

BORN-AGAIN

By Phil Tyler

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Plot Synopsis: The scene is the living room of a flat in a modern multi storey apartment complex in an Australian city. Four children await the arrival of their father who has called them all together to tell them of some important news. As usual, dad is running late.

Genre: Comedy

Setting: The lounge room of a flat in a multi-storey building

Place: An Australian City

Time: Not too far into the future

Stage Sets and Props: Doorbell sound, bunch of flowers, Test tube with hair inside, large envelope with papers inside, Coffee table, 4 x Easy chairs or sofa(s), optional window.

Estimated Running Time: Approximately 45 minutes.

Cast List:	JACQUI	Eldest child.
	RHYS	Youngest child and the only boy.
	MARIA	Second daughter.
	SARAH	Youngest daughter.
	DAD & QUENTIN	Aged 50+

Ages of the children are such that they can realistically be children of the actor portraying Dad.

When this play is performed no reference should be made to Quentin in the program cast list.

JACQUI *(Pacing about)* Where the hell is he?

RHYS On his way.

JACQUI Well, I am getting just a little bit fed up with waiting for him. *(Looking at her nails)* I've had to cancel my acrylic overlay appointment for this.

MARIA Dad's always a few minutes late, you know that.

JACQUI Do you know how hard it is to get an appointment at Mon Petit Ongle on a Saturday?

MARIA Do you still go there Sis? Thought you were back at Salon Bisou.

JACQUI Does it matter where I go? The point is dad is late.

SARAH I'm sure dad is doing his best to be here on time.

RHYS On his way.

JACQUI On his way! Is that all you can say?

SARAH Ring him Jacqui. To find out where he is.

JACQUI No point, always goes through to message bank. He hasn't been answering for weeks. You know that. Anyway, he never answers when I ring him.

RHYS Dad always answers when I ring him. He probably doesn't answer when you ring him Jacqui because he knows you will probably be after a loan.

JACQUI How dare you, you little shit!

MARIA I have to say dad always answers when I ring him.

SARAH Except if you ring him on Jacqui's phone.

(They all laugh except Jacqui, whose face has turned a light shade of crimson)

JACQUI Oh, very droll.

RHYS What's it about anyway?

MARIA What is what about?

RHYS This get together.

SARAH No idea, but it must be important.

MARIA Maybe he's going to introduce us to his latest woman.

JACQUI *(Angrily)* He better not have got himself another bloody woman. We had to pay off that woman he met at the laundrette to get rid of her.

RHYS I thought you said she shot through because you told her that Dad had this curious liking for handcuffs and masks.

MARIA No, that was the one before. The pole dancer.

JACQUI He needs to start acting his age. All these bloody women rob him blind. There will be bugger all left for us if he keeps going the way he does.

RHYS I liked her.

MARIA Who?

RHYS The pole dancer, Anastacia. Must be the only woman ever born in Woy Woy with the name Anastasia.

JACQUI How the hell do you know where she was born?

RHYS I bumped into her one day at the pharmacy.

SARAH Pharmacy? Were you sick?

RHYS Sick? No! Got chatting, you know how it is, and...

MARIA Stop right there, brother. I don't like the way this is going.

RHYS Just thought I'd mention it, Woy Woy, that is.

JACQUI *(Looking out of the window)* At bloody last!

SARAH What?

JACQUI *(Cynically)* Papa is putting in an appearance.

SARAH What, you can see from this high up? You must have good eyes.

MARIA Well she does spend almost as much on her eyelashes as she does on her nails.

JACQUI *(Angrily)* Bloody hell!

SARAH What?

JACQUI He's got another bloody bitch with him.

(They all rush to the window and try to see down below)

MARIA No, no, wait, wait. She's going the other way.

SARAH Yes she is. Dad was probably just giving her a lift out of the goodness of his heart,

JACQUI *(To Sarah)* Don't be so damned stupid. Dad only gives a woman a lift for one single reason. To waste our money on them.

MARIA Wouldn't be so bad if he just took them out for fish and chips, or a pizza.

SARAH But dad deserves all the extras. Can't he have a coke and a garlic bread?

JACQUI No chance.

MARIA No, they see dad as an easy touch.

JACQUI Champagne.

MARIA Lobster.

JACQUI Oysters.

SARAH Rhubarb pie.

(They all turn to stare at Sarah. After a few moments of silence, they continue the conversation)

JACQUI Okay... And that's just for breakfast. Before he decides that they will look better in a new outfit.

RHYS Hang on a minute you lot. It's dad's money, he can spend it how he likes. Surely?

JACQUI Just you listen to yourself. You really don't get it do you?

RHYS Get what?

JACQUI Get what? You know, I thought of you the other day when I was completing my census return.

RHYS Really?

JACQUI Yes really. I was longing for the return of the time when you could legally describe someone as an idiot.

RHYS *(Hurt)* That's not very nice.

SARAH It wasn't a nice thing to say. Although, I do see where you are coming from. *(She bursts out laughing at her own quip)*

MARIA Rhys, darling little brother. What Jacqui is saying in her own less than generous way is that our father is giving away our inheritance to a series of women.

SARAH He does deserve a bit of company though.

JACQUI Always happens to older men. *(Pointing)* Below the belt starts to rule the head and *come in spinner*.

MARIA *(Who is still at the window)* Oh no!

SARAH *(Alarmed)* What?

MARIA He's stopped to talk to another woman. *(JACQUI and SARAH rush back to the window)* No, it's all okay now. She's walking away. He's heading for the lift now.

SARAH He's carrying flowers. They must be for us.

JACQUI Ungrateful bastard.

RHYS Hang on a minute.

JACQUI After all we've done for him.

MARIA Looked after him.

SARAH Helped him choose our Christmas presents.

JACQUI Got rid of all those undesirable leeches trying to bleed him dry.

RHYS You did all that for your own ends.

JACQUI *(Raising her voice)* It's our money he's spending, you imbecile.

SARAH Shall I get a vase out? For the flowers?

(JACQUI and MARIA stare at SARAH with a few moments of silence)

JACQUI Sister, what planet are you on?

SARAH Well, if Dad has bought us flowers.

MARIA Dad never buys us flowers.

RHYS He did once.

JACQUI When?

RHYS When mum died.

JACQUI You dummy! He stole them from other people's graves.

RHYS You don't know that.

MARIA Of course we do, he was so inept he forgot to take the cards off them.

(The doorbell rings)

SARAH *(Excited)* Dad's here.

MARIA Well, let him in then Sarah.

(SARAH goes off stage to the door. DAD enters holding flowers followed by SARAH. JACQUI and MARIA pretend excitement)

DAD *(Arms spread)* Girls!

J.M.S. *(Faux happiness)* Dad. *(Hugs and kisses all round)*

DAD I bought you flowers.

JACQUI Oh, how thoughtful of you, dad. You really shouldn't have.

DAD Well, you're my girls, *(Looking at RHYS)* and boy of course.

SARAH *(Taking the flowers)* They are lovely dad.

JACQUI Gorgeous. Sarah, grab the vase.

SARAH What?

JACQUI Oh, forget the vase, Give them to me. *(JACQUI takes the flowers from SARAH)*
I shall just put them out on the balcony for the moment and we'll find a vase later. *(JACQUI takes the flowers off stage to the imaginary balcony)*

MARIA Sit down dad, you must be worn out, coming up 14 floors in a lift with your arms full of heavy flowers.

DAD Oh, thank you. *(Looking around)* You really do look after your flat, Jacqui.
(DAD sits down on a central vacant armchair)

JACQUI Thank you dad, it does cost a bit, you know, to live in this building. Besides the rent, there are strata fees, cleaning, and so on.
(They all sit down surrounding Dad)

MARIA So, dad, why did you want us all here together?

SARAH Yes, dad, is it something important? I'm so excited.

JACQUI *(Dryly)* Aren't we all excited to hear what it is that you must tell us. Even Rhys is excited. *(Firmly)* Aren't you Rhys?

RHYS *(Reluctantly)* Oh, yes, we were just saying before you came how much we are looking forward to what you have to tell us.

JACQUI Aren't we just.

DAD *(He stands up)* Is there a cup of tea going?
(JACQUI, hands on shoulders sits him back down)

JACQUI You can have a cup of tea later dad. Why don't you just tell us what is on your mind.

DAD I do have a dry throat you know.

JACQUI *(Through her teeth)* Dad, just bloody well tell us what her name is.

DAD What? You think I have found another woman?

RHYS Wouldn't be the first time dad.

MARIA Yes dad, is this one a refugee? Alcoholic? Or perhaps just a blonde who needs a bit of help with servicing her mobility scooter.

DAD *(Laughing)* Oh girls, you are so funny. Of course, it isn't about a woman! It's, how do I say it? Yes, er, yes, er, no... It isn't about a woman.

SARAH Oh, thank goodness for that dad, you had us all worried.

MARIS So dad, what is this wonderful news?

DAD No, no. Well, the fact is... I've decided to be born-again!

ALL What?

DAD I have decided that I want to be born-again.

MARIA You've gone religious dad?

JACQUI I knew it! It's that Jehovah woman who you were paying to iron your underpants.

SARAH You can't be born-again dad. You can't sing.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment before continuing)

JACQUI Okay... I knew I should have put a stop to it when I had the chance.

RHYS Dad, I've heard about this. Someone was telling me in the hotel. Yes, when a woman is born-again apparently, she lies on her back waving her arms and legs around, screaming out swear words.

SARAH Wow.

JACQUI *(To Rhys)* You idiot! If you think that lying on your back, with your arms and legs flailing about, screaming out swear words is born-again, that explains why your girlfriends don't hang about.

SARAH I don't know why, but I think I like this born-again thing.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH)

JACQUI Okay... Forget I ever said it.

DAD No, no. When I say that I am going to be born-again, what I mean is that I am going to be cloned.

ALL Cloned?

MARIA You can't be serious, dad?

JACQUI Oh, my God? Perhaps I should be converted. Then I could pray for the women of the world who are going to have to deal with two of you.

SARAH How wonderful dad. Two of you!

DAD Well, that's if I stick at two of me.

ALL What?

JACQUI This is beyond me, I thought I knew my own father.

MARIA But dad, you can't be cloned. The government doesn't allow it. They only let sheep be cloned.

RHYS That's right. They cloned a sheep a few years back. That's right, yes. What was its name?

JACQUI Its name was Dolly.

RHYS Yes, of course! They named it Dolly, after Dolly Parton. No idea why though.

SARAH Perhaps they should have named the sheep Jolene.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment)

JACQUI Okay... Dad, are you sure that Sarah isn't adopted?

DAD Adopted? Of course not. Sarah is one of us.

MARIA Look, no matter what we think. The government won't allow it anyway so you can just forget the idea dad.

DAD *(Chuckling)* That's what everyone thinks, but it's not a question of what you know. It's a question of who you know.

MARIA But who do you know dad?

DAD Ah, *(tapping the side of his nose)* that would be telling.

JACQUI Oh, stop talking nonsense dad. You don't know anybody who is anybody.

DAD I do so. Well, even if I don't, my mate Gerry does.

JACQUI Gerry?

RHYS But dad, your mate Gerry installed dashboards into cars on the assembly line. Who would Gerry know?

SARAH Well, he would probably know the man who fitted the windscreen wipers.

JACQUI *(Fighting hard to control herself)* Sarah! Shut up!

SARAH *(Upset)* Well, I was only trying to help.

MARIA *(Putting her arm around SARAH'S shoulder)* Don't worry Sarah, she didn't mean it. Did you Jacqui?

JACQUI I suppose not.

DAD Listen you lot. It's all very well you calling my mate Gerry just a dashboard installer. But you forget one thing.

ALL What?

DAD Well, he was a deputy union delegate, wasn't he?

RHYS I think so.

DAD Well, the Labour government is back in power, aren't they?

MARIA And?

DAD Join the dots girl, join the dots.

JACQUI So, are you saying that your mate Gerry knows people in power that can organise you to be cloned, even though the government says it can't happen?

DAD Exactly.

RHYS Wow.

DAD Of course, you can't go down the hotel spouting on about it. Otherwise, the powers that be will shut it down, just to show that they are in charge.

RHYS Wow.

MARIA It's as simple as that?

DAD Yes! There are, of course, a couple of technicalities. Minor details, but nothing major.

MARIA And where does this take place dad? Here or overseas?

DAD Well, er, Europe, I would say.

JACQUI Europe? Paris? Venice? London?

SARAH Paris? Can I come with you dad? I've always wanted to go to Paris.

MARIA So it is Paris? Is it dad?

DAD Look, it may not be Paris, I didn't say it was Paris. I said Europe.

JACQUI So, dad, exactly where in Europe is it going to be? Now that Paris is out.

DAD Does it matter exactly where it is?

RHYS Of course it does dad. We want to know.

DAD Well, it will probably... Well maybe, er... It could be in *(Pause)* Bishkek.

ALL Where?

DAD Bishkek.

JACQUI And where the hell is Bishkek?

DAD Well... It's in *(Pause)* Kyrgyzstan.

MARIA And where the hell is Kyrgyzstan?

RHYS Kyrgyzstan, never heard of it.

SARAH Oh yes, Kyrgyzstan, officially the Kyrgyz Republic. It's a landlocked country in Central Asia, lying in the Tian Shan and Pamir mountain ranges. Bishkek is the capital and largest city of the country. It is bordered

by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the south, and China to the east and southeast. Ethnic Kyrgyz make up the majority of the country's 7 million people, followed by significant minorities of...
(Towards the end of SARAH'S comments, she tails off as she realises the others are staring at her)... Wikipedia...

JACQUI *(Looking at Sarah)* She is, isn't she dad.

DAD What?

JACQUI Adopted, she is, isn't she.

DAD Of course she isn't. I don't know why you think that.

JACQUI ... Okay... This is a load of... Dung! You are being taken for a ride dad.

DAD No I'm not. And anyway, my mind is made up! And, even if I did change my mind, I wouldn't be able to get my deposit back anyway.

JACQUI Deposit? Surely, dad, you haven't handed over any money.

DAD I had to! Goodness, give me a break! You don't realise that places are limited. On such an important decision, one must be decisive. I had to secure my place on the program. It was a one-time offer.

MARIA I just know I am going to regret asking this dad, but how much deposit have you paid these people?

DAD Pocket money. That's all it was. Pocket money.

SARAH *(To MARIA)* You see, Sis, he's only given them pocket money.

JACQUI *(To RHYS)* Aren't you going to say something?

RHYS Why, do I have to say something?

JACQUI Because you are the male child. If this goes ahead, you are going to end up with a dad younger than you are.

RHYS Okay, okay, I shall say something. Dad, what you do is entirely up to you but, when you say pocket money, would that be small or large pocket money?

DAD Oh, most definitely small pocket money.

MARIA Which is how much, exactly?

DAD Well... Five thousand.

M.J. *(Together)* Five thousand!

RHYS Wow.

SARAH I never got that much for pocket money.

DAD Well, enough of this. The decision is made. The deposit is paid. Finito.

RHYS Finito indeed.

JACQUI If it isn't enough that you have spent thousands on a whole variety of unsuitable women who have done nothing but try to bleed you dry, your mate Gerry is getting in on the act now.

DAD Hang on, is it wrong to want and enjoy a little female company?

MARIA Of course it isn't Dad. We all appreciate that you must get a bit lonely now that mum has gone. But they do take advantage of you. I mean, that Jehovah woman convinced you that you needed creases in your underpants!

JACQUI When mum died dad, we went through her estate, and we could see that we were all in line for a healthy inheritance when it's your turn to join her. Not that we want you dead dad. Of course we don't. But the thing is...

RHYS You are spending your daughters' inheritance at a crazy rate dad.

MARIA Yours as well Rhys. Don't forget that.

JACQUI Exactly. The way you are spending it dad, I shall probably only ever get to buy a 4 x 2 with a double garage.

SARAH I bet they feel better.

MARIA Pardon?

SARAH I bet they feel better.

MARIA What do?

SARAH Underpants with creases in.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment before continuing)

MARIA Okay... And you Rhys can forget about driving a Ferrari. It will be a bike for you.

RHYS Yes, I see what you mean. I really don't want a bike.

SARAH Can I have it then?

JACQUI Oh shut up Sarah, this is serious business. All right, all right. Let me get this clear. You dad, have spent \$5000 on a deposit for this cloning procedure. Correct?

DAD Correct.

JACQUI Which means that there must be more money to pay at some stage. Correct?

DAD Correct again.

RHYS Well, excuse me for getting in on the act, but how much more will you have to pay?

DAD Bloody good question!

JACQUI *(Raising her voice)* And we would like a bloody good answer!

DAD Well, I don't have to pay it in a lump sum. I can spread it over a few payments.

JACQUI *(Getting even more frustrated)* Dad, I couldn't care less about a bloody hire purchase agreement. How much?

DAD *(Silent for a moment)* Er... Twenty thousand dollars.

ALL How much?

DAD Twenty thousand dollars. Worth every cent I would say.

MARIA Of course you would say that, but I am starting to side with Jacqui. This is one hell of a lot of money.

RHYS There goes your 4 x 2 with the garage Jacqui. It's a 3 x 1 and a lean-to for you now.

SARAH Will the bike still have gears?

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment before continuing)

MARIA Okay... So, in a nutshell dad. That is why you have called us all together today. To tell us that you have spent \$25,000 of our inheritance.

RHYS Although it is your money.

MARIA Yes of course it's dad's money. But it is still our inheritance.

JACQUI So, it's all clear now. Well, I guess we are just going to have to live with it. The meeting is adjourned. Let's all have a cuppa. Sarah! *(Indicates for SARAH to go out to the kitchen)*

MARIA I suppose we should count ourselves fortunate that we are only twenty-five grand out of pocket. Ay dad?

DAD Yes, well, there are a couple of other things we need to discuss.

MARIA Sarah! Hold it right there. *(Sarah returns)*

JACQUI Continue dad. Another couple of things you said, as if losing twenty-five grand isn't enough.

DAD Yes, well, er, I've been thinking. You know, about the future. After I am cloned, about what it will be like.

JACQUI Yes...

DAD Well I was thinking about my childhood. What it was like, you know.

JACQUI No dad. We don't know.

DAD Well, I had a terrible childhood and, well, you know...

JACQUI For heaven's sake dad. We don't know!

MARIA Tell you what, dad, why don't you tell us? We like talking about the olden days. Don't we?

ALL *(Speaking over each other)* Oh yes/absolutely/love it/sure do.

SARAH Oh yes dad, I love it when you talk about when you were a child. Never seeing daylight, working in the coalmines...

RHYS *(Incredulous)* Dad never worked in the coalmines!

SARAH Well, that's what he used to tell me for a bedtime story.

RHYS Keep going dad.

DAD Yes. Well. Right... *(Clears his throat)* I've been thinking about when I was a kid growing up, and times were tough, and I was just thinking that I would like things to be a little bit better next time around. That's all.

MARIA Of course things will be better. Time has moved on from when you were a kid. We now have modern health services.

JACQUI Modern transport.

RHYS Modern education.

SARAH Labradoodles.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment before continuing)

JACQUI Okay... *(Turning to dad)* Go on dad...

DAD Education, yes. That's important now that you bring it up.

JACQUI Yes...

DAD Well, I know it's not something that I have mentioned too often, but I only went to a State School.

JACQUI You are correct Dad. It's not something you have ever mentioned apart from every single week when we were at Grammar School, telling us how fortunate we were.

MARIA It's not something you are going to have to worry about dad. Who knows? You may be able to go to Grammar School yourself next time around.

DAD I know. I think I shall have the brains, and money to go to Grammar School, but what if I don't. In this world, it's who you know, not what you know.

RHYS Dad, where are we going with this?

DAD Well, with my new self, I don't want to leave my education to chance. So, I thought I shall have to go to a... Private School.

JACQUI Private School? This is beyond me. What the hell is wrong with just being a plumber again?

DAD Exactly Jacqui. *Just! Just!* I don't want to be a *Just* anything the next time around. I want to be a somebody. I want to be... Well, a somebody!

MARIA Okay dad. You want to go to a private school. I suppose we could afford a couple of hundred dollars a year. We'll have a look around locally and see what's available.

DAD Locally?

MARIA There are good private schools around locally that don't cost too much.

RHYS Understood dad. Seeing as you want to be born-again it makes sense to go to a Catholic School.

MARIA Yes, Catholic Schools never cost much.

DAD Catholic School? I'm having *Nun* of that. (*Bursts out laughing*). Get it? *Nun* of that. (*Everyone else is stony faced*) Well, I'm not going to a Catholic school.

JACQUI Okay then dad, where do you want to go?

DAD Well, to begin with I was thinking of Winchester School.

JACQUI Winchester, in Queensland? Where Uncle Brian lives? Why on earth would you want to go to a God forsaken place like Winchester for? I don't get it.

SARAH (*Bursts out in a fit of laughter*) *Nun* of that, Catholic School. (*Looking around*) Get it? Get it?

(*There is silence as everyone looks at Sarah*)

DAD Okay... (*Turning to Jacqui*) Queensland? Who said anything about Queensland?

JACQUI You did dad. You said Winchester didn't you? Winchester, Queensland, where Uncle Brian lives. It's in the middle of nowhere.

MARIA I suppose you could live with Uncle Brian. Do they even have a school though?

DAD (*Annoyed*) No, not that Winchester. I'm talking about Winchester School as in Winchester England.

ALL England?

DAD Yes, England. Winchester School, one of the finest schools in the world.

JACQUI And how much do they charge may I ask?

DAD Pocket money, pocket money.

JACQUI *(Getting annoyed)* Dad! Forget the pocket money rubbish. How much does it cost?

DAD *(Mumbling)* Eighty thousand.

JACQUI I can't understand you Dad.

DAD Eighty thousand dollars... But that includes boarding as well.
(Silence)

RHYS You'd have to be a bloody good plumber for that sort of money.

JACQUI Maria, can you check that I'm still alive.

MARIA *(Checks JACQUI'S pulse)* Yep, still alive, but only just.

JACQUI I know I shouldn't ask this, but how many years were you thinking of going to Winchester School for?

DAD Well, only for about five or six years.

JACQUI Well, thank goodness for that! Only eighty thousand dollars for five or six years. That's fifteen thousand a year. Round figures.

DAD No.

JACQUI No what?

DAD No, not fifteen thousand dollars a year.

JACQUI No? Well, I did say *round figures*, so it isn't exact.

DAD No, it's not the *round figures* that's wrong it's the eighty thousand dollars. That's the amount for one year only. You multiply the eighty thousand dollars by the number of years, and you get... Well, er...

RHYS Pocket money?

MARIA About half a million dollars-worth of pocket money.

RHYS Half a million dollars? I've gone from one day expecting to drive a Ferrari, then down to a pushbike and now it's looking like I shall only be getting a pair of roller skates.

SARAH I love roller skates.
(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH for a moment before continuing)

JACQUI Okay... So let me get this clear dad. Our new cloned father is only going to Winchester for five or six years.

DAD Yep.

JACQUI It's just that schooling is usually about ten or twelve years.

DAD Yep.

JACQUI So, you will be doing the other years of schooling locally. Right?

DAD Oh no.

JACQUI No?

MARIA So, where will you do the other years of your schooling?

DAD Eton.

ALL *What?*

DAD Eton! Surely you have heard of it. It's where all the worlds future Prime Ministers and despots go.

RHYS Damn! There goes my right roller skate.

JACQUI And which one are you going to be dad?

DAD *(Chuckling)* Well, how about I become a despot?

MARIA More expense!

DAD Well, I suppose it is. But all up, I reckon I can get a decent education for a million. *Round figures* of course.

RHYS Of course. No point trying to tie it down to an exact figure is there.

JACQUI *(Stunned)* A million?

DAD Good value I reckon. And, let's be honest, I can afford it.

JACQUI But that doesn't leave much for us does it? We don't wish you dead dad, but we all were expecting a bit of an inheritance. I don't expect anything outrageous, no. Just enough to buy a modest house, three or four bathrooms, three-metre-high ceilings, French ceiling centres, Italian marble floors, made to measure lined curtains, Afghan carpets. Nothing extravagant. Just a basic, little place.

RHYS If that's basic, I would hate to see it when you decide to go upmarket.

JACQUI *(To Rhys)* Shut up! *(In tears)* I never expected this dad, I don't know how I am going to make ends meet. I shall never be able to hold my head up high again at Mon Petit Ongle.

SARAH If you're having your nails done Sis, you don't hold your *head* up you hold your *hands* up.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH)

MARIA Okay... I'm with Jacqui, dad. The way you are considering spending money there won't be much left for us to fight over. I am starting to wonder if this cloning is a good idea.

RHYS Yes dad. Even I am starting to think that having ironed underpants wasn't that extravagant after all.

DAD You will all get used to it. After all, it's a few weeks away yet.

JACQUI Well is that it dad? Can we all have a cuppa now?

DAD Now that you mention it, there is just another one small thing...

MARIA There is something else besides spending our money on having the world's most expensive education for your alter ego?

DAD Hang on a minute, it is still my money, until I decide to spend it, or I happen to die unexpectedly which I can tell you, is not expected any time soon.

RHYS Okay dad. Tell us what this other thing is.

JACQUI Yes, do tell us.

DAD Well, it's just that when I was growing up, I always felt a little bit lonely.

MARIA That might just be because you were an only child.

DAD Exactly. An only child. It was a curse I had to carry as I grew up. At school I had to listen to the other kids laughing about how they used to beat the crap out of their little brothers. I couldn't relate. I felt left out. I didn't fit in.

MARIA Surely dad, isn't it better to be lonely than enjoy beating the daylights out of a little brother half your size?

DAD You don't understand do you? The other lads had big brothers as well. If I didn't share my liquorice, then they would get their big brother to put the heavies on me. I can't tell you the number of times my stomach ached for a liquorice.

SARAH Oh no! how sad.

DAD Yes, and then the big kids would chew my liquorice and say that I could have a half-eaten one if I was really desperate.

JACQUI Oh for God's sake! This is killing me! Where the hell are we going with this?

DAD *(Firmly)* I want a brother!

(JACQUI lets out a scream and starts quietly sobbing.)

MARIA A brother?

RHYS *(Cheerily)* Well, there goes my other roller skate.

SARAH Oh goodie! An uncle!

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH)

MARIA Okay... We can't afford it dad. If it costs a million for educating just one of you, then it must cost... Two million dollars for the pair of you!

JACQUI I wish I had been adopted. A loving family that would have been happy with just one daughter... And a couple of dogs. Bankers, Lawyers, Arms Dealers, just normal parents.

MARIA It doesn't make sense. I mean dad, you said that when you were growing up the other boys either had older or younger brothers. Two of you the same, I just don't get it.

JACQUI I don't get any of it.

RHYS Jacqui, are you talking about dad or the inheritance?

JACQUI Both!

DAD Well, let me explain.

JACQUI Well someone needs to.

DAD Look, although I shall have a cloned twin, I am thinking of making a couple of changes in my brother.

JACQUI Changes? What sort of changes?

DAD My twin is going to be much tougher than I am. If anyone messes with me, I'll just set my brother on 'em. He'll soon sort 'em out.

JACQUI And how are you going to do that?

(DAD pulls a small, sealed test tube from his pocket. It has hair in it. He waves it about)

DAD *(Exclaims)* Aha!

JACQUI What the hell is that?

DAD Well, its human hair isn't it.

JACQUI And?

DAD Well, this hair is from someone who was particularly tough. And in Kyrgyzstan they have people who know how to extract just the right amount of DNA from this hair, and mix it in with my own DNA so that my twin brother will be one mean bas... Well, one tough brother.

JACQUI You are bonkers, you really are.

RHYS If you don't mind me asking, who does that hair belong to?

DAD *(Tapping his nose)* Wouldn't you like to know.

MARIA Well, we would since you mention it. That's why Rhys is asking.

DAD *(Waving the test tube about)* This hair belongs to none other than...

ALL Yes?

DAD Joseb Besarionis dze Jugashvilli.

JACQUI And who the hell is he when he's at home?

DAD Better known as Joseph Stalin.

JACQUI *(After a few moments silence)* You are, aren't you dad? Bonkers that is. You go on about half eaten liquorice, but you are a bloody fruit loop. I mean, how old is that hair you've got? Ay? 80 years or more? You can't get DNA from 80-year-old hair, and even if you could, it could belong to anybody.

DAD It's Stalin's I tell you. It was collected by his barber when he was having a moustache trim. The barber risked his life to collect this. If Stalin had found out the barber was selling his hair, he could have ended up in the gulags.

JACQUI Well everyone else that ever knew Stalin ended up in the gulags, so why not his barber?

MARIA If it is genuine dad, and if DNA can be extracted, couldn't you have chosen someone other than Stalin? He was a mass murderer. I mean, anyone but Stalin.

DAD Well, I did think about Mao Tse-tung. But he doesn't look anything like me if you know what I mean *(He pulls his eyelids back)*. Besides if I had Mao as a brother I would have to put up with all those Chinese comments *(Imitating an exaggerated Chinese accent)* Ah so, who flung dung. If I had chosen Mao, then yes, you could say I was bonkers.

RHYS Oh dad. That's old school. People don't speak like that anymore.

DAD I'm not taking that chance!

SARAH If you had chosen Mao he would have stuck up for you Dad because being Chinese he would have been good at Kung-Fu.

(There is silence as everyone looks at SARAH)

JACQUI *(Looking at Sarah)* You are, I know you are.

SARAH What?

JACQUI Forget it.

RHYS Okay... I agree with Maria and Jacqui. That hair could belong to anyone.

DAD It's genuine I tell you! One hundred percent genuine!

RHYS How do you know that?

DAD My mate Gerry has guaranteed it. He said if it's proven not to be the real deal, I can have my money back.

JACQUI Money! Don't tell me you bought that stuff.

DAD The good stuff doesn't come cheap you know. You must think of it as an investment for the future. I don't want to skimp on Quentin.

RHYS Quentin? Who the hell is Quentin?

DAD My brother. That's his name. He can't just be a Shane... Or a Bruce... The world is full of them.

JACQUI I know that I need a serious talking to for asking this question, but how much did you pay for the hair?

DAD *(Annoyed)* Pocket money.

MARIA *(Sarcastically)* Pocket money.

DAD It's an investment in the future.

JACQUI Every time you open your mouth dad, we get poorer, and your old mate Gerry gets richer. I don't think you realise how vulnerable older people like yourself can be to scammers. The world is full of them. Thank goodness we have the Family Trust set up to protect both you and us.

JACQUI Exactly. Thank goodness for the Family Trust.

RHYS Right on.

DAD Family Trust. Yes the Family Trust. So pleased you have mentioned the er... Family Trust. Because, er... There will have to be changes to the er... Changes to the Trust.

JACQUI Changes? What sort of changes?

DAD I'm cancelling it.

ALL What?

DAD Cancelling it. No point having a Trust if I need the money for myself. And, as you know, I am the major shareholder so I can cancel it anytime I wish.

SARAH You wouldn't dare... Would you?

DAD Look, I'm a reasonable and fair man. You all know that I am. But I have 60% voting rights and you all only have 10% each. It's a 60-40 split. Motion carried! But, because I am reasonable, I would much prefer it all to be an amicable agreement, so my mate Gerry has had the appropriate paperwork

drawn up to dissolve the Trust. All that's needed are your signatures. Hey presto! It's sorted.

JACQUI And what if we don't want to sign?

DAD Plan B. 60-40. Although I forgot to bring the agreement up here with me. It's still in the car. Once it's all signed though, I can drop it into the solicitors first thing Monday morning.

MARIA Yes dad, I agree with you. Much better if we all sign, then you can start putting everything into place.

OTHERS Pardon?

MARIA Yes, much better for us all to stay friends. Tell you what dad. You shoot down and get the paperwork. We'll all sign it and then you can slip it into the solicitors on Monday.

DAD I knew you would all come to your senses! It's the only way when you think about it.

RHYS Go get the paperwork then dad. We'll all wait here.

DAD Right! *(DAD gets up and heads for the door)* Only be a couple of minutes. Then we can have that cuppa.

(DAD heads off stage)

JACQUI What the hell are we going to do?

SARAH Sign the paperwork! Aren't we?

(There is silence as the others look at SARAH for a moment)

RHYS He has to be stopped somehow.

MARIA Absolutely, there is no way he can be allowed to get away with these shenanigans.

JACQUI That bastard Gerry has a lot to answer for.

MARIA Too right he does.

JACQUI I would like to pull bloody Gerry's fingernails out one by one. Slowly.

MARIA Yes, then I will pull his toenails out. Even slower.

SARAH Oh goodie, does that mean I can I have his nail clippers?

JACQUI *(To Sarah with a raised voice)* No, you can't have his bloody nail clippers.

RHYS Sisters! Please! All this talk about the suffering you want to inflict on Gerry doesn't answer the question. What are we going to do about dad?

JACQUI Well, we had better decide soon. Dad will be back up in a couple of minutes.

(A few moments silence as they think)

SARAH We have to act in dad's best interests.

JACQUI Pardon?

SARAH We have to do what's best for dad.

MARIA Of course we are going to act in dad's best interests Sarah. That goes without saying.... I know... Kidnap!

J.S.R. *(Together)* Kidnap?

SARAH How is kidnapping dad in his best interests?

JACQUI Will you stop being negative Sarah. Just for once try to see the positives.

SARAH Okay, I'll try.

RHYS Yes, Kidnap just might work. How long will we keep him prisoner for?

SARAH *(Trying to be positive)* We could hold him for ransom and keep him until his family pays up.

(There is silence as the others look at SARAH for a moment)

JACQUI Sarah! We are his family!

SARAH Oh, yes, of course, I forgot. I was only trying to be positive... But I would be happy to pay to get him back though.

JACQUI *(Raised voice)* Oh shut up Sarah.

RHYS No we can't kidnap dad as we would have to release him sooner or later. We shall have to think of something else.

MARIA Well, we need to be quick. He'll be back in a minute, and if we can't think of anything then it's *Hello Mr Solicitor* on Monday morning.

JACQUI There's only one solution, isn't there?

RHYS Is there?

JACQUI There is.

MARIA Well, tell us then, what is it?

JACQUI Simple really.

RHYS Yes?

JACQUI Well dad is determined to go through with this cloning thing. He's certain that he wants to go to the world's top schools. He wants a brother with a bit of Stalin in him.

RHYS Named Quentin.

JACQUI Exactly! And while he has a breath in his body he won't be dissuaded.

MARIA Well, if he didn't have any breath left in his body, he wouldn't be able to do what he wishes.

JACQUI And that little shit Gerry, wouldn't be able to cream his little bit from the pile.

RHYS What on earth are you suggesting? Surely you're not saying that we... Kill dad?

JACQUI Oh, stop being so bloody dramatic Rhys! Think of it as an inevitable accident!

RHYS Accident?

JACQUI Do you want a Ferrari or not?

RHYS Yes... I guess so.

JACQUI Then stop being sentimental for once in your life.

MARIA Dad has had a good life.

SARAH I thought we were going to act in dad's best interests.

MARIA We are Sarah. We're saving dad from the horrors of growing old.

SARAH What?

JACQUI Don't you realise what happens to men when they get old?.. They start dribbling. *(She shudders in revulsion at the thought of it)*

MARIA Pooing themselves...

JACQUI Having meals at the same time of day... Every day.

RHYS Wearing a jacket when it's not even cold.

MARIA Playing Bingo.

RHYS Plus various bits stop working... Or dropping off.

MARIA Exactly!

JACQUI Don't you see Sarah. We are saving dad from all that.

SARAH *(Upset)* Poor dad!

JACQUI Had a good innings. 80 *(Or Dad's age)* not out. Then out of nowhere comes a googly and it's all over.

RHYS I've always had a soft spot for cricket analogies. Makes my heart race.

JACQUI So... Are we all agreed? Raise your hand if you are. *(JACQUI and MARIA raise their hand. To SARAH threateningly)* Sarah! *(SARAH slowly raises her hand. To RHYS)* Rhys! *(RHYS raises his hand)* Well that's it then. All agreed! Motion carried.

RHYS So, who, how, when, where?

JACQUI Us, don't know, now, here.

SARAH There won't be blood will there? Blood always makes me queasy.

JACQUI No of course there won't be blood. Not unless dad puts up a fight that is.

MARIA It must look like an accident.

RHYS Phew! At least a beheading is off the agenda. Far too messy.

MARIA Poisoning?

JACQUI No, that takes far too long. We would have plenty of time to get help.

SARAH What about a Funnel Web spider bite?

JACQUI Where the hell are we going to get one of those from? Try telling people there was a Funnel Web spider 14 floors up.

RHYS We could drown him in the bath. If we added some lavender bath salts it would make the whole sordid episode much more pleasant.

MARIA Jacqui doesn't have a bath, you idiot!

RHYS Right, I forgot that... I know, electrocution!

JACQUI Electrocution? Now that isn't a bad idea...

RHYS It's quick, clean, painless. Well at least for us it's painless.

MARIA Yes, but how are we going to pull that off?

RHYS We could get dad to change the globe in the balcony light.

SARAH The balcony light isn't faulty, is it?

JACQUI (*Annoyed*) Does it matter if it's faulty? We just tell dad that it is, and when he has his fingers in the light fitting we turn the power back on.

MARIA No sis. If our timing is off, he might just get a zap and live to tell the tale.

RHYS That's it!

MARIA What is?

RHYS The balcony! We are 14 floors up aren't we?

M.J.S. Yes.

RHYS Dad will get what he has always wanted.

JACQUI Which is?

RHYS Flying lessons, with Quentin as co-pilot.

JACQUI *(Excitedly)* That's it, flying lessons! From fourteen floors to ground level should take about... *(Thinking)* Four seconds.

RHYS That is one hell of a steep learning curve!

SARAH Poor dad!

(There is silence as the others look at SARAH for a moment)

JACQUI Okay... Poor dad indeed. I shall miss the stupid bugger.

RHYS So, who is going to do it? Help dad into the cockpit so to speak.

JACQUI Well, you are the boy. Time to man up.

MARIA I agree, it's a job for you Rhys.

RHYS But what if he struggles? Then what?

MARIA You're a big boy, just overpower him.

RHYS I can't do it on my own. Someone will have to help me.

JACQUI All right, all right. We shall all have to do it. That way if one of us goes down we all go down. Agreed? *(The others nod solemnly)* Accidents do happen, sometimes when we least expect them.

RHYS But how do we get him onto the balcony?

JACQUI Leave that to me.

(The doorbell rings but no one moves)

JACQUI *(After a few moments)* Don't move anyone, I'll get it.

(JACQUI opens the door and DAD comes back on stage followed by JACQUI)

DAD Here we are *(Waving some papers around)* All ready to sign and seal.

JACQUI Oh, lovely dad. But before we get that out of the way, can you do me a little favour?

DAD Of course I can. You know you only need to ask.

JACQUI I think that the window box planter on the balcony needs a coat of paint. It's chipped. I'd like you to have a look and tell me what you think.

DAD Of course, anything for my precious daughter.

RHYS *(Laughingly)* We would like to buy the paint dad... Before you spend all your money!

DAD Oh very funny son. Well then, let's have a look.

JACQUI I'll come too.

MARIA Me too. Hey, why don't we all have a look? Come on Sarah.

DAD *(Laughing)* The more the merrier, hey?

(They all head off stage onto the balcony, so the following dialogue is all off stage as a Voiceover)

DAD So, where is the paint chipped?

JACQUI There!

DAD Where?

JACQUI You need to lean over a bit to get closer.

DAD Where?

JACQUI *Down there! Look closer!*

DAD *(DAD becomes increasingly alarmed)* What you doing?.. Get off!.. Hey!.. I'm losing my balance! Hey! Hey! Aaagh...

(The voiceover ends and after a few seconds the children return to the stage looking glum)

JACQUI *(Sadly)* If only we had realised dad was suicidal. We could have... Done something... Helped him.

RHYS We weren't to know.

MARIA I had no idea.

SARAH Poor dad.

RHYS Thank God we were able to stop him before he went through with his bonkers plans. Two or three of dad is way too many.

JACQUI *(A bit brighter)* At least Rhys, you can now order your Ferrari.

(RHYS starts to make car noises as he imagines himself driving his Ferrari)

MARIA *(Much brighter)* And you Jacqui. Well... A 5x3... Double brick here you come. And You Sarah. You can have your bike... Any colour you like. *(SARAH smiles)*

RHYS *(Very happy)* Overall... I don't think it could have turned out any better.

(They all start celebrating by yahooing, high fives, the works)

(The doorbell rings)

JACQUI Hey everyone, calm down... That's probably the Police. Look sad... He jumped... Okay? *(They all nod in agreement)* I'll answer the door. *(JACQUI goes off to answer the door. After a couple of seconds, there is a blood-curdling scream at the door from JACQUI)* Aaagh...

(In rushes JACQUI and rejoins her siblings. They stare at the door and in walks QUENTIN. He is dressed like an English Bovver Boy. Union Flag tee shirt, braces, shin length jeans, bovver boots. They are speechless at seeing the man that is identical to dad)

QUENTIN *(In a broad English accent)* How do!.. Ah don't think we've met... Me name's Quentin!

(The stage lights dim, and the curtain closes)