

A REAL NIGHTMARE

by

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## A REAL NIGHTMARE

### CHARACTERS

Gus..... a man in his thirties

Ant..... a woman in her thirties

Harry..... a middle-aged man

Dave.....a man in his forties

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*(The scene is a rehearsal room of an amateur dramatic society. Two sofas sit, side by side, facing the front in the middle of the stage, with a gap between them. There is a hook on the wall at the back between the sofas. There is one door, stage left. At the start of the play, the curtains at the front of the stage are closed. These are then opened slowly, with it looking as though Dave is pulling them across. As he does so, we see Ant taking a few steps forward to stand downstage centre, facing the audience, ideally with the front of her feet just over the edge of the front of the stage. Behind her Harry and Gus are moving the sofas slightly to angle them towards each other. They continue to do this whilst Ant speaks to Dave).*

Ant: Thanks.

Dave: *(When he has pulled the curtains right across the stage he moves to stand next to Ant).* Not a problem.

Ant: I don't know whose crazy idea it was to cut the rehearsal room in two with curtains, but I prefer us to rehearse with the curtains open.

Dave: I think it was my idea.

Ant: Oh, sorry.

Dave: No worries. I thought it would make the rehearsals feel more authentic, more like the real thing.

Ant: Yer, though it's not quite, though, is it?

Dave: Not quite what?

Ant: The real thing.

Dave: How do you mean?

Ant: For one thing, we haven't got an audience, have we?

*(Gus and Harry have now finished arranging the sofas. Gus goes behind one of them and fetches a bag. This contains a few items of clothing. He moves around the stage, placing these at intervals on the floor. The bag also contains a mirror. He props this up against the wall stage right).*

Dave: True.

Ant: Having said which, perhaps it's better if there isn't an audience.

Dave: How do you mean?

Ant: Well, you know, audiences. People coming in late, annoying others; someone forgets to turn their mobile phone off, so we get Michael

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Jackson's 'Thriller' blaring out as one actor is about to shoot another; someone crunching boiled sweets during a romantic moment on stage....

Dave: I guess it's better than in Shakespeare's time.

Ant: How do you mean?

*(Gus has finished putting clothes on the floor and gets out his mobile phone to text someone. He starts to walk around the stage looking intently at his phone).*

Dave: Well, you know, the ones in the pit, farting and fornicating.

Ant: And they don't do that now?

Dave: *(Looks forward for a moment)*. I don't think so. Anyway, you can't very well have a play without an audience, can you? What if there's a funny moment?

Ant: *(There is a moment's silence as Ant waits for Dave to continue)*. What?

Dave: Silence.

Ant: *(Thinks briefly)* Yes, I see. Perhaps I'm being too, what shall we say, post-modern, or is that post-post modern. A play without an audience. Now there's an idea. *(Ponders)*.

*(Gus, still looking at his mobile phone now bumps into Ant. Ant nearly falls over. If possible, she falls off the stage and then has to climb back onto it).*

Ant: *(As Gus bumps into her)*. Aah!

Gus: Oh, sorry.

Ant: *(To Gus)*. Look where you're going!

Gus: Sorry, just texting someone.

Ant: Can't you leave that till later? We need to get started now. Everyone ready?

Gus, Dave  
and Harry: Yes.

Ant: Good. Let's begin then. *(They exit through the door stage left)*.

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*(No-one is on stage for a short while. Then Gus enters. He stops, looks around, goes downstage centre, looks at the sofas and then angles them slightly towards each other. He steps back, pauses, then returns the sofas to their original position. He steps back again, looks around and notices some chairs are missing. He exits and returns shortly with two chairs. He places them downstage left. He then goes downstage centre, pauses, composes himself, and speaks).*

Gus: *(In character with a Cockney accent).* Cold meat, radishes, cucumbers. Watercress. Roll mops.

*(Pause.)*

Hardboiled eggs.

*(Pause.)*

The lot.

*(Pause.)*

That'll get them nowhere.

*(Pause. At this point, Ant opens the door and sees Gus speaking. She is holding two shopping bags. She walks quietly towards Gus who does not notice her).*

They do all right.

*(Pause.)*

And he wants a cup of tea.

*(Pause.)*

That's past a joke, in my opinion.

*(Pause. During this pause, Ant interrupts Gus.)*

Ant: Gus.

Gus: *(Starts and turns round to Ant).* Ant. *(Comes out of character).* I mean, Ant. Hi. I didn't hear you come in.

Ant: What are you doing? Practising your lines?

Gus: No, I know them. I'm practising the pauses. It's not easy being silent, you know.

Ant: *(Puts down the shopping bags).* This should help. *(Ant embraces Gus and kisses him for several seconds).*

Gus: What was that for?

Ant: I've missed you.

Gus: I've missed you, too. Not here, though.

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Ant: Why not? (*Looks around*). There's no-one else here.

Gus: They could be here any minute. It's too dangerous. What about Dave?

Ant: What about him?

Gus: We don't want him to find out, do we? That would be curtains.

Ant: I think he knows.

Gus: W-what do you mean 'I think he knows'?

Ant: I think he knows about you and me.

Gus: How? Have you...?

Ant: No, of course not.

Gus: (*Nervously*). Well, how does he know?

Ant: I don't know, but I think he does.

Gus: What are we going to do?

Ant: I don't know.

Gus: He's hardly going to take it lying down, is he?

Ant: You'll just have to stand up to him, then, won't you?

Gus: Me? Stand up to Dave?

Ant: Yes.

Gus: But Dave's a bully.

Ant: I know he's a bully. That's why I want to leave him.

Gus: I don't know, Ant.

Ant: What do you mean?

Gus: (*Hesitates and shakes his head, then speaks*). It's all getting too much for me. Too heavy. (*Shakes his head. Gets increasingly nervous. Takes a step back*). I'm not sure I can take it anymore. I'm sorry Ant, but...

Ant: But what? (*Gus does not respond*). What is it, Gus? (*Pause*). You're not giving up on us, are you?

Gus: (*Confused*). No, yer...oh, I don't know.

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- Ant: You can't give up on us now, Gus. I've made my decision. I'm leaving Dave...for you. (*Holds Gus' hands*). I had a dream last night. It was just the two of us, you and me.
- Gus: Where? On a desert island?
- Ant: No, Halifax actually.
- Gus: Halifax? Why, Halifax?
- Ant: I don't know. You can't control dreams, can you? It was really foggy. Then we went to Stratford.
- Gus: Upon Avon?
- Ant: No. East London, you know. Where they're having the Olympics.
- Gus: Oh. How did we get there?
- Ant: I don't know.
- Gus: You don't know? It was your dream. Train, plane?
- Ant: I don't remember, Gus.
- Gus: Oh, pity. (*Pause*). Was the sun shining?
- Ant: It was dark.
- Gus: Oh. Did we go anywhere else?
- Ant: Yes, we ended up here...in this rehearsal room. (*Looks around, then looks at Gus*). Just you and me. It felt so real, Gus. Like now. This feels real. I don't want it to end, Gus. It can't end. Just, just kiss me, Gus. (*They embrace and kiss, but after a short while Gus pulls away*).
- Gus: Ant, stop. (*Footsteps can be heard*). Who's that?
- Harry: (*Harry enters*). Evening all.
- Ant: (*Surprised and relieved*). Oh, Harry, it's you.
- Harry: (*Looks at himself*). Oh, so it is. I thought I'd come as myself tonight. Expecting someone else?
- Ant: Well, only Dave.
- Harry: Only Dave, hey? Didn't you two come together, then?
- Ant: No, I came straight from work. He phoned to say he was going home to change first.