ACT I

Scene I

A tatty but tidy one-room flat with a semi-partitioned kitchenette area stage L. which is partially visible. The entrance to the main living space is located upstage C. At rise HORATIO is found lying on the double bed, R., staring at the ceiling, having just woken up.

HORATIO

(After a listless yawn.)
It is morning…I have awoken…yet again.
(Beat.)
And how are we this morning, Horatio?
(Beat.)
I really couldn't tell you. As you are patently aware, I have only just this moment woken up.
(Beat.)
Oh…a little moody, it seems.
(Beat.)
No. Just…the same…same as always.
(Beat.)
You sound moody.
(Beat.)
What if I do? Any reason why I shouldn't?
(Beat.)
Yes…it's a brand new day, full of endless possibilities.
(Beat.)
Or more of the same…same as always.
(Beat.)
But that's the beauty of it, isn't it? – you just never know.
(Beat.)
Most of the time I know.
(Beat.)
True…but today could be different. Today could be the one.
(Beat.)
What one?
(Beat.)
The one…the one for something special.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(He scratches his head and contemplates for a moment)

Mmm…you could be right.

(Beat.)

You know I'm right.

(Beat.)

No I don't. I wish I did. But like you say…you never know.

(HORATIO drags himself out of bed, dressed in a pair of paisley pyjamas, and yawns and stretches before standing perfectly still, hands at his sides, staring straight ahead seemingly deep in thought. Pause.)

HORATIO

It's really quite strange when you think about it. I mean, why is it that it's only at moments like this, when I'm completely alone, with no one to hear me but me, that I begin to feel like…well, me…a complete person…the *real* me …the definite article, if you will? When it's just me with me I…I truly believe that I come to embody that person that deep down I know myself to be. I become that certain someone who, in all modesty, could legitimately describe themselves as an interesting person. An interesting personality. The truth is, I don't know of anyone else quite like me in the whole world. That's not to say that there isn't, but if there is I've never met them. Which, if you consider it, opens the door to the possibility that I could be…which is not to say that I am, but that I could quite possibly be…the most interesting man in the whole wide world.

(Beat.)

Then again, if it's just me that's privy to this knowledge then what exactly does that mean? What does it matter? It could have been me who painted the Mona Lisa, but if I'd just stuck it in a drawer and never shown it to anyone what would have been the point in painting it? Who would have known of its dark, enigmatic beauty? No one. It would never have become the celebrated masterpiece and pop culture icon that's revered by millions to this very day.

(Beat.)

Which is why I definitely made the right decision in getting out of that bed and presenting myself to the world at large…yet again.

(With a sigh.)

Still…with no job to go to, no matter how interesting you might be…it still takes effort.

(HORATIO moves to the kitchenette area and proceeds to make himself a cup of instant coffee.)

Fuckers. What a complete bunch of fuckers. How can you fire someone for being overly diligent? It makes no sense. It defies reason. They should have given me a raise. A slap on the back at the very least. All I got was a slap in the face.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

I'd seen it all before, of course. The corporate greed, the scandals, the public inquiries, the mighty falling, the jail terms, the celebrity whistle-blowers, the rotting, maggot-ridden underbelly of capitalism gone berserk. I'd seen it all. So I knew. When the time came I knew what I had to do. And I did it. I knew the risks…and still I did it.

(With damning intonation.)

Two DHL packages sent from the Chief Executive Officer to a member of his own family with no remittance, no official coding, and no apologies. Pure, unmitigated big-business sleaze. So, naturally, I took it to the CFO. His response? A big fat dismissive nothing. Yet another milk-starved minion sucking at the big nipple. So I did the only thing my conscience would allow me to do. I strode right into the corner office and confronted the all-powerful tit himself. I was nervous, I admit it. But I knew I carried with me the principled hearts and minds of 1,357 co-workers who I knew would be behind me in my quest against what was clearly an egregious and completely indefensible abuse of the system by someone who netted more in personal income each year than the company actually made in profit.

(Beat.)

And what did it get me? 1,357 averted glances and an unemployment allowance that I'm still trying to figure out how to survive on. But I will, I'll do it…I'm an accountant.

(Pause.)

Or was.

(HORATIO takes his cup of coffee and seats himself at the small table, centre stage.)

HORATIO

Don't know how that actually came about, come to think of it. Becoming an accountant, that is. Not a childhood dream, it must be said. Just sort of happened, really…before I knew it. I should have been something far different, something more suited to my talents. Not that I'm not good at it – I am. One of the best. Perhaps *the* best – who knows? It's never been put to the test. But I'm an untapped resource. My potential is massive. If only people knew that. Knew the truth. But they don't – and that's the trouble. The fact is I'm wasted on budgets and number crunching. I'm so much more. I should be up to my neck in…nuclear physics and quantum leaps…genome maps, that sort of thing. Breaking down barriers, discovering new directions for the future of mankind. That's much more up my alley.

(Beat.)

Or pop singing. I'd have made a sensational pop singer. Not that I have much of a voice, if I were being honest. But you don't need it nowadays. What I do have is the off look and the attitude…and that's the clincher if you've an eye to becoming an internationally recognised, multi-platinum selling recording artiste. I could've been

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

huge. World-class. And videos – I'd have made some groundbreaking videos. I have all sorts of ideas. They're all in my head. Even now. Had to have changed my name, of course – "Horatio Higgins" not having sufficient appeal to the all-important teen market. But everything requires sacrifice, doesn't it? That said, if you don't have the right background for these things there are very few doors that'll open up to you. I know…I've tried.

(Beat.)

Besides…what choice do you really have when your own dear mother, lying on her deathbed, her body riddled with tumours, her eyes sunk deep in her skull, her face so ravaged with pain that you barely recognise it, looks up at you and begs you in a cracked, feeble voice to give up your dreams, get your act together and apply yourself to something steady and sensible like…well, accounting. You don't – you just do it. And so I did. And I'm glad I did. She'd be proud. Very proud.

(Beat. Somewhat self-consciously.)

Still, I must confess…as job descriptions go…not the sexiest.

(As he stares off ahead, lost in thought, the lights fade to BLACK.)

Scene 2

A short time later. He is now dressed and standing before the mirror combing his hair. After several rearrangements of his parting he finally throws down the comb in a rage, growls loudly and sits down on the edge of the bed and fumes.

HORATIO

God I hate that! Why does it do that? It's deliberate – it has to be. I can get up for days in a row – days and days – make a couple of flicks and it's perfect. And other days – like today – I could rake my scalp till it bleeds and I'd still end up looking like some sort of mental patient. Christ, that pisses me off, it really does! It's against me. Something's against me, I know it.

(Beat.)

And why bother? What do I do it for? For who? Who am I fooling? Who cares what I look like? I certainly don't. So why do I bother?

(Beat.)

Well, don't look at me – I'm sure I couldn't tell you.

(Beat.)

I didn't ask you.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

Good.

(Beat.)

Yes, it is good since you always claim to know everything. Now I come to learn you don't.

(Beat.)

I never said that.

(Beat.)

No, but you imply it.

(Beat.)

You perceive it.

(Beat.)

Yes, I do.

(Beat.)

And I'm supposed to be held accountable for your perceptions?

(Beat.)

I didn't say that.

(Beat.)

You implied it.

(Beat.)

Oh, shut up!

(Beat.)

Why don't you shut up!

(Beat.)

I am you, you fool.

(Beat.)

Then that should make shutting your big, stupid mouth even easier, you self-important, unemployed prick!

(Pause.)

HORATIO

God, I hate this – I hate life. I hate everything. I hate every living, breathing thing. Even plants – whatever gasses they breathe or give off – I hate them. All of them

(Beat.)

It's almost to the point where I…I just can't deal with it anymore – any of it. It gets harder and harder to find a reason to…make the effort…to summon the energy, the will…it all gets harder. Harder to fathom. Harder to focus.

(Beat.)

I can honestly say that if it weren't for my wife I sometimes think I'd be very tempted to…

(Beat. With incredulity.)

Your wife?

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

Yes, my wife.

(Beat.)

That's a laugh.

(Beat.)

Don't you laugh at my wife.

(Beat.)

Why not? Anyone else would.

(Beat.)

But you're not anyone else…are you?

(Beat.)

Aren't I?

(Beat.)

I don't know. I didn't think you were. But if you are I'd certainly appreciate you telling me.

(Beat.)

I didn't think I was either, but now I'm a little confused. Let me ponder on it momentarily.

(Beat.)

Well, while you're pondering perhaps you could also think of an apology to offer my wife.

(Beat.)

Why? I didn't insult her.

(Beat.)

Yes you did.

(Beat.)

I didn't, I made fun of her – that's not the same thing.

(Beat.)

Well, my wife is not a laughing matter, and I distinctly recall hearing you use the expression "That's a laugh."

(Beat.)

Well…come on. I mean, she may be Brigitte Bardot, Mother Teresa and Bob Geldof all rolled into one in your eyes, but let's be completely honest here – she's hardly someone you could introduce at a dinner party without feeling a distinct twinge of embarrassment, is she?

(Beat.)

I don't see why not.

(Beat.)

Because! Because she's…oh, never mind.

(Beat.)

I don't agree. I don't agree at all. No.

(Beat.)

Forget I spoke.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

In fact, let's try it – right now.

(Beat.)

Now?

(Beat.)

Yes, now. Not for real, of course. Just pretend. Just to get a feel for it – how it might feel.

(With a reluctant sigh.)

All right – if it'll make you happy.

(HORATIO pulls back the bed sheet to reveal a fully inflated blow-up doll. He pulls the doll out of the bed and stands her beside himself and begins to enact a mock introduction.)

HORATIO

Ah, Mrs. Bainbridge, how lovely to see you again. And how are those two charming girls of yours? Getting taller by the second, I shouldn't doubt. Melanie still working on her German? I don't believe you've met my wife, have you? Mrs. Bainbridge, this is my wife – my wife, I'd like you to meet Mrs. Bainbridge, Honorary Chair of the Choral Society.

(As HORATIO looks back at the doll he expression soon adopts a look of defeat. After a moment he sits back down on the bed with the doll.)

HORATIO

(With a sigh.)

Perhaps you're right.

(Beat.)

Perhaps others wouldn't see what I see. All in the eye of the beholder, I suppose…like everything else.

(Beat.)

It's not even as if she's *actually* my wife, when you get right down to it. I mean, she is, but…not in the lawfully wedded sense. It's just what I call her. But when you've been together as long as we have, she and I – or her and me, if you will – it seems a little strange not to. She is, after all, my partner in life…my significant other…my one and only.

(Beat.)

Mmm…you can say that again.

(HORATIO gives the doll a gentle kiss on the cheek. After a heavy sigh.)

HORATIO

Anyway, mustn't mope – mustn't mull. Better days ahead. Perhaps even today.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

You never know.

(As he pushes the doll beneath the bed.)

All right, my wife, daytime positions.

(HORATIO stands and takes a final look in the mirror.)

HORATIO

Yes.

(Beat.)

Yes, I'd say, all in all – parting aside – a perfectly adequate presentation for yet another fruitless trip to the Job Opportunity Centre.

(As HORATIO exits through the door C. the lights fade to BLACK.)

Scene 3

Later that evening. The room is empty. Footsteps are heard ascending a flight of stairs. Presently HORATIO enters through the door C., looking decidedly ebullient. He crosses to the answering machine and presses the "play" button. A recorded voice announces "You-have-no-new-messages."

HORATIO

Really? Is that so, mister condescending, know-it-all piece of Taiwanese budget-priced crap? Well, I'll tell you something, shall I? I don't care! And would you like to know why I don't care? Probably not, but I'm going to tell you anyway since *you* obviously have nothing going on.

(Pulling himself up, with a proud smile on his face.)

I have just met the most wonderful, incredible, beautiful, fascinating girl in the whole wide world.

(Beat.)

Not officially, of course…but I'm willing to wager. I can't believe it. I still can't believe it. God, how right I was to get out of that bed this morning.

(Beat.)

I told you.

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

(Beat.)

You did.

(Beat.)

You wouldn't listen.

(Beat.)

I listened.

(Beat.)

But you didn't really believe me.

(Beat.)

Not really. But I tried.

(Beat.)

Yes, you did try. And what did your trying teach you?

(Beat.)

Um…I don't know. What?

(Beat.)

That you never know.

(Beat.)

Yes. Yes, you're completely right – you never know.

(Beat.)

Honestly though, I still find it hard to believe. Less than twelve hours ago I was…what's the word?…languishing. I was languishing. Knee-deep in the doldrums. Feeling small and insignificant. And now, all of a sudden, I'm…ten feet tall. Not literally, of course…but I do feel taller.

(Beat.)

Her name's Nore. As in Queen Noor, or Norway, or neither nor, or Nordic, even. Not that she looks Nordic. Anything but, in fact. Which is rather exotic in itself. Our eyes crossed…well, not crossed in the astigmatic sense, but met…whilst scanning the career notices pinned to the particleboards at the Job Opportunity Centre. Not that they had any job opportunities, but…well, what's in a name?

(Beat.)

I fell immediately. Totally. You know how you do? How you just *know?* Well…I knew. I couldn't tell her I was looking for a job, of course. It might've given off the wrong signals. So I told her I was scouting for job opportunities for the employees I'd just laid off. After I'd said it her eyes took on a watery appearance, as if she was about to cry. When I saw that…that honest, pure, heartfelt human emotion, I did for a moment consider coming clean…surmising that she might be equally touched by my honest, open, human admittance of a small untruth. But I couldn't. I couldn't let her down. It would've been cruel. And anyway, I was touched. So I kept it up – out of duty.

(Beat.)

Anyway, we chatted for a while about this and that. Nothing too deep or personal. No religion or politics or how Britain had become a one party state made up of three alternatives of the same thing and how much I wanted to stab Tony Blair in the eye with a rusty fish knife. It was our first date, after all. But even in those superficial

HORATIO (Cont'd.)

pleasantries I could tell she was something special. A catch, if you will. So…after a while…I popped the question. Not *the* question, of course – not marriage – not at this juncture. Even so, it took all the courage I could muster – all I had – but I did it. I asked her if she would do me the honour of joining me for dinner this evening. And to my utter astonishment she said yes!

(Beat.)

Well, actually she said no. Understandably, I was crushed. Devastated, I think, would be closer to the mark. Pissed off…resigned…dead inside. And then *my* eyes took on a watery appearance – as if *I* was about to cry. And then…she said yes.

(Beat.)

I asked her where she'd like to go – anywhere she wanted – but she didn't seem have any suggestions. So I took the reins and escorted her to one of my very favourite eating establishments just a short walk from Fulham Broadway. A little Indian place called "All the Raj." They cater mostly to the take-away crowd, but they also have a select number of hand carved, solid oak bar stool-type chairs where you can sit at the counter and enjoy their cuisine "in-house," as it were. She seemed to like it.

(Beat.)

She'll be here any minute. She just went to spend a penny. In fact I'd have thought she'd be finished by now. I don't know how long these things take with the ladies. That bit's always been something of a mystery to me. I mean, I know they don't just whip it out and decant, so to speak, as we do. I know for them it's a something of a more technical procedure in that department. Still…I hope she didn't get lost.

(There is a knock at the door.)

HORATIO

Ah! There she is – right on cue.

(HORATIO quickly checks himself in the mirror before opening the door. NORE, a sweet-faced, rather overweight young woman, is standing in the doorway looking visibly nervous.)

HORATIO

Nore!

NORE

Hello.

HORATIO

I was getting worried. Thought for a second you might have done a runner, ha, ha, ha!

NORE

Sorry…there was someone in there. I mean, before me. I had to wait.

HORATIO

Urghh! I do apologise, Nore. It's all a part of this "Unity Through Shared Experience" programme they have nowadays. All the hip housing associations have them.

NORE

Do they?

HORATIO

Oh, yes. It's very "right now" apparently. But it's also very tiresome. I mean, it is unifying, I suppose, in a very uncomfortable sort of way, and very socially forward thinking. But it's also very annoying and disgusting.

NORE

Yes, I…I wasn't going to say anything, but…well, there was a smell…afterwards…when I got in there.

HORATIO

(Hurriedly.)

Anyway, come on in – make yourself comfortable.

NORE

(As she enters.)

Thanks.

HORATIO

Let me take your coat.

(NORE removes her jacket and hands it to HORATIO, who lays it on the bed.)

NORE

Thanks.

HORATIO

Welcome to my humble abode.

NORE

(After a moment of two of surveying her surroundings.)

Yes, it…it is a bit, isn't it?

HORATIO

What?

NORE

Humble.

HORATIO

You…you don't like it?

NORE

Oh, no. No, I didn't mean anything by it. Not at all. It's just…well, I'd sort of expected something a bit…flashier. Not that I like flashy – no. I just…well, for someone who owns an international chain of hotels…

HORATIO

Oh, what this? This is nothing – just a little pied-a-terre I keep around for whenever I'm in town. I have homes all over. All over the world. Apartments in New York, Paris…Monte Carlo…um, Benidorm. All over. Hong Kong, Mozambique, Bournemouth. A farm in Italy…two actually. A horse ranch in Montana…that's in the United States, you know.

NORE

Yes, I know. Good grief, wherever do you find the time to live in so many places?

HORATIO

I don't. That's just it, I don't. I haven't been to some of them in…well, literally years. The thing is, Nore – at the risk of sounding a bit…well, coddled – it gives me so much comfort to know that wherever I am in the world I'll never be too far from home.

NORE

Oh, no. No, I think that's nice. Really nice. I like that.

(Beat.)

Seems a waste, though – all those lovely places sitting empty.

HORATIO

Oh, they're rarely empty. No, no, I…I lease a lot of them out for commercial purposes. Package holidays for corporate executives and their spouses and dependents, and what have you. Some I let out to friends and assorted family members. And others I…

(Beat.)

No, I…I shouldn't say. It might sound immodest.

NORE

What will?

HORATIO

No, really, I…one doesn't normally talk about these sorts of things.

NORE

Oh, now you've got me all curious. Please tell me – I promise I won't breathe a word.

HORATIO

Well…all right – off the record, mind. One or two of my properties I…donate, I suppose you could say, free of charge for charitable purposes. Small children with cancer, landmine victims, pensioners with Alzheimer's, amputees, that sort of thing.

NORE

But that's wonderful! I think that's…just wonderful!

HORATIO

But, of course, it's never mentioned publicly. It wouldn't be…seemly.

NORE

No, no, of course not. No. Gosh, I think that's lovely. You really do have a big heart, don't you? It's obvious to anyone.

HORATIO

It's interesting you should bring that up Nore, because as a matter of fact I do have a big heart. The biggest, apparently. It's on record. The Guinness Book of Records, in fact. It's actually the largest organ in my body.

(With a self-conscious smile.)

Well, perhaps not *the* largest…but it is very big. It caused quite a stir when I was born. Made all the local papers. There's x-rays of it in countless medical journals up and down the country.

NORE

Good grief!

HORATIO

But again, it's not something I like to discuss in a public forum. It is a physical abnormality after all, Nore, and as such exposes me to the charge of being labelled a freak.

NORE

What? Why? Who would possibly think that way? I think it's amazing. Absolutely incredible!

HORATIO

Well…one could say that.

NORE

You should be proud. To have the biggest heart in the world, it…it means something; it says something – about you.

HORATIO

It says I'm an extraordinary human being, Nore, nothing more.

NORE

(Half to herself.)

And I've met him. The man with the biggest heart in the whole world and I know him.

HORATIO

You know a little bit of him. It's my sincere hope that you'll get to know a lot more.

NORE

(Bashfully.)

And it's…I hope so too.

HORATIO

Oh, but listen to me going on and on about myself as if I were the earth's axis. Tell me about you.

NORE

Me? Oh…well…there's not much to tell, really. I'm just me. Little old me. Nothing special. Just ordinary, I suppose.

(Beat.)

Like I say – just me.

HORATIO

Impossible! That simply cannot be true. You're so much more than that, I just know it. It's not even a choice. That is life – all life. That's how it is. We are all individually shaped by our own singular experience. Each and every one of us. All handcrafted by Mother Nature's imperfect…fingering.

NORE

I beg your pardon?

HORATIO

Your name, for instance – what is that? What is its root origin?

NORE

Its what?

HORATIO

Nore – why Nore? Where does it come from? Scandinavia? Jordan? The Palestinian Territories?

(Beat.)

NORE

Streatham.

HORATIO

What?

NORE

Streatham.

HORATIO

Ah…ah, yes.

(Distractedly.)

Streatham.

NORE

It's short for Nora.

HORATIO

Short? How so?

NORE

'Cause…'cause it's shorter. Nore – Nora. See?

HORATIO

Oh yes…the other syllable.

(Beat,)

But is it worth it?

NORE

What?

HORATIO

Shortening it. I mean, it's already short – why make it shorter?

NORE

I don't know. It's just nice, I suppose. What I've always been called. Friends, family. It's just…friendly.

HORATIO

And "Nora" is unfriendly?

NORE

No, I just…it's just…nice.

HORATIO

And what if your name were…I don't know…Dee?

NORE

Dee?

HORATIO

Yes.

NORE

But it's not.

HORATIO

No, but what if it were? What would your friends call you then?

NORE

Well…Dee, I suppose.

HORATIO

Ah, but Dee as in "D-E-E" or Dee as in "D" – the letter?

NORE

I…I don't know. Why are you saying this?

HORATIO

Because it's important. Phonetically it's very important. You are, apparently, surrounded by hordes of people who are all too ready and willing to lop off a perfectly good syllable from a name that is already painfully lacking in linguistic nuance. It's all so gratingly irritating, don't you see?

NORE

No. No, I don't.

HORATIO

But if your name were Dee, and everyone called you Dee, how could you possibly know if they were being friendly or unfriendly?

NORE

(Feeling somewhat browbeaten.)

I don't know, I…I don't know.

(Beat.)

I…I think I ought to go.

HORATIO

Go!

NORE

Yes. Yes, I-I don't feel comfortable.

HORATIO

But…Nore, you just got here.

NORE

I know, but…I think I should be going.

HORATIO

Oh, please don't, I…you haven't…I haven't had a chance to…show you…to tell you…

NORE

I don't think I want you to.

HORATIO

Nore, I'm sorry. Sometimes I…I get carried away with things. Stupid things. Things that mean nothing. I don't know why, it's hard to explain. It's frustrating and…and I can't focus, really. Not properly. And sometimes it all gets to be a bit of a blur, you see, but I…I do like you – and your name – and…and I really don't want you to go.

(Beat.)

So please don't.

(Pause.)

NORE

I'm just me…just Nore. Nothing more. I can't impress you with big names or places or people I've met, 'cause I haven't. I'm not. I'm just who I am. Just Nore.

HORATIO

I know you are. Would you stay…please?

(Pause.)

NORE

All right…for a bit.

HORATIO

Thank you.

(Beat.)

Can I offer you a drink? A nightcap?

NORE

No.

HORATIO

Just a quick one – for me?

NORE

Well…as long as it's quick.

HORATIO

You name it.

NORE

Um…

HORATIO

Anything. Anything you want.

NORE

Anything?

HORATIO

Absolutely.

NORE

Um…well, then…Cointreau.

HORATIO

Cointreau?

NORE

Yes. Did I say it wrong?

HORATIO

No, no, it's just…I just ran out of it.

NORE

Oh…well, never mind, I'll have a…a Bailey's, then.

HORATIO

Bailey's, right.

(He stands and moves towards the kitchenette then stops.)

Only…

NORE

What?

HORATIO

I'm out of that, too.

NORE

Oh…well, then whatever you have is fine.

(Beat.)

HORATIO

Oh dear.

NORE

What is it?

HORATIO

Nore…can I be completely honest with you?

NORE

Of course you can. You always can. Anyone.

HORATIO

(Crossing back to her.)

God, this is so awkward.

(Beat.)

You see, I had a big party here last night. Very extravagant. All A-list. All celebrities and pop stars and journalists and so on.

NORE

In here?

HORATIO

Yes, it was an, um…an intimate occasion. And, as you'd imagine, they all behaved like complete animals. Drank me out of house and home. You should have seen this place this morning. It made all the papers, of course, but that's small compensation

HORATIO (Cont'd.)
when you're bent double in pain over the kitchen sink washing your umpteenth champagne flute.

NORE
But that's so exciting! I can't imagine! I'll have to look it up when I get home.

HORATIO
(Alarmed.)
Look it up?

NORE
In the paper.

HORATIO
Oh…no…when I say the papers, I mean just the broadsheets.

NORE
Mum gets The Independent.

HORATIO
Ah…yes, I do remember him. Seemed rather bored as I recall. Left early. Doubt he gave it a mention.

NORE
They get The Times at work – I'm sure it'll be in there.

HORATIO
(Feigning vagueness of memory.)
The Times…The Times…Oh! Oh, him! Ha, ha! Him, yes, yes, how could I forget? Drunk as a skunk before he'd stepped through the door. I'd be surprised if he managed to get home in one piece, let alone string together something vaguely resembling a news item.

NORE
What was it for?

HORATIO
What?

NORE
The party?

HORATIO
Oh…just some new hotel we've opened up in, um…Cardiff.

NORE

(Excitedly.)
Cardiff!

HORATIO

Yes.

NORE

Me sister lives there – been there tons of times. Know it like the back of me hand. Oh, what street, where is it?
(Nostalgically.)
Ahh, Cardiff…

HORATIO

(A little panicked.)
Did I say Cardiff?

NORE

Yes.

HORATIO

I meant…Kosovo.

NORE

Kosovo?

HORATIO

Yes, it's a…sort of a trial-run thing.

NORE

Isn't that a bit dangerous?

HORATIO

Oh no, it's all under U.N. supervision. Armed guards, barbed wire, attack dogs – the works.

NORE

Good Lord, who would ever want to spend their holidays in a place like that?

HORATIO

Well, er…thrill seekers.

(Beat.)

NORE

Oh…right.

HORATIO

If it proves successful we're thinking of opening one up in Mogadishu…and possibly Harlesden.

NORE

Yes.

HORATIO

Anyway, needless to say that repugnant horde of self-promoting swine drank me completely dry, so all I can offer you is…Horlicks.

NORE

Oh…Horlicks.

HORATIO

Yes – do you not like it?

NORE

No. I love it.

HORATIO

Really? I do, too.

NORE

Makes me feel like a kid again – warm and…happy.

HORATIO

And loved.

(Beat.)

NORE

Yes…and loved.

(HORATIO stares into NORE'S eyes for several moments before standing and crossing back to the kitchenette.)

HORATIO

I'll heat the milk – shan't be a tick.

(As HORATIO proceeds to prepare the Horlicks, NORE takes a closer look at her surroundings. Pause.)

NORE

I'm starting to get it, I think.

HORATIO

Get what?

NORE

This place.

HORATIO

(Warily.)
In what…what do you mean?

NORE

The whole thing. The whole…when I'm in London I want to feel like I'm in London and not just another anonymous luxury hotel– 'cause you're always in hotels. Right?

HORATIO

Completely right. What a very insightful young lady you are, Nore.

NORE

(Somewhat embarrassed.)
Oh…I'm not, really. I just try to be, you know…aware…best I can.

HORATIO

Nonsense. You sell yourself short – and that is something you should never do. Know your worth.

NORE

Me? Oh, I'm sure I'm not worth much – not in the big scheme of things.
(With a self-deprecating smile.)
Not unless, of course, you're priced by the pound.

(HORATIO stops what he is doing and crosses back to stage C. and gives NORE a chastening look.)

HORATIO

Now, now – I want none of that. None of it. Know your worth. You can't let others define your value.