



THE RECRUIT

By Dave Patton

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The Recruit

A ONE ACT PLAY

BY

DAVE PATTON

CHARACTERS

Name 1. Willy..20 year Veteran

Name 2. Freddy..Recruit

Name 3. Sonar..the Gaffer 25 year Veteran

SCENE

A room in a tenement flat

Firefighters are clearing up after a serious fire in which the occupant died.

LENGTH

4,400 words

Approximately one hour play

TIME AND PLACE

Glasgow Scotland

Mid 1980s

The Recruit

Scene

In the aftermath of a serious fire in a tenement flat, a man lies dead on the floor of his living room.

Along the hallway, three Firefighters survey the bedroom and are looking for hotspots.

The furniture here, unlike the living room, is roasted and buckled, but intact and recognisable.

Everything plastic had melted.

Papers were charred and bedclothes seared.

Sonar

Right Willie, you and Freddy here, make a start on clearing up in here, I'll away through and see that we're okay next door, okay?

Willie nods

Right you are Gaffer, we'll get this place squared away in no time, eh Son?

Sonar to Freddy

Okay son, just stick with Willie here, he'll show you the ropes..okay?

Freddy, clearly nervous

Right gaffer, yes..

Willie

Right Freddy son, here's the script.

Everything's got to come out of here, then we'll give it a right good check for any embers.

Now all the furniture's ruined so ... Are you alright son?

Freddy stands at the door and hasn't said much since coming up to the remains of the flat.

Eh, yes. Sure, I'm fine... I'm fine Willie, it's just... I never thought it would look like this.

I mean, is this a bad one or are they all like this, you know, wrecked?

Willie takes a look around, trying to see things through Freddy's eyes.

Some are Freddy son, some are better, some are worse.

There's not any two the same really, but don't worry son, you'll get used to it; we all do... honest.

Anyway son, there's not much here can be salvaged, it's way too damaged, but we'll look through those drawers, his wardrobe and see is there anything that's worth keeping. If we find anything, we'll give it to the Polis, okay?

Freddy nods

Aye, okay Willie.

Willie winks and nudges him

Except a winning lottery ticket eh, because he'll not be wanting that now will he!

Freddy is clearly uneasy

Willie, don't you and the rest of them ever take anything' seriously?

Willie laughs

Oh lots of things Freddy son, lots of things.

Rangers beating Celtic; A good whisky; and usually in that order!

Freddy ignores Willie's humour.

I mean, don't you feel sorry for the old fella through there?

Willie, looking puzzled

Sorry for him? Freddy son, I never knew the man.

Freddy

But he's dead Willie! Burnt to death in his own house, and lying on the floor like, well just like some old rubbish.

Willie grunts as he pulls aside a chest of drawers.

Well there you go son eh? Is that no what you'd want for yourself then?

I mean, a nice quick way to go, and in your own house into the bargain.

What more could a body ask for son, eh?

Willie laughs at his joke.

A body Freddy, get it, '*What more could a body ask for.*'

Christ that's good, I'll need to remember that one.

Freddy doesn't share the joke.

Quick? Willie the poor man's been roasted. He looks like somethin' out of a horror movie!

Willie turns from his task

Look son don't get so upset, the man's died, and there's none of us can change what's happened here. But see, this is your job now son, your not a civilian any longer, OK?

Freddy

It's not about that Willie. It's just that; well nobody seems to care.

Willie sits on the bed

Look son, come here, take a spell a minute.

They sit on the remains of the bed, as Willie lights a cigarette.

Willie

Freddy son, you're probably finding things hard and maybe a wee bit strange, aye?

But just take your time to get used to it, right?

Look son, this is your first stiff, and I wish it had been a better one for your first one, you know, a wee bit less....dramatic, tidier like, you know?

Christ knows son, I was maybe just as upset as you at my first. It was a long time ago, and I just don't mind now how I felt. But you see son, your man lying through there, he'd had a life, he was quite old, right? I mean, it wasn't a kid that died, thank Christ, 'cause that's bad, they're bad!

And besides, he wouldn't have felt any pain son, the smoke and fumes would have killed him well before the heat ever got near him; just slept away like, you know?

And anyway son, look around you here. Look at this place; what do you see?

Freddy looks around the room

How d'you mean Willie?

Willie

Freddy son, have you seen the bathroom in this house?

Freddy frowns and nods.**Willie**

Aye?

And you see all those empties behind the bed there as well?

Aye?

Well they weren't 'cause he'd had a few pals round for a wee cheese and wine son, 'cause it would've taken a good while to gather that many, some of them are ancient. I mean, that pile's a geologists dream!

Freddy

Archaeologist Willie, Archaeologists, the people that study old artefacts and stuff.

Geologists study rocks and things, see?

Willie laughs

Aye, alright smart arse, an archy-bliddy-ologist then.

But look Freddy, if you had the stomach for it and if you were to rake down to the bottom of the pile, you'd probably find the odd half bottle of whiskey, not too many like, but a few.

But as you get nearer the top of the pile you'd find less and less good stuff, and more and more Jake.

Freddy looks puzzled.

Willie

Jake Freddy? you know; the vino calapso; the mammy mine; plonk; wallop; wine.

Freddy

I don't suppose you mean the good stuff Willie? (quickly) and I'm not criticising mind.

Willie snorts

No son, I don't mean the good stuff. I don't even mean cooking' stuff either. We're talking about industrial grade here!

You see son, the first time he threw a half bottle down there, was when he gave in to the bevy, and not just there, see that pile in the bath?

Aye? Well, you'd find exactly the same there son.

See, this is him hitting' the buffers, and you know what's next, right?

Freddy more confused now than when Willie had started

No Willie I'm sorry, I don't understand. What's next?

Willie's tone hardens

Christ sake son, d'you walk about the town with your eyes shut?

Freddy is stung by Willie's changed tone

Eh?

Willie

The Dossers Freddy; Winos; Jake heads.

Christ son you must of seen them along at the railway arches!

Freddy

Oh aye Willie, I've seen *them* right enough, but I thought maybe they were tinkers or tramps just.

Willie sighs

No, no, no Freddy son, they're not tramps or Tinks either, there's a helluva difference believe you me!

See son, in a couple of months, maybe a year from now, he'd have been out on the streets; living in a Hostel when he could, but more often than not, sleeping' rough.

Oh, He'd get together with another three or four, same as his self, and they'd form a wee Giro club. You see, that way they can be sure to always have money for the bevy. His unemployment money would last a couple of days, then somebody else's, and that's the way it goes, day after day, week after week, and month after month.

Oh the faces would change right enough, for you don't last too long at that game, but nobody would notice or even care, just so long as the numbers stayed the same.

Only, by that time son, it would only be wine on high days and holidays.