

A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Panama

[A city street outside a bank. Enter Donk. He stops. Looks about. Studies the sign on the side of the building. He bends and pretends to tie his shoelaces. Stands. He whistles. A man enters from the opposite direction – Fisher. He carries a Gladstone bag.]

DONK: G'day.

FISH: How yer goin'?

DONK: Not bad.

FISH: See yer later.

[Neither moves. Pause. They repeat:]

DONK: G'day.

FISH: How yer goin'?

DONK: Not bad.

FISH: See yer later.

[Pause. They stare at each other. The town hall clock strikes.]

DONK: I said 'G'day.'

FISH: I said 'How yer goin'?'

DONK: I said 'Not bad.'

FISH: Donk?.....Is that you Donk?

[Donk ignores this. Gazes at the sky.]

Donk? Ignore me then, why don't you?

DONK: Eh?

FISH: It's me. Don't you remember me?

DONK: I, er, yeah, of course.

FISH: What's my name then?

DONK: I, er.....

FISH: You don't remember.

DONK: No, I do. It's Fish.

FISH: Yeah.....Er.....Right

DONK: What do you know?

FISH: Eggs don't bounce.

DONK: Good one, yeah.....yeah.....good one.

FISH: What do *you* know?

DONK: Not much. Not much at all really.
[Pause. They look around at the bank. Fish checks his watch, even though he's not wearing one.]

FISH: Don't know much, do we Donk.

DONK: Nope. Nope, Fish, we don't. More's the pity. How's Sylvie?

FISH: Who?

DONK: Sylvie. Your Missus.

FISH: Oh her.

DONK: Nice lass. Saw her in a nursing home once. Recently. Looked good. Took her for a nurse. Might be wrong though.

FISH: Shot through.

DONK: That's no good. Shot through, did she? More's the pity.

FISH: Glad to be rid of her. Said I snored.

DONK: She didn't.

FISH: She did.

DONK: I don't believe it.

FISH: Snored! Me! Like a grampus, what ever that is. Like, and this really cuts Donk, like sleeping next to a jumbo jet, she said.

DONK: Do you snore?

FISH: How would I know? I'm asleep, aren't I. It's the principle of the thing. Snored!

DONK: She didn't stand staunch.

FISH: Hmph.
[Pause. Fish checks his 'watch.' Puts his bag down.]

DONK: So, Fish, what's been happening? What are you doing hanging round here. All alone. Outside the..... bank.

FISH: The bank?

DONK: I'm jumping to conclusions on account of the sign.

FISH: Er. Banking.

DONK: Ahh.....

[Pause. Donk examines his shoelaces again.]

FISH: What are you doing?

DONK: In general?

FISH: No, right now.

DONK: Fixing my shoe laces.

[Pause.]

So's I don't trip over...The old plates of meat...Ha ha ha.

FISH: Bit clumsy are we?

DONK: Are you?

FISH: No you. You are.

DONK: Am I?

FISH: I don't know, I don't know. You're the one who has to keep checking your shoelaces. Me, I wear slip-ons. Steel-capped. Rubber soled. Top shelf.

[They both stare at Fish's shoes. He wiggles his toes. Tapdances.]

DONK: Banking, eh?

FISH: That's the idea.

DONK: You wouldn't happen to be making a - withdrawal?

FISH: That's the plan.

DONK: A man, a plan, a canal, Panama.

FISH: You talk in circles.

DONK: We like a good plan.

FISH: Who's we?

DONK: You don't expect me to tell you that.

FISH: No, no. I suppose you'd have to kill me if you did, ha ha.

DONK: Too right.

[Pause. They examine their 'watches.']

FISH: How?

DONK: Eh?

FISH: If you had to...er...you know...do the deed...how would you... er... go about it?

DONK: Ah, slowly?

FISH: You're missing the point.

DONK: Is there a point?
FISH: Of course. There's always a point.
DONK: Right. Right. Let me see if I've got you. If, and I say 'if', I had to...er... let's say bump you off, and I'm not saying I'd like it, no I probably wouldn't, then what means would I employ to...er...achieve...er...to get the job done? Is that what you're asking?
FISH: That's the ticket.
DONK: I dunno.
FISH: Well think man, think. I'm trying to formulate a self-defence plan here.
DONK: Like Kung-fu.
FISH: Tamagotchi.
DONK: Glock.
FISH: What did you say? Did you call me gronk?
DONK: No, glock. Glock.
FISH: Glock?
DONK: Glock. Glock special.
FISH: Is there such a thing?
DONK: All right - Uzi.
FISH: Better, better.
DONK: Satisfied?
FISH: Barely.
DONK: And why was this again? I forget.
FISH: You talk in circles.
[Pause.]
Wish the bank would open. Where's the security guard?
DONK: How much are you planning to - withdraw?
FISH: That's a bit personal.
DONK: Just asking. You don't have to answer.
FISH: Well Donk, just between you, me and the lamp post - is that a lamp post?
DONK: Where?
FISH: Just there.

DONK: Yes. I guess it is. It's got a lamp.
FISH: I thought I saw it move.
DONK: You're seeing things.
FISH: No I'm not.
DONK: Speed psychosis.
FISH: Oh, that.
DONK: It's just a lamp post.
FISH: The whole day's takings.
DONK: I beg your pardon?
FISH: The whole day's takings. In this bag.
DONK: Wow...Me too. Only I didn't bring a bag.
[Pause.]
FISH: Isn't that funny. Both of us here at the same time, in the same street, outside the same bank, planning to withdraw the 'whole day's takings.'
DONK: With a Glock.
FISH: A Glock?
DONK: This one here.
[He pats his pocket.]
FISH: I wonder what the psychs would have to say about that?
DONK: Probably write a report.
FISH: I prefer the old sawn-off Uzi.
[He pats his own pocket.]
BOTH TOGETHER: Those were the days.
DONK: At least we're on the same page, if not at the same picnic.
FISH: You talk in circles...I wish this bank would open.
DONK: I'm surprised there's not more of a queue.
FISH: Good observation Donk. I wonder what the psychs would make of it?
DONK: A tip-off?
FISH: Who would tip them off for God's sake? They're psychs!
DONK: The lamp post.

FISH: Eh?

DONK: You're right, it did move.

FISH: Must be seeing things.

DONK: Me too.

FISH: It could be someone disguised as a lamp post. Act natural.

[They act natural.]

This is a disaster.

DONK: I might call the whole thing off.

FISH: And waste the adrenalin?

DONK: It's all society's fault.

FISH: Bloody oath.

DONK: Bloody oath, bloody oath.

FISH: It wants a good kick up the quoit.

DONK: A clouting to remember.

FISH: A slap around the gills.

DONK: A bunch of fives.

FISH: A shiner.

DONK: A knuckle sandwich.

FISH: A pounding.

DONK: And I've got just the knuckles.

[He looks at his knuckles fondly.]

FISH: Speaking of which Donk, I was told by the psychs that Australian society has the shortest greeting ritual in the world.

DONK: Get away with you.

FISH: The shortest.

DONK: Is that a fact?

FISH: It is.

DONK: How short?

FISH: 'G'day. How yer goin'? Not bad. See yer later.'

DONK: G'day? How yer goin'? Not bad? See yer later?

FISH: That's it. Don't even stop for a chat.

DONK: I've heard shorter.

FISH: In any other country they'll ask how your family's going?
and are your grandad's cataracts on the mend? and how's
the second cousin twice removed on your mum's side? and
has the pox cleared up? And isn't the drought terrible, and
do you think it will snow or sleet or hail?

DONK: Too much information.

FISH: That's what I'm on about.

DONK: I must say this is a top conversation.

[Together they chant:]

TOGETHER: G'day. How yer goin'? Not bad. See yer later.

FISH: Something to fill in the time. Life's good, eh?

DONK: I wouldn't go that far...Life's - not bad.

FISH: There's a reason for everything.

[Pause.]

DONK: What's in the bag?

FISH: What bag?

DONK: That bag.

FISH: This bag?

DONK: Yes.

FISH: A smaller bag.

DONK: You talk in circles.

FISH: Balaclava!

DONK: Excuse me?

FISH: I've forgotten the balaclava.

DONK: Don't worry about it.

[Pause.]

Look at us. Two happy-go-lucky cobbers. The past behind
them. Meet up again on the outside.

FISH: Out and about with a -

DONK: Glock. The other with a -

FISH: Sawn-off Uzi.

DONK: Loitering with intent in the vicinity of a -

FISH: Bank, in the sunshine, on a Saturday morning -

DONK: Without a care in the - Hang on a mo. What did you say?

FISH: Which bit?

DONK: Loitering with intent –

FISH: Speak for yourself.

DONK: In the sunshine.

FISH: On a sunny Saturday morning.

DONK: There it goes again. The crucial bit of information.

FISH: Saturday?

DONK: Saturday.

FISH: Oh.

DONK: I've just twigged.

FISH: Wake up Australia.

DONK: What are we doing here?

FISH: Apart from standing staunch?

[Donk peers in the bank windows.]

DONK: All this time I've been sitting here wasting my time talking to you, giving myself an alibi, waiting for the bank to open, and it's bloody Saturday morning. There's not even a security guard. He's probably home asleep in his cot. Having a nice dream.

FISH: The lights are on but no body's home.

DONK: The hamster's dead but the wheel's still turning.

FISH: Hamsters?

DONK: Ten animals I slam in a net.

FISH: Ten animals you slam in a net.

DONK: Not quite.

FISH: You talk in circles

DONK: I do.

FISH: Well if that's how you feel about it.

DONK: It is.

FISH: Well...Good day.

DONK: Where you goin'?

FISH: Not bad.

DONK: See you later.

[Pause.]

FISH: Not if I see you first.
 [They leave in opposite directions.]

Mark O'Flynn