

Clearing Up

By Andrew Fawn

Copyright Andrew Fawn, 2010

ACT I

*A double-bedroom in a large flat-share. Backed-up against a large window covered by curtains is a bed. The room's owner, JACK (20's) is asleep. The bed is flanked by bedside tables, one of which has a radio on it.*

*Even in the gloom we can make out what appears to be a very messy space with clothes and magazine's scattered around. A door leading off to the left leads out into the rest of the house.*

*SILENCE - THEN A RADIO ALARM SOUNDS. HEAVY METAL MUSIC PLAYS.*

NINA (OFF STAGE)  
That's my cue.

*NINA (20's) opens the bedroom door and steps inside. Momentarily stopping to survey the carnage, she marches over to the curtains, and pulls them open. Light flood in.*

*JACK stirs.*

NINA  
Wake up lazy-boy.

JACK  
Leave me alone.

NINA  
I would Jack, but last night you told me to make sure that your alarm woke you.  
(pause)  
Although why you didn't just ask me to wake you and save the electricity...

*Jack flips round onto his back.*

JACK  
The music is soothing.

*Nina looks bemused at the radio which is still playing Heavy Metal Music.*

NINA  
Soothing?

JACK  
Soothing.

NINA

It's a waste of electricity. And airwaves.

*Nina turns off the radio.*

JACK

I was listening to that.

NINA

No you weren't you were falling asleep again. It really is a waste of electricity to let it run on and on like that.

*She leans down and starts to pick up some of the mess, but thinks better of it.*

NINA (cont'd)

We've all got to do our bit now.

JACK

Do our bit?

NINA

Yes. Do. Our. Bit. Save some money Jack. Be responsible.

JACK

If I could save money I wouldn't be living here with you lot. I thought I gave up flat-sharing at University.

NINA

Charming.

*We hear FOOTSTEPS coming from off-stage.*

BRIAN (OFF-STAGE)

Am I interrupting?

*BRIAN (early 30's) pokes his head into the room.*

NINA

Only Jack's escape plan.

BRIAN

Is this mess to cover up the tunnel?

JACK

Ha bloody ha.

BRIAN

So what are you still doing in bed?

JACK  
I'm having a lay-down protest.

BRIAN  
A protest? Against what?

*Jack sits bolt upright in bed.*

JACK  
Against you two bothering me. And without bringing me a cup of tea no-less.

*Nina stares at Brian who is at first oblivious. Noticing her look, he shrugs his shoulders.*

BRIAN  
I guess I'll put the kettle on.

*Nina smiles appreciatively. Jack flops back in bed as Brian leaves the room.*

JACK  
Thank-you!

*EXIT BRIAN.*

NINA  
You can't keep treating him like a slave.

JACK  
Should I leave it to you?

NINA  
And you can't keep leaving your room like this. This mess.

JACK  
It's my room.

NINA  
You don't exactly leave the other rooms how you find them.

JACK  
Fine I'll just make mess in my room.

NINA  
Jack you can't live like this. What do girls say when you bring them home?

JACK  
If they're coming home with me they're usually too drunk to care.

*He sits back up again.*

JACK (cont'd)  
You were.

*She turns her back on him to hide her blushes.  
Knowing this, Jack smiles smugly to himself.*

NINA  
Indeed. Well that was a long time ago.  
(pause)  
And girls our age are going to care.

JACK  
Then I'll go out with younger girls.

*She spins round facing Jack.*

NINA  
Jack...

JACK  
Fine! Then we'll get a cleaner.  
(pause)  
That's it!  
(pause)  
We'll get a cleaner and she can take care of the mess.

NINA  
And paying for a cleaner is your way of doing your bit?

JACK  
We'll pay for a cleaner.

NINA  
Oh no, not we. Me and Brian are tidy enough.

*Nina folds her arms. Jack straightens his back,  
indignant. He studies Nina's for a moment.*

JACK  
Fine. I'll pay for a cleaner. It'll be my way of doing  
my bit.

NINA  
Really?

JACK  
Yes doing my bit by hiring a cleaner. I'm creating  
jobs.  
(pause)  
A job.

NINA

Not really creating a job though Jack...

JACK

Fine! I'll be keeping an existing cleaner in work.

*He starts to get out of bed, but looks down below his waist, still covered by the duvet and stops.*

JACK (cont'd)

You couldn't pass me my sweats could you?

*He points to a crumpled pair of sweat-pants on the floor.*

*She picks them up between her index finger and thumb and tosses them to Jack. He puts them on.*

NINA

You were saying about creating jobs.

*Now decent, Jack gets out of bed.*

JACK

Yes. I'll hire a cleaner and that'll be my way of doing my bit for society.

NINA

That's hardly what they mean about big society.

JACK

Ow!

*Jack has stepped on something sharp. He jumps up and grabs his foot. Sitting down, he checks for bleeding -there is none- and rubs the sole.*

JACK (cont'd)

Alright then -expert- what do they mean.

NINA

Well...

JACK

Yes?

*Whilst he is checking his foot still, Nina takes out her smart-phone and quickly taps some buttons.*

NINA

Well...

JACK

I'm listening...

*She finishes typing just before Jack looks up.*

NINA

It's about: people getting involved in their local communities.

(pause)

Transferring power from central to local government.

*Jack nods, impressed.*

NINA (cont'd)

Publishing government data.

(pause)

And...

*Nina looks and points at the sole of his foot, panicking Jack into checking it again.*

*Using this moment, Nina takes out her phone and darts a quick look at the screen.*

NINA (cont'd)

...and supporting co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises.

*Before she can put her phone away, Jack looks up.*

JACK

You're cheating!

NINA

No I'm not.

JACK

You were looking at your phone!

NINA

No I wasn't.

JACK

Then show me the screen.

*He holds out his hand, expectantly. Slowly, Nina walks over, her hand still in her pocket, we can see that she is doing something with the buttons.*

*Once she has reached him, she hands it over.*

NINA

There you go.

*Jack snatches the phone from her and checks the screen, before handing it back to her.*

JACK

You closed the page.

NINA

I did not.

JACK

Fine.

(pause)

But I am still doing my bit. And I can prove it. Run those points by me again.

*Nina freezes, she can't remember! She looks at Jack and smiles sweetly. He indicates for her to take her phone out and she reads from it:*

NINA

Right then: transferring power from central to local government.

JACK

Right.

NINA

I'm waiting.

JACK

Well. Normally it would be up to the government to decide a tidying-up regime...

NINA

Tidying up regime?

JACK

Yes tidying up regime.

(pause)

But I am taking that into my own hands. As master of all I survey...

*The sweeping motion of his arms indicate the room.*

JACK (cont'd)

I am the local government here.

NINA

That's a pretty spurious argument.

JACK

Said the loser.

NINA

Loser? Now you've done it.

JACK

Bring it on.

NINA

Supporting social enterprises?

JACK

I think it's pretty enterprising for this cleaner to set up their own business, not to mention enterprising of me to support it.

*Nina puts her hands firmly on her hips.*

JACK (cont'd)

And I intend to be very social to her whenever she comes by.

NINA

She?

JACK

Yes, she. The Cleaner.

NINA

What makes you think it will be a she.

JACK

Because cleaners are women. Women are she's.

NINA

Jack I think that's very naive not to mention offensive and completely out-of...

(pause)

You know what? Let's leave sexism for another time.

JACK

Same time tomorrow.

*She shoots daggers at him.*

JACK (cont'd)

So...

(pause)

You were saying?

NINA

People getting involved in their local communities.

*Jack hesitates for a moment. He spies a phonebook buried under some of his clothes and picking it, he rifles through the pages.*

JACK

There!

*He chucks the book to Nina.*

NINA

What?

JACK

Check the area code.

NINA

Oh-two-oh...

*Nina snaps the book shut and tosses it aside.*

JACK

See. She works round here. In the local community. And she is a she.

NINA

Fine. I'll give you that one.

JACK

And what was the last point?

NINA

Government publishing data.

*Jack grabs up the phonebook.*

JACK

What do you call this?

NINA

A phonebook.

JACK

Published by?

NINA

The yellow pages.

JACK

Which is basically the government.

NINA

Jack...

JACK

Fine.

(pause)

I'll blog about her.

(pause)

And since we have already established that I am the local government.

(pause)

Master of all I survey.

*He repeats the sweeping gesture of before.*

NINA

You can't have that one. For starters, I doubt you have the capacity or willpower to keep a blog going.

JACK

But you'll give me something.

NINA

I will concede, despite the aforementioned...

JACK

Ooh big words!

NINA

Aforementioned spurious nature of both arguments, that you are doing your bit for big society based on the principles of supporting social enterprise and getting involved in your local community.

(pause)

So two out of four.

*She flips the 'V' sign at him to indicate two.*

*Jack stands up and stands next to her.*

*FROM OFFSTAGE WE HEAR BRIAN APPROACHING.*

JACK

Two out of four? That's more than you gave me when we...

*She cuts him off with a glare, though as she does they become very close to one another.*

NINA

(vaguely)

Don't.

BRIAN (OFF-STAGE)  
Someone get the door?

*The two of them pause on the cusp of embrace. Nina steps away and opens the door to allow Brian into the room. Jack sits down on the bed.*

JACK  
(irritably)  
What kept you?

BRIAN  
My Mum rang.

JACK  
Of course she did.

*Brian lays out mugs of tea for the three of them.*

BRIAN  
So. What did I miss?

*Jack and Nina exchange a quick glance.*

NINA  
We were discussing the Big Society.

BRIAN  
The Big Society?

JACK.  
Yeah.

NINA  
The Big Society.

*Brian gulps down a mouthful of tea.*

JACK  
So.  
(pause)  
Brian. What are your plans to contribute to the big society?

NINA  
See that's what we were doing. While you were making tea. That's what me and Jack were talking about.

*Now Brian and Jack exchange quick glances.*

*SILENCE. Then -*

BRIAN

So.

(pause)

What exactly is the Big Society?

NINA

Well...

*Nina looks to Jack. Her indicates for Nina to proceed. She nods and takes out her smartphone.*

NINA (cont'd)

Just give me a second...

*Both men sip their tea, waiting for Nina to define the Big Society.*

THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.