

ACT I            SCENE 1

SET BACK STAGE AT THE CIRCUS.  
A TYPICAL DRESSING ROOM.  
GEORGE IS SITTING ALONE  
COUNTING THE BOX OFFICE  
RECEIPTS.

GEORGE:            (DRESSED AS A RINGMASTER) Thirty one, thirty two, thirty three, thirty four pounds fifty seven pence. Where the heck did the fifty seven pence come from? (FED UP) Not enough here to pay the flippin' milk man.  
(TAKES THE NOTES AND PUTS THEM IN HIS WALLET)

VOICE OFF:        WOMAN SCREAMS

GEORGE:            Oh no, Not again. (EXITS IN A HURRY)

(OFF) Thank you ladies and gentlemen, everything's fine. Please give a big round of applause to the Great Cosmo and his beautiful assistant Clara... Clara... Clara... Come back

ENTER DAVID. CARRYING  
THROWING KNIVES. TOSSES THEM  
TO ONE SIDE AND SLUMPS DOWN  
ON AN OLD SETTEE

(OFF) Now please welcome, all the way from the mysterious east, Bend-o, the India rubber man

ENTER GEORGE

How many's that?

DAVID:             Twenty nine

GEORGE:           Twenty nine

DAVID:             But Dad...

GEORGE:           Don't but Dad me

DAVID:             I only nicked her

GEOREGE:         Only nicked her, you "only" nicked the other twenty eight

DAVID:             But Dad...

GEORGE:           But Dad, but Dad, there's always a but Dad

DAVID:             Her hair was in the way, it was all piled up bouffant style

GEORGE: It's not anymore. Nice centre parting

DAVID: There wasn't much blood

GEORGE: Not much blood. That knife board looks more like a butchers block

DAVID: But Dad...

GEORGE: I don't want to hear it

DAVID: She moved

GEORGE: Oh she moved alright. Off out the door faster than Limping Larry the Wonder Greyhound. Here, I got that this morning (PASSES HIM A LETTER)

DAVID: What is it?

GEORGE: Read it

DAVID: (READS) Pratt and Swindler

GEORGE: How apt

DAVID: Solicitors, dear sir, blah, blah, blah. Further to our clients blah, blah, it is our intention to take action... What's this all about?

GEORGE: Clara the twenty fifth.

DAVID: The twenty fifth?

GEORGE: Yes, you remember, not a bad lass but looked a bit like a wing nut

DAVID: Ohhh! That one

GEORGE: Yes that one. We had to carry her off still attached to the board. Twenty grand for a prosthetic ear hole

DAVID: We're insured, aren't we?

GEORGE: To have insurance means you have to pay insurance premiums and to pay insurance premiums you have to have money. Anyway, nobody will touch us with a barge pole now, with our track record.

DAVID: We're not insured then?

GEORGE: You're a big disappointment to this family

DAVID: I didn't want to be a knife thrower, you made me do it

GEORGE: Oh, that's it chuck the kindness back at your poor old Father, it's the only thing you can throw with any precision

DAVID: Kindness! I'm doing you a favour. You wouldn't have a knife thrower if I hadn't been coerced into it

GEORGE: I did not coerce you into it. It's what your Mother would have wanted

DAVID: I'm no good at it!

GEORGE: That's evident. We'll have to change the name of the act to, Cosmo the Fairly Accurate Knife Thrower.

DAVID: Very funny

GEORGE: You've got to practice harder

DAVID: I'm thirty seven Dad

GEORGE: Excuses, excuses

DAVID: I only came back to help out for a few weeks after Mum died and I've been here ten years

GEORGE: This is where you belong son.

DAVID: No it's not Dad. I don't like it

GEORGE: Don't like it?

DAVID: I never have done Dad.

GEORGE: How can you not like it. The roar of the grease paint, the smell of the crowd

DAVID: I hate it

GEORGE: The Circus business is in the families blood, it's in your blood

DAVID: I'm afraid it's not

GEORGE: You're a Grimaldo

DAVID: Sorry Dad, I don't have any talent for it

GEORGE: I just don't understand it, there have been ten generations of Grimaldos right here at the end of the Pier

DAVID: See, that's another thing, Grimaldo

GEORGE: What's wrong with that, it's your name

DAVID: Not it's not, it's Grimshaw, Dad

GEORGE: Oh yeah, that would have looked good wouldn't it, me and your Mother the Amazing Flying Grimshaws. Just practice a bit more and you'll be fine

DAVID: No, I've had enough

GEORGE: Son

DAVID: I'm an accountant Dad

GEORGE: Arrrgh! I don't want to hear it

DAVID: Hear what Dad?

GEORGE: The "A" word

DAVID: You mean, accountant

GEORGE: (COVERING HIS EARS) There it is

DAVID: Accountant, accountant, accountant, accountant

GEORGE: Stop it, stop it. If your poor dear Mother was alive today she'd be turning in her grave

DAVID: Mother always understood. She knew I wasn't cut out for this

GEORGE: It nearly broke your Mother's heart when you went.

DAVID: You would have only caused a row

GEORGE: You couldn't even face her to say goodbye, you had to sneak out.

DAVID: It was best that way

GEORGE: The only teenager to run away from the Circus to be an accountant

DAVID: When this show's over I'm going

GEORGE: You can't

DAVID: I'm home sick

GEORGE: This is your home

DAVID: I know, I'm sick of it

GEORGE: You can't go now. there's only one more week to the end of the season.  
Where am I going to find another knife thrower

DAVID: I don't know

GEORGE: That's it, just leave me in the lurch

DAVID: You can always get Frank to do it

GEORGE: I can't get Frank to do it, he's already Bend-o the India Rubber Man, Macho  
the Strong Man and Mind-o the Memory Man.

DAVID: He used to do it

GEORGE: He's as blind as a bat. He's so short sighted he can't see his hand in front of  
his face. At least you haven't killed anybody. Yet

DAVID: I don't care Dad. I've finished

GEORGE: Hang on, Bend-o's nearly done. I'll talk to you in a minute (EXITS)

(OFF) The fantastic Bend-o ladies and gentlemen

ENTER FRANK. HOBBLING AND  
HOLDING HIS BACK

FRANK: Where's the Ralgex

GEORGE: (OFF) And now for your delectation and delight. The one, the only, the  
Guinness Book of records listed, the worlds fattest, bearded, fire eating  
woman, the fantabulous Flame-o

DAVID: You alright Frank?

FRANK: My bloomin' backs gone again. Have you seen the Ralgex?

DAVID: On the side over there

GEORGE: What the hell's the matter with you Frank?

FRANK: I'm getting too old for this caper George

GEORGE: You're supposed to finish off the act by squeezing into the fish tank

FRANK: It's two feet square George

GEORGE: I know, that's the whole idea Frank. Not very impressive you hobbling off  
like some geriatric

FRANK: I'm sixty two for crying out loud

GEORGE: You did it OK on Friday

FRANK: Hah! (TO DAVID) Rub some of this on my back will you David lad. (TO GEORGE) It wasn't you that was stuck in there for two hours while the fire brigade tried to get you out.

GEORGE: They did it didn't they

FRANK: No thanks to you. You wouldn't let them break the glass. Oh no. Hang about don't do that you said we can't afford another tank

GEORGE: Well we can't. That reminds me. This came this morning (HANDS FRANK A LETTER)

FRANK: Where's my glasses?

DAVID: Here

FRANK: Thanks (READS) South Claptonshire Fire Service... two hundred and fifty quid call out charge!

GEORGE: They have to these days if it's not an accident or anything.

FRANK: This is addressed to you

GEORGE: But it was you that got stuck

FRANK: I'll flaming well swing for him, ahhhh!. If I could get up. How long have I known you George Grimshaw?

GEORGE: Grimoldo

FRANK: Grimshaw

DAVID: Told you

GEORGE: Shut up

FRANK: Forty odd years and you don't change. Still as tight as a gnats chuff

GEORGE: Oh come on Frank, my old mate it's only two hundred and fifty quid

FRANK: You pay it. It's your damned show. Besides I haven't got two hundred and fifty quid. I haven't got two hundred and fifty pence

GEORGE: What about the compensation money you got from your accident?

FRANK: George that was five years ago

GEORGE: Yeah, but you got ten grand

DAVID: Dad, the Elephant stood on his foot, he screamed so loud it shot off down the Pier, completely demolishing Mrs Harcastle's Novelty Gift Shop, smashing everything inside it...

GEORGE: Causing nearly ten quid's worth of damage

DAVID: Ten quid?

GEORGE: She'd just stocked up for the season

DAVID: Anyway, everybody was out after it, police, fire brigade, the vet from Clapton Zoo and the TA. They only caught up with it when it stopped at the Rock Emporium and ate twelve hundred weight of liquorice rock

GEORGE: We got him back safe, everything was alright

DAVID: Alright, you didn't have to muck him out. I tell you. You don't want to be near an animal of that size after it's just eaten that much liquorice

FRANK: I remember the following night when Flame-o was just warming up her act, she ignited, he farted, and a thirty foot flame took the eyebrows of everybody in the first six rows

GEORGE: And your point is?

DAVID: You ended up borrowing most of Frank's money to pay out for all the damage

FRANK: Note the crucial word there – borrowed

GEORGE: You'll get it back

FRANK: When

GEORGE: Soon. I've got big plans for this place

FRANK: I heard all this before George, you've always got big plans. Nothing ever happens.

GEORGE: It will, you wait and see

FRANK: Anyway the place is falling in bits and you've no money to do it up

GEORGE: That's where you're wrong see

DAVID: Dad there's no money in the bank.

GEORGE: How do you know

DAVID: I do the books Dad,

GEORGE: Oh yeah

DAVID: That's why I came back, because Mum used to do them and you hadn't got a clue

GEORGE: She was good with that sort of thing your Mother

DAVID: There you are you see, some family talent did get handed down. She could have been an accountant