note?

**Derek** – He did?

**Jackie** – Well, it's more like a message scratched in the ice. A suicide note maybe...

**Felix** – So it's a suicide?

**Charlie** – To my knowledge, this would be the first time anyone commits suicide by locking themselves up in a freezer.

**Felix** – I believe you might be right... I think I've read of a case where it happened in a sauna, but never in a freezer...

*Charlie moves closer to the freezer.*

**Charlie** – Or he left this message to guide the police to his murderer...

**Felix** – No way...

**Derek** (*to Jackie*) – Well, go on, what does it say?

**Jackie** – It’s full of spelling mistakes...

**Charlie** – I bet it is.

**Jackie** – I’m having trouble reading the first bit...

**Benedict** – The teacher might be able to help, he’s used to reading poor handwriting.

*Charlie looks inside the freezer.*

**Charlie** – Weird... That handwriting looks familiar...

**Derek** – So?

**Charlie** – Hang on, give me a second... Oh, yes, I can see it: Derek killt me...?  
*(Everyone turns toward Derek, shocked)* No, I’m kidding...

**Jackie** – Please, this is not the time for jokes.

**Charlie** – Let’s see... *(reading)* “I have an incredible talent... but I’m freezing my nuts off”

*They all look at each other, dismayed.*

### Act 3

*We hear the sound of a helicopter.*

**Benedict** – What's that? Monsanto doesn't normally start spraying for a few months yet.

*Ramirez and Sanchez, two cops, arrive. They look more like two bumpkins than elite forensic cops. Ramirez, the inspector, can even vaguely look like Columbo.*

**Derek** – Ah, the forensic police are here...

**Jackie** – Well, that was fast.

**Charlie** – They're special forces. They must have been parachuted...

**Ramirez** – Inspector Ramirez. This is Constable Sanchez. We came by helicopter to be more quickly on the scene, but we had trouble finding your stupid village.

**Sanchez** – From the chopper we used the road as a reference point. But it stops dead in the middle of a potato field.

**Felix** – Ah yes, it's the old A road. It was downgraded to a track road a few years ago when they built the motorway.

**Derek** – Which greatly affected the businesses of Beacon, believe you me.

**Ramirez** – Businesses? What businesses?

**Sanchez** – We didn't even know there were still people living here.

**Benedict** – Before the war we still had a grocery store... At least according to local lore...

**Felix** – Now we go to the big Tesco once a month and we store everything in the freezer.

**Ramirez** – Speaking of which... What's the deal about this freezer?

**Sanchez** – Cherchez la femme... Like the French say...

**Derek** – This way please, but surely you must have time for a quick drink first?

**Jackie** – Because let me tell you, it's not a pretty sight...

**Ramirez** – I don't know if... That bad?

**Felix** – He's in the freezer! He's not going to spoil...

**Ramirez** – In that case... Just the one then. For the road, right Sanchez?

**Derek** – How about you, ladies? Instead of the lemon in your tea?

**Wendy** – Why not...

**Catherine** – At this point ...

*Derek pours a drink in both tea cups and leaves. Catherine looks at her cup.*

**Catherine** – Did you see that? The tea turned clear like water.

**Wendy** – Yes...

**Catherine** – It might be toxic.

**Wendy** – Or they forgot to put the tea bag in the water.

**Catherine** – Oh, and the water's started to boil again...

*They look at each other, worried.*

**Ramirez** – That's not bad...

**Sanchez** – Oh boy, you can really feel it going down.

**Ramirez** – Wakes you up...

**Sanchez** – I'm seeing things out of focus, is that normal?

**Charlie** – Don't worry, it's temporary. Usually.

**Benedict** – There's been a few cases reported of permanent loss of vision, but it's extremely rare.

**Sanchez** – Right. Sounds more like a hard drug than a liqueur.

**Ramirez** – As long as it's legal...

**Sanchez** – Clears the lungs too.

**Ramirez** – It's not flammable, is it?

**Charlie** – I used to know a firebreather who used this instead of lead-free petrol because it was cheaper.

**Felix** – I have been known to put some in my 4x4 myself, and I haven't noticed any reduction in performance.

**Ramirez** – I'm sure... I've never drunk diesel myself but I imagine it has a similar taste.

**Benedict** – I bet if you were to drink drain cleaner after this, it would taste like holy water.

*They all drain their glasses.*

**Ramirez** – So, about this human cadaver?

**Derek** – This way, please Inspector, Sir ..

**Ramirez** – You go ahead Sanchez. You know how I feel about dead bodies. (*To the others*) If I ever leave this job, it will be because of the dead bodies...

*Derek opens the freezer. The teacher films.*

**Sanchez** – Oh you weren't kidding, he's hard as wood.

**Felix** – Pardon?

**Sanchez** – Come have a look, Sir.

**Ramirez** – No, no, I trust your judgement.

*Derek, Felix and Benedict come closer to check.*

**Benedict** – Jesus Christ... He's actually frozen...

**Ramirez** – You look surprised, Father... Surely you're seen your fair share of stiffs...

**Derek** – I don't understand! I set it to the lowest...

*Derek, Felix, Benedict and Charlie are dismayed.*

**Jackie** – I wacked it up to ten last night. So it would be cold enough to freeze the chips this morning...

**Sanchez** – What if it was another case of frozen babies, Sir?

**Ramirez** – It's a baby?

**Sanchez** – No. It looks more like a man, early twenties...

**Ramirez** – So how...

**Sanchez** – Maybe he survived all these years by eating whatever he could find in the freezer. And when the food ran out, he died of hunger?

**Ramirez** – Interesting theory, Sanchez... What did you keep in this freezer?

**Jackie** – Nothing. We keep it unplugged all winter...

**Ramirez** – I see...

**Sanchez** – Sir, I think he tried to draw something on the inside of the lid.

**Ramirez** – Really? Okay, I need to see this...

*Ramirez comes closer.*

**Ramirez** – So he did... It's like cave paintings in there...What does it mean?

**Sanchez** – I don't know... Looks like Egyptian hieroglyphics...

**Ramirez** – Take pictures of everything, Sanchez. And close the door before it all melts. We'll get it analysed by an Egyptologist.

**Sanchez** – What for, Sir?

**Ramirez** – To better understand the victim's personality.

**Sanchez** – Shouldn't we be trying to understand the murderer's personality...?

**Ramirez** – Don't you start trying to confuse me, Sanchez. Are you trying to teach me my job?

**Sanchez** – Of course not, Sir. I'll take pictures of everything, right away...

**Ramirez** – We'll ask the lab for carbon dating. When we know when he died, we'll be able to build several hypotheses on the circumstances of his death...

**Derek** – Are we suspects, Inspector?

**Ramirez** – Well, the body was found on your premises.

**Jackie** – But we're the ones who called the police!

**Ramirez** – You'd be surprised the number of criminals who call the police after committing their murders...

**Felix** – And in your opinion, Inspector, when do you think he died?

**Ramirez** – It's always difficult with the frozen ones. Time of death could be anywhere between 24 hours and six thousand years.

**Sanchez** – I hope you all have good alibis between the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods...

**Jackie** – But listen, I told you this freezer was only switched on last night...

**Sanchez** – What do we do, Sir, do we take him out of the freezer?

**Ramirez** – Leave him there for now... We have to be very careful to not break the cold chain...

**Sanchez** – So what do we do, boss?

**Ramirez** – What's gone into you, Sanchez?

**Sanchez** – What do you mean, boss?

**Ramirez** – You used to call me Sir, why are you calling me boss now? I don't condone this flaunting of the rules.

**Sanchez** – I'm sorry Sir, you're right.

**Ramirez** – This isn't an episode of Midsomer Murders, Sanchez. We are the elite police force: the forensic police!

*Sanchez salutes him.*

**Sanchez** – Sir, yes Sir!

**Ramirez** – As you were.

**Sanchez** – So, what do we do, Boss?

**Ramirez** – Why don't you search this hovel... *(aside)* Go ahead and fuck up the place even if it's not necessary... It never fails to impress the suspects.

**Sanchez** – Of course, Sir.

*Sanchez starts searching the pub, moving as many things around as he can and making as much noise as he can.*

**Ramirez (to Jackie)** – So, Madam. You're the last person to see the victim, is that right?

**Jackie** – Er...no. I'm the first one to see him dead.

**Ramirez** – That's what I meant. So you found the body. That makes you our prime suspect.

**Derek** – Inspector, are you serious?

**Ramirez** – I suggest you keep your mouth shut until we tell you to open it. Understood?

**Sanchez** – Sir, I think I found the murder weapon.

*From behind the counter, he pulls the plastic toy gun that Derek took from Jason.*

**Ramirez** – It's a toy, Sanchez. Can't you tell?

**Sanchez** – You're right, Sir... And the victim didn't die from gunshot wounds...

**Ramirez** – That will be for the autopsy to tell. He could well have been shot with that gun before being placed on ice in the freezer.

**Sanchez** – But you just said yourself it's a toy gun...

**Ramirez** – Don't try to confuse me, Sanchez. *(He freezes like he's having a vision)* I just had a flash... And I think this case is a lot more complicated than it looks.

**Sanchez** – I think's it's quite complicated enough...

**Charlie** – A word of caution, Inspector, the flash could be a side effect of the potato booze...

*Sanchez continues his search.*

**Sanchez** – Oh great, there's another one.

*He retrieves the hunting rifle.*

**Ramirez** – Is this your hunting rifle?

**Derek** – What if it is, is hunting illegal now?

**Ramirez** – No, but it's suspicious. You know what they say... He who steals an egg will steal a chicken. Start as a hunter, end as a killer. Is there a flat above?

**Derek** – Yes.

**Ramirez** – Come Sanchez, we're gonna check it out... (*Looking towards the two Londoners*) This pub has all the hallmarks of a brothel...

**Sanchez** – No one moves until we get back, alright?

**Ramirez** – You, the madam, you go first.

**Jackie** – If you'll follow me, Inspector...

*Ramirez points his chin towards the two Londoners.*

**Ramirez** (*to Sanchez*) – We'll interrogate the two whores later.

*Catherine and Wendy look at each other, dismayed. The two policemen leave with Jackie. Derek, Felix and Charlie are so concerned they forget the two Londoners, who've been sat there watching it all without saying anything.*

**Derek** – Just what we needed... Now we have a dead body on our hands.

**Felix** – We? But I didn't do anything!

**Derek** – What? No, we all agreed!

**Charlie** – He's right though, it was mostly your idea, Derek...

*Catherine and Wendy are stunned.*

**Catherine** – So you knew about this?

**Wendy** – You're all in on it!

**Catherine** – You're all accomplices...

*They turn toward the women, knowing they're busted.*

**Felix** – No, but... It's not at all what you think...

**Charlie** – I can see how this might look...

**Benedict** – And how you might have misinterpreted what we said...

**Felix** – Worse case, it's involuntary manslaughter.

**Derek** – Possibly even just a workplace accident.

**Catherine** – Did you, or did you not put this bloke in the freezer?

**Charlie** – It's a little more complicated than that...

**Derek** – We just wanted to break the monotony.

**Felix** – To show you that things did happen in Sodgibbon Cross.

**Charlie** – So you would have enough material to write an article about us. Even a short one.

**Benedict** – Actually, it was to help you out really.

**Felix** – Unfortunately, accidents happen.

**Catherine** – Wackjobs, I tell you...

**Derek** – You won't say anything to the police, will you?

**Catherine** – Come on Wendy, let's get out of here...

*They stand up to leave just as the cops come back with Jackie.*

**Ramirez** – No one leaves without my say so.

*The two Londoners sit back down.*

**Ramirez** – What do you think, Sanchez?

**Sanchez** – Yes, it's rather cozy...

**Ramirez** – I'm not talking about the flat, idiot! I'm talking about our investigation!

**Sanchez** – Oh sorry... What I think, Boss... To be honest...

**Ramirez** – I see... I can tell I'm going to have to find the key to this mystery on my own, guided by my sole instinct.

*Ramirez turns towards the group and feels their awkwardness.*

**Ramirez** – And my instinct tells me that these fuckwits all fit the profile of a perpetrator. Take my word for it, Sanchez.

**Sanchez** – You're right, Sir. I'd even say they all fit the profile of the murderer...

**Benedict** – Gentlemen, please! You're talking to a minister of the faith.

**Ramirez** – Don't let that impress you, Sanchez. A minister of the faith is to the Catholic hierarchy what a General is to the Salvation Army: a pompous title for someone with no real authority.

**Felix** – As for I, Inspector, I think you'll find that I am the highest magistrate in this municipality.

**Sanchez** – But of course. And I'm a peace keeper, does that make me a Blue Helmet?

**Ramirez** *(to the others)* – Alright, that’s enough. If you bunch of nitwits have anything to say, now is your last chance.

**Derek** – Well...

**Felix** – You see...

**Charlie** – No, I don’t think so...

**Sanchez** – I’m betting on the priest, Boss. He looks like butter wouldn’t melt, but look at him, he’s a pimp if I ever saw one.

**Ramirez** – Very well, since no one wants to spill the beans, we’re going to proceed to the identification of the body. Who knows, that might trigger some memories...

*He opens the freezer.*

**Jackie** – Wait, I’ll remove the chips...

**Ramirez** *(to Derek)* – You, come over here. Do you recognise the victim, yes or no?

**Derek** – With that layer of ice over his face I can’t be sure.

**Sanchez** – Great, we’re going to wait for the Spring thaw...

*Ramirez catches sight of the two Londoners.*

**Ramirez** – Right, let’s try something else... Who’re these two skanks?

**Sanchez** – You’ve got a moonlighting gig as a pimp is that it? A little dough on the side?

**Derek** – They’re tourists visiting the region, Inspector.

**Ramirez** – Tourists? Do you really expect me to buy that? The last time there were any tourists in the area, they were Roman. They wore armor and they left after a week, fighting a mild depression.

**Sanchez** – This case gets stinkier by the minute, Sir.

**Jackie** – I don’t want to cause trouble but for what it’s worth, before these two showed up, this was a quiet, fairy tale village.

**Charlie** – Without a happily ever after.

**Catherine** – Oh, the cheek!

**Ramirez** – You slags, bring your asses over here.

*Catherine comes forward, followed by Wendy. Ramirez forces Catherine’s head in the freezer.*

**Ramirez** – So you don’t recognise the victim either?

**Catherine** – Oh my God, how gruesome!

*Wendy looks too.*

**Wendy** – His face does look familiar...

**Sanchez** – Must be a local, Sir. He looks a little slow in the head. Also, no one ends up accidentally in a hole like this place.

*Ramirez looks at the Londoners again.*

**Ramirez** – Tourists, you say...

**Derek** – I swear, Inspector. They really are from London. One of them works for the press, the other for the telly.

**Ramirez** – That's not incompatible with being a whore. What do you think, Sanchez?

**Sanchez** – I think it's a menage a trois gone wrong.

**Ramirez (to Felix)** – He was your wife's lover, is that it? That's why you killed him?

**Felix** – I'm not married, Inspector.

**Sanchez** – Too bad for you. You could have claimed temporary insanity during a crime of passion...

**Ramirez (to Derek)** – So you're the sucker?

**Sanchez** – He does have a nice sucker face.

**Derek** – But of course not! I mean, yes, but... the priest, he's me wife's lover.

**Ramirez** – I see... *(he turns towards the two Londoners)* And you didn't see anything, of course? You're not very observant, I thought you were journalists ...

**Catherine** – Actually, I did... From the window of the flat above, I thought I saw a man, looked like Zorro, come in the pub.

**Sanchez** – Zorro?

**Ramirez** – What were you doing up there?

**Sanchez** – Shagging the landlord probably...

**Wendy** – The landlady was showing us the flat, it's for sale.

**Ramirez** – So you saw Zorro walk in the Red Lion...*(ironically)* Maybe he's the killer, Sanchez! Why don't you check and see if Don Diego de la Vega has any priors...

**Sanchez** – Right away, Sir... Can you spell the name?

*Ramirez sighs.*

**Catherine** – I meant a man wearing a mask, Inspector.

**Wendy** – Maybe it's a robbery gone wrong?

**Catherine** – They could claim self defence.

**Ramirez** – Go ahead and lead this investigation, why don't you?

**Catherine** – Not at all, Inspector.

**Wendy** – Even if I think the investigation would progress faster...

**Ramirez** – Alright, Sanchez, go ahead and proceed to the collection of a DNA sample for the purposes of identifying the victim...

**Sanchez** – I'll do it right away, Sir...

**Ramirez** – We'll also need DNA samples from all the suspects.

**Sanchez** – What for, Sir?

**Ramirez** – Why do you think?

**Sanchez** – To find out who's the father of the baby who grew up in the freezer?

**Ramirez** – No, idiot... To find out which one is Zorro... Take them to the town hall for the collection... and send the samples to the lab.

**Sanchez** – Come on, follow me...

*The two Londoners are about to follow him.*

**Ramirez** – Not you... I still have a few questions to ask you...

*The others leave.*

**Ramirez** – Right, now that we're alone, how about you tell me what you're really doing in the region? The press rarely reaches a crime scene before the cops. Especially around here...

**Catherine** – It's a complete coincidence, Inspector, I assure you...

**Ramirez** – But of course... Wrong place at the wrong time... *(to Wendy)* Do you have anything to add? You're seriously lacking in the imagination department, for a television producer. Who do you work for?

**Wendy** – Mainly for the BBC...

**Ramirez** – I see... BBC 1, BBC 2, BBC 3, BBC 4... Clearly imagination isn't the main asset of BBC television producers.

**Catherine** – Oh really? And what do think it is?

**Ramirez** – Cup size?

**Wendy** – Now you're the one talking in clichés, Inspector. With all due respect.

**Ramirez** – Don't tell me you're here to cast characters for a new show...

**Catherine** – No, but it's a shame because there's quite a choice here. Have you seen their inbred faces?

**Ramirez** – Yes, you have a point.

**Wendy** – You included, Inspector... Has anyone ever told you that you could be on television?

**Ramirez** – You think?

**Wendy** – Definitely... Movies probably not, but television... I'll leave you my card if you want.

*Ramirez looks at both women for a beat.*

**Ramirez** – Can I ask... What is the exact nature of your relations, you two?

**Wendy** – Our relations?

**Ramirez** – Yes, well... You know what I mean...

**Catherine** – Is this... relevant to your investigation?

**Ramirez** – Not at all, just inappropriate curiosity...

*Derek, Felix, Charlie and Benedict return, looking embarrassed.*

**Ramirez** – Alright you can go now, but don't leave the municipality until further notice.

*Wendy and Catherine move away.*

**Felix** – Inspector, we need to talk... As the First Magistrate of this municipality...

**Ramirez** – Skip the foreplay...

**Felix** – We're a little in over our heads here... After discussing the situation among us, we believe there are certain facts that you should be made aware of...

**Ramirez** (*ironically*) – Well, what do you know...

**Derek** – We know who the victim is.

**Ramirez** – Well, well, well... And it just came to you, did it?

**Benedict** – It's Jason, his nephew.

**Felix** – You mean his cousin.

**Derek** – Let's say my godson.

**Felix** – He'd been training for years to appear on Incredible Talent.

**Benedict** – He's a contortionist.

**Derek** – One time we found him in a suitcase.

**Ramirez** – Yea, well now he can play Otzi the Iceman.

**Charlie** – No but because it's an accident...

**Ramirez** – Did you or didn't you put him in this freezer...

**Derek** – We did...

**Benedict** – And we didn't...

**Derek** – I didn't know the freezer was on.

*Ramirez doesn't quite believe him.*

**Ramirez** – What would you think if you were me and heard this story?

*Sanchez returns, followed by Jackie.*

**Ramirez** – Right, so we're going to take all of you down to the station in the chopper, and you'll be able to explain everything. You might even remember more after your skulls have repeated, brief encounters with a phone book.

**Charlie** – Do you really think we'll all fit in the helicopter, Inspector?

**Felix** – You could always start by torturing the landlord and landlady. It's their freezer, after all.

**Benedict** – And their godson. At the end of the day, it's really just your garden variety family affair...

**Derek** – Right on brand, Father. I see the Blatheringington-Smythe family tradition of raising priests and rats is still alive and well.

**Benedict** – Inspector, I beg you to show some humanity. At least let me give this poor innocent soul a final blessing.

**Ramirez** – Ok, but hurry up.

*Felix moves closer to Ramirez conspiratorially.*

**Felix** – Look, maybe we can come to an agreement to avoid complications. The justice system is so overloaded...

**Ramirez** – This gets better all the time... Are you attempting to bribe an officer of the law?

**Felix** – But not at all, Inspector! Since we are both at the service of the state! Technically it's not possible for a Civil Servant to bribe another. I was only suggesting an arrangement serving the interest of our nation...

**Ramirez** – Well, put that way... How much?

**Felix** – Let's say...

*Benedict opens the freezer and crosses himself.*

**Benedict** – Oh, my God!

**Ramirez** – What now?

**Benedict** – The body... it's resurrected...

*Sanchez looks at the body which is now thawed.*

**Sanchez** – He's right, Sir. He opened an eye.

**Derek** – Looks like the ice melted.

**Jackie** – The freezer must have broken down. Thank goodness I hadn't put all the chips in yet.

**Ramirez** – I don't know... He doesn't look very fresh...

**Charlie** – It's like you said before... When the cold chain is broken...

*Jason rises out of the freezer like Dracula from his casket.*

**Benedict** – Dear God Almighty! *(he crosses himself)* Just like Jesus rising from the grave...

**Charlie** – Captain Igloo edition.

**Jason** – Show me the money, Uncle Derek!

**Sanchez** – That, on the other hand, is not canon...

**Jackie** – What money?

**Derek** – I'll tell you later, Jackie...

**Ramirez** – Never mind her, it's the police you should be explaining this to...

**Felix** – Please forgive us, Inspector, it's just a stupid bet.

**Benedict** – We wanted to put the video on YouTube.

**Ramirez** – And him? He was a willing participant?

**Sanchez** *(to Jason)* – Do you want to press charges?

**Jason** – What I want is to be on the telly.

**Charlie** – Come on Inspector, you can see he’s perfectly fine.

**Sanchez** – I don’t know... he looks a little confused. He could be scarred for life...

**Jackie** – Oh no, that’s just how he is, Inspector.

**Felix** – Actually, I think he even looks sharper than before, don’t you think?

**Derek** – Give him a glass of potato booze, to help with the thawing...

*Jackie pours several glasses.*

**Charlie** – I use this as antifreeze in my car’s radiator. There’s nothing better.

*Derek gives the bottle to Jason who drinks directly from it.*

**Ramirez** – Alright, we’re done here, Sanchez... If there’s no body there’s no crime...

**Jackie** – How about a refill, Inspector?

**Ramirez** – Oh, go on then.

*Jackie hands a glass to Ramirez who drinks it all.*

**Ramirez** – Oh yes, I can see how that’d wake the dead.

*In fact, Jason is now fully alive. He takes a few tentative steps.*

**Benedict** – Are you seeing this? He’s walking! It’s a miracle.

**Charlie** – A miracle? Do you think it could be recognised by the Vatican?

**Benedict** – A case of miraculous thawing? I’m not sure...

**Felix** – Of course... A miracle! Maybe that’s what we need!

**Derek** – Like with Jesus! A bloke everyone thought was dead has come back to life!

**Jackie** – Do you think it’ll work?

**Catherine** – The last time they tried it was 2,000 years ago and it’s still very popular.

**Derek** – We’ve hit gold, I can feel it... JC come back from the dead...

**Wendy** – More like come back from the frozen burgers, but sure...

**Felix** – You’re right... this is a sign from above. The nudge we were hoping for from the Man Upstairs. We’ll make Sodgibbon Cross a pilgrimage destination.

**Jackie** – What do you make of it, Father?

**Benedict** – But... it’s a fake miracle, we should know.

**Derek** – On the other hand, real miracles don’t actually exist, right?

*Benedict looks at Jason.*

**Benedict** – You know what, you’re right. God has sent him. Jesus even said: Blessed are the poor in spirit...

**Felix** – We’ll turn this retard into a Saint. Saint Jason. And we’ll turn this village into the next Lourdes.

**Charlie** – Jason, aka JC. Even his name is a sign.

**Felix** – I can already see the headlines in the Catholic Times and the Daily Mail: victim of pesticides and freezer accident miraculously comes back to life!

**Benedict** – Monsanto Subito!

**Derek** – Glory be to God in the Highest! This is the beginning of a new era for Sodgibbon Cross!

**Felix** – We are living a historic moment, dear friends.

**Charlie** – In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an Annus Freezeris.

**Benedict** – For the pilgrimage, we’re going to need a statue of Jason somewhere in town...

**Charlie** – Jason coming out of his freezer, like Christ coming out of his tomb? Now, that would be the dog’s bollocks.

**Felix** – If only we could get the press to buy into this...

**Derek** – But the press is already here!

**Benedict** – Glory be to God, this village will finally get a second life!

*Catherine and Wendy observe the excitement, a little overwhelmed.*

**Catherine** – They’re all wackjobs, I tell you... In the middle of a spectacular mass hysteria... Come on, let’s split before one of them feels the urge to sacrifice a chicken... or a human...

*But Wendy seems to be caught in the excitement too.*

**Wendy** – What’s the matter with you? Can’t you see what’s going on? You should write about this!

**Catherine** – You think?

**Wendy** – Trust me. Within three days it’ll be like the grotto in Bethlehem around here. And we’re the first ones here! Can you imagine the audience numbers if there’d been a journalist on site back then!

**Catherine** – You’re right... This kind of thing only happens once every two thousand years... We can’t afford to miss it...

*Catherine walks to Jason.*

**Catherine** – Hello Jason. They call you the Messiah of Sodgibbon Cross. Are you thinking of founding a new religion?

**Jason** – Would I be on the telly?

**Wendy** – And how! If we play our cards right you may even get your own show.

**Jason** – Like Graham Norton?

**Catherine** – Maybe even your own channel...

*Sanchez's phone rings and he picks up.*

**Sanchez** – Inspector Sanchez here... Affirmative... Understood, I'll pass it on... *(he puts his mobile away)* We have the results of the DNA tests, Sir.

**Ramirez** – Yes, so what? We already know who the victim is. Well, we know who his godfather is.

**Sanchez** – Yes, but now we also know who the baby daddy is...

**Jackie** – Jason's dad? So who is it?

**Sanchez** – Apparently, Father...

*Everyone turns to look at Benedict.*

**Benedict** – I don't understand... There must be a mistake...

**Ramirez** – Or another miracle...

*Catherine sighs.*

**Catherine** – This is definitely the worst village in England...

**Wendy** – That's it! I got it!

**Catherine** – Got what?

**Wendy** – My new reality TV concept!

**Catherine** – Celebrity Rectory?

**Wendy** – The Worst Village in England! Any village in England can participate in the competition and at the end we invite celebrities to spend a month in whichever place has been voted asshole of nowhere... What do you think?

**Catherine** – Hmm, yes that might work even better than Celebrity Farm.

**Wendy** – Hallelujah! WC Productions is safe from bankruptcy!

**Catherine** – Will you excuse me for a minute, I think this is the right moment for another exclusive interview...

*Catherine walks to Benedict.*

**Catherine** – According to our sources, you are the father of the new Messiah... Have you considered going freelance by any chance?

**Benedict** – Freelance?

**Wendy** – You've been working for The Man for thirty years, you know, the Vatican.

**Benedict** – And all I got for my trouble is that they wanted to shut down my parish...

**Wendy** – As the Messiah's father, you could set up as a Sole Proprietorship...

**Catherine** – And if you do, you're going to need a good Communications Director.

*Jason looks at Benedict with a stupid look.*

**Jason** – Dad?

**Wendy** – And for the show, this one's really going to need a coach...

**Catherine** – Are you ready for a new adventure, Father?

**Benedict** – Tell you what, Sister, for you I'll always be ready to be defrocked.

*Black*

*End*

## ***About the author***

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez was first a drummer for several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then began a career writing television scripts before turning to theater and writing plays. He has written close to a hundred scripts for television and almost as many plays, some of which have already become classics (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker*). He is one of the most produced contemporary playwrights in France and in other francophone countries. Several of his plays are also available in Spanish and English, and are regularly produced in the United States and Latin America.

Amateur and professional theater groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his website La Comédiathèque ([comediatheque.net](http://comediatheque.net)). However, public productions are subject to SACD filing.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from The Book Edition for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

### ***Other plays by the same author translated in English:***

*Casket for two*

*Critical but Stable*

*Friday the 13th*

*Him and Her*

*Running on Empty*

*Strip Poker*

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays are available to download for free from his website: [www.comediatheque.net](http://www.comediatheque.net)

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