

Scene 2

*Outside The Cricketers' Arms. A pub bench, table and a dustbin.
Enter Francis from the pub entrance.*

*On the pub table are some unfinished drinks. Some dregs of
Guinness, white wine, red wine in a bottle, orange juice, etc.*

FRANCIS. My father, Tommy Henshall, God rest his soul, he woulda been proud of me, what I done with my life, until today. I used to play washboard in a skiffle band, but they went to see the Beatles last Tuesday night, and sacked me Wednesday morning. Ironic, because I started the Beatles. I saw them in Hamburg. Rubbish. I said to that John Lennon, I said, "John, you're going nowhere, mate, it's embarrassing, have you ever considered writing your own songs." So I'm skint, I'm busking, guitar, mouth organ on a rack, bass drum tied to me foot, and the definition of mental illness, cymbals between my knees. So there I am, middle of Victoria Station, I've only been playing ten minutes, this lairy bloke comes over, he says — "Do you do requests?" I say, "Yes," he says, "I'd like you to play a song for my mother." I said, "No problem, where is she?" He said, "Tazmania." So I nutted him. This little bloke Roscoe Crabbe seen all this and offers me a week's work in Brighton, says he needs a bit of muscle. I tell him this is all fat. But I need a wage, I haven't eaten since last night. But I don't get paid until the end of the week, and I can't stop thinking about FISH AND CHIPS. I'm staying in a pub, and I don't even have enough shrapnel for a PINT. *(He empties all the dregs into one pint pot, and downs it in one. He frowns and picks a cigarette butt out of his mouth. He considers it first with disgust and then with pleasure, and places it behind his ear for later. He looks at the dustbin. Puts a hand on the lid.)* There might be a discarded bag of chips in here. No! I can't go through the bins! Must stop thinking about FISH AND CHIPS. Come on Francis! Think about something boring, like ... Canada. *(He gives up. Lifts the lid and starts searching in the bin. Enter Stanley Stubbers. He is followed by a cab driver carrying one big trunk.)*

DRIVER. That's as far as I'm going with this mate. *(The driver puts the trunk down unceremoniously.)* The fare is five and six.

STANLEY. Oh ffffoot and mouth! Don't be a bad egg about it! *(Stanley gives him the money.)*

DRIVER. I drive a taxi, mate, I ain't Heracles.

STANLEY. It's a trunk. No one's asking you to hold up the sky for all eternity!

DRIVER. *Atlas* held up the sky. Heracles took over for five minutes so *Atlas* could go and get the golden apples from the Hesperides' garden. *(The taxi driver leaves. Stanley spots Francis.)*

STANLEY. What's this pub like?

FRANCIS. Groundbreaking. It does food.

STANLEY. A pub? That does food?! Buzz-wham! Whoever thought of that? Wrap his balls in bacon and send him to the nurse! What are the rooms like?

FRANCIS. World-class.

STANLEY. Not that I care. I'm boarding school-trained. I'm happy if I've got a bed, a chair, and no one pissing on my face. Could you do me a favour and keep an eye on the trunk for me, whilst I see if they have any vacancies?

FRANCIS. How much?

STANLEY. Half a crown?

FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* HADDOCK AND CHIPS AND MUSHY PEAS! Yeah, alright. *(Stanley goes into the pub. Francis considers the trunk, and the task in hand. Enter an old man on sticks, struggling along. He looks, en passant, at the trunk.)* Don't even think about it. *(The pensioner heads off towards stage right, and then stops, turns and looks. Francis lets out a war cry, and charges him. The pensioner picks his sticks up and runs off. Francis's charge takes him offstage right. A Boy Scout master, in shorts, woggle, etc., walks on and inspects the abandoned trunk. A blood-curdling scream from Francis, and he is projected onto the stage from stage right, doing athletic full salto tumbling, chasing the Boy Scout off into the wings stage left. Francis walks back on, from stage left, straightening his tie. Enter Stanley, acting secretly.)*

STANLEY. *(Loud whisper.)* I need, what they call in the army, a batman. What's a decent drink for a geezer like you, for a day's graft?

FRANCIS. My current guvnor, that is my *previous* guvnor, used to pay me twenty pounds a week, at the end of the week, which is no use to me.

STANLEY. Why not?

FRANCIS. I have to EAT EVERY DAY!
STANLEY. I shall pay you five pounds per day.
FRANCIS. *(To Stanley.)* Alright, guv, you're on.
STANLEY. Do you know where the main post office is in Brighton?
FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* I have absolutely no idea. *(To Stanley.)* Oh yeah, it's next door to my gran's.
STANLEY. There should be some post for me. You'll need this letter of authorisation. *(Stanley gives Francis a letter.)*
FRANCIS. *(Reading.)* To whom it may concern, the bearer is an authorised agent of Stanley Stubbers.
STANLEY. Shhh!
FRANCIS. Who's Stanley Stubbers?
STANLEY. *(Whisper.)* Me! But don't call me Stanley Stubbers. I'm going to have to make up a new name for the pub.
FRANCIS. *(Whisper.)* What's wrong with "The Cricketers' Arms"?
STANLEY. *(Whisper.)* You're not exactly a Swiss watch, are you? A false name for me, because I'm lying low. What do I call you? I don't do first names. First names are for girls and Norwegians.
FRANCIS. *(Whisper.)* Henshall.
STANLEY. Like it! *(Whisper.)* Get my trunk indoors, Henshall, collect my letters Henshall. I'll be in my room. *(Exit Stanley into the pub. Francis attempts to move the trunk, it is too heavy. He requests help from the audience. Two male volunteers are brought up onto the stage and are taught correct trunk lifting technique. Under instruction from Francis they carry the trunk off into the pub, and remain backstage until next required. Opportunity for improv comedy around hometown, occupation, dress sense, etc., always respecting the audience members. Francis remains in character.)*
FRANCIS. Post office. *(Enter Rachel and Lloyd.)*
RACHEL. Oi! Francis! Where are you going mate?
FRANCIS. I'm walking round and round in circles to ward off the hunger pangs.
LLOYD. I will cook you the lunch of a lifetime.
FRANCIS. Lunch?! I haven't had breakfast yet.
RACHEL. Have you got my trunk out of the motor yet?
FRANCIS. I've just done the trunk. *(Aside.)* Ah! — Concentrate, Francis! *(To Rachel.)* Don't worry, Roscoe, I'll get your trunk from the motor, now.
LLOYD. I'll get one of the bar staff to give you a hand. *(Exit Lloyd into the pub. He sees the two volunteers standing offstage.)* What! You two

again! I've told you before, it's not that kind of pub! *(The volunteers return to the audience with applause.)*
RACHEL. I need you to go to the post office, and —
FRANCIS. — Alright guv, stop going on about it. You only have to tell me once.
RACHEL. I haven't asked you to go to the post office at all, yet.
FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* Oh shit!
RACHEL. Lloyd tells me it is just around the corner.
FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* That's handy.
RACHEL. Collect any letters for me or my sister, Rachel Crabbe. This is a letter of authorisation.
FRANCIS. I've got one of those already. I don't need two do I?
RACHEL. How come you already have a letter of authorisation?
FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* This is trickier than I thought. *(Francis takes the letter.)* You're right. I'm gonna need that.
RACHEL. And any letters you collect are private. Is that clear?
FRANCIS. Don't worry, guvnor, I won't even read them myself.
RACHEL. I'm gonna sink a couple of beers, and a lie down in my room. *(Rachel goes in.)*
FRANCIS. *(Aside.)* You got to concentrate, ain't ya, with two jobs. Kaw! I can do it, long as I don't get confused. But I get confused easily. I don't get confused that easily. Yes I do. I'm my own worst enemy. Stop being negative. I'm not being negative. I'm being realistic. I'll screw it up. I always do. Who screws it up? You, you're the role model for village idiots everywhere. Me?! You're nothing without me. You're the cock up! Don't call me a cock-up, you cock-up! *(He slaps himself.)* You slapped me?! Yeah, I did. And I'm glad I did. *(He punches himself back.)* That hurt. Good. You started it. *(A fight breaks out, finally he attacks himself with the dustbin lid and renders himself unconscious. Enter Alan.)*
ALAN. *(Aside.)* What is my life? Am I to eat, drink, sleep, get a good job, marry, honeymoon, have kids, watch them grow up and have kids of their own, divorce, meet someone else, get old, and die happy in my sleep like every other inhabitant of Brighton and Hove? What kind of a life is that? No. I am an artist. Character is action. I cannot allow this late suitor to come along and end my beautiful dream, like a dead, discarded Russian astronaut dog landing on my head. *(He notices Francis.)* My rival's lackey. This will be the beginning of the end. *(To Francis.)* Where is the dog, your guvnor? He will die today. *(Alan takes his jacket off, rolls his sleeves up, takes his watch off as if preparing for a fist fight.)*