

Third Angel presents
THE LAD LIT PROJECT
(2005)



PERFORMANCE TEXT

Third Angel was an innovative and prolific performance and participation company based in Sheffield from 1995-2023. Led by Co-Artistic Directors Rachael Walton and Alexander Kelly, the company's work was created through an evolving devising process, and encompassed theatre, live art, installation, games, film, video art, documentary, photography, and digital media.

Third Angel reached audiences across the UK, mainland Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America. Their collaborations with artists and specialists from various fields, such as psychology, geography and astrophysics, led to interdisciplinary and boundary-pushing productions.

In addition to their shows, the company was committed to community engagement and education. Third Angel ran an acclaimed participation programme, mentoring emerging and mid-career artists and companies, delivering Arts Award to young people and running education residencies at all levels, as well as the weekly theatre making group for teenagers, *Future Makers*.

The company's archive is held at the Theatre Collection at the University of Bristol (www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/) and at thirdangel.co.uk.

“Consistently innovative and challenging... extraordinary performances.” *The Times*

“...engaging with the big issues about how we live with a fierce intelligence.” *The Guardian*

“A genuinely brilliant theatre company.” *Yorkshire Post*

Third Angel was an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, 2014-2022, and an Associate Company at Sheffield Theatres.

Third Angel presents THE LAD LIT PROJECT (2005)

Credits

Devised, Written & Performed by	Alexander Kelly
Directed by	Rachael Walton
Dramaturgy by	Dee Heddon
Professional Placements (Devising)	James Bush & James Stenhouse
Lighting Design by	James Harrison
Music donated by	Digitonal, Louie Ingham & Rob Langley, Paul Keatley, David Mitchell, Lee Sykes/ Vortex Music
Additional creative input	Jeremy Killick, Tim Wild, Nick Chambers, Andy Eccleston, Russell Armstrong, Robin Sidwell, Josh French, Chris Thorpe, Boris Worrall, Andy Tate, Christopher Hall
Company Manager	Hilary Foster
Professional Placements (Administration)	Marie Foster & Rachel Wadsworth

Supported by Sheffield Theatres as part of the Pyramid Project, Leeds Met Studio Theatre, Prema Arts Centre and Arts Council Yorkshire.

The Lad Lit Project premiered at The Crucible Theatre Studio, Sheffield, in 2005, and toured through to 2016 for 81 performances.

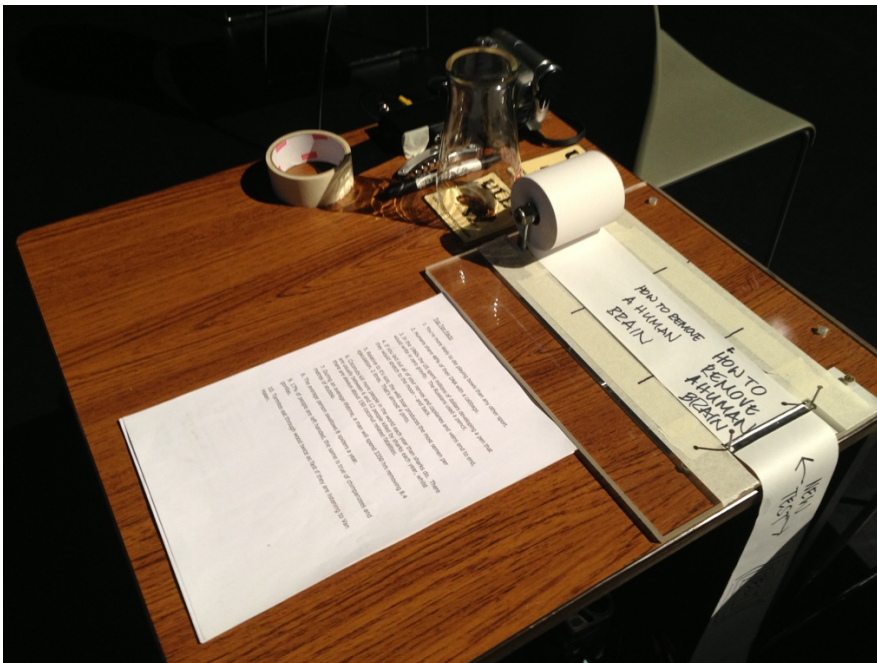
Programme Note

It probably won't surprise you to hear that I have been reading a lot of Lad Lit recently. It might make you wonder what "Lad Lit" is, though. It's a publishing term, short for "Lad's Literature", meaning novels aimed at blokes in their 20s and 30s. If you read a few examples of it, it doesn't take long to spot that it usually works to a pretty clear formula. A gang of mates. A crap job. A girl. A pub. A particular time and place. A good helping of nostalgia. A dilemma. A betrayal or a secret uncovered. A decision made. The End of an Era... The author is usually in his 30s, and the books often read as semi-autobiographical. Some of them are great. Some of them are awful. But I got kind of addicted to them. They spoke to me about a part of my life, part of my past. I began to wonder if I could fit my own life story into the Lad Lit formula, and this project started with me trying to do that. The answer was no.

So from here I asked myself, how would I tell my life story? I became interested in how other men view their lives. How would they tell their life stories? What would they call the chapters in the unwritten books of their lives? What stories did they want to tell? And these are some of the questions that we set out to explore.

Over the years we have often worked from (auto)biographical sources, and to me *The Lad Lit Project* feels, both professionally and personally, like the end of a chapter in itself. The culmination of many of the interests and experiments from the last ten years. A line in the sand.

[January 2005]



Performance Text

The text of *The Lad Lit Project* evolved over the years it toured. This version was updated in 2008, after the majority of its touring.

**

A table, centre stage, behind a row of 6 chairs. Chairs are numbered 1 (SR) – 6 (SL). A projection screen behind the table. On the table: a video camera/ player, a roll of paper running over a transparent section of desktop, 2 marker pens, a pint glass, a bottle of local bitter, a bottle opener. Under the table, a video camera directed at the underside of the paper.

Titles In Bold are written by Alex at the desk, and appear, via video projection, behind him.

Video material in bold also appears on this screen.

SECTION TITLES IN ITALICS do not appear on screen, but are included here for reference.

**

Alex enters and goes to the table. He starts the video.

Video: MRI Scan footage passing through Alex's brain

PHYSICAL FACTS

Stands in front of chair 6.

I'm a man.

I am 6 feet tall.

I weigh 12 stone, and 12 lbs.

That gives me a Body Mass Index of 24; that's the highest acceptable Body Mass Index, apparently, before you are overweight.

I have a 39 inch chest, 33 inch waist, 31 inch inside leg.

Size 8 feet. 16 and a half inch collar. Hat size 7 1/4. Wedding ring size Q.

My hairdresser says that my hair is 'dark blonde', although I've always called it mousy brown.

My eyes are somewhere between brown and green, so I usually say they're hazel.

Sits on chair 6. Takes off right shoe and sock, shows bare foot to audience.

About 5 years ago I started to get eczema for the first time in my life – and now I get it on that foot, this finger and that knuckle. At about the same time I also began to develop hayfever. After a couple of years saying 'but it can't be hayfever, because I don't get hayfever', I finally went to the doctor he told me that actually, I do get hayfever now. I have developed an allergy to tree pollen, so I get hayfever in the spring, rather than the summer.

I have a mild obsessive compulsion which means I will go back to double, triple and even quadruple check that the back door is locked, whenever I leave the house.

I prefer coffee to tea
I prefer bitter to lager
I prefer red wine to white wine
I prefer gin to whisky
I prefer sparkling water to still
I prefer plain chocolate to milk chocolate

I don't like:
olives
cucumber
celery
marmite
or peanut butter

My blood pressure is 127 over 77, and my resting heart rate is 67 beats per minute.

I am blood type O rhesus positive.

I was born on 27 April 1969, at 2.30am. I weighed exactly 7lb.

INTRODUCTION

Those are the facts. Undisputable, physical facts about me. And that's where this project started, really, with a fascination with this physiology, and a curiosity as to where, in this matter, my personality lies. I've heard that over the course of a seven year period, my body will replace every single one of its cells. So if I'm not even the same person, physically, as I was when I was 14, where, in this body, do my memories of being a 14 year old boy live?

I'm interested, too, in what those memories are of: the experiences themselves, I suppose. I wonder: If I had made a different decision one day, in, let's say, 1989, would I be somewhere else this evening? Would I be a different person?

When I left school, I carried on living at home with my Mom for a couple of years. I had a series of crap jobs in a bar, then a call centre, then a warehouse. And during that two year period, social life revolved, almost entirely, around my gang of mates. All of us lads, all about the same age. And we did everything together.

We went to the pub together.

We played computer games together.

We played Dungeons and Dragons together. A lot.

We watched films together.

We went shopping together.

We hung around each other's houses, listening to music and talking about girls – together.

At some point during this period, my Mom said to me: When you are older and you come to write your autobiography, you will call this chapter 'Waiting For The Lads'. And ever since my Mom said that, I've had this idea in the back of my head about what I would call any chapter of my life, even as I'm still living it.

During the course of this project I've spoken to a lot of men. I asked them about the times in their lives that they always look back on. I asked them about their formative experiences. I asked them what they would call the chapters in the unwritten books of their lives.

PUBS

Goes back to the table.

Opens the pint bottle and pours himself a glass of beer.

Holds the pint aloft.

So, given that that's our subject matter, at some point this evening I'm going to have to talk about pubs.

Which is fine by me, because I think pubs are fantastic. I know a lot of people like pubs – I'm sure you all like pubs - but not everyone realises how important they are. Why are pubs so important? Well, think about it:

You're in a strange town and you've got a couple of hours to kill – maybe you're waiting for a train. You don't know anyone. What can you do? Well, you can go into a pub, any pub at all, and you will be welcome. Because 'pub' is short for 'Public House'. Pubs are houses where any member of the public, as long as they are over 18 and they haven't been barred, is welcome. So any pub you go into on any given evening, whether it is in a strange town or just at the bottom of your street, could potentially be home to almost anyone in the country, just for that evening.

But of course usually you go to the pub to meet your friends, I realise that. And that's good because none of you has to worry about clearing up the following morning, everyone can drink whatever they want and you can tell each other jokes, talk about your problems and get them sorted out; generally spend some quality time together. But of course sometimes you don't want to talk to your mates do you? You see them all the time; to tell the truth you're probably a bit bored of them. And it's important in this day and age to have some quality time to yourself. Well that's okay in the pub, too. You can sit and nurse your drink, or read the newspaper – they probably provide them for you – or wander off and play games. You can have a go on a fruit machine, or have a game of pool, and if you play pool in a British pub there will probably be the rule 'winner stays on' and that means you'll probably end up playing someone you don't know and you'll have to talk to that person. Pubs encourage you to talk to strangers! And it doesn't have to be over a game of pool, you can just sit up at the bar, buy someone a drink, get talking, make a new friend. Now, I know not everyone is happy talking to strangers, are they? Some people are a bit shy, a bit nervous... But. Pubs. Sell. Booze! And booze relaxes you, makes you a bit more interesting, makes the other person a bit more interesting, gets the conversation flowing, makes some people positively garrulous, apparently. And some of these new people you get to meet in the pub you might get to go home and have sex with!

So let's recap. Pubs let you spend quality time with your friends; they let you spend quality time on your own; they encourage you to meet new people and make new friends and start new relationships; they help you to go and have sex and reproduce. Now, surely, these are some of the most important things in life aren't they?

So I propose a toast: to the glory that is the Great British Pub, which, through encouraging us to procreate helps to ensure the survival of the human race, and, more importantly, makes life worth living! Cheers!

Drinks beer from the pint glass.

He's Not Our Responsibility

So, this is a story set in a pub.

Sits in chair 1.

You are 15 years old.

You are sitting in the back garden of a pub with your Dad and some of your Dad's friends.

This is a pub garden that you know very well, because you have been coming here for a years now, because this is the sort of pub garden that parents are happy to let their children in. There's a big, L-shaped lawn, with an 8 foot high brick wall all the way round it, and inside the wall there are trees and shrubs. There is usually a game of football, or cricket, or both going on out here. But on this particular afternoon there's just you, your Dad and your Dad's friends.

A little boy comes out of the back door of the pub and starts playing in the garden, but this isn't unusual, so you don't pay him any more attention. Ten minutes later a man comes out of the pub. He's not wearing a shirt, and you can see that he's got tattoos and a ponytail. He's looking for something, and because you notice that he's looking for something you start looking around for whatever it is as well. And you both see it at the same time.

The little boy is now playing on top of the 8 foot high brick wall; and you know that the drop on the other side is even further, down on to pavement.

The man starts to walk over towards the little boy, and he shouts over to your table:

“Are you lot fucking blind? Can't you see there's a little boy playing on top of this fucking wall?”

Silence.

Your Dad looks over for the first time, to see what's going on. He calls back:

“He's not our responsibility.”

Silence.

The man gets the boy down off the wall, and starts heading back towards the door to the pub.

“I've got a good mind to come over there and smash that fucking pint glass in your fucking face.”

Silence.

The man disappears into the pub, taking the little boy with him.

Your Dad says:

“It comes to something when you’re talking about a child's safety and you're threatening to smash a pint glass in someone else's face.”

Drinks from his pint.

And then the conversation picks up – about whatever it was about before these things happened. And you sit there, confused. Because your Dad was right – that guy was out of order having a go at you when he was meant to be looking after the little boy he's let him out of his sight. But your Dad was wrong. That little boy was on his own. Surely he was your responsibility. And this is the first time that you realise that your Dad can be wrong.

Moves back to the desk.

10 FACTS

Indicates a list on the table.

These are My Ten Favourite Facts:

You're more likely to die playing bowls than any other sport.

Human beings share 48% of their DNA with a cabbage.

In the 1960s the US spent millions of dollars developing a pen that would write in zero gravity. The Russians used a pencil.

If you laid out all of your nerves and veins and capillaries end to end, they would stretch to the moon – and back.

(Now I know the Earth has seven moons, but I'm referring to the moon everyone calls The Moon. That's not one of the ten facts, by the way, the 7 moons thing... it is a fact, it's just not one of my Top Ten. It's kind of a sub-fact...) *(Etc.)*

Relative to its size, the wild boar produces the more semen per ejaculation than any other mammal. 2 litres in one go. That's almost 4 pints, isn't it?

Holds up pint glass as a measure.

Takes a sip.

Coconuts kill more people in the world each year than sharks do. There are usually between 6 and 12 people killed by sharks each year, whilst there are always about 150 coconut-related fatalities.

During an average lifetime, a man will spend 3350 hrs removing 8.4 metres of stubble. That's over 19 weeks, 6 and a half days shaving.

The average person swallows 8 spiders a year.

17% of people are left handed, the same is true of chimpanzees and gorillas.

Termites eat through wood twice as fast if they are listening to Van Halen.

The Girl

Moves chair 2 forward.

You are 58 years old.

You have been divorced now for a couple of years,
and you have also been through your Transitional Relationship,
and it's a good thing in both cases that the relationship is over.
You've got a new job.

You enjoy the work more and it is better paid.

You have a whole new lease of life, in fact, and you decide you are going to finally get around to doing some of those things you've been meaning to do, just for yourself, for years now.

Top of your list is to learn Spanish. So you enrol in evening classes, and you go along to the first lesson...

Sits.

...where you discover that the teacher is absolutely gorgeous. She is one of the most beautiful women you have ever met; she's about 15 or 16 years younger than you – in her early 40s. She is so good looking that it is intimidating. You can't talk to her properly. Half way through the first class you say something stupid by mistake, because you are nervous, and you end up having an argument with her about something you didn't even mean to say in the first place.

So the next week you calm yourself down and talk to her properly, and it turns out that you get on very well. She is recently divorced, too, and you also have a lot of family and medical history stuff in common. You are the two oldest people at the class, and she sees you as an ally because of that.

You're also really enjoying learning Spanish, so after the third lesson, with no ulterior motive whatsoever, you ask her if she would be interested in giving any personal tuition. She says she would, what a good idea, and she invites you over to her house one afternoon the following week.

Now this first 'private lesson' is just that: it's a private Spanish lesson. But what is important about it is that moves you into her domestic orbit – you find out where she lives, what her house is like, what books she has on her shelves, and all of this gives you more conversational ammunition.

You decide to bite the bullet and ask her if she would like to go for dinner, and she says she would, how lovely, and you arrange a time and a place. So a few evenings later you are getting ready to go out. But the problem is you don't know if this is a date or not. You don't know if it's just two friends meeting for food, or if this is Dinner, with the possibility of more than that on offer...

A couple of hours later, as she sits opposite you in the restaurant, you're pretty sure there is more to this than just food. And later on, when you get home with her, the evening goes on to become very pleasant, very quickly.

And this is the start of the most passionate, the most intense, the most sexual relationship of your entire life. You are seeing each other 3 or 4 times a week, and she is emailing you 4 or 5 times a day, and she expects you to reply to each of her emails individually, you can't just send her one email back at the end of the day in response to all four of hers – no, you have to engage in a proper electronic conversation. About a month into the relationship she has to go away for a week, but she phones you every day that she's away, and some of these phone conversations last for three hours. You've never had a three hour phone conversation before in your life. Physically it is fantastic; it's quite tiring in fact, but fantastic.

Three months in to the relationship you find yourself temporarily between jobs. But you don't spend this extra free time pursuing some of the other things on your list of things you really wanted to do; you just dedicate all of your energy to the relationship. Even though you have noticed that whenever the two of you do anything together, it is always her who decides where and when. You've also noticed that when you are with her these days, you don't really act like yourself any more: you act the way you think she wants you to act. And this is a trait you recognise in yourself from previous relationships, and it is not something you like. You think about it rationally, and you come to the conclusion that it would actually be for the best if the relationship ended. So you make the decision, and the next time you see her, that's what you do. You finish it.

Stands.

But neither of you really wants it to end, and one evening, two weeks later, she manages to restart it.

Sits again.

And two weeks after that, she finishes it. For good this time.

Stands, replaces chair 2 in the line, sits in chair 3.

So it's messy, and upsetting, at the end. You've only known each other for about 5 months, but you're the most depressed you've ever been in your life.

You have this clear memory from early on in the relationship, when one evening she told you that she used to be a model, and she showed you some photographs – professional photographs – that she'd had taken when she was just 21. And you remember looking at these photographs and thinking that back then she was so good looking that if you'd met her in person, you wouldn't even have dared to speak to her.

And yet, a few short years later, here she was pursuing you as much as you were pursuing her, and, when she got hold of you, pretty much using you as a sex object. As the depression fades you realise that this relationship has done you the world of good: your confidence is at an all-time high; you are happier than you've ever been starting a conversation with a woman you

haven't spoken to before; the happiest you've ever been starting new relationships.

And these new relationships, it turns out there are going to be quite a few of them, in the next few years.

Returns to the desk to remove the chapter title, then sits on chair 6.

BLOOD TYPE/HANDWRITING

Some people believe that you can tell a lot about someone if you know what blood type they are. It's called Blood Profiling; it's very popular in Japan, apparently. I'm blood type O, as I said, and blood profiling tells us that that makes me ambitious, go getting and flexible: I'm an opportunistic survivor. Romantically, though, my blood makes me both fickle and needy. It also suggests that I eat a lot of meat protein because of my high levels of stomach acid. Which is a shame really as I've been vegetarian for nineteen years.

Other people believe graphology can tell you about some one's personality. Analysis of my handwriting tells us that I have:

A relaxed and balanced attitude – I am friendly, honest, sympathetic and affectionate. I have a desire to be close to people and to have an identity within a group, or a gang. But I have problems with self-discipline, apparently, and mood swings that make me unreliable. I'm quarrelsome, resentful, and inclined to feel inferior – but I still think that my word should be final.

Now, half of that doesn't sound like me at all, I don't think. Although I do recognise some of it. I recognise wanting to be close to people and wanting to have an identity within a group, or a gang.

FRIENDS

Because if I look back at my life I can see that I've always had a gang; not the same gang, obviously, but there has always been a core of close friends around me. And I like to think about how my friends all fit together, as groups and as individuals.

Stands, moves down stage centre, and moves around a lot during this next section:

And sometimes I think about how I can know two people really well, but how they've never even met each other; and I wonder if those two people know two different versions of me. And I like to imagine all of my friends in a big diagram in my head, in fact, with lots of different categories. And I like to move people from one category to another as relationships change and develop.

I start with My Gang, and outside that I've got my entire Social Circle of friends and acquaintances.

I have a category for my Work Friends.

And a separate category which is Work Mates – because these are people who I can get on with at work, but I wouldn't risk going to the pub with them because I know that conversation would run out after about 20 minutes, it would all be a bit awkward.

Over here I have School Friends – people I have chosen to stay in touch with. And this has a sub-category, which is Friends Reunited Contacts – people who have contacted me through the Friends Reunited Website and they've said - *Hi there, remember me? What are you up to these days?* And I've thought - *That's nice*, and I've emailed them back and said – *Hi, what are you up to?* And I've never heard from them again, because they've realised that they are not that bothered.

I've got Couples Friends – double dates.

Then I've got my Girlfriend's Friends – and these are people I like, and I look forward to seeing them, but I wouldn't ever arrange to see them on my own without my girlfriend being there because that would just be weird. There's also my Girlfriend's Older Friends – who know her from other aspects of her life; most of them are pre-me, and when we see them, some of them talk to her like she's the girl she once was, not like she's the woman she has grown up to be now and I find that a bit fucking annoying.

Friends' Partners. Now some people in this category will move into other categories as I get to know them better – probably Couples. But at least one person will only ever be in this category because I just don't like her very much. And I don't get on with my friend as much as I used to now he's going out with her, because I go round to see him, and she's always there, and I'm trying to talk to him and she's saying things like – Well, we think this, don't we honey?

Over here I've got Friends Of Friends, people I would like to get to know better, but with a couple of them I have a sneaking feeling that they don't like me quite as much as I like them, but the main problem is simply that I don't have their mobile number, so I can't invite them to things, and I have to wait for our mutual friend to invite us to the same thing before I can even speak to them again.

Over here is a Bloke Who Really Likes Me, and would like to be friends with me but I just don't have time to be friends with him.

This guy I have got time for because this is my Friend Who I Really Like But Who None Of My Other Friends Can Stand, so I have to arrange to see him on his own, out of harm's way.

Ex-Friends – still mates, still like them, but we're just not as close as we used to be; it's like our friendship went in at Number 1 then slowly drifted down the charts. We still see each other occasionally, and we always have a really good night, and at the end of it we always say - We really must do this again sooner next time, and we always mean it, and it's always a year before we see each other again.

This is my Special Friend – and my Special Friend is a woman, but there's nothing 'going on' – she's like a sister, the sister I never had – she doesn't know that many of my other friends that well, so there's a bit of distance

there, which is useful, so we can confide in each other; but it is completely platonic.

And this is where the diagram starts to get complicated because there are a couple of categories that overlap with several other categories, for example, Ex-Girlfriends - now, a couple of people in this category are genuinely close friends now, but there are one or two people in here who I am still in touch with because I have this idea that they never quite got over me, and they still fancy me a bit and that's good for my ego. There's also a sub category here, Flings, a friend I got drunk with and had sex with one night – but it's not a problem, we can laugh about it now – or there's the girl from work who I went home with one night, and the next day it was – Hello, we saw each other naked last night but we're not gonna talk about it are we...? No, we're not! And we've never acknowledged that it happened since.

This last category overlaps with 5 or 6 other categories, too, and there's probably just one person in each of the overlaps, because these people are My Closest Friends – the people I rely on, the people I turn to for advice, and who won't take the piss out of me too badly – at least not until they've helped me sort out whatever scrape I've got myself into. Some of these people I see every week, some of them just a couple of times a year, but I know that when I do see them the friendship will pick up as if we saw each other yesterday.

I think that's it... I have got all this worked out on graph paper, with different coloured pens and a nice key in the bottom right hand corner... yes, that's good.

Returns to desk.

The men I spoke to told me lots of different stories. With most of them I could see a parallel in a chapter from my own life. But with a couple of them, their stories they told me were completely beyond my experience, even though they were completely true.

Caterpillar

Moves chair 4 down stage, sits side on to audience.

It is January 1945. You are 19 years old.

You are the Flight Sergeant Observer on a two-man crew Beaufighter Bomber. That means that you are the Navigator. And the Wireless Operator, and the Air Gunner, and the Reconnaissance Photographer.

You are only 19, but you can navigate this plane using the stars in the night time sky.

On this particular night your plane is in the sky somewhere over occupied Holland.

And on this particular night your plane is on fire. Neither you nor the pilot have done a parachute jump before, but you are going to have to bail out.

Stands.

You are first out of the plane and your parachute opens almost immediately. As you look down towards the ground you see that the packet of cigarettes that you did have stuffed into your boot has come loose and you watch as your cigarettes fall away from you into open space, and, just for a moment, you are pissed off about that.

Then the pilot falls past you, and you watch him, and you wait for his parachute to open.

And it never does.

Then you land in a field, and your training kicks in: your knees bend, you fall, you roll, you are back on your feet and you gather the parachute in to your chest.

You run across the field, and dump the parachute in a ditch to hide it. You run out between two isolated cottages and onto a road, where you see a young boy just standing watching you. And you see a bike leaning against a hedge, and you think you're going to nick that bike, even though you have no idea where you are or where you are going to go. At that moment a man comes down the road on a bike, and he indicates, because he doesn't speak any English, he indicates that you should get on that that bike and you should follow him. So you do.

He leads you to a farm house and the farmer opens the door, pulls you inside, pushes you down the hallway, opens a cupboard and pushes you inside, and he says one word to you in English and the word he says is: *Quiet*. Then he closes the cupboard door, leaving you standing in darkness, listening to the sound of your heart beating, which seems to be beating much louder than a man who has just been pushed into a cupboard and told to be quiet would want his heart to be beating.

Just minutes later you hear a loud knock at the farmhouse door, and you hear the door open, and you hear Nazi soldiers come in and begin to search the farmhouse. Looking for you. You hear them in the hall outside the cupboard. You hear them searching all the other rooms in the farmhouse. You hear them outside your cupboard again. And then you hear them leave. At some point after that, you have no idea how long, the farmer opens the cupboard door and lets you out.

You have been picked up by the Resistance. They give you a new identity. They take your dog tags from you, and they give you a forged identity card, with your photograph on it, but with the name Jan Van Der Ploeg. They give you a badge that says 'Doofstom', which means deaf and dumb, because your cover is that Jan Van Der Ploeg is a deaf and dumb tailor from northern Holland, making his way cross country, by bicycle.

Sometimes you are accompanied and sometimes you are alone. Because you are pretending to be deaf you have to ignore it when anyone speaks to you from behind, even if they shout at you, even if they are on a road block, even if they are armed, you have to just keep cycling and hope they don't shoot.

In this way you move from one safe house to another. Some are farm houses, others are in towns and cities. In each safe house the Resistance families who hide you, they feed you from the meagre rations they are given each week – usually just potatoes and a lump of fat. They make a pudding out of mashed up tulip bulbs, which is really sweet. They drink tea and coffee made from dried privet leaves. Although what the difference between privet leaf tea and privet leaf coffee is, you never fully understand.

You are standing in an alcove off a living room in a house in the west of Holland; you are standing next to a Resistance soldier who is also hiding in this house. The two of you are separated from the living room by a single curtain. In the living room the policeman who owns this house, who is a member of the Resistance, is drinking whisky with a Nazi Officer, because the policeman's cover is that he is very friendly with the occupying forces, so they are quite often popping round for a quick drink.

The Resistance soldier next to you doesn't really speak very much English, although he has picked up a few words listening to the BBC World Service's Band Night – he particularly likes Roy Fox and His Orchestra. But he decides to take this opportunity, whilst the two of you are alone, to try out the few words of English he does have, on you. He turns to you and he whispers, *Take it away boys!* – and starts to laugh. And you can't help it, you start to laugh to laugh too, and he likes that, so he says it again, a bit louder this time – *Take it away boys!*

And you have to put your fist in your mouth in an attempt not to be heard, as you become hysterical with both fear and laughter. And by some miracle the Nazi Officer doesn't hear you, and he finishes his whiskey and he gets up and leaves.

You are 20 years old. You have made it out of Occupied Holland, through Allied France and back to Britain. You have been through interrogation, de-briefing and a medical. You have lost two stone. Your fiancé has believed you to be Missing In Action, possibly dead, for over three and a half months. You send her a telegram at the first opportunity you get. The telegram reads:

“Hello Toots.

Arrived in London in the pink.

Meet me tomorrow Glasgow Central Station 10am.”

Moves chair 4 back in line and sits on it.

You make it home to Scotland, and over the next few months, you find out two things. You find out that the man who forged your identity card, and the man who took your photograph to go on it, were both executed for helping men like you. And you find out that you are now the member of a club – The Caterpillar Club. And you are a member because you managed to save your own life using a caterpillar silk parachute. They send you a membership badge – that you will choose to wear under your lapel in the future - a small brass badge in the shape of a Caterpillar.

Stands, moves stage left.

Over the next few years you lose touch with everyone in Holland who helped you. And you never talk about this story to your friends or even your family.

Until one afternoon, years later, when there is a knock at your door. You are at home because you are recovering from an operation, and your wife goes to answer the door, and although she has never met the man who is standing there before, she knows instantly who he is: he's the farmer who hid you on the night you landed in Holland. He has been in London on business. He contacted the RAF to find out your address. For reasons that you will never bother to investigate, the RAF told him that you were dead. But he told the RAF that that was impossible, because if you were dead, he would know. So he took from the RAF what they thought was your last known address, and he got on a train and he's come and found you.

You haven't seen each other for over 30 years. You've got a lot of catching up to do. So you invite him in for a cup of tea.

Takes chair 6 behind desk, sits, erases chapter title.

WHAT DO MEN DO?

What do men do?

Reads from a list.

They...

Play computer games

Read the newspaper

Watch the football

Take the piss

Take the bins out

Argue the toss

Take things too seriously

Don't take things seriously enough

Work 12 hour shifts

Listen to music on headphones

Ride bikes with no lights

Ride bikes with no hands

Down pints

Shotgun cans

Point brick walls

Put shelves up

Read on the toilet

Stop pissing halfway through – because they can

Drive too fast

Drive whilst drunk

Get indignant (about stuff)

Fight

Watch other men fight

Open jam jars

Cook

Garden

Look out for their mates

Run to the shops
Love their families
Flirt
Keep phone conversations short
Imagine being able to fly
Imagine being able to turn invisible
Fix things
Get depressed
Feel lonely
Eat some toast
Bullshit
Brag
Bully
Support the underdog
Sit in the sauna
Commit adultery
Wonder who they are
Worry about money
Act on impulse
Fuggedaboutit
Moan when they're ill
Torture people
Show off
Fix cars
Help strangers who are lost
Struggle to accept hair loss
Try on their first condom on when they're their own, so that when they
have to try
one on with someone else, they know what they are doing
Remember road numbers
Look at themselves in the mirror
Like what they see
Buy gadgets
Avoid work
Nap
Alphabetise
Make compilation tapes and CD's
Download
Drink too much
Eat too much
Get rowdy
Get lairy
Get frisky
Do the maths
Walk around like they own the place
Try to guess what you're thinking
Go out of their way
Go to sleep during arguments – if they're allowed to
Build homes
Piss in the sink
Piss in the street
Piss in the shower
Piss in the fireplace
Piss in the wardrobe

Piss in the empty pint glass that they keep by the side of their bed for just
such an
eventuality
Get their hair cut
Have a lie in
Go down the gym
Phone their Mums
Get (unnecessarily) competitive
Pick their noses while driving
Think about things rationally
Say "it's not a problem," when it clearly is
Play pool
Wear vests
Hang around in gangs
Go for walks on their own
Cut the lawn
Wash the car
Watch films
Buy magazines
Build models
Beat their wives
Collect stamps
Draw pictures
Refuse to ask for directions when they are lost
Stick to the timetable
Sit with their knees too far apart
Say 'that's not what I mean'
Show you what they're talking about
Video everything
Make you watch it later the same day
Walk the dog
Drive down the M1
Drive down the A42
Drive down the B3506
Posture
Fuck
Get angry with other road users
Look at pornography
Worry about the size of their penis
Take holidays together
Forget birthdays
Put their hands on a girl's hips as they brush past her in the office
Die first
Stub their toes
Wear overalls
Write lists
Miss buses
Take taxis
Stick the knife in
Predict the weather
Make maps
Start wars
Sign treaties
Invent things
Ejaculate

Reminisce
Pick their teeth
Give farts marks out of ten
Try to fuck women in the arse and pretend it was an accident
Chair committees
Make plans
Sometimes cry
Say 'If I were you....'
Give you advice
Start religions
Get a bit sweaty
Grow beards
Shave them off
Get erections on public transport and secretly enjoy them
Do press ups
Drink meths
Feel responsible
Miss their girlfriends
Whinge
Rehearse arguments in their heads
Daydream
Skim stones on water
Chuck their kids up in the air
Refuse to lend their tools
Straighten their ties
Straighten their hair
Play with kids' toys
Jiggle their bollocks
Stare at women's breasts
Try not to stare at women's breasts quite so much
Drink themselves into temporary impotence
Try to solve your problem even when you haven't asked them to
Bang on the side of the van
Shout during arguments
Swear at inanimate objects
Swear at strangers in the street
Swear at referees
Have sex in public toilets
Publish green papers
Govern
Say 'you like that don't you'
Make money
Travel
Wear jumpers
Sing
Drink coffee
Fall in love
Go to clubs
Pay for sex
Hurt your feelings
Throw cushions
Sail remote control boats
Make women pregnant
Wink
Wank

Shake hands
Play golf
Pat each other on the back
Give sideways one armed man hugs
Hurt themselves
Boast about what base they've got to
Lie about what base they've got to
Make bets with each other about who can shag you first
Choose the same lane as the girl with the best body so they can swim behind
her
and look at her under water
Regret the times they weren't unfaithful, but could have been and got away
with it
Make you sniff their unwashed hand the morning after they have fingered
a girl
Think of as many words for 'penis' as they can
Think of as many words for 'vagina' as they can
Think of as many words for shagging as they can
Put their goolies on each other's heads
Say 'you know what she needs'
Say 'dirty bitch'
Say 'but did you sleep with him?'
Say 'no, leave those on'
Spit roast
Snog
Cuddle their pillows
Look at the girl they are shagging and imagine that it is porn
Take the piss out of virgins
Fly aeroplanes
Say 'did I ask you to do that?'
Trouble you for fifty pence
Sell the Big Issue
Take their time
Read the news
Wait for their wives
Wait for their children
Wait for their chance
Wear tracksuits
Smoke pipes
Write fantasy novels
Go for a drink after work
Upgrade their computers
Keep in-jokes running for far too long
Start revolutions
Play rugby league
Carry things
Whistle a tune
Look at you funny
Say 'there's more where that came from'
Deliberately give colleagues the wrong advice
Play war games
Read comics
Call them 'graphic novels'
Sit in the front passenger seat
Blame the map

Exclaim alone
Raise children
Fear change
Make excuses
Make weapons
Make things up
Sleep in tents
Play the drums
Release EPs
Tickle people
Make speeches
Go to board meetings
Use binoculars
They tuck their penis between their legs and look at themselves in the mirror
Eat the last biscuit
Carve the roast
Imagine having sex with someone else
Cut down trees
Eat things off the floor
Spend a night in the cells
Do community service
Set light to things
Tend barbecues
Sigh
Tut
Faff
Make a fuss
Give up
Repeat themselves
Stand by the grave
Dig the allotment
Say 'what do you do?'
Look at engines
Look into holes
Stroke the cat

Not One Of Us

Stands. Moves chairs 1, 2, 3 & 5 downstage the next few lines.

You are 20 years old. You have just moved away from home for the first time.

You are moving into a shared house in a new city.

It's a four bedroomed house – well, it's a three bedroom house...

...but the landlord has turned the living room into an extra bedroom.

Sits on chair 5.

And you are first person to move in. But within a week 3 other guys have moved in. Two of them are your age, and one of them is two years younger, he's just eighteen.

And at first you assume that it will be three of you who are the same age who will get on best, who will become the best friends. But for some reason this isn't what happens. The other three just seem to gel better as a group. Some nights they go down the pub together forget to invite you. They hang out in each other's rooms listening to music and they don't really include you in that.

Two months into living in the house you are in the kitchen one evening, and the kitchen is the only communal room in the house: it's a kitchen/dining room. And you are in there with Brett. Brett is a rugby player and he's one of the two older guys and Brett wants to talk to you about a friend of yours who has been visiting a lot recently, and has actually stayed over twice this week. And Brett wants to know if this guy is your boyfriend. So you say yes, yes he is. So Brett wants to know if that means that you are gay. So you tell him yes, yes you are. And as he has brought it up you ask Brett if he's alright with that, and he says yes, yes he is, of course he is, why wouldn't he be?

The next day you notice that there are some new posters up on the kitchen wall. They're pictures of famous women wearing very few clothes. The following weekend there are some lists up on the kitchen wall, too: each of your housemates' Top Ten Most Fanciable Female Celebrities; the girls they have shagged since they have been in the house - with a few extra details about what those girls 'let them do'.

From this weekend onwards things are that bit more awkward in the house. You can hear the three of them talking in the kitchen, and you walk in and it's silence.

When your female friends come round to visit, your housemates seem awkward around them and don't really know how to talk to them.

Brett starts going out with a girl called Katie, and Katie starts visiting a lot, and you and Katie get on really well, and at first you think that this is going to help; but it doesn't.

One weekend Brett's parents come to visit - and Brett doesn't get on with his Dad very well - there's a lot of tension there for some reason - but you're in the kitchen when they arrive and you get talking to Brett's Dad about music and you hit it off straight away, and Brett doesn't like that very much either.

By the end of the year relationships in the house are pretty frosty, but it's your birthday on the day before you are due to move out. So you decide that you are going to have a party, and you let your housemates know and they make sure they are not around.

You are all packed up and ready to leave. Your friends come over and you all have a few drinks. And your friends know what your housemates are like and they decide to make a few alterations to the lists on the kitchen wall. They add the names of some male celebrities to the Top Ten Most Fanciable lists, and they add Brett's name, and the names of your other two housemates, to the lists of people they have shagged in the house. And you move out the next day.

Stands. Moves chair 5 back into place.

So you're not around to see how your housemates react to these jokes. And, in fact, you never speak to your housemates again.

You do see them from time to time – you still live in the same city, so you see them in the street, or across a bar...

But you barely acknowledge each other.

Returns to desk and erases title. Moves chairs 3, then 2, back into line. Stops at chair 1.

I REMEMBER

An improvised list; for example:

I remember walking in to a bar and seeing her sat at a table – when I hadn't expected to see her, and the shock of seeing her was almost physical – like being punched in the stomach.

I remember the day she met me at the station.

I remember watching her dance.

I remember watching her kiss someone else.

I remember being in the garden at 2 in the morning.

I remember how she used to love it when I would just lean forward and kiss her in the middle of a conversation without warning.

I remember how we both told each other that we loved each other on the day she had to leave.

I remember that night in the hospital.

I remember buying her an expensive Christmas present even though she had said she wouldn't go out with me.

I remember standing on her doorstep.

I remember sitting in the car, just talking.

I remember her asking me to stay the night anyway.

I remember her crying in the pub.

I remember being able to smell her on the pillow the morning after she stayed the night.

Returns chair 1 to the line and goes to desk.

Wank Towels

Moves to downstage centre.

You are 14 years old.

You are having breakfast in the kitchen with your brother. Your Mom comes in to the kitchen and your Mom is carrying a towel in each hand. You recognise the towel in your Mom's right hand as the towel that lives underneath your bed. Your Mom says: *Boys, I don't mind if you masturbate, but I do wish that you would wash your towels more often.*

You have never been so embarrassed in your entire life. You can feel your face burning as it turns red. You don't look at your Mom, you don't look at your brother, you don't even finish your cereal, you get out of the kitchen,

you get out of the house, you get to school as quickly as possible so you can forget this ever happened.

You get home from school that evening, and you walk into your bedroom.

What your Mom has done, is, she has washed your towel. And she's ironed it. And then she has cut the towel into twelve smaller square towels, and she has sewn up the cut edges of these smaller towels on a sewing machine, and she has left them in a neat pile on your bedside table.

You hear your brother's voice behind you:

Have you got a pile of these?

He's in your doorway, holding his pile of towels.

You say: *yes I have.*

Your brother says: *oh, okay*, and he goes away.

And the two of you do not talk about this again until you are much older and much drunker.

When you do finally talk about this again, when you are both in your mid-twenties, you both admit that neither of you could ever use them, because you couldn't look at them without thinking of your Mom.

Returns to desk.

Christmas Eve

Sits on chair 3.

You are 22 years old.

You are at home with your wife and your three year old son, Jason.

This is the first year that Jason has been Christmas-aware, and he is very excited about the prospect of Santa Claus visiting this evening with lots of presents. He's so excited, in fact, that he is being unusually naughty and difficult about going to bed. He is in his pyjamas in the middle of the living room carpet, playing with his Lego. You tell him for the third time:

“Jason, I won't tell you again: it is time to pack away your Lego because you should be in bed.”

Jason carries on playing as if he hasn't heard you. So Jason's Mom gives it a go:

“Jason, Mummy is going to count to 3; when Mummy gets to 3, you had better be in bed.

One... two... three...”

Still no response from the Lego department. You stand up, you cross the living room and you pick up the phone, but you only dial 5 digits.

Stands, crosses to front of stage.

“Hello... is that Santa? Hello Santa, it's Mr Stephens here... yes, that's right, Jason's Dad. Well, yes he has, he's been a very good boy all year, ...until this evening unfortunately. Well I suppose something has happened... or not happened in fact... he won't clear up his Lego, and he won't go to bed... well I was phoning to ask your advice really... Really? What, no presents at all? Well, yes, you know best Santa... well okay... okay, so we won't see you tonight, then, but hopefully we'll see you next year. Okay, thanks Santa. Bye.”

You turn to look at your son. And you see the tears streaming down his cheeks as he throws his Lego into its box. You see him run from the room, crying, shouting that he's going to bed now.

You pick up the phone again, to call Santa back, to tell him that maybe a few presents would be in order after all, and to do this in a voice loud enough for Jason to hear in his bedroom, but it is too late.

You already regret this. And you are going to regret this, for the rest of your life. In 20 years' time, you will still tell people that this is the worst thing you ever did as a father.

Moves back to desk and erases chapter title.

FOOTBALL

Walks to downstage right, then walks across front of stage during this.

I asked men: Is football important?

Men said: Yes!

Men said: Yes, football is important, because it allows me to talk to other men. I can meet a stranger at a party, or at a bus stop, and although we don't know anything about each other we have something in common, we can talk about football.

Men said: Yes, football must be important, because it stops me from talking to other men... As soon as other men find out that I'm not interested in football, they clam up. They have no idea what else to talk to me about, and that isolates me.

Men said: Yeah football is important, and it is handy being able to talk to other blokes about it at parties and stuff. But the problem is when you get talking to a bloke, and it turns out that he knows much more about football than you do, because you only follow your own team but he follows the whole Premiership and the Championship and even the SPL, so you're going to have to keep agreeing with him for half an hour, because to admit to him that you were faking your level of interest in, and knowledge of, football would be an insult to both him and to yourself.

Finishes journey to desk.

Alex makes a topical football joke that is only funny to people who know a lot about football.

Parents

You are 35 years old.

Moves chairs 4 and 5 forward, stands behind them.

Your Dad is 61 and your Mom is 57.

The three of you are in your Dad's kitchen. Your Mom and Dad have been divorced for years now, and it occurs to you that this is quite an unusual situation, for just the three of you to be alone together.

Your Mom asks your Dad how he's been, and he tells her. Your Dad asks your Mom how she's been, and she tells him. They say "arthritis". They say "back pain". They say "symptom". "Remedy." "Hospital." "Check-up." They say "prostate". They say "ulcer".

You don't say anything.

You have known for a long time now, you have understood, that at some point in the future both of your parents are going to die. And whatever age you are when that happens, you will be an orphan.

But what you understand for the first time listening to this conversation is that before they die, your parents are going to get old. When you are their age they will both, hopefully, be in their mid-eighties. They will be weaker and frailer than they are now. They will be less able to do things for themselves. They are going to need looking after. Probably by you. They're going to become dependent; on you. And then some other people arrive and you stop thinking about this. At least for now.

Replaces chairs, goes to desk, erases chapter title.

SUNDAYS CHILD

Moves chair 6 from behind desk to stage left.

The 27th April 1969 – which of course you've all remembered was my birthday – was a Sunday. That means that I am Sunday's Child. Depending on which version of the rhyme you know, that makes me full of grace or fair and wise or bonny and blithe and good and gay.

ASTROLOGY

Moves chairs 5 and 4 to stage left.

"27th April? What star sign are you?"

I'm Taurus.

Which makes me lazy and stubborn but also loyal and dependable, in general. But you can go into astrology much more deeply than that. You can get a star-chart done for the time and place of you were born, because the precise positions of the planets in the different astrological houses at the exact time and place of your birth affects your personality, apparently.

According to my star-chart, at the moment I was born, the planets conspired to make me: lazy, jealous, secretive, crafty, scheming, deceitful, inflexible, fickle and poor – although poor isn't a personality trait is it? - and give me a fiery temper. But, despite all that, the planets also made me excellent for marriage and partnership. Possibly because it was the planets that gave me my pleasing disposition and my good looks.

ROOSTER

Moves chairs 1, 2 and 3 to stage right.

According to the Chinese Calendar, though, I'm a Rooster, or a cock, and this means that I am happy and radiant, wise and efficient, a good problem solver, a bit of a perfectionist. A bit of a gossip. I'm contentious, I'm dogmatic (even after being proven wrong), I'm sensitive to criticism, because I am bloated with pride.

Centre stage.

Being a rooster I will always leave an impression, but it could be of either respect or disgust.

Returns to desk.

David and Goliath

Picks up pint. Sits on chair 3.

You are 17 years old.

You are in a pub on a Friday night. This is the pub you come to every weekend – so you know lots of people in here, but on this particular evening you are sat at a table with the mates you arrived with. You become aware that there is some trouble somewhere in the pub – you hear raised voices and you look over. You see that a fight has broken out on the far side of the room, and this is like a cartoon fight because one of the guys in the fight is much bigger than the other guy. And the little guy is trying to get away and the big guy is chasing him, so the fight is bumping into people, spilling drinks, knocking tables over, it barges past your table, charges along the other wall, down some steps and ends up at the bar.

Finishes pint. Stands. Puts pint glass down on table.

Now, in this particular pub the floor in front of the bar is the lowest point in the room, and all of the seating areas are raised up at different levels around it. Because the fight has bumped into so many people, everyone in the pub is now standing up, looking down to see what is going to happen next, at the bar. And at the bar the big guy has got the little guy by the scruff of the neck, ready to hit him some more.

Leans against the 'bar'. Stands up again, stops music.

And in your memory, all of this is suddenly happening in complete silence. No one else is at the bar. Everyone is standing watching, but no one is speaking. And even the jukebox has stopped.

Leans back on 'bar'.

The little guy is pinned to the bar and his right hand finds an empty pint glass. He lifts the pint glass off the bar, and slowly moves it round in front of his body. The big guy sees that there is now a pint glass in the equation, and he lets go of the little guy's collar, and takes a single step back.

The little guy pushes himself off the bar, and he stands up straight. He takes his eyes off the big guys face for a moment, and he looks at the pint glass in his right hand. He looks back at the big guy's face.

And then he relaxes, and you feel the whole pub relax with him and then he sticks the pint glass into the big guys face and you watch as the glass breaks and cuts into his face; you see the blood begin to appear and then you look away.

Replaces pint glass. Returns to desk. Erases chapter title.

How To Remove A Human Brain

Stands centre stage. Demonstrates (rather than mimes) the following as he describes it.

You are 31 years old and you work in a morgue. You are a morgue technician. Your friends think your job is weird, but you don't. You enjoy the work and you're good at it. Your friends think that that is a bit weird, too.

You have the body lying in front of you on a steel trolley. You lift the head and you use a wooden headrest – a plastic one will do if that's all there is left, but wood is preferable – to hold it in place, with the chin resting on the sternum.

You take a comb and comb the hair forward, making a parting across the back of the head from one earlobe to the other. If the hair is long enough to need it, you use a hair grip to hold it in place.

You take a knife, a PM 40, made in Sheffield, which is the same shape as a butter knife but is actually more like a Stanley knife, with interchangeable blades, for hygiene. You cut through the skin along the line of the parting.

You're wearing gloves. You push your thumbs into the cut you have just made, and up underneath the skin, and you begin to peel the skin off the skull, rather like peeling an orange. And in fact there is a layer of pith underneath the skin, just like an orange. This is the only part of the job that you sometimes don't like, because if it is an old person, with what you call cheap skin, it can tear, and the feeling of that goes through you. But usually it's okay, and if it's a bald man, then it's kind of fun.

Once you have loosened all of the skin, you peel it down over the face, until you can see the eyebrows of the skull. Then you take a Tonga knife and cut

the muscles either side of the jaw. You take an air saw, which is harmless when it is not switched on, but once it is powered up it can cut through bone, which is what you need it to do. You cut all the way round the top of the skull; you are careful to turn corners in the cut behind each ear and to cut an inverted V at the back of the head. This will allow you to 'key' the skull cap back on properly, when you replace it later.

You take a skull key, or if your boss isn't around, a chisel, because it gets better purchase in the incision you have just made, and then you can simply pop the top of the skull off.

Still wearing your gloves: you push your fingers through the membrane surrounding the brain, and down inside the skull, and take the weight of the brain and lift it out a small way.

With one hand you take a scalpel and reach inside the skull and cut the two optic nerves, and then reach further down and cut the point where the spinal cord joins the cerebellum.

Then you are able to lift the brain completely out of the skull.

“Holding” the brain in two hands.

If the body in front of you is an average male, the brain will weigh 1.35 kg. It will be: 140mm wide, 167mm long and 93mm wide.

The average male body is 5ft 9in tall

and weighs 12st 4lbs.

That's a body mass index of 25 – slightly overweight.

Shoe size 9,

Blood type O,

heart rate 72 bpm –

that's 2.86 billion heartbeats in a lifetime –

a lifetime that will have lasted, on average, 75.7 years.

The average male body is:

43% muscle

14% fat

14% bone and marrow

10% other internal organs

9% connective tissue & skin

8% blood

2% brain.

Returns to desk. Erases title.

The End.

Thanks for listening.