

TEDDY BEAR'S PICNIC

A play in two acts

by

Jane Lockyer Willis

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TEDDY BEARS PICNIC

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About the play

Jim and Rowena embark on a weekend break with friends, Patrick and Betty.

Tensions arise when Rowena discovers that she has picked up Betty's suitcase by mistake. What does she find there? And what does Jim discover when rummaging through his wife's case?

The drink flows and the confessions begin. As things go from bad to worse - enter Bruce, the local eccentric, who at night has a tendency to frequent the hotel corridors. Through their mutual love of churches, Jim finds in Bruce a friend and ally.

TEDDY BEAR'S PICNIC touches on such areas as deceit, adultery, love, loss, impotence and rage. Fast moving, funny and sad.

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CHARACTERS

(flexible ages)

Jim - late forties/fifties

Rowena - his wife/ early forties

Patrick - sixties

Betty - His wife/ sixties.

Bruce - seventies/eighties

Harriet - His sister/ sixties

ACT 1 Scene 1 – Hotel bedroom. Late afternoon

ACT 1 Scene 2 – The same. After dinner that night

ACT 11 Scene 1- The same. After dinner the fol. Night

ACT 11 Scene 2 – The same. The following morning.

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Setting: The play is set in a smart hotel bedroom somewhere in rural England. The room is furnished with twin beds, side tables with reading lamps, chest of drawers, dressing table, wardrobe, large sofa, a couple of easy chairs. Leading off is a bathroom, not seen. There is a French window back centre stage looking out onto a garden, with river running past and a church steeple in the distance.

Time: present day

ACT 1 Scene 1

Late afternoon. Jim enters bedroom. He is in his early fifties, good looking and slim. He can be both charming and rude. His often sarcastic, opinionated and aggressive manner masks a deep insecurity and lack of self worth and his destructive nature is inclined to push social boundaries to their limits.

JIM: This is us. (*Puts down case and scans room*) Very nice!

ROWENA: *struggles through door with her case. She is in her early forties: attractive, slim and polite unless thwarted, usually by her husband. Her general manner is assertive and up beat. She has learnt over the years that this is the best way to*

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cope with her husband's mercurial and difficult nature. Oh yes! It is nice, isn't it? (Going to window) And what a view!

JIM: *(bouncing up & down on one of the twin beds) Never mind the view. Feel your mattress, Row. (Stretches out) Bags I this bed. Pure bliss!*

ROW: *(still at window) This outlook certainly has the wow factor... reminds me of the screen saver on my computer. (JIM joins her) A meandering river - weeping willows....*

JIM: Swans drifting by, church with quintessential steeple.

ROW Flutter of autumn leaves falling from, from ...What sort of trees are they do you suppose?

JIM: Haven't a clue. We're townies, remember. Anyway, you've forgotten to add the rain.

ROW: I've deleted the rain.

JIM: Hope you've deleted your friends too.

ROW: *Our* friends.

JIM: *Our* friends then. Perhaps I can delete them for you.

ROW: No doubt you will during the course of the weekend. *(Goes to wardrobe, looks inside.)* Darling, there aren't any coat hangers.

JIM: *(joins her)* Perhaps they've been nicked by the previous inmates.

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ROW: Some people! They can afford a swanky en suite and then steal all the hangers. What is it with them?

JIM: The Magpie Syndrome: This English middle class compunction to collect things. To own what is not theirs. With me it was beer mats. I'll speak to reception on our way out.

ROW: Out? Where?

JIM: To take a gander at the Church. The spire alone must be worth a second look. I wouldn't mind seeing the bell tower either at some point, if it's at all possible.

ROW: Not now though. I want to unpack, hang up my dress. It'll crease horribly.

JIM groans, goes to telephone, lifts receiver, pauses then speaks

JIM: Hello. This is room 10. We don't appear to have any coat hangers. *(Pause)* No, not one! There's an ironing board, and an iron, and a curious looking contraption for pressing trousers, but no wardrobe hangers. *(Pause)* That is correct. Please can you bring us some pronto as we want to un-pack? Thank you so much. *(Replaces receiver)* They're bringing them now.

ROW: Good.

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- JIM:** *(He stops short)* Shush! Keep still!
- ROW:** What?
- JIM:** The air conditioning! Listen! *(They both freeze)* The ducting's vibrating.
- ROW:** Well?
- JIM:** I'll never sleep with that racket!
- ROW:** Don't start Jim, please; at least not yet. Let me get settled in first.
- JIM;** It'll drive me mad!
- ROW:** Everything drives you mad. I hope you brought ear plugs, or I'll never hear the last of it. *(Suddenly remembering)* Jim?
- JIM:** What?
- ROW:** Did you pack your suit?
- JIM:** No. *You* did.
- ROW:** I didn't. I hung it on the wardrobe door ready for *you* to pack.
- JIM:** Wonderful! So I've no suit to put on tonight. Thanks a million, Row. *(Angrily slings his suitcase on bed, opens it and rummages inside.)* You're absolutely right. No bloody suit! Thankfully I remembered to pack some extra trousers. Yep! And a jacket and sweater. You've remembered to pack *your* dress, I take it.

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- ROW:** There's no need to be sarcastic. *(She places her suitcase on bed, opens it and gasps)* Oh no!
- JIM:** What now?
- ROW:** This isn't my case.
- JIM:** *(goes to see)* Are you sure?
- ROW:** Of course I'm sure. It's Betty's. I've picked up Betty's case by mistake.
- JIM:** Idiot!
- ROW:** How did I do that?
- JIM:** You tell me.
- ROW:** *(remembers)* It must have been in reception when the four of us met up. I remember putting mine down next to Betty's when we said hello. I must have picked up hers by mistake before we went to our rooms. They're identical: same colour, size, everything. Quick Jim, I must get mine back. What's their room number?
- Knock on door. JIM answers it. It's the maid with hangers. He thanks her, takes them, closes door, opens wardrobe and places them on rail*
- JIM:** We have hangers folks! Not a lot to hang on them, but hangers, we now have.

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- ROW:** (*agitated*) Jim, I must get hold of my proper case. I'll just pop down to reception with this one. No, on second thoughts, perhaps I'll go straight to their room.
- JIM:** You do that. (*Sitting on bed*) May I have this bed then? Only I like to be near the window. I feel shut in otherwise.
- ROW:** Yes, yes: Anything for a peaceful life.
- JIM:** I can't think why we had to come to this god forsaken place. It's miles from anywhere, and I've got the most god awful backache from driving through that sodding weekend traffic.
- ROW:** Oh, stop moaning!
- JIM:** I wouldn't mind, if we were with some decent people, but Patrick and Betty! Why you had to chum up to those two losers, I'll never know. Is it because they make you feel superior? Do you feel prettier, wittier and wiser in their cruddy company?
- ROW:** Here we go! Another jolly weekend! How I look forward to them!
- JIM:** I can see it all now. Into the bar they'll totter: Patrick in that over pressed grey striped suit he wears with the coordinated shirt and tie and those hideous rubber soled Hush Puppies he insists on creeping about in so as he can listen in on juicy conversations. Not that there'll be any. And Betty, dear

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heart, will sit in the lounge ankles crossed sipping gin and tonic in her crinkle free, special offer catalogue dress designed for comfort and durability.

ROW: Oh belt up Jim! I'm going to their room. Betty will want *her* case.

JIM: (*goes into bathroom. Sound of taps running*) This water's none too hot.

ROW: Did you hear me?

JIM: And it's a funny brown colour. Yuk!

ROW: Probably rust. Keep running it and it should clear.

JIM: (*re-entering bedroom*) Hear you what?

ROW: I said clear. The water will clear if you keep running it. Look. I'll pop along then. What's their number?

JIM: Twenty, I think. Must you? If you get jawing to them we'll never get away. And then we won't have time to look at the church.

ROW: You and your churches!

JIM: Have you anything valuable in your case?

ROW: Not, but Betty may have ...

JIM: Brought her double row of cultured pearls, you mean? Let me guess: two dresses of best quality crimplene, that hand knitted cardigan with the bobbles on it... oh, and that

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dreadful plastic mac she bought in the Isle of Man. Well, there's only one way to find out if there's anything of value in it. (*He begins rummaging through BETTY'S case*)

ROW: What are you doing Jim?

JIM: We need to be doubly sure this is hers and not some other daffy dame's, don't we?

ROW: Jim! Stop it! I know it's hers. She packs everything so beautifully and carefully. That's her trade mark. Not like me. She'll open mine and have a fit. (*Slaps his hand*) Don't! She'll know if we've fiddled.

But curiosity gets the better of her and in silence they both begin looking through the contents almost mesmerized by the ordinariness of her things.

JIM: (*brings out a nightdress case in the shape of a Teddy Bear*)

Get a load of this!

ROW: I think it's a nightdress case.

JIM: In the shape of a Teddy Bear. Ah! She takes her Teddy on holiday. Isn't that sweet? I wonder if our Betty wears flannelette nighties. Shall we have a peek inside and find out? You don't mind do you Teddy? (*He lifts up the flap and brings out a nylon nightdress.*) Nylon! And see through! Oh Patrick! This could be your lucky weekend! (*His hand*

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touches on something else.) What's this? There's something more inside Teddy's tum- tum. This is better than Christmas! *(He brings out a small plastic sachet containing fine white powder.)* Well, well, well! What have we here? Funny place to keep your face powder... don't you think, love? Not her colour, I wouldn't have thought. I know she's pale faced, but not this pale.

ROW: Let me see. *(Snatches sachet and fingers it)* It can't be!

JIM: I think it is.

ROW: Cocaine! Betty?

JIM: Here, give it back. *(Takes sachet and carefully opens it)*

ROW: What are you doing?

JIM: Stop getting hysterical woman! I'm just going to have a little taste. *(Dips index finger into powder and tastes it.)* It's cocaine all right.

ROW: So! As if *you'd* know! *(Pause)* You haven't taken Coke!
(Pause) Have you Jim?

JIM: *(pause)* Just the once.

ROW: *(surprised)* When?

JIM: In the old days.

ROW: How old days?

JIM: A couple of years back.

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- ROW:** A couple of years back! That's not the old days!
- JIM:** I forget when.
- ROW:** Like heck you do. You might be growing forgetful but not that forgetful. Or is your memory, like your hearing ... selective?
- JIM:** Very clever.
- ROW:** So where was it? Where did you snort the stuff? And more to the point, where was I?
- JIM:** At your mother's.
- ROW:** That sounds about right. While I was playing the dutiful daughter you were – Hang on! Wasn't that the weekend you went to that party where they all swopped partners? It was.
- JIM:** Don't exaggerate, darling. I stumbled upon one couple in a compromising position and that was only because they were lying on my overcoat.
- ROW:** I want to know.
- JIM:** Come here! (*He pulls her towards him. She shrugs him off.*)
- ROW:** Don't try to get round me, Jim. Tell me.
- JIM:** (*sighs*) I went to this party. You knew that. You were invited too, for God's sake. At the Evans's... that snotty couple who'd recently moved into the cul- de- sac round the corner from us.

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ROW: A house warming party, it said on the invite. Certainly warm, by the sound of what went on.

JIM: They're obviously loaded: posh nosh, best wines, all of that.

ROW: Get to the point, Jim.

JIM: After stuffing ourselves with food, I took the stuff. A few of the guests were really into it. It was there in a dish, on the sideboard for everyone to see and snort if they wanted to. They made no secret of it. I was curious that's all so thought, why not? - Just this once. Frankly, it didn't do a lot for me. Made me rather giggly from what I remember and more garrulous than usual. That was the first and last time ... just that once. Finis!