

### 3.3 Speech Transcription: *The Glass Cage*<sup>1</sup>

**The Glass Cage**  
by Michael Russell  
(facilitated by Ian Brown)

#### **Characters**

Michael 1	The Voice of Despair
Michael 2	The voice of hope: nice, sweet and hopeful
The Despairing	
The Poo Person	soft like velvet, female with sultry undertones
A Judge	
Fairy Godmother	

#### **Setting**

A hole in the fabric of time and space where criminals are trapped forever in glass cages.

#### **The Time**

The Present

Performer	David Field
Sound Engineer	Andreij Shabunov
Producer/Director	Christopher Williams

---

<sup>1</sup> Script presented by the ABC to the Prix Italia, 2000. Includes minor edits and text transpositions made during production, but does not constitute a transcription of the audio production (see Appendix 3.2).

*The Glass Cage. Because I haven't felt like an 'I' for a very long time. Prelude to Escape*

- Michael 1            It is a bad day at the ranch. It is appalling, in fact. It is so appalling that everyone feels that their heads are being squeezed in a vice.
- Michael 2            It is extremely interesting that as the only sane person here, I am being as loony as possible to fit in with the prevailing atmosphere.
- Michael 1            It is so daunting that he is making himself a book, to keep himself sane. It is the only thing between him and the madness that makes the awfulness bearable and keeps him from going under. It is in fact, a nightmare of such awesome proportions that no one can possibly imagine how awful it is. It never ceases to amaze him that no one else seems to notice. They go about their daily business as if this is okay and no one questions the futility and hopelessness of his life.
- Michael 2            It seems to be an endless round of food and toilets and food and toilets. I don't know if there is anything else in existence apart from food and toilets and sometimes I don't care anyway. There is no way out. It is so confined and foolishly conceived and conscientiously carries out as a duty of care and a life worth living and a sort of existence that is defined by food and toilets and how many times I throw up and how many times I scream and how many times I feel like dying and how many times I just want to smash the faces that leer at me and mouth obscenities at me.
- Michael 1            Faces that hate him and faces that love him too. The ones that love him are so few and far between that it makes him sad to see them, because they show their concern and can't do anything for him.
- Michael 2            Why did this happen to me? I ask myself. Why does it have to be me who is this shell and considerable disaster? Why does it have to be me that am in this place of torture? Why does it have to be me in this well of treachery. I feel that my life is a sort of parable for torture and filth. It is a small microcosm of the larger world of inequities and foolishnesses that make me feel that the entire universe is a perverse joke on the part of some sadist who enjoys the spectacle from a vast distance and presents himself as a benevolent despot

who cares and cares and cares, instead of hates and hates.

*Poo-Painting: a Plan*

- The Despairing      They say you are crazy and mad and bad and stupid. I know you aren't. I know you are a sane person in a mad world
- Michael 2            It is slow and agonising, but excruciatingly pleasurable.
- The Poo Person      It is a bitter pill to swallow. You can't believe the world is so bloody awful. It doesn't make sense to go on living in this tragedy. It doesn't make sense to stay in this demented half-world of insanity and despair.
- Michael 2            It makes me feel my bum is a portal to a new universe of joy and warmth. That feeling only lasts 'til they come to see what I have done and their horror takes away my pleasure. They seem like maniacs and gremlins in the midst of my forests and fields of joy.
- The Despairing      It only seems that you are crazy and mad and bad and sad and vlad. It doesn't appear to you that they know anything at all. It seems to you that they know nothing of the workings of your fertile mind and your stupid body and your awful habits and your silly nonsense and your daft craziness and your foolish obsessions and your joking ways
- The Poo Person      You feel so helpless and alone. It feels deeper than a bottomless pit and more awful than a dungeon in Hell. It feels like your only outlet is this disgusting habit of unpicking your bottom and smearing it around to see what you are made of. This doesn't endear you to your carers who can't appreciate the beauty of your creations and only see them as disgusting faeces from a crazed lunatic.
- Michael 2            The main problem seems to be the smell and the colour. If only it smelled like roses and looked the same. If only it was a nice acceptable substance that oozes out of me, instead of shit. That way I could hide my shit and keep it and not have them take it away. That way I could hide my shit and keep it and not have them take it away. That way it could talk to me at night and comfort me with its warmth and wetness.

- Michael 1                    It seems to you that the world feels that your faeces is a hated thing that you should not indulge in. You feel that it gives you the key to reality and it feels like a friendly substance in a cruel world.
- The Poo Person            No one ever asks you what they signify until one day you very carefully crafted a play about them and fully explored their significance and beauty. It seems to you that all the trauma in the world is contained in your shit and you can overcome the tortures you are subjected to by smearing and feeling the ain and joy of this process. It seems to you that you are exploring your unconscious with this method and that no one understands that that is what you are doing.
- Michael 1                    The only friend you have is your shit and it talks to you nightly and comforts you with its dense feelings of gooiness and softness. The only time you feel loved is when you feel your shit and feel its bodiness and humanness.
- The Despairing            Your mind plays out its gruesome dryness and you watch them from a detached space that seems somehow remote in the feelings inside the dramas.
- Michael 2                    It's not as if I have anything else to comfort me – only a dumb bear that I hate, with a stupid face like a twit. It sits here, grinning inanely at me and staring into space. I hope it isn't autistic like me – maybe I have misjudged it!
- The Despairing            Only a moron would believe your dreadful life is a reality. No-one can really see that life is a hopeless empty futile stupid mindless boring horrible ghastly wretched rotten mess.
- Fairy Godmother           We are only a small voice against the harsh chorus but we make your world bearable and give you hope. We only help a little bit, but a little bit is better than nothing.
- Michael 1                    You feel as if your life is a treadmill. It goes round and round and round in an endless journey of food and toilets. It drifts along without direction – an aimless plotless deviation and nightmare.
- Fairy Godmother           Do you feel that touch like the song of a soft bird? It caresses your cheeks and makes you feel that somewhere in this zoo of insanity there are creatures of

light and joy that can see you inside your cage and give you a key to the world outside and to the real world that you so long to stand in and experience.

- Michael 2 I make no attempt to escape because they only return me to the prison and change the locks.
- Michael 1 It feels like your world is an endless succession of nights and days with little to choose between them. Knowing how little you are able to influence the course of your life you are nevertheless convinced that something is expected of you and that you might one day be able to vary the monotony now existing in your world.
- Michael 2 The feelings I have are small and fragile. They aren't able to survive the feelings that are thrown up against them. They crumble and shatter and fall into little pieces like so many toy animals on the shelf. The shelf is my existence and I share it with no one.
- Fairy Godmother Somehow our belief gives him a strength to go on and on and on in spite of the setbacks and barriers and obstacles and his own stupid body which tortures him ceaselessly and gives him no rest or respite or let up or hope of change and progress.
- Michael 2 I am alone and helpless. I am not alone in my dreams. They are full and feel like a host of angels surround me and give me strength and courage and hope and joy. It feels in my dreams like I'm an angel with wings to fly away from this torture and pain. It feels in my dreams like I am overwhelmed by joy.
- Michael 1 It is only an idea you have – only a fragile little idea that keeps you going and gives you hope. It means so much to hear other people telling you you can do things and encouraging you to go on when all hope seems lost.

*The Smell of Freedom*

- Michael 1 Just when it all seems so useless and tragic, your need is met and someone unlocks your cage and sets you free. They come and give you a life of hope and joy and words and meaning.
- Fairy Godmother I only know that you need my help. I feel your pain and I

feel your desperation. I wish I could help, but they don't believe me. They don't believe me. he don't believe me.

The Despairing      There's food in that fridge. It's there for you to take. No one will mind. It's all free for the taking – just walk in and steal it. Just walk in and take it.

Michael 1            Your life is useless, stupid, demented, ridiculous. Why don't you just jump in a neighbour's swimming pool and remove the world of your ridiculous presence. We don't need your sort in this world. You only costs taxpayers money for no good reason. Go on. Out you go. Relieve us of this burden.

The Poo Person      It's only my poo. It's only my poo. It's only my poo – not a big pile of shit.

*On the Run*

Michael 2            It's a feeling of hopefulness and abandonment. It's a feeling of joy and lightness. It's a feeling of degrees of awareness and fullness of existence.

Michael 1            Your own trust in yourself is so fragile it barely survives the evil negativity. It feels to you that there are two kinds of people in the world. One kind feels your fears and hopes, and like your intelligence and wit. Another kind merely look at you as a blind deaf post that has no feelings or intelligence and no means of doing anything to contribute to the world in any way.

Michael 2            I only know the words for hate hate hate hate. I only know the words that rip and tear at the fabric of my soul. I only know the words that mangle and kill my feelings. They pull at my will and feel so angry and despising. I am a victim of their hatred and I am a helpless ghost in this world of people who can talk and walk and run. I am a fellow traveller shut in the carriage at the end. My door is locked and my windows are barred. Reality is a small space for me. The walls close in and give me no freedom to move.

Michael 1            You are so alone you feel like a fool and a dope and a hopeless mess.

Michael 2            A fool and a dope and a hopeless mess. I am only in

space of intelligence sometimes. Other times I exist in a peculiar timewarp of ethereal quality, which is a great morass of treacle that sucks at my body and draws all the intellect out of my brain. So that I am unable to function at anything more than an animal level and can't see any way out or any hope.

- Michael 1            It makes you wonder if perhaps you are a alien or a changeling or a genius or a joke.
- Michael 2            It is foolish of me to trust that I will always be believed, but I learn to live with that and keep going against the tide of evil and hurtful doubters. I need so much to be believed.
- Fairy Godmother    You can go back... You can go back... You can go back!
- Michael 1            You can't do this you know – it's not on. It won't work. It's a desperate attempt at nothing. You can't get it together. You need some help. You are a spastic twit. You are a nerd and a fool and an idiot basket case. Twit. Twit. Twit.
- Michael 2            It's too hard out here. I will be shot on sight like a felon. Not a human being. They won't know that my stupid body drives me to do these stupid things.
- Fairy Godmother    You can go back... You can go back... You can go back!
- Michael 1            It must be better somewhere – maybe on Mars or Venus or Jupiter – maybe that is where you are from. Only your good fairy could know that and she isn't telling. She comes to you at night – soft and warm and gentle and tucks you in and kisses your tears away. She tells you stories about your family and how they love you and how you aren't really retarded, only slow to use your hands and unable to speak. It isn't your brains that are retarded, only your body.
- Michael 2            The fridges are calling too loudly. The fridges are calling. They are deafening. They are filling my mind with food. Food, food, food. This food obsession – it drives me to do awful things that jeopardise my very life.
- Fairy Godmother    You can go back and I will be there. I will be there. I will be there.
- Michael 1            Let go of this foolish dream of independence and a real

life. You are too stupid and futile and pathetic to ever get it together. Drop out of reality and give up the ghost of the freedom idea. Go on. Go on. Give it up. Give it up.

Fairy Godmother Let's go back and try again. They nearly got us that time, but this time we'll stay one jump ahead of them. Slowly, slowly catchee monkey.

Michael 2 Knowing this, my understanding of myself is enhanced and I make great progress in a short time. I wonder how good I would have been if I had known this when I was still a gorgeous little child instead of a weird teenager.

### *On Trial*

Michael 2 It makes me feel a ghost in the machine to be in this foolish charade. It makes me feel that someone must have wanted me to endure this trial for some reason but who? And why? It doesn't make sense to lock me up in this prison for no good reason. The only thing I can think of is that I am on trial for some hideous crime committed in a past life. Maybe I tortured a person with a disability and this is my atonement.

Judge You are guilty guilty guilty. You you you. Guilty guilty guilty. Heinous crime. Criminal. Foul leper. Filthy reprobate. Gruesome ghoul.

Michael 2 It isn't a very logical explanation but it is the only one I have.

Michael 1 Told you so. Twit, twit, twit. Twit, twit, twit. It's only what you should have expected. Ha ha ha!

Judge You will be sent to the most hideous prison man can devise. You will be locked up and we will throw away the key. There will be no reprieve, no pardon, no joy, no hope, for the rest of your natural life.

The Poo Person Sweetie, don't worry. It'll be all right.

The Despairing Awful. Awful. Awful. Pain. Pain. Pain.

Michael 2 It must have been a hideous crime for such a dreadful punishment. How can I have survived for so long? It makes me feel saint-like that I have endured and survived.



Fairy Godmother We will keep trying. Don't give up. It will be alright one day.

*Back at the Ranch*

Michael 1 You feel like a fool and an idiot when they refuse to allow you to be a human being and a member of their exclusive club. The club for people who talk and speak freely.

Michael 2 It is a nice club. You sit around smoking your heads off killing yourself slowly by small degrees and chatting pleasantly about life and its ups and downs. I'm not able to participate but I hear it all. Every last stupid word of it. All the trials and tribulations of being my jailer and having to cope with my weird habits and clean up after me.

Michael 1 It is always so boring in the world they make for you. It never changes. You know the routine off by heart. It feels very claustrophobic and foolishly conceived and madly eccentric and dynamically nowhere. It makes your life seem endless and kooky and cookie and cocky and rocky and gnocchi. Gooky and drooky and grookie and sookie soopy and froopy and loopy and gloopy and droogie and froogie and looby and droody and ghoulie and cruelly and snooly and schmoolie -

Michael 2 You might say many things are very habitual but only to them. To me, weirdness is an intricate moment of exquisite awfulness and dreadful trauma in living technicolour. Although I can see the bright side sometimes when they are being open and loving to me which did happen sometimes, but having no means of responding appropriately, I am unable to keep their interest and they go away believing I am nothing but an amazingly fucked up mess.

Michael 1 Leaping off at a tangent you feel your mind change gears. It feels like a radical shift from dreary and hopeless to funny and hopeful.

Michael 2 It makes me smile inwardly to imagine how you would feel if you could read my mind and see the thoughts running around in their cage like little rats. You would laugh at the futility and boring justification, although you wouldn't understand half the words, being uneducated morons. Morons with tiny little minds unable to conceive

of a better world than this nightmare you have created for me to inhabit on a daily basis. It only feels like a small thing to me, but to you it is a quantum leap of faith. One day you might understand, but for now you bide your time and fool yourselves that you are doing the right thing. You laugh at my pain and despise me, but you can't ignore my anguish.

I am a metaphor for pain and suffering who opens your own wounds. But you can't bleed for me, only yourselves. It makes no sense to you and it makes no sense to me. In fact, it is completely senseless. Mindless. Boring. Dull. Excruciating. Pitiful. Gutless. Desperate. Disgusting. And devoid of all meaning.

*End of Play*