

JEFFREY Yes, well er, is Mr Partridge here?

GLADYS Yes, I think he's outside. Anything important?

JEFFREY Yes, it's very serious, Gladys. The er, camp director had a letter from a couple staying last week saying that Mr Partridge hit their little boy. I've been asked to sack him.

GLADYS Oh dear. Poor Mr Partridge. How's he going to get another job at his age?

JEFFREY Yes, I know, it's most unpleasant. I wish to get it over with as quick as possible. Would you, er, would you send him in.

GLADYS (*worried*) Yes, all right. (*She opens the office door*) Would you come this way, Mr Partridge, please.

MR PARTRIDGE *enters, hands in pockets, with a dejected look.*

GLADYS *pulls out a chair at JEFFREY's desk.*

JEFFREY Sit down, Mr Partridge, please.

MR PARTRIDGE *sits and JEFFREY signals for GLADYS to go.*

GLADYS *goes, closing door behind her, and exits by the back door.*

Mr Partridge, I don't know how to tell you this.

MR PARTRIDGE You can save your breath. It's about that flippin' kid I hit, isn't it?

JEFFREY Yes.

MR PARTRIDGE Well it wasn't my fault, I was provoked.

JEFFREY Well what happened exactly?

MR PARTRIDGE Well, I was packing up the Punch and Judy and I couldn't find the sausages. So I looked around and there was this snotty-nosed kid, sucking an ice cream cornet.

"Have you got my sausages?" I said. "Get lost Grandad," he said, and I could see the sausages peeking out of his pocket. So I grabbed them off him, snatched his ice cream cornet, stuck it in his face and give it a twist. Then I clipped him round the ear 'ole and kicked him up the arse.

JEFFREY (*ironically*) Yes. (*Looking at letter*) Well, the parents certainly haven't exaggerated the incident, Mr Partridge. Erm, I'm very sorry to have to tell you this, but I've been instructed to dismiss you.

MR PARTRIDGE (*dumbfounded*) Do you mean I've got me cards?

JEFFREY Yes, I'm afraid so.

MR PARTRIDGE Well, that is marvellous that is. That's gratitude for you. After twelve years! Twelve years of trying to amuse those rotten little brats.

JEFFREY Mr Partridge, if you dislike children so, why is it you're a children's entertainer?

MR PARTRIDGE Well, it's a living, isn't it? I was on the halls for years, you know. Whimsical Willie, the Juggling Joker. Then, when after I come out the army in nineteen eighteen, well, things were never quite the same, so I gave up the juggling and became a comic. Then the talking pictures came out, things went from bad to worse. I finished up doing the Punch and Judy, well, it was all right at first, posh parties, kids with their hair in ribands and Eton collars. Then the war came and I went back as a comic doing my act for ENSA. Went to North Africa, France—followed the troops everywhere. And now I finish up with this lot. God, it's pathetic, isn't it?

JEFFREY (*staring at MR PARTRIDGE during his speech*) I think that's fantastic.

BARRY, YVONNE, TED, SPIKE, FRED, SYLVIA, TRACY, BETTY, DAWN and GARY *filter in during the ensuing dialogue and assume meeting positions.*