

THE KEEPER

A sit-com by Phil Collinge & Andy Lord

Pilot Episode

Running time thirty minutes

Phil Collinge & Andy Lord

Phil:

Andy:

Answer phone:

E-mail: enquiries@collingeandlord.co.uk

SCENE: 1 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

PULL BACK FROM A CLOSE UP OF A POSTER, 'THE ANTLER HOTEL - ANNUAL HIGHLAND CATTLE RECOGNITION CONTEST, 21ST JULY'. THERE IS A STRIP OF PAPER ACROSS THE POSTER READING 'CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF COW'. ANGUS REEVES ENTERS FROM BEHIND THE BAR, SINGING THE THEME TO NEIGHBOURS TO HIMSELF. HE IS CARRYING A VASE OF FLOWERS. HE PLACES THEM ON THE BAR AND BEGINS TO DUST WITH A FEATHER DUSTER. THE DOOR OPENS AND THE LAIRD OF MULLSHIRE ENTERS.

LAIRD

Fine day Angus.

ANGUS

Oh, yes...Very nice your Lairdship.

HE REACHES UNDER THE BAR AND PRODUCES A PLATE COVERED IN GINGHAM CLOTH.

ANGUS

Would you care for a complimentary drop scone at all?

LAIRD

Mmmm...I think I'll give it a miss if you don't mind
Angus...I'll just take a dram.

ANGUS

Dram?...Right...Now don't tell me...I know this one...

LAIRD

Whisky.

ANGUS

Oh yes!...Whisky, that's right...Now then...How...Er
...How much is a dram then?

LAIRD

Two measures Angus...Two measures...You're
getting quite good at the Landlording now.

ANGUS

Mmmm...Well after twenty years working in a
Glasgow temperance bar, it came as quite a
change.

LAIRD

That must've been a very lonely life.

ANGUS

Yes...Well...Since Auntie died and left me this place
I've become quite used to visitors.

LAIRD

Customers Angus...Customers.

ANGUS

Oh yes...I still feel you'd all be happier if you tried some of my herb tea though.

THE LAIRD FINISHES HIS DRINK IN ONE.

LAIRD

I'll give it a try if you like.

ANGUS

Oh lovely...One herbal tea then.

LAIRD

Aye...And stick a dram in it.

ANGUS LOOKS DISMAYED AND GOES FOR THE TEA. THE LAIRD HELPS HIMSELF TO A SCONE AS SARAH ENTERS.

SARAH

Father.

LAIRD

Sarah...Glad you could join us...Nice to know that you can fit the affairs of the estate around 'sex, drugs and rock and roll'...I must be one of the few men in the northern hemisphere who can recognise you stood up from twenty paces...

ANGUS RETURNS WITH A TRAY OF TEA.

LAIRD

(CONT)...Ah, Angus...You'll not have met my daughter will you?...This is Sarah...She's just returned from a month long fornication tour of the Outer Hebrides.

ANGUS

Oh...Er...Well, everyone should have a hobby...
Delighted to meet you Sarah.

SARAH

Yea, right.

LAIRD

She's here to act as my personal assistant for the interviews.

ANGUS

Oh lovely!...I've made some badges.

**HE PRODUCES SOME CIRCULAR CARDS,
EACH WITH A PIN ON THE BACK AND A PAPER
DOILY STUCK ON TO PRODUCE A FRILLY
EDGE.**

SARAH

Oh...That's...That's very nice Angus...I take it you
don't get out much?

ANGUS

No, I'm fairly self sufficient...I can do anything with
these hands.

LAIRD

Don't say a word girl!...Now, I'm expecting four
people...Starting a half past eleven...So if we set up
over there.

SCENE: 2 EXT DAY.

SET: WOODED AREA BY DOUGIE'S HUT

STUDIO.

**MIX. WE SEE. A PAIR OF MANS LEGS SLOWLY
TRAMPING THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH.
HE IS WEARING SLATE GREY TROUSERS AND
A PAIR OF HIGHLY POLISHED BOOTS.**

**WE HEAR. HEAVY BREATHING AND A
CLANKING SOUND AS HE MOVES WITH A
STUMBLING WALK.**

SCENE: 3 INT. DAY

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

MIX. THE LAIRD AND SARAH ARE SAT AT THE BAR WHILST ANGUS POTTERS AROUND THE ROOM TIDYING UP.

LAIRD

It's a long time since I last interviewed anybody for the post of Gamekeeper.

SARAH

You've never actually interviewed anyone.

LAIRD

Has it been that long?...You could be right.

SARAH

And we've never had a Gamekeeper have we?...
Not only can we not afford one...But we don't actually have any game.

ANGUS

What, no animals at all?

LAIRD

Mmmm...Aukterbrook has a worldwide reputation for having the least wildlife in the whole of Scotland... With the obvious exception of my daughter here of course.

ANGUS

Why do you need a Gamekeeper then?

LAIRD

Well...The estate is also the home of the 'All in, poaching champion of Scotland'...A title he's held for twelve years...Some would say the two facts are not unconnected.

ANGUS

Oh...and who is this champion poacher then?

LAIRD

A cunning and dangerous man by the name of Dougie McRanald...He's...

SARAH

You've no evidence of that father...The man just has a keen interest in furry things.

LAIRD

Aye, and a keen interest in eating anything that lives and squeaks on my estate...But not any more...Oh no!...A new Gamekeeper, and I'll have him.

SARAH

You still haven't told me where the money's coming from father...We had to sell the piper last Christmas to make ends meet.

LAIRD

The way you kept looking at him, I sold him to make sure that ends didn't meet...Anyway the Gamekeeper will be paid for out of the Lottery grant.

SARAH

What Lottery grant?

LAIRD

The Lottery grant we received in the post.

ANGUS

Crumbs!...You've won the Lottery?

LAIRD

I never said we'd won...I said we'd received a grant ...If the English can't address their envelopes properly that's their look out...It was intended for a Greenkeeper at Lord's...And it's going on a Gamekeeper for the Laird...Same difference.

SCENE: 4 EXT. DAY.

SET: WOODED AREA BY DOUGIE'S HUT

O/B.

MIX. DOUGIE MCRANALD IS CROUCHED DOWN SETTING A SNARE IN THE COPSE. HE IS WHISTLING QUIETLY TO HIMSELF AS HE SLOWLY MOVES AROUND. CUT TO. THE LOWER LEGS, WHICH ARE NOW MOVING THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH AT A QUICKER PACE. THE BREATHING IS HEAVIER AND THE CLANKING LOUDER. DOUGIE HEARS THE APPROACHING SOUNDS AND TAKES COVER. HE WATCHES FROM BEHIND A BUSH AS A FIGURE BLUNDERS INTO THE COPSE. DOUGIE'S EYES WIDEN.

DOUGIE

Bugger me!!

CUT TO. THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE. IT IS JOE GOODWIN DRESSED IN FULL ZOO KEEPERS UNIFORM INCLUDING A PEAKED CAP, AND CARRYING A MOP AND ALUMINIUM BUCKET. HE LOOKS AROUND. HE IS OBVIOUSLY LOST. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS DOUGIE REVEALS HIMSELF FROM BEHIND THE BUSH.

DOUGIE

Who the hell are you?!

**JOE IS STARTLED BY DOUGIE'S SUDDEN
APPEARANCE. HE SCREAMS AND RUNS BACK
INTO THE WOODS.**

SCENE: 5 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

MIX. THE LAIRD AND SARAH ARE SAT BEHIND TWO PUB TABLES PUSHED TOGETHER. THE LAIRD SHUFFLES PAPERS AND TRIES TO LOOK AUTHORITATIVE UNTIL HE REALISES THAT SARAH IS STARING AT HIM. HE STOPS AND COUGHS.

LAIRD

Well then Angus...Send the first one in.

ANGUS, CARRYING A CLIPBOARD, WADDLES OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM, WHERE TWO MEN AND A WOMAN ARE SAT IN A ROW. ONE MAN IS DRESSED CONSERVATIVELY, WHILST THE OTHER APPEARS TO BE A HIPPY. THE WOMAN SEEMS VERY STRAIGHT LACED.

ANGUS

Good morning everybody...Now...Er...Mr Jelicho?

THE HIPPY SLOWLY REACTS.

MR JELICHO

Sorry...Names are labels yea?...Yea.

ANGUS

Morn...Er...Yes...Walk this way Mr Jelicho.

THEY CROSS TO THE TABLE AND THE LAIRD INVITES MR JELICHO TO TAKE A SEAT. ANGUS PICKS UP ONE OF THE BADGES AND BEGINS TO WRITE ON IT.

ANGUS

And our first contestant is...Er...This is Mr Jelicho, come about the job.

HE SMILES AND HANDS THE BADGE TO MR JELICHO BEFORE SHEEPISHLY EDGING AWAY FROM THE PROCEEDINGS.

LAIRD

Good morning Mr Jelicho...Good to have you with us...Now then...Have you got a new book out at the moment?

SARAH

You'll have to excuse my father Mr Jelicho...The only experience he's had of interviewing is watching Michael Parkinson...Now then...

SCENE: 6 EXT. DAY.

SET: WOODED AREA BY DOUGIE'S HUT

O/B.

**MIX. JOE'S HEAD POKES THROUGH THE
TREES AND LOOKS AT DOUGIE WHO IS
STOOD IN THE CENTRE OF THE COPSE.**

JOE

Er...Hello.

DOUGIE

Hello yerself...It's all right...I don't bite...At least not
the English...Never know what you might catch...Is
there something I can do for you?

JOE

Well...I'm a bit lost.

DOUGIE

Aye, you are that all right...You're about three
hundred miles lost by the look of it.

JOE

I'm looking for the Antler Pub in Aukterbrook...The
man at the train station said I could catch a bus.

DOUGIE

Well you'll not catch one stood here.

JOE

I couldn't catch one at all...Apparently they're on strike...And I couldn't find a taxi, so I had to walk.

DOUGIE

Hamish gone fishing then has he?

JOE

Pardon?

DOUGIE

Aye, he does that a lot...See, Hamish drives the only bus in town...And when the buses aren't running, he drives the only taxi.

JOE

So why's he on strike?

DOUGIE

He's protesting about cut price taxi fares...You look cold...Let's go inside, and I'll get you a wee snifter.

DOUGIE WALKS OVER TO A SMALL BUSH AND DRAGS IT ASIDE TO REVEAL A SMALL WOODEN DOOR. HE OPENS IT AND BECKONS JOE OVER.

SCENE: 7 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

**MIX. MR JELICHO'S INTERVIEW CONTINUES
SLOWLY. HE IS ADMIRING HIS NAME BADGE.**

LAIRD

So...Mr...Mr Jelicho...Good Morning...Again.

MR JELICHO

Morning...Yea...Again.

LAIRD

Yes...Now then...

SARAH

What he's trying to ask you, Mr Jelicho is...Why
have you applied for the position of Gamekeeper?

MR JELICHO

Well...It's basically a green thing...Y'know?...It's
nature...It's...Living things...It's all that open space
trip yea?...And the free love and magic mushrooms.

SARAH

Free love?

LAIRD

Excuse me Mr Jelicho...Forgive me if I drag you by the josticks down to somewhere close to the planet earth...What experience do you actually have in this line of work?

MR JELICHO

Experience man is bad Karma yea?...I'm a child of the now dig?...Now is with us here...It's...Now...This moment is new and unique...I don't need experience of the new, man.

SARAH

So, about this free love then...?

LAIRD

And have you ever worked with animals?

MR JELICHO

Animals?...The furry things that squeak?...Yea get you...Animals.

LAIRD

Well?

MR JELICHO

Well...Er...Well what?

LAIRD

Have you ever...At any time in your drug induced, flower power existence ever so much as actually seen an animal?

MR JELICHO

Hey...I'm just not a negative guy, y'know?

LAIRD

It's 'no' isn't it!?...The answer's no!...You've never seen an animal in the flesh...Close up!

MR JELICHO

Hey, denial yea?

SARAH

Done much of this free love then have you?

SCENE: 8 INT. DAY.

SET: DOUGIE'S HIDEOUT

STUDIO

MIX. THE SMALL AND DINGY ROOM IS LITTERED WITH A COLLECTION OF BIZARRE OBJECTS. HUNTING TROPHIES AND STUFFED FISH LINE THE WALLS. PHEASANT, GROUSE AND RABBITS HANG FROM HOOKS ABOVE A SMALL WINDOW. THERE IS A DANGEROUS LOOKING COPPER STILL AT ONE END OF THE ROOM. DOUGIE MOVES AWAY FROM THE STILL WITH TWO GLASSES OF MOONSHINE. HE OFFERS ONE TO JOE.

DOUGIE

There you go laddie...Get that down your neck.

JOE

Er...Right...Thanks.

HE TASTES HIS DRINK. HE APPEARS APPRECIATIVE AT FIRST THEN HE SPLUTTERS.

JOE

Christ!...That's...Interesting...What's it made of?

DOUGIE

You don't want to know.

JOE

An old closely guarded recipe is it?

DOUGIE

No...but believe me, you don't want to know.

JOE SNIFFS THE DRINK. DOUGIE IS RUMMAGING AROUND THE HUT, OBVIOUSLY LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.

DOUGIE

So, tell me laddie...What are you doing in these parts?

JOE

Well, like I said...I'm on my way to the Antler...

DOUGIE PICKS UP A HUGE KNIFE AND STARTS TO CLEAN HIS FINGERNAILS. JOE GULPS.

JOE

(CONT.)...So if you could just point me in the right direction...I'll be off.

DOUGIE

The Antler y'say?...And what would you be doing there?

JOE

Er...I'm on my way to a job interview.

DOUGIE

For a security guard is it?

JOE

What?...No, no I've just lost my job...Fifteen years at London Zoo...Without even a thank you...Rosie's going to miss me.

DOUGIE FINDS A HUGE PIPE AND SMILES WITH SATISFACTION.

DOUGIE

That the wife is it?

DOUGIE STARTS TO RUMMAGE IN SOME DRAWERS.

JOE

Not exactly no...Rosie's a Hippopotamus.

DOUGIE

A what?

JOE

A hippopotamus...Y'know, large African quadruped.

DOUGIE

I know what a hippopotamus is laddie...I just couldn't believe what you said.

HE DISCOVERS SOME TOBACCO IN THE DRAWER AND STARTS TO CRAM IT IN THE PIPE.

JOE

They say as how I'm not needed now that they've created the new 'All in one Pachyderm house'...

DOUGIE

Aye?

JOE

(CONT)...Hippo's get second billing you know... Everyone wants Elephants and Chimps or Lions... No attraction in a Hippo...That's what they told me anyway...

DOUGIE

Aye?

JOE

Poor old Rosie...She's having to share a pen with Neil...The Rhinoceros.

DOUGIE

Rhino Neil?

JOE

I just hope she's all-right that's all.

**DOUGIE HAS FILLED HIS PIPE AND IS NOW
TAPPING HIS POCKETS LOOKING FOR
MATCHES.**

JOE

Anyway...That's why I'm here...For an interview...
This is the only thing the Job Centre came up with.

DOUGIE

Aye?

**HE STRIKES A MATCH AND IS ABOUT TO
LIGHT HIS PIPE.**

JOE

(CONT.)...I don't know what sort of Gamekeeper I'd
make mind...But...

**DOUGIE LOOKS AGHAST. HE DROPS HIS PIPE
AND BURNS HIS FINGERS ON THE MATCH.**

SCENE: 9 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

MIX. THE LAIRD AND SARAH ARE SAT STARING INTO SPACE AS THE NEXT CANDIDATE TALKS TO THEM. SHE SPEAKS IN A SLOW MATTER OF FACT WAY.

MS STERLING

...And after that I spent two years with the Forestry Commission on their deciduous tree replanting scheme. I developed a new rota for reforestation and a conservation programme to preserve the indigenous wildlife. Then...

AS SHE PAUSES FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, BOTH THE LAIRD AND SARAH ATTEMPT TO SPEAK, BUT LAPSE BACK INTO SILENCE AS SHE CONTINUES HER MONOLOGUE.

MS STERLING

(CONT)...Then I started my current job as Wildfowl Ranger for the Orkneys. Most satisfying. A surprisingly varied and exiting array of sea birds you know?...But I suppose you want to know why I want to break into gamekeeping?...

SCENE: 10 INT. DAY

SET: DOUGIE'S HUT

STUDIO.

**MIX. DOUGIE IS PACING AROUND THE HUT
LOOKING FLUSTERED.**

DOUGIE

A Gamekeeper...A bloody Gamekeeper!...What
would my father say?...A Gamekeeper in my hut...
Sharing my drink!!

JOE

I'm sorry...Have you got something against
Gamekeepers?

DOUGIE

Something against!?...Course I bloody have!!...I'll
have to move the hut now...Twenty years I've been
here...Jesus!...Entertaining a bloody Gamekeeper!!

JOE

Well, I might not get the job...Anyway, what's wrong
with Gamekeepers?...You might be able to advise
me...Being a country man...I could do with the help.

DOUGIE

Well you won't be getting any from me, you...You!...
You won't be getting any from me!

JOE

Why, what have you got against Gamekeepers anyway?

DOUGIE

Look around you man!...I'm a bloody poacher...In fact, round here, I'm THE bloody poacher...Hang on a minute thought laddie...Hang on a minute... Perhaps we could help one another here...Y'know nothing about the gamekeeping you say?

JOE

Er...No...Nothing...But I see your problem...A poacher...I couldn't really take advice from a poacher...I'd better be on my way,

DOUGIE

No, no, no...Wait a minute...I'm sure we could come to some sort of...Arrangement?

JOE

No, no...I can't do that...Even if I got the job...The Laird wouldn't like it...I'm sure I can cope on my own...Mr...Er...?

DOUGIE

Rubbish!...You canna even find the pub...How will you cope with the hidden dangers of the Highlands?

JOE HEADS TOWARDS THE DOOR.

JOE

Well we'll see...If I get the job I'll be back to...Er...
Well you know...Thanks for the drink.

DOUGIE

No...No laddie we can't have that...We can't have
that at all.

**DOUGIE PICKS UP HIS KNIFE AGAIN. JOE
QUICKLY EXITS.**

JOE

(O.O.V) Yeeeeeeaaaagh!!!

**WE HEAR A LOUD THWANG AND THE NOISE
OF RUSTLING UNDERGROWTH. CLOSE ON
DOUGIE. HE SMILES AS AN ALUMINIUM
BUCKET HITS THE WALL NEAR HIS HEAD.
FADE TO BLACK.**

SCENE: 11 EXT. DAY.

SET: WOODED AREA BY DOUGIE'S HUT

O/B.

MIX. DOUGIE IS STOOD AT THE DOOR TO HIS HUT.

JOE

(OOV) Actually...Thinking about it...Perhaps it would be quite a good idea if we did help each other...You know...You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours... That sort of thing...Hmmm?

DOUGIE

Ach..You've soon changed your tune...listen to me now will you?

JOE

Well...Like you said...We could come up with some sort of arrangement...No one would know...What d'you say?

DOUGIE

I'll think about it.

JOE

I really could do with a bit of help...PLEASE?!

CUT TO JOE HANGING UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE BRANCHES OF A TREE.

SCENE: 12 INT DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

SARAH AND THE LAIRD STILL LOOK BORED AS MS STERLING CONTINUES WITH HER CREDENTIALS.

MS STERLING.

...Well of course you do. It's total environmental management you see. I want to work with the whole ecosystem. Create an harmonious and symbiotic whole. An environment where flora and fauna can exist as they were meant to be, in an inter linked interrelating cycle of nature. I have a special relationship with animals you know, they all seem to respect me. Not that I let feelings get in the way of my duties at all. Oh no, if some little innocent creature needs butchering for the overall good of he surrounding environment, so be it. Whilst I'm on the subject, I am of course fully qualified in many humane methods of destroying animals. A two week residential course in 'animal husbandry and advanced slaughtering techniques' in Cockfosters...

LAIRD

(WHISPERS TO SARAH). Slaughtering techniques
..Hmmm.

MS STERLING

(CONT)...I suppose if I get the job, there would be ample opportunity to put all my qualifications to the test. As you can see from my C.V. I've got a Honours Degree in Agriculture, A Masters Degree in Fish Farming, and a Diploma from the Edinburgh Guild of Falconry...I've also got a research grant from 'Walls' for my work is Bovine Management and the development of the sausage.

SCENE: 13 INT. DAY.

SET: DOUGIE'S HIDEOUT.

STUDIO.

MIX. JOE AND DOUGIE ARE SAT. JOE IS REMOVING A ROPE FROM AROUND HIS ANKLES.

JOE

What sort of Gamekeeper would I make?...I can't even walk through the woods without ending up upside down hanging from a tree...I'll never get the job anyway...Any chance of another one of your...Er ...Brews?

DOUGIE

That snare would've fooled better men than you laddie...Make no mistake about that...Now then...

DOUGIE POURS THEM BOTH A DRINK FROM THE STILL.

DOUGIE

There you go laddie...Bottoms up!

DOUGIE LAUGHS. JOE IS LESS IMPRESSED.

DOUGIE

(CONT.)...Well then laddie...There's no point in giving up now is there?...No point at all...All this way for nothing...No, no.

JOE

No but let's face it...Er...

DOUGIE

Er what?

JOE

I don't know your name.

DOUGIE

No, you don't do you...What were you saying?

JOE

Er...Oh...Well, here I am in the middle of God knows where, in a poachers hut...Drinking poachers... Whatever...And I'm supposed to be on my way to an interview as a Gamekeeper...I mean, how am I going to explain how late I am?...', I'm sorry I'm late, I just stopped off at the local poachers hut for a sniffer'...That'd go down well...And I can't exactly admit that I got lost on the way from the station can I?

DOUGIE

I see our problem...We need a plan.

JOE

Sorry?...OUR problem?

DOUGIE

Aye...I'd rather have a dosy sassanach like you as Gamekeeper, than some ex-marine professional.

JOE

I don't think you need to worry much about professionals...Not on the money his Lairdship's offering.

DOUGIE

Aye, that'd be right enough...Arsehole that he is... Now, how are we going to get you this job?...You might have some tough opposition.

SCENE: 14 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

MIX. THE LAIRD IS FLICKING BEER MATS INTO THE AIR AND CATCHING THEM. SARAH IS PAINTING HER NAILS.

MS STERLING

...I will expect full co-operation from the Estate's management of course. Access to the necessary equipment and facilities is essential if I'm to manage the game in the proper manner. I assume that you have a suitable armoury?...For the shooting parties I mean...How many beaters do you have?

AFTER A SHORT PAUSE, THE LAIRD AND SARAH REALISE THAT SHE HAS STOPPED TALKING. THEY LOOK AT HER WITH BLANK EXPRESSIONS.

MS STERLING.

Oh, I'm sure you have adequate cover. Now about remuneration. I think wage is an ugly word don't you? Now in my last position I was given unlimited use of the Range Rover. I assume you have similar transport arrangements?...

SCENE: 15 INT. DAY.

SET: DOUGIE'S HIDEOUT.

STUDIO.

MIX. JOE AND DOUGIE ARE SAT TALKING.

DOUGIE

Well things would certainly be different around here with a Gamekeeper about...We've not had a Gamekeeper in Auckterbrook since Blind James McCrimmon saw one in eighteen seventy two...And there's those that say he never actually saw him... I'd have to be on my guard for sure...Unless...

JOE

Unless what?

DOUGIE

Unless the particular Gamekeeper concerned is... Sympathetic to my needs...Shall we say?

JOE

If the Gamekeeper concerned overlooks your poaching, scheming and general misdemeanours you mean?

DOUGIE

Aye...Well...Aye...You could say that...But in return I could make your life a lot easier than it would've been... Cause you no trouble...Point you in the right direction...If you follow?

JOE

Point me in the WRONG direction you mean.

DOUGIE

Well...Aye laddie...Aye.

DOUGIE SMILES WRYLY AND TAKES A SWIG OF HIS DRINK. HE REACTS DRAMATICALLY.

DOUGIE

Another good batch...It must be the Germoline...No lad, I think we're on the same wavelength.

JOE

It's all very well being on the same wavelength...But it's not much use if I don't actually get the job.

DOUGIE

Och, don't be so pessimistic...You'll get the job all right...You'll get the job.

HE MOVES NEARER TO JOE.

DOUGIE

(CONT)...Now, you have a great deal of experience with animals...Yes?

JOE

Er...Hippopotami yes.

DOUGIE

Wild beasties?

JOE

Hippopotami.

DOUGIE

Creatures of the forest?

JOE

Creatures of the mud.

DOUGIE

Well there we are then...It's simple.

JOE

Right...Is it?...What is?

DOUGIE

All we have to do is demonstrate to that half-wit of a Laird that you have a unique talent in handling the wild animals.

JOE

How?...I don't think we'll find a Hippo around here...
Not really ideal terrain you see...Too much
undergrowth...They like open grassland and mud...
Mostly mud.

DOUGIE

What are you blethering about man?!...We don't
need a Hippo...Just a wee scary beastie to run into
the Antler at the right moment...Understand?

JOE

Ahhh!...No, not really.

DOUGIE

The plan's foolproof man!...Foolproof!...You turn up
in the nick of time...Save the day...And get rid of the
beastie...The Laird'll take you on 'cos he's a fool...
His daughter'll back him 'cos you're a man...And the
Landlord'll bake a cake in celebration...It's foolproof.

JOE

Now hang on...When you say scary beastie...What
exactly do you mean?

DOUGIE

Och, it's nothing to worry about...It won't be a real scary beastie...It'll just look like a real scary beastie.

JOE

Ah...Right...Good...Excellent...Not really dangerous at all then?

DOUGIE

Aye...I mean no.

DOUGIE RUMMAGES IN A PILE OF JUNK AND PRODUCES AN OLD WOODEN TOILET SEAT.

DOUGIE

We'll be needing this.

JOE

Just exactly how frightening is this thing going to be?

SCENE: 16 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

MIX. WE SEE. THE LAIRD USHERING MS STERLING OUT OF THE PUB WITH A YARD BRUSH.

LAIRD

...Yes, Yes Ms Sterling, I'm sure you are.

MS STERLING

...And as a result of my extensive training I'm sure I can bring a successful approach to your Gamekeeping requirements. I was trained by the S.A.S. in undercover surveillance you know... Poachers would be a thing of the past...

THE LAIRD SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HER AND LEANS ON IT. AS HE SIGHS AND RELAXES, THE DOOR IS FORCED OPEN.

MS STERLING

So you'll let me know then?

THE LAIRD SLAMS THE DOOR AGAIN.

LAIRD

Meanwhile back on the planet Earth...Who's next?

HE SITS NEXT TO SARAH. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS OF LOOKING THROUGH APPLICATIONS, SHE DIGS HIM IN THE RIBS. OPPOSITE THEM IS SAT A RATHER INEFFECTUAL LOOKING MAN, WHO SMILES RATHER NERVOUSLY.

LAIRD

I'm sorry, I didn't realise you were there...Now then
Mr...Er...

THE MAN POINTS AT HIS BADGE.

LAIRD

Right Mr...Er...Sponge...Perhaps you could tell me a little about your past employment?

MR SPONGE REMAINS SILENT, AND SQUIRMS IN HIS SEAT.

LAIRD

Er...Have you ever worked in this line before at all?

MR SPONGE NODS SHYLY.

SARAH

Where was that Mr Sponge?

HE LOOKS EVEN MORE EMBARRASSED AND STARES AT HIS FEET.

LAIRD

Ever worked with firearms before have you?

MR SPONGE OPENS HIS MOUTH AS IF HE IS ABOUT TO SPEAK, BUT CLOSES IT AGAIN.

LAIRD

I think we nearly had something then...Now then Mr Sponge, in your letter you said that you have a great love of the outdoors.

NO RESPONSE.

LAIRD

Mr Sponge?

NOTHING.

LAIRD

Hello?

STILL NOTHING.

LAIRD

Am I communicating in a language which you are familiar with Mr Sponge?

SARAH

Father!...The boy's just shy that's all...there's no need to be shy with us Mr Sponge...I'll be helping quite a lot no the job...I could take you in hand...

MR SPONGE LOOKS ALARMED.

LAIRD

I think he's better off shy!...Thank you Mr Sponge... We'll let you know.

SUDDENLY, THE DOOR OF THE BAR SLAMS OPEN AND ALL EYES LOOKS TOWARDS GROUND LEVEL. CUT TO A LOW VIEW OF THE BAR AS IF LOOKING FROM A SMALL ANIMALS VIEWPOINT. THE PEOPLE IN THE BAR APPEAR ALARMED AS THE ANIMAL RUNS AROUND THE TABLE LEGS, ETC. ANGUS JUMPS ON A TABLE AND SHOOS AT THE CAMERA WITH A FEATHER DUSTER. SUDDENLY MR SPONGE SCREAMS IN A RIDICULOUSLY HIGH VOICE.

MR SPONGE

Oooooh!...It's a wild boar!!

EVERYTHING STOPS AND EVERYONE IN THE BAR STARES AT MR SPONGE. HE LOWERS HIS HEAD IN EMBARRASSMENT. MR JELICHO IS DISTRACTED FROM ROLLING A HUGE JOINT.

MR JELICHO

Hey man...Like...Wow...Pig yea?

THE LAIRD IS STILL SAT IMPASSIVELY AT THE TABLE. SARAH LOOKS QUIZZICALLY AT THE ANIMAL, WHICH WE STILL HAVEN'T SEEN.

LAIRD

You know...In planning these interviews, I'd totally overlooked the possibility of a marauding, pork based life form, scenario

THE CAMERA SCURRIES AROUND FOR A WHILE BEFORE COMING TO REST LOOKING UP AT ANGUS WHO IS STANDING ON A TABLE.

ANGUS

Stop him!...Stop him!...He's doing doo doos on my carpet.

FROM THE ANIMALS VIEWPOINT WE SEE SARAH APPROACH.

SARAH

Relax Angus...Now, who's a nice little pig then?

SHE REACHES DOWN AS IF TO PICK UP THE ANIMAL. CUT TO. A SHOT OF HER HOLDING IT. IT IS AN ORDINARY PIGLET WITH HALF A TOILET SEAT FASTENED TO ITS LOWER JAW TO LOOK LIKE TUSKS.

ANGUS

Get rid of it!...Get rid of it!

SARAH

Oh Angus...He's cute.

**AS SARAH STROKES THE PIGLET, THE LAIRD
STRIDES OVER AND SNATCHES IT FROM HER.**

LAIRD

Enough!...The whole bleeding world's gone mad!...
Here I am, trying to conduct interview for a new
Gamekeeper...And what do the Job Centre supply
me with?...A man who cannot speak...A woman who
can't shut up...A man who is here in body alone, and
a man who is not here at all...It's like being trapped
in an episode of 'The Land That Sanity forgot'...Now
get rid of this flaming pig!!

**HE THROWS THE PIG THROUGH THE DOOR
WITH SOME FORCE. WE HEAR A SCREAM AND
A THUD FROM OUTSIDE. THE LAIRD AND
SARAH LOOK AT EACH OTHER IN CONFUSION.
FADE.**

SCENE: 17 INT. DAY.

SET: THE ANTLER - PUBLIC BAR.

STUDIO.

FADE UP. JOE IS SLUMPED IN A CHAIR APPARENTLY UNCONSCIOUS. SARAH IS GENTLY SLAPPING HIS FACE. CUT TO. THE LAIRD SHOWING MR JELICHO AND MR SPONGE THE DOOR. MR JELICHO OFFERS A HUGE JOINT TO MR SPONGE WHO DECLINES IT.

LAIRD

Good-bye now...Lovely to talk to you...Mind how you go finding your way back to the real world.

HE SHUTS THE DOOR AND GOES TO JOIN THE OTHERS.

SARAH

It must be Mr Goodwin...The last candidate...He was due on the train from London.

ANGUS JOINS THEM WITH A GLASS OF WATER, AND STARTS TO FAN JOE WITH A TEA TOWEL.

ANGUS

Poor man...What's happened to him?

SARAH

I just found him in the yard...He tried to swallow a flying pig...It's something you should never do in a peaked cap.

ANGUS

Crumbs...D'you think he's all right?

SARAH

Unless he's got strong religious objections to pork, he'll be fine...Not the most impressive way to arrive for a job interview though.

ANGUS

He's a candidate?...Why's he dressed as a...Zoo Keeper?

LAIRD

He is a Zoo Keeper...Or at least he was...Fifteen years mucking out the same Hippopotamus apparently...He was a bit of an outside bet really... Just invited him to make the numbers up.

SARAH

You got him to come all the way from London just to make the numbers up?!

ANGUS

He's got very shiny buttons though.

LAIRD

Aye well...

SARAH

I think you should give him the job.

ANGUS

Oh yes!...Why not?!

LAIRD

Why not?...WHY NOT!!...An unemployed Zoo Keeper?...An English unemployed Zoo Keeper!... Who specialises in Hippopotamuses!

ANGUS

Hippopotami.

LAIRD

Eh?

ANGUS

The plural of Hippopotamus is Hippopotami not Hippopotamuses...Though there's no proof that he ever had more than one at once I suppose.

SARAH

And he's experienced with animals.

LAIRD

A Hippopotamus!

SARAH

He's used to being outside.

LAIRD

In a Zoo!...In a bloody Zoo!!

SARAH

So?...What does it matter?...We're in a village miles from anywhere with only six inhabitants...Last year we voted a Ford Escort onto the local council...I think he'd fit in very well...And he's a man.

ANGUS

An unconscious man...Who's had a face full of pig ...He'd be well within his rights to sue you know.

LAIRD

Mmmm...

THE LAIRD REACHES OVER AND SLAPS JOE'S FACE.

LAIRD

(CONT.)...Mr Goodwin?...Mr Goodwin!...I'm the Laird of Mullshire...Congratulations, you've got the job.

JOE'S EYES SLOWLY OPEN. HE SEES THE OTHERS GRINNING BROADLY AND SLUMPS BACK INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. PULL BACK. TO THE PUB WINDOW. DOUGIE'S FACE IS UPAGAINST THE GLASS. HE SMILES SLOWLY AND NODS TO HIMSELF. FADE.

END.