

RED BLOODED

A one-act play

by

Peter Bridge

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Synopsis

Derek is on his way to a job interview in the city. In the suburban station waiting room he is accosted by an ingratiating stranger, who commences to guide Derek through certain recommended interview techniques. Derek plays along with this counselling until his train eventually approaches when, at the same time, the stranger reveals his true identity and his bona fide explanations for carrying out an extraordinary deception upon Derek.

Characters:

1. Derek (Male, age 25-45)
Keen, honest, upright type: incapable of deception... except perhaps under certain dedicated conditions.

2. Danny (Male)
A complex mixture of ambiguous attitudes: Both authoritarian and audacious. He should be older than Derek.

3. Jane (Female)
Outgoing, light hearted, back-chatting... any age 20-45.

4. Jennifer (Female 20-45)
Much the same as Jane... but a little more challenging. Any age

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- (iii) Name and address of theatre or hall where performance(s) would be held;
- (iv) Times and dates of performances.

A fee will be charged for this licence which must be paid prior to the first performance otherwise the licence is automatically cancelled and the performance becomes illegal.

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Time 9-20 am. Present time. Set is simply two long benches positioned about four feet apart; both slightly angled.

Derek enters a suburban railway waiting room. Danny is already sitting there, reading the Times newspaper. Danny looks up and smiles at Derek.

Danny (Looks up) Good morning. (He then gets back to reading the paper).

Derek (Simply nods at Danny, then looking at his watch) Excuse me... Do you have the right time on you?

Danny Yes... I make it nine twenty.

Derek Thanks... That's what I've got... but I thought I might be running slow.

Danny The next Waterloo train is due at nine forty five. I presume that's the train you're waiting for?

Derek Yes it is.

Danny It usually runs on time, notwithstanding fog, snow, leaves on the line, emergency repair works, orchestrated Bank Holiday strikes... or any other South Western Rail device inflicted to hamper the average uncomplaining traveller.

Derek It doesn't take much these days for the whole rail system to disengage, does it?

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Danny No it doesn't

(Derek eventually takes his seat... then after a short pause,
Danny throws him a question)

Danny Not working today, then?

Derek No, as a matter of fact, I've got a job interview in
town this morning.

Danny Good luck. I hope it goes well.

Derek Thanks

Danny Thank goodness my days of being on the receiving
end of sticky interviews are well behind me.

Derek I'll admit they can be un-nerving.

Danny I've had plenty in my time.

Derek Mostly successful I would guess.

Danny Oh no...certainly not to begin with, I assure you.

Derek But then things improved?

Danny Oh definitely. Once I'd developed the right knack,
I began to sail through them.

Derek Perhaps I could benefit from a brief crash course
with you.

Danny You don't need it old son... You've only got to
remember a short sentence of four words... which defines
the 'golden rule'.

Derek Sounds simple...so am I to be allowed access to
this magical phrase?

Danny Of course. It's no secret.

Derek The tried and tested adage is therefore.....

(awaits the response)

Danny Lie your head off.

Derek (chuckles) Lie your head off? I'm sure that's not the employers' textbook dictum for creating a good impression.

Danny Maybe not... but imagine; you might be the ideal man for the job... industrious, conscientious and considerate... but that's entirely valueless as it's impossible to demonstrate those attributes during the course of a twenty minute interview.

Derek But it wouldn't be me to come over as a fake. I mean, surely an employer would see straight through any sort of act of deception.

Danny Not necessarily. If you rehearse your dialogue well before hand, it can come over as completely natural and trustworthy rhetoric. I'm sure you could do it.

Derek (Disparagingly) But to just sit there and tell fibs.

Danny Dear boy, in terms of selection, and, if you will, *natural* selection, it all comes down to the survival of the fibbiest.

Derek But if I got the job under *those* circumstances, I'd be unable to maintain such an act. I'd soon resort to the slightly diffident, unassertive specimen that you see before you.

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Danny But.... you'll have acquired the job. All you've got to do after *that* is to prove you can measure up to it, whatever your natural personality.

Derek I'm not totally convinced...erm... I'm sorry, I don't know your name.

Danny I'm Danny...Danny McCormack.

Derek I'm Derek... Derek Pope.

Danny Look Derek, would you mind if I fired a question at you?... as in an employer's evaluation interview.

Derek Not at all.

Danny Right, imagine you're now in the interview room... right... Now, I'm going to ask the question... and I want you to answer in the manner that you normally would...O.K.?

Derek I'll try... shoot.

Danny All right: Now I'm the interviewer.... Right Mr Pope, This job demands a high degree of security at all levels... so it's vital our employees have a totally incorruptible spirit... so I must put it to you, are you an honest man?

Derek Right...in the way I'd usually answer?

Danny Yup... Away you go.

Derek Well... I would say that a subjective assessment of myself would be that I'm fairly honest...truthful and principled...

Danny You said subjective...does that mean other people regard you as being dead dodgy.

Derek No, no... not at all.

Danny It sounds like you're avoiding giving them a guarantee about your integrity.

Derek O.K. You want me to say that I'm honest...I *am* honest...though I guess we can never be sure of our individual boundaries... I mean, I don't know how I'd be if, say, I was pushed to the *absolute* limit... that is, if for instance, I stumbled upon a large sum of loose money in the gutter. That would be something of a moral dilemma, I guess.

Danny Derek, you've just talked your way out of a job that you'd be perfect for.

Derek But my employer would be justified to make a decision against me on the basis of that response... I'd have to accept it.

Danny But, can't you see.... you answered in that way because you *are* honest; *too* damned honest. You gave the man a frank and honest answer when the situation was screaming out for a good old fashioned, honest to goodness lie. Deception delivers.... every time.

Derek All right, but as *you* detected from my answer, I was actually providing a demonstration of my total honesty.

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Danny Most commendable, Derek... but the next man in gets the job... and why, because he comes in and is crafty enough to state that he's trustworthiness personified... even though, in reality, he'd rob his own grandmother... See what I mean?

Derek Absolutely... though I've got reservations.

Danny Fair enough... but let's expand.... what about your hobbies?

Derek Hobbies? ... Oh, nothing spectacular... I just do a bit of writing for my old school magazine...erm, occasionally, I paint for my own pleasure ... and sometimes I travel to The Hammers' away games... Have a bet on the games while I'm at it... that's about it.

Danny Oh, for God's sake don't mention betting. We all like a punt occasionally, but to admit to wagering money is akin to confessing to an indulgence in habitual masturbation. After all, we're all inclined to dabble but it's absolutely taboo to make it a public revelation.

Derek Fair enough, but how should I make those hobbies sound appealing?

Danny O.K. we'll have you down as a playwright....

Derek I've never written a play in my life.

Danny Who cares....you write, don't you?then, didn't you say you paint?

Derek Yes, occasionally.

Danny Right then; so you're also an artist... and, you said you're a West Ham fan?

Derek Yup.

Danny Hmm ...Perhaps you ought to switch that to Arsenal.

Derek Really?

Danny So you're a keen sportsman extensively travelling round the country to, remember, not bet, but I would say to pursue your investments...O.K?.

Derek That would be a considerable embellishment on reality.

Danny Yes, but there's a thread of truth nuzzling in there somewhere. All the best lies have a foundation of truth...just remember not to overdo the exaggerations.

Derek But I'm beginning to hate the person that you're trying to push me into becoming.

Danny it's for fifteen to twenty minutes of your life. Do you tell your wife the unerring truth every day? ... or do you provide the answers that she really wants to hear?

Derek But that's diplomacy... not downright deceit.

Danny Sure...and a job interview is only a performance... nothing to do with reality... a performance, an act. If you were the only guy competing for the job, you could afford to be more candid... but in as field of say, six to ten competitors, you can't afford to show any sign of weakness.