

Audition Extract 2. KING GEORGE V & BERTIE

*(BERTIE steps into his father's study that resembles a captain's cabin, although it is currently dominated by a huge BBC microphone. BERTIE stares at the contraption with terrified fascination, as one might a coiled cobra.)*

KING GEORGE V Stride boldly up to the bloody thing! Stare it square in the eye and speak to it as you would to any decent Englishman. Show who is in command.

*(BERTIE regards the microphone as though it were about to bite him.)*

BERTIE I d-d-don't thu-thu-think I c-ccan.

*(In the presence of his father, Bertie's stuttering is always in full form; his breathing short and shallow, the neck muscles in spasms.)*

KING GEORGE V

If you don't, this devilish device will change everything. Used to be all a King had to do was look reasonable in uniform and not fall off his horse. Now we must creep cap in hand into people's homes that smell of boiled cabbage, and speak nicely to them. We're reduced to that lowest, basest of all creatures . . . we've become . . . actors! Don't give me your look of defeated pathos. This is a family crisis!

BERTIE Father, we're a limited liability firm, not a family.

*(His father shoots BERTIE a surprised look. Does the lad have a brain after all?)*

KING GEORGE V

We're the oldest, most successful corporation in the world and sitting on thrones is our business! But any moment now we may be out of work. When I'm dead that brother of yours will ruin himself, this family, and this nation, within twelve months. Who'll pick up the pieces? David's friend, Oswald Mosley? His black-shirt British Union of Fascists is marching through the streets of London. Hitler is terrorizing have of Europe, Stalin the other half. Who'll stand between us, the jackboots and the proletarian abyss? *You?*