

# Spree

another amateurish attempt at

a play

by Seldo Voss

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# Preface

This is my second attempt at a play. The first, called Silly Things, was submitted to Freshblood but rejected last year on the reasonable grounds that it was too difficult to stage as it required a cast of at least 14, mainly men. Spree has been written with Freshblood's constraints in mind: it requires a cast of five, four of whom are women, and there no very complex sound or visual effects (although there is always room for a creative director to include these).

Spree is meant to be a comedy (Monty Python fans will recognize its heavy influence in a few places) and as such the plot is not particularly important. It follows a single very bad day in the life of one Jason Parti, who accidentally gets repeatedly caught up in a series of robberies in a crime spree by a pair of radical activists. There's slightly more to it than that, but I wouldn't want to spoil what few surprises there are. Running time is around an hour.

As with my last attempt at writing for Freshblood, some significant caveats apply: I am not a writer, or even a student of theatre. I do computer science, and writing is strictly a hobby. As such, the play is likely to be rife with scenes which do not "work" in a play, such as actors remaining silent for too long or shifting position suddenly without any stage directions to indicate when they should have done so. Please bear this in mind when reading. GILLIAN: I consider this to be the first draft of the play, to be edited and modified in light of the experience of the actors, the director, and the resources available. The form of the play is not set in stone – I can add scenes, take away scenes, change the ending, insert a dancing monkey, whatever you want – I'd just quite like to see Freshblood put on something that vaguely resembles a play that I wrote.

I do not have a director or any other staff in mind, as I don't know any :-). I'd quite like to play Jason, but I suspect I do not have enough free time to do so and in any case there are probably much better actors than me around to do it. I can be contacted on **07971478119**, or by email at [freshblood@seldo.com](mailto:freshblood@seldo.com) (hey, I'm a geek).

## Cast of characters:

### Main characters:

**Jason Parti** - Tense and stressed-out.

**Amanda Greaves** - Enthusiastic police officer.

**Milly "Red Fox"** - Dedicated but totally nuts. Wears red beret on top of balaclava.

**Gillian "San Joaquin Kit Fox"** - Smarter than Milly but lets her lead. Slightly tired of her.

### Secondary characters:

The sex of these characters is basically arbitrary. They are women because women are easier to cast for a student production, and they will probably be played by the same person given the usually-small cast sizes. It is relatively easy to change their names and sexes to suit the needs of the production. It was a little bit funnier for them all to be mad women, though :-)

**Sarah Adams:** Auto rentals clerk

**Mary O'Neill:** Stationery store proprietor (this character needs to be easily identifiable as Irish, Scottish or Welsh -- some nationality that the BNP would have no problem with, essentially)

## Scene 1: 3am on a street in London

<Jason enters, stage left eeeeeen, talking on his mobile phone. Gillian is standing hidden in the shadows, waiting.>

JASON: Yeah, I'm nearly home now, I can see the door. Thanks for hanging on Rob, I just get a bit worried about walking around here so late, you know? Great night, see you on Monday!

<Jason turns off phone and puts it in his pocket. Gillian jumps out and smacks him round the back of the head. He falls to the ground, and covers his head protectively>

JASON: Ow!

GILLIAN: All right mate, give us some money!

JASON: Take it! <fumbles in his pocket for his wallet, holds it up awkwardly behind his back as he lies prone> Take whatever you want! Please! I won't cause any trouble, just don't hurt me!

GILLIAN: What? Er... oh, all right. <takes out a black balaclava and begins to put it on> I'll have your wallet, your phone, any jewellery... and those shoes look nice, I'll take them too. What make is that jacket?

JASON: Wait...

GILLIAN: Never heard of them; is it worth anything?

JASON: No, I mean hang on!

GILLIAN: Oh, you're not going to get away passing it off as imported Japanese crap now, that's never Hang On, I know a quality Wait jacket when I see one, hand it over.

JASON: No, I mean wait! Halt! Pause your robbery!

GILLIAN: What for?

JASON: What were you originally intending to steal?

GILLIAN: Well, a tenner actually. But you seemed so willing to hand over everything without a struggle, I thought I may as well push the boat out for the pushover. And it looks like a nice jacket.

JASON: Oi! I'm no pushover! You hit me on the head! That's threat of violence! I'd be a fool to resist!

GILLIAN: Just a light tap, really, you're exaggerating. Total drama queen. Come on, you could take me if you really wanted to, I've only got this cosh.

<Jason turns around, sits up and looks at Gillian, who by now is wearing the balaclava>

JASON: Oh... er, alright then, I resist! I'll give you a tenner and we'll go our separate ways. I'm not giving you anything else.

GILLIAN: No, you see, that's not going to work now. I've got the cosh out and the funny hat on, I'd feel like an arse nicking a tenner off you now.

JASON: But I resist! And you've only got a cosh. Is it made of wood, by the way, or is it just heavy rubber?

GILLIAN: It's metal in a rubber casing actually. It was bloody expensive.

JASON: Really? I've always wondered where you buy things like that. I mean, it's difficult to imagine walking into a shop and saying "I'm looking for something I can commit GBH with," isn't it?

GILLIAN: It's this little shop in Soho, actually, I know the bloke, he's... oh, fuck this. I'm robbing you, right? I may only have a cosh...

JASON: ...even if it is a high-quality, deluxe cosh, probably got the By Royal Appointment seal and everything, the kind of cosh the Queen uses to subdue errant corgis...

GILLIAN: Right, but you haven't got anything. And moreover, you are cowering on the ground, while I am not. Hand it over, all of it.

JASON: Hardly cowering. I was curled protectively.

GILLIAN: You were certainly cowering. And snivelling, too. Don't muck about, I've robbed bigger men than you, and they cowered as well. It's nothing to be ashamed of, I'm very intimidating. Come on, start with the shoes.

JASON: I'm not giving you the shoes. Or the jacket. It's bloody cold! You don't want murder on your record as well as robbery! There's nothing in the wallet you'd want apart from the cash. You can take the phone as well, it's insured.

GILLIAN: Okay, no shoes, point taken. Don't want you injuring yourself, and it's not like I could wear them. But you're not too far from home, I heard you. It won't kill you to walk in your sleeves, don't be a nelly. The wallet is non-negotiable.

JASON: Okay, I wasn't being totally honest there. My wallet also has my bank cards, but good luck using them before I call to cancel them. The rest is just junk. Do you really want to rob me of 200 Sainsbury's reward points? I'll give you the cash, the cards, and the jacket. It's last season's GAP junk anyway.

GILLIAN: And the phone.

JASON: Fair enough.

GILLIAN: Shake on it?

JASON: I suppose <they shake hands>

<Jason divests himself of his phone, jacket and some money and credit cards>

JASON: There you go. Are you going to leave me alone now?

GILLIAN: What, and leave a living witness? You might recognize my face.

<Jason drops to floor and curls into a ball again>

JASON: Oh god! Oh please, don't kill me! Don't kill me!

GILLIAN: Oh for fuck's sake show some backbone, you pussy! Now play dead for five minutes while I run off, there's a good boy.

JASON: <still cowering> Whatever you say! Whatever! Whatever!

GILLIAN: And they call me scum. People like you disgust me! No self-confidence, no fighting spirit. It's people like you ruining this country!

<Gillian kicks him in nuts, and runs off>

JASON: This is probably not going to be a good day.

## Scene 2: Jason's flat

The bedroom is very basic in terms of props. There needs to be a bed, something that can be used as a window, and something that looks like a door.

<sound of breaking glass. Jason is startled awake, and sits up in bed suddenly>

JASON: <shouts> What's that? Who's there? <more quietly> Ouch, my bloody head!

<gets up and staggers to the window, squinting out>

JASON: For fuck's sake, someone's in the shed! That's all I need. <peers down> Have I left the back door open? Ugh...I'm never drinking again.

<he heads for the door. As he reaches for the door, Milly bursts through it, spinning around and making faux-karate chops and kicks while making Hollywood-style karate noises. She advances rapidly and Jason backs away in the face of her charge. Milly is dressed mainly in black, with a bright red sash and a red beret perched on top of her black balaclava.>

MILLY: Hi-ya! Hai! Cha! Aha! Hwoooooah-hoh! Submit! I am Red Fox, and you... will... yield!

JASON: What?

MILLY: Yield! Abandon your laughable attempt at self defence and render unto us your bourgeois worldly goods, that we may more effectively distribute the wealth!

JASON: Are you trying to get me to vote for the green party? Because I'm really more lib dem.

MILLY: This is a robbery!

JASON: What, another one? I already gave!

MILLY: What?

JASON: I've been robbed once already this evening! The bump hasn't even gone down yet.

MILLY: That is no concern of ours! You bring suffering upon yourself with your bourgeois lifestyle, your decadence, your ostentatious wealth!

JASON: What, a two-room flat in Brixton?

MILLY: House prices are mad at the moment! You must be loaded to afford such a place! And you have very nice carpets, what is this, 32 strands per square inch, deep pile?

JASON: I inherited it from an uncle, actually.

MILLY: What, the carpet?

JASON: No, the flat.

MILLY: Ah-ha! The criminal tyranny of nepotism, perpetuating the injustices of an earlier generation! Have you ever wondered how your uncle made all the money to afford this flat?

JASON: He owned a bicycle repair-shop during the war, I believe. Very profitable time to own a bike shop. Worked his way up all the way from apprentice, back in the 20s.

MILLY: I don't need to hear a history lesson of your capitalist machinations!

JASON: Well, you did ask.

MILLY: So! And what did you do with this hard-working man's bike shop then? Sold it, contributing to the death of the culture of small shopkeepers, killed by the crushing grip of faceless conglomerates and their superstores? Living decadently off the proceeds, having never lifted a finger in honest labour in your life?

JASON: It went bankrupt in the 60s, I think. I work in a bank. Are you going to complain about banks as well?

MILLY: Of course! The slow poison of credit cards, shackling us all to the bitter teats of their bosom of capital!

JASON: Banks have bosoms? And no one forces you to get credit cards, by the way. Is that how you afforded those shoes?

MILLY: They were on sale... shut up! And give us your car keys!

<Gillian walks into the room, dragging a heavy sack>

GILLIAN: Have you got his keys off him yet, Milly?

MILLY: Shut up, I am Red Fox! There is no Milly here!

GILLIAN: Oh right. And what am I again?

MILLY: You are San Joaquin Kit Fox.

GILLIAN: Is there any chance I can just be Kit Fox?

MILLY: No. Any diminutive is a slight to the nature of a noble creature.

GILLIAN: Look, I'm pretty sure the San Joaquin Kit Fox, endangered though it may be, is unaware of its full name. It probably thinks it's called Swift Running Paws, or something unbearably twee like that.

MILLY: <haughtily> It is a matter of principle.

GILLIAN: Fine, whatever. Have you robbed him yet?

MILLY: All right. Give us your car keys. Don't pretend like you don't have them, we saw your car outside, it's got your flat number on the parking permit.

GILLIAN: Useful, that. It's like a little card saying "rob me, for I am in the correct income bracket".

JASON: Hang on just a minute!

GILLIAN: <pulls out a cosh, and Milly does the same> Don't make us use these.

JASON: Not that again! Look, I resist! I'm not giving you my keys. I'm putting up a fight.

<Milly advances quickly, dances around him, and then smacks him hard across the back of the head with her cosh. Jason falls to the floor and curls into a ball>

JASON: Ow!

MILLY: Take that, neo-imperialist scum!

GILLIAN: Neo-imperialist?

MILLY: I'm not sure what it means, to be honest. But he probably is one, the bastard. He was giving me a lot of lip. <she kicks Jason>

JASON: Oof! No need! The keys are on the kitchen table! I surrender! Please don't hit me again.

MILLY: What makes you think I won't just kill you where you lie, you pig? <Jason whimpers and curls up tighter>

GILLIAN: Leave him alone, Milly.

MILLY: Red fox! How many times do I have to tell you, Gillian? Oh, I mean San Joaquin bloody Kit Fox.

GILLIAN: Come on, let's go. You grab the car keys, this bag weighs a bloody ton.

MILLY: Very well. <she kicks Jason in the nuts>

JASON: Oh, come on! There's no need for that! I want to have kids someday!

MILLY: You mean you want to enslave some unsuspecting blossom of a girl to your sexual whims and then shackle her to an unhappy home with the burdens of unwanted motherhood! I know your type, you make me sick! <she kicks him again>

JASON: Ow! What? Okay, whatever you want! I won't have kids! <groans>

GILLIAN: Just as well, really. This country doesn't need any more of your sort. What a nelly. Get a move on, Red Fox, we've got loads more to do.

MILLY: Down with imperialist dogma!

<Milly runs out of the room, stops, runs back into the room, kicks Jason one more time>

MILLY: Pig! <runs back out>

<Gillian drags the sack out of the room. Sound of feet running down stairs, some shouting from below, then a squeal of tyres>

JASON: Why me?

<he lies still for a few seconds, then there is the sound of feet running up stairs again. Amanda bursts in>

AMANDA: Freeze!

JASON: <keeps his head down> Oh god, not another one. Please stop robbing me! I have nothing left of value! <opens an eye and peers at her> Unless you're planning on violating me sexually, of course, in which case I might just have to submit to your whims in the face of your overpowering presence, helpless to resist your ravishing.

AMANDA: <looks at him curiously> What are you talking about?

JASON: There's some condoms in the drawer. I'll just lie still. No struggling from me.

AMANDA: Excuse, me sir?

JASON: <look closer> Oh, you're a police woman! <composes himself quickly> Thank god.

AMANDA: Are you the victim then, sir?

JASON: All my life.

AMANDA: What?

JASON: Nothing... how did you get here so quickly?

AMANDA: I was on patrol down this street, and saw two people run out of this house wearing masks. They drove off very quickly, whose vehicle was that sir?

JASON: Mine. They robbed me and took the car too.

AMANDA: I see. Are you hurt?

JASON: Been bashed round the head, but I think I'll survive.

AMANDA: I'll add GBH to their list of offences then. <takes out a notebook> Can you tell me what was taken?

JASON: As far as I know, fertiliser.

AMANDA: What, sir?

JASON: Fertiliser. You know, green stuff? Makes plants grow better? It was in my shed, out there. They broke in, took it, then came in here and stole my car. I'd left the back door open, I was a bit drunk I came in last night.

AMANDA: Sir...

JASON: Yes?

AMANDA: Are you asking me to believe that two louts broke into your house and stole your car and a few bags of miracle-gro? And nothing else? And with no sign of forced entry?

JASON: It does sound odd now I come to tell someone else. They weren't louts though, it was a pair of mad women.

AMANDA: Women?

JASON: Mad women, yes. Talk like six different manifestos rolled into one. Call themselves foxes.

AMANDA: Foxes.

JASON: Yes, one is Red Fox and the other one... some kind of Spanish name.

AMANDA: Sir, I have to say this doesn't sound particularly plausible. We get robberies from garden sheds quite often around here, sir, and they're not usually stealing fertiliser. They are also not usually perpetrated by "mad spanish-speaking foxes".

JASON: No no, mad women, calling themselves foxes. They spoke English. And what else do people keep in their sheds that's worth stealing? Not the fertiliser is particularly worth stealing, mind. I mean, it was about a fiver for the whole bag, and it was a bloody big bag.

AMANDA: Come on sir, don't play silly buggers. Were you growing marijuana?

JASON: What?

AMANDA: Ganja. Weed. Pot. Wacky baccy. Grass, if you want to be retro. Whatever you like. You were growing it in your shed, and now it's been stolen, right? Along with all your hotlights and other equipment? Quite expensive, some of that stuff, worth much more than the straggly little weeds you can grow with it. You can admit it, sir, I can't arrest you for something you no longer possess, and I don't really think growing a little pot is much of a crime anyway.

JASON: That's very enlightened of you, officer, but I assure you they really did just steal fertiliser.

AMANDA: All right, sir, if that's what you want, that's what I'll write down. "Fertiliser." But if we catch these people, and we recover equipment, you may find yourself accused of lying to the police, which is a more serious charge than simply possessing implements for the cultivation of narcotics.

JASON: You impugn my character, madam! I was engaged in no illegal activities!

AMANDA: This is Brixton, sir. It probably wasn't illegal anyway, no one's very sure since they caught the chief buying five ounces. The ease with which they stole your car smacks of insurance fraud, though.

JASON: I have never been so insulted! I was not growing marijuana in my shed! I was not committing insurance fraud! Those mad women came, assaulted me, and stole my fertiliser!

AMANDA: Very well, sir. <sarcastically> And what do you suppose their motives for this fertiliser-theft might be, given the low current street value of uncut ammonium nitrate?

JASON: I have no idea! I suspect they are imbalanced. Kept talking about endangered foxes.

AMANDA: <quickly, suddenly interested> Really? <pauses, composes herself, then makes some notes> That's, um, interesting. Did they say anything else?

JASON: Something about having a lot more to do. But I don't really know, I was on the floor at that point. They viciously attacked me! I may have internal injuries, in fact.

AMANDA: I recommend you get yourself looked at, then. But I'm not a doctor sir. If you remember anything else, please give the station a ring and ask for me, my name is Amanda.

JASON: Do I ask for "officer Amanda"?

AMANDA: <looks a little flustered> Oh, I'm sorry, Constable Amanda Greaves, G-R-E-A-V-E-S. And what's your name?

JASON: Jason, Jason Parti. P-A-R-T-I. It's Italian.

AMANDA: So I'm speaking to Mr. Party right now?

JASON: <sighs, rolls eyes> Yes, and aren't you witty for pointing that out. Life of the party, party on down, party animal, I've heard them all before.

AMANDA: I apologize, Mr. Parti. I wish we could have met under better circumstances. But if you have no further need of me, I best be back to the station to file this report. Some officers may be round later to take a statement.

JASON: Fine. I'm going back to bed.

<Amanda exits, and the lights go down>



### Scene 3: Auto rentals

The first of two shop-counter scenes. We need the door again, a counter for the clerk to stand behind, and some racks to vaguely suggest merchandise or brochures. J walks into the office and approaches the desk.

SARAH: Good morning sir, can I help you?

JASON: Yes, I'm looking to rent a car, just for a week or two I think, while I sort out my own car.

SARAH: Certainly, sir. May I ask what happened to your car?

JASON: It was stolen, as a matter of fact.

SARAH: Oh! <jokingly> Well I certainly hope you won't be taking our car anywhere near that area then sir!

JASON: <too tired to engage in this> Well, actually, it was stolen from outside my house, so yes, I do rather intend to go back there. I'm very tired and somewhat hung over, could we just dispense with courtesies and give me the bloody car?

SARAH: <affronted, coldly> Absolutely sir. Of course you realise that you will be required to pay an insurance premium on any car you rent, sir, which is likely to be a bit higher than usual given your history of car thefts <quieter, quickly> ...and your possible substance abuse problem...

JASON: What?

SARAH: <affects innocence> Nothing, sir.

JASON: What history of car thefts?

SARAH: Well, you just said your car was stolen, sir.

JASON: Yes, but that's hardly a history, is it? What if I hadn't told you? How would you have known to charge me extra?

SARAH: I wouldn't have, sir, but it's part of my job to assess whether customers are a particular insurance risk, so that I can suggest greater insurance coverage to them. This is for your own protection, sir.

JASON: I suppose you're right. I apologize. What's the daily rate for just a standard runabout?

SARAH: <begins to type details into a keyboard> Standard rate is £30 per day, with no deposit at the moment.

JASON: Fine. And what about this insurance premium? For two weeks say?

SARAH: <glances at her computer> That's... £500, sir.

JASON: What?

SARAH: <glances at the screen again> Five hundred pounds sterling, sir. Is that a problem? It's 50% refundable.

JASON: It more than doubles the price of the car! What happens if I don't take the extra insurance?

SARAH: I can refuse to rent you the car at my own discretion, sir.

JASON: Is that a threat?

SARAH: I wouldn't dream of threatening you, sir. <quickly again> I wouldn't waste the breath.

JASON: What?

SARAH: <innocent again> Sir?

JASON: I could always take my business elsewhere.

SARAH: Indeed sir, and good luck to you, though we hope you won't. However, I might point out that the three nearest vehicle rental offices are all owned by our parent company, and are in any case closed on Saturdays.

JASON: Is that so?

SARAH: Just trying to be helpful. <quickly> You silly little man.

JASON: What?

SARAH: Will you need to borrow a pen? Here are the forms. <indicates point on the paper> Sign there, initial there, and sign again there. We accept all major credit cards.

JASON: I know when I'm beaten. I'm afraid I will be paying in cash, as my cards were stolen yesterday.

SARAH: Were they in your car, sir?

JASON: Oh, no, I was mugged yesterday.

SARAH: I thought you said they stole your car?

JASON: I was also mugged, in a separate incident.

SARAH: Where exactly do you live, sir? How often does this kind of thing happen to you? I may need to further raise your premium...

JASON: <tensely> Look! I didn't just say anything, okay? You heard nothing! I left my cards at home because I have card-phobia, okay? I don't own credit cards! My dog mistook them for biscuits! I'm superstitious about paying with credit on days with an a in them! I have a number of legitimate reasons for not using cards other than their being stolen, all right?

SARAH: <reluctantly> Very well, sir.

JASON: Thank you. Here are the forms, and the bloody premium too. I'm going to have to go back to the bank a second time now, I thought that lot would cover me nicely for the rest of the weekend.

SARAH: <quickly> Like I care?

JASON: Sorry?

SARAH: Any particular colour? They're all the same make. How about a nice red one?

JASON: Is there a colour that suggests the occupant would not like to be robbed, ripped-off or assaulted?

SARAH: Not that I'm aware of.

JASON: I'll have a blue one, then.

SARAH: I'm afraid there aren't any blue ones.

JASON: Oh. Green, then.

SARAH: Nor do we have any green ones, sir.

JASON: Yellow?

SARAH: Sorry.

JASON: Black?

SARAH: No.

JASON: White?

SARAH: No.

JASON: Magenta?

SARAH: What colour is that?

JASON: A rather vivid purple-pink colour.

SARAH: None of them, either.

JASON: What colours do you have?

SARAH: They're all red, actually, sir.

JASON: <sighs> Right, of course. May I ask you a question... <peers at name tag> Sarah? May I call you Sarah? Will you answer me just one question, as honestly as you can?

SARAH: Very well, sir.

JASON: If all the cars are one colour -- and you clearly already knew this -- why did you bother asking me?

SARAH: To be frank, it's because it gives people an illusion of choice when they might otherwise be frustrated at renting from a budget company whose cars are all identical in make and colour. Most people pick red cars anyway when we suggest them, which raises levels of customer satisfaction at no cost to us.

JASON: That's very clever. I appreciate your honesty there, Sarah. Now, may I have a red car?

<G and M walk into the office, and immediately begin to pull on their balaclavas>

SARAH: There you go. <hands him the keys> You're welcome, sir.

JASON: Thank you. <turns to leave>

<M pounces on J and smacks him round the back of the head>

MILLY: Hiiiiiiii-ya!

<The keys fall from his hand, and G reaches down and picks them up>

GILLIAN: Cheers, mate. We'll be taking this.

MILLY: <kicks J in the nuts> Down with your gas-guzzling habits, your polluting monstrosities!

GILLIAN: Come on, "Red Fox", there's no need to draw this out. We've got the keys, let's go.

JASON: Excuse me...

MILLY: Yes, borgeois pig?

JASON: What happened to my car?

GILLIAN: What?

JASON: You know, the blue fiesta you stole from me last night? Don't pretend it wasn't you, I recognize your names. Mad women, and foxes.

MILLY: What is he talking about, San Joaquin Kit Fox?

GILLIAN: Hey, I recognize him too. He's the one we robbed this morning, nicked the fertilizer off him. And that piss-poor fiesta.

JASON: It was a good car! It belonged to my mum! What've you done to it?

GILLIAN: Milly here...

MILLY: Red fox! Red fox!

GILLIAN: Sorry, right, Red Fox here crashed it while swerving to avoid a kamikaze hedgehog.

MILLY: It threw itself in front of the car! It came out of nowhere! I think it was depressed.

JASON: Did you at least avoid the hedgehog?

GILLIAN: Well, we did.

MILLY: That pig! He knew what he was doing, he did it on purpose! Filthy animal-hater, taking advantaged of emotionally-troubled wildlife!

GILLIAN: It got run over by a bus about 2 minutes later.

JASON: Fantastic.

SARAH: So, hang on...

MILLY: Shut up, slave of the capitalists! Or, alternatively, throw off your shackles and join us, sister!

SARAH: These are the people who stole your car this morning?

JASON: Yes, that's right.

SARAH: <claps hands and giggles> Oh, that's excellent! Good show!

JASON: I hate all women.

SARAH:, MILLY:, GILLIAN: WHAT?

JASON: <whimpers> Nothing!

MILLY: Come on, San Joaquin Kit Fox!

<M runs out, followed at a more sedate pace by G, who stops on her way out to kick J in the nuts>

GILLIAN: Nelly.

SARAH: I totally agree with her, you know.

JASON: You what?

SARAH: You're such a wimp! I can't believe they've robbed you twice! They only had bloody coshes! And

they looked like the rubber coated kind!

JASON: Did someone go around peddling these things to mad women at discount rates recently or something? How do you know about them?

SARAH: I do self-defence classes. My ex is a psycho.

JASON: <quickly> No wonder.

SARAH: What?

<A runs into the room>

AMANDA: Everybody stay where you are!

JASON: No fear, I'm in too much pain.

AMANDA: Mr. Parti?

SARAH: <giggles> Ha! That is your name! You party animal! Life of the party!

JASON: <resigned sigh> That would be me. Constable Greaves, is that you again?

AMANDA: Yes, sir. I was passing by, and two people in masks running out of the building. They got into one of the cars in the lot and tore off, nearly ran someone over. What happened?

JASON: They robbed this office, stole a car. It was the same ones who robbed me this morning! The mad women! Foxes!

AMANDA: <to C1> Is that so?

SARAH: Well, more correctly, Mr. Parti <giggles> Mr. Parti was robbed. They took \*his\* car. You realise you will have to pay a £300 claim fee, Mr. Parti? And you lose the refundable portion of your insurance premium, of course.

JASON: WHAT? I was still in the office!

SARAH: Nevertheless, the car was in your possession when it was stolen. It doesn't matter where it was. You signed all the necessary documents.

JASON: About 10 seconds ago!

SARAH: Once again, time is not a factor in your insurance claim. Would you like to fill out the claim forms now, or come back another day?

JASON: Oh for pity's sake...

AMANDA: <to C1> Excuse me... Sarah, is it? Under what circumstances did Mr. Parti here relinquish the keys to the vehicle?

JASON: I was viciously attacked!

SARAH: He didn't even struggle. Practically handed them the keys.

JASON: What? What? They hit me! That's the third time I've been hit there today, rubber-coated cosh or not! I think Darwinism's kicking in, I'm beginning to grow a protective shell!

AMANDA: I didn't address the question to you, Mr. Parti. I have another witness. Will you be willing to give a statement later?

SARAH: Absolutely no problem, officer.

AMANDA: Right. <to J> On your feet, man.

<Jason gets up, unsteadily>

AMANDA: <looks him up and down, apparently slightly impressed> Okay, Mr. Parti. Do you think you can stay out of trouble for the rest of today?

JASON: I certainly intend to.

AMANDA: Good then. <puts her hand on his shoulder> Take it easy. Go home.

JASON: Thank you, I think I will.

AMANDA: Right, I'll be off to report this then. Some officers will be around before closing time, Ms...?

SARAH: Adams.

AMANDA: Right <makes a note> I have a few quick questions before I go, though... can you tell me anything about the appearance of these criminals? According to Mr Parti they are <consults notes> "a pair of mad women calling themselves foxes with Spanish names"?

SARAH: They were women. Can't say I heard anything about foxes, or any Spanish. They spoke English.

JASON: ...I never *\*said\** they spoke Spanish...

SARAH: Please don't interrupt me, Mr. Parti. One of them was wearing red though, on top of the black stuff. Quite distinctive, didn't look bad though, good use of contrast.

AMANDA: Oh, I can't wear red, doesn't suit my complexion.

JASON: ...is now the time for fashion chat?

SARAH: No, I can see you're more of a winter. As for the mad part, I think that's a bit subjective. Mr Parti here strikes me as something of a misogynist.

JASON: ...you'd be too, if women kept assaulting you!

SARAH: See? I'm not sure he's entirely right in the head.

JASON: ...because people keep hitting it!

AMANDA: Be *\*quiet\**, Mr. Parti.

SARAH: I think they might have been terrorists.

JASON: What?

AMANDA: Sorry, Ms. Adams? What makes you think that?

SARAH: Well... just an impression, really. It's always the terrorists these days, innit? They probably want the car so they can suicide-bomb somewhere. You can't trust 'em.

AMANDA: Er... do you have any idea what sort of terrorists they might have been?

SARAH: Hummmm... al-Qaeda?

AMANDA: Are you asking me, or telling me?

SARAH: They could have been Palestinians. Or maybe the IRA? I'm sure they want to bomb somewhere. I could see it in their eyes. Perhaps they were Israelis.

JASON: What? Israelis have never suicide-bombed anywhere!

SARAH: Not *\*yet\**. They could start at any time. You can't trust 'em.

AMANDA: ...uh, right. Thank you, Ms. Adams, you've been very helpful, if somewhat ill-informed.

<she exits>

JASON: Now, Ms. Adams, are you really serious in expecting me to have to pay an insurance claim right now just so I can take a car out of this yard?

SARAH: No, sir. Don't be ridiculous.

JASON: Good.

SARAH: We wouldn't let you take a car now, not with two thefts in such a short time. I'd get summarily fired for that kind of misjudgement! You do owe us the claims fee, though.

JASON: This is ludicrous! I'm going to file a formal complaint!

SARAH: Feel free. The post office is a fifteen minute *\*walk\** in that direction.

JASON: Gah! <he storms out, slamming the door>

SARAH: Honestly, some people are so unreasonable.

## Scene 4: Stationery store

Scenery much the same as the auto rentals store, perhaps some more magazines. There is a sign on the counter that says "please note no persnal checks thankyou" [sic]. There should also be stacks of stationery, in plain view. Jason enters the shop and looks around a bit, but can't find note paper.

JASON: Good morning

MARY: Mornin' <she has a strong regional accent; Scottish, Irish or Welsh and change other references to suit>

JASON: I'm looking for just some ordinary plain note paper?

MARY: What were you plannin' to write, sir?

JASON: Er... a letter of complaint to a car rental company, actually. Is that relevant?

MARY: Oh, very relevant sir. We stock a wide variety of note paper colours and thicknesses, with or without matching envelopes. These things make a lot of difference to the way your letter is perceived and handled by its recipient. A good choice of paper makes all the difference.

JASON: <skeptical> Really.

MARY: Oh yes, sir. And the pen, the pen sir makes a lot of difference too. Or were you going to print the letter? I recommend hand-scribing it though, in a thick black ink, it's taken a lot more seriously that way.

JASON: Is that so?

MARY: Oh yes, there've been studies done sir.

JASON: Studies?

MARY: Aye. Independent studies too, none of these nonsense ones done by the pen makers or the paper company. <she comes out from behind the counter and begins going through the stack>

JASON: Fascinating.

MARY: I'm glad you think so, sir, it's not often I find someone who thinks paper is as interesting as I do.

JASON: That surprises me. So, tell me, what kind of paper should I be buying?

MARY: <pulls out a particular set> Oh, this one will do nicely. A very good choice.

JASON: I appreciate that.

MARY: Matching envelope, sir?

JASON: Oh, go on then.

MARY: <hands him an envelope> There you go. <begins to walk back behind the counter>

<Gillian and Milly walk into the shop behind Jason. Gillian is wearing the jacket she stole from Jason earlier>

JASON: I must say, it's really refreshing to meet someone polite and helpful today. I've just been having the worst...

<Milly smacks him round the back of the head. Jason falls to the floor>

JASON: Ouch! It's okay, I know the drill! I'll just lie here. Continue your robbery. Don't mind me.

MILLY: You pitiful bourgeois scumbag! Look how the capitalists crumble at the first blow! The people are the system!

GILLIAN: Spineless nelly. You make me sick.

<Milly and Gillian kick Jason in the nuts, one after the other>

JASON: Oh, come on! Was that really necessary?

GILLIAN: <peers down at J> Hey, Red Fox, it's him again! His 'nads felt familiar under my boot.  
JASON: <looks up briefly> Oh god! You two! Again!  
MILLY: Quiet, pig! 'Cease your mindless repetition of dogma, or you'll wish you'd never been born!  
JASON: Too late. \*Far\* too late. <to G> Enjoying my jacket?  
GILLIAN: It's very nice, thanks. You left some gum in the pocket, though. You'd have ruined it if you'd sent it through the wash, just as well I took it off you.  
MARY: What's going on here?  
GILLIAN: <to C2> This is a robbery. Me and Red Fox here, we've got coshes, see? We don't want to hurt you, though. We've just come for a pen and paper.  
JASON: You have \*got\* to be kidding. Couldn't you just buy it? It costs less than a pound!  
MILLY: <kicks J in the nuts> Shut up, planet-killer!  
JASON: <doesn't flinch> That doesn't work anymore, they've gone numb. And hey, I'm no planet-killer! I walked here! You drove here, in the second car you've stolen from me today! And this is recycled paper! I fucking love the planet! Lay off! <holds up the paper>  
MILLY: <snatches the paper out of his hand> Right, that'll do! Let's go, San Joaquin Kit Fox!  
GILLIAN: Right. <they turn to leave>  
MARY: Wait!  
GILLIAN: Oh, you like it? He tried to pass it off as Gap, the nelly.  
MARY: No, I mean wait, hang on...  
GILLIAN: Oh, is it? Because he said...  
JASON: Pause!  
MILLY: Oh. What for? <then, as afterthought> ...you pseudo-marxist trotskyite?  
GILLIAN: <to M> Good one.  
MARY: What are you going to be writing with that paper?  
MILLY: None of your business, lackey of the oppressors!  
MARY: No need to be rude. But your choice of paper is very important. I mean, if you're just going to be writing down secret coded instructions to be eaten, that's probably okay, although I recommend a lighter, low-acid, more digestible paper. But if you're going to be sticking cut-out letters to that for a ransom note, it's totally unsuitable, it's powdered, the glue would never hold. What's it for?  
GILLIAN: Bomb threat.  
MARY: <looks panicked> Oh my god!

<C2 runs out from behind the desk, G and M poise to strike, but she goes hunting in a stack of paper>

MARY: I've got \*just\* the thing, been saving it for a special occasion and, well, this could be it! 100gsm, bright white with just a hint of creamy streaks, straight polished edges. It's a masterpiece, this paper, really, and a total bargain at a pound a sheet, not that that's really relevant to you since you're stealing it I suppose, but nice to know anyway. Aha! Here it is. <pulls out a sheet, hands it to M with a flourish>  
MILLY: Wow, Gillian, it's really nice! I mean San Joaquin Kit Fox.  
GILLIAN: That's really sweet of you!  
MILLY: Is it alright if we keep the other sheet as well? We need to write down the list of bomb-making ingredients and our cunning master plan. I keep forgetting it. <she grins sheepishly, although since she's wearing a mask at this point I suppose that's not massively relevant...>  
MARY: <smiling> Absolutely no problem! You're the one holding me at threat of death, after all. <rummages in the desk> Oh, and here, please use some blotting paper, some people think it's old-fashioned but it really does make all the difference in effectively communicating your unreasonable demands to negotiators.  
GILLIAN: That's really, really nice of you. So lovely to meet a polite, helpful victim.

MARY: Oh, I aim to please, even my disturbed and possibly homicidal customers.

GILLIAN: Right then, we'll be off, cheers!

MARY: Do come again! Maybe next time with money and without the masks!

MILLY: Oh, we'd definitely consider it!

GILLIAN: Only it's a suicide bomb.

MILLY: But thanks all the same!

<Milly and Gillian exit, smiling, and talking amongst themselves ("Wasn't she nice?" etc.)>

MARY: Well, wasn't that nice?

JASON: Maybe, if I keep my eyes shut, I'll eventually wake up.

<Amanda runs into the room>

AMANDA: Is everything all right in here?

JASON: Is that you, Officer Greaves? You know, it's really amazing how fast you keep turning up to these crimes. It's like my life is a bad play, and the writer can't come up with anything clever for people to say while waiting for the police to show up. And how come it's always you who turns up at these robberies?

AMANDA: I'm in the neighbourhood.

JASON: This store is eight tube stops away from the rentals office! What neighbourhood do you cover?

AMANDA: Greater London. Are you okay?

JASON: I think I may have a mild concussion.

MARY: Excuse me...

AMANDA: So what was it this time?

MARY: Er...

JASON: They stole stationery. Two sheets of paper.

MARY: Excuse me, do you know each other?

AMANDA: I have met Mr. Parti here previously, in a professional capacity. He was involved in another robbery earlier today.

JASON: Involved? I was the victim.

AMANDA: Yes, that's right. So the perpetrators stole two pieces of paper, Ms...?

MARY: My name's O'Neill. Mary. Yes, they stole two sheets, one 100gsm bright white A4, code 250CA, one 80gsm cream A4, 50% recycled content, code 179AL.

AMANDA: <makes some notes> Is this paper particularly valuable for some reason? What do those codes mean?

MARY: No, they're just manufacturer's codes. The two together are worth one pound, eight-three pence before VAT.

AMANDA: They didn't want money?

MARY: No, they just wanted some paper. I suppose it's shoplifting really, except they had those coshes.

JASON: They assaulted me!

MARY: Oh come now, it was barely a tap. Don't be a nelly. You just crumpled up for no reason.

AMANDA: So, would you say Mr. Parti here did not put up particularly strenuous resistance?

MARY: Not much, no. Handed them one of the sheets of paper, in fact. I may charge him for it, actually.

JASON: You went and found the second sheet of paper for them! You dug it out specially!

AMANDA: Is that true?

MARY: Well, I was under threat of violence. Look at what they did to Mr. Parti; it could have been me. They had coshes! The mark 50 rubber-coated kind. They can do real damage when used properly, you know.



AMANDA: I'm familiar with the make.

JASON: I'm sorry, do all the women in London go to these classes?

AMANDA: I run the classes. Get up, Mr. Parti.

MARY: Is that his name? <giggles> You a bit of a party animal then?

JASON: My, how funny you are. So surprising that a woman of such great wit should still be single at forty-five.

MARY: <offended> Pardon me!

AMANDA: Can you describe the culprits?

MARY: Not really, they were wearing masks.

AMANDA: Mr. Parti? Are you going to say it was the mad fox women again?

JASON: But it *\*was\**! Why would I make this stuff up?

AMANDA: I couldn't possibly guess your motivations, sir.

JASON: If you would just turn up 2 minutes earlier, we wouldn't have these problems. You could have caught them three times by now! Ask her, anyway, about the foxes!

AMANDA: <sighs> Was there any reference by these women -- I assume they *\*were\** women -- to foxes, Ms. O'Neill?

MARY: Yes, they were women. And I do believe they called each other foxes. The one with the red stuff on -- quite striking, really, good use of colour -- was red fox, obviously, and the other one was San Joaquin Kit Fox.

AMANDA: San Joaquin...?

JASON: See! Spanish!

MARY: San Joaquin Kit Fox. It's a type of endangered north American fox, a cousin of the arctic fox but lives further south.

AMANDA: How precisely do you know so much about foxes?

MARY: Oh, just one of those things you pick up.

JASON: You're in league with them, aren't you?! That's why you helped them! You're a mad fox woman too! Arrest her, Amanda!

AMANDA: Please be quiet, Mr. Parti. Jason, you seem like a nice man. And there's a chance, just a chance, that this really is a set of unfortunate coincidences. But this is the third crime today at which you have been present, as well as these fox women. You should be very glad I'm not booking you as an accomplice. You are in no position to be accusing anybody else of involvement. <to C2> Now, Ms. O'Neill, is there anything else you might want to tell me?

MARY: No...

JASON: What about the bomb threat!

AMANDA: <looks round sharply at him> The what?

MARY: <seems mildly surprised that A is interested> Oh, yes, I suppose's there's that. They said the paper was for their bomb threat. Hardly important, surely?

AMANDA: It might be... did they give any indication of where they intend to bomb, or what their motives might be?

MARY: I think they must be radical members of the BNP.

AMANDA: The BNP! What gives you that impression?

MARY: Their choice of target. They just want to intimidate ethnic minorities, such as myself!

JASON: Ethnic minorities?

MARY: I'm ethnic Irish, recently immigrated. I'm an ethnic minority. Stands to reason the BNP doesn't like me.

AMANDA: I suppose that's... logical <makes a note>

JASON: Logical? She's off her trolley! She deals in paper for a living! She knows the codes by heart! She

thinks she's ethnic!

AMANDA: No law against that. Now be quiet. I've got my eye on you, Jason.

JASON: I wish you'd had your eye on me before, then you could have caught them before they hit me again. They've robbed me so many times now we're on a first-name basis!

MARY: I hope you're going to pay for that paper you helped them steal.

JASON: I didn't help them steal it! Burn in hell!

MARY: <stroppily> No need to be rude, just because I'm ethnic. I should report you to the equal opportunities commission. Does that count as a hate crime, do you think?

AMANDA: No, Ms. O'Neill. Jason, please don't make a fuss.

MARY: Of course, it could have been the anti-capitals. They don't like successful businesses.

AMANDA: The...?

MARY: The anti-capitals.

AMANDA: Do you mean anti-capitalists?

JASON: No, no, it makes sense. Are they against spelling and punctuation too? 'Cause I think they've been to work on your sign. <A gives him an impatient look> All right, I'm shutting up.

MARY: Anti-capitalists, yeah, them. They resent my entrepreneurial spirit.

AMANDA: Running a stationery shop in Brixton?

MARY: <looks proud> I'm also the proprietor. Some of the finest paper in London, you know.

AMANDA: I shall be sure to have a look around at some point. Thank you.

MARY: No problem officer. I'm just going to go and make a cuppa to calm my nerves, excuse me. <she exits>

JASON: I'm off. I'll write my complaint on a napkin.

AMANDA: Wait a second, Jason. <she walks over to J> I'm really sorry to accuse you of being involved, Jason.

JASON: <caught off-guard> Er... well, I suppose it does look somewhat suspicious. No problem, really.

AMANDA: And meeting so many times in one day, I can't help but take it as a hint from fate...

JASON: That I should never attempt to purchase anything ever again? I'd start shopping online, only they already know where I live.

AMANDA: Would you like to have dinner with me this evening?

JASON: <flummoxed> What?

AMANDA: Dinner, you know, at a restaurant? This evening? My shift ends at seven.

JASON: Oh, er, well, I suppose so.

AMANDA: No obligation. Entirely a personal occasion.

JASON: <composes himself> Yes, in fact, that would be very nice. This is somewhat sudden, is all.

AMANDA: Oh, if I'd just met you it would be sudden. As it is, I've met you three times already, and you've been flat on your back every time.

JASON: <grins> I suppose so! Anywhere in particular?

AMANDA: <smiles back> Entirely up to you.

JASON: I know a nice place just a few streets away from here, as it happens. How about time? Would eight-thirty be good?

AMANDA: That would be lovely.

JASON: Can I have your number then?

AMANDA: Sure, got a phone on you I can type it into? Oh, of course not. Okay... <scribbles a note into her book, tears off a strip and hands it to him> ...there you go.

## Scene 5: Restaurant

Ideally, scenery here will consist of several tables, with people sitting at them all, but this can be creatively modified to suit -- projection of extra tables and people, or just background noise and imagination. It's theatre; people have adamantine chains to suspend their disbelief. Jason and Amanda are seated at a candlelit table, already having dinner.

AMANDA: Well, this is nice.

JASON: Yes, isn't it? Perhaps my day is looking up a bit. How's your food?

AMANDA: Lovely. This meat is delicious! So tender.

JASON: I can't believe just a few hours ago this was the worst day of my life.

AMANDA: It's funny how things can change in an instant.

<Milly and Gillian burst in. Gillian is holding a gun, Milly is laboriously dragging a large box with the word BOMB written on the side in huge letters>

GILLIAN: All right everyone, pay attention! We are members of the Real RSPCA, and we're taking you all hostage in protest at the suffering of the animals in the pet shop next door! We have a bomb. Everyone stay calm, and no being will get hurt.

AMANDA: No one will get hurt? What about the bomb?

MILLY: At such close proximity, you communist coward, I'm assured that death is instantaneous.

GILLIAN: What red fox is trying to say is that it's not at all painful.

JASON: Gahhhh!!! I can't believe this! I can't believe it's you two! Again! <he lunges at G>

GILLIAN: <hits him round the back of the head with the gun> Look mate, don't do that! If I didn't know for a fact how bloody ineffectual you are, I'd've shot you then! Calm down!

JASON: I am not going to bloody remain calm! You two are ruining my life! What the fuck is this all about? Why do you keep robbing me and hitting me round the head?

MILLY: Us robbing you! You CIA scum, you were the one who kept following us around!

JASON: I was not following you around! I was there first, you came in afterwards! What are you two \*doing\*?

MILLY: We were preparing the ground for our master plan!

JASON: My fertilizer?

GILLIAN: Bomb fuel.

JASON: The rental car?

GILLIAN: Getaway car.

JASON: From a suicide bombing?

GILLIAN: We needed to get away from all the other things first.

MILLY: My stationery?

GILLIAN: For writing our list of demands, like the woman said. She was right, blotting paper made a big difference.

MILLY: Did you mug me too?

GILLIAN: What?

MILLY: Last night, did you mug me? I got mugged on my way home. Was that you too?

GILLIAN: Yeah, might've been.

MILLY: What the fuck was that for?

GILLIAN: I was on my way to rob the fish-n-chip shop, but you were easier.

MILLY: How does a chippie fit into your master plan?

GILLIAN: Sorry mate, I was just hungry.

<Jason lunges at her again, she knocks him to the floor yet again. They struggle for a while -- the director can have fun at this point coordinating a fight scene, complete with Thwack! and Pow! effects if they like -- and end up across the stage, out of earshot of Amanda. Jason ends up on the floor, with Gillian's boot on his chest>

GILLIAN: Honestly, you don't put up much of a fight, do you? Didn't you ever get into fights when you were a boy?

JASON: I generally prefer to run away. Ow... why didn't you just buy everything, instead of leaving a trail of my destruction? You're suiciding anyway!

GILLIAN: We can't let anything be tied to our real identities. It could get traced back, and be used to hurt our families.

MILLY: The machinery of oppression has no compassion, knows no morals!

JASON: You could have paid with cash!

GILLIAN: That would have looked suspicious.

JASON: Oh yeah, 'cause robbing the place looks totally innocent!

GILLIAN: And we didn't have enough money anyway.

MILLY: Because of the inherent injustice of the oppressive system!

JASON: Look, what exactly are you against, anyway? You've called me several mutually-conflicting epithets so far.

MILLY: We are the Real RSPCA, a radical paramilitary group dedicated to the protection of innocent non-serpentine animals! We recognize that violence is the only way to solve the injustices suffered by non-serpentine animals today!

JASON: Non-serpentine?

GILLIAN: We don't like snakes. You can do whatever you like to snakes.

JASON: Now, I'm sure someone's mentioned this to you before, but humans are animals too, you know.

MILLY: The only animal that inflicts suffering on others!

JASON: What? I suppose lions are just humanely culling the gazelle population?

MILLY: Fur is murder!

JASON: So is blowing up a restaurant full of people! And, I might point out, the size of the bomb you've made is going to pretty effectively blow up the pet shop next door as well.

MILLY: <looks very thoughtful> Really?

GILLIAN: I \*told\* you it was too big.

MILLY: It's only fertilizer and a load of petrol, how powerful can it be?

JASON: Big enough. These walls are paper-thin anyway.

MILLY: <abandons her revolutionary talk> Well, that fucks things up a bit. Gillian, what'll we do? We can't bomb the bunny rabbits, it's against everything we stand for!

JASON: You wouldn't really have done it anyway, would you?

GILLIAN: What makes you think that? We're very dedicated. Look at Milly there, she can barely contain her enthusiasm to blow herself up.

<Gillian removes her boot from Jason's chest and he picks himself up>

JASON: Well if you're so dedicated and violent, how come you never really injured me today? All you did was knock me down, over and over. You hit the same spot on my head every time, too. <rubs his head>

GILLIAN: It's like sheep, innit. No sense killing you outright if I can shear you over and over.

JASON: But now you're not going to make mutton out of all of us, what are you going to do?

GILLIAN: I'm not sure, to be honest. We are faced with a bit of a dilemma.

MILLY: Is there any way we can make the bomb smaller, Gill?

GILLIAN: Not really, I booby-trapped it to go off if anybody tampered with it.

JASON: That was clever.

GILLIAN: Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

JASON: You see my date Amanda over there? She's a police officer. What we'll do is, you give me that gun, and I'll take it over to her and tell her you've given yourselves up, and she'll negotiate for, I dunno, an easy sentence or something.

MILLY: We will not surrender to the borgeois establishment!

JASON: It's that, or little bits of bunny everywhere. Your choice.

MILLY: We still have the hostages, and the gun!

JASON: And how's that going to work, exactly? We stay here until the police show up...

GILLIAN: ...in two working days...

JASON: Right, in two working days, what? Sorry?

GILLIAN: <looks slightly embarrassed> We posted our demands to the police.

JASON: As in, by mail? On the deluxe crazed fundamentalist A4? I hope you used a proper envelope, that mad woman in the stationery store would never live it down.

GILLIAN: And we cut the phone lines before we came in.

JASON: Very professional. Still, why's it going to take two working days? Won't the police get it with the morning post? That's only eight hours from now, and it's not like we're going to run out of food quickly, this is a restaurant...

MILLY: We refuse to conform to the inbuilt class injustices of the postal system!

JASON: Could you translate?

GILLIAN: <sighs> She thinks first-class mail perpetuates class boundaries between the rich and poor.

JASON: <deadpan> So you posted your demands to the police by second class mail.

MILLY: It was a sign of solidarity!

JASON: Solidarity with who? Even bank statements get sent by first-class post, and I should know, I stuff the bloody envelopes for a living.

MILLY: <looks at him> Really? Are you feeling oppressed? Because I could give you some pamphlets to stuff in with the statements; we've been looking for a cheap way to do mass-mailings of propaganda.

JASON: I am not on your side, you maniac! I am trying to negotiate my way out of a hostage situation!

MILLY: <smacks him round the head again> Willing servant of the despotic oligarchy!

JASON: Ouch! Stop that! Why don't you just phone the police with your demands? Don't say you don't have phones, you stole mine earlier!

GILLIAN: Actually, I used to for parts for the bomb.

JASON: So if somebody sends me a text message right now, we all die?

GILLIAN: I don't think so.

JASON: You're not sure?

GILLIAN: I've never built a bomb before, okay? There's no dummies guide! I was working off some instructions we found online, but they were sort of vague about the construction of the detonator.

JASON: Not just mad, but incompetent too. How about I go over there and borrow Amanda's phone, and then you can phone in your demands and at least get negotiations started, okay?

GILLIAN: Alright. Don't do anything silly, we don't want to have to kill anyone.

JASON: You don't. She does.

MILLY: Dammit! How am I supposed to become a martyr?

JASON: There are easier ways! Join a convent or something!

GILLIAN: She tried that, they threw her out for complaining that the communal system was a mockery of basic economic principles.

MILLY: The faceless bureaucrats are always the same!

JASON: God is a faceless bureaucrat?

MILLY: Well, have you ever seen her face?

JASON: Fair enough. Uh, San Joaquin...?

GILLIAN: Call me Gillian.

JASON: Keep Milly under control, would you?

<Jason crosses the room and returns to Amanda, who has been peering interestedly at the conversation but has been unable to hear what's been said>

AMANDA: What the hell is going on?

JASON: Uh, they need to borrow your phone.

AMANDA: What? Why?

JASON: They're animal-rights fanatics. They're mad, but they've got a bomb, and they need to get in touch with the police to start negotiations.

AMANDA: \*I'm\* the police! They can negotiate with me!

<she gets up, pushes Jason out of the way and crosses over to Milly and Gillian>

AMANDA: Now, what's this nonsense about a hostage situation?

MILLY: And who might you be? Just another unquestioning slave of the state?

AMANDA: My name's Amanda. I'm a police officer. Technically off-duty at the moment.

GILLIAN: Hey, I know you! You run those self-defence classes, don't you?

AMANDA: That's right! Er... Gillian, is it? And you're... Milly?

MILLY: Red fox! And this is San Joaquin Kit Fox! We are freedom fighters for the cause of eliminating the suffering of non-serpentine animals everywhere! We are cold-hearted and anonymous!

AMANDA: I remember you, you're the one who kept complaining about the holder for the cosh being made of leather. Nice outfit.

MILLY: Oh, you like it?

AMANDA: Good use of colour. Striking. Although I'm not sure about the shoes.

MILLY: It's so hard to find quality cruelty-free shoes in red. If they're not leather, then they're put together in some sweatshop in Indonesia. I have to order them specially.

JASON: Um, could we focus, just for a bit, on negotiating our release? We can talk shoes later, when no one's threatening to blow anyone up? Yes?

<Amanda suddenly pounces on Gillian, grabbing the gun and holding her in a headlock. The gun goes off, Jason dives for cover>

AMANDA: <looks into audience, where gun was pointing> Oh bugger. I've shot the waiter.

MILLY: Aha! Once again the meddling influence of the state leads to the suffering of the worker!

JASON: Never mind, my soup was cold anyway.

GILLIAN: Ouch. That was bloody clever, how did you manage that? And I was expecting you to try something, too.

MILLY: You have been corrupted by your contact with the decadence of the status quo!

GILLIAN: What contact?

MILLY: You should never have had that donut at starbucks.

AMANDA: It's quite simple actually, it's in the way you held the gun. You were holding the gun to prevent it

going away from you if I grabbed it, but instead I pushed it towards you. Look, I'll show you. Here, you hold the gun again.

JASON: Er, what?

AMANDA: Right, so you've got the gun, you're holding it firmly, right? No chance I could get it.

GILLIAN: I suppose so.

AMANDA: Ah, but look at your fingers. You're holding it one-handed, a weak grip, there's a gap there, see? So when I push the gun in suddenly it pops out of your hand...

JASON: ...kills the waiter...

AMANDA: Well yes, it did kill the waiter, you must have had your finger wrapped round the trigger... and then I grab it, like so. See? A better grip is two-handed, like this, see? Now there's no way you can jump me.

GILLIAN: I get it. Well, I won't be making that mistake again in a hurry.

<Milly smacks Amanda's hands with her cosh, hard. Amanda drops the gun, which goes off again>

AMANDA: Ow!

JASON: Oh christ...

<Jason dives for cover again. Gillian picks up the gun quickly and points it at Amanda, holding it two handed this time>

GILLIAN: I see what you mean. It does seem a lot more secure this way.

JASON: Where did the bullet go?

MILLY: <looks into the audience> It hit the other waiter. Just a flesh wound this time, though.

AMANDA: Oh good. <shouts into audience> You'll be okay! Tie a tourniquette round it to stop the bloodflow!

MILLY: Now, pitilessly crushed opponent of the revolution, will you listen to our demands?

AMANDA: How many do you have?

<Milly hands Amanda a piece of paper>

GILLIAN: 52 demands, plus one polite request that bus drivers keep a better look out for hedgehogs on the roads.

AMANDA: <reads the list> You'll never get all this.

MILLY: We are well aware that the dinosaur of official bureaucracy cannot be moved by mere threat of violence. Our glorious deaths will be a symbol of the might and determination of the real RSPCA!

AMANDA: How big is your group anyway?

MILLY: No-one knows! Each member knows only the names of two other members! Anonymity is vital!

GILLIAN: It's just us at the moment, actually. But we've almost persuaded her sister to join, if we also exclude rats.

AMANDA: Would you stop diving for the floor every time something happens? It's very distracting.

GILLIAN: Yes, don't be such a nelly.

JASON: I've had quite enough of this!

<Jason lunges at Gillian and wrestles for the gun, which goes off a third time, which makes Gillian squeak in surprise and drop it. Amanda dives for the gun and picks it up again, this time backing away and keeping Gillian and Milly in sight>

AMANDA: Another waiter?

JASON: No, you hit the same waiter you hit last time.

AMANDA: Will he be okay?

JASON: I don't think so.

AMANDA: Can't he use another tourniquette?

JASON: Around his neck?

AMANDA: Oh. Never mind. What'd you do that for, anyway?

JASON: I was trying to get the gun away from her!

AMANDA: Yes, but why? I thought you were on their side!

JASON: THEIR SIDE!?

AMANDA: Of course, don't think I'm naïve. That's why you kept arranging things in shops and they just had to come and grab the goods out of your hands, pretending to rob you while you give up without a fight. Very clever arrangement I thought, that's why I started following you.

JASON: Following me!

AMANDA: Yes, and invited myself to dinner. If you're not involved with them, I suppose it was sheer luck you actually invited me to the scene of your next crime.

JASON: You mean you're not interested in me at all?

AMANDA: You? God no, first I thought you were a dangerous terrorist, now I discover you're actually just a spineless weakling. I was just trying to gain your confidence.

GILLIAN: See? Nellies never win.

JASON: You shut up. <to Amanda> I can't believe you thought I was involved!

AMANDA: Whatever. It's all over now. Come off it, you two, you're never going to use that thing. Give up now and you'll only get a few years under the terrorism act. I'll even enter a plea for leniency.

MILLY: Noooooooooooooooooooo! WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF THE SYSTEM!

GILLIAN: MILLY! NO!

MILLY: I AM NOT MILLY! I AM RED FOX! NOW... HEAR... ME... ROAR!

JASON: Oh god, we're all going to die!

<Gillian and Amanda duck down, Jason assumes the foetal position. Milly plunges the detonator>

MILLY: 10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1...0!

<A few seconds pass. Within the depths of the bomb, a mobile phone rings>

GILLIAN: No bang? Thank god, I must have left something out.

JASON: I think I've wet myself.

MILLY: Dammit! What happened to it? What about my dramatic final act of defiance? I can't afford not to die, I'm up to my neck in credit-card debt! What happened to the ruddy explosion, San Joaquin fucking Kit Fox?

GILLIAN: Can't think. I followed the instructions so carefully.

AMANDA: Fertiliser bomb?

GILLIAN: Yeah.

AMANDA: Remote trigger?

GILLIAN: Yeah, his old phone.

AMANDA: What's your detonator?

GILLIAN: Oh, that's it. I left it in the boot of the car. I left it separate, didn't want it accidentally going off prematurely, it's a bit sensitive and very powerful.

JASON: <looking outside, stage right> That would explain the explosion outside, then.

MILLY: <craning to look> Ooh! That's impressive! A show of strength!

JASON: ...coupled with enormous incompetence.



MILLY: The symbology is clear! We are not to be trifled with!

AMANDA: Thank god, I thought it was going to be a lesbian version of Thelma and Louise for a moment there.

MILLY: Who are you calling lesbians? I'm not a lesbian!

GILLIAN: Nor am I!

MILLY: You're not?

GILLIAN: No!

MILLY: Then why do you do what I say? I thought you were selflessly following my capricious whims out of a sincere but misplaced adoration for me, never explicitly rebuffed and always clinging to faint hope, culminating one day when you would finally, hesitantly, bravely admit your love for me and I, in a moment full of bittersweet perfection, would answer that I too, have always loved you, but that it must always remain merely platonic as I have dedicated my body and soul to a higher cause, that of ending the suffering of non-serpentine animals everywhere?

GILLIAN: No! I actually believe in the cause, is all.

MILLY: Are you sure you're not a lesbian? It's okay, you know. I'm very open-minded.

GILLIAN: No, definitely not a lesbian.

MILLY: <not willing to let go of the idea> You're very butch...

GILLIAN: How long did you spend coming up with your response?

MILLY: Oh, no more than a few hours.

GILLIAN: It's quite touching, though. Do you really love me?

MILLY: <looks slightly sheepish> Well... yes, I suppose I do, really, Gillian. In a strictly platonic way, of course. But who would look after the welfare of bunnies, if not me?

JASON: I think the bunnies have managed quite well by themselves so far, to be honest. It's not like they're endangered or anything.

AMANDA: Anyway, this is very moving, but you've got no bomb, I've got the gun, and the gig is up.

JASON: The gig is up? What is this, the Scooby Doo ending?

AMANDA: Well, how would you prefer it to end?

<Time goes in reverse: lights flash, everyone runs around backwards a bit, ending up with Amanda holding the gun. There is the sound of another shot>

AMANDA: Another waiter?

JASON: No, you hit the same waiter you hit last time.

AMANDA: Will he be okay?

JASON: I don't think so.

AMANDA: Can't he use another tourniquette?

JASON: Around his neck?

AMANDA: Oh. Never mind. Okay you two, give yourselves up. You're never going to use that thing. Give up now and you'll only get a few years under the terrorism act. I'll even enter a plea for leniency.

MILLY: We will never surrender to the will of the system! Never!

GILLIAN: MILLY! NO!

MILLY: I AM NOT MILLY! I AM RED FOX! NOW... HEAR... ME... ROAR!

JASON: Oh god, we're all going to die!

MILLY: 10 second countdown started!

GILLIAN: <rushes to Milly's side> Oh Milly, I know we're going to die, but there's something I have to tell you!

MILLY: What, San Joaquin Kit Fox?

GILLIAN: Milly, I love you!

MILLY: Oh Gillian! I love you too!

<They embrace (and kiss, if the actors are adventurous) as a huge projected picture or movie of a mushroom cloud appears, along with explosion sounds. Lights fade to black, a few seconds go by, then a spotlight comes up on Amanda and Jason>

AMANDA: You're right, that would've been a much better ending.

JASON: Told you.

<lights fade: that's all, folks>

----- The End -----