

CHAPLIN

(THE TRIAL OF CHARLES SPENCER CHAPLIN, ESQ.)

By

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Draft# 10.

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‘Chaplin’ is a one-man play. For the most part the live actor responds within the spaces of the pre-recorded dialogue. (Marked *) and pre-recorded video sequences (marked **).

Characters:

Charles Chaplin – Legendary star of the silent screen (live actor)

The Tramp – Chaplin’s screen alter-ego. (both pre-recorded video and live actor)

Adenoid Hynkel – Chaplin’s new film character, a buffoonish version of Adolph Hitler. (pre-recorded video and live actor)

Alf Reeves – An early British stage associate of Chaplin who became the manager of the studio. (pre-recorded character)

Elsie – A cockney receptionist, a fictional character, yet dream-like version of his mother. (pre-recorded character)

Reporters – Fictional characters based on real people who work for a fictional periodical called ‘Moving Pictures’. (pre-recorded characters)

MR CHAPLIN'S private rooms at the CHAPLIN studios in Los Angeles. A huge movie screen is featured prominently upstage. In front of this is a platform. Directly beneath the platform is a splicing table with two reels of film on it. This item of furniture also doubles as a chest of drawers. Facing the screen is an easy chair and to the left of this is a small table upon which the switches for a large projector have conveniently been rigged. In this chair sits a cloth dummy. To the right is a small table upon which is an intercom. Situated about the room are various articles of furniture and bric a brac that suggest MR C spends a lot of time here.

There are two more easy chairs, a large globe in a stand, a vanity desk with make up, an office swivel chair, and a desk upon which is a gramophone. To the back of the space is a hot plate upon which sits a kettle and a small fridge. Every surface is cluttered with either writing material or old newspapers. Old film and film canisters are everywhere. In the centre of the room is an ottoman.

The lights fade to black.

A spotlight appears on MR C sitting in one of the chairs. He writes on a pad of paper and talks to the dummy.

CHAPLIN What about this? *(reads)* "I'm sorry but I don't want to be a superman." It's too Shavian isn't it...a dictator...an emperor, yes...

Lights fade. Lights come up again on MR C who is seated elsewhere.

CHAPLIN *(reading)* "I don't want to conquer the world. I would like to help the world...humanity is like that..." *To dummy.* Yes, naïve optimism, it's a dirty job but some bugger's got to do it.

Lights fade. Lights come up on MR C again, this time he is seated at the make-up table. He holds the pad then tosses it.

Lights fade. They come up on MR C getting the swivel chair from the corner and placing it in the centre of the room. He looks at the dummy.

He picks the dummy up and plops it in the chair. He begins to create a barber scenario where the dummy is the customer and he the barber. He experiments and plays around. He dries up and sits. Lights fade.

MUSIC: Wagner starts to play on the gramophone. MR C becomes illuminated as he stands by it listening. He listens for a bit, takes off the record then puts on another. He listens then takes that off also replacing it with Brahms's 'Hungarian Dance' number 5. He listens then prepares the dummy. He then restarts the record and moves to the dummy but music starts before he arrives. He returns and replaces the needle again but the same thing happens. He returns to the gramophone and kicks it making the record skip. He prepares himself as the record skips. He does a pirouette and stamps hard on the floor.

The music continues and blasts through into the house speakers. He does the shaving lazzi on the dummy from the movie. Lights fade as he is half way through.

A huge swastika appears on the screen accompanied by more Wagner. Various clips from 'Triumph Of The Will' appear. The music starts to change. "It's a Hap-Hap-Happy Day' by Celia Lipton begins to bleed in as the images also begin to change. Hitler is doing the infamous jig after hearing the news of the surrender of France. It cuts to him dancing on the balcony of his alpine retreat. More images appear of Hitler smiling and having a jolly time of it. Celia is still bopping away. The images and music finally fade. Has this been a dream? Lights fade in. It is early Monday morning. MR C is seated facing the screen. He may be asleep. The intercom buzzes once, then again. MR C ignores it. It buzzes once more. He reaches over and clicks it on. The secretary speaks. She is a crazy older English woman with a slight South London accent.

ELSIE* You're flogging yourself to death, you are.

CHAPLIN Morning, Elsie.

ELSIE* Messing about with comic bits for Charlie is a waste of time.

CHAPLIN Your opinion has been duly noted.

ELSIE* I've told you, if you want to save this moving picture then fire the git in the uniform. You'll save us all a pile of grief.

CHAPLIN How many times do I have to tell you, Elsie, Hynkel is me. Hynkel is a character that I have created.

ELSIE* No, he's not.

CHAPLIN Yes, he is.

ELSIE* I'm not arguing. You'll never convince me that strutting swine is you. Are you up then? Can I tell them you're awake?

CHAPLIN Yes.

He gets up and puts on his housecoat. He talks to the dummy.

We have to forgive Elsie. She's mad. And we can't just dump the woman because she's gone off the deep end. She's been with us since Adam was a boy.

He stubs his toe on the Ottoman but doesn't react. He then sits in another chair. He has a delayed reaction to the pain. The intercom buzzes. He leaps up and opens up the line.

VOICE* Is that Doogan's plumbing and general maintenance?

CHAPLIN *Fiddling with the switches.* Elsie I'm getting the crew room again.

ELSIE* I'm not apologizing; it's this new gadget you've given me. I can't work under these conditions.

CHAPLIN Open up the lines, Elsie. I can't be doing with arsing around switching this thing on and off.

ELSIE* Done. Speaking of arsers. Alf Reeves wants you to call him.

CHAPLIN And I have not been wasting my time. Have you looked on your desk?

ELSIE* What's all this scribble?

CHAPLIN It's a speech for Charlie.

ELSIE* *Reading.* "People, don't let yourselves be ruled by these dictators--"

CHAPLIN I want copies made and distributed to all departments.

ELSIE* This is what you've spent the weekend doing is it? Too little too late would be my opinion.

CHAPLIN Thanks for the vote of confidence. *He brushes his teeth.*

ELSIE* If you hadn't brought Hynkel on board in the first place you wouldn't be forced to go through all this palaver.

CHAPLIN Here we go.

ELSIE* The other day he came up to me as if he knew me. Very familiar, he was. I gave him an earful.

CHAPLIN I know, I was there.

ELSIE* I didn't see you.

CHAPLIN Forget it.

ELSIE* Alf Reeves on the line.

She is gone. He stands expecting ALF. Pause.

CHAPLIN Alf? Alf?

VOICE* Sixty-five bucks for a sump-pump and the basement is still flooding.

It cuts off. Pause.

CHAPLIN *To the dummy.* It's not entirely for charity that we keep Elsie on. Artistic striving and insanity live in the same camp. We like the company.

He goes to the switch on the side-table, switches on the projector and sits to view the rushes. We see a number countdown and then the scene appears. It is HYNKEL'S office. There is a huge desk upon which an intercom rests. A slate appears in front of the camera. We hear a voice. "Hynkel's office. Take one." The slate is snapped shut. "Camera rolling." The assistant director's voice is heard: "and action." MR C as HYNKEL comes into frame and sits down. He clicks on the intercom and speaks.

HYNKEL** The letter I wrote to Field Marshal-

A boom microphone pops into view. MR C looks at it then over to the operator. He gets up and shouts 'Cut!' right into it. The crew prepare for the next take. Blank film rolls by. MR C switches off the projector, gets up, and goes to the make-up table to put on his moustache.

CHAPLIN *Talking to the dummy.* There's poetic justice for you. You'd think it was the Tramp on the end of that boom, eh? "I'll give you talkies, you bugger."

REEVES* Charlie!

ALF REEVES, having known MR C since his Vaudeville days, is the studio manager of twenty-five years. He is a working-class Lancastrian who has retained much of the dry wit of his class.

CHAPLIN Alf.

REEVES* That woman has got to go.

CHAPLIN It's the new intercom system

REEVES* I've just circled the studio trying to get through to you.

CHAPLIN The exercise will do you good.

REEVES* She's making my life purgatory.

CHAPLIN Your life? She was on the set on Friday. I walked up to her in full uniform. She said, "Who do you think you are, Lord Shit?" I said, "Shit? That's nice language coming from a God fearing woman."

REEVES* Absolutely.

CHAPLIN She said, "Don't worry Mr, it's in the bible; Job 5:9, only there's another word for it. However, for the moment, Shit will do for you."

REEVES* I give up. You're like my wife; you can't throw a thing away.

CHAPLIN Have you seen Jackie yet?

REEVES* In the canteen chomping on a plate of potato waffles.

CHAPLIN Good. We hire him to play a fat bugger like Mussolini and he spends six weeks before rehearsal eating tins of tuna and carrot sticks.

REEVES* Well, he told me to tell you that he knows he's Irish but there are only so many spuds a man can eat. I mean, the canteen food isn't exactly haut cuisine, is it?

CHAPLIN He's supposed to be Benito Mussolini. Il Duce is a big, fat bastard; we don't think it's unreasonable to ask Jackie Oakie to be likewise.

REEVES* Well, if it's physical authenticity you're after strictly speaking you should be three inches taller.

CHAPLIN According to some sources, Hitler is bigger than God and I don't think even I can fill those shoes.

REEVES* Yeah, lifts or no lifts.

CHAPLIN *Pulling out a piece of paper and reading it.* "Adolf Hitler is a Prophet. To turn him into a buffoon only shows you for what you are, a Godless Bolshevik. You will be tried, convicted and hung."

REEVES* We should tell the papers about these threats. We might gain some much-needed empathy.

CHAPLIN What's up, Alf? What tale of woe from the technical wasteland of the set?

REEVES* It's the soundboard again.

CHAPLIN Give us the days when you pointed a camera and turned a crank.

REEVES* Well get into uniform anyway. 'Moving Pictures' is mithering us for a cover shot of Hynkel and an interview. I can have someone here in ten.

CHAPLIN What if I suggested photographing the Tramp? How would that go over?

REEVES* Like a fart at a fondue.

CHAPLIN The jackboots are upstaging the floppy shoes.

REEVES* So it would appear.

CHAPLIN Well, not for long. *Reading his notes.* 'Dictators die and the power they stole from the people will come back to the people.'

REEVES* What's that?

CHAPLIN A speech; a speech for Charlie.

REEVES* What the hell for?

CHAPLIN Elsie is of the opinion that I have abandoned the Tramp; left the poor, little bugger dying in the corner like the runt of a litter.

REEVES* *Dry.* Terrible.

CHAPLIN While I think she's wrong, I admit that I haven't done him any favours. I put him, a silent film star, in the ring with a man who doesn't just have a gift for the gab but has seduced half the planet with the spoken word.

REEVES* Deary me-.

CHAPLIN Now, I'm not regretting doing this because I wanted to lampoon this swine Hitler and lampoon him I will; it's just left Charlie scrambling like a third monkey on Noah's plank.

REEVES* Don't tell me.

CHAPLIN Yes, what would be the ultimate insult to an oratorical genius? What would burst his bubble and put Charlie back in the running?

REEVES* A frontal lobotomy.

CHAPLIN On the right track. Turn Hynkel into a gibbering buffoon and give Charlie the final words in the film.

REEVES* *Dry.* Why didn't I think of that?

CHAPLIN And this is not just me giving the kid a leg up, no. This is *HIS* speech from the heart; an innocent's plea for a return to some kind of sanity.

REEVES* I see. How long is this speech?

CHAPLIN I don't know; five, six minutes.

REEVES* Where is it?

CHAPLIN Being copied. It'll be on your desk before ten. *The moustache is on and he stands up.*

Think of it, Alf; the Tramp addressing the world. *He reads from his notes.*

"Greed has poisoned our hearts. Has blockaded the world with hate. Let us seek out the goodness in humanity and the natural urge towards universal brotherhood."

The screen suddenly bursts into life. The slate appears. "Hynkel's office, take two!" "Camera rolling." "Action!" HYNKEL appears, sits at the desk and clicks on the intercom.

HYNKEL** The letter I wrote to Field Marshal...*He dries.* What is it? *Voice off.*
PoopSCHINK. Great. We'll never get that passed the Breen office. Cut.

MR C, (live actor) calls to the booth. Blank film squiggles by. The projector turns itself off.

CHAPLIN *To booth.* Rollie!

REEVES* Charlie!

CHAPLIN Alf.

REEVES* That bloody woman-

ELSIE* I heard that.

CHAPLIN Elsie, are you listening in?

ELSIE* Are you publicity?

CHAPLIN No.

ELSIE* Then I'm on the wrong line.

CHAPLIN Elsie, get lost.

ELSIE* With pleasure.

REEVES* Charlie, are you sure this speech is a good idea?

CHAPLIN Here we go.

REEVES* You've said all you need to say by doing the film and pissed off enough people into the bargain.

CHAPLIN That's standard. *He starts to get dressed as HYNKEL.*

REEVES* No, it's not. The film is one thing; a five-minute speech is another. I've only heard a few lines and I can tell you right off the bat, this speech will be seen as propaganda.

CHAPLIN Chaplin the Bolshevik scourge strikes again.

REEVES* I'm telling you chief; the enemies you've created by doing this picture are nothing compared to the hornets nest you'll stir up with a speech.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* And we didn't think it could get any worse than being tried convicted and hung.

REEVES* Listening to you scares ten colours out of me sometimes.

CHAPLIN No one is more aware of my position than me, Alf. What am I supposed to do? Hitler all ready has most of Europe; he's sure as hell not going to get my film as well.

REEVES* This is so distressing.

CHAPLIN Where's the vaudeville really going on, Alf; on my set or in most of the Western world? *A spot suddenly comes on. He addresses the house like a comic.* Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to 'Charlie's Court circus.'

REEVES* For God's sake-

CHAPLIN *To the dummy.* Charles Spencer Chaplin, Esquire, you have been charged with being a Bolshy little bastard! How do you plea?

REEVES* Not guilty by reason of insanity.

CHAPLIN *To house.* He's not bad, is he? We should be a double act.

REEVES* I wish I'd stayed in bed.

CHAPLIN *Still with house, a vaudeville comic.* Did you hear the one about the political dissident who goes to the doctor, he's got a frog growing out the top of his head. Doc says to the him, "Bloody hell, what happened there"? The frog says, "I dunno, it started out as a boil on my arse." Work with me, work with me.

REEVES* It's not funny.

CHAPLIN *Indicating audience.* Where did you get this lot?

REEVES* You're losing it, you are.

CHAPLIN *To the screen.* Excuse me, your honour, I'd like my trial transferred to the Lyceum. *Indicating audience.* This lot look like the Grimsby pier version. *The spot snaps off.*

REEVES* Chief, you're going to fall so hard they'll have to shovel you off the pavement.

CHAPLIN How the hell can you call this Bolshevism, Alf? *He reads from the speech.* "God is within us all, Jew, gentile, black man, white. Let us work together to create a world of beauty and happiness?"

The screen bursts into life again. The slate appears. We hear the voice. "Hynkel's office. Take twelve." The board snaps shut. "Camera rolling"... "and, action!" HYNKEL enters again in to frame. He sits and leans into the space where the intercom had been. It is on the other side.

HYNKEL** The letter I wrote to Field Marshal... *Laughter is heard. He breaks character.* Continuity. *Pushing the intercom off the desk, more bored than angry.* Clear everybody off the set who doesn't have a paid position. *Getting up.* This is a Sound stage people; *SOUND.* Cut.

Blank film squiggles by. He calls to the booth again; "Rollie, Rollie!". The projector turns itself off.

REEVES* What is going on?

Pause.

Charlie?

CHAPLIN Nothing. I'm just having some problems with this projector. Let me ask you something, Alf.

REEVES* Yes?

CHAPLIN The rushes from last week. Hynkel's office, take twelve. We had props put the intercom on the other side of the desk. We did the take and with hilarious results, right?

REEVES* Best double take I've seen in years. Why, what's up? Am I missing something?

CHAPLIN Nothing, nothing.

REEVES* Are you sure?

CHAPLIN Positive. You'd better take a look at this speech of Charlie's.

REEVES* I suppose I'd better. Are you sure about this?

CHAPLIN I've never been surer, especially now.

REEVES* You're very cryptic today. It makes me nervous. In the mean time please do something that makes me happy and get ready for this photo-shoot as Hynkel.

CHAPLIN Yes, and as soon as we've got the magazine people out of the way, we'll be rehearsing a new scene.

REEVES* What?

CHAPLIN A gibberish speech for Hynkel. *To dummy*. We're really going to taking the mickey out of old Jabber Jaws this time.

REEVES* I'll let them know. I don't know why I have this feeling of impending doom.

CHAPLIN It's in your job description.

He is gone. MR C picks up the pad and quotes from the speech.

CHAPLIN "Machinery that brings convenience has left us in want!"

The screen suddenly bursts into life. We are back in the office. The slate comes into view. "Hynkel's office. Take thirty two." The slate snaps shut. "Camera rolling" ..., "action." HYNKEL comes into shot.

HYNKEL** The letter I wrote to Field Marshal Fritz-breaking character. Wait a minute, it's thirty-three. *Getting up*. Second slate. *He goes out of frame*. NOTE: MR C, (live actor) mirrors the moves of HYNKEL onscreen. A slate comes into view. "Hynkel's office. Take thirty-three." It snaps shut. "Camera rolling..." "Action." HYNKEL enters the frame, sits and turns on the intercom. MR C, (live actor) comes further into the room, sits and tries to turn off the projector.

HYNKEL** The letter I wrote to Field Marshall Fritz, where is it?

VOICE* On your desk, sir. All you need to do is sign it, sir.

HYNKEL** *Noticing the letter*. Ah, very good.

He picks up the pen. It is stuck to its holder. HYNKEL tries to extricate it. He gives up and plonks it on the desk.

HYNKEL** You'd think with the money I'm spending on this film we could come up with a prop that works.

He gets up. MR C, (live actor) also gets up.

Rollie, bump up the lighting; this is not a Jean Cocteau flick. Let me take a look at the shot-

Blank film squiggles by. The projector turns itself off. MR C finishes dressing as HYNKEL and talks to the dummy.

CHAPLIN Last week we had props glue the pen to the holder. We did the shot and got a very funny take. So why, we ask ourselves, are the rushes seen today completely unfunny? It's nothing to get our knickers in a knot over. No, no we can handle intimidation better than this. We're not going to completely lose our bottle! The whole point of the movie is to lampoon Hitler. Show him for what he is; a vaudeville freak-show. No, we are not going to let these lunatics get the better of us. *Kicks letter from earlier.* We are going to do Charlie's speech and what's more we are going to make Hynkel a blithering stuttering imbecile. Are you with me?

Immediately the cheers of a huge crowd can be heard. He puts on HYNKEL'S hat and now fully dressed in the costume of HYNKEL, walks up on to the top of the podium. He surveys the audience. He arrests the cheers of the crowd with a sweep of his hand.

CHAPLIN Err du strauvitz hichden zertz der weiner schnitzel mit der lager beeren und der saukraut. Er du flutzen zachter vietden and Tomania mit ein staup und der weider zachter hudtz! Eh! Ich blain au straub, mit a hach-hacht-hucht-

He coughs and drinks some water. He then does some comic biz.

Democratzy schtunck.. Liberty schtunck. Free schprecken schtunck.. Tomania mit eine grosser army in der verlt. Der grosser navy in der verlt. Mitz eina atza grosser armiz mit eina und sacrifice. AAhhh. Strauss neina strossen tighten der belten.

He looks to the side and comes down from the podium to speak to imaginary characters.

Ah, Herring. Poopschink, Herring. Und Garbage. Garbage und Herring. Herr Garbage smelten Herring and Herring smelten Garbage.

He takes a good sniff. To dummy. No more silly buggers for you, my lad. You'll be a verbal bloody genius from here on in.

He runs up the podium steps.

Baloney. Baloney mein Heinz strichter michk achter fluden. Einda strauf! Micht einer kraut! Ehhh! Das staff nicht icha dyken ta! Micht eina straus nicht dyschtachen, meine dicta mit eine die straffen, die straffan, die straffan!

He comes down the podium, picks up the speech and gives it to the dummy.

Look at you, neither use nor ornament. Get your finger out, lad.

Vesut understetz ach der fluden zachter hutten zuchter hoon.

Eh der flucten zachter huchten zuchter heiner hutten hun. Einer stritz nicht eina gutten zachter flueten. Ein echt strichen zicht. Ein echt strichen zucht. Ein echt strichen zecht. Ein echt strichen zicht, ein echt strichen zucht.

He spots the globe in the stand. He walks seductively towards it. He picks it up and starts to do a lazzi with it. MUSIC. He plays with the globe for a couple of minutes. Suddenly the rushes start to play. HYNKEL, (on screen) is standing in front of a podium. The slate appears. "Hynkel's speech, take one." It slaps shut. "Camera rolling," ... "action!"

HYNKEL** Err du strauvitz hichden zertz der weiner schnitzel mit der lager beeren und der saukraut. Er du flutzen zachter vietden and Tomania mit ein staup und der weider zachter hudtz! Eh! Ich blain au straub, mit a hach-hacht-hucht-
He coughs and drinks the water. It is vinegar. He gags. He recovers then breaks character, speaking to MR C, (live actor).

HYNKEL** He's put vinegar in it. That's it. I've had it. Six weeks...six weeks of working my fingers to the bone, spending time, resources and energy; building the character of a statesman, a politician; for what; so that I can have my scenes kyboshed by you?

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Ignore him. We haven't even shot this yet!

HYNKEL** You're not listening to me are you? How long did you think I'd put up with this? Hello?
Pause.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* It's Douglas, that's who it is. *To booth, laughing in relief.* Fairbanks, you bastard. You went to all this trouble to get an imitator.

HYNKEL** I am no imitator, sir, and this is no joke. *Pause. MR C turns slowly.* We need to talk. *MR C goes to turn off the projector.* Don't dare touch that projector! Sit down! *MR C sits.* Listen to me, you. You will stop sabotaging me, you understand? I mean you, your other character. The tramp! Him, our scruffy little ghetto brat. Now he's finished his scenes, it is now my turn. And if he's got nothing better to do than play tricks on his co-star then you'd better have words with him, sir or I will. *MR C goes to stand.* Sit down. And I have neither time nor respect for vaudevillian has-beens who have problems with the new man on the block!

He exits the frame. MR C gets up from the chair and comforts the dummy.
 HYNKEL, (on screen) returns in a close up profile.
 Oh, and by the way. Tell Jackie Oakie if he wants to steal every scene from me to look straight into the camera; *Turning to look at MR C, (live actor)*...that will do it every time!

There is a LONG PAUSE. MR C looks up to the booth.

CHAPLIN The trick is not to panic...yet. *Begins to exit undressing. He returns; to dummy.* We're not leaving; we're not bailing out or doing a runner; but I think we've seen enough of Hynkel for the present, thank you very much.

He goes off. The screen again becomes illuminated. The Tramp appears from the left in long-shot, as if he is being thrown out of some establishment. He turns and collects

himself, dismisses his assailant and walks out of frame, right. His head pops back into frame a beat later. MUSIC. He has noticed the camera. He exits. He returns closer to the camera, moving in and pretending that he hasn't noticed the lens. He exits frame. He suddenly appears in close-up, peering into the lens. He touches the lens and laughs. He notices the world outside of his prison. He is intrigued but a little apprehensive. He moves further from the camera in contemplation. He suddenly dismisses it and walks away from the lens towards his original entrance. Remembering the scenario he quickly does an about face and exits stage right. The screen irises out. MR C, (live actor) sans HYNKEL'S uniform, re-enters. He gets back into his housecoat while checking the screen.

ELSIE* The people from 'Moving Pictures' magazine are here. Apparently they want a picture of Hynkel for the front cover.

CHAPLIN Yes, I know.

ELSIE* What's next; Ghengis Khan on the cover of Vogue? It's a bloody travesty. Fire Hynkel before it's too late.

CHAPLIN I can't let him go, Elsie. He's part of the flick. What we have to do is control him.

ELSIE* Control him? Who are you trying to kid?

CHAPLIN All right, the uniform is a bad idea right now. Tell them to cancel the shoot.

ELSIE* That's more like it.

CHAPLIN We'll concentrate on Charlie and his final speech. Yes, that's what we'll do. *He sits then to the dummy.* If this bugger Hynkel thinks Charlie's been messing around with his scenes we have to deal with it. In a stand up squabble between these two Charlie doesn't stand a cat in hell's chance.

REEVES* Charlie, why have you cancelled this photo-shoot?

CHAPLIN I'm not feeling well.

REEVES* What's up?

CHAPLIN I've got a headache.

REEVES* A headache? I've seen you in front of the camera with double pneumonia.

CHAPLIN It's my back...I can't walk.

REEVES* All right, what's really going on?

CHAPLIN I've changed my mind, all right? Something's come up.

REEVES* You've got a woman in there.

CHAPLIN For God's sake-

REEVES* You could've picked a better time for a bit of rolley-polley, chief-

CHAPLIN Yes, I've got Heddy Lamar in here dressed in a leopard-skin tutu- you steaming nit. Leave me alone for five minutes.

Pause.

REEVES* *Through teeth.* Get the bleedin' uniform on and get out here, chief. Reassure the crew, the cast and me that you haven't, without a shadow of a doubt, completely lost the plot.

Pause.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* I can't tell him, can I? Well, can I? The less said about this the better, wouldn't you say?

REEVES* NOW!!!

CHAPLIN RIGHT.

MR C exits behind the screen to put on the uniform. The screen becomes illuminated. The Tramp enters and sees HYNKEL'S hat lying on the floor. He looks around and, using the cane, picks it up. He replaces his derby hat with that of HYNKEL'S. He suddenly becomes a traffic cop and directs traffic. A car zooms by and he spins around calling for a halt to the oncoming cars but does the Heil Hitler salute instead. He looks at his arm and takes the hat off, examining it. He picks the derby up, replaces it on his head and, putting HYNKEL'S hat on top of that, exits frame doing a mock goose-step. The screen goes blank. MR C reappears on the other side.

CHAPLIN Now some one has nicked the bloody uniform.

The Tramp (CHARLIE) appears on the screen. He has HYNKEL'S hat. He takes a bite out of the brim and chews. MR C senses something and turns.

CHAPLIN There you are. All right, Charlie. Who's been a naughty boy then? Who's been making his co-stars life miserable? *CHARLIE, (on screen) reacts.* Yes, I know he's wound a bit tight but just let me deal with it. Here, I've got something for you. *He looks for the speech.* You're gonna love this. It's a six-minute speech. *He finds it and climbing the podium to the screen, shows it to CHARLIE.* Now, I know you've got problems with reading but we'll work on it. *Reads.* "The sadness that has been inflicted upon us is but

the passing of greed.” *Noticing HYNKEL’S hat. Where did you get that? Put that down, right now! The buzzer goes and CHARLIE, (on screen) is startled. He begins to exit out of frame. No, Charlie, I need to talk to you. CHARLIE has gone.*

REEVES* All right, chief, we’re getting grey hairs out here. What’s up now?

CHAPLIN I can’t find my uniform.

REEVES* That’s the second one this week. What are you doing with them?

CHAPLIN *Down from the podium.* I’m donating them to the Hitler Youth, what do you think I’m doing with them?!

REEVES* *To people off.* He’ll be here in a minute.

CHAPLIN Look, why don’t we do the photo as Charlie?

REEVES* They don’t want Charlie, they want Hynkel. He’ll be there!

CHAPLIN I can’t find the uniform!

REEVES* Look, throw on anything; we’ll improvise. Just make an appearance; we’ll do the interview first until we can get another uniform. *He is gone.*

CHAPLIN And what do you suggest I wear right now; my bloody skivvies? I’m surrounded by imbeciles.

CHARLIE, (on screen) appears in his long-johns with his costume neatly folded with the hat on top. He offers the costume to MR C. BEAT.

CHAPLIN Good one, Charlie. Always thinking of his dad. *Going to the dummy in the swivel chair and moving him to the side of the room.* I don’t know why I have this feeling of impending doom.

MR C, (live actor) then moves to the chest of drawers just below the podium and faces the screen. CHARLIE, (on screen) moves closer to the lens and faces out. The clothes are out of sight beneath the lens and all we can see is CHARLIE’S chest and head. NOTE. The following sequence should be seamless and full of magic. The obvious opening of drawers for the live actor to retrieve clothes should be discouraged and easy, immediate access to the clothes is essential. MUSIC: CHARLIE, (on screen) moves the shirt from out of sight beneath the lens upwards and again out of sight. Simultaneously MR C, (live actor) pulls the shirt out of the drawers, mirroring the movement of the shirt on screen. MR C puts the shirt on while CHARLIE watches. CHARLIE repeats the same action with the pants and MR C does likewise, again putting them on. The waist-coat comes next and then the jacket. NOTE: It should be stressed that this sequence is not necessarily a comic lazzi but both at once a magical and visceral experience; rather like a pupae

transforming into a butterfly. CHARLIE reveals the hat and spins it upwards out of sight and the hat flies up from the drawers. MR C catches it, turns, and puts his hand out to retrieve the cane that CHARLIE is offering. He pulls the cane from the side of the chest and spins into the room banging his foot on the ottoman. He sits. CHARLIE reveals a shoe and drops it out of sight. A shoe falls from the ceiling and MR C puts it on. CHARLIE drops the other shoe out of frame and the other shoe falls from the ceiling. MR C puts it on. The transformation is complete. CHARLIE, (onscreen) realizing something has happened, peels off his moustache. He has become MR C. He calls out from the screen to CHARLIE, (live actor) to come back into the screen. CHARLIE refuses and begins to make mischief about the room. He first hooks his cane over the film on the splicing reel and walks away dragging film all over the floor. The image of MR C disappears below frame as if CHARLIE had pulled him under. CHARLIE romps about the room. MR C reappears and watches CHARLIE, calling to him like a father to a wayward child. CHARLIE discovers the speech and MR C tells him to read it. CHARLIE responds by tearing off a page and eating it. CHARLIE spots the projector switch. He moves in and hits it with his cane. The screen flickers and MR C reacts as if he has been hit. CHARLIE enjoys the power and continues to do it, tormenting his creator. The screen finally goes blank. CHARLIE mounts the podium to the screen to check that he is alone and finding he is thus liberated, turns on the room. He dismounts the podium and goes to MR C'S make-up desk. Dying for a smoke, he finds a butt end of a cig in the ashtray. He puts it to his lips and looks for a match. He picks up the Oscar on the desk, examines it and strikes a match on its arse. He lights the cig and discards the Oscar into the wastepaper basket. He inhales deeply on the cig, turns, trips and swallows it. He looks horrified and feels his stomach. He wiggles a bit and hits his chest. The cig comes back up. Relieved, he takes a couple of drags and drops it to the floor. He drinks some tea directly from the teapot. The buzzer goes and we hear ELSIE'S voice. CHARLIE points the cane at the buzzer as if it were a rifle and fires off a round. We hear the pop of a Mauser. The buzzer goes again and hearing REEVES'S voice CHARLIE fires off another round. The buzzer goes again revealing ELSIE'S voice. CHARLIE points and fires but this time about five consecutive shots ring out as if coming from an automatic weapon. CHARLIE examines the muzzle of the weapon and blows the smoke away. Suddenly it begins to fire at full automatic and propels him around the room and into the chair facing the screen. MR C appears on screen and bullets spray across his image. He waves them off like flies and begins to remonstrate CHARLIE, (live actor). The gun ceases and MR C'S image, (on screen) changes to that of CHARLIE. MR C, (live actor) lets out a burst of air as he regains his body. He collapses exhausted as one long buzz comes from the intercom.

REEVES* I need to talk to you.

CHAPLIN Tell them I'll be right there.

REEVES* No, about this speech.

CHAPLIN Just give me a minute. I'm too old for this. *To empty screen.* I have to say that was a little disappointing, Charlie. There's a little more to life than cigarettes and

arsing around. That's the other fellas job. Hynkel is supposed to be the idiot and WE are supposed to be moving in a different direction. *He picks up the speech and climbs the podium.* I mean look at what you've done! You're supposed to be learning this, you little prat! Are you listening to me? Life is not one long comic lazzi, Charlie! I can't be the one who does all the work! *To dummy.* Kids, eh? If there's none to make you laugh there's none to make you cry.

ELSIE* Charlie. That speech is growing on me. *Reads.* "In the Chapter of St Luke it is says that the kingdom of God is in all men..."Your mother would be proud, God rest her.

CHAPLIN The speech is not about fulfilling mother's dying wishes, Elsie.

ELSIE* I didn't say it is. I'm talking about the content.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Mother never recognized our fame, our fortune, eh; it meant nothing to her. *Cockney voice not unlike ELSIE.* "Think of what you could achieve, my lad, if you were in the pulpit."

ELSIE* She was very proud of you. It's just that her religion came first.

CHAPLIN I'm not complaining. Among the many things the 'old queen' did for me, one was to keep me humble.

ELSIE* Nothing wrong with that.

CHAPLIN *To dummy while making tea.* But we've never had much time for organized religion, eh? And the speech is not about grandstanding it's not. We've been directing Charlie in comedy for years; social, political satire. *Picking up the dummy.* It's been clever and it's been deft. There's been the knockabout stuff for the rank and file and there's been metaphor and fable for the clever bugger's. Everyone's happy; including us; laughing all the way to the bank. *Putting dummy in centre easy chair.* But there comes a time when you've just got to sod the aesthetics and just say it the way it is. Let Charlie say what he feels. What? Yes, I know it doesn't look good, the way he behaves. He's a kid; it's like he's still five years old. Playing silly bugger's is his way of coping. But he knows what it's like to get the short end of the stick. We know he does; and if he could speak and God willing he will, no one is more qualified to be the voice for the kids who are suffering because of all this bloody insanity.

REEVES* Charlie. Charlie.

CHAPLIN I've changed my mind about rehearsing Hynkel. We need to spend rehearsal time on Charlie's final speech; lots of rehearsal time.

REEVES* I really think you should reconsider doing Charlie's speech.

CHAPLIN What's wrong with it?

REEVES* Where do you want me to start? It's anti-nationalist, anti-capitalist, anti this anti that. Have I missed anything out?

CHAPLIN Auntie Jean, she works in wardrobe.

REEVES* I'm glad you're finding this amusing, chief. "Let us do away with national borders!" What are you doing?

CHAPLIN For God's sake, Alf.

REEVES* I'm serious, chief.

CHAPLIN Do you think I'm into this for a giggle, Alf? We got the go ahead to do this picture from the President of the United States. We were getting so much grief I called him up, "should we do it?" we says. "Yes", he says, "Go ahead and best of luck!" Yes, Alfred. You were in the room with me.

REEVES* Making the film is one thing political rhetoric is another-

CHAPLIN It's a speech.

REEVES* Which will be seen in every poky theatre from here to Nantucket. That's powerful propaganda, chief.

CHAPLIN I don't need this grief right now, I really don't.

REEVES* Besides, Roosevelt's a bloody lefty; everyone knows that. What about when the Right get in. They have a very long memory, chief. And believe you me you'll be first up against the wall when the smoke clears.

CHAPLIN I can't think about all this now.

REEVES* That's your trouble chief, you don't think. You're on a suicide mission. So lets not talk about the moderate Right, lets not talk about some piddling issue of losing everything you've grafted for because you're considered a subversive; let's talk about the nutters and the fanatics. Because if you wanted to say to these guys: "Screw you, come and get me," you couldn't say it better than by doing this speech.

CHAPLIN The speech will guarantee me an assassins bullet?

REEVES* People have been killed for a lot less, chief. Pain in the arse that you are, I'd like to see Christmas with you; if only for the fact that you throw a good piss-up.

Pause.

CHAPLIN So, I'm to just hand the film over to Hynkel? What about Charlie? What about the Tramp?

REEVES* Sod Charlie, sod the Tramp; he's had a good run, what about you?

CHAPLIN I've just figured out a way to save the little shit, now you're telling me to make a choice between saving my own neck and doing him in?

REEVES* Look, now's not the time to get into a barney about this.

CHAPLIN When is the time, Alf?

REEVES* After you've done the photo-shoot and interview with these magazine people!!! I've bought you some more time since you're in the middle of a nervous breakdown. Jackie Oakie's taken them to the canteen; Spotted Dick's on special.

CHAPLIN *Spot on. To audience; the vaudeville comic.* Why was the little brick unhappy? Because his father was round the bend and his mother was up the wall. He had a feeling that his folks didn't like him. He didn't get the message until he found a road map in his lunch bag. You have to laugh don't you. Dad, the poor old piss-artist chose the bottle and a fading vaudeville career over Charlie and his brother Syd. *CHARLIE comes into view on the screen looking pained and playing up the pathos.* Not that we blame him. Charlie was a Bolshy little bastard and Syd; well he was Syd. *MR C mounts the podium.* Then mother's being carted off to the loony bin and it's the orphanage for Charlie and Syd. Yes, you have to laugh. In human destinies the fates heed neither pity nor justice. *To the heavens.* Blessed are the meek, mother? Well it would make a nice change from being a target for some bugger's boot.

CHARLIE'S image burns up as HYNKEL'S image replaces it. Terrified MR C scoots down the podium and turns to see HYNKEL, (on screen) standing holding a match.

HYNKEL** He's a bit more trouble than he's worth, eh? Did I startle you?
He throws the match at MR C.

CHAPLIN No, we're getting used to it.

HYNKEL** *Seeing the Tramp costume.* You've obviously given no thought to what I said.

CHAPLIN I've given it plenty if thought and look, we definitely need to talk.

HYNKEL** Finally.

CHAPLIN Now, I mean this with all due respect but I really think you've got your wires crossed here.

HYNKEL** The Tramp's had it in for me since day one. He's upset about sharing screen-time. It's as simple as that.

CHAPLIN I'm well aware what he can be like but that is not the point.

HYNKEL** The point is, it's quite obvious what is going on. You're in it together. Old chums, isn't that right? Brought up in each other's childhood. Look at you. It's disgusting.

CHAPLIN If you'd just let me get a word in edgeways!

Pause. He crosses to the other side of the podium as he speaks.

It's important for you to understand that you are both equally vital to the successful vision of the film and what I had in mind. And I think basically all Charlie's trying to get you to do is to lighten up, you know. You are the comic villain, after all.

HYNKEL** The comic villain?

CHAPLIN Yes.

HYNKEL** The comic villain.

CHAPLIN Yes.

HYNKEL** Not a great deal of room for interpretation in that description.

CHAPLIN Well...within the framework of the vision-

HYNKEL** Vision? What vision?

CHAPLIN It's a political satire. *To dummy*. Good God, what are we doing explaining this to him?

HYNKEL** Fine. *He exits out of frame.*

CHAPLIN Where are you going? *Up on podium*. Wait a minute, sir. Come back here. *He exits behind the screen to look for HYNKEL. We see his silhouette.*

HYNKEL** *Still out of frame*. I have no intentions of being portrayed as a buffoon. The man who can bring civilization to its knees does not stoop to arse kicking, gobbledegook and pratfalls.

CHAPLIN *Behind the screen in silhouette*. You mean...what...you're quitting?

HYNKEL** *Re-entering frame, he looks for MR C out front as he speaks. MR C'S silhouette waves from behind. HYNKEL turns*. I'm a dictator, a Statesman, and a world

leader. Clowns and stuttering imbeciles do not run countries and wage wars, sir. The whole thing is ridiculous.

CHAPLIN But that is the point!

HYNKEL** The point is that you have lost all perspective on the character of a man like me.

He exits frame again. MR C'S silhouette follows him.

CHAPLIN Wait...wait a minute, don't you...Hynkel, come back here...

MR C re-enters the stage.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* I don't know about you but I could murder a cup of tea. *To tea pot.* Boil, you bugger.

HYNKEL quietly re-enters frame.

HYNKEL** If you want comedy, you already have your fool. I am an orator, sir. I have dragged myself up from the sewer of the First World War and resurrected a nation with the word. Get your Tramp to take your pratfalls.

CHAPLIN But you're satirical...you're comic!

HYNKEL** I am not a comedian! There is nothing comic about the creator of the thousand year Reich!

CHAPLIN *Getting up.* I beg your pardon. I didn't know you entertained the aspirations of a leading man.

HYNKEL** I am a man who will lead the world into the dawning of a new era. Not to a six-penny seat in some ghetto-ized music hall.

CHAPLIN *To dummy* He's gone right off the deep end, eh-?

HYNKEL** I have arrived to a position of power by using the 'word'. The 'word', sir, with that sense of drive and purpose that cannot be denied. Give me...I demand...I must have empathy.

CHAPLIN *Shouting.* You're the villain! What do you want; flashback scenes of a brutal childhood, poverty and deprivation?

HYNKEL** You're the one who's obsessed with that, sir, not me.

CHAPLIN *Up the podium.* You're out of line, you. You will do what you were hired to do. That is being comic and looking like an idiot.

HYNKEL** Ah, there we are. I'm being set up.

CHAPLIN No, no I don't mean that.

HYNKEL** Yes you do. You'll portray me as tiresome, clichéd, evil vaudevillian just because you don't like me. *Moving away.* You're a bigger fool than that Tramp of yours has ever been.

CHAPLIN *Following.* Don't push it. I'm not very good with difficult actors.

HYNKEL** *Turning.* It's nothing to do with me being difficult. It's your own moralizing that is killing your film, sir, not me. *He exits frame.*

CHAPLIN My own moralizing?

HYNKEL** *Returning.* All underdogs are good and all leaders are intrinsically bad? Please. A mountebank's philosophy, sir!

CHAPLIN Now just one moment, sir-!

HYNKEL** *Crossing.* Look at you! You are empathizing with the Tramp to a degree that is completely undeserving. You're going to give someone who is famous for his silence, who couldn't string a sentence together if you held a gun to his head, you're going to give him a six-minute speech. And what kind of speech? Some left wing, pacifist rant. If you want to preach about social injustice, the silent suffering of the working classes and the need for egalitarianism, don't use him as a mouth piece because that's not who he is. *He exits.*

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Now he's telling us how to direct our film.

HYNKEL** *Returning in a bigger image.* He's no more a bloody democrat and pacifist than I am. He's an anarchist.

CHAPLIN No, no, no, no. There is a difference between the anarchy of a mischievous child like the Tramp and that of the ravings of a paranoiac.

HYNKEL** Anarchy is anarchy.

CHAPLIN No, sir. Your anarchy is destructive. The Tramp's is a claim to human dignity.

HYNKEL** In a world where the working man is slave to the capitalist system. Please. You're a long way from that garret in Kennington, sir.

CHAPLIN No, sir. I am who I am. I will never forget where I'm from.

HYNKEL** *Moving in to a close-up. The size of HYNKEL'S face sends MR C scooting down the steps.* Then try not to be quite so selective with your memories, sir.
Pause.

CHAPLIN What's that supposed to mean?

HYNKEL** Well, if you're going to be coy about this, then I have nothing more to say.
He sinks out of frame.

CHAPLIN *Jumping onto the podium and shouting to the floor.* My memories?...What are you driving at?

HYNKEL** *In long-shot.* The Canteen Theatre, Aldershot, sir. Think about it.
Pause.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* What does he know about our first appearance on stage?

HYNKEL** *Walking towards the lens and getting bigger.* Your mother lost her voice while performing and you went on for her, correct? Saved the day; a regular little Parsifal. However, there's a little more to the evening than that, right sir? *He looks down at MR C.*

CHAPLIN Sorry, I thought we were having a script meeting. Is there a rider in your contract that stipulates prying into the director's personal life?

HYNKEL** Sir, sir, sir, if you cared to take a long hard look at what you did that night and why, it would quickly become apparent to you why you insist on romanticizing that weather-beaten dim witted vagabond, and why you insist on forcing the indignity of physical comedy on such an international figure as myself, who truly has something to say!!!

The force of HYNKEL'S delivery sends MR C down the stairs. MR C pauses, collects himself, and begins his retort.

CHAPLIN Now you listen to me. You don't like comedy? Well, I'm going to give you comedy and you're going to take it because I have captured the attention and attracted the laughter of the entire planet! *He moves centre and picks up the pile of film.* This film. MY film, is about man's inhumanity to man. And it's only through comedy that one can show the stupidity and the cruelty and the misery of that inhumanity. And only the world's worst joke has any hope of bringing that lesson home, sir. And that joke is you! You! *He mounts the podium.* You are a fucking little fascist ferret, sir, and I will grind your 'word', and the 'image' of your 'word', under the collapsible iron heel of humour and satire...and by the time I have finished with you, you jack-booted little jerk-

off, you won't know your arse from your elbow and your thousand year vaudevillian freak-show will be the laughing stock of history-

HYNKEL, (on screen) backhands MR C, (live actor). MR C spins and tumbles down the platform steps and reels around the room. Vaudeville piano music comes in. HYNKEL'S image disappears.

The spot comes on and the sound of a booing and jeering audience comes in. It is the audience of the Canteen Theatre in Aldershot in 1895. MR CHAPLIN becomes a comic again.

CHAPLIN Ladies and gentlemen. The dainty Miss Hannah Chaplin apologizes for her momentary loss of voice so the management would like to graciously offer the services of her five-year-old son in her place.

There are boos and jeers.

Come on, give the kid a chance. That's the ticket. Now put your hands together for five-year-old Master Charles Spencer Chaplin!

Spot out as MR C collapses amongst the film. The band strikes up and a child's voice is heard singing the Victorian ditty. As the song progresses MR C crawls to a chair and sits. He mouths the last two lines of the song as if suddenly turning into the child.

CHILD* *Jack Jones was well known to everybody,
Round about the market, don't yer see
I've no fault to find with Jack at all,
Not when he's as he used to be,
But since he's had the bullion left him
He has altered for the worst
For to see the way he treats his old pals
Fills me with nothing but disgust;
Each Sunday morning he reads the Telegraph,
Once he was contented with the star;
Since 'Jack Jones' has come into a little bit of cash,
Well he don't know who he are.*

CHAPLIN *To the dummy.* Retirement is starting to look very rosy right now....

REEVES* All right, chief I've got our three esteemed reporters in the next room. Don't bust my balls, you promised me.

CHAPLIN Can't they give me ten minutes?

REEVES* It would be easier to get J. Edgar Hoover to admit to being a Nancy boy. That's a no.

HYNKEL'S head pops into frame on the screen.

HYNKEL** Saved by the press; for a change.

CHAPLIN I have nothing to hide. The irony of that song has not escaped me, sir. I may have momentarily left the Tramp behind by bringing you on board however that will soon be rectified.

HYNKEL** It's not the song, sir-

CHAPLIN And yes, that was his mother's last appearance on stage. And yes! that was the beginning of her madness; and if you mean to imply that Charlie's star rose as hers fell-

HYNKEL** It's not the song, sir-

CHAPLIN And there is some kind of psychological significance in that, I'd have to say rubbish. Charlie's misfortunes were very much tied up with his mothers-

HYNKEL** It's not the song-

CHAPLIN And it was shortly after that he was committed to an orphanage.

HYNKEL** It's the singer.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Is he starting to get up your nose or is it just me? We can see what he's up to, eh? Of course there's elements of anarchy in Charlie, of course there's anger. You don't go what he went through, come out the other end in one piece without having a strong sense of survival and self-preservation. But there's more to him than arse kicking, there's self-sacrifice. *To screen.* Don't tell me us he's not qualified to do this speech because you're wrong. *To dummy.* What Hynkel wants is his own speech, that's what all this is about. Yes. He wants to give voice to his obscene doctrine of self-preservation; a nasty, little piece of fascist diatribe. He wants us to leave Charlie behind, dying in the corner like the runt of a litter. I'm surprised he didn't mention his dad. Yes, Charlie had a lousy childhood. But, you know what, he prevailed. Some fall by the wayside others prevail. And survival and success is not all about kicking the shit out of the world.

Pause as he paces.

What Charlie did that night? Well we know what he did that night. 1895 in the Canteen Theatre, Aldershot, Charlie was five years old. His mother was performing and she lost her voice; the manager had seen Charlie performing and sent him on in her place. That's what he did that night!

ELSIE* There's three people wandering around. They look suspicious.

CHAPLIN They're with the magazine, mother.

ELSIE* They're not here to take me away?

CHAPLIN No, they're not here to take you away.

ELSIE* You promise.

CHAPLIN I promise, mother. I won't let them take you away.

REEVES* This is probably a daft question but is everything all right in there?

CHAPLIN It's all going to be worth it, isn't it Alf? The graft and slog will yield fruit somewhere down the line.

REEVES* You're asking me?

CHAPLIN I can here the poetic musings of the critics, right now; yes I think I can. *Characterizes a critic.* "Who the bleedin' 'ell does Chaplin think he is to create what he deems is a metaphor for the identity crisis we in western society are currently undergoing. Bollocks to him, the Bolshy, little bastard." How am I doing?

REEVES* I don't know, I can't understand a word you're saying.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* We'll have to forgive Alf. He's a good lad but he's as thick as two short planks.

REEVES* For a silent film star you certainly love the sound of your own voice. Which reminds me. Have you given any more thought to what I said?

CHAPLIN The speech is a bit more than me sounding off, Alfred.

REEVES* You do know, don't you that the irony of you railing about the evils of the system will not be lost on the paying public.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* We can always rely on Alf to bring it down to the level of personal income.

REEVES* What are managers for?

CHAPLIN Being worried about what people think because I have some money in the bank is honestly the last thing on my mind, right now.

REEVES* Well, it shouldn't be. Everyone loves a winner; but it doesn't go over too well when the winner starts slagging the system that made him.

CHAPLIN My pictures made me rich, Alf; not the exploitation of

the working man.

REEVES* What do you call the Tramp, Little Lord Fontleroy?

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Can we believe this? Even our mates are putting the boots to us. I've known a kettle take so long to boil.

REEVES* I'm just trying to prepare you, chief because these bugger's from the magazine are all over me about this speech.

CHAPLIN What?

REEVES* They've been asking questions all over the shop.

CHAPLIN How did they find out about the speech?

REEVES* They've been on the lot for the last hour.

CHAPLIN They're a couple of two bit hacks and a photographer from an industry magazine, what business is the speech of theirs?

REEVES* I'm just telling you, chief; they seem to show a great interest in the speech.

CHAPLIN Who the hell is responsible for...? *Running up to the screen.* Hynkel; that son of a bitch.

REEVES* Shut up, they're coming. I'm just out to get these good gentlemen some coffee, Charlie. Now, what was it? One with two creams and one sugar, two with one cream and two sugars-

VOICE#3* I don't want sugar.

REEVES* Right. That's one with two creams and two sugars-

VOICE#2* No, I want two creams but one sugar.

REEVES* All right. So that's one with two creams and one sugar, one with cream and one sugar-

VOICE#1* Two.

REEVES* What?

VOICE#1* Sugars.

Pause.

REEVES* Has anybody got a pencil?

VOICE#1* Forget it. Three black is fine.

REEVES* No, no, no, I'll write it down.

CHAPLIN Alf, go and get three black coffees.

REEVES* Right. I'll be back in five...or was it two? Just joking. *As he is going.* I've got it, no worries. One cream, no sugars, one two creams and two sugars, no, *no* sugars...oh bugger.

CHAPLIN *The spot comes on.* Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Larry, Curley and Mo.

MR C becomes the comic referring to the REPORTERS as if seated in the room.

VOICE#2* This is the first film in which the tramp speaks, correct?

CHAPLIN Absoluters.

VOICE#3* And you've given him a six-minute speech.

CHAPLIN He's been taking voice classes. *To House.* These are the jokes, folks.

VOICE#1* In the final speech of this movie the clown says that we should, and I quote, "do away with national borders." What do you mean by that, sir?

CHAPLIN *To house.* Now listen, I says. I love my God and country. But I love God more; his taxes are lower. Work with me, work with me.

VOICE#3* You've lived in this country for many years but you have never become a citizen. Why is that, sir?

CHAPLIN I'm a citizen of the world. And that means a bloody big passport, I'll tell you. *Working the crowd.* I'm trying, I'm trying.

VOICE#2* Even though this country handed you what you yourself described as a 'golden birthright'; to achieve success and fortune never before envisioned?

CHAPLIN Now don't tell me what an American is, I says. I'm the living embodiment of the American Dream. I'm a bit slimmer round the waste, that's all.

VOICE#3* This is your gratitude to your adoptive, a country that has taken you, sir a disaffected orphan-

CHAPLIN *To booth.* Dim the lights, Rollie. I'm dying out here.

VOICE#2* What is the problem you have with nationalism, sir?

CHAPLIN Did you hear about the orphan who goes to a psychiatrist? He says, "I don't have no folks, what am I to do? The doc says, "Become a nationalist and your country will fill the void." "Motherland, Fatherland, I like that." Says the orphan. "But will I be kissed and tucked in at night?" "No" says the doc, "but you'll get your arse kicked if you misbehave."

VOICE#1* Would you call yourself a Communist, sir?

CHAPLIN Lord love a duck I really feel like I'm on trial. Now I get it. It's them. Magazine people my arse! *Coming down from podium.* You're the people who've been sending me those nasty letters, aren't you?

VOICE#2* Excuse me?

CHAPLIN Don't play innocent with me.

VOICE#1* What letters are you talking about, sir?

CHAPLIN *Picking and reading letter.* "Adolf Hitler is a prophet. To lampoon him only shows you for what you are, a Godless Bolshevik. You will be tried, convicted and hung." Sound familiar? Ring any bells?

VOICE#3* Sorry Mr, but-

CHAPLIN Ladies and gentlemen. We now present the famous 'Spill the coffee on the villain and burn his bollocks' sketch starring Charlie the Tramp and the Three Bugger's.

MR C picks up three coffees on a tray. He has obviously become CHARLIE, the Tramp.

VOICE#3* One cream no sugar.

CHARLIE hands out the coffees during this dialogue. This becomes a comic lazzi.

VOICE#1* You didn't answer my question, sir.

VOICE#2* No, you didn't.

VOICE#3* Is it true, sir that your father was an alcoholic? *Receiving coffee.* Thank you.

VOICE#2* Well?

VOICE#1* It's rumoured that you play tennis with Harry Bridges of the Longshoreman's union.

VOICE#3* Excuse me, sir, I don't mean to be a bother but there's sugar in this.

MR C takes coffee from VOICE#3 and gives it to VOICE#1.

VOICE#2* It's rumoured you donated five thousand dollars to the Communist party's Christmas fund.

VOICE#3* When your mother went insane, how old were you, sir?

VOICE#2* And two thousand to the children of imprisoned left-wing political dissidents.

VOICE#1* There's two sugars in this.

VOICE#2* That's mine.

CHARLIE begins to frantically exchange the coffees.

VOICE#1* *At the end of his rope.* His has got two creams and two sugars, I wanted two creams and one sugar. He wanted how many creams?

VOICE#3* One.

VOICE#1* So the one with two creams is mine!

CHARLIE deliberately spills coffee over VOICE#1 who screams in agony.

VOICE#1* For crying out loud. You did that on purpose, you son-of-a bitch.
CHARLIE brings out a handkerchief and tries to mop up the mess on the man's clothes.

VOICE#1 Get the hell away from me, you crazy pinko!

CHARLIE reacts as if pushed. He pushes back. A full-blown fight erupts between the imaginary men and CHARLIE. There is much shouting, mayhem and music. This fight should be very silly but with moments of great anger and violence. He throws each one off stage and collapses in a heap. A small image of CHARLIE appears on the screen all pumped up and pleased with himself. MR C talks to him.

CHAPLIN I think that may have been a mistake. I know you were trying to help but you are supposed to be a pacifist, after all, kid. Hynkel will probably have a field day with this one. And it still hasn't altered the fact that I have to talk to them for real.

REEVES* Charlie, what's going on? What happened?

CHAPLIN What?

REEVES* You've just kicked the shit out of the political correspondents for the Los Angeles Herald Express.

CHAPLIN Eh?

REEVES* I wish we could, chief, I wish we could. There's going to be a lawsuit as sure as eggs are eggs.

CHAPLIN *To dummy.* Now Alf's involved.

REEVES* This is going to take some doing to salvage something out of today, I'm telling you. This is hardly what I'd call a public relations coup, chief.

CHAPLIN Just deal with it, Alf!

REEVES* Just once I'd like to be the tortured genius instead of the poor bugger who just has to deal with it!

HYNKEL'S image onscreen appears next to CHARLIE'S diminished image. CHARLIE squares off.

HYNKEL** Look at the way he behaves; and you're still thinking of giving him a speech.

CHAPLIN He was trying to help!

HYNKEL** Do I hear the dulcet tones of compromise?

CHAPLIN Stop this right now. I will not have Alf involved in my fantasies.

HYNKEL** What happened in the Canteen Theatre?

CHAPLIN All right, you're fired! Get off the lot, go on.

HYNKEL** What happened?

CHAPLIN I saved my mother that night from a pretty awful experience. She lost her voice remember? I went out there and I broke the tension. They loved me...I was five years old! What is this, am I on trial?

HYNKEL** What did you do?!

CHAPLIN I RIDICULED...! I imitated my mother's voice cracking. There, I've said it. Is that what all this palaver is about?

Pause.

HYNKEL** Children can be cruel.

CHAPLIN It wasn't intentional cruelty. It was instinct.

HYNKEL** A child's instinct for survival. A child knowing he had no one but himself to rely on; because his mother was weak.

CHAPLIN She saved my life. She had her own strength. In days when children were lost to disease she kept me alive with nothing; nothing but prayer! Long evenings in dark, stuffy basements when sometimes I was close to death she would enact stories of Christ's pity and love for the poor and for small children. Words so luminous and full of passion the like of which I've never seen or heard since. She kept me alive.

HYNKEL** You kept yourself alive. Your performance in the Canteen Theatre was not exactly a Passion Play was it, sir?

Pause.

CHAPLIN I see. What exactly is it you want from me?

HYNKEL** 1895 when you were five years old and you ridiculed your mother's loss of voice, that's where the tramp was born. That's where you, the artist was born. Your comedy, sir, is routed in cruelty, self-preservation, the natural evolution of which is to me. Charlie is I as a child, sir.

CHAPLIN Charlie is you?

HYNKEL** Charlie is I. Only the child...the child has grown up and now has the power of speech.

HYNKEL begins to sing Jack Jones. The child's voice comes out.

HYNKEL**
*But since he's had the bullion left him
 He has altered for the worst,
 For to see the way he treats his old pals
 Fills me with nothing but disgust.
 Each Sunday morning he reads the Telegraph,
 Once he was contented with the star;
 Since Jack Jones has come into a little bit of cash
 Well, he don't know who he are.*

During the song the image of a child in long shot appears behind HYNKEL. When the song finishes there is a huge applause. We are back in the Canteen Theatre. MR C instantly becomes a comedian.

CHAPLIN “Aint that amazin’. A little nipper like that. I should get some of that gripe water, it goes well with the tonic, I’m told. He’s gonna go places, that kid. Yeah straight to school. *He takes the tray off the ottoman.* No, seriously. It’s not healthy a nipper his age out all hours. *He uncovers a child’s upright punching bag. It becomes CHAPLIN the child. He puts it on the ottoman.* Look at the bags under his eyes. And look at his clothes. Ladies and gentlemen we proudly present ‘The Lambeth Borough Council meeting March 1st, 1895. Or, as it’s known in vaudeville circles: ‘What to do with the Bolshy, little bastard!’ All rise for the Justice.”

There is applause. MR C puts on a grotesque wig and becomes the JUSTICE. He bows as if a new character has entered into the sketch.

CHAPLIN Since the mother and father are out of the picture- done a runner, skiddley-daddled, this child is now a ward of the court. Incarceration is the only option but where? This child obviously can’t be cured with six of the best across his bare arse and a dutiful spell with the colours. He has a sheet as long as the bailiff’s bar tab. Flouting of authority, kicking the arse of a copper, stealing food from an infant, violence towards inanimate objects, possession of an offensive wardrobe. However, the real kicker is that he did precipitate his mother’s descent into madness by ridiculing her failing voice. Now, the court doctor has pointed out, Mr Left Wing bleeding heart over there, that the child is stricken with remorse for the said act of cruelty towards the mother and has been found in possession of a speech penned by the mother as an act of repentance. All of which would be darling, diddly doo did not the speech extol the three concepts most likely to destroy our nation; internationalism, democracy and pacifism. So you’re knackered kid. Now, given the child’s record, this court has every reason to believe that this child will continue his path of anarchy and mayhem and given the opportunity recite the speech on every street corner. But as the court doctor again lovingly points out, the child’s voice is too immature with little or no oratorical flare. His skills are in pantomime and silent gesture. He is therefore saving the speech for an adult whose acting skills would ensure a dazzling rendition of the speech. The child’s father is a vaudevillian and quite obviously the other party in this duo of desperation. Get him in here. If we’re going after subversives we want to go after the big fish! We’re going to nobble the bastard!” Yes, I am stark raving bonkers; I’m the comic villain. Oh no, I’m not, oh yes I am...he’s behind you!

The buzzer goes. HYNKEL’S image appears on screen.

HYNKEL** *Speaking softly.* Steady, steady. That way madness lies. You see, my dear friend, it really is useless to resist. The art of oratory is the combination of bodily gesture and the spoken word. Your final speech must therefore, be mine.

CHAPLIN Do you think that I would give you the satisfaction of a fascist diatribe!

HYNKEL** You don't have a choice.

CHAPLIN It's promised to the Tramp.

HYNKEL** I am the Tramp!

CHAPLIN It's his birth-rite.

HYNKEL** *In a slow-burn.* You have the world vision of a wart, sir. Very well. Then we shall continue with your own sad, sorry birth-rite of a childhood. *Calling out.* Charles Chaplin Senior to the court!

CHAPLIN No!

VOICES* *Off- ad in finitum.* "Charles Chaplin Senior to the court!" "Charles Chaplin Senior to the court!" "Charles Chaplin Senior to the court!" Etc.

MR CHAPLIN mounts the podium and he suddenly becomes CHARLES CHAPLIN SENIOR. HYNKEL remains on the screen to become the JUSTICE. SENIOR is so drunk he is barely coherent.

HYNKEL** Is your name Charles Chaplin?

CHAPLIN *Mesmerized by the luminous image.* Aaurrgh...uuuurrrr...is bootiful.

HYNKEL** According to the court Doctor your child has been harbouring a subversive speech so that you could recite it. That would indicate that you are in collusion with him.

CHAPLIN *Laughing at the joke he is telling.* Dis bloke he goes to aaah doctuur, an ee's goraaah frog growin' ouww the toe of 'ees 'ead. The doc sez; "Blaaeey 'ell, 'ow dee it 'appen?" Frog sez; "I denow . ee starrey oww as a boil on mee arse."

HYNKEL** Well, sir? Are you in collusion?

CHAPLIN I'm in Stepney. Doin' a turn a 'The Pig un Whistle'.

HYNKEL** *Exiting.* Have this man arrested for contempt.

CHAPLIN Where ya goin'? I luv ya.

HYNKEL** *Re-entering.* I know you're guilty, sir. You're one of those decadent metropolitan bohemians with Bolshevik leanings.

CHAPLIN *Falling on the floor.* Bolshevik leanings? Are dose the things ya stick on the mantelpiece; buy 'em darn the markee for thripney bit?

HYNKEL** *Turning and walking away from lens.* Have this man arrested for contempt.

CHAPLIN Come on, lighten up. Less have a pint...

HYNKEL** *Walking up to the lens to become a larger image. He talks to the house.* We must send a message loud and clear that we will not tolerate such ideology...

CHAPLIN senior puts his finger up HYNKEL'S nose.
And the sentence will be severe and without mercy.

CHARLIE I can see right up your nose!

HYNKEL** We recognize clearly that if Marxism wins we will be destroyed. We cannot expect a different end. But if we win we will destroy Marxism down to the roots...*CHAPLIN senior puts his finger up HYNKEL'S nose...* without any tolerance. A middle course does not exist for us!

HYNKEL walks towards the lens getting bigger then veers off to the right. This movement sends CHAPLIN senior reeling down the podium steps to the floor. Pause. The punching bag becomes illuminated. CHAPLIN pulls himself up and sees it. Pause.

CHAPLIN Hello son.

HYNKEL returns. This time he is huge and all we see are his boots.

HYNKEL** I'll make a deal with you, sir. If you accept responsibility for the speech the child will be set free.

Pause.

CHAPLIN Say that again?

HYNKEL** If you accept responsibility for the speech the child will be set free...

Pause.

CHAPLIN But I'll do the time.

HYNKEL** Correct.

CHAPLIN I hate this sketch. It's supposed to be a comedy. That bloke over there thought he was coming to see a panto, didn't you? Oh, look, some bugger's leaving...

Pause.

Kids, eh? If there's none to make you laugh there's none to make you cry. Skulking around with speeches when you should be playing bloody marbles or something. *To*

house. This is his mother's doing this. Filling his head with all that religious stuff. The Bible this and the Bible that...Pity, love, humanity? Well, that's all fine and dandy if you're a saint but what about the rest of us? I mean, we're just trying to get on with it aren't we? Nobody's perfect.

HYNKEL** Sir.

CHARLIE What?

HYNKEL** If you accept responsibility the child will be set free.

CHAPLIN I could walk right out of here, right?

HYNKEL** And the boy would be incarcerated.

CHAPLIN Why was the little brick unhappy? Because his father was round the bend and his mother was up the wall.

Pause. He goes to the punching bag.

You get three square inside, son. *To house.* What? They'll take better care of him than I can. I'm no bloody use. I mean, look at me....*To kid.* Stop that...come on, stop it. *He grabs the bag as if head-locking the child. It is desperate and playful at the same time. He gives the bag a scalp rub.* Here, you've done it before. It's not like it's gonna kill you, is it? It's only an orphanage....Lord love a duck...*He breaks down and sinks onto the ottoman.* I can't do it, kid. I'm just getting going again. I'm booked at the Lyceum next week...maybe Drury friggin' Lane ...the week... after...Sod this...

He lets the bag go which springs back and forth. HYNKEL appears onscreen in extreme close-up.

HYNKEL** Are you satisfied, sir? Can you now face the truth? You surely now realize that the final word must be mine. You feel you have been blessed by providence and you need to give something back? No! I owe a debt to no one but myself. You dragged yourself up from the gutter on your own. I did it! Me! We're all on our Jack Jones, aren't we? Alone.

MR C tenderly replaces the punch-bag to the side and goes to leave.

I know, that with privilege comes responsibility. Responsibility to oneself! And you've been pretty effective thus far, wouldn't you say? *HYNKEL watches MR C leave. He speaks to the house.* He is the most powerful comedian the world has ever seen. I have complete and utter control over a vast industrial empire. Five years it takes him to do a film. He writes the script, he plays the main character, he does all the editing and then, then I write the bloody music! I do it all. It then goes out to the world and makes me a gazillion dollars. That's not too shabby for a scruffy, little street urchin who started off with less than nothing! Now it's time to tell people how we did it. Now it's time to give people a lesson in self-preservation; because his speech, quite frankly, is a lie.

MR C appears on the other side of the stage dressed as Hitler. He wears a hat and a full-length leather coat with the swastika armband.

Are we really so naive to believe that all men are created equal before God? Or that we can peaceably co-exist beside those it is our destiny to dominate?

MR C slowly mounts the podium.

Must we listen to the railings of these pacifist windbags; these camouflaged egoists, whose sickly imaginings expose them for what they are; cowardly know it alls and critics of nature? For the...

MR C raises his arm, silencing HYNKEL onscreen who then fades. A Swastika flag appears on the screen as the following speech progresses.

CHAPLIN For the compulsion...to engage in the struggle for existence...does not simply lie in the limitation of living space, but is the basis of all evolution and is therefore God's path. For before God, we have been put on this earth with the mission of the eternal struggle for our daily bread; beings who receive nothing as a gift and who owe our position as Lords of the earth only to the genius with which we can conquer and defend it! So as mankind through this sacrifice and eternal struggle grown great, through eternal peace does it perish! Thus over the last two thousand years of understetz, mit der lager beeren and der sour Kraut. Eh der flueten zackter vietden...Poopschink, poopschink herring. Herring und garbage, Garbage and Herring, you're mad, ofcourse I am, I'm the comic villain, Oh no I'm not, oh yes I am, he's behind you!!!

MR C'S voice is drowned out by the rising wail of the air raid siren. Three bomber targets appear on the deck, moving and converging on the centre. MR C begins to tear up the speech. Three bombs begin to screech to their destination and on the third, final and loudest detonation he hurls the remnants of the speech into the air. Thousands of small pieces of paper flutter onto the stage from the ceiling.

LONG PAUSE.

MR C takes off the Hitler costumes and comes down from the podium. He picks up pieces off the speech from the floor. Snippets of the speech appear on the screen and are heard in voice over.

CHAPLIN* Soldiers don't fight for slavery, fight for freedom...I'm sorry, but I don't wish to be an emperor...machinery that brings convenience has left us in need...the misery that has been inflicted upon us is but the passing of greed...

A child's voice is heard.

Happiness for us all...Let us fight for a new world, a decent world that will give young people a future and the old some security...

MR C turns to listen to the child's voice. MUSIC. HYNKEL'S image appears on the screen in close up. The Tramp's image is superimposed on that. Through this bleeds the image of the child. MR C walks up to the screen. HYNKEL and the Tramp disappear leaving the child. The child looks out into the room.

MR C walks to the image of the child and touches it as the image fades and lights fade to black.

THE END

