



# BACKWARDS

BY: VASE&FUGLSANG 2016  
One act. Duration: approx. 75 min.

Two actors take the audience through a friendship between two men touching down on ten points in time. The story is told backwards, beginning with two old men and ending with a pair of five-year-olds. The stage design is simple. A screen in the back for projection of ambience colours and at one point to be used for shadow puppetry. Stage management is simple with simple set pieces and props that can be rolled or carried quickly on- and offstage by players or a stage hand.

Costumes are simple – often just hinting at the role.

The music consists of classic songs which can be played from tape along with other sound effects.

Lighting and sound (and remote-controlled robotic vacuum cleaner) can be run by one or two people.

The play is best suited for small to medium sized stages. It has been performed successfully throughout Denmark with approx. 150 performances on three separate tours.

The play has been translated from Danish, and any linguistic enhancement or local adaptation is welcome.

**CHAPTERS:**

**11. DEATH (BACKWARDS)**

**10. OBLIVION**

**9. RETIREMENT**

**8. AUTUMN**

**7. MIDWAY**

**6. DIFFERENCES**

**5. THE BEST MAN**

**4. CAREER**

**3. BOYHOOD DREAMS**

**2. FRIENDS**

**1. MEETING**

**-LIFE CAN ONLY BE UNDETSTOOD BACKWARDS; BUT IT MUST BE  
LIVED FORWARDS.**

**- Soren Kierkegaard**

## 11. DEATH (BACKWARDS)

Music: Django Reinhardt, "I'll see you in my dreams". The characteristic beep-beep cardiac rhythm of an ECG machine is heard. The two players enter, each carrying a cremation urn. They stand until the heartbeat ends in a long beeeeeep.

PLAYER 1

That's it then. The last of over two billion heartbeats. That's how many we can all expect, on average, if we aren't very unlucky and don't do anything too foolish. So that's it, those are the rules of the game.

PLAYER 2

As they were for two friends called ... Alex ...

PLAYER 1

... and Tom.

PLAYER 2

Got them right here. Or what's left of them anyway. We'll learn about their lives in a minute, and their friendship, which is what this is all about.

PLAYER 1

Funny things, friendships.

PLAYER 2

You never really know where they come from ...

PLAYER 1

... what they can develop into ...

PLAYER 2

... or how they end up.

PLAYER 1

But tonight we will know. Because this story will be told backwards.

PLAYER 2

From old age to childhood.

PLAYER 1

So the last chapter, entitled Death, is already over with, and things can only go forward from now on!

PLAYER 2

Well ... backwards.

PLAYER 1

So in our story, Tom and Alex keep getting younger.

PLAYER 2

Their health gets better and better.

PLAYER 1

Their dream grown bigger and bigger. Let's rewind a couple of years ...

PLAYER 2

... and begin with Chapter 10:

PLAYER 1

About two old men ...

PLAYER 2

... and some biscuits.

## **10. OBLIVION**

Transition, change of lighting. Music: Django Reinhardt, "Blue Drag". Setting: a care home. A robotic vacuum cleaner (remote-controlled) enters from one side. Tom enters, slowly, with a couple of cardboard boxes. Alex then enters from the other side of the stage. He is using a walker and has a pronounced hunch. He tries to get past the robot. After a couple of attempts, he finally succeeds. The robot exits. Music ends.

ALEX

Hi Tom.

TOM

Hey-hey.

ALEX

Your fly's undone.

TOM

Yes-yes.

Tom helps Alex into a chair.

TOM (CONT.)

Going down.

ALEX

Am I there yet?

TOM

Bit more!

(checks)

Let 'er go then.

Alex drops heavily into the chair and proceeds to unwrap a package of biscuits.

ALEX

Biscuits.

TOM

Yes-yes. Exciting.

ALEX

The ones we always have.

TOM

I see. And you are?

ALEX

Alex.

TOM

Alex, right. Let me just write that down ...

(writes in notebook)

"Alex". Oh, you're in here already.

ALEX

I came yesterday too.

TOM

Right!

Alex notices the moving box.

ALEX  
(sighs)  
No. Tom. Have you been packing up again?

TOM  
Yes sure. All packed up and ready to move out!

ALEX  
No-no, Tom. You live here.

TOM  
(looks around)  
Right.

ALEX  
(nods)  
I'll unpack. You put things away then!

TOM  
Yes-yes!

In the following bit, Alex removes items from the box and hands them to Tom. Without Alex noticing, Tom places the items in the other moving box as he receives them.

ALEX  
(picks up a book)  
Bookshelf.  
(picks up a carton of milk)  
Refrigerator.  
(picks up a roll of toilet paper)  
Arsehole!

The joke creates a moment of connection while they both laugh a little. Alex also finds a TV remote and a snow globe, which he puts on the table.

TOM  
And you are?

ALEX  
Alex.

TOM  
Alex, right. Let me just write that down ...

Tom is about to write in his notebook, but discovers a different name.

TOM (CONT.)

Mary?

ALEX

Your wife.

TOM

Oh right. And Angela?

ALEX

Staff.

TOM

Blonde?

ALEX

(nods)

Very nice lady!

TOM

(smiles)

Hottie!

Alex finds a bathrobe in the box.

ALEX

Six Senses Spa & Wellness? Stolen goods, this!

TOM

Yes-yes!

ALEX

Six Senses, that's that bloody cold place.

TOM

Probably.

Alex hands the bathrobe to Tom, who puts it over his arm. Alex finds a toy car.

ALEX

Matchbox car?

TOM

Bugatti!

Alex finds a pocket knife.

ALEX

Swiss Army knife? Hey, that's mine, isn't it?

TOM

Yes-yes!

Alex looks at Tom in surprise. He is carrying the bathrobe over his arm and proudly displays the full box to Alex.

ALEX

Right! All done then.

TOM

Yes. All packed up and ready to move!

Alex now sees that Tom has put all the items into the other box.

ALEX

No no. Tom, how many times do I have to tell you ...

(resigned, overbearing)

Let's leave that for tomorrow. Biscuits?

TOM

Exciting!

ALEX

The ones we always have.

Tom sits. Alex begins to put biscuits on a plate.

TOM

Yes sure. And you are?

ALEX

Alex.

TOM

Right!

Tom picks up the snow globe to inspect it. Meanwhile Alex has spotted a small photograph at the bottom of the empty box. He looks at it in surprise.

ALEX

Where did this come from?



TOM

What?

ALEX

(shows him the photo)

This ... Alice?

TOM

Alex?

ALEX

(bewildered)

No, Alice. Why do you have a photo of Alice?

TOM

That's not Alex.

(points at the snow globe)

That's Alex right there! And that's me!

And look at this ...

(shakes the snow globe)

It's snowing?

Alex gives up, nodding.

ALEX

Yes, it's snowing.

(pause)

Did you know that out of the billions of  
snowflakes in the world, not two are the same?

TOM

Right ...

(brief pause)

And you are?

ALEX

Alex.

Transition, change of lighting. Same music: Django Reinhardt, "Blue Drag".

PLAYER 2

Chapter 9, eight years previously. At the Six  
Senses Spa & Wellness!

Music ends.

## 9. RETIREMENT.

Transition, change of lighting. Setting: fish pedicure station at a wellness resort. Meditation music and sounds of trickling water. Tom enters, removes his socks and puts his feet in the fish tank. He sighs with content. Alex enters wearing a bathrobe and socks, carrying his shoes.

ALEX

So this is where you've been hiding?

TOM

What do you mean?

ALEX

We said to meet at the jacuzzi?

TOM

We did?

ALEX

Yes, just half an hour ago. You don't make it easy, do you?

TOM

Must have slipped my mind. Anyway, how do you like it?

ALEX

Honestly? This is probably the dumbest birthday present you have ever given me.

TOM

It's only good for you to try something new!

ALEX

You were a lot more fun to be with back when you could have a pint now and then.

TOM

Come on, it's nice here!

ALEX

It's cold.

TOM  
Go in the sauna then.

ALEX  
Too hot.

TOM  
Steam?

ALEX  
(shakes his head)  
My asthma.

TOM  
Salt bath?

ALEX  
No, my psoriasis will get itchy.

TOM  
Hee hee hee ...

ALEX  
It's no joke, psoriasis, you know!

TOM  
Not that, it's these!  
(he points into the tank)  
This is some funny stuff.

Alex waddles over and peers into the fish tank.

ALEX  
Are those ... fish?

TOM  
Yes! It's called a fish pedi!

ALEX  
Fish pedi?

TOM  
They eat all the dead skin cells, corns, warts ...  
and all!

ALEX

Does that not hurt?

TOM

No-no, it just tickles a bit. Try it!

ALEX

Not on your life. How do you know those dumb fish know the difference between dead skin and ... live?

TOM

They just do. At our age it's dead anyway, most of it. Come on!

Alex sighs and reluctantly pulls off one sock to put a foot in the water. Tom looks at him.

TOM (CONT.)

One foot!?

ALEX

Well I don't want to lose them both.

They sit for a bit. Alex looks into the fish tank.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Why are they all over by you?

TOM

Maybe try washing your feet?

ALEX

Is that not what we're doing now?

TOM

Give them time, now. They need to get used to you first. Just like the rest of us.

ALEX

Very funny!

(is bitten)

Oow!

(takes his foot out of the water)

They bite! Piranhas!

TOM  
Just you wait, you'll have feet like an infant.

ALEX  
That's going to look silly on someone who's 75.

Alex removes his foot and starts to put his sock back on. Tom spots something.

TOM  
Right! Here's Christina!

ALEX  
(looking as well)  
No, that's Charlotta!

TOM  
Who?

ALEX  
The instructor!

TOM  
Yes-yes, that's what I'm saying. She's Swedish.  
Hottie!

Tom stands, sucks in his stomach.

TOM (CONT.)  
*Hejsan!* We're ready!

ALEX  
Egads, this cursed body image cult!

TOM  
It's good for you. Look at you slouching.

ALEX  
I am not slouching!

TOM  
Yes you are. What have you done for your body recently?

ALEX  
Well, I took down the bathroom mirror.

TOM

Get up, you.

(to the instructor)

I brought my friend today ... Um, *kompis*!

Alex gets up reluctantly and stands behind Tom.

ALEX

Oh no, this is pathetic! She is much too young.  
And that tight outfit.

TOM

Hold on ... Wait until she turns around. Now look.

They both gaze at Charlotta, losing their train of thought.

ALEX

God, I love Sweden!

TOM

*Jättebra!*

A gong sounds. Transition, change of lighting. Music: Alina Devecerski, "Flytta På Dej". The pair begin to perform senior gymnastics exercises. Tom is accomplished and leads the choreography. Alex follows along half-heartedly. Music volume is lowered after a little while.

ALEX

So how about Sunday? Should we go for a bite for lunch?

TOM

Sunday's no good.

ALEX

You never seem to be up for anything on Sundays?

TOM

Well you know, Mary helps out at the church ...  
and ... so I drive her there.

ALEX

Okay. But we can nip out for a few hours while she's being saved, can't we?

TOM  
Not really, I ... I usually go in as well.

ALEX  
(looks at Tom in disbelief)  
You old hypocrite!

TOM  
What?

ALEX  
Just trying to grab a ticket to the eternity club  
before it's too late, eh?

TOM  
I just go in with her!

The gong sounds again.

ALEX  
Now what?

TOM  
Tai Chi!

Transition, change of lighting. Music: Tai Chi music. They begin a Tai Chi routine.

ALEX  
(quietly)  
All I'm saying is when you're gone, you're gone.  
And then it better be swift.

TOM  
Why's that?

ALEX  
Well I don't want to be sitting there all confused  
in some care home with wild hair and my fly  
undone. Anyway, this makes no point at all.

TOM  
Might just be the point!

Gong! Tai Chi music ends.

TOM (CONT.)  
(to the instructor)  
*Jättebra*. See you again tomorrow! It was ...  
*jättebra*!

They start to put their shoes back on.

TOM (CONT.)  
So, do you feel any different?

ALEX  
Yes, now that you mention it ... My underpants  
are right up my crack.

TOM  
(shakes his head, grinning)  
Well, I am going to the sauna.  
(walks off in the wrong direction)

ALEX  
Tom! The sauna! It's that direction.  
(points)  
You'll end up in the ladies' otherwise.

Alex exits.

TOM  
(confused, to himself)  
Goddammit ... you old fool.

Tom exits. Transition, change of lighting. Music: Boccherini, "Quintet No.1"

PLAYER 1  
Chapter 8. A few years earlier. Autumn. Salmon  
season.

Music ends.



## 8. AUTUMN.

Transition, change of lighting. Setting: A glorious autumn day. The two friends are fishing by a river. Sound of rushing water. Alex sits on a rock with a small children's fishing rod. He is reading aloud from a book about fishing, as Tom enters wearing rubber boots.

ALEX

Tom, listen to this ... "Later in the season, the waters offer fine opportunities for perch, bream, pike, and pond loach." You may even have the good fortune..."

TOM

(hushes Alex)

Well we aren't going to catch a damn thing if you scare away all the fish.

(notices his rod)

What kind of a kid's rod is that you brought?

ALEX

It's something I got for the children once. At this point, I might as well hang onto it. Becoming a grandad, remember?

Alex is trying to untangle the fishing line. Tom is fishing.

TOM

Right, how are the kids?

ALEX

Oh, going SO well. Nicholas just started Uni. And Anne is off working for a charity abroad.

TOM

What about you and Alice? Are you on speaking terms these days?

ALEX

Weeell ... Alice isn't really the sort you speak with. More like, you get spoken to.

(the line is tangled by now)

Can you help me with this?

Tom comes over to Alex to help him rig up.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Actually, Alice is re-marrying. Poor bloke.

TOM

... You know, Mary was asking about you.

ALEX

Oh no, not this again.

TOM

She has this friend, Sarah ... Divorced, lovely woman.

ALEX

Oh give it a rest, Tom.

TOM

Just give it a chance. This one's a librarian ... your kind of thing.

ALEX

And what did you tell her?

TOM

Well I told her you're a writer.

ALEX

Will you stop ... What, with one book to my name?

TOM

I thought that was a really good book! Of course I mentioned that you're a retired head teacher with a juicy pension, I'm not an idiot. Give it a chance.

(jokingly)

She may not be the prettiest, but give her a scrub and a thorough shave, and she'll be good as new.

Alex smiles reluctantly at the joke. They continue fishing in silence.

ALEX

Any takers for the 'international mega-corporation'?

TOM

I've had a couple of offers, actually.

ALEX

You would miss it too much, though!

TOM

You know what. I can't be bothered any more.  
Better to sell it off and get a decent price.

ALEX

Which is...?

TOM

Enough for Mary and myself. Might even be a bit  
left over for a proper fishing rod for a mate!

Alex noticed something about Tom.

ALEX

Now I know what it is!  
I have NEVER seen you in wellies before!

TOM

They're practical.

ALEX

Did my ears deceive me or did Tom Anderson  
just refer to his footwear as 'practical'? You  
always wear those fancy Italian shoes.

TOM

Mary got them for me.

ALEX

You and that Mary are really hitting it off, eh?

TOM

It's just a pair of wellingtons. It's not like I  
started going to church.

Pause. Alex gets up and casts his line. They fish for a bit.

ALEX

(startled)

I have a bite!

TOM  
Yes, sure you do.

ALEX  
It's true. I have a bite!!

TOM  
Well I'll be! You have a bite!

Tom puts down his rod to help Alex.

ALEX  
Look at it, it's enormous! What is it?

TOM  
(looks at the fish)  
I think it's a salmon ... You got a salmon, man!

Alex struggles with the fish. He runs up and down the riverside.

ALEX  
Ohhhh, it's so big!

TOM  
Give it some slack!

ALEX  
I am!

TOM  
Pull it in, man. Pull it in!

ALEX  
You just said 'slack'? It is really strong.

TOM  
You've got it worn down now! I'll take a picture  
of you landing it.

Alex struggles with the salmon. It is more like it is wearing him down. Tom runs to get the camera but struggles to operate it.

TOM (CONT.)  
Aaaarh ... how does this thing work?

ALEX  
Press the 'ON' button.

Tom switches the camera on and looks into it.

TOM  
I can't see anything.

ALEX  
The cover!

TOM  
It won't ... I can't ... could you?

They trade places. As Tom takes the rod, the fish comes off the hook. They both look at the loose fishing line. Alex is complaining loudly, while Tom is suddenly quiet.

ALEX  
What are you doing? You were supposed to hold it.

TOM  
Shit.

ALEX  
(pacing back and forth)  
What a letdown. It was one for the books. An enormous salmon ... And caught with Nick's little rod. Well almost caught. I have to remember to tell him. His old dad locked in combat with a giant of the ocean. That was straight out of Hemingway ... "The Old Man and the Sea". No, I will not give up. I am sure the beast is still out there somewhere. And I have a feeling where it might be hiding.

Tom is standing with his back turned as Alex starts to reposition his equipment further downstream. Tom looks at Alex solemnly.

TOM  
I'm leaving on Tuesday. For Switzerland.

ALEX  
I see?

TOM  
Going into rehab. It's going to be a while too.

ALEX  
(stunned)  
Oh come on, it can't be that bad, surely ...

TOM  
(cuts him off)  
Yes it is! It is bad. And you know it.

ALEX  
Well today, for example, you haven't ...

There is an awkward pause as Alex realises that Tom has probably already had quite a bit to drink.

TOM  
It is the first thing I think about in the morning,  
and it is the last thing I think about before I go to  
bed. It ends now.

ALEX  
You mean some kind of .. clinic?

Tom nods, sits down on the rock.

TOM  
I have to get far away from everything. For a long  
time. You know, the kind of crap where you sit  
around in a circle, crying. I'll definitely hate it.

Alex sits down next to him.

ALEX  
(smiles)  
You definitely will. I can just picture you, Tom,  
singing Kumbaya ...  
(stops himself, suddenly serious)

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Is this something that Mary ...?

TOM

(nods)

It's the right thing to do. And it's my last chance.  
And I am scared as hell...

ALEX

You know, if there is anything I can do ...  
anything! ... You know!

TOM

Could you drive me?

ALEX

Sure, of course I can drive you. What time is your  
flight?

TOM

I'd like you to drive me all the way there.

ALEX

Errr ... to Switzerland? Why?

(long pause, as Alex realizes that  
Tom can't make it on his own)

Fine. Yes. You know, I could use a lungful of that  
fresh, Alpine air. Be great for my asthma.

TOM

Thank you!

They help each other up. Alex gets out his pocket knife and hands it to Tom.

TOM (CONT.)

What the Devil, do you still have that?  
(attempts to hand it back)

ALEX

Keep it. You can't be going to Switzerland,  
fighting a battle... and not have a Swiss Army  
knife!

Tom smiles and puts the knife in his pocket. They exit. Lights fade.  
Music: Queen: "I wan't to break free" (solo-part).

PLAYER 1  
Chapter 7. We have come midway through life.  
And life sometimes takes a tumble ...

Alex rushes across the stage wearing ear protectors.

PLAYER 1 (CONT.)  
... so you have to keep your balance.

Music ends. Transition, change of lighting.

## **7. MIDWAY.**

Setting: Alex' house. He is dragging a table onto the stage and proceeds to finish its surface with a sander. Tom enters (wearing sunglasses, hung-over/still drunk from the night before) carrying a bag of sandwiches, a bottle of wine, and Alex' mail. The fact that Alex can't hear him is used for comedic effect.

TOM  
Hey! Hello. Helloooo? Found your mail in the  
hallway.

ALEX  
Tom! So good to see you, Tom.

TOM  
I brought a bite to eat ... and something to wash it  
down.

ALEX  
(hears nothing)  
Thank you. You too!

Tom leaves to get glassware. Alex keeps on sanding. Tom returns with two mugs.

TOM  
Hey, what happened to your wine glasses? This  
is Barolo!

ALEX  
What?

TOM  
Italian!



ALEX  
(gets out his pocket knife)  
Swiss!

Alex hands the knife to Tom who starts to use its corkscrew to open the bottle.

TOM  
I was thinking we could hit the town tonight ...  
listen to some music ....

Alex finishes with the sander.

ALEX  
There!

TOM  
What are you doing with that table?

ALEX  
Sanding it. Sanding it all the way down. Then  
stripping it and painting it.

TOM  
(visibly shook)  
Isn't that the Hans Wegner you and Alice bought?

ALEX  
Well it's MY bloody Hans Wegner now!

Alex begins to pack up his tools. Tom finally uncorks the wine and pours some in the mugs.

TOM  
That was a set. What about the chairs?

ALEX  
She got those.

TOM  
All 12?

ALEX  
No-no-no, I got the table and two of the chairs.  
She got ten chairs plus the extension leaves. We  
had it appraised, and that made it equal.

TOM

You can't bloody strip and sand a Wegner table.  
That's a classic!

ALEX

(on his way out)

Seems to be going quite well. I have to show you  
the best bit.

TOM

You'll de-value it!

Alex leaves while Tom finishes his mug of wine. And immediately pours another.

ALEX (OFF)

Feast your eyes on this!

Alex returns carrying a blue chair.

TOM

You painted them blue!?

ALEX

Not just blue ... Grecian blue.

TOM

*Grecian* blue? What's with the bird droppings?

ALEX

Sea foam. I feel like it's really setting the  
atmosphere!

TOM

You should try this wine. It's the good stuff.

ALEX

Yes, it's really coming along nicely. You know  
how Alice always wanted all those heavy  
curtains and dark furniture. Now there'll be light,  
and plants, and lots of air ... I opened up into the  
conservatory, you know.

TOM

You did *what*?!

ALEX  
I took the wall down.

Tom gets up and goes to look. Alex looks too.

TOM  
You took down a load-bearing wall?

ALEX  
Naaah, I don't think so. More like over-bearing.

TOM  
So those cracks in the ceiling were always there?

ALEX  
Well, it's an old house. Can't you picture it, Tom?

Alex sits Tom down in the chair.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
There you are ... in 'Little Greece'. And here I sit,  
writing. I've had a great idea for a novel. It's set  
by the Mediterranean.

TOM  
Okay. You're writing again? Great!

Alex leaves with the power cord. Tom sits down, shook.

ALEX (OFF)  
I never used to have the time – with Alice. But  
now I finally have the opportunity. And the  
energy. I never had so much energy!

Alex comes back.

TOM  
Yes, I see that ... are you eating?

ALEX  
Nah, I'm not really that hungry.

TOM  
You've lost some weight.

ALEX

Is that not just you gaining?

(pats Tom's stomach)

You look a bit worse for wear, frankly. You been out boozing?

TOM

Just a company thing that got a bit out of hand.

You wouldn't have something for a headache?

ALEX

Try the bathroom.

TOM

(points to a letter)

Don't forget your mail. And I'd get someone to have a look at that wall, if I were you.

Tom leaves for the bathroom.

ALEX

(distracted, reads the letter)

Yes-yes, I have thought about it.

(still reading, to himself)

Oh no, she didn't ...

Tom returns.

TOM

You have to take that seriously ... could be dangerous.

ALEX

She bloody did too!

Alex hands the letter to Tom, who reads it quickly.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Has she gone and lost her bloody mind?

TOM

My God ... that calls for a drink, I think.

Tom refills the empty mug.

ALEX

She's only taking everything. Everything! She HAS lost her mind.

TOM

Well, this is from a barrister ... you can't take that too personally.

ALEX

Personally!? This is about as personal as it gets! I've sacrificed everything. Did I ever question any of her ridiculous ideas? Did I?

TOM

No, you never did.

ALEX

She got everything just the way she wanted it!

TOM

She certainly did.

ALEX

I mean, I'm not the one who walked away from it all. I bet she found someone else.

TOM

Come on, you don't know that.

ALEX

No that's right, I don't know anything! Maybe there have been many others!

TOM

(wants to change the subject)

Alex, don't you think ...

Alex rushes around the place, getting more and more worked up.

ALEX

... And now she wants it all. The kids and the car and ten Wegner chairs. Even my bloody fishing rod, that's gone too. She has taken the toilet

brush, Tom. The toilet brush! What kind of a sick person takes the toilet brush out of the hands of her ex-husband?!

Tom stops Alex.

TOM

Of course you're right, Alex. But you do have to move on too ...

Alex calms down a bit and sits down. He jumps back up immediately.

ALEX

You know a good barrister, don't you? I mean, you've been bankrupt three times, you must know someone.

TOM

(takes the letter)

Sure, I'll take care of it. You've got enough on your plate as it is, what with "Little Greece" and all.

They both stand by the chair. Suddenly Alex gets emotional.

ALEX

Tom! Be brutally honest now ...

(long pause)

... is that seafoam a bit much?

TOM

You want me to be honest?

(pause)

It looks great!

Alex hugs Tom.

ALEX

Without you Tom, I think I might have gone a bit crazy.

(brief pause)

PAINT STRIPPER!

Alex runs out to get a can of paint stripper, puts it on the table.

TOM

Hey! What do you say we take this table into the garden to ... strip it?

ALEX

Oh right. Good thinking.

They pick up the table and start to carry it out.

TOM

Plus you won't have to mow the grass!

They exit. The chair stays. Music: Eric Clapton, "Mainline Florida".

PLAYER 1

Chapter 6, in which Alex learns a time-honoured truth: It's not difficult to *become* a father, but *being* a father is something else entirely.

Music ends.

## 6. DIFFERENCES.

Transition, change of lighting. Audio: a football match being played. Setting: a football pitch where two junior teams are playing. Alex is standing behind a barrier advertisement that reads "TOM'S DISCOUNT AUTO". He is wearing a training outfit as coach.

ALEX

That's right, spread out, boys ... and push on! Yes, very good ... Come on, help Nicholas out, there's no one he can pass to.

Tom enters excitedly with a plastic bag full of beer cans and joins Alex behind the barrier.

TOM

Oh, did they start yet?

ALEX

(surprised)

It's the second half. One-all.

TOM  
(looks at the ad on the barrier)  
Oh good, you put the banner up.

ALEX  
Oh yes, and thank you for the uniforms!  
(points to the players)

TOM  
Looks great, doesn't it. Want one?

ALEX  
(with a disapproving look)  
No thank you, not while we're playing.

TOM  
(to the players)  
COME ON, NICK!  
(to Alex)  
Is he bigger than you at this point already?

ALEX  
(spots something)  
... No, Ref, that was clearly offside!

TOM  
I was wondering if you have time to help move  
house tomorrow?

ALEX  
Move? Who's moving?

TOM  
Linda!

ALEX  
Oh but didn't she just move in?

TOM  
I just can't deal with it. She wants to be the boss,  
and everything I do is wrong.

ALEX  
Too bad, I really liked Linda. Or ... am I thinking  
of Tina?



TOM

Oh no, she was even worse ...

ALEX

Rats. So Linda is moving out.

TOM

Yes, Linda is moving out ... and Lisa is moving in.  
Have you met Lisa?

ALEX

I don't think so?

(to the players)

Watch your man! Keep an eye on their number  
nine! He's deadly!

TOM

(to the players)

TAKE HIM DOWN!

(to Alex)

So? You free?

ALEX

Ah well, no, afraid I can't.

Tomorrow's just no good. I have to wash the  
uniforms, I have essays to mark, and I have to go  
pick up this furniture with Alice.

TOM

More furniture?

ALEX

Yes, Alice made a real bargain. An original  
Danish Wegner table with two leaves and a  
dozen matching chairs – for under £1000.

TOM

Well-well. Was it not you who used to say that if  
you own more than seven things, then your  
things own you?

ALEX

Well yes, in principle ... but this is a classic of  
modern design! Alice and I will be able to enjoy  
this set together ... for the rest of our lives.

(spots something on the pitch)  
Noooo, surely that's not a free kick?

TOM  
(yells at the referee)  
YOU'RE FULL OF SHITE, YA BASTARD!  
(to Alex)  
It's like you never have time for anything any more?

ALEX  
Me? Well ... that is a shame. But you know how it is.

TOM  
No I don't, actually.

A foul is committed on the pitch.

ALEX  
YEEEEES! A penalty! We get a penalty!

They cheer and bang on the barrier.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
That is so important!

TOM  
Yes! Nicholas is taking it!

ALEX  
(worried)  
Oh no, why him? It never goes well.

TOM  
OF COURSE it will. Your son ... my godson. Of course he'll put it in.  
(yells)  
Give it a good wallop, Nick!

ALEX  
No-no-no, he's going to miss. He got his poor nerves from me.  
(turns his back to the pitch)  
I can't watch.

TOM  
COME ON THEN, NICK!

We see from Tom's expression that the boy misses the shot. Alex turns around to look.

ALEX  
Oh no, he's devastated. And Alice will be mad  
that he was put in that position...

TOM  
(shouts)  
COME ON REDS!  
(to Alex)  
What if I reschedule for Saturday, can you come then?

ALEX  
No even worse, we have to look at locations for  
Anne's eighteenth birthday.

TOM  
(confounded)  
What? I thought that was going to be a small  
party – family only?

ALEX  
(suddenly put on the spot)  
Weeeeell yes, that was the plan. But it sort of  
grew out of hand ... you know Alice. She has all  
these friends ... and before we knew it ...

TOM  
(hurt)  
Okay... so ... how many will you be?

ALEX  
Oh I don't know ... no more than 30 or 40. Alice  
handles all the invitations and stuff. 50 at the  
most.

TOM  
You're a real shit, you know!

ALEX

But I really tried to ... it would just be easier if  
you and Alice got on a bit better ... why is it  
you're not talking to each other any more? What?  
Why is that?

TOM

(ignores the question)

That's my god-daughter! You're a giant shit, you  
are! AND a giant wimp!

ALEX

Well I can't please everyone ...

TOM

(cuts him off)

You know what? Don't even try, mate! Goodbye!

Tom throws down his beer can at Alex' feet and starts to leave.

ALEX

(stops him)

Tom.

(brief pause)

I'll swing by with a couple of invites tomorrow.

Tom leaves.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to himself)

We can see about moving as well then.

(to the players)

Oh come on, look alive, Nicholas!

Lights fade. Music: Earth Wind and Fire, "Mighty Mighty".

PLAYER 1

(grinning)

Chapter 5. Two happy boys. Tomorrow ... isn't for  
another day!

## 5. THE BEST MAN.

Transition, change of lighting. Setting: in the bathroom of a nightclub. Alex's stag night.

TOM

Come on!

Alex comes crawling in. Music ends.

TOM (CONT.)

Are you okay?!?

ALEX

Of course. Just have to ...  
(rushes to the toilet bowl)

TOM

Glasses glasses glasses.

Tom removes Alex' glasses at the last moment. Alex is on his knees, throwing up into the toilet. Tom passes tissue paper to Alex as needed.

ALEX

(bellowing from the depths)  
AUUUUUUAEEEECHA!

TOM

No, I don't think you should have had that last pitcher.

ALEX

ALIIIIOOOOKEEEEEEMEEEE!

TOM

No, she is not going to kill you. We'll get you back to vertical yet. You only have to walk the length of the church tomorrow ... and nobody says you have to walk in a straight line! You still have the ability to say 'I do'.

ALEX

I do not!

They both laugh. Alex wipes his mouth with some toilet paper.

ALEX

Oh hey, I feel much better now.

TOM

You look great too! Here's to that.  
(he pulls out a flask)

ALEX

Yes, cheers to that!

They drink. Perhaps they sing a little drinking song. Alex is leaning on the toilet bowl.

TOM

Do you want to hear the speech?

ALEX

What speech is that?

TOM

Well, the speech I'm going to give tomorrow.

ALEX

Oh, that speech. No, actually I don't.

TOM

The hell you do!

ALEX

Yeah, actually I do.

Tom gets a crumbled piece of paper from his pocket.

TOM

Don't worry, it's gonna be hilarious. I'll spill all the best stories.

ALEX

Wait wait, my mother-in-law will be there.

TOM

To hell with her. You're not marrying her. Do you want to hear the speech or not?

ALEX

Okay, maybe just give me the gist of it.

TOM

So. I'm going to begin with the beginning ...

ALEX

That's a great place to begin!

Both laughing.

TOM

So I'll start off with the time we first met, looking  
at the naked ladies.  
One of them was a ginger ...

BOTH

Top AND bottom!

TOM

And then I take us through everything, like our  
camping trips, when we'd drink your dad's  
alcohol ...

ALEX

Ew ... I think I might be sick again actually.

TOM

And I saved a poem you wrote.

ALEX

You did?

TOM

Yes! And I'll bloody read it out loud!  
Shit ... It was supposed to be a surprise.

ALEX

Tom! Don't worry about it. I won't remember by  
tomorrow.

TOM

Then there were the years when we didn't see  
each other ...

ALEX

Skip those. Too boring.

TOM

Yes, scratch that. Then I'll skip ahead to when – BOOM  
– suddenly we meet again in that taxi. All the fun stuff  
we did out on the town with girls and ...

ALEX

I'm just going to rest my head here ... I am  
listening, though!

Alex closes his eyes and turns his face away from the audience.

TOM

Then I'll say a few nice things about Alice ...

ALEX

You know ... that can be well worth it!

TOM

I mean, it's to get in with her sister, of course ... if  
that's okay?

ALEX

Fine by me! We'd become family! We'd be  
cousins!

They laugh for a bit.

TOM

Then I might tell another joke or two, and then ...  
(he packs his speech way)  
... I might go off-script completely and talk about  
how happy ... and proud ... I am ... to have you as a  
friend. And how I've always looked up to you,  
even if perhaps you don't believe that.

Alex dozes off at this point.

TOM (CONT.)

And how you are the cleverest and best friend  
anyone could have. That you are always there for  
me, and how lucky Alice is ... and even though it's  
going to be you two now, it will still be us two ...  
because a real friendship like this is a rare thing.  
So when you have a friendship like ours, it's  
important to hold onto it, and to tell each other ...



(sees that Alex is asleep)  
Hey. Alex. Are you sleeping?

ALEX  
What? No, I'm wide awake! And I have  
something to tell you.

TOM  
What?

ALEX  
I'm going to be sick again!

Alex throws up again. Music: Earth Wind and Fire, "Mighty Mighty".

PLAYER 2  
Chapter 4. In which fortune comes along as Tom  
gets the boot by his girlfriend ... Susan  
(thinks to himself)  
... Or was it Janet ... it wasn't Carol ... maybe Jane?  
Oh well ... Chapter 4.

Music ends.

#### **4. CAREER.**

Transition, change of lighting. Setting: In a city, at night. Tom is on the street in his  
socks. It's raining. He is arguing with his girlfriend, who is on the second floor of a  
building.

TOM  
Helen ... for Christ's sake ... let me in. I said I'm  
sorry, didn't I. Just let me in so we can talk about  
it.  
(brief pause)  
I can't be down here in just my socks!

A single shoe lands in front of Tom. He puts it on.

TOM (CONT.)  
Come on, Helen ... one shoe?!

A jacket falls from above. He puts it on.

TOM (CONT.)  
Just give me five minutes. I'm on my knees here  
... goddammit.  
(he gives up, turns around, whistles)  
Taxi!

Tom tries to hail a taxi. Spotlight on Alex, who is a taxi driver. (two chairs, one diagonally behind the other) Tom is trying to put his shoe on, hopping. He gets into the back seat.

ALEX  
Evening. Where to, then?

TOM  
Train station. So glad you stopped ... I am soaked!  
Look at my shoe. That's a genuine Belmondo ...  
completely ruined.

ALEX  
(recognizes Tom in the mirror)  
What, Tom!?

TOM  
Alex?! What are you doing here?

ALEX  
I'm a taxi driver!

TOM  
My God, Alex ... wait, I'll come sit in the front.

Tom scoots his chair forward so he is next to Alex.

TOM (CONT.)  
Wow, is it great to see you! How long has it been.  
3, 4 years.

ALEX  
6.

TOM  
Six, is it really? So good to see you. You haven't  
changed one bit!

ALEX

Neither have you.

TOM

When did you move here?

ALEX

Four years ago.

TOM

Right! And the writing? Are you a famous writer yet?

ALEX

Nah, I've put that aside for the moment. I'm at Uni now ... English and literature studies.

TOM

University?

ALEX

Yes, it's very interesting. I am writing my thesis. It's ... taking a while.

TOM

Wow man, university. I've caught a ride with a professor!

ALEX

Well ... this is just a side thing to make a bit of money.

TOM

Yeah yeah sure. Good job too ... I never thought they'd give you a license with minus six in both eyes.

ALEX

I did fail the test three times.

They both laugh.

TOM

Oh man, is it great to see you!

Sound of a vehicle horn.

ALEX

Oh no, I'm stopped in a bus lane.

Tom sticks his head out of the window, yells. Alex starts to pull the car away.

TOM

GIVE IT A REST, YOU TOSSER! We're having a conversation here.

(to Alex)

You really haven't changed a bit.

ALEX

Neither have you.

(awkward pause)

What about you? What are you up to these days?

TOM

Well, what aren't I up to? At the moment I'm working for a car dealership.

Just got promoted. So I have a company car and everything!

Tom hands Alex a business card.

ALEX

Well well well. So why are taking a taxi?

TOM

Car's with Inland Revenue just now. Some misunderstanding about the registration.

ALEX

Do you like the job?

TOM

Nah, I'm just in it to learn all the angles, then I'm opening my own shop ... "TOM'S DELUXE AUTO".

ALEX

Tom's Deluxe Auto?

TOM

Yessir. Only the best! None of your cheap bangers.

ALEX  
So, Managing Director, eh?

TOM  
Professor!

ALEX  
(another awkward pause)  
So what's with that shoe?

TOM  
Oh, just this crazy chick ... Helen. Why are the  
ones that are great in bed always bonkers as  
well?

ALEX  
Well I'm sure I don't know about that.

TOM  
Oh okay. What about you? You have a special lady?

Alex smiles shyly.

TOM (CONT.)  
You bloody have. You have a girlfriend! I was  
sure you'd go to your grave a virgin.

ALEX  
No no, let me just ...  
(he rummages in his pockets)  
... Here we are!

Alex finds a photo in his inside pocket while Tom quickly grabs the wheel.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
That's Alice. We've been together 2 years.  
She reads History of Art.

TOM  
Another professor!  
(studies the photo, surprised)  
Damn Alex, she's a hottie too.  
And she's a ginger ... is it real?

Alex turns red. Nods.

TOM (CONT.)

So are you getting married or what?

ALEX

Oh no. Alice and I don't believe in the institution of marriage.

TOM

What? Oh I get it ... always best to keep your options open.

ALEX

And personal freedom – that's important.

TOM

Oh definitely. You have to watch out for that personal freedom.

ALEX

We also believe that we can live non-materialistic lives.

TOM

Yes?

ALEX

You know, there's a Chinese proverb which says: If you own more than seven things, then your things own you!

TOM

Oh okay. Right. Well we do tend to get more things, don't we.

(another awkward pause)

Did you say seven things?

ALEX

Yes, seven.

TOM

Well that'll give you a pair of clean underpants each day of the week.

Alex gets the joke and they both laugh for a bit.

TOM (CONT.)

It is really great to see you. Professor and everything, oh man.

Alex stops the taxi. Tom begins to find his wallet. Alex stops him.

ALEX

No no no, this one is on me!

TOM

Hey thanks! Fantastic to see you again. I have thought about you a lot, you know. I really have ... I wonder what ol' Alex is up to.

ALEX

Okay ... so how come you never wrote?

TOM

What?

ALEX

We said we were going to write to each other. I wrote to you ...

TOM

Yes?

ALEX

Three times. You never wrote back.

TOM

Nooo, weell ... I was moving around a lot at the time ... and you know me. You're the one who has a way with words.

(laughs)

There is an awkward silence between them. Alex is clearly hurt.

TOM (CONT.)

You know what ... I'm sorry!

Alex dismisses him.

ALEX

No, it's me that ...

TOM

Listen, what are you doing for new years' eve?

ALEX

New years', I'm not sure...

TOM

Well I am. You are going to a party at our place.  
You and the hottie... what was her name?

ALEX

Alice.

TOM

Yes. You and Alice, me and Helen and a bunch of  
other people.

ALEX

Isn't Helen the one who just kicked you out?

TOM

Oh, she'll have come around by then. So what do  
you say?

ALEX

I'd have to ask Alice.

Tom gets out of the taxi.

TOM

Hey man, it'll be just like old times.

Alex rolls down the window and calls to him.

ALEX

Tom! See you later!

TOM

Great!

Alex drives off and Tom discovers that he still has the photo. He tries to get Alex's attention but the taxi is too far away. He puts the photo in his pocket. (Maybe we have seen this photo before - in the future - maybe not)

Music: Otis Redding "Change gonna come". Player 2 pulls a small tent across the stage.



PLAYER 2

Chapter 3. The dreams are big, nothing is impossible,  
and everything is seventeen years old.

Fade music.

### **3. BOYHOOD DREAMS.**

Transition, change of lighting. It is night. The two boys are camping. We see their shadows in a tent on the screen in the back. They perform using back projection.

TOM (OFF)

Are you coming?

ALEX

I'm here, I'm here.

Alex crawls into the tent where Tom is.

TOM

Look what I got!

ALEX

Blackberry brandy?! Doesn't that taste awful?

TOM

Yes! I've got four bottles! Got some white wine too.

ALEX

Won't your mum notice?

TOM

Nah, she's got loads of bottles all over the place.  
What did you bring?

Alex gets out a bottle.

ALEX

My mum and dad don't really drink that much ...  
but I got this from dad's clinic.

TOM

What the ... 85 percent alcohol??

ALEX

Yes, it's the stuff they use to clean all the dental equipment.

(produces a cigar)

And I got this. It's a real Cuban.

They manage to light the cigar. Alex has a go, coughs.

TOM

Stop, you're getting it wet! Give it here.

This is how ...

Tom takes over and puffs on the cigar.

TOM (CONT.)

Check me out. Managing Director Tom Anderson.

Sports car. Giant house. Hot wife. Can you picture it?

ALEX

Yeah yeah, I see it! When are you moving?

TOM

After the summer holidays. I'm going to live in my uncle's basement.

ALEX

Cor, I'd like that!

TOM

Why don't you come along!

ALEX

No, I have to finish my A levels.

TOM

Alright, next year then. We'll get a flat and everything. Come on, read it to me again.

ALEX

But it's not done yet!

TOM

Sure. Come on!

ALEX

Alright then.

(produces a small notebook; reads  
from it)

We glide away together  
softly on a forest lake,  
deep, and black as shale.  
In a paper boat,  
a glance of love as a sail.

TOM

That's bloody brilliant!

ALEX

(reads on)

The rudder of my heart's entwined  
in a mermaid's ginger hair.  
Tread softly because  
you tread on my dreams.

TOM

Perfection. It sounds just like some of the stuff  
we read in school.

ALEX

Well, I did borrow a couple of lines at the end.

TOM

Doesn't matter! Everyone does that. Just one  
small suggestion ... I'm no poet of course ... this  
mermaid ...maybe she should be a blonde?

ALEX

I'll think about it.

TOM

But apart from that. You can go all the way with that!

ALEX

You think I could get it published?!

TOM

Yes man, girls are crazy about this stuff. All that  
stuff about love and dreams ... well ... I don't  
know about treading on them.

ALEX  
Oh, it's not near done.

TOM  
Can I borrow it? I could bring it round to some of those ... printers.

ALEX  
Publishers?

TOM  
Yes sure, I'm great at that kind of thing. Do you mind if I learn it by heart and ... you know ... try it on some girls?

ALEX  
(smiles)  
You'd like that, eh?

TOM  
(laughs)  
They go CRAZY for that stuff, is all I'm saying.

They both laugh. Alex starts to cough.

ALEX  
I need some fresh air – I have that asthma.

Alex crawls out of the tent, coughing. Transition, change of lighting. Night sky. Tom follows him. Rear screen lights down, night lights on stage. They lie down on their backs and look up at the sky.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
(pointing to stars and constellations)  
The North Star. The Big Dipper. Ursa Minor.

TOM  
We have to write!

ALEX  
Yes sure. Orion's Belt.

Tom turns to Alex, serious now.

TOM

No, I really mean it! We have to PROMISE each other we'll write!

ALEX

(seriously)

Yes. Of course. Let's say every week.

TOM

Yes, AT LEAST!

Brief pause, star gazing.

ALEX

Do you know how many stars there are?

TOM

No, do you?

ALEX

Nobody does. We will never be able to see it all. They say the universe is infinite.

TOM

Oh come on, it's got to end somewhere!

ALEX

No way of knowing. Some people say it all began in one tiny spot that didn't have time or anything ... and then BANG, it just exploded into the cosmos. And THEN time began.

TOM

I don't understand one bit of that.

ALEX

And maybe it will all start contracting back together again.

TOM

And then what? Time will go backwards or what?

ALEX

Well, maybe?

TOM

You have the strangest head on you. I'm going to go backwards ... to take a piss. And then we are going to drink your dad's alcohol.

Tom gets up to go pee, Alex lies back, pondering his poem.

ALEX

We glide away together  
softly on a forest lake,  
deep, and black as shale.  
In a paper boat,  
a glance of love as a sail.  
The rudder of my heart's entwined  
In a mermaid's blond ... No, long, blond ... blond,  
long hair ...  
in a mermaid's ginger hair.  
(shouting out)  
Tom! Ginger is better!

Music: The Beatles: "Do you want to know a secret".

PLAYER 2

Chapter 2. Hormones are just beginning to stir  
below the surface. And two lads discover  
something about gingers.

Music ends.

## **2. FRIENDS.**

Transition, change of lighting. Sound of birds singing. Early summer morning in woodland or a park. Alex is searching for his dog.

ALEX

Skipper? Skipper?

Alex exits. Tom enters, sets a ladder against a garden wall or fence. He is about to climb it when he hears Alex approaching. He steps away from the ladder; plays innocent.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Skipper!

Alex notices Tom. They size each other up. Alex decides to go the other way, so he turns around.

TOM

Can't find your dog?

ALEX

It's just that he's a Kleine Münsterländer ... So he'll catch the scent of a rabbit or something.

TOM

(cuts him off)

Hey, I've seen you before.

ALEX

I have seen you too.

TOM

Do you live here?

ALEX

No, I go to school in the city.

TOM

One of them posh schools?

ALEX

What?

TOM

Since you're carrying homework around.

ALEX

Ohhh, that's not homework ... I'm just reading it.

TOM

Not for school?

ALEX

It's really good. "Huckleberry Finn". It's a classic.

(gives the book to Tom)

You can borrow it if you want, but it belongs to the library.

TOM  
(gives the book back)  
What's your name again?

ALEX  
Alexander.

TOM  
That is a long name.

ALEX  
And what's your name again?

TOM  
I'm Tom.

ALEX  
That is a short name.

TOM  
Soooo Alex...  
(brief pause)  
Have you ever seen a naked lady?

ALEX  
Er ... what, like ... naked naked?

TOM  
Yeah, what did you think?  
(points)  
Climb up and see for yourself!

ALEX  
What's up there?

TOM  
(whispers)  
It's a loony bin ... just for ladies.

ALEX  
Do you mean a sanatorium?

TOM  
Yes-yes, for ladies! And in the summertime they lounge about in the garden.



ALEX  
With no clothes on?

TOM  
You can see everything! Even the bottom bits!

They both giggle, but it's too much for Alex.

ALEX  
Skipper!

TOM  
Are you scared?

ALEX  
(hesitates)  
No ... no, I'm not scared!

TOM  
Climb up them. I'll keep watch.

Alex slowly climbs up the ladder to peek over the wall at the forbidden sight. Tom teases him.

TOM (CONT.)  
Someone's coming!

Alex is startled. Tom laughs disarmingly.

ALEX  
I thought for a minute...

TOM  
Yeah yeah, up you go.  
(whispers)  
Can you see anything?

Alex nods at Tom.

ALEX  
There's one there.

TOM  
Is she lying on her back or on her front?

ALEX  
On her back!

TOM  
Is she a ginger?

ALEX  
Yes ... top and bottom!

TOM  
My turn! Alright?

Alex descends slowly down the ladder. He stops on the last rung with his back to Tom. Tom realises what has happened.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Is it stiff?

ALEX  
(shyly)  
No, come off it...

TOM  
It's bloody supposed to. If it's stiff that means  
you're not a fairy!

ALEX  
(looking down)  
Well I'm definitely not that, then.

TOM  
My turn now. Keep watch.

Tom climbs the ladder quickly.

ALEX  
You see anything?

TOM  
Oooohh ... It IS the ginger. She's the one with the  
biggest knockers!

ALEX  
Tom! I think I have to go home now.

Alex begins to leave. Tom comes down off the ladder.

TOM  
Don't you tell anyone about this!

ALEX  
I would never!

TOM  
This is our spot now.

ALEX  
Yes!

TOM  
You have to swear.

ALEX  
Swear? Then we better do it like in the book. In  
blood!

Alex gets out his Swiss Army knife while Tom holds his book.

TOM  
Is that a real Swiss Army knife?

ALEX  
(nods as he unfolds the knife)  
Corkscrew, screwdriver, toothpick, *blood knife*!

Alex spits on his finger, wipes it on his shirt. Tom does the same. Alex pricks a hole in his finger. When he goes to do it to Tom, Tom retracts his hand.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
It's just a little prick. You can look away while I  
do it.

Alex pricks a hole in Tom's finger. They mash their cuts together and wipe their fingers on their clothes. Tom hands the book back to Alex.

TOM  
So, see you down here again tomorrow?

ALEX  
(nods)  
I can bring two sodas.

TOM  
Do you have cola?

ALEX  
Yes.

Alex begins to leave.

TOM  
Do you want me to help you with your dog?

ALEX  
I don't think you can.

TOM  
Wanna bet? I can whistle.

ALEX  
I don't really ... bet.

TOM  
Sure, everyone does. What do have?

Alex takes some coins from his pocket.

ALEX  
Two bob and sixpence.

TOM  
(takes the coins)  
Okay, it's a bet then!

Tom whistles loudly with his fingers a couple of times. They look for the dog. It doesn't come.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Alright then. You win.  
(hands the money back to Alex)

ALEX  
(pause)  
But ... you still owe me two bob sixpence.

TOM  
Yes-yes. You can get them tomorrow. That is a strange dog you have.

ALEX

It's not strange.

(smiles)

But it is a bit deaf. See you later!

TOM

Yeah, see you!

Tom stops, looks to check that Alex is going. Alex exits. Tom climbs the ladder again, looks, and puts his hand down his trouserfront. Music: Louis Armstrong, "Winter Wonderland".

PLAYER 2

We have arrived at the end. Or rather, the beginning. This is Chapter 1, where it all begins ... with half a liquorice pipe.

Music ends.

## **1. MEETING.**

Transition, change of lighting. Setting: a Christmas market. Alex is sitting on a bench with a large bag of sweets. Tom enters, chewing on a mouthful of sweets. He throws away his empty bag and sits down next to Alex.

TOM

(looks over with envy)

How much you got left?

ALEX

One gobstopper, three red fruit drops – and one blue – and half a penny pipe.

TOM

You are slow.

ALEX

I am not allowed to eat a lot of sweets ... my mum and dad are dentists. That's them over there!

(points)

TOM

My mum's a cleaner. I can eat all the sweets I want. That's her over there.

(points)

ALEX

She's fat.

TOM

Yes.

(brief pause)

Can you whistle?

(he whistles with his fingers, badly)

ALEX

I can whistle inwards.

(whistles the Marseillaise inwards)

That's the Marsa-maise.

(brief pause, then spots something)

Your fly's undone!

TOM

My dad's a racecar driver!

ALEX

Is he really!? In a racecar?

TOM

You think I'm lying?

ALEX

I just never met anyone who has a dad who is a racecar driver.

Tom pompously produces a small toy car from his pocket.

TOM

I got this last year.

Alex examines the car with admiration.

TOM (CONT'D)

That's the kind he drives.

ALEX

Wooooow.

(reads with difficulty off the car)

B-U is BU ... G-A-T is GAT ... T-I is ... T-I-T-I ...is  
BUGA-TITI!

TOM

Is that what is says?

ALEX

Yes. Can't you read?

TOM

Course I can.

(takes the car back)

ALEX

My dad can drill into teeth.

TOM

My dad travels all over the world. America ... Spain  
... He's coming back for my birthday. I'll be six.

ALEX

I'll be six too next time. We're having Nea-pop-  
litan icecream.

TOM

We're having that too!

ALEX

I like the red part best.

TOM

Me too.

ALEX

I always save that for last.

TOM

Why do you do that?

ALEX

I just like to have something to look forward too.

TOM

That sounds stupid. It will melt. You should do it the other way around. You eat the red first. Then the brown, then the white, and then you trade. Because there's always someone that doesn't like the brown.

ALEX

Oh wow, you're really clever.

TOM

Well I am starting school soon.

ALEX

Me too!

TOM

We will be classmates then!

ALEX

Well ... I'll be going to a school in the city.

TOM

Bugger.

ALEX

(brief pause)

Here, you can have my penny pipe.

TOM

I can?

Alex passes the liquorice pipe to Tom. He eats it immediately.

TOM (CONT.)

Okay then you can play with my racecar ... for a whole hour. I live in the new estates by the railway.

ALEX

My mum says I'm not allowed to go down there.

TOM

Then I'll have to come to you.



ALEX  
(looks Tom up and down)  
I don't think I'm allowed that either.

TOM  
But then we'll never get to play.

ALEX  
No, I guess not.

They sit for bit in silence. Snow starts to fall.

TOM  
Oh, look at that...

ALEX  
It's snowing?

TOM  
Yes, it's snowing.

ALEX  
Did you know that out of all the snowflakes in  
the world, there aren't two that are the same?

Music: Encore of Django Reinhardt, "Blue Drag". A cone of light closes on the  
pair to make the scene look like the snow globe from the beginning of the play.  
Music and lights fade.

**END**





