

Hunt Sabb

Episode 1: Electioneering

Scene 1

Mandela's bar, Chris and Jon. Bar noise in background

Chris: There you go Jon, two pints of lager and a packet of crisps. [sound of squeaking plastic] The packet seems to be stuck [small bang followed by the sound of crisps landing in lager]. Oh, now they've gone everywhere. Damn. [sighs] Look, I'll be honest. I've got no idea what I'm going to do.

Jon: Try picking the crisps out of the lager. It should be fine.

Chris: No, I mean I don't know what I'm going to do with my life.

Jon: Yes, I know how you feel.

Chris: Jon, how can you possibly know how I feel? Our situations have got absolutely nothing in common!

Jon: How do you mean?

Chris: Right, let's go through the list. Finals are in ten weeks' time, and it's doubtful whether I'll pass...

Jon: Yes, I know how you feel.

Chris: No you don't - you got a first for the last two years. You've got about as much chance of failing as I have of tossing a coin and it coming up heads a hundred times in a row.

Jon: You'd never guess we studied maths.

Chris: And that's just the start. Even supposing I manage to scrape a pass, what then? Who wants to employ a third rate mathmo with negligible additional skills.

Jon: Yes, I know how you feel.

Chris: No you don't - you're always complaining about being bombarded with letters from companies looking to recruit someone with your academic record. The only job offer I've had is from the development office who want students to spend an afternoon ringing up alumni and persuading them to donate large sums of money to their old university.

Jon: Don't scoff, they were offering four pounds an hour.

Chris: And last but by no means least, despite the reputation of Britain's universities for being a hotbed of sexual activity I haven't seen any of it, or more importantly, participated in any, unless you count randomly getting off with drunk girls at the end of term discos, which personally I don't.

Jon: Yes, I know...

Chris: Don't even start that. You've been going out with Alison for as long as I can remember.

Jon: Yes, but before I met her I was lonely.

Chris: That was for three days! You got together in freshers' week! I've been single for three years. Three years!

Jon: Yes, well at least you don't go on about it.

Chris: All I'm saying is that my life is going to get intensely unpleasant in the lead up to finals, and even assuming I survive those, I'm left with no prospects, no relationship and nowhere to go.

Jon: Yes, I know...

Chris: Oh, shut up.

Jon: Anyway, your love life isn't completely empty. There's that historian you fancy, Mary.

Chris: How do you know I fancy her?

Jon: It's the way you go red every time she comes by.

Chris: OK, I fancy her, but there hardly seems any time left to do anything about it. Anyway, what did you bring her up for?

Jon: Because she's walking towards us now. Hi Mary!

Mary: Hi Jon... Chris.

Chris: Oh, er, yeah, hi

Mary: Listen you guys, I need a favour, really badly. Could you sign this form for me please?

Chris: Yes, certainly!

Jon: Why, what is it?

Mary: It's a nomination form. I want to be a sabb.

Jon: I didn't know you had to official permission to jump in front of horses and irritate huntsmen.

Mary: No, a sabbatical officer for the students' union. I'm standing for women's officer. I need two signatures on my nomination form, and I've left it to the last minute. It has to be in by midnight.

Jon: Yeah, I'll sign that... there you go.

Chris: OK.

Mary: Brilliant! Thanks, guys.. I've got to rush off and hand these in now.

Chris: Mary! You left these... papers.

Jon: Too late. (riffles papers) Oh look, there's a spare nomination form here. Tell you what Chris, why don't you stand?

Chris: Yes, with my total lack of experience I'd be sure to get in. Don't be stupid Jon.

Jon: No, I reckon it's a two birds, one stone scenario. Mop up your job problem and, er, bird problem in one go. People are dying to employ graduates who've had relevant experience, and you can't get much better than top-level work in a students' union. And as for the other thing... well, when you're working those long days and nights in the union building, in close

proximity to Mary, the sweet chirping of the pigeons, the soulful wailing of the grade two violinist in the practice room... it's inevitable, really, isn't it?

Chris: You know what your problem is, Jon? You think life is like a Hollywood romantic comedy. But it just doesn't work like that. I mean, take that bloke we used to know, Rob Moore. He spent the whole of last year lazing around, getting pissed and shagging random women. Four weeks before his exams he got a letter from his tutor saying that if he didn't get his act together he'd fail. Now, what would have happened if life was like a Hollywood film?

Jon: Well...

Chris: I'll tell you: he would have got a load of books out the library, worked like a maniac for the four weeks, given up the boozing and shagging and stormed his way through the exams, all to the tune of some dodgy American rock anthem, which would take up precisely three minutes of screen time and finish just as the invigilator said "Stop writing now please." But what actually happened?

Jon: He...

Chris: He carried on exactly as before, did no work at all, failed his second-year exams and then got a letter from the department which politely suggested that he needn't bother coming back in October, which rather tactlessly enclosed a leaflet on careers in the bricklaying industry. Now, I will admit that, in the romantic comedy genre, this plot twist is not entirely inconceivable. However, staying in the make-believe Hollywood world for a minute, his next move would be to join a bricklaying firm, working his way up the ladder and eventually becoming a multi-millionaire brick magnate with a beautiful wife, then sending a team of incompetent comedy builders into the house of the professor who told him to leave in order to spite him. Now how close is reality coming to this romantic ideal?

Jon: OK, so he's currently working as a sales assistant in a computer games shop in Hounslow, point made. All I'm saying is that you should at least think about it before dismissing it completely.

Chris: All right, just to humour you. What are the posts I can stand for then?

Jon: Right, let's see what it says. "President: The president is in charge of all the Union's affairs, and ultimately takes responsibility for the day to day running"

Chris: Well, that's no good, I can't even preside over a packet of crisps, let alone the entire bloody Union.

Jon: Point. OK then: "Sports Officer: The SO organises sporting fixtures and liaises with team captains whilst remaining a team player and giving 110%."

Chris: The only sport I've played here is pool, and I don't think that counts. Besides, I've seen what sporties are like when they're in the bar on Wednesday evenings. I don't want to have spent all day dealing with idiots who think you can have more than a hundred percent.

Jon: Fair enough. Next up: "Women's Officer: The Women's officer represents the interests of all women students, and campaigns to achieve greater equality in all areas of student life."

Chris: Yeah, I could stand for Women's Officer! That would be really funny! I bet it doesn't say anything about men not being able to stand.

Jon: "Brackets: Every year some daft bloke thinks it would be really funny and original to stand for women's officer, however, only women may stand and vote for this post"

Chris: Oh well, saw me coming. Anyway, that's the post Mary's standing for. What else?

Jon: Academic Affairs Officer.

Chris: What, there's an entire sabbatical to look after students who have affairs with academics?

Jon: Very funny. No, they do things like moan about the library not being open for long enough, and how there isn't a proper appeals system for degrees.

Chris: I have enough problems with my own academic affairs, even *I* wouldn't trust me with anyone else's.

Jon: Welfare officer. Runs campaigns like AIDS awareness day and Safe Sex week.

Chris: I always practise safe sex. I never get a chance to try it for real.

Jon: Boom-boom. I take it that's a no for that one too. OK, how about Entertainments Officer - responsible for organising "the most kickingest, slammingest, funk-ed-up hard rockin' slam-dunkin' aural assaults on students this side of London."

Chris: I didn't actually understand any of that. I hope that rules me out.

Jon: You are hard to please. OK, last one: Communications Officer.

Chris: You know I can't communicate. You remember the time I had to give a project presentation and I was so nervous I gibbered through my three thousand word report in under five minutes?

Jon: No, listen, it says "the Comms officer is responsible for co-ordinating the actions of clubs and societies, and ensuring that information is shared and passed-on within all spheres of student activity. Computer skills and good organisational abilities are needed." Well, you've got computer skills.

Chris: You mean I'm the one that the arts students come to when their essay won't print?

Jon: Well, that's what 'computer skills' boils down to, isn't it? I think you'd be ideally suited for that job. You're always enthusiastic despite trying to hide it behind your cynicism, and you don't give up, and that matters more than any of this other rubbish. Why don't you stand?

Chris: Because I don't care and I can't be bothered. Look, sorry if I've been a bit miserable tonight, but the utter horror of my immediate future has put me in a bad mood. I think I'll wander off to bed now and sob myself to sleep. Don't try to stop me.

Jon: OK, 'bye then. [to himself] Well, I still think you should stand. Let's see: Name - Chris Hunt. Position - Communications Officer.

Barman [rings bell] : Last orders please! Yes sir, what can I get you?

Jon: Would you mind signing this form for me, please?

Scene 2

Lecture theatre. Chris and Jon. General student noise

Chris: All right Jon!

Jon: Hi, Chris. Anything good in 'the Parrot' this week?

Chris: Wouldn't have thought so. Though I did spot this - there's a bloke with my name who's standing for election!

Jon: Er, yes, I've been meaning to talk to you about that.

Chris: What? Oh, it'll have to wait, he's about to start.

Lecturer: Good morning. Today I'm going to carry on from where I got a bit muddled last time when I was discussing the problem of discrete logarithms... [fade out]

Lecturer [fade in] : Oh, well, that doesn't seem right. I wish these examples would work out more often. It's not like long division - at least you can check that with a calculator. Um... well, it's nearly out of time, so I'll stop here and finish this next time.

Jon: How did you manage?

Chris: Oh, not bad. If I can get 11 across then I should be able to finish the rest.

Jon: What?

Chris: Oh, I lost track of the lecture after about five minutes so I did the crossword out of the Parrot. I'm stuck on 11 across : "Fruit and nuts (7)" Can I borrow your lecture notes?

Jon: Yes, just like you do every time. Listen, about the Parrot. You remember that you said that there was someone with your name standing for election? Well, there is no one else with your name.

Chris: Yes there is, I kept getting his mail in the first year. He does Theatre Studies, I think.

Jon: No, what I mean is that the person standing for election is you. I filled the nomination form in with your name.

Chris: Wh.. what? Why did you do that?

Jon: Look, I really think you ought to give it a go. Where are you going?

Chris: I'm going to get myself out of this bloody election.

Jon: But what about Fluid Dynamics?

Chris [walking away] : Sod fluid dynamics! You git!

Scene 3

Sabbs corridor. Chris and Vince.

Chris: Excuse me! Excuse me! Are you Vince?

Vince: Yes, that's right.

Chris: Vince the vote? The elections guy?

Vince: Yes. What is it?

Chris: Er, yes, it's just that there's been a bit of a misunderstanding. You see, I'm standing for election, or rather, I'm not standing. That is, I was nominated by, a, er, friend, and I need to well, un-nominate myself.

Vince: What is your name?

Chris: Me? I'm, er, Chris Hunt.

Vince: Ah yes, Mr Hunt, standing for communications officer.

Chris: Yes, that's me. But I don't want to. Stand, that is.

Vince: Appendix 5, Section 5, Subsection VII, ii: "No candidate may withdraw from election once candidature has been announced without forfeiture of the electoral deposit."

Chris: I'm sorry?

Vince: You can't. The constitution forbids it.

Chris: Have you memorised the entire student union constitution? Isn't it thousands of pages long?

Vince: No, of course I haven't memorised the whole thing...

Chris: Of course...

Vince: ...just appendices four and five, procedure for union election and union referenda. Besides, we've already started to print the ballot papers, there's no way we can change them. I'm afraid there's no way you can pull out, unless you want to hold the election up and lose the fifty pounds deposit. And you also have to turn up to Hustings tomorrow evening.

Chris: But I don't want to do it! I suppose the only way I can get out of this is if this other guy who's standing wins, this [rustles paper] 'Ron' character wins. Hang on, 'Ron', that's a bit chummy. Doesn't he have a surname?

Vince (sighing, as if he is about to start a well practised lecture) : Mr Hunt, we have STV here.

Chris: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

Vince: S - T - V. It stands for Single Transferable Vote. What did you think I said?

Chris: Oh, nothing. So who gets this single vote? Is it the union president?

Vince: Everyone gets a vote, that's why we call it democracy. And in each election, there is an extra candidate called R.O.N. - which stands for "Re-Open Nominations" - so that, if the electorate is unsatisfied with the candidates who are standing, they can give their vote to R.O.N. If RON is elected, then we hold a new election.

Chris: I see. So I can get out of this if I tell everyone to vote for RON instead of me? I think I understand. So how does the rest of this Single Transferable Vote thing works then?

Vince: Believe me, you really don't want to know.

Chris: No really, I'm interested.

Vince: Really, you're not.

Chris: Why, what have you got to hide.

Vince (again, beginning a well practised speech): Once the votes have been collected, we distribute them according to the first preference indicated, calculating quota as the number of

unspoiled papers divided by the number of candidates plus one. We then distribute the surplus any candidate has above quota, rescaling the value of each paper in proportion to the size of the excess...

Chris: No, you're right, I really don't want to know. Thanks for your help, but I must go and do something else right now.

Scene 4

Computer Room, Chris and Jon

Jon: Why am I here?

Chris: Because you got me into this mess, and you're going to help get me out. Now, read this

Jon: "Chris Hunt. Don't vote for me, because I wouldn't be any good. Vote for RON and let's have a properly contested election with candidates who would do a good job instead." Well, it's a bit blunt, but I like the picture of you pointing out of the poster. Very eye catching. Reminds me of a poster of General Kitchener I saw in history once.

Chris: Oh, that's where I got the idea from. I did wonder whether that could be entirely original.

Jon: Well, your poster's fine, so what do you need me for?

Chris: Because you are going to help me put 300 copies of this up around campus, while I practice my Hustings speech.

Scene 5

Backstage. Chris and Dawn.

Chris (to himself, under his breath): Good evening, my name's... no, that's too formal... hello, my name's Chris Hunt, and I'm standing for communications...

Dawn (heavy Scottish accent): Oh, hello Chris. I'm Dawn.

Chris: I'm sorry?

Dawn: What for?

Chris: What?

Dawn: Pardon?

Chris: This is getting nowhere. I'm Chris. And you are...?

Dawn: I'm Dawn. Standing for Women's Officer.

Chris (jokingly): Oh right. So I suppose that makes you a bit of a feminist then?

Dawn: I don't know. What's a feminist?

Chris: What? Well, it's... it's someone who thinks that women... that women... are... er... good... and... look, shouldn't you know this? Why are you standing for women's officer?

Dawn: Oh, because I'm a woman, and I really like being a woman, and I want to help other women enjoy being women too.

Chris: I think you might have missed the point a bit here, you see, er, um... oh, help... you... oh, hello Mary, you won't believe how glad I am to see you here.

Mary: Hello Chris, I like your posters, very clever. I do hope you get in, it'd be nice working with someone that I get on with.

Chris: Yes, I've just met your opposition, spending a year with her might drive me mad. But I should explain...

Assistant: Chris Hunt? You're up next.

Vince (though a microphone): The next candidate is Chris Hunt, standing for Communications Officer.

Chris (drops microphone then picks it up off the floor): Hello? Is this thing on? Right. (he starts off speaking quite quickly, and speeds up as he goes along, obviously very nervous about public speaking).

Hello, my name's Chris Hunt, and I'm standing for the post of communications officer, or rather I'm not standing because you see I don't actually want to be communications officer, it's all a mistake, I was nominated but I never agreed to stand, and so it seems that the simplest thing is that you should vote for RON and then we can have a proper election and maybe some people that are really interested in standing will stand because as I've said before I don't want to stand in fact I'd much rather sit, or retire, but it seems that I can't or rather that's what Vince said, and so that's why I'm still standing even though I'd much rather be sitting if you see what I mean OK, that's all, are there any questions? No? Good.

Chris (no longer on mic, panting) : So, campaign manager, how did I do?

Jon: Well, after that performance, I don't think any of the audience will be voting for you.

Chris: Brilliant! So, how many of them were there out there? I couldn't see with those lights in my eyes, and the almost uncontrollable urge to run away to somewhere a long way from here. If it was packed, then it would be, what, three or four hundred?

Jon: Close. I'd say three or four.

Chris: What?

Jon: OK, maybe there were two dozen. Mainly this year's sabbaticals and executive committee.

Chris: But why did no one come?

Jon: Well, did you ever go to hustings? They go on for hours, and it clashes with EastEnders. If you think it was painful to have to go up there and hust for a three minutes, think how painful it is for anyone who has to watch you.

Chris: Well, since it's polling tomorrow I've just got to hope that the poster campaign works - I don't think I can do anything more to persuade people not to vote for me. Listen, I've wasted so much time on these elections I really need to get some work done. Shall I meet you tomorrow night for the count?

Scene Six

Sabbs corridor

(knock on door)

Vince (tired): Yes?

Chris: Have you finished counting yet?

Vince: For the thirtieth time, no. I told you, we'll let you know when we're ready.

Jon: I tell you, this isn't like Newsnight. Where's Jon Snow and his swingometer, that's what I want to know.

Chris: Oh, what a week! And I'm still no closer to sorting all my major life problems. So what about you, Jon? Have you taken the shilling of any of those ethically questionable city firms that've been plying you with alcohol and ridiculously large starting salaries for the last few months?

Jon: Well, sort of.

Chris: And what are they paying you? Sixteen? Eighteen? Twenty? Twenty Five? Thirty?

Jon: A hundred and twenty.

Chris: What? A hundred and twenty k for your first job? Even I think that's totally ridiculous and I know nothing about money. I was eight before I realised that you don't have to have the exact change to buy things.

Jon: No, a hundred and twenty pounds a week.

Chris: What? You could earn more standing outside Woolworths with a sign saying 'Maths Graduate - will differentiate for food'. What are you doing that pays that kind of a pittance?

Jon: Well, the department offered me a place to do a PhD, and I think I should.

Chris: But you could make a fortune - the city absolutely devours maths students.

Jon: Yes, and then spits them out with a mortgage and a coronary when they reach thirty. I don't want to be some smirking twat in braces and a blazer shouting 'buy' and 'sell' at a computer screen till I collapse. In fact (affects pompous tone) I actually quite enjoy maths, and I want to make a real contribution to the subject. (normal) The sad thing is, that's I almost believe that.

Chris: No, that's brilliant. I wish I still enjoyed it. It's just that after about six months I realised I wasn't any good at it, and that rather took the fun out of the enterprise. So what area are you going to research?

Jon: Mud.

Chris: Sorry?

Jon: Well, there's a research grant to look into fluid dynamics applied to coastal estuaries in relation to viscous liquid suspensions - or in other words, mud. Hey, look, they're putting the results up now. Oh brilliant, not even a computer graphic of how the vote was divided, just a photocopied list of the results. On a rather grubby piece of A4. With someone's essay printed out underneath. This really isn't like it is on TV.

Chris: I can't look, you go and see what it says.

Jon (after a few seconds): Well, there's bad news and there's bad news. The bad news is that your current fancy, Mary, was beaten by - what was that thing you said about her?

Chris: I said that Dawn, like her namesake, was very pretty to look at, but not very bright.

Jon: And how long exactly were you working on that line?

Chris: Er, about two days.

Jon: Oh, and the bad news is that is that you beat RON quite significantly - 832 votes to 311.

Chris: Well, how on earth did that happen? Oi, Vince!

Vince: Yes, Mr Hunt?

Chris: Why have I been elected? Why didn't RON win?

Vince: Well, it's not my place to offer an explanation, but considering all the options, and analysing the voting patterns fully, including a five year weighted average of electoral preferences...

Chris: Oh, please, get to the point

Vince: I'd say it was because more people voted for you.

Chris: Yes, but why?

Vince: Well, some people will vote for anyone who puts their name forward. But the message that I've been hearing is that a lot of students responded to your posters telling them to vote for RON... by voting for you. I suppose they thought you were being ironic. I-RON-ic - do you see? It's a joke. (silence) I'm sorry, I don't often tell jokes.

Chris: But... but... I don't want to be a sabbatical! I demand a recount!

Vince: You could always put in a complaint. That happens a lot. Although it would be a first for a successful candidate to appeal against a result.

Mary: Congratulations, Chris. You don't look very happy.

Chris: Oh... well, you don't seem particularly upset, Mary. I'm sorry you lost out, by the way.

Mary: Well, I think I might take a job I've been offered helping to administrate a women's refuge in the Midlands. So I'm afraid I won't be around to see you being communications officer. But I'm sure you'll be great - your election campaign was really effective, and very witty.

Chris: Yes, but I'm not sure I want to be Communications officer.

Mary: Having second thoughts? Well, if you're really sure you don't want to do it, I suppose you could resign, then there'll be a bye-election.

Chris: Resign! Why didn't I think of that earlier? Right, lend us a pen Jon, I need to hand in my notice.

Jon: Are you really sure you want to do that, Chris?

Chris: Of course I'm sure. I never wanted to stand in the first place. I *didn't* stand, if we're splitting hairs. This is all your doing. *Remember?*

Jon: I still think that you'd be ideal for it. Just look at what you've done over the last week - you've designed a really eye catching advertising campaign, and plastered the entire university with it. All right, so it didn't have quite the desired effect, but it really got people's attention. Then you went through hustings - admittedly, you talked so fast that no one understood a word that you said, but at least you made the effort. And now you're about to

turn down the first and only definite job offer that you've ever had. They do pay seven thousand, not much, but better than living off the dole while you look for a job. All I'm saying is, you should at least give this a go - there are eight hundred people out there who think that you'd do a good job. Aren't you going to listen to them?

Chris: No, be quiet a moment - 120 a week, times 52 weeks - hey, does this mean that I'll be earning more than you?

Jon: If you want to look at it that way then yes, I suppose you will.

Chris: And if I hate it then I can always just resign! Brilliant! I can't lose! It feels like all my problems have been solved! But I can't help feeling that there's one detail that I've forgotten.

Jon: Could it be that you've still got to pass your finals in slightly less than ten week's time?

Chris: Oh yes, that was it. Bugger.

Closing Music: 'I'm still standing' by Phil Collins

27/12/98

revised 8/2/99

revised a bit more 8/3/99

4500 wds

Episode 2: Freshers' Balls-up

Scene 1

Meeting Room – Chris, Dawn, Danny, Will, Matt, Emma

Chris: OK, let's start with apologies for absence. I've received one, from our esteemed president, who this week is on an NUS course in Brighton called 'Encouraging Team Working' – the idea seems to be 'swan off on a junket to the south coast and leave the rest of your team to do the work'. And, according to the constitution, it falls to me to chair these delightful weekly sabbs' meetings in her absence. Well, since we're going to be deluged with thousands of lovely new freshers next week, I think we should go round the table and see how the arrangements for welcoming them are going – and by that I don't mean changing the bedclothes and tidying the beer bottles off your floor, Will. There is a limit to how welcoming we should be. I'll start - I'm overseeing the tours of campus and issuing NUS cards, and any help you can give with those will be much appreciated. Any questions? No? Good. Right, now Welfare – Emma, how are the welcome packs coming along?

Emma: Oh, just fine. I've been spending the last few days taking envelopes and stuffing them with the welcome guide, the safe sex guide, the free drink and the token alcoholism awareness booklet. Sorry, I mean the free drink token and the alcohol awareness booklet. Then I pop in a fresh condom, in case they get up to any cheeky business in freshers' week!

Chris: Fine. And if you do find yourself a little short of condoms, I've still got mine, which I'm sure will work fine if you blow the cobwebs off it. Right, Will, how are the preparations for the sports clubs friendly welcome games coming along?

Will: Absolutely sorted, Chris – or as our recruitment campaign is called, 'sported'! I've got all the university captains to organise sign-up sheets for kickabouts on the Wednesday – even for the poofy sports like Chess and Netball – and then we'll take them out and get them completely slaughtered immediately afterwards. That'll knock any homesickness right out of them!

Chris: Along with anything they've eaten in the last twenty-four hours. Now Will, do tell your friends not to let them overdo things. Some of these freshers are away from home for the first time, so try not to get them literally slaughtered – we could do without any deaths from alcohol poisoning, at least in the first week. Is that clear?

Will: Yes, I understand. I'll be sure to take them in hand and treat them with my special attention.

Chris: Yes, and another thing: the only reason any pretty young thing fresh out of convent school should find their way into your or any other sports captain bed should be because they've drunk a little too much and can't remember where their room is – and I would expect you to sleep on the floor. There are enough dumb blonds throwing themselves at you as it is without you preying on innocent virgin flesh.

Will (mumbling): Just cos you're not getting any, doesn't mean no one else should.

Chris: All I'm saying is that you shouldn't abuse your position. After freshers' week, they're fair game. Honestly, anyone who signs up for mixed rugby deserves everything they get. Right, Dawn, the women's welcome. I trust this is all in hand?

Dawn: Aye, it will be a celebration of everything that women have achieved at this University. There will be a small exhibition to illustrate this and outline the work of the women's committee over the last thirty years, as well as talks from myself and female academics about the trials and glories of being a woman at this university. And there'll be some home made fairy cakes too.

Will: Oh, we never get cakes for our piss-ups

Emma: That's because if you ate anything it might dilute the effect of the alcohol and be more difficult to mop up when you throw up later.

Dawn: We confidently expect to double the number of new women students attending over last year.

Will: What, you think you might get as many as twelve people along with your promises of free cake? Get away.

Dawn: Yes, well you never seem to get more than eleven people along to play in your silly football team.

Chris: Before we get dragged into yet another argument about each other's abilities, let's turn to Academic Affairs. Matt, what delights have you in store for our nubile new students?

Matt: I think you'll find that nubile means 'of marriageable age', which, whilst technically accurate in most cases, is presumably not the sentiment you intended to convey. After heavy consultation with a focus group of last year's students, the Academic Affairs team has redesigned the popular 'Idiot's guide to getting a degree', by removing the wordy text, and replacing it with a pithier cartoon strip. My favourite element is the guide, Polly the parrot, who is wearing the university scarf. I was thinking of having a word with the people in the marketing office to see if they could make a cuddly toy version to sell in the Union shop.

Chris: Right... you don't feel that this is... dumbing down the process, at all?

Matt: Oh no, not at all. What you've got to appreciate is that with the decline in standards at GCSE and A-level, and the increased number of students carrying on to higher education, the students we receive are, year on year, objectively stupider. And it's not their fault, but we have to deal with the fact that they are, unfortunately, thick.

Chris: OK... any other things planned for freshers' week?

Matt: Yes, we'll also be organising a number of events and workshops to help students prepare for the shift from being at school to being at university. For example, all next week I'll be running a daily workshop on 'How to go to a lecture'.

Chris: Excuse me? Surely all you have to do is sit down and take notes.

Matt: Well, you know that and I know that, but do they know that? I think not. And there are so many other skills that they simply do not have – they need to find their lecture room, and when their lectures are, and turn up on time. All skills which it is vital to master if they want to succeed!

Chris: Well, I managed without any such training, but, well, you're the academic affairs officer... Right, so finally, and perhaps most importantly. Entertainments – now, there's a mini-disco every night in the union, but the big event is the full union Freshers' Ball on Friday night – how's that shaping up, Danny?

Danny: Yeah, everything's under control. It's gonna be kickin'. My DJ crew are gonna mix up a storm of Hip-Hop, Trip-Hop, Skip-Hop and Jazz-Funk-Pyschadelic-Indie-Disco-Soul Fusion. It's gonna be the best night out on campus all week!

Chris: I'm glad to hear it. And what about the live entertainment? Don't tell me it's Dancing Queens, the Transvestite Abba Tribute Band *again* – they've played every freshers' ball since I've been here.

Danny: Nope.

Chris: What, really? I don't believe that! So who have you got instead?

Danny: Hold on, I've got it written down here somewhere (sound of rustling papers) Ah yeah, here they are. It's a band called 'the Suede'.

Chris: What, you've booked Suede? *The Suede*? Really? Isn't that incredibly expensive?

Danny: No, s'alright, their manager said they've played here before and they like the crowd so we only have to pay travelling expenses.

Chris: That's incredible. I'll get my publicity boys working on the posters. We'll be packed to the rafters if people know Suede are playing! OK, that's the end of the meeting. Fellow sabbaticals, go back to your offices and prepare for freshers' week!

Scene 2

Outside the union, Jon and Chris. Gentle rain.

Chris: Does anyone else want to join the tour? Oi, Jon!

Jon: Oh, hiya Chris.

Chris: I'm just about to take a load of freshers off on a tour of campus. Want to come along too?

Jon: I've been a student here for as long as you have, I think I know my way round by now... oh, what the heck. I need a rest after the extended coffee break I've just had.

Chris: OK everyone. We start off outside the students' union building.
[door opens, and rain dies away]

Just inside is the most important place on campus, so if you haven't found it already make a note. It's Mandela's Bar, named in honour of President Mandela of South Africa.

Jon: Actually, the full name is "The Free Nelson Mandela Now, 1982 Bar", which just goes to show how far in touch with events your student union is.

Chris: Oi, who's giving this tour, you or me? Beyond the seating area is the large open space which opens up into a dancefloor called the marketplace, because every Wednesday there's a mini-market here where you can buy "alternative clothing", such as saris and yahmaks, ideal if you didn't go on a gap year but wish you had. Some people say it's actually called the marketplace because it turns into a meat-market on Tuesdays, when we have a night called Dr Mike's Disco Party.

Fresher I: Why is it called Dr Mike's Disco Party?

Chris: I have absolutely no idea. Just above us is another dancefloor and bar, which caters for smaller events, called Thatcher's.

Jon: That's short for "The Margaret Thatcher Memorial Bar", as it was rather optimistically named in 1987.

Chris: And really big events will take over the entire union area - Thatcher's, Mandela's and the Marketplace - like the Freshers' ball tomorrow. You are all coming along, I hope?
(another door)

Now, if we go though here, we reach the sabbs' corridor - that's where the student union sabbaticals work. I'm a sabbatical officer, and I can tell you, we sometimes spend some very late nights working frantically in here to make sure that this union runs smoothly for you.

(there is some distant crowd noise, followed by Will cheering)

Will: Yeeeeeeess! One nil! One nil! One nil! One nil!

Danny: Hey man, keep the noise down. People are trying to sleep.

(a door opens)

Matt: Is anyone here for my introduction to attending lectures?

Chris: No Matt, I'm doing a tour.

Matt: Oh, they must just be too stupid to find my room. (door closes)

Chris: Also in this area of the building are rooms that societies can book for meetings and events, and facilities for desktop publishing and photocopying,

Jon: But the photocopier is always broken...

Chris: ...but if you know what you are doing, you can usually fix it.

(there is the sound of some hammering, kicking and general photocopier abuse, followed by the noise of a photocopier in action)

Jon: Yes kids, become a union sabbatical and you too can spend half your life fixing photocopiers.

(sound of a fire door being pushed open, and the rain begins again)

Chris: ...And as we move outside the Union for the rest of the tour, then immediately opposite we see Senate house. This is where all the administration for the University takes place, and if you are fortunate you'll never have to go in there throughout your entire university career. I certainly didn't.

Jon: In the sixties, a group of students got together, and in the middle of the night hoisted a mini onto the roof of the building as an end of term prank. The authorities didn't really seem to mind much, until it came to actually getting the thing off the roof, when they got a crane to lift it down, and found that the crane couldn't lift it. Eventually they had to saw the car into little bits to get it off. The Vice-Chancellor was most unamused by the whole affair - mainly because it was his wife's car.

Fresher II: Is that true?

Chris: Almost certainly not. But it's a good story. There are stories about most of the buildings here, all of which I've heard told by my friends from other universities about places at their university. Just next to the Senate House is the library, which, like the Senate House, I never actually went in when I was an undergraduate, so I can't tell you much more about it.

Jon: Oh, I went in there a few times.

Chris: You swot

Jon: Actually, it's because they keep a load of back issues of magazines in there, and I used to go in to read old copies of 'Viz' when I had nothing else to do in the first year.

Chris: Then just over this way is the University Centre, a funny building half on stilts which has an expensive bar and a big hall where plays get put on, orchestras perform, and you might even be lucky enough to sit an exam in there. Apparently they used to have rock gigs in there as well, but the architects didn't plan for the weight of the audience, and one night during a Boomtown Rats gig the audience pogoed up and down so hard that the structure sank six inches into the ground, since when they don't have gigs any more.

Jon: I thought that story was about the library, where they forgot to take account of the weight of the books, so they can't put any books on the top floor otherwise the building will collapse.

Chris: No, you're thinking of the swimming pool built on the top floor where they forgot to take account of the weight of the water, so there's an empty swimming pool at the top of the sports centre.

Jon: No, the swimming pool story is that they designed an Olympic sized pool but forgot to take account of the thickness of the tiles, so that it ended up eight millimetres less than Olympic size and now they can't use it for any official competition events.

Fresher I: Are any of these stories you're telling us true?

Chris: Oh, definitely not. But it's our duty as old students to pass on these stories to the next generation, in the hope that one day, through a process of chinese whispers, they might become interesting. I hope you're all taking notes. Now beyond here, we start getting into the mess of departments. You tend to get Humanities over there, sciences over that side, social studies is behind us, and maths is right the way over there, well out of harm's way. It's not really worth touring round them all, you'll get to know your department soon enough. Anybody got questions?

Fresher I: Yes, what's that over there?

Chris (confused): That? Er... that's a car park?

Fresher I: Are there any anecdotes about that?

Chris: Er, no... it's just a car park. (pause) Any other questions?

Fresher II: Do you know where the geography department is?

Chris: Er... no. Why?

Fresher II: I've got a lecture there tomorrow morning. See (sound of rustling paper)

Chris (reading): "Introduction to Geography, Room GS1.31/a". Er... (rustle) why don't you follow the map on the back?

Fresher II: Oh yeah, thanks. Bye then.

Chris: Bye. You know, I think Matt might have a point about the standard of new students.

Jon: What's that?

Chris: Oh, never mind. Do you fancy a quick drink?

Jon: Yes, might as well knock off for the day. How have things been going?

Chris: If I never see another blank NUS card ever again, I won't be sorry. All I've done today and yesterday is issue the damn things. How difficult is it to follow the simple instruction 'remember to bring a passport sized photo', and how many of the little idiots forgot?

(rain stops as they re-enter the student union)

Jon: That reminds me, can I get an NUS card off you? I haven't got round to it yet. Ow! I was only kidding.

Chris: Sorry. So, how are you enjoying freshers' week so far?

Jon: Have I even noticed that it's freshers' week yet? I've been working solidly since Monday morning. I'm a researcher now.

Chris: Yes, how is the PhD going? Got any results yet?

Jon: Chris, a PhD degree usually takes over three years. I've been going for three days. One of which was spent trying to get a photocopying code out of the departmental secretaries. I currently plan to spend the first six months reading up on my research area.

Chris: Six months reading? Wow. Well, just so long as you know what you're doing. I don't even know what I'll be doing next week. I'm too busy thinking about what's happening tomorrow night. Danny keeps saying he's got everything under control for the freshers' ball, but I can't help worrying that something will go wrong. And since the sabbs have got to help set it up and oversee the stewarding, I'll be right in the middle of it.

Jon: No, you're just nervous because you've always been on the receiving end in the past, and you're not comfortable now you know how much effort it takes. It'll all be fine, I promise you. Nothing could possibly go wrong.

(there is a rapid series of shots, followed by the noise of glass breaking and a wall collapsing. Or whatever seems appropriate)

Chris: Danny, keep the noise down!

Danny: Sorry, just testing the PA system with this new happy hardcore CD - "BBC Sound Effects Vol. 2". It's wicked!

Scene 3

Just inside the union, music playing in the background & crowd noise

Chris: Hello, that's five pounds please... thanks. Enjoy the ball. Hello, five pounds please.

Posh Bloke: I say, that's awfully cheap. (waits for response, none comes). You see, the reason I say that is because I went to my brother's May Ball last year, and that was eighty pounds a ticket. He's at Keble, you see.

Chris: Oh yeah? I've got a mate at Keele. It's up by Newcastle isn't it?

Posh: No, Keble - Oxford. It was a very exclusive affair.

Chris: Oh, that explains a lot. Well, it explains the dinner jacket anyway.

Posh: I assumed from the sobriquet 'ball' that it would be black tie, though I don't see many others appropriately dressed. It's not a problem, is it?

Chris: No, not at all. Go on in.

(there is a muffled scuffle)

Will: Get his cummerbund!

Posh: Unhand me!

Chris: Though perhaps I should have warned you about the Rugby club's strictly enforced 'No DJs' policy. (louder) Tell them to go gentle on him, Will.

Will: I'll pass the message on. My turn at the turnstile now. Haven't you pulled yet?

Chris: Funnily enough no. I haven't had the chance.

Will: But taking people's money of them as they come in is an ideal way to chat them up. Hello darling, five quid please – but for you, I'll accept three quid. Ta. Anyway, tell you what, I'll let you into a trick that's guaranteed to work. Come a bit closer. All you've got to do is explain you're a sabbatical officer, and they'll be so overawed at your power that they'll jump straight into bed with you. Don't think of it as an abuse of power, think of it as one of the perks of the job. (to a punter) There you go mate, enjoy the ball.

Chris: Er... yes, thanks for the tip, Will. I'll, er, bear it in mind. But first I need a drink - see you later... pint of IPA please, Liz. Thanks.

Jill: I guess you must have been here a while if you're on first name terms with the bar staff. Hi, my name's Jill, I'm new here. And you are...?

Chris: Oh, hello Jill (to himself) well, I suppose it won't hurt to try it...

Jill: Pardon?

Chris: I said, my name's Chris Hunt, I'm one of the student union sabbaticals, and the reason I know the bar staff is because I'm responsible for hiring them.

Jill: No you're not.

Chris: Excuse me?!

Jill: You're not Chris Hunt... he is!

Chancer: Here's your drink, Jill. Who's your friend?

Jill: He's pretending to be you to try and impress me!

Chancer: Come over here mate...

Chris: What's going on? I'm Chris Hunt!

Chancer: I don't care who you are, I'm well in with this bird and you'd do me a real favour if you just buzz off and let me get on with it. Thanks

Chris: B... B... but... oh, sod it. I ought to check how Danny is getting on with the band.

Scene 4
Backstage

Danny: So you'll be onstage at ten and playing for about an hour...

Chris: Hey Danny, where's the band?

Danny: They're right here, Chris.

Chris: Um... could I have a word Danny?

Danny: Sure.

Chris: In private!

Danny: Yeah, what's the problem?

Chris: It's just that I couldn't help noticing that there's a minor technical problem with the band.

Danny: What's that?

Chris: How do I put this? They aren't Suede!

Danny: Aren't they? Here's the card they gave me.

Chris (reading): "They Swayed: a contemporary folk-rock band available for weddings, bar mitzvahs and other social occasions". You've booked a band called s-w-a-y-e-d, not s-u-d-e, I mean, not s-e-u-... You've booked the wrong Suede, you idiot!

Danny: They're different?

Chris: Yes!

Danny: Oh, sorry. I'm afraid I don't know much about music if it has guitars in it. Is this going to be a problem?

Chris: Well, we've got a union packed full of freshers who are expecting the cutting edge in modern rock, and all we've got to offer them is a bunch of finger-in-the-ear acoustic folk-rockers! We can't let them go on, or we'll be lynched!

Female Singer: Is something the matter?

Chris: Er... no. Or rather, yes. You see... excuse me, I've started to go a little light-headed. I'll just sit down for a minute. (in an absent, distracted fashion) By the way, you all look awfully familiar. Have I seen you before somewhere?

F Singer: Well, we performed at the Cambridge Folk Festival last year...

Chris: Never been, not that it matters

F Singer: ...and you may have caught us at the Eistedfodd.

Chris: Haven't ever been to Wales. Look, it doesn't matter...

Male Singer: Well, we did used to perform under the name of Dancing Queens, the transvestite Abba tribute band

Chris: Oh, that would have been it. Now, to get back to the matter in hand, there's a bit of a problem... no, hold on a moment, I've just had a thought...

Scene 5
In the Union

Chris (on microphone): Hi, I'm afraid that there has been a slight problem. Suede's van has, er, broken down so unfortunately they won't be playing tonight

(boos from the audience)

Chris: However, in their place and at very short notice is Dancing Queens, the *acoustic* Abba tribute band!

(band starts up into an acoustic version of Dancing Queen, and the audience starts cheering)
Fade down

Scene 6
In the union

Danny (on microphone over thumping music): And, as we enter the final hour of our Freshers' ball extravaganza this is Danny your DJ easing you into the early hours with some hardcore house. Go wild!

Chris: Hey Danny, how's it going?

Danny: It's cool... but the room's not. It's so hot in here. Can someone open a window?

Chris: Oh great, the air conditioning must have broken down again. I'll tell the stewards to watch out for people dehydrating... brilliant.

Drunk Girl: Hi, can you play a request for everyone in P Block?

Danny: OK, just a moment... you don't look too well you know. You're looking very pale.

Chris: He's right. Do you want a glass of water?

Drunk Girl: No, really, I'm fi..eugh

(music comes to an sticky halt)

Danny: Oh no, all over my decks!

Chris: She's fainting. Watch out, she's going to hit her head on that...

(fire alarm goes off)

Chris: ...fire alarm.

Danny: Woa, where did the techno fan come from?

Chris: That's not techno, that's the fire alarm.

Danny: Well, it's got a good rhythm

Chris: Whatever, we still have to evacuate the building till the fire brigade come. (into microphone) Everyone please start moving calmly to the exits, don't rush.

Scene 7
Outside the union

Fireman: Well sir, we've checked the building, and the alarm was triggered by an alarm panel, but there's no fire.

Chris: I could have told you that.

Fireman: Well, you can let people back into the building now sir.

Chris: It hardly seems worth it now – we've only got twenty minutes left before we have to shut everything down, Danny's decks are ruined, and most people seem to have... gone over there and sat down in the car park. What's going on?

(he moves toward the crowd, who are singing to an acoustic backing)

Crowd: I feel stupid, and contagious / Here we are now, entertain us

Chris: Emma, what's going on?

Emma: Isn't it heartwarming? The alarm went off just as the band were leaving. Everyone was standing around, so I suggested that we have a bit of a sing-song. They all seem to be enjoying it.

Crowd: And through it alllll, she offers me protection / A lot of love and affection / Whether I'm right or wrong.

(if necessary, just use the live version of Angels from Glastonbury '98 – someone must have a copy)

Chris: Er... fine. I suppose I'd better go and start overseeing the clean-up inside.

Scene 8

Inside the Union

(the sound of glass being swept up)

Jon: Alright Chris. How're things?

Chris: I was right. I knew that this would be a disaster: Suede were never booked, the fire alarm went off, and for the fourth year running, I didn't pull.

Jon: Disaster? Were you at the same ball that I was? Who wants to see professional shoe-gazers like Suede when you can have the uplifting party music of Dancing Queens? And that outdoors climax was inspired – everyone loves a good sing along when you're drunk, and the night air probably cleared a lot of heads and saved a few visits to casualty with heat exhaustion. And as for pulling, well, it's never too late.

Chris: What does that mean? Oi, come back! Don't just wink at me and walk off like that!

Fresher: Hi there, you look knackered!

Chris: Oh hi, yeah, I'm really tired. Er... did you enjoy the ball then?

Fresher: Oh yes – it was fantastic! I had such a good time.

Chris: I see. (to self) Well, second time lucky.

Fresher: Sorry?

Chris: You see, I'm tired because I've been up since seven setting up the ball. My name's Chris, I'm one of the Union Sabbaticals.

Fresher: Oh, get lost.

Chris: Excuse me?

Fresher: You're the second creep who's tried that line with me today. Honestly, did you really think I'd be impressed if you pretended to be a sabbatical? I thought you older students were meant to be mature?

Chris: No, look – I'll show you my NUS gold card! Come back! Oh... bugger.

Closing music: Dancing Queen, by Abba
30/12/98
fiddled with a bit 10/3/99
4500 wds

Episode 3: Crime and Punishment

Scene 1

Chris is in his office, and has dozed off. Jon knocks at the door and enters.

Jon: Can I come in?

Chris: Wh.. what?

Jon: Sleeping on the job again?

Chris: No, I was just, er, resting my head on the desk to get a better, um, perspective on these figures.

Jon: I was just wondering whether you wanted to come down for a quick drink, but from the look of you perhaps you'd better dig yourself a burrow and hibernate for six months.

Chris: No, I should be all right. If we go now, I reckon we'll make it in time for last orders.

Jon: Actually, I do think you should go home and get some rest.

Chris: Why? It's not that late.

Jon: Well, exactly. You're so tired you seem to have lost all sense of time. It's only just gone five 'o'clock. You know, until you started doing this, I had no idea how much work you sabbaticals put in.

Chris: Yes, and before you started your PhD, I had no idea how little work you postgraduates get away with.

Jon: Go home and rest, Chris. Just go home.

Chris: Well, perhaps just a little kip...

Scene 2

Chris' bedroom. Chris is snoring.

The phone starts ringing.

Chris (asleep): Mmm, no Emma...oh. (picking up phone) Wh... hello?

Danny (on phone): Hi, Chris.

Chris: Hello?

Danny: Hi, this is Danny.

Chris: Oh, good morning Danny, what time is it?

Danny: Er... it's just coming up to 9.30. Listen, Chris...

Chris: Oh, no! I've overslept. It's... I'm missing the Health and Safety in Music and Dancing Working Party! I'll be over as soon as I can.

Danny: No, the meeting isn't till tomorrow.

Chris: No, it's definitely on Friday.

Danny: Tomorrow is Friday. Listen, there's something I need...

Chris: What? Oh, I see... it's still Thursday night. Sorry, I've just been a little out of my head recently... I'm such a dope

Danny: Yes, that's kinda what I needed to talk to you about...

Chris: So... if it's Thursday night - still - what are you calling me for?

Danny: I tried everyone else I know, but they didn't answer. You see I really need to talk to someone...

Chris: Well, I'm touched that you think you can turn to me in your time of difficulty, even if I am the last person that you think of. Why don't we meet up and talk it over in person? Where are you calling from?

Danny: I'm in the police station.

Chris: Right, so... what?

Danny: I've been arrested. That's what I was trying to tell you. I need someone to come down and bail me out.

Chris: Bloody great. Oh, I know - this is another bad dream. Ow! Damn, it isn't. OK, I'll be right over.

Scene 3: Police station

Chris: Hi, er, you've got a friend of mine, Danny.

Desk Sergeant: Now, let me see... Daniel Doyle, arrested for Possession with Intent.

Chris: I don't believe it! Drugs... and what was he doing in a tent?

DS: You would not believe how many times I have heard that line, sir.

Chris: What? Oh, sorry. I didn't mean... But I never suspected...

DS: You should really have seen the signs... the blood shot eyes, the disturbed sleeping hours, lack of money, food cravings late at night - all classic signs of the addict

Chris: Yes, but that describes everyone I know

DS: Oh, an entire cartel is it?

Chris: No, they're just... students.

DS: Right, well if we can just fill in this form we can let him get back to his studies while we analyse the substances we found on him and decide whether to press charges. Now, are you his parent or guardian?

Chris: No. I suppose that I'm his.. that I'm... well, that I'm someone who just... knows him. A bit. Is there a box you can tick for that?

DS (sighs): I see this is going to take a long time.

Scene 4

Mandela's bar.

Jon: Hiya Chris, I see you did make it after all. Too late for last orders though.

Chris: Hmm? Oh, I keep forgetting that it's still Thursday. You would not believe the hassle I've just had.

Danny: It would have been quicker if when they asked if I had a police record, you hadn't brought up that Puff Daddy remix. I'll never live down buying it.

Chris: You shouldn't be out in public. Why don't you go to your room?

Jon: And since when have you been his mum?

Chris: Since I had to go down and get him out of prison. I'm now legally responsible for his behaviour although I really hope that my responsibility doesn't extend as far as his taste in shirts.

Jon: Prison? What happened?

Danny: Well. It's like I was just sitting in the pub near where I go to get supplies, and this guy comes up and starts chatting. He mentions that he's feeling a bit tense, so I offer him a tab. He asks me if I've got anymore, and since I'd just bought a load I offered to sell him some. How was I to know? He didn't look like an undercover cop.

Jon: And how many had you bought?

Danny: Oh, just my usual amount... about two hundred.

Chris: Oh Danny... you could get the entire campus high on that much! They're sure to think you are a supplier. What did you need that many for?

Danny: They calm me down. Otherwise I get too excited

Chris: Excited? The most excited I've ever seen you was when the new Brain Drillaz single came out, when you got up at 2pm specially to go out and get it. Anyway, you shouldn't be out.

Danny: But I just feel so awake now.

Jon: Why don't you want Danny to be out? It's no use bolting the stable door after the horse has been arrested.

Chris: Yes, but I don't want the Parrot getting hold of it. They go to print tonight, so we should be all right. But I really don't want to open the paper tomorrow and find the headline 'Sabb Drugs Scandal' plastered all over the news section.

Jon: Oh. I think you should have mentioned that a bit earlier.

Chris: Why?

Jon: Because Nav, the Parrot news editor was just sitting right behind you, and has just jumped up and legged it in the direction of the Parrot offices. I can't lip read, but I think he might have been shouting "Stop the press".

Chris: Oh shit.

Scene 5

Chris' Office. Emma enters.

Emma: Look at this.

Chris: Oh that's bloody great. Front page news.

Emma: They should lock him up and throw away the key.

Chris: That's a bit harsh for a first offence.

Emma: Yes, but... just to save time, why don't you tell me which story you are talking about?

Chris: Stop Press Exclusive: "Sabb Drugs Scandal" Exclusive.

Emma: Yes, I was hoping you'd ignore that tabloid tattle, and focus on the rather more important issues in the main story.

Chris: "Exclusive - Student Attacked in Lunn talks exclusively to the Parrot"

Emma: They're rather fond of the word exclusive, considering they're the only newspaper on campus. But anyway, the point is, we should really be doing something about this - put out some advice and lobby the council to make the area safer. I've managed to contact the girl who was attacked, and she's coming to see me this afternoon. Not that I'm pissed off that she went to the Parrot before contacting Advice and Welfare or anything. I thought you might like to come along too, if you're not too busy.

Chris: I'm very busy right now, but I'll see if I can make it over. See you later.
(door closes)

Chris: Right, what have they printed? "Scandal hangs over the head of disgraced sabbatical Danny Doyle, who was last night arrested for forcing drugs on innocent schoolchildren" Well, that's... what's the word? Completely untrue, that's the one. "The Union President, who is away on a fact finding mission to Bristol University, was not available to comment". Yes, but the rest of us could have set you straight. Oh, I give up with this bloody paper. Where's the crossword?

Scene 6
Emma's Office

Emma: Perhaps you could just tell us in your own words what happened to you.

Student: Well, I explained this all to the guy from the Parrot.

Chris: And was that what they printed?

Student: Well, not quite.

Emma: It happened last week, when you were walking home?

Student: Yes, the thing that upset me most is that I don't know how he could tell that I was a student. I was tired after a long day - 2 lectures and a seminar - when I suddenly noticed a presence behind me, and this voice said "Oi", and he grabbed my scarf.

Chris: That scarf? The one you're wearing?

Student: Yes...

Chris: ...which is the university scarf?

Student: And then he pulled my hooded top over my head so I couldn't see who he was, and pushed me over.

Chris: That wouldn't happen to be the same top that you are wearing now?

Student: Yes...

Chris: The one with the university crest emblazoned prominently on the back? (pause) I think that solves the mystery of how he knew you were a student.

Emma: Shut up, Chris. Carry on, please.

Student: He pushed me over, and said "You bloody students, cluttering the place up, something should be done", and started hitting me. If those two rugby players hadn't been passing and chased him off, I don't know what he might have done.

Emma: And those bruises...?

Student: No, well, they were from when the one of the rugby players tripped over me, but he was very apologetic. Just talking about it brings back painful memories (starts to sob)

Emma: That's all right

Dawn: Here, have a hanky,

Student: Would you excuse me please? (leaves)

Emma: Chris, in future, please exercise just a little bit of tact and try not to take the piss out of victims of attack. Now, it looks like we need to do something about this. I think we should publicise the subsidised attack alarms in the shop, and see if we can get a sensible article in the Parrot about simple things, like not going out alone after dark, and sticking to well-lit areas. Dawn, do you have any suggestions?

Dawn: Yes, well clearly this is a women's issue since women are in much more danger from this kind of menace. I've discussed this with my Women's Group, and we've come up with a solution: Yoga.

Chris (surprised and scornful): Yoga?

Dawn: Yes, as well as the physical threat, all too often the mental threat is overlooked. The mental anguish caused by the worry of attack is not to be scoffed at, and so I'll be starting weekly classes for women to reach their full potential through the relaxing exercises of Yoga.

Chris: Now, I don't like to sound like Mr Negative, but I can't help questioning the, er, efficacy of that particular scheme.

Dawn: Sorry?

Chris: Well, I'm trying to be tactful, but I just think that it's... the biggest pile of crap that I've ever heard of. Wouldn't it be better to offer self-defence classes? Judo, karate, anything but... yoga?

Dawn: Look, do I tell you how you should do your job?

Chris: Well, no. Like most people, you slag off what I do, but you never tell me what I should be doing instead.

Emma: I don't think this is a very productive discussion.

Dawn: Well, I'm off to see my Yogi, and we'll see who's right. (Dawn leaves)

Chris: Yogi? She might as well call in Yogi Bear. You don't seriously think that Yoga would be helpful.

Emma: Of course not, I think that the idea is completely barking. But you've got to learn to hold back from saying what you think sometimes. It doesn't make any difference, like everything else she does, that idea will never come to anything. Much as I like Dawn, she couldn't organise a piss up in a brewery.

Chris: That's a bit of a cliché.

Emma: No, I meant that when she was secretary of the real ale society, she tried to organise a visit and tasting session at a local brewery, but only three people turned up, the minibus broke down on the way, and the society lost about three hundred quid on the deal. Talking of beer, when was the last time you had a drink?

Chris: Last night, why?

Emma: No, I mean when was the last time you got off campus and went for a drink, rather than stumbled out of your office into Mandela's to catch last orders?

Chris: Gosh, it must have been back in September... or August.

Emma: I was thinking that we should all get off campus a bit more often. We live on campus, work on campus, eat on campus – we might just as well be in prison. Which is good news for Danny, he won't notice the difference when they lock him up, but it's not so good for the rest of us. A bunch of us were planning to make a regular thing of getting away, just going to a pub and forgetting about work. You should come along. Next Tuesday, at the Cockney Face?

Chris: Yeah, why not?

Scene 7

The Cockney Face pub. Chris enters.

Emma: Hi Chris, good that you could make it.

Chris: Yes, when you said that it would be a good idea to get off campus and get away from work, I didn't realise that the rest of the Union would be doing the same thing. It seems like half the Exec's here.

Dawn: Well, Emma did invite everyone along quite forcefully.

Danny (livelier than usual): Yeah, this is actually item twelve on today's Exec meeting agenda.

Chris: Danny, you know that since the police confiscated your supply, you've been a lot more lively. It's as if there used to be this weight on your shoulders, which has been lifted off.

Danny: Yeah, it's really horrible. I used to be able to shrug off the problems of the world, not care about what it's like, but since I came off them it's like everything is real.

Chris: Everything **is** real.

Danny: Yeah, I know. It's horrible.

Dawn: You should come along to my 'Personal growth and spiritual development through Yoga' sessions, they really put you in touch with your Tao. Or is it your zeitgeist?

Chris: I thought you wanted to make the Yoga for women only?

Dawn: Yes, but there's something in the Union constitution which says I can't do that.

Chris: The Equal Opportunities Policy?

Dawn: Yes, it's a real pain. I wish I could get rid of that. I might try to at the General Meeting next term.

Chris: That's ridiculous! Don't you realise what the Equal Opps policy is there for?

Dawn: Well, it seems mainly to get in the way of things that I want to do.

Chris: But don't you see... we need an equal opps policy to stamp out discrimination. Don't you know that only 10% of lecturers are women? That female students are twice as likely to fail as their male counterparts?

Dawn: Yeah, yeah, whatever.

Chris: Whatever? These are the issues that you are supposed to be addressing as women's officer!

Dawn: And what would you know about that? How can you possibly comment on that sort of thing when you are, without doubt...

Chris: A man? So you're saying that just because I'm a bloke I can't have an opinion on these issues?

Dawn: Well, if your attitude is to patronise us by repeating negative statistics then I don't think I want to hear your opinion.

Chris: Oh, for goodness sakes, I came to the pub to get away from work, not to get into a row about what it is that we are supposed to do. I can't be bothered with this.

Nav: So, dissent in the ranks?

Chris: What do you want Nav? Haven't you got a paper to edit?

Nav: I'm just out for a quiet drink before I go in for the night. Looking for stories. Looks like I might have found one: "Sexist Sabb says 'No need for Women's Officer'"

Chris: You're twisting my words. No, that's not right, I didn't even use any of those words, that's simply not what I said. Who do you think you are? You can't go on printing lies! You're lucky we didn't complain about that crap you printed about Danny last week.

Nav: What, he was arrested for possession, wasn't he? You can't deny that. And anyway, what are you going to do about it if we do get things wrong?

Chris: It's a pity you can't live up to your name - I thought parrots were supposed to repeat what was said to them exactly. Instead you seem to think you can make up whatever suits you. Look, the Parrot is funded by the Union...

Nav: But editorially independent...

Chris: Unfortunately so, but we can bring a complaint against you to the Union Executive committee.

Nav: And do what? Censure me? Oh, I'm quaking in my boots.

Chris: Well, if you're going to be like that, I suppose we could sue you for the libellous articles you print if you don't sort things out.

Nav: Yeah, that would be a good idea. Use Union funds to pay for a libel action against another part of the Union body. I'm sure we'd give that very fair and balanced coverage. Face it, Hunt, we print what we like, and there's nothing you can do to stop us.

Chris: This isn't the time to have an argument. I think I need to pop outside before I'm moved to violence.

Nav: Moved to violence? Won't you have to have a vote before you can do that?

(Chris pushes his way out of the pub to let off steam)

Chris: Oh, bloody students! I want to wring their necks!

Attacker: Tell me about it.

Chris: Oh, excuse me, I didn't see you there, lurking... er, standing in the shadows.

Attacker: Don't apologise. I hate those bloody students. This used to be a really nice area till that University started expanding. Then suddenly house prices are rising because students want to live here, cluttering the place up. You used to be able to have a quiet drink in there, until someone decided it was a student pub, and it filled up with those jabbering idiots. You'd think that if they were here to study they'd have something sensible to say, but oh no, it's all bragging about how little work they've done, and how much they've drunk. Swanning about the place with their dyed hair, painted nails and "outrageous" clothes, then in three year's time they'll leave this place without so much as a thank you, cut their hair, put on a suit and get a well paid job in the city, leaving the honest people, people like me who pay their taxes to fund their three year holiday to deal with another load of pain-in-the-arse layabouts.

Chris: Um... I can see that you might be annoyed.

Attacker: There's a bunch of them living next door to me. Half the houses in our street have got them in. They're like vermin. And most nights they're out there, shouting and screaming, keeping me awake at night, knocking the bins over, never worrying about the consequences of their actions. And what's worse is that they don't have to pay council tax - I'm the one who ends up having to pay for the binmen to come and clear up their mess.

Chris (trying to walk away): Yes, I suppose they can be irritating at times.

Attacker: It's enough to make you want to give them a good kicking, just to get the anger out of yourself. Look, here comes one now. Let's show him how we feel.

Nav: Chris, I just wanted to apologise... oof! Ow!
(the attacker has started to beat him up)

Nav (in pain): I didn't mean it!

Chris (unable to act): Oi, leave him alone! He's a prat but he doesn't deserve that!

Dawn (coming out the pub): What's going on?

Attacker: It's another one.

Chris: Dawn, this is the guy that's been attacking students. Get help!

Attacker: Not so fast!

Dawn: Don't touch me! I'm warning you!

Attacker: What? Ieeeeee! Aaaaaaagh!

Nav (breathless): What's she doing?

Chris (doubtful): It looks like she's using some kind of... Yoga... move on him.

Attacker: Uh. (thud)

Dawn (excited): There you go. I told you that Yoga was the answer.

Chris: I thought yoga was all about breathing, stretching and pretending to be a tree.

Dawn: Oh, it is. But after the class, the instructor showed me a few, um, unorthodox moves.

Danny: What's going on here?

Chris: Well, Dawn seems to have floored the bloke who's been beating up students, and I... I think I'm about to faint. All this excitement is too much.

Danny: Here, try one of these 'D's. They calm me down.

Chris: Danny! I thought you were off those. I'm disappointed in you.

Nav: "Ents officer back on drugs scandal – exclusive!"

Chris: Piss off, Nav, this is private business. Danny, how could you? Where did you get them?

Danny: Oh, you know, my usual supplier, Boots.

Chris: Right, who is this Boots bloke? I want to have a word with him, about his unscrupulous manipulation of the innocent. Something should be done about these corrupters of our youth!

Danny: Hey, less of that. I'm not your youth. And Boots isn't a bloke, it's a shop.

Chris: What, as in Boots the Chemist? This conspiracy goes deeper than I suspected!

Danny: Yeah, look man. It's my D's – each one comes with a little 'D' written on it.

Chris: Hold on, let's see that packet. "Drowsasyl – clinically proven sleeping tablets. Guaranteed to induce sleep for even the worst sufferers of insomnia. Do not exceed maximum dose of two tablets per day. Warning: may cause drowsiness."

Danny: They're great. I usually have one after each meal. They make things less complicated.

Chris: So, what you are saying is that you were arrested for possession of perfectly legal, over the counter, sleeping pills?

Danny: I suppose that's right.

Chris: Danny Doyle, you are a grade one prat! I was so worried that you'd be put in prison for dealing drugs, and all you did was offer a bloke in a pub something which would make

sure he gets his eight hours that night. They had you at the police station for five hours, why didn't you say something?

Danny: Well, it all happened so fast...

Chris: I'm so angry with you!

Danny: Here, have a D, it'll calm you down.

Chris (genuinely): Thanks.

Scene 8

Chris' Office

Chris: We really have to do something about the Parrot. It's not right that I should be sat here on Friday morning again, worrying what they'll print about us this week. Their problem is that they have too much power without any responsibility.

Emma: Oh come on, they're only a student newspaper, written by volunteers. You can't expect them to uphold the same standards as professional newspapers.

Chris: Yes but there are some basic standards anyone can follow like, oh I don't know - choosing to print the facts rather than whatever the editor thinks will get the most people to read it. I've hardly slept since Tuesday, worrying that it's going to be "Scandal: Hunt implicated in student attacks - exclusive". Even Danny's tablets haven't helped.

Emma: You're being a bit one sided on this - it's not as if most students believe what they read in the Parrot. It's not as if most students read the Parrot. Most of them only look at the sports reports and the gossip column. Is it any surprise that the editor might resort to tabloid tactics to increase his readership?

Chris: Yes, but a lot of people do believe everything they read in it. I had to put up with people saying that I looked young for my age for weeks until I found out that they'd misprinted my age as 39 in one of their articles. As the only source of news on campus, they should be more careful.

Emma: But it's not as if you couldn't do something about it.

Chris: What? The editor laughs in my face every time I threaten anything.

Emma: I meant that you could come up with an alternative to the Parrot. You could restart the Student Union newsletter. You've got the resources here, and you are the communications officer - so communicate!

Chris: That's not a bad idea. Admittedly, the newsletter has folded within six months of being launched five times in the last decade, but it would at least give us the right of reply... yes, I think that might be a good idea.

Matt (entering): I've got the new edition of the parrot hot off the presses here. I don't know what you've been worrying about, Chris, it seems fine to me.

Chris: Phew!

Matt: Yes, there's hardly any spelling mistakes on the front page, and you can almost believe that English is the author's first language. Though the grammar and structure leave an awful lot to be desired, and...

Chris: Give that here and let me see! Hmm. "Have-a-go hero Hunt thwarts thug. Union Sabbatical Chris Hunt went undercover to flush out the scum who has been preying on students in Lunn". Well, it's not accurate, but at least it sounds favourable. It goes on: "Our intrepid News Editor gives an exclusive personal account of how the villain was brought to justice. 'On Tuesday night outside the Cockney Face I came face to face with the evil face of evil, a face whose evil deeds have cast a stain on the good face of the good people of Lunn. As I emerged from the pub I thought I was about to become the next statistic of violence against students as an evil shape hove from the shadows. But my salvation arrived in the nick of time, in the shape of Sabbatical Chris Hunt who, in a carefully planned operation with avenging angel Dawn Johnson brought the scoundrel to justice.'" It goes on like this for the rest of the page. I don't understand. I mean, I expected it to have no relation to the truth, but why is he making me sound as if I knew what I was doing?

Emma: Well, he's a journalist, and he's just going for the most interesting story. You've got to admit, it does make it sound a lot more exciting than it really was. Is there any other news in there?

Chris (turning pages): Let's see. Bottom of page five: "Police Drop Charges. Police have dropped charges against Danny Doyle, after laboratory tests on seized substances proved inconclusive." Inconclusive? That's rich, considering.

Matt: Speak of the devil...

Danny (entering): Hi guys! What's the party for?

Chris: Hi, Danny. Glad to hear that the police aren't pressing charges. Doesn't it speak volumes about our team communication that I find this out by reading it in the Parrot?

Danny: Yeah, well they said they couldn't really prosecute me for dealing in unprohibited substances. They did think about charging me with fraud, but they decided against it.

Chris: Well, that's a relief.

Danny: Yeah, and it's a good thing that I didn't have any speed on me when they nicked me, otherwise I would really have been in trouble.

Closing music: Sorted for Es and Whizz, Pulp
12/4/99
fiddled a little: 11/10/99
4600 wds

Cold Snap

Scene 1

Near the North Pole

[Cold wind is rushing past]

Emma: Come on Chris, we're almost at the North Pole!

Chris: I'm trying, but it's so hard to move...

Emma: Only fifty metres more! I'll kiss you when we get there!

Chris: I can't move -- the snow's too deep.

[A deep rumbling noise]

Emma: Watch out! It's a herd of snow hippos!

Chris: Nooooo!

[the rumbling noise speeds up and becomes higher, till it is recognisable as the insistent bleeping of an alarm clock]

Chris: Damn! It was just a dream. [he yawns and gets up] Aah! It's so cold! And worse than that, I've started talking to myself!

Scene 2

Chris' office

[There is a rattling sound. The door opens]

Emma: Oh, hi Chris. Are you using a typewriter in here?

Chris: No, it's my teeth chattering with the cold.

[The rattling continues, and then there is a bell sound]

Chris: Oh great, someone's sent me an email.

Emma: Listen Chris, we have to talk.

Chris: Yes Emma, there's been something I've been meaning to ask you for a while now...

Emma: Well, it can wait a bit longer then. We need to do something about the heating situation.

Chris: What about it?

Emma: We need to have one. It's five below zero outside, and not a single radiator on campus has been switched on. I'm currently using mine as a drinks cooler. It's so cold that we're leaving the fridge in our kitchen open to heat it up. We've got to do something about it. We need to lobby the university to switch the heating on, and we need to launch a publicity campaign to tell people how to keep warm when they inevitably ignore our pleas and consign us to freeze to death.

Chris: Aren't the students here clever enough to be able to work out how to keep warm themselves?

Emma: Yes, except that the accommodation office has announced a blanket ban...

Chris: But that's ridiculous! They can't ban blankets! That's draconian! I've don't know much about Draconia, but it's definitely draconian! It's an infringement of our human rights! We won't let them get away with this! They can take our lives, but they will never take our blankets! We will fight them in the accommodation office! We will fight them in the residences! We will fight them on the beaches, even if that means having to drive two hundred miles to the coast! And we will never, never surrend... er, what are you looking at me like that for?

Emma: Would you let me finish? As I was saying, they've announced a blanket ban on electric heaters. Apparently in confined spaces, like campus rooms, they constitute a fire hazard.

Chris: Well, um, that's still quite bad, isn't it? We can still fight them on the beach towels, can't we?

Emma: The first thing to do is to set up a meeting with the top dog.

Chris: Shouldn't we take this to University Council?

Emma: Chris, the University council is so slow that by the time we even got the issue on the agenda, it would be July, and they'd reject it as irrelevant. Even if they did agree with us, the most they would do would be to set up a working party to investigate the issue, which would take two years to produce a report on the matter, which would then go back to University council, which would then consider the conclusions and then, if we were lucky, they might just set up a sub-group to work on a feasibility study for implementing the recommendations, if any.

Chris: So you're saying that you don't think we should go to University Council?

Emma: The only way to get anything done in this university is to go straight to the guy in charge.

Chris: You mean, the chancellor?

Emma: Oh please, he's just a titular head.

Chris: That's no way to talk about the honourable Sir Brian Fillett!

Emma: A titular head -- it means that he is only in charge in name. His only contact with the university is when he comes to the graduation ceremony to hand out two thousand tatty certificates and shake two thousand sweaty hands, and say "Well Done" two thousand times.

Chris: So who is in charge?

Emma: Well, in this case there are three relevant people. There's the vice chancellor who, before you ask, is not the chancellor in charge of vice, but is the one who takes over when the Chancellor isn't around, which is all the time. Except that he complains that he is too busy so he won't get involved in problems that have anything to do with students.

Chris: This is a university, right? Surely everything that goes on has to do with students.

Emma: You would have thought, wouldn't you? The next person is the head of accommodation services. Unfortunately, she's a complete bitch, and since she made the decision to keep the heating switched off to save money, I don't think that we can win there. The last person is the senior tutor, John Thomas. What are you sniggering about?

Chris: Oh, nothing. But what have our problems got to do with the senior tutor? Other than the fact that student's work will suffer if they freeze to death overnight.

Emma: Because John -- or "Call Me John", as he's known -- you'll find out why -- is the complete opposite of the vice-chancellor. He gets involved in everything that goes on, whether it's anything to do with him or not. If there's a pie on campus, he has a finger in it.

Chris: Doesn't that imply that there are at most ten things going on at any one time? Don't you think that's a bit of an underestimate?

Emma: Shut up Chris. The point is, he likes to be part of the action, and most of all, he wants everyone to love him. It's his one weakness. He wants all the students to think that they can come to him, as a friend, if they have any problems. It's quite pathetic, really.

Chris: So what do you need me for?

Emma: I've arranged for us to see him this afternoon. He likes you.

Chris: But I've never met him.

Emma: Yes, but he likes what you're doing, with the new magazine and poster campaigns. I've argued with him too many times; it would be good to have someone there to win his trust.

Chris: Oh, you mean like a "good cop, bad cop" routine.

Emma: I was thinking more along the lines of "experienced sabbatical, slightly pathetic sabbatical", but you can think of it your way if you like. Besides, I think it would be good for you to get to know the important people -- you should meet the big nobs.

Chris: So you're saying that John Thomas is a big nob?

Emma: I suppose so. What are you sniggering about now?

[knock on the door]

Jon: Oh, are you two hard at it?

Emma: No, come on in Jon. I was just going. I'll grab you later this afternoon Chris.

[door closes]

Jon: Oh yes?

Chris: It's not like that. I wish it was, but it's not like that.

Jon: You still fancy her?

Chris: "Fancy" is too crude a word for the elevated feeling I harbour for Emma, but yes, I fancy the pants off her.

Jon: That's bad. You've got to do something about it. You've got to tell her how you feel. You can't keep simpering over her like this, it's not healthy. And besides, if you don't act soon, she's going to start thinking that you are cute.

Chris: That's good, isn't it?

Jon: No, it's not good. It's not good at all. If she thinks you're cute then it means that she doesn't see you as a potential lover, it means that she sees you more as a little furry puppy: a bit silly, fun to play with, but nothing more.

Chris: Oh, rub it in why don't you.

[Door opens]

Matt: Sorry, I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

Chris: No Matt, I was just pouring my heart out to Jon here. I'm sure what you have to say is far more important.

Matt: You're not still going on about Emma? Aren't you over her yet?

Chris: How do you know about that?!

Matt: Oh, come on. Everyone knows that you fancy her. It's obvious. Whenever she walks into the room, you give a little sigh, and look at her with big eyes like a puppy-dog.

Jon: See?

Chris: Everyone knows?

Matt: Yes. They've got a sweepstake in the Parrot office on when you two will get together, though I have to say that most of the money is currently going on the "hell freezes over" timescale. Well, everyone except Emma knows, of course.

Chris: Why doesn't she know?

Jon: Well, could it be related to the fact that [loudly] you haven't told her?

Chris: You know, sometimes I stand here at my door, and look through the little window onto the corridor, and I think to myself... quick! Get under the desk!

Matt: That's a strange thing to be thinking. Are you seeing a psychiatrist?

Chris: No, I mean it. Hide under the desk.

Jon: Why have switched the light out?

Chris: Quiet! It's the swuss!

Jon: Who?

Chris: Ssh!

Che [opening the door]: Chris? Chris? Oh, why aren't you in? I'll just leave a note... Chris? What are you doing down there?

Chris [clearing his throat]: Oh, er, hello Che. I, er, didn't see you there.

Ché: Why were you hiding under the desk?

Chris: No, no, this is, this is a new energy saving incentive. We switch the lights off and huddle under the desks, to trap the heat. It could save the student union thousands.

Che: If you're so keen on saving energy, why have you left your computer switched on and

doing nothing? Anyway, I have to talk to you on a subject of the utmost importance.

Matt: Would you excuse me? I have some very important things that need doing. Now. Things. Excuse me.

Che [shouting after him]: This affects you too! [to Chris] This affects all of us! It's about the current cold spell. My members are freezing in bed at night!

Jon: Have you tried wearing extra underwear?

Chris: Jon, this is Che. Che is from the Students and Workers United through Socialism Society, or SWUSS for short. Che, this is Jon from...

Jon: From the Department of Applied Maths and Physics, or DAMP for short.

Chris: And as for the cold weather, that's under control. I'm going to see the Senior Tutor to get the heating sorted out this afternoon.

Che: That's not good enough!

Chris: It's not?

Che: No, we need direct action! We've sat down and let them screw us over for too long.

Jon: Can you be screwed over while you're sitting down?

Che: The time has come for the masses to rise up together in defiance of these so-called authorities. Students of the world, Unite! We demand...

Che & Chris together: An occupation!

Che: How did you know that?

Chris: Because every week, without fail, you come to my office, and demand an occupation. Generally, it's just after you've read something in the Parrot that has ticked you off. This obsession with having an occupation is unhealthy. It's like some kind of...

Jon: Preoccupation?

Chris: Exactly.

Che: An occupation is the most direct way of sending a message to our tyrannical rulers. It's when the people unite in a show of support. We storm the Bastille, which in this case happens to be the senate house. And we occupy it.

Jon: Occupy it?

Che: Yes, we all sit down in it, and occupy it.

Jon: And then what?

Che: And then what what?

Jon: And what do you do next?

Che: Well, we just... keep occupying until the self-styled powers that be capitulate and give in to our demands.

Jon: And what if they don't?

Che: Stop being so negative, you tool of oppression!

Chris: Don't call my friend a tool!

Che: Occupation was a very powerful weapon in the fight against tyranny in the seventies.

Jon: But there hasn't been an occupation here since the seventies!

Che: And that's exactly why we need one now. I have to hand in an essay. But I'll be back, and we will have our occupation!

[the door slams behind him]

Jon: That was intense. Now I understand why you were trying to avoid him. Why does he come and bother you?

Chris: Well, the President is away this week in London to judge some student media awards, so he's picking on everyone else. But I do seem to get more than my fair share of him. I think I must just attract idiots like him. Students and workers, indeed. What have students got in common with people who work? It's more like students and wankers...

Jon: Did you think of that?

Chris: No, actually it's something that Matt says. Hey, how come you seem to know so much about the history of occupations all of a sudden?

Jon: Well, that's related to what I came to talk to you about, in a roundabout kind of way.

Chris: Go on. How are things at the cutting edge of mathematical research?

Jon: Oh, not good. I can't prove that my transforms are monotone. My percolations keep shooting off to infinity.

Chris: You must be doing something right. I did Mathematics for three years, and I've got no idea what you're talking about.

Jon: No, no, it's quite basic really.

Chris: Oh thanks.

Jon: I just don't seem to be getting anywhere. It's so frustrating. And I just don't seem to be able to get any work done in the department, so I go to the library. And when I'm in the library, things aren't any better, so instead of working, I end up reading through old copies of the campus newspaper.

Chris: Let me take your temperature. You must be ill.

Jon: No, it's quite interesting to see how things used to be. For example, did you know that in 1986, the Parrot had journalistic principles? They actually printed a news article that was based on an objective summary of the facts, rather than the writer's personal agenda? Or that in 1992 they printed a whole issue without a single spelling mistake in one of the headlines? Anyway, that's where I read about how there haven't been any occupations for decades. It takes my mind off how badly my research is going.

Chris: Come on, it's early days yet. I've got confidence in you, Jon. I know you'll pull things together.

Jon: Yes, everyone seems to have confidence in me. That in itself puts the pressure on me. And the one person that matters doesn't have that confidence – me.

Chris [after a pause]: You know, that's almost profound.

Scene 3

Inside the Senate House.

Chris: Hi there, I've got an appointment to see Dr Thomas.

Secretary: Just take a seat please.

Chris: Gosh, it's warm in here, isn't it?

Secretary: Yes, well, there are health and safety regulations that demand that we keep the temperature within acceptable ranges in the workplace.

Chris: Really? It's very cold in our offices.

Secretary: The student union is not considered a workplace.

Chris: Oh.

Emma: Hi Chris, are you ready?

Chris: Ahhh (a forlorn sigh)

Emma: Right, you haven't met Thomas before, but do you want to play the Communadee game? I'll bet that he says "communadee" at least eight times.

Chris: What's 'communadee'?

Emma: You'll see. Here he is.

John Thomas: Emma, and you must be Chris. Welcome. Come and take a seat in my office.

Chris: Pleased to meet you Dr Thomas.

Thomas: Call me John.

Emma: John, we have to talk to you about this cold weather. The campus accommodation is freezing. People are going to get ill.

Thomas: Mmm. Mmm.

Chris: How are students supposed to study if it's too cold to even hold a pen?

Thomas: Mmm. Mmm.

Emma: Something has to be done.

Thomas: Mmm. Mmm.

Chris: Dr Thomas?

Thomas: Call me John. Mmm. Mmm. (pause) Mmm. I'm sorry, but I can't help you.

Emma: What?

Thomas: You see, we live in a communadee. And as members of a communadee we have to act with responsabiladee. The halls of residence are heated by very old boilers, which get switched on at the end of November, and switched off in February. It's only the start of November. We can't just put these boilers on and off every time it gets a bit nippy outside. That would be an act of great irresponsibilidee to the communadee.

Chris: A bit nippy? It's so cold that my eyeballs are starting to freeze solid. Think about the students!

Thomas: Mmm. Mmm. No, I **am** thinking about the whole communadee. These boilers consume a lot of fuel, and it's very expensive just to switch them on for a short while. Someone has to pay for that. We have to pay for that. You, me, the whole communadee. And then rents will rise. And that hurts everybody, not just those who feel a bit cold for a few days.

Chris: That's ridiculous!

Thomas: I've made up my mind.

Emma: Thank you for your time. We have to go now.

(door closes behind them)

Chris: Why did you give up so easily?

Emma: Something I forgot to say about Johnny is that he is extremely stubborn. Once he makes up his mind, there's no changing it. All that we could have achieved by arguing would be listening to him say "communadee" another dozen times. We'll have to find some other way of winning this fight.

Chris: Oh, by the way, Emma, do you want to...

Emma: It'll have to wait. I've got a welfare services provision of prophylactic materials working party meeting to get to, and a rep for the company is going to give us a demonstration. Bye!

Scene Four
Mandela's Bar

Chris: I can't believe that you are wearing that!

Will: What? It's perfectly good sporting gear.

Chris: It's below freezing and you're wearing shorts and a vest?

Will: So? What, are my cods hanging out? No. So what are you complaining about?

Chris: I just don't understand how you aren't cold. I suppose you do have a lot of rather unsightly body hair to insulate you, but even so...

Will: It's good healthy exercise, that's the secret. Grown men basking in each other's body heat. Sweat pouring as heads lock together in the scrum. The heat of battle, the warmth of teamwork. You should try it. Come on, I'll race you to the sports centre and back.

Chris: Um, actually, OK, I will.

Will: Really? OK then, go! [fading out] And Foster takes the lead, storming off ahead...

Chris: Well, that should get rid of him for half an hour.

Jon: Hi Chris, sorry I'm late. I got caught up with something I was reading in the library.

Chris: What, you've managed to get working again?

Jon: Er, not quite. Take a look at this, I made a copy.

Chris: What is it?

Jon: It's the front page of the Parrot from 1973.

Chris: "Mini on senate house roof. Vice-chancellor baffled."

Jon: No, not that one.

Chris: "Senate house occupation enters seventh week. SWUSS claims a victory; secretaries claim they are starting to get in the way."

Jon: No, give it back here. Look. "Heating crisis ended. Student Union strikes deal with Senate House to alleviate cold conditions."

Chris: Well, I am amazed. The parrot using a word like "alleviate"? I would never have believed it if you hadn't shown me.

Jon: Look at the accompanying photo.

Chris: "Student union president John Thomas declares 'this is a victory for the whole community'" Oh my goodness! The sly old devil! He never said that he was once one of us! Thanks Jon. This could be the last piece of ammunition that I need break the donkey's back! I'll go to see him right away.

Will (out of breath): Ninety seven seconds! A new world record! Hey, how did Chris get back here before me?

Scene Six
Senior Tutor's Office

Thomas: Well Chris, what can I do for you today?

Chris: It's about the heating again.

Thomas: I've already told you, there's nothing I can do.

Chris: Yes, well, maybe there is. I've done some reasearch into the mechanics of these old boilers, and it turns out that if they fall below freezing, then they can break. In the long run, it's cheaper to put them on during cold weather than to pay for the maintenance if you don't.

Thomas: That's very impressive, but I'm still not sure that...

Chris: Let me quote you something: "It's vital for the university to work with its members to build a strong comunadee... sorry, community... where everyone can flourish. They have to put themselves in our place, to see things from our perspective."

Thomas: I'm not sure it's as simple as all that... who are you quoting?

Chris: You. You said that in 1973, when you were in my place. And now I'd like you to put yourself in my place. I want you to stay in my room tonight, to see how cold it gets, so you can see it from our perspective.

Thomas: I'm sorry?

Chris: Listen to what you said twenty five years ago. Don't just sit here in your comfortable office, get involved, find out what it's really like.

Thomas: Well, it's an interesting idea, but I don't know if I can do that for you.

Chris: Don't do it for me, **John**. Do it for the community!

Thomas: Perhaps just this once. But don't expect me to change my mind just like that.

Scene Seven
Chris' office

Jon: So how long did he last?

Chris: About forty minutes. Then he got worried because he couldn't feel his toes any longer, so he called me and agreed to switch the heating on as soon as he had enough feeling in his fingers to be able to sign the documents.

[a deep metallic rumbling begins and clunks on in the background]

Chris: That sounds like it's starting now. He also told me something very interesting. He said that he admired my realistic approach to the subject. He said that he wished his son could be more like me.

Jon: He has a son?

Chris: Oh yes, he does indeed.

Che (opening the door and then knocking): There you are Chris. We are demanding an occupation right now!

Chris: You're too late. We've already arranged for the heating to be switched on.

Che (slightly put off by this): Well, we still demand an occupation!

Chris: What for?

Che: Well, just, because, that's why.

Chris: I don't think so. You see, I've found out something very interesting about you. I know who your father is, Luke.

Jon: Luke?

Chris: Yes, you don't think anyone would seriously name their son Che? It's a pseudonym. Che's real name is Luke Thomas. Son of John Thomas, the Senior Tutor.

Che: Yeah, So?

Chris: So while you are giving us sob stories about how your poor members are suffering the cold, you go home every night to your posh little centrally heated mansion with mummy and daddy. You're a hypocrite Luke. You talk about wanting an occupation now, but as soon as

you graduate, the only occupation you'll be interested in is the kind that pays fifty thousand a year. Go on, get out of my office and stop wasting my time!

Che: You can't talk to me like that. Only one person tells me to get out of his office and stop wasting his time, and that's my father. You are not my father! (pause) Now I'm leaving. But I was going anyway!

(slam)

Jon: That told him. So what else is new?

Chris: I think I might be in with a chance with Emma. She's invited me back to her room this afternoon.

Jon: Oh yeah? You go girlfriend!

Chris: What?

Jon: Sorry, I don't know what came over me. I don't think skipping work to watch Jerry Springer is helping either.

Scene Seven
Emma's room.

(Chris knocks at the door. Emma opens it. Reggae music & voices)

Chris: (sigh)

Emma: Hi Chris, come in.

Chris: Oh, I didn't realise that this was a party.

Emma: But I see that you brought a bottle anyway. Red wine, classy. I'll put it with the others.

Chris: Gosh, it's hot in here.

Emma: Yes, it seems like there are only two possible temperatures in these rooms: life-threateningly cold, or scaldingly hot. Here, let me take your coat. Oh, and your jumper too. And your shirt. And your t-shirt. And your other t-shirt.

Chris: I have to wrap up warm when I'm outside.

Emma: So I see. You know, I haven't noticed this before, but seeing you standing here in your vest makes me realise that you are, well...

Chris: Go on.

Emma: You're quite cute, you know.

Chris: Bugger.

Closing music: No woman, no cry by Bob Marley
24 October 99
4200 wds

Sexual Politics

Scene 1

Chris' Office

Jon: So, let me get this clear. The one girl you fancy more than anyone in the whole world is...?

Chris: (with a severe hangover) Emma.

Jon: And the one girl who you could not fancy less in the whole world is...?

Chris: Dawn. Ow. Could you pass the alka-seltzer? It's kept in the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet.

Jon: Now, the girl whose party you turned up at last night all ready to ask her out was...?

Chris: Emma. (plink plink fizz)

Jon: But the girl you spent half an hour snogging in the corner of Emma's room was...?

Chris: Do I have to say it?

Jon: Was...?

Chris: Dawn. Oh! Why am I such a cretin?

Jon: That was going to be my next question.

Chris: Oh, what possessed me to do it? Well, I know what possessed me – it was alcohol. Now I know why they say you shouldn't mix your drinks – beer and then wine and then vodka – that must be the foulest cocktail ever mixed. I drank two pints of it! And I was talking to Dawn, and because we were so drunk, she didn't seem half so annoying as usual. No, more than that, half as annoying would still be unbearable. And then... then we... I... oh, what have I done? And just when I thought my life couldn't get any worse...

Dawn (opening door): Morning Jon. (with meaning) Morning Chris. How are you today?

Chris: Ow...

Dawn: Fabulous! So, what are we going to do tonight?

Chris: Wha...?

Dawn: Oh, come on, you can't have forgotten.

Chris: Wha...?

Dawn: It's our anniversary today. Our one day anniversary! Isn't it exciting! I hope you've got something special planned. I'll come by at six, so see you then, munchkins. (door closes)

Chris: Wha...?

Jon: Chris, get off the floor. Or at least stop drooling on the carpet you'll leave a stain. Am I to gather from that exchange that not only did you get off with the wrong woman last night, but also this woman now thinks that you are going out.

Chris: (slowly): That would be the conclusion that I would be inclined to draw. It wouldn't be

so bad but that woman just gets on my tits!

Jon: Sounds like the tables were turned last night, though...

Danny (entering) : I've got the posters for the sports ball here, I'll leave them on your desk. Man, you were absolutely zooked last night! Totally flipped! (leaves)

Chris: It's amazing, I've been working with him for four months now, and I still don't understand a single word that he says. Now, would you excuse me? I have to crawl into a corner – that one over there looks suitable – and die. Goodbye.

Scene Two Meeting Room

Matt: Good afternoon everyone, let's get this exec meeting underway. Apologies from el Presidente Sarah who is locked in heavy negotiations with our vending machine suppliers to try to knock a penny of the price off a pack of polos. Vital work, I'm sure you'll agree. Anyway, the only item on the agenda is the annual budget assessment, to be delivered by our budgetmeister extraordinaire, Chris Hunt. Those of you who saw Mr Hunt in action last night will probably be expecting a 'gripping' report, something which is sure to set tongues wagging...

Chris: Shut up Matt. Now, the material that I'm presenting is rather complicated, so I'll need your full attention. On this flip chart, I've illustrated the main areas of income to the students union. I'm using the overhead projector to show some graphs of previous year's expenditure. If you look at the handout I passed round then you should see some of the areas that I think require particular attention, while on this wallchart I've sketched out some of the projects which would require extra funding. Now, if you turn to page 18-C in the budget guide-books that I gave you...

Emma (bursting in late): This is completely ridiculous!

Chris: That's not fair Emma, I've spent ages preparing this.

Emma: For once in your life Chris, will you stop coming up with supposedly 'comedy' misunderstandings, and pay attention. (ripping sound)

Chris: Hey! Leave my flip-chart alone!

Emma: Look at this! Look at this! It's appalling.

Chris: It looks like a perfectly well designed poster to me. Oh... sorry.

Will: It's the poster for the annual winter sports ball, designed by me and Danny. Do you have a problem with it?

Emma: Yes I bloody do have a problem with it. It's a piece of degrading objectifying sexist filth!

Danny: Sexist filth – yeah, I loved their last album.

Will: Could you be a little more specific?

Emma: Well, firstly, there is the picture of a buxom woman wearing next to nothing...

Danny: Excuse me... what does buxom mean?

Emma: That... er...

Will: To put it in language that you'd understand, it means she's got big tits.

Danny: Oh yeah. Huh-huh. That was my idea.

Emma: It's obscene.

Will: As the chair I shall be impartial in this debate, but I should point out that it's not exactly explicit. There are much dirtier pictures on the Internet. Er, or so I've been told, not that I'd know about that sort of thing.

Chris: Can't we get on with the budget?

All: No!

Emma: The point is, this is gratuitous sexism. What has this girl got to do with the sports ball?

Will: She's a sports player. Look, she's holding a hockey stick over her head...

Emma: Which, incidentally, is causing her obscenely short top to reveal her unfeasible LaraCroftian cleavage.

Will: And she's wearing a hockey skirt

Emma: Which is being blown up by the wind...

Dawn (noticing for the first time): You can see her pants!

Emma: Exactly. And that's not all. The wording on the poster is particularly tasteless. "You're sure to score at the Sports Ball." I mean, that's just sending out entirely the wrong message. The last thing we want is people feeling pressured into getting off with drunken idiots.

Chris: I agree, for example... oh, never mind.

Will: It's probably a good thing we didn't use our alternate slogan, "Get a chance to show off your tackle and get your kit off at the sports ball"

Emma (disparagingly): That's not even a double entendre, that's just...

Matt: A single entendre?

Emma: No, it's just crap.

Matt: As Women's Officer, Dawn should also comment on whether this poster is sexist. Dawn?

Dawn (still absorbed by her observation): You can see her pants! Oh, I don't think that it's all that bad...

Emma: Excuse me a moment. (whispering)

Dawn: This Poster is an Affront to Women. It is sexist and disgusting and sexist and...

Emma: Objectifying.

Dawn: Objectifying, and under the union's equal opportunities policy it should be banned.

Emma: Seconded!

Matt: Well, let's have a quick vote. All those in favour of banning the poster? Against? Right. Chris, do you want to vote?

Chris (weakly): Can I abstain?

All: No!

Chris: Well, all things considered, I suppose it is a bit... dodgy, and perhaps we should be cautious...

Dawn: Oh Chris, I love you!

Matt: Well, in that case it's three in favour and three against. Oh. Does anyone know what we do when it's a tie?

Will: Well, clearly there isn't a majority in favour, so the poster stays...

Emma: Rubbish. If you aren't going to sort this out, then I'll just do it myself. Come on Dawn, this isn't getting anywhere. (door slams)

Will: This is ridiculous. Let's go and talk some sense into them Danny. (door slams)

Chris: Can I get on with my budget now?

Matt: Hardly seems worth it, since I'm the only one left in the room and I never listen to anything you say anyway.

Chris: But it is important! We're going severely over-budget this year, we need to find another ten thousand pounds from somewhere, or else we'll have to make some really major cuts in the union's budget.

Emma (shouting, audible through the door): Yeah? Well you're a shortsighted sexist dinosaur!

Matt: It's not that big a deal, surely? A few thousand quid isn't that much – we spend that much on photocopying each year.

Will (also shouting): Prudish feminist imbecile!

Chris: Well, it's a darn sight more important than arguing about some stupid poster. Suppose we had to stop using the photocopier and copy everything by hand?

Emma: Exploiter of women!

Matt: Oh, I wouldn't worry about it, just do what we always do, go to the Senior Tutor...

Will: It's about free speech!

Matt: ...go to Dr Thomas and ask for a few extra quid to cover the shortfall, it always works. There's absolutely no danger of him saying...

Dawn: You can see her pants!

Matt: He won't say no.

Scene Three
Senior Tutors Office

John Thomas: No.

Chris: Excuse me Dr Thomas?

Thomas: Call me John. It seems that every year someone from the student's union comes to me asking for [mocking a student] "oh, just a little bit, and, oh, uh, a little bit more". Well, it stops here. We can't keep bailing you out every time you're a bit short of cash. Each year, we agree an amount that the university will give to the union, and it's time to start acting with more responsibility to the community. As you know, my son is a student, and each term I give him his allowance to last the term. Now, this year, he came to me asking for extra money so that he could go to the Glastonbree arts festival, and I had to put my foot down and say, "No. We agreed a budget, and part of being an adult is managing your money and sticking to your budget." Of course, then he asked his mother who gave him the cash, but that's not the point. Besides, you can't go asking my wife for money, it doesn't make sense. Er, what was I saying?

Chris: But we really need this money, or else we're going to have to cut budgets!

Thomas: No.

Chris: Can we have it as a loan?

Thomas: No.

Chris: Can we not have the money?

Thomas: No... I mean, yes, you can't. Tricking me into agreeing won't work. You're not going to get a penny more from the University.

Scene Four
Mandela's Bar

Jon: Run this past me again. Goodness only knows how much I enjoy you telling me about your self-inflicted woes.

Chris: Well, Dawn still thinks that she's going out with me, the sabbatical team is at its wits' end over some stupid poster, and the whole union is going to go bankrupt next week so I'll be out of a job. You're right you know, when you spell them out like that, my problems don't seem bad – they seem utterly, utterly awful. How the hell did I let myself get into this mess?

Jon: You know I'm starting to lose patience with you. Every day I come along and listen to you spout a load of crap about all your mundane little troubles, and never do I hear you ask how my day was.

Chris: How was your day?

Jon: Bloody awful, if you must know. I just could not get a single thing done. I'd swear that as I sat there staring at them, my equations were mocking me. I'd say that I need a holiday, except that I took one last week to go see Alison.

Chris: It's tough trying to keep up a long-distance relationship.

Jon: Oh, what would you know? The first relationship you have in years, and you're trying to get out of it as soon as possible. Why don't you just go with it, give it a try, instead of complaining that you don't have anyone all the bloody time.

Dawn: There you are Chris. I've been looking for you all over. You aren't trying to hide from me, now are you?

Chris: Well...

Dawn: Because if you are, then that's so cute, my little country bumpkin! We can play hide and seek at my place all night!

Jon (hissing): Go with it! Seize the Dawn, I mean day!

Chris: What are you so happy about?

Dawn: Me and Emma and my women's committee have just spent the afternoon tearing down posters!

Chris: Let me guess, you went round the union and tore down every last copy of the sports ball poster.

Dawn: That's right. Then someone went round and put a load more up, so we tore them down too.

Jon: Exactly how long did this little farce go on for?

Dawn: About three hours! But now they've run out of posters, so they can't put any more up. Come on Chris, let's go. Come back to my room, they're showing Thelma and Louise on TV and I feel empowered!

Chris: Well, OK. But no heavy petting, OK?

Scene Five
Matt's office

Matt: Morning Chris, you're in early. Up at the crack of Dawn, were you?

Chris: Shut up Matt. As it happens, we're just good friends.

Matt: Have you tried telling her that? Besides, it's in the constitution – if two sabbs are seeing each other, then the rest of the team are obliged to take the piss out of them.

Chris: It seems like that's the only thing we can agree on at the moment. Look at this week's Parrot.

Matt: 'Union In Crisis'. Well that's no surprise – they use that headline every week. 'The union was in turmoil this week as the union ruled that a union-produced poster was sexist, under the union equal opportunities policy, and therefore had to be removed from union noticeboards by union officials. The issue has divided the union sabbaticals, since union sports officer Will Foster and union ents officer Danny Doyle produced the poster, which was condemned by union women's officer Dawn Johnson and union welfare officer Emma Stott.' I see the journalism is down to its usual standard.

Chris: It just makes me so annoyed that they treat the 'union' as a single entity, and then seem surprised that people within the organisation might have different opinions.

Matt: Look, it goes on. 'Is this poster offensive? Decide for yourself with our full-size pull-out reprint'. Never let it be said that the Parrot misses a chance for a cheap marketing stunt. Things have come to a pretty pass when a free newspaper has to resort to cheap tricks to make people read it.

Chris: Oh, I'm fed up with this stupid argument. It's completely pointless. Why doesn't anyone seem to care that we have serious problems ahead with the budget?

Matt: Speaking personally, it's because whenever you start to talk about money, I find myself losing interest... well, in pretty much everything really. But if you think it really is so important, then I suppose I'd better arrange an emergency sabbatical meeting for today.

Chris: You're serious? You're actually paying attention to me?

Matt: Yeah, well, we're having an emergency meeting to discuss the poster. It's not going to be too much effort to put you down as item two.

Chris: Oh. Thanks.

Scene Six
Meeting Room

Matt: OK, let's get started. This is going to be a long one. Let's recap. Erm, poster, pants, pissed-off people and political correctness. Yes, that's pretty much it. Who wants to kick off this mammoth meeting? Will, would you like to start the slanging match?

Will: Yes. Right. In a word, er, sorry.

Matt: Eh?

Will: Sorry for all the trouble we caused. The poster was ill considered and tactless. You were quite right to complain, and in future we will always consult with the women's committee over whether posters are in any way sexist or inappropriate.

Danny: Yeah. Sorry (sniggers, which he just about manages to turn into a cough).

Matt: Oh. Right. Well, I suppose that's that over and done with. Back to work, then.

Chris: Oi!

Matt: What is it? Oh yes, Chris wants to say something boring.

Dawn: You leave my Chris alone. He's special. I don't let just anyone play with my Pookie.

(silence)

Chris: I should probably point out that Pookie is the name of one of Dawn's many stuffed animals. They all have names you know (he shudders).

Will: Get on with it.

Chris: Well, to cut a long story short, we are going to go over budget. We have to make cuts.

Dawn: I have an idea!

Chris: Go on...

Dawn: Why don't we ask for some more money?

Chris: (sigh) I've tried that. Look, we really have to cut budgets. The welfare budget in particular has some excesses which could be trimmed...

Emma: You git! I thought we were friends.

Chris: Oh come on. You have to admit that there are savings to be made. I mean, do we really need to give out free condoms to freshers?

Emma: It's a vital part of our safe-sex campaign. You can't slash my condoms!

Matt: They'd be no use to anyone if you did.

Danny: Why don't you get people to wash them out and send them back to us once they've used them?

Emma (with scorn): No! Condoms aren't the same as milk bottles.

Will: Well, they do both get filled with...

Emma: Yes, all right...

Chris: What about the lesbigay 'coming-out' helpline? We could save a load of money if we didn't run it on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Emma: Why? Do people stop being gay on days beginning with T?

Chris: No, but surely they could wait a day to talk about it. Look, what I'm trying to say is that we all need to look for ways to save money. It's not as if someone is just going to give us ten grand because we're a bit hard up.

Matt: And on that note, I call this meeting to a close. I'm sure we'll all have a lot to think about what Chris has said.

(chairs moving, doors closing)

Matt: Hold on a mo. Now that the girls are out the room perhaps you two smirking buffoons would like to explain exactly what modification to circumstances bought about today's sudden *volte face* vis-a-vis the poster farago.

Danny: Eh?

Matt: Why'd'ja change yer mind?

Danny: Oh, it was crazy, man! As soon as the Parrot printed their story, we had a run on tickets. Normally we sell about five, six hundred for a sports ball, but we sold all thousand tickets in a couple of hours. We issued an extra five hundred, and they went too. The box office don't know what's going on. That's probably just too many spliffs though.

Chris: I don't understand.

Will: It's publicity, isn't it? A bit of scandal, a bit of sex, flash of a girl's pants, and suddenly everyone wants to be in on the act. We're going to try doing this every year. Upset the women's committee, and sell the place out. Just goes to show that there's no such thing as bad publicity.

Matt: Oh, I don't know about that, some of Chris' posters are pretty crap.

Danny: Hey, now we've sold all those tickets, that should sort out all the money problems, right Chris?

Chris: Not exactly. The sports ball usually runs at a small loss, being subsidised by the sports

budget. Now that you've sold all those extra tickets, it'll make a large loss. But thanks for trying, guys.

Scene seven

A restaurant in Lunn

Dawn: This is so nice of you to take me to this posh restaurant, Chris. Do you think the owner was a real beefeater?

Chris: I took you here because I wanted to talk. It's so hard to have a conversation at the Union, when you get interrupted constantly. You see...

Waiter: Are you ready to order sir?

Chris: Oh, yes. I'll have the Rump steak, medium, and Dawn...

Dawn: I'll have a nut cutlet.

Waiter: Certainly.

Dawn: What were you saying?

Chris: Just that, well, it's nice going out with you, but... I'm not sure... you, see, you're...

Dawn: I know what the problem is.

Chris: You do?

Dawn: You're nervous, aren't you? I'm the first person you've gone out with.

Chris: Don't be ridiculous! I've had dozens... well, maybe not that many, but... you aren't the first, well, not really, though I suppose in a manner of speaking, then perhaps...

Dawn: I knew it!

Chris: No, that's not the reason... I don't feel comfortable going out with you, because you're... you're...

Waiter: Your nuts, madam.

Dawn: Oh, thank you. This looks lovely.

Chris: It almost looks good enough to eat.

Dawn: But despite your nervousness, I know we are right together. I can be gentle with you. And I know that you're a good person – the way you stood by me and Emma over that poster.

Chris: Yes, well I was under pressure to decide...

Dawn: Oh Chris, I just love your sense of humour. That, and your...

Waiter: Your rump, sir.

Chris: Oh, could I have a pint of John Smiths to go with this?

Waiter: Only if you want to ruin it...

Chris: Pardon?

Waiter: Of course, sir.

Dawn: You've just got to let your guard down, stop being so defensive. And I'd love to be the person you let your guard down to first.

Chris: I've heard it called many things... But you're right, the problem is with me. I'm not sure that I want to make you have to put up with all my problems. I think it's that I'm... I'm...

Waiter: Your bitter, sir.

Chris: Yes, maybe I am.

Dawn: No Chris, I'm not going to let you give up on yourself so easily. I know you are a good person inside, you just need a little coaxing. When Danny and Will were drooling over their poster like a page 3 model, you were decent, and didn't act like a teenage boy.

Chris: What was that last thing you said?

Dawn: You're not a boy. You're a man.

Chris: No, that part about drooling.

Dawn: They treated that girl as if she were just some cheap pin-up... it was horrible.

Chris: Yes... hmm. I wonder...

Dawn: What?

Chris: Oh, I'll tell you later. It'll be a surprise.

Waiter: Is everything all right? Would you like to order something off the dessert trolley for afterwards?

Chris: Oh, OK. I'll have the sticky toffee dumplings...

Dawn: And I'll have the selection of cheese and crackers.

Waiter: Of course.

Scene eight
Meeting room

Chris: Well everyone, don't all congratulate me at once!

Emma: To save a lot of time and effort, why don't you tell us what it is that you've done.

Chris: I've only gone and solved our budget crisis! The freshers will have their condoms after all!

Emma (blaze'): Oh good.

Dawn: My hero!

Chris: Don't you want to know how I did it?

Will: I don't suppose saying 'no' would stop you telling us anyway?

Chris: Look at this!
(rustling paper)

Emma: Oh, take that patronising crap out of here.

Will: Oh, is that The Star? Let's take a look.

Chris: Yes, take a look here on page eight...

Danny: It's my poster! Fantastic!

Emma: What? "Loony uni liberals ban saucy ads" Chris, what exactly is the meaning of this?

Chris: Well, they didn't put quite the spin on it that I'd hoped...

Emma: What did you do?

Chris: Well, I... I sold the story to the press. They gave me ten thousand pounds for it, and exclusive rights to the poster! It solves all our budget problems! You remember how upset you were over the budget cuts, don't you?

Emma: You cretin! You idiot! You're worse than those two!

Chris: Condoms for the freshers! I gave you your condoms back! Why are you so upset?

Emma: Money grabbing little twit! Is money all that matters to you?

Chris: But... I thought...

Emma: Those two only put up that poster on campus. Now you've spread it across the nation. Thousands of people will see that picture, and think that Lunn University is a place where sexism is rife. Maybe hundreds of sixth form students will see that and be deterred from applying here, put off by the unpleasant climate of harassment they will surely face if this kind of material is tolerated.

Danny: If I'd've seen that poster I would definitely have chosen to apply here, instead of just sticking a pin in a list.

Emma: Shut up. Don't you realise what you've done here Chris?

Chris: I think you're over-reacting a bit...

(door slams)

Danny: She's just pissed off. She'll calm down later.

Chris: (trembling a little) Oh good. I don't think I could take much more of that.

Dawn: She's right. You're an idiot. I thought I could trust you. I thought you understood our problems, that you sympathised with what we were trying to do, but you're worse than the rest of them. You're like a wolf in sheep's clothing. No, you're like a man in woman's clothing!

Will: Chris is a trannie? You never said!

Dawn: It's over Chris! I can't go out with you any more. Not when you behave like this...

(door slams)

Matt: I know you said you weren't all that keen on dating her, Chris, but there are easier ways to get yourself out of a relationship...

Chris: I... I... I...

Will: Single again, after four days? Never mind eh, Chris, it happens to all of us... well, not me of course, I always dump them, but... here, take this paper. Maybe that'll make you feel better.

Chris: (stunned by the whole experience, so rather faintly) Oh – oh look. You can see her pants!

Closing music: Underwear, Pulp.

15 Jan 2000

4250 Words