

CONSEQUENCES

an audio drama

by Roger Elliott

copyright : Roger Elliott : 2023
rogerelliott.writer@gmail.com

CONSEQUENCES

Characters

this play is written for six actors with
the small parts doubled thus...

Jack Cronan

Billy Jackson

Thumper

Lizzie, Billy's wife
Andrea, Jack's wife

Barrister
DCI Thompson

Den, a rocker
Paddy

Notes

The action of this play, told mostly in flashback, covers
fifty-nine years from 1965 to 2024...

I have marked the year on the scene headings. This is not
because the actual years are important, and the listener doesn't
need this information ... its more as a guide to the actors and
director so they can change intonation with the age of the
characters.

For instance, Jack ages from 18 to 77.

Music

Jack is a Stan Getz fan, and has
even named his cat after him...

1 : 2024 : JACK'S FLAT : KITCHEN

(FX : INTERIOR KITCHEN. JACK IS COOKING)

(MUSIC : STAN GETZ' 'WHISPER NOT' PLAYS SOFTLY)

(FX : JACK'S CAT MEOWS)

JACK Alright ... just wait a minute Stan... don't be so bloody demanding...

(FX : JACK OPENS SOME CAT FOOD, SCRAPES IT INTO A BOWL AND PUTS IT ON THE FLOOR. THE EXERTION MAKES JACK COUGH. AND COUGH AGAIN. EVENTUALLY THE COUGHING FIT SUBSIDES)

JACK Oh Stan ... what a mess we're in, you and me ... how did we end up like this, eh? And how did we end up here? Not exactly what I had planned for myself ... a pokey little bedsit in Peckham ...

(V/O) And it wasn't ... a room with a bed and a broken sofa and a Baby Belling in the corner with shared 'facilities' down the hall... I'd had dreams when I was younger ... no, I had plans ... well, a combination of the two really...

(V/O) I was 18 and had yet to decided between the forces, Navy probably ... and the law ... a very broad canvas I know, but then that's what dreams are for, aren't they? But they weren't ordinary dreams .. I had a ridiculous inner belief at that age, call it naivety, call it the arrogance of youth ... if it was the Navy then I would be an Admiral ... if it was the law, no jobbing solicitor for me I would be a barrister ... maybe even a judge ...

(V/O) Dreams or plans .. whichever they were ...
they were all dashed that day when I made a
stupid decision that changed my life for ever...

(FX : THE CAT MEOWS AGAIN)

What? You want more? That's all there is you
greedy little beggar ... do you know how much
this stuff costs?

I think you hate this place as much as I do! But
still, it won't be for much longer, will it ... for either
of us... what's that?

(JACK TURNS OFF THE MUSIC)

JACK Did you hear that Stan? There's someone
outside... (CALLING) Who's there?

(A BEAT)

(V/O) They're there again..
I can hear them...
four men standing outside my door...
standing and breathing together .. in unison ..
their synchronised exhalations
steaming the glass panels so cloudy
that vague dusty shapes
of heads and hats and shoulders
are all I can see...

How do I know there are four men
standing outside my door?

How do I know the number?
I don't... I don't know for sure...
they are too hazy to count, too floating...
but its always been the same ...

well no, not always...
they used to be clear sharp silhouettes ...

2 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : A NOISY SATURDAY NIGHT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM THE DOORS OPEN AND JACK WALK IN. TRAFFIC NOISE OUTSIDE.)

BILLY There he is(CALLING) Jack! Jack!

JACK (V/O continues) sharp as sissors
sharp as scalpels
eons ago..
before the smoke...

BILLY (CALLING AGAIN) Jack! We're over here... I got
you one in...

JACK (APPROACHING) Sorry I'm late ... bloody bus
broke down...

BILLY Here... get that down you Happy Anniversary!

LIZZIE Its not your birthday is it Jack? Billy, you should
have said...

JACK No, its not that Lizzie...

BILLY Its 21 years to the day since we met ... Margate,
May 18th 1965!

JACK Not exactly a day I want to remember though is it
Billy? I mean they're not the happiest of
Memories...

(V/O) ... and they weren't ... the only good thing
that happened that day was that I met Billy ...
.. it has always intrigued me how just one person
out of the hundreds you meet casually day in and
day out can suddenly become part of your life ...
and often from the most innocuous of meetings...

3. 1965 : COFFEE BAR, MARGATE

(FX : COFFEE BAR. THE CHATTER OF CUSTOMERS AND CLINK OF CUPS. CHAIRS MOVE. THE DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES. FOOTSTEPS)

(MUSIC : GERRY & THE PACEMAKERS 'I LIKE IT' PLAYS ON THE JUKEBOX)

BILLY What can I get you?

JACK White coffee please.

BILLY (V/O) He stood out the moment I saw him. I'm not sure if it was because of the way he was dressed ... well cut suit, nice tie, good shoes ... or the fact he was so tall ... but he certainly cut quite a figure...

(TO JACK) Sugar?

JACK Two please...

BILLY Anything to eat with that? Cake? Biscuit?

JACK No thank you...

(FX : BILLY MAKES THE COFFEE ... STEAM HISSES)

BILLY Just visiting?

JACK What?

BILLY I've not seen you in here before ..

JACK Oh ... yes ... visiting ... just for the day...

BILLY Yeah ... seen some of your lot around town earlier...

JACK My lot?

BILLY Mods ... nice suit by the way...

(FX : BILLY PUTS THE COFFEE ON THE COUNTER)

BILLY There you go ... two bob please...

(FX : COINS. THE DRAWER OF THE TILL RINGS)

JACK Thanks...

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS. FOUR MEN COME IN ...)

BILLY Oh, oh ... not again...

JACK What? ... oh...

DEN (TO JACK) What you looking at you ponce?

JACK Me? Nothing...

DEN (LOOKING FOR A FIGHT) Yes you are ... I've a good mind to...

BILLY (INTERUPTING LOUDLY) What d'you chaps want? Cup of tea?

DEN You can keep your fucking tea... we just came in to talk to this skinny prat...

JACK But why? ... I mean, you don't know me ... I've just come in for a coffee...

DEN (MIMICING JACK) Oh ... I've just come in for a coffee...

BILLY Really ... he's not any trouble ... he comes in here most days ... works just round the corner...

4 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : BUSY BAR ... CONTINUING AS SCENE 2)

JACK So what's the plan tomorrow, Billy ... we going to the match?

LIZZIE He can't Jack ... we're going to my Mum's for Sunday lunch.

JACK That's a real shame ... should be a good game ... Billy? ... Billy, what is it?

BILLY (DISTRACTED) Er... sorry, you say something?

JACK What are you looking at?

BILLY That man...

JACK Which one?

BILLY The tall thick-set one ... short hair ... he keeps looking over at us ... watch out, he's seen me looking ... he's coming over...

JACK Bloody hell ... its Thumper!

LIZZIE Thumper?

BILLY Who?

JACK One of the nastier characters from B Wing...

(THUMPER PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD AND APPROACHES...)

THUMPER Ah, I thought I smelt something... a little wriggling worm...

JACK What are you doing here? I didn't think this was your manor...

THUMPER You saying I can't go where I want? Or have a

drink in any pub I want?

JACK 'Course not ... you can go wherever you desire...

THUMPER I will ... not that I need your permission.

JACK How long you been out?

THUMPER I didn't come over to make conversation. I came to collect that debt you owe me.

JACK What debt?

THUMPER The ton ... the £100...

JACK What! I did everything you asked me to. I don't owe you anything!

THUMPER Oh, I think you do ... your memory must be slipping ... do you want to step outside and discuss it? Maybe I can remind you.

JACK No .. its alright... (FUMBLES IN HIS POCKET)
look I only got nine pounds on me ...

THUMPER Well, that will have to do for now ... on account...
I'll be back for the rest mind, now I know where you drink...

(FX : THUMPER TAKES THE MONEY AND GOES)

(A BEAT)

BILLY What the hell was that about?

LIZZIE Did you really owe him money?

JACK No ...

(V/O) ... no I didn't ... but a small matter like that would never stop him ... you never said no to Thumper ...

5. 1975: PENTONVILLE PRISON : CANTEEN

(FX : A LOUD ECHOING PRISON CANTEEN. THE SCRAPE OF SPOONS ON METAL PLATES. LOW MURMURED CONVERSATIONS. FOOTSTEPS APPROACH)

JACK (WHISPERING) Watch out ... here comes trouble...

(THUMPER STOPS BY THE TABLE)

THUMPER Move!

(FX : EVERYONE STARTS TO GET UP)

THUMPER Not you Curran ... I want a word with you...

JACK Me? My names Cronan...

THUMPER Curran ... Cronan ... doesn't matter. Sit.

(FX : JACK & THUMPER SIT)

That's better ... now we can have a nice chat...

(A BEAT)

Now .. I hear you're leaving us ... getting out ... in three days time. That right?

JACK (QUIETLY) Yes...

THUMPER Good. Well I want you to do a little job for me...

JACK (INTERUPTING) I'm not sure I can...

THUMPER 'Course you can. It's not much. You don't want anything to go wrong on your last three days and you not get out, now do you?

JACK What do you mean go wrong?

THUMPER Well, say you get into a fight in the showers,

they'd keep you in. And keep you in for a very long time...

JACK (QUIETLY) But I'd never do that ...

THUMPER Stranger things have happened ...and don't forget you owe me. I've looked after you in here.

JACK How exactly?

THUMPER There was several took a shine to you when you come in. Nice clean lad. Tall. Slim. Quiet. I told 'em to leave you alone. And they did. So I reckon you owe me...

(A BEAT. JACK DOESN'T REPLY)

Let me tell you what it is I want you to do... it's not a big job. Just take a message and come back with an answer.

Under your mattress you'll find a note. On it is an address in Peckham and a five number number.

JACK Digit. A five digit number.

THUMPER There see... smart too. Grammar school?

JACK (QUIETLY) Yes...

THUMPER Me, I couldn't even read and write when I come in 'ere but Fenton, old lag on A Wing, he taught me to read ... and I read all the time now ... Harold Robbins, I like him...

Still, back to this job ... I want you to remember that address and that number ... then burn the paper ... don't keep it or they'll find it when they search you before they let you out...

Then, when you are out, you go to the address and talk to Paddy ... not his real name of course ... really he's Sean ... but he's Paddy to me ... anyway, tell him you come from me and give him the number...

If he says he's not interested, which he might, just tell him I have very long arms ...

JACK Long arms?

THUMPER He'll understand ... Paddy will tell you when to go back to see him again and when you do he'll give you a message to give to me.

JACK And how do I do that?

THUMPER Don't play dumb. I know you're not. You arrange a visit and come and give me the message.

JACK And then?

THUMPER Then nothing ... that's all...

6 : 2024 : JACK'S FLAT : KITCHEN

(MUSIC : STAN GETZ' 'A SUMMER AFTERNOON')

(FX : JACK IS WASHING UP ... A MEOW FROM STAN)

JACK Get out the way then you stupid animal ...

(V/O) they used to be clear sharp silhouettes
the visitors outside the door
sharp as scissors ... eons ago
before the smoke
of course, there used to be twelve then
twelve men and true
the disciplined disciples I called them

I used to mistake them for trees sometimes
 solid English oaks, upright and massive
 but no, they were people
 men and women
 honest citizens...

7. 1966 : THE OLD BAILEY : COURT No 2 :

(FX : A LARGE AIRY COURTROOM. THE HUM OF A
 CEILING FAN. THE SHUFFLE OF THE JURY)

- BARRISTER Please note that members of the jury ... do go
 on Mr Jackson. The four 'rockers' came into your
 café ... what happened then?
- BILLY Well they started making trouble. Swearing and
 that. But mostly they were hassling the
 defendant. Calling him names. Nasty names.
- BARRISTER What sort of names?
- BILLY Ponce ... nancy boy ... lanky lupin ...
- BARRISTER Lanky lupin? I've never heard that one before...
- BILLY Yeah, well ... stuff like that. They were itching for
 a fight.
- BARRISTER Go on...
- BILLY I managed to persuade them to leave the café ...
 wasn't easy mind ... eventually they did go ... but
 not far. They just hung about outside the door
 waiting for him to leave...
- BARRISTER The defendant? Mr Cronan?
- BILLY Yes ... it was obvious they meant trouble...
- BARRISTER So what did you do?

- BILLY I told him there was a back door ... through the little kitchen ... it leads to a side alley which comes out further down the street.
- BARRISTER So he could get away with being seen?
- BILLY Well, without having to walk right past the rockers ... yeah...
- BARRISTER Why did you do that? You didn't know him, so why did you help him?
- BILLY I didn't want trouble in the café ... or immediately outside it ... I've had that before see ... anyway, he seemed like a nice bloke and as far as I could see he hadn't done anything wrong.
- BARRISTER And Mr Cronan took your advice? And left the premises that way?
- BILLY Yeah...
- BARRISTER Did you also advise him to take a knife with him ... from the kitchen as he passed through?
- BILLY No
- BARRISTER But you know he did?
- BILLY I know now .. yes ... but I didn't at the time.
- BARRISTER What happened next?
- BILLY The rockers saw Mr Cronan coming out into the street lower down ...and ran off...
- BARRISTER Chasing Mr Cronan?
- BILLY Yes ... then I saw him turn down a side alley...

8. 1965 : SIDE ALLEY

(FX : TRAFFIC IN THE MID DISTANCE. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. THE RATTLING OF A LOCKED METAL GATE)

JACK Damn!

DEN (DISTANT) There he is.

(FX : FOOTSTEPS APPROACH)

DEN Come here you prat...

(APPROACHING) There see... I told you you wouldn't get away... I think we should teach you a lesson...

Mind out lads ... he's got a knife!

JACK Come any nearer and I'll use it!

DEN Remember there's four of us ... and only one of you... you're all on your ownsome...

JACK Don't come any nearer!

9. 1966 : THE OLD BAILEY : COURT No 2 :

(FX : INTERIOR COURTROOM ... as Scene 7...)

BARRISTER So you saw the attack?

BILLY Well no, not really ... heard it more than saw it...

BARRISTER Please explain Mr Jackson.

BILLY Well, after the rockers rushed after him I followed ... I wanted to see if I could help...

BARRISTER Go on...

BILLY I got to the end of the alley, but all I could see was their backs, crowded in there ... I couldn't see him ... Mr Cronan ... but I could hear something of what they were all saying...

BARRISTER Please tell us what you heard.

BILLY The rockers were baiting him ... shouting at him ... then I heard the word 'knife' ...

BARRISTER And who said 'knife'?

BILLY I couldn't tell which one ... anyway, I thought Mr Cronan was in big trouble so I ran off to find the Police...

BARRISTER And did you? Find a policeman?

BILLY Well, when I got down to the seafront I realised how many Mods and Rockers were around ... not as many as last year of course...

BARRISTER But you did eventually find a policeman?

BILLY Yes, I found a patrol car who come back with me.

BARRISTER And?

BILLY Well ... it was too late...

10. 1975 : PRISON CANTEEN

(FX : ECHOING CANTEEN .. as Scene 5..)

THUMPER See ... it's not a lot to ask...

JACK This Paddy or Sean or whatever his name is ... you said he might not be too happy to see me?

THUMPER He might be a little annoyed to get the message from me, but I don't think he'll give you any trouble.

He thinks because I am in here I don't know what's happening outside, and its time to remind him who he's dealing with. Anyway, you can look after yourself alright, can't you? I was told you knifed a man in the neck.

JACK Only in self defence, and see where that got me.

THUMPER Well, you are only delivering a message ... you'll be fine.

JACK What's this all about?

THUMPER You don't need to know.

JACK Then I won't know if the answer he gives me makes sense.

THUMPER No you won't ... and its better that way.

11 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : BUSY BAR ... as Scene 4)

BILLY What did you mean when you said to him 'I did everything you wanted me to' ... you don't mean you and he ... you know ... when you were inside.

JACK Course not! Nothing like that.

BILLY But it does happen? ... I read about it.

LIZZIE What?

BILLY Use you imagination...

LIZZIE Oh

JACK Yes it does happen but it was nothing like that, really ... I just ran an errand for him...

(V/O) Truth is, I nearly didn't even do that. When I got out I was so relieved that all that sordid business was finished, I wanted to put every thought of prison and everything to do with it behind me ... I just wanted to get on with my life. I had to find a job. And somewhere to live. And that wasn't easy.

(V/O) I stayed with my Mum at first, but she didn't really want me there. She had a new man in her life and a son hanging around ... especially an ex-con ... wasn't exactly an asset.

(V/O) I took the first job I could get. Driving. Delivering for an engineering company across South London and Kent. It wasn't much but I had a steady wage coming in and it was just enough to move out from my Mum's and pay for a room in a shared house. The first step on the ladder back to normality.

(V/O) It was about a month later that I was sitting in my cab, studying the A-Z, trying to find a small workshop somewhere when I noticed Alverne Avenue on the map. At first I couldn't think why that name meant something. Then it came to me. Paddy's address, on the note I had burnt before I left prison. 17a Alverne Avenue. So it was chance rather than any sort of plan or intention, almost a roll of the dice, an impulse, that meant five minutes later I was knocking on a faded blue door on a three storey house that had seen far better days.

12 : 1976 : PADDY'S HOUSE

(FX : SUBURBAN STREET. THE DOOR OPENS)

PADDY (WITH A BELFAST ACCENT) Yes?

JACK I'm looking for Sean ... sometimes known as Paddy...

PADDY And who might you be?

JACK I have a message for him ... from Ron Harris ...
 in Pentonville...

PADDY Thumper!

JACK Yes.

PADDY You work for him?

JACK No, not really ... I was inside with him and he
 asked me to come and see you when I got out...

PADDY To give me a message?

JACK Yes.

PADDY He's got a bloody nerve. What makes him think
 I'm interested?

JACK He said you might think that, so told me to
 remind you he has long...

PADDY (FINISHING THE SENTENCE) ...has long arms
 ... yes, yes, I know ...

 (A BEAT)

PADDY Well, what is it? The message...

JACK It's a number ... 74392.

PADDY 74392

JACK Yes ... that's right... Thumper said you would
 give me an answer, or at least a message to take
 back...

PADDY Yes, but I need a bit to time first. Come back in about four weeks. But don't come to the front door next time. See the side gate? Go through there, and knock on the back door. And come after dark. We don't want anyone seeing us now, do we?

JACK What's this all about?

PADDY He didn't tell you?

JACK No...

PADDY Well, I'm certainly not going to either. Its better you don't know... for all of us...

13 : 2024 : JACK'S FLAT : KITCHEN

(MUSIC : STAN GETZ' 'FOUR')

JACK (V/O) That driving job was good really ... took me all over the place... I even found myself back in Margate one day, not that the place held any happy memories for me of course, but I went back to the café ... to have a coffee, but also to see if that man was there ... the one that had tried to help me...

14. 1976 : COFFEE BAR, MARGATE

(MUSIC : ROD STEWART'S 'MAGGIE MAY' PLAYS ON THE JUKEBOX)

BILLY What can I get you?

JACK White coffee please. And a slice of that fruit cake.

BILLY Fine ... er ... don't I know you?

(FX : BILLY STARTS MAKING COFFEE)

JACK Well, yes ... I wasn't sure you'd remember ... that's why I came in really ... to say 'thank you'...

BILLY I know ... you're the Mod, the one the rockers were after... in here... back in ... er .. '65...

JACK Yes ... and I wanted to say thanks for trying to help me.

BILLY You look a bit different ... last time I saw you you had a nice suit on ... looking very smart you were I remember...

JACK (LAUGHING) Yes ... but a suits not really the right gear for driving a van.

BILLY Suppose not ... here...sugars there if you want it.

JACK How much?

BILLY Don't be silly ... have it on the house...

(A BEAT)

You want to talk? ... come on lets sit over there...

(CALLING) Lizzie ... can you listen out for the bell?

LIZZIE (FROM THE KITCHEN) Fine...

(FX : BILLY & JACK SIT AT A TABLE)

BILLY So ... when did you get out?

JACK About three months ago...

BILLY Was it awful? Inside?

JACK I wouldn't recommend it.

BILLY Seemed really harsh ... locking you up ... when all you were doing was defending yourself.

- JACK Well yes, I agree ... but that's all in the past now ... its was all a ghastly mistake... do you know I wasn't even a Mod?
- BILLY Weren't you?
- JACK No, not really ... I never had a scooter or joined any group or gang ... I just liked their style ... and do you know why I had my suit on that day?
- BILLY Why?
- JACK I was on my way to my Gran's funeral ... I never did get there and my Mum never forgave me for that.
- BILLY So why were they chasing you?
- JACK Turns out they'd had a bit of a run in with a group of real Mods down on the beach the year before ... you know, the riots ...
- BILLY Don't tell me about it ... I had them in here that day ... fighting ... wrecked the place... I'd only just got it back in shape when you come in...
- JACK Then you know what I mean ... anyway, this group came off second best that day so had come back the next year to get their own back, and when they saw me in that suit they thought I was a Mod ... and easy prey...
- BILLY So it was just bad luck?
- JACK You could say just a crap roll of the dice ... wrong place at the wrong time...
- BILLY So what really happened in that alley?
- JACK You were at the trial ... didn't you hear it all then?

- BILLY Not really ... being a witness I wasn't allowed into the courtroom ...
- JACK Oh ... of course ... well they came at me in the alley and I just swung out ... that's all ... I caught one of them and he went down like a sack of potatoes ...
- .. the leader was so surprised he stood there for a minute then went to see if they could help the lad on the ground and I managed to scarper...
- BILLY Where did you go?
- JACK I was making for the train station but then I ran into some cops ... they saw the blood on me and stopped me ... then they heard over the radio that a body had been found...
- BILLY That must've been from the patrol car I found....
- JACK Yeah ... well ... the rest you know...
- BILLY At least you are out now.
- JACK Suppose ... now I've just got to start again and work my way back up ... step by step ...
- BILLY Start again?
- JACK I was 18 ... just doing my A Levels ... I had plans, big plans, but they all went in the bin ... so yes, I'm starting again... anyway, thank you for saying what you did and trying to help me.
- BILLY My pleasure...
- JACK Maybe I can buy you a drink sometime?
- BILLY I'd like that...

15 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : BUSY BAR ... as Scene 11)

JACK (ARRIVING WITH DRINKS) Here we are ... one for you Lizzie...

LIZZIE Thanks

JACK And one for Billy ... where's he gone?

LIZZIE He needed the loo...

(A BEAT)

Are you and Andrea alright Jack? I haven't seen her for ages...

JACK We're fine ...

LIZZIE Really?

JACK Really ... though I do wish I could get a better job ... things are tight but its not easy when you've got a police record....

LIZZIE Have you talked to Billy? There might be something for you there...

JACK (V/O) No ... I hadn't talked to Billy... and didn't intend to ... oh, he'd done himself alright and had three cafes now, but I didn't see myself spending my days frothing milk or toasting teacakes and being nice to anyone who came in the door. I enjoyed my driving job. Enjoyed the independence. Once I had left the warehouse each morning I was my own man ... well, I had to make all the scheduled deliveries of course, but I could stop for lunch or coffee when I wanted and where I wanted ... or I could even miss lunch and then have time ... do something else. And that's exactly what I did the day I went back to Paddy's.

I was just about to knock on the front door when I remembered the instructions, so opened the gate and walked round to the back. The garden was a complete mess. Weeds and brambles everywhere. It didn't look as though anyone had cared for it for ages... and the house didn't look much better.

Peeling paint ... a broken window with the glass taped over ... and all the curtains were drawn... in the middle of the day. I knocked, not really expecting an answer. And I didn't get one for a long time. I was about to walk away when a curtain twitched and Paddy's pale face peered out. It took him a second or two to recognise me...

16 : 1976 : PADDY'S BACK GARDEN

(FX : THE BACK DOOR OPENS)

PADDY I told you to come after dark!

JACK I can't ... I don't live round here you know...

PADDY Well ... I expected you last week...

JACK I couldn't get here then ... I was put on another round... you got the message for me or not?

PADDY 'Spose you'd better come in...

17 : 1976 : PADDY'S HOUSE

(FX : A HEAVILY DRAPED ROOM. THE DOOR CLOSES...)

PADDY Right ... you tell Thumper that this is an end of it ... now I've done this I don't owe him anything .. my debt's paid off. Understand? More than paid off...

JACK I'll tell him...

PADDY So what's he got on you? Why you doing this?

JACK I don't think he's 'got' anything on me really, though he threatened to mess up my release...

PADDY But you're out now, so why?

JACK I'm not sure really...

PADDY Take my advice, and get out ... don't have anything to do with him...

(A BEAT)

I'm going away. Probably Portugal. Maybe Spain.

JACK Is that the message?

PADDY 'Course not ... the message is 'Broadstairs'...

18. 1976 : PRISON MEETING ROOM

(FX : A STARK MEETING ROOM. MUMBLED CONVERSATIONS)

THUMPER (WHISPERING) Broadstairs? You're sure he said Broadstairs?

JACK Positive. Something wrong?

THUMPER It's just not the answer I was expecting. I thought Brighton ... Blackpool even ... but Broadstairs! Bloody hell!

It'll take a bit of time to let that sink in ... but thank you for doing that...

JACK So that's it?

THUMPER Yes, like I said...

JACK (V/O) And it was ... until I ran into him again in
the pub fifteen years later ...

19 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : BUSY PUB ... as Scene 15..)

LIZZIE Can you have a word with Billy for me Jack? I
think he's working too hard ... now he's got three
cafes, he's out all hours ... I hardly see him .. and
I'm not sure the girls know who their father is .. I
want him to have a break ... you know, spend
more time at home ... and maybe get away for a
few days somewhere...

JACK Where would you go?

LIZZIE Oh, I don't know ... Italy would be nice, or
Majorca ... but it could just as well be
Scarborough ... anywhere ... just somewhere
where he would have to stop for a bit. I know,
why don't you and Andrea come too? He'd like
that.

JACK I'm not sure we could even afford Scarborough at
the moment Lizzie.... as I've said, things are
really tight...

LIZZIE But you will talk to him for me ... please? I love
him Jack, but I feel we are just drifting apart...

(BEAT)

JACK OK...

LIZZIE Thanks ... and talking of Billy, where's he got
too?

JACK I'll go and find him. I need the loo myself anyway
... back in a minute...

20 : 2024 : JACK'S FLAT : KITCHEN

JACK (V/O) They're still there ... outside...
still waiting for me
but there's only three now...

three men standing outside my door
I've never seen their faces
their scowls or scars or stares
but they are always there
waiting
breathing as one breath
one rasping tobacco-stained breath
waiting, with shoulders hunched
hands heavy
and knuckles dusted...

21 : 1992 : PUB GENTS TOILETS

(FX : A URINAL FLUSHES AS JACK COMES IN...)

JACK Ah... there you are Billy. Lizzie was getting
worried ... thought you'd drowned yourself...

Billy ... you OK?

DEN Hello Jack ... long time no see...

BILLY Sorry Jack ... they kept me in here...

DEN We thought you'd come looking for him
eventually...

JACK Sorry ... do you know me?

DEN I ought too ... you killed my little brother. Don't you remember? You stuck a knife in his neck and he bled to death ... in some rotting rat-infested back alley in some arse-lick of a town ...

JACK Look ... it was self-defence ... you know that ...

DEN He was unarmed and you attacked him with a knife ... and now you're going to get it.

JACK Look ... I've paid for what I did ... served my time...

DEN But that doesn't bring Tony back, does it? He was only eighteen you know ... had his whole life ahead of him ... and what did you do, five years? Six? Do you really think that's all Tony's life was worth? He was a good lad ... and I was supposed to be looking after him...

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS)

DEN (CALLING) Sorry mate ... its closed for a bit ... business...

(FX : THUMPER WALKS IN)

THUMPER Sorry yourself, I can't wait... well, well ... look at this ... what's going on in here then?

JACK Thumper!

DEN This is a private matter. You keep out of it.

THUMPER Well, that's where you are wrong. This man owes me a lot of money, and if you do anything to him ... certainly anything serious ... I'm going to lose out, aren't I? And I don't like doing that ... losing out...

So I suggest you and your two friends just leave. Right now. Allright?

DEN And who's going to make us? There's three of you, and three of us ...

THUMPER There's might only be three of us in 'ere ... but there's another two outside that door.

DEN You're bluffing ... anyway, we come prepared...

THUMPER What! Those pissy little knives? I don't call that prepared ... this is what I call prepared...

(FX : THE CLICK OF A GUN BARREL)

BILLY Bloody hell!

THUMPER Now I have your proper attention, I repeat ... I think it best if you and your mates just leave.

(FX : THUMPER WHISTLES LOUDLY. THE DOORS OPEN & TWO MEN COME IN)

THUMPER Ah, Harry ... these gentlemen are just leaving ... escort them off the premises and make sure they really go ... I don't want them skulking around the car park waiting for a second chance...

DEN (TO JACK) I'll get you Jack Cronan I don't care how long it takes but now I know where you drink, I'll find you...

THUMPER You lay one finger on him and you'll have me to contend with. Understand? And I have very long arms... now just be thankful I am in a good mood and piss off...

22 : 1992 : PUB BAR

(FX : BUSY PUB ... as Scene 19..)

BILLY (TO LIZZIE) You should have seen their faces, Lizzie, when Thumper pulled out his gun!...

JACK Shut up Billy! We don't want the whole world to know...

BILLY Sorry.

THUMPER And call me Ron ... or Mr Harris if you want ... but not Thumper ... well not to me face... people will think I'm called after a bloody rabbit...

BILLY (TO LIZZIE, QUIETLY) What's he on about ... rabbit?

LIZZIE (WHISPERING) Its that film I took the girls to ... never mind, I'll explain later...

THUMPER (TO JACK) I'm glad we met ... I've been keeping an eye out for you whenever I've been around here.

JACK I really don't think I owe you that money Ron ... Mr Harris...

THUMPER What?

JACK You know ... earlier, when you came over?

THUMPER (LAUGHING) Oh, that ... sorry about that ... just my evil sense of humour ...

JACK Then you weren't serious?

THUMPER 'Course not ... here's the money back...

JACK But I only gave you nine pounds...

THUMPER Don't worry, keep the rest ... I owe you anyway, for doing those errands with Paddy ... I wasn't sure you would, you know, once you were out ... but I can see now that you're a man with a sense of honesty ... a man that keeps his word ... a man that can be trusted ... in fact just the sort of man I am looking for.

JACK That's nice of you to say but I'm sorry, I really don't want to get involved in anything dubious.

THUMPER Don't worry I've gone straight ... that last stretch inside did it for me ... I never want to go through that again ... but lets talk about you. What you going to do now that chaps found you? He'll be all over this manner asking questions...

JACK I don't know ... I don't suppose it's any use going to the Police?

THUMPER (LAUGHING) They wouldn't help you, even if they could.

JACK No chance of you sorting him out then?

THUMPER I told you, those times are behind me...

JACK But ... the gun...

THUMPER That's just for protection ... its not even loaded...

JACK Then I suppose I'll have to move. Andrea will hate it...

THUMPER Your missus?

JACK Yes...

THUMPER Any children?

JACK No.

THUMPER Your lady ... Andrea, did you say? ... she a good home-maker? Cook a good meal?

JACK Yes.

THUMPER Then I might be able to help you. Here's my card ... come and see me on Saturday... and bring Andrea ...

23 : 1992 : BROADSTAIRS SEAFRONT

(FX : WIND, WAVES AND SEAGULLS)

ANDREA Is there anything I should know about this man before we meet him Jack? ... I mean you haven't told me much about being inside...

JACK Because I want to forget it all, that's why... .. and the memories were fading nicely ... as if it was all a dream and wasn't really part of my life ... and it all happened to another Jack... but then, after meeting Thumper last week its all fresh again...

ANDREA I know you think it was an injustice...

JACK They attacked me and all I did was defend myself. I just wish I hadn't grabbed that knife from the kitchen ... they'd have given me a bit of a kicking ... maybe a broken nose ... but that would have been the end of it. Instead I got seven years inside ...

(A BEAT)

So what is it you want to know about him?

ANDREA Well, what was he in for?

JACK I'm not absolutely sure, but I think it was for a bank job that went wrong and the security man ended up getting hurt ... and I don't think it was his first time inside either...

ANDREA And you've no idea what he wants to see us about? Or why he wants to meet me?

JACK Absolutely none.

ANDREA There it is ... number 22 ...the one with the blue paintwork... the San Moritz Guesthouse... looks nice.

JACK Last place I'd have expected to find Thumper!

ANDREA That's probably why then ... so nobody finds him unless they are invited.

JACK Maybe ...

 (FX : THEY RING THE BELL)

JACK Oh, don't forget to call him Mr Harris ... or Ron if he invites you ... but not Thumper.

ANDREA Don't worry ... I won't let you down...

24. 1992 : SITTING ROOM AT THE SAN MORITZ

 (FX : THE CLINK OF TEACUPS)

THUMPER I suppose you are wondering why I asked you to come here?

JACK I'm sure you'll tell us when you're ready...

THUMPER Of course ... well, I wanted to meet Andrea ... and I wanted you both to see this place.... its just a shame you couldn't meet Mary as well...

JACK Your wife?

THUMPER Yeah ... she's in Majorca sorting out our house there ... we have just used it for holidays before but now we are moving out full-time ... so I am looking for someone to run this place for us. Someone I can trust...

JACK I'm not sure I know anyone suitable.

THUMPER I do ... you two.

ANDREA Us?!
JACK I really don't think...

THUMPER (INTERUPTING) Just hear me out...

(A BEAT)

You need to move, for own safety ... you said so your self just a few days ago ... I presume Andrea does know about all this? I mean, you did tell her what happened in the pub?

JACK Most of it yes ... and we have talked about moving away ...

THUMPER And any decisions yet as to where to?

ANDREA No...

THUMPER Good ... now listen...

My wife and I bought this place in 1971 ... Jack helped with that though he didn't know any of that at the time... anyway we have run it as a guesthouse since then ... well, I haven't really had much to do with it ... but its been a very good cover...

We made some money, as much as we needed, but we haven't even begun to touch on its full potential... we didn't want too much work so the place has just sort of ticked over, but we still made around 60k ... I reckon you could almost double that with some better advertising you could certainly make 100k...

What are you earning now? Driving ... about 10k?

JACK Give or take...

- THUMPER And you've got to change your job anyway if you've got to move away?
- JACK I suppose so ... yes ... I hadn't really thought.
- THUMPER Then move in here, the two of you, and run this place...
- ANDREA But we've got absolutely no experience .. either of us...
- THUMPER That's the joy of it, you don't really need any ... Mary would tell you everything ... explain all the things about laundry and the cash and carry ... you know, the workings of the place...
- Oh, I'm not pretending it will be easy ... you'll have to work, especially at the beginning, but I am sure you can do it between you...
- We'd still own it but you would be managers ... but not on a salary ...
- You put 1k a week into my bank account and keep the rest ... so you can easily clear 30 or 40k and maybe even more if things go well... it would be your place, by which I mean you would make all the decisions ... we won't be breathing down your necks, checking things ... I just want to relax now, but need to know that I have enough coming in to live on...
- JACK (V/O) So that's how we ended up living in Broadstairs. It took us a couple of days to decide, being such a major change to everything we'd known before, but when Billy offered to come and help for the first couple of weeks and explain things like portion control and VAT, we decided to go for it. Thumper was as good as his word ... he left us alone to get on with things as long as he got his slice.

The first couple of years were hard work but we soon got the hang of it and made a good living ... but then ... but then nothing stays the same for ever does it?

Andrea found a lump ... and months of chemo followed ... really knocked the stuffing out of her ... and me ... eventually she was given the allclear but I was still worried for her ... she was a shadow of her former self...

25. 2004 : BROADSTAIRS SEA FRONT

(FX : TRAFFIC PASES. SEAGULLS)

- JACK So... would you like to go on holiday, like the doctor said?
- ANDREA Yes ... if you think we could...
- JACK Then why don't we go to Majorca and see Thumper and Mary? We owe them a visit...
- ANDREA Oh... that would be lovely ... it would be nice to get some sun but do you really think we could? I mean, who would look after the guesthouse?
- JACK The staff could cope without us for a few days ... its not that busy at the moment ...
- ANDREA Oh Jack, that would be wonderful ... thank you...
- JACK That's alright Princess ... I think we both deserve a break after what we have been through recently... don't you?

26. 2004 : THUMPER'S GARDEN IN MAJORCA

(FX : CICADAS ... THE CLINK OF ICE IN GLASS)

THUMPER I hope you haven't come out to tell me you two are retiring ... especially when things are going so well...

JACK No ... nothing like that ...

ANDREA It would be nice though ... especially if we can come somewhere like this. Its wonderful here Ron...

THUMPER If it wasn't for the locals it would be...

ANDREA I'm sure they aren't that bad...

THUMPER You'd be surprised! ... but yes we love it. Mind you the winters can be surprisingly cold and wet...

ANDREA But then you gets days like this... its glorious.

THUMPER You soak it up all you can ... and I'll get more Sangria...

(FX : THUMPER LEAVES)

JACK You alright lovely?

ANDREA Perfect ... its lovely to feel warm again ... I have been cold to my bones for months ...

JACK Lets hope all that's behind us ...

ANDREA God I hope so .. I don't think I could go through all that again...

JACK Fingers crossed.

ANDREA What about what Ron said? ... what are we going to do about retirement?

JACK I don't know ... I thought we'd just keep going for a bit ... I enjoy being busy and having the guests around... well, most of them ... I mean, what would we do all day if we didn't have the guesthouse?

ANDREA But we will have to stop sometime.

JACK True ... but not just yet, eh ... but I promise I will think about it.

(FX : THUMPER RETURNS)

THUMPER Here we go ... some more for you Jack?

JACK Please...

(FX : THUMPER FILLS JACKS GLASS)

THUMPER There ...

JACK This is the life! Cheers...

THUMPER So, how long can you stay?

JACK Till Monday ...

THUMPER So its back to the San Moritz then?

JACK (V/O) Yes ... back to Broadstairs ... it was a nice summer that year ... oh, not as warm as Majorca of course, and Andrea missed the heat of the Mediterranean sun, but it was nice enough, and we were soon back in the swing of things...

27 : 2004 : SAN MORITZ KITCHEN

(FX : THE DOOR OPENS)

BILLY Anyone in?

JACK Billy! Hello stranger ... come in mate ... here
Jenny, take this ... cappuccino for table 7...

(FX : THE WAITRESS GOES... THE DOOR SWINGS
SHUT)

Coffee Billy?

BILLY No thanks ... anyway, I thought Andrea did all
that and you stayed front of house charming all
the old biddies...

JACK Yes, well ... she's been none too well since we
got home ... it's the cancer, its come back...

BILLY You didn't say...

JACK No ... then what is there to say that hasn't
already been said? ... the doctor thinks its pretty
bad. He hasn't told Andrea of course, and I'm not
going to ... don't want to abandon all hope just
yet ... enough of that, how are you?

BILLY Not too good tell the truth...

JACK You're not ill too are you?

BILLY No, not that ... its Lizzie ... she's left me ... or,
more accurately, she's thrown me out...

JACK What the hell's happened?

BILLY I had a thing with one of the waitresses, and she
caught us...

JACK You stupid bugger!

BILLY Yeah, I know...

I don't know what got into me. Oh, it was exciting
tasting forbidden fruit and I was flattered that a
young girl fancied an old git like me ...

Not that she really did fancy me of course ... I think she was just after a manageress' job ... still, Lizzie found out and that was it...

- JACK So do you need a bed? You know you can always stay here ...
- BILLY Yes please ... for a few days anyway...
- JACK Stay as long as you like ... or at least till Lizzie forgives you...
- BILLY I'm not sure when that will be ... you see, its not the first time...
- JACK Oh, Billy! You bloody idiot!
- BILLY I know ... I know...
- JACK What about your girls? Do they know?
- BILLY Yes ... Lisa was furious, but then she's never really liked me ... but Julie said I could go and stay with her if I wanted ... bless her...
- JACK And will you?
- BILLY What ... go to Australia! ... I very much doubt it...
- JACK What's happening with the cafes?
- BILLY They've all got managers in these days, I just need to keep an eye on them ... so I'll have plenty of time to help out here you if you want...
- JACK That would be great, especially while Andreas ill... you know, till she gets better..
- BILLY (V/O) Only unfortunately, Andrea didn't get better...

VICAR (IN THE BACKGROUND) ... we therefore commit her body to the ground : earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope....

BILLY (V/O : CONTINUING OVER THE ABOVE) After that Jack needed my help more than ever and after a month or two I was running the kitchen and all the home staff while Jack dealt with the bookings, the money and charming the punters... particularly the blue-rinse brigade...

Lizzie took me to the cleaners in the divorce, and she runs the cafes now, so it was a good job I had the guesthouse to keep me busy ... to distract me.

Jack and I got along well enough ...
(LAUGHING) ... I am sure most of the guests thought we were an old gay couple ... it almost felt like that some times, we were together so much...

Life ticked over ... but as Jack says, nothing stays the same for ever, does it?

28 : 2006 : SAN MORITZ : HALL

(FX : THE FRONT DOOR OPENS)

JACK Welcome to the San Moritz ... how can I help you?

THOMPSON I am looking for a Mr Cronan ... Jack Cronan ...

JACK That's me...

THOMPSON I'm DCI Thompson. And these gentlemen are DS Patterson and Sgt Hooper. I have papers here impounding the San Moritz and freezing all its secondary assets.

- JACK What! ...you can't do that ... I mean, why? What have I done?
- THOMPSON Its nothing to do with you directly Mr Cronan ... we have reason to believe this establishment was bought with the proceeds of a crime.
- JACK Oh ... I see ... well, I wouldn't know anything about that... I'm only the manager.
- THOMPSON But you do know the owner? ... Ron Harris?
- JACK You know I do ... as I am sure you are well aware, we were in Pentonville together ... so our paths crossed there ... but I just work for him. I haven't seen him in ages...
- THOMPSON Now that's not strictly true, is it Mr Cronan. You visited him recently ... in Majorca.... and thanks for that by the way, we weren't quite sure where he was...
- JACK You mean you have been watching me!?
- THOMPSON Yes, of course
- JACK Bloody hell!
- THOMPSON I'm surprised you are surprised ... or maybe you didn't realise what a big fish Ron Harris is?
- JACK And your point is?
- THOMPSON That you are involved... deeply involved ... in fact you helped him buy this place ... so tell us what you know and it will go easier for you in the long run ...
- JACK You want me to grass on Ron?
- THOMPSON Just be sensible. He can't help you now and you don't want to let him drag you down with him ... you need to look out for yourself.

Look, I'm not expecting any answers immediately ... but just think about what I have said. What I want you to do now is pack a bag. You have twenty minutes and please bear in mind you won't be coming back here. DS Patterson will accompany you at all times.

(FX : BILLY WALKS IN)

THOMPSON Ah, Mr Jackson. I've been expecting you.

BILLY What's going on?

JACK Don't tell him anything Billy. They are after Thumper ... and they're closing the place down...

BILLY They can't do that!

THOMPSON I'm afraid we can. And you too have twenty minutes to pack your stuff. And then we'll have a nice chat down at the station.

JACK (V/O) I didn't tell them anything ... I thought about it mind, spilling the beans, but decided to keep my mouth shut..

Thumper had been good to me, treated me right, and got me out of that fix in the pub, so the last thing I wanted to do was stitch him up, not that I knew any of the details they wanted anyway ...

In the end they didn't need me ... Paddy told them everything they wanted to know, and Thumper lost it all. The San Moritz had to go of course, and I was out on my ear ... and so was Billy ...

29. 2008 : MARGATE SEAFRONT

(FX : WAVES AND SEAGULLS)

BILLY Lets sit here...

JACK Well?

BILLY Well?

JACK You said you had something to tell me...

BILLY Ah ... yes ...

(A BEAT)

I must say I'm glad that's all over ... the court case I mean ... though I'm sorry you've lost the San Moritz...

JACK It wasn't mine to loose ...

BILLY No...

(A BEAT)

JACK Go on ... spit it out ... what is it?

BILLY I'm going...

JACK Going? Where?

BILLY To live with Julie ... in Australia...

JACK I thought you hated her husband ...

BILLY Well, he is a prick ... but it'll be nice to see my grandchildren ... there's two I've never seen...

JACK I envy you that ... children... grandchildren...

BILLY Its not all a bed of roses you know... families...

JACK I know ... but more sweet than sour ... usually...

BILLY 'Suppose...

(A BEAT)

JACK When you going?

BILLY Soon ...very soon

(A BEAT)

JACK I'll miss you...

BILLY I'll miss you too ... you know I will, you're my best friend ... we've been through a lot, me and you but there's nothing for me in this country any more, except bad memories...

JACK God, what a mess...

BILLY Yes ... I'm sorry, but I have to go...

JACK I know...

(V/O) So there I was again ... at a cross-roads with nowhere to go ... only I was older this time, much older ... and alone ...

30 : 2024 : JACK'S FLAT

(MUSIC : STAN GETZ 'WHISPER NOT' PLAYS GENTLY)

JACK (V/O) And that's when I came here ...

Not much is it, a room with a kitchenette and shared facilities down the corridor ... but at least they can't move me on because there's nowhere else for me to go...

It's odd how life plays out isn't it? ... I had plans but when they didn't pan out I just tried to keep going forward, going through the doors that opened before me, not quite sure where they would lead...

I've made mistakes, course I have, then we all make mistakes ... don't we?

My biggest one by far was grabbing that knife ... it must have take what, half a second? ... a second? ... to see it and grab it ...

How different my life might have been ... but then, who knows what would have happened if I had made other choices ... it might have been even worse ...

I'm alright really ... I've got the cat for company, and I listen to my music ... and I wait ... wait for the end ...

now there's only one
just one man waiting
waiting in the shadows
dressed all in black...
I can't see his face
but can feel his eyes watching ...
and waiting ...
waiting for me...
as I wait for him
and the final knock on the door

(MUSIC : FADE UP)

THE END