

10. Street Scene

Caz enters. She is pushing the trolley from which hangs plastic bags crammed with clothing and other stuff. She has another bag in each hand. She is struggling.

Caz (Stopping.) That's it. (To baby) Can't you learn to walk. You could help me with these bags. (She sits on the ground.) I must be mad. But I swear.... at this rate it could be the last thing I do....but I'll find him for you. (Stops. To baby.) You don't eat well enough. Neither of us. I should take you home. You've not slept in a cot for ... I don't know how long. (Wait.) I thought I spotted him earlier. Turned out, not. I only realised after I'd ripped his coat off over his head. (In explanation.) I saw him from behind. The back of his head was familiar. (She sees someone approaching and stands.)

Orf enters, now as a market researcher. He has a clip-board with a palm-top computer attached. He checks it and then approaches.

Orf Madam. I wonder if you wouldn't mind answering a few questions about your shopping habits?

Caz No. (She tries to leave. He bars her way pleasantly.)

Orf I am authorised to make a payment of £3.50 as a thank you for inconvenienced caused. (Looking her up and down.) Maybe that would be of use to you. What a handsome baby.

Caz (After a moment.) Two minutes. I've business to attend to.

Orf Mmmm. (Wait.) Thank you. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. If there is a question you do not understand please stop me and I shall repeat the question. If, after the third repetition, you still do not understand we shall leave the question, proceed to subsequent questions, returning to the unanswered questions at the end of the survey, at which point I am authorised to repeat the questions a further three times. In the event of your continuing to fail to understand the unanswered questions such questions at this point will be delegated as "unanswered". Thank you. Question One. How would you describe your age ? Under 16, 16 - 18, 18 - 24, 24 - 30, 30 - 35, 35 - 45, 45 - 55, 55 - 60, over 60, over 70, over 80, over 90.

Caz (After a moment.) I'm 28.

Orf (With a sigh.) How would you describe your age ? Under 16, 16 - 18, 18 - 24, 24 - 30....

Caz (Stopping him.) That one.

Orf 24 - 30.

Caz Yes.

Orf (Writing.) Are you in full-time employment, Self- employed, Part-time employment, in full-time education, subsisting solely

on state benefits, in receipt of financial remuneration as the director of a company, limited or otherwise....

- Caz** **(Stopping him.)** I sell these.... **(Showing her bags.)**
Orf **(Looking inside. Deciding.)** Self-employed, small business, director. Would you describe the annual turn-over as your business as greater than £15,000, less than £15,000, greater than £30,000, less than £10,000, greater than £120,000, less than £5,000 ? **(He waits.)**
- Caz** Less.
Orf Than ? £5,000 ?
Caz Yes.
Orf Good. **(turning a page.)** Do you own a pet?
Caz No.
Orf Would you describe the number of children in your household as less than 1, 1, less than 3.....
Caz One. I'm sorry. I must go.
Orf **(Dropping £3.50 in her hand.)** You are required to complete the survey once payment has been received.
Caz **(Trying to hand it back.)** I don't want it.
Orf Sorry. Not authorised.....

Caz gives up trying to leave.

- Orf** Thank you. Have you, or any of your dependants, ever been the victims of domestic violence at the hands of an alienated, if generally affable male companion?

Silence. Caz looks in disbelief. Orf offers her a look at the clip-board in flippant explanation.

- Caz** **(To the baby.)** Come on. We've got time to make up. **(She starts to leave. Orf doesn't attempt to stop her but speaks after her.)**
- Orf** You must answer the questions. **(His tone of voice stops her in her tracks.)** An unanswered question will be intimated as a refusal to co-operate and breach of binding, verbal contract. **(Wait.)** Your address.
- Caz** I understood it to be anonymous.
Orf Your address? **(No reply.)** Your address. **(No reply.)** After the third repetition of the question unanswered questions will be passed over and returned to at the end of the survey. Question : Are you aware of the current legislation requiring citizens without permanent, stable employment or residence to remain within the environs of their issuing parochial authority ? **(Quiet. He repeats the question. No reply. He repeats the question. No reply.)** After the third repetition of the question the unanswered question will be passed over and returned to at the end of the survey. **(Wait.)** Question : do you believe society to be a more prosperous and secure society than a time greater than 15 years ago, greater than 30 years ago, greater than 50 years

ago ?
Caz May we leave? Please? **(A moment of quiet. Then Orf begins to repeat the question.)** I'm looking for my husband. We lost him. I have some things.

She searches in her bag and takes out curling tongs, an electric carving knife, a travel iron.

Quiet.

Orf repeats the question.

Quiet.

Orf **(Again.)** After the third repetition.....

In desperation... and despite herself she begins to sing, half to the baby, but very loudly. He stops in curiosity. She stops.

Caz I have some things.

Orf **(After a moment)** Show me.

She roots through the bags again. Other small items. There is a small pile of rejected items at her feet.

Quiet.

Orf Well. **(Wait. He enters data into his palm-top.)** It does concern us that you would appear to be in an area without proof of permanent residency...

Caz **(Clearly lying.)** I am visiting relatives.

Orf With the necessary papers?

Caz **(Lying)** Yes.

Orf **(Smiling. He's made his point.)** Well. **(He looks into the trolley. Then at the pile. She puts all of the bags onto the pile.)** Well. They're only car-boot-good really. **(Wait.)** But £80 for two hours labour on a Sunday morning isn't to be sniffed at.

He produces a heavy, plastic sack. Hands it to her. She fills it with the stuff and hands it to him. Quiet.

Caz Thankyou.

She takes a few steps off. Then a few more quickly. He allows her to go. Exit. He watches her with interest.

Orf completes his palm-top entry, closes the lid with a snap and exits.