

LITTLE SPACES

By Bobby Keniston

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CHARACTERS

ADELE: Happy, charming hostess. She smiles a great deal, except for the few times she doesn't--- which isn't a very pleasant thing to see. She wears an apron and carries a notepad.

MONTGOMERY: Uncomfortable, claustrophobic. He is constantly tugging at his clothing. Breathes funny as the play progresses. He wears clothes that are somewhat too small for him, to heighten the sense of claustrophobia.

KAT: Montgomery's girlfriend. Somewhat flighty, but seems good-natured. Proves to have some wisdom by the end of the play.

PROPS

Fishing Magazine

Tray with two sodas

Notepad for Adele

Coffee table

Any assorted props the director may choose to box them in.

SOUND EFFECT

Sound of people moaning in pain

PRODUCTION NOTES

This is an absurd play dealing with existentialism, a kind of quirky, darkly comic “No Exit,” hopefully made a bit more relatable for high school students (there's a bit of Beckett thrown in for good measure). It is a simple play to stage, and should leave the audience laughing, scratching their heads, and perhaps a bit creeped out.

The important thing about this play is the characters. Montgomery should constantly be tugging his clothing and fidgeting. A claustrophobic, Monty is completely uncomfortable for the duration of the play. Kat, on the other hand, should be comfortable, if somewhat vacuous. I think she truly cares for Monty, but really can't deal with him on a mature level, as she is somewhat self-absorbed. She leaves him because she can see that Monty has chosen to remain in his little hell-world. Much of what she says is by rote. Adele smiles and appears very happy, but this should mask a kind of sinister nature.

The set should look very cramped. The one door should almost hit Monty every time it is opened. Kat should be right in his face, adding to his discomfort, and Adele should tower over him, invading his space from above. Props can be absurdly exaggerated in size, to make the room appear even smaller.

In summation, this is a play to truly play with. It is short, so you can go wild with your imagination to heighten the absurdity and bizarre nature in any way you can imagine. Have fun, but stay true to the characters!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This short play was originally performed as part of an evening of one-act plays presented by Foxcroft Academy at the Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. I would like to acknowledge the original cast, who dove right in to this absurd piece, and loved every minute of it. What they created on stage made this play really shine. They are: Nik Hasenfaus as Montgomery, Paige Hobbs as Kat, and Erin Boyer as (a very creepy) Adele.

I wrote this play in the midst of severe kidney stone pain. I needed a shorter piece to complete my evening of plays, I was under a deadline, and I had to write, pain or not. This bizarre little comedy is an example of what can happen when a playwright is in pain.

I was curious to see how audiences would respond to this play. In the original production, we heightened the more absurd elements. We really boxed Montgomery in, with Kat sitting next to him. We used potted plants set behind him, creeping over him. One of our cast members had a suit of armor, and just for fun, we threw that in, too. Anything to heighten the absurdity of it all. We included a silver tray with fruit and a replica of a skull on it, to add a hint of menace, as well. Whenever the door opened, it came close to hitting Montgomery (but never did of course), making him feel even more boxed in. We also employed some very interesting lighting and sound effects.

To my great surprise, "Little Spaces", which was the last of the three plays performed that evening, was a huge hit. Much of the audience from the community, as well as the teachers and students who attended, liked it the best. They kept saying, "There's just something about it..." The word "strange" was used a lot, and "funny-- but in a creepy kind of way." It was a hit that people were talking about for quite some time afterward.

Here is my suggestion: don't try to stage this production in order to let the audience know what it is "about", per se. It's much more fun to play with it, shake it up a little bit, let yourselves be creative. Since it is a short piece (between 10-12 minutes for the original production), audiences seem to really enjoy deciding for themselves what the show is about, and where Monty is, and how he got there.

I guess basically what I'm saying is, have fun with it, and the audience will too.

*This play is dedicated to Tracy Sue, once again,
For all of her support and encouragement, and
for being the world's best ideal reader.
Thanks, always and forever, Tracy.*

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SETTING: A small room. Very small room. Two chairs, separated by a small table with a lamp and one magazine on it. It looks like some kind of waiting room. Whatever the area, it should appear very walled in. Stage left wall has a door.

AT RISE: *MONTGOMERY, 20s, and KAT, 20s, are sitting in the two chairs, staring straight out. KAT just seems lost in LaLa Land, but MONTGOMERY is obviously nervous and agitated. HE fidgets and tugs at his clothing. His leg shakes. HE picks up the one magazine, tries to look at it, but can't really focus. HE sets it down.*

MONTGOMERY: I don't even remember why we came here.

KAT: Do you think I'm prettier than the girls in that magazine?

MONTGOMERY: What?

KAT: Am I prettier than the girls in that magazine?

MONTGOMERY: This is a fishing magazine.

KAT: Yeah?

MONTGOMERY: So I'm not sure what you're asking me. *(beat)* Yes, you're prettier than the fish in this magazine.

KAT: *(good natured)* You're so silly.

MONTGOMERY: That's me. Mr. Silly.

(MONTGOMERY continues to fidget. HE tugs at his shirt collar.)

KAT: Boy, you sure are fidgety. Mr. Fidget. Fidgety, fidgety, fidge, fidge. *(SHE laughs at her joke)*

MONTGOMERY: It feels hot in here. Doesn't it? I feel hot. I'm sweating. And I'm not even wearing a sweater, but I'm sweating. Is my face red? Do I look like I'm going to pass out? I feel like I'm going to pass out. That is how I feel at this moment. It's so hot in here.

KAT: I feel fine. Finey, finey, fine-fine.

MONTGOMERY: Do you remember why we came here? Or how we even got here? I don't remember. It's like I was born, and then I was here. I don't really recall anything in between.

KAT: I think it was your idea.

MONTGOMERY: What?

KAT: It was your idea, I think. Us coming here. I don't remember anything about this place. I know I wouldn't have recommended it.

MONTGOMERY: But do you remember how we actually got here?

KAT: *(thinks a moment)* Uh... taxi? I know we didn't take the bus, because I don't like taking the bus. And you're such a good boyfriend. Always so considerate about how I don't like taking the bus. So I'm pretty sure we must have come by taxi. *(beat)* I don't want to say anything bad about people who take the bus, but it is such a terrible way to travel. So much hardship on the bus. People coughing without covering their mouths. Sitting in these little seats, trying not to look at one another. And it is such a little space.

(MONTGOMERY yelps.)

What is it?

MONTGOMERY: Little space. Little space. That's what this is. A little space. I don't like it.

(ADELE enters, smiling. SHE is dressed like a waitress. SHE has a tray with two glasses of soda on it.)

ADELE: Hello, my name is Adele, and I will be taking care of you. Here are your complimentary rhinoceroses.

MONTGOMERY: Excuse me?

ADELE: Oh. What did I say? Did I say rhinoceroses? You'll have to excuse me. I sometimes get my words mixed up.

KAT: Me too!

ADELE: Really? Perhaps we shall become lifelong friends and have slumber parties where we French braid each other's hair! What I meant to say, of course, is here are your complimentary beverages.

KAT: How nice!

MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

(MONTGOMERY and KAT take their drinks.)

Excuse me, but what is this place again? I don't really remember.

ADELE: All you need to know is that we pride ourselves on service.

Service is our number one concern. To serve. I assure you that you will get everything you deserve out of your experience here.

MONTGOMERY: It seems a little hot in this waiting room.

ADELE: Funny you should say so. But I'm afraid I must change the subject. Although we have had your reservation on file, there are a few more moments of waiting. Please feel free to stand up if you like, but do not go through this door until I tell you you can. Do you understand?

KAT: Sure do.

MONTGOMERY: Okay. But, I have to confess: this is embarrassing, but I really get quite nervous when I'm in little spaces for too long. Is it possible for me to go outside?

ADELE: I'm afraid not, sir. The only way outside is to go through the door here, and I believe I have already stressed the importance of not going through the door until it is time to do so. But I'm sure you'll be quite comfortable here, and it should only be a few trumpets longer until we can take care of you.

MONTGOMERY: Trumpets?

ADELE: I meant minutes, of course. Please forgive me. I often confuse words. If there is nothing else I can do for you, I will take my leave. I'll check in again shortly.

(ADELE bows and exits. MONTGOMERY takes a sip of his soda.)

MONTGOMERY: This soda is warm. Almost hot.

KAT: Mine tastes fine, snuggle bear. Why don't you try to relax? Read your fishing magazine.

MONTGOMERY: I think I'm going to stand. *(HE stands up. At once, HE is overwhelmed by the smallness of the space, and becomes dizzy. HE sits back down.)* That didn't help. That didn't help at all. I don't feel so good. Why did she say "fathers"? Do I have a fever?

(KAT places her hand on MONTGOMERY's head. HE flinches at the touch.)

Your hand is hot! Ow!

KAT: You feel cool as a cucumber. *(SHE laughs)* That's a funny word. Cucumber. And by the way, she said "trumpets".

MONTGOMERY: Huh?

KAT: She didn't say "fathers". She said "trumpets."

MONTGOMERY: *(after a beat)* Listen, honey, doesn't it bother you that neither of us can remember coming here? I mean, what are the odds of that happening? Why shouldn't we be able to remember coming to this place? And why can't we go outside? Are we prisoners or are we patrons or are we guests? And why is she mixing up her words? I don't understand it... why doesn't she get her words right? Trumpets is nothing like minutes. I can't stand it.

KAT: You really need to learn to just relax and to forget about things that you can't control. Really. Why should you worry about it? Things happen as they happen. You need to loosen up, or I'm just going to break up with you. *(beat)* I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. I wouldn't break up with you. Although, it would make Carl very happy.

MONTGOMERY: Who's Carl?

KAT: (*pleasantly conversational*) Oh, he's just a guy that I see when you bother me too much. I think he's in love with me. You'd like him. He plays the kettle drums.

MONTGOMERY: What? Are you telling me that you've been seeing someone behind my back?

KAT: Yes. His name is Carl. Haven't you been listening?

MONTGOMERY: I can't believe this.

KAT: I didn't mean to upset you. Mr. Upset. Upsety, upsety, upset-set.

MONTGOMERY: Why would you do this to me?

KAT: Oh, honey. "Why" is such a boring question. If you're not going to look at the magazine, let me see it.

(*MONTGOMERY hands her the magazine. HE is clearly still very agitated. KAT looks through the magazine. ADELE enters through the door, smiling.*)

ADELE: Hello again! Glad to see you are still here.

MONTGOMERY: You told us we couldn't leave.

ADELE: Well, I did strongly encourage it, didn't I? (*as a waitress*) Are you ready to die?

MONTGOMERY: What?!

ADELE: I said, Are you ready to die in a tortuous fashion and be roasted like chestnuts in the fire?

MONTGOMERY: What!?

ADELE: Oh, dear. I must have gotten my words confused again. What did I say?

KAT: (*Without emotion*) You asked us if we were ready to die in a tortuous fashion and be roasted like chestnuts in the fire.

ADELE: Oh, silly me. (*smiles*) What a silly, silly thing to say!

MONTGOMERY: Yes. Silly.

ADELE: What I meant to say, of course, is are you ready to order?

MONTGOMERY: Order what? Is this a restaurant?

ADELE: I'll give you a few more years. Minutes. Minutes.

MONTGOMERY: Wait!

ADELE: What is it?

MONTGOMERY: We're not staying. We're leaving. Come, on Kat, we're going. (*HE stands up and is immediately dizzy*)

KAT: But I don't want to go. Not like this.

MONTGOMERY: Fine. Stay if you want to. Call Carl. But I'm leaving. I'm not staying here another... (*HE swoons from dizziness*) Oh no.

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ADELE: (*pushing him back to his seat, getting in his face*) Sir. Your attitude is really hurting my feelings. I have done my best to make you feel welcome here. Now, you can either make the best of a bad situation, and be generous toward my kindness, or you can keep on in your rudeness, and ignite my wrath! What's it gonna be, sir!? I would strongly recommend the latter.

MONTGOMERY: Is this a nightmare?

ADELE: If by nightmare you mean something unpleasant that is really happening, really and honestly happening, then yes, this is a nightmare.

MONTGOMERY: What's outside the door?

(*ADELE smiles. SHE opens the door. Sounds of moaning, people in pain, are heard. SHE closes the door, and it is silent.*)

ADELE: Music, sir. Music is outside that door.

(*ADELE exits. MONTGOMERY fidgets. KAT stares at him a moment.*)

KAT: Mr. Fidget.

MONTGOMERY: Yeah, that's me. (*beat*) When I was little, six or seven, I broke my dad's prized possession. It was a watch. An old watch that his grandfather had given him. I was playing with it when I shouldn't have been. And I broke it. It was the only time I had seen my father cry. He made me stand in the corner in the laundry room, which was a very little space to begin with. He told me that I couldn't come out until he said so. He was probably waiting to cool down, you know, so he wouldn't scream at me or spank me or something. It would have been better if he had. I hated being there in that little space. It felt like hours and hours and hours. And then, when he finally let me come out, he was still really mad. He didn't speak to me for seven weeks. And then he left my mom, and I never saw him again.

(*There is a long pause.*)

KAT: Do you think I'm fat?

MONTGOMERY: No. What? Where did that come from?

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