

# **The Edge**

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

**Spotlight Publications**

## **The Edge**

**CAST** (in order of appearance)

The Young Man  
The Young Woman

Setting: the flat roof of a high building.

Time: the present

“The Edge” was the winner of the Youth Section of the Scottish Community Drama Association *Play on Words 2006* playwriting competition, and was first produced by Abbey Youth Drama Club at Barrfields Theatre, Vikingar Centre, Largs on 3 November 2006 with the following cast:

The Young Man Andrew McLellan  
The Young Woman Dawn Chandler  
Director Madeline Reid

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*The lights come up slowly on the flat roof of a high building, surrounded by a parapet. A door to the roof is upstage, and there could be television aerials, satellite dishes, air circulation vents, chimneys, etc. If possible, the area immediately DS of the parapet should be totally dark with no overspill of light. There's a light wind, with pigeons in the background, and perhaps the faint sound of traffic. The US door to the roof opens. A young man enters and approaches the edge. He tentatively looks over*

**He** Wheew! (*He steps back quickly. Encourages himself, almost inaudible*) Okay. Come on. Come on. (*He inches towards the edge again*) That's it. Slowly. Slowly. Go for it ...

*He steps up onto the parapet. Gradually slows his breathing. The US door opens. A young woman enters and watches. She has a small bag slung over her shoulder. He isn't aware she's there. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes, preparing to launch himself into space. At the critical moment, she steps forward*

**She** What're you doing?

**He** Bloody hell!

*He teeters for a moment, but manages to step back off the parapet and away from the edge. He breathes heavily, recovering. She dumps her shoulder bag and looks over the edge*

**She** Long drop.

**He** You nearly had me over!

**She** Long way down.

**He** Dead right!

**She** Concrete down there. Bit of grass. Paving slabs. Concrete mostly.

**He** What are you? A bloody landscape gardener!

**She** You'll be all right ...

**He** Oh thanks!

**She** ... till you reach the bottom. Too late then. You'll be splattered. All over the pavement. Raspberry jam.

**He** What?

**She** That's what you're thinking about, isn't it? Going over.

**He** None of your business!

**She** Just wondered. Lots of people down there. You wouldn't want to land on somebody. Not without warning. Mind you, you'll attract a bit of attention, screaming all the way down. They'd look up then. Mightn't have time to move out the way, though. Too busy talking to notice. Or they mightn't know where it was coming from. Waste a few seconds having a think. (*Puts on a voice*) 'Who's that screaming?' (*Another voice*) 'I don't know.' (*First voice*) 'Where's it coming from?' (*Second voice*) 'Up there.' They look up. You arrive out of the blue. Splat! Raspberry jam.

**He** What makes you think I'd scream?

**She** Don't worry - I'm not implying anything. It's okay. Be macho if you want.

**He** I'm not being macho.

**She** You can't help it. All men are. Specially when a woman's around. Some don't manage it, though. They turn into bullies. They bully women.

**He** I'm not a bully either.

**She** Oh? Well, I don't know you well enough to tell, do I? I know you'd scream, though. Once you've jumped - when you realise it's too late to go back - too late to change your mind - you'd scream then. I should think most people scream. The first time.

**He** The *first* time! You'd only do it once!

**She** Somebody might break your fall. You might get away with a few injuries.

**He** Pretty severe injuries.

**She** Funny that - 'pretty' severe. They'd be anything but pretty.

**He** Wouldn't want to try again though, would you?

**She** Depends why you jumped in the first place. How badly you wanted to. How bad things were to make you jump. If they were still the same. Hadn't changed since you jumped. Awful if it didn't change a thing. All that trouble. All that heartache. All that raspberry jam.

**He** That's what I was thinking. How bad things really are. I thought ...

*He turns towards her. She's looking into the distance*

**She** You can see where I live from here.

**He** Thanks very much! I'm thinking about jumping – and you're admiring the view ...

*She ignores his comment and draws him along the edge, pointing*

**She** See that church spire?

*She takes his arm and they lean forward awkwardly to see*

Start by the church - follow that line of trees to the river - you pass my house. You can see the roof. The red tiles. See?

*She points, leaning against him. He nearly overbalances, but they manage to step back*

**He** Hey!

**She** You were nearly over!

**He** You pushed me!

**She** I didn't!

**He** You leaned on me.

**She** That's not pushing!

**He** It is so!

**She** I didn't mean to.

**He** Would've been the same whether you meant to or not!

**She** Would've made your mind up for you, wouldn't it?

**He** Damn right it would! And it isn't funny!

**She** I didn't say it was.

**He** Nearly had me over twice and you're joking about it!

**She** Would've saved a bit of time, though, wouldn't it. Not a good idea to look before you leap. Best way's to hold your nose - run to the edge - and jump. Don't think about it. No, that's the swimming pool, isn't it. So you don't get water up your nose.

**He** What're you on about?

**She** Don't just stand there - do it. Thinking about it puts you off. *(She moves to another spot and looks over)* You can see all the Square from here. The people look tiny. All squashed up. Maybe they're the ones who've already jumped. Walking round all squashed up - like concertinas. Like in the cartoons.

*She demonstrates. He doesn't respond. Long pause. She tries again*

They use it in films, you know. Raspberry jam. I read it in a magazine. Right colour - same consistency - sort of oozes the same way. They use it for blood. Great if you're a vampire.

**He** Vampires wouldn't eat jam. They need real blood. They can't live without it.

**She** In a film. If you were a vampire in a film. It'd taste better.

**He** I should think real vampires prefer the taste of blood.

**She** You couldn't drink it anyway. It's too thick. Wouldn't come out the glass properly.

**He** It would if it was thin enough.

**She** How thin would it need to be?

**He** I don't know. They wouldn't drink it out of a glass anyway.

**She** Who wouldn't?

**He** Vampires. They bite your neck.

*He turns towards her, showing his teeth, imitating a vampire. She's unimpressed*

**She** You're not really a vampire, are you?

**He** Don't be stupid.

**She** (*stung*) What did you do that for, then? (*Mimics his vampire action*) That was stupid.

**He** I was just ...

*He's embarrassed, but she's forgotten already, still following her own thoughts*

**She** They use blood capsules as well. In their mouths. The camera moves in, they bite the capsule, blood spills out for the close-up. Drips down your chin. Wonder what they taste like.

**He** What?

**She** Blood capsules. What do they taste like?

**He** (*loudly, suddenly irritated by her insistence*) How would I know?

*There's sudden squawking and flapping of pigeons. She looks up*

**She** You've disturbed them. We're invading their territory.

**He** Who?

**She** They think we're after their eggs.

**He** Oh, birds.

**She** People. They swoop at you.

**He** The people swoop at you?

**She** The birds! They think people're after their eggs. They swoop at them.

**He** Swoop at the eggs?

**She** The birds! They protect their nests. They think they're after their eggs.

**He** The eggs are after the nests?

**She** You're being annoying on purpose, aren't you! You know what I mean. The birds swoop at the people!

*She demonstrates, swooping and flipping his hair - to his annoyance. He pushes her away and she stumbles towards the edge. He leaps forward and pulls her back*

**He** Hey!

**She** Oops! Nearly had *me* over that time!

**He** Sorry.

*He's holding on to her. Too long. She wrestles herself away from him*

**She** That's enough of that!

**He** What? I didn't mean -

**She** I know what you're up to -

**He** I didn't -

**She** Don't touch me again. I'm warning you!

**He** All right, all right! Keep your hair on! (*Pause*) You want me to go?

**She** Suit yourself.

**He** I'll go if you want.

*She shrugs. They stand apart, occasionally taking surreptitious glances at each other. She wanders away and looks over the edge, singing quietly*

**She** "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men ..." Poor Humpty. Sitting on his wall. Minding his own business. Leans over. Ooops! Squish! Instant omelette. Maybe somebody pushed him. One of those unsolved crimes. Who killed Humpty Dumpty? "I, said the sparrow, with my bow and arrow." No, that's Cock Robin, isn't it? Maybe the sparrow was a serial killer. Going round shooting people with his little bow. Unsolved crimes all over the place. Nobody would suspect a poor wee sparrow, would they? (*Pause*) Makes you think all sorts of odd things, doesn't it? Up here. High up. Away from everybody. You can really think. Clear your head. Let your mind wander. "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall ..."

*She absentmindedly sucks her thumb as she continues to hum the tune. Twirls a tendril of hair with one finger - a child again. Realises, takes her thumb out of her mouth. Checks to see he hasn't noticed. Decides to regain his interest*

There aren't any vampires now. They lived in Transylvania - years ago - they're all dead.

**He** They can't die. They're *undead*. Not living - not dead - *undead*. It's not the same thing.

**She** You believe in them, do you? Vampires.

**He** I'm interested, that's all. I've read about them. I don't *believe* in them.

**She** What're you talking like that for, then, if you don't believe in them?

**He** Just because I'm interested doesn't mean I *believe* in them!

**She** All right! Don't get all excited! There aren't any round here. Not any more -

**He** There aren't any bloody vampires!

**She** Interesting choice of words. Bloody.

**He** There aren't any vampires!

**She** You're really into it, aren't you? Really gets you going.

**He** I don't believe in them!

*He turns away in annoyance. She twirls her hair and sings quietly*

**She** "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall ..."

*He glances at her. She hums quietly to herself. He feels uncomfortable about his outburst. Tries to make conversation*

**He** So you live near the river ...

## **The Edge**

### **Plot Summary**

A young man is on the roof of a high building, contemplating throwing himself over the edge. A young woman finds him there and initiates a conversation, but her readiness to slip into fantasies sounds a warning note. The young man eventually leaves the roof, apparently having come to terms with his difficulties - but the girl is fixated with death, and finally does what she'd planned to do all along.

Alastair Cording, the judge of *Play on Words 2006*, commented 'A cleverly controlled situation, with grimly comic moments, about the saving of a would-be suicide - by a genuine suicide. It all comes together to deliver a deeply serious, ultimately tragic tale of teenage angst versus genuine anguish'.

Running time: 30 minutes

