

## Act 1

*(Before the curtain rises we hear the following. A line of army trucks moving along a road and we hear the soldier's voices, one of whom is our hero Jim Macallum, although at this stage, that is not clear)*

Jim            Get off the road. IED. Get off the road.

*(We hear the crackle of a military radio followed by a soldier's voice)*

Soldier       Village in sight. Five hundred yards.

Jim            Off the road. You need to move off the road. Watch the bend.

Soldier       Four hundred yards. No sign of movement.

*(Jim's voice becomes more frantic)*

Jim            It's on the next bend. Over by the tree. Look to your left. Look!

Soldier       Three hundred yards. Still no sign of life. Village square in sight.

Jim            By the tree. The one on your right. See? See?

Soldier       Two hundred yards and-----

*(Sound of massive explosion and curtain rises with the sound of the explosion still echoing)*

### Act 1. Scene 1.

*(We see a very dingy bedsit. There is a bed in the centre of the room. A table covered in bottles and leftover takeaways. A sofa is in front of the table with its back to the audience. A door lies at the far corner of the room. There is an air of neglect.*

*As curtain goes up there is a figure in the bed. As the sound of the explosion dies away, Jim Mcallum wakes up screaming in his bed. He has a wiry tough body and is 35-40. He is wearing a teeshirt.*

*As he screams another figure suddenly leaps up from the sofa. This is Davie Scobie. Same age, but smaller and fatter. In his underpants)*

Davie        What the hell----?

Jim            In the corner. By the market stall. The one in the blue shirt.

*(Davie suddenly grows calm and takes control)*

Davie        Awright Jim. Take it easy pal.

Jim            In the corner. The one with the teeshirt! There's an IED. Look!

Davie        I know Jim. I see it. It's awright.

*(He goes cautiously towards him. His whole tone soothing)*

Davie        Take it easy son. Come on.

Jim            They're going to run straight into it. It's going to go.

Davie        It was a dream. Just a dream. Look around you.

Jim            It's there. Can you no see it?

Davie        Aye, I can, but we're safe. Take a deep breath. Come on.

*(There is a pause, then suddenly Jim slumps back against the headboard, breathing hard)*

Davie        Do you want a beer?

Jim            Aye.

*(Davie goes to the table and opens two bottles, taking one back to Jim, who drinks deeply before leaning back against the headboard, sighing deeply)*

Jim            I hate sleeping.

Davie        I know.

Jim            Where did we go last night?

Davie        The Darlington. Then the Wee Thack. Then I think the Rabby Burns and I seem to recall, the Broomhill. But to be honest it aw got a bit hazy after that. All I know is that I've got a mouth like a donkey's arsehole.

Jim            How would you ken what a donkey's arsehole tastes----- Oh don't answer that question. Weren't there two birds that we picked up?

Davie        Bella and Sadie.

Jim            Weren't we getting on well.

Davie        We were till you called Bella a slag. It seemed to go down hill after that.

Jim            Did I? Why did I say that?

Davie You were holding forth on the many faults of your soon to be ex wife and she unwisely suggested that maybe there were faults on both sides. Let's just say, you didn't agree wi that particular point of view.

Jim Aw.

Davie And then, when you smacked the bouncer's head off the wall, they decided that you weren't perhaps the most stable person they'd ever met. Impressive though.

Jim What?

Davie You and the bouncer. He must have been twice your size.

Jim The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Davie I thought you were going to kill him.

Jim Was it that bad?

Davie Aye.

*(Pause as Jim drinks more beer)*

Jim Yesterday was not the best day.

Davie I thought, eh, he was nice. The judge I mean.

Jim Was he?

Davie Aye, well, I mean he said some awfy nice things.

Jim What, like "say bye bye to your wife and kids"?

Davie No. No. I don't mean that. I mean what he said about your military service.

Jim Aw, that. Sorry, I rather missed that in the main body of his speech.

Davie Eh?

Jim Nothing. Just----- nothing.

Davie Look, I was thinking. Why don't we go out the night eh? There's a new club opened up on King Street. Eight brands of beer on draught! We could start at the Darlington. Get a few bevies, then head on down there. There'll be loads o birds.

Jim Davie. Which queue were you in when God handed out brains?

Davie Eh?

Jim Were you **in** court yesterday or was that your twin brother? I have just lost my wife and kids. Even saying hello to them in the street could get me banged up? Do you get that?

Davie Of course. Look, I'm just trying to help.

Jim Oh and that was your idea of help was it? My pal, Jim MaCallum's just been banned forever from seeing his family, but don't worry, a few pints of heavy and a bit of skirt will put it all back the gither again, eh? Is that what you thought?

Davie No-----

Jim You're a prat, do you know that? Ten years I've served wi you and you're as stupid as the day I met you.

Davie Look I'm sorry. I thought----

Jim Well don't think. Just don't.

Davie Okay. Okay.

*(Pause Jim finishes his beer and opens a second one)*

Davie Go easy pal. It's ten o'clock

Jim Since when did you play bloody nursemaid.

Davie Look I'm just saying. You're a pal, you know.

Jim It this what I'm reduced to. You for a pal. Look at ye. I can hardly see your underpants for the rolls of flesh. Put your bloody clothes on.

*(As Davie dresses, Jim sits on the bed moodily nursing his drink)*

Jim Did you see her yesterday?

Davie Who?

Jim Marion. In the courtroom. Wi her fancy lawyer. Painting me like some bloody lunatic. She was pleased enough to marry a soldier. Happy to take the money. Oh still happy to do that. And what have I got? This.

Davie Jim, I don't think she was happy to be there.

Jim Well if she wisnae happy why was she there? Why are we not at home? Me her and the weans?

Davie            Because she's scared of you. Scared of your temper.

*(The next words are yelled)*

Jim              I don't have a temper. Or at least no more than most folk. She painted me like a bloody psycho

Davie            You are a bit----

Jim              A bit what? Go on?

Davie            I just sometimes feel-----

Jim              What? Feel what?

Davie            Maybe there's somebody you could talk to .

Jim              What? Like a headshrink you mean? You and all eh? You think I'm a lunatic too?

Davie            Not lunatic. I mean---

Jim              Just piss off eh? Go on. Piss off. Before I break every bone in your overweight under exercised wee body. Go on.

Davie            Okay. Okay. Will you be at work tomorrow?

Jim              Maybe.

Davie            Only we've got a new decorating job.

Jim              I said maybe.

*(Davie walks over to door and opens it. He pauses)*

Davie            Jim?

Jim              What?

Davie            You're not going to say anything are you?

Jim              What?

Davie            I mean the drink and the nightmares. You're no going to crack up, are you? We're aw in this together. You, me, the boys. We need to stand together. Know what I mean?

Jim              Just get out of here. Now. While your balls still have a function in your life.

*(Dave pauses, then after a moment leaves.)*

*Jim lies down on the bed face down and pulls the pillow over his head. The last thing we hear is the sound of gunfire followed by an explosion. Jim's body shakes)*

## **Act 1. Scene 2**

*The house of Helen Robertson.*

*The stage shows a large living room. The room is full of dark furniture, three piece suite and a piano at one end with shelves of music above. There is also a door leading off to the kitchen which itself does not have to be seen.*

*As the scene opens we hear a recording of the song "Einsmakeit" ("Solitude") from Franz Schubert's song cycle, "Die Winterreise" ("Winter Journey) which is sung by a tenor voice, accompanied on the piano. Helen sits at the piano following a score as the music plays. She is in her mid thirties, single and a piano accompanist by profession. Helen should be dressed in very drab old fashioned clothes and come across as completely put upon by others, especially by her mother Mary who is a very manipulative woman. Helen goes through life with her head down, living in the shadow of others, her individuality, at least in the beginning, completely subsumed by others. Music is her only outlet.*

*As she follows the score intently her mother appears in a wheel chair. She is a diminutive sparrow like woman with a pinched face and in her mid seventies. However she is sharp mentally and knows exactly how to "play" her daughter)*

Mary            Helen!

*(Helen sighs and turns the music down)*

Helen            Yes mum?

Mary            Can you turn that bloody racket off?

Helen            I told you. I have a singer coming over tomorrow and I don't know this piece.

Mary            It's going through my bloody head!

Helen            I need to listen to some recordings mum and then I've got to practice it. Just half an hour.

Mary            I want a cup of tea.

Helen            I've just made your breakfast. You know I don't make you another cup till half ten.

Mary Well I'm thirsty and I want a cup now.

Helen Please mum. I'm behind on this and I need to be ready.

*(Mary switches from imperious to pleading)*

Mary All I want is a cup of tea. Is it too much to ask? I would make it if I could get out of this chair, but I can't. Just one wee cup of tea. Please hen!

*(Mary sighs and switch off the music. Then gets up from the piano)*

Mary It's no as if I'm asking the earth is it?

Helen No, mum. Of course not.

Mary Why do you no play some decent music? Like a nice wee scotch song or some Perry Como. Instead of that classical muck.

Helen I'm an accompanist mum. That "classical muck" comes wi the territory.

Mary Well you canny be that good at it, given the money you make.

Helen I'm a musician. Of course I don't make any money. Haven't you heard, we all do it for love?

Mary if you were good enough, you'd make lots of money

Helen That's why I need to practice.

Mary Oh I see, It's my fault is it? If you didnae have the old woman in the wheelchair----

Helen Mum, I just meant-----

Mary You think I like being in this wheelchair do you?

Helen No and-----

Mary Think I like being dependent on you for charity. Having to beg for cups of tea.

Helen Mum, I was just busy----

Mary You're all lucky the lot of you. Your limbs working. Able to get out. Feel the sunshine. See your pals. No stuck in here like me.

Helen I've offered to take you out.

Mary It's too cold to go out.

Helen I can wrap you up.

Mary The cold get's in my bones. Even in Summer now I feel it. I'm on my way out, so you wont have too many more cups of tea to make me.

*(She starts to cry self pitying tears)*

Mary I feel it you know. The old grim reaper looking over my shoulder.

Helen Don't talk like that mum. You're not going to die.

Mary I am you know. You know these things at my age.

Helen I'll make you some tea.

Mary Oh thanks. You know I hate to be a burden to you. Can I have two of they custard creams as well?

Helen Oh! Sorry I forget to get them yesterday

Mary What? But you promised! Oh Helen, it wisnae much of an ask. Just one packet of custard creams.

Helen Look, I'll get them later.

Mary But I wanted them wi my tea. Could you no run down and get some?

Helen Mum, I need to get this work done.

Mary Your old mother just wants a wee biscuit. It's no much to ask is it?

Helen Could you just wait till this afternoon?

Mary Please hen. Just for me.

*(Helen sighs in defeat)*

Helen Okay. Let me get my coat.

*(Pause as she gets coat on)*

Mary Oh. And get ma magazine. And a wee pack of imperials.

Helen Mum----

Mary Please hen. Just to keep your old mother happy.

*(Helen sighs and starts to move off)*



Helen Oh mum. The decorator might arrive while I'm gone.

Mary What decorator?

Helen For the hall. He's painting the hall.

Mary I don't like upset. And paint gives me a headache

Helen You'll be out while its being done. You'll be at the centre.

Mary Oh aye. The centre. Shoved off like an unwanted penny.

Helen You like the centre.

Mary I hate it. You just want me out of the way.

Helen I don't want you out the way. It's good for you. You see your friends.

Mary They're aw dying. Just like me.

Helen You're not dying. I'll go and get your custard creams

*(She goes out the room and Mary calls)*

Mary And the magazine. And the mint imperials

*(Sound of door slamming. Mary gives a satisfied smile and wheels across to the TV and turns it on. After a few seconds the door bell rings)*

Mary Who the bloody hell is this?

*(Wheels out of room and pulls the door open. We hear her voice and Davie's. She is querulous and he is cheerful)*

Davie Hello there Mrs.

Mary Whatever it is we're no buying.

Davie Naw, naw, sweetheart. We're the decorators. Your daughter called us.

Mary We'll she's no here. Don't know when she'll be back. Could be aw day.

Davie Well, she just wanted us to give an estimate. It was the hall.

Mary How do I know you're decorators? You might be thugs. I'm just a poor old woman you know.

Davie No, no. We're decorators. Here's our card. Your daughter Helen called us.

Mary Well she never tells me anything. I'm just her mum.

Davie Kids, eh. Look, could we just come in and measure up.

Mary Oh, I suppose so.

*(All three come into the room. In contrast to Davie, Jim is silent and withdrawn)*

Mary I hope you wiped your feet. This carpet is new.

Jim Is it?

Mary What do you mean, "is it"? I'll have you know it was bought last year.

Davie Oh don't mind him Mrs. It's his sense of humour. Jim, why don't you go out and measure up, eh?

*(Jim takes the tape and goes out into the hall)*

Mary He disnae look right in the heid.

Davie Och, he's as sane as you and me. He's just the strong silent type.

Mary Hmm!

Davie So, you lived here for a while?

Mary 30 year. Of course, its just me now. And the daughter. When she's here o'course. Loves her music. At least that what she calls it.

Davie How long's your husband been dead.

Mary 10 year. But it feels like yesterday. And noo I'm in a wheelchair as well.

Davie You've suffered then.

Mary Oh you've no idea. No idea at all. I'm afraid I'm all alone in my pain.

Davie You have your daughter though.

Mary When she can be bothered. When she can be bothered.

Davie Tell you what. While Jim is finishing the measuring, why don't I make you a cup of tea?

Mary Oh would you? Aw you're a gentleman. The kitchen's next door.

Davie Right you are.

*(He disappears into the kitchen. After a few moments the door opens and closes. Then we hear Helen's voice offstage)*

Helen        Oh hello.

*(Davie calls out from the kitchen off stage)*

Davie        Hello there, Mrs Robertson. Do you want a cup of tea.

Helen        Oh thanks

*(She comes into the room with shopping bag)*

Mary        You took your time.

Helen        I've hardly been gone.

Mary        Left me to entertain those men. Goodness knows what could have happened to me.

Helen        Aye **two** of them might have made you tea.