

**Affairs
at
The Hart**

**A comedy in two acts
Written by Peter Foord**

Spotlight Publications

Affairs at the Hart

by

Peter Foord

SYNOPSIS

The play is set in a small country hotel somewhere on the moors of Somerset. It is the summer of 1974 and the story revolves around a group of holidaymakers travelling to Weston-super-Mare for a week's getaway. Their mini-bus breaks down en-route and they find themselves stuck in the hotel overnight and because of this, various relationships from the past, present and future are played out with the other guests and staff, in what becomes a very stormy night in more ways than one!

This play was written with assistance from the following people to whom I would like to extend my grateful thanks. To my wife Anita, for her ideas and patience, and to Hutton Drama Club for giving me the inspiration to write in the first place.

P.F.

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

Clive Hodgkins. 30s - a sales representative. Fancies himself as a ladies' man. He has dated a lot of girls of which most have been one night stands.

Alison Medway. 30s - wife of George, lover of Clive. A shy, nervous type. Is on a weekend away with Clive. She has never done anything like this before.

George Medway. 40ish - the minibus driver. Husband of Alison. Quiet, generous and generally "nice" sort of person but can't hold his drink.

Jeffery Baines. 40ish - the hotel manager and owner. Married. Very polite, very efficient. Is having an affair with Lucy.

Dot Mason. 60s - Daisy's best friend. Dotty by name and dotty by nature. Has lived a full life and enjoyed every minute of it. Has been married umpteen times.

Daisy Silvers. 60s - Dot's best friend. They have known and worked with each other since their schooldays. More refined than Dotty but still good for a laugh. Tries to keep Dotty on the straight and narrow.

Julie Richards. 30/40 - daughter of Daisy. Knows her own mind and doesn't care who else knows it. Separated from Derek and an ex-one night stand of Clive.

Susan Mason. 30/40 - daughter of Dot. Quiet sort of person, unlike her mother. Never married, still looking for Mr Right. Has been friends with Julie since they were small children.

Lucy Taylor. 20s - the chambermaid and general help. Is having a fling with Jeffery Baines. Lives with Derek.

Derek Richards. 30s - separated husband of Julie, live-in lover of Lucy. Looks and talks like a reject from the Sixties flower power era.

All of the action takes place in the lobby of a small country hotel on the moors of Somerset in the summer of 1974.

ACT 1

Scene 1: A Friday evening at about 5 p.m.

Scene 2: Later that evening, about 8 p.m.

Interval

ACT 2

Scene 1: Around midnight of the same evening

Scene 2: Around 7.30 am the next morning

ACT 1

Scene 1

Early evening

The scene opens to the foyer of a small country hotel. It is the summer of 1974. The hotel entrance is set back centre and there is a staircase DL and two doors on the SR wall. These lead to the kitchen UR and the dining room DR, and between them on the wall is a public telephone. There is a front desk UL behind which is the office door and there is a large sofa centre stage, next to which is a small coffee table with some magazines on. Against the back wall SR there is a bar and three stools next to it. There is a small window behind the bar. There is a notice board on the left back wall. The décor is tasteful and modern (for the 1970s!). Mr Jeffery Baines the manager is behind the front desk. Alison and Clive enter through the entrance carrying a suitcase each and go to the desk

Alison This is pleasant, isn't it?

Clive Yes, a friend recommended it to me. I've.... er, he's stayed here a couple of times.

Alison Nice and quiet. Just what we wanted. *(She goes over to the notice board by the front doors and reads)*

Clive *(looking around)* Mm, very quiet. *(After waiting a few seconds he rings the bell on the desk)*
Hello, anyone there?

A short while later, Mr Baines, the hotel manager appears from the office

Mr Baines Ah, good evening sir, madam. Can I help you?

Clive Yes, we have a room booked for tonight in the name of Smith.

Mr Baines Let me see. Oh yes, here we are. A double room with breakfast, Mr and Mrs Smith. Room 6, the best room in the hotel, sir.

Clive Thanks. It's very quiet here, isn't it?

Mr Baines A little bit for the time of year. All the bad weather and the three day week has taken its toll, I'm afraid. How would you like to pay, sir?

Clive American Express, okay? *(Hands over card)*

Mr Baines That'll do nicely, sir!

He studies the card for a moment

(In a low voice) Excuse me sir, there seems to be some mistake. This card belongs to a Mr Clive Hodgkins.

Clive *(realising his error)* Oh, er, ah, yes. That's me.

Mr Baines Sorry, sir. I thought you said Mr and Mrs Smith?

Clive *(whispering)* That's right, *(with a knowing wink)* for this weekend.

He thrusts a pound note into the manager's hand

I'm sure you understand, don't you?

Mr Baines *(grinning)* Of course, sir! I'm sorry, Mr Smith I didn't recognise you, it's been a while. Now where were we? Ah, yes, Room 6. It's on the second floor.

He does the business with the card etc. and then hands it back

There we are, sir. All done. I hope you and Mrs Smith have a very pleasant stay.

Clive Come along, darling.

Alison *(in a whisper)* Mr and Mrs Smith? That's not very original, is it? Do you think he knows?

Clive Knows what?

Alison That we're not married, silly. I'm so nervous. I've never done anything like this before.

Clive Don't worry, everything will be fine. Just relax.

They head off towards the stairs

Mr Baines Excuse me, sir!

Alison jumps

You've forgotten your key.

Clive (to Alison) Stop worrying.

Clive returns for the key and then they continue to the stairs

Just relax. Come along.

They exit upstairs and Mr Baines goes back into the office

A short time later the front doors open and George, Sue, Julie and Daisy walk in each carrying suitcase, except Sue who has two. Dot is also there but she is carrying a small bag containing her knitting plus she also has a bucket and spade, a beach ball, an inflatable rubber ring and is wearing a sunhat and sunglasses

George Here we are then, ladies. Safe and sound.

Sue No thanks to that minibus of yours, though.

George Sorry about that. The mechanic says he can't fix it out on the road but don't worry, ladies, we'll have another bus here in the morning, straight after breakfast.

Sue How far are we from Weston-super-Mare anyway?

George Oh, about thirty miles, I guess. It'll only take us about an hour.

Sue Good, then maybe we can get on with our holiday.

Julie Here we are stuck in the middle of heaven knows where. To think we could have been on the pier this evening playing bingo.

Dot Kelly's eye number one!

Daisy House!

Julie Yes. Thank you, you two, don't remind me.

George Right, okay, ladies, let's get booked in.

He rings the bell on the desk

Hello, anyone about?

Mr Baines (reappearing from his office) Good evening, sir. Can I help you?

George Yes. Thank you. We should have some late bookings. We broke down up the road and I believe the company phoned through to book us in for the night. It was Mr Jones of The Greendale Coach Company?

Mr Baines Ah, yes, I have it here... Mr Jones... One single room and two twins. I have put you in Rooms 1, 2 and 3 on the first floor. Number 1 is the single room. If you could just sign here for me. (Hands over the register)

George (signing) The company will settle the bill. If you could send it on to them.

Mr Baines Certainly sir. It's all been arranged. Here are your keys.

Julie (taking charge) Right, I'll take those. Sue, you and Dot have Room 2. Me and Mum will have 3 and here's yours, Mr Medway. Now I'm going up to get changed. Four hours stuck in the back of a minibus is not my idea of fun. I wouldn't mind ordinarily but we had only been moving for less than one of them! You coming?

Sue May as well. There isn't going to be much else to do around here. Maybe we should have ordered a taxi like the rest of them.

Julie Nice thought but we have little enough spending money as it is.

Sue Yeah, true. Oh well, you coming, Mum?

Dot Well, I don't know about you, Daisy, but I just want to take the weight off my legs. (Heads for the sofa) That walk to get here has done me in.

Sue But you only had to walk a few hundred yards.

Daisy That was more than enough for me, thanks.

Dot Me, too! I'll join you. I'm not going to climb up them stairs.

Sue Then you'll have to get your broomstick out then, Mother, because there isn't a lift!

Dot Don't you be so cheeky, my girl.

Julie Right. We'll see you later.

Julie and Sue head for the stairs each trying to carry two suitcases and all of Dot's beach goods

(To Dot and Daisy) I suppose we'll have to take these up then.

Daisy Good girl. There's a dear.

The girls give a raised eyebrow and Dot and Daisy settle themselves down on the sofa. Dot gets her knitting from her bag

Daisy *(looking around)* It's quite nice here, isn't it? Mind you it's all a bit modern for my taste. Makes you wonder what they will come up with next, doesn't it?

Dot Sorry, did you say something?

Daisy I said it's a bit modern, isn't it?

Dot What is?

Daisy The decoration.

Dot What decorations? There aren't any. It's not Christmas.

Daisy No, the wallpaper. Oh, do you know, you're getting worse. Why don't you put your hearing aid on?

Dot Eh? Wait a tick. I'll put me hearing aid on. *(As she does so she jumps because the volume is much too high and we hear a high pitched squeal)* Ow!

Daisy What's the matter?

Dot What? Hang on. I'll never get used to this thing.

She fiddles with the volume control

That's better. Now what did you say?

Daisy I said, put your hearing aid on.

Dot It is on!

Daisy Oh never mind. Go back to your knitting.

Dot It's really nice of the girls to bring us on holiday, isn't it?

Daisy Yes but it's a shame it's started the way it has.

Dot Still, we will be in Weston tomorrow. Then we can get on that pier and start playing.

Daisy That's all you ever think about, isn't it? Bingo.

Dot Well at our time of life what else is there to look forward to?

Daisy True. *(Pause)* We could always chase some nice blokes up and down the prom. *(She laughs)*

Dot Oh, yeah. But don't you think their Zimmer frames might slow them down a bit?

They both giggle like schoolgirls and Mr Baines comes over

Mr Baines I'm glad to see you are both enjoying yourselves, ladies. I wondered if you may care for a cup of tea?

Dot Thank you. That would be very nice.

Daisy Yes, thank you.

Mr Baines Two cups of Rosie Lea coming right up then.

He exits into the dining room

Dot Just what I need.

Daisy Rosie Lea? Cor, it's a long time since I've heard it called that. Do you remember when we used to waitress in the café back home?

Dot Good old Lyons Caffe. Those were the days. Do you remember Mr Jones the manager? He was a one, wasn't he?

Daisy Yeah, you daren't bend over when he was around, he'd goose you as soon as look at you! Dirty old devil! He wouldn't have got away with it these days, would he?

Dot Go on, you used to enjoy it really, didn't you?

Daisy (indignantly) No, I did not! Just cos you did. I remember the things you used to get up to for a free jam doughnut! You were terrible.

Dot Well, we were young, free and single in those days. (After a long pause) I wonder if there are any nice cafés in Weston?

Daisy Hope so cos we'll have to have lunch somewhere. I'm not sitting on the beach with a soggy sandwich and a bottle of pop.

Mr Baines (*entering with a tray of tea*) Here we are, ladies. How would you like it?

Dot Wet and warm, please! (She giggles)

Daisy Oh! Dotty, behave yourself! (To Mr Baines) Please excuse my friend, you can't take her anywhere.

Dot Oh, yes you can. I just won't behave myself!

Daisy Don't mind her. White with two sugars, please.

Dot Me too, thanks.

Mr Baines (pouring the tea) I couldn't help overhearing you before but did you say you were going on to Weston-super-Mare?

Dot That's right. We should have been there this evening if the bus hadn't broken down. Why?

Mr Baines It's just that I have some brochures over in the rack of places to visit if you're interested.

Daisy That would be nice, thank you.

Dot Do they tell you where you can play bingo?

Mr Baines Er, I don't think so but I'll have a look.

He brings over some leaflets

We have one on Cheddar Gorge. This one's about the model village. There's one about the fun fair coming to town and one about a pop concert with some group called the Bay City Rollers. Nothing about bingo, I'm afraid.

Dot That's alright, we'll probably go on the pier anyway. Let's have a look. Tell you what though, we could go and see those Gay City Rollers, I fancy a bit of a boogie, it could be fun!

Daisy (*flabbergasted*) A bit of a boogie? At your age? With your hips? Are you mad? You've been taking too many of your little pink pills again, haven't you? They always make you like this.

Mr Baines Well, I'll leave them with you anyway. Enjoy your tea. (*He goes back to his desk*)

Daisy There, see you've embarrassed him now. He's gone. Such a nice man, too.

Dot (nudges Daisy) Fancy him then, do you? I think he's a bit young for you.

Daisy Oh, stop it now, you're embarrassing me. You're not fit to be let out, you're not. Just behave yourself.

Dot Oh, go on. Live a little! We're on holiday.

The ladies carry on chatting as Clive comes down the stairs and goes over to the desk

Clive Excuse me. Do you have a cigarette machine in the hotel?

Mr Baines No, sorry, sir. You might try the corner shop just down the road, though. It's a bit late but you might just catch them open. You'll have to hurry.

Clive Thanks, I'll give them a try.

He exits through the front door and Mr Baines goes back into his office

Shortly afterwards, George comes down the stairs and goes over to the sofa and talks to Dot and Daisy

George Are you okay, ladies?

Dot Yes, thanks. Although I'd much rather be playing bingo.

Daisy Oh, give it a rest, Dotty. Besides, I'd rather be eating at the moment. I'm famished.

George I know what you mean. I was just going to ask about dinner. I hope they can fit us in at short notice. Have you seen the manager?

Daisy I think he's in his office.

George I'll go and see.

He goes to the desk and rings the bell. Mr Baines comes out, straightening his tie

Mr Baines Yes, sir?

George Will it be possible for us to have an evening meal here tonight?

Mr Baines That's no problem, sir. It has already been booked. Seven o'clock in the dining room over there. I'll just go and check with the chef and make sure he knows.

George Thanks, that's great.

He goes back to Dot and Daisy. Mr Baines goes back into his office

All sorted, ladies. Seven o'clock in the dining room.

Dot What's for dinner tonight then?

George Oh, I don't know, I forgot to ask. I'll just go and find out. (He goes toward the desk) Oh, bother, he's gone. I know, I'll just go and see if there's a menu in the dining room.

He goes into the dining room

Clive enters through the front doors and goes over to the desk, shaking rain off his jacket and rings the bell. After a short while Mr Baines reappears, looking a little flustered

Clive There's quite a storm brewing up out there. I just missed the shop. Is there anywhere else I can get some fags? I'm dying for a puff.

Mr Baines Not really, sir. The only place around here would be the pub in the next village but that is about two miles from here.

Clive Damn! Still I suppose it won't take long in the car. Thanks.

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PLOT SUMMARY

The play is set in a small country hotel somewhere on the moors of Somerset. It is the summer of 1974 and the story revolves around a group of holidaymakers travelling to Weston-super-Mare for a week's getaway. Their minibus breaks down en route and they find themselves stuck in the hotel overnight and because of this, various relationships from the past, present and future are played out with the other guests and staff, in what becomes a very stormy night in more ways than one!