

Spotlight Publications

Best of Enemies

A play in one act
written by Ron Nicol

BEST OF ENEMIES

CAST (in order of appearance)

Fraser, the one-time leader of an inner-city gang

Rab, a former member of the gang

Bugs, formerly Fraser's loyal supporter

Lexy, Rab's former girlfriend

Delia, an English girl

Setting: A city somewhere in Scotland. An open stage should suggest various locations: perhaps a city centre street flanked on one side by a run-down play area with broken swings and a slide, and on the other by an open space outside a night club or dance hall with pavement café style benches or metal chairs and tables. Most of the action takes place in the early evening or late at night, with the light coming from street lamps, shop windows, neon signs and advertising hoardings. Perhaps the monologues could be given under a lamp at the corner of the street.

Time: Now

Author's Note: "*Best of Enemies*" is a sequel to "*Friends and Neighbours*" which was a prize-winner in the Youth Section of the Scottish Community Drama Association's *Play on Words* playwriting competition in 2004. Several productions since then have won a number of festival awards between them, and I've often been asked what happened to Fraser, Rab, Lexy, Delia and Bugs. "*Best of Enemies*" is set about a year later and gives some of the answers. The two plays can be performed separately or together.

Dim lighting as Bugs enters and stands US. Fraser and Rab enter from opposite sides of the stage. Fraser walks up to Rab and thrusts out his hand in a stabbing movement. Rab crumples and falls. Blackout. In the darkness we hear police cars arrive - slamming doors, shouts, running feet, indistinct police radios - and then sudden silence. After a moment a soft comes up. The stage is empty except for Bugs, who steps into the spot

Bugs It was about a year ago. We was all in the gang then. Dead cool, eh? The gang! (*Smiles and shakes his head.*) Some gang! There was only four of us. Me, Lexy, Rab and Fraser. Fraser was the boss. Organised everything. Just small stuff at first. Smashing windows. Shoplifting. Stealing from cars. But then it got all political, like. Fraser started banging on about asylum seekers and immigrants taking our jobs. Had us going out at night and beating them up. But when Rab got this posh English girl-friend it all fell apart. Delia said attacking refugees and blacks was racist, and made Rab leave the gang. Then the police came after Fraser for stabbing some immigrant. Fraz thought Rab had grassed him up and said he'd get his own back. He'd a knife, so I dialled nine-nine-nine - but they came too late. They rushed Rab to hospital and Fraser got arrested and put away. Four years. Two years supervision after he gets out. Nobody knows it was me phoned the police. Well, somebody had to do something. It was getting out of hand - and I couldn't tackle Fraser on my own. I was scared of him, if you must know. Only stayed in the gang cos I fancied Lexy. Knew I'd no chance, but you can still hope, eh?

The spot fades and the lighting changes - evening outside a youth club or dance hall. Music plays in the background as Lexy enters

Lexy Hi, Bugs, How's it going?

Bugs Lexy!

Lexy The very same. How are you, Bugs?

Bugs Can't complain. You're looking good, Lexy. Great, in fact. Lovely as ever.

Lexy Get real, Bugs. Don't keep using them same old chat up lines.

Bugs I wasn't. I didn't mean...

Lexy You're like a wee puppy wagging its tail. Tongue hanging out - hoping for a treat. Give it up, Bugs. I don't fancy you, so there's no wee snogettes for you. Put your tongue away before you bite it off.

Bugs Same old Lexy, eh?

Lexy No so much of the old! Haven't seen you for a while. What you been up to?

Bugs Been staying with my Auntie Jean. Helping out on the farm, like. The police kept calling round asking questions after Rab was stabbed, an' I got fed up with it. Came back yesterday. Thought I'd come down - have a look.

Lexy How long's it been anyway?

Bugs This time last year.

Lexy What happened?

Bugs How d'you mean?

Lexy You was the only one here - 'cept Rab and Fraser. What happened?

Bugs Well - Rab just stood there. Frazer walked up and stabbed him. Didn't say a word. Over in seconds. Couldn't do nothing. Then the police came.

Lexy Who called them? That's what I want to know. Caught Fraz with the knife in his hand, so somebody must've known what was gonny happen.

Bugs Aye, well, no hard to guess, was it? He'd already stabbed that immigrant guy.

Lexy Wish I knew who told the pigs it was Fraser done that one. He might've got off easier - but two stabbings...

Bugs Serves him right. He beat up loads of them - immigrants, blacks...

Lexy You helped him!

Bugs I just held them. It was Fraz did the hitting.

Lexy That's just as bad.

Bugs Aye, right! But I didn't stab them! Didn't even carry a knife! It was Fraz did that!

Lexy You was always a coward, Bugs.

Bugs He went too far, Lexy. Beating up people just cos they was different. That's no right. I know what it's like. Bullied at school. Picked on for no reason. Just cos I wore glasses!

Lexy Yeah, yeah. Heard it all before, Bugsy.

Bugs It was your fault, Lexy! Telling folk them glasses made me look like a bug-eyed monster!

Lexy Stop your moaning, Bugs. You was jealous. Fancied me rotten and knew I fancied Frazee. Sniffing round me when he wasn't there. If I didn't know you better I'd think it was you grassed him up - but you're still the same wee nyaff you always was.

Bugs Aye, some things never change. You're still the same old Lexy!

Bugs turns away and exits. The lighting fades to a spot

Lexy He's nice, wee Bugs. I know I send him up - make fun of him, like - but he asks for it, know what I mean? I really like him, by the way. Known him since we was at primary school. I was even thinking it might be nice to go out with him some time - but he'd have nothing to do with me if he knew what I'm like now. Used to be just me and my Mam, but since I left school she'd been ranting on about how I kept her back and was old enough to look after myself. Then she took up with this guy. Thing is, he started trying it on with me as well - till she caught him at it. Would you believe it - 'stead of chucking him out she got jealous. Blamed me for leading him on. Came home one night and they'd buggered off. I'm on my own now. Work in a shop. Part-time so money's tight - so - well, some nights I go on the streets. I'm no bad looking - and men'll pay for what I got. What's wrong with that? You gotta live. *(She looks offstage thoughtfully)* Aye, he's okay, is Bugs. Bit of a numpty sometimes, but he cares.

Thinks about things. Made me think about what we was doing. Picking on blacks, like. Spitting on them from balconies and that. I used to think they shouldn't be here, but Delia was all for them as well. She's no bad - for an English cow. Got her head screwed on. It was her fault Fraser went after Rab. Why the hell did she have to get off with him in the first place?

The spot fades and lighting is restored as before. Lexy steps back and watches from the shadows. Music continues to play in the background as Delia enters, takes out a mobile phone and checks her text messages. Rab enters and watches, until eventually she turns to him

Delia Like the view? Or are you just going to throw up. If you are - do it somewhere else.

Rab What?

Delia First thing I said to you. This time last year. You were just standing there. Gawping. Like you're doing now. Remember? *(She poses playfully)* See anything you like?

Rab What are you on about?

Delia That's the next thing I said - and you said...

She waits expectantly. Rab doesn't respond

You said 'looks good from here'.

Rab remains silent

Come on, Rab, give me a break. Play the game.

Rab just looks at her. Delia gives up

Go on then, if it makes you feel better, pretend you don't remember me. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Cordelia. We used to go out together.

She puts out her hand, but Rab ignores it

Rab I know who you are.

Delia I should hope so. Still going to the dances, Rab?

Rab What's it to you?

Delia Bloody hell! Why are you being so mean?

Rab Thought you'd gone back to England, Delia. Couldn't stand all these uncouth Scots living in their wee caves. Watching spiders crawl up the walls. 'Uncouth'. That's what you said.

Delia Won't forget that, will you? Just won't forget it.

Rab How can I?

Delia Must've made an impression then.

Rab Aye, right. Didn't pull any punches, did you? Coward, you called me!

Delia Only because you wouldn't speak out. Said nothing. Let the bullying and beating up go on.

Rab What was I supposed to do about it?

Delia You could've tried to make them see that what they were doing was wrong.

Rab Easy for you to say. No so easy for me - going against my pals.

Delia You didn't try hard enough.

Rab I did what you said, didn't I? Left the gang - and got stabbed for it!

Delia I'm sorry, Rab. I should've asked before. How are you?

Rab What do you care? Never came to see me in hospital, did you?

Delia I phoned a couple of times. Asked about you at reception. Didn't think you'd want to see me after what I said.

Rab Aye, right. Get back to the slums where you belong! Bet you don't remember that!

Delia I was furious with you. I didn't mean it.

Rab Oh yes you did.

Delia Oh! Is this where we do the old panto routine and get everybody laughing? Oh yes you did. Oh no I didn't. Sorry, Rab, I'm not in the mood.

Rab Yeah. That's you all over, isn't it? Always what *you* want. Never mind about anybody else. Push your ideas at everybody. Like you did with me and Fraser.

Delia Fraser was a racist! You have to speak out, Rab, and if that's what you call pushing my ideas...

Rab You certainly pushed them at *me*. Why the hell did I go with you in the first place?

Delia Because you fancied something a bit different from your dumb friends, that's why!

Rab You *were* different, Delia. You made me think. The trouble was you turned me against the others. Made me leave the gang. And in the end you got me stabbed!

Delia You really blame me for that?

Rab You don't see it, do you? Talk about being dumb!

Delia Actually, Rab, it never would've worked between us - because you're as dumb as the rest of them!

Rab There's no point talking to you! Why don't you sod off back to England where you belong!

BEST OF ENEMIES

A powerful, occasionally violent tale of gang culture and teenage angst, with overtones of *West Side Story*, set in a Scottish inner city.

Plot Summary

Fraser is in prison, having stabbed his former friend Rab in the mistaken belief that Rab had betrayed him to the police. Bugs, Lexy and Delia were involved in the events leading up to the stabbing incident, and a year later they unexpectedly meet. Arguments and accusations follow - until they hear that Fraser has escaped. Fraser's attempts to track them down and discover the truth lead to unlikely alliances, violent confrontations and ultimate heartbreak.

Best of Enemies is a sequel to Ron Nicol's award-winning *Friends and Neighbours*, which is also published by Spotlight Publications. The two plays can be performed separately or together.

ISBN 978-1-907307-72-0