

Snakes and Ladders (Writing Sample)

ACT I

Scene One

A TRAIN STATION. NIGHT.

KEV, a homeless man in his fifties, sits outside the train station, surrounded by about half a dozen shopping bags, full of dirty clothes. He is surrounded by rubbish. A group of well-dressed men and women walk past **KEV**, laughing. As they walk past **KEV**, one of them breaks away from the rest of the group and pauses to stare at **KEV**. This is **JASON**, a handsome man in his twenties. **JASON** approaches **KEV**, carefully, staring hard at his face.

KEV: What?

Pause.

KEV: What are you looking at?

Pause.

JASON: What's your name?

Pause.

KEV: Go away. Go on. Go with your friends.

JASON quickly reaches into his pocket and pulls out a wallet. **KEV** sits up. **JASON** pulls out a note and offers it to **KEV**. **KEV** stares at it.

JASON: What's your name?

KEV locks up at **JASON**.

JASON: Come over here, would you?

KEV: Why?

JASON: I want to – Let me get a look at you...

JASON holds out the money. **KEV** moves closer and takes it out of **JASON'S** hand.

KEV: What you wanna look at me for this?

JASON: This is remarkable...

KEV: This isn't a sex thing, is it? Listen, I'm grateful. Very...grateful. You're...very *generous* but...I'm not going to, suck you off for it, or whatever-

JASON: You don't...sound like him. Not at all-

KEV: What are you on about?

JASON: But...the resemblance is...

JASON pulls out his phone and switches on his torch. He shines it, right at KEV'S face. KEV recoils, swearing.

KEV: The fuck are you doing!?

JASON: Just...stay still, will you-

KEV: Fuck off!

JASON: It's not possible. You've even got his eyes...you've even got his *wrinkles*-

KEV jumps to his feet and grabs JASON.

JASON: Hey-

KEV: If you don't put that fucking light out, I'm gonna smash your fucking teeth in.

JASON: Listen, there's no need to get upset. Look, here. I'm turning it off. I'm turning it off. Alright? So, just...calm down, please?

Pause. KEV lets JASON go.

KEV: Not fucking worth the grief.

JASON: I'm sorry if I offended you.

KEV: I weren't *offended*. Fucking, can't get offended when you sleep outside a train station, can you? You did piss me off, though. What do you think I am, huh? I'm still a person, yeah? Fucking, *blinding* me-

JASON: I'm truly sorry. Truly. Here-

JASON takes out another banknote and offers it to KEV.

JASON: Take this. As, ah, *compensation*. Yes? No hard feelings?

Pause.

KEV: You should be more careful. Waving that around. At night, in this part of town, alone-

JASON: Oh, don't worry about that, I'm with-

JASON turns around and stops, realising he is all alone.

JASON: Oh. They must've just...moved on. Without me.

KEV: You're all alone. In the dark. With a strange man.

JASON: Oh, you don't seem all that strange to me-

KEV moves forward, getting right into JASON'S face.

KEV: You're all alone. Anything could happen. You get me? I could do anything I want to you right now-

JASON: There's C.C.T.V.

KEV: You trust the *police*, do you? Eh? Fuck me, you *must* be rich. How much you got in there?

JASON: In my wallet?

KEV: Yeah. How much you got? Or, don't you know?

JASON: About...three or four-hundred pounds...

Pause.

KEV: *Fuck me.* You know what I could do with four hundred pounds?

JASON: What?

KEV smiles.

KEV: I could eat.

JASON leans forward

JASON: Even your teeth...God, they're the mirror image-

KEV: What the fuck are you talking about?

JASON: Listen...this might sound a bit unusual-

KEV: Weren't you listening? I just told you-I just told you I could do whatever I wanted with you. Aren't you scared?

JASON: Hmm? Oh, no. Not really. If you *really* wanted to mug me, you'd have done it by now, right? Rather than just *monologuing* about it and giving me the chance to get away.

Pause.

KEV: Fuck me. I wish you weren't right. I really do.

JASON: Listen-

KEV: Can't you just fuck off now? Thanks for the money. Thanks for half-blinding me. Now go, go on, go back to your mates-

JASON: Listen!

KEV: What?

JASON: How would you like...I can give you somewhere to sleep tonight, if you'd like?

Pause.

KEV: You know, I weren't joking when I said I weren't interested in any sex stuff-

JASON: I know-

KEV: Don't care how much of a pretty boy you are, I'm not gonna fuck you-

JASON: I KNOW. Christ. You've got to be the most...*obtuse* vagabond I've ever met!

Pause.

KEV: A what?

JASON: What?

KEV: The *fuck* did you just call me? A vaga-whatsit?

JASON: A vagabond.

KEV: What's that when it's at home?

JASON: Well. It means...it means a homeless person-

KEV: So, a tramp.

JASON: Well, I don't like to use that word-

KEV: It's what I am, isn't it? What's a fucking vagabond? Do I look like a fucking *vagabond*? No. I look like a fucking tramp, coz that's what I am.

JASON: Well, you aren't really supposed to use that word anymore-

KEV: Well, I'm officially giving you permission, yeah? Please, if you're gonna call me anything, call me a tramp. Anything but a fucking vaga-whatever-

JASON: I could just call you by your name.

Pause.

KEV: Yeah. You could.

JASON: So, what is it?

Pause.

KEV: It's Kev.

JASON: Right. Kev. My name's Jason.

Pause. JASON holds out his hand.

JASON: Now, to return to my previous question, would you like somewhere to sleep tonight? Somewhere better than a piss-soaked train station?

Pause.

KEV: And, you're not asking me to sleep with you-?

JASON: No. You'll have your own bed. Your own room.

Pause.

KEV: Why?

JASON: Why what?

KEV: What you wanna give me a bed for? You invite a lot of *vagabonds* home with you?

JASON: I just...I want your help. I need you to *settle* something for me, alright?

KEV: And that's it?

JASON: That's it.

Pause. KEV looks around.

KEV: Girl I knew. Used to sleep, somewhere over there. Outside W.H.SMITHS. She went off with some guy-

JASON: Oh, yes?

KEV: Yeah, must've been about a year ago, now. He told her he had a spare room or something. She'd been through a lot. He must've seemed like an angel to her. Well. He *weren't*. He weren't an angel.

Pause.

KEV: He raped her.

JASON: Oh.

KEV: Repeatedly. Then he dragged her out of his house, and dumped her on the street, somewhere.

JASON: Jesus. Well, that's...that's horrible. That's just...ghastly.

KEV: So, you understand my suspicion, yeah? Charity, you know. You take it where you can but you...you can't let what some stranger's offering you go to your head, yeah?

JASON: Well, yes. Quite. Look, here...let's...the two of us...walk right through the town centre. We'll stop and wave our hands underneath every C.C.T.V. camera we can find, and then I'll call us a taxi...right in front of the nearest camera. That way, if you *do* go missing, you know...there'll be a mountain of evidence against me. Would that...put your mind at ease?

KEV: That won't make a difference. I get what you're trying to do. It's very good of you, but it won't make a difference.

JASON: Did they ever...catch the guy? Who...took that poor girl?

KEV: What do you think? She was a tramp, weren't she? Nobody gives two shits about *vagabonds*. Nobody even noticed she were missing. I even saw the bastard, walking down the streets, a couple of times. She pointed him out to me, before she...moved on.

JASON: Right. Well...look, what can I do? What can I do to reassure you?

Pause.

KEV: Nothing. Nothing at all.

Pause.

KEV: But I really don't wanna sleep outside a piss-soaked train station *again*, if I can help it. So, come on. Let's go.

JASON: Yes?

KEV: Yeah. Come on. Show me this room you got. Come on. Where do you live, anyway? Not far, is it?

JASON laughs.

JASON: It is a bit out of town, yes, but I think you'll agree, it's worth the journey, once you get there.

JASON helps KEV pick up his shopping and the two of them walk off together.

BLACKOUT.

About The Play

Snakes and Ladders is a darkly-comic play that was heavily inspired by *The Double* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and *Money* by Martin Amis. The play's conflict hinges around the Lowe's, a family of financially strapped landowners who discover that a homeless man, Kev, is an exact physical copy of Sir Eric Lowe: the family's recently deceased patriarch. Sir Eric Lowe was a wealthy businessman and a philanthropist, and the rest of the Lowe's have been trying to ride on his reputation ever since. When Jason Lowe, the adopted son of Sir Eric, invites Kev to stay with them for a while, a power struggle begins to emerge within the family. Some want to use Kev to fill the hole left by Sir Eric's death. Others want to exploit Kev's resemblance to the dead man in order to make money. Some fear that Kev's sudden arrival may result in the exposure of Sir Eric Lowe's terrible secrets...