

# SEESAW [1978]

*A Vaudeville for two performers by Eric Presland*

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*[The set suggests a surrealistic children's playground; four large building bricks/boxes, planks, a seesaw, all painted bright glossy primary colours. CHRIS and PAT wear dungarees, and have a slight suggestion of clown make-up - not so much as to become stage-cliché clowns or hide natural expression.]*

*As the lights come up, PAT is standing playing with a yo-yo; CHRIS is sitting almost foetally on the bottom of the seesaw, in the dumps.]*

PAT: *[To self, concentrating:]* Up... down... two... down... three... down... *[The Yo-yo string tangles. To audience:]* Life's full of Ups and Downs. Right now, I'm Up. *[PAT jumps on a block.]* Chris is Down.

CHRIS: Pat...

PAT: I'm the king of the castle...

CHRIS: Pat...

PAT: And you're a dirty - what?

CHRIS: I'm fed up.

PAT: Why?

CHRIS: Why do we always play the same games?

PAT: We don't know any others. I suppose. I like them, anyway.

CHRIS: That's because you win. You always win.

PAT: That's because I make the rules up.

CHRIS: You cheat.

PAT: No I don't. I just - change the rules from time to time.

CHRIS: Well, I don't want to play any more.

PAT: You *are* fed up.

CHRIS: I told you I was. You never believe me.

PAT: Course I do, love. I believe you are Fed Up. Honest.

CHRIS: Swear.

PAT: Oh... Knick-knacks!

CHRIS: Not that swear, real swear. Cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-be-eaten-alive-by-a-column-of-voracious-all-consuming-giant-man-eating-soldier-ants swear.

PAT: I swear I believe you are Fed Up. I swear on my Mother's grave.

CHRIS: Your mother isn't dead. She lives in Cricklewood.

PAT: Same thing. OK, I swear on the Koran, on the Kaballah, on the Vedas and the Seven Sacred Books. I swear on Enid Blyton. OK?

CHRIS: OK.

PAT: Good.

CHRIS: Then comfort me.

PAT: There, there. Better?

CHRIS: No.

PAT: There, there and possibly there.

CHRIS: It's not working.

PAT: You won't let it work.

CHRIS: Try again. Please.

PAT: There, there. Ever so there, there, there.

CHRIS: Harder.

PAT: There there there there there there there -

CHRIS: Harder -

PAT: There there there there there there there there  
theretheretherethere. Phew, this is hard work.

*[PAT sits on a box for a rest.]*

CHRIS: You stopped.

PAT: I'm tired. In fact, I'm shattered. Being a pillar of emotional stability takes it out of you, you know. You better?

CHRIS: Mmm. A bit. If you could just manage...?

PAT: *[Resigned]* OK. *[Perfunctory]* There, there, there.  
Sympathy, sympathy.

CHRIS: You say all the right things.

PAT: Thanks.

CHRIS: I feel much better.

*[CHRIS straightens on the seesaw, legs raising it off the floor till its parallel to the ground.]*

CHRIS: Want to play?

PAT: No. *[PAT stands, turns away.]*

CHRIS: Please...

PAT: No. I'm fed up. I'm a bit Down.

*[PAT stands on one of the smaller boxes, sulking.]*

CHRIS: Oh, come on.

*[CHRIS raises and lowers seesaw alone.]*

PAT: Shan't.

*[PAT suddenly turns and screams like a kamikaze pilot jumps off the box and onto the seesaw, which sends CHRIS up into the air, waving legs around, struggling to get down.]*

PAT: *[To audience:]* You see? I'm really Down.

CHRIS: *[To audience:]* Pat's really Down. *[Inviting them to join in:]* Aaah!

PAT: That's cruel, that is. Mockery's cruel. And you're mocking.

CHRIS: Sorry. Ether, ether.

PAT: Ether?

CHRIS: It's an anagram of there, there.

PAT: I don't want to play. I don't like word games. Not when I'm Down.

CHRIS: *[Shrugs]* I'm not Down. I'm high as a kite. Whee!

PAT: *[To audience:]* It's in the nature of our relationship. In order for the one to be Up -

CHRIS: *[To audience:]* That's me -

PAT: The other has to be Down. And yet it is also in the natural order of things that the one who is Down calls the tune; for –

CHRIS: *[Upper class]* It's a lovely view.

PAT: - at any moment, by raising my weight –

CHRIS: You can see over five counties.

PAT: - by choosing not to be Down, I can bring the high and mighty crashing to the floor once more. Of course, in the

very moment of using my power, I forfeit it, and it transfers to the person who is Down again. Unless, that is, I step off the seesaw –

*[PAT does so; CHRIS crashes to the floor]*

PAT: - reject the conspiracy of the weak with the strong. As long as we stay on the seesaw, we can never both be Up. The most we can do is a sort of Half-way Up –

CHRIS: Like the Grand Old Duke of York.

PAT: Neither Up nor Down.

BOTH: *[To audience:]* And that's a boring game.

PAT: *[Eager to see the good side, to audience:]* And at least we can't be Down together either. If we ever were... *[Mimes slitting throat]* Seriously. I don't want to think about it. I don't, I don't.

*[PAT tries to block out the thought. A string of sausages appears from PAT's ear. PAT pulls it out, waves it around, then stamps on it frantically.]*

PAT: That's better. *[With relief:]* There's always the seesaw...

*[CHRIS starts wailing, as if newly-fallen.]*

PAT: Does it hurt?

CHRIS: I'll be all right. Honestly.

PAT: Shall I get you a bandage or something? I could make a poultice.

CHRIS: Don't fuss. It's only a little bump.

PAT: I think there's a bit of steak in the fridge....

CHRIS: *[Brightening]* Is there? Oooh, ow, ouch *[The sore part suddenly gets more sore.]*

PAT: I'll get it for you.

CHRIS: Would you?

PAT: I just said I would.

CHRIS: You're an angel.

PAT: I know. Saves on bus fares. *[Mimes flying.]*

CHRIS: But heavy on Brasso. *[Mimes polishing halo.]*

*[PAT goes to a smaller box, opens it, and a jack-in-the-box springs out with a piece of steak in its hand.]*

PAT: Thank you. *[Takes steak.]* Here you are, put that on it.

CHRIS: Thanks. *[Eats piece of steak, which disappears by magic.]*  
Mmm. Delicious.

PAT: *[Indignant]* You're not meant to eat it.

CHRIS: I'm *starving*.

PAT: I brought it for your head.

CHRIS: My head's hungry. It's my steak. I can do what I want with it.

PAT: We were going to have it for supper.

CHRIS: I'm having supper early.

PAT: But your head hurts.

CHRIS: How do you know what hurts?

PAT: *[To audience, agreeing:]* How do I know what hurts? *[To CHRIS:]* Better?

CHRIS: Yes. Thanks.

*[They smile and hug. The first moment of real warmth.]*

PAT: You know, you bring out my maternal instincts.

CHRIS: You bring out my maternal instincts too.

PAT: Mummy!

CHRIS: Mummy! *[They hug again.]* My God! Do you realise - ?!  
This is - INCEST!!

BOTH: Argh!

*[They roll round on the floor as if poisoned.]*

PAT: Quick! What's the antidote?

CHRIS: Confession.

*[PAT kneels quickly in front of CHRIS.]*

PAT: Father, dear father, I confess I have lusted in my heart  
after my own mother, and did commit the act of darkness  
with her.

CHRIS: I absolve you. Three Hail Marys, please.

*[CHRIS mimes ringing cash register. PAT and CHRIS reverse position.]*

CHRIS: Oh, reverend Father, I have erred from the true path of the  
Lord, in that I did commit fornication with my dear white-  
haired old mother in my heart, and other parts of the body.

PAT: I absolve you. Five Te Deums. *[Cash register again.]*

CHRIS: And Father - can I do it again, please?

PAT: As long as you confess afterwards.

CHRIS: That's a relief.

*[They collapse, panting. Pause.]*

CHRIS: *[Gruff working-class:]* 'Ere. Want a good time tonight,  
darling?



PAT: *[Thinks, then:]* No thanks. I'd rather stay with you.

CHRIS: *[Considering]* That's nice.

PAT: Yes, it was rather good, wasn't it? I wish I'd said it.

CHRIS: But you did, Oscar, you did.

PAT: I have a terrible memory. *[Suddenly seriously worried]*  
How did we get here? I can't remember...

CHRIS: We walked through the door...

PAT: Only ghosts do that.

CHRIS: Perhaps we are ghosts...

PAT: Perhaps we opened the door first...

CHRIS: It was our space. Prepared for us. Our garden of delights.  
And here we are.

PAT: *[Understanding]* Ah. *[The worry returns.]* I still don't remember...

CHRIS: Remember what?

PAT: I feel like I lost something. There used to be - something - else. Before.

CHRIS: *[Unbelieving]* What?

PAT: *[Outburst]* If I knew that, I'd – Stupid!

*[PAT looks at CHRIS with real hatred. CHRIS suddenly becomes aware of the jack-in-the-box for the first time. Goes over to it with curiosity.]*

CHRIS: Who's that?

PAT: What? Oh, that's nothing.

CHRIS: A nothing that's hiding in *our* fridge, eating *my* steak?

PAT: You ate your steak.

CHRIS: It was got at. I knew it tasted funny.

PAT: You said it was delicious.

CHRIS: I bet it's been paddling in the coleslaw too.

PAT: It's nothing. Just a friend.

CHRIS: Who?

PAT: No-one you know. Before your time.

CHRIS: I don't remember... What's it doing in the fridge?

PAT: I like to have it handy. You know, just in case.

CHRIS: In case what?

PAT: I'd rather be with you. Honest.

CHRIS: In case WHAT? *[Suddenly frightened, clasping PAT]* Let's play a ball game.

PAT: Don't want to.

CHRIS: Please....

PAT: I'm tired. I've got to get up in the morning.

CHRIS: Why?

PAT: It's the rule.

CHRIS: Why?

PAT: *[Worried]* I can't remember...

CHRIS: Play the ball game.

PAT: I've got a headache.

CHRIS: For me...

PAT: I've told you, I'm tired.

CHRIS: You're always tired.

PAT: I'm Down. Remember?

CHRIS: We've played that.

PAT: I'm not playing. I don't want to.

CHRIS: *[Pedantic]* You may not want to. But you're still playing. That's the first rule. You can't stop.

*[CHRIS produces a bright, medium-sized ball, about 9" across.]*

PAT: *[Peevish]* OK....

*[The Ball Game is symbolic screwing. This should be obvious from the characters' reactions, but should not be played for double entendre. The game consists of simply throwing the ball from one player to the other, with variations of height, speed, underarm/overarm etc. Improvisation should make this clear. Now PAT is just passing the ball back perfunctorily. CHRIS, having suggested the game, has to put on an elaborate show of enjoyment, throwing the ball high, throwing from between the legs and generally displaying skill. PAT stops with the ball.]*

PAT: I'm not comfortable.

CHRIS: Lie down.

PAT: *[Lying down]* That's better.

CHRIS: Good. Can I have the ball back?

PAT: I think I'll go to sleep.

CHRIS: That's against the rules.

PAT: I've changed the rules.

CHRIS: You can't.

PAT: I just have. [*Snores loudly.*] I've gone to sleep.

CHRIS: No you haven't. You're still talking.

PAT: I'm talking in my sleep.

CHRIS: You're talking to me. I'm not asleep.

PAT: How do you know?

CHRIS: I'm not.

PAT: Prove it.

CHRIS: I'm talking to you.

PAT: I'm talking to you, and I'm asleep.

CHRIS: *[Exasperated]* You're *not*.

PAT: Oh, go away. You're not in my dream.

*[Pause as CHRIS thinks this one out. PAT snores again. CHRIS has a bright idea.]*

CHRIS:           *[Imitating alarm-clock]* Brrrrrrrrrrrrr!

*[PAT fumbles round irritably and switches CHRIS off; goes back to sleep.]*

**CHRIS:** Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

PAT: *[Waking with a start]* You can't do that. I switched you off.

CHRIS: Brrrrrr - I'm a repeating alarm - Brrrrrrrrrrr!

PAT:OK. *[Switches CHRIS off again; sits up.]* I'm getting up.

CHRIS: So I see.

PAT: But I'm still Down.

CHRIS: Oh.

PAT: Maybe if I didn't go today... Stayed in bed...

*[PAT falls back]*

CHRIS: You're not sick.

PAT: No....

CHRIS: It's against the rules.

PAT: But I'm worrying. About what I lost.

CHRIS: Where did you last have it with you?

PAT: I don't know -

CHRIS: What colour was it?

PAT: *[Agitated]* I don't know. I don't think it was that sort of A Thing.

CHRIS: Well, what sort of a Thing was it?

PAT: Just a - Thing sort of Thing. You know. A Thing.

CHRIS: What sort of Thing do you call that? I don't believe you ever had any Thing.

PAT: Maybe I didn't....

*[PAT looks wistfully at the Jack-in-the-box]*

CHRIS: Who *is* that?

PAT: I told you. A friend.

CHRIS: What sort of friend?

PAT: Just a friend friend. You know....

CHRIS: No, I don't.

PAT: From way back....

CHRIS: I wouldn't know.

PAT: Before I lost....

CHRIS: If you had....

PAT: I *did*. I know I did.

*[PAT goes over to the Jack-in-the-box and looks at it with curiosity. To JACK:]*

PAT: Did *you* take it?

CHRIS: Who - Is - That?

PAT: *[To JACK:]* Are you sure you didn't?

CHRIS: I want to know.

PAT: *[Offhand]* Nothing to do with you. All in the past.

*[CHRIS seizes the Jack-in-the-box and pushes it back inside the box, clamping it down.]*

CHRIS: There! That's what I think of your past.

PAT: That was my friend. You can't do that to my friend.  
*[Bursts into tears.]* Now I'm all alone.

CHRIS: You've got me.... *[Comforts PAT]*

PAT: But I wanted....

CHRIS: Well, you've got me. So make the most of it while stocks last.

*[PAT smiles.]*

CHRIS: That's better. You know, you look almost human when you smile. *[Brightly]* No use worrying. There's work to do. Look on the bright side. We've got - *[Indicates boxes and*

*seesaw]*

PAT: I know.

CHRIS: And it's all Ours. Made specially for us.

PAT: Sometimes I wish - I wish we had - Others.

CHRIS: *[Shocked]* That's Rude, that is. And it's against the rules.

PAT: I can change the rules.

CHRIS: Says who?

PAT: Says me. *[Sudden decision]* In fact, I just have.

*[PAT does a somersault off the box, into a headstand. Standing on head:]*

PAT: You're upside down. *[This is a revelation.]*

CHRIS: No, you're upside down.

PAT: Depends where you look at it from.

CHRIS: Relative.

PAT: Einstein.

CHRIS: Auntie Flo.

PAT: *[Coming from headstand into cycling position, on back:]*  
Look. I'm cycling. Over the hills and far away.

CHRIS: You're not going anywhere.

PAT: I am. You'll see.

CHRIS: *[Sadly]* You never go anywhere.

PAT: I do in Pretend, so there. Lots of places.

CHRIS: Where?

PAT: Oh, just places.

*[PAT gets down from cycling; runs to another box and flips a switch; a jack-in-the-box comes up with a plate in its hand. PAT takes it, saying "Good morning" and "Thank you" to the Jack, and then puts the lid down.]*

PAT: Different places. Exotic. Exciting.

CHRIS: What sort of places?

PAT: Places you can't come.

CHRIS: Oh.

PAT: Doing things you can't do.

*[There is a stick lying on the floor. With one foot PAT flips it into the air and catches it in one hand. Puts plate on point of the stick and starts twirling it in the air.]*

PAT: See? You can't do that.

CHRIS: I can too.

PAT: Bet you can't.

CHRIS: Bet you I can.

*[CHRIS moves to grab it. PAT snatches it away.]*

PAT: No. Won't let you.

CHRIS: Please.

PAT: No.

CHRIS: Pretty Please?

PAT: *[With pitying contempt]* Haven't you got any work to do?

CHRIS: You won't let me.

*[CHRIS goes and sits on the end of the seesaw, facing away from it, sulking.]*



*PAT starts spinning the plate again.]*

CHRIS: *[To audience:]* Nothing to do. *[To self:]* Now, come on. There must be lots of things to do. Lots of things. Get it together. *[Groucho Marx voice, to audience:]* I didn't know it was falling apart. *[To self:]* I must keep busy. Bizz, bizz, bizz. *[Looks around. To audience:]* What more could I want? *[To self:]* Something... *[Angry]* Now don't get started. We can't both be down. You've got to be up. Up, up, up, up.

*[CHRIS firmly turns round on the seesaw, forcing legs up as far as they'll go, straining to go further. To audience:]*

CHRIS: You can't, you see. You can't get any higher. You need help. *[Comic wail.]* H-e-e-e-l-p!

*[PAT is absorbed in juggling, muttering a paragraph from an advanced economic textbook.]*

CHRIS: *[To audience:]* There are barriers. Like... *[indicating the Jack]* Who is that? I don't know. The past? Funny thing, the past. Pat's got a past. And Pat's past is part of Pat. Solid. Real. I don't think I've got a past. It happened to somebody else... *[General]* I'm frightened.

PAT: *[Not paying attention, offhand:]* Don't be frightened.

CHRIS: *[After pausing to assess the effect of this]* It doesn't help. *[Strains at the seesaw again.]* Stasis. *[Mock French accent.]* Impasse. *[Pause]* Cul de sac. You can't on your own. I can't.

*[CHRIS flops into the Down position.]*

PAT: *[Breaking off from spinning, suddenly remembering.]* Something... lost...

*[PAT tries to put the plate back on the stick, but it won't go.]*

PAT: *[To audience:]* I used to be good. I could put the stick on my forehead too.... What's happening?

CHRIS:                *[Dully]* Nothing. That's just the point.

*[PAT topples the stick eloquently to the ground. It falls like a dead body.]*

PAT:                 Nothing.

*[PAT makes the sign of the cross over the stick, puts plate on head, and carefully balancing it, walks over to the seesaw. Sees CHRIS. Accusingly:]*

PAT:                 You're Down!

CHRIS:              I feel Down.

PAT:                 But I was Down. We haven't changed. It's not fair.

*[PAT gets onto the seesaw and CHRIS starts to go up. They both strain to keep their own side down.]*

PAT:                 I'm still Down.

CHRIS:              It changed. While you were away. Things do.

*[CHRIS gets off, PAT falls with a bump and bursts into tears. CHRIS casually hopscotches over to a box. A Jack comes up with a bottle in its hand.]*

CHRIS:              *[To Jack:]* Les, where did you spring from?

*[CHRIS takes to bottle.]*

PAT:                 I didn't want *you* to – I wanted to do it for – on my –

CHRIS:              *[To Jack:]* I knew you'd agree with me. I could see you were reasonable. Not like - *[indicating PAT]* Always fighting. God, Les, it's great running into you again like this after all these years. What you doing these days? Same as ever? How's things? Me? Oh, up and down. *[Offers bottle to Jack.]* Would you like - ? No? Well, it takes all sorts. Glug. Tell me, old friend - glug-glug - why do people - ? I mean, why can't they - you know....?

PAT:                 Boo hoo *[Looks to CHRIS for a reaction.]*

CHRIS: You see, I like to get out too. It's not all on one side.

PAT: *[Firmer]* Boo hoo! Boo hoo!

CHRIS: I get tired. Pat's not the only one. But no, you'd never think it, going on like that.

PAT: *[Shouts]* BOO HOO!

CHRIS: You see, Pat wouldn't let me –

PAT: *[Changing tack, hopefully:]* Sniff? Snivel?

CHRIS: *[To Jack, ignoring this:]* I knew you'd understand, Les. You always understand. You always did. You're a real friend. I hope you don't mind - ? Glug-glug-glug. *[Now starting to get drunk.]* You work hard, you build something, and then – you don't want it. You suddenly find it wasn't what you wanted after all.

PAT: *[Now angry, goes over to CHRIS to attract attention]*  
SNIVEL!

CHRIS: Nothing turns out the way you wanted. Oh God, isn't life awful? I mean, seriously, isn't it?

PAT: *[to audience:]* I don't want to be Down, not any more. But what can you do? Eh?

CHRIS: People are awful too. When you look them in the face, people are pretty rotten. I hate people. Nobody cares. Nobody gives a – a tuppence – about – about anything.

PAT: *[To audience:]* Anybody want a go on the see-saw?

CHRIS: *[Still to Jack:]* Do you care?

PAT: Or a ball game?

CHRIS: You're just saying that. You don't care. Not really. You're just like all the others.

PAT: *[Picking a member of the audience]* Excuse me. You may

think I've got a terrible cheek –

CHRIS: *[To Jack:]* Oh, go away. You don't understand. *[Battens it down firmly again.]*

PAT: - but I'd really like to play ball with you.

CHRIS: Glug-glug. Now I'm on my own. All alone in the big, wide world.

PAT: *[To another in the audience]* Or you...

CHRIS: It's a big world...

PAT: Oh, come on.

CHRIS: Noisy...

PAT: You'd like it really.

CHRIS: Sharp corners...

PAT: *[To rest of the audience]* Rejection's a terrible thing. You lose confidence... Do you want that to happen to me? *[Sudden anger. Picks up plate and stamps on it. To individuals:]* Now look what you've made me do. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

CHRIS: There's only me. And Pat.

PAT: *[With dignity]* I shall retire to the seesaw and sulk.

*[PAT goes and sits on the end of the seesaw.]*

CHRIS: All alone. Poor me. Poor Pat. *[To audience:]* Nothing wrong with Pat. Really. Underneath it all. Poor Pat. Poor little Patsy-Watsy. All alone with the past. What's past is past, they say. But Pat's past is present. Pat peoples the present with the past. Pat parades the past past Chris, but Chris prefers Pat's past pinned in the past, not presented in the present. Perhaps if Pat's past were presented pretty palatably, partaken in partnership, possibly Chris would perceive Pat's past not as a past but a parameter of Pat's

present, in part, which crystalises Pat for Chris. Christ, Chris is pissed. Chris is quoting crap. Chrissie is pissie and Patsy waits patiently. Patty must be potty. Poor Potty Patty. Pity poor pretty potty Patty. *[To self:]* It's not much help. After all Pat's done for you.... You should be ashamed of yourself. *[To audience:]* I *am* ashamed of myself. Very ashamed. Pat's a friend. A real friend. Warm and generous and true. *[To the bottle:]* I think you and me should go and say hello to Pat and say thank-you for being such a good and warm and generous and true friend. *[Gets up with difficulty. To bottle:]* Ready when you are. *[Picks up the fallen stick as well, and staggers to the end of the seesaw, singing:]*

Me and my shadow  
Strolling down the avenue  
Me and my shadow  
All alone and feeling blue

*[Knocks at the end of the seesaw; no response from PAT. Drinks from bottle.]* Can I come in? Glug-glug.

*[Again no response. CHRIS carefully puts down the bottle, steps to middle of the seesaw, and bows low. Takes out cigarette and lighter.]*

PAT: You're drunk.

CHRIS: Not. *[Lights lighter, and breathes out a great spurt of flame.]* Belch! Well, maybe a little bit. But I only had one. *[Appealing to audience:]* Din' I? *[To PAT:]* Just one itty-bitty, teeny-weeny drinky-winky.

PAT: I hate you when you're drunk.

CHRIS: *[Grandly]* I drink to forget.

PAT: And did you?

CHRIS: I think I got a head start. *[Clears throat for speech.]* Pat, my love, my darling. I come to make amends.

*[CHRIS gravely offers PAT the stick, which turns into a bunch of flowers.]*

CHRIS: I just want you to know that I think you are beautiful - belch! - beautiful. I think you are the best friend I've ever had. I think I've treated you rotten - rotten! - and I think - I think - I think I'm going to be sick. *[Collapses over seesaw]* Bleugh!

*[Slides down the seesaw to be comforted by PAT.]*

PAT: Ssh!

CHRIS: Groan!

PAT: Let my cool hand soothe your fevered brow.

CHRIS: Groan!

PAT: You shouldn't -

CHRIS: I just did. In fact, I think I'm going to do it again. Bleugh!

PAT: Here.

*[Produces like magic a large pill with "PILL" written on it.]*

PAT: Eat this.

*[PAT forces the pill down CHRIS's throat. CHRIS goes into violent spasms, then sits up with a big beaming smile.]*

PAT: You shouldn't punish yourself. Your body is a temple.

CHRIS: In urgent need of structural alterations.

PAT: If you don't behave yourself, I'll demolish you and build an office block.

CHRIS: You wouldn't. I'm listed. Grade A. I'm a landmark of outstanding local interest.

PAT: There aren't any outstanding locals.

CHRIS: All the same, I'm very interesting.

PAT: But progress –

*[PAT jumps on the end of the seesaw]*

CHRIS: Conservation –

PAT: Outdated –

CHRIS: Our heritage –

*[CHRIS leaps onto the other end of the seesaw. It goes up and down.]*

PAT: We've got to move with the times.

CHRIS: I've got to move with your times.

PAT: Change. *[The seesaw is balanced evenly. Firmly:]*  
Change. *[The seesaw comes down on PAT's side. Brightly:]* A change is as good as a rest.

CHRIS: I'd settle for either.

PAT: *[Gradually becoming manic]* Change. Winds of change. Change of life. All change. Here's your change. A nice change. Have a change. Have a break. Break. Snap. Snip-snap the scissor man.

CHRIS: Pat –

PAT: All change, all change. *[Coming down]* Change. Loose change. Lose change. Lost change. Lost. *[Hits side of head to budge the thought; shakes it out of ear. To escape thought:]* Let's play the ball game.

CHRIS: *[Eager to escape too]* Yes, let's. We haven't played it for ages.

PAT: We played it yesterday.

CHRIS: Not properly. You didn't.

PAT: I was tired.

CHRIS: I know. I don't blame you. It's not your fault that –

PAT: That I don't want to play? That I *can't* play?

CHRIS: I didn't mean –

PAT: *[To audience:]* You lose confidence.

CHRIS: Let's play the ball game. Please.

PAT: Yes, let's. Quickly. *[CHRIS goes to the ball]* Hurry.

*[This time they play very fast and intently for a few minutes, as concentration blots out other ideas; they start to relax into it, responding to each other, and it becomes more ornate and erotic. Then it becomes faster and faster again, until PAT throws the ball high into the air and catches, then throws it to CHRIS, who does likewise, both with a little shout. Then they calmly walk to each other, hug, put the ball carefully to one side, and lie down.]*

CHRIS: That was nice.

PAT: Mmmm.

CHRIS: Did you....?

PAT: Oh yes. Certainly did.

CHRIS: I'm glad.

PAT: Thank you. *[Pause]*

CHRIS: I think it's the best game.

PAT: Yes. *[PAT is coming down.]*

CHRIS: *[Brightly]* We should play it more often. *[Pause]* What are you thinking?

PAT: Nothing.

CHRIS: Nothing at all? You can't think nothing.



PAT: All right, then. I wasn't thinking anything. I wasn't thinking.

CHRIS: You can't stop...

PAT: I was in a coma. Catatonic. Do - re - mi -

CHRIS: That's pentatonic.

PAT: Oh. *[Pause]* You were drunk last night.

CHRIS: That's gin and tonic. *[Pause]* What *were* you thinking?

PAT: If you must know, I was thinking that you were probably going to ask me what I was thinking.

CHRIS: Why?

PAT: You usually do.

CHRIS: No I don't.

PAT: You just did.

CHRIS: But not *usually*. Sometimes, not *usually*. It's not habit-forming.

PAT: More often than not.

CHRIS: Have you been counting? Conducting a statistical survey?

PAT: Of course not...

*[Irritated, PAT gets up, hauling an imaginary rope to do so. Pause.]*

CHRIS: Did you really like it?

PAT: What?

CHRIS: The game. The ball game.

PAT: Of course.

CHRIS: Are you sure?

PAT: Of course I'm sure.

CHRIS: Was it wonderful? Was it the best it's ever been? Were you transported to new heights of ecstasy?

PAT: It was OK.

CHRIS: *[Disappointed]* Oh.

PAT: *[Coming to console]* It was fine. Don't worry.

CHRIS: I'm sorry.

PAT: What for?

CHRIS: I'm sorry you didn't like it.

PAT: I did like it.

CHRIS: No you didn't.

PAT: Who said I didn't?

CHRIS: You did.

PAT: No I didn't. I said it was OK. It was fine.

CHRIS: It was a stupid idea.

PAT: No it wasn't.

CHRIS: *[Now hopeful]* Wasn't it?

PAT: *[Starting to get irritated]* No. *[Relenting:]* Honestly. Thank you.

CHRIS: Say you enjoyed it.

PAT: *[Exasperated again]* I enjoyed it.

CHRIS: You're just saying that.

PAT: You asked me to say it.

CHRIS: You don't mean it.

PAT: I mean to mean it.

CHRIS: You're too mean to mean it.

PAT: I do try.... *[Turns away]* Oh, we're just going round in circles.

CHRIS: *[Gleefully leaping up]* That's right. *[Grabs PAT and runs in a circle.]* Ring-a-ring-a-roses, pocket full of poses. A-tishoo, a-tishoo -

PAT: *[Breaking away, bleak]* All fall down.

CHRIS: *[Helplessly]* Pat... You're not the only one. I get Down too.

PAT: I'm Down....

CHRIS: *[Angry]* Oh, not again. You're always Down.

PAT: I can't help it.

CHRIS: You don't try.

PAT: *[Suddenly very serious, all suggestion of a game gone]* Why - should - I?

CHRIS: Because the Garden's ours. Not mine, not yours. Ours. *We* were given it.

PAT: *[Again very deliberate]* Who - are - we?

*[Suddenly realising that something dreadful has been said, PAT looks over shoulder, as if expecting to be arrested or hit over the head. Cowers.]*

CHRIS: *[Shocked, dancing around]* Oh, that's wicked, that is. You'll be struck down by a thunderbolt, you will. God will come and suck your brains out of your ears and stick your

eyeballs on skewers and eat them for breakfast. For your own good.

PAT: Won't, so there. God doesn't eat.

CHRIS: How do you know?

PAT :Stands to reason. God is everywhere, God is in everything, so if God was eating my eyeballs, he - or she - would be eating him - or her -self. Anyway, God isn't hungry and I don't care.

CHRIS: *[Frightened]* You don't care.

PAT: No.

CHRIS: But you've got to care. It's the first rule.

PAT: Well, I don't.

CHRIS: *[Panicking]* Let's play a game.

PAT: What game?

CHRIS: Any game.

PAT: *[Vicious]* All right, then. Let's play Hunt The Thing.

CHRIS: What thing?

PAT: My Thing. My Thing-that-I-lost-that-I-had-when-I-came-out-I'm-sure-but-when-we-got-here-it-seemed-to-have-gone Thing.

CHRIS: You haven't got a Thing. I told you -

PAT: *[As if calling a dog]* Here, thing. Come along, thing. Who's a good little Thing, then? Come to Pat, little Thingy.

CHRIS: How can you hunt a thing when you don't even know what it looks like?

PAT: Thingy. Thingy. Here, Thingy. Look, I've got you some

nice bread and milk.

CHRIS: You've never had any Thing.

PAT: Maybe it doesn't like bread and milk.

CHRIS: It doesn't like anything.

PAT: How do you know what it likes?

CHRIS: There is no such Thing.

PAT: You don't know.

CHRIS: I do, I do.

PAT: But if there isn't a Thing.... there's no Thing. Nothing. I'm Nothing.

CHRIS: Play a game.

PAT: *[Making up mind]* I'm going.

CHRIS: Going? But you can't go.

PAT: I can. I'm leaving the Garden.

CHRIS: Play a game, please...

PAT: I'm going.

CHRIS: But where would you go?

PAT: I'm going to find my Thing.

CHRIS: But you've never been anywhere.

PAT: There's always a first time.

CHRIS: You couldn't. You'd never manage without me.

PAT: How do you know? You never know till you try.

CHRIS: You haven't got any money.

PAT: Have, too!

*[With a twist of the ear, a stream of coins come from PAT's mouth.]*

PAT: See?

CHRIS: That's not real money.

PAT: It's real enough for me.

CHRIS: Let me see.

*[Takes money from PAT, palms it. It disappears.]*

CHRIS: See? You haven't any money.

PAT: I can get more. *[Twists ear. Nothing happens. Shrugs.]*  
Who needs money anyway?

CHRIS: You can't leave me like this.

PAT: I can't leave *me* like this.

CHRIS: But my heart. I gave you –

*[Mimes taking heart out of chest and giving it to PAT. PAT looks at it throbbing in the hand. Then eats it.]*

PAT: Mmmm. Delicious. *[Finishes, wipes mouth, then very formal:]* Well, goodbye. It's been nice knowing you.  
Thanks for the heart, and the party and everything.

CHRIS: It's been nice having you.

PAT: It's been nice being had.

CHRIS: Do drop by any time you're passing.

PAT: Thank you.

CHRIS: And don't forget to write.

- PAT: I'll send you a postcard. Yes, well... Be seeing you...  
*[Shakes hands again.]*
- CHRIS: I hope so. *[PAT starts to go, waving, to side of stage. To audience:]* It's good to be civilised about these things. Grown up. Adult. *[Pause]* Waaaaah! *[PAT is at the edge of the stage, facing the darkness beyond. CHRIS to audience:]* Gone quiet all of a sudden, hasn't it? Well, the show must go on. And on. And on. *[Picks up broken pieces plate and tries to juggle with it. To audience:]* That's silly. There aren't many games for one player. Oh, I know what you're thinking. All this garden, all to myself. Space. Freedom. I should be grateful, I know. *[Tries to be grateful:]* Free! Whoopee! *[Does a cartwheel.]* You see? It doesn't work. Freedom's no fun on its own.
- PAT: *[Internal]* Through the gate and down the path. At the end of the path, another gate.... a road... leading to another road.... leading to more roads.
- CHRIS: *[To audience:]* I know, I'll have a party. *[Dashes to the boxes and opens them up, but no jacks appear. CHRIS searches from one box to another.]*
- PAT: The darkness snakes along the valleys. The mists coil off the smouldering hills. City lights in the distance...
- CHRIS: *[To self:]* Hopscotch... *[Runs around marking out a hopscotch and then plays it a couple of times, before getting bored.]*
- PAT: And at the end? Another garden? Another seesaw just like this one? Maybe not even a garden at all...
- CHRIS: Aeroplanes.... *[Flies around:]* Brrrrrrrr... *[Gets bored]*
- PAT: Maybe it's all roads. All joining up together. Leading nowhere.
- CHRIS: Stepping stones...
- [CHRIS climbs on a box, and jumps from one to another.]*

PAT: Dick Whittington had a cat. I wish I did. So many crossroads. How do you know when you've taken a right turning? You only know if you've taken a right turning when you've arrived. And how can you know when you've arrived if you don't know where you're going?

CHRIS: "Go out and play now". "Go out and play by yourself." *[To audience:] I can't.*

PAT: I'm frightened....

*[CHRIS in a moment of decision picks up a rope and throws it across to PAT.]*

PAT: Heeelp!

CHRIS: Help yourself.

PAT: I can't.

CHRIS: Walk across. Your public expects....

PAT: I'll fall.

CHRIS: We're all rooting for you.

PAT: *[Gingerly stepping on the "tightrope"]* There's a drop on either side.

CHRIS: You'll make it. *[To audience:]* Ladies and gentlemen, see the death-defying Pat, alone, without any support or harness and without the aid of a safety net, clawing a way back from the darkness, from the killer loneliness which is about to pounce on the other side of the chasm. Will Pat be eaten alive? Will the blood-crazed beast seize its helpless prey? Will the tightrope break? Will Pat make it in time, or hurtle to death on the sawdust ring, fifty feet below? Roll up, roll up for the most astounding spectacle you'll ever witness in your entire lives. You won't believe your eyes. It's amazing, it's horrific, it's disgusting, it's British.

*[PAT is by now getting into it, and starting to clown around on the rope.]*



CHRIS:           *[To PAT:]* Oh, hurry up.

PAT:             Look what I can do!

CHRIS:           Hurry.

PAT:             You can't do this.

CHRIS:           I'll cut the rope.

PAT:             You wouldn't.

CHRIS:           I will if you don't hurry.

PAT:             Wheeee!

*[CHRIS mimes sawing the rope off. PAT sees what is happening, stops clowning and runs back. They fall into each other's arms.]*

PAT:             Phew, that was close.

CHRIS:           You pushed your luck.

PAT:             That's what luck's for. You wouldn't have cut it.

CHRIS:           Wanna bet? *[Pause]* So you came back.

PAT:             Yes.

CHRIS:           So I won?

PAT:             You always win this one.

CHRIS:           It's the only one.

PAT:             And you have to win.

CHRIS:           You don't mind.

PAT:             I want you to win. So I win too, in a way.

CHRIS:           *[Angry]* Oh, why do you spoil it?

PAT: I don't.

CHRIS: If you want me to win, if you let me win, it's not real winning.

PAT: But I play to win.

CHRIS: It's a cheat.

PAT: I might win one day.

CHRIS: *[Appalled at the thought]* Oh no!

PAT: If I play really hard.

CHRIS: Please don't.

PAT: But you want to win properly. Not rigged.

CHRIS: *[Exasperated]* Oh, I just can't win.

PAT: *[Smugly]* No!

CHRIS: Oh... you...

PAT: Tee-hee!

CHRIS: One day...

PAT: I'm Up now. You can be Down if you want.

CHRIS: I'm not Down. I'm *furiosus*.

PAT: Seesaw?

CHRIS: Grrrrr.

PAT: *[Getting worried]* Don't take it like that.

CHRIS: Rage. Fume. Snort.

PAT: It's gone far enough.

CHRIS: Why should I play your stupid games?

PAT: It was your idea.

CHRIS: My idea! Oh, that's rich!

PAT: I thought you wanted....

CHRIS: You never asked me what I wanted. I didn't want this.

PAT: Do you think I wanted it?

CHRIS: Well, if you didn't, and I didn't, who did? *[Pause]*

PAT: *[Pointing at audience]* They did.

CHRIS: And who's them when they're at home?

PAT: Them. I hate them. *[Pokes tongue out.]*

CHRIS: Oh yes, blame it on Them.

PAT: It's true.

CHRIS: Always Them. Never you.

PAT: Let's have a game.

CHRIS: I'm fed up with games.

PAT: I've got a new one.

*[PAT goes over to the fourth box. Rummages in it, bottom in the air.]*

CHRIS: I'm fed up with you.

PAT: I know it's here somewhere.

CHRIS: I'm fed up with me.

PAT: I put it here, I know I did.

CHRIS: I'm fed up with everything.

PAT: What have you done with it?

CHRIS: Me? Why should I do anything?

PAT: You're always moving my things around.

CHRIS: *Our* things. *Ours*.

PAT: This one's mine.

CHRIS: I haven't seen it. Ever. In my life.

PAT: You must have put it somewhere.

CHRIS: If it's yours, you look after it.

PAT: I did. You moved it.

CHRIS: *[Screaming]* I could kill you.

PAT: No you couldn't. Wouldn't dare.

CHRIS: Course I'd dare.

PAT: No you wouldn't.

CHRIS: You just try me.

PAT: Go on, then. Dare you. *[CHRIS hesitates]* See, I told you you couldn't. Chicken.

CHRIS: I'm not chicken.

PAT: Then I dare you. Dare you.

CHRIS: You - Are - The - Limit.

*[CHRIS grabs PAT by the seat of the pants, tips PAT into the box. PAT struggles violently. CHRIS slowly gets the upper hand and pushes PAT down. CHRIS sits on the lid, pressing heavily on PAT. There are stifled shouts and thumps, then stillness. PAT is dead. NB. This sequence should turn from*

*the comic to the very nasty. There is a long pause as CHRIS sits on the box whistling and swinging legs; the face suffuses with an evil leer. CHRIS gets up and walks round the box, talking to it.]*

CHRIS:           There! Didn't think I would, did you? Thought I was too scared. That's why you always pushed me around. Didn't think I had the nerve. Well I did, see. And I'm boss now. I'm not playing your games any more. I'll play my own games. *[Leaps on box.]* I'm the king of the castle. Can't catch me.

*[Leaps off box and hides behind another. Pokes head round it. No one is following.]*

CHRIS:           Can't even chase me....

*[To wipe out the thought, changes tack. Gets on end of seesaw, walks up to the middle, so it balances. Works both sides. To audience:]*

CHRIS:           When you've done that, what else can you do?

*[It starts to topple. CHRIS steadies it, then goes up and down each side, never letting it touch the ground. To audience:]*

CHRIS:           Do you want a go? *[Remembering:]* Oh, you can't do this one with two, can you?

*[The savour goes out of the game. CHRIS gets down. Walks over to the flowers, picks them up where they have fallen. To audience:]*

CHRIS:           I can do tricks too. Ladies and gentlemen, before your very eyes....

*[CHRIS covers the flowers with a cloth. Makes magic passes. Takes cloth off with a flourish. It is still flowers. Tries again, fails again. Picks up PAT's yo-yo. Shows it to the audience with a flourish. Tries to use it, but the string tangles. Inwards:]*

CHRIS:           Juggling! *[To audience:]* Juggling's easy. *[Takes three small balls out of pocket and starts to juggle.]* See, I knew I could juggle. I told you so. You never believed me. *[The balls go higher and higher.]* Whee! Hey Pat, I'm juggling. I'm really juggling. Come and look at this, Pat! Pat! Pat?

*[Suddenly the full realisation of being alone hits CHRIS. The balls fall to the floor. CHRIS looks at the box with desolation.]*

Pat?

*[No answer. CHRIS listens at PAT's box; shakes it.]*

Pat?

*[Sudden desperation. Goes and opens the other boxes. Jacks pop up, CHRIS runs from one to another.]*

CHRIS:           *[To 1st]* You're.... *[To 2nd]* No, you're... *[To 1st]* You're Pat's, aren't you? *[To 3rd]* Les, nice to see you.... Les? You are Les, aren't you? Or are you Pat's too? The past, it's so confusing. Can't remember. Which is Pat's, which is mine? Which is Pat and which is me? Did we - ? I mean, were we - ? *[To audience:]* You were here, don't you remember either?

*[In the silence, CHRIS backs away panicking from the audience, ending up in front of PAT's box, back to it. PAT leaps up.]*

PAT:            Boo!

CHRIS:          Argh!

*[PAT leaps down and embraces CHRIS, who is quivering with terror.]*

PAT:            There, there, love.

CHRIS:          I thought you were dead.

PAT:            Didn't want to be dead. It's dark. No room. Overcrowded. Unhygienic. And my dear! The neighbours!

CHRIS:          I'm so glad.

PAT:            I'm glad you're glad.

CHRIS:          I'm glad you're glad I'm glad.

PAT: And I'm glad you're glad I'm glad you're glad.

CHRIS: Oh, forget it.

PAT: Forget what?

CHRIS: I can't remember. *[Pause]*

PAT: What do we do now?

CHRIS: Smile.

*[They have both been looking serious. They free each other. They slowly pass a hand over their faces, which transforms them with a smile.]*

CHRIS: Are you gonna stay?

PAT: Maybe...

CHRIS: Let's play a game.

PAT: *[Eager]* Yes! Yes!

CHRIS: Bubbles?

*[CHRIS produces a bubble mix. Blows a huge bubble.]*

CHRIS: If it bursts, you stay.

PAT: If it reaches the ceiling, I go. *[The bubble is released; they watch it rise.]* Look at it. So light –

CHRIS: Pretty...

PAT: You want to follow after...

CHRIS: Hollow...

PAT: Frail...

*[The bubble bursts, as it always will under stage lights. PAT looks at it for a second, then shrugs; turns to seesaw.]*

PAT:                Shall we?

CHRIS:            Why not?

PAT:                Why not indeed?

CHRIS:            After you –

PAT:                No, after you –

CHRIS:            But I insist –

PAT:                No, *I* insist –

CHRIS:            Well, if you insist.

PAT:                I do.

CHRIS:            Thank you.

PAT:                Don't mention it.

CHRIS:            I just did.

PAT:                Oh.

*[They get on the seesaw, test it, and start going up and down. They relax into the routine.]*

PAT:                We should be stronger.

CHRIS:            But we're not.

PAT:                No.

CHRIS:            We should be freer.

PAT:                But we're not.

CHRIS:            We should let go.

PAT:                But we don't. We should explore.



CHRIS: But we won't.

PAT: In the meantime...

BOTH: *[To audience]* There's always the seesaw.

*[The lights slowly fade on them going slowly up and down on the seesaw.]*

**THE END**