

# IN COLD BLOOD

By Patrick Marlowe

Aged 44

## CHARACTERS:

Alex, an evil frog – Osman Jalloh

Keith Popshaw, a heroic hedgehog – Mitesh Soni

DATE

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**SCENE ONE**

**TIME**

The Present

**PLACE**

Alex's Very Posh Office

**AT RISE**

We hear an offstage commotion, as if a female character is being saved from deadly peril.  
Alex and Keith suddenly rush on.

**ALEX**

I don't know how to thank you. You've saved my wife.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Hey. Think nothing of it. It's all in a day's work for Helpful Hedgehog, Your Friendly Local Hero.

**ALEX**

Can I give you some feedback?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Please do. Where would we be without feedback?

**ALEX**

Your name.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Helpful Hedgehog, Your Friendly Local Hero?

**ALEX**

It's rubbish.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Pardon?

**ALEX**

It's the lamest thing I've ever heard in my life.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Oh. I thought it was rather snappy.

**ALEX**

We need to do something about that. What's your real name?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Keith Popshaw.

**ALEX**

Never mind. Let me ask you another question: how is life in the independent hero business?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Not what it was, I'm afraid. You're the first person who's needed a hero in weeks.

**ALEX**

Oh dear. Times must be hard.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Yes, they are. Things are changing so fast. When I started my customers knew me. I knew them by name, and they knew I'd be there when I was needed. I wasn't interested in glory. I only wanted to serve my community.

**ALEX**

It sounds charming.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

It was.

**ALEX**

Was?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Well, the community grew and it became harder to provide the personal touch. Sometimes people had to wait for me to get to them, and that's no joke when you're hanging off a cliff by a thread.

**ALEX**

It can't be.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

And all the while, we independent, local heroes were losing business to the big out-of-town superheroes, with their buy one rescue get another rescue free deals. We can't compete with them.

**ALEX**

Perhaps I can help.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

I don't mean to be rude, but you're just a frog. What do you know about the hero business?

**ALEX**

You'd be surprised.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

What can you do? Do you have any special powers?

**ALEX**

Well, for one thing, I'm amphibious.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Really? Wow. That must be really useful.

**ALEX**

It's got me out of a few tight spots.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

I mean, I can only use my right hand. I'm absolutely useless with my left. But to be truly amphibious. Wow.

**ALEX**

This is going to be a long night. Look, Keith Popshaw, your days are numbered. Nobody wants a small-time hero anymore. It makes no economic sense. You can't compete with the superheroes, because they're better than you, more efficient than you and cheaper than you.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

You don't know what you're talking about.

**ALEX**

Now don't get prickly. You have to face facts. Superheroes are better value. And as they say, 'Every Little Helps.'

**KEITH POPSHAW**

You! Alex, the evil frog!

**ALEX**

Welcome to the nerve centre of my Global Superhero Network, Mr Popshaw. I've been expecting you.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

But you called me in to rescue your wife.

**ALEX**

She didn't need rescuing. I knew you wouldn't come here of your own accord, so I provided you with a little incentive. Now, I have a proposition for you.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

I'm not listening.

**ALEX**

I'd like you to come and work for me.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Not me. You're barking up the wrong tree, frog.

**ALEX**

One way or the other, I will destroy whatever is left of your tin-pot little business. Now, you can roll up in a ball and pretend it isn't happening, or we can do it the nice way.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Never. I'm not afraid of you.

**ALEX**

You should be.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

That's a load of bull, frog.

**ALEX**

Would you like a sausage?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Pardon?

**ALEX**

I think I'd like a plate of sausages.

(A plate of sausages miraculously appears.)

**ALEX**

Oh yes. I can think things into existence, too. Now that is useful. So, will you come and work for me?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Never!

**ALEX**

What a shame. It's a nice job, with a good career path. We'll start you off on rescuing cats from trees, and then in fifty years or so, you might move up to helping old ladies cross the road.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

You..you're just pond-life.

**ALEX**

Is that supposed to be an insult? Are you turning me down, Keith Popshaw?

**KEITH POPSHAW**

I certainly am.

**ALEX**

Oh. Pity. Off you go, then.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Right.

**ALEX**

Just a friendly word of warning. If you step out of here and try to cross the road, I will think a huge car into existence which will come and squash you flat.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

Your parents must be proud of you.

**ALEX**

Don't talk to me about them. My mother was nothing but a common toad. Yuck. And my father was a newt. Never happy unless he had a drink in his hand. And I swore when I was just a tadpole, that I was never going to end up like them.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

You could have done some good in the world, with your talents, but instead you became a cold-blooded reptile.

**ALEX**

I am what I am.

(He takes out a lily-pad.)

**ALEX**

It's a shame. This is my lily-pad 2, the last word in portable computing, and something you'll never be able to afford. Loser.

**KEITH POPSHAW**

I'm a mammal. Warm-blooded. I prefer my computer to have a mouse. Goodbye.

(He goes. Alex closes his eyes. We here a screeching of tyres, and a squishing sound.)

**ALEX**

Goodbye.

**THE END**

