

ALAN [*savagely*]: The Government pays you twenty quid an hour to see me. I know. I heard downstairs.

DYSART: Well, go back there and hear some more.

ALAN: *That's not fair!*

[*He springs up, clenching his fists in a sudden violent rage.*]

You're a—you're a—You're a swiz! . . . Bloody swiz! . . . Fucking swiz!

DYSART: Do I have to call Nurse?

ALAN: She puts a finger on me, I'll bash her!

DYSART: She'll bash you much harder, I can assure you. Now go away.

[*He reads his file. ALAN stays where he is, emptily clenching his hands.*]

*He turns away.*

*A pause.*

*A faint hum starts from the CHORUS.*]

ALAN [*sullenly*]: On a beach . . .

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[*He steps out of the square, upstage, and begins to walk round the circle. Warm light glows on it.*]

DYSART: What?

ALAN: Where I saw a horse. Swizzy.

[*Lazily he kicks at the sand, and throws stones at the sea.*]

DYSART: How old were you?

ALAN: How should I know? . . . Six.

DYSART: Well, go on. What were you doing there?

ALAN: Digging.

[*He throws himself on the ground, downstage centre of the circle, and starts scuffing with his hands.*]

DYSART: A sandcastle?

ALAN: Well, what else?

DYSART [*warningly*]: And?

ALAN: Suddenly I heard this noise. Coming up behind me.

[*A young HORSEMAN issues in slow motion out of the tunnel. He carries a riding crop with which he is urging on his invisible horse, down the right side of the circle.*]

*The hum increases.*]

DYSART: What noise?

ALAN: Hooves, Splashing.

DYSART: Splashing?

ALAN: The tide was out and he was galloping.

DYSART: Who was?

ALAN: This fellow. Like a college chap. He was on a big horse—urging him on. I thought he hadn't seen me. I called out: Hey!

[*The HORSEMAN goes into natural time, charging fast round the downstage corner of the square straight at ALAN.*]

and they just swerved in time!

HORSEMAN [*reining back*]: Whoa! . . . Whoa there!

Whoa! . . . Sorry! I didn't see you! . . . Did I scare you?

ALAN: No!

HORSEMAN [*looking down on him*]: That's a terrific castle!

ALAN: What's his name?

HORSEMAN: Trojan. You can stroke him, if you like. He won't mind.

[*Shyly ALAN stretches up on tip-toe, and pats an invisible shoulder.*]

[*Amused.*] You can hardly reach down there. Would you like to come up?

[*ALAN nods, eyes wide.*]

All right. Come round this side. You always mount a horse from the left. I'll give you a lift. O.K.?

[*ALAN goes round on the other side.*]

Here we go, now. Just do nothing. Upsadaisy!

[ALAN sets his foot on the HORSEMAN's thigh, and is lifted by him up on to his shoulders.]

The hum from the CHORUS becomes exultant. Then stops.]

All right?

[ALAN nods.]

Good. Now all you do is hold onto his mane.

[He holds up the crop, and ALAN grips on to it.]

Tight now. And grip with your knees. All right?

All set? . . . Come on, then, Trojan. Let's go!

[The HORSEMAN walks slowly upstage round the circle, with ALAN's legs tight round his neck.]

DYSART: How was it? Was it wonderful?

[ALAN rides in silence.]

Can't you remember?

HORSEMAN: Do you want to go faster?

ALAN: Yes!

HORSEMAN: O.K. All you have to do is say 'Come on, Trojan—bear me away!' . . . Say it, then!

ALAN: Bear me away!

[The HORSEMAN starts to run with ALAN round the circle.]

DYSART: You went fast?

ALAN: Yes!

DYSART: Weren't you frightened?

ALAN: No!

HORSEMAN: Come on now, Trojan! Bear us away! Hold on!

Come on now! . . .

[He runs faster. ALAN begins to laugh. Then suddenly, as they reach again the right downstage corner, FRANK and DORA stand up in alarm.]

DORA: Alan!

FRANK: Alan!

DORA: Alan, stop!

[FRANK runs round after them. DORA follows behind.]

FRANK: Hey, you! You! . . .

HORSEMAN: Whoa, boy! . . . Whoa! . . .

[He reins the horse round, and wheels to face the parents. This all goes fast.]

FRANK: What do you imagine you are doing?

HORSEMAN [ironic]: 'Imagine?'

FRANK: What is my son doing up there?

HORSEMAN: Water-skiing!

[DORA joins them, breathless.]

DORA: Is he all right, Frank? . . . He's not hurt?

FRANK: Don't you think you should ask permission before doing a stupid thing like that?

HORSEMAN: What's stupid?

ALAN: It's lovely, dad!

DORA: Alan, come down here!

HORSEMAN: The boy's perfectly safe. Please don't be hysterical.

FRANK: Don't you be la-di-da with me, young man! Come down here, Alan. You heard what your mother said.

ALAN: No.

FRANK: Come down at once. Right this moment.

ALAN: No . . . NO!

FRANK [in a fury]: I said—this moment!

[He pulls ALAN from the horseman's shoulders. The boy shrieks, and falls to the ground.]

HORSEMAN: Watch it!

DORA: Frank!

[She runs to her son, and kneels. The HORSEMAN skitters.]

HORSEMAN: Are you mad? D'you want to terrify the horse?

DORA: He's grazed his knee. Frank—the boy's hurt!

ALAN: I'm not! I'm not!

FRANK: What's your name?

HORSEMAN: Jesse James.

DORA: Frank, he's bleeding!

FRANK: I intend to report you to the police for endangering the lives of children.

HORSEMAN: Go right ahead!  
 DORA: Can you stand, dear?  
 ALAN: Oh, *stop* it! . . .  
 FRANK: You're a public menace, d'you know that? How dare you pick up children and put them on dangerous animals.  
 HORSEMAN: Dangerous?  
 FRANK: Of course dangerous. Look at his eyes. They're rolling.  
 HORSEMAN: So are yours!  
 FRANK: In my opinion that is a dangerous animal. In my considered opinion you are both dangers to the safety of this beach.  
 HORSEMAN: And in my opinion, you're a stupid fart!  
 DORA: Frank, leave it!  
 FRANK: What did you say?  
 DORA: It's not important, Frank—really!  
 FRANK: *What did you say?*  
 HORSEMAN: Oh bugger off! Sorry, chum! Come on, Trojan!  
*[He urges his horse straight at them, then wheels it and gallops off round the right side of the circle and away up the tunnel, out of sight. The parents cry out, as they are covered with sand and water. FRANK runs after him, and round the left side of the circle, with his wife following after.]*  
 ALAN: Splash, splash, splash! All three of us got covered with water! Dad got absolutely soaked!  
 FRANK [*shouting after the HORSEMAN*]: Hooligan! Filthy hooligan!  
 ALAN: I wanted to laugh!  
 FRANK: Upper-class riff-raff! That's all they are, people who go riding! That's what they *want*—trample on ordinary people!  
 DORA: Don't be absurd, Frank.

STOP

FRANK: It's why they do it. It's why they bloody do it!  
 DORA [*amused*]: Look at you. You're covered!  
 FRANK: Not as much as you. There's sand all over your hair!  
*[She starts to laugh.]*  
*[Shouting.]* Hooligan! Bloody hooligan!  
*[She starts to laugh more. He tries to brush the sand out of her hair.]*  
 What are you laughing at? It's not funny. It's not funny at all. Dora!  
*[She goes off, right, still laughing. ALAN edges into the square, still on the ground.]*  
 It's just not funny! . . .  
*[FRANK returns to his place on the beach, sulley. Abrupt silence.]*  
 ALAN: And that's all I remember.  
 DYSART: And a lot, too. Thank you. . . You know, I've never been on a horse in my life.  
 ALAN [*not looking at him*]: Nor me.  
 DYSART: You mean, after that?  
 ALAN: Yes.  
 DYSART: But you must have done at the stables?  
 ALAN: No.  
 DYSART: Never?  
 ALAN: No.  
 DYSART: How come?  
 ALAN: I didn't care to.  
 DYSART: Did it have anything to do with falling off like that, all those years ago?  
 ALAN [*tigh*]: I just didn't care to, that's all.  
 DYSART: Do you think of that scene often?  
 ALAN: I suppose.  
 DYSART: Why, do you think?  
 ALAN: 'Cos it's funny.