

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

By Alexander Hayden James Smith

[Note: Performed at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith in 2002]

"Riders on the Storm" by the Doors plays as the lights come up on the interior of a cluttered caravan. Various 70s and 80s paraphernalia dot the room, and sitting in a comfy chair is Jane. Leaning on a table away from her is her long time friend Mary. They are dressed outlandishly, with various bits and bobs from "high" points in the century's fashion history. Jane is reading a book, "Junky" by William Burroughs.

Mary Milkman been today.

Jane Mm-hmm.

Mary He's got a nice arse. Notice how milkmen are gettin' younger these days?

Jane Mmm.

Mary Heh, policemen too. I swear half the ones the council keep sendin' round I could put over my bloody knee!

Jane That'd be nice...

Mary Too right it would. Especially, wass'is name, PC Kent...yeah, he's got a cute little bum fluff beard, I could eat 'im right up!

Jane Mmm...did you buy any eggs?

Mary What? Oh for God's sake, I know men hold no interest for you but I intend to keep enjoying my pre-menopausal life thank you very much!

Jane So...did you buy any eggs then?

Mary Yes, yes I bought the bloody eggs!

Jane Can you make me an omelette?

Mary Make yer own bloody omelette. I'm just waitin' for the rain to die off an' I'm off out for my jog.

Jane What's the point in jogging when you smoke forty a day?

Mary Well, it might be a bit of a challenge, but it's worth it. If I donated my body to medical science when I die, would they use it? Well they will after I lose a few spare tyres.

Jane Have you been memorising adverts on the tube again?

Mary Yes...I mean, no. But it's got a point innit? Plus I'd like to look good naked again...

Jane Please...I was hungry until you said that...

Mary Shuttup you! 'Least I haven't given up on life, spendin' all day sittin' in that armchair with me 'ead full of painkillers and me nose in a bloody book!

Jane I doubt the rain will die off any time soon. I saw the weather report. Man said we could expect storms all day...

Mary Bollocks...

Jane Oh well, looks like you'll have to wait till tomorrow to catch sight of the vicar on his morning jog...

Mary Shuttup you!

Jane ...Except he's gone on holiday to Amsterdam with his homosexual lover for the Easter...

Mary How do you know? You never leave the bloody house!

Jane taps her nose slyly.

Mary Whatever. Oh Gawd, I feel so bloody cooped up in 'ere. Can't we call Brian from the garage and come and get 'im to drive the caravan somewhere?

Jane Are you stupid? If we move this caravan then the council will be round with their bloody bulldozers right away to build a new block of flats or something. And that's if the bloody neighbours don't decide to erect a huge memorial celebrating our leaving after five years of polluting their oh-so-wonderful neighbourhood.

Mary Like we give a flyin' fuck about their house prices...

Jane Exactly. So no more of this nonsense talk. If you want to do something then tidy up this place. Most of it's your stuff...

Mary No! I've had a better idea! Let's dance!

Jane I don't do dancing...

Mary Bollocks you don't! I remember back at our school disco you out-greased Olivia Newton-John!

Jane Yes well that was then and this is now, and now I don't do dancing.

Mary Oh don't be miserable, have a dance! It'll do you good!

Jane No, it'll make me dizzy and I'll fall over. Look, I'm not stopping you from dancing if you want to. I was listening to something good for dancing to earlier. It's in the player, just go and turn it on.

Mary This isn't that 'Tubular Bells' crap is it?

Jane No, it's quality music, something I'm sure you won't be familiar with.

Mary Ok...

She walks over to the record player and turns it on. "Touch Me" by the Doors starts playing. Mary seems a little unsure at first, but begins enthusiastically dancing for a while, as Jane continues reading her book. Eventually she turns the music off and starts hunting around for another record...

Jane What are you doing? The next song is even better...

Mary Well, we've listened to something of yours, and now we're going to listen to something of mine...

Jane Oh God help us...

Mary No, really, it's great, you'll love it! Really arty stuff...

She puts on the record. "King of Rock and Roll" by Prefab Sprout plays. Jane places her book over her head and bashes her head against the chair. Mary dances like no one is watching, which for us would be the preferable state of affairs.

*Eventually, lights down on them (and sound), and lights up on another part of stage, revealing **Linda**, a social worker.*

Linda *(On the phone)* Yes...yes I understand the situation...no, yes well I'm almost there so how about I give you a call afterwards...yes, yes we can do lunch...ok, kiss the kids goodnight for me honey...ok, love you too...bye...yes I'm your kitty-witty...yes...yes Ok Daniel, goodbye! *(Hangs up)*. Christ, who'd marry their bloody boss...

She looks up at the caravan.

Linda Right, this must be the place...

Lights down on her and up on the caravan once more. Now "Gold" by Spandau Ballet is playing. Jane finally snaps. She leaps out of the chair and tackles Mary to the ground. She starts hitting her over the head repeatedly with a space-hopper. Both of them are screaming "Stop!", but obviously for different reasons. As Linda walks through the front door, Jane throws the space hopper at the record player. Naturally, the record ends and the silence that follows is deafening.

The two friends both look at the newcomer in shock. Linda responds likewise.

Linda Linda Geoffries, Social Services. I'm here to do a report...

Jane Watch out Mary, looks like you're the one that's gettin' younger. Now they're gonna put you in care...

Mary Fuck off, Jane. 'Ere, what's all this about then?

Linda Um, well, our department was alerted to a possibly severe case of child abuse here. Would it be possible for me to see the child?

Jane Yer lookin' at her...

Mary I said fuck off! Look, I'm sorry about her miss, it's the pills the doctor has her on. They send her a bit funny sometimes when she gets overexcited...

Linda Yes, well, that's all well and good but if I could just see the child...

Mary Yeah, about that. There's no kids 'ere. You must 'ave the wrong place...

Linda Are you sure...?

Mary Look, you can have a go round the place if you want, though I recommend an asbestos suit, coz I know for a fact that you won't find any bloody kids!

Linda If you refuse to co-operate I can involve the police...

Mary Listen 'ere, missy. There are many complaints about us in this neighbourhood. They complain about our caravan. Our friends. They complain about our music, they complain about the way we talk and the way we dress, they complain about how bloody long we are in the Post Office for Christ's sake. But not once has anyone ever complained about child abuse, due mainly to the blindingly obvious fact that there 'aint no children 'ere!

Linda If you're hiding a child somewhere...

Mary Look! Two middle-aged women in a cramped caravan is no bloody place to raise a kid, that much is obvious even to me and I only got 3 O levels!

Linda So...what you're telling me is...you have no children?

Mary just looks at her, exasperated.

Linda So this isn't number 69?

Mary No, you berk, it's bloody 66, look on the door...

Linda I'm sorry, it said 69 on the door.

Mary It's those fuckin' kids off that estate again. Bastards think we're a couple of rug munchers...

Linda Yes, well...if this isn't 69, could you direct me to the real residence?

Mary Yeah, well obviously it's 3 doors down you nitwit...God, they let anyone work for the council nowadays. No wonder the twerps can't even get rid of us...

Linda Yes, well, I'm sorry for wasting your time. But don't worry, Housing Services will be coming for you!

Mary That's what they said last time, and the time before that! Get out of 'ere before I set Space Hopper girl on you!

Linda exits, defeated.

Mary Yeah, that fuckin' showed her. What's wrong with you, ya dozy cow. I thought the reason you stayed at home was so you could torture anyone foolish enough to come knocking, like those bastard Jehovah's Witnesses...

Jane I don't know, I just feel a little off is all. Can I have a cigarette?

Mary Yeah, sure. *She offers a cigarette, which is hastily taken and lit.*

Jane Thanks. God that was embarrassing.

Mary Not 'alf as embarrassing as it must have been for her, poor cow. God, fancy that, the Joneses of number 69...I swear they was the only nice ones around 'ere...

Jane Just goes to show...

Mary I don't reckon it's true...I reckon that snotty little social worker's gonna get another shock...I mean, we seen the kids, they go out every Sunday to visit their granny and they look fine.

Jane Yeah, well, who knows eh? So what were we doing before miss power-suit walked in?

Mary Well, in the split second before you stopped beating me over the head and she walked in, I was considering how we really need to get that bloody lock fixed, I mean, any old bugger could walk in...

Jane Oh God, Spandau Ballet, don't remind me.

Mary Bitch.

Jane What!? But you know I don't like them, no need to be rude...

Mary Slag.

Jane Mary, really...

Mary Cow.

Jane Look, do you want a slap?

Mary ...And then nothing. Nothing at all!

Jane What are you babbling about, you hag?

Mary Listen. Try going further than 'Bitch, slag, cow'. It's impossible.

Jane Oh for God's sake...

Mary Come on! I'll start. "Bitch!"

Jane Slag.

Mary Cow.

Jane ...

Mary See!

Jane Slut!

Mary But look how long it took you to think of it! No other word fits in their quite that well. It's like it has to be stuck on odd numbers in order to guarantee a winner in any female slingin' match. There must be a victor! Our vocabulary is geared towards providing us with a definite winner, and the answer lies in 'bitch, slag, cow'!

Jane You've been at my pills, haven't you?

Mary Oh well I can't help it, can I? I'm bloody bored!

Jane Do something useful. Read a book, clean up this place or, I dunno, go and tie-dye some more of your stupid bloody t-shirts...

Mary Well aren't you gonna do anything?

Jane I'm not the one moping around complaining about having nothing to do, am I?

Mary But that's because you never bloody do anything anyway? When was the last time you went out, eh? We've hit 30, not bloody 60, we're not at retirement age yet, love. Come on, get out there, get yerself a bloke and enjoy yer life a bit. And do something with that hair...

Jane Will you please shut up. God. If all you're gonna do is drive me insane all day with your bloody voice then I might start going out. Just don't be surprised if I don't bother to come back!

Mary Oh please, if you're gonna be a miserable cow for the next 20 years I'd be better off without you...

Jane Fine!

Mary Oh for God's sake, Jane, what's up? Remember when we used to have fun? Me, and you, and...

Jane ...and Ted...

Mary Yeah, and Ted. And he wouldn't be too pleased to see you sittin' at home all day twiddlin' yer thumbs when there's a whole world out there we could be enjoyin'! I don't mean to be harsh, love, but he's gone, and he's been gone for nearly 10 years now, so wake up and smell the burnt coffee, daffodil, because you've slept in!

Jane I didn't understand a word of that. Now piss off and leave me to my misery, because contrary to popular belief, it does not love company.

Mary Jane Henrietta Gladys Thompson, why if you weren't my best friend...

Jane ...only friend...

Mary ...Yes, only friend...if you weren't my only friend I'd...oooh, look, it's that woman from the council! The police are round and she's takin' the kid!

Jane Let me see!

Mary Blimey! Who woulda thunk it? I mean, I know they're a nosy lot round 'ere but to tell that...you'd have had to bug the house. She must'a been tipped off by MI5 or somethin'...

Jane Actually it was me...

Mary Yeah, bollocks it was, love. Why would you do a thing that? You always hated the rozzers ever since they locked up your dad for kickin' in that bloke's head what tried to touch you up...

Jane Yeah, well, if there's a kid involved then I'm not ashamed to swallow my pride.

Mary You serious? But you never leave the house! How the hell...?

Jane taps her nose slyly.

Mary You sly cow...

Jane Wouldn't you have done it?

Mary Probably...I mean, maybe, I dunno. I always feel a bit stupid in situations like that.

Jane Yeah, well, that's some people's fucking problem isn't it? Do you want a cup of tea?

Mary What? Oh yeah...

Jane goes to make the tea. As she rummages around she speaks.

Jane Is everything alright, Mary? You look little unwell...

Mary No, no I'm fine, really. Just kinda had the wind taken outta me sails, know what I mean?

Jane Oh don't worry about it. Look at this bloody street, all those twitching net curtains. Someone was bound to be a child abuser, it's statistically proven.

Mary Really?

Jane Yeah. If you ask me that lot at number 69 were prime candidates...

Mary Says you. Still, at least the kid'll be alright now...

Jane Doubt it, but at least he's got a chance now.

Mary Probably get adopted...

Jane Probably. That'd be nice. I always wanted a baby.

Mary Yeah, but baby's grow up into evil toddler bastards from hell. And then there'd be bloody puberty to contend with. If it's male it'll last for his entire life...

Jane Don't be such a cynic. A child would've been wonderful.

Mary Is that why you were so quiet when the social worker came round? Because ever since Ted died, all you ever wanted, a baby, was suddenly placed out of reach? And when you saw the opportunity to save a child from a life of torment and abuse you placed your principles on the line to see that justice was done, an unselfish act towards a child that wasn't even your own. So now, in many ways, you've been a better mother to that child than he's ever had, and in a roundabout way achieved your life-long dream?

Pause.

Jane Don't be so stupid. I was fucked up on my painkillers.

Mary Oh...

Jane And my lifelong dream is to marry either Tom Sellick or the guy who played 'Face' in the A-Team...

Mary Ok...

Jane And since when did you take to amateur psychology...

Mary Well your Freud book was lying around so I picked it up earlier and...

Jane You bitch, I was wondering where that went...

Mary Well you will leave stuff lying around...

The friendly bitching continues as the lights fade down and the Door's song 'The End' fades up.

END.