

# The Magic Roundabout

(Not Zebedee, Florence and Dougal... something else)

A One Act Play

By  
**Bob Davidson**

Written in August 2008  
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## The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

### Cast

LIZ - A forty year-old lady who is in the employ of the Roads Department. She is the “line manager” whatever that is, to...

ANGIE – Another forty-year old lady who is in the employ of the Roads Department and who is subordinate to Liz.

SANDY – A tramp who is nudging sixty.

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*As the house lights dim and the opening music fades we hear the sound of heavy traffic. The scene is a roundabout on the A9 on a stretch of dual carriageway between Perth and Inverness, just north of Perth. The roundabout has been planted with trees and there are a few on the set. Also on set, stage right is a small tent. There is a pair of legs sticking out of the entrance flap. There is also a shopper style bicycle propped up nearby. Scattered about the ground is a lot of litter, including beer cans, a whisky bottle and some empty crisp packets. LIZ and ANGIE enter stage left they take a couple of tentative steps towards centre stage. They are nervous, suspicious and a bit jumpy. The traffic noise quietens considerably but is still heard rumbling on in the background.*

ANGIE

I shouldnae really be here. I'm no' trained to be oot in the field.

LIZ

Listen tae ye... oot in the field! We're no' working for M.I.5.

ANGIE

I know, but when I started work wae the Roads Department I didnae think I'd be oot doing jobs like this. I'm no' trained for confrontation. I was just trained to answer the phone.

LIZ

*(under her breath)*

Aye, and your pretty useless at that...

ANGIE

This is no' a job for two women. This is mair a job for the Polis.

LIZ

And what if it was two Poliswomen?

ANGIE

Oh, well that wid be different eh? They'd be trained for situations like this. I'm no' trained for situations like this. I'm a trained telephonist. Poliswomen'll be trained in un-armed combat.

LIZ

You could always hit somebody wae yer phone.

ANGIE

Aye, or the fax machine. I did that once... at my last job, but I didnae bring the phone or the fax machine wae me.

LIZ

Hae ye got yer mobile?

ANGIE

Aye.

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LIZ

Och well you could always use that.

ANGIE

I suppose so.

LIZ

But, maybe diplomacy will be the best bet.

ANGIE

Liz, we don't know anything about that man. He could be a serial killer...

LIZ

...Or an axe murderer...

ANGIE

...or an axe murderer.

LIZ

He's maybe both...

ANGIE

You mean a serial killer that killed a'body wae an axe?

LIZ

Aye, something like that...

ANGIE

... or a chainsaw...

LIZ

...will ye shut up, Angie! You're starting to gie me the creeps.

ANGIE

Liz, let's just say we couldnae find him. We searched the whole roundabout and there was no trace of him.

LIZ

We cannae do that Angie.

ANGIE

How no'?

LIZ

Because his tent is just there.

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ANGIE

*(seeing it for the first time)*

Oh my God... so it is! Oh Liz, let's go. I'm really scared. I'd rather be back in the office. Oh... I think I'm having a panic attack. I think I'm agoraphobic.

LIZ

Angie... calm doon.

ANGIE

I shouldnae really be here...

LIZ

Aye, so you keep saying. Look he's probably a harmless old tramp that has never hurt a fly. He'll be used to getting moved on. It's a damned shame in a way, poor old devil. But if we don't ask him to go, then he'll still be here tomorrow and it'll be you that has tae answer a' the telephone calls about him. How many did we get yesterday fae motorists on their mobiles?

ANGIE

Eighteen.

LIZ

Eighteen, and the day afore?

ANGIE

Twelve.

LIZ

And the day afore that?

ANGIE

Aye, aye, ye've made yer point.

LIZ

Ye ken the procedure. We have to ask him to go first, serve him wae a notice to move from Roads Department property and if he's still here after twenty-four hours... then we call the Polis.

ANGIE

Can we not just poke the notice under the side o' his tent?

LIZ

No.

ANGIE

Aw... how no'?

LIZ

Ye ken how no'... cos he's got to sign the copy.

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ANGIE

Liz... I've got an idea...

LIZ

Whit...

ANGIE

*(looking about furtively)*

I could sign it... I could. I could sign it wae ma left hand...

LIZ

You're left handed!

ANGIE

Aw right, wae ma right hand then and then we could poke it under the side of his tent.

LIZ

No, you can't do that Angie...

ANGIE

Aw... how no'?

LIZ

Because it's dishonest. We'd be as well just to go back to the office now and say that he signed it and that we spoke to him and that he assured us he would leave by tomorrow morning and when, in the afternoon, he hussnae gone because he didnae know he had to, we could...

LIZ/ANGIE

... phone the polis...

ANGIE

... oh why didn't I think o' that?

LIZ

ANGIE... we're going tae serve this notice, hae a wee chat wae the man, sympathise and that...

ANGIE

... and tell him to bugger off...

LIZ

... and ask him nicely... tae leave. Now *(she glances over to the tent)* go and wake him up so we can get the job done and we can maybe nick into Marco's café for a cappuccino on the road back tae the office.

ANGIE

Naw, Liz... no way!

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LIZ

I thought you liked Marco's?

ANGIE

I wissnae saying no way to going tae Marco's, I was saying no way to waking *him* up.

LIZ

Angie, it wissnae a request... it wis an order.

ANGIE

An order! We're no working for M.I.5!

LIZ

Angie, I shouldnae have to remind you that I am yer line manager, whatever that means and that you are my subordinate and, and... you'll dae as yer telt.

ANGIE

I thought I was your pal?

LIZ

Only after five o'clock at night and afore nine in the morning... and at weekends of course.

ANGIE

And?

LIZ

And what?

ANGIE

And when we go to Majorca?

LIZ

Aye... I'll be your pal when we go tae Majorca...

ANGIE

... and at the Elton John concert?

LIZ

...and at the Elton John concert although technically that's at the weekend so I'd be your pal anyway, but only if you go and wake him up right now.

ANGIE

Come with me.

LIZ

Come with you where?

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ANGIE

*(she nods towards the tent)*

Over there.

LIZ

*(sighing)*

Okay. Okay... we'll do this together. You first...

*ANGIE shakes her head.*

...alright, me first.

*They hold hands and creep up on the tent. They position themselves either side of entrance and crouch down by the feet. They nod a signal to one another and then each grab a foot and give it a shake. ANGIE'S foot flops over and she screams a blood curdling scream. LIZ stands up holding the other, which is just an empty Wellington boot.*

LIZ

Och... he's no' even here.

ANGIE

Oh, thank goodness... let's get oot o' here afore he gets back.

LIZ

I think we should just have a wee look inside his tent.

ANGIE

What for?

LIZ

Well, to see if there's any clues as to who he is?

ANGIE

Clues! Oh my god she's turned into Miss Marple. Liz you're beginning tae annoy me.

LIZ

Oh just one wee look? Come on, I bet you're just a wee bitty curious as to what's in there?

ANGIE

No I'm no'.

LIZ

I bet you are...

ANGIE

What if he comes back?



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LIZ

Axe in hand...

ANGIE

...aye, axe in hand... *(laughs)* alright then one quick look.

*They position themselves either side of the tent entrance again and take a hold of one flap each and slowly open up the front of the tent and peek inside. Suddenly they fling their heads back.*

ANGIE

Oh my god, what a smell...

LIZ

Gee whiz, he couldnae have washed for months... right, deep breath.

*Both take a deep breath and stuff themselves into the entrance of the tent leaving just their backsides showing. SANDY enters stage right, he is carrying a small axe and a small pile of firewood.*

ANGIE

Oh, god is that his pants? That is disgusting! God what a smelly bugger eh? There is no need for that. See if he was here right noo Liz, I'd gie him a good talking too. Cleanliness doesnae cost much.

SANDY

*(Clears his throat)*

Can I help you?

*The women freeze.*

If you tell me for what you are looking, I can maybe be of some assistance...

*The women slowly reverse out of the entrance to the tent and slowly turn to face SANDY, who raises his axe in a cheery wave.*

SANDY

Hello.

ANGIE

Liz... he's got an axe.

*SANDY smiles broadly at them.*

LIZ

I can see that... *(to Sandy)* Em, we see you have an axe?

SANDY

Yes, I much prefer it. So much quieter than a chainsaw.

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*ANGIE faints and keels over.*

SANDY

What's the matter with her?

LIZ

Em... she's a telephonist

SANDY

I'm sorry but that doesn't explain it.

LIZ

Em, she's a telephonist who is allergic to certain words. Chainsaw's one of them.

SANDY

Mmm... probably something from childhood. *(He steps towards the ladies)* let me examine her...

LIZ

... No, no that won't be necessary. Angie's a born fainter, a professional, she'll be right as rain in a minute.

*ANGIE comes round slightly and eyes flicker open.*

SANDY

Are you feeling slightly better now, Angie?

ANGIE

Liz... he knows my name! He knows my name! How does he know ma name?

SANDY

It's okay, Angie, Liz told me your name...

ANGIE

Liz, he knows your name as well... oh...

*She faints again.*

SANDY

Oh good grief... Would you like a cup of tea?

LIZ

What?

SANDY

A cup of tea, I have chopped some wood and was about to light a fire and have a brew up.

LIZ

Eh... no thank you. I see... you've chopped some wood... that would explain the axe.

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SANDY

Ah... you thought I was an axe murderer?

LIZ

No, of course not.

SANDY

Of course not. There are a lot of them about eh? Axe murderers, bump into them all the time eh?

LIZ

Yes... I mean no. And you can't light a fire I'm afraid.

SANDY

Don't be afraid, Liz. Why can't I light a fire?

LIZ

Because you're on Roads Department property and it's not allowed.

SANDY

Ah. Okay. Do you think Angie would maybe like a sip of water then?

LIZ

Maybe.

*SANDY reaches inside his coat and brings out a bottle of water. He unscrews the lid and crouches beside the ladies and offers the bottle to Angie's mouth. She takes a sip and opens her eyes. SANDY places the back of his hand on her forehead and strokes it gently.*

SANDY

It's okay, just relax, you'll be fine. Lie still. Fainting is just the body's way of saying lie down – I need to get some oxygen to my brain. You know you're the first people I've spoken to since I arrived.

LIZ

When did you arrive exactly? Only we've had complaints.

SANDY

Complaints?

LIZ

Aye, motorists phoning in on their mobiles saying there was a tr... someone camped on the roundabout.

SANDY

A tr...?

LIZ

I was going to say tramp but I changed my mind.

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SANDY

That was kind of you...

LIZ

... Only it's against the law to camp on Roads Department property and so we are here to ask you to leave I'm afraid.

SANDY

Ah!

ANGIE

Aye and the law has to be upheld.

SANDY

Always?

ANGIE

Aye, of course. The country would be in a right mess if the law wissnae upheld.

SANDY

The country is in a right mess... laws like camping on Roads Department property?

ANGIE

Aye.

SANDY

And using mobile telephones whilst driving?

ANGIE

Em... aye of course.

SANDY

So none of the motorists were actually driving when they phoned to complain about the tr... camping on this roundabout?

ANGIE

Well I dunno... maybe it was their passengers.

SANDY

Mmm... maybe... and breaking into someone's tent?

LIZ/ANGIE

What?

SANDY

Should that law be upheld? Making derogatory comments about someone's underwear and their personal hygiene. That's a breach of the peace in my book.

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ANGIE

Your tent shouldnae be here... Liz, gie him the notice and let's go.

SANDY

And where should it be if it shouldn't be here?

ANGIE

I don't care as long as not here. Just go back to where you belong.

SANDY

How do you know I don't belong here?

ANGIE

Cos it's obvious you don't.

SANDY

What makes it so obvious?

ANGIE

Well... first of all, it's a roundabout and nobody comes from a roundabout and secondly... well, you don't sound like you come from round here.

SANDY

Well... if you don't mind me saying, you don't sound like you come from round here either.

ANGIE

I do so... I was born in Aberdeen.

SANDY

Ah! But then, Aberdeen is not round here is it?

ANGIE

Well... maybe it's no' but at least it's Scotland!

SANDY

Ah! But then what is Scotland other than a few hundred miles of coastline and a squiggle on a map?

ANGIE

It's more than that. It's our culture and traditions and that. Scotland for the Scots I say.

SANDY

And I say, Aberdeen for the Aberdonians. What about you, Liz, where are you from?

LIZ

It doesn't really matter where I'm from. I'm really sorry but we have to ask you to leave. I have to serve you with a notice to quit which I'd like you to sign for.

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SANDY

Of course Liz, I'd be delighted.

LIZ

Do have any form of identification?

SANDY

You know, as a matter of fact I do, Liz... *(he rummages in his coat pockets)* my birth certificate.

*He hands it over and she reads the details.*

LIZ

Alexander Buchan... born twelfth of September nineteen fifty.

SANDY

That's me... glad to make your acquaintance.

LIZ

*(reading from the certificate)*

Place of birth, Bertha Cottage in the Parish of Strathord.

*(She thinks for a minute)*

Where is that exactly?

SANDY

It is... exactly... Here!

ANGIE

*(grabbing the certificate)*

What?

SANDY

Aye... beat that!

*He beams broadly.*

You said I should go where I belong. Well, I agree, and I belong right here. I have come home.

*He sits down.*

LIZ

Mr Buchan...

SANDY

... please, Liz... call me Sandy.

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LIZ

... Mr Buchan, I don't doubt the details on your birth certificate. But... and I really sympathise and all that... but you can't really stay here can you? I mean it's a roundabout in the middle of a dual carriageway.

ANGIE

Aye, Sandy the noise of the traffic's bound to drive you nuts.

SANDY

I didn't say *you* could call me Sandy... just Liz. And I don't worry about the sound of the traffic... Ha! They'll all run out of fuel before too long and it'll be as quiet round here as it was when I was a laddie.

LIZ

What do you mean, run out of fuel?

SANDY

Well, you only have to look at this one stretch of road and see all those vehicles tearing along as if there's no tomorrow. Guzzling up the world's resources like it's going out of fashion... which it is. Any fool can see that it can't go on forever.

ANGIE

Are you one of them Eco Warriors... like Marshy or whatever his name was?

LIZ

... Swampy...

ANGIE

...aye that was him.

SANDY

No, certainly not. I'm not a warrior of any kind.

ANGIE

Well what are ye then?

SANDY

I am a man who is tired of travelling and who has come home.

LIZ

Well I'm sorry Mr Buchan, but this is no longer your home. It's a roundabout and I'm afraid we've got work to do. If I can get you to sign this please.

*She hands him a small book with a sheet of carbon paper between the pages and he takes it and signs on the dotted line.*

LIZ

Basically it's just a written requirement for you...

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SANDY

...it's okay Liz, I *can* read, in fact I have an honours degree in English.

*She tears off the form and hands it to him. He studies it for a moment and then folds it neatly in half and places it in his coat pocket.*

LIZ

Right, well I'm sure you'll find somewhere else soon... for your tent.

ANGIE

Aye and dinnae leave as much rubbish lying about the next time.

SANDY

I am not responsible for this... it was here when I arrived.

LIZ

Goodbye Mr Buchan. Best of luck to you.

*The two ladies make to leave.*

SANDY

It was about here...

*The ladies stop reluctantly and turn.*

SANDY

... the cottage. (*he spreads his arms to show the location*) It was about here, as far as I can tell, as far as I can remember. It's difficult now with the trees. Can't get the same view of the hills, but I'm sure it was about here. I used to sit, about there (*he gestures*) on an old stone trough and watch my mother. She would collect wool from the fences where the sheep had been rubbing, and spin it into yarn. I don't know, all this talk of global warming but you know, I think the summers were warmer then. And while she was spinning the yarn, she would spin me yarns. Do you know, according to her, I am a direct descendent of Rob Roy McGregor! She was an amazing woman. Content with her lot and never a complaint or criticism. We need a few like her now. And so resourceful, never a thing wasted. And not a mention or thought of carbon footprints, greenhouse gases or energy saving light bulbs. Have you any idea just how stupid the term "energy saving light bulb" is? There has not been a light bulb invented yet that saves energy. They all consume it. The only way they save energy is when you switch the damned things off!

LIZ

We all need light bulbs, Mr Buchan.

SANDY

Do we?

LIZ

Aye... of course, or we'd be in the dark.



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SANDY

We are in the dark. You'll be saying next that we all need personal computers and televisions...

LIZ

Well, I think we do. I mean we've got used to all these things haven't we?

SANDY

Perhaps, but I'm not sure that means we need them. I heard some wag say that computers help us solve problems that ten years ago we didn't have.

LIZ

They can also be used for a lot of good. Like in medical science.

SANDY

They can't remove someone's appendix though, can they?

ANGIE

Liz, can we go? Remember Marco's

SANDY

Can I ask you ladies one question before you go?

ANGIE

Aye, anything but make it quick, I could murder a cappuccino.

SANDY

Are you happy?

ANGIE

Aye I'm happy and I'll be even happier when I sit doon tae a coffee and one o' thae wee tubular biscuits that melts in your mouth.

SANDY

Liz?

LIZ

Well... I think I'm as happy as most folk. I have my ups and downs I suppose. I don't see my daughter as much as I'd like, but then she has a busy life. As do we all. There never seems to be the time. One day rolls into the next and before you know it a week has gone by and then a month and then it's Christmas and it seems like it's only yesterday you were taking down the decorations from last year.

SANDY

Where is your daughter?

LIZ

Edinburgh... she's a nurse.

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SANDY

Ah, a noble profession.

LIZ

Tell her that!

SANDY

Ah... yet another unhappy person. You know it wouldn't surprise me if myself and Angie here, were the only two happy people in the world.

ANGIE

Well I'm not that happy...

LIZ

I kind of forced her into it I suppose. You see it was what *I* wanted to do... be a nurse I mean and when I couldn't, I forced her into it.

ANGIE

Ye cannae force someone to do what they don't want to do.

LIZ

Oh yes you can, Angie.

*ANGIE looks at SANDY for guidance.*

SANDY

I'm saying nothing.

LIZ

You would think we would learn, but we don't.

SANDY

Let me guess, Liz. Either one, or both your parents didn't want you to go into nursing?

LIZ

Both. Mum was a nurse and cynical to the core. Had seen a lot of changes and it wasn't the job for me. It wasn't the job it used to be, but then it never is. Dad said no daughter of his was going to earn her living wiping the arses of other people. Big talk from a hotel porter who would think nothing of kissing a few arses in the hopes of a big tip.

SANDY

And so?

LIZ

And so... I got a job with the council. In an office. Safe and secure and dull. Married an office worker who was also safe and secure and dull. The only really good thing that happened was when I divorced him. Happiest day of my life, unlike my wedding day which was the unhappiest.

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ANGIE

Liz, I never knew all this.

LIZ

No... neither did I.

SANDY

Angie, what about you? Do you still live to please your parents?

ANGIE

Eh, no... both ma parents are dead.

SANDY

That is not what I asked.

ANGIE

Oh... I haven't really thought about it.

SANDY

What did you want to do with your life, when you were at school?

ANGIE

All through school I wanted to be an Air Traffic Controller.

LIZ

God help us... you!

ANGIE

What are you laughing at? I could have been. I got five highers you know. Two "A"s and three "B"s... how many did you get, smarty-pants?

LIZ

Eh... none, I left after fourth year.

ANGIE

Aye well... there you go then, I'm not your subordinate at everything.

SANDY

So, Angie why didn't you train to be an air traffic controller?

ANGIE

Well, it was my decision, it wissnae ma mum or dad. I just didn't want to leave home I suppose.

SANDY

They didn't persuade you to go?

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ANGIE

Well no, they said that they thought I was more of a home bird and that it would have been quite a difficult job... and stressful. I'd have had to move to Bournemouth and without going abroad, that was about as far away from Aberdeen as you could get.

SANDY

Ah, Angie my dear you should have gone. Right now you could be talking to the captain of a Jumbo Jet inbound to Heathrow from Los Angeles, not talking to an old fool on this roundabout.

ANGIE

But it was my decision... it was... I'm sure it was. They were happy that I stayed at home.

SANDY

Ah well... that's the main thing eh?

ANGIE

I didn't do it to please them. I'm sure I didn't... or maybe I did. Oh God, I can't be sure now. Maybe I did. I remember my dad stopped talking to me when I said that I was leaving. Maybe it was just easier to go along with what they wanted...

SANDY

... anything for a quiet life eh?

ANGIE

... oh God, yeah. That was it. I remember now thinking that very phrase. Anything for a quiet life.

SANDY

And that's what you got. Be careful what you wish for. Still, you're happy now eh Angie?

ANGIE

Oh God no! Do this dead end crap day in day out. Two weeks in Majorca wae her, and a big night out to see Elton John... I don't even like the wee nyaff. The sum total of my year... my life. Jesus! What a waste of time. What a waste of my life.

SANDY

But your time is not over. Your life is not over. You still have time, Angie, lots of it.

ANGIE

No!

SANDY

Yes! Believe me it will be different from now on. It will.

ANGIE

No! I'm trapped. We're all trapped. Locked into our little pointless lives. Bound and gagged, unable to speak or even think for ourselves. Frightened to act in case we

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upset the applegart. Anything for a quiet life. Scared in case we invalidate some guarantee that everything's going to last forever.

SANDY

There are no guarantees, Angie.

ANGIE

I know there isn't. That should make it easier, but it doesn't. What are we so frightened of? Does this go back to when we were all living in caves? Is it something we're brainwashed with?

SANDY

A bit of both maybe... I think it's a bit of both.

LIZ

And what about you Mr Buchan? Are you happy?

SANDY

Well, I did think I'd like a bigger tent, but then it would be more difficult to carry. Or maybe a bike with more gears... for the hills... but this one has three gears, the finest Sturmey Archer could make, all hidden in the rear hub out of harms way. Nice and simple, easy to use and reliable... so I think I'll stick with what I've got. At least until I rebuild the cottage.

ANGIE

What cottage?

SANDY

My mother's old cottage. I feel I owe it to her... not that I live my life to please my dead mother you understand.

LIZ

What are you talking about? Rebuild the cottage?

ANGIE

Mr Buchan you can't re-build a cottage on the middle of the roundabout. You shouldnae really be here with your tent.

SANDY

Oh, Angie, Angie... I'm tired of being told what I can and cannot do. What harm would it do eh? A wee house tucked in here amongst the trees? I think there's a kind of bullying at work here. Just because I'm Sandy Buchan, and the Roads Department is the Roads Department and the Council is the Council or the Government is the Government. What is it they say? You can't fight city hall.

LIZ

You can't just simply do what you want.

SANDY

Why not?

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LIZ

Because you... you can't.

SANDY

Not a good enough answer, Liz. Just because you don't do what you want to do and Angie doesn't do what she wants to do, doesn't mean to say I have to be the same. I've never heard anything so ridiculous. Can't do what we want, of course we can.

LIZ

We can't, there are rules.

SANDY

Says who?

LIZ

Says... the people who make up the rules.

SANDY

Okay, someone steals from a shop... it's a crime eh?

LIZ

Of course.

SANDY

Okay, an old lady who is starving steals a bread roll from a shop... it's a crime?

LIZ

Yes.

SANDY

What, that she stole from a shop or that she is starving? Okay a Supermarket puts one pence on the price of a bread roll and overnight increases its profits by ten thousand pounds... is that a crime? I think it is. But you, Liz, would bring the old lady to justice eh?

LIZ

I'd probably buy her the roll.

SANDY

Good for you! What about tomorrow though, and the next day... what does she do then? There are rules, Liz, but only for some. Sandy Buchan breaks the rules and someone calls the Polis eh? Governments break the rules and thousands of people die. Sometimes hundreds of thousands... sometimes millions. All to satisfy a few egos and fuel greed. Now in the big scheme of things my wee tent isn't really in the way is it? And neither would a wee house. Surely a man has a right to have a wee house somewhere to live out the rest of his life. You two ladies, when you're back in the country, could come and visit for tea or a bowl of soup.

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ANGIE

What do you mean, when we're back in the country. Where are we going?

SANDY

Oh, I can't see you wasting any more of your precious lives doing this sort of thing. Life's too short. This is not a dress rehearsal. That was last night. This is the one and only performance. Ah, two weeks in Majorca and Elton John... there's more to life than that.

LIZ

Some people are happy with that.

SANDY

Some people *are* happy with that, but we're not talking about some people, we're talking about you!

LIZ

What can you see us doing, Sandy?

SANDY

Well... Liz, I see you nursing somewhere...

LIZ

... I'm too old.

SANDY

Nonsense. You are at the perfect age. Perfect. (*He thinks for a moment*) I see you, not in a hospital, certainly not in Scotland. Perhaps Africa or possibly South America. Maybe working aboard a hospital ship on the Amazon. They do fantastic work on those ships. I know it would be right up your street. You won't have a lot of money, Liz but you'll be alive.

ANGIE

Aw, Liz, that sounds brilliant!

LIZ

I couldn't.

SANDY

You could.

LIZ

I couldn't

ANGIE

You could... aw, Liz, just think about it. The Amazon... what about me Mr Buchan?

SANDY

You can call me Sandy now, Angie...

The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

ANGIE

... thanks... Sandy.

SANDY

Well... I see you in Africa, definitely. You have living quarters on the edge of a rough earth airstrip. Your job is to maintain and fly a small aircraft, not an easy job in somewhere so remote, but you are well up to the task. You fly the aeroplane in and around a game reserve, tracking animal movements, looking for injured beasts and spotting for the anti-poaching patrols. Like Liz here you will not earn a lot of money but what a life eh?

ANGIE

Do you really think I could do that?

SANDY

I don't think so, Angie... I know so.

ANGIE

How can you be so sure?

SANDY

Because... because I met a young lady just like you before and she is now doing that very line of work and she would not change it for the world. If she can do it, so can you.

ANGIE

How? How can I do it?

SANDY

A bit at a time.

ANGIE

But, where do I start?

SANDY

At the beginning.

LIZ

And me?

SANDY

Same place.

LIZ

It'll never happen.

SANDY

Not if you speak like that. But if you want to, you can and I know you will. You will both leave here with a new goal. Liz you must find out what qualifications you require to enrol on a nursing degree course. When you have found out, begin your studies.



The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

Angie, you must first of all take flying lessons until you obtain your pilots licence... I would then recommend a period of instructing others to fly, for no longer than two years before leaving for Africa.

ANGIE

You make it sound so easy.

SANDY

I can see no difficulties whatsoever, not one... can you?

ANGIE

No, actually I can't. It's just as simple as doing it?

SANDY

It is as simple as that. Do you own a car, Angie?

ANGIE

Aye.

SANDY

Well sell it. It'll pay for your initial training.

ANGIE

Okay.

SANDY

Liz... are you ready for the rest of your life?

LIZ

I'm not sure.

SANDY

You are unsure about what?

LIZ

Change. I'm scared. Sometimes I feel like I could just walk away and keep walking not caring where I'd end up. Stow away aboard a ship or something and see where it took me. But then within minutes I'm convincing myself that everything's fine the way it is. Only it's not fine at all. It's far from fine. I sometimes think I'm just passing the time till I'm old enough to die. Just putting in the hours and days and weeks till I'm old enough to go on bus trips to Blackpool.

SANDY

Oh, Liz, you must... you must have the courage to grasp the nettle. And when you've grasped it, pull the bloody thing out by the roots and throw it into the past. Have you any idea how painful it is for me to hear you say you are passing the time until you are old enough to die? Many people do not get the opportunity to pass the time. Next time around you'll do it better eh? Next time you'll take charge? There is no next time, Liz. Do it, do it today.

The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

LIZ

Sandy, you've worked on a hospital ship haven't you?

SANDY

I may have done...

LIZ

... as a doctor?

SANDY

I was a surgeon aboard such a ship, for a couple years, yes.

ANGIE

A surgeon?

SANDY

Mmm... it was interesting work.

ANGIE

Well if you're a surgeon, what on Earth are you doing here, living in that smelly wee tent?

SANDY

I told you, Angie, I have come home. A man cannot travel forever. What is it they say? A rolling stone gathers no moss, well I think it's about time I gathered a little moss. Besides that was a long time ago. I now have other plans. I've always gone with my own flow and that flow has brought me here.

LIZ

You have a degree in English?

SANDY

An honours degree, yes.

LIZ

An honours degree, sorry, and you've been a surgeon?

SANDY

Yes.

LIZ

Anything else?

SANDY

Well, I did a law degree a long time ago and was a lawyer for a while, but I had to give that up.

ANGIE

Why?

The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

SANDY

I was too honest. I studied medicine after that in Edinburgh.

LIZ

Happy days?

SANDY

Very. I've always been happy.

ANGIE

Even when you were a lawyer?

SANDY

Ah, sneaky question, Angie. Happy, but maybe not as happy as other times. I was happy to study law... I think it tells us a lot about human nature. I was also happy to give up practising law. But I am now very happy that I studied the subject in the first place all those years ago. You see... that is why I am here. That is why I have come home. Do you know when they made this roundabout?

*The ladies shake their heads.*

Nineteen eighty three. I was working in South America at the time. It was all part of the upgrading of the A9 from Stirling to Thurso. Land was being bought up along the entire route so the earthmovers could move in and begin their work. There were all sorts of legal battles of course. How much influence the land-owner carried would determine the route of the roadway. Lots of influence and lots of money and the route would make a convenient detour. No influence and no money and your house would be bulldozed.

LIZ

Your mum's cottage?

SANDY

Yes.

ANGIE

Did she actually own it, Sandy?

SANDY

Well, Angie, as much as anyone can actually own anything in this world, yes she did. The cottage had been part of the farm where my father was employed. Sadly he was killed, crushed to death against a wall by a cattle beast one morning. I was walking to school when it happened.

LIZ

How old were you, Sandy?

SANDY

I was seven years old.

The Magic Roundabout – Bob Davidson

ANGIE

My God, that's awful.

SANDY

It is. My mother was never quite the same after that. A little part of her died that day and a part of me as well. Anyway the farmer, as a measure of compensation signed the cottage over to my mother, the house and seven acres of land. We kept a few sheep and a Jersey cow, called Josie and a goat called Millie. And we survived. In fact we were happy, despite what had happened. It was when I was in Brazil that my mother died. Sometimes my work would take me to some very remote places and I didn't find out that she had died until three months after the event. I could see no point in returning there and then and so it was another eighteen months before I was back in this country. By then the house had gone and this roundabout was in its place.

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*