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# Chris Thomas

## - *Which One?*

A one act play - comedy

**Running Time:** approx. 30 minutes

**Period:** Modern Day

### Synopsis:

Three students live together in a messy house. Jason says a woman wouldn't stay five minutes. Bill and Nathan disagree and have a bet. If a woman stays longer than five minutes they win; if she leaves they lose. As it happens, a female acquaintance of Jason's needs help with an assignment. That evening Coralie arrives. Jason is actually interested in her. As he makes the move, Nathan and Bill come back from the pub after having a few. They rib him so much Jason picks a fight with Bill.

Nathan is left with Coralie and tries to make the move on her, but Bill comes back from the fight, interrupting him. Coralie, worried about Jason, sends Nathan out to look for him, leaving her and Bill alone. Bill makes the move on her, but the other two come back and interrupt. Coralie leaves to 'powder her nose' leaving the guys to argue. In the midst of their debate, she returns – in bondage and discipline clothes. She tells them she wants them all and ties them up. She then leaves; she actually prefers the older man next door.

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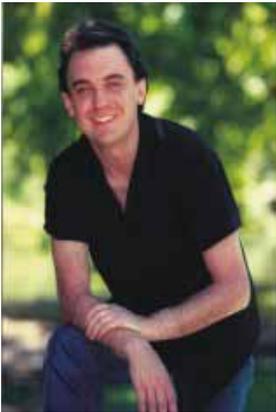
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## About the Playwright: Chris Thomas



Born in Perth, Western Australia, Chris Thomas is a writer, actor, journalist and broadcaster who has developed diverse experience in these areas over several years.

He has many eclectic acting credits to his name and broad journalistic experience, working for mainstream newspapers, independent publications and freelancing for numerous titles, as well as extensive work in media relations and flexing his dulcet tones as a radio announcer.

Chris Thomas is also the author of the novel *Journo's Diary*, the *Doctor Who* short story *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* and the plays *Which One?*, *Reality Matters*, *Appetite for Destruction*, *The Bonza Land of Oz*, *King Bling* and *SMS Mess*.

*Which One?* received an encouragement award for writing at the 1994 Bunbury One-Act Drama Festival. Chris himself has received numerous accolades including Excellence in Performance Award at the 2001 South West Drama Festival for his role in the play *Disposal* and Best Male Supporting Actor at the 2008 South West One Act Festival for his role in *The Return*.

### About the Play:

*Which One?* premiered at Playlovers Theatre, Floreat, Western Australia in September 1994 and was also performed at the 1994 ITA State Drama Festival at Kwinana Theatre as well as Bunbury Little Theatre as part of the 1994 Bunbury One Act Drama Festival, where it received an encouragement award for writing.

It also received the following support from the adjudicator:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: I'm writing in support of Chris Thomas's play 'Which One?' which I saw when adjudicating festivals of one act plays. It worked very well for the audiences who saw it, as it has very accurately drawn characters and a well structured plot. I believe that it could be developed into a longer play or into a TV series, as it has strong possibilities for development of character and the potential for characters to find themselves in a series of amusing situations. I do hope that you will have a look at the play as it certainly worked well when I saw it and has the potential for further development. Yours Sincerely, Chris Edmund, Head of Directing, Academy of Performing Arts, Perth."

### Original 1994 Cast:

David Bishop as Jason  
Chris Thomas as Bill  
Wally Graham as Nathan  
Mandi Nelson as Coralie

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# WHICH ONE?

By  
Chris Thomas

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## CHARACTERS:

(They can be aged anywhere between 17 and 30)

JASON: The one who tries to keep everything in order.

BILL: A crude sort who likes to find innuendo in everything.

NATHAN: Likes to think of himself as an eccentric.

CORALIE: A nice girl-next-door type, but who knows what hidden desires she has within?

## SCENE:

*[The scene is a lounge room, the general living area, of a bachelor pad. Fairly plain, the decor should not match. The main lounge should be able to seat three, with two accompanying armchairs offside. A coffee table should also be present. Generally the room should be a bachelor's mess but it should include an old pizza box with some pizza in it, a couple of old socks and a dead pot plant strategically placed in the scene. NATHAN is on the lounge, staring at nothing intently. JASON enters, reading a car magazine not noticing NATHAN at first but then tries to figure out what he is looking at.]*

JASON: What are you doing?

NATHAN: *(without looking at him)* Isn't it obvious?

JASON: Apparently not.

NATHAN: Can you keep the noise down a bit? I'm trying to watch a program.

JASON: But we don't have a TV any more.

NATHAN: Only in relative terms. Who are we to define what is and what isn't?

JASON: I really wonder about you sometimes, Nathan. Thank God Bill provides a bit of sanity around here. At least I can understand his annoying habits. Where is he, anyway?

NATHAN: I believe he's contemplating the mould on the bathroom ceiling.

JASON: You mean he's taking a bath?

NATHAN: Indeed, yes.

*[Enter BILL, in jeans and t-shirt with damp hair and a towel hanging around his neck.]*

BILL : Any pizza left?

JASON: We haven't had pizza for a week.

BILL: Yes, but I distinctly remember saving a piece for myself and leaving it in *that* box (*points to pizza box lying on floor*). You guys haven't eaten it, have you? (*JASON gives him a look of distaste. BILL grabs the box, takes a piece of week-old pizza out and eats it*)

JASON: I'm glad we don't have any women around here. They'd take one look and be out the door in five minutes.

NATHAN: Perhaps not. If they were strongly attracted enough to you, this (*moves hand around to indicate the lounge room's state*) may mean nothing to them. In the boundaries of love, what's a mouldy pizza or sock between friends?

JASON: It might be fine for a while but then they start worrying about petty things like the amount of hair you leave around the basin. (*Thinking...*) Still, it's all right for them to use your razor when they want to shave their armpits. Well, you know women.

NATHAN: I believe they are the female of the species *homo sapien*.

JASON: What *is* it with you Nathan? And in the "boundaries of love" as you put it, I would not wish anyone the misfortune of smelling Bill's socks.

BILL: (*picking up a sock and sniffing it*) Smells all right to me.

JASON: You're really gross.

BILL: You ain't seen nothing yet. (*Puts sock into his mouth*)

NATHAN: Taste good, does it?

BILL: *(spitting sock out)* Not a good move really. By the way Jason, Coralie called and said she needed your help with something. Hubba hubba, eh? *(makes a few pelvic thrust movements)*

JASON: You're a willie mantic, you know that?

BILL: A willie what?

JASON: A willie mantic. Someone who's got their heart in the wrong place, usually between their legs. When did Coralie call?

NATHAN: A few days ago.

JASON: You both knew and didn't tell me?

BILL: Now, now. Just because you want to do the horizontal lambada with her. Who knows what sort of help she might be asking for? *(nudging JASON a bit)*

JASON: Do you ever think with your top half?

BILL: Not if I can help it.

JASON: She's certainly not coming here with the state this place is in. And the way you two carry on!

BILL: What do you mean? I'm a great fun-loving guy to be around!

NATHAN: It would be a good opportunity to test my theory.

BILL: That's true. If she really wants you, this mess isn't going to stop her going for what she wants.

JASON: Look, how many times do I have to keep telling you that we're just good friends? Anyway, a bed surrounded by cups of mouldy coffee is hardly conducive to love making...

NATHAN: Why would you be worrying about setting the mood if you did not want to exchange bodily secretions?

JASON: You're as bad as Bill sometimes. Just give it a rest. I'll do this at my own pace. Besides, you two are bound to bugger things up.

NATHAN: I'm not in the habit of "buggering" up your life.

JASON: Not intentionally, unlike Bill.

NATHAN: What's that suppose—

BILL: (*interrupting*) I've just hit upon an idea.

JASON: Spare me, *please*. The last brilliant idea you had was watching the TV by candlelight the last time we had a blackout. That's when we had a TV, before you tried fixing it with the hammer.

BILL: (*ignoring the comment*) How about we have a little wager? Invite Coralie over and see how long she stays for. If she stays for more than, say half an hour, we win.

JASON: You've got to be joking. One look at this pigsty, nay, pig *swill* she'll be out the door. There is absolutely no way Coralie is coming here. And I'm hardly going to bring a girl back here with your perverted thoughts and his strange lapses into Zen Buddhism.

NATHAN: We'll go out somewhere for the evening.

JASON: That doesn't alter the state of this place.

BILL: For Chrissake's, that's the *whole* point! To see how she reacts to this mess! And why are you so worried about the impression she gets of you? You keep saying you don't want to bonk her.

JASON: I never *actually* said that. All right then, don't ask me why but I'm on the verge of swaying to this idea. How about we change the stakes?

BILL: To what?

JASON: If you lose you two have to keep this room up to *my* living standards.

BILL: How will we know how long Coralie's been here?

NATHAN: My dear friend, haven't you heard of honesty?

JASON: *I* have, but I doubt it's in Bill's vocabulary.

BILL: Give me a little credit. Not scared of losing, are we?

JASON: Not in the slightest. I won't have to do much if *you* win. I can't lose.

NATHAN: You will if you keep tucking your shirts into your underpants. (*JASON is mortified. BILL laughs and pulls the elastic in JASON's underpants*) It might just be acceptable in winter, but we're in the middle of spring. Don't look so worried. I'm not going to tell anyone, and Bill won't either, because we all know he bathes with a rubber ducky. (*Now BILL is horrified, JASON laughs*) Considering the lack of trust amongst us I'll get Mr Rogers next door to keep an eye on how long Coralie's car is here for. Fair enough?

JASON: When did Coralie say she wanted to come round?

BILL: Go give her a call and ask her (*JASON exits*). What are you up to Nathan? I know you act like a space cadet most of the time but underneath that pseudo-intellectual bulldust you have some other motive.

NATHAN: Just like you do, except you disguise it underneath your brash exterior. Don't forget this was *your* idea.

BILL: Yes, and you were all for it. What the hell are you up to?

NATHAN: Do you know what Coralie looks like?

BILL: No, but I've had some good reports.

NATHAN: Let's leave it at that then. (*JASON re-enters*) That was quick.

JASON: I wish you guys had told me she called earlier. She's got an assignment due tomorrow and she's desperate for some help.

BILL: She's desperate, eh?

JASON: For my *help*. Listen to every word I say you filthy-mouthed dung beetle, not just the ones that appeal to a certain body appendage.

NATHAN: If the assignment is due tomorrow, I presume she'll be around later this evening?

JASON: Got it in one. You guys better have made yourselves scarce by 8.30.

NATHAN: It's settled then. Now, if you'll excuse me I must find out why is a grape and have a chat about tonight's events with Mr Rogers (*NATHAN exits*).

BILL: And if you'll excuse *me*, I have to look in the mirror before I forget how good I look. (*BILL goes to exit, stops, goes up to JASON*) Remember, if it's not on, it's not on.

JASON: Bugger off, will you? (*BILL exits, then JASON looks towards ceiling*) What the hell have I got myself into? [*Shakes head, sighs, briefly puts head into hand, then exits, lights go down.*]



[*Later, in the evening. The doorbell rings, JASON runs out in a panic looking for his shirt, sees it on the couch and hurriedly puts it on before he answers the front door. CORALIE comes in, carrying a bag, some books and a lecture pad. She dumps them on the coffee table as they both take a seat.*]

JASON: Sorry about the mess. The other two never lift a finger to help.

CORALIE: Oh, I didn't really notice. It's fairly neat compared to some places I've seen.

JASON: Where do you want to start?

CORALIE: That question could be misconstrued.

JASON: (*panicking slightly*) I was referring to this assignment of yours. It's due in tomorrow isn't it?

CORALIE: What? Oh yes, but we don't have to rush into it straight away.

JASON: But if it's due so soon...

CORALIE: Don't worry, most of it's finished. (*She looks around the room*) The other two you live with... what are their names?

JASON: Bill and Nathan.

CORALIE: I spoke to one on the phone. He sounded fairly laidback but a little brazen.

JASON: Sounds like Bill. He didn't say anything did he?

CORALIE: I could hardly have had a conversation with a mute, now could I? Of course he said something!

JASON: I meant about me.

CORALIE: Well, I wanted to speak to you and you weren't there, so he had to say something about you.

JASON: Sorry. Forget it. Let's get started, shall we?

CORALIE: That tongue of yours is going to get you into serious trouble one of these days.

JASON: You keep taking everything the wrong way!

CORALIE: Tell me more about the two you live with. How did you meet?

JASON: I was looking for a room to rent and I saw an ad for this place in the paper. Bill and Nathan were already here when I moved in.

CORALIE: So where are they now?

JASON: Out somewhere.

CORALIE: So we're here by ourselves then? *(said with a slightly ominous undertone, she crosses her legs)*

JASON: *(nervously)* Um, yes. Nice to have a bit of peace and quiet for study isn't it?

CORALIE: Amongst other things. Any luck on the romantic front?

JASON: What prompted that?

CORALIE: *(leans over JASON)* Just a question.

(PAUSE)

JASON: I'll be honest with you. I don't think you really need my help with your assignment, you just want someone to reassure it's okay. But I'm glad you came over. I've been meaning to tell you this for a while but I just didn't know how to bring up the subject.

CORALIE: Well, stop beating around the bush and spit it out.

JASON: *(leaning over her a bit)* I like you.

CORALIE: I like you too, Jase.

JASON: No, I mean in a romantic way.

CORALIE: *(startled by his revelation)* I had no idea... I thought you weren't very interested.

JASON: I just give that impression to avoid hassles from certain people. *[he moves to kiss her but before he gets the chance he is interrupted by BILL and NATHAN entering the house singing There's A Kind Of Thrush All Over My Girl. BILL and NATHAN enter the living area with a couple of bottles under each arm. They are also wearing red witches hats they have stolen from the side of the road on their heads. Obviously, they have been drinking.]*

BILL: G'day Jase, how's it going mate?

JASON: Fine until you arrived on the scene.

NATHAN: *(looking at CORALIE, but says this to JASON)* You didn't tell us you were having company.

JASON: You damn well knew about it.

NATHAN: *(moving to CORALIE)* Please excuse Jason. He's hopeless with introductions. *(holds out hand, CORALIE and JASON stand, BILL jumps over the couch, ready to sit next to CORALIE)* I'm Nathan, he's Bill and I believe you've already met Jason.

CORALIE: *(shaking his hand)* Nice to meet you. *(She sits back down, Nathan sits in one of the offside armchairs)*

BILL: *(JASON tries to sit back down only to find BILL in the way so he grumpily sits on the arm of the couch)* So Coralie... tell us a bit about yourself.

JASON: If you don't mind, Coralie and I were enjoying a quiet evening.

NATHAN: Don't worry about us, we'll be like mice.

JASON: I severely doubt it. You've been at the pub haven't you?

BILL: Chill out man. Nathan and I only had a couple of drinks. And we brought some back for you.

JASON: How thoughtful.

CORALIE: They've obviously gone to a bit of trouble. Why don't you get some glasses Jase? *[CORALIE touches JASON's leg tenderly but BILL does the same, mocking the gesture. JASON gets up, sighs with grim resignation and exits to get glasses.]*

NATHAN: Do you live round here often?

CORALIE: Sorry?

NATHAN: I mean, how do you know our dear housemate Jason?

CORALIE: We're in a couple of the same classes at uni.

BILL: I spoke to you on the phone didn't I?

CORALIE: I think so.

BILL: If I may so, you have the sweetest sounding voice I have ever heard. *[As BILL says this JASON returns with the glasses thumping them on the table and he resigns himself to sitting in the other offside armchair.]*

JASON: You're really full of it tonight Bill. Are sure that you only had a couple?

NATHAN: Notice that we didn't say a couple of *what*. We could have meant middies, pints, yard glasses, jugs or cartons.

JASON: Cartons I'd say, with the amount of bulldust that is presently coming from Bill's mouth.

BILL: Now, now. How about I open one of these bottles before they get warm?

CORALIE: *(trying to break the tension)* Sure, why not? *(BILL opens the bottle but it froths too much and it spills onto Coralie's skirt).*

BILL: *(trying to wipe it off, but also groping her in the process)* Bugger! I'm sorry. I really am.

CORALIE: *(standing)* No it's all right really. It doesn't matter, this is an old skirt. Have you got a sponge or something I can use?

NATHAN: Go through there to the kitchen and there will be a sponge in the sink.

CORALIE: *(as she exits BILL wipes his hands on her skirt)* Thanks.

JASON: *(stands)* What the bloody hell are you two playing at?

NATHAN: I'm not playing anything... I don't even own a deck of cards.

JASON: I'm growing just a *little* bit tired of you Nathan and a *lot of a* bit tired with you Bill! Cut the crap and tell me — what happened to our bet?

BILL

& NATHAN: What bet?

JASON: I know you two are drunk but you're not *that* pissed. I thought you guys said you were going to make yourselves scarce after 8.30.

NATHAN: We said we'd make ourselves scarce *by* 8.30. There was nothing said about what time we could come back *after* 8.30.

JASON: You cheating bastards!! We're not testing the theory properly.

BILL: We're part of this bachelor's mess too, Jason. We have to be included in the equation.

JASON: Why didn't you tell me this earlier? You two walked in just when—

CORALIE: (*re-entering, sitting on the lounge again*) Just when what?

BILL: Just when we thought the pretty dame may have perhaps disappeared forever she returns making our hearts rejoice.

JASON: I should give you a carton more often, then you could write my comparative literature essays.

CORALIE: Don't be cynical Jason. I thought what he said was very sweet. [*JASON says nothing, but quietly fumes at BILL. BILL ignores this and smiles at CORALIE's comment.*] Well, how about that drink we were all going to have?

NATHAN: (*trying to stand but falling back into the chair*) Perhaps I should pour the drinks this time considering Bill's lack of motor coordination?

BILL: Whatever suits you mate. Just as long you don't miss my glass when you're pouring. [*NATHAN opens bottle(s) and pours drinks for everyone*] So Jase mate... Coralie was telling us you're in the same course at uni.

JASON: We're not in the same course, we just attend a few of the same classes.

BILL: Same difference. You know Coralie, Jason here always speaks very highly of you. In fact, he never stops talking about you.

JASON: (*giving him a mutinous look*) Don't exaggerate Bill. (*To CORALIE*) I may mention you every now and then but not to the extent Bill thinks I do.

NATHAN: Did you know Jason's a big fan of Plastic Bertrand?

CORALIE: Plastic who?

NATHAN: You know, that French guy from the early eighties who had the "hit" with *Ca Plane Pour Moi*.

JASON: You're really coming up with some beautes tonight, both of you.

NATHAN: Come on Jase, we all know you've got every re-mix of that, um, "classic".

CORALIE: Don't fret Jason, we've all got some daggy things in our past that we'd rather forget.

NATHAN: *(raising his glass)* Here's cheers then.

CORALIE: Oh, I just thought we were having a couple of quiet drinks. What are we celebrating?

BILL: *(giving Jason a devilish look)* It hasn't happened yet, but we're hoping it will soon. Aren't we Jase? *(BILL pretends as if JASON might getsome oral sex, JASON almost chokes on his beer. CORALIE doesn't see BILL's actions)*

JASON: That's it! I've had enough of this Bill. Outside now!!

CORALIE: What's got into you Jason?

BILL: Yeah, calm down mate. I'm only having a joke.

JASON: I've reached the end of my tether. You're coming outside now and I'm going to knock some sense into you!! *(BILL and JASON struggle, but JASON finally manages to drag him off)*

(PAUSE)

NATHAN: So here we are then.

CORALIE: I've never seen Jason like that before. Does he always fly off the handle so easily?

NATHAN: Only with Bill. They have a bit of a personality clash every now and then.

CORALIE: Shouldn't we go outside and see if they're all right?

NATHAN: They'll sort it out between them. They always do. Don't worry, they haven't seriously injured each other in the past.

CORALIE: What about the future?

NATHAN: *(moves over to sit by her on the lounge)* It will take care of itself somehow — it always does.

CORALIE: How can you say that?

NATHAN: By using a combination of my larynx, muscles and electrical impulses from my brain.

**This is not the end of "Which One?"  
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**COSTUMES**

JASON: Dark blue jeans, white or bright coloured t-shirt. Brogues. Wearing a dress shirt when Coralie arrives.

BILL: Faded jeans, muscle shirt. Wears sneakers on return from the pub.

NATHAN: Slightly Gothic look. Doc Martens, black jeans, grey t-shirt. Wears a dark blue jacket on his return from the pub.

CORALIE: Wears a skirt with hemline just above the knee. Wears a light-coloured open blouse over a body suit. Low heeled shoes. For her change in character she wears black leather. As stated in the script, if this does not prove practical, black lace underwear will suffice. Try and keep the leather boots, but if not, use high heels.

## World premiere for Playlovers

Playlovers has a tradition of presenting new and interesting works and their one-act season this year is no exception.

The season will feature the world premiere of *Which One?* by Christopher Thomas and another locally written play *Down The Well* by Jason Crewes.

In *Which One?* three male university students share a house and when a girl visits one evening, each starts lust after her without the others' knowledge.

They all make their declarations of love for her but the girl has her own sordid secret which

is not revealed until the play's climax.

The play is essentially a comedy but it touches on male sexuality and the trauma of sharing a house with people.

*Down The Well*, by Jason Crewes, was first performed at the WA Academy of Performing Arts last year and is being directed by his sister Amanda.

Amanda describes the play as a psychological drama.

"It's about a woman coming to terms with her life and accepting it," she said.

The third play is *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco directed by John Milson, head of musical theatre at the WA Academy of Performing Arts.

The one-act season plays at 8pm on Friday and Saturday, September 9, 10, 23 and 24. Tickets are \$8 and bookings can be made on 341 5788.

Playlovers perform at Hackett Hall, Draper Street, Floreat.

### Sunday mass

The Malcolm Sargent Festival Choir will perform Haydn's *Imperial "Nelson" Mass* and other works at St George's Cathedral on Sunday, September 11 at 2.30pm.

The choir and orchestra will be conducted by Simon Lawford, master of music, St George's Cathedral.

Admission is \$10 at the door. Proceeds aid the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund.

Playlovers have two new works, *Which One?* and *Down The Well* and Ionesco's *The Lesson*, which is directed by John Milson and will be entered in the festival, but not for adjudication as a production. The season runs until September 24. Bookings on 341 5788.

Sunday Times

Post Newspaper



Nathan (Wally Graham), Coralie (Mandi Nelson), Bill (Chris Thomas) and Jason (David Bishop)