

HALFWAY HOUSE

by

Mikey Jackson

Episode 1: An Inspector Calls

Post-watershed 30 minute TV sitcom

www.mikeyjackson.com

FADE IN:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

MADDY HALFWAY relaxes on the sofa, reading a novel.

An awkward looking BARRY SHINGLES shuffles in via the far door (leading upstairs which we never see) with his trousers and pants round his ankles, his modesty saved by a long shirt. He eyes MADDY like a lost child. Coughs to gain her attention. MADDY looks his way and rolls her eyes.

MADDY

Barry, what are you doing?

BARRY

We've run out of toilet paper.

BARRY'S vocal tone is child-like and mumbly. Typical immature big kid in an adult's body.

MADDY

I can't do anything about that until Vincent comes home with the shopping. And for God's sake, cover yourself up.

BARRY

I can't. My bum's dirty. Oh, and you know you really hate it when I leave those brown pebble-dashy bits all over the pan.

MADDY

Yesssss.

BARRY

It's happened again. Sorry.

MADDY'S face is an absolute picture of incredulity.

MADDY

I once had high hopes for Halfway House. And then you arrived.

BARRY

Aw, thanks, Maddy. You say the nicest things. -- Can I use the pages you've already read as toilet paper?

MADDY lets out a weighty huff of disapproval as she reluctantly tears out the pages. BARRY shuffles closer and takes possession of the makeshift bogroll sheets.

BARRY

Thanks. Good book?

MADDY

Get back to that lavatory and wipe your dirty bottom! Now!

BARRY'S been told. He nods and shuffles back towards the far door. He then pauses. Thinks about it. Looks back at her.

BARRY

Maddy. Is there any chance in the foreseeable future of me getting my willy wet in your lady tunnel?

MADDY

Don't be so disgusting, of course not!

BARRY

Right. In that case, while I'm in the toilet, I might as well have a wank at the same time.

MADDY'S face, absolute picture number two.

MADDY

Just for the record, I will never have sex with you. It's unethical.

BARRY

Why? Because you're my therapist?

MADDY

No. Because you're a minger.

BARRY

Huh, I'll have you know I've got a girlfriend.

MADDY

Yes. An imaginary girlfriend. That's why I'm your therapist.

BARRY

Oh, please, Maddy. My willy's tingling. It doesn't have to last long. Just a quick bonk on the sofa.

Saved by the front door bursting open. Enter VINCENT SPLOSH, drunk as a skunk. And I mean really, really drunk. MADDY stands up, arms crossed, not best pleased, as VINCENT staggers along, failing miserably in the act of sobriety pretence.

Let's have him do an overly exaggerated wobble-lap around the sofa as the other two look on. Once his lap is spent, VINCENT double takes at BARRY'S bare legs, then throws an unsure glance at MADDY.

VINCENT

Not interrupting anything, am I?

We notice a permanent drunken slur to VINCENT'S voice.

MADDY

You're drunk again.

VINCENT

I might have had a sociable half.

MADDY

Vincent, you shouldn't binge like this. You're a recovering alcoholic.

VINCENT

Recovering? I never even knew I was ill.

MADDY

Sit down before you fall down. And Barry. Clean yourself up. Now!

BARRY exits through the far door. VINCENT plonks himself down on the sofa. MADDY sits beside him, then realises --

MADDY

Vincent. Where's the shopping?

VINCENT

What shopping?

MADDY

The shopping I sent you out to buy. I gave you ten pounds.

VINCENT

Oh. Do you mean that tenner I put on a horse?

MADDY

I bloody well hope not.

VINCENT

Never fear. I bring good news.

MADDY

You mean the horse won?

VINCENT

Um. Not quite. It had to be shot in the stalls.

MADDY

(with a groan)

So what is the good news?

VINCENT

On the way home, I found a fiver. It was in a hat on the pavement, next to a sleeping homeless person.

MADDY

Riiiiight. And did you manage to buy anything with that?

VINCENT

I certainly did.

VINCENT dives a hand into his inside jacket pocket and -- wait for it -- pulls out a half bottle of vodka.

VINCENT

Dah-nahhhh! Isn't she a beauty?

MADDY

What on Earth made you buy that?

VINCENT

It was three quid off. You know me, I can never resist a bargain.

MADDY

Are you telling me you never bought any shopping at all?

VINCENT

Yes. This.

MADDY

I meant real shopping. As in food.

VINCENT

Um. No. Should I have done?

MADDY

Oh, brilliant. It'll be so much fun pouring vodka over one cornflake each.

VINCENT

Ahhhh. Welcome to my world.

MADDY

That's it, I've had enough! Go hungry
for all I care!

Livid, MADDY takes to her feet. A sharp exit through the door to the kitchen. SLAM! VINCENT plucks a drinking straw out of one pocket. He pops it in the vodka bottle and sucks through it.

BARRY returns, trousers now in the correct place. He joins VINCENT on the sofa.

VINCENT

Maddy's in a right old mood. Have you
been begging her for sex again?

BARRY

Afraid so.

VINCENT

Ah. That's what it'll be then. Tell me.
Exactly how many times have you tried
it on with her?

BARRY

At last count, five hundred and fifty-
six attempts.

VINCENT

And how many times has she actually
opened her legs for you?

BARRY

At last count... never. I think she's
playing hard to get.

VINCENT continues his vodka sucking between exchanges.

VINCENT

You really need to stop chasing women
who show you zero interest. I did.

BARRY

Yeah, only because they filed
injunctions against you. With me, it's
harmless flirtation.

VINCENT

Barry, you're an ex-stalker. Flirtation
from you is never harmless.

BARRY

It's just a bit of fun.

VINCENT

I don't think your girlfriend would see it like that.

BARRY

Who, Imogen?

VINCENT

Yes. Imogen. Why, how many other imaginary girlfriends have you got?

BARRY

I think she's gone a bit cold on me. She hasn't shown her face for days. Do you reckon somebody else is seeing her?

VINCENT

Nope.

BARRY

How can you be so sure?

VINCENT

Because nobody else can.

BARRY

I don't ask for much in life. My only ambition is to shag Imogen. Trouble is, she always says she's washing her hair. She must have the cleanest follicles in the world.

VINCENT

Well, my ambition is to drink Scotland completely dry of whisky. But I doubt that will ever happen.

BARRY

Eh? You did that last year.

VINCENT

Did I? I don't remember.

BARRY

Of course you don't. You were comatose for three months.

VINCENT

Ahhhhh. Happy days.

VINCENT chucks away the straw. Swigs at the vodka instead.

BARRY

See? Everybody gets what they want except me. I imagine myself a girlfriend and what do I get? A frigid bitch who refuses to show me her fur burger.

VINCENT

True. But that's probably down to you being such an unfanciable wanker.

BARRY

Oh, thanks. I thought you were my best friend.

VINCENT

Only when it's your round. -- Look. Barry. Forget women. Find yourself some blokey mates. They never let you down. Take my old pal Silent Sam. Never a crossed word.

BARRY

Only because he's a mute.

VINCENT

Hey, I've been studying his special brand of sign language. I'll show you a few of his moves.

VINCENT stands up, wobbling a bit. He simulates holding a pint glass, raising it to his mouth and back down again.

VINCENT

That means, 'Mine's a pint, barman.'

Trousers pockets turned inside out, puppy dog eyes.

VINCENT

That means, 'I've run out of money. Can you see me right until my next benefits handout?' Now, here's my all-time favourite.

A shocked face, wide eyes, gaping mouth, jazz hands.

BARRY

What does that one mean?

VINCENT

'Shit, I'm about to be hit by a bus.'

BARRY

How do you know that?

VINCENT

Because that's what he did just before being hit by a bus.

BARRY

What? Is he all right?

VINCENT

Of course he's not, he's dead. He was hit by a bus. Weren't you listening?

BARRY

Bloody hell. Was it quick?

VINCENT

About forty miles an hour.

BARRY

No, no, no, I meant his death.

VINCENT returns to the sofa, downing more vodka.

VINCENT

Well, I'm no coroner, but I'd say it was pretty instantaneous.

Introducing GEORGE PLINK via the kitchen door in full Elvis Presley Vegas gear, performing an exaggerated routine of pelvis moves. Then, mimicking the Elvis sneer and voice combo --

GEORGE

Aha-ha. Thank you very much. You're a wonderful audience.

BARRY

Who do you reckon George thinks he is today?

VINCENT

No idea. It's difficult to tell from so few clues.

GEORGE

(more gyrations)
Aha-ha. I am the King.

VINCENT

I agree. You're 'king something.

GEORGE scowls, hands upon hips. And re-enter MADDY.

MADDY

Listen up, people. I've just taken an important phone call. We've got an inspector paying us a visit today to give this place a right going-over.

BARRY

Ooh, goody. Halfway House could do with a decent spruce-up. Especially that lavatory pan.

MADDY

He's not a cleaner, Barry, he's from Social Services.

BARRY

What does he want with us?

MADDY

He needs to check you're all being adequately looked after.

BARRY

Ah. Looks like you're buggered then.

MADDY

Don't be like that. If it wasn't for Halfway House, you'd still be in prison, George would be locked up in that mental hospital and Vincent would be stuck in rehab.

VINCENT

Please don't send me back to that hell-hole. They refused to give me booze. They threatened me with cups of tea. Without biscuits.

MADDY

Exactly. Do any of you really want to go back to where you came from?

Firm shakes of no way heads all round.

MADDY

Good. Then help me out here.

VINCENT

This inspector. Will he be strict?

MADDY

Does a bear shit in the woods?

VINCENT

I don't know. Does it?

MADDY

Yes, of course it does.

VINCENT

Well. I certainly didn't see that one coming.

IMOGEN

Hello, Barry.

Meet IMOGEN NATION, BARRY'S imaginary girlfriend. NOTE: Only BARRY can see or hear her. (And we can as well, obviously!) BARRY stands up, elated.

BARRY

Imogen. You've come back to me.

MADDY

Oh, here we go. The idiot's talking to himself again.

VINCENT

Hey, Barry. What's Imogen like?

BARRY

Oh, she's not too bad.

IMOGEN

What do you mean not too bad?

BARRY

A bit rough around the edges. And her tits are too small. But hey ho, beggar's can't be choosers.

An insulted IMOGEN marches over to BARRY and knees him in the bollocks. Oof! BARRY doubles up in pain. VINCENT laughs.

VINCENT

Can I assume you've just been clobbered in the gonads?

Clutching his bits, BARRY nods, groaning a definite yes.

VINCENT

Then step aside, Barry, I'm taking over. It's high time that invisible figment of your sordid imagination found herself a real man.