

**ACT ONE SCENE ONE**

*THE LIVING ROOM IN A 'GENTRIFIED' SUBURBAN-STYLE HOUSE IN CLAPHAM. A ROUGH LOOKING YOUNG MAN, NAILS, STANDS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW. ENTER JAMES, A YOUNG, FLOPPY HAired, 'EX PUBLIC SCHOOL TYPE', STUDENT WHO LIVES WITH HIS ELDER SISTER, POLLY, IN THIS HOUSE. HE STANDS LOOKING AT NAILS FOR A WHILE AND THEN SPEAKS.*

**JAMES**

If you don't mind me asking.... Why do they call you Nails?

*NAILS TURNS MOMENTARILY TO STARE AT JAMES. AS WE HEAR A DISTANT FRONT DOOR SLAM CLOSED, HE TURNS BACK TO THE WINDOW. HIS ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THE WINDOW. HE TURNS BACK TO JAMES.*

**NAILS**

Where's your sister off to?

**JAMES**

She's gone to get something to eat.

*NAILS TURNS BACK TO THE WINDOW. HE IS ON WATCH*

**NAILS**

What?

**JAMES**

I don't know. She didn't say.

**NAILS**

Pity.

*JAMES REFLECTS ON THE YOUNG MAN IN THE ROOM WITH HIM*

**JAMES**

So? Why do they?

**NAILS**

A bucket of chicken'd be good. Do you reckon she's gone for a bucket of chicken?

**JAMES**

Possibly.

**NAILS**

Hope she gets plenty of chips. How far is it from here to the fried chicken shop?

**JAMES**

Ten minutes.

**NAILS**

Whereabouts?

**JAMES**

We tend to use the one on Lavender Hill.

**NAILS**

Thought so.

**JAMES**

Do you know it?

**NAILS**

Oh Yeah. I know it.

**JAMES**

That's our nearest one. Mind you, she could have gone for a Chinese. She likes Chinese. And it's nearer.

**NAILS**

Yeah, but I wanted fried chicken.

**JAMES**

Did you say?

**NAILS**

She didn't ask.

**JAMES**

Bit of a chicken and 'egg foo yung' situation then.

**NAILS**

Funny.

**JAMES**

Yeah. Chicken. Egg. Foo Young. Get it?

*JAMES SMILES*

**NAILS**

But not that funny.

**JAMES**

No.

**NAILS**

Eggs is OK, but you got me hopes up going on about fried chicken. Besides, eggs are better suited to breakfast; and that comes later.

**JAMES**

Are you planning on staying?

**NAILS**

Might be. Haven't made me mind up yet.

**JAMES**

And Polly's OK with that?

*NAILS DOESN'T ANSWER BUT LOOKS ONCE MORE OUT OF THE WINDOW. JAMES IS CLEARLY UNSURE ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY.*

**JAMES (CONT'D)**

So, go on, tell me... Why do they call you Nails?

**NAILS**

Did she drive?

**JAMES**

No car, I'm afraid. It's way too difficult to park around here. We use the tube mostly, with the odd taxi thrown in when needs must. Why?

**NAILS**

But you've got a microwave?

**JAMES**

Yes.

**NAILS**

Course you have. House like this? People like you? You've all got fuckin' microwaves.

**JAMES**

I beg your pardon? That's hardly polite, is it? Coming in here, into our house and then saying that.

*NAILS LOOKS AT HIM AND JUST SMILES*

**JAMES** (CONT'D)

Why d'you need to know anyway?

**NAILS**

Ten minutes walk in this weather; chips could get cold. But thirty seconds in the microwave brings 'em back to an optimum temperature.

**JAMES**

That's very specific.

**NAILS**

You have to be with microwaves. Tap the exact number in. Thirty seconds. Ping. Done.

**JAMES**

Right.

**NAILS**

Any longer and they go soft; lose that fresh, just-cooked crispness.

**JAMES**

I see.

*JAMES LOOKS AT HIM; TRYING TO WORK HIM OUT.*

**NAILS**

What's the time?

**JAMES**

Nearly midnight.

**NAILS**

Fuck. It'll be closed now.

**JAMES**

You've lost me now.

**NAILS**

If he's done what he said and changed the fuckin' opening hours.

**JAMES**

Who? Who said?

*NAILS IS SUDDENLY DETERMINED*

**NAILS**

Google it.

What? **JAMES**

*JAMES LOOKS PERPLEXED*

You got a phone? **NAILS**

Yes. **JAMES**

**NAILS**  
Then google it. Find out what time they close.

*COMPLIANT, JAMES TAKES OUT HIS PHONE AND  
BEGINS TO SEARCH WHILST STILL KEEPING AN  
EYE ON NAILS.*

**JAMES**  
How exactly did you get in?

**NAILS**  
How d'you think? Through the front door.

**JAMES**  
But how?

**NAILS**  
Your sister let me in.

**JAMES**  
Why?

**NAILS**  
You'll have to ask her.

**JAMES**  
I will.

**NAILS**  
Then I'm sure she'll provide you with a suitable answer.

**JAMES**  
That still doesn't explain what you were doing at our front door in the first place?

**NAILS**  
Christ! You're like a dog with a fuckin' bone.

**JAMES**

Just trying to get a handle on what's going on here.

**NAILS**

Going on?

**JAMES**

Yes. You just turning up out of the blue. Do we know you?

**NAILS**

No.

**JAMES**

So?

**NAILS**

I told you. Your sister invited me in.

**JAMES**

But why? Why would she do that? That's not like her.

**NAILS**

Young woman, in the house all on her own. Maybe she was lonely. Wanted some company. Perhaps, she was afraid. Frightened. Home alone.

**JAMES**

How do you know she was alone?

**NAILS**

She told me. Said you was out.

**JAMES**

I was at a gig.

**NAILS**

There you go then. Brixton Academy. Said you should've been working though.

**JAMES**

Yeah.

**NAILS**

On your thesis.

**JAMES**

It's a long essay.

**NAILS**

I know. Just 'cause I ain't written one, don't fuckin' mean I don't know what it is.

*THEY HOLD THE SILENCE. THEY ARE BOTH  
WARY OF EACH OTHER.*

**JAMES**

Did you threaten her? Is that how you got in here?

**NAILS**

No! Did she say that?

*JAMES HOLDS HIS GROUND AND JUST SMILES*

**NAILS** (CONT'D)

Did she look like someone who'd been threatened? Well? And would I have let her go waltzing off out through the front door if I had? Well?

**JAMES**

I don't know.

**NAILS**

And, do you go out and buy fried chicken for someone who's been threatening you? Well? Do you? Do you?

**JAMES**

No.

*JAMES GATHERS HIMSELF*

**JAMES** (CONT'D)

But something's not right. You're rattled. I'd bet my last farthing you're not telling the truth. At least, not the complete truth. In fact, I'd stake this house on it.

**NAILS**

Yeah?

**JAMES**

Yeah. You're hiding something. And believe me, I will find out.

**NAILS**

Will you? Well good luck with that! But if there's nothing to know, there's nothing to find out! Is there?

**JAMES**

So you say.

*JAMES SMILES AND HOLDS THE MOMENT  
HOPING THAT THE SILENCE WILL URGE NAILS  
TO SAY MORE. HE DOESN'T. HE CHANGES TACK.*

**JAMES** (CONT'D)

But if I've got you wrong, misread the situation... Then I apologise.

**NAILS**

Right.

**JAMES**

Just making conversation.

**NAILS**

Really. Do I look like a bloke who wants to make conversation?

**JAMES**

No. Not particularly.

**NAILS**

Then you should trust your instincts more, mate.

*THEY ARE SILENT AGAIN BRIEFLY. NAILS LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW. JAMES CHECKS HIS PHONE. HE HAS A RESULT.*

**JAMES**

Eleven until late.

**NAILS**

What?

*NAILS TURNS MOMENTARILY CONFUSED*

**JAMES**

When they close. The fried chicken shop. I googled it. Until late. That's what it says here. So I presume.

**NAILS**

Bastard.

**JAMES**

Is something wrong?

**NAILS**

Mind you, that information could be out of date.

*NAILS SNATCHES THE PHONE, CHECKS THE PAGE, BEFORE HANDING IT BACK*

**JAMES**

Updated two days ago.



**NAILS**

Fuck him.

**JAMES**

Is there a problem?

**NAILS**

He told me he was cutting late night openings mid-week.

**JAMES**

You've lost me again.

**NAILS**

Tosser!

**JAMES**

Do you work there? Is that it?

**NAILS**

Did. Past fucking tense.

**JAMES**

And now he's conjugating verbs.

*JAMES CLOSSES HIS PHONE DOWN AND PUTS IT  
IN HIS POCKET. HIS SUSPICIONS NOW AROUSED  
AGAIN.*

**JAMES (CONT'D)**

You still haven't said what you were doing here at our front door.

**NAILS**

Delivering newspapers.

**JAMES**

We don't have a paper.

**NAILS**

Free fucking newspaper.

**JAMES**

We always put those straight in the recycling.

**NAILS**

Yeah. You might. But some fucker has to deliver 'em first, don't they?

**JAMES**

If you ask me there's too many of them. Every other day another one. Polly and I are big supporters of the Rain Forest Trust. Do you know how many trees are destroyed each year to ...

**NAILS**

And d'you ever wonder why? Ever think what makes those Amazonian Indians suddenly think it's a good idea to start rippin' up their own gaff?

**JAMES**

I think you might find...

**NAILS**

No fucking money.

**JAMES**

That we're singing from the same hymn sheet on this one. Amazingly.

**NAILS**

I doubt that.

**JAMES**

And that's where you're wrong. As it happens, I agree with you. If it's to stop, there needs to be substantial investment...

**NAILS**

Like that's ever going to happen.

**JAMES**

People have to learn. I agree that for many working in international finance it's counter intuitive, but it's rapidly becoming a global imperative. It needs to be done, and soon. But convincing people, that's going to take time. And time, is a commodity we have little of.

**NAILS**

Do you always talk bollocks?

**JAMES**

Excuse me. I do have some expertise in this area. My thesis is on 'E.P Thompson's concept of the moral economy and its implications for global finance in the 21st Century'.

**NAILS**

Really? You can shut up now. I'm tired of this conversation.

**JAMES**

I'm just saying...

**NAILS**

Oi, cloth ears. Didn't you hear me? Shut the fuck up. Where's your sister with this chicken?