

## BODYSHOP

***The National Health Service has been dismantled and everything now has to be paid for. Medical advances have made the buying and selling of human parts a way of life (or death!)***

***The play is set in Hospital Shop where anything can be bought and sold. An old man comes in looking around at all the garish signs advertising the wares of the shop. He realises it is a Sale day and smiles. He fiddles with a few artefacts on display before sitting down to wait for attention. He is obviously not used to being in such a place. He dings the bell but there is no answer. A moment later a younger man enters. He is much more confident with his surroundings. He looks around impatiently, obviously in a great hurry. He dings the bell several times but gets no response either. he sits down and flicks impatiently through a magazine. The old man eventually speaks to him.***

Arnold        It's my legs.

Victor        What is?

Arnold        These. ***(he pulls up a trouser leg)*** They are not what they were.

Victor        I don't wish to see them, thanks very much.

Arnold        That's your loss then, but it's not everyday you see legs like these.

***(He wiggles his trouser legs enticingly)*** Look!

Victor        I really don't ..... Good God where did you get those! If I had legs like those I would have gotten rid of them ages ago. Nobody should have to go through life with pins like that. Imagine waking up and seeing them in front of you every morning.

Arnold        ***(Indignantly)*** These are my own legs. I was born with 'em. They were good legs in their day - footballer's legs. They are, run through an icy, muddy pitch on a cold December day legs. Wayne Rooney would have given his right arm for a leg like this.

Victor        Aagh. Look at them. What about all those blue lines on them? They look like a map of the motorway.

Arnold        That's me veins ***(He drops the trouser leg again as if suddenly ashamed.)*** Varicose veins! They used to be hidden but now they've all popped up to the surface like the long stringy bits you get floating on the top of a plate of vegetable soup. I thought I'd pop in here and see what they could do for me vis a vis the appendages ***(taps legs)***

Victor        Are you looking for new veins then?

Arnold        No! New legs

Victor            Legs! You mean you want to get some new legs.

Arnold           Yes, spoils yer love life does veins, they don't like touching' them y'see. All rough and knobbly they are. Not tactiley stimulating.

Victor            Who doesn't like touching them?

Arnold           Women, stupid.

Victor            Women!

Arnold           Yes women! You know - those lumpy cuddly warm things. **(pauses for a moment reflecting on some past encounter with this species)** Hmm, yes. You know what it's like You just get to a point where they are all hot and steamy, hands crawling' all over you, kissing and blowing in yer ear, then their hands wander down yer leg and - they touch yer veins. Suddenly its cheerio and they're off quicker than snow off a dyke leaving you higher than a Yeti's truss..

Victor            **(Having got quite worked up during the ongoing description is now disgusted by this revelation.)**

                      I can see why! Are you sure it's just your legs? **(Arnold looks at him with disgust)**.. I mean to say

Arnold           Course it's me legs. The rest of me is still quite physically desirable. I can still do the business. **(Winks knowingly at Victor)** I've looked after meself y'see. This body attracts women. I have to fight them off. **(He stops and sighs)** Till they touch me legs. **(slumps back into his chair.)** These are warriors legs, fought in the war they did. Carried me through thick and thin, saved me many a time. I remember once in Italy.....

**(He breaks off as Victor has wandered away obviously not listening. Arnold looks around the Shop.)**

.....            I can't usually afford to come into places like this. The prices are too high. Not meant for blokes like me these posh shops

Victor            **(Irritably)** Yes, yes. So what did bring you in here then, or did you just come into to annoy me talking about your stupid legs!

**Arnold rummages about in his pocket and finally brings out an envelope. He takes a garishly coloured piece of card out of it and waves it about.**

Arnold           This! I won it in a Spot the Spleen competition. It was in this magazine, you see. They had all these pictures of celebrities insides taken by a miniature camera and you had to match them to the person you thought owned it. Piece of cake really. I may not be an educated man but I know a good spleen when I see one. So I won, only I didn't actually win - I was second. The winner received a life times supply of blood transfusions. That would

almost be worth getting a rare blood disease for - just to get your money's worth like.

Victor H'mm. What exactly is that card?

Arnold It's a voucher! The competition was in the medical section of the Exchange and Mart. I was going to sell the wife's wheelchair to buy some food, when I spotted it. I spent my last £2.20 on a stamp and entered. Most people are intestinally inept but all I had to do was.....

Victor Yes, Yes! I don't need to know all that. What's the voucher for?

Arnold That's the beauty of it. It says I can have a free choice of any limb I care to name. Talk about lucky. It's not every day you get an offer like that. That's why I came in here - to see what I could get. I thought a new pair of legs might be a high priority. Not ones with veins like mine of course. a nice pair, young and fit. Healthy legs that could stand being fondled.  
**(Winks at Victor again.)**

Victor You disgusting old man. Is that all you want a new pair of legs for. A bit of nocturnal hanky panky.

Arnold Well no. I thought if I had athlete's legs I could maybe play a bit of football as well. Footballers make a lot of money, what with high wages, agents, sponsorship deals with boot companies and Sugar Puffs, opening supermarkets, quiz shows on the Telly, and occasionally they actually have to play football. I could see meself as one of them. Premier League of course - not just any old rubbish.

Arnold Hmmph! (looks around the shop) They don't have a lot of stuff do they.

Victor The stuff out front is just for show. Paper mache models and the like. All the big stuff is out the back in refrigerators. The goods have to be kept fresh. Well out of sight so nobody can see them. Raw meat can sometimes put people off you know. Affects the sale of second hands bits like.

***A snooty assistant enters from the back of the shop***

Assistant Please fill in one of these registration cards. It gives our computer a match, blood, DNA, bone marrow, that type of thing. We can't have any old bits mixing together. Dilutes the line you, know. It's all a question of breeding.  
**(To Victor)** You look like you may have a high compatibility factor, Sir.

Arnold What about me?

Assistant You look like you will come into our any port in a storm category, Sir.

Arnold Cheeky besom. My family's lived here for hundreds of years.

Assistant I don't doubt it Sir, but there's living and there's - **(sneers)** living. I'll just go ahead and punch you in.

Arnold There's no need to be like that, just because I'm getting on a bit.

Assistant Punch you in to the computer, Sir. Put you on our Database

**(She puts in Victor's card and then Arnold's. Having done that she oozes round to Victor and makes up to him.)**

Does Sir see anything that Sir fancies? I should add that most of the items you can see on in the shop are for display only. The bulk of our stock is stored at the rear of the premises in our specially designed freezers. It's a question of freshness you understand. European legislation on sell by dates and all that sort of bureaucracy type of thing.

Victor How do we know what we are buying then? How do we know you won't fob us off with a lot of old tat.

Assistant Tat! tut, tut, tat! As I said this is a high class establishment. It wouldn't do our reputation any good to be trading in tat. What we can give you is our exclusive catalogue. **(Hands him a book the size of a wallpaper book.)** Perhaps sir, would like to see our newest range. It has all the latest models and some exclusive lines especially in entrails and accoutrements.

Victor Would the cost of the treatment include the operations?

Assistant Prices as marked sir, and they do include the operation by a top surgeon.

Victor I'm worried about my final appearance, would it be a plastic surgeon?

Assistant Only in the sense that he would check your credit cards before he started the operation. All our personnel are, however, fully qualified

Victor Hmm, I see. **(He takes the book and starts to leaf through it.)**

Arnold **(Jumping up and trying to grab the book.)** I was here first! I should get first look. I want something for my voucher. **(Waves it in her face. She looks down her nose and sighs audibly.)**

Assistant Hmm, a voucher. Then this book is for Sir. It is our voucher catalogue. Perhaps sir would care to peruse it. **(She gives him a small pamphlet and waves him away turning to Victor.)** Now, does Sir see anything Sir desires.

Victor **(Flashing his credit cards)** I can afford the best of everything. I have a high-profile job in the City which means I have unlimited cash. It does also mean I have ulcers. I would like an operation to fix them. How much would it cost?

Assistant Well - er Ulcer operations are very high priority. all you younger chaps seem to be after this type of operation at the moment. I'm afraid they are at a premium just now. Supply and demand you know. **(Smugly)** Yes I suppose a person in your line of work would know all about that. All I can offer you at the moment is a cut price stomach operation. The surgeon needs the money to pay off his second wife. Some indiscretion with an MP. Perhaps he could rummage about and sort out your ulcer while he's in there.

Victor **(Angrily)** That's not really good enough. I work my arse off in a high pressure job, nine hours a day, six days a week, glued to a bloody computer terminal, constantly on the phone, millions riding on my latest deal, and I can't even get a proper operation when I want one.

**(He thumps the counter angrily. Suddenly he doubles up in pain clutching his stomach. He gestures to the assistant.)**

Pills, pills. Get my pills.

Assistant I'm afraid I didn't take a course in pills at my induction training. Pills were for back room Staff not Salesforce. Our Group leader said.....

Victor Would you just shut up and give me one of my pills. I am in agony.

Assistant **(huffily)** There is no need to adopt that tone. I could always sell you some of ours that would be acceptable. **( She takes out a bottle of little pills.)**

Victor **(Grabbing them.)** I'll take them **(Swallows one)** What are they for?

Assistant Piles!

Victor Piles! I haven't got bloody piles! **(doubles up)** Oooh I shouldn't have taken that pill. It will just set me back

Assistant Yes it will set you back 40 pounds. plus VAT.

Victor **(Goes to argue but doubles up again.)** Ooh I need help.

Arnold **(Comes to his rescue and takes the pills out of his jacket and gives him one.)** Here son!

Victor **(The pain easing slightly)** O.K. O.K. I admit I need something now. Show me this cheap stomach operation. Come on damn you, show me, show me!

Assistant **(Unperturbed)** Cheap operations, Sir, are in the book the other gentleman has.

**(Victor dashes over and snatches the book out of Arnold's hand.)**

Victor Give that to me!

Arnold **(Snatching the book back)** Here I was reading that.! I was just looking at a nice pair of legs.

Victor I don't give a damn about your legs. I am in desperate need.

Arnold My need is as great as yours.

Victor No its not! Its not! There are multi-million pound deals going on. A fortune could be slipping through my hands. the ebb and flow of the world's market forces are washing back and forth without me. I've got to be there to cream off my share.

Arnold And everybody else's share as well.

Victor What do you know about it you backward old geriatric!

Arnold What do I know! What do I Know! I'll tell you what I know! I know I had a pension. This pension was supposed to give me security in my old age. A decent amount of money to see me through my declining years. in relative comfort. Then one day one of your computers, and one of their computers and one of somebody else's bloody computers probably in Japan or Germany or somewhere else we fought in the bloody war decided between them that our pension didn't matter and wiped it off the bloody market. Gone at the press of a button. Somebody had money but it wasn't us in our old age. Me and thousands like me were left penniless. we only qualify for a pittance from the Governments new Advanced Elderly Handout Premiums. I bet you made a nice tidy profit. Some for them, some for you and some for a bloody Japanese computer. I shouldn't be in here begging' for an operation because I've been lucky enough to win a bloody voucher I should be out there walking about on legs I bought for meself with my own hard earned money. Legs I chose for myself. Independent legs!

Victor Yeah, well. it was a crucial deal. Mistakes sometimes happen. you have to take risks when you are working in the city. The pressure of the high-stake deals means someone occasionally has to lose.

Arnold Well I don't like it when that someone happens to be me.

Victor So. There have to be sacrifices - you just happen to be one of them.

Arnold We didn't have to make sacrifices when we had a National Health Service. People that were ill or couldn't take care of themselves were always looked after.

Victor They are taken care of today as well.

Arnold Yeah in a hearse! Any illness and you are taken straight down to the National Disposal Unit.

Victor **(Getting very angry and annoyed.)** All you old folk ever do is moan. I'm sick to death of hearing about the bloody National Health Service. We're much better off without it. The while thing was dragging the country down in a welter of depression and sickness. It was a financial leech, sucking the country taking great chunks out of the economy to keep old men in zimmers and old ladies and surgical stockings.

Arnold **(Waving his voucher in disgust!)** At least we didn't need bloody vouchers.

Assistant Would you two stop arguing and hurry up

**(The two men wrestle violently with the book)**

Victor This old codger won't give me the book.

Arnold It's only an ulcer for god's sake! You can get that fixed anytime.

Victor I told you I don't have the time. I'm too busy. My terminal is waiting and every second I leave it unattended costs me thousands. Now stop pissin' about and give me the book!

Arnold No I won't I've got my voucher. **(He waves it in the air.)** I'm entitled.

Victor Is that so.

**(He snatches the voucher from Arnold and holds it out of his reach.)**

Well I've got it now so give me the book!

Arnold No I will not I've got my voucher! **(He waves it in the air.)** I'm entitled.

Victor Is that so.

**(He snatches the voucher from Arnold and holds it away from his reach.)**

Well I've got it now. So give me that book!

Arnold No I won't. Give me back my voucher.

Victor No. Give me the book. Give it to me or I'll tear up your voucher.

Arnold You wouldn't, you can't. That's my legs

Victor I mean it. **(Holds voucher up again)**

Arnold No you don't that's my bloody legs. Alright you bastard here.

**(He hands over the book.)**

Victor Thanks. I didn't want your rotten voucher anyway. Useless bloody things they are just for parasites. This is what I think of vouchers.

***(He very deliberately tears the voucher into small pieces and tosses them up in the air like confetti.)***

Arnold My legs! You've destroyed my legs!

Victor So what! It would have been a total waste. You are a useless old tosser and you always will be. Even if you did have a new pair of legs you wouldn't be able to do anything with them.

Arnold Here's something I can do with them!

***(Arnold rises slowly and then with a quick movement kicks Victor in the stomach. Victor collapses and rolls about in agony A trickle of blood spills out of the side of his mouth. He moans and gestures hysterically.)***

Victor Oooh!

Arnold I think I will keep me old legs thanks. I need them to get out of here. Fast!  
***(He legs it pronto)***

***(The assistant rushes over to him and kneels beside him. She backs off trying not to get any blood or similar substance on her suit.)***

Assistant Are you hurt?

Victor Oooh!

Assistant I'll see if I can help you. Do you have any cash on you?

***(Victor clutches his stomach again. he points to his pocket and gestures frantically. The assistant fumbles in his pocket and eventually takes out his bottle of pills it is empty. She then takes out his wallet. She counts out a wad of notes.***

Just a minute.

***(She rushes over to the counter and comes back with a bottle of painkillers.)***

Take one of these.

***(She pops one of the pills into his mouth and takes some notes from his wallet. Victor groans again.***

I think you need another.



***(She pops another pill in Victor's mouth and takes some more notes from his wallet.)***

Victor Oooh!

Assistant You can't have any more - you can't afford it. ***(Checks wallet again)*** You can just about afford to call for an ambulance. I hope you made a big killing on the stock market today because this little lot is going to cost you a fortune. Hang on and I'll get help

***(She empties the wallet and goes to the phone.)***

Hello ambulance. I think I have a customer for you. It's a bit of an emergency. Yes I think he has enough to pay for treatment. He has a wad of credit cards and some money for the journey. What? No, - no vouchers!