

Tom Stoppard

Professional Foul

Scenes from a Television Play

SCENE THREE. Interior Anderson's hotel room.

The hotel dates back to the Czech 1950s, and so it looks rather Edwardian. The furniture is large and solid. The room contains a bed, a wardrobe, a chest, a telephone. A bathroom containing a bath leads off through a door.

Anderson is unpacking. He puts some clothes into a drawer and closes it. His suitcase is open on the bed. Anderson turns his attention to his briefcase and brings out McKendrick's magazine. He looks round wondering what to do with it. There is a knock at the door. Anderson tosses the girly magazine into his suitcase and closes the case. He goes to open the door. The caller is Pavel Hollar.

ANDERSON: Yes?

HOLLAR: I am Pavel Hollar.

ANDERSON: Yes?

HOLLAR: Professor Anderson.

Hollar is Czech and speaks with an accent.

ANDERSON: Hollar? Oh, heavens, yes. How extraordinary. Come in.

HOLLAR: Thank you. I'm sorry to—

ANDERSON: No, no—what a pleasant surprise. I've only just arrived as you can see. Sit where you can. How are you? What are you doing? You live in Prague?

HOLLAR: Oh yes.

Anderson closes the door.

ANDERSON: Well, well. Well, well, well, well. How are you? Must be ten years.

HOLLAR: Yes. It is ten. I took my degree in '67.

ANDERSON: You got a decent degree, too, didn't you?

HOLLAR: Yes, I got a first.

ANDERSON: Of course you did. Well done, well done. Are you still in philosophy?

HOLLAR: No, unfortunately.

ANDERSON: Ah. What are you doing now?

HOLLAR: I am a what do you say—a cleaner.

ANDERSON: (*with intelligent interest*) A cleaner? What is that?

HOLLAR: (*surprised*) Cleaning. Washing. With a brush and a bucket. I am a cleaner at the bus station.

ANDERSON: You wash buses?

HOLLAR: No, not buses—the lavatories, the floors where people walk and so on.

ANDERSON: Oh. I see. You're a cleaner.

HOLLAR: Yes.

Pause

ANDERSON: Are you married now, or anything?

HOLLAR: Yes. I married. She was almost my fiancée when I went to England. Irma. She is a country girl. No English. No philosophy. We have a son who is Sacha. That is Alexander.

ANDERSON: I see.

HOLLAR: And Mrs Anderson?

ANDERSON: She died. Did you meet her ever?

HOLLAR: No.

ANDERSON: (*pause*) I don't know what to say.

HOLLAR: Did she die recently?

ANDERSON: No, I mean—a cleaner.

HOLLAR: I had one year graduate research. My doctorate studies were on certain connections with Thomas Paine and Locke. But then since '68. . . .

ANDERSON: Cleaning lavatories.

HOLLAR: First I was in a bakery. Later on construction, building houses. Many other things. It is the way it is for many people.

ANDERSON: Is it all right for you to be here talking to me?

HOLLAR: Of course. Why not? You are my old professor.

Hollar is carrying a bag or briefcase. He puts this down and opens it.

HOLLAR: I have something here.

From the bag he takes out the sort of envelope which would contain about thirty type-written foolscap pages. He also takes out a child's "magic eraser" pad, the sort of pad on which one scratches a message and then slides it out to erase it.

You understand these things of course?

ANDERSON: (*nonplussed*) Er. . . .

HOLLAR: (*smiling*) Of course. *Then he writes on the pad.*

Hollar demonstrates the pad briefly.

ANDERSON: (*stares at him*) To England?

Hollar whispers to him.

HOLLAR: Talk outside.

Hollar goes to the door and opens it for Anderson.

Hollar carries his envelope but leaves his bag in the room.

Anderson goes out of the door baffled. Hollar follows him.

They walk a few paces down the corridor.

Thank you. It is better to be careful.

ANDERSON: Why? You don't seriously suggest that my room is bugged.

HOLLAR: It is better to assume it.

ANDERSON: Why?

Just then the door of the room next to Anderson's opens and a man comes out. He is about forty and wears a dark rather shapeless suit.

He glances at Anderson and Hollar. And then walks off in the opposite direction towards the lifts and passes out of sight. Hollar and Anderson instinctively pause until the man has gone.

I hope you're not getting me into trouble.

HOLLAR: I hope not. I don't think so. I have friends in trouble.

ANDERSON: I know, it's dreadful—but . . . well, what is it?

Hollar indicates his envelope.

HOLLAR: My doctoral thesis. It is mainly theoretical. Only ten thousand words, but very formally arranged.

ANDERSON: My goodness . . . ten years in the writing.

HOLLAR: No. I wrote it this month—when I heard of this congress here and you coming. I decided. Everyday in the night.

ANDERSON: Of course. I'd be very happy to read it.

HOLLAR: It is in Czech.

ANDERSON: Oh . . . well . . . ?

HOLLAR: I'm afraid so. But Peter Volkansky—he was with me, you remember—we came together in '63—

ANDERSON: Oh yes—Volkansky—yes, I do remember him. He never came back.

HOLLAR: No. He didn't come back. He was a realist.

ANDERSON: He's at Reading or somewhere like that.

HOLLAR: Lyster.

ANDERSON: Leicester. Exactly. Are you in touch with him?

HOLLAR: A little. He will translate it and try to have it published in English. If it's good. I think it is good.

- ANDERSON: But can't you publish it in Czech? . . . (*This catches up on him and he shakes his head*) Oh, Hollar . . . now, you know, really, I'm a guest of the government here.
- HOLLAR: They would not search you.
- ANDERSON: That's not the point. I'm sorry. . . . I mean it would be bad manners, wouldn't it?
- HOLLAR: Bad manners?
- ANDERSON: I know it sounds rather lame. But ethics and manners are interestingly related. The history of human calumny is largely a series of breaches of good manners. . . . (*Pause*) Perhaps if I said correct behaviour it wouldn't sound so ridiculous. You do see what I mean. I am sorry. . . . Look, can we go back. . . . I ought to unpack.
- HOLLAR: My thesis is about correct behaviour.
- ANDERSON: Oh yes?
- HOLLAR: Here, you know, individual correctness is defined by what is correct for the State.
- ANDERSON: Yes, I know.
- HOLLAR: I ask how collective right can have meaning by itself. I ask where it comes from, the idea of a collective ethic.
- ANDERSON: Yes.
- HOLLAR: I reply, it comes from the individual. One man's dealings with another man.
- ANDERSON: Yes.
- HOLLAR: The collective ethic can only be the individual ethic—writ big.
- ANDERSON: Writ large.
- HOLLAR: Writ large, precisely. The ethics of the State must be judged against the fundamental ethic of the individual. The human being, not the citizen. I conclude there is an obligation, a human responsibility, to fight against the State correctness. Unfortunately that is not a safe conclusion.
- ANDERSON: Quite. The difficulty arises when one asks oneself how the *individual* ethic can have any meaning by itself. Where does *that* come from? In what sense is it intelligible, for example, to say that a man has certain inherent, individual rights? It is much easier to understand how a community of individuals can decide to give each other certain rights. These rights may or may not include, for example, the right to publish something. In that situation, the individual ethic would flow from the collective ethic, just as the State says it does.
- Pause.*
- I only mean it is a question you would have to deal with.
- HOLLAR: I mean, it is not safe for me.
- ANDERSON: (*still misunderstanding*) Well yes, but for example, you could say that such an arrangement between a man and the State is a sort of contract, and it is the essence of a contract that both parties enter into it freely. And you have not entered into it freely. I mean, that would be one line of attack.
- HOLLAR: It is not the main line. You see, to me the idea of an inherent right is intelligible. I believe that we have such rights, and they are paramount.
- ANDERSON: Yes, I see you do, but how do you justify the assertion?
- HOLLAR: I observe. I observe my son for example.
- ANDERSON: Your son?
- HOLLAR: For example.
- Pause.*
- ANDERSON: Look, there's no need to stand out here. There's . . . no point. I was going to have a bath and change . . . meeting some of my colleagues later. . . .
- Anderson moves to go but Hollar stops him with a touch on the arm.*
- HOLLAR: I am not a famous dissident. A writer, a scientist. . . .
- ANDERSON: No.
- HOLLAR: If I am picked up—on the way home, let us say—there is no fuss. A cleaner. I will be one of hundreds. It's all right. In the end it must change. But I have something to say—that is all. If I leave my statement behind, then it's O.K. You understand?
- ANDERSON: Perhaps the correct thing for me to have done is not to have accepted their

invitation to speak here. But I did accept it. It is a contract, as it were, freely entered into. And having accepted their hospitality I cannot in all conscience start smuggling . . . it's just not ethical.

HOLLAR: But if you didn't know you were smuggling it—

ANDERSON: Smuggling entails knowledge.

HOLLAR: If I hid my thesis in your luggage, for instance.

ANDERSON: That's childish. Also, you could be getting me into trouble, and your quarrel is not with me. Your action would be unethical on your own terms—one man's dealings with another man. I am sorry.

Anderson goes back towards his door, which Hollar had left ajar. Hollar follows him.

HOLLAR: No, it is I who must apologise. The man next door, is he one of your group?

ANDERSON: No. I don't know him.

Anderson opens his bedroom door. He turns as if to say goodbye.

HOLLAR: My bag.

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

Hollar follows Anderson into the room.

HOLLAR: You will have a bath . . . ?

ANDERSON: I thought I would.

Hollar turns into the bathroom. Anderson stays in the bedroom, surprised. He hears the bath water being turned on. The bath water makes a rush of sound. Anderson enters the bathroom and sees Hollar sitting on the edge of the bath.

Interior bathroom.

HOLLAR: (*quietly*) I have not yet made a copy.

ANDERSON: (*loudly*) What?

Hollar goes up to Anderson and speaks close to Anderson's ear. The bath taps make a loud background noise.

HOLLAR: I have not yet made a copy. I have a bad feeling about carrying this home. (*He indicates his envelope*) I did not expect to take it away. I ask a favour. (*Smiles*) Ethical.

ANDERSON: (*quietly now*) What is it?

HOLLAR: Let me leave this here and you can bring it to my apartment tomorrow—I have a safe place for it there.

Hollar takes a piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket and starts writing his address in capital letters.

ANDERSON: But you know my time here is very crowded—(*Then he gives in*) Do you live nearby?

HOLLAR: It is not far. I have written my address.

He gives Anderson the paper.

ANDERSON: (*forgetting to be quiet*) Do you seriously—

Hollar quietens him.

Do you seriously expect to be searched on the way home?

HOLLAR: I don't know, but it is better to be careful. I wrote a letter to Mr Husak. Also some other things. So sometimes they follow me.

ANDERSON: But you weren't worried about bringing the thesis with you.

HOLLAR: No. If anybody watches me they want to know what books *you* give me.

ANDERSON: I see. Yes, all right, Hollar. I'll bring it tomorrow.

HOLLAR: Please don't leave it in your room when you go to eat. Take your briefcase.

They go back into the bedroom. Anderson puts Hollar's envelope into his briefcase.
(*normal voice*) So perhaps you will come and meet my wife.

ANDERSON: Yes. Should I telephone?

HOLLAR: Unfortunately my telephone is removed. I am home all day. Saturday.

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

HOLLAR: Good-bye.

ANDERSON: Good-bye.

Hollar goes to the door carrying his bag.

HOLLAR: I forgot—welcome to Prague.

Hollar leaves closing the door.

Anderson stands still for a few moments. Then he hears footsteps approaching down the corridor. The footsteps appear to stop outside his room. But then the door to the next room is opened and the unseen man enters the room next door and loudly closes the door behind him.

SCENE ELEVEN *The Colloquium.*

Anderson is at the lectern. There is a Czech Chairman behind him.

Chetwyn is in the audience but McKendrick is not. We arrive as Anderson approaches the microphone. Anderson lays a sheaf of typewritten paper on the lectern.

ANDERSON: I propose in this paper to take up a problem which many have taken up before me, namely the conflict between the rights of individuals and the rights of the community. I will be making a distinction between rights and rules.

We note that the Chairman, listening politely and intently, is suddenly puzzled. He himself has some papers and from these he extracts one, which is in fact the official copy of Anderson's official paper. He starts looking at it. It doesn't take him long to satisfy himself that Anderson is giving a different paper. These things happen while Anderson speaks. At the same time the three Translators in their booths, while speaking into their microphones as Anderson speaks, are also in some difficulty because they have copies of Anderson's official paper.

I will seek to show that rules, in so far as they are related to rights, are a secondary and consequential elaboration of primary rights, and I will be associating rules generally with communities and rights generally with individuals. I will seek to show that a conflict between the two is generally a pseudo-conflict arising out of one side or the other pressing a pseudo-right. Although claiming priority for rights over rules—where they are in conflict—I will be defining rights as fictions acting as incentives to the adoption of practical values; and I will further propose that although these rights are fictions there is an obligation to treat them as if they were truths; and, further, that although this obligation can be shown to be based on values which are based on fictions, there is an obligation to treat *that* obligation as though it were based on truth; and so on ad infinitum.

At this point the Chairman interrupts him.

CHAIRMAN: Pardon me—Professor—this is not your paper—

ANDERSON: In what sense? I am indisputably giving it.

CHAIRMAN: But it is not the paper you were invited to give.

ANDERSON: I wasn't invited to give a particular paper.

CHAIRMAN: You offered one.

ANDERSON: That's true.

CHAIRMAN: But this is not it.

ANDERSON: No. I changed my mind.

CHAIRMAN: But it is irregular.

ANDERSON: I didn't realise it mattered.

CHAIRMAN: It is a discourtesy.

ANDERSON: *(taken aback)* Bad manners? I am sorry.

CHAIRMAN: You cannot give this paper. We do not have copies.

ANDERSON: Do you mean that philosophical papers require some sort of clearance?

CHAIRMAN: The translators cannot work without copies.

ANDERSON: Don't worry. It is not a technical paper. I will speak a little slower if you like.

(Anderson turns back to the microphone) If we decline to define rights as fictions, albeit with the force of truths, there are only two senses in which humans

could be said to have rights. Firstly, humans might be said to have certain rights if they had collectively and mutually agreed to give each other these rights. This would merely mean that humanity is a rather large club with club rules, but it is not what is generally meant by human rights. It is not what Locke meant, and it is not what the American Founding Fathers meant when, taking the hint from Locke, they held certain rights to be unalienable—among them, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The early Americans claimed these as the endowment of God—which is the *second* sense in which humans might be said to have rights. This is a view more encouraged in some communities than in others. I do not wish to dwell on it here except to say that it *is* a view and not a deduction, and that I do not hold it myself.

What strikes us is the consensus about an individual's rights put forward both by those who invoke God's authority and by those who invoke no authority at all other than their own idea of what is fair and sensible. The first Article of the American Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of religious observance, of expression, of the press, and of assembly, is closely echoed by Articles 28 and 32 of the no less admirable Constitution of Czechoslovakia, our generous hosts on this occasion. Likewise, protection from invasion of privacy, from unreasonable search and from interference with letters and correspondence guaranteed to the American people by Article 4 is similarly guaranteed to the Czech people by Article 31.

The Chairman, who has been more and more uncomfortable, leaves the stage at this point. He goes into the "wings." At some distance from Anderson, but still just in earshot of Anderson i.e. one can hear Anderson's words clearly if faintly, is a telephone. Perhaps in a stage manager's office. We go with the Chairman but we can still hear Anderson.

Is such a consensus remarkable? Not at all. If there is a God, we his creations would doubtless subscribe to his values. And if there is not a God, he, our creation, would undoubtedly be credited with values which we think to be fair and sensible.

The camera, on the audience, finds McKendrick's empty seat.

SCENE TWELVE. *Interior McKendrick's room.*

McKendrick is fully dressed and coming round from a severe hangover. His room is untidier than Anderson's. Clothes are strewn about. His suitcase, half full, is open. His briefcase is also in evidence. McKendrick looks at his watch, but it has stopped. He goes to the telephone and dials.

SCENE THIRTEEN. *Interior Anderson's room.*

The phone starts to ring. The camera pulls back from the phone and we see that there are two men in the room, plain clothes Policemen, searching the room. They look at the phone but only for a moment, and while it rings they continue quietly. They search the room very discreetly. We see one carefully slide open a drawer and we cut away.

SCENE FOURTEEN. *The Colloquium.*

We have returned to Anderson's paper. There is no Chairman on stage.

ANDERSON: Ethics were once regarded as a sort of monument, a ghostly Eiffel Tower constructed of Platonic entities like honesty, loyalty, fairness, and so on, all bolted together and consistent with each other, harmoniously stressed so as to keep the edifice standing up: an ideal against which we measured our behaviour. The tower has long been demolished. In our own time linguistic philosophy proposes that the notion of, say, justice has no existence outside the ways in which we choose to

Tom Stoppard

employ the word, and indeed *consists* only of the ways in which we employ it. In other words, that ethics are not the inspiration of our behaviour but merely the creation of our utterances.

*Over the latter part of this we have gone back to the **Chairman** who is on the telephone. The **Chairman** is doing little talking and some listening.*

And yet common observation shows us that this view demands qualification. A small child who cries "that's not fair" when punished for something done by his brother or sister is apparently appealing to an idea of justice which is, for want of a better word, natural. And we must see that natural justice, however illusory, does inspire many people's behaviour much of the time. As an ethical utterance it seems to be an attempt to define a sense of rightness which is not simply derived from some other utterance elsewhere.

*We cut now to a backstage area, but **Anderson's** voice is continuous, heard through the sort of P.A. system which one finds backstage at theatres.*

*The **Chairman** hurries along the corridor, seeking, and now finding, a uniformed "**Fireman**", a backstage official. During this **Anderson** speaks.*

Now a philosopher exploring the difficult terrain of right and wrong should not be over-impressed by the argument "a child would know the difference." But when, let us say, we are being persuaded that it is ethical to put someone in prison for reading or writing the wrong books, it is well to be reminded that you can persuade a man to believe almost anything provided he is clever enough, but it is much more difficult to persuade someone less clever. There is a sense of right and wrong which precedes utterance. It is individually experienced and it concerns one person's dealings with another person. From this experience we have built a system of ethics which is the sum of individual acts of recognition of individual right.

*During this we have returned to **Anderson** in person. And at this point the **Chairman** re-enters the stage and goes and sits in his chair. **Anderson** continues, ignoring him.*

If this is so, the implications are serious for a collective or State ethic which finds itself in conflict with individual rights, and seeks, in the name of the people, to impose its values on the very individuals who comprise the State. The illogic of this manoeuvre is an embarrassment to totalitarian systems. An attempt is sometimes made to answer it by consigning the whole argument to "bourgeois logic", which is a concept no easier to grasp than bourgeois physics or bourgeois astronomy. No, the fallacy must lie elsewhere—

*At this point loud bells, electric bells, ring. The fire alarm. The **Chairman** leaps up and shouts.*

CHAIRMAN: *(in Czech)* Don't panic! There appears to be a fire. Please leave the hall in an orderly manner. *(In English)* Fire! Please leave quietly!

*The philosophers get to their feet and start heading for the exit. **Anderson** calmly gathers his papers up and leaves the stage.*

Brian Lee

Letter From Haltwhistle

A Real Language of Men

HALTWHISTLE IN NORTHUMBERLAND is a small town, sometimes called a village—an “industrial village” would be a goodish description—which travellers and guide-book writers, walkers like John Hillaby, will only mention in passing if they aren’t quite severe with it, as they make for somewhere else or go on up along the Pennine Way which runs around the town’s boundaries. Nikolaus Pevsner is the kindest: though there is little to attract the eye of the tourist, nothing is badly out of place. A good deal of it is indeed rather run-down looking. It is Presbyterian Chapel rather than Church, although there is a very fine church behind the small unprepossessing square with a caff in it which the younger people hang around in the evening. But though Main Street can look

exceptionally dismal on a cold and wet winter evening, the slates and stone roofs shining and the Northern light silver and thin, it is a dismalness of character, not like that of a modern estate where the planned and the natural can seem so often at odds.

Haltwhistle is in very beautiful, still rather wild country, to which, in part at least, it belongs; just as the history of the place, going back through small local industries—coal and fluorspar mining, brick-making, quarrying—to the sheep-farming and sheep-stealing of the border reivers, has its own keeping too, present with the past. Things hold together there still. Position (nearly two-thirds of the way across from Newcastle to Carlisle), setting, history, and people have some continuity. And with all those things, too, goes Haltwhistle’s speech, its words and its constructions, the peculiar twists and turns of idiom and intonation. When you meet a good sound example of it, which is easy enough, it is all expressive, distinctive—although it is dying, in our world. Haltwhistle’s isolation goes with its queer and rather churlish independence, with its surface unattractiveness: and they have saved it from something. Difference is dying a little more slowly there. The place doggedly persists in being itself.

THIS SENSE OF DIFFERENCE shows at once in an essential Haltwhistle word. Anyone from anywhere else—Bardon Mill, three miles up the road, Brampton, twelve miles away in Cumbria, Newcastle, London or Outer Mongolia—is a *doon-by-er*, one from *doon-by*.¹ A dialect dictionary might translate it in various ways, but essentially it means: that-which-is-not-Halt-

BRIAN LEE, born in London in 1935 and brought up there and in Scotland, is a lecturer in English at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic. He has written miscellaneous reviews and articles on language, education and literature, as well as verse. He recently published a collection of poetry for children, “Late Home” (Kestrel Books). With Duke Maskell he edits “The Haltwhistle Quarterly”, a review of letters.

Haltwhistle (where he lived and kept a pub, “The Spotted Cow”, for two years) has a population of about 3,500, and lies on the English side of the Border just south of the Roman Wall, and on the border too between Northumberland and Cumbria, just over half-way between Newcastle upon Tyne and Carlisle. The name sometimes leads people to assume that it is a railway town, but it is much older: the church is 13th-century, and one or two local buildings incorporate pele-towers, small houses or towers used for siege-defence in the period of the border raids. The name may come from haut-twessell (twitchell in the South, a twisting alleyway), meaning “the high ground by the bend” in the burn—which does fit its position; or haut-whysil, “high boundary.”

¹ *Doon-ower* (down-over) means, more or less, “close-by”; *oot-by* means “further-out”, connected with Haltwhistle but remote in its position.