

## **Characters**

- Brian (M)** - Businessman trying to change jobs. Tense
- Kevin (M)** - Owner of a large company. Jolly and very chatty
- Marvin (M)** - Kevin's chauffeur. Uniformed and correct

## Scene 1 – Bus Stop

(The lights come up. The scene is set beside a bus stop. The bus has apparently broken down and the two passengers have been forced into each other's company. Brian and Kevin sit on a bench and stare out at the audience. Kevin is chewing with gusto and noisily on a limp sandwich, while Brian is trying to read a magazine but is being put off by the masticating sounds. There is a long and pointed silence (apart from Kevin's loud chewing) before Brian speaks.)

**Brian:** (Irritated and staring at Kevin) Excuse me, but do you *have* to make that dreadful noise when you chew?

**Kevin:** (Inaudible through a mouthful) What were you saying?

**Brian:** I'm sorry, but what did you say?

**Kevin:** (Inaudible, still chewing) What were you saying?

**Brian:** Oh for goodness sake, finish the blasted mouthful, then tell me what you're saying!

(Kevin chews for a while, then swallows noisily)

**Kevin:** Ahhh, that's better. I'm sorry. What were you saying?

**Brian:** I was asking you to stop making such a dreadful noise.

**Kevin:** Oh, sorry. I couldn't hear you while I was chewing, I was making such a dreadful noise.

**Brian:** (Quietly to himself) idiot!

**Kevin:** (Proffering a sandwich) Would you like one?

**Brian:** (Frostily) No thank you very much, I just want to read this article.

**Kevin:** Are you sure? (Shaking the bag noisily)

**Brian:** (Not looking and speaking pointedly) I said no...thank you!

**Kevin:** (After a longish pause) Are you *absolutely* sure? I have loads left.

**Brian:** (Taking a deep breath) I'm absolutely sure. I had breakfast earlier and I'm simply not hungry, do you understand, not hungry!

**Kevin:** (Putting the packaging down) Oh well, if you're absolutely sure. (After a long pause) Lovely day, isn't it?

**Brian:** (Taking a deep controlled breath) Is it?

**Kevin:** Of course it is.

**Brian:** Is it?

**Kevin:** (Undeterred) I mean, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the wind is naught but a gentle zephyr, softly stirring the golden corn. (He looks at Brian with a pleased smile)

**Brian:** (Glancing up quickly but with no real interest) Yes, I suppose it is. (He straightens the magazine in annoyance and starts to read again)

**Kevin:** Are you sure you wouldn't like a sandwich? My mother always said, "Kevin", she'd say, "One must always have a good breakfast. It's the most important meal of the day". And do you know, she's right. I read it in The Readers Digest. **(He thinks carefully)** It was a piece by Doctor Philbert Grimes...I think it was by him anyway...and he said, do you know what he said? He said...now let me think what he said exactly...I hate to quote erroneously...he said...oh yes, he said that "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day". **(Pause)** What do you think about that?

**Brian:** Look, do you mind! I really do want to read this article. I'm going into town for a big interview for a new job and this is all about the company involved, so if you'd just keep quiet for a bit while I do my research, I'd be most grateful. **(He goes back to his reading and huffs to himself)**

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**Kevin:** That's perfectly okay, I understand. **(Pause)** I'll keep very quiet. **(Pause)** You'll hardly know I'm here. **(Long pause)** I'll just sit here and do nothing except be very, very quiet. **(Longer pause)** Mum used to say, "Kevin", she'd say, "Kevin, you have the God-given talent of keeping very quiet".

**Brian:** **(Sarcastically, without looking up)** Very quiet, eh?

**Kevin:** Oh yes. In fact, I'll be as quiet as a church mouse.

**Brian:** **(Not really listening)** A church mouse, eh?

**Kevin:** **(Nodding)** A veritable church mouse.

**Brian:** **(Exhales noisily)** Thank you.

**(There is a long pause, while Kevin looks around happily and Brian reads)**

**Kevin:** I don't blame you; you know.

**Brian:** **(Puzzled)** You don't blame me for what?

**Kevin:** Not having a sandwich.

**Brian:** **(Sighing noisily)** Oh no, I thought we'd finished with all the sandwich nonsense!

**Kevin:** I don't blame you because, matter of fact, they're pretty awful.

**Brian:** **(Half interested, despite himself)** Why, what's in them?

**Kevin:** **(Peering into the bag)** Let me see...well, I have Bovril, banana and chocolate spread.

**Brian:** **(Thinking)** Well, that sounds all right. I don't mind any of those.

**Kevin:** All together in one sandwich?

**Brian:** **(Shocked)** Ah, I feel a little bit sick, all of a sudden.

**Kevin:** **(Nodding)** Yes, they were pretty awful. **(Pause)** But then, I knew that they'd be awful, you see?

**Brian:** Really?

**Kevin:** Yes. **(Pause)** Do you want to know how I knew they'd be awful?

**Brian:** **(Sternly)** Now hold on a second! You're not going to roll out that hoary old chestnut about how *you* made them yourself?

**Kevin:** What? **(Puzzled)** But if *I'd* made them, I'd know what was in them, wouldn't I? That would be a bit stupid, wouldn't it?

**Brian:** **(Relieved)** Yes, it would.

**Kevin:** **(Laughing)** Of course I didn't make them.

**Brian:** **(Looking at his paper)** Of course you didn't.

**Kevin:** No, because...

**Both:** ...That would have been a bit stupid!

**Brian:** Well, I'm glad we got that sorted.

**Kevin:** **(Smiling, shaking his head slowly and speaking to himself)** Made them myself...now that's a good one...made them myself. I must remember that one. **(He chuckles)**

**Brian:** **(Not listening)** Hmmmmm.

**Kevin:** **(Matter of factly)** No, in fact I knew they'd be horrible, because I ordered them from the delicatessen!

**Brian:** **(Hopelessly)** Oh I don't believe it!

**Kevin:** **(Without a hint of facetiousness)** Oh yes, I get them to make the same ones every day. There's a deal for three toppings, you see. Awful or not, they're very good value.

**Brian:** **(Head in his hands and speaking in slight desperation)** Please, can you just be quiet. I don't want a sandwich, I don't want to look at the gentle zephyr stirring the corn, I don't want to hear quotes from your mother, and I certainly don't want to engage in conversation with you...If you don't mind!

**Kevin:** So, you want me to be quiet then?

**Brian:** **(Icily)** Remember the church mouse?

**Kevin:** **(Puzzled)** Church mouse! What do you mean, church mouse?

**Brian:** **(Completely frustrated)** The church mouse! Remember your God-given talent, the veritable church mouse?

**Kevin:** **(Brightly)** Oh yes, how stupid of me, the veritable church mouse.

**(Long pause, Brian looks at Kevin suspiciously...Kevin smiles back. After another very long pause, Brian goes back to his reading with a sigh)**

**Brian:** (To himself) That's better. Now, where was I?

(After a few seconds, Brian snaps his head up to look at Kevin as if expecting Kevin to speak. Kevin smiles, staying resolutely silent. Brian holds the stare, then goes back to his paper with a huge sigh, relieved. A long minute passes.)

**Kevin:** You won't hear a whisper from me!

**Brian:** (Frustrated) Oh I don't believe this!

**Kevin:** I'm sorry...did you say something?

**Brian:** (Abruptly, making a decision) Right, we'll do it your way! (He holds out his hand) Hello, my name is Brian Brewer and I'm dreadfully glad to make your acquaintance. And your name is?

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**Kevin:** Oh, yes! I'm pleased to meet you too. I'm Kevin. (They shake hands)

**Brian:** (Brian puts the magazine into his pocket, then with exaggerated patience, folds his arms and crosses his legs) Now Kevin, what would you like to talk about?

**Kevin:** (Thinks for a bit) Why don't you tell me a bit about yourself?

**Brian:** (To himself) Oh well, might as well go through with it. My name is Brian Brewer...

**Kevin:** ...Yes, you already said that!

**Brian:** (Loudly, ignoring the interruption) as I said (Continuing in normal tones)...my name is Brian Brewer and I'm going for an important interview this morning...and because the bus has broken down, it looks like I'll be late and probably miss it. This is making me a little irritable, so I didn't really want to get into a conversation with a stranger, whilst waiting interminably for another blasted bus! Happy now?

**Kevin:** (Delighted) Well, isn't it lucky that we've been introduced then. You see, I'm like you, I don't like talking to strangers either.

**Brian:** (Staring aghast at Kevin) Are you for real...I mean, actually for real?

**Kevin:** Oh yes, I'm real all right. My mother... (He suddenly remembers what Brian had said about listening to quotes from his mother) ...er...somebody I know, used to say, now what was it, oh yes, she used to say, "Kevin my son, you are the most real person that I've ever met, really real, in fact."

**Brian:** (Defeated) Maybe it wasn't the sandwich after all!

**Kevin:** Sandwich?

**Brian:** That was making me feel sick.

**Kevin:** Oh dear. Maybe I should tell you a little about myself, would that help?

**Brian:** I don't think so...I think it could be terminal!

**Kevin:** **(Brightly)** All right then, I'll keep it short. Best to take your mind of it. Upset tummies can be dreadful. I remember that my mother used to...

**(Brian turns abruptly and stares menacingly at him, raising a finger in warning. There is a pause then Kevin goes on).**

**Kevin:** Anyway, I come up here every morning on the bus, just to look at the view. I find it helps to relieve the stresses of everyday life. Now, your turn, tell me about your interview?

**Brian:** All right, if it'll keep you quiet for just one minute.

**Kevin:** A veritable church mouse! **(Giving the thumbs up)**

**Brian:** I work in a whisky distillery, in fact, I'm Head Distiller at the plant.

**Kevin:** But I though you said you were a brewer?

**Brian:** **(Puzzled)** What!

**Kevin:** You said that you were a brewer, I definitely heard it!

**Brian:** **(Slowly and clearly)** No! I said my name is Brian Brewer and I am a distiller!

**Kevin:** **(Delighted with himself)** Yes, I know that. **(Proudly)** I was making a joke.

**Brian:** **(Looking at Kevin as if he has two heads)** What?

**Kevin:** It's a joke, you see. You said your name was Brian Brewer and you are a distiller. I then cunningly swapped the two words. Both words could describe an occupation, see? So, it was quite a simple matter to switch them around and watch the hilarity ensue, so to speak.

**Brian:** **(Without a trace of humour)** Very risible. May I go on?

**Kevin:** Please do, I'm all ears...as my mum used to say **(Stops abruptly)** ...sorry!

**Brian:** I'm an ambitious man you see and I'm very anxious to climb the ladder within the world of Distilling, which is very much a cut-throat business. Oh, being Head Distiller is fine, but I work for Coppinger's Whisky, you see and they're only a small player in the field of alcoholic spirits, so I'm very keen to get into a bigger and better operation. I've secretly managed to blag an interview with a larger company, so you can see why I'm a bit worked up. They may have a vacancy you see, and I really thought I was in with a chance. It's all I ever wanted, but now the bus has broken down so that's why I'm a bit tetchy. I'm sorry if I was being rude.

**Kevin:** Golly! Yes, I can see why you'd be nervous.

**Brian:** Ooooooooooooooh!

**(Brian starts to hop from one foot to the other and seems a little preoccupied. It becomes apparent that he needs to pee badly).**

**Kevin:** Are you all right?

**Brian:** Sorry about this **(He drops his voice to a whisper)**, but I need to pee. Tension always does this to me. **(Brian stands and looks around frantically)** Look, do you mind if I pop over there behind that bush. Maybe you'd keep an eye on my briefcase for me?

**Kevin:** Certainly. You go and enjoy yourself. Leave everything with me. My mother always said, oh what was it? Oh yes, she always said, “When you’ve got to go, you’ve got to go”.

**Brian:** Thanks...I’ll just be a minute. **(He leaves at a run, fiddling with his buttons)**

**Kevin:** **(To himself)** What a nice man!

**(SFX. Telephone rings. Kevin looks around, but there is no sign of Brian. He looks at the bag, then over at the bush offstage, then back to the bag)**

**Kevin:** As my mother used to say, “Kevin”, she’d say, “Kevin, you are the most helpful of people”. **(He comes to a decision)** I’d better answer that, it could be important. **(He opens the case and takes out a mobile phone. He puts it to his ear and speaks)** Hello, how can I help you? **(Pause as someone speaks)** No, this isn’t Brian. No, I’m looking after his phone. **(Pause)** No, he can’t come to the phone. Who is this please? **(Pause)** Richard, nice to speak with you. May I help at all? **(Long pause)** Oh I see, he didn’t show up at the breakfast sales meeting? **(Puzzled)** Odd, he strikes me as being very conscientious. **(Smacks his head)** Oh no, wait a second. He told me where he was going. Now let me see, what did he say...oh yes, **(Speaks slowly and distinctly as if remembering)** he said that he was going to an interview with a bigger company. **(Pause)** Yes, a bigger and better company! **(Pause)** Yes, that’s right, bigger and much better. **(Long pause)** All right, I’ll tell him, I’m sure he’ll be delighted. Oh, before I go, may I have your full name? **(Pause)** Right, that’s Richard...I’m sorry, could you spell that? **(Pause, then Kevin spells out the letters)** C-O-P-P-I-N-G-E-R. Coppinger, oh yes, I’ve got it, Richard Coppinger. Yes, I’ll tell him. Thank you and goodbye. **(He hangs up)** Another nice man!

**(Brian returns, doing up his fly and looking satisfied)**

**Brian:** Ah, now that’s better.

**Kevin:** **(Smiling)** I know something that you don’t.

**Brian:** What?

**Kevin:** **(Playing coy)** It’s something you’re going to like.

**Brian:** What?

**Kevin:** Something that I think that you’re going to like a lot.

**Brian:** What on earth are you rabbiting on about?

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**Kevin:** **(Chanting)** Brian’s going on holiday, Brian’s going on holiday.

**Brian:** What do you mean, Brian’s going on holiday?

**Kevin:** **(Proudly)** I’ve found out that you are going on holiday.

**Brian:** **(Puzzled)** I’m not due any holidays. Where did you hear that?

**Kevin:** Ask me nicely and I’ll tell you.

**Brian:** What?

**Kevin:** Ask me nicely and I'll.....

**Brian:** **(Impatiently interrupting)** ...What do you mean by holiday?

**Kevin:** Well, while you were away, your phone rang.

**Brian:** **(Looking horrified)** You didn't answer it, did you?

**Kevin:** Yes, I thought it might be important.

**Brian:** **(Slowly)** Who was it?

**Kevin:** It was a charming gentleman who thought you needed a holiday, a very long holiday.

**Brian:** **(More slowly)** Who was this, charming gentleman?

**Kevin:** Now let me think...what did he say his name was? Oh yes, Richard.

**Brian:** **(Very slowly)** Richard! Richard who?

**Kevin:** Poppinger or Crossinger, something like that!

**Brian:** **(Scarcely daring to breathe)** Coppinger, was that his name?

**Kevin:** **(Delighted)** Coppinger, yes, that's it, Richard Coppinger!

**Brian:** **(Holding his head in his hands)** What exactly did Richard say, think carefully, what exactly did he say?

**Kevin:** Now what did he say...oh yes, he said...

**Brian:** **(Interrupting loudly)** ...Oh just cut that out and tell me what he said!

**Kevin:** He said that seeing as you were obviously working so hard, you deserved time off, a lot of time off. **(He beams at Brian)** Isn't that brilliant?

**Brian:** **(Stunned)** Oh my God! What have you done?

**Kevin:** Oh nothing really, he decided you deserved a break, without any prompting from me. It's all down to you, you know. Well done!

**Brian:** **(To himself in anguish)** But how did Richard find out...how? I kept everything so secret. I deleted the e-mails and shredded the letters, so how did he find out?

**Kevin:** **(Beaming)** It's a secret!

**Brian:** **(Suddenly suspicious)** How did he find out?

**Kevin:** Say please.

**Brian:** **(Icy cold)** Please.

**Kevin:** **(Smiling)** Say, pretty please!

**Brian:** **(Menacingly)** Pretty please.

**Kevin:** **(Brightly)** I told him you were going to an interview for a job in a larger and much better company. I think he was impressed, because he kind of made a spluttering sound.

**Brian:** **(Horried)** Dear God! What did he say then?

**Kevin:** He said that if you felt you needed to be somewhere else, you could go, and for as long as you liked, he said that he didn't care. As long as you like, eh? Isn't that brilliant?

**(Brian screams and finally losing control leaps on top of Kevin with his hands about Kevin's neck. He is incoherent with rage. The two fall to the ground with Brian on top of Kevin)**

**Brian:** You buffoon, you moronic buffoon! Do you know what you've done, do you know what you've done?

**(A man in a grey suit and chauffeur's cap runs in and pulls Brian from on top of Kevin)**

**Marvin:** That's quite enough of that!

**(Brian rolls onto his back crying and sobbing. Kevin stands and looks down at Brian)**

**Brian:** Thank you Marvin. I think our horseplay got a little out of control. I always played too hard you know. Mother used to say it. She'd say...oh now what was it she'd say? Oh yes, "Kevin", she'd say, "Kevin, you always play too hard".

**Marvin:** **(Indicating Brian)** Do you think he's all right?

**Kevin:** I should imagine so. Just winded, I think. He's a bit like me. Gets a little too enthusiastic. We've had a lovely time. The bus broke down, that's why I called you, Marvin. Maybe you could take us both into town in the Bentley?

**Marvin:** Certainly sir. I'll help the gentleman up.

**(Marvin helps a sobbing Brian to his feet)**

**Marvin:** There you are now, sir. Be a good gentleman and let me clean you up a bit.

**(Marvin takes out his handkerchief, spits on it and carefully cleans Brian's face and dabs down his hair. Brian is in shock and doesn't flinch)**

**Marvin:** That's much better now, sir!

**Kevin:** Oh yes, much better. Thank you, Marvin.

**Marvin:** My pleasure, sir.

**Brian:** **(Stunned and still sobbing quietly)** But what am I supposed to do now?

**Kevin:** I've just had a wonderful idea! Why don't you come and work for me? I need someone who works as hard as you and I think we get on ever so well. What do you think?

**Brian:** **(Sarcastically)** Thank you, oh thank you ever so much. How can I ever repay you? **(Sobbing and speaking softly)** You've ruined my life, thank you so ruddy much. **(Still sobbing, picks up his case and walks slowly offstage, his head bowed. As he goes, he**

takes the magazine from his pocket and crumples it up and throws it away) So much for the new job!

**Kevin:** **(Looking after the departed Brian)** A most pleasant and charming man. Do you see how he thanked me, Marvin? Not many people would take the time to do that, but he did. I'm a good judge of character, you know. My mother used to say...now what did she say...Oh yes, she'd say "Kevin" she'd say, "Kevin, you're a good judge of character."

**Marvin:** A wonderfully perceptive woman, your mother.

**Kevin:** I've just had a thought. It must be fate. **(Speaking hesitantly, as if the pieces were slowly falling into place)** Yes, fate. Because the bus broke down, I was going to be late for that tiresome interview they'd planned for me. Some chap was brown nosing for a job. Well, now that I've missed the interview, he can go hang. **(Coming to a decision)** Yes, I'm going to offer my new friend Brian, the job. And he's a brewer as well, so he's already in the alcohol trade. Hmm! Fate indeed.

**(As they are about to leave, Marvin first notices and then picks up the crumpled magazine that Brian had been reading. He opens it, stares at it for a second then speaks)**

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**Marvin:** Look at this, sir. It's an article about how Gilthorpe's Distillery came to become the leading producer of whisky in all of Europe.

**Kevin:** **(Taking the magazine from Marvin)** Why so it is! It's a small world, Marvin, a very small world indeed.

**Marvin:** What was it that your mother used to say, Mister Gilthorpe?

**Kevin:** **(Thinking hard)** Now what was it she used to say...oh yes...she used to say, "Kevin" she'd say, "Kevin, it's a small world, a very small world indeed".

**CURTAIN**