Towers.

Solo Play.

John Scott. 2020.

**Staging.** *Stage to be set with a lectern for two of the first three speakers. A screen for projections of images and words centre stage. Within the script these will be referred to as* ***SLD*** *(Slide) with a number.   
Lights fade…*

**SLD 1.** Once Upon a Time…There was a pauper and there was a Prince. The Prince was often confused as to why the pauper always appeared so happy. And so, he asked him, “Why have you always got something to laugh about?”

**SLD 2.** The pauper replied, “Because I have something you’ll never have.”

The Prince thought this a ridiculous idea and asked him, “Oh yes and what is that?”

And the pauper replied with a solitary word...

**SLD 3.** ENOUGH.

**SLD 4.** And lo the Prince was furious at the gall of the little shit and he was banished to live in a Tower.

**SLD 5.** We see an image of multiple Towers. Eifel, Blackpool, Twin Towers, Trump Tower. The Tower of a home PC, A Pit Head Winch Tower, Grenfell Tower, An Ivory Tower, The Tower of Babel, Tower Hamlets etc. The Word TOWERS to the centre.

**Pt 1**. *A populist quasi fascist named Neil Fathersom. He is the leader of a new populist political party named The Tower.  
Stage should be lit to give the idea of a political conference, a rally. Cathedral of light. Speaker enters and talks at a lectern/podium. Back projection of Big Ben and parliament. With his party logo etc.*

**Voiceover:** Ladies and gentlemen welcome to this the second conference of the party of the people The Tower. Now without further ado please raise the roof and welcome the father of the nation, Neil Fathersom!

*Fathersom takes the stage.*

**Fathersom:** Well, well, look at this. This is quite the gathering. Welcome friends. Actually, not just friends, I think I’m going to call you family. Brothers sisters… Hell, for all I know some of you may be lovers.   
My word, it’s hard to believe isn’t it? But here we are, what an extraordinary time this is. How did we get here? We’ve finally arrived at this day. Two short years ago when I formed this party, The Tower, they said we had no policies, they called us extremists, some were even known to laugh. Well…They’re not laughing now.

*We hear a huge cheer. As if from a crowd of thousands.*

I’ve dreamt of this day and I’ve thought very hard about it, very hard indeed. Because I’m just like you. I’m just another ordinary person. As many of you will know I make no secret of the fact I’m a big fan of the Beatles. And just like them I’d like to say…Try to see things my way. We can work it out. We can work it out.

*Another cheer.*

Because that’s why I’m doing this, not for the prestige, not for the career and certainly not because I want to work in politics. What part of we’ve all had enough do they not understand…And we have…We’ve all had enough of politics!

*Another huge cheer.*

And we have had enough. In fact, what part of we’ve all had enough do they not understand. We’ve had enough of them telling you to forget truth, forget meaning, forget being proud to stand up for what you *really,* for what you *really* believe in and lets just go back to politics as usual. No more I say, no more. The Tower stands for a proper clean break, not some dodgy con trick we’ve had played on us so many times. It’s time to press the reset button, wipe the slate clean and give the people of this country a fresh start.

*Another cheer.*

Let me ask you a question. Where were that lot when your children couldn’t get an education, eh? Where were they when working families had to rely on hand outs just to feed themselves? I’ll tell you where, languishing in their Kensington luxury apartments while you and your families are held hostage in nowhere more affordable to live than a badly facilitated death trap.

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I’ve been accused of many things. I’ve been called a liar. As many of you will know I am a Christian. I’ll say here as Gods servant… I do not lie. I believe in not just love, but a tough, responsible love. I believe all life is sacrosanct and begins at the point of conception. That’s why when we come to power young women will have to take a real responsibility in how they treat their bodies. And if you don’t want to face up to that responsibility then we’ll do it for you. Under the Tower every child will have the same chance at a life. Now you tell me…am I lying?

*Another cheer.*

I’ve been accused of many things and I’ve been called many things. I’ve been called offensive. Let me tell you where being offended gets you. While you put all that energy into worrying about something I’ve said, nearly six million refugees are trying to get here by any means they can. Here! To a country that has nothing to do with their problems. It is no longer our responsibility. And all that offence you feel will do nothing to change that. But I can! And I’ll say this, if being proud of who and what you are means they can make false accusations of racism…then fine…I am a racist. And proud of it!

*Huge cheers and camera flashbulbs pop.*

You know all of this reminds me of a joke…And I’ll leave you with this. I think we should get rid of democracy…All those in favour raise your hand.

*Blackout. Huge cheers.*

**SLD 6.** We see something similar to a Nazi flag. Instead of a swastika it has a T in the centre.

**SLD 7.** “I have a dream…So what! I’ve got a plan.” Neil Fathersom.

**SLD. 8 “**As soon as you accuse the other of ignorance you automatically grant them licence to say the exact same thing about you. That’s why I call the worst of my enemies…Very well informed, sneaky fuckers.” (Some pauper/comedian)

**SLD 9.** You might find some of this a little bit offensive. The house would like to remind you this is not a day care centre. This is the arts.

**Pt. 2.** *Lights up.*

*A comedian takes the stage. Perhaps a back projection of a stone wall, typical of comedy clubs. He is lit by a spotlight. They can be from anywhere and have any accent.*

**Voiceover:** Ladies and gentlemen. Please put your hands together and welcome to The Tower Comedy Lounge…John Scott!

**Scott:** Well, well, look at this. This is quite the gathering. Welcome friends. Actually, not just friends, I think I’m going to call you family. Brothers sisters… Hell, for all I know some of you may be lovers. Nice to see you again friend. Remember C wing?   
So ladies and gentleman how did we get here. How did we ever become this cruel?   
I mean me…Personally, I blame Thatcher for everything. I went to the place where her ashes are scattered. It was nice…But I would have put in a bigger fucking dance floor.   
But we keep voting for more of the same? Keep it coming, I love the taste of the boot me. Even when it’s on my face.

Some of these people call themselves Christians. A Christian Tory? You might as well call yourself a vegetarian butcher. Just because you go to church every week doesn’t make you a Christian! That’s like me standing in a garage and going, hey look at me…I’m a car. Of course, Jesus was a famous Conservative. He was! There was that time he cured the cripple. He said, take up thy bed and walk. You’ve been declared fit for work you scrounging bastard.

The right wing always like to tell us they’re for hard working people. Which obviously then sets up the precedent that everybody outside that remit is lazy or a parasite. It’s weird, they actually put thought into that shit. We’re here to represent the hard-working people. What’s a hard-working person? Can you define that? I’m a comedian that means my day starts about lunch time. Does that make me lazy? Hell No! Sometimes people crash into this. I had a promoter the other day wanted to have a meeting. He said, how does nine a.m. sound? I said I dunno I’ve heard its shit. You know they say the amount of sleep you need is down to your genetics. That’s why someone like Einstein required eleven hours sleep, whereas someone like Margaret Thatcher only required four hours sleep. I think that’s bugger all to do with genetics. I just think if I did half the evil shit that Thatcher did…I couldn’t sleep either. Now you tell me…Am I lying?

*An image of Blackpool Tower is projected onto the backdrop.*

Look I’m like you I’m just another ordinary working-class person. But we’re heading right these days. Blackpool Tower ladies and gentlemen. Every year ladies and gentlemen, every single year my dad would take me to Blackpool. I know, what a tight-fisted bastard!  
I actually went to see Queen in Blackpool, but without Freddy Mercury. Which is a bit like going to see the Beatles, but without John, Paul, George and Ringo.   
They say you can tell what class you are by the amount of times you’ve danced to Come On Eileen at a wedding. Let me reassure you ladies and gentlemen I’ve dance d to it at a funeral.   
I’ve been trying to become a bit more intellectual and bohemian. First, I started with trying to improve my fashion sense and failing miserably. It would seem there is nothing I can do to improve the general calamity of what I look like.

It’s often got me in trouble. I used to have long hair and I got it cut off because I was once mistaken for a homeless person. This really happened. I was outside the train station having a quiet moment when suddenly I saw ten pence come flying through the air and land at my feet. I looked up and there was this dad with his wee boy. And the wee boy went “There you go” So I thought well 10 pence that’s a lot of money for a wee boy, so I picked it up and said “Do you think I’m homeless?” Then he said, “No, but now that you’ve picked it up, we know that you’re Scottish.

I said, how dare you! Don’t you stereotype me young man. Then I glassed him.

I was trying to be bohemian in Glasgow in the summer and failed miserably. But that’s what I love about Glaswegians, they can be quite direct. You know how you get a back handed compliment? I got a back handed insult and I don’t think the guy even meant to insult me. It was a sunny day and I will admit I was maybe dressed a wee bit arts and crafts for Sauchiehall street. I was wearing a flowery shirt, a pair of linen trousers, a pair of Jesus sandals and Panama hat. Just blending in on a typical day in Glasgow. Anyway, I walked past this young guy and as he got behind me I suddenly heard him shot, “Wanker” And when I turned around he went, “No mate I wasn’t talking to you. I was shouting to my friend over there…But I can see why you turned around.”

As for my stimulating my intellect I’ve recently completed a degree at university and am currently sitting a master. I was going to have a gap year, but working-class people don’t have gap years. No, we call that the dole.

However, I’ve not really improved anything because both the degree and masters have been in drama. Oh yes, that’s going to solve all my financial problems.

It’s a good job we’re all being trained as actors. My university is actually a former polytechnic and we have to turn up there every day and pretend it’s worth the money.

Let’s have a look at another Tower.

*Switch to an image of the Twin Towers under attack 9/11*

Is this where it all started? Did it all change with these towers? I watched that as it was happening. And I’m still left with thought…I’ve never seen a tower collapse like that. Who here thinks 9/11 was an inside job? Does it even matter? We’re where we are anyway.   
And now our Governments prey on the fear this induced.   
I once had a wee glance into what life can be like for people in the Middle East. I went to Egypt on my holidays just as the Arab spring kicked in. They say you want a Revolution.   
I didn’t plan it that way. I’m not Scottish and tight and went oh Egypt’s in flames that should be cheap. No, I’d booked my holiday and couldn’t get my money back, so I thought bugger it I’m going to risk it. I was quite scared to go but my wife is a Geordie. She’s very stoic. This is genuinely something she said. We watching the riots on telly and three days into the riots we were supposed to be leaving the next day. And she turned to me and said, “Have you noticed Egypt on the telly? Everybody seems to be wearing jackets and long sleeves. I hope it’s going to be warmer where we’re going. I was just thinking, I hope they’re not going to be running around with my head on a pole.   
But it was great when we got there we got upgraded and put into bigger posher hotels. To keep us all together for safety. But British people don’t like change. There was a posh guy checking in, in front of me and he said, “I’m not moving hotel. I want to speak to someone in charge.” And the young Egyptian on the desk was brilliant. He just laughed and said, “I’m afraid sir nobody is in charge! We’re having a revolution.”   
So we settled in and my wife said to me, “By the way don’t you get pissed and start banging on to the Egyptians about revolutions.” Because I’m Scottish. We’ve got quite romantic ideas about revolutions. I mean we’re shit at them…However, by the end of the night I did get pissed. I rounded up four bar staff and a toilet attendant. I said, “C’mon. We’ll paint ourselves blue and we’ll fuck up Israel.”  
But, one thing that genuinely did happen. And this will give you insight into what life is like for people over there. We flew with Thomas Cook and one night there was a quiz on that was in a hotel about a mile down the road from ours. So I said to my holiday rep. “Can we go to the Thomas Cook quiz night.” And I swear this is what she said to me. She said yes you can, but about half way down the road there is an armed security check point. Just say you’re with the Thomas Cook quiz night and they’ll let you through.   
WHAT!? That gets you unfettered access to the Middle East? Well, we could have saved ourselves a lot of bother in Iraq with that one. Just turn up on the Iraqi border, “What do you lot want?” Nothing we’re here with Thomas Cook quiz night. “Oh, really and where are you going with all that oil?” Oh, that’s first prize.

You know, I’ve been accused of many things and I’ve been called many things. I’ve been called offensive. Let me tell you where being offended gets you. While you put all that energy into worrying about something I’ve said, nearly sixty-six million primary school children in the developed western world are going to turn up hungry and malnourished at school on Monday. And all that energy you put into being offended by jokes will do fuck all to change that.

You know all of this reminds me of a joke…And I’ll leave you with this. So, I was on the lower east side in Glasgow. And I bumped in to an old school friend Barry. I hadn’t seen him in years. A bit of a weird guy. He used to think you could get a sun tan by sitting up close televisions. So, I say How you doin’ Barry. What you up to these days. He says I’m good Jimmy, I’m good. I live here on the lower east side and I’m making a living as a beekeeper. I said, you live on the lower east and you’ve become a beekeeper? Where do you keep them? He says, Oh I keep them in my apartment. I say you keep them in your apartment? Do you live on a roof? He says no I live on the 11th floor. I say, you live on the 11th floor, here on the lower east and you have bees in your apartment? Ah…where about in your apartment can you keep bees? He says, I keep em in the closet. I say, You live on the lower east on the 11th floor and you keep bees in the closet? How many bees have you got? He says, I got over 2000 bees. I say how can you keep 2000 bees in your apartment closet? He says, I keep em in a shoebox. I say you’ve got 2000 bees in a shoebox? Hasn’t that killed them all? He says yeah! Fuck em!

*Blackout.*

**SLD 10.** “There isn’t an evil in the world that can stand up against being laughed at.” Michael Moore.

**SLD 11.** An image of Trump Tower

**Pt 3.** *Lights up.* *House lights also go up to give the feeling of a public meeting in a hall. An image of the Grenfell Tower disaster on the backdrop. “Justice for Grenfell”*

**SLD. 12.** An image of the Grenfell disaster and the words “Justice for Grenfell.”

**Voiceover:** Ladies and gentlemen could you please welcome Grenfell Tower survivor and committee member James Treadway.

**Treadway:** Thank you for coming today.It’s great to see this many people. Since the disaster I don’t see the people in this room as neighbours, you’re more like family. Brothers, sisters and of course missing loved ones that can’t be with us today.  
Sorry, I’ll just get on…You know, our Government… tells us… they’re for hard working people Yet it’s a fact that wealth disparity in the borough of Kensington, where Grenfell Tower stands, is amongst the most acute in Britain. For those that live there it is considered to be among the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country. When I saw the News the next day, after the fire. T.V. journalists and pundits kept referring to the residents of Grenfell as “poor people”. there’s nothing we can do about that, but that description did not sit well with me. Look, I’m like you, or anybody else. I’m just another ordinary working-class bloke. I personally wouldn’t describe the people of Grenfell as poor people. They are aspirational, intelligent, articulate and hard working. They are also the brutally truthful reminder that this is how tight, how squeezed and how utterly disregarded so called ordinary workers are, especially in London. It would seem that things are now so bad even skilled professionals can find nowhere more affordable to live than a badly facilitated death trap. This is your beloved free market. This is where it has taken us.  
  
Margaret Thatcher once famously said, there’s no such thing as society. Grenfell is a brutal reminder of where such thinking has led us. How did we get here? How did we ever become this disregarding, this cruel?   
 If two pound more per sheet of cladding, at a total cost of five thousand pounds, had been spent the disaster would have been avoided. But that’s not the point of free enterprise is it? The point is to make the highest profit margin and hold little regard as to how it will affect people’s lives. Well you tell me, am I lying. I’m not.   
 Worse still the cladding was put there for aesthetic reasons. So that millionaires would have less of an eyesore to look at and be reminded every day that they have to move among people worth so much less than them. People that don’t count like them. People that they know in their hearts they are just better than.

I apologise for having to do this, but I’m going to read some of the final text messages victims of Grenfell sent out as they were dying.

“Forgive me, the fire is here. I’m dying”

“I can’t leave the flat. Please pray for me and my mum.”

“Tell my sons that I love them.”

“Smoke is coming under the doors.”

“I’m staying here with the dogs.”

“We’re not going to make it.”

“Please help me. Please tell my family that I love them.”

“Forgive me everyone. Goodbye.”

I read those comments at a meeting last week and was accused of being offensive. Well while you’re worrying about me being offensive the survivors of Grenfell still haven’t been given new homes to live in.

The day after Grenfell they decided to cancel The Mansion House dinner “As an act of respect” This is a dinner of bankers, stockbrokers, establishment and politicians. Where meals are literally served on plates made of gold. I wonder what the price of one of those plates is? Five thousand pounds perhaps? The difference between seventy-two people burned to death and your dinner looking the absolute best it can.

It’s like some kind of sick joke. I remember a better time than this. Forget there’s no such thing as society. We used to sing songs about love and revolutions.

*Blackout.*

**PT 4.**

**SLD 13.** We see a graphic of a tower penetrating clouds, dream like. On it are the words, ‘To dream about a tower means you generally aspire to great things. Or - you may be jealous or insecure of someone else’s success- depending on who was at the top.’ ***WWW. Dream-interpreation.com***

**SLD 14.** A slide with just dialogue. The words, “Prolix, Prolix, nothing a pair of scissors can’t fix. And so, we call upon the author to explain.” ***Nick Cave (We Call Upon The Author)***

*The author (In this case John Scott) enters and takes a seat. He is similar to the comedian but this is not stand up. He is as himself. Should be lit differently from stand-up segments.*

**Author.** I read that dream thing online. Reading it made me quite relieved that I don’t think I’ve ever had a dream about Towers.   
Because I’m just like you. I’m just another ordinary person. So, how did we get here. How did I ever become this cruel?

You know, I sometimes worry that as a comedian people may think that I have a cruel streak running through me. If you boil comedy down it’s pretty much impossible to write a truly politically correct joke. There always has to be a target, even if that target is yourself.   
But the idea of cruelty I think is a misinterpretation. I think comedy celebrates the fragilities of life, and when it’s working really well, it exposes hypocrisy.   
However, there is no denying that I write jokes about the establishment that at best can be called satirical and at worst downright vicious. But there are reasons for that…

**SLD 15.** We see an image of a pithead tower.

So, I’m going to tell you some stories about the fragility of my life and perhaps expose some hypocrisy. Or be exposed…  
That’s called a headframe or a pit head tower. It operates the cage that miners would be lowered into the pit. And, I know, I know, why is it not possible to go and see theatre in the North East without some bugger mentioning a pit or a strike or more commonly both together.   
I admit as somebody from a mining town I do occasionally raise an eyebrow at the amount of stuff your miners seemed to be up to. Pitmen painters, pitmen poets, pitmen playwrights and for all we know pitmen Peruvian Nose Flute players. It does actually make me wonder…well it’s no wonder the pits shut down; the miners seemed to be doing everything apart from their actual jobs. But I don’t want to sound cynical. I cried like a baby at the end of Billy Elliot.

There were actually very few miners in my family and the main reason for that was because my Grandfather was one. And my grandfather was a miner at a time when the conditions he worked in could only be described as brutal. He had six sons and vowed that none of them would ever work down the pit and therefore none of them ever did.   
My Grandfather lost three toes on his left foot when a coalface collapsed on him and he had to take time off work, without pay and rely on charity to see them through.   
A story that sticks with me, regarding the conditions he worked in, was one all about the winters. At that time, it wasn’t unusual for miners to work up to their wastes in water in freezing conditions. After a shift, my grandfather had to walk a mile home, to a hot tin bath prepared by my grandmother. When he got home some days his clothes were actually frozen and when he took his trousers off, they could stand up on their own.

So, hearing stories like that, not only did none of my grandfather’s children work down the pit, none of his grandchildren did either. Well all apart from one of us. I’ll tell you about Michael in a second.

So, as I mentioned, and as many people of a certain age will know, there was a strike. Many of us from those regions or heritage can only describe what happened as a brutal, coordinated and wilful destruction of the communities the miners lived in.

During the miners’ strike a great incident happened at my school. I’m still friends with some of the janitors from my high school. The janitors at my school were political activists and belonged to a group known as Militant Tendency. This was a group that was expelled and outlawed by the very Labour Party itself. Which I think suited them just fine and so well done them.   
Well, one day in the autumn, during the strike, a lorryload of coal arrived to heat the school boiler, and these wonderful men at Militant Tendency sent the coal back stating they wouldn’t encourage the enterprise of scabs during the strike and wanted nothing to do with their coal. This meant they were sacked. Then, the teachers came out in sympathy of the sacked janitors to have them reinstated and so now the school got shut down for a fortnight. Very few of us at school knew much about Militant Tendency, but as you can imagine they were now massive heroes to two thousand pupils on a sudden unexpected holiday.

I grew up in a town that was two miles away from one of Scotland’s biggest pits, Bilston Glen. It had been described just prior to the strike as the jewel in the crown of Scottish mining and now it was due for closure. In Scotland Bilston Glen became the focal point for the strike and resistance to the Governments intentions. That meant on an average day there could be a couple of thousand striking miners there, secondary pickets from Yorkshire and other areas and a couple of thousand policemen. This was the personification of Margaret Thatcher verses the trade unions.

To me and my mate Jimmy, as fourteen-year olds now on an unexpected holiday, we thought a visit to Bilston glen would be a top day out. We were young, we were naive and we were very wrong about that.

**SLD 16.** We see an image of the police en masse at Orgreave

There is a famous campaign among our communities to see justice for a thing known as The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. Orgreave is now famous as what is regarded as the most violent confrontation between police and picketing miners at the Orgreave coke-works in 1984. 95 striking miners were arrested that day on charges of rioting and unlawful assembled. None of the 95 people arrested were ever successfully prosecuted, as police officers gave unreliable evidence. And the case was thrown out of court. I’ll read some words from the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign describing what happened.

‘Dozens of mounted officers, armed with long truncheons, charged up the field, followed by snatch squad officers in riot gear, with short shields and truncheons. The miners fled up the hill towards the embankment and the railway bridge. Many of those who couldn’t or wouldn’t run were assaulted with batons, causing several serious injuries, and dragged back through the police lines to the temporary detention centre opposite the plant.

Several similar charges followed, forcing the miners up into the village, where they tried to find refuge in gardens and in the yards of the industrial units opposite. The police ran amok, clubbing and arresting miners indiscriminately. In one piece of TV footage a senior officer can be heard shouting “bodies, not heads”, but the number of head injuries sustained by the miners meant he was largely ignored.’

**SLD 17.** We see the famous image of Lesley Boulton with camera. A mounted policeman wielding a long stick and bearing down on her.

This is a famous image from Orgreave of Lesley Boulton, then a mature art student, who was documenting events with her camera.

Much of what happened at Orgreave was caught on television. I remember seeing it on the news, my mother crying out in horror and weeping at what we were witnessing.

So maybe me and Jimmy should have known better than to go visiting the front lines of the miners strike. Thankfully due to the police presence when we went up there, we couldn’t get near the front lines. So we climbed on top of a bus stop and stood watching from a safer distance. Nothing like Orgreave happened that day, but there are reports that something similar happened on another day. But on that day, I saw many miners dragged from the front lines, by these now infamous snatch squads, and be severely beaten by the police. And the worst thing I saw that day was a policeman beat a man around the body and head with what appeared to be a fire extinguisher. So, we never went back there.