

DRESS REHEARSAL

A full-length comedy

by

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DRESS REHARSAL

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Cast

Kate: The best actress in the group.

Geoff: A very good male actor.

Helen: The director. The play is everything to her.

Andy: Another good actor.

Betty: Costumes and props.

Tony: Another good actor. Voice off.

Daphne: The lighting and scenery 'man'. Voice off.

Neville: The sound engineer. Voice off.

Scene. *A church hall somewhere in middle England. Back drop of the inside of a garden shed. Small table with three chairs behind stage left. Just off centre stage, two upholstered high back chairs laid on their backs with straps draped over, inside a framework with a board above them with dials, buttons, and levers on to look like a flight deck. A white coat draped over one of the chairs.*

The play they are rehearsing is in bold type and is set sometime in the Twenties. The acting is very ham and over the top.

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Opens. *(Helen sat behind table, Geoff stood next her with his foot on one of the chairs chin in hand looking bored wearing a pair of men's combinations that are a little too small for him. Betty stage centre putting final touches to 'space ship')*

(Enter Kate wearing a pair of men's combinations that are far too large for her. The arms and legs are at least six inches too long and she's struggling to hold the trousers up. Geoff looks up and starts to look interested)

Helen: All right boys and girls, come along now we're doing the dress rehearsal tonight.

Kate: Dress rehearsal?

Helen: That's right dear.

Kate: But we don't open until the twenty first of next month.

Helen: Ah! Well there's been a change in plans.

Kate: Why?

Helen: Well when Betty took the posters and tickets in to the printers he got the dates wrong.

Kate: Obviously he got it wrong. Why aren't we getting them reprinted?

Helen: Because it cost us two hundred pounds.

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Kate: They got it wrong so they should pay, or do it for nothing or give us our money back.

Helen: Well when I took the Vicar some tickets to sell, he told me that he was quite pleased that we were bringing our date forward as on the twenty-first of next month they'll be busy getting this hall ready for the Harvest festival

Kate: So we have to do the play six weeks early?

Betty: It wasn't my fault the printer got the dates mixed up. Helen wrote everything out, all I did was take it to the printers.

Helen: No one is blaming you Betty, it's no one's fault really just a simple mix up.

Kate: Where we lose six weeks of rehearsals.

Helen: I have confidence in you all. You're all scripts down now and we have been rehearsing for eight weeks. I know you can bring it off.

Kate: Talk about off! What are these that Betty gave me to wear?

Geoff: *(To Kate)* God you look fantastic.

Kate: *(To Geoff)* Don't you start? Well?

Helen: *(To Kate.)* That's your under suit dear. All astronauts wear them.

Kate: *(To Helen waving one arm with the spare sleeve flapping around.)* Couldn't have you managed to get ones that would have fit me? You could get someone else in here with me.

Geoff: Can we try it?

Kate: Not if you were the last man on earth.

Geoff: I love it when you threaten me. You have a look in your eyes that turns me on.

Kate: Can't we cut six inches off the arms and legs?

Helen: No! I promised Ted at the gents' outfitters that he'd get them back in pristine condition. Can't you just roll them up a bit?

Kate: I'd look like the Michelin man then.

Geoff: Brilliant.

Kate: Pervert!

Geoff: Wow! You are fantastic.

Kate: Sod off!

Geoff: Have you ever been married Kate?

Kate: None of your damned business:

Geoff: Just a simple question.

Kate: Keep your nose out of my life.

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Betty: Don't let him wind you up Kate.

Geoff: No, don't wind me up Kate.

Betty: You know the more you wind him up the more he does it.

Geoff: Chance to do it would be nice.

Kate: Bog off Geoff.

Geoff: Oh yeh! Why don't you just say yes?

Kate: No!

Geoff: Why Kate? You know that I love you.

Kate: Just which part of no don't you understand?

Geoff: All of it.

Kate: I won't go out with you because you are a flea brained moron.

Geoff: Well that's better than what you called me on the phone.

Betty: What did you call him on the phone?

Kate: You don't want to know Betty.

Betty: Well that's really why I asked.

Helen: Why don't you go with Betty and try on your space suit
Kate.

(Kate starts to exit with Betty)

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Geoff: Hey Kate, have you anything on under there?

Kate: That's for me to know.

Geoff: And me to find out right?

Kate: *(She turns to him)* You come near me and you'll be singing soprano for the rest of your life.

Geoff: I just love it when you talk dirty to me.

Helen: Shouldn't you be trying on your costume Geoff?

Geoff: They won't let me in the dressing room will they?

Kate: That's because you can't keep your mind on what you're supposed to be doing.

Geoff: I'd rather think of what I'd like to be doing.

Betty: Don't let him get to you Kate. It'll only make him worse, try to ignore him.

Kate: The voice of experience talking. How many times have you been married Betty?

Betty: Five. I tried to ignore them but couldn't.

Helen: Do you have any kids Betty?

Betty: Yes I have four. One of each.

Geoff: One of each? How do you work that one out?

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Betty: Well I had a Dan and Helen with my first husband, and Roy and Nancy with the second.

Helen: So that's two of each.

Betty: My first husband left me for another woman. The second for another man, they must have inherited his genes because Nancy is a lesbian and Roy is gay. There's nothing like that in my family, well I did have an aunty who became my uncle but she wasn't a real uncle you know. She was my mums' best friend at girls' school.

Kate: What about three and four?

Betty: Number three! I got home from work early one day and heard someone upstairs.

Kate: He was in your bed with another woman?

Betty: No! He was photographing himself wearing my clothes.

Geoff: My god!

Betty: It wouldn't have been so bad but he looked better in them than I did.

Kate: And number four?

Betty: He died.

Helen: Now you're on to number five?

Betty: Well we're not married yet, but I hope he'll pop the question soon.

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Geoff: You can always have me Betty love.

Betty: I thought you were in love with Kate?

Kate: In his dreams Betty. In his dreams.

Geoff: Ohhh! Yeah!!!

Kate: Why are we putting the play on in here anyway?

Helen: Because the theatre is out of bounds I'm afraid.

Kate: Why?

Helen: Well you know the Ballet school put on a show in July?

Kate: Yes, I couldn't make it. Was it any good?

Helen: It was brilliant. The trouble was Mr and Mrs Broadbent got a little carried away with themselves and did a 'Par de Dir.' I was surprised that a woman of her size could get up onto her points. Anyway she took a flying leap and Mr Broadbent caught her and lifted her over his head then there was a terrific crack and Mr Broadbent disappeared up to his armpits through the stage.

Betty: The looks on their faces was a picture. It took six men to pull him out.

Kate: Was he all right?

Helen: Just a few splinters.

Geoff: That stage wasn't built to take fifty stone on one spot.

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Betty: She's not that heavy.

Geoff: All right forty stone.

Helen: Come on, we don't want to be here all night. Let's get that space suit tried on Kate.

(Kate and Betty exit)

Geoff: This I've got to see.

Helen: You'll see it from inside your space suit.

Geoff: I've told you they won't let me in the dressing room.

Helen: Well you'll have to dress in the corridor won't you?
Come on we have be out of here by ten thirty.

Geoff: I'm going. I'm going.

(Enter Betty waving a skimpy bra and pants)

Betty: Helen?

Geoff: Bloody hell whose are those? They're not Kate's are they?

Betty: Are these for the moon men, or women?

Helen: *(To Betty.)* We had to cut the moon men Betty. *(To Geoff.)* Will you go get changed Geoff? *(To Betty.)* No they're going back to the shop; we don't need them now so keep them clean. Shouldn't you be helping Kate get into her

costume? *(To Geoff.)* Geoff, stay out of that dressing room.

Geoff: How do I get to my costume then?

Betty: I put it in the gents for you.

Geoff: You went into the gents Betty? What if I'd have been in there?

Betty: You weren't here. And if you had have been in there then I'd probably still be laughing.

Geoff: That's below the belt Betty.

Betty: There's not much to aim at is there? Come on I'll show you where everything is.

(Lights down [Exit Geoff and Betty.] then up again)

(Enter Betty and Kate in her space suit which is made of cardboard boxes, tubes and corrugated cardboard some of which is painted silver, with shoe boxes on her feet.)

Helen: There you are Kate. The costume looks good Betty. What's that Kate?

Betty: I've got to finish painting them yet Helen; I'll do that tonight when I get them home. I had to use cling film for the visor on the helmet Helen. Do you think it will be all right?

(Kate is trying to get her hands on her helmet, which is a cardboard box with an oval cut in the front covered by Clingfilm. But she can't put her hands near to it.)

Helen: I'm sure it will Betty. Is she trying to say something? I can't hear you Kate darling.

(Enter Geoff wearing a similar costume to Kate only the cardboard helmet is much smaller.)

Betty: You managed on your own then Geoff?

Geoff: Yes I did, it was a bit of a struggle but I managed. Is Kate all right she looks to be turning blue?

Helen: She'll be fine. It's not too tight is it Geoff?

(Geoff reaches up and pulls Kate's helmet off.)

Kate: Thank god! Thank you Geoff you're a saviour. I couldn't breathe in there. Who the hell sealed this thing?

Betty: That was me I'm afraid Kate. I'm really sorry.

Kate: Sorry! You could have killed me. Didn't you hear me shouting for air?

Helen: I could see your lips moving but couldn't hear a sound.

Kate: If you couldn't hear me from six foot away how the hell is the audience going to hear me?

Betty: I could take the cling film off Helen.

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Helen: Yes do that Betty. Can you breathe in your helmet Geoff?

Geoff: Well it doesn't come right down onto the body so there's plenty of air. *(He spins it round on his head.)*

Kate: This thing is ridiculous. It takes forever to put it on.

Helen: I'm sure Betty did the best she could, given the time scale. It's not only you who have had six weeks cut off your rehearsal time you know?

Betty: I had to come up with these suits pretty quickly. I tried a pair of my dad's coveralls. I hung them on the back of my brothers Transit van and was spraying one half when my dad took them back. He says that all his work mates have been taking the Micky out of him since. What with the left side silver and the right side blue. My brother's not noticed the silver paint on the back of his black van yet.

Kate: And these on my feet? *(She lifts one foot and shakes it.)*
Are these shoe boxes?

Betty: It's all I could think of.

Geoff: Couldn't you have got hold of some boots or something?

Kate: What about hiking boots, or wellies sprayed silver?

Betty: We can't afford anything like that.

Geoff: Why do we always have to do these plays on a shoestring?

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Helen: Because we don't get the audiences we need to make the money to be able to spend on the next production.

Betty: We could increase the subs.

Kate: This isn't the time or place to be discussing that subject Betty. I have some wellies you could spray them silver. Do you have any wellies Geoff?

Geoff: Yes madam chairman.

Kate: How do you expect us to get into and out of those seats when we're wearing these suits?

Geoff: You used my name and didn't bite my head off.

Helen: I'm not sure at the moment. I'll think of something.

Kate: Better be quick Helen. We open tomorrow night. This is supposed to be a dress rehearsal remember?

Helen: You've no need to remind me of that Kate darling.

Kate: Where is everybody else? There's more than just us two in this play. Well there is on my script anyway.

Helen: Tony said he'd be slightly late but as he doesn't come into the play until you take off then there's no problem. Andy is somewhere, I've seen him.

Kate: If memory serves me right there were three crew on board Apollo thirteen.

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Helen: There were. This play isn't called Apollo Thirteen Kate. It's called Moon Mission as well you know.

Kate: Well I can only see two of us.

Helen: Yes well! You'll have to do it all between you because Zack isn't coming.

Geoff: What! Why not?

Helen: His mother was taken ill suddenly.

Kate: His mother?

Helen: Yes, his mother.

Kate: Do you remember when we performed the Time Machine last year?

Helen: Of course I do.

Kate: And Zack was going to play one of the friends?

Helen: That's right he was which one was it?

Kate: It doesn't matter who it was but he backed out of the play.

Geoff: That's right said he couldn't do it because.

Helen: Because what?

Kate}

Geoff} Because his mother had died.

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Betty: I remember that because we had a whip round and sent a wreath to the funeral.

Helen: My god. I make no wonder that she's ill. He won't be seeing her then will he?

Kate: It would be very difficult wouldn't it Helen?

Helen: But why? Why has he lied to us, to me?

Geoff: Cold feet Helen. He is scared to go on stage.

Helen: He has stage fright?

Kate: That's right Helen. A simple case of stage fright.

Geoff: That lets everybody down. How can we do a play that needs three astronauts when we only have two?

Kate: We have to work twice as hard that's all. We'll go through the script and cut out all his lines and alter all our lines that involve him.

Geoff: That will take days.

Kate: We open tomorrow night so it had better not, had it Helen?

Helen: No! I'll get to work on it after this dress rehearsal.

Kate: And we'll help. Won't we Geoff? This isn't a play it's a disaster!

Geoff: We're all in the same boat so we'll pull together. Betty?

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Betty: I'm sorry but I have to get home tonight. I promised Mike that! Well, you know.

Helen: You go home and you know with Mike, Betty. It shouldn't take the three of us long to sort this out.

Kate: It had better not. Now about getting in and out of those chairs?

Helen: Go take those suits off and do the rehearsal in your under suits.

Kate: You have to be joking!

Geoff: Swap with me. Mine are a bit tight.

Kate: Are you sure Geoff?

Geoff: Yes. Look I'll go into the gents take these off and throw them out. You or Betty can throw yours through the door.

Kate: All right. Come on Betty let's get this cardboard suit off.

(Exit Kate and Geoff)

Helen: Betty! Have you a moment?

Betty: *(Moves to exit but turns back when Helen calls.)* Be careful they are fragile you know. And they have to last four nights.

Helen: Betty! Where does your dad get his coveralls from?

Betty: I think he gets them from his work why?

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- Helen: Well if you can, can you get two pairs and spray them silver tomorrow. Will the paint be dry if you do it tomorrow?
- Betty: I think so. It dries pretty quickly you know.
- Helen: Just don't hang them on the back of your brothers van when you spray them.
- Betty: I think they do them in white as well as blue.
- Helen: Get two pairs of white then if you can, that will save you spraying them. You might as well try and get two pairs of wellies while you're at it.
- Betty: That's no problem. They have silver ones in the shoe shop on the High Street.
- Helen: Find out what size Kate and Geoff are and see if you can get them can you?
- Betty: We'll probably go into the red you know?
- Helen: I know Betty. I know. But what else can we do? You've done a brilliant job coming up with those cardboard suits so quickly but.....
- Betty: They're not good enough are they? I did my best Helen. I watched Tom Hanks in Apollo thirteen twenty times to get them right.
- Helen: Don't you mean Tom Hanks Betty?

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Betty: I know what I mean Helen. I think he's gorgeous. He could have me anyway he wanted.

Helen: Well Betty cardboard is a bit stiff to be using as clothing.

Betty: It was the only thing I could think of that wouldn't cost us much.

Helen: How much did they cost anyway Betty?

Betty: About twelve pounds. I got the cardboard from work so I only had to buy the tape and spray paint.

Helen: You won't get into trouble at work will you?

Betty: No! It was the end of the roll and that usually gets thrown away.

(Lights down and up again.)

(Enter Kate and Geoff. They've swapped combinations.)

Helen: That's better isn't it Kate?

Kate: At least they fit a little better.

Geoff: My god! You were right Kate you could get two people into these. What waist are they Helen?

Helen: Let me look. *(She looks.)* My god they're forty-eight. If you're interested Kate dear he's wearing blue ones.

Geoff: *(Holding the front of the pants out.)* Fancy joining me in here Kate?

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Kate: I don't think so Geoff. Thank you for the offer but no thanks.

Geoff: She didn't bite my head off. Something's wrong.

Betty: Maybe she's learning to ignore you.

(Enter Andy)

Andy: Very nice Geoff. They're all the fashion in the states I hear. Suits you too Kate.

Helen: Come on boys and girls let's get on with this dress rehearsal. Do you have a white coat for Andy Betty?

Betty: Got it here. *(She takes the coat from the chair and holds the white coat up for him.)* Try this on Andy it should fit you.

Andy: Sleeves are a bit long but I can roll them up. *(Rolling sleeves up.)* It'll make me look more like the mad professor won't it?

Helen: All right, from the top people. And action.

Kate: For god's sake Helen this isn't Hollywood.

Helen: Well go then.

Geoff: Where to?

(Geoff exits)