

Headhunters

by Fraser Grace

One of 4 plays commissioned as part of Menagerie Theatre Company's 'Escapism' project, May 2020.

This is a play for three performers of any age.

Notes for performers :

- SFX or FX in the script stands for 'Sound Effect'
- Feel free to add live or recorded music if you wish
- If you are unable to create desired sound effect, find a creative way around that (eg. Narration)
- Please open and end your recording of the play with the title followed by the writer's name.
- If you wish, you may also name the performers and anyone else who was involved in the recording. By doing this, you give your consent for those names to be in the public domain when Menagerie releases the recording via our website and social media channels.
- See the guidelines on our webpage for how to send the recording to Menagerie.
- If you have any questions about the play or recording, please email office@menagerie.uk.com
- And don't forget – have fun.

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In this play for three characters, Chubber, Lalli and Bodge travel to the inside of a human head, and discover they must kickstart their patient's imagination.

Note from the Author

I hope you enjoy reading and making this audio play. The three characters can be performed by people of any age or gender. There are also lots of sound effects to create or record – including some that are quite ambitious. There's also a song involved – for when Bodge gets drawn into the Memory Bank - choose a song that stirs memories for you.

Top Tip

Imagine the mic is your listeners' ear, and use distance from it as your key tool to create a sense of space and to establish entrances and exits

Good luck!

Headhunters

*FX: **Chubber** is working – using an electric drill, or a hand saw, or a hammer. Occasionally Chubber pauses, breathing heavily with the effort. Over this racket, **Lalli** and **Bodge** begin calling from a long way off, preferably from different places.*

Lalli: Chu-bber

Bodge: Lalli? Chubber?

Lalli: Chub- chub-chub-chub -chub...

Bodge: Lalls, is that you?

Lalli: Chubb-er...

Chubber: *(calling back)* I'm down here.

Fx: Chub strikes with the hammer again.

Lalli: Chub-ber?

Chubber: *(calling back)* Down he-re!!!

Lalli: Chub-chub-chub...

Chubber: *(still calling)* I'm in the basement. I'm just...

FX: A final strike with the hammer. Things fall apart – a massive, extended metallic collapse. Chubber waits until the last noise has died away.

Chubber: That should do it.

Lalli: *(in the same space now treading on rubble)* Here you are. I didn't know we had a basement.

Chubber: Hidden depths, Lalli.

Lalli: In a twelfth floor flat?

Chubber: Call it 'unsuspected dimensions', if that helps.

Lalli: So this is where you come to hide out...

Where d'you get all this stuff?

FX: Bodge arrives – and walks across rubble

Bodge: Gotcha! I was looking for you two. Woah. Is that what I think it is?!

Chubber: It certainly is, Bodge.

FX: more shifting metal.

Chubber: A human head. That's got the cover off at least.

Lalli: Where did you get it?

Chubber: Better not to ask. You coming in?

Bodge: We are in.

Chubber: Inside the head. No time to waste. There's a malfunction with this one. Institute of Mechanical Psychiatry asked me to take a look. Looks a bit beyond help if you ask me – what we call in the trade, bit of a Binhead. Here. Drink this.

Lalli: I don't remember saying we'd come.

Chubber: I don't remember saying you wouldn't. Bottoms up.

Bodge: What are we drinking?

Chubber: Reducing solution. Funny thing is it starts off as a long drink and ends up a very short one.

Bodge: I will if you will Lalls - Ready? One two three –

FX: they drink – slapping of lips etc.

Chubber: Lalli?

Lalli: Nothing. Bodge?

Bodge: My stomach feels a bit weird. Apart from that, noth...aaagh!!

FX: shouts as the liquid has its effect, then into cries like on a rollercoaster as they shrink - and land in a heap. They speak at first in tiny voices. If possible, this is a different sounding-space to the basement.

Lalli: You're sitting on my hand.

Bodge: Get off my leg!

Lalli: What happened to my voice!!

Chubber: Takes a few moments to adjust, and...

FX: giant belch. Chubber now sounds more normal.

Chubber: Better.

FX: Bodge belches, then Lalli.

Bodge: Excellent.

Lalli: Fine.

Chubber: Great!

FX: they dust themselves down. Chubber is looking around...

Lalli: You could have warned us about the landing...Blimey – is this what what we look like on the inside?

Chubber: Ah-huh. Who'd think there was so much stuffed inside a human head. Nice to have everything clearly organised at least - unlike some people's bedrooms. What's this? 'Worry Stack' – oh dear oh dear...

FX – takes a sheet of paper, and reads.

Chubber: 'When will it ever stop raining...'

Lalli & Bodge also take sheets of paper, and read what's written on it.

Lalli: 'My skin's so bad, nobody likes me...'

Bodge: 'Why aren't I any good at sport...'

Chubber: Pages and pages of worries worries worries...

Lalli: Listen to this one - 'All I want is to be normal'.

Chubber: Ha! No such thing as normal – otherwise we'd all be doing it. Or most of us. Steer clear of the Worry Stack if I were you. Now...Pleasure Centre, pleasure centre...ah – pleasure centre - over here, at the heart of things, naturally.

Bodge: Pleasure Centre? It's just a giant belly button. Can I poke it?

Chubber: If you like.

Three short oohs or giggles, each identical.

Chubber: Enough. Time for pleasure later. Must be somewhere here...

Lalli: What are we looking for Chubber?

Chubber: According to the diagram it should be...to the left of the Memory Banks...a hah!!! Here we are - the seat of all our friend's troubles...

Bodge: Is that an engine?

Chubber: Just what I thought. This head we're in has got very bored. Hence it has become a Binhead. That's why it was sent to us. And here, my young apprentoids, is the reason.
The Imagination Block is completely silent. Go on, Lalli, Give it a kick.

FX: Lalli. gives it a kick, once, twice.. an engine starting but not catching.

Chubber: And again...

FX: the same.

Chubber: Hmm...nothing more likely to produce stasis than a failed imagination...

FX: sound of metallic unscrewing of a fuel tank...

Chubber: Been running on dry for a while...Funny thing with humans, the smaller the imagination the bigger the dipstick.
That's a joke.
But I can see very little in the way of creative juices in here...

FX: liquid swilling around in metal container

Lalli: What kind of juices..?

Chubber: Creative. Naturally occurring, but they can be stimulated.

Bodge: You reckon? With what?

Chubber: O I dunno. Books. Telly, films, walks in the park, games in the woods, occasionally a computer game, trip to the ballet, night in a dark cupboard, insert your ingredients here. Which is exactly what it says on the tank. Fair enough. Bodge, Lalli, search your pockets.

Lalli: What are we looking for?

Chubber: Small sachet, about the size of a tea bag.

Lalli: Found one.
(reading) 'Imagination powder.' What is this?

Chubber: I can't imagine. Pity we've only got the powdered stuff. I might have known you'd be running dry too. Ah well, better than nothing. In the tank with it. Make sure it all goes in.

FX: stuff tipped into the engine.

Chubber: And now a bit of spit, if you don't mind...

Lalli: What?

Chubber; Spit in the tank. Or sweat in it, whichever's easier. Imagination plus spit or sweat = creative juice. The age-old formula.

FX: Bodge spits.

Chubber: Lalli?

Lalli: Gross.

FX: Lalli spits.

Lalli: You see, Nothing.

Chubber: You have not yet applied the final unspoken ingredient. A quick boot, Bodge, if you please.

FX: Bodge kicks. Dang.

Bodge: Owwww!

Lalli: Still nothing.

Chubber: Hmm. It's at this point we recall the ancient motto. 'Si cetera deficit, malleum etere' Meaning?

Lalli: Errr wait, that's - If all else fails, hit with a hammer.

Chubber: How did you...??!

Lalli: Duo lingo latin. Every morning. That's how bored I am. Was.

Chubber: Well?

Lalli: What?

Chubber: The hammer. Go on, your turn, Lalli.

Lalli: Ok, stand back...uuuugh

FX: Lalli swings the hammer - ding of hammer on metal, engine turns over, then chugs into life. Chubber now speaks over the sound of the engine...

Chubber: Excellent. Job done. Now all we have to do is get out of old Binhead here and get back to our regular size, right Bodge. Bodge? Where's Bodge? Bodge - no!

FX: Someway off a huge door slams shut.

Chubber: O no. No no no no no.

Lalli: Is there a problem?

Chubber: Bodge slipped into the memory banks. *(running, calling)*
Follow me - quickly.

Lalli: *(running to catch up)* Are they dangerous? Memory banks?

Chubber: *(still running, calling)* For an amateur, possibly. Depends what memories Bodge stirs up.

Come on – give me a hand with the wheel...

FX: they expend a lot of energy, and eventually the huge wheel turns, and the door opens.

Lalli: It's going... Yes!!

Chubber: Good work.

Lalli: Pottering about in someone else's memories. You sure that's a good idea?

Chubber: A terrible idea. But not as bad as being lost down memory lane, which is probably what's happened to Bodge. Come on. Try not to get distracted, just run through all the bits of memory and look out for Bodge. Go!!

FX: assorted memories football matches, motorbikes, happy birthday, flight announcements...all the stuff we used to do before lockdown. While that's going on, Chubber and Lalli are running, and shouting to each other to make themselves heard.

Lalli: Blimey, Binhead packed a lot in, don't you think?!

Chubber: Ha! This is just the respectable stuff.

Lalli: Wait wait – back up - What’s this door – ‘private keep out’.

Chubber: Just what I was saying. For once I think we should do as we are told...Don’t get distracted. Think! Where would Bodge go first? What does Bodge love to remember the most?

Lalli: I dunno. Food, Strictly, cooking food, eating food, football [fill in as applicable]...eating more food...

Hey - that’s Bodge! Listen.

FX: a song, sung from a very long way away. This can be any song you like. It drifts in snatches towards us. Could be sung acapella, or to a karaoke track.

Lalli: That’s Bodge’s song. Bodge always sings that tune!

Chubber: Right. Let’s hope the song keeps rolling. Which way? Look around you; OK Lalli, I can see six little lanes. Choose one.

FX: A roaring motorway

Chubber: Different kind of lanes...Follow the song. Concentrate!

Lalli: I think...This one, down here!

Chubber: Ok - go!

FX running, Bodge’s singing gets louder as Chubber and Lalli approach, until they are very close.

Then Bodge breaks off singing.

Bodge: Hey.

Lalli: Hey Bodge.

Bodge: I remembered the song!

Lalli: You ok?

Bodge: Yeah. I got lost for a while. The song started it off. Funny finding your own memory between someone else’s ears. Don’t s’pose it means as much to Binhead as it means to us though eh? That song.

Lalli: Probably not. Nice mountains, though.

Bodge: Yeah weird. Who remembers a song like this in the mountains?

FX: last line echoes around a mountain top...echoes on next line, too...

Lalli: *(shouting, enjoying the effect)* People who live in Tibet, possibly.
(echoes)

Chubber: Ah...phew. *(echoes)*

Lalli: Chubber. You got here.

Chubber: *(breathless)* I came up the hard way. Quite a climb.

Bodge: Lucky Binhead. How could you be bored with mountains like this in your head?!

Chubber: Remembering good times. Always healthy, even if it can make you sad too. And breathless.

Lalli: Remembering there's an outside's a start...

Bodge: One more verse of the song?

Lalli: No! Better not, we've got to get down from here soon, and then all the way back.

Chubber: Oh we can do better than that. Somewhere in here I have...ah got it.

Lalli: Not more Imagination Powder...

Chubber: Close. Pollen. Look around. Can you see two small round holes?

Bodge: Over here. Rabbit holes?

Chubber: Nostrils. Lucky for us Binhead is a Hay Fever sufferer. All we have to do, is open the bag - so...

FX: zip or Velcro

Chubber: ...jump up and down a bit, and....wait.

FX: a mighty, mighty sneeze – builds and then explodes...repeat of the rollercoaster screams...and they land back in Chubber's basement. Bits of 'get off' etc.

Bodge: We're back – and normal size!

Lalli: No such thing as *normal* – idiot.

Bodge: Don't call me an idiot. Hey what happened to Binhead? Where'd the head go?

Chubber: O, long gone by now. Imagination all fired up, creative juices flowing – Binhead no more. Off Painting or fixing a bike or recording a song, or cooking an eight-course dinner, or something...

Lalli: S’pose that’s it then. You coming back upstairs?

Chubber: Soon, I just have to look at this new job that’s come in.

Bodge: Wow! Another head!

Lalli: Who is that?

Chubber: Hmm. Looks like a certain well-known politician...

FX: metallic lid being slid off...Chubber peers in.

Chubber: Good lord!

Lalli: More Imagination Powder...?

Chubber: Yep, I think this one may well need a whole sackful...

----THE END----