

"THE AUDIENCE"

Written by

Bruce Kane

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

DAN - Unhappy that's he's been dragged to the theatre by his wife...

FRAN - Who loves the theatre because there are no commercials.

TED - Another audience member who'd rather be anyplace but the theatre. .

LIZ - Ted's wife who got their tickets from Shirley

HELEN - Audience member who talks on her phone...constantly.

YOUNG COUPLE - Young audience members who spend the whole time making out.

HOUSE MANAGER - Off stage voice.

(MORE)

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LIGHTS UP ON TWO ROWS OF THEATRE SEATS. FRAN AND DAN ENTER.

DAN
(checking his ticket stubs)

I think these are our seats.

(They sit)

FRAN
Did you remember to turn off the TV?

DAN
Yes, I remembered to turn off the TV.

JENNY
Did you set the DVR?

DAN
Yes, I set the DVR.

JENNY
I just don't want to miss Midsomer Murders.

JENNY
Don't worry, it's on streaming.

FRAN
You know I don't how to do that.

DAN
We could've stayed home. Then you could've watched it live.

(TED AND LIZ ENTER. TED SITS NEXT TO DAN)

FRAN
I hate the commercials.

DAN
It's on PBS. There are no commercials.

FRAN
That's the best part of going to the theatre. No commercials.

DAN
That's the best part? No commercials? I coulda been home watching the ballgame.

TED
(to Dan)
Tell me about it.

(HELEN ENTERS AND SITS DOWN IN THE SECOND ROW. SHE IMMEDIATELY TAKES OUT HER PHONE AND DIALS)

DAN
(introducing himself)
Dan.

TED
(introducing himself.)
Ted. You a fan of theatre.

DAN
No. I'm a fan of the White Sox.

HELEN
(into phone)
I'm at the the theatre. What can I tell ya? I'm a glutton for punishment.

HOUSE MANAGER (O.S.)
Good evening and welcome. We ask you please to turn off all cell phones and electronics. Photography of any kind is strictly prohibited out of respect for the performers, some of whom will be nude.

DAN
(pleased)
Okay.

TED
(to Liz, excited)
You didn't tell me there were going to be naked ladies.

LIZ
(annoyed)
More female exploitation.

TED
(to Dan)
How bad could it be?

LIZ
Shhhh. It's starting.

TED
How can you tell?

LIZ
The actors just came out.

TED
Those are the actors?

LIZ
Yes, those are the actors.

TED
They look like stagehands.

LIZ
They're not stagehands.

TED
They're dressed like stagehands.

LIZ
They're not stagehands.

TED
They're dressed like stagehands.

LIZ
Trust me, those are the actors.

TED
How can you tell?

LIZ
They're not doing anything. Stagehands would be doing something.

TED
Maybe it's a play about stagehands on strike.

LIZ
Just watch and find out.

HELEN
(into phone)
I think it's a western. Something to do with a stage coach.

DAN
(to Ted)
You have any idea what this thing is about?

TED
(to Liz)
Know anything about this play?

LIZ
No, but Shirley said it was very good.

TED
(to Dan)
Shirley said it was very good.

HELEN
(into phone)
Shirley said it was good.

DAN
(to Fran)
Shirley said this play was very good.

FRAN
Whose Shirley?

DAN
How should I know?

FRAN
Then why are you telling me she liked it?

DAN
I thought you'd like to know.

FRAN
How could Shirley, whoever she is, know it's good? It just opened.

DAN
(to Ted)
When did she see it?

TED
See what?

DAN
The play. When did she see it?

TED
Who?

DAN
Shirley.

TED

(to Liz)

When did she see it?

LIZ

Who?

TED

Shirley.

LIZ

See what?

TED

This play. When did she see it? Dan wants to know.

LIZ

Whose Dan?

TED

He's Dan.

DAN

I'm Dan.

TED

Dan wants to know when Shirley saw the play.

DAN

Actually my wife wants to know.

TED

Actually, his wife wants to know.

LIZ

Whose wife?

TED

Dan's wife. She wants to know when Shirley saw the play?

LIZ

(to Dan)

You know Shirley?

DAN

Never had the pleasure.

TED

Lucky you.

DAN

My wife was curious when Shirley saw the play.

LIZ
She didn't.

HELEN
It turns out Shirley never saw the play.

LIZ
These are her tickets.

DAN
(to Fran)
She never saw the play.

FRAN
Who?

DAN
Shirley.

LIZ
She had a baby shower.

TED
(to Dan)
She had a baby shower.

DAN
Who?

TED
Shirley.

HELEN
(still on phone)
Shirley had a baby shower.

DAN
(to Fran)
She had a baby shower.

FRAN
Who had a baby shower?

DAN
Shirley.

FRAN
And I didn't even get her a gift. Boy or girl?

DAN
I think Shirley's a girl.

FRAN
The baby. Boy or girl?

DAN
(to Ted)
Boy or girl?

TED
Who?

DAN
Shirley.

TED
She's a girl.

DAN
Is she having a boy or girl?

TED
I'll find out.
(to Liz)
Boy or girl?

LIZ
Boy or girl what?

TED
Shirley.

LIZ
(confused)
She's a girl.

TED
Shirley's baby. Boy or girl?

HELEN
Did you hear that? Shirley's pregnant.

LIZ
What are you talking about?

HELEN
No. No mention of the father. But, you know Shirley.

LIZ
Shirley's not having a baby.

HELEN
She's not gonna keep it.

TED
 (to Dan)
 Shirley's not having a baby.

DAN
 (to Fran)
 Shirley's not having a baby.

FRAN
 Then I'm glad I didn't buy a gift.

(LIZ SHUSHES THEM. SOMETIME DURING
 THE ABOVE EXCHANGE A YOUNG COUPLE
 ENTER AND TAKE THEIR SEATS IN THE
 SECOND ROW AND QUICKLY BEGIN MAKING
 OUT, WHICH THEY WILL CONTINUE TO
 DO. THE REST SETTLE DOWN TO WATCH
 THE PLAY. AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO.)

TED
 (sotto voce to Dan)
 Why are the actors whispering?

DAN
 I'll check.
 (sotto voce to Fran)
 Ted wants to know why the actors are whispering.

FRAN
 (sotto voce)
 Whose Ted?

DAN
 This is Ted. He wants to know why the actors are whispering.

FRAN
 They're not whispering. They're speaking sotto voce.

DAN
 (to Ted)
 They're speaking Italian.

TED
 Don't tell me there's going to be subtitles. I hate
 subtitles. If I wanted subtitles, I could have stayed home
 and watched Midsomer Murders. At least that's in English.

LIZ
 Shhh. The actors can hear you.

TED
 That's a switch. Cause I can't hear them.

LIZ
It's the style.

TED
You can't hear the actors? That's a style??

LIZ
God, I married a philistine. It's avant garde. Very avant garde.

TED
What the hell is avant garde?

LIZ
It's French. You wouldn't understand.

TED
(to Dan)
They're not Italian.

DAN
You sure?

TED
They're French.

DAN
That explains it.

TED
Explains what?

DAN
Why he's taking his shirt off.

(The Women all sit up and pay very close attention)

LIZ
Oh... my.

FRAN
Oh... yes.

TED
Oh no...

DAN
Now he's taking his pants off.

TED
Why is he taking his pants off?

LIZ

Because it's in the script. That's why. And from what I can see, it's a very well constructed script.

FRAN

Oh my.

LIZ

Oh yes.

TED

Oh God...

DAN

He's not wearing any under...

FRAN

(leaning forward in
her seat)

Will you pipe down. I'm trying to concentrate.

(The Girl, who's been making out
with her boyfriend the whole time,
notices there is a naked man on
stage. While the boyfriend nibbles
her neck, she shifts to get a
better view.)

HELEN

(into phone)

Starkers. Completely. Right here in front of me. Don't you just love the theatre?

DAN

(to Fran)

How much did we pay for these tickets?

FRAN

Thirty dollars.

DAN

A piece?

FRAN

A piece.

DAN

(appalled)

We paid sixty bucks for this?

FRAN
 (really enjoying the
 view)
 And money very well spent.

TED
 (to Dan)
 This is the third play I've been to where some guy's taken
 his pants off. It used to be only women took their clothes
 off on stage.

DAN
 That's when theatre was theatre.

HELEN
 (peers through
 binoculars)
 You know the guy who said there was no such thing as small
 parts, only small actors? He was wrong. But Shirley was so
 right.

DAN
 I couldn't do that. In front of everybody. Could you do
 that?

TED
 God no.

LIZ
 Who'd want you to?

DAN
 (to Fran)
 What has this got to do with anything?

(Fran shushes him. Liz reaches over
 to borrow the binoculars from
 Helen)

TED
 (to Liz)
 Well... if you have to use binoculars.

(Helen starts to retrieve the
 binoculars, but the Girl intercepts
 them. Annoyed, the Boy takes the
 binoculars from the girl and gives
 them back to Helen)

TED
 Relax kid. Remember, it's not the size of the boat, but the
 motion of the ocean.

LIZ
Keep telling yourself that.

DAN
Still and all, that must have been some audition.

(From off stage, we hear the sound
of an audience applauding. Fran and
Liz and the Girl stand up
enthusiastically joining in.)

DAN
Why are you applauding? Why is everyone applauding?

FRAN
It's over.

DAN
What's over?

FRAN
The play is over.

DAN
It's over? What kind of play is over in ten minutes?

FRAN
A ten minute play.

DAN
(to Ted)
Do you believe this? I gave up a ballgame for a play that
only lasts ten minutes.

LIZ
It's only the first one.

TED
What is?

LIZ
The play. It's only the first one.

TED
Y'mean there are more?

FRAN
Yes.

DAN
And they're all ten minutes long?

LIZ
That's why they're called ten minute plays.

TED
Whoever heard of plays that are only ten minutes long?

FRAN
It's all the rage.

DAN
Y'mean, that's all these guys can write is ten minutes?

TED
It took Shakespeare that long just to say hello.

DAN
Hell, I've seen plays with titles that were longer.

LIZ
If you don't like this one, there are eight more coming up.

DAN
(really appalled)
Wait a minute. You're telling me there's eighty more minutes of this stuff?

(Liz nods)

TED
Well, all I gotta say is... if the next one doesn't have bare boobs, I'm outta here.

(Dan and Ted exchange high fives.
The wives just shake their heads in
embarrassment)

LIGHTS DOWN

THE END