

(T)RAIN

By Jo Cattell

The 4th Annual Davenport Theatrical
10 Minute Play Contest

CHARACTERS

GRAMPS	Old man. Preferably over 70. Just lost his wife. Unhappy. White
DICK	Another old man. Sensible and reasonable. Maybe a couple years younger than Gramps. Black
ESME	15 year old. Latina. Patient and gentle humoured.
KEESH	14 year old. Angry. She has seen more in her 14 years than most see in their entire lifetime. Black.
ANNOUNCER	A man with a quick sense of humor who really should have been a stand up comedian. Indian or Pakistani.
CLARRIE	Character from another play. A hooker from Australia. 30s.
DAVEY	Character from another play. A cop from Australia, who is also a stalker serial killer. 30s.
BUSKER	Flamenco Guitar player. Any age. Spanish/Latino
HOODIE DUDE	A guy in a hooded top

NB. The Busker & Hoodie Dude could be played by the same actor playing Davey.

Inspired by the messages found on the London Underground and in London Graffiti. And the Chicago CTA driver who is always cheery and makes me feel happy when he is driving the train I am on. This play is dedicated to him.

SCENE 1

On the Tube. Two old men sit side by side. Gramps sniffs. A Guitar Player stands nearby playing a melody on his guitar...

GRAMPS It shoulda been me to go first.

DICK Don't start with that, Harry.

ANNOUNCER Good evening ladies and gentlemen...

GRAMPS It's true though, Dick. I'm just not cut out for this living alone, thing.

ANNOUNCER Thank you for flying London Underground with us tonight.

DICK Tonight's a special night Harry. We're going to the theatre.

GRAMPS I don't really understand theatre to be honest.

DICK If all the World's a stage...

ANOUNCER Please note that begging is not permitted in any part of London underground. However, to the gentleman busking away happily on carriage three, please carry on and enjoy yourself. The transport police have been called and should be with you shortly.

Gramps and Dick note what the announcer says and both look straight to the Guitar Player. The Guitar Player quickly packs up his stuff and pockets the money. He looks out the window. He runs up the carriage, then back the other way, scoots out the doors and disappears. Everyone watches. He escapes, but in the process loses one shoe. And the passengers all cheer.

GRAMPS He escaped. Lucky bastard.

DICK You don't have to go to this.

GRAMPS I want to. I want to. I just don't understand theatre.

DICK It's a play. They'll tell a story.

GRAMPS No.
Yeah.
I dunno. What is that, eh? I got a TV at home. A TV is the best thing for watching. And to be honest, I'm a sports man. Cowboy

stories. They're good too. And I dunno...I mean, if it was one of them big shows on the West End –

DICK Them big shows aint so fancy.

GRAMPS They look pretty fancy.

DICK It's not about the looks of things, though is it. If it was, neither of us woulda got wives.

GRAMPS I was a looker in my day.

DICK OK. Well, then I woulda ended up lonely. But you know what, it's the substance of things. My lady gave me a chance and got to know me. And that's what she loved. My substance.

GRAMPS I thought we were talkin' about theatre.

DICK At our age, we're always talking about life.

GRAMPS Huh.
I got prostate cancer.

DICK Sorry Harry.

GRAMPS Yeah.

SCENE 2

Getting on the train. Keesh and Esme stand leaning against the doors opposite to where people are getting on.

ANNOUNCER Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm afraid we are experiencing some delays and will be stuck here momentarily. And when I say momentarily, I mean that if you require a more efficient service please alight at the next stop where a team of heavily drugged sloths will drag you to your destination. Thank you.

KEESH Aaaagh!

ESME Why are you screamin'?

KEESH Fuckin delays. My life is always delayed.

ESME I think that's a bit of an extreme reaction. Like, it's not about you. Is it. And like...You're always screamin', Keesh. You aint owed nothin'

KEESH No. You don't think I don't know that? I aint allowed to expect anything. They smash hope outta me. My dad, my sister. Fuckin teachers. When things go wrong, it's like "what do you expect". And if anything ever goes right, it's "be grateful. You don't deserve nothing." What kinda message is that? Those people that own the world, they get told it's there's don't they. Me, I get told I'm nuthin and I aint getting nuthin. Men can see that no one is ever gonna stand up for me. Cos people don't. I'm disposable. Anythin I might be capable of, don't matter. Maybe in my head is the cure for cancer. But people would rather wait till some privileged prick 100 years from now comes along and discovers it, than know what answers lie in me.

Esme spots the shoe on the ground.

ESME At least you got two shoes.

KEESH So, what, that's what I gotta be grateful for?

ESME It's a start. Cos someone right now is running around London in one shoe and that's nasty.

KEESH Fuck you Esme.

ESME Just sayin that maybe your anger is why no one likes you.

KEESH Get outta my face. Move! Move – get outta this train.

ESME Calm down, man. I was just having a laugh.

KEESH I don't do jokes.

ESME I see that.

A Hoodie Dude gets on, sees the shoe, picks it up and places it in a prominent position on a chair back. He then sits down opposite and opens up his backpack.

ESME Don't you want friends?

KEESH No.

ESME Seriously?

KEESH No.

ESME Be straight.

KEESH No. I don't want friends. I'm better by myself.

Hoodie Dude pulls out a sign from his backpack then goes over to the shoe. He puts the sign above the shoe, which reads "If Cinderella's shoe fitted so perfectly, why did it come off in the first place?"

ESME So we aint friends?

KEESH No.

ESME You got issues.

ANNOUNCER Ladies and Gentleman, be sure to take all of your belongings with you as you exit at your destination. And ponder on this: If Cinderella's shoe fitted so perfectly, why did it come off in the first place?

KEESH I'm a misfit.

ESME Maybe you're just looking at yourself wrong.

SCENE 3

In the theatre. Dick and Gramps are watching the end of the play and talking loudly through it. Clarrie and Davey are about to fight it out...

CLARRIE (performing 'onstage') Get off me Davey.

GRAMPS I can't hear what's goin on.

DICK He's the one that's been killin everyone.

DAVEY (performing 'onstage') Come on, you don't have to play hard to get with me now, love.

GRAMPS I thought it was the sisters?

DICK No. He set the sisters up.

DAVEY (performing 'onstage') I'm givin you the perfect fairy tale endin'

GRAMPS Eh?

DICK Sssh.

Davey has a knife and grabs Clarrie, forcing himself on her. But she is a fighter. She manages to grab his knife hand and bites him and it's enough for her to get free of his grip. She kicks the knife and it disappears under the bed. She scrambles under the bed, looking for the knife but instead she finds a stiletto heel. Davey grabs her leg and drags her away. She turns and smacks his head hard with the heel. Again. Again. He finally stops moving.

CLARRIE (performing 'onstage') I knew it was after us. We need to get the tail of the devil-dingo. Have to make sure it don't touch anyone or it will live again.

Clarrie finds the knife and cuts Davey's penis off, then places it in a jar.

CLARRIE (performing 'onstage') We're gonna go turn into Bush dust.

GRAMPS Maybe she could do mine too. Solve one problem.

SCENE 4

On the train home. Keesh is sat alone. Gramps and Dick get on.

ANNOUNCER Dearly Beloved. We are gathered here today to get through this thing called London. Electric word, London, it'll take forever. And that's a mighty long time. But I'm here to tell you, there's something else. The after world.

DICK Not very reassuring hearing the train driver talk about the after world.

GRAMPS Sounds like my kind of train.

KEESH (In general to anyone who will listen) Just move already!

DICK Harry, let's get on the next train.

GRAMPS Nope.

DICK OK.

Dick doesn't move.

DICK I gotta funny feeling in my toes. I'm gonna wait...

GRAMPS OK. If that's watcha want.

Dick gets off the train. Gramps sits down. Hoodie Dude gets on. He looks around and puts up a sign. "No Eye Contact. Penalty £200"

ANNOUNCES OK. Mind the doors.

Doors close. Train lurches forward. The rhythmic sound of the underground. The rushing of air.

ANNOUNCER We are now over 58 meters underground. That's deep, deep, deep.

KEESH (To announcer) Shut up.

GRAMPS He is a talker this one.

ANNOUNCER And you may be wondering –

KEESH No!

ANNOUNCER - why did I get stuck on this train with this crazy driver? And to be fair, I am crazy. /and... sad.

KEESH /I don't care! I don't care!

GRAMPS I just want to get home.

ANNOUNCER And you probably don't care. And all you want is to get home –

KEESH Aaagh!

ANNOUNCER But you're in my care now. (He laughs)

Keesh and Gramps start to look a bit scared.

ANNOUNCER So to the young man in the hooded top. Please take down your sign that mock at society distancing itself when in such close proximity.

KEESH What are you –

ANNOUNCER And everyone, take a look at the people around you.

Keesh and Gramps look at each other.

ANNOUNCER Say hello.

Keesh and Gramps pull faces of discomfort.

ANNOUNCER Smile

KEESH Is this a joke? Get me off the Eharmony train. This is stupid.
Shut up and drive already.

GRAMPS As if things weren't bad enough.

KEESH What problems you got old man. Living off your old man
pension. Lived a good easy life.

GRAMPS My wife died last week.

KEESH My mum died when I was 8.

GRAMPS The hospital decided to just stop feeding her.

KEESH She died of an overdose. Then my oldest sister did the same.

GRAMPS I have cancer

KEESH I hate everything

GRAMPS And I failed at life

KEESH I'm never gonna be given a chance to even try

GRAMPS I'm old. Ugly.

KEESH And smelly

They both grimace

GRAMPS And I was in love with another woman most of my life.

KEESH Huh

GRAMPS Hrmph

ANNOUNCER Now, don't you all feel slightly better as we make this journey
together. I try to give my passengers all small gifts of hope.
They are tiny. Like rain drops. Each raindrop can seem
inconsequential. But the collection of drops makes rain and
rain gives life to the earth.

It starts to rain on the carriage. Gramps and Keesh don't seem surprised by this point. They both start to cry in the rain. Gramps takes off his watch and gives it to Keesh.

GRAMPS Here.

KEESH I don't want your watch.

GRAMPS You do.

The rain keeps going.

KEESH I'd prefer an umbrella.

They both smile at each other.

- END -

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