

# MATTER MATTERS



**A SHORT PLAY BY JAMES KENT**

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**Matter Matters**  
A short play by James Kent

CLOUDS IN BACKGROUND. WEARING NECK SCARVES, A COUPLE ...  
HUGH AND EMMA, OUT FOR A SPIN, ARE FLYING A BIPLANE – THEY SIT ON CHAIRS, BOXES.  
THE BIPLANE SCARCELY HUMS. PILOTING, BARELY, HUGH FUMBLES, SHIFTING GEARS.

HUGH

The thing is ... I liked it.

EMMA

Good. That's good. Irrelevant but—

HUGH

Why irrelevant? I liked – I enjoyed walking *while* drinking a glass of water.

EMMA

Of *what*?

HUGH

*Whatever* I was drinking, I enjoyed being able—

EMMA

Oh! That *word*. "Able." Oh, Hugh, not age. Not again. Are you thirty? Does everything now occur only in sequence?

HUGH

Yes! If action overlaps there's no time.

EMMA

There is. Always, you know. Always time. You don't bother keeping track.

HUGH

*You* always bother to keep track of it.

EMMA

I *do*. How can I not? Watch out! We're listing!

THEY LURCH TO 45 DEGREES. HUGH STRUGGLES TO TURN THE STEERING WHEEL.  
THEY'RE UPRIGHT.

EMMA

Life, sad. Goes too fast. Up. Down. (BREATHING HEAVILY) There's no arc.

HUGH

I'm talking minutes, not moments. We all have a third act.

EMMA

With savings, dearest, but no one produces three acts anymore.

HUGH

Then dollars for storytelling is out of hand.

EMMA

It is. And who cares? Hugh! Look at me. You weren't home schooled.

HUGH

You're too kind.

EMMA

The third act is a lie. A bouquet. "Flowers For Algernon." Neanderthal Tech prevails! And you expect me still to be a test tube mouse? Not really, no. Life *is*. Then it *isn't*.

SOUND: A PLANE BUZZES OVERHEAD.  
INSTINCTIVELY, SHE DUCKS. HE DOESN'T.

EMMA

Like all gifts. (SHAKING HER HEAD) Dear one: It *won't* play. We *know* this. Everyone knows!

HUGH

We write about that which we know.

EMMA

NOT if *that* which we know is too well known by everyone else!

HUGH

Alright, alright! Then.... How about this one?

EMMA

Oh, Gawd. Why does it have to be here? Now! Hey! Are you nosediving?

THEY LEAN FORWARD A BIT. SHOWING TEMPER, HE YANKS UPGEAR.  
THEY SUDDENLY JOLT UPRIGHT.

HUGH

Fine! It doesn't. London. 1914? 1929?

EMMA

The ol' precipice pretext. Everyone knows you're trying to metamorphose the so-called past with the so-called present.

HUGH

No critic of mine has ever *mentioned* the word "metamorphose."

EMMA

You haven't *earned* bitchy critics. But just keep it up. Those cartwheels about: Yee *woefully* ignorant of history are doomed to re—

HUGH

Next you'll be telling me the personal-is-the-political won't play!

EMMA

When has Gloria Steinem written a comedy? BEEN DONE TO DEATH. Exactly the point.

HUGH

You *had* no point. You just got lucky that time.

EMMA

Thank you.

HUGH

(GLANCING AT HIS WATCH)

There are only so many plots, you know. We have to turn in pages Friday.

EMMA

But infinite ways of telling them. How rude you are. As I lick my wounds, read my CV.

HUGH

Are we a couple? Or am I just having this rant with myself? You know the reviews always run that way because we're both out so....

EMMA

What are we?

HUGH

So out there.

EMMA

Too many hits?

HUGH IS NODDING VIGOROUSLY.

EMMA

You wish! Too much baggage, you mean. Of course we're a couple. Of what, exactly, I'm not sure. Some cockamamie plays. I'm sure we're beginning to look alike. Or will. Our last two dogs looked like us. How can you rewrite rewritten clichés?

HUGH

Because that's what they want.

EMMA

Who? Audiences? Producers?

HUGH

Everyone. "Give me the same thing only different."

EMMA

Give me strength. I pray for a cloudburst.

SOUND: GREAT CLOUDBURST

HUGH

How about a couple with magical powers?

EMMA

We're just writers. Actors now have PhD's. They're "Entertainment Professionals."

HUGH

We'll have to decide.

EMMA

Decide what? WHY?

HUGH

Because we've been at it for five minutes and you KNOW my stomach can't take more than ten minutes of writer talk about writing. I'm just doing a job. I've never hidden the fact. It's not as if I have talent!

EMMA

Hm. Yes. You're right. A brand-new someone needs to walk in right now. Fly by?

HUGH

We do two-handers. No one who barely pays us can afford *three* actors!

EMMA

There's no center aisle. Because there are no more intermissions.

HUGH

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

EMMA

It's the first line of the new play we're writing.