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SF PERUSALS

The Boundary

A Play in One Act

Tom Stoppard and Clive Exton

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK

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ISBN 978-0-573-12046-6

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THE BOUNDARY

First produced by the BBC on July 19th 1975, for Eleventh Hour with the following cast of characters:

Johnson	Michael Aldridge
Bunyans	Frank Thornton
Brenda	Elvi Hale
Voice of the telephone operator	Jean Channon
Brenda's double	Olive McNeil
1st cricketer	Barry Summerford
2nd cricketer	Gordon Hann
The voices of	John Arlott and Trevor Bailey

Directed by Mike Newell
Produced by Graeme McDonald

The action takes place in a lexicographer's library

Time—the present

CHARACTERS

Johnson
Bunyans
Brenda
1st Cricketer
2nd Cricketer

Other plays by Tom Stoppard
published by Samuel French Ltd:

Albert's Bridge
Artist Descending a Staircase
Dirty Linen and New-Found-Land
The Fifteen Minute Hamlet
Hapgood
If You're Glad I'll Be Frank
Night and Day
The Real Inspector Hound
The Real Thing
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead
A Separate Peace

THE BOUNDARY

A lexicographer's library

The room contains a desk, a table and a chair. Around the walls are bookshelves filled with boxes. There is also a copy of "Fowler's Modern English Usage". The room is cluttered with the paraphernalia of the life work of our heroes. Paper is everywhere but the disorder seems exaggerated; in fact, chaos reigns. It seems that the place has been turned over. There are piles of paper on the floor and over the furniture, beneath which are hidden a television set, a telescope on a tripod, a telephone, a typewriter and a woman. Against the door is a drift of paper, like a snowdrift. Through the french windows we see a cricketer, who figures intermittently throughout the play as a white flannelled sentinel. A pane of glass in the french windows is broken. From nowhere in particular comes the modulated, well-bred sound of a TV cricket post-mortem

The door is pushed open inwards and Johnson, who is an old man, enters, knee-deep in slips of papers. He registers the unwelcome fact that his room has been pillaged and becomes more and more concerned and horrified. He picks slips of paper up here and there and mutters to himself . . .

Johnson Tannin . . . Therefore . . . Talismanical . . . Tortoise . . . Telephone . . .

He searches in a mound of paper and scoops up an armful, revealing a small television set, with a cricket match going on. At the same time he announces triumphantly . . .

Telephone . . .

We become aware of the source of the sound. He taps on top of the TV set with his hand

Operator . . .! Operator . . .!

Realizing his mistake, he drops the papers back on the TV set. He then begins searching for the phone under another pile of papers. He lifts up another armful, revealing a telescope on a tripod. He pauses and studies it for a moment. He's puzzled, he has lost track of his thought. He puts his eye to the telescope, which is pointing through the window in a slightly downward direction. Immediately afterwards he realizes that he still has the wrong implement and drops the papers over the telescope. His mind clears. An old-fashioned telephone is sitting in the middle of a table. He puts the receiver to his ear, thinks for a moment, dials three digits ...

Operator (*off; speaking through a crackle*) Telegrams.
Johnson I wanted directory enquiries.
Operator (*off; speaking through a crackle*) A telegram to directory enquiries?
Johnson No, I'd rather speak to them if that's possible.
Operator (*off; speaking through a crackle*) Directory enquiries is one-nine-two.
Johnson Thank you. (*He hangs up and dials again*)
Operator (*through crackling*) Directory. Which town?
Johnson Can you get me the telephone number of the police.
Operator (*through crackling*) Is it an emergency?
Johnson Emergency. Well, yes.
Operator (*through crackling*) Dial nine nine nine.
Johnson Thank you. (*He replaces the receiver and dials 999*)
Operator (*through crackling*) Emergency. Which service?
Johnson Now look here, my name is Johnson. I seem to have been bungled. (*Pause*) Just a moment. (*He hangs up absent-mindedly, crosses to a pile of galleyproofs and rummages among it. He comes up with the one he wants, remarking victoriously*) Burgled.

He turns back to the phone but before he reaches it:

The door opens and Bunyans enters

Burglars.
Bunyans I beg your pardon.
Johnson Look.
Bunyans (*softly to himself*) Bugger.
Johnson Burglars.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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