

UM

© Bruce Goodman 1997

Characters:

She
He

She enters, looks surprised at seeing an audience and stays.

She: Not much new. Nothing new under the sun. Hello. Not much going on here. Is this between plays? Not much going on back there, or here. Not much going on anywhere I had to take a pill. Gangrene the doctor said. I thought he meant I would get gangrene unless I took the pill but apparently he says gangrene like other people say shit. To express surprise. No good a doctor saying shit in the surgery it might mean he wants a sample very confusing more so if he says fuck. Would that he would, but no luck he said gangrene but the truth is it was nothing to do with gangrene it was... it was... the heart. My heart. Never said why. It's all very well for thingy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to fall in love with whodacky by taking a bit of stuff but with... you think I'm wandering don't you?... you're surprised I know about *Midsum*?... I'm not a play not the play... I'm filling in filling in excuse me. Always easier to attend a play coming through the stage.

I'll sit in the audience if there's a spare seat or on the steps if I have to, to show I'm not a play excuse me. Is it against fire regulations to sit here? I'm trying to be normal, trying to be calm, trying to enter relatively unnoticed.

Excuse me lady how the hell would I know you're a woman just because you're wearing a dress how the HELL WOULD I KNOW. Excuse me. Excuse me. Any critics here? *(Not pausing)* You can't tell critics they look like everybody else but they scribble in their programmes in the dark. *(Returning to stage)* Turn the house lights on I'm looking for a critic no don't ruin the magic keep the magic keep the pretence let the critic scribble in the dark like a voyeur on a dunny wall ring me.

Ring me. Where was I? I'm sitting in the audience waiting. Waiting. (*She sits*) We're waiting. Anyone out the back there? There was no one out the back when I came through.

Pause. Empty stage.

She: We're WAI-TING.

He enters.

She: (*ignoring his entrance*) It's gangrene. Oh gangrene. Oh gangrene. Gangrene, gangrene well aren't you going to start HE'S NOT GOING TO START IS THIS THE PLAY?

He: Not much new.

She: IS THIS THE PLAY? Is he starting?

He: Nothing new under the sun.

She: It's a very bad way to start. Nothing what? Nothing FART? That's what Cordelia said and look what happened.

He: Hello. Not much going on here. Is this between plays? Not much going on back there, or here. Not much going on anywhere I had to take a pill.

She: I mean NOTHING. NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING. I don't mean fart.

She goes onto the stage.

She: Take your seat sir we're waiting for the play we don't want to hear from the audience we're not interested in your problems we don't want to look at you I don't want to hear you.

Both speak in a choreographed fashion - he acting as almost an accompaniment.

He: Gangrene the doctor said.

She: Cordelia - I meant. I keep thinking of The Daughters of the Late Colonel.

He: I thought he meant I would get gangrene unless I took the pill but apparently he says gangrene like other people say shit. To express surprise. No good a doctor saying shit in the surgery it might mean he wants a sample very confusing more so if he says fuck. Thank God he didn't, but no luck he said gangrene but the truth is it was nothing to do with gangrene it was... it was... the heart. My

heart. Never said why. It's all very well for thingy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to fall in love with whodacky by taking a bit of stuff but with... you think I'm wandering don't you?... you're surprised I know about *Midsum*?... I'm not a play not the play... I'm filling in filling in excuse me. Always easier to attend a play coming through the stage.

I'll sit in the audience if there's a spare seat or on the steps if I have to, to show I'm not a play excuse me. Is it against fire regulations to sit here? I'm trying to be normal, trying to be calm, trying to enter relatively unnoticed.

Excuse me sir how the hell would I know you're a man just because you're wearing pants how the HELL WOULD I KNOW. Excuse me. Excuse me. Any critics here? (*Not pausing*) You can't tell critics they look like everybody else but they scribble in their programmes in the dark. (*Returning to stage*) Turn the house lights on I'm looking for a critic no don't ruin the magic keep the magic keep the pretence let the critic scribble in the dark like a voyeur on a dunny wall ring me.

Ring me. Where was I? I'm sitting in the audience waiting. Waiting. (*He sits*).

She: It was an affair of the heart now we can't speak I couldn't speak I was too out of control. He put his foot on my shoe once once while we talked when we were young young he put his foot on my shoe and I thought is this affection? Is this a nonchalant pat saying I like you he put his foot on my shoe so I touched his arm and he took his arm away and left his foot on my shoe when I was young when we were young but I no longer knew what he meant O O O O O O. What did he mean was he playing with my heart leaving his foot on my shoe and taking away his arm when I touched it. And the...

He brushed back my hair from my face like it was hanging over my face like he wanted to look at my face like he liked me and my heart went like I couldn't speak like he liked me like I was sad like I touched his arm again and he took the foot off my shoe and said he was going out for a smoke and that was that. The first time like he couldn't cope. Neither could cope help help help. What do I do now? Years ago are you following me?

Silence.

He: We're waiting. Anyone out the back there? There was no one out the back when I came through.

Pause.

He: We're WAI-TING.

She: I'll sit in the audience. I'll sit in the audience. He might think I'm in a play. He might think I'm some unreal character in a play. He might watch me. He might put his foot on my shoe. Not that we need a play - I mean everyone here is a play in themselves, it's just that some of us don't know how to shut up. You got a play in you sir? Anything happen to you yes yes yes yes yes we don't want to hear it we don't want to hear about your ingrown toenail stuff when my heart is smothered my heart is broken. I'm broken all years. I'm broken. I'm trying to tell you. I'm trying to get it out. How in the stillness, in the night, I wake and feel the fell of dark not day. My sweating self. But worse.

He: It was an affair of the heart now we can't speak I couldn't speak I was too passionate too obsessed too out of control. I put my foot on her shoe once once while we talked when we were young young I put my foot on her shoe so she touched my arm and I took my arm away and left my foot on her shoe when I was young when we were young O O O O O O.

He goes to the stage.

He: I'm waiting.

Pause.

She: I might go. I might try again. Look at the time! Hello.

She goes to the stage.

He: Hi.

She: Hello.

He: Anything happening?

She: No. Not much. Everything. Everything everything everything.

He: Nice shoes.

She: Thanks.

He taps his foot near her shoe.

She: You see. WHY DOESN'T HE JUST PUT HIS BLOODY FOOT ON MY SHOE? Why?

He puts his foot on her shoe.

She: Mm? Mm? Mm? Mm? Mm? Mm? Mm? Mm? (*Nonchalantly touching his arm*) Wasn't it funny that...

He: SHE'S TOUCHING MY ARM! Oh God! She's touching my arm!

He takes his arm away.

She: He does not like me.

He: I cannot cope.

She: He doesn't know he has his foot on my shoe.

Pause.

She: I'm going out for a smoke.

He: I don't smoke.

She: Neither do I. I'll take it up. When did you give up?

He: I never started.

She: Ah!

He: I'm going out for a smoke.

He exits.

She: He meant it like the doctor meant gangrene. He meant it like the doctor said gangrene instead of shit.

He reappears.

She: He meant it like he's going to do something else.

He: I mean I'm not coping.

He exits.

She: He meant it like he was going to, going to the toilet or something. He was excusing himself. Like all the heavens fell. ONCE, I was walking walking. There was a lake there. The path wound round the lake like a ribbon round a parcel. But that's silly. A parcel is gaudy. The lake was peaceful. I could've smelt the flowers but maybe someone was watching. I couldn't smell the flowers. They'd be thinking thinking I was mad. Nuts or something. A

silly lady. Like a parcel. All wrapped up. All done. That's it. There's a silly lady. She smells flowers.

Ho hum. Oh yes. But no no no no no. Oh yes yes yes yes yes. All done. Smell the flowers. Silly lady. I'm normal. Anyway... What's this got to do with it? I SAID - WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Ahaha-ha--ha---ha----ha! Got to go out for something. I'm almost a play in itself! (*She laughs*). I'll sit in the audience instead.

She exits backstage, passing him on the way.

She: YOU!

He: She meant it like the doctor meant gangrene. She meant it like the doctor said gangrene instead of shit.

She reappears.

He: She meant it like she's going to do something else.

She: I mean I'm not coping.

She exits.

He: There was a... when I was in the south of Germany - is Dachau in the south of Germany? - anyway I went to Dachau you know the concentration camp I didn't take any photos you know. You know, it would be wrong to take photos there. In the oven chamber. There were half a dozen brick ovens there where they burned the bodies. You know like there were wreathes on each oven like that was where everyone was burned.

And there was a Carmelite Convent of nuns at the back end of the camp living there because a whole lot of Carmelite nuns died there in the war under the Nazis but the Jews have kicked them out because Jews wanted to be the only ones that died there. What of the fifty-five millions who died trying to save them I thought. If they could spare a minute, take a moment out from killing Arabs and say thank you. But I'm not bitter about Jews. Oh no! I'm bitter about HER. HER! HER! You think I'm bitter about Jews but I'm not I'm bitter about what never happened. With HER. Anyway, behind the door of the oven chamber was a modern day fire extinguisher. It was the only photo I took. Wasn't that callous. It was a government regulation. The holocaust can not be repeated because we have a fire extinguisher in the oven chamber. That's what the government regulation meant when at the gates of Dachau the sign said in huge letters in many

languages - NEVER! NEVER AGAIN! It meant they had a fire extinguisher in the oven chamber and everything will be all right now. That's government regulations. Where two or three are gathered together there will be a fire extinguisher in the midst of them. My house has fire doors. I have EXIT written over the door of my bedroom. It's government regulations. I live in an apartment. Block. If there's fire in my bedroom I know to exit. My love is like to dry ice and I to fire. Oops! Three Carmelite Nuns in the oven. Put them out! PUT THEM OUT! PUT OUT THE NUNS! There'll be no gas oven today, the pollen count is too high. They might get asthma. Help! Help! Help! I want to burn. I want fire. Bloody government regulations.

She enters.

She: Silly man.

She goes to sit in the audience. He exits. Silence.

She: We've never been able to touch. (*Getting up*) Like a kiss that misses. Like a handshake that never grasps. It's been years. We meet - like a - like a missed kiss, a pissed kiss, a moist kiss, a mist piss, a pissed mist, a...

He enters.

He: Hello.

She: Hello.

Both: How are you?

They laugh.

Both: How...

He: You go.

She: How's the family?

He: Great! Great!

Pause.

He: Dustin's married.

She: Dustin?

He: The oldest.

She: Oh! Dustin! Oh! Is he?

He: Yes!

She: Fancy.

He: You?

She: Fine! Fine! You?

It gets faster.

He: Great! Great!

He: Dustin's married.

She: Dustin?

He: The oldest.

She: Oh! Dustin! Oh! Is he?

He: Yes!

She: Fancy.

He: You?

She: Fine! Fine! You?

It gets faster.

He: Great! Great!

He: Dustin's married.

She: Dustin?

He: The oldest.

She: Oh! Dustin! Oh! Is he?

He: Yes!

She: Fancy.

He: You?

She: Fine! Fine!

These next two speeches are uttered simultaneously, building from the repetition of the previous section. Where words of both speeches are identical they are said in unison.

She: What do you expect me to do? Sir. I cannot say, Dustin's fine. Dustin's married, Dustin's GREAT.

He: Dustin's fine. Dustin's married, Dustin's GREAT.

She: GREAT.

He: GREAT.

She: GREAT.

He: GREAT.

She: I have no Dustin. There is no Dustin of mine.

He: A lovely girl. They're made for each other.

She: Dustin Dustin Dustin Dustin.

She: I should've had a Dustin. I could've had a Dustin, but he took his arm away.

He: Grandparent soon. *(He laughs)*

She: If he had not taken his arm away in that... If he'd left it there while I touched him on the arm, with my hand -

He: - with her hand -

She: - with his foot on my shoe, brushing back my hair, in his arms then. There would be no Dustin.

He: Imagine that! *(He laughs)*.

She: Someone else instead. Ah... how small a touch... The universe shrugs.

He: Gosh! Time flies!

She: Dustin - stupid name. I would never have had a Dustin.

He: I took my arm away.

He: *(loud)* Still working?

She: Yes!

She laughs. He laughs. She touches his arm. Greatly gentle.

She: Can we never meet?

He: It's too late now to meet.

She: Or touch. Or...

He: It's too late now to touch.

She: It always was.

He: Yes.

She: Yes.

He: Too late for the old foot on the shoe trick.

She: Yes.

He: Still working?

She: Yes!

She laughs. He laughs. He puts his foot on her shoe.

He: Can we never meet?

She: It's too late now to meet.

He: Or touch. Or...

She: It's too late now to touch.

He: It always was.

She: Yes.

He: Yes.

She: *(returning to audience seat)* See now, waiting for a play to start. Excuse me, madam, excuse me. Don't be fooled.

Pause.

She: I know when to shut up.

Pause.

He: *(returning to audience seat)* No good being bitter about the past.

They wait.

He: I'm going out for a smoke.

He exits.

She: I could be sitting next to King Lear for all I know. Or Hamlet. Or... Cordelia. Nothing comes of nothing. I wonder what he's doing out the back?

She gets up.

She: Mmmmmmm. You never know. Do you? Silly old me. Smelling flowers. Not much new. Nothing new under the sun. Hello. Not much going on here. Is this between plays? Not much going on back there, or here. Not much going on anywhere I had to take a pill. Gangrene the doctor said. I thought he meant I would get gangrene unless I took the pill but apparently he says gangrene like other people say shit. Um... The rest is silence.

She exits.

She enters.

She: No no. Nothing comes of nothing. Speak again.

She exits.

THE END