

With the Sun on Our Backs

a play about the miners' strike in Leicestershire

based on the story of the Dirty Thirty

by Anthony Stevens

© April 1985

CHARACTERS:

BILL, a miner, aged 58

CATH, his daughter, 23

JOHNNY, a miner, Cath's husband, 25

JULIE, Bill's other daughter, 17

AL, a miner, 19

**Policemen, Economist, Solicitor, Jogger, GPO Man, Italian
Woman, Italian Man.**

Playable by 2f, 2m.

The Song of Coal

It's the fossilized product of decomposition
Of gigantic forests under tropical conditions
– You want to know what's inside a lump of coal? Just stop! Go back!
Three hundred million years ago,
It's the sun stored up, it's the sun turned black!

Don't leave it in the ground [*repeated, very rhythmically*].

Now the forest's underground but it has no leaves
A living rock that's buckled, barely let's a man breathe.
– You want to know what's inside a lump of coal? Just stop! You'll see!
Coal's got sweat in it, sweat of men.
To unlock the sun our labour is the key!

Don't leave it in the ground, etc.

You know Britain was the first to industrialize
On the basis of her coal, but who got the prize?
– You want to know what's inside a lump of coal? Just stop! Profit!
It's a lesson for the miners, you can't win –
In the capitalist system, when you've got then you'll get!

Don't leave it in the ground, etc.

(Spoken over accompaniment) March 1984 to March 1985. The longest strike in British history. A strike against the dole queue. A strike against the profit system. A strike for coal.

You can turn coal into petrol, coal into gas,
Or you can leave it in the ground more profit to amass.
– You want to know what's inside a lump of coal? Just stop! Hit back!
We've got to smash the profit system, we need coal:
It's the sun stored up, the sun turned black!

Don't leave it in the ground, etc.

ACT ONE

PRELUDE (*the actors speak in turn*)

- 1 This is the story of a family on strike.
- 2 It's dedicated to the Dirty Thirty.
- 1 The Leicestershire striking miners. Their wives. Their families.
- 3 It's a story based on truth.
- 4 We've taken different people, different incidents, and we've mixed them together.

4 takes on character of CATH. She prepares a feeding bottle and plate of baby food.

- 2 We've left things out.
- 3 And we've added things.
- 1 To make a play.
- 3 A story about working people fighting for the right to work.
- 2 To have a job or not to have a job? *Who* will choose?

CATH: It's an old-fashioned thing t' say, but I always said if I 'ad any kids I'd stop at 'ome t' look after 'em. If I could afford to, then I would. An' that's whar'I'm doin'. Me dad – 'e's a miner – 'e didn't earn much when I were little, before the Seventy-Two strike, an' there were no way that we could manage. So me mum used t' go out t' work an' me granma 'elped bring me up.

- 1 People change. A wife becomes a mother.

CATH: Mind you, it's 'ard enough work lookin' after a littl'un. 'E's fourteen month old an' you gorra 'ave eyes in the back o' your 'ead. I can't 'ardly remember what it were like bein' free, I mean bein' able t' do more or less whar'I liked. Let alone bein' single.

- 2 This is the story of people acting for themselves – freely.
- 1 Fighting for the right to choose their own lives.

- 3 The background? Britain in 1984. A world that finds profit in waste.
- 2 The waste of resources. Coal.
- 1 The waste of lives. Dole.

CATH: I've only got one kiddie, Davey. I dunt want another, not really. I mean, I do, I'd love one, bur'I'd 'ave t' come t' terms wi' the fact that only one of 'em'd work. Only one of 'em'd gerra job.

- 2 What will the baby become?

Brief pause.

CATH: *(out of character)* We can't answer that.

I'M NOT GOIN' T' WORK, N' MORE

CATH begins to feed the baby.

CATH: You gonna 'ave some breakfast then, Davey? Come on, open up, sleepy 'ead. What d'you 'ave t' go an' wake up in the night for, eh? Little bugger. I thought you'd grown out o' that. Didn't wake y' daddy up though, did y'? No. Tried 'ard enough though, didn't we? You're gonna 'ave t'r'ave a sleep today, you are. Else you'll be a right little whatsit by teatime. Dunt spit it out, it's lovely. Look. *(She tastes some)* Mummy loves it. Mmmm.

Enter JOHNNY. CATH looks at him questioningly.

JOHNNY: I'm not goin' t' work, n' more!

CATH: You what?

JOHNNY: I've come out, an' I'm not goin' t' work, n' more.

CATH: I should bloody well think not!

JOHNNY: You what?

CATH: Davey, your dad's out on strike! You've gorra good daddy, you 'ave!

JOHNNY: I didn't know 'ow you were goin' t' react.

CATH: I'm over the bloody moon!

JOHNNY: Why didn't y' say summat?

CATH: It int my place.

JOHNNY: You've gorra back me up.

CATH: There's no gorra about it. I'll support you. But 'cause I want to.

JOHNNY: Well, why didn't y' say summat?

CATH: I dunt think it's a woman's place t' tell a man whether 'e should go t' work or not. It's your own mind, int it?

JOHNNY: Yeah, well, I know I'm a bit slow mekin' it up sometimes, but I made it up now an' nothin'll change me.

CATH: I'm not gonna give up smokin'.

JOHNNY: I should'a come out last week, really. An' I would 'ave.

CATH: I've stopped smokin' before an' I know I eat more, more than whar'it costs me in fags if I gi' it up.

JOHNNY: What if you start smokin' more 'cause you're eatin' less?

CATH: I still ent gonna gi' it up.

JOHNNY: It were a Welsh picket. Them Kent lads 'ave gone. Bloody good talker 'e were. All about their communities an' the pit bein' the mother o' the community an' 'ow the valleys were dyin', an' they were askin' us 'elp t' save their mothers from all bein' murdered. Or summat like that. I mean, 'ow the 'ell could I go past that?

CATH: They won't understand that round 'ere.

JOHNNY: No, I says to 'im, you've gorra mek 'em think there's summat in it for them, they won't stand up f' nobody else's job. Especially now they've 'ad the ballot, eighty or ninety percent t' go on workin'.

CATH: But that's why you went back in last week, 'cause they were gonnar'old a ballot.

JOHNNY: It were all a bit confused last week. What wi' us own lodge men tellin' us it weren't an official strike an' t' go back in t' work, even if we'd not crossed the Kent picket, they stood out there tellin' us we 'ad t' go in, 'cause we were gonnar'ave us own ballot. Jack Jones 'isself told us t' cross picket lines.

CATH: What changed you then?

JOHNNY: I just thought about it a bit an' the way I see it, all right we've 'ad a ballot an' it's t' go on workin', but we 'aven't got no right t' vote someone else out o'r'is job, 'ave we? It's as simple as that.... Davey's quiet.

CATH: Bloody 'ell, 'e's gone t' sleep. You didn't 'ear 'im in the night, did y'?

JOHNNY: I did.

CATH: I didn't know you were awake.

JOHNNY: I ent bin sleepin' too well lately. *(Pause)* I will now.

Exit CATH.

A LIFT TO THE PICKET

JOHNNY: *(to audience)* That evening I 'ad a phone call from a mate 'o mine at Bag'orth, called Al. As a matter o' fact, 'e's the boyfriend o' me father-in-law's other daughter. Me wife's younger sister. Anyway, 'e's just got this new car. Well, not new, but y' know whar'I mean. An' 'e wanted t' give me a lift t' work tomorrow. So I accepted.

He gets into the car with AL. They drive off.

JOHNNY: Smart.

AL: Hope them fuckin' pickets aint there.

JOHNNY: Oh. Yeah.

AL: Fuckin' Welsh bastards. I stopped yesterday. I aint gonna stop today. This bloke said 'e 'ad t' work in a two foot seam, then 'e said at least 'e got up off 'is knees when 'e got out the pit. I dunno what the fuck 'e was talkin' about.

JOHNNY: Funny accent, int it?

AL: 'Ere, where's y' snap bag?

JOHNNY: Oh, I must 'ave left it at 'ome.

AL: You wanna go back an' get it?

JOHNNY: No, no, you're all right. Seen Julie lately?

AL: Not for a week or more. She keeps sayin' she's got all this school work. I'm goin' up tomorrow though.

JOHNNY: She's bright, that girl. God knows what she sees in you. Wants t' be a designer or summat. Redesign you. What's she studyin', Art an' English?

AL: Well, I can speak fuckin' English *an'* I'll keep drawin' me wages. Drawin' me wages, get it?

JOHNNY: Hey, we're almost here. Look, just stop a minute, will y'?

AL: What for?

JOHNNY: Go on, just stop a minute.

AL stops. JOHNNY gets out, goes round to driver's side.

JOHNNY: I'm asking you to support your union and not to cross this picket line.

AL: Cut it out, you prick, get back in!

JOHNNY: I'm not getting' back in. I'm serious. You're in the NUM, aren't y'?

AL: You know I am.

JOHNNY: An' y' know whar'it stands for?

AL: Course I do.

JOHNNY: Then why aren't you out on strike?

AL: What're you on about? You know we 'ad a ballot.

JOHNNY: Well y' dunno whar'it means, do y'? It's the National Union o' Mineworkers, the National Union, not the Area. It's not what Jack Jones says. Arthur Scargill's our leader.

AL: All right, 'e can give us a national ballot then, can't he?

JOHNNY: There's already 120 – 130, 000 miners out. What y' need a ballot for? You're the minority, mate, not us.

AL: Let 'em fight their own fuckin' battles. Anyway, this is just a political strike.

JOHNNY: What d'y' mean?

AL: What I said.

JOHNNY: What d'y' mean, it's *just* a political strike?

AL: Scargill ent interested in jobs, is 'e? 'E just wants t' bring down Thatcher.

JOHNNY: Y' know, I thought you just looked at page three o' The Sun, but I see y' must read the political page an' all. You stupid bastard, can't y' see a fight for jobs is bound t' be a fight against Maggie Thatcher? Eh? Can't y' see it?

AL: (*realizing*) You used me, you cunt! You used me t' get a fuckin' lift t' the picket!

JOHNNY: You offered it. Show off your new motor. Wha'd it cost y', Al? You better get in t' work, mek sure you can pay for it. You think your job's safe, do y'? They're gonna close Leicestershire down too, y' know.

AL: Cunt!

JOHNNY: (*coming downstage*) 'E went in.

JOHNNY: This is a song that was written for the striking Leicestershire miners early in the strike.

During the song, the actor playing AL changes, in full view, to BILL. BILL joins in last chorus.

(Tune: Villikins and his Dinah)

Ian MacGregor is intractable
No need to talk to him, just break his thick skull
Cause we've got to break him to make him see sense
But that will be acting in pure self-defence.

I am a miner and I'm standing firm
I've come out of the ground but not like worm
With the sun on our backs although I'm growing thin
We will stay out on strike till we bloody well win.

Margaret Thatcher looks after the rich
And when I think of her I get a strange itch
She's cut schools and hospitals to help the pound float
Now we need one more cut – just the length of her throat.

I am a miner, etc.

Lionel Murray is no friend of ours
Before Marg'ret Thatcher he cringes and cowers
If ever he says that he'll lead the attack
I'll give you some simple advice: watch your back.

I am a miner, etc.

The Labour leaders give 'moral support'
Especially after a battle's been fought
They tell us you mustn't call this a class war
And in ten years we'll change it, so don't break the law.

I am a miner, etc.

The Leicestershire miners are led by Jack Jones
For there are some miners who've got no backbones
He's a friend of the bosses, a scab and a cheat
The pit he deserves only goes down six feet.

But there are some Leicestershire miners stand firm
They've come out of the ground but not like a worm
With the sun on our backs although we're growing thin
We will stay out on strike till we bloody well win!

BILL shakes JOHNNY'S hand.

A JOGGER runs past.

JOHNNY: *(to audience)* The wife's dad. *(He goes.)*

BILL: *(to audience)* We'll not gerr'em out, not in this area. I know 'em. I bin down the pit thirty-eight year. An' me dad, 'e were a miner, 'e came 'ere durin' the war. 'E'd always fought for the nationalization o' the industry. I stood wi' 'im on January 1st 1947, Desford Colliery, when they pulled up the blue flag. 'E were an 'ard man, but the tears were goin' down 'is cheeks. Then there were this bloke called Slogger Williams. 'E challenged ev'rybody in the area 'e could get more coal out wi' one shovel than anybody else. An' 'e got thirty-five tones out! Bloody idiot!

Me dad used t' tell me about the old butty system, y' know, when this bloke could decide 'ow much money y' got accordin' t' whether or not 'e liked y' face. Now we'm got the incentive scheme. An' it's set area against area, miner against miner. 'Cause you can earn a 'undred pound bonus at Bag'orth. In some pits in other areas it's n'more'n fifteen or sixteen pound.

There's scabs round 'ere, hereditary scabs, an' they like t' go on about a national ballot, bur'I'll tell y'. There were a national ballot vote against the incentive scheme back in the seventies, but Leicestershire, South Derby and Notts, all them

what's workin now, they brought it in by the back door. At meetin's we 'ad, Jack Jones wouldn't give y' the views o' the older miners like me, that only if we stay as we are 'ave we got any chance of improvin' conditions underground. I were more interested in things like getting' toilets down the pit, 'cause at Desford we used t' get these flies, muck flies, droves on 'em. All these men whar'are crossin' picket lines, they'm like muck flies, t' me. They get the smell o' money an' y' can't ger'em away from it. Scabs.

Exit BILL. Enter JOHNNY with paint pot and brush. He begins to paint a wall, singing to himself, quietly at first.

HERE WE GO!

JOHNNY: Here we... go. Here we... go.... Here we go.... Here... we go.... Here we... go....*(Louder)* Here we go... here we go.... *(Louder)* Here we go-o, here we go! Here we go, here we go...

Enter CATH.

CATH: What are you doin'?

JOHNNY: Decoratin'.

CATH: You bloody aint!

JOHNNY: You've been on at me t' do it.

CATH: That were before the strike.

JOHNNY: Now 'old on a minute. I thought you liked me t' tek me own decisions.

CATH: As far as goin' on strike's concerned. Now you're on strike, we've gorra work together.

JOHNNY: I thought I'd done wi' gaffers for a bit.

CATH: An' so you 'ave. But you ent gonna last long unless we ger'a bit organized, are y'? Up till now you've earned the money an' I'm the one what's made ends meet. You've 'ad y' last pay packet, now we're gonna spend it. Together. We're gonna stock up on all the things we need an' I'm not goin' t' do that on me own. You're the one that eats all the brown sauce an' I don't, so I'm not gonna mek the decision whether we need brown sauce or not. We're goin' together. From now on, we're workin' together.

JOHNNY: What about the wall?

CATH: Leave it. It'll remind us that one day the strike'll be over. Then you can finish it.

JOHNNY: Right. An' you can bloody well 'elp an' all!

They both go.

ROMEO AND JULIET

JULIE is at home. She is reading. With her is AL.

AL: Where's y' dad?

JULIE: Out.

AL: When's 'e comin' back then?

JULIE: Dunno. He's goin' t' be late though.

AL: Oh. *(Pause)* What shall we do then?

JULIE: I don't want to go out.

AL: Nor do I. *(He grins at audience.)*

Pause.

AL: What you readin' for?

JULIE: Got to.

AL: I'm 'ere.

JULIE: Yeah.

AL: An' nobody else.

JULIE: So?

AL: Come on, Julie. You know what I mean.

JULIE: No.

AL: You do.

JULIE: What?

AL: (*half-aside*) Oh fuck, I know what t' call it with me mates.

JULIE: What then?

AL: I can't. You don't need a word for it with your girlfriend, do y'?

JULIE: Well, if you don't know what it is you want, then you can 'elp me, can't you? I've got this part in the school play, that's what I'm doin', learnin' me lines. You can test me.

AL: 'Ow long'll it take?

JULIE: Just a bit longer'n what you want. No time at all.

AL: (*pleased*) OK then.

JULIE: Here. You read from the book. I'll start here, right? Tell me if I ger'it wrong. An' you can read 'is speeches, right? Got it?

AL: Out loud?

JULIE: Well, since I failed me O level in mind-readin'. I got to know when I 'ave t' speak, haven' I? Ready?

AL: (*shocked*) It's poetry!

JULIE: O Romeo, Romeo! – wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

AL: *Aside. (He thinks, then takes two or three steps sideways)* Shall I hear more or shall I speak at this? This is stupid.

JULIE: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor

AL: Nobody's gonnar' understand this, are they?

JULIE: It is nor hand nor foot
Nor arm nor face nor any other part

Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

AL: Julie?

JULIE: What!

AL: Give us a kiss.

JULIE: Listen, Romeo – that's you – is outside Juliet's *bedroom*. She doesn't know he's there yet, but she's in love with 'im, get it? You know, Romeo and Juliet?

AL: No.

JULIE: The original version of West Side Story? No? It doesn't matter. The problem is that their families are at war with each other. So he – you – are takin' a bit of a risk. If my dad finds you outside my bedroom, he'll kill you.

AL: You could hide me inside.

JULIE: I don't know you're there yet. I'm just talkin' to myself.

AL: You can see me.

JULIE: No, it's dark.

AL: Oh.

JULIE: It's a play. You got to use your imagination.

AL: (*to audience*) I do. But you still know when you're only wankin', don't y'?

JULIE: Romeo, doff thy name!
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

AL: I take thee at thy word.
Call me but – love – and I'll be new – baptized.
Henceforth. I never will be Romeo? Huh?

JULIE: What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?

AL: (*taken in*) It's all right, its only me. Oh! (*He laughs*)

Er, by a name.

I know not how – to tell thee – who I am. Who am I? Who I am.

My name, dear saint, is hateful – to myself.

Because – it is an enemy – to thee.

JULIE: My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.
Art thou not Romeo, and a Scab?

AL: (*getting into it*) Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.

JULIE: And art thou not willing, for another pay packet,
To stab all my family in the back?

AL: You've lost me.

JULIE: And didst thou not think, seeing my father gone,
Here's a good chance for a quick bang?

AL: Yeah. No. What's goin' on?

JULIE: Are you gonna come out on strike?

AL: I'm not bloody stupid.

JULIE: Love conquers all – so they say;
Even uniting enemies – in a play.
Well Al, my Romeo, I'm glad you came
Because a scab by any other name
Still smells as bad, still turns me off:
I'm glad you're here so I can say PISS OFF!

Exit AL.

JULIE: Don't bother comin' round tomorrow!
(*To audience*) Parting is such *sweet* sorrow!

Exit JULIE. Then enter CATH.

CATH: (*to audience*) It took four week before we gor'any money from the DHSS. The last wage 'e got, we stocked the cupboards up. Then we were managin' on the family allowance every week. Then when the DHSS money did come we thought we were rich. We did. It sounds daft, 'cause it weren't much, but we'd gone four week on six pound fifty a week. The first week we ate as normal, then the second week we cut down t' two meals a day, an' then by the third week we were both 'avin a round o'

toast in the mornin', an' one meal about 5 o'clock. An' that's what we've bin doin' since, 'cause I'm still not givin' up smokin'.

It's made me realize 'ow much money we must 'ave wasted. It's silly things y' stop spendin' y' money on, for instance bin liners. I know it's the 'astle 'avin' t' wash a bin out every time you've emptied it, but when they're 30p a time, thirty pence dunt sound much – it does now. An' wash powder, 'cause I've got one o' them big packets an' I keep that stocked up an' I buy, say, Drive or Ariel, an' when some o' that's gone I go an' buy a cheap brand an mix 'em together.

We still get through a lot o' sauce, mind. Dunt tell 'im but I started thinnin' it down wi' water. 'E dunt like what I done wi' our kitchen towel 'older though. 'E says, I know you got to economise bur'I'd rather see nowt on there than a bog roll!

Exit CATH.

A FUNNY THING

Enter BILL dressed as a woman. He looks very pleased with himself.

BILL: *(to audience)* A funny thing 'appened t' me on the way t' the picket. No, seriously. A funny thing 'appened t' me on me way 'ere. Three days ago. It's took me that long t' ger'ere. Three days o' bein' reeducated. I'll explain this clobber in a minute. But I've gorra question for y'. When is a right not a right? Now, as I understood it, a right was summat y' just 'ad, like naturally, an' they couldn't tek it away from y', 'cos it were y' right. You 'ad a right to it, y' see. So, if they can tek it away from y', it couldn't a bin a right in the first place, could it? D' y' see whar'I mean?

POLICEMAN: *(entering)* All right, move along there. Come on, push off.

BILL: What for? I'm just talkin' t' me mates.

POLICEMAN: I have reason to believe that you are about to tell these people something that may lead to a breach of the peace.

BILL: I'm just tellin' 'em the truth.

POLICEMAN: Exactly! And since you've admitted that your intention is to get to the truth, I have to advise you to turn back. Now. In other words, shut your bolshy gob or I'll shut it for you.

BILL: Now just a minute, I want t' mek sure that I've gor'it correct, right. You're *advisin'* me t' stop talkin', that's all?

POLICEMAN: ... Yes.

BILL: It's nor'an order?

POLICEMAN: No.

BILL: So I can go on if I want to.

POLICEMAN: No.

BILL: 'Ave you 'eard o' a thing called the right t' free speech?

POLICEMAN: It rings a bell. I have come across it, yes. Something to do with the National Front? Sending all the blacks back home, is that it?

BILL: No, whar'I'm sayin' is, if there's a right t' free speech, then I can go on talkin' t' me mates, can't I?

POLICEMAN: Oh, no. You see, you've got to look at it from my point of view. If everyone looked at things from the point of view of the policeman this would be a very nice country to live in, I say. Then you wouldn't get any of that lefty claptrap about the police state, would you? I'm only doing my job. You've got your rights. I've got a job to do. But if you could only see things from my point of view, then you'd, well, it would be like you had a job to do too, wouldn't it? And what's that got to do with your rights, eh? You tell me that. Unless there's a right to a job, I suppose. No, no, there can't be, can there? Or there wouldn't be any unemployment. I hadn't thought of that. Yes, but on the other hand, there *isn't* any unemployment in the police force. So *we've* all got the right to a job anyway. And – in my opinion – a right to expect the general public to see things from the policeman's point of view. After all, we've got a job to do. Ha, ha, ha! On the other hand. On the other hand there is a watch. 7.05 precisely. Ask me another. I'm here to assist. Do you want to cross the road? Would you like the kiss of life? (*Slowing down*) I am a... genuine... community... policeman. (*He stops, lifeless.*)

BILL gives POLICEMAN a quick kick up the arse.

POLICEMAN: (*coming to*) Yes! And! I apprehend a possible breach of the peace! For a start, this lot laughing at the police. Since it's my duty to prevent it, I must advise you not to go any further in attempting to reveal the truth.

BILL: Ah ha! That's just whar'I'm sayin'. Y' can only advise me, y' can't tell me.

POLICEMAN: True, very true. So what?

BILL: So everythin'.

POLICEMAN: No, no, no, no, no, no. Oh no. You see, since it's my *duty* to prevent any possible breach of the peace, then your not taking my advice amounts to "obstruction of a police officer in the course of his duty". Get it?

BILL: No.

POLICEMAN: You will. Because you're fucking nicked.

BILL: What for? I 'aven't tried t' go on yet.

POLICEMAN: Don't have to. *All* you have to do is question what I'm saying, because that's also "obstructing a police officer in the course of his duty". If I say so, since obviously I'm the best judge of that. Aren't I?

BILL: I'm nor'avin' this. I'm goin' t' appeal.

POLICEMAN: All right. That's your right. I'll be the judge. (*He puts on a wig.*)

BILL: Oh, God!

POLICEMAN/JUDGE: (*very public school*) Justice is mine, saith the Lord. It certainly won't be yours. Now, what is the basis of your appeal?

BILL: Well, my Lord.

JUDGE: Your Honour.

BILL: My Honour?

JUDGE: My Honour.

BILL: Your Honour?

JUDGE: Yes.

BILL: Well, your Honour.... What were the question?

JUDGE: There was only one, I believe.

BILL: Eh?

JUDGE: You said: what were the questions?

BILL: No I didn't. I said: what were the question?

JUDGE: The question *was*: what is the basis of your appeal?

BILL: What's it now then?

JUDGE: Pardon?

BILL: You said that's what it *was*.

JUDGE: Oh, never mind. My original question "were": what is the basis of your appeal?

BILL: Well, your Honour.... Oh, by the way, y' dunt 'ave t' try'n talk like me, y' know. I understand your dialect, 'n all.

JUDGE: Shut up! Now, could we please get on with it? (*Pause*) You may speak.

BILL: Well, that's whar'it's all about, your Honour. Free speech. I come 'ere t' ask you t' up'old me right t' free speech.

JUDGE: Thank you. In my judgment, there was no reason for the arresting officer to suppose that you yourself would have committed any offence, merely that an offence was likely to occur at the place to which you were going. All that is required in law is that a police officer shall reasonably assume that a breach of the peace is likely. Fortunately, in this country we do not leave it entirely to the police themselves to decide what is reasonable and what is not – we have judges to do that for them. Let us examine the present case: there was, as I understand, an unseemly closeness and intimacy between yourself and your audience, a mere x feet, which could in fact be construed as conspiratorial. But that is not the charge. As yet. Moreover, it is evident to me that your audience was both unsavoury in appearance and completely uneducated, precisely the kind of yobs who need little encouragement to laugh out loud at officers of the police. However, the right of free speech is of particular importance in this country. For this reason I require further information before making my final judgment. How did you come to be standing outside Rawdon Colliery in the first place?

BILL: Funnily enough, your Honour, that were what I were tryin' t' tell me mates at the time, when I gor'arrested. Y' see, it were a road block, in Ashby. The first day I were wearin' all me badges, an' this policeman waved me over an' told me t' turn back. So I insisted on me rights, like, an' almost got mesen arrested. Then the second day I left me badges off an' 'e stopped me again. So I says: I gor'a right t' travel on the 'ighway, 'aven't I? But 'e wouldn't 'ave none of it an' I got turned back again. So I thought t' mesen, at least I got the right t' dress 'ow I please, so on the third day I dressed up like this an' 'e didn't bother t' stop me. So I got t' the picket anyhow.

JUDGE: Picket?

BILL: Yes.

JUDGE: You're a miner?

BILL: Yeah.

JUDGE: Guilty as charged! And fined one hundred pounds for attempting to deceive the court! And transvestism!

BILL: Now wait a minute. I weren't tryin' t' deceive no one. I bin tryin' t' tell the truth from the start. An' I only 'ad t' use this disguise because I were bein' denied me rights, weren't I? I reckon it's you what's in disguise, not me. All this garbage about the rights o' the individual an' the rule o' law, that's a disguise, int it? I bin reeducated in three days flat. I'm tellin y', what you call the rule o' law, that's a disguise for class rule, for the rule o' the bosses an' the capitalists. Well, I'm nor'ashamed o' mesen. I'm not gonna pretend t' be whar'I'm not. I'm a workin' man an' that means I ent got no rights. Not unless I fight for'em. An' I'm gonna. 'Ard! Bloody 'ard!

Both go. Enter JULIE.

JULIE: *(to audience)* We went on this fantastic march in Mansfield. Someone said there were forty thousand of us. An' it was a brilliant day, really hot an' sunny. Even me dad got a boost out of it. That was because people kept askin' us why we were called the Dirty Thirty, or why the men were, an' me dad told 'em 'ow this scab was interviewed on Radio Leicester, what 'e thought of the thirty strikers in Leicestershire, an' 'e said, I think they're a filthy dirty thirty. An' me dad says, this scab must be sick as a pig now, 'cause we're becomin' famous, thanks to 'im.

Then there were some Kent women near us an' we were singin' with 'em: "Maggie Thatcher's got one, Ian MacGregor is one, da da da da, da da da da." An' this girl comes over an' she says: *(poshish)* "Do you realize that what you're singing is anti-women?" So I says, no it's not, it's anti-Thatcher an' MacGregor.

But there were some terrible things as well. After the rally, when most of the miners' buses 'ad gone, the police started chargin' the ones that were left, on horses. An' I saw some schoolkids comin' out of school, near the miners, an' a policeman just belted this girl, she was only about fifteen, he really laid into 'er with 'is truncheon an' knocked 'er down with 'is horse. He could've killed 'er.... There's no word to describe 'im.

Exit JULIE.

THE TV ANSWERS BACK

JOHNNY is at home watching TV.

TV: (*fast*) Eleven weeks into the miners' strike, we ask tonight: what is the future for British coal and the British coal industry? With the dramatic decline in Britain's industrial base, can the coal industry survive in its present form? Later, we'll be talking to Ian MacGregor...

JOHNNY: Thar'll do us some good!

TV: ... but first the background to the present strike. 1972 and 1974 were the apotheosis...

JOHNNY: The what?

TV: ... of the great fighting tradition of the NUM...

JOHNNY: Yeah!

TV: ... making this a particularly tough nut for the government to crack. Will Mrs Thatcher crack first? Is she cracked already? Or is that just the way she smiles? Later, we'll be asking Saatchi and Saatchi. And we'll be asking Lord Gormley why there *should* have been a ballot. But first – the background.

JOHNNY: Let's have some bleedin' facts!

TV: Remember the oil crisis of the early 70s? Yes, you *can* blame the Arabs for the present coal strike. It was the quadrupling of the price of oil that led to those ridiculous plans for the expansion of the coal industry. Tonight we'll be examining those plans and asking: is Arthur Scargill really an Arab?

JOHNNY: Fucking 'ell!

TV: Is there a conspiracy to keep pushing up the price of oil and the price of coal in tandem until nuclear power really is cheap and everyone can have their own bomb? Has the Yorkshire Area of the NUM got a bomb already? Will Mrs Thatcher be prepared to use hers first? Or will she rely on the BBC? Later we'll be asking Leon Brittain to put up the licence fee. I mean, how can you say the BBC is uneconomic when it's a cheaper way to beat the miners than one single cruise missile?

JOHNNY: You lyin' bastards!

TV: Excuse me, but would you be quiet at home?

JOHNNY: Eh?

TV: I said, would you watch in silence or not at all?

JOHNNY: Who me?

TV: Yes, you. Please do not interrupt a public service.

JOHNNY: Public service! What, the British Bullshit Corporation!

An 'EXPERT' comes out of the TV set.

EXPERT: I suppose you know all about it, do you?

JOHNNY: I know what's true an' what aint.

EXPERT: And you're going to tell me there's no such thing as an uneconomic pit.

JOHNNY: Yeah.

EXPERT: Well?

JOHNNY: The way I see it, there's coal in the ground, enough for 'undreds o' years, an' there's men t' turn it. But this government, it wants t' leave it there, in the ground. It's like throwin' money away. An' the men, throwin' them' on the scrap heap. It's retarded. It's criminal waste. You'd 'ave t' be an economist not t' see that.

EXPERT: I am an economist.

JOHNNY: Well, coal's worth money, int it? What's the point o' leavin' it in the ground?

EXPERT: (*patronizing*) But you have to be able to sell it.

JOHNNY: Yeah, bur'if we 'ad subsidies like what they do in other countries, then coal'd be cheaper an' we could sell more.

EXPERT: Yes, I thought you'd come up with that. Subsidy is public money. Public money is taxation. But where does it come from in the first place?

JOHNNY: Out o' wages an' that.

EXPERT: Not exactly. Let's call it the National cake, shall we?

JOHNNY: All right.

EXPERT: And you want to have your cake and eat it?

JOHNNY: Eh?

EXPERT: My dear fellow, it doesn't make coal any cheaper just because you pay for it in two installments, first as subsidy, then as a purchase price. You see, in the end, it's British industry that foots the bill for *your* inefficiency.

JOHNNY: Yeah, but...

EXPERT: And time's up! Ladies and gentlemen, a big hand please for a gallant loser. But don't go away, sir, for you have won a consolation prize, a free trip to your nearest job centre! *That's* the only way to bring down the price of coal. Thank you and goodnight. (*He goes.*)

JOHNNY: (*to audience*) I still know I'm right. I'm gonna 'ave t' do some 'omework, bur'I'm gonna beat that cocky bastard, you'll see.

Exit JOHNNY.

"THERE AINT ANYTHING LIKE A... SCAB"

BILL: (*entering; to audience*) We were invited down t' South Wales for an 'oliday an' it were great. The weather were fantastic an' the 'ospitality, they'd do anythin' for y' down there, not like round 'ere. Mind you, we went t' see the distribution o' food at Mountain Ash. At this welfare centre there were a queue, it must 'ave bin a hundred an' fifty yards long an' about four hundred people queuin' up f' food. An' it were really pathetic, pathetic t' see 'em. It were 'eart-touchin'. They couldn't a bin gettin' above eight tins in a plastic bag. See, they've got the real 'ardship an' we've got the isolation.

But there's one thing really sticks in my mind. They took us t' this cemetery t' see this gravestone of a miner in the last century, William Crawshay I think it were, an' 'e were quite notorious because 'e'd exploited children, young children. And as 'e were dyin' 'e made a confession. 'E said: Please God forgive me for what I done. An' this granite gravestone must 'ave measured ten foot be ten foot an' the granite were about a foot thick, all surrounded by iron railin's. An' it 'ad got 'is name an' the year, and under it 'God forgive me'. Now this miner who took us t' see it, 'e'd never seen it before. An' 'e spit on the grave.

Enter POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN: Get back on the kerb.

BILL: Eh?

POLICEMAN: Get back on the kerb. For your own safety.

BILL: What if I dunt want to?

POLICEMAN: I'll 'ave you.

BILL: What for?

POLICEMAN: Obstructing the highway. We've got a charge for anything you do, you ought to know by now.

BILL obeys.

POLICEMAN: I don't know why you bother. You'll not get 'em out now. And it looks like it'll piss down in a minute.

POLICEMAN turns his back and saunters upstage. BILL starts whistling 'Singing in the Rain'. He steps off the kerb and on again. POLICEMAN turns but doesn't catch on, then turns his back again. This becomes a full-scale tap dance with the POLICEMAN'S movements choreographed in. Finally, POLICEMAN turns and watches BILL dancing, oblivious. BILL realizes, stops. POLICEMAN comes up to him, intimidating.

BILL: Y' know, there's an old sayin': when a miner feels the sun on 'is back, you'll never get 'im down the pit again.

POLICEMAN: It's raining.

BILL: Is it?

Pause.

BILL: I know what you're thinking. Were that an offence? I dunno if it'll 'elp y', but Gene Kelly weren't arrested for it, were 'e? But then that weren't on a picket.

POLICEMAN: I'm goin' to 'ave you. (*He goes.*)

BILL: I reckon' e's gone t' check it wi' 'is superiors.

Enter JOHNNY with life-size dummy.

BILL: What the 'ell's that?

JOHNNY: That is a scab.

BILL: Now whar'are you doin' 'obnobbin' wi' scabs?

JOHNNY: Well, y' gorra talk to 'em, ent y'? Dunt do no good. But you gorra talk to' em. Now, what is a scab? 'Cause there's scabs – an' there's scabs.

BILL: Ah, but they're all scabs.

JOHNNY: Yeah, but just suppose there's a 'uman bein' in there somewhere an' 'e dunt know 'ow t' ger'out, see? Like 'e's sort of... well, pregnant.

BILL: Daft!

JOHNNY: No, like we're the midwife, see. Gorra do some tests, find out if there's anythin' 'uman in there. Now, wharra we lookin' for?

BILL: 'Ow about an 'eart? 'As 'e got one o' them?

JOHNNY: Right. (*To dummy*) There's lads from Kent bin 'ere, lads from Wales, from Yorkshire, from Durham, an' they all stand t' lose their jobs an' their communities if y' dunt 'elp 'em. Whar'about their children, eh? The young kids?

Pause.

JOHNNY: No. Definitely dead as far as the 'eart goes.

BILL: 'Ow about a spine, then?

JOHNNY: Thatcher's planned f' this, y' know. She's out t' break the NUM an' with it the 'ole trade union movement. So ger'up off y' knees!

He lets the dummy flop forward. Pause.

JOHNNY: Last chance then. You try the brain. Go on.

BILL: Listen pal, if y' won't fight for the other areas an' y' won't fight for the trade union movement, at least won't y' fight for your own job, 'cause Leicestershire's done, y' know. Five year at the most. Where y' gonna go then?

JOHNNY makes the dummy stir.

JOHNNY: Look, signs o' life! Keep talkin'!

BILL: Come on, answer me that, where y' gonna go then?

JOHNNY talks through dummy, crude ventriloquist.

JOHNNY: "We've bin promised jobs in the Vale o' Belvoir, ent we? So you must be as daft as them other silly buggers that won't go t' work."

BILL: Oh ah, along wi' South Derby, South Notts, an' I even met blokes from Kent think they're comin' t' the Vale. Ah, Jack Jones's Promised Land. 'Ow many jobs d' y' think there's goin' t' be?

JOHNNY: "No, they're goin' t' put us in there, then it'll work, y' see. That's why they won't invest in Kent an' Wales an' Scotland, 'cause they won't 'ave work."

BILL: You daft bugger! Y' can't say the Welsh lads don't work. Y' can't say none on 'em don't work.

JOHNNY: "Well, they only do three day a week."

BILL: Who the 'ell told you that?

JOHNNY: "I've 'eard it, an' it's true."

BILL: I give up!

JOHNNY: (*himself*) They believe it, dunt they? They believe it! Y' know, all that's what some bloke were tellin' me in the pub last night. They think we're gonna get the Vale o' Belvoir because we're super miners!

BILL: Yeah, that's what MacGregor says.

JOHNNY: An' they believe it! No 'eart, no spine, *an'* no brain. They're dead. We might as well go 'ome.

BILL: Y' know what?

JOHNNY: What?

BILL: There's nothin' lower than a scab.

They sing, dancing with the dummy. [After Rogers and Hammerstein]

We've got mortgages and cars
We've got items on H.P.
And if we need a pair of tits
We've got them on page three.
Then off we go to Benidorm
To spend ill-gotten gains:
What aint we got?
We aint got brains!

Oom-pah, oom-pah, oom-pah, oom-pah.....

We're known as working miners,
We turn lots of coal to sell,
We're members of the NUM
But you could never tell.
And if we see a picket line
We'll cross it for the boss:
What don't we give?
We don't give a toss!

You gotta get down on your knees and be completely mindless –
Better still on your belly so the boss can see you're really spineless....

Nothin's lower than a scab!
Nothin' in the world.
Nothin's lower than a scab,
There aint anything like a scab.

We don't like Arthur Scargill,
We don't like Mick McGahey,
And as for Peter Heathfield
We think he's just as crappy.
We've got Thatcher and MacGregor, they
Have told us what to do:
If you need our help
We'll shit on you!

We've got the Vale of Belvoir
So our future is secure.
Well, we're nearly almost certain
So we better had make sure.
That's why we're working miners and
We'll work right on till then:
What are we not?
We're not real men!

It's not that we think there isn't such a thing as the class war –
It's just that there's nothing we wouldn't betray our own class for....

Nothin's lower than a scab!
Nothin' in the world.
Nothin's lower than a scab,
There aint anything like a scab.

Nothing cheats like a scab
Nothing bleats like a scab

Nothing smells like a scab
Nothing repels like a scab
Nothing should be expelled like a scab!

There aint a thing that's wrong with the working class
That can't be cured by breaking the arse
Of degenerate lousy wooly-backed stinking
Moronic black-legged parasitic spineless – SCABS!

Nothin's lower than a scab!
Nothin' in the world.
Nothin's lower than a scab,
There aint anything like a scab!

Mood-change. BILL spits on the dummy. They leave, dragging the dummy off with them.

CATH'S FIRST SPEECH

CATH enters.

CATH: *(to audience; nervous, but strong by the end)* I hope you'll bear w' me 'cause I ent never stood up in public t' mek a speech before. An' I'll be honest wi' y', it's worse than 'avin' a baby. Anyway, I wrote some things down about the women's group an' 'ow we got started, because I tek it that's what y' want t' know about. *(Reading)* It started because someone rang me up an' said they've got wives' support groups in the other areas an' why didn't I start one. I thought, well, we're on a hidin' t' nothin' here. We live in at least a thirty mile radius o' one another. The nearest person t' me is ten mile away. But I thought I'll gi' it a go, because when all's said and done it's our fight as well as the men's. Even though they're the ones that go down the pit, we're the ones that 'ave t' mek ends meet at the end o' the day. An' that's 'ow we got started, to 'elp the men out really, with there bein' only thirty on strike in this area.... I'm not goin' t' read n' more o' this, 'cause I can't see who I'm talkin' to. It's worse'n bein' on the phone. So I may ger'a bit disjointed, but.

In the village where I live no one wants t' talk about the strike, they rabbit on about anythin', even t' the colour o' the grass. So the worst problem is loneliness, really. An' when we meet, every fortnight, we give each other a little boost an' it 'elps you along.

To start wi', bein' in a minority area you're always on the defensive, t' start wi', like, bur'as I got more 'n more confident I used t' wear me badges an' I still do. An' women just look at me badges an' just turn away. There's two women who turn their backs on me in particular an' their 'usbands aint miners.

Now I can't understand that. I can't understand why Leicestershire ent out. 'Cause Coalville, that's where the strike shoulda started, 'cause Leicestershire's done in five year. Coalville, the cinema's closed down, Tesco's a pulled out. Factories

runnin' down. Pallitoy, mek the kids' toys, they've laid sixty off, on about layin' another hundred an' fifty off. Round 'ere they just can't see it.

That's one thing I find really hard to accept, that they just dunt think like I do. 'Cause I know if I'd a bin a man I'd a bin out on strike from day one. Definitely. I honestly thought after two weeks Leicestershire'd be out. An' I were proved wrong. It's bloody 'ard to accept, thar'is. An' it's just greed. They wave their wage packets, bur'I bet 'alf o' the wage packet that they're wavin' all goes t' the H.P. man.

Now, I'm doin' this for the sake o' my little boy, so as 'e can 'ave the 'ope or'a job when 'e grows up. It's funny really, my life revolved round 'im before the strike, an' now 'e's 'ad t' tek second place, in a sense. I mean I dunt neglect 'im, dunt get me wrong. But the strike's first, 'cause it's goin' t' affect 'im. I mean I weren't just gonna sit at 'ome waitin' for the strike t' finish, 'cause whar'd be the point in that? An' that's why the women 'ave got organized. An' that reminds me, I wrote down this quote somewhere, I'll gi' it to y'. 'Ere it is. It's from a pamphlet written by Welsh miners back in 1912.

"Sheep cannot be said to have solidarity. In obedience to a shepherd they will go up or down, backwards or forwards as they are driven by him and his dogs. But they have no solidarity, for that means unity and loyalty. Unity and loyalty, not to an individual, or the policy of an individual, but to an interest and a policy which is understood and worked for by all."

Now, we ent got no community round 'ere like they 'ave in Wales. An' we got scabs. Wooly backs. Sheep. But we 'ave got solidarity, amongst usselves. An' that's whar'I'm sayin'. Y' dunt show solidarity by sittin' at 'ome. An' I 'ope y' dunt mind me sayin', but y' dunt show solidarity just by comin' t' meetin's neither. Y' gorra get up an y' gorra do summat. That's solidarity. An' that's just what the scabs are afeared of, 'cause it costs y'. Bur'I don't care whar'it costs, I'll sell me 'ouse if necessary. I don't care 'ow long it teks, we're gonna win. 'Cause we cant afford not to.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

IN SOLITARY

A Police cell. A baby crying, off. JOHNNY seated, alone, head in hands. Enter plain clothes police OFFICER with life-size dummy which he seats on a chair.

OFFICER: *(to audience)* Subtlety.... One of our little tricks of the trade, as you might say, is always to have two personnel present during the interrogation of a suspect. What's subtle about that, you may well ask? Nothing. As yet. But just imagine the situation. You are all on your own. It's entirely possible that no one else even knows where you are. And there's *two* of us. But what for, eh? What for? 'Cause one of us just sits there, dumb so to speak, he does not utter one single monosyllabic... word. He just looks at you. In such a fashion that you cannot tell what he is thinking. Now, this begins to play upon your imagination, and your imagination happens to be our most subtle, er, implement. Or instrument. Since we play upon it. Little ideas start running round and round inside your head. 'What's the quiet one here for?' you ask yourself. 'I just can't seem to establish any human contact with him. Can it be that he is devoid of all human emotion?' And then you start to think: 'if he isn't here to ask me questions, he must be here for some other function. I wonder what it can be....' And so on. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Imagination. Subtlety.

JOHNNY: Look, I gorra right t' make a phone call. I know I've gorra right.

OFFICER: As far as I'm concerned, son, you've only got one right, and that's the right to keep going on about your rights. I'm not stopping you.

JOHNNY: I'm entitled to make one phone call.

OFFICER: That is what is known as a guideline. Provided it does not hinder us in the execution of our etcetera. That is not a right.

JOHNNY: Can I make a phone call? Please.

OFFICER: All in good time, son, all in good time. My good time.

JOHNNY: For Christ sake, you can 'ear the baby cryin'! Why'd you 'ave t' pur'im in a separate cell? If I can't mek a phone call at least let me 'ave 'im 'ere with me! For Christ sake!

OFFICER: What, conduct a serious enquiry with a baby bawling its head off? Don't be silly, son. I mean, it is in your best interests. To make sure justice can be properly done. All you have to do is answer a few simple questions.

JOHNNY: Fuck you!

OFFICER: Married, are you?

JOHNNY just looks at him.

OFFICER: Your kiddie?

JOHNNY: Whose else?

OFFICER: Oh, I just wondered if you were, you know, one hundred percent sure.

JOHNNY: I'm sure.

The OFFICER grins unpleasantly. Slight pause.

OFFICER: What you think of Scargill then? He seems pretty cocksure an' all. You a fan of his, are you? A follower? A devotee?

JOHNNY: What's this gorra do wi' anything?

OFFICER: Don't you think he should have held a ballot?

JOHNNY: No.

OFFICER: You see, what I'm really interested in is whether you realize that this is a political strike.

JOHNNY: I still can't see what that's gorra do wi' me bein' 'ere.

OFFICER: Which way did you vote in the last General Election?

JOHNNY: That's nowt t' do wi' you.

OFFICER: We both voted conservative.

JOHNNY: I fuckin' well didn't!

OFFICER: Are you a left-winger or an extreme left-winger?

JOHNNY doesn't answer. Pause. The OFFICER gives him a cigarette. Pause.

OFFICER: Course, you need a light, don't you, since we have to take things like your matches off of you. *(Pause)* You know, with your little kiddie crying away in the background

there, I can't help thinking about your wife, you know what I mean? What's she like in bed, then? She get going, does she?

JOHNNY: What the fuck is this?

OFFICER: I was just wondering what you might do for a light. I mean, if I could have a couple of hours with your missus, what about that then?

JOHNNY: *(crushes cigarette and throws it away)* You bastard!

OFFICER: *(standing)* All right, son. Since you decided to give up smoking, good for you. If I was you, I'd do some pacing up and down. He won't mind.

The OFFICER leaves. JOHNNY remains seated as long as he can, then gets up and starts pacing. After some moments...

JOHNNY: *(to dummy)* Look, I dunno whar'I'm doin' 'ere because I didn't do nothin'. It were an accident, nothin' to it. Look, I was standin' on the picket, next t' this copper...

Enter uniformed policeman.

JOHNNY: an' there were some pushin' and shovin' an' I got sort of pushed into 'im an' 'is 'at fell off.

JOHNNY stumbles against POLICEMAN, knocking his helmet off.

JOHNNY: *(to policeman)* Sorry, pal. It were an accident. Somebody shoved me, that's all.

POLICEMAN: That's all right, mate. Understood.

JOHNNY: *(to dummy)* An' that's all that 'appened. I didn't think no more about it, till another copper, a different one, turned up on me doorstep, when I were at 'ome. I'd been 'ome hours.

POLICEMAN: Are you John Newman?

JOHNNY: Yes.

POLICEMAN: All right, get your coat.

JOHNNY: What for?

POLICEMAN: You're under arrest.

JOHNNY: What for?

POLICEMAN: Get your coat or come as you are.

JOHNNY: But whar'am I supposed to 'ave done?

POLICEMAN: You'll find out before we're done with you.

JOHNNY: Look, I'm 'ere on me own, with a kiddie. Me missus 'as gone out t' do some shoppin'. There's only me wife's dad I can leave 'im with – but 'e dunt live near 'ere.

POLICEMAN: It's not a bloody taxi parked over there, you know. Bring him with you.

JOHNNY: Look, I can't think. I'll 'ave t' leave a note.

POLICEMAN: Just shift your arse or you're liable to get it broken.

Exit POLICEMAN.

JOHNNY: *(to dummy)* An' when I gor'ere they just said it were 'assaulting a police officer'. I'd just stepped into 'im, 'cause I were pushed, an' 'is 'at fell off.... Christ, what's the use? *(To audience)* An' all the time I kept thinkin' 'bout Cath comin' 'ome an' findin' us not there. She'll 'ave been 'ome an hour or more an' there's no way she can find out where we are....

CATH enters unused stage area. Through the following, she becomes increasingly anxious. She calls, sits, fidgets, etc.

JOHNNY: I can see 'er gerrin more n'more worried, till she's sick inside. I can feel it. Till she's goin' 'alf crazy. *(Pause)* An' I feel guilty. For Christ sake, I feel guilty, because my missus is goin' crazy an' davey's cryin' in terror, on 'is own in a fuckin' police cell. Eighteen month old. I feel guilty! 'Cause I can't look after me own son, I can't stop 'im cryin'. These bastards won't let me!

JOHNNY sits. Enter plain clothes OFFICER.

OFFICER: Now then, had a good pace, have we? Considered our situation? Good. Then perhaps we can just sign this.

JOHNNY: What's that?

OFFICER: Your statement. Concerning the assault of a police officer.

JOHNNY: I 'aven't made no statement, so I can't sign one, can I?

OFFICER: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. *(Pause)* Of course, you got plenty of time to think about it. If you can hear yourself think, that is.

Pause. Both sit. Arms folded.

OFFICER: You know, I just popped out for a bit to catch the news on the radio. I always try to keep up with the news, don't you? Friend of yours, isn't he, Neil Kinnock? So to speak. Apparently he's just made this big speech, all about the violence on the picket lines. Absolutely no justification, he says. Rule of law. Parliamentary democracy. Ballot box. Etcetera etcetera etcetera. *(Pause)* You got to admit, it doesn't help your case, does it, son? Just sign the statement, save yourself some bother.... 'Friend of yours!' *(He laughs)*

SONG: THE WHITE FLAG (Tune: Red Flag)

OFFICER: *(sings as though through the dummy)*

You think the strike can change the world,
You've got to think again.
In four years time then maybe I
Might be in Number Ten.
But till then don't rock the boat,
Because I need the floating vote.

JOHNNY/CATH: We'd like to know, with friends like these,
Why justice should take centuries?

OFFICER: You think the system can be changed,
We've got to take our time.
We mustn't scare the middle class
For fighting is a crime.
And so I'm not sinking the ship –
I'm a rat and I need it.

JOHNNY/CATH: What can you say of friends like these?
They're not the cure, they're the disease.

OFFICER: I know the miners have a case,
On me you can depend.
I call myself a socialist,
Well, we can all pretend.
I'm your friend, do as I say,
Live not to fight another day.

JOHNNY/CATH: You think you know your enemies?
I'm telling you – it's friends like these.

Exit OFFICER.

JOHNNY: (*to audience*) I didn't sign the statement. Summat turned up. I think it were the Chief Superintendent. Anyway, 'e called the two pigs out an' when they come back in, y' could tell 'e must 'ave gi'en 'em a bollockin', by the way they told me I were free t' go 'ome. S' y' see, even coppers 'ave t' tek care not t'r'overstep the mark sometimes – like keepin' a baby on 'is own in a police cell. But not trumpin' up some charge when even the copper who were there said it were an accident, that weren't goin' too far, not when it were a strikin' miner gonna get done for it. That weren't goin' too far. They didn't drop the charge, did they? I could go 'ome bur' I 'ad t' turn up at the Magistrates Court, didn't I?

Enter SOLICITOR to JOHNNY and CATH who now has Davey.

SOLICITOR: John Newman?

JOHNNY: Yes.

SOLICITOR: Good. We haven't got much time. I've been briefed on the precise circumstances of the alleged assault and I'll do my best to get the charge dropped today, but for your own sake I want to spell out the issues to you, so you know where you stand. The way your baby was taken into custody may have some effect on the magistrates, but strictly speaking it has nothing to do with the charge, so I wouldn't count on that. I want you to look on the negative side for a minute. Eighty to ninety percent of charges against striking miners have been for obstruction of a police officer, obstruction of the highway, breach of the peace, threatening words and behaviour, and assault. Which is where you come in. The simple reason is, these are all charges where a police officer doesn't need witnesses or independent evidence. It's just your word against his.

JOHNNY: What d'y' think they'll do, then?

SOLICITOR: I'll be frank with you. This whole process has nothing to do with justice. In one way, it's a public relations exercise: fifty arrested one day, two hundred the next, and in the eyes of the Great British Public every striking miner becomes a criminal. In another way, the idea is to make it difficult for you to picket, that's why you should expect conditional bail – it's one of their ways of restricting your freedom without needing to prove you guilty.

JOHNNY: So they're not gonna drop the charge?

SOLICITOR: Why should they? When they can put the conditions on you? If that's what they do, you'll have to sign a paper agreeing to it. Then if you breach it, they'll be able to send you to prison.

JOHNNY: Wi'out findin' me guilty o'r'anythin'?

SOLICITOR: Exactly.

JOHNNY: Thanks. I mean it.

POLICEMAN: (*entering*) Newman? This way.

SOLICITOR, JOHNNY and POLICEMAN go.

CATH: (*to baby*) David Newman.... New man. (*She sings*)

DANDLING SONG [*After Robert Nunn*]

You didn't ask me for your life,
You still don't know you're in a fight,
No silver spoon to see you right,
But you are mine, you're lucky.
I hope you'll be a happy child,
Be sometimes still, be sometimes wild,
And though this winter will be cold,
I know you will be plucky.

What will the future bring to you,
A prison cell or the dole queue?
Or will you be one of the few
That never has a worry?
Sometimes the world will get you down,
We count the pennies, not the pounds,
But if you learn to stand your ground,
Then I will not be sorry.

Your daddy is a working man,
His life is nothing very grand,
And although we can make no plans,
I hope you'll be like he is.
For he is fighting for our class,
And though this fight is often fierce,
Though you leave home, you'll still be wi'us,
And then I'll shed no tears.

Enter JOHNNY with a paper.

JOHNNY: (*reads*) "John Newman is not to visit any premises or place for any purpose in connection with the current trade dispute between the NUM and the NCB, other than peacefully to picket at his usual place of employment." (*Slight pause*) It's retarded. I can picket me own pit bur'I can't go round y' dad's 'ouse t' talk about the strike! You can imagine it, can't y'? 'What are you in for then? – Oh, I knocked off

this security guard with a sawn off shot gun, how about you? – Oh, I watched Arthur Scargill on me wife’s dad’s telly instead o’ me own!’ It’s fuckin’ barmy!

CATH: *(to audience)* One of the Dirty Thirty were told e’ ’ad t’ stay at ’ome from seven in the mornin’ till seven in the evenin’, an’ then ’e ’ad t’ report t’ the nearest police station where the police just kept ’im ’angin’ around. He complied with this condition for four months.

JOHNNY: I might ’ave signed it but that dunt mean I’m doin’ it. There’s a picket at Rawdon tomorrow. I’m goin’.

CATH: Oh no you’re not!

JOHNNY: There’s only thirty of us. If they go on like this, there won’t be any pickets left in this area.

CATH: I’ll go.

JOHNNY: Oh no you aint!

CATH: You can get Davey up, can’t y’? Gi’ ’im ’is breakfast.

JOHNNY: You’re ’is mum.

CATH: *That’s* why I’m goin’ picketin’!

CATH goes. Brief pause.

JOHNNY: *(to audience)* Wouldn’t you be proud of ’er? *(Pause)* Oh, an’ in case you’re wonderin’ ’ow much o’ this is made up, I’ll tell you a true story. A striking miner from Coventry Colliery was cautioned by a policeman from Kent when he tipped off the helmet of a working miner. Several hours later he was arrested at home by local police and charged with assault. His eighteen month old baby was held in a separate cell for several hours. The Coal Board sacked him when they heard of the assault charge. His case was heard five months later and he was acquitted. The Coal Board did not reinstate him.

Exit JOHNNY. Then enter BILL.

TWO SIDES OF A COIN

BILL: *(to audience)* Now don’t laugh, bur’I’ve started writin’ poetry.... ’Cause, in a funny sort of a way, it ’elps you along. When you feel a bit on your own, like.

He sits, begins writing. Enter JULIE.

BILL: Where've you bin?

JULIE: Out.

BILL looks at her.

JULIE: No, I 'aven't been out with 'im!

BILL: I didn't say owt.

JULIE: Didn't need to.

BILL: Where've you bin, then?

JULIE: Look, you're me dad, not me probation officer. Do I ask you where you've been?

BILL: That's different.

JULIE: Why?

BILL: I'm your dad.

JULIE: An' I'm your daughter. Not that I 'ad any choice in it. What you writin'?

BILL: Oh, nothin'.

JULIE: See!

BILL: Oh, Little Miss Clever. Sometimes I think it's a pity you didn't leave school.

JULIE: Leave home, you mean.

BILL: It's not me stoppin' you, is it?

JULIE: 'Ow the 'ell can I get out of 'ere before I've got a job? *(Pause)* Look, it's my life, my future. Right?

BILL goes on writing.

JULIE: *(angry, to audience)* He goes underground
He lives in his own world
Where his friends laugh at the same things
He is closed, he's self-controlled.
Sometimes he tells me of the old days

As though they're not old.

BILL: (*reflective, more 'to himself'*) She goes to school
She lives in her own world
Where her friends laugh at the same things
She is free, she's seventeen.
She always tells me where she's going
But not where she has been.

JULIE:
He treats me like a child

He needs me as a child

He doesn't realize

I know where I'm going

We're two sides of a coin
That can never meet.

BILL: I know she's grown up

I'm not sorry

She doesn't know

How much more growing

Lies ahead,
But on her own.

Two sides of a coin
Both incomplete.

JULIE: (*still angry*) He's out on strike
And I'm standing with him
But not because I am his daughter,
He's no shepherd, I'm no sheep.
He doesn't need to tell me which way,
Or when a path is steep.

BILL: (*still reflective*) She's on our side
And I'm standing with her
Not because I am her father,
I'm not the pen, she's not the page.
She doesn't know she has the wisdom
That can be lost with age.

JULIE:
I want to have a job

I know that means a fight

For the future and for me

BILL: We've got a fight on

I won't worry

I've come to see

There is nothing as strong

I know it will be long

He's the past, I'm the future –
We can never meet.

As a child
Running free.

The past and the future –
Both incomplete.

BILL: Julie.

JULIE: Yeah.

BILL: Listen t' this. Tell me what you think.

(He reads his poem)

All of you dead workers
Who fought for your future –
We are the future that you fought for!
You can't come back, we can't undo
What you endured while fighting for us:
We're still fighting for you!

Pause

JULIE: Yes, we are the present.

We both know where we're going.
We both know where we've been.
Because we're fighting on the same side –
There's still a wall in between!

Exit JULIE.

BILL: *(to audience)* Y' see. It 'elps.

Exit BILL. Then enter CATH.

ON THE PICKET LINE

CATH: *(to audience)* July. I never thought it'd be so cold, at six in the mornin'.... There were only a few on us, an' all these scabs goin' in an' tryin' not t' look at y', an' the lorries comin' out, bleedin' little 'itlers safe up there in their cabs, or so they thought. An' I hated their guts. It were like they were drivin' their cars an' their lorries right over me an' my family, like we were lyin' in the road an' they just said t' the'selves: There's nobody there. Strike, what strike? Pit closures, what pit closures? There were only a few on us, an' I thought, before comin', I were goin' t' feel really nervous. Bur'I didn't. I felt really strong.

The JOGGER runs past.

POLICEMAN: Bit chilly, eh love?

CATH: Er, yes.

POLICEMAN: And boring. Bloody excruciatingly boring! What a life, eh? A policeman's life. On picket duty, stand around, get your helmet knocked off, ho ho ho, arrest some bloke, interrogate a suspect, sit around, off to court, sit around, stand around, knees bend, back on picket duty, say mindless things like "Bit chilly, eh love?" I mean, I am an actor! Five parts I've had since the interval, five different parts, all the same! All boring. I mean, I'd like to bring some depth, some humanity to the part. But all that sod of a director can say is, 'Just do it like policeman'. Ha! Aren't policemen human too? Don't they have feelings? Spots? Constipation? Erections? I am an artist! Beneath this blue serge jacket beats a heart that sometimes skips a beat, beneath these well-pressed regulation trousers...

CATH: Why are y' tellin' me all this?

POLICEMAN: Well, I couldn't tell a man, could I?

The dummy is thrown at him from off-stage, knocking him over.

VOICE OFF: Just do it like a policeman!

POLICEMAN: (*stands*) Bit chilly, eh love?

CATH: Er, yes.

POLICEMAN: And boring. (*Shouts off*) Like a policeman? Right! (*To CATH*) Makes a change to have a pretty face around though. Yes. Can I get you something to warm yourself up?

CATH: What?

POLICEMAN: You know, how'd you fancy something nice and warm inside you? I got just the thing.

CATH ignores him.

POLICEMAN: Nip off behind that hedge, shall we?

CATH: Just piss off, will you?

POLICEMAN: Not very ladylike, is it? Couldn't your old man get it up last night? Can't be much of a man, can he, if you got to come down here. Left you all unsatisfied, did he? Thought you'd come down here and see what you could get? (*Pause*) You got to be a certain minimum size to get in the police force, you know.

CATH: Yeah, you gorra be a wanker too.

POLICEMAN: All right! I've had enough of this! Trendy bloody play, got to give the woman the last word, likes to think it's so liberated! (*To audience*) If I had my way I'd arrest the lot of you! (*He goes*)

CATH: (*to audience*) There were this big women's picket at Calverton, in Notts. Women from all over. At first the coppers didn't know 'ow t' cope wi' us. Then we 'eard this inspector shoutin' to 'is men, 'Don't treat them any different. Hit them like they were men.' That's just what they did.... An' we gave as good as we got!

Exit CATH.

PLAYING AT HOME

JOHNNY is at home watching TV.

TV: Twenty-two weeks into the miners' strike, we ask tonight: What is the future for British coal and for the British coal strike? The nationwide return to work called for by 'Silver Birch' has so far failed to materialize, so is it time to bring back the birch? The CBI has called on its members to reduce energy consumption so that it can sit out the strike 'indefinitely'. We ask: will the miners' strike go on forever? What's it all about anyway?

JOHNNY: Jobs, y' daft bugger!

TV: Who started it? Will the TUC deliver in September? Will the Post Office deliver by Christmas? Will there be a General Strike? Will the Generals strike back? Wouldn't we all be better off under a military dictatorship? Tonight we have a special film report on the economic recovery in Poland...

JOHNNY: What about unemployment!

TV: And tonight we'll be asking: What about unemployment? Well, what about it? Don't ask me, I've got a job. I couldn't give a toss. Next question please.

JOHNNY: Right. 'Ow many miners jobs d' they really want t' chop?

TV: Oh no, not you again.

JOHNNY: Answer the bloody question!

EXPERT: (*comes out of TV*) You don't give up, do you?

JOHNNY: An' I know whar'I'm talkin' about.

EXPERT: Here we go again.

JOHNNY: First, I'll gi' y' four reasons why there ent no such thing as an uneconomic pit. One, if y' close a pit 'cause it's uneconomic, y' just mek the next pit in line uneconomic compared t' the new average cost per tonne, dunt y'? Two, they're not really uneconomic, it's just that they've bin deliberately starved of investment. Three, the Coal Board always plays tricks with its accountancy, countin' in things like Area over'eads an' early retirement costs, which, if if y' close the pit, just get transferred t' the other pits in the Area. Four, it costs a helluva lot more t' close pits than it does t' keep 'em open.

EXPERT: Very good. But there's only one problem. Mr Scargill goes on about British coal being the cheapest deep-mined coal in the world, but the world coal trade involves massive amounts of strip-mined coal which is much cheaper. British industry must have access to the cheapest energy supplies.

JOHNNY: I knew you'd say that. An' I know what this government's up to. It wants a coalfield that stretches from Selby in Yorkshire to the Vale o' Belvoir in Leicestershire an' then it wants t' privatise it. Correct?

EXPERT: Er...

JOHNNY: Y' know it is. 'Cause o' the new technology. Computerised minin'. The Coal Board reckons it can get nine tonnes per man shift out o' the Vale o' Belvoir. A few years back the national average were only two an' a quarter tonnes. So there's bound t' be job losses, ent there?

EXPERT: Well...

JOHNNY: Y' know there is. Now, we've got a pay claim outstandin' alongside o' this strike. It ent the increase what matters, it's the rest of it. We want a four day week, no overtime, an end t' the incentive scheme an' retirement at fifty-five. An' I'll tell y' this, we're stickin' out for it, I want the lot. We've come that far now. That way, y' can 'ave y' new technology and' we can keep us jobs.

EXPERT: MY dear fellow, it's quite impossible. Utopian. The idea is to increase productivity, not decrease it.

JOHNNY: Dunt gi' me that. I'm playin' at 'ome this time.

EXPERT: Pardon.

JOHNNY: Last time I were playin' away, on your ground, like. Nor'any more.

EXPERT: I don't follow.

JOHNNY: Right from the start we called this Wembley for the miners, 'cause it were the big un. An' what that meant were, there ent no possibility of a draw, it's either we win or we lose. Bur'I've learnt there ent no Wembley really, there ent no neutral ground. It's either we play away or we play at 'ome. If we play away, then we start talkin about profit, an' you know more about that than we do, 'cause that's what you're after. Bur'if we play at 'ome, then it's all about jobs, 'cause that's what matters to us.

EXPERT: You want a bloody revolution!

JOHNNY: Jobs. I'm talkin' about the future. 'Cause it ent just minin', is it? It's all industries. It's what they call the threat o' new technology. That's why the TUC 'as gorra support us. 'Cause why should it be a threat? We aint luddites. We want the benefits o' the new technology for ussen, not f' some other buggers who don't 'ave t' work. I'll ask you another question.

EXPERT: Oh.

JOHNNY: Weren't you on the telly about a year ago on some programme about unemployment?

EXPERT: Yes, I believe I was.

JOHNNY: An' didn't you say summat about more leisure time bein' the only possible answer to the problem?

EXPERT: Quite possibly.

JOHNNY: Well, that's whar'I'm sayin'. A four day week, no overtime, early retirement.

EXPERT: Well, yes, but... that was a long term view. These things take time.

JOHNNY: Sorry, pal, you just scored an own goal. You should learn whar'I learnt; dunt play away, play at 'ome. An' I'll do the same. Then we can both stop playin' and just ger'on wi' the strike.

Both go.

TROUBLE WITH THE PHONE

CATH is at home with JULIE. JULIE is playing with Davey.

CATH: Y' know we did this interview for radio Northampton?

JULIE: No.

CATH: Yeah. It were live.

JULIE: You 'ad to watch your language then.

CATH: Y' can say that again. This chap who were goin' t' interview us come out an' met us in the foyer, an' 'e were ever so nice. Get these people a cup o' tea, y' know. An' 'e said, I'll just ask y' general questions on the strike. But when we gor'in the room an' we went on the air, 'e completely changed. 'E asked Johnny whar'are y' plans f' today an' the rest o' the week? So 'e says, I'm gonna sunbathe. Well, 'e didn't like that. An' then 'asked me if I were bein' fair t' me kid...

JULIE: 'E didn't?

CATH: ... an' I could'a jumped across the table an' strangled 'im. I told 'im I'd sooner me kid went wi'out now an' us' win, than end up on the dole. An' then 'e says, 'ow long can y' last out on strike? So I says to 'im, 'ow long is a piece o' string?

JULIE: What did he say?

CATH: 'E didn't. The sweat just stood on 'im. An' 'e appealed as if t' say, please say summat else. So I said, forever if that's 'ow long it teks.

JULIE: Hey, is it right what dad told me, Johnny's gor'a chance to go fund-raisin' in Italy?

CATH: 'E's goin'.

JULIE: Lucky sod. Why 'im?

CATH: 'Cause 'e knows 'is stuff.

JULIE: Whar'about the bail condition?

CATH: Italy dunt count. I 'ope.

JULIE: Bet you'll miss 'im.

CATH: Davey will. 'E's all for 'is dad now. He'll be one who's sorry when the strike's over.

JULIE: I bumped into Al the other night.

CATH: Oh yeah.

JULIE: Y' know whar'e said?

CATH: What?

JULIE: He admired what Johnny's doin'.

CATH: 'E's just tryin' t' get round y'. Dunt get taken in.

JULIE: What you take me for, eh big sister? I want a job nor'an 'usband. I says to 'im, why aren't you out then? An' y' know whar'e said?

CATH: 'Cos I'm a prat.

JULIE: I can't afford it.

CATH: Bloody 'ell.

JULIE: 'Cause 'e's single an' 'e wouldn't get nothin' from the DHSS.

CATH: Bloody 'ell!

JULIE: Hey, I wish I'd known about Italy, then maybe I could've fetched 'im out. 'E only got t' Skegness.

Pause.

JULIE: Bet you will miss 'im though.

CATH: Course I bloody will.

A knock at the door. CATH answers it.

MAN: Mrs Newman?

CATH: Yes.

MAN: It's about your phone.

CATH: Oh yeah. Come on in. *(To Julie)* We've been 'avin' some more trouble.

MAN: What exactly's wrong with it?

CATH: Well, we've only 'ad it three week, 'cause we 'ad the same trouble with the other one, so they gave us a new one. Bur'it's no better. Y' can 'ear voices, like in the distance, an' cracklin' noises like there's a thunderstorm goin' off somewhere. It's terrible. Oh an' just lately we've bin gerrin' cut off, y' know, 'alf-way through a conversation.

MAN: It sounds to me as though there may be water seeping into an underground cable.

CATH: Oh. What's that mean then?

MAN: We'll have to dig up some of your lawn and pavement.

CATH: Oh.

MAN: But don't worry. Well put it back exactly as we found it.... Ah. (*He has noticed the strike poster on the wall.*)

CATH: Who has t' pay for it?

Pause.

CATH: I said, who pays for it?

MAN: Sorry?

CATH: For diggin' up me lawn an' pavement?

MAN: Oh. Um. It may not be necessary after all.

CATH: Oh. Why's that then?

MAN: Well, it could be the phone after all. That could be the cause of all the noise.

CATH: An' that would explain us bein' cut off, would it?

MAN: Um. No.

CATH: Well, 'ow d'y' explain that then?

MAN: Well, it could just be someone at the exchange doing it accidentally.

CATH: Over an' over again, like?

The MAN smiles at her awkwardly.

CATH: Well I dunt know, you must 'ave no end o' faulty phones at the GPO.

MAN: Yes, there has been a big increase lately. We'll be bringing a new phone round.
Goodbye.

He goes. CATH and JULIE laugh.

CATH: Did y' see that? When 'e saw the poster?

JULIE: Yeah.

CATH: You'll be my witness, won't y'? 'Cause thar'll be the third phone in as many weeks.

JULIE: You were great.

CATH: I'll tell y' summat, this strike's done a 'elluva lot for my confidence. I used t' be the one thar'd sit in a corner in the pub an' not say a word. Now, it's as if there were a part o' me wantin' t' ger'out.

JULIE: Poor old Johnny, I bet 'e'll be glad t' see y' back in the kitchen where you belong.

CATH: Well, 'e says 'e will. But I know 'e prefers it this way, deep down, like. 'Cause we've never 'ad s' much in common. It meks y' wonder 'ow we ever gor'on.

JULIE: You're missin' 'im already. Come on, 'e 'asn't gone yet.

They go. Then enter BILL.

BILL: *(to audience)* I've gor'another poem for y'. *(He reads)*¹

Sometimes y' feel up, sometimes y' feel down,
Sometimes like an 'ero, sometimes like a clown.
'Cos the enemy within 'as gor'an enemy within;
Sometimes it meks y' wonder if you're goin' t' win.

So y' think o' y' true friends, like the Coalville railmen,
I pur'em top o' their class, wi' eleven out o' ten.
T' the movement o' coal they've pur'on the brake;
So y' shin up a ladder – then y' slide down a snake.

Now most snakes I know, they aint got no name,
This'un's called Jones – 'e's a snake just the same,

¹ See the Appendix.

'Cos 'e's 'elpin' scab lorries t' shift the scab coal;
'E'd gladly see us *an'* railmen on the dole.

Now, when I think of 'im I wish I 'ad a gun,
But short o' that I'm trustin' in the new rule fifty-one.
'Cos there's only one thing t' do wi' a traitor –
So do it sooner – there might not be no later.

Mesen, I know this strike is really a war
Against the profit system an' the scab next door.
Bur'I'll tell y' this, I've gorr'a new neighbour,
'E dunt live round 'ere – 'e's International Labour.

'Cos 'alf-way round the bloody world, in Australia,
There's miners an' dockers who're fightin' wi' y'.
So dunt let the scabs ger'out o' proportion,
Dunt ler'em grow in y'. Just 'ave an abortion!

That's why we need the new rule fifty-one.

Exit BILL.

AL ITALIANO

JOHNNY at a table. Bottle of Chianti. The WOMAN brings him a bowl of spaghetti, then stands smiling at him.

JOHNNY: *(to audience)* Now dunt go thinkin' I'm gonna mek a fool o' meself. I bin 'ere more'n a wik now an' I know whar'I'm doin'. You get y' fork in it an' y' pull a few strands up, then y' tek 'em back down again, that's the trick of it. You pull 'em up just so they get out o' the bowl, s' they dunt get ravelled up wi' the others, tek it back down an' twist it round an' it should come out all right. First meal we 'ad, this lad, Italian, 'ad ate 'is before we gor'a quarter way through us own, we 'adn't got the 'ang o' eatin' it. Plus you 'ave to eat it fast 'cos it goes cold fast, spaghetti. *(Through the rest of the scene he doesn't get beyond preparing a mouthful.)*

WOMAN: Spaghetti is OK? You no wanna chips?

JOHNNY: No, no, this is brilliant, this is.

WOMAN: Brilliant?

JOHNNY: Yeah. Brilliant. 'Old on a minute. *(Pocket dictionary)* 'Ere, lucente.

WOMAN: Lucente! No no, non e lucente! Lucente, it is is... luce, luce del sole, sole, ah, sunshining. Shining. *(She mimes sunshine.)* No spaghetti!

JOHNNY: The spaghetti is... *(He kisses his fingers, Italianate.)*

WOMAN: *(Very pleased.)* Ah! *(She goes.)*

JOHNNY prepares another mouthful. Enter MAN.

MAN: Ah, camarato, amico! *(Shakes him warmly by the hand, at length.)* Good, good. Benvenuto, e? *(More formal.)* I hope you are liking it here, Italy.

JOHNNY: Yeah, it's brilliant.

MAN: Si, si, sun always shining. Not like in England, e? Raina, raina, raina. I am in England.

JOHNNY: Sorry?

MAN: I am in England. Once. Tottenham Hotspur. You win. *(Shakes his head sadly.)*

JOHNNY: Oh yeah. I seen Juventus once.

MAN: Juventus! Pah! I tell you, boss of Fiat, you know, he owna Juventus. All a, all a, all a... you know, 'He we go, he we go, he we go'?

JOHNNY: Supporters.

MAN: Si, si.... Facisti! Juventus – fascisti! My team she play in red.

Enter WOMAN.

WOMAN: *(to MAN)* Pink Floyd.

MAN: She want to know what Pink Floyd is doing now.

JOHNNY: I dunno. I've not 'eard of 'em, not for a few years.

WOMAN: O! You? Inglese? Not hear of Pink Floyd! O!

MAN: Me, I am in Judas Priest! You like?

JOHNNY: You're in Judas Priest? I'm not quite sure what you mean.

MAN: You know. *(He dances, head banging.)* Fantastico, e?

JOHNNY: Ah, you mean *into*. You're into Judas Priest.

MAN: Si, si. You too?

JOHNNY: Er, well, a few years ago, like.

MAN: Like. Like. Si. (*He puts his hand on JOHNNY's knee. JOHNNY is unsure of this.*)

JOHNNY: Er, we were sayin' where d' young people meet round 'ere, girls an' that, there dunt seem t' be much night life goin' on. I were talkin' t' Sam about it, 'e's the miner from Yorkshire who's wi' us. You wouldn't understand a word 'e's sayin'. At the meetin's, like, our translator 'as to ask me what 'e's said so as she can translate it into Italian. It's like I gorra translate it into English for 'er first. 'E's from Yorkshire, see?

The MAN and WOMAN look completely blank.

MAN: Usa the hands more, al'italiano, e? Talka with the hands. Then maybe we understand.

WOMAN: We want to know abouta strike.

MAN: Si, Le-i-cestershire is not solid, no?

JOHNNY: (*Trying*) You can say that again. There's only thirty of us out, out of two an' a 'alf thousand. (*Belated big shrug.*)

WOMAN: Thirty? What good you do, only thirty?

JOHNNY: Well, y' might say it's pissin' in the wind, like, but y' gorra go an' 'ave a go.

WOMAN: Pissing in the wind? What is that? Usa the hands.

JOHNNY: No, I couldn't do that.

MAN: Ah, you English, so, so... conservative. No, no. Mi scusi. I dona mean that. Conserved, no?

JOHNNY: Reserved.

MAN: You meet out political police?

JOHNNY: Yeah. We 'ad fifteen of 'em outside a meetin' in Terni. There were more police than there were people.

MAN: Larger than the life, no? Italians, we all actors, we treat a life like is a play. I show you. (*He dresses up.*) Firsta the raincoat, then a sunglasses, chewa gum. Look mean like Clint Eastwood and that'sa political police. They try to frighten people but you think they looka too stupid, e? Is parta the act. It mean they can do what they like, be brutali, no one a stop them, government take no notice. Porchi! (*He goes among the audience to intimidate them.*)

JOHNNY: 'Ave y' ever seen the way y' typical English policeman walks? I'll show y'. 'Ands behind 'is back, slow, saunterin', like 'e's got all the time in the world, like 'e knows nobody'd dare t' come near 'im unless they 'ad a real good reason. Cock o' the bleedin' walk!. That's all an act too. More reserved, like, I can see that. But we sin some things durin' the course o' this strike. I sin a copper, a policeman, wi' a miner on the ground, 'oldin' 'im down wi' 'is knee, like that, an' beatin' the 'ell out or'im with 'is truncheon, like this. (*He demonstrates.*)

WOMAN: Si, si. We understand.

JOHNNY: We never thought the police'd behave like that. An' we never thought they'd be used against the miners like they 'ave been.

WOMAN: Now I do not understand.

JOHNNY: The police. We've been surprised by the way the British police 'ave been used against the miners.

WOMAN: I know what you say. I not understand why. Why you surprised?

JOHNNY: (*To audience*) When y' think about it, that's a bloody good question, int it? I couldn't answer it. (*To Woman*) When I first saw your political police, I thought, that's what's comin' in England, especially if we don't win this one.

WOMAN: Issa same. Disoccupazione. Demoralizzazione. Issa same, issa same a... sistema.

JOHNNY: System.

WOMAN: Si.

JOHNNY: Same system.

WOMAN: Si.

MAN: (*Returning*) You no like a spaghetti? You wanna chips?

JOHNNY: For a minute I thought you were the food police.

MAN: ??

JOHNNY: No, I love it.

MAN: I show you how to eat it, e?

JOHNNY: Oh well, when in Rome.

MAN: Is Milano.

JOHNNY: Yeah, I know, but.

WOMAN: Is cold. Spaghetti is cold. I get you some more.

JOHNNY: There's no need, really.

WOMAN: You thinka Italy, you no wanna thinka cold spaghetti. We look after you. (*She goes.*)

JOHNNY: Y' know, at first I found it a bit unreal bein' in Italy, with the strike goin' on at 'ome. But nor'any more. I can see you've got the same problems as we 'ave. I mean, in England, wherever we've bin we've met good people who've pur'us up an' supported us an' done anythin' for us, an' it's the same in Italy. We might speak a different language an' 'ave different things in the culture, like, but basically it's the same sort o' people all the way round. It's simple, but t' me, that's internationalism.

The WOMAN brings a new bowl of spaghetti.

MAN: First you eat, then, when you gotta hands free, we talka politics, e?

All go.

THE LONELINESS OFF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER

CATH is on the picket line. Enter AL, walking.

CATH: Hey you, I seen you drivin' in other mornin's, lookin' the other way. What's 'appened t' your flash motor then?

AL: It's off the road.

CATH: Tough. Well, drivin' or walkin', as far as I'm concerned you're still crawlin'.

AL: Don't give me that.

CATH: Y' know, you're a stupid bugger really. If you'd a come out even after a couple o' month, Julie'd still a'r'ad you back. Nor'any more.

AL: I'm not gonna 'ave 'er tellin' me what t' do an' what not t' do, am I?

CATH: It's better'n Maggie Thatcher tellin' y'.

AL: No one's tellin' me.

CATH: See that copper standin' there? 'E's just waitin' for me t' call y' a scab or summat so's 'e can arrest me f' threatenin' words an' behaviour. Why dunt y' go 'an 'old 'is 'and?

AL: Stop windin' me up.

CATH: I know you.

AL: Oh yeah.

CATH: Yeah. Y' kid yourself you're bein' independent bur'it's just greed.

AL: Why should I make a martyr o' meself?

CATH: I aint no bloody martyr. 'Cause martyrs lose. Just wait till they shut the Leicester pits, then you'll be squealin'. There's thirty men round 'ere, they'll 'ave jobs t' go to, 'cause no other area's gonnar'ave you.

AL: Ler'em shut the pits.

CATH: Oh yeah, whar'll you do then?

AL: Summat.

CATH: You gor'an 'ard awakenin' t' come, you 'ave.

AL: Look, I know you're right. I know you're doin' what's right. Just leave it at that.

AL goes in. Pause.

CATH: What the 'ell can y' say t' that?

The JOGGER runs on, stops and sings.

Sometimes you feel you're only treading water
Waiting for the tide that won't come in.
That's when it hurts

That's when the pain starts.

Sometimes you feel you're a mouse in a treadmill
Sometimes you're going nowhere very fast.
That's when it hurts
That's when the pain starts. That's when you cry,
How long will it last?

If you can't sleep you lie awake till morning
But morning never seems to want to come.
That's when it hurts
That's when the pain starts. But you're not deaf,
The birds are singing. And you're not dumb,
Stay awake, sing to the dawning
Of a new day you can help to make.

Then one day you wonder what the point is,
You're growing old, your life seems very long.
Are you the same
As you once were? Are you being born again?
Are you strong? Can't you feel it?
Breathe in the wind, the sun is inside you,
You have learnt
That you can run past pain.

It's the loneliness of the long distance runner
You're on your own
There's no one to turn to
That's when it hurts
That's when the pain comes
That's when you know
You must turn to yourself
That's when it hurts
That's when you're stronger
Than before you started running
That's when it hurts –

But you can last longer.

Exit CATH and JOGGER.

CHRISTMAS

BILL: (*To audience*) Well, we made it through till Christmas. An' it were a bloody good Christmas. We 'ad fantastic support. The kids 'ad things they'd never 'ave 'ad if their

dads 'ad bin workin'. Some on 'em even got the new technology – computers. As for mesen, I 'ad a good think. About the meanin' o' Christmas. Y' know "A Christmas Carol"? Y' ger'it every year. Scrooge. 'E ent 'alf like Ian McGregor. But the difference is, we're not askin' f' charity. An' all those people what give to us, they weren't doin' it out o' charity neither. They were doin' it out o' support, 'cause they wanted t' see us win. Now, some say as Christmas is about peace. Bur'I say, not if that means compromise an' so-called reconciliation. After all, if Jesus were alive today 'e wouldn't be workin' for ACAS, would 'e? I reckon the real meanin' o' Christmas is new life in the middle o' winter. An' that's the meanin' o' this strike an' all, new 'ope in the middle o' Thatcherism. Yes, it were a good Christmas.... An' then it were new year....

THE STRIKE ENDS

CATH and JULIE at home. BILL and JOHNNY standing to one side, in London.

CATH: Sunday, March 3rd. I couldn't go t' London, Davey were ill. Christ, it were a bloody long day.

JOHNNY: Standin' in the rain. There weren't all that many miners there, not after twelve month. A lot that 'ad come were men that 'ad bin sacked.

JULIE: Why don't you turn on the radio?

CATH: I dunt want t' know.

JULIE: It can't be worse than not knowin'.

JOHNNY: Deep down, I felt a bit sick that it were a Welsh motion t' call the strike off wi' no agreement.

CATH turns the radio on –recording of Thatcher saying that this is a victory for the working miners.

CATH: Oh Christ!

BILL: There were a feelin' o' inevitability about it.

JOHNNY: It 'it me like a tonne o' bricks. Like someone in the family 'ad died.

JULIE: There was nothin' I could say.

BILL: We've put everything up! Everything! There's men been killed on picket lines! There's kid's bin killed pickin' coal! An' what for?

CATH: I can't believe it. I can't. 'E's gorra go back down the pit. Wi' scabs.

JOHNNY: (*shouting*) We're not goin' back! We're not goin' back!

CATH: I wish I could go back down with 'im.

JULIE: So do I.

JOHNNY: Fuck the TUC! Biggest fight for fifty years an' they've done fuck all t' support us!

BILL: Y' can blame the TUC. Y' can blame who y' like. But the truth is, we've bin beaten by the scabs. We didn't get us own 'ouse in order.

JOHNNY: They still should'a backed us, scabs or no scabs. *We've* put up wi' scabs for twelve month, we've taken all the shit. An' now we've bin sold down the river, just so South Wales can say they were solid t' the end. So fuckin' what!

CATH: I'm dreadin' it when the men get 'ome.

JULIE: I'll stay 'ere.

BILL: I used to enjoy me job. Bur'I can't work wi' no scabs, nor'any more. I'll never forgi' 'em for it, never, not till I die.

JOHNNY: See that? "Unity is Strength". I'll tell y', unity, it's a fuckin' excuse! Unity! That's what Kinnock goes on about, that's what the TUC goes on about! An' y' know whar'it means? It's a fuckin' excuse for doin' fuck all!

BILL: We only made one mistake. An' that were when they didn't discipline scabs when they amended Rule fifty-one.

JOHNNY: 'Ow can you 'ave unity with scabs? When they go marchin' back in on Tuesday, in Yorkshire an' Wales, tellin' the'selves it's really a victory, where'll we be, eh? On us own. Wi' fuckin' scabs.

BILL: (*to audience*) An' there'll be men outside the pit gates, sacked men, some o' the best men this union's ever known. An' all they've bin sacked for is fightin' f' their jobs. 'Cause they ent criminals. Oh yeah, they've bin charged an' convicted. Some on 'em. I know men at Keresley bin sacked f' causin' an affray in a public place. That were when the police come an' beat 'em up in their own 'ome.

JOHNNY: (*to audience*) It were the worst day o' my life. Anyway, what could we do but go back 'ome?

CATH: At first there were just silence. It were like no one wanted t' speak.

JOHNNY: (*To CATH*) I'm sorry.

CATH: You ent done nothin' wrong.

BILL: It were terrible, just standin' in the rain. There were a kind o' inevitability about it.

CATH: I'll tell y' this, if they'd 'ave left it t' the women you'd still be out.

BILL: We put everythin' up. Everythin'. An' it weren't good enough. (*He begins to cry.*)

JULIE: Don't give up, dad. You can't.

BILL: I didn't want you t' see it.

JULIE: Don't be stupid.

BILL: Not like this.

JULIE: I'm glad. (*She embraces him.*)

JOHNNY: We've nothin' t' be ashamed of. We've done what's right. An' the fight's gorra go on. It's not a total defeat.

BILL: We'll not fight again. Not if we don't get rid o' the scabs.

JOHNNY: The scab leaders.

BILL: They're a cancer.

JOHNNY: Get the right leaders. Get back t' people like Al, re-educate 'em.

BILL: Not round 'ere. They're hereditary scabs round 'ere.

JOHNNY: You got to cut a cancer out.

JULIE: Don't give up, dad. I was glad you cried, not if you give up.

BILL: I thought you'd given up on 'im – Al?

JULIE: Yeah.

CATH: The fight's goin' t' go on, whether we like it or not. You still got fight in you. I know, 'cause I'm y' daughter. 'Cause I got some o' your fight in me too. An' that's goin' on. I supported this strike for Davey, so as 'e could 'ave a job an' a future. I thought, if I

pur'up a fight for 'im now, then with a bit o' luck, 'e won't 'ave t' fight for 'issen.
Now I know that were wishful thinkin'. An' if I do anythin', I'm gonna make sure 'e's
a fighter too, like 'is granddad.

(To audience) Y' see, with the end o' this strike, I know there'll be folk who
say that History will prove that we were right an' the scabs were wrong. T' my mind,
that's just another way o' sayin' we've 'ad a good 'idin'. 'Cause 'istory aint gonna say
we're right, not unless we make it. We've got t' make 'istory, not wait for it. That's
why we gorra go on fightin'. When all's said an' done, we 'aven't got no choice. 'Ave
we?

THE SONG OF COAL: REPRISE

If you have to earn your living by selling your labour
Then you should know the world doesn't owe you any favours.
– You want to know how to beat the ruling class? Don't stop! Stand up!
There's a banner for the future, don't let it down,
If you've got some fight in you, don't leave it underground!

Don't leave it in the ground, etc.

You know there'll be a future but what will it be?
It's up to you to make it but how far can you see?
– You've got to learn the lessons of the miners' strike. Don't stop! Just look!
There's a banner for the future – it is unfurled:
It says one day the working class will make a better world!

END

APPENDIX

At some performances in the East Midlands, Bill recited the following poem instead of that on pages 48 and 49:

There's mountains o' coal in Leicestershire
In South Derby there's more than enough,
But the NUR at Mantle Lane
Said: We won't move the stuff!

There's trains wi' coal on an' waitin',
But these lads didn't 'ave no doubt;
When the manager said t' some, 'Go home,'
The 'ole bloody lot walked out!

So a management whizz-kid from London
Came along an' 'e 'ad a big stick;
So the drivers they joined wi' the railmen –
'E went back feelin' sick!

O, the gallant workers o' mantle lane,
They are hard, they are brave, they are true;
An' they know better than anyone
What dirty tricks management gets up to!

Bur'instead o' the trains now there's lorries
At the rate o' thirty or forty an hour;
Now, someone must be 'elpin' 'em,
Someone wi' more faces than the clock tower!

When the true history o' labour is written
Jack Jones will just be a stain,
An' people everywhere will applaud
The gallant workers o' Mantle Lane!