# LEFT LUGGAGE

by

# Ian Saville

# **PROLOGUE**

(Various items of luggage are on stage. Music. Ian enters carrying large trunk on back. Places trunk next to other luggage. A red rope trails from the trunk. Ian opens it and finds the rope is attached to suitcase in trunk. Opens suitcase to find rope attached to a smaller suitcase. Along the trail Ian is distracted by various tricks he finds attached to the rope - a silk handkerchief turns into a cane, objects float in the air, things appear and disappear. Another suitcase, and finally Ian finds the end of the red rope. It is attached to a red box. Inside the red box is a blue box, and inside that is a pack of cards. Ian places the apparently larger red box inside the blue box, and starts to look at the cards. Sound of a train approaching. Sounds die away, and voices of Gods are heard over PA)

GODS: Ian Saville?

IAN: Yes?

GODS: Ian Saville, Socialist magician?

IAN: Yes. Is that the gods from the socialist utopia?

GODS: That's right.

IAN: I was wondering when you were going to turn up. Why are we meeting here, at

this railway station? And why have I got all this luggage?

GODS: We didn't know what you would need, so we decided to give you everything we

could think of.

IAN: But it's too much. It's weighing me down. Anyway, where am I supposed to be

going?

GODS: Sorry, but that's a question only you can answer.

IAN: But I'm confused.

GODS: That's all right. For now. Be careful with the luggage. Especially that box over

there.

IAN: What, this one?

GODS: No, the one next to it.

IAN: Oh.

GODS: (among themselves) Actually, I'm not sure we should have ... well, he's got to

have some ... yes, but that one? Surely ...

IAN: What are you talking about?

GODS: Never mind. Hope you get to the conference. Goodbye.

IAN: What conference? No! Don't go! Wait! WAIT!

(Ian freezes, gesturing to Gods. Railway station sounds end. Lights change and Ian turns to audience)

#### INTRODUCTION

Good evening. Before I go any further, I need to give you some information about the central character in this show. He is Ian Saville, the Socialist Magician. Played in this case by me. Now, the existence of Ian Saville the Socialist Magician is not a fiction devised for the purposes of this narrative. I really am a Socialist Magician, and have performed my socialist magic act for the last fourteen or fifteen years. In fact, I invented the genre of socialist magic, or socialist conjuring, and I remain the leading practitioner. In fact, nobody else has taken it up, funnily enough.

How I came to be a socialist conjurer is the subject of a previous show, <u>Brecht on Magic</u>, so suffice it to say here that I was given the idea by some gods from a socialist Utopia, who also introduced me to Bertolt Brecht, in the form of a ventriloquist's dummy. With his help, I developed such classics as the class-struggle rope trick, and the vanish of a leading reactionary and a trident missile.

Nevertheless, after all these years of practising this art, there are still some people who object that the very term, "Socialist Conjurer" is itself a contradiction - or perhaps even a paradox. How can mystification serve to demystify the workings of the world? And how do you square being a hard-line socialist (as I am) with the trivial world of magic tricks? This question may be in some of your minds even as I speak.

#### THE SOCIALIST PACK OF CARDS

Let me answer with a story. Let me take you now to the committee room of a North London Trades Council. An earnest group of activists is meeting to discuss the next stage of their campaign. It doesn't matter what the campaign is. Feelings are running high. People are being denounced left, right and centre (well, mainly right and centre, actually). Those who have so far escaped criticism from others are busily criticising themselves before anyone else does. (*Ian takes out pack of cards*) But at the back of the room, a young comrade is sitting with a pack of cards - shuffling, cutting, practising little flourishes.

Suddenly, the chair of the meeting notices this (*Ian becomes chair, silencing meeting with "all right - that's enough of that. No physical violence please, comrade"*) and demands an explanation. Why is the comrade not joining in the debate, helping to forge policy? Why is he playing with cards - not Union cards, or Party cards, but playing cards? The very agents by which the bourgeois state seeks to divert the working class from their struggle with capitalism and imperialism.

The room goes silent, and all eyes are on the young comrade, as he stands and says:

(Sentimental music fades in as Ian speaks)

To you, comrade chair, this is just a pack of cards, but to me this is a whole ideology.

Take a look at this pack, comrade chair, and you will find that It is divided, just as we are divided. It's divided into colours, suits and values.

It's divided into red cards and black cards. When I look at the red cards, that reminds me of red, the colour of socialism, and the colour of the workers' blood, shed in pursuit of our struggle. Black is the colour of anarchism, and though I'm not an anarchist myself, those black cards remind me of the many anarchists who have stood beside us in our struggle. Some of them have also described themselves as Socialists, and they generally have a good sense of humour.

The cards are divided into four suits. This reminds me of the suits you have to wear to get anywhere in the Labour party today.

Four suits, spades, diamonds, clubs and hearts. When I look at the spades, I think of the work of the working classes. Manual work, done with spades, sometimes. And I think of the peasantry. Though you don't get many peasants in North London, admittedly. But people have allotments. Well, that's the spades.

The diamonds remind me of the wealth and riches expropriated from the workers by the ruling classes.

The Clubs are the weapons wielded by those in power - from the batons carried by the police, to the nuclear weapons of the imperialist state. Weapons which maintain that system of oppression and expropriation.

And the hearts, the red hearts, represent the true red heart of socialism, the only system that can truly sweep away all this - the only hope for the world.

There are 52 cards in this pack. 52. That number, 52, reminds me of the minimum number of opinions expressed on any issue in the meetings we've had so far.

As in society, the cards are divided into court cards, a small minority representing wealth and power; and the ordinary spot cards - the masses who have no trappings or titles, but whose work feeds all. (Not that you can talk about cards working really, so the metaphor does fall down a bit there). The court cards also remind me of the need to abolish the monarchy, to create a truly just and equal society.

The highest card in the pack is, of course, the Ace of Spades - that single, ornately decorated symbol reminding us of our true goal - workers' unity. Because it's a spade, which I already said symbolises the workers, and it's alone and indivisible. Which also reminds me of the turnout at some of our meetings.

And if you add together all the spots on the cards you get a total of 220, which is the number of times a revolutionary group can be expected to split in the course of a year.

The meeting heard this all in silence (apart from the music playing in the background, of course), and at the end the chair looked the young comrade straight in the eyes, and said:

(Music stops)

"That is the worst load of bourgeois deviationist rubbish I've heard in a long time. Get out of here!"

And yes, I was that activist, and this is that pack of cards.

# THE COMMUNIST CONJURING MANIFESTO PACK

(Ian shows pack of cards that he has been flourishing throughout this trick)

But this is a very special pack of cards. This is no ordinary pack.

It is little known that before he died, Marx developed an interest in conjuring tricks. He is said by some to have been planning a treatise on the role of magic in revolutionary politics, though the existence this document is hotly disputed. But by a coincidence which it would be too tedious to relate at this point, I came

across a copy of Marx's notes for this treatise. What had not been previously realised was that, true to his subject, Marx had written his thoughts not on paper, but on a pack of cards.

(Shows cards to a member of audience) As you can see, each of these cards has not only the value of the card on it, but also a Marxist thought on the role of magic. Here, you see, it says "all previous magicians have only changed the colour of silk handkerchiefs, the point, however, is to change the world". And here - "All great events in history are repeated - the first time as tragedy, the second as farce, and the third time as a rope trick."

Since I have this pack of cards out, I might as well use them to demonstrate a Marxist principle - that of the social influences which go to make up apparently chance occurrences.

I'd like you to select one of these cards, if you will, without letting me see it. (*Audience member does so*) And so that you can identify it later, I have here in my wallet some stickers. I've got some round stickers and some square stickers which would you like? (*One is chosen*) I'd like you to write your initials one of these stickers, and put the sticker on the front of the card so that you can identify it later. I now shuffle your card back into the pack.

Now, you have chosen a card, apparently by chance. But is there really such a thing as chance? Aren't all our actions and thoughts determined by our social being, which is determined by a whole array of influences and factors that go to make up our experience? In fact I am confident that by finding out enough about your social being, I can find your card.

And I'm willing to risk my own hard-won exchange value, my money, on my abilities. Here in my wallet, I have a ten pound note. I also have my Union card, but that is too precious for me to risk. I'd like you to take that ten pound note, and you can keep it if I fail to find your card. I'll leave my wallet here on the stage while I do this.

But I need to find out some information about the social and political influences that led you to take that particular card. I already know that you prefer round/square stickers. Could you tell me where you come from, and what job you do?

(Audience member supplies information. Ian takes card from pack, but it is not the card selected. Audience member looks for card in pack, but cannot find it. Ian asks for more information about their background from audience member. Then he explains that the reason the card is not in the pack is that before the performance, Ian worked out, from the larger social influences that determine the global political situation, which card would be chosen, and which initials would be written on the sticker. He placed that card in his wallet this morning. The wallet, which has been in view ever since Ian took it out of his pocket, is opened, and in the zipped up compartment is the audience member's card, with the sticker and initials. Applause. Ian gets back his £10 note.)

Now, before I move on ...

#### THE HARD-LINER INTERRUPTS

(Ian uses ventriloquism to make sound of voice coming from offstage. He goes to investigate.

The following sequence is enacted by Ian playing both parts, jumping from place to place, and using a gruff, aggressive voice for the hard line version of himself:)

HARD-LINE IAN: What are you doing, comrade?

IAN: I'm just doing this show.

H-L IAN: What's that?

IAN: It's a show about the left. It's called *Left Luggage*.

H-L IAN: Should be called *Sell out* if you ask me.

IAN: What are you talking about?

H-L IAN: That's all you are, a sell-out. What are you doing in this bourgeois theatre institution. You should be out on the streets, if you call yourself a real revolutionary.

IAN: Look, could you just go, I need to ...

H-L IAN: Take your hands off me, you agent of the bourgeois imperialist state. I wondered

how long it would be before you resorted to violence!

IAN: Get off this stage!

H-L IAN: That's it. Show everyone how the face of left liberalism is soon transformed into

the naked violence of the state!

IAN: Get off. I want to do the rest of this show!

(Ian is apparently scuffling with his hard-line self)

H-L IAN: All right, all right. I'm going.

IAN: Good.

H-L IAN: But before I go.

IAN: Yes?

H-L IAN: Do you want to buy a paper?

IAN: What paper is it?

H-L IAN: "Socialist Magic Weekly". The only socialist alternative to the bourgeois magic

press.

IAN: All right, all right. I'll buy a paper. How much?

H-L IAN: Thirty p. But a rich bourgeois performer like you can afford to pay the solidarity

price of a pound.

IAN: Here's a pound. Now get off.

H-L IAN: So long, sell out.

(Ian approaches audience again).

I'm glad I've got rid of him. That is a bit of a charicature of a Socialist magician. In fact it's a charicature of a socialist, but as with most charicatures there is a grain of truth in it, because I do quite enjoy all the slogans.

But what I'm trying to do in this show is to explore some of the contradictions of my situation, and for this slogans are inadequate. This show will get beyond the slogans. To sum up - What do I want? Slogans out! When do I want it? As soon as possible within the current political and economic situation.

### **DIFFICULT TO BE A SOCIALIST**

In fact, my act has become a sort of barometer of people's attitude towards socialism. When I started performing my act people would say "Socialist Magician? what a strange idea. One of the last places I would expect to find socialist ideas explained is a magic act." And then about ten years after that, they were right. One of the last places they could find socialist ideas explained was my magic act.

It became difficult to be a socialist, let alone a socialist magician. I used to say, "good evening, my name is Ian Saville, I'm a socialist magician", and that got a laugh. Because it was unusual and unexpected. Then I began to notice that the laugh came earlier than before. I realised that when I said "I'm a socialist magician", people started to laugh before I got to the last word.

#### CHANGES IN THE WORLD:

The problem is that recent developments in the world had left me uncertain about what I was or what I should be doing. The fall of the old totalitarian regimes in the east - not that I ever really thought of them as socialist, but their destruction was hailed by many as the end of socialism - the fall of the Berlin wall, the rise of violent and vindictive nationalism throughout the world, the defection of so many of my old friends and heroes - all these things had made their mark. The new and unexpected developments in world politics had tested my understanding and belief.

"We must establish socialism!" I had told myself: "Socialism is both necessary and possible. Socialism or barbarism! The means of production, distribution and exchange must be organised on a socialist basis, must be socialised, received into social ownership. Social. Social, social, social. So shall we do it now? So shall I so shall he so shall his so shall isn't so shall is SOCIALISM. What is socialism?" I had repeated the mantra so many times that it was beginning to lose its meaning for me. Socialism.

Socialism Socialism Socialism Socialism Socialism Socialism Socialism ...

(As Ian speaks, the sound of a train is heard)

As I repeated the word, it lost its meaning, it began to sound like an old fashioned steam train. The vision of the train was there in front of me, the great filigree ironwork, the coal, the steam, the tender - but the gods were gone, and I was left to call after them ...

(Ian is now back in position as at end of prologue, with one hand raised, looking up)

# WAIT!

# THE PLATFORM

So here I was on the platform. But was it the right platform? How could I tell? There was a sign saying "no platform for racists or fascists", so thought I must be in more or less the right area, but then again, I've known many platforms which appeared right, but turned out in the end to be wrong. I needed to get to one of the platforms on the left-hand side. But left from whose point of view? From my position, or that of the train? The train coming in, or departing? Or other passengers? Or customers, as they're now known by British Rail. Or whoever it is that owns the stations these days. But if I try to get to the left of everybody else in the station, won't they then just move to my left? Then, in my effort to get to the left of them, I'll move to a more extreme position, and they'll do the same, until we've all moved so far sideways that we're miles from the station, and then we'll have hope of catching the train.

Porter - Porter! They didn't notice me. For the first time, I noticed how much luggage I had with me. Why have these Gods given me so much stuff?

Actually, what is it all?

(Ian opens large red folder, and finds that it is the picture of Karl Marx with moving lips and eyes:)

IAN: Hello Karl Marx.

MARX: Hello.

IAN: I'm glad you're here. You can give me a bit of help and guidance.

MARX: I'm afraid not.

IAN: What?

MARX: Well, the thing is, I don't have anything clear to say about this historical period.

For the moment, I'm just part of your luggage.

IAN: That's a shame.

MARX: It is, isn't it? You'll have to be content to just use the method I taught you, to

analyse where you are and where you're going.

IAN: That seems quite difficult.

MARX: I suppose it is. But you're better off relying on your own insights in the long run.

IAN: Can't you tell me anything?

MARX: Well, it's more than my job's worth, but I will tell you one thing.

IAN: What's that.

MARX: Try looking in the media.

IAN: What do you mean by that.

MARX: I'm not saying any more.

IAN: The media?

MARX: That's what I said.

IAN: Which media are you talking about?

MARX: That's for you to find out. Ta ta. (*Ian puts him back in folder*)

IAN: What does he mean by the media? What media do I have available? Apart, of course, from this copy of *The Socialist Magic Monthly*. And that's a sectarian rag if ever I saw one.

(Ian picks up paper)

Look at this stuff. All this aggressive attacking of other groups. (*Reads*) "We condemn magicians who wear red jackets" That's a veiled attack on me! "By wearing a red jacket, the conjurer is not displaying a socialist allegiance. Rather, he is fostering the dangerous bourgeois illusion that the wearing of any jacket is acceptable for a socialist magician. The only acceptable form of dress for the true revolutionary magician is red overalls."

And look at this - "Magnificent turnout on anti-top-hat demo" I was on that demo. There were only about a dozen people there, and they're making out that it was a massive rally. I think they must have faked that picture.

"Why ventriloquism is a sell-out" Complete rubbish! (*Newspaper replies: "No it's not"*)

Then there's an article here headed "For the liberation of the rabbit". Actually I agree with that. Because I am a vegetarian. That's why I devised this trick. (*Ian takes giant carrot from apparently empty hat*)

But mostly this is sectarian rubbish. I can't believe I'm going to learn anything from this. It doesn't show a true picture of the world, or of the left. (*Ian begins to tear up newspaper*) This stuff is just a combination of sectarian attacks, and hopelessly over inflated accounts of the strength of the left. Or rather of this tiny

little group that produces the stuff. We're never going to get anywhere if we persist in ...

(Ian has torn up newspaper, but now notices a bit that he has dropped on the floor. He picks it up and looks at it with interest.)

Actually, this looks quite interesting. It's an advert for a conference of some kind. I wonder where it came from?

(Suddenly, the newspaper is restored to its full size, except for a small hole, which Ian shows that the dropped piece fits into.)

It's an advert for a conference. The title of which is "Socialist Magic: The way forward for the 1990s, and well beyond, perhaps even into the twenty first century, if we get that far though the way things are going I'd advise you not to hold your breath, especially if you actually are a socialist magician - after all, there's not exactly a career structure is there - in fact what kind of nutter even thinks of going into this sort of business these days. I thought you had more sense" Yes, I like that. It's snappy. Oh look, here's the agenda: "Item 1. The mistakes of the past. 2. How to put them right 3. What to do next 4. What to do after that - i.e. not immediately after things have been put right, but for a short period during which things have already been going right for a little while 6. Why is there no 5? 7.Re-ordering the agenda."

It looks interesting. But who are the speakers? Let's see. The keynote address is being given by ... Ian Saville, socialist magician! And apparently I'm also performing at the Saturday night social (followed by a disco from Loughborough). I don't remember that booking! Wait a minute. Where's the date? And the location? That's typical of the Socialist Magic Weekly collective. They've missed out the most essential information from the advert. That's ridiculous. And I haven't done anything towards preparing my speech.

I don't know. What am I going to do. I'd like to get to this conference. It might be important. But where ...

(A soft squeaking sound - really Ian using ventriloquism - is heard. Ian tries to find the source, opening various boxes, checking with Marx that it is not him, until he eventually narrows it down to a dirty white box. The sound gets louder and softer as he opens and closes the box slightly. The lights dim and close in around Ian ands the box, as he takes from it a sparkly cloth. As Ian and the audience look at the cloth, a large onion with eyes and a mouth, floats up above the cloth. This is the SOUL, and his mouth lights up as he speaks.)

### THE SOUL

SOUL: Hello.

IAN: Who are you?

SOUL: Don't you recognise me?

IAN: No. I can't say I've ever met a floating onion before.

SOUL: It's true we haven't met for some time.

IAN: All right. I give up. Who are you?

SOUL: I'm your soul.

IAN: My what?

SOUL: Something wrong with your hearing, is there? Really, these bodies. They don't

make them to last, do they. I said I'm your soul.

IAN: But I'm a materialist. I believe in the body, I believe in the brain, at a pinch I

might believe in the mind, but I don't believe in the soul - and if I did believe in

the soul I certainly wouldn't believe in it as an onion.

SOUL: Ah, well, I've just taken on the *form* of an onion. I'm not an actual onion, or I

wouldn't be speaking.

IAN: So you can take on any form at all, can you?

SOUL: Oh yes.

IAN: Can you take the form of a rabbit.

SOUL: Of course.

IAN: Go on then.

(SOUL goes down behind cloth, and comes up again still as onion)

IAN: That's not a rabbit.

SOUL: Oh well, I must have got stuck. It doesn't matter.

IAN: But I don't believe in the soul.

SOUL: That's all right. You don't have to believe in me.

IAN: But how can I have a conversation with you, if I don't believe in you?

SOUL: Aha.

IAN: Aha? What do you mean, Aha?

SOUL: I'm just being enigmatic.

IAN: Well could you stop that? It's very annoying.

SOUL: Anyway, I couldn't care less whether you believe in me. What rankles is that

you've neglected me.

IAN: I haven't neglected you. You don't exist, so I can't neglect you. If I was Faust I

could have sold you, but I don't know how much I'd get for an onion. Maybe if

you were a more expensive vegetable, like an aubergine ...

SOUL: Maybe you *did* sell me.

IAN: I don't know why I'm bothering talking to a non-existent religious concept. It's

ridiculous. I gave up all that religious stuff quite soon after my barmitzvah.

SOUL: Anyway, you've got me all wrong. I'm not a religious soul.

IAN: What are you, then?

SOUL: I'm more a sort of abstract intellectual incarnation of your hopes and desires. In

the shape of an onion.

IAN: Well what are you doing here, anyway?

SOUL: I'm just here to help you look at what you really believe.

IAN: But I know what I believe.

SOUL: Do you?

IAN: Of course.

SOUL: What?

IAN: Well, I believe that ...(takes out pack of cards and starts to read quotes).

SOUL: Not good enough, I'm afraid.

IAN: What do you mean?

SOUL: Let me show you a trick.

IAN: What is this?

SOUL: Take a card.

IAN: Yes

SOUL: Hold it on the front of the pack so the audience can see it.

IAN: Don't you look at it, though.

SOUL: I can't see. I haven't got any eyes, have I? I'm not a potato you know.

IAN: All right.

SOUL: Now hold it higher. Higher ... higher ... higher (pack disappears)

IAN: My ideology -it's gone.

SOUL: (laughs)

IAN: You can't do that.

SOUL: It's all right, you'll get it back. If you can find out what you really believe in.

IAN: No, I'm not standing for it. I'm going to see the authorities about this.

### THE LOST PROPERTY OFFICE

(Ian has a small, open fronted box containing a tube which he takes out and shows empty. Replaces tube. Knocks on door at top of tube. Voice from inside says "Come in." Opens door to find a disembodied head, apparently made of stone or ceramic, and bearing a resemblance to Lenin. The mouth of the stone head moves as it speaks. This is the CLERK.)

CLERK: Hello.

IAN: Hello. Is this the lost property office?

CLERK: That's right. Property is theft, but lost property is a legitimate way to make a

living within capitalist society. That's our motto.

IAN: I wonder if you could help me.

CLERK: What do you want, then.

IAN: I've lost some luggage. You see, I have to go on a very important journey, to

attend a conference, but I seem to have lost both the location of the conference,

and my ideology.

CLERK: To lose just the conference would be a misfortune, but to lose a whole ideology

seems like carelessness. Can you describe this ideology?

IAN: It was in the form of a pack of cards, with various philosophical mottoes written

on them.

CLERK: What did you use it for?

IAN: For arriving at a consistent view of the world. And for helping me to do my

magic tricks. Look, without it, this rope trick becomes just another rope trick.

It has no political significance whatsoever.

CLERK: It seems to me that what you need is the line.

IAN: The line?

CLERK: Yes. The right-on line.

IAN: No, surely the line is immaterial.

CLERK: That's where you are mistaken. The line is very material indeed. It is made of

tempered steel. You don't get much more material than that.

IAN: But the line itself is unimportant. I couldn't care less if there was no line

involved at all. It's where I'm going to that matters.

CLERK: Oh no. It's the line that's important, not the destination. Talking about the

destination is at best a diversion, and at worst downright dangerous.

IAN: Dangerous?

CLERK: Of course. The whole journey is fraught with danger. And having found the

correct line, your task is by no means complete. You have to stay on it.

IAN: Is that difficult?

CLERK: Very. There are constant temptations. At every juncture you will be presented

with many choices, only one of which is correct. And of course there are times

when the line changes without you realising, so that you find that what you

thought was the right line all along is now no longer the right line, and never

was the right line, and in fact you were not actually travelling on it, although it

may have appeared to some mistaken people that you were. All very difficult

and dangerous. Some people have disappeared after travelling along the wrong

line.

IAN: But what if I were to stay on the correct line, get to the end of it, and then find I

was somewhere where I didn't want to be?

CLERK: If you are on the correct line, it follows that you must be in the right place.

IAN: But if I haven't thought about where I'm going

CLERK: Look, if it turns out that having followed the correct line, as determined by the

advice I may give you, you find yourself in the wrong place, the line itself is not to blame. Nor is the architect of that line, or the functionaries who guided you along the way. No. If you find yourself in the wrong place it is clear where the

blame must lie.

IAN: Where?

CLERK: On the surrounding landscape, which has failed to move as it was supposed and

expected to.

IAN: So if the journey doesn't go as we intended, we blame the landscape?

CLERK: The only thing we can blame, really.

IAN: All right. Can you give me some advice about the correct line?

CLERK: I'm afraid not.

IAN: Why?

CLERK: All services have been temporarily suspended.

IAN: Why's that?

CLERK: Engineering work.

IAN: What sort of engineering work?

CLERK: Social engineering work on the line.

IAN: So what am I supposed to do?

CLERK: Get a ticket.

(A fan of tickets appears in Ian's hand. During the next speech, he throws tickets into the tube in the box, but every time he does so, more tickets appear)

IAN:

But which ticket? There are so many to choose from. There's the labour party "dream ticket", which just takes you on a fantasy trip. There's the CP ticket, but I think they've discontinued that now. There's the Socialist worker Ticket, which believes it's the only ticket. There's even a liberal democrat ticket, which takes you back to where you started from ... (and others, ad lib)

Which ticket do I need?

(Ian opens door of box. The head and tickets are no longer there.

"Bing-Bong" sound)

PA VOICE: We regret that due to essential maintenance work on the line there will be long delays during this historical period. The implementation of a society based on the needs of all humanity rather than the greed and profit of the few is now running considerably late. We regret any inconvenience this may cause, but cannot be held liable for any resultant loss. ("Bing-Bong" sound, as on PA system)

IAN: And what am I supposed to do in the meantime?

PA VOICE: ("Bing-Bong" sound) Be patient. Wait. That's what the waiting room is for. ("Bing-Bong" sound).

IAN: But I don't want to wait. I want to get somewhere.

PA VOICE: ("Bing-Bong" sound) I am afraid the historical conditions are not yet right for you to get anywhere. ("Bing-Bong" sound)

IAN: I can't accept that. Things need doing now. Plans need to be formulated, and action undertaken. The conference is happening without me. I've got a speech to make and a performance to do.

PA VOICE: ("Bing-Bong" sound) There's no point attempting to fly in the face of history. Settle down and enjoy your time. Use it to work on your speech. Get to know your fellow waiters.

("Bing-Bong" sound).

## THE WAITING ROOM

IAN: I looked around me. I was in a dim and dusty, cobweb covered waiting room.

As my eyes began to adjust to the darkness, I discerned shapes - irregular bundles covered with cloth, that took on a frightening aspect. The place was cold and dismal - a warehouse for lost hopes.

But what were these shapes? I started to remove the cloths.

(He does so. Underneath he finds a cut- out of Brecht, a stained glass mirror with a picture of William Morris, a cut-out of Ian himself with a beard [as a Rabbi] and one of Emma Goldman. There is also a television set, and a reproduction of Munch's The Scream.)

What's this? Oh, it's Bertolt Brecht, the great socialist poet, playwright and theatre theorist.

BRECHT: (Brecht punctuates his speeches with moving his cigar to his mouth and puffing out smoke)So, you've arrived at last, have you?

IAN: Bertolt Brecht, my theatrical inspiration. The one who showed me how theatre could be used to change the way people think about the world. What are you doing here?

BRECHT: What do you think I'm doing? This is a waiting room, so I'm waiting. I assume there will be a train along soon.

IAN: I hope so. And look, here's William Morris, poet, designer, artist and socialist visionary.

MORRIS: (*The stained glass window lights up as Morris speaks*) Greetings!

IAN: How do you do. Here's Emma Goldman - anarchist, syndicalist, scourge of capitalism and tyranny, thrown out of both the USA and the USSR for her determination to stand up for the persecuted. How did you get here?

GOLDMAN: The same way as you. I was directed here by that nasty clerk at the information desk.

IAN: Yes. I didn't get on with him too well either. And here's somebody I've never

seen before. Looks a bit like a Rabbi. Who are you?

RABBI: My name is Ian Solomon

IAN: Strange. My name was Ian Solomon, before my family changed it.

RABBI: Yes. I changed it back when I became a Rabbi, to emphasise my Jewish roots.

IAN: So you are actually another potential me, are you?

RABBI: Yes.

IAN: I might have guessed I'd come across something like that in this journey. What

about this one? (removes cloth). I know that picture! That's that painting by

Munch that was stolen in Oslo earlier this year. What was it called?

SCREAM: AAARGH!

IAN: No, don't tell me.

SCREAM: AAAARGH!

IAN: Will you shut up. You're giving me a headache.

SCREAM: AAARGH! I can't help it. I am the scream. I was painted in 1893. I have been

screaming for over a hundred years.

IAN: You must have quite a sore throat. What are you screaming about, actually?

SCREAM: I'm screaming about the horrors of war, the lack of humanity in human relations,

the alienation of the individual from the community, the loss of individualism in

the twentieth century, and the fact that my ears are a funny shape, as you can

see. (Figure in painting moves his hands from his ears to reveal funny sticking-

out ears).

BRECHT: Well, now that you're here, Ian, we might as well start.

IAN: Start what?

BRECHT: The conference, of course.

IAN: What conference?

GOLDMAN: He's talking about the conference on socialist magic.

IAN: Oh, that conference. So that's where you're all going is it?

BRECHT: Of course. So who's going to chair? I can't because I have too many important things to say.

GOLDMAN: And I can't, because I am the only woman here, and therefore have to contribute to the debate.

MORRIS: I am a nineteenth century visionary, so I clearly can't chair.

RABBI: You're not suggesting a Rabbi should do it?

SCREAM: Aaaaargh.

IAN: All right, I'll chair.

(To operate the figures, Ian has to run about behind them as they each speak [or scream]. This activity gets increasingly frenetic as the scene continues)

BRECHT: Good, now, the agenda ...

IAN: Oh yes, I've got the agenda somewhere, it was printed in the ...

BRECHT: No, there's a new agenda. Now there is only one item, and that is "what are the inadequacies of Ian Saville as a socialist magician, and what should we do about it?"

IAN: Oh. Right.

BRECHT: You see, the problem with Ian Saville's magic is that it's not *alienated* enough.

MORRIS: No, as I see it, the problem is that it's not visionary enough - it doesn't present a vision of a socialist utopia ...

GOLDMAN: Rubbish. The problem is that he doesn't take the anarchist perspective into

account. Or the women's perspective.

BRECHT: Scheiss. You are talking complete drivel ...

SCREAM: Aaaaargh.

BRECHT: And you can shut up too. You have not yet negated the negation, so I don't

know what you're doing here.

RABBI: Listen, Saville's problem is that he neglects his own ethnic roots. His act is not

Jewish enough.

GOLDMAN: That's totally irrelevant to what we're discussing.

BRECHT: Precisely.

RABBI: So now we see the anti-Semitism of this conference.

GOLDMAN: How can I be an anti Semite? I'm a Jew myself.

BRECHT: And my wife was Jewish.

RABBI: That's got nothing to do with it.

SCREAM: Aaaaargh!

MORRIS: Well, I'm not Jewish.

IAN: No, although with a name like Morris ...

BRECHT: I propose a vote of no confidence ...

GOLDMAN: You can't do that.

RABBI: What about the standing orders?

SCREAM: Aaaargh!

(Everybody seems to be trying to talk at once. Suddenly Ian breaks away.)

IAN: Stop!

I've had enough of this. I thought this conference was supposed to get us somewhere. But all that's happening is people are shouting and screaming at one another. When's this train going to come. I need to get away from here.

I need more information about what's happening. Maybe this monitor will have some train information on it.

(There is a TV at the corner of the stage. Ian turns it on. We see that on it there is a smoother looking version of Ian, being interviewed by Jonathan Ross. The Video Ian is talking about his time in the "wilderness", and is explaining how those "wilderness years" came to an end. Ian speaks to his own incarnation on screen, and the two seem to be speaking very informally, interrupting and correcting one another at speed:)

IAN: Hey, who are you?

VIDEO IAN: Who am I? What do you mean, who am I? Everybody knows who I am. I'm Ian Saville.

IAN: But *I'm* Ian Saville.

VIDEO IAN: Oh yes. So you are. I remember.

IAN: What do you mean, "I remember"?

VIDEO IAN: Well, you are me in the past ...

IAN: The past?

VIDEO IAN: ... that's right, so I have been in that situation ...

IAN: What, in the waiting room?

VIDEO IAN: yes, and I have been through all that you are going through now.

IAN: You mean the confusion, the search for...erm

VIDEO IAN: truth?

IAN: no, I was going to say the search ...

VIDEO IAN: the search for the correct ideology

IAN: yes, the search for the right on...

VIDEO IAN: line. Yes. I've been through all that.

IAN: And what did you, how did you ...erm

VIDEO IAN: resolve it?

IAN: yes

VIDEO IAN: I'm glad you asked me that actually ...

IAN: Are you?

VIDEO IAN: Yes, because ...

IAN: Because what?

VIDEO IAN: I'm about to explain.

IAN: Of course.

VIDEO IAN: Right.

IAN: Carry on.

VIDEO IAN: Look, could you just stop interrupting me all the time?

IAN: I thought it would make the scene more realistic.

VIDEO IAN: Well it just slows things down.

IAN: Yes, but I ...

VIDEO IAN: well it's very ..

IAN: I thought

VIDEO IAN: I don't care what you thought. It's very annoying. Anyway, everyone knows I'm just a video image, so you're not fooling anyone.

IAN: OK

VIDEO IAN: Can I continue, then?

IAN: Go ahead.

VIDEO IAN: Well, basically, I decided to give up all this political stuff.

IAN: Really. Oh, sorry.

VIDEO IAN: That's all right. I decided to concentrate on the ventriloquism.

IAN: What, forget about the magic?

VIDEO IAN: Yes. I mean my technique with the magic tricks was pretty awful

IAN: I wouldn't say that

VIDEO IAN: Well I would. Anyway, I thought, forget all this political stuff, concentrate on the ventriloquism, and maybe I stand a chance of getting somewhere.

IAN: And it worked did it?

VIDEO IAN: oh yes. I now have my own TV series. Money, cars, luxury yachts - everything you could desire.

IAN: just by concentrating on the ventriloquism?

VIDEO IAN: Well, I perfected a new technique of ventriloquism.

IAN: What was that?

VIDEO IAN: Closed mouth ventriloquism.

IAN: Closed mouth ventriloquism?

VIDEO IAN: Yes. As you know, all previous ventriloquists have had their mouths slightly open when the dummy speaks, but I perfected a technique whereby I keep my mouth completely closed.

IAN: Surely that's impossible.

VIDEO IAN: No. Watch this: (with mouth closed, voice on video perfectly clear) My name is Ian Saville, the closed mouth ventriloquist.

IAN: Incredible.

VIDEO IAN: Years of practice, you see.

IAN: I'd quite like to try that myself.

VIDEO IAN: Go ahead.

IAN: (with mouth closed, quite indistinct) My name is Ian Saville the closed mouth ventriloquist.

VIDEO IAN: You haven't quite got it yet.

IAN: (*still with mouth closed*) No, I'm not as good as you.

VIDEO IAN: That's right, you're not as good as me, but keep practising.

IAN: Yes. But ...

VIDEO IAN: But?

IAN: But what's the point?

VIDEO IAN: The point is to become such a technically perfect ventriloquist that I make a very large amount of money. That's the point. What other point could there possibly be? You've got to be single minded. Abandon all other goals, and you'll get there one day.

IAN: But what about establishing a society based on equality - free from exploitation,

in which all get the full fruits of their labours, and the weak are supported by the

strong?

VIDEO IAN: That is just a waste of time.

IAN: You've become obsessed with technique and money to the point of total

irrelevance. I don't care how successful you are. I'm going to turn you off.

(Ian moves to turn the TV off. His video self watches as the hand approaches and tries to fend

him off.)

VIDEO IAN: No, no, please, no !!!

(TV goes off)

IAN: So, am I going to follow this? (Ian takes out the £10 note he lent to the audience

member at the beginning. He crumples it up, and watches as the ball it has

become floats in the air, apparently leading him on)

No. But this waiting room is not the right place for me either.

I have spent long enough in the waiting room.

The time has now come when I have to decide -

Shall I leave all this luggage or shall I resume

A journey for which no clear map's been supplied?

These boxes and trunks have been weighing me down,

Their contents confuse me or fill me with shame

For though many dreams they contain are my own

I know many crimes have been done in their name.

For we had to pack quickly, without enough light,

And what came to hand was not always ideal

All around us was suffering - how could we put it right

And yet not put each other through any ordeal?

Oppression spawned harshness, brutal acts bred revenge

Intolerance grew from impatience and zeal.

Yesterday we were enemies, the day before, friends,

Today we're not quite certain just how we feel.

(Ian starts to pick up the various items of luggage lying around the stage, and rearranges them in a pattern)

If I leave out intolerance, but keep anger on board

Perhaps then the burden won't be quite so great.

Revenge is too heavy, but I can afford

To travel with justice - I can carry that weight.

The defeats that we've gone through, the strikes that were smashed

The people who died without seeing their dreams

Still remind us that not every hope has been dashed

The profit machine's not as strong as it seems.

No, I won't walk away, but I will rearrange things

Maybe moving these cases will help, who can tell?

Because one things for sure, nothing moves till we change things

And that notion applies to my luggage as well.

Let's move things around and about. Why should a belief that people can cooperate be a burden? Why should the idea that we don't have to exploit each other be an embarrassment? Why should the revolutionary notion that people don't have to murder one another be such a millstone? No, what keeps us from moving forward is not the luggage, but faith in money and markets.

Rearrange the luggage.

See it with fresh eyes.

What I really believe in.

(The luggage has been rearranged, and now it is clear that it forms the shape of a train. Steam issues from the funnel. The sound of a train is heard. Ian finds the pack of cards in his hand.)

I hope.

(Blackout)

THE END.