

A GHOST IN THE GARAGE

by

Adrian Reynolds

"A GHOST IN THE GARAGE"

Music; an extract from 'Evil Eye' around 3 minutes into the track, a little after the tablas start (see music notes: 1). Wanda is pottering in the garden.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

His skin was burnished bronze, a
supple sheen that was warm to her
touch. Beneath the surface,
pulsing with vital masculine
energies, his muscles
throbbbed...throbbbed...

The music fades. Wanda speaks aloud.

WANDA

...lazily? Languidly? Anyway,
they were throbbing...

Music comes back up.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

And so was she. Rashid's body was
hers to command, and her wish was
to --

The music fades.

EMLYN

Wanda? Tea for four, s'il vous
plaît. Mr Chaterji's on his way
up the drive, ETA ten seconds,
white one sugar, and I've just
called Diane.

DEE DEE

It's Dee Dee!

EMLYN

You are not Dee Dee!

Dee Dee goes to her room, slamming the door. The doorbell rings at this point; cheery chimes that are long out of fashion.

(CONTINUED)

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EMLYN (CONT'D)

Down with the shears Wanda! And
 aujourd'hui with the tea if you
 don't mind! I'm sure the weeding
 can wait.

(politely as he
 opens the door)

Bonjour Monsieur Chaterji.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

'Wait there,' she told Rashid,
 drawing herself away from his hot
 spicy breath, his pulsating
 maleness. You'll have to excuse
 me, but my husband's showing the
 holiday slides, and I'm in charge
 of tea and malted milks.'

Some time later...the slide show is underway.

EMLYN

And here - ici - you'll see the
 guest house where we stayed in
 Boulogne. Something of an
 atmosphere about it, didn't you
 think Wanda?

(Wanda doesn't
 reply)

I sensed...a presence. Madame
 Bertillon, the proprietress, told
 us that her grandfather had died
 in the room two down from ours.
 And he was prone to sleepwalking
 in later years.

WANDA

Another biscuit, Mr Chaterji? Go
 on, Mr Chaterji. Be a devil. You
 can have it on a plate. Here.
 Try a Rustic Crunch.

EMLYN

And this one is of Madame
 Bertillon herself. If you'll
 notice, Mr Chaterji, there is an
 unusual shadow over her left
 shoulder. Significantly, this is
 the position that her grandfather
 adopted in the family portrait
 you'll see over the piano.

WANDA

It's not very clear. I don't know that Mr Chaterji can see it.

Emlyn readies another slide.

EMLYN

Fortunately I took a picture. See? It hasn't come out very well, but all the same...

Emlyn shows the said slide, flips back to the previous one, and repeats the procedure.

WANDA

I could put the kettle on again if you're wanting, Mr Chaterji.

EMLYN

Of course, a sceptic might say that it's just a coincidence. But after all, what is a coincidence?

DEE DEE

It's a damp patch. Like the one in my room.

WANDA

I cleaned just the other day, as soon as I found out you were coming. I'd have noticed a damp patch.

DEE DEE

Not here. In the house. And there's a fungus in Karen's room the size of a labrador.

WANDA

What about the landlord?

EMLYN

Of course, even if it were proved to be a damp patch, there is still the question of why it chose to appear in that particular place, in that peculiarly grandfatherish formation. So-called natural phenomena can be every bit as intriguing as the supernatural,

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EMLYN (CONT'D)

don't you think Mr Chaterji? As the bard so rightly said, 'There are more things in Heaven and Earth', eh Mr Chaterji?

DEE DEE

The landlord doesn't set foot in the place, except when one of us is having a shower. He lives just across the road, and we never set eyes on him till the bathroom window's steamed up. Then he's round before you can get a towel on. He brings his son sometimes. We were going to complain, but with something like that do you go to the Accommodation Centre or the Women's Officer?

EMLYN

A little courtesy. I'm trying to show Mr Chaterji the slides. You might even find something of interest yourself Diane.

DEE DEE

It's Dee Dee.

EMLYN

Diane. A name you seem only too happy to acknowledge when it's on a cheque.

DEE DEE

Patriarch.

EMLYN

We'll have less of that, thank you. Sorry about this Mr Chaterji. Two terms at polytechnic, and she wants to change the world starting with her given name. Still, plus ça change que sera, eh?

WANDA

There's a sponge in the kitchen. Mr Chaterji likes his sponge, don't you Mr Chaterji?

DEE DEE

It's not a polytechnic, it's a university. You know, don't you Mr C?

WANDA

Lemon icing as well. We had it once before, remember Mr Chaterji?

EMLYN

Went to the Polytechnic of Life, me.

WANDA

Another tea? I think so.

Wanda goes into the kitchen. Cue music. (From 'Evil Eye' again.)

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

Rashid's dark eyes were full of accusation when she returned to him. He was too proud to say it, but she knew he was jealous. 'I have a husband you know. He sells garden furniture and thinks there's a ghost in the garage.'

She approached her lover, traced a long finger down his beautifully sculpted chest. 'I loved him once,' she smiled. Rashid scowled. 'I thought love was the finest thing in the world, and told myself how lucky I was to have a man like him, who knew about poltergeists and patio sets.'

She drew Rashid close to her, placed the tip of her tongue on the pulse in his neck, and licked it, thinking how it would be to have the rasping sliver of a cat's tongue. 'The more he dwelt on what happens after death, the less alive he became. One day I woke up, and there he was, a piece of toast in his mouth and a book

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WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE) (CONT'D)

about the Bermuda Triangle in his hand. Dead, even as he turned the pages. My husband died many years ago, Rashid. But I am still alive.'

She held his head to her face, and traced her eyelashes down his cheek, purring as she did.

'Comfort me in my grief. Make love to me in my widow's bed.' And hearing her words, Rashid forgot his jealousy, for how could he envy a man who was dead, a man who spent more time with his ouija board than with his wife?

Delicately, Rashid kissed his lover on her lips as a butterfly would brush against a flower, and taking her in his strong brown arms, carried her upstairs and...

The kettle boils during the second half of the last sentence, boiling with a piercing whistle that intrudes into Wanda's daydreams and ends the music. She makes up a tray of tea and cake and takes it back to the slide show. She stops before entering, to hear...

EMLYN

And in this one you'll see Wanda in the grounds of the chateau, seeing if she can sneak some cuttings I wouldn't be surprised. Interestingly enough, Marie Antoinette once stayed there, and may have sat in the very bench that Wanda's sitting in. To think that their...derrières may have shared the same space, across the centuries.

Wanda enters with the tray.

WANDA

Am I to understand my buttocks are being discussed, Emlyn?

EMLYN

In a manner, mon amour. They have been raised metaphorically, as a bridge spanning time.

WANDA

You used to say I had a nice bottom. A nectarine, you called it. 'A nectarine?' I asked. 'Yes my love: a peach without the fuzz.'

DEE DEE

Mum!

WANDA

And right then, I knew we were to be wed.

DEE DEE

Do you have to?

WANDA

And now it looks like a bridge.

EMLYN

A metaphorical bridge. I was illustrating a point.

WANDA

With my bottom.

(pause)

Some cake Mr Chaterji? A nice big slice for you.

EMLYN

All I was saying --

WANDA

It doesn't matter. There are worse things than bridges.

EMLYN

But all I meant --

WANDA

I told you. It's gone.

DEE DEE

There's this bloke who used to be a steel worker, Karen says. Now he sells cakes in the market. Seconds from Marks, but they're perfectly good. Just missing a cherry on the top, or iced too thin. She brought back two Bakewell tarts for a pound, and we had one with some custard she made herself, not out of a packet or anything. A lot of students don't even know where the market is, but Karen knows some of the stallholders and they let her have things cheap sometimes.

WANDA

Have we met this Karen?

EMLYN

The blonde girl, isn't she? In the downstairs room?

DEE DEE

I don't see what her hair's got to do with it.

EMLYN

Yes, that's her. Tall. Scraggly sort of. And a baggy cardigan, if I remember right.

DEE DEE

Ask a man to describe another man and he'll say he's 'a good bloke' or 'a bit of a lad', but if it's a woman all they can think is what she looks like, starting with what colour her hair is. Isn't that right, Mr C? I've never heard Mr C call a woman by her hair.

WANDA

Your father's only seen her the once or twice. He's hardly likely to know what she's like. Not really.

EMLYN

And she'll not appreciate me not knowing what she looks like, am I right Mr Chaterji? Chercher la femme and you'll find someone who likes to be complimented.

WANDA

I forget.

EMLYN

Of course, you don't need all that as you get older. Other things become more important. In nature, there is balance. The decline of the body means the strengthening of the spirit. Surfaces grow less enticing, but you develop a kind of X-ray vision where the soul's concerned. Stands to reason.

DEE DEE

It must be Karen's soul that's blonde and wears a cardy, eh Mr C?

WANDA

I think you should show another slide.

Emlyn shows another slide.

EMLYN

On with the show then. Now in this one you can't but fail to be impressed by this south view of --

DEE DEE

It's Mr C!

WANDA

-- the majesty of Versailles --

DEE DEE

There! That's Mr C!

EMLYN

-- the palace of the Sun King Louis --

DEE DEE

It is you, isn't it! It's Mr
Chaterji!

WANDA

That's the palace of Versailles.
Stop pestering poor Mr Chaterji.

DEE DEE

In the background, over on the
left. Half of him's in a bush,
but that's you, isn't it Mr
Chaterji?

WANDA

These are our holiday slides, Dee
Dee. From France. We went just
the two of us, your father and me.

EMLYN

Do you know there are tribes who
spend their whole lives trying to
find out what their names are?
Some of them go to the grave not
knowing what they're called. They
take their names very seriously.
Very seriously indeed. They
wouldn't dream of taking up any
old nom de plume just because the
fancy took them. You could upset
ancestral totems, anger the tribal
gods. Anything could happen.

WANDA

Yes dear.

(to Dee Dee again)

Mr Chaterji's never been to France
in his life, have you Mr Chaterji?
All the hours God sends he's
mending lawnmowers in that leaky
workshop under the arches, and any
spare time he does get he's with
us or at his club, isn't that
right Mr Chaterji?

EMLYN

And less of the leaky. We saw to
that just the other day, didn't we
Mr Chaterji? A square of lino and
a splash of fixative and it's as
good as new.

DEE DEE

But the trousers! He's wearing the same ones now! Those are Mr C's feet, in Mr C's socks and Mr C's shoes.

EMLYN

Mr Chaterji. Be so kind as to set the foolish girl's mind at rest as regards your whereabouts when this picture was taken.

DEE DEE

I am an independent woman who somehow happens to be your daughter. I am a student, whose intelligence has taken her to university and will in time take her far beyond it into a world where I can do what I want, when I want and with whom I want. I am not a 'foolish girl': I am Dee Dee McReedy --

EMLYN

Of course, traditions about names aren't restricted to the people of so-called 'primitive' tribes. According to some Christian sects, when you're called, it's the name you were christened with that they call you by. That's what it's for. And how's Saint Peter going to know who you are if you turn up at the Pearly Gates with a name that's not the one he's got written down? Be a proper to-do if you got up there, told him your name was 'Spud' say, and he'd got you down as a Barry. Medieval theologians argued about that one for years. Of course, it also raises interesting questions for the deaf. If you're called but you can't hear...

DEE DEE

I'm not listening.

EMLYN

My point exactly.

DEE DEE

And that there is Mr C. In the bush.

EMLYN

These next few are ones we took on the boat trip. I thought I'd managed to catch a seal in the one, but I dare say it's Mr Chaterji, out for a fish breakfast.

Music; an extract from 'Lucky Saddle' starting with the water noises. See music notes: 2.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

She'd married a man she thought might be a poet. He'd called her bottom a nectarine, and it had been the most marvellous, romantic thing she'd heard. But a poet's heart doesn't have room for garden furniture, and as the years went by she realised that if her husband had ever truly been a poet, his muse had jumped ship without even leaving a slim commemorative volume.

There was no verse in her life then: no longing chorus or frenzied couplets, not even a limerick. But there were books, in a pile on her husband's side of the bed. The words her husband cherished were found in tatty paperbacks, and it was a passion she could not share with him, as much as she tried.

Her husband's passion was for 'the unknown', and to know it he read breathless volumes promising the occult secrets of Stonehenge and the truth about flying saucers. The books told him that there was a world beyond the one he inhabited, a world comfortably distant from the garden centre

where he worked. Aliens would never abduct a barbecue set, nor vampires invest in crazy paving. But the idea that they existed, somewhere, was an article of faith for him. By believing such things, and a thousand-and-one others, he gave his life glamour, and we all need glamour. We can think our selves glamorous, and will that dream into life. And -- sometimes -- we can fail. Or we can find glamour in the impossible. And the impossible never lets us down.

Her husband sold ornamental wheelbarrows and concrete frogs, but knew that -- somewhere -- there were monsters and spaceships, and a ghost in the garage. He wasn't a bad man. But he wasn't the man she imagined she'd married, and the fault was as much hers as it was his. Her own dream she supposed had been to see a poet in a garden furniture salesman. She was disappointed that she had dreamed such a small dream, but glad that the dream was over and she could get on with her waking life. And then she met Rashid.

Music fades.

Another slide is shown...

DEE DEE

It's Mr C again! Can't you see?
The shape of his neck, the way his
collar pokes out over his jumper..

EMLYN

And I dare say that's his lobster
pot. Yes, that'll be the lobster
pot you keep in the workshop,

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EMLYN (CONT'D)

won't it Mr Chaterji? Just in case. It's a fisherman. A French fisherman. This nonsense will end, and it will end now. Do you hear me Diane?

DEE DEE

If it isn't Mr C, tell me who it is.

EMLYN

I don't know. I can't be expected to know the names of every Tom, Dick and Harry who happened to be in France the same time as your mother and me. And never mind the Jacques, Philippes, and Jean-Claudes.

(pause)

You've not been taking drugs have you?

WANDA

Emlyn!

EMLYN

It has to be said, and as her father I demand the right to know. Hallucinating poor Mr Chaterji every time I change the slide, wanting to be known by some silly fad of a name, wearing an ear ring in her eyebrow and not going to bed at a civilised hour. It all adds up. Diane, have you been taking drugs?

WANDA

Emlyn, what sort of a question is that?

EMLYN

One that has to be asked. Now Diane, are you going to answer?

DEE DEE

The man who saw a ghost in the garage accuses me of seeing things.

EMLYN

I never said I saw it, not directly. But the lights I saw, the noises I heard...I drew a perfectly rational conclusion.

DEE DEE

Of course. We've got a haunted garage. Silly me.

EMLYN

Which has nothing to do with the matter in hand.

DEE DEE

Me being a junkie.

EMLYN

She even makes light of it. Evasiveness, hostility, identity crisis...the stock-in-trade of the substance abuser. Will you tell us, Diane? Or do we have your urine analysed?

DEE DEE

Go ahead - you take the piss every other way. Never mind 'letting her make her own mind up' or 'she's grown up and she has to make her own choices now'. Even 'she's going through a phase' would have been handleable. But no. The only possible reason I could want to do things that you don't like is because I'm on drugs. Very imaginative. You couldn't even credit me with the wherewithal to join a religious cult or find my own new way of going barmy. But no, something like that wouldn't happen to our Diane. Not little Diane who wore a velvet dress for her christening and came first in French. But she would take drugs, and being the soft thing she is, they'd send her strange. Make her put her ear rings in the wrong place and forget her name. Could only be drugs, couldn't it?

EMLYN

Tell her, Wanda. Tell her who she's speaking to. In front of Mr Chaterji.

WANDA

That's your father, dear. You know what he's like. He gets upset, and jumps to silly conclusions. Leave him be, eh?

EMLYN

Wanda, I'm surprised. This is serious, and if all you can think is to make a cheap jibe...if this what I suspect, we've both failed in our duty as parents.

DEE DEE

The defence rests its case.

EMLYN

Just look at the state of her!

DEE DEE

You try living on a grant and get clothes anywhere but charity shops.

EMLYN

Charity shops is it? Have you no pride?

DEE DEE

Pride, yes. Money, no.

EMLYN

And we know why now. Straight down the opium parlour as soon as it opens.

DEE DEE

Opium parlour?

EMLYN

Don't come the innocent with me girl. I know.

WANDA

Look, let's settle this. Diane. Dee Dee. Whatever you want to call yourself --

EMLYN

Her name is Diane.

WANDA

Whatever you want to call yourself. Have you been taking drugs?

DEE DEE

No.

WANDA

Thank you. Emlyn, did you hear that? Our daughter is not a drug addict. Now can we have the next slide please? Sorry about this Mr Chaterji.

Emlyn shows another slide.

EMLYN

Makes them liars. Once they're hooked they can't tell the difference between truth and --

WANDA

Emlyn!

EMLYN

The Dordogne. As seen from our tent. It's beyond the hypermarket.

DEE DEE

I was offered a joint at a party once --

WANDA

That's quite enough.

DEE DEE

But it was finished by the time it got to me.

WANDA

The Dordogne. Tell Mr Chaterji about the wild boar.

Music rises; see music notes: 3.

EMLYN

One of the few places it still lives in the wild in fact, and an important part of local folklore...

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

Being of Indian extraction, her husband believed Rashid to be somehow more in touch with spiritual matters than the bulk of his acquaintances.

Never mind that Rashid had grown up not on the banks of the Ganges but the Wolverhampton Ship Canal; that his learning was gained not in some sacred mountain monastery but an urban comprehensive in the relegation zone of its league table - Rashid was, as far as her husband was concerned, a guru.

Her husband floated the possibility of levitation and Rashid responded with gravity. He talked pointedly about pyramids and Rashid nodded politely.

Rashid endured, with stoic good humour, labyrinthine theories about spontaneous human combustion, spoon bending, werewolves and Atlantis, subjected to heresies that would have made the most progressive Pope nostalgic for the Inquisition. And while he listened, he watched.

He watched his tormentor's wife bring in endless trays of tea and cakes, coffee and biscuits, a smile on her face. Her face was not especially attractive, but there was something about it, or so Rashid fancied. Something that was special and which spoke to him more than the wan willowy women

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WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE) (CONT'D)

advertisers and market researchers had dictated his demographic group should find alluring. Something enticing in its creases and furrows. Something that he thought he might love.

(pause)

Love...love. That first time in the garden, when passion, and Rashid, became oh so real...

Music fades.

Wanda is in the garden, snipping with her shears. She stops, realising that she is no longer alone.

WANDA

Mr Chaterji! You surprised me! I like to potter out here. Just pottering. Dig a few things up, replant them somewhere else, or throw them away if I don't like the look of them. What they are I couldn't tell you. Not the faintest idea. Except...you know: roses, daffodils. And I can make a fair stab at a chrysanth.

A longish silence. In the distance, a fire engine is heard.

WANDA (CONT'D)

Diane seems to be settling in. She rings every week. And there's letters. Usually about how she can't afford food once she's bought her books. I pretend not to understand, and send her a cake, but we both know what she's really after. You've always been partial to my cake, haven't you?

(pause)

Is that a hint, Mr Chaterji? The thought had crossed my mind. If

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CONTINUED:

WANDA (CONT'D)

you can stay a while that is. But of course, I forget. Your club. I'm sure they can start without you. Come on, put those tools in the wheelbarrow, and take them into the garage. I'll follow on when I've finished pruning. I think it's pruning. Some small order of deforestation. You'll find the wheelbarrow tilts to the left. I dare say it could be mended easily enough. But then it wouldn't have an idiosyncrasy. Do you need idiosyncrasy in a wheelbarrow? I don't know Mr Chaterji. Gardening's a pastime for one, and one without anything better to do at that. An idiosyncratic wheelbarrow makes me feel like my idea of a real gardener. A crimpoline dowager with a red setter and a shelf full of preserves. Oh, and Mr Chaterji. One other thing. Just so there's no confusion: when we get to the garage, I intend to have sex with you.

The wheelbarrow and its contents are spilled onto the ground. Cue music, another extract from 'Evil Eye' (notes: 1), timed so that the bass riff starts after the pause...around 8 minutes into the track.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

It was a lot less spontaneous than it sounded. She knew that Rashid wanted her, but knew also that he would not be the one to initiate matters. He could accept the invitation, and they would make love. Or he would decline, and the incident would not be mentioned again. This she was sure of. For one, Rashid was polite -- overly polite, as his dealings with her husband had shown. And for another, who would possibly believe him?

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE) (CONT'D)

(beat)

Rashid accepted her invitation.

Pause, so that we hear only the music, which is dominated by the rhythmic bass.

They made love in the garage, on the workbench that her husband had bought with the intention of making a dolls house for their daughter. Wednesday evenings were put aside for the task, and he'd got as far as drawing what he called a schematic. But then 'Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World' appeared on the television schedules, and he learned there is more to life than pagoda-shaped bird tables and herons cast in epoxy resin.

Music continues for a while. Back in the present now, Wanda and Emlyn are chatting in bed, after the slide show.

EMLYN

I thought it went pretty well. Yes, I think we can safely congratulate ourselves on a successful evening. Except for Diane's little...running joke. Student humour I suppose. I haven't got the education to appreciate it. Mr Chaterji seemed to take it in good grace though.

WANDA

He's a graceful man.

EMLYN

Years of yoga.

WANDA

Did he tell you that?

EMLYN

You don't need to be told. Not something like that. It's in his bearing.

WANDA

I've never heard him say about
yoga.

EMLYN

Words are too clumsy sometimes.
You've got to harness the
intuition, read between the lines.

WANDA

I'm going to put my head down in a
minute.

EMLYN

Still, you've got to admit...

WANDA

What?

EMLYN

I had a look at the slides again,
while I was packing it all away.
She's got a point.

WANDA

Have you got a shirt for the
morning?

EMLYN

I've got a draw full of shirts.

WANDA

But anything suitable?

EMLYN

They're all...suitable. They all
go with my suit.

WANDA

Ha ha. And good night.

Wanda turns over to sleep.

EMLYN

Suppose that...Diane is right --

WANDA

Good night, Emlyn.

EMLYN

About Mr Chaterji.

WANDA

But she isn't. She can't be. You said so yourself.

EMLYN

Suppose that Mr Chaterji was in our holiday slides.

WANDA

While he was under the arches, seeing to a tetchy strimmer. Good night Sherlock.

EMLYN

If not Mr Chaterji, then at least his image. Some of the pictures did look a bit like him. More than a bit.

(beat)

Like the man said, there are more things in Heaven and Earth... you've got to keep an open mind.

WANDA

About what?

EMLYN

Doppelgangers.

WANDA

Well you keep an open mind about them. I'm going to sleep.

EMLYN

Spirit doubles. Astral twins. Mr Chaterji could have a clone, psychically speaking. A doppelganger.

WANDA

Is this leading anywhere? Anywhere sensible that is? Because if not, I'd much rather be asleep. It's been a long day. specially with Diane back. And even if Mr Chaterji has got this...look-alike, what would he be doing in France with us?

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

It wasn't the right thing to say. Especially before sleep, when he'd have all night to brood on it. How many times had he told her about the mysteries that dreams uncover, the secrets only sleep can show?

But she was tired. It had been a long day. With her daughter back, yes. But even more so when she'd spent the evening with her lover and shared only cake with him.

Some couples have a song of their own, or a place, something or somewhere that has meaning and magic only for them. With Rashid she had a cake, a lemon-iced sponge that she'd baked the morning of that day in the garden.

Since then she'd cooked it often. 'If you pass his workshop,' she'd say to her husband, 'Tell him I'm doing a sponge. You know what he's like.' And her husband would laugh. 'He's a devil for your sponge.'

And on holiday, while her husband hunted a famously haunted monastery, she spent the day with her lover in a patisserie. All day they sat and held hands, and all day they were stared at. From the way they behaved with one another it was clear that they were anything but husband and wife. But that isn't why they drew such attention. Not in France.

No, they were stared at because, with all the fine pastries and fancy tarts, fulsome pies and fabulous gateaux to choose from, they asked for a simple sponge with lemon icing.

Wanda and Emlyn are silent, and sleep. The night passes...they have an alarm clock which skips a beat to indicate the passage of time. The alarm rings, and Emlyn stops it.

EMLYN

You know Wanda, I don't think it was Mr Chaterji's doppelganger in the pictures.

WANDA

Good morning Emlyn.

EMLYN

And a bon matin to you, cheri.

WANDA

I slept well, thanks for asking. Until the alarm went off at least. Does it really need to be set on a Sunday?

Emlyn gets up and goes to the bathroom.

EMLYN

The garden centre is open. A lot of trade is done on a Sunday.

WANDA

But you're not going in.

Emlyn continues to talk from the bathroom, where he has started his morning ritual, which commences with a long and faltering piss.

EMLYN

No. But the cycle continues. The wheel of life and death doesn't stop just because the deity hypothesised by Christians had the day off.

(beat)

And I want to index my magazines.

WANDA

They're already sorted out aren't they? That big box in the garage?

EMLYN

A random agglomeration of data. The dedicated researcher needs fingertip access and meticulous cross-referencing. Plus some proper stationery boxes, which I hope to acquire from the civil service surplus store.

DEE DEE

(from her bedroom)

Can you keep it down? Some of us are still trying to sleep.

EMLYN

Seven hours of sleep is an adequate amount for a healthy human. The Aztecs managed with five. And I was talking to your mother.

DEE DEE

Couldn't you at least shut the door? You sound gross.

WANDA

Some children like to treat their parents when they come home, to show how they've missed them. Breakfast in bed. A smile and some toast. A cup of tea even.

DEE DEE

Some children don't wake up to the sound of their fathers sluicing like cart-horses and ranting about Aztecs. How you can even think of tea is beyond me.

EMLYN

Urine is a perfectly natural substance known by the ancients to have many reviving qualities. People from so-called primitive tribes often drink their --

WANDA AND DEE DEE

No!

EMLYN

-- and the Body Shop are planning to bottle --

DEE DEE

We don't want to know.

WANDA

No we don't.

EMLYN

I was merely trying to inform you.

WANDA

Some things are better off unsaid.

EMLYN

Re: the presumed images of Mr Chaterji in the slides, I think we may have to investigate the possibility of a tulpa rather than a doppelganger.

WANDA

Silly me.

EMLYN

A tulpa being a kind of thought form created by those advanced in the spiritual arts. Mr Chaterji's name in this context will come as no surprise. I can sense by your mood that this is neither the time nor the place. Perhaps over breakfast. Or should I say petit-déjeuner?

Emlyn hums an erratic version of 'La Marseillaise' to himself while he washes.

WANDA

(to herself)

No Emlyn, you shouldn't.

Emlyn's humming and splashing get louder. His daily ablutions also include forceful throat clearing that he uses as a rhythmic accompaniment to his humming. It is a most irritating sound. Wanda has to speak up over it even with her internal voice.

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE)

Something, she realised, would have to be done. Even as the thought came to her she felt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDA (INTERNAL VOICE) (CONT'D)
 lighter somehow. Clearer. It was
 so logical. So right. Rashid had
 shown her the glamour of a
 different life. Making that
 glamour her real life would be her
 own task. And what was the worst
 that could happen? Something
 would have to be done. Something
 would have to be done.

The violent sound of shears cutting halts the bathroom
 symphony and we are in the garden an hour or two later in
 the day.

WANDA
 (muttering to
 herself)
 Something has to be done. Things
 can't go on like this. I can't go
 on like this.

Dee Dee comes out to the garden.

DEE DEE
 Mum. Here. A cup of tea.

WANDA
 Thank you.

DEE DEE
 I'm sorry about earlier. It's
 just...I try and tell Karen what
 it's like, but...

WANDA
 I know, darling. I know.

DEE DEE
 I've got a tea here for dad. Is
 he...?

WANDA
 He's in the garage. Sometimes I
 imagine...

DEE DEE
 Yes?

WANDA

Never mind. Go on. Tea's getting cold.

In the garage, Emlyn is cataloguing his magazines...

EMLYN

A is for Alien Abduction. B is for Bermuda Triangle. C is for Crop Circles. D is for --

Enter Dee Dee.

DEE DEE

Tea dad?

EMLYN

Merci. Merci beaucoup.

DEE DEE

How's it going?

EMLYN

Bien. Très bien.

DEE DEE

I don't speak French.

EMLYN

Come on. You were top in the class.

DEE DEE

I'm not a kid any more. I don't go to school.

EMLYN

You're at...university now. That's just a big school isn't it?

DEE DEE

Sometimes.

EMLYN

Ah well. D is for doppelganger. I knew it.

DEE DEE

Depends. Could be all sorts of things. And are we talking little d or big D?

EMLYN

Is there a difference?

DEE DEE

There can be. Little D for Diane.

EMLYN

And big D for Dee Dee, eh?

DEE DEE

You got it. About last night, and seeing Mr C...

EMLYN

I know Dee Dee. I know. Seems I'm the only one who doesn't see.

Music rises: see music notes: 4.

WANDA

Mr Chaterji hasn't been seen for some months. Said his club was taking up more of his time what with one thing and another, and that was it. He just sort of fell from conversation.

Then we saw the local news one night. Mr Chaterji, with a horned helmet and a broadsword, his arm round a plump woman with a blonde wig, the pair of them stood on the deck of a longship in the boating lake by the flyover. Seems his club's into Viking reenactment. I didn't think they'd got as far as Smethwick. There must have been twenty or more of them on the ship, tickled pink under the moustaches and the armour.

Eighteen months it took them to build. Couldn't have been done without Mr Chaterji and his workshop they said. It's hard to know what to say. But he looked happy. They both looked happy. Fortunately there was a tape in the machine, and Emlyn had the wherewithal to record most of it

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANDA (CONT'D)

for Dee Dee to see. She was up the other weekend with her friend Karen. Seems they're getting on alright with the house and their courses, but not a whisper about any boyfriend. Still.

We went for a walk, out along the canal, and stopped off at The Blue Boar for a pint and a bite. It was a nice night. All crisp and cold and everything just like it should be. The sky was all black, proper wintry black, and the stars were all white and twinkly. And there was this...light. Just for a second, but it zipped across the sky like I don't know what, whoosh and gone. Just...gone.

Music fades out...that's all folks!

THE END

MUSIC NOTES

Music is very important to the mood and structure of the play, and I have some specific tracks in mind to be used as the backdrop to Wanda's monologues:

- 1: 'Evil Eye' can be found on 'Divination - Light in Extension, Volume 2'.
- 2: 'Lucky Saddle' is by FFWD on the album of the same name.
- 3: Use an extract from the beginning of 'Om Namah Shiva - Transformation of the Heart Mix' on the Jah Wobble CD EP 'The Sun Does Rise'.
- 4: Here we want to start with a few seconds from the start of 'Evil Eye' (see above) before blending into 'World Peace A.D.?' by Suns of Arqa from 'Arqaology'.