

Spanner in the Works

(adapted from my story, A Situation)

ONE

INT INSIDE THE WALL CAVITY

A dark chasm; narrow and claustrophobic; seemingly endless, vague lighting from above: rough brickwork and plaster, dirt and dust. As the shadows slip by on either side there is a sense of erratic but purposeful movement, accompanied by faint scurrying noises. Up ahead a shaft of light cuts across the cavity: close in on the light.

This light streams in through a hole in the plaster wall. The sudden brightness is blinding but gradually the hole becomes defined. We enter the hole, which now resembles a short tunnel, and peer out. Inside the room beyond Edward sits facing the wall, he is hunched over a table

INT EDWARD'S BEDSIT, ABOUT 6.PM

He is at the table which is placed against the wall, studying a products manual, other work-stuff lying aside in various piles; notebook opened and his pen there; his mind wandering, the writing in the manual is unfocused, as though he requires a pair of specs; his gaze eventually drifting to the wall; eyes shut for a few moments then open abruptly and he blinks, glances at the clock, back to the manual; the writing now focused as he reads, trying to concentrate.

We look directly down on him from the ceiling; now panning round interior: the sense of the claustrophobic, spartan nature of his living conditions, the lack of internal decoration etc:

he yawns, sighs, scratches the back of his head. Now a sudden anguished expression, his eyes shut tightly. He relaxes, sighs, his eyes still shut:

After a moment he gets up and walks to the tallboy where there are some framed photographs; one of his parents, a portrait of Deborah, another of her with her younger

sister Jeanette; he studies latter. His eyes close and he takes a deep breath, controlling himself.

The mirror on the wall above the tallboy: he examines his face, frowns then alters his expression, forcing a grin which soon disappears; he places his elbows on top of the tallboy, continues staring at himself until his face loses focus and he blinks sharply, back into focus, he looks worried; stares into his eyes:

EDWARD

I am not a bad man (EACH WORD ENUNCIATED)

he continues studying his face, now close in on one of his reflected eyes.

EDWARD

*Not a bad man. (PAUSE) Just a man,
a young man, a youth; a youthful man.
I am a youthful man.*

The clock ticking. He glances at it. He sees the table with the assorted work-stuff in the mirror, the wall above it; he studies the wall, then turns and goes to it.

We linger on sisters' photograph.

He leans across the table to peer at the wall which is painted but has no wallpaper covering; there are a few small incisions, ruts etc. He sits back down and concentrates on the manual, writes a note into his notebook; stares at it, attention drifting; he speaks naturally:

EDWARD

*Subject to the usual damn trials and damn
tribulations: I am subject to them -
that's bloody all!*

gets up and paces about the room.

EDWARD

That's bloody all!

catches sight of his parents in the photograph then of himself in the mirror and stops and rubs his forehead.

EDWARD

(AS IN A PRAYER) God, o please God

stares at Deborah's photograph, then gazes at the clock on the mantelpiece; returns slowly to his chair and slumps into it; becomes aware of clock ticking and stares at it again, then at the manual and his written notes; then at the A4 folders and trade brochures and assorted stationery. Then he squints round at the door, hearing something, a slight scraping sound; glances opposite the door, to his left side, glances up at the ceiling, continues reading then loses concentration; he suddenly frowns at the wall, seeing a tiny insect; he gapes, the middle finger of his right hand drums on the edge of the table, nervously:

EDWARD
God... (GENUINE AWE)

slow but jerky close up to the insect from Edward's perspective; the insect doesn't become a gigantic figure - just a tiny beetle in close-up - then it blurs

to frontal of Edward's face from the insect's perspective: this is gigantic; he is frowning, now squinting, his face takes on a fierce expression, now filling the screen.

And the side of his face now as he stares at the insect; the sense of its defencelessness in relation to him.

EDWARD
The world of the insect. (A STATEMENT)

Sound of clock ticking breaks his concentration and he sits down and lifts across an A4 folder, flicks through it; groans:

EDWARD
Oh Lord, lordie lordie lordie

move to close up of his face; staring into nothing; his eyes shut eventually, head bowed

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM: EARLIER THAT DAY

same close up from last; eyes shut, head bowed.

Then he walks to gaze out window. He is wearing his "work clothes" (fashionable suit etc.), like any salesman. Behind him, on the floor, there are forms and a couple of books lying on the fireside-rug. Door opens and Jeanette enters with a tray, two mugs of coffee and plate of biscuits. She wears a t-shirt and tracksuit bottoms, her feet bare; no bra; she's recently showered, has towel wrapped round her hair. Places tray on coffee table,

and reaches to unwrap towel while speaking;

JEANETTE

*Are you sure you dont want a shower
Eddie?*

FADE

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

EDWARD

Oh Lord, lordie lordie lordie

He gazes at the table, unseeing, still sitting at the table. The manuals and stuff now in focus, he stares at them:

EDWARD

SUDDENLY) *It's mumbo-jumbo, just
bloody mumbo-jumbo.*

His attention is drawn to where the insect is no longer visible. But he doesn't seem to have been looking for it. He smiles for a time; then the anguished look reappears.

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

Jeanette, exactly as before when reaching to unwrap towel from her head but without speaking this time; she smiles at him. His worried face while gazing at her.

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM: A SHORT TIME AFTERWARDS

She sits on an armchair, her legs drawn up under her, her hair damp and uncombed; sipping the coffee. The forms and couple of books still on the fireside-rug. Edward sits on the side of the sofa away from her, cup of coffee in hand:

JEANETTE

*He's good at practical things but when
it comes to paperwork he's more or less
useless.*

EDWARD

It's not everybody's cup of tea.

JEANETTE

*No but he really is though Eddie,
sometimes I think he's illiterate.
PAUSE. Honestly.*

EDWARD

*Well when it comes to work about
the house you might as well call me
illiterate.*

JEANETTE

I dont believe it.

EDWARD

*Well it's true. (A GLANCE AT THE
THE FORMS ON THE FLOOR) Really it's
just eh...it's my job I mean... SHRUGS.*

JEANETTE

*You dont work with mortgages and
house insurance.*

EDWARD

What?.

She is smiling at him

EDWARD

*Naw I know but I'm a salesman remember,
so that kind of thing, it's basically what I do,
dealing with forms and all that kind of stuff,
invoices and accounts, statements, promotional
literature - all the jargon, you get able to
see through it.*

She is curious.

EDWARD

*You develop a sixth sense. I mean when
people're trying to pull the wool over*

your eyes, trying to con you I mean you can tell.

JEANETTE

Can you?

EDWARD

More or less.

JEANETTE

God...! (SOMEWHAT IMPRESSED)

EDWARD

*Dont get the wrong idea I mean
it's nothing to be proud of, it's
just part of the job... (SLIGHT DISTASTE)
being a salesman I mean, you're trying
to do them before they do you...it's
eh...nothing to be proud of I mean...*

She is gazing at him. He shrugs and she smiles. He is embarrassed, awkward in reply to her smile. She runs her hands through her hair. He continues looking at her, as though mesmerised.

She asks him a question which is inaudible. But she has spoken in a normal voice; she is slightly puzzled then repeats the question, smiling:

JEANETTE

Why do you and Deborah not set up together?

EDWARD

What... Eh...

She continues watching him.

EDWARD

Aw well I mean basically it's eh...

He is too aware of her and is self conscious.

EDWARD

It's no as easy as that I mean eh

She is puzzled.

EDWARD
You've got to be sure of things.

PAUSE

JEANETTE
STILL PUZZLED) *What things?*

EDWARD
Pardon?

JEANETTE
What things've you got to be sure about?

EDWARD
Och a lot.

JEANETTE
What like?

EDWARD
It depends.

She is smiling. She reaches to pass him the plate of biscuits.

EDWARD
GAZES AT HER CHEST FOR A MOMENT) *No thanks.*

JEANETTE
Sure?.

EDWARD
AWKWARD SMILE) *We're going for a meal
tonight. Deborah's coming round for me.*
(AVERTS HIS GAZE FROM HER)

JEANETTE
Oh relax.

EDWARD
What d'ye mean?

JEANETTE

You're so tense.

EDWARD

Tense?

JEANETTE

Tense. One biscuit'll not hurt you!

EDWARD

It's just this damn promotional test I've got to sit tomorrow morning, it's driving me nuts.

JEANETTE

It cant be as bad as that...

EDWARD

Maybe no to you but the idea of failing it! (GLANCES AT WATCH) I better go...

JEANETTE

You take life too seriously.

EDWARD

I've got to read up on the bloody stuff.

JEANETTE

Come on!

EDWARD

Honest. Every bloody damn product, I've got to know it inside out, every bloody last one.

JEANETTE

You're kidding!

EDWARD

I'm no kidding at all; it might sound stupid but... (GETS UP AND MOVES ABOUT) God I mean see if I fail it, if I actually fail the damn thing...

JEANETTE

What'll happen? (MOCKING TONE)

EDWARD

God sake Jeanette I know it sounds daft, but... See I think I'm on the road out, I mean... (NERVOUSLY)

She is puzzled.

EDWARD

See I'm just no good at it - I'm no one of these guys that can walk into a factory and sell them a ten year supply of bloody useless detergent.

She laughs briefly.

EDWARD

You want to see some of them in action! God, they'd sell ye anything. No kidding ye.

JEANETTE

I thought you were doing good.

Edward grunts ironically.

JEANETTE

Deborah said you were.

EDWARD

*I dont tell her everything. (GUILTY)
I mean I tell her most things but...*

JEANETTE

SMILES) But not everything.

EDWARD

See I started off well. It was easy. My figures were great I mean I won the regional prize for two months running. Then gradually things went kind of sour It's hard to explain. I just... (SUDDEN

ANGUISH)*I cant reach a closure anymore. And that's the real truth, if I'm being honest, I cant close a sale. And that means I'm a goner...*

JEANETTE

A goner!

EDWARD

Jeanette it's the one thing you need in the selling game, the closure-knack, how to stop talking and point the customer's pen at the dotted line. I either blab too much or I else I dont say a bloody word, I get tongue-tied. I let them slip away...

He looks at her directly and punches his right fist into his left hand.

EDWARD

You see it's like I know too much, I bloody know too much. And that's the problem...I mean...the actuality, when you're face to face with them, as individual human beings, the customers, your clients... (ENDS LAMELY)

Then he gets up from the sofa and paces about in frustration

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM, MOMENTS LATER

He stands gazing out the window, dejected.

JEANETTE

What you looking at?

He seems not to hear her; he is now staring out the window.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE JEANETTE'S FLAT

A man has strolled round the corner into the street below, he is walking along the

pavement; [in his early thirties, dressed smartly; quite businesslike] after a time he glances up in the direction of Jeanette's window

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

Edward starts, he moves a little as though to avoid being seen by the man; he still stares out

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE JEANETTE'S FLAT

The man is now parallel with Jeanette's close; now he pauses and stares up again. pan to Jeanette's window [2 up in ordinary Glasgow-style tenement] but Edward cannot be seen.

The man continues on

INT. JEANNETTE'S ROOM

The man further along from Edward's perspective

Close up of Edward's profile

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

Edward has shifted his stance at the window, gazing out but his attention is elsewhere, though nowhere in particular.

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM MOMENTS LATER

Jeanette tugs down her t-shirt, shifts her position on the armchair. A moment later she catches Edward watching her, he averts his gaze, then glances at his watch.

After a few moments his gaze returns to Jeanette and they look at each other; he is

vaguely puzzled. Now he smiles but in a very strained manner

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT, PRESENT TIME

Close up of his face, eyes shut, the look of anguish; but no interior indication of whereabouts, or time

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

She is standing on the fireside-rug, gazing into the mirror above the mantelpiece, footering with her damp hair, raising it above her head so that her neck is exposed.

Unknown to him she is aware he is watching her, seeing him in the side of the mirror. She moves from one foot to the other, still footering with her hair

EDWARD
IN A WHISPER) *Jeanette...*

She seems not to hear him.

The camera moves towards her and she turns and stares, letting her hair fall, she nibbles her lower lip.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT.

He is lying on the bed, hands behind his head, staring intently at the ceiling.

We see his empty chair at the table, all his stuff as before;

pan to the tallboy, the photographs. We hear him get noisily up off the bed and he walks to the window and parts curtains to peer out.

EDWARD
*It's alright, it's alright, you just
have to act accordingly. These things*

are sent to try us. They are. I mean...
(BOWS HIS HEAD) *Oh God.*

the anguished look, eyes tightly shut. Then he sighs and opens his eyes, stares back out through parted curtains.

EDWARD
O Lord, lordie lordie lordie.

He turns and stares at the stuff on the table; the clock ticking, he glances at it.

INT. THE LOBBY OUTSIDE EDWARD'S BEDSIT. PRESENT

He exits from his room, without his shoes, returns back in then out, slipping them on as he goes; he locks the door behind him and walks upstairs to the bathroom on the first landing.

INT. THE BATHROOM.

There is a pulley above the bath and some clothes belonging to an elderly single male hangs on it. A couple of pairs of elderly socks lie neatly arrayed on the edge of the bath. The place is basic, almost decrepit, the floor clatty etc.

Edward is finishing a pee. He pulls the plug - a 2 short and 1 long tug routine - it doesn't work, nor on the second occasion, but does on the third. He goes to wash his hands at the sink but looks in horror at the interior of the bowl. Somebody has spat into it and not sluiced away the evidence.

EDWARD
Jesus God, that's bloody ridiculous!

He makes to turn on the bath tap instead but pauses, seeing a plastic basin on the bottom with sudsy water and some clothes inside it. He shakes his head but still rinses his hands under the tap, wipes them on the sides of his jeans.

INT. THE LANDING OUTSIDE BATHROOM DOOR

Mr McAllister is standing, he turns the handle then chaps it loudly. Edward opens almost immediately.

EDWARD
ANNOYED) *I was only in two minutes.*

MR MCALLISTER
GRUNTS; SARCASTIC MUTTERING) *Two minutes!*

He and Edward are awkward in passing each other; he enters and shuts the door firmly.

Edward stares at the door for a moment then retreats

INT. THE LOBBY OUTSIDE EDWARD'S BEDSIT

He appears and walks forward, takes out the key, preparing to unlock the door. He inserts the key then pauses. There is an indistinct sound coming from along the corridor; he turns and stares. [but this should not be overstated] A moment later he enters his room

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT.

He's at the table, a cup of coffee by his elbow, reading a brochure and then closing his eyes, repeating what's written to himself; then he checks to see he's got it right, glances at his notes. He starts further on in the brochure, again memorising; he gazes vaguely at the wall and reaches across, and squashes the tiny insect with his right thumb. He sits back down; then he stares at the slight stain on his skin, then back to the wall where the stain is also visible.

EDWARD
MURMURS) *It's just so bloody incredible.*

his attention returns to the studying.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT, SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

He is at the sink and cleansing his right thumb very thoroughly, then he washes his face with cold water, dries himself, rubs at his chin as though contemplating a shave; instead

he returns quickly to the table, glancing at the clock. He resumes studying.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT, SOON AFTER

He is reading, yawns, hands now propping up chin, trying to concentrate, the page becomes unfocused, he stares at it and when it focuses it now reads:

Always bear in mind that the insect you have murdered was probably about to copulate and be responsible for the birth of a million eggs, a hundred thousand of which would have survived to become fully fledged members of the beetle race. In effect you have committed genocide.

He stares at the stain on the wall.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT, TWENTY MINUTES' LATER

He is naked from waist up, his t-shirt over the chair at the table; he is shaving - warm water in a shaving-mug - moving between the sink and the mirror above the tallboy; quite cheerily.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT, SOON AFTER

He is remaking the bed, dressed as before, breathless whistling of a tune. A pair of trousers now hang over the wardrobe door; also a shirt on its hangar. He is preparing the room for Deborah's visit. The wardrobe door is ajar. Inside on its floor a stack of chemical samples is visible.

Suddenly he stops.

EDWARD
My God! (HORRIFIED)

He fumbles the buckle on his jeans, hesitates and gets fresh pair of boxer shorts from tallboy, then a fresh pair of socks.

He pauses, bows his head, his eyes close.

EDWARD

Oh Lord, lordie lordie lordie...

He hurries to the sink and gets a towel, preparing to wash the genitals, but without taking off his jeans etc.; instead he lowers them to his knees and places the towel over them to catch the splashes of water when he starts.

The cold water makes him gasp.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Edward from the waist up, still at the sink, but not washing, his eyes are closed.

INT. JEANETTE'S BEDROOM

No sound at all. They are in bed. He lies on his back, looking worried; she is on her side, propped on one elbow, just looking down at him; he glances at her; the strained smile; after a moment he seems to relax completely in spite of himself.

Still no sound. Eventually she says something which we don't hear, her voice muffled; he looks up at her; he reaches an arm over her and they move into a clinch.

EDWARD

VOICE-OVER, MURMURS) *Lordie lordie...*

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Edward from the rear, washing himself; he pauses, stares down at the red patch on his right testicle.

Edward from the side, examining the testicle.

EDWARD

My God...

He puts his hand onto the edge of the sink, steadying himself; he is frowning.

EDWARD

Nonsense.

He leans both hands now on sink edge, staring at the wall.

EDWARD

MURMURS) *I'm just a damn fool... like
dad always said...*

he stares down at his genitals again, turns on the tap quite briskly, preparing to rinse himself. But at this moment a loud chap-chap at the door and he nearly topples over, trousers still at his knees and the towel across them; he makes to grab the towel and now he does fall, sideways, holding onto his jeans and the towel; he stumbles upright, frantically drying himself and fastening his jeans.

Another loud chap-chap as he grabs for his t-shirt and pulls it on. He stops to look at himself in the mirror, smooths his hair, glances down at his jeans, another look at himself, clears his throat and steps to open the door; again he pauses, as if in silent prayer.

The third chap-chap and he glances right and left as if wanting to escape. He breathes in and out deeply, relaxing himself, he clears his throat again and then unlocks the door. He opens it.

Catherine is outside. His head cranes over her as though she is too small to have entered his line of vision. [She always speaks matter-of-factly unless otherwise directed]:

CATHERINE

I'm your neighbour up the stairs...

He stares curiously down at her.

CATHERINE

*...if you mind son me and my husband
moved in last week.*

EDWARD

What...

CATHERINE

*You gave us a wee hand up with
our suitcases and our bags.*

EDWARD

SLIGHT IMPATIENCE) *Did I?*

CATHERINE

*If you mind the housing put us in after
we got decanted out our own place for
the structural renovations - the council.*

He focuses on her then steps out and peers sideways. But she's alone.

EDWARD

Go on

Catherine is puzzled

EDWARD

*What is it I mean, sorry. Sorry, I
dont eh...eh. Being honest, I've got a
bit of a sore head, I'm studying for a
test ye see, for my work, tomorrow
morning. It's an in-house thing and it's
really... (FROWNS SUDDENLY AT HER)
What is it you want, is it something you want?*

CATHERINE

*My husband would like you to come up
the stair a minute, he'd like a word with you.*

EDWARD

Pardon?

CATHERINE

*If you wouldnt mind. He's just awful
worried the now about something.
And he'll no tell me. I'm the last person.*

Edward is staring at her; her face changes expression in a surprising way and he gapes at her and there's a look of fear on his face, peers over head; she studies him

CATHERINE

You know how he's an invalid.

EDWARD

PAUSE) *Aw aye, yeh, that's right, an
invalid - he's got a walking stick or*

whatever it is one of these three angled triangular kind of frame things whatever you call them. Sorry I mean...is he wanting me to do something?

He peers sideways to the staircase during last delivery.

CATHERINE

He'll tell you himself.

She places her hand on his wrist; he appears not to notice

EDWARD

Yeh but missis it's just I'm so busy the now, I'm just so busy, I've got all this, God, stuff I'm studying and having to learn, to memorize, for the morrow morning, first thing...

And he half flings back the door to show her but stops, blinking at her; she has become the last person he wants to see inside his room. He shields the interior from her, then glances at her hand on his wrist; he closes the door.

Catherine gives him a sharp look and takes him by the elbow; he is powerless, gapes at her in some fear. But then he gives a crafty smile, frowns and glances sideways, and again looks at her hand on his arm.

EDWARD

I'm waiting for my fiancée - Deborah - we're getting married, I'm just having to pass this wee test first, for my promotion, and then after that we'll be putting the mortgage down for a house, a flat, a wee room and kitchen or something, a place of our own... (GRINS) We're getting married in a few months' time.

CATHERINE

You'll just be a minute.

EDWARD

WORRIED) *Yes but...*

CATHERINE

Honestly. It's because you see my husband gets agitated sometimes, he gets things on his mind and they'll no let him go.

She makes a brandishing motion with her right hand as if to indicate how things are inside her husband's mind:

CATHERINE

He's a worrier. He never used to be. Telling you son he was aye about the most relaxed man you could meet, but no now. Us being stuck in this DSS lodging house just makes it worse.

EDWARD

FROWNS) *It's no a DSS lodging house.*

She seems not to have heard him and she leads him across the landing and up the stairs to the room directly above his own. He has forgotten to lock the door and he isn't wearing his shoes. He is vaguely worried.

INT. THE LANDING OUTSIDE THE OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

They are approaching the door; he is now in front and she is gently guiding him along.

She opens the door and pushes him in first.

He stares about..

INT. THE OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

Edward staring about. The place is as delapidated as his own. But certain touches show Catherine has managed to achieve something [but not overdone]

He sniffs, but not obtrusively. The odour seems to direct him to the line of vision wherein he sees the invalid standing supported with the zimmer. Edward stares at this, puzzled.

CATHERINE

Here he is.

INVALID

What's your name young fellow?

EDWARD

My name's eh... (STOPS AND GIVES
THE INVALID A SUSPICIOUS LOOK)

CATHERINE

*He's the boy gave us a hand up the stair
with the bags*

INVALID

Aye. What's your name young fellow?

Edward still watching him, suspiciously:

EDWARD

Edward Prichard. (EMPHASISNG LAST SYLLABLES)

The old couple are puzzled.

EDWARD

I'm just eh... (SEEMS DEJECTED)

INVALID

You go away Catherine.

Catherine looks at him as if trying to figure out what he is thinking.

INVALID

*Go a message. I want to have a word
with the young fellow.*

The invalid withdraws a hand from the contraption and waves at her to leave and Edward makes as though to support him in case he's about to fall. But the invalid is in control. Edward surrepticiously looks the invalid up and down.

Catherine is pulling on her overcoat, which is somehow quite fashionable. Edward stares at her, now at her legs and feet; he is respecting her. She moves business-like to the door, gives a last look at the invalid then leaves.

INVALID

Sit down! (QUIET AUTHORITY)

Edward sits. The invalid manouevres his way to a chair nearby the window. He sits and sighs deeply. And he looks at Edward.

Edward wants to have something to say but cant think of anything; his brow becomes furrowed.

INVALID

*See young fellow what it is, I've
got a confession to make and I dont
want Catherine to know.*

Edward feels funny at this but keeps his eyes open and concentrates hard.

INVALID

*Poor old sowel she's got enough on her
plate, she works hard and she looks after
me ye see, she looks after me.*

The invalid breathes in sharply, like somebody needing oxygen. Edward has been watching him attentively and he too breathes in sharply but via his nostrils; and immediately registers the smell coming from the old bloke. He manages to conceal his disgust from him. He notices some photographs on a cupboard, old black and white style - not necessarily of the old couple themselves.

INVALID

*What's your name young fellow? Naw,
dont tell me, it's best I dont know.
Now pay attention: before they invalidated
me out my job of work I used to be
involved in what some folk call
malpractice; some other folk would call it
sabotage and other folk again, well,
they'd call it something else all the
gether. What I used to do ye see was the
spanner-in-the-works carry-on; I used to
stop the line. Understand me?*

Edward is totally confused. The invalid continues as though unaware of this:

INVALID

*That was what I did, wherever it was I was
working, I used to bring things to a halt -*

I tried to anyway. That's the shape my politics took and that's the shape they were; and I cant help it and nor did I ever want to help it, and I've never wanted to change things neither. But as a way of living my life so to speak what it means is I've aye had to do what my conscience tells me. There was never an inbetween. There never is. Now...

The invalid stops to study Edward as if wanting to make sure who it is he is telling all this. Edward is impassive. The invalid breathes in sharply:

INVALID

The last place I worked in was a firm by the name of eh Gross National Products which, as you probably guess, is a made up name. I dont want to tell you the real one because you never know you might be a police informer.

Edward puzzled, smiles after a moment, shaking his head. The invalid's hands have started waving about furiously:

INVALID

But never mind that never mind that - and never mind me neither because I get nervous and I get agitatit.

Edward is distracted here by the pronunciation of 'agitatit'; he is gazing at the carpet, smiling to himself. He glances surrepticiously at the invalid.

The invalid is speaking but we cannot hear him. Edward smiles again, then stops it, gazes at carpet for a time, lost in thought.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

Edward's Escort 1400 on a country road, south west Lanarkshire somewhere. Sense of peace & quiet.

Fade in BBC Radio 5-style "talk-in" programme.

INT. IN THE CAR

Edward in salesman clothes driving, listening to radio; on the passenger seat is a pile of A4 folders and trade brochures and order-forms etc.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

Edward's Escort 1400, the sense of peace & quiet.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, APPROACHING HAULAGE COMPANY

Escort now approaching village; a small kind of haulage/garage company; one old truck, an old single-decker bus, a newish transit van; other vehicular bits and pieces. Edward drives past it; stops a hundred yards up as an afterthought, does a three-point and returns, drives into parking area.

EXT. HAULAGE COMPANY PARKING AREA

Edward getting out the car, couple of brochures under his arm; goes to boot and opens it, peers at the buildings, ex-barnyards converted into garage/stores - he is wondering what goods to sell - eventually he withdraws a litre of detergent, and two different aerosol cans - closes boot. Footers with his tie for a moment, before heading into the first building. He starts whistling a tune. He disappears inside.

A couple of moments later he reappears out a side door; he looks about and crosses to the next building.

INT. THE HAULAGE COMPANY GARAGE

There is a truck inside, plus a couple of cars.

EDWARD

(VOICE OVER, MUTED) *Hullo! Hullo!*

A side door opens and he appears:

EDWARD
Hullo! (GLANCES AT HIS WATCH)

He strolls around.

EDWARD
Anybody home!

INT. THE HAULAGE COMPANY, CORRIDOR

Edward appears in a shadowy corridor, a few doors lead off it; he approaches, listening. A big dog barks loudly from close by somewhere:

EDWARD
Jesus Christ...

Then he pauses, hearing a radio; he opens a door. Inside are two men and a youth in the middle of their tea-break; they look like mechanics; Radio 1 plays; they stare up from their sandwiches and newspapers at him.

INT. HAULAGE COMPANY TEA-ROOM

Edward stands inside the doorway.

EDWARD
Hullo eh I'm looking for the gaffer.

The men gaze at him.

EDWARD
AFTER A MOMENT) *Is he around?*

1ST MAN
Who is it you're wanting to see?

EDWARD

Guy in charge. (STILL CONFIDENT)

The other man grins. The youth also grins.

1ST MAN

What d'you want him for?

EDWARD

I'm from New World Chemicals, my name's Eddie Pritchard; I've a couple of things to see him about.

1st Man stares at the samples Edward is holding. The other two are watching the interchange, the man sips tea, the youth sips a can of coke.

EDWARD

Is he around?

An alsatian dog trots in. Edward is nervous at first but remains in control; he isn't actually scared of dogs. The alsatian sniffs at him. The men watch him, the youth grinning. Edward smiles as though showing he quite likes this dog, but he doesn't attempt to pat it.

1st Man reaches his hand to the dog and it goes to him; he treats it as a dog-breeder might. He takes a bite of his sandwich.

1ST MAN

What ye selling?

Edward now knows for certain this guy is in charge.

EDWARD

Well I was really wanting to show three things I think you could be doing with in here; one I mean this degreaser...

He steps across and displays an aerosol.

EDWARD

It's a new one we've got on the market for real heavy duty stuff, I mean this one'll shift anything, it's bloody brilliant.

The youth suddenly turns up the radio as a certain song comes on.

1ST MAN
IMMEDIATE ANGER) *Get that to fuck!*

Youth turns volume down.

EDWARD
Bit of a hangover myself...! (SMILES)

The two men look at him. The dog gets up from the floor and rubs against his leg, then exits.

2nd Man gets up and starts tidying his things away.

Edward gains 1st Man's attention now by displaying the aerosol's label to him:

EDWARD
It's the best on the market without any doubt at all which is no just because of its price but the actual way it does the job. I mean you know yourself, with some degreasers, a wee bit of hard, genuine rust and that's them beat, they just cant do the job they're supposed to do - you'd be as well using fairy liquid! (GRINS)

Now he smiles to 2nd Man who is standing waiting by the sink.

1ST MAN
TO 2ND MAN) *Ye making a start on that fucking truck?*

2ND MAN
Aye.

1st Man takes out a pile of keys from his pocket and passes 2nd Man a couple; 1st man watches him leave. Edward also watches. Youth has lifted 2nd Man's newspaper and lighted a cigarette, flicks match into a bin in a tricky sort of manner, turns to football pages.

EDWARD
Quite a score at Ibrox last night eh!

YOUTH
(GUARDED) *Aye.*

1st Man returns the aerosol to Edward and gets to his feet; he walks to where some forms

are scattered higgledy-piggledy on a chair; he looks through them.

EDWARD

So how's business?

1ST MAN

MUTTERS) *Alright.*

EDWARD

Not a great time of year right enough.

1st Man now lifts his mug and looks to see how much tea he has left, swallows the dregs and turns to leave:

1ST MAN

TO YOUTH) *Give him a cup of tea.*

Youth nods. Edward glances at 1st Man who lifts his lighter and cigarettes from the table and then exits. Edward stares after him.

INT. HAULAGE COMPANY, TEA-ROOM

Edward sits alone at the table, the aerosols and litre container on another chair. He gazes out the window at the rolling fields.

MUTED SOUND: Of ordinary church congregation in full voice, singing first couple of verses of the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful. FADE

Edward gazing out window. He sips at the tea.

EXT. HAULAGE COMPANY PARKING AREA

Edward is returning the samples to the boot.

EXT. HAULAGE COMPANY GARAGE

Inside the two men stand beside the truck, talking about something; out of earshot.

Edward's car now heading towards the road. Neither of the men show any interest in his departure.

INT. INSIDE THE CAR

Edward drives in silence; the countryside beyond. He switches on Radio 4. The car approaches a sign on the road; the one symbolising CAUTION; ELDERLY, INFIRM PEDESTRIAN. Edward doesn't see it.

INT. THE OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

The invalid focused from Edward's perspective.

INVALID
...which happened to me.

Edward tries to concentrate

INVALID
And it's caused me a lot of pain and suffering, a hell of a lot if I'm being honest.

The invalid waves at the zimmer:

INVALID
I wasn't always pushing one of them about you know!

Edward eventually sees something is expected of him.

EDWARD
What is it you call it?

But the invalid ignores this:

INVALID
Now what happened you see, I've got to fill you in, I was keeping a low profile because

they were after me, I'm talking about the bigwigs, they were out to get me. And they were using a fellow who was a mucker, a pal. Mind you he was a waster the same man, if I'm to be honest about it, and ye dont like saying that about anybody never mind when he's your mate. But this yin was the sort that winds up changing colours, he joined the enemy, he was a turncoat. That happens a lot in this life: traitors.

Edward frowns. The invalid peers this way and that, clearing his throat, like he's looking for a spittoon. He swallows whatever's in his mouth:

INVALID

Bad bastard that he was. And to think ye took him into yer home and gave him yer hospitality. And his wife and mine became friends too and my Catherine, poor old sowel, she used to look after their weans like they were her own. But that was who it was, the very one they sent to get me. They had chose him because they knew we were close. Ahh! It's a world of conspiracies out there.

EDWARD

Pardon?

INVALID

But I soon knew the situation anyway - too many ears to the ground young fellow... You probably dont know that yet but ye will soon enough. Wait till ye get to my age, then ye'll find out.

The invalid winks and taps the side of his nose, waves his hands in a dismissive gesture:

INVALID

But there's much more you've got to understand and I'm no wanting to get us bogged down in the petty stuff. Come and sit next to me so I dont have to bellow.

EDWARD

I'm fine here though.

INVALID

No but I want to tell ye a secret young fellow, and walls have ears.

EDWARD

What?

INVALID

I thought ye'd have kenned that by now, you being a student and aw that.

EDWARD

But I'm no a student. I'm in the selling game.

INVALID

EDWARD

I'm just studying for a work test. It's a kind of I dont know what ye would call it, mainly it's product memorising I've to do. I think it's what's known as a Retraining Schedule. In reality it's to do with regrading, if ye dont pass it ye stay where ye are. And that's like a demotion. In fact it is a demotion. In fact this test isnt really to pass onto greater things at all, it's just to avoid the pit.

INVALID

The pit?

EDWARD

Yeh.

INVALID

The old woman says ye were a student.

EDWARD

Did she? I wonder how she thought that.

INVALID

She'll have keeked in the letter box and seen ye at yer lessons.

Edward finds what is being said incomprehensible.

INVALID

Cause that's how she does it.

EDWARD

I've no got a letter box.

INVALID

She's good but so she is. Ye just wouldnt have heard her at all but what she'll have done she'll have keeked in and seen what ye were doing. I aye wished I'd had her for a partner at the 'spanners'! She would've been rare at it - better than me. And I would say I was one of the best though as a masculine model my limitations were there, they had to be. Masculine models and limitations, masculine

Distort then mix voices during previous sentence; meanwhile the expression on the invalid's face alters, as though he is having difficulty in focusing on Edward.

INT. JEANETTE'S BEDROOM

Jeanette and Edward are lying in bed; both on their backs, he with his hands behind his head; she looks close to dozing off, not really attending to what he is saying; he speaks quietly but not drowsily:

EDWARD

models and limitations. These facets we are born with - faculties I mean - man.

*Man is born with definite limitations.
We attempt to set out and change the
world but then we get bogged down in
the microcosmic ephemera of getting
to B from A. Ye have yer goal. Ye go
to college and ye take a wee look about.
Ye think the road ahead is signposted...*

INT. THE OLD COUPLE'S BEDDIT

EDWARD (AS VOICE-OVER)

*...not so much signposted as like the
conditions are set for ye. Ye find a lass and
the two of ye set out as partners in the
face of a hostile and aggressive world;
and that includes yer parents. Because the
harsh truth is that most parents hate their
children, just like Romeo and Juliet,
wherefore art thou, they hate them actively
and discourage them from doing the things
they want, if ye want to change the world
ye're no allowed to, they dump ye down
so ye have to take what ye're given, and
then ye end up with things ye dont really
want but are just settling for and it isnt your
fault at all because ye are doing yer best,
trying yer damndest to please and to settle
down properly with yer loved one in yer nest,
when ye are married, when ye are given
the proper chance, the nettle, grasping
that opportunity.*

Edward's eyes are closed, he is smiling, very relaxed on the armchair:

EDWARD
MURMURS) *Lordie Lordie.*

He notices the invalid watching him.

EDWARD
I find this chair so relaxing. I just wish

I had a cigar! But what I mean, it's just so soothing, for my head - and for my brains - giving them a rest like this, not having to worry about things, ye see my fiancée eh was coming, she's about due

to come.

(NOW NERVOUS)

INVALID

Ah...! So ye've a fiancée, that's even better. That shows ye're responsible. I like to see responsibility in a young fellow. What's yer name?

EDWARD

Pardon?

INVALID

WINKS) *Ye're no going to tell me eh?*

EDWARD

I told you before.

INVALID

Did ye?

EDWARD

Yeh, it's Edward Pritchard, I dont mind ye knowing.

INVALID

Edward Pritchard... (NODS) My name's Robert Parker, Bobbie - like the boy who used to play for Falkirk or was it the Hearts? - big right back if yeremember, rare big player . I think he got a cap for the Scottish League team, maybe even the full national one. Before your time I

dare say.

The invalid stares at Edward. Edward becomes self conscious. The invalid holds the stare. Edward shifts awkwardly in the armchair. The invalid resumes talking but it has become so low Edward strains to hear, then sinks back.

INT. NEW WORLD CHEMICALS OFFICE

Salesteam of six sitting or standing in a large office. Edward is there, he sits on the periphery of the group. Couple of guys have their jackets off, couple with ties loosened; two older men, like Edward, are dressed as smartly as usual; they chat inaudibly in the background.

Bob (in shirt sleeves) is recounting an anecdote; aside from two older men the others listen, with varied responses:

BOB

So he says how much are they Bob? A snip my man I says, three and a half quid. Three and a half he says that's a bit steep. Not for quality I says. So anyway, I'm pushing the order and he's looking at it and he's trying not to look me in the eye. I'll tell ye something I says, since ye're a new customer, I'll stick ye in for the discount. He goes mmmm. Cant say fairer than that I says, one'll no kill ye eh! So anyway. He goes ok Bob and I give him the pen, and I starts asking him about the holiday - he's dead proud of his tan. So he signs where I show him and I'm telling him I've got to take this one back with me because it's my only sample and all that - his order'll get delivered within seven days, etcetera.

Bob pauses waiting for a reaction. Silence at first then one of the others laugh

BOB

GRINS) You've got it. (THEY SLAP EACH OTHERS RIGHT HANDS) In five days time he'll get his one... his one gross!

BILL

Fucking hell..ye got him for a gross!

PETE

That's the way to do it!

LAUGHING SALESMAN

Ye sold the poor bastard a gross!

BOB

Well he did ask for one.

BILL

That's disgraceful! (GRINS) What's his name! (THEY LAUGH)

BOB

Oh I wouldnt go back there if I was you.

EDWARD

He'll be fine if he lives for a hundred and fifty years.

The others stare at him then see the joke and grin briefly. Edward watches them before he smiles.

BILL

JERKS THUMB AT HIM) *Fast Eddie!*

Edward smiles but is slightly self conscious.

1st Older Salesman nudges 2nd Older Salsman

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

TO EDWARD) *Tell him about the time you sold that ten drums of cement sealer.*

Edward self conscious again.

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

INDICATES 2ND OLDER SALESMAN)
He's not heard it yet.

LAUGHING SALESMAN

C'mon Eddie!

EDWARD

MODESTLY) *Och...*

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

TO 2ND OLDER SALESMAN) *Just three*

weeks in the job he was!

The salesman called Bob is unsealing a cigar. Edward shakes his head, smiling.

The door opens and Lilian enters: the wolf-whistles etc. are immediate, but a bit perfunctory

BOB

Show me yer underthings Lilian.

Lilian ignores him and walks nonchalantly forward, as though passing Bob to talk to someone else. But when within striking distance she slaps him hard on the cheek. it's a genuinely sore one she gives him and he reels.

BOB

ANNOYED) *Fucking hell that was sore!*

Others laugh. Edward half smiles

LILIAN

Mister McLean's ready to see you Eddie.

Edward starts guiltily.

BILL

Oh oh.

LAUGHING SALESMAN

Figures down again Mistar Pritchard!
(LAUGHS)

2nd Older Salesman looks worried on Edward's behalf. He whispers to 1st Older Salesman when Edward rises and follows her to the door.

LAUGHING SALESMAN

Cheer up you'll soon be dead!

EDWARD

Thanks.

Lilian waits to let Edward exit first. Just before the door closes Bill speaks:

BILL

Why are knickers like figures?

LAUGHING SALESMAN

I dont know, why are knickers like figures?

The door closes on reply and the guffaws.

INT. OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

Edward is staring at the invalid who is talking:

INVALID

*That's how I need to make a confession,
plus because I've got a feeling something
impending is going to happen... I dont
know like it's as if maybe ye think ye're about
to get knocked down by a lorry or a bus or a taxi -*

EDWARD

What?

INVALID

*Well ye see sometimes they go careering
down the road and they dont see ye if
ye're an invalid, ye're walking that slow
they fail to take ye in on their line of
vision. And ye cant but take a stride
without doing so with that very reckoning
and ye're darting a look this way and that
or else trying no to, ye just keep yer
face fixed to the front and try no even to
listen for the roar of the engine - the
thing that's coming to mow ye down.*

EDWARD

My God!

INVALID

Yeh.

EDWARD

That sounds like an awful nightmare.

INVALID

It's like they think ye're a pillar or a post.

EDWARD

Surely no!

INVALID

Aye! (NOW WHISPERS AND SIGNALS TO EDWARD) Come here till I tell ye. Ye're no a religious young chap, are ye?

EDWARD

I believe in God if that's what ye mean.

INVALID

Do ye? (A BIT TAKEN ABACK)

EDWARD

Well I hope I do I mean I hope I do... And I'm no ashamed of it. I used to be an agnostic. But no now, I'm back to believing. It's...I dont know, yer life changes sometimes. I'm no a churchgoer right enough. My parents werent either. Actually my dad was a bit of an atheist.

INVALID

INTEREST) Mm.

EDWARD

Politics, that's all he was interested in. But he didnt stop me going to Sunday School when I was wee. Mum wouldnt have let him anyhow.

INVALID

Was she an atheist?

EDWARD

She said she was. (PAUSE) I've not been to church for years - apart from

when my fiancée's grannie died last March. I felt a hypocrite. (SUDDEN FROWN) Did I though? Maybe I didn't. Maybe I just thought I should have felt a hypocrite

He stops for a moment, then goes for honesty;

EDWARD

I've been involved in some things recently that I think really are sins, to be honest, and I mean quite big ones I don't mind telling you Mister Parker and I can only hope I'll be forgiven, I hope nothing's going to get held against me although if it does I'll not complain, if I've to get chastised for it. If I can only make up for it, maybe by doing my test properly tomorrow, if I can only manage that.

He punches his right fist into his left palm:

EDWARD

That's all, that's all I want!

INVALID

Ye will pass it.

EDWARD

What!

INVALID

Ye will. Ye'll pass your test and ye'll get yer promotion.

Edward stares at him suspiciously.

INVALID

Somebody that's as diligent a studier as you, he's the kind that deserves to succeed. And ye will succeed. I'm convinced of that.

EDWARD

*Ah but I'm no that diligent, my
concentration's nil...*

Edward suddenly glances sideways as though expecting to see his fiancée. Then he looks briefly at the window. He wets his lips, swallows; he sees the invalid peering at him:

INVALID

*Although with me mind you there's aye the
wish that a young fellow like yerself could
one day take up the cudgels where me and
the muckers left off. But these battles
have finished, just like the days they happened
in are finished, and the kind of future that sorts
itself out on the past isn't the kind of future we
fought for - and I'm no a supporter of such
things - none of us were, no in the slightest.
Ye understand me?*

Edward hesitates.

INVALID

*Ah ye will young fellow ye will. And now
if you'll no come to me then I'll come to
you.*

And he gets himself up onto his feet with the aid of the contraption and makes his way over to sit down on the chair next to Edward and he claps Edward on the knee which Edward hates. And he wriggles his way out of touching distance as soon as politely possible.

INVALID

*Now young fellow, my confession, afore
Catherine comes back; when I worked in
whatever ye call it, Gross National -
which is twenty years ago now - the
country was in a state of economic
decline, everything was to pot. You're a
bit young to remember that eh?*

The invalid has now been sitting too close for Edward's comfort and he is finding the

odour difficult to contend with and he turns his head to grasp his nose and breathes in and out deeply; his face is anguished.

The invalid continues speaking but the sound is distorted. Edward is trying to focus on it but fails.

The invalid continues speaking, the sound remains distorted.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, GREEN FIELDS

As when he was driving but without the car on the road.

INT. MR MCLEAN'S OFFICE

Mr McLean is standing with his back to Edward, hands clasped behind his back, gazing out the window; green fields beyond

MR MCLEAN

You see Edward we saw you as promotional material - we still do I mean dont get the wrong idea, this is why I'm talking to you just now.

Edward shows his depression at this information

MR MCLEAN

C'mon now if I didnt think you were up to it I wouldnt be bothering my shirt actually telling you now would I. It's just your figures you see.... (CHECKS FIGURES: SIGHS) They've been down for the past three quarters, and I mean really down (BARELY VEILED SARCASM) You're managing to pay your petrol I take it!

Mr McLean leaves chair and strolls to gaze out window. Edward watches him

MR MCLEAN

The first six months you were here you were top man you know top man, we thought you were a shooting star. That's what Jim Petrie said when he came up from London, that boy's

a shooting star, he said, he'll have all our jobs if we're not careful. (SIGHS: REFLECTIVELY) All our jobs... (BRISKLY) But not with these figures Eddie, not with these figures. (TURNS SHARPLY) You dont have a problem do you?

EDWARD

A problem...?

MR MCLEAN

People have problems. That's why they cant cope. The country's full of people who cant cope. You know what bottle is Eddie?

Edward thinks this is rhetorical and doesnt answer

MR MCLEAN

You dont; well I'll tell you, bottle is what these people dont have, and that's why they're on the street, that's why they have to be subsidised by the likes of you and me. They're freeloaders. I cant abide freeloaders Eddie, that's the one thing that gets to me - dyou know what I mean

EDWARD

Yes

Mr McLean doesnt hear him; it was rhetorical this time

MR MCLEAN

MUSES) The one thing that gets to me. (TURNS SHARPLY) If I had one criticism to make of you Eddie do you know what it'd be? You think too much. Now that's what attracted us to you in the first place but there's a time and a place for everything and the Manchester Weekend wasnt the time and it wasnt the place. You remember the occasion? I do. Jim and myself held a stewards enquiry. I said to Jim then, the trouble with Eddie is he doesnt mix

EDWARD

I dont mix...?

MR MCLEAN

RAISES HAND) Hear me out. I said that to Jim because you were failing the new client presentation

EDWARD

I didnt know I failed it

MR MCLEAN

Well you didnt fail it precisely but you disappeared during the afternoon session; you found it difficult you said, that's what you said

EDWARD

Yeh but that was in confidence

MR MCLEAN

Of course it was in confidence Eddie everything's in confidence, that's the name of the game. But Jim said to me, no he said, it's not because he doesnt mix, it's because he's a thinker. But maybe he thinks too much. These were his actual words

EDWARD

I just wasnt sure about it, so I said so

MR MCLEAN

I respect your honesty Eddie, you're an honest man, nobody could say different

EDWARD

I thought the psychology was out

MR MCLEAN

You thought the psychology was out. What does that mean, you thought the psychology was out... This is the chemical business Eddie dyou know that?

EDWARD

Yes

MR MCLEAN

MUSES) *Hardest sell in the game...* (HE
TURNS TO STARE OUT THE WINDOW)
Hardest sell in the game.

Through the window are green fields. Edward stares out at them.

INT. OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

Pan to window, then to Edward apparently listening to invalid. Now the invalid's face in close up as he talks, but immediately distorted; and fade.

pan round room to dwell again on window, invalid always out of frame.

FADE INTO VOICE OVER: OF A MINISTER PRAYING TO A CONGREGATION

MINISTER'S VOICE

*Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
come. Forgive us each and every
trespass. Each and every trespass
that we do o God, lordie lordie*

INT. OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

Edward in profile; head bowed, staring at carpet, seeing the faded quality of it, the frayed edges etc.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Edward staring into the mirror above the tallboy:

VOICE-OVER EDWARD

You always think the worst about folk. Always. You blame them for this and you blame them for that. You're just so conceited. It's pride. Pride and adultery. And genocide. Lord; lordie lordie; o lordie. (NOW ALOUD, SUDDENLY) And blasphemy.

INT. OLD COUPLE'S ROOM

Edward staring, in profile.

INVALID
OUT OF FRAME) *...in the Sahara region, and these armless and legless beggars in third world countries who have to get wheeled about in bogies in an effort to pay off loans to the I.M.F. and the World Bank.*

EDWARD
MURMURS) *What...*

Fade.

INT. IN A PUB

The salesteam at two tables; a lot of drink around; all are half cut, including Edward; three different conversations in progress; Edward is with Laughing Salesman and 1st Older Salesman:

EDWARD
And ye see they had devised this unheard of method for removing fresh limbs from a young person's body in order to weld them onto elderly sick people, millionaires - spare part surgery. They had this fluid that liquidised the membranes or something

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

FAIRLY DRUNK) *Liquidised the membranes?*

EDWARD

What came out was this terrible brown stuff, it reminded ye of old blood or something, as if it was rancid

LAUGHING SALESMAN

Oh shut up Eddie for christ sake

EDWARD

No but it's true.

LAUGHING SALESMAN

Yeh well we dont want to hear about it!

EDWARD

It's a bit like that story where you've got this guy and he gets turned into a human trunk with no limbs, it's bloody horrible, he gets captured and mutilated by evil slavers.

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

By what? (QUITE DRUNK)

EDWARD

Evil slavers.

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

Evil slavers...? (PUZZLED)

LAUGHING SALESMAN

DISTASTE) What did they do it for?

EDWARD

I dont think it was for anything I mean they had just captured him.

In the background other salesmen guffaw over a joke

1ST OLDER SALESMAN

Sounds bloody awful to me! (PUZZLED)

Mutilated by evil slavers...

1st Older Salesman stares at Edward briefly, then reaches for his drink again. Laughing Salesman now shifts on his chair to become part of the other company, someone there telling another joke.

Edward watches 1st Older Salesman fumble with his cigar then sip at his drink with understated relish. Edward stares at his own cigar.

In the adjacent company the other salesmen guffaw at the joke's conclusion. Edward glances in their direction. He meets the gaze of Mr McLean who is sitting at a table to the rear where he and Lilian have been chatting together.

INT. OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

INVALID

Ye did yer best.

Edward is almost scared to look up from the carpet. But he manages it and finds the invalid staring straight at him. He cant cope with the stare.

EDWARD

I just dont have the mentality for it.

INVALID

What was that young fellow?

EDWARD

Nothing.

INVALID

I'm saying to Ye when the old woman comes back we've got to speak about other things, maybe the facilities in this place.

Edward puzzled.

INVALID

See she's a habit of sneaking up on ye. If she does then ye should just

start talking about the facilities here - I mean what ye're supposed to do for grub and so forth because ye're no allowed to cook in yer room as far as I hear. That right?

Edward nods.

INVALID

So just talk about the facilities ye've got in this place, that'll do the trick. Because it's a hell of an irritation, especially to her. No me so much cause I'm no what ye'd call an eater, but she gets all het up about it and ye cannay blame her, poor auld sowel, she's used to an oven and a cooker and what have ye. So if ye start talking about the facilities ye see I dont want her knowing what I'm going to tell ye. I want that to be a secret between me and you.

The invalid breathes in sharply. Edward stares at him, again suspicious; eventually he smiles knowingly, shakes his head.

The invalid now gazing round the four walls in a very intentional and deliberate way, then at the window - as if expecting a snooper to be hanging outside on a painter's platform. As soon as he begins speaking Edward is once more very aware of the odour emanating from him; the invalid also gesticulates a lot and Edward finds it off-putting and after the first few words the distortion again, with words rarely distinct:

INVALID

So like I was saying this was an incident of a special kind; ye dont often get them quite like this and ye have to be aware of that and how this should be the case young fellow because if ye dont know it and ye dont understand it why then what ye find, ye find....and terrible fuisty and dark, shadowy....

The invalid seems to be trying to focus on Edward while he speaks:

INVALID

*.....wicked wicked but that's to be
expected.....drove him off his mind
ye could say.....destroyed.....
then too ye must know about it killing...
the boy like an accident.....an
ordinary wee boy just the usual.....
full of devilment like ye'd expect, we're
aw like that at one time or another.....
.....feasible, just no feasible
.....feasible, just no feasible*

Full close up of invalid's face now distorted.

Edward feels dizzy:

INVALID

*Cause that spanner had just been tossed
and it had to be tossed there was no two
ways about it*

Edward stares at the wide lapels on the invalid's jacket; there is a stain down one of them.

INVALID

*A very big spanner; one of the biggest
seen in this country for quite a number of
years - me and a couple of blokes working
the gether for it, a team effort - and I
reckon it must have cost maybe one point
seven five million for final rectification see
young fellow because we had it worked so
the bigwigs never found out it was deliberate
- no even that it was an accident.*

EDWARD

That it was an accident...?

INVALID

*No, that's what I'm saying. I'll tell ye something
ye'll maybe no quite understand except maybe
ye might: ye see they never found out that it*

happened at all. Ye get it? They just thought there was something wrong with the entire works, and I'm no talking about safety measures because safety measures dont make that much difference as well ye'll know, but just that a general improvement would need doing, right the way through all their factories - and I'm here meaning across the whole of what ye call the 'free world'.

Edward smiles to the side, as though expecting to see some of his work-colleagues step out from behind a curtain, that it's all some kind of practical joke. He gazes at the carpet, shaking his head very slightly.

INVALID

That's how it cost so much to put right ye see because ye're talking Thailand, Indonesia, India, Zambia, Kenya, Korea, Vietnam, Scotland

EDWARD

PLAINLY) *It's a hoax.*

INVALID

Denmark, the Irish Free State, Wales, Pakistan, Australia, Iceland, Sweden - wherever G.N.P. Plc. used to exist it no existing now of course because it was taken over by a big conglomerate back in the time of the conspiracy trials. Then it went itself in the Throgmortin Crash if ye mind, and ye had the Makgas Consortium stepping in, government funding and CNI money, headed by a noted patriot - though ye understand young fellow that the patriot's real name is something different to anything I might tell ye so what's the point of me telling ye anything at all. Unless ye rather ye heard everything, but that sort of information isnt classified it being freely available elsewhere and if ye would rather hear than no hear then ye should go and check it out, ye'll find most of it down the Advocate's Library.

Edward looks up from the floor. He looks at the invalid.

EDWARD

It's a world I don't know Mister Parker. I wish I did but I don't. I've never really been able to get the hang of it - it's like the international news in the quality Sunday papers, all these places and names ye can never remember, they go hazy as soon as ye look at them. I'm sorry. Honest. My mind's good at some things but not at others. I wish it was different: I wish I could just bloody I mean it's concentration, it's just concentration, it's the same when I was at college and ye got all these graphs and what-dye-call-it statistical analyses and data-base spreadsheet things I mean and it was just mumbo-jumbo... (PAUSE) I don't seem able to concentrate, I just don't seem able to concentrate, beyond about five minutes, at any given point...I think there's something up with me.

The invalid is frowning at him. Edward clears his throat before continuing:

EDWARD

I just do my best at my job of work without hurting too many people, although ye've got to appreciate about it that being on the road, what I do, as a sales rep, what ye have to do, anybody, ye've got to gyp folk because that's the nature of the game, salesmanship, ye have to gyp people into buying stuff they don't need. Silly buggars. How come they buy all that junk! I've never been able to work it out. Even my own mother, with all her experience through having a salesman for a son, this guy comes to the door a week ago and he sells her some insurance that's more or less useless, in fact it's absolutely useless, it's no good at all, if I'd had been there I'd have bashed him one on the jaw. Bloody stuff! I went through it to check. Rubbish! Absolute rubbish! And I mean

Invalid stops him by waving his hand sharply:

INVALID

Young fellow, were you the lad that helped me up the stair the other day? Were you?

EDWARD

CLEARs THROAT) *Your wife says so but ye'll have to work it out for yerself, it's no good asking me because how do ye know about me ye dont know nothing quite honestly, quite frankly, when ye come to think about it. She says it was me, she says it was but I wouldnt actually believe her, how do ye know, she might be lying, just because she's elderly and small and acts like she's the epitome of truth and wisdom therefore she has to be a paragon, but how do ye know the devil hasnt entered her soul and she's only there to draw us all into evil ways?*
(PAUSE) *I obviously only mean that as a for instance; I dont really think it - I mean how could I! Obviously I couldnt.*

The invalid stares intently at him.

EDWARD

Look, I'm just trying to be honest and that's that. I dont know anything about industrial sabotage or industrial injuries, I dont know anything at all, if somebody has to suffer a terrible horrendous agony just in order that others might go free, that's just the same as happens to other people - it happened to Jesus Christ, He had to be crucified, so maybe it was like what you're saying, for the sake of the good of mankind as a whole, if that's what ye're talking about, about somebody having to get killed instead of something else. Well there's other sins people have to atone for, it's no always just yer own. I think that's a mistake a lot of folk make, especially males like us, men, I think we're very often mistaken at the very root of our own existence as human beings.

INVALID

I'm no following yer drift.

EDWARD

Well look I mean you asked if I believed in God. I do, I really do. I stopped it for years

but that was my father's influence and ye've got to grow up sometime, ye've got to get into the real world, the world out there; I mean it's a hard hard sell, everybody knows that. It's no my fault people suffer, ye help the one person are ye supposed to help them all? And then how are ye supposed to keep on living yer own life into the bargain? Cause nobody helps ye. Know what I mean? That's all I'm saying, it's no because ye're selfish, ye just dont have the power or the control except maybe a wee miniscule slice, and then ye wind up getting squashed, just like a wee beetle - that's what happened to a friend of mine...when we were at college, he started to get involved in charity work for foreign countries and then he ended up in trouble.

INVALID

You're misjudging yerself young fellow.

EDWARD

Pardon?

INVALID

I was beginning to guess that just after ye came in. But there again it's my own fault; I tend no to get things right either.

Edward scratches the side of his head.

INVALID

*And then ye see I've got to trust whoever she trusts; my missis, I have to rely on her for my character judgments. Of course it's this bloody thing here...! (GESTURES AT ZIMMER)
If it wasnt for it I'd be able to give more time to things, I'd be able to do my own thinking when it comes to getting things done, and that's what's important. (PAUSE) Ach...*

the invalid becomes dejected.

Edward studies the frayed edges of the carpet, its threads spread haphazardly; he reaches to straighten the ones within touching distance. He smiles to himself, glances surreptitiously at invalid who still sits as before. He continues smiling as he studies the carpet; he stops smiling, but is lost in thought for several moments.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

The empty bedsit. The photographs on the tallboy.
The wardrobe door is slightly ajar.
Fade in the clock ticking. The clock in its place.

INT. THE OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

EDWARD
SLOWLY) *Oh Lord, lordie lordie.*

Then suddenly Edward is horrified and starts up from the armchair, glancing this way and that:

EDWARD
What time's it?

Invalid doesn't respond.

EDWARD
*I don't understand it, I just don't understand it!
None of it I mean none of it*

He looks about and then slumps back in armchair; he stares vacantly, as if he's given up.

INT. JEANETTE'S BEDROOM

Jeanette lying in bed. Edward is dressing.

EDWARD
*She is precise but I like that about her
because it fits in with me I mean we're*

quite alike in that I mean I try to be like that myself. Deborah's a great lassie, really great. It's just she doesn't have the best of manners.

JEANETTE

What?

EDWARD

I don't mean manners like etiquette, it's just eh it's like a bad habit she has I mean eh it's just - ye've got to admit it she can have a nasty tongue, even yer own mother says it to me once, she says I wasn't to take what she said too seriously. That was when I asked her to marry me I mean when she said no...!

Jeanette smiles.

EDWARD

I was totally shattered. I mean it had never ever dawned on me I mean, the idea, I mean... It's no a criticism, it's just - yous two are different.

JEANETTE

I know.

He doesn't notice the irony.

EDWARD

You are but - even yer clothes and that I mean God, I'm no meaning to be critical but sometimes ye just wish she would I don't know just maybe relax a bit, her style I mean. I mean you call me Eddie! She never calls me Eddie.

JEANETTE

You never call yerself Eddie.

EDWARD

*I do with clients. But I mean can ye
imagine me calling Deborah Debbie?
Or Debs? It just sounds stupid. She
would never stand for it.*

Jeanette now gets out of bed and puts on a long t-shirt she uses as a nightie. Edward gazes at her. She footers around at her dressing table. There is a photograph of her boyfriend there, and also among assorted others is one of Deborah; one also of Deborah and Edward together. Edward looks at them for a time, then at Jeanette as she stand by the dressing table, the shape of her body beneath the t-shirt etc

EDWARD
MURMURS) *Lordie...*

INT. OLD COUPLE'S BEDSIT

He jumps to his feet in extreme agitation.

INVALID
Just sit down a minute.

EDWARD
I cant, I just cant.

INVALID
Ye can.

EDWARD
I've got to go.

INVALID
*I've a need to tell ye something. It's a
kind of confession. I've got to talk
things out with ye.*

EDWARD
But ye've done that already.

INVALID
No I've no.

EDWARD

I thought ye had.

INVALID

Look young fellow talking it out in that certain way I'm meaning is a confession; that's what a confession is. And I'll know when I've done it, because ye always do, once ye've made it ye know ye've made it. Yer mind feels easy.

Edward in extreme agitation; now he stands completely still; his head droops

The invalid is staring at him.

EDWARD

Sorry.

The invalid frown and gestures impatiently.

INVALID

Ye see I'm no able to speak unless you're willing to listen, ye've got to be able to hear what I'm saying but ye're no always willing to do that.

EDWARD

Yeh but Mister Parker I'm sorry eh it's just that my fiancee's due any minute.

INVALID

She'll know where ye are, Catherine'll tell her.

EDWARD

Will she? (PUZZLED)

INVALID

Aye...

Edward nods then sniffs, breathes in deeply and raises his head, at the same time making a gulping noise like as if his adam's apple is stuck, then the tears start in his eyes and he blinks to keep from crying.

INVALID

What's wrong?

EDWARD

Jees I'm just in awful trouble Mister Parker, awful trouble.

INVALID

Sit down a minute.

EDWARD

Yeh but I'm just in so much trouble.

INVALID

Sit down. Maybe we can share it. Sometimes ye share a problem ye swop it, and in the swopping it gets lost.

Edward has his face in his hands.

INVALID

Dont get yerself into a state...

He leans forwards, grasping Edward's arm:

INVALID

Edward's a King's name by the way, did ye know that?

Edward shakes his head.

INVALID

Come on, at your age it cannay be that bad, it'll be a personal thing; personal things are easy. Just sit down a minute and tell me what it is. I was going to tell you mine so you can just tell me yours. See! If you tell me I'll tell you, that's what I mean by a swop.

Edward drags his wrist across his face, wiping his eyes as he sits down.

INVALID

I'll take on your problem if you'll take on mine. You hear me out and then I'll hear you out, is it a deal?

EDWARD

Yeh but...

He rubs quickly at his eyes with the palms of both his hands.

INVALID

In that way ye see we'll both have things into the open, we'll have shared what's troubling us... If I start worrying about your problems you start worrying about mine. Ye get it?

Edward glances at the door, not listening to the invalid; he glances at the window.

EDWARD

What time's it?

The invalid is gazing at him. Edward closes his eyes and he puts his hands next to each other as if to clasp them in prayer but he doesn't quite succeed:

PAUSE

EDWARD

I slept with my fiancée's sister this afternoon. (OPENS EYES, BUT AVOIDS LOOKING AT INVALID)
I slept with her. I didn't mean to. I don't know what to do about it. I just don't know.

INVALID

Mm. (IT'S WORSE THAN HE'D EXPECTED)

EDWARD

I've never done it before, never, it just bloody happened it was just bloody out the blue, I think maybe it was me with my head full, all the worries I've had cause

*of this damn test, my job, the whole lot.
Plus as well ye dont like saying it but
maybe it was a set-up from her sister I
mean ye dont like saying it because
they're the same flesh and blood but ye
dont know ye just dont know. I dont mean
I mean eh..I just...*

INVALID

Mm.

EDWARD

It just happened.

PAUSE

INVALID

Aye it's a difficult one that.

EDWARD

Is it?

INVALID

*Questions of loyalty young fellow, they're
aye the worst.*

EDWARD

Yeh... (SIGHS)

INVALID

And she doesnt know?

EDWARD

What?

INVALID

Yer wife's no found out?

EDWARD

It's no my wife it's my fiancee; I'm no married.

PAUSE)

*I suppose they're the same really anyway,
if ye're married or engaged. I am wanting
to get married to her. In fact I actually asked her and she*

said no.

INVALID

She said no?

EDWARD

Yeh. I asked her. She didnt want to. She said it was too soon.

INVALID

Aw.

EDWARD

I dont know how. I thought it was good ye know I mean I thought it was fine, but it wasnt, she just said no. It was a shock.

INVALID

Oh well, aye. Had ye been planning it for a while?

EDWARD

Naw no really, I just actually popped it out one night. I hadnt thought of it happening, her saying no. I suppose it's ego, ye just dont think of it, ye always think it's you, ye always think you've got to make the decision. And that's that. Then ye find out it isnt, the other people have got their own minds, and what they say for themselves ye dont find out till ye've asked... And I've no asked her again, and I'll tell you something, I'm no gony ask her again, no till I know, I mean no till... (PAUSE) Eh...I know this is a personal question Mister Parker but I was wondering...I'm only meaning how it's as though here we are meeting up with each other at a time when we need a way out of a problem, the both of us and eh...

The invalid gestures dismissively:

INVALID

Mine isnt really a problem.

EDWARD

INVALID

It's different to that

EDWARD

I see.

INVALID

But on ye go anyhow and say what ye

were saying.

Edward hesitates.

INVALID

About fate or whatever it was.

EDWARD

Well I dont mean exactly fate because I know God doesnt arrange things just for our benefit in that way I mean that's even a bit like blasphemy, to suppose he does. (WORRIED LOOK) I'm thinking more in the way ye get led along a country road, like ye're going over a hill in the distance where the fields look rectangular with their hedgerows and ye're going to a village to do a bit of business and there's no avoiding it even although ye hate the very idea because the road leads ye there and ye know ye're to have to grit yer teeth but ye're used to that because that's what ye do all the time when you meet these clients even if they're old and valued ones I mean ye're always gritting yer teeth anyway and then having to go and do it because that's the way things are, ye've always got to go straight in and start off the chat as if it was the first time in yer life. But maybe things are going to happen to ye along the way. Maybe ye start to get a blind panic settling in cause that can happen too, that

can happen too - it happens to me, sometimes. There's all kinds of trials and tribulations. Ye see in some ways today has been awful bad for me. I'll no bore ye with all the sorry details, it's just personal stuff mainly, and maybe that kind of thing's best not to get aired. Ye have to remember I'm younger than you I mean ye know what like it is nowadays anyway, folk just dont talk about serious things, they dont want to, they only talk about things like television and videos and football, rock bands, that side of things, media personalities and high financiers, big businessmen, big fat-cats who work down the Stock Exchange in London, all these big high financiers who get the great big sums of money.

INVALID

facilities young fellow

Edward gapes at him

INVALID

What ye were saying there a wee minute ago... About the facilities, mind? Just tell us about them.

Edward turns to see Deborah and Catherine, both standing just in from the doorway. The door is ajar. Deborah smiles briefly.

EDWARD

Hiya...

Edward then coughs and makes to rise from the armchair but doesn't. For one split second he feels so comfortable and nervous at the self same moment he wants to rush straight across and take her by the hand and drop to his knees and ask her to marry him right there and then but something is stopping him and he feels like bursting out crying again because he seems to have failed and it's in such a dramatic and unforeseen way... He is anguished again.

He studies the carpet a moment, getting himself relaxed, then he turns to speak but the invalid has been watching him and now he speaks instead:

INVALID

He was telling me about the facilities Catherine. Some funny rules they've got in this place! (PAUSE) Eh young fellow?

EDWARD

Oh yeh, yeh...

He raises his head to look directly at the old woman, tries to swallow saliva but his throat seems as dry as a bone; he avoids looking at Deborah.

INVALID

Tell us again.

EDWARD

Yeh.

INVALID

They're strict eh?

EDWARD

Yeh.

INVALID

Tell her about what people do.

EDWARD

D'ye mean the other tenants or just me myself?

INVALID

Just how ye all get by for yer meals and the rest of it.

Edward addresses the old woman:

EDWARD

Some people I think just eat cold stuff; cheese and slices of cold meat, tins of beans unheated, that kind of thing. Bread and butter. Or chips or maybe kebabs or pakora from the carry-out shop.

CATHERINE

EDWARD

*Other people buy an electric kettle
and what they do is boil eggs and cook
things preserved in salted water, like
these wee hot-dog sausages ye can buy
out the supermarket and sometimes I
think some of them heat up these wee
fish done in tomato sauce - pilchards.*

DEBORAH

He's talking about himself.

Catherine is puzzled.

DEBORAH

*And then he makes a cup of tea straight
after, without rinsing out the kettle so
it's all tomato sauce left inside - even
vinegar sometimes. (SMILES)*

Catherine now impassive, studying Edward.

EDWARD

*ATTEMPTS A SMILE) She's just saying
that, she's just saying that.*

He twists a little as if trying to glance at her but is somehow not able to manage the manoeuvre, and he sees her frowning. He clears his throat, looks at the invalid who is also impassive.

EDWARD

*Ye can maybe even cook soup in yer
kettle, especially if it's really clear
and no full of vegetables. As long as the
owners dont find out, what they dont
know wont hurt them - they're absentees.*

CATHERINE

Mm...

She grimaces from him to her husband; what Edward has said doesnt signify much to her:

CATHERINE

TO DEBORAH) *If he was fit and healthy we wouldnt be in this state. We would have a proper cooker with an oven and I could make proper meals. Even in a place like this. Ye see he was on the injured pensioner's income supplement but they took him off it and stopped paying him because it'd become a condition, so that's us now until he gets better, if he ever will. And he's the only one that says he will, cause the doctor says he'll no.*

DEBORAH

That's bloody appalling! (SHE GLARES AT EDWARD, SHAKING HER HEAD

Edward stares at the carpet.

DEBORAH

Bloody appalling.

Edward glances at the invalid who is peering in the direction of the window; he turns to Catherine:

EDWARD

I'm sorry missis I'll have to go back down the stair now because I've got my studies to attend to.

INVALID

He's got his test tomorrow morning.

CATHERINE

Did ye tell him about yer cousin Donald?

INVALID

DISMISSIVELY) No.

CATHERINE

Ye should have.

INVALID

Och the boy's no wanting to hear about him.

EDWARD

*It's only because things are so rushed,
plus as well I was thinking of setting my
alarm early, so's I could get up and do an
extra bit of studying the morrow morning.*

INVALID

Ye'll pass young fellow so dont worry.

EDWARD

*I hope so. (TO DEBORAH) I was telling
eh Mister Parker about the test I'm doing.*

DEBORAH

Oh... (LOOKS POLITELY TO INVALID)

EDWARD

QUICKLY) Will we go then?

DEBORAH

Alright.

EDWARD

*I thought ye would feel like something to
eat... Do ye?*

DEBORAH

SELF CONSCIOUS IN THE COMPANY) Do you?

EDWARD

Well if you do.

Deborah sighs.

EDWARD

I mean eh...

INVALID

*I'll maybe pop down later then like we
agreed.*

EDWARD

Pardon?

INVALID

*Maybe the back of ten - when ye're
knocking off for a coffee. Or else will
you just come up here?*

EDWARD

INVALID

*Well I'll just pop down then (TO
CATHERINE) It'll be alright.*

Catherine gives him a look. Edward is moving now to leave.

CATHERINE

*(TO DEBORAH) He's a stubborn old besom.
(NOW TO INVALID). You know fine well
what the doctor says.*

INVALID

What do doctors know...

CATHERINE

Listen to him.

INVALID

*The state pays their wages - firms' men
to the core! That right young fellow?*

Edward glances at him curiously.

INVALID

*(TO CATHERINE) I'll only be going down
the one flight of stairs.*

CATHERINE

*Aye well ye're no supposed to go down
any flights of stairs.*

Edward grasps Deborah's arm but too roughly and she shakes his hand off.

EDWARD

Sorry.

The elderly woman opens the door for them. He makes way for Deborah then follows her.

INVALID
Mind now young fellow!

EDWARD
'Bye.

INT. THE LANDING OUTSIDE OLD COUPLE'S ROOM

DEBORAH
TO CATHERINE) *Thanks.*

CATHERINE
Cheerio hen.

The door closes. They walk slowly along corridor, he to the rear.

DEBORAH
RUBBING HER FOREARM) *That was a hard grip.*

EDWARD
I didnt mean it, sorry.

A door off the corridor is an inch or so ajar. He frowns at this in passing, as though it's significant; but she pays no heed. He is attending to inconsequentialities in the hope that his other problems will somehow disappear.

EDWARD
So where did ye meet Missis Parker?

DEBORAH
In the street.

EDWARD
The street...

DEBORAH
Why?

EDWARD

*Oh nothing I mean it's just a bit... strange.
Not think so?*

DEBORAH

What were ye talking about when we came in?

EDWARD

What...?

DEBORAH

*Ye just switched subjects; one minute ye
were talking about fate and big business
and then ye went to making tins of soup in yer
electric kettle.*

EDWARD

We were just having a conversation.

DEBORAH

IRRITABLY) Men's talk.

EDWARD

No men's talk, it was just...

DEBORAH

PAUSES) Yeh?

EDWARD

Just a conversation

Deborah shakes her head, exasperated. Edward accepts the opportunity not to explain further, following her downstairs to the half-landing. He studies her as she walks, as if he has never ever known her, and never ever will. Close up of her back.

The bathroom door is ajar. He pushes it and looks inside. She pauses.

EDWARD

Look at the state of this place!

INT. BATHROOM

On the pulley above the bath a scanty line of battered male clothing hangs. Edward steps in to examine it.

INT. LANDING OUTSIDE

Deborah gazes in.

DEBORAH

People have got to wash their clothes.

INT. BATHROOM

EDWARD

*Aye but I mean it's a bathroom Deborah,
it belongs to everybody.*

Edward begins speaking as he exits:

EDWARD

I mean ye dont force...

INT. LANDING OUTSIDE

EDWARD

...people to look at yer dirty washing.

DEBORAH

MUTTERS) *God sake Edward.*

EDWARD

*It's a communal place but, old McAllister
treats it like it was his own personal*

property.

DEBORAH
IRRITABLY) *Tch*

He frowns after her as she walks. As he follows her downstairs he is staring at her. The sense that he is very close to her, that she is vulnerable to him; the fleeting possibility that one push would send her flying. His face now in close up; his inner turmoil, fists clenched; he has paused in walking.

Suddenly his arm is raised and he has pushed her in the back and she goes flying down the final half flight of stairs

INT. THE STAIRS DOWN FROM THE BATHROOM LANDING

We see him standing from below, eyes closed; he seems relaxed now.

DEBORAH
LOOKING UP AT HIM) *Edward...*

EDWARD
ABSENTLY) *Yes*

He sees her now, and then follows, gazing vacantly out the window on the half-landing as he passes.

INT. LANDING OUTSIDE EDWARD'S ROOM

She waits while he tries to find his key to unlock door. He can't find it. After a moment's hesitation he frowns, glances at her and puts his hand on the handle, turns it and the door clicks open.

EDWARD

Deborah unaware of anything amiss.

EDWARD
The door's open. I must've forgot to lock it.

DEBORAH
(DISINTERESTED) *Mmm* (STEPS INSIDE)

Edward now realises he isn't wearing shoes; he studies his feet for a moment, then stares along corridor before entering.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Edward closing the door, spots his shoes on the floor, then the key on top of tallboy

EDWARD
Here it is.

He sees his face in the mirror, glances at the photographs and is horrified to discover those with Deborah are face down.

EDWARD
INVOLUNTARY) *Oh God....*

DEBORAH
What's up?

He quickly fumbles them upright, shielding it from her.

EDWARD
Nothing...

He is gazing at himself in the mirror; now turning and he walks to the wardrobe; the door is wide open, he closes it; then a puzzled frown

EDWARD
Bloody test...

DEBORAH
It's not that important surely.

EDWARD
It is to me.

Deborah shrugs, glances round the room which is generally untidy; her gaze lingers on

the stain on the wall where the insect was crushed; the stain is noticeably larger - but not amazingly so. Edward looks at it, but not really registering the fact.

EDWARD

*I mean it's just a question of priorities
ye know I mean I was going to tidy up and
then that old woman came for me and I had
to go up the bloody stair. How could ye say no,
God; I mean she's forceful, she doesnt look it
but she is. Obviously I dont regret it - an old
couple like that, I mean ye help a person out.
But at the the same time... Mind you, imagine
getting put out their house because of rent-arrears;
terrible.*

DEBORAH

Rent-arrears? (PUZZLED)

EDWARD

I mean it's bloody awful.

DEBORAH

*I thought it was because the council were
refurbishing...*

EDWARD

*Yeh well, whatever it was I mean it's
terrible. People just dont think nowadays.
They dont I mean I notice that all the
time. You're right what ye said up the
stair. Appalling so it is, terrible*

Edward sighs. He glances at the top of the tallboy then walks to the table and scrutinises all the stuff on it, shakes his head; he notices she is watching him and he smiles wearily:

DEBORAH

*Have you got time to go out for a meal?
(POINTED BUT NOT SARCASTICALLY)*

Edward glances at her but forgets her question and continues.

EDWARD

*I dont know Deborah, sometimes I feel
as if I'm just making no headway at all.*

He turns to her, the strain on his face. He breathes in deeply, then has to get onto the chair; he sits down heavily, rubs one hand across his face and mumbles:

EDWARD

Oh God...

DEBORAH

AFTER A MOMENT) *What's up?*

EDWARD

MUMBLING TO THE TABLE) *So bloody bad*

He lays his face on the surface of the table and mutters indistinctly. Deborah goes to him

EDWARD

I'm soGod ...awful (RAISES HIS HEAD)

DEBORAH

Dont worry.

EDWARD

Awww... (HEAD NOW IN HANDS, STARING AT TABLE)

DEBORAH

GENUINE CONCERN) *Are you alright?*

EDWARD

ONE HAND ON HIS BROW) *No, no, I'm not, I'm not feeling good I'm just...not feeling good*

DEBORAH

What's wrong?

EDWARD

Aw Jesus

She put her hand on his shoulder.

DEBORAH

You're shivering...

He peers upwards from the table, in the direction of the wall.

Close up of where the insect had been; the smudge is unmistakably larger but he seems not to notice although he looks right at it

EDWARD

*It's just funny how yer life goes I mean
I played for a good tennis club as a boy.
I quite enjoyed it. (SMILES UP AT HER)
We used to have masturbation contests
some nights.*

Deborah mild surprise by this confession. He now realises what he has said and is also surprised; he continues quickly:

EDWARD

*It was just stupid I mean ye couldnt call
it wicked, the kind of mischief ye get up
to I mean boys, it's devilment...we all do
it, it means nothing it's just... See
Deborah ye've got your dreams, these
dreams, when ye're wee, it's amazing the
imagination ye have, all these dreams. I
had millions of them. We all do. Then ye
mess it up. Ye make a mess of it.
Everything. Ye just... (GLANCES UP AT
HER AGAIN) I dont know what ye do
ye just seem to mess it all up.*

Deborah is now curious. He senses a possible change in her, that he might have gone too far.

EDWARD

*That's life eh! (ATTEMPTS A SMILE) God
I mean if it was just possible to help that old
guy and his wife. I bet she's never done a bad
turn in her life I mean never. It's just so remote
ye can't imagine it! Ye can tell just by the way
she looks at ye, I mean see the way she looks
at ye, ye just dont know, what to think, ye dont
know; her eyes, like they look right through ye,
right inside; ye're left with no secrets at all;
she sees everything I mean for God sake
what's she like at all!*

He smiles, but it is strained:

EDWARD

*Honest Deborah I just feel so hopeless in
comparison to people like that...*

Deborah's attitude has softened. He looks to the front again, his head drooping.

She touches his neck.

EDWARD

SUBMISSIVELY) *It makes ye angry...*

DEBORAH

GENTLY) *Edward...*

Several moments pass in silence. Her hand now massages the back of his neck; he visibly relaxes, eyes closed.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Edward's eyes are open and he is staring ahead, blankly; Deborah's hand is still on his neck

pan round room

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

Jeanette stands by the fireplace, as earlier - she wears a t-shirt and tracksuit bottoms, her feet bare; no bra; she's recently showered, has towel wrapped round her hair; she is staring at him curiously, nibbling on her lower lip.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

He is staring at the table. Deborah's hand still massaging his neck; he seems oblivious to it.

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

She is looking into the mirror and adjusting her hair, raising it so that her neck is bare, the towel lies on the armchair next to her

INT. JEANETTE'S BEDROOM

They are in bed. He lies on his side gazing at her; she is on her back, she glances at him and smiles in a puzzled manner.

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

She is looking into the mirror and adjusting her hair, raising it above her head so that her neck is bare

VOICE-OVER, EDWARD
MURMURS) *Lordie lordie.* (CHANGE IN TONE)
An old story as well I mean it's the fall of Man...

INT. OLD COUPLE'S ROOM

The invalid present but not in frame till directed.

Edward is sitting where he was during the long conversation they had earlier, he continues without interruption from previous scene:

EDWARD
*...Adam and Eve. Ye just do these things,
Man, ye do them, what the hell do ye do
them for, ye dont know, none of us do.
Ye just take your punishment. Ye're due it,
so if ye're due it ye take it, what else is
there, that's the way things are I mean.
(SIGHS) God...if it was just possible to*

finish with all these stupid problems; if ye could just relax. I'd love to relax. But how can ye, ye can't, ye've always got to be on your guard. These damn erections. And there's nothing ye can do I mean what can ye do, that's what I find so terrible about it, it's like ye're helpless, ye're beat before ye start, yer whole life. It's like we're doomed, the whole lot of us. I mean we're all the same too, subject to the trials and tribulations.

The invalid now in frame; attentive but impassive

EDWARD

And that's why we stray, it's no badness. And if ye're talking about sins and confessions I mean look at the sort of things that go on in the world, it's terrible so it is, death and starvation and then ye get pollution, plus horrible evil crimes like genocide... (LAPSES INTO SILENCE)

And then blasphemy! Some would say that's the worst of all but everybody does it. (HORROR)

I do it all the time... (PAUSE) I mean ye dont even know ye're doing it it's so regular a part of yer life, yer very existence. And it's worse than murder, blasphemy, because ye're going against the Lord. But the amazing thing is ye can still be saved! Even there, that's the great thing about it!

INVALID

PAUSE) That's a difficult one.

Edward gazes at him.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

He is staring at the table. Deborah's hand still massaging his neck; he raises his hand and lays it on hers, still facing away from her

INT. JEANETTE'S ROOM

She is looking into the mirror and adjusting her hair, raising it so that her neck is bare

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

The tallboy; the photographs of his parents and the one of Deborah and Jeanette together.

Edward's head now cradled on his forearms on the table.

Deborah carries two mugs of coffee across and puts one beside him on the table

DEBORAH

Here's yer coffee.

EDWARD

It's because people try and dictate the terms of yer life and I mean it's no their life it's yers, so they should just bloody well leave ye in peace. To get on with it.

DEBORAH

What d'ye mean?

He frowns at her. Then he smells her skin and shivers but it seems slightly false. Now he registers the stain on the wall; but he is puzzled only for a moment, then he glances at her and continues:

EDWARD

SMILES) Did I ever tell ye about the time we went on this coaching holiday, a summer camp, and we played this daft game where we had to kid on we were out on army manouevres and Davie Finlay had cheroots from Holland he'd stolen off his uncle and we all smoked them. My God it was bad! So terrible and maybe the worst queasiness I've ever experienced

- I mean if ye're talking about queasiness.

DEBORAH
HALF SMILE) *What?*

EDWARD
Sorry! (SIPS COFFEE, THEN GRINS) It's just yer memories, they come and go. We dont have any control. The good Lord made us with memory boxes and inside each one of them ye've got the Voice of Conscience. And the Voice isnt yer own. As well as that it's in touch with everybody else's. That's how it catches ye out.

Deborah is puzzled.

EDWARD
I used to believe that when I was wee. The minister told us it at Sunday School

DEBORAH
Nonsense

EDWARD
No but in a way it's right enough, it's how ye know ye've done wrong; that's how ye can tell. (PAUSE) I mean how else can ye do it, ye can't, ye wouldnt be able to. It's just not possible. If ye think of all the sins in the world. It's because of that ghostly communication we all have, that's how it works. Even that old invalid up the stairs, he agrees, Mister Parker.

Deborah again puzzled; then she smiles

DEBORAH
Have you been drinking? Ye seem a bit high

EDWARD
High?

DEBORAH
Just a bit

EDWARD

I dont know what ye mean. (GETS UP FROM THE TABLE AND WALKS TO STAND BY THE WINDOW, HIS BACK TO IT). I dont know what ye mean, high.

DEBORAH

Doesnt matter

EDWARD

GESTURING AT STUFF ON TABLE) I've just been worrying about this damn test. Bloody mumbo jumbo.

DEBORAH

MORE FIRMLY) It doesnt matter.

EDWARD

And then I had to go up the bloody stair just when I was getting into it, damn bloody invalid I mean a great old couple but for God sake some people just dont think, they just dont think I mean about other people, about what they've got on their plate with their problems I mean we've all got bloody problems, we've all got bloody problems, and we dont all have the time to go and sort out other people's - even if we want to!

He pauses and they stare at each other; he becomes uncomfortable

DEBORAH

Are you talking about Jeanette?

EDWARD

What?

DEBORAH

Are you talking about Jeanette?

EDWARD

DEBORAH

Yes ye are

EDWARD

I'm not.

DEBORAH

*Ye are. It's because I asked ye to go
and give her a hand with her mortgage
and house insurance stuff*

He is unable to speak

DEBORAH

*Well it's my fault Edward so dont blame
her. (PAUSE) I didnt think. (PAUSE) I
forgot about yer test*

Edward shakes his head slowly

DEBORAH

*It's just that she was worrying about it
and needed it checked. And Benny's
hopeless. He's fine with his hands, but
he's hopeless at paperwork - especially
if it's official.*

He rubs his chin nervously. Eventually Deborah smiles.

DEBORAH

You're good at it.

EDWARD

SUBMISSIVELY) I'm a fool...I'm just a fool

DEBORAH

You're not a fool.

EDWARD

I am...

DEBORAH

Dont be daft

He walks to the sink and begins washing his hands, gulps a mouthful straight from the tap. He sees her watching him and blurts out:

EDWARD

I killed an insect earlier on Deborah I just squashed the thing, the wee soul, I just actually killed it, in cold blood, just like ye would I dont know I was going to say kill a beetle, that's how bad it is for the poor wee creatures. It's become a byword for it all, death and destruction and just wanton brutality, even the way ye sell yer products to people, how the guys just gyp people into buying rubbish they dont want. The whole thing, it's just so awful, it's terrible and wanton and just goes against everything God stands for. People dont want that sort of life. They dont. They dont want it. It shouldnt be forced on us. You take the way I live my life just as an ordinary man; even take an average day and I commit awful sins, trying to gyp people left right and centre. It's so awful I mean terrible, it's terrible.

DEBORAH

God Edward it's just a job!

He hesitates, takes off his t-shirt

EDWARD

I'll get ready

He starts washing his arms and shoulders and when he speaks he does so in a matter-of-fact way.

EDWARD

I dont get on with Jeanette ye know I was meaning to tell ye that. She's your sister but I dont. I'm sorry. I just cant help it though... (APPEARS TO BE ENGROSSED ON WASHING HIMSELF, UNDER THE ARMPITS) I just dont get on with her, it's a terrible thing to say, your sister and all that but I dont want to see her again. And her boyfriend,

Benny, I dont like him either.

He starts drying himself and then hesitates but looks at her directly. She is puzzled.

EDWARD

Sorry, I'll have to wash myself all over

He goes to the tallboy and withdraws another fresh pair of boxer shorts; he sees her still watching him

EDWARD

Sorry, I'll just be a minute

Deborah frowns. As he walks to the door he pauses by the shirt and trousers hanging on the hangar at the top of the wardrobe door and he steps to somehow adjust them but it all falls on the floor and door creaks open, revealing the stack of chemical samples

EDWARD

Bloody hell... (REACHING FOR THEM)

He returns the shirt and trousers onto the hangar and onto the top of the wardrobe door. He puts on another vest then gets a towel.

INT. OUTSIDE EDWARD'S DOOR

He has made the exit carrying the clothes

EDWARD

I'll just be a minute

INT. INSIDE THE BATHROOM

He closes the door behind himself and stands with his back to it, then applies the snib; he goes to the sink and grips the edge of the washhand basin with both hands, avoiding the mirror-cabinet on the wall. He turns on the tap, still avoiding looking at himself, he begins washing his genitals in the same style as before, the towel between his knees etc.; at one point he examines the testicle then soaps his hands very thoroughly before beginning to wash yet again

INT. INSIDE THE BATHROOM

He has finished, he now gazes at himself in the mirror-cabinet

INT. INSIDE THE BATHROOM

He is sitting on the toilet bowl (just for a seat), elbow on knee, hand cupping his chin; staring blankly. After a time he speaks quietly:

EDWARD

*What ye do is tell the truth, ye confess,
that's all there is to it. Ye're okay afterwards.*

He continues sitting there, staring blankly

INT. INSIDE THE BATHROOM

He has opened the window [frosted glass] just enough to see out he is crouching, peering out; this is the back of the building, across the way the back of another tenement, at one window someone stands looking out

INT. OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM DOOR

Sound of the cistern refilling.

Door open and he exits holding the clothes and towel etc., closes the door and walks along corridor.

He goes downstairs and pauses at the window on the half-landing; he stares out for a time.

INT. OUTSIDE EDWARD'S BEDSIT

He has his hand on the handle, steadies himself and enters. Deborah can be seen sitting on the edge of the bed, newspaper on her lap

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Deborah watches him enter and close the door

EDWARD
GLANCES AT DEBORAH) *Sorry.*

She glances back to the newspaper

EDWARD
Ye should've put the radio on.

She doesn't respond.

EDWARD
Sorry

Still she doesn't respond. He is nervous

EDWARD
I was thinking of a curry.

He puts the soiled clothing and towel into a plastic bag and sticks it nearby the sink; he doesn't look at her. Then he squints at the wall, frowns at the large stain. He looks at her directly:

EDWARD
Would you prefer Chinese?

Deborah now begins chewing on one of her nails

EDWARD
Eh? (ATTEMPTING A SMILE)

DEBORAH
What's wrong?

EDWARD
What? (CAUTIOUSLY)

DEBORAH

What's wrong?

EDWARD

Wrong...?

DEBORAH

There's something wrong

EDWARD

What d'ye mean?

Deborah studies him silently for several moments

DEBORAH

EVENTUALLY) *What were you saying
about Jeanette? Earlier on.*

He is unable to speak

DEBORAH

What were ye saying about Jeanette?

EDWARD

Nothing.

DEBORAH

Yes ye were.

EDWARD

I wasnt

DEBORAH

Ye're saying ye dont like her?

EDWARD

No. I'm not

DEBORAH

Yes ye are

EDWARD

Honest, I'm not

DEBORAH

Well what? What are ye saying?

EDWARD

Nothing

DEBORAH

Nothing...!

EDWARD

I didnt mean it the way it sounds.

DEBORAH

Well how did ye mean it?

EDWARD

It just came out

DEBORAH

Just came out!

EDWARD

It doesnt matter.

DEBORAH

It does matter.

EDWARD

It doesnt.

DEBORAH

It bloody does

EDWARD

Not really

DEBORAH

Edward it bloody well matters, if you dont like my sister.

EDWARD

I dont not like her at all

DEBORAH

Well why did ye say it?

EDWARD

I didnt

DEBORAH

Edward...

EDWARD

I didnt say it like that, in these words

DEBORAH

Yes ye did

EDWARD

I didnt

DEBORAH

Well what words did ye say?

EDWARD

No them anyway

DEBORAH

What then?

EDWARD

No them

She rises from the bed and he takes a step backwards. They stare at each other for several moments

DEBORAH

She was a bit off when I phoned. What happened? Did ye have a fall-out?

EDWARD

What?

She stands awaiting a proper answer

DEBORAH

Did the two of ye fall-out?

EDWARD

No.

DEBORAH

She can be too quick at times.

(PAUSE) *Ye shouldnt take what she says too much to heart*

Edward is unable to speak

DEBORAH

She can have a sharp tongue Edward, I know that. (PAUSE) She's got a funny sense of humour.

Edward is now extremely tense

DEBORAH

She thinks you dont relax enough... (SMILES)

EDWARD

Did she say that?

DEBORAH

(SMILES) *She's always saying it. Ye shouldnt mind her though.*

EDWARD

No...no... I dont...

After a moment he turns and gets his shirt and trousers, changes clothes during the following:

DEBORAH

We dont have to go out

EDWARD

I want to

DEBORAH

Are ye sure?

EDWARD

Yeh. I need a break...some air.

DEBORAH

We could get a carry out

EDWARD

You were wanting a meal

DEBORAH

*Yes but it doesnt matter, we could bring it
in*

EDWARD

Och no

DEBORAH

But you've got no time

EDWARD

Well I'll just make time then I'll just make it

He lifts out a tie and puts it on

DEBORAH

I dont like dragging ye away

EDWARD

It's no that important

DEBORAH

Yes it is, for you

EDWARD

Ach... (SUDDEN SIGH)

DEBORAH

It's okay

EDWARD

Sorry

DEBORAH

It doesnt matter

EDWARD
EYES CLOSED) *O Lord.*

DEBORAH
Edward, it doesnt matter

EDWARD
That old guy's coming down...

DEBORAH
Just leave him a note

EDWARD
BRIGHTENS) *Yeh*

DEBORAH
He wont mind

Edward's sudden dejection:

EDWARD
HEAVILY) *Yes he will*

DEBORAH
No he wont

Edward starts putting on his shoes while speaking:

EDWARD
He will...I better tell him

He notices her slightly puzzled look

EDWARD
*Coming down the stairs for nothing
I mean it's no fair, he might fall or
something - I dont want that on my
conscience*

She nods.

He reaches for his jacket and puts it on while moving to the door. He pauses and looks back to the stuff on the table

EDWARD
I'll no be long. (LOOKS AT HER BEFORE
LEAVING)

Deborah stares after him once the door is closed.

FADE

INT. OUTSIDE EDWARD'S BEDSIT

We see him from his door as he walks along the corridor. At the foot of the stairs he hesitates and glances back, then continues up.

FADE

INT. HALF LANDING UPSTAIRS

We see him continuing up; at the top he glances sideways before disappearing in direction of old couple's room.

INT. TOP OF THE STAIRS ON OLD COUPLE'S LANDING

Edward is at their door. He stands staring at it. Then he chaps it twice. There is no answer. For a time it doesn't seem to dawn on him. Then he chaps it again. Pause. He chaps it a few times. Still no answer. He stands there wondering what's up. He glances sideways, he is uncomfortable now. He chaps the door urgently, then stops and hesitates, before gripping the handle and turning it. The door is locked. He tries to force it for a moment then steps back and looks to see if there's light underneath it. There is none. He stares at the door again, then becomes nervous, glancing sideways; he makes to chap it again but stops.

And then slowly he withdraws, slightly nervous, returning along the corridor. The other door which was ajar earlier is now shut. The sense that he would like to move quickly but is controlling himself. He walks downstairs, passing the bathroom door which is also shut, no light showing beneath it.

He slows on the half landing, looking out the window; he begins to relax, eventually continuing downstairs to his own landing where he stops and stands very still, listening intently. He turns to look back upstairs. The house is silent. He stares towards his own door. He is aware of the shadows but starts walking steadily, more confidently

We watch him reach the door; he sees the light on under it. He grips the handle and turns it.

INT. EDWARD'S BEDSIT

Deborah is standing by the window. She hears the door open and turns. They stare at one another. But he seems to grow more confident, until eventually she becomes the submissive figure but without withdrawing her stare from his: until her attention is attracted to the wall:

Where the insect was crushed it now appears the stain is widening as we look. Her face contorts, her hand goes to cover her mouth:

DEBORAH

Edward...

Edward sees the stain and strides immediately across, reaching over the bed, laying his hands on it as if to stem the trickle of brownish liquid. Now he withdraws his hands and stares at them, the stuff is on the palms and between his fingers. Suddenly he wipes them down his jacket, realising the stuff is actually blood.

Deborah is aghast, hand covering her mouth.

Edward glances at her, then at his hands again and again wipes them. The slow trickle continues through the wall, but should not be overdone and should neither saturate, nor spread too widely. Edward now holds his hands towards her in the manner of somebody seeking forgiveness

Deborah's hand has come away slowly from her mouth; she stares at him, a look of anguish now spreads over her face.

EDWARD

HOARSELY PLEADING) *Deborah...*

Pan round room but without showing the stain on the wall; neither it, Deborah nor Edward should enter the final frame.

end