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SF PERUSALS

A Resounding Tinkle

A Play in One Act

N. F. Simpson

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

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ISBN 978-0-573-02229-6

www.SamuelFrench.com
www.SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA
Info@SamuelFrench.com
1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE
Theatre@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk
020-7255-4302

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A RESOUNDING TINKLE

Produced at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on the 2nd April, 1958, with the following cast of characters:

(*in the order of their appearance*)

BRO PARADOCK	*Nigel Davenport*
MIDDIE PARADOCK	*Wendy Craig*
UNCLE TED	*Sheila Ballantine*

Directed by WILLIAM GASKILL
Décor by TAZEENA FIRTH

The action of the Play passes during an evening in the living-room of the Paradocks' suburban home

Time—the present

A RESOUNDING TINKLE

SCENE—*The living-room of the Paradocks' suburban home. Evening.*

A door back C *leads to a small entrance hall, where coats and hats are hanging. There is a window* R *of the door, from which anyone standing on the front doorstep can be seen obliquely. A window* R *looks out on to the garden. The fireplace is* L. *A sofa stands* LC *with a small table* L *of it, on which there is a radio-receiver. A low, coffee-table stands in front of the sofa. On it, there are some rug-making materials. There is an armchair* RC *and a sideboard up* R. *Several bottles are on the sideboard. Small tables stand down* R *and down* L. *There is a telephone on the table down* L. *Built-in bookshelves fill the wall* L *of the door. A standard lamp is above the window* R. *In the hall there is a hall-cupboard and a hat-stand with hats and coats on it. Other suitable dressing may be added at the discretion of the Producer.*

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play*)

When the CURTAIN *rises, it is not yet dark, and the window curtains are undrawn. A fire is burning in the grate.* BRO *and* MIDDIE PARADOCK *have just come in. A shopping basket full of books is on the coffee table. Both* BRO *and* MIDDIE *are staring out of the window* R *into the garden.*

MIDDIE. It'll have to stay out.

BRO (*turning away from the window*) What are the measurements?

MIDDIE (*continuing to stare through the window*) You don't need measurements. A thing that size in a semi!

BRO (*moving to the sideboard*) I thought we were living in a bungalow. (*He picks up two small adjustable spanners from the sideboard*)

MIDDIE. People think you're trying to go one better than everybody else.

BRO. What are these doing here? When did we order adjustable spanners?

MIDDIE (*without turning*) They were samples.

BRO. What do they think we want with two?

MIDDIE. (*turning away from the window and beginning to put books from the shopping basket on to the bookshelf*) One of them is probably for loosening things.

BRO. You can do that with any spanner.

MIDDIE (*with a handful of small identical books*) I've brought in some more of these in case Uncle Ted comes. I expect he'll ask for critical essays with his coffee.

BRO (*after a pause*) There's no difference between them. You can use either of them for tightening and you can use either of them for loosening.

(MIDDIE *puts the last book on the shelf, picks up the basket and moves to the door*)

MIDDIE. One is probably bigger than the other or something.

(MIDDIE *exits up* C *to* L, *leaving the door open*)

BRO. They're *adjustable*, Middie. (*He puts the spanners on the sideboard, goes to the armchair* RC, *picks up a newspaper, sits and reads*)

MIDDIE (*off*) Or smaller or something.

BRO. The plain fact is that we don't need adjustable spanners and are never likely to. (*He pauses*) It would be interesting to know what would have happened if *I'd* answered the door and let them foist adjustable spanners on to us.

MIDDIE (*off*) We don't have to use them if we don't like them.

BRO (*after a pause*) We shall have them unloading a complete tool-kit on us before we know where we are.

MIDDIE (*off*) They won't be round again.

BRO. I hope you're right—that's all I can say.

MIDDIE (*off*) I wish it were.

(MIDDIE *enters up* C *from* L, *and as though attracted compulsively towards it, crosses to the window* R)

I wish that were all you could say. Except that then we'd have you saying it all day long, I suppose, like a mentally deficient parakeet. (*She looks steadily through the window*)

BRO. What a typical woman's remark. A parakeet saying the same thing over and over again wouldn't necessarily be mentally deficient. If that's all it's been taught how can it say anything different?

MIDDIE. Look at it.

BRO. It may be educationally subnormal—but that's another matter.

MIDDIE. Look at its great ears flapping about.

BRO (*after a pause*) It's only once a year for goodness sake.

MIDDIE. Surely they know by now what size we always have.

BRO. Perhaps they've sent us the wrong one.

MIDDIE (*crossing above the armchair to the sofa*) It's big enough for a hotel. (*She picks up a magazine from the coffee-table and sits on the sofa*) If you had a hotel or a private school or something you wouldn't need a thing that size. (*She looks through the magazine*)

BRO. I suppose not.

MIDDIE. And supposing it goes berserk in the night? I'm not getting up to it.

BRO. Why should it go berserk any more than a smaller one?

MIDDIE. We shall have old Mrs Stencil round again if it does—threatening us with the R.S.P.C.A.

BRO. You should have been in when they came with it, then you could have queried the measurements.

MIDDIE. I can't think what we're going to call it. We can't call it Mr Trench again.

BRO. The only time we've not called it Mr Trench was three years ago when we had to make do with a giraffe.

MIDDIE. And look at the fuss we had before they'd take it in part exchange.

BRO. Of course they made a fuss. There was something wrong with it.

(MIDDIE *puts the magazine on the coffee-table, then picks up her rug-making materials and works on the rug. She does this intermittently throughout the evening*)

MIDDIE. Imagine calling a clumsy great thing that size Mr Trench.

BRO. Why not?

MIDDIE. We can't go on year after year calling it Mr Trench.

BRO. You talk as if it were the same animal every time.

MIDDIE. You can hear the neighbours, can't you? They'll think we never launch out.

BRO. I know what you want to call it.

MIDDIE. It looks all the time as if we're hard up for a name to give the animal.

BRO. You want to call it Oedipus Rex, don't you?

MIDDIE. It's better than Mr Trench year after year. At least it sounds as if we knew what was going on in the world.

BRO (*contemptuously*) Oedipus Rex! (*He wags a finger archly through the window*) Ah, ah! Only the *edible* blooms, remember, Oedipus.

MIDDIE. If you say it in that tone of voice—of course it sounds ridiculous.

BRO. Oedipus! Not all your weight on that glass, eh?

MIDDIE. Anything would sound ridiculous if you said it like that.

BRO. It isn't Mr Trench we want a change from.

MIDDIE. The only thing to do is ring up the Zoo. Tell them to come and collect it.

BRO. And be without an elephant at all?

MIDDIE. Tell them to come and collect it and the sooner the better. I'd rather not have one.

BRO. That's only your point of view.

MIDDIE. We did without one the year we had a giraffe instead.

BRO. I know we did without one the year we had a giraffe instead. And look at the trouble we had getting it changed. I don't want that all over again.

MIDDIE. It's the R.S.P.C.A. I'm worried about.

BRO. They haven't been round yet. In any case you wouldn't get the Zoo at this time. They'll be closed.

MIDDIE. I don't know why they couldn't send us what we asked for in the first place.

BRO. Is it any use trying to get hold of Eddie on the phone?

MIDDIE. Yes. Ring Eddie up. Or Nora. Nora'd be sure to know what to do. They used to keep pigeons and things. They had a room full of nothing else but different kinds of birds when they were all living at number eighty-nine, and white mice and things.

BRO. It'll have to stay outside tonight.

MIDDIE. I'm not having it in the kitchen, if that's what you're leading up to.

BRO. If it starts straying all over the place during the night we shall have the R.S.P.C.A. making a lot of difficulties.

MIDDIE. Not if we get it changed first thing. Get on to Nora.

BRO. If we're getting it changed first thing in the morning, where's the sense in thinking up a name like Oedipus Rex for it now?

MIDDIE. Because I'm not calling it Mr Trench six years running. You can if you like. I'm not.

BRO. I didn't want to call it Mr Trench the year it was a giraffe. That was your idea. It was your idea it would make a pleasant change to give the name to a giraffe instead of an elephant. Now you complain about calling it Mr Trench six years running.

MIDDIE. I think we'd be better off without it.

BRO. How would we?

MIDDIE. I do really. I think we'd be better off without. We've done nothing except bicker ever since they came with it.

BRO. We weren't in when they came with it.

MIDDIE. That's the whole point.

(Both relapse into silence. BRO *reads his paper. After a few moments he looks up)*

BRO. If we're going to change the name at all, I can't see what you've got against "Hodge" for that matter.

MIDDIE. "Hodge" is all right for a monkey.

BRO. We'll go through some names and see what we can agree on. "Hodge."

MIDDIE. "Hodge" for a monkey. "Gush" for an elephant.

BRO. "Admiral Benbow."

MIDDIE. "Hiram B. Larkspur."

BRO. "Playboy."

MIDDIE. "Killed-with-kindness Corcoran."

BRO. "New-wine-into-old-bottles Backhouse."

MIDDIE. " 'Tis-pity-she's-a-whore Hignett."

BRO. "Lucifer."

MIDDIE. "Stonehenge."

BRO. "Haunch."

(*There is a pause*)

MIDDIE } (*almost simultaneously*) "Splinter."
BRO }

BRO. Thank goodness we can agree on something. Now I can ring Eddie. (*He puts his paper on the floor, rises, crosses to the telephone down* L, *lifts the receiver and dials a number*)

MIDDIE. Why ring Eddie when you've got Nora who's had some experience with animals? She could probably suggest something.

BRO. So you keep saying.

MIDDIE. Well?

BRO (*into the telephone*) Is that Mrs Mortice? . . . Oh . . . Yes, will you? Tell her Bro Paradock would like a word with her. (*He waits*)

MIDDIE. You've decided to ring Nora, then?

BRO (*ignoring Middie; into the telephone*) Hallo . . . Nora? . . . Yes, thank you, Norah. And how are you? . . . Oh? . . . And what's that, Nora? . . . A what? . . . No! I can't believe it. Hold on a moment, Nora. Wait till I fetch Middie to the phone.

MIDDIE. Don't tell me they've got ours.

BRO (*to Middie*) It's her snake. It's too short.

MIDDIE. Too short for what? (*She rises, moves to Bro and takes the receiver from him*)

BRO. She says they're worried about the R.S.P.C.A. (*He moves* LC)

MIDDIE (*into the telephone*) Nora? . . . Yes, Bro was telling me. Isn't it maddening? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes, and do you know they've done exactly the same with us . . . No—about ten times too big. You'd think they'd know by now, wouldn't you? A thing that size in a semi of all things.

BRO. This is a bungalow, for the fiftieth time.

MIDDIE (*to Bro*) Oh, for God's sake! (*Into the telephone*) No, Nora, I was talking to Bro. He won't have it we're living in a semi. If I've got the deeds out once to show him, I've got them out a hundred times . . .

BRO. I wouldn't have bought the place without looking pretty closely . . .

MIDDIE (*into the telephone*) Just a moment, Nora. He's got to have his say out.

BRO. I wouldn't have bought it without looking pretty closely at the deeds to see if there was any mention of its being semi-detached. It's one of the things I always look for.

MIDDIE (*into the telephone*) I'm sorry, Nora. I've started Bro off on his hobby-horse again . . .

BRO. You just read things into them once you've made up your mind.

MIDDIE (*into the telephone*) He's got a thing about this being a bungalow, Nora. He hasn't set foot upstairs since we moved in . . . Exactly, Nora . . . It's just the same with us, of course. We're stuck with the thing like you . . . We shan't get the Zoo at this time . . . We shall just have to keep it till the morning . . . Not indoors, no. We've got it out at the back . . . Yes, I should think so, Nora . . . You're perfectly justified . . .

(BRO *tries to attract Middie's attention*)

BRO. Why not ask her if she'd like to have Mr Trench and we'll take the snake off her?

MIDDIE (*to Bro*) What? (*Into the telephone*) No, it's

something Bro just said, Nora. I think he's thought of something. I'll get him to tell you. (*She puts her hand over the mouthpiece. To Bro*) You talk to her; she's on about this snake of hers.

(BRO *takes the receiver from* MIDDIE, *who moves* LC)

BRO (*into the telephone*) What do you say to that, Nora? . . . How about it? . . . Oh, I thought Middie told you. It was just an idea I had—I thought perhaps we could help each other out if I came round with our Mr Trench and took the snake off you . . . Are you? . . . Yes—Middie wants to change the name of ours this year . . . "Oedipus Rex" . . . Of course it is, Nora—and for an elephant this size. Middie doesn't seem to see that . . . Yes . . . No—don't bother about changing the name, Nora. We can do all that ourselves when we get it home . . . "Bees' Wedding"? . . . Oh, yes. I should think that must look rather good on a snake. Wait a moment, Nora—I'll ask Middie. (*To Middie*) She's called her snake "Bees' Wedding". What do you think? Shall I tell her to take it off the snake and keep it for Mr Trench when I take him round?

MIDDIE. That'll mean we shall have to find a name to fit the snake out with.

BRO. Let's see what "Bees' Wedding" looks like on Mr Trench, first. (*Into the telephone*) Hold on a moment, Nora.

(MIDDIE *and* BRO *look out for a few moments through the window* R *into the garden*)

What do you think?

MIDDIE. Wait till he turns round.

BRO. Remember she's got the upstairs as well.

MIDDIE. Yes—well, it's better, anyway, than "Mr Trench" for him.

BRO. I'll just tell her to keep "Bees' Wedding" for Mr Trench, then.

MIDDIE. Ask her about "Mr Trench" on the snake; see what she thinks.

BRO (*into the telephone*) Nora? . . . Yes, it fits beautifully . . . Tailor-made, Nora . . . Would you, Nora? I

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