

# Campfire

*A farce by Eric Presland*

First performed on Hampstead Heath, June 21<sup>st</sup> 1985

and at the Royal Oak, Hackney

## **CAST**

### The Scouts

#### WOMBAT PATROL

Garter, aged 12 – 13

Chisolm, aged 12 – 13 [they are inseparable Chums]

Thrupp, aged 15, a bully

Rutter, aged 16, their patrol leader

Skipper, a serious and conscientious man in his 30s

### The London Motor Gang

Captain Bernard Kelley, the identical twin of SKIPPER

Nosebag, hulking, stupid – a skinhead

Coyle, a clone and a cynic, 30s

Hodgekiss, a bank manager, irretrievably suburban, irretrievably vanilla however hard he tries

Acting Guide Commissioner DEIRDRE Twill

Policeman 1, doubles with Nosebag

Policeman 2, doubles with Hodgekiss

## **THE SET**

There are two large tents to the rear of the stage, capable of holding 4 – 5 people. It should be clear that these two areas are in separate fields, despite their closeness on stage.<sup>1</sup> In the front is the area for the camp fire, created by orange footlights.

The tent(s) should open from front and back, but the back exit should not be obvious to the audience. A character should be able to exit from the tent and be able to reappear from the wings, unbeknownst to the audience<sup>2</sup>.

## **TIME**

The late 70s/early 80s

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<sup>1</sup> For the first production we had one tent, but turned it into two different tents with the use of two different flysheets and fronts.

<sup>2</sup> See Act 2 Sc. iv

ACT ONE

Scene One

*[Downstage at the camp fire. GARTER is onstage 'civvies' but with a suggestion of Robin Hood. THRUPP with him as Little John. CHISOLM as Friar Tuck, with a large cushion and a frying pan. SKIP is watching from the front. THRUPP doesn't know his lines, and reads them. GARTER and CHISOLM are well into it – after all, they wrote it.]*

GARTER: But what meat are we having, Friar Tuck?

CHISOLM: Venison

GARTER: Venison? That will cost us dear.

*[They both find this hilarious.]*

THRUPP: We – also – have – some – hamburgers – I – think, Robin.

CHISOLM: But someone's dropped them on the ground. They're always doing that.

GARTER: There's a lot of dirty burgers in these woods. *[Hilarious again]*

THRUPP: *[As himself]* Actually, Skip, I don't think that's very funny.

SKIPPER: Yes, it is a bit off.

CHISOLM: Not as off as Thrupp's socks. Yeuch!

SKIPPER: Not exactly District Commissioner material, I agree

GARTER: But Skip –

SKIPPER: No buts, Garter. Cut it. I don't want to offend your artistic sensibilities as author of this little charade, but we're on our best behaviour tomorrow night. The District Commissioner will be inspecting us, and the other troops will be here as well. If we play our cards right, we could be in for the District Cup.

GARTER:            *[Reluctant]* Oh – all – right.

CHISOLM:          Knickers!

THRUPP:            Watch it!

CHISOLM:          *[To THRUPP]* Wart-bum!

THRUPP:            Oh Skip, did you hear that, Skip? Chisolm swore, Skip. I heard him. Can I punish him, please? Can I put cold water down his trouser leg please, Skip, please?

SKIPPER:          No, Thrupp. *[To CHISOLM]* Chisolm, did you swear? Did you?

CHISOLM:          It was only a little swear, honest. Just a teensy tiny little swear.

SKIPPER:          What did you say? Out with it.

CHISOLM:          *[Mumbling]* Wart-bum, Skip.

SKIPPER:          What?

CHISOLM:          *[Again to himself]* Wart-bum.

SKIPPER:          Speak up, boy.

CHISOLM:          *[Shouting]* WART BUM, Skip.

SKIPPER:          *[Trying not to smile]* A Scout is clean in thought, word and deed, Chisolm.

CHISOLM:          Yes, Skip.

SKIPPER:          Tomorrow morning just after reveille and before breakfast, I want you to run round the field five times repeating, "A Scout is clean in thought, word and dee." Understood?

SKIP:                Carry on. Where were we?

- THRUPP: And – what – about – drink – to – go – with – the – meat?
- CHISOLM: I had some sherry, but I used it in the pudding.
- GARTER: What is the pudding?
- CHISOLM: Nothing. The merest trifle. I have however some bubbly.
- GARTER: I thought that was ordinary wine.
- CHISOLM: I put some washing up liquid in it. It's bubbly now
- THRUPP: What – about – the – loyal - toast?
- CHISOLM: It's in the loyal toaster.
- THRUPP: We – have – to – have – something – to – drink – the – loyal – toast – in?
- GARTER: Don't be silly. You can't drink toast.
- THRUPP: That's not fair. That's not in the script.
- GARTER: I was improvising, Thrupp. All the real actors do. My sister's at Drama School and she's always being a tadpole or something, and making up lines for herself like, "I'm a great big wet slimy tadpole' and –
- THRUPP: Shut up, Garter –
- CHISOLM: It's true! Next term she's going to grow up and be a newt.
- SKIPPER: Let's just get on with the rehearsal shall we? It's a good line, Garter. Keep it in.
- GARTER: Gosh, thanks, Skip.
- SKIPPER: But now it's in, stick to it. Cue: "You can't drink toast".
- THRUPP: I meant, what wine will we drink it in?
- CHISOLM: Hock.

GARTER: I beg your pardon?

CHISOLM: Sorry. Touch of hiccups. No, we'll have some Riesling

THRUPP: Do you like Riesling?

GARTER: I don't know, I've never Riesled.

CHISOLM: But I must return to my pot –

GARTER: I didn't know you smoked

SKIPPER: *[Warning]* Garter....

GARTER: My older brother –

SKIPPER: I don't want to know about your older brother. Thought, word and deed, Garter... Continue.

CHISOLM: But now I must return to my pot. Supper will be ready when the moon rises over the Great Oak, and the tawny owl sets forth on her nocturnal flight. Seven-thirty sharp.

*[CHISOLM exits.]*

GARTER: A noble feast indeed. But hark *[pause]* – hark! *[pause]* – HARK!! *[A kazoo fanfare offstage]*. That must mean the King is close at hand. I must don my best cloak of Grimsby Green.

THRUPP: Shouldn't – that – be – Lincoln – Green?

GARTER: The shops in Lincoln were shut. Help me on with it.

*[They mime doing this.]*

THRUPP: This - buckle - is – tight.

GARTER: Almost as tight as Friar Tuck, from the smell of his breath. *[Another fanfare]* But see! The king comes!

*[Enter RUTTER, with a pudding bowl on his head. GARTER and THRUPP kneel.]*

RUTTER:           *[Out to SKIPPER]* I haven't made the crown yet. Is this OK?

*[Thumbs up from SKIPPER.]*

RUTTER:           Greetings, my loyal subjects. I have heard how you vanquished the Sheriff of Nottingham.

THRUPP:           Beat the crap out of him!

SKIPPER:          Thrupp! I'm surprised at you.

THRUPP:           Well if they can improvise –

SKIPPER:          No!

GARTER:           He will never stalk Sherwood Forest again.

RUTTER:           I'm glad to hear it.

GARTER:           Not now they've chopped it down for the bypass.

RUTTER:           Six long years have I journeyed, fighting Saladin even to the gates of Jerusalem. But I have always kept England close to my heart.

THRUPP:           Why is he called Saladin?

GARTER:           Because of his love of lettuce.

RUTTER:           Yes, he always likes to have some salad in.

You have brought justice to this most fair part of my kingdom, for which I thank thee.

GARTER:           *[Blushing]* Gosh, it was nothing. Any folk hero would have done the same.

RUTTER: In honour of thy services – *[he mimes a sword]* arise, Sir Robin.

THRUPP: HOORAY!

RUTTER: But now, let us have feasting and merriment.

GARTER: Perhaps you are thirsty, sire. Try some of our excellent local mead.

RUTTER: Ah yes, mead! How I have missed the nectar of Old England! I even commanded my minstrel, Blondel, to compose a ballad in its honour. How did it go? “Real mead again, don’t know where, don’t know when...”

THRUPP: I will go fetch it.

*[THRUPP exits.]*

RUTTER: What excellent and loyal chaps they are!

*[A cry of pain offstage. Enter THRUPP again, dragging CHISOLM on with real enjoyment.]*

THRUPP: On your knees, you naughty friar!

CHISOLM: Mercy! Mercy! *[THRUPP exits.]*

RUTTER: What is this? Where is my supper?

CHISOLM: It was ready, my lord. And I had to taste it to see if it was good. And it was. Very. So I tasted it a little more. And it was even better. So I tasted it again, and it was simply the most scrumptious supper that was ever made. And it was so good – I ate it all.

GARTER: Not again!

RUTTER: Friar, friar, you must give up these dreadful habits!

CHISOLM: But I’ve nothing else to wear!

- RUTTER: Silence! What else do you have in store?
- CHISOLM: Nothing, sire.
- RUTTER: Not even a packet of Royal Jelly? Angel delight?
- CHISOLM: No, sire.
- RUTTER: Then we will have to... *[He eyes CHISOLM speculatively].*  
Nice and plump... very succulent.... Thrupp, bring the Royal  
Cauldron immediately.
- CHISOLM: What?
- RUTTER: I think I could fancy a bit of rump...
- CHISOLM: No!
- RUTTER: Perhaps a little breast...
- CHISOLM: Leave my breast and rump alone!
- RUTTER: Bear up, good friar. Imagine you are a missionary in the  
barbarous Northlands, where I am told guests are often  
served in such wise.
- GARTER: It makes a change from deep-fried Mars bars.
- RUTTER: You are a man of God, you should be grateful to serve  
others – on a plate.
- CHISOLM: The missionary position has never attracted me.
- SKIPPER: Chisolm!
- CHISOLM: What's wrong with that?
- SKIPPER: You know perfectly well what's wrong with it.
- CHISOLM: No I don't -

SKIPPER: Well, if you don't know, let's just say it sounds better as written.

CHISOLM: *[Resigned]* OK. *[Back in play]* I never felt the urge to be a missionary. I was called to the cloth, not the pot.

*[THRUPP re-enters with the cauldron.]*

THRUPP: The cauldron is ready sire. It's heating up nicely.

RUTTER: Into the pot with him.

GARTER: Stay, sire. This is my most trusty comrade. Spare him, I beg thee.

*[Fanfare off]*

RUTTER: What is that sound that sound that strikes on mine ear?

CHISOLM: It's Thrupp on a kazoo –

GARTER: It is the Royal Huntsmen, sire. That sound denotes that relief is at hand. They have caught one of your royal deer. We shall dine on venison tonight.

RUTTER: Well, you are saved, Tuck. I trust you have learnt your lesson, Friar. But come, let us drink a toast to celebrate my return.

*[THRUPP re-enters with a tray, glasses and bottle.]*

RUTTER: Give me my royal drinking cup, that I may pledge the health of all my subjects. *[THRUPP gives it to him.]* I swear I will never quit my realm again, but devote my life to the happiness and prosperity of my kingdom. *[Drinks.]* But come, let us have music. Let me hear that old Sherwood song which I love so well –

*[SKIPPER comes onstage and into the action.]*

SKIPPER: Right. And then Thrupp, you step forward and do your poem –

THRUPP: 'If!

SKIPPER: If what?

THUPP: That's my poem.

*[Declaims]* "If you can keep your head when all around you"

SKIPPER: Not now. Save it for the night.

THRUPP: That's what we want around here. A bit of decent manly sentiment to raise the tone.

SKIPPER: Right. You're doing your stuff. "If blah blah blah". The others go off and change into their best uniforms. When you finish, you go off and change, they come on, line up, and do the first chorus. March, march, march, wave the flags, you come on again to join the second chorus. Shall we see that?

*[They line up in a row:]*

ALL: By the camp fire, by the camp fire  
With the open skies above.  
By the camp fire, not a damp fire,  
It's the country life we love.  
The skies are blue, the grass is green,  
The sun is warm and the air is clean.  
We're the fittest lads you've ever seen  
With our campfire, cheer-and-stamp fire  
With our champ fire routine.

*[A tremendous climax.]*

SKIPPER: That wasn't bad at all. Bags of guts. The DC will like that.

THRUPP: I Say, Skip. Do these little beasts have to upstage me like that? I mean, I stand at the back and I do the semaphore – and it's real semaphore, cos I've got my semaphore

badge and besides I looked it up – and I'm spelling out C –  
A – M – P –

*[He does so energetically in semaphore.]*

SKIPPER: *[Hastily]* I get the idea.

THRUPP: - and all they can do is march up and down in front of me going 'the skies are blue, the grass is green'. It's a complete waste of a good badge.

SKIPPER: It'll have to do, we haven't got time, the inspection's tomorrow. And while we're about it, perhaps you might do better learning your lines than worrying about what other people are doing.

THRUPP: It's jolly difficult, getting the hang of this acting lark. I say the lines over and over, but just when I think I've got them, they've gone again.

SKIPPER: It'll come, I'm sure. Remember, the honour of the 25<sup>th</sup> Penge is at stake. Now clear this lot up and put away your props. Rutter, I want a word with you.

RUTTER: *[Who has been in a dream world]* Skip?

*[RUTTER and SKIPPER to one side, while the others clear the stage.]*

SKIPPER: What's the matter, old chap? You're looking distinctly peaky.

RUTTER: I haven't – er – I haven't had much sleep the last few nights.

SKIPPER: Anything on your mind?

RUTTER: Whatever makes you think that?

SKIPPER: You haven't quite been with us lately. Off your chuck, that sort of thing.

RUTTER: It's nothing. Perhaps a touch of summer flu.

SKIPPER: Well, if there's ever anything you ever need to talk over with me, you know where my tent is.

RUTTER: Thanks, Skip.

SKIPPER: Now line them up.

*[RUTTER produces whistle and whistles. The other three come running and stand at ease. RUTTER falls in beside them.]*

RUTTER: Wombats, wombats, alert!

*[They all come to attention.]*

SKIPPER: You've all done jolly well today, and for that I'm going to excuse you inspection tomorrow morning. There will of course be an inspection at 6.30 tomorrow evening, when the District Commissioner arrives, and I want it to be the very best. I'm sure you all want to win the County Trophy as much as I do. Now fall out, get your supper, and lights out at 8.30.

RUTTER: Fall – out!

*[They do so. SKIPPER exits, CHISOLM and RUTTER get cooking pots. THRUPP drags GARTER forward by the ear.]*

GARTER: Oh don't, Thrupp, you're hurting me. Ow.

THRUPP: You'll hurt a darn sight more when I've finished with you. What do you mean by stamping on my foot in the march-past?

GARTER: It was an accident, honest.

THRUPP: A likely story.

CHISOLM: It was my fault really, I pushed him.

THRUPP: I'll deal with you later, Chisolm. But first, Garter, I'm going to teach you a lesson.

RUTTER: All right, Thrupp. That's enough.

*[He gives pots and pans to CHISOLM and GARTER.]*

RUTTER: You two, go and light a fire. You're cooking tonight.

GARTER: Us? Holy cow!

CHISOLM: Thanks, Rutter. You're a brick.

*[They dash off.]*

RUTTER: So what was going on there, Thrupp?

THRUPP: He stood on my foot.

*[RUTTER smiles.]*

It's no laughing matter. He needs to be taught to respect the feet of a superior. But you've let him off. Again.

RUTTER: If there are punishments to be handed out, me or Skip will do the handing.

THRUPP: But you never do anything. This whole outfit's getting too slack. The Wombats are going right downhill. You're far too kind.

RUTTER: This is the Scouts, not the Army, Thrupp.

THRUPP: More's the pity. Military discipline, that's what they need. Their kit's a disgrace. Look at it!

*[He lifts the tent flap to reveal a hotchpotch of jumbled gear.]*

The Commissioner's coming tomorrow. What do you think he'll make of it? Your lack of discipline is going to lose this troop the County Trophy, do you realise that?

RUTTER: There's more to life than trophies. Your trouble, you don't relax enough.

THRUPP: Bah!

RUTTER: Look up there. It's nearly the full moon. Isn't it beautiful? "Speak silence with thy glimmering eye, and wash the dusk with silver." That's Blake, that is. He was looking up at that very moon nearly two hundred years ago.

THRUPP: Good night for a night exercise.

RUTTER: You've no romance.

THRUPP: Only girls think of romance.

RUTTER: You're not old enough, but one day –

THRUPP: One day I'll be Patrol Leader and I'll lick the Wombats back into shape.

RUTTER: But not yet you are. Now go and collect some firewood, there's a good chap.

THRUPP: Yes, Rutter.

*[THRUPP salutes very smartly and marches off. RUTTER stares a long time at the moon, dreamily. Sighs:]*

RUTTER: Oh Tony...

**FADE TO BLACKOUT**

Scene Two

*[The London Motor Gang tent. Very neat and NW3. Some Art on the canvas, and tasteful drapes. NOSEBAG setting up a barbecue.]*

COYLE: *[From inside the tent]* Another Bloody Mary, Mary?

NOSEBAG: Don't call me Mary. It's Nosebag, right? Nothing but Nosebag.

COYLE: Pardonnez-moi! Beulah, peel me a Yorkie.

*[He emerges from the tent.]*

NOSEBAG: Just get me another drink, you prick.

COYLE: Now what have we here? Cow, cow, more dead cow, dead pig, minced pig, a lump of dead cow – ooh, what a lovely surprise! – a tomato!

NOSEBAG: If you don't like it, do the cooking yourself.

COYLE: Sorry. Can't do a nut roast on a Barbie.

NOSEBAG: I don't know why you come on London Motor Gang weekends if you're a vegetarian. Everyone knows real men don't like nuts.

COYLE: *[Suggestive]* I've never had any complaints about my nuts.

*[Enter HODGEKISS. He is wearing very baggy shorts, inside which he wears a strap-on dildo which looks absurd. Exaggerated deep breaths.]*

HODGEKISS: Hey-ho for the open air. Just smell the scent of pine on the breeze.

COYLE: That's Nosebag's mouthwash. He gargles in Jeyes Fluid.

NOSEBAG: Leave it out.

HODGEKISS: There's hills to climb and rivers to swim, and fells to walk –

COYLE: In Tring?

HODGEKISS: This is the life for a real man. Isn't that right, Coyle?

COYLE: You're asking the wrong person.

NOSEBAG: I have no idea why you're here, Coyle.

COYLE: Strange as it may seem, I actually like motor bikes. Unlike you. *[To HODGEKISS]* Nosebag goes to the Coleherne in his leathers by tube, clutching a crash helmet he doesn't actually use.

HODGEKISS: Really?

COYLE: He doesn't have a bike.

NOSEBAG: I keep failing the test. It's not fair.

*[HODGEKISS starts calisthenics. His strap-on waves about]*

HODGEKISS: Sometimes I just think to myself, "Dammit, Hodgekiss, why don't you just throw it all over at the Bank, and run away to become a big hairy – lumberjack, or something?"

COYLE: And why don't you?

HODGEKISS: I'd lose my pension rights.

COYLE: Why do you wear that thing?

HODGEKISS: What thing?

COYLE: That strap-on. It's absurd.

HODGEKISS: I'll have you know that everything about me is entirely my own.

COYLE: Who are you kidding?

*[He reaches inside HODGEKISS's trousers and pulls the rubbery thing out.]*

You could have someone's eye out with that.

HODGEKISS: Don't tell anyone, will you Coyle? It's just that with some of these fellows round here, one feels so – inferior.

COYLE: So you're keeping up with the Flynns, huh? *[Confidential]* I'll let you in on a little secret. You're not the only one around here to go in for a little – enhancement. They're just better at hiding it. If I were you, I'd save that monster for a special occasion. Do you want a drink?

HODGEKISS: I wouldn't say no to a little snifter. What have you got?

COYLE: *[Looking back into the tent]* Let me check the cocktail cabinet... Gin, scotch, vodka, vermouth, Tia Maria, crème de cassis, dry white, and a drop of Cointreau. I can do you a cheery Harvey Wallbanger or a bracing Bloody Mary.

HODGEKISS: I rather fancy a small dry sherry.

COYLE: You would. *[He disappears into the tent.]*

NOSEBAG: Nervous?

HODGEKISS: *[Nervously]* Nervous? Me? Why should I be?

NOSEBAG: It's your initiation tonight, right?

HODGEKISS: It can't be worse than the freemasons.

NOSEBAG: Can't it? It's more than a funny apron and a dodgy handshake, you know. This one's – *[sinister]* different...

HODGEKISS: I know. It's jolly exciting. Up with the old trouser leg and wave your trowel about, what?

NOSEBAG: Any timewasters are severely punished.

HODGEKISS: Oh, goody!

*{COYLE comes back out.}*

COYLE:               What a disaster! The icebox has broken! We're condemned to lukewarm cocktails for all eternity. Till Monday anyway. Your sherry.

*[HODGEKISS takes it.]*

NOSEBAG:           I'd better light the charcoal.

COYLE:               You're right. Those steaks won't burn themselves.

*[He exits]*

COYLE:               *[To HODGEKISS]* How's your sherry?

HODGEKISS:        Most agreeable.

COYLE:               Enjoying the weekend?

HODGEKISS:        Oh, very much. The Treasure Hunt this afternoon was most amusing. It was most gracious of you to let me ride pillion. I'm definitely getting my own bike when I receive my next increment.

COYLE:               I don't go much for the games myself. Or the silly ranks and club rules. But where else can you get such hot sex with so many humpy men in the open air, and still be within spitting distance of a cocktail cabinet?

HODGEKISS:        I saw you slipping into the woods last night, as I was flossing.

COYLE:               You do that every night?

HODGEKISS:        Want to preserve the old choppers, don't we?

COYLE:               Oh, Hodgekiss. You sound just like my father.

HODGEKISS:        Really? Do you think I'm a Daddy type then?

COYLE:               More the granny type, I fear. You've got a lot to learn.

HODGEKISS: I'm really trying to fit in. I got all the gear from 'Hell-for-Leather'.

COYLE: And maybe one day when you grow up it will fit you.

*[Enter CAPT. KELLEY, a laconic figure in shades. He's seen too many Clint Eastwood movies. Or maybe just bad porn.]*

CAPT. KELLEY: Ok, you guys?

HODGEKISS: Absolutely hunky-dory – er – Chief.

COYLE: Drink, Captain?

CAPT. KELLEY: Pils

COYLE: Such high living. *[Exits.]*

CAPT. KELLEY: Nervous?

HODGEKISS: The initiation? If I knew what was expected of me...

CAPT. KELLEY: Hang loose, son.

HODGEKISS: Oh, I will, Captain Kelley. Loose is my middle name, ha, ha. You know, I feel all my life has been just one long preparation for the great day when I can cross the threshold of the London Motor Gang – do tents have thresholds? I don't know.

CAPT. KELLEY: It's a great day for you. You've completed all the tests. Got the piercings -

HODGEKISS: And very painful they were too

CAPT. KELLEY: Had the tattoo –

HODGEKISS: I never knew you could be tattooed there –

CAPT. KELLEY: Baked the quiche –

HODGEKISS: Delicious!

CAPT. KELLEY: Seen three operas. And now it's here. The great day dawns.

HODGEKISS: And whatever happens, I want it, I do. It's all I ever wanted. Ever since my big brother tied me up in the airing cupboard. I knew it was for me. It took thirty years to realise that there were other men who felt the same.

CAPT. KELLEY: And tonight's the night.

HODGEKISS: There's only one problem.

CAPT. KELLEY: What?

HODGEKISS: I'm SCARED SHITLESS!

CAPT. KELLEY: Pull yourself together. You're a man.

HODGEKISS: I am?

CAPT. KELLEY: You can take it.

HODGEKISS: Can I?

CAPT. KELLEY: You can take anything.

HODGEKISS: Anything?

*[KELLEY stares him down ferociously. HODGEKISS goes to jelly.]*

CAPT. KELLEY: And you know the penalty for failure.

HODGEKISS: Expulsion. The disgrace! I'll never be able to show my face in the Covent Garden Crush Bar again.

CAPT. KELLEY: Right.

*[COYLE re-enters.]*

COYLE: Your pils, Captain.

CAPT. KELLEY: *[Taking it]* It's not cold.

COYLE: The icebox broke.

CAPT. KELLEY: Forget it. *[Tosses it back]*

COYLE: Charming manners.

CAPT. KELLEY: Coyle. A word.

COYLE: That sounds ominous.

CAPT. KELLEY: The guys tell me you've not been balling.

COYLE: I didn't realise it was compulsory.

CAPT. KELLEY: It's out of character. You well?

COYLE: I haven't felt like it.

CAPT. KELLEY: You should take advantage. Everyone here's into safer sex. Guys in town aren't always so sensible.

COYLE: Maybe I don't need any kind of sex right now.

CAPT. KELLEY: I hear you go off in the woods, though. What you doin'? Writing poetry?

COYLE: What's wrong with that?

CAPT. KELLEY: Poetry's for cissies. Poetry's punishable. There's Boy Scouts the other side of that wood –

COYLE: Really?

CAPT. KELLEY: We wouldn't want to scare the innocents, would we?

COYLE: Could do them some good.

CAPT. KELLEY: It's people like you who give sadomasochists like us a bad name.

COYLE: I don't know what you're talking about.

CAPT. KELLEY: Word to the wise, Coyle. Watch it. *[Turning on HODGEKISS]* And don't forget, the fancy dress party's still on for tomorrow night.

COYLE: Gotcha.

HODGEKISS: Fancy dress?

CAPT. KELLEY: Weekend in Berlin for the best costume.

HODGEKISS: Fancy dress??

CAPT. KELLEY: All the bar take goes to the Children's Missionary Fund.

COYLE: *[Aside]* Respectable charities for respectable leather queens.

CAPT. KELLEY: You've brought your presents too, I hope.

HODGEKISS: Presents? Fancy dress?

CAPT. KELLEY: And it better be good. If the charity committee thinks you haven't entered into the spirit of the thing, they'll fine you £250 –

HODGEKISS: That's my Christmas bonus!

CAPT. KELLEY: - or expel you from the group. See you around. *[Exits.]*

HODGEKISS: Fancy dress??? You didn't tell me about fancy dress.

COYLE: It was with the invitation. In the letter,

HODGEKISS: What letter?

COYLE: The letter with the invitation to this weekend.

HODGEKISS: You invited me to this weekend.

COYLE: Because I had the invitation for you, in a letter.

HODGEKISS: What letter?

COYLE: This letter. *[Produces it.]*

HODGEKISS: You forgot to give me the letter. I'm out before I'm even in.

COYLE: I've had tricks like that.

HODGEKISS: It's too spit-making.

COYLE: You must have something with you. Improvise.

HODGEKISS: I've got manacles, a slave harness, assorted dildos, two meat tenderisers, a pair of handcuffs, cock rings, tit clamps and two masks.

COYLE: Just your day wear, huh? Tough.

HODGEKISS: And I can't afford £250. I spent all my bank balance on manacles, a slave harness, assorted dildos –

COYLE: I get the idea! But don't worry. We'll think of something.

HODGEKISS: I must be able to get a costume from somewhere...

COYLE: You can nip into Tring and get something.

HODGEKISS: But it's my initiation. I don't know how long that goes on. Nobody'll tell me anything.

COYLE: Well, I'll go and get you something.

HODGEKISS: Would you?

COYLE: What are friends for?

HODGEKISS: Oh thanks, Tony – may I call you Tony?

COYLE: Sure.

HODGEKISS: You're a brick. A brick.

COYLE: I thought you said something else.

*[Re-enter NOSEBAG]*

NOSEBAG: Steaks are ready. Here's yours. *[Tosses it to COYLE in a napkin.]*

COYLE: I'm vegetarian.

NOSEBAG: Cow's almost vegetarian. It eats grass.

COYLE: Next time I'll bring sandwiches.

NOSEBAG: *[To HODGEKISS]* Here's yours. *[He tosses it to HODGEKISS, who drops it, then picks it up. It is hot.]*

HODGEKISS: Oooh, ow *[He waves his hand frantically]* I've burnt myself. It hurts. I've got a blister. Oooh. *[He faints.]*

COYLE: That's all we need – a masochist who can't stand pain.

### **SLOW FADE TO BLACKOUT**

#### Scene Three

*[The Scout Camp again. GARTER sweating over pen and paper, CHISOLM stirring a saucepan very gravely. He is making blancmange.]*

GARTER: Chisolm, what rhymes with 'glitter'?

CHISOLM: I dunno. Bitter, sitter, fitter.

GARTER: They don't quite fit the mood.

CHISOLM: Shitter!

GARTER: Shitter? No such word. Anyway, doesn't fit the mood.

CHISOLM: What is the mood?

GARTER: Sort of glamour and Broadway.

CHISOLM: What have you got so far?

GARTER: Um – Come with me, let's see a show place  
Fancy free, it ain't like no place.  
The spotlight glows, the costume glitters  
The champagne flows –

CHISOLM: - and they eat spam fritters!  
What's wrong with that?

GARTER: No-one eats spam fritters in a New York nightclub.

CHISOLM: Maybe they do.

GARTER: Have you ever seen a musical where they eat spam fritters?

CHISOLM: I don't like musicals, they're soppy.

GARTER: Well they don't, see?

CHISOLM: Maybe they should. Rutter's spam fritters are jolly decent.  
*[Looking over GARTER's shoulder.]* You'll never have that  
ready in time for the camp fire.

GARTER: I will too. The only problem I can see is, how to get a  
costume.

CHISOLM: Can't you do it as you are?

GARTER: Oh, rot! It's all about bright lights and spangled tights. Like  
Panto, only more so. Of course I need a costume. You can  
do Robin Hood with bits of cardboard and old army  
blankets, but this needs Class with a capital K.

CHISOLM: There's that other camp over through the woods. They  
might have something. They seem to wear the most  
awfully strange things. I saw one of them in the distance a  
couple of days ago. It looked like he was a sort of Gladiator  
or something.

GARTER: Perhaps they're something to do with the Army.

*[CHISOLM shows GARTER the saucepan.]*

GARTER: It's still awfully lumpy.

CHISOLM: Hell's bells! I was never any good at blancmange.

GARTER: You should have read the packet before you mixed it.

CHISOLM: I didn't know you had to keep stirring it. I thought it would just lie there and set.

GARTER: It's set all right. Set in lumps. You won't half catch it when Thrupp sees it.

CHISOLM: Rutter'll take care of me. He's a chum.

GARTER: Maybe.

CHISOLM: Have you noticed? He's been awfully strange lately...

GARTER: Yes. He just mooches around like he's gone all soft. Maybe he's sweet on some girl.

CHISOLM: Girls? Bah!

GARTER: My sentiments exactly, old man.

CHISOLM: It's still awfully lumpy.

GARTER: What we need is a strainer...

CHISOLM: I know! We'll use my socks.

GARTER: You haven't changed your socks in weeks.

CHISOLM: Nobody'll ever know.

GARTER: Of course they'll know. Your socks stink to high heaven. Whoever heard of Camembert Blancmange?

CHISOLM: It's a new delicacy. We just invented it. Oh, come on Garter. Don't be such a drip. It's our only chance. Find a bowl.

*[GARTER searches round. CHISOLM takes off his sock, which is very ripe. GARTER brings the bowl. They start to strain the blancmange through the sock.]*

GARTER: Easy now. Don't spill it.

CHISOLM: Squeeze it. Harder. You'll never get the lumps out that way.

GARTER: You squeeze it. I'm not touching your beastly socks.

CHISOLM: Ok, ok.

*[The first lot is through, they fill the sock up again.]*

CHISOLM: Now the next lot.

*[Enter THRUPP, unbeknownst to the others. He stops dead when he hears the following.]*

GARTER: Now squeeze again. Harder. You've got to ease it down to the bottom.

*[THRUPP goggles at the audience, his reactions increasingly outraged.]*

GARTER: Not like that. You put your hand round the top and then pull it down gently and smoothly.

CHISOLM: Look, we've done this once before. I know what I'm doing. Don't treat me like a child, Garter.

GARTER: You're pulling too hard. It'll never come like that.

CHISOLM: Course it will. There. Look at that. It's oozing out nice and smooth and sticky.

GARTER: *[Looking in the bowl]* Are we going to get it all in? There seems to be an awful lot of it – far more than when we started.

CHISOLM: Don't worry, there's quite enough room. I can take it all. There. There's room for another lot if you want it.

GARTER: No, that's enough. I'm tired.

CHISOLM: Please yourself. I'm quite game for another go, if you want.

*[THRUPP comes out of his horrified trance.]*

THRUPP: CHISOLM!!

*[The blancmange is mostly through. GARTER holds the bowl, CHISOLM quickly puts the offending sock behind his back. THRUPP comes to them.]*

THRUPP: And what do you think you're doing? Ungodly wretches.

CHISOLM: It's not that dirty, honest.

THRUPP: Not that dirty? What are you saying?

CHISOLM: What's a little toe cheese here and there?

THRUPP: Toe cheese? Is that what you call it? Is this the first time you've done this?

GARTER: Oh yes, Thrupp.

THRUPP: Promise you'll never do it again,

CHISOLM: Oh, we won't need to do it again. We'll whip it properly next time.

THRUPP: Whips?! Oh, what depths of depravity have you sunk to?

GARTER: We only used a sock this time because Chisolm couldn't get it to harden.

CHISOLM: But next time we'll know how to do it properly, see.

GARTER: Be a sport, Thrupp. Nobody need ever know.

THRUPP: I shall make it my business to see that everybody knows. Fall on your knees and pray to God for forgiveness. The 25<sup>th</sup> Ongar has fallen prey to Sodom and Gomorrah.

CHISOLM: What did they do in Gomorrah, Thrupp?

THRUPP: They – they – never mind what they did in Gomorrah. They certainly didn't read 'Scouting for Boys'. And as a result the Lord destroyed them for their unnatural perversions.

CHISOLM: What's that?

THRUPP: What's what?

CHISOLM: What you just said. Unnat –

THRUPP: Oh, I know what temptation means. I have felt it myself. But we must resist. We must fight it. I'll see to it that the wickedness is thrashed out of you, if I have to do it myself, Chisolm, why are you only wearing one sock?

CHISOLM: It's –er – it's a bit crusty.

THRUPP: There's no time for explanations. Dinner up in five minutes and you're not even properly dressed. Put it on at once.

CHISOLM: But – I

THRUPP: Put that sock on immediately.

CHISOLM: Yes, Thrupp.

*[He makes a face and slowly, painfully draws on the sticky sock.]*

THRUPP: Garter, what have you got there?

GARTER: Er – the blancmange. For afters.

THRUPP: Let's have a look at it. *[He takes the bowl, stirs it.]*  
Excellent smooth. *[Sniffs it]* Raspberry. My favourite.  
And something else...? Just a hint.. What is it, Chisolm?

CHISOLM: Er –

GARTER: It's for the smoothness. Something to give it a bit of body.

THRUPP: You've made enough for seconds too. You're improving,  
Chisolm.

CHISOLM: Thanks, Thrupp.

THRUPP: Shoe?

CHISOLM: But – Thrupp –

THRUPP: You can't go without your shoe.

*[He puts on his shoe.]*

THRUPP: That's better. Now be off to the dining area with that lot.  
Wait for it. Attention!

*[They come to attention. CHISOLM gives a loud Squelch.]*

THRUPP: And don't think you've heard the last of this disgusting  
episode, either of you. I shall tell Skip as soon as the  
Commissioner's visit is over. I knew things were slack, but I  
had no idea to what depths of festering corruption we had  
sunk. At ease. Easy. Fall out.

*[They exit. He calls after them.]*

At the double!

*[He falls on his knees and prays:]*

Oh Lord, take these thoughts from my mind, or give me the  
strength to resist them. Let me dedicate myself to thy  
service, that I may be pure and holy –

*[Enter SKIPPER]*

SKIPPER: Learning your lines, Thrupp?

THRUPP: Sort of –

SKIPPER: That's the spirit. Keep it up. Why are you on your knees? Lost something?

THRUPP: Somehow they seem to go in more when I'm on my knees. The lines.

SKIPPER: Remarkable. Now why don't you beetle along and get some chuck. Too much brainwork and you'll get a fever.

THRUPP: Yes, Skip. Thank you, Skip.

SKIPPER: Oh, and – Thrupp –

THRUPP: Yes, Skip.

SKIPPER: I've got a bit of advice for you. If you really have dreadful problems with lines, you should take a tip from my father. Used to do a bit of amateur dramatics himself, you know. The Croydon Repertory Amateur Players – and they really were! – from Croydon, I mean. But anyway he was jolly good, except he could never remember a single line. Forgetful all round, as a matter of fact. You know what he did once? Left me and my twin brother outside Debenhams while he nipped in for a cardie, and when he came out, completely forgot there were two of us and just walked off with me.

THRUPP: Skip –

SKIPPER: Oh, I know it sounds batty, but by the time Mother reminded him when we got home, and we'd gone back to the shop to collect him, the little blighter had completely disappeared. Never saw hide nor hair of him from that day to this. Of course Mother was pretty miffed about the whole thing, didn't speak to him for – oh – minutes, but I

was much too young to remember my brother, and I can't say I cared very much one way or the other – where was I?

THRUPP: Lines...

SKIPPER: Of course. Anyway, my father hit on this wheeze – *The Amorous Prawn*, I think it was – or was it *The Constant Nymph* – and –

THRUPP: The lines... ?

SKIPPER: Anyway, what he used to do was leave lots of little cards all over the stage where he had to move, and on these cards he had all his lines written down, and his moves, so he knew where to go next, and he used to follow these cards round the stage like a treasure trail. Hid them in props too. Of course, he used to hide them pretty carefully so the audience never suspected a thing. I'm sure the D.C. wouldn't either, if you get my drift. Mm?

THRUPP: Gosh. Thanks, Skip.

SKIPPER: Now off to supper with you.

*[THRUPP salutes smartly and exits.]*

SKIPPER: Odd that I should think of Bernie just then. Haven't given him a thought in years. I wonder where he is now...

*[Enter CHISOLM]*

CHISOLM: I say, Skip, could I have a word with you?

SKIPPER: Shouldn't you be at supper, Chisolm?

CHISOLM: I wanted a word in private, and after supper it's Lights Out terribly soon. It's about the camp fire tomorrow and it's terribly important and I'm ever so worried. Oh, please Skip –

SKIPPER: What is it, old son?

CHISOLM: I have this problem, see. It's my – my –

SKIPPER: Spit it out

CHISOLM: My bladder, you see.

SKIPPER: I'm afraid I don't.

CHISOLM: It seems to have a mind of its own.

SKIPPER: A bladder with a mind of its own. How very unusual.

CHISOLM: And embarrassing.

SKIPPER: I can imagine.

CHISOLM: Yes, well, the thing is – you don't mind me talking about my bladder, do you?

SKIPPER: I'd feel positively left out if you didn't.

CHISOLM: It seems to work for some of the time – well, most of the time, actually, and then it sort of stops. Completely. For ages and ages. Then suddenly – very suddenly as a matter of fact – everything happens at once.

SKIPPER: I see.

CHISOLM: And there's no stopping it. Do you see?

SKIPPER: Only too vividly.

CHISOLM: You remember, in *The Dam Busters* –

SKIPPER: You don't need to go on

CHISOLM: Or – like a tsunami - What do you think it could be?

SKIPPER: Very awkward, I imagine.

CHISOLM: But what I'm absolutely terrified of it, what if it happens onstage? I haven't told anyone this, not even Garter. It

only happens when I'm nervous, and I'm nervous about tomorrow and the DC coming, so – what should I do if the urge comes while I'm up there, doing a sketch or a song, and there's no stopping it. If the DC's watching, what do I do, Skip? What do I do?

SKIPPER: Stay in character.

CHISOLM: Stay in character, yes.

SKIPPER: Stay in character at all times. It's probably all in the mind. A blockage.

CHISOLM: Rather the reverse, I would have thought.

SKIPPER: A mental blockage. Something that you want to say and can't. Don't worry about it, old chap. It's only a show. Do your best, no-one can do more. This is just a storm in a teacup –

CHISOLM: Rather more than a teacup, Skip.

SKIPPER: There's nothing to be nervous about. Now get back to your supper.

CHISOLM: Yes, Skip, thank you, skip. *[Exits]*

SKIPPER: Bladder – tosh! I don't know what those two young scamps will think of next.

*[He exits. Slow fade to - ]*

**BLACKOUT**

Scene Four

*[The LMG Camp. HODGEKISS is staked out on the ground in a leather harness. NOSEBAG has just pissed on him. He does up his flies.]*

NOSEBAG:           What do you say?

HODGEKISS:       Mmm. Very complex. I detect citrus notes, very bright, with a hint of cigar box and possibly vanilla.

NOSEBAG:        *[Outraged]* Vanilla??? Are you taking the piss?

HODGEKISS:       Well, I –

NOSEBAG:        *[Menacing]* What do you say?

HODGEKISS:       Ta muchly.

NOSEBAG:        Ta muchly?

HODGEKISS:       Sorry. Ta muchly, sir.

NOSEBAG:        That's better. Want a drink?

HODGEKISS:       I've just had one. Though I wouldn't say no to a nice cup of tea. Getting a bit chilly round the Urals, ho, ho.

NOSEBAG:        This isn't a laughing matter.

HODGEKISS:       Sorry, Nosebag. I mean – Nosebag, sir.

NOSEBAG:        I'll get you some tea.

*[Exits]*

*[HODGEKISS has a serious nose itch. Tries to reach it. Can't. The itch turns to an incipient sneeze, but disappears. Same again. A third time, each time getting larger and nearer. COYLE enters. HODGEKISS smiles that the sneeze has gone away. Suddenly it explodes. COYLE jumps.]*

COYLE:            Hey! How's it going?

HODGEKISS: Quite jolly, really. Nosebag's just been.

COYLE: What happened?

HODGEKISS: He had a little tinkle. It's a bit sticky. I wish I could wipe it off. He's gone to get me a cup of tea.

COYLE: Any rough bits?

HODGEKISS: I wasn't too happy with Herman's avocado.

COYLE: Did it hurt?

HODGEKISS: No, but he didn't have any French dressing.

COYLE: Ooh – Tough!

HODGEKISS: How long have I been here, Coyle?

COYLE: Three hours, I'd guess. It's getting on for midnight.

HODGEKISS: Doesn't time fly when you're enjoying yourself. How much longer do I have?

COYLE: That's all down to Kelley. He likes to push people to their limits.

HODGEKISS: I wish he'd let me wear my new nipple clamps. I bought them specially.

COYLE: *[Soothing]* I'm sure you can wear them afterwards. When we have to dress for dinner.

HODGEKISS: Do you want to do something unspeakable to me?

COYLE: What did you have in mind?

HODGEKISS: I don't know. Whatever you have in mind, really.

COYLE: Oh come on. I'm sure there must be some vile humiliation you'd like to heap on me. Everyone else has.

COYLE: Nothing comes to mind.

HODGEKISS: Shame

COYLE: I'll come back to you if I think of anything.

*[Enter RUTTER furtively to the edge of the area, in shadow.]*

RUTTER: Tony... Tony...

COYLE: *[To HODGEKISS]* Must dash.

HODGEKISS: It's been nice talking to you.

COYLE: Catch you later.

HODGEKISS: And if you do think of anything really degrading, just let me know.

COYLE: Surely.

*[He exits towards RUTTER.]*

RUTTER: Tony!

COYLE: Ian!

*[They meet on the edge of the area. Their embrace is hard and passionate.]*

RUTTER: I couldn't put you out of my mind all day.

COYLE: I've been in a daze all day. I could hardly mix the cocktails this morning, my hands were shaking so much. And our precious Captain Kelley is getting suspicious.

RUTTER: Our Skip's beginning to notice too.

COYLE: Does he suspect anything?

RUTTER: I don't think so. People think a scout uniform is a chastity belt. Anyway, he's too worried about the inspection tomorrow – tonight.

COYLE: I'd never forgive myself if I got you in the shit.

RUTTER: I can look after myself. I'm sixteen, for Chrissake.

*[They make themselves comfortable.]*

COYLE: So, how's it going?

RUTTER: We've been rehearsing. We have to do this really stupid Robin Hood sketch. I play Good King Richard.

COYLE: He was one of ours, you know.

RUTTER: Really. That's not in the history books.

COYLE: Sure he was. Never married. Remember Blondel, the faithful minstrel. He didn't follow Richard round Europe just to sing to him. Blondel was jailbait too.

RUTTER: I hate that word.

COYLE: But you are, honey, you are. Fact of life, I could go to jail for you.

RUTTER: Would you?

COYLE: Gladly.

RUTTER: I've written you a poem. Lots of poems, actually. But every time someone comes along, I have to hide them. It makes me feel so dirty.

COYLE: Oh Ian, you're such an idealist. Is it really worth it? You could go into care. I'm only thinking of you.

RUTTER: I'll risk it.

COYLE: If my fellow campers saw me, they'd disown me?

RUTTER: Why? They're gay.

COYLE: It's letting the side down, going for chicken.

RUTTER: Chicken?

COYLE: A young gay man.

RUTTER: *[Attempts a squawk, looks behind him]* No good, I can't manage an egg.

COYLE: But I'm sure we could manage something else.

*[RUTTER kisses him, then pulls him down, so that COYLE's head is in his crotch.]*

COYLE: Not so fast, you're suffocating me. We've got plenty of time...

**BLACKOUT**

Scene Five

*[Lights up on the same area. Early morning. A bird trills overhead. HODGEKISS tied down as before, but asleep. Enter CHISOLM and GARTER, running, in the next field.]*

CHISOLM: A scout is clean in thought, word and deed. A scout is clean in thought, word and deed. A scout is clean in thought word and deed.

*[He stops, panting.]*

Gosh, I'm whacked, Garter. I should never have started smoking.

GARTER: Let's stop here. No-one can see us from the camp.

*[They flop down.]*

CHISOLM: I've got to do this five times, too. I'll take it to the Court of Human Rights. It's inhuman and degrading treatment.

GARTER: Couldn't we just drop a circuit or two? Nobody would notice.

CHISOLM: Thrupp would. He's watching every move we make. I bet he's standing there right now with a stopwatch.

*[GARTER notices HODGEKISS.]*

GARTER: Look, Chisolm. Over there. Behind the fence. There's a man.

CHISOLM: Gosh, you're right. Has he fainted?

GARTER: I don't know. Let's crawl a little closer. There's a gap in the fence. Quietly – he might be dangerous.

*[They edge towards him.]*

CHISOLM: He's not wearing any clothes!

GARTER: He's got a kind of loincloth.

CHISOLM: What are those funny braces?

GARTER: Perhaps they're holding his loincloth up. Look – he's been tied up.

CHISOLM: Perhaps he's been robbed. By an Evil Gang.

GARTER: They've taken all his money and stripped off all his clothes and tied him up and left him for dead.

CHISOLM: Perhaps he is dead. Quick! There's no time to lose.

GARTER: What about 'A scout is clean in thought, word and deed'?

CHISOLM: What about 'Be Prepared'?

GARTER: Thrupp's going to murder you.

CHISOLM: Not if we save someone's life and bring a gang of international diamond smugglers to justice. It'll be just like *Jennings Does It Again*. Come on, Garter.

*[They go over to him. CHISOLM slaps him.]*

CHISOLM: Hello? Hello? Speak to me. Are you dead?

GARTER: I'll give him the kiss of life.

*[He jumps on top of HODGEKISS, who struggles awake. HODGEKISS is terrified.]*

HODGEKISS: Help! Help!

GARTER: *[Disappointed]* Oh. You're not dead.

HODGEKISS: *[Sleepily, seeing the Scout uniforms]* Is it the fancy dress? I haven't got a costume yet.

CHISOLM: He's rambling. It's the effect of concussion. Quick, give him a pillow.

HODGEKISS: I don't want a pillow.

GARTER: It'll make you comfortable.

HODGEKISS: I don't want to be comfortable. I'm meant to be uncomfortable.

CHISOLM: Don't argue. You're in a state of shock.

HODGEKISS: Go away!

CHISOLM: Garter, take off your jersey.

GARTER: But it's really nippy. Oh, all right.

*[Takes off his jersey, puts it under HODGEKISS' protesting head.]*

CHISOLM: Now, something to keep him warm while I run and fetch an ambulance.

HODGEKISS: Ambulance? I'm not hurt! Go away! They hardly touched me.

CHISOLM: So they did touch you! The fiends. And left you for dead.

HODGEKISS: No!

CHISOLM: I'll run back to camp for a blanket.

HODGEKISS: I don't need a blanket. Go away!

GARTER: What if someone sees you? They'll ask questions.

HODGEKISS: Is this part of the initiation?

CHISOLM: I know! Body heat! Remember how Biggles saved Algy when he was trapped by the avalanche? He lay down on top of him and the heat from his body saved Algy from dying of exposure.

HODGEKISS: I'm not dying.

GARTER: But you're very exposed. *[To CHISOLM]* Lie on top of him.

HODGEKISS: What?

CHISOLM: But I want to run for the ambulance.

GARTER: I can't lie on top of him. I've taken my jersey off.

CHISOLM: Oh, all right. *[Gets on top of him, resigned.]*

HODGEKISS: Get off me. You're not my type. You're too young,

CHISOLM: You're never too young to save life.

HODGEKISS: I don't need my life saving.

GARTER: Suicide? Gosh. Don't do it. It's not worth it. There must be something to live for. Listen to the birds. Smell the pines... *Top of the Pops* is live on Wednesday... *[To CHISOLM]* What about these ropes?

CHISOLM: Have you got a pen-knife?

GARTER: It's back in the tent.

CHISOLM: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Garter. You're useless. Let me look. If you can tie them up, you must be able to untie them...

*[He fiddles with the knots.]*

HODGEKISS: Get off me. Go away. Leave me alone. If you untie me, I'm done for.

GARTER: Why?

HODGEKISS: They'll come and punish me.

GARTER: See? I knew there was an International Gang in it somewhere. *[To HODGEKISS]* Are they out to murder

you? Tell us where you've hidden the diamonds. You can trust us.

HODGEKISS: Go away! Leave me in peace! You're mad, both of you.

GARTER: You want to stay out here, tied up with no clothes and you call us mad?!

HODGEKISS: It's an initiation rite.

CHISOLM: An initiation rite. Gosh. Just like in *Jungle Jim*. Can we stay and watch?

HODGEKISS: No. Go away.

GARTER: Why not?

HODGEKISS: It's – private.

CHISOLM: Oh please. Be a sport.

GARTER: Do they do unspeakable things to you? I've never seen anything unspeakable.

HODGEKISS: No. You're too young.

CHISOLM: Why are we always too young for the interesting things?

HODGEKISS: It's members-only.

GARTER: Sounds a funny sort of club to me.

HODGEKISS: If you don't go away, nobody'll come and beat me, and I'll never get to the Fancy Dress.

CHISOLM: Mad, quite mad. Must be the exposure. Get on top of him again. I'll get the ambulance.

GARTER: Right.

*[CHISOLM gets on top of him again. HODGEKISS fights. Enter NOSEBAG, in leathers, but with wig and make-up too.]*

HODGEKISS: Help! I'm being assaulted by a boy scout!

NOSEBAG: What's going on? Who are these kids?

GARTER/CHISOLM: *[Outraged]* Kids?!

NOSEBAG: Hodgekiss, are you cheating?

HODGEKISS: They attacked me!

CHISOLM: We did not.

HODGEKISS: That one sat on me.

NOSEBAG: Sat on you?

HODGEKISS: Lay right on top of me. It was disgusting.

GARTER: I was trying to save you.

HODGEKISS: I told you, I didn't want to be saved.

GARTER: I was trying to share my body heat.

NOSEBAG: You're depraved. Where do you pick up these ideas?

HODGEKISS: I don't know what the younger generation is coming to.

NOSEBAG: Childhood used to be a time of innocence.

HODGEKISS: In my day, scouts were clean in thought, word and deed.

NOSEBAG: I blame the parents.

HODGEKISS: I blame the teachers.

GARTER: *[to NOSEBAG]* Are you wearing make-up?

NOSEBAG: What? Oh – that – er – it's a game.

CHISOLM: Oh whizzo. I love games.

NOSEBAG: A game for grown-ups.

CHISOLM: Why?

NOSEBAG: Because it is. Now, be off with you.

GARTER: It's not fair.

NOSEBAG: Push off, both of you.

GARTER: Oh, all right.

*[He collects his jersey. They leave, but reluctantly, so they're on the edge of the area for the next bit.]*

HODGEKISS: Is that your costume for the fancy dress?

NOSEBAG: Not all of it, obviously. The crinoline's in the tent. I just thought I'd experiment.

HODGEKISS: Very tasteful.

NOSEBAG: Thank you.

*[A woman's voice offstage.]*

DEIRDRE: Mr. Kelley! Mr. Kelley!

NOSEBAG: What the –

*[Enter DEIRDRE in fancy commissioner's uniform – lots of braid and badges. She bears more than a passing resemblance to Margaret Rutherford.]*

DEIRDRE: Ah! Hello! Captain Kelly?

NOSEBAG: No, he's –

DEIRDRE: I'm most awfully sorry if I've caught you on the hop. The regional HQ meeting was cancelled so I thought I'd just beetle on down and spend the whole day with you. People

do get in the most terrible stew about inspections and the like, but I prefer to see things as they really are.

*[She sees HODGEKISS]*

Practising your knots, I see. Excellent, excellent.  
*[Inspects the knots.]* Ah, a double bowline, most adventurous. But your sheepshank is somewhat wayward. Keep up the good work. Just carry on as if I wasn't here.

*[She stands and beams at them, waiting for them to do something. They stare at her, stupefied.]*

NOSEBAG: Did you say – Captain Kelley?

DEIRDRE: Yes. You are expecting me, aren't you?

NOSEBAG: No!

DEIRDRE: Oh, how stupid of me. Silly DEIRDRE. You're expecting my colleague, Wilfred Clavicle, aren't you? Dear Wilfred, such a sweet man, but headstrong. I'm sorry to tell you he's prostrate with the influenza, absolutely riddled with it. A result of overindulgence in British Bulldog. He rang from his sickbed to ask if I could leap into the breach. Well, you know me –

HODGEKISS: I don't actually –

DEIRDRE: Helpfulness is my middle name. Do you a good turn soon as look at you – even if you don't need a good turn, I'll find you one, believe me. Always willing to turn my hand to anything.

HODGEKISS: *[Eagerly]* Really?

DEIRDRE: If there's a dyke that needs a finger putting in –

NOSEBAG: *[Recovering a little]* This camp is for men.

CHISOLM: Who is it?

- GARTER: No idea, old chap.
- CHISOLM: Rum old trout, isn't she?
- DEIRDRE: So her I am.... And here you are.... What more could we want?
- NOSEBAG: You want a list?
- DEIRDRE: I should apologise for being here in mufti. I thought I'd change into my uniform a bit later.
- NOSEBAG: You're into uniforms?
- DEIRDRE: Never go to camp without it.
- NOSEBAG: That's something, I suppose.
- DEIRDRE: Don't be so old-fashioned. There's nothing you can do that we gals aren't just as capable of.
- HODGEKISS: Really?
- DEIRDRE: We don't know what we can do till we're stretched to the limit.
- NOSEBAG: But women just don't do it.
- DEIRDRE: Nonsense. We've been at it nearly as long as you have. We've just done it separately. It's time for a little integration.
- NOSEBAG: You can't. The guys will have a fit. They won't be able to function.
- DEIRDRE: Nothing but prejudice, and I won't stand for it. I'm here for the holiday, and that's that. *[To NOSEBAG:]* I don't know if I should mention it, you appear to have some lipstick smeared on your face.
- NOSEBAG: Lipstick? Ah! Yes – I mean No – I was eating strawberries.

DEIRDRE: Messy chap. Clean it up at once. Sets a bad example.

CHISOLM: The makeup.... The wig... it's the perfect answer

GARTER: What to, Chisolm?

CHISOLM: Your turn, you idiot. The new song. You need a costume, remember?

GARTER: Yes...

CHISOLM: Well that man's got one. And what was the other one saying about fancy dress? They must have lots of costumes. It's perfect.

DEIRDRE: So what are your plans, Mr Kelley?

NOSEBAG: I'm not Kelley!

DEIRDRE: There I go, rattling on again. Dominating DEIRDRE they call me at HQ. A real steamroller.

GARTER: HQ? What do you think?

DEIRDRE: *[To HODGEKISS]* Pleased to meet you, Captain Kelley.

*[She tries to shake his hand but he can't reach and so contents himself with a little wave of his hand.]*

HODGEKISS: My name's Hodgekiss.

DEIRDRE: Twill. DEIRDRE Twill. ADC Twill, in fact.

CHISOLM: *[Realising]* ADC – Acting District Commissioner! She's come to inspect us, but she's in the wrong camp. Come on, we must run and tell the others.

*[CHISOLM and GARTER exit at the run.]*

HODGEKISS: Pleased to meet you. Excuse me if I don't shake hands.

DEIRDRE: Are you all right down there, Mr. Hodgekiss?

HODGEKISS: Fine, thank you.

DEIRDRE: I thought you must be getting a little uncomfortable.

HODGEKISS: Actually, I've been here all night.

DEIRDRE: Is this a test for your Advanced Endurance Badge?

HODGEKISS: Yes! How did you guess?

DEIRDRE: I thought it must be. That or maybe Escapology.

NOSEBAG: Captain Kelley isn't here. He's taken the lads into Hatton on their bikes.

DEIRDRE: You brought bikes? What a good idea! Splendid exercise, peddle away, up hill, down dale. Fresh air in the lungs. Best way to see the countryside.

NOSEBAG: Motor bikes.

DEIRDRE: That's very progressive, but – aren't they a little young?

NOSEBAG: Who?

DEIRDRE: The boys.

NOSEBAG: These ain't no innocents, lady.

DEIRDRE: *[Doubtful]* I'm sure you know your boys better than I do, but – are they old enough to have a licence?

NOSEBAG: You don't need a licence for what we do.

DEIRDRE: If you keep off the roads, I suppose not.

NOSEBAG: We can do what we want right here in the woods.

DEIRDRE: That's all right then.

DEIRDRE: But what about the younger boys? The new ones? Surely they aren't riding motor-bikes all over the country?

HODGEKISS: Oh no. I'm the new boy, and I'm here. I'm still saving up to get a bike.

DEIRDRE: Joining up now? At your time of life?

HODGEKISS: It's what I've always wanted to do. I suppose I'm just a late developer.

DEIRDRE: But you're far too old.

HODGEKISS: Better late than never.

DEIRDRE: But it's against the rules.

NOSEBAG: Not our rules.

DEIRDRE: You can't just make up your own rules. It's – it's – against the rules!

HODGEKISS: I don't see why.

DEIRDRE: *[Taking a deep breath]* Have I got the right place? I mean Captain Kelley is SM, isn't he?

NOSEBAG: We're all SM here, lady.

DEIRDRE: All SM? But you can't be!

NOSEBAG: There's more of us around than you think.

DEIRDRE: This is most irregular. Only one person is meant to be SM. You can have as many ASMs as you like, of course –

HODGEKISS: If we weren't SM, we wouldn't be here.

DEIRDRE: I know that it is everyone's ambition to rise to SM – and indeed beyond – and with application it is possible to reach such heights. But until that day dawns, you will have to content yourselves with the ranks ordained by our great

founder. You can't just go round making yourself SM just because you want to be SM.

NOSEBAG: We don't let people in unless they are SM,

DEIRDRE: What?

HODGEKISS: Why not? We feel SM so we are SM.

DEIRDRE: Feelings do not enter into it. One Scout Master is enough in any troop. I can't go around encouraging overage hippy communes –

NOSEBAG: *[Outraged]* HIPPIY?!

DEIRDRE: - in the Scouting movement.

NOSEBAG/HODGEKISS: Scouting...?!

DEIRDRE: Of course. What else do you think I'm here for?

NOSEBAG: Search me.

HODGEKISS: I think there's been some mistake...

**BLACKOUT**

Scene Six

*[The Scout camp again. THRUPP is having a wash in a bowl and trying to learn his lines at the same time, script by the side.]*

THRUPP: On your knees, you naughty friar. On your knees, naughty friar. .... Blah, blah, blah. What's the cue? 'Fetch the cauldron, Little John' – 'Yes sire, with pleasure'....

'Come here, Friar Tuck.' No, that's not it.

*[Looks at the script again.]*

On your knees, naughty friar.' - I'm never going to get this. I'll have to make those cue cards.

*[He has finished his wash, and goes to clean teeth. Can't find toothpaste. He goes into the tent to rummage in the chaos.]*

This is a disgrace. Can't find anything. Who's been at my rucksack?

*[Enter CHISOLM and GARTER, running.]*

GARTER: Rutter! Skip! The DC's here!

CHISOLM: But it's not a he, it's a she!

THRUPP: What are you shouting for? And where's my toothpaste?

CHISOLM: The DC's here, Thrupp, only she's an ADC. Where's Rutter? Rutter!

GARTER: Her name's DEIRDRE.

THRUPP: A woman? What a cheek! Don't we deserve a man, then? It's a disgrace.

*[Enter RUTTER.]*

RUTTER: What's up?

CHISOLM: The DC's on her way over.

GARTER: We saw her in the other camp.

RUTTER: Have you been over there?

GARTER: Not *over* there. In that direction.

CHISOLM: We had to run round the field five times, remember. And she's here!

RUTTER: *[Decisive]* Thrupp, clear that mess in the tent up.

THRUPP: Why me? It's not my mess.

RUTTER: Garter, go and find Skip and tell him/

GARTER: Right ho. *[Exits.]*

RUTTER: Chisolm, come with me and clear up the kitchen area. You didn't do last night's washing up.

CHISOLM: Sorry, Rutter. *[They exit]*

THRUPP: Why should I clear up after them? I'm not a skivvy. I'm always getting picked on. Why couldn't I go and find Skip? Why should Garter have the cushy number? Well, I'm jolly well going to finish doing my teeth, and everything else can blooming well wait. Where's that toothpaste? Oh God, it's in Rutter's knickers. Those little beasts just throw things around, manners of pigs.

*[In a towering rage he comes out of the tent and starts to clean his teeth. Gradually he realises that there is something wrong with the toothpaste. He looks at the tube. It is KY Jelly. He googles, then lets out a roar.]*

CHISOLM!!!!

**BLACKOUT**

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

### Scene One

*[The Scout camp as before. Tent at the back, open area with flickering flames at the front in which the sketches and sing-songs are conducted. The audience also forms other members of visiting troops, join in with songs etc. It opens in the camp fire area, DEIRDRE conducting the troop in singing 'Ging Gang Goolie'. CHISOLM, GARTER, THRUPP and RUTTER sitting round the fire, leading the singing. At the end of the song, DEIRDRE addresses the audience.]*

DEIRDRE: Welcome, welcome, to all our visiting Ongar and Epping troops! Well, chaps, now that we're all into the campfire spirit, I'm sure we're all going to enjoy ourselves with all sorts of sing-alongs, sketches and other jolly japes as well. Full marks to your excellent turn-out, and a special thanks to the Wombats for their tasty bangers-and-mash supper this evening, and jolly tasty it was. Bravo, Wombats!

Now, before we go on with the show, I have one serious word to say. You may have noticed a certain other camp in the next field. It is frequented by some very strange types, I can tell you. I must warn you to have nothing to do with them. I repeat, do not go into the bushes and talk to strange men. I think I've said enough.

You can rest assured that every effort has been made for your safety. I am sending your Skipper out on patrol even as I speak, and he will accost any unsavoury characters, you can bet your life.

But on to more pleasant matters. Patrols have gone out of the way to learn skits and turns for tonight, and I'm sure we're going to enjoy ourselves very much. We start with P.L. Rutter from the 25<sup>th</sup> Ongar who is going to recite a poem he has written himself...

*[She sits. RUTTER gets up.]*

RUTTER: Thank you. I wrote this one very early one morning in camp when I was feeling a particularly warm glow. It's called *Dawn Chorus*:

*There was no sound. The air was still  
As the great dawn crept across the sky.  
I was filled deep inside  
With sweet notes, and my heart leapt high...*

**SLOW FADE TO BLACKOUT AS HE SPEAKS**

Scene Two

*[The scout tent again. To the scene have been added cardboard cut-outs and papier mâché parts of the 'Robin Hood' set. Enter COYLE and HODGEKISS, who crashes around. HODGEKISS has with him the strap-on from Act One Scene Two.]*

COYLE: Sh!

HODGEKISS: Sorry, Coyle.

COYLE: It'll be in here. They're all dressing up for their Camp Fire, they won't miss one Scout uniform.

HODGEKISS: How do you know so much about it?

COYLE: Trust me. You want a costume, don't you?

HODGEKISS: Do I ever!

COYLE: What on earth have you brought that thing for?

HODGEKISS: I need to make sure it fits in my costume.

COYLE: Boy scouts don't wear strap-ons, you plonker.

HODGEKISS: I can't suddenly go down three sizes. People will notice.

COYLE: You think they don't know?

HODGEKISS: Without my dildo I don't feel properly dressed. Oh, I wish you'd got something for me in Hatton. Something flowing...

COYLE: I couldn't get away from Kelley. He's been watching me like a hawk. I don't know what he thinks I'm doing.

HODGEKISS: Is this the tent?

COYLE: Yes. Go in. Have a look round. See if anything fits you.

*[He pushes HODGEKISS into the tent.]*

HODGEKISS: Doesn't seem right somehow. Stealing Scout uniforms. It's kinky.

COYLE: It's that or expulsion.

HODGEKISS: I know, I know. *[He disappears inside.]*

COYLE: I'll keep a lookout. *[Pause]* Found anything?

HODGEKISS: There's lots, but I don't know what will fit. I'll have to try them all on.

COYLE: For God's sake, Hodgekiss, it doesn't have to fit exactly. It's an LMG fancy dress party, not a fashion show.

HODGEKISS: Huh! Same thing for some of them. And I don't like looking untidy. Just because you're into S & M doesn't mean that you can't be presentable.

COYLE: Stop lecturing and get on with it.

HODGEKISS: *[Finding something]* Hello, hello. I say, this is a bit ripe. *[Pokes his head out.]* Look at this, Coyle.

*[Hands him a sheaf of poems. COYLE flicks through it.]*

HODGEKISS: Hot stuff, eh?

COYLE: *[To himself]* Ian...

HODGEKISS: Precocious these days, aren't they? Childhood seems to go so quickly.

COYLE: Better to start as you mean as you go on.

HODGEKISS: They're far too young to know their own minds then.

COYLE: When did you know?

HODGEKISS: Five or six, I suppose. But that's different.

*[Enter CHISOLM.]*

CHISOLM: Who are you?

COYLE: My names Coyle, Tony Coyle.

CHISOLM: What are you doing here?

COYLE: We've come to see if we can borrow a Scout uniform. It's for a fancy dress party. There wasn't anyone around.

CHISOLM: How long will you need it, the uniform?

COYLE: Only tonight.

CHISOLM: Can't see why not. Help yourself. You can have Garter's togs if you want. He won't be needing them, he's doing a sort of fancy dress himself.

COYLE: Who's Garter?

CHISOLM: He's my best chum.

COYLE: Uh-huh. I think there might be problems with sizes.

CHISOLM: You know best. Help yourself to whatever you want.

COYLE: Thanks.

CHISOLM: I'll just nip in and collect Garter's things.

*[He disappears into the tent. From inside:]*

CHISOLM: Mr. Hodgekiss –

HODGEKISS: Not you again! Get away from me – help!

COYLE: What's up, Hodgekiss? He's a perfectly harmless kid.

CHISOLM: Don't call me kid!

HODGEKISS: Harmless? That's what you think. He leapt on me.

CHISOLM: I only want some clothes, honestly.

HODGEKISS: My clothes? *[To CHISOLM]* You're sex mad!

CHISOLM: Not yours, idiot!

HODGEKISS: As long as you promise not to rescue me!

CHISOLM: Certainly not. Not after all the thanks you gave me last time.

COYLE: Quick, someone's coming. Get down in there. Don't make a move.

*[He goes behind the tent. Enter THRUPP, a handful of cards at the ready. He starts walking through his part.]*

THRUPP: I come in from the right. "I was small as a child, so they called me Little John. I suppose after that my name was like a piece of Sellotape." I can write that on my hand. - "Why was your name like a piece of Sellotape" – "It just stuck." Other hand – Two paces forward – Friar Tuck is stirring the cauldron with his stuff. That one goes on the staff. Blah, blah. "No, that shallot we had left over from last night. And there's those teapots from Belgium." That can go on the quiver. And that...

*[COYLE comes back.]*

COYLE: Excuse me, but I seem to have lost my way.

THRUPP: What do you want? Don't come near me. If you lay one finger on me I'll throw you over my shoulder into the trees.

*[He takes up an exaggerated kung-fu position.]*

COYLE: I don't want to touch you.

THRUPP: I've heard that before.

COYLE: You're not my type.

THRUPP: *[Manacing]* What did you say?

COYLE: Just a joke. I've lost the footpath to Hatton. Can you help me?

THRUPP: The road's through there –

COYLE: Through where? It's so dark now, I can't see. You couldn't take me there, could you?

THRUPP: Can't you see I'm busy?

COYLE: What are you doing?

THRUPP: Learning my lines. Except I can't. Skip said I could cheat and put them on little cards, and I've got all the cards here, in order. I've just got to work out where to put them.

COYLE: What's your name?

THRUPP: Thrupp. Assistant Patrol Leader Thrupp.

COYLE: Tony Coyle. *[They shake hands.]* Well, Thrupp, perhaps I can help you.

*[He takes the cards, which he holds with the poems.]*

COYLE: Where do they go? I'll stick them down. Have you got any Sellotape?

THRUPP: There's some in the tent.

*[He makes to go past COYLE into the tent. Instantly a hand appears with Sellotape in it round the other side, and COYLE takes it without THRUPP seeing.]*

COYLE: I seem to have some on me.

THRUPP: I've worked out the first few. Those go on the staff, those on the quiver. Then I run out of space on me, and they have to go on the set.

COYLE: What is the set?

THRUPP: We've got a log. *[Points at it.]* I go behind that at the fanfare. My line's on the next card.

COYLE: *[Not looking at the paper]* Got it. Done it.

THRUPP: Then I hold Richard's sword. That's there.

COYLE: Done.

THRUPP: Then I go off, and come back again, and I'm by that rock.

COYLE: Done.

THRUPP: Finally I have to bring on the cauldron and I say that it's ready and heating up nicely, and then I don't have anything to say until we sing the song.

COYLE: Last one on the cauldron then. Easy.

THRUPP: Thanks, Mr Coyle.

COYLE: Call me Tony.

THRUPP: You're a brick – Tony.

COYLE: You look nervous about this sketch.

THRUPP: A little bit, yes.

COYLE: Well, drink this. It'll help you.

*[He produces a hipflask from his back pocket.]*

THRUPP: What is it?

COYLE: It's a little sedative. Soothes the nerves. It'll give you confidence.

THRUPP: Are you sure?

COYLE: Would I lie to you?

THRUPP: Well ...

COYLE: Try it. You'll see.

*[THRUPP takes the flask and has a swig.]*

THRUPP: Mmm! What's in it?

COYLE: It's just a little prescription of my own devising.

THRUPP: Are you a chemist?

COYLE: Sort of.

*[THRUPP takes another swig, and hands the bottle back.]*

COYLE: Keep it. Your need is greater than mine.

THRUPP: Gosh. Thanks. I'd better be getting back.

COYLE: I think I can find my own way, now you've pointed it out. Good luck with the show.

*[He edges THRUPP off, then returns to the tent.]*

You OK, guys? Am I a little charmer, or am I a little charmer?

*[CHISOLM reappears, arms full of costumes.]*

CHISOLM: Thanks, Tony. See you later. *[Exits]*

COYLE: You ready yet, Hodgekiss?

CHISOLM: I've found a set that fits. I'm just putting on the socks.

COYLE: Then hurry up, for God's sake. I want to get out of here.

*[Enter RUTTER.]*

RUTTER: Tony!

COYLE: Ian!

RUTTER: You shouldn't be here.

COYLE: I couldn't bear to stay away.

RUTTER: Really?

COYLE: No.

RUTTER: *[Affectionately]* Bastard.

COYLE: It's Hodgekiss. He needs a uniform for fancy dress. That little guy, Chisolm, said it would be OK.

RUTTER: He would.

COYLE: What's wrong?

RUTTER: We need them for the finale. There won't be enough uniforms to go round.

COYLE: *[Offhand]* Oh, well. Too late now. You'll manage. How are you doing?

RUTTER: One down, one to go. That sketch –

COYLE: Oh yes. Thrupp was here –

RUTTER: What was he doing here?

COYLE: Cheating at cards. I was helping him.

RUTTER: Can't you ever be serious?

COYLE: Not if I can help it. How long have you got before you strut your stuff again?

RUTTER: *[Looking at watch]* About ten minutes.

COYLE: Ten minutes?

RUTTER: At least.

COYLE: Time enough...

*[COYLE pulls RUTTER behind the tent. HODGEKISS emerges immediately, in an ill-fitting Scout uniform, his own clothes under his arm.]*

HODGEKISS: I'm ready, Coyle. Coyle? Coyle?

*[He wanders to the back, and sees the two of them, presumably 'at it'. He is terribly embarrassed, doesn't know what to do.]*

HODGEKISS: Beg pardon, I'm sure.

*[He goes forward and whistles, drums fingers, looks at watch. Looks at the back of the cauldron where COYLE placed a card. He reads:]*

"The hairs that glisten on your back  
With your salt sweat..."

*[He frowns, puzzled.]*

**FADE TO BLACKOUT**

Scene Three

*[The campfire again. CHISOLM is Master of Ceremonies, terribly breathless.]*

CHISOLM: District Commissioner, Skip, fellow scouts, when we were rehearsing our finale yesterday, my friend Garter wanted to change the lyrics of a Ralph Leader song cos he thought he could write a better one, and everybody said he couldn't cos there wasn't time anyway, but he could, and he did, and it's much better and it's a surprise item in the programme, and I think it's jolly good, so there, so without more ado here's my friend – Garter!!!

*[GARTER bursts forth from the shadows. He is dressed in outrageous drag several sizes too large, and has heavy, badly done makeup. He does the number in what he images is best showbiz style.]*

GARTER: Come with me, let's see a show place  
Fancy free, it ain't like no place  
The spotlight glows, the night life glitters  
The champagne flows, the night owl flitters.  
This ain't the place to go to bed early  
The place that has you by the short and curlies –

DEIRDRE: Really!

GARTER: It's Blackpool!  
Every day you try to cram  
In Blackpool,  
You can take a horsedrawn tram  
In Blackpool  
Hark! The sound of the bingo hall  
Hark! The numbers the callers call  
In Blackpool  
Very sporty in the park  
In Blackpool  
Very naughty after dark  
On the beach you can take your socks off  
On the cliffs you can get your rocks off –

DEIRDRE: You can stop that right there, young man. Just what do you think you're doing?

GARTER: Well, they've done songs about Paris and San Francisco and Chicago and London and Glasgow, but no-one's done Blackpool except George Formby and he doesn't count cos he's rotten so I thought –

DEIRDRE: I'm not interested in what you thought. What is Scouting coming to?

GARTER: I don't understand.

DEIRDRE: When I joined the Girl Guides forty-two years ago, I did not anticipate that I would end up fostering a haven of rampant transvestism.

GARTER: What's transvestism?

DEIRDRE: You are!

GARTER: Me? Oh, golly!

*[A Butch commanding voice is heard offstage.]*

KELLEY: Take – off – that – frock.

DEIRDRE: Who said that?

KELLEY: *[Entering. He is wearing his dark glasses.]* I said, take off that frock.

DEIRDRE: Do I know you?

KELLEY: I won't tell you again, take off that dress.

DEIRDRE: How dare you talk to me like that!

KELLEY: Not you. Him.

GARTER: Me?

KELLEY: That dress is mine.

DEIRDRE: Sir, I must protest this irruption of such a vile –

KELLEY: All the guys have got costumes now except me. I'll be humiliated, a laughing stock. Give it here at once.

*[He attempts to strip it off GARTER, who fights back.]*

GARTER: Get away, you big bully.

*[CHISOLM comes from the audience and joins in.]*

CHISOLM: Pick on someone your own size.

*[In the tug of war over the dress a sleeve rips off.]*

GARTER/KELLEY: Now look what you've done!

KELLEY: Out of my way, Kid.

CHISOLM: Don't call me kid.

*[He clobbers KELLEY. His dark glasses fall off.]*

DEIRDRE: Help! Skip, where are you?

CHISOLM: Skip! But –

KELLEY: Who the fuck is Skip?

GARTER: Ooh, Skip, you swore, Skip. That's very rude. *[To DEIRDRE:]* Skip swore, Miss. Can we pour water down his trouser leg?

KELLEY: I'm not Skip, whoever he may be.

DEIRDRE: Mr Kelley, have you gone mad? What is this delirium of frocks and fancy dress?

KELLEY: I'll have that frock off him if it kills me. *[He rips off the other sleeve.]*

DEIRDRE: Desist, sir!

THRUPP: *[Coming from the audience]* Out of the way! You need an expert, someone practised in martial arts.

KELLEY: Humiliated in front of my men...

*[CHISOLM has picked up the frying pan he uses as Friar Tuck, to hit KELLEY. KELLEY ducks, and it hits THRUPP, who is poleaxed.]*

KELLEY: I want my frock.

DEIRDRE: You are insane. Resist, boys. Protect your virtue. That's it. One – two – in the guts!

*[CHISOLM and GARTER fight KELLEY off. He exits.]*

Quick, follow on the scent. We must rouse the local constabulary. Berserk Scoutmaster on the Rampage in Deepest Hertfordshire. There's not a moment to lose.

*[GARTER and CHISOLM follow KELLEY. THRUPP revives.]*

THRUPP: Trust me, commissioner. I will not fail you. Follow me, men.

*[He faints again.]*

DEIRDRE: Yoicks! Tally ho! *[She wants to go after them, but is pulled back by her responsibilities.]* God, what it is to be young!

*[She sees THRUPP.]*

Wake up, young man! Your country needs you. Wake up.

*[She slaps his face repeatedly, as the lights fade to:]*

**BLACKOUT**

Scene Four

*[The Scouts' tent again. HODGEKISS is still waiting outside for COYLE and RUTTER to finish whatever they are doing. KELLEY rushes in.]*

HODGEKISS: Oh, hello, Captain. Like the costume.

KELLEY: Fuck the costume!

HODGEKISS: How kind of you to say so. Do you want to...? I had no idea –

KELLEY: Hide me. I'm in danger of being beaten up by two twelve-year-old boy scouts.

HODGEKISS: *[Sniggers]* No!

KELLEY: Shut up, damn you! Here they come – they're implacable.

HODGEKISS: *[Enjoying that someone else is in the shit]* Aren't they? Quite terrifying!

*[CHISOLM and GARTER enter]*

GARTER: There he is!

CHISOLM: We've got you now. Surrender immediately.

GARTER: There's no escape now. You're surrounded. A bit.

KELLEY: See what I mean? They're merciless.

HODGEKISS: *[Seeing CHISOLM and GARTER]* Oh, hello again.

CHISOLM: Gosh, are you still here?

KELLEY: You know each other?

HODGEKISS: We shared a tent for a brief interval.

KELLEY: Then get them to lay off.

CHISOLM: Never. We shall see justice is done.

GARTER: You assaulted me. And tore my frock.

KELLEY: My frock, mine.

CHISOLM: And called me kid. Some things have to be paid for.

*[Enter THRUPP, reeling a little.]*

THRUPP: Halt or I fire!

GARTER: What?

THRUPP: Sorry. I got mixed up with the Cadet Corps. Never mind, grab him.

KELLEY: Protect me from these children!

HODGEKISS: In there.

*[KELLEY makes for the tent. As he dives in, THRUPP takes him in a flying rugby tackle. His legs are still outside, struggling.]*

CHISOLM: Isn't this exciting?

GARTER: Who would have thought it? Fancy Skip going crazy!

HODGEKISS: Skip? Who's Skip?

GARTER: Our Skipper – Scoutmaster. He's waffling on about fancy dress when the only fancy dress around here is –

HODGEKISS: That's not your Skipper, that's our Captain.

CHISOLM: It can't be.

THRUPP: Help me!

HODGEKISS: If he's your Skipper, why should he want a frock?

GARTER: If he isn't our Skip, why did he answer to Kelley? I heard him.

HODGEKISS: Our Captain's Kelley.

CHISOLM: He can't be.

HODGEKISS: Why not? Kelley's not an unusual name.

THRUPP: Come on, you chaps.

CHISOLM: That's definitely Skip. I'll prove it.

*[He goes over to where THRUPP is struggling.]*

'Scuse me.

*[The struggle stops. CHISOLM looks into the tent, satisfies himself, comes out. Struggle starts again. To HODGEKISS:]*

No, that's definitely our Skip!

HODGEKISS: Don't be daft. I'd know our Captain anywhere.

*[He goes to the tent.]*

Excuse me...

*[Same routine as before, stopping and starting again.]*

That's definitely our Captain.

CHISOLM: Skip!

HODGEKISS: Captain!

*[Enter SKIPPER. The way this illusion is achieved is as follows: As soon as the actor playing KELLEY/SKIPPER gets into the tent, he changes. He's wearing a scout uniform underneath. The actor playing NOSEBAG is now dressed in identical boots and jeans to KELLEY, and thrusts his legs out into THRUPP's arms. There is enough distraction between CHISOLM and HODGEKISS to cover this. KELLEY/SKIP slips out of the rear of the tent and*

*round the back of the stage to re-enter. I got this trick from an old Brian Rix farce.]*

HODGEKISS: Hello Captain

GARTER: *[Simultaneous]* Hello, Skip.

GARTER/HODGEKISS: *[To each other]* See? *[Double take]*

GARTER: Skip?

HODGEKISS: Captain?

SKIPPER: Chisolm! Garter! What are you doing here?

GARTER: But you're not here, you're there.

SKIPPER: What are you talking about? And why are you wearing that ridiculous frock?

CHISOLM: But you wanted that frock.

SKIPPER: Why should I want a frock?

CHISOLM: I don't know. But you did. 'I want that frock', you said.

GARTER: Tore the sleeve too.

SKIPPER: You're not meant to leave the camp fire.

GARTER: But –

SKIPPER: You heard what Miss Twill said. There are dangerous men around.

CHISOLM: But *you're* dangerous.

SKIPPER: Me? What nonsense! Have you two been drinking? I don't know what you think you're playing at, running around like this. Do you want to lose us the trophy? Get back immediately, and that's an order. And take those props with you for the last sketch.

*[CHISOLM and GARTER exit with the cauldron, the log etc.]*

THRUPP: He's weakening!

SKIPPER: *[To HODGEKISS]* You been sent to patrol too?

HODGEKISS: No, I –

SKIPPER: Load of nonsense if you ask me. Which troop are you from?

HODGEKISS: Hodegkiss, LMG.

SKIPPER: Haven't heard of them. Shouldn't you be with your boys? If you're not patrolling...

HODGEKISS: I'm waiting for one of them.

SKIPPER: Shouldn't he be at the campfire too?

HODGEKISS: He seems to be otherwise occupied.

THRUPP: Don't worry, I've got him pinned.

SKIPPER: Thrupp! You too? Has everyone gone mad?

THRUPP: I'll settle him, Skip.

*[He feels for the frying pan, which CHISOLM left behind. Takes it into the tent. Sound of pan hitting head. KELLEY is still.]*

Done it, Skip.

*[THRUPP turns and comes out of the tent, dusting his hands. Double takes as he realises there are two.]*

SKIPPER: Get back to the fire immediately. I don't want you skulking here.

THRUPP: But – but – but –

SKIPPER: This is no time for impersonating chickens. Get back before anyone notices. And take that frying pan with you. Now.

*[THRUPP exits.]*

SKIPPER: I don't know what this troop is coming to.

*[Enter DEIRDRE with a policeman.]*

DEIRDRE: Have you got your men fanned round the perimeter?

POLICEMAN 1: Yes, your Guideship.

DEIRDRE: Good. Ah, there he is. Officer, arrest that Scoutmaster immediately. *[Sees HODGEKISS]* Make that two Scoutmasters.

POLICEMAN 1: Any advance on two?

DEIRDRE: Have your men fan out round the camp fire. Tell them to watch out for strange men. Ah – *[indicates SKIPPER]* that one is a raving pervert. And that one *[indicates HODGEKISS]* is an imposter and a raving pervert. *[To HODGEKISS]* I've a good mind to horsewhip you.

HODGEKISS: *[Excited]* Ooooh! Really?

DEIRDRE: *[Shocked]* Oh my giddy garters! Lock them up at once before they can do any more damage.

POLICEMAN 1: *[To SKIPPER]* You heard what the lady said. You're under arrest.

SKIPPER: What for?

POLICEMAN 1: She says you assaulted a minor.

SKIPPER: Me? How?

POLICEMAN 1: In that you did forcible attempt to remove his frock. *[To DEIRDRE, puzzled.]* Is that right, ma'am?

DEIRDRE: Quite correct.

POLICEMAN 1: And you are prepared to witness to that effect.

DEIRDRE: I most certainly am.

POLICEMAN 1: What about him?

HODGEKISS: I've nothing to do with it. I'm just waiting –

POLICEMAN 1: Ah! Loitering! I see...

DEIRDRE: He's a known deviant. Last time I saw him he was staked out on the ground.

POLICEMAN 1: Nothing illegal about that –

DEIRDRE: But now he's impersonating a Boy Scout.

POLICEMAN 1: That's altogether a different matter. Impersonation is a very serious offence.

DEIRDRE: They are both liable to contaminate innocent minds. They're a danger to the public.

POLICEMAN 1: I see what you mean.

SKIPPER: But I've been patrolling the woods all the time.

POLICEMAN 1: I bet you have! *[To HODGEKISS]* And are you a senior scout? If so, I must ask you to show me your Bushman's Thong. *[Pause]* I thought not. In that case, I shall have to ask you both to accompany me to the station.

SKIPPER: I shall do no such thing.

POLICEMAN 1: Don't add resisting arrest to your litany of crimes.

SKIPPER: What litany of crimes?

POLICEMAN 1: I'm sure we can come with one at the station. This way, sir. And you...

HODGEKISS: Don't we get handcuffs?

POLICEMAN 1: I don't think that's necessary.

HODGEKISS: Shame. I would have liked handcuffs.

POLICEMAN 1: Well you can't have them. Now – move. And don't try to escape. The woods are crawling with police.

*[The three exit. DEIRDRE dusts her hands down.]*

DEIRDRE: Now let's hope that's the end of it. Now, DEIRDRE, back to the fire with you. Innocent minds must not have the chance to ponder the implications of all this activity. Hey ho. A Guide's work is never done.

*[She exits. COYLE and RUTTER reappear, adjusting their clothes.]*

COYLE: I thought she'd never go.

RUTTER: I could stay with you all night.

COYLE: You heard the police. I could be arrested just for being here.

RUTTER: Can't you lie low till they go away?

COYLE: Where? You've seen what this place is like. Piccadilly Circus. Someone's bound to spot me.

RUTTER: Or make a run for it.

COYLE: If I was a scout, I could maybe slip past them.

RUTTER: There's other uniforms in the tent.

*[COYLE goes into the tent.]*

COYLE: *[From within]* Captain!

KELLEY: Coyle! What the hell are you doing here?

COYLE: I might ask the same. I haven't time to waste. This is an emergency.

KELLEY: You're telling me. I've been beaten senseless by a Boy Scout.

COYLE: Some people have all the luck.

KELLEY: It was emphatically not consensual.

COYLE: The police have surrounded the camp, they say.

RUTTER: The Commissioner is on the rampage.

KELLEY: I've met her. The woman's mad.

COYLE: Don't worry. I've got a plan. We'll disguise ourselves as scouts.

KELLEY: She knows me. She thinks I'm their Scoutmaster already. It'll never work.

COYLE: Then we'll disguise you some more. It's the only way. Do you trust me?

KELLEY: Not an inch.

COYLE: Half an inch? Even half an inch can make a difference.

KELLEY: Convince me.

COYLE: OK, there are more uniforms in here...

*[He goes into the tent.]*

**SLOW BLACKOUT**

Scene Five

*[The Camp fire. THRUPP, CHISOLM and GARTER setting up the Robin Hood sketch and getting into costume behind DEIRDRE, who is addressing the troops. THRUPP is very nervous, and sneaks a swig from the hipflask.]*

DEIRDRE: Now boys, whatever you do, stay calm. I can tell you that from now on you will be completely safe. The constabulary has surrounded the camp. Our job is to carry on as if nothing has happened. And now you can see that the Wombats are in a flurry of activity behind me, which means that we are ready for our final sketch, which is entitled, I believe, "King Richard's Return".

*[She sits in the audience. The lights fade, then return. The sketch is now in progress, the log in place. GARTER is holding the large drinking cup.]*

THRUPP: *[Reading off his staff]* We'll have to drink the loyal toast.

GARTER: Don't be silly. You can't drink toast.

THRUPP: I mean, what wine will we drink it in?

CHISOLM: Hock

GARTER: I beg your pardon.

CHISOLM: A touch of hiccups. No we'll have some Riesling.

THRUPP: *[Reading off his hat]* Do you like Riesling?

GARTER: I don't know, I've never Riesled.

CHISOLM: But now I must return to my pot. Supper will be ready when the moon rises over the Great Oak, and the tawny owl sets forth on her nocturnal flight. Seven-thirty sharp.

GARTER: A noble feast indeed. But hark – *[Kazoo fanfare offstage]* – that must be the herald signalling that the king is close at hand. I must don my best cloak of Grimsby Green.

THRUPP: *[Reading off his hat again]* Shouldn't that be Lincoln Green?

GARTER: The shops in Lincoln were shut. Help me on with it.

THRUPP: *[Helping and reading off his shoe at the same time]* This buckle is tight.

GARTER: Almost as tight as Friar Tuck, from the smell of his breath. *[Another fanfare]* But see! The king comes! *[Pause]* But see, it is the king. *[Pause]* Honestly, it is the king – coming – shortly

*[CHISOLM whispers from offstage,]*

CHISOLM: No it's not. He's disappeared.

THRUPP: What shall we do?

GARTER: *[Deliriously happy to be vindicated]* Improvise!

THRUPP: I can't.

CHISOLM: You've got to.

DEIRDRE: I say, anything up?

GARTER: Nothing, nothing. *[THRUPP swigs from his flask.]*

THRUPP: But see, King Richard appears to be unavoidably detained.

GARTER: So he does.

THRUPP: I wonder what can have kept him.

GARTER: Perhaps he's having problems with his palfrey.

THRUPP: His what?

GARTER: His palfrey. Yes. King Richard's palfrey is lame.

THRUPP: Is it? So it is. Poor little palfrey.

GARTER: He has stopped to take a stone out of its shoe.

THRUPP: Ooh, nasty!

GARTER: See, he's getting out his Scout knife with six attachments including the one to take stones out of horses' hooves.

THRUPP: If it works on a horse it should work on a palfrey.

GARTER: A palfrey is a horse, you idiot.

THRUPP: Oh.

GARTER: Yes, now he's removing the stone. He's hitching the palfrey to a tree.

THRUPP: What's he doing now, Garter? - I mean, Robin ...

*[He takes another swig.]*

GARTER: He's stroking his palfrey – er – yes he is. And lo, he's rubbing it down with an oily rag. What a kind monarch our good King Richard is.

THRUPP: Oh. Yes. Er – very kind. The kindest king that ever was.

GARTER: And now he's feeding it a carrot. He does seem to be taking his time. Now he's – er – he's tying his shoelace. And now he's – scratching his nose. And now he's – sending his messenger on – on some errand or another. And now –

*[RUTTER appears from the opposite direction to where they are looking.]*

RUTTER: *[off]* Sorry I'm late.

GARTER: *[With relief]* But see! It is the King. *[Fanfare again]*

*[RUTTER enters with KELLEY disguised with a huge false nose. This is in fact the strap-on dildo. THRUPP takes one look and reaches for the hipflask again.]*

RUTTER: Greetings my loyal subjects.

GARTER: *[Whispers]* Who's that?

RUTTER: I don't think you've met my loyal minstrel, Blondel, have you? He's followed me all over Europe, though he is a mere boy. Haven't you, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods. The nose wobbles precariously.]*

RUTTER: Unfortunately at the moment he's lost his voice on account of all the minstrelsy. Isn't that right, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods again.]*

RUTTER: I have heard how you vanquished the bad Sheriff of Nottingham.

GARTER: He will never stalk Sherwood Forest again.

RUTTER: I'm glad to hear it.

GARTER: They've chopped it down for the bypass.

RUTTER: Six long years have I journeyed, fighting Saladin even to the gates of Jerusalem. Haven't I, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods. THRUPP is at the back of the stage, looking for his next line, while having a swig from the flask. NOSEBAG in his party costume of full drag goes across the back of the stage. He is trying to elude the police. THRUPP double takes, but by the time he looks again, NOSEBAG is gone. He looks where the apparition was, looks at the flask, shakes his head.]*

RUTTER: *[Continuing over this]* But I have always kept England close to my heart. Haven't I, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods]*

THRUPP: *[To GARTER]* Did you see what I –

GARTER: What?

THRUPP: *[Looks again. There is nothing.]* Nothing.

RUTTER: You have brought justice to this most fair part of my kingdom, for which I thank thee. Hasn't he, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods again.]*

GARTER: Gosh, it was nothing. Any folk hero would have done the same.

*[THRUPP looks towards the back again. NOSEBAG crosses back again, this time followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> POLICEMAN. THRUPP shakes his head and finishes off the hipflask. GARTER kneels.]*

RUTTER: In honour of thy services – arise, Sir Robin.

*[Silence. GARTER kicks CHISOLM.]*

CHISOLM: Hooray!

DEIRDRE: I like that. Both patriotic and instructive.

RUTTER: But now let us have feasting and merriment. My loyal messenger told me that jolly Friar Tuck was preparing a most noble repast in my honour. Where is he?

THRUPP: *[Reading off the log]* 'He lies back,  
His stomach taut and firm,  
His ribcage arched  
His eyes closed to ecstasy.'

RUTTER: My poem!

DEIRDRE: That doesn't sound like Friar Tuck to me.

*[GARTER shoos THRUPP.]*

GARTER: Exit.

THRUPP: *[Saying it as a line]* Exit. Oh, I see! Exit! *[He exits.]*

GARTER: Perhaps you are thirsty, sire. Try some of our excellent local mead.

RUTTER: *[Removing poem from the log and destroying it as he speaks]* Ah yes, mead! The nectar of old England. How I have missed it! I even commanded my loyal minstrel to compose a ballad in its honour. Didn't I, Blondel?

*[KELLEY nods again.]*

How did it go? You must sing it for me.

*[KELLEY protests in mime.]*

Well, maybe not. If I remember it went something like this: "Real mead again, don't know where, don't know when"

GARTER: I will go fetch it. *[Exits.]*

RUTTER: What excellent and stout-hearted chaps they are. I would that all my subjects were as brave.

*[THRUPP enters, dragging NOSEBAG in his full drag costume.]*

THRUPP: Look what I found skulking in the woods. *[As himself]* What do you think of that, eh?

DEIRDRE: Who is this person? I don't understand.

RUTTER: Good heavens! Maid Marian! Welcome, lovely Marian to our camp.

DEIRDRE: Of course. Silly of me.

GARTER: *[To DEIRDRE]* She's the leader of the local Guides. A kind of Special Guest Star.

RUTTER: But where is Friar Tuck? I told you to bring Friar Tuck.

*[KELLEY wags a disapproving finger in sympathy.]*

THRUPP: But –

RUTTER: Stay in character

THRUPP: He was lurking –

*[KELLEY indicates he must go with his nose.]*

RUTTER: No matter what Maid Marian was doing, go and get me Friar Tuck this instant. *[KELLEY pushes THRUPP off]* Well, Marian, I'm sure you have a lot of things you ought to be doing.

NOSEBAG: What? Why surely. Wimples to sew, lutes to play. You know how it is... A Maiden's work is never done

RUTTER: Don't let me keep you.

NOSEBAG: Thanks. Well, be seeing you – er – King Richard.

RUTTER: Bye-ee.

*[NOSEBAG exits. KELLEY tries to follow but THRUPP re-enters, with CHISOLM, who now has the frying pan, blocking his way. THRUPP tries to say his line, but dries. He looks at the rock, but there is nothing on it. He runs to the log. With relief:]*

THRUPP: "His strong thighs grip my waist as I enter him,  
He trembles as my fingers run across his chest"...

*[They all stare in horror. KELLEY gets his attention, and mimes going off to get the cauldron. It's a bit like a turn at charades. The penny drops.]*

I'll go and get the cauldron.

RUTTER: Why?

THRUPP: I think we're going to need it.

*[THRUPP runs off to get the cauldron in panic.]*

DEIRDRE: What's going on? I don't understand.

RUTTER: What is this? Where is my supper?

CHISOLM: It was ready, my lord. I tasted it to see if it was good. And it was. Very. So I tasted it a little more. And it was even better. So I tasted it again. And it was simply the most scrumptious supper – and so I ate it all.

*[Over CHISOLM's speech RUTTER destroys the card on the log.]*

RUTTER: Are you telling me there is no supper because you ate it all? You must give up these dreadful habits.

CHISOLM: But I've nothing else to wear.

RUTTER: Well you shall pay for this.

*[THRUPP and GARTER re-enter with the cauldron. He reads off it as he comes -]*

THRUPP: The hairs that glisten on his back  
With his salt sweat,  
I want to lick it off  
To run my tongue down vertebrae to the cleft –

GARTER: That's a bit ripe!

THRUPP: This is disgusting!

DEIRDRE: I quite agree. *[To THRUPP]* I'll have you cashiered, young man.

RUTTER: He's drunk. *[KELLEY mimes drinking and getting sozzled.]*

DEIRDRE: Drunk? This gets worse and worse.

RUTTER: *[To CHISOLM]* For god's sake, keep going. *[To audience]* Give me that cauldron. Into the pot with him, Little John.

CHISOLM: My lord –

RUTTER: No arguments. The king has spoken. Little John?

THRUPP: This camp is cursed. There's a sex fiend at work. There's lubricating jelly in the tent. I cleaned my teeth with it.

*[There is a shocked silence. CHISOLM is left stranded with no-one to put him in the cauldron.]*

CHISOLM: I suppose I'd better get in then. *[He does so.]*

RUTTER: Let's add some herbs...

GARTER: But we haven't got thyme! *[He finds this hysterically funny. KELLEY does too; he seems to be turning into Harpo Marx.]*

THRUPP: And Garter and Chisolm play with themselves. I heard them say so.

DEIRDRE: Oh, stop him, stop him. Stop this filth!

CHISOLM: With pleasure.

THRUPP: If you can keep your head when all around you...

RUTTER: That's later.

*[CHISOLM brains THRUPP again with the frying pan.]*

THRUPP: You'll be a man, my son. *[He passes out.]*

CHISOLM: Help, help, the water's getting hotter.

RUTTER: Bear up, good friar. Imagine that you are a missionary in the Northlands, where, I am told, guests there are often served in such wise.

*[A look of consternation comes over CHISOLM's face.]*

CHISOLM: It's happening.

GARTER: What?

CHISOLM: My bladder. It didn't want to work and now it does. I can feel it coming on. What shall I do?

GARTER: Stay in character.

CHISOLM: What??

*[KELLEY dithers then finds the loyal toasting cup. Measures it, nods, hands it to GARTER.]*

GARTER: Stay in character. At all times. Golden rule. Here, use this.

*[He hands the loyal toasting cup to CHISOLM.]*

GARTER: Now get down.

CHISOLM: The heat grows too intense. I faint.

*[He ducks behind the cauldron.]*

GARTER: Stay, sire. This is my most trusty comrade. Spare him.

*[A very loud tinkle into the drinking cup starts. RUTTER is standing over THRUPP in case of more trouble. He is away from the cauldron, and so doesn't actually hear what is going on. GARTER, being nearer to CHISOLM, does.]*

RUTTER: But what is that sound that strikes upon my ear?

GARTER: It is the royal huntsmen, sire. The noise denotes that relief is at hand.

RUTTER: I can hardly contain myself.

GARTER: You're not the only one. But – er – we shall soon have supper, for they have –

THRUPP: *[Reviving]* - fornicated like rabbits all over the camp –

*[RUTTER brains him again.]*

GARTER: - shot one of your royal deer. We shall dine on venison tonight.

RUTTER: Most excellent. Release Friar Tuck from his agony.

CHISOLM: Not yet... *[The tinkling is continuing.]*

GARTER: He seems to be quite enjoying the warm water –

CHISOLM: Yes! It's the first shower I've had in months.

RUTTER: Come, Friar. There's no need to be bashful.

CHISOLM: Oh, yes there is!

GARTER: Hurry up, Chisolm. *[The tinkling continues]*

CHISOLM: You can't rush these things.

GARTER: It is the effect of fear, sire. It has weakened him. Let me help you out, good friar.

CHISOLM: All done.

*[GARTER helps him out, taking the full royal drinking cup.]*

RUTTER: All's well that ends well. I trust you have learnt your lesson, good friar.

CHISOLM: I have indeed.

RUTTER: So come, let us drink a toast to celebrate my return. You have the mead, I see. Give me my royal drinking cup, that I may pledge the health of all my subjects.

*[KELLEY is horrified. Mimes that he shouldn't.]*

CHISOLM: No!

RUTTER: What's this? My royal drinking cup, I say.

GARTER: You can't –

RUTTER: Give it here.

*[He lunges for it. GARTER throws it to CHISOLM – it'll need a lid, like a German beer stein – who throws it to KELLEY. THRUPP wakes up again. KELLEY throws it to THRUPP.]*

THRUPP: Cheers!

*[He drains it at a gulp, looks queasy, looks in the cup, passes out again.]*

GARTER: But come, let us have music.

RUTTER: Let me hear that old Sherwood song that I love so well.

CHISOLM: We can't. Thrupp's passed out again and I can't semaphore.

GARTER: *[To DEIRDRE]* A slight technical hitch. We must consult.

RUTTER: We've got to do it. How do we get Skip –

CHISOLM: - the captain –

RUTTER: - whoever he is – off otherwise.

GARTER: Who'll cover? Thrupp can't do his poem.

RUTTER: We can do the song as we are.

CHISOLM: No, you start. You're changed. We'll get in our uniforms and come back and join in. Let's take Thrupp too.

*[GARTER and CHISOLM exit with THRUPP.]*

RUTTER: OK. *[Sudden realisation that there are no uniforms left for them.]* But –

*[To audience:]* But come, let us have that old Sherwood song that I love so well. How did it go, Blondel? *[KELLEY*

*shrugs*] Don't you remember? [*KELLEY shakes his head.*]  
But you wrote it.

*[KELLEY mimes that he is a forgetful old silly.]*

I suppose I shall have to teach it to you myself.

*[KELLEY mimes 'Oh goody'.]*

RUTTER:           By the campfire, by the campfire  
                      With the open sky above  
                      By the campfire, not a damp fire,  
                      It's the country life we love

*[RUTTER takes KELLEY's arm and gets him to dance]*

The skies are blue, the grass is green  
The sun is warm and the air is clean  
We're the fittest boys you've ever seen –

With our campfire, cheer-and-stamp fire  
With our champ camp fire routine.

*[To the audience:]* All together now – one – two – three

By the campfire, by the campfire

*[He conducts with the strap-on. KELLEY joins in.]*

*[CHISOLM and GARTER reappear and join the line-up. They are wearing COYLE and HODGEKISS's clothes.]*

CHISOLM:        Couldn't find our uniforms.

RUTTER:           I know who's got them.

GARTER:          But we found some hankies, though.

*[He passes out coloured hankies of the kind used to signal sexual preference in 'the hanky code'. They wave them in best Gang Show tradition.]*

ALL:                By the campfire etc.

*[Their routine takes them off the edge of the stage. When they dance back, NOSEBAG is on the end of the line in his costume.]*

KELLEY:           What are you doing here?

NOSEBAG:        I can't get away. Filth everywhere. I thought you might be in trouble too.

KELLEY:           I am. Just join in now.

*[They continue dancing.]*

KELLEY:           We're going to have to make a break for it together.

*[They start to sidle off, still dancing. POLICEMAN 2 appears and stands watching them suspiciously in their path. They come back and try to sidle off the other way. When they reach the edge again, they return with COYLE on the end.]*

RUTTER:           I thought you got away.

COYLE:            Fuzz round there too. We're surrounded.

RUTTER:           What do we do?

COYLE:            Keep singing.

*[They do. In the energetic routine, KELLEY's nose flies off. RUTTER catches it. KELLEY stops dancing and turns his back on the audience.]*

KELLEY:           Ow! My nose!

DEIRDRE:        *[To RUTTER, about the strap-on]* What is that you're holding?

RUTTER:           It's a jelly mould.

DEIRDRE:        What's Robin Hood doing with a jelly mould in Sherwood Forest?

RUTTER:           Afters?

KELLEY:            *[Groping for it]* Where's my nose?

*[He comes face to face with DEIRDRE.]*

DEIRDRE:         Mr Kelley!

KELLEY:            Shit!

NOSEBAG:         Language! Not in front of the boys.

DEIRDRE:         *[Approving]* I'm glad someone has some decency. *[The KELLEY]* Mr. Kelley, I thought you were in custody.

*[They are still trying to dance.]*

Mr. Kelley, stand still while I'm talking to you. How did you escape?

KELLEY:            I haven't escaped.

DEIRDRE:         They can't have released you.

KELLEY:            Released me from what?

DEIRDRE:         From the police cell where you belong. Stand back, boys. That man is dangerous. He may be armed.

KELLEY:            She's mad. I always said she was.

DEIRDRE:         Don't move. You are surrounded. One blow on my whistle summons the constabulary.

RUTTER:            But Miss Twill –

*[DEIRDRE blows her whistle.]*

GARTER:            Cripes, that's torn it.

DEIRDRE:         We'll soon see who's mad.

*[POLICEMAN 2 comes running.]*

POLICEMAN 2: What's up? Where's the villain? Is it you? Or you? Put your hand up, whoever you are.

DEIRDRE: Officer, that man [*Points to KELLEY*] is an escaped Scoutmaster. Arrest him immediately.

POLICEMAN 2: He looks like an ordinary Scoutmaster to me.

DEIRDRE: Half an hour ago he was taken into custody and marched down to the police station on charges of child molestation. He must have escaped his captors. Arrest him at once.

KELLEY: I've not escaped from anywhere. I've been here all the time. I've got witnesses.

POLICEMAN 2: Escaped, you say? We'll soon see about that.

*[He takes out his radio, calls through to the Station.]*

Zebra Victor Daniel to the Old Corral. Are you receiving me? Over. Zebra Victor Daniel to the Old Corral. Are you receiving me? Oh, hello Sarge. I've got a woman down here says she's seen an escaped Scoutmaster. Know anything about it? [*To DEIRDRE*] What's his name?

DEIRDRE: Kelley.

KELLEY: I'm Kelley.

DEIRDRE: You admit it,

KELLEY: No law against being called Kelley.

DEIRDRE: We'll see about that.

POLICEMAN 2: Name of Kelley. You've got him, you say? So he's not escaped? I thought so. She seems the highly-strung type to me. Right, Sarge. Zebra Victor Daniel to the Old Corral, over and out. [*To DEIRDRE*] It's all right, madam, he's safely under lock and key.

DEIRDRE: He's not. He's standing right there. I should know, I performed a citizen's arrest on him. He's dangerous.

KELLEY: Do I look dangerous?

*[He advances on her dangerously.]*

DEIRDRE: Keep away from me. *[To POLICEMAN 2]* Last time he tried to seize this young man's dress.

POLICEMAN 2: *[Totally confused]* Really?

DEIRDRE: And all day there's been strange men coming and going in chains and harnesses and one of the boys talked about licking sweat off, and there was one with lubricating jelly –

RUTTER: He's given us the slip –

DEIRDRE: - and this one dressed up like Liza Minelli, and the whole edifice is crumbling, do you hear? Crumbling round our ears, and we've got to stop it, constable, you and I, before it's too late.

POLICEMAN 2: Sure you haven't been overdoing things, madam?

DEIRDRE: What do you mean?

POLICEMAN 2: Well, fresh country air does funny things to people who aren't used to it. Like, turns them funny in the head, if you get my drift.

DEIRDRE: Nonsense. I'm perfectly sane. That man is SM Kelley, or my name isn't Deirdre Twill.

COYLE: Excuse me, what did you say your name was?

DEIRDRE: DEIRDRE Twill.

COYLE: *[Shaking his head]* She has these little fantasies.

POLICEMAN 2: What do you mean, sir?

COYLE: We have a District Commissioner Twill. But that's not her.

POLICEMAN 2: Really?

COYLE: No. That is. *[He points to NOSEBAG.]*

NOSEBAG: What? Oh yes. Absolutely. Jolly hockey sticks. Deirdre Twill, that's me.

DEIRDRE: He's lying. Arrest him. Arrest them all. They're all in it together.

COYLE: She's been causing problems all weekend. Ask the people in the camp in the next field. Tried to gate-crash there first, then claimed to be some sort of inspector here.

POLICEMAN 2: And you're not having an inspection?

COYLE: Of course we are – and that's DC Twill doing it.

NOSEBAG: *[To GARTER and CHISOLM]* Attention!

*[They come to attention. NOSEBAG adjusts their muir caps, straightens their harnesses.]*

NOSEBAG: Jolly good. Top hole. Full marks. Carry on.

POLICEMAN 2: Did you want this Kelley arrested?

DEIRDRE: I did, but you won't arrest him.

POLICEMAN 2: He's been arrested.

DEIRDRE: No he hasn't. He's here.

POLICEMAN 2: We're going round in circles. You'd better come to the station, madam. We need to sort this out.

DEIRDRE: It's not me.

COYLE: And while you're sorting things out, Sergeant –

POLICEMAN 2: Constable, actually –

COYLE: Only a matter of time –

POLICEMAN 2: Oh, thank you –

COYLE: - perhaps you can get all these policemen called off? I'm sure they must have better things to do than loiter looking for strange men.

POLICEMAN 2: I dunno. Some of them quite enjoy it. They will have their little bit of fun.

COYLE: Nevertheless –

POLICEMAN 2: *[To NOSEBAG]* Didn't you call them out?

NOSEBAG: Certainly not! The idea!

POLICEMAN 2: Her again? *[Indicating DEIRDRE]*

COYLE: 'Fraid so.

POLICEMAN 2: She's a blooming nuisance. In that case...

COYLE: Excellent.

NOSEBAG: So, if there's nothing more we can do for you, we have a campfire to attend.

POLICEMAN 2: I understand. Now come along, madam.

DEIRDRE: I will not. I am not responsible –

POLICEMAN 2: I can see that, madam.

DEIRDRE: This is disgraceful. I shall write to my MP.

POLICEMAN 2: And who might that be? Mr Gladstone?

DEIRDRE: Really!

CAMPFIRE – Eric Presland

*[They exit, DEIRDRE protesting all the way.]*

NOSEBAG:            Alright, everyone. Simmer down!

COYLE:             Careful, Nosebag. Authority's going to your head.

NOSEBAG: Sorry. I got carried away.

COYLE: Hey, I've had a great idea. We've got a party in the other field. Why don't you join us?

NOSEBAG: But they're just kids.

CHISOLM/GARTER: DON'T CALL US KIDS!

RUTTER: But what about Skip?

COYLE: They'll release him now. Hodegkiss too.

KELLEY: And I'll see my brother for the first time in twenty-five years.

COYLE: Are you sure he's your brother.

KELLEY: Who else can it be but my long-lost twin?

GARTER: Can we really come, Coyle, old man?

COYLE: Sure.

GARTER: Whizzo!

CHISOLM: Will we get to see an initiation rite this time?

COYLE: Maybe. If you're very good.

CHISOLM: Gosh!

RUTTER: The way you got rid of them all was a stroke of genius.

COYLE: I think I can safely say I surpassed myself.

RUTTER: I love you.

COYLE: Come here. *[They kiss.]*

GARTER: Yeuch!

CHISOLM: That's sippy.

RUTTER: Even with a man?

G & C BOTH: It's still sippy.

RUTTER: How do you know? You've never tried it.

GARTER: That's true. What do you think, old man?

CHISOLM: Well, Rutter's a really good egg...

GARTER: And if he likes it...

CHISOLM: It can't be all bad.

GARTER: Think we might give it a whirl?

CHISOLM: I'm game if you are, old son.

GARTER: Righty-ho. How do we do this?

*[They kiss clumsily and inexpertly.]*

*[Enter THRUPP, still drunk, but dressed in KELLEY's leather gear, with a pair of handcuffs in one hand and a riding crop in the other.]*

THRUPP: By the campfire, by the campfire –

KELLEY: My gear!

NOSEBAG: Looks good. Could be quite a tasty geezer.

THRUPP: By the campfire, by the campfire etc

COYLE: Hey, Thrupp, you're too late. It's over.

NOSEBAG: *[To THRUPP]* I like the gear. You look good.

THRUPP: You think? It feels odd. Nice odd, though.

NOSEBAG:           Come to my tent later, I'll show you how to use those things.

COYLE:             So you want to sing, Thrupp?

THRUPP:            I want to sing...

COYLE:             All right, everybody. Back to the camp. Lead the way, Thrupp.

ALL:                By the campfire, by the campfire..

*[They all dance off. The lights fade, so that all that is left is the flags glowing luminously in the dark, and the voices disappearing into the distance.]*

**THE END**