

Sheep Love To Die

A extract from the play by

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ONE

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN SOUTH EAST LONDON; SET IN THE PRESENT AND IN THE CHARACTERS' PAST.

THE ACTION OPENS IN DARKNESS. AT FIRST WE HEAR THE MUFFLED SQUAWK OF EMERGENCY SERVICE RADIO AND THEN, RISING ABOVE IT, THE TERRIFYING ROAR OF A HOUSE FIRE.

LIGHTS SLOWLY RISE TO BACKLIGHT TWO WOMEN SAT ALONE ON STAGE IN ARMCHAIRS; BOTH ARE IN THEIR LATER YEARS AND ONE, CONSTANCE, APPEARS TO BE ASLEEP. THE SOUND THEN STOPS ABRUPTLY TO BE REPLACED BY SILENCE. CONSTANCE BECOMES AGITATED AND CALLS OUT IN HER SLEEP.

THE LIGHTS COME UP TO CREATE A HAUNTING ATMOSPHERE.

CONSTANCE

Have I been asleep?

EVELYN

Yes.

CONSTANCE

I thought so.

THEY ARE SILENT FOR A MOMENT

CONSTANCE

What day is it?

EVELYN

Does it matter?

CONSTANCE

I just like to know, that's all.

EVELYN

Today is... just that. Today. And always will be, whatever we choose to call it.

CONSTANCE IS CONFUSED BY THIS ANSWER BUT SAYS NOTHING.

*THEY ARE BOTH SILENT FOR A WHILE
UNTIL CONSTANCE SPEAKS AGAIN.*

CONSTANCE

I was dreaming.

EVELYN

Do you remember what about?

CONSTANCE

They wouldn't let me be a fairy in the pantomime because I couldn't dance with a stick.

EVELYN

And that's all?

CONSTANCE

Yes.

EVELYN

Good.

CONSTANCE

Why?

EVELYN

No reason.

CONSTANCE

But it's left me feeling...

EVELYN

How?

CONSTANCE

Uneasy. Detached.

EVELYN

It's your age.

CONSTANCE

D'you think so?

EVELYN

Without a doubt.

CONSTANCE

I see.

EVELYN

That's the most likely explanation.

CONSTANCE REFLECTS ON THIS FOR A MOMENT

CONSTANCE

Thank you.

EVELYN

For what?

CONSTANCE

Your certainty.

EVELYN

You're welcome.

LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE AMPLIFIED AND ECHOING SOUNDS OF A CUSTODY SUITE IN A POLICE STATION.

TWO

LIGHTS SNAP UP TO A TIGHT, BRIGHT LIGHT ON DAZ. WITH THE SNAP OF THE LIGHT COMES THE SOUND OF A LOUD ELECTRICAL THUD. DAZ IS IN HIS LATE TEENS. HE IS DEFIANT AND WHEN HE SPEAKS HE REVEALS A STRIKING SOUTH LONDON TWANG; HE TALKS AT A 'GANGSTA-RAP' LICK.

DAZ

You got an answer for dat Mr Policeman? No? D'int fink so. So I won't be takin' up anymore of your time. 'Coz, I reckon, after I've 'ad a bit of a chat wiv my brief 'ere, you and the rest of the goons gonna be off on a spotta 'gardening' leave. Takin' some time to think a bit more 'bout your shrubs an' herbaceous borders rather than kickin' the shit outta me an' ma bro.

DAZ SMILES AT WHAT HE'S JUST SAID

DAZ

So, I ain't listening no more, Mr Policeman. I ain't listening to you, to no social worker, to no teacher, to no yoof worker, to no suits down no dole, to none of you fuckers. You wanna know why? Cause you ain't got nuffin I wanna hear. Nuffin to say of any fuckin' consequence. You got me?

“Am I comin’ froo loud an’ clear? Is I gettin’ in yer ear? Am I even gettin’ near?”

“Coz yer like to give it out, but now you gotta take it! You’s running a race Plod, but you ain’t gonna make it.”

DAZ LAUGHS

DAZ

It makes my heart sing. You know that? So tread lightly, Mr Policeman, coz next time you’re in the hood, me and the cuz, we got a bit of a surprise for you. A little something planned. A welcoming party. With plenty of pop. You readin’ me? Plenty of ‘POP, POP, POP!

DAZ FIRES AN IMAGINARY GUN INTO THE AIR. BUT HAVING MADE THIS GESTURE HE SUDDENLY DROPS THE ‘GANGSTA’ ROLE.

DAZ

I so wish I’d said that to ‘em.

LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A RAGING, HOWLING WIND .

THREE

LIGHTS SNAP UP TO A LOW, HAUNTING LIGHT ACCOMPANIED BY SFX OF A LOUD ELECTRICAL THUD. EVELYN AND CONSTANCE ARE STILL SAT IN THE ARMCHAIRS. CONSTANCE CRIES OUT.

CONSTANCE

Evelyn? What’s happening?

EVELYN

It’s just the wind.

CONSTANCE

I’m frightened.

EVELYN

I know. It’s been a wild night.

CONSTANCE

I don’t like it when the wind blows like that.

EVELYN

Try not to worry. It’s going to be alright.

Are you sure?
CONSTANCE

Yes.
EVELYN

THEY SIT IN SILENCE

Did you check on your orchids this morning?
EVELYN

I don't know. I remember checking on them....
CONSTANCE

But?
EVELYN

I can't be sure it was today.
CONSTANCE

You always feel better after you've checked on them.
EVELYN

I know.
CONSTANCE

So, do you feel better?
EVELYN

No.
CONSTANCE

When you get a moment, go and have a look at them. It'll help take your mind off things.
EVELYN

Yes... I'll do that. Thank you.
CONSTANCE

CONSTANCE CONSIDERS FOR A MOMENT

Have we had this conversation before?
CONSTANCE

What?
EVELYN

This. Conversation. Before.
CONSTANCE

Slip
EVELYN

Slip.
CONSTANCE

THIS DUAL DIALOGUE IS ACCOMPANIED AT THE START BY THE SOUND OF METAL SCREECHING ON METAL; ONE METAL PLATE SLIDING OVER ANOTHER.

Before.
CONSTANCE

EVELYN

I'm not sure.

THE TWO DRIFT INTO SILENCE ONCE MORE UNSURE OF WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED.

I thought I might say a prayer.
CONSTANCE

If you think it'll help.
EVELYN

It might.
CONSTANCE

Then do it.
EVELYN

LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK . IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE ECHO OF FOOTFALL IN A NOISY SECONDARY SCHOOL CORRIDOR.

FOUR

LIGHTS SNAP UP TO A TIGHT, BRIGHT LIGHT ON JANEY. WITH THE SNAP OF THE LIGHT COMES THE SOUND OF A LOUD ELECTRICAL THUD. JANEY IS IN HER LATE TEENS, 'LIPPY', OUTWARDLY CONFIDENT - 'GOBBY' YET LIKEABLE AND DRESSED IN WHAT PASSES FOR HER SCHOOL UNIFORM.

JANEY
 Yer know wot? I'm done wiv this place. That's what I said to her when she called me into her office. 'Ow come,' I said, ' It's always me what get's the blame whenever anyfing kicks off. And no I din't hit her. Not hard anyway.
(MORE)

JANEY (CONT'D)

An' if she don't like it, she shouldn't have been lookin' at me like I'm some sort a slag, should she? An' then, d'you know what she said, the stuck up bitch? She leans over her desk an' says, 'I am still the Headteacher of this school, and I will not have my staff treated like that! I'm callin' your mum.'

So I says to her, 'Good luck wiv that. She won't answer. An' if she does, you'll get no fuckin' sense out of 'er. She'll be off her face by now.'

She has no idea that woman. None of 'em do in that place. Fuckin' witch.

LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE SFX OF A CEILIDH IN FULL SWING - THE SOUND OF PEOPLE DANCING, DRINKING AND ENJOYING THEMSELVES.

FIVE

LIGHTS SNAP UP TO A TIGHT, BRIGHT LIGHT ON PAT KAVANAGH. WITH THE SNAP OF THE LIGHT COMES THE SOUND OF A LOUD ELECTRICAL THUD. PAT KAVANAGH IS A BUSINESS MAN, NOW IN HIS LATER YEARS BUT STYLISHLY DRESSED IN A LONG CAMEL COAT. HE SPEAKS WITH A SOFT IRISH BROGUE.

KAVANAGH

'It's business! Business, pure and simple.' That's what my Daddo would have said. 'In the end, you do what you have to. Do that, and you'll make a success of things. Do otherwise, and you won't. Essentially, those are the two choices you get to make in life. In business, you have to take tough decisions sometimes. Nobody ever made an omelette without breaking a few eggs. It's the only way to make money. So just remember. Do any different and the only person who'll get hurt is you.'

LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR ONCE MORE THE MUFFLED SQUAWK OF EMERGENCY SERVICE RADIO, TOGETHER WITH THE ROAR AND CRACK OF A TERRIBLE FIRE.

SIX

LIGHTS SNAP ON BRIGHT TO ILLUMINATE THE WHOLE STAGE ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOUND OF A SHARP ELECTRICAL THUD. WE SEE A BARE ROOM IN A NEW HOUSE DEVOID OF ALL FURNITURE EXCEPT TWO OLD ARMCHAIRS IN WHICH SIT EVELYN AND CONSTANCE.

INTO THIS SCENE ENTER STEVE AND JANEY. STEVE IS IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES, ALL 'ARMS AND LEGS' AND 'SIMIAN GAIT'. JANEY, NOW IN HER LATE TEENS, IS SLIGHTLY IN AWE OF STEVE. THEY ARE BOTH OBLIVIOUS TO THE PRESENCE OF EVELYN AND CONSTANCE IN THE ROOM.

JANEY

Oh Steve, I love it.

STEVE

Fort you would.

JANEY

And you ain't muckin' me about when you say we can 'ave it? 'Cause I won't fink it's funny, if you are.

STEVE

I ain't muckin' you about, alright! I got the heads up from an old mate about the job. Went to see the bloke and he said OK.

JANEY

He must fink a lot of you, to take you on, just like that.

STEVE

He's the boss... so what he says goes.

JANEY

An' he says we can 'ave this one, down 'ere by the river?

STEVE

It's ours. It comes wiv the job. Says he needs someone on hand 24/7 to do all the day to day stuff. Says he's sick an' tired of shellin' out to some firm to do the same fink at twice the price.

JANEY

I 'ave to keep pinchin' meself.

STEVE

Told you I'd get it sorted.

JANEY

Nuffin like this has ever happened to me. An' you're pleased?

STEVE

Yeah. Sweet.

JANEY

Is that all you gotta say? Here's me turnin' fuckin' cartwheels and you....

STEVE

Gis a chance, I only just stepped in froo the door.

JANEY

Use yer imagination!

STEVE

To fuckin' early in the mornin' to imagine anyfing.

CONSTANCE

What time is it?

EVELYN

I don't know.

JANEY

Really?

CONSTANCE

Look at the clock.

EVELYN

I can't see it from here.

JANEY

Wot? Anything?

STEVE

Well, perhaps not anyfing...

JANEY

Come on then, before he turns up!

JANEY THROWS STEVE A SIDEWAYS LOOK, THEY LAUGH AND EXIT RUNNING. LIGHTS SNAP TO BLACK. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A THE PAYOUT FROM A 'ONE-ARMED BANDIT' - COINS CASCADING LOUDLY AND BRIGHTLY INTO THE COIN-TRAP.

SEVEN

LIGHTS SNAP UP TO A TIGHT, BRIGHT LIGHT ON KAVANAGH. WITH THE SNAP OF THE LIGHT COMES THE SOUND OF A LOUD ELECTRICAL THUD.

KAVANAGH

People like to talk a lot of shit about me. Why? Because the world's too full of fuckin' hypocrites. That's why.

(MORE)

KAVANAGH (CONT'D)

Imagine, just for a moment, that you're out with the wife and she sees a winter coat in the window of her favourite shop. The price tag says sixty quid and she's very taken with it. Now, you have a mind to get it for her. But all the while you can't help but think... sixty quid? There's got to be something wrong with it at that price. But then, you ask yourself, 'When am I ever gonna see a winter coat for the wife at that price again?' So you take her in, and buy the coat. It's beautiful. She can't believe it.

She takes you home, cooks you a nice tea and then she shows you how grateful she is by reminding you of all those times when the two of you were courting. Now, that coat has brought you and her a whole load of happiness. But sixty quid? For that coat to cost sixty quid you know that someone, somewhere, has been ripped off. But do you care? No. The fuck you do. Does it stop you buying it? No. If people think, for one moment, there might be something in it for them, then that's it. When it comes to money, it's a different matter entirely.....

HE LAUGHS TO HIMSELF REFLECTIVELY

KAVANAGH

But what do I know? Me; a single man. Once upon a fuckin' long time ago maybe. Back in the day I thought it might be different, but... You win some, you lose some. These days, I like to make sure I win more than I lose. Makes sense really. I mean, in the end, who wants to be a fuckin' loser? Eh?