

## Act 1

*(Man, who hence-forth shall be known as Sandwich board man enters with sandwich board with 'Act 1 – Park Life' written on it, displays sandwich board to audience then exits. Peter Prentice enters. It is early morning at the park. Peter Prentice delves into his pocket to retrieve mobile then presses some buttons. He stands in front of duck pond in order to converse with person on end of phone.)*

**Prentice:** Hello, is that a real human person, oh good... Yes, I'm calling regarding my Spotter Control account... yes, what it is is this... I have recently secured myself employment... why, thank you... well, I just wanted to check something on my statement... I just wanted to check ... Is it right that if I were to spot the fifteen thirty-five from Bristol Temple Meads this coming Monday that I would have accrued enough merit points for my Bronze accreditation... My spotter control number is two, four, six, eight B. That's B for Butler report...I'll wait...

*(Peter Prentice awaits answer)*

**Prentice:** Oh hello... So, I'll definitely have enough merit points? ... Excellent... So, I would be able to claim for the tartan thermos flask after that? ... That's good, because I start this new job on Tuesday and I don't know when I would have got the chance to catch it otherwise... well that is good news... Well, thanks for reassuring me on that one... Thank you... goodbye.

*(Peter Prentice replaces bag of duck food in his pocket. Pigeon Lady enters, stops, surveys the view, then reaching deep into a pocket then takes out hip flask, takes a lusty swig from it and returns it to pocket)*

**Pigeon Lady:** *(to Prentice)* Hey, you there.

**Prentice:** Me?

**Pigeon Lady:** Yes you mister man

*(Pigeon Lady approaches Prentice and winces slightly)*

**Prentice:** Are you alright?

**Pigeon Lady:** This knee's killing me today...

**Prentice:** I'm sorry to hear that... You're up early today.

**Pigeon Lady:** What's early?

**Prentice:** It's seven in the morning.

**Pigeon Lady:** Didn't sleep too well.

**Prentice:** Out for a stroll in the park?

**Pigeon Lady:** Oh you're sharp.

*(Prentice stands looking at his shoes.)*

**Pigeon Lady:** I'm glad you're here.

**Prentice:** Why? In case you fall?

**Pigeon Lady:** What?

**Prentice:** Well, you said about your knee.

**Pigeon Lady:** No, don't be daft.

**Prentice:** Um... sorry?

**Pigeon Lady:** No, it's just that I could do with your young eyes.

**Prentice:** What for?

**Pigeon Lady:** I need you to read this for me.

*(Pigeon Lady awkwardly produces crumpled envelope from pocket and hands it to Prentice)*

**Prentice:** What is it?

**Pigeon Lady:** That's what I want you to tell me.

**Prentice:** Oh, yeah.

*(Prentice opens envelope. Takes out contents and reads letter)*

**Pigeon Lady:** Well?

**Prentice:** It's from the council.

**Pigeon Lady:** What do those Nazis want?

**Prentice:** They want you to... It's a health and safety order.

**Pigeon Lady:** Order? I don't listen to orders. I'm far too long in the tooth to be taking orders.

**Prentice:** They want you to get rid of the pigeons

**Pigeon Lady:** You mean the rock doves?

**Prentice:** The rock doves... I see, yes, yes, the rock doves...

**Pigeon Lady:** I see.

**Prentice:** Looks like real trouble.

**Pigeon Lady:** They're just bluffing.

**Prentice:** It looks pretty official.

**Pigeon Lady:** What nonsense.

**Prentice:** It seems pretty serious.

**Pigeon Lady:** I don't think so.

**Prentice:** They're saying they're going to take you to court.

**Pigeon Lady:** They do, do they, not content with just bossing people around. They think they can command the birds now do they?

**Prentice:** I think they just want you to stop feeding them.

**Pigeon Lady:** Nazi Taliban bird haters.

*(Pigeon Lady takes another swig from her flask and then offers the flask to Prentice)*

**Pigeon Lady:** Do you need some Dutch courage?

**Prentice:** I'm not sure that's such a good idea.

**Pigeon Lady:** I won't go telling if you don't.

**Prentice:** You don't think it's too early?

**Pigeon Lady:** It's medicinal.

**Prentice:** Really?

**Pigeon Lady:** Yes. It's a bit chilly this time of the morning.

**Prentice:** Isn't it just.

*(Pigeon Lady takes another lusty swig from flask and stumbles a little, and Prentice grabs her to steady her)*

**Pigeon Lady:** So, you drinking or what?

**Prentice:** I'll pass thanks.

**Pigeon Lady:** You young ones have got no stamina nowadays.

**Prentice:** Sorry.

**Pigeon Lady:** Not to worry, more for me I guess.

*(Prentice offers letter back to Pigeon Lady who ignores him)*

**Prentice:** Your letter.

**Pigeon Lady:** I don't need that now. I know what it says.

**Prentice:** Are you sure?

**Pigeon Lady:** Quite sure thank you... must be off... you're boring me now...

*(Pigeon Lady exits. Prentice stands agog at his encounter before coming to and reaching into his pocket and pulling out some old bread. He begins to throw bread toward pond. Prentice feeds the ducks a while. A man dressed in pyjamas enters upstage walking in a stereotypically mock military gait. He spies Prentice and decides to approach. He stands beside Prentice, who continues feeding the ducks oblivious to the man's presence. The man later claims to be Corporal Jones.)*

**Jones:** The Border Regiment....

**Prentice:** The Border Regiment?

**Jones:** Fought their way all through Burma.

**Prentice:** Myanmar.

**Jones:** What?

**Prentice:** Myan.... Mar?

**Jones:** Don't be ridiculous man.

**Prentice:** Um..... right.

**Jones:** Corporal Jones by the way.

**Prentice:** Um..... yes, I see.

**Jones:** Watch those fellows.

**Prentice:**       *(perplexed)*... I'm sorry.

**Jones:**           Those chaps. *(gestures towards ducks)*

**Prentice:**       *(peering at ducks)*... What the?

**Jones:**           Need to keep your beady eyes on them.

**Prentice:**       The ducks?

**Jones:**           That's what they want you to think.

**Prentice:**       Is it now?

**Jones:**           Is that what you think?

**Prentice:**       Do I think that the ducks are just ducks?

**Jones:**           That's right soldier.

**Prentice:**       Well, they do look a lot like ducks.

**Jones:**           If that's what you think, then they've already won.

**Prentice:**       They do seem to act a lot like ducks too.

**Jones:**           If you don't keep your wits about you then it's only a matter of time before you're a goner.

**Prentice:**       I'd best keep my wits about me then... Corporal?

**Jones:**           That's it!... Corporal! But right now, I'm incognito.

**Prentice:**       You're in pyjamas.

**Jones:**           Yes, that's correct, pyjamas.

**Prentice:**       Thought as much.

**Jones:**           Standard issue Border Regiment cognito this. Top of the range.

**Prentice:**       Looks more Top Shop.

**Jones:**           Top Shop? Are you being subordinate?

**Prentice:**       Wouldn't think of it.

**Jones:** Don't be subordinate man. The name's Jones. Corporal Jones.

**Prentice:** Licensed to freak me out?

**Jones:** Licensed, yes, all sorts, to drive, to fish, to gut, to drink vodka martinis.

**Prentice:** To wear pyjamas.

**Jones:** Precisely. *(points to bread)*. What's that?

**Prentice:** *(holds bag of crumbs aloft)* Bread.

**Jones:** Not for me thankyou. Got to keep in tip-top condition, in case of.... You know.

**Prentice:** They're for the ducks.

**Jones:** Ducks? What ducks?

**Prentice:** These... never mind. My name's Prentice. Peter Prentice.

**Jones:** Sssh, not in front of daffy.

**Prentice:** Daffy?

*(Corporal Jones nods toward ducks)*

**Prentice:** Of course.

**Jones:** Ponds have ears you know.

**Prentice:** I wasn't aware of that.

**Jones:** It pays to be aware soldier. Otherwise.

*(Jones runs finger across neck in garrotting motion)*

**Prentice:** Right... do fish have ears?

**Jones:** Fish? What are you twittering on about man?

**Prentice:** Not exactly sure.

**Jones:** I think it might be wise for you to the report to the medic.

**Prentice:** *(humouring Jones)* I might just catch him later.

**Jones:** Be sure that you do man.

**Prentice:** Are you enjoying your afternoon in the park corporal?

**Jones:** Well, it's not Burma.

**Prentice:** Where is?

**Jones:** Quite so Private.

**Prentice:** Except Myanmar.

**Jones:** What?

**Prentice:** Burma.

**Jones:** Burma... tell me about it. Tragic. Still we must struggle on.

**Prentice:** That's the spirit corporal.

**Jones:** Right then Private....

**Prentice:** Prentice.

**Jones:** Private Prentice. I must be off, stay alert and keep an eye on um....

**Prentice:** Daffy?

**Jones:** Well so they keep saying.... but I'll never admit it to them you know. At ease soldier.

*(Corporal Jones exits. Prentice stares at the ducks a while before deciding on making a call. He reaches into the pocket of his suit and pulls out a mobile phone, he calls someone)*

**Prentice:** Oh come on, be in..... *(as if talking to answerphone)*...Hello, um... *(cuts off conversation by switching phone off.)*... uugh.

*(Corporal Jones re-enters)*

**Jones:** Oh forgot to mention something.

*(Pause)*

**Prentice:** What was that?

**Jones:** It'll come to me.

*(Long pause. Prentice is on tenterhooks awaiting the Corporal's revelation, whilst evidently eager to make his phone call)*

**Jones:** Oh, now I recall. Don't tell um....you know who.

**Prentice:** My lips are sealed.

*(Jones makes to exit, then remembering something else he returns to Prentice)*

**Jones:** And another thing.

**Prentice:** Yes Corporal?

**Jones:** If you see the pigeon lady.

**Prentice:** The pigeon lady?

**Jones:** That's right. If you see the pigeon lady tell her that the drop off is at the usual spot, Saturn fifteen hundred hours. She'll know what you mean.

**Prentice:** Glad that she would. Just sounds cuckoo to me.

**Jones:** And what would you know of the cuckoo?

**Prentice:** Um. Nothing.

**Jones:** Yes, quite right, eh. Ponds, ears, etc.

*(Corporal Jones exits)*

**Prentice:** Absolutely barking.

*(Prentice exits. Pigeon lady enters on bike with basket. In the basket is birdfeed of some kind. The pigeon lady beckons the birds to come hither. Cooing is heard as the pigeon lady takes contents from basket and begins to scatter contents around.)*

**Pigeon Lady:** Welcome my brethren. Sorry I'm late. I had an unexpected visit from my great nephew... he needed feeding first and he was a hungry little chap... I hope you little fellows have been faring well since I last saw you... That's it, feed up... you want to be big and strong, for there are hard times ahead...

*(Cooing from pigeons)*

**Pigeon Lady:** dastardly politics in the human world my friends... nothing for you to worry too much about... we shall prevail have no fear of that... you will need to be strong though, can you promise me that? ...



*(Yet more cooing from pigeons)*

**Pigeon Lady:** There may be some battles to be fought...

*(More cooing from pigeons)*

**Pigeon Lady:** Who indeed? Who would be so cruel and callous as to try and hurt Rock dove kind... Do you remember those people I was talking about last time I saw you?

*(More cooing from pigeons)*

**Pigeon Lady:** Yes, that's right. Them, the council. The Nazis. Still, we won't let them push us around will we?

*(The pigeons seem to coo in agreement.)*

**Pigeon Lady:** I don't suppose any of you have seen the Corporal today?

*(Pigeons coo)*

**Pigeon Lady:** I hope the Corporal can make it today. I'm sure he said Saturn5... It had better be here today. I need that delivery... There are going to be tough times ahead.

*(Pigeon lady empties bag of bird tit-bits)*

**Pigeon Lady:** That's all I could muster today. I know, I know... You little fellows will have to get along without me for a while. I can't be sure when I'll next see you... I'm sure the Corporal would keep an eye out for you... you can trust the Corporal, I just hope that I can.

*(Pigeon lady spots man in distance)*

**Pigeon Lady:** *(Calling out to this individual)* Hello. Hello! Yes you there, mister man.

*(Peter Prentice now dressed casually and carrying a small canvas rucksack enters cautiously)*

**Prentice:** Um... yes?

**Pigeon Lady:** I've seen you.

*(Pause)*

**Prentice:** Right.

**Pigeon Lady:** You've been here before.

**Prentice:** Yes, it's my local park.

**Pigeon Lady:** I know.

**Prentice:** Do you?

**Pigeon Lady:** You live in Northcliffe Street don't you?

**Prentice:** Northbrook Lane.

**Pigeon Lady:** It was named after Lord Northcliffe you know.

**Prentice:** Northbrook Lane?

**Pigeon Lady:** Yes he was quite a character that Lord Northcliffe.

**Prentice:** Was he?

**Pigeon Lady:** Yes, if you get the chance, you should goggle box him.

**Prentice:** Goggle box him?

**Pigeon Lady:** Silly me, I'm assuming that you have a computer.

**Prentice:** Ah, I see. I do have a computer. I use it mostly to log my progress on Spotter Control dot UK.

**Pigeon Lady:** Well you should read all about Lord Northcliffe, he was responsible for so many good things that happened in this town.

**Prentice:** I think I will, thank you for the tip.

**Pigeon Lady:** I'm distantly descended from Lady Northcliffe you know.

**Prentice:** I see.

*(Pause. Prentice notices pigeons clustered about)*

**Prentice:** Um.... Are you the pigeon lady?

**Pigeon Lady:** What?

**Prentice:** Are you the pigeon lady?

**Pigeon Lady:** Why do you ask?

**Prentice:** I just wondered.