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HANDBAG

by Mark Ravenhill

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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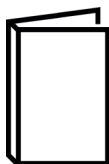
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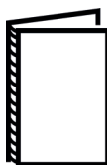


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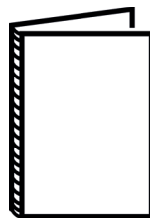
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mark Ravenhill was born in Haywards Heath, West Sussex in 1966. He studied Drama and English at Bristol University. His first play *Shopping and Fucking* was produced by Out of Joint and the Royal Court Theatre in 1996. Subsequent plays include *Faust Is Dead* and *Handbag* (both Actors Touring Company), *Some Explicit Polaroids* (Out of Joint at the Ambassadors Theatre), *Mother Clap's Molly House* and *Citizenship* (both National Theatre), *Pool (No Water)* (Frantic Assembly at the Lyric Theatre), *The Cut* (Donmar Theatre), *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (Paines Plough) and *Over There* (Royal Court). From 2012 to 2014, Mark was playwright in residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company, producing a new version of Brecht's *Galileo* and *Candide* inspired by Voltaire (both Swan Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon). Mark's work in music theatre includes a new English version of Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* with additional material by Michael Nyman (King's Head); *Ten Plagues*, a song cycle for Marc Almond with composer Connor Mitchell (Traverse Theatre) and *Elysium* with composer Rolf Wallin for the Norwegian Opera. Mark is the co-creator of the ITV sitcom *Vicious*.

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HANDBAG

Handbag commissioned by Actors Touring Company, was first performed at the Lyric Hammersmith Studio, London, on 14 September 1998. The cast was as follows:

TOM/CARDEW	Tim Crouch
LORRAINE/PRISM	Faith Flint
PHIL	Paul Rattray
SUZANNE/CONSTANCE	Julie Riley
MAURETTA/AUGUSTA	Celia Robertson
DAVID/MONCRIEFF	Andrew Scarborough
 DIRECTED BY	Nick Philippou
DESIGNED BY	Gideon Davey
LIGHTING BY	Simon Mills
SOUND BY	Christopher Shutt
PRODUCED BY	Hetty Shand

CHARACTERS

MAURETTA

SUZANNE

DAVID

TOM

PHIL

LORRAINE

PRISM

AUGUSTA

CARDEW

MONCRIEFF

CONSTANCE

The first production of the play doubled the characters as follows: **MAURETTA/AUGUSTA**, **SUZANNE/CONSTANCE**, **DAVID/MONCRIEFF**, **TOM/CARDEW**, **LORRAINE/PRISM**.

A slash in the dialogue (/) is a cue for the next actor to start their line, creating overlapping dialogue.

Scene One

SUZANNE, MAURETTA *and* DAVID *waiting.*

MAURETTA I hope he's alright.

SUZANNE It's probably just a bit difficult...performing...to order.

DAVID It means a lot to Tom. It means a lot to both of us.

MAURETTA To all of us.

DAVID And when it means so much...to all of us...then it must be difficult to have a wank.

SUZANNE ...A wank?

DAVID Alright. It must be hard to spill your love seed. / Summon up the spirits of the ancestors of fertility.

SUZANNE I'm not saying...no. Just wank's a bit...functional.

DAVID Alright.

Pause.

MAURETTA If Tom's finding it a bit difficult...

DAVID He'll be fine.

MAURETTA Yes, but if the pressure's really / blocking...

DAVID He'll get there.

MAURETTA Then maybe you / should...

DAVID No. We agreed. This is Tom's... I mean, I'm right behind Tom...but Tom really wants to... I mean, no kid wants to end up with my gene pool.

MAURETTA You shouldn't be so / down on yourself.

DAVID Gene swamp, really. I'm still trying to sort myself out.
Tom's more...sorted.

Pause.

MAURETTA Maybe we can help him.

SUZANNE A helping hand?

MAURETTA Well, I think that's David's territory.

DAVID I'll give it a go.

MAURETTA I mean... I don't know. Music or something.

DAVID I know, I know.

DAVID *produces a porn magazine.*

This should do the trick.

SUZANNE No.

DAVID Might get him going.

SUZANNE No. No.

MAURETTA If it does / the trick...

SUZANNE I'm not having my... Our baby is not being / conceived
with some oiled-up, fake-tanned rent-a-dick porn model.
I'm not having that.

DAVID (*showing different pages*) This one? This one? Or...how
about? (*porn-star voice*) Hey Brad, my parents are away for
the summer. How about / coming over and having a kid?

SUZANNE Put it away. Put it away.

Beat.

MAURETTA Go on. Give it a go.

SUZANNE Yes?

MAURETTA Yeah. Go on. If that's what it takes...

DAVID Alright. (*porn-star voice*) Oh Brad, yeah. Give me that
baby. Give it to me.

Exit DAVID with porn.

SUZANNE I thought you wouldn't want...

MAURETTA Anything that works. Just waiting for the starter's orders now. My body's ready now, you know? All those little hormones rushing around screaming...come on, come on. We're up for it. Start the clock.

SUZANNE It's gonna work.

MAURETTA Think so?

SUZANNE I know it is.

MAURETTA How?

SUZANNE I dunno. I just...believe. I love you.

MAURETTA I love you.

SUZANNE Mummy.

MAURETTA Mummy.

Enter DAVID and TOM.

How did you...?

TOM *holds up a cup.*

TOM Ta-tum. All done.

DAVID Got there all by himself.

SUZANNE Well done.

They all hug and kiss TOM. TOM gives the cup to MAURETTA.

MAURETTA When I was a kid my dad walked out. One day he came home and he packed a bag and he stuck his head round the door and he said: "I'm going out." And that was it. He was gone and we never mentioned him again. But people would look at you and they'd say: "It's not right. A mum and a dad's best for a kid. A kid's gotta have a mum and a dad."

So they should be fucking pleased now. Because you, my child, will be doubly blessed. There's a positive glut of parents here for you. You've enough mummies and daddies that if one decides to pack a bag and move on you've got plenty to be going on with.

And we love you and we want you and we're waiting for you.

MAURETTA kisses the cup, passes it around the others, who each kiss the cup. Loud music through the walls.

SUZANNE Oh god. The child abuser.

TOM Yes?

SUZANNE Next door. The child abuser. We reckon he's got all the local kids in there. Chopped up.

TOM No?

SUZANNE And we reckon he turns the music up really loud so you can't hear the screams.

TOM Oh.

DAVID Joke.

SUZANNE Yes. It's a joke.

MAURETTA Right then.

SUZANNE Right then. Here we go.

MAURETTA Can't let this get cold.

SUZANNE Fingers crossed.

SUZANNE kisses MAURETTA. Exit SUZANNE and MAURETTA.

TOM It's really not very conducive. Boom boom boom. What's that? (*the porn*)

DAVID That? Doesn't matter.

TOM Show me. Oh. Why did you...?

DAVID Just thought you might need...

TOM Not with that.

DAVID Alright.

TOM No. I don't want this to be... That's... It's sordid.

DAVID Sorry.

TOM ...Sorry. I just want everything to be... You see so many kids. At the end of school, the parents come and pick them up. And I watch them from the staffroom window, and they grab hold of the kid's hand and it's: "shut up" – swipe – "Keep your fucking mouth shut." I mean, how's a child supposed to grow, develop and grow, when there's so much anger and, and...ugliness? And that's why I want... We can do so much better than that. We can create something calm and positive. We can do that.

Pause.

DAVID I love you.

TOM And...I love you. Daddy.

DAVID Daddy.

Scene Two

Victoria Station.

PRISM, *in great distress, is searching. She carries a suitcase.*

PRISM Oh...where? Oh where can it be?

Enter AUGUSTA, carrying a large handbag.

Oh thank god.

(*to AUGUSTA*) Excuse me. Excuse me. You've made a terrible mistake.

AUGUSTA I don't think so.

PRISM But you have.

AUGUSTA I never make mistakes.

PRISM Please – there has been an awful muddle.

AUGUSTA Let me pass.

PRISM We must sort out this confusion.

AUGUSTA Are you a lunatic?

PRISM I am a novelist.

AUGUSTA That is much the same thing.

PRISM No.

PRISM *grabs the handbag.*

AUGUSTA Let go of my bag.

PRISM It's not your bag.

AUGUSTA I was warned that London would be like this. Lunatics,
/ brigands, vagabonds.

PRISM It's not your bag. It is my bag. This...this is your bag.

AUGUSTA Oh. Are you sure?

PRISM Quite sure.

AUGUSTA How can you tell?

PRISM Because they are quite different. Look. Look.

AUGUSTA I'm afraid looking is not one of my natural talents.

PRISM But surely you / can see...?

AUGUSTA In fact all my talents are quite artificial. I shall use my glasses. Oh. What is this?

PRISM It is a handbag.

AUGUSTA A handbag?

AUGUSTA *drops the bag.*

PRISM Don't. No. Don't. / Take care.

AUGUSTA An ordinary handbag.

PRISM If you have caused any / damage—

AUGUSTA The most ordinary handbag I have ever seen.

PRISM How superficial you are. You must think of the inside. What is inside is of great importance.

AUGUSTA To challenge substance over style is quite a challenge to society, is it not?

PRISM (*talking into, bag*) There. There. No damage done. You are quite alright.

AUGUSTA Whatever are you...?

PRISM The manuscript of my new novel.

AUGUSTA You are rather plain to be a novelist, are you not?

PRISM I don't think you should call me plain. Plain is a rather insulting word to use with someone you don't know.

AUGUSTA What an eejit...foolish person I am. I was forgetting one of the primary rules of life: insult only those to whom you have been introduced. Miss O'Flaherty.

PRISM Miss Prism.

AUGUSTA Prism. That is rather scientific, is it not?

PRISM O'Flaherty. That is rather Irish, is it not?

AUGUSTA Pray, don't talk to me about Ireland. I detest Ireland.

PRISM But you are Irish.

AUGUSTA Oh there are very few Irish left nowadays on account of their choosing to die in such vast numbers. If one encounters famine, they all must.

PRISM You sound Irish.

AUGUSTA How persistent you are. I am not Irish. Except by birth and upbringing. Which, I am sure you will agree, are of no relevance whatsoever. O'Flaherty does make me sound a little Irish but I shall lose the name O'Flaherty very soon. I shall be married before the season is quite over.

PRISM You seem very certain of that.

AUGUSTA It is inevitable. I am in my full bloom. I am here to live with my sister and her husband. No doubt you have heard of them. The Moncrieffs.

PRISM Colonel Moncrieff?

AUGUSTA There. I knew you had.

PRISM Colonel Moncrieff of Belgrave Square?

AUGUSTA I believe his Indian campaign was much remarked upon. To lose so many men in such a short space of time always leads to comment and medals and so forth. Yes. Colonel Moncrieff of Belgrave Square.

PRISM Then we are making the same journey. I too am going to live with Colonel and Mrs Moncrieff of Belgrave Square.

AUGUSTA How remarkable. No doubt you are a distant relation of the Colonel's. Oh, sister, delighted, delighted.

PRISM No, not sister. I am to be nanny to your sister's child.

AUGUSTA Oh. It is born?

PRISM No. But it is imminent.

AUGUSTA A nanny? Didn't you a moment ago tell me that you were a novelist?

PRISM I am a novelist...and a nanny.

AUGUSTA That doesn't seem quite proper. A baby and a book. That could lead to great confusion, could it not?

PRISM It could not. I am never confused.

AUGUSTA I am not quite sure it is proper to talk to a nanny. Particularly such a very plain one.

PRISM Plain, plain, plain. You are quite intolerable.

AUGUSTA You understand me already. Now come. I like you a great deal and as I like you a great deal, you may carry my bag.

Scene Three

Office.

PHIL *stands. Blood is running from his nose.*

PHIL Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Enter DAVID with a bowl of water and a cloth.

DAVID Alright. If you...

PHIL Cunt. Cunt. Cunt.

DAVID If you sit down.

PHIL Fucking cunt.

DAVID Alright. If you sit down so I can...

PHIL Ooooh.

DAVID It's not so bad. Looks a lot worse than it is.

PHIL It's not safe, is it? Nowhere's safe when some cunt can just leap at you and...

DAVID Keep still. Almost there.

There. No serious damage done.

PHIL Should have been police around.

DAVID Well...

PHIL Should be police everywhere with cunts around like that. They should have cameras up. Watching them.

DAVID Maybe it's just as well they didn't.

PHIL They want to get that cunt on video. That's what they want to do.

DAVID You think so? Could be tricky. Put cameras up and you get all sorts of other cunts on video as well.

PHIL Well yeah...

DAVID Like cunts who snatch handbags from other poor unsuspecting cunts.

PHIL What you saying?

DAVID Nothing.

PHIL Come on. What you saying?

DAVID I'm saying that maybe there's a reason why you got a bloody nose.

PHIL You reckon?

DAVID And maybe if you snatch a handbag it's not surprising if someone runs after you and gives you a hard time.

PHIL I gave it back.

DAVID Wise move. He might have carried on kicking if you hadn't.

PHIL I could have handled him.

DAVID Of course you could.

PHIL You Old Bill?

DAVID No.

PHIL You gonna grass me up?

DAVID No.

PHIL So what you after?

DAVID Me? Nothing. Just...a Good Samaritan.

PHIL You work here?

DAVID That's right.

PHIL You'll be in trouble. Back here after hours.

DAVID Oooh, I think they'll forgive me. Drink?

PHIL I've gotta go.

DAVID Stay for a drink. I'll raid the boardroom. Glass of wine?
Beer?

PHIL Alright. Beer.

*Exit DAVID. PHIL goes over to a TV/video. Pushes play.
The video starts:*

SUZANNE *(on video)* And that tea. Is that your regular brand of tea?

LORRAINE *(on video)* Oh yeah. We always have this one.

SUZANNE *(on video)* And why do you think that is, Lorraine?

LORRAINE *(on video)* I don't know. It's a family thing.

SUZANNE *(on video)* Is that an important consideration when you're shopping?

LORRAINE *(on video)* You get a taste for things, don't you?

Enter DAVID with two cans of beer.

SUZANNE *(on video)* So, you wouldn't say you often try new products?

LORRAINE *(on video)* Do you think I'm old-fashioned?

DAVID Drinks are served.

You enjoying that?

PHIL Is that your job?

DAVID A part of it.

PHIL Ask people about tea bags?

DAVID Right now, we're the most sought after team in the business.

PHIL To ask people about tea bags?

DAVID To ask people about tea bags...in a completely new way. We actually go and live with the consumers of tea bags. Tea bags and air fresheners and pizzas. The full gamut of modern life. Live with them for a week, take along a video camera and video their choices, their habits and discover all the stuff statistics never tell us. Yeah. Thought you'd be impressed.

PHIL Live with them?

DAVID Live with them.

PHIL Could get a bit...

DAVID Strictly impersonal. Observation- not relationship-orientated.

PHIL Still, you must think about... I mean, she's (*woman on video*) ...she's alright, isn't she?

DAVID Not my type.

PHIL No. What's your type?

DAVID Well...

PHIL Bet your type's more...

DAVID Yes?

PHIL Bet I'm more your type.

DAVID What makes you think that?

PHIL 'Cos you're a Good Samaritan with a stiffy.

DAVID Well...yes.

PHIL Good Samaritan. He didn't walk by. That's the one, isn't it? Didn't walk by. Got involved.

PHIL kneels down, undoes DAVID's flies. Sucks DAVID's cock. Almost instantly, DAVID's pager goes off.

Fucking hell. What's that?

DAVID Pager.

PHIL I thought you were alarmed.

DAVID Listen... I've got to go.

PHIL Tea bag emergency?

DAVID Come on. I've got to go.

PHIL I'll finish you off.

DAVID No.

PHIL Can't go until I've finished you off.

DAVID It's really very important. I...

PHIL Only take a few minutes.

***PHIL** unclips the pager from **DAVID**'s trousers, sets it down some distance away from them, then unzips **DAVID**'s flies and starts sucking him off again. This goes on for some time. The pager beeps. **DAVID** tries to move but **PHIL** holds him in place. More sucking. The pager is still beeping. **DAVID** struggles to get to it. **PHIL** gets there first.*

Don't let it control you.

DAVID Please.

PHIL Be your own person. Say: this is my time and I am my own person.

DAVID Come on.

***PHIL** reads the page.*

PHIL "Labour started"?

DAVID That's right.

PHIL What does that mean? Labour started?

DAVID It means...it means my child is about to be born.

PHIL Yeah? Poof with a kid. Wicked.

DAVID So. Yeah, wicked. I ought to / go to the hospital.

PHIL I wasn't there. My kid was born. I wasn't there. Her mother was in another hostel. They never told me. She should have told me but she's a junkie cunt.

DAVID Did you want to be there?

PHIL Best to keep away. Do you want to be there?

DAVID Yes.

PHIL I can't even take care of myself. I can't work it out. There's so much to do, isn't there? You've got to clean yourself,

your clothes, your room. You've gotta buy things and pay for things and order things. All this stuff just to take care of yourself. I mean, I can't see how anyone does it, I just can't cope. How do you cope?

DAVID I don't know. It's just natural.

PHIL For you. Yes. For people like you. But for me... I mean I cut myself. In the bathroom or the kitchen or whatever. All the time these little cuts. And I look down at it, at the blood and that and I think: I should do something about this. I should...it should be natural to know what to do. But I can't remember or maybe I never knew. So I just stand there. Watch myself bleeding.

DAVID Sort yourself out.

PHIL I'm trying, you know. I try. But things just keep on fucking up.

DAVID Then try harder.

PHIL I wet myself. I wet the bed. Every night I wake myself up with it and I don't know what to do and I lie in it.

DAVID That's disgusting.

PHIL I know.

DAVID Get a doctor. Get a social worker.

PHIL Get a life.

DAVID Yeah. Get a life.

PHIL Oh oh oh. I've done it. I've pissed myself.

DAVID Stop it. Stop that.

PHIL Please. Please. Help me.

DAVID Clean yourself up.

PHIL I don't know how. Please. Please. Don't want to be like this. Damp and pissy. You gotta...

DAVID Come on then. Alright. Alright.

DAVID *removes PHIL's trousers and mops him down.*

PHIL Has it gone now? Did you make it go away?

DAVID Yes. All gone now.

PHIL You're clever. I like you. See, I need you. What do you do with this? (*the cloth*)

DAVID You wash it.

PHIL How do you do that, then?

Beat.

Do you want me to finish you off?

DAVID ...Yes.

PHIL Yes *please*.

DAVID Yes please.

PHIL Twenty quid.

DAVID I'm sorry?

PHIL Twenty quid. Come on. Nothing's for nothing. Twenty quid.

Scene Four

Flat.

SUZANNE *videos* LORRAINE, *who is eating.*

SUZANNE So what's that, Lorraine?

LORRAINE It's a pizza.

SUZANNE What type of...?

LORRAINE Cheese and tomato pizza.

SUZANNE A cheese and tomato pizza.

LORRAINE Want some?

SUZANNE No thank you.

LORRAINE If you want a bit...

SUZANNE No thank you.

LORRAINE Is that "getting involved"?

SUZANNE ...That's right.

LORRAINE You're not allowed to do that, are you?

SUZANNE There doesn't seem to be... I can't see very much cheese.

LORRAINE You oughtta eat something.

SUZANNE In fact, I can't see any cheese at all.

LORRAINE That's right.

SUZANNE So...a cheese and tomato pizza with no cheese. That's a bit unusual.

LORRAINE There was cheese.

SUZANNE Yes?

LORRAINE But I scraped it off.

SUZANNE I see. / Scraped it off.

LORRAINE Yeah. Scraped it off. Go on. Taste it. It's nice.

SUZANNE Why did you scrape it off, Lorraine? Don't you /
like the cheese?

LORRAINE You'll waste away, you will.

SUZANNE Why did you buy a cheese and tomato pizza and
scrape off the cheese?

LORRAINE Do you think I'm weird?

SUZANNE I'm not here to pass judgement.

LORRAINE You think I'm weird.

SUZANNE No, no, no.

LORRAINE You think it's stupid, scrape off the cheese.

SUZANNE No.

LORRAINE Taste it.

SUZANNE ...No.

LORRAINE Maybe it is stupid.

SUZANNE Hey, we're all a bit stupid sometimes.

Sometimes I'm very stupid. Sometimes I'm totally bonkers.

LORRAINE You're not.

SUZANNE I am.

LORRAINE You're not.

SUZANNE So why did you scrape off the cheese, Lorraine?

LORRAINE My mum used to scrape off the cheese.

SUZANNE I see. Your mum used to scrape off the cheese.

LORRAINE That's right.

Little bit. You know you want it.

SUZANNE Well...thank you.

LORRAINE You're involved now.

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