
DRAMA

0411/11/T/EX

Paper 1

May/June 2016

COPY OF PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

2 hours 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the stimuli and on the extract from Stephen Poliakoff's play *Talk of the City* provided in this booklet.

This clean copy of the material is for you to use in your responses.



This document consists of **28** printed pages.

Stimulus 3

Photograph: *Port Authority (Mystery No. 12)*, by Mac Adams (1975)



EXTRACT**Taken from *Talk of the City* by Stephen Poliakoff**

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Stephen Poliakoff's play *Talk of the City* was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in 1998.

The play is set in 1937, just before the start of the Second World War. It depicts the early years of broadcasting at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). On a lighthearted note, it shows the way that performers and announcers used to dress formally, even though they could not be seen on radio. There are also some more serious underlying historical themes. These include the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany, the Spanish Civil War against fascism, and the constitutional crisis in Britain caused by the abdication of King Edward VIII. The play also hints at the reluctance of the BBC to report the mistreatment of Jews by the Nazis.

At that time, the BBC broadcast from its headquarters at Broadcasting House and also from Alexandra Palace (an exhibition centre), both in London.

The play is in two Acts, and the extract consists of a slightly shortened version of the first six scenes of Act 1.

Characters

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Robbie | a radio-show host in his mid-thirties |
| Dredge | a dancer in her early twenties |
| Daphne | a studio manager in her thirties |
| Mabs | a radio performer in his late fifties |
| Milly Dews | a singer and radio performer in her twenties |
| Clive | a broadcasting executive in his thirties |
| Honker (Harry Wallace) | a junior studio manager in his mid-twenties |
| Isabel | a researcher, a friend of Clive, in her thirties |
| Bernard | a Jewish actor from Germany, in his early twenties |
| Assistant | a trainee newsreader, in his twenties |
| Arnos (Arnold Grove) | Head of the Spoken Word at the BBC, aged about 50. |
| Dancing Girls | |

Act 1

The play opens in February 1937.

Scene 1

The Radio Show.

The back wall of the sound studio is flecked with Art Deco pieces that can shine at various stages in the play. The floor has a severely beautiful pattern on it, evocative and formal.

The bells. The Big Ben chimes before the news broadcast. We hear an educated voice, who starts to read the news. 5

VOICE-OVER: 'This is the National Programme. Copyright reserved.'
'Here is the news summary and sports bulletins. They are followed by 'Friday Night at Eight'. You will then hear something about an event in British air travel.' 10

The lights come up. The musicians come on and take their place followed by DREDGE – a young London woman in her early twenties – and two DANCING GIRLS. All three of them are in full costume. They stand waiting as other news items follow.

VOICE-OVER: 'Barcelona is reported to have been shelled by an unknown vessel today, very little damage was done and when the shore batteries opened fire the vessel went away.' 15

MABS enters, a man in his late fifties, large appearance with a soft, self-deprecating manner. He is holding a leather binder, and a small yellow suitcase. He stands waiting, taking his position at his microphone. The news continues. 20

VOICE-OVER: 'The insurgents claimed today to have captured various places near Malaga and to have taken prisoner some thousands of militiamen.'

ROBBIE enters. He is in his mid-thirties, dressed in full evening dress, his energetic appearance trapped in his immaculate radio clothes. He is also holding a leather folder. He stands with authority by the microphone. 25

ROBBIE: Turn down the news please ... [He turns to the musicians.] Gentlemen, I have a new signal, watch, please. [He does a hand signal like a conductor.] It is for a slow dark tempo ... I'll show it to you once more ... you too, Dredge ... I'm calling it the skimmer. [He grins at DREDGE in her costume.] You look glorious. 30

DREDGE: [Laughs] Do I? Pity nobody else can see it, isn't it! 35

ROBBIE: But I can. [He grins.] Isn't that enough?

The news continues, half heard. DAPHNE enters, in her thirties, sharp, rather strict appearance but with a hint of something more playful underneath.

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| ROBBIE: | Seen the new sign? | 40 |
| DAPHNE: | I certainly have ... in moderation <i>only</i> please. Now, [<i>Tapping his script</i>] the words of your Parisian interview with Milly are quite complicated, I hope you've studied them – careful of trips, and no deviation. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Smiles</i>] Deviation, forbidden! Absolutely. | 45 |
| DAPHNE: | [<i>Handing him a folded note</i>] But there is a note for you – since I know you love last-minute surprises. Thirty seconds everybody. | |
| | ROBBIE <i>is reading the note.</i> | |
| DAPHNE: | It's rather aggressive, and self-important, isn't it? | |
| ROBBIE: | It certainly is. [<i>Reading aloud</i>] 'I need to see you. Might be able to fit you in on Wednesday.' Who is he? I have never heard of him. | 50 |
| DAPHNE: | He's second or third down from Arnold Grove, Head of the Spoken Word. | |
| ROBBIE: | Oh, he's from 'TALKS'! Of course – explains the deadly tone. [<i>He looks up.</i>] Is he here, do you think? Tucked away somewhere up there? | 55 |
| | MILLY DEWS <i>comes running on to take her position, fragile, rather nervous manner, she stands near ROBBIE at the microphone.</i> | 60 |
| DAPHNE: | There you are, Milly. Fifteen seconds everybody. [<i>Glancing round</i>] Mabs, remember. | |
| MABS: | Yes, don't get my pages stuck together this time. My hands are nice and dry today. [<i>Places yellow suitcase at his feet</i>] | |
| DAPHNE: | And the suitcase is the wrong colour [<i>She smiles.</i>] I don't like 'wireless lies', you know that. [<i>As she moves off, to ROBBIE</i>] To the back of your mind now ... the note. | 65 |
| | <i>One of the big red lights on the set springs on. They are standing waiting, staring around and up, very respectful, well-behaved and formal, in their evening dress and costumes as the news swirls around them.</i> | 70 |
| MABS: | It seems to get longer and longer the news, these days. | |
| | <i>The other red light flicks on. ROBBIE begins to sing, the girls dance when ROBBIE makes signs, the whole atmosphere is of people well-practised, at home in their world.</i> | 75 |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Singing</i>] IT'S 'FRIDAY NIGHT AT EIGHT', AND HERE WE ARE AGAIN. | |
| MILLY: | [<i>Singing</i>] Here we are again. | |
| ROBBIE: | And these are some of the delights we have in store. | |
| | <i>The musicians play, the girls dance. As ROBBIE alters the tempo with hand signals, there is a sharp dramatic change.</i> | 80 |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Spoken</i>] We have of course Inspector Bonnington of Scotland Yard, with a new mystery to solve. [<i>Assuming upper-class, understated, throwaway voice</i>] So Sergeant Ostler, where are you dragging me off to today? | 85 |

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| MABS: | [As <i>Sergeant Ostler</i>] Well, sir, news has come in of a baffling murder ... in south London ... it's being called 'The Blue Suitcase Murder'. | |
| ROBBIE: | [As <i>Bonnington</i>] You sure the local chaps can't handle it? | |
| MABS: | [As <i>Ostler</i>] No, they're completely stumped ... it's definitely a case for our top detectives. | 90 |
| ROBBIE: | [As <i>Bonnington</i>] 'The Blue Suitcase Murder' ... Sounds a little over-dramatic to me. I suppose we better go over there and nose around. [Sings] IT'S 'FRIDAY NIGHT AT EIGHT', AND THESE ARE SOME OF THE DELIGHTS WE HAVE IN STORE. | 95 |
| | [Spoken] The girls are dancing, the music changes because we are delighted to welcome back Milly Dews. | |
| MILLY: | Hello, hello, everyone. | |
| ROBBIE: | Milly, you've been very busy, haven't you? | |
| MILLY: | [Reading from script] Very busy, Robbie. | 100 |
| ROBBIE: | [Reading] You've been to Paris since we last saw you? | |
| MILLY: | [Reading] That's right. Wonderful Paris, croissants, a trip down the Seine, and some marvellous music. [She sings a lyric in French.] [Spoken] I brought back a song or two for those at home to enjoy. | 105 |
| ROBBIE: | Milly has been collecting songs like she collects hats. She brings a whiff of the continent to our shows, a taste of WHAT'S ABROAD. [Sings] It's 'Friday Night at Eight' and these are some of the delights we have in store. [He looks up, makes his hand signals, the music darkens, he speaks with surprising intensity.] | 110 |
| | And Mr Tudor Baines will be here to give us an extract from his current success here in London, 'Dark Waters'. The scene is a rusty old cargo boat, moored in a dangerous port, bobbing slowly on dark waters. [The music plays, ROBBIE connects with the mystery, with feeling.] The water is thick with debris, foul smelling and full of secrets. You may wake up still thinking about these chilling events tomorrow morning. | 115 |
| ALL: | [Singing loudly] IT'S 'FRIDAY NIGHT AT EIGHT', AND THESE ARE THE DELIGHTS WE HAVE IN STORE. | |
| | <i>The music continues as MABS, DREDGE, the DANCING GIRLS and MILLY exit. ROBBIE stops the music abruptly with a hand signal, the red lights snap off, the musicians leave, the lights change on stage. ROBBIE sits in the middle of the stage and starts taking his shoes and socks off.</i> | 120 |
| ROBBIE: | [Muttering intensely to himself] The rhythm wasn't right. | 125 |
| | DAPHNE enters. | |
| DAPHNE: | A taste of the continent. [ROBBIE looks up.] It should have been just a taste of the continent, not a whiff. And you plopped in that phrase about abroad – it came from nowhere. | |
| ROBBIE: | [Smiles] Unforgivable. | 130 |
| DAPHNE: | Of course. The approved text is paramount – as you well know. | |
| ROBBIE: | [Amused but respectful] Don't worry – it will always be paramount. | |
| | <i>The DANCING GIRLS and DREDGE come back on, still in costume but soaked with sweat. MABS follows them, looking like he's given his all.</i> | 135 |

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| ROBBIE: | [To DAPHNE] But what about THE SHOW? | |
| DAPHNE: | The broadcast ... it was not bad. | |
| ROBBIE: | It's never the show – she always calls it the broadcast! | |
| DAPHNE: | And you should be pleased I do. But there were lapses. The 'Dark Waters' introduction was a little intense. | 140 |
| ROBBIE: | I didn't deviate! | |
| DAPHNE: | No – but you dwelt ... things got a little disorganised around there – | |
| CLIVE: | I noticed. | 145 |
| <i>They turn. CLIVE has entered and is standing on the edge of the area. He has sharp features, natural authority and is elegantly dressed. He is in his thirties.</i> | | |
| ROBBIE: | You noticed did you? And who might you be? | |
| DAPHNE: | I think this must be the author of your note, Robbie. | 150 |
| CLIVE: | Clive Lynn-Thomas and yes, I sent you a note. I need to see you. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Startled by his confident manner</i>] You wanted an appointment, did you? We'll have to look in the book and see where I can fit you in. [<i>Indicating DAPHNE who's holding a ledger</i>] It will be at least a fortnight. | 155 |
| DAPHNE: | At least ... | |
| CLIVE: | I think it would be much better if it was right now. | |
| ROBBIE: | You do, do you! Well, that's impossible. | |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Indicating ledger</i>] Then keep looking. | |
| DAPHNE: | The only possibility I can see in the next three weeks, is the day they've asked you to appear on television ... you know this television enterprise. | 160 |
| ROBBIE: | No, I'm not doing that. Nobody who's anybody appears on that! <i>But</i> I have other plans for that time. [DAPHNE <i>turns page</i> , ROBBIE <i>looking at CLIVE</i>] I told you it wouldn't be easy ... [<i>He moves.</i>] So what else did you 'notice' while you were up there ... did you have a good time? | 165 |
| CLIVE: | A good time? No. It's not the expression I'd use. | |
| DREDGE: | It's not, is it! | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Dangerous grin</i>] I think certain expressions are occurring to <i>us</i> , aren't they. Obviously we don't draw the great stars like those that appear on 'Monday Night at Eight' we all know that – but this was a good show – | 170 |
| MABS: | You must have got wrapped up in Inspector Bonnington's investigation, surely? | 175 |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Calmly</i>] No, that was embarrassing. | |
| ROBBIE <i>turns startled.</i> | | |
| CLIVE: | I've never understood why all wireless detectives have to talk out of the corners of their mouths like that – and never get excited. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Dangerous smile</i>] Because that's what they do. And I always get my man, don't I, as you may have noticed. | 180 |
| DREDGE: | [<i>Pugnacious</i>] He always gets the murderer. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Moving</i>] Now I think you've already overstayed your welcome ... so if you'd excuse us ... | |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Calmly</i>] But you do something unique in your show. | 185 |
| ROBBIE: | Unique! Do I? And what is that? | |
| CLIVE: | You have a <i>medley</i> at the start telling the audience what is coming up – which nobody else does. A totally novel feature, | |

- something unique. The show itself is mere fluff of course, the usual variety items and Victorian melodrama – and that tedious Bonnington. But the medley is interesting. You move from light to dark, and you stay on the dark longer than expected, not afraid to linger. 190
You show an instinctive sense of structure.
- They are all staring at him.* 195
- CLIVE: Yes, really.
I call it ‘instinctive’, because I have no idea if you realise you are doing it or not. [*He smiles.*] But there we are. [*To DAPHNE*] Found a time yet?
- ROBBIE: I’m off. It’s incredible, isn’t it! Can you believe this character! Get him out of here. [*He exits.*] 200
- DAPHNE: I rather feel you’re going to have to *wait* to see us. [*She exits with MABS.*]
- CLIVE *calmly takes out cigarette case.*
- DREDGE: [*Astonished*] You can’t smoke here. Nobody can smoke in this building. Ever. You know that. 205
- CLIVE: Don’t worry.
- DREDGE: You mean you’re above the rules! Are they all as bad as you in TALKS?
- CLIVE: Oh, most of them are far worse. No they are. [*He smiles at her.*] Hard to believe, I know. 210
- ROBBIE *re-enters, standing barefoot.*
- ROBBIE: I forgot my shoes. [*He walks over slowly to get them.*] ‘Instinctive sense of structure’, indeed!
- CLIVE: You may think it’s ridiculous. But you do have it. 215
- ROBBIE *picks up his shoes.*
- CLIVE: You should go and do this television experiment you know.
- ROBBIE: Really? What on earth for?
- CLIVE: Because it’ll be interesting. It’s a terrible journey of course, miles away in north London, but it can’t fail to be worth a look. 220
- ROBBIE: I can’t go.
- CLIVE: Why not?
- ROBBIE: I have things to do – I’m buying an umbrella, for the Coronation.
- CLIVE: The Coronation isn’t till May.
- ROBBIE: It’s important I’m prepared. I missed the Abdication speech, that great moment. When everybody, the whole nation was sitting round the wireless set. And you know why, why I wasn’t listening? Because I had to study my script for my interview with Milly Dews the next day. I had to study for our ‘spontaneous’ chat. [*He looks at CLIVE.*] Did *you* hear it? 225
- CLIVE: [*Smoking*] Your interview with Milly?
- ROBBIE: No, the Abdication speech.
- CLIVE: Well, I sort of had to ... I helped draft the speech.
- ROBBIE: You did what!
- CLIVE: I gave my notes to our Director-General, Sir John Reith, and he incorporated them into the text with the King. 235

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| ROBBIE: | [<i>Truly startled</i>] You helped write the speech!? | |
| CLIVE: | I'm afraid so. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Recovering</i>] Well, no wonder this world here ... the world of variety is a bit of a shock to you! If that's how you spend your time! | 240 |
| CLIVE: | No, no, no shock. It's been fascinating. [<i>Moving to exit, he turns.</i>] And we will definitely have that time together. | |
| | ROBBIE <i>looks at</i> DREDGE. | |
| DREDGE: | What a snob! | 245 |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Moving</i>] Yes ... he dares give me advice ...! Instinctive structure ... we don't realise what we're doing ... it's all an accident ... he gives me instructions! [<i>He stops in the middle of the stage.</i>] I'm definitely going to buy the umbrella. | |
| | BLACKOUT | 250 |

Scene 2

Alexandra Palace.

In the blackout, the screams of a trumpeting young elephant, and the deeper urgent, throaty grunts of a young rhino.

ISABEL *standing alone for a second as the sounds fade away. She is in her thirties, fashionably dressed. She has a witty, unpredictable manner. She is drinking tea out of a badly chipped cup. The floor is sprinkled with animal droppings.*

255

Upstage the only prop is a single, rather sinister-looking original television camera.

HONKER, *a very enthusiastic rather innocent man in his mid-twenties, comes rushing on with a broom.*

260

HONKER: Just got to get rid of these last traces ... then the smell will go as well [*He starts sweeping the droppings up.*] or at least nobody will know what it is, which is just as good.

ISABEL: I rather like the smell. It's most unexpected – like being at the circus.

265

HONKER: Well, you know radio people, they can be a little grand.

ISABEL: I certainly do know – and you're right, I'm not sure they're used to performing surrounded by rhino droppings.

HONKER: [*Sweeping dung*] Rhino *and* elephant droppings in this case.

270

ISABEL: They're late, aren't they?

HONKER: Oh, everyone is always late coming here! Which is useful today! [*He rushes off to get dustpan.*]

ISABEL: [*Amused, staring at droppings which are now in a pile*] I won't offer to do anything – because you seem to have it under control.

275

ROBBIE *sweeps in, in a good suit, fine new shoes and overcoat.*

ROBBIE: I'm late. I hate being late. The others are just coming. It's miles,

- it's like travelling to the moon getting here! [*Moving around*] And I can't believe the smell – that has got to go.
- ISABEL: They had a baby elephant and a baby rhino here. They both got stuck in the lift apparently, poor things. 280
- ROBBIE: Snakes, they didn't have any snakes, did they?
- ISABEL: I believe they had one or two snakes yes.
- ROBBIE: That could be it! I can see the camera staring at a dead snake for half an hour for one of those interludes they're so fond of! 285
Anyway now show me to our dressing rooms please ...
- ISABEL: No. [*ROBBIE turns, surprised*] I'm sorry I don't work here. I'm a friend of Clive Lynn-Thomas, I'm meeting him here.
- ROBBIE: So there are two of you now! Popping up to watch me perform. [*He looks across at her standing by the droppings.*] You know I never thought I'd meet a friend of Clive's standing next to a pile of dung. 290
- ISABEL: You know Clive well?
- ROBBIE: I met him once – for a few minutes.
- ISABEL: [*Lightly*] I see. Well, first impressions are pretty accurate when talking about Clive. [*She smiles.*] But I'm not sure you really know him yet. 295
- HONKER *enters, greeting* ROBBIE.
- HONKER: There you are! Hello, I'm Harry Wallace. People, I'm afraid, call me Honker ... so feel free ... [*ROBBIE about to speak*] It's because I honk out all the time apparently, 'marvellous, marvellous, marvellous'. So ... [*He gets down on his knees, sweeping up dung.*] It's marvellous to see you. 300
- ROBBIE: It's ... interesting to be here.
- The whole entourage enter. DREDGE, and the DANCING GIRLS, all three dressed in fur coats, and their finest show costumes. MABS is in a splendid coat, top hat and cane as if for a wedding. DAPHNE is in her working clothes and holding a large notebook.* 305
- ROBBIE: We're complete. 310
- HONKER: [*HONKER turns and stares at the stunningly dressed group, the women looking gorgeous.*] What a wonderful sight!
- DREDGE: We thought so ... [*Showing off her costume, under her coat*] we made a real effort.
- HONKER: It's marvellous to see you. It's a feast ... for the eyes. Clearly. But I just want to say, and I say this very reluctantly, and I realise the stupidity of it all, but we can't allow wireless costumes on television. We're not permitted to do that. 315
- Silence*
- ISABEL: That's idiotic. 320
- DREDGE: We can't be seen like this?! We haven't got anything else to wear.
- MABS: It doesn't seem to me, to make total sense ...
- ROBBIE: But nobody has ever seen them when they dress up on the radio! These girls have never been seen by anybody. They're totally unknown, completely fresh. You must make an exception. 325
- DREDGE: Nobody has ever seen us dance.

- HONKER: I know I know, it's senseless. But there's trouble for me if I break these regulations. It's all to do with budgets and departments and money – and other ludicrous things. 330
- DREDGE *and the other girls stare back at him.*
- DREDGE: [*Very quiet*] You mean there's no possibility at all that we can be seen?
- HONKER *is rushing off.*
- DAPHNE: [*To ROBBIE*] I told you they probably couldn't appear. I warned you. *You can be seen, because you're being yourself.* 335
- ROBBIE: [*Startled*] I'm being myself?
- HONKER *comes back with a small table.*
- HONKER: But there *are* freedoms here. Other freedoms, I like to think. Our show, 'Trafalgar Square', that's what we call it, has real people. People we found in Trafalgar Square, normal people, like the man who cleans Nelson's Column. And a typical tourist, a foreigner's impression of London. [*Breezily to ROBBIE*] You've seen the scripts? They're simple, aren't they. When you read the interviews, look up every other sentence, up down, up down, 340
and look *at* the interviewee. You'll get the knack! Ready? [*He exits.*] 345
- ROBBIE: [*Taking scripts out of pocket, nervous laugh*] Ought to be able to do this, meeting everyday folk, good working-class boy like me.
- DREDGE, MABS, *the DANCING GIRLS and ISABEL move towards exit.* 350
- DREDGE: *We could have appeared as ourselves.*
- ISABEL: [*Lightly*] You will. Somewhere. And without the smell.
- DAPHNE *takes ROBBIE's overcoat off and exits. HONKER re-enters with two chairs.* 355
- HONKER: It'll soon be seven o'clock. Hang on tight. [*He exits.*]
- The lights changing, focus on the small table and the camera.*
- ROBBIE: At least I managed to bring my own musicians. [*He does his hand signals. Music starts. He moves to table, puts the scripts in front of him. Stands for a second alone. To himself*] Remember you're appearing as yourself ... [*He sits facing us.*] 360
- HONKER: [*Voice from above, hushed.*] Ten, marvellous, nine, marvellous, eight, marvellous, seven six five, marvellous, four incredible, three two terrific, one, marvellous. Zero. [*His voice booms out as ROBBIE prepares himself in front of us.*] Ladies and gentlemen 365
we welcome you to the British Broadcasting television service, broadcasting from Alexandra Palace, London, and it is our pleasure to present 'Trafalgar Square'.
- ROBBIE: [*ROBBIE looks up.*] Hello I'm ... [*He hesitates for a second.*] I'm Robbie Penacourt ... and this is 'Trafalgar Square' ... [*ROBBIE does his hand signals, the music drops and changes.*] 370

- HONKER: [From above] Oh dear – I forgot to warn him about his hand signals.
- ROBBIE: [Does signal, music stops] And the first person we're going to meet this evening is Mr Robin Tucker who is the person that cleans Nelson's Column. [Pause, nobody enters, ROBBIE glances around at the script.] I think he cleans Nelson himself, the actual figure of Nelson, right at the top of the column. [Nobody enters.] 375
- HONKER: [Off] Go on, go on, go on. We're having a problem with Tucker. Do the paragraph about where we are. 380
- ROBBIE: So ... while we're waiting for Mr Tucker. [He shuffles papers.] I'm Robbie Penacourt ... I'm appearing tonight as myself. [He does hand signal, low music, and finds the right page] Maybe you'd like to picture where we are, we're in the great crumbling Alexandra Palace, a vast old building of exhibition halls, high above London. [He improvises.] And it's absolutely miles from the centre! 385
- HONKER: [Off] Back on to script two ... we have the next person, script two! Everything is back on track. 390
- BERNARD enters, heads for the table and the pool of light. ROBBIE holds up his hand very formally and stops BERNARD. ROBBIE is shuffling his papers wildly. He stands up, starting the music again with signals, and then beckons to the camera, instinctively responding to the technology. 395
- ROBBIE: Bring the camera forward ... closer, closer ... point it at the chair! [To audience] We're having a moment's Interlude now, ladies and gentlemen ... THE CHAIR.
- He walks up to BERNARD in the shadows. BERNARD is a dark-haired, short, good-looking young man in his early twenties. 400
- ROBBIE: [Lowering his voice] Who are you?
 BERNARD: I'm the Baron Freiherr von Brandis.
 ROBBIE: You're the typical tourist? ... I don't think – I don't think I can find your script. For the interview. And it may not look good if we share. 405
- BERNARD: [Confident, unfazed] That's all right, is it not? [He slips his script in his pocket.] We could just try to talk.
- ROBBIE: Without a script? How would we? We wouldn't know what's going to happen ... [He looks at BERNARD.] If we do ... what about?
- BERNARD: About the city, this great English city that I'm in. That's why I'm here. 410
- ROBBIE moves back to table and into light with BERNARD. ROBBIE stops the music with signals, sits in chair.
- ROBBIE: This is the end of the interlude now. You're watching 'Trafalgar Square'. And now we meet, this is the Baron Frei ... Frei – 415
- BERNARD: The Baron Freiherr von Brandis.
 ROBBIE: He is a tourist ... a foreign eye. [He looks at BERNARD, smiles] and we're trying to talk ... about ... London, the centre of this country and the Empire ... [Suddenly] So was it much grubbier than you expected, when you first saw it? 420
- BERNARD: [Unfazed] Yes, it is a dirty city, quite quite dirty, but also, I tell you

- what I think, it is a great warren, a city afraid to show itself, to declare itself.
- ROBBIE: You mean it's full of secrets? That's right, you're right, Baron. [To audience] In fact, in a few weeks, maybe here in 'Trafalgar Square' there will be the secrets of London ... who knows, look out for it! Right here on 'Trafalgar Square'. 425
- BERNARD: And I will tell you something else, and this is very interesting – the day I arrived, just a few months ago, on a train coming from the white cliffs of Dover, and I'm from Leipzig, a quite dark city at the depth of winter, and it is night now, and I'm looking out of the window of my train, as we enter London – and I couldn't believe my eyes. The whole city is shining! I thought this is the most amazingly bright, well-lit city I've ever seen. All of it is revealed. It is like day! 430
- ROBBIE: [Excited, moving in his seat, jumping in] I know what you're going to say! I know what's coming! ... It was the night the Crystal Palace burnt down, last year wasn't it? When it lit up the whole of London as it burnt. Wasn't it?! 435
- BERNARD: Yes. Correct! 440
- ROBBIE: What an amazing night to arrive, in a foreign city! Your first night fresh from Europe and you're greeted by that!
- BERNARD: Yes, the sky was completely red.
- ROBBIE: It was, and you could see everything and everybody so brightly. All the couples out walking arm in arm, or kissing in corners, every nook was lit up! It was so un-English. [He starts the music with a signal. To audience] I wish I could tell you some of the things I saw that night ... saw people do ... things even I had never seen before! [He lifts hand to make the music louder. He cuts the music dead and the lights change.] 445
- ROBBIE moves around stage incandescent. BERNARD stands. HONKER and DAPHNE run on.
- ROBBIE: I have never, NEVER ever been so embarrassed ... in my whole life. This is one of the worst moments. I cannot believe how amateur this outfit is. [He moves.] I make no apologies for being a radio beast ... I will be monstrous. If I have to. That was a disgrace. 455
- DAPHNE: [Trying to calm him] It wasn't too bad, Robbie – honestly, you survived ... it wasn't that embarrassing.
- ROBBIE: It was a shambles ... no wonder television is a laughing stock. 460
- HONKER: It was a roller coaster. Heart-in-the-mouth stuff, I had no idea what was going to come out next.
- ROBBIE: It was an outrage.
- CLIVE: It was fine.
- CLIVE is entering with ISABEL. He is calm, and elegantly dressed. 465
- ROBBIE: So you are here!
- CLIVE: Absolutely. I told you I would be. [He moves.] No, it was a shock to hear something so unprepared ... probably the only time that's ever happened, either here or at Broadcasting House. 470
- DAPHNE: That may well be true. [DAPHNE makes notes in her large ledger.]
- ROBBIE: [Serious] It really was fine? Are you sure? [Then turns] I don't

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| | know why I'm asking him! | |
| CLIVE: | Yes – it was like watching a traffic accident. | 475 |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Stops</i>] What? I thought you said it was OK? | |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Calmly continuing</i>] In the sense that it's unrepeatable – that element of surprise ... it just happened. | |
| HONKER: | Unrepeatable – an unrepeatable accident. But worth seeing! | |
| CLIVE: | It had danger. | 480 |
| ISABEL: | [<i>Lightly</i>] And what's more hardly anybody is watching so it doesn't matter what happens here. The rest of the world couldn't care a hoot. | |
| HONKER: | Yes, sadly only two thousand people have televisions ... | |
| BERNARD: | Yes – that is what I am thinking. That is why I enjoyed it so much. | 485 |
| | <i>They all turn and look at him.</i> | |
| ROBBIE: | You were very good, Baron, very good indeed. I couldn't have done it without you. | |
| BERNARD: | Thank you. Yes I was thinking the following while it was happening ... For one reason or another, because of charitable work my family is concerned with in Germany, I have been seeing a lot of refugees over there, aliens, you know how they are followed and policed and checked up on. [<i>He laughs.</i>] I was thinking – the only place I have felt I wasn't being watched recently, was just now <i>on television!</i> Yes! [<i>He smiles.</i>] A very good sense of being free from prying eyes! | 490 |
| | <i>ROBBIE watches him, carefully intrigued.</i> | |
| CLIVE: | The other significant feature of course is – there's no record. What happens here has already disappeared into the ether. There's nothing to say it ever took place. | 500 |
| ROBBIE: | Thank God for that! | |
| HONKER: | Come on, everybody, let's go to the Dive! [<i>To ROBBIE</i>] That's where I put your entourage – it's our little hut, where we're allowed to drink. [<i>He grins.</i>] Which is marvellous! Come on, let's celebrate. | 505 |
| DAPHNE: | I'm not sure that's the word I'd use – celebrate the fact that Robbie is still in one piece perhaps. [<i>She exits.</i>] | |
| BERNARD: | An excellent idea. [<i>He follows.</i>] | |
| ROBBIE: | I will join you. | |
| | <i>BERNARD stops. They look at each other.</i> | 510 |
| ROBBIE: | Don't run away. You were superb. [<i>He turns back.</i>] As for you two ... there's something a bit sinister about you being here. What are you up to? | |
| CLIVE: | What are we up to? | |
| ROBBIE: | Yes. That's right ... Why are you studying me like this? | 515 |
| ISABEL: | [<i>Emollient</i>] He has something to put to you – | |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Rather grandly</i>] Yes. I want you – | |
| ISABEL: | [<i>Softening it</i>] He has a request – | |
| CLIVE: | I want you to – | |
| ISABEL: | He would like you – | 520 |
| CLIVE: | [<i>Ignoring this</i>] I want you to come and work for me. | |
| ROBBIE: | [<i>Very startled</i>] Work for you?! | |
| CLIVE: | That's correct. | |

Silence, ROBBIE staring at CLIVE

ROBBIE: I don't follow. I'm just a song and dance man. 525
 CLIVE: Precisely. [*Pause*]
 ROBBIE: I don't understand ... [*Holds up hand and moves*] No! I don't
 want to hear! I'm going to the Dive. Right now! Where I belong!

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

Broadcasting House. 530

A young man's voice starts reading in the educated BBC tone, but a little over-eager.

VOICE-OVER: 'In the House of Commons this afternoon the Under Secretary
 for Foreign Affairs was asked whether he had seen Herr Hitler's
 recent assurances about the neutrality of Holland and Belgium. 535
 Lord Cranbourne replied that he did not think that the position
 resulting from Herr Hitler's statement a week ago was clear
 enough for him to say anything on the matter.'

*We see the ASSISTANT, a young man in his twenties dressed
 in similar suit to CLIVE, modelling his appearance on him. The
 ASSISTANT is reading the news sitting on a chair, while CLIVE
 moves around him listening.* 540

ASSISTANT: [*Looks up at Clive*] Was that all right?
 CLIVE: It was excellent ... but if you want to sound exactly like the
 original, you need the slight reassurance in the voice – that 545
 everything is all right in the world really, that these great matters
 are in careful hands.

ASSISTANT: Oh yes of course, I should do that.
 CLIVE: [*Reassuring tones*] 'The meeting with Herr von Ribbentrop, the
 German Ambassador, was merely routine ...' or those wonderful 550
 words when the old King died ... 'the King's life is moving
 peacefully towards its close ...'

ASSISTANT: 'The King's life is moving peacefully towards its close ...'
 CLIVE: Once more 'the King's life is moving peacefully towards its
 close ...' 555

ASSISTANT: [*More effortless gravitas*] 'The King's life is moving peacefully
 towards its close ...' That's nearer, isn't it?
 CLIVE: Yes, it was tinged with the tone, it was good.

ROBBIE *enters*.

ROBBIE: Well, I'm here. Don't ask me why. 560
 CLIVE: I think the other six news items can wait.
 ASSISTANT: [*Jumping up*] Absolutely, Mr Lynn-Thomas. I will go back to my
 normal duties now. That was a very good observation, thank
 you.

ROBBIE: Yes, he's good at observations! 565
 ASSISTANT: I'm sure Arnos will be impressed.
 CLIVE: Arnos?

- ASSISTANT: Oh, I mean Mr Grove. You know everybody calls him *Arnos Grove*, after the stop on the Piccadilly line, on the Underground. [Embarrassed] Sorry, shouldn't have mentioned that. (Very respectful) Thank you again. [He exits.] 570
- ROBBIE *moving warily, a little closer.*
- CLIVE: My assistant. They are selecting some standby newsreaders ... in case of problems ... he's having a go.
- ROBBIE: Will he have to dress up in the full garb, you know evening dress, stiff collar, even for the audition? 575
- CLIVE: Of course ... [Watching ROBBIE.] It's amazing, isn't it – the way this organisation behaves. It is only *fifteen* years old, and yet it has become an instant cathedral of broadcasting, managed to create all this sham venerability – so people have difficulty remembering a time when it didn't exist. 580
- ROBBIE: In *reality* it is so young, but in spirit – It's never been young?!
- Slight pause*
- CLIVE: Good. 585
- ROBBIE: [Grins] I get a 'good' ... [Moves] I got a 'good'! I've survived the first round.
- CLIVE *looks across at him.*
- CLIVE: At the start of any enterprise, between two comparative strangers, this is really one of the most difficult moments – this now ... isn't it? 590
- ROBBIE: Absolutely, I agree.
- CLIVE: When one doesn't know each other's tastes, opinions. [Slight pause] If I was to say for instance Henry James is the most compulsive story teller there has ever been, bar none, bar absolute none. Dickens is sentimental claptrap, not fit for grown-up consumption, and J.M.W. Turner couldn't paint for toffees ... [He turns.] What would be your reaction? 595
- Silence*
- ROBBIE: [Swallows] If you were to say that – I'd play for time definitely! [He moves.] Obviously. [Looks at CLIVE] But eventually I'd say – that remark you made, that was the most absolute complete rubbish I've ever heard. 600
- CLIVE: Right. I see. Good.
- ROBBIE: Another 'good' ...? Not quite such a big one. 605
- Pause*
- CLIVE: [Fingering the records carefully] Did you get that recording of my programme ... those records?
- ROBBIE: Yes.
- CLIVE: Did you listen to them? 610
- ROBBIE: Yes.
- CLIVE: Tell me absolutely frankly what you thought ... Holding back nothing.

- ROBBIE: I thought, without doubt ... it was the best programme that I'd ever heard about Friesian cows. 615
- CLIVE *smiles*.
- CLIVE: Good. I'm glad you thought so.
- ROBBIE: If you don't mind me asking – how much time did you spend on it?
- CLIVE: Oh, it was not too bad. About eight and a half months. 620
- ROBBIE: Eight and a half MONTHS! You're not serious – in that time –
- CLIVE: You've done a thousand medleys, I know. [*He smiles.*] The programme should have been at least twice as long of course.
- ROBBIE: But it was an hour long already!
- CLIVE: It would have been better at about two and a half hours. I would have been able to include all the history. [*Forcefully*] And listeners *would* have stayed with it. I assure you. 625
- ROBBIE: Well *I* would have stayed. [*Grins*] I think.
- CLIVE: But you liked the form? The real farmers, going on location as they say – the shape, beginning with the sound of a calf being born, the dark, surprisingly prolonged section in the slaughterhouse. 630
- ROBBIE: [*Amused, but impressed*] The form was good.
- CLIVE *moves with records over to where gramophone is built into the wall.* 635
- ROBBIE: Is that more of it there?
- CLIVE: No, [*He smiles.*] something even more interesting. [*He turns, having put on record.*] You know I said how little time all this has been here.
- The record starts, a woman's voice talking softly. 'I can't remember where it was, or when it was, but it went like this ...' She begins to sing a ballad.* 640
- ROBBIE: Yes. Why is this woman's voice important? Who is she? Was she here at the beginning? The very start of this place?
- CLIVE: No. It doesn't matter who she is – the fact is, she's already dead. This person here is singing to us, not from beyond the grave, but while she's in her grave. Until very recently we couldn't hear people's voices after they were dead. Nothing remained. Their sound, their voices, had gone for ever. And now, in this very building – there is a whole room of the voices of the dead. 650
- ROBBIE: [*Moves*] I hadn't thought of it like that.
- CLIVE: We tend to forget how quickly we get used to ideas like that. [*He stops the record.*] And now, with the Abdication of the King, which the whole nation – apart from you – listened to. And with the Coronation about to happen – 655
- ROBBIE: [*Suddenly*] This is an essay in power you're giving me? ... Isn't it! An essay in the power of the instrument – It's an *essay*, with demonstrations!
- CLIVE: I'm not lecturing you, I hope.
- ROBBIE: No, no no. [*Urgent*] *Tell me why I'm here, Clive!* 660

Pause

- CLIVE: I had a radical thought while doing the Friesians ... that project was pure, of course. But –
- ROBBIE: Yes?
- CLIVE: I had an unprecedented thought for the next project – 665
- ROBBIE: Yes?!
- CLIVE: To use somebody from Entertainment, in a 'Talk'. Somebody who can sing and play many parts – to help both dramatise and document the world we're living in. Instead of doing a straightforward documentary or talk, we engage the listener from an unexpected direction. 670
- ROBBIE: That *is* a startling thought!
- CLIVE *is about to continue.*
- ROBBIE: Wait a moment, wait ...! [*He moves, thinking*] Entertainment colliding with the world of Talks! Me in a documentary! That is revolutionary! [*He looks at CLIVE.*] What is the subject? 675
- CLIVE: I thought the subject would be English apples.
- ROBBIE: [*Stunned*] English apples? Why?
- CLIVE: [*Breezily*] Evocative subject, moving from orchard to orchard, there are some wonderful stories behind certain kinds of apples, there's the Egremont Russet, the Laxton's Fortune, the Ellison's Orange. We take something seemingly simple and reveal its mysterious history – [*He stops.*] Does the principle appeal to you? 680
- ROBBIE: The principle certainly ... but – 685
- CLIVE: The principle appeals. Good! It will need careful handling through the bureaucracy here, of course. I will need to write a very lengthy proposal document.
- ROBBIE: Maybe the subject matter ... we could discuss a little further? Find an alternative ... ? 690
- ARNOS *enters. He is a man of about fifty, with a large blustery manner, but flashes of beadiness coming through.*
- ARNOS: Clive, just dropping by ... nothing formal.
- CLIVE: [*Surprised*] Mr Grove ...
- ARNOS: [*Quick nod in the direction of ROBBIE, then back to CLIVE*] I wanted to let you know – as soon as I heard – the paper, the one I asked you to write about the Empire Service, well, the Director-General is very pleased, very *pleased* indeed. 695
- CLIVE: [*Carefully watching ARNOS*] That's excellent news ...
- ARNOS: 'Elegant' and 'incisive' – those were some of the words being used, I believe. You usually come up trumps, don't you! 700
- CLIVE: [*Sharp smile*] That's very gratifying ... and all those reservations *you* had, were those noted and discussed?
- ARNOS: My reservations? ... [*Blustery laugh*] They can't have been very serious, can they – because they've already slipped the memory! *Now* – the Coronation. Got to help me out there, Clive – what we broadcast surrounding the Coronation ... many countries listening, got to be judged perfectly. New task, new paper! 705
- CLIVE: Fine. I'll start right away. 710
- ARNOS: Splendid. [*He moves over to radio in wall and switches it on. Dance music pours out of it.*] Just watch this – I want you to watch ... It's my party trick at the moment ... it's made an

- impression on everybody I've done it to so far. Are you listening carefully? ... It may not work today, of course. [*He slowly starts twiddling the knob on radio.*] So you move the dial – through all those squeaks and bumps ... never know what they are ... we're going into France now, we're in France. [*The same dance music pours out.*] You see ... and now we move the dial again – and here we are, not sure where we go next, I think this is Belgium ... and what do we have? ... [*Same dance music pouring out*] And then again with Germany ... and if we're lucky, if we're very lucky – [*A snatch of German talk comes out of radio.* ARNOS *disappointed*] No ... [*A moment later, the same tune, but different arrangement bursts out.* ARNOS *turns, triumphant.*] There! [*Music playing*] Isn't that interesting? – the same music everywhere! It's American of course, the tune –
- ROBBIE: It's called 'Laughing in the Night', [ARNOS *turns.*] the tune.
- ARNOS: Yes. Is it? Who are you? I don't think I know who you are.
- CLIVE: I'm sorry, I should have –
- ROBBIE: I'm Robbie Penacourt ... [ARNOS *looks blank.*] Robbie Penacourt ... from 'Friday Night At Eight'.
- ARNOS: Oh yes of course, of course.
- CLIVE: And this is Arnold Grove.
- ARNOS: Head of the Spoken Word. Pleased to meet you. Forgive me not recognising you ... but this is a very unusual encounter for me, somebody from the Entertainment Side.
- ROBBIE: Don't worry about it. [*Grins*] I'm used to it.
- ARNOS: [*Staring at Robbie*] I'm afraid I'm usually out on Friday nights ... Occasionally, I catch Inspector Bonnington, isn't it? Yes. I think that's good value, not quite as good as Inspector Hornleigh on Mondays, but you're right on his tail! [*Moving off*] Keep at it, keep it all going ...
- ROBBIE: [*Suddenly*] Can I ask you something?
- ARNOS *turns, surprised.*
- ARNOS: Yes. What is it?
- ROBBIE: If Mr Lynn-Thomas here – this is a revolutionary thought, Mr Grove ... But if he was to ask me to perform in a *talk*, to help dramatise that particular subject, either a historical matter or something happening now, if I was to sing songs and play people ... doing voices –
- CLIVE: In the documentary – to help people understand the topic.
- ROBBIE: To engage them from another direction! Would that be acceptable? In principle?
- Silence*
- ARNOS: What a truly extraordinary notion.
- CLIVE: It is, yes – but that doesn't make it necessarily unwise.
- ARNOS: It's so radical – it goes beyond the revolutionary.
- ROBBIE: That's why it's exciting.
- ARNOS: [*Moves*] What would one call it? It's a very complicated idea for the listener, they could get confused between what is proper fact and what is entertainment.
- ROBBIE: Depends how one does it! But the principle is not ruled out? [*He smiles.*] Is it?
- ARNOS: It's an amazing proposal. [*He moves.*] I'll have to consider all

aspects ... and of course refer it to others as well. [To CLIVE]
Further discussion will follow ... [He exits.]

ROBBIE: He didn't rule it out!

CLIVE: No.

ROBBIE: I hope you don't mind ... that I did that. 770

CLIVE: It took me by surprise ... [He moves thoughtfully.] but it was an excellent move.

ROBBIE: I thought I'd cut through everything. Smack him with it, when he was totally unprepared. You *really* don't mind?

CLIVE: [Smiles] No. It was very bold. You grabbed the chance. I approve. 775

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

*Nightclub. The Night Out.**Dance music playing, as in a fashionable nightclub.*

ISABEL *in a rich evening gown, sitting on a high stool, holding a drink. ROBBIE sitting next to her a little distance between them, on another high stool. He also has a drink and is a little unsteady. He is in a dinner jacket, his bow tie askew.* 780

ROBBIE: I think he's angry with me. I interfered when I shouldn't have.

ISABEL: He doesn't get angry easily...

ROBBIE: Why do I mind? I've only just met this man – and already I seem to want his approval. It's crazy! [He drinks.] I DON'T CARE [He drinks.] He *forces* you to care what he thinks, doesn't he ... he even gave me a sort of cultural test – which I failed miserably! ... And then I found myself worrying about it afterwards, all down the street ... ! 790

ISABEL: The Dickens versus Henry James test?

ROBBIE: That's the one.

ISABEL: He hates Henry James – [She smiles.] I expect you passed.

ROBBIE: Really? He talked to me about *apples* as well.

ISABEL: Now that I've never heard him do. 795

ROBBIE: And the funny thing is *I'm* from the country. I know all about apples. He thinks I'm a factory worker originally, I'm sure he does ... with machine oil coming out of my ears. Or a coal miner. All intellectuals think like that – if they know you're working class.

ISABEL: [Drinking] When *in fact* you were brought up in a field of cabbages? 800

ROBBIE: Nearly. Turnips. Near Swaffham, in Norfolk. My parents were farm labourers. As a boy I ran up and down behind them as they worked the fields. [Holds up hands] Horny hands of the soil.

ISABEL: [Warm, teasing smile] So you're a peasant really? 805

ROBBIE: Yes. I'm a country boy who came to the big city ... [He turns towards the music.] I hate this tune ... [He does one of his hand signals, towards the musicians, self-mocking smile.]

ISABEL: You're not on your show now – they're beyond your control.

ROBBIE: I have no influence now, away from my variety studio! [Staring at ISABEL in her evening dress] And what about you? I know nothing about you? 810

ISABEL: I thought you'd never ask!

ROBBIE: [Grins] Been waiting for my chance. What's your relationship with Clive ... been longing to ask that! 815

- ISABEL: That's not difficult. I love him.
- ROBBIE: Yes. Yes. I thought so. Are you going to get married?
- ISABEL: Maybe ... who knows.
- ROBBIE: And do you do anything else? I have a feeling you work at something. 820
- ISABEL: I observe.
- ROBBIE: Yes, I'd noticed *that!* I do too – when I remember.
- ISABEL: No, I observe professionally. When the King abdicated, various people got very interested in the reaction of the masses, in 'primitive reactions' as they were called. In measuring them scientifically. 825
- ROBBIE: Primitive reactions – I know all about those!
- ISABEL: Yes – so they recruited people to conduct surveys, into what the masses were really thinking – by sitting in pubs, standing in bus queues, being amongst them at the races. Mass observation. 830
- Noting everything down they saw and heard. [*She smiles.*] I do that.
- ROBBIE: Wait a minute – you're studying the masses by sitting in pubs, and listening to what they're saying as they play darts?!
- ISABEL: I write down what I see. 835
- ROBBIE: And then you draw conclusions! From what's happened in this one pub?! Those are their typical primitive reactions to such and such a subject? You can't be serious.
- ISABEL: I just collect evidence, I don't interpret it. [*Smiles*] Not yet anyway. 840
- ROBBIE: But *I* might walk into this pub ... and sing a burst of one of my medleys. Tell some jokes. What would that signify?
- ISABEL: [*Laughs*] No, you wouldn't be a very good subject ... No.
- ROBBIE: Why not?
- ISABEL: Because you make these ... these rather surprising leaps of thought ... between subjects. 845
- ROBBIE: How do you know that isn't typical? I may be a perfect example of a farm labourer's son ... [*He drinks.*] The whole thing's rubbish –
- ISABEL: It's not rubbish to try to work out for the first time what the mass of people are thinking, rather than just guessing – or not caring. 850
- ROBBIE: And all the time you're doing this, you have to blend in – don't you? In each pub, each bus stop ... [*Staring at her in her splendid dress and her posh manner*] That must be a little difficult for you.
- CLIVE *enters with a drink, he is also in evening dress.* 855
- CLIVE: No, she's very good at that ... she has chameleon-like qualities [*Touching her briefly*] – haven't you – that come as a real surprise.
- ISABEL: There you are ... [*She smiles.*] Tell Mr Penacourt what I do isn't rubbish. 860
- CLIVE: It certainly is not ...
- ISABEL: [*To ROBBIE*] He's using it for *his work* too.
- CLIVE: Yes ... she feeds me little pieces from time to time ... when she picks up something relevant ... And they're surprisingly interested in it at Broadcasting House. 865
- ISABEL: Before, they had absolutely no idea what their listeners thought of their programmes – the mass of the audience – the ones who would never dream of writing letters.
- CLIVE: No, we didn't. [*He smiles.*] But *I* got it right anyway – it seems!

- ROBBIE: [*Grins, to ISABEL*] So you become one of the masses?! [*He mimics in cartoon cockney*] ‘Cor blimey, luvly weather we’re ’aving, aren’t we, darling!’ [*To ISABEL*] Come on, do it for me ... I’d love to see you blending in ... 870
- ISABEL: No, no it’s not like that ... I just give off the right aura. [ROBBIE *smiles.*] No, I huddle, or bend my head, dress right, I don’t need to talk. [*The music changes and she gets up.*] Do you want to dance? Clive doesn’t dance. 875
- ROBBIE: No. I just dance professionally. [*He drinks some more, looking at them both.*] But I feel I’m being recruited for something. You are spies, the two of you! And you have targeted me ... we should be on a night train, going somewhere, with the blinds drawn! – shouldn’t we! 880
- CLIVE: Of course I have recruited you, [*He smiles.*] it goes without saying.
- ROBBIE: [*Facing them*] The thing is I don’t think it can possibly be just English apples, it’s not just *apples*. 885
- CLIVE: We’ll do the apples first, nice and simple –
- ROBBIE: No. I’m not that big a fool ... there is something else. You’re such a pure practitioner ... eight months on Friesian cows! – Using somebody like me ... it must be because you can’t do whatever it is you want to do *any other way*. [*He gets up.*] Oh, let it be more, Clive ... I want it to be more... [*He moves to the music, dancing with ISABEL, but not holding her close.*] I’m not dancing ... not in front of him ... this isn’t dancing. Let it be about America – because I know America well. Never been there but I think about America all the time ... let it be about America, Clive! You’ve been there lots, haven’t you? 890
- CLIVE: Yes ... I have paid fairly frequent visits. In fact, I wrote one of my first reports there on the harmful effects of advertising on broadcasting. 900
- ROBBIE: I can see you striding around New York, lecturing the Americans! Telling them ‘you’re too commercial!’ [*He turns.*] What is our *real* mission, Clive?
- CLIVE: How much have you been following, week by week, what’s going on in Europe? 905
- ROBBIE: Oh no – please. Not *that* ...! [*He moves.*] First apples, now this!
- CLIVE: Answer my question – how much have you been following?
- ROBBIE: Well, I open a newspaper from time to time ... and occasionally I glance at the bits about abroad. 910
- ISABEL: That’s more than most do.
- ROBBIE: And anyway Herr Hitler is too easy to do, everybody can do him. Admittedly he is not portrayed on the wireless – but you just have to click your heels and scream. [*Grins*] No challenge for somebody with instinctive structure!
- Music playing* 915
- CLIVE: And tell me – what about what’s happening to the Jews there? In Germany?
- ROBBIE: [*Puzzled where this is leading*] The Jews? Well, there are some restrictions, aren’t there, temporary things going on ... because of the rebuilding of Germany. 920

Pause

- CLIVE: *So – this is our project. We will follow a day in the life of a Jewish man, a real day, a real man, though his name is changed. This is who you will be, Robbie. He is middle class, respectable, a lawyer, once a pillar of the community, who has also written some rather beautiful songs. We will follow him during a ‘normal day’ and see how many normal things he is prevented from doing, how many things we accept as our right have been taken away from him. And at the end of the day he is arrested. His liberty is taken away. You will portray this man and sing his songs.* 925
- ROBBIE: [*Very disappointed*] No, Clive, no – that’s absolutely out! Nobody will listen to something like that for a start –
- CLIVE: They will. This is how to make them listen ...
- ROBBIE: They want to forget about any difficulties out there! And I don’t want to be involved in politics either. I’m not allowed to associate myself with that. I *knew* this would start to happen, the spinning of a left wing web, communism, you’ll have me fighting in Spain soon, and not just on the radio! 930
- ISABEL: Neither of us are communists, Robbie, that isn’t the issue.
- CLIVE: [*To ROBBIE*] Stop jumping to conclusions –
- ROBBIE: You’re the one who’s jumping to conclusions ... We don’t *really* know what’s going on in Germany, do we? We don’t! And all their attitudes are different there, anyway, and we can’t *tell* them what to do, can we?! It’s not for us to lecture them ... And we certainly don’t want to annoy them – ... the whole idea is preposterous. 940
- CLIVE: You’re contradicting yourself, Robbie – you wanted the project to be much much more than apples, and now you’re running away from it.
- ROBBIE: Oh, I am, am I! I’m sorry I’ve had about all I can take from you, I have been patronised from the first moment – informed I do my work by accident, *despite myself*! I’m encouraged to make a fool of myself on that television experiment, because *you’re* interested. 945
- ISABEL: That was worth it, wasn’t it, Robbie?
- ROBBIE: [*Looking at both of them*] Everything is so clear to you two, isn’t it?! – So blindingly obvious ... with your surveys, and all the time you have to spare on just one topic ... Well, I don’t have that time, and I DON’T CARE IF I DISAPPOINT. 950
- CLIVE: But I do.
- ROBBIE: What does that mean – that’s meaningless ... You care if I disappoint you – that’s A LIE. I’m just a crude entertainer, a compère, who sings a bit and dances a bit, and has *everything* written for him. That’s me ...! And he *doesn’t care*. And now I’m off. The useful clown, that you found, that you picked for your own purposes, is scampering off – to the rest of his life! Which is looking pretty good at the moment ... Pretty bloody good! 955

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

The Walk to the Station.

The sound of taxis and distant train doors slamming, as if from a mainline railway station. During this scene the sound of trains and whistles growing gradually louder and louder, until they completely surround us. 970

| | | |
|----------|--|------|
| ROBBIE: | You really have to go? | |
| BERNARD: | Yes. I must go. I have to go back – my life is there. | |
| ROBBIE: | Yes, I know. [<i>He moves.</i>] In these last few minutes, Bernard – you must tell me what to do about Clive. [<i>Mimics</i>] Clive Lynn-Thomas. I can't get rid of him, he is pushing and pushing at me ... attacking my confidence all the time. But there's something so challenging about him as well. And he has such different values, he doesn't care about my show, what stars are on it ... [<i>Suddenly</i>] Which reminds me, I haven't heard if the Silver Minstrels are going to be on on Friday... | 975 |
| BERNARD: | [<i>With feeling</i>] To hell with the Silver Minstrels! | |
| ROBBIE: | You're right. Here you are, going in a few minutes, and I'm talking about the Silver Minstrels! | |
| | <i>Pause for a second; as ROBBIE looks at BERNARD, the sound of the trains and the platform whistles become louder.</i> | 985 |
| ROBBIE: | This is a shocking time to ask such a question ... but it is the sort of thing you often can only ask when somebody is about to leave. Not that I've ever asked a question like this before – | |
| BERNARD: | What is it, Robbie? | 990 |
| ROBBIE: | The Baron Freier von Brandis ... it's such a fantastic name ... | |
| BERNARD: | It's like something from the book, <i>The Prisoner of Zenda</i> ... I know. | |
| ROBBIE: | Is it your real name? Are <i>you</i> the Baron Freier von Brandis? | |
| BERNARD: | No. I'd like to say it's half my real name ... but it isn't. When I arrived at Woburn House, you know, where most aliens report in London, so many people were passing themselves off to each other with titles and funny names, I did so too. It's very useful for getting invited to parties, all sorts of things. | 995 |
| ROBBIE: | You're Jewish, aren't you? | 1000 |
| BERNARD: | Yes. [<i>Smiles</i>] That's correct. | |
| ROBBIE: | I thought so ... I knew it. [<i>He looks at BERNARD.</i>] It's awful to ask this now too – | |
| BERNARD: | Better to ask it, than to think about it after I've gone. | |
| ROBBIE: | How difficult are things for Jewish people, in Germany now? | 1005 |
| BERNARD: | There are problems, of course there are. It isn't good. I find it a difficult question to answer in this country. Because a few people ask you ... and you start to tell them – and you quickly realise they really don't want to know ... perhaps only half a sentence at the most ... | 1010 |
| ROBBIE: | Yes, I know. I suppose I'm like that ... | |
| BERNARD: | I tell you – I went to a very grand wedding in Buckinghamshire, with lots of people with names like Farquhar-Buzzard and Babbington-Semple, being a Baron was really useful, as you can imagine – 'You must know the von Stauffenbergs?' people kept asking me... . | 1015 |
| ROBBIE: | I wish I'd been there. [<i>He mimics in a foolish upper-class voice.</i>] As you passed yourself off as a Baron to the Mallenby-Deeleys – Erskine-Mars. | |
| BERNARD: | Yes, you would have been very interested. There was an Italian waiter who shouted at all these upper-class guests [<i>He mimics an Italian accent.</i>] 'You're taking the wrong plate! Stop it at once! <i>Stupido!</i> I'm telling you get in the queue and wait for your strawberries.' They were terrified of him! I wanted to support him, to shout out, 'Go on, get after them!' | 1020 |
| | | 1025 |

- ROBBIE: I love the idea.
 BERNARD: You were on the wireless, yes, [ROBBIE *turns.*] the night before, I was staying in this big house and they switched on the wireless and there you were.
- ROBBIE: I was! That's a wonderful picture! All of them listening to me ... 1030
 BERNARD: But they switched you off – and went out.
 ROBBIE: [*Loud*] I really must get off Friday nights! Everybody goes out ...!
 If I was on Monday nights, I'd be coming out of every window, in every street.
- Loud, piercing platform whistles* 1035
- ROBBIE: I'm sorry – I'm being incredibly self-centred ... absorbed in my show.
Another loud whistle
- BERNARD: So – this is goodbye then. [*He goes.*]
- ROBBIE: Goodbye ... [*As the whistles blow, ROBBIE calls powerfully.*] Be careful! Take care of yourself! 1040

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

Broadcasting House.

Clock ticking, after the shrill sound of the whistles. ASSISTANT and CLIVE together above the main set. 1045

- ASSISTANT: [*Very nervous*] 'This is the National Programme, copyright reserved ...' Just clearing my throat.
 CLIVE: It will be all right, just a few slow deep breaths.
 ASSISTANT: I can't believe this has happened already, I've only just got the standby job, and now here I am ... and all those people listening ... 1050
- CLIVE: They just hear the news, they don't see a face. That reassuring voice is what matters, be careful not to get too involved, that's all, too urgent – they don't want any immediacy. You're going into their living-rooms, they may even be eating ... they're used to the news being something far away. 1055
- ASSISTANT: That's right. I know ... you think I can do it?
 CLIVE: Of course you can.
 ASSISTANT: I will always be grateful for this, Mr Lynn-Thomas. I shan't forget it.
- Red light flicks on, above the main stage. ASSISTANT now alone, starts reading the news in perfect young BBC voice.* 1060
- ASSISTANT: 'This is the National Programme, copyright reserved. Here is the news summary and sports bulletins. They are followed by 'Friday Night at Eight', and then you will hear some stories of adventures at sea and on land. [*Pause*] Important changes in the German Cabinet are announced tonight, they affect principally two departments, that of War and Foreign Affairs.' 1065

- On stage MABS, DREDGE and the DANCING GIRLS stand waiting. DAPHNE and ROBBIE close to each other downstage.*
- ROBBIE: Promise me you are not upset. 1070
- DAPHNE: Why should I be upset?
- ROBBIE: Because I talked to *him*, I discussed things with him, without you present.
- DAPHNE: Why shouldn't you discuss things with him? He is a very rude man – but he's also highly intelligent and interesting. 1075
- ROBBIE: There's no *question* of me working with him ... spending days and days with him.
- DAPHNE: Well, I guessed you might feel like that.
- ROBBIE: And there's *absolutely* no question of me ever discussing things with him again – without you being there. 1080
- DAPHNE: That's good. That's reassuring.
- ROBBIE: We're a partnership. You are the structure of my whole life. [*Holding her, warm smile*] Aren't you, Daphne?! ... A partnership made in broadcasting heaven.
- DAPHNE: [*Warm laugh*] Speak for yourself! But I'm glad there will be no secrets between us. Nothing going on behind my back ... Everything involving us will be completely honest ... ? 1085
- ROBBIE: No secrets, ever. I swear –
- MILLY comes running on.*
- DAPHNE: Enough chatting, forty-five seconds everybody! [*She exits.*] 1090
- ROBBIE: [*Indicating DREDGE and the DANCING GIRLS*] Don't they look beautiful?
- DREDGE: We always look beautiful! Fat lot of good it does.
- ROBBIE: [*Grins*] People can sense it, I'm sure, they can feel you breathing, you *exude* through the air. 1095
- MABS: [*Studying his script*] Inspector Bonnington is going to Windsor Great Park today ... to solve the Gravel Path murder. And Sergeant Ostler goes fishing ... [*He mimics Bonnington.*] 'Windsor Great Park, not an area I know particularly well ... why can't the local chaps see to it, Ostler?' [*To ROBBIE*] I catch two brown trout – and have to cook them for you! ... And you are jolly polite to a duke ... 1100
- ASSISTANT: [*Reading the news above them*] 'In an important speech in the Czechoslovak Parliament today, the Prime Minister Hodza refers to Herr Hitler's speech and to that of Field Marshall Goering ... 1105
- MILLY: [*Looking up from her script*] So it's Amsterdam today. And my tulip song!
- ROBBIE: [*Listening to the news*] His protégé is reading the news, and I'm going to be talking to Milly about *tulips*!
- MILLY: [*Twittering on*] I've had an approach, I have to tell you, from 'Monday Night at Eight'. You wouldn't mind me going on there, would you? Of course it's a great honour to be on your show, but *they* have a hook up to America once every six months ... if it was one of those shows, I couldn't turn it down – not broadcasting to America! 1110
- ROBBIE: You *must* accept, Milly, of course. [*To himself, wistfully*] A hook up to America ... 1115

The red light goes on, the music intro starts.

- ROBBIE: [*Suddenly*] What if we tear up this tulip chatter, and talk about something completely different, Milly, just see what happens. 1120
Where the mood takes us?
- MILLY: Don't play jokes like that, Robbie, please.
- The other red light flicks on.*
- ROBBIE: [*Sings*] It's 'Friday Night at Eight', and these are the delights we 1125
have in store. Milly Dews is here again.
- MILLY: [*Reading*] Hello, everyone. Hello, I'm back again from my travels.
- ROBBIE: [*Improvising*] Could be the last time, folks, Milly is here!
- MILLY looks startled.*
- ROBBIE: [*Back on script*] You've been to Amsterdam among the canals 1130
and the tulips?
- MILLY: [*Reading*] Well, Robbie, I was singing, if not in the tulips, then
about the tulips. Red, red tulips. [*She bursts into a couple of
lines of the tulip song.*] That's just one of the songs I brought
back – for all of you – from old Amsterdam!
- BLACKOUT 1135
- MILLY continues to sing the tulip song during the scene change.*

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