

Stake-out

By

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CAST:

Tom: A man in his early thirties.

Frank: A man in his mid forties.

Viv: a woman in her mid thirties.

Stake-out

Set: Room in a dilapidated, almost derelict, house. Window in back wall, doorway down stage left, old empty packing cases up stage right. Wallpaper hanging off the walls, lath showing through the plaster. Tom paces the room nervously, periodically looking out of the window.

Sound of footsteps on the stairs. Frank enters the room, carrying a hold-all.

Tom I thought you weren't going to show.

Frank I got held up.

Tom Where's the gun?

Frank It's in the bag. [Walks around looking at the place.]

It's a bit of a dump, isn't it.

Tom It's all I could find.

Frank I suppose it'll do.

Tom It's the location that counts.

Frank [Looking out the window.] True.

Tom When's he coming?

Frank Soon.

Tom When.

Frank Soon. I said soon.

Tom It's just -

Frank Calm down. Just calm down. Right.

Tom Yeah.

Frank [Holding Tom's shoulders and looking into his eyes.] Right!

Tom Yeah.

Frank Everything is gonna be all right.

Tom Yeah.

Frank [Frank lets go of Tom.] That's better. Christ! I'm tired. Traffic's murder. [Thinks for a moment then laughs.] That's funny, eh? "Traffic's murder". [Laughs again.]

Tom [Without amusement.] Yeah, funny.

Frank It is though. Took a lot longer than I thought. I expect he'll be late.

Tom Oh shit.

Frank We'll just have to wait. Nothing else for it. Got a light?

Tom [Fishes in his pockets.] Yeah. Got one somewhere.

Frank Don't hurry, I got all day.

Tom [Still searching his pockets.] I know I got it somewhere.

Frank You'd lose your fucking balls if they weren't in a sack.

Tom [Triumphantly retrieves a box of matches.] Got 'em!

Frank Brilliant. [Takes matches and lights cigarette.] I knew I could rely on you. Want one?

Tom No. No thanks.

Frank When I first saw you. Down the Duke of Albemarle. I said to myself. There's a man you can rely on.

Tom [Seeming genuinely pleased.] Really.

Frank Oh yes.

Tom No one ever said that before.

Frank It just goes to show what a sorry state the world is in.

Tom [Puzzled.] What?

Frank The way nobody has, until now, spotted your finer features, your hidden talents. What's the time.

Tom Quarter past.

Frank A quarter past. I reckon he should be here by half past. Wouldn't you say.

Tom Probably.

Frank Yeah. Probably. But he might get held up. I got held up. If it can happen to me it can happen to him.

Tom S'ppose so.

Frank Oh yes. The one thing you can rely on in life is you can't rely on anything.

Tom Yeah.

Frank Except you. I can rely on you, can't I?

Tom Yeah. Course you can.

Frank I thought so. Just checking. You know how it is. In my line I have to make snap decisions. It's not easy, I can tell you. Snap decisions. I have to be prepared to sum someone up in a few seconds; by the way they move, the way they look, something they say.

Tom Really.

Frank Oh yes. Of course, it's mostly the way they move. They don't have to speak. I can tell by just watching the way they move. Body language.

Tom What?

Frank It's called Body Language. The way people move. It says a lot about them. It gives them away. They don't have to open their mouths. It's their bodies give them away.

Tom That's clever.

Frank Yes. Yes, it is. It's very handy. [Cautiously looking out the window.] You can do a lot with body language. [Pause.] I hate waiting. Does it make you nervous?

Tom What?

Frank Waiting. Does waiting make you nervous?

Tom Haven't thought about it. I s'ppose so.

Frank It makes most people nervous. They use it. In certain circumstances they use it, making people wait, to break them down. You wouldn't let it break you down, would you?

Tom No.

Frank I'm glad to hear it. I wouldn't want you breaking down on me.

Tom You can rely on me, Frank.

Frank I'm glad to hear it. [Sits on floor with his back to the wall, smoking his cigarette.] What's the time?

Tom Twenty past.

Frank I think he's going to be late. Don't you?

Tom Might be.

Frank Yes. It's a distinct possibility. Traffic's murder out there. I expect it's road works. It's usually road works. Or road improvement. It could be road improvement. They could have improved a road so it gets twice as congested as it used to. [Pause smoking.] Got anything to drink?

Tom [Looking round.] I don't know.

Frank You didn't bring anything?

Tom No.

Frank [Pulls out hip flask.] I did. [Unscrews and takes a shot, proffers it to Tom.] Want a shot?

Tom No thanks.

Frank Bourbon. Jim Bean. Very nice.

Tom No thanks.

Frank Suit yourself. [Takes another shot and returns it to his pocket.] Just as

well. Keep a clear head. That's what's needed, eh?

Tom Yeah.

Frank [Gets up and looks out of the window.] He's definitely going to be late.

Tom When do I get paid?

Frank [Turns and looks at Tom icily.] After. After it's done. That's when you get paid. Does that present you with any difficulties?

Tom No. That's all right.

Frank Any cash flow problems? Need a sub. I could lend you a tenner. I might even stretch it to a twenty.

Tom No. That's all right.

Frank It won't be long now anyway, will it? Not long.

Tom No.

Frank [They sit in silence for a while. Frank starts sniffing.] It smells a bit in here, wouldn't you say?

Tom [Sniffs.]

Frank Wouldn't you say it's a bit whiffy? [Gets up and starts looking around.] Has something died in here? [Approaches Tom.] It's not you is it?

Tom No!

Frank Only I can't work with people who smell. I won't have it, smelling. I have standards.

Tom It's not me!

Frank Okay. Keep your hair on. [Sniffs again.] It's kind of musky. I suppose it's damp. [Sniffs again.] But there's something else. Something's definitely died round here. I can tell. I can smell it. You can tell that smell anywhere. [Searches around the room.] Can't you smell it?

Tom Sort of.

Frank Sort of! You either can or you can't! If you can't smell it there must be

something wrong with your hooter. [Continues searching, starts moving some old crates in a corner. Goes behind them and with his foot prods a dead rat into the centre of the room.] What did I tell you? I knew something'd died round here.

Tom It's horrible.

Frank Of course it's horrible. It's dead. [Peering down at the rat.] I'd say it's been dead quite some time. Lost a bit a weight I'd say. [Moves back to the crates and looks down.] Someone's had a crap in the corner too.

Tom It wasn't me!

Frank I didn't say it was. Anyway, it's an old turd, all dried up, must have lost it's smell by now. Probably a tramp. [Moving back into the room.] Next time I want to employ the services of an estate agent remind me not to call you.

Tom It's the location –

Frank that counts, yes I know. [Looking out the window.] At least it has a good view.

Tom He will come, won't he?

Frank He'd better.

Tom What if he doesn't come?

Frank Not come?

Tom Yes. What if he doesn't come? What then?

Frank He's bound to come.

Tom But what if he doesn't? What if something's happened? What then?

Frank We'll just have to wait.

Tom We can't wait forever.

Frank Very perceptive.

Tom I don't think he's going to turn up.

Frank Oh yes. And on what do you base this pronouncement.

Tom I just have a feeling.

Frank You have a feeling.

Tom Yes.

Frank Christ! I'm lumbered with someone who has feelings!

Tom He should have been here by now.

Frank So he's late, he's got held up. The traffic's murder. [They both sit in silence.] Got anything to eat.

Tom No.

Frank Waiting makes me hungry. Always has. I could do with a nice ham sandwich and a bottle of beer. Cornish pastie. Ploughman's lunch. I'd settle for a sandwich.

Tom You're making me hungry.

Frank You're hungry. I'm starving. I didn't get any breakfast. Too busy. [They are interrupted by the sound of someone coming up the stairs. Frank rushes to the window but can't see anything. He picks up his bag and hides it behind the crates. Enter Viv. She halts suddenly and stares at Tom and Frank, they stare back.]

Viv What are you doing here?

Frank I could say the same thing to you.

Viv This is my property.

Frank You haven't looked after it very well.

Viv I've only recently inherited it; not that it's any business of yours. Who are you?

Frank We're from the council – extermination – we're exterminators – we've had complaints.

Viv Complaints?

Frank [Pointing to the rat.] The rats.

Viv Oh.

Frank Very nasty. Can't allow that kind of thing to go on. Complaints from the neighbours.

Viv My uncle neglected his affairs towards the end.

Frank Spreads disease.

Viv The poor dear was a bit gaga, you see.

Frank Been empty long, has it?

Viv Yes. After the last tenant passed away Uncle intended to sell it but he never got around to it. I did wonder what I'd find but I had no idea it would be this bad.

Frank That's the problem with property. It requires constant attention otherwise it deteriorates something shocking.

Viv Do you think we've had squatters?

Frank I shouldn't wonder. [Taking her to the corner and showing her the turd.] There are signs of human habitation.

Viv Oh. Why are people so disgusting?

Frank I don't know. I've often wondered myself, but I never come up with a satisfying answer.

Viv Are there many?

Frank Turds?

Viv No. Rats.

Frank We're not sure, are we Tom?

Tom No.

Frank We've only just started our preliminary investigation.

Viv How long will it take?

Frank Not long.

Viv Good. I haven't got all day. How did you get in?

Frank The door was open.

Viv No it wasn't.

Frank Yes it was.

Viv Really.

Frank Yes. Wasn't it Tom?

Tom Yes.

Frank When we arrived it was off the latch.

Viv How odd.

Frank Probably the squatters. You should have better security.

Viv Yes. I suppose you're right. How much do you think it's worth?

Frank I wouldn't know, I'm an exterminator not an estate agent. Ask my friend.

Viv Are you an estate agent?

Tom No.

Viv Then what are you?

Tom I'm his assistant.

Viv An assistant exterminator?

Tom Yes.

Viv How quaint.

Frank It takes years of training.

Viv Really.

Frank Yes. There's more to exterminating than most people think.

Viv You amaze me.

Frank Oh yes. It can get very complicated.

Viv I suppose so.

Frank There's more than meets the eye to most things.

Viv How true.

Frank You, for instance.

Viv Me?

Frank Yes, you. You have style.

Viv Really.

Frank Yes. Look at those clothes! You have natural style.

Viv Really.

Frank Oh yes. I can always spot style when I see it. And you've got it.
You've got it in abundance.

Viv How kind of you to say so.

Frank Think nothing of it. I only speak the truth. Don't I Tom?

Tom Oh yes. He does.

Viv But appearances can sometimes be deceptive, can't they.

Frank Not to me.

Viv Really?

Frank Not to me.

Viv You're very confident.

Frank You have to be confident in my profession. [Pulls out flask and offers it
to Viv.] Would you care for a drink?

Viv What is it?

Frank Jim Bean.

Viv In there?

Frank Yes. Bourbon. Jim Bean. Very warming.

Viv [Takes the flask and drinks.] I see what you mean. Why is your friend
looking out of the window in that furtive way?

Frank He's a bit nervous today.

Viv Is he often like that?

Frank It's work stress.

Tom Frank! He's coming.

Frank Are you sure?

Tom I've got eyes in me fucking 'ead 'aven't I?

Frank Language. There's a lady present.

Tom He's coming.

Frank All right I heard you. [To Viv.] Excuse me a moment. [Gets the bag out from behind the packing cases, and pulls out a snipers rifle.] I have some work to attend to.

Viv I had no idea rats were so formidable.

Frank This one is.

Viv Don't let me interrupt you. I love to see men at work.

Frank You do, do you?

Viv Yes. It's very erotic. Don't you think?

Frank I never thought of it that way.

Tom Here they come.

Frank I see them.

Tom Coming . . . coming.

Frank [Fires a shot.]

Tom Got him!

Frank [Fires another shot.]

Tom And another one bites the dust! [A shot smashes into the window frame near Tom who jumps back.]

Frank [Fires another shot.]

Tom Full house! And not before time.

Frank I suppose you could've done it quicker?

Viv Bravo!

Frank Thank you.

Viv That was so / exciting.

Tom Well done Frank.

Frank Thank you. It's all in a days work.

Viv Who would have thought an inheritance could be so exhilarating?

Frank [To Tom.] Go down and fetch their attache case. [Tom scrambles up and hurriedly leaves the room. To Viv.] Alone at last.

Viv I thought he'd never go.

Frank Me too.

Viv That was very cunning.

Frank What?

Viv Giving him that pointless task just so we could be alone together.

Frank There's nothing pointless about an attache case full of heroin.

Viv Oh.

Frank I won't have exchange value made a mockery of.

Viv I had no idea.

Frank That's okay then.

Viv Won't people be curious?

Frank What?

Viv All that noise. The shooting. People will be curious.

Frank Not round here. Cars backfire all the time, round here.

Viv I had no idea my Uncle's property was in such a noisy area.

Frank The neighbourhood is in sad decline.

Viv Do you know what I like about you?

Frank Surprise me.

Viv You're so authoritative.

Frank Really. [Preening.] You think so.

Viv Oh yes. I find authoritative men quite irresistible.

Frank Do you?

Viv Yes. [they embrace – lots of passionate kissing and groping. Viv suddenly backs off.] Aren't you afraid he'll run off?

Frank Who, Tom? No. He wouldn't dare. I'd kill him slowly if he crossed me. He knows that.

Viv I see.

Frank And it's a question of initiative.

Viv Initiative?

Frank Yes. He hasn't got any.

Viv Oh.

Frank That's why I can rely on him. You can always rely on someone with no initiative – provided you don't give them anything complicated to do.

Viv You're so wise. [Stroking his chest.]

Frank I do my best.

Viv I bet you do.

Frank Want to find out?

Viv Be my guest. [They disappear behind the packing cases. After a pause Tom re-enters with the attache case – looks around surprised the room is deserted.]

Tom Frank? Where are you, Frank?

Frank [Voice from behind packing cases.] I'm busy.

Tom I got it.

Frank Fuck off.

Tom What?

Frank Wait outside. I'm busy. [Sounds of passion from behind the packing cases. Tom stands around looking embarrassed, then exits. More

sounds of passion from behind the cases. Frank grunts. He stands, zipping his trousers at the same time.] Thanks. That was nice.

Viv Is that all?

Frank What?

Viv [Standing up.] Is that it?

Frank I'm a busy man. In my trade you can't afford to dawdle. [Viv moves over to the gun and picks it up.] You can have a second installment later, when I'm not in a hurry. [Frank sees Viv examining the gun.] Be careful with that. It might go off.

Viv I like guns.

Frank I knew we'd have a lot in common.

Viv Daddy taught me how to shoot.

Frank A wise man.

Viv Down on the estate.

Frank Watch where you're pointing that thing.

Viv Shooting the vermin. [Viv shoots Frank. He falls down dead. Tom bursts into the room.]

Tom What the –

Viv Oops.

Tom Oh my God

Viv There's been a change of management.