

## Auditions for the part of JEFFREY BERNARD

### Audition Piece 1

Now what the fuck am I doing with last month's Vogue? Perhaps I'm supposed to be writing something for them. Who's in and who's out in the drinking clubs. No Knickers Joyce is in. Herpes Henry is out, in fact barred for life. Or perhaps I'm in it. Jeffrey Bernard seen throwing up over a friend on Ladies' Day at Royal Ascot.... Well, the sun ought to be well over the yardarm somewhere in the world by now. Time for a Bloody Mary (*Mixing it with care*) The merit of these things is that you can persuade yourself you're having breakfast, and a healthy one at that. Though, it's possible to overdo the health angle. A bloke I know had fourteen healthy breakfasts on the trot and what with one thing leading to another didn't arrive home until six the next morning when he was totally legless and bursting for a pee. Falling out of his taxi, he was just about to urinate in desperation against the offside rear wheel, which like all of us he erroneously believed to be legal, when a dear old couple hove into sight very possibly on their way to early morning Mass. Some modicum of decorum prompted our man to do the decent things and so he zipped up and bounded up the steps to his front door which he attempted to unlock. Unfortunately, his keys not being magnetic, he was unable to make contact. One knows the problem.

*(Having mixed the bloody Mary he now attempts to pick it up but his is too shaky. He tries to steady it by gripping his wrist with his other hand – managing the manoeuvre)*

Health hint. A good cure for shaky hands: grip the glass very firmly..... So, our man can't get his key in the lock by now he's at his wits' end – no great distance to travel. There's only one thing to do. He inserts his

member through the letter-box and proceeds to relieve himself. Now. It so happens that at this precise moment his landlord, a naturally angry man who has been trying to evict our hero for some time, is coming down the staircase with the not unreasonable intention of taking his dog for a walk. You can imagine his and Fido's bemusement when confronted, not with the terror of a buff envelope thudding through the letter box, but with our man's cascading member. The hound backed away snarling and steaming, the landlord – one can only imagine – clasped his fluttering heart and our man politely turned his head to say good-morning to the churchgoing pair he'd originally tried to avoid offending. There has to be a moral there somewhere, but I'm damned if I can work out what it is. Cheers.

## **Audition Piece 2 -**

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*(The telephone rings shrilly and unexpectedly. Jeff stares at it. As it continues to ring, he approaches the phone warily, then gingerly picks it up)*

Coach and Horses ?...Norman! What the fuck do you mean what am I fucking doing here ?...How the fuck did you know I was fucking here ?...oh, I see.... The cleaning lady – no, she's not arrived yet. Any message ?...It's a long story, Norman. No, in fact it's a short story. I fell asleep in the bog and why the hell don't you call "Time Gents, Please" in the gents ? I mean I would have thought there'd be some kind of legal requirement under the Landlords' Liability Act. Oh, and talking of the law, Norman. I appeared to have caned the best part of a bottle of vodka. Does that count as drinking after hours. I mean given the circumstances? I'll tell you one thing, Norman, the service was a bloody

sight faster than it usually is. If you made this Britain's first self-service pub you'd quadruple takings over night... Yes, Norman....No, Norman... I owe for vodka, one tomato juice, a dash of Worcester sauce, one tea bag, a slightly cracked egg, oh and a tin of biscuits which unfortunately became spilled. .. What do you mean, what have I been up to all night ? I have been sitting here quietly nursing my drink and contemplating the meaning of life. It's all going to change, Norman, starting tomorrow... All right then if you insist – to-fucking-day. Now how long are you going to be? Of course I won't move until you get here – I'm hardly in a position to move, am I?... No, I won't touch anything. Norman, I'll just get on with my packing.... My packing. It's another long story, mate. Just get off your arse and get down here.....

*(He replaces the telephone. During the following he re-packs his scattered belongings)*

He's coming. I've never seen Norman at seven in the morning before – it should be a fascinating if grisly sight. Come to that, he's never seen me at seven in the morning. People who have say I'm not at my best, though they do generously add that I'm not at my worst either.

### **Audition Piece 3**

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*(Delving into his belongings Jeff, produces a pair of tortoiseshell-backed hairbrushes)*

*(Staring at them)* Tortoiseshell hairbrushes. Now how did I acquire these? I know. In settlement of a bad debt, by a very severe case of alopecia. *(A moment's brooding)* I wonder what it's like to be a tortoise. Not a barrel

of laughs, I shouldn't imagine. You can't be frivolous or facetious if you're a tortoise can you ? And think of the danger of being turned into a pair of hairbrushes. But you do have a home to go to. Just pull in your head and there you are, all snug and cosy... God, I hate flat hunting. And I hate staying with other people while I'm looking for somewhere to live. No matter how kind and generous they are, you can see them looking at you all the time, with their eyes pleading..'Please, please Jeff, don't get pissed and set the flat on fire'..One thing I know, I will never ever again live anywhere beyond staggering distance of the Coach and Horses.

*(During the following, he produces photos from his belongings, looking at them and setting them down on the pub table)*

I pitched my tent in Soho at around 13 and it's been a downhill struggle ever since. And if anyone wonders how such a dump could possibly have gripped me and seduced me, then they didn't know Soho when you could end up drunk, penniless and alone on less than a pound. To step out of both the classroom and my mother's Dresden-littered drawing room into this enchanted dungheap was like waking up in Disneyland, Treasure Island, Pleasure Island, you name it. And what an incredible mixture I've had the luck to stumble across, mostly in the gutter where you find the best company. Poets, painters, prostitutes, bookies' runners, bohemians, bums, philosophers, crooks, cranks. Dylan Thomas, Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud, John Minton, Frank Norman, French Vera, No Knickers Joyce, Sid the Swimmer, Ironfoot Jack, Nina Hamnett, Muriel Belcher ! She ran the Colony Room Club or Muriel's as it was always known. I can see her now, sitting on her stool at the end of the bar, like a raven on its perch, and chatting up the punters.

