

A Group Of Humans  
by Bob Richardson

FADE IN:

INT. THE ROYAL LIMO. DAY

PRINCE MAIN of the royal house of Chances -- the scared, ageing, and very weary heir to the English throne -- heading for Ponder in response to *That Letter* -- His chauffeur FAWN GROVEL-BROWN mid to late forties -- big man -- over weight -- is lost in the mist.

MAIN

Have you made any sense of those directions yet? **BEAT 1.**

FAWN

(Patting the letter on the seat next to him)

No Your Highness -- no mountains -- or valleys...Not that we'd see them through the mist.

MAIN

(Catching Fawn's eye)

I thought you said you had been here before; FAWN, and how on earth is the press going to find us? -- I really need this exposure. **Beat 3.**

FAWN

Sorry sir -- it was a few years back, and I wouldn't worry about the paparazzi finding you, a little bit of mist won't stop that lot.

MAIN

Yes, you're right I suppose we'll just have to press on.

FAWN

(Eyeing main in the rear view mirror)

There's a *Venture* brewery horse box ahead -- the driver will know.

MAIN

(Answers wearily)

Why does everyone emphasize the word *Venture*, as if "New Monarchy", and the re-naming of everything were my fault? **Beat 3.**

FAWN

Sorry sir, I just can't get used to London, being called *Venture*

MAIN

No, neither can I...anyway, flash  
the headlights at the driver.

FAWN

(Nodding at the mirror, he  
flashes the lights)

MAIN Folds his arms, and raises the knuckle of his right  
index finger to his left nostril, then wipes the corner  
of his right eye with the inside of his right wrist.

MAIN

Did you find out anything more  
about Ponder? Beat 3.

FAWN

There was talk of an archive,  
containing evidence.

MAIN

Yes -- I've heard of the archive at  
Ponder -- evidence of what? Beat 3.

FAWN

Emotions!?

MAIN

(A Little  
disappointed)

Emotions!? -- That usually means  
poetry, and love letters. I was  
hoping for at least an unseen  
dairy.

FAWN

I think he's pulling in sir, but  
the mist is getting thicker, I  
can't... quite...see...

INT. THE BREWERY HORSEBOX DAY

Two very large brewery dray horses -- BARRY and NORMAN on  
their way from Venture city to mysterious Ponder for  
their annual holiday -- BROWNIE the vegetarian urban Fox  
is tagging along. The horse box is moving slowly but very  
erratically. Both horses are stamping to be let out.

BARRY

When is Ray going to stop? I bet  
he's lost, and I'm bursting!

NORMAN

Lost!? No, he's been bringing us  
here for years, but his driving is  
definitely getting worse. Beat 3.

BARRY

Well if he doesn't let us out soon  
-- he'll have an awful lot of work  
on his hands.

Brownie pops up from behind a hay bale.

BROWNIE

Shut up you two -- I'm trying to  
sleep -- and stop stamping!

NORMAN

(Mimicking a

cultured accent)

Mind your manners, or you'll  
receive more than just my  
admonishment.

BROWNIE

Admonishment!? -- I swear -- the  
closer we get to Ponder -- the more  
you two sound like you've swallowed  
a flippin' dictionary. *Beat 3.*

BARRY

(Smiling

at NORMAN)

(To BROWNIE) Do as my esteemed  
colleague and valued friend  
requests, or you'll get a piece of  
*My!* Mind as well!

BROWNIE

Yeh! Yeh! Yeh! -- What ever!

BARRY

(Winking at NORMAN)

You really must dine with us in the  
archive at Ponder.

BROWNIE

(Still tetchy)

Dine!? Give me strength! -- Have I  
got to put up with three weeks of  
this horse sh...?

NORMAN

(Laughs) All right Brownie -- you  
know we don't really mean it.

BROWNIE

Yeh! -- Well I hope this archive is  
as good as you say it is. *Beat 3.*

EXT. PONDER CASTLE COURTYARD DAY.

PRINCESS CERTAINTY SERENDIPITY CHANCES (CERT), of the

royal house of chances. Typical English beauty, late twenties, and her companion, LADY FAUNA FAUX-PAR. Very pretty, ten years older two dress sizes larger. Educated, a bit clumsy, and frequently misses the point. They have just returned from a ride with their escort, the recently posted CAPTAIN TRAPTIN. Late thirties, tall, athletic, extremely competent cavalry officer, but feels he is in the wrong job. They all dismount.

CERT

I enjoyed the outing -- Ponder is lovely. No wonder my Grandmother spent so much time here. *Beat 3.*

FAUNA

Rather! Thanks Captain -- pity about the archive being closed.

CERT

Yes -- why does the archive close when it's misty Captain?

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

The Fusion Fathers meet at the lowest tide of each month. *Beat 3.*

FAUNA

Why low tide?

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

That's when the mist or *Ground Ether*, is at it's most intense. --

CERT

I've heard of the Fathers -- Aren't they the multi faith order, who achieved ecumenism.

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

Yes, and this is a very important time for them. Today, they are voting for the future of Ponder, Friday they are expecting a very special visitor -- plus of course, the return of the three Fathers from the holy land. *Beat 3.*

FAUNA

Holy land...Wow! -- and do you know who's coming Friday Captain?  
*Beat 3.*

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

I won't know that until the day.

CERT

What happens at *High* tide then?

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

The huge black diamond, known as the cushion of knowledge is below sea level, and it needs the mist to work properly -- The archive is useless without it. *Beat 2.*

CERT

So...It's closed at low tide because the Fathers meet -- and it doesn't work at high tide. When exactly is it open? *Beat 2.*

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

It does open, but only functions properly, one week in four.

CERT

It sounds a bit like my computer.

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

(Smiles)

They do call it the stone database, or paperless archive -- people come from all over the world to access centuries of old records. *BEAT 2.*

FAUNA

That's amazing -- but how are the records stored if it's paperless?

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

In the soil, sand and rock brought here by the Fathers for a thousand years -- Magnetism, the cushion of knowledge, and the untapped power of the mind do the rest. *Beat 2.*

CERT

I'm impressed -- but why cushion -- Do people actually *sit* on it?

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

(Laughs) I've no idea.

FAUNA

(Laughs) Nice one Cert! I know the answer to this one. When a diamond is cut square or lozenge shape, it's called a cushion, and this cushion weighs two hundred kilos!

CERT

Kilos!? Surly not -- Diamonds are weighed in carats, if true that would make It...*Beat 3.*

FAUNA

I'm sure it's kilos -- Old Queen Pariah's jewellers cut and polished it *right here*, a hundred and fifty years ago, but I don't know why it's kept here.

Beat 3.

CAPTAIN TRAPTIN

Before the cut and polish accessing records was slow -- Now, you only have to think of a person or animal to get vivid images, of how they died -- including the emotions, and feelings. Beat 3.

CERT

(Her mental

arithmetic completed)

Truly fascinating Captain -- and if FAUNA is right, and it *is* kilos -- the cushion of knowledge weighs -- one million carats! BEAT 3.

INT. THE BREWRY HORSEBOX. DAY

NORMAN

One million carrots! Yum Yum! -- Why did I say that? Beat 3.

BARRY

You always say that.

NORMAN

No -- not Yum Yum -- the bit about the carrots!

BROWNIE

You usually say Yum Yum Pig's bu...

BARRY

(Quickly interrupting)

Brownie!

NORMAN

No I don't say that.

BROWNIE

(Laughs) Yes you do!

BARRY

You must be thinking about the archive Norm' -- but I'm not sure there's that many carrots in there.

NORMAN

Carrots! -- I've only ever seen carrot tops -- What's a million?

BARRY

So it's you that's been biting the tops off. Why don't you just get your lips round them and pull out the carrot!?

NORMAN

Pull out the carrot?! Yes! pull out the carrot! Now I'm really getting in the holiday mood.

BARRY

(Still stamping)

(Laughs) Yeh! Me too 'Ansome! I think I can smell the sea now, and Ponder.

NORMAN

(Laughs) No -- I think that's Brownie you can smell!

INT. (TWO DAYS EARLIER)HOTEL ROOM IN JERUSALEM. DAY.  
The old city -- Fusion Fathers: CHARITY -- CLARITY -- and ACTIVITY -- All are Very fit in appearance but of indeterminate age -- are dining. **Beat 3.**

FATHER CHARITY

You certainly like your jackets Father.

FATHER ACTIVITY

Well it's as good a way as any to take on the carbohydrates for the journey back to Ponder in the waterspout Father. **Beat 3.**

FATHER CHARITY

Indeed -- but I prefer the rice, and this delicious local bread.

FATHER ACTIVITY

Almost makes it worth missing the vote on the selling of the lease.

FATHER ACTIVITY

(Finishing a mouthful of potatoes)

Yes -- but I can't help wondering how the voting went. **Beat 3.**

FATHER CHARITY

I agree but we had to come -- The offer was too to good refuse, and to coincide with a thirty-year

(MORE)

FATHER CHARITY (CON'T)  
 storm to take us back -- I am  
 tempted to say that was divine  
 providence itself.

FATHER ACTIVITY  
 (Looks at F.C. For  
 three full seconds)  
 You really do believe that; don't  
 you Father? I am tempted to agree.

FATHER CHARITY  
 (smiles)  
 Yes, but we would have achieved  
 little here, without the clerics  
 allowing us to re-open the tomb. We  
 should be proud, No other order  
 would have been allowed. *Beat 3.*

FATHER CLARITY  
 (To FATHER ACTIVITY) What happened  
 to the original rock samples we had  
 from here?

FATHER CHARITY  
 Still in Ponder, but they are  
 inconclusive due to the tragic  
 death of the Roman guard who died  
 heaving the stone in place when  
 they first sealed the tomb.

FATHER CLARITY  
 Yes, how sad. I think the samples  
 from inside will be more accurate.  
*Beat 3.*

FATHER CHARITY  
 Yes, and with the future of the  
 archive in the balance -- we must  
 get all three satchels back in time  
 for Friday.

FATHER CLARITY  
 And we must pray the voting went  
 well. *Beat 3.*

FATHER ACTIVITY  
 (Looking out  
 of the window)  
 It's almost time Fathers...

In the square below - The clerics are laying out three  
 satchels filled with rock, soil, and sand. Equally spaced  
 ready to be picked up by the speeding waterspouts.

FATHER CHARITY

Are you ready fathers?

They finish eating, stand up, and clasp hands around the table. All three say as one:

FATHER ACTIVITY FARTHER CHARITY FATHER CLARITY

I have everything when I have  
nothing - I have nothing when I  
have it all -- EACH AND ALL!

All three open their incredibly reflective, spun diamond fibre cloaks -- The room is filled with blinding coloured light. When the light returns to normal they are gone to the sound of gale force winds and the vibrations of the three speeding waterspouts as they pick up the satchels bound for Ponder.

EXT. THE VERANDA. PONDER HOUSE. DAY

A large country house overlooking Ponder, and the sea. Lord Cyril Serendipity Wonder the forth Earl of Ponder -- bumbling philanthropist -- keen to comment, but never finishes a sentence -- Taking tea with his house guest, Countess Blame Blameworthy -- tall and beautiful but, extremely menacing, and Major Havoc -- Commanding officer at Ponder castle -- well groomed uncomplicated man -- just wants to hunt and make love -- Has called to go hunting with Blame. They are joined by the estate manager, Bonita Wauneta Luneta Postal -- Stunningly beautiful -- compelling presence, with the stance of a dancer about to perform. Blame is on her best behaviour in front of her cousin Cyril as she plans to take more than tea.

LORD WONDER

Ah! Bonita -- I'd like you to meet  
my -- (To Blame) Allow me -- (To  
BONITA) The Countess -- Er. . .and  
the Major -- You know...Er I think.

BLAME

Good morning -- Seniorita?

BONITA

Your Ladyship -- yes; I am single.  
(To Major Havoc). Major.

MAJOR HAVOC

(Stands up)

Miss Postal.

BLAME

Rather interesting surname you have  
Bonita -- what does it mean?

BONITA

Luneta, means glass lens, and Postal means post card -- Make what you will of that, but many women in my family are intuitive. Some are said to have the third eye. *Beat 3.*

LORD WONDER

Third what? Never heard that...Er Very...Er...at running the Er...

BLAME

The Sanctuary? *Beat 3.*

LORD WONDER

Yes! Of course...The Er...

BLAME

Fascinating -- how many animals do you keep here?

BONITA

We do not *keep* any animals -- they are all free to leave, but if you include the indigenous animals the numbers run into hundreds. *Beat 3.*

BLAME

So, how many...oh I don't know...lets say; Elephants?

BONITA

(Surprised at  
Blame's choice)

Three. Do you like elephants?

BLAME

(Casually)

Well; not especially -- but just for example do you have a *bull* elephant here?

LORD WONDER

Yes indeed -- we are very proud of our community. . .Most are victims of -- Ah yes! Everoti he's the biggest, Er. . .They say he can lift a half-ton tree on his...

BLAME

(Finding it harder  
to contain herself)

Tusks? Cyril -- Just like a big gentle forklift truck. He sounds perfect...I mean; marvellous -- I'd love to see him. *Beat 3.*

MAJOR HAVOC

Odd choice of words -- victims!?

BONITA

Not odd at all, Major. They have all been rescued from some atrocity or other -- and they are NOT! All animals! **Beat 3.**

MAJOR HAVOC

(Shows a little genuine concern)

I hadn't realised -- who are they?

LORD WONDER

Oh I have a memory like a -- Bonita has the exact facts and Er...has a photographic...Er -- Truly remarkable! **Beat 3.**

INT. THE ROYAL LIMO. DAY

FAWN taps the Satellite Navigation screen, in an attempt to look busy.

FAWN

There's nothing on the screen...

MAIN

You're hiding something; FAWN! Come on -- Just tell me what you've heard.

FAWN

OK sir -- Word is, from the pantry under butler, who works closely with the chambermaids, who have direct contact with the ladies in waiting; who have access to...

MAIN

Yes! Yes! I have no doubt as to it's accuracy -- I know nothing is private in that palace.

FAWN

Well sir -- It's no big secret that you don't really want to be king.

MAIN

What makes you so sure?

FAWN

Because you are afraid of being an unpopular monarch -- like your ancestors who came a cropper.

MAIN

(Holding his  
neck)

I do wish you hadn't said cropper.  
What exactly am I here to do then?

FAWN

One! Search the archive for  
evidence of the kings, that *didn't*  
come a cropper -- Sorry I said it  
again.

MAIN

(Holds his  
neck again)

FAWN

Two! You must undergo a complete  
personality change.

MAIN

How?

FAWN

Dump you ego! -- Sir. **BEAT 4.**

MAIN

Have you taken leave of your  
senses; Fawn?

FAWN

No sir, you have to do exactly what  
your Mother did here! over 60 years  
ago. **BEAT 4.**

MAIN

My Mother!?! -- And what was that?

FAWN

Dump your own ego, and get your  
Mother's, ready for pick-up Friday.

MAIN

Friday!?! Why Friday?

FAWN

Because the tide will be out --  
and, I also heard if you get it  
right "New Monarchy" may not be  
necessary. **BEAT 4.**

MAIN

Egos can't be dumped and retrieved,  
whether the tide is in or out!

FAWN

Apparently in Ponder they can --  
But I don't know what the tide has  
got to do with it.

MAIN

(Leaning forward to  
take hold of the letter)  
You spend far too much time around  
the Palace kitchens -- Let me have  
another look at those directions.

MAIN Re-reads the letter of invitation. He then folds his arms, and raises the knuckle of his right index finger to his left nostril, then wipes the corner of his right eye with the inside of his right wrist.

EXT. VENTURE BREWERY HORSEBOX. DAY.

The huge shiny vehicle was being driven slowly but erratically, as RAY finishes a sandwich, and down's his third bottle of "Venture Brewery Olde High Yield Ale". He is attempting to steer with his knees as the front wheel catches the side of the grass verge and mounts it. The powerful truck runs with three of it's six wheels on the verge for fifty yards, then bumps down heavily, but very neatly in the side of road. RAY leans forward, rests his head on the wheel, and begins to drift into a drunken sleep. His left foot is on the clutch pedal, and his right foot on the brake. His left foot slips off the clutch pedal, and the engine is stalled in gear. His right foot remains on the brake, and moves up and down in time with his breathing. Three large intakes of breath and he is asleep. The brake lights stay on with weight of his foot.

INT. HORSEBOX. DAY.

BARRY

What's he up to?!

NORMAN

Well at least he's stopped!

BROWNIE

We've crashed! I know it...We've  
crashed; we've crashed!

NORMAN

No we haven't...Listen to the air  
noises, he's making sure the brakes  
are working, he knows what he's  
doing!

Barry looks at Norman, as the air noises stop. Silence reigns for about 5 seconds, and then all that is heard is Ray's incredibly loud snoring, and the urgent sound of the engine electrical systems warning buzzer.

BARRY

(With rising anger)  
Listen to that! He's having a kip!!

BROWNIE

What's that noise -- It's the fire alarm, I know it -- We're on fire...Help! Help!

NORMAN

No we're not BARRY's right he's having a kip...Stamp! Stamp  
Whinney! Whinney! Whinney!

BARRY

Stamp! Stamp! Whinny! Whinny!

INT. THE ROYAL LIMO. DAY.

FAWN doesn't see the horse box mount the verge because of the patchy mist.

FAWN

(Passes the letter back  
as he gestures ahead)  
I can see the horse box -- I think the driver has seen us, the brakes lights are flashing.

MAIN

Yes; good, pull in but not too close, if the driver is lost as well -- That lorry's cargo could be very useful to us.

FAWN

Yes sir I'll just check out the driver.

MAIN

Of course -- I'll wait in the car until you're satisfied.

EXT. VENTURE BREWERY HORSEBOX DAY

FAWN pulls up two car lengths behind the horse box, gets out and walks towards it, with his right hand resting inside his left jacket lapel. The wheels of the horse box are so close to the grass verge. He has to step up on to the grass verge to approach the driver's cab.

RAY Wakes with a start from his 60 second power nap, as his foot slips off the brake pedal which produces a large release of high pressure air, and turns off the brake lights. Instinctively he applies the hand brake, which

produces a second, and louder release of air. He then turns off the key which stops the warning buzzer.

FAWN sees and hears all of this, and stops momentarily, with a look of growing concern, at the sounds coming from an already stationary vehicle.

Barry and Norman stop stamping and whinnying. All is silent for a few moments.

RAY looks in his rear view mirror, and sees the uniformed figure of FAWN approaching.

RAY

(In a loud whisper)

OH NO! It's the...

RAY reaches for his flask and takes a big swig of coffee. From his pocket he takes out a packet of mints, and pops two in his mouth. FAWN arrives at the cab window, just as RAY is winding it down. Both men speak together.

FAWN

Can you give me  
directions to P...

RAY

I'm trying to find  
the road to Pon...

Both realise they are looking for the same road, but FAWN now has more on his mind. FAWN is first to speak.

FAWN

Ponder! We have confusing  
directions, and the mist...

RAY

(As chirpy as he  
could manage)

Only wish I could help. -- I think  
I've been going round in circles  
myself.

Barry and Norman start stamping and whinnying.

FAWN

(Moving back

from the cab door)

Would you mind stepping out,  
there's something I have to do.

RAY got out of the horse box. FAWN produced a portable scanner from in side his jacket, and proceeded to scan RAY

RAY  
(With a relieved  
smile)  
There's no need for that.

FAWN  
Just doing my job.

The cab door just about cleared the verge, so FAWN could see in the cab. He didn't see the empty bottles.

FAWN  
(He looked at RAY  
with suspicion, then in the  
direction of the noise, distaste)  
My Employer would like a word with  
you, about your...horses...

RAY  
(Seeing Fawn's grimace)  
Not very keen on horse A?

FAWN  
Oh, I can take them or leave them.

RAY  
(Smiles knowingly)