

The Door

A drama in one act

Written by Tony Earnshaw

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THE DOOR

Cast

Boyd - ex-army corporal, now a civilian

Ryan - ex-army captain, also now a civilian

Setting: a bare room, utilitarian, functional, a few chairs.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Set

An institutional waiting room. Plastic seats or similar, possibly a screen with notices on.

Sound

Sound requirements are very simple, consisting simply of a banging door at regular intervals through the play.

Lighting

No complicated lighting, simply lights up at the start to reveal the two characters and black out at the end. The lighting effect should be of a starkly lit waiting room.

Props

A newspaper for Boyd (a tabloid)

A novel for Ryan

Costume

The clothes should suggest the rank and character - e.g. brogues, chinos and blazer for Ryan; bomber jacket, jeans and desert boots for Boyd.

Two men sitting in a bare room. Silence. Fidgeting. Somewhere a door bangs. Boyd gets up and paces before speaking, and is restless throughout the initial exchange

Boyd Drives you round the bloody bend, doesn't it? Round the bloody bend.

Ryan What does?

Boyd The bloody door, always bloody banging. Listen ... Silence. Then, just as you relax ...

Door bangs

See? Drives you round the bloody bend.

Ryan So, go and shut it.

Boyd Shut it? I'm not going to go and shut it. Not my job, not up to me, mate. Not my responsibility.

Ryan It's just a door.

Boyd It's just a door that's banging all the bloody time because somebody can't be arsed to shut it. Drives you round the bend, doesn't it?

Ryan Something does.

Boyd What's that supposed to mean?

Ryan It means that the door banging is a minor source of irritation compared to the idiot banging on about it.

Boyd Watch it, smart-arse, or I'll sort you out.

Ryan I don't think so.

Boyd No?

Ryan No. Not your job to sort me out. Not your responsibility.

Boyd Need sorting out, you do.

Ryan We all need sorting out.

Boyd Not me. I'm bloody fine, me. Nothing wrong with me.

Ryan Got it all sorted, have you? Life, meaning, everything?

Boyd All sorted. Few pints on a Friday. The match on Saturday. Sleep on a Sunday.

Ryan And Monday to Friday? Family?

Boyd Don't talk to me no more, the family. Monday to Friday, same old same old, know what I mean?

A pause

Come far then, have you?

Ryan How do you mean?

Boyd It's a simple enough bloody question. Have you come far, to get here today? Train journey, was it? Swanky car?

Ryan Chichester.

Boyd Aren't we posh? Chichester, in rural Surrey.

Ryan It's in Sussex.

Boyd Whatever. Sounds posh, sounds comfortable, sounds la-di-bloody-dah. Nice read of the paper on the train? *Times*, was it? *Sun* man myself. Listen to that bloody door.

Ryan I was reading a novel, actually.

Boyd Always the reader.

Ryan Keeps me sane.

Boyd Does it?

Ryan If I am.

Boyd Got the tube, me. Easy, quick. And then I get to spend hours cooped up with Lord Up 'Imself and a banging door.

Ryan Go and shut it.

Boyd I am not going to go and bloody shut it.

Ryan Not your job.

Boyd Not my responsibility. And we know what happens when we exceed our responsibility, don't we, sir?

Ryan Don't need to call me that any more.

Boyd We all land in the shit, that's what.

Ryan I did my duty.

Boyd You told me I'd wasted my life. We all looked up to you. You told us to go and we went. Then you told us we should never have been there in the first place. What were we supposed to think?

Ryan I told the truth.

Boyd You were supposed to protect us.

Ryan I told the truth.

Boyd You betrayed us.

Ryan Is that what you're going to say?

Boyd What happened to you?

A pause

Do you think they're listening?

Ryan They're very bored if they are.

Boyd Yes but it wouldn't stop them would it? Its like CCTV.

Ryan How?

Boyd You've got guys paid to watch CCTV right, for hours at a time. Easy job. But nothing happens. Every now and then someone moons the camera, sometimes you catch a bit of a domestic, but most of the time it's just you and the TV screen, with nothing happening. It's depressing.

Ryan Why depressing? Boring, yes, but depressing?

Boyd It's depressing, Mr know-it-all, because it's exactly like my sodding life. Camera's running, nothing's happening.

Pause

Somewhere a door bangs. Ryan gets up and paces before speaking, and is restless throughout the initial exchange

Ryan Drives you round the bloody bend, doesn't it. Round the bloody bend.

Boyd What does?

Ryan The bloody door, always bloody banging. Listen... Silence. Then, just as you relax ...

Door bangs

See. Drives you round the bloody bend.

Boyd So, go and shut it.

Ryan You go and shut it.

Boyd starts to stand, stops himself

Boyd Oh no, not falling for that, it can keep banging for all I care.

Ryan Oh well, provides a rhythm, I suppose.

Boyd A rhythm?

Ryan Listen, there it goes ... bang, whoosh whoosh whoosh ... bang.

Boyd I can't hear no whoosh whoosh whossit.

Ryan Listen, just faintly, someone is sweeping or something ... there, did you get that? Bang, whoosh whoosh whoosh ... wait for it ... bang. Great.

Boyd Nah, can't here no whoosh whoosh. Bit of tippy tappy, maybe.

Ryan Tippy tappy maybe?

Boyd No. Tippy tappy ... maybe. Maybe someone typing

Ryan Right! That's good, we've got a nice little rhythm section now. Ready ... Bang whoosh tippy tappy whoosh whoosh bang. Just need someone with a Hoover to add a melody.

Boyd That's right ... wait a minute, what am I saying? I'm nearly as barking as you. Hoovers providing the melody!

Ryan Well, not really high enough for the descant, you see. Probably get that from the washrooms, need someone to go and run the tap really ...

Boyd No, I am not going to get up and run the water to provide a descant, I am not going to find a Hoover

to substitute for a melody and I am not going to ... There you go again, winding me up.
Ryan wouldn't need to wind you up if someone closed the bloody door.
Boyd Could be money in it, though.
Ryan What?
Boyd Music from everyday objects. Dancing to the beat of head on door.
Ryan Brush to rhythm, dance to brush, dance with brush. No, never catch on.
Boyd Dance to the rhythm of the AK47. Pick up your feet as the bullets fly.
Ryan A modern sabre dance.
Boyd Love Sculpture, right?
Ryan I was thinking more Khachaturian.
Boyd He did a version too, did he?
Ryan How long, how long, Oh Lord?
Boyd Getting to you, is it?
Ryan Patience can wear thin.
Boyd Patience can wear thin! Why don't just say what you mean for once?
Ryan Because I'm worried how it might be taken.
Boyd Frightened of being misunderstood?
Ryan Quite the contrary.
Boyd You're confusing me.
Ryan 'I trust I make myself obscure'.
Boyd I don't understand you sometimes.
Ryan Quite.
Boyd You being a smart-arse again?
Ryan Only aspirationally.
Boyd You think you're so bloody clever.
Ryan On the contrary, I don't think I'm anything special.

Pause

Somewhere a door bangs. Boyd gets up and paces before speaking, and is restless throughout the initial exchange

The Door

A one act play, running time 50 minutes, featuring two male actors.
Winner of the Sir Michael Caine Award for Best New Writing, Leatherhead Drama Festival 2009.

Plot Summary

Boyd and Ryan are discovered seated, apparently waiting for something. Boyd is reading a tabloid, dressed in jeans and bomber jacket. Ryan is in chinos and blazer, reading a novel. They ignore each other until the banging of a door (off) provides a trigger for conversation. Over the course of the next 50 minutes they squabble about who should shut the door, argue about politics, religion, and lifestyles and gradually reveal their shared history. Ryan was the officer in charge of an army unit in Iraq, Boyd served in the unit. Ryan had a crisis of conscience, Boyd blames him for the impact on morale. They are waiting to explain themselves to a board of enquiry. Ryan is nervous about being underprepared and Boyd takes on the role of prosecuting officer to help him. In a final twist, the roles are reversed and it is Boyd who ends up giving himself up to the military police. Throughout the play the banging of the door acts as punctuation, heightens the tension and provokes changes in the direction of the conversation

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