

SYNOPSIS

To impress his ex-girlfriend, an artist takes employment assisting in the completion of a mural at a rural train station. But, while encouraging of his presence, no-one takes his position seriously, sidelining him with menial tasks, and distractions, while the mural remains incomplete and unworked on. Initially enjoying the frivolous nature of his well paid position, the artist soon grows uneasy, determined to see the mural completed, and thus demonstrate, ostensibly to his girlfriend but gradually to himself, his worth.

CHARACTERS

THE ASSISTANT – A slightly needy man in his mid 20s. He has accepted a job in order to impress his ex-girlfriend. Broken and easily corrupted upon his arrival, he is happy at the lack of taxing work his job provides him, but as his employers gleefully exploit his compliance, he begins to value himself and fights to complete job he arrived to do.

STATION MASTER – a militant chap in his late 40s, the kind of man who has never experienced war but imagines he would be good in one. Doesn't actually want trouble but wants to feel there is the potential for trouble.

THE LOST PROPERTY ATTENDANT – A ghoulish chap. Grew up in lost property. Torments and collects people less through malice as a desire to normalise his situation.

BEAST/ALASDAIR – An artist in his late 60s. Theatrical in manner and enjoys attention. He is his own biggest fan and needs no audience present to put on a performance.

THE SECRETARY – A WOMAN in her mid 20s. Loyal to ALASDAIR but wants out and needs to find a proxy to bequeath her role to.

SCENE 1.

A CLATTERING TRAIN. THE ASSISTANT IS
TAPPING AT THE KEYS ON HIS PHONE
COMPOSING A TEXT MESSAGE.

THE ASSISTANT: (V.O.) My dearest Sarah, I hope this text finds you well. How things have changed since we agreed you needed a break from me. I have a job. And not just any job. A job assisting a great mural artist. The competition must have been stiff, but as the lady in the job centre said...

FADE TO BACKGROUND HUBBUB IN JOB CENTRE.

JOBCENTRE LADY: Don't think there isn't people who deserve this job more than you. There is. Plenty. But I'm not showing them. And do you know why? Because I deserve to see the back of you. You're getting this job because *I deserve it*.

THE ASSISTANT: ...as the lady at the job centre said... *I deserve it*.
Please reply.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT COMES OVER THE
TRAIN SPEAKER.

ANNOUNCEMENT: (D) We will shortly be arriving at ????, where this train will terminate. Please ensure you have all your

ANNOUNCEMENT (CONT): belongings, before exiting.

THE ASSISTANT: Oh hell!

THROUGH THE RUSTLE OF THE ASSISTANT
GATHERING HIS BELONGS WE HEAR A DULL
CLUNK.

SCENE 2.

TRAIN STATION. THE STATION MASTER SHOUTS,
TRAIN WHISTLES, PULLS AWAY.

THE ASSISTANT: Stop! Please! (*To himself*) Damn!...

Excuse me, I left my phone on that train. Is there any way of stopping it?

STATION MASTER: Bombing it?

THE ASSISTANT: God no. Why would I want to...

STATION MASTER: Just because it's a small village doesn't mean it's not worth bombing...

THE ASSISTANT: No I didn't...

STATION MASTER: We've got things here that are well-worth blowing up.

THE ASSISTANT: I'm sure.

STATION MASTER: We're proud of this station, we deserve to be terrorised.

THE ASSISTANT: Of course.

STATION MASTER: We're getting a mural.

THE ASSISTANT: Yes, I know, I'm working on it.

STATION MASTER: Ah! Then you must be Alasdair's assistant?

THE ASSISTANT: Yes.

STATION MASTER: You're late.

THE ASSISTANT: What? But I said I'd arrive Friday.

STATION MASTER: Well maybe you did and maybe you didn't.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Indignant*) I did!

STATION MASTER: Maybe. And you say your phone's missing?

THE ASSISTANT: Yes.

STATION MASTER: Well you might want to check in lost property then, the cleaning team go through the carriages before it does the return trip, someone might have handed it in...

THE ASSISTANT: Where's...?

STATION MASTER: I'll walk you there. Show you some of the sights.

A KEY TURNS, DOOR CREAKS OPEN, CLOCK
TICKS.

The waiting room... where people like to?

THE ASSISTANT: Wait.

DOOR SLAMS SHUT. KEY TURNS.

STATION MASTER: No vandalise. Keep it locked. Anyone turning up for a train so early they can't stand *isn't* catching a train. Even had people using it as...

A KEY TURNS, DOOR CREAKS, TAP DRIPS.

Toilets. Keep them locked too. People started waiting in them. Anyone wanting the toilet needs to ask for the key at the office which is located in the...

VOICES ECHO.

Entrance foyer, where you will be painting a mural. Got any ideas yet?

THE ASSISTANT: Well it's not really for me to...

ATTENDANT: I understand. Keeping your cards close to your bushel.
Lost property's out the exit and to the right. Here, give me your
arm. This is my number. Any trouble, or unauthorised
sheltering, just call.

SCENE 3.

LOST PROPERTY BOOTH.

A SERVICE BELL RINGS.

THE ASSISTANT: Hello? ... Hello? ...

THE BELL RINGS AGAIN.

Hello - is anybody the...

ATTENDANT: Hello!

THE ASSISTANT SHRIEKS.

Are you looking for something?

THE ASSISTANT: (*Panting*) Yes I...

ATTENDANT: Is it me?

THE ASSISTANT: What?

ATTENDANT: Is it me?

THE ASSISTANT: No, it's my phone.

ATTENDANT: Is it this phone?

THE ASSISTANT: (*Relieved*) Yes, that phone.

ATTENDANT: You've lost your girlfriend too.

THE ASSISTANT: Sorry?

ATTENDANT: Sarah...

THE ASSISTANT: Have you been reading my messages?

ATTENDANT: You loved her very much.

THE ASSISTANT: That's none of your business.

ATTENDANT: But she likes Steve better.

THE ASSISTANT: What! Steve! But he...

ATTENDANT: Has a bigger cock...

THE ASSISTANT: (*Indignant*) This is nonsense.

ATTENDANT: It surely can't be smaller...

THE ASSISTANT: *Excuse me* those pictures are private.

ATTENDANT: Oh yes, they're privates alright... And you're late for work.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Indignant*) I said I'd be here Friday. I specifically said that.

ATTENDANT: But *they* don't listen, do they?

THE ASSISTANT: No they...

ATTENDANT: (*Eagerly*) Belittle you?

THE ASSISTANT: (*Trying to be calm, rational*) No, I wouldn't say that... It's just...
Look just give me my phone back.

ATTENDANT: No.

THE ASSISTANT: No, not no, yes! I need to get to get in touch with my
employer... you yourself have seen that I have -

ATTENDANT: (*Interrupting*) A small penis.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Exasperated*) A job to do! A very *important* job.

ATTENDANT: No.

THE ASSISTANT: No? Not no! Yes! Yes I do!

ATTENDANT: No. I called you in sick. You're in no state for work.

THE ASSISTANT: I'm in no state for work! How dare *you!* How dare *you* say that!

ATTENDANT: They weren't happy.

THE ASSISTANT: Weren't ha...

A PHONE CHIMES; A TEXT MESSAGE.

THE ASSISTANT: Who's that?

ATTENDANT: It's Sarah.

THE ASSISTANT: Sarah...She replied... but I didn't...

ATTENDANT: I sent it for you. She says she respects your decision to move on. And thanks you for letting her do the same.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Aghast*) I didn't say that... (*Hyperventilating*) She can't... I came here to give her space, not to... Move on! Where will I go? I don't want to move on! I've nothing to... no-one to...

THE ASSISTANT BREAKS INTO TEARS.

THE ATTENDANT HUSHES HIM.

ATTENDANT: There, there, we all get lost sometimes, but this is where the lost belong. You're home now

GROWING DROWSY.

THE ASSISTANT: Yes... I...

HIS BODY SLUMPS TO THE GROUND

SCENE 4.

THE LOST PROPERTY STORE. THE ATTENDANT IS
HUMMING MERRILY TO HIMSELF.

THE ASSISTANT: Excuse me... Excuse me?

ATTENDANT: Yes?

THE ASSISTANT: What are you doing?

ATTENDANT: I have to tag you, so I know what you are and when you arrived – after two months you go to auction.

THE ASSISTANT: Sorry?

ATTENDANT: Auction. Don't be scared. There you can get found again - by a new Sarah.

THE ASSISTANT: I want the old Sarah, not a new one.

ATTENDANT: But your penis...

THE ASSISTANT: It's not about my penis.

ATTENDANT: Well what is it about?

THE ASSISTANT: It's about my laziness, my lack of focus, I'm...

ATTENDANT: ... a stupid little boy, who never wants to grow up...

THE ASSISTANT: Stop reading my phone. In fact, give it here... *What...* Untie me. Untie me now.

A SPLUTTERING YAWN INTERRUPTS THEM.

What's that?

ATTENDANT: The beast. You've awoken him.

THE ASSISTANT: The what... Look untie me now. I want to get out. I'm not lost anymore. I want to go to work.

THE BEAST UNLEASHES A SNEEZE/SCREAM.

Hurry! Please! I promise not to move.

ATTENDANT: Well... okay.

THE SERVICE BELL RINGS.

ATTENDANT: Ah the bell, I must go. Don't rile the creature, I've yet to tether him.

SCENE 5.

SHUFFLING FOOTSTEPS AND WHEEZING HEAVY
BREATHES THE BEAST APPROACHES THE
ASSISTANT.

THE ASSISTANT: Please don't hurt me. I have a... *job*.

OBJECTS BEING SHUFFLED AROUND.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Pleading*) Oh lord. You're rummaging. What are you rummaging for?

A PUFF ON AN INHALER.

BEAST: My inhaler - and just in the nick of time.

THE ASSISTANT: (*sigh of relief*) I thought you were a monster.

BEAST: Ha! That might still be the case!

THE ASSISTANT: And is it?

BEAST: I am old, but even as a youth I could not be described as pretty. Eczema, asthma, and a personality that only made matters worse. Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?

THE ASSISTANT: Right. You couldn't untie me could you?

BEAST: I have never had much luck with knots. A short spell in the scouts taught me I had no desire to help others, unless I was pleasing myself whilst doing so.

THE ASSISTANT: Okay, so your answer is?

BEAST: Hop or be damned!

SCENE 6.

DEEPER IN LOST PROPERTY. A DAMP CAVERNOUS PLACE. WATER DRIPS.

THE ASSISTANT: Are you sure this is the right way?

BEAST: I am sure of no such thing! My political leanings encourage me always to err to the left in times of trouble.

THE ASSISTANT: (Sighing) I give up. We're lost.

BEAST: Not all those who wander are lost.

THE ASSISTANT: And us?

BEAST: We're lost!

THE BEAST STARTS LAUGHING TO HIMSELF.

THE ASSISTANT: It's not funny.

STILL LAUGHING.

BEAST: I am reminded of the time long ago when...

FADE TO SILENCE

SCENE 7.

DEEPER STILL IN LOST PROPERTY. WATER

TRICKLES. FOOTSTEPS WADE. MICE SQUEAK.

FROGS CROAK.

BEAST: ... and that was when I discovered I could not be trusted with maps.

THE ASSISTANT: A radio! Maybe they're looking for me.

A SWITCH IS FLICKED. A BURST OF

CRACKLING MUSIC QUICKLY FADES TO

NOTHING.

Dead. Everything's dead. And soon we'll be dead. We have nothing no food, no water, no... entertainment. If we don't die of starvation, we'll die of boredom.

BEAST: Radio be damned! Who needs a radio when you have this.

THE ASSISTANT: Gum disease?

BEAST: No. A mouth. A mouth with which to sing. A mouth with which to tell tales, tales so black and pungent they rot the teeth as they're the being told, tales so saucy you could dip your chips in them.

THE ASSISTANT: What I'd give for some chips.

BEAST: You're hungry?

THE ASSISTANT: Yes!

BEAST: Then we must hunt!

SCENE 8.

A MOUSE SQUEAKS. A TRAP SNAPS. A SQUEAL
OF AGONY.

THE ASSISTANT: You have a mouse trap on your nose.

BEAST: Tiger got to hunt, bird got to fly; Man got to sit and wonder,
'Why, why, why?'

THE ASSISTANT: Eh?

BEAST: I have done the necessary and got us grub.

THE ASSISTANT: I'm not eating a mouse.

BEAST: Cheese!

THE ASSISTANT: Ah right cheese.

BEAST: Or mouse.

SCENE 9.

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A FIRE CRACKLES.

THE ASSISTANT: (V/O) Dearest Sarah I hope this lipstick on a flip-chart finds you well. I am in lost in...err... lost property accompanied by a babbling madman...

BEAST: More mouse?

THE ASSISTANT: Oh... er... thanks.

(V/O) Please reply.

PAPER BEING RIPPED AND CRUMPLED.

Jesus what am I saying. It's useless! We're doomed and I'll never see Sarah again! I should never have come here. I could have been watching her in the cafe now, wearing her down – she can't stop me drinking tea. Instead I'm here. Looking for a job I don't even wa...

A PHONE ALARM.

My phone!

RUMMAGING. THE RING GETS LOUDER.

Where is it ! Where is... Ha! I'm free! Free!

HE STARTS DIALING. A PHONE RINGS.

No it's not regarding unauthorised sheltering...

SCENE 10.

THE LOST PROPERTY COUNTER.

THE BELL IS RINGING IMPATIENTLY.

ATTENDANT: Ah, Station master so nice to see you. How can I help?

STATION MASTER: Hand him over Derek.

ATTENDANT: Him?

STATION MASTER: Yes, *him*. The assistant. I know he's here.

ATTENDANT: (*Sighing*) Why must things get found?

STATION MASTER: You didn't, Derek.

ATTENDANT: (Forlorn) No - I didn't.

SCENE 11.

TRAIN STATION.

STATION MASTER: Not a very good way to start a new job.

THE ASSISTANT: He tricked me.

STATION MASTER: I'll take you to Alasdair's.

THE ASSISTANT: Don't you need to be at the station?

STATION MASTER: There's not another train due until... Twelve, four, eight... tomorrow.

THE ASSISTANT: Oh.

STATION MASTER: And we don't want you disappearing again do we?

THE ASSISTANT: No.

STATION MASTER: No indeed. Luckily you're just across across the road, opposite the entrance. Easy for you to get to work. And easy for me to keep an eye on you. I know what you artists are like, I've a nephew who works as a sculpture.

THE ASSISTANT: A sculpture?

STATION MASTER: In Penrith.

THE ASSISTANT: But if the job was a sculpture he wouldn't move.

STATION MASTER: He moved alright, he didn't mind travel, used this very station.

THE ASSISTANT: Yeah, but I'm just saying that a sculpture...

STATION MASTER: Correct.

THE ASSISTANT: It's what a sculptor makes...

STATION MASTER: Bingo.

THE ASSISTANT: So the job's a sculptor.

STATION MASTER: (*Mournful*) They put a traffic cone on his head.

THE ASSISTANT: What?

STATION MASTER: The kids.

THE ASSISTANT: *(Matter of factly)* Your nephew's a sculpture.

STATION MASTER: 3 years in the job. Tried to get him work here but they blew the budget on your thing.

THE ASSISTANT: It's not really mine. I'm just assisting.

STATION MASTER: Hih, assisting. You need to take more responsibility son. I'm not surprised Sarah left you.

THE ASSISTANT: What?

STATION MASTER: Here we are.

SCENE 12.

ALASDAIR'S HOUSE. A KNOCK ON A DOOR.

THE DOOR OPENS QUICKLY.

SECRETARY: Alasdair... *(Disappointed)* Oh it's you.

STATION MASTER: I've brought you the late assistant.

SECRETARY: He's dead?

STATION MASTER: No he's late.

THE ASSISTANT: I wasn't when I arrived.

STATION MASTER: And now?

THE ASSISTANT: I suppose... A bit... So... Where's Alasdair?

SECRETARY: Come in.

DOOR CLOSES.

SCENE 13.

ALASDAIR'S HOUSE.

SECRETARY: Alright I'm not blaming you, but... Alasdair's gone. I don't know where, but if you'd been on time we'd know: he needs someone to focus his attention or else he wanders – he's got a very active mind.

THE ASSISTANT: What's he look like?

SECRETARY: Large globular head, face huddled in an absurdly small area, as if the nose was about to tell a secret, that even the ears, sticking out and folded forward, wanted to hear.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Suspecting*) That's some description.

SECRETARY: He wrote it himself.

THE ASSISTANT: (*Unenthusiastic*) Anything else?

SECRETARY: Screams when he sneezes. Likes telling stories.

THE ASSISTANT: Black, pungent, saucy...

SECRETARY: Yes! That's him!

THE ASSISTANT: Oh god.

SCENE 14.

THE LOST PROPERTY COUNTER.

THE BELL RINGS HESITANTLY.

ATTENDANT: Ah, you're lost again, I should never have let *him*
take you... But he doesn't get them all you know.

THE ASSISTANT: I want the beast...

ATTENDANT: Oh but surely not...

THE ASSISTANT: Look he's not actually a beast, he's an artist...

ATTENDANT: And he looks like?

THE ASSISTANT: You know what he looks like. He's the beast.

ATTENDANT: So many items come my way, and most are beastly... to begin with.

THE ASSISTANT: He tells tales.

ATTENDANT: A snitch!

THE ASSISTANT: No a story teller.

ATTENDANT: What kind of tales?

THE ASSISTANT: Black, pungent, saucy... Look you do know what's happening don't you? Out there. On the station.

ATTENDANT: Well...

THE ASSISTANT: A mural. An artwork above the station entrance. It'll bring people, tourists, and you know what that means...

ATTENDANT: Lost property.

THE ASSISTANT: But it won't happen unless you give me...

SCENE 15.

THE BEAST/ ALASDAIR Ahoy!

THE ASSISTANT: Hi Alasdair, I'm Richard, your assistant. Sorry about leaving you earlier.

ALASDAIR: Nonsense! Once you have shared mouse with a man the bond is irrevocable. I am reminded of a time at sea: I have always

ALASDAIR (CONT): urinated more than the average man...

FADE OUT

SCENE 16.

THE ASSISTANT: (V/O) Dearest Sarah I hope this text finds you well. I have reached my job. My employer is a...

ALASDAIR SCREAMS/SNEEZES IN THE
BACKGROUND.

THE ASSISTANT (CONT): (V/O) ...a... a genius. A teller of tales so black and pungent they rot the teeth as they're being told, tales saucy you could dip your chips in them.

A TEXT MESSAGE ARRIVES.

(V/O) Hahaha dip your chips in them! Well done on the job.

Sarah.

Hmm. Maybe he is a genius.

ALASDAIR SCREAMS/SNEEZES AND FARTS IN
THE BACKGROUND.