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IVY & JOAN
BY JAMES HOGAN

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Ivy & Joan was first performed in an earlier version at The Print Room, London, on 14 January 2013 with the following cast:

IVY Lynne Miller

VICTOR Steven Beard

JOAN Lynne Miller

ERIC Steven Beard

Director, Simon Usher

Designer, Carmen Mueck

Lighting Designer, Simon Bennison

Sound Designer, Paul Bull

Production Manager, Andy Beardmore

Stage Manager, Justine Boulton

Ivy & Joan was first performed in this version at The Jermyn Street Theatre on 6 January 2015 with the following cast:

IVY Lynne Miller

VICTOR Jack Klaff

JOAN Lynne Miller

ERIC Jack Klaff

Director, Anthony Biggs

Designer, Victoria Johnstone

Lighting Designer, Charlie Lucas

Sound Designer, Gareth Mcleod

Line producer, Mark Sands

IVY

CHARACTERS

IVY

60s. *A live-in barmaid in charge of the hotel's cocktail bar
who has just been retired.*

VICTOR

a wine waiter, late 50s.

Scene: The staff room of a comfortable hotel
on the Lancashire coast.

Year: 1980

Time: Lunchtime in July. A wedding reception is in progress.

IVY *sits at the table drinking tea from a china cup but no saucer.*

Piano music heard in another part of the hotel.

VICTOR, *the wine waiter, enters carrying a copy of the Racing News.*

VICTOR: What time's your bus? Amanda's been looking for you. She wants to say goodbye.

IVY: Oh, does she? You know what she can do. Little Miss Button Missing can take a running jump.

VICTOR: *(indifferent)* Right.

He sits at the table and opens the Racing News.

IVY *breaks the silence.*

IVY: You're a man of God. Evil begets evil doesn't it? So who's stolen me saucer? This saucer! Victor, who's took it?

VICTOR *looks up briefly, but he is not interested.*

I left it on the draining board. Everyone knows it's mine. Has someone moved it? Was it you? I've looked everywhere. Was it you?

VICTOR: Nope.

IVY: High and low, it's nowhere. Sheraton bone china. Or was it flighty Little Miss Button Missing? I wouldn't put it past her. She'd do it out of spite. She would too. Sheraton bone china, Tupperware, *she* wouldn't know the difference, would she? Knows nowt about wine neither. Chardonnay's

a perfume! Huh! "I think you mean Chanel, love, don't you?"

Ought button up her blouse an'all. Don't you think so?
(*beat*) No, why do I bother? All the managers are of the male species.

VICTOR: (*matter of fact*) She's attractive.

IVY: Aren't you on *now*? They've started, haven't they?

VICTOR: (*looks at his watch*) Not yet! They're still eating.
There's no one in the bar.

IVY: Little Miss Button Missing's in there on her own.

VICTOR: She'll manage all right.

IVY: If you say so.

IVY *sips tea.*

The music stops.

What a racket. Hark at it. Friend of the happy couple on the piano. Honky tonky plonky? Liberace I don't think. You only get what you pay for, or don't pay for. Cut price wedding, cut price music, cut price bride an'all. I mean it. Yesterday that dress was her bedroom curtains.

VICTOR: *Gone with the Wind.* In *Gone with the Wind* Scarlet O'Hara makes a dress out of the curtains. Vivien Leigh.

IVY: The groom's old enough to be her father. Another chequebook wedding.

VICTOR: Tight bastard actually. Wouldn't breathe out if he didn't have to. Drives his own van. Too stingy to employ anyone. He owns the furniture shop just off the square. Bradshaw's.

IVY: Oh, them, oh dear. Oh well, she'll allus have a table to eat off. His carnation's droopy. That's not a good sign either.

VICTOR: Trust you Ivy.

IVY: He's past it. You can always tell, can't you? Vic, have *you* seen me saucer?

VICTOR: No. I have not seen your saucer. How would I know it was yours?

IVY: The pattern! Sheraton bone china. Little Miss Button Missing knew. "Whose is this?", she said. "Whose is this pretty saucer? Ivy's?" (*beat*) She's binned it. I bet she has an'all. Just like her. "Whose is this pretty saucer?" Bang, straight in the bin. If I was a witch I'd put a curse on her.

VICTOR: Ivy, give over.

IVY: I would! Hubble bubble at the double vanish. You're a cockroach now, love. Crawl away.

VICTOR: Mumbo jumbo? They'll lock you up.

IVY: I'll crown you in a minute. I'm serious. Little Miss Button missing, by God she's got it coming.

VICTOR: Give over, I said. I'm busy.

IVY: If I see her before I go...

VICTOR: Don't spoil the wedding. There's folk out there enjoying the'sel. Crikey, if anyone could hear you now... Give over!

Pause.

Aren't you going somewhere?

IVY: I am. My friend Inky in Manchester, why?

VICTOR: Witches and Hobgoblins? Good job it's not Wales. They still burn witches there. I wish I'd gone for a walk now. But for the rain... It's your own fault all this.

IVY: My fault?

VICTOR: You invite antagonism, don't you know?

IVY: I've worked in this hotel forty years.

VICTOR: I know. Don't miss your bus.

Pause. She stares at him. She's hurt.

IVY: You can put the flags out when I'm gone. I'm legally entitled to remain on these premises until midnight tonight. Midnight tonight.

She sips her tea.

I know too much. That's why they want me out.

VICTOR: No. You only think you do.

IVY: I do know! So what do *you* know stuck in your Racing News? I twigged it straight away. The place is crawling with executives from head office. Open your eyes, Vic, and switch on your other brain cell. They were in my bar having a right pow-wow. They all end up in my bar, don't they? Sat at the other end, confidential conversations? Huh. They don't know I can lip read.

VICTOR: (*makes a note on his paper*) Blue-eyed Boy. Three twenty at York. Ten to one. That's a winner.

IVY: I'm only the first, the first to go. (*beat*) Mr. Timmins might call *you* into the office. All depending on what Little Miss Button Missing thinks of *you*.

VICTOR: Your tea's going cold.

IVY: No matter, as long it's hot to start with. (*pause*)

When I walk out of here... This is the last half hour of my forty years in charge of the cocktail bar. We never think of that, do we, the last half hour; the last half hour of things.

VICTOR: Oh but I do. The last half hour of my marriage. Me and Muriel, I remember our last breakfast together. For the first time in twelve years she refused to slice the top off my boiled eggs. So I grabbed my coat, walked out. Never went back.

IVY: Slice the top off your boiled eggs?

VICTOR: Well, my mother always did, and tied my shoe laces.

IVY: When did you leave home?

VICTOR: I got married when I was thirty seven.

IVY: Twelve years married, you didn't slice the top off your own boiled eggs fall that time?

VICTOR: It was a thing between us. But all good things come to an end. You're not missing much leaving now. You're not missing anything. I remember when the cocktail bar was full of celebrities. All the stars of the summer shows. An autograph hunter's paradise. Comedians, entertainers, actors.

IVY: You don't have to tell *me!* I've seen'em all I have. Les Dawson, Russ Conway, Alma Cogan, the girl with a giggle in her voice. She died of cancer, thirty four years old. Mind you, I go back to Dickie Henderson. What a lovely man an'all. And *he* died of cancer. Terry-Thomas. Remember Terry-Thomas? All those funny films. *Private's Progress*: (as Terry-Thomas) "You're an absolute sha'r!" The perfect English gentleman he was. (*beat*) He was! And *he* got Parkinsons. Why do these terrible things happen to such nice people?

VICTOR: Oh, well *you* needn't worry. (*reflects*) As we get older these things happen.

IVY: I know. In one day my life turns upside down.

VICTOR: Only if you think about it. (*smug*) I've learned to live in the moment. I've had to. Tomorrow comes tomorrow and not before.

IVY: So I see. The horses, losing your wages. Here today, gone today, penniless by tea-time. A live-in job and staff meals,

you always know where your next meal's coming from. But that's *false* security.

VICTOR: What time's your bloody bus?

Pause.

IVY: Can I say something?

VICTOR: You've done nowt else since you walked in.

IVY: Add up all what you've lost. All these years your wages go straight into the betting shop. Everywhere else it's economical misery. There's no visitors now. They all go to Benidorm. The pier's only open weekends. If it wasn't for wedding parties this hotel would.... *(beat)* But the betting shop stays open for layabouts. I can't work it out. You an'all throwing your money away.

VICTOR: It's an investment. One day I'll win a big one, an accumulator.

IVY: A what?

VICTOR: An accumulator. If you don't know racing, you won't know what it is.

IVY: *(taps her handbag)* This is my accumulator, my savings book. I'm an outsider. At least *you're* still talkin' to me. About the only one who is. Thank you for that.

VICTOR: *(bored with her)* Eh? What's up now?

VICTOR *makes another note.* **IVY** *looks on.*

IVY: D'you know how long I've had it, this cup and saucer? Forty years. On my last day the saucer goes missing. In pieces, I dare say, but no-one owns up.

VICTOR: Buy another one.

IVY: If it's broken, I want to know.

VICTOR: I see. You want closure.

IVY: Sheraton bone china. My friend Inky gave it me. Inky coz she writes nice letters. Copper-plate handwriting with a fountain pen. She still does do, write nice letters. Ever since the war. My friend Inky from the WAAFs. Don't laugh, me and Inky in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. More like Fred Karno's Army. Left right, left right, or right left right left, *we* didn't know. (*beat*) Did you do National Service? Vic. (*beat*) No, you didn't, I can tell. Were you a conchy?

VICTOR: You what? A conchy!

IVY: Conscientious objector.

He lowers his racing paper, shaking his head in disgust.

You never talk about it. Gen'ly men who keep quiet about the war...

VICTOR: D'you mind! Catering corp. I were never a conchy!

IVY: (*unimpressed*) Catering Corp, oh.

VICTOR: What d'you mean "Oh"? I just told you. I were never a conchy!

Pause. He stares at her waiting for an answer.

They all say that “oh”. “The catering Corp, oh”. But you can’t fight a war an empty stomach. I did my bit me; and my father before me. In the first World War my father served in the 8th East Lancashire Regiment and fought in the trenches. So bugger off.

He buries himself in his racing paper and turns his back on her.

IVY: I’m only talkin’, Vic.

VICTOR: Celebrating your forty-year dash for freedom? And now you want a public enquiry to find your broken saucer.

IVY: Broken. I thought so. *(pause)* I hope the bus is on time. Inky said she’ll meet me. Manchester Victoria. D’you know Manchester?

VICTOR: No.

She sips her tea.

IVY: *(subdued, thoughtful)* Sheraton bone china. I want to show Inky I’ve still got it. Listen, if you find it... Eh, the dustbins! *(she stands up)*

VICTOR: Don’t be so daft. Ivy, you can’t go rooting through dustbins now, you’ll miss your bus.

IVY: Vic, if it’s broken, if you find the pieces, keep them for me. Will you keep them for me? I’m due back in two weeks. I’ve an appointment at the Town Hall. Housing Department. I’m hoping for a council flat, two bedrooms. You see, when Harry gets back.

VICTOR: Harry. Here we go.

IVY: I put my name down years ago. I qualify now. Mind you, this was a bolt out the blue. Two week's notice. I said to Timmins "give over, I'm goin' now". We've no rights, have we, live-in staff. *(pause)* Vic, where will you go when...

VICTOR *cocks his ear.*

Go to the town Hall. Put your name down. How old are you now? Fifty seven, fifty eight? Sixty soon then. *(beat)* The thing is, Harry won't know where I've gone. When he comes to find me...

VICTOR *lowers his paper. This mention of HARRY is weird.*

We'll get married straight away of course. Oh, he's such a rascal, my Harry. "Ivy, what I don't do to you on our wedding night won't be worth doin'." A right rascal, but I like a man who thinks highly of himself. He could turn up tomorrow, any day. D'you know what he looks like? Did I show you his photo.

VICTOR: *(stopping her with a gesture)* Ivy...

IVY *rummages through her handbag.*

IVY: It's all agreed. We'll get married at the Town Hall. The reception won't be here. Not in this dump. I know what lurks in the kitchens. Enough wildlife to film a nature programme.

IVY *shows the photo to VICTOR.*

That's my Harry. They don't make'em like that any more.

VICTOR: (*stares at the photo*) I wonder what he looks like now.

IVY: Head waiter. Savoy trained.

VICTOR: Good looking man I will say. (*returning the photo*)
Windy day. Where was it taken?

IVY: The Lakes on our day off. Windermere. (*putting the photo in her handbag*) The best head waiter this hotel ever had. They took him for granted, of course, like everyone else. Live-in staff were never off duty. Now it's all legalized, eh? Little Miss Button Missing doesn't know how lucky she is.

VICTOR: Ivy, I can't concentrate.

Pause.

IVY: Eh you, never mind them horses! You heed my warning.

VICTOR: The witch's warning?

IVY: No, Vic. Plain old common sense!

VICTOR: Sorry, Ivy. I place my faith in God.

IVY: God, he says, huh! The betting shop. Is that allowed?

VICTOR: I'm not a Catholic!

IVY: Listen, I know things God doesn't tell you. I'm warning you, Vic.

VICTOR: I know! The witch's warning! I'm quaking in my boots!

IVY: Stop acting the goat. I'm talkin'. When they sat in my bar, them executives... You wait and see, more redundancies. If they want a strike, they're going the right way about it.

VICTOR: You *don't* know.

IVY: I *do* know. Don't fall on the sword of ignorance. Listen to me. You'll thank me one day. Oh, you listen to the Bible, I know you do. Begat begat begat and all that. I believed in the Bible once, every word of it, but not any more.

VICTOR: What changed your mind?

IVY: I read it.

VICTOR: (*looks at his watch*) If you want to start a strike, you've twenty minutes to go before the Exodus. Why not catch the bus, love? Go in peace, and I wish you all the very best in the future. (*false smile*)

She is silenced for a moment. Sips her tea, and then decides to speak seriously.

IVY: Them executives and Little Miss Button Missing were drinking till the small hours. "You're working late, Ivy!" I take pride in my bar, I said. Every glass is polished before I go to bed. I turned the music off so I could listen. Hush hush, but I can lip read. (*beat*) So I'm a witch, am I? I bet if I read your tea-leaves...

VICTOR *Shrugs it off.*

Don't scoff. I have a moral duty to tell people what my psychic gift tells me. Let me see your cup.

VICTOR: It's a tea-bag.

IVY: Tea stains'll do. Let me look.

VICTOR: (*beat, he wants to put her off*) Executives you say. What executives?

IVY: The penny's dropped, has it? Them executives! Your cup, Victor please. Give it me.

VICTOR: No!

IVY: Come on, why not?

VICTOR: It's a Pagan thing, isn't it?

IVY: Them executives. Why d'you think they're staying the night? An inspection? Oh, no. That's not the real reason. And what's your destiny? I do need your tea-cup please.

VICTOR: No!

He puts his paper down and rises from the table.

Goodbye, Ivy. Have a nice journey to Manchester.

IVY: What're you doin' here? The reception's starting.

VICTOR: Mr. Timmins said it's all right.

IVY: What's alright? Wait till he calls *you* into the office.

VICTOR *makes to go.*

Vic! Them executives, your name was mentioned.

VICTOR *waits.*

They spent a lot of time in the staff quarters, didn't they?
Then ended up in my bar. Mr Timmins bowing and
scraping.

VICTOR: No one mentioned my name. You're making it up.

IVY: One of them's got a tape measure. Like a builder's tape
measure. He put it on the table. Now if that's not clue...

VICTOR: When? My day off? They're refurbishing. Mr
Timmins told everyone they're refurbishing.

IVY: Ties undone, flirting with Little Miss Button Missing. I
would never presume to socialize with area management.
Krug champagne. Krug! She didn't pay for it. (*assuredly*)
She'll pay for it on her back.

VICTOR: Refurbishing now turns into a fiendish management
plot. You're still at it, Ivy, to the bitter end, making
mischief.

IVY: Vic, if you stick your head in the sand any longer, your
backside'll get sunburn!

He makes to go again.

All right, refurbishing, but what for? Harry once said: "To
work in this hotel you need eyes in the back of your head
and a knife-proof vest". He was right. (*beat*) Go on if you
want too! You're on duty.

VICTOR: (*hesitates*) What about *your* fatal destiny? This Harry
fellah. D'you even know where he is? Is that all you've got

Hungry for More?

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