

**"DIAGHILEV'S BAG"**

© by

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## DIAGHILEV'S BAG

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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

# DIAGHILEV'S BAG

## CHARACTERS

Henrik	Overweight, roughly spoken and takes a pleasure in being obnoxious to people
Janesh	Opposite of Henrik, keen, religious and wishing to get on
Diaghilev	Sensitive carer suffering from stress at what the world has shown him
Child	Young boy or girl with an air of cheeky innocence

## DIAGHILEV'S BAG

(It is the middle of the night. The stage is bare apart from some old boxes and boulders lying around. Rubbish is scattered here and there, stones, pebbles, etc. Two men dressed in overalls move about shining torches and occasionally picking things up and taking them to a plastic bag that stands at the front of the stage. One carries a hand brush and pan. They could be park keepers or garbage men but they are not .... )

- Henrik            That's the trouble with my wife, no sense of humour – "What time do you call this?" she says... I said " Bewitching hour?"... she wasn't amused I can tell you... "Twelve o' clock," she says, "Where've you been till twelve o'clock?"... I told her, I said, "Do you want to know the truth or do you want me to make up a story?" ... she says, "The truth of course"... so I said, "I've been up an alley screwing that barmaid with the blond hair!"... she said, " You've been what!?" and I was just going to repeat it when she says, " You've been drinking after time again haven't you ?" ... "O. K.," I said, "I've been drinking after time"... That's what she wanted to hear, she didn't want the truth even though she'd asked for it ... as a matter of fact I had been screwing the barmaid with the blond hair but it just goes to prove a point Janesh, if you want a woman to believe you, tell her what she wants to hear, tell her anything, but don't tell her the truth ... How about you? Have you set the date yet?
- Janesh            No
- Henrik            You should have set the date by now. How long is it?
- Janesh            Two years
- Henrik            Two years? For two years you've been going out with the girl and still you haven't set the date?
- Janesh            We're saving
- Henrik            Saving? By the time you're married you'll be too old for the other, you'll have forgotten what its for... You do know what it's for Janesh, don't you? It's not for peeing over high fences you know! (laughing) The youngsters of today, I don't know what to make of them - in my day you went out, found a girl then Wham! Bang! You got married if you put her in the club - but none of this "saving to get married" business
- Janesh            We want to buy our own place
- Henrik            It's not important - if it's that important I would forget all about it. Where's your passion Janesh? What are you waiting for? Still, I suppose with you it doesn't matter like it did with us - with us you were supposed to be married before you got a bit of the other - today it doesn't seem to matter
- Janesh            It does with some women

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Henrik            You what? You're not trying to tell me you've been going out with her for two years and you still haven't .... ?

Janesh            Yes

Henrik            You're joking Janesh? Tell me you're joking

Janesh            I'm not

Henrik            Two years? She's kept you waiting for two years?

Janesh            She's an old fashioned girl

Henrik            What've you been doing in that time?

Janesh            Kissing...

Henrik            Yes?

Janesh            And cuddling...

Henrik            Yes? ...Nut no...?

Janesh            No

Henrik            Let me see your hand (Janesh bewildered takes off his glove and shows it) Yes! I see now why you have the blisters!

Janesh            (Snatching hand away) It isn't funny

Henrik            You can say that again

                         (At this point Diaghilev enters also in overalls. He is tentative, nervous, looking around at the ground)

Diaghilev        What isn't funny?

Janesh            Henrik - he isn't

Diaghilev        What's he been saying ?

Henrik            All I said was -

Janesh            There's no need to repeat it

Henrik            He's been going out with that girl of his for two years and they still haven't "consummated the relationship"

Diaghilev        So?

Henrik            So it's unusual that's all, in this day and age...anyway Diaghilev, where've you been?

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Diaghilev I had something to attend to

Henrik What thing? You've come when the job's almost done

Janesh Is this your first one serge?

Diaghilev No, of course not. I've been to loads of sudden deaths

Henrik But not suicides, eh Diaghilev?

Janesh Are you sure you're all right serge?

Diaghilev Course I'm all right

Janesh You don't look it

Henrik You look as if you're about to heave at any minute

Janesh Do you feel sick?

Diaghilev (Lying) No

Janesh Everybody feels sick the first time you know - I was sick - Have you tried putting your fingers down your throat

Diaghilev I'm fine I tell you

Henrik I'll put my fingers down your throat for you Diaghilev

Diaghilev That wont be necessary thank you

Henrik You know your trouble? You're too sensitive. You're not cut out for this kind of work

Janesh You were a teacher, serge, weren't you?

Diaghilev Yes

Janesh What made you give up a good job like that to be a. policeman?

Diaghilev I had great ambitions at the time

Henrik Don't tell me - you were going to change the world? Fight crime

Diaghilev Something like that

Henrik You lot are the worst sort – idealists - that's why you write that poetry of yours

Janesh You write poetry?

Diaghilev A little

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- Henrik Course he does - now then Diaghilev (indicating bag) How's about writing a poem for this fellow then?
- Diaghilev (Clutching mouth feeling unwell) Excuse me (he runs off to be sick causing much merriment to Henrik)
- Janesh You shouldn't humiliate him like that
- Henrik What've I done?
- Janesh He's a sergeant, you should show some respect for rank
- Henrik It takes more then three stripes to make me respect a man - respect is something you earn
- Janesh You've never tried for promotion then Henrik?
- Henrik Me? Why should I? I'm happy as I am. Anyway they'd never promote somebody like me - I speak my mind too much
- Janesh You might've upset him
- Henrik So? They shouldn't send a boy to do a man's job. You know what they say about teachers, "A man amongst boys and a boy amongst men "
- Janesh You should show more respect for the dead as well
- (Diaghilev re-enters wiping his mouth)
- I said he should show more respect for the dead, serge. What do you say?
- Diaghilev It would be more fitting
- Henrik Respect? For what?
- Janesh A young man's died here tonight
- Henrik And I should respect him because he had the stupidity to jump in front of the midnight express?
- Janesh You should be more thoughtful
- Henrik And was he thoughtful when he did this? Eh? Did he think of the practicalities?
- Janesh He was upset
- Henrik "He was upset" - I'm upset at having to miss my evening out - overtime like this I can do without - I could have been enjoying myself, instead of which I have to poke about looking for -
- Diaghilev Do you always have to be so heartless?

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- Henrik            Me? Heartless? I'll have you know I'm a very caring person - I cry at weddings and at funerals - but only at the thought of how much money's being wasted! Listen friend, do you know how many times I've had to do this? Do you know how long I've worked this patch? I was doing this before you even joined so don't come along telling me I should be more caring - I've had my fill of this job and your sensitivity – it's that that causes half the trouble in this world - if everybody was down to earth like me we'd have none of this - jumping in front of trains because your girlfriend tells you to piss off - I can do without it, I can tell you
- Diaghilev        It was because he'd lost his job
- Henrik            Whatever
- Diaghilev        You're not bothered are you? You're completely unmoved - it doesn't bother you one iota that somebody could become so depressed they can do a thing like this
- Henrik            All that bothers me is that I have to waste my time wandering round here in the dark picking up bits of entrail when I could have been off at ten having a good time. Why they choose this way I'll never know, I can think of hundreds of better ways - what do you say Janesh?
- Janesh            I don't think I'd have the courage
- Henrik            For instance you could drink yourself to death - a couple of bottles, a few tablets and there you are - none of this - this is so messy
- Diaghilev        Do you think he was bothered about the method when he did it? Do you think it even crossed his mind?
- Henrik            I'll tell you one thing - it crossed his mind to change it
- Diaghilev        You what?
- Henrik            He changed his mind
- Diaghilev        What do you mean?
- Henrik            I mean I talked to the driver and he said he changed his mind - he says when he picked him up in his lights he was standing with his arms and legs outstretched waiting for the end and then at the last minute he changed his mind and tried to run
- Janesh            No?
- Henrik            Yes - but he must have got his foot caught in something and by then it was too late
- Diaghilev        Dear God
- (Janesh makes the sign of the cross and says a silent prayer)



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- Henrik (To Janesh) What are you doing? While you're there Janesh say one for me - ask him who's going to win the three thirty
- ( Pulls out a packet of sandwiches and starts eating )
- (To Diaghilev) You want one?
- Diaghilev How the hell can you eat at a time like this?
- Henrik At a time like what?
- Diaghilev Here we are combing the embankment for bits of some young man and all you can think about is eating
- Henrik You don't want one?
- Diaghilev No
- Henrik They're nice
- Diaghilev I don't care if they're caviar - I couldn't eat a thing at this moment
- Henrik You should eat - you've got to keep body and soul together - unlike this fellow (indicates bag then offers one to the bag as a joke) You want one?
- Diaghilev You know Henrik, I sometimes wonder what makes you tick, you seem to go out of your way to be disgusting
- Henrik Just a bit of fun - everybody needs a bit of fun - especially at a time like this
- Diaghilev I can understand that but you go over the top, you enjoy making people feel uncomfortable
- Henrik Which reminds me Diaghilev, why were you so late?
- Diaghilev I had something to attend to
- Henrik You said "Get started and I'll be with you directly"
- Diaghilev I'm sorry
- Henrik Instead of which you leave us to do the dirty work while you're away somewhere skiving
- Diaghilev I wasn't skiving.- anyway have you finished ?
- Henrik Almost - its difficult to say in this light
- Janesh We've been down the track quite a way but the torches weren't very good

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Diaghilev      That's why I went to fetch you these batteries (producing them from pocket)

Henrik            (Sarcastically) Oh that's where you've been? Fetching batteries - how thoughtful

Diaghilev      Watch your tongue

Henrik            I'm watching it - in fact I've been watching tongues for the last hour and a half - and ears and noses and God knows what else

Janesh            Henrik!

Henrik            Well, he talks to me as if I was a kid and now the job's done he brings us new batteries

Janesh            We might need them later

Henrik            What for? We've finished

Diaghilev      I'm afraid not

Henrik            Listen Sergeant Diaghilev, we've done what we had to - we've combed the embankment on both sides of the track, picked up what there was left to pick up - now can we please go home?

Diaghilev      No

Henrik            "No" he says

Janesh            Why not serge?

Diaghilev      We've had instructions to stay here till morning until they can get somebody out to relieve us

Henrik            You're joking?

Diaghilev      I wish I was

Janesh            Till morning? That's ages yet - what are they playing at?

Diaghilev      It seems they want to be sure we don't miss anything

Henrik            What do they want us to do - count the bloody pieces? What do they think it is - a bloody jigsaw?

Janesh            I can see their point Henrik - we'd look pretty silly if ...

Henrik            Why cant they send some of the nightshift out?

Diaghilev      They're busy it seems

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Janesh            Never mind Henrik, think of all the overtime you'll be getting

Henrik            Overtime like this I don't need - sleep I do - I'm dreadful if I don't get my sleep

Diaghilev        That I can believe

Henrik            Well this is just great - what are we going to do, sit and look at each other all night?

Janesh            We could try sleeping

Henrik            On what?

Janesh            I know what, I've got some cards in the car, we could play cards

Henrik            You stay there - I'll get them - where are they?

Janesh            In the glove compartment

Henrik            (Going off muttering to himself) "Sleeping" he says (calls back) You set up a table

                      (They sort out boxes to sit on and a table)

Janesh            He's a strange one old Henrik

Diaghilev        You can say that again

Janesh            His bark is worse than his bite, you know

Diaghilev        (Unconvinced) Really

Janesh            Underneath all his bluster he's a good policeman

Diaghilev        If only he wasn't so ....

Janesh            Awkward? He's a challenge for a sergeant, a problem in man management

Diaghilev        You can say that again

Janesh            Its a horrific business this

Diaghilev        Yes - you had many?

Janesh            One or two - you get used to them on this patch - it affects different people in different ways - take Henrik, he pretends it doesn't bother him but underneath ...

Diaghilev        What about you?

Janesh            I try and treat it as part of the job

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Diaghilev Not a very pleasant part

Janesh No, but somebody has to do it

Diaghilev You never think about things like this when you join

Janesh No - not the kind of thing to put on recruitment posters

Diaghilev I don't think I'll ever get used to it

Janesh That's because you're a poet - can I ask you, what's a policeman doing writing poetry?

Diaghilev I don't know, they just seem to come of their own accord

Janesh I wish I could create like that, the only thing I'm any good at is woodwork

Diaghilev A very useful pastime - you'll have plenty of time for that when you're married

Janesh If I get married

Diaghilev It is a long engagement

Janesh That's because she wants everything just so - just like her father

Diaghilev Her father?

Janesh One of the bosses at headquarters. I met her at one of the dances

Diaghilev One of the bosses? You'll be all right then - I'll soon be calling you "Sir." Perhaps there's more to you than meets the eye

Henrik (Re-entering with cards) You what?

Diaghilev I said there's more to Janesh than meets the eye - he tells me he's marrying a boss's daughter

Henrik When she gets round to it - I wouldn't care if she was worth waiting for she's as ugly as sin

Janesh Hey!

Henrik Never mind Janesh, you know what they say 'The ugliest ones make up for it in bed'

Janesh That's my future wife you're talking about

Henrik Yeah, yeah... right then, what are we playing? Come on then, move over... turn the light this way (he begins to shuffle and deal)

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Diaghilev (Indicating bag) Don't you think we ought to... ?

Henrik What?

Diaghilev Well...move it... put it in the car or something?

Henrik He's all right where he is - we could find more of him at first light  
(They play cards with Diaghilev looking round nervously at the bag)

Diaghilev It feels wrong

Henrik What?

Diaghilev Us sitting here playing cards and ... it doesn't seem right - like soldiers at the crucifixion

Henrik You're a Christian as well are you?

Diaghilev Sort of

Henrik What do you mean "Sort of" - either you are or you aren't, there cant be any half measures

Diaghilev I want to believe and yet... when something like this happens I ask myself "What's the point?"

Henrik The point is this fellow tried to argue with a train and the train came off best – that's the fact of the matter and the end result is over there in that bag - if you think you're made in the image of God my friend, go over there and take a look

Diaghilev No

Henrik (Sensing he's on to a weakness) Why not?

Diaghilev I don't want to