

# VARIETY MEMORIES

*another fine reminiscence from the Arthur Tolcher archives*

*legendary stand up existentialists*  
**ALBERT CAMUS & JEAN-PAUL SARTRE**  
*remember*

## **THE TWO CORINTHIANS**

- SARTRE:** We were their audience.
- TOLCHER:** This was, when?
- SARTRE:** Way back when.
- CAMUS:** I recall. Modern times.
- SARTRE:** A moment to be treasured at the London Polonium.
- TOLCHER:** Classic.
- CAMUS:** The Two Corinthians were Frankie Kafka and Freddie Nietzsche. A double act without equal.
- SARTRE:** A surreal Eric and Ernie.
- TOLCHER:** "Two old men sitting in deckchairs..."

**SARTRE:** A huge influence on all the twisted turns that followed.

**CAMUS:** If we exist at all.

**SARTRE:** So, the Corinthians drifted on.

**CAMUS:** Dressed as clouds, my dear. Dressed as clouds.

**SARTRE:** Checked the crowd -

**CAMUS:** Counted the house.

**SARTRE:** - through these ridiculous joke shop spyglasses.

**CAMUS:** Frankie says, "The last time we were here we took the roof off."  
And they both turned towards heaven.

**SARTRE:** Their timing was absolutely bloody marvellous.

**CAMUS:** And, of course, in the audience, we all up looked too. There was nothing to see.

**SARTRE:** Then, I remember, there was a pause. A powerful pause.

**CAMUS:** There is no heaven, of course. We looked. No angels in clouds.  
The theatre is not a church.

**SARTRE:** A long painful indomitable pause.

**CAMUS:** Eventually Freddie says, "In the absence of the Gods..." and by the time we looked down on the stage again they'd gone.

**SARTRE:** Oh, we applauded. They made us wait. Then we booed. Still they made us wait. We shouted abuse.

**CAMUS:** In the end, well...

**SARTRE:** Let me tell it.

**CAMUS:** Pardon me for breathing.

**SARTRE:** In the end we discovered that they'd been situated there all the time. Existing in the space.

**CAMUS:** It was a trick of the light.

**SARTRE:** Eventually, Frankie says, "I spurn your euphemisms."

**TOLCHER:** Classic.

**CAMUS:** Honestly, you had to be there. Their timing was absolutely bloody marvellous.

**SARTRE:** One thing you have to learn in a double act is that it's about the relationships. The individual jokes don't matter but, sometimes, I know it's an exercise in nauseating futility, you really can't help yourself, at times you have to fight-

**CAMUS:** – for the punch line!

**SARTRE:** – to avoid the obvious.

**CAMUS:** Exactly.

**SARTRE:** This is a famous Corinthians' routine.

**CAMUS:** I will be Freddie.

**SARTRE:** I am the man Frankie. Ready?

**CAMUS:** As ready to roll as Sisyphus ever was, dear.

**SARTRE:** "It's nice out."

**CAMUS:** "Seen Sam yet?"

**SARTRE:** "Wait"

**CAMUS:** Isn't that just the most perfect existentialist joke, dear?

**SARTRE:** Not even the critics failed to get it at first. Try again...

**CAMUS:** Of course, Simone [de Beauvoir] absolutely hated it.

**SARTRE:** ... Fail again.

**CAMUS:** Called it supercilious and silly.

**SARTRE:** ... Fail better.

**CAMUS:** Hated Sam and all his works.

**SARTRE:** That's not true. Is that true?

**CAMUS:** Then Freddie, that's me, nails it.  
Deconstructs the mechanics of human comedy, resists the obvious trump and reveals the allegorical treasure. He says, "This is an existentialist joke?"

**SARTRE:** And Frankie, mugging the whole 'that which does not kill us' yadda yadda schtick, in mock horror, and in case you missed it, says, "Oh! God! Oh, how absurd."

**CAMUS:** On the face of it: dangerously theological. So, Freddie takes the *absurd* and reconsiders it. "As blurred."

**SARTRE:** "As what."

**CAMUS:** "As your face."

**TOLCHER:** Classic Corinthians.

**SARTRE:** "You think you do but you know nothing about me." That was Frankie speaking yet it could be me. It's the dark heart of every double act. "You think you do but you know nothing about me."

**CAMUS:** "I can see your reflection  
in the glass  
behind the optics."

**SARTRE:** "You, my friend, are looking at the fourth wall."

**CAMUS:** I'll be honest, dear, I still don't fully understand this next bit.

**SARTRE:** Perhaps that's the point.

**CAMUS:** Frankie waved this bit of paper. I can still see it – could have been a religious tract or the racing form or anything – and he says:

**SARTRE:** "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

CORINTHIANS 13:12."

**CAMUS:** "We've dressed alike since first we met."

**SARTRE:** "Oddly, as also I am known."

**CAMUS:** "How's your drink?"

**SARTRE:** "Phallic dynamite, thanks."

**CAMUS:** "Oh." – You should have been there. Freddie gives this look. Shocked. You can't see it because the face was more or less hidden but you know it's a look. Aghast. Withering.

**SARTRE:** "How's yours?"

**CAMUS:** "The differences are significant."

**SARTRE:** "It's nice out."

**CAMUS:** Frankie there, hammering the unbeatable set up. "It's nice out."

**TOLCHER:** Bound to be a picture of it somewhere.

**CAMUS & SARTRE:** Not now, Arthur.

**SARTRE:** Where were we?

**CAMUS:** Let's go.

**SARTRE:** We can't

**CAMUS:**

**Why not?**

*The End.*