

# Blessed Be the King of Glory

Rod Dungate

PREVIEW

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## Characters

Pelham: *A young man, 20s*

Kinsident Arthur II: *Titular and elected Head of State*

Simpson: *Arthur's PA*

The Rt Rev Hubert Topping: *The Bishop*

Sir Peter Partridge: *Chief Constable (played by an older woman)*

Gabriel: *An archangel*

Two other actors who play:

Two soldiers

Two Palace servants (Davis 1, Davis 2)

Two police officers

A Gaoler

Tod, *villain for hire*

Daisy and Daffodil, *two of Pelham's maids*

Andre, *a couturier*

and animate

Pelham's mother

Maccers, *Tod's dog*

Lanky, *another of Tod's dogs*

A crow

and also create

Moira, *Pelham's Mother's cow*

Pronunciation Note: *Blessed*. For the most part, *blessed* is spoken with one syllable, but sung with two. *Blessed* in the play's title is with two syllables (it's from the song). If there is a strong feeling at any moment that *blessed* should be spoken with two syllables, that is open to your interpretation.

## One: Pelham's Home

(A house, in some disrepair. Rubble strewn around. Other items. Pelham's mother lies on the ground, gasping for breath. Standing nearby, a dagger in her mouth, is Moira, the cow. Pelham's Mother is a life-size puppet.)

The skies are blue, the sun shines brightly, the birds sing – though perhaps not just yet.)

Mother My son, my son, why have you forsaken me?

(In the distance, and approaching, cheerfully, we hear Pelham.)

Pelham Helloooo. I'm home.

(Moira starts at the sound of Pelham. She departs quickly, dropping the dagger. Pelham arrives.)

Pelham Hello mum. Bit early for a kip.

Mother Son . . .

Pelham I'm just going to get a drink. Want one?

Mother Son . . .

Pelham What?

Mother Son . . .

Pelham I'm getting a drink.

Mother Here.

Pelham Too tired to get up are we?

Mother Help me.

Pelham Back gone again?

Mother Here. Look. Closer.

Pelham You're talking funny.

Mother Closer.

Pelham Don't give me your cold. Oh god. Blood. How d'you do this?

Mother Listen.

Pelham Let me get an ambulance.

Mother No time. Last breath.

Pelham Lie still.

Mother All night I was lying here. Waiting for you. All night, through the pain, through the agony. Waited. Important. Sun rise. Dawn birds heralding a new day. Waited. Hung on. You ... for you ... And you ...

Pelham Yes? ...

Mother All night clubbing.

Pelham Big business.

Mother I have bigger business.

Pelham Is there money in it?

Mother Gold shines; but it also dazzles and then blinds.

Pelham I've got my Ray-Bans. What do we get out of it?

Mother Pain. Danger. Torture at the hands of dark forces. An honourable demise.

Pelham I know clubs like that.

Mother You're feckless. A waster. A ne'er do well. I longed for a daughter, but I was cursed with a son.

Pelham No-one's perfect.

Mother You father owned this house. Our little grassy knoll. And his father before him. Our little hill, our green hill. And his father before him. And his father before him for generations. And we have guarded a terrible secret.

Pelham Was it something Granddad did?

Mother Your granddad didn't do it. It was done thousands of years ago. What it was and who did it nobody knows. Because we have guarded the secret. Anyone knowing this sin could bring an end to civilisation as we know it. We guard the writing.

Pelham If it's so terrible why don't you just tear it up?

Mother Knowledge can't be destroyed so easily; only contained. Angels and demons have warred to possess it. But we have been steadfast. I alone among women stood against the Flood.

Pelham Look where that got you.

Mother The Flood was afraid, for when you speak of this sin, skies grow dark and the sun ceases to shine. The absolute truth of the mighty sin against the ghost.

Pelham We're haunted!

Mother The Holy Ghost. It is the Great Repudiation. Words so powerful they could corrupt even the Saints in their prayer and commit them to eternal, everlasting burning. Mortals who have read the words have run instantly mad. The words have been forgotten, where it is recorded has been cast aside. Until now. That is why I was attacked. The secret is safe but they will be back.

Pelham I had a bad night.

Mother While you danced with floozies I danced with Death. Did they want it for power, or money? Unchallenged dictatorship or unbounded wealth? In my rage, I killed a first assailant, killed a second, lopped off the arm of a third was laying into a fourth when I fell.

Pelham Felled by a powerful adversary.

Mother Fell over the wheelbarrow you left out. And I was impaled on the dagger still held in the disembodied hand of my third assailant. You can see where it lies.

Pelham This is evidence – it'll have finger prints. And here's the arm. It's horrible. This'll have finger prints too.

Mother They cheered as I fell, dying. But I laughed in their faces. I laughed so loudly the earth shook. And as the earth shook they ran.

(Mother laughs as if to prove her point.)

Pelham Don't do that I might need to rebuild.

Mother Son. Closer. You must now be the protector of the secret. It is locked in a casket; you will know it when you see it. It is the Ark of the Repudiation.

Pelham Where is it?

Mother Guard it carefully and God help us all. Son ... come closer ... Whatever your faults, you are my son, and the son of your father and the grandson of his father.

Pelham Where's the box?

Mother Son, my own son ...

Pelham Where is it?

Mother Son ... fuck your sorry arse.

(And with a gasp and cough she dies.)

Pelham Bitch.

(Mother gives a gasp and a splutter.)

Fucking witch.

(Mother gasps long and splutters hard.)

Fucking go if you're going.

(And she finally goes. Actor-puppeteer leaves.)

Thank fuck for that.

(He suddenly realises he doesn't know where the Ark is. He runs to his mother, takes her up and shakes her vigorously.)

Where's the Ark you stupid bitch? Dead bitch!

(Mother gives her final gasp, which may sound a bit like a last laugh. He drops her abruptly.)

Fuck you.

(He wanders about in a desultory fashion, half-heartedly looking for the all-important box. He picks up the dagger and drops it. The arm and drops it. He makes suitable comments as he does this. He puts his mother's body into the wheelbarrow and wheels her out of the way; covers her up, though not too well. Moira has come in and watched some of this.)

Pelham Ah Moira. There you are. What a terrible night, eh?

(Moira responds. Moira responds often, with nods, shakes of the head, rolling eyes, and moos.)

We try to eke out an existence with toil and sweat but the Lord above and the politicians don't want it that way do they? They want us ground under-foot. Squashed and beaten, eh? Still they spared you didn't they? What? You fought them. Chased them? Killed some? Well done. So, we've still got each other, don't we? And the bond of trust between us? Moira? . . . You know a lot, don't you? Have you ever seen the old lady with a kind of box? A sort of special box? That she kept in a special place? Do you think you could get it for me? You do? Brilliant. Yes, no time like the present. I'll wait here. You're a beautiful girl, Moria.

(Moira goes for the Ark. After a moment or two Chief Constable Sir Peter Partridge and Bishop Hubert Topping ride in on their horses.)

Partridge Here we are.

Topping Is this the right place?

Partridge According to my Satellite Navigation.

Topping I can't get on with those, Sir Peter.

Partridge That's because your head is always in the celestial clouds, Bishop. His eternal vigilance doesn't go to giving you the odd, at the next round-about take the third exit. You boy.

Pelham Me sir?

Partridge Who else, you wet sod?

Topping Sir Peter, remember community policing.

Partridge Namby pamby bollocks. You, crap-head, has he turned up yet?

Pelham Who?

Topping The Kinsident, young man.

Pelham The Kinsident? The real one?

Partridge He's had his brain removed.

Topping Don't be so hard on him.

Partridge Anesthetised then.

Topping He's probably in awe of us. You know what the poor and needy are like. Yes, young man; His Majesty, Kinsident Arthur II, bless his name.

Pelham Fuck me sideways. What's he coming here for?

Topping To look around.

Partridge None of your business.

Pelham Sorry?

Partridge Don't worry about that, dude. Just be honoured he's coming. You might get a medal.

Topping And I could bless you.

Pelham I'm made then, aren't I?

Topping It all helps get you a better table in a restaurant.

(Moirra comes in with the Ark.)

Topping Help, there's a cow.

Pelham Hi Moira.

Partridge Cows don't bite.

Topping But they shit.

Partridge The only time to worry about shit is when it's hitting fans.

Topping But all that slithery slurping noise.

Pelham You'd better go old girl. Thanks for bringing this.

(Moira goes. Pelham attempts to hide the Ark.)

Partridge What's that?

Pelham Moira's very house-trained. Indoors she's got a litter tray. But she farts a bit.

Topping Bad for the ozone layer.

Partridge What are you hiding?

Pelham Nothing.

Partridge A box.

Pelham Just a little junk box.

Partridge Let me see.

Pelham Just an old box. Belongs to my mother. Keeps her beans in it.

Partridge Likely story.

Pelham We're branching into market gardening.

Partridge Give it here.

Topping Oh my god.

Pelham No.

Topping Be careful.

Partridge Why not?

Pelham It's mine.

Partridge I think you'll find it's mine.

Pelham Sentimental value.

Topping He's got a point. If it is the you-know-what it's been with the family for -

(Partridge has a look around.)

Partridge Now what do we have here? (To Topping.) Leave this to the grown-ups.

Pelham It's my mother.

Partridge She doesn't look very alive.

Pelham She's dozing.

Partridge Wake up!

Pelham She a heavy dozer.

Partridge She's covered in blood you tossers.

Pelham She cut herself shaving.

Partridge Oh, ho, ho, is this a dagger I see before you?

Pelham It's a prop for a play.

Partridge You confuse reality and illusion. This probable corpse, this likely bloody weapon, this too-evident disarray, we have a crime scene here, sonny. In which case, everything is evidence. In which case the box is mine.

Topping He's got a point.

(Partridge produces a Taser, which he demonstrates.)

Partridge So you can either resist arrest, or hand over the evidence.

Topping Most succinctly put, Sir Peter.

(Pelham weighs up the situation. He decides to make a run for it. But he runs straight into the arms of one of the Kinsident's soldiers. Note that his uniform matches the arm seen earlier.)

Soldier A Where are you off to in such a hurry?

Pelham Nowhere.

Soldier A That's suspicious in itself.

Partridge This is a crime scene.

Soldier A What we got here?

Pelham My Mother's jewellery box.

Topping You said it had beans in it.

Partridge Leave me to the interrogation, Bishop. You said it had beans in it.

Pelham Beads.

Partridge Better check. Give it here.

Pelham No.

Partridge It's evidence, give it to me.

Pelham No.

Soldier A It's evidence, give it to him.

Pelham Evidence of what?

Soldier A Crime.

Pelham There hasn't been a crime.

Partridge I'll decide that. The public is ill-equipped to distinguish between right and wrong.

Topping That's why we have religion.

Soldier A Give it to him, or I'll arrest you. And I'm military police.

Partridge And I'm Chief of Police and I'll arrest you.

(Pelham reluctantly gives the box to Partridge.)

Pelham I'll get you for this.

Partridge I'll have your balls off first.

Topping Sir Peter, community policing.

(Soldier B enters.)

Soldier B Stand back. Back behind the barrier please.

(Assisted by Soldier A, Soldier B forces the crowd behind a barrier which he puts up. The crowd is Pelham. Kinsident Arthur II comes in, on a splendid horse, followed by Simpson on a dreary mount.)

Arthur Here we are Simpson. See you got here first.

Partridge Eager to serve, sir.

Arthur Find anything.

(Partridge passes the box to Topping.)

Partridge Nothing of significance, sir.

Arthur What did you pass Topping?

Partridge Nothing, majesty.

Simpson It was a box, sire.

Topping Just a box.

Partridge Just a box.

Arthur I saw it was a box.

Pelham It's my box, sir.

Soldier B Stand back.

Pelham Don't push.

Arthur Who are you?

Partridge He's a potential terrorist, sir.

Arthur He hasn't got a beard.

Partridge Kalashnikov?

Soldier No, sir.

Partridge Probably under cover.

Arthur Or one of those other things.

Partridge What other things?

Arthur You know. Those other things?

(He demonstrates.)

Topping He's got a point.

Simpson Don't take chances, sire.

Arthur What's in the box, Topping?

Topping Beads, sir.

Arthur Likely story. You'll be telling me it's beans next.

Pelham It is beans, sir.

Arthur Who are you?

Partridge What sort of beans, magic?

Pelham Runners. Scarlet Marvels.

Arthur We have a dispute, Simpson.

Simpson We do sire.

Arthur I shall have to arbitrate

Simpson We need your wisdom, sire.

Arthur Topping. Open the box.

(The skies darken and thunder rumbles.)

Topping I'd rather not, sir.

Arthur Get on with it.

Topping I've got to prepare a communion for the Return of the Ladies.

Arthur Simpson, get the box.

Partridge It may contain explosives.

Simpson Yes, sire.

Arthur Open it.

Simpson Me?

Arthur One, you're trained in security. Two, you're dispensable. I'll stand clear.

Simpson Oh. No. Ah. Got it. No.

(And so on as he tries – or appears to try – to open the box. Thunder rumbles.)

Arthur I think it's going to rain; we'll open it at the Palace.

Simpson Good thinking. Lots of special equipment there.

Arthur So I hear. Off we go then.

Pelham Sir.

Soldier B Back off.

Arthur Who are you?

Pelham Pelham, sir.

Arthur Speak.

Simpson Is that wise, sire?

Arthur What's wrong?

Simpson We don't know what he'll say.

Arthur He's poor, what can it matter?

Pelham And homeless.

Arthur And homeless.

Pelham And alone.

Arthur And alone.

Simpson He's playing you.

Pelham And all alone.

Arthur And all alone.

Topping Blessed are the meek.

Partridge Clap-trap.

Arthur Well?

Pelham Sire. I was wondering. Now that I'm poor, homeless, and all alone. And hungry. Have you got any work going?

Arthur Have we?

Simpson No.

Arthur What can you do?

Pelham Bit of MC-ing, DJ-ing.

Arthur Not sure we need that.

Pelham Events promotion.

Simpson Events foment revolution

Topping Except communion.

Simpson On occasions, especially communion.

Arthur Oh dear.

Pelham Entrepreneurship.

Arthur Have we got any entrepreneurship?

Simpson Masses.

Arthur I'm sure we could find you something.

Simpson It's not the right protocol sire.

Arthur It's the protocol I'm using so it is the right one. I'm sure we could find you something, what with all the ladies having been washed away. Bring your CV along and we'll have a look at it. We can't have you being all alone can we?

Pelham Just me and Moira, sire.

Arthur Moira?

Pelham My cow. Had her since I was a child.

Arthur We can find employment for you, but I don't think we can find employment for a cow ...

Pelham She's only a small cow.

Arthur I don't think so.

Pelham Really just a cowlette.

Topping Apparently rather crepitatious.

Simpson Freak floods are caused by freak weather. Freak weather is caused by a damaged ozone layer. A damaged ozone layer is caused by over-farting.

Arthur Sorry.

Pelham No problemo, sire. I'll sort it.

Topping Blessed be the meek.

Arthur Right, off we go then. We'll put this intriguing little artefact under armed guard, just in case. Jump to it. We'll keep it safe and sound, under lock and key. And we'll see you tomorrow.

(Kinsident Arthur, Simpson, and the two soldiers depart.)

Partridge Well, you're a little smartie-pants aren't you?

Pelham What, me? No. Why?

Partridge Thinking you'll worm you way into his nibs' good books. Taking advantage just because the ladies got washed away. He's perfectly capable of wanking you know.

Topping Besides which I pray every day that the Ladies will be washed back in a Third Great Flood.

Pelham I just want a job. In the Palace. Where I feel safe.

Partridge I've no doubt you felt safe at home, didn't you? Like your poor old mother. And now your home is a crime scene.

Topping Are you going to wear your latex gloves?

(Partridge does so.)

Oh, excellent.

Partridge Want a pair?

Topping Marvellous.

(During the following Partridge will put things in bags. He picks up the knife first, but has to put it down to pick up the arm. He forgets to pick up the knife again.)

Partridge Dangerous weapons. Severed limbs. Several other things here, look. Small tell-tale things. A dented wheelbarrow. A dead mother.

Pelham It's not my dead mother.

Partridge Looks like your dead mother.

Pelham It's a representation of my mother.

Partridge It's the lifeless flesh and blood of your mother.

Pelham Since it is lifeless it is not my mother. I cannot recognise it as my mother. Therefore, it is merely a representation of my mother and must be recognised as such. Life is a fleeting spark, that is soon extinguished.

Partridge Don't play existential games with me, you fucker. You're skating on very thin ice. The arm of the law is very long.

Topping And the bosom of Mother Church all embracing.

Partridge Come Bishop. You may think you're cock of the block here on your little green hill, but once you come inside our city walls we'll have our eye on you.

Topping Church and State work hand in hand.

Partridge For the protection of the State.

Topping For the endurance of the Church.

(And off they trot. Moira has watched them go. In she comes.)

Pelham Ah, Moira. Just the cow I wanted to see. Moira, I've got some important news. I have to go on a journey. A long journey. Yes, I know it's sad. But needs must. And, d'you know something, Moira? You've got to go on a journey too. D'you know what that means?

(Moira does. She runs off happily and returns with a suitcase.)

No Moira. Yours isn't that sort of journey – that's the sort of journey humans go on. And you're a cow; you need a cow journey.

(Pelham gets the knife.)

Yours is more of a metaphorical journey. A metaphysical journey. Don't be afraid, Moira. Think of this not as an ending, but as a beginning.

(He cuts Moira's throat. Moira splutters, convulses, a spurt of blood shoots from her throat. She shudders, falls, convulses. Death throes. Is still. Farts hugely. Is still. Farts again then speaks from her arse.)

Moira Pelham.

Pelham Who's that?

Mora Pelham. List.

Pelham Moira, you're talking. But your dead, dead cows can't talk.

Mora List Pelham. List, list, oh list. Death has no sting for the righteous, and the grave all the mystery. Hear these words. The blind man may see, but he is not always king even in the land of the mono-sighted. Hear this and believe.

Pelham I hear.

Moira Recall the words of your blessed mother.

Pelham She died at –

Moira Son, fuck your sorry arse. Heed these words and tremble.

Pelham But she –

(However, Pelham's explanation is lost beneath horrendously terrifying claps of thunder and flashes of lightening.)

*The Play Continues.*

*For a full script or for details of a licence to perform Blessed Be The King Of Glory, contact:*

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