

Double Talk

[Two men sitting alone at separate tables opposite each other; they each have a half of bitter in front of them. They act in unison, mirroring each other's gestures, and both S&1 the lines. Though this is written as a monologue, it is in fact two monologues delivered simultaneously.]

MAN 1/2: *[Out to audience]* Thursday night. Christ, what a dump. I knew I ought to have stayed home. Never get anyone in on Thursdays. No money till pay day. Everyone stays in for telly and scrag end.

[He sips beer, glances round, not seeing the other.]

Look at it; talent night at the crematorium. Talent, ha! I should have stopped home and caught up with 'Celebrity Sheep at the Supervet'; I love staring at ewes with prolapses. No chance of getting anything here tonight. *[Indicating punter]* He's sitting like he's got a prolapse. Or is the bar stool that uncomfortable. Look at it all. Like an air raid shelter. The whole place is falling apart. Like a leper in a wind tunnel. *[Sips beer again.]* Make it last, make it last. If you're not careful you'll have to have another one, and then you'll be on the toilet all night. The last time he cleaned his pumps was the last time we won Eurovision.

[He looks round again, sees the other looking at him; he quickly looks away.]

Hello, I didn't notice that. Not bad, not bad. Haven't seen him before. Refugee from the cottage by the Town Hall, most like. Can't say I blame him, going cottaging. You get a better class of zombie there.

[Takes another quick look, then looks back.]

Yes, definitely not bad. Nice face. I wonder what the rest of him's like. Difficult to say. I wish people wouldn't wear macs like that. Tall or short? We'll see when he goes to the bar - you can't tell sitting down. Probably turn out to be Toulouse Lautrec. *[Pause]* He'll have to go to the bar soon, he can't make that one last much longer. *[Looks again.]* 38? 40 maybe? Getting on a bit. I wonder it that's a wig.

[Quick look.] I bet it is; you can't see the join, but that's no sign, you can't tell these days, not since the Chinese muscled in on the trade. They've ruined the fun of wigs by making them properly. Still, not bad, not bad at all. Better than a poke in the arse with a wet loo brush. *[Pause]* I wonder if he's seen me. Can't have missed, I suppose. With only the three of us in the bar. Unless he's mistaken me for the charity boy with the calipers and the slot in the top of his head. Not showing much sign of interest, though. Hardly falling over himself to get to know me, now is he? I suppose I'll have to wait till he goes to the bar. Unless he tees the same way about the beer that I do. Or to the loo. No, he's probably one of those people with cast iron bladders. And I couldn't go first, that would seem like I was trying to pick him up. So... I could ask him for a light, I suppose. Yes, yes, what a good idea.

[Fumbles in his pockets and produces cigarttes. Takes one. Elaborate mime of searching pockets tor matches. About to get up, smiling, when the smile falls, and out of his last pocket by mistake he produces matches grudgingly.]

Shit!

[Sits again, takes sip of beer, recovers himself.]

He is nice, too. I suppose I could just go and talk to him. *[Pause]* Oh, I couldn't. *[Pause]* Go on, you could. Just ask him the time or something. "Excuse me, do you have the time? Only I have to take my anti-psychosis pills every two hours." That'll get him for sure. *[Pause]* Talk about the weather, then. "Terrible weather tor cottaging, isn't it?"

Oh, I couldn't. Anyway, he doesn't fancy me. I'm sure he doesn't. If he did, he'd have done something. Given a sign or something. No, of course he doesn't. *[Pause]* Why not? Dammit, why not? What sort of sign are you expecting? Do you think he'll roll on the floor to have his tummy tickled? *[Pause]* Well, you're hardly what you were, now are you? Beginning to go grey, a bit thin at the front there. Putting on a bit of weight, frankly a bit seedy. No, definitely not in the same class as him. No, he wouldn't want to know me.

Pity... Trouble is, once you're sitting down at a table, you're sort of stuck there. Getting up is so ostentatious. Still.... I suppose I could go to the bar for another drink, he might just... It's worth a risk. What the hell, yes... What've you got to lose? It's nearly 'Last Orders' anyway. I can't see anybody else...

[His mouth falls as a very pretty boy - invisible - walks up to the bar behind him. His eyes follow the youth slowly]

... coming... in.

[Low whistle. He stares as if hypnotised. Pulls himself back, Indicating the other man off-handedly.]

Well, I didn't fancy him anyway.

LIGHTS