

ONE ACT PLAY

a one act play

by Matt Fox

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One Act Play

2 Characters – Man - Woman

Setting – a bedroom. A double bed.

Man and Woman are in the bed.

They are sat up in the bed next to each other.

Both have an individual spotlight, so they can be lit or unlit as required.

Both speak in exaggerated Yorkshire accents.

Spot comes up on Woman

Woman – Les Miserables...by heck what a show...by heck...and by gum for that matter as well. That Jean Val Jean...by gum, by heck...lovely beard...you can always trust a man with a good beard...not worried about his vibrating razors or his face ointment. Likes to show off his masculinity...wears it right there on his face for all to see...lovely man that Jean Val Jean. Apparently Les Miserables means 'The Miserables' ...it's a funny old language that French...nothing like English really...'The Miserables' ...lucky they kept with the French really otherwise nobody would have gone...needs the mystical nature of a foreign language to really sound like a show worth seeing...no one down our way would go and see The Miserables...but Les Miserables...well that sounds like culture...I have to say the other characters in it weren't a patch on old Jean Val Jean though by gum...Barely a beard between them...you can't wave a revolutionary flag without a good beard to hang your message of freedom from...that's where that William Wallace went wrong...probably the reason why the English executed him if you want my opinion...face like a babies bum that chap had by heck and not so much as a flat cap or whippet to bring to the bargain. Lovely man Jean Val Jean though...shame he weren't from Yorkshire really.

Spot fades on Woman and comes up on man.

Man – I was down T'park T'other day when I saw T'at William T'Shakspeare was putting on one of his T'Plays. Two T'Gentlemen of V'T 'rona I believe it were called. I do love William

T'Shakespeare...lovely fella...lovely writer...bit T'morbid now and then but a lovely writer...liked a whippet I believe...took em down T'Globe to seeT'plays...clever fella. Saw T'R, T'S, T'C that's T'R, T'S, T'Cs production of Anthony and Cleopatra last year...lovely production...no whippets mind, but lovely none the less...got great reviews from T'Guardian and T'Newsnight Review...lovely fella that T'Shakespeare.

Spot fades on man and comes up on woman.

Woman – Now the Yorkshire dialect's a funny old thing...you'd have to born and bred there like me to fully appreciate the subtle nuances of it. Born and bred with a flat cap and a pint of mild and a job in steelworks. Cos that's what you do in Yorkshire. Get job in steelworks, wait for steelworks to close down, stand on dole queue and finally form all male stripper troop to entertain the Yorkshire wives of the unemployed Yorkshire men. That's the Yorkshire dream...and grow a beard...that's important to...shows the whippet who's boss.

Spot fades on Woman and come up on man.

Man – As I said , I was down T'Park with T'William T'Shakespeare, when I saw T Ships come sailing in...

Looks quizzical but starts to speak again.

...T ships come sailing in...wait...it weren't T'Christmas...this is getting T'silly...and why was T'William T'Shaksepeare standing with me looking at T'Ships? He's T'dead...has been for fourT'undred years.

Spot comes up on woman.

Woman – Now this accent has gone far enough...at least three of the those T's had no right being placed in a sentence like that...there was me explaining the Yorkshire dialect...as someone who's actually from Yorkshire and there's you putting T's where they don'T belong.

Man – Well you emphasised the T in that don't far too much...are you trying T make some sort of clever point?

Woman – There you go again...the word's 'to' not 'T'. You're missing the vowel alT'gether.

Man – Me? You just...anyway wha'T are you doing T'alking about Jean Val bloody Jean and Les Miser – bloody – rables. What's that got to do with anything?

Women – I was merely using him...played by Colm Wilkinson in the original production I might add...as an example of why Yorkshire men should have beards.

Man – Yorkshire men? Jean Val Jean's supposed to be French...I doubt he'd ever been to Yorkshire...and Colm Wilkinson was Irish...I think Alfie Boe is from Yorkshire though.

Woman – Who's Alfie Boe?

Man – You mean you don't know? The one bit of information that would make your link between Yorkshire and Les Miserables at least vaguely make sense and you don't know!...Alfie Boe is the current Jean Val Jean in the current London show...and he's a bloody Yorkshireman!

Woman – And they let him play Jean Val Jean?

Man – Aye...didn't seem to think being from Yorkshire was an impediment.

Woman – By gum.

Man – Aye, by gum.

They sit in silence from a time looking at the audience, sighing and looking around.

Woman – So why all that stuff about Shakespeare? Some sort of attempt to out-culture me in front of people? Shakespeare was as populist as Claude-Michel Schonberg in his time...don't think just cos they study him at universities that he's any more high-brow than anyone else.

Man – What about that Andrew Lloyd Webber?

Woman – Well maybe him...but no one else.

Man – Fair enough.

Woman – You're allowed the occasional T by the way. You seem to have lost them alT'gether now.

Man – Well you made me feel a little self-conscious to tell the truth...I didn't want T'over do it.

Woman – There you go...everything in'T moderation.

There is a pause

Man – So why exactly are we sat here in bed? It's not like we know each other or anything?

Woman – By heck no...you are certainly not the sort of person that I'd usually find myself in bed with.

Man – Why?

Woman – You're just not...not really something I want to get into with them watching?

Indicates audience

Man – I'm glad you can see them to...I thought it was just me...was it you that broke it then?

Woman – Broke what?

Man – The fourth wall...it wasn't when you took your shoes off to get into bed was it? You can do a lot of damage with a rough stiletto heel...

Looks out at audience

Far more damage than I imagine both of us thought.

They both raise a hand and wave nervously at the audience – there is a pause.

Woman – Well I guess there's nothing to do except carry on and hope no-one notices. I'm sure whoever owns it'll be properly insured. You have to be in this day and age.

Man – Oh aye by gum...everyone's been insured since that Brecht started on his escapades.

Woman – Brecht?

Man – Bertolt Brecht, German fella...there was a time when you couldn't do anything without old Brecht breaking a fourth wall...it pushed the premiums right up so it did.

Woman – They never think about the consequences these epic theatre vandals...one minute you're watching a nice play and the next your knee deep in semiotics. Anyone would think that playwrights thought theatre should have an intellectual purpose.

Man – Not me...give me a nice musical comedy with some song and dance numbers any day. That's what the people want...not this pretentious rubbish with placards and direct addresses to the audience.

Woman – Oh aye.

Man – By gum.

There is a pause

Man – So what do we do with them?

Indicates the audience

Woman – I'd just ignore them and hope they go away – just get on with our everyday lives.

The Man considers this for a while

Man – What everyday lives?...I've never met you before and I certainly don't know how we ended up in this bed...to be honest I'm not altogether sure how I ended up with this accent or how I know any of things I just talked about.

Woman – Aye...I say I'm born and bred in Yorkshire, but to be honest I don't even know where Yorkshire is.

Man – Nor me...but now you come to mention it I think Alfie Boe might be from Lancashire anyway...you got any idea what a whippet is by the way?

Woman – Nay by gum.

Man – Well we must have come from somewhere...how did you know about Les Miserables and Jean Val Jean's beard?

Woman – Well I think my character was primed with that knowledge, so they could make that strange opening monologue, inciting laughter and confusion with the audience in equal measure.

Man – I think any laughter came from your obviously fake accent rather than the contents of the script.

Woman – Script? You mean someone wrote what I said?

Man – Well it seems that way...not quite sure why they bothered to be fair...seems like drivel to me.

Woman – Aye you're right there.

Man – But how did they manage to implant the words in our heads?

Woman – And who are they?

Both look around the room

Woman – Do you think they're here right now?

Man – Could be...to be honest apart from the bed, I'm not sure where the rest of this room is?

Woman – They could be out there?

Indicates the audience

Woman – Hidden amongst the crowds

They both lean forward looking at the audience

Man – Aye...bastard.

Woman – Bloody bastard.

They both sit in the bed looking uncomfortable, fiddling with the bed sheets etc.

Man – We could just leave.

Woman – Aye we could...where to though?

Man – Well this building must be situated somewhere? We could leave now and start a life somewhere.

Woman – Me and you?

Man – Why not? Do you know anyone else?

Woman – Well no...can't say I do...you?

Man – Never met anyone else in me life...not sure how I even have language if I'm being fully honest...no one taught me.

Woman – It's from him.

Points into the audience

Man – Him?

Woman – The writer.

Man – How do you know it's an him? There's all sorts out there.

Woman – Only a him would be so cruel.

Man – That's a pretty firm view on the nature of masculinity for someone who's never been anywhere or met anyone or done anything.

Woman – I've met you.

Man – Aye...and I've met you. But how do we know we're male or female? Is that from 'him' as well?

Woman – Aye.

Man – Well I think I'm probably a man – not that I'm overly sure what a man is.

Woman – But what about your last statement on the nature of masculinity? You seem to know that a man is masculine.

Man – Aye, but what’s masculine?

Woman – I have a feeling that that’s a question that even people who have been conscious of their world for more than ten flippin minutes wouldn’t fully know.

Man- Why’s that?

Woman – Because it sounds like the sort of question that maybe people would debate endlessly, going round and round in circles, until they finally admit that they haven’t a clue.

Man – Oh aye, and what about femininity?

Woman – What’s that?

Man – Well I think...and again I don’t know where this is coming from...but I think femininity is like the woman version of masculinity.

Woman – But what’s the difference.

Man – I don’t rightly know.

Woman – Well what’s the difference between me and you?

Man – Mm.

Surveys himself and then her

Man – You’ve got smaller hands than me.

Woman – Aye...and you’ve got bigger jaw.

Man – Aye.

Woman – You’ve got a deeper voice than me.

Man – True...and you’ve got tits.

Woman – So’ve you.

Man – Aye.

Woman – Well if that’s it then I don’t know whether there’s much to debate.