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One-Sided Triangle

A Play

Stephen Smith

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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ONE-SIDED TRIANGLE

First performed by Waterbeach Community Players at Waterbeach School, on Friday, 13th March 1992, with the following cast:

Mike	Alex McLauchlin
Brian	Martin George
Sarah	Caroline Harris

Directed by Stephen Smith
Designed by Mark Easterfield and Janet Crack
With the assistance of Julie Petrucci, Eddie Curtis, Jane Butcher, Martin Andrus, Alan Dean, Chris Shinn and Kalaya Wilderspin

ONE-SIDED TRIANGLE

The garden of a small hotel bar in the northern Thai city of Chiang Rai

Along the back are various plants, with a spirit house, adorned with Buddha statues, positioned C. R *is a white table with beer bottles on it. Two chairs are by the table and a hold-all under the chair* L. *Inside the hold-all is an English language newspaper, e.g.* Bangkok Post *or* The Nation. L *is another set of table and chairs. The bar entrance is* L, *the garden entrance is* R

As the CURTAIN *rises, Mike, a lean unshaven man wearing a short sleeved shirt and trousers, is pacing up and down smoking nervously*

Brian enters. He is older, smaller, and fatter. He is wearing a cap, a T-shirt and shorts

Mike So?

Brian Flight landed thirty minutes late. (*He sits down and takes the newspaper from the hold-all to read*)

Mike looks anxiously at his watch

Don't worry, she'll be here soon. Most likely hanging on for dear life as a kamikaze tuk tuk hurtles towards us at this very

moment. Poor sod, they must be the most uncomfortable form of travel designed by man. (*He pauses*) Been on a camel?

Mike (*still pacing*) No.

Brian That must be the most uncomfortable form of travel designed by nature. Getting off is the worst, drop like a stone. (*He pauses*) Mind you, elephants aren't a lot better. Do you know the best way to get off an elephant?

Mike What I want to know is why she had to come here in the first place.

Brian I told you they got stroppy about the visa. She couldn't get it sorted until after I had left last night. So she has had to fly up this morning.

Mike Why?

Brian Well we couldn't have you traipsing around northern Thailand any longer without a passport, could we?

Mike No, why did they get stroppy?

Brian I don't know. I suppose they smelt a rat and you know what happens once they smell a rat: the price rockets. Luckily, you're dealing with pros. We know how to play it cute. Sarah's an expert. She knows how to walk away, tell them you'll think about it, let them sweat a little.

Mike (*agitatedly*) I haven't got time to let some corrupt official sweat a little.

Brian Look, it worked all right. No worries. You want to take some money home with you, don't you?

Mike I'd also like to get home in one piece. All I've asked for is a clean passport to get out legit. Is that too much to ask? I thought you could get anything in this country if you had the money?

Brian You can, but it takes time. These officials know you can easily get a new passport complete with the works on the black market. So as soon as we start offering above the going rate, they get suspicious, and then the proverbial hits the fan. "Either this falang's a prat or he doesn't want the mob

involved. Perhaps we'd better check." You want that?

Mike What do you think?

Brian Like them, I think it's a bit fishy why you wouldn't settle for a forged passport like all the rest. And why I have to come all this way to collect you and take you to Bangkok in a minibus. It's a bloody twelve hour drive. What have you been doing up here?

Mike Business.

Brian That's what they all say. (*He pauses*) I bet it's carvings.

Mike Carvings?

Brian The carved wood. The teak. Beautiful stuff, I've got to admit. Although what someone wants with a wooden elephant half the life-size is beyond me. They'd need a jumbo to take it back. (*He laughs*)

Mike Yes.

Brian Smuggling carved teak furniture, that's your game, isn't it? Worth thousands back home. Naughty to the environment and difficult to get out of the country. Probably already been caught, so that's why you need another passport. Thought I was stupid, didn't you?

Mike The thought crossed my mind.

Brian That's why you need a minibus.

Mike You did hire it in Pattaya?

Brian Of course I did. I've even got "Top Thailand Tours" plastered all over it, as requested. Very original, I must say.

Mike The idea is not to stand out, it's to blend in with the tourist trade.

Brian Most tourists don't travel to Bangkok in a minibus. They take the luxury coach service. Reclining seats, food, movie—they even have hostesses.

Mike I am paying enough, aren't I?

Brian I suppose so, but it will be extra if I'm driving any smuggled gear.

Mike (*angrily*) Save the comments and do as you're told, or you

won't be getting anything. (*He stares at the entrance to the bar*)

Brian (*getting up annoyed and going over to Mike*) Look, I don't have to be here, you know. I don't have to take this from you. I've got a perfectly good thing going for me in Pattaya. This is only *petty cash*. I can walk away, I can.

Mike If your bird doesn't turn up within the next five minutes, it'll be me that'll be doing the walking.

Brian (*retreating to his chair*) She'll be here. No worries. (*He pauses*) Look, how about a beer to calm your nerves?

Mike I want to keep a clear head.

Brian You have got it bad, haven't you? Don't worry, they can be bribed, you know.

Mike Who?

Brian The police. Leave all the talking to me. Not ivory, is it?

Mike No.

Brian Good. That would be costly, and I like elephants. Can't feel the same about trees as you do for animals, can you?

Mike (*joining Brian at the table*) It's not the police I'm worried about.

Brian Oh, that sounds more serious.

Mike You should try it some time.

Brian I've taken my share of risks here, you know.

Mike What? Running a bar on a tourist visa? Not exactly James Bond, is it?

Brian (*pausing, then taking a swig from a beer bottle*) They made one of those James Bond films here, you know. Down in Phuket. *Man With The Golden Gun*. You know the one with the funny shaped rocks coming out of the sea.

Mike Taxi driver, were you?

Brian What?

Mike Back in England?

Brian How did you know?

Mike Educated guess.

Brian (*getting up*) Just trying to make conversation. It would look bloody suspicious if we had sat here without saying anything.

Pause

Mike Sure this girl is kosher?

Brian Sarah? Oh, yes. She's up to her eyeballs in debt.

Mike I thought she was a pro.

Brian That's what makes her a pro in this game. She hasn't got any choice.

Mike But isn't in the embassy staff?

Brian No, freelance. (*Sarcastically*) Went to India to find herself. Got into Buddhism and ended up here. Married a Thai who traded her in for a new model a few years later, and now she makes her living as a translator.

Mike So how did she get me a new passport?

Brian Got a thing going with the Military Attaché, lucky lady. He can clear passport applications, no questions asked. Covert operations and all that.

Mike And what's her story?

Brian About why she needs a passport?

Mike Yes.

Brian You are someone she feels sorry for. Embassy wouldn't give your girlfriend a visa a couple of years ago, so you overstayed your welcome. Now you're worried the Old Bill are sniffing around, and without a new passport it's deportation, a huge fine, or imprisonment. Not necessarily in that order.

Mike And he fell for that?

Brian Happens all the time. Let's face it, the Thais have got to be the best lookers in the world. Not difficult to fall in love out here. That's why I stayed. Except I wasn't stupid enough to let

my visa run out. Hop, skip, and a jump down to Malaysia every three months, and you are home and dry.

Mike And you are still with her?

Brian No, she was too good for me. I didn't deserve someone like her. She gave me this. (*He shows Mike a golden Buddha hanging on his necklace*) When she left. Supposed to bring me luck and protection. Not too good a track record so far. Worth a bit—solid gold. Really impressed Sarah.

Mike What's your hold over her?

Brian She's lived here too long not to get heavily into gambling. You name it, she's into it. So when she came to Pattaya, a few weeks ago, looking for some action, I got to her and decided to cultivate her.

Mike So you don't really know much about her?

Brian Enough. I have a bar. I can spot a loser. Couldn't survive without losers.

Mike And what makes you think you're not a loser?

Brian You came to me, remember. I'd say you should think yourself lucky that I fancied a trip up north. A bit of daytime for a change.

Mike Lucky, am I?

Sarah enters hurriedly. She is a plain looking woman in her thirties

Sarah Sorry I'm late.

Brian No worries, darling.

Sarah Everything is in the envelope: passport and life story. Who wants it?

Brian (*sitting down again to read his paper*) He does. I've already got my passport and life story.

Sarah (*handing the documents to Mike*) You are Paul Weaver, a workwear salesman from Croydon. First trip to Thailand.

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