

AUNTIE JOAN, THE EVERLASTING AUNTIE

Pilot Episode

Genre: fantasy/comedy/drama, aimed at 8/12 year olds.

**American Copyright Registration:PAu 4-248-999**

Logline.

Can one woman who lives on potatoes and with a very talkative,  
highly, perhaps overly intelligent dog save the world.

PROLOGUE/TEASER SEQUENCE

FADE IN:

EXT./INT. CASTLE IN THE SKY - DAY

An enormous castle is floating just above the clouds. Rippling waves of soft cloud gently surround it. There is a large globe of the Earth floating above the main gate and stone statues either side of the entrance.

We enter through the main entrance and float through the corridors. All of the many wooden doors are closed but have signs on them. We can hear a general hubbub of chatter and see the signs on the doors as we pass through.

The signs on the doors read: "Committee for Glaciers and Iced Cakes", "Committee for Weather and Dress Patterns", "Committee for Really Nice Monsters", "Committee for Elves and Gnomes", "Committee for Potatoes and Sponge Cakes", "Committee for Singing Postmen", "Committee for the Development of Spaghetti Trees" etc.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Back before the dawn of time when the future direction of our world, our Earth, was still in the earliest planning stages, all the very many committees responsible were fully engaged in the very hard work of deciding every single detail of almost every aspect of our planet's future.

We enter a very long corridor with an impressive set of doors at the end and none along its length. There is a much larger sign on these doors reading, in capitals: "THE VERY IMPORTANT POPULATION PLANNING COMMITTEE".

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One single committee was put entirely in control of the future inhabitants; they alone would decide who we, the people, would be and what we would look like.

The doors swing open to reveal an enormous hall. In the distance sits the very important committee.

Around the hall there are several circular fenced-off areas. Inside each one, a large pig is running on a treadmill connected to a strange mechanical device, which emits sparks as it helps power the lights that hang down throughout the hall. To encourage each pig to run, a large cake is lying in front of its nose on a fixed plate

The table at which the committee sit is large and square. There are four members of the committee: COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN.

All four are very unusual humans: They each have three arms, two on the right side, one on the left; three different-sized ears; very fat tummies; long grey matted hair; long crooked noses; bright-green skin on their legs; and rather spotty faces. There are a number of insects nesting in the skin folds on their legs. They are wearing baggy shorts to the knees and a dirty white T-shirt that is stretched over their tummies.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The greatest of all their ideas was finally decided just before the dawn of time, which for easy reference was approximately tea-time on the third Thursday of the third month, of the third year, of the third millennium. The Very Important Population Planning Committee were halfway through a rather nice jam sponge, when Ben, the newest member, and at only thirteen hundred years old, just into his teens, stuck up one of his three hands.

BEN stands, putting two of his hands on his waist, and scratching his head with his third hand.

BEN

I fink  
(pause, then more emphatically)  
I fink  
(pause)  
I definitely fink

BEN sits down to rapturous applause and cries of "here, here" from the other COMMITTEE MEMBERS

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

(addressing the other COMMITTEE MEMBERS)

Ooh, ooh, it's very good he finks.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 and COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 react positively.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 (CONT'D)

We all have to start finking at some point.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

(together) So right, right you are.

BEN

I fink I have an idea; I was finking this fink all of yesterday.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Was it hard, finking for so long?

BEN

Not really, I was eating some cake and that always helps me fink.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

So what was your fink?

BEN

Uuuh, umm, I can't remember, let me try some more cake.

BEN takes an enormous slice of cake and divides it into three pieces, one in each hand. He pushes them all into his mouth in one movement, then munches for a while.

BEN (CONT'D)

(shouting at first)

Yes, yes, I remember my fink. My fink was about these new plant seedling things, to grow a type of beautiful people, looking exactly like what we are, what we finked about together last year.

(pause)

I finked why not grow one extra especially beautiful one, an absolutely perfect one, with just two arms, so we can always check how the newly finked-out people develop in the future, and if they grow in a silly stupid way, we will always have one single perfectly perfect specimen to check all the others against; we should make that one live forever as well!

BEN pauses, and the other COMMITTEE MEMBERS scratch their heads and um and ah.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well, what do you lot fink?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

(hands on face, stroking chin)

Totally brilliant finking, Ben, totally brilliant. Let's do it. If the new people grow in a silly way, we can always get rid of them and start again using the perfect sample what you finked about.....

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So that's what they did, and a specially developed seedling was planted in their garden and in the course of a few years Auntie Joan grew to a beautiful adult woman, at least in the eyes of a group of rather silly ancestors who absolutely loved jam sponge.

EXT. BRAUGHING VILLAGE HIGH STREET - NIGHT

The village High Street is deserted, and a strong wind is blowing. There are a series of half-timbered houses and thatched cottages along the central road. It is raining heavily.

A pub is open, and the bright lights from within light up the pavement. Smoke rises from its chimney, and piano music can be heard coming from inside.

(The following narration should take place as AUNTIE JOAN is walking slowly through the village, before she comes into clear view.)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This, then, is the tale of that very woman grown from a seedling so many, many, centuries ago. A woman who was the most perfectly beautiful example of their entire race. However, her creators, who were a little less than perfect in the brain department themselves, had forgotten to add a few simple things, like a proper appetite, and eyebrows.

So, our heroine was only able to enjoy eating potatoes - anything else just made her sick - skin and all, rotten or not, even covered in lumps of earth. She cared little for the fineries of baking, boiling, or even frying them. Down they went, with a pinch of salt. On the other hand, of course, she never needed to pluck her eyebrows.

She had no family, no friends, just a pet creature that enjoyed the same diet and might be called a dog, if you looked at it from behind, which was not the safest view, unless you carried an umbrella.

Auntie Joan had recently begun some research, looking for any traces of her original family.

It seemed the creators had ended up originally with some twins from this special single seedling planted in their garden. These spares had been cast into the world to mix with normal humans, which meant, as Auntie Joan had finally realised, that there must be relatives who had survived through the centuries.

She had actually found a very likely family and without warning of any kind, she is bearing down on what she hoped was their country home in Hertfordshire.

Hoping beyond hope that they would welcome her. Hoping, really hoping she would spot some resemblance to herself in these ordinary people.

(pause)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What lucky people ...

FADE OUT.

END OF PROLOGUE/TEASER SEQUENCE

## ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. BRAUGHING VILLAGE HIGH STREET - NIGHT

On this dark, windy and rainy night, an ill-defined figure emerges from the distant gloom. It is AUNTIE JOAN. With her is her DOG.

AUNTIE JOAN is large and tall. She wears a raggedy dress stained with the remnants of several meals, a loose coat thrown over her shoulders, a hat, and wellington boots. Her appearance is strange and a little revolting:

She has three ears that are floppy and of different sizes, a long-crooked nose that drips green snot, skin covered with pus-filled spots, swollen eyes with dark bags under them, and bright green legs. Insects crawl in the folds of the skin of her legs and she has cobwebs under her arms. She wears dark round glasses tilted at an unusual angle on her nose.

DOG appears to be a strange mixture of several breeds. His tail is like that of a Labrador but other of his features are distinctly feline. He has stripes like those of a tiger. DOG travels in a wooden cart, which he propels via a treadmill that turns the cart's small wheels.

As she makes her way down the street, AUNTIE JOAN is singing, "Singing in the Rain", deliberately splashing through all the largest puddles. Her voice is loud and harsh. DOG joins in by barking.

Under a streetlight, AUNTIE JOAN pulls out a strange looking phone. It is like a normal mobile but has a large old-fashioned dial attached to the front. An aerial pops out of her hat and she makes a call.

INTERCUT INT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE/EXT. BRAUGHING VILLAGE HIGH STREET - NIGHT

The call is answered by SIMON Pettifer (35).

SIMON

(into phone)

Pettifer household, who is speaking please?

AUNTIE JOAN

(into phone)

It's your Auntie. I'm your Auntie.

(singing)

I'm singing and dancing in the rain.

DOG barks several times.

SIMON

(into phone)

We don't have an Auntie; we lost her a few years ago. Who are you?

AUNTIE JOAN

(into phone)

I'm your new Auntie!! The new one, you always get a replacement when you lose something, that's me. I'm standing just opposite your house. Shall I pop in? You will love me instantly.

AUNTIE JOAN sneezes and some very large green snot bursts from her nose, and splashes on the pavement, sizzling like a frying pan. DOG shrivels his face, shakes his head and barks furiously.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Ready or not, I'm on my way to your front door. How wonderful! I hope you are all in.

(hangs up)

EXT./INT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

AUNTIE JOAN crosses the road, heads up the short drive, and bangs very hard with her fist on the Pettifer's front door, breaking a pane of glass.

AUNTIE JOAN

Oops a daisy, silly little me.

The door opens slowly. SIMON, his daughter NINA (10) and his wife DIANNE (mid-30s) are grouped closely together and peer round the partially open space. NINA is wearing an Arsenal football shirt.

As the door opens, AUNTIE JOAN is picking DOG up from the little cart. She springs up with a little jump, landing directly on the raised doorstep, almost completely in the Pettifers' faces, and holding DOG by one of his ears. DOG is grinning idiotically.

AUNTIE JOAN

It's me, Auntie Joan, the one and only,  
everlasting, loving, one of a kind! Here I am at  
last!

SIMON lets out a scream of utter shock, DIANNE faints and falls backward, and NINA turns and runs back into the house screaming.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

I knew, I just knew you would love me instantly.  
I am the happiest Auntie on this planet. I am  
going to hug and kiss you all for hours.

AUNTIE JOAN barges past the Pettifers in the hall and goes on uninvited into their lounge.

In the hallway, SIMON is waving some smelling salts under DIANNE's nose trying to get her to sit up. NINA is inside the downstairs' lavatory, the door slightly ajar, peeping out.

AUNTIE JOAN sits on the sofa, feet outstretched on DOG's back. Water drips from her hat and coat. Some large spiders creep out from the skin folds on her legs and climb up to the webs under her arms.

The television is switched on, showing an episode of *Doctor Who* with the volume up loud. The final theme music starts and AUNTIE JOAN and DOG leap to their feet and start dancing in a circle, echoing the theme music in a raucous chorus.

AUNTIE JOAN

Love it, love the whole idea, makes me so  
emotional, love the Doctor, amazes me how they



managed to film such a clearly interesting documentary. Reminds me of my past.

DOG nods his head in agreement.

In the hallway, DIANNE is shaking her head and starting to sit up.

DIANNE

Has she gone dear? Was she even real? Did we all just suffer some mass hallucination? Is it Halloween and I just forgot?

SIMON shakes his head and points to the lounge.

DIANNE

Goodness, what's that racket? Where is she?

SIMON

She's watching *Doctor Who* on our telly; I think Nina is stuck in the loo; the baby seems to have slept through it all upstairs. Shall I call the police?

DIANNE

How will you explain it: A raving loony with green legs just burst into our house and started watching *Doctor Who*? They'll arrest you first.

SIMON and DIANNE cautiously approach the noisy lounge, holding hands and both trying to hide behind the other.

SIMON

Stop it, dear, I'll go in first; you hold back by the door. If anything goes wrong, just grab the baby from upstairs and run to the neighbours'. I'll try and hold her down or something.

DIANNE

Okay, okay. Take your cricket bat; it's here in the hall cupboard.

SIMON takes the cricket bat and edges carefully into the lounge. He stands with his back to the wall, the bat held menacingly in his right hand.

AUNTIE JOAN

Cricket, brilliant idea, I love it; play with my dog all the time. I have a ball somewhere.

AUNTIE JOAN searches in an inner pocket, whilst SIMON stays with his back against the wall.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

Found it!

AUNTIE JOAN pulls an old cricket ball out from her coat pocket.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

I'll bowl. Whoopee, I knew this was going to be fun.

AUNTIE JOAN throws the ball with considerable strength. SIMON manages to get the bat between him and the ball speeding towards his head. The ball glances off the bat, hits and smashes the large mirror on the other wall, then drops directly on DOG's head, whose eyes roll upwards, and he gently rolls over onto his side. SIMON drops the bat and runs to DOG.

SIMON

(stroking DOG's head)

Oh dear, poor doggy, oh dear, did you get a bump on your head?

AUNTIE JOAN shakes her head slowly.

SIMON

Is he dead? Oh my giddy aunt, I never killed anything.

DOG winks at AUNTIE JOAN, out of SIMON'S sight.

AUNTIE JOAN

What's a giddy aunt? Is that how you lost your last one? That dog will be the death of me, even if I am immortal. There is a limit to my ability to cope with his nonsense. Give me your smelling salts, please.

SIMON hands AUNTIE JOAN the smelling salts. AUNTIE JOAN fills a dirty hanky with the entire bottle and shoves it under DOG's nose. DOG shrieks in an almost human voice and leaps about two metres in the air. He runs round the room with bits of the salts still attached to his nose. Eventually he forces his way into the toilet, where NINA is still peeking out, and shoves his nose into the toilet.

DOG

(very loudly)

Flush the toilet quickly! Don't people understand dogs have very sensitive noses?

NINA reacts in utter shock at hearing DOG speak, but she flushes the toilet over DOG's head as instructed, before running out of the room.

AUNTIE JOAN

(loudly to DOG)

Maybe you could use some of that sensitivity not to play jokes on people you have just met?

NINA

Dad, the dog spoke to me! Didn't you just hear that?

DIANNE enters the lounge with a garden spade in her hand. She stands in front of AUNTIE JOAN.

DIANNE

Stand still woman, and I mean it. I am very handy with a garden spade. Who are you and why did you just invade our home?

NINA

Mum, her dog just spoke to me, it did. I flushed its head in the loo.

AUNTIE JOAN

I am very good in the garden as well. I grow my own potatoes. Well, now and again I get hungry before they actually grow properly and pull them out again.

(pause, rubbing her tummy)

Bit peckish now, as it happens. Any old spuds about, please?

SIMON

Look, whatever your name is, can we all sit down and discuss this as reasonable people? Dianne, put the spade down. Nina, stop trying to hide behind the sofa; this lady is not harmful, well not in an intentional way.

NINA inches out from behind the sofa. DOG enters the room.

DOG

Thanks for the flushing, cleared the cobwebs as well. Love your jumper; is that your name, Arsenal?

NINA, still wary of a talking dog, doesn't reply and goes to stand behind DIANNE.

SIMON

How come your dog speaks? Dogs are just supposed to bark.

AUNTIE JOAN

It's all down to the training, years and years of it. In the end, he surprised me completely. Must have been about one hundred years ago. Can you

remember, Dog? Can you recall your first words to me? It makes me so emotional just thinking of that moment. I was trying to coax him to say something really simple, you know, like "My name is DOG" or just "Mummy", you know what I mean.

NINA

What were his first words, then? Go on, tell us, at least.

DOG

I remember it well too.

DIANNE

Go on, for pity's sake, what did you say?

DOG

I said: "What skin-care products do you use?"

DIANNE

That seems a little bit unkind?

DOG

Not really, I just wanted to avoid those myself.

AUNTIE JOAN

He made me cry. I was so emotional; it was like the Niagara Falls.

DOG

Yeah literally, you don't want to get her upset: When she cries entire streets get flooded. It's not a safe or pretty sight, not at all. I call it a Joanami

AUNTIE JOAN

(wistfully looking upwards)

I had this vision of a shared life, of a companion through life's struggles. All I got was a complaining, barking-mad cross between a dog and a tiger. Still, we do share some amusing times; he can be very funny.

DOG

She laughs a lot when I do my inside out trick, always cracks her up.

NINA

How do you do that?

DOG

I gotta be in the mood, maybe another day.

AUNTIE JOAN

Now let me explain: I am a woman of many years, born just after the dawn of time. I lived for ages in the same cave, originally with some sisters but they got called back for a re-model by our ancestors. Apparently, they were very ugly.

(strutting like a model)

It seems I was the only one blessed with such beauty.

(no longer strutting)

Never met my ancestors either, and never saw my sisters again. So in the last couple of weeks, I started looking in our local library, looking for links to my family that might survive today.

EXT./INT. A TOWN LIBRARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

AUNTIE JOAN walks up the steps of the library building, heavily wrapped in a large blanket with a large straw hat pulled down over her head. In one hand she carries a large bag of potatoes; in the other she carries an even larger bag containing DOG.

She enters the library and addresses the LIBRARIAN at the front counter.

AUNTIE JOAN

Do you have any books that show birth records for this entire country?

LIBRARIAN

We do have some going back about three hundred years. They can be accessed on this special computer system.

(points to a desktop computer lying on a small table)

You can also access all the births and deaths if you look on the records at Somerset house. You can do that at home on your own computer. Do you have a computer at home? I can write out the link for you.

AUNTIE JOAN

I don't know anything about computers?

LIBRARIAN

You don't even have a computer? How do you do anything?

AUNTIE JOAN shakes her head.

AUNTIE JOAN

I have a dog; he is very clever. We talk a lot together.

LIBRARIAN

With your dog?

DOG

(from inside the bag)

Yes, with her dog. Is that a problem?

LIBRARIAN

Your bag spoke!

DOG

(from inside the bag)

No, I did. Why don't you take the rest of the day off and go to a beauty parlour? I'll pay.

DOG's paw emerges from the bag clutching a £20 note.

DOG (CONT'D)

(from inside the bag)

May not be enough; just tell them to do their best. Anything will be an improvement.

The LIBRARIAN runs out from behind the high counter, screaming. She runs out of the front door, arms waving in the air.

AUNTIE JOAN

Will you ever learn, why scare the pants off people? We agreed no talking in a public place, remember, please.

DOG

(from inside the bag)

So why carry me around in a stupid bag, then?

AUNTIE JOAN

Not everywhere welcomes dogs: Libraries certainly don't. We will have to come back another day.

DOG

And I have an idea to get me in here. Let's try tomorrow. Come on, home straight away. The telly is good tonight!

THE FOLLOWING DAY

AUNTIE JOAN walks up the steps of the library building. As before, in one hand she carries a large bag of potatoes, but this time DOG is walking beside her on his hind legs and dressed as a young girl: A knitted hat and scarf cover most of DOG's face, but the short dress he is wearing does not cover his furry legs.

DOG

How do I look? Be honest, tell me, please.

AUNTIE JOAN

Apart from the massively furry legs, anyone could mistake you for a little girl. If anybody asks why such hairy furry legs, tell them you are due a wax treatment very shortly.

DOG

Will that make my legs more human?

AUNTIE JOAN

Of course. It can be done in almost any hairdresser's store - like that one across the road.

DOG

So, take me there first. Go on, do me a favour. How long does it take?

EXT./INT. A HAIRDRESSING SALON - DAY - FLASHBACK CONT'D

AUNTIE JOAN and DOG cross the road and enter a cheap-looking hairdressing salon. AUNTIE JOAN addresses the young ASSISTANT.

AUNTIE JOAN

My daughter wants her legs waxed, first time, you know. Dead worried she is. Can you do it very gently and keep her spirits up please?

ASSISTANT

How old is she? She looks very young. Let me see her legs, please.

DOG pulls up the skirt a little, and twirls like a ballet dancer.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

I never saw such hairy legs; this will take some time. It won't be pain free. Are you sure? Maybe

about thirty minutes. Lie on this treatment bench, please.

DOG jumps up on the bench in one go. The ASSISTANT brings a pre-heated tub of fresh melted wax and dips a long piece of paper in the molten wax and sticks in over the right leg.

ASSISTANT

Just give it a few minutes to harden, please, then I'll start the treatment.

DOG

This is quite pleasant and certainly pain free. What happens next?

ASSISTANT

You will see. I will do it very quickly. Don't worry, I do this every day; I know the job very well.

AUNTIE JOAN

That's very reassuring. Maybe I should have it done. I have lots of hairy places, particularly my chest.

The ASSISTANT looks at her watch.

ASSISTANT

Okay that's long enough; it should work now.

The ASSISTANT grips the top edge of the paper on the leg.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Now, this will be a bit painful for a short moment only.

The ASSISTANT smiles at DOG. She then yanks the strip of paper upwards and off DOG's leg, pulling a massive amount of fur off in a complete narrow single strip the entire length of his leg.

DOG's face turns bright red, steam starts pouring from his wide-open mouth, his eyes start revolving faster and faster in his head, his feet spin as well, and his dress blows off his body in one single blast, revealing his animal body. Then, on the jet of an incredibly loud fart, his entire body is shot upwards, his head smashing into the suspended light above the treatment table.

He falls back onto the table, the light fitting stuck on his head, then collapses in a crumpled heap as he falls off the bench onto the floor.

The ASSISTANT is in total shock, and for a moment nobody moves.



As DOG slowly recovers, AUNTIE JOAN gently removes the light fitting from his head. DOG sits up shaking his head.

DOG  
I think, perhaps, just maybe,  
(pause)  
we will leave the second leg for now.

DOG looks back down at the leg where there is a single stripe of pink flesh cut through the grey fur.

DOG (CONT'D)  
Hopefully the pain will ease off by Christmas.

ASSISTANT  
You're a dog, not a child!

DOG  
Funny that, so instead of reporting you for cruelty to children, should I just contact the Canine Society, or maybe the RSPCA?

ASSISTANT  
But you're speaking to me! Dogs don't speak!

DOG  
They do when someone has just ripped half their leg off. We're leaving. Do we owe you anything, or is torture free? Where is the nearest chemist shop? I need some pain killers.

AUNTIE JOAN  
Sorry, really sorry, Dog. I had no idea what it involved. I will treat you to a potato ice cream, will make it myself this evening. You know how you love that, potato peelings whipped with sour milk and kept in the fridge till it freezes.

DOG  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, try and bribe me. It was your idea.

AUNTIE JOAN  
Where is the nearest chemist, please, miss?

ASSISTANT  
Two doors down to the left. No charge, sorry it was a bit difficult. Please recommend me to all

your friends. The pain will wear off within  
twenty-four hours, don't worry.

DOG

Oh yes, recommend, of course, rely on me.

(addressing AUNTIE JOAN)

Pass me your phone; I'll do it now

DOG takes the mobile phone from AUNTIE JOAN.

DOG (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hi, is that Tom the greengrocer? Tell me, does  
your cat or dog need torturing? Try that  
hairdressers near the library, first rate job,  
and it's free...

AUNTIE JOAN and DOG leave the hair-dressers and head to the left.  
DOG is limping and has not put the girl disguise back on.

EXT./INT. A CHEMIST SHOP - DAY - FLASHBACK CONT'D

AUNTIE JOAN and DOG enter the chemist shop together. AUNTIE JOAN  
addresses the CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT who is behind the counter.

AUNTIE JOAN

Do you have some pain killers please? Suitable  
for a young child.

DOG

(whispering)

You must be joking; I need something serious.  
That girl nearly pulled my leg off.

AUNTIE JOAN

Strong ones, please.

CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT

How old is the patient, please, precisely?

DOG

(loudly, out of sight below the  
counter)

258 years and still not reached maturity.

CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT

(looking at AUNTIE JOAN)

Was that a joke?

AUNTIE JOAN

No, that was just my little one pulling your leg.

(addressing DOG)

Quiet down there, please. Remember children should be seen and not heard.

DOG

Depends if they are dying of pain.

At that moment the CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT glances up at a bank of three screens above her head. In one we can see AUNTIE JOAN as she stands at the counter; in one of the others a SHOPLIFTER, a man in a black hoody, can be seen emptying some shelves into a black plastic bag.

CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT

Don't move, please madam. There is a shoplifter stealing from us at this very moment. Down in the aisles of perfume and make up.

DOG

Go get him, missus. Punch him on the bonce, as hard as you can. Woof, Woof.

The CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT reaches under the counter and presses a bell push. Sirens start screaming throughout the shop and a steel shutter descends in front of the main shop doorway.

The SHOPLIFTER runs out of the aisle with the plastic bag bulging over his shoulder. He reaches the front door, and before the shutter falls completely, he throws the bag out and jams a metal shopping basket under the falling shutter, arresting its descent and allowing him to escape the shop through the gap.

The CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT runs over to the front door as the shutter gradually crushes the shopping basket to close the gap. She takes out her mobile phone to call the police.

AUNTIE JOAN

Time to disappear, Dog.

AUNTIE JOAN grabs the packet of pills left on the counter-top, grabs DOG, abandons her bag of potatoes, and starts spinning round in a single space. As she gets faster and faster, DOG starts shouting. She is holding dog by his front leg and as she spins his face shows a very stupid grin.

DOG

(shouting)

Love it, love it, here we go.

AUNTIE JOAN and DOG both disappear in a blinding flash, and nothing can be seen of either of them.

The CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT returns and looks around to see where the customer is hiding and sees nothing. The MANAGER rushes out of his office into the main shop.

MANAGER

What happened? Did you press the emergency button?

CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT

Yes, I did. I saw a hooded man pulling things from the shelf and pressed the alarm immediately. There was a woman and her child standing right here when the thief was pulling stuff from the shelf.

MANAGER

Maybe they were in it all together and the woman was just there to divert your attention. The CCTV will show everything.

POLICE arrive, and the shutter is raised as they enter to begin their investigation.

CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT

(addressing POLICE)

We've been robbed. A load of stuff was taken by a thief on the second aisle whilst an accomplice diverted my attention. We have a CCTV of the whole incident. Come with me to see it, please.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM, CASTLE IN THE SKY - DAY

The Very Important Population Planning Committee is again in session. However, its members, COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN, have aged considerably since we last saw them: Their hair is now longer and matted, beards touching the floor, faces aged etc. Their skin is in considerably worse condition and thick cobwebs grow under their arms.

The pigs on the treadmills have also aged and have long beards and grey hair as well.

On the table is a very large jam sponge cake with jam oozing out of the middle and a layer of frosted icing lying thickly on the top.

There are new pictures on the wall of the room (of people who look similar to the members of the committee, including one of a family with three children posed in front of a very large wooden boat).

On one wall there is also a large screen, at which a projector is pointed.

Also on the wall is a large CLOCK with numbers around its face from 0 to 500. The CLOCK shows 350 o'clock and is seemingly chiming endlessly. COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 gets up and knocks the CLOCK to the floor. It utters a few more weak chimes then its springs burst out and it is silent.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 returns to the table and calls the meeting to order.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1  
(banging on the table with an  
enormous leg bone)  
Order, Order, I bring this the eight thousand and  
eighty third annual Very Important Population  
Planning Committee meeting to order. Would  
someone like to read the minutes from last year's  
meeting?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 holds open a large heavy book, but no one volunteers.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 (CONT'D)  
Very well, if there are no volunteers to read  
them, we will take it that the minutes are  
adopted and can now be given to the keeper of the  
archives.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 rings a large bell, and a small DONKEY enters the room. It bows gracefully and the book is placed in a hamper on its back. The DONKEY is obviously burdened by the heavy weight of the book and moves slowly as it takes it away. A sign on the DONKEY's back reads "Donkeeper/Bootlicker".

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1  
I will now read the agenda for today's meeting.  
All in favour say "aye".

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2  
COMMITTEE MEMBER 3  
BEN

(together)

Aye

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 produces a list which is at least 12 metres long and unfolds it in front of himself. He begins reading.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

(reading)

"Item 1: for the committee to consider the development of ..."

LATER

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 is still reading the agenda, although he appears to be about halfway through it. The other COMMITTEE MEMBERS (i.e. COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN) have fallen asleep in various different positions (e.g. feet up on table, head in hands). There is loud snoring.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

(still reading)

"Item 426: for the committee to consider the ..."

On the floor, the broken CLOCK sprouts legs and hands and ears and runs out of the room, hands over its ears, springs trailing behind.

LATER STILL

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 is still reading the agenda, although he appears to be at the end of it. The COMMITTEE MEMBERS are still asleep, although their positions have moved somewhat. There is continued loud snoring.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

... And that concludes the agenda for today's meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 folds up the agenda, and claps his hands loudly to wake the others up.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 (CONT'D)

Unless there are any objections I will move to the first item on the agenda.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

No! No! Certainly not, no objections

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

None at all.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

But may I propose before continuing that we adjourn for a cake break?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

BEN

(together)

Aye to that.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 rises and brings a very large knife to the table and four plates. He cuts the cake into four pieces, then divides them and places one piece on each plate.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN greedily devour their portions of cake. Each does this using their three hands - breaking their piece into three, one for each hand, and shovelling the lot into their mouths.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 rings the same bell as before and the DONKEY re-appears. He signals for the DONKEY to bring more cake. The DONKEY goes to leave, grumbling on his way.

DONKEY

(Muttering under his breath)

What a pain, they drive me completely insane. I have no idea why I took this job. Everyone warned me, told me it was never going to be what they advertised. I realise now they mis-spelt butler; they meant bootlicker - bootlicker to a group of lunatics. It didn't say lunatics in the job description either.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Is there some problem Donkey; have you some complaints?

DONKEY

None at all, sir. New cake will be on its way within a few minutes. Cook has prepared sixty-three jam sponges, enough to last till supper I'm sure.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Bring two next time, if you don't mind. Save you the extra work.

DONKEY

You are too kind, sir. That will certainly save me work.

(Under his breath)

What a plonker. I am going to play pin the tail on the human later, and I will use a big nail instead of a pin. Hee Haw Hee Haw Haw.

The DONKEY leaves the room.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

The first item on the agenda is a review of development on Earth. I have prepared a series of slides that will be projected onto the screen.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 rings the bell again. The DONKEY re-appears, now balancing two enormous jam sponges on his back.

As the DONKEY approaches the table COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 holds out a carrot for him. As the DONKEY tries to take the carrot, one of the cakes falls off his back and lands upside down on the floor. Immediately, hordes of insects run off the legs of the committee members and race to the cake, climbing all over it.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Oh my goodness, it's destroyed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

Oh dear, oh dear!

BEN

No, no, it's more or less intact. I can rescue it, I'm sure.

BEN runs out and returns with a garden spade, which he uses to lift the cake off the floor and drop it on the table. The cake is covered with insects.

BEN (CONT'D)

(addressing the insects)

Shoo, shoo get back to your homes.

The insects run back to the legs of the committee members. BEN takes a knife, cuts a large portion of the cake and tastes it. His piece has a large spider on it, which he doesn't notice as he goes on to eat it whole.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's absolutely fine, a bit more crunchy than usual though.



COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Thank goodness, what a triumph!

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

Well saved!

The DONKEY, carrot in mouth, looks shocked. COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 takes the second cake from the DONKEY and places it on the table.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Donkey, please pull the curtains and start the slide show.

The DONKEY complies, and the COMMITTEE MEMBERS turn their chairs to see the screen.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Before we start this, I just want to say these pictures were taken at random in the last couple of weeks and just show a number of average humans, both male and female. Before it starts, I am going to prepare you all.

I have seen the pictures already and have never been so repulsed in my life. It is very sad that, despite everything we have done to allow them to develop freely, some terrible things must have happened to alter the structure of their bodies. So be warned, this is not going to be a pretty sight! Donkey, start the projector, first slide please.

The DONKEY presses the button and a photo appears on the screen. We cannot see the first picture; however, the COMMITTEE MEMBERS react in shock and revulsion, all holding their hands over their mouths. Now we see the screen and it is a picture of Brad Pitt (or similar).

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Oh dear me, dear me, I never saw such a horrific image. The poor man!! Dare he even show himself in public?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

I know, I know, wait it gets worse. I am sorry you have to see this, really sorry. Donkey, next slide please.

The DONKEY presses the button and a picture of Myley Cyrus (or similar) appears. The COMMITTEE MEMBERS again react in shock and cover their eyes this time.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

My goodness, do her parents know what she looks like? Maybe they abandoned her as a small child.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Next slide please.

The DONKEY presses the button again and a smiling picture of David Beckham appears.

There is a combined scream from the COMMITTEE MEMBERS, and BEN is physically sick on the floor. Insects run from legs to devour the vomit. COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 and COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 sob and bawl into over-large handkerchiefs.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Even our dear donkey is better looking than that!  
(addressing the DONKEY)  
Just skip on quickly to slide ten. For all our sakes, get these horrors off the screen.

The DONKEY skips through other slides as instructed to display slide ten, which is of Auntie Joan. She is shown smiling with a mouth full of blackened teeth. On one side of her is a pile of green snot, on the other a heap of dirty potatoes.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

We have failed friends, failed, failed.  
All our dreams of creating an entire race  
of people in our own image lie in tatters.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

Thank goodness we have such an outstanding beauty in Auntie Joan. She might well be destined to save the entire race of humans on Earth. She's one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen.  
(addressing BEN)  
Ben, you did well so many years ago, finking this out.  
We must start again as we predicted.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

All our hard work wasted. We better get on with a plan as soon as possible. How about another great flood or a really big meteorite? What are you all finking?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 pauses and he stands up, hands raised in the air.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

(with great solemnity)

Maybe, just maybe, gentlemen, the time has arrived when we must, for the first time in a thousand years, ...

(pause)

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN react with astonishment.

BEN

Oh my goodness, he is going to do it, I just know.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Yes, yes, I fink he is going to do it. The first time in maybe one thousand years, you may be right. Oh my goodness, here it comes, he only paused to gather strength.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

... My friends, my dearly beloved colleagues, gentlemen. The time is clearly here, clearly now, we must take the situation in hand.

(loudly and with great presence)

We shall fight them in the bathrooms; we shall fight them in the kitchen; we can never be defeated. If we live for a million years, people will say, this was their finest hour.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN cheer and clap.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 gets up and leaves the room. COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN are in a state of nervous anticipation. COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 returns with a tray loaded with four boxes, each one labelled: "FINKING HAT"

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

My goodness, he has brought them himself. I am in complete shock, my goodness gracious me.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2 places one box in front of each member, and returns to his place at the table.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Gentlemen, prepare to open your box. Silence all round, this is a moment of great destiny. Donkey, play the appropriate music please.

The DONKEY is standing by a music system and presses a start button. "Twist and Shout" by the Beatles blares out.

DONKEY

Oops sorry, wrong track.

The DONKEY presses the button again and we hear the first section of Beethoven's 5th symphony (39 seconds of it exactly and only). Then there is silence. The room darkens automatically as four spotlights land on the four boxes. As COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN remove the lids of their boxes, the room is plunged into complete darkness.

The lights return in full and we see COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN seated and wearing very strange crowns.

Each crown is made of rusty metal with a lining of toilet paper (some of which is hanging loose). They contain rough stones rather than jewels and each one is topped with a fish skeleton and a sign reading "FINK KING".

DONKEY

(bowing in servility)

Your majesties, I am your servant.

The smashed CLOCK runs into the room.

CLOCK

Your majesties, I am fixed and returned, just to serve you.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN start to engage in a serious conversation in hushed tones, and the scene ends with a shot showing the picture of Auntie Joan remaining on the screen.

INT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

AUNTIE JOAN is concluding her recounting to SIMON, DIANNE and NINA of the events we have seen in the flashback sequences.

AUNTIE JOAN

So, as you can see, we found you. It was difficult: We went back to that library and used their computer - they showed me how - and it took a couple of weeks, but ...

(raising her voice)

... here we are!

Bet you really excited now that I have arrived.

SIMON

Never more so. It's been a blast so far. The dog nearly died, my wife collapsed, and our lounge is nearly wrecked. Goodness alone knows whether the neighbours have been alerted.

The television is still on in the corner of the room, and we hear the evening news is just starting.

DIANNE

Can we listen to the news, please? I just need some distraction.

NEWSCASTER

(on TV screen)

Today in the headlines: America will vote shortly in their national election for a new President, England's football team fly to the World Cup full of hope, and we start with some very disturbing news from a Chemist in North London. Over to our reporter on the scene, Rebecca Johnson. Evening Rebecca, tell us what's going on.

EXT. A CHEMIST SHOP - NIGHT

Reporter REBECCA JOHNSON (late 20s) is seen on screen outside the same chemist shop we saw earlier.

REBECCA JOHNSON

Yes, a couple of weeks ago a vigilant shop-assistant noticed a thief emptying some shelves in the middle of her chemist's store. At the time, she was serving a woman who was dressed strangely - with a heavy blanket round her shoulders and an over-sized hat on her head - and who was apparently accompanied by a child below the counter height. This has roused the suspicions of the local police. The thief got away just before the shutters on the front door came down.

The woman and her child had also disappeared when the assistant returned to the counter. There was no other obvious escape route, and when the police and staff examined the CCTV, they made an extremely unusual discovery. We are going to show you now the relevant excerpt from that actual video.

The police are asking in advance if anybody recognises the woman and what seemed to be her dog, not a child. Please ring your local police station with any information.

INT. A CHEMIST SHOP - DAY

The video clip is shown on screen.

We see the same scene in the chemist shop we saw earlier replayed but this time from the perspective of in-store CCTV.

The clip begins with AUNTIE JOAN and DOG at the counter with the CHEMIST SHOP ASSISTANT having disappeared from view. We see AUNTIE JOAN take the pills from the counter, and then AUNTIE JOAN and DOG spin and disappear in a flash as before, leaving only a bag of potatoes. However, from this perspective, we now also see DOG deliberately making faces at the camera.

EXT. A CHEMIST SHOP - NIGHT

The shot returns to REBECCA JOHNSON concluding her report.

REBECCA JOHNSON

So, this was clearly some sort of trick, but the shop assistant does say she saw no trace of the pair in any form whatsoever when she returned to the counter. She also added that she heard the dog ... - and this is the unbelievable additional information that thrust this report into the headlines - she said very clearly that the dog definitely spoke to her before she went to chase the thief.

North London constabulary are very anxious to interview anybody that knows or even thinks they know anything about either the woman or the dog. They have offered a reward of £5000 for any information leading to their arrest.

This is Rebecca Johnson reporting from North London, and now back to the studio.

INT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

We see SIMON get up and switch off the television, a look of alarm on his face.

EXT. A CHEMIST SHOP - NIGHT

The scene picks up immediately after REBECCA JOHNSON has finished her report. The CAMERAMAN switches off his camera and the SOUND TECHNICIAN lowers his microphone.

CAMERAMAN

Do you know what this dog was supposed to have said, Rebecca?

REBECCA

Yes, you can hear it clearly on the original video - the police cut it out from the version that was sent for publication. The dog said something about punching the thief on his bonce, apparently, and then barked loudly. Very strange, and there are definitely only the woman and the dog in the CCTV video.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

The Pettifers, SIMON, DIANNE and NINA are discussing the TV news broadcast with AUNTIE JOAN and DOG. AUNTIE JOAN sits, flopped down, in a large single chair at the side of the room. SIMON, DIANNE and NINA sit in a tight group on the larger sofa.

SIMON

My goodness, there you were, you and your daft hound, clear as day, there on our telly.

DOG

I might remind you that I have in fact completed an intelligence test sent to us by post and managed to score just over 155, that's stunning for a human, and equivalent to Einstein in a dog's world. You go and find any single dog in the world close to that.

SIMON shakes his head.

DOG (CONT'D)

Of course not, admit it. I speak therefore I am.

DIANNE

But what if the police find you in our house? We will all be arrested as accomplices. Maybe the neighbours saw you arrive and saw this thing on the telly. We are doomed. From the moment you jumped onto our step, I knew we were up to our eyes in camel pooh.

AUNTIE JOAN

We once had some potatoes with that on them, completely delicious. Came from Morocco, if I remember correctly.

So down to business, you are probably wondering why and how and for what reason I was searching for you.

I could die for a potato, by the way.

NINA

Shall I go and get you a couple of potatoes? Does the dog like them too?

DOG

Sure do. I eat them raw as they come straight from the earth. They put hairs on your chest and in my case on my bald leg.

DOG examines his damaged leg; the fur has mostly grown back.

DOG (CONT'D)

Looking better by far. What's this button do on the side of the chair?

DOG pushes the recliner button on the chair AUNTIE JOAN is sitting on. It reclines very quickly.

DOG (CONT'D)

Blimey this is a good thing.

AUNTIE JOAN is nearly in the fully reclining position, her arms flailing above her head and her legs in the air. Her leg insects are obviously confused and lots of them are trying to escape the upside-down legs, climbing up towards her shoes. Some of them leap onto the side of the chair and sit perched on the arm.

AUNTIE JOAN

What is this? Well for the life of me, I have never seen such a thing.

DOG keeps pressing the button and AUNTIE JOAN is catapulted up and down relentlessly.



AUNTIE JOAN

Stop it you are making me dizzy.

DOG stops pressing the button.

NINA

How come you're so infested with so many insects?  
It's revolting, ugh, makes me sick.

AUNTIE JOAN

Not at all. We co-exist! Surely you understand that living things need each other? All these little bugs are sharing things with me. I give them good things, from my exciting diet of potatoes, and they give me back all sorts of benefits.

NINA

Like what?

AUNTIE JOAN

Well, I never get an itch ever; they do my scratching. I never get bitten by a wasp or stung by a bee. I don't get dandruff. I can see in the dark. I never need a bath or wash. The list is endless. It's how our ancestors set things up. It's really worth doing; maybe I can transfer some to you?

(pause)

I haven't had a bath in about two centuries - bet you couldn't tell.

DOG

(screwing up his face)

Depends on your nasal sensitivity.

NINA

No, not really. And no insects, thank you - I'm absolutely sure. Why do you have three ears? That's a bit weird.

AUNTIE JOAN

The third ear is specially used when our ancestors want to speak to you directly. It's a sort of built-in mobile phone.

Once the insects start living on you, they become very friendly. They will never desert you or go and live on another human. It's marvellous really. Why not try just one? My left-knee spider

has just had some babies. Surely you might just try one. She won't mind, I'm sure.

AUNTIE JOAN reaches down and puts her hand behind her left knee. She removes her hand to reveal a large spider sitting in it, together with a number of really small spiders running around in circles.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

These only hatched a few days ago, still very young and keen to learn.

SIMON

In your world where dogs speak and apparently insects act as housekeepers, there must be so much more to find out. Do all animals speak in your world?

DOG

They certainly do, and in another couple of hundred years all the animals living here will do the same. I speak in dog barks to other dogs, and they all say the same thing: Humans utterly misunderstand their needs. How many times could you bare to be told to "sit" before you are completely revolted? Shall I come and pat you on the head for half an hour, and the food you give them, ugh.

These dog food companies should be locked up. Half the stuff they market as pure chicken is pure rubbish from any animal that passed by the factory that day.

AUNTIE JOAN

Yeah, a friend of my dog told him the other day that he thought he tasted human bits in his supper.

SIMON

What? That's not possible.

DOG

Entirely possible, we saw in the news that the owner of a dog food company went missing recently. The family were distraught; then they claimed on his life insurance - you get the point. They got the money and the costs of production fell that week, a win-win situation.

AUNTIE JOAN

Stick to potatoes, I say. Never goes wrong, no artificial bits and bobs. What was the company called?

DOG

Dan's Delicious Dogs Dinners, I think.

NINA

Yes, I said I would bring you some potatoes. I'll go now.

NINA leaves the room and returns quickly with a few potatoes on a plate.

NINA (CONT'D)

Raw straight from the farm. Shall I wash them?

AUNTIE JOAN

No thanks. King Edwards, my absolute favourite.  
(throwing a potato for DOG)  
Here, Dog.

DOG does a somersault and catches the potato as it bounces up from the floor.

AUNTIE JOAN (CONT'D)

He's just showing off. He only worked that trick out about forty years ago, and has been perfecting it ever since. Bit of a pain really.

The peace of the room is suddenly disturbed by the sound of police sirens approaching from the distance. They get considerably louder and are followed by the screech of tyres just outside the window. Loud voices can be heard.

EXT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Outside the Pettifer house, a neighbour, NEIGHBOUR 1, is talking with a SENIOR POLICE OFFICER.

NEIGHBOUR 1

Over there officer. No, no, the house with the blue door. I saw them an hour ago; they just marched into the house.

INT./EXT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

DIANNE reacts in panic at the sound of a loud knock at the door.

DIANNE

It's the police. One of the neighbours obviously recognised you from the TV and saw you going into our house.

(shouting)

What now, Simon? We are all going to get arrested.

SIMON peeks out through the closed curtains. There are now three police cars outside containing more POLICE OFFICERS.

SIMON

They're coming for you, Auntie Joan. What shall we do?

DOG

Nothing, they can't arrest us, or you, if we're not here. Auntie Joan, time for one of your twizzles, I suggest.

AUNTIE JOAN

No, no, we will go with them, if they insist. Don't worry about us. I have some ideas how to throw them off the trail.

There is a repeated loud banging on the front door. Outside is the SENIOR POLICE OFFICER and OFFICER 2, who is holding a large Alsatian on a tight lead.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

(shouting through the letterbox)

Open up, open this door, please, or we will just knock it down.

SIMON opens the door with DIANNE and NINA standing behind him.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Good evening, sir. We have reason to believe you are hiding some known criminals in this house. We have a warrant to search the place, and I have placed my men all around, so there is no possibility for anyone to escape.

SIMON

You mean our visitors? They popped in for tea a little earlier. They are the most charming of guests. Why on earth are you interested in them?

OFFICER 2

Is there a dog with your guests?

SIMON

Why yes, a lovely creature, pure pedigree, a novel new species I understand.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

(sidling up to SIMON and whispering in his ear.)

Can you tell me, sir, man to man, has the dog actually spoken at all? Said anything to you or anyone? Strictly between ourselves.

SIMON

(laughing out loud)

Yes officer, he spoke most seriously about the state of the country, and argued in favour of giving the vote to dogs over the age of five. Are you barking mad, officer? You are pulling my leg I presume?

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Well, to be honest sir, we are not entirely sure about any of this, but because it was on the telly, we have to be seen to be pursuing our enquiries.

SIMON

Well, to be fair to you officer, I understand all this. We are talking about our Auntie Joan, a woman not in the best of health, she is in our lounge just now. She popped round a short while ago, enormously concerned that she may be implicated in that store robbery.

I am sure she can explain everything. She was more frightened than anything else when the alarms went off.

(pause)

About the dog, because Auntie Joan is rather lonely, she has a tendency to talk to her dog and also reply to herself, you know what I mean. Come and meet them and ask her anything you like.

AUNTIE JOAN is standing directly the other side of the lounge door, hand cupped to the door, listening carefully to every word. She looks at DOG, puts a finger to her lips.

She quickly sits down back onto the reclining chair, pulls her skirt down over her legs, puts her glasses on the coffee table, and holds her hands over her face. DOG lies stretched out on the floor at her feet.

The door opens and the SENIOR OFFICER and OFFICER 2 enter, the latter accompanied by his Alsatian. DOG rolls over onto his back, feet in the air, and barks twice in a low tone. The Alsatian barks back three times in a row, followed by a single fourth bark.

SIMON, DIANNE and NINA follow the police officers into the room.

SIMON

Auntie Joan, are you awake, dear? These nice gentlemen want to chat with you.

AUNTIE JOAN

Which gentlemen, Simon? Where are they?

SIMON

(addressing the SENIOR POLICE OFFICER)

Sorry officer, can you stand a little nearer? Her sight and hearing are no longer at their best.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Are you Auntie Joan?

AUNTIE JOAN

Yes, that would be me. Who wishes to know? Would someone pass me my spectacles, please?

(giving a little giggle)

Blind as a bat without them.

The SENIOR POLICE OFFICER hands AUNTIE JOAN her glasses.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Madam.

AUNTIE JOAN

Call me Auntie Joan, everyone does.

(giving a longer second giggle)

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Very well. Auntie Joan.

AUNTIE JOAN

Yes young man, how can I help you? Is that your doggie? What is he? - looks like a big poodle from here! Here boy come to Auntie, come on.

The Alsatian jumps across the room and leaps into AUNTIE JOAN's lap. The chair tips over and they both fall in a heap on the floor.

OFFICER 2

I am so sorry, ma'am. He has never done that before. Here Thomas, here boy. Are you alright, ma'am?

Initially the Alsatian doesn't move, but DOG barks quietly twice and then the Alsatian gets up, licks AUNTIE JOAN's face, and goes to sit by DOG on the floor. The Alsatian whimpers a little, DOG nuzzles his face, and they lie down together.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Auntie Joan, you were in a chemist shop a couple of weeks ago whilst it was being robbed. My colleagues are concerned you were connected to the thief and acting as a decoy whilst he stole quite a lot of valuable items.

In response AUNTIE JOAN laughs out loud raucously. She stands up and goes over to DOG.

AUNTIE JOAN

Dog, we were terribly scared, weren't we?

(pretending to be DOG's voice)

Yes, we were, weren't we, Mummy?

(in her normal voice)

We hid behind the counter and then the Manager gentleman came down and we ran out through the back entrance of his office. Didn't we run fast, Dog?

(pretending to be DOG's voice)

Yes we did, Mummy, we did.

DOG barks twice, goes over to AUNTIE JOAN and puts his head on her feet. The Alsatian starts making a very human-like laughing sound: a cross between a growl and a laugh.

AUNTIE JOAN

Your Alsatian is starting to sound a bit like a human. Isn't that amazing? Dogs are such clever things. Maybe he's hungry, or fed up of being forced to chase criminals every day. Maybe he doesn't like the food you serve him every day. Maybe he would prefer to just chase sheep!

The Alsatian makes a sound between a growl and the words: "here, here".

SIMON

Sounds like he is agreeing. Who knows, maybe dogs will eventually be able to talk to us.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

Right, I am convinced your Auntie Joan has nothing to do with the criminal activity a couple of weeks ago. She certainly does not fit the profile and just seems a rather doddery, older, and charming lady. My apologies sir, for disturbing your evening and again, AUNTIE JOAN, thank you for your co-operation.

The SENIOR POLICE OFFICER strokes DOG on the head.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Lovely doggy, strange breed but still lovely. Well, we must be going; we have other serious crimes to solve.

The SENIOR POLICE OFFICER and OFFICER 2 go to leave the room. Just as OFFICER 2 is leaving, DOG (with his back to OFFICER 2) speaks.

DOG

All their dog ever wanted was to be a sheepdog...

OFFICER 2 turns round in his tracks and stands with his mouth wide open in shock. AUNTIE JOAN quickly bends down by DOG, stroking his head.

AUNTIE JOAN

Yes doggy, just like you, a proper little sheepdog; we all need to be happy in our skins.

(then whispering in DOG's ear)

One more word from you and you will be permanently splattered over the nearest wall.

DOG

Baa, Baa.

OFFICER 2 smiles and leaves the room.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. A SMALL FLAT IN HACKNEY - DAY

In a small flat above a building in Ridley Market in Hackney, London, GRAHAM (mid-30s) is looking at a PC computer. He is watching a video that he has slowed down in order to carefully observe the activity.

GRAHAM wears a dirty white T-shirt with the slogan "Nerds forever" on the front and "Nerdiness is a healthy sign of inner charm" on the back, sagging old jeans with red braces, worn-out slippers, and a back-to-front baseball cap. His hair is matted and dirty, his face pimply and unshaven. His finger nails long and dirty.



The room is very untidy. There are dirty pots and pans everywhere, the sink is full with debris, and the rubbish bin is overflowing. The curtains are drawn and the room is lit by a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

The video is exactly the same one of AUNTIE JOAN and DOG in the chemist shop, but it is moving very slowly on the screen.

GRAHAM types some instructions into the keyboard. He stops the video and picks up his mobile and makes a call.

INTERCUT INT. A SMALL FLAT IN HACKNEY/BUSY LONDON CAFÉ - DAY

GRAHAM holds a phone conversation with JEFF (mid-30s), who is in a busy London café with a laptop open in front of him. In contrast to GRAHAM, JEFF is very smartly dressed.

GRAHAM

Jeff, is that you? Graham here. Can we speak, please?

JEFF

Yes, mate. What brilliant idea has your extraordinary bonce come up with, some scheme to make us millions? Are we on track for another over-night success?

GRAHAM

Yes mate, this time it's right on the button, and it's definitely a stroke of utter brilliance.

JEFF

Yeah, like the last twenty or so over the last month. You just sit there and think that thinking is enough; thinking is just the start. You need to take a piece of paper, write it all down, and look at it a day later. If it still looks good and you have worked out all the things that can go wrong, leave it a whole week, then ring me.

GRAHAM

What! Would you have told me all that if I was Einstein?

JEFF

No, 'cos Einstein would not ring me and tell me that a new way of developing scrambled eggs was to keep chickens in vibrating cages. Nor that the Bermuda triangle was in Bermondsey, because you can't spell. In general, Graham, I still care for you, you are my mate, always have been, but you

need to get out of your flat and look at the world, maybe once a month to start with.

GRAHAM

But everyone has their own special moment; maybe mine is now. How do you know if I haven't told you?

JEFF

Go on then, try me, maybe one day, just once, you are right, never mind how silly your ideas can be, maybe just once in a lifetime you may be almost right.

GRAHAM

I'm going to send you a short video in a moment, only forty seconds. I've been working on it with some new software that adds sound back when it's been deleted. Clever stuff really. I'll send it to your phone.

JEFF

Go on then.

GRAHAM clicks with his mouse and we see the "sent" message on his screen.

JEFF

Got it, ta. Will call you back in a few mins.

JEFF touches his phone screen, and we see the CCTV video playing. This time, however, DOG can clearly be heard saying, "Go get him, missus. Punch him on the bonce, as hard as you can. Woof, Woof," and later as he is spinning, "Love it, love it, here we go."

JEFF rewatches the parts where DOG is speaking, then closes the screen and calls GRAHAM back.

JEFF

Graham, that's some sort of ventriloquism. Clever all together but no more than that.

GRAHAM

That's the point; the new software clearly allocates the sounds to their exact source; there would be no point otherwise.

JEFF

Are you serious? It must be some sort of fakery.

GRAHAM

Not possible, checked again and again. Cleared it all down and started again twice. The silly dog definitely spoke.

JEFF

Good grief man, good grief, so what does this all mean?

GRAHAM

The dog is worth millions, just millions.

JEFF

So what?

GRAHAM

I want to find the animal and kidnap it. The owner is some old woman, hardly likely to be a problem. Dog stealing is easy, and you can always say you found it straying somewhere. When she takes it for a walk, we can grab it. She will just think it's lost.

JEFF

The last bit of shenanigans like that and we nearly got nicked. Remember, you thought you had found a goose that lays golden eggs. Yeah, stupid of me to even believe you. It would have helped if we even knew the difference between a goose and a duck.

I'm going to come round, straight away. I want to see this software and the PC version of the film. See you shortly.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM, CASTLE IN THE SKY - DAY

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1, COMMITTEE MEMBER 2, COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 and BEN are sitting in their places at the table. Around them are many empty cake plates piled up on the table and on the floor. All four are wearing their "FINK KING" crowns but all look considerably older than last we saw them, with their hair and beards nearly so long as to touch the floor

Over by the window the DONKEY is fast asleep, snoring loudly, under a large blanket that hides almost his entire body.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Gentlemen, gentlemen, we need to get this decision sorted. We have over-run our allotted

time by a number of years already, there are no more jam sponge cakes left, and we are basically running on empty! Even with our special finking hats on, we are getting nowhere fast.

BEN

It's too difficult for my finking power, and not having cake just makes it almost impossible. My tummy feeds my finking parts.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

(together)

Here, here.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

No cake, and no decision, the worry is aging us all. Too much stress is unhealthy. Every hour that passes adds years to us all.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

It's even affected the donkey. All he does is sleep. Where are those carrots?

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 picks up a carrot and goes over to the DONKEY, pulls the cover off, and gives him the carrot. We see that the DONKEY has also aged visibly: His mane is long and overgrown and he has a beard that goes to the floor. The bottom half of his legs are also turning green.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3 (CONT'D)

Go home, donkey. We will call you when we need you. Go and get some rest.

The DONKEY leaves the room limping and holding a walking stick.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Well let's summarise: We have failed twice in the past with this idea of re-generation. The first time we tried a meteorite, the second a flood.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

Yes, the first wiped out everything. Nothing was left, even small possibilities that had looked promising. The dinosaurs were all very pretty animals, and the few humans had not started in any serious way, just some early versions of the

monkeys. That was a big mess. Well, we were learning on the job.

BEN

Well, it's pretty obvious we can't do that again. It's too painful for everyone. What about the flood then? I fink that was a proper success.

BEN stands up and goes to the picture on the wall of the family and three children in front of the boat. Up close, we can see all the family in the picture have the same mix of features as the committee members. Also, there is a small plaque on the bottom of the picture. It reads: "Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, Naamah, average age 600 years."

BEN (CONT'D)

Noah did very well: He saved all the animals and when it had all dried up was able to start again. But even he said he wasn't sure if any other humans had actually survived. No-one knew!

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

We need a more humane method.

Just at that moment, the DONKEY re-enters the room carrying an enormous jam sponge on his back.

DONKEY

We found one last jam sponge. It was at the back of the pantry hidden by a huge tub of carrots.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 2

Wow, we are saved, thank goodness.

Collectively the COMMITTEE MEMBERS place the cake in the centre of the table and move all the empty plates to the floor. The cake is then cut into four and devoured greedily.

DONKEY

May I suggest something? Why don't you rain jam sponges down upon the people of Earth. They will love that, over-eat and then simply all get so fat they won't survive. Not an unpleasant way of dealing with the problem.

BEN

Ooh, I finked something like that idea myself earlier today. It's a brilliant solution, and if any jam sponges are left over, we can always help to finish them off.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

We have to fink about that carefully. In the meantime, our most important rule always was: If there is even one single being from the general population left on Earth that resembles us and our original plan, we must not destroy the entire population. So, we had better ask Auntie Joan to check again for us. How is that dog she asked for so long ago. Apparently, he has learned to speak. That Joan is not just a pretty face.

BEN

Her dog was a major mix up: The wrong seeds were all thrown together, and when they came out that machine no-one knew what we had created. I fink he is half-tiger, half-cat and half-dog.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

You are not finking straight, Ben. You can't have three halves in anything, except a cake.

BEN

Maybe, but this creature behaves like a dog that has swallowed a bottle of pep pills most of the time. Must be the only four-legged animal with attention deficit disorder.

COMMITTEE MEMBER 1

Let's see how long it will take the cooks to create enough cakes; it's the key to our success. I am still convinced this messy population experiment is over.

The sound of their voices fades as the COMMITTEE MEMBERS continue their discussion, and we hear the NARRATOR's voice as the scene ends.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So, simply on the suggestion of a really old donkey, a rather clever plan was hatched, based on an entirely novel way to destroy the entire population of the Earth, that is if you avoid thinking about how many people on Earth may not like jam sponge, so would avoid eating them. I suppose that if so many fell on the Earth, many people would be destroyed by the cakes falling directly on them anyway. "Death by Jam Sponge" would probably just be another terrible episode

in the history of the world, ranked with the extinction events of the far distant past.

Fade Out

Fade in.

INT./EXT. THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

AUNTIE JOAN is about to leave. She is standing by the front door, a small bag of potatoes in her hand. SIMON, DIANNE and NINA are seeing her and DOG off.

SIMON

Well, thanks for popping in. It's been a real pleasure, and fortunately we were not all arrested for some awful crime. Please pop by again soon; just give us a few days' notice so we can flee the country.

NINA

You don't mean that, Daddy. Surely, we can consider that Auntie Joan may really be related to us. She has done some research, and in the end, they are both a lot of fun. I just adore Dog.

AUNTIE JOAN

Thanks Nina, I can promise you I will come back and bring all the information we found about our possible relationship. In the end when you find out who I really am, I think we will be not just family but good friends.

There is the sound of a baby starting to cry from upstairs in the house.

DIANNE

Well, must be off. Our little Sammy needs his next feed. Funny though, it's not potatoes.

DOG

I was weaned on potatoes, minced and served in warm sour milk - never did me any harm.

NINA

Come again soon. Ignore my dad; he's just very square-minded, I will work on him a bit.

NINA reaches over and gives DOG a kiss on the head. DOG is overcome and flops around the driveway, eventually doing a couple of somersaults back to NINA and leaps into her arms.

DOG

My very first kiss from a girl. This is the first sign of true love. I am yours forever, well unless any other girl tries to kiss me. Do you want to see my inside-out trick? I keep it for special occasions.

AUNTIE JOAN

Not today, not today. We are off, many miles to travel - you know the routine.

DOG

Tatty taters to that, a quick twirl and we are there.

AUNTIE JOAN

You know it tires me out.

DOG

Oh go on, I love it.

DIANNE

The baby is still crying; I must be off, but I'm sure we will meet again.

DIANNE leaves the others to go upstairs.

AUNTIE JOAN

Come on then Dog, a quick twizzle. Stand back, you lot, it creates a lot of turbulence.

DOG jumps into AUNTIE JOAN's arms. She holds his front paw and leg and starts spinning. Slowly at first. DOG is flying round grinning at SIMON and NINA. The speed intensifies, and then in a sudden flash they both vanish, leaving only some trailing smoke behind.

NINA

That was rather impressive.

SIMON is standing in shock. He starts prodding the bushes on the side of the driveway.

SIMON

It's some trick. Come out wherever you are. Come on, I know you are in the bushes.



NINA

They have gone. Maybe you'll realise now they were something rather special, and next time they arrive try to be a touch nicer to them. I suspect we are in for some special times with them.

SIMON

Maybe so, but when we all saw them for the first time, they frightened us all to death.

NINA

Never judge by appearances, Dad, never ever.

She picks up DOG's little cart and takes it into the house.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

PILOGUE/NEXT EPISODE TEASER SEQUENCE

FADE IN:

INT. UPSTAIRS IN THE PETTIFERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Upstairs DIANNE has taken the baby SAMMY (10 months old) from his cot still wrapped in a blanket, and is holding him in one arm as she prepares a bottle to feed him. The bottle is ready, and she sits on a small rocking chair and pulls the blanket off his face. The baby has a small but very crooked nose, absolutely identical but much smaller than Auntie Joan's.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPILOGUE/NEXT EPISODE TEASER SEQUENCE



Auntie Joan in a very early original photograph.