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Other People

A Play

Geoff Saunders

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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OTHER PEOPLE

First performed by Group 64 at the Goodrich Theatre,
Putney, London, on 8th November 1992, with the
following cast:

Andrea	Gaëlle Hobbs
Stephen	Richard C. Broughton
Hilary	Sally James
Duncan	Jonathan Gambier

Directed by Geoff Saunders
With the assistance of Lesley Ann Thompson, David
Jones and Dominic Banks

CHARACTERS

Andrea, early twenties

Stephen, early twenties

Hilary, slightly older

Duncan, early thirties

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of the flat shared by Andrea, Stephen, Hilary and Duncan

Time—the present

To
Mum, Dad,
Michael, Katharine,
and
Christopher

... and to Caroline Ferris, who laughed
the loudest ...

OTHER PEOPLE

The living-room of the flat shared by Stephen, Andrea, Hilary and Duncan. 6.30 p.m. Winter

The room looks comfortable and warm, though the decor is dated and in need of renewal. The seating — armchairs and a sofa — is mismatched and rather shabby. A stereo unit features prominently, with a small table nearby. There are three doors: these lead to the entrance hall, the kitchen and to the rest of the flat

As the CURTAIN rises, Stephen and Andrea are on stage. Stephen is sitting in an armchair reading a library book. He is in his early twenties and is rather scruffily dressed. Andrea is the same age and is, by contrast, very smartly dressed in casual, fashionable clothes. She is standing by the stereo unit, holding a record up to the light. A half-eaten Mars bar and a lighted cigarette rest on the table

Andrea Oh God, oh God ...

Stephen Perhaps ——

Andrea Perhaps what?

Stephen Perhaps you should have been concentrating on what you were doing.

Andrea It wasn't my ... the needle just sort of fell out of my hand.

Stephen In which you also had a cigarette and a Mars bar.

Andrea (*scrutinizing the record*) It's not much of a scratch — only "Welcome to the Cruise" and "Sukarita".

Stephen Duncan's Judie Tzuke album!

Andrea Oh, no, it's one of his favourites, I suppose, don't tell me ...

Stephen Look at the sleeve.

Andrea What?

Stephen Look at the sleeve.

Andrea (*picking up the record sleeve and studying it closely*) Oh, Jesus.

Stephen Signed by the lady herself.

Andrea You had to point that out, didn't you? You're a right bastard, Stephen, you really are. Duncan's going to be furious.

Stephen Don't be daft, Duncan doesn't know how to be angry. You could gun down his entire family and he'd just say "Gosh".

Andrea But his favourite Judie Tzuke album ... Stephen, I've scratched it. What can I say to him?

Stephen Just tell him the truth.

Andrea That you made me laugh while I was putting the record on and ——

Stephen But I didn't ——

Andrea Yes, I know, but ——

Stephen I didn't make you laugh. I had nothing whatever to do with it. In fact, I don't remember saying a word to you. Deathlessly funny or otherwise.

Andrea But ——

Stephen You want me to share the blame, I suppose.

Andrea Can't you just say you told me a joke, or something? Distracted me? So I dropped the needle? He won't mind so much if he thinks you were involved. Duncan's your mate.

Stephen He's just as much yours as mine. More, in fact — you've lived here longer than I have. And that's beside the point, anyway. Whether I made you laugh or not, it was you who dropped the needle, you who scratched the record, Duncan's favourite Judie Tzuke album, signed by the lady herself at a concert in nineteen seventy-seven, you who ——

Andrea He'll hate me! Oh God, he'll hate me! Please, Steve, protect me. I don't want him to hate me.

Stephen But you wouldn't mind if he hated us both? Eh? You wouldn't mind lousing up my friendship with him as well?

Andrea Oh, that's right, that's fine, that is, yes, go ahead, save yourself! You never own up to anything, do you? It's always my fault, isn't it? Something's gone wrong, let's blame Andrea! You must really hate me too! Well, I can't blame you for that, really. I hate myself too, a lot of the time. I've always been awkward, clumsy, you know. When I was seven I got water in my ears and it affected my balance and I was forever falling over. Just as that was clearing up I kept on being sick. I was sick in the font at St Peter's once. And in the library at school, three times, twice in the Biology section and once in Home Economics. My father was horrible to me about that. He kept making jokes about how a pool of sick was hardly an advertisement for the cookery books.

Stephen sniggers

Oh, thank you so much! I need my cigarette. *(She picks up her cigarette. It has gone out)* Oh, no! No! *(Almost in tears, she rummages through her pockets until she finds her lighter. She lights the cigarette, inhales desperately, then seems to become calmer)* It was humiliating. I carried a plastic bag around with me for nearly five years just in case. The doctors did every test under the sun and the only conclusion they could come to was that it was psychosomatic. Well, of course, from then on, my mother was convinced I was loopy. Which wasn't — isn't — too far from the truth, I suppose. So, you see, it doesn't surprise me at all that you hate me. I'm used to it. But I do think you could try to understand me. If you just knew what I'd been through ...

Stephen But I do know. I know very well.

Andrea How can you? How can you know?

Stephen Because you've told me. Ad infi-bloody-nitum.

There is the sound of a door opening, off, then footsteps

Andrea He's here! Please, Steve, what can I say? What can I tell him?

Stephen I've told you. Tell him the truth.

Andrea I can't. He'll hate me.

Stephen He won't. He doesn't know what hatred is. There's also the chance he might think you're not worth the effort, seeing as you hate yourself enough for the both of you.

Andrea Please, Steve, help me, he's coming!

Stephen Tell him the truth. And if you lie, I won't support you.

Andrea You're a selfish bastard, Stephen Adams, you really are.
(She grabs the Mars bar and retreats across the room, away from the hall door)

Hilary enters from the hall. She is slightly older than the others and wears an immaculate business suit. She is carrying a briefcase and a wet raincoat

Hilary Hi. I've left my umbrella to dry in the hallway, don't fall over it.

Andrea Oh, it's you.

Hilary Indeed.

Andrea I thought — we thought — we thought it was Duncan. But it's you. Thank God it's you.

Hilary Well it's nice to be appreciated, even if it's just for not being somebody else. Stephen, the coat-hooks in the hallway ...

Stephen Oh, no, I'm sorry.

Hilary You've been here all day. It only takes half an hour to put up a few coat-hooks.

Stephen I'll do it tomorrow.

Hilary Well, do. Now that it's raining all the time we need them. There's nothing worse than having wet raincoats all over the place.

Andrea Hilary, I've got a problem.

Hilary Well, well, doesn't that make a change. Our flatmate has a problem.

Andrea Please, Hilary.

Hilary Just let me hang my coat up in the kitchen and I'll be with you. *(She heads for the kitchen)*

Andrea Just a minute ago I was going to put a record on — some old Judie Tzuke thing of Duncan's — and Steve told me this really funny joke and ——

Hilary exits into the kitchen

Hilary *(off)* My God!

Andrea Hilary?

Hilary *(off)* This room was spotless when I left this morning. Spotless!

She enters, furious

All the mugs were clean, the table was clean, for once, and the floor was clean; I even made myself late for work scrubbing that ruddy floor!

Andrea Hilary ...

Hilary Eileen Cathcart said: "Why are you late, Hilary Johnson?" and when I told her ——

Andrea Hilary! This is really important!

Hilary When I told her I'd had to clean the floor because I knew no-one else would do it and I couldn't bear the thought of it being so filthy all day while I was at work, do you know what she did?

Andrea Please Hil, it is important.

Hilary So's this, Andrea.

Stephen What did she do, Hilary?

Hilary She laughed in my face, the cow. Laughed in my face. She's a heartless bitch. It's easy for her, of course, she has a cleaning lady.

Stephen All the same you can hardly blame her for laughing, can you? It is pretty ridiculous.

Andrea Look I'm sorry, but ——

Hilary Ridiculous, is it? To want to live in a clean and tidy flat where you don't have to do a mountain of washing-up before making a cup of coffee, where you don't ——

Andrea Please Hilary ——

Hilary Oh, for heaven's sake Andrea! Look, I'm sorry Stephen, I know it's different for people who've been to university, where being untidy and unhygienic is thought of as creative and trendy ——

Andrea Please!

Hilary — and somehow the mark of true intellect, but I didn't go to university and even if I had I might well have grown out of those habits a long time ago.

Andrea Will someone please listen to me? Oh God, no-one ever listens to me!

Stephen Oh but they do, Andrea. They do. I reckon you'd have grown up a hell of a sight sooner if you'd been ignored a few times.

Hilary I'm going to tidy up the kitchen now. (*She heads for the kitchen*) I don't know how I've survived in this madhouse for so long.

Andrea (*following Hilary*) Please don't be angry with me, Hilary, you know what I'm like, I need support, I always have.

Hilary And always will. Look, you know I care about you and I'll never turn you down when you need help ——

Andrea Oh, Hilary, you are lovely. (*She hugs Hilary*)

Hilary (*extricating herself*) — but at this moment I am in a pig of a bad mood — I even said the "f" word at work today, I'm so ashamed — so my first priority is to tidy up the kitchen and get rid of my aggressive feelings, otherwise ——

Andrea But this is really urgent ——

Hilary — otherwise I may well break your neck. Look, I can hardly unclench my fists. Discuss whatever it is with Stephen. He fancies

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