

GREEN AND PLEASANT

A play for radio

by

Katy Walker

SCENE 1

A BARRAGE OF ENGLISH CITY SOUND, CLICHES GALORE.
JERUSALEM, LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY, THE NATIONAL ANTHEM,
EAT IN OR TAKE AWAY? SKINNY OR REGULAR? YOU WHAT MATE?
SNIPPETS OF NEWS, FTSE 100 UP TODAY AT.. LATEST FIGURES ON
IMMIGRATION, REFLECTING THE RECENT INFUX FROM ROMANIA
AND BULGARIA..., NOISE OF TRAFFIC, SIRENS, STANDARD OF LIVING
FALLING, MORE PEOPLE IN FOOD POVERTY, JOB LOSSES, RISING
TENSIONS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND IMMIGRANTS... FINISHING
WITH THE END OF THE HYMN: 'ON ENGLAND'S GREEN AND PLEASANT
LAND'

CHRISTO (V/O) Hello. I am Christo. I am from Bulgaria

SCENE 2, EASYJET FLIGHT 3160

TANNOY Ladies and gentlemen, we are now beginning our descent into London Stansted. Please return your chairs and tables to the upright position and fasten all seatbelts.

(IN BULGARIAN) Ladies and gentlemen, we are now beginning our descent into London Stansted. Please return your chairs and tables to the upright position and fasten all seatbelts.

CHRISTO (V/O) I am come to UK for help the trees. For many years I am study the disease of Aesculus Hippocastanum - horse chestnut trees. I think you know of this disease? Which make the leaves to turn brown and curl up? Is a disease from Macedonia, not far from my home, and in forty years it has travel from small area through all of central and eastern Europe. It is in Pirin mountains, where I live. I love this place. Is World Heritage Site. Completely beautiful. But still we have this problem with horse chestnut trees. For many years I am try to find solution, and now Institute in UK have invite me for helping with research because I am world expert. Is an honour for me to come to UK as expert. But is one problem. I am not at all expert in speak English.

SOUND OF SAFETY LIGHTS COMING ON

CHRISTO (CLOSE) Hello. I am Christo. I am - дяволите (diavolyte)! Is too fast! Go back.... Hello. I am -

AIR STEWARD Excuse me sir. Could you fasten your seatbelt for me?

CHRISTO Excuse me?

AIR STEWARD Seatbelt. We're just coming in to land.

CHRISTO Oh. Yes, of course.

FASTENS HIS SEATBELT

CHRISTO (V/O) I have learning for long time, and I like very much. I think I am 'not bad' for speaking now, and also for understand. But is a difficult language, with very many exception to rule, and so I must keep practice. Keep go over from beginning. Consolidate.

VOICE Revision Lesson One. Introductions. Say your name and where you are from

CHRISTO Hello. I am Christo. I am from Bulgaria

VOICE Good. Now say how you are feeling today. For example, 'I'm fine' or 'I'm a bit tired'. So, how are you feeling today?

CHRISTO Today I am feeling exciting

AIR STEWARD Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to switch off your device now.

CHRISTO Oh. Excuse.

AIR STEWARD Thank you. And it's 'excited'

CHRISTO Excuse me?

AIR STEWARD I am feeling excited, not exciting.

CHRISTO Oh. Thank you. I am get this wrong all times.

AIR STEWARD Well, it's a tricky one, English

CHRISTO (V/O) Yes. Is a tricky one. Only thing is to keep practise, and to ask for help

SCENE 3, INFORMATION DESK, STANSTED AIRPORT

ASSISTANT Can I help you?

CHRISTO Yes

ASSISTANT Right. Fire away then

CHRISTO I am Christo

ASSISTANT Okay

CHRISTO I have message

ASSISTANT Right. Who's it for?

CHRISTO Excuse me?

ASSISTANT The message - who's it for?

CHRISTO Ah. Message for me

ASSISTANT No, sorry, lost me there mate

CHRISTO Excuse me, I do not understand

ASSISTANT No, me neither mate. You want to leave a message, is that right?

CHRISTO I am meet... (READING) Neil from Institute

ASSISTANT Okay. So. (SLOWLY) Meeting point... over there. Where that yellow sign is, yeah?

CHRISTO Yes, but is not there

ASSISTANT By the yellow sign, mate. See? Meeting Point

CHRISTO Yes. I have wait here a half hour. But nobody comes. And so I come here, to ask for message. From Institute. Neil.

ASSISTANT Oh right. I get you now. Let's have a look. Institute of what was it?

CHRISTO Arboriculture

ASSISTANT Right. Yeah, got a message here. Christo Dimitrov

CHRISTO Yes. I am Christo

ASSISTANT Institute of Arboriculture - what's that, then?

CHRISTO Is study of trees

ASSISTANT Oh yeah? Well, there must be a lot of trees to study today, 'cos they're not coming. Said you've to get a taxi

SCENE 4, INSTITUTE

CHRISTO I have taking coach and then train. Taxi they say is one hundred pounds.

NEIL Right, yeah, that's... Yeah, well, you got here, that's the main thing.

CHRISTO Was eight pounds for coach, and nine pounds for train.

NEIL Right. Well, stick a claim in for expenses. I'll get Sam to give you a form.

CHRISTO Form. Okay.

NEIL And yeah, I'm afraid there's been a bit of a cock-up on the accommodation front

CHRISTO Cock up?

NEIL Yeah, mix up, you know. Sorry, Christo, but I should tell you it's chaos round here. We lost our director last month so everything's

pretty much up in the air. And I'm afraid we're struggling a bit with the extra admin.

CHRISTO (V/O) One thing about English, there are many different expressions. Cocks up in air, for example. Sometimes is difficult to understand meaning.

NEIL Christo?

CHRISTO Oh, er, yes. The cock is up and there is struggle

NEIL God, sorry mate. You didn't get any of that, did you?

CHRISTO No

NEIL Sorry. So look, we have nowhere for you to stay. Accommodation. At the moment. You understand?

CHRISTO But you have say it will be arrange. For me.

NEIL Yeah, and it will be. Tomorrow. Tomorrow we have a flat for you. But today, no flat. A mistake. Yes?

CHRISTO Okay

NEIL Now, normally I'd say you could come and stay with us

CHRISTO Okay

NEIL Yeah, but I'm afraid that's not possible

CHRISTO Oh

NEIL My wife's... well, she's got her book club tonight. Book club - it's a, when people, women mostly, get together and talk about a book they've read, and drink wine. Well, mostly just drink wine. Anyway, she usually hosts it and she has to move stuff into the spare room to make space, so... Sorry, talking too much again, aren't I?

CHRISTO No, is fine

NEIL Anyway, so the thing is, Christo, we'll have to book you into a hotel for tonight, okay?

CHRISTO A hotel?

NEIL And then tomorrow you can move into your flat

CHRISTO Tomorrow.

NEIL That's right. So there's a hotel near here, Sam'll take you round there. And if you bring us the receipt we'll make sure you're reimbursed. You'll get the money back.

CHRISTO Is much money for hotel?

NEIL Shouldn't think so. But as I say, we'll make sure you're reimbursed.

CHRISTO (V/O) He is good man, Neil, but he does not realise. In UK everything is so expensive. I have spend already nearly all my money on sandwich and coffee and then travel to Insti-

tute. I have not enough money for hotel. But I cannot tell to Neil this. Or to Sam. I do not know what to do and so I go with Sam to check in and then I come back to Institute.

SCENE 5, INSTITUTE

NEIL I don't know where you'll want to set up - there's here, for paperwork, obviously, and I've given you the code for the lab, and then greenhouse space is up to you. There's space in the main one, if you have a word with the lads in there, or else there's one down the end that's completely empty. Don't tend to use it much, actually, so it may need a bit of sorting out first, but it's up to you. Your choice. You've got the master key so you can let yourself in and out, haven't you?

CHRISTO Master key. Yes. Thank you, Neil

NEIL Right. Great. Well we'll see you tomorrow then

CHRISTO (V/O) And then I have idea. I go to hotel, and I collect my things, I telephone to my wife and then I return to Institute. Is true,

greenhouse has not been use for long time, I think. Is need tidy up. But they are some sacks and thing for make a bed, and is quite warm. And is better than say I have not money for hotel. And is light in morning so I am making early start

SCENE 6, GREENHOUSE, MORNING

NEIL You're in early. Hotel not up to much, then?

CHRISTO No, is...

NEIL Never mind, your apartment's ready today, so you can get settled. I should say it's not in the best part of town, I'm afraid, but Sam's seen it and she says it's clean, at least. Those your control group?

CHRISTO Yes, I am get started with potting up. Is correct?

NEIL Yeah, potting up. Great. Get them settled in their new home, too, eh?

CHRISTO (V/O) In afternoon I go to my new apartment. Is true what Neil say, is not in best part of town. Not at all. The streets they are dirty, full of rubbish, and the people they are all look angry or afraid. I am try not looking afraid also. In my village is not like this. There are not many people. Is why I am coming here, to UK for get money to move to city. All young people have move already, to Sofia, for work. In village are no jobs, except in Institute. I am lucky one. But is no job for my wife, and no future for my children in village. I can work for Institute in Sofia, and is better life for my family. But I hope we can live in place where people are not angry and afraid, and where there is not so much rubbish in streets. So, is okay. Is good opportunity for meet new people

SCENE 7, OUTSIDE CHRISTO'S APARTMENT

CHRISTO IS UNLOCKING HIS DOOR. SOUNDS OF FOOTSTEPS COMING UPSTAIRS

CHRISTO Hello

NO ANSWER. THE FOOTSTEPS CARRY ON UPSTAIRS. CHRISTO
GOES INSIDE AND SHUTS THE DOOR

CHRISTO (V/O) Is true. Is clean. Is very small, also, but this make it easy for clean. Is kettle, also, for making good English cup of tea

SOUND OF KETTLE BOILING AND CHRISTO MAKING TEA

CHRISTO (V/O) Is not so bad. Is not so close to Institute, and travel is expensive, but Neil has tell me about ebay, and I have now a bicycle for get to work. Work is good, and because I am alone here I can stay late in lab or greenhouse. My seedlings they do well and are settle in. And I also. And my English it gets better I think.

SCENE 8

VOICE Series 3. Episode 12. Popping the Question

CHRISTO (ALONG WITH THE LESSON) Are you ready then, mate? Guess so.

PAUSES THE LESSON SO HE CAN REPEAT

Are you ready then, mate? Guess so. Guess so.

PRESSES PLAY AGAIN

Going to pop the question? Blimey, you're a brave boy.

PRESSES PAUSE AGAIN. LEAFS THROUGH DICTIONARY

Blimey... Blimey... Aha. 'Informal'. Good. 'To express surprise, excitement or alarm.' Hmm. Blimey mate! You are going to pop the question!

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. CHRISTO GOES TO ANSWER IT, STILL TALKING WITH THE LESSON

Watch out, here comes Neela now. Hi Neela, how's it going?

OPENING THE DOOR

Hi. Excuse me, I practice my English. Is very exciting

KELLY (NOT INTERESTED) Oh yeah?

CHRISTO Yes. Today, Nadim is popping the question

You know this? To pop the question?

NOTHING

Sorry. Excuse me. I am Christo. Good to meet you, mate

KELLY Yeah, well, it's about that bike

CHRISTO Oh! Yes, is mine. I buy today, from ebay. £18 only. I think is
okay.

KELLY Well no, it's not okay, as it goes

CHRISTO No?

KELLY No

CHRISTO You think is not good bicycle?

KELLY I dunno if it's good or not, you can't leave it there

CHRISTO Oh! I should move her?

KELLY Yeah

CHRISTO To where?

KELLY Jeez, I dunno, just move it, it's in the way

CHRISTO Oh, I understand. You have something to bring inside?

KELLY Well, yeah, I do have stuff to bring inside, yeah, and that bike's in
the way

CHRISTO Ah, excuse me, I did not know. It is heavy?

KELLY You what?

CHRISTO The.. 'stuff'. To bring inside. Is heavy? I can give you a hand,
mate, if you like. I carry for you

KELLY No. Look, I just want the bike moved, alright?

CHRISTO Is okay, I don't mind. You show me, I carry

KELLY No! It's not... I haven't got... There isn't anything to carry, al-
right?

CHRISTO Alright, yes. Sorry. Sometimes is difficult for me with the English.
I have not understood very well. Sorry, mate

KELLY I'm not your mate

CHRISTO Excuse me?

KELLY Look.

(SHE PUSHES THE BICYCLE IN THROUGH CHRISTO'S DOOR AND
SPEAKS SLOWLY, AS IF TO AN IDIOT)

This. Here. Okay?

CHRISTO Okay

KELLY Not out there. You get me?

CHRISTO Okay. I get you. I get you... (HE'S WONDERING WHAT THIS
MEANS) Ah! I get you ... stuff. Yes. Of course. I get you.
Whenever you like.

KELLY Oh, for... Forget it. Keep THAT. in HERE. That's all. Alright?
Not difficult. Just a bit of consideration for your neighbours,

or don't they do that where you come from? CON-SIDER-
ATION, yeah?

CHRISTO Excuse me

KELLY (TALKING TO HERSELF AS SHE LEAVES, BUT LOUD ENOUGH
FOR CHRISTO TO HEAR) Fucking Immo

CHRISTO Blimey

SCENE 9

CHRISTO (V/O) There is small park near my flat. From my window is possible to see some parts of trees from there. I like. It reminds me of my home, in Pirin mountains. Here there are many trees. I grow up with these trees, they are like family for me. I miss. So is good to see some trees from my home here. Is sad also, because one tree is horse chestnut tree and, like all over Europe now, this tree has disease. I love horse chestnut trees. They are so beautiful,

don't you think? They are first for having leaves in spring, and first for blossom. You know their blossom? Is like candles, who light tree like for party, and also for say 'Look at me! I am beautiful tree!'. And this disease, it makes the trees so ugly. I hope very much that I can find way to stop it. I continue with my research. I try to be optimist. I try.

SCENE 10, INSTITUTE GREENHOUSE

RAIN

NEIL Alright Christo? Thought maybe you weren't coming in today

CHRISTO Neil, I am sorry. My bicycle, is... what is word? Is... (MAKES POPPING NOISE)

NEIL Oh, a puncture

CHRISTO Puncture

NEIL So how did you get here, then?

CHRISTO I walk

NEIL In this? Bloody hell. You're soaked, mate

CHRISTO Yes.

NEIL You haven't even got a jacket on

CHRISTO No. But is fine, I am soon dried out. You want to see me?

NEIL Well look, I do, yeah, but... get yourself dried out, mate, then come and
see me later. Not important, just when you're ready.

CHRISTO (V/O) So I get dry. In toilets, with machine for hands. And I go to
see Neil. He is collecting papers for accounts, and he has
not my receipt for hotel. He wants to have it so I can be re-
imburse

SCENE 11, NEIL'S OFFICE

NEIL Only I know you're a bit... well, every little helps, doesn't it?

CHRISTO (V/O) And so I have to tell him. That I do not stay in hotel. Is too expensive. I do not want to tell him I sleep in greenhouse.

NEIL Oh. Right. Well. God, sorry. You should have said, I'd have lent you the money.

CHRISTO Is okay. I do not mind. Really

CHRISTO (V/O) But he does not stop

NEIL So where did you go then? Christo?

CHRISTO (V/O) And I must say something

CHRISTO I am not tired. Is so exciting for me, come here, so I walk

NEIL What, all night?

CHRISTO Almost. And then I make start on my research.

NEIL Right.

CHRISTO (V/O) I think he believe me. Is okay

NEIL So what about your bike then? Just a puncture, you said?

CHRISTO Puncture. Yes

NEIL So easy to fix then?

CHRISTO I think.

NEIL Got the right tools and stuff? Repair kit?

CHRISTO I get this evening. From shop

NEIL Oh, no need for that, mate. Save your money. Tell you what, I'll give you a hand. Give you a lift after work, we'll swing by my house and get the kit.

CHRISTO (V/O) And so we swing by Neil's house, and then he takes me home. He doesn't say anything, but he check the lock on his car two times, and when we get to front door he turns to check it is still there.

SCENE 12, CHRISTO'S FLAT

CHRISTO AND NEIL'S FOOTSTEPS COMING UPSTAIRS. CHRISTO OPENS THE DOOR

CHRISTO Come, please.

NEIL Thanks. (PAUSE) Aha, the offending article

CHRISTO Excuse me?

NEIL Sorry, the bicycle

CHRISTO Ah, yes. The 'fending'...

NEIL Article. The thing that caused the problems

CHRISTO Fending article. Yes. But now problems are over!

Soon, my friend, you are good as new. We fix you up with lovely new
inside tube

NEIL Inner tube, yes

CHRISTO Inner tube.

NEIL So, shall we crack on? Get started?

CHRISTO Oh, no, is... No, thank you. You have help very much already,
with all this tools and give me lift. I do later. Now, we must
drink

NEIL Oh, well, thanks, but... I'm on bathtime tonight - Annabel has her book
club. Again

CHRISTO Ah yes, I remember. The ladies who drink wine

NEIL That's it

CHRISTO So you must have drink with me, for say thank you. Please?

NEIL Well...

CHRISTO Also, you are my first visitor

NEIL Really?

CHRISTO Really

NEIL Oh. Well, okay then, yes. Thanks

CHRISTO Good. (HE GETS OUT A BOTTLE AND TWO GLASSES)

Please, Neil, sit

NEIL Right

BUT HE CAN'T, BECAUSE THE BICYCLE IS IN THE WAY

CHRISTO Oh, I see, is not possible. I will move outside. (THINKING) Yes, I think is okay for a small time. I am sure.

HE OPENS THE DOOR AND MOVES THE BICYCLE INTO THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE. SHUTS DOOR

So. Neil. Welcome!

NEIL Thanks. That looks...

CHRISTO Ah, is Rakia. Traditional Bulgarian drink.

NEIL Right, well, thing is I'm driving. Is it..?

CHRISTO Oh, is fine. I give only a small glass. Is sign of hospitality.

Nazdrave!

NEIL Oh, er, nazdrave!

THEY CHINK GLASSES AND DRINK

So, this is...

CHRISTO Small. Yes.

NEIL Listen, I'm sorry, I didn't realise...

CHRISTO Is fine. I like.

NEIL Right. Good. Have you met the neighbours?

CHRISTO Yes. One lady she has knocked on my door

NEIL Great. She nice?

CHRISTO I am sure.

NEIL Great. So settling in, then?

CHRISTO Yes

NEIL Must be difficult, away from your family, though

CHRISTO Yes. But is only for one year

NEIL Yeah, but still... Two children, did you say?

CHRISTO One girl, one boy. Six and eight

NEIL Same as my girls, nearly. You should come over one day

CHRISTO Thank you. I would like that.

NEIL So

CHRISTO So

NEIL Enjoying it, then? So far?

CHRISTO Yes, very much. Everyone is very nice

NEIL Well, good.

CHRISTO You have worked here for long time?

NEIL Eleven years. Keeps me out of trouble.

CHRISTO Is good to be with other people, in lab, to share knowledge

NEIL Yes, I miss the practical side. That's the trouble with management, you get stuck at a desk all day.

CHRISTO I would not like this. I like to - is correct? to get my hands dirty?

NEIL Yeah, that's right. You used to working on your own, then?

CHRISTO I have assistant sometimes, but Institute has little money for employ people.

NEIL Tell me about it

CHRISTO (MISUNDERSTANDING) Well, economy in Bulgaria now is focus mainly on big cities. Institute is in country, so is difficult for find funding. Also for find people - most people are go to the cities for work. I am lucky to stay in my home town and have work.

NEIL Right

CHRISTO You want I should say more?

NEIL No. Well, if you want, yeah. Sounds tough

CHRISTO Yes. Is tough. But I am lucky one, I have job, and when I go home I will have money, too, I hope. This is why I take small apartment, so I can save money for going back home. We try to have enough money to move to Sofia. Is difficult for my family: only people left in village are old people, waiting to die.

NEIL Really?

CHRISTO Really. Because there are no jobs, so young people they must move to city. Is a sad situation

NEIL Yeah, must be. You'll go back at Christmas, will you?

CHRISTO No, for Christmas I will stay here

NEIL Really?

CHRISTO I would like to go home, of course, but the flights they are very
expensive

NEIL Yeah, tell me about it

CHRISTO (COMPUTING) Ah. Is an expression, 'tell me about it'?

NEIL What? Yeah, it's like saying 'I know'.

CHRISTO So you do not mean really tell me about it

NEIL No. No

CHRISTO And I have told you everything about it, about my economic situation. I am a stupid

NEIL No no, it's fine. It's a funny one, English

CHRISTO Yes. Blimey. Yes, is a funny one.

You want some more rakia?

NEIL Oh, no thanks, mate, I'd better be going.

CHRISTO Of course. Bathtime.

NEIL Yours have baths, do they?

CHRISTO Baths? Yes, of course.

NEIL Of course. Sorry, I didn't ... Great. Well, good luck with the puncture.

CHRISTO Thank you. And good luck with the bathtime.

NEIL Bye mate, see you tomorrow

CHRISTO Bye mate. Oh

CHRISTO (V/O) I say goodbye to Neil and then I see. On my bicycle is a note. It does not have name, but I think is from woman opposite to me. Is angry note, full of angry words. Many words I do not know. I look up in my dictionary.

CHRISTO Oh..... Oh.....Oh... Blimey

SCENE 13

CHRISTO (V/O) Aesculus Hippocastanum was the first tree I remember. Is my first love. Even my wife say this. Is not true, of course, but almost. Is such a beautiful tree, in all the seasons. Now, from my window, I can see the fruit begin to grow. You say conkers. I have to try your British conkers game, we do not have this. As a child, I fill my pockets with these shiny treasures and they make me smile to know they are there for me to touch, smooth and round and lovely. So you see I love this tree. And I am sad when this disease come and turn tree from beautiful thing to ugly.

SCENE 14, LANDING, CHRISTO'S FLAT

FOOTSTEPS GOING DOWNSTAIRS

CHRISTO Hello

FOOTSTEPS CARRY ON DOWN. THE DOOR CLOSES WITH A BANG.

THEN, AFTER A MOMENT, KELLY'S FOOTSTEPS COMING UPSTAIRS.

CHRISTO IS WAITING FOR HER

CHRISTO Please.

KELLY Shit! You scared the life out of me

CHRISTO Excuse me. I wait for you

KELLY What for?

CHRISTO You come in, please? I make tea

KELLY You're alright

CHRISTO Yes, I am alright. Please...

KELLY I'm in a hurry

CHRISTO It will not take long. Please

KELLY Don't know you, do I? You might get me in there and chop me
into little pieces

CHRISTO No, I - Okay, so I tell it to you here. I have your note

KELLY You what?

CHRISTO Your note, that you left on my bicycle

KELLY Nope, you lost me there mate

CHRISTO When I left outside.

KELLY Yeah, well you can't leave it there, can you? Told you, didn't I?

CHRISTO I know. Excuse me. But was only for short time. I have visitor
and was crowded

KELLY Yeah, well. You're lucky to be here at all if you ask me. I wouldn't
have it. No offence, but there ain't the room, is there, know
what I'm saying?

CHRISTO Yes, yes, no room. So I put in hallway for a short time. I hope this
was not when you were having ... stuff... to move?

KELLY You know what, mate? You shouldn't be here if you can't understand
the language.

CHRISTO I understand you are angry

KELLY Too right I'm angry. Some of us have to wait years to get one of
these flats, then you lot turn up like you've got every right
and then fucking complain about them.

CHRISTO I am sorry. I-

KELLY Then I suppose you'll be bringing your whole family over, will you?

Then see how much space you've got

CHRISTO I am not bringing my family. No. I am here for work. Only this. I

am professional and I have job

KELLY Yeah, and whose job is it, eh?

CHRISTO (CONFUSED) Is mine

KELLY 'Cos you nicked it

CHRISTO I do not know this 'nicked'. Is my job. Really

KELLY What, and no-one else in the whole of Britain could do it instead?

CHRISTO I think this is true. I am expert

KELLY Well you know what, I don't think you're an expert, I think you're
disgusting. (SHE SPITS AT CHRISTO). Disgusting.

SCENE 15

CHRISTO (V/O) Cameraria Ohridella. Leaf miner. Is nasty, nasty disease.

First we have these beautiful trees and then the leaf miner come and make the trees ugly. Their leaves curl with ugliness. Is not a fault of the trees, they do nothing wrong. It comes and it take hold and there is nothing the trees can do, except to give in to disease. But. Inside tree, is the same. Tree is still alive, is not dead, so what can we do? We cannot chop down these trees, just because they are ugly. And if we do, the disease will only go to another tree. So, we cannot kill disease, we cannot chop down tree, all we can do is try to help.

SCENE 16, PUB

NEIL There you are, mate, pint of bitter. Proper English drink. Cheers

CHRISTO Cheers. How much?

NEIL No, you're alright. It's on me

CHRISTO 'It's on me'. I know this one - Series 4, Episode Six. It's on me:
you buy the square

NEIL Do I? Oh, you mean the round

CHRISTO Oh, yes. Yes, the round, of course. I remember for next time.

NEIL So how's it going, in the lab? Don't get down there much, I'm afraid

CHRISTO It's going. Slowly, but is going. We test, and we wait.

NEIL Right. Well, good luck

CHRISTO Thank you. And you, how's it going with you?

NEIL Oh, you know, paperwork. Funding. You on your bike?

CHRISTO No

NEIL Another puncture?

CHRISTO No, is worse than that

NEIL Oh yeah?

CHRISTO I don't have bike anymore

NEIL Why not?

CHRISTO I don't... Is nothing

NEIL No, go on. What happened?

CHRISTO Is my fault. I cannot leave in hallway, but there is not room in my flat, so I leave outside

NEIL What, and someone nicked it?

CHRISTO Was destroyed. Smashed up, and burned.

NEIL God, Christo, sorry. Kids, I suppose

CHRISTO SAYS NOTHING

Christo? Do you know who it was?

CHRISTO I can't understand why people are so angry

NEIL What people?

CHRISTO Neil, tell me - is someone in your Institute who could do job I have?

NEIL What?

CHRISTO If you advertise job, is someone here in UK who can do same job, better maybe?

NEIL No. I don't know. Look, Christo, what's happened?

CHRISTO She say I take job. Steal job. Is true?

NEIL No, of course not. It's a special post, special funding, just for you.

Who's 'she'?

CHRISTO So why does she think I steal job from her?

NEIL No, she doesn't, it's- it's a thing. People, they say these things. Generalisations. 'You come over here, you steal our jobs'

CHRISTO I see.

NEIL Is this someone at work?

CHRISTO No, no, is- Is just my neighbour

NEIL What, and she's burned your bike?

Mate, I'm really sorry

CHRISTO Is okay. Is only bike. I walk instead

NEIL To work? It'll take you hours. No, look, we'll get you another bike. You can borrow mine

CHRISTO I don't think is good idea. Perhaps she burn this one also.

NEIL So how are you going to get around? Is there a bus?

CHRISTO I prefer walk. Enjoy the British weather

NEIL Well not tonight you won't. I'll give you a lift

SCENE 17

CHRISTO There is very famous horse chestnut tree outside the house of Anne Frank. There was. She writes about it in her diary, how she looks out of the attic up into this tree, the rain-drops like silver on her branches. She looks for a long time at this tree, and it gives to her hope. Tree is no longer there. In 2010 it fell down, rotten and full of disease

SCENE 18, NEIL'S CAR

CHRISTO And then we put the earth all over him and one piece of tree -
what is word?

NEIL Branch

CHRISTO Yes, branch. One green branch on his head, like this. Is very
funny. Oh, is just here

NEIL Yup, I remember.

CHRISTO Thank you, Neil. For lift, and also for pint.

NEIL Welcome, mate. We'll have to do it again

CHRISTO I would like this. Now, if you wait I will get your tools for bicycle

NEIL I'll come up with you.

SCENE 19, STAIRS TO CHRISTO'S APARTMENT

CHRISTO You would like another rakia, maybe? Or your wife is going out for drinking wine again?

NEIL No, no, she's in tonight. Thanks, mate, but I'd better get back. Shit.

HE IS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.

CHRISTO What has... (HE ARRIVES AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS TOO)

NEIL Shit. Mate, I'm really sorry.

SCENE 19

CHRISTO Is shit. Really. On my door. And somehow, they have gone inside also, and there is shit all over, on walls, on bed. I do not know how is possible. Door was locked, I am sure, but maybe lock is no good. Neil, he will not leave me. He make me go home with him. Annabel, Neil's wife, she gives me cup of tea and biscuit, but I think she is not happy I am there. I am in lounge drinking my tea and I hear them talking.

SCENE 20, NEIL'S HOUSE

ANNABEL I'm not being unhelpful, it's just... You could have rung me

NEIL I couldn't, could I? Didn't have a chance.

ANNABEL Only it would have been good to have a bit of warning. The spare room's full of washing, there's no sheets on the bed-

NEIL Yeah, well at least they're not covered in human excrement

ANNABEL God, Neil!

NEIL Come on, Annie, I couldn't leave him there, the woman's obviously a psycho

ANNABEL So why hasn't he called the police? If it's been going on all this time?

NEIL Why d'you think? They'd probably just tell him to get on with it, anyway.

Embrace our culture

ANNABEL Don't be stupid. Well I suppose he can stay for tonight.

NEIL Great

ANNABEL But Sandy and Ems are coming at the weekend, remember, so
then it gets a bit awkward. Was it really bad?

NEIL Yes, in a word. God, Annie, you should have seen his face. I only went
in with him because he wanted to give me back my bicycle
pump. Poor bloke. And then in the car on the way here his
wife phoned and he was all cheerful and laughing, and
then when he hung up he just sat there, crying. Oh. Alright
Christo?

CHRISTO Yes, alright, thank you. Annabel, I am very sorry for ruin your
evening

ANNABEL Oh no, it's fine

CHRISTO Neil tells me you were going to have quiet evening in front of television

ANNABEL Oh well, it doesn't matter. It's nice to meet you

CHRISTO Nice to meet you too. You have very beautiful house

ANNABEL Thank you. Could do with a few more rooms, but you know...

NEIL So, Christo, it's all sorted. You can stay in the spare room

CHRISTO Oh. Thank you. Very much. But I am going home now

ANNABEL What, home home?

CHRISTO (AMUSED) No, back to my flat.

NEIL No, mate. No, it's out of the question. You're staying here.

CHRISTO You are very kind, but I must go back.

NEIL You can't, it's...

CHRISTO Is shit. I know. Literally. But is okay. I clean.

ANNABEL Really? Because, you know, it would be lovely to have you, although the spare room is in a bit of a mess because I didn't know you were coming, and then at the weekend we've got-

NEIL God, Annie. (TO CHRISTO) Look, are you sure?

CHRISTO Sure I'm sure. Because if I do not go back she get what she wants, no?

NEIL Yes, I suppose. But what about..

CHRISTO The shit? The shit on the sheet. Is good I am not Spanish, is impossible for them, these words: ship, sheep, chip, cheap, shit, sheet

NEIL Well, look, if you're sure..

CHRISTO I am sure

NEIL Well, we can give you some sheets. Can't we, Annie?

ANNABEL Yes, of course. They're not ironed, I'm afraid...

NEIL And I'm sure we can find some cleaning stuff, rubber gloves, can't we?

Annie?

ANNABEL Yes, I'll put you a little bag together.

CHRISTO Thank you. This is very kind

NEIL And you'll stay for supper first?

CHRISTO No, I think is better to go back now. Thank you

NEIL Okay, fine. We'll get some chips or something on the way. That's alright with you, Annie?

ANNIE Fine. Only...

NEIL What?

ANNIE Well I was just thinking.... We're having some friends to stay at the weekend, but next weekend, maybe - would you like to come over for dinner?

CHRISTO Yes. Please, Annie. I like that very much. Blimey. I like that very much indeed.

SCENE 19

CHRISTO (V/O) And so Neil gives me lift, and we stop for fish and chips, and we go to park to eat them, and is good. I have friend, I think.

And then we go home. And I take out my 'little pack' that I have from Annie, and I clean. And I clean and I clean. And then I go to bed. To my clean bed, and I lie there and I look at

branches in streetlight from my window and I think about
my home and my wife and how I can not tell her about this.
And in the morning I wait until I hear my neighbour and I
open my door and I say, very loud, very happy:

CHRISTO Good morning!

The door slams shut. And then we hear a door downstairs open and
footsteps coming up the stairs

CHRISTO (V/O) And then there are footsteps from the stairs and I think
okay, now who is coming to be nasty to me now, and is
man from upstairs, who always ignore me. I am turn to go
inside and then, something incredible:

MAN Alright?

Footsteps continue up the stairs

CHRISTO The tree of Anne Frank, it was full of disease. Everywhere. They
think is completely destroyed. But. Have you heard this

expression ‘green shoots’? Well, from this tree come green shoots. We take cuttings and we grow cuttings and we send small trees to other parts of the world as symbol of hope. Perhaps these trees, they also become diseased, who knows? But we are working, to find cure. And all the time, trees are getting stronger, getting a little bit some power for resist. So even though some trees may get disease, perhaps there are some, or perhaps just one, who grow tall and green and healthy, with leaves which are not brown and gnarled (‘nar-led’, is this correct? I like this word, is very good word, nar-led). And because these trees they are small number, and they are surround by many trees of brown and dry and ugly, their beauty is more, do you see? Perhaps this one green tree is so beautiful that it can make you crying. I think this is possible. Yes. I know.

THE END