

A SERIES OF SMALL FIRES

**A one act drama by
Treena Thorpe and Phil Tyler
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2021 performance script

This play was first performed on September 15th, 2012, at the South-West One Act Drama Festival, Bunbury, Western Australia. Treena Thorpe directed it with the following cast.

MICHAEL CHURCHILL/SON:	Greg Hawkins
NIGHBOUR/GWEN:	Lorna Moorman
CLIFFORD CHURCHILL/DAD:	Phil Tyler
NURSE FLYNN:	Suzanne Hughes

Festival Adjudicator Dr Robyn McCarron awarded the following:

- Best Original Script
- Best Male Actor – Phil Tyler
- Best Female Supporting Actor – Suzanne Hughes

Dad is in his 60's. Michael is his son. Gwen is about Dad's age and the Nurse can be any age. The set consists of an easy chair, a plastic chair, a large table, a small table, a small fridge and a couple of photos and nick-nacks. Also required is a smoke machine, a medal, a pair of singed socks and a smoke detector of some sort to produce an audible alarm.

It was also performed on 2nd October 2021 at the Big Apple Theatre, Donnybrook. Treena Thorpe again directed it with the following cast.

MICHAEL CHURCHILL/SON:	Alex Brown
NIGHBOUR/GWEN:	Suzanne Hughes
CLIFFORD CHURCHILL/DAD:	Phil Tyler
NURSE FLYNN:	Heidi Welsh

The time is today. The setting is the sitting room of an elderly man's flat located in a multi-storey block in a dockside city in England. Before the curtain opens, there is smoke coming from the stage, a fire detector is sounding and there is the sound of banging on a door and a doorbell ringing. There are shouts of panic "Dad, Dad are you all right, Dad, Dad" or similar shouts. When the curtain opens, a man and a woman are on the stage waving their arms to clear the smoke. The woman, Gwen, is in house clothes, hurriedly put on, and the man, Michael is dressed conservatively. As the smoke clears, Dad is not to be seen.

MICHAEL: Quick, find out what's on fire.

GWEN: The smoke's coming from the kitchen. *(She goes off stage. MICHAEL is still waving his arms about trying to disperse the smoke when GWEN shouts from off stage. MICHAEL takes out his mobile phone)*

GWEN: Its ok, I've got it, nothing serious.

MICHAEL: Do we still need the fire brigade?

GWEN: No, we won't be wanting them. *(She returns to the stage holds up burnt socks)*

MICHAEL: *(seeing the socks)* What the... *(Puts his mobile phone away and looks around)* Dad... Dad where are you? Oh my God, I hope he's not dead. *(With panic in his voice)* Dad!

An elderly man walks onto the stage. He is poorly dressed with threadbare clothing and his slippers are on the wrong feet. A newspaper is under his arm. He sees MICHAEL and is taken aback

DAD: What, what, *(shouting)* get outa here ya mongrel. Get out 'fore I call the police. *(gesticulating)* Get out.

MICHAEL: Dad... thank God you're okay.

DAD: Get out I tell ya, I've got nowt worth pinching.

MICHAEL: It's me Dad ... Michael... Your son.

Dad stops shouting and looks at GWEN. After a few moments of silence he turns and sits on the lounge chair

DAD: What does a man have to do to get a bit of privacy in his own house? *(He opens his newspaper and starts reading it)*

MICHAEL: Dad... Dad... It's me Dad, I've come to see you.

DAD: *(looks up and exclaims joyously)* Michael *(puts his arms out)* I didn't know you were coming over. Is that your Mam cooking breakfast I can smell?

GWEN: Nobody's been cooking anything, it's just you been drying your socks in the grill again, and not for the first time.

DAD: *(to both)* Oh yes, I should have known it, the pair of ya. *(To GWEN)* I knew you would be sticking your nose in as soon as I give you a key.

GWEN: You didn't give me a key, the fire brigade did.

DAD: Ganging up on me ay? So that's it.

MICHAEL: Dad, why would the fire brigade give Mrs G a key?

GWEN: Don't ask, you'd rather not know.

MICHAEL: What do you mean?

GWEN: Well, I shouldn't say but...

DAD: He's not interested.

MICHAEL: I want to know.

DAD: A man can't even have a sit down on toilet in peace. Five minutes to read his damn paper and do his daily business before that interfering bitch turns up.

MICHAEL: What?

GWEN: Ignore him. He's talking about the visiting nurse. Lovely lady she is. Looks after him a real treat she does. If I were her, I'd drown the cantankerous bugger.

DAD: *(to Gwen)* Haven't you got summat else to do?

MICHAEL: Dad!

GWEN: *(to Michael)* Don't you worry about it. Anyway, I can't be standing around here all day. I am just so glad you are here at last; it's getting beyond me I can tell you. I don't mind doing for him and picking up a few things for him here and there, but there are some things a next-door neighbour shouldn't be asked to do.

MICHAEL: Yes, I can imagine, anyway thank you Gwen I do appreciate all the help you've been giving Dad. Knowing you have been here for him means so much to me, especially with me living so far away.

GWEN: Yes, well now you know why I wrote you those letters.

MICHAEL: Yes, I do know now. I'll show you out.

GWEN: No need to show me out I know this place well enough now. *(as GWEN is leaving)* Be careful now Clifford, be good. *(DAD picks up his paper and starts reading while all the time muttering under his breath)*

MICHAEL: You are very lucky to have a neighbour like Gwen you know.

DAD: Interfering old biddy... She's only after me manhood. There ain't too many of my generation with my sex appeal still standing.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: I worked her out years ago. Soon as she found out I was on my own I couldn't get shut of her.

MICHAEL: *(both chuckling)* Yes Dad, with your looks and personality I can see what attracted her. I'm sure it works every time. *(DAD goes from chuckling to a coughing fit. MICHAEL pats dad on the back to help him with his coughing. He gets a cup of water for DAD)* Here dad, drink this. *(DAD drinks and stops coughing. He pulls out a dirty handkerchief and wipes his eyes. MICHAEL sits down beside DAD)* That's better Dad... You do know why I'm here don't you?

DAD: *(brightly)* Of course, you've come to see your Mam and me.

MICHAEL: *(puts his hand on his shoulder)* Dad, Mam's not here anymore.

DAD: *(confused)* What? What are you on about? Of course, she isn't here, she's been dead last five years. Don't you remember?

MICHAEL: Yes of course I remember. *(He notices a medal on the table and picks it up)* Hey; this is your long service medal from the docks.

DAD: *(DAD takes the medal and puts it into its box and puts it back onto the table)* All containers now.

MICHAEL: Sorry?

DAD: The docks... All containers now... Can't stop change I suppose.

MICHAEL: Yes dad, change... change. That's why I'm here Dad.

DAD: *(getting upset)* Don't like change... Had enough of bloody change... You people always changing things about, that's all you bloody think about... What's wrong wi' old ways eh? Had enough of bloody change. *(Starts another coughing fit)*

MICHAEL: Don't upset yourself Dad, calm down... Don't get upset, I was talking about the containers.

DAD: *(contemptuously)* Change! Only just got used to them video tapes now they're gone. They should 'ave waited until all old people were dead 'fore they go changing things about. *(Continues to read his newspaper)*

MICHAEL: Ok Dad, just calm yourself.
DAD grumbles under his breath picks up his paper and starts to read again and continues to read it through the next few lines

DAD: They do it on purpose.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: Government.... Invents things. As soon as you get used to summat they get rid of it. It's a conspiracy, but don't you worry, I'm onto 'em.

MICHAEL: No it's not.... it's just technology Dad. Technology makes life easier.

DAD: Not for me it don't.

MICHAEL: If it wasn't for technology, you wouldn't be able to watch Arsenal on the telly... And you'd have to walk up 14 sets of stairs to get to this flat. *(DAD grunts in disagreement)* Talking about 14 stories Dad, how are you coping up here?

DAD: What?

MICHAEL: How you coping Dad? Being so high up and so far from the shops.

DAD: Shops, what you on about?

MICHAEL: I was just thinking dad that it must be quite a walk to the shops.

DAD: It's not far.

MICHAEL: You manage ok do you? You know... carrying all the shopping back.

DAD: It's not far.

MICHAEL: Must be a struggle.

DAD: *(annoyed)* What are you on about?

MICHAEL: Carrying your shopping all that way, especially if the lifts not working.

DAD: I manage.

MICHAEL: Fourteen floors is a long way up Dad. Even I would struggle to carry stuff up fourteen floors. Surely you can't do that every day. *(There is a grumble noise from DAD and he looks away)* How long has the lift been out of action?

DAD: I manage.

MICHAEL: A couple of days.... longer? Boy, am I glad I don't have to carry stuff up here. You must be pretty fit Dad. *(There is no response from DAD. MICHAEL checks the newspaper DAD is reading)* Dad?

DAD: Did you know that lift's not working again?

MICHAEL: *(exasperated)* I just said that Dad.

DAD: Had a lot of trouble with that lift.

MICHAEL: That's why lots of older people prefer to live in single storey places. *DAD looks up from the paper with a look of surprise on his face as though seeing MICHAEL for the first time.*

DAD: You know your Mam loves you coming over.

MICHAEL: *(MICHAEL sighs in frustration)* Stop it... Dad, how old is that newspaper?

DAD: What?

MICHAEL: Your newspaper, its Sunday's paper Dad... Today is Friday... Don't you get the paper when you go to the shops?

DAD: Sunday paper is the only one worth reading these days.... besides it's got the telly guide in it.

MICHAEL: Yeah of course... anyway, that would be one extra thing you would have to carry up the stairs... Especially when Gwen says the lift hasn't worked for the last three weeks. *(There is no response from DAD)* Dad, do you reckon you could pick me up a couple of things from the shops when you're down there today?

DAD: I don't go to shop on Fridays.

MICHAEL: I'm surprised that Mrs G and you don't take turns about to go to the shops. No point in you both going down there every day.

DAD: What you on about? We take turns.

MICHAEL: What? One day she goes and does her shopping and the next day she goes and does yours?

DAD: *(annoyed)* What are you on about? You're confusing me... Isn't that what people do... Help each other?

MICHAEL: *(goes over to his father and kneels beside him, he gives DAD'S shoulder a squeeze and smiles at his DAD)* Okay dad, don't upset yourself... It's not important.

DAD: *(puts down his paper and looks at his son and after a pause)* Hello son, I didn't hear you come in, would you like a cup of tea? Your Mam'll be making it in five minutes.

MICHAEL: *(looks at his father and after a few moments)* Dad, how about I save her a job and I make the tea. *(He gets up and goes to the kitchen bench)* I'll make it how you like it Dad, I remember, always a strong pot of tea on the table. Two sugars, strong and sweet coming up.
He makes the tea but is unable to find the sugar. He goes over to his father

MICHAEL: Dad, where's the sugar?

DAD: My Doris made a good cup of tea, a good cook my Doris.

MICHAEL: Dad where's the sugar?

DAD: Made it so strong you could stand a spoon up in it. *(DAD picks up the paper and starts to read again)*

MICHAEL: Dad...

DAD: Ants.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: Clever are ants.

MICHAEL: Ants?

DAD: It were because of ants, they don't like cold you know.

MICHAEL: What do you mean?

DAD: *(lowering the paper)* In freezer... sugar's in freezer.
MICHAEL walks back to the kitchen bench and gets a sugar bowl from the freezer. He returns with two cups and puts them down on the coffee table. Puts his hand on DAD'S shoulder and says.

MICHAEL: You know I love you Dad.

DAD: *(reading his paper again)* Everybody knows ants don't like the cold.
There is a knock at the door

MICHAEL: I'll get that Dad. *(he walks toward the door but in bustles NURSE FLYNN before he gets there)*

NURSE: It's only me Clifford *(seeing MICHAEL)* Oh you have a visitor, how lovely for you Mr Churchill. Hello, I'm Nurse Flynn. *(Shaking Michael's hand, very friendly)*

MICHAEL: Hello, I'm Michael, I'm his son. *(She drops his hand and her jovial mood changes)*

NURSE: Son! Son? Really, I didn't know you had a son Clifford. You never said you had a son. Anyway, it's about time somebody from your family turned up here.

MICHAEL: Pardon?

NURSE: Well the poor old bugger's...

DAD: Old? *(The NURSE cuts him off)*

NURSE: Been battling along on his own, stuck in this flat day in, day out, struggling to get about, and the only person giving him a hand is his next-door neighbour and she isn't young. You should be ashamed of yourself. *(She is bustling around doing things for DAD)*

MICHAEL: What...I...

NURSE: Well have you seen the state of this leg? Well, have you? *(She has removed DAD'S bandage and turns his leg over so that MICHAEL can see it better. DAD groans in pain at that)*

NURSE: Sorry Clifford but it just makes me so cross that you have been left to struggle along like you have, and all this time you had a son.

MICHAEL: But I...

NURSE: Yes, yes, I know you are busy.

MICHAEL: Yes but....

NURSE: Yes but.... If I had a quid Clifford for every time I have heard that excuse.

MICHAEL: Yes but...

NURSE: Don't bother, I've think I've heard every excuse under the sun.

MICHAEL: Dad didn't tell me and it's not easy just popping in from Western Australia you know.

NURSE: Australia...

MICHAEL: Yes Australia.

NURSE: *(apologetically)* Oh, yes well, I suppose...

MICHAEL: It isn't easy just popping in you know. If I had known earlier.

NURSE: Yes... well, you could have rung.

MICHAEL: I ring regularly but dad never said anything. It wasn't till Gwen rang me and then I was on the first plane over. Anyway, now that I'm here I will.... organise something... do what I can.

NURSE: *(she stops bandaging and looks at MICHAEL)* He needs something permanent.

DAD: *(to the NURSE)* My son's visiting me you know. From Australia.

NURSE: Yes Clifford I can see that. Isn't it lovely, you having a visit from your son.

DAD: He lives in Western Australia.

NURSE: Yes Clifford I know, he has come a long way to see you.

DAD: How do you know?... are you related to him?

NURSE: He's your son Clifford, from Australia.

MICHAEL: Mind you, now that I am here, I can see that something needs to be done.

NURSE: I have tried to tell your father that he needs more permanent care... If you know what I mean.

MICHAEL: Even though I've only just got here, I am beginning to understand the situation. He definitely needs someone to look after him full time.

DAD: I am here you know. *(To himself but everyone hears)* So that's why he's here, *(to the NURSE)* he wants to put me out to grass.

MICHAEL: Dad, I'm just thinking of what's best all round.

NURSE: He does need watching.

MICHAEL: Yes, somewhere good where there are people to watch over him.

NURSE: He does have a tendency to start fires.

MICHAEL: So I've been told.

NURSE: Well, you only have to see his leg to realise he needs care.

MICHAEL: Exactly.

NURSE: I mean anyone else who lights a match in the bathroom to get rid of the smell usually doesn't set fire to the curtain.

MICHAEL: I didn't know about that.

NURSE: You don't know the half of it.

MICHAEL: Obviously.

DAD: I am here you know... *(they ignore him)*

NURSE: Then there was the time he wanted to keep his fish and chips warm so he put them in the oven.

MICHAEL: Well, everyone does that.

NURSE: Yes, but it's normal to take the paper off first.

MICHAEL: Lucky he didn't burn the place down and take a hundred others with him.

NURSE: Yes, I think you are doing the right thing.

MICHAEL: But what exactly is the right thing. This situation isn't what I thought it would be.

DAD: I can hear you know. Yeah, you were all hoping I'd be dead by now then you wouldn't have the bother of doing the right thing.

NURSE: I think I might know just the place for him. I could put you in touch with them.

MICHAEL: Please. You know I'm a bit confused I thought this only happened to very old people Dads only in his sixties.

NURSE: Unfortunately, people as young as fifty are getting it.

DAD: *(struggles to get out of the chair and heads towards the window)* I know the right thing. I'll throw myself out the bloody window, right now.

NURSE: Yes it would be perfect. *(They see DAD heading to the window)*

MICHAEL: Dad, where you going?

DAD: I'll save you all the trouble and sort it out myself.

NURSE: Oh, not that again. *(They both grab him and steer him back to the chair)*

MICHAEL: What do you mean not that again?

NURSE: Well, he's always on about saving everybody the trouble.

MICHAEL: Well should he be up here then with his state of mind as it is?

NURSE: He isn't serious, he knows the windows only open four inches.

MICHAEL: *(gently)* Dad, you are a silly old duffer sometimes.

DAD: Piss off you two, get out me home.

MICHAEL: Dad!

DAD: You two are talking like I'm not even here. Who are you two anyway to decide what's good for me? Bugger off the pair of you.

MICHAEL: The next fire could be your last one Dad.

NURSE: It's a good job he doesn't smoke, or his bed would have gone up by now. Anyway, I've got to be off now. *(Handing MICHAEL a brochure)* Take this.

DAD: Yeah geroff.

MICHAEL: What is it?

NURSE: It's a brochure for a place I know of. Green Hills Care Lodge. In fact Clifford, an old friend of yours is in there. Billy Hinds. You probably know others there as well. Like a home from home for him it would be Clifford.

DAD: *(to the NURSE)* I thought you were off, *(to MICHAEL)* she thinks I'm doolally. It's probably a bloody cemetery.

MICHAEL: *(to the NURSE)* Thank you.

NURSE: *(to MICHAEL)* Look, with you here there isn't much need for me here today. You can wash your father can't you?

MICHAEL: Well I....

NURSE: It's easy, just like washing a baby.

MICHAEL: Well couldn't you...

NURSE: You'll be right, you'll manage. *(To DAD)* Okay then Mr Churchill. I'll see you again Monday. Take care now. Your son only has good intentions for you. *(She heads out the door. MICHAEL starts reading the pamphlet)*

DAD: *(to himself)* Good intentions, we all know where they lead.
MICHAEL sits down next to his DAD: He looks at the pamphlet

MICHAEL: Dad, this doesn't look a bad place... I like the design of the entrance. Look Dad

DAD: You're not bloody washing me.

MICHAEL: At last, something we agree on. Look at this brochure; it got a really impressive entrance.

DAD: I don't care what the front looks like. That's just to get you in.

MICHAEL: Look at the brochure.

DAD: I don't need to look. They're all the same them places.

MICHAEL: No, they're not. (*MICHAEL leafs through the pamphlet*) Look they've got a bowling green.

DAD: Don't bowl, never have, never will

MICHAEL: And bingo on Friday nights.... And they've even got Karaoke every weekend.

DAD: Karaoke... good God save me... get me some pills.

MICHAEL: Ok, where are they? (*MICHAEL stands*)

DAD: It'll save a lot of expense.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: You know.

MICHAEL: What are you on about Dad?

DAD: Pills, bloody pills, I can't hardly move so throwing myself out the window's too hard.

MICHAEL: Don't talk like that Dad I am not getting you any pills.

DAD: Well, get me a razor blade then... I'll cut my own throat I will.

MICHAEL: Dad!

DAD: Well, you're sticking me in a home, full of senile old buggers. I'd rather bleed to death than have the life sucked out of me in one of them places.

MICHAEL: Come off it Dad.

DAD: Treat you like a baby they do.

MICHAEL: No they don't. They're staffed by loving caring folk, who'll look after you. A warm bed with good food to eat... Company as well. That's what you need Dad, you haven't been looking after yourself.

DAD: A warm bed and all you can eat... From a spoon.

MICHAEL: Come of it Dad.

DAD: I thought I'd brought you up better than that. (*Mimicking a carer at the home*) Come on now Mr Churchill, it's liquid lamb, it'll do you good... It'll go through me quicker than Epsom Salts.

MICHAEL: Don't be ridiculous Dad.

DAD: The minute you walk in they put a nappy on you and talk to you like you're a baby.

MICHAEL: No, they don't.

DAD: That's 'cause so many of 'em in them places shit 'emselves. (*Mimicking a carer again*) Now be careful Mr Churchill, don't let that bone get stuck in your throat. (*Speaking normally again*) All them places are is a dumping ground for old people... (*pointing at MICHAEL*) by ungrateful kids. (*They both sit in silence*)

MICHAEL: How's your tea dad?

DAD: Tea? Is that all you can say?

MICHAEL: Drinking tea reminds me of those Sunday's we used to have at Grandads.

DAD: I never put him in a home.

MICHAEL: Is your tea ok or not?

DAD: Yes, milk an' six pills.

MICHAEL: I used to love lunch at Grandads. Bread and beef gravy with tinned tomatoes on top. I used to stick loads of pepper on it.

DAD: Real beef, wi' a knife and fork.

MICHAEL: Beef, Yorkshire pudding and mince pies with custard. It was good, wasn't it?

DAD: I bet you don't get that in Senility Hills Care Lodge.

MICHAEL: Dad, don't call it that. Anyway, your old mate Billy lives there. It will be like old times.

DAD: Never heard of him.

MICHAEL: Don't be silly Dad, you and Billy were pals for years.

DAD: That's why I never see him, they won't let him out.

MICHAEL: You can talk about old times.

DAD: With him? He's been gaga for the last 50 years at least. No wonder no one wants to share a room with him.

MICHAEL: Dad! You won't be put in a room with Billy. You get a room of your own.

DAD: Ya get a bigger room in prison.

MICHAEL: Dad!

DAD: Except prisoners get out sooner or later. The only way I'll get out a place like that is horizontal... in a smell proof box. Screwed down to make sure I don't run off. And it will be out the back way, not through that flash entrance.

MICHAEL: This tea is good.

DAD: *(under his breath)* You forgot the pills.

MICHAEL: *(annoyed)* Oh stop being silly... By the way Dad, Anne sends her love.

DAD: If you didn't live on the other side of the world with what's her name, you'd know I don't like milk in me tea.

MICHAEL: *(shakes his head)* My wife's name is Anne Dad.

DAD: I suppose I should be grateful.

MICHAEL: What about?

DAD: She stayed in Australia. La de dah bitch.

MICHAEL: Come of it Dad. I wish you wouldn't speak about Anne like that. Someone has to stay at home and keep running our electrical contractor business.

DAD: Sends me her love... She's never met me.... I bet this was all her idea... Put you up to it did she?

MICHAEL: Dad!

DAD: She'd be happy to see me locked up. She probably knows that them places will be the finish of me. That way she gets her hands on me money sooner.

MICHAEL: You don't have any money Dad. That's why I'm having to pay for you.

DAD: Money makes life easier, sweep the old man under the carpet, put him away, then you don't have to think about him anymore. Out of sight, out of mind. I know.... *(DAD is getting increasingly agitated)*

MICHAEL: *(firmly)* Stop it Dad, *(gentler)* It's for the best you know it is... Anyway, you have never been to this place so how can you know what it's like? If there were any other way ... there isn't.

DAD: Australia.

MICHAEL: What about it?

DAD: Billy Hinds' daughter tried to get him to go to Canada and live with her there.

MICHAEL: Did they?

DAD: Yeah, she cared about Billy.

MICHAEL: I care, but you know you're not up to travelling.

DAD: So you say.

MICHAEL: You're not. If it were possible then I would do it, but it isn't.

DAD: So you say.

MICHAEL: Yes, I do say. *(They lapse into silence, and then very gently)* Dad, this whole situation doesn't give me any pleasure you know... I would love to take you back to Australia with me, I would love it but it just isn't possible. *(Long silence)*

DAD: I paid don't forget.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: Your fare, I paid so you could go.

MICHAEL: Oh my God, you are still on about that. It was years ago.

DAD: You were skint. Said you wouldn't go 'cause you didn't have the money.

MICHAEL: That was a long time ago Dad.

DAD: I still remember.

MICHAEL: What is the point Dad?

DAD: Ya never paid me back. Ya still owe me.

MICHAEL: I offered, you said no.

DAD: Even when now you've made all that money, ya never paid me back.

MICHAEL: Dad...

DAD: We went wiout...

MICHAEL: Dad.

DAD: Good job your Mam ain't here. Lock her away as well you would.

MICHAEL: Dad if Mam was still alive you would be better looked after. You would be eating better than you are, you wouldn't need to go into care.

DAD: (*with disgust*) Care! It's a bloody loony bin full of nutters and senile old buggers.

MICHAEL: It isn't, it's an aged care facility, and it looks a really good one at that.

DAD: At least Billy had the chance to say no.

MICHAEL: Well, if you want to go to bloody Canada, I'll fix it for you.

DAD: What do I want to go to Canada for? I don't know anybody there.

MICHAEL: Dad, Anne and I talked about bringing you to Australia years ago but didn't think you would ever leave England. If it means that much to you Dad I'll talk to Anne.

DAD: What about?

MICHAEL: You coming to Australia.

DAD: Why would I want to go there? Place is full of snakes and spiders.... and giant ants.

MICHAEL: Then what are you on about?

DAD: It would be nice to be asked.

MICHAEL: Give me strength.

DAD: *(long pause)* Billy Hinds' family kept his house for him when he went in. They used to take him back there at weekends.

MICHAEL: Did they?

DAD: I'm cold, who left window open? It's like a barn in here.

MICHAEL: *(exasperated)* I'll close it. *(gets up and goes to the window, looking out of it)* You can see the docks from up here Dad.

DAD: Kept it clean they did.

MICHAEL: You can make out the ships, the cranes.

DAD: Always there for him it was.

MICHAEL: All containers now, different from when you worked there Dad. It would have been nice to see all the changes.

DAD: Always had his home he did.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: Billy Hinds, always had his home he did.

MICHAEL: All right for some.

DAD: Always there for him it was.

MICHAEL: Right.

DAD: Kept it clean they did.

MICHAEL: Mm.

DAD: Always had his home he did.

MICHAEL: Dad!

DAD: Kept it clean they did.

MICHAEL: *(louder)* Dad!

DAD: Always there for him it was.

MICHAEL: *(louder again)* Dad! Listen, this is a council flat, you can't keep it. Oh, for heaven's sake, talking to you is like talking to a brick wall, and a thick one at that... I'm sorry dad; I didn't mean that, you know I didn't.

DAD: Always there for him it was.

MICHAEL: *(exasperated)* Ok then I'll ask. The council will say no, I know they will. You can't keep a flat empty just because the former owner wants to visit. But I'll ask... Leave it up to me... Stupid idea but I'll go down first thing in the morning and ask.

DAD: Ask what?
MICHAEL looks at his father unbelievably, sits and they are silent for a few moments

MICHAEL: Hey why don't we go and see Grandad's grave tomorrow. If I can remember how to find it. I haven't been there in years. We can visit Mam's grave as well. You can show me where it is.

DAD: If you had been here for funeral you'd know where it is.

MICHAEL: Do you want to go or not?

DAD: No, I'll see her soon enough as it is.

MICHAEL: Come off it Dad. Don't talk like that.

DAD: Well, I won't last long in that place you're gonna dump me in you know.

MICHAEL: Rubbish... *(brightly)* Hey Dad, I brought you some jellybeans. *(He gets them out of a bag)*

DAD: What?

MICHAEL: Black jellybeans, still like them don't you?

DAD: *(puzzled and gruffly)* What do you mean?

MICHAEL: I remember that you always had a jar of black jellybeans in the kitchen.

DAD: *(getting agro)* What are you on about? I don't know what you are talking about, what are you going on about black jellybeans for? Where do black jellybeans come into things? The only thing black is the cloud hanging over me.

MICHAEL: Come on Dad, no need to get yourself all upset again.

DAD: Well, you say some strange things.

MICHAEL: I was only thinking about when I was a kid. I remember the black jellybeans because if I had been a good boy and done something that you were pleased with you would give me a black jellybean. You know, I loved getting a black jellybean. I would grab it out of your hand and pop into my mouth and I would feel so proud.

DAD: Worst thing I ever did.

MICHAEL: What was?

DAD: Black jellybeans, telling your Mam I liked them, didn't have the heart to tell her I hated the bloody things. Your Mam used to buy 'em for me and giving 'em to you was a good way of getting rid of 'em.

MICHAEL: You are joking?

DAD: I only liked chocolate almonds.

MICHAEL: I remember the dish of almonds but not chocolate ones.

DAD: Well, I sucked off all the chocolate and put 'em back in dish for visitors.
MICHAEL has a look of horror on his face as he goes back to the window

MICHAEL: You have a great view from this window Dad. Do you ever look out to see the cranes down at the docks working? All a lot different now. Times have changed, a lot less people down there now, with the containers and all. Did you know I can see the old canal as well, I used to love walking along the canal when I was a kid... on a summer Sunday morning ... walking to Grandads for Sunday lunch... sometimes we would see a pair of swans... All housing now... I remember the houses going up... going on sale. A three bedroom semi-detached could be had for twenty thousand, seven hundred and fifty pounds... I don't remember you walking with Mam and me.

DAD: Wasn't I was with ya?

MICHAEL: No, it was lovely though.

DAD: What was?

MICHAEL: The walk... Summer mornings... I can't ever remember walking to Grandads in winter. Perhaps we never went to church in winter.

DAD: No.

MICHAEL: You know that was one of my favourite memories of mama and grandad.

DAD: What?

MICHAEL: Walking through the cornfields on a summer Sunday morning. Along the canal, I loved seeing those swans.

DAD: Larklands.

MICHAEL: That's right, the estate was called Larklands. Mind you, I never saw one down there.

DAD: Never saw what.

MICHAEL: A Lark, I never saw a Lark, probably just advertising, you know how it is. Everywhere has to have an attractive name.

DAD: Yes.

MICHAEL: Wouldn't be the same if you called it Canal Views or something like that. I loved those walks Dad.

DAD: The A3.

MICHAEL: A3, what the road?

DAD: Went to Cotmanhay. The A3.

MICHAEL: Oh, the bus.

DAD: A3, that's how I got there.

MICHAEL: Of course.

DAD: Couldn't be bothered walking... It's a supermarket now.

MICHAEL: What is?

DAD: Methodist church.

MICHAEL: Is it?

DAD: I were married there.

MICHAEL: Yes, I know.

DAD: We lived with your Mam's family for a while after we were married.

MICHAEL: Did you?

DAD: Times were tough, with you being on the way and all.

MICHAEL: *(looking a bit surprised)* Oh I didn't know that.

DAD: Well, there's a lot you don't know. *(They sit in silence for a while)*

MICHAEL: Dad do you remember a shoe box I had? It had my school reports, birth certificate and a few other bits and pieces in it. Have you still got it?

DAD: Burnt it.

MICHAEL: *(shocked)* What?

DAD: When I had to move from the old place, I had to get shut of stuff.

MICHAEL: But Dad that was my stuff.

DAD: Well, you were on other side of world, didn't think I would ever see y'again.
They remain silent for a while and Michael returns to the window.

MICHAEL: I really love my life in Australia very much, but you know I still miss this town, the people, the culture... My family. I used to love it when grandad got his accordion out on a Sunday afternoon.
MICHAEL starts humming a tune (the original production used CALM IS THE SEA) then starts singing it. While MICHAEL is singing DAD starts to weep, quietly at first and then a little louder. MICHAEL does not realize his father is crying until he finally hears him. MICHAEL rushes to DAD'S side
Oh Dad I'm sorry, stirring up old memories, I didn't think. Please don't get upset.

DAD: Ya don't understand, *(sniffing and wiping his eyes)* it's not the old memories that are the problem it's the day-to-day things that get a little mixed up, but I'm ok when I'm here, it's me home.

MICHAEL: But Dad...

DAD: Listen, I want ya to know how I feel.

MICHAEL: Sorry Dad, but you know I only want what's best for you.

DAD: I know (*DAD blows his nose loudly and wipes his eyes*) but ya have to understand. How would you like it if someone came into your house and said you are moving to somewhere else?, where you'll stay until yá die,

MICHAEL: But I'm worried that one of your little accidents will take you ... and everyone else in the block of flats as well. (*DAD starts to cry again this time a deep sobbing of desperation*)

DAD: I don't want to go please, please don't make me go, I'll be more careful I promise, I love me home, it has all me memories here, please don't make me go, I'll be nice to the nurse, (*sounding desperate now*) I'll even be nice to Gwen.

MICHAEL: (*putting his arms around DAD*) Dad, oh Dad I'm sorry. Look, if it means that much to you I will see what I can do. Maybe you are not as bad as everyone says, (*DAD grunts the odd **no** and **yes** during the following suggestions*) I could get you some more help, maybe meals on wheels, I could arrange the nurse daily instead of twice a week. You know, it could work! Now look, stop crying, leave it with me and I'll see what I can do.

DAD: (*wiping his eyes and composing himself*) You'll see, I am all right... Ya don't have to worry 'bout me... You'll see. (*He sniffs again, picks up his paper and starts to read*)

MICHAEL: Okay then. How about a nice cup of tea, now where was that sugar? (*He smiles at his DAD who is reading his paper*) You know, suddenly it's like the world has been lifted from my shoulders. It means I shall be able to get back to work a bit sooner than I thought.

DAD: (*after a few moments DAD puts his paper down and looks at MICHAEL*) Hang on a minute, what did you say **you** do again?

MICHAEL: What do you mean... do?

DAD: For a crust, what do **you** do?

MICHAEL: I'm an electrician,

DAD: And where did you say **you** lived?

MICHAEL: (*puzzled*) Bunbury ... Western Australia.

DAD: Bloody 'ell.

MICHAEL: What?

DAD: What a coincidence.

MICHAEL: What is?

DAD: Well, my son, he's electrician... And he lives in Bunbury as well.

MICHAEL and his father look into each other's eyes for what seems an eternity

MICHAEL: (sadly) Dad... I am your Son.

They continue to look at each other for a few moments before DAD looks away and goes back to reading his paper. MICHAEL moves over to behind his father and puts his arms upon DAD'S shoulders.

Love you Dad, always have, always will. (MICHAEL picks up and looks at the brochure he has been given)

As the lights fade and the curtain closes, a flute playing CALM IS THE SEA is heard