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**Product Code A0871-SP**

# P A R E N T S

A Short Play

by Dan Weatherer

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**Parents**  
by Dan Weatherer

**Cast of Characters**  
2W/2M + Offstage Voice

Gilly Marston: *Warehouseman; parent of Bethany.*

Steff Lightwood: *Unemployed; young single-mother of twins, Adam and Joe.*

Tom Hanton: *An acquisitions broker; early to mid-thirties; father of Rebecca.*

Marianna Hanton: *Beauty product sales manager; twenties; mother of Rebecca.*

Offstage Voice: *Female, any age.*

**Setting**

*Hall outside classroom: Parents' evening; Reception class, Western Primary  
(English)*

*Hall outside classroom: Parent/Teacher conference, Kindergarten  
(U.S.)*

Parents  
by Dan Weatherer

SETTING: *Parents' Evening; Reception Class, Western Primary School. The school corridor complete with children's paintings and school notices, etc. on the wall. There are four seats next to the classroom door.*

AT RISE: *STEFF is sitting in the seat nearest to the door. Enter GILLY.*

GILLY  
(To STEFF)  
Alright?

STEFF  
(Shy)  
Hiya.

*There is a moment of awkward silence as GILLY chooses which seat to take.*

GILLY  
Mind if I take this one?

*STEFF shakes her head. He sits next to STEFF, who shuffles away from him. Another awkward pause follows.*

GILLY, *Continued*  
You been waiting long?

STEFF  
About twenty minutes. She's got a couple in there now. Frea's parents, I think.

GILLY  
Ah right. Not a name I recall. Bethany talks about her friends all the time, but it's in one ear, out the other, you know how it is? Some names stick, others don't.

*STEFF nods.*

GILLY, *Continued*

Don't get me wrong, I wanna keep track of who is who, I think it's important to know the names of your kid's friends, but after twelve hours at the warehouse, it's kinda difficult to keep up with her. She can chatter for England that one.

*STEFF laughs politely.*

GILLY, *Continued*

Which one's yours?

STEFF

I've two actually. Adam and Joe.

GILLY

Oh, the twins! Bethany is always talking about those two! She knocks about a fair bit with 'em.

STEFF

Hope they aren't leading her into mischief. I keep telling them to behave but do they listen?

GILLY

Nah, it's OK. Boys will be boys. I think it's good that she mixes with the lads too. She never has a bad word to say about 'em...not like that Rebecca.

STEFF

Yeah, she sounds a right one! Adam has told me about her a few times.

*GILLY leans into STEFF and lowers his voice.*

GILLY

Did you hear about Mitsy, the class hamster?

STEFF

No?

GILLY

The way Bethany tells it, and bear in mind that she has a highly active imagination so I can't say for sure just how much of this is true, but apparently Rebecca force fed the hamster plasticine balls!

STEFF

Oh, that's awful! Was the hamster OK?

GILLY

Bethany said so, though it wasn't moving for a while! She said the teacher mended it though.

STEFF

Thank God for that! What a terror she sounds, I'd hate to have to hear about one of mine doing something like that!

GILLY

Yeah, same here. Still, Ms. Dooley sounds like she has it under control. If you can give CPR to a hamster I'll bet there isn't much she can't handle!

*STEFF laughs. There is an awkward pause.*

GILLY, *Continued*

So, twin boys, then. Bet they keep you on your toes, eh?

STEFF

They do! There's always something. I never get five minutes these days. They are good kids but they just never stop! I don't know where they get the energy! Still, I'd not have it any other way.

GILLY

Aye, nor me. Well. I would but—

*Enter TOM and MARIANNA.*

TOM

Ah, here we are! The Reception class...finally! Maisie's directions were hopeless. It's like a bloody maze in here.

MARIANNA

I shall have word when she arrives tomorrow. I'll not look the fool on my first parent's evening!

GILLY

Evening.

TOM

Good evening.

*MARIANNA looks at GILLY disapprovingly before taking the seat furthest from him.*

STEFF

Hiya.

*TOM nods and takes the seat next to GILLY.*

MARIANNA

Good evening.

*There is another awkward pause.*

TOM

Tell me, is there much of a wait? I have a meeting at eight and I really need to be back at my desk. Multi-million pound deal on the—

GILLY

‘fraid so, mate. I’ve been here five minutes, but this one –

STEFF

Steff.

GILLY

*(To STEFF)*

Sorry, where are my manners. *(To TOM)* Steff here has been waiting a while now.

TOM

Oh.

*Awkward pause; MARIANNA leans forward so that she can address STEFF at the far end of the row of chairs.*

MARIANNA

Would you be a dear and let us go before you? Thomas has an awfully important Skype call at eight and he really ought to be on time. His associates would look upon his tardiness most unfavorably.

STEFF

Ahrm...

GILLY

*(To MARIANNA)* Sorry, love, it doesn’t work like that. You should have gotten an earlier appointment. We all have to wait our turn.

MARIANNA

Oh, but we did.

TOM

Our nanny gave us terrible directions. Couldn’t find the bloody place. Missed our slot.

*GILLY and STEFF look at one another.  
GILLY mouths the word “nanny” and  
they both smirk.*

MARIANNA

Yes, she’ll be getting quite the telling off when she arrives tomorrow morning.

GILLY

That still makes you late.

MARIANNA

We arrive here in good time, we just couldn’t locate where we were meant to be, could we darling?

TOM

No. A minor hitch.

*GILLY and STEFF look at one another;  
pause.*

STEFF

*(To TOM and MARIANNA)*

Is this your first time at the school?

TOM

Yes it is. Seems rather...rudimentary.

MARIANNA

Indeed. This wasn’t our first choice, not at all. We wanted to send Rebecca to Saint David’s in Chelmsford, however we couldn’t bear to send her away, could we darling?

*GILLY AND STEFF look at one another  
again and smirk upon hearing that they  
are Rebecca’s parents.*

GILLY

*(To TOM and MARIANNA)*

You er...you got any pets at your place?

MARIANNA

Certainly not!

TOM

Oh God Lord no.

MARIANNA

Filthy things. What with all the feces and such! Plus Archie has allergies.

TOM

Archie is our eldest. Twelve, strapping kid. Good head for business already. He started a lunchtime sticker shop last week, made an absolute fortune. Buy low, sell high, that's what I always tell him! Terrible allergies, though. If he gets even a whiff of peanut butter we have to take home into A and E. Head swell like a balloon –

MARIANNA

Yes, alright, Thomas, that's enough. I'm sure they don't want Archie's complete medical history.

GILLY

*(Pause; then to TOM)*

What did you mean earlier when you said it all seems rudimentary?

TOM

Well...look at it. The painting on the wall...ill defined...sloppy use of form and color. And those posters, at five I could already count to one hundred...backwards too.

MARIANNA

It just seems a little...simple for our tastes. At Saint David's they have the reception class reading music by the end of the year. You know, nursery rhymes and such. Not symphonies...That's for year one.

GILLY

Impressive. Still, sound a bit much. I mean they are only five.

MARIANNA

It's never too early to plant the seeds of culture. That's what award winning author and child development expert Dr. Lucille Rathings says, and I for one agree with her. Rebecca is enrolled in Tap, Ballet, Contemporary Dance and is a keen player of the piano.

TOM

When we can get her to practice that is.

MARIANNA

Yes, well... I've said to Judith before, she needs to be stern with her. *(To STEFF)* Judith is our daughter's piano tutor. She charges fifty pounds an hour but came highly recommended by the Dean of Saint David's.

TOM

Yes, it's his wife.

*GILLY and STEFF stifle a laugh. Pause;  
GILLY nudges TOM in the ribs.*

GILLY

Hey, I bet this takes you back, eh? Sitting outside the classroom, waiting for the headmaster to come and give you a rollicking? Eh?

MARIANNA

I think not! Thomas was a perfect student. Weren't you, Thomas?

TOM

I was but I had my moments. *(To GILLY)* There was this one time I said I'd eaten all of my vegetables so that I could move onto my treacle sponge...but I hadn't! I'd left the cauliflower! I just scooped it onto the floor when the dinner lady was breaking up a fight behind me! Oh, I was a sod in those days! It's a miracle I'm as successful as I am now.

GILLY

Did you hear that, Steff? We've got a real bad 'un here.

*STEFF smiles.*

MARIANNA

You never told me that story before! Why now, in front of total strangers? Whatever will they think of us?

TOM

Hey, you knew I had a wild streak when you married me. *(Pause; to GILLY)* What do you do then?

GILLY

I'm a Storage Expediter.

TOM

I see, sounds impressive. And what does that entail?

GILLY

I load stock onto the back of a lorry. It's a posh way of saying warehouse worker. Still, it keeps the wolves from the door. You?

TOM

I'm in property acquisitions. I buy and sell large estates...surprisingly demanding work. Keeps me at the office until all hours. It's like I say to Marianna, commerce never sleeps!

MARIANNA

He rarely sees the children, such is his dedication to his work. Nor do I really, we are a very productive family when it comes to our work.

STEFF

*(To MARIANNA)*

What is it that you do?

MARIANNA

Me? I represent one of the leading retailers of beauty products. I've a team of fifty sales reps beneath me. My team is current county leader in terms of sales.

STEFF

Oh are you with that Forever lot, then? I've had some of their stuff. Brought me out in a rash.

MARIANNA

*(Flippant)*

Forever is a brand for the more discerning skin type. Our products don't suit just anybody.

STEFF

*(Taken aback)*

Oh. *(Pause)*

TOM

*(To STEFF)*

So what does your partner do?

STEFF

Last I heard an eight to ten stretch.

TOM/MARIANNA

Oh!

GILLY

What did he do?

STEFF

Armed robbery. Well, attempted, but he had priors. He knocked off a Gregg's with a water pistol and a sock. The police arrested him in the bookies next door. Couple of witnesses in the shop at the time saw him go in. He robbed them first thing in the morning so the tills were almost empty. Figured he could double his money betting on the 12:20 at Kempton. Never was that bright.

GILLY

No, doesn't seem the smartest move. Do you see much of him?

STEFF

You mean do I visit him inside? Nah. I won't have the kids in a place like that. Besides, he was a waste of space. We were done with a long time before he pulled that stunt.

TOM

I'm sorry to hear that. Dreadful luck.

STEFF

Luck had nothing to do with it. He made his bed.

MARIANNA

*(After a pause)*

So, do you work?

STEFF

No. My boys keep me busy enough.

MARIANNA

So what do you do for money, if I may ask?

STEFF

I claim. It's all I can do.

MARIANNA

*(Aghast)*

You live on Benefits?

STEFF

It's not a dirty word. Yes, my boys and I make do.

TOM

Can't you get a job?

GILLY

Hang on mo, let's not pry. Her business is her business.

STEFF

*(To GILLY)*

No, it's OK. *(To TOM)* Easier said than done. Try getting a job that pays a living wage and fits in around my boys' childcare needs. There aren't many about. It's either take a job paying less than I claim now or work all the hours god sends and never see my kids. I've no-one to help with the boys, no-one to take them before or after work, so I'm kinda stuck. I don't like to claim but I do what I can for my boys.

GILLY

As do we all.

*There is an awkward silence. SFX:  
sound of door opening and departing  
footsteps.*

WOMAN'S VOICE

Miss Lightwood, please?

*MARIANNA nudges TOM.*

TOM

I know we touched on this earlier but I do have a terribly important call to take...

STEFF

*(Annoyed)*

No, go ahead. Don't mind me.

TOM

Thank you. *(To MARIANNA)* Darling?

*MARIANNA and TOM stand.*

MARIANNA

*(Softly)*

Thank you.

*MARIANNA and TOM exit.*

TOM, *Off*

Mr. and Mrs. Hanton, delighted to finally meet you, Ms. Dooley.

*SFX: Door closes.*

GILLY

I'm sure they didn't—

STEFF

*(Interrupting)*

No, those type never do, do they? Winds me right up! Makes me feel like I have to justify myself. I mean they have a nanny for God's sake. They practically pay someone to bring their kid up for them!

GILLY

I'm sure it's not as clear cut as that. I know what you are getting at though. I'd kill to spend more time with Bethany. My shifts mean it's either first thing in the morning or last thing at night when I see her.

STEFF

How do you manage? I'd hat that. You miss so much.

GILLY

Can't be helped. My parents help. They are a Godsend and Bethany loves spending time with them. I need to work; I'm fortunate to have a job with decent money. Let's me take her away on holiday and do things she enjoys on my days off.

STEFF

That's nice.

GILLY

You been away yet this year?

STEFF

No. Not yet. We get away when we can, y'know, on those newspaper deals. The boys love it.

GILLY

I'm taking Bethany to Greece later this year.

STEFF

Oh, I went there before we had the boys. It's nice. Hot thought. I'm not sure where we stayed exactly but it was a bit dodgy.

GILLY

Dodgy how?

STEFF

Well, we kept getting approached by men trying to buy our passports. Put me right off going back!

GILLY

*(Laughing)*

I'll be sure to keep an eye out for them – thanks for the tip off!

*SFX: Sound of door opening, footsteps and door closing. MARIANNA and TOM enter.*

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