

"BILL"

© by

Tony Breeze,
70 Nottingham Road,
Burton Joyce,
Notts UK,
NG14 5AL
[44]0115 9313356
tonybreeze@ntlworld.com

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Ventus Books
70 Nottingham Road
Burton Joyce
Notts, UK, NG14 5AL
[44](0)115-9313356
tonybreeze@ntlworld.com

To avoid possible disappointment application should be made, preferably in writing, as early as possible stating :-

- (i) Name and address of applicant
- (ii) Name and address of society
- (iii) Name and address of theatre or hall where the performances would be held
- (iv) Times and dates of performances

A fee will be charged for this licence which must be paid prior to the first performance otherwise the licence is automatically cancelled and the performance becomes illegal

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CHARACTERS

Anne.....An old lady of indeterminate years whose children have grown up. She vibrates with warmth and humour and still has a wicked twinkle in her eye

Dedicated to the love that existed
between a wonderful old couple,
Bill and Anne

(The scene is the living room of an old person's house, which may be indicated by whatever props thought necessary. If time is limited for setting, the essentials needed are two armchairs, a table and perhaps a window frame or symbol thereof. It is suggested that introductory music be used in the form of the song entitled "Bill" or an instrumental version of it. At the conclusion of the music an old lady comes into the room carrying a tea tray)

Anne (To Bill off) I'll take it into the front room, love. Do you hear '? (To herself) Deaf as a post (To Bill) And don't forget to change your shirt, I'm not having you coming down here looking like Worzel Gummage! ... (To herself) He comes off that allotment, straight in the back door looking like I don't know what ... (To Bill) Your collar studs are in the drawer if you can't find them... (She looks around for the best place for the tray) Now then where shall we have it? Over here? No, the sun will be in his eyes - he can't stand the sun in his eyes... over here? Yes, this is better (Puts down the tray on a table) I'll just pull the curtains a fraction (she does so) ... (To Bill) Have you found it? (To herself) You spend half your life ironing shirts for them and then they can't find them - they need looking after like babies (She sits in one of the chairs) Yes, this is better ... I wouldn't care if he liked wearing them - he can't stand collars and ties ... "If God had wanted me to wear a collar and tie," he says, "I'd have been born with one!" (To Bill) Are you coming or aren't you '? (To herself) I think I'll just pull that curtain a fraction more...

I hope he's left his boots outside - he comes in without a care in the world, mud all over the place and who has to clear it up? Muggins of course (To Bill) Come on love, its going cold... (To herself) He can't stand cold tea ... I've not forgotten anything? Cups, saucers, plates, cakes - he'll not eat one, you watch, every day I bring him a cake and without fail he'll not eat it - "Meat's what a man needs after a hard days work," he says "meat not cakes," . . . I still think its nice to have a little something special every now and then... Men! Who can understand them? One minute everything's all right and then it's all wrong ... I wouldn't care, but he spends so much time in that allotment - "To get away from your nagging" he says - the cheek - I don't nag - at least I don't think I do - you've got to speak your mind I say, its no good bottling things up ... some do though, bottle it all up and then when it's built up enough, out it comes - I'm not like that, I'd sooner say it and get it over with - like that allotment - "It's too big," I told him, "It's too much for you" ... "Nonsense," he says, "Where would I be without my allotment? "One day," I said, "We're going to come down there and find you in a bad way - like that time you had the funny turn in the garage"... I went out there and found him sitting on a box looking as white as a sheet. "What've you done?" I said - "I don't know," he says, "I just came over all funny"...The doctor said it was a stroke, a warning, he said, to take it easy... and what does he do? As soon as he's able he's back down there digging away - "If I'm going to drop," he says, "I'll drop in harness" - he talks as if he was a carthorse! It's not as if we needed all the stuff he grows - barrowfuls he brings back - "What am I going to do with all this? I said, "We cant eat all this"... "We'll eat it," he says, "You wait and see" ...He ends up giving half of it away to neighbours - good hearted he is, like that - I wouldn't have him any other way though... (To Bill) "Are you coming for this tea or aren't you? ... (To herself) The back garden would be quite big enough if you ask me, we could grow all we need in there - but no, he wont have it - "The day I give up my allotment, "he says "Is the day they carry me out"

(Going to the window) It's looking nice though, the garden, even if I say so myself ... I do like a nice garden ...you can tell a person's character from the garden they keep, that's what I always say... there's some round here - they let things go to rack and ruin ... a bit of colour all the year round, that's what I like to see... (She sees a cat in the garden) Oh no, it's there again (Knocks on the window) Go on! Get out of it! Go and do your business in your own garden ... I cant stand cats - mucky things - I wouldn't care if it did it on its own patch but it always heads for ours (Knocks again) Go on! Scram! Before I get Bill onto you - "I'll sort it out," he says," An injection of lead is what it needs, right between the ears!" He would as well, he's daft enough - and then where would we be? ... I've told her - I've told her about it. "It keeps doing its business in our garden," I said, but I'm sure she thinks I'm making it up..."My little Fergy-Wergy?" she says "Are you sure? I don't think he would because he's got his own tray and he's ever so intelligent - I'm sure he wouldn't do a thing like that" ...If Bill catches it there'll be trouble... still, they're not all like her round here, thank goodness - "Fanny Adams," he calls her, "Fanny Adams" indeed! (She chuckles to herself)

Its not just the allotment that's too big, it's this house as well - I tried to tell him "We don't need all this room," I said, "Now the kids have gone - What do we need three bedrooms for? We only use the one" ... "I'm not moving," he says, "I like it where I am. You can't cope with new places at my age" ... I tried persuading him but it was no good. "What about the stairs?" I said, "One day we're not going to be able to manage, those stairs, I have trouble as it is" ... "I'm not living in any bungalows," he said - "For seventy years I've gone up to bed and I don't intend changing now" - he can be so cantankerous ... I even tried to persuade him to put our names down for one of those "warden assisted" complexes - he says, "I'm not living in no old folks home!" - "It's not a home," I said, "Its warden assisted - that means if you want help you can ask for it" ... He thinks it's all community singing and whist drives - I tried to tell him but he wouldn't have it.

"And what if our Michael and Sarah wanted to come and see us?" he says, "What would we do then? Tell them to stay in a hotel?" ... "Its not as if they come very often," I said. "They've got their own lives to lead," he says... I suppose they have but you still miss them - you can't bring up your own flesh and blood and then just forget about them... he says I worry too much - Was that the phone? "If they're going to ring," he says, "They'll ring, and worrying won't do any good". (Mimics daughter) "We'll put the phone in Mum so we can keep in touch," she said and then the calls get less and less - we might as well not have it for what use it is

(To Bill) Bill? This tea's going cold ... it's just as well I didn't pour it (She picks up a framed photograph of the children) Look at them...who'd have thought they'd turn out the way they did - pillars of respectability and didn't they used to fight - hammer and tongs ... I was pregnant with Michael when we first moved in here ... "Our first home," you said, "Our very own place" ... the garden was a mess then, builders rubble all over the place - and echo - didn't it echo? - I still remember it to this day... "Let me carry you over the thresh-hold," you said - and then you nearly dropped me! ... Orange boxes we had for furniture and pleased we were to have them... "Give us a chance," you said, "And we'll have this place looking like a palace" ... happy days ... we didn't have much but what we had was paid for.

I can even remember the night Michael was born like it was yesterday - I'd been having a fancy for pomegranates - don't ask me why - I couldn't get to sleep with the smell of the paint and then I felt the baby coming - "I've started," I said - You didn't believe me.

"Another false alarm," you said - but it wasn't - and didn't you panic - "Hold everything," you said - as if I could - the midwife only just got here in time - no hospital babies in those days - the women of today don't know the half - and you boiling water for all you were worth ... "What do you want all that for?" the midwife said - "It's what they do in the films," you said - "It's a baby" she says, "Not a fish!" We didn't half laugh.

(Looking at photo) He was good to you though, wasn't he? Strict but fair ... you never felt his hand, though he threatened it many a time - do you remember the time you were cheeky to me? "You'll apologize to your mother," he said 'And then straight to bed - no tea for you my lad" ... and then I crept up later with a tray for you - it's a good job he never knew - at least I don't think he knew... and then you came along young lady ... "How would you like a little baby brother?" we said, never dreaming it would be a girl ... "It's a girl!" you said, "I don't want a girl!" - As if we could do anything about it - "Can't you take it back?" you said!

You'll never know how much we struggled, working all the hours God sends just to get you two what you wanted - and you never appreciated it - not a care in the world. Still, I suppose that's the way it should be, play today and pay tomorrow...

Do you remember the time we took you both to the seaside? We had to stay in that caravan and then it rained - didn't it rain? I've never seen rain like it - and the wind - you both thought the van was going to blow over - you ran in terrified in the middle of the night - "We've come to keep you company" you said. "Skegness is so bracing" - they weren't kidding... you weren't bothered though, the next day you were off - "Can we go for a paddle in the sea, Mum? Paddle? It took us half an hour to find the damned sea ... And those donkeys, I'll never forget the donkeys looking so sad. You wanted to bring one home with you - "We can always keep it on Dad's allotment," you said

(To Bill) Bill I'm not telling you again - if you think I'm wasting my time boiling kettles for you, you're mistaken