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Jabiru

A Play

Margaret Johnson

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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CHARACTERS

Katie, scatty, down-to-earth; late 20s.

Edward, her boyfriend; 30ish.

Sam, tour guide, Belizean nationality; 26.

The action of the play takes place inside, and on the veranda of, a tourist hut on a bird reserve in Belize

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- SCENE 1 The hut and veranda. Morning
SCENE 2 The hut and veranda. Thirty minutes later
SCENE 3 The hut and veranda. The early hours of the
 following morning
SCENE 4 The hut. Later the same morning
SCENE 5 The hut and veranda. Nine o'clock a.m.

Time — the present

NOTES

It is intended that the character of Sam be played by a black actor. If, however, a suitable actor cannot be found, it is permitted to change the character to a Spanish speaker, as, in Belize, English, Spanish and Creole are the principal languages.

Directors of productions in North America may wish to make slight alterations to the text to make Edward and Katie American rather than English. This is permitted, provided the integrity of the original script is preserved.

JABIRU

SCENE 1

Tourist accomodation in a hut on a bird reserve. Belize

DS is a veranda area with a few outdoor seats and maybe a table. The interior of a thatched hut is US, the walls dividing the hut from the veranda possibly being suggested by a simple low bamboo fence and/or a timber door frame

The accommodation in the hut is fairly basic. There is a door to a bathroom R, a double bed, a chest of drawers, and a table and chairs

Edward enters and goes into the hut carrying a rucksack. He is in his thirties. He puts the rucksack down in a corner and inspects the cleanliness of the accommodation. He finds it lacking. He opens the door to the bathroom and goes in. Pause

Edward (off) Good God!

Edward comes out of the bathroom holding a small green frog in his cupped hands. He walks on to the veranda and tosses the frog on to the earth. He comes back into the hut and busies himself with his rucksack

Katie enters quickly, carrying a rucksack and looking flushed and excited. She is in her late twenties

(Not turning round) Thought you must have taken a tumble into the lagoon.

Katie (*looking round at everything fondly, dumping her rucksack down in the middle of the room*) Just saying some hallos. Everybody's still here.

Edward Who's still here?

Katie The staff. (*Pause*) It's all exactly the same!

Edward Well, it certainly doesn't seem to have been cleaned since you were here last.

Katie walks over to the chest of drawers and tugs at the second drawer down. It moves a few inches, then sticks

Katie (*pleased*) Yes, exactly the same!

Katie exits into the bathroom. There is a pause, then she enters again, looking disappointed

Katie There used to be a little green frog living on the shower curtain.

Edward Not all exactly the same then. I must say, I'm quite pleased about that.

Katie Oh, but he was ever so sweet once you got used to him. We called him Elvis.

Edward Elvis?

Katie Rosie said he had an Elvis sneer. (*She laughs*) She screamed the place down the first time she saw him. Well, he did have a way of creeping about in the pattern on the shower curtain; got you rubbing the soap out of your eyes and moving in closer to take a look. Then just when you were eyeball to eyeball he'd leap right from the top of a palm tree on to a beach. (*Pause*) Heard a lot of secrets, I should think, that little frog. (*Pause*) Didn't you have a frog in your hut?

Edward No. (*He crosses the room to the chest of drawers with a pile of clothes, having to take a detour round Katie's rucksack to get there. He tries to open the stuck drawer but can't do it*) Oh, for God's sake. I don't know why you insisted on us being put in this hut if you knew the chest of drawers was no good.

Katie The bottom drawer works. You have it. I'm not going to bother to unpack anyway.

Edward (*yanking open the bottom drawer and depositing his clothes*) Now, why doesn't that surprise me?

Katie We're only here for two nights.

Edward We aren't staying anywhere for longer than two nights this entire holiday! Are you going to live out of your pack for two weeks?

Katie I haven't decided. (*She sprawls on the bed, looking round and remembering*) Rosie put up a washing line across here and hung all her clothes from it. Of course they were all leopardskin and low cut. Nothing loose-fitting. She baked the entire holiday.

Edward How on earth your sister came to be on a bird-watching holiday in Belize in the first place, I shall never understand.

Katie She enjoyed herself well enough. But then Rosie always does. Besides, it isn't exclusively a bird-watching holiday.

Edward You were the only one getting off that bus without a pair of binoculars, Kate.

Pause

Katie I thought the bus was going to tip over when all you lot piled over to the right to catch a glimpse of that aural.

Edward Oreole.

Katie Mmm, say that again, it's sexy.

Edward Don't be silly.

Katie Come on, come over here and whisper it into my ear. Aureole, aureole ...

Edward I'm hot.

Katie So am I. Come here. Come on, we're on holiday!

Edward reluctantly sinks down on to the bed next to Katie. She chooses to ignore his reluctance and kisses him

Katie Say it. Aureole ...

Edward (*unsexily*) Oreole. (*Pause. Then, casually*) So, you say there's been no staff changes?

Katie (*kissing Edward's neck*) No ...

Edward Everyone's still here?

Katie Yes, Ocean, Sam ... Edward, I'm trying to get passionate here.

Edward I told you, I'm too hot. Besides, some of the others are meeting on the waterfront in ten minutes.

Katie That's all right, I don't mind a quickie.

Edward I want to have a wash first.

Katie I don't mind you sweat-licked.

Edward I meant, before I meet the others. I want to have a wash and get changed before I meet the others.

Katie Oh all right, go and have your bloody wash. (*She gets up off the bed and moves to the window*)

Edward There'll be plenty of time later for all that.

Katie Sure.

Edward Don't let's start one of your sulks.

Katie We're in paradise, Edward, why ever would I want to sulk?

Edward Why indeed.

Black-out

SCENE 2

The same. Thirty minutes later

Katie is sitting in a chair on the veranda, eyes closed

Sam, a Belize national, one of the guides at the bird reserve, enters

Katie opens her eyes

Katie You startled me.

Sam You were dreaming.

Katie Snoozing. (*Pause*) I didn't think you'd still be here.

Sam This place is as good as any other place.

Katie I thought you'd be out on the lagoon.

Sam Said I was busy.

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