

# **A Bird In The Bush**

*A play in one act*  
**Written by Ron Nicol**

**Spotlight Publications**

**A Bird in the Bush**

CAST (in order of appearance)

**Bernard**

**Marjorie**, his wife

**Kate**, their younger daughter

**Jessica**, their elder daughter

**Malcolm**, Jessica's fiancé

Setting: A bedroom

Time: The present; a hot summer's night

ISBN 1 904930 81 6

COPYRIGHT © RON NICOL 2006

Published by Spotlight Publications

All rights are reserved including performances on stage, radio and television. No part of this publication may be copied by whatever means without the prior permission of the copyright owner. It is an infringement of the copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before a licence has been issued.

Drama groups must obtain a full acting set of scripts (a minimum of one script per speaking part plus one for the director) before a performing licence can be issued.

The name of the author shall be stated on all publicity including posters and programmes. Programme credits shall state "script provided by Spotlight Publications".

All enquiries to:

Spotlight Publications, 259 The Moorings, Dalgety Bay, Fife, KY11 9GX

Tel. 01383 825737

Email: [enquiries@spotlightpublications.com](mailto:enquiries@spotlightpublications.com)

Website: [www.spotlightpublications.com](http://www.spotlightpublications.com)

*A darkened bedroom. Marjorie is in bed. Creaking floorboards as footsteps slowly approach. The door opens and a shaft of light spills into the room. Marjorie stirs. Bernard furtively creeps in, tiptoes to the dressing table and slides open a drawer. Kate stealthily enters behind him and raises her arm to strike. At the crucial moment Marjorie switches on the bedside light*

**Bernard** (*turning*) Aaah!

**Kate** (*as he turns*) Aaah!

*Bernard is cowering in front of Kate, who is brandishing a tennis racket. They both turn towards Marjorie and react as she rises like a vampire in its coffin to sit up in bed*

**Bernard/Kate** Aaah!

**Marjorie** What's going on?

**Kate** I heard somebody creeping about. I thought it was a burglar.

**Bernard** That was me!

**Kate** I know it's you *now*. I can see it's you *now*. I didn't know before though, did I? Sneaking into that drawer – I thought you were stealing Mum's jewellery.

**Marjorie** I don't have any jewellery, Kate, and if I did I wouldn't keep it in that drawer. Is that a tennis racket?

**Kate** It was the first thing I could find.

**Marjorie** A tennis racket? What for?

**Kate** You don't think I'd be playing tennis in the middle of the night, do you? To hit the burglar with, of course.

**Marjorie** You wouldn't have hit your own father!

**Kate** I didn't know it was him, did I? I thought it was a burglar.

**Marjorie** Kate, your father wouldn't be creeping about in the middle of the night sneaking into drawers, would he?

**Kate** But he *was* creeping about in the middle of the night sneaking into drawers!

**Marjorie** You're right. Why were you creeping about in the middle of the night sneaking into drawers, Bernard?

**Bernard** I thought everybody was asleep.

**Kate** We were - till you woke us up.

**Marjorie** What on earth were you doing? Creeping about scaring people.

**Bernard** It's my house. I'll creep about if I want.

**Kate** Talking about scaring people, what *is* that stuff on your face?

**Marjorie** Night cream. It's to rejuvenate my skin.

**Kate** Oh, Mum, don't be taken in by that. It doesn't work. Women are constantly spending fortunes on products with overstated claims. There's no way you can renew your skin.

**Marjorie** It's not renewing - it's rejuvenating.

**Kate** It can't give you younger skin, no matter what it says.

**Bernard** Not at your age.

**Kate** Not at any age.

**Marjorie** I don't care. If it makes me look better and feel better I might as well give it a try.

**Bernard** You look fine, love. I like you as you are.

**Kate** There you are, Mum, Dad likes you as you are.

**Bernard** Of course I do. There's nothing wrong with looking a bit faded. It's your age. Things start to go wrong. Like a car. Once you've had the best years out of it, it needs more upkeep. A good going over now and then...

**Marjorie** A good going over!

**Bernard** Till it's had its day. Then you trade it in for a new one...

**Kate** So you're going to trade Mum in, are you?

**Marjorie** He certainly is not! He'll put up with me as I am.

**Bernard** That's what I'm saying. I like you as you are. Wrinkles show character ...

**Kate** (*warning*) Dad! Shut up!

**Bernard** What? What've I said?

**Marjorie** (*ominously*) If you really don't know...

**Bernard** Now see what you've done, Kate. You've annoyed your mother.

**Kate** I've annoyed her! Me!

**Marjorie** It's all right, Kate love. Go on back to bed.

**Kate** I think I'd better. Goodnight Mum. Night, Dad.

**Marjorie** Goodnight.

**Bernard** Sleep well.

*Kate exits. Marjorie immediately turns on Bernard*

**Marjorie** What on earth were you doing, Bernard?

**Bernard** Sorry, love, got a tummy ache. I was looking for those tablets. Those diarrhoea ones.

**Marjorie** They're in the kitchen drawer. If you're going to get them, do it quietly.

**Bernard** I was being as quiet as I could. Creeping about, I was.

**Marjorie** I know, I heard you creeping. So did Kate, obviously. Those floorboards need fixing.

**Bernard** They need to be taken up and re-laid. Lined with hardboard or something.

**Marjorie** You've been saying that for years.

**Bernard** I'll get round to it.

**Marjorie** All that creaking. Do you have to slam that bathroom door?

**Bernard** It sticks.

**Marjorie** I told you to fix it before they came.

**Bernard** I haven't had time.

**Marjorie** You said it would take half-an-hour.

**Bernard** More than half-an-hour.

**Marjorie** Half-an-hour, you said. Simple, you said.

**Bernard** Hardly simple, Marjorie.

**Marjorie** A few strokes with the plane, you said. Half-an-hour, easy.

**Bernard** I never said it was easy.

**Marjorie** Half-an-hour, you said.

**Bernard** All right, don't keep on. It's the hot weather. Expands the wood. Makes it stick.

**Marjorie** You said it was the *cold* weather made it stick.

**Bernard** It does. It shrinks the wood.

**Marjorie** You can't have it both ways, Bernard.

**Bernard** It shrinks in the cold and expands in the heat. It's a well known fact...

**Marjorie** Don't talk about it - fix it!

**Bernard** What! Now?

**Marjorie** Of course not. Do it tomorrow. Last time they were here was Christmas, remember?

**Bernard** What are you on about now? What's Christmas got to do with anything?

**Marjorie** You'd tummy trouble then as well. Up and down all night. Slamming that bathroom door. Flushing the toilet. Too much Christmas spirit if you ask me.

**Bernard** It was that pudding. It was too rich.

**Marjorie** You shouldn't have eaten so much. You know it doesn't agree with you.

**Bernard** You kept piling things on my plate.

**Marjorie** Don't try and blame me, Bernard. You asked for seconds, and thirds, and even then I found you picking away at the leftovers in the kitchen. No wonder you've so much tummy trouble.

*Bernard clutches his stomach and makes for the door*

**Bernard** Won't be long.

**Marjorie** Make sure you flush.

**Bernard** I know.

**Marjorie** Use the spray...

**Bernard** I know!

**Marjorie** And don't drip on the floor...

**Bernard** I *know*!

*He exits. Creaking footsteps along the landing*

**Marjorie** And don't slam that door!

*The bathroom door slams. Marjorie sighs and plumps up her pillow. She picks up a book from the bedside table and begins to read. After a moment she fans her face with the book, then puts it down, stretches the neck of her nightdress and blows down it. She takes hold of the edge of the sheet and shakes it up and down, making it billow out to create a cooling draught. She sighs again, gets out of bed and crosses to the window, peers through the curtains for a moment, opens the window slightly, closes the curtains and returns to bed. Just as she picks up her book the toilet flushes off. The bathroom door slams. Marjorie sighs. Creaking footsteps. After a moment Bernard enters*

**Bernard** Must be a blockage. Needs something to shift it properly. Clear the passages.

**Marjorie** Is that toilet playing up again?

**Bernard** It's my bowels I'm talking about.

**Marjorie** Bernard! Do you have to be so crude?

**Bernard** What's crude about natural bodily functions?

**Marjorie** We don't want to hear about your blocked passages.

**Bernard** We? You're the only one here.

**Marjorie** You don't exactly speak quietly.

**Bernard** You're not bothered about the neighbours, surely.

**Marjorie** These walls are so thin you hear everything.

**Bernard** That's not my fault.

**Marjorie** Slamming doors is your fault.

**Bernard** They stick.

**Marjorie** Half-an-hour, you said.

**Bernard** All right, all right.

**Marjorie** Other people manage to shut doors quietly.

**Bernard** I'm not 'other people'. I can do what I like in my own house, can't I?

**Marjorie** Not when it keeps other people awake.

**Bernard** I can't tell my bowels not to function just cause we've got people staying.

**Marjorie** They're not people – they're our daughters.

**Bernard** Daughters are people, aren't they?

**Marjorie** You know what I mean.

**Bernard** I can't stop my digestive juices working because it wakes people up.

**Marjorie** If you'd stop slamming that door...

**Bernard** It doesn't close if you don't slam it.

**Marjorie** Why do you need it closed?

**Bernard** So people know somebody's in there. So they don't just walk in.

**Marjorie** Lock the door, then.

**Bernard** I do, but you have to slam it to get the bolt across.

**Marjorie** But you close it even when you aren't in there. How can people tell if there's anybody using it?

**Bernard** You listen, Marjorie. If you can't hear anything, it's empty.

**Marjorie** I'm not standing listening at bathroom doors. Suppose somebody came along and saw me?

**Bernard** Who's going to come along? There's only us.

**Marjorie** There's Jess and Kate.

**Bernard** Sometimes...

**Marjorie** I hate to think what people would hear if they listened at the door while you're in there. A regular performance. Proper fireworks display. You should leave the door open.

**Bernard** What! Let people see me?

**Marjorie** When you've finished, I mean. When you come out you should leave it open.

**Bernard** How do you keep any - you know - aromas in, then?

**Marjorie** You spray before you come out.

**Bernard** That's no good. Spraying doesn't kill the smell - it only deadens it.

**Marjorie** It's supposed to kill ninety-nine percent of household germs - you must be the one percent they can't do anything about.

**Bernard** It's not my fault I've a delicate stomach.

**Marjorie** Delicate stomach, my foot!

## **A Bird in the Bush**

### **Plot Summary**

It's a hot summer night, and Bernard's stomach ache and his abiding hatred of a cooing pigeon combine to keep his whole family awake. When he determines to track the pigeon to its lair, his daughter's fiancé and the next door neighbour become entangled in his growing fixation. Eventually the police are called, and the play ends with a hectic and hilarious sequence in which Bernard has to face the consequences – and the wrath of his long-suffering wife.

Running time: 40 minutes