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Lesser Mortals

A Play

Geoff Saunders

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

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LESSER MORTALS

First presented by Drip Action Theatre in St Mary's Hall,
Arundel, as part of the Arundel Festival Theatre Trail on
18th August 2012, with the following cast:

Victoria

Kathy Haigh

Wendy

Gill Medway

Tilly

Justine Richardson

Gladys

Brenda Hargraves

Director Lin Jones

CHARACTERS

Victoria, 55

Wendy, 53

Tilly, 43

Gladys, 82

The Scene

A Quaker Meeting

LESSER MORTALS

A Quaker Meeting

At least four chairs are arranged in an arc. Wendy, Victoria and Gladys sit on three of them; the other is unoccupied. There may, if you wish, be more people onstage, sitting silently, eyes open or closed, in an arc as at a Quaker Meeting

Wendy is 53, Victoria 55 and Gladys 82. When the play opens, Gladys is asleep; Wendy and Victoria are lost in their thoughts

There is silence for a while

Victoria She was only being nice — Quakerly, I suppose — but I do wish she hadn't bothered. All I wanted this morning was an hour of peace and quiet, nobody bothering me with talk or sympathy or ... anything. But there she was, looming at me in that way she has. And I was thinking 'Don't speak to me, don't speak to me, don't speak to me' and trying to look invisible, but that didn't put her off. Loom, loom, loom she goes and then there's a silence and then:

Wendy Sarah and I would love you to join us for lunch after Meeting.

Victoria I do hope I wasn't rude. I've accepted, but I don't think my voice or my body language backed up my words ... I don't want to have lunch with them, I really don't, but —

Wendy No idea why I said that. Never have people over for lunch. Seemed the Quakerly thing to do, though. Only been widowed two months, poor girl. Thought maybe it would cheer her up a bit. *(Pause)* Oh, goodness. Lunch is yesterday's leftover pie and

yesterday's leftover mash. Fine for Sarah and me, obviously, but can't give that to Victoria. Not on its own. Oh, Wendy, stupid girl, why did you have to be kind and sociable all out of the blue? *(Pause)* Broccoli. Grab some on the way home. Covers a multitude of sins, broccoli.

Victoria Let's be positive about this. Maybe some company is just what I need. All I've wanted so far is to be left well alone. Alone doing nothing, just staring as the room gets darker around me and I realize I haven't eaten anything, done anything, even got dressed ... Then raging. Raging silently, sometimes; sometimes screaming and thumping the cushions, raging at you and your cruelty and your endless silence.

Wendy Serve what's left of the pie in the kitchen and carry it through. Cut it into four; that way Victoria can have seconds and think it's a new pie. Lots of gravy. Pie, mash, gravy, broccoli. It'll have to do.

Victoria People are trying to be kind, I know, and I should forgive them on the spot, but I hate it — I really hate it — when they say you've "taken" Ray. You don't exist, do you, you didn't "take" him anywhere. He just went. If you existed, and you wanted to "take" him — whatever that is supposed to mean — if you wanted to take him wouldn't you just, I don't know, snuff him out? He breathes in, he breathes out, he's dead, calm and painless. Why, if you are this merciful and loving all-powerful being, did you throw him off a ladder and slowly leach the life out of his broken body over the next two weeks? Answer me that? Of course you can't. Even if you existed I'm not sure you could.

Wendy Plan B. Send Sarah ahead after Meeting. Doesn't like the coffee and chat thing, anyway. Likes to maintain her inner calm. *(She looks out, "seeing" Sarah across the Meeting)* Look at her now with her mouth open, doing her Buddhist hands thing. That's yoga teaching for you. *(Pause)* Yes, send her ahead for the broccoli. That way Victoria will think we had it in already. *(Pause)* And she'd better hide some of the photos in the living-room. And some of the books. Don't want Victoria finding out we're not widowed sisters after all.

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