



## THE COLIN ATKINS STORY

By Neil Rathmell

EXCERPT

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# THE COLIN ATKINS STORY

a play in one act

by

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## CHARACTERS

Mr Atkins, a middle-aged man

Mrs Atkins, his wife

Doreen Atkins, their daughter, 14

Colin Atkins, their son, 15

Policeman

Brenda, Colin's ex-girlfriend

## THE COLIN ATKINS STORY

***(1957. The front room of a council house in the north of England. Settee, armchairs, sideboard, coffee table, record-player. Enter MRS ATKINS in coat and hat, carrying a shopping bag. She takes off her hat and calls upstairs.)***

MRS ATKINS

Are you up yet?

***(She waits for a reply, then shakes her head and goes out with the shopping. She returns a moment later and calls upstairs again.)***

Tommy?

***(She takes off her coat and addresses the audience.)***

I'm sorry about this. He'll be down in a minute. We seem to be having one of those mornings.

***(She calls upstairs again.)***

Tommy! They're here!

***(She goes out with her coat, returning almost at once and addressing the audience.)***

I'm Mrs Atkins, by the way. I'm ever so sorry to have to keep you waiting. We're just waiting for my husband to come down and then we'll get started. Won't keep you long.

***(She smiles reassuringly. Enter DOREEN, looking cross. She glances briefly at the audience, then addresses her mother.)***

DOREEN

What's the matter, mum? Why aren't we starting?

MRS ATKINS

We're just waiting for your father, love.

DOREEN

Where is he?

MRS ATKINS

In the bathroom.

DOREEN

Doesn't he know everybody's waiting?

MRS ATKINS

Well, love, I have shouted for him. Two or three times. But you know what he's like.

DOREEN

He does this every time.

MRS ATKINS

I know, love. But what can I do? The more I try to hurry him up, the longer it seems to take him.

- DOREEN He only does it to be awkward. You'll just have to start without him.
- MRS ATKINS Ooh, no, love, I couldn't do that. I'd never hear the end of it.
- DOREEN You'll have to. It's his own fault. He should get up like everybody else. Just start, mum! It'll serve him right.
- (She turns to go, glancing briefly again at the audience. She speaks to her mother in an exaggerated stage whisper before she goes out.)***
- Just start, mum!
- (Exit DOREEN. MRS ATKINS smiles again at the audience, apologetically.)***
- MRS ATKINS I don't know what can be keeping him. I'm sure he won't be long.
- DOREEN ***(Off.)***
- Just start, mum!
- MRS ATKINS ***(To DOREEN, stage whisper.)***
- I don't know what he says.
- DOREEN ***(Off.)***
- Read it then.
- MRS ATKINS I haven't got a script.
- (DOREEN comes on briefly, hands a script to MRS ATKINS and goes out again.)***
- Oh. Right. He's not going to like it. Oh, well!
- (MRS ATKINS faces the audience again.)***
- We've decided to start without him.
- (Reads from the script.)***
- Prologue. It is now a well-established fact of contemporary British history that, in the world as it was before the 1950s, there were no teenagers. Shakespeare wrote of the seven ages of man, but in the immediate post-war years such fine distinctions would have been over-subtle. There were children, adults and OAPs. Certain sub-categories existed – babies, toddlers, students, apprentices, women – but none of them was of any significance compared with the three major generation groups: adults, children and pensioners. So where did teenagers come from? Because by the 1960s, Britain was full of them. For over fifty years, the origin of the British teenager has remained a mystery. But now, that mystery has at last been solved. Scientists believe that they have discovered not only the identity

of the first British teenager, but the exact day on which he came into being. We invite you to watch a dramatic reconstruction of the events of that momentous day. The story begins on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, 1957, in the home of Mr and Mrs Atkins.

***(Enter MR ATKINS, half-dressed.)***

About time too! Where have you been?

MR ATKINS Upstairs.

MRS ATKINS Everybody's been waiting for you. We just had to start without you in the end.

MR ATKINS I'm sorry.

MRS ATKINS You're not even dressed.

MR ATKINS What?

MRS ATKINS Look at you! You show me up every time.

MR ATKINS No, I don't.

MRS ATKINS Yes, you do.

MR ATKINS No, I don't.

MRS ATKINS Yes, you do.

MR ATKINS No, I don't. Now come on, let's get started.

***(Turns to audience.)***

It is now a well-established fact of contemporary British history that in the world as it was before the...

MRS ATKINS I've done that.

MR ATKINS What?

MRS ATKINS I've done it.

MR ATKINS What?

MRS ATKINS The prologue. I've done it.

***(Pause.)***

MR ATKINS Oh, well, thank you very much! That's only my best speech! Remind me not to bother coming at all next time!

MRS ATKINS I had to do it, Tommy. Everybody was waiting.

MR ATKINS Yes! For me!

MRS ATKINS No, they weren't.

MR ATKINS Yes, they were! That's my speech!

MRS ATKINS Oh, for goodness sake, if it's that important to you, let's do it again.

MR ATKINS I'm not doing it again.

MRS ATKINS Well, stop moaning then.

MR ATKINS I'm not moaning.

MRS ATKINS Yes, you are.

MR ATKINS No, I'm not. I just don't expect to come down in the morning and find all my speeches have been done by other people.

MRS ATKINS All my speeches! You do exaggerate, Tommy. One speech.

MR ATKINS Yes! My best one!

MRS ATKINS One little speech and we never hear the end of it! Anybody would think it was all you had to say.

MR ATKINS Oh, I can't be bothered to argue.

MRS ATKINS No, because you know you're in the wrong. If you got yourself up in the morning instead of lying in bed till all hours, we wouldn't need to do your speeches for you.

***(Pause. MR ATKINS sulks. MRS ATKINS watches him.)***

Something's happened to you, Tommy. You never used to be like this. You used to be such a - such a vigorous man. Hard-working. Ambitious. And look at you now. You haven't even got a job.

MR ATKINS I'll get a job.

MRS ATKINS When?

MR ATKINS I'll get one. It's not easy adjusting to civilian life after six years in the army. I've fought a war, you know.

MRS ATKINS The war ended twelve years ago. How long does it take to adjust?

***(Pause.)***

MR ATKINS Twelve years?

MRS ATKINS Pull yourself together, Tommy. Please. Before it's too late.