



Pre-Release Copy

Ragtime Band

A play in two acts
by
Tony Layton

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By Tony Layton

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PREVIEW COPY

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Synopsis.

It's Christmas Day, 2050. A group of people is trying to exist on what is left of the world after a holocaust. Their memories and sense of humour help to sustain them, mainly, through what is probably the end of civilisation. The basic human frailty of turning a blind eye towards impending doom is what has led to this dire situation.

However, their plight has not gone unnoticed by Vox, the official inspector of the galaxy, and Chippy, his robotic helper, who have come to record what we have done to the "garden".

Vox is inspired by the spirit shown by the group and decides to give the human race a second chance. The garden is restored to its original splendour, but for how long?

Author's note.

Although this play was originally conceived for a small cast it has been designed for the director to be flexible with cast size. The play was originally performed with a cast of 35, therefore, directors should use the names of characters simply as a guide and not to be adhered to rigidly.

Characters

Mog	a female survivor
Rod	a male survivor
Saki	a female survivor
Tucker	a male survivor
Vox	an alien visitor
Chippy	a robotic assistant to the alien visitor

Ragtime band

The set is a scrapyard of modern paraphernalia. TV's, radios, cookers, microwave ovens, parts of cars. A cold light pervades the scene. The cast are dressed in costumes designed for the ritual they are performing; they are essentially primitive with evidence of modern influence. They are creating complex drum rhythms with pieces of pipe and oil drums and tin cans of various sizes. To this rhythm they perform an energetic dance in a circle ; each of the group takes their turn to enter the centre of the circle where they perform in contrasting styles, one energetic, one acrobatic, one sensuous, one robotic. The dance builds to a climax where in the final section they perform in well rehearsed harmony in a style reminiscent of the best of Zulu tribal dancing. With a grand climax of screaming, drumming and shouting the dance ends. Rod picks up the frame of a TV set and places his head inside it.

Rod And now it's time for "Neighbours".

He "la-la's" the signature tune. Mog crosses to "turn" it off.

Mog No thank you, ta very much. I want the news.

Tucker *(Holding a portable aerial on top of his head.)* This is the world service of the BBC, and here is the news on Christmas Day, 2050. The news is that there is no news. Yes folks, for the fifth year in a row there is no news.

Saki The weather will remain dry with the sky changing from red to yellow with a hint of green in the east.
The cold spell will continue indefinitely.

Rod *(He sings, holding a broken umbrella over his head and dancing around the others.)*

"I'm singing in the dust,
Just singing in the dust.
Not a wonderful feeling
But I don't make a fuss.
There's dirt on my feet,
There's not much to eat.
C'mon with the sun
We're ready for heat.
All the plants and the trees
Went off with the breeze
The world gave a cough
And a gigantic sneeze.
No cars, boats or trains,
No supersonic planes.
I'm singing, *(slowing down)* and dancing in the dust."

Tucker Bravo ! Bravo !

A cold breeze moans in the background. Mog lifts the mood. She picks up a portable radio.

Mog No trannies blasting your ear drums now though, is there, like there used to be ! You'd go to the beach...if you were dead lucky you'd find this spot between smelly, oily bodies. You'd slip in between them, usually sideways, close your eyes hoping for some peace and quiet...and along would come this scantily clad maiden carrying this enormous ghetto-blaster. Her mission... to destroy silence !! *(She raps loudly around the stage. The rest become a group on a crowded beach complete with sun-glasses and funny hats)*

"The beat sounds cool, the beat sounds cool,
Gotta shout it, gotta scream it you crazy fools.
Gonna scream it high, don't like it low,
Gotta have the noise wherever I go!"

She continues to repeat this loudly over dialogue.

Tucker Clear off!

Saki Get lost!

Rod Turn it down!

Tucker Cretin !
Saki Hooligan !
Rod Vandal !
Tucker Bog brain !
Saki Moron !

The group repeats the above sequence in rap fashion increasing in volume and pace until Mog is eventually subdued. She stares at the audience in disbelief. Rod takes the radio off her gently, smiling. She smiles back believing him to be a friend. Once in control of the radio he becomes a fiend and relishes tearing it apart and eating it. He throws it onto a heap of rubbish. Mog goes to clout him but they are divided by Tucker.

Tucker Got bad though, didn't it ! That's the trouble with being packed like sardines. And the politicians did nothing.

Mog stands on a box becoming a politician. The rest become a huddle of hecklers.

Mog As your candidate for Much Snoring by the Wheeze, I assure you most categorically that I will do everything in my power to get rid of this plague of noise that is ruining our peace and quiet.
Rod You said that in 2035 and in 2040 and now you're saying it again. Why should we believe you? Tell us that! You're a bag of wind.
Mog I repeat. I assure you that....
Saki You can start with next door's Jack Russell. It doesn't stop. Day and night yap,yap,yap !Now it's got pups. They ought to stick a cork in it or something !
Mog All of this is of the utmost concern I assure you, and I...
Rod All the same you lot. You ought to stick a cork in it if you ask me !
Tucker I've got a hi-fi raver next to me. I turn on my classical rock n' roll discs and he hits me with a polyphonic full sound real cannon effects from his "1812". I've got cracks in the walls.
Saki It's driving me barmy all this noise. You can't even go shopping without it . The supermarket's like a disco!

Disco music. Mog and Rod do a stacking shelves dance routine up stage, and Tucker and Saki dance through their dialogue.

Saki Pears, apples, grapes and plums.
Tucker Jaffa cakes, ice cream and chocolate yum-yums.
Saki Fresh Greek yogurt and Cheshire cheese.
Tucker Marzipan, sausages and mushy peas.
Saki Sesame seeds and frozen fish.
Tucker Semi-skimmed milk and a T.V. dish.
Saki Hey look ! It's passed its "sell by" date.
Tucker Oh yeah! Don't know why you shop here. The fruit's rotten, the milk's off and the bread's always dry.
Saki Yeah, I know. But the music's better here than Sainsbury's!!

Music stops. The group splits up. A moment of stillness. Mog comes down centre. A cold wind blows.

Mog Quiet now though.
Rod Very.
Mog Yeah! Very quiet ! Miss the blackbirds, I do. Warm summer evenings , sun going down....and blackbirds .
Saki The sky-lark was one of my favourites. I liked the sky-lark.
Rod What did that sound like, then ?
Saki You're jokin' ?
Rod What ?
Saki You really don't know ?
Rod So I'm not a clued up.... birdologist !
Saki Ornithologist!
Rod Hornythingy , or whatever. Anyway, what did it sound like ?
Saki Well, it was something like...(she prepares herself to whistle but then changes her mind)...no, I think not.
Rod Go on !
Saki No !

Rod Give us a hint. Just a little whistle.
 Saki It's no use Rod I can't. Sorry, but I can't.
 Rod Describe it then. Go on , describe it !
 Saki You can't describe it. It's impossible to describe.
 Rod My mother used to say there's no such word as can't.
 Saki It was a sort of high-pitched melodious trilling sound. Satisfied?
 Rod I see, Saki A high-pitched, melodious trilling sound. Something like this?

He flutters around Saki "twittering". Saki holds up an imaginary rifle and shoots him down. Rod performs a dramatic death ending up flat on his back.

Tucker I'd give anything for a plate of mushy peas.
 Mog Just think ! All we've got is the sound in our heads. We'll never hear it again. All those beautiful sounds, gone..for ever.
 Tucker Mushy peas, soggy chips and battered cod with extra batter bits thrown in, swimmin' in vinegar and showered with salt. Wonderful!
 Saki Tucker !
 Tucker What ?
 Saki Shut it ! You're torturing my taste buds, Tucker!
 Saki Every Saturday night..down the Chippy (*Saki becomes the server, the rest customers*) That's one cod,peas and chips,love..and ...
 Mog And a pickled egg..no..make it two.
 Saki Those to go with the fish,peas and chips,love ?
 Mog Yeah !
 Tucker And...what you havin' ?
 Rod Double chips, two battered sausages and fried onion rings. I'm ravenous !
 Tucker And one plaice for me love.
 Saki No chips ?
 Tucker No thanks !
 Saki Diet is it ?
 Rod He wants a body like mine.
 Saki Must be desperate !
 Rod It's all solid muscle under there. Solid !
 Mog He's got one of those mirrors that makes you go all skinny and he looks at himself all day.
 Rod Rubbish !
 Mog And once a week he does ten press-ups to keep in shape.
 Rod Fifty.....at least fifty! Sometimes sixty !
 Saki You must look like Superman under that lot. You'll be wearing your underpants outside your trousers next.
 Rod Very funny old joke !
 Saki Four pounds fifty "p" please love.
 Tucker Thanks love ! Right, whose paying ? (*All freeze in 'shock'*) Then the walk home.

They 'eat' their chips

Mog In the rain.
 Saki Raindrops dripping off our anoraks into the soggy chips.
 Rod Cars deliberately belting through puddles, showering you with icy cold water as they flash by.
 All. Whooooooshhhhh ! Roadhog!!
 Mog I'm soakin!
 Saki So am I.
 Tucker But...so what !
 Mog That didn't worry us.
 Saki Took more than a shower of mucky water to dampen our spirits. We were young.
 Rod Ambitious!
 Mog Full of hope.
 Tucker ..and how we philosophised.

Rod I don't remember that.

Mog Course you do.

Saki We did it all the time.

Rod Did we?

Saki Never stopped.

Rod Didn't we?

Tucker You were quite good at it Rod

Rod Was I ?

Tucker You were going to change the world.

Rod What's the biggest problem facing the world today?

Mog They always put the best films on late at night. How do people get up in the morning?

Rod Do you call that a big problem?

Mog For me it's a big problem. I'm not like these potato couches that stare at anything all night.

Rod It's couch potatoes.

Mog What?

Rod You said potato couches.

Mog What I did say was.... that I am very selective in what I watch and I can't always watch what I want to watch.

Rod And that's a problem?

Mog Of course it's a problem. I need sleep and the T.V. companies don't want me to sleep. They want me to stay awake all night and watch American Football or Sumo wrestling, and then they dangle the carrot of a great movie, a movie I've always wanted to see..and it comes on at two in the morning. Two in the morning !

Tucker Why don't you tape it?

Mog I would..but you need a degree in electronics to understand the instructions.

Rod So...here we are...the world in crisis and all you can think about are the T.V. schedules. Brilliant!

Saki I think one of the biggest problems is...

Rod Yes..?

Saki ...is...what came first, the chicken or the egg ?

Rod Not that old one !

Saki Right! If you're so clever,you tell us ! Come on! A chicken comes out of the egg...no egg,no chicken.You need a chicken to lay an egg. So how was the first chicken born ? Answer that one mastermind !

Tucker What I don't understand is...you have space, right? Here we are standing on top of the world ...nothing above us.

Mog Only clouds.

Tucker Okay clouds...but above them...nothing...just space with galaxies and planets and stars going on for ever. And there it is.

Rod Forget about space and chickens and eggs. I think our biggest problem is....

Mogidiots who think they're intellectual.

Rod All right pea-brain. You'd better run on home. You'll miss the test card on BBC2.

Mog Funny !!

Rod Not as funny as your haircut!

Mog Very good! Is that supposed to be humour?

Saki He's been reading Corn Flake packets again.

Tucker So what is it, Rod , this problem you're on about ?

Rod Another time.

Mog He's sulking!

Rod Rubbish!

Saki Whose got a little cob on then?

Mog Aah! Has diddums got a liddle cobbywobby on den? Have a chippy-whippy in your liddle mouthy-wouthy. Open wide!

Rod Get lost!

Mog Good evening viewers ! Your reporter is speaking to that famous thinker and philosopher Rod Malloy who is about to reveal another wonderful thought from his remarkable brain.
Saki Rod Malloy is a recluse by nature and only ventures out to the chippy once a week.

Mog and Saki jostle Rod.

Mog Oh possessor of the admired brain, tell us, please tell us what enlightening thoughts you have for us today !
Saki Lighten our darkness!
Mog Guide us !
Saki Tell us ! Speak to us ! Open up our minds !
Mog Yes ! Tell us now ! Now !

Rod extracts himself.

Rod Gerrof ! That's the trouble! There's not enough space! It's too crowded. The human race is like a plague....a diseaselike bacteria on the skin of an orange. You know the way an orange goes rotten...how the green rot kills the fruit...
Mog Ughhhh !
Tucker Yea ! Where can you park these days ? It's a nightmare! He's right !
Saki So now I'm bacteria.
Rod Look! Imagine you're light years away in space. You see the earth. It's the size of an orange through your telescope. What do you see ? You see blue and grey. You see the seas, continents and clouds. You might pick out a small pin prick of light that is London or New York. But people? No. Too small to see and yet what is killing the sea, what is destroying the rain forests, who makes acid rain , who made a hole in the ozone layer??
Mog Yes folks, these questions have been brought to by courtesy of the Jaffa Orange Fruit Company.
Saki Drink fresh Jaffa juice every day
Tucker ...because it's naturally good !
Mog and Saki TARRA !!

Lighting change.Rod is isolated in a spot.

Rod And here is the news. Government figures released today reveal that there is expected to be a 60% increase in the world's population by the year 2045. When questioned on these alarming figures a Vatican spokesman is quoted as saying " We have no intention of changing our policy towards birth control!" A government spokeswoman said in response "No change could mean no future for millions already born." In the tented cities of Wiltshire and Yorkshire the problems of over-crowding are already keenly felt as thousands of children are without proper sanitation.

Mog moves across to Rod

Mog Turn it off. It wasn't all doom and gloom in 2040. We enjoyed ourselves, didn't we ?
All. Yeah!

Lighting change. Disco music. All four are dancing close together.

Tucker Don't know why we come here !
Saki It's great!
Mog Yeah! It's ace!
Saki Too good!
Mog Hot,hot,hot !
Rod You're telling me. It's too hot and it's too crowded.
Mog Don't start Rod!
Rod What ?
Mog You start on that again...
Rod I only said it was crowded.
Saki We're trying to enjoy ourselves if you don't mind !
Tucker We know we're all going to die some day but we don't go on and on about it.
Saki And you didn't have to say that either.
Tucker What ?

Saki It's gettin' impossible to have a good time around here.
Mog Yeah ! Why don't you two happy souls go and jump in the lake !
Tucker All I said was...
Saki You're as bad as one another.
Mog Ignore them, Saki Hey, I love this one. It's one of my favourites.

The music grows louder. The girls perform a complex dance movement which the boys ape. When the girls realise this they stop dancing to watch the boys, feigning disapproval which forces the boys to stop gradually. Good humour returns and the four perform an over the top routine until blackout. Lights up on cold scene.

Tucker Fabulous days they were. Fabulous! Life was full. The gang stuck together through thick and thin and we had a great time.
Rod Fabulous?
Tucker Yeah! Fabulous!
Mog He'll be sayin' "fab" next.
Saki Sounds like a drop-out from the 1960's.
Mog He was only born eighty years too late, that's all !
Tucker What's wrong with fabulous?
Saki Please ! We do live in the 21st. century.
Rod Hey ! Remember Disney Land ? That new one on Corfu? The Roller Coaster ?

Lighting change and fairground sounds.

All. Wheeeeeeeeeeee!!!
Saki It's horrible !
Tucker Hold on !
Mog I'm going to be sick.
Rod Over we goooooooooooooo!
All. Wheeeeeeeeeeee!!!
Mog I want to get off.
Saki Where's my stomach ?
All. Wheeeeeeeeeeee!!!
Rod Tremendous !
Tucker Down! Down! Down! Yeah !!!
All. Wheeeeeeeeeeee!!! Screeeeeeeeech !!!!!

They stagger around the stage.

Saki I need somewhere still.
Mog Same here.
Saki Never again.
Tucker How about the jungle rapids? You go down this raging river on a raft and you're attacked by crocodiles and poisonous water snakes, and you go over this waterfall.....
Mog Shut up, Tucker! Go and play with the piranhas.
Saki Look! Food!
Rod *(as American salesman)* Come and buy your Hot Dogs, your Triple-Decker , Super-Duper Munchy Burgers, your King-Size straight from Italia Pizza's; you name the filling ..we got it! We got Candy-Floss in your regular pink, blue and yellow. Then we got your striped, polka-dots and multi-coloured with your own personal Picasso abstract painting engraved on it. Yeah folks! This a high-brow joint here. We got ice-cream; we got raspberry and strawberry, we got rum and raisin,we got chocolate...plain and milk, we got pistachio, Knickerbocker-Glories, Peach-Melba's, Uncle Sam's Coffee and Cream Dream Time Special with and without walnuts. You want it , we got it. Yes madam, and what can I get for you ?
Saki Vanilla cornet,please.
Rod We got raspberry, we got strawberry, we got chocolate, coffee, lemon , orange ,rum, brandy and coke flavours. Vanilla we ain't got.
Saki But I want vanilla.

Rod Every day I get one. Why me? They come and they say "I want vanilla!", and I say ..There's no excitement in Vanilla. There's no call for vanilla. This is the 21st century .

Mog Okay ! One Caribbean Hot Shot, One Cowboy Buckeroo with a slug of Rye, One Oriental Surprise with mango juice, and one Oasis Special with oil of palm and yam essence.

Rod Now you're talkin'! Now you're talkin'! Comin' up! Comin' up !

A sequence of all four battling against their enormous ice-creams to a background of fairground music and flashing lights.

Mog I feel sick!

Saki Hey look ! "History of the world on the gigantic dome screen with polyphonic sound."

Tucker Let's go !

Blackout and sinister "space" music. A taped narrator speaks over music with appropriate images flashed up on a screen up stage during the narration.

Narrator In the beginning.....there was space , black, limitless , lifeless space. A silent,giant mass floated alone ...a cold,dark sphere with a belly of fire. Until....(*deep rumbling*)...until...(*louder rumbling*)...an explosion ripped through the darkness. (*Loud explosion with bright, dancing flashes of laser light over stage and audience, with explosions continuing for several seconds accompanied by the sounds of screeching space debris.*) Here we witness earth...our home to be..a ball of flame, searing through the new universe to find its own special place amongst its sister stars. (*Dramatic music underlines the drama.*) Billions of years pass by until we see our earth with a cool crust with a core of fire...just like its parent. But sometimes this crust is fragile and thin and through it pours its life-blood,the liquid fire of creation...natures own spectacular firework display. (*The stage is filled with loud bangs and flashes of colour.*) Millions of years go by....gases form , an atmosphere is created,a protective layer surrounds the planet helping to keep out those deadly space bullets...the meteorites and the asteroids. (*Sounds of a shower of meteorites crossing the sky.*) The seas form and from the seas comes life.

A basic life-form is projected onto the screen.

Mog It's you Rod!

Rod Shurrup !

Blackout. Lights up .

Salesman Hot dogs! C'mon get your hot dogs, hamburgers, fresh apple pie. You wan't it? We gorrit! Hot dogs! C'mon get your hot dogs.

All (*Overlapping*) Two hot dogs! One with onions. Double-decker, relish and peppers. Crusty apple pie, fresh cream. Mini-steak, green salad on the side with mushrooms. Two king size burgers with relish. One chicken nugget and fries.

Repeat until served. They force down the food , quickly at first then slowly. The Dead March accompanies the last attempts to finish the meal.

Mog I feel sick.

Saki Give over,Mog !

Mog I do, honest.

Saki Don't think about it.

Mog I'm not kiddin' ! Ohhhhh!

Saki runs off with Mog.

Tucker It was great that history thing.

Rod Yeah !

Tucker Mind-boggling you know !

Rod What ?

Tucker When you think , if you had a twenty metre long time scale of the world , the existence of man could be represented by a thin , one centimetre line at the end of it. That's mind-boggling that is. (*He holds up a finger and thumb to estimate a centimetre.*) That's all we add up to.

Rod How about the Rocket Ride?

Tucker That's all we add up to? I'm off!

Rod Where?

Tucker Jungle rapids, then the Skymaster, then the Overland Stage. No time to waste.(Exits)

Rod Hey ! Hold on ! Hold on ! Flippin' charmin'! Great ! Alright ! Don't worry about me , Pal! So there I was... alone in this crowd of a million pushing people, and I found myself being eased into this tent; teepee actually. In the centre was this American Indian Medicine Man"Running Fox", sitting crossed-legged in front of a smoking fire. (*Mog and Saki squat in a corner.*) In the shadows I could see these two squaws beating quietly on buffalo hide drums. I sat down and for some reason I felt a bit afraid, but I tried not to let on. Then they all started chanting. I wanted to leave but my legs wouldn't let me. They had turned into pink blancmange with an attack of the colly-wobbles !

Tucker (*as a Red Indian*) Hi-ya-ya-ya-Ho-hi-ya-ya-ya-ya-ho-ho-ho-Hi-ya-ya-ya-Ho-hi-ya-ya-ya-ya-ho-ho-ho.

The chant continues.

Rod A few moments later I was hooked. I was in a deep trance-like state. I was floating on a golden cloud over the happy hunting grounds of my brief life.

The chanting stops.

Tucker I see much wealth here.

Rod Excellent ! Euro dollars or gold?

Tucker Not gold. Not dollar.

Rod Yen ? Pesetas ? Francs ? Lire ?

Tucker None of these. I see much wealth of years.

Rod Years ?

Tucker Many years stretch out for you across the wide plains of life.

Rod But will I be rich ?

Tucker You will have fortune enough for one man.

Rod Fortune ?

Tucker Yes. In your old age you will have a fortune of memories to brighten up the cold winter nights.

Rod Do you see me living in a super-luxury , multi-million pound module with air-conditioning and pollution control, or will it be one of those cheapy one million pound inter-linked units.

Tucker MMMMMMMmmmmmmmm! I see a capsule.

Rod Sounds like the module. Can you see the surround-sound quadraphonic system, the virtual reality game corner and the three dimensional movie scanner.

Tucker Nooooooo !

Rod No ? What about transport? I do have at least a turbo-charged jet-copter ?

Tucker Aaaaaahhh ! That is still undecided ?

Rod Why ?

Tucker Future like flowing stream, goes this way and that. Sometimes direction changes. A rock falls into the river and flow changes. You will flow with the stream. You have much luck. Thankyou !

Holds out an open palm for payment.

Rod I slipped him a fifty pound piece which considering that my allowance only came to £1,000 a week, was, in my opinion, fairly reasonable. He disagreed !

Tucker Cheapskate! Clear off ya bum! You insult my name ! Here! (*Throws the coin back*) Buy some budgie seed. I hope your luck sinks in the river and sticks in the slime of time. Creep!

Rod He was seriously annoyed. I found Tucker and the girls on the roundabout riding plastic horses.

The group ride around in a circle . Fairground music plays.

Tucker Hey Rod ! That Jungle Rapid ride is fantastic. Why don't you give it a try ?

Rod Anything to do with rivers, streams...count me out. From now on I'm allergic to water. Especially water that flows over mud !! Hey, this is good! This is wonderful !

Music fades with blackout. Back to cold light and haunting breeze of opening. Saki and Mog are collecting various bits of debris to build a tree-like structure. Tucker drags on a weird, Heath Robinson type machine. The object of the machine is to provide power to a single electric bulb which is provided by pedalling furiously. Rod has a book in his hand and positions himself next to the bulb. He opens the book with elaborate ceremony and nods to Tucker indicating that he is now ready. Tucker proceeds to pedal which causes the machine to clatter noisily. When Tucker reaches full speed the bulb begins to glow allowing Rod to make out the print on the book, but only just. The girls are resigned to watching.

Rod (*Reading over the noise*) Scrooge pressed his nose against the frosted window and looked into the warm room where his assistant, Bob Cratchett was sitting surrounded by his family. His small , white, frail

son, Tiny Tim held a glass high above his head and said, "God bless us all, and Mr. Scrooge. God bless us one and all. A merry Christmas everyone." Tears formed in Scrooge's hard.... *(He is losing the fight against the noise)* Tears formed in Scrooge's hard eyes. His soul began to....

Tucker stops pedalling and half stumbles off the machine, exhausted. The bulb goes out.Saki and Mog perform a slow hand clap.

Mog Wonderful !
Saki Stunning !
Mog Absolutely first-class !
Saki Wouldn't have missed it for the world.
Mog Definitely one of the high points of 2050 !
Rod Ignore them, Tucker At least we're making some attempt to brighten up Christmas.
Mog And what do you think we're doing ?
Rod You tell us!
Mog This is a tree.
Tucker Call that a tree?
Mog In fact it's a Norwegian Spruce.
Rod A Norwegian Spruce ? I see! Tucker,what do you think?
Saki Don't ask him. He can't tell one tree from another.
Tucker I know the difference between an oak tree and a lavatory.
Mog *(Not amused)* Fantastically funny.
Saki Radical ! No imagination have they!
Rod I tell you what was funny. Your pathetic attempt to make candles.
Mog At least we made a fire.
Tucker You made a fire alright. You burnt down our hut in the process. It took us weeks to build that.
Saki It was an accident.
Mog Make yourselves useful. Find something to decorate the tree.
Rod Thanks for the offer but...
Tucker ...we've got more important things to do.
Saki Such as ?
Tucker Such as.....
Rod Such asimproving the windmill.
Tucker Yes!
Mog The windmill! That's a laugh. You've been working on it for....how long?
Saki Three years at least.
Mog It'll be great ,you said. We'll be able to pump up water from the well,you said. We'll be able to generate electricity,you said.
Rod Considering we haven't any proper tools.....
Mog Then make tools , or find them, or improvise. Think ! Think ! I don't believe you sometimes ! We can't even keep warm in winter.
Rod *(Slapping himself on the wrist)* Naughty,naughty ! Silly Rod ! Naughty boy ! Make every one warm right away ! Okay ! I will. I'll turn on the fire.OOPS! Silly me! No electricity ! Then get some wood. Right I will. Oops! Silly me again. Trees all gone. Fine. How about coal? Good thinking,I will. But it's dark down there! So, light a torch! A taper! A naked flame? Hold on! Gas ! Correct ! I know! Peat! Good idea! I'll get some.Where is it? Ten miles or so! How do I get there? You walk,idiot! But it's getting dark. I need a light. We definitely need electricity. I know! How about static. *(He runs on the spot.)* If I swing my arms around as I run,who knows I could produce some sparks. Can you see the sparks? Can anyone see the sparks? *(All the rest enjoy this spectacle.)* This is great! This is good! I feel sparks of electricity running through me. I'm heating up . The heats building up. I'm on fire. Quick! Someone put a bulb in my mouth. Let's see the light. I must have a kilowatt stored up here. *(Mog puts a light bulb in Rod's mouth. He stops running and blows into the bulb several times before giving up.)* No go! So much for science. However, we will persevere. Onward! We are not daunted. We will re-discover e.l.e.c.t.r.i.c.i.t.y !!
Mog No chance !

Rod I see. No chance . Tell you what, Mog , my old pal,mate,buddy, for you I pose a very simple task. A very simple task. If you can do this thing.....

Mog What is it ?

Rod Patience ! If you can do it you get my .. *(he runs to a box and takes out a pocket watch)* ... antique gold watch. Ooh look! Her greedy eyes are sparkling. *(He dangles the watch in front of her and sings...)*

"When Irish eyes are smilin'
Sure 'tis like the morn in spring"

Mog He gets worse !

Rod See! It winds up. Keeps perfect time.Tick-tock,tick-tock. And for this little gem of man's ingenuity all you have to do is draw a perfect circle.

Mog A circle ? Is that all ! No problem! *(She picks up a stick and draws a circle in the dust.)* There !

Rod Is that it ?

Mog You asked for a circle. That's a circle ! Hand it over, sunbeam !

Rod What do you think, Tucker? Is that what you would call a perfect circle ?

Tucker I'd say it was a very good likeness of a squashed tomato, personally.

Rod Saki ? What is your considered opinion ? Remember, I did say perfect.

Saki Well...

Rod No favouritism now.In this case we want the truth,the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Now then ! Perfect or imperfect ?

Saki Imperfect !

Mog How can I draw a perfect circle ? I haven't got a compass have I ! Give me a compass, I'll draw a circle.

Rod The lady hasn't got a compass .Has anyone got a compass? No ? It looks like you'll have to make one.

Mog Sure ! Give me the tools and I'll make a compass. I think you think we're helpless. We're not helpless! Give me the tools and I'll make a compass. Come on !

Rod Wish we could help but we can't I'm afraid. You'll have to make the tools yourself. All you've got to do is build a whacking great furnace and....I assume you are familiar with the steel making process ? What are you going to use for fuel ? You need protective clothing. Where'd you get that from ?

Mog What is this ? Mastermind,or somethin' ?

Lighting change and re-group.

Tucker Welcome to this bumper edition of "Ego Trip". Yeah ! This is the game that rewards brain power with cash power. Yes folks, at stake tonight is a total cash prize of twenty billion pounds.

All OOOOOOooooo!!!

Tucker Yes I said twenty billion pounds, and I mean sterling. These three brave contestants here have the opportunity of either becoming wealthy beyond their wildest dreams or , if they should lose, they will face the rigours of survival in a desolate landscape without water,food or comfort of any kind whatsoever. But let's not look on the dark side for a moment. Let's meet our three brave heroes.

Mog My name is Eloise Finckleburger. I run a world-wide chain of fast-food restaurants. Eating is one of my favourite sports . I also enjoy playing table-tennis with my baby brother,but sometimes I use a bat. *(sniggers)* Only joking.....er...naturally.

Tucker Thankyou Eloise and what a wonderful sense of humour hasn't she folks.Our next contestant is....

Rod Sinclair Prendiville Fergus Marmaduke Smythe. Retired professor of philosophy,Cambridge and Harvard. And my hobbies are gardening and cross-words.

Tucker Very interesting, professor.Let's hope we don't have any cross words here tonight though.

Rod Very droll. Do you think we could get on with it ?

Tucker Yes..er..and finally..

Saki Jane Scrimp.

Tucker Jane Scrimp !

Saki Yes. Jane Scrimp.

Tucker I see. So tell us Jane Scrimp what is it you do for a living ? *(Saki mumbles a reply.)* I'm sorry ...we didn't catch that.

Saki I'm the Prime Minister.

Tucker The Prime Minister ? Never mind Jane. I suppose someone has to do it. So...here we go. You at home can play as well.See if you can beat our super-egos here to the draw. First question; everyone ready ?

All Yes !
 Tucker Correct !! Just a joke ,folks. First question...How do you make a wheel ?
 All You...er...you get....er...er...er...
 Tucker Next question. How do you make titanium ?
 All Er...er...er....er...
 Tucker Next question. How would you make a ball of string?
 All Er...you get ...erm...fibre....er...grass....twist..
 Tucker Next question. Could you make a pencil,type HB ? *(Silence.)* Could you design a simple radio receiver?
 How about a telephone? Could you design a machine to put the perforations into a roll of toilet paper?
 Could you make a pane of glass? How do you measure the speed of light? Could you make a clock
 from scratch? What is the formula for plastic? How do you make dynamite? How do you make a ping-
 pong ball? Could you design a paper-making machine? Given the basic ingredients of rocks, minerals
 and water, could you make a rocket ship to reach the moon? Could you make a pin? ... Well, and how
 did you all get on at home? Better than our contestants I hope. For them it's back to the stone age
 I'm afraid. Better luck next time.

Lighting change. Rod dangles the watch in front of Mog.

Rod Tick-tock !
 Mog Clever clogs !

Rod places the watch back in the box ,picks up a car tyre and rolls it across to Mog.

Rod We could probably make one of those in two or three thousand years,with a bit of luck. So before you
 tell us to think, you think! We're off to tilt at the windmill.

*Tucker and Rod exit. Mog rolls the tyre angrily after Rod We hear crashing and yells off stage as the tyre finds its target.
 Pleased with her success Mog returns to Saki and they continue to decorate the tree.*

Mog They're right. It's nothing like a Norwegian spruce.
 Saki I don't know ? With a little imagination.....
 Mog *(Angrily)* It's nothing like it !!
 Saki Hey ! This is me. This is Saki you're talking to. We've got a pact,you and me. Remember ? No one
 freaks out. No-one panics. We keep calm. We hold on to our sense of humour and we stick together.
 Okay ?
 Mog Sorry....I....
 Saki We've survived so far ,haven't we ? Mog ! Haven't we?
 Mog Suppose so.
 Saki You suppose so ? There's no suppose so about it. We're still here ,and as long as we're here we don't
 give up.
 Mog What's the point ?
 Saki This isn't like you.
 Mog We're living in a scrap-yard. The world is one big decaying dump. We're like rag-merchants, living on
 the scraps of civilisation. And another thing !
 Saki What ?
 Mog I checked the tins yesterday.
 Saki I don't want to hear !
 Mog I checked the tins and there's...
 Saki I don't want to.....
 Mogand there's fifty days left,Saki ! Fifty days !
 Saki I told you I didn't want to hear.
 Mog You've got to listen. You've got to face reality.
 Saki What's the point ? What is the point ?
 Mog The point is we need to plan.
 Saki I don't want to think about it.
 Mog In fifty days, unless something turns up we begin to die.
 Saki If it happens it happens, but it might not happen.
 Mog I hope you believe in miracles.

Saki Who knows ?
Mog Because as sure as eggs are eggs the writing's on the wall, Saki. And...as far as we know....as far as we've been able to make out ...it looks like ...we are the last.
Saki Don't be stupid ! We don't know that.
Mog To think that all those great centuries have led to this. All that music...all those books...all that technology...all gone.
Saki It's at this point we hear plaintive violins playing gently in the background.
Mog Dust ! Forgotten ! It's as if it never existed.
Saki Cut it out,Mog ,will you ! *(Mog picks up a music-box and opens it.It plays a Christmas Carol. She takes out a small silver pine cone.)* Look at that!
Saki A pine cone ? Where'd that come from ?
Mog It's been locked in here for years. Must have been ten or eleven when I put it in there. It was a treasure. Still is.

She places the cone back in the box and places it on the tree. Lights slowly fade on the scene. Lights up on Rod and Tucker who are struggling with the spars of a Spanish-type windmill. They are tying old shirts and sheets to the spars to act as sails. They hold the main spar upright which takes all their strength and expertise. They ad-lib slightly panicky orders to one another during this process. Eventually the main spar is held firmly between them.

Tucker Now what ?
Rod We wait.
Tucker For what ?
Rod For someone to take our photograph. What do you mean, "For what"? For the breeze.
Tucker What if it doesn't work ?
Rod It'll work. It's got to work.
Tucker The others didn't work. Can't see this working either.
Rod I'm not going back to those two to tell them it doesn't work. It's got to work ! It's got to work ! *(Tucker laughs to himself)* What's the joke?
Tucker Thinking of that day we took out your father's vintage car .
Rod The old Stutz !
Tucker That's it! The Stutz Bearcat. She was beautiful. That cream and chrome dazzled you when the sun shone on it.

Lights cross-fade to the girls who are admiring the imaginary car.

Saki Didn't know his old man had this.
Mog Look at that red leather.
Saki And all those brass dials. It's gorgeous !
Mog It was covered in plastic in a barn until his dad died.

Rod enters carrying a petrol can and wearing helmet and goggles, followed by Tucker.

Rod What do you think of her? *(The girls fall about laughing when they see Rod)* Fine. Go ahead ! Laugh. Enjoy yourselves ! *(He pours petrol into the car.)* And when I'm on the open road I'll wave as I go by.
Mog He's got petrol !
Rod Very bright !
Saki All the petrol ran out ...when was it ?
Tucker 9th of September, 2037.
Rod Dad kept it in a sealed container for a rainy day. But I say who needs the rain. Today we're going to be the only petrol-driven car on the road. So look out you gutless, solar driven wimps. Here we come ! *(Tucker prepares to turn the starting handle, the others get into the car.)* Advance magneto, pump petrol, hold out choke and NOW! *(Tucker turns the handle; the engine splutters and stops.)* Come on you little beauty ! Come on! NOW! *(Tucker turns the handle, the engine splutters and bursts into life. Tucker jumps into the car and the engine stops. A general moan goes up and they all get out of the car.)* I don't understand it. My father swore by this car. It's got to work ! It's just got to work !
Mog Perhaps it's dead.
Saki Yea ! Maybe it wasn't designed to run for over a hundred years.
Rod What do you mean ? This car is immaculate . It's like the day it came out of the showroom. We've loved this car. I've spent days polishing the chrome and the leather. This car has got eternity built into

it.It's solid. And it's got to work! *(He turns the handle violently and the engine splutters and settles into a regular firing pattern.)* Get in ! *(They get into the car. They sing a short,raucous selection of early 19th century songs, e.g."Daisy,Daisy", "My Old Man Says Follow The Van", "Champagne Charlie". The car pulls up and they get out. Rod presents a picnic hamper from the boot.)* All the trimmings. Dig in !

Mog A picnic !
Rod Open the bubbly,Tucker!
Saki Bubbly as well ?
Mog We are posh!
Rod And why not. It's the old girls last day out. She deserves it.
Saki Look at that down there !

Sounds of creaking metal doors swinging in the breeze.

Rod The old M4!
Saki Rusting hulks as far as you can see.
Tucker Miles of 'em ! Sad isn't it !
Mog I don't know ? Rabbits like it.
Rod To think, I was nicked for speeding on that once.
Mog Bet you couldn't even walk on it now.
Rod Wouldn't really fancy it anyway. They say at night you can hear weird noises coming from the twisted , tangled wrecks !
Tucker Yeah ?
Rod Yeah !
Tucker What sort of weird noises ?
Rod You don't want to know.
Tucker I do! What sort of noises? Animals and stuff ?
Rod Human noises !
Tucker Humans don't live down there. It's full of rats.
Rod Live humans don't ! But they say , when its a full moon, you hear ghostly whispers from the long dead drifting through the corridors of metal and sweeping over the carpets of broken glass.
Tucker What do they say, Rod? What do they say?
Rod They say.....
Tucker Yeah ?
Rod They say , in a really creepy whisper...
Tucker Yeah ?
Rod "Help us ! Help us !" And then...
Tucker Yeah ?
Rod "We're dying for a pee and the service station's closed! "

Tucker , realising he's been had chases Rod around the picnic area with an old umbrella.Rod picks up Mog's portable radio to defend himself against Tucker who has assumed the attacking style of an epee swordsman.

Tucker On guard, knave ! There is only one way to deal with the takers of the Micky.

They lunge and parry over the following.

Rod And what is that ?
Tucker Instant death by furred umbrella !
Rod Ha! Ha! Fine words !
Tucker I know! But flattery will not save you.
Rod Perhaps not ! But this will,fiend !

He turns on the radio and holds it out in front of him. The music is loud and unharmonious. Tucker falls back in gothic horror dramatic style and "commits suicide" by running himself through with the umbrella. Mog snatches the radio from Rod.

Mog If you've messed this up.....
Tucker Do you mind Mog ?
Mog No I don't mind. I like it!
Tucker It'll never make the charts.

Mog So what ? I still like it !

Tucker jumps up, grabs the radio and is chased by Mog He holds the radio above his head and re-tunes it. The news is being read. They freeze and listen.

Newsreader ".....and it has been confirmed that the whale found washed up on the Icelandic coast was the last of the species. The whale is now extinct. This brings this years total to over 1,000 animals who have suffered the same fate . Scientists say that the radiation levels.....

Mog *(Grabbing the radio)* Turn it off!

The group is silent for a few seconds.

Tucker Oh well ! Are there any salmon sandwiches ?

Saki Idiot!

Mog and Rod shake their heads in disbelief.

Mog What's wrong with those two ?

Rod We had the last of the salmon months ago.

A bright flash fills the stage followed by a distant explosion. Blackout. The noise rumbles on for a few seconds in the blackout. Lights up on Rod and Tucker who are holding up the windmill spar. A breeze can be heard springing up.

Tucker Here it comes!

Rod Hold on !

Tucker It's not moving.

Rod Turn it! Turn it your way.

Tucker *(Sings)* "I turned it my way."

Rod More !

Tucker It's no good ! Must be the axle. Needs grease.

Lights up also on Mog and Sak . The music-box is winding down .The tune stops and all four freeze. A strong overhead beam of light fills the stage accompanied by the roar of rocket engines. Smoke fills the stage. Through the bright,smoke-filled light emerge two strange looking characters, a robot and a space traveller - Chippy and Vox They move forward and examine the scene. Vox moves forward. He/she has the head of a large insect, with large multi-faceted eyes and two large antennae. At the end of his/her arms are long needles that are used constantly as sensing and communication devices. Vox draws patterns in the air with his/her needles which create a high-pitched whistling sound that varies in pitch and volume according to the movement of the needles. Vox points the needles at Chippy; they act like a magnet and the robot moves forward to take its place next to Vox, who then rubs the needles together and they produce a sound which resembles bird-song speeded up. Chippy responds to this with flashing lights and electronic bleeps. Vox points at Rod and Tucker who are in a strong shaft of light. When they speak Vox's needles dance in response to the sounds. Chippy's computer is busy assimilating the information.

Tucker It's not moving.

Rod Turn it! Turn it your way.

Tucker *(Sings)* "I turned it my way."

Rod More !

Tucker It's no good ! Must be the axle. Needs grease.

They freeze. Vox and Chippy do not understand the language. Vox points again at Rod and Tucker who repeat the same sequence as before. This is repeated several times, each time the speech gets faster and eventually looks like a fast-forward sequence on a video tape.

Chippy English !

Vox rattles his/her needles with delight.

Vox. Eeeeng Leeeeeshhhh !

Chippy English !

Vox English ! English !

Vox and Chippy face one another and point an action which promotes flashing lights and a high-pitched buzzing noise.

Chippy Compatibility established ! Compatibility locked !

Vox So this is Blue Moon.

INTERVAL.

ACT TWO.

The scene is as we left it in Act One. The stage is filled with a strange haze and a loud electronic buzzing noise that gradually subsides.

Chippy They call it Earth.
Vox Earth ? Earth ? Not very imaginative. Very dull. I prefer our name for it. Report !
Chippy Planet entered condition Red, five of their years ago. Atmosphere once hostile. Contamination wide spread. Hole in ozone layer. Now repaired. Flora and fauna seriously affected.
Vox What are these ?
Chippy The talking animals are called humans. They are the gardeners of the planet.
Vox Tell me more.
Chippy Their skins are soft ; teeth small ; slow runners.
Vox How can such puny creatures survive ?
Chippy They have developed the brain. They made weapons that could kill anything. But they mainly killed one another.
Vox That is always the trouble when a primitive life form develops a brain. Their thinking is always faulty. Can they fly ?
Chippy Only aided by machines.
Vox Do they change shape ?
Chippy Metamorphosis is not possible.
Vox Unbelievable ! Record ! Have made contact with a human life form. Investigation commencing . Suggest method!
Chippy Suggest we activate their memory cells and we enter invisibility mode.
Vox Explain logic !
Chippy Human's shock tolerance level too low. They might expire, then communication very difficult.
Vox Don't know why I should shock them ?
Chippy You very beautiful , Vox, but they too primitive to see your beauty.
Vox Of course! Activate invisibility mode! (*Vox and Chippy assume an elevated position up stage. A shaft of red light creates their invisibility, although they are always clearly seen by the audience.*) Activate brain control! (*Mog ,Saki,Rod and Tucker move forward zombie-like.*) Circle! (*The four form a circle.*) Line! (*The four form a line.*) Good! Test action facility !
Chippy Indicate year!
Vox Let's look at them when the garden was healthy. Try 50,000 years ago !

The four change their shapes to become more stooped. They are primitive in movement and speech. They improvise a scene in which grunts takes the place of speech . "Who gets the first bite of a newly killed beast" is the basic theme . The disorderly scene is brought to some sort of order when one of the four beats a bone on the ground in anger. One of the others copies the pattern of beats . This is repeated by the two "drummers" until more complex rhythms are created. The two who have been watching express their delight by banging their feet in time to the rhythm. A dance is created, which is suddenly frozen by Vox.

Vox Enough ! Enough ! Test successful but tells us nothing. Move on !
Chippy Time ?
Vox Try recent time ! Five years ago. Before condition Red.Let us hope we see some improvement.
Chippy Activating !

The four dance to a loud disco beat for a few seconds.

Vox I see no change.
Chippy Observe speech patterns ?
Vox Very well !
Saki Dig-dog-diggitty-dog-dog. Dig-dog. Dig-dog. Pow!

Tucker Pow-wow-whim-wham-pow-wow-pow-wow-wheee !
Mog Tee-Tickety-Tee-Tee-Tiddley-Toe-Tiddley-Toe-Bam !
Rod Bam-Bo,Bam-bam-bo,Bee-bo,Bee-bo,Bee-bee-bo,Dig-dig !

Repeated over following dialogue.

Vox Explain,Chippy ! Explain !
Chippy Can not be explained !
Vox Stop the sequence! *(The four freeze.)* Move on! Fine tune towards critical time.
Chippy Activating fine tune. Earth date, December 1st, 2045. Play !

The four suddenly burst into activity placing heavy boxes in a high stack in the centre of the stage. A warning "bleep" or horn is sounding in the background.

Rod Water canisters ?
Tucker Check !
Mog And we've got some from the abandoned unit next door.
Saki What happened to my dogs ?
Mog And a stack of frozen fruit.
Rod Great! Tucker! Have you got the masks and the charging panels?
Tucker Ready!
Saki What happened to my dogs ? Where are they ? Where are they ?
Rod They've gone,Saki Forget it ! Get your act together or you'll be joining them. *(Saki stands stunned for a moment.)* Get the probes into position and check levels ! Now,Saki ! Now ! Move ! *(Saki is jolted into activity.)* Closing door...now ! *(The warning bleep is now a distant sound.)* Levels ?

Tucker Oxygen normal, and temperature stable!
Rod Mog ?
Mog Radiation acceptable level.
Rod Saki ? Saki ? Get it together.....now!
Saki I'm trying ! And don't shout ! Surface activity minimal and no measurable air-borne activity.
Rod So...now we wait !
Vox For what are they waiting ?
Chippy It appears that garden Earth is polluted to dangerous levels.
Vox Not very good gardeners are they ? They don't deserve to survive.
Tucker Good idea these units.Very cosy !
Mog Hope your feet don't pong ? I don't fancy being stuck in here with ponging feet for too long , I can tell you.
Tucker My feet are exquisite if you must know.
Vox Pong ?
Chippy Definition: Slang for odorous,smelly,stinking, obnoxious stench, a malevolent reek,a....
Vox I understand,Chippy !
Saki How long are we going to be down here?
Mog Who knows ! A few days...a couple of weeks...month or two.

Tucker has been tuning in the radio. After much distortion a clear signal comes through.

Newsreader ... The picture in what used to be called Great Britain is typical of what is happening world-wide . Those who do not have a sealed unit to shelter in are filling the cellars of town houses.In the country the people have fled to the caves. There is widespread devastation of wild-life. Basic resources have ceased to operate. Professor, how do you read the situation ?
Professor It's too early to make a full and clear assessment of the world-wide situation. All I can say is that it has all happened a lot faster than we had predicted it would. For instance....

Saki jumps up and turns off the radio.

Saki Yes folks. You have been listening to a story of every-day country folk. That was the last episode of this final series. Yes! That was the end of the world! *(She climbs onto the pile of boxes and with an imaginary trumpet starts to play the national anthem. Mog tries to help her down but she resists and*

increases the volume. Rod and Tucker eventually help her down but she struggles against them.) I don't want to come down. Leave me!

Tucker It's okay. Come on.
Saki Let go !
Rod Come on, Saki!
Saki I can't breathe in here. I want to get out.
Tucker Stop her, Mog!
Saki I want to get outside. There's no air!
Mog No,Saki! No! You can't! You can't do it!
Saki I must !I must !

Saki is held down by all three. Saki stops struggling and ends up on Mog's lap being rocked like a baby,whimpering quietly.

Mog That's it,Saki Have a good cry.Have a good yell!

Rod brings across a glass of water for SakiShe sits up to drink it surrounded by the rest.

Rod Don't worry Saki We've got it licked.
Tucker Yeah ! No problem !

Saki's crying subsides and she forces a smile.Lights fade on the group.

Vox Yes. Very touching! Resourceful creatures aren't they. Yes. And kind. That's good. Yes. You know Chippy,I find them quite appealing. I'd like one as a pet. *(Chippy's lights flash rapidly)* Alright! Alright! It was only a thought. Move on! For how long did this ordeal last?
Chippy One hundred and twenty three days in total.
Vox Mmmm! Fine tune to day one hundred and twenty four. Let's see how they looked.

Lights up down stage. Boxes have been cleared. The four are laughing as they share a bottle of champagne.

Saki That went right up my nose.
Mog Come on Tucker ! Don't hog it all.
Tucker Here's to those wonderful cans of baked beans that helped us through those long,dreary days.
Rod And here's to those cans of air freshener that saved us from the baked beans.
Mog And here's to us. We survived and we're still not crazy. It's a miracle !
Saki And here's to life !
All. Life !!
Vox Interesting ! They came through it all remarkably well. *(The group begin to dance quietly in slow motion)* See how they celebrate. The ordeal is over and they are happy. What puzzles me is how did they allow their earth toto...
Chippy Fester?
Vox Yes...or deteriorate for so long. Do they care ? Check!
Chippy Activate !

The four are lined up, spaced out down stage.

Mog One of the things that used to annoy me more than anything was..you'd be driving along, right, and the pea-brain in the car in front would toss out a cigarette-end, not giving a seconds thought to other road users. I mean, that could have caused a very nasty accident,apart from littering up the place. And I've seen worse. I've seen bottles, yes bottles, thrown out of cars into hedges. What have they got for brains,I ask you ?

Saki I used to like going down to the seaside until it got too bad.There was one beach you could see sixty different types of birds all at the same time. They'd all flock down as the tide went out..Terns, Black-Headed gulls, Herring Gulls, Sandpipers...and the last time I went down there , there was this Cormorant dragging itself up the beach,covered in oil. I wanted to help it , but before I could get down to it a gang of boys was throwing stones at it. I shouted for them to stop but the wind was against me. I tried to run through the soft sand but the faster I tried to go the more the sand held me up. When they saw me they ran. I was too late. The bird was dead. I was furious! I chased them. I cursed them at the top of my voice.I couldn't help it. I don't normally curse,but I couldn't help it. "You damn hooligans!" I shouted,over and over. They laughed and stuck their fingers up at me.

And I cried. Not for myself. No! I cried for them. What sort of evil is it that can't care for the life of a wounded creature ?

Tucker On the hill outside of town there used to be a wood. Owl Wood ! They called it that 'cos a Barn Owl had always lived there for as long as anyone could remember. It was a great place to play Robin Hood and Coweys and Indians. I slept in it once,for a dare. I was scared to death, but I was glad I did it. My mates thought I was dead brave. They made me leader of the gang. I was chuffed! It's gone now...the wood. They built a whacking great estate that stretches for miles. They call it the Owl Wood Estate, but no owls live there anymore. Shame that ! They say the kids have nothing to do but steal cars.

Rod When I was a kid we lived next to the steel mill. Some nights the flames from the furnace were so bright it made it seem like day. You could play football in that light. You could ! I suppose we got used to the smell of the fumes. When I visited my Auntie Madge she used to always say "Come on Rod! Strip those smelly things off and let's get them in the wash. You stink like an old chimney!". It was only later that I found out how dangerous that factory was. Didn't know about acid rain and lung diseases when I was a kid. Didn't know smoke could do all that. Now everyone knows how dangerous it is. It's always in the newspapers and on television. But they won't close it. You see...thousands work in that factory and if they close it down they'll be out of workand if they're put out of work they'll put out the local MP. And the local MP doesn't want to lose his job, because he lives down in London in a swish penthouse overlooking the Thames where the air is fresh and where he can watch the swans gracefully glide by.

Vox The more I know about them the more I like them. I am tempted to take one home with me. *(Chippy flashes his lights and bleeps.)* Stop it,Chippy ! Stop it ! I can't stand jealous robotics. It's much too gaudy and in bad taste. So...where does the blame lie ? That is a very important section on our report.Investigate a main cause of global decay.

Chippy Investigating ! Earth's oxygen level impaired! Cause! Supply of oxygen reduced. Rain forests are main supplier of oxygen. They are destroyed.

Vox Destroyed ? That can't be right. An animal doesn't cut off its air supply on purpose,does it ? Activate ! Activate !

Chippy Activating now !

Rod Read how an ex-Miss World became the world's richest woman. Read about the men she knew and the decisions she had to make in a man's world.

Mog Yeah! I lift the lid on the whole scam with no holds barred. You want to know the truth? If you've got the guts to face the bare facts then read my story in 'The Sun' tomorrow.

Saki In the 'News of the World' this Sunday read about corruption in high places. We name names and we have photographs never published before that will amaze you.

Tucker Yeah! We give you the low-down on the high-flyers who are into satanic ritual in the heart of rural Britain. Watch our "Which Witch" column as we raise the latch and catch a batch of fairy Tories manifestly doing what definitely isn't in their manifesto. Order your copy now !

Vox What's this ? What's this raving !

Chippy Gossip ! Very popular.

Vox I understand that much.I'm not a total imbecile. What has gossip got to do with rain-forests ?

Chippy Very simple. Gossip sells newspapers. More people buy newspapers, so more newspapers needed. More paper needed to make more newspapers. More wood needed to make more paper. More trees cut down to make more paper. Simple !

Vox They destroyed the garden for that ?

Chippy Correct ! And for...

Rod The Mail, The People and The Times.

Saki Guardian, Express and Independent.

Tucker The European and T.V.Times.

Mog Gardening World and Radio Times.

Rod The Nursing Mirror and Daily Mirror.

Saki Practical Scientist and Literary Review.

Tucker Private Eye and Photography.

Mog CD Review and Astronomy.

Rod Spectator, Punch and Housewives Friend.

Saki Cosmopolitan and Naturist.

Tucker PC Plus and Astrology.
Mog Car Mechanics and Rare Antiques.
Rod Exchange and Mart and Girl and She.
Saki Hello!, Woman, Harpers and Queen.
Tucker Town and Country and House and Garden.
Mog Country Life and Horse and Hound.
Rod Vanity Fair, Hobbies and Crafts.
Saki Health and Fitness, The Musical Times.
Tucker Paperbacks and cards and maps.
Mog Serviettes and tablecloths.
Vox Enough ! Enough ! You've made your point !
Chippy And many more things besides.
Vox I'll take your word for it.
Chippy And....most peculiar...I don't believe....
Vox What ?
Chippy Scanner tells me they use paper to buy goods.They call it money. They change paper into gold.
Vox What fool would give gold for paper? They must be mad! It's worse than I thought. I'll have to talk to them. De-activate !
Chippy De-activating now !

The four resume their positions,Mog and Saki by the music box, and Rod and Tucker by the windmill. Vox and Chippy come down stage and assume a static posture, waiting to be noticed.

Rod We could try some of that mud , some of that slimy stuff by the old river bed.
Tucker Could give it a bash I suppose.

They stroll towards Vox and pass him during the following. Tucker starts to laugh.

Rod What ? Come on then. What?
Tucker I was thinking. What if they could see us now ?
Rod Who ?
Tucker All that sci-fi rubbish , all those boffins who thought the future was going to be like "Metropolis", all space ships and strange creatures from distant galaxies. Look at us..we're back to square one.
Rod Yes ! More like Barney Flintstone than Luke Skywalker.
Tucker Barney who ?
Rod Your knowledge of 20th century television is sadly lacking my friend. He was a stone-age....

Their conversation fades as they move off right.

Vox Very observant !

Mog and Saki move down stage and walk in front of Vox and Chippy.

Saki If you could have anything at all for Christmas what would you have?
Mog Anything at all ?
Saki Yes !
Mog An electric shower and perfumed soap.
Saki And sacks of talc and Eau de Cologne ?
Mog Yes ! Masses of it. I'd dance in a cloud of white dust...
Saki ...then bathe in asses milk !
Mog Ugh ! No ! I never did fancy that.

They stand facing the windmill.

Saki It'll never fly you know.
Mog Men ! We'll end up doing it ourselves. You see!

They turn and walk across Vox.

Vox Good evening,ladies !
Saki and Mog Evening !

They freeze and turn slowly to face Vox.

Vox May I introduce myself ? I am....

The girls scream and run off SR.

Chippy I told you !

Vox *(Peeved)* I know you told me. You don't have to remind me. You are infuriatingly clever. And I knew you would remind me that you had told me. You are sickeningly predictable.

Chippy Sorry !

Vox So there! I've said it.

Chippy Sorry !

Vox Intelligence is all very well but hoity-toity stiff-necked arrogance is unbearable.

Chippy Sorry !

Vox And stop saying sorry !

Chippy Sor.....So, do I effect active recall mode, Vox, master ?

Vox Don't be flippant ! You can drop the "master" . I think we ought to put into effect the active recall mode .

Chippy Good idea ! Activating active recall mode, now !

Chippy emits a loud buzzing noise. From SR. the four are drawn towards Vox as though trapped in a magnetic force. When they stop they are unable to move their bodies but their heads can move.

Vox Sorry about that. Fear of the unknown is a primitive emotion, but I make allowances. I assure you, you are perfectly safe. Do you believe me ? *(The four nod in unison.)* They still look nervous to me.

Chippy Should I de-activate recall mode ?

Vox Try it ! *(The four are released from the ray.)* There! Once again,good evening. My name is Vox and this is my robotic aid,Chippy We are from a place beyond Andromeda and we are here on ... well I suppose you could call it ...

Chippy Intergalactic survey !

Vox Yes..a sort of...

Chippy ..mission to assess viability of planet.

Vox Yes..we are here to....

Chippy Examine,evaluate and repair.

Vox Shut up! I apologise for my friend.Too clever for his own good sometimes. *(Rod opens his mouth to speak but freezes.)* Yes ? Have you a question ? *(Rod's mouth closes.)* They are still very frightened,you know.

Chippy Emotion implant ray?

Vox Mmmm! Could work ! Go ahead !

Chippy Activating emotion implant,now !

The four are surrounded by a bright light that gradually fades. They are now relaxed and free from fear.

Rod Welcome! It's great to meet you. Did you have a good trip ?

Vox *(Aside to Chippy)* It worked ! *(To Rod)* A marvellous trip !

Saki Did you say beyond Andromeda? That's millions of light years away.

Chippy Two million and twenty eight thousand three hundred and four to be exact.

Tucker So how could you....

Vox travel that far ?

Chippy Particle suspension and accelerated light technique.

Vox Ignore him! Basically it means that we can travel one light year in one of your days.

Tucker Phew ! That's really pulling "G".

Mog That's still over two million days!

Vox Yes ! It was a long trip. To business.Time is of the essence. To the point. We are alarmed at what we see. Your garden has been grossly mismanaged. There is erosion everywhere and good earth has turned to poisonous waste. It is as though a lunatic had been let loose . I hear you use trees for currency !

Mog Say again !

Vox And that you destroyed your precious atmosphere so that you could get more paper from the trees, but you killed the trees. You turned the rain to acid ! Correct or not correct ?

Rod It wasn't us. We didn't do it,did we?

Saki Definitely not.We didn't want anything to do with it.

Mog We even wrote letters to parliament.

Tucker Yes! I wrote a letter to the paper once.

Rod When ?

Tucker You know. When all the cars died on the motorways...

Rod Yeah.

Tucker ...and I said they all ought to be cleared away so we could use them as cycle paths.

Rod Oh yes! That's right ! Yes,you did!

Mog And we had a jumble sale to save the whale,didn't we!

Saki Yes ! And we made banners and marched everywhere.

Vox Didn't do much good did it.

Rod At least we tried.

Tucker Yes,we tried.

Vox Pity more didn't try. It appears you are faced with two choices. Correct ?

Chippy Correct !

Vox One! You abandon garden Earth and come with us. Two ! You stay here and regenerate the garden.

Saki How can we abandon it?

Mog This is our home. I know it doesn't look much at the moment but this has been a great place once.

Rod You should have come here a hundred years ago. The sea was clean and full of life.

Tucker Teeming with life.

Saki And the sky was full of the songs of birds.

Mog And we had a thousand rich cultures spread around the planet.

Rod A thousand languages and a million upon million of stories in books, plays,films,poems....

Vox What's a poem ?

Chippy Structured verse with rhyming words or can be blank verse which has a basic....

Vox Chippy ! I was speaking to them.

Chippy Sorry !

Vox Don't start that again ! (To Rod) Explain ?

<----- Three pages of the play have been deleted from here ----->

There is a sudden eruption of joy. They spin and dance around the area screaming, "We did it!" etc. The dance becomes more organised; they each have something to beat out a rhythm; it is reminiscent of the opening dance but this is full of joy and the release of tension. They eventually come together in a close group, arms around one another. They are laughing and exhausted. Up stage a tree has appeared, which Rod slowly approaches. On it we see a bright red apple that is shining in the light. Rod picks the apple and brings it down to the group)

Rod Here ! Look what I've got.Isn't that perfect? I never thought we'd ever see one of these beauties again.

He holds it up. It is highlighted in a shaft of light. All four move towards the apple all showing that they have a strong desire to possess it.

Saki Mmmmm! Gorgeous!

Tucker Yummy, yum, yum!

Mog Mmmm! Tasty! Okay! Not all at once! Who wants the first bitey-whitey? And what's it worth?

Freeze. The chorus of birds builds up to a climax. Blackout.

~~~~<<<< END >>>>~~~~