



THE SHARPER THE BETTER

Bare stage. Closed curtains. Three persons prepare.

A: The dressed. Centre stage. Stands, almost completely static, on a foot-high stool covered in black rubber. Sweats. Breathes occasionally, as though attempting to hold breath for elongated and unnatural lengths. Electric blue oilskin trench, white socks, white eye, beige cheek, nude leather moustache.

B: Dresser 1. Right side of stage. Takes in full view of the production. Arms crossed. Entirely white outfit reminiscent of a 50s schoolboy.

C: Dresser 2. Left of the dressed. Interacts with small pile of garments and accessories strewn about the stage floor. Wears lingerie, boots, leather gloves that come above elbow. Heavy make-up.

B: Bare the neck.

C: But.

B: Bare it.

C: Sir. [*Shuffles behind the dressed, unveils the nape.*]

B: The leg, it stops where?

C: Here. [*Indicates upper shin.*] The rest is just foot.

B: Terrific. All light should be focussed on the foot.

C: That'll have them on their feet. [*Twitches nervously.*]

A is burdened. Makes small, uncomfortable gestures with the trench, as though it itches. Points at himself.

B: He's barmy, bleedin' barmy. Make him stop. If only I was born without eyes.

C: What a day to choose to put oilskin on. We're having a heatwave.

B: Nonsense. Superstitious hogs. I've never felt better in my life. It all makes it bit more fun, a bit more restrictive.

C: "Never put on you tomorrow what you can wear today."

B: This is finery to deceive the eye. He looks sad?

C: He's got a slate loose.

B: Put that headpiece on him. I can't reach such heights, but the pedestal is necessary.

C places a remarkable yellow and black polka dot fascinator on A's head. A indicates with a curl of the lip and a roll of the eye to reposition the fascinator askew, drawing down, shading the right eye. A smiles, cheeks redden.

B: Oooh, a first blush! And subsequent blushes will reveal a number of possible construals.

C: I imagine so. But it'll be clear as clay knowing him.

B: It's all "I am, ain't I? I have, don't I? I think, I think..."

C: Which heel? The red? The red heels, please! Let us use those today! They are the difference between being interested and being attracted.

A moans, pleasurably.

B: Those garish, sickly smiles. He is salacious?

C: He has on him a rubber.

B: Used?

C: Ready.

B: Who allowed that? Did he place it himself? *[Pause.]* Mmm, it does add the tenderest manipulation to the fabric that only an object of such a size could achieve. Well, let's keep it like that.

C: I like it under the sheets. The lights turned off. I prefer to keep it on. I'm kinky like that.

B: Your lusts are of no interest to us. Apply the beauty spot.

C: *[Delicately applies dark spot to A's left cheek. Mutters to A.]* To see people experimenting with power is always atrocious.

B: What was that? *[Stumbles closer.]*

C: A tie? For added restriction, for added pomp, for the crowds, so that they understand their place? *[With one long, elegant movement, ties the tie. Allows room for A's breath, for gulping Adam's apple.]*

B: We are creating a beacon. We are creating a monument. We do not torment with this beauty. Within the mangle of London, our protagonist finds a cushion of relief. This is a blissful piece!

C: "There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find / Nor can his Watch Fiends find it: tis translucent & has many Angles."

B: Precisely. Nothing naff! I think we are almost ready for the crowd. The lights are correct?

C: A bag, for when he exits? For his drinkie?

B: Of course. Get his drinkie!

C rustles through the remaining accessories. Finds a full bottle of rosé. Wraps in stray piece of blue leather and lays delicately in large white leather bag with a horseshoe taking the role of the handle. Walks to A, gently bends A's right arm at the elbow, hooks bag on A's arm crook.

C: The drinkie has been added.

B: What has he under the trench? Say it!

C: Nothing.

A becomes suddenly relaxed. Takes rosé from the bag, drains 20 seconds worth of a swig. Replaces bottle. All sweating stops. His body assumes a contrapposto pose. He lifts his chin, stares directly forward with utter clarity and spotless nerve.

B: Lift the curtains.

END

HURTENCE
THE SHARPER THE BETTER
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THE RAGGED SCHOOL
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