

ZOO

©

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Performances or readings of this play may not legally take place before an audience without a licence obtainable on application to:

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

- (1) 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

Father
Mother
Son
Daughter
General Factotum
Old Man
Old woman
Family man
Family woman
Children
1st young woman
2nd young woman
1st young man
2nd young man

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There are two armchairs in front of the house curtains. In each chair we can see someone sitting behind a newspaper in dressing gown and pyjamas with their legs visible but not their faces. Beneath one paper are the pyjama-clad legs of a male and beneath the other those of a female.

Mother (Commenting on news) I don't know, things get worse every day

Father What's that dear?

Mother I said things get worse - the newspapers are full of such stories – it's a wonder a body dares to venture out alone

Father Yes dear

Mother Nothing but sex, crime and violence - they're worse than animals

Father Yes dear

Mother Are you listening to me?

Father Of course I am

Mother What did I just say?

Father You said, "Are you listening to me?"

Mother No, before that

Father 'Sex, crime and violence'

Mother You're not really listening

Father I am

Mother You're not - all you want to do is read your paper

Father I always read the paper after dinner

Mother We never seem to talk any more

Father Of course we do

Mother We don't. All you're bothered about is reading your silly newspaper

Father OK then – let's talk

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(They both put down their papers and we see that their faces are not human but are those of monkeys. They wait for the audience reaction to die down before speaking)

- Father So what do you want to talk about?
- Mother I don't know - anything - I'm stuck here with the kids all day, I look forward to you coming home and all you want to do is read your paper. I don't think you care any more
- Father (Getting up to console her) Of course I do
- Mother You don't, you never take me anywhere, we never go out - its ages since we've been anywhere interesting
- Father So where do you want to go?
- Mother I don't know - anywhere - I'm stuck at hare all day while you're out enjoying yourself
- Father You call going to work enjoyment?
- Mother Well at least you get to speak to somebody occasionally
- Father (Going to cuddle her) Baby's feeling lonely
- Mother Don't - the kids will be down soon
- Father So?
- Mother So they'll see us
- Father Who cares - come on - give us a kiss
- Mother Not now
- Father Come on, don't be shy
- (Enter two monkey children, a boy and girl, fresh from the bathroom with dressing gowns, drying their hair with towels)
- Son (Chanting) We know what you're doing!
- Daughter Caught you - you were kissing, weren't you?
- Mother Of course not
- Son Yes you were
- Father Its time you two were in bed
- Daughter We just came down to say goodnight

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Son And to remind you of what day it is tomorrow

Father Why? What day is it?

Daughter Don't you remember? Shame on you Daddy

Father (Turning to woman) What's tomorrow?

Mother It happens to be your son's birthday

Son Yes!

Father Of course it is

Daughter You'd forgotten

Father I hadn't

Daughter You had

Father I hadn't - I was only teasing - so where do you want to go?

Daughter Somewhere special

Father You name it

Son I don't know

Father How about a museum?

Daughter They're boring

Son Yeah, boring

Father Where else? Come on, name your poison

Mother Why don't we take them to the safari park?

Father The what?

Mother The safari park

Daughter Where they keep those funny animals?

Father Isn't that a bit expensive?

Mother What if it is

Father O.K. then, why not? Would you like that?

Son Yeah!

Daughter Can we go for the whole day?

Father Sure - is it a deal?

Son (Shaking hands) Deal

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Mother But you'll have to be up early

Daughter Don't worry, we will

Father Now both of you off to bed

Daughter Will you read us a story?

Father Only if you're both in bed in two minutes

Daughter Come on

(They scamper off and there's a short blackout while they remove their pyjama bottoms - music is played "Mama's taking us to the zoo tomorrow" - when the lights come up we can see inside four darkened living areas created from cut-out rocks where the creatures live. There is rickety caveman-like furniture and outside the gardens are divided by rickety fencing)

Attendant (Bringing them on perhaps through the audience) Keep together please, keep together, we can't afford to have you running off

Mother Come on, we've got to keep together

Daughter He's being naughty again

Son I'm not

Daughter He is

Father If you don't behave yourself I won't bring you again - birthday or no birthday

Attendant When you've quite finished - are we all together? ... Right then, ... ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Darwin Safari Park - as you know this is the largest wildlife park in the country and because it's so large we're able to keep our animals here in their natural state - the park is so large in fact that we believe the animals may not even be aware that they're in captivity. ... Before we go into the compound I have to give you a word of warning - the creatures you are about to see are a protected species and have to be treated with the greatest of care - this is their home and they don't like being disturbed - which is why we built the observation post - when we go in I want you to be very quiet and to move very slowly in case we disturb them

Mother Are they dangerous?

Daughter Do they bite?

Mother I hope not

Son I hope they do

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(There is an area for the observation post either at the front of the stage or amongst the audience so that the visitors' voices can prevail over the background noises that the animals make. The visitors may wear stage mikes or the animals may freeze when the visitors are making any comments)

- Attendant (Leading them in) Quietly now, as quietly as you can - (in hushed tones) Keep very still - they're very shy and you never know whether they'll appear or not - it may be a bit early for them yet - they're probably still asleep
- Son Why did we have to come this early?
- Father You want to see them properly don't you?
- Son (Loud whisper) I can hear something - there's one coming
- (All the animals that appear in the following scene are humans dressed in cavemen clothing of rags and furs. There's a rattling of milk bottles and a caveman milkman comes jogging on, stops, looks around him like a nervous prairie dog and begins dropping bottles onto the doorsteps of the living areas)
- Son (Amazed) Look at it!
- Daughter Isn't it funny - it looks just like one of us
- Attendant You can laugh, but there are some people who say that we're actually descended from them - personally I'm not so sure
- Son (Loud whisper) What's it doing?
- Attendant They seem to have a system where this one goes round waking all the others up in the morning.
- Mother Are they intelligent?
- Attendant Well they have a form of intelligence, but not as we know it
- Daughter I can see another one moving over there
- (A light comes up on the home of an elderly cave couple where an old cavewoman in curlers is getting up. She puts in her teeth, puts on her dressing gown and comes out to collect the milk)
- Son Good heavens! What is it?
- Attendant That's one of the older females
- Son She looks awful
- (The old female looks around at the insult but cant see the offender)

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Daughter No she doesn't - I like her - have they got names for them?

Attendant Yes, we call that one Hilda

Mother Hilda? She's cute (Calls to her) Hilda! Here Hilda!

(Hilda looks around again but can't see anyone)

Attendant Please - you shouldn't really do that - we want to try and keep them as natural as possible

Father If you think she's cute you need glasses

Attendant I'm afraid they all go like that when they get old

Son (Seeing an old man getting up in the same house) There's another one

Attendant That's the male

Daughter What's his name?

Attendant "Bernard" - he's a bit bad tempered in the morning

Son Why?

Attendant He just is

Daughter (Calling) Bernard! Here Bernard!

(Bernard looks around grumpily chuntering to himself but can't see them)

Mother (To husband) That's what you'll be like when you get old

Father Not likely

Son What do they do here all day?

Attendant We've studied them for a long time - they have some very interesting behaviour patterns - if you keep watching you'll see they go through the same routines every morning - its wonderful to watch and so predictable

(We see the caveman Bernard go to the bathroom for a shower or bath and begin singing to himself)

Attendant This is the grooming routine

(Bernard stands at the mirror which is audience-side, gargling, pulling faces and combs what little hair he has left)

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Mother Isn't he ugly?

Daughter Just like Daddy

Father Watch it

Son Do they do this every morning?

Attendant Every morning without fail

Mother What comes next?

Attendant The morning feed

Father What do they actually eat?

Attendant We've tried giving them sensible food but they're very set in their ways

(The couple sit down to pour bowls of All Bran - when they speak to each other we hear the garbled grumbling tone of their conversation rather than their exact words)

Daughter What's he saying?

Attendant His milk's off ... this next bits interesting, you'll like this. This is what they call "entertainment"

(The woman switches on a stone-age radio and we hear a well-known morning radio programme in the background)

Mother No?

Son Are there any young ones?

Attendant Yes, in the next pen

(The light goes down on the old couple [or they freeze] and comes up on the second pen where a younger caveman couple lie in bed snoring and a gang of children run in and start jumping on them, pillow fighting, etc.)

Daughter Ah, they're lovely - can we take one home?

Mother Don't be silly dear, where would we keep it?

(The family caveman is fed up with the kids and gets up and shouts at them incomprehensibly and they run off crying - the woman, who is heavily pregnant, gets up and begins to argue with him, defending the children, in noises sounding like words but not quite distinguishable as such - they both argue, pointing

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fingers at each other and she storms off to the kitchen while he angrily gets dressed)

Father She looks pregnant - has she got a name?

Attendant We call her Maureen - his name's Malcolm - we're very proud of them - they're our first pair to breed in captivity

Mother He's as grumpy as you in the morning Dad

Father Watch it

(The family caveman picks up a pair of caveman binoculars and stands looking out towards the third cave area, making lustful throaty noises)

Daughter What's he doing now?

Son Is he looking for something to eat?

Attendant I don't think it's eating that's on his mind

(The lights come up on the third area where two young females appear getting dressed and pulling on their tights)

Attendant We've had a lot of trouble with him, he's a bit of a character - he seems to have a very strong sex drive - last week we had a very nasty incident with one of the female keepers who's still off work - we have to keep a very close eye on him

(The wife in the second area returns and catches Malcolm looking - we hear her bark questions at him and his mumbled excuses then the family all go to the kitchen table and begin the breakfast behaviour which looks like a rowdy chimps tea party. There are arguments and chattering, etc as the kids gorge themselves while the caveman tries to read his paper)

Attendant Their manners aren't very good