

15.

*The sound of water in the darkness. Lights up to find Joe and the Ozzard sitting down.
There is a long pause.*

Ozzard Christ. Listen to the bloody chatterbox.

Joe Eh?

Ozzard I can hardly hear myself think, mate, you're talking so much. Stop the fucking clocks we have a problem.

Joe What?

Ozzard It's getting late, so give it a rest, you know what I mean?

Joe What?

Ozzard Sorry, I'm only having you on. You're the worst fucking case I've ever seen.

Joe I'll just have a sit down, then I'll be gone.

Ozzard What's your name then?

Joe Joe.

Ozzard Joe. Joe. Joe. Hey Joe. Where you going with that gun in your hand?

Joe Sorry?

Ozzard Jesus Christ, are you a bit slow? Jimi Hendrix Experience? The band? The song? Hey Joe?

Joe Never heard of it.

Ozzard Shame.

Joe I'm sorry.

Ozzard Forget it.

Joe So what's your name?

Ozzard Me? They all call me the Ozzard of Wiz. On account of my medicine of choice.

Joe You what?

Ozzard Speed. Wiz. You know what I mean? Wiz. Fuck me, have you lost your voice?

Joe You what?

Ozzard Fuckin' hell man. Tenner a gram. You want some?

Joe No thanks.

Ozzard A bargain that is. If you change your mind, you know where I am. They always return for the Ozzard's Wiz. *(pause)* Don't start talking again. I can't bear it.

Joe I can't work it out.

Ozzard What's that, then?

Joe The sea. She called me to the sea.

Ozzard We could share it.

Joe Now she's left me all alone, hasn't she?

Ozzard Yeah, well, women are like that, fucking sluts. They lead you on then kick you in the nuts.

Joe But I can't work it out.

Ozzard Well, that's life for you. It's like a jigsaw puzzle innit. Except there's no picture on the box, or the picture keeps on changing from minute to minute. Or there is no box at all and anything could be a piece. So there you are, banging your head against the wall, trying to discover what piece goes where, and the pieces are all mixed together, and then it dawns on you, you realise, this is a game that goes on for ever. The world keeps on swimming before your eyes and you try to squeeze some piece in, but it snaps off in your hand. Then you're in the shit because you've broken the puzzle, or more dodgy yet, some woman comes along and turns the table, throws the bits on the floor. We're all fucked. The sooner we understand that the better for everyone concerned. That's what it's like. Don't you think?

Joe I don't know.

Ozzard You don't know? Shit. If there's one thing I've learned, it's this. When it's time to go, then you'll go, ain't nothing you can do about it, but time is too precious to spend not knowing. When the door to life finally slams shut and the big man says time to get going, then you want this much at least to be true – all of your thoughts belonged only to you. *(pause)* Oh come on, a tenner, that's all. Ten quid. Then at least we can both have a fucking conversation.

Joe No.

Ozzard You'll be glad you did.

Joe Sorry, I'm not in the mood.

Ozzard Stop ducking the issue. You'll have a laugh. Oh come on. Cheer up, cheer up.

Joe No.

Ozzard Go on.

Joe Really, no.

Ozzard You'll regret it, yeah. When it's gone it's gone. I'm doing all the work here. I don't know why I bother. You're no fun.

Joe Please. Don't go.

Ozzard Don't leave me now, now, now. Hothouse Flowers. You remember that one? That's better. So, a little smile, thank you god, it took hours, but a smile. You talk to your Uncle Oz, don't be shy. Whatever the problem was, it's done and dusted now.

Joe I'm sorry. It's just, I don't know, people.

Ozzard Tell me about it. People are bastards no mistake. No trust. That's the problem. I wouldn't want to shout it, but I often say, there's only two kinds of people in the world, bastards and real bastards, and all of them out of their minds. I'm sorry, that's just the way that I feel. Present company excepted of course.

Joe There must be good in people mustn't there?

Ozzard Good? No way. Guilt maybe. Shame. Fear. Remorse. But good? Oh no.

Joe But there must be.

Ozzard Yeah? Where?

Joe In people's hearts.

Ozzard Don't make me fucking laugh. Look, I stink, right? Yeah, yeah, I know it's true. If I knocked on a door, asked for a bath, what do you honestly think they would do? Invite me in? No way. They'd take one look at me, then they'd tell me to sling my hook. It's the way of the world, that's all. I should know. I mean, ev'ryone would like to think that their hearts are full of nothing but good, but they'll sell their mothers' teeth in the blink of an eye. You can't get a grip on life. Realise that and we'll get along fine. So tell me about yourself. Got a wife? Kids?

Joe No.

Ozzard Got three myself. Well not mine exactly. The woman I was staying with for a while. She kicked me out the bitch. For hitting the boy. And I was paying for

his football. It's a bit fucking rich if you ask me. Kids these days. No respect. He'll grow up a fucking pouf I expect. (*pause*) So what was the deal with that bird then, eh?

Joe I made a mistake, that's all.

Ozzard Odd mistake.

Joe I thought she was someone else.

Ozzard That's the way it goes.

Joe I could look for her.

Ozzard For god's sake!

Joe Apologise.

Ozzard I don't think so.

Joe Why not?

Ozzard It's not the way it works.

Joe She needs to know.

Ozzard Know what exactly?

Joe Just, you know.

Ozzard You know what?

Joe What?

Ozzard Women don't need to be worried, Joe. You're a good lad, I'm sure, but get this straight. Don't tell women a blessed thing.

Joe But –

Ozzard But? But nothing. It'll only be a weight on their minds they don't need. Open and shut. No room for discussion. Trust me. It's true. Keeping shtum. It's the best thing you can do. (*pause*) You don't know anyone who wants a banjo do you?

Joe You're kidding.

Ozzard Why would I do that?

Joe I used to play at home. All the time.

Ozzard No. You never.

Joe I did.

Ozzard Well, how about that? What a coincidence, eh?

Joe Where is it?

Ozzard I've got it here as it goes.

Joe What? Don't wind me up.

Ozzard I have. Look.

(Ozzard produces banjo)

Joe Where did you get it?

Ozzard A man in a pub. Poor bloke couldn't find the money for a debt. Musicians, eh?

Joe She's a beauty no mistake.

Ozzard Is that right? Have it.

Joe What?

Ozzard She's yours. For nothing.

Joe No way.

Ozzard I like your face. But it would be polite to play a tune or two, don't you agree?

Joe I'm not sure.

Ozzard It sounds fair enough to me. Well, I'm waiting.

Joe I don't know if I can.

Ozzard Go on, have a go.

Joe I feel a bit shy.

Ozzard Shy? I thought you were a musician man.

Joe I just feel a little self-conscious.

Ozzard Why? Don't mind me.

Joe Right.

Ozzard I'm disappointed Joe, really I am.

Joe I've not played in a while.

Ozzard That don't matter.

Joe It does to me, you know.

Ozzard I won't laugh or anything. Not my style.

Joe Do you want it back?

Ozzard No, it's yours my friend.

Joe I'll practice it, right? Get back up to speed. 'Cos it's all about practice at the end of the day.

Ozzard Yeah, lets see those fingers bleed. Gotta see a man about a dog, Joe. Can't wait to hear those songs on the banjo.

(exit Ozzard. Blackout.)