

# The Bench

A series of playlets

(one day, one bench, nine encounters)

by

Jamesine Cundell Walker

*These plays are presented in the playwright's suggested order, because they follow the timings in the course of a day. However, they can be performed in any order and in any number, in one act or two. They are designed to accommodate large and small casts of any age. On the other hand, the whole cycle could be done by 3 actors with a minimum of costume changes. The only set item required is a park bench, set off centre in a plain space. What else the set comprises is entirely at the discretion of the director, but nothing else is essential. This makes the playlets suitable for touring venues. Lights and sound would considerably enhance the playlets but again are not essential. The real essential is well crafted performances which are believable and convincing. In this way the audience will recognise the stories and people that they know.*

*The piece is set in a park, anywhere in the country on a fine day in late September*

## **Act One**

**11.10 The break up**

**11.30 The first born**

**12.00 Slimmers' Planet**

**12.30 The Skate Board**

**13.30 The ice cream van**

## **Act Two**

**14.30 The care home**

**15.00 After the Funeral**

**16.00 Piece to Camera**

**20.00 The bag lady**

*As the play is short, it is possible to add vignettes of characters crossing the park with suitable music between the scenes. These can be used to denote the passing of time or to develop existing characters or resolve situations e.g. A and B from the break up may have resolved their difficulties over coffee and reappear together later. The original cast liked the idea that Jay, who was a gay woman in our production, was actually having an affair with vegan Sally who makes soup overnight in the vagrants' shelter.*

## **The break up**

*These 2 people could be any age, Alex female and Bobby male but can also work with 2 actors of the same gender with small adjustments.*

*When the lights go up, or before the performance actually starts, BOBBY is sitting on the bench, reading a paper, tablet or magazine and is obviously waiting. The music starts to fade, the lights start to go down. B's phone rings. Let it ring for quite a long time as an audience alert. He has the following conversation:*

BOBBY Yeah I'm still waiting. ....Yes well I knew this would happen..... Yeah thanks, I'm gonna need it..... Look mate I'm gonna turn this off now, or it might disturb us, and the others in the park.... Yeah mate tomorrow.

*He turns off his phone, and hopefully the audience turn off theirs.*

*Eventually ALEX enters.*

ALEX Where have you been?

BOBBY What do you mean where have I been. Where have you been? I've been here of course.

ALEX Yes, well I was here an hour ago. I was here for half an hour and then I went to get a coffee over there.

BOBBY Over where?

ALEX That place, costa..... packet or whatever.

Pause

ALEX Double espresso.

Pause

ALEX It hasn't helped.

BOBBY Well I've been here since eleven so you can't have been here for long

ALEX Eleven?

BOBBY Yes, eleven

ALEX But I said meet at ten

BOBBY You never did

ALEX I did

BOBBY I wrote it in my calendar; 'eleven o'clock' (*gets phone out again*)

ALEX Well I don't care what you put, it was always 10

*Pause while he checks. Clearly she was right*

ALEX I'm right aren't I?

BOBBY Well anyway we're here now aren't we.

Pause

ALEX Well shall I sit down?

Pause

ALEX does

BOBBY (*coughs, gets out a notebook or similar then starts*) Well the point of this meeting was.....

ALEX It's not a bloomin' AGM

BOBBY I know..... I know it's not an AGM but I just think we need to be clear on our agenda

ALEX There you go again. Are you taking minutes?

Pause

BOBBY I wanted to meet because there are things we need to sort out.

ALEX You mean you want some of your stuff back

BOBBY No

ALEX Oh

Pause

BOBBY Well certain things yes

ALEX You see

BOBBY Now of course it was always your flat so.....

ALEX Too right it was always my flat- don't even start on that!

Pause