

ANONYMOUS

A Short Play

by

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SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

ANONYMOUS
and
HIT & RUN

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ISBN 978 1 872475 37 0

Printed and published by
SchoolPlay Productions Limited,
15 Inglis Road,
Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU

PRODUCTION NOTES

Anonymous began life as a series of workshops I conducted with a group of 'A' Level students at Cross Hall High School in Ormskirk. They were anxious to find a small cast ensemble piece that they could use to develop their skills as ensemble players and give them experience of a more stylised approach to theatre. Between us we came up with the basic ideas which are explored in *Anonymous*, i.e. how the mundanity and anonymity of ordinary life can drive people to do extraordinary and destructive things.

After some discussion and improvisation I was able to put together the framework of the play. The piece has a stylised form to help promote the idea of alienation, loneliness and of course anonymity. The set is only suggested by the use of tables and chairs. Costume is kept to a minimum, props used sparingly.

As a post script I am pleased to say that all the students passed the exam. All in all I think that I am as pleased with that as I am with the play.

This play is dedicated to Adie, without whom . . .

C.M.

CAST

Housewife

Husband / Boss

Henpecked

Mother / Friend

Wild Child.

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(The Characters are sitting on chairs in various positions on the stage. We hear a steady pulsing rhythm ticking away in the background. This will be used as a basis for the rhythmic patterns of speech that the characters will use. As each Character joins in the vocal fugue he or she moves their chair to centre stage until they are all in a line to represent a commuter train. The rhythm patterns are meant to represent the sounds of a train).

Charac 1: Put on my coat, put on my hat. *(repeat)*

Charac 2: Mustn't be late, mustn't be late. *(repeat)*

Charac 3: Don't want to go, don't want to go. *(repeat)*

Charac 4: Same ev'ry day, same ev'ry day. *(repeat)*

Charac 5: Travel to town, travel to town. *(repeat)*

(When all the characters are seated they all take up the same chant).

All Characs: Anonymous, anonymous, anonymous. *(repeat)*

(All the CHARACTERS disappear behind newspapers).

Housewife: This is the train my husband takes. Every morning the same. Like clockwork. Regular. Unchanging. Never varying. Dependable, I like that.

All Characs: Dependable, dependable, dependable. *(repeat)*

(One of the male characters takes on the role of the HUSBAND. He sets up a table and two chairs. He sits on one of the chairs and disappears behind his newspaper again).

Housewife: *(miming putting out a meal)* It's another lovely day dear.

Husband: *(without lowering his newspaper)* Is it? I hadn't noticed.

Housewife: Are you doing anything interesting at work today?

Husband: *(slowly putting down his paper)* Interesting? How do you mean?

Housewife: You know, interesting, unusual, exciting.

Husband: *(with infinite patience)* Darling I work in an insurance office, not for the S.A.S.! *(checks his watch)* Heavens! Is that the time? I'll miss my train if I'm not careful. 'bye Darling! Mustn't be late! *(he goes back to his train seat).*

All Characs: Mustn't be late, mustn't be late, mustn't be late. *(repeat)*

(HENPECKED stands up and paces. He consults his watch)

Henpecked: I'm going to be late! I'm going to be late! Where's the train? I'm going to be late!

(A female character takes on the role of HENPECKED'S MOTHER)

Mother: Well don't go blaming me my lad! I woke you in plenty of time, didn't I?

Henpecked: Yes mother.

Mother: Don't you use that tone of voice with me my lad!

Henpecked: No Mother!

Mother: You're not too big for a clip round the ear. You remember that!

Henpecked: Yes Mother. (*MOTHER sits down*) I've made it! I've made it!
Nobody saw me come in late, I've made it!

(The HUSBAND has become the BOSS. He stares at HENPECKED who cannot meet his gaze. The BOSS indicates one of the chairs at the table. HENPECKED reluctantly sits down. The BOSS circles in a predatory way).

Boss: Late again. (*It is a statement*)

Henpecked: Yes, I'm sorry, only I....

Boss: I don't want any excuses! I want to see an improvement. If not, well there are plenty of young men who would give their eye teeth for a job with Peregrine Insurance. Am I making myself clear?

Henpecked: Oh! Yes! Perfectly clear.

Boss: I'm glad to hear it! Now get on with your work, and remember that my eye is upon you.

(BOSS returns to his train seat).

All Characs: Get back at him, get back at him, get back at him. (*repeat*)

(WILD CHILD stands up. She stretches languorously).

Wild Child: So I like to have good time O.K.? There's no law against it, is there? The clubs are a good place to be seen. I'm waiting to be discovered. It shouldn't take long. I've got what it takes. So in the meantime I do Temping to pay the bills and buy the clothes. It's dead boring but it will do. You need the right clothes to attract the right people. I mean men. Not that I have any trouble in the department. Just the opposite.

(The BOSS is seated at his desk. WILD CHILD sits opposite him).

Boss: Well. Miss, ah! Have you had any experience -- in this kind of work? (*He leers*)

Wild Child: (*to the AUDIENCE*) I could feel his eyes all over me. I know his type, (*plaintively*) "My wife doesn't understand me!" (*to the BOSS*) Oh! Yes! It's all in my references.

Boss: (*without taking his eyes off WILD CHILD*) Yes you seem to be amply qualified.

Wild Child: (*aside*) Creep!

Boss: Let me know if there is anything I can do to help you settle in. (*He returns to his train seat*)

Wild Child: It was like that the whole two weeks that I was at that office. Nothing that you could call real harassment, just looking and the odd comment. As if I'd have anything to do with a boring middle aged, middle class creep like

him! I've got my standards you know. A man's got to have a certain something if he's going to be seen with me! We're talking at least a Porsche here!

All Characs: A Porsche here, a Porsche here, a Porsche here.

(WILD CHILD sits down. HENPECKED stands up)

Henpecked: Call this a Holiday? With her whining the whole time? *(MOTHER stands up)*.

Mother: I don't like the way that waitress looks at you. Too familiar by half if you ask me.

Henpecked: Nobody asked you Mother..

Mother: What did you say?

Henpecked: Nothing, Mother.

Mother: I should think not. Now come on, I don't want to miss the flower arranging exhibition.

Henpecked: Yes Mother.

(HENPECKED and MOTHER sit down, WILD CHILD stands up).

Wild Child: I was glad when that job came to an end. I couldn't get out of the door fast enough. Trouble is I left so quickly I left some stuff behind in my desk. I'd go back for it, but that's one of my rules, never look back, never go back. No regrets, no entanglements, no hassle. I mean, if I dwelled on all the little things that have gone wrong in my life; the men that have let me down,, the men that I've let down, well it would be really depressing. Then I'd get worry lines all over my face and we can't have that, can we? So I square my shoulders, stick out my chin and go out to meet the world on my own terms. I like it that way.

All Characs: I like it that way, I like it that way, I like it that way. *(repeat)*

(WILD CHILD sits down on the railway seat. HOUSEWIFE moves to the table and sits down. She is joined by MOTHER who becomes FRIEND).

Friend: *(handing across a holiday snapshot)* This is the last one. That's the coach we came home on and they're the staff at the hotel. There's that waitress who kept making eyes at my boy, I soon put her straight, I can tell you.

Housewife: Why aren't there any pictures of your son? Do you know I've never met him?

Friend: Oh he's a very keen photographer, my boy. Much rather be behind the lens. He's a bit shy. *(changing the subject)* How's hubby?

Housewife: Much the same, he did seem positively perky these past couple of weeks. Spruced himself up and even started wearing that aftershave that I bought him for Christmas, and for work as well!

Friend: *(not really listening)* Fancy!

Housewife: Of course it didn't last. He's back to normal now. Back to his old,

reliable self. I like it that way.

Friend: *(still not listening)* Fancy!

All Characs: I like it that way, I like it that way, I like it that way. *(repeat)*
(HENPECKED stands up).

Henpecked: Back at the office. Why couldn't it have burned down when I was away?
(HUSBAND becomes BOSS and stands up).

Boss: Oh! It's you. Bright eyed and bushy tailed after your little holiday then?

Henpecked: I suppose so.

Boss: There's a first time for everything. Well suppose you get over to your desk and get some work done? *(heavily sarcastic)* Any time this year will do!
(HENPECKED sits at the table).

Henpecked: I hate him! I hate him! I hate him!

All Characs: I hate him! I hate him! I hate him!

(HENPECKED finds the objects that WILD CHILD has left behind. They are a hairbrush, a bottle of perfume and a lipstick).

Henpecked: What on earth? The Temp must have left them. *(He sniffs at the perfume)* Hmm! Not bad! Not the sort of stuff you'd expect someone who works here to wear. Not your common or garden Temp this.

(An inspiration bursts upon him. Nothing less than great, magnificent inspiration. He produces a pen and paper and begins to write furiously. As he does so BOSS walks across. HENPECKED shields his paper).

Boss: Hard at it I see. Wonders will never cease.

(BOSS sits down. HENPECKED finishes his letter. Then he carefully smears some lipstick on it, sprays it with perfume and pulls some hairs from the hairbrush which he carefully folds into the letter. He then places the whole concoction into an envelope and seals it).

Henpecked: *(with relish)* Let's see him get out of that!

(He hands the letter to the next person in the line of chairs who passes it on to the next and so on until it reached HOUSEWIFE. While this is happening all the CHARACTERS chant).

All Characs: Get out of that! Get out of that! Get out of that!
(HOUSEWIFE opens the letter).

Housewife: *(reading)* Is this your perfume? *(she sniffs the letter)* Is this your shade of lipstick? Is this the colour of your hair? *(she looks at the strand of hair)* Signed a well wisher. *(Pause)* Oh my God! *(HUSBAND sits at the breakfast table. HOUSEWIFE addresses the AUDIENCE)* From that moment I knew I couldn't trust him. *(HUSBAND opens his newspaper)* I could see the guilt in his every movement and in every word he spoke.

Husband: Any more toast Dear?

Housewife: What had I done to deserve this? Hadn't I been a good loyal devoted wife?

Husband: I'll be off to work now then Dear. *(He stands and walks away from the table).*

Housewife: In my mind's eye I could see them together. Touching, laughing about how they were deceiving me!

(HUSBAND and WILD CHILD act out HOUSEWIFE'S fantasy).

Wild Child: *(pawing at HUSBAND)* Do you think she knows?

Husband: Who cares? I provide her with a roof over her head what more can she expect? A man needs a little excitement in his life. *(They both laugh nastily and sit down).*

Housewife: Who could I turn to? What could I say? I was so frightened and ashamed!

Friend: *(standing)* You haven't been looking yourself lately, nothing wrong is there? *(She just wants a juicy titbit of gossip).*

Housewife: Wrong? Of course not! Why should there be anything wrong?

Friend: No reason, no reason at all. It's just that you haven't been yourself lately that's all. All the girls have been saying so.

Housewife: *(aside)* They all know! Oh! my God! It's written all over my face!

Friend: Just remember that you can always confide in me. I'm the soul of discretion I am. By the way did I tell you what Doris said to me the other day?

Housewife: I've no one to trust!

(HOUSEWIFE and FRIEND sit down. ALL CHARACTERS chant).

All Characs: No one to trust. No one to trust. No one to trust. *(HENPECKED stands up).*

Henpecked: I watched him for weeks. Looking for any signs of strain. Nothing. Nothing! I was going to have to do something. *(HOUSEWIFE stands up).*

Housewife: I watched him for weeks. The stain of guilt grew on him every day. I must do something. *(WILD CHILD stands up).*

Wild Child: I can't just leave my stuff there. I'll have to do something.

(HUSBAND sits at the breakfast table. HOUSEWIFE stands nearby. HENPECKED prepares for work. MOTHER fusses over him. WILD CHILD carefully applies make up). Only one thing for it! I'll have to go back to the office and get my gear. If he so much as looks at me I'll do him for harassment! (She sits on the Train).

Henpecked: There's only one thing for it. I'll have to write another letter!

Mother: Are you sure you've got everything dear?

Henpecked: Yes Mother, don't fuss Mother.

Mother: I'll fuss if I want to. Now off you go and have a good day.

Henpecked: Oh! I will Mother, I will.

(HENPECKED and MOTHER sit down on the train).

Housewife: I can't I can't stand it anymore! There's only one thing for it!

Husband: Is there any toast Dear?

Housewife: Just coming dear.

Husband: There doesn't appear to be a knife for the marmalade dear.

Housewife: Here it is darling! *(She produces a knife from her apron pocket and plunges it into her HUSBAND'S back. HUSBAND slumps across the table, Dead. HOUSEWIFE calmly wipes the knife on her apron, places it in her handbag, puts on her coat and takes her seat on the train. HUSBAND remains slumped across the table).*

Housewife: This is the train my husband takes. Every morning the same, never varying. Like clockwork. Dependable. But not today.

All Characs: But not today, but not today, but not today.

Housewife: They'll catch me of course. I don't care. For the moment I'll just sit here, among these strangers. Anonymous.

All Characs: Anonymous, anonymous, anonymous. *(repeat and fade).*

(The lights go down. The sound fades away).

THE END