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Ernie's Incredible Illucinations

Alan Ayckbourn

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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www.SamuelFrench.com

www.SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

Theatre@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk

020-7255-4302

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CHARACTERS

ERNIE

MUM

DAD

RECEPTIONIST

DOCTOR

OFFICER

AUNTIE MAY

FIRST BARKER

SECOND BARKER

THIRD BARKER

FOURTH BARKER

REFEREE

TIMEKEEPER

MAN

WOMAN

KID SARACEN

SECOND MAN

LADY

LIBRARY ATTENDANT

GIRL LIBRARIAN

LADY LIBRARIAN

A TRAMP

PATIENTS, SOLDIERS, CROWDS, BOXERS, ETC.

SETTING

the action takes place in a doctor's waiting room and surgery – and elsewhere.

TIME

The present

ERNIE'S INCREDIBLE ILLUCINATIONS

At one side of the stage is a doctor's waiting-room. It is filled with an assortment of miserable-looking patients, coughing, wheezing, sneezing and moaning. Amongst them sit Mr and Mrs Fraser and their son, Ernie

Ernie *(to the Audience, after a second)* If you ever want to feel ill—just go and spend a happy half-hour in a doctor's waiting-room. If you're not ill when you get there, you will be when you leave.

A man enters, having seen the doctor. He is moaning. He crosses the waiting-room and goes out. The other patients look at him and sorrowfully shake their heads. The Receptionist enters

Receptionist Mr and Mrs Fraser . . .

Mum and Dad rise

Doctor will see you now.

Mum Thank you. Come on, Ernie.

Mum and Dad and Ernie follow the Receptionist across the stage to the Doctor who sits behind a table

'Morning, Doctor.

The Receptionist leaves

Doctor Ah. Ah. Mr and Mrs Fraser. Is that it?

Mum That's right. I'm Mrs Fraser—and this is my husband, Mr Fraser—and this is our son—Ernie.

Doctor Ah yes. Ernie. I've been hearing all sorts of things about you, young Ernie. Now, what have you been up to, eh?

Dad Illucinations.

Doctor I beg your pardon?

Dad Illucinations.

Doctor Oh, yes, illuci—quite, yes.

Mum What my husband means, Doctor, is that Ernie has been creating these illusions.

Doctor Ah.

Mum Well, they're more than illusions, really.

Dad I'll say.

Doctor Beg pardon?

Dad I'll say.

Mum He's been causing that much trouble. At school, at home, everywhere he goes. I mean we can't go on like this. His dad's not as strong as he was, are you, Albert?

Dad No.

Doctor What?

Dad No.

Doctor Perhaps it would be better if you told me a little more about it. When did you first notice this . . . ?

Mum Ah well . . .

Dad Ah.

Mum Now then . . .

Dad Now . . .

Mum He'd have been . . . well, it'd have been about . . . near enough . . . er . . .

Doctor Go on.

Ernie steps forward. During his speech Mum and Dad remain seated. The Doctor moves to the side of the stage, produces a notebook and makes notes on what follows

Ernie It started with these daydreams. You know, the sort everybody gets. Where you suddenly score a hat trick in the last five minutes of the Cup Final, or you bowl out the West Indies for ten runs—or saving your granny from a blazing helicopter, all that sort of rubbish. It was one wet Saturday afternoon and me and my mum and my dad were all sitting about in the happy home having one of those exciting afternoon rave-ups we usually have in our house.

Ernie sits at the table in the Doctor's chair and starts to read a book. Mum has started knitting and Dad just sits, gazing ahead of him. There is a long silence

Ernie It was all go in our house.

Pause

Mum I thought you'd be at the match today, Albert.

Dad Not today.

Mum Not often you miss a game.

Dad They're playing away.

Mum Oh.

Dad In Birmingham. I'm damned if I'm going to Birmingham.
Even for United.

Ernie Meanwhile—while this exciting discussion was in progress, I was reading this book about the French wartime resistance workers and of the dangers they faced—often arrested in their homes. I started wondering what would happen if a squad of soldiers turned up at our front door, having been tipped off about the secret radio transmitter hidden in our cistern—when suddenly . . .

*The tramp of feet, and a squad of soldiers comes marching on
and up to their front door*

Officer Halte! (*He bangs on the door*)

Pause

Dad That the door?

Mum What?

Dad The door.

Mum Was it?

Officer Open zis door. Open the door! (*He knocks again*)

Mum Oh, that'll be the milkman wanting his money. He always comes round about now. Albert, have you got ten bob . . .?

Dad (*fumbling in his pockets*) Ah . . .

Officer (*shouting*) Open zis door immediately. Or I shall order my men to break it down! (*He bangs on the door again*)

Mum Just a minute. Coming.

Dad Should have one somewhere . . .

Officer We know you're in there, English spy! Come out with your hands up . . .!

Mum What's he shouting about? Oh, I'd better ask him for three pints next week, if Auntie May's coming . . .

Officer Zis is your last chance . . . (*He knocks again*)

Mum Oh shut up . . .

The Officer signals his men. Two of them step back, brace their shoulders and prepare to charge the door

I'm coming—I'm coming.

Ernie I shouldn't go out there, Mum . . .

Mum What?

Ernie I said don't go out there.

Mum What . . . ?

Ernie It's not the milkman. It's a squad of enemy soldiers.

Mum Who?

Ernie They've come for me . . .

Mum Who has?

Ernie The soldiers. They've found out about the radio transmitter.

Mum What radio?

Dad Hey, here, that's a point. Have you paid our telly licence yet, Ethel? It might be the detector van.

Mum Oh, sit down, Albert. Stop worrying. It's just Ernie. Shut up, Ernie.

Ernie But Mum . . .

Dad I think I'll take the telly upstairs. Just in case . . .

The Soldiers charge at the door. A loud crash

Ernie Don't go out, Mum.

Mum Shut up!

Dad (*picking up the television, struggling with it*) Just take it upstairs.

Ernie (*to Mum*) Don't go!

Mum I can't leave him out there. The way he's going he'll have the door off its hinges in a minute . . . (*She moves to the door*)

Dad Mind your backs. Out of my way . . .

Ernie Mum . . .

Mum opens the door just as the two Soldiers are charging for the second time. They shoot past her, straight into the hall, collide with Dad and land in a heap with him. Dad manages to hold the television above his head and save it from breaking

Mum Hey . . .

Dad Oy!

The Officer and the other Soldiers enter. Ernie crouches behind the table

Officer Ah-ha! The house is surrounded.

Mum Who are you?

Officer Put up your hands. My men will search the house.

Dad (*feebly*) Hey . . .

Officer (*shouting up the stairs*) We know you're hiding in here, you can't get away . . .

Dad Hey—*hey*—HEY!

Officer Ah-ha. What have we here?

Dad Oh. It's the telly. The neighbour's telly. Not mine.

Officer Ah-ha.

Dad Just fixing it for him, you see . . .

Officer Outside.

Dad Eh?

Officer You will come with me.

Dad What, in this? I'm not going out in this rain.

Officer Outside or I shoot.

Dad Here . . .

Mum Albert . . .

Ernie Hold it! Drop those guns!

Officer Ah, so . . . (*He raises his gun*)

Ernie Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da.

The Soldiers collapse and are strewn all over the hall. Mum screams. Then there is a silence

Mum Oh, Ernie. What have you done?

Ernie Sorry, Mum.

Dad Oh, lad . . .

Mum Are they—dead?

Dad Yes.

Mum screams again

Steady, steady. This needs thinking about.

Mum What about the neighbours?

Dad Could create a bit of gossip, this could.

Mum What about the carpet? Look at it.

Dad Hasn't done that much good.

Mum What'll we do with them?

Dad Needs a bit of thinking about.

Ernie steps forward. As he speaks and during the next section, Dad and Mum carry off the bodies

Ernie Well, Mum and Dad decided that the best thing to do was to pretend it hadn't happened. That was usually the way they coped with all emergencies . . .

The Doctor steps forward

Mum (*struggling with a body*) We waited till it got dark, you see . . .

Doctor Yes? And then . . .?

Dad We dumped 'em.

Doctor I beg your pardon?

Dad We dumped 'em. Took 'em out and dumped 'em.

Doctor Dumped them? Where, for heaven's sake?

Dad Oh—bus shelters—park benches . . .

Mum Corporation car-park.

Dad Left one in the all-night cafeteria.

Mum And one in the Garden of Rest.

Dad Caused a bit of a rumpus.

Doctor I'm not surprised.

Mum We had the police round our way for days—trying to sort it out . . .

Dad They never did get to the bottom of it, though.

Doctor Extraordinary. And then?

Ernie (*stepping forward*) And then—Auntie May arrived to stay. I liked my Auntie May.

Auntie May enters

The Doctor steps back again

Auntie 'Ullo, Ernie lad. Have a sweetie.

Ernie Ta, Auntie. And Auntie May took me to the fair.

The stage is filled with jostling people, barkers and fairground music. The Barkers speak simultaneously

First Barker Yes, indeed, the world's tallest man! He's so tall, madam, his breakfast is still sliding down him at tea time. Come along now, sir. Come inside now . . .

Second Barker Ladies and gentlemen. I am prepared to guarantee that you will never again, during your lifetimes, see anything as unbelievably amazing as the Incredible Porcupine Woman.

See her quills and get your thrills. Direct from the unexplored South American Jungle . . .

Third Barker Try your luck—come along, madam—leave your husband there, dear, he'll still be there when you come back—tell you what—if he isn't I can sell you a replacement—five shots for sixpence—knock 'em all down and pick up what you like . . .

Ernie Can I have a go on that, Auntie?

Auntie Not now, Ernie.

Ernie Oh go on, Auntie May.

Auntie I want a cup of tea.

Ernie Have an ice-cream.

Auntie I've had three. I can't have any more. It'll bring on my condition . . .

Ernie What condition, Auntie?

Auntie Never you mind what. But I should never have had that candy floss as well. I'll suffer for it.

Fourth Barker Just about to start, ladies and gentlemen. A heavyweight boxing bout, featuring the one and only unofficial challenger for the heavyweight championship of the world—Kid Saracen. The Kid will be fighting this afternoon, for the very first time, a demonstration contest against the new sensation from Tyneside, Eddie "Grinder" Edwards. In addition, ladies and gentlemen, the Kid is offering fifty pounds—yes, fifty pounds—to any challenger who manages to last three three-minute rounds . . .

Ernie Oh, come on, Auntie. Let's go in and watch.

Auntie What is it?

Ernie Boxing.

Auntie Boxing? I'm not watching any boxing. I don't mind wrestling but I'm not watching boxing. It's bloodthirsty.

Ernie Auntie . . .

Auntie Nasty stuff, boxing . . .

Fourth Barker Come along, lady. Bring in the young gentleman. Let him see the action . . .

Auntie Oh no . . .

Fourth Barker Come along. Two is it?

Ernie Yes please. Two.

Fourth Barker Thank you, son.

Auntie Eh?

Ernie This way, Auntie.

Before Auntie May can protest, she and Ernie are inside the boxing-booth. The Crowd have formed a square around the ring in which stand Kid Saracen, Eddie Edwards and the Referee

Referee Ladies and gentlemen, introducing on my right, the ex-unofficial challenger for the World Heavyweight Championship—KID SARACEN . . .

Boos from the Crowd

And on my left, the challenger from Newcastle upon Tyne—
EDDIE EDWARDS . . .

The Crowd cheers

(*To the boxers*) Right, I want a good, clean fight, lads. No low blows and when I say "break"—stop boxing right away. Good luck.

Timekeeper Seconds out.

The bell rings. The Crowd cheers as the boxers size each other up. They mostly cheer on Edwards—"Come on, Eddie", "Murder him, Eddie", etc. The boxers swap a few punches

Auntie Oooh. I can't look.

The man next to her starts cheering

Man Flatten him, Eddie!

Auntie peers out from behind her hands in time to see the Kid clout Eddie fairly hard

Auntie Hey, you stop that!

Man Get at him, Eddie . . .!

Auntie Yes, that's right, get at him!

Man Hit him!

Auntie Knock him down!

Man Smash him!

Auntie Batter him! (*She starts to wave her arms about in support of Eddie, throwing punches at the air*)

Man That's it, missis. You show 'em.

Auntie I would, I would.

Man Give 'em a run for their money, would you?

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