



2016

A One Act Play  
by

Bob Davidson

# 2016

Youth play – running time 30 minutes

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Written one week in March 2008

Cast

CLAIRE – a seventeen year-old girl. Was until recently a pupil at a London comprehensive.

GOGS – a nineteen year-old guy. Dropped out of a degree course in electronic engineering. Worked, until recently, in a shop selling hand computer games.

*As the house lights dim the stirring strains of “The Star Spangled Banner” ring out through the theatre. As the curtains open the tone of the music changes to that which would be heard from a small transistor radio. On stage is a small transistor radio. It is lying on the ground on what looks like a small grassy bank, which leads down towards the edge of the stage, changing to a sandy beach as it goes. At the rear of the stage is a drystone dyke, the likes of which are much in abundance on Scotland’s west coast. This then is a short stretch of beach on the west coast of Scotland. The year is 2016. Sitting centre stage in the middle of the beach is CLAIRE, a seventeen year-old girl originally from London who is wrestling with a can of prunes trying, unsuccessfully, to prise off the lid. The music stops and she looks up at the radio just in time to catch the pips for the six o’clock news. All the while we hear the sound of waves gently lapping.*

Voice Over SFX from radio  
*(in American accent)*

This is the United States Occupation Forces News Bulletin broadcast by the BBC at 6pm on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.

CLAIRE  
*(quietly)*

Wow... it’s the first of July.

Voice Over SFX from radio

American and British forces have been engaged in heavy fighting around rebel strongholds held by insurgents on the outskirts of the northern city of Edinboro.

*CLAIRE looks at the radio and brings the can of prunes down on it, smashing the casing and silencing it in one fell swoop.*

CLAIRE  
*(to the broken radio)*

It’s Edinburgh! Edinburgh! Not Edinboro, even I know that you Yankee git. Why won’t you just go home?

*She looks at the broken radio and sighs.*

I should not have done that. Oh good grief.

*She chucks the can of prunes over her shoulder and gazes out to sea for a moment. Eventually she scrabbles about some other cans lying on the shore next to her. She picks one up and examines it.*

Ah ha.

*It has a ring-pull. She rummages in her pocket and produces a spoon.*

Bingo!

*She sits cross-legged and pulls the lid off the can and licks it. She then takes a spoonful of the contents and slowly savours that first mouthful. She looks back at the smashed radio.*

Edinboro... ha, stupid Yanks.

*CLAIRE carries on eating for a few moments until she is suddenly startled from somewhere stage left. She clutches the can to her chest and retreats backwards on her bottom. GOGS enters stage left holding a knife at arms length. He is about 19, tall and thin and scared. He is glancing around nervously but his main focus of attention is CLAIRE. She looks quickly around and reaches for another can to use as a weapon. He sees her and advances brandishing the knife. Her hand retreats from the can. Neither move for a few moments.*

CLAIRE

Are you a Yank?

GOGS

Aye right!

CLAIRE

Oh God... you're native.

GOGS

More than you are by the sounds of it. What's in the tin?

CLAIRE

Rice pudding...

*She examines the label...*

Ambrosia.

GOGS

Where'd you get it?

CLAIRE

*(nodding to the shore)*

Washed up.

GOGS

Give it to me.

CLAIRE

No! And I don't care if you are pointing a knife at me.

*They stare at each other.*

You are pointing it at me aren't you?

*He lowers the knife slightly.*

GOGS

Probably came from that Calmac supply boat that was shot out the water a couple of weeks back. On its way to Lewis. They said that it was an arms shipment from Ireland, but I saw it leave Oban the night before. Another step nearer winning the war on terror. Another victory for coalition forces. Another Calmac ferry that'll never sail again... so at least that's something.

CLAIRE

Have you been chipped?

GOGS

*(looking her in the eye)*

No.

CLAIRE

You sure?

GOGS

Aye... I'm sure.

CLAIRE

Have you been watching me?

GOGS

Yea.

CLAIRE

How long for?

GOGS

Couple of days.

CLAIRE

Where are you from?

GOGS

Embra.

CLAIRE

It's Ed-in-burgh, not Embra. God you're as bad as the Yanks. Edinburgh, or what's left of it.

GOGS

What do you mean?

CLAIRE

Yanks have been shelling it for the last week.

GOGS

How do you know?

CLAIRE

I heard it on the radio news quarter of an hour ago.

GOGS

You've got a radio?

CLAIRE

Well... had a radio. It got broken.

GOGS

Pity.

*CLAIRE rummages for a tin with a ring-pull, finds one and offers it to the boy.*

CLAIRE

Devon Custard?

*GOGS nods and takes a couple of steps closer. He pockets the knife and she lobs the can to him. He sits a safe distance from her and pulls the lid off the can and licks the custard from it. CLAIRE resumes her rice pudding and watches as he dips his finger in the can and eats the custard from his finger. She finishes her rice.*

CLAIRE

Here...

*She throws him her spoon.*

So if you're from Edinburgh, when were you last there?

GOGS

About six weeks ago. Left just before they blew up the bridges.

CLAIRE

Yea I heard about that. Mind you, your government was planning on knocking them down anyway weren't they?

GOGS

Aye... they probably did a deal with the Yanks. We'll blew them up for ye wae a few laser guided bombs if you give the rebuilding contract to an American firm.

CLAIRE

Mmm... has a ring of truth about it. Perhaps with a bit of cynicism thrown in. I don't think they're winning the battle for hearts and minds with you. Chuck us your knife for a minute...

*GOGS takes the knife from his pocket and goes to throw it but pauses.*

It's for these prunes... I'm determined to have one.

*CLAIRE smiles disarmingly and he slides the knife over towards her. She picks it up and runs her finger along the blade.*

Oh, I say, it's sharp... *(she points the knife at him)* unlike its owner. Roll over...

*He stares at her. She shouts...*

...on your front NOW!

*Reluctantly he lies down on his front with his arms out to the sides. She sits astride his back with the knife held at his face, while her left hand rubs the skin at the base of the back of his neck until she finds the small scar.*

You lying Scotch git.

*She sticks the point of the knife into his neck and GOGS cries out...*

GOGS

Ooohyaaa...

CLAIRE

Oh shut up.

*She twists and angles the knife slightly until she winkles out a tiny blood soaked gadget the size of an aspirin.*

I thought you said you hadn't been chipped.

GOGS

I forgot.

CLAIRE

Two days you've been watching me with this thing in the scruff of your neck. God knows how many people have been watching you.

*She stuffs her bloody fingers in front of his face.*

10 meters. That's how accurate they are with these things. They've probably been tracking you all the way since you left that dump of a city. You know this, I'm glad the Yanks are flattening the place. Somebody should have done it years ago.

*She stares out at the audience...*

My God, they're probably watching us right now. You idiot.



*She clambers to her feet, places the chip on the ground and scrunches it with her heel. She then rakes in her rucksack and produces a packet of elastoplast. She wipes the blood from the back of GOGS's neck and carefully sticks the plaster in place over the wound. She hands him back the knife and sits while he gets back up and sits down beside her rubbing his neck and grimacing with the pain.*

Prat. So when did they chip you?

GOGS

Just before the Yanks arrived.

CLAIRE

Before?

GOGS

Yea it was our Polis. I was picked up at a demonstration in Princess Street. Big rally against the Westminster crowd inviting the Americans in to help with the war on terror. Things got a bit out of hand and one of the cops was killed. Hit by a petrol bomb...

CLAIRE

... yea I remember hearing about it.

GOGS

Anyway they got a bit rough after that. You can understand it I suppose. They were rounding folk up by the dozen. Next thing I know I'm in Edinburgh Castle with about three hundred other folk. I was taken to this room and made to strip. I remember being examined by a doctor or someone who said he was a doctor, and next thing I remember is waking up in Princess Street Gardens with a pain in the neck.

CLAIRE

And you've been one ever since? I cannot believe that you could have been so stupid. Ten days I've been here and okay it's not the Ritz, but there's a nice view, peace and quiet (before you arrived) a steady supply of... custard. Okay there's the occasional low flying jet or helicopter but I've managed to avoid them so far. And then some dork arrives with a chip in his neck and more than likely one on his shoulder.

GOGS

Just what is that supposed to mean?

CLAIRE

It means that I wish I'd never clapped eyes on you. It means that I wish you had stayed in Edinboro and been hit by a Yankee shell. I've got to get out of here...

*(she begins to gather her belongings)*

...find a new place.

*She turns to him.*

Alone.

GOGS

Oh don't be daft, naebody's looking for me. I think they've got other things on their mind.

CLAIRE

Well I'm not taking any chances. They must have thought you were a threat otherwise they wouldn't have chipped you.

GOGS

Threat? I'm no' a threat. I've never threatened anybody.

CLAIRE

You threatened me with a knife.

GOGS

Aye maybe... but at least I didnae stab ye in the back o' the neck.

CLAIRE

Oh stop whining.

GOGS

Look, I worked in a shop selling second hand computer games. I've never as much dropped an empty crisp packet. I'm not a threat to national, international or your security. I'm just like you... running scared.

CLAIRE

Ha... I thought all men of your age were being encouraged to stand and fight. Join the... what was it? The Tartan Taliban?

GOGS

Huh that's just a whole lot of neds who used to fight each other at football matches.

CLAIRE

They're doing something though eh? Making a stand against the imperialist aggressor?

GOGS

You don't mean that?

CLAIRE

No I don't... I was taking the mick.

*She sits down again on the beach next to him.*

So you wouldn't fight to keep Scotland for the Scots.

GOGS

No I wouldn't.

CLAIRE

Not very patriotic are you?

GOGS

No... I'm a citizen of the world, me.

CLAIRE

Oh, give me strength.

GOGS

Listen I don't know what Yanks are doing here. Probably nothing to do with being invited to help with the so-called war on terror, but as far as I'm concerned they can have it. It's no' the first time we've been invaded and it'll no' be the last. It only takes a generation anyway. Yankee troops'll start having bairns wae local lassies who will grow up to be as Scottish and small minded as the folk that have always been here. What's the point in fighting to stop that? You'll never stop it. It's just the way things go. How many Romans or Vikings do you see wandering the streets o' Dundee or Inverness. And there's the English...

CLAIRE

... nothing to do with me.

GOGS

And the Poles. Friendliest invasion ever. Did they land fighting their way up the beach at Dornoch? No, they got ninety-nine pence tickets and flew in wae Ryanair.

CLAIRE

Is that a bad thing?

GOGS

No, I'm delighted to see them, honest I am. It steers us all up a bit. The last thing we want is for a whole lot of Scottish folk to start inbreeding.

CLAIRE

Yea, but then the Poles all went home again, didn't they?

GOGS

I cannae say I blame them, dunno why they came here in the first place. But the Yanks are different, they're killing folk. They're shelling Embra.

CLAIRE

They're shelling half the cities in England too, but, you're probably right, there's not much we can do, if anything at all.

GOGS

Exactly... look after number one.

CLAIRE

Exactly.

*She gets to her feet.*

I'm off. See ya.

GOGS

Where will you go?

CLAIRE

As far away from here as possible.

GOGS

New Zealand?

CLAIRE

Oh... right little wit aren't we. I dunno where I'll go, but I ain't stopping here. And if you want my advice you'd do well to hop it too. You go that way. I'll go this way, before some patrol boat or helicopter gunship turns up at dusk to kill us.

GOGS

Look I told ye, I huvvnae done nothin'.

CLAIRE

No, you haven't done anything. Why can't you Scotch talk proper?

*CLAIRE shoulders her rucksack and exits stage right, leaving GOGS alone. He eventually gets up and walks to the front of the stage where he crouches and skims some stones out into the audience. He returns to the centre of the beach and sits on the sand. The lights dim and change to moonlight. CLAIRE slowly enters stage right. She quietly lays her bag on the ground and sits a couple of feet away from GOGS who continues to stare out to sea.*

GOGS

I see no ships.

CLAIRE

Any helicopters?

GOGS

There was one earlier on.

CLAIRE

How close?

GOGS

Couple of miles away, maybe.

CLAIRE

That's close.

GOGS

It looked like one of those big transport jobs.

CLAIRE

It's still close.

GOGS

And two A10s flew over just after you left.

CLAIRE

I heard them.

GOGS

They've got this huge gatling gun mounted in the nose. Did you know that it can fire 4000 rounds per minute. That's 66 rounds every second. Every second. You would hardly think that's mechanically possible. And we're not talking wee bullets here. This thing fires lumps the size of coke cans with depleted uranium tips.

CLAIRE

I remember watching some documentary or other... I think it was on the second Iraq war. It was just like a black and white telly screen but it was really some gun-sight for a helicopter. I hate them. Anyway you could see some truck in the middle of the screen and there was a fuzzy glowing figure on the left and two on the right of the truck...

GOGS

... thermal imaging.

CLAIRE

Yea... anyway there was short burst of noise and the figure on the left just exploded. The two on the right stood bolt upright and within a second they'd gone too. That was from five miles away. I hate those things. You could probably build a whole hospital for the price of one of them. Do you know what today's date is?

GOGS

Haven't a clue... middle of June?

CLAIRE

No, it's the first of July. First of July, Two Thousand and Sixteen. Do you know what happened one hundred years ago today?

GOGS

Em... no, sorry... before ma time.

CLAIRE

First day of the Battle of the Somme. I studied it in history.

GOGS

Oh?

CLAIRE

How many British casualties?

*GOGS shakes his head.*

Sixty thousand. That was the British ones. Germans were pretty much the same. That was the first day. Five months later... a million men dead. And for what? It's not as if we've even learned anything. We've learned absolutely nothing. Here we are, you and me, one hundred years on, cowering on this beach waiting for someone we can't even see to machine gun us in the dark.

*The lights fade to black and then back into bright daylight. GOGS is skimming stones again. After a few moments CLAIRE enters stage right carrying a packet of biscuits.*

CLAIRE

*(waving the packet)*

Chocolate covered HobNobs... my favourite. Past their sell-by date, but the packet's still sealed so I'm game if you are?

GOGS

Aye – I'll risk it. A packet of chocolate biscuits is a traditional Scottish breakfast after all.

CLAIRE

It's all there was on the beach this morning.

GOGS

Maybe the van broke down.

CLAIRE

Maybe... oh I'll tell you what else there was. You'll never guess...

GOGS

Sherman Tank?

CLAIRE

Close... a box of 1000 US Army condoms.

GOGS

Did you bring them back?

CLAIRE

What ever for?

*They stare at each other for a moment.*

Don't be ridiculous. Not on a first date.

GOGS

We could be killed at any minute.

CLAIRE

Well I'd just as soon be having a bar of chocolate at the time thank you very much. Here have a HobNob and be a good boy. Go and build a sand castle or something.

GOGS

Cheers.

*They sit side by side again.*

Why'd you come back again last night?

CLAIRE

I didn't know where to go. It was something you said as well. You said – I'm just like you, running scared. And I am scared but I don't know where to run. I ran all the way here and I stopped running when I got here because... well look at it. It's so beautiful. I thought if they do catch up with me, and want to kill me, then here is as good a place to die as any.

GOGS

Don't say that.

CLAIRE

How old are you?

GOGS

Nineteen. You?

CLAIRE

Seventeen.

GOGS

Well you're a bit too young to be thinking of dying. Where are you from?

CLAIRE

London.

GOGS

What did you do there?

CLAIRE

Me? I was still at school or at least I was until the school got blown up. Just after the Americans arrived. I used to go to school on the tube, but it wasn't running this day and I had to walk. By the time I got there all hell had let loose. It had been hit by a cruise missile about five minutes before. The air was thick with dust and there was huge blocks of rubble everywhere.

GOGS

Was anybody hurt?

CLAIRE

Five pupils were injured but none of us were killed... Some of the Yanks died though. The crazy thing is that they had commandeered the building the night before and none of the pupils had been allowed in. Crazier still is they wanted it to use as a mortuary. There was some of their own men in building when the missile hit. Absolutely crazy, just what is all that about?

GOGS

Friendly fire.

CLAIRE

One of the stupidest sayings I've ever heard. Anyway what happened there was horrible, I was scared and I couldn't stay there any longer, so I legged it.

GOGS

Where'd you go?

CLAIRE

I got, what turned out to be, the last train out of Kings Cross. It only went as far as Peterborough.

GOGS

I'd have tried to make it to France.

CLAIRE

All the ferries had been stopped and the tunnel was blown up. Kent was chock-a-block.

GOGS

The Americans blew up the tunnel... I never heard that.

CLAIRE

Well they claimed to have blown it up in some counter insurgency move, but I think it was the French.

GOGS

Yea?

CLAIRE

Yea, you think about it... what would you do if you were living in Calais and all this stuff was happening over here?

GOGS

I suppose so. Anyway you were saying you made it to Peterborough?



CLAIRE

Yea, I then hitched a lift on a truck as far as York but the A1 was blocked solid with traffic with folk heading north. It was chaos. I managed to get a lift on the back of a motorbike from some guy about Harrogate who took me all the way to Carlisle. I then walked over the hills across the border like something out of the Sound of Music. Broke into a farm ate all the food and nicked the keys to a Land Rover and drove through the night up past Glasgow and run out of diesel between Oban and Fort William. Walked the rest. You're the first person I've seen in about three weeks.

GOGS

You got family?

CLAIRE

My brother's dead and I've got a sister I don't speak to. Well... I speak to her, she doesn't speak to me. And my mum's abroad.

GOGS

Where is she?

CLAIRE

Australia, thank God. She was due to fly back on the day after the Yanks arrived but they stopped all the flights, so she's stuck there.

GOGS

Right – that's where we're going. All that talk about this being a nice place to die.

CLAIRE

We are not going anywhere.

GOGS

Oh come on, I've always wanted to go to Australia.

CLAIRE

Well we'll have to leave it for another time.

GOGS

No, no, we could do it. Let's give it a try?

CLAIRE

We'll never get off this dump of an island.

GOGS

Okay, okay we'll stay here and throw stones at the helicopters when they pass in the hopes that one will shoot us soon. Our bodies will be washed out to sea and we'll be eaten by an enormous haddock in some sort of fish supper's revenge. Or alternatively we could maybe end up doing a wee bit of snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef. It's a tough choice.

CLAIRE.

Would we swim all the way there?

Is your mum a good cook?  
GOGS

The best!  
CLAIRE

Then in that case, perhaps... if we can find no other means.  
GOGS

It's a long way.  
CLAIRE

Look tomorrow morning we start walking. East and north till we get to John O' Groats and yes, swim if we have to, across the Pentland Firth to Orkney...  
GOGS

How far's that?  
CLAIRE

Only six miles or so...  
GOGS

I can't swim six miles...  
CLAIRE

... okay okay we steal a boat or hire a boat or build a boat or something but we get over to South Ronaldsay.  
GOGS

Then what?  
CLAIRE

We make our way right up through the islands and then...  
GOGS

...Aren't you forgetting something?  
CLAIRE

What?  
GOGS

Isn't the American Fleet up there, in Scapa Flow?  
CLAIRE

Then that's the very place to go... right into the lion's den.  
GOGS

Okay, then what?  
CLAIRE

GOGS

*(He thinks for a moment)*

Shetland, then Norway.

CLAIRE

You make it sound so easy. Shetland then Norway. Why not say – Shetland then Norway then Australia, and be done with it. The way you're talking we'll be there tomorrow afternoon.

GOGS

Got your passport and ID card?

CLAIRE

Yes, you?

GOGS

Yip. Let's start tonight.

CLAIRE

No, better in daylight... I don't want to be that fuzzy figure on a black and white telly.

GOGS

Right let's go now then.

CLAIRE

No... Let's go tomorrow at dawn. Really, I promise. You're right we can't just sit here forever. We'll stick together... and we'll try and get to Norway.

GOGS

Brilliant!

CLAIRE

If we make it, what then?

GOGS

I dunno, try and get down to Amsterdam or Frankfurt and get a plane to Oz if we can. Have you any money?

CLAIRE

No.

GOGS

Neither have I... we'll have to find some. I just think we'd be better on the east coast than over here. Less midgies as well.

CLAIRE

I like 'em.

GOGS

You what?

CLAIRE

Yea, they never bother me.

GOGS

You must be a freak. You like midgies? I'll give you a statistic right. You know the first world war that you were talking about and the second world war and Korea and Vietnam and all the other wars wae Napoleon and a' that?

CLAIRE

Yea?

GOGS

Midgies have killed more folk than a' thae wars put together.

CLAIRE

Rubbish.

GOGS

It's true. Malaria has killed more folk than wars.

CLAIRE

Malaria spread by mosquitoes?

GOGS

Aye.

CLAIRE

Not midgies.

GOGS

Same thing.

CLAIRE

No it isn't.

GOGS

Aye it is.

CLAIRE

Well, whatever. I think you're right though, we're facing the wrong way. We're looking west. We should be looking east.

GOGS

Aye across in Caithness or Sutherland, who knows we might even manage to jump a boat that'll take us straight across to the Continent.

CLAIRE

There'll be patrol boats.

GOGS

We'll find a way.

CLAIRE

There'll be helicopter gunships.

GOGS

They cannae fly all the way across the North Sea... can they?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Haven't the Yanks got an airbase in Shetland?

GOGS

Have they? Sumburgh?

CLAIRE

Yea I think so.

GOGS

We'll sneak in under cover o' daylight and nick one their planes.

CLAIRE

Can you fly a plane?

GOGS

Naw, no' really... I think a boat's the best idea.

CLAIRE

Perhaps we could book a cruise... see the fjords?

GOGS

Oh aye like you see in those Reader Offers. Or we could maybe go to the Eden Project?

CLAIRE

Yea or go and see Cliff Richard! How old is he now? Must be about a hundred.

GOGS

Do you think, now this is a serious question, do you think we could paddle a two-man canoe from Shetland to Norway? One of those sea kayaks loaded up with food and water.

CLAIRE

I doubt it.

GOGS

No seriously, I think we could.

CLAIRE

It's a helluva long way.

GOGS

Aye but is it though? How far actually is it? Wish I had a map. I bet it's no further than two hundred miles.

CLAIRE

Across a pretty wild bit of water.

GOGS

Aye I know, but it would be up to us eh? We get hold of one of these boats fill it wae tins of food and as much water as it'll carry... and we paddle.

CLAIRE

Straight across?

GOGS

No, no still up through Orkney, Fair Isle and Shetland. When we get to Shetland we turn right and keep paddling. Big coast on Norway, we couldnae miss. We take a chance when we're going round Orkney and Shetland to pull up on a beach and stock up and get away again. We'd be too small to show up radar. I think it could work.

CLAIRE

I like the fact that we wouldn't be relying on anyone else.

GOGS

Exactly. Even if we did manage to find the money some joker would rip us off to take us to Norway and we'd probably end up in Rosyth docks the next day anyway.

CLAIRE

Where do we get one of these canoes?

GOGS

Outdoor centre, a school maybe?

CLAIRE

Yea, okay.

GOGS

And when get to Norway we can sneak ashore and no one need know we're there. Nobody wanting to check our passports and putting us on the first plane back to Blighty. My mum always said I should paddle my own canoe.

CLAIRE

I don't think she meant all the way to Norway... when did you last see her?

GOGS

Haven't seen her for about a year. She lives in France.

CLAIRE

Well, would you not want to go across there then, instead of going for a paddle with me in the North Sea?

GOGS

Na... I don't really like the guy she's married to.

CLAIRE

Who's that?

GOGS

Ma dad.

CLAIRE

Oh!

GOGS

He used to work abroad all the time. In the Middle-East. He was a helicopter engineer. He would send money home in a cardboard box and mum and I lived pretty well. We got on well too. It was a different story when he came home on leave, when it was a case of – this house ain't big enough for the four of us.

CLAIRE

Four of you?

GOGS

Oh yea, I've got a sister... but I don't speak to her. Well... I speak to her but she doesn't speak to me. Then ma dad injured his hand, big time, lost three fingers and had to give up work. When he moved back in, I moved out. They flitted to France about three months later. I don't think I'm welcome, but hey, you've got to paddle your own canoe.

*The lights dim and change to moonlight. CLAIRE and GOGS are still sat there.*

GOGS

You don't suppose it's coal?

CLAIRE

What's coal?

GOGS

That the Yanks are after? Apparently there's loads of it still under the Forth.

CLAIRE

There's probably loads of it all over the place. Left there since all the pits closed in the eighties. I don't think it's coal they're after.

GOGS

Oil?

CLAIRE

Well, there's none left up here is there? No – I think they're here in some sort of desperate dying act. They're finished... and they know it. Their economy is in a state of collapse and they're just grabbing what they can get while they still can. They're sacred of Russia in debt up to the hilt with China. I think they're here because they want a base for the next world war.

If you like what you've read so far and would like to buy a copy of the complete script or would like to perform the play, please get in touch.

Thanks for reading,

*Bob Davidson*