

A Fishy Tale

Or

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Dan Jeffries

SCENE 1

The Lights come up on stage to reveal a fish and chip shop. It's tidy and newly furnished. Center Stage Left we see the counter and the cookers. Behind this is a cold drinks cabinet and the usual things e.g. Sauces, pickled onions and eggs, a telephone etc. Down Stage Left is the main front door from which the customers enter. A Bell rings to indicate the entrance of someone. Down Stage Right there is another door leading to the upper floor. The stairs should actually lead to an upper floor but it is not necessary for the audience to see any action on this floor. There is the possibility of using silhouettes through some material to 'suggest' the action that takes place. Up Stage Left is the door that leads to the kitchen. We do not need to see the kitchen but there needs to be a corridor from door to kitchen.

The time is quarter to eight. George, a man of around forty years, can be seen tuning in the wireless that is sitting on the counter. He is a shortish man with a moustache. He never stops. His accent is shaky, as is his grasp of the English Language. The song 'Flash Gordon' by Queen is playing on the radio and is constantly going out of tune. While trying to amend this, George is constantly looking at his watch and is in a general state of fluster. As a last effort he bangs on the top of the radio and suddenly it's crystal clear.

GEORGE: Blaady Hell! Engleesh Technology! For Blaady Hell's Sake! Why does everything have to blaady well be left up to me, huh? *(to the skies)* Can you up there please explain this to me, up there, can you, please? Bring me favour, OK? This is the first business of my opening night...uh...the first night of my opening business...oh, blaady hell...you know what I try to say...and all I want is some good fortune...and good profits heh heh heh. But what have I got? A bleeding radio that don't know it's alive, a shop with no customers, and a girl who's bleedin' late to do the bleedin' job that I bleedin' well gave her! Bleedin Hell! *(Suddenly the radio goes out of tune again)* Oh Three Blind Mice! Here we go again! Right, Radio, I pay for your services and now you pay if I don't get them!

George starts to play with the radio again, thinking that if he turns it up it might help. The song is 'Stand and Deliver' by Adam and the Ants. While

fixing this, Angel, the new helper, appears at the door. She is a girl of about fifteen, pretty, with an innocent and unaware nature. Her presence and vocal quality is, unsurprisingly, like an Angel. She knocks. She is not heard. She knocks louder. Nothing. She starts banging on the door yet George is completely unaware. Angel now really starts to hammer on the door, kicking the wood that surrounds it. But due to her excitement her eye to foot coordination lets her down and the glass in the door smashes. This George notices.

GEORGE: What the Blaady Hell in The Land of Batter is going on here?

ANGEL: Oh, Mister George, Mister George, I'm so frightfully sorry! You see I was knocking at the door and you couldn't hear me so I started knocking a little louder and still you couldn't hear me, so I was just about to shout through the letterbox when this car drove past me, through this big puddle, and all the water splashed off the road and hit the glass and...and...*(she starts to cry)* I'll pick it all up and put it back together if you want me to...I promise...

GEORGE: Hey, no no no, don't you worry your pretty little head over that, huh? What to me is more important is that you work hard for me and then everything OK, yeah? Remember, you get this work 'cos I owe your papa a favour. Your parents gonna come here tonight, huh?

ANGEL: *(her tears subsiding)* Well, Mummy said that she might come along after her gym class but Daddy definitely can't come. He's gone to shoot Wild Boar down on the estate. It's Wild Boar shooting season.

GEORGE: *(baffled by this)* Has he? He's...probably...doing it...so he can...have...uh...something with his chips! To be sure, three be sure. Wild Boar and Chips! You phone your dada and tell him that if he comes and buy some chips tonight I'll throw in a bottle of Georgio's very own special Panda-Pop Fizzy Drink Coca Cola with extra bubbles! *(Falsely)* Mmmmm...Yummy Yum. Now, my Angel, we must discuss. Do you remember what you were taught? Huh? *(patronisingly)* And I might even give you a Fish Cake if you prove your salt and pepper to me!

ANGEL: Really? Oh Goody! For a Fish Cake? Right, I'd really better get my concentration hat on! *(thinks)* OK...ummm...oh yes...I've got it. *(she coughs in preparation)* Here Goes. Don't talk to strangers, don't go

with old men to look at their rabbits, look left look right look left again...

GEORGE: What the bloody hell?!? Oh Jimminy Cricket Bats! No, sweetness, what *I* taught you. Do you remember that, huh? Come on now, try again. Remember the Fishy Cake!

ANGEL: Oh THAT! Now I've got you! How silly of me. Let's think. Oh yes. I open the doors at 8:15, 8:20 if there's a cue. When the person walks in you ask them what they want and remember 'the customer is always tight'. "Four Bags of Chips Please", they say. I say, "Yes Sir. Would you like chips with that?" "Yes Please". Then you wrap up the chips, oh..."Salt and Vinegar?", I ask. "If you've got any", they reply. You stick them all in the bag, call out 'Au Revoir. Murky Buckets pour ta business de la Fish and Chips' and if they're a man then you give them a little smile and you flutter your eyebrows at them and they're yours. Oh...wait a minute...I'm getting all muddledymuddled. I'm thinking of the article 'How to get your man with just your eyebrows' that I read in 'I'm a Girl' magazine. Golly, tonight might just be my lucky night. I can feel it in these eyebrows of mine...

Angel has now drifted off into a world of lipstick and boy bands. George, stunned at what he's been listening to, breaks the silence with a small cough...

GEORGE: Uh...Angel?...Uh, Hi!...Ummm...what about the money? The money that is given for services rendered?

ANGEL: (*snapping out of it*) Oh don't worry about that Mister George. You can give me my wages at the end of the night. Shall I get started now?

Angel goes off into the kitchen as George puts his head in his hands. Blackout.

SCENE 2

Ten minutes later. Lights come up on George who is again trying to tune in the radio. The sound of frying can be heard and Angel is sat behind the cookers reading 'I'm a Girl' magazine. From the corridor leading to the kitchen walks out an extremely tall youth with a bucket of uncooked chips.

GEORGE: *(looking up from the radio)* Ah, Angel, this is...umm...David? Yes?
(he gets no acknowledgment) I think it's David. Like the statue...only with chips. No chips but large Sausage! Battered! That's it David, you take the chips to the cooker and pour them in to the hot fat that burns. Understand? Good.

David, having done this, just stands there. George goes up to Angel, whispers in his ear and points to David. David still standing there starts to tickle himself under his arms. He starts to laugh until he pulls his hands away abruptly. He now goes to the microwave at the back of the shop and sticks his hand in. He closes the door, pushes some buttons, and starts to (or so he believes) cook his arm. He whistles 'Whistle while you Work' while picking his nose and inspecting his findings. George and Angel just stare.

GEORGE: *(when he can take no more)* What's the problem now? *(no reply)*
You blaady well do not know what to do do you? You tell me on the the acclimation form that you work in chip shop for eight years, correct?

David opens his mouth as if to say something and belches.

GEORGE: If you'd been that honest on your form I might be more compassionate. GET OUT OF MY SHOP YOU BLAADY GREAT EARWIG! I knew you were a fucking weirdo when I see you putting your dingedangle in that can of Sainsbury's Dog Food! All the Vitamins, Irons and Meaty Goodness in the world wont help you, you ShitBag! GET OUT!

David belches again, retracts his arm from the oven, goes up to George, pulls his trousers down and shows his buttocks to him. He leaves. Angel lets out a little giggle.

GEORGE: That's enough from you, my girl. Now YOU will have to cook the chips, serve the customers and keep me happy.

ANGEL: Where are you going to be, Mister George?

GEORGE: That is of no concern to you. I may have to pop out at some stage of a theatre to do something. But I will be back, never you fear. Now. I will show you what to do. *(he is concerned with the time)* To cook - it's easy. Peel potatoes, cut into chips, put in fat. Fish - peel it, cut into chips, put in fat. Same for everything else. Apart from the fish. All Clear? *(Angel opens her mouth to reply)* Good. Simple, innit? Now we gonna do a little trial run to see what you have learned and see how you cope with the potatoes and customers. I will be the customer - Mr. Britain my name will be. *(Angel looks at him)*. Pork Chop my girl, come on, don't hang around with a noose around your neck. Peel those potatoes.

As soon as she rushes out into the kitchen, he opens a door pretending to be a customer.

GEORGE: *(in his very best British Accent)* Oh Hello there my young fellow! I'd like two of your finest fish with adjacent numberings of chips, one Rump Steak and succulent Pig's Kidney's Pie with matching chips and a Pickled Egg. And do be quick, my daughter's got her Horsey Finals tonight. All of her friends want to see her ride Lawrence. Her horse, that is. Her boyfriend's called Simon. I've heard I've heard that she rides him too! Oh I'm such a scream!

During this speech, Angel has been running in and out of the kitchen carrying chips, heating up pies and attempting that age old problem of getting Pickled Eggs out of a jar.

GEORGE: How long, boy?

ANGEL: Oh the chips will be ready soon, your Majesty. They just need to cook some more.

GEORGE: Well hurry them up.

Angel looks bemused by this statement. George shushes her, encouraging her to carry on as she was.

GEORGE: And don't be too complacent with the chips, young Johnnie me Girl! My friends from the rowing team are coming here. They heard all about you and your establishment. Oh, by the way, is young George in? I'd like to thank him personally for his spirited efforts in trying to make our streets, our community, a better place for us all. No longer do we feel trapped within our homes, terrified of rapists and pillagers, the streets are cleaner now thanks to...

Angel coughs and points to her watch.

GEORGE: *(In a state of panic)* Flaming Hairdo's. Cripes. Okay. Okay. Ready, my Angel? Now, the time it is fast approaching 8:15 beep beep beep BEEEEEEP.

George finds this particularly amusing. Angel smiles politely.

GEORGE: Angel, my dearest little fish, it is time to open those great doors to the waiting nation of good old fashioned fish and chips. *He puts his hand on the burning hot oven and screams Greek expletives. (Embarrassed)* Angel...that was just a...lesson to show you what not to do when you burn your end of arm sausages on the hot Mr. Cooker. *(Almost forgetting)* Oh my Dizzy Aunt...The Radio!

He rushes to the radio and waves Angel to go and open the door. As she opens the door he does a very lame trumpet fanfare.

RADIO: *(typical Cheesy local radio DJ)* ...and four more cats were soon to follow. OkeyDoakey. Now we have a special request for a Mister George who is the proud new owner of 'S and V's', the new chip shop in Slim Street. Remember: If you think your going to flip, your saviour is a chip. *(Amused with himself)* Ha Ha Ha. That's really very amusing. Now, this is actually more of an apology than an announcement to Mister George as we have had to cancel his special record request of 'One Step at a Time' by Michael Ball due to it's sensitive content in relation to the Northern Ireland Peace Protest. But what we have got, Mister George, I think you will agree, is a little belter of a number.

We see the look on George's face fall as 'Land of Hope and Glory' is played (an awful synthesised version if possible). Angel re-enters the shop and shrugs her shoulders due to the lack of customers.

GEORGE: Fuck-a-me with the Royal Jewels! Excuse my Greek, young Angel. *(she is slightly embarrassed)* I pay really good money to 'Tonka FM', they promise me my song at 8:15, they promise me my adverts. Do I get any adverts? *(pause)* Well, yes I did as a matter of fact, but I don't call some bloke talking over a piece of music saying 'Buy your Fish and Chips at S and V's' a blaady advert, do you? And now, the one thing that I wanted, the song that has epitomised the struggle my family has had to face within the Cooked Sea Life and Sliced Fruits of the Earth business, is taken off the air and replaced with this piece of *(he struggles for the word)*...pop. It's blaady injustice, that's what it is...

He is interrupted during this sentence as the sound of a man trying to enter is heard. George and Angel turn round slowly to see who their first customer might be. He enters.

TRAMP: Forty bags of chips please my girl. Are they still for free? Henry got his for free three years ago. Exchanged them for a cod-piece. He was an actor!

The tramp finds this extremely funny, to the point where he vomits, collapses on the floor and dies. Angel and George look at each other and George turns the radio up as the lights die down.

SCENE 3

It is now 8:30. S and V's is in full flow. The bell on the door does not stop ringing. George has now stepped in to help serve the food while Angel is running in and out of the kitchen with buckets of fish, chips, sausages etc. MAN 1, who is waiting for his food, is a large, scary man, unconcerned of others. He farts and belches and laughs at his own vulgarity. As someone walks out of the shop, he trips them up, sending their bag of food flying.

George is pushed very hard by the volume of people and this man's attitude.

GEORGE: *(shouting into the Kitchen)* I need two more buckets of chips - ASAP, if not sooner!

A woman behind the counter laughs at his little joke.

MAN 1: What was that, Costas? *(In a bad Greek accent)* Two more buckets of sick? I can arrange that for you.

He starts to simulate vomiting on an order that is passed to a customer.

GEORGE: Excuse me my friend...

MAN 1: I ain't no friend to you, sunshine.

GEORGE: Look, we don't want no trouble, Okay? OK. *(with spirit)* Oakey Doakey. Who ordered the Large Cod with chips, two small battered sausages, one plain sausage and six (SIX!?) pickled onions?

MAN 1: I ordered that lot but I only wanted five pickled onions and a Large Haddock not a Large Cod, you fucking twat! *(to a woman standing next to him)* I've gotta go easy on the pickled onions - I've gotta date tonight, know what I mean gorgeous?

WOMAN 1: *(standing back from him)* You're telling me that you haven't had six already?

GEORGE: Okay, my friend...

MAN 1: *(leaning over the counter and grabbing him by the throat)* Look, fuckface, I said I ain't a friend of yours, and when I say things like that I fucking mean 'em!

GEORGE: *(in a strangled voice)* You didn't let me finish. My friend, I would just like to wish you and your family all the best in the world and here is your order. What was that sir? You'd like it for free? Of Course! No problemo! Take them, take them! Have a nice day now! *(Man 1 grunts, lets him go, and leaves. As he leaves, George shouts)* Next time you come I'll pay YOU to eat my food *(to himself)* you British Bulldog Bastard!

He cowers, waiting for some response from the lout. When he gets none he stands up and receives a small round of applause for ousting out this

unwanton member of society. Angel comes in to see what's been going on.

GEORGE: Angel, I'm so glad you missed all that commotion. You don't look like the type of girl that could stomach anything violent, anything corrupt or unjust within our society. *(to the customers)* Everyone, this is Angel, my helper. *(she receives a small round of applause which she is extremely embarrassed about)* It just sickens the sick out of me that we don't stand up to these brutes who scare us, who walk down the street with bottle in hand and barge you out of the way. Why should I be terrorised for living where I want to live *(chants of 'Here Here')* I tell you all something now. If I wasn't doing this...I'd be a Robert. *(looks of confusion)* Yes, a good old fashioned British Robert. I want to be out there on the streets with my long arm of the law, holding my truncheon, making a difference - like Tony Blair does. I want to fight the corruption that plagues us, to stop people scaring the wits out of others. Why SHOULD I have to put up with it? No More! I will settle for it No More!

With that he receives a huge round of applause, Angel being the most supportive and proud. During this applause, fifteen rugby players, pissed out of their heads, burst through the door chanting 'We're going home in the back of an Ambulance!'

GEORGE: *(out loud)* Jimminy Beeswax! *(Having pulled Angel to one side)* I remember that important thing that I have to do. Now is the time! Sheeesh, I'm late already, I really must go. Now, remember everything that I have taught you. *(He takes her by the shoulders and stares in to her eyes)* I am now passing the power over to you. Here are the jewels *(he hands her his apron)* You will fight and you will fight well. King George has said so. *(As he drifts off into the distance)* May the force be with you, Angel. Always.

With that he leaves via the kitchen and we hear him falling over some tins and the sound of general commotion and cursing. Angel is shaken by the responsibility she now has. A long, heavy pause.

WOMAN 1: Well come on my love, it's no use looking like a lost sheep. We all want our food. We've paid you our money and now we want our food, don't we folks!

Woman 1 starts off the chants of 'Food Food Food' etc. Everyone starts to join in. We see a look of panic on Angel's face but slowly this changes into a look of sure-fire confidence. Angel has now transformed into a hard, London-esque woman. She is as coarse as sandpaper, far removed from the Angel that was.

ANGEL: Right. You want your food? Here's yer bloody food. You...Yes, You...the one who looks like a lemming...what did you want?

LEMMING: Uhhh...cod and...

ANGEL: FishCake was it? Right, there you go then. Come back soon wont ya, as long as ya haven't thrown yourself off a bleadin cliff. Next. You...what do you want?

MAN 2: I was wondering, could you cook me a...

ANGEL: No I bleading well couldn't. Come back in half an hour and I *might* just look at ya. Now sod off. Right. Do any of you ugly fuckers left want serving or are you getting out of here. Behold! (*puts her hand to her ear*) Hark! I think I hear the distant beckoning of the local Ale house. Now piss off before I chin the lot of ya.

The Rugby team and the rest of the customers rush out at the mention of 'ale'. One tries to say something but Angel just grabs a pressure point in their neck and they collapse on the floor. She pushes them out of the door, locks it behind her, puts the closed sign on, and slides down to the floor, exhausted.

ANGEL: Fuck Me. Why do I do it? Why do I put myself through all of this? *She chuckles to herself.* You know why you do this to yourself, girl, and you know that it'll be worth it in the end. Now, I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want, and that's a lovely lovely lovely lovely fag-a-fag-Ahh.

She goes to her bag behind the cookers and takes out a pack of 20 Lambert and Butler.

ANGEL: Now. To sort things out. Make a plan. Let's say I can keep the shop shut for ten minutes. Right. I need to phone Dave - that's the first priority. He'll help me out. The ideas mine, 100%, no doubt about that, but I do need some backup, a partner for my crime.

She looks for somewhere to flick her ash, can't find anywhere, so she flicks it into the cookers. She takes a mobile out of her bag and makes a call.

ANGEL: Dave?...Dave?...It's Angie...Who the bloody else d'ya think it is? What daft sod ever phones you? Right, clotheads, listen and listen good. The shop is clear. El Greco's finally sodded off somewhere and we shouldn't have to see him for a while. Get yer bleedin' skates on and get down here. Oy...wait a minute... Skates...SKATES...D'ya get it...No, not the things with ball bearings ya dickhead. Oh forget it ya lump of lard. Just get your fat arse down here and pronto. Oh, and say 'Ta' to yer Rugby mates...they did an excellent job. *She hangs up.*

ANGEL: Sorted. Nice one. Now to phone the most important people in all of this...the one's that'll be raking in the cash for 'sweet little Angel'. Ahhhh - Angel. What a creation. And so easy to play. Exactly everything that I aint. God I'm busting for a slash. Where's the loos again? Oh, I ain't going outside in this weather. I'll freeze me Giblets off!

She screams in desperation for relief. She looks around, frantic for somewhere to urinate.

ANGEL: Perfect!

She takes the Jar of Pickled Eggs, places it centre stage, removes the lid and squats herself over the jar. She releases her...trouble...as she speaks on the phone.

ANGEL: Mary? It's Angie. God that feels good. Nothing, darling, just performing a necessity...no, not that ya dirty bleader. *(Dirty Laugh)* Are you and the rest of the girls ready, yeah? Got everything? Got the...whatsit...with the double thingy that can do the...y'know...in

under three minutes? *She emits a particularly dirty laugh.* Oh Yeah, bring that one as well! Ha Ha Ha! *She has now put the lid back on.* You know where we are don't 'cha? Slim Street, that's it. Where the old abattoir used to be. I'll see you down here in five, yeah? *There is a knock at the door.* Look Babs, I gotta go. I'll see you in a minute. Okay then. Ciao.

She hangs up and unlocks the front door. Dave enters. He is about 25, muscly but gangly. He is unmistakably a figure for much fun.

ANGEL: Take yer time, will yah!. Nah, come here...give us a kiss. *They kiss, briefly.* I told ya we'd do it didn't I? I bleeding told ya!

DAVE: You're the best Angie!

ANGEL: Did anyone phone for me?

DAVE: Your mother phoned. Wanted to know how the new job was going.

ANGEL: Silly moo. What does she care for? She only wants to get some money back off me so she can go back down the Working Man's Club, buy a pie and a pint and pick up some business. I'll chuck her a fiver later if she's lucky. What else you been up to then?

DAVE: Not a lot. Just been waiting for you to give me a ring. *(pause as he's building himself up to say something big)* Y'know, I really love you Angie. You look after me so well. You buy me m'fags and everything and you treat me to Benson and Hedges if I do the washing-up. No-one's ever loved me like that before. You're really special to me. *He gets down on one knee.* Angie...Angie...will you...oh....I can't bring myself to say it...*he coughs*...will you...will you...

During all this Angel has got back on the phone and starts talking to Mary as he's just about to propose.

ANGEL: Mary...Where in Gorbachev's name are ya? We gotta get moving...and sharpish...*(she sees Dave on the floor)*...uh?...hold on a sec darling...Dave...what the hell are you doing down there?

DAVE: *(embarrassed)* Umm...I thought...I thought that...uh...I thought that I saw some doggie's doos on the floor and I didn't want you to step in it so I got down on the floor to pick it up and I realised...*(he's really struggling now)*...I realised...that it was...only...my...reflection. Sorry.

ANGEL: *(who's back on the phone)* Are you slags coming or what? We're

wasting valuable time here! *She hangs up.* David Thorndike, WHAT was all that pigging about on the floor in aid of?

DAVE: Nothing. Nothing. I wont do it again, I promise. It's just that...

ANGEL: Look Darling, tell me later when we've got things going. But now I've really gotta think about things. And where better to think about things than on the khazi. I'm going out the back to drop a plaited loaf, YOU stay in here, behave yourself and let the girls in if they arrive. I wont be long.

Angel exits through the kitchen door. Dave stands in the room, unsure of what to do. He goes to the fridge, takes out a can and cracks it open. He walks about without an agenda. He goes to the radio, inspects it and turns it on. It is just interference. He bangs the top of it but with no success. He shrugs and turns it back off. He now plays the role of a Greek, saying thinks like 'Blaady Hell, innit?' and 'Sheesh Kebabs for tea!' but he soon gets bored of this. Suddenly he gets a flash of inspiration as he thinks of the 'I'm a Girl' magazine that Angel always carries with her and has got in her bag. Making sure that she's not coming back, he runs to her bag and takes the magazine. He goes to the front of the stage and starts to examine all the models inside. This is like Hard Core Pornography for him. He sits on the floor and notices the jar of Pickled Eggs next to him. Not being one to miss the opportunity of free food, he removes the lid and inhales the strong odour that is instantly released. He licks his lips and plunges his hand straight in and removes an egg. He pops it in his mouth and plays with it, pushing it between his lips and popping it back in again. There is something about the brine that interests him and, as we see him getting hornier due to the pictures, he decides to experiment by putting his hand down his pants and playing with himself. Turning himself on we see the egg popping in and out of his mouth as he gets more and more excited. Suddenly:

ANGEL: *(shouting loudly)* Dave? DAVE! There's no bleeding loo roll! Get us a few sheets of the wrapping paper and bring it in here will ya?

Dave, completely stunned, rushes to the counter and picks up a wad of paper, his hand still down his pants and the egg at the front of his mouth. As he runs towards the kitchen corridor, there is a knock at the door, the ring of the bell, and twelve whores walk in, tarted up to the eyeballs. Dave is caught center stage with his hand down his pants, an egg in his mouth and wrapping

paper under his arm. The women just stare in astonishment as, at the same time, Angel comes running in with her trousers and knickers round her ankles screaming:

ANGEL: Dave, give it too me now! I'm desperate!

The lights go down swiftly.

SCENE 4

Five minutes later. Lights come up on the prostitutes roughly assemble as a group with Angel standing in the middle like a war-time leader. Dave sits on the counter staying well out of the action.

ANGEL: Right, Girls, this is the plan. I reckon we've got about another half an hour till Zorba gets back from whatever he's doing. Now, the word should have been spread around to enough men that I reckon they'll be cueing up outside in the next five minutes. Mary, Tess and Donna - you put the posters up in the clubs, right?

MARY: Aye, that we did. We had a few questions about what massages would be given but when I whispered in their ear and discreetly told them that it was a place where you came to lose your mess, they asked no more questions then.

ANGEL: Excellent. That's the type of commitment we need. Right Girls, this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna use the upstairs for tonight *(there is a chorus of disapproval)*...I know...I know what I said but it's turned out differently than what I'd expected. There ain't enough tables for starters...well...there are NO tables as a matter of fact, but this is not the issue. We mustn't waste time. Dave, who I think you've all met by now...*(there is a ripple of giggling)* will be coordinating everything, assigning the men to the women and sorting out payment etc. Are you clear with everything Dave? Now girls, I don't want you giving him any hassles, d'ya hear?

DONNA: Yeah, Girls, we mustn't egg him on...

TESS: Or fiddle with his plans...

CARLEY: Or jerk him about...

They all laugh.

ANGEL: Behave, the lot of you. He's a bit nervous is my Dave, he hasn't been in this line of work before, have you my precious? *He shakes his head.* He's actually trying to get on to a YTS Pimping course at the minute, aren't you, so he need all the help he can get, don't you darling? It's got summin to do with that 'New Deal' scheme that Labour's doing I think. God knows... *She looks out the door.* Shit, we've got a crowd already. *There is a bustle of panic.* Right. Mary, Donna, Tess, Carley, Geena and 'Wendy the Well', you go upstairs. There should be mattresses, Kleenex, KY, everything you need. If there's anything else, give us a shout. The rest of you, stay down here. Right. Dave, you go to the door and you let em in one at a time. I'm gonna go behind the counter and keep serving the food should their hunger take over at any point. Now Dave - remember it's 50p for a look at their bellybutton, fifteen pounds for anything else. Go on, Go on, open the doors. And, shit, don't let me forget to reduce the Pickled Eggs to half price.

DAVE: *(as he's opening the door)* Why?

ANGEL: Don't worry, I'll tell you about it later.

DAVE: *(as he lets one man in)* Welcome, Sir, to the upper-class massage parlour 'S and V's' - that's 'Sin and Vice' to you and me. We have a wide selection of women who are prepared to do anything you want them too, ranging from Animal Sex to watching your holiday slides that you took in Putney. These girls are the dirtiest, horniest, low-life scum you could ever wish to meet...*(the man is becoming scared by his words and Angel shouts a commanding 'Dave')*...but, BOY, are they lovely. You could show 'em to your Mum and be as proud as punch. Now Sir, is there anyone here that takes your fancy?

MAN 1: Well, I quite like the look of her.

DAVE: Ahhh...'Bowling Ball' Bertha, quite a legend around this way let me tell you.

MAN 1: Why 'Bowling Ball'?

DAVE: *(demonstrating with his hand)* Well there's room for two fingers in that hole and you can put your thumb...

ANGEL: *(screams)* DAVID! I think the Gentleman gets the picture. Now, sir,

would you like to take this woman upstairs or not?

MAN 1: Hmmm...Go on then. It's gotta be better than what I get at home.

ANGEL: Excellent Sir. That'll be fifteen pounds please. *David collects the money.* Now, Bertha, if you'd like to take the gentleman upstairs...that's it...(calling after him) And remember Sir, there'll always be a bag of chips waiting for you after you climax! *They leave.*

ANGEL: See Dave, see how easy it is? Now you're gonna have to let more than one in at a time cos at the rate you're taking I'm barely gonna be able to pay for me taxi fare. Let the next lot in.

Dave opens the door and about twenty five people push their way in, some of them wanting food, some of them the other.

DAVE: *(in total panic)* Shit, Angie, what do I do? It's fucking mayhem in here!

ANGEL: You keep control! Stay Calm! Remember our discussion after watching Titanic!

Angel is busy taking orders from those who want food and Dave is dealing with a queue of men who want women. People start shouting their orders to Angie and Dave is swamped with men. At some point an Old Man, who's a bit of a toff and soft in the head says:

OLD MAN: *(to Angel)* I say, my girl, what's going on in here tonight? A sort of promotion type thingy is it for the grand opening, yes?

ANGEL: *(struggling)* That's it, Sir, that's exactly right. Cod and Chips was it?

OLD MAN: That's right, yes. *(pause)* So, what *is* going on exactly?

ANGEL: Cor, well, you've asked a question there, haven't you. What's going on, hey? Well, let me put it to you this way...(thinks) what we've arranged is...we've organised...it's a...umm...well...YES...I know what we've done...all those that have spent ten pounds or more in here tonight we've decided to re-unite them with there long lost daughters. It's a special offer from us to you to say 'Thank You' for your custom.

OLD MAN: Really? I think that's an absolutely smashing idea. I haven't seen my daughter in over twenty years. Well, in that case I 'd better

have four more cans of coke, six battered sausages and two pickled eggs.

ANGEL: Pickled Eggs, eh? You like them, do you? Okay, let me sort that lot out for you and we'll see what we can do.

While this has been going on, trouble has been escalating by the stairs leading up to the top floor where Dave is trying to arrange things.

DAVE: Look, Sir, we've only got a couple of women left. No you can't have three at a time. That's particularly selfish.

MARY: *(from upstairs)* Come on Davey me boy, send the next lot up, will ya? We can fit plenty more in before the time is out.

DAVE: Oh shit. OK. Look. You give me your fifteen quid...No you haven't given it to me already...Of course I'm sure...give me your money...for fucks sake...give me your money. No you haven't. Look, I don't want to have to get violent...

Suddenly about five men jump on top of Dave and start beating the crap out of him. Angel sees what's happening and calmly walks over there. She takes a whistle out of her pocket and blows. Everyone stops.

ANGEL: Right now. You...give me your fifteen. No you didn't I was watching you. Thank You very much. Dave, ya big lump of lard, are you OK? Good. Now, Sir, are you sorted out for a woman? Excellent. David, can I leave you to carry on sensibly or am I going to have to make you stand in the corner again? *David nods his head sheepishly.* Good. Carry on then.

Angel returns to the counter as the men go off with their women upstairs. Some people made a sharp exit when they saw violence. The shop is the calmest it's been for quite a while. It's just the Old Man left now waiting for his food.

OLD MAN: I say, there seems to be an awful lot of tension between these men who are looking for their daughters.

ANGEL: Ah yes, you see that's because some of them haven't seen their daughters for so long that they can't remember what they look like and they start arguing. Now, let's see if you're eligible. *She adds up*

the amount on the till. That'll be nine pounds and ninety nine pence please.

OLD MAN: What? But just one penny...

ANGEL: I'm sorry, sir, but that's the new chip shop laws that have been introduced. You're only allowed a certain number of goods, about...(under her breath) nfffwjhfj to be exact, and it looks like you've already exceeded that so I'm actually doing *you* a favour here, so, sir, I would vacate the premises ASAP if not sooner or I'll call the chip police. *The old man runs out in fear. Shouting after him:* Enjoy your Pickled Eggs!

DAVE: *(to himself)* What is it with these Pickled Eggs!?!

The shop is now empty apart from a couple of prostitutes waiting by the stairs. The room has an easy calm of people waiting for something to happen. Soon though, the hookers start to flirt with Dave while Angel, filing her nails, watches with quiet amusement. After a while:

TAMSIN: So, Dave, is it true what I hear then?

YASMIN: Is it Dave, tell us, is it?

DAVE: *(nervous)* Why, what have you heard?

TAMSIN: Well, you know how gossip spreads. It's like a chip pan fire; in under a few seconds everything's caught on. *To Yasmin:* Shall we ask him? I suppose we should. *Quietly to Dave:* Well, Dave, and correct me if this is a lie, but we've heard that back home you're known as Dave 'The Donger of Death' Thorndike. I wanna see this for myself!

The Girls burst out laughing while it looks like Dave's gonna burst into tears. Angel's in uncontrollable fits of laughter too.

ANGEL: Donger of Death? Donger of Death?!? More like Penis of Pestilence!

While everyone is in fits of laughter, the doors burst open and in pour about twenty rugby lads, pissed out of their face and chanting 'We want whores and chips for dinner!!!' At the same time the phone in the shop starts to ring and Angel, afraid of the noise, tries to get everyone to calm down. She picks up the phone and says:

ANGEL: Hello, Sin and Vice? Nothing is too much for our girls. How can I help?

GEORGE'S VOICE: Sin and Vice? Sin and Vice?!? What in Blazing Saddles is going on here, uh?

ANGEL: *(to herself)* Shit! *(To George)*...Sin and Vice? Sorry Sir, we can't help you there. This is...uh...Citizen's Advice, you must have misheard me. How can I help you?

During this conversation the Rugby team are running around the shop, making a terrible noise, creating mayhem in the kitchen by throwing uncooked chips everywhere etc. They are also trying to score with the women. Dave thinks that these are his friends that helped out earlier but he is mistaken. He tries to rationalise with them but they walk all over him. The conversation continues.

GEORGE: Oh Blaady Hell! I try to contact my own shop on its opening night and I can't blaady well even get that right! What an ironing board that I end up phoning you. I hang up now and phone my shop. Goodbye.

ANGEL: No Mister George, WAIT!

GEORGE: How you know this Mister George?

ANGEL: Well, we have very smart computers here that tell us who is phoning so...that's how we know.

GEORGE: But I'm on a friend's mobile.

ANGEL: Well, like I say we have very smart computers indeed. Please don't phone your shop. It sounds like your mistake of phoning us was the best thing that you could have done. Why don't you talk to me and tell me your problems, huh?

GEORGE: Oh, I such a bad bad man. I deserve nothing. I treat people like sheet, I step on them and treat them like sheet, I no good. My new shop, 'S and V's' (that's short for 'Salt and Vinegar' - good innit?), I must go there. I can't believe that I left a poor, young girl all down there by herself. What must she think of me! *He hears the commotion in the background.* Your offices are a bit rowdy tonight aren't they? Sounds like you've got a Rugby Team in there. Ha Ha Ha.

ANGEL: Ha Ha Ha. Very Good Sir. So what do you intend to do about this young girl? Y'know, just looking at my files here it seems that

we've had a similar case a couple of years ago. The girl took action and sued the man for all he was worth - about thirty five quid. If I were you Sir, I would give the girl a raise and offer your apologies. What do you think?

During this speech, people start vacating from upstairs to downstairs. Men have their flies and shirts undone, the girls tops are undone and revealing themselves, They are all smoking fags. One or two are still engaging in sexual practices, breast sucking, penis fondling etc. Angel, making use of the long phone chord, goes over to the counter and starts serving out bags of chips.

ANGEL: What are your plans?

GEORGE'S VOICE: Well, I'm right outside the shop now...(as he's walking in) so I'm just gonna talk to her...

He enters the shop and his jaw drops as he see what's going on. He carries a baby over his shoulder. His mobile drops to the floor. A hooker goes up to him and says:

WENDY: Well, Looks like God has saved the best till last. What say I get on my knees right now and let me sample some of your Home Made Fish Sauce.

She gets on her knees and starts to undo his zip.

ANGEL: WENDY!!! STOP THAT NOW!!! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!!!

NANCY: Well it looks like he's brought his chips back so she's giving him a refund in true Slim Street style!

GEORGE: *(hardly able to control himself)* What in Tony Blair's Ball Bag is going on here! My eyes can't believe what they seeing. I'm FlubberGisted. And what a sight for a new born baby to see when he's just entered the world.

The door opens and George's wife enters with their young son.

GEORGE'S WIFE: *(to her son as they enter)* And so, Michael, this is the business that your Father has worked so hard for over

the years...

She sees what's going on in the room and screams. She shields Michael's eyes by putting his head in her dress. She screams even louder when she sees the baby in his arms and, again, even louder, the hooker on her knees. There is a stage full of shocked people. Dave walks down the stairs with a wad of notes in his hands.

DAVE: *(as he's walking down the stairs)* I reckon we've done alright here tonight, Angie. Any sign of Zorba yet...?

The lights slowly start to fade as Dave sees the situation and now it is Angel's turn to put her head in her hands.

SCENE 5

Two minutes later. The stage is now empty. From behind the counter we see George slowly raise his head up. He is in pain. He's got a black eye and has had a nosebleed. Angel walks down the stairs carrying a couple of thin mattresses and some used condoms. She hides these from George's eyes. George groans and slides on to the floor again.

ANGEL: *(as she was at the start)* George Junior is fast asleep upstairs now Mister George. He's nicely snuggled up and snoring like...well...he's snoring like a baby. Do you need any help?

GEORGE: *(from the floor)* You blaady well stay away from me, y'hear? You been plenty trouble already, you know that? Plenty trouble. *There is a long pause as Angel thinks about what she's done.* Help me up, my Angel, will you? I'm old man. I shouldn't be involved in things like this.

Angel helps him up as Dave walks in from the kitchen.

GEORGE: And what the blaady hell is this fool still doing here huh?

DAVE: I'm peeling the chips...uh...the potatoes for you Mister George. I'm trying to help you out. I feel real bad about what's happened. We both do, don't we Angie...uh...I mean...don't we...uh...Angel...Angie's a pet name...

Angel looks at Dave and motions to him, gently, to stop trying. George looks at her and she nods sympathetically to him but she has a wry smile on her face.

GEORGE: You kids so STUPID! You think that you can trick King George, huh? You think that while I'm making babies you can make *me* the baby, huh? Well, you're wrong. Very wrong. *(to himself)* I bloody well knew I should never have left you by yourself. I knew that there was something about you. Quiet waters running deep and all that nonsense. You a dark horse. I should never've gambled on you.

ANGEL: *(Now back as Angie)* Well you're a fine one to talk, Mister George, aren't you? Here I am, trying to make a little money for myself WHILE STILL SERVING CUSTOMERS I might add, I make a couple of pennies for myself and YOU, YOU, Mister George, are going to your bit on the sides delivery of your baby son. So don't talk to me about Dark Horses. I'm a bleeding Albino Derby Winner compared to you!

GEORGE: OK, OK, you've made a point. *Dave just stands there looking stupid with potato in one hand and a peeler in the other.* What are you doing just standing there you stupid earwig? Put that stuff down, get your butt out of here. This shop is no more. *Dave puts his stuff down and goes to leave.*

ANGEL: You stop where you are right now, 'Donger of Death' Thorndike. *(To Dave)* How easily you give in, never prepared to work. *(Pointing to George)* Can't you see how crushed this man's spirit is, how he thinks that his battle is over? Why do you think I was doing what I was doing Mister George, huh? For the money? To make sad, lonely men feel important for two minutes, three if they're *real* men? *She looks at Dave who looks to the floor.* You think that's why? I'll tell you why. I did it because I wanted to show that I could. That's all. And YOU, Mister George, I've been watching you for months. I've been watching you going for lease applications at the council, going to fish wholesalers, I've seen you working your balls off. You were doing this because you could. And what an outcome. Only you and I know the reason that you owe my Dad that favour, the reason that I got this job. Now if I was to tell the council that...

GEORGE: Stop, stop! You don't have to go on. I cheat, I get found out. *(to*

the skies) Thanks for the favour you bastards! *(To Angel)* My life is yours. I know that I am pathetic. I cheat on my wife, I make other women pregnant, I take the baby and name it after *me*? How cruel can I be?!? I can't even run a blaady fish and chip shop, the one thing that ANY Cypriot or Greek or foreigner can do and I, Mister George, I can't blaady well do that. I'm a useless lump of sheet. I no longer know what to do. Guide me, my Angel, show me where I should go.

ANGEL: *(long pause)* Well, I've been thinking. Hear me out. I think that this can work. There is always a need for brothels, for sex, for women who will agree to fuck men for money. That's existed since time immemorial. And men can't help it. The sadder men, the one's who still live with their mummies, how are they ever gonna find a woman? Their ideal woman is twice their age, living under the same roof, with entrance most definitely forbidden!

DAVE: But I still live with my Mum...

ANGEL: Shut up, Dave. These men need these women otherwise the world would run out of Washing Powder and clean sheets. We can utilise this, Mister George. Here we can create the perfect business. We can take the cooker out, the fridge, partition it all off, get some cheap mattresses in, put some curtains in the window, do the joint up properly. We'd have people queuing from now till Christmas!

GEORGE: But I've paid so much for all this stuff. I can't waste it. No one will buy it. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!!!

ANGEL: Simple. *(pause)* We'll run a back street fish and chip shop at the same time. It's perfect. And we're actually beating the future, cos surely the time's gonna come when fish is as much in demand as sex. The difference is that Fishermen aren't catching women. We can sell rare breeds - battered piranha, GoldFish Pie, every type of perversity you can imagine. Lobster Cakes! Whale Nuggets! The list is endless! Supply and Demand. It's obvious.

GEORGE: *(getting up slowly)* Angel...I always thought that you were a bit slow, a bit stupid. Do you know how much of my blood and sweat is in this food? Not literally, obviously, but me and my family we work bleading hard to do this and now you're asking me to throw it all away, to run a house of ill dispute, repote, whatever it is, just so that we can earn lots of money? Lots of money that would pay for the hospital fees for my lover and myself? Money that

would support the child that's been snatched from my breast?
Money that would keep the Newspapers silent for as long as I
want? Money that would get me a legitimate licence and be able
to thank your father properly? I thought you were a stupid girl, a
basic girl, but now that don't bleading matter anymore cos, Lord,
how you've proved me wrong...It's a blaady brilliant idea! I can't
blaady believe it! I've gone all WibblyWobbly! I'm as happy as a
lamb full of springs! Oh Joyful Day! Dave, you come with me. We
go find the women and start advertising. *(he looks at Angel)* 'Sin
and Vice'. I blaady love it. Come on Davey-my-Boy, let's go.

DAVE: *(to George)* Hold, on, Hold on. *(looks at Angel)* Tell me about the
Pickled Eggs, Angie! What's wrong with 'em?

ANGEL: Nothing, baby. People were just complaining that the brine made
them a bit hot and spicy. Don't worry though, I know that's how you
like 'em so I'll save you a couple for when you get back.

Dave, now satisfied with the explanation, exits with George.

*Angel looks around the shop and smiles contentedly at herself. She goes to
the back of the shop, picks up her 'I'm a Girl' magazine, wonders why it's
covered in Brine, shrugs her shoulder and says:*

ANGEL: Now, if I can just get these eyebrows down to perfection...

*The lights fade as 'Land of Hope and Glory' is heard and the curtain slowly
falls.*

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