

# **Brown Bread.**

**A PLAY BY...**

*Good men ride into the sunset  
Old soldiers fade away  
What happens to the bad blood?  
How does evil end its day?*

Mentally deteriorating ex gangster Henry Salmon lives out what's left of his life in the middle-of-nowhere in the company of his frustrated and angry daughter Thelma. Convinced that figures from his lurid past are out to seek revenge for his crimes, Henry lives in a dark world of his own making, that begins to disintegrate the moment a stranger arrives 'to do the drains'.

**HENRY SALMON. 60's. A hard man past his best.**

**THELMA SALMON. Late 20's/30's. Plain. Resourceful. Deadly.**

**VERNON. Late 20's 30's. Sweaty. Nervous. Slimy. A snake in the grass.**

**THE PRESENT.**

The stage is in darkness as we hear the opening bars of *Chubby Checker's... 'Let's twist again' (Is it a bird...is it a plane...etc)*.

As the music grows in its intensity so do the lights.

They fade up slowly to reveal a man, (HENRY SALMON 60's) dancing. Standing centre-stage with his back to us and dressed in a battered suit that might have been the height of fashion in the 1960's, he twists with style and enthusiasm.

With the lights, up we can now see the room. A large bay window dominates. An old radiogram, a chest of drawers, a couple of battered armchairs, a chair, a table and a metallic bucket furnish the room. Apart from the notable absence of a TV everything appears ordinary.

A harassed looking young woman, (THELMA) enters the room carrying a tray. On the tray a chipped mug and a delicate cup and saucer and a copy of 'Lady magazine' plus a newspaper. She frowns, walks towards the source of the music that belts out the music and switches it off.

THELMA:               Daddy...please. If you don't mind, I have a headache...and besides I need a word.

HENRY:                **(Mid-twist and disappointed)** Thelma? I was just getting going.

THELMA:               It's tea time daddy. You can dance some more later. For the moment I'd be grateful if you'd sit down. I want to talk to you about something quite important. Please?

**A disgruntled HENRY flops into his chair and takes the mug that THELMA hands him. He takes a noisy slurp and burps.**

**THELMA looks at him with disgust.**

THELMA:               I think there's a thank you there somewhere don't you daddy? And maybe a sorry for the burp? And what have I told you about slurping? Mmm?

THELMA:               I know it's just you and me but manners matter.

**The old man looks sheepishly up into THELMA'S stern face...a moment...he smiles like a naughty boy.**

HENRY: Sorry my love. And thank you for this lovely cup of tea just what I need after all that twisting.

THELMA: Sometimes I despair of you, daddy...I really do. Anyway, never mind that for now...I need to speak to you about something quite important.

**THELMA places the tray on the table, takes her drink and magazine and sits in her chair. HENRY eyes her suspiciously.**

HENRY: You want my permission to go out again don't you?

THELMA: Why would need your permission to go out? I go out when I want. That's what grown-ups do daddy. They make their own decisions.

HENRY: You go out rather a lot these days, don't you? I mean if I were to have a fall or something, I could be lying here for hours without anyone knowing. It could be the end of me.

THELMA: **(Sighs)** You've been enjoying Chubby Checker and his twist for the last hour daddy. I doubt very much that you will ever 'have a fall' as you put it. If you can survive that particular dance routine without falling over then I think you can survive anything don't you? And I'm not out 'rather a lot' as you well know. I think I've been out twice this week. Women of my age are out all the time these days.

HENRY: Bloody Bingo.

THELMA: I don't go to Bingo daddy as you well know...I go to the pub.

HENRY: Aah...the demon drink.

THELMA: No daddy *not* the demon drink. Far from it. I go to the pub for the company. And anyway...me going out is not what I wanted to speak to you about.

**HENRY burps again.**

THELMA:            **(Annoyed)** *I don't know why I bother. I'll try again when you're not being so disgusting.*

**THELMA angrily picks up her magazine and begins to read to herself.**

**PAUSE.**

HENRY:            Thelma?

**Pause. THELMA ignores him.**

HENRY:            Thelma?

THELMA:           **(Sighing)** Daddy?

HENRY:            Read something from the paper to me would you my sweet? See if they mention me, would you?

THELMA:           **(Angry)** *You're just not interested in me at all are you? You take no notice of what I say. All you're concerned about are the papers and whether or not your name might be in them. Well let me tell you...it won't be. No-one remembers you.*

THELMA:            *It was all a long time ago and besides it was nothing to be proud of. In fact, it's all best forgotten.*

HENRY:            I'll have you know I was a well-respected man.

THELMA:            No you weren't daddy. You weren't well respected, you were feared. It's not the same thing. People were scared of you and it's nothing to be proud of. You were a gangster. A crook. A nere-do-well. You made your living off other people's misery.

**HENRY is shocked.**

HENRY:            How dare you. I'll have you know my girl that people looked up to me. I looked after them. There was no messing about on my manor. Everything was ship-shape and Bristol fashion.

HENRY: I was the law and order on my patch. The Coppers couldn't be bothered so I took it into my own hands to look after my people. God knows what would have happened if me and my boys hadn't of kept the scum under control.

THELMA: There wouldn't have been so many knee-cappings for a start.

HENRY: You can scoff my girl, but you wouldn't have what you have today if it wasn't for my business activities.

**A pause. Open-mouthed THELMA makes a point of looking around the room at their threadbare surroundings.**

HENRY: What?

THELMA: **(Incredulous)** A two-bedroom bungalow in the middle of nowhere? Is that what your business activities bought us?

HENRY: It's not forever. Just 'till the heat dies down.

THELMA: **(Shouting)** *The heat? What fucking heat?*

HENRY: There's no need for foul language. I got enemies as you well know.

THELMA: No you haven't daddy. Maybe you did at one time a long, long time ago...but they're all dead by now. It's been over forty years. And besides... don't you think they would have got you by now?

HENRY: They got long memories my enemies. They're biding their time. I can feel it. They're out there somewhere. Mark my words. Waiting in the shadows for me to make a mistake. To let my guard down. One slip up on my part and – **(does universally recognised throat slitting gesture)**.

THELMA: Jesus Christ.

- HENRY: More language young lady? May I remind you that my activities were supposed to have bought you not only an education but *class too*.
- THELMA: I never stayed at any school long enough to learn anything useful let alone get class. We were always on the move.
- HENRY: Holidays in the sun. Fashionable clothes. A car...you had that nice little mini I bought for you. Oh, how soon the privileged forget.
- THELMA: You stole it for me daddy. You nicked it.
- HENRY: How dare you. You need to get your facts right my girl.
- THELMA: Ok Big Willy stole it...under instruction from you.
- HENRY: It was a misunderstanding on Big Willy's part...and what about the houses we lived in eh? Sheer luxury. Gold taps, heated toilet seats.
- THELMA: **(Incredulous)** Daddy. I never stayed anywhere long enough to warm my arse on a toilet seat heated or otherwise. What was it...ten...eleven houses we lived in? You were always...what was it you called it? Oh yes. Ducking and diving. Bobbing and weaving. Keeping your head down. Oh yes, a wonderful life. No friends to speak of and a dad who only stayed out of jail 'cause the coppers couldn't pin nothing on him because he was paying most of them.
- HENRY: **(Shocked)** *Wash your mouth out with soap and water.* Clean as a whistle me. Innocent as Jesus Christ. It was all the rumour and innuendo that followed me around that did it.
- THELMA: *Rumour and innuendo?*
- HENRY: See, I wouldn't expect you to understand but that's what happens when you're a celebrity.

HENRY: You have to remember there were a lot of people out there jealous of my success...envious people out to get me. There was good reason for my restless behaviour.

THELMA: Restless behaviour? *Restless behaviour?* Look where your restless behaviour has got us. It's like living on the moon.

HENRY: Huh...you soon change your tune. When you was a little girl I distinctly remember you saying that you wanted to live in the country.

THELMA: This is not the country daddy. This is a bog. The only reason we are not the only inhabitants is because everyone here has a dubious story to tell. This place is for people who can't afford to hide in Spain.

HENRY: Thelma you surprise me. We have a good life.

THELMA: Daddy...daddy we exist on your pension and any ill-gotten gains that you still have in the bank that draws interest.

HENRY: Thelma. I am a wanted man. Needs must. Remember that...needs must.

THELMA: Once more daddy. No-one *wants* you. These people you keep on about. They don't exist anymore. Your enemies...they're all long gone. And if by some freak of nature, they are still drawing breath they're too old and infirm to do anything about it. They'd expire before they made it to this outpost. No-one cares daddy. I don't mean to be cruel...but...but you're forgotten.

**A pause. HENRY'S lip trembles.**

THELMA: Your enemies from the bad old days are either dead or in homes for old gangsters. No-one cares daddy. Those days are over. Those days are long gone.

**A pause as HENRY fights to hold back the tears.**

HENRY: How could you say such a thing Thelma? You've cut me to the quick.

THELMA: **(Sorrowful)** Oh for God's sake daddy...I didn't mean to hurt you. But you must face facts. It's over.

**A pause. HENRY produces a large off-white handkerchief and blows his nose.**

HENRY: If you ain't gonna read to me...then I'll do it meself. Pass the paper to your old forgotten father would you Thelma? **(Mumbles to himself but makes sure Thelma hears)** Doesn't love her old dad. Doesn't care about me. She left me once just like her mother did. Could do it again anytime. Be easy for her. The drop of a hat. Gone. No heart...cold as ice. Just like her mother.

THELMA: **(Sighing)** I didn't leave you daddy.

HENRY: You left me Thelma don't deny it. I remember you walking out of the door suitcase in hand.

THELMA: It wasn't a suitcase daddy it was a briefcase.

HENRY: It was a bleeding suitcase Thelma don't try and confuse me.

THELMA: **(Frustrated)** *It was a briefcase Daddy. For the job I had. A job that I loved but thanks to you I didn't have for long. You remember that? Do you?*

HENRY: No daughter of mine had to work. I provided for you. You had everything you needed. You didn't have to go out to earn money.

**THELMA'S annoyed, she lets out a shout of exasperation and throws the newspaper at her father. She sits and begins reading her own magazine, turning over the pages noisily.**

**A pause.**

HENRY: Anyway....putting the past aside for one moment...what was it you wanted to talk to me about my flower?



THELMA: Never mind.

HENRY: Please yourself.

**HENRY opens the paper but he's not fooling anyone, especially his daughter. He cannot see. Squinting and opening one eye at a time he attempts to read the upside-down newspaper.**

**A moment or two of fruitless focusing on the small print serves only to make him annoyed and frustrated. He can't see ...so he pretends...**

HENRY: **(Ranting)** *I don't know what the world's coming to. (Slams the paper down in false indignation). Confusion and indecision abound. People run around like headless chickens, rudderless, with no direction. Left, or right? Up or down? In or out? Backwards or forwards. No one seems to know or care. Wimps...that's what they are Thelma. The world is full of wimps. (Pause)* You know what they need? Thelma are you listening? I said you know what they need.

THELMA: **(Sighs. Without looking up from her magazine... she's heard it all before)** Leadership daddy?

HENRY: I'll tell you what they need. Leadersh-are you taking the mickey out of your old dad Thelma? Are you? Because if you are Thelma you are not too big or too old to be punished. Are you listening to me my girl?

THELMA: No daddy I'm not.

HENRY: **(Angry)** *Right. Right that's it. You can go to your room. Now. Right this minute.*

**A pause.**

**Thelma looks over the top of her magazine, staring coldly at her father. She sighs deeply before resuming reading.**

**A pause. HENRY continues...**

HENRY: Real leadership that's what they need. Someone to tell them what to believe in, what to stand up for. I'll tell you it's not like it was in my day. You knew where you were in my day. In my day you stood up for two things. The National Anthem and a lady entering the room. Nobody believes in anything anymore that's the trouble. A man was a man in my day. If you wanted something that badly...you fought for it. You didn't give up at the first sign of trouble. The one thing you did not do...you didn't turn your back and walk away. Perish the thought.

THELMA: **(Without lowering her magazine)** Really daddy?

HENRY: Wimps...and wet behind the ear's liberals... that's the problem. No calibre. No backbone. White feathers all round thank you very much.

THELMA: **(Sighing, she lays her magazine to one side)** What exactly are you reading Daddy?

HENRY: Er... **(picking up the upside-down paper and thinking quickly makes something up)** Troop movements.

THELMA: Troop movements.

HENRY: Troop movements.

THELMA: I've never known you to be so concerned about the whereabouts of our troops before.

HENRY: That's probably because you haven't been listening to your old dad. Troop movements is and always has been a major concern of mine.

THELMA: Where are they going that's upset you so?

HENRY: Who?

THELMA: **(Sighs)** The troops daddy, the troops. Where are they moving too that got you so upset?

HENRY: They're not. They're not going anywhere...that's my point, they're coming back.

THELMA: Coming back?

HENRY: That's what I said. Coming back. Back to Blighty. Back with their tails between their legs. Back because some lily-livered politician has thrown in the towel, stuck his head up his arse and shouted, 'we *surrender*' before the first shot has been fired. I'll tell you Thelma, it's a disgrace, a bloody disgrace.

THELMA: I'm confused daddy. These troops. Back from where exactly? Where have these troops that you're so obviously concerned about come back from?

HENRY: Er... **(thinking quickly)** the Balkans...yes... Back from the Balkans.

THELMA: **(Suspicious)** The Balkans? Let me think...the Balkans is an area of south eastern Europe situated at a major crossroads between mainland Europe and the Near East.

HENRY: I know that.

THELMA: Interesting. Didn't know we had any troops in the Balkans. Read it to me daddy.

HENRY: What?

THELMA: I'm interested. Read it to me daddy.

HENRY: **(Floundering)** I wouldn't dream of wasting your precious time. Suffice to say...it's all wrong. They were there to fight...and fight they should have. I ask you...fancy bringing our boys back home before their natural bloodlust has been sated. It's criminal. They'll be some frustrated paratroopers on the streets of Aldershot tonight, believe me. You'd better stay in.

THELMA: We're a long way from Aldershot daddy.

HENRY: You can never be too careful Thelma. Better safe than sorry. There will be repercussions.

**A pause.**

**THELMA stares at her father with pity and shaking her head slowly.**

**The old man gets serious.**

HENRY: Mark my words Thelma...we are in great danger of going soft.

THELMA: **(Uninterested-back to her magazine)** Really?

HENRY: ...and believe me...the day that, that happens the insects will take over the world.

THELMA: **(Surprised-lowers her magazine)** I beg your pardon daddy? For one moment there I thought you said the insects would be taking over the world.

HENRY: It's just a matter of time. They're waiting you know...just below the surface. Waiting for us to make the fatal mistake.

THELMA: The fatal mistake?

HENRY: And that's not all...

THELMA: It isn't?

HENRY: No Thelma no it is not. See...what you don't understand is that they're angry, very, very angry.

THELMA: I think I'm losing you daddy. Who? Who's angry?

HENRY: *The insects Thelma...the insects.* Please try and pay attention to what it is I'm saying. This is important.

THELMA: The insects are angry?

HENRY: No.

THELMA: But you said-

HENRY: (**Cutting in**) The insects are bloody seething. Think about it. Wouldn't you be? Seeing your species being trampled underfoot. Your brothers and sisters crushed beneath the boots of the human race day after day without so much as *a-oops I beg your pardon*. And what about the bomb?

THELMA: The bomb? The atomic bomb?

HENRY: The very same. I bet it's never even crossed your mind has it eh?

THELMA: That's not exactly true daddy. I've often thought about the bomb and it's dreadful and on-going circumstances...but...I must admit, never in terms of...insects.

HENRY: Are you honestly telling me that you have never wondered how many insects are vaporised every time we decide to test an atomic bomb? Eh?

THELMA: Er...no. I can't say that I have.

HENRY: You see. You see what I mean. No-one cares about the highly civilised society that's going on just a few inches below our feet. No one gives a fig. Just because you can't see them it doesn't mean they aren't there. Mark my words Thelma they will have their revenge.

**A Pause as THELMA stares at her father unbelievably.**

THELMA: And how do you know all this daddy? How do you know about the insects?

HENRY: Vibrations.

THELMA: Vibrations?

HENRY: Vibrations that travel through the earth, to my feet, up my spine, and to my brain. Simple. Mark my words Thelma...we're that far...**(holds up a thumb and finger)**, *that far*, from being wiped off the face of the earth. We've got to pull ourselves together before it's too late. We've got to be strong. We've got to stand our ground.

THELMA: I see. **(Pause)** Daddy?

HENRY: What my flower?

THELMA: If we've finished with the insects for the moment, may I tell you my news?

**A pause. HENRY stares hard at his daughter.**

THELMA: Daddy? Daddy are you OK?

HENRY: It's nature's way Thelma...that's what it is...nature's way. This is a world where only the strong survive. The law of the jungle is the rule we bow to. It's the way it is and ever more shall be so. Look at me Thelma. **(Shouts-THELMA jolts)** *Look at me*. That's why I'm still here. That's why I've come through all this unscathed. Me... I'm a natural survivor. I have the strength of a lion and the cunning of a fox. Like my old dad and his dad before him and his dad before him and his dad before-

THELMA: **(Cutting in and shouting)** *Daddy please.*

**HENRY breathes deeply out of breath...his eyes begin to close. He raises the newspaper to cover his face and he naps ...snoring loudly.**

THELMA: **(Angry)** *Oh Daddy.* **(To the sleeping HENRY)** Sometimes daddy...sometimes I just want to **(holds hands in strangling pattern)**

**THELMA jolts as HENRY suddenly awakes to continue his rant.**

HENRY: Man's inhumanity to man. That's the name of the game my lovely girl. First come first served. All these do-gooders...*they make me sick.*  
**(Sarcastically...mimicking a do-gooder)** *God gave us everything we'd ever need we should be grateful. We're custodians. We're looking after this world for those yet to come.* Huh. What a load of rubbish.  
**(Chuckles, lowers his newspaper and stares and points upwards to aim his rant at God personally. He stands while THELMA looks on incredulous).** *So, what are you going to do about it eh? Huh? What exactly have you got planned this time? You've done the stone tablets, the column of fire, the parting of the waters. Take a lot to impress us now. And please...not a plague. You overdone the plague thing. We've got special effects men who can do a better job than you. And to be honest I think you might have used up all your options So? Come on, surprise me. What next? (Pause)I'm waiting. Come on. (Pause) Huh...*  
 just as I thought. No-one at home.

**He flops back into his chair exhausted. A pause.**

**THELMA's worried**

THELMA: Who are you talking to daddy?

HENRY: **(Looks skyward...shouting again)** *Well...let me tell you something matey. I don't care anymore...you missed your chance. When I really needed you, you didn't show, and it's too late now. I'm not interested anymore. I don't need you and anyway, I don't like your terms.*

THELMA: Daddy please. I think that's, enough don't you?

HENRY: What...frightened he might strike me down? I'd like to see him try.  
**(Chuckles, raises his upside-down paper back to the reading position)** Look at it. Doom and gloom everywhere you look. **(He shouts like an army Sergeant)** *Keep it up lads...keep it up. Shoot the guns drop the bombs.*

**THELMA stands and begins collecting the cups. She places them on the tray and EXITS leaving her father to his rant.**

HENRY: *Don't stop now or we'll all be out of bloody work. Wouldn't want that would we eh? Got to have something to keep idle hands busy, haven't we? Stop the wars and what would happen to the man who carves the wooden legs, moulds the glass eyes...sharpens the surgeon's knives? What about the workers eh? (Voice fades as he drifts into sleep)*  
*What about the bloody workers.*

**HENRY suddenly snores loudly.**

**THELMA ENTERS as he begins to talk in his sleep.**

HENRY: *Come to daddy Thelma come to daddy. That's the ticket Thelma, that's the ticket. Look she's walking everyone...she's walking.*

**THELMA watches her father twitch and shudder.**

HENRY: *Max... listen to me. If you want to keep your other thumb, I suggest you stop crying like a baby and tell me where you've hidden the loot. I'm gonna count to ten and... and...(he sleeps and snores).*

THELMA: **(Softly. Kneeling close to her sleeping uncomprehending father)**  
Maybe, maybe daddy things wouldn't be so bad if you went out now and again. Got some fresh air. Maybe, if you took a walk with me? You haven't been outside for years.

THELMA: You've been stuck in the house for too long daddy. It's not natural. It wouldn't hurt...a walk Probably do you the world of good. Brighten you up a bit. Come down the pub with me and maybe the world wouldn't look so...grey.

**HENRY is suddenly awake...he responds suddenly causing THELMA to jolt back.**

HENRY: It's not grey my love. It's blood red that's what it is...blood red. And anyway...they'd find me Thelma...you know they would. If I stuck my head outside the door...they'd find me.

THELMA: No-one will find you daddy.



HENRY: Some people have long memories Thelma. I don't forget...so why should they?

THELMA: Oh daddy...please (**looks at her father hopelessly then cuddles him**).

HENRY: Read to me Thelma? Please? I can't see anymore.

THELMA: Give it here. Pass me the paper.

**HENRY'S like a small boy who's found his favourite toy. He hands the paper across to his daughter and sits back in his chair expectantly.**

**Much to the old man's annoyance THELMA sits and seems to be taking her time in sorting out the crumpled newspaper.**

THELMA: I don't know why you have to be so messy Daddy.

HENRY: Come on, come on. Hurry, hurry.

THELMA: Calm down daddy the print's not going to evaporate.

**THELMA fiddles with the paper until it's neat and tidy.**

THELMA: Now...where shall we start?

HENRY: You know what I like.

THELMA: (**Sighs**)OK. Let me see. Mmmm. We've got the public executions in Saudi Arabia or a chain saw massacre in the United States of America?  
(**Pause**) No?

**HENRY nods his head in disapproval.**

THELMA: Ok...let's see...we got a suicide bombing in Kabul or -

HENRY: (**Cutting in**) No. Nothing new there.

THELMA: OK. Ummm. Ah...what about...a vivid description of the wars in Central Africa or the dreadful purges taking place in the more hidden corners of Tibet. Or...ah. Headline.

- THELMA: *Police attack wrong protesters. Mmm?*
- HENRY: **(Excitedly)** *That's the one, that's the one. Close to home that's what I like. None of that foreign rubbish.*
- THELMA: Right. **(Deep breath and reading aloud)** 'Police in London tazer wrong crowd of protesters injuring seventeen. Three protesters from the 'become a vegetarian today' march, remain in hospital one with a suspected heart attack'.
- HENRY: Excellent...excellent.
- THELMA: *Chief of Police Rodney Ironside...said...-*
- HENRY: **(Cutting in)** *Rodders Ironside...bloody hell knew him when he was on the beat.*
- THELMA: Yes, thank you daddy...would you like me to continue?
- HENRY: Sorry my love.
- THELMA: *'Chief of Police Rodney Ironside...said a mistake had been made confusing the vegetarian march with the many thousand strong anti-government protest that was taking place on the same day. He offered his sincere apologies saying that 'it was a mistake easily made considering the noise and confusion'.*
- HENRY: **(Chuckles)** Oh dear. Whatever next?
- THELMA lowers the newspaper and glares at her father disapprovingly.**
- THELMA: I don't think it's meant to be funny daddy.
- HENRY: Sorry. Onward.
- THELMA: **(Sighs and raises the newspaper again. She reads)** *'From your correspondent.*

THELMA: *As screaming sirens mingled with the cries of the wounded, angry crowds of vegetarians turned on the police and began ransacking nearby buildings, causing widespread fear and damage. A government spokesman said later that there were concerns for three policemen who had gone missing. At a hastily convened roadside press conference a representative for the Vegetarian marchers said the government's fears were misplaced as-* ‘

HENRY: **(Cutting in)** Any pictures?

THELMA: No.

HENRY: Blast. A story like that should be illustrated. A great mistake not to use the photographic image. If I can't see the print, then I at least want to see the blood.

THELMA: **(Glaring at her father...she continues)** *'A representative for the Vegetarian marchers said the government's fears were misplaced as three policemen had laid down their weapons earlier on in the day and joined the ranks of the non-meat eaters'.*

HENRY: God...I hate happy endings. Move on move on. Next.

THELMA: Let me see. Ah. You'll like this. **(Reads quickly)** *'The centre of New York city was closed down yesterday afternoon when a concrete Eagle said to weigh in the region of five tons, fell from a plinth secured on the roof of the 'Hope & Charity' building'.*

HENRY: **(Falsely)** Oh dear. Anyone hurt?

THELMA: Don't be so impatient daddy. *'The popular Hope & Charity building was used regularly to house many of New York's homeless and had recently undergone a total refit ready for its reopening at the weekend. New York's Chief of Police Reggie Mitchell said the disaster had arisen because of a combination of unusually high winds and a faulty mooring bolt'.*

THELMA: *'Referring to the nine persons known to have lost their lives in the freak accident, Police Chief Mitchell said... 'No-one was to blame...it was an act of God. It was just one of those things.*

HENRY: **(Pointing skyward)** You again.

THELMA: *'Police Chief Mitchell said that the names of the deceased would be withheld until the families of the dead were located and informed. A later report revealed that the majority of those killed belonged to the Convent of St Mary Magdalene, on one of their frequent trips into the city to distribute food and clothing to the poor and needy'.*

HENRY: Ha! Funny old world. One minute you're walking along minding your own business...the next you're crushed underneath a bleeding great concrete bird of prey. I don't know...makes no sense if you ask me. And nuns you say? Now there's a thing. You would have thought that a higher authority would have had his eye on them. **(Looks upwards accusingly)** Kept 'em safe. Watched over them. Ah well. Seems to me that-

THELMA: **(Cutting in)** Daddy...what's the point in me reading to you if you will insist on interrupting me every five minutes.

HENRY: Forgive me Thelma. I was merely pondering on the terrible state we find ourselves in and reflecting on the fact that there appears no... what I would call, natural justice.

HENRY: Doesn't matter who you are...or how much money you have...or even what you believe in. When it's your time...well...it's your time. **(Gazing skyward...to God)** Oh...I'd love to get my hands on the rules of this crazy game you're playing. I'd make a bleeding fortune.

THELMA: Right...I think that's enough for now. I don't know who you think you are talking to but it's too spooky for me **(Slams the newspaper down onto her lap).**

HENRY:                   Thelma my love...I'm sorry. You know what I'm like. I get carried away. I get over excited. Please... please continue.

**HENRY jolts as he's interrupted by a sudden and loud knocking at the door.**

**THELMA stands alarmed, her hand to her mouth.**

THELMA:                *(To herself) Not yet. It's too early.*

HENRY:                   Too early what are you talking about?

THELMA:                Nothing daddy. Who could it be?

HENRY:                   *Oh God. It's them. They've found me. Thelma. they've found me. Revenge...revenge. They've come to take their revenge.*

THELMA:                Calm down daddy and don't be silly. It's probably a salesman or something?

HENRY:                   No-one ever calls here you know that. No-one. It's them. I'm done for.  
*(Shouts) Dead man walking...dead man walking.*

**A pause...another knock...louder this time.**

HENRY:                   It's time I can feel it in my bones...but I want you to know Thelma that I have no regrets. I did what I had-

THELMA:                *(Cutting in)* Oh shut up Daddy.

**Another knock followed by a long silence during which HENRY and THELMA exchange fearful glances. The silence continues for a few seconds. HENRY smiles in relief.**

HENRY:                   Ah. Gone. Got fed up and went away.

THELMA:                Ssh.

HENRY: Kids probably. Knockout ginger. Used to play it me-self. Knock on the door. **(Raps on the table)** Wait. Then when they opened it...punch 'em in the gob. **(Laughs)**.

THELMA: Not the rules I remember daddy. Anyway, Knockout Ginger's a street game. We live in the country.

HENRY: Anyway, they've gone now. Right. **(Claps his hands)** Panic over. Phew...close call that.

**While THELMA looks puzzled, HENRY drops back into his chair.**

HENRY: Sit down girl...sit down. It's all right nothing to worry your pretty little head about. Just follow your old man's example. Cool as a cucum-

**A sudden knocking at the door interrupts HENRY mid-sentence. A clap of thunder shakes the house and HENRY and THELMA dart to opposite ends of the room as voice from behind the door shouts.**

VOICE: Anyone at home?

HENRY: No. Go away.

**Pause.**

VOICE: Ah Mister Salmon I presume...I've come to do your drains.

HENRY: **(To THELMA)** Drains? Did he say drains? Do we have drains Thelma?

THELMA: Of course, we have drains daddy.

VOICE: It's the council. Well, not all of 'em of course **(laughs)** just me, their representative. Er...Charlie...um Bleach's the name. Drain cleaner extraordinaire.

**THELMA frowns and mumbles.**

THELMA: **(Quietly)** Idiot.

VOICE: Mister Salmon...Your drains are down for doing. They are due... and I've come to do 'em. I am your designated drain cleaner.

HENRY: Not my drains pal. My drains is OK. Nothing wrong with my drains. And what time do you call this?

VOICE: Er...2.30 in the afternoon Mister Salmon. A reasonable time for a drain-cleaning call I believe. I have my photographic identification to present if you have any doubts, any suspicions.

HENRY: What do you mean...suspicions? Why should I have suspicions?

VOICE: Just saying. Look Mister Salmon if I'm to do my job properly then I do need your co-operation. Open up please.

HENRY: Go away.

VOICE: I can't go away Mister Salmon. I have a job to do. I am contracted to do your drains and your drains I shall do.

HENRY: If you don't go away, I will report you to your superiors.

VOICE: *That may be all well and good Mister Salmon, but they will only send someone else. Drains is drains and they have to be done. (Clears throat and sings)*  
*Once a year we never fail,*  
*out in wind and rain and hail.*  
*Clearing leaves and shovelling shit*  
*we like to do our little bit.*  
*Moving muck shifting remains...*  
*We're the men who do your drains.*

**THELMA nods her head in disbelief.**

HENRY: What the hell was that supposed to be? If you think you can sway me with a tune or charm me with a ditty then you are very much mistaken.

VOICE: Oh, do come on Mister Salmon. Play the game.

HENRY: *Go away. I shan't tell you again.*

VOICE: Right. You've had your chance Mister Salmon. Now it's my turn. I'm going to have to turn ugly. If I'm not mistaken it's Thelma's bike out here leaning against the wall. **(Menacing pause)** Open the door or I'll let the tyres down.

HENRY: **(To THELMA shocked)** He knows your name. **(To the VOICE)** You wouldn't dare.

VOICE: All right, if that's the way you want it. Don't say I didn't warn you.

**A pause. As we hear the sound of air leaving a tyre, we note that HENRY has developed a pronounced tremble.**

THELMA: **(Alarmed)**Daddy...daddy are you all right?

HENRY: It's the red mist Thelma...it's...it's descending...a man can only take so much.

**HENRY moves from his position towards the chest of drawers. He opens a drawer produces a small box, from which he brings out a vicious-looking knife. He stomps back towards the door.**

THELMA: **(Shouting)***Daddy...daddy what are you doing...daddy put that thing away immediately.*

**HENRY pulls open the door violently...to reveal a meek, nervous looking man wearing glasses (Charlie Bleach/VERNON). Spotting the knife, he screams and holds up his hands in a pathetic effort to protect himself from HENRY'S attack.**

**HENRY raises the knife ready to strike and THELMA screams...**

THELMA: **(Screams)***Daddy...no.*

**She wraps herself around VERNON'S body to protect him, causing HENRY to pause mid-stab.**



**LIGHTS DOWN. END ACT I.**

**LIGHTS UP. ACT II.**

**(Reprise END OF ACT I).**

**HENRY pulls open the door violently...to reveal a meek, nervous looking man wearing glasses (Charlie Bleach/VERNON) who screams and holds up his hands in a pathetic effort to protect himself from HENRY'S attack.**

**HENRY raises the knife ready to strike. THELMA screams...**

THELMA:                   **(Screams)***Daddy...no.*

**She wraps herself around VERNON'S body to protect him causing HENRY to pause mid-stab.**

HENRY:                   **(To THELMA shouting)** *Thelma. What the hell do you think you're doing?*

THELMA:                   **(Panicking)** *There's been a mistake. He's not a council worker daddy...he's Vernon...a friend of mine. Don't you dare hurt him. (To VERNON, screaming) What the hell was that all about Vern? Drains? Charlie Bleach? Is that the best you can do?*

VERNON:                   After what you were saying about how difficult it would be to get the old man to open the door, I thought I'd better come up with a plan.

THELMA:                   And that was your plan was it...drains?

HENRY:                   **(Shocked)** Am I to believe that you know this council worker Thelma?

THELMA:                   Please daddy let me handle this. **(To VERNON)** I told you to wait for me in the pub.

THELMA:                   I told you we would have to do this together or not at all. I told you-

VERNON:           **(Cutting in)** I was getting worried about you. I thought I'd become pro-active.

THELMA:           Pro-active? You nearly got yourself killed. **(Deep breath)** Well you're here now. You'd better come in.

**Much to HENRY'S horror, VERNON steps over the threshold. He nods at HENRY.**

VERNON:           Mister Salmon.

HENRY:           **(Despairing)** You know what you've done Thelma? You have handed me over to those that would wish me harm. I am undone. Betrayed...betrayed by my own flesh and blood...oh woe is me...woe...woe.

VERNON:           **(Puzzled)** What's he talking about Thelma?

THELMA:           Take no notice Vernon.

**HENRY drops to his knees and bows his head.**

HENRY:           Do your worst. I have been preparing for this moment for a long time oh harbinger of doom. I am ready. **(Lowers his head – ready for his execution).** I'm ready to pay for my sins.

**VERNON is confused.**

THELMA:           **(To VERNON)** It's all right. **(To HENRY)** Get up daddy please. You look very silly down there. Please. Get up. **(Deep sigh)** This man is not your enemy...he is not here to punish you. This man is Vernon. Vernon is my friend. More than that. **(Pause)** Vernon is...Vernon is my lover.

**A shocked pause all round.**

**HENRY is on his feet in a flash. He stands open-mouthed in silence.**

THELMA: For God's sake say something daddy. You look like a fish.

**HENRY (still open-mouthed) looks at THELMA, then at VERNON, then back to THELMA, then to VERNON.**

HENRY: You...you...you defiled my daughter? **(Raises his knife).**

VERNON: Er...

THELMA: Give me the knife daddy. *Now.* **(Holds out her hand)** Nobody defiled me daddy. Vernon has been very patient. Indeed, and if you must know, it was Vernon who suggested I save myself until after we were married.

HENRY: Married? **(Shouts)** *Married?*

THELMA: **(Sighs)** It was going to happen one day. Admittedly it took a little longer than I would have hoped but I put that down to us living in such isolation. *Now.* The knife daddy please.

HENRY: **(Beside himself with rage. To VERNON)** If I find you are lying to me and have laid hands upon my daughter, I will rip your balls off.

**VERNON gulps loudly.**

THELMA: **(Firmly)** *Knife daddy. Now please.* **(Holds out her hand).**

**HENRY glares at VERNON.**

THELMA: **(Sternly)** If you do not give me the knife daddy we shall leave. And if I have to walk through that door, I promise you, you will never see me again. **(pause)** Knife. **(Holds out her hand).**

**A pause...HENRY reluctantly hands over the knife.**

**THELMA goes to the chest of drawers replaces the knife in the box puts it in the drawer and slides it shut.**

THELMA: Right. That's better. Now daddy. I will admit that this is not how I planned it... **(a hard gaze in VERNON'S direction) ...**

VERNON: I'm sorry my love.

THELMA: ...but we are where we are, and it is what it is. So. You deserve an explanation. But first I would like us all to sit down and relax. **(A pause) Everyone...(firmly)...sit.**

**VERNON and HENRY sit in unison.**

THELMA: Good. Right daddy. I want no interruptions of any kind. No shouting, no threats of violence. Nothing. Do I make myself clear?

HENRY: I-

THELMA: **(Cutting in)** *Do I make myself clear daddy?*

HENRY: **(Sheepishly)** Yes.

THELMA: Good. Right. Daddy. This as I have already explained is Vernon. Vernon is here with purpose.

**THELMA looks at VERNON for a reaction...nothing.**

THELMA: Vernon?

VERNON: Yes?

THELMA: Your purpose? Tell daddy your purpose.

VERNON: Purpose? Oh yes.... purpose. Er...Mister Salmon... **(clearing his throat)** Mister Salmon...I er...I would...um...I...er

THELMA: **(Cutting in)** *For God's sake Vernon.* Daddy. Vernon wants to ask you for my hand in marriage.

**Shocked silence...until HENRY lets out a highly distressed and blood curdling moan which makes VERNON and THELMA step back in shock and alarm...**

HENRY: *Noooooooooooooo.*

**A pause as everyone looks shocked.**

HENRY: *Noooooooooooooo.*

**A pause.**

THELMA: You disapprove?

HENRY: You can't leave me Thelma...not now...not in this the twilight of my life. I couldn't stand the other love of my life leaving me...

THELMA: **(Cutting in-to VERNON)** Mother walked out on him when I was a younger. I was very young. I don't remember.

HENRY: **(Continues)** I'm an old man Thelma and I am in decline. An old man who will soon become infirm. And... I have no-one else but you my sweet. No-one to feed me. To dress me. To wash me. To guide me. One trip. One fall and I'd be finished. Brown bread.

THELMA: I have no idea what you're talking about daddy. You are as far as I can see as fit as a fiddle. And if misfortune were to overtake you in the health department, they can do wonderful things now to rebuild you.

HENRY: Not for me the replacement hip, the heart bypass or pacemaker. There is only one Henry Salmon Thelma. I refuse to be repaired like some rusty old Morris Minor. When it is my time...I shall know and go with grace. And I shall go knowing that I tried my best, that I –

THELMA: **(Cutting in)** Where exactly is this leading us daddy.

HENRY: I need you my girl. Daddy needs his Thelma. The thought of being without my Thel-

THELMA: **(Cutting in)** Daddy. When we are married daddy...we want you to live with us. We've discussed it and we are agreed.

**A pause...realisation sets in... HENRY smiles.**

HENRY: Oh, Thelma my love you have made your daddy so very, very, happy.

**HENRY moves to the radiogram, flicks a switch and Chubby Checker blasts forth.**

**HENRY twists...while VERNON looks on aghast.**

THELMA: **(Shouting above the din to VERNON)** He's come around...told you he would eventually.

**VERNON looks on, agog at HENRY'S dancing.**

HENRY: **(Shouting above the music to VERNON)** *If you're going to become a member of the Salmon family you'd better learn to dance my boy...come on...what's the matter with you...come on...let's twist again.*

**After a moment's hesitation and a silent appeal to THELMA VERNON begins to reluctantly twist (awkwardly).**

**THELMA smiles.**

THELMA:                   **(Loudly. To the ‘boys’)** *I think this calls for a little more than a dance off don’t you. We need to celebrate properly...I shall go for champagne.*

**A happy THELMA does a little ‘twist’ herself, smiles, waves then EXITS via the front door.**

**VERNON cannot match the old man’s pace. He waves his hands in apology and collapses into an armchair.**

**HENRY nods his head in disapproval and turns of the music...**

HENRY:                   That’s the trouble with young people today, no stamina, disgusting...absolutely disgusting.

**HENRY flops into the chair opposite VERNON and eyes him suspiciously.**

**A pause.**

HENRY:                   You are a very lucky boy.

VERNON:                 Pardon me Mister Salmon?

HENRY:                   Understand this. My daughter is everything to me. A different time...a different place and I would have presented you with your ears in a velvet lined box. And... I would have got great pleasure from it believe me boy...believe me.

**VERNON gulps.**

VERNON:                 **(Nervously)**Oh I do believe you Mister Salmon. Your reputation goes before you.

HENRY:                   Thelma is not aware but there have been other candidates for her affection.



HENRY: Let's just say that there were many who were unsuccessful in their romantic endeavours towards my daughter. Very unsuccessful – *what did you say?*

VERNON: Pardon me?

HENRY: Something about my reputation going before me?

VERNON: Oh. Yes. That. Your reputation...it does. It goes before you.

HENRY: **(Excited)** *What do you mean? Goes before me. You know of me? You've heard of me? (Smiles) I'm...I'm not forgotten?*

VERNON: Forgotten? Of course not, Mister Salmon. Any writer who deems himself worthy of the title investigative journalist knows about Henry Salmon. 60's legend and what have you.

HENRY: **(To himself)** 60's legend. Like it. **(To VERNON)** Investigative what?

VERNON: Journalist. I'm a journalist...and you're Henry Salmon. *The* Henry Salmon. Otherwise known as 'Henry the Pig'. Hard Henry. Henry 'no mercy' Salmon. Henry the Fish.

HENRY: I never liked that.

VERNON: Pig or Fish?

HENRY: Fish. An obvious play on my surname Salmon. Riles me. Makes me angry. Lazy...not a proper nickname...now 'hard Henry' that's different. Got a rhythm to it. Means something. 'Fish'...nah that's just insulting.

VERNON: Sorry.

- HENRY: No matter. So? What's this all about then my boy? I'm beginning to suspect an ulterior motive as to your presence in my humble abode. Am I right?
- VERNON: The truth then?
- HENRY: Nothing but. One deviation from the path of righteousness and you will pay dearly, I can promise you that.
- VERNON: **(Gulps)** Understood.
- HENRY: And. Correct me if I'm wrong but why do I get the feeling that my darling daughter is a mere pawn in this a complicated and underhand game of chess that you're playing. Answer me this young feller-me-lad...are you about to break her heart?
- VERNON: **(Trembling)** Er...
- HENRY: I suggest you begin your explanation sooner rather than later. Speak now or forever hold your peace.
- VERNON gulps loudly.**
- VERNON: I do have a confession along the lines that you are suggesting Mister Salmon.
- HENRY: Mmmm. Continue...carefully.
- VERNON: **(Nervously)** I am not who I appear to be.
- HENRY: None of us are my friend. Nothing to be ashamed of in that department. I myself am guilty of sporting a façade of sorts.
- VERNON: I...I...I am in fact a journalist.

HENRY: Oh dear.

VERNON: I am employed by the Daily Trumpet-

HENRY: **(Cutting in - shouting)** *Fucking hell. The Daily Trumpet. It's a fucking rag. I won't have that shit in my house. The Daily Trumpet for God's sake. I ought to-*

VERNON: **(Cutting in quickly)** I am employed by the Daily Trumpet on a *freelance basis* and...

### **Pause**

HENRY: Carry on.

VERNON: And am authorised by the very same to offer you the sum of 20,000 pounds for your life story with the promise that nothing will be published until you are... **(Closes eyes in fear and trepidation)** *...dead.*

### **A pause. HENRY glowers...**

HENRY: **(Shouts)** *20,000 quid? What the hell do you think I am? A numpty? A six fingered in-bred from the Home Counties? 20,000 quid? Chicken-fucking-feed.*

VERNON: 40,000.

HENRY: 60.

VERNON: Done.

HENRY: Now.

VERNON: What?

HENRY: Make a phone call. I accept but I want cash. 60 grand. And I want it now or the deal's off.

VERNON: But-

HENRY: Do it. I presume you have a phone everybody does these days.

**VERNON produces a phone...pushes a few buttons...pauses...**

VERNON: **(Into phone)** Hello. It's me. **(Pause)**. Yes...I'm still breathing...very funny. Tell them upstairs that Mister Salmon has accepted our offer. **(Pause)** 60,000 pounds. Yes, that's right 60. Here's the thing...he wants it now. Cash. Yes cash. Now or the deals off.

**Looks at HENRY and smiles. HENRY nods in agreement.**

VERNON: **(Relieved)** Right. Good. **(To HENRY)** Be here tomorrow morning...OK? **(HENRY nods in agreement)**. OK. Mister Salmon is in agreement. Tomorrow morning. Bye. **(Puts Phone in pocket. (To HENRY) Done.**

HENRY: **(Smiling)** Luvverly jubbly. Right. **(Rubbing hands together)** When would you like to start?

VERNON: Er...

HENRY: Come on man...don't shilly-shally. Time is of the essence. What do you want to know? Got your note book? Let's make a start. No time like the present. Got a lot to tell.

VERNON: I got this. **(Pulls out a small recording device)**

HENRY: Ah the wonders of technology. Such a small device for such a big story...right then... where shall we start?

VERNON: Um...well...the er...Soho years? Can we start there?

HENRY: Your wish is my command.

**LIGHTS DOWN...**

**END OF SCENE...MUSIC (Gangster's paradise – Coolio).**

**LIGHTS UP.**

**HENRY and VERNON sit facing each other between them the tools of HENRY'S brutal trade.**

**Cleavers, knives, saws, nooses, handcuffs etc, etc.**

**HENRY is finishing off a bloody tale...while VERNON listens intently.**

HENRY: ...so I said to Bernie...Bernie...Bernie my old friend I know you're a bit out of it at the moment and that's to be understood considering what you've just been through but just in case you weren't aware...I'll repeat myself...I said, Bernie you got one finger left on your right hand. Now, if you don't give me the information that I want, I will take that finger and start on your other hand. So... what's it to be? One more name or one more finger? One more name and we're home and dry... or...I relieve the family of the responsibility of buying you gloves this Christmas? Your choice? **(To VERNON)** You know what he said...you know what Bernie the bastard said eh? And considering his predicament I shall for ever hold him in high esteem for his reply...

**Pause. VERNON waits, mouth open in expectation...**

VERNON: What did he say tell me?

HENRY: He said...he said, and you won't believe this he said.... **(Laughs)** *'A scarf will do me fine thank you very much you bastard'*. I mean what could I do eh? I mean the cheek of the man. I had to let him go after that didn't I? *'A scarf will do me fine thank you very much you bastard'* **(laughs)**. *Respect*. I had all I needed anyway. No real point going to work on his other hand much as I wanted to-

**ENTER THELMA clutching a bottle of Champagne and smiling.**

HENRY: Thelma my darling there you are. I was getting worried about you. Me and Vernon have been reminiscing.

**Her smile soon fades as she takes in the implements of torture littering her front room carpet.**

THELMA: Daddy...what's going on here? Vernon...Vernon what's happening? Why have you got all this horrible stuff out daddy? You haven't had this stuff out in years. Vernon speak to me.

HENRY: Not his fault my love. Me and Vernon were just chewing the cud. Talking about the past...that sort of thing.

THELMA: The past?

HENRY: Oh yes. Bye the way. Seems your so-called boyfriend here is not what he appears to be – like...not your boyfriend.

**VERNON sits open-mouthed in shock at HENRY'S revelation.**

HENRY: And another thing...it's not about you...it's about me.

VERNON: *Henry...? (Looks at THELMA with a weak smile and laugh) Mister Salmon what are you doing?*

HENRY: Well she's going to have to find out sooner or later that you're a liar and a fraud ain't she? And who better to break the news than her old daddy eh?

VERNON: But...-

HENRY: Seems Vernon your lover boy here is nothing of the sort my sweet. He's a newspaper reporter who has just paid *us* 60 grand for *my* story. In other words, the slimy bastard used you to get to me. Still there you go...takes all sorts don't it? Anyway, I told you I was remembered, didn't I? He's heard of me...enough to pay me all that money. See? You was wrong. **(Pointing at himself)** Henry Salmon...legend.

THELMA: **(Distressed)** *Oh my God...Vernon...how could you?*

**THELMA EXITS into the unseen kitchen area a highly distressed state.**

**HENRY looks at VERNON and shakes his head.**

HENRY: Oh, dear oh dear...now you've gone and done it.

**A pause...suddenly a scream from offstage.**

HENRY: **(To VERNON)** She is not a happy bunny. If I was you, I'd make a run for it while you – whoops too late...

**ENTER THELMA wielding a cricket bat.**

**A fearful VERNON attempts shielding himself and runs behind his armchair but to no avail.**

**THELMA, slowly and methodically beats him to death while an interested HENRY looks on.**

HENRY: Not so hard with the bat dear...that's got the England team's signatures on it from 1960.

HENRY: West Indian tour, May, Barrington, Cowdrey. Happy days. **(Grimaces)**  
Gently does it dear... worth a bit of cash that. Modify your grip...

**THELMA beats down upon the now prone and very still VERNON (we see his feet sticking out from behind the chair).**

THELMA: **(To the prone VERNON)** *You bastard. (Beating in time) How. Could. You. Do. That. To. Me.*

HENRY: Oooo. I think that might be enough for now my love. I think you've achieved your goal.

**Breathing heavily, THELMA stops. She bursts into tears again.**

**HENRY stands to embrace her.**

HENRY: All done my love? Daddy's here. I want you to know that I couldn't care less about the money, just to know that I am not forgotten. That's quite enough for me.

**He takes the bloodied bat from her and checks to see if the signatures are still intact.**

HENRY: Barrington, May....yup everything seems OK. Nothing that a damp rag won't remove. **(To THELMA)** Well my girl...I have to say that I am impressed. You my dear are a chip off the old block. You have style, elegance and above all, balance. Out of ten I would have to give you nine...I've taken a point off for hysteria but...considering that this is your first time... it goes without saying that your daddy is impressed and more than a little proud.

**HENRY embraces his daughter.**

HENRY: I'll tell you what. Why don't you get daddy's tying up rope from under the sink and that large sheet of polythene that's all rolled up neatly in the broom cupboard.



HENRY: We'll get the place cleaned up and in the morning, we'll drag young Vernon here out into the garden and put him next to your mother eh? What d'you think?

THELMA: What?

HENRY: What my love?

THELMA: You said...we'd put him next to mother?

HENRY: I did? Slip of the tongue my dear. Anyway...in the morning we'll roll him up nice and tight, dig a hole and slip him in all cosy like. We should really do it now for hygienic reasons but to be honest I think we're both a bit knackered for any guerrilla gardening, so we'll do what has to be done in the early hours. OK with you?

THELMA: **(Dazed and confused)** OK.

HENRY: In the meantime, I think you should go in the kitchen get that bottle of champagne, pour out a couple of glasses so we can celebrate the revelation that my lovely daughter Thelma has inherited her daddy's skill-set...what say you Thelma? Drinkies with daddy? Eh? Here girl, wipe away your tears.

**HENRY pulls out his off-white handkerchief from a pocket and proceeds to wipe away Thelma's tears.**

**THELMA smiles sniffs, smiles and EXITS to the unseen kitchen.**

HENRY: That's my girl...that's my girl. **(He moves to survey the body...to dead VERNON)**. Well, well, well. That surprised the both of us didn't it.

**We hear a Champagne cork pop.**

**HENRY sits in his chair puts on a pair of cello-taped glasses.**

He begins to read the paper.

**ENTER THELMA holding two glasses of Champagne. She hands her father a glass and sits in her armchair with her glass in hand. She trembles.**

HENRY: This for me is like one of those debutante things they used to do when I was a young man. Posh people would celebrate their daughters coming of age with a big do. And that's what my little Thelma has done. She's come of age. Today is the day she has shown her daddy what she's made of. And her daddy is well pleased because it's the same stuff he's made of. Very well pleased indeed. Here's to you my sweet...cheers.

THELMA: Cheers daddy.

**HENRY sips his champagne...THELMA doesn't.**

HENRY: Aah. Very nice...very nice indeed. **(licking his lips)** I am amused by its audacity.... you not drinking my love?

THELMA: No daddy...I'm still feeling a little shook up.

HENRY: It will pass my love...it will pass. First time is always the worst. You know what I'm thinking.

THELMA: No what daddy?

HENRY: **(Coughs)** I think it's time we took a **(coughs again)** a holiday what do you think? Bahamas? Maybe...Switzerland? **(Coughs again)** A cruise? You fancy a cruise Thelma? I think it's time I dug up some treasure I've had hidden away for too many years...**(coughs loudly and consistently)** Oh dear...got a bit of a frog in my throat...**(Suddenly a violent cough that causes him to drop his glass)**. Blimey...I'm feeling a bit iffy.

HENRY: I hope it's not this champagne...you didn't get the cheap stuff did you my baby?

**A coughing, choking HENRY looks at his daughter who smiles at him and places her still full glass on the table.**

**HENRY is finding it difficult to breath...he coughs continually.**

**He coughs into the handkerchief, examines it...shows it to THELMA.**

HENRY: Blimey...that's blood. *Thelma...Thelma...that is blood...is it not?*

**Looks up a THELMA who stares at him intently.**

HENRY: Thelma...why are you looking at me like that? **(The truth dawns).** *Thelma...Thelma what have you done? What have you done to your daddy Thelma? (Breathing with difficulty). What was in that champagne? Thelma? What have you done? Thelma? Thelma.... have you done your daddy in? Tell me? **(Shouts)** Thelma...have you poisoned your daddy?*

THELMA: Yes daddy. I have. Sorry.

HENRY: Was it...was it...the blue bottle in the cupboard under the sink or the yellow bottle in the shed...tell me girl? Quickly now.

**THELMA's intrigued...she watches his pain intently.**

THELMA: The yellow bottle from the shed.

HENRY: **(Coughing violently)** *Damn.* The blue bottle was the stuff you should have used. This could take a while. For God's sake Thelma how could you do this to me?

THELMA: *For God's sake?*

HENRY: Well you never know. **(Coughing violently)** Get me some water my love, would you? Might ease the pain a bit.

**THELMA stands her ground. She stares.**

HENRY: *Come on Thelma...have some pity on your old dad.*

THELMA: Pity? I thought you said I was a chip off the old block. You never had any pity for anyone. At least...at least I'm not enjoying this like you would. I was hoping it might be quicker.

HENRY: See this is what happens when you don't have the experience...too low a dosage and poor execution if you'll excuse the pun. Bloody hell this hurts...**(coughing)**.

THELMA: I'm sorry daddy. I didn't mean it to go on for so long.

HENRY: *Don't make it worse by apologising girl...what have I always told you...never apologise. You do what you do, and you don't look back. Never.*

THELMA: Yes daddy. I remember.

HENRY: Just watch....and learn.

THELMA: I am daddy. I am watching.

HENRY: You need to make sure you know...I'm an indestructible old bugger. I've survived worse than this. And if I do get over this I will come and get you. Daughter or not. You'll always be looking over your shoulder. Like me. Always wondering...

**THELMA EXITS...**

HENRY: *Oi where are you going? I haven't finished.*

**A moment, she returns with a suitcase.**

HENRY: You're leaving ain't ya? Do your old dad a favour eh? Don't leave yet Thelma...please. Either stay with me until the end or make sure and bash me with the cricket bat. Finish me off girl...make sure. Very important. You don't want me coming after you, do you? 'Because I would you know. If I survive this...I would have to have my revenge. Just like others want their revenge from me. You don't want to live like that...always waiting...never knowing what's around the corner... you don't want that. Make sure.

THELMA: I told you daddy. No-one is coming after you. It's all in your head. I'm off. Try to sleep. Close your eyes. I'm sure it'll all be over soon. I have to go. Goodbye daddy...goodbye.

**She leans over his convulsing body and kisses him gently on the cheek.**

**THELMA EXITS, shutting the front door gently behind her.**

HENRY: *(Shouting) Thelma...Thelma my love...daddy loves you...he does...daddy loves you very much.*

**LIGHTS DOWN.**

**end.**